



Gateway Gazette

Monthly Newsletter of the St. Louis Chapter

BUICK CLUB OF AMERICA

Volume XXVII, No. 4

May 2007

PERSONAL PROFILE: GENE HUGHES

The trip to Mount Dora in central Florida was my first visit to the famous annual Mt. Dora Classic Wooden Boat Show. Accompanied by my photographer son, Matt, and classic wooden boat collector/enthusiast and good friend, Marty Haugh, we were looking to kick tires and experience the reflections bouncing off the over 150 pristine varnished wooden boats.

Upon seeing the various classic car/trailer/boat combinations exhibited at the show, I experienced a weak moment of nostalgic interlude and I began to contemplate owning a vintage auto that could gracefully accompany an "heirloom" I recently inherited from my family, a 1959 16' Shepherd wooden outboard runabout. The mahogany plank boat manufactured in Canada had become my restoration project.

The Buick owning journey begins with a phone call to Mike, the sales manager of a used car lot located at the crossroads in a small town in central Florida. The photos of a fairly nice '54 Pontiac Chieftain taken two weeks prior as we passed through on our way to Mt. Dora were now the screensaver on the computer in my office in St. Louis. Mike's answer to my inquiry, "What's the story on the Pontiac?" was, "I don't know much about the car, it is a consignment" and in Mike's words, "It's one of Miss Kitty's cars."

An initial phone conversation with Miss Kitty was sad and at the same time uplifting, friendly and interesting. Miss Kitty in her soft, sophisticated southern accent explained the Pontiac on Mike's lot was a nice car however, "Ya oughtta see my 1953 Buick Roadmaster Riveria, now that's a car." Miss Kitty went on to explain her husband's car collection was his passion and, although the Buick was not the most valuable car in his collection, Ben considered the Roadmaster his centerpiece. Miss Kitty explained she and Ben had owned the car since 2000 and pur-

(Continued on page 2)



Photo by Matt Hughes

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 1st

May 3rd

May 5th

May 20th

June 2nd

7:30 PM

10:00 AM

9:00 AM

6:30 PM

Dues are due

Monthly Meeting at Culpepper's

Sinclair Display

Tour to Crown Valley Winery

Bobby's Frozen Custard Display

PERSONAL PROFILE: GENE HUGHES

(Continued from page 1)

chased it from someone in North Carolina. She went on to say the older restoration needed a little T.L.C. In her warm voice, Miss Kitty went on to explain that a few weeks earlier Ben was walking to his auto workshop located behind their home when he either tripped or stumbled over what she described as a retaining wall. She returned home a short time later and found him alive but gravely injured with what was later diagnosed as a severe spinal injury. Within days his condition worsened and Benjamin Franklin Harrison died of a stroke.

My initial conversation with Miss Kitty was my first indication that there may be more to acquiring a vintage Buick than just writing a check.

Now for the questions a novice, neophyte, never-before, soon-to-be-car collector asks oneself upon deciding to buy a site-unseen (not even a photo) 1953 Buick located 1100 miles away. At this point I did not know a Special from a Century from a Roadmaster not to mention value, transportation, inspection and long distant money transfer.

Without explanation events began happening that were aligned so perfectly, I knew the Roadmaster was destined to become a fixture in our family garage which already suffered from L.I.F.O. and F.I.F.O. regarding too many autos too few spaces. First Problem: Appraisal... Within minutes of hanging up with Miss Kitty, I was on the phone with an "Antique Car Consultant and Appraiser". Mr. Keefe was an acquaintance of my cousin living in New Port Ritchie. Mr. Keefe happened to live just 45 minutes from Miss Kitty and said he could inspect the car the next morning and would phone me as he viewed and appraised the Buick. He asked me if it was a Century or a Roadmaster. I had to confess I had forgotten. I just knew it was 2-door hardtop.

Bob Keefe phoned at 8 am on April 13, 2006. I was pacing around the kitchen table while my wife, Ina, looked on. I listened while Bob said this is a very nice car and you won't find many like it. His verbal appraisal confirmed the car was priced according to value, whatever that meant. Miss Kitty got on the phone and said, "If you want it send me the money..." Another short conversation with Bob convinced me Miss Kitty was indeed honest and all the paper work was in order.



Gene and Ina Hughes

Things quickly gained momentum. Miss Kitty agreed to accept a cashiers check from the car carrier when the car was loaded for St. Louis. But she would not hold the car beyond a few days without a substantial deposit. Problem: I didn't know a car carrier. Minutes later I was on the phone with Jim, an old friend in the car business. I was dumfounded when Jim said he knew a guy who was leaving St. Louis on Saturday and dropping two cars in Naples and was returning to St. Louis with an empty slot and could pick up the Buick on Wednesday April 19th. The next day I had a meeting in a convenient parking lot with the car carrier. We exchanged notes and with check in hand he was on his way to get my still unseen Buick.

All these arrangements had taken place within an hour or so; it was still Wednesday, 9:30 AM and I was on my way to work.

I took special notice this morning of the business establishment I had passed almost every day on my way to work. I remembered seeing some old cars parked in a lot adjacent to Spectrum Painting Co. I pulled into the lot and immediately met a smiling gentleman who looked like he might know something about the old cars I now recognized as Buicks. I asked Mr. Smiley if he knew anything about Buicks. Wrong question to ask Paul Meyer unless you wanted to spend several hours learning about

(Continued on page 3)

PERSONAL PROFILE: GENE HUGHES

(Continued from page 2)

Buicks, Life, People, Clubs and Family. Which, of course, I did. Paul gave me a rundown of the number of 1953's produced and a lot more. I told him I thought I had just bought a Buick. He promptly handed me a BCA application and I promptly gave him a check for membership. Paul went on to tell me about losing his valued friend, Hank, only days before and how he felt new friends and new members are a part of life.

had been introduced to several club members when Ina, Abbey (our 19 year old daughter) and I visited with club members at the 2006 Easter Show.

There have been many more wonderful side stories to the Buick acquisition, mostly people stories, some car stories. Our Buick Roadmaster and our Shepherd Boat are chrome and mahogany reminders of those people and our stories.

In less than a week the car arrived in my driveway and Paul was there to congratulate me. By then I

Ironically, the '53 Buick was delivered to us exactly 53 years after it's production date, April 17, 1953.

Get it in Gear


Make your \$15 dues check payable to "St. Louis Gateway Chapter Buick Club" and mail it to:

Pete Nathan
#1 Huntleigh Trails Lane
St. Louis, MO 63131



- Find an error on the roster printed last month?
- Have an email address that isn't shown on the roster?
- If so, send the changes & updates to John Waltz.
- Contact information is on the back of this newsletter.

ELECTRONIC GAZETTE



With a recent increase in printing costs and the upcoming increase in postage rates, we will be considering sending the *Gazette* in PDF format via email to members who prefer an electronic file.

An electronic copy as well as a hard copy of the June newsletter will be sent to all members for whom I have an email address.

Be sure I have your email address if you want to be part of this experiment.

John Waltz, Editor
BCA55Waltz@charter.net

SPRING TUNE-UP - MARCH 31

Photos contributed by Bob Brasses



I think it was close to 11:00 AM when I got to Spectra Painting and already there was a gang of club members going from car to car. Pete Nathan's car was on the lift and Bob Windal was tightening fittings where there were small drips. I got the impression that Mike Marx was still trying to talk Paul Meyer into selling him the '30 Roadster. Mike was claiming something was wrong with Paul's car (hood ornament or radiator or something) and that Paul wouldn't want that. Mike's '30 model business coupe had been pulled up earlier in the bay next to Paul's '30 and comparisons were being made.



Ed Keil had brought the brats, burgers and condiments. (I think Gene Hughes brought an additional cooler of drinks and Bill Landers brought brownies.) The grill was hot and Dave Smith was at his normal post grilling and increasing the pile of burgers and brats. A table of food and condiments was set up and the sky was relatively clear. The bad weather wasn't supposed to arrive until the afternoon.

Paul Meyer had a couple Buicks in the lot that hadn't been there the week before: a '58 Estate Wagon and a '50 Super Riviera. I'm sure Steve Little has first dibs on parts from the '50 but what will Paul do with the '58? Herb Morris was inquiring about changing the differential in his '37 to allow lower rpm cruising. Don't we all want that?

I counted 20 in attendance, 18 scruffy men plus Timmy Pegg and Monica Ledwon. Melissa Perucca used to bring her '60 model but she didn't make it. Hope all is well with Melissa and her car. The long distance award should go to Bill Wester who came from Illinois.

I only took one picture. I had to. There must have been 7 or 8 men huddled over the engine compartment of Jeff Watkins' '66 LeSabre.



As it approached 2 PM dark clouds were rolling through and some people were heading home before the predicted possible hail. The food table had been moved under cover and the grill was cleaned up for next year. I heard Paul kept the lift open until 4:30. Thanks again, Paul, for a good start to our calendar year of Buick events.

HCCM EASTER SHOW AT FOREST PARK

Article contributed by Bob Brasses; Photos by Steve Dodson & Bob Brasses

Attendance for the club was 18 cars. The weather started out cold, but warmed enough by afternoon that walking around and viewing the cars on the show field was almost pleasant.

We had a few members volunteer to help Steve Dodson judge cars. Way to go, guys!

Barb enjoyed visiting with other club members which worked out well. While she visited, Adam Martin, Bobby Windal and I hiked around the show both on the upper and lower lots. We saw a few Buicks and left some info about our club with the owners.

One interesting thing was not a Buick but an old midget racecar. While they were dating, Mom and Dad had gone to Walsh Stadium where this car had run. It was pretty basic with an outside brake lever.



Special thanks to those who brought the goodies to eat. They were very much appreciated!

