



ORIGINAL OWNERS DRIVE HOME THE MESSAGE THAT FORD IS DIFFERENT



By John M. Clor

As most of you probably already know, Ford's newest marketing promotion is tagged "Drive the Ford Difference." It's clearly aimed at all of those ill-informed buyers who still think that the domestic brands are pretty much all the same and that quality and fuel economy are attributes only found in the imports. But I suspect you don't have to tell Mustang owners about the attraction of owning a vehicle that stands apart from the crowd. Mustang has been "connecting with customers" for 45 years now, and is the poster child for automotive leadership.

Let's face it, No domestic competitor has been able to run stride-for-stride with Mustang's ongoing market dominance, and imports have spent the last five decades in this country in what mostly amounts to a me-too copycat game of one-upmanship. What cars like the Mustang have done for Ford is to create an army of loyalists who know and appreciate the difference between a car that is just a transportation appliance and one that can spark a lifetime love affair.

And no, I'm not exaggerating about the "lifetime" part. Take Marc Snyder for example. I met Mark at Barber Motorsports Park during the Mustang 45th Anniversary Celebration in Birmingham, AL. He had stopped by the Acme apparel tent



where I was autographing copies of my book while chatting about Mustangs with MCA members. Marc was one of the 10 original owners of those 1964½ Mustangs on display at the Barber

Museum. He asked me if I could help him and his group get in touch with two retired Mustang legends: designer Joe Oros and product planner Don Frey.

Since I was involved with Ford Communications putting together the historical press releases leading up to the 45th event, I agreed to help—but only if HE could get ME the inside scoop on some of those 1964½ owners, whom he quaintly described as "just a bunch of average Joe's who purchased a Mustang in those first months after introduction, and by pure circumstance, had the good fortune to have held onto their cars these past 45 years."

So we struck a deal. A short time later, Marc sent me the following passage, summing up the experiences of that eclectic group of self-professed "Old Timers" at the 45th Anniversary event:

"Ten original owners of the 1964½ Mustang attended the 45th Mustang Anniversary celebration in Birmingham. Two prized ponies had a first-class delivery—trailer in from Pennsylvania and Ohio. The rest enjoyed the open road both to and from the Barber Motorsports Park.

"With 417,000 miles on the odometer, Jack Blakeley made the 3,000-mile drive from St. Helens, OR, joining Laki Mala-

matenios from Grass Valley, CA, in the "Mustangs Across America" Drive. Driving a 45-year-old vehicle is always an adventure; you are never quite sure how it will go. While Jack made frequent stops to visit NAPA part stores and a generator specialist in Edmond, OK, Laki drove the speed limit with his rare HiPo "K-code" car, but there were also dozens of Shelys that came along that thought they were on the Autobahn. Sometimes a few would get behind him and ride for awhile, but they eventually sped away. The youngest owners, Marc Snyder and Kathy Miller, assumed responsibility for organizing the group. They had received their Mustangs as a 16th birthday and high school-graduation gift, respectively, in June of 1964.

'Ford Mustang—The car designed to be designed by you!' was the ad from the time. The nine Mustangs parked in front of the Barber Museum provided spectators a view of most of



the options available on the 64½ introductory model. Hardtop and Convertible with all engines, including two of the extremely rare "HiPo" versions, were on display. The three Ford marketing themes of 'Economy,' 'Sporty,' and 'Luxury' were clearly visible for the public to admire.

So, now that the nostalgic drive is complete for the 45th, what memories do these owners treasure the most? Here are their words:

"For one, it was flashes of those Shelys speeding by as they traveled across the country. For another it was the sound of silence; not an AM station anywhere along the route!

"For some, the most exciting time was cruise night—a high-speed, stop-on-a-dime freeway ride that will never be forgotten. Motorists on the roads were stopped by police so we could pass by, and what an incredible reception we got from the crowd as we drove into Homewood, AL. It was a spectacular treat!

"Many of us who drove to and from Birmingham found that, as we passed new Mustangs, they all waved and gave us the thumbs-up and smiled. It was really great to experience how much everyone enjoyed seeing our original Mustangs on the highway. We were greeted with comments and questions everywhere we stopped along the way. It was like it was back in 1964—every time you went for a drive, people would wave and want to look at or ask about your Mustang.

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For everyone involved, the enduring memory was the instant camaraderie established among the original owners and their families. The Old Timers gathered for dinner after the opening ceremony and enjoyed an unexpected photo opportunity with Alan Mulally, President and CEO of Ford Motor Company. For a few hours, the clock rolled back 45 years and we were all young again and young at heart. The personal stories told revealed that our Mustangs are more than just collector's cars; they have become an integral part of the fabric of our lives."



Do you see what I mean about the Ford difference? Mustang and a host of other great Ford products have long been objects of owners' affection. Other manufacturers only wish they had built a vehicle that makes people feel this way. These original owners want to know if there are even more of them out there. So Marc issued this request:

"Although the "Old Timers" are all looking forward to the 50th Mustang Anniversary Celebration in April 2014, another reunion of the group was discussed in the interim. If you are an original owner of a '64½ Mustang with a scheduled build date prior to August 1, 1964, and still own that car today, please contact Marc Snyder at 256.520.1470 or msnyder66@earthlink.net for more information regarding future activities of our group."

I thanked Marc for polling his group and sending their thoughts along to me so that I could share them here with you. But I couldn't resist asking him for the story behind his own beautiful '64½. Here's what he sent me:

"It was the fall of 1963 and I was 15. 'Hammerin' Hank' Aaron was in Milwaukee and 'Mr. Cub' Ernie Banks played in Chicago. Baseball was pure and steroid-free. In November 1963, a CIA-backed coup d'état in South Vietnam was the beginning of the end of innocence for my generation. The Beatles would storm the U.S. in January 1964 with their hit tune 'I want to hold your Hand.' But I was like most teenage boys in those days with only thoughts of my first car.

"My dad and I loved cars, and he could identify anything on wheels. We spent hours identifying the make, model, and year of automobiles that we passed on the road. He always won, but I learned a lot about automotive history along the way. Time waits for no one—I could feel the clock ticking away towards my 16th birthday, and the car question had yet to be settled.

"It was now the spring of 1964 and the greatest media blitz in automobile history was about to kick off at New York's World Fair. Bemis Motor Company in Byron, IL, received only one Mustang during the third week in April. It was a Poppy Red coupe. It was not to be displayed to the public until 'M' day, April 17th. I was in the Bemis showroom that first day,

but it was already too late for that Mustang as it had already been sold! Truthfully, I can not remember when the negotiation began for a new Mustang, but it didn't take long to get an order in for mine. On April 22nd, at a total cost of \$2,710.75, I joined the stampede!

"My Mustang was delivered just two days before my 16th birthday on June 18th, to the proudest and luckiest kid in Byron. In so many ways, it seems like just last week that I was taking delivery of that new Mustang. But trying to recall each of the details belies the reality that it will soon be 45-years-ago that I watched it roll off the transporter in front of the Bemis Motor Company. It quickly vanished into the back of the garage for new-car prep, but I had to wait over the weekend for my drivers test on Monday. The short trip along the Rock River down to the County seat in Oregon, IL, is still vivid in my mind as if it were yesterday. The test administrator was totally absorbed in the new Mustang and had barely a thought of the novice driver behind the wheel taking his first driver's exam!

"Time has a sobering quality. It is fluid, and certainly swift. For nearly 45 years that Mustang and I have aged gracefully together during high school proms, college fraternity parties, marriage, raising a son, and military service. These are great memories! But the future holds new opportunities for adventures in a Mustang—just as it was in the beginning!

"FYI: My 5F07U157819 Mustang is a Wimbledon White hardtop coupe with a standard 170-cid inline 6-cylinder engine. Factory options include a 3-speed Cruise-O-Matic transmission, a 6000-rpm Rally-Pac, tinted windshield, white sidewall tires and Push-Button AM radio. Dealer added accessories are original, which include the passenger vanity mirror, rear-seat speaker, universal (flat) outside mirror on the driver's door, back-up lights, and front/rear high-rib floor mats. Original documentation includes the completed order form, cancelled check, and the Bemis Motor work order for installation of the back-up lights on March 5, 1966, at a cost of \$20.18, including the labor."



Again, my thanks to Marc Snyder and his fellow Original Owners who made the effort to share their experiences. For me, just the fact Ford racing has a "Ford Performance Group" program that interacts with loyalists to help them enjoy and promote the Ford enthusiast lifestyle proves Ford is truly different than any other automaker! Look for other unique Ford ownership perspective on www.FordPerformance.com, we're driving home the Ford difference every day!

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