

# NUTS & BOLTS

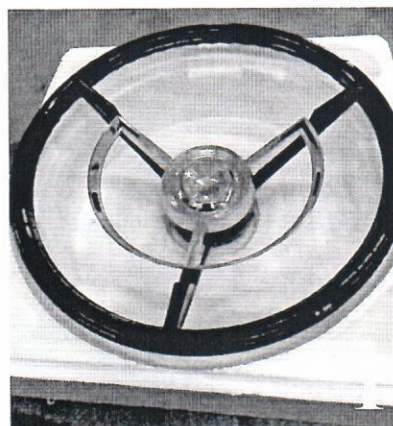
By Gil Baumgartner



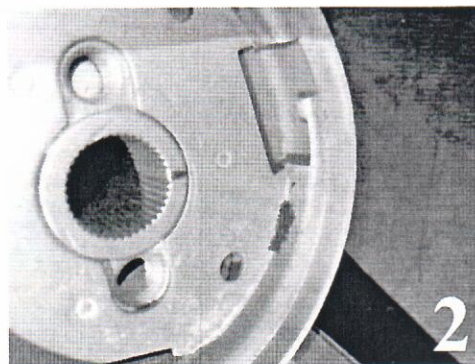
Installing the  
Smaller Steering Wheel  
on 1956/57 Thunderbirds

In recent years, a smaller steering wheel (15" dia.) with horn ring has been produced for 1956 and 1957 model, they are available from Thunderbird Parts dealers. They come in one color (black) and must be painted to match the interior color of the car if desired.

The first photo shows one of the new smaller dia. wheels with the horn ring attached in its shipping container. Removal of the horn ring before the wheel is installed on the vehicle can be enhanced by a second person to steady the wheel while pushing down and turning the ring counterclockwise to remove the ring. Once the wheel is installed on the vehicle more down force can be applied to the ring while turning counterclockwise for easy removal.



The second photo is an original wheel showing the alignment splines. The new smaller dia. wheel does not have the wider alignment spline which makes it slightly more difficult to properly install. The spline on the steering shaft in the steering column must be at the top center of the shaft with the front wheels pointing straight ahead and the front suspension properly aligned before attempting to install the new wheel. In most cases the front suspension alignment will not be a problem because the new wheel is being installed on a road worthy vehicle and the front suspension is already properly aligned.



The third photo shows one of the smaller wheels properly installed, the smooth outer part of the wheel is evenly spaced at the top and the lower spook points straight down. The smaller steering wheel does not have an alignment spline as shown in photo #2. To properly install the new wheel, make sure the front wheels/tires are pointing straight ahead. Remove the old steering wheel, the steering shaft alignment spline should be at the top center of the steering shaft when the front wheels and tires are pointing straight forward. Position the new wheel on the shaft with the lower center spoke pointing straight down and the smooth outer portion of the wheel at the top, now push the wheel on as far as possible. Place a socket or short pipe over and around the top of the steering shaft contacting the steering wheel only. Tap the pipe or socket until the wheel is down on the shaft far enough for the wheel retainer nut to be tightened without stripping the steering shaft threads. **Caution do not use excessive hammer force when tapping the wheel onto the steering shaft.** Next tighten the nut until the wheel is completely installed.

