# Living with a Legend

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## The First Car Wash

*– Steve Sloan*

I'm the kind of guy who would rather drive a car any day than wash it. So after my freshly restored 1966 GT350 came home that's just what I did – drive it. But eventually the crust of dirt and grime got too much, even for me. It was time for the car's first wash.

At 65 years old, I'm still doing some things the way my father taught me in my youth. So my drill for getting a clean and shiny car is – rinse, wash, rinse, dry and wax. Piece of cake, right? What could go wrong? If you read my previous article about the first oil change you'll know that I have two primary character traits. A perfectionist's tendency to over-think a simple task, and a gift for finding trouble. It's not always my fault, you understand; trouble just seems to like me.

*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 seventh installment.*

And while I may use an old-fashioned process, I want the latest modern supplies. No cheap, bargain basement, half-off, sale-priced junk for my prized possession. So the first step toward washing my car was to determine the absolute best current products on the market. And what better source of information than someone who had already done this? So I turned to other Shelby owners who I'd made friends with over the years. Oh, my! I found out that each one of them had their own personal favorites, and they were all different. Different car wash, different wax and so forth. The only pattern was that quality mattered. Avoid the cheap stuff. Gee, I already knew that.

I ended up taking the advice of an owner I seemed to share a lot of common values with. Chuck Olenyk had finished the restoration of his 6S098 recently and had made a lot of the same choices as me – high quality, original stuff for most of the car, but a few compromises for extra power; like a bore and stroke and free-flowing exhaust. We seemed to be on the same wave length about our cars in general so I figured that might carry over (pun intended) into our preference for maintenance products. Also, I had met and formed a bond of trust with Chuck and his lovely wife, Lynne, at SAAC-39. Based on his recommendations, I ordered P21S Bodywork Shampoo, P21S 100% Carnauba Wax, a Meguiar's X3002 Microfiber Wash Mitt, and a P21S Super-Absorbing Drying Towel (with case). I already had a bucket and a hose.

Armed with those superior supplies, I picked a nice Saturday morning to give my baby its first bath. Remember – rinse, wash, rinse, dry and wax. Nothing to it.

Well… maybe I had left out a step. After backing the car out of the garage I started to roll up the windows. I say "started" because that's exactly what I did – I started, but could not finish that oh-so-simple task. Crap! The windows wouldn't roll up! I had never tested them before. Why should I? I live in Houston and the car is not air-conditioned. When would I ever want the windows up?

With a little extra muscle applied to the crank, I finally got the passenger window to close. But the driver's window was being stubborn. The moment of truth finally arrived when I decided that I was either going to get

that sucker up or break something trying. With the door open and me standing on solid ground, I applied alternating forward and backward pressure on the crank as I lifted up and pressed down on the glass to get it to move. The car rocked back and forth like a load of elephants was walking in one side and out the other, and the window finally went up. Whew!

After that struggle, the first three phases of the bathing process (rinse, wash and rinse) went pretty much as planned. Then came the drying phase. I was looking forward to trying out that high dollar, P21S Super-Absorbing Drying Towel (with case). With a name like that and a price to match I was expecting some real water sucking magic. In my mind I could see me drying the entire top of the car with one effortless wipe. I removed this marvel from its case and presoaked it, per instructions. Then I laid it on the car roof and started to wipe. Huh?

It stuck to the car like flypaper. I peeled it off and tried again with the same result. That just didn't seem right. Slap it on and peel it off; slap and peel. I'd never experienced anything like it, and I wasn't sure this was good for my paint. To make matters worse, the car wasn't really getting dry. I had to be doing something wrong, but I was unwilling to use my freshly restored Shelby as a test bed for a technology that I clearly did not understand. So I tossed this marvel of science to the side and asked my wife, Robyn, if she had something I could use. She disappeared for a few moments and returned with some of her cheap, bargain basement, half-off, sale priced towels. They worked just fine.

The waxing phase went without incident and soon my pride and joy was shining like new money. Mission accomplished.

I had hoped that rolling the windows down would be easier than getting them up, but that was not to be. It was a repeat of the elephant walk. I added that problem to a list of things I needed to do to finish "sorting out" the car. This (I learned from Shelby guru Jerry Oldridge) is the process of taking a car that looks good and making everything function properly. It's the final stage of a restoration if you plan on actually driving the car. And the more extensive the restoration, the more issues will probably need to be sorted out.

Well, at least the car was clean and shiny now, and I probably wouldn't need the windows to crank properly until the next time I washed it. To finish things up I opened the trunk to clean the spare Cragar wheel. Yikes! Man the lifeboats! We're taking on water! Yes, the trunk area was "slightly damp." The fun just never ends. I dried things out the best I could and added that to my "sorting out" list.

I knew these were things I couldn't fix myself so I sent a quick email to Jim Cowles (the amazing guy in Green Bay who restored my car) to see if he knew a good shop in the Houston area that could help me out. He seemed surprised that I had washed my car with a bucket and a hose, and informed me that no one did that anymore. Apparently a squirt bottle and a microfiber cloth is the hot tip these days. In any case, he put me on to Bruce Siegel at SureFire Mustang Restorations to look into my issues. I called Bruce that evening and he was at my house by noon the next day – Sunday. How's that for service?

For the windows he diagnosed torn moleskin in the channels that the windows slide up and down in. Probably a result of my insistence on factory original parts everywhere possible. Fifty-year-old moleskin is apparently not the hot tip of the day. The car would need to go into his shop.

There seemed to be two problems with the trunk leak. One was the rubber seal on the trunk lid, which did not appear to be aligned for optimum contact with the opening. Not a big deal. But the other problem was more serious. Water was getting in around the rear window somewhere… actually everywhere. He couldn't be sure, but it looked like there was no bedding glaze where the glass seals to the body. Again, the car would need to be in his shop to fix this problem. So we scheduled a day later in the week for me to drop it off.

After getting the car in his shop, Bruce confirmed all of his original suspicions. The door glass channels needed new moleskin. The rubber trunk lid seal needed repositioning, and the rear glass needed to come out and then be reset – with bedding glaze this time. I OK'd all the work and he got it done in two days. That guy doesn't waste any time.

Now you may be thinking that these problems were the fault of the restoration shop, but I can't let you leave with that impression. Jim Cowles worked miracles with this car. And more important, he was honest and trustworthy. When you live 1,300 miles from the restoration shop, those are critical factors.

No, the problem wasn't Jim; the problem was poor communications and contradictory instructions from… ME. Before I sent my car for restoration I mentioned that I planned on driving it. But after the process got started I became obsessive (some would say anal) about using date-code correct, assembly line parts and getting all the details concours perfect.

Among other things, I had Jim use NOS rear wheel brake cylinders; even though no one would ever see them. We exchanged multiple emails about the correct washers for certain bolts. And I had him swap out the master cylinder he originally put in the car because it was a later style that didn't require an adapter where the brake lines screw in. Carryovers should have the early style with those adapters. So I'm sure he got the impression that this was turning into a show car. And show cars don't need messy black glaze oozing out around the rear window. They never see rain and they certainly don't get washed in the driveway with a bucket and a hose. Ha, ha!

Lesson learned – communicate better. I give you this advice for free since I'll never need it again. One restoration is enough for this guy. From now on it's just me and 087 out on the open road together; clean and shiny and having fun. That's my life living with a legend… and loving every minute of it.