



# The Sparkplug

Vol. 59 No. 2  
February 2026

## Deep South Region of AACA Newsletter

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Meetings are held at the Clubhouse on the 4th Thursday of each month. Refreshments begin at 6:00 pm, and the meeting begins at 7:00 pm.

DSR dues are \$20, and AACA dues are \$45.

**Newsletter Deadline on 25th day of each month.**

### DSR Events

#### February

**26 - Monthly Meeting**  
6:00 pm  
Henderson Collection  
5253 Highway 90 W.  
Mobile, Alabama

#### March

**Canceled!!! - Train Trip to the WWII Museum in New Orleans.**

**14 - Fun Run to The Tin Top Restaurant & Oyster Bar**  
10:00 am - For Caravan  
Meet at old Café del Rio  
1175 Battleship Pkwy,  
Spanish Fort, Alabama  
- OR -  
11:30 am - At The Tin Top  
17451 County Rd 49 S,  
Bon Secour, Alabama

**See page 3 for more details.  
Visit [www.deepsouth.aaca.com](http://www.deepsouth.aaca.com)  
for info on these and more events  
happening in our area.**

### AACA Events

#### 2026

**February 5-7 - Annual Convention/  
National Awards**  
Chantilly, Virginia

**March 19 - Special Nationals**  
Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

**March 26 - Winter Nationals**  
Cartersville, Georgia

**April 9 - Southeastern Spring Nationals**  
Charlotte, North Carolina

**April 23 - Annual Grand Nationals/  
Western Spring Nationals**  
Las Vegas, Nevada

**May 28 - Eastern Spring Nationals**  
Indiana, Pennsylvania

**Visit [www.aaca.org](http://www.aaca.org)  
for more info**

In hopes that spring mowing season will soon be here, we feature Ray & Katherine Harper's fully restored 1971 Cub Cadet. Submit a good, distant photo of your car to be featured.

### Zeno's Corner

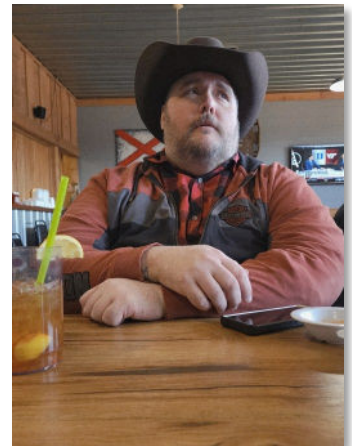
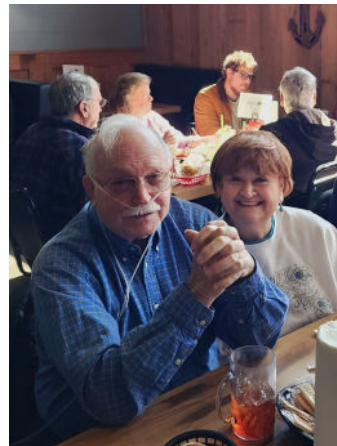
I hope everyone is staying warm! As I get older, the cold affects me worse it seems like. I wanted to share with our members the passing of two long time members that will be missed tremendously - Herb Thoms and Lou Lartigue. Both served our great country and their local communities. They gave of themselves whenever they were asked, and their loss will be felt by many.

I look forward to seeing you at our monthly meeting at the Henderson Collection!  
Regards, Zeno



# Fun Run to David's Catfish House - January 31

Twenty-nine members of the DSR along with a few folks from the Dixie Wings braved one of the coldest days of the year to make the trip to Spanish Fort for lunch at David's Catfish House. Everyone said it was way too cold to drive the antiques, but it is never too cold to eat catfish!





## Out & About

### Cruise-In at Bayou Grill - January 17

Harold Courtney and Andy & Lisa Simmons brightened up a dreary, cold day at this event put on by Southern Bay Cruisers and Classics.



### 2026 Panini Senior Bowl Player Parade - January 30



Dan Jacobsen escorted Sydnee Cantley, Miss University of South Alabama 2026, in the Senior Bowl parade. Looks like it was a cold day for a convertible!



A monthly publication of the  
Deep South Region - AACA



## Upcoming Events



**February 26 - DSR Monthly Meeting** - The February meeting will be held at The Henderson Collection, 5253 Highway 90 W. Mobile, Alabama, with dinner at 6pm

followed by the meeting at 7. We will have our annual Chili and Soup potluck, so bring your favorites, along with desserts and sides.

**March 14 & 15 - Train Trip to the World War II Museum, New Orleans, LA.** - Due to major increases to the prices quoted by the hotel and AmTrak, as well as, logistics changes made by the shuttle company, the price per person was going to be almost double what we were originally quoted. We did not see that as a viable option for anyone, so this event has been canceled. Since many of us have already set that date aside for DSR activities we have added the following event.

### March 14 - Fun Run to The Tin Top Restaurant & Oyster Bar -

17451 County Rd 49 S, Bon Secour, Alabama. We should start having some nice spring weather by then, so we can get our cars out and take the beautiful country drive to Bon Secour. We will caravan from the old Café del Rio parking lot on the Causeway, 1175 Battleship Pkwy, Spanish Fort, leaving at 10:00. If you would like to meet us at the Tin Top, our reservation is at 11:30. We can make a little stop at the Punta Clara Kitchen in Point Clear for dessert on the way home.



**UPCOMING! We have several other events in the works, so watch The Sparkplug for more information!**

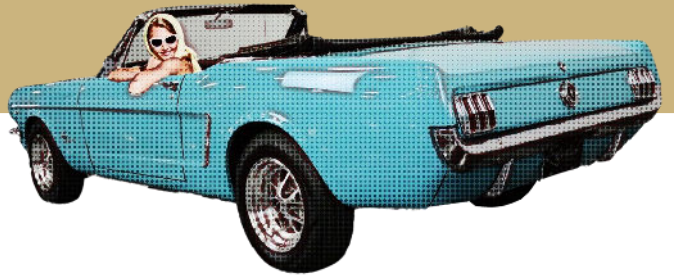
**SEND ME YOUR STORIES, PLEASE!**

I hope you enjoy my Pony Tales this month! Every car has a story, and I would love to share yours. Whether you purchased it brand new, dragged it out of a barn, or got into a bidding war at Vicari, let us know how you acquired your car and what shenanigans the two of you have gotten up to!



# Pony Tales

In the early 1980's, my dad, Billy Dobbs, bought thirteen 1965 Mustangs from a farmer's field for \$250. As you can imagine, most were "parts cars", and that was being generous! From those thirteen cars, he built two vintage burgundy coupes and my tropical turquoise convertible.



**Dragging her home from the field.**

In my naivete, I thought he would present me with my beautiful pony on my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, but my dad was a much smarter man than that! When the concours restoration was finally finished in 1990, he decided to keep the car and show it for a while. At her first national show in Pensacola, she earned 98 out of 100 points, losing those 2 points for having the wrong brand of oil filter installed. As I said – wise not to give it to a teenage girl. She spent several years as a pampered show car and was even featured in Mustang Monthly magazine and on the cover of Where magazine, along with my daughters.

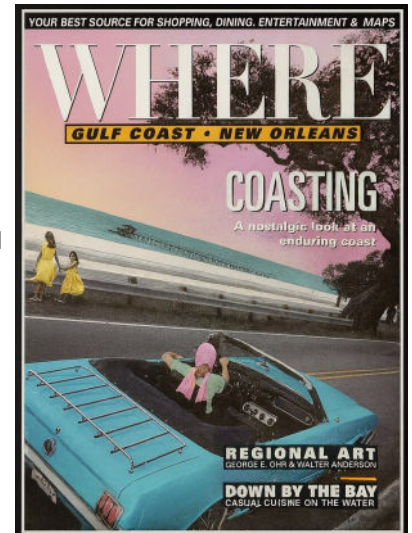
When I finally purchased a home with a garage in 1996, he gave her to me. I showed her a bit, but mostly, I drove her. Like my dad, I never

thought a car should be relegated to being polished and pushed off the trailer just for show, and in 1999, she became my daily driver.



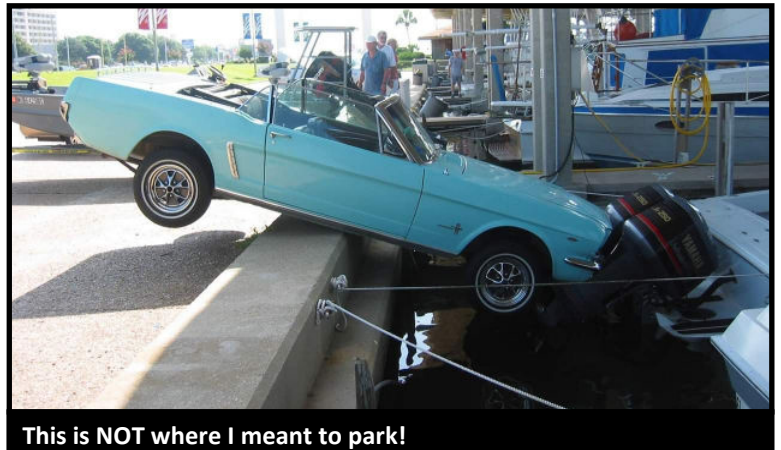
**Driving the beach in Padre Island, Texas.**

I never felt uncomfortable travelling in her, and she took me on far off adventures to Gatlinburg, Atlanta, Birmingham, and even South Padre Island. I will never forget driving her through the heat of a Texas summer with the top down. I would spot a small burst of rain in the distance, and if I was lucky, I would drive right through it without ever stopping to put the top up. Within a few minutes my pony and I would be dry, again, and looking for the next rain cloud.



As she aged, she finally became a bit unreliable, especially in the power braking system, and my friends began to encourage me to buy a new car. I put it off as long as I could, but one summer day in 2004, things came to a head. As I travelled along Highway 90 in Biloxi, the brakes went out completely. I was passing the old Broadwater Marina, a U-shaped system of roads surrounding a harbor full of very expensive pleasure boats. I thought, "Okay. Don't panic. Just turn into the marina, and you can coast to a stop." Unfortunately, both sides of the marina were blocked, and I had no choice but to go straight forward. I was convinced that the curb would stop me from going off into the harbor, but no such luck. She gathered just enough speed to jump that curb and land on the back of a boat!

I jumped out immediately, terrified the mooring lines would break, and I would end up in the drink and upside down with no way to escape. Luckily, someone pulled in right behind me. Within seconds he was strapping my pony to his truck to keep her from going over. I immediately made a call to her regular mechanic, as he had just done some work on the brakes. He was mortified and sent a tow truck immediately. Ironically, the boat I landed on belonged to his brother-in-law, proving that the big bustling Mississippi Gulf Coast really is just a small town.



**This is NOT where I meant to park!**



# Pony Tales, cont'd.

We saved her that day, but I decided it was time to grow up. I went to the Ford dealership the next day and purchased a 2004 Mustang Coupe. My little convertible was once again relegated to the occasional parade or show, but her adventures were not over.

In 2005, the Coast was hit by the biggest natural disaster in US history – Hurricane Katrina. After swimming out of my house in Diamondhead, I made my way to dry land, but my poor ponies both had to stay behind. The little '65 went under in the garage, and I knew there was no coming back without extensive work.

By this point, my dad was unable to work on her, and he did not know who to send her to for restoration. Along with thousands of other unfortunate vintage car owners, I began searching for someone to save her. My pony ended up in a busy shop in Lafayette, Louisiana, but this was NOT a good thing. After numerous visits over two years, it became obvious that this charlatan was never going to finish my car, and it looked like he was going bankrupt. Fearing I would find my car behind a padlocked door owned by a bank, I gathered up her sad, disassembled pieces and took her home.

I was so depressed that I almost sold her for parts. My dad had passed away by this time, so losing the pony in such an unscrupulous way was more than I could take. My sweet husband, though, he convinced me to keep her, and longtime friend Ronne Goldman got her looking decent and back on the road. In the two years she had been in Lafayette, her wooden steering wheel, original 1965 bumpers, and the engine my dad had rebuilt for her had disappeared. None of this can be replaced, but at least she was back on the road.

Fast forward to 2024, and it is definitely time for her to have a little work done. After 34 years, I think she deserves it, so Ronnie Goldman is giving the little pony her second facelift. I have no idea what adventures she got up to before landing in that farmer's field, but she has certainly seen some since joining the Dobbs family. I can't wait to see where the next 34 years might take me and my little blue pony.

~Deana Landry



**Billy Dobbs turned a stripped-out '65 convertible into a Southern show champ.**  
article and photographs by Rob Reaser

**A**ll Mustang restorations must start somewhere on the ladder to perfection. Some vehicles, whose life's purpose was to hold down a garage floor, have only two or three rungs to go before reaching success. Those that were consigned to years of regular use start somewhere in the middle. For ponies like Billy Dobbs' Tropical Turquoise '65 convertible, the climb to the top began at the absolute bottom.

"The mileage was unknown," explained Dobbs, an auto and lift truck mechanic from Mobile, Alabama. "The instrument cluster was missing," and that was just the beginning. The convertible was, essentially, a stripped-down chassis devoid of the most elemental body parts. "The car was an extreme basket case," he continued. "No engine, no doors, no hood, no bumpers, no valences, no grille, no wheels and no seat." We've heard of starting with a gas pedal and a prayer, but that's rough. If the Mustang had been built on a frame instead of a unibody, no doubt even the sheetmetal of Dobbs' droptop would have been absent.

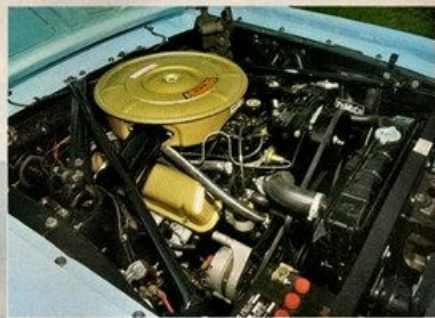
But Billy saw beyond the missing pieces, and took stock of the Mustang's attributes. "The car had never been wrecked or damaged, in either the front, sides or rear, so I felt it was worth saving at just about any cost. Also, it originally came with power steering, power brakes, a power top and air conditioning." Dobbs purchased the car in 1983 and contributed two years of part-time work to put the meat back onto the pony's bones. In addition to rebuilding the 289-V6 engine that had been located for the ragtop, and revitalizing the C-4 transmission and 2801 rearend, the AACA and Mobile Bay Mustang Club member performed the bulk of the restoration tasks himself. Options added during the build-up included a Rally-Pac console, Deluxe interior, and a luggage rack. Billy entrusted the body and paint tasks to the capa-

ble hands of Jim Salter and crew of Salter's Classic Autos in Pace, Florida.

Since piecing the car back together, making a Mustang out of a mental picture, Billy has pointed the droptop to an easy life of concours shows, club functions and weddings. Dobbs reports, "The car was used to drive my daughter and her husband away from the church after their wedding. Bird seed was used instead

of rice, and I am still finding seeds in the car more than a year later. A friend suggested putting birds in the car to clean out the seeds. I mixed that idea in a hurry."

Billy Dobbs' Tropical Turquoise '65 convertible has today climbed the rungs of perfection. From lowly shell to high shine, this convertible plays the game in style.







## Bikes, Trikes, Trailers and Accessories

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