

DRIVEN

L i v i n g T h e L e g e n d

Shelby American Automobile Club of Northern California

AUGUST 2012



SHELBY INVADES EUROPE

SHELBY - COBRA - TIGER

SHELBY RUN EUROPE 2012

Team Shelby was a new online forum, virtual club and enthusiast site for the new generation (S197) based Shelby's, and their first function was Carroll Shelby's 85th Birthday Bash held January 2008 at Shelby World Headquarters based in Las Vegas. Some of the first people I met there were Patrick Bouthoorn and his wife Astrid, who traveled all the way from the Netherlands to attend. Patrick had one of the first 2007 GT500's in Europe.

For years, Patrick had a dream and in that dream he imagined a number of Shelby's touring across Europe, driving the best roads and visiting historic sites along the way. At a Shelby event in Terlingua Texas in September 2010, that dream was put into motion with the help of Sean Cook at SMC Events. It was decided that this unique opportunity would be capped at 20 cars to keep it manageable. Upon hearing of this adventure, I tossed my name into the hat to reserve a spot, even though I'd not yet discussed this with Debra, my understanding and patient wife of 27 years. Although she didn't immediately approve, she surprised me with a very special envelope. In that envelope was a homemade card with images of Europe, the Autobahn symbol, and a picture of our GT500KR in a street scene, on the bottom, it said, "Happy 50th Birthday". I'm one lucky fella.



As Patrick shared his basic thoughts of the route, the anticipation was building. Driving the unlimited speed sections of the Autobahn, stops at the world famous Nurburgring, and Le Mans, while on a tour of Europe in our very own cars, and those cars are Shelby's....a car guys fantasy! I'm sure I am speaking for most of us that when we were about six months out, we all (attendees) began to count the days...the tour had been finalized with a departure date of Friday June 29th. Fast forward to early May, and Dan (the only other California attendee besides myself) and I had to get our cars to Houston as that was where our cars would meet up with two Texas based cars to begin their over water voyage to Rotterdam and their on-time arrival near the end of June.

My co-pilot for this trip was to be our eighteen-year-old daughter, Victoria. Although she has been driving for two years, she had not yet mastered a stick. In the month prior to the trip, her older brother Taylor was gracious enough to allow her to gain some training time in his 2001 Bullitt Mustang, so she could also get the full experience of this adventure. The day arrived for us to depart San Francisco for our flight to Amsterdam. I was full of nervous anticipation, as I had not seen my car in 5 weeks, and wondered of its arrival condition. I had booked the flight so we would have 3 days prior to the road trip in an effort to get our body clocks somewhat adjusted prior to us jumping into our cars and embarking on this wonderful road trip.

After two leisurely days playing tourist in Amsterdam, we took a 30-minute taxi ride to Almere, both the starting point of Shelby Run Europe and the hometown of Patrick and Astrid. That afternoon, Sean (co-organizer) drove four of us to collect our cars from the dock in Rotterdam. Of the eight cars that were shipped from the US, four were shipped from Houston, while the other four were shipped from Baltimore. Walking into that warehouse, and seeing my car in exactly the same condition as when I dropped it off in Los Angeles prior to its journey, was a major relief. Other than a little dust, all four cars looked great. After we provided our passports, insurance documents and signatures, off we went for the 90-kilometer drive back north to Almere. After we got cleaned up at the hotel, we all went to Patrick & Astrid's for a wonderful welcoming BBQ.

The next morning Patrick had arranged for a group tour of a wonderful 13th century castle near Almere called Muiderslot. When we returned in mid afternoon, the hotel parking lot became a car show and sticker party.

There was no planned car show, simply many of the locals, along with hotel guests had heard about all of the American muscle cars. They all wanted a see and hear these great cars. Even the local Almere newspaper came out to write a report. The sticker party was all of the participants putting the run stickers on their cars, always a fun activity.





Saturday, June 29 Day One (324km = 201mi)

Today was the day we had all been waiting for. “Day one” of Shelby Run Europe. The energy was boiling over...everybody was excited! Patrick, along with his 7-year-old son Rick, would be the lead car for the tour. He drives a (can’t miss it) 2007 Grabber Orange GT500, followed by his wife Astrid and their 14-year-old daughter Cheyenne in her own car. Astrid drives a beautiful black with yellow accented 2008 Terlingua Mustang, which is not only a very rare car, but is also the only one in Europe.

Participants awoke to sunny skies and a warm day. We drove southeast from Almere on our way into Germany and soon found our way into the town of Nurburg, and its world famous Nurburgring. When we arrived, the track was closed, as there had been a

fatality with a motorcyclist earlier in the day. We were instructed to stay close by as the track, (which incidentally is an open public toll road), would be reopening soon. If you crash, there is a traffic/police report, and if you damage any barriers, you must also pay to have them repaired.

The next bit would certainly make the heads of OTEC (Open Track Executive Counsel) spin....I’m assuming that most of you reading this have never been on the ‘Ring, but have heard of its tough reputation. Let me just say this, driving on the ‘Ring is a combination of open track, in rush hour, with every sort of car, truck, RV or motorcycle, in a testosterone-fueled free-for-all and has absolutely no rules, all vying for the same line through the corner. A jailbreak, simple as that.



I don’t play video games, and other than watching a few videos on YouTube, and looking at an online map, I had zero idea on the configuration of the Nordschleife. At 23km (15mi) long, my plan was to go out, drive 60-70%, enjoy myself and take in every second of this opportunity. After all, this was day one of our tour, in our Shelby, and the last thing I wanted was to wad up my car. The feeling was mutual amongst the other participants in terms of track approach. (our group actually did have meeting to discuss driver and passenger safety) To enter the circuit, you drive up to the entry gate, swipe your ‘Ring card, the gate arm raises and off you go.

In a very short period of time, a number of econo boxes, Porsche GT3’s, the M5 Ring Taxi and a slew of M3’s went whipping by me. After a number of kilometers, I ratcheted it up a notch, and was moving along in disbelief at the passes I was witnessing in front of me, which would earn us a black flag at any of our track events. Every inch of the track is considered passing zone, safe or otherwise. I’m sure there are days when there is room to spare, but on this day, it was packed. With the volume of cars and the amount of time it took to exit and re-enter (you only run one lap at a time). I only got in two laps, but on this day, that was enough on the Grunne Holle, which is its nickname. Translated from German, it means the Green Hell, so aptly named by Jackie Stewart.



Sunday July 1, Day Two (560km = 347mi)

We were off to southern Germany and the Bavaria town of Hohenschwangau that is home to King Ludwig's fairytale castle, Neuschwanstein. Our lunch break was to stop at Meilenwerk in Stuttgart, which is a state of the art automotive facility including specialized auto dealers, service centers, restaurants and bars. Twenty-eight Shelby's of the German Shelby Club were there to meet us and gave us a very warm welcome. After a hearty lunch of schnitzel and a tour of the facilities, it was time to continue on to Bavaria. I was excited for this leg, as it took us onto the unlimited sections of the Autobahn (nationally, the posted speed limit in most sections is 130kph which is 85mph). Three of us broke away with Jürgen, a German national living in Prague with a 2008 750HP Super Snake leading the way. Beside myself, Quentin and his son Matt, were in a sister KR to ours. Sustained speeds of 160 mph were easily achieved and the Shelby's were all rock solid steady. Now, as fun as it is to go fast in a straight line, doing a 140 mph around many sweeping corners is an entirely more exciting time especially when you can feel the back end wiggle ever so slightly. This day went by entirely too fast.



Monday July 2, Day Three (285km = 177mi)

Although it had rained over night, the clouds were breaking and it was starting to dry out in the morning. This was good for us, as our day started with a tour of Neuschwanstein, the castle that inspired Disney to use its likeness. Although not very old, by castle standards, it may certainly be one of the most majestic. After the tour, it was wheels up at 11:00am. Our drive today would take us from Bavaria Germany, into Austria through the Tyrolean Alps close to the Lichtenstein border on our way to our hotel in Nauders Austria, which is a short distance to the Italian border. The highlight of this drive was the famous road #188, or the Silvretta Hochalpenstrasse. Winding its way up to over 6000 ft above sea level and cresting the summit where the beautiful Silvrettasee (lake) is waiting. While we were taking pictures at the summit, I met a family from Berlin. Their young son knew all about Shelby's, and as I speak fluent German, we shared a wonderful conversation about these bodacious muscle cars. When it was time for us to leave, I hung back for a moment, turned the traction control off, and left that youngster with two long black souvenirs. I'm sure he had a big smile on his face on their drive back to Berlin, and will undoubtedly remember the Americans and their cars for the rest of his life. Lunch today was spent in an alpine field bathed by the glorious summer sun and mountain air.



Coming next month...the Stelvio Pass, and the day we had breakfast in Austria, lunch in Switzerland and dinner in Italy!

Until Then ...

Tom Dankel