

Dr Bednar  
Jace Hersey  
FYS Roadside America  
Road Narrative

### The Unexpected Legacy

As far back as I can remember, I always looked forward to visiting my Uncle Joe's lake house for the 4th of July and other times throughout the year. It was always a special time for our families to get together and to make memories. But, the real excitement for me was walking across the street from his home, where my Uncle Joe had his collection of automobiles in his "car barn" as we all called it. Inside, there was everything from muscle cars to classic cars. Although each car was unique in its own way, there was one car that I was always drawn to—his 2007 Shelby Ford Mustang. Even at an early age, to me, that Mustang was more than just a car. Every visit, I would have to just sit inside it and admire it—knowing later that Uncle Joe would always take me for a ride. Early on, I knew the Shelby was fast and looked cool, especially with those LeMans style silver racing stripes and the hood scoop that was fashioned after the famous Shelby Cobra roadster.

That Mustang had an interesting history. After my uncle owned it for numerous years, he sold it to my grandfather, who owned it for several years before selling it back to my Uncle Joe. You see, they had an agreement that if my grandfather ever decided to sell it, he would give my uncle the first right of refusal...which he did. I still remember hearing them claim they both got the best bargain. It actually became a family joke—the car that never left the family. The joking back and forth through the years gave the car even more meaning to me and to our whole family.

As I grew older, I learned about the man Carroll Shelby, his cars, as well as the real difference between a Mustang and a Shelby GT Mustang. In fact, in 2019, my

father, my grandfather, and I went to see the movie Shelby versus Ferrari which gave me the background story of Carroll Shelby and his impact on automobile racing.

Throughout the movie, I couldn't help thinking about the times Uncle Joe would take me for rides in his Shelby Mustang, and I understood the connections that my family had to the Shelby legacy. It was part of our family story too. I realized that these experiences, these memories, and these feelings that I had sharing unforgettable times with my family influenced my passion for this car. As far as how a Shelby GT Mustang differs from a Ford GT Mustang, I learned that the Shelby version has numerous upgrades based on sophisticated racing technology. In addition, Carroll Shelby's influence can be seen throughout the vehicle as all the Shelby modifications are completed at Shelby Automobiles, Inc., in Las Vegas, Nevada,

Several years later, Uncle Joe must have understood how important that car was and had always been to me. During one of my visits to see him, we walked over to the see the Mustang, as we had done so many times before, and he said my name, and all of a sudden threw me the keys. Initially, I thought it was just for a ride around the block and that he wanted me to drive this time. But then, he looked at me and said, "IT'S YOURS!" I was totally speechless, and I didn't even know what to say...I was in shock...and I didn't even believe what I had just heard. The Shelby Mustang that I had always loved was mine. On that day, which I will never forget, my uncle didn't just give me an amazing automobile, he passed on a family treasure. Since 2007, this car had been part of my family, an important part of my visits to see him, memories over the years, and it now belonged to me!

Being gifted this Mustang, that had so many memories attached to it, taught me meaningful life lessons. It symbolizes the importance of family connections, as my Uncle Joe, and grandfather shared in the passing of this car back and forth before it

was given to me...passing down not just an automobile but passing down the history and memories associated with this automobile. All of these lessons, made me realize that the most important legacy was not the passing down of this car but instead the passing down the bond we built in our family over the shared experiences with this automobile.

Looking back, at the time, I didn't realize that all those trips to see my uncle, all those visits to the car barn, and all the rides in the Shelby would create the love and appreciation I now have for automobiles. After this experience, I've also come to realize that the most meaningful gifts aren't necessarily material ones. What the Shelby first meant to me, and what it means to me now, have changed. I'm hoping my personal growth and maturity over time will help the reader understand why I feel as I do. Perhaps, the most valuable lesson I have taken away from this experience is that you can't place a dollar amount on family, memories, or someone's generosity. I now understand that the day my uncle gifted the car to me, he gave me more than the Shelby GT Mustang. I will always look at the Mustang and think of all the memories linked to it. I now understand that a person's generosity should never be measured by 'what' is given. It should be measured by the thoughtfulness, kindness, and memories the gift creates. Today, The Shelby GT Mustang, has only 2,700 miles on it and is stored in my parent's garage back home in Montgomery. As far as the future, I am hoping one day that I will have my own car barn just like my Uncle Joe.



My Grandfather & me with The Shelby Mustang



Uncle Joe's Car Barn



Carroll Shelby



Uncle Joe