

The Official Magazine of the Cougar Club of America



VOLUME 39 | ISSUE 1
SPRING 2020



1980 - 2020



THE COUGAR GOES TOPLESS



RICK SCOTT
MERIDIAN, ID
CCOA #10112

1970 XR-7 CONVERTIBLE

HERE is a story about how Rick Scott ended up with a 1970 Mercury Cougar XR-7 Convertible. Rick is a member of the High Desert Cougar Club of Oregon and plans on joining the Cougar Club of America very soon. Here is his story in his own words.

When I was 17, I had enough money saved up for my first car. The car I wanted, desperately, was a 1968 gloss black Camaro Z28 with the white racing stripes. I looked at many Camaros, all different years, and I actually found a 1968 gloss black Z28 with no engine. At that time, I was not mechanically inclined. Because of this, I didn't buy it. I kept looking and looking for my first car. One day, I was driving down one of the highways back in Iowa, as that is where I'm originally from. There was a boat dealer up off the interstate and I saw a white car sitting there. There was just something about it that caught my eye. I took the next off-ramp and drove back. The car had a nice leather interior, a clock, power seats, and power windows. I was like, "Oh, I like this car!" It was a 1973 Mercury Cougar XR-7 hardtop. I ended up buying it and instantly became a Ford fan. My buddy that I hung out with back then was a Mopar fan. We ended up constantly racing each other even though the Cougar was not set up for racing. You know, I was 18! I had another buddy that had a '64 Galaxy, making me even more of a Ford fan. I drove that Cougar for years and years. Eventually, I had to sell it off because I was starting to have a family and it was too small. And, yes, there is regret there.

In 1996, when I lived in Maryland, I needed a second family car. I started looking around in the paper and I saw an advertisement for a 1970 Cougar, and that's all it said. The price was in my range, so I figured I would go look at it. I drove about two hours to get there. The owner walked me out to a detached garage that had a garage door that opened straight up. As soon as I saw it what was sitting in there, I was like, "Oh, my goodness." I went in and looked at it. It had about an inch of dust on it and huge holes in the convertible top. It wouldn't start so we decided to push it outside. We had a hard time moving it, but we finally managed to get it out of the garage. After some fiddling around, we finally got it started. I ended up buying the car for \$2,600 after talking him down from \$3,600. Also included were two spare doors with the glass in them, and extra hood, and a bunch of clusters and taillight assemblies. The rear brakes cylinders were frozen, so I messed with those and managed to get them working. I then drove the Cougar all the way home.

The front seats were cracked from the wear and tear, but the driver's seat was the worst. As for the holes in the convertible top, because I didn't have the money to do anything professional to it at that time, I just got some black material and glued it to the top to close up the holes. I really didn't do anything else to it except taking the carburetor off and cleaning it. After that, I just drove it. I'm not sure how many years it had sat. I bought it from a kid who, I believe, said that it was his dad's or his grandfather's...I can't remember. Back then, the mileage was around 137k, and right now the odometer reads approximately 182k.

In about 2001, the cam went out. Due to divorce circumstances, I pushed the Cougar back into the garage and let it sit. About 10 years ago, I married a wonderful lady. Next year will be our tenth anniversary and she has been pushing me to get the car restored. I have good support there. In 2013, the car had been sitting for about twelve years in my garage. So, I slowly started repairing it. The floor pans were rusted out. The inner rocker panels were also rusted out. A friend and I did the welding, and it was a nightmare. First, we got the inner rocker panels replaced, then we did the floor pans. In the meantime, I had pulled the engine out and sent it off to be rebuilt. I raised the Cougar up about three feet off the ground on blocks and jack stands so I could get underneath it. I started scraping all the grease and grime and the original coating off of the bottom because it was in bits and pieces and in the process of peeling off. I went under there with a scraper and wire brushes and just went to town on it. It took me several days to get that done. Then, I did the same thing to the engine compartment. Next, I repainted the bottom. I had to replace the brake lines and the fuel line. I installed a Wieand Stealth 4-barrel high-rise intake manifold with an Avenger 650 carburetor and a hopped-up cam. I also bought some after-market Cougar valve covers that I put on it. Did a little bit of chrome. All this was done to just kind of spruce it up a little bit. I followed this up by having Posi put in the back and kept the same 300 gears. I also put on some Cooper Cobra 15" tires with Keystone Classic wheels. I've wanted Keystone Classics since I was fourteen-years-old and the car had stock wheels with hubcaps. But when I put those tires and rims on it, it just made the car pop.

As for the interior, I had it reupholstered by Boise Upholstery. I took a seat out and showed it to him. He looked at it and he goes, "Wow! I've never done seats like that before. I can do 'em, but I'm telling you I've never done them before." The guy's been in business for like 50 years. The original front seats had



leather from the head to the bottom down the middle and vinyl down the sides. And the back seats have leather only where you rest your head while the rest was vinyl. So, I got them redone to the original specifications. It cost enough because of the leather, and the guy did a fantastic job on it. Everything in the interior is original, including the door panels, except for the carpet and the reupholstered seats.

The engine is the 351 Windsor. The engine block is a late '69 and it is original. I did some research on it because I was told this was an original engine. In my research, I discovered that in the early '70 model, they finished using Windsors before they moved on to Cleveland.

My granddaughter ended up naming my car. I was a fan of Odie from the Garfield comic strip and I actually had a stuffed animal of Odie that was yellow cream-colored with the big red tongue hanging out. It was in the garage and my granddaughter was looking at one day. Because it was almost the same color as my car, she said, "Papa, you should name your car Odie." I looked at her and said, "Okay, we can do that."

I like my current Cougar because my granddaughter loves it. She loves riding in it with the top down. My wife loves riding in it with the top down. It turns heads. It needs a paint job, but it still turns heads. There just aren't that many of them out there. I believe there were originally about 1,997 1970 Cougar XR-7 convertibles made. I've spent so many years on this project that it's nice to finally seeing it come to fruition...before I die! I would someday love to have the exact same model in a hardtop. 🐾

Ronnie Simpson's
1970 Standard Convertible





NEAL JACOBSON
CAMANO ISLAND, WA
CCOA #06778

1970 XR-7 CONVERTIBLE

NEAL JACOBSON is one of the first Cougar guys to join the High Desert Cougar Club of Oregon back in 2017. He owns four Cougars, but he is only going to focus on his 1970 Mercury Cougar XR-7 Convertible. Here is what he had to say about this classic car.

As I recall, I was told that the guy I bought my 1970 Mercury Cougar XR-7 Convertible from finding the car in storage and it had been there for some time. It was not a driver at that time, but it was close. It needed a couple of repairs done. I could move it around under its own power.

When I got the car, the tires and top were shot. The front suspension had been rebuilt, but not aligned. I got it aligned and put new wheels and tires on her. I had to remove the cloth from the top, but I have not installed the new one yet. I have it though, I just need to get it done. I removed the original seats, as the foam was falling apart and making a mess, and installed another set that I had. I also put in a new carpet, better door trim, and an aftermarket stereo.

In working under the hood, I discovered that it did not have a numbers matching block. But the heads, intake, and exhaust all look correct though.

I would call this car a low-grade driver, but a good prospect

for a restoration project. I have no idea if the mileage reading is good so I will not speculate on that.

I have taken it to a couple of cruise-ins and hope to do so again next season. It is rough around the edges, but really solid with its original floors. It had been damaged and a poorly repaired R/H quarter panel has tons of Bondo in it and has painted several times. The engine is a 351 Cleveland 4V automatic. The Cougar has a good list of options, like AC, Power Windows, Console, tilt power steering, and Disc brakes. I have done several repairs to it so far, but as it is an old car that appears to not have been well cared for, it needs much more.

I have another 1970 XR-7 hardtop Cougar that is white and named Ginger. I have been razzed by several people about a Gillingan's Island connection for that name, which is not why she is named that. Well, my brother hit me up on that angle about that name, and it hit me that I should just run with it. So, sticking with that theme, I named her Mary Ann.

This car is cool and I do like to drive it when I can. Unfortunately, I do plan to put it up for sale later this year. I want to find somebody who will put the time and care into her she deserves. I think I may have saved it from a worse fate when I bought her. I now have a dream Cougar in the form of a Standard Hardtop 428 CJ that I will be putting my efforts into. 

