

Observing Pony Production Is An Eye-Opener!

By JIM SMART
With Jim Haskell

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The life's blood of this project has been your efforts, MCA members. Each contribution to *In Search of Mustangs* has put us that much closer to solving the many mysteries of Mustang production.

Despite all our efforts for going on 14 years, there is still much we don't know about production.

When you get right down to it, each of our Mustangs was produced by human beings who came to work, punched a time clock, and built 75 Mustangs an hour for eight hours a day, five and six days a week.

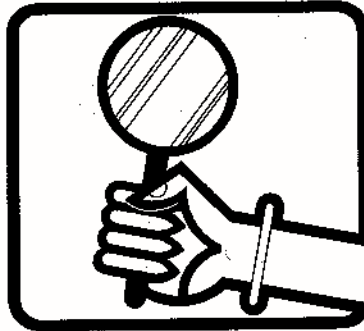
As Mustang enthusiasts we're excited by the prospects of spending a day or two on the line, watching an ongoing legend come to life. Very few of us have known the thrill of watching new Mustangs emerge from raw materials.

Seven years ago, I had the opportunity to spend the better part of a shift at the Dearborn assembly plant where Ford was building the last of the 1986 Mustangs. Fellow Mustangers and Ford employees Jim Gillespie and Dave Wagner took me through the plant. Ford graciously allowed me to photograph the very last day of 1986 Mustang production, September 30, 1986.

While the Dearborn plant was more advanced than it was when it was churning out 1965 Mustangs, the basic process hadn't changed much in 21 years. The cars were still hand built by human beings, with the exception of a new fully-automated paint booth and some line robotics. Production was still affected by all the same things it was in 1965 — supply problems, equipment breakdowns, striking and sometimes apathetic workers, and components misplaced along the line.

Just ahead of the body drop part of the Dearborn line, we couldn't help but notice that a rear axle assembly for a four cylinder LX was destined to be mated to an HO GT. A tie-clad line supervisor and an assembly worker moved swiftly to switch axles, avoiding what might have been a major delay for workers down the line. It was quick, cold, impersonal, and necessary.

As Jim, Dave and I toured the plant, we discovered that a handful of 1987 Mustangs had already been produced in the midst of 1986 model year production. The 1987 models had low consecutive unit numbers between 1000001 and 1000060 (does your 1987 Mustang have a serial number that low?) These low serial number 1987 Mustangs were quality evaluation vehicles where



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IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS

We encourage your participation in "IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS," an international census of Ford Mustangs and Shelby Mustangs 1964 1/2 through 1973. Data from over 40,000 Mustangs are already included in the census. Make sure yours is in there too!

From this project you'll see monthly updates in the Mustang Times that hopefully will answer your particular concerns or questions on Mustang production facts and other interesting tidbits about our ponies. In addition, a series of full-length Mustang production reference books called the Mustang Production Guide(s), are currently in the writing stage.

All you need to do to participate is fill in the blanks below. The information can be found on a metal plate (1964 1/2-69) or vinyl sticker (1970-73), found on your driver's door near the latch. If there is no plate or sticker, just the serial number is adequate. Total information is very important. Feel free to enclose the history on your Mustang(s).

Name: _____
Address: _____

Mustang # 1. Year _____ Is it a GT, MACH 1, T-5, etc. _____

Warranty/Serial Number _____

Body _____ Color _____ Trim _____ Date _____ DSO _____ Axle _____ Trans _____

Mustang # 2. Year _____ Is it a GT, MACH 1, T-5, etc. _____

Warranty/Serial Number _____

Body _____ Color _____ Trim _____ Date _____ DSO _____ Axle _____ Trans _____

Mustang # 3. Year _____ Is it a GT, MACH 1, T-5, etc. _____

Warranty/Serial Number _____

Body _____ Color _____ Trim _____ Date _____ DSO _____ Axle _____ Trans _____

Thanks for participating in this project. If you desire a reply, please enclose a SASE. Send all information to:

In Search of Mustangs
P.O. Box 727
Paris, TN 38242

fit, finish and other important criteria were being checked. None of them were GTs — all were LX models with 2.3 liter fours. Most of them were ultimately used for crash testing and other forms of destructive testing. Ford crash tests hundreds of vehicles in a given year, most of which are standard production units.

Back on the line, we followed 1986's final job down the line. We watched a worker place the floorpan in an assembly jig where the process begins. The floorpan had a 1987 Ford part number, which should tell you something about concours correctness. Fact is, Ford did whatever it took to get these final 1986 units off the line, including the use of 1987 parts.

In a matter of minutes, rocker and torque boxes were welded to the floorpan, then side pillars and quarter panels — raw sheet metal began to look like a Mustang hatchback. There was a strange emptiness behind the last 1986 Mustang, void of assembly jigs and other Mustangs in the making. We're not certain where the last 1986 Mustang is today, but Jim, Dave and I all shared a rare opportunity that rainy Detroit day. We watched a model year draw to a close at Dearborn.

Every time I've toured an assembly plant, I've learned something new about motor vehicle production. We all tend to glorify our Mustangs and the people who built them. But each and every one of our Mustangs spent but a few brief seconds with each worker along the way. The mission of each of the Mustang plants is the same as it was for other carlines at Ford, to get a product produced and shipped to the dealer in the most effective manner possible.

What's more, human beings just like you and me hand built each of these cars over a 27-hour period. This means three different shifts took part in the assembly of each of our Mustangs. Let your imagination go to work on that one!

If you don't believe us, pull out your rear seat and tell us what you find. Whether it's a Dearborn Shoney's matchbook or a fistful of trim screws found underneath the rear seat along with the weathered broadcast sheet, we're astonished, but we needn't be. It's just a little bit of that human touch.

Would you like to know more about *In Search of Mustangs*? Just send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

In Search of Mustangs
P.O. Box 727
Paris, TN 38242

You can also call the Mustang Help Line at (901) 642-0064.

The Mustang Times/March, 1993

Fairview MCA National To Include Baseball!

Members of the Shiloh Valley Mustang Club, sponsors of the Fairview '93 MCA National Mustang Show, plan a host of family activities for the July 16-17 event, including a trip to a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game.

The show will be held at Longacre Park in Fairview Heights, IL, approximately 35 miles east of St. Louis.

A bus has been scheduled to take Mustangs and their families to see the Cardinals play the Houston Astros Friday evening.

Tickets are \$17 per person and cover the cost of a reserved seat game ticket and bus ride to and from Busch Stadium.

Only 50 tickets are available in this block and they will be sold on a first come, first served basis.

To order, send a check or money order payable to SVMA to Steve Packman, 19 Crestwood Lane, Centralia, IL 62801.

Deadline for purchasing baseball game tickets is May 30.

In addition to the MCA National Mustang Show and the baseball game, the park offers numerous family activities including softball, horseshoes, volleyball, aerobic walking paths, and tennis courts. Mustangs attending the show are urged to bring their sporting equipment and to take advantage of the recreational opportunities offered by the park.

Shopping excursions to St. Clair Mall, the largest shopping mall in the St. Louis metro east area, are also planned. The city of Fairview will furnish a free shuttle bus to transport Mustangs between the show site, motels and shopping areas.

For additional information on the Fairview '93 MCA National Show call Steve at (618) 533-5377.



Baton Rouge Mustangers Name Officers For 1993

Melba Henzen is the newly-elected president of the Baton Rouge Mustangers.

Also serving as officers of the club for the coming year will be Joe Hebert, vice president; Francis Vicknair, treasurer; and Carolyn Durham, secretary.

Members of the Board of Directors of the MCA Regional Group include Kerry Hicks, Andy Chase, Shane Fowler, Chester Welche and Conrad Ledig.

Brown Is New President Of Texoma Mustang Club

The Texoma Mustang Club MCA Regional Group has voted Bob Brown president for 1993.

Serving with Brown will be Larry Gore, vice president; Kirsten Reinartz, secretary; Allen Fleitman, treasurer.

Directors of the group include Kirk Klement, Jack Tyler, Tim Sampert, Dean Hunter and Gary Claytor.

HOT OFF THE PRESS!

MCA's New
1993-94
Judging Rule Book

The newly-revised Official MCA 1993-94 Judging Rule Book is now available from the Mustang Club of America.

The book includes all official rules for MCA-sanctioned National and Grand National Events and is used by MCA Judges as "The Bible" for competition.

Order yours today. The Rule Book is \$5, plus \$1 shipping and handling. Send check or money order payable to MCA to: Judging Rule Book, P.O. Box 447, Lithonia, GA 30058.