

Nine Days with 003

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One of the wonderful benefits of the Internet is the ability to find and connect with people (that you may or may not know) instantly. I was a semi regular on the saac forum, and in the fall of 2009 saw a new post by a user whose online name was 5S003. I assumed that meant this was the owner of one 1965 GT350, car number 003. I sent a private message introducing myself and to let him know I had some photographic prints of this car from around 1980 (when Don Day owned the car) at a vintage racing event being held at Westwood Mountain High Raceway in Coquitlam, British Columbia, and that I would be happy to send those off as some of the history of this most unique Shelby.

I received a response a day later from Mark Hovander, he said he would appreciate anything I had on the car as he was assembling a historical binder on 003, and the more information the better. For those of you that do not know the history of this car, it is indeed the very first GT350 street prototype ever built. Mark has created a fantastic website featuring his car which you can view at www.1965gt350mustang.com

Mark had also told me that he was planning on attending the Monterey Car Week festivities, specifically the Gathering at the Quail as his car would be exhibited there as part of the 45 Years of Shelby Display, as well as SAAC-35 to be held ten days later at Sears Point in Sonoma. We kept in touch over the next six months. I was looking forward to meeting Mark in person and seeing the car that I had photographed 30 years prior. As the Monterey dates were looming, Mark mentioned that he didn't know what he was going to do with his car for week and a half in between events, as shipping the car back to his home in the Pacific Northwest was just not feasible or logical.

Fortunately, we had the solution. A few years back we completed our project of a four bay garage, with a capacity of five cars as one bay has a 4 post lift.

Since we live only 45 miles north of Monterey and 100 miles south of Sears Point, I offered a space to Mark, and assured him that it was a secure facility.

I finally got to meet Mark while he was standing in line for the Dan Gurney autograph session on the Saturday at Laguna Seca. We had chatted on the phone and emailed numerous times, but this was the first time we met in person. For those of you that know Mark, you will agree that he is one of the nicest people you could ever meet, a true ambassador for the Shelby club, and someone who's passion for the hobby runs deep. We agreed to rendezvous the next day (Sunday) so we could escort him to our home. My good friend Michael McGuirk was with me and when we met up with Mark on Sunday morning. I led in the KR, with Mark & 003 in the middle, while Michael in his Whipple supercharged 2006 Legend Lime GT took up the rear (let me tell you, that car can haul the mail, Michael was gracious enough to let me have 3 open track sessions at SAAC-35, but that's a story for another day).

For those of you that missed it, 5S003 was honored as the Best Shelby at the Gathering at the Quail. Mark



had Chuck Cantwell drive the car across the block (Chuck was the GT350 program engineer). Carroll Shelby was in attendance and handed the award to Mark, Chuck, and 003. Congratulations, Mr. Hovander, for an honor well deserved.

Michael affectionately refers to any of our cruises as a "conga line", usually because of our serpentine weave through slower traffic. Our drive from Monterey to

San Benito County was a fun little blast and we arrived somewhat expeditiously. Michael lives in San Jose and he graciously offered to drop Mark off at the San Jose airport for me. Thank you, Michael. The plan couldn't have worked out any better.

We parked 003 between our two sentry guards, a 1968 GT500KR and a 2008 GT500. At the very least, she wasn't going to be lonely. Prior to Mark's departure from our place, he gave me a run down on the car with her quirks and idiosyncrasies. All old cars have them, and that can sometimes add to the excitement. Mark's parting comment to me was, "see those numbers on the odometer, I expect to not see the same ones when I get

back here in 10 days, as I want you to take the car out and enjoy her”.

A few days passed, and I sent Mark an email asking if he had his return itinerary set yet so we could arrange picking him up at the airport. I told him that I hadn't driven the car, but had started it up for my teenage son and some of his gear head buddies... oh's and ah's as I fired up the beast. I pressed the skinny pedal on the right and increased the staccato of the side exit exhaust. That car sure does have a sweet note. Part of Mark's response to my email was, he would be very disappointed if I didn't take the car out, and suggested I take it to a cruise night (if our town had one) or take my wife out for a picnic. Either way, just take the car out, and enjoy her.

Okay, okay. The man says drive his car, I'm driving his car... but I have to tell you, the first time down the road had me nervous, anxious and excited all at the same time. Not just because it was someone else's car, but the historical significance and resulting value of this most unique Shelby. Once I started mowing through the gears, 003 felt like that comfortable pair of old blue jeans. It just felt right. I went for a short cruise on the back roads near our home, with my first stop at Tiffany Ford in Hollister to visit some friends that work there. 2010 marks their 100th anniversary (they are the oldest Ford dealer in California) so I thought they'd appreciate seeing this car. Pics and discussion soon followed.

After that short foray, I went back home to pick up my wife in 003 so we could go to San Juan Bautista for lunch and stroll around the historic mission. On the way home, a San Benito County sheriff drove by us in the other direction and as we passed him, he immediately flipped a u-turn and followed us for about 10 minutes. Mark gave me the ins and outs of his car, but we never discussed paper work, insurance, registration etc. It all came to pass as the sheriff soon peeled off. Otherwise, I'd have another paragraph or

two to write about... “no officer, this isn't my car... why is it so loud you ask?, well....”

The next morning was a beautiful sunny and clear Sunday. My family likes to go out for breakfast, and we have a favorite little place called Flapjacks in the small one horse town of Tres Pinos. Our 18 year old son drove his mom in the KR, while I drove our 16 year old daughter in 003. The restaurant has a nice outdoor seating area, and as it was almost full, we made quite an entrance rolling up with these two vintage road warriors. Of course, we took the scenic route on the way home through the rolling hills surrounded by the lush vineyards.

Mark and his 16 year old son Peter flew in late on a Tuesday evening. The following Wednesday morning I drove up to San Jose to pick them both up and bring them back to our house. Mark wanted to take his son back down Highway One past Big Sur and show him what he saw just 10 days earlier, then cruise the coast up to San Francisco, across the Golden Gate to Marin to get ready for SAAC-35, which was starting on Thursday. Mark needed to get there a day earlier since he was participating in a cruise through the Marin headlands and Point Reyes with Chuck Cantwell (who had his 1966 GT350 shipped out from Pennsylvania) as well as a number of other cars the following day.

Our nine days with the number 3 car (as Mark likes to call her) were extremely enjoyable. At least once every day I would go out to the garage and just stare. No hair raising stories, or at least none that I'd put into writing (just kidding Mark). She drew a crowd wherever we went, and having both the privilege and honor to have spent the time 003 is something I'll never forget. It's not every day that you get to have the most significant Shelby Mustang in your garage. Thank you Mr. Hovander for placing your trust in us to keep her safe, and more importantly, thank you for your friendship.

