

AT THE HELM!

Jim Farley talks the talk and walks the walk.



Text and Photos by Mary Jean Wesche

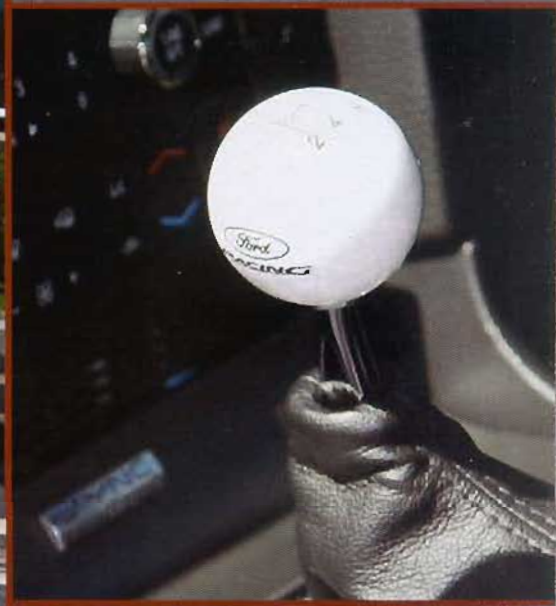
At the age of 14, Jim Farley, Ford group vice president, Global Marketing and Canada, Mexico, and South America operations, sold an airline ticket that he was to use to fly from California to Chicago and bought a 1966 Mustang and proceeded to drive it to Chicago, by himself. Just think about that, and then think about the shock on his mother's face when he pulled up in the car! When the 2010 Mustang reveal was held in Southern California, one of the Mustangs on display was Jim's restored 1966, although not the same one as previously mentioned. His life-long goal was to work at Ford Motor Company!

A few months after Jim Farley first came to Ford Motor Company from Toyota, several automotive journalists were asked to meet with him and Mark Fields in Las Vegas during a Dealer Meeting. Always one to question authority on some level, I wondered why anyone in those Executive positions at Ford would want *me* at that type of meeting. A decision to not attend was nearly made, however, after taking a long breath, I decided to err on the side of caution (another of my mother's Momisms) and go.

Well, meeting Mark Fields and Jim Farley was a wonderful experience on so many levels. We discussed Ford Motor Company's plans for the future, and got a quick tour of the information they

shared with their Dealers on the future products from Ford, and the testing that was ongoing to improve Ford vehicles. I won't bore you with all the details of the brief two days of meetings, but there was also lots of fun stuff. The second day, Jim sat at a table with about six journalists, both print and online media were represented. He asked what was the first thing our readers did when they bought a Mustang. He asked us what we thought our readers wanted from upcoming Mustangs. You should remember the question being posed to the members and the ensuing answers being printed in several issues of *Mustang Times*.

At that time, I told Jim that if I asked that question of you, the members



of the MCA, that you would respond. And, respond you did. I forwarded the comments on to Jim and he replied that he shared your comments with the Ford engineers and the Mustang team.

Well, that episode spoke volumes about Jim, and his commitment to Ford Motor Company and its customers. He truly wanted to know what the consumer wants, whether dealing with Mustang enthusiasts or those who purchase an F150. **He really listens.** And, he and all the teams respond to the consumer in a positive manner. It's quite evident when you read how much they've increased Ford's market share.

I have had the opportunity to talk with him at length about the future of the Mustang,

and the interest level the American Icon has generated. He indicated the then-upcoming V6 was going to be a powerhouse that would thrill any Mustang enthusiast. Additionally, with its horsepower and ever-increasing safety features, it would be a good daily driver for just about anyone, from first-driver to a senior citizen. We played a lot of "what ifs" with sometimes him asking me as many questions as I asked him. I shared comments I've heard from many of you about wants, wishes, desires, whatever you want to call it, and he just sat and smiled. Obviously some of the wishes had already been considered by the enthusiasts who comprise the Mustang Team—and true enthusiasts they are! Jim commented that he felt the MCA members

were quite well versed on their hobby and enjoyed hearing from you!

He talked with pride about how his grandfather was Ford employee #300. And, then he jokes about how his father asked where he planned to spend holidays when he went to work for Toyota, because he wasn't going to be allowed to come home. I'm sure his dad is quite proud of him!

Of course, during our conversations, he couldn't give away any secrets about future products, but he did indicate that there was much in the works that would make the enthusiasts happy. One of those products was just introduced at Laguna Seca—the 2012 Boss 302.

A perfect example of his enthusiasm



is his personal vehicle—a modified 2010 Grabber Blue Mustang GT. On a recent visit to Detroit and Ford Headquarters, I photographed his Mustang. And, I have to share this: I actually was allowed into the Executive Parking Garage where it was quite obvious which Ford product parked there belonged to Jim Farley. Not only was I allowed into the garage, I actually drove his Mustang out of the garage, around the parking lot, parked it at the base of the beautiful entrance to Henry Ford II World Headquarters, took the photos and parked it back in its original spot. Now, that might not mean much to some of you, but to me it was a HUGE honor to actually drive Jim Farley's Mustang. And, what a cool ride it is! Later, as he was leaving for a meeting, he drove it out for a quick photo op. You could definitely hear him coming and going! He drives it hard and enjoys it immensely.

When Jim arrived at Ford on his first day it was during the month of November. When asked by the garage personnel what car he wished to have to drive, he asked for a Mustang. A comment was made that most executives requested a crossover or something similar, and he replied, "Well, not this one. And, by the way, make it a stick." A 2010 Grabber Blue GT was delivered to him. Since he it was early in the day and he had the time before his first meeting, Jim took it for a spin leaving the garage with a memorable burnout! I can just imagine the grin that was on his face.

Jim has modified his Mustang, and I hear that he did much of the work himself instead of having the mods handled by a professional technician. He wanted to enjoy the same hands-on experience working on his new Mustang as any enthusiast would. Just how enthusiastic he is about Ford and the Mustang shows in this—his daily driver. And, what does he do in the winter months? Jim states, "During the winter I use a set of slave wheels and Goodyear snow tires. Lots of fun!"

At the Mid America Ford Performance and Team Shelby Meet in Tulsa this past June, Jim was behind the wheel of several Mustangs and Shelbys, and even drove Rick Titus' Panoz on Hallett's road course. He obviously enjoyed his experience that day, and it was evident as he talked about it later on that evening.

You've heard it said on many occasions—what a great time to be a Mustang enthusiast! Well, with the Mustang team that's in place at Ford these days, it's hard to disagree with that statement. The company is being led by highly intelligent enthusiastic executives that "GET IT,"

We finally have a leadership team at Ford that understands the product, whether it's the Mustang Team, the Ford Racing Team, or the design team. No matter which Ford vehicle they're working on, they all are enthusiasts and take pride in their work! Just look at what they're producing, what more proof of that statement can there be? **MT**

MODIFICATIONS

Here's some of the major mods that Jim Farley has made on his Grabber Blue GT!

- Ford Racing exhaust
- Quick Shift kit with white shifter ball
- Air intake
- Strut tower brace
- Ford Racing suspension and lowering kit
- Brembo brakes
- GT500 Argent wheels

