

Chickens, Chili, and Cars, Cars, Cars

According to mythology, Texans amble through life at a slower pace than other folks. But don't try selling that line to Camp County native Carroll Shelby. Born in Leesburg in 1923, the future automotive legend craved velocity from an early age. In a childhood photo, taken

before the family moved to Dallas in 1930 (and posted at www.carrollshelby.com), young Carroll poses for the camera from behind the wheel of a pedal-powered "hot rod."

Decades later (after a stint as a chicken farmer), he was posing in the winner's circle at Le Mans, Sebring, and other world-class racetracks. He broke

the land-speed record at Bonneville in 1954. After an accident in Mexico that same year, he returned to the track with one hand taped to the steering wheel. *Sports Illustrated* named him "Sports Car Driver of the Year" in 1956.

Sidelined by angina pectoris in 1960, the resourceful Shelby turned to designing high-performance cars for road and track. His innovations pumped up the Mustang in 1964, two years after he had developed his signature speed machine, the Cobra Roadster. "The name came to me in the middle of the night," Carroll explains. "The next morning, [I saw that] I'd written 'COBRA' on a pad on my bedside table."

An expatriate Texan for much of his life, Shelby never lost touch with his roots. A planned successor to the Cobra he named the Lone Star. And his "Texas Tuxedo"—cowboy hat with striped bib overalls—became a trademark. Perhaps his greatest impact on Texas culture, however, took place far from the roaring engines and checkered flags. In 1967, Carroll was trying to sell his Chiricahua



At his Las Vegas plant, Texas-born automotive legend Carroll Shelby poses with his Shelby Series 1 sports cars, modern clones of his 1965 Cobra that sell for \$175,000 each. The Texas Cobra Club (www.clubcobra.com) holds a road rally in and around Austin each February (February 27-29, 2004).

Ranch, "150,000 acres of rocks and rattlesnakes," at Terlingua. A prescient PR consultant suggested holding a chili cookoff to attract buyers, and before you could say, "No beans, stranger!" another Texas legend was born.

In 1990, a heart transplant gave Carroll the ticker of a 38-year-old Las Vegas gambler. A new kidney perked up his innards in 1996. Still active in automotive design, manufacturing, and racing, the octogenarian speedster also devotes time to raising funds for the Carroll Shelby Children's Foundation, which helps indigent youngsters with heart and kidney ailments.

—Gene Fowler, Austin

Quakertown Remembered

One by one they moved, often under cover of darkness. They crossed creek beds and narrow roads, banished to the outskirts of the city. Resting on sled-like runners atop large cylinders, they inched forward, pulled by teams of horses.

"They" were the homes and business-

es of the people of Quakertown, a bustling African-American area in Denton near the College of Industrial Arts (now Texas Woman's University). Quakertown, which lay alongside Pecan Creek near downtown, boasted a doctor's office, barbershops, a grocery store, churches, a drugstore, and even a mortuary. But after a 1921 bond election, Quakertown residents were forced off their property to make way for a city park. With the Ku Klux Klan already active in town, the scantily-cloaked civic-improvement effort was, in fact, a shadowy campaign by some residents to move black families away from the all-women college.

Some Quakertown families moved their homes to Solomon Hill, a new enclave whose distance from jobs at the town's two colleges meant at least a one- to two-mile walk. Other families left town, bitter and discouraged. With their clientele gone, the few businesses that hadn't moved couldn't survive; by 1923, Quakertown had disappeared.

Yet Quakertown is not forgotten. A historical marker about the community sits beside Pecan Creek in today's Civic Center Park. The dark drama inspired two fictional works: *White Lilacs* by Carolyn Meyer (1993) and *Quakertown* by Lee Martin (2001), both based on the life of Henry Taylor, a gardener and groundskeeper who nurtured his prized white-lilac bush through the move. In 2002, exhibits about Quakertown were installed in Denton's Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum and the Martin Luther King Jr. Recreation Center. And at press time, the Historical Park Foundation of Denton County, Inc. was planning to move a small house—one of the few known Quakertown structures—from Solomon Hill to sit beside the Queen Anne-style Bayless-Selby House Museum. Once it is refurbished, the Quakertown house will become a museum devoted to the county's African-American history.

—Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe, Argyle