

Rare Finds

'70 Cougar Eliminator: "It's Rare and It's Fast"

Story and photos by Jerry Heasley

Editor's note: Longtime musclecar journalist and photographer Jerry Heasley has a knack for finding interesting and highly unusual cars that have been tucked away in barns, stashed in garages, or sometimes just put out to pasture. Rare Finds is a new, regular feature for the magazine that will bring you the results of Jerry's prospecting.

Rick Parker was shocked to his toenails at the sight of the '70 Cougar Eliminator you see here. First, he was staring at one of the rarest and most elusive muscle ponycars ever built: a Mercury Cougar Eliminator with a 428 Super Drag Pack Cobra Jet, four-speed transmission, and 4.30 Detroit Locker rearend. And second, he actually recalled this Grabber Orange coupe from his high school days on Powell Avenue in Columbus, Ohio. The sight of this car invoked pure nostalgia.

If you're mainly into Mustangs and Fords, the Super Drag Pack nomenclature might throw you for a loop. It did for Rick and it did for us. Rick, who owns Signature Auto Classics in Columbus, admitted, "If somebody told me last week that car was a Super Drag Pack, I would have said there is no such thing."

Apparently, Mercury used this term in its Cougar line. As far as we know, Ford did not use Super Drag Pack in the Mustang, Fairlane, or Torino literature.

Rick, still pumped up from his Rare Find, told us the tale of the Cougar.

"In 1970, my brother Bill bought a Grabber Orange 351 Cougar Eliminator brand-new. A local guy in the same neighborhood bought this Cougar. The interesting thing about the car is the guy lived on Powell Avenue where I went to high school. I remember seeing this car when I was 13 years old."

Rick even recalled the original dealer, Bill Swad Lincoln-Mercury on Broad Street. The original owner went into the armed services and took his ride with him to an Air Force base in Arkansas. Later, the original owner brought the Cougar



back to Columbus after he got out of the service. Rick might never have seen the hot Cougar again if it weren't for friend Jeff Hartzler.

"Jeff is a big Cougar guy, I guess is the best way to say it. About eight or nine years ago, he bought the car. He brought it by my shop, and I said, 'Holy @\$\$', this is the car I remember from when I was 13 years old. I know this car!'"

The Grabber Orange paint was faded, the pinstripes peeling, and the bumpers dulled by the years. But, it's funny how cars have a certain character, and we remember them like long-lost friends.

Jeff, being the Cougar person he was, was just as excited. But like so many of us, he didn't restore the hot Merc. The Eliminator sat in his Smithville, Ohio, garage for almost a decade. Finally, he offered the car to Rick. The odometer showed 64,000 miles. When the deal was done, Rick couldn't believe he ended up with the big, bad Cougar from his high school days.

Assessing the Mercury's condition, Rick came up with a Yogi Berra-like statement: "I would classify it as in real good poor condition."

"It's got some rust in the quarter-panels, but not much. For being in Ohio most of its life, it's not that bad. It's very, very fixable. It's just dirty and ugly. I'll take it all apart and do the whole thing."

The engine is a Q-code 428. In the Ford line, this nonram-air 428 would be cataloged as a Super Cobra Jet due to the presence of the Drag Pack. Mercury went with the term Super Drag Pack for its Cobra Jets with the Drag Pack option. Therefore, this engine is, according to Mercury literature, a 428 Super Drag Pack Cobra Jet. That's a mouthful.

The original Cougar brochure states Mercury's Drag Pack consisted of the Detroit Locker differential with 4.30 gears, an engine oil cooler, and special heavy-duty engine components. The Marti report reveals a total of 215 Cougars built in 1970 with the Q-code 428 and four-speed engine/transmission combination. Unfortunately, there is no breakdown for the 428 Super Drag Pack. Not all Q-codes, of course, were Super Drag Packs.

Rick said, "I've been told by some of the Cougar people it's one of fewer than 20 built with the Super Drag Pack with the 4.30 gear." **MCR**



The Cougar's original Q-code 428 was pulled out in the early '80s, and the car sat with an empty engine bay for some 25 years. Rick has that original mill and will eventually replant it in the Cougar.



The Cobra Jet in this Cougar's Super Drag Pack was a nonram-air car, so the scoop was there purely for looks.



Here's what Rick Parker means when he describes his rare cat as "real good poor condition." It's more dirty than rusty, which is surprising considering the car spent most of its life in Ohio.

DESCRIPTION	33C 084	OF910	507368
COUGAR 2DR HARDTOP	3114 00		2536 00
INCLUDES AT NO EXTRA COST	NC		NC
351-2V V8 ENGINE	NC		NC
H1-BACK BUCKET SEATS	NC		NC
CONCEALED DUAL HEADLAMPS	NC		NC
SEQUENTIAL TURN SIGNALS	NC		NC
2-SPOKE COLOR-KEYED STRG WHL	NC		NC
FLOW-THRU VENTILATION SYSTEM			
COMPETITION GOLD			
CJ428-4V	310 90		245 90
ELIMINATOR	129 60		102 46
4-SPEED-MANUAL HORST SHIFTER	204 70		161 89
SUPER-DRAG-PAK OPTION	207 30		163 94
HIGHER RATIO AXLE	13 00		10 25
F70X14 BLTD TRACTN TIRES	35 00		27 67
RIN-BLOW STEERING WHEEL	57 10		45 09
SPORTS CONSOLE	64 80		51 23
POWER FRONT DISC BRAKES	60 90		48 16
AM-RADIO	15 60		12 30
DLX SEAT & PRT-SHOULDER BELTS	90 70		71 72
STYLED STEEL WHEELS	1189 60		940 61
TOTAL OPTIONS			

This is the Cougar's original invoice. We don't know what's more shocking, the original \$4,300 price tag, or the fact that the dealer got a whopping \$1.33 for putting 4 gallons of gas into it!

D.D. BOWEN & COMPANY	281.40	SCHEDULE B-	50.00	30.00
TOTAL FOR VEHICLE			4353.60	3526.61
4 GALS GAS				1.33
DLR ADV FUND				20.00
2				
IN-STATE TOTAL	59.00	2364.00	281.40	
OUT-STATE TOTAL	81.61	22.61	881.21	00
TOTAL FOR VEHICLE AND DEALER CHARGES				3547.94

HAVE A RARE FIND?

If you have a Rare Find or know of one, please send an e-mail with your name, address, phone numbers, and a few facts about the model year, car line, and engine option to jerry@jerryheasley.com.

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GATE RELEASE & ACCOUNTING



Here's how Mercury advertised the Eliminator back in the good old days.

Cougar Eliminator

CALL IT THE ROAD ANIMAL. Car joins the three Cyclones in producing all-out driving action—handles front and rear, road setup and build tape engine systems excellent. And excitement's Best 300 (200 hp) or CJ 428 (275 hp). With it, you'll get the Competition Handling Package (standard with CJ 428-4V and Best 300, required extra cost option with 351-4V). And F70 x 14 belted tractor tires are a required option with all engines.

Standard equipment includes: Hood scoop • Front and rear spoilers • Rear deck air-leaf spoiler • Turbinester • 16 back bucket seats • Racing mirrors • Special competition colors.

Optional equipment (in addition to engine) includes: Bar Air induction • 4-speed transmission with Hurst Shifter* • Solid Disk transmission • Mustang-Like 4-disc record • 3.50:1 axle • Drag Pak with 3.21:1 axle • Super Drag Pak with 4.30:1 axle • Republic heavy-duty battery.



Like the rest of the car, the Cougar's interior is dirty and worn but largely complete.