

Round Up

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MANNY ARANDA

2012 SHELBY COBRA WRAP

My first encounter with a Mustang as a kid, was in my Dads 1969 coup. It looked fast like a rocket ship, had growl and threw you back in the seat when my dad hit the gas. That was my introduction to a Mustang, I loved that car and it stuck with me. At age 19 my first car was a 1966 Mustang 200 CI coupe; my second was a 1966 coupe 289 V-8 three speed on the floor! I eventually sold those due to expenses which did not cooperate with having a family or two baby car seats in the back. Some years after, the mustang fever however came back to me and I bought a 1995 SN-95 V-6 and eventually the kids grew older which in turn led me to buy a 2001 GT Convertible. I was in the Navy and it moved my family to Japan, and I had to place the 2001 GT in storage Stateside. It was not one of my fondest memories and I missed it so much, it was like leaving a family member behind. Luck would have it, a fellow Sailor was selling a 1997 SN95 GT which was slightly modified for Japanese streets, so I bought it. Some Japanese loved it, while others with Nissan Skylines would run side by side on the freeways. After my tour in Japan, I sold it and came back to the States to my 2001 GT. I always loved the Shelby's and decided I was going to buy one when I "Grown Up".

When I retired from the US Navy in 2012, I started looking into Shelby's and finally bought a 2012 Shelby GT-500 in 2017 from Car Max for \$49K with only 2,400 miles on it.

As a kid I loved watching war movies such as 12 O'clock High, Black Sheep Squadron, etc. I put together model airplanes, all WWII Bombers, Fighters, however the P-51 was my favorite and I was intrigued it was a Mustang. The Mustang made its way into



military aviation and it looked awesome. I loved its bubble canopy and sleekness; it really caught my attention more so than other fighters of the WWII era. One facet of the WWII aircraft was the Nose Art which will play its way into my story. As I started attending car shows around California, such as Ponies on the Pike in Long Beach, I saw some mustangs with P-51 markings. Some were not as detailed as others however it sparked my interest and it dwelled on my mind for quite some time. Out of the Love for Mustangs, I formed a Mustang Club here in my town four years ago and you can find us on Facebook. "Muscle Mustangs of Ridgecrest".



I had done other things with my Cobra like a put a Cobra decal both sides however a club member convinced me to go for what I really wanted, a P-51 wrap. I made enquiries at many different places who wrapped cars, and many told me if I wanted a chrome wrap it was going to be costly due to the material. This is when I had an epiphany and went to the local Ford Dealership "Jim Charlton Ford" and talked with the general Manager "Nick Charlton" and asked him to sponsor my car with any amount he was comfortable with. He agreed to sponsor my car wrap and I was now one step closer to getting it done.

I started looking up P-51 Mustang owners and wrote to a couple of them asking permission to use their aircraft as a template for my car. Some owners were stand-off-ish and did not reply back after my initial contact, so it was a little hard. I saw Crazy Horse from Stallion 51 Flight Operations in Kissimmee, Fl. A school who teaches and certifies pilots to fly in P-51D Mustangs. I was able to talk to the staff and eventually the owner of Crazy Horse. Lee Lauderback (Owner of Crazy Horse) who was delighted to give me permission to use his aircraft as a template for my 2012 Shelby Cobra. Just as long as I sent him pictures of my Cobra when done.

Jim Charlton Ford dealership gave me one thousand dollars to the cost of the wrap which was \$5.5K plus tax. The shop who did my wrap was RAD Custom Graphics in Ridgecrest, Ca. The owner Rayan and I sat down, and I told him, "listen, this wrap has to be "spot on" this is a P-51D wrap and it will receive lots of criticism if done wrong or with small imperfections.

The City of Ridgecrest has a large aviation influence since it's home to China Lake Naval Weapons Station with two Naval F-18 Fighter Weapons Test Squadrons, VX-31 Dust Devils and VX-9 Vampires. Ryan promised it would turn out all right and it did.

There was one more item which I wanted added to keep it with a WWII vibe by adding a Nose Art picture of a Pin-up Girl riding a Cobra (keep it Shelby) throwing a Bomb down below.

I still work for the US Government but now selling F-18's to our allies and it's been a pleasure and honor to be able to have my cobra wrapped as a P-51D many thanks for allowing me to share my story with you.

