

30th  
Anniversary  
Celebration

# The Year of the Cat

Lincoln-Mercury's Ponycar  
Contender Brought Pure  
Luxury to the Mustang Arena

By Jim Smart

PHOTOGRAPHY: JIM SMART, PPC PHOTO ARCHIVES



much more in terms of sportiness and luxury. In base form, the Cougar offered buyers V-8 performance from its 289ci small-block. A slightly longer wheel base, combined with abundant sound deadening and a wealth of interior amenities, made the Cougar Lincoln-Mercury's flagship right out of the gates.

For many years following the Cougar's introduction, Lincoln-Mercury coined the slogan "At the Sign of the Cat...", which became a household phrase, followed by the friendly growl of Chauncey, Mercury's live mascot.

This is 7F91S500001, the first mass-production '67 Mercury Cougar to roll off the Dearborn, Michigan, assembly line during the summer of 1966—still very much alive today. Clad in Cardinal Red with leaded show-car seams, 500001 is certainly the most distinctive Cougar ever made, not to mention having the most unusual history of any to follow. Jim and Elaine Pinkerton of Seattle, Washington, likely know more about Cougars than any two people across the land. They have sharpened their claws on a few of them and managed, with great effort, to find the first one a continent away in New Brunswick, Canada.

The Number One Cougar's interesting history began 3,000 miles away more than 30 years ago at a Canadian Lincoln-

Mercury dealer—Dryden Motors in Moncton, New Brunswick. Number One's history, ironically, mirrors that of the first production Mustang—5F08F100001—built two and a half years earlier on the same assembly line. Both vehicles were shipped to eastern Canada sporting Canadian sales-district codes. And both experienced bizarre sales histories once they reached the dealers.

The first mass-production Cougar was shipped to Dryden Motors, Canada's largest Lincoln-Mercury dealer at the time. Because Dryden Motors was having problems taking delivery of new Cougars, the dealership was not happy. To pacify the situation, Lee Iacocca, Ford Division General Manager at the time, loaned Dryden Motors the first production '67

Cougar—a loaded XR-7. Like the first production Mustang, Cougar One was not to be sold because it did not include the Manufacturer's Statement of Origin (MSO). When delivery of new Cougars later didn't pan out to Dryden Motors' satisfaction, the dealer refused to return 500001 to Ford. The dealer put his foot down, and so did Ford. It would prove to be a stalemate that would last for years and cost Ford a fortune.

Dryden Motors promptly thrust the Cougar into a closed-end lease for three years. In 1969, the Cougar was returned to the dealer, where it was used as transportation for a short time. Then it was stored in a parking garage above the dealership for safe keeping. Not one engine part would move until 1977, when the dealer principal passed away. Ford rejected his son's application to be a dealer principal, forcing the dealer into bankruptcy.

Marc Ogren of the Cascade Cougar Club in Seattle, Washington, was thumbing through an old copy of *Cars & Parts* magazine from 1982 when he stumbled on an advertisement for Cougar Number One. As luck would have it, the Cougar and the owner were still in New Brunswick. Marc was successful at finding both in 1992—10 years later. A deal was struck, and the car was shipped to Seattle. When Marc realized the magnitude of a full-scale restoration, he sold the Cougar to the Pinkertons.

The Pinkertons understood what a restoration involved, plus what doing a historically significant collector car meant. They looked to John Benoit of Cascade Classics in Edgewood, Washington. John pulled 500001 into his shop and went to work on a Cougar unlike any he had ever seen before. Despite its mass-production status, 500001 is different indeed. Leaded seams, distinctive carpeting, a one-of-a-kind trunk-lock badge and grille ornamentation, and other unique appointments make 500001 more than just the first Cougar



off the line. It was virtually a hand-assembled automobile.

We mentioned the unique badging, and here's why. If you study the Cougar logo closely, it looks a lot like the Jaguar cat. Jaguar couldn't help but notice this also during the summer of 1966, insisting that Lincoln-Mercury halt the use of the "Cougar" emblems. This was one of very few '67 Cougars so equipped. John Benoit managed to find the only surviving Cougar trunk lock in a file-cabinet drawer of the original Ford supplier. He had to fabricate the grille ornament using available materials.

This is a restoration fitting of the car's Number One status. John's talents shine here, with a glistening Cardinal Red finish and extraordinary attention to detail. Under the hood is the car's original 390-4V High Performance V-8 that channels the ponies through a C6 transmission and a 9-inch rearend. Cougar-specific styled steel wheels and bias-belted tires round out the rolling stock. Items we like to dream about, like Speed Control and tilt-wheel, make for terrific Cougar fantasies. We'd all like to have them. All the Pinkertons have to do is look on—and smile.

M&F



# Cougar One - Serial #00001



## The 1<sup>st</sup> production Cougar

**Build Date: July 4, 1966**

**390- 4V Marauder GT Engine - 320 HP**

**C- 6 Automatic Transmission**

**3:00 9" Rear End**

**Tilt - Away Steering Wheel**

**Styled Steel Wheels**

**Power Disc Brakes**

**Power Steering**

**Sports Console w/Convenience Lights**

**AM-FM Radio**

**Cruise Control**

**Restoration by John Benoit**

**Cascade Classics • Puyallup, WA**

**Body & Paint by Brandon Huhtala**

**Automotive Images • Federal Way, WA**

**Owners: Elaine & Jim Pinkerton  
Cascade Cougar Club • Snohomish, WA**