

# Daily Journal

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## Full Speed

*She's stopped street racing, but litigator Wynter Deagle still loves winning.*

By Shane Nelson  
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**S**an Diego trial lawyer Wynter Deagle doesn't drag-race anymore, but she's certainly not shy with the accelerator in her '66 Ford Mustang.

"My husband will tell you I have a lead foot," she said, laughing.

The power of classic American muscle cars captured Deagle's attention early, first occupying much of her free time as a middle schooler in Rhode Island, where she worked regularly on cars with her father.

The duo's first classic car rebuild was a 1970 Pontiac Trans Am, a restoration followed closely by overhauling the 454 big block racing engine in a 1970 Dodge Charger. Later, in high school, Deagle drove a 1969 Chevy Malibu she and her dad fixed up.

Drag-racing the Malibu down a straight street in her little hometown was not, however, something her father encouraged. Deagle, who is managing partner of Troutman Sanders LLP's San Diego office, won her last race in the car at 17 but said the celebration didn't last long. One of her father's friends called and told him what she was up to.

"My dad was waiting at the end," Deagle recalled. "I was all ready to celebrate the fact I'd beaten this really obnoxious guy. And I saw my dad standing there, and I was like, 'Oh God. I'm dead.'"

Grounded for a month, Deagle said the illicit race and subsequent punishment became a poorly kept secret in the little Rhode Island community.

"In a small town, if you don't know your business, you just ask somebody, and they'll tell it to you," Deagle explained. "So all of my friends' moms knew. Everyone knew."

Working on vehicles with her father started around age 4 for Deagle, who said her early involvement typically

entailed passing tools to dad and asking questions. Describing her family's financial standing as "upper lower class," Deagle said repairing cars was a recurring household chore.

"Our cars were always breaking down at one point or another," she recalled. "So my dad would always be outside working on them."

The only one of her parents' six kids interested in auto engines, Deagle moved beyond inquisitive tool assistant before too long and started tackling repair projects herself under dad's supervision. Engines were generally the two's primary focus while body work was farmed out to friends with shops specializing in rust, dents and auto paint.

"Me hanging out with old cranky mechanic guys started young," Deagle said.

Captain of the cheerleading squad in both high school and college, Deagle said auto engines weren't something her friends were interested in, but cars and their motors were, nonetheless, frequently on her mind. And time spent with dad was always cherished.

"It was just kind of like, 'This is my dad's and my thing, and this is what we do,'" she said. "'This is a thing we have in common that gives us an opportunity to spend time together. ... Yes, I'm captain of the cheerleading team, but I also love to go put on overalls and get dirty under my car.'"

Deagle sold the Chevy Malibu to help pay for college but later bought a '67 Ford Mustang she drove while finishing her undergraduate degree at Roger Williams University, which was just 30 minutes from her parents' home.

Weekend visits home to tinker on the car with dad were common, but the Mustang didn't get the refurbishment Deagle would have preferred, due largely to her tight budget as a college kid. Still, time with the classic sparked an enduring fascination for the iconic Fords.

"The body shape of the '67 Mustang



Thomas Kurtz / Special to the Daily Journal

**'A lot of my job is stressful and requires really deep, thoughtful and on-the-ball attention. ... Working on a car is relaxing for me. I'm not in any particular rush. I'm just trying to make it run better..'**

— Wynter Deagle, Troutman Sanders LLP

— I just thought it was a beautiful car. The lines are so clean," said Deagle, who later sold the '67 to help pay for law school. "I loved the chrome in the wheels and up against the doors. ... And I loved having a convertible."

A fan of Perry Mason and Ally McBeal growing up, Deagle said she enrolled at Northeastern University School of Law, where she completed her degree in 2007, in part because the thought of being in court all the time was really appealing.

"Looking back, I think I was a little bit naïve about what lawyers did," she said, laughing again. "But I loved the idea of getting paid for winning because I like to win. I'm incredibly competitive, which is why I was drag-racing."

Troutman Sanders partner Justin Nahama has worked with Deagle for seven years and described her as an outstanding attorney who excels under pressure.

"I've seen her under fire in several cases in court and in depositions, and she's just as good as it gets," Nahama said. "If it was my company that had any kind of challenges, she'd be the first person I would call."

Nahama's also ridden on several occasions in Deagle's current restoration project, a fire engine red '66 Ford Mustang equipped with a powerful 396 engine. Noting the car attracts a great deal of attention wherever Deagle

drives it, Nahama said it's the sound of the high-powered motor that turns the most heads.

"It's just a stunning car," he said. "It sounds great and looks great and rides great. It's a total classic."

Asked about whether he's witnessed firsthand any of Deagle's fondness for speed, Nahama was far less forthcoming.

"As an attorney, I'll plead the fifth on that one," he said, laughing.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the problem-solving skills Deagle honed while working alongside her father on cars have become invaluable in her business litigation practice. But the tinkering she does most weekends under the hood of her '66 Mustang also provides an important distraction.

"I just like to fiddle with it," Deagle said. "A lot of my job is stressful and requires really deep, thoughtful and on-the-ball attention. ... Working on a car is relaxing for me. I'm not in any particular rush. I'm just trying to make it run better."

Although Deagle's father hasn't yet had a chance to kick the tires on her latest Mustang project, she said he'll likely have an opportunity during a San Diego visit tentatively slated for this fall.

"I'll let him drive it — maybe," she said, chuckling. "I'll at least let him sit in the passenger seat while I drive it."

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