

# Member Spotlight

## Joe Yochim

By Monica Ledwon

This month's Member Spotlight shines on Joe Yochim, a gregarious and energetic fellow, who understands the treasure that old cars can be. He owns several cars that have great sentimental value as well as classic status.

Joe was South St. Louis born and raised. He graduated class of '79 from Mehlville High School. He remembers fondly a family vacation in a 1972 Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser to Florida where his father first introduced him to classic cars by taking him on a tour of a museum in Fort Myers. Joe had never seen or touched a Ford T and A model nor looked closely at the intricate design of a 1906 Rambler. That trip bestowed upon him a lifetime love of old cars.



After high school Joe found work from a man who owned five gas stations as well as five helicopters, Steve Lieber of Lieber Enterprises. Joe was not only the gofer for Mr. Lieber but washed his Corvettes as well as his helicopters. Of course, hanging around that place also was Alan Barklage of TV news' Skycopter fame. Mr. Lieber owned the Bell 206 Jet Ranger as well as the familiar yellow Y98 chopper back in the day. In time, Joe became friends with Alan and he accompanied him on some daily media missions. Eventually, Alan showed Joe the basics and let him take over the controls for short times of an occasional chopper pleasure flight.

Joe's father loved new cars and took delivery of about 45 in his lifetime. Always driving the GM brand label with a preference for Oldsmobiles, he once took home a 1974 Delta 88. When the shocking revelation came from a trusted mechanic that the car had a Chevy engine under the hood, his father sped off to trade it in on a '72 Buick Electra 225 Gold Key car. Upon driving this car, Joe could distinguish the difference between an Olds

and a Buick by feeling the Buick's command on the roads. He was reared in a true car nut environment.

After his interesting times at Lieber Enterprises, in 1986, Joe became a US Postal worker and has held this respected job for over thirty years. He has been blessed with two children Katherine and Matthew and a sweetheart of a wife, Jeanne.

As he appreciated cars, he's gathered a small collection through the years. He still drives a 1994 Chevy Blazer originally bought new at Weber Chevrolet as a daily driver. His Aunt Melanie once bought a 1985 Pontiac Gran Prix off Don Darr's show room floor. Joe has affectionately kept Aunt Mel's heirloom Pontiac with him, up and running to this day. His father deviated from the GM badge per Mom's request in buying a 1997 Mercury Marquis as his last new car. Joe says his dad was still driving it at age 99. But after being pulled over by a STL County police officer for questionable control of the vehicle, Joe convinced him to turn over keys. The Merc was then also brought into his fold.

The fourth classic car acquired is quite a tale to tell. In 2016, on a cold and wintry day in February, Joe was on his US Mail route when he spotted an open garage door on a house. Peeking out was a 1950 Special 41D in what appeared to be original condition. Drooling, he jumped out of his truck and crept into the garage to take a closer look. The homeowner spied him rooting around and fiercely confronted him. Joe apologized profusely and explained he loved old cars. He begged her to contact him if ever she would like to sell the car.

As warm summer days came about, Joe approached her mailbox, and the Buick owner, Glenda, was standing nearby to greet him. "Mr. Mailman, were you serious about buying the car?" She explained that it was her grandfather's car who had passed in 1962. It had been stored in Leavenworth, Kansas, and her brother had done some repairs and refurbishing to put it back on the road. But after his passing, the car was moved to her garage in St Charles. Being afraid to drive it due to the manual steering and brakes, she asked if Joe would like to buy it. A joyful affirmative was given!

Joe bought the Special with 34K on the odometer and has run it up to 40K. The seats had the archaic plastic seat covers on that when cut off revealed a pristine interior upholstery. One can always see this car at the fall Westport Wheels of Motion show. Since I owned the exact car with exact exterior colors of Calvin Grey body and black roof, looking upon it the first time was trip down memory lane for me. It even smells the same as my '50 Buick.

Joe is a very active and energetic member in local car clubs. In 2004, he had his Aunt Mel's Grand Prix at the HCC's Easter show and was invited to join. Besides participating in their shows, he has held the offices of Board Recording Secretary, President, Vice President and recently returned to the office of President.

In 2017, bringing the Special to the Easter show for its premier showing, Joe met Pete Nathan who, with his usual charm, coerced him to sign on to our club. Joe felt this is where his Buick belonged with the Fireballs and Dynaflashes and he discovered that the Gateway Chapter is a group of awesome people.

Besides car club activities, Joe enjoys working with Matthew's Boy Scout Troop, and being the engineer of HO gauge Model trains. Although he doesn't make many monthly meetings, Joe is looking forward to helping us host our 2020 Heartland Regional.

