

Mark Botalli's 1969 Mach I SCJ

story and photos by Mark Botalli



Like so many other stories mine dates back to the introduction of the Mustang. I remember going to my local Ford dealer with my father and brothers to see the new Mustang. I remember going to the World's Fair and seeing the Mustang there. I remember cars sitting on the transport trucks with covers on them so you couldn't see what they looked like until they were officially introduced to the public.

It should come as no surprise that, like many young people of that era, my very first car was a Mustang, specifically a 1965 coupe with 289 and a 3-speed transmission. After tinkering with that for a while, I decided it was time for a different car.

Naturally another Mustang.

In February 1973, after looking at several fine cars — including a 1969 Boss 302, a 1968 GT 500KR which was too expensive, and a 1967 GT 500 with a 427 motor — I finally found the 1969 Mach I you see here. It was in Staten Island, New York, and, as soon as the owner opened the garage door, I knew I had to have it. We settled on a price and the next day I was driving it home. It was used every day as my main mode of transportation until about 1976 when it was parked due to an accident and lack of funds to have it repaired.

As early as 1977, I started to accumulate parts because I knew that some day I would fix the car of my dreams. As I got more and more parts I decided it was time for the

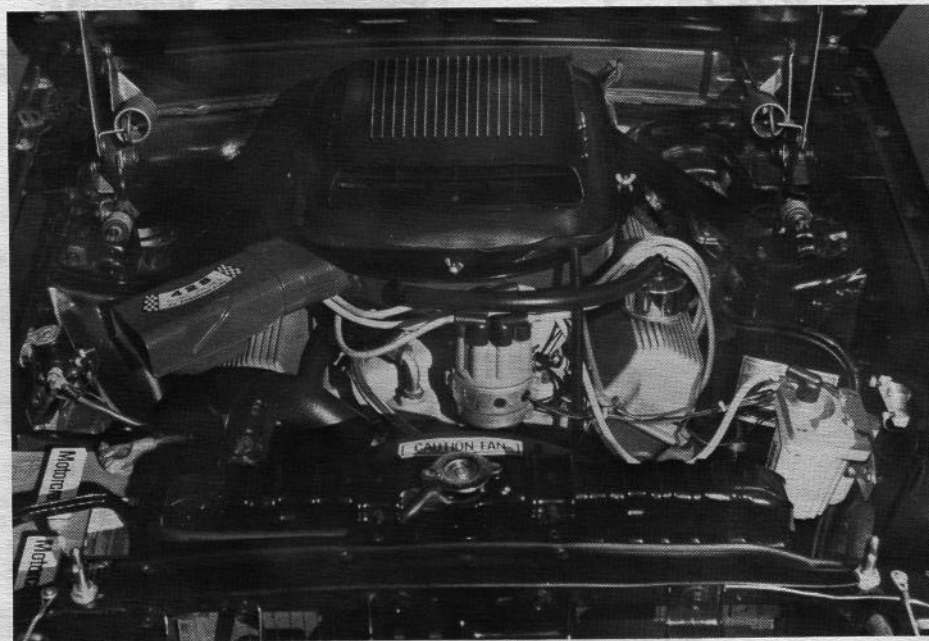
restoration to begin. The car was totally taken apart — interior, drivetrain, front suspension and rearend were removed. The engine compartment and underside were sandblasted and painted. Front suspension parts were sanded and painted with DuPont Imron.

Engine work was done by AER Research in Madison, New Jersey, which is owned by Dick DiBiasse (he did motor work for



Mark Donahue back in the '60s). The engine is a 428 SCJ and was bored .030 over, balanced, blueprinted, received a triple cut valve job, polished rods, high volume oil pump with Hooker headers, stock aluminum intake and a Holley 750 CFM race carburetor. All parts for the motor were selected by my brother, Greg. Greg works in an auto parts store and it was through this arrangement that I saved plenty of money. This car has the Super Cobra Jet and Drag-Pak option which included 427 "LeMans" rods with cap screws, an engine oil cooler mounted in front of the radiator support and a choice of 3:91 or 4:30 gears. My car has 4:30 gears and the close-ratio 4-speed with a Hurst Competition Plus shifter. With the drag-racer rearend and the engine buildup you could say that the ride is mildly quick.

Exterior paint was done by Tom Caldara of Tom Caldara's Custom Auto Body in Yonkers, New York. Many have asked



what type of paint was used, but, to tell you the truth, I really don't know. When the car was left at Tommy's, I told him that I wanted the original color, Acapulco Blue, and I wanted it to shine. The result speaks for itself.

It's been almost four years since the restoration was completed, which itself took approximately four years. Since I told the engine shop and the body shop that there was no rush, each one took about a year to complete their respective tasks. Detail work was done by myself and the car has the original interior, with the exception of new door panels, a roll bar, shoulder harnesses and a console top.

To date, the car has won six first place trophies (including a first at the 10th Annual SAAC Convention), ten second places (including the 1986 MCA Grand National East in Vally Forge, Pennsylvania), and three thirds.

My Mustang mania did not stop with the Mach I. About four years ago I purchased a 1964 1/2 Mustang convertible with 260 V-8, power steering, power brakes, and power top. The ragtop is currently undergoing the same type of restoration as the Mach I.



Then, two years later, I picked up a 1966 Shelby GT350 which has had the exterior restored but needs the engine compartment restored and some minor interior

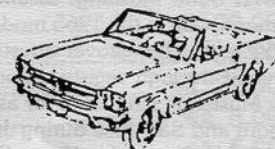
work.

It would be nice, someday, to have all three cars completed and shown at the same time.

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