The Road Doesn't Always Take You Where You Intend To Go

– Steve Sloan
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Did you ever set out for a ride in your car with a particular destination in mind, only to end up somewhere completely different after having the drive of your life? That's what I felt like during my latest research journey.

It all started when I received an email from a fairly new 1966 GT350 owner. He had read some of my articles in *The Shelby American* and had a question about the **CarryoverGT350.com** web site. In the process of talking with him it came out that his GT350 has the original engine from a Carryover. What a hoot! My first question was, "*Which Carryover?*" His reply was, "*I don't know.*"

Huh? How could he know his engine came from a Carryover car and not know which one?

Let me stop here for a minute and explain two things. First, this owner wishes for both him and his car to remain anonymous. That makes telling this story a little difficult. To minimize the confusion I'll refer to him as "Mr. X" and his car as 6SXXX. Second, a Carryover is one of the first 252 1966 GT350s produced, and they're a little different than the cars that followed. Specific details on that can be found in the latest SAAC Registry and on the **www.CarryoverGT350.com** website.

A little more questioning of Mr. X revealed that he had already contacted the 1965-66 GT350 Registrar, Howard Pardee and provided the Ford VIN stamped on his engine block. He was informed that the engine was from a Carryover GT350. However, Pardee wouldn't say which car it was. The reason for that was the club's airtight policy of not revealing corresponding Ford and Shelby VINs. In this case, Mr. X knew the Ford VIN but if Pardee told him the corresponding Shelby VIN, it would violate that policy.

For those who may not already know, for 1965-66-67 Shelbys received regular Ford vehicle identification numbers as they were being built on the Ford assembly line. This VIN is critical evidence in proving whether a car is a legitimate Shelby and exactly which Shelby it is. It is stamped in four places on the car. (The cars did not receive Shelby serial numbers until they were completed at Shelby American.)

Three of those Ford VINs are stamped on the metal chassis of the car and hidden from view under normal circumstances. One stamping is on the passenger side inner fender panel, hidden under the outer fender lip. To see it you must loosen the bolts on the outer fender and pry it up to

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The 1965/1966/1967 Ford and Shelby VINs are the Holy Grail of these cars. They absolutely prove a car is or is not a genuine Shelby.

SAAC is extremely fortunate to have a complete list of these corresponding serial numbers for each and every 1965, 1966, and 1967 Shelby. SAAC is also extremely fortunate to have kept this list out of the public eye for fifty years. The Registrars keep them absolutely confidential.

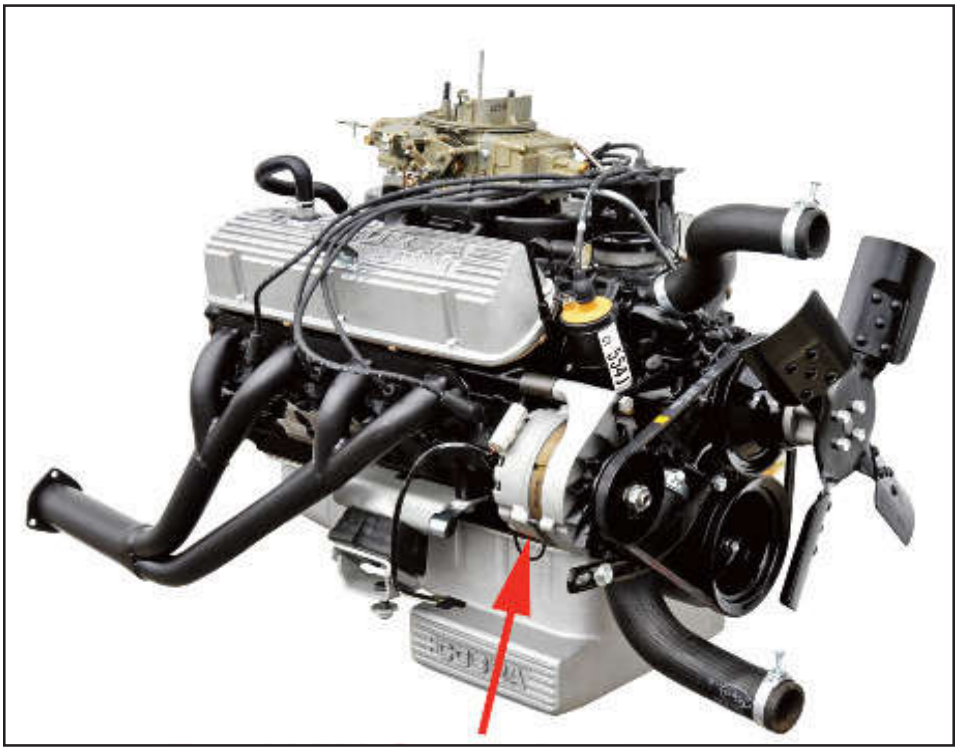
It is SAAC's policy – carved in stone – not to provide either the Ford or Shelby serial numbers to anyone. SAAC will only confirm or deny that a number corresponds to factory records.

look underneath. There's another stamping on the driver's side inner fender panel, similarly hidden by the fender bolted over it. Then there's a stamping under the Shelby VIN tag. The rivets of that tag must be drilled out and the tag removed to see that stamping. [*Note: On some of the Carryovers (30 cars known so far) that third stamping is not precisely under the Shelby VIN tag. It's in that general area, but further out on the inner fender lip and covered up by the outer fender.*]

The fourth stamping is on the engine block and can be seen from below the car. Engines are easily swapped between cars, so this stamping doesn't prove anything about the legitimacy of the car the engine currently resides in. But it does let you know if that engine is original to that particular car. In that case, the VIN on the engine will match those found on the chassis.

Each 1965-66 GT350 actually has two different VINs. The Ford VIN (stamped in four places as just described) was used to identify the car during Ford production, and was used to describe the car in production and shipping records. The Shelby VIN was stamped into the car's aluminum Shelby VIN tag (and a corresponding Shelby VIN stamped into the passenger side fender apron). SAAC has the factory records showing which Ford VIN goes with each Shelby VIN. That information is kept confidential because it is used to determine if a particular chassis is a legitimate Shelby, and if so, which Shelby. If you send the '65-'66 Registrar just one of those two numbers, he won't tell you the other one. But if you send him both a Ford and a Shelby VIN he will tell you if they match up or not. That is a simple yes or no response.

Okay, back to our story. At this point I was hooked. If I could find out the Carryover that Mr. X's engine came from, I might be able to reunite that engine with its original car. I asked him if he was open to selling his engine to the owner of the original car (if I could find that car and owner). He said that was a possibility. He didn't really want to part with it, but he understood how much that engine might mean to a fellow owner.



VIN stamping location on a 289 Hi-Po engine. It's on the block, just above the oil pan (hidden from view in this picture by the alternator). Photo courtesy of Virginia Classic Mustang.

Touching base with Pardee yielded little else. He wouldn't tell me the Shelby VIN of the donor car, and Mr. X wouldn't share the Ford VIN from the engine. So I was on a quest to find a Carryover who's Shelby or Ford VIN I didn't know, and contact information for the current owner. No problem for an ace Shelby detective, eh? All Pardee could add was that his records indicated that the donor car did not have its original engine when purchased by the first known owner. That wasn't much to go on. Oh, and Pardee had tried getting in touch with the last known owner, but his contact information for that person was no longer valid.

Hmmm… Through the COG (Carryover Owners Group) I know 86 owners who represent 91 total Carryovers. So I sent a list of all those cars to Pardee to see if it might be one of them. If so, I could give him up-to-date owner contact info. No luck. It wasn't one of those cars.

My next step was to recruit the COG into the search. My email to the group started like this:

"*I'm looking for a Carryover whose number I don't know and whose engine is now in a later 1966 GT350 whose identity I can't reveal during my search.*"

Ford VIN stamping on the engine block (last six digits purposely blurred)

I followed that up with the information Pardee shared. Sure, it was a long shot, but what else could I do?

Well, after a week or two of no results I realized the answer to that question. I started reading the history of all 252 Carryovers in the Registry, looking for one that did not have its original engine when purchased by its first known owner.

"*Honey, will you make a really large pot of coffee, please.*"

By the time I got into the two-hundred count, all I'd learned was that my bladder must have gotten smaller with age. That coffee was running through me fast! Then I read the information on 6S231. Bingo! There was no original owner named and the first owner listed is said to have bought the car without an engine. Yee Ha! This sounded like the car I was looking for. Continuing on through number 252 yielded no other car with anything like that in its history.

The last listed owner of 6S231 was Curt Behlmer of Studio City, California. Several of the COG members live in California, so I felt I had a pretty good chance of finding him. Hopefully, he still owned the car.

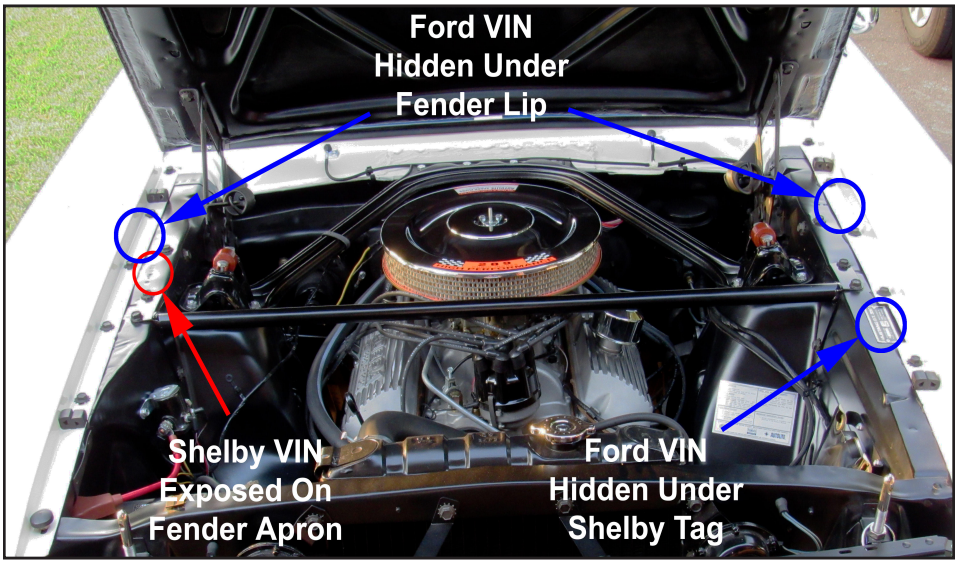
Before tapping into my COG resources again I thought I'd better run my research by Pardee. I didn't want to send my fellow owners on a wild goose chase. A quick email to him with my guess about 6S231 solicited this four word reply, "*Not a bad guess.*" That's as close as he would get to saying I was correct without violating SAAC's policy. I took that as confirmation of my conclusion and was now ready to turn the COG loose looking for that last known owner.

That part of this quest was almost too easy. It turned out that one of the COG members actually knows Curt and had seen the car a long time ago. Oh, yeah! Now to get back to Mr. X and find out how he wanted to proceed with making contact – email, phone call, text message… whatever.

To say Mr. X was shocked would be an understatement. He hadn't thought I had any chance of figuring out which car his engine came from; much less being able to contact the owner. He wanted a few days to think things over before doing anything. I advised my COG pal to hold off on making any contact with Curt for a little while.

In the mean time, I went back to reread the Registry entry for 6S231. When I first skimmed over that information something clicked in the back of my mind; there was something odd there that needed further attention. But I had ignored that in my haste to identify the car that Mr. X's engine had come from and it's owner. Now I had time to go back and follow-up on my original feeling that something about 6S231 needed a closer look. What a can of worms that opened up.

Here's what the 2019 Registry says: ***6S231***. *White. Date ordered 10/13/65. Shipped to Mutual Ford, Inc. (Springfield, MA) 10/28/65; they were invoiced $3,547 plus $214 for Cragar wheels plus $30 for LeMans stripes plus $40 rear seats plus $100 freight for a total $3,931 which was paid 11/15/65. Purchased by Cary McSquid (Manhattan Beach, CA) without engine; front clip replaced due to a number of accidents. It had been painted white, light green, red and then white again. The left door had been painted blue, red and then white. The side scoops were filled in and the quarter windows had been replaced with vents which were glued-in due to the removal of the braces. The rear seat and over-ride traction bars were missing. McSquid had worked for Shelby American in the production department from '65 to 1/66, modifying the first 252 carryover cars '65 GT instrument panels' wiring for the '66 tach, and he recognized his own work in this car. McSquid was a Navy UDT frogman during the Korean war. During a clandestine operation behind the lines, he was captured by the North Koreans, subsequently escaped from a POW camp and received the Navy Cross. He restored the car and passed away 1/97, leaving it to his stepson, Curt Behlmer (Studio City, CA). Curt says he intends to drive it at open track events like Cary did.*



Ford & Shelby VINs stamped into Mustang unibody.

After reading that information again I realized that the car mentioned was not only missing its original engine when purchased by the first known owner, but it also had the front clip replaced (effectively everything forward of the firewall). That's important.

With the original front clip missing and the original engine gone, none of the four Ford VIN stampings were with that chassis when purchased by the first known owner. And the Shelby VIN stamping on the passenger fender apron was also absent. How did anyone determine it was a legitimate Shelby, much less which one?

Another message to Pardee revealed that those answers were not in his computer database. It seemed to me they must lie with the first known owner, the late Cary McSquid. So I

started digging up everything I could find about him. I remembered seeing his name in an old issue of *The Marque* where there was a mention of McSquid talking about all the trouble he had, while he was working at Shelby American, doing the wiring changes needed to swap out the regular 1965 dash panel for the 5-dial GT panel in the first 252 1966 GT350s. (Right now I can't remember which issue that was in and SAAC does not have a searchable archive for the older issues.) Some version of this story appears in the 1997 and 2011 issues of The Registry. Here's an excerpt from the 1997 Registry entry for 6S231:

"*McSquid had worked for Shelby American in the production department from 9/65 to 1/66, replacing the 1st 252 '65 instrument panels with '66 pieces, and he recognized his own work.*"

And an excerpt from the 2011 Registry entry for 6S231:

"*McSquid had worked for Shelby American in the production department from '65 to 1/66, replacing the first 252 '65 instrument panels with '65 GT pieces, and recognized his own work in this car.*"

And here's a paragraph from the 2011 Registry, page 266:

"*The 1965 GT dash bezel was not included on the first production 1966 GT350s; rather, the horizontal speedometer unit was, and it was swapped for the new five-gauge cluster at Shelby American. Most, if not all, of the swap over was performed by Shelby American employee Cary McSquid. It was not a difficult process, but some new wiring did need to be run so it was not a simple "plug-and-play" change. The five-dial dash had an accompanying glove compartment door (the trim patterns on the two pieces were matched). However, when the five-dial dashes were installed, the cars kept their 1965-style glove box doors.*"

We now know those instrument panel swaps didn't actually happen. Recent research has revealed that those first 252 cars arrived at Shelby American with the 1965 5-dial GT instrument panel already installed by Ford. Factory documents and physical evidence on the cars prove that. So, in an old copy of *The Marque* and in the 1997 and 2011 Registries, we have McSquid's story about swapping out instrument panels at Shelby American and his recognizing that work in 6S231. However, in the 2019 Registry (22 years after McSquid's death in 1997) the story has changed. Now he's supposed to have recognized his work wiring in the tachs on the first 252 1966 GT350s. Something's not right there. It looks to me like McSquid initially told the story of wiring instrument panel swaps, but when SAAC realized that didn't happen (well after he had passed away) they revised his story in their publications to show him installing tachs.

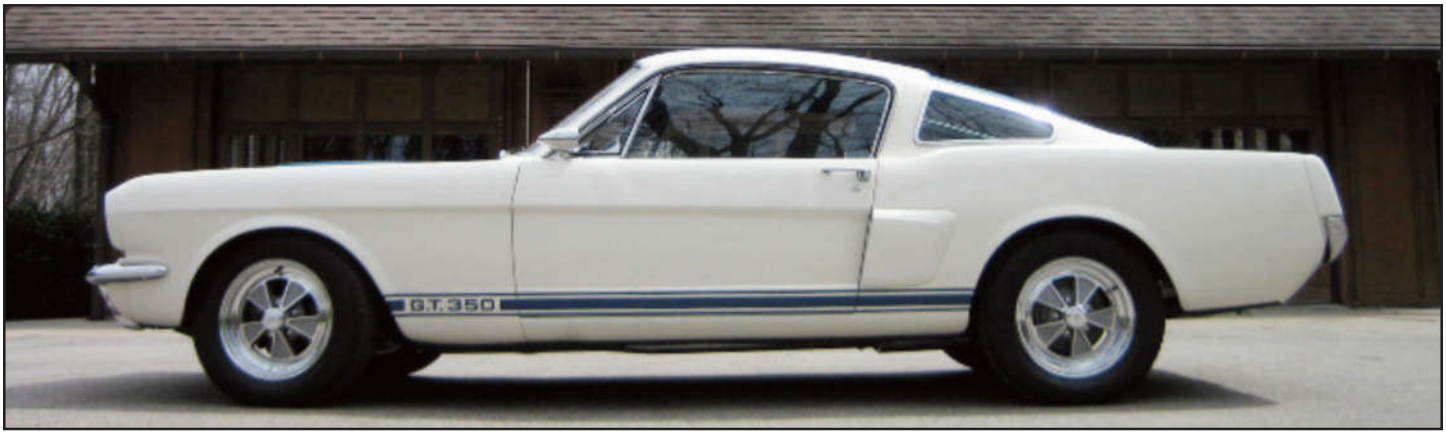
Why does this matter? Because it seems we only have McSquid's word that the car currently listed as 6S231 is a legit Shelby and is in fact 6S231. He's noted as describing some features found on the car that were unique to 1966 GT350s. But his strongest testimony that the car was a Carryover is the telling of a story that we now know is factually incorrect. And there's no explanation at all for why the car was claimed to be 6S231.

Perhaps the Shelby VIN tag came with the car. Or maybe the Shelby VIN is on the title. But even if both those things are true, how can you know for sure that those two items go with that chassis? *OUCH!*

I was excited to figure out that 6S231 is the source Carryover for the engine that now resides in Mr. X's car. And I was thrilled that one of my COG buddies knows the owner of 6S231. Although I was disappointed in discovering that what is now listed as 6S231 "might" not be authentic. Or maybe it is. All I can say for certain is there are unanswered questions. I tend to think the car is legit because from what I've been able to learn about Cary McSquid, he was an honest and honorable guy who, like many of us, might not have had a perfect memory. But that's just my personal opinion.

At this point I've shut this project down. I have no desire to contact the current owner and start the conversation with, "*Can you prove the car you have is 6S231?*" I'm sure Mr. X would want the answer to that question before he begins any negotiations about the engine he has.

So while the original goal of this project may not have been accomplished (reuniting an engine with its original car), I still had a great time on this adventure. And having Howard Pardee and a whole corral of fellow owners willing to help with research like this really makes the journey fun, regardless of the destination eventually arrived at.



6S098, owned by Chuck Olenyk. This is what a nicely restored Carryover looks like.