

Member Spotlight

Bill and Ginny Landers



This month's "Member Spotlight" focuses on Bill Landers. Though the focus is on Bill, how could we talk about Bill without including Ginny. She is always by Bill's side and rarely misses a club event.

So how, you might ask, did Ginny become the second half of "Bill and Ginny"? Well, Bill had a date arranged with a young nursing student, but upon arrival for the date, she informed Bill that she was going back to her old boyfriend, so she was no longer interested. Bill looked past her at her roommate and thought this lovely lady might be a worthy fill in for the upcoming date and asked her if she would go out with him. Thus began, Bill and Ginny. How is that for a first meeting? Their 55 year marriage has produced 2 children and 6 grandchildren.

Bill grew up on Cottage Hills, Illinois and attended Civic Memorial High School in Bethalto, Illinois. Upon graduation, he attended Washington University and received his Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Electrical Engineering. Bill served his country in the Army after ROTC in college. After Army schools in Fort Benning, GA and Fort Devens, MA. Bill spent 2 years in Heidelberg, Germany and ended his service as a 1st Lieutenant. Thanks Bill for your service.

Bill had a 37 year career with McDonnell Douglas as an electronics design

engineer and later as Program Manager of Avionics. He retired in 1999.

In his retirement years he spent 15 years working as an AARP volunteer tax aid where he prepared income taxes for elderly people who were unable to do the work themselves. He and Ginny have also served as election judges in St Louis County for the past 16 years. For hobbies, Bill does stained glass . He and Ginny are regulars on cruises having seen the sights of many foreign lands in the process.

The gorgeous 1990 Reatta convertible seen on the previous page is Bill's pride and joy. The car won "Gold" status at the first BCA National in which it was eligible. With some work and improvements, he won "Senior" status (394+ points judged on a 400 point scale) and has maintained "Senior Preservation" every year since.

Bill has served 4 years as Director of the Gateway Buick Club and 5 years as the Gazette Editor.

In Bill's words, this is how his Reatta and his Buick involvement came to be.

Ginny and I have just passed the 20-year mark as members of the Buick Club, having joined in 1997, just a couple of months before the St. Louis National BCA Show. We haven't been actively involved in "collector car" activities much longer than that. We had admired restored (or great original) cars from our teen and younger years, and always said we would like to have a special car for fun use, not just transportation. We actually were thinking relatively new cars as opposed to older cars in those days. In early '95, we finally got serious and started checking out the car ads in the local papers (we didn't know Hemmings, etc. existed).

By that summer, we had found a red 1990 Reatta Convertible in great shape with only 33K miles and a late 1980s Mercedes SL roadster (also red) with low miles and a price which seemed several thousand less than market. Even though the Mercedes was offered by a local BMW dealer who would provide a warranty, the carpeted area behind the seats had something spilled on it which could not be removed. While the latter might explain the low price, we finally opted for the Reatta. The lady who had bought it new from Art Haack Buick said it was "her mid-life crisis car" after a recent divorce. She drove it for 3 years, decided to move on with her life and parked the car in her garage for a couple of years before deciding to sell it.

Even though the Reatta was in great condition, it took a lot of work to get it detailed and up to show car condition. We took the car to two car shows that fall and got a feel for what the judges were looking for. We continued to take the Reatta to a number of car shows the next couple of years and collected a number of awards. We also continued to monitor the "for sale" ads and in the Spring of 1997, we saw an ad about the Gateway Chapter, BCA looking for new members, and meeting at Chuck-A-Burger. We joined the club, helped to work at the National show and became active members. We have attended many of the BCA National and Heartland Regional shows over the years, driving the Reatta all over the Eastern part of the country.

After joining the club in 1997, the "bug" to get an older car bit. We found a 1965 Riviera in pretty good shape at a reasonable price, and had the perfect car to restore. However, other priorities intervened and the car sat for several years until I sold it to an ex-club member who actually restored it.

The bug bit again at the 2005 National show in Batavia NY. We saw a striking '62 Electra 2DHT in the car corral, but the owner was never around when we had time to check on the car. After returning home, we decided we really were interested in the car, and tried to find the owner by contacting the local BCA chapter. After a number of e-mails, the owner's name and address were obtained and an exchange of letters led to several phone calls and ultimately a deal.

Then, how to get the car from Batavia to St Louis? The owner said the car was in good condition with only 55K miles, but hadn't been driven any distance for quite a few years. Trying to drive it 800 miles in August heat might not be the smartest thing, so we had it shipped.

We've enjoyed our years as members of the BCA and our own Gateway chapter. We've made many good friends, from our chapter and from across the country, and always look forward to seeing old friends at the National and Regional meets.

You'll find us at most chapter events, enjoying ourselves with Buick friends.

Thank you Bill and Ginny for that fateful decision to purchase your Reatta and become such a wonderful addition to the Gateway Buick Club for these past 20 years.