

Cobra Photography Tips



««« *The Devil is in the Details: the ten Checklist pages (pp.7–16) provide you with every expert tip you need at your fingertips as you shoot your Cobra.*»»»

—CobraCountry's Mission Statement—

To provide the preeminent world stage where you can best expect to sell your Cobra promptly and at a fair market price. That means we will position your car—and to its most competitive advantage—in front of thousands of prospective Cobra buyers who are dispersed far & wide and the world over.

...and our *Serpent-Certified* formula to make it happen:

Team Member #1 (you) must put to use our expert tips for capturing buyer-motivating photographs of your car. For your photo-shoot you'll employ the methods of a pro; your untutored snapshots may (perhaps) help you sell your *Honda Civic* to a local buyer, but they won't help you reach over the horizon to those predominantly distant buyers in the worldwide Cobra and GT40 marketplace. With your prospective buyers dispersed so far & wide, you can discard the ill-suited cliché "*Must see to appreciate*" and replace it with "*Just see my great pictures and you will appreciate.*"

AND LISTEN VERY CAREFULLY: YOU [or whoever will be shooting your car] MUST PHONE ME FIRST before you commit to your 'final' photo session of your car. Not negotiable. One more time: NOT NEGOTIABLE. If you intend to have a "**good photographer**" friend or relative... or a professional photographer... shoot your car for you... he or she **MUST phone me first to go over my serpent-centric photography guidelines; otherwise it's absolutely, positively dead certain** that all he'll accomplish is to waste your time and ours. At best his photos will be *harmless*; at worst your roadway reptile will resemble a roadkill rattlesnake. Don't take my word for it: just take a gaze at the sampling [in *CobraCountry's Policy Statement re Prosumer and Professional Photographers*] of the routine *buzzard-bait* snapshots sent to us by advanced and professional shutter punchers... each and every one of whom smugly assured the owner that he didn't need to heed anyone's advice about how to photograph a Cobra. And I'll rest my case.

Team Member #2 (CobraCountry) skillfully colour-corrects and contrast-corrects your good photos and copy-edits and expertly polishes up your ad copy (text), then positions your car in front of the thousands of prospective buyers who shop this site's '*For Sale*' pages every week.

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Contents



'Cobra Photography Tips for DIPSTICKS'

by Curt Scott

Page Subject

- 3 **So You Possess a Shelby Serpent You *asp*-ire to Sell...**
- 4 **4 GOLDEN GUIDELINES** for photographing your Cobra or GT40
- 5 **Your digital camera**—modifying its ***d-o-p-e-y*** factory-default settings so it can help you capture good **TERRIFIC** photos of your serpentine drivin' machine
- 6 **Motorcar Photography 101**—a 5-minute overview

Checklist Pages*—Checklists to protect you from yourself

- 7*** **Engine shots** <<<in smooth outdoor shade only>>>
- 8*** **Cockpit shots** <<<in smooth outdoor shade only>>>
- 9*** **Dashboard shots** <<<in smooth shade (or twilight) only>>>
- 10*** **Head-on frontal shots**—capturing your Cobra's *striking* persona, **Part I**
- 11*** **3/4-frontal shots**—capturing your Cobra's *striking* persona, **Part II**
- 12*** **Broadside shots**—capture your Cobra's character in BS (broadside) shots
- 13*** **3/4-rear shots**—from 'fat-butt toad' to lean, *screamin' mean* drivin' machine
- 14*** **Rear-Half shots**—capture eye *candy* shots of the rear half of your Cobra—**New!**
- 15*** **Hard top & soft top shots**—sidestepping Grandma's stodgy footgear
- 16*** **Your CHEAT SHEET**—best [tested & proven] camera angles/distances/heights

- 17 **Close-up (macro) shots**
- 18 **Trunk (boot) shots**
- 19 **More superb Cobra photos** as captured by Cobra Country serpent sellers!
- 20 **G-r-r-r-reat!!! GT40 and Daytona Coupe photos** shot by their owners!
- 21 **Photo Session Toolkit** —and— **How to send us your photos**

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So you possess a Shelby Cobra [or a Daytona Coupe or a GT40] you want to put up for sale. You've got it all scrubbed and polished. And you've got a digital camera. You're all set to snap a bunch of pictures and galvanize the worldwide brotherhood of Cobra connoisseurs to push and shove to purchase your car.



Not so fast, reptile breath. Good motorcar photography compels you to be aware of some *camera-specific* basics before you can entertain any hope of capturing high-quality images that will *captivate and motivate* those far-flung prospective buyers. **And:** your Cobra [or Daytona Coupe or GT40]—*in part because of its seductive body shape*—obliges you to be aware of some very *breed-specific* tips. No rocket science or shutterbug babble, just an elementary 'Why didn't I think of that!' medley of expert, 'Cobra veteran photographer' pointers for your camera work. First you'll be guided through changing 4 or 5 of your camera's *dopey* [repeat: **DOPEY**] default settings, thus liberating it to *at least be able to* capture good photographs for you—*not just for photographing your roadway reptile, but for ALL of your outdoor picture taking*. But mostly you'll be guided thru the simple drill of capturing the sleek coachwork of your *serpentine drivin' machine*.

Why, you may ask, are good photos so essential to selling my Cobra [or GT40]? Well, let's say you wish to part with, for example, your spiffy riding lawn mower. The odds are that it'll be a local sale... someone within 15 miles or 15 blocks of your humble bungalow. So you place a classified ad in your newspaper or your local *Recycler*; some local chap will drop by on Saturday morning, get smitten with your *Toro Turfstripper*, and [if the stars are all aligned] purchase it. **But selling your Cobra or Daytona Coupe or GT40 mandates that you modify your mower-marketing M/O. To wit:**

Reason 1—the market for your Cobra is nationwide and worldwide. That means the lion's share of your prospective buyers are so distant that they aren't likely to drop by your house and then fall in love with your Shelby serpent by petting it in person [thus the hackneyed catchphrase "**Must see to appreciate**" is downright ludicrous]. You must prompt them to commence getting snakebit whilst they're still somewhere way beyond the horizon. Your creative writing won't do that for you, and point-and-shoot snapshots will just make 'em *scatter like a covey of quail*. But first-rate photographs of your serpent can often tip the scales [sigh: that was a *stumbled-upon* pun] and motivate folks to contact you and inquire further. **Indeed, one really good photo of your Cobra or Daytona Coupe or GT40 is worth at least 350 homely, birdcage-liner snapshots.**

Reason 2—Many of your potential purchasers are not even *contemplating* purchasing the brand [or color scheme or coachwork livery or drivetrain ensemble] of your Cobra or GT40. So just as in Reason #1... you *must* inspire these potential purchasers to commence lusting for your car while they're still groping around amongst all the rival reptiles. It'll most likely be your photos [above all else] that will set them on the path to choosing your drivin' machine over all the other hissing contenders.

Reason 3—Many sellers have commented upon how caller-after-caller has marveled over how gorgeous their Cobra is—and *their only point-of-reference is the good photos they're looking at*. That will *never* happen if you show folks your serpent using *buzzard-bait* snapshots. Never. On that same note, many of the Cobras and GT40s that sell on CobraCountry are purchased and paid for *sight-unseen*—that is, except for those fine amateur photographs that grabbed their attention. Buyers from 100 to 8,000 miles away concluded their purchasing decision based on the photographs alone. You can read about some of those instances among the seller testimonials. Again, snapshots won't do that for you. *Not ever gonna happen.*

So if you're gearing up to sell your Cobra or GT40, here what to do first: since you've most likely already taken photos of your car, email 10 or 15 of your best pix to me; I'll critique 'em for you and advise you on which one(s) you'd be wise to reshoot.

661•251•0806 Pacific Time
email: Curt@CobraCountry.com

4 GOLDEN GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR COBRA OR GT40

#1—SHOOTING DISCIPLINE: Don't engage in the [curiously enduring] ritual of stalking around your car, pausing here & there in trial & error fashion to click your shutter... *as if a Cobra has never been photographed before.* That "Hmmm... lemme try this... and this... and this..." technique used by every novice is a *galactic* time-waster for everyone involved. You see, every camera position around a Cobra has already been pre-tested for you. **About 97% of 'em are total losers.** So dedicate your shooting time to the *Winner's Circle* 3%, like a seasoned pro. Let's say you're dead-center-lined-up to shoot a head-on frontal shot—a proven good angle. Now—*closely following the frontal shots Checklist Tips on page 10*—quickly conclude the entire *Checklist* sequence of 9 to 12 head-on frontal shots: pause at each specified distance and shoot from each of the specified camera heights in quick succession before you proceed to, say, 3/4-frontal shots. **Methodically capturing a serial progression of shots along each effective (proven good) angle is how a pro does it, and that's how you'll do it. 100% of how stalking & clicking steers you to photograph your Cobra is DEAD WRONG; 100% of how these expert tips steer you to photograph your Cobra is DEAD RIGHT.** Don't look for 'a shortcut' to taking great photos that will sell your car: **THIS IS THE SHORTCUT.**

#2—CHECKLIST PAGES: You'll find a *Checklist page* [pp. 7–15... each with very specific rules of engagement] for each of the 7 "*Winner's Circle* shooting angles" of your car: **head-on frontal, 3/4-frontal, broadside, 3/4-rear, Rear-Half** [so distant buyers can view every surface of your coachwork] + **engine, cockpit & dash.** You'll see an upside-down camera icon on each of the 5 pages of COACHWORK shots—that's to remind you to keep your camera inverted and feed your flash *down low* for ALL of those shots. There's also a schematics page (p.16) that provides you with quick-reference visual pointers. **The Devil is in the Details: PRINT OUT THESE TIPS and revisit the dedicated Checklist page before you begin each sequence of shots!** Your photo-shoot will go faster and your photos will be *more seductive* to buyers if you carefully heed the *Checklist* for each of the 8 core sequences you'll be shooting. **One more time: USE THOSE CHECKLISTS!**

#3—YOUR ZOOM LENS: I prefer to call it a '**cropping lens.**' You should use it to 'crop' every single shot you take! For example: if you're shooting your engine, then *zoom out* to capture your entire engine compartment. Same with your cockpit shots. On the other hand, when you're 25 ft./≈7.5 meters away from your rear fender to shoot your 3/4-REAR full-car shots (see *Checklist*, p.13), then *zoom in* to fill your frame with your car... don't waste your precious pixels by capturing a scenic view of the surrounding real estate.

#4—PHONE ME FIRST! It's always [repeat: always... *always*] advantageous for you [and/or your 'good photographer'] to phone me first, before your 'final' photo shoot. The odds are decisively in your favor that—*due to its paint color or livery, coachwork features (289FIA vs. 427SC, for example), stance, engine bay componentry, Carroll Shelby's autograph, ultra-clean undercarriage or a host of other factors*—I can share with you car-specific pointers and shooting angles for you to be sure to pursue... or to *avoid*... with your camera.



"There are so many folks who just don't have the time to do things right. But they always have plenty of time to do 'em wrong... and to do 'em over." William Maxey Hannon

Preparing your digital camera to capture awesome photos of your roadway reptile



Tip for users of DSLR [interchangeable lens] cameras:

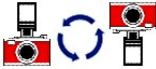

Use only your "standard" 18–55mm zoom lens for shooting your car... *it's the ideal lens for your entire photo session!*
Leave your longer tele-zoom lenses in your camera bag.



««Listen: Higher megapixel count does nothing to improve the quality of your images. NOTHING.»»

Here's a shocker for you: your modern digital camera ("digicam") was fashioned and default-set at the factory *to sell you the camera*, NOT to help you to capture good photos. Even the preposterously high 'Megapixel' counts of today's consumer digicams is for selling cameras, not for capturing better images [way back in 1936, legendary film director Frank Capra—in his *"Mr. Deeds Goes To Town"*—applied the term 'pixelated' to characterize a correspondingly absurd state of affairs]. IMHO, the camera makers—one and all—have become *irredeemably* 'pixelated.' You see, pixel *QUANTITY* is about **IMAGE SIZE** [and it's about *Madison Avenue* slick marketing]—it contributes nothing to IMAGE QUALITY. **NOTHING.** Here's the rub: the QUALITY of each one of those little rectangular pixels is *inestimably* more essential for you to capture good photos than your digicam's misguided megapixel count. That's true whether your camera was made by *Nikon* or *Canon* or *Olympus* or *Sony* or whoever—even if it's a fine DSLR [altho' there's no shortage of sound reasons for you to spring for a nice DSLR such as that *Nikon D5100* above]. You should promptly make a few permanent changes to the way your camera is set up so that it's liberated **to at least be able** to capture good photographs. **If someone else will be shooting your car for you, he/she MUST first read and very carefully heed this page! Follow these five steps:**

1. Your camera's main-operational dial was set at the factory on "**AUTO**" [on *Canon* digicams, it may be **merely a green oval or rectangle** on the main dial]. Like most folks, you probably assume that means the camera is set that way so that it can automatically make all the best decisions and your photos will come out perfect without your doing anything. Nope, *nothing of the sort*. It means that your camera maker is exploiting the term "automatic" because the word works like a *magic elixir* on consumers ["**Everything is AUTOMATIC—I don't have to THINK!**"]. Sigh. Think of it like this: **GREEN = DUMB.** You see, with the exception of the "M/Manual" setting, *every one* of the main operational settings on your camera is indeed an "automatic" setting. And any one of those automatic settings is a certifiably better choice for you than the *dopey* "auto" factory setting—which is a "*dumb-down/capability-disabling*" setting; your camera may have a "**P**" setting [for Programmed Automatic], or an '**A**' or '**Av**' setting [for Aperture-Preferred Automatic]... *either of which is a far better choice for you.* For now, set it on '**P**'. Your camera will still be set on "automatic"—but a '*smarter*' automatic.

2. Your camera's flash also came pre-set on "Automatic." "Automatic flash" is useless for your outdoor day-time photography. Look for a jagged arrow/lightning-bolt icon [or a "**Flash ON**" button] and choose that setting, so that your flash is forced to work with every shot you take... *especially out in the bright sun and bright daytime shade. That's where (trust me) you need your flash the most... and where 'automatic flash' never, never works.* All of your Cobra photos and your 'people' photos outdoors will come out *incalculably* better if you set your camera permanently on forced flash [aka 'Fill Flash,' aka "Flash ON"]. Then go outside in the bright sun and click your shutter button and make sure the flash is indeed engaging. **I hope to never again hear "My camera has 'automatic flash'—it knows when to use the flash."** Wrong, '*Flash Gordon*' breath—no camera is so intellectually endowed. "**Automatic flash**" [the *brilliant* factory default configuration] **is the most worthless feature on your camera; "forced flash," on the other hand, is perhaps its most valuable feature. Use it!** And if your camera's flash offers different levels of intensity, then crank it up to its highest setting. You need your flash operating *at full throttle* when you're outdoors. **There's more:** your camera's flash is [sigh: *inexplicably and counter-productively*] positioned *higher than* flash lower than the lens, where you need it at least 99% of **positioned it in the first place.** And if you have a separate,  the lens; **so turn your camera upside-down to get your the time—and where your camera maker should have more powerful flash... USE IT!** 

««You employ your flash outdoors not to add illumination, but to more evenly distribute your illumination.»»

3. If your camera has a "Quality" setting [*i.e.*, independent of your size/megapixel setting]—set it **permanently** on the highest setting [*e.g.*, Fine, Super Fine, HQ or SHQ]. **Then dial your resolution down to 3 or 4 Megapixels [that's a range of roughly 1,900 to 2,600 pixels wide; note that 6Mp is as low as you can go on some DSLR cameras]**, and increase it only when your objective is to print out a huge wall mural. It's quite unlikely you have any need to capture *ginormous* 10- or 15-Mp images. Dialing UP your camera's 'Quality' setting is how you improve the quality [**tekkie explanation:** ratcheting UP your 'Quality' setting dials DOWN the wretched 'pixel scatter' and 'pixel puddle-ing' of excess JPEG compression—thus preserving the integrity of each pixel; ratcheting up your megapixel count [beyond, say, 3 or 4 Mp], on the other hand, *serves only to bloat the filesize—and provides you no benefit*].

4. ISO [aka "light sensitivity"]: reset your camera's ISO to a fixed low setting [*e.g.*, 80 or 100—the lower the better]; **default "AUTO" setting NOT GOOD.** **Tekkie explanation:** ISO is the 'film speed' of yesteryear; the lower the number, the 'smoother/silkier' and 'less grainy' your paint job and your dash gauges. If you trust that your consumer digicam can produce sharp/smooth image quality at the higher ISO ranges that the default "AUTO ISO" setting will kick it up to... then I've got the deed to *The Sydney Harbour Bridge* to sell you.

5. DATE/TIME image graffiti: if your camera's [dreadful/image-vandalizing] **date/time stamp** is turned on... **TURN IT OFF!**



Cobra Photography 101



DISTANCE: *Scrupulously* heed my distance guidelines.

For example, when you're taking your head-on frontal shots, you **MUST** be *physically close* to the car—I specify 6 ft. to 7.5 ft. [≈2–2.5 meters] for these frontal shots, and 5 ft. to 9 ft. for your 3/4-frontal shots—and *no further*. Distance—and *distance alone*—is how you control *perspective*: from 6 to 7.5 ft. away your Cobra is a menacing hammerhead shark; from 12 ft. away *it's a gasping guppy*.

SHOOTING IN DIRECT SUNLIGHT—only good times: EARLY TO MID-MORNING; LATE-AFTERNOON TO DUSK.

There is **NEVER** a situation where you can shoot a shiny object (your car) at midday with the sun high overhead [or, worse, on the opposite side of your car]—and get acceptable results. Did you get that? **NEVER**. Here's what happens: that high-overhead sun will create harsh glare (or muddy washout) on your upper coachwork [so that your paint job... *or your polished aluminum...* is flattened out, bleached out *and ugly*], and everything below the 'beltline' on your car comes out murky dark. **SPECIAL SUN-GLARE TIP:** shooting when the sun is a bit "too high in the sky" [*i.e.*, mid-morning or mid/late afternoon]: take ALL of your 3/4-frontal, broadside and 3/4-rear shots at the maximum recommended distances [≈9 ft. for your 3/4-frontal and broadside shots], and from 2, 3 and 4 steps up on your stepstool. **Explanation: using your stepstool elevates your camera above the (mostly) horizontal fanspread of glare, and can work REALLY well for you...** especially for **darker metallic REDS, BLUES and GREENS**. If your car has a front license plate mounted, **REMOVE IT for your photo-shoot**. If you possess a DSLR camera, ask me about the huge benefit of using a good polarizer filter in bright/glaring sunlight.

SHADE vs. DIRECT SUNLIGHT: When you're shooting in outdoor shade [which is *compulsory* for all your engine, cockpit and trunk (boot) shots], that means **1)** the 'smooth' shade of a solid structure, *not* tree shade [photographically speaking, tree shade isn't shade at all, it's *chaos*], and **2)** you're outdoors, with nothing overhead but open sky... no dark canopy of any sort above your car [you must maximize the ambient light enveloping your car]. Seek the brightest shade of the day... that is, mid-morning or mid-afternoon not the darker shade of just after sunrise or just before sundown. Put another way, you use your flash to *supplement* the ambient illumination of daytime shade, not provide the primary illumination as it would, say, inside your garage. It's also important for your car to be entirely in the shade [or entirely in direct sunlight]... not part in the shade and part in direct sunlight. Such uneven lighting guarantees you'll be shooting *really splotchy, cruddy* snapshots. **Caution:** when your shadow encroaches onto your car, your impulse is to just "squat down" and/or "back away." **You cannot do that.** The best distances and angles and camera-height ranges don't instantly become negotiable because your shadow is on your car. Instead, rotate your car properly with the sun, as illustrated on p.16 (your '**Cheat Sheet**'). By the same token, if your car is in the sun, you cannot *walk around your car shooting*. The sun will not follow behind you—it'll just stubbornly remain fixed in position, eventually glaring right into your lens. Not good.

If your car is properly rotated in relation to the sun for the shot you're taking, your shadow will NEVER encroach upon your car. Rule of thumb: you're good as long as the sun is behind you AND way over to your left or right.

TREES. Avoid 'em. Tree shade (I repeat myself) is chaotic—renders your paint job a splotchy train wreck. Similarly, tree *reflections* [especially if you have a dark-colored car—which acts as a mirror] also make a chaotic mess of your paint job. And leafless wintertime tree-limb reflections can look *really ghoulish* on your paint. It's okay for trees to be *in the background*, but just be on the alert for any mayhem that nearby (or overhead) trees might be perpetrating on your silky-smooth coachwork. And OH trees will color your chromed and polished engine parts a *really wretched and chaotic* green.

ACCENT LIGHTING: If you're shooting in the shade: **1)** turn on your parking lights (nice accent touch!); **2)** similarly, for your rear and 3/4-rear shots [especially if you're shooting a GT40 or a Daytona Coupe], try to find a way to get those bright red brake lamps to light up. **3)** Take closeup shots of your dashboard... with your instrument panel lighting turned on (thus nicely illuminating your gauges). **You can shoot your dash both with and w/o your flash.** Carefully follow the *Checklist* tips on page 9 for shooting your instrument panel. **4)** If you have decorative carriage lamps in the background [on a pole or on the front of your garage, for example]—*turn them on!* That radiant glow in the background can impart an elegant *finishing touch* to your serpentine scene.

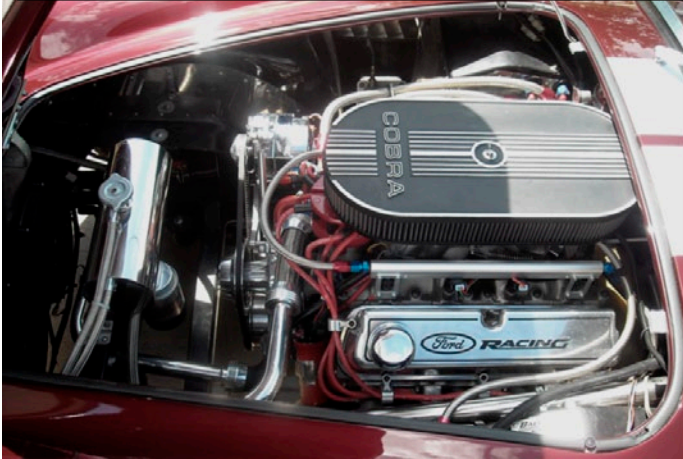
YOUR CAMERA'S 'ZOOM LENS.' Use it. Adjust it for every shot. Don't waste your precious pixels by framing your entire county; once you're the recommended distance(s) from your car, *zoom in* (or *out*) and fill your viewfinder with your subject (car). Conversely, when shooting your engine, *zoom out* and capture your entire engine compartment. Your zoom lens [I prefer to call it a "cropping lens"] is worth its weight in *Krugerrands* for enabling you to make every pixel count. Use it for every shot.

TAKE LOTS OF PHOTOS: You've perhaps heard the adage "*Quantity has a quality all its own.*" Sage observation. For each angle of your car you're shooting [frontal, 3/4-frontal, broadside, 3/4-rear], follow the *Checklist* to take a methodical and disciplined sequence of photos. For example, for your 3/4-frontal shots, raise your camera's maximum elevation [think: an "upward curve"] as you back away from your car. **At 5 ft. distance**—shoot from waist level and chest level; **at 7 ft.**—waist level, chest level and eye level; **at 9 ft.**—waist level, chest level, eye level, PLUS 1,2,3 steps up your stepstool. **Your 'final picks' of each angle and variety of shot will be much, much better now that you have that carefully-heeded sequence of shots to choose from.**

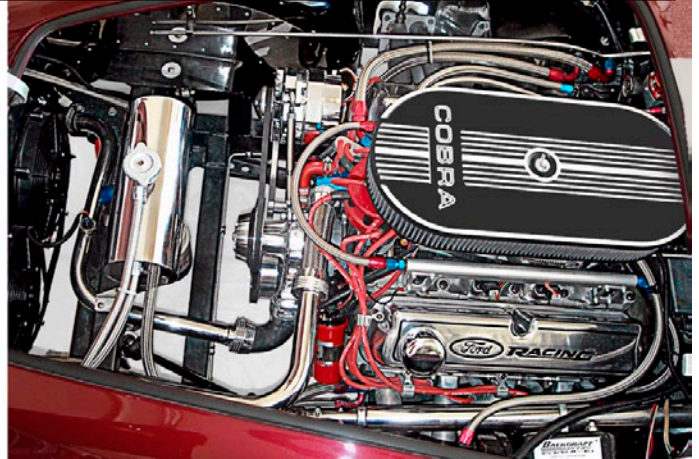
Make certain that your various sequences of shots encompass every surface [*i.e.*, driver side, passenger side, front & rear] of your coachwork... you must enable each prospective buyer to 'walk all around your car' by viewing your good photos.

—engine compartment—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your **ENTIRE** sequence of these engine shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.



DISMAL: car half in shade/half under midday sun, no flash, no shower curtain liner—thus gloomy darkness, ugly bleachout.



DAPPER: same engine, same camera. Car in bright/smooth outdoor **shade**, using shower curtain liner, footstool and flash; **note that the camera is lined up with the fan belt.**




Shooting Your Engine [with a tip of the G.I. helmet to the late Bill Mauldin...]

At right: three effective shooting aids for your engine shots: **1)** a bright white **shower curtain liner**, **2)** a **footstool**, and **3)** a **dark-coloured long-sleeve shirt** [wear it to avoid garish reflections of your *Maui wowie* floral print tourist shirt].

The camera icon you see below tells you to operate your camera rightside-up for **ALL** of your engine shots. For **ALL** of your full-car shots (body shots) you'll of course see an upside-down camera icon.



PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR SHOOTING YOUR ENGINE:

- [] **Your camera**—set up as recommended on page 5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot you take; tilt your camera back & forth to get several flash angles, and capture 6 or 8 shots from each side of your engine.** 
- [] **"Spiff up" your engine compartment**—and make sure all of the shiny surfaces are wiped clean.
- [] **A bright white/opaque shower curtain liner** [≈\$6 at *Walmart* or *Lowes*. Check it closely: they all look 'white/opaque' folded up in the package]. Lay it out in the sun to smooth the wrinkles. **Spread the shower curtain on the pavement and drive your car over it so that all you see beneath the engine—from every pre-tested angle—is pure whiteness—including beneath and all around your radiator and your bellhousing.** That photo above (right) gives you a quick fix on how this tip will work for you. You also have the option of placing one or two shop lights under your car to further illuminate/'brighten up' the shower curtain. Dark bad, light good. **And don't say to yourself "I can do without the shower curtain... that concrete beneath the engine will work."** No it won't—it's not even a close call. Invest \$6 and use the shower curtain liner [for even more 'whiteness', position the shower curtain on top of a white bed-sheet]. **Once you've finished shooting your engine, remove that shower curtain liner from beneath your car.**
- [] **A footstool or stepstool**—line it up [and thus your camera] just as you see in the photos above—with your fanbelt, **NOT with your valve cover.** By shooting from this *slightly* higher elevation, you're minimizing fenders and maximizing engine stuff. **Zoom out and capture your entire engine compartment with each and every shot.**
- [] **Have a 'helper/sidekick'** hold up your hood (bonnet) so your pesky prop-rod doesn't interfere with folks' view of your engine; helper should also raise your hood as high as possible so it doesn't obstruct your camera's 'field of view.'
- [] **Setting**—outdoors, mid-morning or mid-afternoon [so you're benefiting from the brightest shade of the day]. Your entire car must be fully within the smooth shade of a *building*—not (*chaotic*) *tree shade* [and again: **be wary of trees: all your highly-polished and chromed engine stuff gets rendered an ugly, green, chaotic MESS**]. You need maximum ambient light, so there must be nothing but *open sky* overhead—no canopy or roof of any sort over your car, **and no direct sunlight on your car.** With this blend of illumination you're as close as you'll ever get to having your own photography studio.

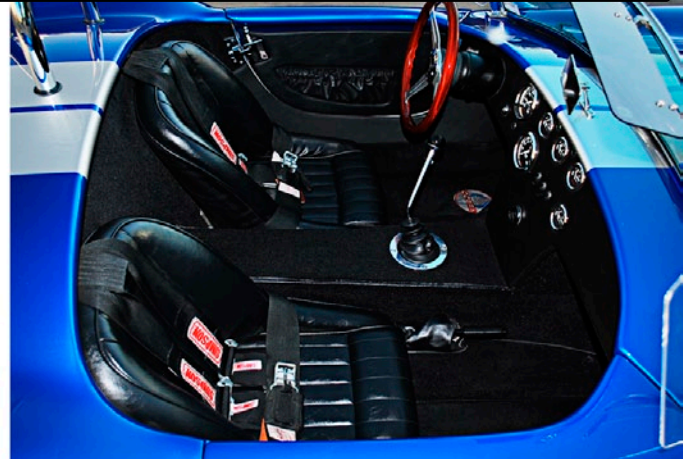
««TAKE 6-8 PHOTOS FROM EACH SIDE OF YOUR ENGINE, ALTERING YOUR CAMERA ANGLE & HEIGHT WITH EACH SHOT»»

—cockpit—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your **ENTIRE** sequence of these cockpit shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.



BEFORE—shot under direct sunlight and without flash. Harsh glare, harsh shadows, *terminal bleachout*. Scary!



AFTER—same cockpit, same camera, shot in smooth outdoor/daytime **shade**, with flash, from ladder, seats oiled. *Awesome.*




BEFORE—Rick Henkelman's cockpit shot under direct sunlight, and w/o flash. *Terminal bleachout*. Eek!



AFTER—Rick's Cobra, same camera, car now in smooth outdoor/daytime shade, open sky overhead, *and with flash*. Leather seats oiled. *Awesome!*

PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR SHOOTING YOUR COCKPIT:

- [] **Your camera**—set up as directed on p.5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot you take. Camera right-side up.**
- [] **Cockpit shots 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)—**tall (8 or 10 ft.) stepladder, cleaning supplies, leather oil or Armorall.** 
- [] **Preparing your car**—steering wheel straight, dashboard lights turned on, cockpit clean & tidy, door map pockets empty, no rag or jacket or "stuff" lodged behind the seats. **If your leather or vinyl upholstery is black, oil your seats (but not your dash!).** If you have a tilt steering column, *tilt it down to driving position*; if you have adjustable seats... slide them all the way back.
- [] **6- or 8-ft. stepladder**—take cockpit photos from both sides of your car (see the diagram on p.16). To avoid warping the shape of your cockpit [to keep it 'rectilinear'], **position the closest legs of your ladder 3 ft. (1 meter) from your door**; don't rotate your camera to vertical... keep your camera parallel with your car, as you see in the shots above. **For cockpit shots from the REAR of your car**, use (at least) your 8 ft. or 10 ft. ladder and get your camera as high as safety permits.
- [] **Setting**—outdoors. For your cockpit shots, your entire car must be fully within the smooth shade of a building—*not (chaotic) tree shade*. You need the brightest shade of the day to blend with your flash, so mid-morning or mid-afternoon is best. Open sky overhead (no 'canopy' above your car, and no direct sunlight on your car); no busy distractions visible in the background. So if you're in your driveway, *close your garage door*. **Adjust your zoom with every shot to capture your entire cockpit.**

When shooting your cockpit (and your engine), your car must be outdoors and entirely IN THE SHADE (the smooth shade of a solid structure, *NOT chaotic tree shade*). You CANNOT capture good cockpit shots by positioning your car under direct sunlight.

«««TAKE LOTS OF SHOTS FROM BOTH SIDES AND REAR OF YOUR COCKPIT, ALTERING YOUR CAMERA ELEVATION WITH EACH SHOT»»»

—instrument panel—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your ENTIRE sequence of these dashboard shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.



OUCH! Shot under direct sunlight. Harsh shadows, harsh glare, *terminal* bleach-out, wheel turned -95°. *Plug ugly.*



GREAT SHOT! Same dash, shot in dim outdoor **shade**, no flash, dash lights turned on, steering wheel straight. *Awesome.*

YOU CANNOT CAPTURE GOOD DASHBOARD SHOTS IF YOU POSITION YOUR CAR UNDER DIRECT SUNLIGHT.




GREAT SHOT! Mike Wells' dash, car nosed out of the garage, wheel straight, dash lights on, with flash engaged. *Awesome!*



GREAT SHOT! Etienne Barbara's dash in dim outdoor shade, wheel straight, dash lights on, with flash. *Awesome!*

PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR SHOOTING YOUR DASHBOARD:

- [] **Your dash shots 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)—**Windex** & a **soft cloth** & a **soft brush**, a **dark long-sleeve shirt** [to preempt gaudy reflections on your gauges], a **dark blanket**, a ladder or pole to steady your camera with every shot. 
- [] **Preparing your dash**—Wipe/brush clean your dash, gauge faces [and chromed bezels] and steering wheel spokes. Steering wheel straight, no unsightly keychain. Turn on your dash lights. If you have a tilt column, *tilt it down*. Close your hood [bonnet].
- [] **Ideal setting**—outdoors, in smooth, shade [or under carport or canopy] with—and *only with*—your flash. **Or:** back your car into your garage with the nose facing out into the bright outdoors—Mike Wells' shot above [LHS] typifies what you can expect.
- [] **Take lots of shots with your flash... and without your flash.** Use your flash only with those shots you shoot at oblique angles (from left or right or up high); *turn off your flash* when you aim straight at your dash and gauges and for each of the macro/*über* zoomed-in shots you capture of your gauges. **Steady is good: the steps of your tall stepladder work well to steady your camera.** If you set your camera on *Aperture-preferred automatic* [the 'A' or 'Av' on your main dial], choose a small aperture [*i.e.*, 11 or higher number] to bring all of your gauges into wicked sharp focus. **Sharp focus is good.**
- [] **YOUR TOP PRIORITY**—to capture your dash in sharp focus and w/o glare and your gauge faces with minimal reflections. To advance that goal, **1) wear a dark shirt**, & **2) drape a dark blanket over the rollbar, seatbelts, fire extinguisher.** With every angle you shoot from, pause and survey those gauge faces. For any pesky external reflection(s), have a friend hoist a dark blanket [or a floormat] to block it. **Glary gauge face reflections will ruin your dash shots.**
- [] **STRATEGY**—Take lots of different angles of shots... from the driver side of your car, through the rollbar [with your flash off], from the RHS of the rollbar, **and from a tall ladder behind your car** [be sure to 'zoom in' with your zoom lens]. There's *usually* no compelling reason for you to capture the entire width of your dash—only the steering wheel and all the gauges.

—STOP EVERYTHING! With each shot you prepare to take, pause first to examine your gauge faces for glare and reflections.—

—head-on frontal shots—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your **ENTIRE** sequence of these frontal shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.



You say your Cobra resembles a gasping guppy?

#1: DISTANCE FACTOR. Owner Tim Wayne is wayyyyy too far in front of his Cobra [perhaps 25 ft.]. *Thus all drama is forfeited.* This car could just as well be a 1956 Nash Metropolitan. On frontal shots of any sports car... **close good, distant bad.**

#2: OTHER STUFF. Note the visors: *Here's winkin' at you, kid.*



Now it's a sleek, menacing hammerhead shark!

#1: DISTANCE FACTOR. Same Cobra, same camera. Camera at dashboard height; Tim was ≈6.5 ft. in front of his car... and using flash, his camera upside-down. **Distance and flash and angle of sun is EVERYTHING** in frontal shots of a Cobra.

#2: VISORS. Tilted to horizontal and inconspicuous. This is good.



BEFORE: a medley of glare, gloom and plug-ugly

Bob Quantz' Versailles Blue 427S/C was shot by his photographer friend ('Delbert') wielding a fine Nikon D80... but who treated with scorn Bob's urging that he first visit these *Cobra Photography Tips*.




AFTER: A Study in (Versailles Blue) Splendour

Same Cobra, same owner; Bob took this shot [and other equally superb images] using only his modest (≈\$150) Samsung TL320 compact digicam. But, you see, Bob scrupulously followed these tips.

«««At each specified distance (6 ft., 6.75 ft. & 7.5 ft.), take ALL these shots with your camera at hood scoop level and higher»»»

PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR CAPTURING YOUR FRONTAL SHOTS:

- [] **Your camera**—set up precisely as recommended on page 5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot you take. Hold your camera upside-down with every frontal shot you take.** This gets your flash down low where you need it, and works nicely to feed illumination to the lower regions of the front of your car and into your grille [as evidenced in the RHS photos above]. 
- [] **Your frontal-shot 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)— **broom, shop measuring tape, knee cushion, long-pile shag coachwork duster.**
- [] **Your car**—debris swept away, hood down, visors lowered a bit; wind wings adjusted evenly, wheels straight, parking lights turned on.
- [] **Setting**—outdoors. Concrete [i.e., light-hued pavement] beneath your car. Fancy surface [brick, cobblestone, pavers] also works well. NOT dark asphalt, gravel or grass. Avoid parking lot lines. **TIP:** back your car up snug against a light-colored wall [or your garage door].
- [] **Distance**—Measure off 6 ft. (≈2 meters), place your measuring tape down on the concrete [**DEAD CENTER** in front of your car] and keep your lens centered above that tape. Shoot 3 or 4 shots—the lowest with your camera at the height of your hood scoop... *and no lower* [from too low your Cobra will resemble a stepped-on Budweiser bullfrog], the highest ≈12" above your windscreen. Then step back 9", then another 9" (to ≈7.5 ft.) and repeat the same shots at each distance. **Adjust your zoom lens with every shot you take.**

IN-THE-SUN SHOTS: if your car is properly rotated in relation to the sun for any specific series of shot(s) you are taking (e.g., frontal, 3/4-frontal, broadside), your shadow will never encroach upon your car. **NEVER.**

—3/4 frontal shots—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your ENTIRE sequence of these 3/4-frontal shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.



—How to make your Cobra squat like a toad—

- #1: DISTANCE FACTOR.** Photographer is wayyyyy too far from the car [perhaps 40ft. away instead of 5 to 9 ft.]. PLUS he's moved himself mostly in front of the car instead of more on the side—two quite common mistakes made by Cobra snapshooters. If you heed the recommended angles, distances and wide range of camera heights on page 16 [schematic illustrations page], you'll get GREAT results.
- #2: NO FLASH.** Your flash MUST work on every shot—altho' at this distance it wouldn't have helped. Besides, the excessive distance had already killed this critter dead in its tracks.
- #3: THE SUN.** Harsh OH sun. PLUS, the sun is over yonder... he's shooting the SHADOW end of the car. **Light is good, dark is bad.**




—How to make your Cobra lunge and strike—

- #1: DISTANCE FACTOR.** This is the same make of Cobra replica as the one at the left. Mike Giannetto took this shot of his car in the bright shade of mid-afternoon, with his little Kodak digicam about 6 ft. from his headlamp. Distance is EVERYTHING in 3/4-frontal shots of a Cobra or GT40. You can see that getting physically up close makes a dramatic difference. And note how, as you shift toward the side of the car [Mike is about 45° off the headlamp with this shot], the wheelbase stretches back out and you get an increasingly aggressive, 'pursuit plane' persona.
- #2: FLASH.** At this close range, it enriched the paint, brightened the chrome and eliminated any trace of shadow under the car.
- #3: PAVEMENT.** Nice, bright, light-colored tile mosaic. The lighter the surface under your Cobra, the better results you'll get.

««TAKE LOTS OF THESE ALL-IMPORTANT 3/4-FRONTAL SHOTS, at 5ft., 7ft. and 9ft., from waist level to up on your stepstool.»»

PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR CAPTURING YOUR 3/4-FRONTAL SHOTS:

- [] **Your camera**—set up precisely as recommended on page 5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot you take.** Hold your camera upside-down with every 3/4-frontal shot you take. This gets your flash down low where you need it, and works splendidly to feed illumination to the lower regions of the front of your car and into your grille area. 
- [] **Your 3/4-frontal shots 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)—broom, stepstool & 8 ft. stepladder [for your highest shots at 9 ft. (2.75 meters) away], knee cushion, measuring tape, cleaning supplies, shag coachwork duster.
- [] **Preparing your car**—visors lowered a bit; wind wings adjusted evenly. Wheels straight, tires dressed. Parking lights turned on.
- [] **Setting**—outdoors. Concrete [or otherwise light-colored pavement] beneath your car. Patterned pavement [brick, cobblestone, pavers] can work well also. NOT dark asphalt, gravel or grass. Avoid painted parking lot lines. Take along a broom to sweep away tree debris on the pavement. Clean, uncluttered background; if you're in your driveway... close your garage door!
- [] **Illumination**—You can shoot your 3/4-frontal shots entirely within the smooth shade of a building [the 'bright' shade of mid-morning or mid-afternoon], and you can shoot it in direct sunlight [early-to-mid-morning or mid-to-late afternoon]. Try it both ways. If you're behind the wheel parking your car to shoot 3/4-driver's side shots, you want the sun in front of you, but just ever-so-slightly to the left of center [so that it illuminates both the front and the driver's side]. **But be advised:** you can never shoot your car at anywhere near 'high noon' and get good results. You'll get topside bleachout and unsightly undercar shadows. **And listen carefully:** if your shadow encroaches onto [or near] your car, you do not 'squat down' and you do not back away. You see, the distance & height guidelines for your 3/4-frontal shots [5ft. to 9ft. distance, waist-high to stepstool height] don't suddenly become negotiable merely because your shadow intervenes. Instead, rotate your car 20° or so in one direction or the other, to jettison that pesky phantom. Your shadow on (or near) your car is a signal from the sun that your car is improperly rotated for the angle of shot you're taking. You never alter a (proper) camera position to accommodate your shadow. NEVER.
- [] **Strategy: get higher & higher with your camera as you back away from your car**—position yourself at ≈45° off the driver-side headlamp and 5ft. [≈1,5 meters] away [place your shop tape at that 5ft. mark]. From that starting point, shoot with your camera **1)** low, at fender-top level, then **2)** at chest level. Then back up 2 ft. [≈7 ft. from the headlamp], adjust your zoom lens and repeat the same shots, but continue higher, to eye level. Then back up 2 feet again [to ≈9 ft. from your headlamp], adjust your zoom and do it again, but all the way up 1, 2, 3 steps of your ladder. Then return to your starting point and step to your right to about 30° off your headlamp and repeat those same shots on that new axis. **Adjust your zoom lens with every shot.**

—BS (broadside) shots—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your ENTIRE sequence of these broadside shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.



Above: getting your BS shots WRONG

Photographer is lined up with the center of the car. Not ideal positioning—and the harsh midday sun makes a high-glare mess of the paint job. But it gets worse as you move towards the REAR of the car. Look at the black Cobra on the right.



Above: worse—getting your BS shots really bad

Photographer has positioned himself in line with the rear fenders. We're talking "fat butt syndrome." Not good. **The reason:** those fat rear fenders are much closer to the camera than are the front fenders... and thus are getting *magnified and uglified*.



Better: Photographer is far forward—lined up with the headlamps, camera down low. Distance (from camera to headlamp) range: ≈ 6 ft. to ≈ 9 ft.—and no further.




Better: Photographer is far forward—lined up with the headlamps, camera at chest level or higher. Distance (from camera to headlamp) range: ≈ 6 ft. to ≈ 9 ft.—and no further.



Above (both cars): Photographer is lined up with headlamps, close proximity (≈ 6 ft.) to the car, higher camera position. **Perfect.**



PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR CAPTURING YOUR BROADSIDE SHOTS:

- [] **Your camera**—set up as recommended on page 5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot. Hold your camera upside-down**—your flash will "slide under" and effectively lighten the ugly undercar shadow as you see above. 
- [] **Your broadside shots 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)—**broom, stepstool & 8 ft. stepladder, cleaning supplies, shag duster.**
- [] **Preparing your car**—visors lowered a bit. Front wheels straight. Tires dressed. Parking lights turned on.
- [] **Setting**—outdoors. Concrete (i.e., light-colored pavement) beneath your car. Patterned pavement (brick, cobblestone, pavers can work well also. Avoid *if at all possible* dark asphalt, gravel and grass. If you're in your driveway... *close your garage door!*
- [] **Strategy: get higher & higher with your camera as you back away from your car**—align your camera **with the headlamps**, and shoot first at 6 ft. (≈ 2 meters) distance [camera heights from fender top to chest level; then back up to 7.5 ft. away (≈ 2.5 meters) and go even higher, using your ladder [1, 2 steps up]; then at 9 ft. go 1, 2, 3 steps up]. **Continually adjust your zoom lens. THEN:** follow the same steps in a second round of broadside shots, but with your camera lined up with the 'front axle.'
- [] **Illumination**—You can shoot your BS shots entirely within the smooth shade of a building [the 'bright' shade of mid-morning or mid-afternoon], and you can shoot it in the sun in the early morning or late afternoon. If you're shooting in the sunlight, rotate your car so that the sun is always *behind* you—but at an angle (to your left or right), so that your shadow doesn't fall on your car.

—3/4 rear shots (1: entire car)—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your ENTIRE sequence of these 3/4-rear shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.



—The fat-butt squatting toad—

REARVIEW DISTANCE FACTOR, Part I: Doc Fallon is much too close (at ≈6 ft.) to his serpent for a 3/4-REAR shot. If you wish to turn your Cobra into a fat-butt toad, this is how to do it. And predictably, the OH trees made a *train wreck* of Doc Fallon's emerald paint job. Overhead trees bad.





—The lean, mean, green, serpentine drivin' machine—

REARVIEW DISTANCE FACTOR, Part II: Same serpent, same camera. The good doctor captured this follow-up 3/4-REAR shot from ≈25 ft. away at stepstool height, camera upside-down, car on light surface... *and no tree reflections*). **Distance is EVERYTHING in 3/4-rearview shots of a Cobra or GT40.** As you can see above, backing your camera away makes for a *sleek transformation*, and your Cobra sashays onto the world stage as a *lean, obscenely mean, serpentine drivin' machine*.

3/4-rearview shots. Back off to 25 ft. (8 meters) to slim-down "fat butt syndrome."

««« FOR 3/4-REAR (ENTIRE CAR ONLY) SHOTS, YOU MUST BACK AWAY TO 25 FT. (8 METERS) FROM YOUR REAR FENDER.

PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR CAPTURING YOUR 3/4-REARVIEW SHOTS:

- [] **Your camera**—set up precisely as recommended on page 5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot you take.** 
- [] **Preparing your car**—visors lowered a bit. Wheels straight, parking lights on. Rotate your trunk/boot handle to horizontal (closed). 
- [] **Your 3/4-rear shots 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)—**broom, stepstool [or short stepladder], cleaning supplies, shag duster.**
- [] **Setting**—outdoors. Concrete (or otherwise light-colored pavement) beneath your car. Patterned pavement (brick, cobblestone, pavers can work well also. NOT dark asphalt, gravel or grass [avoid those darker/grislier surfaces if at all possible]. Avoid painted parking lot lines and other surface eyesores. Clean, uncluttered background; if you're in your driveway... *close your garage door!*
- [] **Illumination**—Depending upon how bright the flash is on your camera, you can shoot your 3/4-rearview shots entirely within the smooth shade of a building [the 'bright' shade of mid-morning or mid-afternoon], and you can shoot it in direct sunlight [early-to-mid-morning or mid-to-late afternoon]. If you're in the sunlight, remember that the sun must be behind you—preferable behind and from the side as well—thus lighting up both the rear and the side of your car. So stop for a moment and make sure the sun is lighting all the part of the car you're facing. **But be advised:** you cannot shoot your car at anywhere near 'high noon' and get good results; similarly, the sun *cannot* be on the far side of your car; you see, the glancing sun glare would be aimed straight for your camera. You get topside bleachout, *and a harsh undercar shadow that will turn your sculpted serpent into a potbellied pig*. Also, "watch out for bleachout" on your dashboard; if the sun is bleaching out your dash, rotate your car to eliminate that glare.
- [] **Distance/angle factor—avoiding 'fat butt' syndrome.** Refer to that "lean, mean green drivin' machine" shot at above right; Doc Fallon was about 25 feet (≈8 meters) from his car. From that vantage point, take shots starting at chest level, to then standing level, then 1, 2, 3 steps up your stepstool. Then move laterally a step or two (left & right) so that you're shooting your car from different angles as well. You'll wind up with a set of drop-dead gorgeous 3/4-rearview shots of your Cobra. **Remember: 25 feet (8 meters) away from your rear fender. 25 feet. 8 meters. That's 25 feet. Again: you MUST be 25 feet away.**



ONE MORE TIME:

You must (repeat **MUST**) back away to 25 ft. [≈8m] from your rear fender for your 3/4-REAR (entire car) shots. Then, *of course*, use your zoom lens to 'fill your frame with your car.' P.14 will show you the way you can capture really good 3/4-rear shots from close up.

at left: Irwin Rawet (Boca Raton, Florida) took this 3/4-rearview shot of his Cobra with all the doors & decks open (and in bright shade). This lets folks see—with *one image*—how your trunk, cockpit and the underside of your hood are nicely appointed! And see how well that light pavement worked to accentuate the elegant lines of his coachwork. You can move in closer (than 25 ft.) for this shot.

—Rear-Half shots (2: partial car)—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot an ENTIRE sequence of these Rear-Half shots before you proceed to your next sequence of shots.



—The fat-butt/narrow-chested *full-car* shot—

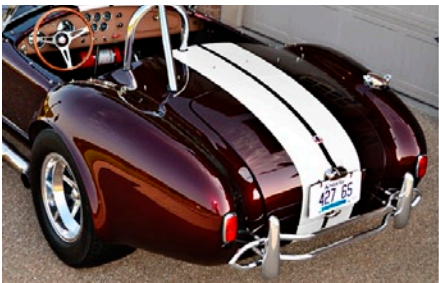
This is what you get when you capture a (full-car) 3/4-rear shot from up close... in this case about 6 ft. (≈2 meters) away from the back fender. It's the fat-butt, narrow-chested, awkward-looking, ugliest blue goose in the pond. That pointy-nose front end is the problem.



—The zoomed-in (camera-cropped) shot—


Here's 'The Fix': Remain the same distance from the car, but zoom in and lop off that ugly 'tapered' front end. See how much larger and sharper the details are now... and the fat-butt/narrow-chested *ugly gosling* look is no more!

«« BELOW: RANDOM EXAMPLES OF GREAT REAR-HALF SHOTS TAKEN FROM A VARIETY OF ANGLES AND CAMERA HEIGHTS. »»



«« ATTENTION TO DETAIL: Note how much more attractive each of those Cobras is... by simply turning on the taillights. »»

PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR CAPTURING YOUR REAR-HALF SHOTS:

- [] **Your camera**—set up precisely as recommended on page 5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot you take; Hold your camera upside-down for every 'Rear-Half' shot you take. Steady your camera with every shot.** 
- [] **Preparing your car**—Parking lights (and dash lights) turned on... *as they are above*. Rotate your trunk handle to horizontal (closed).
- [] **Your Rear-Half shots 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)—**broom, stepstool [or short stepladder], cleaning supplies, shag duster.**
- [] **Camera position(s)**—Move all around the rear of your car snapping your shutter... from the driver side around to the passenger side, and at different camera heights, just as you see represented in the photos above. Stay close to the car, and take lots of your shots from higher angles... which helps you to capture richer paint colour and contrast. **One other tip:** if you intend to shoot these 'Rear-Half' (or 'Front-Half') photos **IN THE SUN**—*which is fine*—then *phone me first* for expert tips to get the best results.
- [] **Reflections**—especially with darker-coloured cars, try to capture vivid cloud and/or architectural (and palm tree) reflections on the rear deck surfaces and rear-fender-side surfaces of your car. Eye-catching reflections can very effectively accentuate the shine and 'mirror finish' of your paint job. Nose your car into a house or other structure that can provide eye-candy reflections.

One other thing: In motorcar photography, 'The Devil is in the Details.' So USE THESE CHECKLISTS. They will save you from yourself. But dammit... only if you use them.

—hard tops & soft tops—

USE DISCIPLINE: Shoot your **ENTIRE** sequence of these 'lid' shots before you proceed to the next sequence of shots.

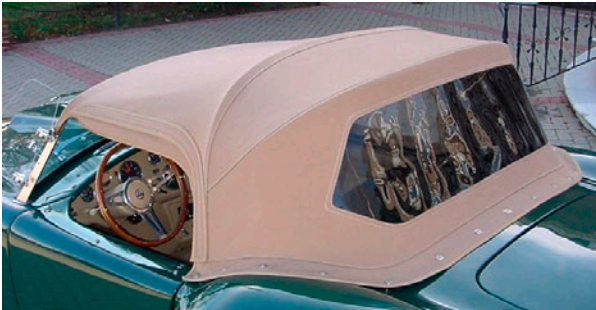


above: this is a good photo, pretty much everything done right. But IMHO [in my humble opinion], a Cobra roadster photographed full-car with a hard top (or soft top) tends to look a bit 'funky'... *kinda like your grandma's high-top lace-up shoes*. Better, methinks, to photograph just the top itself—from 8 or 10 feet away to reduce 'warpage,' [use your zoom lens to 'get close'], and from different angles and camera heights. Take some shots from 1 or 2 steps up on your stepstool [and *zoomed in*]. See the photo at right.



Now, with the rest of the reptile out of the picture, the 'funky' effect is pretty much dispensed with, and the focus is on the [very stylish] top itself. This is good.

But see how dark and shadowy his cockpit came out? *It's because he forgot to use his flash*. Take most of your hardtop/softtop shots with your camera upside-down, so the illumination 'reaches under' the top and into the cockpit.



ABOVE: Frank Sanchez used his vintage 1.3 megapixel *Sony Cyber-shot* to capture this photo of the spiffy *Hartz Cloth* soft top on his Cobra. Evidence once again that *mega-pixel count has nothing to do with good photography*.

See how nicely his dash and wheel show up? *Frank remembered to use his flash—and to turn his camera upside-down!*



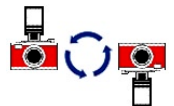
ABOVE: Harold Gumm [Lompoc, California] used his *Canon Rebel* digicam to capture this shot of the soft top on his Cobra. Surf good.

And see how clearly the dashboard shows up? *Again, it's because Harold remembered to use his flash*.

«««YOUR "TOP" PRIORITY: sidestepping the homely look of grandma's high-top lace-up shoes»»»

PILOT'S CHECKLIST—EXPERT TIPS FOR CAPTURING YOUR REMOVABLE TOP SHOTS:

- [] **Your digital camera**—set up as recommended on page 5. **Your flash MUST engage with every shot.**
- [] **Your removable top shots 'TOOLKIT'** (see p.21)—**stepstool, cleanup supplies, shag duster.**
- [] **Setting**—outdoors. Clean, uncluttered background; if you're in your driveway... *close your garage door!*
- [] **Illumination**—You can shoot all of your hard top and soft top shots entirely within the smooth shade of a building [the 'bright' shade of mid-morning or mid-afternoon], and you can shoot it in direct sunlight [early-to-mid-morning or mid-to-late afternoon]. If you're in direct sunlight, remember that the sun must be behind you—preferably behind and from the side as well—so that the sunlight is glancing off into a distant horizon and not into your camera. Take your shots with your camera both rightside-up and upside-down, to provide additional angles for your flash.
- [] **Convertible top distance & angle factor.** Back up 10 or 12 feet [3 or 4 meters] to reduce 'warpage,' and use your zoom lens to 'get close.' **Adjust your zoom lens with every shot you take.**



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—YOUR SHOOTING SESSION *CHEAT SHEET*—

Best camera angles, distances, heights, expert tips... *all on one page!*

Use the very best digital camera you can get your hands on • Set up your camera exactly as detailed on p.5—the way it should've been set up at the factory—**YOUR CAMERA MUST BE SET TO FLASH WITH EVERY SHOT** • Take all your shots **OUTDOORS**, with open sky OH • Each red "X" below marks camera position (angle & distance): those camera positions are critical for you to get best results—**HEED THEM CLOSELY!** • Tree reflections can render your paint job A **TRAIN WRECK** • Use a stepstool to "rise above and vanquish" sun glare on the top surfaces • Adjust your zoom lens to carefully frame each shot • **Accent lighting:** for dashboard shots, turn on your dash lights; for your full-car shots, turn on your the parking & brake lights and your decorative carriage lamps.

page 7: engine

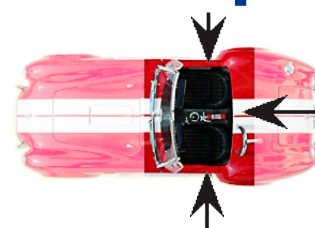


Entire car **MUST BE** in "bright" outdoor **SHADE** [smooth building shade, NOT chaotic tree shade]. Place a bright/white vinyl **shower curtain liner** on the pavement beneath your engine [that is a **VERY** valuable tip—**DON'T ignore it!**]. Step up onto a footstool and [to vary the angles of your flash] slightly shift your camera angles—including *upside-down*—and take 6 or 8 shots from both the driver & passenger side. Zoom out to capture your entire engine compartment with every shot. **More tips on page 7.**

page 8: cockpit



Your camera **MUST** be set to flash with every single shot you take. **No exception.**



TALL (8' or 10'; 2,5 m or 3 m) step ladder



Car **MUST BE** in "bright" outdoor **SHADE** with open sky overhead [smooth building shade—NOT inside your garage, and NO DIRECT SUNLIGHT striking anywhere on your car]. Dash lights on. Position ladder ≈3 ft. (1 m) away from the door; adjust your zoom lens.

More cockpit shot Checklist tips on page 8.

«**CAREFULLY OBSERVE THE SUN IN THESE ILLUSTRATIONS: IT REMAINS IN THE SAME PLACE... WHILE YOUR CAR IS ROTATED**»

BELOW... NO ROCKET SCIENCE! Roughly 85% of your *in-the-sun* shots will be with your car simply **AIMED DIRECTLY**—nose first or butt first—at the sun [low sun—the hour or two after sunrise/before sundown] as shown below • Park on bright, unstriped concrete, NOT black asphalt, gravel or (worst of all) GRASS • In the sun, you **CANNOT** walk around your car snapping your shutter—if your shadow encroaches onto the car, **PROMPTLY STOP SHOOTING** and rotate your car correctly for the shot(s) you're taking • If your car is entirely within smooth daytime **SHADE**, all the best camera positions (below) remain the same; but in the shade you're entirely free to rotate your car *at will* to reap maximum advantage from an effective background—a solid white garage door, for example.

Distances from sun to car not drawn to scale. //:=)

page 10: frontal

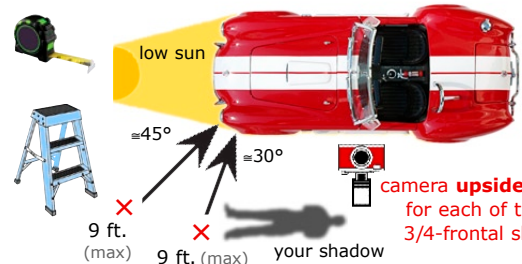


Your camera **MUST BE upside-down** for each of these head-on-frontal shots; keep your lens *dead-center-aligned* for every shot.

Use a shop measuring tape to measure off 6 ft. **DEAD CENTER** in front of your Cobra; raise your camera to the height of your hood scoop [and **NO LOWER!**] and shoot; then take 2 or 3 shots at higher levels 'til your camera is pointed downward from the height of the top of the windshield. Then back up to 7 ft., then 8 ft., repeating your original shots at those distances and adjusting your zoom lens with each shot.

Rotate your car 180° for butt-on REAR shots. Note the shadow icon: if your Cobra is properly rotated with the sun, your shadow will **NEVER** land on your car. **More frontal-shot tips on p.10.**

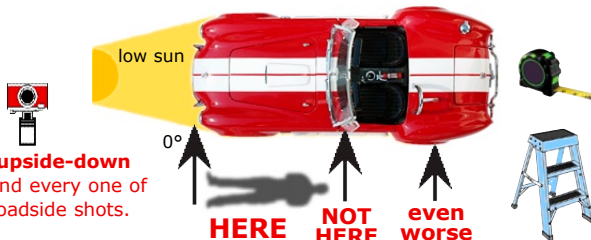
page 11: 3/4-frontal



camera **upside-down** for each of these 3/4-frontal shots.

Positioning yourself at distances of 5 ft., 7 ft. and 9 ft. from your headlamp [and at both angles indicated above], shoot at several heights—from knee level to chest-high; **then at the furthest (9 ft.) distance, also take shots at standing height and from your stepstool.** **More 3/4-frontal shot tips on p.11.**

page 12: broadside



camera **upside-down** for each and every one of these broadside shots.

HERE NOT HERE even worse

Line up with your headlamps. At (measured) distances of 6 ft., 8 ft. and 10 ft., shoot with your camera at knee level, then to mid-thigh level, waist level, chest level; then at the 10 ft. [3 meter] distance, also take shots at standing height and from your stepstool. **See the BS shot photos on p.12.**

pp.13&14: 3/4-rearview



camera **upside-down** for each and every one of these 3/4-rear shots.

25 ft. [≈7,5 meters] [22 ft. min. distance]

≈25 ft. from rear fender. Use your zoom lens to "fill your frame" with Cobra. **Heights:** from chest-level to up on stepstool. Rotate your car a bit if the sun bleaches your dashboard.

More 3/4-rear shot tips on pp.13 & 14; we recommend you use page 14 tips.

—closeup shots: how to do 'em right—



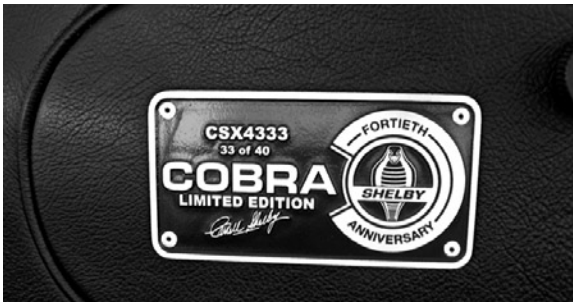
Paint job reflections can often make for a dramatic and eye-catching shot. Best to shoot these in bright daytime shade. Try it both *with and without your flash*. In the photo above, turning the camera upside-down [to get the flash *down low*] helped to illuminate the wheel, sidepipe and pavement—*while not bleaching out the reflections*—and seriously improved the photograph.



Fine chassis componentry impresses Cobra enthusiasts—especially if that componentry is clean and nice and shows well. Best to have a bright, clean surface under the components you're shooting. So take some close-up shots of the good stuff. Use your flash on every component shot.



Instrument panel closeups can help stimulate a buyer. Shoot outdoors in muted daytime shade. **Clean your gauge faces and turn your dash lights ON.** Shoot from numerous angles, including head-on (as above) and from both sides of your rollbar; include your entire steering wheel in most of your shots; find ways to hold your camera *really* steady. **TURN OFF YOUR FLASH for straight-on dash shots;** you see, those flat gauge faces will rebound your flash right to your camera. **Nuke gaugeface reflections**—have a buddy hold up a dark blanket or—in a pinch—a floor mat as a “blackout curtain” to block pesky/glaring reflections on your gauges [a chromed rollbar can easily be the biggest culprit].



Glovebox closeups. Take shots from several angles, including straight-on [straight-on is important for dash plaques, since any other angle will noticeably 'distort' the rectilinear shape of the plaque]. Shoot outdoors in bright daytime (smooth) shade, open sky overhead—but NO DIRECT SUNLIGHT striking your car. **If you wish to shoot directly into (i.e., near 90°) into the dash, TURN OFF your flash. Just be sure to turn your flash back on when you're done with those shots.**

Metallic paint job closeups: the lion's share of your potential buyers are quite distant and unlikely to “drop by your house.” Here's how you get 'em to appreciate just how gorgeous your paint is when viewed in person...



—left & right—

- 1. Your car outdoors,** completely within the shade of a building [but open sky overhead]. In other words, the same bright daytime shade as when you shoot your engine and cockpit shots.
- 2. Now here's a twist: turn your flash OFF.** For paint job closeups, you cannot have either direct sunlight or flash striking the finish. **Just don't forget to turn your flash back on when you're done taking these various closeup shots!**



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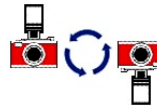
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—bringing up the rear—



Trunk shots [*boot shots* for you UK & Commonwealth denizens] can be valuable for you to show prospective buyers how nicely your luggage compartment is finished off. After all, not all serpents sport a nicely-detailed trunk. If you have special equipment in your trunk [e.g., gel-cell battery, remote/concealed stereo componentry, fuel cell, nitrous tank, mobile poodle-grooming parlour, *etc. etc.*], it's that much more advantageous for you to capture some good boot photos. If you're shooting the rear with the trunk (boot) closed, **be sure to turn your trunk handle all the way to closed, the handle turned to horizontal.**

Generally speaking, just as with your engine and cockpit shots, you'll get consistently better results in bright daytime (outdoor) shade and using your flash. **That is to say, avoid solar glare and USE YOUR FLASH! Take each shot twice—first with your camera rightside-up, and again with it upside-down.**

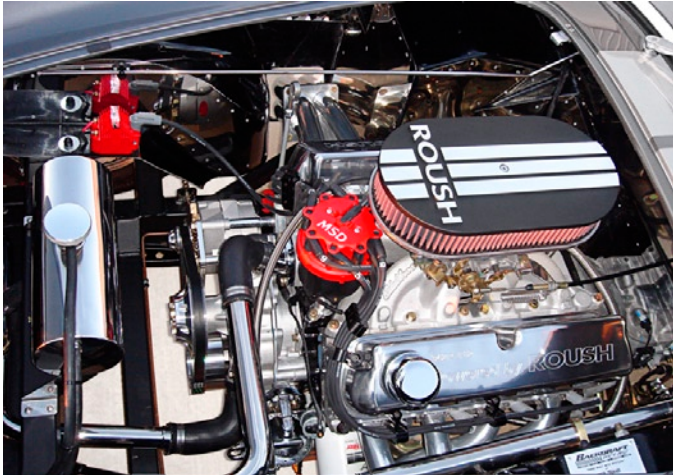


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—More great Cobra photos shot by owners just like you—

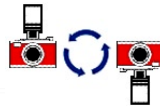
[and most of 'em shot with a consumer-variety digicam probably similar to yours]



at left: fine engine-compartment shot, shot in mid-afternoon smooth shade [and with his flash] by Matthew May. You're looking at the reason why I recommend your positioning a bright white/glossy shower curtain liner on the pavement beneath your engine... **a valuable tip for you to pay heed to!**



above: head-on frontal shot, shot in mid-afternoon smooth shade by Ray Dilela [Franklin Square, New York]. Note the nice eye-catching [and paint-job-accentuating] cloud reflections.



above: underhood shot captures the exquisite paintwork and engine detailing of Tracy Manes' red Cobra. Randy Borscherding [of Houston, Texas] did the fine photo work.



above: 3/4-view shot by Ryan Parks [Rancho Santa Margarita, California]. **Setting:** late afternoon, in bright, low sun on light concrete and a white (building) backdrop. Perfect angle of sun—almost directly in front of his car. All that light-colored surrounding + his flash [camera upside down] collaborated to make for a great photograph—*darn near studio quality!*

Below: why I advise you to (permanently) set your camera to flash with every shot...



Mark Kassab [Panama City Beach, Florida] took these comparison shots of his 'Flame Yellow' *Unique Motorcars* Cobra. On the left, with his flash set on the [poorly-conceived/factory-default] "automatic flash"; on the right, with his camera set on **"Flash ON/Forced Flash."** **Any questions?**

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G-r-r-r-reat!!! GT40 and Daytona Coupe owner photos...

each of 'em shot with a consumer-variety digital camera set at 3 or 4 megapixels or less.



Smile. You're on Candid Camera!
Superformance GT40 Mk1 by owner Steve Briscoe [Greeley, Colorado]



Daytona Coupe shot, by owner Pete Moore [Thousand Oaks, California]. Pete captured his *Coupe* in smooth daytime shade, on bright/clean concrete, with his white garage door as a backdrop, and using his flash to good effect [and with driving lights on]. He was armed with only his little *Samsung TL320* digicam. **Pete's Coupe went to a lucky new owner in the San Francisco Bay area.**



ERA GT40 Mk1 3/4-frontal shot, by John Stallings [Sterling, Virginia].

Now get this: John had no previous experience with a digital camera, and used a borrowed 10-year-old, 3-megapixel *Nikon Coolpix 990*. That vintage little digicam boasts a very good *Nikkor* optical glass lens, decent-sized flash and first-rate pixel quality. And John carefully followed my tips. **Compelling evidence once again that good photography has NOTHING TO DO with megapixel count.** That black beauty promptly went to Switzerland!



Superb, superb, superb GT40 cockpit shot, taken by Eric Hall [Bristol, Rhode Island]. Here's the formula: **1)** car is in smooth, bright outdoor SHADE; **2)** flash forced on; **3)** small aperture [f9 or higher] so that the entire cockpit is in sharp focus; **4)** **Eric moved his camera right up into the door opening**, steadied his camera on the roof, and 'zoomed out' so that he was able to capture the entire interior. Also note that (with a touch of good luck) at this angle there was no 'flashback' to bleach out his gauge faces. Perfect GT40 cockpit shot.



Superformance/Brock Daytona Coupe portrait par excellence. A true masterpiece, captured by one of the industry's universally renowned, respected, acclaimed and admired performance car photographers at **SAAC 30** [the 30th Nat'l Convention of the *Shelby American Automobile Club*] at *California Speedway* in Fontana.

//;-) I just couldn't resist slipping one of my own images into these pages, albeit at the very end...

Don't engage yourself in the [curiously enduring] ritual of stalking around your car, guided only by your hunches to pause here & there to click your shutter. That's the *tried and true* formula for capturing crappy snapshots.



Your Toolkit Contents:

1. **digital camera**—use the best digicam you can get your hands on! Don't even think of using your cellphone or your iPad to photograph your car. Sheesh.
2. **shop measuring tape**—for measuring off the *critical* distances of your head-on frontal, 3/4-frontal and broadside shots.
3. **footstool**—for your **engine shots** [so you capture more engine, less fender].
4. **stepstool**—for your 3/4-view & broadside shots at distance [7ft. to 10ft.] distance; also comes in handy to get your camera above sun glare—see tip on p.6
5. **stepladder—TALL:** 8ft. or 10ft. [2,5m or 3 m] for your cockpit and dashboard shots.
6. **knee padding**—moving blanket, pillow, *buzzard carcass*. A dark-coloured moving blanket can serve double duty as a "blackout curtain" to block reflections on your gauge faces when shooting your instrument panel [hint: so can your floor mats].
7. **cleaning supplies**—Windex, soft rags, lens cleaning cloth, paper towels, soft paint brush (for dash), "California Duster" [shag-type coachwork dry mop]
8. **leather "gloss"**—leather oil, baby oil, Armorall, Meguiar's 'Leather Wipes'
9. **broom**—to clear your shooting location(s) of pesky tree debris.
10. **shower curtain liner (and shop lights)**—for your **engine shots** [bright, white, glossy vinyl]—*beneath your engine it'll pay you HUGE dividends!* Place a couple of shop lights beneath your cockpit (facing forward) to provide more light beneath the rear areas of your engine.
11. **dark, longsleeved shirt** [in place of your Maui Wowee floral print] to preempt garish reflections on your gauges & chromed engine parts.
12. **walking stick** [or a shovel handle or a PVC pipe] to steady your camera. **Trust me: you'll capture MUCH sharper photos.**
13. **Cobra Photography Tips**—**Get all those li'l details right in one shoot... heed those Checklist tips to the letter!**

—AVOID PAVEMENT 'SPLOTCHES': don't dress your tires where you intend to shoot your car!—

—emailing your digital photos to CobraCountry—

1. **Create a folder on your computer desktop** and put your car photos into it; **carefully go through them and glean your 25 or 30 'top keepers'** [12 or 15 full-car shots (as depicted on p.16), 3 or 4 engine-compartment shots, 3 or 4 cockpit shots, dash shots and perhaps closeup shots, trunk (boot) shots, softtop/hardtop shots and undercarriage shots]; **initially separating the wheat from the chaff is your job: you purge the dark/blurry/gloomy birdcage-liner images on your end; you'll be emailing us only your semi-finalist 'keepers.'**

2. **Phone me for details** on how you should a) select, and b) email your photos to me.

Here's what you must not do:

1. **DO NOT MODIFY OR RESAVE your photos**—don't rotate them [except temporarily, for your viewing], crop them, downsize them or alter them in any way; send each of your JPEG images **just as your camera captured it**. We [in concert with *Adobe Photoshop*] will expertly execute image-correcting magic to each of your photos.
2. **DO NOT UPLOAD your images up to some 3rd-party photo-sharing website** [such as *Dropbox.com*, *Flickr.com*, *Google Drive*, *KodakGallery*, *Photobucket*, *Picasa*, *SkyDrive*, et al.] for us to slog through and try to download your images. That *always* proves to be an enormously time-consuming and counterproductive task. *So we don't do it.*