

# Plainly Speed



## This Rare California Special Is Equipped With an Even Rarer Plain-Jane Drivetrain

text and photography by Jim Smart

**A**s a Ford journalist and historian for the past 20 years, this is the first '68 California Special Mustang I've seen with a 200ci six, which should demonstrate just how rare this hardtop is. In fact, out of the 4,117 GT/CS hardtops built, it is just one of 80 with the standard six, which helps explain why we've never seen one in our travels.

Of course, California Specials, as well as their Colorado cousins, the High Country Specials, are special all by themselves. But most were equipped with the two-barrel 289 V-8, C4 automatic

transmission, and 2.79:1 axle ratio. These were common '68 Mustang hardtops with an unusual cosmetic option called California Special, conceived to spur sagging Mustang sales throughout the west.

When you find a California Special with a 390 High Performance V-8 or a 428 Cobra Jet, you've spotted an unusual and highly desirable GT/CS. But when was the last time you saw a 200ci six in one of these limited-production notchbacks? It is an offbeat Mustang option with the most standard of standard features, including a three-speed manual-shift



taken its place. When the 289 expired, the car was parked for many years, the harsh desert environment taking its toll. For 10 years, Chuck persistently reminded the owner that he was interested in buying.

Chuck stepped up to the plate with \$900 in 1990 and hauled the car home along with the original toasted 200ci six. It took Chuck and Betty four years to turn

years later, they took it to Atlanta for the Mustang Club of America's 20th Anniversary bash. At 139,000 miles, they retired the Mustang from its driving duties, electing to enter it into competitions as a concours, undriven restored car. Along the way, it has taken several First Place and Best of Show awards in MCA National shows. The icing on the

around the former daily beater and make it like new again. Chuck went to work on the damaged fiberglass and massaged the sheet-metal. He also applied the Seafoam Green acrylic enamel, pinstriping, and GT/CS graphics. The Ivy Gold standard interior was completely replaced. Not a detail was overlooked.

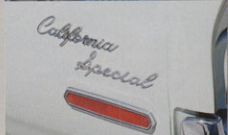
The 289 between the shock towers was removed and tossed aside to make way for the original, correct 200ci six—likely the only

time in the history of *Mustang Monthly* we've seen a V-8 to six conversion. The engine was completely rebuilt by Doc's Machine Shop. Today, it purrs nicely, equipped with the correct Thermactor air-injection system.

The Schnarrs have spent the last nine years enjoying their unusual GT/CS hardtop. When the restoration was completed in 1994, the Schnarrs headed off to Charlotte, North Carolina, with Mustangs Across America for the Mustang's 30th Anniversary celebration. Two

transmission and 3.20:1 conventional gears.

Striking and concours restored, the Seafoam Green GT/CS was hard to miss at the San Diego Mustang Club's annual show last fall. Chuck and Betty Schnarr of Tucson, Arizona, bought this unusual Mustang 12 years ago. Previously a daily driver by two former owners, the GT/CS carries a DSO code of 75, indicating it was sold new in the Phoenix sales district. Time had not been kind to the bleached-out pastel green hardtop. The original 200ci six was damaged by overheating in the Arizona sun, and a 289, also later consumed by the desert heat, had



cake was an MCA Gold award for outstanding showmanship.

The Schnarr's California Special demonstrates to us all that you don't need displacement to prance proudly in Mustang show circles. All it took in this case was the unusual six-cylinder status, coupled with craftsmanship all of us appreciate.