

Ernie Nagamatsu's good friend Max Balchowsky (creator of all the famous Old Yeller sports racers) helped Ernie buy this Cobra long ago. Californian dentist, Ernie Nagamatsu is the second owner of this 1964 Shelby 289 Cobra chassis number CSX 2203. The first owner wanted an automatic transmission and also wanted an air conditioner, so Max installed air conditioning and the car had aluminium aircon louvres fitted in the glove compartment! Ernie started racing his Shelby Cobra at the famous and historic Riverside International Raceway with a stock passenger- car automatic transmission.

Ernie's Shelby Cobra was once in the movie *Love Bug* as Max was the stunt co-ordinator and picked this car along with others to race against 'Herbie', which was the VW race car in the movie. Ernie's Cobra has also raced at Road America and in the Monterey Historic Races. Max wanted to do the Jim Hall-type conversion to turn the Shelby Cobra into a racing automatic, so Ernie and Max went to a Cobra racing expert to get help to convert the Cobra into racing configuration.

Another friend of Ernie's had bought a special Shelby 289 Cobra from one of the Ford family members – and it came with the ultra rare AC-built Le Mans Hard Top. AC built only three of these special tops, and two were used on the first two Cobras to race at Le Mans in 1963, while the third one was shipped to Shelby American. This third hard top was used by Dave McDonald at Continental Divide Raceway after which the top was stored so that in time it became a highly sought after the 'trophy' after it was purchased by Ernie. In order to fit the special

Le Mans Hard Top, the windshield on the Cobras had to be angled back, thus making them more aerodynamic than stock Cobras. Ernie recently sold his special Hard Top to the owner of the rare racing ex-Dave McDonald Cobra to make a match, and Ernie has since made and fitted a replica top that is now fitted to his own Cobra. Ernie also owned a Shelby 427 Cobra that he sold in 2009 at Pebble Beach, and he currently owns two 1965 Shelby GT 350s.

Ernie's Shelby Cobra is fitted with a 289 Ford V8 motor with a cubic capacity of 4727cc. Ernie raced in the Tourist Trophy race in England at the Goodwood Revival Meeting in 2001, where he co-drove the car with seven-time Indy 500 driver Lyn St James. Together they won the Goodwood 'TT' Trophy.

Ernie is looking forward to driving his Shelby 289 Cobra 'Down Under', where he and his ever-enthusiastic wife and supporter, Elaine, will be delighted to meet with fans. The *New Zealand Festival of Motor Racing celebrating Chris Amon* will see possibly the very first genuine Shelby 289 Cobra to race in New Zealand – and Chris Amon raced one of these cars himself in 1964. ●



Right: Chris Amon's
 1964 Shelby Cobra
 (Photo: Ernie
 Nagamatsu, 2010)



Ernie Nagamatsu, USA – 1964 Shelby Cobra 289 CSX 2202 & Le Mans Hardtop 4727cc. (Photo: Tam McPartland, Coronado, November 2004)