



Advice On Safely Trailering Your Show Car

By **DONALD MALLINSON**
President
Heart of Illinois SHO Club

I started helping my father set up and tow travel trailers all over the United States and Canada before I was old enough to drive. But I was old enough to watch and learn. Since then I've logged well over a quarter-million miles pulling trailers — without incident.

Mustang Club of America members who follow a few simple — but vitally important — rules can enjoy trailering their show cars to various regional and national events without risking harm to their classic autos or to themselves or their passengers.

THE TOW VEHICLE

I believe in having the biggest and best tow vehicle you can get. A semi is perfect, but not practical.

Any make full-size pickup with a long wheelbase will serve as a dependable tow vehicle. You need a long wheelbase to make pulling a heavy load more stable.

Suspension (one-half vs three-fourths ton) is not too critical if you use a load equalizing hitch.

The fifth wheel units sometimes require at least a three-fourth ton suspension.

Since many of you will have to make do

with what you already have, we can move on to the next most important part.

THE HITCH

I have seen far too many expensive cars (not to mention irreplaceable people) wind up in the ditch because they were going down the road with a rusty bumper hitch and nothing else. Look at it this way: You have invested a lot in your show car so it makes little sense to put it at risk for the lack of a \$250 quality hitch setup and the couple of hours it takes to set it up right.

Any time the load being hauled equals or surpasses the towing vehicle (and that is most of the time when hauling cars) you should have a quality load equalizing hitch. Reese and Draw-Tite are the most common brands and are proven quality units. These consist of a well-designed receiver that bolts (better than welding in most cases) to the tow vehicle frame, a ball mount that comes in various sizes to make the trailer sit level when going down the road (important for stability), and the load equalizing bars and optional anti-sway mounts for the trailer itself.

What the load equalizing bars do is counter balance the weight put on the hitch (the tongue weight) and transfer it equally between the front and rear axles. For small

travel trailers without a load equalizing hitch you may have approximately 50 to 100 pounds tongue weight, but a 4000 to 7000 pound car-trailer combo needs 300 to 500 pounds tongue weight and this would point your headlights towards the sky.

Air shocks and overload springs are just a stop-gap approach and are not safe. They overload the rear suspension and tires.

The anti-sway attachments are needed for certain long trailers that tend to sway when hit with wind gusts from passing trucks. These, in effect, tend to force the car-trailer unit to be "straight" unless forced to bend by turning a corner.

THE TRAILER

When buying a trailer, make sure it has double axles with brakes on all wheels. A load rating GVWR higher than the anticipated total of trailer and load (be sure to include tools, ice chests, spare tires, supplies, etc. that may be loaded inside the trailer or car) is required. When in doubt, get the trailer and car weighed at a grain elevator or truck stop. Make sure the tires on it have enough load capacity.

Check the lug nuts frequently and set the brakes carefully. Brake balance is set at the controller on the dash of the tow vehicle. Play with this and get to know how it works,

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both loaded and empty. Lash everything down or risk ruining your car.

I strongly advise that you find a quality, well-known travel trailer sales/service outlet instead of going to rental outfits. You will get better advice and service in most instances.

Read and understand how your receiver-style hitch works. Take the time to drive down a deserted road at low speeds and experiment with the brakes. Your brake controller will let you apply trailer brakes independent of the tow vehicle brakes. This is the way to stop a trailer from swaying. Don't get on the regular brakes if this happens. Just apply the trailer brakes and that will stop the sway in most instances.

You also have another adjustment that sets the balance between the tow vehicle and the trailer. You want the trailer brakes to be a bit more aggressive than the tow vehicle brakes, otherwise you may see the back of your trailer pass you.

I like to constantly check my controller to make sure the balance is right at all times. This helped save me when some jerk in a Chevette stopped dead in the road ahead of me earlier this year. I applied the brakes without stomping on them and when I heard all eight tires making a low moan, I knew I was okay. Nothing teaches you the concept of threshold braking like a panic stop with 10,000 pounds of truck, trailer and show car.

I can't overemphasize the importance of getting to know your set-up by testing on a safe, deserted road before getting into rush hour traffic.

One final thought: I have tried every combination you can think of and will strongly recommend a full size tow vehicle instead of mid-size compacts.

Carefully check the towing capacity of any vehicle you plan on calling into service. If it doesn't have the capacity, then don't hook up that big trailer.

Also, it is torque that gets a big load moving, not RPMs and horsepower. That 350/351 V8 may only have 10 more horses than the 305/302 or that V6, but check the torque figures and where the torque comes in.

A dedicated tow vehicle is the safest. If you must use a family car or van, then the load equalizing hitch is a must and careful matching of the load to the tow vehicle is important. That 4000 pounds of show car and trailer can "walk" a 3500 pound tow vehicle right into the ditch if not set up right.

THE WALK-AROUND INSPECTION

Why do you think most semi drivers walk around their trucks when pulling into a rest stop? It is to check the tires, etc. to make

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sure nothing is coming apart.

You need to inspect the hitch (put a wrench on the hitch ball once in a while).

Most importantly, check the temperature of the tires and wheels. I lay my hand on the tread of each tire and on the wheel bearing surface at each rest or gas stop. If you feel excessive heat (and you'll know it) then don't go on until you know why. Heat can cause a bearing to seize or a tire to blow, both of which can put you in a ditch.

Remember, safety first when towing.

Questions? Need Some Help? Why Not Ask Fred Glazier!

If you have questions about your Mustang or need some help with a sticky restoration problem, Fred Glazier can help.

Glazier's column "Ask Fred" is featured monthly in *The Mustang Times*.

Though Fred is best known as an expert on early model Mustangs, he will also be happy to help with your questions about your late model Pony.

Mail your questions to: Ask Fred, C/O *The Mustang Times*, P.O. Box 447, Lithonia, GA 30058.

Please include your MCA membership number on your correspondence.

MCA Board Meeting Minutes Continued

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were elected directors. Norman will serve through January 1995 and Bob will serve through January 1994.

Steve Sanders from Northwest Arkansas Mustang Club advised that his group and several other clubs will host a show October 17 at Petit Jean Mountain State Park. The groups will have a 1994 Mustang at the show, as well as President Clinton's car.

Charlie Ping from Model City Mustang Club advised the group will host a show in Oxford, AL September 26.

With there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held Tuesday, October 12, 1993, at 7:30 p.m. at the Marriott Courtyard, Windy Hill Road in Marietta, GA.

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