



DRAGONSNAKES SLALOM SNAKE

Shelby American factory records, consisting of work orders, sales invoices and shipping invoices, provide a clear picture of Cobra production some forty-plus years ago. While Shelby American's aftermarket parts catalog was filled with competition or competition-inspired parts and pieces, factory documents show that very few cars came from the factory with these exotic items. Basically, there were two packages of "accessories" available: "Group A" and "Group B." They were not performance components but appearance items like a chromed air cleaner, front and rear bumpers, chromed exhaust tips, chromed wire wheels, wind wings and sun visors.

It's not difficult to see why so very few street Cobras were not ordered with competition parts like roll bars, Halibrand wheels, quick jacking pads and the like: when the cars were new, between 1963 and 1965, there just wasn't anything else on the street that was as fast. Who needed more?

Silly question. Someone always needs more. But with small block Cobras, that desire didn't come right away. As original owners got used to the cars and put some miles on them, they then began to upgrade them, using the Shelby American parts catalog as a guide. They would either order the parts from Shelby American directly and if they were handy with tools, install them on their own. Or, they would bring their car and the newly arrived parts to their friendly local mechanic and have them installed. But most often the parts were ordered through the dealer they bought the car from and installed in the dealership's service department.

In the hierarchy of importance, historically speaking, factory-installed is the gold standard because the parts were genuine "factory" pieces, the car had them from day-one, and being installed at the factory indicates some standard of workmanship. Dealer-installed is one notch down, mostly because it can be difficult to document and as every dealer's service department was different, there were no real standards. Owner-installed is at the bottom because parts could have been purchased anywhere, new or used, and installed at any time. Most owners had little experience with anything other than their own car.

Leaf spring Cobras came in two basic flavors: street and competition. However, "competition" was further divided into road race versions, a Dragonsnake for drag racing and a Slalom Snake for autocrosses and slaloms.

The Slalom Special or 'Slalom Snake' as it became known, was first announced in a press release by Deke Houlgate on Dec 8, 1964. It was promoted as a "Cobra equipped for slalom, gymkhanas, autocrosses, time trials and other sports car competitive games." Listing at a hefty \$6,995, the Slalom Snake came with front and rear anti-roll bars, Koni shock absorbers, 15" x 6" American 5-spoke magnesium wheels, high performance Goodyear Blue Streak tires, competition roll bar, air scoops for the brakes and a hood scoop for the carburetor. The also had the bumper bars deleted, side-exiting exhausts and a 1963 Chevrolet SS badge attached to the boot lid. Only two cars were invoiced by Shelby American as "Slalom Specials," CSX2522 the prototype, and CSX2537.



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Original Shelby American publicity photo of CSX2522, the prototype Slalom Snake.

Hired as a "Kelly Girl," Helen Green worked at Shelby American in the high performance parts department. She and her husband, Chuck Green, were active autocrossers with their 1964 Corvette Stingray. Carroll Shelby became aware of the success they had been experiencing after talking to Helen on several occasions. This led Shelby to meet Chuck Green and he hired him to manage the aftermarket parts department. Shelby offered Green the use of a Cobra to autocross and promote the Slalom Snake option. That car turned out to be CSX2522. If Chuck and Helen were successful in their Corvette, they were even more so with the Cobra.

Chuck was the father of the Cobra Owners Club and he organized many competition, rally and touring events for Cobra owners in the Los Angeles area. Helen was extremely active as well, running a driving school for women at Shelby American and competing in the Cobra as well. Many times Chuck and Helen shared Top Time of the Day in both the men's and women's classes at autocrosses from Los Angeles to Phoenix.

There comes a tipping point when a factory sponsored car, whose purpose is to gain publicity, is so successful that it causes a backlash. At one event, Chuck Green managed to sideswipe a light pole, damaging CSX2522's passenger side enough that Shelby told him to "get his own car." That was probably just as well because autocross competitors had begun complaining about the unfairness of having to compete against a factory-sponsored car at these amateur events.

So, Chuck and Helen gave up the Slalom Snake. They purchased CSX2526, a black street car which had been a factory demonstrator. When they got it at Hi-Performance Motors it had 1000 miles on it and was discounted \$250. They later brought it back to the dealership because the hardening had come off the lifters and damaged the camshaft. It was under warranty, so while it was disassembled Chuck had a high-rev kit installed. He also flared the fenders and installed American 5-spoke magnesium wheels. For the next two years, Chuck and Helen competed



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almost every weekend with the Cobra, winning hundreds of trophies. In 1967 they sold the car to Steve Schuler, who still owns it.



CSX2537 as it presently sits in the Shelby American Collection in Boulder.

After Green's accident the prototype Slalom Snake was repaired and sold to Hayward Ford in the San Francisco Bay area on Dec 29, 1964. Hayward's Sales Manager, Roy Miller, used it for a number of months as his personal transportation until it was finally sold. Rich Kotz of San Jose, California purchased it in 1967. In December of 1969 it was purchased by Ron Tredway of Los Altos, California. Tredway used it for autocrossing and drag racing until 1974. In the intervening years, he has either been restoring the car or thinking about restoring the car. It is fairly close to completion at this time.

The other Slalom Snake, CSX2537, was also white with a red interior. The original owner prepared the car for SCCA racing in the late 1960s and it eventually became a vintage race car for the past 25 years. After sustaining some front end damage at Steamboat Springs, Colorado race in 1996, it was sold to Bill Murray of Murray Racing in Longmont, Colorado. It was then purchased back by Patrick Hogan in 2001. During the next four years the car was painstakingly restored to its original Slalom Snake specifications, painted white with twin red stripes, by Bill Murray. It is presently on display at the Shelby American Collection in Boulder, Colorado.



DRAGONSNAKES

SLALOM SNAKE



Chuck Green at the wheel of CSX2522 in 1964.