



VOLUME 43 | ISSUE 1
SPRING 2024

AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT

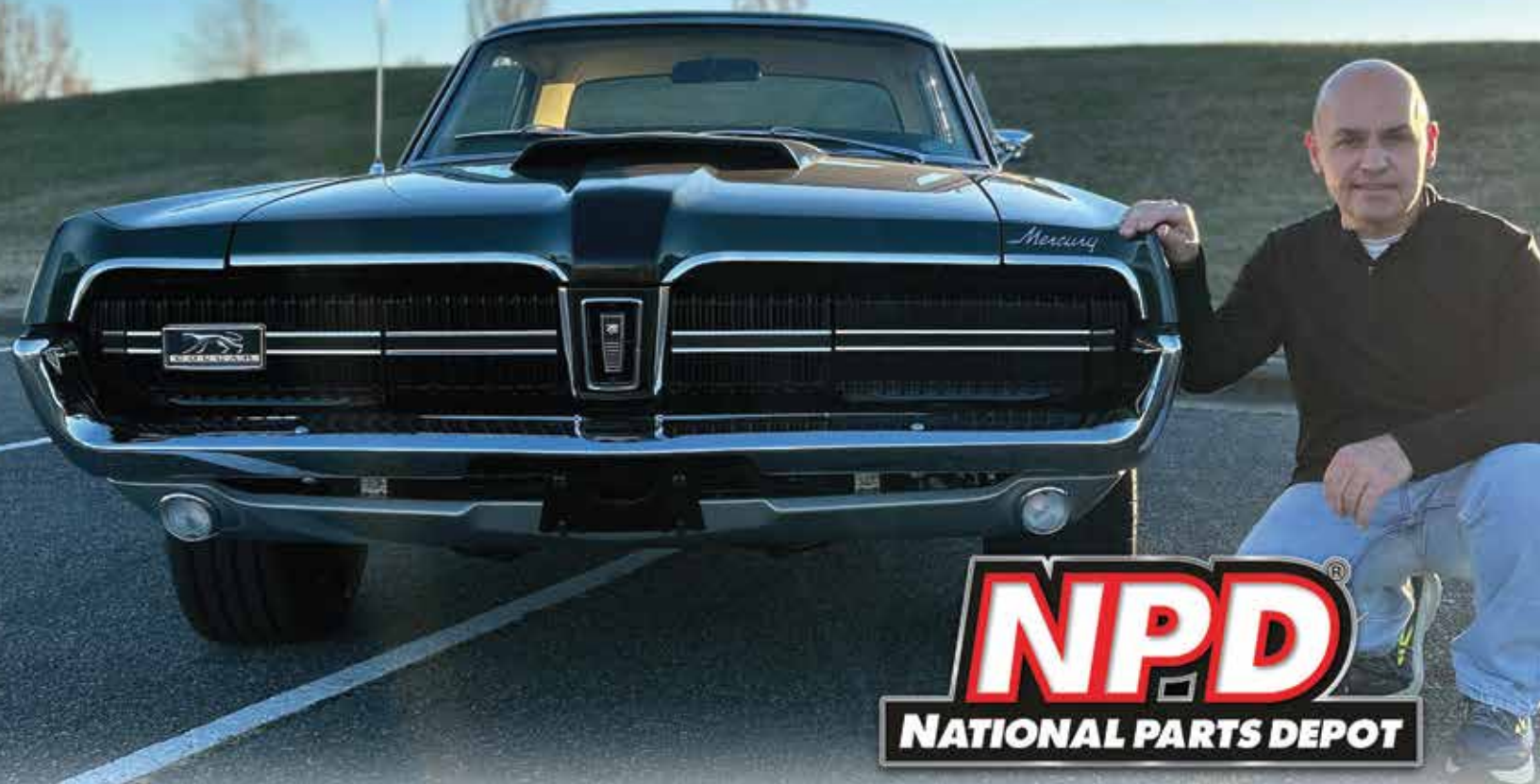
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Cover background photo: **Ford Heritage Vault**
In This Issue background photo: **Randy Wentzel**



AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT

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ATSOTC welcomes publishable material for future editions. Send your submissions to:

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Summer 2024 Deadline - Please send your submissions no later than **May 21st, 2024**.

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- \$30 for members who receive the newsletter by email.
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ATSOTC (At the Sign of the Cat) Volume 43, Number 1 is published by Cougar Club of America LLC, 33 Cayuse Lane, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275, Tel. 904-588-4670. Periodicals postage paid at Owasso, OK, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to: CCOA LLC, 19455 E 72nd St. N, Owasso, OK 74055.

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Subscription inquires, including address changes: Visit us at cougarclub.org or write to: CCOA LLC, 19455 E 72nd St. N, Owasso, OK 74055 or call 918-760-2269.

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A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR



By Gavin Schlesinger - CCOA Chairperson (CCOA #5780)

Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines...

Spring is in the air! It is the perfect moment to finish your winter projects and get back out on the road cruising in your Mercury Cougar for the car show season. The Members Rides section of www.CougarClub.org is a fine place for inspiration if needed. It's constantly being updated and features images of Mercury Cougars from around the world.

Congratulations and thank you to the people that were willing to be on the ballot for our previous election. The results are in, and our Club Officer results are:

- Vice Chairperson: **Mark Kulwik**
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- Financial Director: **Mark Smith**
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- Club Services Director: **Chris Jones**
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Please join me in congratulating and thanking the volunteers that make our club possible.

If you have ever thought of being a volunteer, there is no better time than today. **We are seeking additional support for both coordinating events and our social media presence.**

We have three years until the 60th Anniversary of the Mercury Cougar. It takes a lot of planning to make an event happen, and I am certain all the clubs that held events in 2017 need ideas and volunteers to start paving the way commemorating this milestone celebration.

If you have any ideas or feedback on how to improve the club, please reach out to me or to one of the existing BOD officers to share your views.

Thank you for your continued support for the Cougar Club of America and our hobby!



Founded by Mercury Cougar Enthusiasts, made strong by our Membership and Volunteers.

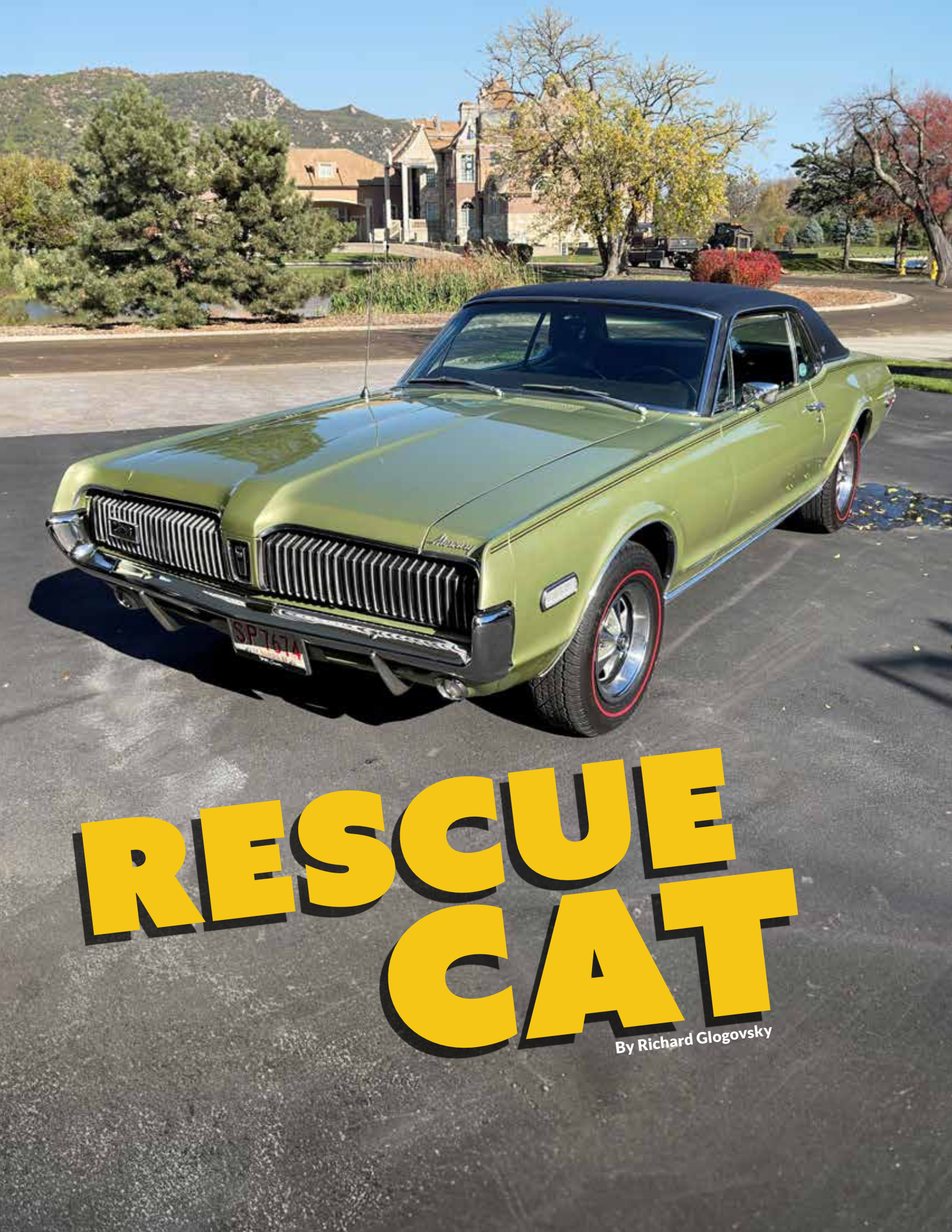
We need your support to maintain ATSOTC magazine and to keep it updated with everyone's stories and images. Please send an email to submissions@CougarClub.org and/or Editor@CougarClub.org as we want to hear from you, our membership and readers, on what can be done to enhance your experience with ATSOTC. When you submit your images and articles, you become a part of Cougar history.

Our website www.CougarClub.org is constantly evolving and improving. Conan (webmaster@CougarClub.org) is doing an amazing job adding content, images, and information to help with all things Cougar. If anything is missing and you are able to contribute, it is always greatly appreciated.

Twenty twenty-four will be another amazing year, and I look forward to seeing everyone's events being planned and photos shared.

If I can be of help in any way, please email me directly at chair@cougarclub.org.

Keep both hands on the wheel, and I hope to see you out on the street!



RESCUE CAT

By Richard Glogovsky

Though bound to be parted out, I found this 1968 Cougar XR-7 (302-4V) stored in a garage in Tampa and saved it in April 2020. The car had not run for eight years after its owner had passed. Cheap tires were placed on the car, and a lot of carburetor cleaner with new points, condenser, and battery was used to get it started. Remarkably, the car had very little to no undercarriage surface rust plus a numbers-matching engine with 42,000 miles. We closed the deal and shipped the Cougar to north of Chicago to start the restoration.

The story really begins when my father purchased a 289-powered Lime Frost/black Cougar in 1967. When I turned 16, he gave the car to me. Tired and rusted from the winter salt, the Cougar had its rear quarters and floor plates replaced, its flanks repainted, and its 85,000-mile engine rebuilt. I also added Ansen slotted magnesium wheels. That started my love for

Cougars, especially pulling into my high school playing Ted Nugent's "Cat Scratch Fever." It was a great car but I had to sell it because I needed money for my engineering degrees (Purdue 1984-85, MSOE 1982). I couldn't stand to see that car drive away, so I didn't. Later, I purchased a 1973 Cougar convertible with the 351C and drove around Purdue with the top down in the Indiana winter. That car probably went to parts after I sold it.

Thus, the hunt for another Cougar later in life. After the '68 came home from Florida, it was clear my wife was not too happy with an old car and parts all over the place. After doing basic bodywork and removing/refurbishing plenty of parts, it was clear that this job was too big and too long for me, and I needed to get some classic car experts with more time than my few nights and weekends. I wanted this car to be perfect.



Working with some old friends who usually work on classic 1960s Pontiacs, Chevys, and Dodges, it took some convincing to help me do a full restoration on the Cougar. As we ripped the car apart to refurbish the interior, electronics, steering, exhaust, paint, engine, and transmission, the car became a conversation piece for all the Brand X folks that came in the shop and around town. It was all good, though, because the comments were always, "Wow, what a great looking and cool car."

The whole restoration process took a little over two years. All parts are original from my friends at WCCC and John's Cougars, or as-close-as possible repos that

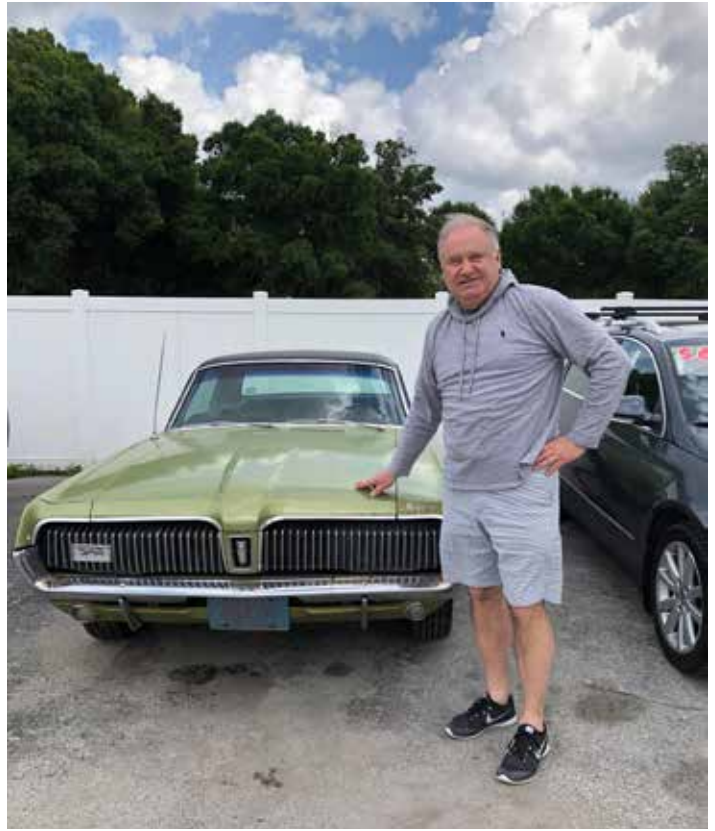
were available elsewhere. There were a lot of struggles with the Autolite 8400 carb (which was rebuilt and flowed twice on the East Coast), a dog of a carb but the original. The last part was getting the original air conditioning to work – now it is as cold as a freezer.

The car is still being broken in, and I'm working on some very small details in continuing to make it even more perfect.

We now go to car shows and enjoy the thumbs-ups and neck-breakers when I drive around town. Maybe time to start on another Cougar project . . . I am thinking so!







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Mid-America Classic Cougars (MACC)



By Randy Christian (CCOA #9216)

Twenty twenty-four is off and running. MACC concluded 2023 by having our big chili cook-off and electing new club officers at Charlie Brown's house, then finished with a bang at the club Christmas party with 35-plus members and friends in attendance.

New club officers for 2024 are:

- Randy Christian - President
- Dan Whisnant - Vice President
- Charlie Brown - Secretary (a life-long appointment since he is great at taking notes)
- Craig Parrott - Treasurer
- George Temes - Sergeant at Arms



We kicked 2024 off by setting up our MACC and Friends car corral at the 60th annual Daryl Starbird car show in Tulsa. This is one of the largest indoor car shows in the country with over 1200 vehicles in the building. We had 22 cars in the corral including 13 Cougars, a Triumph TR6, a Saturn Sky, a Mercury M100 pickup, a 1936 Ford, a 1955 Thunderbird, and several others. Overall, MACC took home 10 trophies including Floyd Brown, who brought home three awards for his 1968 Cougar GT, custom 1968 Cougar convertible, and 1968 Cougar GT-E promo car. The GT-E is beautiful, and Floyd and his son Charlie did a fantastic job restoring it. We look forward to the next show in 2025.

We are currently planning the cruises and car shows we will be attending in 2024. MACC members love to drive their Cougars and show them off wherever we can. We will keep everyone updated in future issues of ATSOTC. If any Cougar owners make it down our way, please don't hesitate to look us up and hang out.



















1970 COUGAR ELIMINATOR A FAMILY LEGACY RESTORED

By Todd Slabaugh (CCOA #10388)

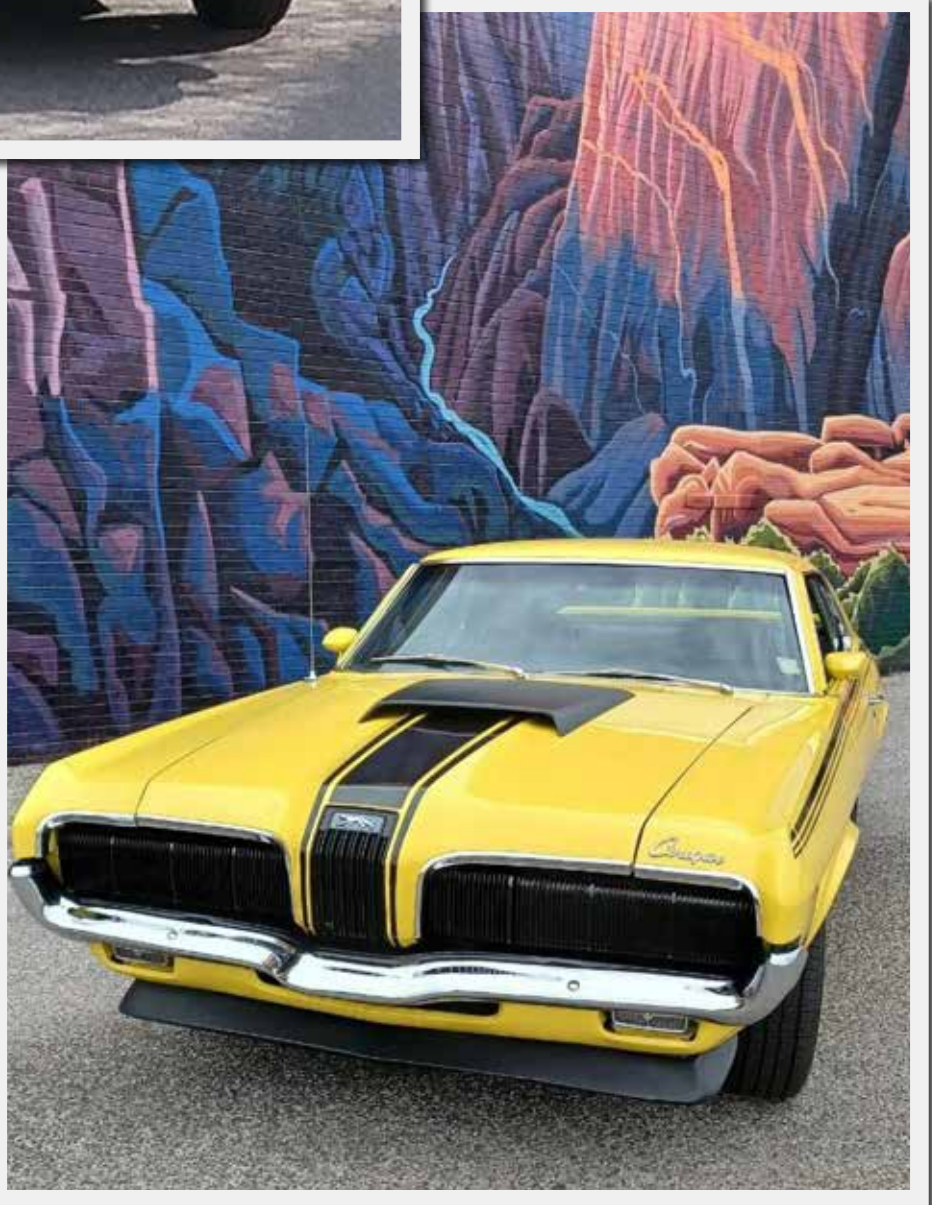
We have a 1970 Cougar Eliminator that was purchased new by my dad in the fall of 1970 from Brookside Lincoln-Mercury in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Cougar was a daily driver until 1974, when the cost of gas had skyrocketed, so it was stored in the garage and replaced by an AMC Gremlin for our daily driver. Over time, the Eliminator spent several years in my grandpa's barn, and at least one year in the field behind that barn. As can be seen in the "before" picture, the car was no longer pretty when we took possession of it in 1986, though it was still very solid: there were no rust holes, with the rear quarters being amazingly nice and the floor being equally clean under the carpet. The interior was just as it was when last driven. Though the original trunk lid was missing, the rear spoiler was in the back seat.

The vital statistics are as follows: 428 SCJ Ram Air with Drag Pak 3.91 Traction Lock gears, C6 auto, styled steel wheels, and AM/8-track stereo. It has about 43,000 miles on the odometer. We did little in the way of actual restoration until the early 2000s. I consider it a nice driver-quality car that does well at local shows and provides many enjoyable drives each year until the snow begins to fall. To this day, it remains an ongoing project. When I bought this car from my dad for \$1, my son was immediately waiting for the day I hand him the keys – I'll probably make him pay \$2 so I can tell everyone that I doubled my money!

As for now, there are Eliminator-specific details that we want to correct, and then we will focus on driving it for a while.

We live in the small town of Garrett, Indiana. There are still a few people around who recall my dad driving it to work, or my mom running to the post office. It was a special car then, and it's a special car now.







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Tribute Cat

By John Stavrou (CCOA #9387)
Photos by Randy Wentzel



In October of 2017, my family and I experienced a tragic loss with the Tubbs Fire in Santa Rosa, California. As a result, our family's home, including my beloved 1968 Cougar (which I had owned since 1993) was destroyed. This was my first car that was purchased by my parents. Many great memories were made driving the Cougar, from being part of my wedding celebrations to cruising with my then-five-month-old son, not to mention outings with the family when I was a teenager.

Long story short, I was very devastated by the loss, yet I was fortunate to have the Mercury Stray Cats club, if not the entire Cougar community, reaching out and supporting me through this difficult time.



Not long after the fires, a local friend of mine asked me if I was interested in acquiring another Cougar as he had one that he was willing to sell. He had plans to keep her but when he found out about my story, he reached out. I reluctantly said that I would check out his Cougar and, once I saw his car, I was hooked! I already had envisioned how this Cougar would end up and decided immediately that I would make a tribute to my original Cougar. A deal was struck, and the Cougar was mine!





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Once the bugs were sorted out, I wanted to get my car repainted in the same color as my original Cougar. I searched high and low for the right person to take on this project and, after receiving a recommendation from a fellow Stray Cats member, I ended up taking my Cat to T&N Body and Paint in Lodi, California, who did a wonderful job repainting the Cougar to match the blue of my old car. We ended up removing the vinyl top as there was evidence of rust in the back channel in between the trunk lid and rear glass, so a new panel was ordered and installed along with body work and new seals. Since my original Cougar had a painted top, I opted not to put the vinyl top back on.









I will never forget the day I went to the body shop to pick up the Cougar. I was I such in awe upon seeing it for the first time! It almost seems like I never lost my original Cougar. For now, my goal is to create new memories with my son by attending car shows and cruises just like I did with my father in our original Cougar. I enjoy it as much as I can, and I am fortunate to have acquired another Cougar and have all the work done in such a short period of time. Many thanks to the Cougar community for their support!



THE GOLDEN CAT

By Eric Purkhiser (CCOA #9866)





The story of the Golden Cat started years ago as a dream of my brother, Keith. He called me one day and said he decided to buy a project car that was just outside of Reno: a 1967 Mercury Cougar. I'm a mechanic by trade and have been a Ford guy all my life so, when I heard this news, I was all in. Keith and I travelled from Santa Rosa (in the Bay Area) to Reno so I could help assess the condition of the car.

When we arrived, the Jamaican Yellow Cougar was in rough shape and rather Plain Jane in its original configuration of 289-2V, standard three-speed manual transmission, black interior, and center console. Over the years, it lost the console and was repainted purple, then green. The original 289 also had been replaced with an aged 351C-2V. Overall, the car was driveable but needed to be fully restored. Keith handed over a fist-full

of money and we towed the Cougar back to the North Bay. Fast forward five years, and the car was still waiting for the restoration it so deserved, but children had been born and life marched on for Keith, with the Cougar taking a back seat.

In the meantime, I acquired a GM 471 blower setup at the classic car shop at which I was working. At that moment, I did not own a car in which to install a blown engine but, before long, I built a complete small-block that was in search for a home. While looking for a classic Ford in which to install this powerplant, I happened to tell my brother about the supercharged engine I had waiting at home. He mentioned that he may be selling the Cougar and that I should buy and restore it. Cash once again traded hands and I became the proud owner of a dusty 1967 Mercury Cougar.



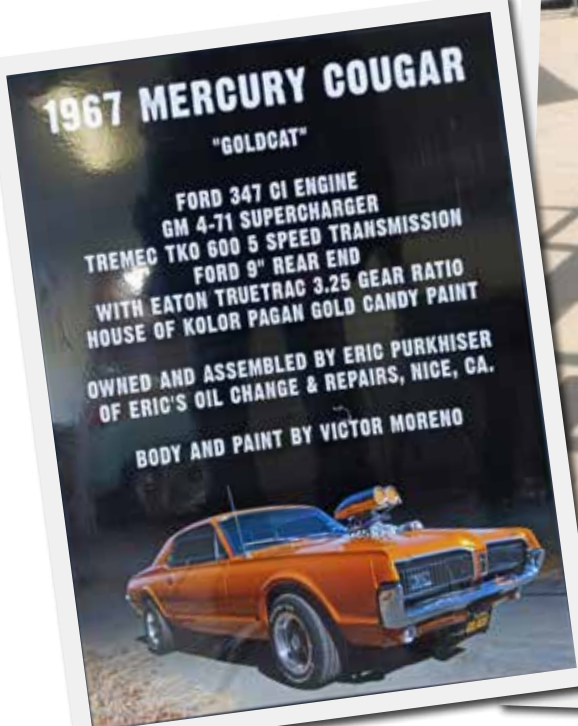


This was exciting stuff! I drove the car home and the next day took it to the shop, where I immediately started stripping the Cougar apart. Upon inspection, it was going to need new floor pans, quarter panels, and fenders. The Cougar was in the body shop for over a year but, when it finally saw the light of day, the derelict Cougar had emerged as the Golden Cat with a three-stage House of Kolors Pagan Gold paint job. I personally put in countless hours installing the engine and handling all the rest of the repairs.

I decided that if you're going to do something, it should be done right, so of course the rest of the car had to be up to snuff. The entire suspension, rear end, and steering were replaced and upgraded. The old three-speed manual was ditched in favor of a TREMEC TKO 600 five-speed capable of handling the power of the 347cid supercharged engine.

Overall, I am very pleased how the car turned out. I have taken it to several local car shows and won a few trophies. People love seeing the car as it is a one-of-a-kind hot rod Cougar.

I hope you enjoy it as well – cheers!







Second Time Around

By Chuck LoMagro (CCOA # 9883)

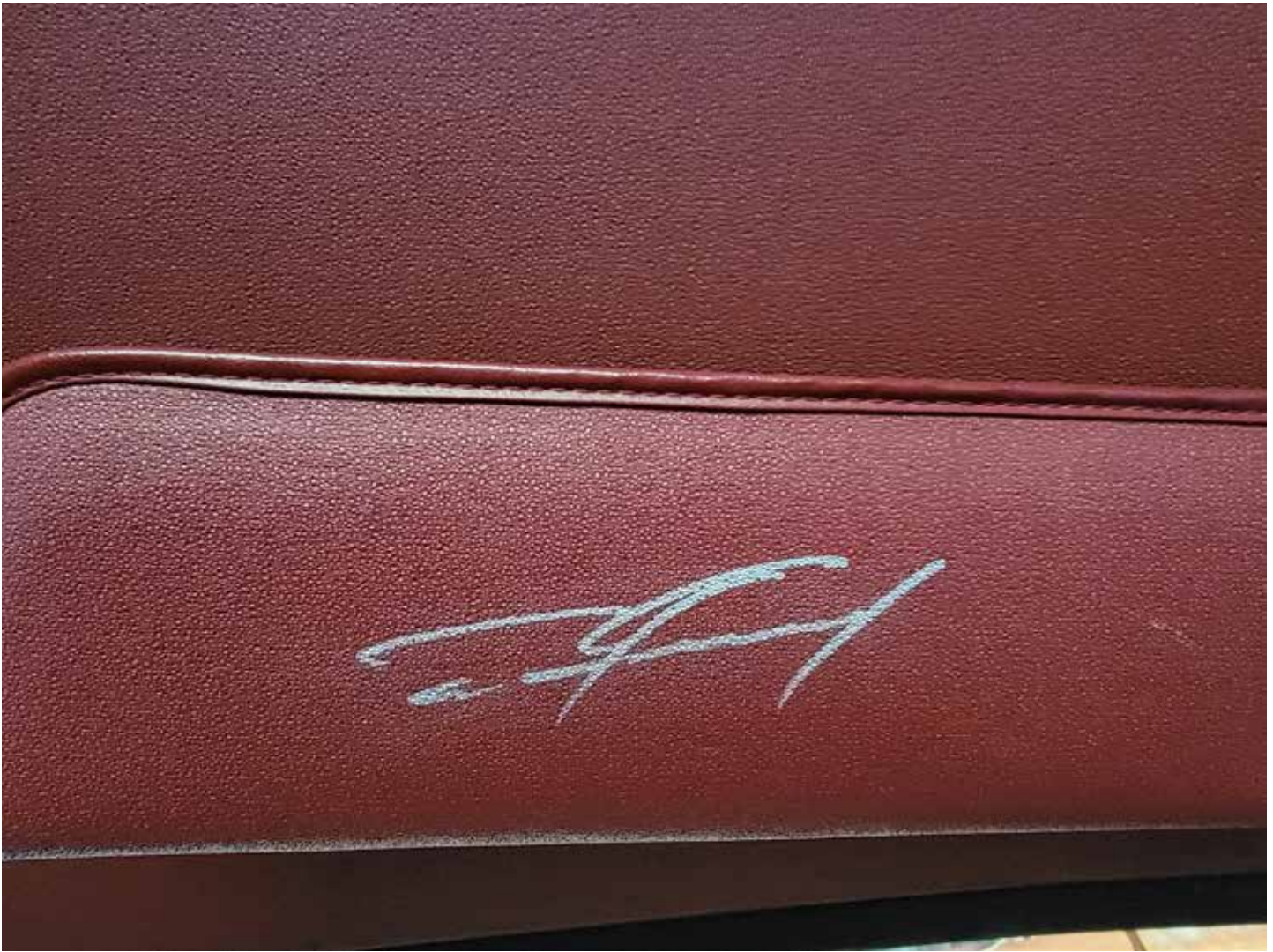
At the age of three, I received my first car, a battery-operated ride-on Marx Mobile. Since then, I have loved all things automotive. My love for Cougars has been with me since high school when I bought a 1968 Cougar. From high school to marriage and family, you never forget your first car.

Years later, I was lucky enough to have a good friend from high school call me one day and tell me there was a 1968 Cougar for sale that looked just like the one I had in high school. The car was located around the corner from my friend's place of business in New Hope, Pennsylvania.

The next day, I went to check it out. There it was, parked on the side of the road with a "for sale" sign. After a quick look-over and test drive, I purchased it for \$700. The Cougar was in fair shape and needed plenty of attention.

With determination fueling my every step, I embarked on a journey to restore the Cougar to its former glory, with many upgrades along the way. The task ahead seemed daunting, but I was undeterred. I pored over manuals and magazines, learning every detail of the car's design. Each rusty bolt and faded panel held a story of its own, waiting to be uncovered.

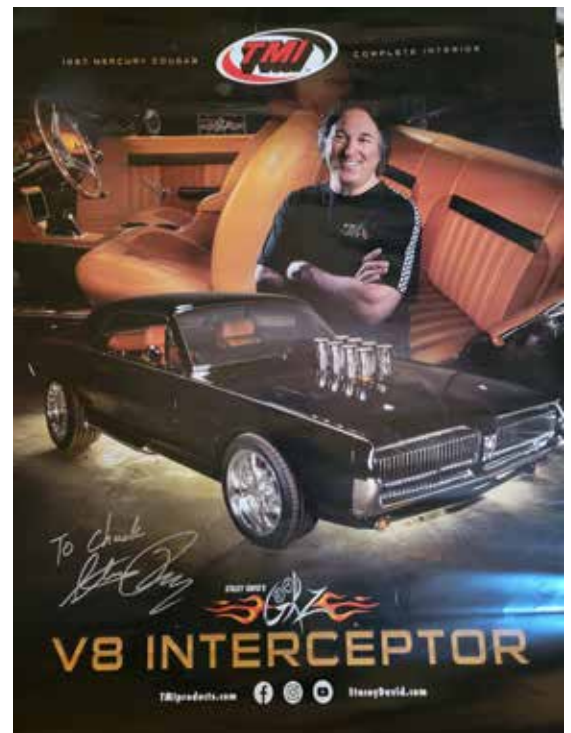




I was fortunate that the body and frame were in great shape. This Cougar was a Dan Gurney Special with a 302 and three-speed automatic. I was also fortunate to have Dan Gurney sign my driver-side sun visor.

Now overhauled, the 302 features Doug's Headers and new three-inch custom exhausts with Flowmaster mufflers leading to chrome tips through the rear valance. I added an Edelbrock manifold with 650 Holley carburetor, electronic ignition, and Cougar valve covers and air cleaner. Factory GT-style hood scoop topped it off.

The interior has been completely reupholstered plus the installation of new carpets, stainless steel console, Shelby steering wheel, and upgraded retro-looking 100-amp AM/FM with Bluetooth to power four Pioneer speakers front and rear. All exterior lighting is LED – headlights and taillights work as they should, but better and brighter. XR7-G front valance has been added with Lucas fog lights.



I redid the suspension with better springs up front, better leaf springs in the rear (to prevent the low-hanging rear from which some Cougars suffer), Koni gas shocks all around, and bigger sway bar in front and rear. Brakes have been upgraded to discs with 15-inch Scott Drake factory replica aluminum wheel with radial BFGoodrich 60s all around.

I met Stacey David at the 2023 SEMA Show, who liked what we did with the Cougar. As you may know, he built the 1967 V8 Interceptor. Included here is the poster he signed as well as a picture of Stacey, my wife Ruth, and me.

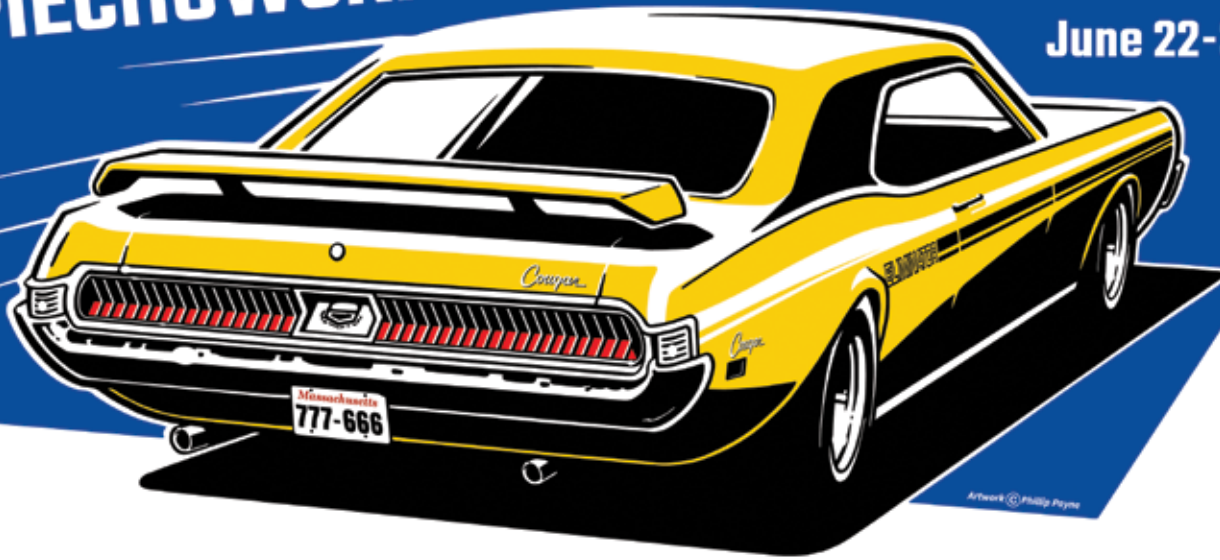
Though my primary career has been as a sales and marketing professional in the building services industry, I still have managed to devote a great deal of time pursuing my automotive passions, leading up to the creation of Greasy Hands Garage (<https://greasyhandsgarage.com>). As I look back on the journey that brought this second 1968 Cougar into my life, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to breathe new life into a piece of history. Though it may have started as a neglected relic, it has since become a cherished companion, forever etched into the fabric of my life's story.





DRIVER:
PIECHOWSKI WYRWAS

June 22-30



Artwork © Philip Payne

TEAM ELIMINATOR

151



YELLOW E-CAT: OUT OF ITS CAGE AGAIN...

By Mark Piechowski (CCOA #9085) Artwork by Phillip Payne (CCOA #6434)

You may recall reading in a previous issue of ATSOTC about my Cougar-crazed marathon to assemble the Yellow E-Cat in time for the 2023 Carlisle Ford Nationals. With the help of friends, it was a success! For 2024, I have plans for the Eliminator to return to Carlisle, which is at the beginning of June (May 31-June 2). However, my preparations are focused for late June. The juxtaposition may confuse you, but the answer is a bunch of fun!

Once a year, there is a big event called The Great Race. For 2024, my Eliminator is entered in the event as car #151. The Great Race is not a competition of speed but, rather, a competition of staying on time and following the route sheet very, very closely. Over a route course of 2000-plus miles over 10 days, competitors will be piloting their pre-1975 vehicles (including vintage trucks, buses, and motorcycles) over scenic back roads as they pass hidden check points that monitor the exact time you drive by. Passing the check point too late or too early will result in a points penalty. Each car has a driver and navigator who work together to stay on time. Despite the

Yellow E-Cat having plenty of horsepower on tap, course speeds top out at 50 mph. Some cars are over 100 years old, like this 1916 Hudson.



The event takes place regardless of the weather, which can be tough on the open cars but, hey, it's all in good fun! The Great Race is put on by Hemmings Motor News, Coker Tire, Hagerty Insurance and other sponsors. There are celebrations, car shows, museums, and other activities at every stop along the way. If you'd like to see some of the action, there are videos of the Great Race on YouTube.

For 2024, the route of the Great Race runs from Owensboro, Kentucky to Gardiner, Maine. If you are along this route, please keep a watch for the 150-plus Great Race cars traveling by. The cities in red are the overnights stays while the cities in blue are the lunch breaks.

- The car: 1969 Mercury Cougar Eliminator in Bright Yellow powered by a 390 and auto trans.
- The driver: Me, Mark Piechowski, of North Adams, Massachusetts.
- The navigator: Friend and CCOA Eliminator Registrar Dave Wyrwas of Merrimack, New Hampshire.

Dave and I are excited to participate in The Great Race. The thought of competing gives me both butterflies and adrenaline. It's January 12th as I write this, leaving me six months to prep both the car and ourselves for this event. These six months will go by in a flash!

Of all the collector car brands out there, it appears that the members of the Cougar community are the most supportive and welcoming car folks. If you are near the event route, we ask for your support by cheering us on as we navigate through your area. I'm looking forward to seeing other Cougars along the way. Please keep your spare Cougar parts on hand just in case we have a mechanical break-down.

One more thing, as this is one of my favorite parts: Resident Cougar artist Phillip Payne has created special artwork to promote our participation in The Great Race. This awesome design will make a great addition to any Cougar enthusiast's collection.

These T-shirts will be available at Carlisle Ford Nationals, or email me at FirstEliminator@aol.com.

Hope to see you out there!



MERCURY COUGAR 1974



photo: Ford Heritage Vault

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Charlie Brown (CCOA #8693)
Member Services Director

WELCOME TO THE COUGAR CLUB OF AMERICA

Spring is here, and many of us are preparing our Cougars for short drives, car shows, or just putting them back together. I hope you will share your pictures on the CCOA Facebook page. **If you are so inclined, take some snapshots at your club meetups and any club get-together and submit an article for the ATSOTC magazine. If you're new to CCOA, write an article about your Cougar and its history. We all love a good story, and we love it even more to share it with the CCOA family.**

I know that, from time to time, your Cougars end up finding new owners. I would like to encourage you to ask the new caretaker to join CCOA, enjoy the magazine, and share the enthusiasm we all have for our Cougars.

We are also looking for technical articles for the magazine, so think of us when you're upgrading or restoring your Cougar.

CCOA membership for the last three months saw a slight downturn in active members. We also saw the normal uptick in renewals in December and January since many of our members have a January renewal date. We are still missing several renewals, so please check your cards for the expiration dates.

I want to share several statistics about changes to our CCOA membership:

- As of January 31, 2024, Cougar Club of America has 738 active members, down from 750. We expected several renewals in January since renewal notices went out in November, but they may have missed the notice.
- From November 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024, a total of 254 members renewed their memberships.
- From November 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024, we added 21 new members and two returning members.

NEW MEMBERS

Joining the club from November 2023 through January 2024 are the following new members – welcome!

CCOA#	Member name	City	State	Country
10565	BRAD STOCKS	DELAFIELD	WI	
10566	STEPHAN GIMMEL	BAECH		Switzerland
10567	SAM & SHARON DIPRIMA	NAPERVILLE	IL	
10568	FRANK JAROS	RIVERVIEW	MI	
10569	QUINTON & BETH BENTLEY	PERRY	OK	
10570	JOHN ALTMAN	COON RAPIDS	MN	
10571	BOB HARDIN	GLENDALE	AZ	
10572	MIKE TAYLOR	BUFORD	GA	
10573	DALE FAULKNER	WALNUT COVE	NC	
10574	DENNIS DOBRANSKI	EDMONTON	AB	Canada
10575	DAVID FRICK	MOUNT AIRY	MD	
10576	RON BURKHARD	FOND DU LAC	WI	
10577	DARRON HOWARD	AUBURN	WA	
10578	TAMMY CRAYS & DALLAS HILL	ARMA	KS	
10579	DAVID BLAINE	DAVISON	MI	
10580	BOB & PERI BEHNKE	BREWERTON	NY	
10581	ARMANDO ACUNA	SCRANTON	SC	
10582	JIM GUDDAL	NAPLES	FL	
10583	ANDREW HINE	DANVILLE	IN	
10584	PATRICK LITTLE	AUSTIN	TX	
10585	LEE STONES	SEDALIA	CO	

SPREAD THE WORD

We need your help grow the CCOA family. The more Cougar enthusiasts we have as members, the more content we will have for the ATSOTC publication. If you know someone who appreciates Cougars but who is not yet a member of the CCOA, please share your magazine or invite him or her to visit our website. New members are always welcome!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?
DO YOU NEED TO MAKE AN ADDRESS CHANGE?

Check your CCOA membership card for your due date. If you are an e-member, you will receive an email with a download link to let you know if it's time to renew. If your renewal is due, just use the "JOIN" button at www.cougarclub.org and this link will take you to Cornerstone Registration for renewal Membership processing

<https://coa.cornerstonereg.com>

If you prefer, you can send a check using the membership form found elsewhere in this magazine.

Be sure to let Cornerstone Registration know if you change your postal or email address. We use this data to mail out the ATSOTC. You can also change your personal information on their site. It pains me when mail is returned undeliverable so, if you have an issue updating your personal information, please don't hesitate to contact Cornerstone Registration.

Cougar Club of America

c/o Cornerstone Registration, Ltd.
PO Box 1715
Maple Grove, MN 55311-6715

Toll-Free: 866-427-7583 (In the U.S. only)
Tel: 763-420-7829
Fax: 763-420-7849

E-mail: coa@cornerstonereg.com

Online at <https://coa.cornerstonereg.com>

NEW! The Cougar Club of America

COOLER



\$43.00

Price includes shipping
within the continental U.S.

This spacious cooler has room for 12 cans plus everything else you need for a fun event.

With embroidered logos in two locations, it also makes for an eye-catching travelling companion.

The cooler features honeycomb polyester and polyester canvas.
Size: 8.75" H x 11.25" W x 8" D

This initial production run is limited – don't delay!

Get yours at: <http://www.cougarclub.org/store.htm>

CCOA APPLICATION

Cougar Owners Unite!



Join with hundreds of **Cougar Club of America** members to celebrate the Mercury Cougar. As a member, you will receive the CCOA's publication, *At the Sign of the Cat*, an official membership card, and an eye-catching window decal for your car that identifies you to fellow Cougar enthusiasts wherever you go.

Use this form or the online registration form at <https://ccoa.cornerstonereg.com> today. Annual dues are **\$30** for members who receive the newsletter by email. For members who want a printed newsletter by mail, the dues are **\$45 for U.S. addresses** or **\$50 for non-U.S. addresses** (payable in U.S. funds only) Become a member of the club that is *exclusively* dedicated to the preservation of the Mercury Cougar.

New Member _____ Renewal _____ (make any changes below)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ ZIP: _____

Country: _____ Phone# _____

E-mail: _____

(please print clearly and include email even if choosing regular mail membership)

E-member (\$30) _____ U.S. mail member (\$45) _____ Non-U.S. mail (\$50) _____

May we share your contact info with regional clubs and other event organizers?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you a member of a local Cougar Club? _____

*To join or renew, please fill out this form and mail it with payment
(Make checks payable to **CCOA**) or use the on-line form at <https://ccoa.cornerstonereg.com>*

Cougar Club of America
c/o Cornerstone Registration, Ltd.
PO Box 1715
Maple Grove, MN 55311-6715
Toll-Free: 866-427-7583 (In the U.S. only)
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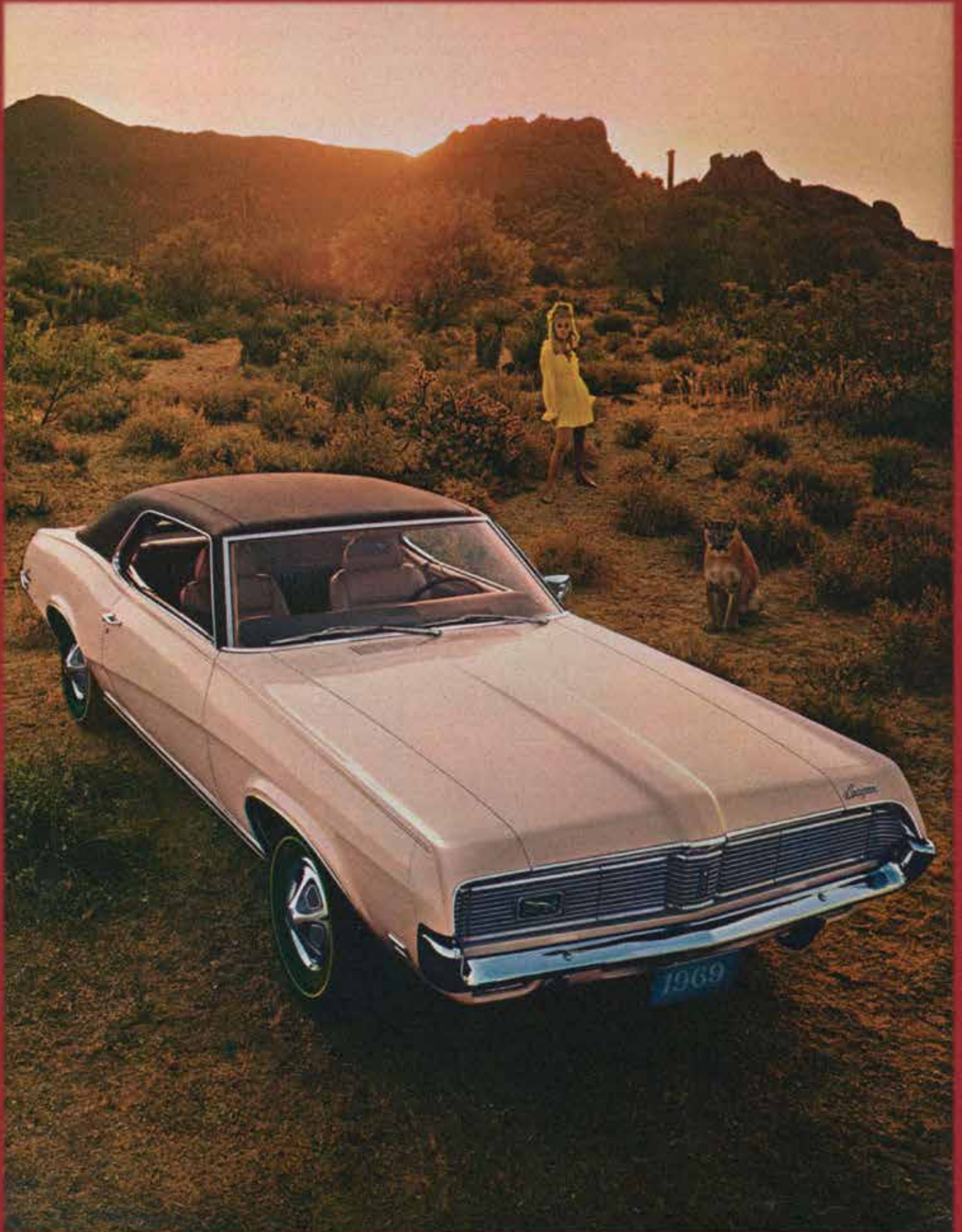


photo: Ford Heritage Vault