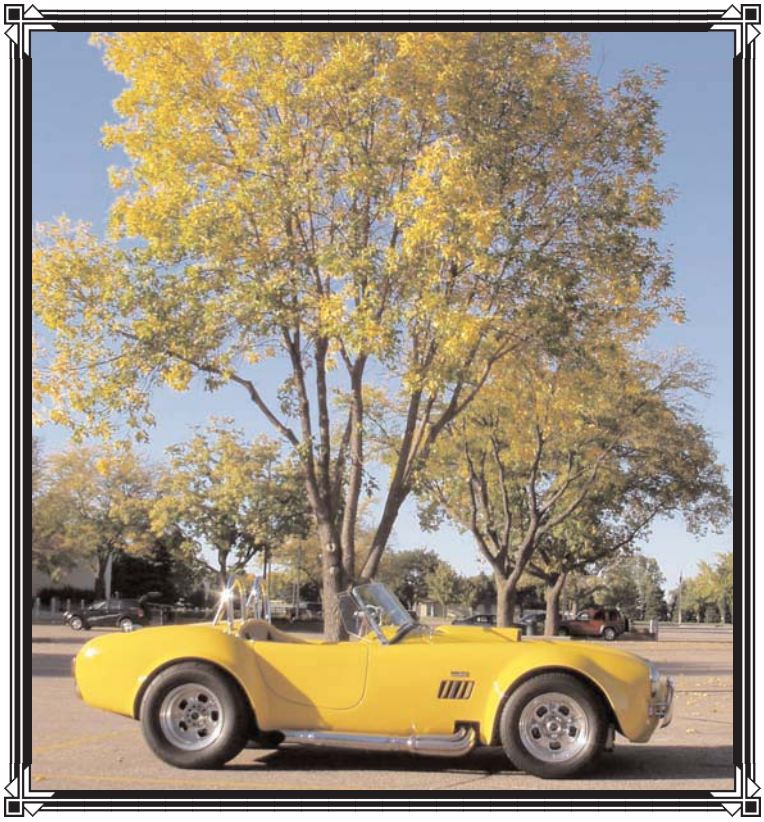
Is It Fast Enough For Him yet?



It was a 1967 Cobra replica with a 460 cubic inch big block, but it wasn't fast enough for Terry Koch.

Terry bought the car about three years ago from fellow club member Rich Barnes who had built it. Terry was intending to build his own and had just sold his business when Rich was offering this Cobra for sale. Since he had the money in hand, he bought Rich's Cobra and saved himself from having to wait until he finished a kit before enjoying driving it.

But already having a 750-horsepower drag race car that gets down the quarter mile in short order, Terry decided he needed more horsepower in his street car, too. So, he pulled the 460 out of the 2500-pound car and installed a bored and stroked 500 cubic inch mill that showed 675 horsepower and 700 foot-pounds of torque on the dyno. Terry sold the 460 to Jim Christensen who installed it in his 1957 Ford Ranch Wagon.

"I actually put some bigger tires, stickier tires on it, but before I did, I could break the rear tires loose in high gear at 50 MPH," Terry said.

However, he said he has never been stopped by the police, as he keeps the reins tight on all those horses. But his son-in-law did get pulled over once while driving it, he noted.

"It's got so much power per pound with a short wheel base, it certainly demands your respect," Terry said.

He has never raced it, since he already has a drag racer, but he estimates it would probably do a quarter mile in the mid-tens, maybe quicker. He's had the drag racer for 20 years and gets all of the racing fun he needs from it. The Cobra is fast enough, that if he did decide to start racing it, he would probably be required to build a roll-cage and install upgraded seat belts in it, he said.

The bigger motor is not the only change Terry has

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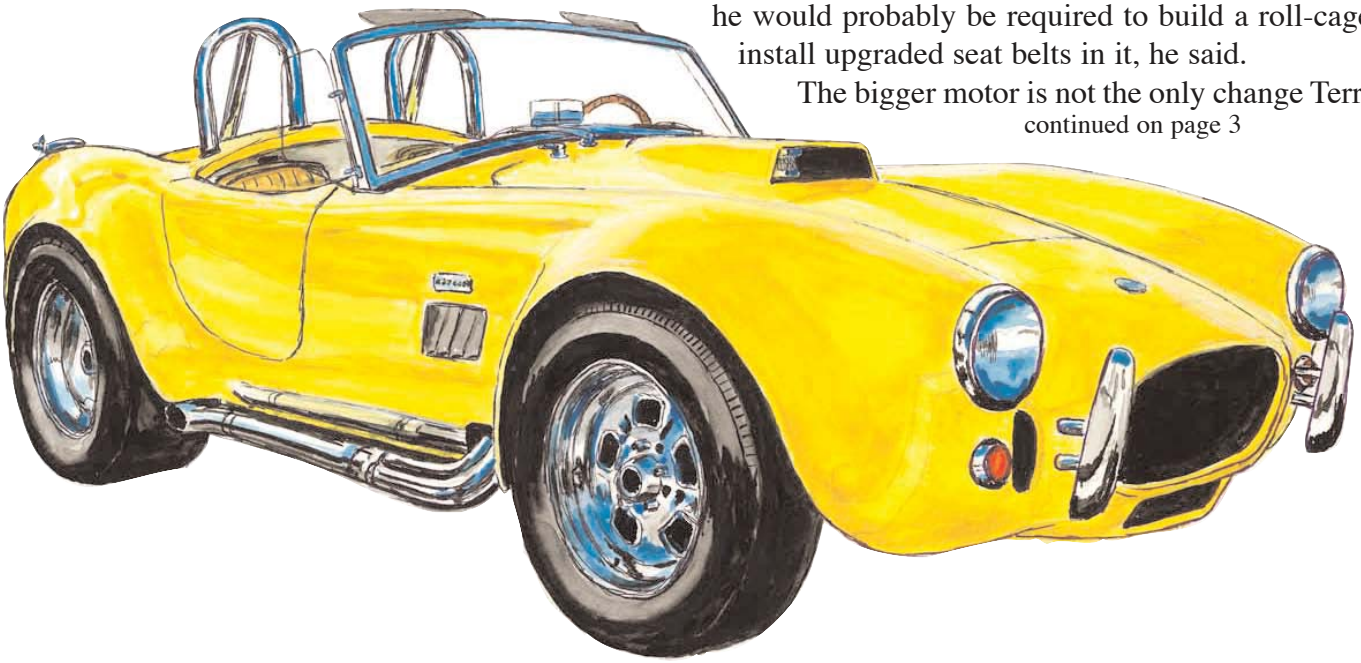

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made. The Viper-yellow car had black side pipes and roll bar when he got it, and he had those chromed.

Terry also owns a 1965 Mustang and a 1967 Fairlane convertible, but seldom drives them because the Cobra is so much more fun. It's going to take a couple more very big motors before he starts putting miles on either of those cars. But he is thinking about how many horses he could stuff under the hood of the Mustang.

Billets Change the Look of Hot Rods in the 1980s

By Clay Seachris

It had always been fairly costly to build a hot rod or custom car, but car enthusiasts had always been able to scrimp and save enough to get their projects done. Beginning in the 1980s, though, more money was flying around than ever before. Those dollars ramped up the level of build quality, components availability and professional building services. Nearly every aspect of the hot rod and custom car scene benefited.

There are several possible reasons for the change. Many of the guys who couldn't have a cool car in high school were now older and had the money to build that car -- only better. For the first time, there were shops and aftermarket businesses all over the country that could build great cars and excellent components for those cars.

Friendly competition played a part, too. Many wanted to prove "I can build one better than yours." Whatever the reason, it was definitely a new era for hot rods and a renaissance for the '50s custom car.

The new design trend in hot rodding could be summarized in one word: billet. Though it was a decidedly 1980s phenomenon, it had its roots in the '70s. In 1976, Funny Car builder John Buttera built a Model A roadster based on ideas submitted by designer Harry Bradley. It was new and contemporary, and it differed greatly from the way hot rods had been built. The main difference was Buttera's use of machined billet aluminum for some of the suspension components, as well as the windshield posts, rearview and side mirrors, and gauge cluster.

Dan Woods had dabbled with machined aluminum in the early '70s with ball-end milled firewalls for T-buckets and Buttera had even made some machined aluminum parts for his own '26 T a couple of years earlier. But this was the first time that new machined aluminum components, including exterior parts, were used extensively on a hot rod.

John's friend Boyd Coddington took careful notice. Boyd was a machinist at Disneyland in the 1970s who had built some outstanding hot rods in his garage. In '79, he built a small shop behind his house and went into the business of building cars full time. Boyd and John teamed up to create a couple of billet parts for the 1932 Ford Vicky Boyd was finishing. The Vicky was really a resto-rod with a billet instrument panel. But the next car out of Boyd's shop, Vern Luce's '33 Ford coupe, helped define the new era of billet "smoothie" cars. Smoothie referred to the elimination of all the "barbs" associated with older cars, items such as hinges, door handles, windshield frames, body seams and in some cases, overlapping body panels (like the doors on a Model A).

Though Buttera's Model A roadster hinted at it, the Luce coupe really cemented the look for the

high-tech hot rod of the 1980s. The design was a refined amalgamation of Jim Ewing's fenderless orange '34 Ford coupe and Jake Jacobs' '34 highboy coupe.

The Luce coupe came at a time when the landscape was ripe for a new trend, making it extremely influential. Many future rods would follow its design cues.

From there, the billet fad took off, and billet parts are still incorporated into new hot rods today. The difference is that today numerous manufacturers create billet parts that can be purchased with a phone call and a credit card. Billet turned into probably the biggest thing in hotrodding since the tire. And it has even transcended hot rods to become prevalent on custom motorcycles, especially Harley-Davidsons.

Again with the help of John Buttera, Boyd Coddington came up with a three-piece billet wheel that would start the aftermarket billet-wheel trend. The first billet wheels appeared on a roadster version of the Luce coupe built for Jamie Musselman. That car received a great amount of magazine coverage, and won the first of many America's Most Beautiful Roadster honors at the Grand National Roadster Show for Boyd Coddington.

A form of this type of wheel had previously been manufactured by Center Line Wheel Corporation, but those wheels utilized cast or stamped centers. The billet center allowed Boyd to program a mill to cut an infi-