

# A MUST NUT & 1973

by Tony Edmondson

People were worried about the recession, the large deficit, record foreclosures, sky-rocketing health costs and the plight of the farmer. Sound like today?

Well, gas started out the year at 40¢ a gallon, but was starting to rise. By the summer vacation time 50¢ and higher was common and we entered the first "energy crisis." By the end of the year, the President asked gasoline station owners to cease selling gas on Sundays.

President Nixon announced the end of the war in Vietnam, and the first Watergate bugging trial was held. It was 1973.

The ads were proclaiming: "What makes Mustang different is the way it looks, handles, and makes you feel." And, "Driving a Mustang adds up to a statement of personal style. It feels great to you . . . it looks great to whoever's watching." Ah, but isn't it so! The dealer material announced: "The 1973 Ford Mustang is an experience in control and balance. That great satisfaction comes from Mustang's roadability. Roadability is how a car moves, stops, turns, rides and communicates with the pavement and with you. Mustang does it." They also stressed the continuation of a nine year tradition: "Almost a decade ago, Mustang was a car designed to be designed by you. It still is."

Government regulations were getting heavier, and the required impact absorbing bumpers were added to the Mustang. With urethane coating, color keyed to the exterior, they were standard on all '73 Mustang models.

Although the 1973 Mustang is remembered primarily as the last of its breed, it was unique in several areas. It is remembered as the last year for the convertibles (until 1983). It was the only Mustang up to that time that had made it to a 3rd year without a major styling change. The completely restyled body which had been introduced in 1971 was longer, wider, and heavier than ever before. It had the longer hood featuring concealed windshield

wipers, a thinner roof section, and flush door handles which were also a new addition. This new, larger body was designed with an engine compartment which could accommodate the new 429, but the rising gas prices that came with the emerging fuel crisis and government regulations doomed the "Fat Mustang" from the start.

As in the previous years there were basically three different body styles with variations to a total of five: hardtop, sportsroof, convertible, Grande, and Mach I. Currently the most prized of these is the convertible.

Even though other companies made convertibles after 1973, only one other pony car convertible was available that last year, first cousin Mercury Cougar.

Each year the production of convertibles had come down from a high of 101,945 in the 1964-65 year to 6,121 in 1971 and 6,401 in 1972. There was a jump to 11,853 in 1973 with it was announced that not only would it be the last convertible, but that the basic automobile was changing.

Many people feel that the 1973 convertible is one of the best looking cars ever made. However, at the time of its production, there seemed to be a lack of appreciation for convertibles and especially the 1971-72-73 style. Perhaps because of this lack of appreciation or maybe just because of the concentration on the previous models, there doesn't seem to be very many 1973's around today.

I am a self-proclaimed "Must Nut" and have been envious of those who owned these marvelous cars for years. I looked for that just right Mustang for years (just right being one that looked pretty good, that I could drive daily, and maybe most importantly one which I could afford).

Finally the second week of January, 1983, in the middle of an ice storm, I saw the ad: "1973 Red Mustang convertible, call . . ." After 2 days, I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to at least go see it. Like a lot of chauvinistic Mustangers, I really thought I would

prefer one of the earlier models.

Then I saw her. She was beautiful. Obviously well taken care of, one owner, and garaged. All big pluses in my mind. Luckily, I had a good friend, William, along to talk me out of purchasing her right there. We checked her out carefully and found the standard 1973 complaints, rust around the tail lights and cracked door panel skins. Other than these, she was fabulous. I made a ridiculously low offer and was turned down.

I went home and told my wife about her. After much discussion of the pros and cons, on January 27th, a deal was struck. It was like waking up from a great dream and finding it was real. I'm still walking on air after more than a year. Likely you've had a recurring daydream. Well, if you have had such a daydream and had it come true, then you will understand this feeling.

My little red "breeze wagon" began life in March, 1973, in Dearborn. She was special ordered through Patrick Ford in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The original owner received her on 3-21-73. Almost 10 years and 90,000 miles later she became mine.

I joined the Mustang Club of America in January, 1984, because it seemed to be just another step in the Must Nut progression. Since joining, I have attended shows all around the Southeast.

One thing that owning a classic Mustang and being in MCA does is make you want to show it. I showed my car that first winter at a little local Atlanta area show with no results except to find out what it really should look like. Restoration is going slowly; so far, a new tail light panel, new seat bottoms, and new door panel skins.

I am very proud of my little '73 and feel like there aren't enough articles about this year's model. Now that the 1971-72-73 Mustang has started to assume its rightful place as a much sought after collectible, I hope we will see more and more articles about them.

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