



COMMUNITY NEWS

Story last updated at 1:34 p.m. on Thursday, October 5, 2000

Count the Mustangs in the shop

by **R. Cathey Daniels**
for The Oak Ridger

How many Mustangs do you reckon reside at A&A Mustang on Fordham Road?

Well, strictly speaking, there are 10, in different stages of restoration, just passing the time in the back of Hilltop Muffler -- A&A's sister shop -- before testing their wheels on the road again.

But surely several Mustangs linger among the thousands of used parts -- the fenders, the seats, the doors, the bell housings, the radiators -- stacked and shelved and ready for revved-up reincarnation.

You'd want to count the model Mustangs, the child's sidewalk-weary pedal car, the huge posters, the tiny original Hot Wheels, the Mustang medallion jewelry.



Mustang peddle cars have also become desirable collectors' items.

And, of course, you'd have to count the Mustangs in your heart.

Take that my-oh-my '68 California Special.

Meadowlark yellow, grackle black-striped, Thunderbird taillights -- one of only 5,000 Specials gently rolled off the Golden State production lines.

Been in storage for seven years -- ever since its favorite driver, Joe Antrican -- co-owner with wife, JoAnn, of the Muffler and Mustang Shops -- passed away.

JoAnn finally decided the time had come to bring the Special out, raise her on blocks, let her son, James -- who manages the Muffler Shop and pulls double duty in the Mustang Shop -- tweak and tune it a little.

JoAnn will tell you several times: Only 14,000 original miles; only been wet once.

"We bought the California Special in 1979 in Las Vegas and pulled it back to Oak Ridge," says JoAnn. "Then in 1985 we decided to restore it."

The couple -- who had been in the muffler business since 1973 -- stripped the California Special clear down to bare metal, then, with care and tedious precision, brought it right back up again.

Little did they know they were tinkering with something that would eventually stretch clear to Richard Petty, clear around the globe and clear into little children's hearts.

But it was just so simple at the time.



James and JoAnn Antrican operate the Mustang and Muffler shops. On the rack behind them is their 1968 California Special.

-- Staff photos by Kelley Scott Walli



A close up of the grill area of the Mustang car.

"We had a few parts left over," says JoAnn. "So we tossed those on the bottom shelf in the Speed Shop. Well, within a year we were out of speed performance parts and into Mustang parts."

Within another year the couple, their employees and a few customers had started the Tennessee Valley Mustang Club -- a nonprofit organization now with over 100 families doing a little more than driving Mustangs and holding Mustang shows.

"For several years we sponsored children to the Dream Connection," says JoAnn.

One child trekked to Las Vegas to meet David Copperfield, another to Charlotte to talk racing with Richard Petty.

The Mustang Club regularly donates money to Children's Hospital in Knoxville, has held shows as benefits for low-income families, and donates to child-friendly organizations in the Oak Ridge/Knoxville area.

"People that come to the Mustang Club are just good-hearted people," says JoAnn.

And people that come into the Mustang Shop spread the word.

"We've shipped parts to Australia, Puerto Rico, Germany, Japan ...," says James, who has appeared on TNN's "Shade Tree Mechanic" to demonstrate, among other things, the installation of a muffler system on a '66 fastback.

"They hear about us through the shows, and advertising, and by word of mouth -- mostly I let our quality work do our advertising."

"It's a funny thing," says JoAnn, who manages the Mustang Shop and who will heft a lion's share of organizing the Regional Mustang & All-Ford Show Saturday and Sunday at the Oak Ridge Mall.

"We take a car and take it down to metal and bring it up -- and I think we're more proud of it when it rolls out the door than the owners, just to know what you've accomplished, to see what you've accomplished."

Yes, one would be hard put to count the number of Mustangs residing at A&A Mustang.

