

Story of DABEEST

By Jim Foster

Website: <https://dabeest.com/index.php>



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When I got my first car, I was living at home, going to Pierce College in Woodland Hills, CA and working at a Shell gas station on Mulholland Hwy. just off of Mulholland Drive. I constantly needed to borrow one of my parent's cars to go anywhere and it was starting to get kind'a old. The owner of the gas station, where I was working, had 2 Mustangs for sale. One was a white 1968 Ford Mustang coupe with a 289 engine, a 3 speed stick transmission and cheesy cut pile carpeting that he had recently installed. The other was a 1969 faded green Ford Mustang fastback with a 390 engine and a 4 speed stick transmission and cool mag rims (which was the one I really wanted at the time). Both needed some work, but hey they ran. I asked my father to borrow the money to buy one of these since I was a college puke with very little money. My father decided that neither of these Mustangs would be good for me and that he would find the right car for me. <Sigh>, I could only imagine what he thought was "right" for me.

One day while I was working, my father and sister drove up in a black 1968 Mustang coupe. He asked if I liked it and if I did, that he would buy it for me and I could pay him back. It looked okay; standard rims (with hub caps) no real bells and whistles, but still good enough. I mean it could have been something like a Pinto or a VW Bug (not that I'm putting these down mind you, it's just that they're really not my type). So I said "sure, I'll take it". So my father went back to Valley Park Ford and bought it for me. The car was black with a black vinyl top and turquoise color interior single exhaust and a 2 bbl carburetor. This was back in September, 1976. At the time of the purchase the odometer showed 54,783.5 miles. Since this was only an 8 year old car and owned by a dean at Pierce College not someone in sales, I assumed this was the actual mileage and it had the original engine (see below).

This car also had one other feature that became very useful. Since it was originally owned by a dean at Pierce College, on the back of the rear view mirror was a LA Pierce College staff sticker!! What made this cool was during the first few weeks of each semester, there would be a student manning the gate to the faculty parking lot. They would see the staff sticker on the mirror and open the gate for me to park with the faculty. Pretty neat, huh? After about 4 weeks, they would stop manning the gate, but by then most of the students would drop out (you would get a refund if you dropped out during the first 4 weeks) and parking would no longer be a problem.

After I got the car, I installed a Pioneer stereo system which I had before I bought my car. I also installed dual exhaust with the "turbo" mufflers. This gave my car a nice "classic" sound. At that time, a neighbor of ours had an extra 4 bbl intake manifold that he gave to me. A friend and I installed it along with a new Holly 600 carburetor. It was very easy, just pull off the old manifold (with the carburetor) and bolt on the new manifold with the new carburetor, connect the fuel lines and fire it right up. It sure got crummy gas mileage until I had someone with experience to properly adjust the carburetor. The only other thing I got was Mag rims and air shocks for my car. A little while later, my car got its name (I got personalized plates).

For the first 10 years, I was very diligent about keeping Dabeest clean and waxed. Then my first accident with it occurred. Someone made a left turn into me and hit the left front wheel. I had Dabeest fixed and repainted. After my first accident, I started to get lazy and Dabeest started to look pretty "worn". Things

like the driver's seat seams would start coming apart, the head liner had a small tear that kept growing, the dashboard started to crack, a huge crack in the windshield from a freeway rock hit, vinyl top coming apart, you know stuff like that. I would try to fix what I could with duct tape (hey, I was still going to college and could not afford better). I would also get cheap seat covers to hide my work, but after a while, well you get the idea.

After 19 more years of cosmetic neglect, Dabeest looked awful. I did keep up on the mechanical maintenance, however, since it was my primary means of transportation. I had to have the valve seals replaced, timing gears and timing chain replaced and the transmission rebuilt 3 times (not bad for almost **450,000** miles that I put on it over 30 years). During this time, I got to know my car pretty well. Dabeest had, shall we say, several incidents. One being when my power steering pressure line ruptured, it sprayed power steering fluid on the very hot exhaust manifold, lighting it on fire. Fortunately, I had a fire extinguisher in the car and was able to put out the fire. Unfortunately, I did not have the money to replace it or the power steering pump which was also damaged. Yes, driving without power steering for several years was difficult to say the least. Another incident was when the brake light relay on the brake pedal decided to keep the brake lights on. This was not such a big deal since I would just disconnect the battery whenever I parked. But one day while on the Ventura freeway, instead of the fuse blowing (and that was one tough fuse), the relay got so hot that the plastic part caught fire. I was in the fast lane when I noticed burning plastic flames dropping on my foot! Needless to say, things got pretty exciting as I was trying to pull over and resolve this issue. There are other numerous minor "incidents" as well but not worthy of mention. It did give Dabeest a personality though.

Around this time I had saved up some money and went to several body shops to see what it would cost to make Dabeest (eh shall we say) more presentable. I thought that it may be difficult to get a date with Dabeest looking the way it did. Unfortunately, the quotes I was given was well out of my price range. I guess that any future girlfriend I meet will need to put up with Dabeest the way it was. Fortunately my girlfriend (now my wife) did not mind. We both thought "hey it has its own anti-theft deterrent" since it looked so bad no one would want to steal it. The only other significant addition to Dabeest was a new stereo, which I bought around the beginning of May, 2006.

Then came that fateful day, May 26, 2006. It started out as an okay day, the Friday before Memorial Day weekend and my birthday. I went to work like normal (yes, I had to work on my birthday, but who doesn't now a days). On my way home while listening to my new stereo, I was stopped in the Topanga Canyon exit lane on the 118 freeway (AKA Simi Valley Speedway) westbound at 4:30 in the afternoon waiting for traffic to clear. I then looked up in my rear view mirror just in time to see a utility truck hit me. I must have turned my wheel at that instant because there was only about 6 feet between me and the car in front of me and I did not hit it. The impact spun me around crossing 4 lanes of traffic, where I ended in the fast lane facing the wrong way. The officer who came to my aid stated that the approximate speed the truck that hit me was about 45 mph at time of impact. And yes, this did cause a "SIG" alert on the 118 freeway. Fortunately for me, I did modify my exhaust system or there would have been a fire, since the old exhaust pipe ran up and over the back axle and next to the now ruptured gas tank which was half full at the time of the accident. One of my other "modifications" was the back of my driver's seat was kind'a broken and I had a tool box behind it holding it in place. That gave way upon impact, but prevented me from getting whiplash. Whew, I guess God's birthday present to me was I will survive this.

Since Dabeest was 38 years old at the time of the accident, there was no "Blue Book" value for my car. My insurance company contracted another company to determine the value of my car. The other company based the value of my car on other cars similar to mine sold in the general area where I lived. My insurance company offered me a whopping \$1,750.00 for Dabeest. After I woke up from the shock, I mentioned that I had just recently installed a \$400.00 stereo system and provided them with a receipt to prove it. They then revised the offer to \$2,250.00. Since the concept of auto insurance was to "make you whole" after an accident (at least that's what I thought, silly me), I asked them where in my area or anywhere in the country for that matter, could I find a replacement for double of what they offered. When my question went unanswered, I decided to get an attorney to get a better settlement from the person who

hit me's insurance company. The insurance company from the person who hit me paid me \$4,750.00 for Dabeest plus some extra for "pain and suffering" and lost wages for a grand total of about \$8,000.00. I also did get my medical expenses and attorney fees paid too. Since this was the best I could do, I accepted the offer. They also sent me a letter dated February 18, 2007 that I need to file for a salvage certificate within 10 days since they were declaring Dabeest to be a total loss (no big surprise there). I kind'a ignored that part for a while.

After almost a year and a half (after the accident) of trying to find someone willing to fix Dabeest and get the remainder of the money necessary to do so, I came to a local Mustang club (which I later joined) for some advice. They told me of Chino'Z Auto Body. I took Chino'Z to see my car (since it was immobile) and he said he would be able to fix Dabeest. It was determined that the damage to the back end of Dabeest was so severe that he would need to "back half" the car. This means that he would cut off the back half of my car and weld on the back half of another 1968 Mustang! WOW!

Initially, I just wanted Dabeest to be made drivable again, so when Chino'Z started to work on Dabeest, I went to the DMV to get a salvage certificate. This was on June 18, 2007 (yes, 4 months after I got the letter). When I made my request, the person at the DMV stated that no one has submitted any documentation stating that Dabeest was declared a total loss and that a salvage certificate was not needed. I then asked "Can I register my car without salvage against the title and all that it implies?" Their response was "Yes". So, I registered Dabeest, got my tags and left. Thinking that Dabeest was NOT a salvaged vehicle, I cashed out one of my 401k plans (on Jan. 2, 2008 before the market went down) to have the repairs done right. DABEEST is now my 401K.

On Feb. 18, 2008 I went to the AAA to register Dabeest again (the registration is due in February) but I was told that Dabeest was declared a total loss and that I needed to go to the DMV to get the necessary documentation. In a nutshell, the insurance company took over 6 months (yes, in our computer savvy world) to notify the DMV that Dabeest was declared a total loss. Had I known that, I may not have cashed out the 401K necessary to fix it up (but I'm glad I did). So now I had to "jump through hoops" to get Dabeest registered as a salvaged vehicle. I have now insured Dabeest as a collectable car for a more accurate value. A lot less expensive to insure, but the down side is that I cannot put more than 13,000 miles on it in a year (that won't be too hard) and I cannot use it as my daily driver. #@*&!! I finally get it fixed up the way I wanted and now I hardly drive it.

During my first Mustang club meeting at after I got my car back I won a raffle prize which was a free entry in their annual show. I figured "what the heck" and gave it a try. I won 2nd place!! They suggested that I enter it in another show in Ventura (Ponies by the Sea put on by Tri-County Mustang Club). So I did and won 1st place!! I casually mentioned to my friends and family "Maybe I have a show car". They kind'a scoffed at me saying "Dabeest ain't no show car!" Since then I have entered it in to numerous car shows and events and have won numerous 1st, 2nd and 3rd place trophies/awards and several honorable mentions. Hmm.. Maybe it is a show car after all. Granted, I enter it into the "Personalized People's Choice" division and people like the story of Dabeest and vote for it based on that. Still, that's not too bad for a salvaged car. I was in 5 Mustang clubs, am a member of the Fabulous Fords Forever council, go to about 6 car shows a year and go to various "Shine and Show" events like Friday night at Bob's Big Boy in Northridge, CA or Super Car Sunday in Woodland Hills, CA. Dabeest was the cover car on the April, 2012 Running Horse put out by Mustang Owners of California. I was asked twice to drive a bride from her house to the chapel and then the newlyweds to the reception. Dabeest has been featured in several YouTube videos and was also used in the music video "The One that Got Away" by Katy Perry where she actually drove Dabeest!! Not too bad for a salvaged car?

On September 18, 2012, after over 450,000 miles and 36 years, it was time to rebuild the engine. I have been saving up money for this eventual event and, well actually I did not get enough to do the job so I had to get a line of credit to pay for it. I was referred to Mike Bradley's Automotive in Chatsworth by numerous car enthusiasts. He took the engine out of the car and I then had it towed to Chino'z Auto Body to have the engine compartment repainted. Mike indicated that, yes this engine was quite worn, but it came apart

pretty easy to be rebuilt. He showed me the cam shaft, some bearings and the timing chain/gears. They were pretty worn and I was told that I was driving on borrowed time.

Mike then took the engine block to West Valley Machine to have the engine block machined. Mike told Bill (the owner of West Valley Machine) that this engine had a lot of miles on it. Once Bill got into it, he made several discoveries about the engine that I did not know about. First was that the engine bore was 40 over. This meant that the engine was rebuilt at least once before, probably twice. Second was that the crank was turned once before and that it was a crank for a 302 engine, not a 289 engine. Third was that the heads were also from a 302 engine, not a 289 engine. These heads were rebuilt at least once before since the intake valve guides were cast iron and the exhaust valve guides were brass. Normally they would all be cast iron. It was also noted that several of the valve guides were very loose and probably moving up and down with the valves. Also, one set of heads had hardened valve seats where the other head had the soft valve seats. The amazing part here was that the soft valve seats were in better condition than the harden valve seats. Another item was that at least one of the valves, if not more, was too short. I was asked if the engine made a lot of noise while running and I told him no, not really. Fourth was that the casting number on the engine block indicated that this block was a 289 for a 1966 Mustang, not a 1968. Had I known this was probably not the original engine, I may have put in a new crate engine instead of rebuilding the current engine. Bill indicated to me that this engine was kind'a hap hazardly put together and asked how many miles I put on it. When I told him, he was "floored". Apparently, I was very lucky to have the engine last as long as it did.

So now the engine is going to be bored 60 over and then "sleeved" back to 0 over. The block will also be rebalanced. I was told that I should put a roller cam in instead of a standard cam. I also wanted a slightly more aggressive cam. The heads will be cleaned up and reused too.

The exhaust system was also very old (about 30+ years) and I was told that I should replace it. It had the Corvair turbo mufflers which were turned down before the rear axle. This gave Dabeest a nice classic muscle car sound.. It was suggested that I put in a Flow Master 3 chamber exhaust system, which I did. It initially sounded "neutered" (for lack of a better word), but after a few thousand miles it started to sound okay. When I get the money, I plan to put in electronic exhaust cut-outs on it (which my wife would rather I did not do) to have Dabeest roar again.

In July 2015, Lifetime was filming the movie "Manson's Lost Girls" and DABEEST was used in this movie. The movie came out on February 6, 2016.

Also in February and in March, 2016 Dabeest was used in another music video "California Sun" produced by Christian Töpperwien. This music video was released July, 2016.

On January 26 - 29, 2017 at the LA Convention Center, DABEEST was at the 1st annual Classic Auto Show and it was next to the main stage! This was, however, my last car event in California as I have now moved to Eugene, Oregon.

I moved to Eugene in April, 2017 and started my new job. I flew back to California on May 27th to finish the sale of our home in Chatsworth and to pick up my family and DABEEST. We drove up to Eugene and arrived at our new home on June 2nd. June 3rd I went to one of the local car shows, Function for Junction, in Junction City, Oregon. I have since gone to several other car shows / cruises since then. There is a great community of car enthusiast here in Oregon and they put on awesome car shows/events.

The moral of the story;

How much you love your car is **not** based on how much money you spend on it, rather how much money you spend on it that you don't really have.