

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT – BOB HUFF

By Monica Ledwon

This month's Member Spotlight features Bob Huff, who has an amazing history with the Gateway Chapter as a Founding Member, and also holds the revered Lifetime Membership to the Club.



Bob grew up in southern Missouri in the town of Gideon. He graduated high school there and then moved with his parents to south St. Louis. Bob joined the Navy and spent four years in this part of military service. After his stint and back home, a fellow Navy buddy suggested Bob go on a blind date. Bob really didn't want to go. His blind date, Vi, also felt likewise. But as history is told, Vi and Bob have been married for 50 plus years. They have one son, Kevin.

Bob developed his interest in classic cars through his son Kevin's attraction to show cars in the Forest Park Easter Concourse de Elegance. As a youngster, Kevin's magnetism to the "Old Timees" as well as Hot Wheels drew Bob along into the hobby.

Bob worked throughout his life in the printing business. He first joined Concordia Publishing House, a Lutheran organization, and worked there twenty years till its closure. Moving on to Christian Board of Publications, Bob was approached several times by the shop foreman to look at an old car in his parents' barn. Bob

finally gave in and found his first classic, a 1950 Nash 2dr covered in dirt and debris. After a good scrubbing, the Nash was found to be in great original condition.

Bob went on to buy his first classic Buick, a 1948 Super convertible, and drove it everywhere around South County. His first body off restoration project was a 1940 Buick Special convertible. He entered the '40 into a local show hosted by Placke Buick on Kingshighway and won Best of Show. Bob's favorite car was found at a Hershey Swap Meet and Show. It was love at first sight when he saw a trailer pull up hauling a 1959 Le Sabre convertible all original with a "For Sale" sign on its window. Within ten minutes a deal was made that included transporting the car to St. Louis.

Bob retells the inception of the Gateway Chapter Buick Club took place at a car show on the Six Flags parking lot in 1978 where any old car was admitted to the park for free. With all the old Buicks grouped together, Bob Huff met Bob Louden and the club was born. Early on, meetings were held at members' homes until the official Mallory Buick meeting where Bob Louden was declared the first Director, Bob Huff the first Assistant Director and his lovely wife, Vi, the first Secretary. With Bob's printing business background, he also filled the editor position and published the initial issues of the Gateway Gazette.

Bob always says his old car hobby was a pressure relief valve from the stresses involved in the printing business. Finishing his printing career at Beaumont Graphics, he expanded his horizons by selling parts. A young mechanic who helped him on his '48 was a parts scavenger and gave Bob his entire inventory when moving. Bob further increased his inventory by buying new old stock parts from local dealers. He recalls that he cleaned out about fifteen Buick dealerships back in the day! Bob says he always buys cheap and sells reasonably and today is doing business on EBay.

One of Bob's most memorable Buick Club meets was the 2003 100 Year Anniversary of Buick up in Flint, Michigan. There, he was astonished to see 1800 Buicks gathered together to enjoy an event hosted by the Buick Motor Division. Bob said Buick spent "a ton of money" on this show that included music by Huey Lewis and the News, professional fireworks and a deluxe hospitality tent that went all out on catered food and refreshments.

Bob has been retired now for twenty-four years and still goes to swap meets and shows but at a leisurely pace. His son, Kevin, is a chip off the old block and keeps many of Bob's overflow collectible cars (about 40) at his Columbia, Illinois homestead that has several barns on the property. Today, Bob has an eight-car garage on his south county home that houses his current classics ('58 Buick wagon, '53 Packard Caribbean, '58 Eldorado convertible, '61 Dodge convertible, '57 Eldorado Brougham with stainless steel roof) as well as Kevin's cars. Bob's daily drivers sit outside as he is well aware of the pecking order when it comes to garage space for old cars!



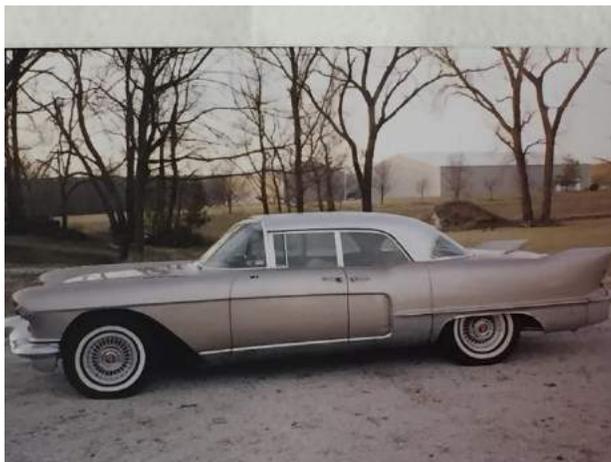
1949 Buick Roadmaster Riviera. This was the first true hardtop car ever produced.



Bob looking dapper with his RH drive Bentley



Bob's favorite car, 1959 Buick LeSabre convertible



A very rare 1957 Cadillac stainless steel roofed Brougham

