



# Gateway Gazette

Monthly Newsletter of the St. Louis Chapter

**BUICK CLUB OF AMERICA**

Volume XXVI, No. 3

April 2006

## HANK DEGLMAN HOSPITALIZED

Some of you will not have heard the news that Hank had a major stroke on March 26th and remains in intensive care at St. Anthony's Hospital. He remains comatose and on life support. His sister, Dial, keeps us updated through Pete Nathan. These have been difficult days trying to deal with this tragedy and communicating as best we can.

Everyone I have spoken to wants to do something to help. It seems there is nothing we can do at this point but keep Hank and his family in our prayers and aware of our willingness to help. We don't have words to express our personal sorrow and our concern for his family.

*Remembering...* Hank has always been the person in the chapter I called when I couldn't remember another member. He told me there were a few members he had never met, but let me tell you it wasn't because he didn't try. Last month's meeting was possibly the first one he had missed since he joined in 1994. And he always made a point to meet new members and visitors. He has a way of letting us know that we are wanted and that our cars are special even if they are not show cars.

There wasn't time to put together a fitting tribute for this issue, but I can get my Buick out of storage and be ready in case there is only one last parade with Hank.



**Hank began his term as  
Gateway Chapter Director  
at the Kunz Plantation Picnic  
May 2005**

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

On February 24<sup>th</sup> I found myself in the emergency room at St. Joseph Hospital in Kirkwood. The diagnosis was congestive heart failure, pneumonia, anemia, and kidney failure. Things were not looking good as I was transferred to the intensive care unit. After being stabilized, I was told to expect a minimum of two weeks and probably a four week stay. Remarkably, I was home in eight days. I am convinced my speedy recovery was due to the outpouring of visits by my Buick club friends. Over 35 members visited in the first two days. Every time I saw a smiling face I felt so much better. I want to thank everyone I saw for helping me through this. Words cannot express my feelings for the overwhelming support of my fellow club members.

On to other things. Don't miss the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting at O'Leary's. We will be voting for Assistant Director and three Board Members. I want to personally thank Ed Keil for his many years of service to the club. Ed has been appointed by me to be an advisor to the Board. A warm thank you to Carl Schmiehausen for serving as Assistant Director. Carl held the March meeting for me and did an excellent job.

As of March 16<sup>th</sup>, we have 27 cars promised for the Easter show. I am predicting a sunny and 75 degree day.

The oil change at Paul Meyer's is scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup>. Dave Smith has volunteered to do the barbequing. We have a great time and everyone is wel-

come to come and enjoy car stories and change their oil. Remember to bring containers to carry away your old oil.

Things I've seen and heard:

- Jeff Watkins' dad is ill. (*Jeff's father passed away. Ed*) Our thoughts are with you, Jeff.
- Our own Delia Greer is being honored at a luncheon in May. Delia has been selected as one of the Ten Women of Achievement in St. Louis for 2006. With everything Delia does for Wings of Hope, this honor is well deserved. Congratulations, Delia.
- I have heard that the Great Race is coming through St. Louis on June 28<sup>th</sup>. It has not been announced where yet. When I find out I will keep you posted.
- I know there are about 30 club members that are going to Rochester, Minnesota, for the Nationals. As of February only 162 registrations have been sent in. This is typical. They are expecting record numbers, so let's get our registrations in ASAP. I still have raffle tickets for those who are not going.

Many thanks again and I can't wait to see your Buicks come out of hibernation.

**Hank**

## BOB LOUDON'S 1940 BUICK CENTURY CONVERTIBLE



**Bob parking for the races at Wilmot Hills, Wisconsin, in 1952**

*Bob Loudon, our chapter's first director, has allowed me to publish portions of his memoirs. Last month the story was about his first car, a '36 Nash. This month it is about not his first but his most fondly remembered Buick. As it begins Bob is 22, single, living with his folks in Aurora, Illinois, and driving his own rig, hauling new cars (mostly Nashes) all over the country. Ed.*

1950 was a good year for me. I had a new GMC for my car transport business, a new '50 Nash Ambassador and things were about to get even better. My good friend, Bill Pascall, and I were cruising along going somewhere in the big Nash and I said, "I would sure like to find another Buick Century to play around with, maybe a '40 coupe or something." Bill said, "If you're going to dream, make it good. How about a Century convertible?" Not two weeks after Bill and I had that conversation, I walked out the front door of my folks' house at 319 Fox Street and nearly fell over. There it was, showing its age, but straight and solid, no dents, not even a trace of any rust and it was black. The paint was thin and it needed a top and some upholstery work, but what a find.

I left a note under the wiper saying that I would be interested in buying the car. That night about supper time the phone rang and it was the Buick's owner. It seems he had just come back to Aurora from California and, until he could find a suitable place to stay, he was staying down at the Y, just a block from my house. He had just

ordered a new Ford from Aurora Motor Sales. A wonderful new chapter in my life began the day that Dudley Stone's Ford arrived. I bought the Century convertible and drove around the block and down Fox Street and pulled into my drive for the first time. It is still clear in my mind how great that Buick felt, big and solid and smooth.

Dudley said it had just begun blowing steam out the exhausts. I pulled the head on the Buick and found the problem to be only a blown head gasket, so I took the head down to Phillips Auto Parts and had them grind the valves and mill ninety thousands off the head. I bought a new head gasket set and put her back together. But first, I went out to Nelson's Auto Salvage and picked up a dual carb manifold off a wrecked '41 Buick Roadmaster. When my '40 was ready to go, it now had higher compression, dual carbs and dual pipes and a fresh valve job. It was cruising the streets many nights and it ran sweet, I want to tell ya.

I was aware that the '40 Buicks still used lead babbit for bearings in the connecting rods. Anyone who ran one of these babies hard and fast almost always ended up with a burned connecting rod. Knowing this, I ran my '40 hard all that summer with plans in mind to build an engine with inserts later on. My plan worked well as the engine lasted until late October at which time a

*(Continued on page 4)*

## BOB LOUDON'S 1940 BUICK CENTURY CONVERTIBLE

*(Continued from page 3)*

rod began to knock. Since the Buick was a convertible and northern Illinois winters are not conducive to convertibles and since I had a nice new Nash with a fabulous heating system, I parked the Buick for the winter.

In the meantime, I purchased a '38 Buick Century Coupe in very rough shape. I had plans for drag racing and wanted a killer engine in this coupe and I had found a friend in the owner of the Joliet-Aurora Transit Lines. They ran a fairly large fleet of intercity buses all made by Flexible, a company interestingly enough out of Loudonville, Ohio. Some coincidence, eh? Flexibles for years had used straight eight Buick engines and I figured they must hold up or Flex wouldn't have used them all these years. I found out from my friend about the special rods and bearings they used and later got a call offering me a fresh short block that would put my convertible back on the street.

In the spring of '51 the Convertible was ready to go again and I really had fun with it that summer as that sucker would run. That year I had the Century repainted, reupholstered, replaced some chrome pieces and a few accessories. Everybody talked about Bob's Buick with the bus engine in it. What a time in my young life. I had my new Nash, a gorgeous '40 Buick Century convertible and a '38 Century coupe. And work started on the killer Buick engine for use in the '38. An article in *Hot Rod* gave me a few ideas, one of which was that a Buick block could be bored 3/16 oversize if you were lucky enough to start with a good one. I took a '41 Roadmaster block, crank and flywheel into Ray Erickson's Speed Shop in Chicago and discussed my plan with him. The engine got the full race treatment. (See sidebar, page 3.)

The '38 never saw the street as things got serious in Aurora that summer. It seems a buddy of mine, who had a '41 Ford convertible with a chopped windshield and a Carson top, dropped an almost new Chrysler hemi in the Ford with Lincoln gears and an overdrive. I'm sure the engine was breathed on as Darryl was a pretty good mechanic and didn't know what stock meant. Needless to say, he whipped my big Buick.

Decision time. Do I want a hot coupe that I can bring out now and then or do I want my big classy convertible to still rule the street? I went for the second op-

tion. The killer motor was going to go into the '40.

Out came the infamous bus motor and in went the serious motor. However, I made one compromise for street use. The stock cam went back in as I wanted the car to idle nice and I figured my big carbs and big valves would get enough fuel in there to do the job.

One other mod was made at that time. The stock Buick rear end gear was 3.9 to one. I figured with all my power I could pull a taller gear. Somewhere

*(Continued on page 5)*

### 1940 Buick Century Convertible (in 1952)

#### Drivetrain

The engine was built by Ray Erickson's Speed Shop, Chicago, Illinois. A '41 Roadmaster 320 cid straight eight engine was bored 0.180" to 355 cid. Jahns racing pistons, Grant rings, Federal Mogul rods, and a stock Buick cam were used. The head was milled a hundred and twenty thousandths, and ported and polished for larger intake valves. The flywheel and clutch assembly were lightened. It was fueled through Stromberg carbs and a Roadmaster dual intake manifold and exhausted through dual pipes. A Spaulding Flame Thrower distributor supplied the spark. The stock 3-speed on the column and a Buick parts option 3.6 rear end gear completed the drive.

#### Chassis

Stock 1940 Buick Century

#### Wheels and Tires

Firestone 500 850-15 bias-ply wide whitewalls on stock rims sporting Studebaker full dish covers with flippers.

#### Body and Paint

Trippe driving lights and twin spot lights accent the stock body. Black paint was sprayed at a Ford dealership in Plainfield, Illinois.

#### Interior

The black convertible top and upholstery work was done by Red Bise. The front seat came from a '47 Chrysler New Yorker, a handsome dark blue broadcloth with buttons in it, and it fit right into the Buick. The rest of the interior was upholstered to match the seat. Red installed blue carpet and the finishing touch was a tonneau that covered the whole backseat when the top was down. Instruments, a black steering wheel, shift knob, and other interior parts from a '49 Buick updated the appearance.



## 1940 BUICK CONVERTIBLE

*(Continued from page 4)*

along the line, I had discovered that there was a seldom seen or heard of optional gear ratio for the '38 to '42 Buicks that was a 3.6 to one and I managed to get one. Seventy-five and eighty were just cruising and I determined that top end was about 124 mph.

I drove the Buick all over the country, two trips to Florida, one to the east coast, out to the Black Hills and many trips to Michigan and Wisconsin, and it made its mark at the old Half Day Drag Strip. But my favorite stories centered around antics with the gang at Tops Drive-In located in Bernyn, Illinois. There were street races with hot rod Fords, Olds 88's, Fred Lorenzen, a Fordillac, and more. And ask me about "riding the rails". Oh what fun we crazy kids had in those days.

*In his memoirs Bob tells the stories of street racing, trips to Daytona for Speed Week and other memorable events. He drove the '40 Century through the summer of '55 but then sold it as his interest in sports car racing developed. My thanks to Bob for allowing me to share these stories with readers of the Gazette. Ed*

## Paul Meyer Reports:

The Oldsmobile club is interested in having a BOP car show and thinking about mid-June. Our chapter should review our calendar and respond.

The Missouri Department of Highways are planning a parade to celebrate opening sections of Interstate highways. We may have an opportunity to take a prominent place in the parade if we are interested. Let's talk at the next meeting.

## Dues are Due May 1st



**Mail your check for \$15  
to our treasurer**

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