

Need a Raise?

Respectfully submitted by Phil Brown

After 50 years many of the 55-57 Thunderbirds sag a little in the rear and set a little lower than we would like. Scuffing the fender skirts when we go around corners and bottoming out when we hits bumps in the road are both symptoms of cars that set too low in the rear. There are several ways to fix this situation. One is to replace the rear leaf springs with new reproduction springs. Another is to have the leaf springs re-arched. You can also raise the rear by adding air shocks to the rear. In that way you add compressed air to adjust the car to the desired height. OR, you can add overload springs to your rear shocks, which is the subject of this article. Adding the overload springs is a very simple process. You simply jack up the rear of the car (both sides) to the point that the rear tires are just ready to leave the ground. For safety **(SAFE IS AS SAFE DOES)** place jack stands under the frame just ahead of the leaf springs on each side. Now go under the car and remove the nut that secures the bottom of one of the shock absorbers and collapse the shock until you can get it out of the bracket. Following the instructions supplied with the kit, (I bought my kit from NAPA part number BK 7041304) place the hardware on the shock. Re-install the shock into its lower bracket. Using the hardware that you slid onto the shock, tighten the clamp

at the top of the shock. Now slide the shock spring up flush with the clamp you just tightened and push the bottom clamp flush with the shock spring and tighten. Now repeat the process for the opposite side. After all the hardware is tight, remove the jack stands and lower the car. The springs around the shocks will restrict the shocks to the point that the car now rides a couple of inches higher. When you take the car for a test ride you will notice that the ride is a bit firmer and that body roll when turning corners is greatly reduced. This is an economical way to improve the overall handling of the car and raise the rear ride height at the same time.



Shock Absorber shown with blue overload spring installed.

Winter Tip

Cold outside and the heater not working? Are the heater hoses heating up? If the answer is no, try replacing the vacuum line from the grasshopper valve in the heater box to the water valve just ahead of the carburetor. Use clamps if necessary to insure a tight seal.