

OBSESSION

A way of life is an understatement



Text and Photos by Craig Rupp

Growing up I have always fought the “daddy bought your car” stereotypes, but that usually only comes from the mouths of the envious. This is what I tell them...

As some kids grew up their dad’s took them to the park, bought them lots of toys, video games, and other easily forgotten rubbish. Instead, my childhood was spent in junk yards pretending to race wrecked cars, searching glove compartments for contraband, and playing with that flea bitten mutt that protected the yard, while my dad found that missing part.

At the age of five, I put in my time at half-day kindergarten and soon after left with dad to pick up his first project car, a 1968 Candy Apple Red Mustang Fastback. Through the eyes of an expert, I was certain this was a pile of junk. The first sign was the Flintstone floor boards that my feet could easily fit in through but dad was sure this was a diamond in the rust.

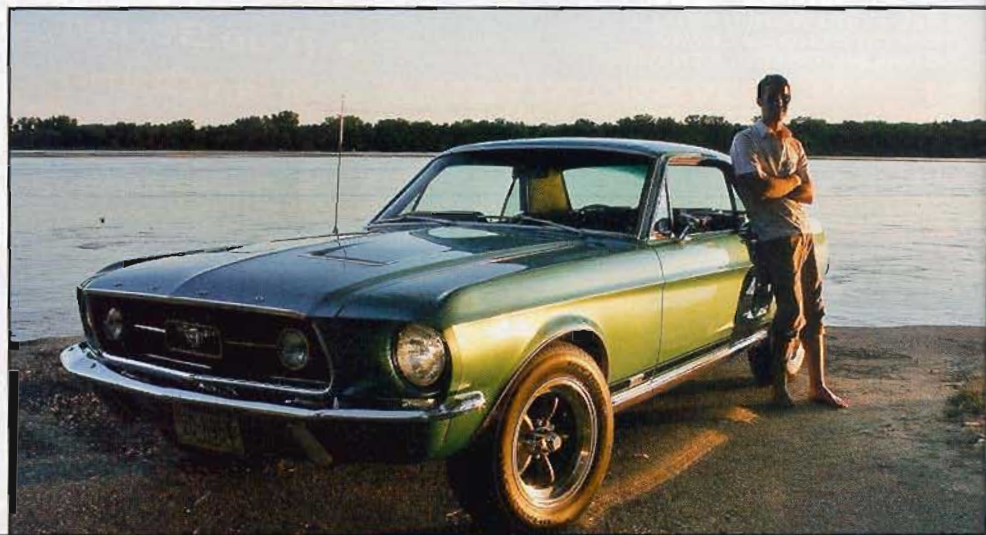
After many months and countless hours of chasing grasshoppers and unorganizing the old man’s tools while he was busy working on the car, it was just about done in time for my Kindergarten graduation. After seeing the fresh red

paint and shiny chrome glimmer in the sun I then decided through careful deliberation that I was going to steal dad’s car.

Well, the years went by and so did the Mustangs. Mouse nests, cat urine, angry wasps, kittens, and other rodents (dead or alive) might be found in most peoples allergy medicine warning labels but it became second nature the summer of my eighth grade year, when the Rupps brought home five Mustang parts cars. It seemed inevitable that one would eventually be mine but to no avail, none received the old man’s approval for restoration.

By this time we had restored several Mustangs, including one for my older brother. It was now my turn to defeat rust and move on to glory. On June of 2005, the time finally came. I willingly forfeited all of my savings to buy my first project, \$450 for a 1967 coupe. The journey was all of two miles from the garage but it could not have seemed longer.

After a few blissful weeks of disassembling, sandblasting, and organizing, the project seemed to be moving well but my high school earnings dried up as fast as the gas stains on the concrete. I like to call it “The Waiting”, but only the lucky few that work with



continued from page 50

budgets, know what I mean. This is when the old man saved my a\$\$\$. I was fortunate enough to have a stockpile of Mustang parts at my fingertips and a mobile 1967-'68 Mustang expert who stayed in the master bedroom, scowled at my report cards, and lectured for missing curfew. My dad is Marty Rupp, the Mustang Club of America Head Judge if you didn't already make the connection, I am "Marty's boy".

So, it was the night before junior prom, there lay "Marty's boy" on the freezing cold garage floor painting POR15 on the bottom of my now rust-free Mustang. My date was nevertheless pleased to see the black stains all over my hands and arms the next night at the dance but she could never understand why I do these things.

Finally the day came to take the ol' girl to get her stripes. I remember having mixed feelings like a mom on the first day of pre-school, but being preoccupied with senior year shenanigans helped the time to fly by and before I knew it the car was finished.

Currently I take my Mustang to local shows, Culver's on Friday nights, and the casual cruise to the orchards to get apples but there is nothing better than waving at random gawkers or the friendly stop light conversations with drivers. I am a third generation Mustang enthusiast. You could even go as far to say Mustangs run in my veins but there is more Rupp than anything. I am glad to share this beautiful car with the public but credit should be given where it's earned. The mastermind behind this restoration was my old man. I almost feel like the luckiest son in the world but hey ... it's no Shelby! **MT**

