

# *Member Spotlight*

## *Mike Saputo*

*By Monica Ledwon*

Our Member Spotlight this month features Mike Saputo, a creative, self-made man with a special affection for a 1966 Electra convertible.

Mike was raised in south St. Louis and graduated from Bishop Dubourg High School. He attended St Louis Community College Meramec Campus and received an Associate degree in Commercial Art.

His first interest in cars developed from a brand identification game he and his brother played when making the long trek in a 1961 Chevy Nomad station wagon north to Jennings to see his grandma. They would position themselves in the rear facing back seat and name the models that zoomed by them.

His first car, the beast as Mike refers to it, was a 1956 Ford Fairlane, and also a blast to drive. It was tricked out with functional hood scoop, and fender skirts cut out to allow for bigger racing tires, powered by a 292c.i. Y block engine. Having a mechanic for a friend whose brother-in-law was even more well versed in engine modification, Mike had them help him transplant a 390 c.i. engine from a '67 Ford station wagon into his Fairlane. He had many a wild ride with this car until he retired it to move on to other Fords.



For a time, Mike owned a very cool a '66 T Bird with landau top. He was attracted to the bells and whistles of the lux interior and of course the sequential rear signal lights. Later he drove a 1969 Ford Galaxie XL convertible, a mean machine with an intimidating front grille. He was from then on forever smitten with the convertible body style.

Upon perusing the newspaper's classified car ads one day, a favorite pastime of any car nut, he came upon an ad for a 1966 Electra convertible for sale. Mike was immediately drawn to this Buick convertible's style and captivated by its road manners. He remembered driving his dad's '59 Le Sabre as a young'un and the solid ride of that car. So, this

'66 Electra became his comrade. It stayed by his side for twenty-two years accompanying him on many a ride in the country to contemplate night skies and surrounding moonlit rural landscapes.



Mike's Painting of his great-niece



Mike and the Boney Goat Band perform at the 40th Anniversary Picnic



Mike's introduction to the car world with his 56 Fairlane about to get a bigger engine installed.



Mike's 1966 Buick Electra convertible

Mike has been a self-employed gardener and landscaper most of his life driving a long running road warrior, a 1992 Toyota Previa to haul his equipment. But he also has a very artistic side and has enjoyed much success selling his paintings, portraits and being contracted out for wall murals. He even had stints with a sports shop, carving miniature mascots for teams in wood that were then pressed into a mold to make a trophy.

Mike's other pastime is music. He teaches banjo lessons and has his own band, the eclectic Bony Goats. The Bony Goats have even played at the Sheldon. And for our club picnics, he always supplies the entertainment of his old timey acoustic mountain music.

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When cruising through the Horseless Carriage Club's Forest Park Easter show one year, Mike met John Pegg and Jeff Watkins who introduced him to the Gateway Chapter Buick Club. He has faithfully stayed with us even after the departure of the '66 Electra. After 22 years, time finally took its' toll on the car and Mike did not have quite the enthusiasm to undertake the full restoration project that it would require. So today Mike enjoys our club events, is still loyal to all Buicks and is a pleasure to see at many club gatherings.

Editor Coments:

The car that Mike owned is the same model car that Jayne Mansfield was riding in when she was killed. The following article describes the accident:

***Blonde bombshell actress Jayne Mansfield is killed instantly on June 29, 1967 when the car in which she is riding strikes the rear of a trailer truck on U.S. Route 90 east of [New Orleans, Louisiana](#).***

***Mansfield had been on her way to New Orleans from Biloxi, [Mississippi](#), where she had been performing a standing engagement at a local nightclub; she had a television appearance scheduled the following day. Ronald B. Harrison, a driver for the Gus Stevens Diner Club, was driving Mansfield and her lawyer and companion, Samuel S. Brody, along with three of Mansfield's children with her ex-husband Mickey Hargitay, in Stevens' 1966 Buick Electra. On a dark stretch of road, just as the truck was approaching a machine emitting a thick white fog used to spray mosquitoes (which may have obscured it from Harrison's view), the Electra hit the trailer-truck from behind. Mansfield, Harrison and Brody were all killed in the accident. Eight-year-old Mickey, six-year-old Zoltan and three-year-old Marie, or Mariska, had apparently been sleeping on the rear seat; they were injured but survived.***

In the aftermath of this accident, government regulations required the use of structure on the rear of a trailer to prevent cars going under the bed of a trailer in a similar accident. These bars are commonly referred to as "Mansfield Bars".

