

# Living with a Legend

*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. This is the second installment.*

The day my 1966 GT350 came home from restoration was one of the greatest days of my life. The car was so clean and shiny and beautiful – just like it must have been when it rolled out the factory doors at Shelby American. It was so nice, in fact, that I had a slight pang of guilt knowing it would not stay that way. In the same way that you want your honeymoon to last forever, I wanted this car to stay “perfect” forever.

If you have any experience with these things you’ll know that’s impossible – especially with a car that will actually be driven. There might be a fighting chance if I was fabulously wealthy and had a paid team of mechanics and car detailers assigned to the task, but that’s not the way my life works. This is the only car of signifi-

## MOISTURE MADNESS

– Steve Sloan

cance or value that I’ve ever owned, and I only have three people on staff to maintain it – me, myself and I.

As a matter of fact, I went into hock to get to this point. With my wife’s encouragement, I raided our retirement fund to finance the restoration. The running joke around our house these days is that if we run low on money in our golden years, we’ll sell the Shelby and use the proceeds to upgrade from dry dog food to the meaty canned stuff. Ha, ha!

In any case, I needed a plan to at least slow down the inevitable decline of my car from its current state of near perfection. One simple way to put things in my favor was to avoid rain, and water in general, as much as possible. Yes, there would be some rust eventually, but I saw no point in giving it a head start. So I kept that in mind whenever I set out to drive the car.

And drive it I did. After all, that’s the point, isn’t it? I know guys who restore their cars for concours and never run their engines except to get in and out of enclosed trailers. That’s fine if it’s what they enjoy – it’s their car and their choice. I truly respect the contribution they make to our hobby with the knowledge gained and shared from those efforts, but I’ve always believed that cars are meant to be driven. Something you own solely to look at is called art, and I’m not an art collector.

I quickly learned that the greatest joy for me was giving rides to young people who had never seen or experi-

enced anything like a 60’s, rough and raw, performance car. Beyond the sheer fun, I figure I’m providing an educational service. Some of today’s kids have never even been in a car with a standard transmission. That topic came up when I was giving rides to my sister’s family one day.

I hadn’t gotten far from home with my niece, Audrey, when she asked what I kept doing with that stick on the floor. I patiently explained how this car had a four-speed standard transmission instead of an automatic like she was used to. About that time the traffic light we’d been waiting for turned green, so I continued my explanation by updating her on which gear we were in as we accelerated. “*This is first gear... second gear... third gear*” and finally, “*now we’re in fourth gear.*” I paused in my lesson to allow her a chance to soak in the wisdom I was imparting. After a few seconds of thought, she asked, “*Uncle Steve, what are gears?*” Oh my! I wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. I just told her that gears are something that old guys like to play with. She seemed satisfied with that answer.



Now, you may think that makes her a silly girl, but there's nothing sillier than an old guy and his classic car. My sister got the last ride that afternoon and I gave her "the works." I pushed the car a little more than I had with her kids so she'd be duly impressed with not only the car, but also my amazing driving skills. Yeah, right. We were headed back home when... Oh no! Up ahead there's water in the road! I quickly jammed on the brakes and started looking for an escape route. Ah, there it was – a break in the esplanade where I could make a U-turn. With a whip of the steering wheel and a squealing of tires, disaster was avoided. Although I think my sister was beginning to doubt the sanity of her driver. She accepted my explanation about avoiding water to keep the car from rusting, but she seemed a little tense for the rest of the ride home. Hmm... I wonder what got into her?

As time went by I noticed that my aversion to water was getting worse. Several times I came close to causing a wreck in order to avoid a small puddle in the road. And on one occasion I backed the car up almost eighty yards in order to get back to a turn-off point. Fortunately it was very early in the morning with almost no traffic. I knew I was taking this too far, but I couldn't

help myself. I had become an "aquaphobic," and it was taking over my life.

Not only would I avoid rainy days, I wouldn't consider driving for at least two days after the lightest of showers. Hey, there might still be a puddle out there somewhere. A few times I found myself faced with no choice but to drive through a narrow wet spot on the road caused by some mental midget watering his lawn. (Come on, what do you want, green grass or dry roads?) I lucked out on those occasions because there was no traffic behind me. So I crept over the area as sloooooowly as possible; sometimes taking several minutes to traverse a twelve-inch wide damp spot on the pavement. And I kept creeping along for thirty or forty yards past the obstacle to give my tires a chance to lay the foul stuff back onto the road instead of slinging it up into my wheel wells.

I was having great success in my war against the demon water.

I knew this was madness, but I couldn't help myself. It was like a voodoo curse that will only hurt you if you believe in it. And for some insane reason I had come to believe that I could protect my car from the ravages of water forever. My wife called it "moisture madness."

One bright Saturday morning I was particularly proud of myself.

There is a nursery on the side of a street that I sometimes drive, and I had learned to look ahead to see if they had been watering their plants and creating a runoff in the road. Sure enough, that was the case this morning. I dutifully turned off ahead of time and picked a different route. Another disaster avoided due to my superior diligence.

As I continued my drive I got deeper and deeper into the trance of man and machine vs. the world. The traffic was a little heavier than usual and I was turning more and more of my attention to simply avoiding the mindless bots that seemed to be steering the other vehicles. And I was getting a little thrill in proving my car and skills were up to the task.

I made it safely to my destination and was almost back home when I saw it. WATER in the road! It was that darned nursery, and the runoff was creating a small river all the way across the street. Oops! I'd forgotten about that. What happened to my superior diligence? A quick check in the rearview mirror revealed a herd of buffaloes close behind me, disguised as other cars. They would trample me if I so much as slowed down.

The moment of truth had finally arrived. There was no place to turn off or turn around, and slowing down would most certainly have caused a chain-reaction wreck. There was only one choice left – I floored the accelerator and raced through the puddle screaming a big Texas, "YEE HA!" I figure if you're going to do something, you might as well do it right. And instead of being angry or frustrated, I found a smile on my face as I emerged from the watery mist.

The spell was broken! The hex was lifted. I was free from the voodoo curse of aquaphobia! I felt like I had just beat up the school bully and would never have to be afraid again. Yes, my car probably developed a little surface rust on some of the bare chassis parts since that day. But I'm having a lot more fun driving it now that I've conquered Moisture Madness.

Life is great when you're living with a legend.

