

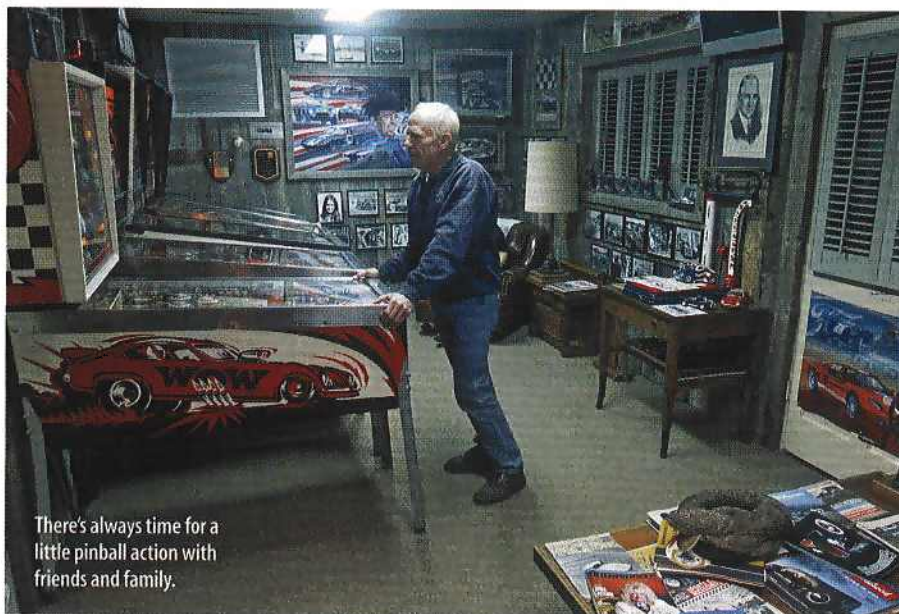
There's certainly more here than meets the eye. One can spend many hours admiring all the wonderful memorabilia.

LYNN PARK GARAGE

A Cobra fanatic through and through.

Story by D. Randy Riggs

Photography by David Newhardt



There's always time for a little pinball action with friends and family.

For many sports car enthusiasts, owning just a single original Shelby Cobra would be the stuff of dreams. A 289 or 427—it wouldn't matter. But for this Southern California collector, one Cobra alone won't get him through the day.

Lynn Park grew up with Fords in his family and was fascinated with cars and engines from early-on. Park enjoyed tinkering with his Mom's Ford and "usually had it running by the time she needed to drive somewhere."

A hand-me-down '56 Ford was his first ride when he turned 16, and Park immediately went to work dropping a 361cid Edsel V8 into the car. In short

order he was drag racing at the San Fernando dragstrip in Southern California's San Fernando Valley, where he could also be found on Wednesday evenings cruising up and down Van Nuys Boulevard and chowing down on "Big Boy" hamburgers at the local Bob's drive-in restaurant.

"If you grew up in the Valley, you just had to go to Bob's," Park remembers. "It was just such a carefree time—a wonderful time to grow up."

The Shelby Cobra happened along at about the time Ford began pushing performance and Park's first sighting of a Cobra came on the September 1962 cover of *Road & Track*, which totally blew him away. He visited Shelby American the very next week but the near \$6000 price meant that a Cobra would have to wait.

Drag racing continued to occupy Park's extracurricular car activities until he went in the Army but in late 1969 after the military stint, he finally built his own "Cobra," converting an AC Aceca coupe by installing a 289 V8 and making other modifications. Thirty-five years later, there are 10 "real" Cobras taking up space in Park's wonderful collection—a long way up from that first '56 Ford.

With 10 Cobras on hand, Park had to start somewhere, and that was in early 1970 when he went to an auto body shop in Burbank to get a grille shell straightened. The fellow there told him, "I've got a Cobra out in the back."

Park investigated and it had some front end damage and the guy had turned down a \$2000 offer. "So I offered him \$2100—that I had to borrow—and he took it. The Cobra had a hardtop with it which I sold for \$500, so out of pocket for \$1600, I had a Cobra!"



▲ Chili anyone? Park collects momentos as he goes, rather than buying them at auction.

In 1972 he found another Cobra in Northern California that had been taken apart and was the 10th built (CSX2010). It's the No. 97 car that Park races today in HMSA and at the Monterey Historics.

"It was a restoration project that had been abandoned. Total out of pocket expenses weren't that much because I did most of the work myself except for body and paint and, because of the gas crunch in that time period, Cobras were probably at their all-time low in price—especially one that was apart. During the decade of the '70s they never did much in price. I was

always a sucker for a car that needed help.

"That's probably my favorite car because I've had it the longest. It was the first recipient of the 'Best Ford' award given at Monterey, it's been invited and shown at Pebble Beach and this last Monterey my son Steve raced it for his first time in the Historic races.

"I went to the first Cobra convention in 1975 and that was pure nirvana for a Cobra nut. I have never wavered off that passion for Cobras from that point on."

In 1979, Park took his hobby one step further in starting Trigo Wheels, manufacturing new Cobra wheels. "We realized that there weren't enough Cobra wheels out there and the originals were becoming unsafe with age."

That was a departure from the company he took over from his father manufacturing, installing and servicing elevators, but eventually the ups and downs of that business encouraged him to sell it in 1998.

In collecting Cobras, Park knew that as time went on, the chances for finding original, unmolested examples were diminishing. So he set out to find the best example of a 289 and 427 that he could and in 1984 located two—CSX2515, a very nice original 289 that still looks much the way it did when it was built and CSX3203, another gem. It's a 427 with just 23,000 very unmolested original miles and also has its original hardtop.



Behind the 427 Cobra is Park's '56 Ford tow rig. Sweet!



Park takes his Samurai dragster to vintage drag racing meets.

vehicles that draw attention at any cruise night—Park's '56 Ford pickup powered by a 401cid Buick V8, an old style '32 Ford Cabriolet with a Dodge 270 Hemi under the hood, and an all-steel '40 Willys with a 392cid Hemi. The Ford pickup looks great pulling the trailer when Park's '66 "Samurai" front-engine dragster is loaded up and headed for a vintage drag racing event.

Of course, scattered about the garage is all the "neat stuff" that this sport and hobby seems to generate—artwork, petrolania, pinball machines and even a package of Carroll Shelby Chili—that are the reason that Park loves being in his garage.

In addition to being a regular in HMSA competition since 1983, Park serves on the Board of Directors for the Petersen Museum in Los Angeles and takes part in the twilight cruise nights that are organized by the Wally Parks NHRA Motorsports Museum in Pomona. At the vintage events Park gathers with his friends in the Wild West Racers group.

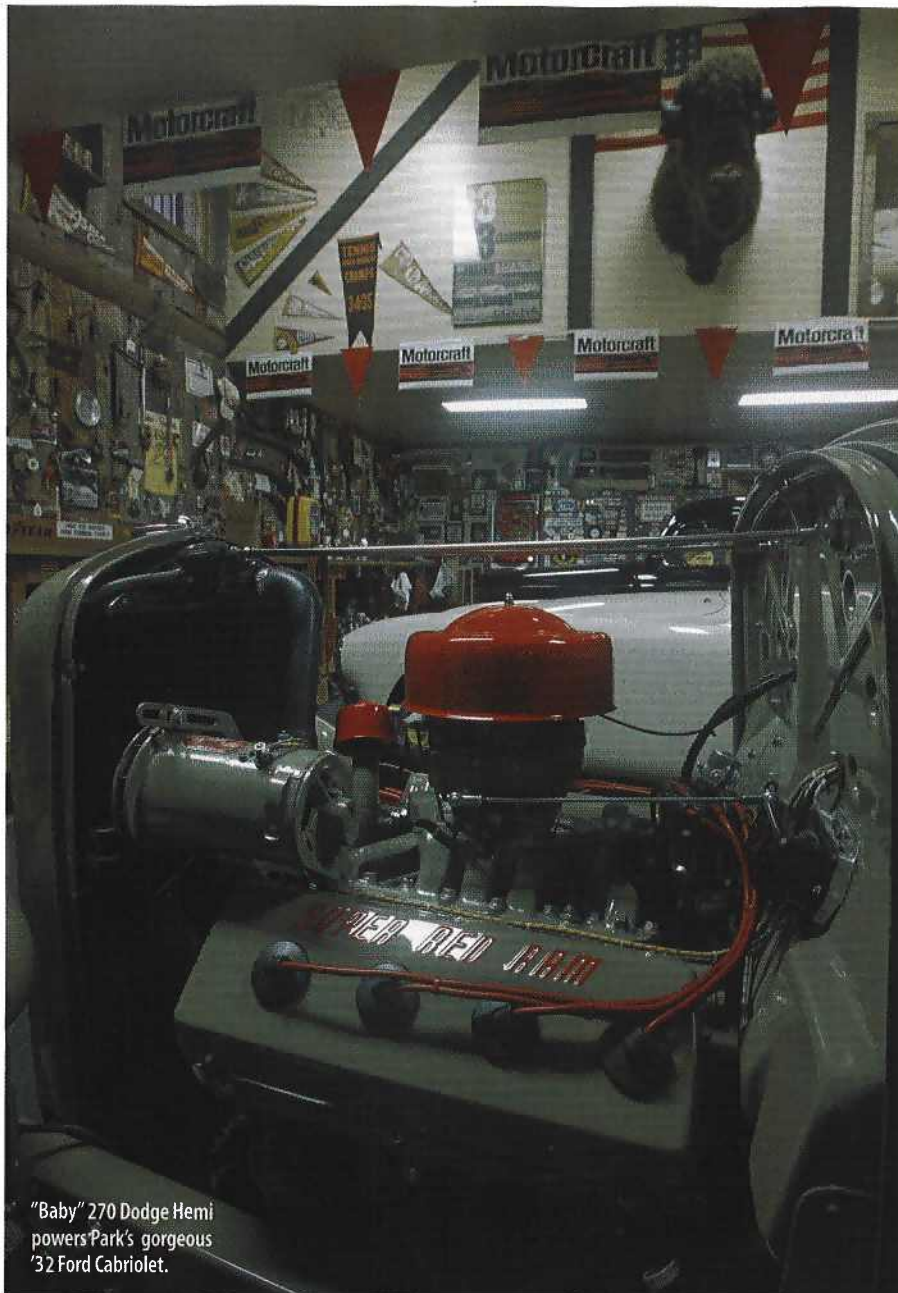
Park also considers himself lucky that his wife Susie shares his passion for the activities that surround vintage racing. "I have a dream of a wife who's traveled all over the U.S. with me and this past summer we hosted about 400 people from SAAC 30 here at the garage. That was amazing. Best of all, I have two sons who go racing with me, so it's really a family affair and what could be better than that?"



▲ Cobra artifacts dominate the scene throughout Lynn Park's eye-opener of a garage.



A hands-on enthusiast, Park likes to get his hands dirty.



"Baby" 270 Dodge Hemi powers Park's gorgeous '32 Ford Cabriolet.

Park's familiar No. 16 racing Cobra was one of the original five FIA cars (CSX2259), but was crashed heavily at Sebring in 1964 by Bob Johnson. It was nearly rolled into a ball but a friend of Park's who worked at Shelby back then got the wreckage and eventually Brian Anglist of Autokraft rebuilt the car.

CSX2176 is bright yellow and this 289 was purchased in 1995. It had minor rear body damage that was repaired and Park uses it primarily to drive on tours like the Cobra 1000—an event open only to original Cobras.

"There's a dull yellow Cobra (CSX2307) in the collection that we call 'The Dirt Bag,' and it was sold new to Ted Offenhauser. He drove it until 1975 and parked it in his backyard. It sat for 20 years and a friend of mine bought it, and I got it from him. I went through it and it's a real attention getter because of its not too nice condition.

"The white car (CSX2044) sat for 32 years after the owner knocked the muffler off it pulling into his garage. It came with a bunch of documentation and Shelby letters and my other 427 (CSX3156) is a run-of-the-mill 427 Cobra that went to Peru until 1989. I had to purchase a front-engined dragster the fellow had or he wouldn't sell me the 427."

A more recent addition is CSX 2248, one of just five Dragon Snakes built by Shelby American for drag racing. In its heyday it was known as "El Cid," and held an AHRA E.T. record of 10.86 in the quarter mile. Park bought the car from Carroll Shelby a couple years ago. He is currently restoring the car and plans to drag race it at selected Cobra and vintage drag racing events.

Mixed in with all the Cobras are three



CSX2259 is one of the original five FIA Cobras.



▲ Park is in the wheel business so this should come as no surprise.