

Pony up

Historic 50th anniversary cross-country road rally passes through Arizona

Story by Jennifer Johnson
Photos courtesy of Sam Haymart / Mustangs Across America



It's the year of the Mustang. At least here in America, it is. And on April 11, the Mustangs Across America 50th Anniversary drive cruised through Arizona, with approximately 200 Mustang enthusiasts stopping in Phoenix on a cross-country trek that had begun in Los Angeles the day prior.

The epic journey, which included 500-plus registered Mustang drivers from more than 45 states and 13 foreign countries, took seven days to cross the United States along a southern route beginning in LA, and then stopping in Phoenix; Las Cruces, New Mexico; Midland, Texas; Dallas; Jackson, Mississippi; Atlanta; and finally arriving in Charlotte, North Carolina on April 16.

Event coordinator Sam Haymart, a resident of Gold Canyon, Arizona, has organized the event since its inception back in 1994. "What started on a whim really has grown into a huge celebration, including Mustang enthusiasts from across the country and around the world," Haymart said. "This year's event was extra special, since it marked 20 years since our first drive and, of course, the 50th anniversary of the Mustang."

It was also special for Haymart because he drove the pace car this year, a restored 1995



Mustang nicknamed "Mustang One" that was nearly identical to the 1994 model that paced the inaugural Mustangs Across America drive. He also had his 17-year-old daughter, Savannah, join him for the trip, and his 19-year-old son, Sidney, participated for part of it.

At the Arizona stop, Mustang enthusiasts gathered at Rawhide Western Town & Steakhouse in Chandler on the evening of their arrival, for dinner and entertainment. Tom Raber of California was there with his "Legend Lime" Mustang convertible named Gator. For Raber and many others, this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel across country celebrating a significant milestone for a vehicle that has won the hearts of many over the years.

"We're having a blast," Raber said, posing the question, "What other manufacturer has kept a vehicle in production for 50 years?"

Upon arrival in Charlotte, Mustang enthusiasts participated in the Mustang Club of America's Mustang 50th Birthday Celebration at Charlotte Motor Speedway. Filmmakers who traveled along on the drive documented the once-in-a-lifetime event.

Participants received a commemorative coin, dash plaque, printed travel guide, windshield placard and post cards as part of the national drive. For more information about Mustangs Across America visit www.MustangsAcrossAmerica.com.