

In October 1969, when Jeff Kaiser was eight years old, he accompanied his father to the Ford dealership to shop for his dad's first "new car." Jeff remembers that day as if it were yesterday because his father was anxious to test drive the new Ford Maverick. Upon arriving at West Valley Ford in Santa Clara, California, they went straight to the new Mavericks. After completing their first test drive, Jeff remembers glancing over at the "last year's model" lot and spotting a 1969 Meadowlark Yellow Mach 1.

He ran over to check out the car and remembers convincing his dad to take it for a test drive. The test drive went well and Jeff was getting excited. However, upon returning to the dealership, Jeff's dad went back to haggling with the salesperson over the Maverick.

Well, Jeff wouldn't have any of that, and let his father know it. Jeff sat on the front bumper of that Mustang and told his dad, "I won't move until you buy this

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Text by Jeff Kaiser and Mary Jean Wesche, Photos by Jerry Heasley

The Story of ZOV 292



car." Jeff doesn't know how much actual influence he had by sitting on that bumper or whether his father was just using the Maverick as a bargaining tool, but they ended up buying the Mach 1 and Jeff went home one happy kid.

Eight years later, Jeff bought the Mach 1 from his father for \$2,000 and began doing what teenage boys do to cars—tearing out all the original engine parts and replacing them with high-performance parts. When it came to the car's

exterior, he kept it primarily stock with the exception of mag wheels, traction bars, and air shocks.

Once again, this was a special time in Jeff's life. This car had once again brought him and his father closer. Together they learned the basics of automotive mechanics as they replaced the original parts with aftermarket goodies. Jeff remembers working on the car with him many late night and weekends. Unfortunately, they carelessly threw away

most of the original components.

As the years went by, the Mustang got faster and faster, and more expensive for Jeff to maintain in his teenage years. It was at this time he was left with little choice but to sell the car back to his father. Although Jeff's dad was glad to help him out, the car was a little "too much" for his dad to use as a daily driver. So after about five years of storing the Mach 1, his dad finally ended up selling it to a long-time friend. The friend he sold it to had always been fond of the car,

so they knew it was going to be well taken care of. Unfortunately, a few years later, his friend died and the Mustang was sold once again. It was at this point they lost track of the Mach 1.

Over the next 20 years, Jeff and his dad frequently found themselves talking about the car, and expounding on their numerous regrets over ever selling it. Then one evening in March 2003 over dinner, they began discussing the car again. Jeff says, "It was at that moment I pledged to find "the car" and bring it back home. Dad thought I was crazy, and told me that the car had probably been wrecked and was sitting in a salvage yard somewhere never to be found."

The very next day Jeff started his quest by calling the son of his dad's long time friend to see if he knew the guy they sold it to or where he lived. The son didn't know, but he too had regretted selling the car and wished Jeff luck in his search. Running out of options, Jeff called in a favor with a friend who worked for in law enforcement, hoping that the original license plates were still on the Mustang and that it was still registered in California.

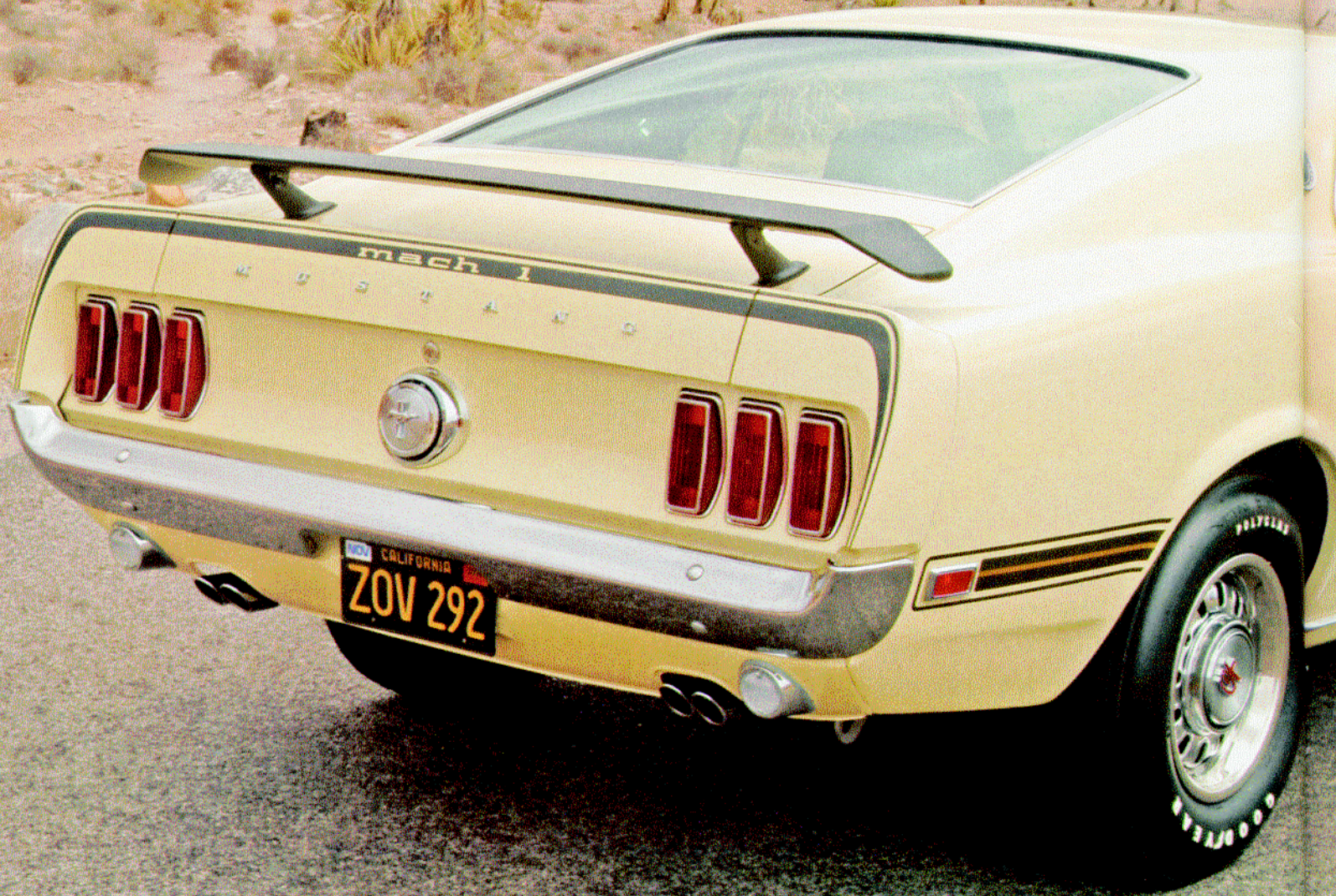
Sure enough, the Mach 1 was still registered and sitting in a barn about 50 miles east of San Jose. Fortunately, the current owner had kept up the registration. Jeff immediately contacted the owner, but did not identify himself as the original owner of the car. He told him he was looking for an original California "black license plate" Mustang to restore and heard that he had one. Jeff then asked him that if the price was right, would he consider selling it. He answered "perhaps," and then explained that he had started to restore the car and was going to paint it red, but he had too many other projects going on. Jeff continues, "He said that if we didn't mind that he had started to take it apart, that he would probably be interested in selling the car."

Jeff couldn't wait to call his dad and tell him of his discovery. Needless to say, Jeff's father was quite surprised. Jeff made an appointment for the next day to go look at the car and invited his father to come along. The next morning his father called and said he couldn't sleep, because he was so excited about the prospect of finding the

car and bringing it home.

When they arrived at the home of the seller, they saw the Mach 1 sitting in a barn with a pile of parts next to it. Sure enough, it was "the car," and it was all there. It had never been wrecked and all the original body panels were there along with the original engine still in the car. It was a perfect candidate for a concours restoration. After some brief negotiating, Jeff purchased the car for \$7,500 and finally brought it back home for good.

Jeff stated, "I would have loved to do the entire restoration myself, but in the interest of time, space, and know-how I decided to team up with a very reputable Mustang Restoration and Repair expert named Elliot Franklin, dba Mustang Corral in Auburn, California." They started the restoration in June of 2003. In April 2004, Jeff flew to Nashville, Tennessee, for the 40th anniversary of the Mustang to ask questions from the experts regarding the details of his restoration and to purchase as many N.O.S. parts as he could find. While in Nashville, Jeff met a man by the name of Duke Clancy



who has a similar Mustang that was built at the same San Jose plant. Jeff says, "Duke was very helpful in many areas regarding research and accuracy. In addition to Nashville, Jeff and Duke ultimately flew to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in June 2005 to attend the Carlisle All-Ford Nationals and continued to procure the missing N.O.S. parts for the restoration.

After three years and more than \$80,000, the Mach 1 is now complete. Every measure has been taken to preserve the originality of the Mustang. All exterior body panels are the original date coded panels, and 90-percent of the replacement parts Jeff has located are N.O.S. or refurbished originals. All the factory markings have been reproduced, as well as original textures and correct colors on and under the car, and under the hood.

As with most restorations done to this level, the monetary value of the car is not quite what has been invested. However, Jeff has found and restored a piece of his past that brings him and his father very fond memories and as they say—That's PRICELESS. *MT*

