

The Original Mustang

Pilot Stanley Tucker

Owned The 1st Of A Legend

(Editor's Note: This article, which is now two years old, was re-printed courtesy of Mid-Country Mustang of Eagle, PA. and is from the company's 1988 catalog. Pat Vassallo, president of Mid-Country Mustang, was kind enough to grant *The Mustang Times* permission to reprint the article to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the birth of the Ford Mustang.)

ANN ARBOR — Twenty-three years and 5.68 million Mustangs ago, Ford rocked America with what was to become the biggest sports car sales phenomenon ever — a versatile, high-performance youth-market car that was both ripe with promise and right for the times.

Baby boomers were coming of age with fists full of dollars in the mid-Sixties, and automakers were eager to lure them into showrooms. In the spring of 1964, Ford launched a powerful advertising blitz; the Mustang immediately commanded the attention of anyone who looked at a newspaper or glanced up from his or her TV dinner. According to Ford, an estimated four million people viewed the car during the first three days it appeared at dealerships.

With a great future in store, the first Mustang, a white convertible, rolled off the assembly line on March 9, 1964. But the publicity tour of serial number 5F08F100001 ended a bit earlier than Ford planners had anticipated. Three days prior to the official April 17 introduction date, while number 00001 was on display at a Saint John's, Newfoundland, dealership following its Canadian tour, the convertible was inadvertently sold.

Stanley Tucker, an airline captain, had seen a commotion over the car at his local Ford dealership and so went in to investigate. Tucker was not aware that the Mustang was the first one produced, but he did know that he wanted it. (The salesman, who should have known better, apparently understood only the ringing of the cash register as Tucker wrote out a handsome check.)

It wasn't long before the captain's phone began to ring. Despite pleas from Ford representatives bent on wheedling the car back, he clung to the Mustang and drove it 10,000 miles during the following two years. Ultimately, Tucker agreed to swap his little-used gem for the one million and first Mustang, a silver 1966 convertible.

When told he could order his replacement

car any way he liked, Tucker promptly made a heavy mark across the entire options list, declining only the highest-output engine. In early 1966, the company brought the pilot to Dearborn to join vice president Lee Iacocca, executive v.p. Charles Patterson, general manager Donald Frey, and director of styling Gene Bordinat in welcoming the millionth car off the assembly line.

In retrospect, it appears that Ford may have bamboozled Captain Tucker out of the vintage Mustang of all time. Auctioneer Mitchell Kruse indicated that a fine convertible should fetch up to about \$21,000 this year. We wondered how much number 00001 would be worth. Kruse figures \$30,000 to \$40,000.

We contacted Tucker, now 55, to inquire about his life and times since owning the first of a legend. We found him in Quebec, now a pilot of Cessna Citation corporate jets. But Tucker has long since been out of the business of Mustang ownership; he sold the one million and first Mustang — used up and rusted out — to a Saint John's mechanic in 1972.

At least the original Mustang is still around to remind us of how the pony car affair began nearly a quarter of a century ago. The unrestored convertible is retired, along with several hundred other automotive exhibits, at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan.

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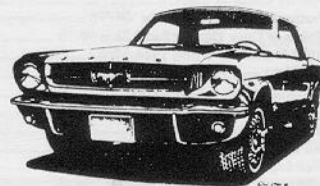
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