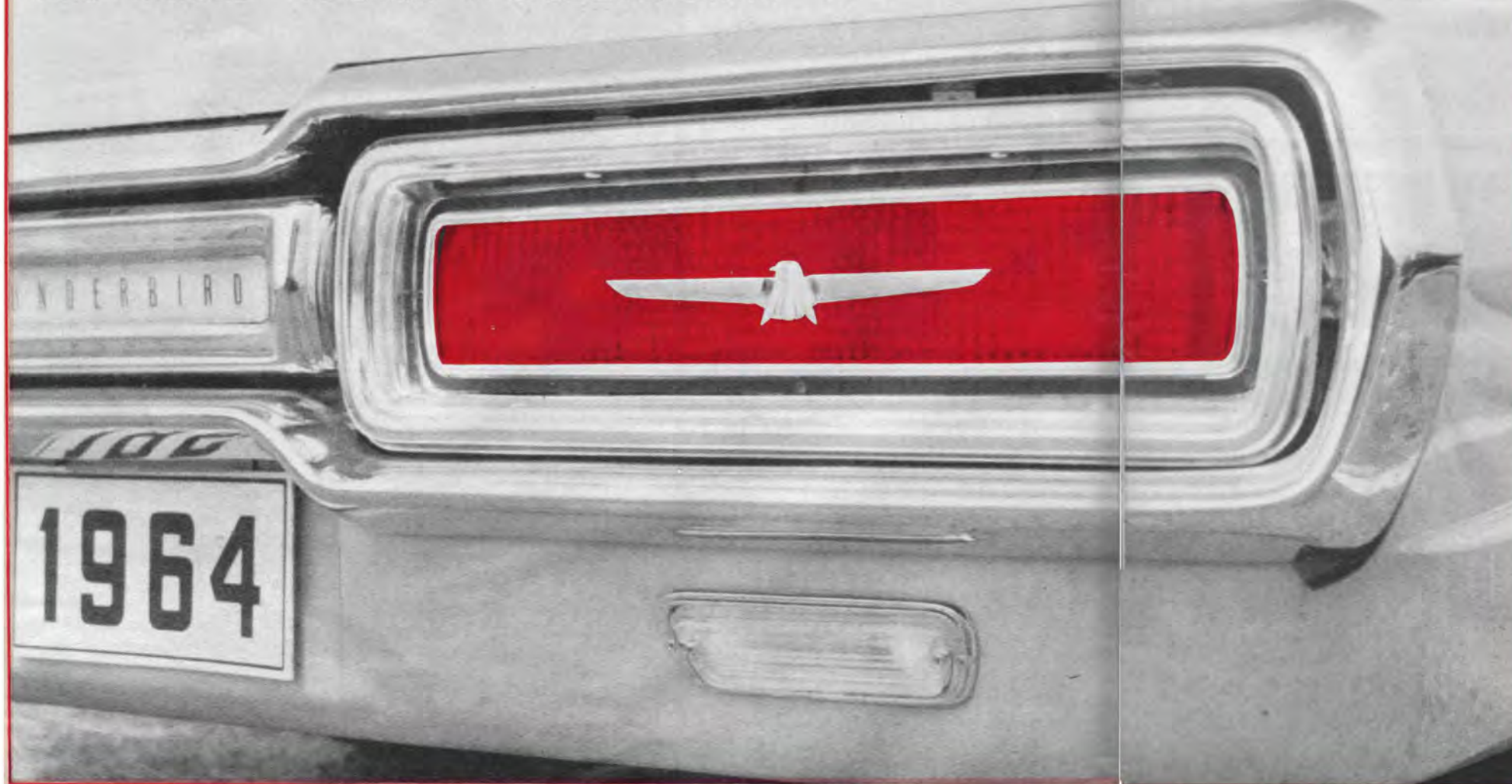


Thunderbird Grows New Feathers



*Gadgets Galore Highlight
the 1964 'Bird*



NOTABLY, the glamorous Thunderbird, that oft-copied style-setter for America's more sportive vehicles, has once more blossomed forth with an "all-new" model designed to attract even larger numbers of buyers from what has been called, appropriately enough, the "Thunderbird market."

Be-gadged and bedazzling, the Thunderbird for 1964 has more and more of that which stimulated the growth of the market—i.e., posh good looks and plenty of power attachments.

Although first glances at the '64 'Birds will trick the mind into believing

that they aren't far removed from the '63 molds, the reverse of that is nearer to the truth. While the basic under-structure—unit-body inner and floor-pan sections—probably do remain much the same as the '63s (and the '61-62s, too), virtually all of the outer sheet metal stampings are new and different.

There's a more powerful look to the car in '64, which the stylists obtained by lengthening the hood and shortening the roof lines. And there's a cleaner, stronger looking rear, achieved with two of the biggest tail/turn/stop lamps ever seen on an automobile. If there was any confusion before, it now is impossible not to recognize that the car

being followed is a '64 Thunderbird.

The taillights originally intended for the 'Bird were to have been sequential for turn indication—all three panels of the light would have flashed blink-blink-blink—but lighting restrictions in some states caused at least a temporary shelving of the system. Front turn signals, however, are repeated in fender-top indicators (à la Cadillac) for the driver's benefit.

Along with all the exterior styling changes, there have been a good many interior changes, all to the benefit of the consumer. Entrance to both front and rear seats is easier, because of the altered doors and roof. Toe room for

back-seat passengers has been improved with a new seat track for the front seats, and the rear seatback now wraps around the corners at shoulder height. Rear seats are separated by a console which runs full-length through the interior and there are individual flood-type reading lights in the rear roof pillars just behind the seats.

Another interior improvement bound to gain the approval of all passengers is the 'Bird's exclusive new system for circulating fresh air. Taking advantage of the inherent low-pressure area behind the rear window, Ford engineers have placed a vacuum-controlled vent just under the window, which, when opened

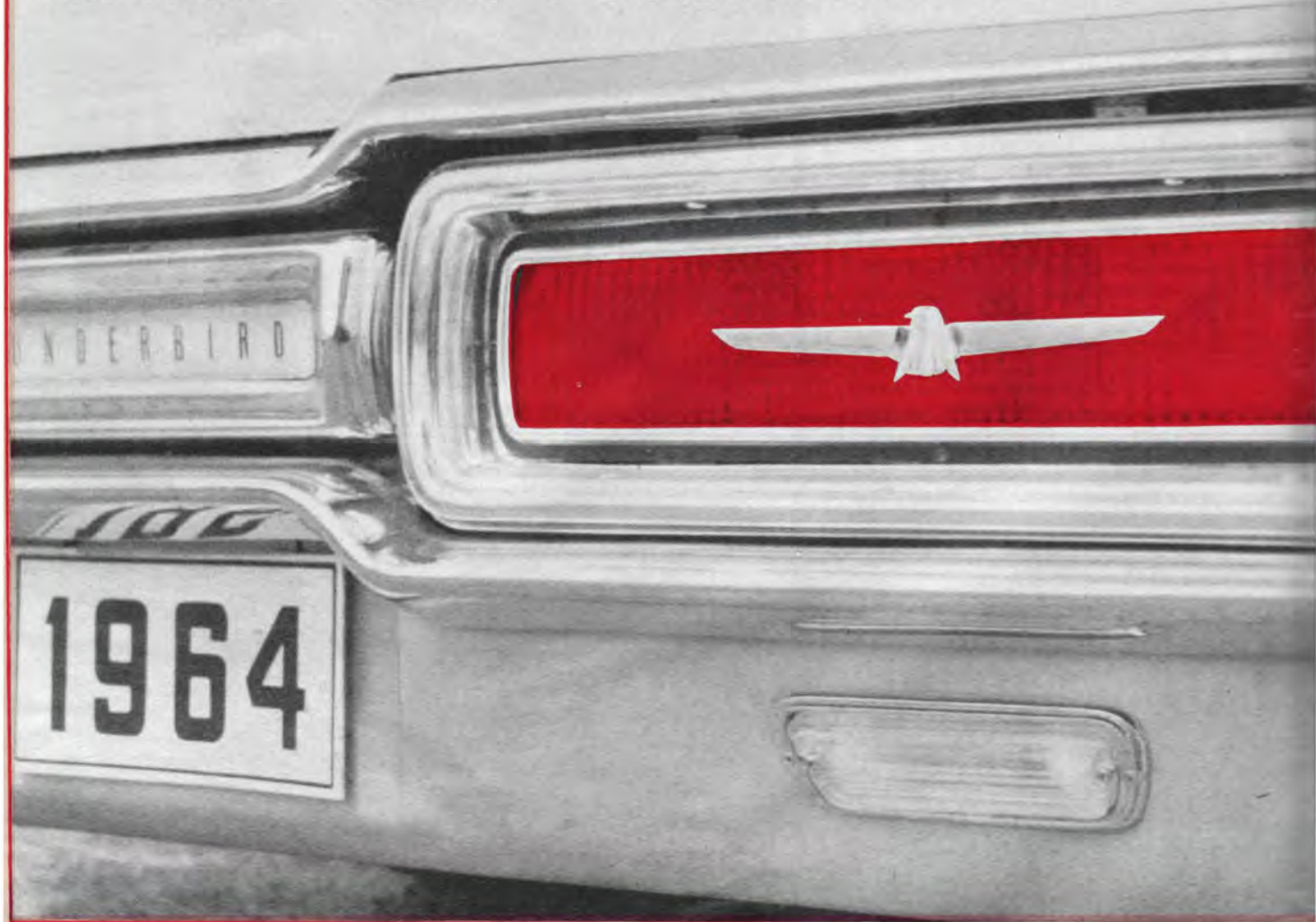
by a console lever, allows the interior air to be exhausted into the slipstream. Opening the front cowl vent (which opens into a high-pressure area of the car's surface) allows outside air to enter the car while the rear vent lets it out. Presto! Excellent, noise-free, windows-up circulation. Ford is the first to use this system in the U.S., although European manufacturers have utilized it for several years.

The full glory of the Thunderbird shows best from the front seat, however, for it is here that the stylists, engineers and product planners have done their most dazzling work. The swing-away steering wheel, which started a

whole new trend in the option industry, is retained as standard equipment, but there is a new dash and console treatment more than faintly reminiscent of an airplane's cockpit.

Instruments are mounted in separate pods, a drum-type speedometer has progressively illuminated numerals and heavy padding is applied to dash and sun visors. The level of the console has been raised and the top padded so that it may be used for an armrest, and all heater/air conditioner, radio, ventilation, power window and cruise control levers, buttons and wheels are clustered on, or around, the console. Fascinating! It should keep boys of all ages

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occupied for a good many months. But where are the reclining seats for blastoff?

Look on the passenger's side—a new Thunderbird thin-shell bucket seat sits in normal, inanimate, bucket-seat attitude—work the proper levers and a headrest pops up while the seat reclines to full-snore position! (The pilot's side, however, adjusts back and forth only, in the usual manner.)

And there's an innovation in the

seatbelts, too. When not in use, they retract into a reel on the door side of the seat. Neat.

First of the "big" (non-compact) cars to utilize the low-profile type of tire made popular by sports car owners, the Thunderbird returns to 15-in. wheels and tires for '64. Although this gives more space for brake drums and cooling, there isn't an increase in the overall diameter of the tire because of the lower sidewalls. Same size as before, with a 381-sq. in. swept area, the 'Bird brakes feature ribbed, flared 11.09-in. drums and a self-adjustment system.

There have been

some strides in the Thunderbird's service department for '64, notably the extension of all lubrication intervals. Front wheel bearings need servicing at every 24,000 miles, the chassis at 100,000 miles, while the body is lubed for the life of the car. Oil and filter change recommendations remain at 6000 miles, however. An optional transistorized ignition system is said to increase plug and point life expectancy to beyond 48,000 miles, by shortening voltage rise time and increasing plug voltage.

Standing by as a faithful power team are the Thunderbird V-8 engine (390 cu. in., 300 bhp) and Cruise-O-Matic transmission. No other power options are offered, nor are they particularly needed. ■

Thunderbird

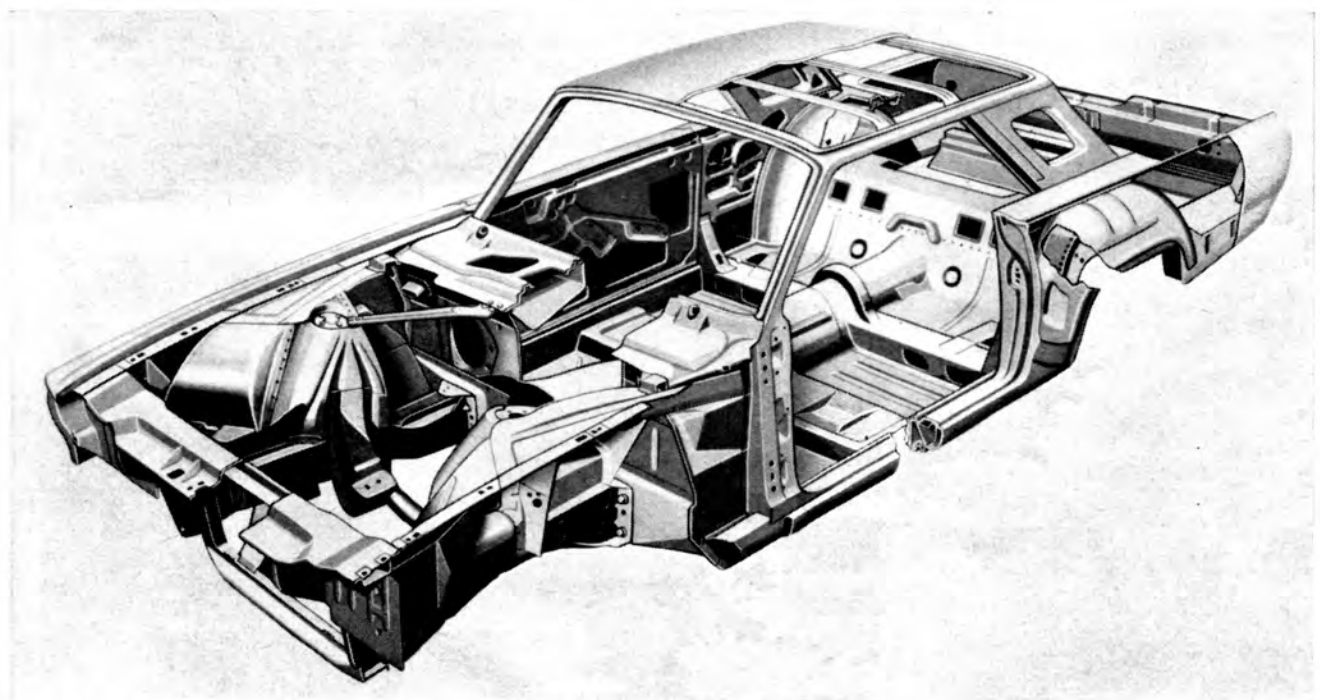


NOW YOU see it, now you don't! Door-side half of Thunderbird seat belts disappears when unhooked. An inertia reel next to the sill keeps things neat.

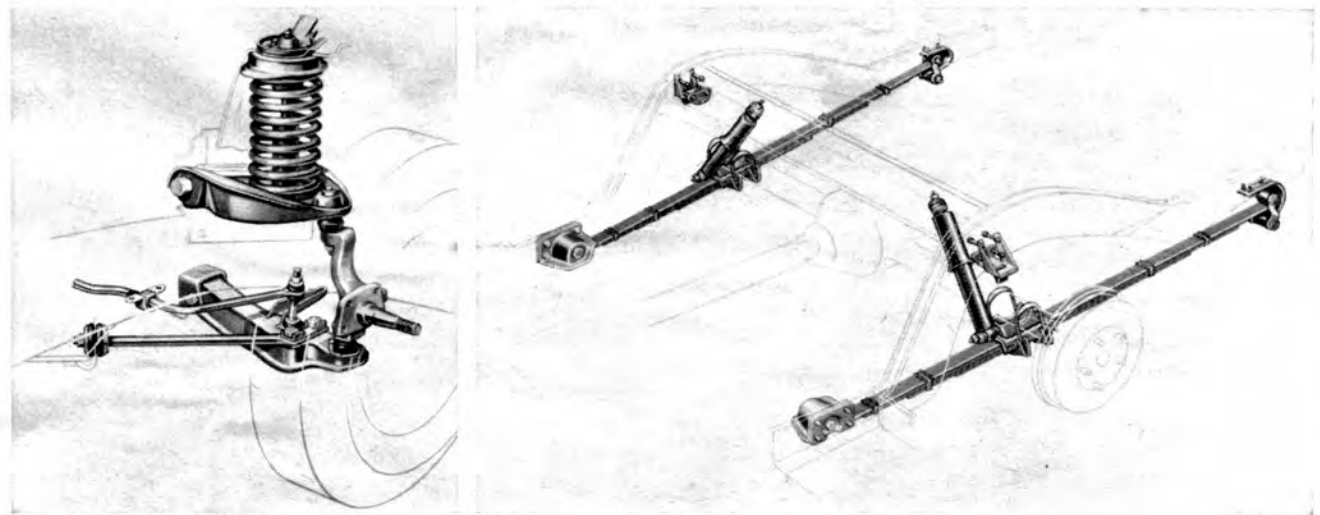


CONSOLE and controls for 'Bird's gadgets are awe-inspiring.

HEAD REST and reclining seat back on passenger's side are new features. Bucket seats both have new contours.



UNITIZED BODY of Thunderbird is deeply reinforced with double panels and strengthening ribs to form a strong single unit. **FRONT SUSPENSION** has stabilizing strut on lower arm; rear (right) springs have front eyes isolated by large rubber bushings.





1955 First models appeared in both convertible and hardtop form; had 292-cu. in. V-8 for power.



1956 Continental spare tire provided more luggage space. Optional hardtop also had "porthole" quarter windows.



1957 Longer rear deck enclosed spare tire; power was supplied by 212-bhp engine.



1958 First 4-passenger boasted larger, 352-cu. in. V-8, 300 bhp and unitized body.



1959 Retaining the same shapes and sheet metal, this 'Bird had an interesting option: the 430-cu. in. V-8 now in Lincoln.

Thunderbird

*There's no 'Bird like an old 'Bird
A brief review of those which flew before*

FEW CARS on the market today have such prestigious ancestry as do the current Thunderbirds. Although the line is only nine years old, it has achieved virtually a "classic" status for its early models and such a high rate of desirability for its newer ones that secondhand T-Birds fetch much higher prices on used car lots than do their contemporary sedans. There are, how-

ever, two lines of distinct preference among 'Bird fanciers: The Purists, who favor the 2-passenger version; and The Pragmatists, who point out the practicality of four seats, automatic transmission, power gadgets, *et al.* It's no secret that the 4-seater Thunderbird is by far the best seller; in its first year in that configuration (1958) it outsold the total of the two previous 2-seaters.



1960 Another new grille, more side trim changes marked this year. The convertible top completely disappeared under the deck.

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1962 Sports Roadster model was offered, included fiberglass tonneau cover, chromed wire wheels on convertible body.



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