

# Mustang, History of a Love Affair

## Third in a Series

by  
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Research of data from "Mustang Guide", by Bill Stone, published by the Benson Printing Co. 1965; and "The Mustang Story" by the Ford Motor Company, Educational Affairs Department, number 5.

### THE MUSTANG FAMILY TREE

Behind the Mustang is a trail of ancestors so complicated that only the archivist of Ford corporate styling could fully follow it. There are show cars and experimental models with exotic names like Mina, Aventura, Allegro, Vivace, Median and Stiletto. Some of these have little or nothing to do with the Mustang as she is today. They are simply part of Ford's search for the blend of sports/personal/luxury car that would best fit the market which the Mustang finally came to fill. But three of these cars stand out as having had a very important influence on Mustangs.

**Median.** Early in 1961, the decision to investigate the sports/performance car field was made by Lee Iacocca, General Manager of Ford Division. Within a year, a number of experimental designs was turned out, among them one called the "Median". It bore a number of important resemblances to Mustang. It was front engined and sat on a Falcon wheelbase. But most prophetic was its four-seater configuration. Few questions could be more crucial than that of two-seater vs. four-seater. For cutting the back seat out of a car immediately cuts the family segment of the car-buying public out of the market.

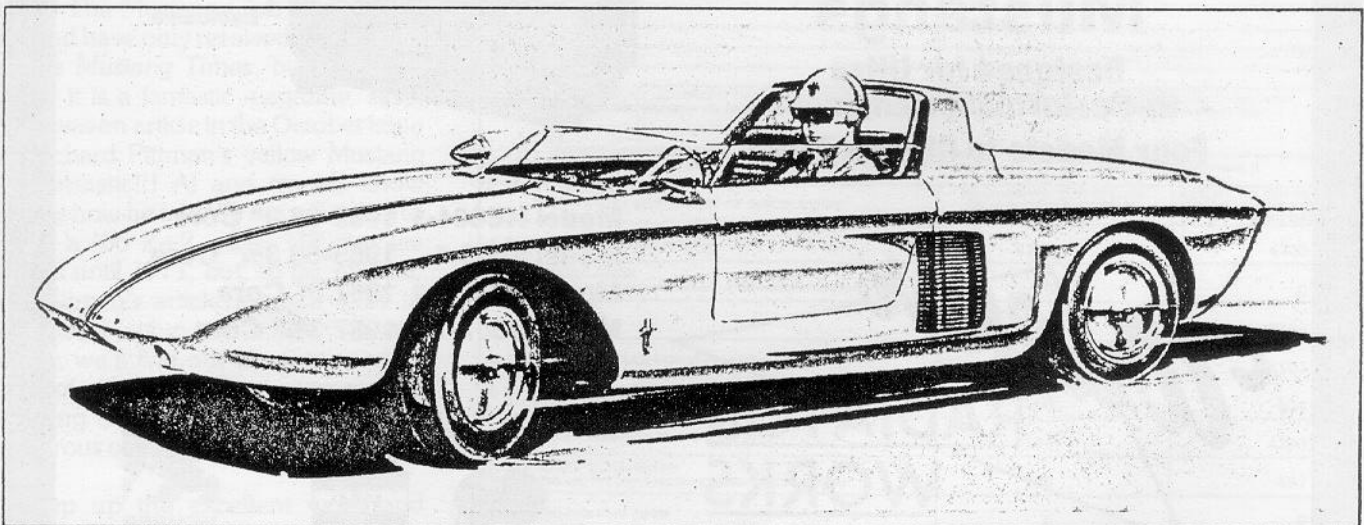
It's worth remembering that since the war only two two-seater American cars have been mass-produced: the Chevrolet Corvette, and the now-extinct '55-'57 Thunderbird. The T-Bird died because, lovely as it was, there just weren't enough people around who could get by with only two seats.



While there is a market for two-seaters — as witness the success of the Corvette and the continuing demand for MG's and Alfas and Triumphs — it just isn't big enough to support a large number of competing makes. During its life-span, the two-seater Thunderbird sold some 53,000 copies — a goodly number, but hardly enough to justify its existence economically.

So when Ford came up with the Median, they had one of the earliest models of what the Mustang would eventually be: a long-hooded four seater. But in 1961, probably even Ford little realized how close they were to the final concept of the Mustang.

**Mustang I.** The first car to bear the Mustang name is significant in a negative way. It was almost everything that the



MUSTANG I

production Mustang is not . . . rear engined, V-4 powered, two-seated, with fully-independent suspension. Mustang I was an extremely sophisticated car — like unto the production Mustang only in its sporty flair.

Mustang I's engine and transaxle unit were imported from Ford of Germany. The engine was a rather unusual V-4 design of only 90 cubic inches — medium sized by European standards, tiny by U.S. standards. As in the Volkswagen and Corvair; engine, 4 speed transmission and differential were combined in one unit — common practice in rear engined cars. Although the stock V-4 develops from 60 to 80 bhp in the Mustang I of the German Ford, it was tuned to deliver approximately 110 bhp in the Mustang I by means of two double throat Weber carburetors, increased compression and a wholly new exhaust system.

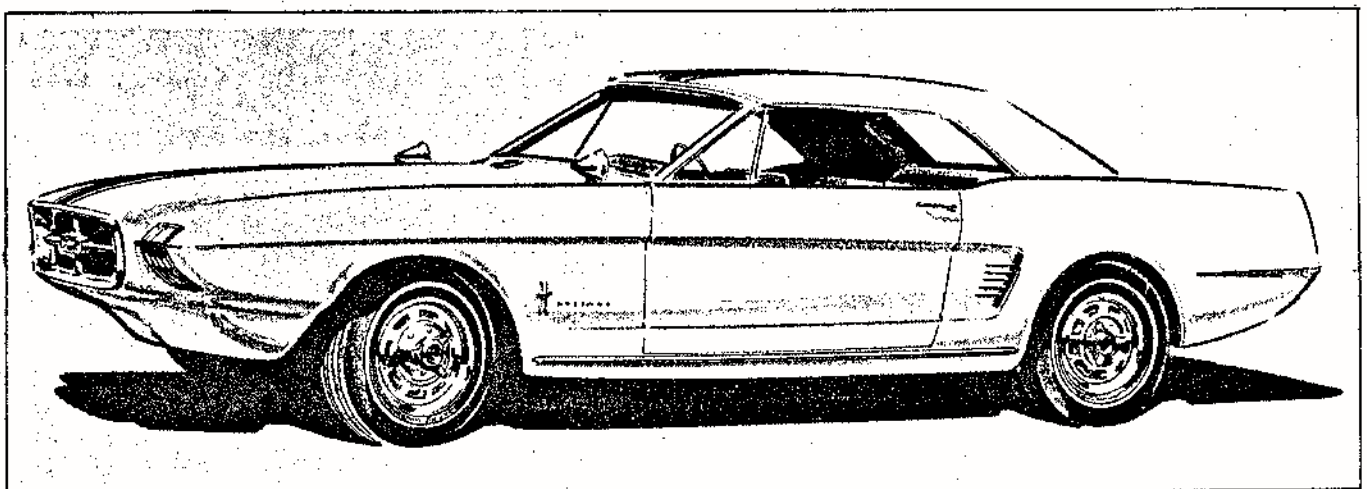
Body and frame of the Mustang I are convincing evidence that the car was designed for show and styling, rather than as a true production prototype. The frame was built of welded tubular steel. The body work was stressed aluminum. Both of these construction methods are common in hand-built or limited production racing automobiles, but are totally in-adaptable to mass production.

Several of the engineering features of Mustang I were quite unusual. Air was drawn through the radiator not by a conventional belt operated fan, but by an electrically-operated one. The seats were an integral part of the body, and as such, had no fore and aft adjustment. So brake, clutch and accelerator pedals were mounted on a single bracket which could be moved toward or away from the driver's seat. Finally, a roll bar was incorporated into the body, as part of the striking air-foil shape above the passenger compartment.

Mustang I was designed in Dearborn by Ford, built in California in the famous Los Angeles racing car shop of Troutman and Barnes. Completed before the 1962 U.S. Grand Prix, she was taken to the Watkins Glen circuit in upstate New York and put through a few demonstration laps by American Grand Prix driver Dan Gurney. The hardcore sports car crowd was enthusiastic about her design, and if they'd had their way, the production Mustang would bear more than a slight resemblance to Mustang I. But by that time, Ford had pretty well given up the idea of a two-seater Mustang, and was well along the road to the Mustang as we know it.

**MUSTANG II.** Meantime, back in Dearborn, a whole family of cars had sprung from the Median. As least two dozen cars — a whole family of Medians and Allegros were finished to varying degrees to explore the four seater personal car theme.

One of these cars, dubbed Mustang II, was presented to the public in the fall of 1963. Again, Watkins Glen was the place, the U.S. Grand Prix weekend was the date. Far less radical than Mustang I, Mustang II was indeed a rather exact preview of the production Mustang. Its wheelbase and track width were identical to those of the production Mustang. To be sure, its overall length was a bit more than that of the final version. But that was merely a matter of body panels, not of basic engineering. Under the hood was one of the same powerplants used in the production Mustang: the 271 bhp, 289 Cu. inch V-8. And behind the engine, a four speed floor mounted stick shift. Though only insiders knew it at the time, this was the Mustang of the future.



**MUSTANG II**