

# IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

WITH RACING LEGEND CARROLL SHELBY AND THE FLYING JUDGE



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Photos by Matt Fukushima

Judge Joseph Di Loreto, a Long Beach probate judge, had arranged for his racing and design idol, Carroll Shelby, to visit his vast collection of cars.

This was a private meeting, one that Judge Di Loreto had dreamed of for a long time. His collection of 18 high-performance vehicles, located in a customized warehouse in Paramount, includes five original Shelby designs. The rarest cars in his collection are the only Shelby-designed, Ford-powered McLaren and Shelby's Cobra Coupe—one of only five in existence.

An avid racer himself, Di Loreto has won more than a hundred races in the past 25 years. In 1991 and 1992, Di Loreto competed in the Pan Am Series, where he used a Shelby spec car. During the days of the Riverside Raceway, the judge competed in the six-hour Los Angeles Times' Grand Prix. Di Loreto continues to race approximately eight to 10 times a year and recently was invited by Lord March to compete in the Goodwood Invitational in England.

Because of his love for racing, Shelby affectionately refers to Di Loreto as the Flying Judge.

## A RACING ICON

Breaking the land speed record in 1955 and winning the 24-hour Le Mans in 1959, Shelby established himself in the racing world as a force to be reckoned with. He was named Sports Car Driver of the Year by Sports Illustrated in 1956 and 1957. But in 1960, Shelby had to walk away from auto racing because of a heart ailment.

Following a successful heart transplant and a late-night vision of building a car called the Cobra, Shelby turned his attention to designing, rather than racing, fast cars.

## A MASTER DESIGNER

In 1962, a roadster went into production that would quickly become an automotive legend. The 180-mph open-cart vehicle was produced in a Los Angeles facility. The shell was originally flown over from Europe and fitted with a V8 engine. Almost 500 pounds lighter than the Corvette, it quickly became the car to beat. This muscle car was the Shelby Cobra.

Forty-five years later, in January of 2007, in Scottsdale, Ariz., Shelby's personal 1966 Shelby Cobra 427 Supersnake

## Carroll Shelby's Children's Foundation

**Organization provides financial assistance to children in need of organ and tissue transplants or acute cardiac disorders.**

**F**ollowing years of heart-related difficulties, legendary racer and automotive manufacturer Carroll Shelby met his biggest challenge. He received a life-saving heart transplant and made the pledge to help save the lives of children who share many of the same afflictions.

"When I was lying there in the hospital awaiting my heart," he recalls, "two boys on either side of me passed away because they did not receive a transplant in time. So I made a deal with the big man above. If I was to receive a heart and survive, I would do whatever I could to help out those who were less fortunate."

So, along with his friends and family, he created the Carroll Shelby Children's Foundation, which has helped youngsters get the medical attention they need. Shelby also appreciates the generosity of his fans "for helping in this race."

As a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization, CSCF depends solely on individual and corporate contributions for funding. Under IRS code regulations, donations to CSCF are tax-deductible. All donations directly support the foundation and its programs.



(Lot #1301), which was designed and built exclusively for the racing legend, was sold during the 36th Annual Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Event for \$5.5 million.

"When I built this dual supercharged 427 Cobra in 1966," Shelby says, "I wanted it to be the fastest, meanest car on the road. Forty years later, it will still kick the tail off just about anything in the world. It's the fastest street-legal Cobra I've ever owned."

From 1986 to 1989, under famed CEO Lee Iacocca, Shelby designed the Charger and the Lancer. The success of these two vehicles was fantastic; however, Shelby's work was not done, for he still dreamed of one last super car. The higher-ups at Chrysler got wind of Shelby's idea, and the Viper was born.

Shelby, who in 1992 was inducted into the Automobile Hall of Fame, is perhaps the only person to have worked at a visible level with all three American automobile manufacturers. His charisma, vision and ability to know the best person for the job have made him into a master organizer and team leader who is able to

produce consistently impressive results.

Currently, the Shelby Cobra is the most replicated car in the world. Collectors and enthusiasts alike enjoy and admire this classic roadster. Today they are manufactured at his Las Vegas plant in limited and custom production.

Shelby, however, isn't only known for fast cars. In October 1991, he created the Carroll Shelby Children's Foundation™, dedicated to providing acute coronary and kidney care for children in need. He has also extended his business savvy to chili, tire distribution and cattle, specifically the Tuli bull.

At the special meeting between this racing legend and The Flying Judge, Judge Joseph Di Loreto coaxed his hero into signing a wall that was designed as a shrine to Shelby. Di Loreto and Shelby reminisced as they walked through the judge's custom warehouse. Swapping close-to-the-heart stories about the cars that Shelby had designed and the judge had collected, they spoke about the good old days of racing. **LB**

