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1972-1976 Big Bird Overview

Following the bigger is better formula, the 72-76 Thunderbirds are the largest thunderbirds ever built before or after this series. My late father-in-law owned a light blue seventy-three. I own a 72 Lincoln continental mark IV which shares the chassis, doors, and understructure with the t-bird. Early base engines for the 72 t-bird were the four hundred c.i.d., but the actual base engine became the 429 at mid-year. I drove a mark V with the four hundred, it was adequate but not overpowered. The 460 was standard in the mark IV. The 72 429-460 is the most powerful of the 72-76 engines with different heads and no e.g.r. valves, which came in 1973 and catalytic converters which came in 1975.

The 385 series 429-460 was in production from mid-1968-1997, it powered everything from fords, mercury's, Lincolns, and ford trucks. It was Ford's longest production big block. The early 429 and 460's from mid-1968 to 1972 would deliver gas mileage in the mid-teens if driven conservatively. My seventy-two mark IV has delivered up to 15 m.p.g. on the highway. I had a friend that had a new seventy-six colony park wagon with a 460 that got 9 mpg. 1973 and later t-birds were hampered

by the emission controls. Thunderbirds of this era were not cheap automobiles; the base price was \$5,293 for the seventy-two and \$7,701.00 for the seventy-six. This is the base price without options. So, one can imagine how expensive of the mark IV of this era was. I can attest this is the best riding car in my small collection. My seventy-two mark IV. With maintenance and replacement of wear items on the suspension, this series of t-bird is the smoothest riding and driving of all series.

Styling is a matter of personal choice. I prefer the 1972 t-birds and mark IV's; they do not have the guard rail bumpers that became prevalent from seventy-three on. This year also does not have the later emission controls, and gaudy styling packages of later years. Many of these cars were sacrificed for their engines and used up in demolition derbies. I love my 1972 Mark IV, if I were picking a t-bird of this series, it would be a seventy-two with the optional wire wheel covers, vinyl top, landau bars, and a 429. It would also have the one year only tissue dispenser which Indianapolis Club member Bob Thomas has on his immaculate 72 T-bird.

Happy Motoring!

Larry Sneary

