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The 1968 Ford Mustang California Special: this vanilla-white hardtop is only a 302/automatic with a modest level of optional equipment, but it can attract as much attention as a full-blown Shelby when ponies gather. Less knowledgeable Mustang buffs sometimes mistake the car for a one-off custom or even a notchback Shelby. But those in the know recognize it as a 1968 California Special, built at Ford's old San Jose assembly plant and sold only in the Golden State.Classic Cars Image GalleryFord's intention, of course, was to unload a few extra ponies on the West Coast market, but after 4,000 or so sales during 1968, the experiment was never repeated. That makes the California Special rare today.The California Special package was available only on the two-door hardtop, but it could be ordered with any Mustang powertrain combination. Tape stripe packages were popular in the late 1960s, but the CS was more distinctive than most, assembled from some things borrowed and some things new. It was the borrowed parts that gave the CS special status, and sometimes confused Mustang watchers.The components that made a Mustang into a California Special included a blacked-out grille with aftermarket fog lamps, nonfunctional fiberglass side scoops, side striping, a fiberglass rear decklid and quarter panel caps from the 1968 Shelby convertible, Shelby taillights, and California Special identification. The CS featured looks a lot like a Shelby and, to a large degree, that explains the interest in this unusual Mustang.And if almost everyone assumes that CS stands for Carroll Shelby, that's just part of the fun of owning something special.While California Ford dealers were selling the CS, the same collection of parts were put on Mustangs destined for Denver, Colorado, showrooms. This version was called the High Country Special.For more information on cars, see: 4fstudio/Stock/Getty Images A number of cars have become legends with the help of Hollywood, including the 1968 Mustang fastback. The Bullitt was not a version of the Mustang, nor was it a sports option upgrade offered by Ford in 1968. Bullitt is sometimes a nickname used by cult enthusiasts for a fastback Mustang, because of the 390 GT that had been selected to appear with actor and race car champion Steve McQueen in the 1968 movie "Bullitt." Two identical 1968 Highland Green fastback Mustangs with a 390 cubic inch V-8 engine and GT equipment package had been acquired for filming according to author Brad Bowling. He further notes that one had been specially fitted for the abuse of the stunt driving scenes and was "trashed" during production. The second one, used for the speed scenes had been sold after filming. A copy of a letter from Warner Brother's movie studio, dated April 16, 1970 confirms details regarding the iconic Mustang that had been sold. According to the letter signed by George Phillips, Warner Brothers Head of Transportation, the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) was 8R02S12559. Deciphering the VIN reveals that it's a 1968 model manufactured at Ford's plant in San Jose, California. It's a two-door fastback body with an eight-cylinder, 390 cubic-inch engine. The 390 engine option featured 325 horsepower and a four-barrel carburetor. Mustang Monthly adds that this particular car had a four-speed manual transmission. The details regarding the Bullit's specs are factory options with no evidence of aftermarket changes to upgrade the power. The car itself was just like any other fastback 390 GT off the factory line. It's only this vehicle's place in movie history that makes it stand out from the other 42,325 fastback Mustangs produced that same year. The 1968 Mustang is a small bodied car with a 108-inch wheelbase and an overall length of 183.6 inches and 70.9 inches wide. The fastback shared these same chassis specs with its two-door hardtop and convertible top sisters. The GT package included sport trim and power front disc brakes. Technically the Mustang is considered a pony car because of its dimensional size. Addition of the 390 V-8 launched the Bullitt into the muscle car league, to better wrangle with "the bad guys" 1968 Dodge Charger in the film. Ford introduced the optional Bullitt edition for the 2001 GT package. This model had 4.6-liter, 281 cubic inch single overhead cam V-8, and chassis tweaks, for more power and sportier handling. The Bullitt option was introduced as a marketing scheme to recapture a thrilling segment of Mustang history in the muscle car era and American pop culture. In a conversation with Simba Julius of Varsity Ford in College Station, Texas, he confirmed that 2009 was the last year the Bullitt package was offered for the Mustang GT. Julius further discussed how the power of the 2010 models and future Mustang options packages continue to live up to the Bullitt's fast and tough image that played out on the big screen more than forty years ago. The 1966 Mustang sported three steering boxes. Two were manual and one was power. The steering box is identified by a aluminum tag that is attached to one of the cover bolts. The tag will have two lines with the top line the identifier code. The code for manual steering should be HCC-AT or HCC-AW. The former was used in lower performance Mustangs and had a turning ratio of 19.9:1 with 4 5/8 turns lock to lock. The latter was used in the high performance cars like the Shelby and had a turning ratio of 16:1 with 3 3/4 turns lock to lock. Place the vehicle on a smooth, level surface, turn off the car, put it in park, set the parking brake, and put the wheel chocks on the rear wheels. Put on safety glasses and mechanic's gloves. Remove the horn ring by pushing down and turning counterclockwise. The horn ring should just lift out. Using the socket wrench, remove the steering wheel nut. Install the steering wheel puller with the correct bolts. Tighten down on the center bolt of the puller to pop the steering wheel off the shaft. Remove the steering wheel. Unplug the column wiring harness. With the socket wrench, remove the two nuts holding the steering column brace to the dash. Remove the steering column from the shaft with a twisting motion straight up the steering shaft. Jack the car up and place on jack stands. With a 1/2-inch drive socket wrench, remove the pitman arm nut. Slide the pitman arm puller over the shaft and tighten the center bolt until the pitman arm pulls free. With the 3/8-inch drive socket wrench, remove the three bolts holding the steering box to the frame. The whole steering box and shaft should lift out of the car in most cases. In some cases the motor mounts will need to be removed and the engine jacked up. Place the steering box assembly on a clean work table. Remove the three bolts on the top plate with a socket wrench. With a hammer and a drift punch, loosen the adjustment nut lock ring and remove. With the crescent wrench, remove the adjustment nut from the input shaft. The sector shaft should now lift out from the rack block. Carefully remove the input shaft rack block and the rest of the internal parts. Count and take care not to lose any of the recirculating ball bearings. Place the smaller parts in a cleaning basket and all the larger parts in the parts washer or bucket of mineral spirits and let soak for a couple of hours to dissolve all the old grease. Clean all the parts with a brush to remove all old grease and contaminants. Blow off all parts with compressed air. Any of the outside surfaces that will be painted that have rust or corrosion can be media blasted or cleaned and prepped with Prep and Etch. Mask off any gasket or seal surfaces and holes. Media blast the external surface only of the main steering box, top plate, and external nuts and bolts. Alternatively, spray with Prep and Etch, allow to dry, then neutralize with water and baking soda. Blow all the items dry with compressed air. Inspect all the internal components for pits and corrosion. Pay particular attention to the surfaces of the rack block, sector shaft and recirculating balls. If all surfaces of these parts are not bright and smooth, replace with a new part. Make sure the recirculating ball guides are not split. Hang the cleaned and prepped exterior parts on hooks and paint with Cast Blast and allow to dry. Put the exterior bolts into hardware cloth and paint with Cast Blast and allow to dry. If the bearing surfaces of the sector shaft and input shaft are scored, sand smooth with 600 grit sand paper, then buff with emery on the buffing machine. Finish buff with white rouge. The surfaces should be smooth and polished-looking. Pack all the bearings with lithium grease. Following the specific directions in your rebuild kit, carefully press in the worm bearing cup and the sector shaft bushings. Lubricate the shaft with lithium grease and center the rack on the shaft. Install the bearing tubes and 31 bearings on each side. Do not turn the shaft or rack until all 62 bearing are installed. After all bearings are installed, rotate the rack back and forth and make sure no bearings fall out. If they do, tear the assembly back apart and start over. Insert the rack and worm assembly into the box and thread in the worm bearing adjuster cap. Tighten to 4-5 inch-pounds and install the locknut. Tap in the bottom plug. Lubricate the sector shaft with lithium grease and insert into housing. Replace the cover gasket, cover and loosely install cover bolt. Check for some lash play before tightening cover bolts. Tighten the cover bolts to 20 foot-pounds Remove the grease plug and the cover bolt on the opposite end of the box from the grease plug. With the grease gun, pack grease into the grease plug hole until it comes out the cover hole. Replace and tighten cover bolt and grease plug to 20 foot-pounds. Do not forget to put the identification tag on the cover bolt. The adjustment of the sector shaft end play and the gear mesh load are precise and detailed adjustments. Follow the directions in the rebuild kit or the adjustment directions at Stangerssite.com. Maneuver the input shaft through the fire wall and position the steering box at the frame. Install three box bolts. Make sure the input shaft is at the center of travel and the wheels are straight. Replace the pitman arm and nut. Tighten the box to the frame bolts to 50-65 foot-pounds. Tighten the pitman arm to the sector shaft nut to 85-110 foot-pounds. Replace motor mounts if removed. Take car off jack stands and lower. Reinstall the steering column. Thread on the support bracket nuts and tighten. Reattach the wiring harness clip. Install the steering wheel and nut. Tighten the steering wheel nut to 25-35 foot-pounds. Reinstall the horn ring and spring. Remove wheel chocks. Test drive car. Enjoy new play-free and accurate steering. The first Ford Mustang rolled off the assembly line on March 9, 1964, and a little over a month later, on April 17, it was introduced to the public at the New York World's Fair at Flushing Meadows Park in Queens, New York. Before the day was over, Ford had secured 22,000 orders for the vehicle at dealerships across the country. As such, the 1964 Mustang was considered an instant hit with consumers. Because the Mustang was introduced in 1964 but advertised as an early 1965 model, it is often referred to as the 1964 1/2 Mustang. Initial production of the second round of Mustangs began on August 17, 1964. Production included 92,705 standard coupes that retailed for \$2,320 apiece and 28,883 standard convertibles that retailed for \$2,557 each. Both the original production Mustangs and the second-run vehicles are technically considered 1965 Mustangs by Ford. That's not to say there aren't differences between the two. The first Mustangs produced feature unique characteristics that set them apart from those produced after July 31, 1964. For instance, the 1964 ½ Mustang featured a generator charging system for the battery as well as a generator charge light. It also featured either a U-Code, F-Code, or D-Code engine. Additional highlights included a horizontal speedometer layout (also found on 1965 models), similar to the one on the Ford Falcon—the Mustang was, after all, based on the Ford Falcon—a brake-light pressure switch on the master cylinder, as well as large horns mounted on the frame behind the radiator. Another difference between the 1964 and 1965 models can be found on the front hood. The 1965 models, produced after July 31, 1964, featured a rolled front edge. That differed from the 1964 ½ model, which featured angled edges that are not folded. The 1964 1/2 Mustangs had full wheel covers, a chrome grille with vertical bars, and the famous running horse emblem. They also featured carpeting throughout. Front bucket seats were standard, with a front bench seat optional. Buyers also had the option of three-speed transmission, four-speed transmission, or an automatic transmission. Here are details on the engine of the 1964 1/2 Ford Mustang: Engine Code U: 170 cubic inch V-6 engine @ 101hp Engine Code F: 260 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 164hp Engine Code D: 289 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 210hp If you want to decode the VIN on a 1964 1/2 Ford Mustang, here's how to do it, using VIN #5F07F100001 as an example: 5=Last digit of Model Year (1965) F=Assembly Plant (F-Dearborn, R-San Jose, T-Metuchen) 08=Body Code (07-coupe, 08-convertible) F=Engine Code 100001=Consecutive unit number The 1964 1/2 Mustang came in a variety of colors, which included: Cascade Green, Caspian Blue, Chantilly Beige, Dynasty Green, Guardsman Blue, Pagoda Green, Phoenician Yellow, Poppy Red, Prairie Bronze, Rangoon Red, Raven Black, Silversmoke Gray, Skylight Blue, Sunlight Yellow, Twilight Turquoise, Vintage Burgundy, Wimbledon White, and Pace Car White. Given all these options, original 1964 1/2 Ford Mustangs remain highly sought after by collectors. While technically not a true Ford model year, these cars are unique in their own right. In 1968 Smokin' Joe Frazier TKO'ed Buster Mathis in the 11th round, clinching the heavyweight boxing title. Life Magazine named Jimi Hendrix "The most spectacular guitarist in the world" and the Ford Mustang, well, the Mustang got side markers. A year earlier the Mustang had seen its first major redesign. The car was bigger and more powerful than ever before. In 1968 newly introduced Federal regulations mandated front and back side markers on the car. This, alone, made it easier to tell a 1967 Mustang from a 1968. 1968 Mustangs have side markers, while 1967 models do not. The 1968 Mustang also featured a new two-spoke energy-absorbing steering wheel along with federally mandated shoulder belts. No doubt, the 1968 Mustang was designed to be safer than previous models, both inside and out. First Mustang with Front and Rear Side Markers FORD Lettering Removed from Hood Rear View Mirror Attached to Windshield Instead of Frame New 302 Cubic Inch V-8 Engine Available First Mustang with Shoulder Belts C-Stripe Graphics Other firsts for the 1968 Mustang included a suspended mirror which was attached to the windshield. In previous years, mirrors were attached to the vehicle frame. The 1968 model also featured the word "Mustang" in script style lettering instead of block letters, and the word "FORD" was removed from the hood of the car. The Mustang's side scoops were switched out in 1968 and replaced with one-piece chrome styling, accentuated by C-stripe graphics. As for the Mustang's grille, it changed as well. Ford decided to do away with the horizontal bars surrounding the galloping pony emblem. Instead, they added a single band of trim surrounding the grille opening. A truly innovative feature on the 1968 Mustang was turn signal indicators integrated into the car's hood. Other changes for 1968 included the introduction of a new GT Mustang emblem, GT hubcaps, and quad exhaust tips on the V-8 powered GT Mustang. As for features, the Mustang included Selectshift Cruise-O-Matic automatic transmission and AM/FM radio. Other standards included bucket seats with options such as hood racing stripes, pop-open gas cap, overhead console, and a new 302 engine capable of producing 230 hp. In 1968 Ford introduced its new 302 engine, which would eventually go on to replace the 289 version. The standard 302 V-8 was capable of producing 230 hp, which was 30 more ponies than the 289 engine. As for high-performance offerings, 1968 was the year Ford unleashed their 428 Cobra Jet Mustang. The car's engine was conceived from a 428 police car short block engine, aluminum manifold, 427 low-riser cylinder heads, and a special camshaft. It also featured numerous suspension tweaks. No doubt, the car was a huge hit at the drag strip. So popular, in fact, that Ford released a 2008 tribute model, and plans to release another limited-run in 2010. Other special offerings of the 1968 year included the introduction of the 1968 California Special (GT/CS) Mustang. The coupe, available through California Ford dealers, featured a Shelby-styled deck lid and spoiler along with a blacked-out grille. About 4,325 of these cars were produced. Dealers in the Denver, Co. area offered their own special-edition Mustang coined the "High Country Special". These cars were sold in the Denver area and were similar in design to the California Special Package, complete with special striping and Shelby styling. 1968 also saw the return of the Sprint Mustang, the Shelby GT350, and GT500 Mustangs, along with a newcomer coined the "King of the Road" Shelby. This GT500KR Mustang released midyear, featured Ford's new 428 Cobra Jet engine, and was said to produce upwards of 400+ hp. Many folks remember the GT 390 when they think of 1968 Mustangs. The car, which was a GT Mustang with a 390 engine, was made famous later that year when it starred as Lt. Frank Bullitt's police car in the Warner Bros. release "Bullitt." The movie car featured no markings signifying it was a Ford Mustang. In 2001 Ford introduced a special-edition Mustang dedicated to the original GT 390 "Bullitt" Mustang. They released another version for the 2008/2009 model year. Standard Convertible: 22,037 units Deluxe Convertible: 3,339 units Standard Coupe: 233,472 units Deluxe Coupe: 9,009 units Deluxe Coupe w/Bench Seats: 853 units Standard Fastback: 33,585 units Standard Fastback w/Bench Seats: 1,079 units Deluxe Fastback: 7,661 units Deluxe Fastback w/Bench Seats: 256 units Total Production: 317,404 units Retail Prices: \$2,814 Standard Convertible \$2,578 Standard Coupe \$2,689 Standard Fastback Ford offered a choice of seven engine configurations in 1968: Engine Code T: 200 cubic inch 6-cylinder engine @ 120hp Engine Code C: 289 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 200hp Engine Code J: 302 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 230hp Engine Code S: 390 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 335hp Engine Code X: 390 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 280hp Engine Code W: 427 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 390hp Engine Code R: 428 cubic inch V-8 engine @ 335hp Example: VIN #8F01C100001 8=Last digit of Model Year (1968) F=Assembly Plant (F-Dearborn, R-San Jose, T-Metuchen) 01=Body Code For Coupe (02-fastback, 03-convertible) C=Engine Code 100001=Consecutive unit number Acapulco Blue Brittany Blue Candy Apple Red Diamond Blue Gulfstream Aqua Highland Green Lime Gold Meadowlark Yellow Pebble Beige Presidential Blue Royal Maroon Seafoam Green Sunlit Gold Tahoe Turquoise Wimbledon White

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