

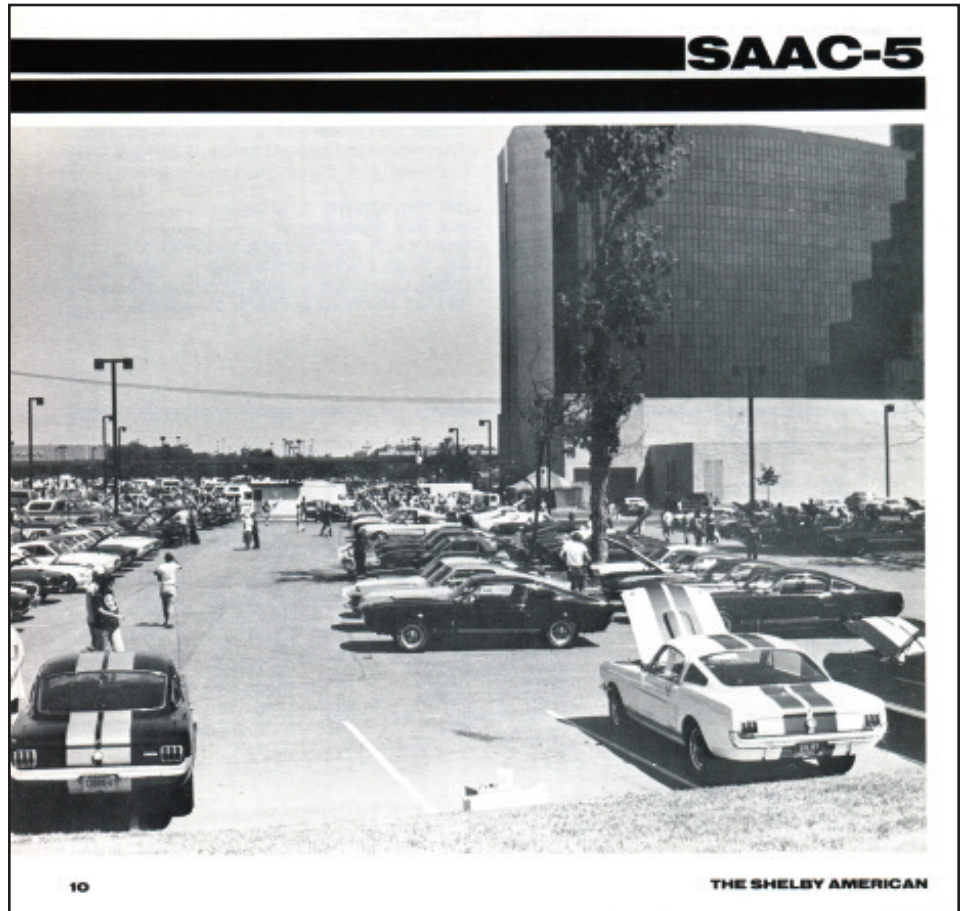
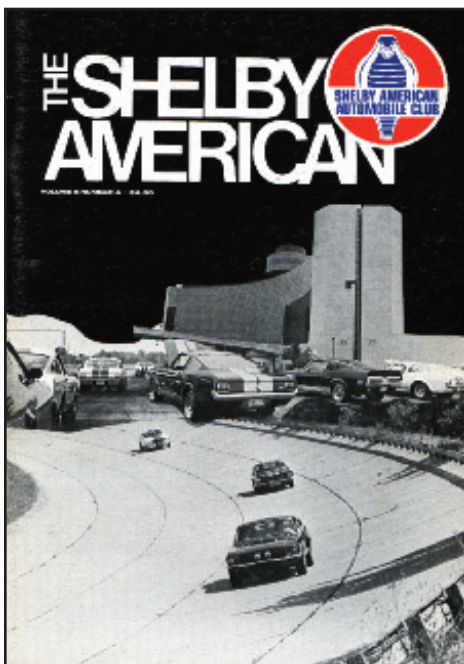
SAAC-5 DEARBORN

July 3-4-5, 1980 Dearborn, Michigan

– Rick Kopec

You always remember certain high points in your life, but maybe not exactly the way they were. Did you really walk into the senior prom with the dream girl cheerleader from the school across town on your arm? Was that you who threw the winning touchdown pass during homecoming? Did you scoop everyone else and get your first Shelby far below market before anyone else knew the car was for sale? And how about SAAC-5 at Dearborn? Wasn't that the best convention ever?

Sometimes our memory is selective, and we remember what makes us happy—not necessarily what actually took place. Over the years, one melds into the other, leaving us with a pleasant memory of the occasion. This seems to be the case when SAAC members discuss past conventions. The first Dearborn convention is the equivalent of the shining city on the hill.



Dearborn was the most successful SAAC convention yet. We tried to count the number of cars but there were so many, and they kept moving around, that we never got an exact number. It must have been very close to 1,000. More than 1,500 people had pre-registered and probably close to that number showed up as “walk-ins.”

There were a lot of reasons why this particular convention was such a success. In 1980, ten years after Shelby stopped building cars, there was still a strong connection between Shelby and Ford. The be-

ginning of the new decade was not a particularly bright spot for performance. The Mustang II had evolved, in 1979, into the third generation Mustang: the “Fox body” platform. The 1980 Mustang had few changes from the previous year. The EPA was now exerting a great deal of pressure and influence on new cars, and Detroit’s engineers had yet to find ways of producing reasonable levels of performance while, at the same time, meeting stringent federal emission requirements.

In 1980, when the SAAC convention landed in the Motor City, the Mustang’s

top performance package consisted of a 255 cubic-inch V8 engine, rated at an anemic 119 horsepower. The GT model had yet to be revived and performance was indicated by a fake hood scoop plunked down in the center of the hood. It was non-functioning. By comparison, the Shelybs were still the performance high water marks in the Mustang family. And they were remembered by those who were still working under the Blue Oval. However, this would not always be the case. As the years passed, SAAC continued to hold conventions—three more in Dearborn and two after that in Ann Arbor, using Michigan International Speedway—but with each one more and more of the Ford employees who witnessed the Shelby American juggernaut, from the Cobra's sports car victories through the Ford GTs' domination at LeMans, either retired or passed away. The company's corporate memory grew hazy. However, in 1980 performance had not been completely forgotten and when the Shelybs and Cobras came to town for the SAAC convention it was a Big Deal.

Also a big deal was the headquarters hotel, the Hyatt Regency. It had 775 rooms and as a business hotel, they would be lucky to rent ten-percent of them on a July 4th holiday weekend. SAAC literally filled the place up, making the hotel management very happy, to the point where there wasn't much the club asked for that it didn't get.

The Hyatt Regency was a four-star hotel and back at that point in the club's history, most members were twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings, and many had never stayed at an upscale facility like that before. They were used to Motel 6s and Holiday Inns. It was fourteen stories high with an atrium in the center that went all the way to the top floor. In the middle of the ground floor lobby, a half-dozen glass, bullet-shaped elevators with strings of lights on them moved people up and down. On the very top floor was a restaurant and bar that revolved slowly, a full 360-degrees, providing a commanding view in every direction. One of the most prominent sights was Ford's huge Rouge factory. In another direction was Ford's World Headquarters, also called "Henry's Glass House." The gigantic blue Ford logo out in front left no doubt you were in the heart of Ford country and this was not lost on any convention-goer. SAAC-5 had the feeling of a college homecoming that alumni get when they come back to town.

We were looking for a location for our fifth convention that was somewhere beside the east and west coast. We didn't really have enough members in the center of

IN OUR MINDS. SAAC-5 now means "Dearborn" and it also means a few other things: huge numbers of participants, almost a thousand cars and, by all accounts, the most successful convention we've had yet. In fact, the one description that has been used by almost everyone is that, on a scale of 1 to 10, SAAC-5 was an 11!

We knew it would be big. When preregistrations topped 1,500 by mid-June (and that number is always doubled by walk-ins), there was no doubt about Dearborn. The parking area that we used had room for 750 cars, and this was filled to overflowing by Thursday. Cars chuffed in bearing license plates from almost every state and Canadian province, and there were wall-to-wall people everywhere. It wasn't uncommon to see the names of countries like Australia, Germany and England under the names on some nametags.

When many first-timers to Dearborn got their first glimpse of the Hyatt Regency, their comments were: "Wow! I wonder what that neat building is?" And when they followed the signs into the lot of this imposing reflective structure, their curiosity turned into amazement. "This place? SAAC-5?"

This was how the convention began for most. And there wasn't a letdown until Sunday morning, when the lots began to empty and the striped cars began their trek home, each in a different direction.

This year's convention was put on with some assistance from the Ford Motor Company. Ford became interested in SAAC for a few reasons. One was that it was sticking its corporate big toe into the waters of performance after having been out for almost 10 years. In the back of their minds was the idea that a convention package might be developed that could be offered to other Ford-related clubs whereby some of Ford's resources could be used. SAAC was chosen as a sort of prototype because it was the most professional and best organized club and, although not everything initially planned was able to be included in the final convention schedule (due, in every case, to outside factors), it nevertheless proved their point. Dearborn was an excellent convention location, and Ford does have some unique resources.

The schedule was fairly simple. The parking area closest to the hotel contained the parts swap area and had to be traversed in order to get to where the cars were parked. It was literally abuzz for three days, and no matter how many times you passed by the tables of goodies and piles of parts, there always seemed to be something that caught your eye for the first time. By Thursday, the participants were more or less settled in and the first thing on most everyone's mind was the car show. Two categories were available: popular ballot and judged concours. By early afternoon, the judges had gone over every concours entrant with the proverbial fine-toothed comb, and the mass of popular ballots was being tallied. Trophies were presented on Friday evening. While preconvention sentiments led a lot of people to believe that the

concours would be the center of the real action, this proved not to be true; only about 100 cars were entered and judged. The remainder opted for the less competitive popular voting.

Seminars took up Thursday afternoon, but things were adjourned early so that everyone could get out to Milan Dragway for a little grudge racing. Basically, it was no-B.S., heads-up stuff: You paired with someone who looked interesting and tried to show 'em your rear license plate for a quarter of a mile. The bleachers were packed and it was hard to tell who liked it more, the drivers or the spectators.

Friday's schedule was also fairly open. Seminars in the morning, a Rep meeting in the afternoon and an evening program after dinner. Guest speakers were SAAC Advisory Board members Dick Smith (427 Cobra hotshoe, vintage racer and 1967 SCCA A/Production National Champion) and "Gentleman" Tom Payne (Shelby American team driver—Cobra, Daytona Coupe, Ford GT and GT350 Mustang). Friday's keynote speaker was William Jeanes, noted automotive writer whose pieces on Shelybs and GT40s graced the pages of *Car & Driver* magazine, and a principal in the legendary Bolus & Snopes Racing Team ('66 GT350). Jeanes' talk had the audience literally rolling in the aisles as he described the Bolus & Snopes effort, which was, according to all reports, 99% public relations and 1% (if that) racing.

Saturday morning brought with it some serious-looking rain, and many SAAC-5 participants began writing off the much touted high-speed event. But out at the Ford Test Track at Ulica, Mich.—about 50 miles from the hotel, the rain was subsiding and the track was beginning to dry. As reports filtered back to the hotel that cars were already out lapping the track at 120+ mph, a sense of urgency began to take hold. By midafternoon, over 100 cars, broken into groups of 10 or 15, were charging out onto the 2½-mile course. It was fourth gear all the way, and as you approached the 31° banked loops which connected the straights, no lifting of the throttle was necessary. It was just you and your redline. Passengers debarked from steaming machines with dry mouths and sweaty palms, and their eyes told the story of "How was it out there?" Many were speechless, or at least reduced to mumbling. Drivers were anxious to try it again and the time between groups seemed to take hours when it was actually minutes. Groups went out for four or five laps at a time, and at 120+ mph, 10 or 12 miles of fourth-gear redline was enough for even the strongest engines. The temperature began to climb and oil pressures began to drop. Centrifugal force kept oil to the outside of many pans in the corners and four engines fell victim. Absolute top speed was set by Dick Smith in a borrowed 427 SC Cobra. Goaded on by passenger Rick Kopec, Smith held 8000 rpm in fourth for a bit as the speedometer touched 180 mph. There's not much to say after that, except that it is incidents like this that help to put SAAC conventions in perspective. While

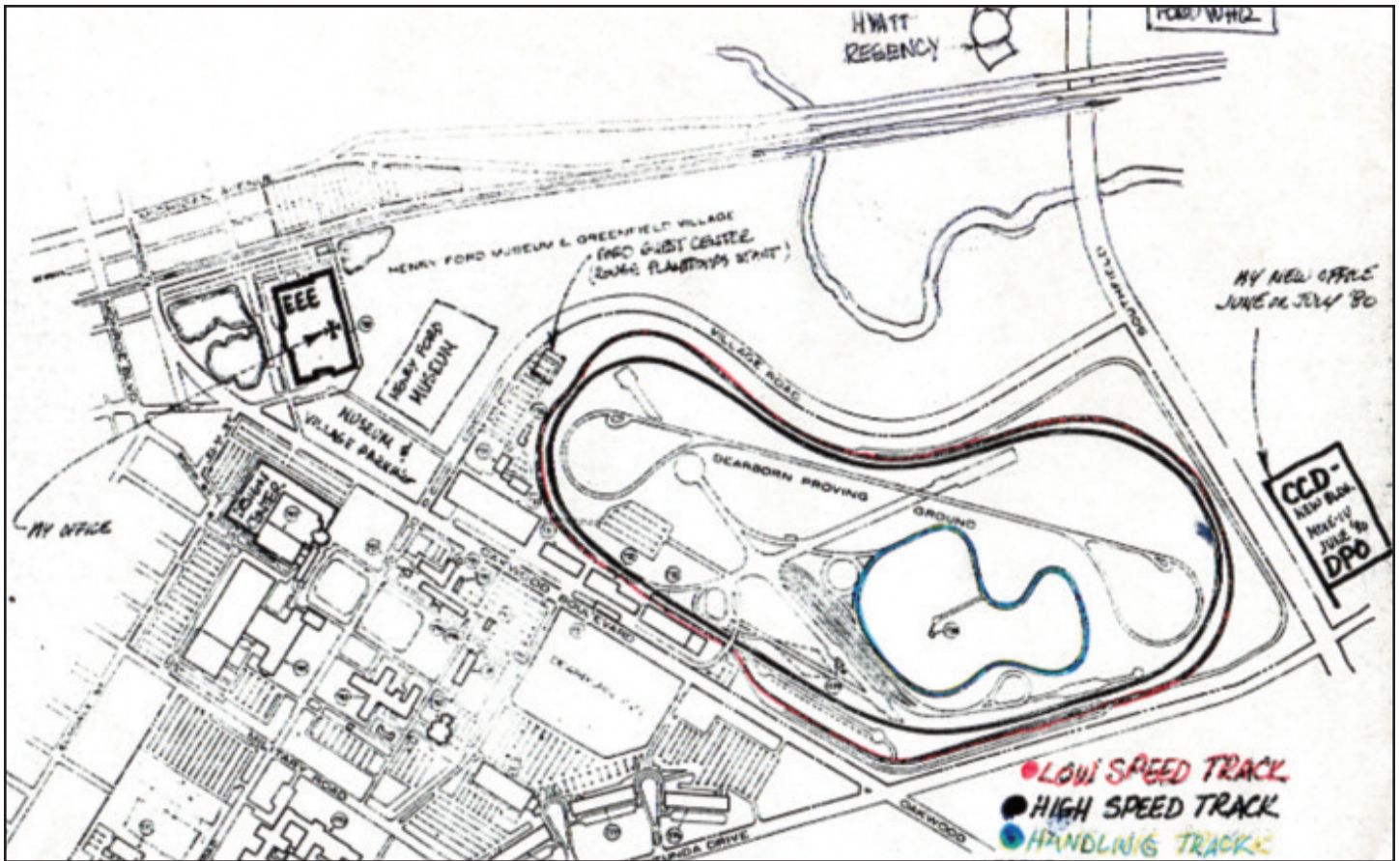
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the country to guarantee that a convention in, say, St. Louis or Omaha would be a success. In those early days we were afraid to take a chance because one bad convention—or at least one that was deemed not as good as the previous one—could be the start of a downward spiral, leaving conventions as little more than small, regional meets. We needed to keep inflating the balloon, not letting the air out of it.

We had been having some contact with Ford's office of public affairs because the manager, Paul Preuss, was a performance enthusiast who had been part of Ford's GT40 effort. He remembered the excitement generated by those cars and he had a real appreciation of the Shelby connection. Ford was also dipping its big toe

back into the performance waters and Preuss was one of the pointmen. In fact, he was the one who had suggested a Dearborn location and using the Hyatt Regency. We looked at a map of the states with SAAC membership numbers and concluded that between Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin there were enough members to insure a successful event. Beyond those states were an even larger number and although not all of them could be counted on attending, we used the 600-mile rule of thumb. There was a good chance that someone would be willing to drive their Shelby or Cobra that distance (about 12 hours) to attend a convention. Back in those days almost all of the cars were driven; very few people



Jeff Burgy sent us this map of Ford's Research and Engineering Center in Dearborn after our visit in mid-January. He highlighted the three proving ground tracks. He also indicated the location of the Hyatt Regency [top right] and the Ford World Headquarters building. It all looked great to us. But the devil is, as they say, in the details.

owned a trailer unless they raced.

A convention in a new location required an advanced recon of the site, so we headed to Dearborn at the end of January. It was about a ten-hour drive and when we arrived at the Hyatt Regency we were not expecting to see a 14-story black glass structure lordling over the flat landscape. The first thing we did was cruise around the parking areas and were confident there was enough parking. We would later be pleasantly surprised that there wasn't and some people had to park their cars on the grass. What we especially liked was that the outer edges of the hotel's property were surrounded by a six-foot high grass berm that made it impossible for anyone driving by on the nearby highway to see into the parking lots.

We had dinner that night with Jeff Burgy and his wife. He was on the club's board of directors. He was a local, as well as a mid-level Ford engineer and his assistance was one of the reasons the convention would be so successful. Jeff suggested that we might want to take advantage of the local drag strip, Milan Raceway. That turned out to be a great idea. The next day we met with Paul Preuss and laid out our

plans for a national convention. We asked Paul if Ford had a track we could use for our high speed event. His first suggestion was Ford's proving grounds, which was within sight from the Hyatt—if you went up high enough.

The Ford Proving Grounds. That had a nice ring to it. It was comprised of three separate circuits; a low speed track, a high speed track and a smaller handling track. Best of all, it was only about a half-mile from the Hyatt. And it appeared that Ford would make it available without charge. We talked to the proving grounds supervisor, whose name Paul had given us, and described what we expected would take place. It raised several red flags with him. First off, the interior of the facility would have only enough parking for the cars that would be running on the track. And based on the number we estimated, space would be tight. We might have to split everyone up into a morning and an afternoon group.

There was another fly in the ointment: spectators would have to be bussed back and forth from the hotel on shuttle busses due to the lack of parking. We could hardly charge people for transportation, so the cost of renting shuttles would have to be

born by the club. And as Ford would be legally liable for anything that happened on their property, spectators would have to stay well back—to the point where there really wouldn't be much for them to see unless they had binoculars. Another problem was that there were likely to be prototypes parked all over the place, and Ford—like every manufacturer—was very protective about their advanced idea cars. They wouldn't be able to hide them during the time we were there, so no cameras would be allowed inside the proving grounds. We immediately envisioned ourselves as running around as the "camera police." The more we heard about the Ford Proving Grounds the less we liked it.

We roughed out a schedule and began announcing details in *The Marque* in the January/February 1980 issue. It would be a Wednesday/Thursday/Friday/Saturday event, July 2-3-4-5. On Wednesday we planned tours (one in the morning and another one in the afternoon) of Ford's styling center and the Rouge River plant. The evening program would consist of a concours Q&A session. On Thursday we scheduled more tours of the styling center and Rouge plant (they were only able to ac-

commodate about 50 people at a time). We also put them on the schedule for Friday, along with seminars about specific types of cars (Cobras, early and late Shelbys, Tigers, Bosses and Panteras running concurrently).

The parts swap was scheduled for all four days out in the parking lot. Vendors were happy they no longer had to unload their wares and cart them into the hotel, and then cart them back out to their trucks or trailers at night. In the five years since the club began, a fair number of entrepreneurs had popped up and were trying to make a living out of supplying parts—both used and new or N.O.S. Most were getting them from Ford dealers parts departments at a discount, and tacking on a little, but never as much as dealers would get at full list. We were also beginning to see reproductions of certain items which had become impossible to obtain.

In March we discussed the proving grounds' shortcomings with Paul Preuss. It had become obvious to us that there were problems we just could not resolve. He came up with another idea. Ford owned the former Packard test track in Utica, Michigan. It was a 2 1/2-mile banked oval about fifty miles northeast of Dearborn. It had not been used in years but it sounded like it would suit our needs. We asked Jeff Burgy to drive out and have a look around. He reported that there were weeds growing up through the cracks in the concrete, but there would be plenty of space for everyone. Things were starting to look up.

We also contacted Milan Raceway and found out that renting a drag strip wasn't as difficult as you might imagine—as long as the date you wanted was available. Friday afternoon and the weekend were out but Thursday afternoon was open. Rather than get involved with classes or brackets we tried to keep things simple: basically run-what-ya-brung. If you wanted to run against someone all you had to do was line up against them in the staging lane. Everyone got a time slip for every run, and they became the currency for bragging rights if a time was reasonable. Or at least lower than someone else's.

As we tried to round the convention schedule out Paul Preuss gave us the name of Mickey Matus, who was working in Ford's Motorsports Department. He was our age (mid-30s) and a performance enthusiast like us. The main difference was that he appeared to have access to anything at Ford including their newest prototypes, Ford's archives, racing programs and access to engineers. We saw him as the kid in Ford's huge candy store. However, our perception was not his reality.

other clubs may claim to include "High Speed Events" in their convention schedules, as far as SAAC is concerned, if you're not running at over 150 mph, it's not really a high-speed event. But it's almost one. . . .

Saturday evening's banquet was followed by an evening of the most entertaining and informative guest speakers ever to grace the podium at any convention. Among them were Bob Negstadt, Shelby American engineer who was responsible for the actual design of the 427 Cobra. Negstadt now works for Ford, and his recollections of the birth of the 427 Cobra provided everyone with new and most interesting information. Also present was engineer Klaus Arning, the man who designed, among other things, the Ford GT suspension, the experimental Mustang Independent rear suspension and the GT350 suspension. Team driver Bob Johnson also offered some wisdom gained during his stint as a Cobra driver. Johnson recalled that at one point, he was offered a Daytona Coupe and three truckloads of spare parts by Carroll Shelby for \$3,500. "What in the hell would I want one of those for?" was his reply.

Ford's current and future plans in the area of performance were highlighted by Special Productions Chief Mickey Matus and Gary Kohs, whose marketing corporation also is deeply involved with Ford performance programs. They outlined some directions that the blue FORD oval will be taking. Current race driver Lynn St. James also spoke and

surprised more than a few members with her exploits behind the wheel, among them some LeMans experience.

The keynote speaker was Walter Hayes, Ford Vice President of Public Relations. When word spread through the automotive press a few months ago that the top P.R. slot was being taken over by Hayes, opinions changed and the word performance began to find its way back into print. No lightweight, Hayes was previously chief of Ford of Great Britain, and among the projects that he oversaw were the Lotus Cortina, Escort rally teams and the Ford Cosworth racing engines that have dominated Formula One for almost as long as anyone can recall. And also a little something called the Ford GT. The man has more performance credentials than a 427 Cobra has power. His remarks were light and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone in attendance. Most expected an attempt to "sell" the 1980s to a group that was singularly caught in the 1960s, but no such line was attempted. In fact, Hayes' most remembered remark was something to the effect that no matter how many valves or cylinders you have, it is cubic inches that count. The measure of a man as well as of a car is always in inches.

SAAC-5 was one of those experiences that you wish could have gone on forever. They are rare, but they come along with enough regularity that you don't lose interest in life. If you weren't there, well, you weren't there.



The weather was perfect and the roads surrounding the hotel were made for cruisin', so there weren't too many Cobras in the lot at one time. But there were a bunch of 'em there. Gone are the days (of small conventions) when it was possible to physically count every car. All we can do now is estimate.



If your tastes ran toward the more aesthetic, Ed Gullett, SAAC member and artist supreme, had a table full of color illustrations. These were hard to pass up.



And if you wanted an original illustration of your car, you could have had that at Dearborn, too.

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THE SHELBY AMERICAN

We made a list of everything we could think of, figuring that we'd never get it all but if we only scored a couple, they would be home runs for us. The list we sent to Matus included tours of Ford's styling center, the Rouge plant and McLaren Racing. We envisioned groups of, maybe, 50 at a time scheduled in the morning and afternoon from Wednesday through Friday. We also put the Henry Ford Museum/Greenfield Village on the list, asking about special discounted admission and maybe a special display out of public view which would include the LeMans-winning MK IV, the original Mustang I show car and a handful of other cars the museum had

which were in storage. We also asked for a special Ford Motorsport display that could be set up at the hotel on Wednesday and left in place until Friday afternoon. It would include Ford's show cars and concept cars as well as some current racing cars. We also asked about borrowing 16mm films from Ford's archives, among them "Progress in Total Performance," "Return to LeMans," "No Margin For Error—Competitive Edge," and "Ford Flat Out." Naturally we would also need a projector.

We had high hopes and even described some of these activities in pre-convention information we printed. Matus eventually got back to us, probably postponing the

news because it wasn't good. We were turned down for everything. We weren't sure if we had simply asked for too much, if they had overestimated their ability to provide assistance, or if they were afraid to provide too much because they might then be inundated by the dozens and dozens of other Ford clubs—and there was a club for just about every model Ford ever made from Edsels to Falcons, Rancheros to Woodies, Model As to early Thunderbirds. SAAC was one of the largest enthusiast organization but that wouldn't mean anything to a 50-member Retractable Hardtop club who would feel snubbed if Ford didn't help them out the way they helped SAAC. In making us happy Ford was likely to cause hard feelings with the other clubs. A win for us wasn't exactly a win for them.

We also approached Paul Preuss with a list of potential guest speakers. This was really more than a request for these people to join us. We knew that Ford would pick up their hotel expenses and maybe even travel costs if they had to come from any distance. Ford had deep pockets. On our long list were Homer Perry (one of the top liaisons between Ford and the GT40 teams); Jacques Passano (Ford's director of racing); Klaus Arning (the engineer who designed the Ford GT's suspension); Fran Hernandez (the Trans-Am boss); Ron Fournier (Kar Kraft); Joe Farkas (the Ford GT program). Our list also included Carroll Shelby, Al Dowd, Dan Gurney, Bob Johnson, Ed Lowther and Dan Gerber because we hoped an invitation from Ford would include picking up some of their travel and hotel expenses. We didn't have a budget for that.

By May we had a much cleared picture of what the Dearborn convention would look like. We were able to get Milan Raceway for drag racing on Thursday afternoon. And we also scored the Utica test track for Saturday. Other convention activities included the always-popular seminars, a popular vote and concours car show, an outdoor swap meet that ran through the entire four days, and evening programs on Friday and Saturday filled the schedule's open spaces.

Paul Preuss suggested Walter Hayes as our keynote speaker. He was Ford's Vice President of Public Affairs and he had previously been chief of Ford of Great Britain where he was head of the Lotus Cortina program, Ford-Cosworth Formula 1 engine program, and Escort rallye teams. Oh, and and he had played an integral part in the GT40 program. Also speaking were suspension engineers Klaus Arning and Bob Negstadt and Cobra team driver Bob Johnson (the first of many conventions he



Depending on who you talk to, this photo shows either Dick Smith inviting Rick Kopec for a quick lap in Jerry Clark's 427SC, which he was "borrowing" for a quick lap—or, Rick Kopec inviting himself for a quick lap. Whichever you believe, the outcome was the same—Smith nudges the blue bullet to 8,000 rpms, which computes to be about 180 mph. After the ride, Kopec was overheard to say: "Not bad, Smith—but why were you holding back?" Such gratitude.



While GMC superchargers weren't exactly common, there were a few around. These two Mustang Street Freaks were exceptionally clean and crisp.



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would attend). Ford also got us the then-current Ford driver, Lynn St. James.

By the time we rolled into the Hyatt Regency on Wednesday we were as pumped as we've ever been just prior to a convention. We were there a full day early and there were already dozens of cars sprinkled around the parking lot. We checked into the hotel and could not wait to get into one of those glass elevators. Our room was pretty high up. The hotel had given us a room for registration which was on the second floor, along a balcony overlooking the registration desk.

A word, here, about registration. Back in those early days of the club we operated

on the several assumptions which would be proven erroneous by the next time we got back to Dearborn (SAAC-8 in 1983). We assumed that almost everyone who attended the convention was a SAAC member. After all, who would come to another club's convention? We also assumed that everyone who attended the convention paid the registration fee—either in advance or when they arrived. So we didn't see any problem with the registration room they gave us to use. It was difficult to find even though we had signs with arrows, which the hotel's cleaning staff removed almost as soon as they were taped up. When someone got to the hotel they

first checked into their room and second checked out the parking lot. A lot never saw our registration area.

Among the things we brought was a bullhorn. We thought it would be useful during the open track, as the track at Utica did not have a public address system. Back in those early days we also had not learned to “read” Carroll Shelby. We invited him to the convention and he said “I’ll try to make it.” We took that as a confirmation and in several communications with club members we said that Shelby would likely be there. On Thursday morning we got a call from Shelby. It was the first time we had received one of those and you have no idea how special it made us feel. Until, that is, he got to the point of the call. He regretted that he would not be able to make the convention. We put on a good face and made a comment about, “*maybe next year.*”

Word out in the parking lot was spreading quickly that Shelby was expected. In a burst of unthinking excitement and with a devilish twinkle in his eye, Howard Pardee grabbed the bullhorn and stuck it out the registration room’s door and announced: “*Carroll Shelby – please report to the registration desk. Carroll Shelby – please report to the registration desk.*”

About two hundred convention attendees suddenly materialized and began milling around the hotel’s lobby and registration area. Every time the revolving door moved all heads turned, expecting to see Carroll Shelby walk in. Finally we told Pardee he better do something to disperse those people. He cracked the door, stuck the bullhorn out and made another announcement: “*Carroll Shelby – please report to the parking lot. Carroll Shelby – please report to the parking lot.*” Within seconds the lobby was like a ghost town.

Thursday was car show day, with a popular vote show as well as a judged concours. Back then the concours show was only a mere shadow of what it is today. In 1980 we were still feeling our way around and trying to gather enough information which would permit the formulation of an understandable and equitable set of rules. That would not happen for a couple of more years. The popular vote car show was much the same as it’s always been. The classes continually change, based on the show committee’s expectation of the cars which would be entered. This was not always a perfect science but unless we went to a strict show pre-registration it was the best it would get. And that wasn’t bad.

The seminars were wrapped up early because most people were heading out to

| SAAC-5 TROPHY WINNERS | |
|--|--|
| CONCOURS | |
| 1965 GT350 | |
| 1st—Dean Dennis, Pauling, NY | |
| 2nd—Lee Swander, Dearborn, MI | |
| 3rd—Leonard Cozoc, Silver Springs, MD | |
| 1966 GT350 | |
| 1st—Norm Ruby, Lathrup Village, MI | |
| 2nd—Bill Meyer, Chicago, IL | |
| 3rd—Lou Dahoda, Waterford, NY | |
| 1966 GT350H | |
| 1st—Philip Branch, Mason, GA | |
| 2nd—Davis Lipombe, Richmond, VA | |
| 3rd—Greg Carlen, Rock Island, IL | |
| 1967 GT350 | |
| 1st—Hunt Palmer-Bell, Louisville, KY | |
| 2nd—Stirling Bull, Alexandria, VA | |
| 3rd—Bob Perkins, Milwaukee, WI | |
| 1967 GT500 | |
| 1st—James Gillem, Lawrenceburg, IN | |
| 2nd—Floyd Newson, Rolling, WI | |
| 3rd—John Stewart, Melvindale, MI | |
| 1968 GT350 | |
| 1st—Gerard Korn, Long Island, NY | |
| 2nd—Thomas O’Dell, E. Alton, IL | |
| 3rd—Elby Lewis, Suzetki, VA | |
| 1968 GT500 | |
| 1st—Toby Gony, Brian, OH | |
| 2nd—John South, Chantock, GA | |
| 3rd—Bernard Zolis, Strongsville, OH | |
| 1968 GT500KR | |
| 1st—Lamar Allen, Cleveland, GA | |
| 2nd—Jerry Cookson, Quincy, IL | |
| 3rd—John Kachigian, W. Bloomfield, MI | |
| 4th—Paul Spork, Stoughton, WI | |
| 1969 GT350 | |
| 1st—Drexel Boston, Thomaston, GA | |
| 1969 GT500 | |
| 1st—Tom Brandon, Stone Mountain, GA | |
| 2nd—George & Debbie Stewart, Hill, Canada | |
| 3rd—Joe Mitchell, Indiantonic, FL | |
| 1970 GT350 | |
| 1st—Jim Wicks, Vinita, OK | |
| 1970 GT500 | |
| 1st—Kerry McMahon, Des Plaines, IL | |
| 2nd—Bill Frederick, Troy, MI | |
| 289 COBRA | |
| 1st—John Wright, Grafton, OH | |
| 2nd—Steve Wolfe, Dearborn, MI | |
| 3rd—Lee Abramsohn, Des Moines, IA | |
| 427 COBRA | |
| 1st—Garnie Moore, Nowata, OK | |
| 2nd—Dean Gilbert, Dearborn, MI | |
| 3rd—Lee MacMillan, Detroit, MI | |
| TIGER | |
| 1st—Wally Swift, Beltsville, MD | |
| PANTERA | |
| 1st—Rick Schanz, Allen Park, MI | |
| 2nd—Groni Martin, Dearborn, MI | |
| 3rd—Pete Lemlin, Detroit, MI | |
| BOSS MUSTANG | |
| 1st—Joe Flowers, Columbia Station, OH (Boss 429) | |
| 2nd—John Cross, Northville, MI (Boss 302) | |
| 3rd—Randy Bramwell, Anderson, IN (Boss 302) | |
| POPULAR VOTE | |
| 1966 GT350 | |
| 1st—David Fawcetts, Fort Worth, TX | |
| 2nd—Rich Finkle, Holmden, NJ | |
| 3rd—Paul Peck, Seattle, WA | |
| 1966 GT350H | |
| 1st—Mark Henderson, San Jose, CA | |
| 2nd—Clifford Hornback, Vinita, OK | |
| 3rd—Larry Gordis, Wakeley, MA | |
| 4th—Jim Bises, Austin, TX | |
| 1966 GT350H | |
| 1st—Bud Yingling, Hanover, PA | |
| 2nd—Al Swanson, St. Louis, MO | |
| 3rd—Paul Holman, Plymouth, MI | |
| 4th—Gary Bassell, Leontis, MI | |
| 1967 GT350 | |
| 1st—Gary Bassell, Leontis, MI | |
| 2nd—Norm Hoag, Canton, MI | |
| 3rd—Al Lepage, Plymouth, MI | |
| 1967 GT500 | |
| 1st—Gary Burns, Garden City, MI | |
| 2nd—Dave McCumb, Northville, MI | |
| 3rd—Quinton McIntyre, Troy, NC | |
| 4th—Victor Brown, Dayton, OH | |
| 1968 GT350 | |
| 1st—Pete Gilze, Milwaukee, WI | |
| 2nd—John Barnes, Ballston, NY | |
| 3rd—Mark Corcor, Dearborn, MI | |



This photo could have been taken back in 1966, because many Hertz GT350s were rented on Sundays for some drag race activity. Not that many current owners like to think about that. . . .

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Milan Raceway to either participate in some old fashioned heads-up drag racing or watching it. This proved to be a very popular diversion. There were probably a hundred cars filling the staging lanes, and then blasting off two at a time. The quarter-mile gladiators kept at it until the sun went down. It was hard to tell who had the more enjoyable time: the drivers or the spectators.

When the tire smoke finally cleared, the best story at the drag strip was when Cobra driver Richie Maccaganno’s clutch exploded during a banzai run, throwing a fist-sized chunk of flywheel through the

cowl, ripping a jagged hole just forward of the windshield. Other, smaller pieces of shrapnel, peppered the transmission tunnel and the inner fender panels. One piece just missed severing the brake and fuel lines, which would have provided a chilling sight: a Cobra without brakes running off the end of the strip on fire. Thankfully, that never happened.

On Friday morning the schedule called for seminars in the morning, and a special meeting for SAAC Reps in the afternoon. The swap meet going on in the parking lot acted like a magnet. Vendors displayed their wares on the asphalt and

people wandered up and down the long rows, stepping over blocks, heads, intake manifolds, aluminum oil pans and valve covers. Back then this stuff was taken for granted; today it would result in double-takes and dry mouths.

Everyone was on their own for dinner. The Hyatt had several excellent restaurants and several others were sprinkled around the mall that abutted the Hyatt's property. The mall was accessible by an overhead tram that stopped at the hotel.

The Friday evening program was attended by about 900 people. The speakers were Dick Smith, the original owner of a 427 S/C (which he still owned) and 1967 SCCA A/Production national champion who was now campaigning his car in vintage races and "Gentleman" Tom Payne, a former Cobra team driver and one of the independents who led the ranks of Cobras in national SCCA events and USRRC races. Payne partnered up with Cobra and GT350 racer Dan Gerber to open Gerber-Payne Ford in Fremont, Michigan. At one time, Payne ran for U.S. Congress. The keynote speaker was William Jeanes, an advertising copy writer and well-known automotive journalist whose work regularly appeared in the pages of *Car and Driver* magazine. His articles about Ford GT40s were among the best ever written about those cars and his article on the 1965 GT350, "Everyman's Real Racer," was the first major article to put these cars in a historical context, a bare ten years after they had been introduced. Aside from SAAC members, Jeanie was one of the only ones to realize that the Shelby GT350s were historically significant cars. His dry-ball sense of humor and wry use of descriptive adjectives made listening to him informative as well as enjoyable. Jeanie was one of the principals of the legendary Bolus and Snopes racing team that campaigned a former GT350 Hertz car in SCCA endurance racing. The racing team was little more than an excuse to party and Jeanie's skillful public relations efforts had the intentional affect of ginning up the team's notoriety to the point where it's actual racing record was virtually unknown.

After the speakers, we shifted into the door prize drawings. For many local regions, the door prizes were one of the high points of the entire event. Those who put on the meet were like politicians between elections, constantly working the phones for donations. They hit on everyone they could think of, beginning with local Mustang and Shelby parts and services businesses and then working their way up the food chain to larger and larger businesses. Occasionally they would get to the right

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| <p>1966 GT350 1st—Bill Imbrock, Hamlet, OH 2nd—Gordon Dunn, Toronto, Ontario, Canada 3rd—Jim Fittz, Cincinnati, OH</p> <p>1966 GT500KR 1st—Mike Rasmussen, Plymouth, MI 2nd—Dave Collins, Youngstown, OH 3rd—Bill Lambert, Bolivar, OH 4th—Ernest DeVincent, Acacia, MA</p> <p>1969 GT350 1st—John Burns, Solon, OH 2nd—Ken Mack, Ypsilanti, MI 3rd—Vincent Lisak, Iselin, NJ 4th—Clay Stroup, Almont, MI</p> <p>1969 GT500 1st—Ed Shaw, Somerset, NJ 2nd—Richard Soules, Groves, IL, MI 3rd—Scott Salzwedel, Lake Forest, IL</p> <p>1970 GT350 1st—Dick Depner, Ottawa Lake, MI 2nd—Scott Salzwedel, Lake Forest, IL 3rd—Tom Lassy, North Olmstead, OH</p> <p>1970 GT500 1st—Lennie St. Amant, Duluth, MN 2nd—Dave Azima, Weyhoff, NJ 3rd—Ron Rogosko, St. Elmo, IL</p> <p>200 COBRA 1st—Bert Levy, Beechwood, OH 2nd—Richard Brubaker, Green Castle, PA 3rd—Ron Baumhauer, Knoxville, IA</p> <p>427 COBRA 1st—John Willets, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 2nd—Wayne Curry, Edwardsville, IL 3rd—Nico Turner, Ann Arbor, MI 4th—Thomson Loomis, Pawton, NJ</p> <p>TIGER 1st—Bruce Paul, Milwaukee, WI 2nd—Larry Merman, Turkey, IL 3rd—Andy Hottle, Baltimore, MD</p> <p>PANTERA 1st—Malvin Herzfeld, Detroit, MI 2nd—Don Walz, Poughkeepsie, NY 3rd—Louis Santanetta, Springfield, MA</p> <p>800S MUSTANG 1st—Dale Mathis, Dalton, GA (Boss 302) 2nd—Joe Flowers, Columbia Sta., OH (Boss 429) 3rd—Herb Sonzell, Ferguson, MO (Boss 302) 4th—Dane Miller, Syracuse, NY (Boss 429)</p> | <p>'68-'68 MUSTANG 1st—Richard Jones, Plymouth, MI 2nd—John Hill, Plymouth, MI 3rd—Pat Orland, Syracuse, NY 4th—Robert Lamb, Muzelle, GA</p> <p>'67-'68 MUSTANG 1st—Greg Coombs, Mt. Clemens, MI 2nd—Dei Kaufman, Portland, OR 3rd—Stanley Parkowski, Nagsaukuck, CT</p> <p>'69-'70 MUSTANG 1st—Jim Kinrade, Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2nd—Walter Buck, Columbus, Ohio 3rd—Larry Sussner, Waltham, MA</p> <p>'71-'73 MUSTANG 1st—Phil Jacobs, Bonley, MI 2nd—Steven Legosz, Royal Oak, MI 3rd—Bill Knopp, Dearborn, MI</p> <p>SPECIAL INTEREST 1st—Tim Buck, Dayton, OH (80 Fairmont) 2nd—Joseph Macredon, Allen Park, MI (87 Cougar) 3rd—Lynn Kermansen, Mt. Clemens, MI (87 Cutlass) 4th—Stan Dumst, Des Moines, IA (84 Galaxia)</p> <p>EXOTIC SPECIAL INTEREST 1st—Steve Wall, Ypsilanti, MI (57 T Bird) 2nd—Fandy Hartigan, Deep River, MD (ERA Cobra Rep.) 3rd—Gary Courtnay, Wolcott, CT (Griffin)</p> <p>COMPETITION SHELBY/COBRA 1st—Jerry Clark, Phoenix, AZ (427 Cobra SC) 2nd—Mike Gaffney, Bloomington, IL (GT350-R Model)</p> <p>LONG DISTANCE AWARDS LONGEST DISTANCE TRAVELED Bruce Armstrong, Australia Alex Copland, Australia Gerhard Rosen, West Germany Stephan Inzer, West Germany Hans Joachim Ace, West Germany Hans Knop, West Germany Sveve Hichana, France Eric Barfield, England Don Johnson, England</p> <p>LONGEST DISTANCE DRIVEN Paul Peck, Seattle, WA—85 GT350 Lee Peterson, Oak Harbor, WA—88 Shelby Bill Brouillard, Ft. Angeles, WA—87 GT350</p> <p>CARROLL SHELBY AWARD FOR BEST SHELBY LAMAR ALLEN, Cowlesland, GA (60 GT500KR)</p> <p>CARROLL SHELBY AWARD FOR BEST COBRA JOHN WRIGHT, Grafton, OH (288)</p> |
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If you've been to a drag strip lately, you'll notice that Fords are few and far between. Not so at Milan on July 2nd. It was like a Ford parade; there wasn't a Chevy within 100 miles.

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person at the right time and were rewarded by a set of Goodyear tires or five cases of racing motor oil. We had stayed away from this for two reasons. One was that we wanted to leave something unique to the regions who, in putting on their events, often looked to the national for ideas and ended up mimicking us. If it worked for us, they figured it would work for them. And it usually did, although on a lesser scale.

The second reason we backed away from door prizes was because our evening programs were much larger than those at regional events. The thought of watching 750 or 1,000 people in the audience, listen-

ing to someone at the podium calling out the six-digit numbers printed on those rolls of two-part tickets, and then parading up to the stage to get a pair of Mustang taillight bezels or a weatherstripping kit for a Fairlane made us practically break out in hives. We'd spoken to the owners of parts businesses who all told us they dreaded getting the solicitation phone call because they felt they couldn't say "No." To do so would, they feared, brand them as non-supporters of the club and leave them open to whispered, backhanded comments of "cheapskate" or "skinflint." But when they did agree to provide something for one region, they found themselves moved

to the top of the future donor list for almost every region (they all talked among themselves) and their good deed backfired on them.

Even though we had decided to stay away from door prizes, we received—unsolicited—a set of Goodyear Wingfoots. One thing led to another and, before we knew it, we were doing the very thing we said we wouldn't do. And just as the vendors had told us, they were afraid to say "No" to, especially to the national club. The result was that we got things that, as one dealer had described them, "had a birthday on his shelves." These were parts that they couldn't sell, so they were happy to donate them and take a tax write-off. And we got stuff prizes that nobody really wanted. Not exactly a win-win situation.

By the end of the evening babies were crying, people were walking out and we sensed that we were losing control of the program. To speed things along we began ganging the awards. Someone had donated a dozen t-shirts, thinking they would go to a dozen "winners" and his company's name would be repeated a dozen times, thus providing plenty of publicity. We pulled one ticket and gave the winner 12 t-shirts. This went over like a lead balloon with the vendor. Before too many people left we gave away the tires and a few other "major" awards.

By about 11 o'clock the evening program wrapped up but when convention participants got outside for one last walk through the parking lot, many were reinvigorated. It was July 4th so, of course, someone produced some fireworks. The unmistakable sound of a high-winding Hi-Po engine could be heard out on the other side of the grassy knoll that separated the hotel's lot from the highway. It attracted convention attendees like moths to a flame. It wasn't long before almost a thousand people were standing, shoulder to shoulder, on the grassy berm as car after car headed out of the Hyatt's parking lot and found its way onto the highway. As each car blasted through the gears past the crowd, it erupted in cheers.

Coolers of beer were carried from cars in the parking lot, and it wasn't too long before a few bottle rockets made their appearance. They were fired at Corvettes and Cameras unlucky enough to be passing by the Hyatt. The fun was shortlived. A dozen Dearborn police cars materialized, red and blue lights twirling. The SAAC directors were tracked down (in their hotel rooms) by the chief of police. He was clearly not wearing his public relations hat. He described what was going on outside as the beginnings of a riot and gave us an alter-



'66 Mustang Trans-Am car, originally driven by Tom Yeager and Bob Johnson, was recently purchased as a basket case by Wayne Conover. By Dearborn, it looked as if it was put into storage in 1966 and taken out the day before the convention. Yeager and Johnson attended and, no doubt, had some memories brought back.



427 Cobra engineer Bob Negstadt waves around the computer printouts for the 427 suspension and chassis as he speaks about his part in the project. This action had avid literature collectors swaying back and forth in time with the papers, mesmerized much like Cobras swaying with a snakecharmer.



The remarks of keynote speaker Walter Hayes, Ford Vice President of Public Relations, were most memorable and left everyone with the feeling that someone "up there" cares as much for what was as what is and what will be. To be sure, Ford will never see another performance era like the 1960s, but neither will it be forgotten.



Concours participants' cars were lined up on the lawn for judging. Quality of cars couldn't have been higher; after all, it was a national convention. Surprisingly, many original cars were represented.

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native: either we got the crowd dispersed immediately or he would call out the Swat Team, accompanied by police dogs. We wasted no time deciding.

When stories about SAAC-5 are told, the "bottle rockets being shot at Corvettes" episode usually figures prominently. And it is almost always embellished to the point where the saga is unrecognizable to those who were there. While there is a touch of fact at the core, this has become one of the SAAC urban legends that contributes to the pedestal that SAAC-5 has been placed on in the pantheon of conventions.

Saturday was open track day and the weather was not favorable. There was in-

termittent rain, heavy at times, and a lot of people were writing off the track. It looked like the day will be spent in the swap meet. But in Utica, about 50 miles away, the rain had stopped and the track was beginning to dry off. Word began to filter back to the Hyatt Regency that the track was dry and cars were already running. A migration began.

The Utica test track was a 2 1/2-mile concrete oval, about four lanes wide, and 31° banking at both ends. It had been built in the 1930s by the Packard Motor Company for testing and although presently owned by Ford, it hadn't seen any serious use in years. There were guard rails

around the outside but nothing on the inside. The track just stopped and tall grass took over. Everyone not running on the track parked in a field outside the track and everyone who was running was directed to park on the inside.

The first thing we needed to do was to decide how we would configure the track. Should we run clockwise or counter-clockwise? Before we made a decision, we decided to ask an expert. Bob Bondurant was one of our guests. He was in town at the behest of the Ford Motor Company and was serving as one of their performance advisors. He advised us to run the track clockwise, because that would allow the drivers to see farther ahead when they went into the banked turn. It made sense to us. Somebody have him the keys to their Aurora Cobra and he made a few test laps at speed. He came into the center of the track and gave everyone the thumbs-up.

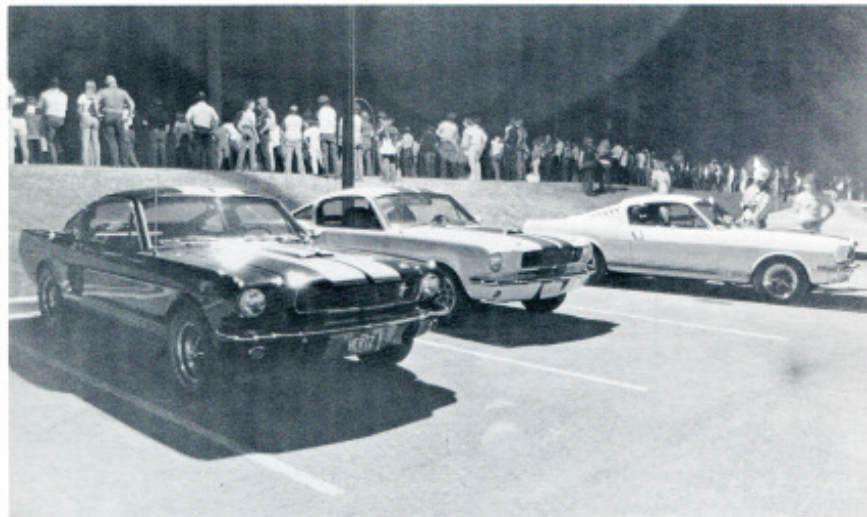
Run groups of about 15 cars had been organized with passengers permitted. Groups were flagged off for five-lap sessions. Passing was allowed on the two straights but not on the turns. In hindsight with the experience of running about thirty open tracks since Utica, this place was a horrendous accident waiting to happen. Fortunately, aside from a blown engine here and there, there were no incidents of any kind. But there certainly could have been. Spectators at the outside edge of the track found that they could see very little, except when the cars were whizzing past them. So they started running across the track between cars. Cars that were doing over 100 mph. Trying to stop them was like herding baby chicks. As soon as we stopped some, others would pop up 50 feet away and dash across. The Ford employee who was overall in charge, introduced to us as the track's supervisor, took one look at what was going on and promptly disappeared.

By the end of the day people began filtering back to the Hyatt. A sit-down dinner was followed by a series of guest speakers who proved to be both informative and entertaining. Bob Negstadt was a chassis and suspension engineer and he was the one tapped to design the suspension for the coil spring Cobra. He had also worked on the Ford GT40 suspension. His supervisor, Klaus Arnon, also spoke. He designed the Mustang independent rear suspension that never saw production. His work on the Ford Gus was one of the first uses of a computer for suspension design. Bob Johnson recalled being offered a Cobra Daytona Coupe and three truckloads of spares by Shelby for \$3,500. He turned Shelby down, flat. It was a stunning confession.

SAAC Director Ken Young was in charge of the swap meet area and, as such, nothing escaped his eye. His main responsibility was to help latecomers find a spot—and also to break up fistfights between vendors. He is pictured here (C) listing all of the reasons why he needs almost all of the parts laying on the ground in front of him. District Rep Coordinator Dirk Gasterland (R) lends a sympathetic ear, and Ken's wife, Shirley (L), is mentally going over all of the reasons why he can't have any of the things on the ground in front of him. Needless to say, Young left the swap area empty-handed, but with enough cash to get home and even pay some bills.



If you were in need—I mean, if you absolutely had to have—a 300 mph Holman & Moody speedometer, you could have taken it home from Dearborn.



A crowd of about a thousand adjourned to the back lawn after Friday evening's program to watch the "speed event" that unfolded on the freeway behind the hotel. Convention participants took turns blasting by in their cars, leaving a wake of cheers and applause. Fireworks were introduced into the equation, it being the Fourth of July and all, and before too long, nickel rockets were bouncing off of Corvettes and Camaros that happened into Ford Country. Next time, they'll know better. . . .

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The keynote speaker was Walter Hayes. He spoke with a great deal of authority and touched on Ford's desire to get back into performance, but probably not in the way they had in the 1960s. This was good news and better news. It was good news that Ford was still interested in performance and after the drought of the later 1970s it would only be a matter of time before they unlocked the secret that would allow the combination of horsepower which could meet Federally-mandated emissions levels. The better news was that it wasn't likely the new definition of performance would overshadow the Cobras and Shelby Mustangs of the 1960s. They


would still be high water marks.

We left this convention with a good feeling. Ford was likely to be a strong future ally—as long as we didn't try to squeeze them too hard and scare them away. We had to demonstrate that there was something in it for them. And as long as we could cultivate people within the company like Paul Preuss we would be in a good position. If they were about to start marketing performance, SAAC would be a natural to assist them. At this point we had no idea where SAAC-6 would be, but it would probably be in California.





Jerry Clark's 457 SC (above) was shared by both Jerry and Dick Smith. Smith's own 427 Competition car also showed at Daytona at 190+ mph, so he had what you might call high-speed experience.

Joey Flowers of Columbia Station, Ohio, received a moment of his trip to Dearborn from the Dearborn Police. Flowers, in his supercharged Boss 429, was cited Wednesday evening for doing 160 mph in a 45 mph zone. License plate says "DEBOSS," and he was—until he was caught by "DELAU."




John Furness, the Pride of Cincinnati, took the local television conversation around the Ford Test Track at almost triple the national speed limit. He was also interviewed while he was driving, and the whole episode was broadcast at 6 and 11 P.M.


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After a night of hurling verbal brickbats at every GT300 owner within earshot, Rick Kopco was forced to get his right foot where his mouth was on Thursday afternoon. The Weber-equipped '68 GT390 was driven out from Connecticut and was in perfect form. Here, Kopco catches Canadian Rep Ford Durso napping. Durso later mentioned that it wasn't easy driving, shifting and talking into his doors all at the same time....



Wayne Carry could have spent the rest of his life giving rides in his 427 Cobras. Car was a snail to the 150 mph area. Note front license plate; they were designed to flatter out at speeds over 50 mph to let more air into the mouth.




Ford Test Track was in the town of Utica, which was in Shelby County. Ah, yes.... The Shelby Car Wash did a booming business on Saturday—however, they didn't get too many wash jobs. But there was plenty of traffic through their lot.


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There was no shortage of Tigers in Dearborn. Everyone seemed to be "LAT conscious."




Rare birds? How about a Cross Boss dual quad manifold or an Autolite in-line manifold—both using a Cobra waterneck.



Trick Pontiac display featured engine and transaxle. And if you were interested in a little monogrammed Pontiac luggage....




"... which is why they call it the "Hard Lock Award".... Richie Maccagnano drove his 289 Cobra from Massachusetts. He experienced a slight problem out at the strip when his pressure plate exploded during an 8,900 rpm shift. Rich wasn't injured, fortunately, but his Cobra was, unfortunately. Within an hour, the transmission was removed and all debris was extracted. Frame required shoring and wiring had to be spliced, but the Cobra was rendered driveable and the next day he left for home.




Carm Bertz was on the scene, representing Hot Rod magazine. He took about two dozen rolls of film. Watch for bits and pieces to turn up in the future.


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Just checking to see who's the REAL Boss....



The GT500Rs were built for the drag strip, and a good number showed up to carry on the heritage. Blinding up the brakes and making the rear end creep is something that only a big block can do "right."



Maccagnano's crippled Cobra attracted attention. There was a moral to the story....



If he could cut a 150 on the streets of Dearborn, the quarter mile was a piece of cake for Joey Flowers. But without those flashing red lights behind you, it's just not the same....

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