

Chasing Down Mustangs Already An Art

by Louise D. Hjelming

Did you ever wonder what causes someone to chase down Mustangs listed in newspaper classified ads? There are probably thousands of reasons, among them: just plain curiosity, thoughts of finding a one-in-a-million deal of a steal, and the old standby, "insanity."

I have a peculiar and probably insane reason for chasing the ads. I own a 1969 Mustang Mach I that is Aztec Aqua in color. It isn't loaded with unusual options, but it does have a low production number. So, getting back to my peculiar and insane reason — I have never seen another Mach I like mine. Oh, I've seen some '69 Mustangs (coupes) the same color and one GT the same color, but never a Mach I just like mine. I've been to some major car shows and the 20th Anniversary Celebration, but still haven't found any clones or even a close relative to my car.

My Mustang fantasy is to find a Mach I like mine (same color) only I'd like it to be a 428 CJ or SCJ with a shaker hood scoop, and loaded with options. Since it's my fantasy I decided to really go for it! Also, add to the list the fact that the car is in great condition and is for sale at a reasonable price!



I'm one of those people who is blessed with a job that allows me to have access to other people's property (public service-type work). I see a lot of cars stashed in yards, fields, and other odd places. I want to add here that I have yet to find a Shelby in a barn — but I'm looking. One day during working hours I spotted a '69 Mach I, shaker and all at a semi-abandoned repair shop. Fantasyland here I come! This particular car was painted primer gray so you can see how easy it was for me to get a vision of Aztec Aqua in my mind. I thought at last I had found my car's long lost relative. Wait a minute, not so fast. The problem is that I was unable to get back to check out the car before the owner returned for it and, worse yet, the shop closed down soon after. My car's alleged relative was lost again.

To further push me over the edge, my boyfriend told me about an event that still has me believing there's a twin to my car, and right in my own backyard so to speak. He was on his way to work early one morning when he looked in his rearview mirror and saw my car streaking up behind him. He was sure it was my car but as he slowed down the car passed him and disappeared. We've never seen the car again. Since we live in the desert we are wondering whether to chalk this up to a "Close Encounter" or a "Mirage". Oh well, back to the classifieds!

Not too long after, the fever hit me again. The only cure is to diligently read the ads in hopes of finding that long lost relative. As usual, there's always some clever person out there that can write an ad that just drags would-be buyers out of the woodwork. This particular ad read: '69 Fastback, 302 Hi-Per engine, "Fast car" with



rear wing spoiler. To me, it wreaked of "Boss 302" and I was off and running (again). The price was great, and I talked to the owner on the phone to gather more details. He never said I had to check it out. I drove 1½ hours to see this thing! Plus, I spent 5 hours the previous evening reading Boss 302 facts so I was well prepared. I arrived before the owner woke up (9:30 am). He stumbled out to the car and proceeded to show off its good point (not "points" in my opinion). Yes, it was a Mustang, and yes, it had a rear wing spoiler, but that was it! This car needed an interior, a paint job, and an engine rebuild. The owner was of the opinion that it just needed "detailing". Detailing is such a strange word. I always thought it meant "clean-up" but I've come to realize it really means "ground-up restoration". This car had nothing about it that said Boss 302 except one thing: the little metal plate on the dash at the base of the windshield that identified it as a Boss 302. I looked for the VIN plate on the driver's door and, of course, it was missing. So, back to reality for me, and I'll let you speculate how this car came about its windshield I.D. plate.

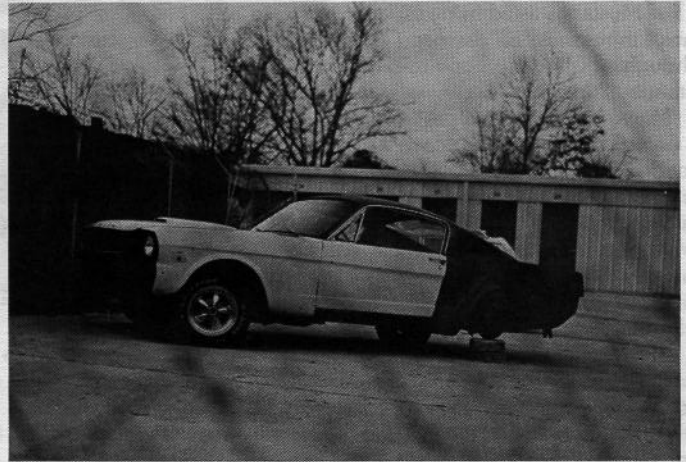
The next ad I chased was for two 1969 Mustang Mach I's. Terrific — now we're talkin'! On closer inquiry I found that one car had the driver's side obliterated in a collision and had a \$500 tag on it. The other car was a Mach I with a 428 Cobra Jet engine, automatic transmission, super wide wheels, a B&M shift kit, a Chromed shaker hood scoop, traction bars, holes in the floor from a nitrous oxide kit, blue overspray everywhere, and last but not least, a VIN plate that had a mishap with a vicious grinding wheel. This time the price was \$3,500. I passed on both of the cars. Then two months later I saw a similar ad for a 428 CJ for \$2,000 and gave it a look.



Does anyone believe in fate, second chances, and all that deja vu stuff? Well, this is the same car that had the \$3,500 tag on it two months earlier and in talking to the owner I discovered it was also the "fantasy car" in primer gray I had seen eight months earlier at the repair shop. One mystery solved, but what about the knarled data plate. Well, I strained, and I squinted, and I finally made out the paint code of . . . Royal Maroon. The car was not metallic blue, minus numerous pieces, plus lots of overspray. This car also had options like air conditioning, tilt wheel and ram air. But again I had to pass because it would take too much money to bring the car back to original condition and that really wasn't what I was looking for. It boils down to economics — Buy it for \$2,000 and add \$6,000 (conservatively) to fix it up and you probably have a \$5,000 car and a \$3,000 loss for all the fun you had fixing it up! But . . . I'd have done it all; with great enthusiasm — had it been Aztec Aqua in color.

So, back to the classifieds (again?)! I think it's only fair to wind this up by saying that I really am starting to exercise some restraint when it comes to "chasing cars". This final example should prove it. I called to inquire about an ad that read: "Two 1966 Mustang fastbacks for \$2,000 for both." The owner was a very nice person. He said he had intended to restore one of the cars with parts from the other — until he accidentally backed into the good car with a dump truck! He said one car was "probably" black in color, and "probably" a "K" car, and quite possibly a GT. Here I go again! So I asked for directions so I could take a peek. He said to drive out eight miles on this road until I found an old fire station, then turn around and go back to the first street on the right, follow it to the end and I'd see the cars, the dump truck, and oh yes, his house was the one with the Harley on the roof! How many of you could pass up something like this? Well, I decided the vision of all this (the cars, the dump truck, and the Harley on the house) was better left in mind. It just couldn't be any better in person!

Well, I'm not cured; probably never will be. I'm going to keep on looking. But occasionally I do have to ask "WHY ME?" **MT**



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