

Nutz Letter

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Newsletter Editor - Scott Ferguson

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Fordnutz Collector club is dedicated to the preservation of all collectable Ford and Mercury vehicles

JIM AND ELAINE'S COUGAR ONE THE FIRST PRODUCTION COUGAR



Story as told
by Jim
Pinkerton

Left, Cougar One
on display in Car-
lisle, PA. Photo
courtesy of Car-
lisle Productions.

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If you would like your vehicle spotlighted or if you would like to contribute to the Nutz letter give me a call or send it to me by mail or E-mail.

Next Issue of the Nutzletter: The restoration story of Cougar One (this is a good one).

When you look at the first production 1967 Cougar, you will see the obvious. It is Cardinal Red with a white vinyl roof, red interior, is equipped with a floor-shift console, an AM/FM radio, cruise control, styled-steel wheels, and is powered by a 6.5 liter (390cid) engine connected to the popular Ford C-6 transmission. What you may not know is the struggle that eventually put Cougar One in the possession of its first owner. Essentially, the car became a pawn in a dispute between Ford Motor Company and one of its dealerships, and its destiny was spun primarily from spite. Here's the story...

The dealership principal in Moncton, New Brunswick, was unhappy because he did not receive his proper allocation of the strike-induced Cougar shortage. In an effort to appease the dealer, Lee Iacocca sent him on loan the first production Cougar, serial #00001, minus the Manufacturer's Statement of Origin.

This kind gesture did little to smooth the ruffled lines between the dealer and the factory. Even after the dealership received its full order of Cougars, the dealer principal refused to send Cougar One back to the factory. Without the MSO, the dealership could not sell the Cougar, so the car was leased instead.

Thirty-four months later, Cougar One was returned to the dealership, where it remained in storage until the dealer principal died in 1979.

Ford refused to recognize the dealer's son as qualified to represent Lincoln-Mercury, so the dealership was forced to file for bankruptcy. The Canadian courts and Revenue Canada sued Lincoln-Mercury for Cougar One's MSO in order to liquidate the dealership's assets and the courts won.

With the MSO, Cougar One was free to go into the hands of the public. An employee of the dealership had an uncle interested in the collector car hobby, so when he learned that the assets of the dealership would be sold, he notified his uncle, Dale Garland. In 1979, Garland became the first member of the public to own Cougar One. Garland drove the car briefly and then retired it to a Quonset hut (a curved hanger like structure) 30 kilometers south of Moncton.

In December 1992, Marc Ogren, a Lincoln-Mercury enthusiast from Renton, Washington, purchased a copy of a May 1982 issue of Cars & Parts magazine to read a feature on Lincoln Zephyrs. Marc found that the issue contained an advertisement listing the first Cougar for sale, Garland's only attempt to sell the car. Despite the fact that the advertisement was more than 10 years old, Marc tracked down Garland in 1993 to see if the car was still for sale.

Surprisingly, Garland did indeed have the car and was willing to make a deal.

Coincidentally, Jim Pinkerton, Marc's fellow Cascade Cougar Club member, was in Moncton on Business at the time. Marc called Jim and asked him to check out the car. Jim obliged, verified the car's authenticity (VIN # 7F91S500001 was on the left door data plate), and Marc bought the car over the phone. Marc flew to Moncton, rescued Cougar One from storage and drove it to Boston, where it was put on a car carrier and sent to Seattle.

The car had some minor repairs done to it and then made the rounds of some local car events and proved to be a popular attraction. Marc realized that Cougar One needed extensive restoration and deserved to live the remainder of its life as a display-only vehicle. Marc, who particularly enjoys driving his cars, decided that the project was not for him, and in April of 1994, he sold Cougar One to Elaine Pinkerton and her husband Jim.

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The Pinkertons tried to interest Lincoln Mercury in helping financially with the restoration in exchange L-M could lease the car for one dollar to use it as a promotional display for the release of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Cougar. Lincoln Mercury decided, with a heavy heart, that it was not feasible for them, as the Cougar was going to be discontinued after the 1997 model year. In April of 1996, Elaine and Jim called on the services of John Benoit, owner of Cascade Classics in Puyallup, Washington, for the tedious restoration process. The car was stripped down and sent to Canada to be acid dipped and zinc phosphated. All of the painted metal was refurbished, and everything possible was replaced with original or NOS parts. The body work and paint were the responsibility of Brandon Huhtala of Automotive Images in Federal Way, Washington.

The car was sent to Carlisle, PA for the Cougar Club of America's East Nationals, and marked Cougar One's first appearance since being restored. It has since been trailered to a couple of local shows in Washington state and then made an illustrious appearance at the CCOA's West Nationals in Bellevue, WA.

Cougar One is one of four Cougars in the Pinkerton collection. (Elaine technically owns them all. Jim says his involvement is merely to "train" and take care of the cars.) They acquired their first Cougar in 1988. When Elaine's father passed away, they inherited his pride and joy, a '68 Cougar that he bought new. Jim and Elaine decided to join the Cougar club and began their first restoration. The '68 went on to be the only Cougar so far to win first place in a National Mustang competition.

From there, the Pinkertons added an un-restored original GTE (the last known '68 GTE and the only factory 4-speed with the 428 CJ), Cougar One and finally a green '68 XR7 (Jim's daily driver).

According to Jim, the ideal destiny for Cougar One would be to find a home beside the first Mustang in the Henry Ford Museum. "Even then it would be hard to give it up", Jim explained. "The car has become a member of our family. It would be like parting with the family dog." (Don't you mean "CAT")

For now, Jim and Elaine are looking forward to taking Cougar One to shows so that others will have the pleasure of seeing it, but they have no intention of entering the car in judged competitions. "With this year being the Cougar's 30th anniversary, we would like to take it to as many shows as possible so that Cougar enthusiasts will have the opportunity to enjoy the car as much as we do."

And so what began as a story of animosity has turned into a story of appreciation for a truly unique and classic automobile. Through the years, Cougar One has acquired an intriguing history, and you can bet, the final chapter of Cougar One has not yet been written, as a matter of fact Jim has written the story of the restoration process, and I will be publishing it next issue.

Written by Scott Ferguson, after reading and listening to the wonderful stories told by Jim and Elaine Pinkerton.



Left top, Cougar One, before the restoration on an outing to Cougar, Washington. Notice the dealer installed optional luggage rack on the trunk. Photo by Jim Pinkerton



Left bottom, Cougar One, restoration just completed and about to be loaded on the transporter to Carlisle, PA. Photo by Jim Pinkerton