

John & Kitty Lasinski

John and Kitty have been married for almost seven years. They have two daughters, Sabina 4, and Anna 2 1/2 months and live in Fenton, Missouri.

John is a mechanical/manufacturing engineer working for Monsanto in the Agricultural Automation Engineering division. Kitty is an interactive project manager for Master Key Consulting.

Kitty and I are definitely car crazy! When we met, I was building a Lamborghini kit car based on a Pontiac Fiero chassis that I had dropped a Chevy 350 into the back of. I got the car assembled and running. While this car was very different and crazy fast, it was too hard to keep it cool; it kept overheating. Meanwhile, I had found a 1956 Chevy two-door wagon that was in decent shape, and we decided that it would make a good fun cruiser. I sold the kit car sans motor to one of the guys in the local kit car club and dropped that 350 into the '56 wagon. I got a little over anxious one day and took it for a quick spin down the road. I couldn't resist kicking in the 4-barrel to see how she ran. Well that was a dumb idea as the hood was not latched to anything, and it came flying up blocking the windshield. Somehow I managed to keep the car straight and got it stopped, so I could put the bent hood down and get it home.

I began searching eBay and found a replacement hood in a little town in eastern Tennessee named Oliver Springs. Kitty and I jumped in her Isuzu Trooper (the hood would fit inside), and we made our first road trip together to go get it. After that trip, I realized that I had found a special woman who shared my passion for cars and classic rock. We were married soon after that. I installed the hood, rewired it and got it all primed and ready for cruising. We attended local cruise nights and had lots of fun meeting and hanging out with all the car people.

While the wagon was cool, it was no muscle car, so we went looking for one. We drove out to Fast Lane Classic Cars to look at a Chevelle, but it was already sold. Kitty, being the wonderful wife she is, said, "If we are buying another car, it should be a convertible," as she stood in front of a beautiful bright red Buick GS455 convertible. The salesman asked if we wanted to take it for a drive. We looked at each other and said, "Heck, yes!" Well, we went home that night and did some extensive searching on the Internet about the Buick, and after finding out how rare (they had only made 165) and powerful it was, we ended up going back the next week and buying it.

The car wasn't perfect but the body and paint were incredible. It had a non-original Buick 455 Stage 1 motor with a big loping cam and headers, but was missing the ram air system from under the hood and various other original parts. The interior also needed some work. Luckily, the owner had the original numbers matching motor, and it came with the car! I redid the interior with new covers and door panels, replaced the wood-grain dash decals and located all the ram air parts it needed. Thank goodness for eBay! We drove it with that motor in it for about a year. This included driving it all the way to New Orleans, Louisiana, on Hot Rod Power Tour, while Kitty was four-months pregnant with Sabina. After that trip, we decided to make the car more drivable and original, so I had the original 455 rebuilt, got rid of the headers and put the car back to original condition (except for the Ferrari red paint), including getting the A/C

working. We then hit the show circuit and started taking first-place trophies beating out Chevilles and other more popular cars.

While having the original motor rebuilt, I noticed a car sitting in the back of the guy's pole barn and asked what it was? He told me it was a friend's car, but his friend just didn't have the time and wanted to get rid of it. It was a 1966 Pontiac Lemans 4-speed convertible, midnight blue with white interior. The drive train wasn't installed, but it was included, plus a brand new Pontiac 455, all for the low price of \$4000. While we needed another convertible like a hole in the head, I drug Kitty out to look at it. She realized it was definitely a good deal and we bought it. I dropped in the 455 and the 4-speed transmission, cleaned it up, rewired it and sold it for \$9,000, without even starting it.

We then decided a street rod might be fun, since we now had the newborn Sabina and couldn't put the top down on the GS. Once again, I scoured eBay and found a great starter project – a 1947 Chevy in eastern Pennsylvania for \$3,500. It had a mild 350 Chevy crate motor, good body with some mods and no interior. I bought some leather buckets from a junkyard and made some door panels. I also retrofitted the original front suspension with a new Mustang II suspension with disk brakes and power steering. Also, I installed a new modern wire harness.

In the meantime, we attended several GS Nationals in Bowling Green, Kentucky, with the '71 GS convertible, where we could never place for a trophy. However, we had the honor of having our car selected by Dennis Gage of the "My Classic Car" show on the Speed Channel to be a feature car for an upcoming episode. The interview and filming took over an hour and was worth more than any trophy. That was my five minutes of fame (I will be signing autographs at our next meeting).

While at that GS Nationals, we got bit by the Grand National bug watching the drag racing. We decided we needed one of those too! Now, Kitty is very understanding, but she said if we got a Grand National, the '47 had to go. So away it went and I found a 1987 Grand National in Kansas City. I flew to KC on Southwest Airlines. The owner picked me up at the airport and I drove the car home. Man what a fun car! This baby was lightning fast, but was docile enough to drive around town with the A/C on and cruise control! It even gets good gas mileage, if you keep your foot out of the Turbo, and it's a BUICK.

Well, that was great for about a year, until that muscle car bug hit me again. I am now hooked on Buicks and wanted another GS. What I really wanted was a GSX. I couldn't afford a real one, so I set out to find a good candidate for a recreation. After searching and looking at Skylarks, I ran across an outstanding deal on a real 1972 GS455 near Shreveport, Louisiana. It was a numbers matching, highly optioned car that was complete but has some rust rot in the rear quarters and front fenders. I decided what better to make a GSX recreation out of but a real GS455.

I once again convinced my lovely wife and off I went with a trailer to Louisiana to pick up the new project. The car turned out to be even better than I thought with a very strong motor and all the original parts, which the previous owner had taken off when he was drag racing the car. Of course, another car had to go, so the Grand National went up for sale and was eventually bought

by fellow club member John Waltz. Herb Morris is now the proud owner of that car, so at least we still get to see it.

I have torn into the '72 disassembling the entire front clip and removing the motor. I opened up the motor, inspected it and found it to be freshly rebuilt as the previous owner stated. I installed new gaskets and repainted it including all the brackets. I have welded in new rear-quarter panels and trunk pans, dropped the transmission and motor in, and I am in the process of getting it ready for paint this spring. I don't know if it will happen, but I would like to have the car on the road again before the end of the cruise season.

We have no plans of ever selling our red 1971 GS455 convertible and want to keep it for a very long time. It's the one car we won't sell! We love to drive it, take it to car shows and cruises. Once the 72 is done and has seatbelts installed in the back for car seats, we'll be able to take the girls with us cruising too.

We joined the local Club after attending a cruise at Berger Buick, and soon after, I became Secretary. We have enjoyed all of the Club events we've attended so far, and so has Sabina. As most of you know, our daughter Anna was born very shortly after the Holiday Party this year, which we attended even though Kitty was having contractions the whole time. So now, we have two girls to bring to meetings with us – we just hope they both grow up with the same appreciation for cars that we have. We've enjoyed meeting and socializing with everyone in the Club and look forward to being involved with many more events in the future.

Contributed by John Lasinski

