REUNION

Doug Cresanta reunites 6S188 with its original owner.

"*This feels just like old times*," claimed Jim Phelps, with a big smile on his face as he shifted smoothly from third into fourth gear. It's been almost 40 years since he has driven the Shelby.

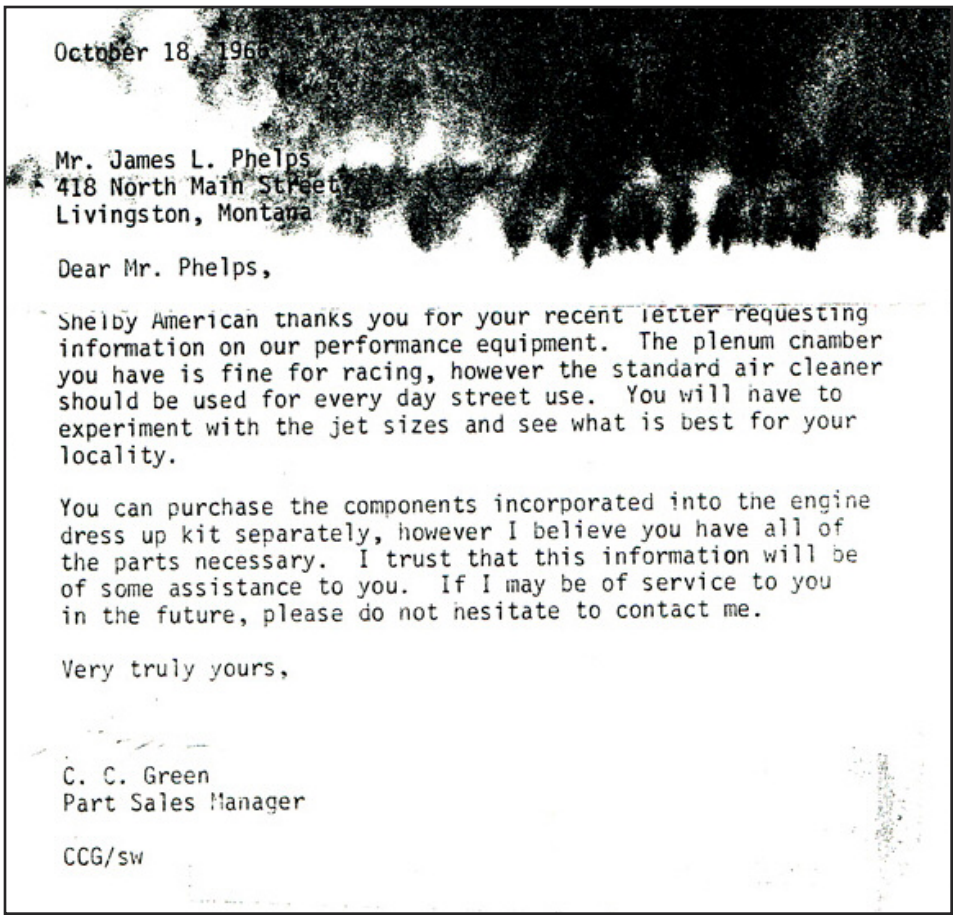
Phelps purchased 6S188, brand new, from Archie Cochran Ford in Billings, Montana in late 1965. "*I wasn't too sure about the purchase until I got behind the wheel for the first time. After that, I was a happy camper! You knew you could run with the Big Dogs*," he recalled. Montana was one of two states that had no speed limit in the 1960s.

Rather than being delivered, the car was picked up at the factory by one of Cochran Ford's salesmen, Bill Mavity. A radio was installed at the factory before Mavity left for Montana and the Shelby American employee tasked with doing the work reportedly grumbled, "*You don't listen to radios while driving Shelbys...*" Once in Phelps' hands, he installed an over-the-counter Shelby wood steering wheel and entered the car in SCCA rallyes and gymkhanas.

Six years later, after being used as Phelps' daily driver, work requirements and family needs dictated that the Shelby be replaced by a pick-up truck. 6S188 was purchased in April, 1972 by James Knudson of Boise, Idaho. The car was used for the next three years getting Knudson back and forth to college. In 1975 it was purchased by Bill Clements of Hardin, Montana. He used it as a daily driver until two things happened almost simultaneously in 1978: a mechanical problem sidelined the car at the same time that duty called Clements into military service. The Shelby was parked in a sugar beet warehouse where it remained for the next 15 years.

Fast forward to 1991 when SAAC member Doug Cresanta of New Jersey met 6S188's owner while working for the same company. It wasn't long before Cresanta was able to acquire the car. While cleaning out the trunk, he found a letter from Shelby American addressed to James Phelps in Livingston, Montana. Using this as a lead, Cresanta was able to make contact with Phelps and quickly verified that he was, indeed, the car's original owner.

Doug Cresanta [*left*] and Jim Phelps get acquainted in Montana. And Phelps gets to do something he never thought he would do again—drive the Shelby GT350 he had purchased more than 40 years ago.



October 18, 1966

Mr. James L. Phelps
418 North Main Street
Livingston, Montana

Dear Mr. Phelps,

Shelby American thanks you for your recent letter requesting information on our performance equipment. The plenum chamber you have is fine for racing, however the standard air cleaner should be used for every day street use. You will have to experiment with the jet sizes and see what is best for your locality.

You can purchase the components incorporated into the engine dress up kit separately, however I believe you have all of the parts necessary. I trust that this information will be of some assistance to you. If I may be of service to you in the future, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

C. C. Green
Part Sales Manager

CCG/sw

Cresanta soon made plans to travel to Montana to meet Phelps. He was able to share all of the information on the car he had gathered. Obtaining more—from the car's original owner— was a real bonus. The two men became friends and Cresanta shared photos of the car and experiences he had with it during his ownership, which included driving it in a half dozen SAAC convention open track events.

When Salt Lake City, Utah was announced as SAAC-32's location, Cresanta decided to drive the car there from New Jersey, and included a stop in Livingston, Montana. There, the car's original owner would be reunited with the car he had owned for the first six years of its life.

Is this a happy face, or what?

"*The feel, the sound, the smell... it all brings back lots of memories*," said Phelps. "*An absolute joy to drive anywhere. You knew you could run with anything on the road. Getting to drive her after all these years has been an absolutely wonderful treat. It sure would be nice to have another one*."

It was hard to tell who was having more fun: Jim Phelps driving his old Shelby or Doug Cresanta, watching him drive it. According to Cresanta, it was one of the coolest things he's ever done. Both men agreed it was a great experience. Who knows? History just might repeat itself.

"*It sure looks nice sitting in my garage again*." Like just about every former Shelby owner, Phelps found himself wishing he had never sold his car. The car was right at home on the wide open roads of Montana [*left*].

Doug Cresanta puts 6S188 through its paces at SAAC-28 at Nashville Superspeedway in May of 2003. The car is presently undergoing a cosmetic restoration and repaint so it will be done in time for SAAC-34.