

People who are heavily into the advertising "game," as some call it, will tell you that the name of something counts for a great deal more than most people believe. As the story goes, Carroll Shelby named his version of the Mustang by having employee Phil Remington guess the distance between two buildings. "About 350 feet," said Remington and thus was coined the GT-350. For himself, Shelby said that "it wasn't that important anyway . . . if the car was good, the name wouldn't matter; if it was bad, the name wouldn't help."

Perhaps Shelby's view is representative of attitudes among the performance-oriented buyers who were the GT-350's target market, but when dealing with the fifty-million plus market that the Mustang was aimed for, the name was of supreme importance. The subliminal associations that the proper name will dredge up in the mind of a potential buyer who knows absolutely nothing about a car can go a long way toward preforming that car's image in that buyer's brain. This is what marketing folks try to do: to choose a name in such a way as to emit the proper subconscious images to the "marketeer," if you will.

In the specific example before us, it is hard to imagine that a better name could have been found. The image of the American mustang, unbridled, free to roam the plains at will and at high speed, sleek and lustrous, and all a part of our national heritage to boot, is unmatched for a car of the Mustang's genre. This is important, too, for the name must match the car. It would have been a waste to have put the moniker on, for example, a car like the Volkswagen Beetle. It might have worked on

the Rabbit, but the VW marketers did alright for themselves on that one.

So if we have decided that the name "Mustang" was a brilliant marketing move [and some observers have claimed that the Mustang marketing campaign was as near perfect as one gets with an inexact science (art?) such as marketing] then how did it come about? How was the name chosen? If you are not familiar with the first car to bear the name from Ford, you'll need to read a little further in this issue. When a name was needed for this "real show-stopper concept vehicle to knock the socks off the enthusiast press at (the) 1963 model introduction," executive stylist John Najjar suggested "Mustang." But the ironic thing is that Najjar did not intend to conjure up images of muscular steeds and leathery cowboys. He was an ardent admirer of World War II's North American P-51 Mustang, a jewel of an aircraft which is considered to be the best prop-driven fighter plane ever made. (To this day, modified Mustangs are the mainstay of air racing in the world). And so it was called "Mustang."

This sufficed for the show car but the process started all over again when the production car neared its introduction. Joe Oros wanted the car called "Cougar" and since his studio had designed the production car's styling it came ready-made with Cougar emblems in most early permutations. Oros even sent notes to Iacocca demanding that the car's name not be changed from Cougar, and, of course, the label eventually was used on the Lincoln-Mercury Division's Mustang clone.

Since the ad agency people felt that the car had an "imported" look, one

very early film foray with the "first, fragile costly prototype" used the name "Torino." This possibly was calculated to flatter the Italian Iacocca, but he wouldn't bite. Henry Ford II wanted to call it, weirdly enough, the "T-Bird II." Even he couldn't ramrod through this awful name, but Henry must like his numeral, for we have been a few "II" cars from Ford since the Mustang.

An agency employee named John Conley, who had researched bird names for the Thunderbird and Falcon, was "duly dispatched to the Detroit Public Library. He produced some 6000 candidates, which eventually were culled to a handful that included Cougar, Bronco, Puma, Cheeta, Colt and Mustang. Of these, Mustang kept rising to the top of the surveys and was ultimately picked 'because it had the excitement of the wide-open spaces and was American as all hell . . .'" according to Witzenburg.

But another truly funny thing cropped up during the public surveys which we mentioned in last month's editorial. Recall that these were "pick the car" type affairs to gauge public interest in new styling concepts. "It was interesting," according to styling vice-president [Gene] Bordinat [quoted by Witzenburg]. "We were doing surveys . . . on the way the car finally went out . . . sort of a confirmation survey to see whether our judgement was right. We had them put a price tag on it, and they came up with some phenomenal prices. Some were up around \$7000-8000, thinking in the Ferrari category. Maybe the horse did that."

How about that for a new nickname for our favorite car? The American Ferrari!