

# In Search of Mustangs — An Update

BY JIM SMART

## Special To Mustang Times

The old W.C. Fields quote, "reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated," can certainly be applied to the *In Search of Mustangs* project.

Indeed there have been times when this project came to a near halt, particularly during the mid-1908s. Project updates have been sporadic at times, with long, unexplained gaps in between. But the project has been far from terminally ill.

In fact, *In Search* is alive and well, and growing faster than anyone might have imagined a few years ago. If you're a long time MCA member, you remember when we first hit 1,000 Mustangs. And remember when we hit the 5,000 mark? Many of you felt that was close to the upper limit. Well, hold on to your hat. As of this writing, we have over 36,000 Mustangs in our census. More are on the way every day. Now that's a lot of information.

Of course, the best of all possible worlds would be if we had complete information on all 36,000-plus Ponies. Unfortunately, many contributors sent in their vehicle identification numbers (VIN) without including critical information like body, color, trim, date, DOS, axle and transmission codes. Old records from dealerships (remember all the information submitted from the likes of Richard Matthews of Paoli, PA, Tom Scheerer of Wicita, KS and Steve Van Cleve of Washington) obviously contain only the VIN and occasionally the exterior color. Those of you who have combed the wrecking yards (Dick Smither, are you still out there?) find a lot of Mustangs without the driver's door. And finally, we've had excellent cooperation from several state motor vehicle administrations who have provided VIN's from Mustangs registered in those states. Those critical codes are absent there too.

## Light At The End Of The Tunnel

Not that VIN-only information isn't useful. It most certainly is and will be included in the Mustang Production Guide listings and other information emanating from this project. As you well know, the VIN reveals the model year, assembly plant, body serial code, engine and consecutive unit number.

You might say, "What's this *Mustang Production Guide*?"

Finally, we're beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel in the form of a series of books to be the product of *In Search of*

*Mustangs*. You might also be tempted to say, "What do you mean 'series' — I thought you were going to publish one big list?" Good questions, and deserving a good answer.

There is simply no way to physically place all the information from this project in one book and keep it manageable from a space and cost standpoint. For example, the Shelby American World Registry costs anywhere from \$50 to \$75, depending on where you buy it. An excellent book, it provides information on roughly 15,000 Shelby Cobras and Mustangs. As mentioned earlier, we're talking about more than 36,000 Mustangs.

Additionally, the *Mustang Production Guide(s)* will be more than simply a listing of VINs and codes. As the name, implies, they will be a complete reference source on Mustang production from 1964½ through 1973. Extensive narrative is required to do justice to the many questions imposed by the hobby. In turn, this takes even more space and would increase the cost of a single publication even more.

We could limit that portion of the registry to be published to only those Mustangs where every piece of information is known. That would look much cleaner (no blanks) and, without detailed explanations, photographs and other frills, might enable a single volume that would be simple and affordable. On the other hand, that alternative would eliminate thousands of Mustangs from the registry and would greatly reduce your chances of finding out if that Pony scheduled for production after yours was a fastback, V-8, or whatever else a VIN can provide. With all of them listed, you will have a reasonably good chance of finding a Mustang next to or very close to your consecutive unit number.

## Several Volumes Are Planned

So, we're dividing the *Mustang Production Guide* into several volumes, and obviously the largest will cover 1964½ through 1966 Mustangs. These two model years currently account for 60 percent of the Mustangs in our registry — not too surprising considering they were the two biggest production years and much of the continuing interest centers on the earliest models. Three subsequent volumes will cover 1967-68, 1969-70 and 1971-73.

While each volume deals with different model years, all will be similar in content. All VINs and other codes (where available)

will be listed in consecutive unit number sequence by assembly plant. Associated with each Mustang's listing will be its last known location (by region of the U.S. or by foreign country as to protect the confidentiality) and by its special interest category if known. Examples of the latter are GT, Mach I, California Special, Sprint 200, GT-350 and GT-500, Boss 302, 351, and 429, World's Fair Car, etc.

There will be comprehensive narrative sections on each of the special interest groupings, complete with color and black and white photographs, that illustrate how they were conceived, produced and marketed. Substantial attention is given to the many questions the Mustang hobby has been asking for years: many caused by a lack of information (or destroyed records) from Ford, incomplete and/or inaccurate decoding guides, and just plain old fashioned incorrect answers from Mustang "experts."

## No Promises This Time!

In short, if you have saved every *In Search of Mustangs* update published in this and other magazines over the years, and have organized them by subject matter, you'd have a bit of what will be contained in the *Mustang Production Guide* series — and a little less than one percent of the actual data. "Okay," you say, "But when will we see all this stuff?"

This time, no promises! The first volume is in the writing stage. All of the data plate and sticker information for each year through 1973, accumulated since the project's inception in December, 1979, has been entered and organized on a computerized data base system such that the second volume can easily follow the first with little delay. The decision to go with one of several publishers' offers or do it ourselves via desktop publishing is near at hand. Again, no promises. But we'd wager the first volume of the *Mustang Production Guide* will be available before *In Search* is 11 years old.

In any case, we'll guarantee that updates on this project will be published more frequently as they were in the *Mustang Times* in the early 1980s. On the drawing board already are articles on 1964½ through 1966 exterior colors, a visit to Gelsi's Mustang World for a look at their collection, the T-5 story, 1967-68 engine line-up and the last 1973 convertible. More information updates are in the works and will continue to see

publication both before and after release of the *Mustang Production Guide*.

If you haven't yet submitted the data on your Mustang, or if you've added to your stable, there's still time left to participate in *In Search of Mustangs*. We're going to concentrate our efforts in the next few months to adding as many Mustangs to the census as possible, even as the *Mustang Production Guide* enters its final stages.

All of the Mustang clubs will be asked to help us out one more time before we go to press, much as they did several years ago. Project updates will emphasize participation. And forms to register your Mustang(s) will be available from several different sources.

It's really very simple. Just send the vehicle identification number and codes from your warranty plate (1964½ through 1969) or Federal Certification Sticker (1970-73) located on the driver's door to *In Search of Mustangs*, c/o Jim Smart, P.O. Box 31425, St. Louis, MO 63131, or Jim Haskell, 8108 Collins Street, Annandale, VA 22003.

We look forward to your participation as we enter the home stretch to final output from *In Search of Mustangs*.

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