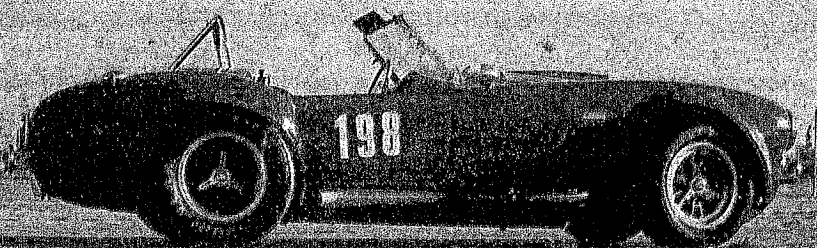


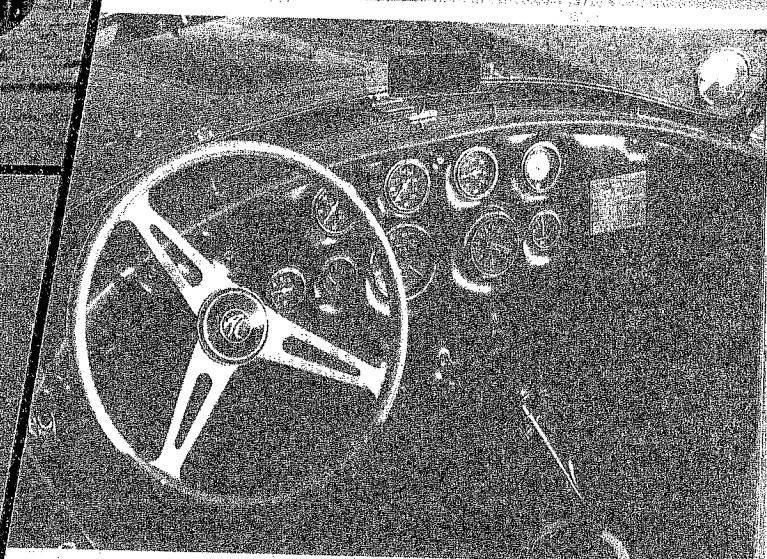
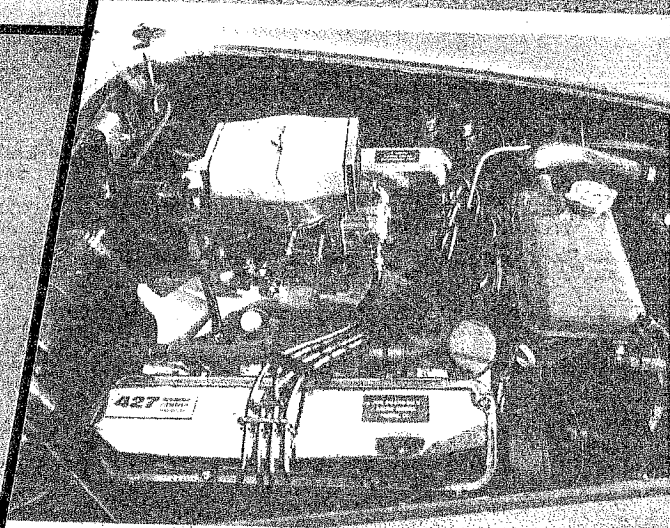
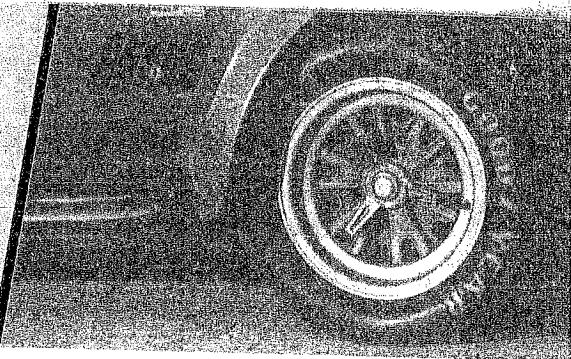
# DICK SMITH'S UNBEATABLE COBRA

GOODYEAR

**SUPER FORD**  
MAGAZINE  
SHOWCASE

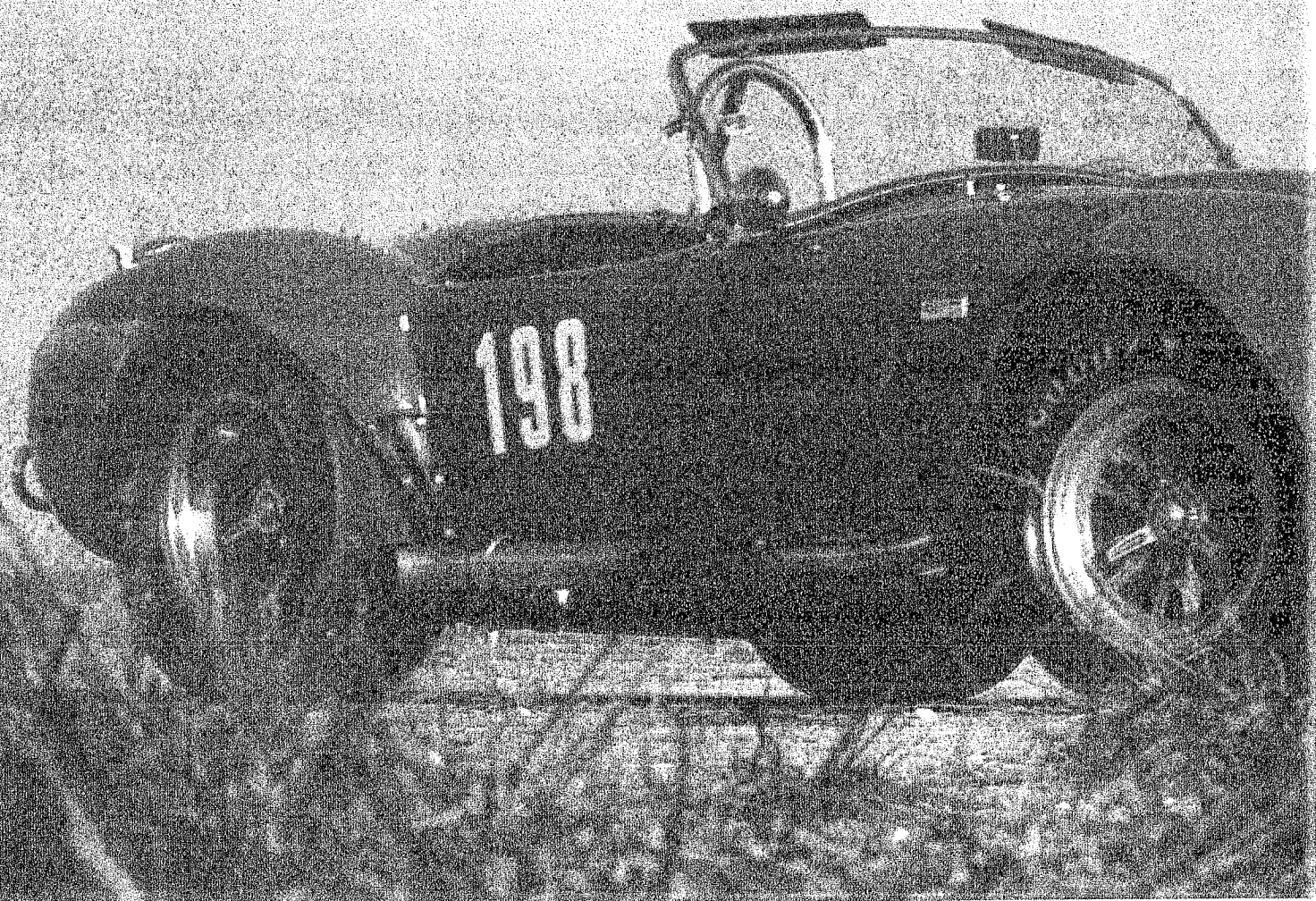
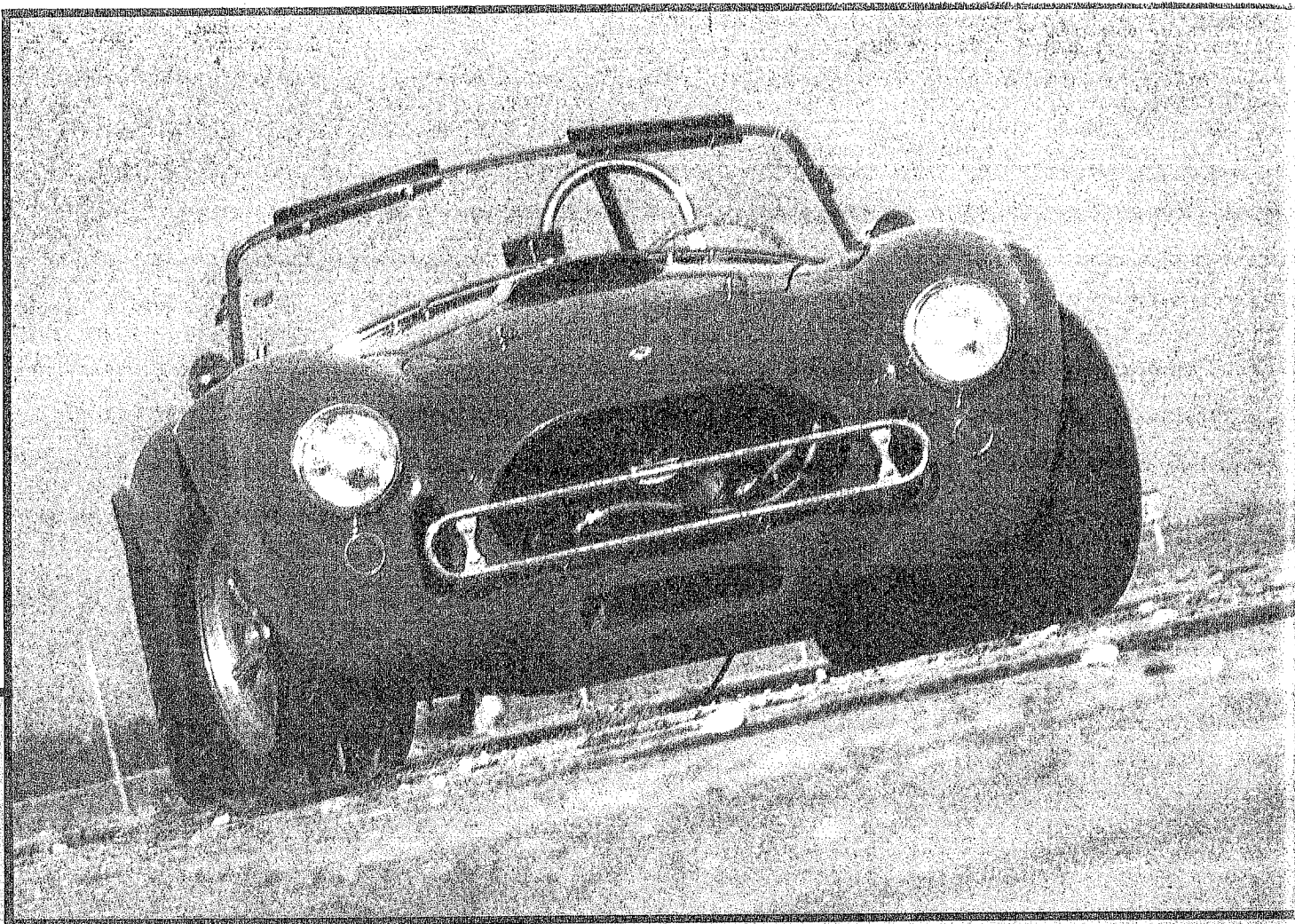


Photos By Roy Owen



1966 COBRA FORD  
WINNER OF  
U.S. CHAMPION  
DAYTONA BEACH ARRG - 67  
NO. PACIFIC S.C.A. CHAMPION - 67-68  
DAYTONA BEACH  
OFFICIAL SPEED 108.045  
AVERAGE SPEED 106.44  
MEMBER 100 M.P.H. CLUB  
DRIVER DICK SMITH  
MECH. ROY WILEY  
SPONSOR GEO. HARM







# dateline:

By Roy Query

March 18, 1982  
Sebring Vintage Races  
Sebring, Florida

SFM: We're here interviewing Dick Smith, former Shelby American race car driver from Fresno, CA. He is here today to run his 427 Cobra SC in the vintage races. Well, Dick, what do you think of the track?

Dick: I'm very pleased with the course and the car, and I'm having a good time running.

SFM: This is the car we just got through photographing for **SUPER FORD MAGAZINE'S** feature article.

Dick: Yes, that's our pet.

SFM: You said you have just restored it. When did you get the restoration completed?

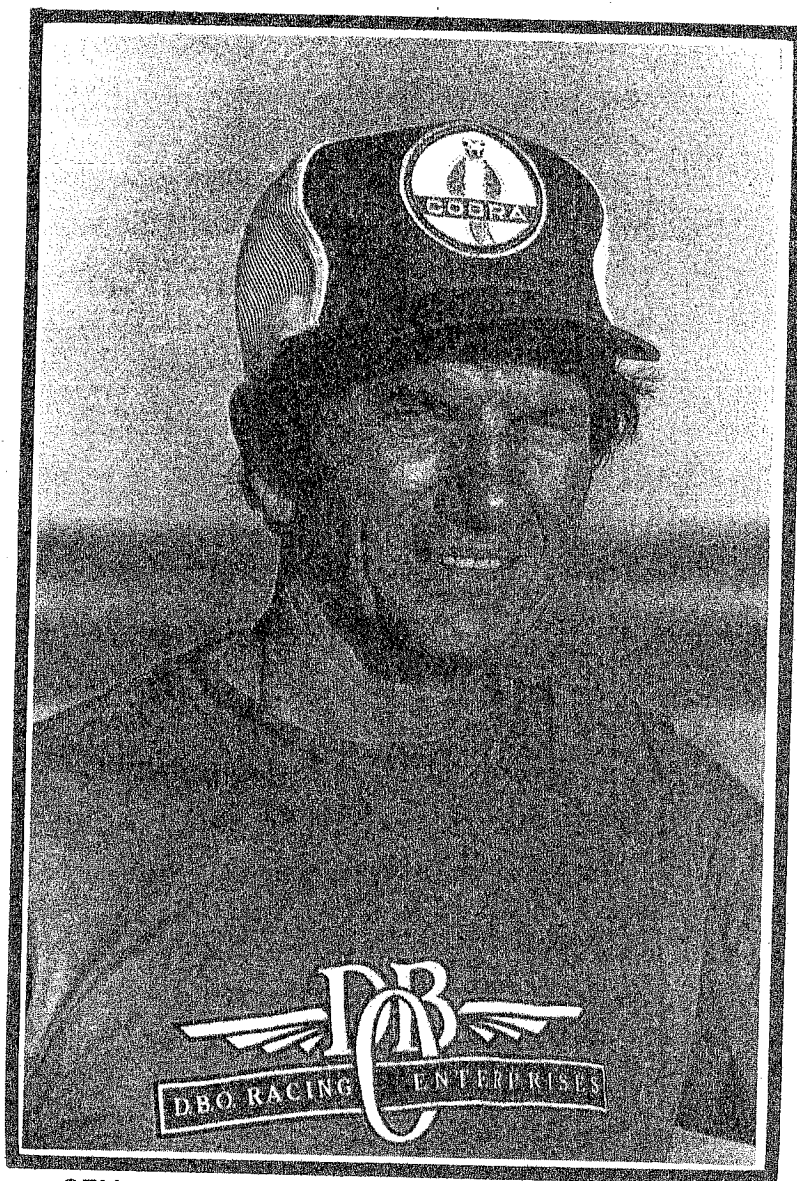
Dick: Actually, this is the 3rd restoration on the car. Carroll Shelby supported us with the car and I was, as they say, "one of Carroll's boys". He provided us with engines, help, money, and that sort of thing. We ran the car heavy in SCCA National and FIA competition. After that, we retired it from the track and ran the Can-Am series. I proceeded at that point to totally restore the car. At that time there were no Vintage Races to compete in, so I put it in the Concours D'Elegance, and finally, when VCR started, we started racing it while still keeping it concours shape. We're having a ball with it.

SFM: Can you give us some details about the car?

Dick: OK, it's a 1966 SC Shelby Cobra. Originally they built 39 SC Shelby Cobras. At last count, there were only 7 SCs left in the world out of the original 39. But, from what I understand, there are 2 wrecked SC cars undergoing complete restorations so there will be 9 all total.

SFM: So the car has been returned back to the original condition, like it was when you first raced it?

Dick: The car is now in absolute original condition except for the color. It was first delivered from Shelby American in Silver. It's silver color caused us a lot of accidents. The other drivers said that the reason for the accidents was that they couldn't see the car coming and they would cut out in front of me. Knowing that, we went with red which was one of the original Shelby colors. Now it is visible on the raceway as well as off.



SFM: Who did you drive for at that time?

Dick: A radio station owner in Fresno, CA, bought the car and I was the original possessor. He bought the car, I picked it up and drove it in competition from then on. I also contacted Carroll Shelby at Shelby American and that's how we got the support from him. So we had the radio station as a sponsor as well as Carroll Shelby as a supplier.

SFM: Who's name was campaigned on the side at that time?

Dick: Carroll didn't care if his name was on it or not. All he wanted was a 427 Cobra in the winner's circle. KARM radio (the sponsor) had its name on the side.

SFM: What kind of modifications did you make?

Dick: We have basically the same block in it now that we ran all through its career. I have spare engines at home, but this is the original engine in it right now. When we took delivery of the car, we brought it home to Fresno, jacked it up, and changed everything on it. We gusseted the frame, reinforced the suspension, and other things that needed to be done to make the car sturdier.

Engine compartment wise, we didn't do a

(Continued Page 42)



whole lot of changing. We added a double belt to keep from throwing them and various sundry things to that effect. We cleaned and blueprinted the engine to make it better. When Shelby delivered the engines they were non-blueprinted. Everyone took them apart and built them their own way.

SFM: What is the horsepower rating of the engine right now?

Dick: Our engine builder, Joe Bogosiaen, an old Ford man himself who ran the Indy project, said the engine has in the neighborhood of 650 horsepower.

SFM: What was the first race the car was entered in?

Dick: The first race was run at Riverside California.

SFM: How'd you do there?

Dick: We won!

SFM: And what was the record after that?

Dick: The worst the car has ever done was a second in Orgeon last year. But, outside of that, we never took anything but first.

SFM: Can you get into a little background on the car?

Dick: The car was the National Champion in 1967. We won Daytona Beach with it, and at the same time set the track record at 198.05 mph, and held an average speed of 106 mph. That was for the ARRC run-offs. We did get into the 100 mph club with the car and just missed the 200 mph club by a mile and a half. Those were some of the biggest wins. The following year we went undefeated the entire season. That was the year of 1968. At Riverside we qualified at the pole. We were 9 or 10 seconds faster than the fastest Cobra. The first 3 or 4 positions were 427 Cobras and we were ahead the full length of the straightaway when the engine decided to let go. If it hadn't been for that, we'd have had a shot at 2 U.S. titles.

SFM: What was your favorite victory?

Dick: I guess the one at Daytona Beach. It's one of the fastest tracks in the world. I thoroughly enjoyed that course. They turned us loose that time, and let 3 top 427 Cobras go at it. Ed Lauder from New York, Hal Kec from Indianapolis, and me. The Corvette factory was there in force . . . Tony De Lorenzo and all the boys. Qualifying wise I had a few problems. I was in about 7th position. Ed Lauder and Hal Kec were in the front row. I knew I had to get up there with them. I took a wild shot on the first turn and slid right between them. It was a 3 car battle for about 6 laps and I knew not all 3 would finish. By the time Hal Kec's engine scattered, the GM Corvettes were already a half lap behind. At that point it left just Ed Lauder and me pushing it. Ed lost it, spun out, and tore up a tire. I inherited the lead totally. I was able to slow down at that point because I was already 3½ miles ahead of the second place car, a Corvette, and he was 3 feet in front of me! I was coming up to lap him and was right on his tail. They were motioning me to pass him but I was playing a little bit of "FORD" then. If I stayed behind him he'd have one more lap to go. There were a whole bunch of Cobras behind him. If he broke, a Cobra would take his place because he would still have 3½ miles to go. I stayed on his

bumper to the finish. When I took the checkered flag, he still had to go on around.

SFM: What would you say was your hardest race?

Dick: Probably the one at Leguna Seca. I was totally surrounded by 427 Vettes. I was the only 427 Cobra and I had been forwarned, the word was out to take out the Ford, so I got on it hard and won the pole position. In those days it was all standing start take off. There wasn't any way a Vette would take a Cobra off the line, and that's exactly what happened. The flag went down, I dropped the clutch, the car took off sideways, and I pulled a hole shot on the Vettes. I had Vettes chasing me from then on but we went ahead and won that one too.

SFM: Did anyone try to even up the score?

Dick: Oh yeah! When I got trapped in traffic, they'd deliberately run into me. They were glass, we were aluminum, they knew it was all over. We jokingly called them plastic pachyderms.

SFM: Back in the early days when you were still running, how serious was the competition between Ford and Chevy?

Dick: It was pretty serious. I can tell you a cute little story about something that happened to me. I won the Northern and Southern Divisions at the same time in SCCA Competiton. So I had to select which one I was going to go to the ARRC with. I decided to go with the North which was the San Francisco region. On my way back to Daytona Beach for the ARRC, I checked home and I had gotten a phone call from a friend of mine, Sam Bennett, who raced 289 Cobras. The message was "Call Sam, it's urgent. You're not going to win if you don't." So I called him in Oregon. He asked me which wheels I had with me. I told him I had the 10½" ones. He said, "Those are illegal wheels, and I have the only set of legal wheels in the US. They are 10" and they'll fit your car. I got the word that if you beat GM they're going to protest your car because of those wheels. The hemologation papers are incorrect and show your car should only have 10" wheels and a single 4 barrel instead of dual 4 barrels." "Well," I said, "First things first. I've got to win that race, and second, how do I get those wheels?" So he shipped the wheels to me and I picked them up in Daytona Beach. Before the race that day, the GM people would come around to our pit area. We deliberately stacked the illegal wheels where they could be seen, and the legal ones were tucked neatly under them. We practiced on the illegal wheels, and 10 minutes before the race, I pulled in and changed over to the legal ones. We won the race. The first thing they hit us with in inspection was the wheels. They got out the calipers and measured those wheels about a dozen times. I got the biggest kick out of watching them. Finally, the SCCA boys said, "That's enough gentlemen, the wheels are obviously legal." So GM lost by 1/2".

SFM: That's a great story, Dick. I'm sure our readers will enjoy hearing about these adventures from your racing history. Thanks for taking time out to talk with us today and good luck in competition with the Cobra.