

# Second Strike

*The Newsletter for the Superformance Owners Group*

November 15, 1998

Volume 1, Number 4



*The stunningly beautiful Superformance Daytona Coupe prototype.*

## THE SUPERFORMANCE STORY

### AN INTERVIEW WITH JIMMY PRICE

Jimmy Price is founder and president of Hi-Tech Automotive in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Hi-Tech employs 200 workers in its 85,000 square foot facility and is the largest Cobra replica manufacturer in the world. Hi-Tech designed and produces the Superformance Cobra. Hi-Tech also manufactures automobile assemblies for other automobile manufacturers and is currently manufacturing the body and chassis for the latest AC Ace for AC Cars in England. Yes, this is the same AC Cars that produced the original Cobras.

I met Jimmy Price at SAAC-23 in July. We sat in the shade of the Olthoff's awning and listened to thunder of Cobras, Mustangs, and GT-40's tearing around Charlotte Motor Speedway, a number of them (the faster ones anyway) cars that he had made in his factory in South Africa. A good way to spend a Saturday. I asked Jimmy how he got into the Cobra business and what his objectives were, two subjects I thought would be of interest to Second Strike readers.

Jimmy's initial interest was not in high performance cars, but in powerboats and competitive water skiing. He got into international powerboat racing with the purchase of a 500cc hydroplane. To not alarm his wife, he had the boat delivered to a friend's house.

Rumor has it that he then dismantled the boat and brought it into his house a piece at a time. This could not be confirmed by press time so it will be accepted as gospel and printed. When the kids came along, the powerboats went into the garage. But the competitive interests remained. His oldest son Justin became interested in go-kart racing at the age of four. Now 23 years old, he is the current South African national champion and is fully involved in the Hi-Tech factory operations.

In the 1960's Jimmy was interested in cars like the MG's and the Alfa sports cars. He often went to the races to see the South African champion Bob Olthoff take on the world's best in an amazing array of machines ranging from Capris and Cobras to the incredible full-sized 427 powered Ford Galaxie.

Jimmy built a successful business career in heavy construction and brick making. But he did not lose his interest in cars. In the early 1980's he heard of a man in Port Elizabeth who had a small factory producing MG TD's from kits. Richard deBeer converted the VW based kits to use a front mounted

Ford engine. He also had a Cobra, a Contemporary kit. Jimmy invested in the company with the idea of producing MG's and Cobras from kits and marketing the cars internationally.

In 1984 they got an order for 126 MG TD's and 60 Cobras from a New York financier who intended to market them in the United States. But economic sanctions were imposed against South Africa and the order was cancelled. The cars and the plans were mothballed and Jimmy returned his full attention to the heavy equipment and brick making businesses.

In 1989, Jimmy decided that change was coming and South

Africa would soon be opened again to the rest of the world. He decided to revisit the car project, but realized that the Cobra was the only car that should be offered. In forming a business plan, he visited replica manufacturers all around the world and visited with people who had been involved in the original Cobra project. His business plan for his Cobra was based on six key ideas gained in this fact-finding:

**Build a car for the "drivers".** There are two distinct markets – one for people who want to build their Cobra and one for people who want to drive their Cobra. The market for "builders" is reasonably well served. But there is a significant market for a fully assembled car for buyers who would rather drive a Cobra than build one. This market is a good fit with the economics of production in South Africa. Material costs are high so producing a kit would not be competitive. But labor rates are low so producing an assembled car would be competitive.

**Quality.** People who would rather drive a Cobra than build a Cobra also rather drive a Cobra than repair a Cobra. There were two quality issues: the quality of the parts and the quality of the assembly. For kits, the quality of parts varied with the source and whether they were new or used. The quality of assembly varied depending of the skill, budget, and resources of the builder. One kit from a particular kit

car manufacturer could be well built and another could be a piece of junk. A factory built car using a well-engineered design, trained and skilled workers, uniform new parts, uniform construction techniques, and rigorous quality control would solve this quality problem.



*Bob Olthoff muscled the monster 427 powered 1963 Ford Galaxie through the turns at Kyalami. The engine was prepared by Holman Moody here in Charlotte!*

**Drivability.** The variations in design, materials, and construction resulted in cars that often looked good, but did not drive or handle well. The Superformance Cobra would be built to be a visual replica of the original in all details large and small. The paint, fit and finish, and components would be first rate. However,

the chassis and running gear would be a modern design with emphasis on performance, drivability, handling, and reliability in operation.

**Delivery.** Long waits for delivery and a protracted series of partial deliveries were all too common. This would be overcome by maintaining a significant inventory of assembled ready to sell cars both in dealer's showrooms and at the factory.

**Cost.** Kits usually take longer and cost more to build than the typical buyer initially believes. The average cost is \$40,000 to \$50,000 and the average time is over a year. So the Superformance base package would include everything required (except engine and transmission) as standard equipment. Using standard engine, transmission, and installation packages, the dealers could then quote prices and delivery schedules and stick to them. The drive-away cost would be competitive with a completed quality kit.

**Ethics.** The kit car industry has a less than enviable reputation for ethical dealing with customers. Problems with late deliveries, incomplete deliveries, failure to deliver goods paid for, poor quality, poor engineering, understating costs, understating build times, high pressure sales techniques, and high costs from a number of less than ethical manufacturers

have given the entire industry a black eye. Hi-Tech would have to address these issues head on by establishing and maintaining high standards of ethical conduct in its dealing with its dealers and its customers.

In short, a high quality, visually correct, factory built Cobra with a modern chassis and drive train, promptly delivered and complete, at a competitive price, in an ethical manner.

The chassis and suspension were designed manually. The design has subsequently been validated on a computer and found to be correct. Since no original 427 Cobra was available in South Africa from which to take a body design, the body shape was taken from another replica and then reworked to be visually correct, symmetrical left to right (the hand made originals were not, incidentally), and smooth. Components such as seats, dash, petals, windshield, gas cap, jack points, and bumpers were designed and constructed by Hi-Tech to conform to the originals. Some components, such as instruments, were purchased from the original suppliers.

The engine and transmission were to be customer options, but two engine/transmission packages from Ford SVO were to be offered: the Ford 351W and the Ford 460 crate motors with the Tremec 5-speed and associated bell housing and clutch assemblies. This would make it possible to supply all the attachment pieces – headers, plumbing, and wiring – with the car. Attachment pieces would also be offered for the Ford FE (390, 427, 428) for buyers who wanted to use the original engine.

To construct the car, Jimmy acquired an 80-acre farm near Port Elizabeth with a fiberglass production facility. The initial facility had three buildings with a total of 2,000 to 3,000 square feet and was very much in need of repair. The facility was refurbished and fitted out for production. The initial production staff

was twelve employees.

When the prototype was ready in 1992, Jimmy invited Bob Olthoff to test it. Bob reported that it was an excellent and very capable machine. Bob and his son Dennis, also a respected race car driver, thus became involved in the early stages of the Superformance project. Bob and Dennis were both active in the Cobra Club of South Africa. Bob is the honorary life president.

Charlie Ponstein in New Orleans was an importer for the MG TD's that Jimmy was building. Charlie and his buddy Doug Reed imported the first Cobra into the United States in 1992. Charlie became involved in politics and Doug continued in the Cobra business with Jimmy on his own. Doug is now the Louisiana dealer for Superformance.



*A Capri with the V8 conversion developed by Basil Green and marketed by Ron Rosen. The kid grinning at the wheel is Bob Olthoff.*

Ron Rosen is a native South African who marketed a very popular V8 conversion developed by Basil Green for the Ford Capri. Bob Olthoff drove a Capri with this conversion to two South African championships. Ron moved to the United States in the 1970's and met Jimmy Price through a business venture importing car parts into South Africa.

Jimmy and Doug brought a car into the United States to display at the Knotts Berry Farm kit car convention in Southern California in the spring of 1994. Jimmy, Ron, and Doug evaluated the Superformance against all other Cobra replicas represented at the Knotts Berry Farm show and used the information gathered to make refinements to the Superformance design. In the fall of 1994, Ron imported his first two Cobras and became the Ohio dealer for Superformance.

Bob Olthoff and his family moved from South Africa to America and set up shop as the North Carolina dealer in Salisbury in 1996.

The initial marketing difficulty was in convincing wary buyers that it was fully assembled and could in fact be completed in a single day. The 1995 Run and Gun in Phoenix was chosen as the place to publicize the completeness of the car and the speed of final assembly. Bob Olthoff and Bob Bondurant knew each other from their Cobra racing days in Europe. Bob Bondurant was now running a successful driving school at the Phoenix raceway. Bob Olthoff introduced Jimmy to Bob Bondurant and arranged to use Bob's shops at the Phoenix racetrack for the construction of the car.

On Thursday, the Superformance team started with an out of the box "kit", a black 427 S/C with silver stripes. They dropped in the engine and transmission well within the prescribed eight hours, and were ready to race on schedule on Friday. The results were heralded in the August 1995 issue of *Kit Car Illustrated*. Although I did not recognize the team when I first saw the article, I do now. Bill Parham supplied the 484 CID 427 side oiler engine. Bob and Dennis Olthoff did the installation while Jimmy Price and Bob Bondurant looked on.

After the Run and Gun, Jimmy asked Bob Bondurant to drive the car around the racetrack. Bob and Jimmy took three laps and Bob pronounced it "just fine" as it was. He ordered several cars, one for his driving school and some for resale. Thus Bob Bondurant became involved with the Superformance project as the Arizona dealer.

By 1995, the Hi-Tech facilities had grown to 40,000 square feet with a staff of 75 and a build capacity of 100 cars a year. By the end of 1995, 75 cars had been imported into the United States. The number grew to 190 by 1996, 305 by 1997, and to 440 so far in 1998. This exceeds by a wide margin the 358 original 427 Cobras produced by AC Cars and Carroll Shelby.

Today, the Hi-Tech facilities have expanded to 85,000 square feet with 200 employees and a build capacity exceeds 200 cars a year. The facility will expand to 100,000 square feet in early 1999 with the addition of a new paint facility designed specifically for painting cars with stripes.



*Gear heads (car fans) make great cars! Factory gear heads in front of the production facilities in Port Elizabeth with their project Mustang built for the Wes Bank Saloon Car Series. Currently they are building two more, one for Justin Price.*

In 1998, Bob Bondurant decided to focus his full attention on his very successful driving school. Dave Radtke at Dayan House of Cobras in Orange near Los Angeles became the California dealer. This fall, Ed Warner at Superformance Northeast in Ipswich in Cape Cod became the Massachusetts dealer.

The Superformance

Cobra certainly seems to have met the objectives that Jimmy Price set down for it. It is as beautiful and as visceral as the original. But it is faster, more agile, more reliable, and more drivable than the original. It is in fact a "real car" where the original really was not. Owner feedback certainly indicates enthusiasm for their machines and the support they get for them. The availability of colors and options allow the owners to tailor the cars to suit their individual preferences. And they have. The acceptance of the standard drive train packages has been high. Based on a survey of 68 owners, 98% have installed one of the three supported engines—2% a 302, 57% a 351, 19% an FE 427/428, and 22% a 429/460. Fully 94% are using the Tremec 5-speed transmission.

Perhaps, just perhaps, the Superformance Cobra will come to be viewed as a marque in its own right.

*This article is based on two interviews with Jimmy Price, one at SAAC-23 and another some time later at the home of the Olthoffs. It is also based on interviews with Bob Olthoff, Bob Bondurant, Doug Reed, and Ron Rosen. Jimmy Price and Bob Olthoff supplied the photos.*

**1998 RUN AND GUN**

Kit Car Illustrated magazine's annual Run & Gun was held in St Louis, Missouri from August 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>. Gateway International Speedway is a lovely facility with an oval, a road course, and a NHRA 1/4 mile drag strip.

Chuck Beck had his Winston Cup engined Lister Chevrolet (looks like a Lister Jag, but has a Chevrolet engine) on hand with hired gun Eric Noble driving. Keith Rohrer trailered in his always quick ERA 427 with the 484 CID FE engine. The works Factory



*Forming the Parade Lap at the 1998 Run and Gun at Gateway International Speedway. The car behind Bob Jordan and Dennis Olthoff in SP171 is powered by a Viper V10. What next?*

Five team road raced their lightweight carbon fiber car with the all-aluminum 302. Greg La Point's Factory Five drag car was fitted with a supercharger, nitrous oxide, wheelie bars and drag slicks. Gary Proia trailered in his Chevy powered Everett-Morrison Cobra built as an all-out race car. This car featured every conceivable gauge and electronic gadget imaginable.

On Sunday afternoon the cars were inspected and in the evening the organizers had their famous "Beer and Pizza" party in the car park of the host hotel. This gave everybody an opportunity to meet all the entrants and inspect the opposition's machines.

Superformance was well represented with five cars competing. Dennis took "the race car" SP245 to defend his 1997 Top Dog title as well as Nick de Bruno's SP120 with his new 460 stroker motor (514 CID!!) and C6 automatic transmission. Doug Reed, the Superformance Dealer in New Orleans, brought SP344, his wild Royal Blue 460 car last seen at SAAC-23. Bob Jordan drove SP171, with the same white/red Willment colors as the race car, from Salisbury N.C. to St Louis. John Selby drove in from Illinois with SP224, a 460 powered machine. Mike Thurwachter from Wisconsin was on hand with SP200, but did not compete.

Competitors were given almost two days to familiarize themselves with the road course. All the Superformance cars were immediately setting the pace and there was some serious competition.

During one session Bob Jordan was out on the track



*Dennis in SP145 leads Factory Five owner Mark Smith in the light weight special. Later, Mark's brother David rolled the special, but it was repaired and continued.*

The competition was stiff and it was serious. Interestingly enough, all the Superformance cars except SP245 are registered for and driven on the street, while a number of the most serious competitors had purpose built machines which were trailered in. It was, in some ways, a showdown between cars built to be both driven and raced, and cars built only to be raced.

when a Contemporary car caught fire in the same corner where Bob had spun a few minutes before. Confusion reigned until it was established that Bob was not involved in this mayhem - the white we saw

from the pits through the thick smoke was in fact an emergency vehicle and not SP171. Doug also had a hairy moment when he went farming with his powerful machine, fortunately with no damage to the car or his ego.

On Wednesday the official time trials were run. In the Pure Street Class, Bob Jordan set third quickest time. His time was actually the fastest on standard street tires. The cars ahead of him were on 16" Michelins. In the Street Prepared Class, Keith Rohrer in his ERA beat Doug in SP344 by 0.29 seconds. Rich Pickles was third and Dennis fourth in SP120, still running in the motor.

In the Pro Class, Dennis set fastest time in SP245 in the first timed session and as his time could not be beaten by anyone in the second session, he did not run again. Gary Proia finished second in his Chevy powered Everett-Morrison Cobra. Third place went to Eric Noble in the Lister Chevrolet who even activated his nitrous oxide in his second attempt, and very nearly hit the wall in the process.

At the Drag Strip on Thursday, the dedicated drag racing cars set the pace. Greg La Point in the supercharged Factory Five car set quickest time at 10.36 seconds. For the road race cars, Gary Proia in his Everett-Morrison Cobra ran a 10.7 and

Keith Rohrer in the ERA 484 a 10.8. Dennis found the normal Goodyear slicks to be the best combination and set a time of 10.93. Doug managed an 11.40 in SP344 and Charlie Ponstein an 11.47 in SP120 on street tires in a traction limited contest.

The Superformance cars and drivers acquitted themselves well, demonstrating that the right street car can hold its own against purpose built competition cars – at least at this level of competition. This is good news to those of us who cannot afford two Cobras.

The Overall Top dog went to Gary Proia in his Everett-Morrison Cobra with Dennis winning Runner-up in SP245. For 1998, overall positions were scored on a points system - 1 for a win, 2 for

second, 3 for third and so on, with the lowest combined points for the Road Racing Section and the Drag Racing Section determined the Top Dog Award. If it had been awarded on combined time as it was in 1997, then Dennis would have won by 0.31 seconds. That's how close it was.

In all, Dennis brought home:

Fastest Time of the Event, Road Race  
1<sup>st</sup> in Pro Class B, Road Race  
4<sup>th</sup> in Street Prepared Class A, Road Race  
Runner-up, Overall top Dog

Doug Reed brought home:

2<sup>nd</sup> in Street Prepared Class A, Road Race.

Bob Jordan brought home:

3<sup>rd</sup> in Street Class B, Road Race

*Ed: Next year, we will take off the throttle stops off and show no mercy. No more Mr. Nice Guy!*

The 1999 Run & Gun will take on a slightly different format. There



*Doug Reed in SP120 leads Eric Noble in the Lister Chevrolet on the road course in practice.*

will be the normal Road Course event and the Drag event at the end. Auto Cross is being added as a third event. Auto Cross is a little like drag racing on an obstacle course. The fastest known way to convert money to tire smoke. It will add a lot to the event. The scoring and rules

are being revised to reward all around performance. There will also be honest to goodness street classes for street legal cars.

The dates are July 19 to July 22, 1999. Mark your calendars. We would like to see as many of us there as possible. Please make every attempt to join the Superformance Team. It's a great facility and a good time will be had by all - that's guaranteed.

*Ed: Now let's see. I can spend my vacation with my mother-in-law. Or I can drive my Cobra at the limit of adhesion for four whole days without getting arrested. Gee, a tough decision, but I think I get the picture!*

*Article by Dennis Olthoff. Photos by Bob Jordan.*

GREAT DESTINATIONS
--------------------

Great road trips are part of what great cars are all about. In "Great Destinations", we will look at some great road trips. If you have been on one or are going on one, please send it in so it can be included.

### **The Pelican Inn, Pawley's Island**

Pawley's Island is a narrow strip of sand and trees and ancient houses separating the Atlantic Ocean from the backwater marshes. For most of its length, it is only wide enough for a single row of houses and a narrow two lane road.

large and set back from the beach and so the solitary road must meander into the backwater to get around it.

We made reservations for late September when the air has cooled, but the water is still warm. Our reservations were confirmed by a gracious, hand written letter from Connie Evans, the summer manager.

The house is now a bed and breakfast. It is the perfect place to relax and do absolutely nothing or

absolutely something. A large porch runs around three sides and has a number of rope hammocks. Power naps are possible and even respected. A portion of the porch in front has been somewhat enclosed as a dining room, where Deanie, the reigning master of low country cooking, serves breakfast and lunch. I feel a power nap coming on.

An elevated boardwalk carries you through the dense trees and dunes to the ocean for a swim or sun. Another power nap opportunity. This is the life.

The eight guestrooms are on the second floor. With high ceilings, a ceiling fan,

and plenty of open windows, but no air conditioning, the rooms are quite comfortable. Ancient, quaint, and comfortable. It has been a long time since I went to sleep to the sound of waves crashing on the shore.

Because it is small and intimate and everyone eats together in the dining room, the conversations with other guests are easy and comfortable. The Pelican inn is a throwback to a quieter and simpler and gentler time. It is a great place to get away from it all and relax. That makes it a great destination.

The Pelican Inn  
On the Atlantic  
Pawley's Island, South Carolina 29585  
(803) 237-2298



*Pat Stenhouse and SP218 in front of the Pelican Inn*

The first beach house in South Carolina was built on Pawley's Island before the Civil war. It is still there, as are many other ancient beach houses that have withstood over a century of salt air and hurricanes. Still standing, but showing the wear. Pawley's Island natives describe their homes as "arrogantly shabby". It fits. Most of the older homes lack modern conveniences such as air conditioning. Instead, they are cooled by ocean breezes, ceiling fans, and the oceanfront trees that abound on Pawley's, but are so rare elsewhere. It is these trees that hold the dunes together that in turn protect the houses from the hurricanes. It is the trees and the ancient houses that they protect that make Pawley's a special place.

The Pelican Inn is one of these ancient houses. It was built in the 1850's as a vacation home. It is quite

**BITS & PIECES**

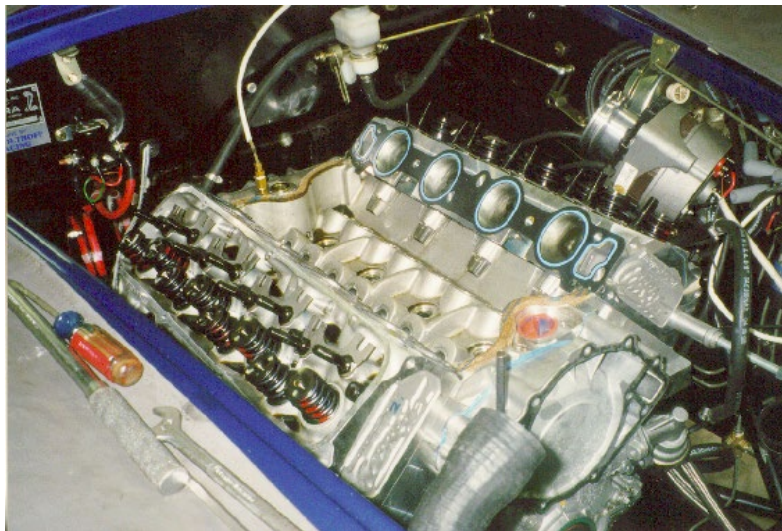
**Submissions**

Bits and Pieces is an owner's forum and includes modifications made by individual owners to their Superformance Cobras to improve the performance, reliability, individuality, and/or drivability of their cars. Maybe it's just puttering. The decision to use any idea and the proper installation and operation of any idea is entirely the responsibility of the owner.

If any item has been recommended, tested, and/or approved by Superformance, it will be so stated.

**New Engines – All aluminum 460**

Not satisfied with the awesome power of his 351W 427 CID stroker motor, David Sugg was looking around for more. When he heard that Superformance was working with Ford SVO to produce a killer all aluminum 460 specifically for Superformance, he volunteered to be the guinea pig.



*David Sugg's all aluminum 460 under construction. Observe the tennis ball sized ports.*

Ford had the parts ready, but was not ready to assemble them, so they sent the engine to the Olthoffs as a kit. Bob and Dennis assembled the engine and installed it in David's SP239.

David and I "did lunch" the other day. On the way to Bubba's BBQ, we just happened to wind up at a light side by side. Out in the country. No traffic. David started in second gear. The motive force exceeded the tractive force by a bit resulting in an oscillating yaw until third gear was selected. (He fishtailed up to about 70 mph.)

SP218's 351 acquitted itself well. In an admittedly traction limited contest, it was dadgum close. Over 100 mph it would be different though.

**New Engines –514 CID 460 Stroker**

Ford SVO is also now offering a stroker kit for the 460. Nick de Bruno just had to have one. So Bob and Dennis built him a 514 CID mountain motor with aluminum heads and an iron block. That works out to about 5 pound of car per cubic inch of engine. Wow! Nick opted for a C-6 automatic transmission.

Now think about this. You are cruising along at 60 mph and you want to pass somebody. Your automatic transmission does an automatic downshift with your 514 cubic inch engine in your 2600 pound car. What happens? Your tires do an automatic meltdown and your car reverses direction one or more times.

Nick wisely installed a shift kit so all downshifts are manual. By the way, SP120 is the only car in SCORE with an automatic.

As an historical note, from Trevor Legate's *Cobra, The Real Thing*, "Shelby American never offered the 427 with an automatic transmission, although they did construct one for evaluation. While being driven by administrative manager, Al Dowd, along the freeway at a steady 80 mph it suddenly shifted down of its own accord, throwing the car into a wild spin. Although he did not actually hit anything he called the factory to come and tow it back since he never had any intention of going near it again."

Sure Al, a steady 80 mph, huh. No passing gear, no nothing. Right, Al. Yeah, sure I believe you. At any

rate, that's his story and he is sticking to it.

Shelby American did produce two 427's with C6 automatics, one for Carroll Shelby and one for Bill Cosby. Both were fitted with twin Paxton superchargers, one blowing into each of the twin Holley four barrels. Shelby still has his. A subsequent owner totaled Cosby's by driving it over a cliff and into a lake.

**Rev Limiter**



Think about this. My car, with the 415 HP Olthoff 351, accelerates to the 6500 rpm red line in first gear at 43 mph in 2.4 seconds and covers only 25 yards in the process. Shifting in 0.4 seconds, then second gear then hits the red line again in another 2.1 seconds at 72 mph. In first gear, the engine speed increases by 2700 rpm a second, as fast as many cars rev in neutral! If you miss your shift point by 0.2 seconds, you could be in trouble. The engine is an eager rev'er and gives no power drop or audible clues that it is time to shift. Without a watchful eye on the tach, it is all too easy to fly past the red line on the way to bent valves. The engine is a strong one, but the laws of physics still apply.

While riding next to David Sugg on the way to lunch, the normal audible clues as to engine speed were lost in the din. A slight hesitation in power delivery indicated valve float. I looked down to see my tach approaching 8000 rpm. Time to shift. The motor collected itself and pulled on in second, but a word to the wise was sufficient. Get a rev limiter!

Bob Olthoff installed the SVO Ignition Control Module (M-12199-C301) manufactured by MSD and the required SVO ignition coil (M-12029-A302).

The rev limit is controlled by plug in chips. I purchased the MSD chip set for 6100, 6300, 6500, 6700, and 6900 rpm (Part # 87461 for the set) and installed the 6500 rpm chip. The ignition cuts the power sharply by 6700, so I won't get caught with my tach hanging out again.

### Soft Glove Box

The Superformance 427 S/C's don't have a glove box unless you special order one. So where do you put your stuff?

Quite out of the blue, my wife Pat bought me a super deluxe "Mirage by Gregory" fanny pack at Outdoor Provisions, a camping store here in Charlotte.

The fanny pack is dark green to match my car and serves as my glove box. It

has a large zippered pouch, a flat zippered pocket on the front, and two water bottle pockets, one on each side. The waist belt secures the fanny pack to the two uprights under the dash. Just like it was made for it.

The large zippered pouch holds most of the gear. Water bottles, coffee cups, and cell phone alternate in the water bottle pockets. The front zippered pocket holds a magnifying glass for map reading in case I get lost. It has a built in light in case I get lost at night. Handy.

Coffee shops sell tall slender cups without handles



*Fanny pack. Water bottles, and gear: Nissan coffee cup, sunglasses and case, mandatory Halcyon racing goggles, flashlight, magnifying glass, cell phone, and plastic coffee cup.*



*Installed in the car with water bottle and Nissan coffee cup. My hand will graze the pack when shifting, but it isn't a problem for me.*

that work well, either plastic or stainless steel. A note on stainless – I have tried a number of them and the wretchedly expensive Nissan is the only one that did not burn my upper lip with a misplaced drinking hole, or leak, or both.

A special note to Cobra owners – whether you get plastic or stainless, be sure to get a cup with a secure cover for the drinking hole. A rapid burst of acceleration will send the coffee up the inside of the cup and out of the drinking hole like Old Faithful. A mess, and a hot one at that. Remember that woman at McDonald's. Oh, the pain of it! And keep it closed while driving. You never know when an emergency will arise requiring that extra margin of safety provided by your powerful Ford engine.

**Variable Speed Fan Switch**

The heater fan on our Cobra has only one speed.

800-877-0072, and Jameco 1-800-831-4242. More sophisticated designs, such as PWM (pulse width modulation), could have been used but the resulting project would have been much more complex.

While this project is relatively simple and straightforward a word of caution is in order. The case of the transistor is at battery potential and **MUST** be electrically isolated from not only the heat sink but any other metallic car components as well. Since the majority of the Cobra is composed of fiberglass this is not a big problem. In fact the hardest part of this project was finding a knob that looked right.

Construction

Mount the transistor on the heat sink using a mounting kit and silicon grease. (This isolates the battery potential from the heat sink and insures proper heat transfer). When you are ready to install

the heat sink be sure that there is plenty of room for air to circulate as it will get quite warm.

Attach the switch to the back of the potentiometer. (This way the off/on switch and the speed are controlled by the same knob.)

Remove the existing fan switch and wire everything up as shown in the diagram.

As I said before this is a fairly simple project, but if you are not comfortable working with electronics please seek qualified technical help.

Bill of Materials

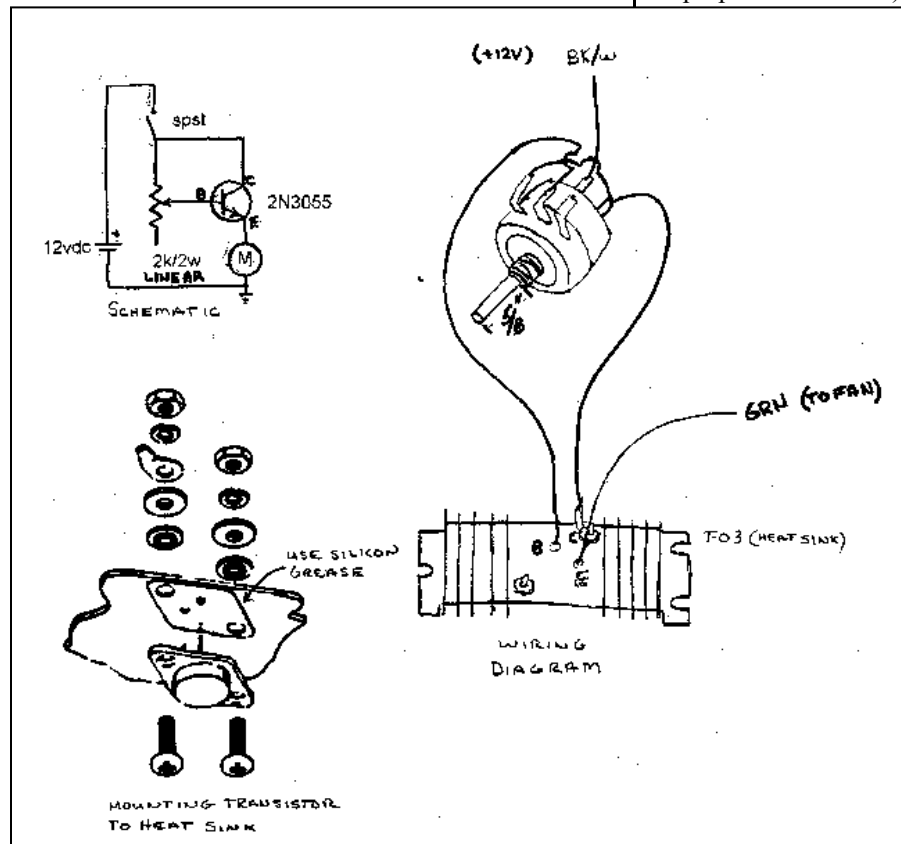
TECH 900-1635 2k 2w pot (linear)

- TECH 900-4655 pot switch
- TECH 900-5459 2n3055 transistor
- TECH 910-3057 mounting kit
- Jameco 16512 T03 heatsink
- Misc hook up wire, silicon, etc.

*Submitted by Brom Sargent SP162.*

On several occasions last winter I had wished for a slower speed or two when I did not need maximum heat. The following simple speed controller circuit provides not only an infinite number of settings, but also much quieter operation.

The speed controller basically consists of a potentiometer, a NPN power transistor, and a heat sink. As shown in the parts list all of the components can be ordered from Tech. America (Radio Shack) 1-



**Retrofit New Seats**

About mid-year this year, Superformance introduced some new features, among them a recessed driver foot well and thicker, softer seats. The seats are a retrofit to earlier models. Carlton Broome recently had Dennis Olthoff install the new seats in SP125. He reports that they are quite comfortable.

**Weatherproofing the Cobra, Part II**

As cold and as damp as it is in England, you would think that they would have weather tight cars with good heaters. Not always, certainly not in the classic 1960's English roadsters such as the Cobra.

The first Superformance Cobras brought into the United States did not even have a soft top because the original S/C's didn't have tops and because Jimmy Price didn't believe anyone would want to drive their precious babies in the rain. In fact, the roll bar brace was positioned so that a soft top would not fit. They are standard equipment now, and are being used more and more by a growing number of owners.

The more I drive my car, the more I get caught in the rain. And the more interested I become in making it weather tight. I am going through a systematic program of making my car more weather resistant without impacting the clean looks. So whatever I do must be nearly invisible. Testing is difficult. It has to be done in heavy rain while driving at speed so I have to wait for a rainy weekend and we haven't had many. Not that I'm complaining. Fixing leaks isn't the goal here. Sunny day driving is.

My current objective is to be able to drive in a rainstorm at 70+ mph without either my passenger or me getting wet. And without having to bail the car out. Once that is accomplished, my next goal is to keep the interior dry.

Progress to date is good. I drove over 60 miles this weekend in the rain at highway speeds. The car was parked nose down in the rain for several hours. I did not get wet. The rugs required drying, but not vacuuming to get the water out.

As I mentioned last newsletter, a number of key areas have been identified for work. I will classify these as "soakers", "dribblers" and "spitters". Soakers will soak you and the car. Dribblers leak enough to wet the rug. Spitters spit water at you and things in the car while driving at speed, but won't require a wet dry vac to clean up.

**Soakers:**

1. Windshield end posts
2. Top of doors at front
3. Gap between top and body

**Dribblers:**

4. Gas cap into trunk

**Spitters:**

5. Windshield cowl flap
6. Top of windshield
7. Center gap, top of windshield
8. Top of doors at rear
9. Seams in the top

When it is all done, a complete paper on weatherproofing will be made available. If anyone has success stories with weatherproofing, please send in your techniques and result. In the mean time, an interim report:

**1. Windshield End Posts**

Use clear silicon sealer. Use a small diameter hole in the applicator tip, the smaller the better.

Clean the body, flashing plate at the base of the windshield post, windshield post, windshield frame, and rubber cowl flap before starting. Dirt will muck up the appearance of your work. Waxing the surfaces helps to remove excess sealer, but use a toothbrush to remove any excess wax from the cracks before starting.

The steps apply to both sides of the windshield, of course.

Step one: Acquire some flat wooden stirring sticks from your local coffee shop. Shave the end of several to a flat point or wedge. Wedge them ever so slightly between the body and the flashing plate at the base of the windshield post. Into the slight gap you have created, squeeze a small amount of clear silicon sealer. You will probably have to work your way around the flashing plate, doing an inch or so at a time. Remove the wedges and clean up any excess.

Step two: Force a thin bead of sealer into the crack between the windshield post and the windshield frame. Start at the bottom and go up about four inches. Wipe off any excess. The sealer should be in the gap and not visible on the frame or the post.

Step three: Force a bead of sealer into the gap between the windshield post and the flashing plate. The flashing plate is thin, so it will be necessary to leave a tiny bead above the surface. The sealer along the side of the post should be all but invisible. The gap at the front is larger and sealer will be visible, but not obtrusively so if you work the sealer to a flat surface.

Step four: Lift the cowl flap at the corner and put sealer on the body and flashing plate under the flap. Lower the flap to form a seal. The cowl flap requires sealing for only an inch or so.

Step 5: Force a bead of sealer between the end of the cowl flap and the windshield post if there is a gap. Again, the sealer will be visible, but not obtrusively so if it is neat.

I have done this on my car and tested it in heavy rain. It works.

## 2. Top of Doors at Front

This was covered extensively in Newsletter #3. It has been tested in foul weather at speed and it works.

## 3. Gap Between Top and Body

Starting from the door and counting around, there is a large gap between the top and body between the #1 and #2 snaps and another one between #4 and #6. The 1-2 gap is a spitter. The 4-6 gap allows water to run in when the car is parked level or nose down. Wind blows significant water in the 4-6 gap when traveling at highway speeds in rain.

I have been working with weather-stripping applied to the underside of the top in the 4-6 gap. It is not particularly visible when the top is erected and is effective in stopping the leak. The 1-2 gap is wide and may require a different solution. More work is needed to complete this one and I will report more in future newsletters.

## 4. Gas Cap into Trunk

This was covered extensively in Newsletter #3. I will have photos of removing and reinstalling the filler neck in an upcoming newsletter. I am not going to remove the filler neck without instruction. A spark large or small will make the stuff down in the hole go boom and my car will look like toast if I can still see it.

## 5. Windshield Cowl Flap

I was unaware of this relatively small leak until I had completed items 1 and 2. Water runs under the cowl flap and then down through (guess where) the windshield post hole. Dirt had accumulated under the flap, which impaired the seal. I lifted the flap and cleaned the underside of the flap and body with a damp rag. This seems to have taken care of it. I will report back after more testing.

## 6. Top of Windshield

An update. I did this to my car. The insulation does not have to be trimmed to 1/2 inch. The full 3/4 inch width is better. It works like a charm and looks like a

factory installation. And it is invisible when the top is installed.

## 7. Center Gap, Top of Windshield

The header frame on the top has a gap in the middle to facilitate attachment to the windshield frame. Water spits through this gap. I put a 3 inch strip of 3/16 by 3/4 inch foam weather-stripping on the back side of the top at the gap. This required care in installation of the top, but it went on OK. It helped a lot, but still required small rag stuffed in on the inside to completely stop it. More work and a report back later.

## 8. Top of Doors at Rear

This is another one I didn't notice until some of the others were fixed. At speed, water spits in from the gap between the top, side curtain, door, and body at the rear of the door.

## 9. Seams in the Top

I haven't done this yet, but I will. My problem with seams in the seam between the rear window and the top.

## FEEDBACK

Letters to the editor and other sayings.

~~~~~

*September 6, 1998*

Mike,

I met you in at the rally in Charlotte. I recently took delivery of my Superformance Cobra #363 and sent you my registration form.

The car is unreal!!!

I was wondering if you had the address for Jim Price and Superformance in S. Africa. I wanted to send him a letter.

Thanks for you help

*Greg McKellar SP363*

Ed: Jimmy's address is:

Mr. Jimmy Price  
Hi-Tech Automotive Ltd.  
P.O. Box 28394  
Sunridge Park  
Port Elizabeth 6008  
South Africa

I understand that letters from owners are posted on

the plant bulletin board for the workers to read. I'm sure that they would like to hear from you.

~~~~~

*October 6, 1998*

To Mike Stenhouse:

George Burritt gave me your e-mail address. As of March of 1998 I'm an owner of a 1996 Superformance S/C. George said you have a "Newsletter" regarding the Superformance cars. Please put me on your mailing list/E-mail list. Also if you have any back issues please send a copy to me. If there is any charge let me know and I'll send you the payment.

I am interested in getting a copy of the parts book/shop manual for the car, if available. My understanding there is a "master parts list" at Superformance in Cincinnati. It shows the cross-reference part numbers for things such as brake pads, etc. The older the cars get the more valuable this information will get!

Thanks

*Joe Powell SP091*

Ed: Thanks for the info. You and your car have been entered in the registry. You will be receiving all future newsletters. Everyone registered since Second Strike #3 was mailed will get a copy. Issues #1 and #2 are out of stock, but a re-print is under consideration.

Dennis Olthoff is developing a list of parts available in the U.S. Stay tuned.

~~~~~

*October 6, 1998*

Dear Bob, Baby, and Dennis:

On Friday, October 2, 1998, I had the occasion to accompany my Superformance Cobra to your shop in Salisbury, North Carolina.

Your place of business was a pleasant surprise. I have represented automobile dealers (and a motorcycle dealership) in the course of my professional career, but I have never seen a place of business to compare to yours as to cleanliness and attention to detail.

The three of you were an even greater, and more pleasant, surprise. Never have I even heard of, let alone experienced, the welcoming, genuine interest, and warm friendship that greeted me upon my arrival

and continued for the entire time I was present. I note that I was present for at least six hours so that this was no mere show made upon arrival, but a true and unique bond of shared interest in a very special automobile. You made me a part of your family and the family of Superformance owners. I find this the more remarkable in that I did not purchase my car from you, but another dealer.

Needless to say, should I purchase another Superformance vehicle it will be from OLTHOFF RACING, INC. (and when the Daytona Coupe becomes available I just might).

A few words about the Superformance Cobra itself need to be said. Some years ago I owned a "real" 427 Cobra and enjoyed it greatly despite its many shortcomings as a street vehicle. When I sold it I never expected to own another and I regretted the sale frequently even though I made some profit from it. By chance I saw a Superformance Cobra in person and after a very brief examination of it and a similarly brief test drive bought it. Joy!!! The Superformance Cobra is a better Cobra in every way. The quality of construction, the fit and finish, the paint quality, and *most importantly the performance in acceleration, cornering and handling, and braking exceed the original by a substantial margin.* One can easily tell the Superformance car is not an original simply because it is so much better than the original was.

The original Cobra was fast, no question about it, but it was impossible to live with. As an owner one lived in fear of damage to the fragile body work just from someone leaning on it let alone a fender bender. It was too hot to drive for more than a brief time as the engine baked driver and passenger alike. The Superformance Cobra has a far stiffer chassis, the fiberglass is substantially stronger than the aluminum body of the original and far easier to repair, the 351W as installed produces no sauna side effects, and the Tremec 5 speed transmission has better, closer gearing than the original. The Superformance Cobra is faster and it is possible to live with it – I drive it to work whenever I can.

If I go on can I get a discount on a Daytona? I would expect that anyone reading this letter to think that is why I wrote it. I can only say to such a reader: Drive a Superformance Cobra for yourself and, if possible a new Corvette and a new Viper for comparison and, if you can, an original Cobra. Then, make up your own mind. But if you decide to buy a Superformance be sure to deal with the Olthoffs as they are a very important part of the pleasure given by ownership.

After I got home and told my wife of my day with you

she wants to come along next time. As soon as I get my car, my wife, and Sabre (our Tevuren) together in one place I will send the picture I promised.

With kindest regards and best wishes, I remain,

*Jonathan S. Kurtin SP139*

N.B. By some remarkable coincidence I ordered new personalized license plates: 2D STRYK. Can anyone explain this?

## SCORE

The Superformance Cobra Owners Registry, **SCORE**, maintains a registry of Superformance Cobras and their owners. In addition, any competitive, show, or other history of interest is maintained for each car. A complete list of dealers and sub-dealers is also included.

SCORE is open to all Superformance owners, dealers, and sub-dealers. The goal is to register every Superformance Cobra and track the ownership history.

Everyone in the registry automatically receives the newsletter. I have also created a mailing list for folks who are not owners but want to receive the newsletter. The registry form can be used for this purpose as well.

We currently have 68 cars registered with their current owners. We started with less than 30 nine months ago, so we are making headway. But there are 440 Superformance Cobras out there so we still have a long way to go.

There is a registration form attached to this newsletter. If you received this in the mail from me, you are registered. If not, please fill out the registration and mail it to me.

If you have any information such as special modifications or competitive or show wins, send it it and it will be entered.

The registry will be printed in January and sent to all registered owners.

Thanks

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 4

This is the fourth in a series of quarterly newsletters for Superformance Cobra owners and completes the first year of publication. We started with 50 copies

for Second Strike #1 and printed 600 for Second Strike #3. We will print 1,000 for this edition.

Thanks for your support.

This is your newsletter. All contributions are appreciated and nearly all are used. Please submit all contributions in writing or via e-mail to:

Mike and Pat Stenhouse  
400 Avinger Lane Villa 902  
Davidson NC 28036-6708  
Email: [Mike@SecondStrike.com](mailto:Mike@SecondStrike.com)  
Phone: 704-655-1902

## IN UPCOMING ISSUES!

### Articles

An interview with Bob Bondurant, GT winner of 1964 Le Mans in the #5 Daytona Coupe.

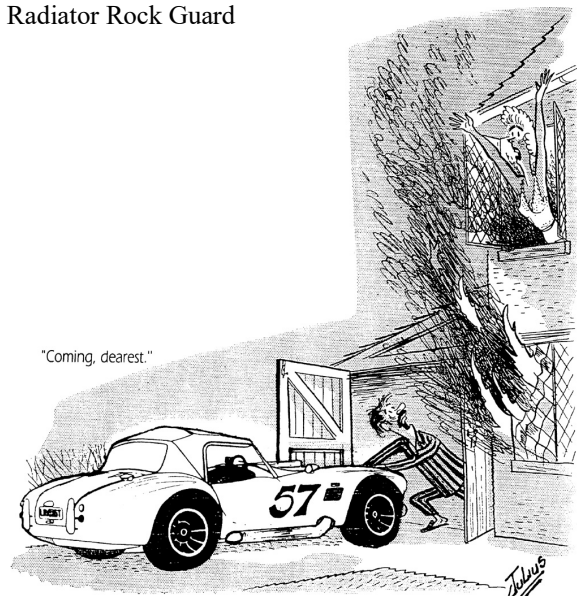
How to pick an engine and transmission.

### Great Destinations

Doug Reed and his significant other tour Texas in SP344 as part of the fabulous *Texas 1000*. Story and photos are promised. This announcement is here to put him on the spot to deliver.

### Bits & Pieces

- Door Latch Alignment
- Shoulder Belts
- Freeing the Heater Temperature Control Switch
- Moving the Brake Light Switch to the Interior
- Radiator Rock Guard



Cartoon by Julius from December 1993 *Snakepit Saga*, the official newsletter of the Cobra Club of South Africa.