

CarStory

with Bill Sherk
The Old Car Detective



The First Mustang In Town

Bill Sherk is one of Canada's leading authorities on old cars. He has written three books on old cars and the two latest are in bookstores everywhere (60 Years Behind the Wheel and I'll Never Forget My First Car). Since 1991 he has been a feature writer for Old Autos newspaper and is the recipient of an award from the Antique Automobile Club of America for his work as a Canadian automotive historian.

Since retiring from teaching history for 31 years to high school students, Sherk, now under the title of "The Old Car Detective", searches out the ownership history of old cars and the stories that go with them, which started with him tracking down and finding his own first car - a 1940 Mercury convertible.

Sherk believes there is a story behind every car and

millions of stories are waiting to be told, all the way from your grandfather's 1919 Model T Ford right up through the '55 Chevy you drove in high school.

Sherk's new column in this paper will appeal to everyone who has, or ever has had, a driver's license. Through the magic of email, you can send your car stories to Bill Sherk at bill@carstory.com

The Mustang can trace its roots back to 1961 when Ford Division chief Lee Iacocca was convinced a growing number of young and young-at-heart car buyers were hungry for something sportier than a family sedan.

To get approval for a new car, he had to convince the company it would be economical to build. And it was, by utilizing components from the Falcon and

Fairlane.

Henry Ford II had the final say on all the details of the Mustang project. He sat in the prototype one day and said: "It's a little tight in the back seat. Add another inch."

In doing so, he was maintaining a family tradition. When his grandfather designed the Model T, he insisted the space between the front and back seat on touring models be wide enough for a farmer's milk cans.

The first Mustang rolled off the assembly line on Tuesday, March 9, 1964.

That Mustang was supposed to go to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn. By mistake, it was shipped to a Ford dealer in St. John's, Newfoundland, and purchased by an airline pilot.

The Ford Motor Company tried to get the car back but the owner was having too much fun driv-

ing it to let it go.

Finally the owner gave it up for a new 1967 Mustang convertible, and the first Mustang is now on display at the Henry Ford Museum. Meanwhile, Don Brown of Leamington, Ontario bought one of the first Mustangs, and he waited six months to get it.

"I ordered my new Mustang in October 1963. I had seen an artist's rendition of the Mustang in TIME magazine in August or September," Brown said.

"I was getting married on Saturday, May 23, 1964, and the car arrived on Tuesday, May 19. It was white with a red interior. It had the 260 V-8 with automatic and it was the first

Mustang in Leamington.

"Oddly enough, the car didn't stir much interest in my hometown, but when we crossed the border into the U.S., we were swarmed with crowds whenever we stopped.

"We drove it to Florida on our honeymoon and there weren't even many in Miami when I had mine. They had just come out."

The new Mustang was officially launched on Friday, April 17, 1964, to coincide with the New York World's Fair.

Full-page ads in 2600 newspapers showed a white Mustang in profile. The car also appeared on the front covers of Time and Newsweek. Four million

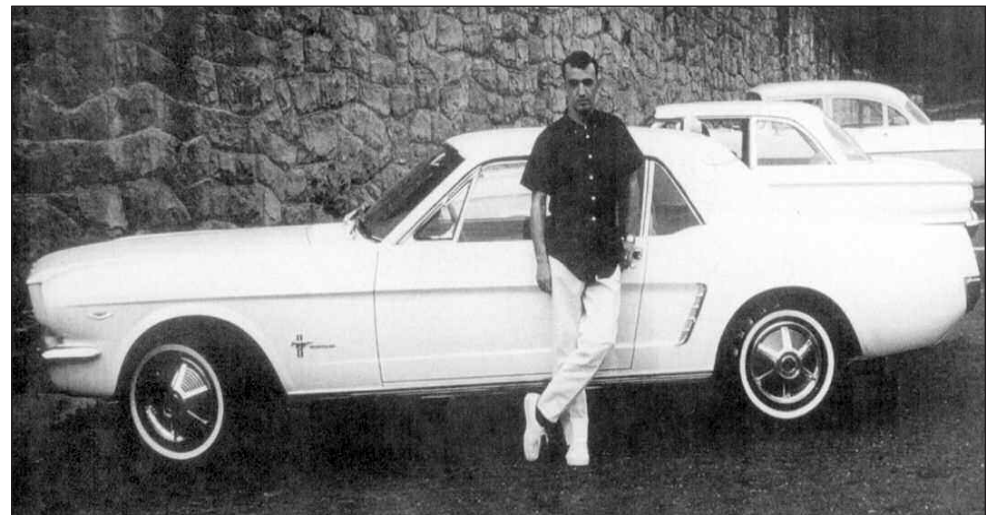
people visited Ford showrooms in the first week.

It was sporty and affordable, an irresistible combination for over 418,000 buyers in the first 12 months. It sold so fast, a bakery put this sign in its window: "Our hot cakes sell like Mustangs."

And Don Brown was exactly the kind of customer the Ford Motor Company was looking for. To buy his new Mustang, Brown traded in his '63 Corvair, built by General Motors.

Do you have any old car stories to share with our readers?

Email: bill@carstory.com



Don Brown with his new Mustang at Cumberland Gap en route to Florida on his honeymoon in May 1964.

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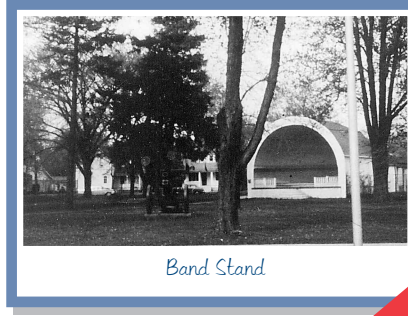
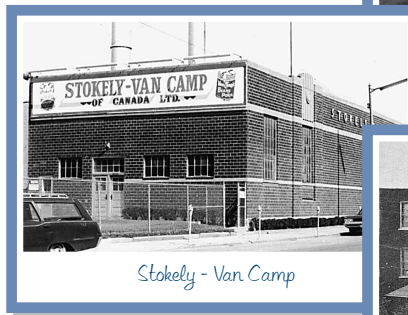
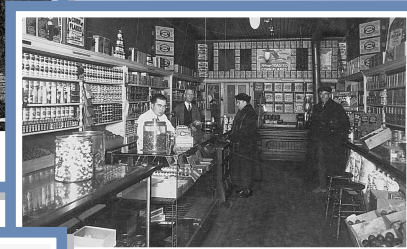
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