

THE BOSS THAT GOT AWAY

In October 1970, Rich Blower was a single young man in a hurry. Not having to worry about a family or similar distractions, he was in the market for a fast car. The engine didn't matter, so long as it was a powerful V8 and *fast*. Naturally his first thought was a Corvette. But the insurance company wasn't anxious to write a 21-year-old, so that dream faded.

Rich soon found himself perusing the back row of the used car lot at Spaniol Ford, where an unusual reddish-orange Mustang fastback sat forlornly. The reflective "BOSS 302" stripes running down the side didn't mean much to Rich, but the healthy V8 did. After driving the car, Rich decided it was indeed fast enough to suit his needs, and he bought it for \$3200. Insurance? No problem. After all, it was only 302 CI and 195 HP.

The Boss 302 Mustang, like the Z-28 Camaro, was a stripped down pseudo-race car built by the factory to qualify the engine and body for the very popular SCCA Trans Am pony car racing series. The factories didn't really care about sales, as long as SCCA was happy.

1969-1970 were the zenith years of Trans Am, and the big three Detroit manufacturers were at each other's throats in a way that hasn't been seen before or since. The rules called for production-based cars with displacement no more than 5 liters, or 305 CI. The engines had to be basically production line units. Ford added huge 351 Cleveland heads to a strengthened 302 block, making it a high RPM powerhouse. The factory 6000 RPM rev limiter went into trash quickly, since that was about where the engine started coming alive. To make their Z-28 a 302, Chevrolet put a 283 crank in the 350 and added huge heads. Neither car had power below 3000 rpm, making them fair game for the stop light bandits.

In 1970, Brock Yates of Car and Driver magazine drove a stock Boss 302 out of the showroom and cross-country to Watkins Glen Raceway in New York. A roll bar and belts were bolted in, the plugs changed, and tire pressures raised before entering the Trans Am race. He finished near the middle of a field of race cars. The roll bar was then removed, tire pressures lowered, and driven back to the dealer.

Rich wasn't aware of Yates' trek, or of the pseudo-race car purpose of his purchase. All he knew was that it would *get-it-on*. This BOSS was originally owned by a man even younger than Rich named Jim Williams. The car was a gift from his dad Lou Williams, a dentist in Casper. Local legend has it that Jim's 145 mph ticket on I-25 in Colorado was too much for 'ol dad. The car went back to Spaniol, having been traded for a more sedate F-250 pickup. Rich was the second owner.

To get even more power, Rich had Western Machine install a "Trans Am Kit," consisting of shaved heads and stiffer valve springs. He stripped the rev limiter and emission equipment off and added Thrush side pipes. Rich would park the Boss downtown and ask his young girlfriend Dixie to keep an eye on it as she could see it from her office window. Rich relates how the Boss was stranded in a snow bank at Washington Park for five days following a blizzard in 1973.

Rich sold the Boss in June 1973 to John Roden, at which point it disappeared. Flip Cooper of Casper found the car 20 years later sitting under a lean-to in western Wyoming. The car was still all original, but missing a few things like the engine. Flip has obtained everything needed to restore the car (including an engine, smog equipment, and rev limiter), and it is currently undergoing a full restoration.



The Boss undergoing restoration

In recent years, Rich would have liked nothing more than to get his old Boss back, or any '70 Boss for that matter. But the values have driven him out of the market. Instead, he and Dixie purchased a 2008 Mustang GT painted in the same color as his '70. Rich designed the BOSS stripes to simulate those on his '70.

Rich says there were two other 1970 Boss 302s in Casper back in the day, both owned by Dr. Charles Wood. He was a familiar sight on CY Avenue, doing "well in excess" of the speed limit. For that reason, those cars were reportedly sold. The ultimate Boss Mustang, a Boss 429, was reportedly owned by Tim Smith in Casper.

By Mark Milliken

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