

# In Search of Mustangs

Understanding the complex and twisted Mustang production puzzle.

by Jim Smart

Ever since Mustang Mania II took off about 12 years ago with the birth of MCA, literally thousands of questions have arisen from Mustangers the world over. Many of these questions regard correctness and originality, but by and in large quite a number of them pertain to where a given Mustang stands in production.

The most often asked question I receive from first time Mustangers with 1965 models is, "Is my Mustang a '64½ or '65?" Naturally, they're all titled as "1965" Mustangs. Ford never recognized these early production Mustangs as "1964½" models. As hobbyists, we find it easier to call them "1964½" models than "early 1965" models. This term comes as a result of our ability to shorten the English language. Mustangs are no exception to the rule.

Most of you are well aware of the many important dates in Mustang production if you've been around the hobby anytime at all. But I know there are some of you who haven't. With this in mind, I offer a refresher. Mustang production began on March 9, 1964, a Monday, at the Dearborn, Michigan assembly plant. That first Mustang was a Wimbledon White convertible, black interior, 260 two-barrel with a Cruise-O-Matic. The VIN was 5F08F-100001. Mustang Number One, as we stated in our last update, is currently on display at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn.

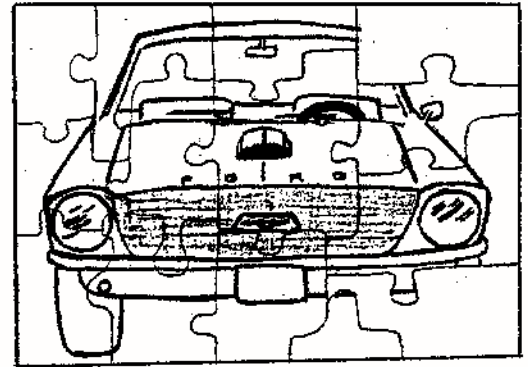
When Mustang Number One rolled off the Dearborn assembly line, it had plenty of company from one other Ford carline, *Fairlane*. Nineteen Sixty-Four Fairlanes began rolling off the Dearborn line in September of 1963. So Dearborn, Kansas City and San Jose were steadily assembling Fairlanes through the fall and winter of 1963-64. Dearborn shut down the first week in February of 1964 to tool up for Mustang and Fairlane production. Assembly was underway a month later on March 9th.

At first, production at Dearborn was slow, about 300 to 500 units a day for the first week or so. This information is based on what we have accumulated thus far since IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS began nine years ago. Fairlane production con-

tinued at Dearborn until mid-June of 1964 when it was suspended and added to Kansas City production. Just one month later at San Jose, Fairlane production ceased and was added to Kansas City, with Mustang production beginning on July 11, 1964 with 100001. We haven't found San Jose's first production Mustang, but Tom Scheerer of Wichita, Kansas sent us 100011 three years ago that he discovered in his travels, making this low serial number the earliest we've found out of San Jose.

Where Mustang production gets confusing is the changeover period in late July through August of 1964. This is the period where 1964½ Mustangs became 1965 Mustangs. By most standards, a 1964½ Mustang is any Mustang equipped with a generator and the 1964 line-up of engines: the 170 cubic-inch six, 260 two-barrel, 289 four-barrel (low compression) and 289 High Performance V-8s. After changeover, 1965 Mustangs were equipped with alternator charging systems and a somewhat altered engine line-up: 200 cubic-inch six, 289 two-barrel, 289 four-barrel (high compression) and 289 High Performance V-8s. Items like door lock buttons, taillamp wiring, air vent knobs and steering wheels saw change in various intervals — some with the generator to alternator change, some shortly thereafter. This gradual transition into the '65s is what confuses a lot of us. Borderline Mustangs create much question at the shows — 1965 Mustangs with '64½ hoods, air vent knobs, and door handles, not to mention other items too numerous to mention here.

While Dearborn and San Jose were building Mustangs, Metuchen, New Jersey was assembling Falcons as it had been doing since 1959. Mustang demand was at the highest level it ever would be. Two assembly plants couldn't build them fast enough to satisfy a hungry market. The first week in February of 1965, Metuchen turned out its first Mustang. Where Metuchen is different is serial numbering. Where Dearborn and San Jose began Mustang production with 100001 each, Metuchen was already in the middle of Falcon production when Mustang production began. This means Metuchen's first



1965 Mustang may never actually be known because the six digit consecutive unit number applies to all units, be they Falcons or Mustangs.

Mustang production continued at all three plants for the remainder of 1965. In August of 1965, 1966 Mustang production began at the three plants on different days around the middle of the month. Where production differed was the assembly of 1966 Falcons at Dearborn instead of Metuchen. San Jose and Metuchen continued Mustang assembly.

For 1967, Dearborn took on a different twist. With the introduction of Mercury's Cougar, assembly of this luxury pony car began at Dearborn along with the Mustang in late August of 1966. Where Mustang serial numbers began with 100001 at Dearborn, Cougar, being a Mercury Division vehicle, started at 500001. Metuchen and San Jose continued assembly of Mustangs, each beginning at 100001. The Mustang production load shifted to Metuchen for 1967, with more units being assembled there than the other two plants. Our records to date prove this fact.

Little changed for 1968 through 1970. Mustang assembly continued at all three plants, with the bulk of Mustang production taking place at Metuchen. As Mustang sales began to decline, the question of continued assembly at all three plants surfaced. Nineteen Seventy was the last year for assembly at all three plants. For 1971, the Mustang production picture changed rapidly. With there being demand for fewer units, Metuchen began tooling up for Ford's new Pinto that was already being produced in Canada's St. Thomas plant (Code X). We're still not certain if Mustang and Pinto were assembled together at Metuchen during the early part of the 1971 model year. We do know Mustang production ended there before January 1, 1971. Though Metuchen did assemble a few 1971 Mustangs, San Jose was never a part of the picture after 1970. Ultimately, Dear-

born became the only Mustang plant after the 1971 model year.

Another question we've been asked, especially in recent times, is when IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS will become a finished product available for public sale. After many embarrassing broken promises, projected publishing dates and so on, we've found it doesn't pay to make promises one can't keep. There have been literally too many unknowns.

With the assistance of Mustanger and project partner Jim Haskell, we're beginning to see the light. As we told you some months ago, Jim is handling all of the data processing for IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS these days. The computer system we planned for fall 1987 is still on hold here in St. Louis. But Jim is steadily punching in new information and doing an outstanding job for a born again IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS. With the development of

our new venture here in St. Louis, *Smart Communications, Inc.*, financial backing for the *Mustang Production Guide* may be within sight soon. We wholeheartedly invite your comments, as always, on what you'd like to see in the *Mustang Production Guide*. Sometimes those seemingly simple ideas are the best ones — don't be shy!

Ah yes, our *The Enthusiast* newsletter/magazine. At this time, we would like to hear from those of you interested in receiving this quarterly update publication on IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS. This newsletter/magazine will be full of Mustang production information, including editorials and features on those unusual Mustangs we discover from time to time. *The Enthusiast* will live up to its title, dedicated to those of you interested in the real nuts and bolts of not only production, but much of the nitty-gritty behind one of the most popular automobiles of our time. While

*The Enthusiast* will carry on as long as we're able to carry it, updates will continue here in the *Mustang Times* as they always have. Should you be interested in receiving *The Enthusiast*, please send a Self Addressed Stamped Envelope and Two Dollars to IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS, P.O. Box 31425, St. Louis, Missouri 63131. MT

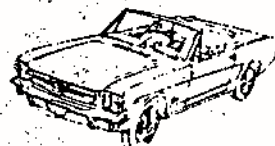
## Upcoming ...

Coming up soon in *Mustang Times* ... our "Old and New" issue will show how some Mustangers enjoy the best of both worlds ... Mark Milosky has over 200 Mustangs, but only drives one of them ... some Mustangers in Indiana hold down the (Old) Fort ... our "'69-'73" issue will spotlight the biggest ponies of all ...

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