

## My First CTCI Convention

By Jim Sweet

Accompanied by my son, Jay, I attended my first CTCI Thunderbird Convention. Yup - the one in sunny San Diego, California. Not brave enough to drive my '57 Thunderbird that distance we flew down on the Alaska-bird.

Arriving at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, the convention registration table was severely shorthanded – only one lady trying to do it all. We did eventually get registered, received our goodie bag and assorted event tickets. So far as I know we only missed one thing: signing up for a table for Saturday's Awards Banquet. Fortunately, on the big night, a couple of unspoken for seats were found for us, so all was well.

It was a real treat to stroll through the flock of some 146 Thunderbirds on display in the



parking lot. As many of the prized vehicles were hiding under protective covers, we made that stroll a couple of times over the following days to try to see them all. I've since learned there were 85 Thunderbirds on site for Concours and Touring class



judging. The others were registered for display only.

During the Awards Banquet, John Sailors was presented with the prestigious Paul Hudgins Memorial Award. This award for "Outstanding Contribution to the Classic Thunderbird Club International was established in 1986." John joins the 2010 recipients, RCT members Dave and Barbara Van Winkle, as Paul Hudgins honorees.

Speaking of awards, Rose City Thunderbirds' own Roger and Ruth Kelley were awarded 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Expanded Touring Class for their beautiful 1956 Thunderbird. I've heard their car wins big at every convention they attend, which I think is most of them...

The highlight of outside activities for Jay and me was the tour of the USS Midway Museum. We, and many other T-Birders, spent a fabulous and fascinating day touring the ship from stem to stern, from the engine room to the bridge utilizing the provided self-guided audio tour devices and headsets. As an old “key pounder” (Morse Code radio operator) one of the best parts for me was going through the communications center and seeing some of the same old equipment that I worked with back in my Coast Guard and, later, other government work days. The CTCI-arranged tour included a great lunch on the forward flight deck.



Jay and I also took in the Trolley Tour around town. We took a break at the Coronado stop for a walk on the beach. Jay commented, “A lot like Oregon beaches, except 20 degrees warmer.” We had lunch at McP’s Irish Pub, which just happened to be where the next trolley would pick us up.

Jerry and Sharron Sharp were kind enough to let us tag along to the Corvette Diner for the promoted gathering of Corvettes and Thunderbirds. Lots of T-Birds showed up, but we only saw a couple of Vettes. The restaurant was totally packed, and very loud! So we four opted to go to another nearby restaurant where we enjoyed a very nice dinner.

On our final day we again hitched a ride with Jerry and Sharron, this time to Balboa Park where we toured the Automotive Museum and the Air and Space Museum. While smaller than expected, the Automotive Museum did have lots of great cars. They had a special exhibition of Show cars: Cars from movies and television. In addition to many interesting aircraft and space related items, The Air and Space Museum had a special Da Vinci exhibit, which was quite remarkable.

As advertised, the San Diego CTCI Convention was “Fun, Fun, Fun, in the California Sun!!”