

Persistent Parklane Pursuit- What makes The Automobile Gallery's New Vehicle a One-of-One

The Automobile Gallery is home to over 90 vehicles that belong to a total collection of over 150 cars that are rotated at least once a month to keep the gallery fresh and unpredictable. That 150-plus car collection of the Gallery grew by one with the recent acquisition of a 1966 Mercury Parklane that has a story as rich as its cream exterior. John Kroll is from Escanaba, Michigan, and purchased this one-of-one Mercury Parklane in 1966, but needed the persistence to do so. As the story goes, John was an experienced street racer and was on the hunt for a new car to clean up the competition. Therefore, went to the local Ford dealership, Northern Motor Company, and had the owner of the dealership, Percy Rosemurgy, put an order in for a 1966 Mercury Parklane with a police interceptor package with the name, Harold Finman on the order sheet. Harold Finman, at the time, was the police chief of Escanaba, Michigan, and was unaware of his name appearance in this order. After 10 days of the order being placed, someone at the Lincoln-Mercury division saw through the facade and canceled the order. With the persistence and tenacity of John Kroll, he called Lincoln-Mercury and asked for the head of the company, and after 5 transferred phone calls, he got there. Famed automobile executive, Lee Iacocca who is also known as the father of the Mustang, answered the phone. After an hour of this phone call between Kroll and Iacocca, Kroll modestly threatened to buy a Pontiac, one of Ford's greatest rivals at the time, for his street-racing fix. Iacocca had heard enough. "John, I highly recommend you never sell this car because there will be many made to *look* like it, but there will never be another one *made* like it." Therefore, John Kroll became the owner of the only 1966 Mercury Parklane with a police interceptor package in the world, which was officially delivered to him on March 22nd, 1966. Through the years of his ownership, however, Kroll only raced this car once, in a competition against an Oldsmobile 442 in which he dusted the General Motors muscle car so badly, that no one ever wanted to race him again.

That marvelous back story only adds to the beauty that is The Automobile Gallery's recent acquisition this past winter. With the police interceptor package, comes more power and larger functioning organs underneath the hood. First, the engine is a 428 PI, which means the motor is 428 cubic inches, and the acronym PI stands for police interceptor. For the time, 428 cubic inches was a lot of engine and could propel this vehicle upwards of 140 miles per hour. There are also unverified reports of police traveling over 155 miles per hour in the same, non-civilian model of this Mercury Parklane. For reference to how respected this engine size and speed was back in the late '60s, this same size of engine would be implemented into the Shelby GT500, Ford's specialty muscle car, in 1967. Beyond the engine, there is a laundry list of characteristics that separates this Mercury Parklane from Parklane's that don't possess the police interceptor package. This specialty '66 Parklane includes heavy-duty suspension, wheels, and tires, as well as an extra capacity radiator and water pump, not to mention the straight exhaust at the back of the vehicle instead of the more-common exhaust system that curved behind the rear wheels. Furthermore, there is a completely different and separate parts list for this Parklane to accommodate the higher performance equipment, as previously mentioned. To further elaborate on what separates the police interceptor package from other standard engine configurations, there are a few different characteristics that put this one-of-one engine above all others. Those particular qualities include a 7-blade aluminum fan, Ford-blue water reservoir tank, and a cast color master cylinder, as well as the extra capacity water pump, as previously mentioned.

Back to the owner, John Kroll, who decided that he wanted to keep the Mercury Parklane at The Automobile Gallery for others to enjoy, as he is beyond his racing career, aged 87 as of this writing. The Mercury Parklane was brought to the Gallery with around 43,000 original miles and has been kept in near-mint condition through the years. Darrel Burnett, who has been the

executive director of The Automobile Gallery since December of 2019, is overjoyed to have the one-of-of Mercury Parklane on display at the Gallery's downtown Green Bay location. "It's essentially 3 cars made into one" Burnett disclosed when discussing how the Gallery intends to maintain this vehicle. "We have preserved its originality but have removed the nuts and bolts to soak them in vinegar to bring the look of the car back to the way it would have been in 1966."

The Automobile Gallery is located on 400 S. Adams st. in downtown Green Bay and currently has the Mercury Parklane on display alongside a collection of other vehicles from muscle, to luxury, and in between. For more information, visit theautomobilegallery.org.

