The story of a classic

In many ways the story of the Thunderbird is one of the most unusual in the automobile business. The whole idea of the car was born at one of the great European automobile shows. The then president of our company pointed to some of the small, fairly luxurious car that are always a center of attention at such shows and asked his companion, "Why can’t we build something like those?"

The Thunderbird became one of the few cars ever built that produced essentially as the original sketches presented it. Most cars undergo countless changes in the design period. But there was a natural clarity and cleanliness to the Thunderbird design that immediately captured all of us at Ford.

It was probably this clean, sharp look that won so many friends so fast when the car went into production. That first Thunderbird had its drawbacks. For many friends so fast when the car went into production, the Thunderbird was a classic.

We built the Thunderbird as a bellwether car for Ford. It was our intention to test new ideas before we put them into our Fords, Fairlanes and Falcons. The new Ford ride and Swing-Away steering wheel appeared first on the Thunderbird, for instance. However, we never thought the extraordinary influence Thunderbird would have on the whole automobile business here and abroad. Almost everybody offers the Thunderbird bucket seats these days. And the Thunderbird book is the most aggressive styling of the 60s.

The Thunderbird is a classic, made so by a peculiar blend of magic ingredients of which we would love to keep the secret. We’re building cars right now in which we hope will become classics, but the truth is, we don’t make classics, we make cars. People make the car a classic. And that’s the story of the Thunderbird.

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