

## Bucket Seats

7-24-08

I remember back in 1964 when just about every car made at that time had at least one model in their lineup that had bucket seats and usually a nice counsel between the seats. One interesting quality that virtually all these bucket seat models had was that they were all two door coupes. They represented the manufacturers attempt to make a plain Jane car into a sports car, or at least a sportier car. The most popular were probably the Chevy Super Sport, Pontiac Grand Prix and the Ford Galaxie 500 XL. There were the other one's that already were supposed to be sports cars or at least sporty, like the Ford Thunderbird, Buick Riviera, and Olds Toronado, and all of them were also 2-Door Coupes. These cars would be called "personal luxury cars" now; however there would be one big difference. If any of these cars were being made right now, they would be 4-Doors.

A few years back I went to a car show, one of many I attend every year, and one of the cars there that really caught my eye was a Red 1964 Ford Galaxie 500XL. Now this would be a somewhat rare car to see at any car show but this one had something that I have never seen before or since for that matter. It had four doors! Yes, folks, four doors on the Sportiest version of a Ford for that year. This was absolutely unheard of back in 1964 and before and for many years after that. I do not know if this was a factory 4-Door or if the owner just customized a 4-Door into what looked like a factory Ford Galaxie 500XL. It looked to me like it came out of the factory just that way. If that is the case, then Ford must have had a vision of things to come.

In the 70's and 80's America began to lean more and more in the direction of Foreign Cars and many of those foreign cars came equipped with bucket seats. Some of the cheaper ones, Toyota, Nissan, Mazda, Honda, typically would not have the nice counsel in between the seats. However, others, like the BMW's and Mercedes', developing the "personal luxury car" theme, would have not only the counsel but also leather bucket seats, sunroofs, and just about every luxury accessory available on cars at the time. The important thing to note on these cars is that virtually all of them were 4-door sedans. They were not 2-door coupes or even 2-door sedans, but 4-door sedans. Throughout the history of cars, and certainly in the collector car market, the most coveted models of any car were the 2-door coupes and convertibles. The 4-doors were always considered "family" cars and the model that the manufacturers made the most of, so they certainly did not have the rarity factor going for them. Because they made so many of them and because they are less coveted by collectors, they are much less valuable and less desirable to own. "Genuine" collectors up until now, anyway, have always preferred the 2-dr Coupes and convertibles. That, however is about to change.

Maybe Ford knew it was coming back in 1964 with their Galaxie 500XL 4-door, but I really doubt it. Even if the one I saw was a factory original, Ford made no effort then or since then to advertise any 4-dr Sports cars to get people to buy them, with the possible exception of the Thunderbird 4-dr in the early Seventies which only lasted a couple of years. No other manufacturer tried to push off 4-dr sports cars on the American public, to my knowledge, choosing instead to start a completely new model line and label it a “personal luxury” car, influenced by and patterned after the German BMW and Mercedes lines. Cadillac was probably the first to do it with their 1975 Seville. Others followed along gradually and by 1990, even the Japanese joined in with the Lexus, Infinity and Acura models from Toyota, Nissan, and Honda. At any rate, for a variety of reasons, the “worm turned” and now the coveted cars, both now and in the future, are the “personal luxury” 4-door sedans with all the luxury accessories anyone could imagine along with sports car performance, handling, and braking, and lest we ever forget, **bucket seats!**

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