

1961 Thunderbird Update

The H.V.A.C. Board hopes that everyone has had a happy holiday season. With the New Year upon us and the exceptional weather, hopefully, you have had time to initiate repairs or restoration on your collector car. During the nice weather, I painted my 1961 T-Bird in its original Diamond Blue color and started assembling the bumpers and mounting new chrome emblems. I have heard from other club members, the ridge molding on top of the fenders, doors, and quarter panels was difficult to remove. I had no choice, but to remove these moldings, because of surface rust, that needed to be wire brushed, sanded, and etched to restore to new condition. When removing the ridge molding on this series of T-Bird, save the retaining clips, the car requires thirty, and they cost nearly \$4.00 each. Upon reassembly, I followed the schematics in the shop manual, and used a little, J.B. Weld for attachment.

Recently, I removed the vent window frames for re-chroming, these items are not being reproduced. With a complete engine rebuild and detail of the engine compartment according to V.T.C.I. judging specifications, it will be time for the last phase of the restoration, the interior, this will include:

- *New seat covers and buns, this phase is already completed.

- *As with all high line Ford products of the fifties through seventies, the Thunderbirds of this era are complicated cars. The phase of removing and replacing the cracked and dry dashboard cover is a task that I do not look forward to, however, it is necessary as the dash pad I replaced in my fifty-eight Thunderbird.

- *While having the dash pad out, I will replace the heater core, air-conditioning evaporator core, vacuum lines, and test all servos for vacuum retention. Also, I will replace all bulbs for the instruments. Do this once and be done, you don't want to take this dash pad out again.

- *Fortunately, my interior door panels and armrest, and anodized trim is in good condition and will be cleaned up, repainted, and buffed.

- *I will then install a new carpet kit, and trunk board kit, along with new weather strip. A new headliner will be installed with newly re-chromed windshield trim. Always do interior and trunk restoration last, to avoid overspray and dirt on your new upholstery.

*Installation of new white wall tires and fender skirts. It will be time for a shake down cruise to fix any bugs that might show up. I will also have a front-end alignment.

*Restoring any car takes plenty of time, hassle, and money. Is it worth it? Yes, I enjoy the process, the high-fives, and the compliments. Plus, anyone can mortgage their house to buy a new muscle car, however, how many like-new sixty-one Thunderbirds do you see at every corner, at a fraction of the cost of a new car, that one can work on?

Enclosed are pictures of my restoration in progress.

Happy Motoring!

Larry Sneary