

The reason that any of us take up Mustang restoration is a personal matter, but the mechanics of the restoration itself (based on my own experience with three) tends to follow a fairly set pattern. For my own use, like a pilot's checklist to avoid the unintentional lapse, I've devised an outline on purchase and restoration, which I can submit for membership comment another time.

This '66 hardtop was my first experience, and thus took longer and cost more money - a function of the learning curve and my own ignorance of what to look for. Fortunately, the interior was clean and the engine sound. But...the good things stopped there.

A (\*\*!xx\*\*) \$49 paint job, not one gauge working, intermittent lights, lots of Bondo-covered rust, leaks, leaks, leaks, and steering that made you believe you were in a 60-knot crosswind on a dead calm day.

The important things came first..totally new wiring and electrical system including the ignition components. A new cooling system, all new seals - front to rear, new ring and pinion, brakes, all new springs and shocks, and about \$120 worth of new front end parts in various arms and rods and bushings. The trunk and interior were then cleaned and restored while the engine compartment was detailed with the original colors and decals. And finally the body work.

A superlative locat paint shop was consulted several times, with competitive bids from 5 other firms. Interestingly enough, we even went to the \$49 shop and found they would only use Bondo and were \$168 higher than the quote we accepted. This part of the job took 2 weeks of cutting bad metal and replacing with good. It cost \$78 over estimate when we found rust covered by Bondo, but the results speak for themselves. Solid primer-coated metal with undercoating.

Confessions the pictures don't show: a Midas "lifetime guaranteed" muffler system (and a bit more exciting sound than Mr. Ford's stock); a modern, high-gloss acrylic paint, Ford color but not the original enamel; and, because they are the original fenders, not replacements, the gloss of the paint highlights even the smallest ripple to the critical eye.

Lessons learned: 1) Paint the car FIRST; both the engine and interior had to be completely re-done because of the dust inherent in any paint shop environment. 2) Sears has an amazing supply of early Mustang parts. 3) A subscription to "Hemmings" and membership to the Mustang Club of America are prerequisites.



The result of all this is a unique experience... it's the fun of driving a super responsive car; its gas milage on regular in the 20's; its looks wherever you go, its notes left under your wiper blade offering to buy; and its tune-ups and repairs that do not require a computer and three weeks of school. But it's also picking your parking spot and an extra bit of walking, and it's remembering that what you've worked on so hard is almost 12 years old, so maybe 55+ isn't too unreasonable after all.

Truly, it has been a lot of fun and we thank you and your magazine for adding to that pleasure.

We have two hardtops in the process or restoration which should be someday future candidates for Car of the Month.

Bill Conrad

Editor's Note: I would like to thank Bill Conrad for giving us the privilege of featuring his fine Mustang as this month's car of the month.