

THE FOLLOWING IS A "MUSTANG FABLE" SUBMITTED TO US BY LAURA FOSTER OF CINCINNATI, OHIO. WE HOPE YOU WILL ALL ENJOY THE STORY AS WELL AS LAURA'S INGENUITY!

The year is 1990. It is a frosty November night, and I am glad to be sitting in front of a fire, instead of outside getting firewood, like my husband.

My five-year-old daughter scampers into the room, carrying a dog-eared brown book. She climbs into my lap and says, "Look, Mommy, what I found!"

"Shel," I ask her, "where did you find this book?"

"It was in the closet, on the back shelf. It has very funny pictures. Will you read it to me, Mommy?"

"Sure, Shel." I turn the book over. PHOTO ALBUM is stamped on it in slightly tarnished gold leaf. I open it to the first page, and Shel immediately points at the picture.

"What is that thing, Mommy?"

I smile. "That's a car, honey. Remember, you saw one in the museum."

"Oh, yeah," she recalls. "But the one in the museum wasn't like that."

"Nope, it wasn't. This is a very special kind of car."

"Was it a president's car?" Only the president had a car now, and that was only for parades.

"No, Shel. That was your Mommy's car."

My daughter's blue eyes grow wide and round in amazement. "You had a car, Mommy? Just like the president?"

"Well, honey, it certainly was a car, but it wasn't quite like the president's."

"Wow! Tell me about it, Mommy!"

I looked at the picture again, and adolescent memories swelled in my mind. I sigh.

"What does this say, Mommy?" Shel pointed beneath the picture. There, drawn rather primitively, was a tombstone with a pony at the top, inscribed with the words, "Laura's First Car. (August 25, 1965) August 1979-March 1980. "In the midst of life, there are bad ball joints." R.I.P." It was one of my worst attempts at humor.

"It says, "Laura's First Car", Shel," I told her.

"What kind of car was it, Mommy?"

"It was called a "Mustang", after a wild horse. Some of them would go very fast."

"Where did you get it, Mommy?"

How was I to tell her so that she would understand? Shel had grown up in a world without automobiles; the whole country had been reduced to using mass transit when all the gasoline finally ran out, the year before she was born. So, how could I explain to her about the joy everyone faced when they turned sixteen? How could I tell her about the problems I had getting my dad to take me looking for cars? Worse, yet, how could I make her understand that her Mommy had once been desperately in love with a group of machines that she would never set foot in?

"I bought it from a man named Murphy," I told her lamely.

"Murphy?" Shel wrinkled her nose at the strange name.

"Yes." I still remember fat, round Mr. Murphy, and Mrs. Murphy hiding anxiously in the kitchen. Shel's grandfather had said that he should have been put in jail for cheating a minor, but I liked the man.

"How much did the car cost, Mommy?"

"Five hundred dollars."

Her eyes get wide again. "Wow, Mommy! Where didja ever get that much money?"

"I got a job and earned it." I remember how I worked my tail off all summer for that money, just so I could buy a car. I wanted a Mustang, oh, boy, how I wanted a Mustang, and had bought the second one I looked at, the one that my little girl had her little pink finger on.

My father had objected to, no, fought against my buying that car. But I pouted, and he finally gave in, saying, "You have to learn sometime, and maybe you will after you get cheated a few times. You sure are getting cheated on this car." But complain as he would, he signed the papers, and the car was mine. The fact that it had 120,000 miles on it didn't bother me. Either did the fact that it needed brakes and a muffler, and had rust on every body section but the roof. I noticed none of these bad points. All I could see was the palomino pony interior, the genuine factory 8-track, and the fantastic shine on that red body (rust or no rust) after a good wax job.

The bill for the new brakes and exhaust system did bother my dad, however. But not me. There was something else that I noted on the bill besides the price when he showed it to me. In one corner, the repairman had written: "Car needs new ball joints, control arm, idler arm." But since I didn't know a ball joint from a ball bat, I was still happy, even though my dad had succeeded in making me feel guilty about the bill.

I drove the car to school, and wondered why it was met with an occasional snicker; I even overheard someone say, "Didja see Foster's rag?". But even that didn't bother me. I suddenly realized that these people were all blind, and I was casting pearls before swine. They didn't realize that this was a Mustang sitting before them and, rust or no rust, that was somethin' else.

"What's this, Mommy?" my daughter asked, pointing to a yellowing clipping on the next page.

I smiled. I had joined the MCA before buying the car, and when they asked that members send in their cars' V.I.D. numbers, I did so immediately.

On receiving the next issue of the Mustang Times, I almost had a heart failure when I read my name, along with the information that my car was the oldest 1966 that they had on record. This was the clipping that Shel was pointing at.

"It says that Mommy's Mustang was the oldest one that they knew about at the time." I read the clipping to her. "The earliest known 1966 Mustang owned by Laura Foster, of Cincinnati, Ohio, #6T07C100409, built 25, August, 1965."

I had showed the clipping to everybody, and they didn't laugh quite so hard anymore, but they still laughed. One kid even said, "Thank God they haven't seen that rust bucket at the MCA, or they'd throw you out of the club." But I didn't care. It was my car, and I liked it, even though it had begun to squeal because it needed a new fan belt. I replaced the fan belt and it stopped squealing, and I was happy again.

"Who are all these people?" Shel asks, pointing at several pictures of teenagers sitting on the Mustang.

"Those were some friends I went to school with. There's your Daddy."

She squeals with delight at seeing her father's picture. He was as skinny as a bean pole, with long, blond hair and more than a few pimples.

"Why does he have his arm around that girl?"

Now it's my turn to laugh. "Oh, it's a long story, Shel. Here's a picture of Mommy." She laughs again, and I laugh with her.

"Who are you with?"

"That's your Uncle Jerry."

"He sure looks funny."

I look at the picture again. "He sure does."

Shel turns the page. "What happened to the Mustang? It has a blue fender in this picture!"

I grin rather sheepishly. "Mommy had a small accident. They couldn't find a red fender, so they had to put a blue fender on it."

"Oh." Shel nods understandingly.

A small accident. Well, a relatively small accident. Nobody was hurt. The guy hit me, but it was my fault.

Shel turns several more pages, then looks at me, perplexed. "How come there aren't any more pictures of the Mustang?" For some reason, she doesn't want to look at the other pictures, labeled "Laura's Second Car", "Laura's Third Car", etc.

"I sold it."

"Why, Mommy?"

"I had to. There was something wrong with the part that made it steer." How could I explain to her about ball joints and control arms? How could I tell her that when we took it to get the fender fixed, the mechanic had said disgustedly, "The thing should be junked. The front end's gone. The steering's shot"? She wouldn't understand.

"Oh," she says understandingly again. "Mommy, do you have anymore pictures of Mustangs? I think they're pretty."

Just then, my husband comes in, covered with snow, and lugging firewood. He sets it down, and Shel jumps into his arms. "We've been looking at Mommy's Mustang, Daddy!"

He looks at me questioningly, and I nod and hold up the book. "Really, Shel?" he says to his child. "What do you think?"

"I think they're pretty, Daddy!"

He laughs. "Another Mustang addict is born. She's starting even earlier than you did, Laura."

I nod again and smile at them. "It's time for bed, Shel."

"I'll take her up," my husband volunteers.

"Okay." I kiss my daughter goodnight. "I'll come up to tuck you in, later."

"Goodnight, Mommy!"

"Goodnight, Shel."

My husband carries her up the steps and I look at the book again. Under the last picture, in the same childish scribble, I had written, "It just goes to show that Mustangs are the best. Even if they're rusty and bent, they turn out to be good. This one turned out to be the oldest on record, and it's probably worth a lot, even if the ball joints are shot. Mustangs are the greatest!!!"

I shut the book and close my eyes. I really was a dreamer as a kid- the car was a rag. But still- I guess everyone loves their first car.

My husband comes back downstairs and looks at the photo album. "Where'd you find this?"

"Shel found it. In the closet."

He leafs through it, laughing at the pictures of us as kids. I think how ironic it is that my daughter should dig the thing out. Then I remember what she asked. "Do you have any more pictures of Mustangs, Mommy? I think they're pretty." I remember an old scrapbook that I've got somewhere and make a mental note to dig it out for her. After all, if the kid's going to like something that she'll probably never ride in, it might as well be the best. I remember my own childish proclamation: "Mustangs are the greatest!!!" And I realize that it's still true. Even after almost thirty years, the car that I fell in love with still has its charm and is still attracting fans.

The moral of this fable: Even if there's no gas left to power 'em, there will still be Mustang fans.

Right?

Laura Foster

Laura Foster #4029

JUNIOR DIVISION

1967-70 Shelby

- 1 Lamar Allen
Cleveland, Ga.
- 2 Gary Martin
Jonesville, Va.
- 3 Drexel Benton
Thomasville, Ga.

Bosses

- 1 Gary Schwartz
Merrill, Wisc.
- 2 Jerry Sain
Buchanan, Mich.
- 3 Randell Bramwell
Anderson, Ind.

Special Interest

No Entries

Unrestored Coupe

- 1 No Winner
- 2 Ivan Rhoden
Plainfield, Ind.
- 3 Myrtle Bea
Lawrence, Ind.

Unrestored Convertible

No Entries

Unrestored Fastback

- 1 No Winner
- 2 No Winner
- 3 Steve Kirk
Louisville, Ky

SENIOR DIVISION

1965-66 Coupe

- 1 Bob Murphy
Knoxville, Tn.

1965-66 Convertible

No Entries

1965-66 Fastback

- 1 Betty Jo Cox
Kingsport, Tn.

1967-68 Coupe

No Entries

1967-68 Convertible

- 1 J. W. Gowin
Rocky Face, Ga.

1967-68 Fastback

No Entries

1969-70 Coupe

No Entries

1971-73 Convertible

No Entries

1971-73 Fastback

No Entries

1971-73 Coupe

No Entries

1971-73 Convertible

No Entries

Modified Fastback

No Entries

Modified Coupe

No Entries

Modified Convertible

- 1 Ralph Smith
Kingsport, Tn.

BEST OF SHOW - JUNIOR DIVISION

STOCK Bob Overby
Brentwood, Tn.

MODIFIED Doug Owen
Knoxville, Tn.

BEST OF SHOW - SENIOR DIVISION

STOCK Bob Murphy
Knoxville, Tn.

MODIFIED Ralph Smith
Kingsport, Tn.