

It's a Small World

Text by Lorne Willard Photos by Starr Novak and Mary Jean Wesche





Everyone has heard the quote "it's a small world" and that's exactly the phrase that has been overused when describing the 1965 GT350 Clones created by Randy Francis and Bob Vervaecke, both of the Kansas City metropolitan area.

The first use of the phrase was during the restoration and transformation of the two fastbacks at virtually the same time. Joe Saitta, owner of the local parts depot, Mustang Plus, introduced Randy and Bob at a chance meeting at the shop as both were creating clones. Bob had just finished installing a Lincoln Versailles rear end to add more stopping power via disc brakes to his. After exchanging a few phone calls and viewing Bob's setup of emergency brake cables, Randy had Bob fabricate the same custom cable setup that he used on his car, proving that it is a small world when two restorers can share ideas on very similar projects.

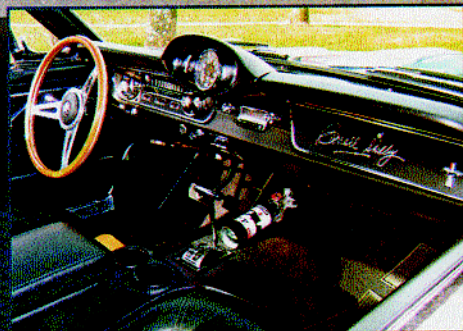
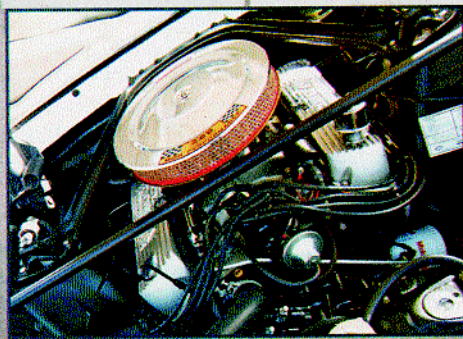
The two car owners chose to restomod their fastbacks in their own special ways to improve the original Shelby, and both have succeeded in their goals. Each of the two cars is a head turner in its own right, but put them together and you've got something special as was evident by the number of observers of an impromptu photo shoot of the cars at the Vintage Mustang Club of Kansas City's 2005 Mustang Club of America National Show in June 2005.

The pair started showing their cars about the same time and a friendly rivalry quickly emerged. If you didn't know that they were friends, you'd think they were enemies. With comments like "hey, don't be stealing parts off my car," "that's not concours," "where'd you get that paint, the appliance store," and "that Wimbledon White can sure look dirty compared to my clean car," the rivalry has provided each with a lot of fun, as well as those within ear shot of the bantering. The cars often go head-to-head on the show field, usually placing 1-2, or tied. You just never know which one is going to win at a given show. Randy and Bob have always been the first to congratulate each other, depending on which way the pendulum swung that particular day.

Other than the rearends, and being clones of the 1965 Shelby GT350, the two cars don't have all that much in common. Randy's car was built with originality in mind and other than the subtle additions of a 351 Windsor, Edlebrock Performer Intake, and 600 CFM Holley in front of a beefed up C-4 automatic transmission, the car has few deviations from the original Shelby creation. The exterior was repainted the car's original Wimbledon White with the correct Guards-

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man blue stripes. The black interior has some subtle modifications including a complete (partially hidden) stereo system, roll bar, and gauge pods. The glove box door is the display for Carroll Shelby's signature in silver ink. The trunk area has been restored to concours specifications and the wheels are original style 15 inch Torque Thrust D's with P225/60's on the rear and P205/60's on the front. At a glance, casual observers often ask if the car is a real Shelby.

Bob's creation, on the other hand, is the proverbial younger wild child twin with all the tattoos, piercing, and purple hair. The original gold exterior was repainted Ford Taurus Performance White and the Lemans stripes were color matched to the side stripes instead of using Guardsman blue. The custom side stripes leave no doubt as to the "clone" status of the car by the addition of the word clone imbedded into the lower stripe. A 5.0L crate motor with aluminum GT40 heads and a T5 5-speed transmission with custom side-exiting exhaust let you know when you hear it that it has something extra under the hood. The suspension is heavily modified as well, with tubular control arms, adjustable strut rods, special tie rods, big Wilwood discs, and tons of other modifications. The interior

sports racing seats and 4-point seat belts, white-faced gauges, aluminum pedals, and a host of other modifications let you see what a Shelby would have looked like if Bob were running the show. The 17-inch American Racing Hopster wheels were custom built to provide back spacing to fit P235/45's on the back and P225/45's on the front.

It was after a few shows that the world got even smaller for these two cars. At the All-Ford Show in Topeka, Kansas, with the two cars parked closely together, Bob was comparing the two engine compartments when he noticed that the two clones were consecutive serial numbers from the same factory, with Bob's car being the younger of the two. After more investigation, they also found that the two cars were DSO'd in Denver, Colorado. So, you might wonder, how two cars heading down the same factory line one in front of the other, even possibly riding on the same car hauler to the same dealer in 1965 would both end up in Kansas City as Shelby GT350 Clones? Because, it's a small world after all.

Note: Since this story was begun, Bob's car has been sold to Tom Boldry of the KC area, so the friendly rivalry can continue. Thanks to Tom for making the car available for the photo shoot. *MT*

