

# JOHN F. KENNEDY'S CARS

7 YEARS AGO • NEWS

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[Presidential Limo](#)

In today's polarized political environment, normally talk of a particular politician is likely to illicit strong emotions of whether or not you shared their viewpoint. In certain occasions though, we can put aside popular opinions and speculations to focus on something all readers of the TBird Club Newsletter can agree on – we all have a “thing” for cars, especially Fords, especially TBirds.

John F Kennedy was no different. Like most red-blooded American males, he appreciated big, shiny, powerful automobiles. This is proven in the vehicles that he chose. John Fitzgerald Kennedy loved [Fords](#) and [Lincolns](#). The fact that he appointed a [Ford](#) executive, [Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense](#) shortly after his election in 1963, seems to indicate that he must have found something particularly sound about their construction.

## 1961 Ford Thunderbird Convertible



JFK's 1961 Ford Thunderbird

The president owned a [1961 Ford Thunderbird](#) convertible. The 1961 model of the Thunderbird was the first in the product line's third generation run. The 1961 T-Bird featured a redesigned body which was much sharper in the front; appearing from the side view to come to a sharp point at the front bumper. The car was nicknamed the "bullet car" because of its pointed design. The "61 model was available with several innovative accessories, including the [swing-away steering wheel](#) and floating rearview mirror. The swing away steering wheel pivoted eighteen-inches to the driver's right, when the vehicle was placed in park, allowing for easy entry and exit from the driver's seat. The floating rearview mirror (standard on most modern vehicles) was first found on this model of the Thunderbird. It was equipped with a powerful 6.4-liter FE Series V-8 engine, which produced 300-horsepower, and a Cruise-O-Matic three-speed automatic transmission. Standard features on the "61 model, such as power steering, bucket seats, reverse lights, and power brakes, were available as extra cost options on most other cars of the day. This model of T-Bird was not only the car which JFK selected; it was also the pace car for the 1961 [Indianapolis 500 race](#). The President's car was [Corinthian White](#) in color.

### **1963 Ford Thunderbird Hardtop**



1963 Ford Thunderbird

The [Sandshell Beige Metallic '63 Thunderbird](#) is thought to be the last vehicle which [President Kennedy](#) actually drove before his assassination in November of 1963. Similarities to the 1961 model are many, but there were a few differences. The '63 models were offered with vacuum assisted door locks, AM/FM radio, and a remotely operated driver sideview mirror. An alternator, instead of a generator, was also standard fare for the 1963 model as was the "Y" engine option. The "Y" code engine was the same 6.4-liter V-8 with a tri-power carb arrangement, which was available only with optional air-conditioning equipped cars. The actual car that the president drove has been recently restored and the owner has plans to sell the vehicle at auction, a minimum bid of \$1 million has been reported.

### **1963 Lincoln Continental Convertible**



1963 Lincoln Continental Convertible

While the President did not actually own this particular Lincoln, it was used to transport him and his wife [Jacqueline](#) along with [Texas Governor John Conally](#), in November of 1963. [Bill Golightly, of Golightly Auto Sales](#), loaned the stunning Sultana White convertible to the trio for a short trip from the [Hotel Texas Ballroom in Fort Worth, Texas](#) to the airport for a flight to Dallas. The exterior of the car has been restored, by [Baker Restorations of Putnam, Connecticut](#), but the interior remains original. The '63

model, a fourth generation Continental, was equipped with a 7.0-liter engine and three-speed Turbo-Drive automatic transmission. Its “suicide” reverse opening rear doors were possibly the most distinguishing feature of the vehicle. The actual Continental was sold at [auction](#) in October, 2013 for \$318,000.