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## FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT

**A**fter a 20 minute hot-lap session, as we were making our cool down lap, my passenger turned to me and said, "Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I'd get another chance to make laps in a GT350. And, Lord knows, I never would have thought the President of the MCA would ever be a Team Shelby driver."

You see, my passenger, Austin Craig, knows a thing or two about Shelby Mustangs and Shelby history. He owned a 5S555, a 1965 Shelby GT350, 6S787 and 6S1305, both 1966 GT 350s, and actually raced a 5R532, a real R-model race car.

We all know Austin as our Publisher of *Mustang Times*, but how many people do you know with Carroll Shelby's phone number in their cell phone? I can tell you now, Austin knows his Shelybs, knows the history, and knows Mr. Shelby personally. When he talks Shelby I, and a whole bunch of others, listen.

So, for him to recognize the significance of there actually being a NEW GT350 and for me to be driving it on a race course spoke volumes. Personally, I thought his comment was pretty cool and said a lot about how much the MCA has worked on being recognized as a leader in the Mustang hobby.

I know a lot of you have heard me talk about racing before, but you've gotta hear this. During the Mid-America Shelby Nationals, I was asked to help Team Shelby with their driving chores for the week-end. We drove and rode with some movers and shakers in the media world, which included our own Mary Jean Wesche, editor of *Mustang Times*, and of course, Austin. We also gave hot-lap rides to as many people as we could throughout the day. Oh yeah, we also gave hot laps to an Air Force C-130 crew headed for Afghanistan.

Yeah, I know you're saying "Tough job, I could do that." Honestly, it was tough! I lost about 20 lbs. over the week-end. I think I'm going to write a book titled "The Nomex Diet." I'm sure it will sell... But really, it was an honor to be asked to help showcase these new GT350 Shelybs.

Later in the day, Gary Patterson, who really does the majority of driving for Shelby American, and John Luft, the new President of Shelby American, introduced me to some people as their "newest team driver." Wow, that's really cool. Austin's earlier comment started to sink in.

Before the week-end track-time was over, I'd driven both new GT350s (there are only two and I have some really funny stories about that), a new 2010 Shelby Super Snake, a Panoz GT race car powered by a FORD 302 engine, and a new GT500 with the SVT Performance Package option.

The Panoz belonged to MCA friend Rick Titus. Rick is brutally fast, exceedingly accurate in his performance assessments, and pretty darn funny! Oh, he is also the son of Jerry Titus, who won championship titles in Shelby Mustangs. By the time you read this, Jerry Titus will have been inducted into the Motorsports Hall of Fame. How cool is it for Rick and Austin to get to participate in honoring Mr. Titus in such a way?

The Panoz was cramped, hot, loud, noisy, and hard to come to grips with driving across the paddock. Once on-track, it was cramped, hot, loud, noisy, and an absolute thrill to drive. Think go-kart with a roof... and a bunch more speed.

When I came in I was soaking wet, worn out, smiling from ear to ear, and wanting more. But, as I mentioned, another car and more laps were waiting. I could learn to like this!

After getting out of the Panoz and into the 2011 GT500, I thought I'd gone to heaven. Hey, this thing's got A/C! Let me tell you, if I didn't know better, I'd swear that car knew what I was thinking. You want to turn—done, want to accelerate—fine, want to slow—right now.

Robert Parker, our good friend with FORD, had told me to see what it could do. It can do a lot! Anyone, and I mean anyone, will be a hero in this car.

So, what's all my babbling about? I honestly wish I could tell you here but you're just gonna have to ask me in person or go try these new Mustangs for yourself. If this is the future of Mustang, we are in for a great ride. Ford and Shelby American have made Mustangs available to us that will stir the soul, will make us all look like we know what we are doing, and will keep us smiling for many more days to come.

BTW... Shelby American has joined our other great sponsors and become a Corporate Sponsor, helping us to continue growing the MCA. Aren't these truly great times to be a Mustang fan and an MCA member?

Your swell-headed President,

*STEVEN MCCARLEY*



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