

Member Spotlight

Bill Bicknell

By Monica Ledwon

This month's Member Spotlight features a longtime expert on classic cars and restoration, Bill Bicknell. His BCA number is 738 and he was member of the Buick Collector's Club of America before the BCA's inception in 1966. Bill was recognized in the May 2018 Buick Bugle as one of 82 active members with 50 years of continuous membership.



Born and raised in California, Bill went to high school in San Jose. As a youngster, he acquired his first car, a 1929 Buick, at the age of thirteen. His affinity for Buicks was enhanced by working at a full service gas station job during his youth. There, he was the runner. With a 1950 Buick as a company car, Bill did valet service for customers. Picking up their car and driving it back to the shop for repairs, Bill experienced some high end rides. But if a vehicle needed a jump start back in the day, the immense 9 tooth chrome grill of the '50 was an excellent pusher to accomplish a boost in ignition for any Cadillac or Packard. So, while working at this job, Bill decided he really liked the Buick work horse car the best.

Bill went on to CA State University in Chico and received a degree in Mechanical Engineering. During these years, he began his collection of Buicks starting with the revered model years of 1953/54 Skylarks. As Bill was completing his studies at

Chico, he met his wife, Ina, while taking a Biology class. But Ina was his teacher—not his classmate! They married during the winter break and will be celebrating 50 years this December. They have one daughter and three grandchildren. During the time between his Bachelor's degree and later obtaining a Masters in Mechanical Engineering, Bill spent his military service in the Marine Corp.

Working in the manufacture of industrial engines such as Ajax and Superior for the oil and gas industry, he spent his professional life with Cooper Cameron. Upon moving to Dayton, Ohio with his job, Bill began a hobby of rebuilding antique engines for owners of Buicks as well as Kaiser, Rolls Royce, and Jaguar. That hobby soon got out of control, and Bill set up his own restoration shop as a separate business while still working.

Bill has owned a vast number of Buicks in his time collecting usually 1955 or older with mid-fifties Skylarks being his favorite. Other vehicles such as Tucker, Cords, Auburns and the unique Muntz Jet Car (designed and produced by the TV man, Ed “the Madman” Muntz) also had space in his garage.

In 2008 Bill retired from his engineering manager position at Cooper Cameron. He and Ina settled in Rolla, Missouri. He joined our Gateway Chapter then, did part time consulting work and scaled down his restoration business into his basement. There, he is currently focusing on helping others around the world find parts for their old cars' new beginnings. Bill has an array of machinery and tools that enables him to remake parts from his own engineering drawings if necessary. Overseas customers contact him from all of Europe. Having held the position of International Marketing Manager during his career, he speaks both Spanish and Russian which adds to his customer service for foreign classic car nuts.

Bill has a huge Buick literature collection along with many different shop manuals that he accrued throughout the years. Currently, Bill has undertaken the restoration of a 1929 Duesenberg. He has the original engine and some body parts. Bill knows that the engine was used for racing but has been unable to determine its true pedigree. His engine is the single overhead cam version, which is the lower horsepower version than the twin cam engines used in the Indy 500 cars.

Continuing the rebuild with reproduction frame and additional body parts, this

project will be the pinnacle of his years in the antique auto scene.

