

IN SEARCH OF MUSTANGS I

No doubt but there are a few of you that remember the 1964 New York World's Fair. The Ford Motor Company had quite an exhibit at the fair, called the "Magic Skyway." In this exhibit, Ford cars were pulled through a "Time Tunnel." Visitors would sit in new Ford convertibles and go from the Stone Age up through modern times as well as into the future. Each Ford car had a hitch installed underneath so that it could be drawn through the exhibit, and on the car's radio it was explained how man had progressed through time with his new inventions, etc. The radio also played any one of four languages: English, German, French, or Spanish, depending on the station selected. Between the time the World's Fair got started in early 1964 and through the end of summer, America was getting its first chance to get to know an exciting new automobile, the Ford Mustang! The Ford exhibit was not only there for display of Ford automobiles and the education of people, but for the introduction of the new Mustang. This is where our story begins.

It concerns a '64½ prototype Mustang, #5F08T383386, built on February 15, 1964. This prototype Pony was built two weeks before the official start of production of March 3, 1964. First, the history: This Mustang began its existence at the end of the Dearborn Rouge Assembly Plant's line. That cold February day in 1964 saw a Mustang destined for a spot 700 miles away and not a showroom floor either. This Mustang required special appointments and preparations and they were performed by a firm called Carron & Company in Southfield, Michigan. Once this Mustang arrived at Carron, the engine and entire drivetrain were removed and stored away for safe-keeping. The quarter panel seams were leaded over (as well as the trunk seams), to make the body free of any joints or seams. An am/8 track radio was installed, and special brackets were welded to the frame to facilitate future use at the New York World's Fair.

Other items, like accessory lights on the interior of the doors, a light in the trunk, and other special options, were installed. Upon completion by Carron,

this prototype Mustang was shipped to New York by enclosed truck. The car was used at the fair through the summer of 1964. If you look in the "History of the Ford Mustang," a new book just released, you will see a photo of Buddy Hackett and a couple of other celebrities sitting in a white Mustang convertible at the New York World's Fair. Whether this is the Mustang I write of now remains to be seen. Upon completion of the fair in late 1964, the car was shipped back to Carron & Company. At that time, the drivetrain was reinstalled, new paint applied, a new interior installed (due to wear and tear from the thousands of people that had been in and out of the car), new tires, anything else that needed replacement. Other items were brought up to date (i.e., a cable gas cap and alternator). After this Mustang was put back to "normal" condition, it was put up for sale on the Ford Motor Company resale lot. This Mustang was purchased by a FoMoCo executive in Dearborn, Michigan, with less than 30 miles on the clock! This was in December, 1965. After driving it for a few years, he then turned it over to his mother who drove it very little. This brings us up to its present owner, Gary Schweitzer of Michigan. Gary purchased this gem in September of 1978. At that time, this Mustang still had the original Carron tires and 35,000 miles on it. The license plates were of 1973 vintage.

This Mustang shares the same beginning as 11 other prototype Mustangs built at the same time and for the same purpose. Where the other 11 went is anyone's guess.

At this time Gary has his Pony undergoing 100 percent restoration to original condition. Between Gary and his father, this Mustang will be making its debut soon. Some of you who may question the originality of Gary's Mustang: don't! It is indeed a prototype '64½ Mustang, even though it has an alternator and 200cid Six.

Other curious items are the interior door lights and the AM tape deck. These items are indeed original on this particular Mustang. All this information was verified by Gary through the Ford Archives, Carron & Company, Life

magazine from 1964 and 1965, and by talking to various people involved in the World's Fair project. This is indeed a special Pony, folks, you'll find few like it. If you have your doubts, just look at the VID plate: #5F08T383386 date 15B (15 Feb. 64. No. not 65!), Body 76A, Color M (Wimbledon white), Trim 85, DSO 842011 (Home Office Reserve), Axle 2, and Trans 6.

We all look forward to seeing this Mustang at a future meet. It will certainly merit a special display, as how many people can say, "I have a Prototype Mustang." Well, maybe eleven others can! Until we hear from any one of the others, Gary has the spotlight. The whereabouts of the 11 other Mustangs is not likely to be known anytime soon or ever for that matter. Chances are, if they were sold in the Dearborn area and stayed there, "ol' man rust" got the best (or worst) of them. Probably, there are people out there somewhere with one of these Mustangs who don't know it.

You might ask, "Why is the consecutive unit number so high in Gary's serial number?" His Mustang was built right along with other Dearborn production units in early 1964. Mustang production began two weeks later in Dearborn. It's certain that Gary's Mustang received special attention as it made its way down the Dearborn assembly line that day in February, 1964.

For those who just tuned in, the first production Mustang is #5F08F100-001, built on March 3, 1964. It is a Wimbledon white convertible and now resides in the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn. (Editor's note: This car is not viewable at the Ford museum. The museum has a policy that prevents it from showing a car until it is 25 years old). Gary's Mustang, as of this writing, is the oldest known Mustang. Could this change? I seriously doubt it.

Thanks to Gary Schweitzer for sharing his Mustang prototype with us. The real thrill will be the day #5F08T383386 shows up at a National Meet! Gary, we just can't wait to see it!

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