



# The Motor Mouth

HO! HO! HO!

It Was a Holly Jolly Christmas Party



Ladies in Red -- from left, Linda Birch, Sharon Stoner, Charline Austin and Judy Roupe

## Christmas party carols, PSEB-style

*Oh little town of Indianola, how still we see thee lie. Above thy deep and dreamless streets, the silent stars go by . . .* This year's gala Christmas party was held in the town community center of the charming little seaside village of Indianola, courtesy of our hosts, Duane and Nancy Niemi. It offered a wonderful country setting as we drove our Brand X "horses" through woods dark and deep on a frosty evening. Through the windows of the center, the warm lights brightened the way to the door, and the music invited us in.

*Don we now our red apparel, fa la la la la, la la la la . . .* It was the Red Sea – or a sea of red inside the center. There were red vests, red sweaters, red shirts, red Santa hats, and some red cheeks, either

from the frosty air outside, or from the warm libations inside. More than half the PSEB partygoers were decked out in red.

*Deck the hall with boughs of holly, fa la la la la, la la, la la. 'Tis the season to be jolly . . .* The center was beautifully trimmed with holiday decorations and boughs not only of holly, but fir and cedar and pine, and a Christmas tree. Tables were perfectly dressed with Margaret Vingo's festive candle centerpieces. The decorations shared the limelight

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**Pizza Party  
and  
Annual  
Planning  
Meeting  
Saturday, Jan. 9  
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for details.**

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## FROM OUR PRESIDENT

*Happy New Year everyone!*

This is my first president's message to you, and I hope you all had a happy and joyous holiday season.

The year 2009 turned out to be a great one for all the T-Birders with a good variety of things to do. From the 29 members who attended our Christmas Event, we had many good comments on the food as well as the facility. A good time was had by all.

As we look forward to this year, the new board has met, and with input from the membership from



our November meeting, we will propose a slate of events for 2010 in January.

We are looking for any additional input that might add to our friendly, social, special group of "Early Bird Members." We hope to see many of you at our home on Jan. 9. (See page 6 for details.)

*-- Duane Niemi, President.*

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### THE MOTOR MOUTH

**Vol. 17, No. 1 -- January 2010**

Gold Medallion-winning publication of the Puget Sound Early Birds, chapter 81 of Classic Thunderbird Club International.

**Members are encouraged to submit articles written by themselves or others. All submissions are subject to editing and space available.**

**Deadline:** 20th of the preceding month

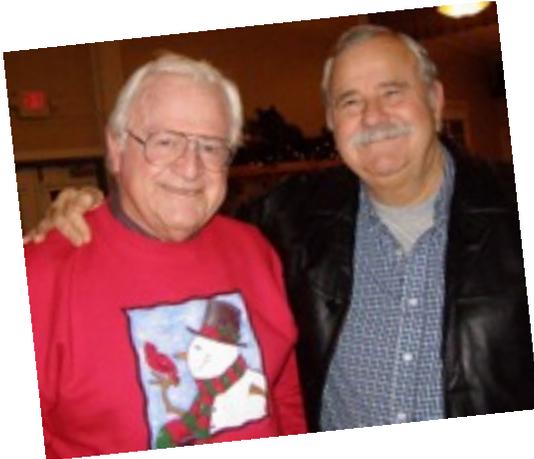
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**Our Mission:** To encourage and promote the preservation, admiration, ownership, enjoyment and restoration of the 1955, 1956 and 1957 Ford Thunderbirds.

**Web site:**  
[www.pugetsoundearlybirds.org](http://www.pugetsoundearlybirds.org)



*(Continued from page 1)*



with tables of goodies – one table of anti-freeze in different flavors, plus appetizers and another large one with all kinds of main courses and side dishes. In the kitchen, several dedicated PSEB ladies sliced, diced, chopped, peeled, grated, carved and baked. Meanwhile. . .



single gentleman – or gentle lady, seemed dismayed.



***I saw ladies bugging Santa Claus, underneath no mistletoe last night . . .***



With or without the mistletoe  
One be-whiskered gent named Ted,  
Hugged every lady in sight  
Even before we were fed!  
Air kisses, hugs and handshakes  
Were done all around --  
Then it was time to grab a plate,  
Load up and chow down.



***God rest ye merry, gentlemen let nothing you dismay . . .*** The ladies who were not in the kitchen joined the resting and socializing gentlemen as they sampled libations, nibbled on hors d'oeuvres and chatted with one another in ever-shifting groups. New members were introduced around, and not a





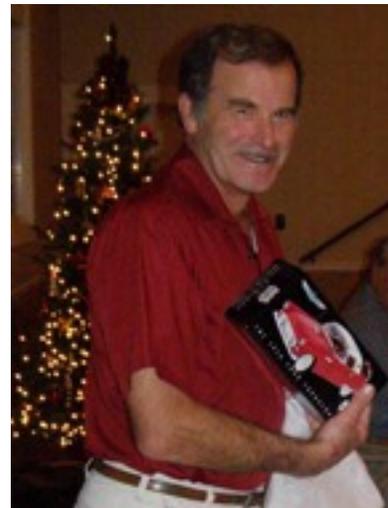
***We 29 folk, of PSEB are, bearing gifts, we traverse afar . . .***

After dinner and absolutely yummy desserts, Prez Ray honked his aoooha horn to let us know that the famous gift exchange would begin as soon as we all drew our numbers. We had each

brought a gift labeled for man or woman to exchange, in addition to the gifts we brought for the wonderful Toys For Tots program the Marines organize for children.

***On the fifth day of Christmas, somebody grabbed from me . . .*** Although the gift exchange started out with unusual calm and decorum, as we got closer to the end of the gifts, more and more people started walking around from table to table,

eyeballing the gifts already chosen, then swiping a gift from someone else instead of picking one from the stage. Some gifts were swiped the limit of two times, to the consternation of those whose gifts had been lifted. Twice Tanya



Johnson had a bottle of wine taken away, only to go and pick another gift of - a bottle of wine. But in the end, everyone came away with a fun gift.





Tanya presented some exciting new PSEB logo clothes that will be available in 2010, and Grinch Gordon reminded everyone that 2010 dues are due from those who had not yet paid.

Sharing the evening warmth, food, fun and laughter were Ted and Charline Austin, Thom and Joni Bayler, Barry and Linda Birch, Bob and Martha Callard, Pat and Beverly Cooper, Tom and Susan Harris, Ed and Tanya Johnson, Cheryl McCurdy (Phil was feeling poorly, and we missed him), Duane and Nancy Niemi, Der and Judy Roupe, Forest and Sharon Stoner, Mike and Sandi Talbot, Gordon and Judy Thorne, Ray and Margaret Vingo, and Jerry and Carol Weiler.

***Oh giving brings comfort and joy, comfort and joy...*** And in the true spirit of Christmas, generous PSEB folks donated more than 30 toys and \$170 to the Marines to brighten the holidays for poor and needy children.

Huge holiday thanks to Duane and Nancy for lining up the community center, organizing the meal and making us feel so welcome – it was an evening to long be remembered.

***And may God bless us, everyone.***

**-- Story and photos by Gordon Thorne**



*Many, many thanks to our Christmas party hosts, Duane and Nancy Niemi, and to Ray and Margaret Vingo who assisted with setup and table decorations. You made this holiday gathering one to remember!*

# ***THE ROAD AHEAD 2010***

*will be decided after generous servings of*



*and appropriate beverages, salads and other goodies.*

## ***Pizza Party and Annual Event Planning Meeting***

***Saturday, January 9, 1 p.m.***

*for lunch with planning session to follow.*

**Hosted by Duane and Nancy Niemi, 22429 S. Kingston Rd. N.E., Indianola**

**Directions from Edmonds Ferry:** Depart ferry and turn left at **Iowa (second street -- parking lot for restaurant on left)**. Go straight across the main road (one way). Follow W. Kingston Rd. N.E. (Niemis' road) to **stop sign and turn left** down the hill. At the **four-way stop, turn left**. There will be a sign for Indianola and White Horse is straight ahead. Drive past four homes on your right, then drop down a hill with very few trees. When you get down the hill back into tall trees, these are Niemi trees. **Turn right into the first driveway (22429)**. Look for Niemi on newspaper post.

**Directions from Bainbridge/Winslow Ferry** (about 25 minutes to Indianola): Depart ferry and go straight over a bridge and past a large casino on the left. **Turn right at the first light** (there will be a sign for Suquamish Rd. and Indianola). Follow speed-limit signs; this is an Indian reservation. Follow the road as it makes a 90-

degree turn and becomes Miller Bay Rd. Pass a traffic light at Gunderson Rd. **At the next light, turn right onto Indianola Rd.** Watch for a 20 MPH sign and prepare to make a sharp **left turn onto S. Kingston Rd. N.W.** (Niemis' road). Drive one mile and **turn left at the first driveway (22429)** past Dewberry Rd. Look for Niemi on newspaper post.

**Directions from North or South Hwy. 3:** Take the Poulsbo exit. At the bottom of the exit from North, turn left, or from South, turn right and proceed to second traffic light. **Turn left on Bond Rd. Turn right on Gunderson Rd., then left on Miller Bay Rd.** Take the **first right to Indianola Rd., then turn left at S. Kingston Rd.** (Niemis' road). Drive one mile and **turn left at the first driveway (22439)** past Dewberry Rd. Look for Niemi on newspaper post.



## And speaking of food. . .

This Christmas Party meal was unique. While members provided the food, there was a set menu and we each brought assigned dishes -- except for desserts! The plan made for a cohesive meal -- a potluck without any surprises -- and we had a delicious meal. Here are the requested recipes.



### **Layered Toffee Cake/serves 12-14**

- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 cup caramel or butterscotch ice-cream topping
- 1/2 t vanilla extract
- 1 prepared angel food cake (16 ounces)
- 9 Heath candy bars (1.4 ounces each) chopped (I also have used Hershey's English toffee bits found in the baking section with the chocolate chips.)

In a mixing bowl, beat cream just until it begins to thicken. Gradually add the ice cream topping and vanilla, beating until soft peaks form. Cut cake horizontally into three layers (use serrated knife; electric knife works best). Place bottom layer on a serving plate; spread with 1 cup cream mixture and sprinkle with 1/2 cup chopped candy bars. Repeat for second (middle) layer. Place top layer on cake; frost top and sides with remaining mixture and sprinkle with the remaining chopped candy bars. Store in the refrigerator. Yield: 12-14 servings. I often make this the night before -- it needs several hours of refrigeration before serving.

-- **Charline Austin**

### **Chicken Stuffing Casserole/serves 8-10**

1 package stuffing mix prepared according to directions. (I prefer Franz's package of seasoned stuffing mix or a similar one and follow the directions for the onion/celery dressing. If you use Stove Top, you probably will need to use more than one box. It is a little thin in coverage with just one.)

Spray a 9 x 13 glass pan with cooking spray and place 1/4 of the stuffing mix in the bottom. Set aside.

Saute: 2 chopped celery stalks and 1/3 cup chopped onion in 2 T. butter. Set Aside.

2 cups cooked chicken diced into fairly large pieces.

Mix:

- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/3 cup milk

Add the cooked vegetables and chicken pieces to the soup mixture. Spread this mixture on the stuffing and top with the remaining stuffing. Bake at 350 degrees uncovered for about 45 minutes, until bubbly.

-- **Judy Roupe**

### **Cranberry Mold**

- 1 20-ounce can crushed pineapple and juice
- 1 6-ounce package strawberry or raspberry Jello
- 1 cup water
- 1 16-ounce can whole berry cranberry sauce
- 3 T lemon juice
- 1 t nutmeg
- 2 cups sour cream
- Optional: chopped pecans or celery

Drain pineapple, reserving juice. Combine pineapple juice, Jello, and water in a large saucepan. Heat to boiling and stir to dissolve Jello. Remove pan from heat and stir in cranberry sauce, lemon juice and nutmeg. Chill in refrigerator until slightly thickened. Blend in sour cream, pineapple and pecans. Pour into a 2-quart mold and chill until set.

[www.justberryrecipes.com/cranberry/cran0040.shtml](http://www.justberryrecipes.com/cranberry/cran0040.shtml)

-- **Cheryl McCurdy**



**Have you paid your 2010 dues?**

Members who haven't paid can bring this form with a check to the Pizza Planning Party on Saturday at the Niemis'. See page 6 for details.

**2010  
Puget Sound Early Birds  
Membership Renewal  
(please print)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday (month/day) \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday (month/day) \_\_\_\_\_

Anniversary (month/day/year) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_  
(street) (city) (state) (zip)

Phone numbers: home ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ cells( ) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address(es) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thunderbirds owned:  
 1955 \_\_\_ Serial number(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 1956 \_\_\_ Serial number(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 1957 \_\_\_ Serial number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

CTCI membership number \_\_\_\_\_ Other T-Bird clubs affiliations? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be willing to suggest and/or host a monthly event? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what month/event? \_\_\_\_\_

What activities, events or committees interest you the most?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**PSEB dues are \$25 per couple per year, payable on or before Jan. 1.**

Please send this form, plus your check for \$25 made out to Puget Sound Early Birds, to:

**PSEB  
 c/o Gordon Thorne  
 13033 Pt. Richmond Beach Rd NW  
 Gig Harbor, WA 98332**



## It's a car! It's a boat! It's the amazing Amphicar!

If you ask an Amphicar owner what is the most difficult part about driving one of these land/sea vehicles, they will probably tell you that it's answering the number of questions they get whenever they take it out for a spin.

Here are the most-asked questions and answers:

### **Who made the Amphicar?**

It was designed and built in Germany based on amphibious prototypes developed by Hanns Trippel. A company called Amphicar Corp. of America was created to market the Amphicar, which was assembled in plants in Lübeck and later Berlin by Industrie-Werke Karlsruhe AG (IWK). There were connections with some other German manufacturers such as Borgward, Mercedes and BMW, and the engine came from Triumph in the UK. The plans were that Amphicar would be a new manufacturer and would produce about 20,000 cars a year for the North American market.

**What years were the Amphicar in production?** It was built from 1961 to 1968. Total production was 3,878 vehicles; 3,046 were imported into the U.S. in 1961-67.

**Why did they stop making the Amphicar?** When new, the car sold for between \$2,800 and \$3,300, which was pretty expensive at the time. But more importantly, in 1968 new U.S. EPA and DOT regulations went into effect that prevented the Amphicar from being imported. With the U.S. representing 90 percent of Amphicar's business, the company shut down.

### **Were there different models**

**produced?** Most Amphicars were pretty much the same. They were all convertibles and called "Model 770" due to its top speed of 7 knots on water and 70 mph on land powered by a four-cylinder Triumph Herald motor that was placed in the rear of the vehicle. The electrics were basically a Lucas 12-volt



positive ground system with certain items such as the horn, lighting and switches made by other manufacturers. An Amphicar could be purchased in just four colors: Beach White, Regatta Red, Lagoon Blue and Fjord Green (Aqua). A special two-part land-and-water transmission built by Hermes (makers of the Porsche transmission) allows the four wheels and twin nylon propellers to be operated either independently or simultaneously. The "land" transmission is a four-speed-plus-reverse unit similar to those found in the old Volkswagen Beetles. The "water" transmission is a two-speed offering unique to the Amphicar featuring single forward and reverse gears. In the water, the front wheels act as rudders.

**How does it stay afloat and not leak?** The hull is made of steel, just as most regular vehicles. How-

ever, the steel is much thicker and great care was given to the assembly and to the joints to keep them leak proof. The two doors have rubber seals around their edges that press against seals on the door frames when the doors are shut, forming a watertight seal. There is even a second door handle inside

that sort of pulls the door a little bit tighter shut. Like other boats, the Amphicar has the required maritime equipment: water navigation lights and an electric bilge pump to expel any water that may splash or leak aboard.

### **If they are made of metal, won't they rust?**

The hull is painted with marine-grade paint to inhibit rust and minimize friction in the water.

### **What kind of gas**

**mileage do they get?** On land they can get 35 mpg or more and on water they use about 1 to 1.5 gallons per hour.

**Can you still get parts for the Amphicar?** Yes. When the Amphicar factory in Berlin closed for good in 1968, the remaining inventory of unused parts was eventually purchased by Hugh Gordon of Santa Fe Springs, Calif. Hugh's [Gordon Imports](http://www.GordonImports.com) remains the Amphicar owner's chief source for spare parts.

**How many are still on the road?** There are about 700 Amphicars estimated to still be in some kind of drivable condition, which is really a testament to how wonderfully they were designed and how much they are adored and cared for by their owners. --ex-

cerpted from [www.About.com/classic\\_cars](http://www.About.com/classic_cars)



## ***Random Meetings Among T-Bird Nuts Happstance or Extraterrestrial Intervention?***

**By Jim Stott**

Often, we travel on different paths that cross at random moments and locations. Last summer in the little fishing village of Gig Harbor, downtown merchants put on a '50s Rock & Roll bash. As I trolled around the harbor, I noticed a 1957 T-Bird, red in color and strong in beauty. As I spent a fair amount of time hanging around this particular classic, I came to meet her owners, Gordon and Judy Thorne. Gordon was very cordial and informative about T-Birds. At one point in our conversation, I mentioned, "... if you ever hear about a '55, '56 or '57 T-Bird with a stick shift that's in good condition, please let me know..."

**I attended Hollywood High School** where kids of rich parents drove brand new T-Birds. (By comparison, I drove a Robin's Egg Blue '39 Studebaker Champion 2-door coupe.) In addition, my dad owned a '56 Thunderbird. From those early T-Bird exposures, I had been on a low-level hunt for a '55, '56 or '57 Bird for more than 50 years. That was the context in which Gordon and I found ourselves having these phone and e-mail conversations.

For a couple of e-mails, Gordon tried to recruit me for PSEB and CTCI membership. Then he called me and as I recall, said, "I don't know if you'd be interested, but I just saw an ad from the Gold Coast club. There's a doctor there who's selling a '56 T-Bird with a manual transmission on behalf of a widow." He concluded with, "I don't know if this would be of interest, but here's the doctor's phone number."

I called the good doctor to see what was what. In my several conversations with Dr. Braff, he told me about the car and that he was acting as a broker/agent for the widow. It became clear that this was a very unusual T-Bird. The car had 53,200 miles on it, and I would be just the second owner. The widow's husband bought the car new in 1956 in



California and drove it until 1974. At that time, he put the T-Bird, (dare I say *my* T-bird?) in his garage and built a plywood enclosure around the entire car. There it sat for 35 years!

At about the same time, Gordon and I realized we had other things in common --- PSEB member Les White, a docent at the LeMay Automobile Museum in Spanaway, was my mentor when I went through docent training -- but neither of us knew of the other's interest in T-Birds. Gordon called Les and Les called me and was very helpful. When stars align, everything eases. From my perspective, this entire '56 T-Bird extravaganza could not have been a series of random chances... too many coincidences. This had to be Kismet.

**This clearly is a PSEB/CTCI version** of the mythical "barn find." Phone calls with the doctor, Gordon and Les graduated to flights from SEA to BUR or LAX on frequent pilgrimages to see the raven beauty. Dr. Braff kept telling me the car was not perfect but was all original. As Forrest Gump said, "Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." Through these visits, however, I reached a much better understanding of what I was "gonna get."



We found that nothing on the car had been touched since 1974. We didn't know if the engine had seized, if the three-speed transmission with overdrive was serviceable, what parts were operable and which parts were either missing or broken beyond repair.



During several summer months, the doctor and I determined the basic car was in very good-to-excellent condition. I contracted with a well-known engine rebuilder in California who completely rebuilt her 292 cid engine. During the rebuild, we found no taper or obvious signs of abuse or unusual wear within the engine – very good news! We replaced brakes and many mechanical parts. The doctor, who's been rebuilding autos for more than 40 years, was helpful in his advice and connections in the classic/vintage car restoration universe.

The original owner, a mechanical engineer, had ordered the car from the local Southern California Ford dealer as a complete "delete" car. That meant no power steering, no power brakes, no power seats, no power windows, no radio, no w/w tires or dress-up kits of any kind.

But the beauty of this particular T-Bird is that it is all original . . . paint, upholstery, wheels, etc. Be-

ing original, everything is marked with the infamous FoMoCo logo. The bad news is that anything that was once pliable, malleable or flexible has taken a permanent set, one example being the original '56 FoMoCo fan belt that was now formed into a permanent triangle. The rubber cuff in the engine harmonic balancer had turned to granite. So this "barn-



find" T-Bird owner is happily going about replacing all manner of things rubber or silicone.

In late September, it looked like we were going to fire up the engine and drive the car onto a commercial car carrier for transport to Gig Harbor. As was previously reported, I flew to Southern California and with my daughter, drove to Ventura. But we were thwarted by engine-starting problems. I took a long, said, unfulfilled flight back to Seattle.

A month later, I returned to California where miracles of miracles, she started and the doctor and I went for a drive. I was satisfied! Currency (cash and food stamps) crossed hands and I was now the official owner of my Raven black beauty – a consummate 1956 Thunderbird! The search was finally over.

## Final PSEB 2009 results:



30-plus toys  
\$170 in cash donations



### Birthdays

- 28 Tanya Johnson
- 29 Margaret Vingo

### Anniversaries

- 1 Brown and Sara Maloney
- 23 Duane and Nancy Niemi



## NEW PSEB LOGO CLOTHING IS COMING

At the Christmas party, our Official Wardrober, Tanya Johnson, presented some new and returning items of PSEB clothing that will enhance any T-Bird experience, whether it's a one-day drive in the country or a three-day overnight T-Bird tour.

Here's your chance to purchase our own popular T-Bird turquoise short-sleeved polo shirt, a new turquoise crew-neck sweatshirt, a navy with gray fleece jacket and a brushed-denim billed hat. ALL with PSEB's own logo.

Watch for pricing details and order form in the February Motor Mouth -- there are quantity minimums, and this will be your only chance to order this year, so plan to build your PSEB wardrobe now!

