

Member Spotlight

Barb Knudsen

By Monica Ledwon

This month's Gateway Gazette features a well-known classic car aficionado of the feminine gender, Barb Knudsen. Although she does not own a Buick, she has remarkable loyalty to all Buick and GM brands especially Chevrolet. Barb has dedicated much of her time and energy to many of our chapter's events.

Barb was born in Anna, Illinois, a quaint southern Illinois town, known for the Lincoln-Douglas debate. During her childhood, her family moved to north St. Louis County where she grew up and graduated from Ritenour High School.

As a young woman, Barb never had any connection to backyard auto mechanics, nor any interest in cars whatsoever until she met and married her husband Jack. Then, she set off on the road to appreciating and loving automobiles.

Jack was a long-time employee of GM. He sparked Barb's interest by buying a 1931 Chevy Roadster and having her work on it with him in the garage. From Jack, Barb learned the difference between crescent wrenches and open ended along with the feeling of accomplishment of getting an old car running again. They later worked together to restore a prize winning 1935 Chevy Tudor that Barb still owns today.

Throughout her marriage while raising two daughters and one son, Barb and Jack gathered an eclectic collection of cars. She still owns a 1936 Cord, 1941 Packard, 1955 Chevy and 1961 Impala, and 1982 Corvette.

Owning commercial property allows Barb to keep her motor pool stored in a large warehouse nearby. Several years back, she graciously invited the Gateway Buick Club to tour the place. It was a great experience to see all her classics as well as a massive amount of auto memorabilia.



The cream puff of her collection is a 1975 Caprice Classic convertible purchased new as Jack's special order. It was the last Caprice in a designated yellow color to roll off the assembly line at the Wentzville plant. Barb remembers that they never went looking for a car. Friends and acquaintances found, through word of mouth, that they would always give some garage space to a needy set of wheels.



Barb became very involved in car clubs as her enthusiasm for this hobby increased. She has held several offices in the Horseless Carriage Club, the Antique Automobile Club of America, Vintage Chevy Club and Classic Car Club of America. She is responsible for changing the HCC's entrance fee schedule to a club group price for the annual Easter Show in Forest Park which still remains in effect today. Barb also is skilled at judging shows with paint being her specialty, learned from Jack's talents in body restoration.

Reflecting back on her history with cars, Barb recounts a time in 1993 a movie was being filmed using downtown streets of St. Louis as a backdrop. The director of King of the Hill needed vintage vehicles from the 50's. Barb's husband Jack, known on the set as the "car wrangler", contacted all antique auto owners he knew to line up for shots and Barb herself drove cars in some scenes. Our Buick club also was involved in this project and I, too, vividly remember bringing my '50 Buick Special down on a very chilly Saturday morning to be in the film.

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In 2003, a few years after Jack's passing, Barb met Gene Bossaller through car club socializing at a JJ's Friday night cruise. Gene, like Barb, loves all GM models and is an Oldsmobile guy with strong Buick leanings. He drew Barb into our Gateway Chapter. She was impressed with the genuine helpful reciprocity that she observed at events between the Olds and Buick Clubs. Barb has generously helped us during past Shriner's shows, either by judging or selling raffle tickets. And, she attends an occasional monthly Buick meeting to put her 2 cents in.

Barb's three children have expanded her family to four grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren, of which she is very proud. Her two daughters have their name on the Chevys '61 and '75 with her son claiming the '55 for future heirlooms to have and to hold.

Other hobbies include an orphaned Chihuahua that can jump 3 feet straight up in the air to greet you, houseplant gardening and volunteering at the St. Charles Humane society. She says of herself that she is a Chevy girl with warm personality as evidenced by her frequent hugs. And, she has a true interest in all her classic car compatriots. Her feelings prove that you don't necessarily have to own a Buick to be a valued member in our club!