



# Gateway Gazette

Monthly Newsletter of the St. Louis Chapter

**BUICK CLUB OF AMERICA**

Volume XXVI, No. 2

March 2006

## BUICK AND THE AUTO SHOWS

Winter months provide different car activities and interests. My only car activity lately was attending the St. Louis Auto Show in late January. (My garage is COLD.) Buick exhibited their latest concept car in Detroit, a crossover vehicle called Enclave. Yes, the world needs another crossover SUV like Detroit needs another nasty winter. But a production version of the Enclave is expected to replace both the Rendezvous and the Rainier for 2008, so that will be one less SUV. The Enclave is being targeted for the \$35,000 class. The reporters raved about the luxurious interior, but added the warning that the gorgeous wood trim and finely stitched leather will surely be industrialized down for production. The bean count-

ers will have their way. The concept model included a skylight extending almost the entire length of the passenger compartment, a feature about as likely to catch on as the Vista Cruiser/Sportwagon. And of course it was loaded with multiple DVD players. The Enclave is based on the GM Lambda platform which will accommodate three-row minivan-style seating and front-wheel drive and all-wheel drive applications. Various reports have Saturn, GMC and Pontiac each using the Lambda platform by 2008. The Enclave featured a 3.6 liter V-6, but it was hinted that a V-8 may be an option. Naturally the Enclave went from the Detroit show to Washington, D.C., rather than to St. Louis.

**We Get**



**Buick LaCrosse**  
St. Louis Auto Show  
January 2006

**They Get**



**Buick Enclave Concept Car**  
North American International Auto Show  
January 2006

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

|           |           |                              |
|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|
| March 2nd | 7:30 PM   | Monthly Meeting at O'Leary's |
| April 6th | 7:30 PM   | Monthly Meeting at O'Leary's |
| April 8th | 10 - 2 PM | Oil Change at Spectra        |

◆ Collector car auction ◆ St. Charles Convention Center ◆ April Fools Day ◆ See page 7 for details ◆

**BOB LOUDON**  
**GATEWAY CHAPTER'S FIRST DIRECTOR**  
**1978-1981**



Many of our chapter club members have never met Bob, so with this issue, I will introduce him again to the chapter. You may see the name Loudon in the newspapers occasionally. Bob's son, John Loudon, is a Missouri State Senator from Chesterfield. Bob is retired and living in Ballwin. He is director of the Midwest Region Nash Car Club. You may see him at car shows occasionally. Recently he began writing his memoirs and offered to allow me to use some of the stories in our newsletter.

Bob grew up just west of Chicago, in and around Aurora, Illinois. As a child he was fascinated with cars and his life story is largely cars and trucks. Moving from toy cars to pedal cars to cleaning cars, Bob went on to chauffeuring and then truck driving. From a small child to retirement, Buicks have been a big part of his life. In his late teens and early twenties he souped up prewar straight eight Buicks for drag racing and even a circle track venture or two. The February 2005 issue of the *Bugle* featured a story on drag racing Buicks, 1936 to 1941 models. When I read it I was reminded of stories Bob is including in his memoirs. We may publish some of those stories here in a later issue. This month from Bob's memoirs we have a story of his first car, a 1936 Nash.

**BOB LOUDON WRITES:**  
**HIS FIRST CAR - A 1936 NASH 400**

My life has truly revolved around cars and trucks and I regret not a bit of it.

I got my first car from my oldest sister. Dorothy was six years older than me and much wiser as well. And a lovelier person never lived, both in looks and personality. She graduated from Northern Illinois State Teachers College in DeKalb in forty-one and immediately received a contract to teach at a little country school a short distance out of Aurora. She had made friends with the son of the Buick dealer in DeKalb and so she went to him for advice and aid in getting a used car. The only thing she could afford that they had was a thirty-five Ford two-door. Well, that Ford was a real disaster for a young girl with no mechanic on the payroll. Typical of Fords of that vintage, the clutch chattered, the brakes were not very good and it vapor locked and overheated in the summer and was hard to start in the winter. Dorothy decided the Ford had to go.

I was working at the Lincoln Mercury dealer's used car lot, keeping the cars clean, and we had a really nice thirty-six Chevy I wanted Dorothy to buy. She drove it and really liked it, but it was more money than she could afford and also she thought that her friend in DeKalb would probably give her a better deal, so off to DeKalb we went. I never was much of a Ford lover as a kid so I figured anything we came back with would be an improvement. Boy, was I in for a day.

Mom and Dad had come along and we arrived at the Buick store about one o'clock. To my horror, this guy had a thirty-six Nash he wanted to put Dorothy in. Everybody liked the car but me. It was a dark blue thirty-six Nash 400 four-door and everyone agreed it would be a big upgrade from the Ford, that is everyone but me. I said, "If you buy that stupid thing I will absolutely refuse to ride in it." Dorothy uncharacteristically informed me that I didn't have to ride in it if I didn't want to. I told her I would be so embarrassed to have a Nash sitting in our driveway that I wouldn't even want to bring my friends home anymore.

At any rate, while they were all involved in the office, I wandered out in the shop where a mechanic was changing our plates and making a couple of

*(Continued on page 3)*

## BOB LOUDON AND HIS 1936 NASH

last minute adjustments on the car. He kind of laughed when I made my feelings known and told me to keep an open mind, that Nashes were really good cars and I would grow to like it. I couldn't imagine such a thing, but he invited me to jump in while he took it out for a road test. My first impression was that it sure was wide compared to the Ford and it did have a really nice dash and upholstery. But it was still a damn Nash. We pulled out of the shop and headed west on Alt. Highway 30, cruising along until we came to a stop sign. So far, so good. It really did ride nice and it had a nice sound too, but it was still a Nash. When we stopped for a stop sign, the mechanic said, "Watch this." Whereupon he floored it and took off through the gears. Well, that old girl did fly. I couldn't believe it. He laughed and told me that a lot of cops and sheriffs used them, as they were fast and reliable. I was starting to crack just a little at this point. So home we went in our blue Nash.

Oh the things that were in store for me. It took little time for the old Nash to win me over. Besides being good riding, roomy, comfortable, economical and fast, it was a really good car as well. Unlike the Ford, the Nash had a smooth clutch, hydraulic brakes, it would always start and it never overheated or vapor locked. I really learned to drive on that car and I drove it quite a bit before I even got my drivers license. Dorothy had rented a garage around the corner and down the block a ways from our house and we worked out an arrangement whereby I would go down to the garage in the morning and bring the car around to the house for Sis. One nasty rainy morning, I came zipping

around the corner onto North Avenue, skidded and hit the curb, bending the tie rod in the process. The result was that the front wheels ended up pointing in opposite directions, a situation likely to cause poor handling. I went into the house totally humbled to confess my stupidity and describe what had happened. My sister was a bit upset but Dad defended me and told me he hoped I had learned a lesson, which believe me I had. There was a gas station right on the corner and we somehow got the car in there and they had it all fixed in about an hour. Never happened again!

Sometime in about forty-three Dorothy and her best girl friend decided to go to California to seek fame and fortune. They took the Santa Fe Chief west and the Nash stayed home. The old girl had developed a slight knock in the engine and with the problems with gas and tires during the war it seemed wise to leave the car home. So I started bugging her about letting me have it as I now had a driver's license. My dear Sis let me have it for one hundred dollars and of course back then it was worth at least four, but that was my sister.

I was mechanically inclined, but I had very little knowledge or practical experience at the time so I had to learn by doing. There was a fairly large auto repair shop called Adoph's Garage about half-way between our house and downtown and I used to stop in there and talk to the mechanics as they worked on cars. There was an old timer working there named Joe. (Weren't all old time grease monkeys named either Joe or Mike in those days?) Anyway, Joe asked me to describe the symptoms, which I did, and he told me he thought it was probably a wrist pin. He told me to short out the plugs one by one with a screwdriver while it was idling and I would soon find out which cylinder was the culprit. This worked and I determined that the number four cylinder was where the problem was. So I jacked up the car with a bumper jack, shoved concrete blocks under the front axle and went to work. My tool supply consisted of a hammer, pliers, screwdrivers, a pipe wrench and a couple of crescent wrenches. I got the head and the pan off and soon had the number four piston out and sure enough the pin was quite loose. Now those old Nashes really had great engines in them for the times. Consider that it had seven mains when most sixes had maybe three or four. It had insert

*(Continued on page 4)*



**Bob washing the '36 Nash  
Spring of 1945**

## Bob Loudon & His 1936 Nash

rod bearings when many cars had babbbitted bearings and splash oiling. It had aluminum alloy pistons and rifle drilled connecting rods which meant the rods were drilled up through their length so that the wrist pins got oil under pressure. Of course the old girl did not have an oil filter on it and so had acquired quite a bit of sludge which caused the pin to get loose as the passageway in the rod was plugged with slime. I took the assembly down to Phillips Auto Parts where they fitted a new pin. I picked up a head and pan gasket and one rod bearing, which was not a very good idea but one of the guys there told me I should replace that one bearing. The reason that is not a good idea is because, when you have five bearings with normal wear on them and one new tight one, the new one does not always get enough oil due to its tightness. However, God was with me and it worked out okay. Of course I knew nothing about head bolt torque or the proper tightening pattern, but I got it all back together with my crescent wrenches and hammer and soon enough the big moment came. With my fingers and toes crossed, I turned on the key, pulled out the choke and hit the starter. The old girl sprang to life and it sounded great. Not a trace of a knock or a tick.

*(The Nash survived Bob's high school years despite many wild escapades that Bob remembers vividly. But we will stop here and move to Buicks another month. Ed.)*

### AFFILIATED INSURANCE SPECIALISTS

**Steve Dodson**  
Account Executive

Representing  
**HAGERTY**

Classic Auto  
E-mail: sdodson1@primary.net

Office (636) 296-2949  
12 Municipal Dr. Suite D  
Arnold, MO 63010

04/05

## MID-WEST FLOOR CO.

"QUALITY THROUGH TIME SINCE 1939"

**Paul Horkits**

Estimator

**314-647-6060 x106 Fax 314-647-9189**  
2417 Breckenridge Industrial Court • Saint Louis, MO 63144  
[www.mid-westfloor.com](http://www.mid-westfloor.com)

0705

## March Milestones

### Anniversaries

Ralph & Penelope Hyde

### Birthdays

Helen Becker  
Maggie Crawford  
Bill Landers  
George Mertensmeyer  
Avis Meyer  
Mary Ann Meyer  
Mark Myers



Barbara Myers  
Kimberly Smith  
Rob Stegeman  
Daryl Sutphen  
Layne Van Overmeer  
Jan Weghorst

## FOR SALE

### 1969 Buick Electra 225 4-dr

Parts car / project car  
Best offer over \$300

**Eric Worthington (417) 538-4203**

3215 W. Hwy 76  
Cape Fair, MO 65624

455 engine installed but not running

### 1998 Buick Riviera

Bright White Diamond w/ taupe leather interior, supercharged 3.8 L V-6, 75,000 miles, excellent condition

\$8,200

**Larry B. Cox (Sherry's brother)**  
**(314) 221-4220**

[larryc01@charter.net](mailto:larryc01@charter.net)

Paul Horkits tells me this car is fully loaded and in great condition.