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August 2017 Newsletter

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RECENT EVENTS:

PITT BIRDS PICNIC at the PITTSBURGH VINTAGE GRAND PRIX

What a perfect weekend for the Pitt Birds picnic! Sunshine, low humidity, and temperatures in the 80's enhanced our perfect weekend. There were over seventy-five in attendance and thirty-five Thunderbirds on display. Warren and Jeanene Smith brought a birthday cake to celebrate the ninetieth birthday of Gordon Reis. We sang Happy Birthday and wished him many more years of good health and happiness. Members also viewed the other displays on the golf course. There were over 2,500 show cars. Ford Motor Co. had its new Ford GT at its display. Other manufacturers exhibited new and upcoming models at their displays. We viewed vintage grand prix races on Saturday and Sunday. All members in attendance enjoyed the event.

The Tuesday Cruise at the Waterfront was a rainy evening but we still had seven members and five Thunderbirds in attendance. The Wednesday Downtown Parade and Plaza Display started in the rain but cleared up in the late morning. The Pitt Birds want to thank all who helped set up the tents, brought the food and beverages, and coordinate the picnic. Proceeds from the PVGP event benefit the Autism Society of Pittsburgh and Allegheny Valley School.



Lunch is Ready



Aerial view of the event. Can you find your Thunderbird?



Wishing Gordon Ries a Happy 90th Birthday

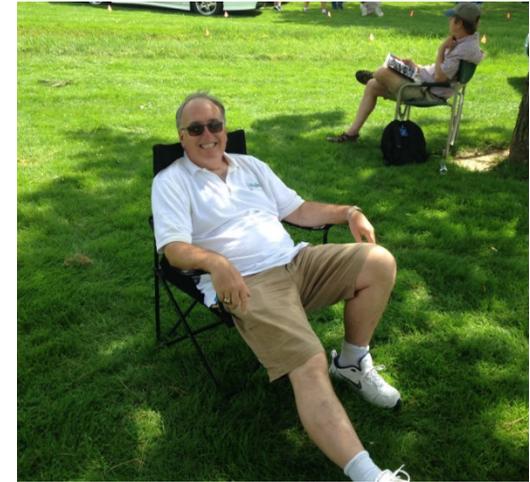
RECENT EVENTS:



PITT BIRDS PICNIC and the PITTSBURGH VINTAGE GRAND PRIX *Continued*

The photo of the 1957 Thunderbird, above, was taken at the PVGP Waterfront Cruise in the rain. One person commented on Facebook: "Thunderbirds look good even in the rain."

The photo of the 1956 Thunderbird, left, was taken on the Roberto Clemente Bridge at the Wednesday evening PVGP Tune-up. The other photos on this page were taken at the Pitt Birds picnic.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Beaver Hot Summer Night Car Cruise

Saturday, August 5th

Join fellow Pitt Bird members in Beaver, PA for one of the nicest car cruises in the area. **GPS:** 901 3rd St, Beaver, PA 15009

Once a year Beaver opens its streets to some of the finest classic cars in the country. Approximately 2,000 cars will be in attendance. Park wherever you can find a good spot and join Jon and Joann Strebeck and their Thunderbird at the town square on the main street near the gazebo. Jon and Joann usually get there early and I recommend arriving before noon. If you have any questions call Jon Strebeck at 724-272-4558.

National Pike Steam, Gas and Horse Show

Saturday, August 12th

The Pitt Birds will travel to West Brownsville to the National Pike Steam Show. Plan to meet at the Meadowlands McDonalds restaurant, just off of I-79 exit 41, at 9:30 AM.

GPS: 235 Meadowlands Blvd, Washington, PA 15301.

We will participate in a car show and view a wide variety of steam equipment. There will be food, music, parades, crafts and a flea market. This is an event for the entire family. **If you plan to attend, please RSVP Pete Sarkis at 412-310-1589 or sarkis2004@comcast.net.**

Moon Area Car Cruise

Sunday, August 27th

Members will meet at Moon Park on or before 11:00 AM to enjoy this great car cruise in the park. The Pitt Birds will have a tent/pavilion for a gathering point located one quarter of a mile on the left after you enter the park. We will have some light snacks and salads. There will be a variety of food vendors at this event.

GPS: 1350 Ewing Rd, Moon, PA 15108.

If you have any questions contact Mary Beth Meyer at 412-818-5898.



ITC Convention:

Tuesday, August 29 – Sunday September 3, 2017

The International Thunderbird Club will have its 2017 convention in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The host hotel is the Hotel Fort Wayne. For hotel reservation, visit: <https://bookings.ihotelier.com/Hotel-Fort-Wayne/bookings.jsp?groupID=1736433&hotelID=77470>.

Tours include the Amish town of Shipshewana and four car museums including the popular Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum. For Details visit: http://www.intl-thunderbirdclub.com/event/itc-convention-fort-wayne-indiana-august-29-september-3-2017/?instance_id=12

Tour Al Geisler's Garage

Saturday, September 16th

Members will meet at Eat'n Park on Route 60 in Robinson.

GPS: 100 Park Manor Dr, Pittsburgh, PA 15205

We will caravan to Al Geisler's garage to see a great selection of Fords. We ask that everyone bring a "cover dish" and we will have lunch at Al's facility. Additional details will be in the next newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP:

Current Membership: **68 Members**

Welcome New Members:

Gary and Tracy Scott
and Joe Simbari

Interested in Joining an International Thunderbird Club?

The Pitt Birds Thunderbird Club is a chapter club with the Classic Thunderbird Club International (CTCI) and the International Thunderbird Club (ITC). Both CTCI and ITC have regional and international events, provide excellent technical advice, publish bi-monthly magazines, offer vendor sourcing, and articles about other local clubs. Membership information to CTCI or ITC can be found by visiting the following web sites.

Classic Thunderbird Club International: www.ctci.org

Then click on "Become a Member" on the Home page.

International Thunderbird Club: www.intl-thunderbirdclub.com

Then click on the "Membership" button on the Home page.

Happy Anniversary Pitt Birds Thunderbird Club:

The second generation of the Pitt Birds started in July 1997. The first meeting of the second generation of this club was initiated by Elmer Andrejcek and Nick Ballas and held at the West Mifflin EMT building. The club was originally organized in March of 1970.

LOST AND FOUND:

Found a Thunderbird floor mat at the Pitt Birds picnic. If you know who it belongs to, please contact Pete Sarkis at 412-302-1589.

FOR SALE:



1956 Thunderbird

Contact: Rusty or Nancy

412-881-5864

theoceancaptain4@aol.com

\$60,000 Firm

312 V-8 Automatic (24,100 orig. miles), Colonial White (w/ porthole hard top incl.) w/ black and white interior, black soft top, aftermarket AC and real wire wheels and custom made to match- center console w/ storage and cup holders, power windows/seats/steering and brakes, also comes with lots of car show extras...



1967 Thunderbird

Contact: Edward Kemena

724-266-0320

edkemena@aol.com

\$14,000 OBO

Hardtop, restored, professional paint job, light blue with white vinyl hardtop and dark blue interior. AM/FM radio and cassette, stainless exhaust, new gas tank, radiator re-core, transmission overhauled, engines runs on unleaded gas. Excellent condition.

Golf Shirts:

Turquoise / Thunderbird blue golf shirt with the Pitt Birds logo, contact Wayne and Dolly Bane at: 724-226-0788. The price is \$30.00 (\$32.00 for XXL).

Tee Shirts:

With the Pitt Birds club logo are for sale for \$15.00 each. Shipping and handling to your address is an additional \$3.00. Limited supply remaining, 2 medium sizes available.

Contact Ann Augustine at: 724-468-3202.

Other Perspectives: What is a Thunderbird?

By: Jim Koscs – Hagerty Insurance

In response to my story on great car names that lost their luster, a reader asked why I had not included the Ford Thunderbird. Indeed, I struggled with that one. Some car enthusiasts feel that Ford hurt the name when it turned the original two-seater into a bigger luxury coupe with a back seat. I think many T-Bird fans feel otherwise. The T-Bird story is far more nuanced than “which is the real T-Bird?”

So, Hagerty is asking, “What makes a Thunderbird a Thunderbird?”

What’s in a Name?

Such was the strength of the Thunderbird name, or, as marketers call it, “brand equity,” that it could evolve or morph into different cars over the decades and still find success. The Thunderbird became many different cars, each with its own story, its own level of success and its own fans. With that kind of history, it’s legitimate to ask, “What makes a Thunderbird, a Thunderbird?”

How you answer that depends on what your favorite Thunderbird is. Here’s my take on Ford’s personal luxury car.

A Tale of Two Icons

Some still argue that the original T-Bird is the “real” one, but I believe that the 1955-1957 T-Bird was more of a pop-culture icon than an automotive icon. Here’s why: Musicians may have written songs about the Thunderbird, but other carmakers didn’t copy it. And although the Ford was conceived as a Corvette-fighter, a few short years later Ford essentially conceded that the T-bird had gone in a different direction.

Ford’s Thunderbird captivated America from the moment it appeared in public in 1954. In its three-year run, the two-seat T-Bird sold about 53,000 cars. That was low by Detroit standards, and no other company saw a business case worth pursuing.

On the other hand, Ford launched a whole new market segment, the “personal luxury car,” when it turned its Thunderbird into a larger coupe for 1958 (a.k.a. “Squarebird”). Other brands would follow: The 1962 Studebaker Gran Turismo Hawk, 1963 Buick Riviera, 1966 Oldsmobile Toronado and even 1967 Cadillac Eldorado owe a debt to the 1958 Thunderbird.

Thunderbird marketing entered new territory with the ’58, positioning a model from a mainstream brand as a luxury lifestyle vehicle. It was a creative – and successful – approach that would serve Thunderbird well for decades.

Jet Age Chariots

As significant as I know the 1958 Thunderbird to be, it’s not my favorite. I much prefer the 1961-1963 and 1964-1966 T-Birds. Both exemplified the decade’s jet age milieu. The 1963-1965 Riviera was a more elegant and beautiful, but those early and mid-’60s T-Birds had Rat Pack swagger. Ford advertising touted “the private world of Thunderbird.”

That brings me to my favorite Thunderbird of the classic era, the 1967. Ford created an all-new look on Thunderbird’s first body-on-frame chassis. The two-door showed the Mustang’s influence in both the proportions and some detailing. I loved the hideaway headlights. The four-door adopted the Lincoln Continental’s rearward-opening “suicide” door style – largely impractical but oh so cool.

Bigger, Not Better

I think Ford got carried away for 1970, putting a big Pontiac-like beak on the T-Bird’s grille. The Thunderbird would keep on growing, sharing the chassis with the larger Continental Mk. IV in 1972. As the T-Bird got bigger, sales got smaller, except for an odd surge to 87,000 for the ’73. The big Bird rode like a cloud, but I never liked these leviathans.

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Other Perspectives: What is a Thunderbird?

Continued

Mainstream Bird

By the early 1970s, the Thunderbird's hold on "affordable luxury" was under attack from a new wave of even more affordable "personal luxury" cars from mainstream brands, particularly the Pontiac Grand Prix and its cousin, the Chevy Monte Carlo. The concept was the same, and the image marketing was similar. The big difference was the "smaller" size and lower pricing.

Ford took note and issued the 1974-1976 Torino-based Elite as a "midsize car in the Thunderbird tradition." And then, presto, with a restyle for 1977, Elite became the new "downsized" Thunderbird, with a price trimmed by \$3,000. Customers bought nearly a million over three years, making it the best-selling T-Bird ever. The Thunderbird was now mainstream.

Buyers were not as enthusiastic about the 1980-1982 Fairmont-based T-Bird, a smaller car that looked overcooked and awkward wearing the previous models' neo-classic design cues and overdone trim.

The ninth-generation model put an attractive "aero" body on a Fox-based platform, and sales jumped 50 percent over the previous car. This was an attractive, comfortable and competent midsize coupe, but the T-Bird's country club status was long gone. The 1987-1988 Turbo Coupe brought back some of T-Bird's special character with performance and technology, and single-handedly established a cult following.

The End of the Coupe

I'll state right up front, my favorite Thunderbird is part of the 1989-1997 series, the Super Coupe built through 1995. I loved the design and the way this supercharged model drove.

With the tenth-generation model, Ford tried taking the T-Bird a bit more upscale with more room and comfort and a sophisticated chassis featuring independent rear suspension. The car looked bigger than the previous Thunderbird but was slightly shorter on a nine-inch longer wheelbase, and rear seat room was much improved. This was the longest-running Thunderbird series, at nine years. Customers liked it, but the market for big coupes was dying. SUVs were taking over. Ford pulled the plug on Thunderbird after 1997.

The End, Again

Like many car buffs, I was intrigued by the news of a two-seat T-Bird revival. Yet, upon seeing the production car, I could only think that it was retro design gone too far. I'm sure the 68,000 people who bought a 2002-2005 Thunderbird would disagree with me. However, that figure was well below Ford's projection, which is why it cancelled the revived two-seat Thunderbird with no successor model.

By trying to appeal to those who longed for the 1955-1957 Thunderbird design, I think Ford missed an opportunity to do something truly creative. They could have brought the original concept into the 21st century. Such a Thunderbird would never have been more than a niche model, but it would have been special, a "halo" vehicle for the Ford line, as the T-Bird once was. In today's crossover-obsessed auto market, there's just no place for "the private world of Thunderbird." That's too bad. Cherish your favorite T-Bird, whichever it may be.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	CONTACT
January 14 th	Holiday Dinner	
February 26 th	Winter Meeting	Wayne and Dolly Bane
March 26 th	Club Get Together (A No Meeting Meeting) at the Max's Allegheny Tavern	Jerry and Barbara Longstreth
April 22 nd	Visit the Amish Community of Smicksburg	Rich and Ann Augustine
May 1 nd	May Day Parade, Uniontown	Ken and June Tarpley
May 13 th	USAF Thunderbirds, Pittsburgh Airport on May 13	John and Donna Shubert
May 21 th	Thunderbird Appreciation Day	
June 2-3 rd	All Ford National @ Carlisle	Jerry and Barbara Longstreth
June 4 th	NHHAC Car Show, Mars, PA	Warren and Jeanene Smith
June 25 th	PA Trolley Museum in Washington, PA	Rich and Ann Augustine
	Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix Events:	
July 8-9 th	Races at Pittsburgh Int. Race Course	Jerry and Barbara Longstreth
July 11 th	Car Cruise at the Homestead Waterfront	Jerry and Barbara Longstreth
July 12 th	Downtown Parade and Plaza Display	Jerry and Barbara Longstreth
July 15-16 th	Pitt Birds Picnic	Jerry and Barbara Longstreth
August 12 th	National Pike Steam, Gas and Horse Show	Pete and Karen Sarkis
September 16 th	Garage Tour to Al Geisler's Garage	Bob and Betty Macek
September 23/24	Crabfest and Railroad Tour in Cumberland Maryland - CANCELED	Pete and Karen Sarkis
October 14 th	Garage Tour in Salem, OH	Jon and Joann Strebeck
November 18 th	Autumn Meeting	Wayne and Dolly Bane
	National Thunderbird Events:	
August 3 rd - 6 th	CTCI Regional Convention, Parsippany, NJ	Jerry and Barbara Longstreth
Aug 29 th – Sep 3 rd	ITC Convention, Fort Wayne, IN	Pete and Karen Sarkis
	CAR CRUISES	
May 21 st	SNPJ Car Cruise, Oakdale, PA	Mary Beth Meyer
July 1- 2	Back to the 50's Car Cruise, Cascade Park, New Castle, PA	Pete and Karen Sarkis
August 5 th	Beaver Hot Summer Nights Car Cruise	Jon and Joann Strebeck
August 27 th	Moon Area Car Cruise	John and Donna Shubert
All Wed. & Sat.	Pittsburgh Mills Mall	Wayne and Dolly Bane