

RED HOT CJ

by Teresa T. Vickery
photos by Tony Garcia

Owners of high performance Mustangs tend to be very passionate when describing their pride and joy. Take Dick Knight of Bellevue, Washington, for instance. "The license plate says it all - RDHOTCJ - Red Hot Cobra Jet. The second fastest production Mustang, according to *Car Life Magazine*, 13.90/103.3, March 1969. That's what got me interested in restoring this car," he told us. This statement confirms that high octane runs through his veins and is further backed by the fact that other ponies in the Knight stable include a 1970 Mach 1, a 1966 HiPo fastback that is drag raced, and a 1988 Saleen convertible.

Dick first became interested in Mustangs back in 1983 with the purchase of his first pony. Eventually he restored a 1970 351C Mach 1 which was seen

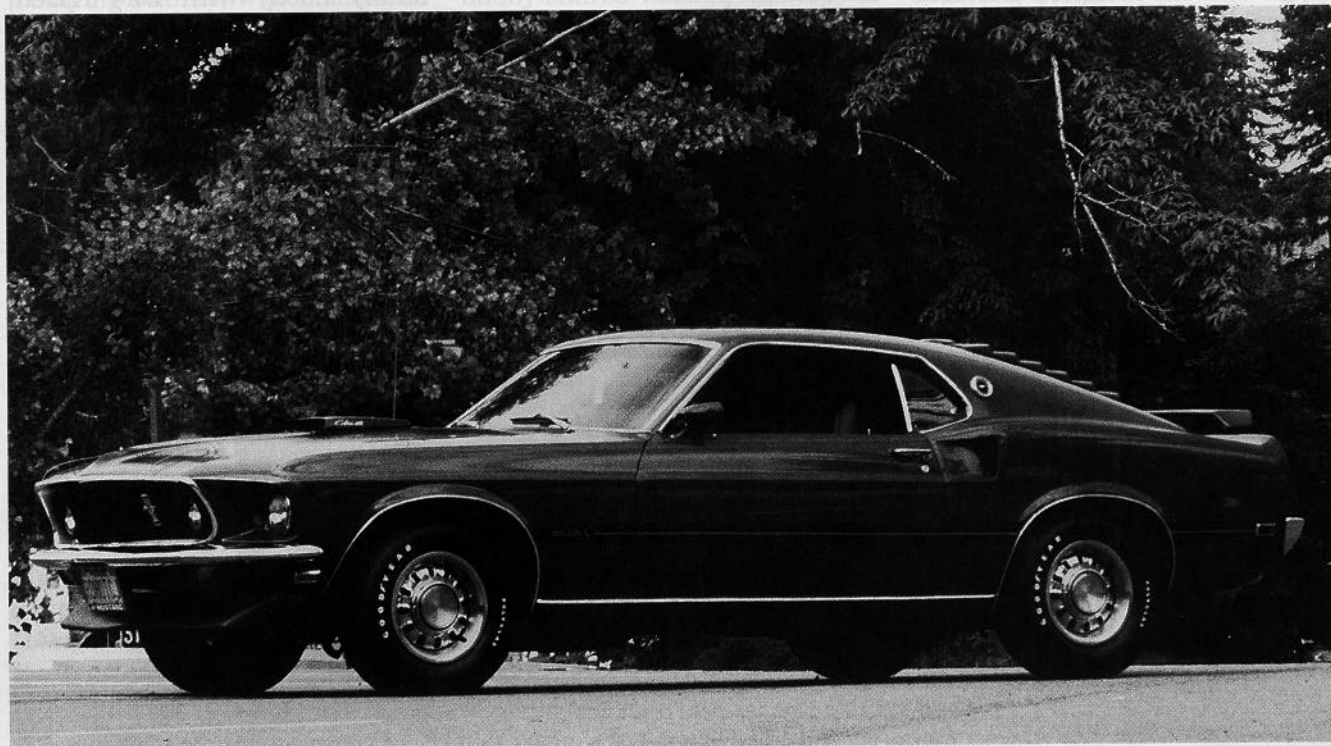
often on the show circuit for three years. But he yearned to try his hand at a bigger, better restoration.

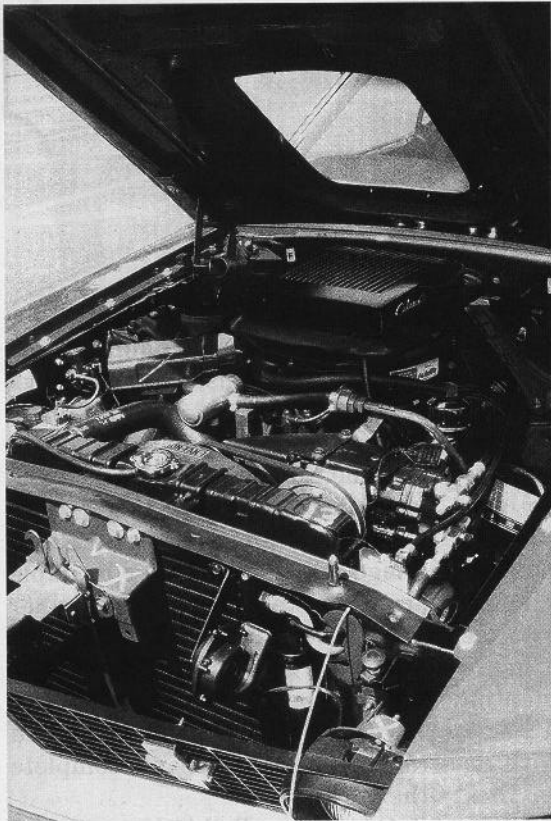
When he heard of a low-mileage 1969 Mach 1, he was eager to take a look. The SportsRoof had been repainted metalflake blue all over including the weatherstripping. But the odometer reading was a mere 51,000 miles and this potential winner was equipped with a 428 Cobra Jet power plant. With an eye toward the finish line, Dick purchased the Mach 1 in September 1989 and began a hard five-year restoration project.

The number one priority was to return the exterior to its original Candyapple Red glory. Randy Sargent of Sargent's Auto Body handled all the necessary steps in smoothing and refinishing the sheet metal.

The gleaming red paint further enhances the muscular good looks of the restyled 1969 platform. Visually living up to its supersonic name, the new-for-1969 Mach 1 looks fast even when sitting still. Complementing the performance image of this particular example are a matte black hood, Shaker hood scoop, NASCAR-type hood pins, side stripes, front and rear spoiler, and rear window slats. Chrome Styled Steel wheels and raised white letter tires complete the package.

Of course all this new muscularity meant the Mustang had grown slightly in size and weight, but the engines available for Mach 1 more than compensated for the increase. Standard fare was the 351W 2V at 250 horsepower, but if that was not enough, the option list contained a 351W 4V at 290 horses, 390 High





Performance version at 320 horsepower, and the potent 428 Cobra Jet churning out a rating of 335. Dick's new acquisition had plenty of power and low miles to boot, but since power, and more of it, is the name of the game, he opted to rebuild the original motor to Super Cobra Jet specs. Upgrades include stainless valves, hardened seats, and hav-

ing it balanced and bored .030. A C-6 automatic transmission handles shifting duties.

times hard (Dick indicates that removing the undercoating after the initial restoration was completed was definitely the low point of this ordeal), but with the



The cockpit of the Mach 1 models (black in this case) also carries a performance image. High-back bucket seats in Comfortweave vinyl are standard as is a deluxe three-spoke Rim-Blow steering wheel, carpet with red sewn-in mats front and rear, molded door panels with simulated woodgrain inserts, a center console, Mach 1 emblems, and a simulated woodgrain-enhanced instrument panel.

The process was long and at

help of fellow Mustangers, the five-year project yielded a Concours Trailered competitor that has received seven Best of Show nods.

While trophies, awards, and printed recognition are a wonderful byproduct of a restoration, perhaps the best part of owning a Mustang is the opportunity to meet others who also enjoy the fun and comradery associated with the cars. This has become a family hobby with wife Karen, and daughter Amy assisting in

show preparations. "We've stayed in the hobby because of friendships we've acquired from other Mustangers like us. It's an exciting hobby and nice to be greeted anywhere we travel with the car."

Of course owning a head-turning "Red Hot CJ" doesn't hurt either!

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