



A FAMILY HEIRLOOM

ORIGINAL OWNER 64½

By Walt Ayre

After graduating from the University of New Hampshire, I joined the Navy hoping to be a pilot. This was not to be as I received a medical discharge. Returning to New Hampshire, I landed a teaching position at Brewster Academy where I taught math and coached skiing for two years. I believed it was time to follow my dream to have a sports car. I bought a 1961 MGA convertible and enjoyed the handling qualities of the vehicle ... along with the fun associated with owning a convertible.

At 25 years of age, I decided it was time to purchase my first NEW car! There was a new concept car being launched at the 1964 Worlds Fair in New York that caught my eye—Lee Iacocca's Ford MUSTANG! Great, a car with sports' car appeal, a 289 V-8 engine and a stick shift to boot! I walked into the local Ford dealer in Laconia, NH, and looked at a beautiful yellow Mustang convertible staring directly at only me! My Dad always said, "Negotiate, then walk away from the salesman; he will come around!" I followed Dad's advice, and after walking out the dealership's door, the exasperated salesman followed saying, "If I give you \$10 from my wallet, will you buy the car?"

SOLD! Purchase date August 31, 1964,

VIN #5F08D184447. The car was manufactured in June of 1964.

We moved to Connecticut where my ski experience landed me a position helping launch a new ski area in Connecticut—Mt. Southington. It was this assignment where I met and married my wife, Pat, in 1965. We seemed to move often from 1965 through 1981 (CT, NY, NH, CA, ME, GA, CA, and back to Atlanta, GA).

By the time we moved from Connecticut to New York to New Hampshire, I had settled into the text book business in northern New England. My car was a company car and the Mustang became a family car with three kids and a very large dog to tote around four seasons, including winter! My company decided to promote me to their division headquarters in Menlo Park, California. Great promotion; but, no company car. The Mustang traveled with us as we settled in Half Moon Bay. We



bought a station wagon for the family and I commuted to work in our yellow "pony." After three years in California, the company decided it was time to return me to our native New England. Our daughter, Alicia, had a horse, while living in California; companies did not pay for pet transfers bigger than a dog or cat! The company promised to "..... pay for your travel if you care to trailer your pet horse from California to Maine." Off we went with a horse, a dog, and a cat in a horse trailer and 3 kids in a Ford station wagon headed east. Interesting to find the pony moving east in a moving van and the family "pet" moving east inside a horse trailer! We were able to find lodging for the horse easier than finding a motel for our family. This family trip was exciting with great tales along the way ... worth a short story!

Once we settled in Maine, we built a barn for both our "ponies;" one an

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Appaloosa and the other a Yellow Mustang convertible. Although our kids loved to ride in the open air during summer months, it quickly became a reality that Mustang convertibles in Maine during long winter months are not practical. Neither are they practical for hauling hay, grain, goat chow, rabbit chow, etc. Pat had her car and I had full use of a company car. I was offered \$500 for the Mustang ... thought the better of it and put her in the barn to rest—a long, six-year rest.

In 1981, we had an opportunity to move to Atlanta with a new company. We decided to store our very rusted Mustang in a Madbury, New Hampshire, barn. Where else would you store a pony? I had always hoped one day we would restore the Mustang.

When we came into a small inheritance and decided to restore the car. After careful research, I found Sunset Restoration, in McDonough, GA, where a highly recommended gentleman (Robert Winkelman) focused 95-percent of his restorations on Mustangs. Our car was transported to McDonough where Robert commented, "Wow! I have never worked on a Mustang with that much rust throughout..." And, let's not forget the mouse nest in the air cleaner housing. The reality here is, Robert had never worked on a New England and California coastal-fog, salt-affected car!

Our first grandchild was born in Maine in January of 1999. This event prompted us to think seriously of returning to our New England roots. Our "original owner 64 1/2 Mustang" was restored and delivered to Eliot, Maine, in August of 2005. As the "original owner," I knew what I had purchased that August day in 1964. However, I wanted to enter a Mustang-focused show where some 150 Mustangs from around New England would be on display allowing me to learn more detail regarding "original" restoration. "What are

the specifics that make this car a 1964 1/2 rather than a 1965 model?" This car show, sponsored by the Mustang Club of New Hampshire, gave me ample opportunity to talk with many Mustang enthusiasts. The many Mustang owners and fans that looked at the car were impressed with the quality of the restoration, indicating it was great to see a well restored 1964 1/2 Yellow Mustang convertible with black interior and a 289 stick shift! I learned a lot that day and came away with first prize in the '64-'65 Convertible Division.

Each year our small town of Eliot, ME, has a Festival Day in September with many festivities, including a parade. Our yellow Mustang convertible is a mainstay, carrying a local politician and our youngest grandson, Adam who is 9. As one long-time politician said to me as they both waved to the crowd, ".....seems like Adam knows more people in this town than me....".

Since that September Mustang Show in 2005, I've attend a handful of shows, which bring interesting antique car enthusiasts together where restoration purists mingle with folks reminiscing about their vintage automobiles. Many Mustang fans have offered high dollars for our car; however, this vehicle is a family heirloom and will be handed down, first, to my son Steve....owner of a 1996 black-on-black Mustang fastback.

We are looking forward to having our newest grandson, Aidan, travel north so all three generations can take sunny rides along the beaches of Maine and New Hampshire. Our oldest grandchild, Zach, turns 16 when our Mustang turns 50. It would be great if Zach could become an owner of a 2014 Mustang. Perhaps then, Father, Son and grandchildren could travel with Mustangs Across America in the summer of 2014.

We can all dream; can't we? **MT**

