

# The "National" by Roger Johnson



## Cheokee, North Carolina...June 23-25

The NorthEast Georgia Mustang Club presented their "Great Smokies National Mustang Show" to record crowds in the beautiful setting of Cherokee. The total number of judged Mustangs was 326! That means this show was the biggest one of its kind *ever* - not counting Charlotte.

Considering the sheer beauty of this part of the country and the heavy influence in the area by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian Nation, a club would be hard pressed to find a better place for a National Mustang event.

How welcomed were we in Cherokee? Let's put it this way. Jonathon Taylor, the Principal Chief of this portion of the Cherokee Indians (probably the most influential man in town) owns and drives a '64-1/2 Mustang convertible.

Another influential man in town was Randy Fleeman (MCA# 17093), the president of the Northeast Georgia Mustang Club and master-

mind of this event. Randy and all of his club members should be extremely proud of their efforts. This show was the result of two years worth of planning.

The actual site of the show was a large paved and grass covered area just on the edge of downtown Cherokee. I couldn't help but wonder what *other* events were held in this clearing 100, or even 200 years ago. Then again, it's this very history that makes the area so appealing.

Some light clouds on Friday and Saturday morning pretty much disappeared leaving nothing but clear skies and bright sun. The perfect, if not hot weather stayed for the entire weekend, although by awards time Sunday afternoon the clouds and thunder were setting in fast.

Speaking of influential people, and we were,

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Right - This line of Boss 302's was fairly indicative of the quality of Mustangs that turned out for the Cherokee event. These cars were four different colors and they were from four different states. They represent one of Larry Shinoda's high-water marks during his stay at Ford Motor Company. These machines have to be considered one of the most classic small block performance Mustangs of all time.



Left - The main hospitality tent was the center of the activity for many of the show-goers. Thanks to the perfect, if not hot, weather, this tent also turned out to be a kind of oasis from the sun. MCA items were sold here, directions were given, and people were reunited. Gary McKee, famous Atlanta radio personality and double serious Mustang collector did all the announcing work for the show. He also operated right here under the "big top".

Right - This may just look like a row of regular daily driven late model Mustangs. But, when you line up enough of these cars up next to each other, they begin to look more like some kind of social movement.

The Cherokee show brought out more variations of the third generation Mustang than you can shake a horse whip at. Expect these cars to be around the show circuit from now on.

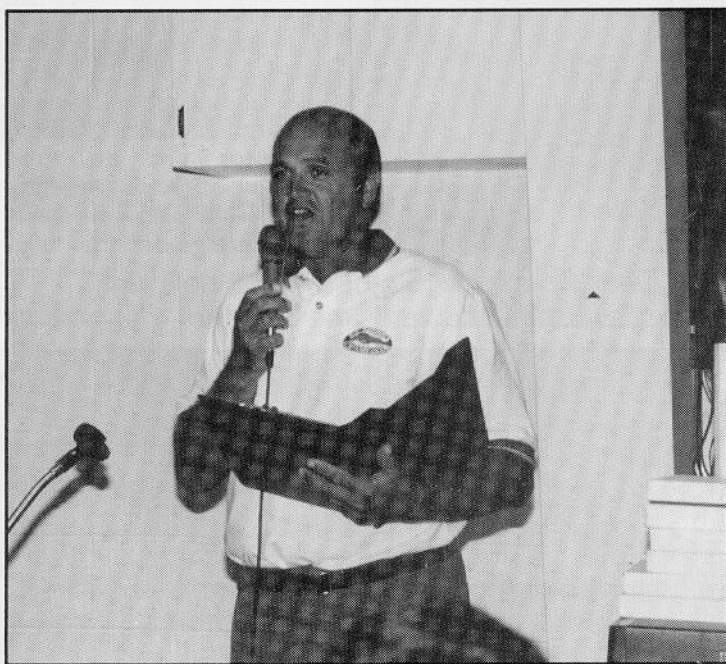


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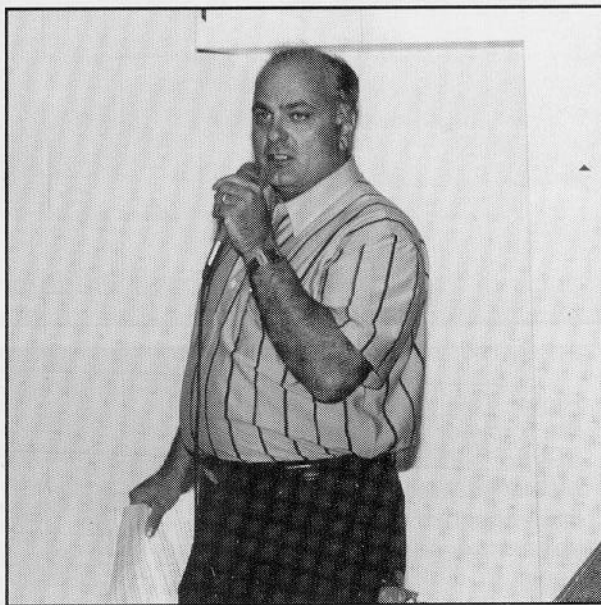
by Roger Johnson

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Right - Shelby Mustangs were out in force for this event. Just about every year and every body style was available for us to drool over. Shelbys always seem to command respect because of their no nonsense design parameters. They were built to go fast, and look good doing it. The entire 12 acres that this show occupied seemed to be the only clearing for miles around. The trees you see in the background completely encircled the show site.



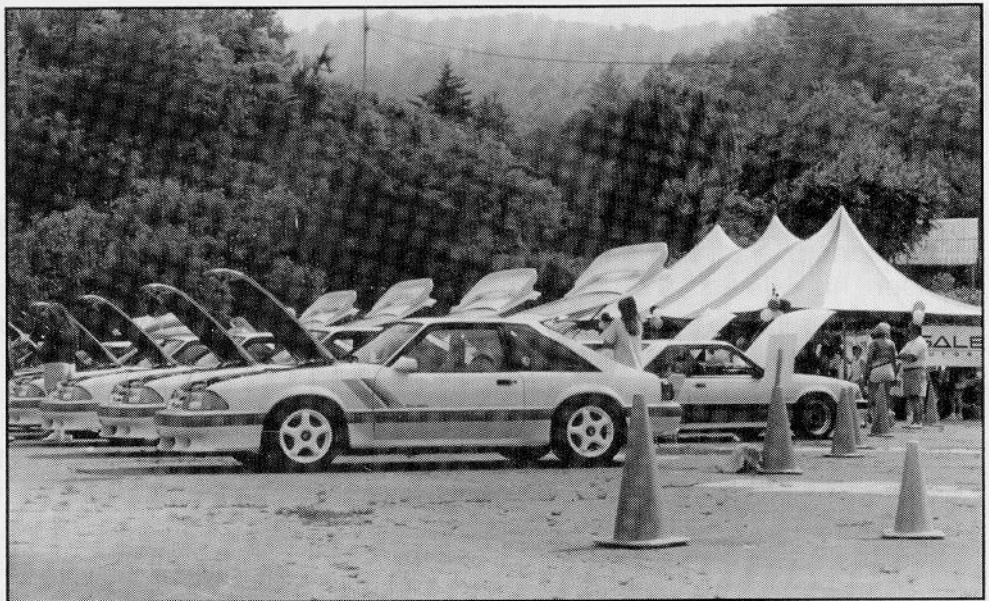
Above - Randy Fleeman (MCA# 17093) was the show chairman, chief instigator and part-time Master of Ceremonies for the event. We caught Randy speaking at the banquet on Saturday night. This show has set a new MCA National Event record for cars judged with an official count 326 Mustangs. Next time you see Randy, slip him "five" for a job well done.



Above - Mr. Mustang himself, John Coletti from Ford's SVE group came to Cherokee for the fun. And to make it even more fun, John brought along his infamous 10 liter Boss Mustang. He also took some time from his busy schedule to update everyone on Ford's plans for the immediate future and to tell us all about the new Mustangs.

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Right - When word got out Steve Saleen was coming to town, Saleen Mustangs, and their owners, came from miles away to pay tribute to the "Man". Steve brought his wife and daughter to the event and hosted the "Saleen" tent for the entire weekend. It was the perfect time for owner and designer to exchange views on Mustangs, especially Saleen Mustangs.



Right - We had the chance to speak with Steve during the lull at the end of the show on Sunday. He informed us of some of the things going on with his operation. He recently formed a three man (and 3 Mustang) racing team to compete in the entire SCCA World Challenge Series for next year. The team is made up of Steve, Bob Bondurant, and our favorite repairman - Tim Allen. The team will be known as "RRR Racing". It's Tim's line, get it? Steve will drive car number 55, Bob gets number 65, and Tim will handle number 75.



Apparently, the driver of the 75 car has already turned some very competitive laps. It would be great to see a few 1-2-3 sweeps by this team.

Steve also mentioned the availability of his 2-seater speedster version, but wasn't ready to talk about pricing on his '96 cars yet. His component sales are doing real well. As you may know, the Saleen upper and lower intake is considered one of the hottest on the market and sales are continuing to be strong.

A new showroom at his main facility in Irvine is also helping sales. In fact, the goal is to consolidate all branches from under one roof. An objective he is already close to reaching.

The subject of Ford's new "cammer" engines came up and Steve assured us he was undergoing development on these engines. I'm betting he's been working a supercharged 4-cammer, but he would not specify.

- RJ



Above - This Boss 429 looked even more like a bully dressed in black paint, big tires and "6-barrel" induction.

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John Coletti from Ford's SVE (Special Vehicle Engineering) was on hand. So was Steve Saleen, his wife Liz, and their daughter Molly Anne.

Steve surely felt right at home since there was an impressive number of Saleen Mustangs at this event - thanks in part to the effort of renowned Saleen owner Debbie Blalock (MCA# 21658). As the show wound down, we even had the chance to ask Steve a few questions about his latest plans.

Considering the total number of cars on display, it was difficult (for me anyway) to determine the actual "early vs. late" ratio. Although the early cars may have had an edge, there still seemed like no end to the newer cars.

Ford Motorsports was also there in force and John Coletti motored out "Big Orange" with its 604 cubic inches of Boss powered havoc. When I saw Jim Osborn (MCA President) cruise out of the compound behind the wheel of this car with Mr. Coletti at his side, I was more than a little jealous. Then later when I saw Ricky Simmons (National Head Judge) driving this car with John in the passenger seat, I knew something had to be done.

When they returned to the grounds I approached Mr. Coletti and reminded him that Jim and Ricky would never have the chance to

tell anyone but their grandchildren about driving "Big Orange". I, on the other hand, could tell thousands of Mustang lovers with a story of the event in the *Mustang Times*. I thought my presentation was flawless. John Coletti must not have. I'm still working on this project. When it happens, I'll do a feature story on it that will make you think *you're* sitting in the passenger seat.

For those of you familiar with the Atlanta radio market, all the announcing work at the Cherokee broadcast booth was done by Atlanta's own Gary Mckee (MCA# 27156). Gary is not just good with a microphone, he also happens to have serious Mustangs of his own including a Boss 429 and '93 Saleen convertible. As you can see, Gary gives the Mustang hobby much more than lip service.

This National was attended by folks from at least 25 states. It shows how effectively word can be spread with two years of planning. You can be sure none of these people went back home disappointed.

This MCA National event had all the right ingredients: perfect weather; a classic setting; tons of gorgeous Mustangs (around 500 tons actually); support from major industry players like Ford and Saleen and fun for families of all sizes and ages. Do we know what you like, or what?



Left - One of the real beauties of going to a show like this MCA National event is the possibility of seeing two, and three, and even more cars like this all in a row. Most of us practically wreck on the street trying to get a second look at just one late model Cobra, or other special Mustang. To find several parked in a row makes for much safer and enjoyable viewing.