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**1968 Ford Mustang High Country Special - Altitude Adjustment**  
Tom Elledge Has Gotten Accustomed To The Rarity Of His '68 High Country Special

By Jim Smart  
Photography: Jim Smart  
Mustang Monthly, June 2007

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When we spotted Tom Elledge's '68 High Country Special at the Carlisle All-Ford Nationals, we did a double-take. For one thing, High Country Specials aren't common to begin with, not even in Colorado where they were originally marketed. To find one in the middle of Pennsylvania is extremely unusual.

Imagine Tom's demeanor when he unearthed this limited-production hardtop in a barn, buried under bird droppings. Perhaps the poop can be credited with protecting the car and its identity for all those years. Tom is quick to say it was something he never expected to find anywhere, not to mention in a barn far from its origins.

Produced from '66-'68 as a special promotion vehicle for Colorado-area Ford dealers, the first two years of High Country Specials were little more than special exterior colors and a triangular HCS emblem for all body styles. For '68, the HCS became a hardtop only and borrowed the front foglights, sidescoops, and Shelby rearend treatment from the California Special.

Assembled at Milpitas, California (San Jose), and sold new at Courtesy Ford in Littleton, Colorado, Tom's High Country Special can't be described as mainstream. At first glance, it appears to be a 289-2V hardtop with fancy California Special-style graphics and body treatment, including the Shelby-style tailpanel with Thunderbird taillights. In fact, it's easy to believe it's a California Special because the HCS graphics are so subtle. Tom's is a J-code 302 four-barrel engine with all the trimmings.



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We appreciate the chrome Styled Steel wheels wrapped in E70x14-inch reproduction Firestone Wide-Oval tires. The narrow-band white sidewalls gave cars of the period a clean, well-trimmed appearance. They were novel because few were ordered with them.

When Tom hauled this car home to Gettysburg, there was a lot of work to be done. Thankfully, the hardtop was solid and didn't need structural repairs. Jeff Keffel reworked the body and laid down the Candyapple Red finish. The sheetmetal is original; there are no patch panels or body filler on this one. Mike Hufnagel at the Pony Ranch in Hanover gets much of the credit for the rest of the body. Keith's Pit Stop handled the mechanical restoration, including rebuilding Tom's matching-number 302.

Inside is a standard red-vinyl interior with the optional console. The standard AM radio is good for ball games and talk radio, but not much else today. Power steering, a more common option, eases driving effort.

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