

# SIX OUT OF SIX

## Mark Hovander's 1965 GT350 Cover Car

*Editor's Note: When you're trying to decide on a photo for the cover of a magazine like The Shelby American you can get as many as 300 or more shots to choose from. It's fairly easy for an editor to winnow them down to a half dozen but the final cut is the most difficult. Often any one of them will do, but after the choice is made and the magazine is completed, nobody gets to see the photos that dropped through the sieve. We're happy to share them with you, along with, as Paul Harvey says, the rest of the story.*

**M**ark Hovander has an imagination that goes way beyond what the rest of us have. Take equal parts of inspiration, creativity and resourcefulness, and mix in a "why not?" attitude. The result is an amazing series of intertwined experiences, each with 5S284 at its center. Where do we start?

Hovander purchased his first Shelby, a 1966 GT350 (6S099) in 1985. It became a long term restoration project, but the hands-on experience only served to wet his appetite for a 1965 model. He sold 6S099 in 1996 to provide a grubstake for when the right 1965 came along. Opportunity knocked at the end of 1998 and resulted in 5S284 sitting in his garage. The restoration gained momentum and he was making good progress until his body and paint man abruptly threw in the towel. This led to the search for a replacement, but during that time he and his wife moved into a larger home to accommodate a growing family. The new house was short of work



space so the Shelby had to sit untouched for two years. Over the next six years progress was a series of starts and stops but when the location of SAAC-32 was announced, the planets began to move into perfect alignment that only he could see.

In 1965, the Shelby dealer in Salt Lake City, Bennett Ford, sold four GT350s and 5S284 was one of them. Hovander began thinking that it was just possible that his car could be finished by August of 2007. The location was, appropriately enough, exactly where the car first hit the streets. He laid out six goals for SAAC-32. One or two would be enough for the rest of us.

First, he wanted to see his car win the 1965 Shelby award at the convention's "Hi-Performance Motors" car show. And because he knew that once restored, all stock 1965 GT350s look very much the same, he decided to finish the car using as many Shelby parts catalog items as he could accumulate: an early Weber induction system; a fully degreed crankshaft dampener; radio, heater and cigaret lighter delete block-offs; large tube headers; a Cobra accelerometer; competition oil pan; Hi-Po Valley Porting Service heads; and just about every other unique option he could get his hands on. And he had already collected a lot of them. One of the biggest decisions was whether or not to go with Shelby/Cragar wheels or the stock steel wheels. He had acquired both and making up his mind which wheels to use proved difficult, so steel wheels went on one side and the Cragars went on the other for the photography.

Hovander brought stands to raise the car while it was on display and provided a creeper so anyone who wanted a closer look could get one. Under it to reveal some of the detailing. When honorary judge Peter Brock saw the car he commented, "Cover material. Definitely cover material."



The second goal was to convince the owners of the other three “Bennett Shelbys” that SAAC-32 was a unique opportunity for these four cars (#282, #283, #284 and #381) to be reunited. Hovander was pretty convincing because two of the other three Bennett Shelbys were there and the fourth one would have been if its owner hadn’t promised to take care of a child whose parents had been deployed to Iraq.

Two other reunions were also planned (we said Hovander had an imagination). Goal #3 was a reunion of Bennett Ford employees who had worked at the dealership in 1965 when the GT350s were sold. The original dealership, no longer there, had been located in what is now a large parking area next to the convention headquarters hotel, the Little America Hotel. A handful of Bennett employees were there on Saturday and spent some time looking at the three 1965 Shelbys that were sold through their dealership.

The other reunion Hovander envisioned was Goal #4: for all of the owners of 5S284 to get together, and again he was successful. He was the third owner, so there were only two others. Both of them showed up at the track on Saturday to reunite with “their” old Shelby. The original owner was 92 years old!

Like most car guys who spent their teenage years absorbing every page of *Hot Rod* magazine, Hovander always wanted to see the Bonneville Salt Flats. Since SAAC-32 was only about an hour east of Wendover, UT the convention presented the perfect opportunity. While browsing through photos of Bonneville on the internet, he came across a heart-stopping shot of a ‘32 Ford taken at sunrise on the salt. Goal suddenly #5 materialized: to use his car in a photo shoot on the Bonneville Salt Flats. Logistically, this proved to be the most challenging, what with the convention going on.

Cars photograph best in low, soft light, just the kind present after sunrise or before sunset. On the way to the convention from his home in Washington State, Hovander timed it so that he and a handful of friends—and photographer Eric English—arrived at Bonneville before sunset on Thursday, their way to Salt Lake City. It took them a couple of hours to unload the car and shoot a couple of hundred photographs.

After the car was loaded up on the trailer (the restoration was so fresh that the engine had less than 20 minutes on it) they went back across the state line into Nevada to the nearest restaurant for dinner. It was one of those moments you want to stretch out for a long time, and by the time they got to the Little America Hotel that night, it was 1 a.m. Two hours later Hovander was forcing himself out of bed to head back to the salt for a round of sun-up photography. The results, as you can see, were worth the effort. That night he went to a local Kinko’s and had some of the photos enlarged and glued to stiff foam backing which could be used in the car show display.

Hovander recalls that he probably got 6-7 hours of sleep the entire time he was in Utah. He was still putting some finishing touches on the car on Saturday morning before the show. At one point he fell asleep for 15 minutes while trying to paint the “CS” logos on the Cragar center caps

and he fell asleep twice during the Saturday evening guest speaker’s program after dinner (we won’t identify who was speaking at the time). As an aside, the other GT350 in some of the Bonneville photos used here is 5S282. It is one of the “Bennett Shelbys” and in another one of those strange, inexplicable coincidences, owner Steve Bowman, one of Hovander’s good friends, lives in the same hometown in Washington. He has owned it since 1973 and Hovander recalls that it was the very first 1965 GT350 he had ever seen. Sometimes that’s all it takes to ignite a spark that lasts forever.

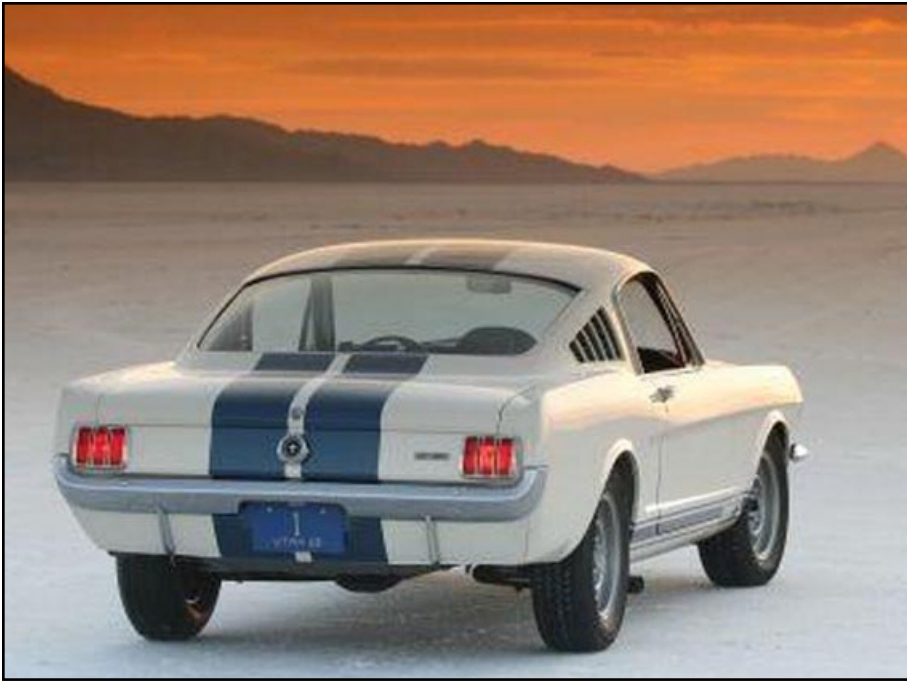
Hovander’s sixth goal was to see one of his Bonneville shots make the cover of *the Shelby American*. When he saw the photography he was convinced there was no way that would not happen. But as SAAC-33 rolled around and there was no magazine, he came to the sad realization that he would have to settle for five out of six.

But there were two more seemingly unconnected factors in play. One was that following SAAC-33, a good “cover quality” picture taken at that event had yet to show up at SAAC HQ. And secondly, as the transition from a paper to an electronic magazine was envisioned, there was no question that one of Hovander’s Bonneville photos would be the only one considered. Six out of six.

Like we said, there was a lot going behind the cover.







The Bluedots mounted on the Cragars are getting a little brittle (understandable, as they are 44 years old now) so they are only installed for shows. With new coil springs the car sat a little high so Hovander took off his shoes and put his weight on the frame rails to help the car settle [below]. There was no official mounting location for a Cobra accelerometer so it was mounted on top of the steering column. Few people have ever actually seen one, and we're betting Shelby American never sold too many of them. To say that Hovander has a lot of photos of his car is an understatement. It's sort of like saying that Bill Gates has a lot of money.





Final detailing went on almost around the clock until the Hi-Performance Motors car show began. Hovander's goal of completing the car by the start of the show was met, with hardly a minute to spare. It required a Herculean effort but it was one of those things you only have to do once. It was 104° at Bonneville by the time the crew arrived on Thursday afternoon. Pictured [left to right] are Lisa and Brian Bogdan (they trailered 5S284 from Seattle); Dave Lennartz (he trailered 5S282); Steve Bowman (owner of 5S282 and the team's mechanic-on-call); Mark Hovander (probably questioning his own mental competency at this point); James Buckingham (official videographer—yes, everything was captured on three CDs). Absent from the photo was Eric English (who was, appropriately enough, behind the camera).



Mark Hovander figures about 50 people (most of them SAAC members) assisted with input or assistance in the completion of this project. Special thanks go to wife Elizabeth and children Nicole, Peter Brock, William Shelby and Dan Gurney. Their support and understanding was essential.