



Belgium Treasure Trove

Rich Barnes had no idea that advertising his '73 Pantera for sale on eBay in May of 2010 would net him four vintage Shelybs, a '69 CJ Mach 1, and a '71 Pantera. He also did not realize that he would travel over 10,000 miles and wait six weeks for his dream cars to cross the Atlantic.

"I'm a collector and a 'restorator,'" Rich told us from his business, The Mustang Ranch in Golden, Colorado. Restorator is the word he coined for one who restores and restifies.

Rich's Pantera ad also mentioned that he bought Shelby and Boss Mustangs. Luckily, someone in Australia spotted the ad and forwarded Rich's email address to the Verschuren family. Mark Verschuren had passed away in Belgium and his heirs in Australia were liquidating his collection, which included four Shelybs, a Mach 1, and a Pantera. Rich was interested. He asked for pictures and VINs.

With so many Internet scams coming to America from overseas, Rich was careful. He wanted to see and touch the cars in person. The Shelby VINs checked out in the Shelby American Automobile Club's Shelby Registry. The '69 Mach 1 had a Q-code in the VIN for a non-Ram-Air 428 Cobra Jet. The '71 Pantera was a bonus.

The deal came together with light-



Rich viewed the cars in the Belgium warehouse. He checked out the VINs with the Shelby Registry and even verified a match on the '67 GT500 with the Ford VIN versus the Shelby VIN through SAAC.

ning speed when Rich learned that other people were trying to buy the Mustangs. The price was too good to pass up. He had to move fast.

"I had to look into flight arrangements, talk to customs about bringing the cars into the U.S. from Belgium, deal with shipping, and line up the hotel," Rich explains.

Despite the red tape, two weeks later Barnes was on a plane to Amsterdam. Mark Verschuren's brother, John, and family friend Ian Sampson boarded a plane in Australia to meet Barnes.

"We rented a car at the airport and drove to the little town of Turnhout, Belgium," Rich says. "We checked into a hotel a few blocks from the warehouse where the cars were stored. The next day, the fellows took me to the

warehouse to see the cars."

When they pulled back the car covers, Rich found two Shelybs "just below concours." The three other Mustangs were "drivers." There was also a '71 Pantera, a Ferrari, and a couple of mid-1960s Corvettes.

Rich made a package deal for the five Mustangs and the Pantera at a price well below retail (he asked that we not reveal the price). He held a big advantage because the Verschuren family wanted to make as few trips as possible from Australia to Belgium to sell the collection.

Of course, Rich had to ship the cars to Colorado. As nice as the vehicles were, they had not been fired up in almost four years, so they needed batteries and tune-ups to get rolling.

Rich requested that the cars not be put in containers because they offer little or no ventilation, trapping moisture that can cause sheetmetal rust, especially in salt-laden air, and creating mold in the carpet and upholstery. Anchored below-deck, the breeze keeps the cars in excellent condition for the trip.

Customs was no problem because the cars are pre-1975 and thus exempt from safety and emissions standards. They arrived at the port in Baltimore, where a transport company loaded them for the haul to Golden, Colorado.

Rich totaled the cost of his airfare and hotel, shipping the cars, and paying customs and duties. His grand total in expenses came to \$24,000, or about \$4,000 per car, for a '67 GT500 fastback (Lime Gold Metallic), '68 GT500KR (yellow), '69 GT500 fastback (Royal Maroon), '70 GT350 convertible (Acapulco Blue with a Madrid, Spain DSO), '69 Cobra Jet Mach 1 (Meadowlark Yellow), and '71 Pantera (black).



Loaded on a transport, the four Shelybs, Mach 1, and Pantera were quite a sight in the little town of Turnhout, Belgium.