

EUREKA MOMENT WITH ENGINE COOLING

We live in Phoenix and have owned our '56 Thunderbird for nearly 14 years. Driving our T-Bird is frequently a struggle with overheating. Even driving in our Thanksgiving Day Parade that starts at 9:00 AM and only takes 20 minutes has been a challenge.

Three years ago, we had the engine rebuilt, and while inspecting the parts of the Y-block engine involved with coolant flow, i.e. water jacket, heads, water pump, etc., I observed an aspect of the water pump spacer that I had not seen, heard, or read about before, and I had sought out anything regarding the spacer because it is unique to the '55-'57 Thunderbirds. It only serves to move the water pump forward 1.1 inches to make the Y-block engine fit in the car.

In all other applications of the Y-block, the water pump mounts directly into the cylinder front cover (also known as the timing chain cover). This positions the water pump impeller to operate adjacent to the opening of the fluid path (referred to as a "volute" in fluid pump terminology). The volute is angled back into the cover at approximately 51 degrees and extends approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch beyond the opening. Figure 1 is an oblique view of the volute opening from slightly in front and to the right and well below the opening.

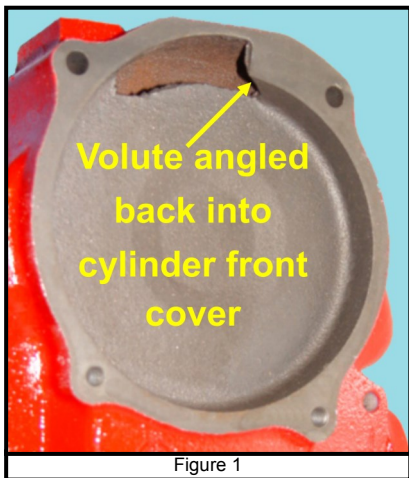


Figure 1

The factory Thunderbird water pump spacer is missing a design feature to extend the volute from the cylinder front cover to the front of the spacer. Without extending the volute, the impeller operates at 0.7 of an inch in front of the volute opening. Fluid departs the impeller vanes at 90 degrees to the helix offset in the internal surface of the spacer. Rather than channel the coolant, the spacer presents an ob-

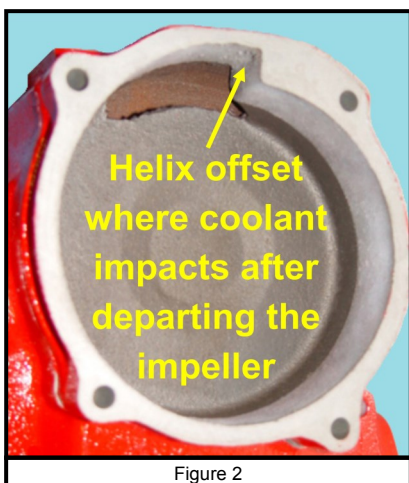


Figure 2

struction to flow that generates turbulence. Figure 2 is the same oblique view of the cylinder front cover with the spacer in place. This observation was clearly a *Eureka Moment* after 60 plus years of Thunderbird cooling issues.

The question then was; what is the most effective and elegant design change to address the problem? I lacked the knowledge of the theoretical considerations, so I enrolled in *Introduction to Thermal and Fluids Engineering* at Arizona State University. I have always enjoyed the challenge of education and training environments, but at times this course proved to be more "enjoyable" than I cared to experience. For the semester, Mrs. Ames' suggestions of a movie, or dinner out elicited responses of "I have Thermal homework," or "I have a test coming up in Thermal." But the course provided the knowledge I needed to develop viable design theories.

When I speak of elegance in design, I am setting goals of perfection in the various aspects of the project. For the spacer project, these were:

- An effective solution.
- Isolated to a minimum number of existing components, ideally one.
- Constrained to the least complex components, preferably non-moving, small, and accessible.
- Compatible with other existing changes, i.e. the "High Output" water pump.
- Acceptable as original for Concours judging.

From a practical perspective, I believe the effects of the design change on coolant flow must be measurable in the car as it was built by Ford Motor Company so I replaced our aluminum radiator with a standard radiator for all flow tests. Additionally, the measurement should be sensitive to the low end of the operating range but have a minimal parasitic effect on the measured flow. To that end, I acquired a 1½ inch Hedland EZ-View Flow Meter to come as close to the upper radiator hose diameter as possible without exceeding it. Figure 3 pictures the meter installation.

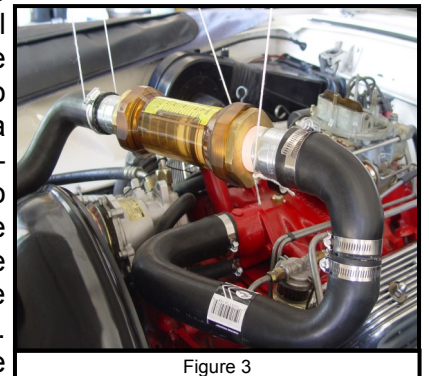


Figure 3

After hundreds of 3D CAD designs, nine plastic models, and three machined prototypes, a design I have branded the "A-432," provided the best improvement in coolant flow. This design includes an inte-

