

Mustang's Mystique: Fun, Excitement

EDITOR'S NOTE: Each month Mustang Times readers from across the nation forward a variety of newspaper articles dealing with their favorite hobby to our national headquarters office. Beginning with this issue, we will attempt to select the best among these newspaper clippings to reprint for your enjoyment each month. If you wish to submit a newspaper clipping for consideration, please mail it to: The Editor, The Mustang Times, P.O. Box 447, Lithonia, GA. 30058-0447).

By **ELIZABETH LONGSWORTH**
Of The Manchester (VT.) Journal

What do locals Biff Mithoefer, Pat Broderson, Gary Miller and Paul Marchese have in common? They all own early Mustang convertibles, the hip, swinging, definitive car of the 1960s.

The Mustang, a car that inspired no less than three different renditions of the song, "Mustang Sally," has come into its own as a classic, and is a car of choice for movie stars and nostalgia buffs alike.

The Mustang was Chrysler Corporation chairman Lee Iacocca's brainchild while he was a young executive at the Ford Motor Company. Designed small and sporty, the Mustang was the first car fashioned to attract a particular segment of the population — young people. Both the Baby Boom upscale college student and the young professional were targeted, and the Mustang was highly successful in this arena, but it surprised Ford executives by also appealing to people of all ages and many walks of life. The Mustang led the way to the now standard tactic of niche-marketing cars.

Initially, the car was named after the World War II fighter plane, the Mustang. Later, the wild pony became its logo and the "Mustang" took on a new connotation. In part because of its good looks, high quality and sporty reputation, but largely due to its outstanding sales, the Mustang is considered one of Ford's all-time winners.

Ford sold 29,000 Mustang convertibles in the first half year of production (1964) and 73,000 at the peak of its career in 1965. Overall, nearly 291,400 Mustang convertibles were sold from 1964 through 1974. Comparatively, more than a million hard top Mustangs sold between 1964 and 1967 alone.

Mustangs are still being made and sold today. In 1983 Ford revived the Mustang convertible — and claims to have sold 25,000 of them in 1987. But the best ones, the ones people ogle over and pay a lot for, are the old ones — the first-year model, called a 1964½, through the 1967 model. And these are the models owned by our four local Mustang buffs.

Gary Miller, of Dorset, VT., owns a candy-apple red 1964½ convertible with a black roof. Recently, he says, "I was driving to the grocery store and passed three or four kids playing baseball. When I stopped at a street sign nearby they stopped playing and yelled, 'Man, that's a great car!' But, he continues, this isn't unusual. "Owning an old Mustang is like being in a cult. It's amazing how many people you get coming up to you and saying, 'I owned one of those,' or 'I knew someone with a Mustang.' There's a real pride in ownership."

Pat Broderson, who lives in Manchester and, with her husband Peter, owns a maroon 1966 convertible, agrees. "People like to talk about the car, where we got it, where we get parts. Most often they want to tell us about the Mustang they used to have — and how they never should have sold it!"

Biff Mithoefer and his wife Amy live in Dorset and own a black 1966 Mustang convertible. He concurs. "I'm amazed at how many people approach me and say, 'I had a '65, and I wish I'd never sold it,' stuff like that."

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Pat Marchese, of Dorset, owns a white 1965 convertible with a red interior. He's found that people stop him to say, "I had one of those when they first came out. I paid \$2,800, and I wish I'd kept it! They're worth so much more now..." He adds, "No matter when I'm out with the car, at least one person comes up to talk."

The cars generate equal enthusiasm from onlookers, but elicit different degrees of involvement and interest from their owners. Mithoefer bought his convertible off the showroom floor at Stuart Ford in Cuttingsville, VT. two years ago. His main interest in the car is the fact that it's a convertible. He says, "I wouldn't have bought it if it weren't a convertible. I don't ride a motorcycle anymore — it's kind of a replacement for that. We bought it to ride around on Sundays with the top down, with the kids."

The Broderson's, on the other hand, have owned their Mustang since it was new. They bought it when they were first married. They were both working and they didn't have children. Pat drove it to work each day, but now Peter drives it most of the time. Back then, says Pat, "It seemed really jazzy. I never thought I'd still be driving it in 1988!" Now, she says, "My husband drives it all the time — from the moment it gets nice in the spring to the time it gets bad in the fall. But we don't use it for long trips — just local ones and for fun." Gary Miller has owned his car just a couple of years. A 1964½, his convertible is the most valuable model, largely because there aren't many of them still around. Plus, it's in superb condition. He too has had to replace the rear, plastic window. But the previous owner had had the car completely rebuilt, and passed it on to Miller in need of only minor improvements. He keeps the car at his primary residence in Rochester, N.Y., but brought it to Dorset last summer. He says, "I put it in the garage for the winter, but the first nice day... I put the top down..." He adds, "The great thing about a Mustang is that it's a group car. You can take three or four people in it and it's fun. You don't get that out of a Thunderbird!"

Paul Marchese bought his convertible 90 percent restored. He has owned it two years and is about to offer it for sale. He says, "I love the car. The main reason I'm selling it is because I'm too busy working to drive it. I really enjoyed it most when I had it in Florida, in the winter. But I'm down there only three months a year. This car's in too good shape to let it sit for 9 months."

Marchese's car has been reupholstered, but the original pony panels in both the front and back seats were sewn into the new upholstery. The engine and transmission have been rebuilt and the car has been repainted. Besides some minor details, the car is in excellent condition.

Marchese remembers one Christmas in Florida when he drove the Mustang to his sister's house. "It was so funny to drive up on Christmas day with the top down, the sun out, presents in the back seat, and a little TV plugged into the lighter. I was dressed in shorts, a Hawaiian shirt and sunglasses. I felt like Santa in his sleigh!"

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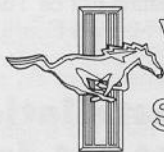
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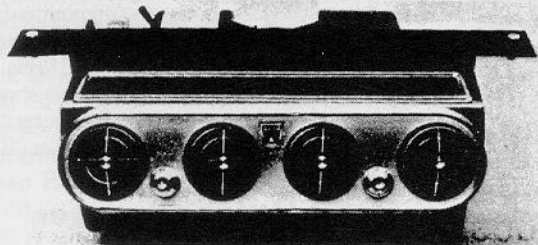
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Gulf Coast Regional Awaiting Pensacola Show Season Opener

By JUNE RABON
For The Mustang Times

Winter winds might be whipping across the nation, but on Florida's Gulf Coast, thoughts have already turned to spring and another year of fellowship and competition among Mustang Club of America members.

Members of the Gulf Coast Regional Mustang Club in Pensacola have already spent months planning for their 10th Annual International/National Mustang Roundup.

The show, which will kick off the 1989 season, will be held in Pensacola March 24-26. Area motels still have a few rooms available, however, it is advisable to make your reservations as soon as possible.

Rooms are available at the Holiday Inn/University Mall and Hampton Inn. Do not call your local 800 reservation number. To insure your reservation for the Pensacola show, call the Holiday Inn direct at (904) 474-0100 or Hampton Inn at (904) 477-3333.

A beautiful, top condition, white 1970 Mach I will be given away at the Sunday awards presentation following the three-day show. Tickets for the Mach I are \$1 each or six for \$5.

In addition to the usual large crowds of American Mustang owners who gather at Pensacola each year for this annual show, more than 150 European Mustang enthusiasts are expected to attend this year's event.

Members of the Gulf Coast group are excited at the thought of seeing these European Mustangs and meeting their owners. We are also pleased that our Pensacola show will be their first state-side meet as they tour the nation during 1989.

The Gulf Coast Mustang Club is once again planning some zany entertainment for those attending. And, of course, the weekend will kick off with the club's Fish Fry, which members expect to attract as many as 1,000 Pony lovers.

Registration information for this 1989 National kick-off is included on Page 8 of this issue of The Mustang Times, and Mustang owners are urged to complete the forms and return them as soon as possible. Registration fee is \$15.

Those needing additional information on the Pensacola show can contact Sonja Blackwood, P.O. Box 10126, Pensacola, FL. 32514 (904) 476-2587, or Keith Meador at (904) 476-6054.

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While these four Mustang convertibles are alive and well, no one is sure how many others are still around. Certainly, thousands have disappeared. Mithoefer believes, "It's becoming a collector's item because about 90 percent of them got smashed up the night of the senior prom. I talked to one guy who smashed up two his senior year!" Miller believes many "grew old and died in junkyards." Pat Broderson wonders whether they were all damaged or sold for parts. She says, "When we bought it, nobody ever thought of it as a classic car. Ironically, it's being called a classic car long before it really is a classic."

But if the laws of supply and demand hold, then the cars must be hard to buy. Broderson has had half a dozen offers over the years — some of them for cash on the spot. "One guy offered \$8,000 and that was 10 years ago!" she says.

"The association in the 60s was with independence," says Miller, "and Mustangs were thought of as being a little racy. The way people were thinking then had a lot to do with the styling of the car. It embodied a basic 60s attitude — it was streamlined and sleek."

Clearly, the promise of fun and excitement has always been part of the Mustang thrill. In that respect, the locally owned Mustang convertibles are simply up to the same old thing.