



MUSTANG:

How I Spell a Lifetime of Memories

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When I was four years old, my father was concluding his obligations to the USAF where he had been a flight line mechanic on Korean War-era P-51 Mustangs. Long after the shooting stopped, I was introduced to the sound and fury of a Rolls-Royce Merlin engine as it spooled up for action. Even at that tender age, I wasn't sure there would ever be a more inspiring sound. 27 liters of "I mean business" V-12's will do that to you.

Shortly after that, my Dad came home with a brand new 1966 Mustang GT convertible, fresh off the Metuchen line. With subtle beige paint, its black stripes and top ... and sinister exhaust trumpets, I got my first real appreciation of small block V-8's in action. I'll never forget the joy of hitting the entrance ramps on the parkways in rural Connecticut on a summer evening. With the top down, nothing (without wings) sounded sweeter than that 289 as she was wound up thru the gears.

Fast forward 25 years and I finally had a chance to consider a Mustang of my own. A lightly used 1989 GT convertible was first. A near perfect Fox body car, my son and I spent many happy hours flashing across the Pennsylvania countryside. After one particularly aggressive

"merge into traffic maneuver," I got the quote that every father wants to hear; "Dad, I love the way my stomach feels when you do that!"

Well, the only thing left of the '66 is the official Ford scale model, which still graces my stable. A picture of the '89 also adorns it.



In the spring of 1995, I finally was able to buy a new 'Stang. A visit to my local dealer confirmed that I wanted a red GT with a saddle leather interior. Which red? How many are there? Three. So I did the logical thing and ordered the car based on a one-inch square in a brochure. How far wrong could I go?

On the day the car arrived I went through all the paperwork and the pre-flight check and the financial handoff required to make the car mine. With that done, it was time to see her. The dealer had pulled it into the service area, where

the floor was painted white and the lights were bright. As I entered the paddock, I stopped dead in my tracks. What had I done?

I thought had ordered a "red" car. In reality, my new and trusty steed was orange. Or at least an orange shade of red. I had never seen this color before ... ever. I must have turned a whiter shade of pale.

My wife saw the reaction in my face and all I could think to ask was, "This is what ordered?" She was mortified.

Then I started to giggle, as only a grown man can do. "This is great! I didn't even know they came in this color. Fantastic."

Every car deserves a name, and Sally has been with us for 14 years now. She's my daily driver today, but in NC that usually means good weather only ... except for rain. She looks and feels pretty much as she did back in '95, with the only mods being a set of Tokico shocks and a Steeda short-throw shifter which has dramatically improved drivability (and reduced the chance of that dreaded missed-shift when going for third at speed).

Sally garners compliments when I make local pit stops for food and fuel, and it occurs to me that the high schoolers she attracts aren't much older than



her now! And yes, on those cool summer evenings, there's nothing better than spooling up the last of the 5.0Ls as I swing out for a blast down a bi-way. Forty three years have passed and the small block still sounds great.

I was fortunate enough to marry my best friend from high school, and we have been blessed with great children and wonderful experiences. Thanks to her tolerance and good nature, I've been fortunate enough to add to our squadron of "toy" cars. Every one has a story.

Next to come home was a 1994 Cobra, Black on Black. I bought Glennis from a couple in upstate NY. With 10k on the clock, she was their pride and joy for good-weather cruising. Unfortunately, health problems meant they couldn't use her any longer and they sold her to finance something more appropriate for a loving couple in their sunshine years. I felt like I was adopting a child rather than buying a car! Several years later, I got a special note from them sharing that every time they saw a Mustang they thought of "us" and hoped we still enjoyed her. The package included a Mustang Christmas tree ornament. We

share a smile and raise a toast to them every time we hang that GT on the tree.

And then there was the rescue. One cold December day five-years ago, I spotted a yellow '98 Cobra sporting "for sale" signs. Original owner wanted to trade up to a Crossfire convertible. While I needed it like a hole in the head (or my wallet) it was too good to pass up. So Eleanor came home to share the hanger with friends. As I pulled her into the garage for the first time, it dawned on me that the DOHC, 4.6 liter motor might actually be the best sound system known to man. There was a whiff of Rolls in that snarl.

Now, whenever I hit the loud pedal on her, it brings back fond memories of P-51's whistling over the head of a small boy at full chat. The mind wanders and the blood runs cold. I should probably call my Dad and tell him that I love the way I feel every time I get close to a Mustang of any kind.

It is an American icon, and I'm very fortunate that we've shared it for three generations now. Yes, my kids all enjoy them too. And my brother. And my nephew...



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