

# NEW LEGS FOR AN OLD PONY

## Installing a Classic Performance Products IFS for 1964-1/2 to 1970 Mustangs

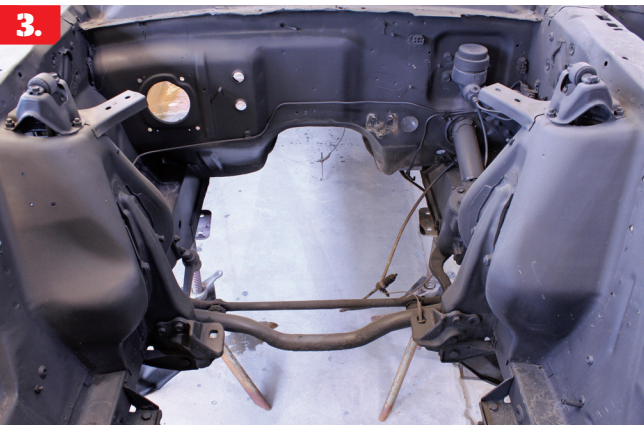
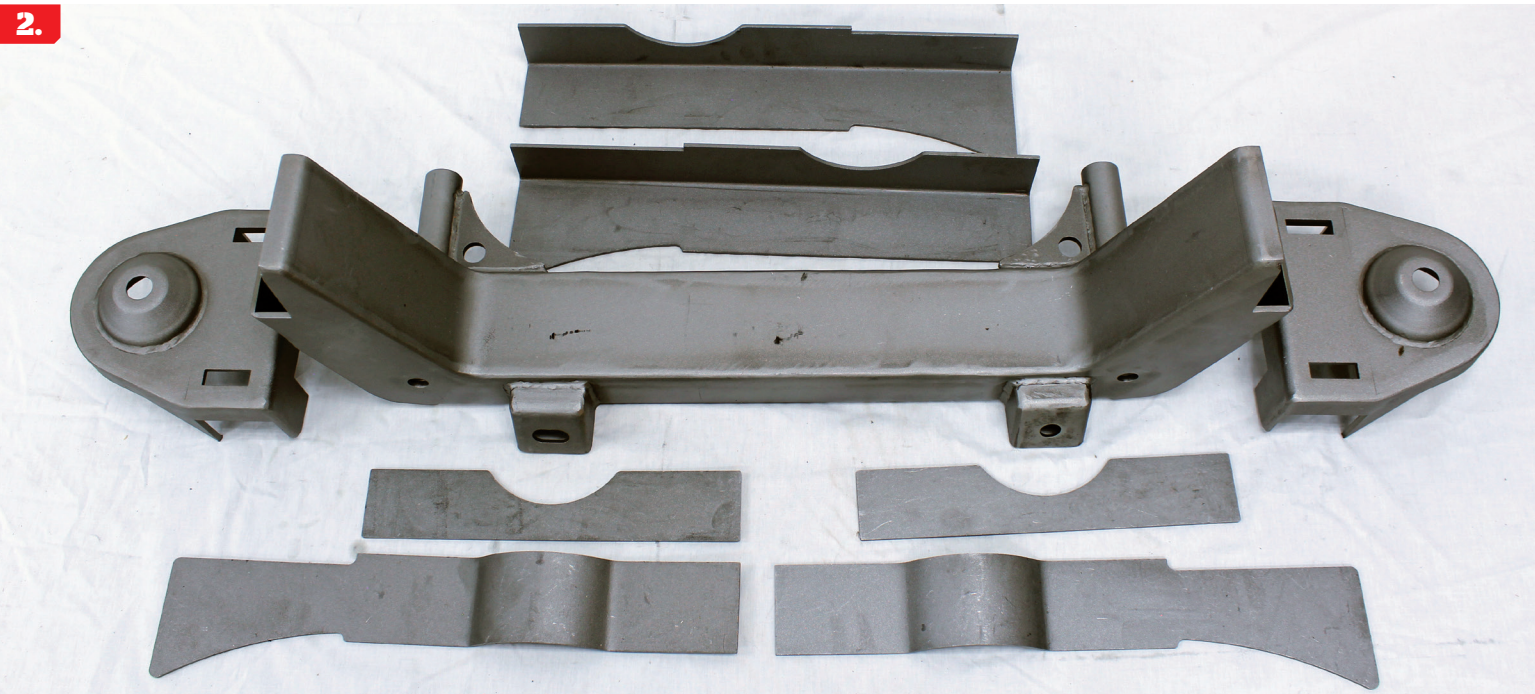
BY RON CERIDONO ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY TATERADFORD

**O**f all the modifications that can be made to any early Mustang, one of the most significant is installing an improved independent front suspension system from Classic Performance Products (CPP). This kit truly resolves two issues simultaneously: It not only improves ride and handling characteristics, it also allows the removal of the spring towers that intrude into the engine compartment and make engine swaps so tricky.

Ford's Mustang, along with the Plymouth Barracuda, was introduced in 1964, creating the genre that would become known as "ponycars;" basically these were compact cars with "sporty" design elements. Mustangs were introduced on April 17, 1964, well before the usual introduction date for new models. As a result, the very early Mustangs are often referred to as 1964-1/2 models. However, Ford identified all the first year's production as being '65s. At the outset, Ford had modest sales goals for the Mustang, expecting to sell around 100,000 for the year—that goal was achieved in the first three months. After 18 months of production, more than a million Mustangs were sold, making it Ford's best-selling new model since the Model A.



**1.** This 1965 Mustang's transformation from mundane driver to corner carver began with putting it on jackstands and leveling it front to back and side to side.



**2.** CPP's Mustang suspension kit has a new front crossmember, upper control arm mounts, and frame reinforcements.



**3.** In addition to the performance drawbacks of the Falcon-based front suspension, the intrusion of the spring towers makes the Mustang's engine compartment extremely cramped.

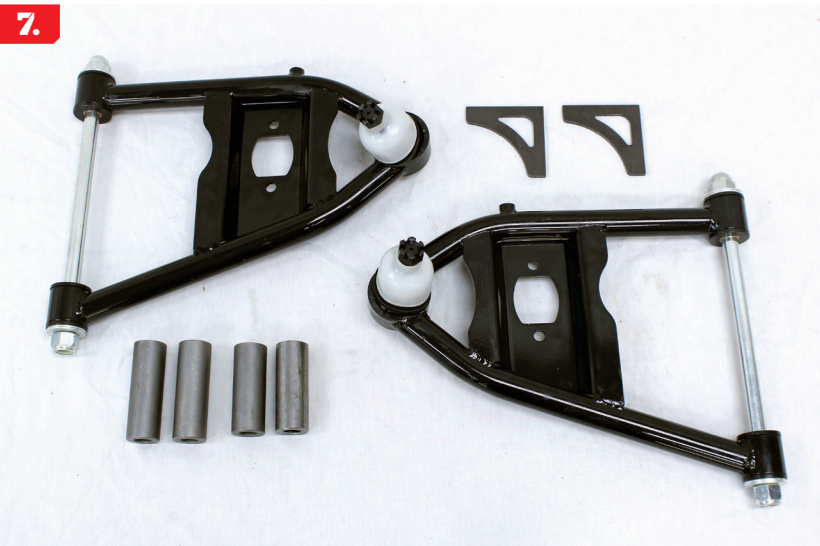


**4.** Here the reason for the spring towers can be seen—the springs and shocks are on top of the upper control arms. All the stock suspension components, including the control arms, spindles, springs, struts, and sway bars will be removed.



**5.** Billet double-adjustable coilovers are included in the CPP suspension kit.

**6.** CPP's tubular upper control arms allow caster and camber adjustments with shims between the cross shafts, mounts, and threaded adjusters on their inner ends.



7. The CPP kit comes with full tubular A-arms rather than the Mustang II single-stamped steel lower control arms and strut arrangement.

8. Using a pair of coil spring compressors makes removing the stock Mustang coil springs much easier and safer.

9. With the suspension and steering components out of the way, Colin Radford used a plasma cutter to remove a majority of the spring pockets.

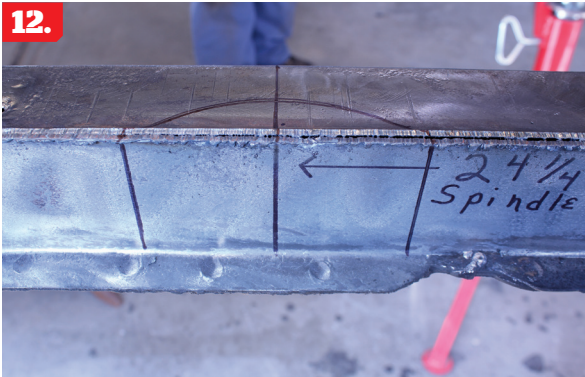
10. Once most of the spring pockets were out of the way, Colin trimmed away the remaining edges. Later, filler panels will be fabricated to fill the holes.

11. In preparation for the new front crossmember, the reinforcements for the inner portions of the framerrails were clamped in place and welded.

12. With the inner reinforcements in place, the notches necessary in the outer portions of the framerrails were laid out at the spindle centerline.

13. After the outer notches have been cut in the framerrails, they will be boxed with the included reinforcements. This is the left side notch; note the inner reinforcement is in place on the right framerrail.

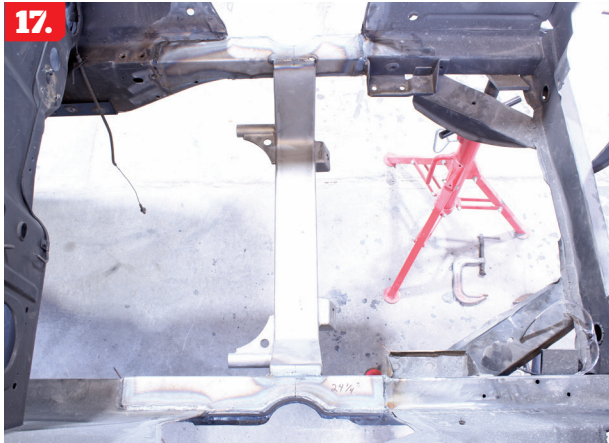
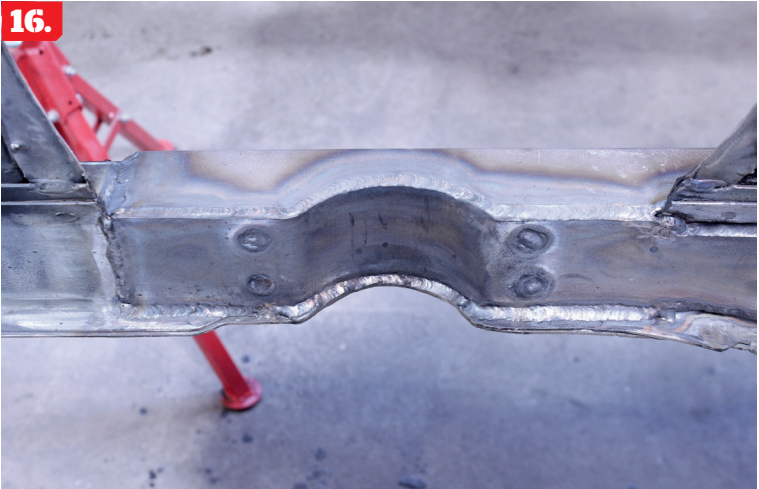
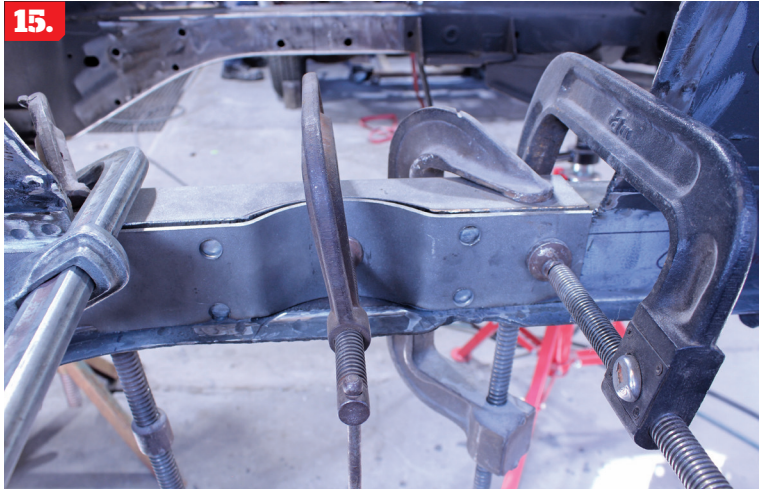
14. This is one of the reinforcements CPP supplies for the notches cut in the rails. Colin drilled four holes in the plates for rosette welds.



Ford dipped into their parts bins to keep the initial base price of a Mustang under \$2,500 and incorporated many existing Falcon suspension components. While reasonably durable, the Mustang's front suspension was developed with cost savings as the goal not performance. If there was ever a car that could benefit from improved suspension components, the early Mustang is it; and an easy and affordable way to do that is available in kit form from CPP.

CPP's Mustang replacement suspension is based on the front suspension from another Ford with a similar lineage, the

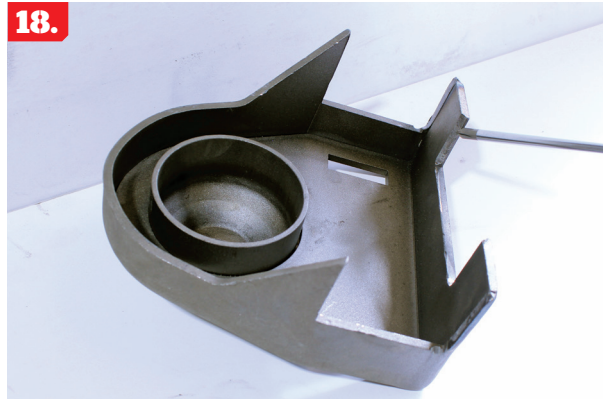
Mustang II. These frontends have proven to be well-suited for various high-performance applications. CPP has improved a good thing by incorporating several refinements, including modular spindles with cartridge-style wheel bearing and hub assemblies, tubular control arms, and a large-diameter sway bar. Another significant improvement is replacing the stock steering gear and linkage (particularly those with leak-prone power assist) with a power rack-and-pinion unit for improved steering response. The kit shown here also includes double-adjustable coilover shocks.



15. The outer reinforcements were clamped in place, and all the areas to be welded were ground to ensure a good fit and clean surface for maximum weld penetration.

16. After modifying the frame-rails, the crossmember can be put in place.

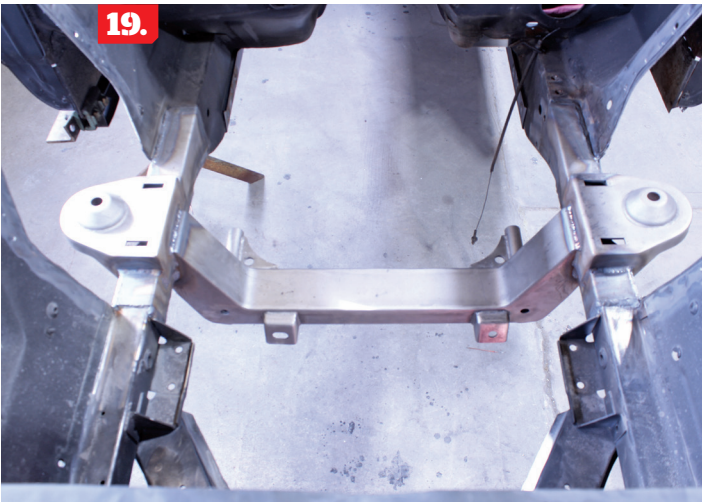
17. With the center of the cross-member established, it is aligned with the centerline marks on the framerrails and welded in place.



18. Notches in the upper control arm mounts fit precisely over the framerrails and crossmember, ensuring they are located correctly (3/4 inch in front of crossmember).

19. Although it's not visible here, there are left and right upper control arm brackets as they are angled to provide antidive suspension geometry.

20. The Billet coilovers include spring seats with bearings to facilitate preload adjustments. Before the adjusters are installed, the threads on the shock bodies are coated with antiseize.





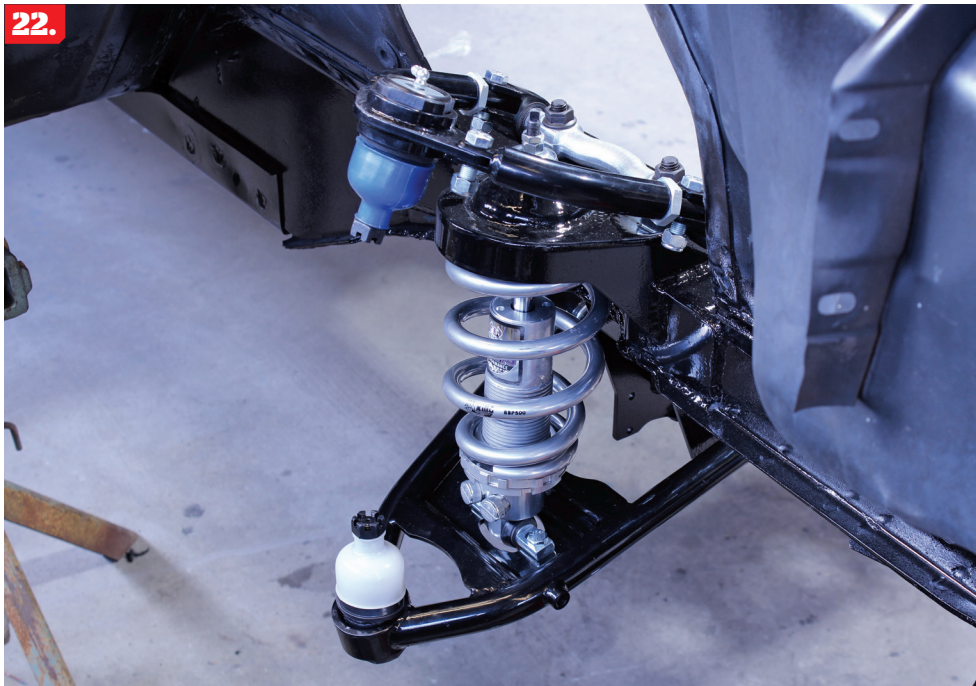
**21.** Along with spring preload adjustments, the two knobs on the shocks provide compression and rebound tuning. For this application, 500-pound springs were installed.

**22.** Unlike standard coilovers, the upper end of the “hybrid”-style springs fit into pockets in the crossmember while the shock studs are secured at the top like a conventional shock absorber.

**23.** CPP includes modern uprights and modular hub assemblies with maintenance-free wheel bearings rather than conventional spindles.

**24.** CPP uses 12-point bolts that thread into the hubs instead of press-in studs. They're installed with a thread-locking compound.

**25.** The assembled hubs bolt to the spindle up-rights; again thread locking compound is used on the fasteners.

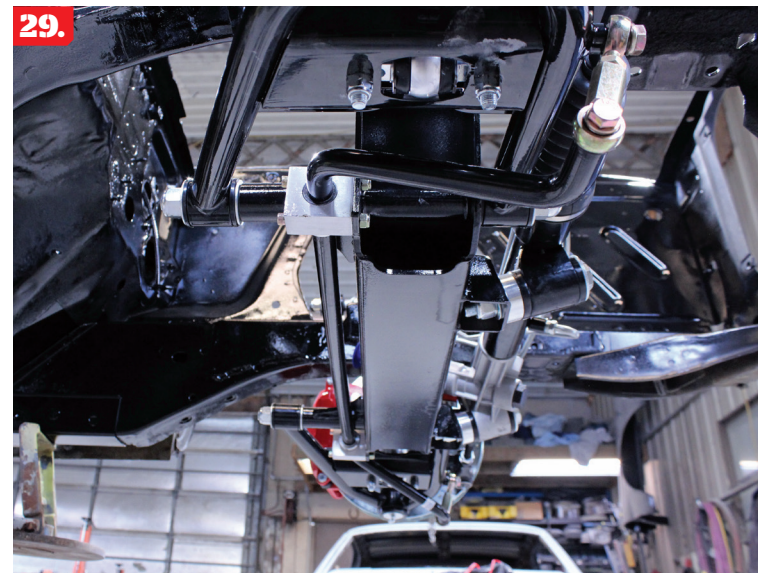
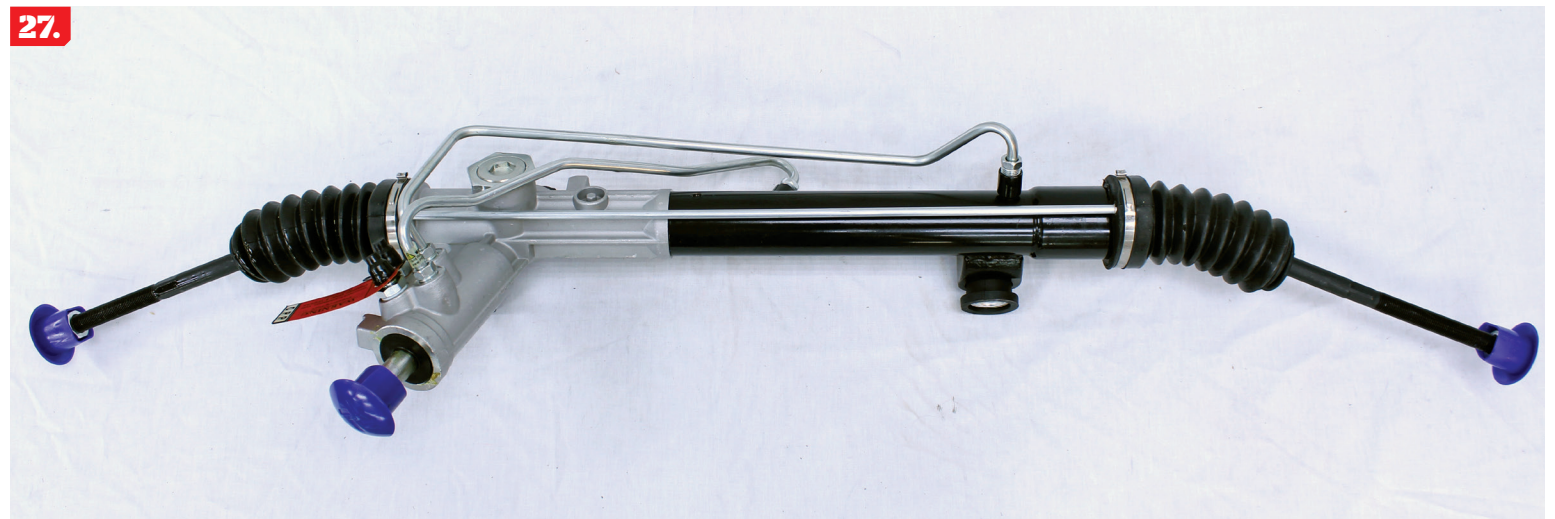


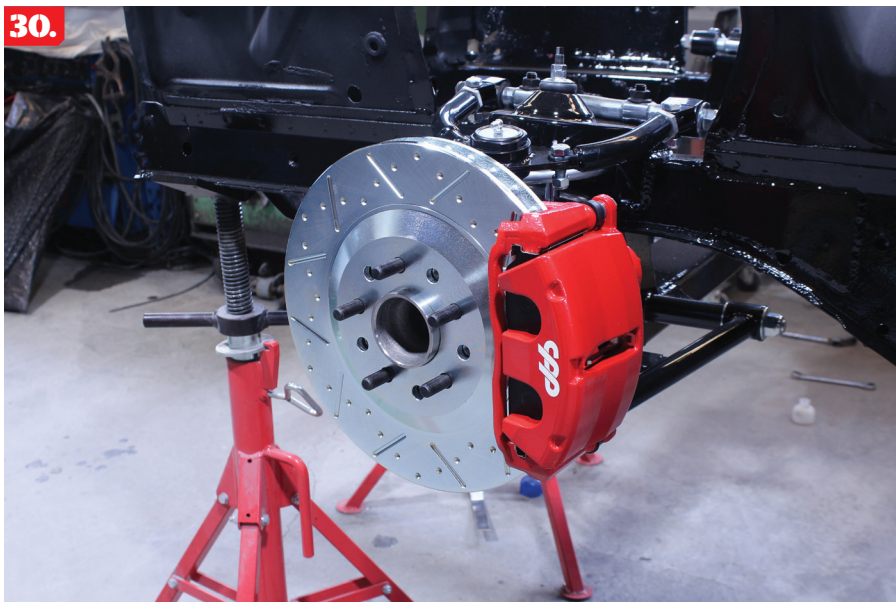
**26.** CPP's modular spindle/hub assembly is compact and extremely strong, eliminating the pin flex that can occur with a conventional spindle.

**27.** CPP's power rack-and-pinion steering is superior to the Mustang's original gearbox and linkage. Fords with factory power steering had troublesome control valves, leaky linkage-mounted power cylinders, and a number of hoses that could be counted on to fail.

**28.** The front-mounted rack-and-pinion provides better feedback to the driver and frees up more room in the engine compartment by eliminating the stock steering linkage.

**29.** The suspension kit includes a new sway bar that attaches to the rear of the crossmember.

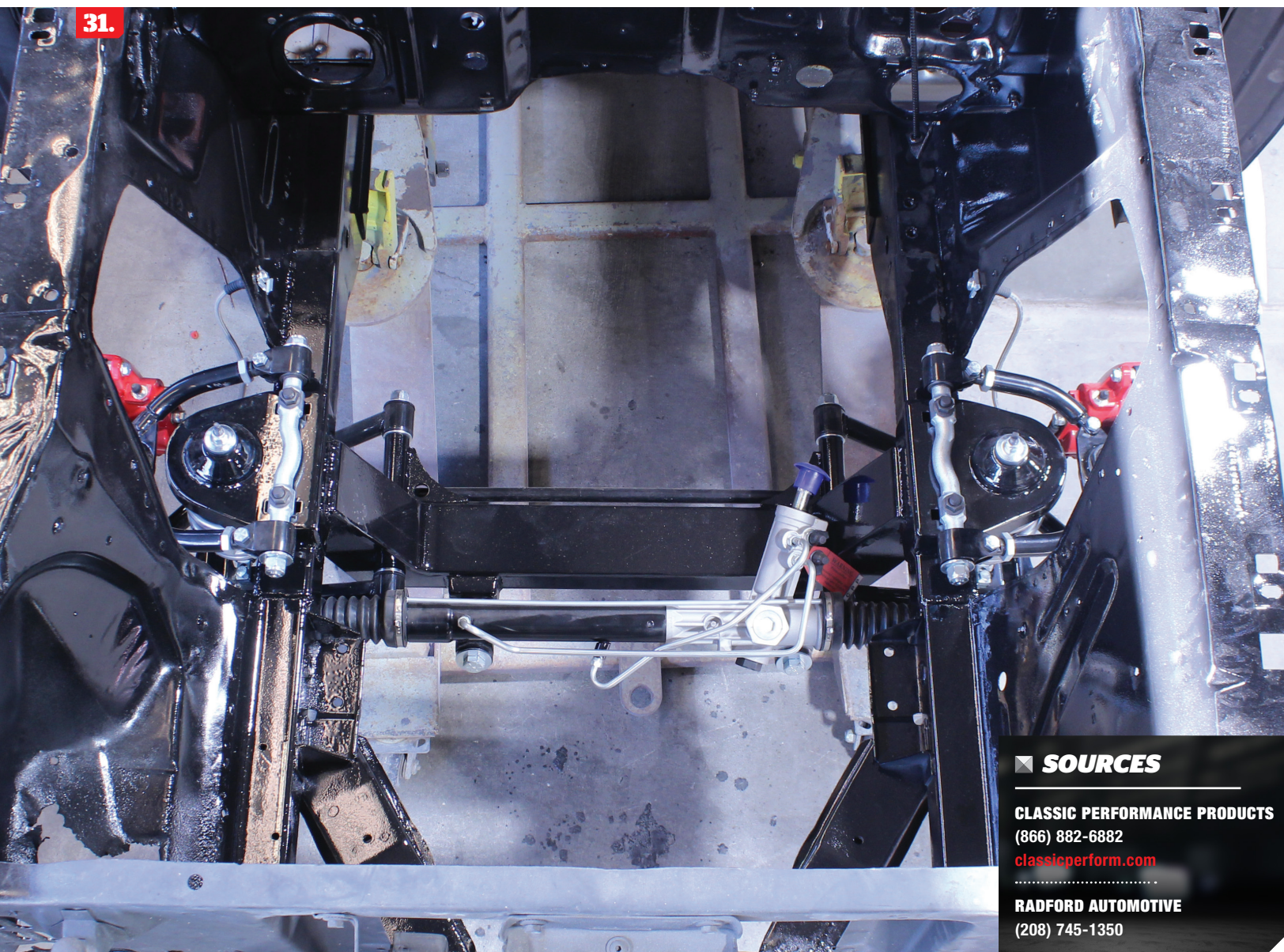




**30.** To provide braking power on par with the improved handling, CPP offers a variety of brake kits. This is their 13-inch Twin Piston Caliper kit that comes with the CS spindles; it's recommended for 16-inch or larger wheels.

**31.** In addition to the obvious performance advantages of CPP's Mustang suspension kit, the elimination of the stock spring towers makes the engine compartment much roomier. This one will eventually house a 428 big-block.

We were able to catch Colin and Tate Radford as they removed the original front suspension from a 1965 Mustang fastback and replaced it with all-new CPP components. Check out the following photos to see how it was done. With vastly improved suspension geometry, more precise steering, adjustable coilover shocks, and disc brakes with big bore calipers, this Mustang will provide the ride and handling we've come to expect from a contemporary performance car and still retain the classic style of an early Mustang. It's kind of like turning a pony into a racehorse. **MR**



#### ■ SOURCES

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