

For Sale: 64-1/2 Mustang, Rare 260

...and other *Myths* by Bob Deale, (MCA#17160)

Because of the confusion that exists regarding the differences between '64 and '65 Mustangs, Bob Deale, respected early model expert, has agreed to shed some light on the subject for us all. -RJ

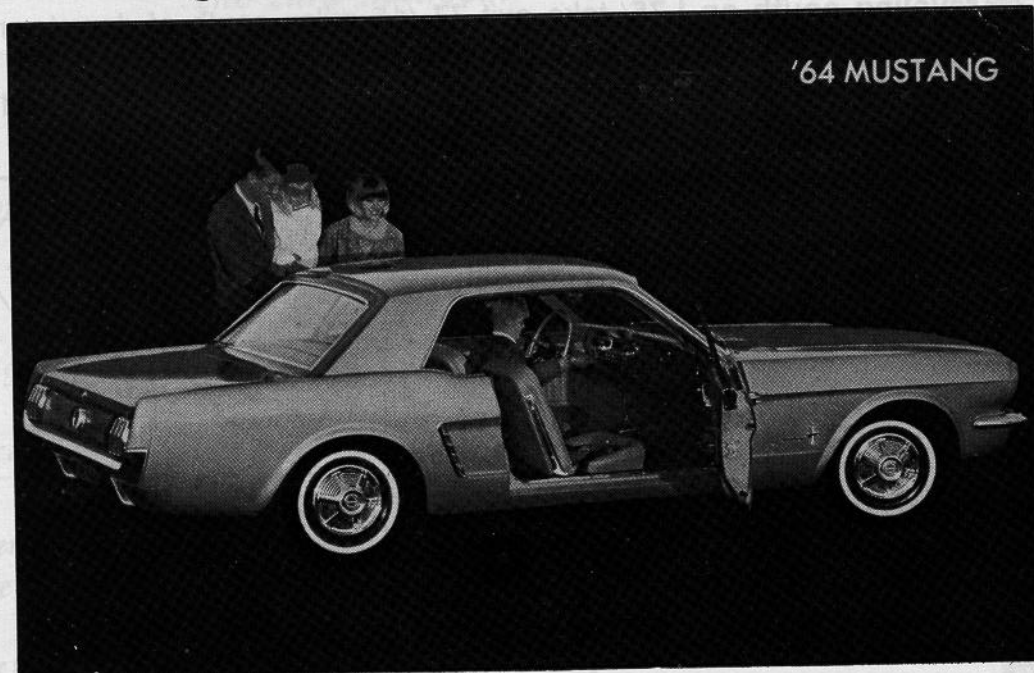
In the ten years since I acquired my latest 64-1/2 Mustang (I bought my first one 30 years ago) I have undertaken a serious study of the original American Pony car.

Special thanks must be given to my very good friend, Al Friedel, and his "Odd Items Survey" of these cars. This survey was the genesis of my own "serious" inquiries.

I have discovered that a cult of mythology often times surrounds a legend. Some of these myths take on a life of their own. They are perpetuated and expanded over time, yet they are never challenged on a factual basis. I will attempt to dispel some of the more prominent myths and lay down some ground work of facts for the production and marketing of the 1964-1/2 Mustang.

Mustang number one (5F08F100001) had a relatively inauspicious beginning. The scheduled build date was Thursday, March 5, 1964. The car probably rolled off the assembly line on Monday, March 9th without much fanfare. The "Fanfare" was scheduled for New York's World Fair on April 17th. Ford put on a massive media blitz at the official unveiling that hit all three TV networks that same evening. That same week, *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines ran cover stories on the Mustang and Lee Iacocca. Both appeared on the cover in each magazine. *Life* magazine even carried a major article on the car's introduction titled "Sports Car For The Masses". Naturally, all the automotive magazines ran their own feature stories on the car.

Ford had scheduled a "first year" production run of 100,000 units. With all the media attention, the



selection of the car to pace the Indy 500 in '64, and because of a very affordable and attractive platform, production topped out at 121,500 cars before the end of the 1964-1/2 production run ended on July 31st, 1964.

Wait, whoa, and time out! "Everybody" knows that production ended on August 17th, 1964. Even the venerable "Mustang Recognition Guide" says so. Yep. And **that's myth number one.**

The August 17th date has become firmly rooted in Mustang lore for a very simple reason. Somewhere along the line, Ford published that date as the change-over date from 5-bolt to 6-bolt engines (Change Level 5). But, as it happens sometimes in the corporate world, the left hand apparently didn't know what the right hand was up to. Subsequent documents and empirical evidence show that the change-over date was actually pushed back precisely two weeks to August 3rd, the date that the new engine codes start showing up in the '65 Mustangs.

For those of you new to the hobby, the engine code is the fifth character of the VIN. The 1964-1/2 engine codes are F (260-2V); D (289-4V); and U (170-1V). The hobby has adopted a habit of characterizing the '64-1/2 Mustang by its engine, (i.e. "64-1/2 D-Code Car"). The '65 engine codes are C (289-2V); A (289-4V); and T (200-1V).

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Although scheduled for an August 20th change-over date, Ford apparently made the decision to change the electrical system from generator to alternator to coincide with the change in engine line-up. In all likelihood, it was a practical decision to save production costs and hassles on the assembly line. Incidentally, this change-over from generator to alternator affected the entire Ford product line, not just Mustangs.

Bob Mannel of Oak Harbor, Washington, who has cataloged several thousand Ford small block engines since 1981, and Jim Smart (former *Mustang Times* editor) are both in agreement that these changes occurred on August 3rd and were coincidental with one another. As Smart put it, "the dividing line between '64-1/2 and '65 has been definitive, with the '64-1/2 powertrains and charging systems distinct and unto themselves. Other components have been staggered."

I also suspect that the August 17th date may have come about due to Ford marketing efforts, in that the August 17th date may be to '65 Mustangs what April 17th was to the '64-1/2 Mustangs - that is, the public introduction date. Remember, except for the engine and electrical system changes, the differences between '64-1/2 and '65 models were nil. So, no retooling had to take place on the assembly line. I believe that building on the sales momentum generated by the '64-1/2 Mustang, Ford was able to ease into the '65 selling season almost effortlessly in mid-August.

The original '64-1/2 dealer marketing guide targeted five action areas. "For exposure programs for April 17th through July." So, production changes had to be made and dealer inventories had to be cleared of the "old" models so that "new" Mustangs could be shown to the world. A study of local newspaper ads for both Ford and Lincoln-Mercury dealers in the July-August 1964 time frame show that clearance sales began about July 30th. However, the Mustang hobby has acted as if the old models just disappeared and the new models just as magically reappeared on August 17th. That simply doesn't make sense. The real answer may be less complicated. It appears that Ford built, stockpiled, and shipped 1965 Mustangs for about two weeks before 'marketing' (not production) began on August 17th.

"Okay", you say, but Ford never called the first Mustang a '64-1/2 model anyhow, so what's the point. After all, they were all titled '65 models. Well, it's at this point **myth number two** rears its head. It's true that they were all titled as '65 models (all '64-1/2 and '65 model VINs begin with a '5'), but at least early on, Ford did call the early production cars '64 AND '64-1/2 models. Notice the date assigned to the lead photo of this article. What you're looking at is the salesman's postcard printed by Ford and intended for mailing to potential buyers. It plainly states; 1964 Mustang.

A second piece of literature dated June 23, 1964 titled "Ford Division Special Vehicles Activity" deals with the subject of Mustang Performance Options and

begins this way; "During the 1964-1/2 Mustang Introduction Shows...". Finally, while they don't specifically say so, the early production showroom sales brochure simply says, "Ford Mustang" on the cover, while the '65 sales brochure refers to "The Total Performance 1965 Mustangs". It's a subtle distinction perhaps, but a distinction never the less. These brochures make for very interesting reading.

Let's step back a minute and discuss the '64-1/2 engine options. When I was showing my own '64-1/2 at a regional Mustang meet, a young enthusiast walked up to me and announced to the world that my Mustang couldn't be a '64-1/2 if it had a V-8 engine. Oh, really? One glance at the '64-1/2 sales brochure and its enclosed option list was sufficient evidence to change his mind. But, were the V-8's really that common? After all, we have all seen ads describing a "rare 260 V-8", or a "very rare 289 D-code". Are these folks simply wrong about their own cars? In a word, yes. It's here that **myth number three** jumps right up and tries to bite us.

The May 1964 issue of *Car Life* magazine made this observation in their own Mustang test and analysis, "Best behaved of the Mustangs tested was the 260 with an automatic. This will undoubtedly be the hottest selling combination, providing respectable acceleration and performance for minimal cost." How prophetic!

Keep in mind, these were years when premium grade gasoline was selling for \$.25 per gallon. Performance was what the public wanted, and performance was what they ordered. The cost was minimal, \$65 to \$75 to upgrade to one of the V-8's from the base 170 cubic inch six cylinder.

According to the more than 3000 car data base of Jim Haskell who wrote a book titled, "In Search Of Mustangs", the '64-1/2 engine sales breakdown goes this way: "48% were equipped with the F-Code 260-2V; 34% were purchased with the D-Code 289-4V; and 17% came with the U-Code 170-1V. Only 1% had the K-Code 289-4V option which was not made available until the first week of June of that year." That means 83% of all '64-1/2 Mustangs came with V-8 engines!

Much more can be said about the differences between '64-1/2s and '65s. One of the preeminent experts on the subject, Dennis Havens (MCA# 9501) has documented over 130 differences between the two models:

It's been said that we shouldn't allow statistically derived facts to take on a life of their own. I couldn't agree more. For too many years, the hobby has allowed what we think we know to blind us to empirical evidence sitting on four wheels right in front of us. The momentum of many myths has colored our thinking and knowledge.

In the end, the differences between the '64-1/2 and the '65 become quite simple. The two significant items that were "distinct and unto themselves" were the particular engine line-up (and their codes); and the electrical system differences...and all that changed on August 3rd, 1964.