

# Living with a Legend

**After a 28-year sleep and an 8-year restoration, an owner begins to get reacquainted with his GT350**

– Steve Sloan

*The details of 6S087's 36-year rebirth were covered in the Winter, 2017 issue. Once the car was finished, Steve Sloan began picking up where he left off in 1979, when he bought the car. After being without it for more than three and-a-half decades, it was time to get reacquainted. He became, in effect, a new owner and experienced most of the first-time adventures that a new Shelby owner might typically encounter.*

## The First Oil Change

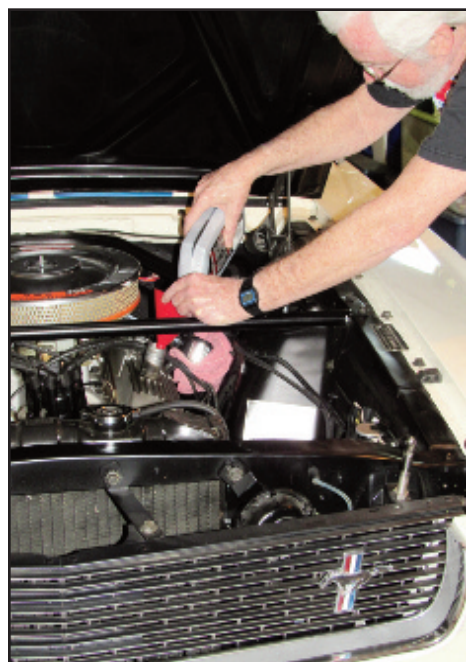
After my 6S087's 36-year restoration was finally completed, I immediately started putting some miles on it. What a hoot! I would do some "spirited" acceleration from time to time, but I didn't want to hurt the freshly rebuilt engine. I decided to keep it under 5,000 rpm until after the first oil change. And 500 miles was my target for that milestone.

During 087's "hibernation" period I got lazy and started paying to have the oil changed in my everyday vehicles. Making a mess and getting oil all over me to save a few dollars had lost its appeal; especially when that oil was draining out of a Chevy truck or a Honda minivan. How mundane.

But the excitement started building as my GT350 edged closer to that

500-mile mark. I bought the appropriate oil locally and ordered a couple of original-style filters from Virginia Classic Mustang. It had been a long time since I'd changed oil on a 289, but it's really quite simple. Drain out the old oil, replace the filter and add new oil. What could go wrong?

Hmmm..... What could go wrong? I'm a bit of a perfectionist so I gave some thought to that question. I decided that the only problem would be keeping the oil from dripping on my now-pristine Cobra oil pan when I took off the old filter, so I devised a plan to avoid that. I would use masking tape to hold a plastic shield in place between the oil filter and the pan. And I would shape the plastic to route any drippage into a tin pie pan.



Problem solved.

When the day finally came I was prepared, and my plan worked perfectly. Not a single drop of oil got on my freshly bead-blasted oil pan. After pouring in the fresh oil, I started the engine and watched the oil pressure gauge climb upward to its usual position. So far, so good. Then I shut off the engine and looked under the car for leaks. There were none. *Yee Ha!* Success. After measuring and topping off the oil, there was only one thing left to do. Take the car out for a drive and nudge that 6,000 rpm mark, at last.

I started the engine again and backed out of the garage to let it warm up in the driveway. Then it was out onto the road. I kept things low and slow getting out of my neighborhood. Not everyone enjoys the sound of a 289 rumbling through a 2½-inch exhaust system and free-flow mufflers. When I was about a half-mile from home I goosed the engine a little to give myself a preview of what was to come. A little further along I punched it again and took the car up to around 4,000 rpm in second gear before having to rein it in for a red light. I was pulling away from that light when...

**HOLY SMOKE!** And I mean that literally. There was smoke coming from under the hood, smoke billowing out the back of the car, smoke getting into the car. What the hell?!? I saw an entrance into a small strip-mall on my right and made a hasty turn into it. Then I immediately shut off the engine and let the car coast silently to a stop. CRAP!



A quick check under the hood revealed fresh oil all over the place. There was a puddle under the engine and a wet trail on the concrete behind the car. Something had obviously gone wrong, but what? Maybe I hadn't tightened the oil filter enough. I had the ghost of a memory in the back of my mind that something didn't feel right when I originally tightened that

filter. But that memory was like a wisp of steam from a hot cup of coffee – it just wouldn't take shape, and vanished before I could grasp its full meaning.

I reached under the car with my hand and gave the filter a clockwise twist. Sure enough, it turned a little. Ah Ha! That must be it. Tightening the filter should cure the leak, but I would need some oil to replace what had been lost.

I called my wife, Robyn, told her where I was and what had happened, and gave her a list of things to bring, including a couple of rolls of paper towels. As I waited beside my lame pony, I had several people stop and tell me how great the car looked and offer their help if needed. One thing about Texas – there's a lot of friendly people down here.

Eventually Robyn arrived with my rescue supplies. One of those items was an oil filter wrench so I could make sure that sucker was tight this time. But something strange happened as I started snugging it up. The rubber o-ring seal started to bulge and squash out of place. How odd. Now what would cause that? I took the filter completely off and found...

Think about it. What rookie mistake would cause the above symptoms? This has probably happened to you at least once.

If you said, "*the old double o-ring trick*," you win the prize. The o-ring from the old filter had stuck to the block. So when I screwed on the new filter I had two o-rings. Not exactly optimal. And what made things worse was that I suddenly remembered doing this once before. Admittedly that



was about forty years prior, but still, that's a lesson I didn't think I'd ever forget.

I took out the extra o-ring, snugged up the filter and added some oil. Then I spent the next twenty minutes getting myself clean enough to get back into the car. On the trip home I just had to laugh. At least the next time I changed oil I wouldn't have to worry about messing up my pristine Cobra oil pan. Lesson learned.