



A Mustang for Marcella

With perseverance and luck, Mrs. Knight got a new '65 hardtop.

article by Rob Reaser
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A Mustang in the garage often is testament to hard fought battles with money, time, space and skinned knuckles. Twenty-nine years ago Marcella Knight's greatest obstacle to getting a Mustang was her husband Ed.

Conflicts with work schedules and family chores prompted the Knights to find a

car for Marcella. "We started looking at the new cars," explains Marcella, "because Ed thought there would be less chance of one breaking down on the highway. I didn't think we could afford it, but Ed said we could if I didn't get a lot of options. (Of course Ed's car had all the frills.) That was one reason I leveled toward the Mustang. You got items included in the base price that would have cost extra on other cars, like vinyl bucket seats.

"But Ed didn't like the Mustang. He preferred the '64 Comet for various reasons, including the headlight arrangement." Mr. Knight quickly leveled another blow against his wife's choice car. "Ed also said the reasons I wanted the Mustang was because we saw the sporty cars on the Dearborn assembly line during our first trip to the Ford plant, and because the car had horse emblems on it. All true," Marcella admits, proclaiming her lifelong passion for horses.

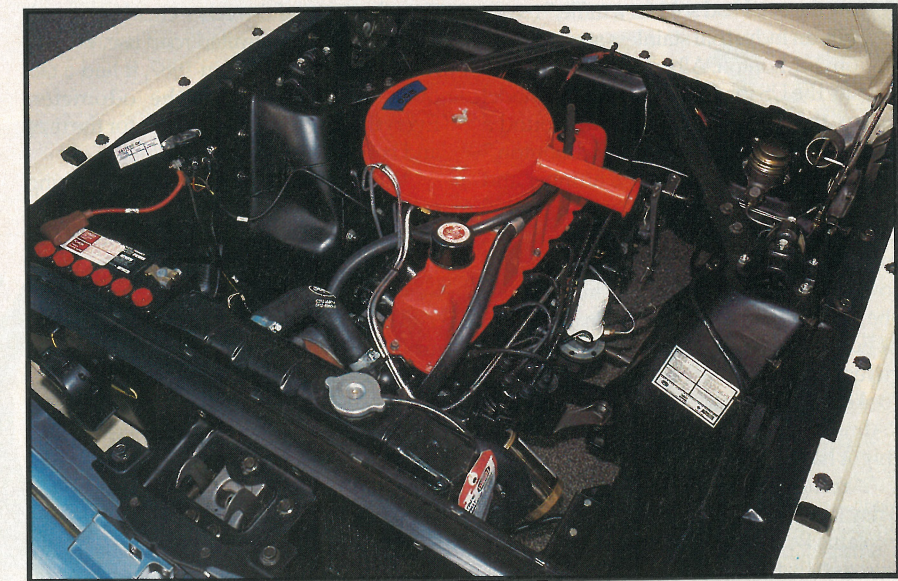
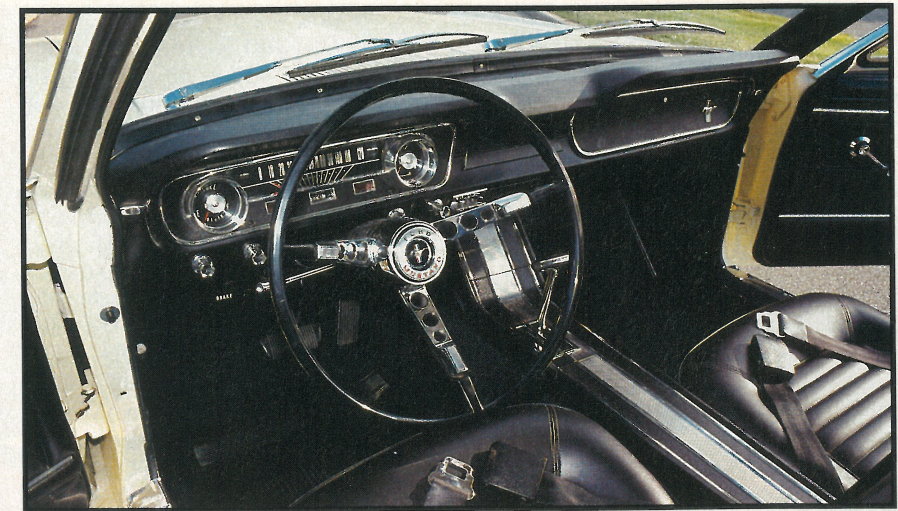
"So one morning I got to thinking, 'I have to get along with Ed for the rest of my life, and I need a sport in the garage to work on my car.' The Comet began to look better and I started to waiver, but I wouldn't admit it to Ed." The search for Marcella's ride continued until at last the fateful day dawned.

"We went to look at the Mustangs first, and Ed pointed out all the reasons why I should get the Comet instead. I could feel the Mustang slipping away." Fortunately, Marcella's luck was about to take a decided turn in her favor. Their next stop was a Lincoln-Mercury showroom to examine the Comets. A salesman, different from their last, asked Mr. Knight if he was "considering buying his daughter a new car." Ed took the remark as less than complimentary, as the actual difference between his age and his wife's was minimal. He offered the man a terse, "Just looking." Explains Marcella: "We took one fast and last look at that

Comet, and Ed said 'Let's get out of here.'" The Knights hurried back to the Mustang lot where Marcella happily made her choice.

"Because I was trying to keep expenses down, the car was plain, without many frills." A Phoenician Yellow '65 hardtop was selected from the corral. And the pony was indeed Spartan by anyone's standards. A 200 cid six-cylinder engine supplied torque to a C-4 automatic transmission and 2.83:1 rearend, while the standard black interior's only option was its console. Rocker panel trim was added to the exterior.

After taking delivery of her treasured hardtop in October 1964, Marcella drove the pony daily until the end of 1982. A '65 convertible, a Mustang II, and a '79 model supplemented her transportation requirements along the way. Then, in 1989, with the '65 Mustang one year away from Antique Automobile Club of America competition eligibility, Mrs. Knight debated the possi-



bilities of restoring the Mustang and doing battle on the showfield. "The idea didn't generate much enthusiasm from Ed, as he preferred to channel our efforts to restoring older cars." Over the past 30 years the Knights have jointly restored '26, '29 and '37 Fords, plus an '07 and a '52 Cadillac. "I have been 'pit crewing' for Ed since the '60s, and I guess he got a case of the guilts, because he said, 'Maybe we could do something with the Mustang.'"

On an '89 trip to the Hershey Swap Meet, Marcella overheard her husband talking to friend and fellow enthusiast Floyd Scranton. "He gave Floyd a sad song about having to concentrate on the Mustang instead of looking for parts for his other project." Marcella decided then that finding an alternate restorer might be in order. "As Ed was leaving home for an Antique and Sports Car Meet in Springfield one day, he asked if I wanted anything before he left. 'Yes,' I said, 'ask Floyd if he will restore my Mustang.'" Floyd is known in the central Illinois area as a prac-

ticed Mustang restorer and valued source of information on early models. His latest project appeared in the November '91 issue of *Mustang Monthly*.

Marcella's decision proved fortunate. Floyd began work on the '65 hardtop in early December 1989 and, with the help of Mr. Knight and Floyd's wife Ethel, the Mustang's restoration was completed in early September 1990. "On the same day we received the finished product, we loaded the car on the trailer and headed for the Southeastern National Fall Meet of the AACA. Our goal, to win our first Junior Award, was accomplished three days later."

Since that first win over two years ago, Marcella Knight's Phoenician Yellow '65 hardtop has been capturing top honors at MCA, AACA, VMCCA and MOTAA competitions throughout the central states. It took patience, luck, and minor skirmishes on the homefront, but Marcella now can enjoy her hard-won spoils.

