



Great Garages

A QUICK LOOK AT THE SHELBY AMERICAN COLLECTION

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The Shelby American Collection in Boulder, Colo., showcases the heritage of Shelby American — this year celebrating its 50th anniversary producing some of America's greatest race cars. Founded in 1997 by Steve Volk and fellow Cobra enthusiasts, brothers Bill and Dave Murray, the nonprofit museum offers guests approximately 25 classic Shelby racers as well as other marques with unique histories.

"Everybody remembers when and where they saw their first Cobra," says Steve, president of Shelby American. "For me it was the summer of 1969: I was a high school student working in Overland Park, Kan., and I walked in on a British racing green 427 Cobra and a silver Mk I GT40 in a customer's garage, where I was sent to repair the sprinkler control unit."

Later in life, he met the Murrays, owners of Murray Racing in Longmont, Colo. Bill raced Cobras in SCCA as late as 1983, and he also built race engines and performed remarkable restoration work. Dave is today the museum curator.

Moving in 1987 to Boulder, Colo., with his wife Lisa, Steve purchased his first factory team 289 Cobra and, subsequently, the remainder of his collection of Shelby race cars. He and the Murrays also collected automobilia from around the country, which is also in the museum.

"We recognized that there was no comprehensive Shelby museum showcasing this important period in motorsports history," he says. "We had found our mission: to become the center of the universe for Shelby race cars and memorabilia."

They met with Carroll Shelby in mid-1996, then met with him and wife Cleo in Los Angeles; today the museum is a prominent repository for cars carrying his name.

The collection, comprising the founders' cars as well as others lent to the museum, includes the small block 289 Cobras, such as race cobras and concours street Cobras; the potent 427s; and the Pete Brock-designed — and only American built FIA GT World Champion — Daytona Coupe.

In addition, the museum collection includes The Ford GT40, Shelby GT350, GT350R and the 428-powered Shelby GT500. Other prominent cars, such as the Cobra forerunner, the AC Bristol, and a 1958 Ferrari Testa Rossa, are also displayed. The museum also includes cars from the Larry H. Miller collection in Tooele, Utah.

This month, Steve has invited us to Boulder to see the museum and focus on four cars in the collection. Quoting Frank Barrett from his fine book about the museum, he's asked us to buckle up and take a ride through that unforgettable era of motoring history:

•1964 289 FIA Roadster, CSX2345 — "The story of CSX2345 begins in 1964. Early that year, to compete for the World Manufacturer's Championship, Shelby built five cars to the specifications of the Fédération Internationale de

l'Automobile. Chassis CSX2259, 2260, 2301, 2323, and this final one, 2345, would carry the flag to Europe.

"These were the most advanced of the 289-powered Cobra racers. Today, CSX2345 is one of only two surviving FIA roadsters and the only one that remains original and unrestored.

"During 1964, CSX2345 carried the team's usual color, Viking Blue, but for 1965, Shelby wanted something a little flashier, so the car was repainted in Guardsman Blue, slightly darker and more metallic.

"As its driver on seven occasions, Bob Bondurant is most often associated with CSX2345. Having started as a Shelby American team driver in 1963, he first shared this car, in its first race, with Phil Hill in the 1964 Targa Florio. On August 8th, in front of 60,000 spectators at Frieberg, drivers in CSX2345, car 66, Bondurant set a cumulative time of 14:02.750, a new record for the over-3.0-liter class.

"CSX2345 raced in more FIA events — seven — and won its class more times — five — than any other Cobra roadster. The only Cobra to endure both the 1964 and 1965 race seasons in Europe, it formed a vital part of the Shelby American team that won the 1965 Manufacturer's World Championship, the first such crown for an American-powered chassis."

•Daytona Coupe, CSX2299 — “Since the Roadster’s aerodynamic drag limited its top speed, Shelby knew that he needed a slicker car — a coupe — to win on European tracks.

Right out of the box, in January 1964, Ken Miles found the Coupe three and a half seconds per lap faster around Riverside than the roadster. With the right gears, the 390-hp Coupe could exceed 185 mph, at least 30 mph better than the best roadsters; for a 24-hour race, this advantage would be enormous. The stiffer Coupe also handled better than the roadster.

“In early June 1964 . . . when the car arrived at Le Mans, it had never been driven. Nevertheless, it made a great debut. As car 5, in Viking Blue with a pair of white stripes, CSX2299 was Dan Gurney’s choice, because the unique high roof could accommodate him. For the same reason, Bob Bondurant became his co-driver. During practice, Gurney lapped the circuit at 3:56.1, a new GT record. On the Mulsanne Straight, speeds exceeded 185 mph.

“During 1964 and 1965, CSX2299 had run in 10 of the 25 races that the Daytona Coupes participated in, more than any other example. It scored four GT class wins, plus three second places and two DNFs, setting lap records at five of its races. In its second life, it was restored during the early 1980s and has run in vintage events at Le Mans, the Nürburgring, Watkins Glen, Laguna Seca and Goodwood.”

•1963 289 Le Mans Roadster, CSX2137 — “That summer [1963], Shelby American, funded by Ford, prepared three factory team Cobras (CSX2136, 2137 and 2138) for an assault on the 24 Hours of Le Mans; they also built three similar cars for customers (CSX2154, 2155, and 2156).

“The Collection currently includes two of these, CSX2137

and 2155; CSX2138 has also spent time there. The factory-run cars have come to be known as Le Mans Roadsters, while the customer cars are often called Le Mans Replicas.

“Gurney’s win . . . in the Bridgehampton Double 500, the final FIA event of the season, was the highlight of the car’s year. Gurney said that he found this Cobra much faster than the one he’d driven at Sebring (CSX2128) back in March.

“That fall, CSX2137 also won under Holbert in a USRRC event at Mid-Ohio and with Bob Bondurant in a one-hour GT race at Riverside.

“In the early 1980s the tired car was rebodied. Later, when Bill Murray restored the car, he re-shaped and reinstalled the original body and brought the car back to its original specification. Indeed, the car’s now-chipped windshield still carries faded but original decals from Daytona and Sebring. Some things are just destined to survive.”

•1967 GT40 Mk. IV, J-7 — “After Le Mans in 1965, Ford realized that the Mk. II was reaching the end of its competitive life. Because this new racer was designed to comply with Appendix J of the FIA’s regulations, it was known as the J-Car.

“Fed by a 660/40-series Holley four-barrel carburetor, the dependable and proven 500-hp 427 engine sent massive torque to the huge Kar Kraft T44 transmission.

“Chassis J-5 through J-8, completed in early 1967 with the latest modifications, were designed, built, and prepared specifically to win just one race, that year’s Le Mans 24 Hours. The four were said to have cost \$1 million each, in 1966 dollars.

“Bearing the race number 3, the car arrived in France on June 1st to make up the quartet of J-Cars, with three GT40 Mk.

IIBs as backup entries. Its drivers, Mario Andretti and Lucien Bianchi, had partnered in a GT40 at Le Mans the previous year.

“Andretti qualified J-7 third at 3:25.3 . . . [At] about 3:30 a.m. [of the race] still running second, Andretti pitted J-7. . . [A] mechanic changing the front brake pads on J-7 installed a pad backward. Andretti accelerated out of the pits, but when he braked for the first time, a front brake locked, and J-7 spun, hitting the earth banks and ending up in disarray in the middle of the track. Somehow Andretti crawled out . . .

“When the dust settled, the damaged J-7 was shipped back to Kar Kraft, where it was stuck back together . . .

“[In 1995, I bought] the now-stripped J-7 . . . Bill Murray . . . restored the car, which has since proven its mettle with demonstration runs at Daytona, Goodwood, Laguna

Seca, Road America, and Watkins Glen.”

Shelby American Collection hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Admission to the museum is \$5; call for special arrangements for groups and clubs. On Sept. 8, the museum will host legends such as Carroll Shelby, Bob Bondurant and Jack Sears to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Shelby American. For more information on the Shelby American Collection, see www.shelbyamericancollection.org or call 303.516.9565.

If you or someone you know has a GreatGarage and would like it to be considered for an upcoming issue, e-mail us at GreatGarages@highline-autos.com.

