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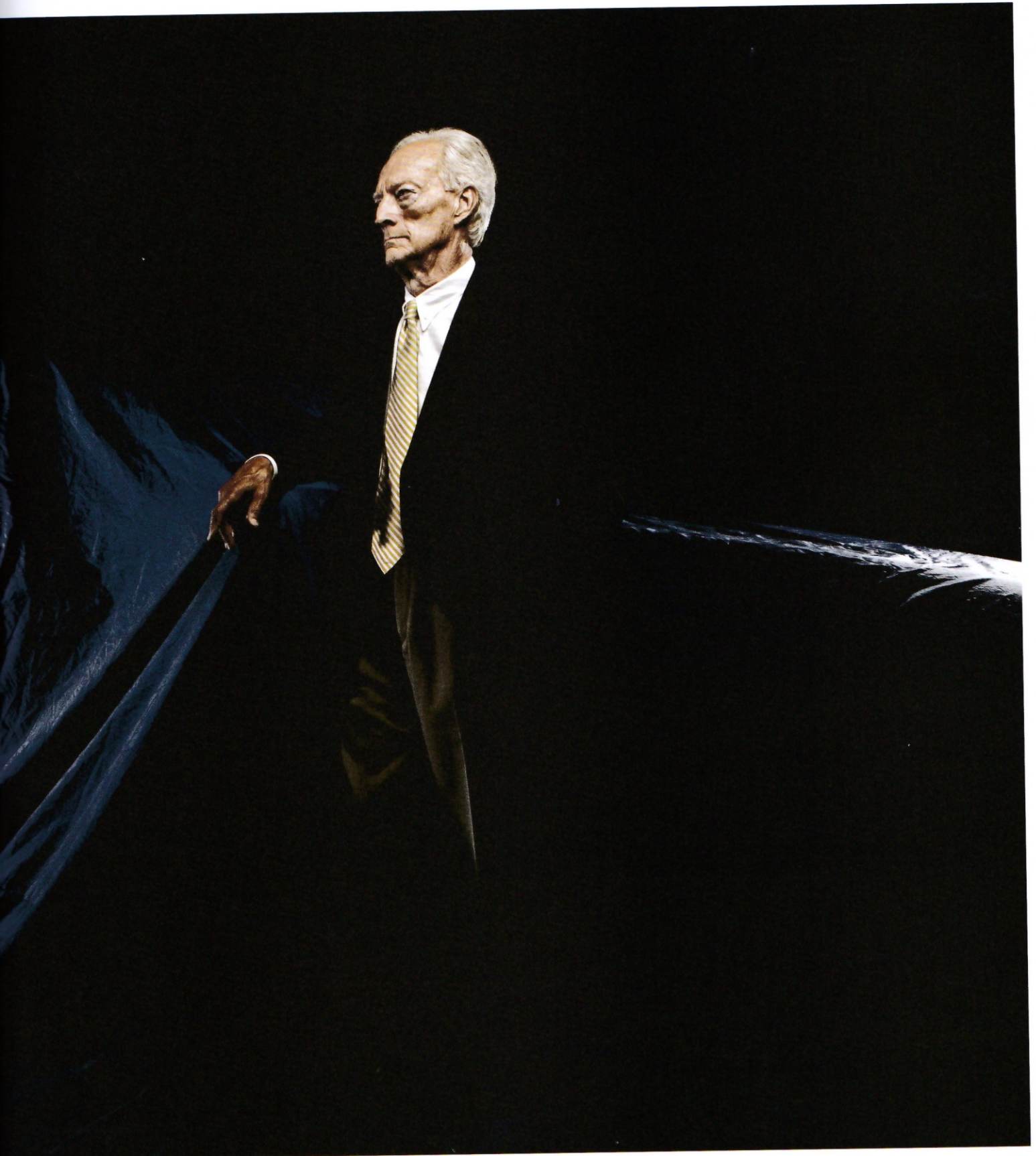
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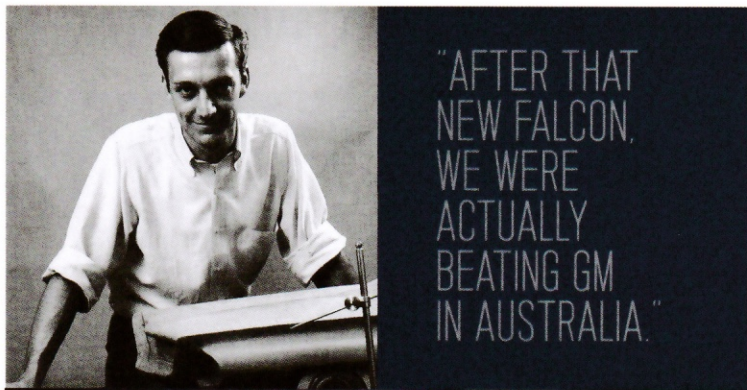
HE CHANGED
THE LOOK
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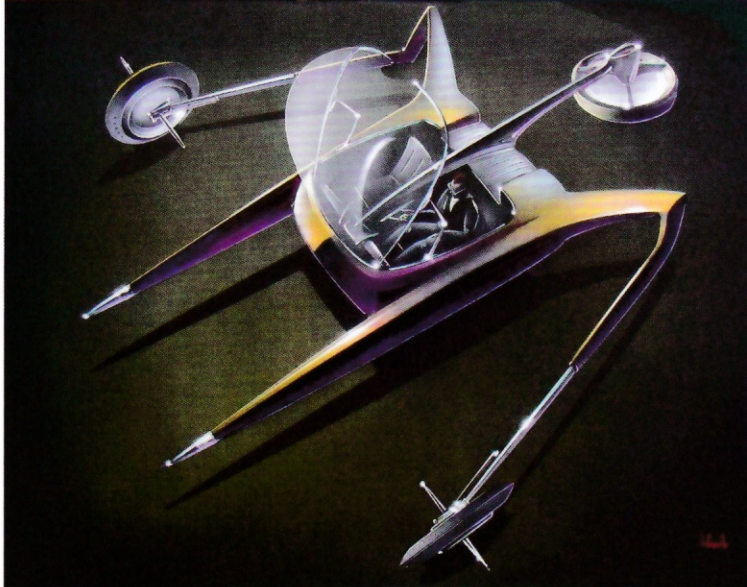
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PHOTOGRAPHS
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"AFTER THAT NEW FALCON, WE WERE ACTUALLY BEATING GM IN AUSTRALIA."



YOUNG TELNACK at work (top), long before cars were designed on computer screens. Flight of fancy (above). The body buck (below) shown out in the courtyard for design review in September 1969 was for the Australian XA-bodied Falcon.



COURTESY JACK TELNACK '83

MEMORIES DIM

from 25 years back, but auto writers of the time will recall an event one cool winter evening in a giant Hollywood studio. It was Ford's off-the-record media reveal of a controversial new car nearly a year before it would appear in showrooms. Why?

Because soon-to-retire Ford CEO Philip Caldwell wanted to show it to the press before he left.

"It was on a big studio sound stage," then-Ford Design Vice President Jack Telnack relates. "They had round drapes over three turntables, and all of a sudden the lights came up, and people came up on the stage. It was a thrill. Telnack knew that his reputation might well be made or broken by the success or failure, of this polarizing design.

That, and a months-long series of controlled media leaks, moved this hugely important new car into the public eye well in advance of its launch, giving people time to get used to it. Most auto scribes at the time agreed it was brilliant PR campaign, and it worked.

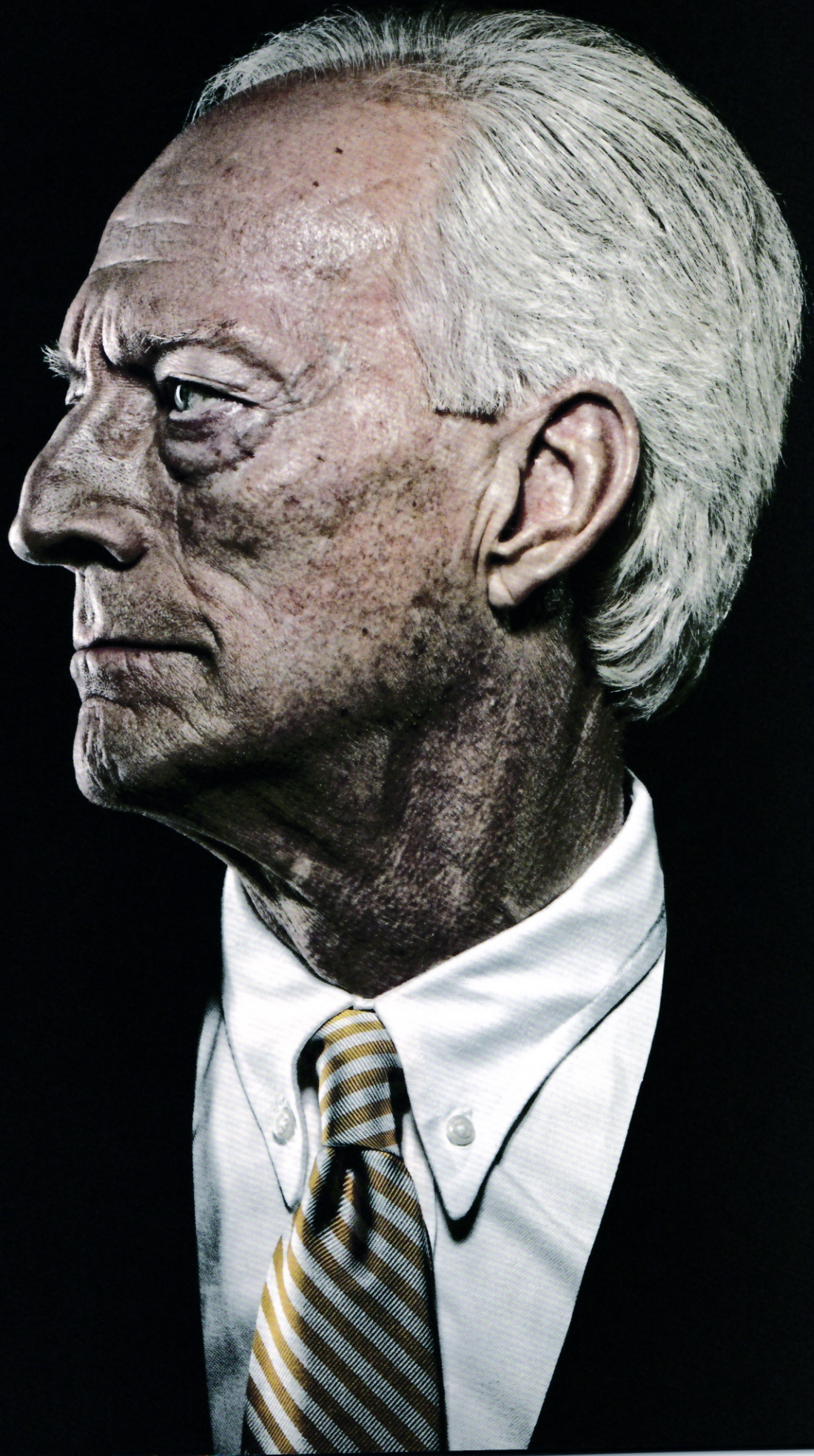
THE CAR THAT SAVED FORD

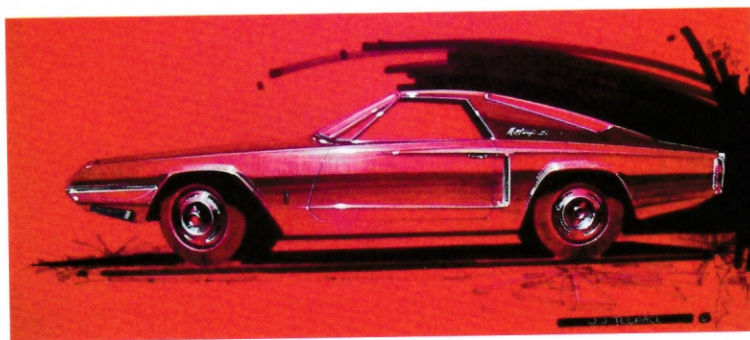
That controversial car was the 1986 Ford Taurus midsize sedan, which replaced the blocky old LTD. It was aerodynamically rounded and refreshingly underchromed. It didn't even have a grille—just a blue Ford oval floating in the body-color panel between the big, glassed-over headlamps in its slant-back nose. The wagon models had rounded rear roofs. Its Mercury Sable sibling wore full-width light-bar mustaches across their faces.

Critics called it a "jellybean." Media called it startlingly different. Buyers soon made it America's best-selling car. Historians would credit it for saving the financially struggling company, though Ford's popular Explorer SUV and F-150 pickups also played major roles.

Telnack reports that Caldwell encouraged and enabled the Taurus and Sable. "We were really in dire straits in those days," he says. "Caldwell would come into the studio and say, 'We've got a lot riding on these. Are you sure you've gone far enough?' Usually they say, 'You've gone too far, tone it down.' But he supported us one-hundred percent."

When the Taurus did not "clinic" well with survey groups, Telnack stuck to his guns. "I didn't care what the research said. We kept doing the model, and it hardly changed from day one. Eventually, it was around long enough that management finally got conditioned to it."





"THERE ARE GREAT DESIGNERS, AND THERE ARE CHARISMATIC LEADERS. JACK IS BOTH."



A BIG PART of Telnack's job was previewing new designs with management for their sign-off, so this is a scene he was used to. Telnack's team designed the '79 Fox-bodied Mustang, which lived, in various forms, for 15 seasons.

And when it was up for final approval, "the marketing guys were not in favor of that clean front end," he relates. "They wanted a grille. Caldwell, Peters, everyone was there, and everyone was looking to Bill Ford Sr., who was responsible for Design, to make the decision. I had explained we supported one without the grille, but that we also had a model there with a grille. I was really sweating, thinking, 'Oh, man, I hope he appreciates this,' because I had had a chance to sell him on it. And when he said, 'That's the one,' I just about jumped out of my seat and kissed him. He put the final stamp of approval on that program."

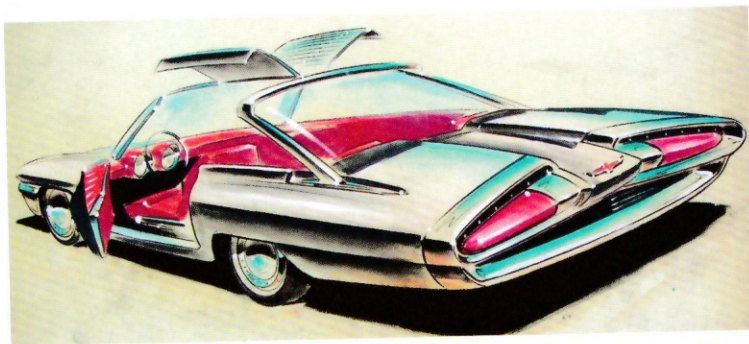
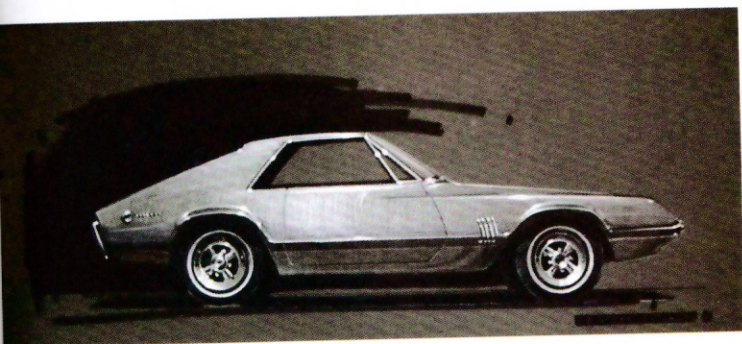
BORN FORD

John J. "Jack" Telnack was born at Detroit's Ford Hospital in 1937, he says, "with a Ford oval stamped on my ass." His father worked for Ford, and Jack grew up riding his bike past the company's iconic Rotunda exhibition hall and climbing the wall around its Dearborn test track to sketch future models whizzing by. He wanted to be a Ford designer.

When he was just 15, his father finagled him a meeting with Ford design executive Alex Tremulis. "I was so thrilled to walk in and see him," he relates. "He was the Tucker designer, Auburn/Cord/Duesenberg and Kaiser/Frazer guy. He showed him a couple of my sketches. 'Kid, this is great,' he said, 'but you have to get yourself an education. Go to Art Center in California. Talk to me when you get back.'"

When Telnack was 16, he used money saved from a delicatessen job to buy a 1941 Mercury convertible, then chopped and channeled and customized it himself. And when he did go to Art Center College of Design, he drove his Mercury there across the country, and back, several times.

COURTESY JACK TELNACK '66



By his second year, he had earned a Ford scholarship. When he graduated in 1958, he was one of three of his class of 12 who were hired by Ford.

Telnack started in Tremulis' preproduction studio working on details of the 1960 full-size Ford. A few years later, he found himself on the design team for the first ('64½) Mustang. "I did the wheel covers," he says with a laugh, "which must have been good because a lot of them were stolen." He also did the first sketches for what would become the sexy '65 Mustang fastback. "That was one of the most exciting programs," he exclaims. "I was just excited to be there. I would have paid them to be there."

DOWN UNDER

In 1966, at the tender age of 29, Telnack was offered the opportunity to establish a Ford design center in Australia. Gene Bordinat was Design VP at the time, and Bill Bourke was running Ford of Australia, where GM's Holden was dominating the market.

"I started with a little corner of the Engineering Center. We hired designers and modelers and began with face lifts. Then, Bunkie Knudsen, who was running the company at the time, gave us the go-ahead to do a ground-up new Falcon. We did the full-size clay models, a two-door and a four-door. The two-door was cool, really hot. I came back with two of my designers and recreated them in Dearborn so Bunkie could review and approve them there.

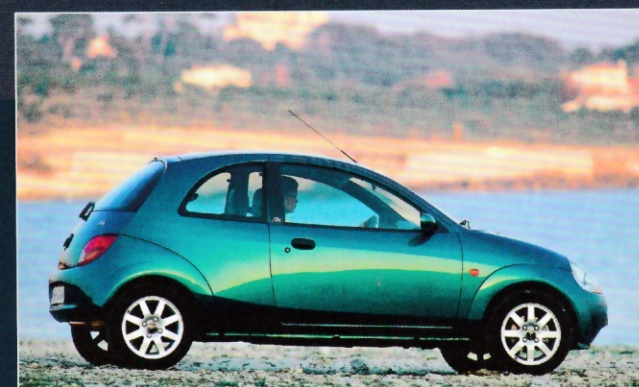
"When Bunkie came down to see us, he said, 'You need a proper studio.' So we built a whole new studio near our headquarters in Broadmeadows, a northern suburb of Melbourne. Then things really got rolling, and after that new Falcon, we were actually beating GM in Australia. Those were some of the

"I SHOULD HAVE FOUGHT A LOT HARDER FOR SOME OF OUR CONCEPTS."

CHECK OUT the gullwing roof panels and floating rear window on what could have become a late-1950s T-Bird (above). At right, Telnack at the helm of one of his many yachts.



TOP TO BOTTOM:
 '79 Mustang Notchback coupe
 Groundbreaking '86 Taurus
 Jaguar's sinewy XK-R coupe
 First-generation Ford KA



COURTESY JACK TELNACK

COURTESY JACK TELNACK

IN EUROPE

Telnack returned to Dearborn as an executive designer in 1969, then moved again in 1972 to rejoin Bill Bourke, who was running Ford of Europe. He took over the Dunton, England, studio, one of Ford's two in Europe (the other was in Cologne, Germany), and before long was promoted to design vice president for Ford of Europe.

His most exciting program there was the original 1977 ('78 in the U.S.) front-drive Fiesta, Ford's first B-size subcompact. His studio's model, which had begun at Ghia in Italy as an attractive but impractical concept, was chosen over two others from Germany and Dearborn. Bourke then asked him to get it in a big luncheon meeting for all Ford of Europe leadership that same day at the Cologne Hyatt Hotel.

"We would have carried it there on our backs!" Telnack says. "They had to take the doors off the hotel to get it into this big room where we were having the luncheon. Henry Ford was there, Iacocca, and all the top management from Ford of Europe. 'We want to show you the car that this program is all about,' he said. 'It was just approved this morning.' The guy who was head of the German studio, whose car didn't win, had to help me pull the cover off of it [laughing]. It was a really exciting day!"

BACK TO DEARBORN

Telnack returned to Dearborn in 1976 as an executive director over a new studio stocked with some of Ford's best designers. They took on a number of programs, including trucks and the '79 Mustang.

"I had the guys put all their sketches on the wall for this new Mustang. They wanted a European character, and they had some very good sketches. The designers asked, 'Which ones do you want?' I said, 'Which ones do *you* want? You're doing these sketches; you must have reasons. I'll come back tomorrow and you pick the ones to present and tell me which you think are best. They were used to operating that way. It was always top-down before."

Ford's popular Mustang had grown too big (1971-'73), then too small ('74-'78), and Telnack's Euro-inspired, aero-angular, just-right-size '79 was an instant hit. Not coincidentally, when Caldwell was elevated to Ford CEO and Donald Petersen to president in 1980, they promoted Telnack to lead Ford North American design.

Seven years later, he succeeded Donald Kopka as vice president over all Ford design worldwide.

TELNACK-ERA GREATEST HITS

FROM FRESH-OUT-OF-SCHOOL designer through his decade as Ford Design VP, Jack Telnack designed or led the design of 40 years of Ford cars and trucks. Among the most significant:

'65 FORD MUSTANG 2+2

Sexy fastback version of Ford's hugely successful first ponycar

'77 FORD FIESTA

Ford's crisply styled first FWD B-size subcompact hit the States for '78

'79 MUSTANG

Following too big, then too small Mustangs, this new one was just right

'80 F-150 PICKUP

Softer, more aerodynamic redesign for industry's most popular pickup

'83 THUNDERBIRD

Brought slick aero styling to Ford's famous midsize luxu-sport coupe

'85 LINCOLN MARK VII

Downsized, sleekly styled, crisp-handling large luxury coupe

'86 TAURUS/SABLE

Revolutionary midsize sedans and wagons were top U.S. sellers

'97 JAGUAR XK8

New coupe and convertible inspired by Jaguar's iconic 1960s XK-E

'96 FORD KA

Low-cost "new edge" Euro city car married soft surfaces to crisp creases

'99 MERCURY COUGAR

New-edge Cougar was first with front drive and a hatchback



RETIREMENT AND BEYOND

When Telnack decided to hang it up on January 1, 1998, he left a legacy of (mostly) hits and had been named *Automotive Industries* magazine's 1989 Man of the Year. He was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the prestigious Eyes on Design auto show in 2006 and inducted into the Automotive Hall of Fame in 2008.

An avid sailor and yachtsman, he had freelanced boat designs for Trojan Boats early in his career, then took it up again post-retirement as a consultant (and board member) for Chris Craft. "I still had my old Chris Craft brochures, never threw them away. I said, 'You have a golden opportunity to take this wonderful heritage and do modern interpretations of it, and I showed them sketches of what they could do for the next generation. They said, 'Okay.'"

After 12 years in Florida, Telnack and wife Marguerite recently returned to Michigan. "Along with my passions for automotive and boat design," he says, "I've always had an interest in architecture. Our new Michigan home is the fifth contemporary home I've designed."

Regrets? "I should have fought a lot harder for some of our concepts. We had one, the first Contour concept car, that was so hot, a beautiful, all aluminum car that led to the bodyside section on the Taurus. I think we could have had something really good going there."

Red Poling, who succeeded Petersen as Ford CEO in 1990, once said of Telnack: "There are great designers, and there are charismatic leaders. What

<JACK TELNACK> <INTERVIEW>

FROM TOP: a Telnack-designed home; at Bondurant's driving school; presenting a design award at Pebble Beach; the GT90 concept



COURTESY JACK TELNACK



COURTESY JACK TELNACK



COURTESY JACK TELNACK

