

## Almost Fifty: Our 1966 Ford Mustang Coupe

By Charles and Susan Buhl

Our 1966 Ford Mustang coupe was built in San Jose, California on June 4, 1966. Power comes from the standard 289 cubic inch, 210 horsepower V-8, through Ford's durable C-6 automatic transmission. Additional options included power steering and the Exterior Décor Group, which places a color-accented pinstripe around the coves on the body sides and deletes the chrome trim in the cove. The dark red accent stripe and red interior highlight the Wimbledon White body color and vice versa. The color combination draws frequent compliments from spectators at both AACA and Mustang car shows. We're always pleased when our coupe draws her share of attention while parked among more eye-catching Mustang convertibles, fastbacks, Shelby's and Bosses.

The coupe body style is the base Mustang, and fastback and convertible styles are more valuable. But most automotive historians, designers and car hobbyists seem to agree that the coupe's long hood, short deck and pillarless hardtop make it an icon. With easy handling and the responsive small-block V-8, it's a joy to drive, and a comfortable and trouble-free long-distance cruiser. She has always been driven, never trailered.

We have owned the coupe since 1999. She's a full family member, and we've reconstructed most of her life story. Luckily for us, she stayed in sunny, rust-free California until the late 1980s and was carefully maintained and cared for. Once in the DC area, her last owner completed a high quality amateur restoration in the early '90's, replacing the interior and exterior chrome, and refinishing the engine compartment and the undercarriage. He also did a fairly impressive amateur paint job – in his Annandale carport! (Don't ask me why, but he was selling the coupe for cash to buy a used Mazda Miata.)

My wife Susan and I first saw the car after that restoration. It was for sale at a cruise-in at the Jukebox Diner in Annandale. We had arrived at the event in my first 1966 Mustang, a 30-footer with a modified engine that had overheated again on the drive to the Diner, despite repeated, very expensive engine rebuilds and repairs. We were both about done with that Mustang, and so the pristine white coupe with the for-sale sign stopped us in our tracks. We made the deal in ten minutes, and shortly thereafter we found a new owner for the 30-footer. The coupe was not yet concours correct, but I learned quickly after we brought her home just what "California car" meant. Happily crawling over, under and around the car, I noted a complete absence of rust – very unusual for these cars. The original inner fenders and floor pans still had their Ford stampings; and all of the sheet metal was original and unmolested. The carburetor, distributor, power steering, brakes and engine electrical system had been rebuilt/replaced. The combination of originality and careful restoration had already resulted in several first place trophies at local Mustang club shows.

Over the next several years, we enjoyed driving and showing the car as we learned how to gradually complete a concours restoration with Richard Porter's extensive mechanical assistance and advice. The front suspension needed a rebuild, allowing those parts to be refinished or replaced with original equipment. Low oil pressure required an engine rebuild, also the right time to repaint, and to have belts, hoses, wiring and external parts updated. Since the mid-2000's, the coupe has earned and maintains both AACA senior and Mustang Club of America concours gold award levels. She has also taught us how to identify high-quality collector cars, what restoration standards we want to meet and maintain in our cars, and the great rewards that come from keeping her in the condition that her history and quality deserve. Richard and Pat Porter, and our many other friends in local and national Mustang and AACA clubs have brought us along in the hobby. Along with the joy of fine cars, we appreciate the strong friendships and great company of our fellow Mustang and classic car owners, in Mustang and AACA organizations.

A word about the pictures of the coupe accompanying this article. They were taken by professional auto photographer and journalist Jim Smart. The front-quarter pic of the coupe was taken in Leonard and Pat Paquette's driveway, and it appeared in Mustang Monthly in a feature on the car. That arresting photo also appeared in Mustang Monthly as part of a story on how to buy a Mustang, with a caption complimenting the car. Most recently, its picture appeared in a Mustang Monthly internet article showcasing cars of particular note at the September, 2015 Columbus Ohio national MCA show. The author expressed his longing for the simply beautiful Mustang coupe, or words to that effect. As our coupe approaches fifty years old, we couldn't agree more.



