



8TH ANNUAL GULF COAST MUSTANG ROUND-UP: PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

by Brad Bowling

As a Mustang enthusiast I look forward to just about every show I go to but I was doubly excited about the Pensacola show (March 27 & 28). I had never been to one of the Gulf Coast's now-famous shows but there were plenty of older Mustangs around to raise my expectations. As show time drew near, I heard stories about bountiful fish fries, ideal show accommodations, and near-miraculous weather handling on the part of the show organizers.

It turns out that the stories are true.

The show officially started on Friday, for early registration. A well-organized group of club members (wearing two-way radio headsets!) directed cars to their spots once inside the spacious show site. There were a few newcomers like myself who found the almost non-stop rain and heavily overcast skies reasons for concern. The headset wearers didn't seem too upset about the weather. "It does this every year," one of the show veterans told me, "and every year, come show day, the sun will be shining."

Friday night, the rain stopped long enough for the Pensacola club to feed delicious, free, fish dinners to hundreds of Mustangers (although I suspect that some of those in line had snuck over from the Holiday Inn when the fish-frying smell wafted through the parking lot). The dinner alone was worth the trip and at that point it still looked bad for the show.

Saturday morning showed up sunny just as show coordinator Sonja Blackwood had confidently predicted ("Every year, people come down here in the rain, get sunburned on the day of the show, then drive home in the rain."). By the





time judging began, 170 cars were inside the roped-off show area and ready for appraisal. Due to the large number of Mustangs on hand, space was at a minimum.

Saturday night was awards night. Numerous door prizes were given out along with the trophy announcements. The standing-room-only crowd overflowed the large banquet room and everyone anxiously awaited the drawing for the Senior Division 1966 red fastback. As the winning card was drawn, everyone in the room, and many of those standing in the adjacent hallway, was prepared to run up on stage to receive the keys to the giveaway Mustang. When the winning name was announced, there was no screaming, no drama. A short but strong silence filled the room until everyone realized that the winner, a local Pensacolan, had won the car but had not even showed up for the drawing. Sales from the tickets benefitted the local Children's Hospital and Ronald McDonald House.

If you've never made it to one of the Gulf Coast Round-ups, you really should try to get to the 9th annual show next spring. Just remember to carry your suntan lotion for the day of the show and your umbrella for the day before and the day after.

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Spring 1987

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