



**PAJARITO THUNDERBIRD CLUB
of
NEW MEXICO**
Chapter 17 of the Classic Thunderbird
Club International
February 2017 Newsletter



February Outing

Saturday, February 19, 2017

Pelican's East

9800 Montgomery Blvd Northeast
Albuquerque, NM 87111-3576
(505) 298-7678

11:30am to 1:30pm

Order from the menu and separate checks

Photos from January Outing:



A whole row of Birds at Claim Jumper



A new Bird?



Claim Jumper in the back



Wisdom from the Good Book:

"Thou shalt not buy thy wife a floor Jack for her Birthday"
- Donald Peterson

More Photos from January Outing:



Best of Show? NOT



Even some honorary T-Birds showed up!



T-Birds that GLEAM!



Our Fearless Leader



When the roof goes down, the price goes up!

Great crowd at Claim Jumper. More chairs, please!



Thunderbird Trivia:

This is a new feature for the Pajarito Newsletter: A Thunderbird Trivia contest. Each month we will provide 3 new trivia questions regarding Thunderbirds and their production. The answers will be published the following month (along with three new questions). Anyone who cannot wait to the following month to hear the answers can email their guesses to Lloyd Powell at Lloydpo@aol.com.

January Questions:

1. What James Bond movie included the 2002 Thunderbird?
2. How many 2002 Thunderbird Neiman Marcus editions were made?
3. Who came up with the Thunderbird name?
4. Email your answers to Lloydpo@aol.com

2017 Pajarito Club Officers

President, **Sam C de Baca**

Vice President, **Jim Kontny**

Secretary, **Bill Verant**

Treasurer, **Jay Norman**

Directors/Trustees, **Ed Sauer, Ray Wood & John Ackerman**

CTCI Representative, **Lou Belmont**

MNCCC Representatives, **Jerry Jennings**

Newsletter, **Lloyd Powel** (Lloydpo@aol.com)

Website, **Jim Bell**

Phone Calling **Dennis Potte** **Sue Chisolm** and **Sherry Jobe**

Thanks for your efforts!



Club Dues Decision:

Annual Dues are \$ 15.00 per year per member or family. Payable at the beginning of each calendar year. Dues are used to defray the cost of the Newsletter distribution and other club events. Make checks payable to Pajarito Thunderbird Club

Mail checks to: Jay Norman
815 Hydra Rd SE
Rio Rancho, NM 87124

Ford Thunderbird Appreciation Day

May 21st, 2017



Your Thunderbird is "unique in all the world" and we want you to share it with the world. So on May 21st, 2017 each of the three large Thunderbird clubs are asking members AND non-members alike to take their T-birds out of hibernation and someplace for the world to enjoy. Work or church, diner or coffee shop, on a family picnic, it doesn't matter. Use your car like it was used when it was brand new. Let others see it, ask questions about it, hey, maybe even let them drive it! Then share your experiences on the Thunderbird Appreciation Day Facebook page. It's going to be all about the Thunderbird on May 21st!



2017 PLANNED ACTIVITIES:

2017 Month	Date	Activity	Leadership
February	2/19.	Lunch at Pelicans	Carol and Fred Lachmeyer
March	3/18.	Rich Ford Display	Ed Sauer and Sherry Jobe
April	4/15?	TBD	Jeannine and Jim Kontny
May	5/21	Ford Thunderbird Appreciation Day	Jerry Jennings and Philip Lovato
June	6/16.	Durango Car Show	Sam C deBaca
July	7/15?	Las Vegas NM Trip	Matt Martinez
August	8/19?	TBD	Vicki and Rick Keller
September	9/16?	50th Club Anniversary Shrimp Boil	Terri and Tony Beach
October	10/21?	TBD	Ed Sauer and Sherry
November	11/18?	TBD	Kay and Lou Belmont
December	12/16?	Christmas Party	Linda and Ray Wood

Pajarito Thunderbird Club turns 50 in 2017:

To prepare for the 50th celebration we offer Thunderbird History from a Ford press release:

DEARBORN PRESS RELEASE: FORD THUNDERBIRD HISTORY

The Ford Thunderbird nameplate lives on in the hearts of enthusiasts, in the garages of collectors and in the memories of millions.

It started in Paris nearly a half-century ago. Since then, the flight of the Thunderbird has included classic two-seaters, cherished roadsters, convertibles and four-door models, as well as exciting hardtops and sedans -- more than 4 million of them. There has been the "square" look, the "projectile" look, the jet aircraft look and the luxury look. Yet, through the years, through the many changes and near extinction, Thunderbird's uniqueness, individuality and engineering innovations have been retained.

The First Thunderbird

Two men, Louis D. Crusoe and George Walker, were primarily responsible for the birth of the Thunderbird. Both were devoted to the automobile and its constant development and refinement.

Crusoe, a millionaire lured out of retirement by Henry Ford II, was a businessman with a solid "feel" for the automobile market. As a Ford vice president and Ford Division general manager, it was his responsibility to strengthen a young Ford Division. His goal was to give it a car that breathed excitement, a car that would add prestige to the Ford name.

Walker, later a Ford vice president and chief stylist, is described by contemporaries as a "stylist with the soul of an artist burning in his heart."

It was October 1951. With their mission in mind, the two men were walking along the aisles of the Grand Palais in Paris when Crusoe gestured toward one of the sportier automobiles on display, turned to Walker and asked: "Why can't we have something like that?"

"We have a job just like that in the works right now," was Walker's quick response. It was not quite so, until Walker found it convenient to get to a telephone and talk with his aides back in Dearborn. But, by the time Crusoe returned to the United States, there was indeed a "job just like that" in the works.

In the months that followed, there was a lot of talk about a "true Ford sports car." Some preparations were made. "Paper sports cars" took shape in the design studios. All hands had been instructed to go to work on a completely new Ford car for the 1955 model year.



DEARBORN PRESS RELEASE (CONTINUED):

Official approval of a crash program to develop the Ford sports car came in a product letter dated Feb. 9, 1953. In it, May 1, 1953, was set as the target date for a full-size clay model. The letter also authorized parallel work by the engineers on a suitable chassis. The initial guidelines called for a two-passenger, canvas-topped open car that "would make maximum use of standard production components." Design objectives included a weight of 2,525 pounds, an Interceptor V-8 engine, a balanced weight distribution, acceleration better than the competition, and a top speed of more than 100 miles per hour.

The new Ford sports car also was "to retain Ford product characteristics and identification to the extent necessary for a ready association with the standard production car." The Ford Design Studio was given basic styling responsibilities. With no time for scale-model studies and the like, the first sports car styling suggestions were full-profile, full-sized air-brush renderings on paper of five different cars, cut out and mounted so they could be viewed like automobiles on the highway. It was an effective, if unorthodox, technique. None of these proposals led directly to a final car, but each provided ideas for the full-size clay model that was taking shape.



Other new cars being sold in 1967 at the start of the Pajarito Thunderbird Club

While the clay model was being developed, other decisions were being made:

- The grille design would be a combination of the typically Ford arched upper shape and a Ferrari-style, egg-crate mesh.
- For cost reasons, the new car would use the same taillights and headlamp bezels as the 1955 Ford.
- A handsome hood scoop was executed to cover a bulge that was created to house the air cleaner.
- "Bullet-shaped" insets at the end of the bumpers carried twin exhaust tips, then the latest in styling and, hence, a must for the new Ford.

On May 18, 1953 - 17 days after his deadline - Crusoe saw a complete, painted clay model for the first time. It closely corresponded to the shape of the final first Thunderbird.

Meanwhile, Chief Engineer Bill Burnett had cut a Ford two-door sedan to the 102-inch wheelbase of the sports car in order to test some ideas about problems such as handling and brake balance.

By the summer of 1953, the car was far enough along for a decision to be made about building it. The decision came in September when Crusoe - in Paris to view the renowned sports cars of the world and measure them against the clay models back in Dearborn - decided the Ford car was right.

Crusoe was unimpressed and offered a \$250 suit to anyone who could do better. A young Ford stylist, Alden "Gib" Giberson, submitted the name that would quickly earn approval and eventually acclaim - Thunderbird. He thought of the name because he had once lived in the southwest, where the legend of the Thunderbird was well-known.

Chief Stylist Frank Hersey, also a southwesterner and an enthusiast, spotted the name on Giberson's list and picked it for the new car. When it came time for Giberson to claim his prize, the modest young designer passed on what would have been the equivalent of a \$800-\$1000 suit today and settled for \$95 and an extra pair of trousers from Saks Fifth Avenue.

Although production wouldn't begin until the fall of 1954, making the new car a 1955 model, Ford was anxious to tell the world about it. Only one small detail remained - a name for the car. There were 5,000 names considered. Hep Cat, Beaver and Detroit were early, yet undistinguished, front-runners. Also suggested were Runabout, Arcturus, Savile, El Tigre and Coronado.

The name Thunderbird comes from the deserts of Arizona and New Mexico, where, according to Indian legend, the Thunderbird was a divine helper of man. Its great flapping wings, invisible to the eyes of mortal man, created the winds and the thunder, and gave the Indians water to live on in the dry wilderness where fate had flung them.

With the name settled and a couple of last-minute appearance changes made, the Ford Thunderbird was ready to go to market;

Its first public appearance was Feb. 20, 1954, at Detroit's first post-war auto show. the first 1955 Thunderbird came off the line at Ford Motor Company's Dearborn (Mich.) Assembly Plant on Sept. 9, 1954.

The press announcement of the new Ford sports car was on Sept. 23, 1954. Thunderbird went on sale Oct. 22, 1954 - starting a legend that would grow with each new generation of Thunderbird cars. (continued next month)_



Offered for sale in October 1954, the steel-bodied 1955 Thunderbird trounced the Corvette 16,155 sales to 700. It was a great year of design for Ford.

A DREAM COME TRUE

The fall of 1956 was an exciting time for this high school sophomore in southern West Virginia because it was when the new 1957 model cars were being delivered to the local dealerships. My buddies and I couldn't wait to get out of class and head directly to the back lots and garages of the dealerships to see which new models had arrived. During the mid-fifties, each new model year brought exciting changes and innovations; like panoramic windshields, tail fins, and push button drive, etc. I was a GM fan back then and loved the new Pontiacs, because my Dad bought a new one every year. I was also enamored with the little Ford Thunderbird, which was now entering its third year of production. I was impressed with the subtle changes and refinements Ford had made for the 1957 model; slightly longer with those canted fins, redesigned grille, and interior. WOW what a beautiful car! Someday I wanted to own one of these babies. That day came 1962 when I learned that a doctor in our town was moving to Chicago and would not be able to take his red and white 1957 Ford E-Model Thunderbird with him.



Now that I had a good job as a draftsman I could borrow the \$1,500 required to buy my dream car. What a thrill it was to drive this "modern" vehicle compared to my hopped-up '55 Chevy Del Rey 2-door, that I had been terrorizing the neighborhood with. The baby bird was not quite as fast as my Chevy but I really enjoyed the sound of that E-model engine when I opened-up those two four-barrel carburetors.

The fall of 1963 brought about lots of changes in my life; I got married and being a mature responsible husband, I gave up my wild car crazy life, sold both of my cars and bought a 1959 Plymouth Sport Fury and headed out west to start a new life and family. The Plymouth led to a 1965 Dodge Dart, which led to a 1966 Dodge Coronet, which led to a 1967 Dodge Station Wagon (my father-in-law was a Dodge Dealer). I was trying to be a responsible husband but I was still a "certified car-nut" at heart, even though my work car was a 1959 Renault Dauphine. During this period, I would just melt every time I saw a '57 T-Bird pass by so, in late 1967, I started looking in earnest regain my dream car, another '57 T-bird. I looked at several used T-Birds that were for sale in and around Albuquerque, but most were very tired or had been abused. In my search for another T-Bird I met Sylvan Young (Syl) who had a couple of them and helped me with my quest. Syl and Don Anderson, along with Rich Donahugh had been trying to get a local T-Bird club started and had applied to CTCI for a charter. Syl and Don were a big help in providing leads and we became great long-time friends. About this time my sister-in-law told me she saw a T-Bird on display at the local Chevy dealership. I made a beeline down there and sure enough there was a gorgeous white '57 Thunderbird with a porthole hardtop and a continental kit and they were asking \$2,000 for it. The original owner had just traded it in on a new red Corvette. I offered my daily driver, the Renault and \$1,600 for the T-Bird and they agreed. So, I finally got my dream car back along with a "Lifetime Warrantee" from Gales Chevrolet, which I have never used but still have a copy (in case I need some Chevy parts).

The first thing I did was to remove the continental kit because it put too much weight on the back of the car. I realized this when driving on a bumpy road I could see the passenger side door gap expand and contract noticeable. It was 1968 and my friends had Mustangs and various "Muscle Cars" but I was living the dream! I knew my recently acquired '57 T-Bird would still be classy when their rides were long gone. I drove the T-Bird daily to work and to college and left notes on every other one I saw, asking them to join our club, which we had named "The Pajarito Thunderbird Club of New Mexico". With respect to our multi-cultural state of New Mexico, we choose "Pajarito", which means little bird in Spanish. Some early CTCI members who joined our club included Jose Archuletta (CTCI# 37), Carl Edwards (CTCI# 199), Tom Windes (CTCI# 312), and Claude Lyons (CTCI# 3010). We also learned that CTCI was having a regional convention in Durango, CO. in the spring, so this became my first trip in the T-Bird. Holy Cow, I was blown away by all of the beautiful Thunderbirds that showed up from all over the western states! Every color and every option were represented and displayed right there on the main street of this

little historic Colorado town. Everyone was so friendly and willing to help educate this novice in the care and maintenance of my new pajarito. I enjoyed meeting George Watts, Lois Eminger, Pat Mace, Red Carney, Jim Schmitt, Pete Shields, Jerry Sellers, and so many other friendly folks who were instrumental in CTCI. What a memorable sight; seeing so many gorgeous T-Birds displayed at Fort Lewis College for the event photo! I was so impressed by the quality of the cars there that I couldn't wait to get home and start restoring my tired little bird.

In 1974 the "BLU-BRD" emerged; the little white '57 T-Bird underwent a cosmetic restoration which returned the car to its original Starmist Blue paint, engine overhaul, new interior, wide white wall tires, and a vanity plate (BLU*BRD). During the seventies and eighties, our "Pajarito Club" was still growing and we were having monthly meetings and fun activities. Additional new members included Sid Foil (CTCI# 11377), Terry Leighley (CTCI#10637), Jim Timmons (CTCI# 15105), and Ed Sauer (CTCI# 17536). I served as the self-appointed president for several years while we were busy displaying our cars at various car shows and taking day trips and overnight trips all over the state to visit New Mexico's many interesting and beautiful sites. These were fun times as we ventured to many interesting sites in the southwest as well attending several CTCI national and regional conventions. These various activities continued throughout the eighties, nineties, and into the next century, with several new members coming and old ones going. After participating in these various activities from 1968 through 2010, my little BLU-BRD was showing its age and needed a well-deserved body-off restoration.

In 2009, the second restoration process began. I knew this process was going to be much more extensive than the first and might take a couple of years, so, I needed to acquire another T-Bird to drive during this period. As luck, would have it, another Pajarito Club member, C E Chisolm had a nice Azure Blue '57 T-Bird for sale. I purchased it and I became very attached to it because it was beautiful and dependable. It became the "LUV*BRD" because I love Thunderbirds and especially this one. My son, Trae Wood (CTCI# 35313) and I undertook the formidable task of a body-off restoration of the BLU-BRD. After disassembly, our friends at Jay Walton' Automotive lifted the body onto their rotisserie for media blasting and subsequent body and paint work. Trae and I took the rolling chassis to his garage and removed the engine and suspension. We sent the engine to the local NAPA Engine Machine Shop for a complete overhaul while we stripped the chassis and suspension. The chassis frame, rear-end housing, under-fender air ducts, suspension control arms, and several engine compartment parts all went to media blasting and gloss black power coating by Chris at Southwest Power Coating. All the chrome and bumper components were sent off for "show quality" chrome plating at Electroplating in El Paso, TX. What fun as we began assembly of the chassis components and engine and transmission. Even though this car was from the southwest and had never been in an accident, the bodywork took a long time because I wanted all the body lines and panel fitments improved as well as the minor damage from the continental kit mounting bracket re-repaired. Surprisingly, some minor rust had to be repaired in the lower-rear portion of the driver's side rocker pane (typical on most T-Birds). Regarding fitment; most of these mid-1950s cars had poor quality control of body panel joints and gaps. After Joe Welp applied the Martin-Senior Starmist Blue basecoat-clearcoat and polished it out perfectly, we brought the restored chassis and running gear over to the body shop for remounting of the body. More fun as we brought the car back to Trae's garage for reassembly of the wiring, glass, weather-stripping, interior, and all the shiny stuff. After installing a new set of radial WW tires, it was back to Jay Walton's for the smoke test and fine tuning. Randy and Kevin masterfully "breathed-on" the rebuilt Y-Block and returned it to a state that it must have been when it was driven out of the showroom at Frontier Ford, in Albuquerque, NM in February, 1957 by the first owner, Frank Miller.

The restoration was completed in August, 2012; just in time to put it in the car hauler and head off to Memphis, TN for the 2012 CTCI National Convention. What an honor to be included with all of those fantastically restored Thunderbirds. The BLU-BRD received a Gold Award and got elevated to Senior Car status but we missed the Gold Medallion by 1.5 points. The next two years flew by and before I knew it we were off to Springfield, MO for the 2014 Regional Convention. Again, we got a Gold but missed the Gold Medallion by 1.5 points, despite correcting some of the deducts from Memphis. The next year we were busy organizing the 2015 CTCI Regional Convention here in Albuquerque but found time to address some additional issues found in Springfield. Success at last; we received a Gold and a Gold Medallion Award! I had promised my wife and other club members that once I received a Gold Medallion Award I would start driving the BLU*BRD and not limit it to the garage and car hauler. Between 2009 and 2016 I had upgraded many items on the LUV*BRD and really enjoyed driving and showing it regularly but in December 2016 I decided to sell it and start driving the BLU-BRD. What a thrill to experience the feel of driving a "Brand New" 1957 Classic.

I owe a great deal of thanks to my son Trae, who facilitated this undertaking and did the majority of the hard labor, our buddy Mike Harding who was there any time we needed an extra hand, my Pajarito Club members who provided their expert advice, and Randy Luce and his crew at Jay Walton's for helping my dream come true. Also, I am especially grateful to my wife Linda who authorized the expenditures and didn't complain (too much) about the countless hours spent working on the project. I believe that the 1955-1957 Ford Thunderbird represents a styling milestone and an icon of the 1950s. Also, I believe that only those who have undertaken a full restoration of one of these beautiful Pajaritos can appreciate the experience of what they were when new and the importance of preserving this truly classic automobile..... Ray Wood (CTCI# 652).