

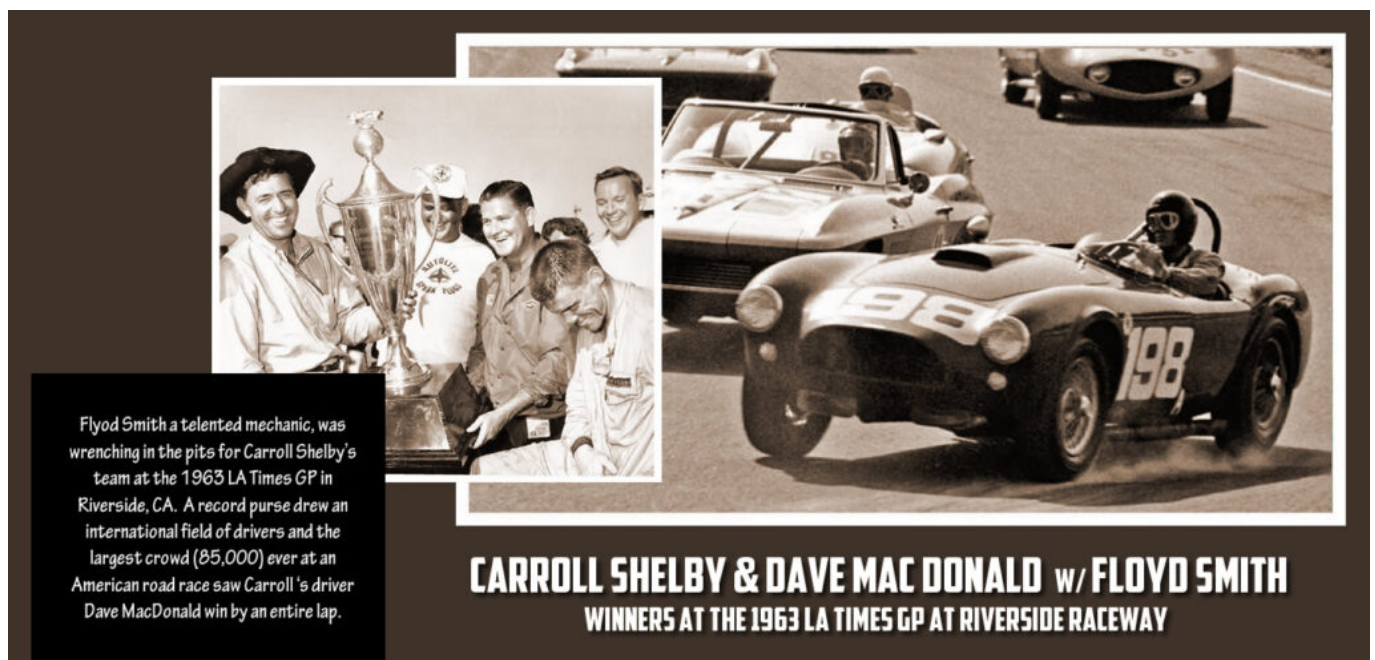
1963 - Floyd Smith and the Texas Chicken Farmer Go Racing

Floyd, a true speed enthusiast, possessed an unwavering passion for anything on wheels. Growing up as the son of a WWII pilot who owned a garage, he embarked on his mechanical journey before he even had a driver's license. His hands were intimately familiar with wrenches long before he took the wheel.

Floyd's father knew a mechanic who worked at Andy Granatelli's establishment in Los Angeles. Granatelli, had acquired Paxton Automotive from Robert Paxton McCulloch and was now overseeing a company specializing in engines and superchargers designed for both aviation and automobiles. Within the same complex, Carroll Shelby's renowned shop was humming with activity, and the mechanic introduced Floyd to Carroll Shelby.

Floyd's sharp mind and willingness to work tirelessly caught the eye of the legendary Shelby. Carroll, impressed by Floyd's skills and dedication, extended an invitation for him

to join his racing team (as an unpaid intern of course). Floyd's moment of racing glory arrived when he became part of the pit crew that supported Dave MacDonald in his victorious drive with one of Carroll Shelby's Cobras in Riverside, California, in February 1963.



With the draft looming in 1964, Floyd who wanted to be a pilot like his father volunteered for the Air Force, leading him to a two-year stint in Vietnam. There, amidst the roar of jet engines and the whir of helicopter blades, Floyd found himself a humble mechanic wrenching on airplanes and indulging his love for speed by racing jeeps at the Cam Ranh Air Force Base.

Floyd's affinity for speed and camaraderie

extended to his social circles. He regularly organized unofficial cannonball races, leading packs of fellow enthusiasts from Los Angeles out to the desert, with the Oasis Palms serving as the finish line. As the racers descended upon the dusty desert enclave, a jubilant cloud of dust in their wake, a weekend of exuberant celebration and camaraderie awaited. Lefty's garage, generously offered as the unofficial headquarters for these high-octane gatherings, provided the racers with a place to work their mechanical magic, using the service station and tools to mend whatever needed fixing before their journey back home. Across the street, the Hot Rod Diner presided over by Floyd and Lloyd's mother, Molly Smith, offered up affordable and hearty meals to fuel the racers' spirits.

In a nod to his racing hero, Carroll Shelby, Floyd often sported a cowboy hat while he drove. Tragically, Floyd's life was cut short in 1969 when he engaged in a fateful street race, ultimately leading to a devastating crash involving his beloved black '55 Chevy. The events that unfolded bore an eerie resemblance to the poignant final scene depicted in the 1973 film, "American Graffiti."