

John Kemper Tribute

By Chet Palumbo



Captain John Kemper was injured while battling a structural fire on July 5th, and died July 12, 2017. He planned to retire next year and was looking forward to having more time to work on his Buicks.

Though Capt. John was not a member of our club, he was a devoted Buick fan through and through. He was friends of several in the club and was a member in spirit.

On Thursday, July 20th, the Gateway Buick club had the privilege of participating in the procession that transported Captain John Kemper from Hoffmeister Colonial Funeral Home to Harris Stowe State University. The procession passed through many neighborhoods in south St. Louis on our tour to the three firehouses where John worked; Engine House #23 – Carondelet, Engine House #14 – Tower Grove, and Engine House #4 – Dutchtown. Each engine house had a firetruck parked in front, with their firemen standing at attention as we drove by.

This truly was a great honor and moving experience to be included in the memorial for Captain John Kemper. It was neat to see the reverence and respect paid to Captain John; people of all ages, race and gender standing at attention or with their hands over their hearts, or simply pulling their cars over waiting for us to pass by. I also noticed one neighborhood where everyone on the street had their porch lights turned on.

Representing the Buick family were Mark Kistner, Greg Kobe, Bill Landers, Bob Merrick, Pete Nathan, Vic and Joyce Nettles, Chet Palumbo, and Bob Windal. The procession of Buicks was led by Brian Zielenski with his maroon 72 Suncoupe that he purchased from John last year.

May a Stage I GSX be awaiting Capt. John to deliver him into his heavenly home.





Thank you to those who made it out today to honor John Kemper and join in the procession. You made a really bad day a little more bearable and for that I thank you. I was very proud to be a member of this club today. Thanks Mark Kistner

I would like to add that Terry was very grateful for the Buick participation in the procession. She told me how impressive it was and that it made her very happy to see all the Buicks honoring him. It was also interesting to see the onlooker reaction to the 'parade' of classic Buicks. Bob Merrick

John Kemper was one of the first people I met locally when I started getting heavy into Buicks. He had responded to my parts wanted ad for some Buick road wheels for my Centurion. I met him at his house in South City where he had a fairly massive hoard of Buick parts and several cars. John was the typical Buick enthusiast who was passionate about the 70-72 GS, particularly the SunCoupes. So he and I naturally spent a couple hours gabbing about cars. There came to be many times when he and I would hook up to swap parts or check cars out throughout the last 15 years. John always gave me the family discount in the parts I bought from him, but I think that's how he treated everyone. John was truly one of the best. He will be missed. Adam Martin

I'd like to thank everyone who came out with their cars. It meant so much to my mom and I. Dad would have loved it. Thank you so much for your help. Jenn Kemper