

By Jim Lane

Our 1966 GT Convertible was built on July 12-20, 1966 in Metuchen, NJ and was then delivered twenty miles away to a Newark, NJ Ford dealership. Although the exact owner history is unknown, I have learned a few things along the way. When I found the car in upstate New York, the owner had the car only five years and had bought the car from a dealer in Dallas, TX. The dealer had acquired the car locally from an estate sale of long term owners. Apparently, the car spent at least one winter in freezing temperatures due to the plastic ice scraper scratches in my driver's side window. Since there was no rust, I am guessing it spent most of its life in Texas.



My intention for the restoration never started out as being a trailer queen. My sons and I completed the original mechanical restoration at home and planned on driving it regularly. After buffing out the paint, I could not stand looking at the heavy paint chips on the front valence. So I went and saw Todd Morris, who owned a restoration shop at the time, for a 'front end' painting. I was puzzled why Todd was crawling in and around my car for a half hour for a simple touch up repair. After a thorough inspection, Todd believed that my car was a rare low mileage original with numbers matching sheet metal, tags, and parts. He wanted me to go home and think about doing a complete and proper restoration. Nearly in disbelief, my direction and goals for the GT changed.

You see, back in 1966, the GT option was only available on the four barrel 289 engines ('A' and 'K' codes). Of the 607,568 Mustangs built that year, approximately 13% were convertibles, and even fewer were GT optioned. Before this time, I had no idea that my car was *that original*, and honestly, after I processed that information, the risk of driving around town scared me to death. Just look around when you're driving, and you'll see that most people have their eyes on their phone and not on the road! I wasn't worried about me hitting anyone, but rather other distracted drivers plowing into me! With just one accident, the car would never be an original again. Therefore, I elected to go ahead and do the most authentic restoration as possible. My goal was to show the car as it was actually delivered to the first owner.

During the restoration, complete documentation occurred during disassembly in order to replicate the finishes and markings. All of the options on the car were verified to the build sheet, which was found taped around the main wiring harness. I wanted to keep every detail and sloppy factory application as possible. The drive train was removed, detailed, and put back together with new fluids. We added hardened valve seats and a new clutch assembly while everything was apart. Everything on the 289 remained undisturbed, and retained its factory pistons, bearings, and manifolds. The car was in Todd's shop for about 18 months and was reassembled at home. Overall, the restoration was three years, but as you all know, a car is never done!

Ten years have gone by, and I still enjoy traveling to MCA, AACA and Concours d'Elegance invitational shows. The GT has achieved its MCA Concours Trailered Grille Medallion (#253) and has also won the prestigious AACA Senior Grand National Award. Both clubs encourage 'retired' cars to continue showing in a special 'Conservator' class. Being judged now is very easy, meaning if nothing falls off the car after you park it, you'll win! Currently, I'm an MCA Certified Judge for 64.5-66 Mustangs, and I am working toward becoming a National Gold Card Judge.