



## THUNDER ROAD, VOL 39

### The Central Florida Thunderbird Club

[www.cfctc.net](http://www.cfctc.net)

Hello Thunderbird Club Family - Another Great CFCTC Event was held at Harbor Hills Country Club Brunch on FEB 22<sup>nd</sup>



The Fabulous Thunderbirds did the drive to Harbor Hills Country Club for their plentiful Sunday brunch. Our thanks to member and Harbor Hills resident Steve Gordon for helping make the arrangements. Unfortunately, only 32 of the 42 signed up members attended. Some lite early A. M. rain and the 8 AM Olympic USA Hockey game acted as a deterrent. Some members just plain forgot! The best part as always are the friendships that are being developed and the addition of new members. Our special friends Rob & Brenda from Jenkins Body shop: Leesburg/Ocala. Welcome from Orlando, John Miller (57 Star mist Blue) and his daughter. Active new member and new friend Larry Witte (68 red on red roadster) Great to have Blake & Sandy back in action!



CLUB MEMBER CLASSIC CAR SPOTLIGHT - CFCTC would like to spotlight another great club

members for each edition with a picture of their Thunderbird and special memories or connections with their classic car. This month's Member Spotlight is in recognition of Bob and Loretta Marsh for their iconic 1955 Classic Thunderbird. Bob and Loretta were recently a top story in The Villages Daily Sun. Originally a courtesy car for Capitol Records, their beautiful car is a piece of history that was once driven by Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Grace Kelly, Bob Hope, Lucille Ball and Elvis Presley.



The 1955 Ford Thunderbird owned by Loretta and Bob Marsh, of the Village of Pine Hills, was once driven by Frank Sinatra and held the likes of Dean Martin, Grace Kelly, Bob Hope, Lucille Ball, and Elvis Presley in the driver's seat.

Photos by Rachel Govola | Daily Sun

## This Villager's 1955 T-Bird Has a Long, Storied Past

Owning a car once driven by Frank Sinatra and shuttled celebrities is a whole new level of history.

By **MADDIE CUTLER**  
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Inheriting a car from a family member is special, but owning a car once driven by Frank Sinatra is a whole new level of history.

Bob Marsh bought his 1955 Thunderbird 20 years ago after seeing it at a car show.

"It was in Spanish Springs, and there was a small "for sale" sign on the seat," said Marsh, of the Village of Pine Hills. "I gave the owner an offer but told him I was leaving for New York on Sunday."

Marsh and his wife, Loretta, both still were working then and were snowbirds. He worked in transportation in the movie and television industry, and was working on "30 Rock" at the time.

"I was at work the following Monday, doing time cards, when

I got the call," Marsh said. "He accepted my offer and I immediately wired him the money."

Marsh called a friend who lived in The Villages and asked if he could have the car delivered to his garage. He hadn't even heard the engine run, but Marsh was committed to buying the Thunderbird.

The reason Marsh was so enamored with the car was because of its provenance. The 1955 Thunderbird was bought by Capitol Records because Frank Sinatra wanted a car for when he stayed at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach. Sinatra drove the car himself for a time, and then it became a courtesy car for other people on contract with Capitol Records.

The record label eventually sold the Thunderbird, and the car along with the documents that prove its history made its way to Marsh.

The car could not have found a better owner. For 38

years, Marsh drove celebrities and cast members to different filming locations throughout the New York area. Some of them were Tina Fey, Denzel Washington when he filmed "Philadelphia," and actors in "A Beautiful Mind."

Since he is no stranger to having well-known passengers, he is even more proud to maintain a piece of history that once held Dean Martin, Grace Kelly, Bob Hope, Lucille Ball, and Elvis Presley in the driver's seat.

Marsh keeps a black and white photograph of Frank Sinatra in the trunk and displays it when he takes the Thunderbird to car shows.

"It doesn't go out a lot, only on special occasions," Marsh said. "It only has about 5,870 or so miles on it. But I love telling people about it."

Marsh always planned to get himself a "trophy" when he retired, and he first bought a different 1955 Thunderbird he

was planning to restore. But when he came across this illustrious Thunderbird, he immediately sold the other '55.

He figured whatever he would have spent on the restoration job could be used to buy the famous car instead.

"I've never owned a classic car before," he said. "I was looking for something based on how it looked, but when I knew the history that came with this one, I wanted it more than any other car."

There is nothing particularly different about the Thunderbird compared to other models that came out in 1955. It is a 3-speed manual with no air conditioning, but the history makes it one-of-a-kind.

"Like us, when something breaks down, you repair it, save its history," Marsh said. "I'm going to maintain it and pass it down to my grandchildren so they can enjoy it, too."

Marsh does not do any of the mechanical work and instead trusts his mechanic, Randy Banger, to take care of the car. Marsh said Banger is the perfect mechanic for the car because he also has done mechanic work for John Travolta.

Circumstances around how Marsh got the car fell into place perfectly, and he is always grateful to start the car and take it around the block.

Occasionally, he even listens to some Frank Sinatra on the radio.

Senior writer Maddie Cutler can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5386, or [maddie.cutler@thevillagesmedia.com](mailto:maddie.cutler@thevillagesmedia.com).

**1955  
FORD  
THUNDERBIRD**



**Engine:**  
292 cubic inches



**Transmission:**  
3-speed manual



**Wheelbase:**  
102 inches



**Base Cost:**  
\$2,944



**Miles per Gallon:**  
14 mpg



## **4 Event Reminders for this week and March 2026**

**Monday 3/2/26 Meeting at Gio's Restaurant.** 11 am. 30 seats available.

RSVP Ralph: [rotaryralph@hotmail.com](mailto:rotaryralph@hotmail.com)

Hope to see everyone on Monday

**Wednesday March 4, 2026** -Here is the most recent information about FANFEST 2026 that is happening on March 4<sup>th</sup> at Burnyzz!

### **GATORNATIONALS NHRA FAN FEST**

It's finally here. After months of anticipation, Fan Fest 2026 is rolling into Burnyzz as we welcome race season alongside the NHRA Gatornationals. This is the night car people wait for every year. Engines rumble, lights glow, and the Burnyzz lot fills with horsepower, hot rods, and pure adrenaline.

Join us Wednesday evening, March 4th at 1 Aspen Rd in Ocala for our biggest event of the year. This is not just another car show. Fan Fest brings together builders, drivers, families, and enthusiasts who love fast cars and unforgettable nights.

Expect NHRA driver autographs, a car show showdown with custom trophies on the line, live rock and roll, and food trucks serving favorites all evening. Bring the whole crew. Kids can enjoy crafts, face painting, and balloon animals while the grownups take in the sights, sounds, and atmosphere you only get at Fan Fest. Last year's turnout was massive, and this year is already shaping up to be even bigger. Spectator admission is FREE. Have a ride you are proud of? Register for the car show through the flyer and claim your spot.

**\$10 donation and members should RSVP to Burnyzz [Alyse Putnam](mailto:Alyse Putnam) Burnyzz Llc. 352-307-1968**

**Sunday March 15th, come celebrate St. Patrick's Day**, we have a bus trip planned to Orlando where we will visit the home of Club member, David Meinz. David has his home filled with his collection of 1950's memorabilia. We plan to leave from Brownwood at 11am and return at 4pm. (Times to be confirmed.) Don't put off making your RSVP - do it NOW!

**RSVP REQUIRED -[rotaryralph@hotmail.com](mailto:rotaryralph@hotmail.com)**

David will prepare a brisket! Once the number of attendees is confirmed, potluck side dishes will be coordinated. BYO beer and wine. This should be a wonderful day to spend with friends.

## [Important Links for Classic Thunderbird Owners:](#)



### [Early Bird Magazines & Articles](#)

<https://store.ctci.org/early-bird-magazine/>

### [Technical Tips for Classic Thunderbirds by Categories](#)

<https://www.ctci.org/earlybird-technical-article-index/>

Anyone member can get to it under the CTCI Website's **Car Tech** pull down menu / **EarlyBird Technical Article Index**







