

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT – BOB MERRICK

This month's Member Spotlight features Bob Merrick, who has dual memberships in the Gateway Chapter Buick Club and the GS Club of America. Bob owns a 1986 Grand National and a 1971 GS 455 convertible.

Born on Shepherd Air Force base in Texas when his father was in the military, Bob later moved with his family to St. Louis. He was raised in and about the Manchester, Missouri region attending Parkway West high school and then graduating from Parkway North. He attained a BS in Finance and a MBA while attending SW Missouri State and has spent most of his career in IT Project Mgt.

His interest in cars was fostered by his dad and at the age of five, he began paying attention to automotive styling and performance details. The family car was a '63 Chevy Impala SS which was quite a grocery getter back in the day. Bob spent his high school years working as a porter for Seeger Toyota in Creve Coeur and began honing his mechanical skills with the light duties of oil changes and brake jobs for this foreign brand. He went on to work for Diamond Honda Motorcycle in the parts department during college.

Bob's first and most favorite car was a 1968 Pontiac Lemans Sprint which almost caused him to lose his initial driver's license with its powerful OHC 6 cylinder engine. In 1975 Bob traded the Lemans for a '71 GS V-8 convertible with a 350 Turbo Hydra- Matic and has kept it ever since. In 1981, Bob retired the GS with transmission issues to be solved at a later time. That happened in 1986 when he undertook a frame off restoration replacing all chassis parts, installing a Turbo Hydra-Matic 400 and transplanting a 455 V-8 engine from a '72 Electra in place of the stock 350. He took delight in running weekend races with the car out at Mid America in Wentzville.

Marriage and having a family of one son and one daughter tamed Bob's lifestyle for a time. He set his future sights on a mid-eighties Grand National and found an '86 in 1989 with 20K worth of mileage. That car was not purchased, though, due to a marital veto in favor of a 1989 Thunderbird for family transportation. Fast forward almost ten years to 1998. While looking in the free classified ad paper, The Thrifty Nickel, Bob's eyes landed on another 1986 Gran National for sale in Edwardsville, Illinois. It turned out to be the very same GN he had looked at in 1989 now with 40K on the odometer!

This sporty Buick was bought as basic stock. Bob added the performance upgrades of a transmission shift kit, bigger turbo and intercooler. For the past thirty-one years Bob has not missed going to the GS Nationals in Bowling Green, KT. Cars are his only hobby.

And, Bob's son, from the age of 10, has been following suit. Born in July 1986, Bob surprised his son after he'd completed military duty in the US Army, with a 1986 GN of his exact same vintage-- VIN verified to have been built in July 1986! Now they continue to go together to the GS Nationals, but with his son beating him in the quarter mile run by 0.2 seconds.

