

Pass It On®...

Go Fast, Go Long.

Carroll Shelby left his name on racetracks and cars all over the world. But it was at Le Mans, teamed up with family carmaker Ford, that Shelby ran the race he'll be remembered for.

At age 7, Carroll Shelby moved to Dallas, Texas. He was the son of working-class parents, balanced precariously on the poverty line. He had a leaky heart valve that reminded him that life could end any day. Might as well live it pedal to the metal.

Shelby rode his bicycle to dirt tracks where his Sunday afternoon worship of speed began. By age 15, he was driving his father's Ford, making repairs and keeping up the maintenance himself. At 18, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and pursued his need for speed above the ground. He quickly became a test pilot, flying an 11-seat Beechcraft and the Boeing B-29 Superfortress heavy bomber. When he finished his military stint, he tried making a living raising poultry and driving a dump truck. He went bankrupt. So, at age 29, he started his racing career.

Shelby raced borrowed cars on the amateur circuit. And he won. With each victory, a new sponsor recruited him. He set 17 speed records at Bonneville Salt Flats; he won trophies in England, France, and Mexico. He set hill climb records in Pennsylvania and New Hampshire, roaring around twisting dirt roads precariously close to the edge. And he began to make his mark in the endurance races: the Italian, Portuguese and British grand prix that require drivers to race through the night.

Endurance racing challenges the mettle of the driver as well as the metal of the car. Shelby had a hand in designing the chariots he trusted his life with. He modified transmissions, displacement, frames and bodies to get the perfect balance of strength and stamina. The race he is most famous for, the one he values the most, is Le Mans — a 24-hour race that is the true test of man and machine. He was the first American to win. This historic feat kicked off the next chapter of his life.

Shelby retired from racing because of his ongoing health issues and opened a training track and driving school. Here, Ford came calling. They wanted to compete in Le Mans to show the world

that Ford Motor Company was not only the world's biggest car producer but also built the fastest cars. The challenge was on. Shelby recruited legendary and irascible driver Ken Miles. They built the car from the ground up, blowing engines and transmissions on the test track until they got it right. When it was over, Ford was the king of Le Mans. And Shelby had reached legendary status.

In his racing life, Shelby crashed twice, enduring months of surgery and rehab. He burned up parts, went bankrupt, but still accomplished what few have done since. His heart leaked like a bad transmission, but he kept on the gas and never looked back.

Drive...[PassItOn.com](https://www.passiton.com)

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

The Foundation for a Better Life® promotes positive values to live by and pass along to others.

Copyright © 2024 | The Foundation for a Better Life®
All rights reserved. | www.passiton.com

Available under a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 License (international):
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>