

# CobraStar

New Member Mike Lechwar submitted this article on his truly unique Lincoln. Not your father's hot rod Lincoln.

First, thanks for letting me into the club. You're active and accommodating. I think I belong here.

My fun car is a 1996 Lincoln Mark VIII. It's a first-generation Mark VIII (1993 -1996) and the part of the last generation of Lincoln Mark cars. They made a second generation in 1997 and 8. Recently Hot Rod Magazine named Mark VIII's as sleeper hot cars that can be had for just a few thousand dollars. The big draw for this car is the comfort and the drive train. It's powered by a 32 valve 4.6 litre V-8, the exact same power plant that was put into the same year Mustang Cobra. The air intakes and some exhausts are different but in all other aspects, it is the same motor. In fact, that's how I came to know about Fords Unlimited. Steve Schneider was at the same Shrine car show that I was. He introduced himself to me and as we compared cars, they were practically identical. Even the colors are the same, Black exterior and tan on the inside. Steve remarked that the only interior difference was the radio; mine is square, his rectangle. Steve's Mustang has a 5-spd, my car has an 4R70W overdrive automatic. Thanks Steve for bringing me into the group.



My Mark was produced in 1996, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln Motor cars. It officially a grand touring luxury coupe that is really fast. That year of production had three different Mark VIII models, the base model, the LSC and the anniversary model. Somewhere along the line the cars got a bit mixed up in production with some purposed exclusive content put into all three. My car started out as a base model but has dual exhaust and a somewhat rare "chrome package" that is a stainless plate over the rocker panels. My gear ratio is 3.08 to 1 while the LSC cars all have dual exhausts and a 3.27 diff. All Anniversary editions have special badging. But, no difference is made in the VIN code to differentiate one from another.

My car came from single family ownership in the Kansas City area. The lady who sold it had bad eyesight and thought the car was always a 4 door. Needless to say, her sons were happy for me to drive off in it and get her off the roads. It had 51000 miles on it two years ago and now I've got it up to almost to 60k. I put 2300 miles on it as a long hauler in last summer's Power Tour.



The car is fast. Once when pulling into a car show I was followed in by a state policeman who "pulled me over" with his light on. We went through the drill, license and registration and then a big grin came over him as he said he just wanted to see the car. He related a story to me that in 1996, a Mark was taken to Bonneville right off a Detroit area factory floor. The two exterior mirrors were removed and the car did 200 mph on the salt flats. He said, "Now that we know who you are we don't have to chase you, we'll just wait for you to go home to Wentzville". A fun day and all the police crawled over the car as if it were really special. (Here's the Bonneville story: <https://www.hemmings.com/blog/2018/04/24/that-time-lincoln-built-a-land-speed-mark-viii-and-set-a-182-mph-record-at-bonneville/> )

The car has air bags instead of springs. The faster it goes, the more it ratchets down to reduce its drag. It then lifts up when you park it to enter and exit. And, the ride is wonderful. I gave up a 1966 Chevelle due to some medical problems and this fits the bill perfectly. It corners like it's on rails and just keeps climbing while going straight. I've got cobra valve covers on it and this fall will install a cobra intake. That will up the HP to about 340. In fact, I could get more for the engine than for the entire car if it were removed. The car is in the process of being cloned into a Lincoln Cobrastar. A car kind of what Yenko did and Shelby did when they started their limited modifications. The hood is already changed, some badging has changed, the exhaust enlarged and the intakes in the process of being relabeled to genuine Cobra logos. A guy in New Jersey is providing most of the change stuff and the following is growing. The rest of the parts come from a guy in California.

I love the car, it's perfect to be a grandpa in. If you look closely at the Museum of transportation picture, you'll see my 6 year old grandson with me to take in the day, cars and train. Last Christmas, my granddaughter participated in it in the Crestwood Christmas parade and as a lefty had a great time throwing candy out the passenger window.

The Mark VIII was the first to have High Intensity Discharge headlights. And, it came with a 12 slot CD changer, actual hand-held telephone and voice commands for the phone. I have all those things in a box in the garage for a purist someday. My iPhone serves me just fine today.

One final note. The car was actually designed in part by my wife's uncle; Arnott Grisinger; Uncle Buzz. I'm including a YouTube reference for you to learn a little about him. He was the head of design for Lincoln Mercury until he retired in the early 70's. The team he led created and designed the first Cougars. His widow is elated to have a Mark back in the family. Enjoy the video.

<https://www.hemmings.com/blog/2013/06/06/a-challenge-that-belongs-to-many-men-inside-the-ford-design-studios-in-the-late-1960s/>

