

SAAC-49

*New Jersey Motorsports Park
July 25 - 26 - 27, 2024*

– Rick Kopec
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No two conventions are the same. Even if they're at the same track and the same hotel. Each convention has its own vibe. A lot depends on how many conventions you've been to and how many Cobras and Shelys you've cumulatively seen. After nearly fifty years we know this.

When we sat down to choose the location for SAAC-49 it was time to go back to the northeast. We'd been to Watkins Glen in 2012, Pocono in 2015, Pittsburgh in 2019 and 2023. And Pittsburgh, at the western end of Pennsylvania, was stretching it a bit to call it a northeast convention. The bigger tracks like The Glen and Lime Rock were out of reach, financially. Unless we could partner up with SVRA or some other sanctioning body, we couldn't afford champagne on our beer budget. Especially with fewer and fewer members choosing the open track option.

New Jersey Motorsports Park was just barely within reach, financially, because we could share the track with SVRA again. We hadn't been there since 2008. The track was well placed, at the southern tip of New Jersey. Not a bad drive from southern New Eng-

land, eastern New York and Long Island, and eastern Pennsylvania. And an easy drive from Maryland, Delaware and the DC area. We set to work securing blocks of rooms at several local hotels as we formulated a schedule.



SAAC-49 would be, once again, a co-event with Team Shelby's Northeast Region. They touted it as ECGN-11, the 11th East Coast Grand National meet. Kind of wieldy, but

that's what they call it. Having them join us in a co-event increases the numbers – always a good thing – and allows us to do a little proselytizing in the name of Shelby American history. Team Shelby (like Shelby American, Inc.) is long on current products and short on the history that got them there. And that's understandable. Between the two organizations, the mix is just about right. As they described it, "A celebration of all things Shelby."

Shortly after we announced the convention dates and hotels we learned that the Pittsburgh Vintage Grand Prix would be the same weekend. It would feature a GT40 Reunion, which looked like an "event" that was not to be missed. However, after suggestions within the Board about jumping ship at NJMP and going to Pittsburgh, we learned that we had already signed contracts with two hotels guaranteeing our block of rooms. Switching the location would mean forfeiting a large chunk of money. As much as we would have liked to be part of the GT40 Reunion in Pittsburgh, we were locked in to Millville, New Jersey. It would have to happen without us.



The last time we had been to NJMP's Thunderbolt Raceway was SAAC-33 in 2008. The track was brand new then and there wasn't a blade of grass growing anywhere. In the intervening sixteen years the place has grown up. Today it looks like a country club with manicured greens, lush shrubbery, and lots of asphalt.

The track was named after the legendary WWII fighter, the P-47 Thunderbolt. They were nicknamed "Jugs" by their pilots because standing on their nose, their profile was similar to the common glass milk jug of the time. Beginning in 1943, Thunderbolts were sent to the joint Army Air Force-civilian Millville Airport to train military pilots.

Built by the Republic Aviation company from 1941 through 1945 (15,636 produced) the aircraft was a successful high altitude fighter and was the foremost American fighter-bomber in the ground attack role. It was equipped with eight .50 caliber machine guns and could carry 5-inch rockets or a 2,500 lb. bomb load. Thunderbolts were powered by 18-cylinder Pratt & Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp engines that produced 2,000 horsepower. From D-Day until VE Day Thunderbolt pilots claimed to have destroyed 86,000 railroad cars, 9,000 locomotives, 6,000 armored fighting vehicles and 68,000 trucks.

Thursday morning's on and off rain kept some Shelys and Cobras in their enclosed trailers but it didn't keep the NewGen Shelys off the track. There's something comforting about driving a basically bulletproof car on a race circuit when it's covered by a factory warranty. Those warranties, however, don't include body damage. One new Shelby slid off the track while negotiating a corner and attempted to re-



arrange the concrete (aptly named) Jersey barrier. It didn't budge.

The State of New Jersey has pretty strict rules about cars on race tracks in their state. You'd think a bunch of Puritans were put in charge and wanted to make sure nobody had any fun. Drivers had to wear long sleeved shirts and long pants no matter what the temperature was. And there was the "Broomstick Rule." Open cars had to have a rollbar two-inches taller than the driver's helmet. Tech inspectors laid a broomstick over the top of the windshield and the top of the rollbar. The driver, sitting behind the wheel with his helmet on, had to be two inches lower than the broomstick.

Obviously, not everyone could meet this requirement. Despite drivers removing seat padding and upholstery and squinching down in the seat in an attempt to pass the "Broomstick Rule" they were not all able to comply. Did that keep them off the track? Suddenly SAAC member Kai Inuma became very popular. The 5-foot tall Hawaiian was pressed into service to take certain Cobras through tech inspection and, amazingly, they all

passed the Broomstick Rule.

The schedule called for SAAC to share the track in the morning with the F4 U.S. series (Formula 4), which is designed to be a globally-recognized yet affordable step between Karting and the FIA Formula Regional Championship. It's an open-wheel spec series with capped costs that allows young driving talent to compete. The cars allow for significant chassis adjustments which increase the drivers' technical knowledge as they gain the experience required to move up the open-wheel ladder. Top three finishing drivers receive prize money. It sounds very much like what Carroll Shelby envisioned with his failed SCCA Can-Am Series thirty years ago.

Following the driver's meeting at 7:15 a.m. SAAC had the track the entire morning. Open track sessions were followed by parade laps with passengers. They were limited to 45 mph (monitored by the NJ State Police).

A unique event took place back at the track around noon when the odometer on SAAC member Steve McDonald's 1966 GT350H, 6S1431 rolled over to 250,000 miles. He brought it to the convention with nine miles shy of 250,000 miles so the event could become part of Shelby history with plenty of witnesses. The requisite bottle of champagne was popped and pictures were taken. This is a record that will not likely ever be broken, what with the prices of Shelys now approaching stratospheric levels and owners severely self-disciplining themselves about mileage.



Steve and Dorrie McDonald and 6S1431 mark a historic milestone: 250,000 miles. We asked Steve what he was going to do with the car now. "Drive it!" he said. "This is no time to start becoming a trailer queen!"

Also on Thursday morning was a Poker Run organized by Team Shelby. It left from the Hampton Inn & Suites and led drivers on a scenic trip through the southern portion of the state to Cape May. Stops included the famous Cape May lighthouse and the Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum. They moved one of their aircraft outside so pictures could be taken with cars. Warbirds and Shelybs always go together. Lunch was at Nauti Distillery, a true farm-to-bottle operation with a tour of the distillery operation. From there it was on to the Ocean City Boardwalk. About 60 cars participated in the 200-mile jaunt.

Dinner was held at the prestigious Flanders Hotel, Ocean City's most prestigious and historic boardwalk hotel. About 110 people attended the Team Shelby dinner. Guest speakers were Shelby American CEO Gary Patterson, Aaron Shelby and drag racer Al Joniec who was 1968 NHRA Super Stock Eliminator driving a 428 Cobra Jet Mustang. He drove the '65 Mustang funny car "Batmobile" and built engines for 1973 SCHACH National Champion 427 Cobra racer Sam Feinstein. He is also an expert on SOHC 427 engines.

Friday's daytime schedule at the track was the same as Thursday's. Except the weather was perfect. About 85



The prime attraction, as far as SAAC members were concerned, was CSX2287, the first Cobra Daytona Coupe. It was the only Coupe built at Shelby American (the other five being completed at Carrozzeria Gransport in Modena, Italy). The car was involved in the famous fire in the pits at Daytona in 1964 and then went on to win the 1964 Sebring event a month later. It also raced at five events in Europe during the 1964 FIA season. After being returned to Shelby American, refurbished and repainted in 1965 team colors it raced at Le Mans. It set 23 National and International speed records at Bonneville. It was then purchased by record producer Phil Spector who drove in on Mulholland Drive in Hollywood. What followed was a sordid and bizarre history which included being hidden away for thirty years. After it surfaced it was purchased by Dr. Simeone and except for a thorough cleaning, has remained pretty much as Spector owned it.

people took advantage of the open track. It was almost evenly mixed between SAAC and Team Shelby. Twice as many people participated in the parade laps, which probably shows that while SAAC members still want to experience driving on a race track, they want to back it down a notch or two and enjoy the ride.

Once the parade laps were completed, at 1 p.m. It was off to the Simeone Museum on the outskirts of Philadelphia. About 115 people went to see the museum. It contains 75 his-

torically significant cars, collected over a fifty year span by Dr. Frederick Simeone, a renowned neurosurgeon. After intense days of preparing for and performing for surgery, Dr. Simeone relaxed with automotive research. He investigated and procured racing sports cars, specializing in cars with substantial race history which were in "as-raced" condition. Rather than restore them, he chose to keep them as they were. Owing to his interest in genetics, the cars reflect this theme, as they highlight the evolution of the rac-



A drivers' meeting was held both mornings, before anyone could put a wheel on the track. Open Track Big Kahuna Howard Pardee [above, red shirt] explained precisely how the event would be run. He was all-business. When one driver attempted to make a light-hearted joke, Pardee cut him off [upper right], and quickly humiliated him, telling him if he wanted to crack jokes he should go to Rodney Dangerfield's comedy club. Reverting back to his military days, Pardee called the guy a slimy maggot and made a few comments about his parentage and suggested several anatomical impossibilities. Driving instructor Dan Reiter [lower right] then tried to lighten the mood by having everyone stand up and do the "Macarena."





ing sports car during the early decades of the automobile. The museum has won many awards and is described as one of the world's greatest collections of racing sports cars. In addition to the Daytona Coupe the museum also has two Ford GTs, a MK II and a MK IV. Dr. Simone passed away in 2022 and the museum is overseen by his daughter and son-in-law.

On Friday evening, 260 conventioners converged on Merighi's Savoy Inn in East Vineland for dinner and the evening program. Many said the buffet was one of the best of any convention they remembered. We were happy to have Chuck Cantwell join us. He recently turned 90 but doesn't look a day over 89. After dinner we heard from Tracey Smith, Executive Vice President at Carroll Shelby International and Aaron Shelby, Carroll Shelby's grandson, who is a Board member of Carroll Shelby International. They keep an eye on the Shelby empire from 20,000 feet. Closer to ground level is CEO Gary Patterson who has been with Shelby since the early 1990s. He has held almost every position at Shelby American in the past thirty years and has had his hands on virtually every car they have produced. No one knows more about NewGen cars.

Jim Marietta was an employee at Shelby American in 1964 in Venice when they started building GT350s. He resurfaced in 2015 and along with another former Venice employee, Ted Sutton, they got Peter Brock involved and began building "re-imagined" GT350 R-Models under the name "Original Venice Crew." There were several things on the R-Model that Brock would have liked to take one step further but there was neither the time nor the budget to do anything. The cars were already racing and winning. It was time to move on.

With most of the talent that built the original R-Models now gone, Marietta announced they would be building another 36 cars, using '65 and '66 Mustang donor cars. They would feature an independent rear suspension, remanufactured using Ford's original Klaus Arning blueprints. They would also have a new front apron designed by Peter Brock, and a reverse-mounted hood scoop. A couple of cars were built and paraded around but they didn't light any fires, probably due their high cost. Less than an original R-Model but way more than a re-stored GT350.

Marietta was at SAAC-49 to publicize his latest idea – a 1965 GT350

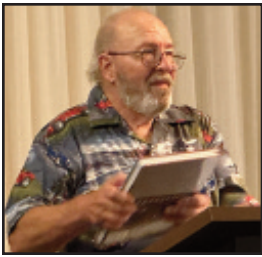
Roadster. It's essentially a restomod '65 GT350 convertible with a sculptured fiberglass cover that extends from behind the seatbacks to the leading edge of the trunk, eliminating the rear seat. This was first seen on the 1962 Thunderbird "Sports Roadster." The rear deck cover was the work of Ford designer Camilo Pardo, who also attended SAAC-49. He was responsible for the design of the '05-'06 Ford GT. Price was \$289K.

The keynote speaker was Tom Cotter – the "Barn Find Guy." Tom is a long-time SAAC member and Cobra owner. He bought CSX2490 in California and flew out from North Carolina and drove it back with *R&T* writer, Peter Egan, who wrote about their road trip in the February '20 issue. They spent nine days taking only back roads – no interstates. He has since driven it everywhere, including on several 1,000-mile Cobra rallies. In 2018 he accompanied three other Cobras on a 2,000 mile lap of Alaska. The most memorable part was when a grizzly bear mangled his original soft top one night to get at a package of Fig Newtons left inside. Fortunately Cotter was asleep in his cabin.

Cotter wrote a book, "The Cobra In The Barn" which contained stories



The suitcase strapped to his luggage rack has become Cotter's trademark. Since 2001 he's put almost 30,000 miles on the car. It's no trailer queen.



Emcee Ron Richards



Tracey Smith



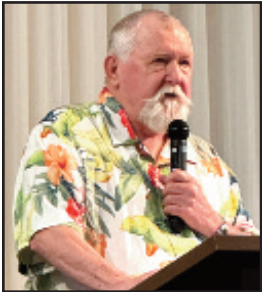
Jim Marietta



Aaron Shelby



Gary Patterson



Rick Kopec



Tom Cotter



David Maffucci



Tom brought along a powerpoint showing some of his more interesting barn finds. Spoiler alert: “The Cobra In The Barn” wasn’t actually a Cobra but an AC Greyhound. It was less than a mile from where Cotter lived. The Porsche Speedster was put away after the owner died and forgotten for thirty years. When the widow had to sell her house, the car was “found” and went to an auction in Monterey where it was sold for about \$350K. The widow’s financial problems disappeared. The 427 Cobra and several other cars including a light-weight Ferrari 275 GTB were found about 40 miles from where Cotter lived. The owner who had collected them was not able to find a new mechanic when his old one died, and the cars were ignored since 1991. They all had low mileage when he stopped driving them (17,001 on the Cobra). His health declined and he went into a health care facility. The house and garage deteriorated, were condemned by the city, and slated for demolition within weeks. A friend assigned power of attorney called Cotter after seeing him on TV. The cars went to auction in Amelia Island where they both sold for big bucks.

about searching for forgotten or ignored cars he described as “barn finds.” The name stuck and led to a handful of other books on the subject and a cable TV program, “Barn Find Hunter” which is it’s eleventh year. It’s a subject that is of interest to almost everyone.

Saturday was car show day. Bill Caron, Team Shelby’s Northeast Regional Director, and his crew handled the car show. Registration figures show that 114 cars were entered in the show but more than 200 were on the show field and about two-thirds of them were early Shelsebys and Cobras. A total of 736 votes cast to determine the popular vote winners. The car winning the People’s Choice Award received the votes of 29% of those voting, and it was a ‘69 GT350 – not something exotic like a Cobra or an R-Model. That was a surprise.

The judges class winners were selected by a four-judge committee, two judges from SAAC and two from Team

Shelby. Special thanks should go to the Team Shelby crew who helped set up the show, park the cars, check the participants in, answer questions, judge the cars and assist with the awards ceremony at the end of the day. Oh yeah, and when it’s all over they broke everything down and picked up the trash. Their efforts didn’t go unnoticed.

Additional thanks need to go to the show sponsors, Cobra Automotive and Tony D. Branda Shelby & Mustang Parts. They picked up the tab for the trophies.



David Maffucci presents a check to Aaron Shelby from SAAC for \$10,000 to the Carroll Shelby Children’s Foundation.



SAAC-49 photographers: Dave Back, Jeff Burgy, John Guyer, Colleen Kopec, Bill Lane, Peter Larkin, Dave Redman, Brian Walshe.

SAAC-49 Concours Results

Gold.....1963 Cobra 289 Competition, CSX2129... 3 Dog Garage
 Gold.....1965 Cobra 427 Competition, CSX3010... 3 Dog Garage
 Silver.....1965 GT350 R-Model, 5R108..... 3 Dog Garage
 Gold.....1966 GT350H, 6S711..... Edward Hemingway
 Silver.....1967 GT350, 67200F5A01529.....Joe Bantelman
 Silver.....1967 GT500, 67400F4A00327.....Dan Weltman
 Gold.....1968 GT350, 8T02J205244-03143.....Michael Mancini
 Gold.....1972 Pantera, THPNMR02749.....Guy Lemon

Concours Judging Team
 •Michael & Harriet Shally
 •Charles Turner
 •Jeff Speegle

Judges

•Ron Richards	•Rodney Harrold	•Brian Littlefield
•JD Kaltenbach	•Nathan Turner	•Greg Domingues
•Jim Hull	•Jim Wicks	•Ben Wagner
•John Brown	•Michael Bauman	•Peter Disher
•Nick Acton	•Tim Smid	•Steve Lapp
		•Marcus Anghel

Photos: John & Trish Guyer



CSX2129



CSX3010



5R108



67200F5A01529



67400F4A00327



8T02J205244-03143



THPMNR02470



6S711





Why do you think they call them “dash plaques?” Some of them on this Cobra go back as far as 1966, which indicates some serious use. It’s no show car!



Rich Klein is the original owner of 6S499. He and his wife PK enjoyed rallying the car when they first got it and they did pretty well. The car currently has 139,000 miles and the Kleins have driven it to two-dozen SAAC conventions. That’s half of them, and it’s probably a record.



SAAC-49 Popular Vote Car Show Results

Judged Classes

•CSX2000/3000 Cobras.....	Tom Cotter
•CSX4000-UP Cobras.....	Nick Acton
•1965 GT350.....	Robert Faulkner
•1966 GT350.....	Kevin Cauley
•1967 GT350/GT500.....	Rick Zappia, 1967 GT500
•1968 GT350/GT500/KR.....	Phil Spatz, 1968 GT500
•1969-70 GT350/500.....	Ed Shaw, 1969 GT500
•1969-70 Boss 302.....	Keith Anderson, 1970 Boss 302
•2012-13 Boss Mustang.....	David Woodldridge, 2012 Boss 302
•2007-09 GT500.....	Len Farber, 2008 GT500
•2008-Present Shelby GT/GTH/SGT.....	David Shaffer, 2016 GT500
•2010-14 Shelby GT500.....	Fred Sacks, 2013 GT500
•2010-Present GT350.....	John Wanzel, 2020 GT350R
•2020-Present GT500.....	Sam Guiruis, 2022 GT500
•1965-73 Mustang/Stock.....	John Booras, 1969 Mustang
•1965-73 Mustang/Modified.....	no award issued
•1974-Present Mustang/Stock.....	no award issued
•1974-Present Mustang/Modified.....	Thomas Jedic, 2013 Mustang GT
•1980-Present Special Edition Mustangs.....	Ken Shelton, 2003 Harley Davidson F150
•2005-Present Ford GT.....	no award issued
•Exotic Fords.....	Steve Pagano, 1974 TVR
•Replicas.....	Steve Meyer, 1965 Cobra Roadster
•Competition Cars.....	Wayne Pope, 1969 Mustang
•Special Interest.....	Tom Jedic, 1969 Cougar Eliminator

“People’s Choice Top 25”

•Charles Garner.....	1970 Torino
•Michael Bauman.....	1969 Boss 302
•Kathleen Wooldridge.....	1968 GT500
•Mike Bender.....	2008 Roush 427R
•Kyle Keller.....	1967 Country Squire
•Jack Smith.....	1966 GT350
•Rick Zappia.....	1967 GT500
•Paul Rosina.....	1968 1/2 Mustang Cobra Jet
•John Burton.....	1967 GT350
•Keith Anderson.....	2017 GT350R
•Phil Quinn.....	1970 GT500
•Rich Perroiconi.....	1968 Mustang GT Fastback
*Joe Volpe.....	1965 Mustang
•Clyde McLaughlin.....	1966 Tiger
*John Morris.....	1963 F150 Pick-Up
•Glen Sides.....	1964 Daytona Coupe Replica
•Sam Guirguis.....	2022 GT500
•David Rioux.....	1967 GT350
•Glen Hill.....	1967 GT350
•Guy Lamon.....	1970 Boss 429
•Mike Parrotta.....	2008 GT500
•Steven Bartie.....	1965 Cobra 427 S/C Replica
•Mike Demelas.....	2022 GT500 Heritage
•Robert Wharton.....	1967 GT500
•Howard Pardee.....	1965 GT350R

SAAC-49 Special Awards

People's Choice Award.....	David Miller, 1969 GT350 (voted for by 29%)
Team Shelby Pick.....	Steve McDonald, 1966 GT350H (250,000 mile car)
SAAC Pick.....	3 Dog Garage, 1968 Team Shelby Mustang T/A
Celebrity Pick/Tom Cotter.....	Bill Collins, 1965 GT350, SFM5006
Celebrity Pick/Ford Motor Company.....	Peter Bauer, 1965 GT350
Celebrity Pick/Jim Marietta.....	Jim Ward, 1975 289 Cobra
Celebrity Pick/Chuck Cantwell.....	Kevin Cauley, 1966 GT350
Celebrity Pick/Camilo Pardee.....	Rick Zappia, 1967 GT500
Best of Show.....	Wayne Olsen, 1969 Mustang Mach I



