

DAILY REPUBLIC

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FAIRFIELD-SUISUN, CALIFORNIA

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Ford Mustang celebrated at Suisun waterfront



Larry Pierotti of Gilroy dusts off his 2008 Mustang Shelby during the Biggest Little Car Show along the Suisun City waterfront, Saturday. Dozens of motorists presented their cars. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)

By **Barry Eberling**

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SUISUN CITY— Mustang enthusiasts are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the classic car's debut, but the oldest of the models on display at the Suisun City waterfront on Saturday didn't show their age.

Among them was Hugh Blackwell's 1965 Mustang, built at Ford's San Jose assembly plant in late 1964. His father bought it new in Tucson, Arizona, and it's been in the family ever since.

"It will be in the family when the 100th anniversary comes," said Blackwell, a Walnut Creek resident and member of the Diablo Valley Mustang Association.

Blackwell and others came to the waterfront for the Golden Hills Mustang Club's Biggest Little Car Show.

Gleaming Mustangs by the dozens were parked on the lawn and paths along the Suisun Channel so people could stop by and admire them. The wind blew through the palm trees and kept temperatures cool. The loudspeaker played oldies such as "My Girl" by The Temptations and "The Great Pretender" by The Platters.

Blackwell remembers when his father bought the family Mustang. Then age 23 and just married, Blackwell didn't pay the car much attention.

"I had seen it. It was originally white. I didn't think much of a white Mustang at the time," Blackwell said.

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The Mustang went to his sister and then his daughter. Blackwell restored it a few years ago, using his knowledge of how cars from that era work.

"It was in pretty bad shape," Blackwell said.

Ripped upholstery and a ripped dash needed fixing. The carburetor needed overhauling. The paint job needed fixing. The car still ran, but not very well.

Now Blackwell takes the restored Mustang to shows. It has 101,000 miles on it and has the original parts down to the AM radio, though the car is a light blueish color instead of white.

Blackwell thinks better of the car now than when his father bought it.

"Oh, it's beautiful," he said. "I get offers to buy it all the time, about every show I go to."

George Santos of Union City came with a poppy red 1964 Mustang convertible, with the year known as "1964 1/2" to Mustang enthusiasts because the car debuted in April of that year.

He bought the Mustang only a week ago for \$20,000 at the Bay Area Mustang Association show in Niles. His wife saw the car and wanted it. It has 87,000 miles on it.

His wife already had a Mustang that she bought in 1968, just before the Santos got married. That car was restored in 2011.

"It turned out so nice we don't want to drive it," Santos said. "We trailer it to the shows."

That red 1964 Mustang convertible, though — that's for driving.

"I drove here doing 70 mph," Santos said. "No problem at all. It's good."

Next, Santos would like to buy a 1968 Mustang convertible. Then he and his wife would have matching Mustangs.

Blackwell and Santos pondered what car coming out today might be a classic on par with the Mustang 50 years from now. Talk turned to the Tesla. But Santos ultimately mentioned the 2015 Mustang.

"I think Ford has a good product," Santos said. "I think they're going to sell."

The Biggest Little Car Show featured Mustang models from 1964 to 2014. It also featured other Fords, such as a 1934 Ford truck and 1970 Ford Torino. The show celebrated an anniversary of its own, with Saturday's edition being the 30th.

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Barry Eberling

Barry Eberling has been a reporter with the Daily Republic since 1987. He covers Solano County government, transportation, growth and the environment. He received his bachelors of art degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara and his masters degree in journalism from the University of California, Berkeley.

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