

The Roadmaster

Buick Club of America—Portland Area Chapter

March 2021

Random thoughts and musings from your Director

Hello Everyone:

Looks like the Portland/Vancouver Metro Area is getting over the biggest snow and ice storm in years! Hopefully you were able to stay warm and didn't lose power. I also hope that your Buick like mine is tucked safely away in a garage.

We recently lost, long time member Bob Heaton of Kelso, Washington. Bob and Nancy owned a 1964 Buick Wildcat convertible that they ordered new. We recently asked members and friends for their reminiscences of Bob. This issue of our newsletter with stories and thoughts is dedicated to both Bob and Nancy. You couldn't have one without the other and they were truly a set well matched. Bob would say something outlandish and Nancy would just roll her eyes, which was all the indication that you needed that Bob might have been embellishing.

My introduction to both Bob and Nancy was quite a few years ago at the End of the World Rod Run in Ocean Park, WA on the Long Beach peninsula. I was wandering around and came across a very strange site – a Buick Nailhead engine in a large '60's era Buick convertible. On closer inspection I discovered that there was a train style horn mounted under the hood and a 4-speed shifter inside the car. While the Nailhead was not so strange, the large chrome air cleaner and the finned aluminum rocker covers along with everything else was! Of course, I stopped to look and made the mistake of questioning the authenticity of all the components attached to the very beautiful car. At that point I made the acquaintance of the aforementioned Mr. Heaton. He took the time to educate me on the fact that the car was truly authentic as he had ordered it new from the factory.

Not only was the car authentic but so was Bob and Nancy still is! This began a friendship as Bob and I spent many hours through the years discussing Buicks and also the fact that we had crossed paths in our previous work lives. Please enjoy the other articles about other peoples' encounters with this wonderful couple.

We have had Zoom meetings in January and February and have another planned for March 20th. Watch for the email announcement with the link and please join us as we would like to see you—even if it is online.

It is time to start thinking about a short no contact cruise or tour—maybe in April or early May. If you have ideas on what or where you would like to see or go – please let me know and we will get it together.

I recently spoke with the Clark County Parks Department about our chapter picnic on the first Saturday in August in Hazel Dell Park in Vancouver, Washington. They are still not opening up the parks for any events but hope to shortly. They are also not yet ready to give details about what that opening will look like. They may put a limit on the number of participants or other restrictions. Once we hear what is happening, the chapter BOD will determine if our event will happen. Watch for more details as they become available.

I hope we will get the opportunity to get together in the near future but in the interim—Please stay safe!

Duke

A Tribute to Robert “Bob” Heaton

by Jerry and Kathy Bernard

“Hello there young man, that sounds like a four speed car.” Those were the first words I heard from Bob Heaton. We meet in Troutdale, Oregon, at a Portland Chapter of the BCA car show. He looked my car over and pointed out some of its better points. He made me feel like my car was pretty special. Then I was introduced to Nancy and Lucille. Nancy his wife and Lucille his '65 Wildcat convertible, 425 cubic inch, four-speed, dual four-barrel, limited-slip car. My wife and Nancy visited most of the day, as Bob introduced me to chapter members and their vehicles. When it came time for the awards to be given out he assured me that I was going to win but not to be disappointed that his car might place higher. Both of our vehicles were in the “M class” for judging. He was right, he received first and I received second. After meeting again at the Portland BCA National, in 2014, we would go on to travel together to several BCA National events.



2018 BCA NATIONAL MEET

Four-Speed 1965 Wildcat Convertible

Article and Photos by Pete Phillips, BCA #7338, *Bugle* Editor

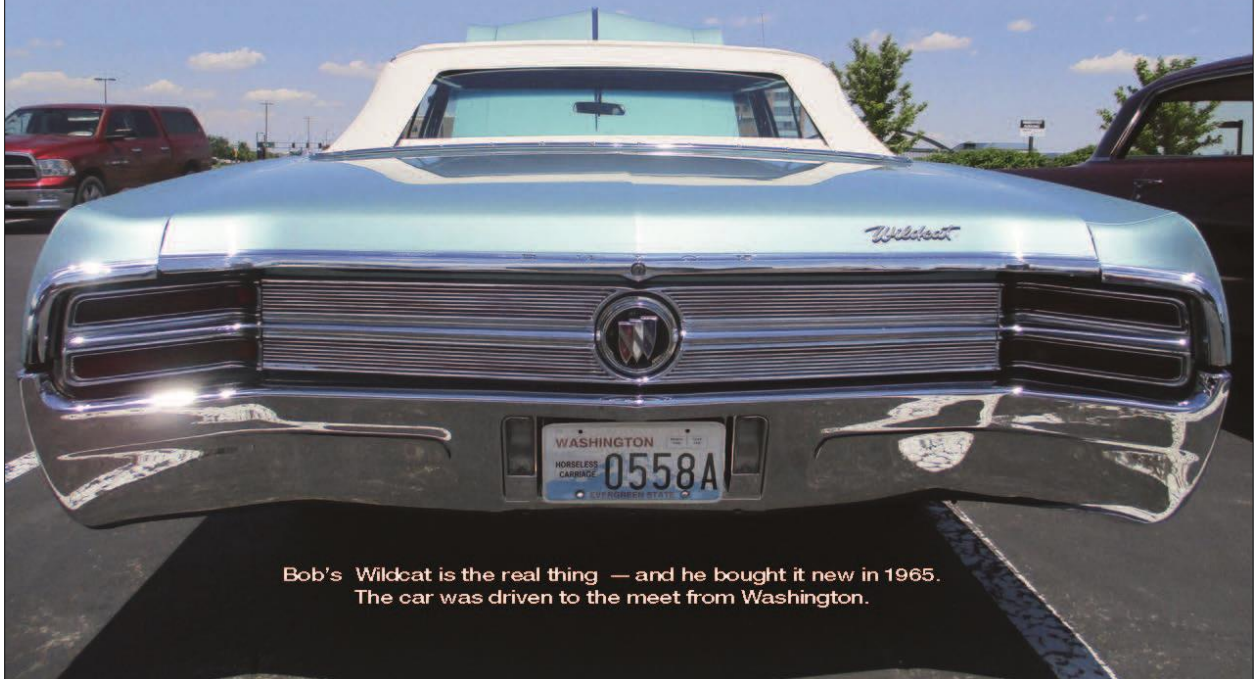
Bob Heaton of Kelso, Washington bought this car brand new. He must have been a young kid when he bought it, because he certainly doesn't look old enough to have bought a car like this new and owned it for 53 years.

This is a very special '65 Wildcat. It has the Super Wildcat engine with two four-barrel carburetors, air conditioning, the dual-snorkel chromed air cleaner, the ribbed aluminum valve covers, and a factory four-speed on the floor. And to top that all off, it is a convertible. This has to be the ultimate 1965 Wildcat! And still in the hands of the original owner. And he drives it long distances to the meets — no trailer for this baby.

The first BCA national meet that Bob and his wife Nancy attended was the Ames, Iowa meet in 2010. They drove it to that meet, and Bob was so happy and relieved to have finally found a club that knew what he had and welcomed it with open arms. He has been told many times, "Buick didn't build a four-speed Wildcat" at local shows, and had grown tired of being told that his car was not original, but modified. Baloney! This car is the real thing.

At this meet, Bob pointed out something unusual on the vehicle's data plate: An embossed star in the middle of the aluminum plate (see photo) on the "paint" line. Someone told him that the star is only on cars that were partially assembled when GM had a strike, and work was stopped for weeks and weeks. The purpose of the star was to keep track of the car during the shutdown. If anyone can verify or correct this account, please let Bob or the Editor know. We do know that a star next to the interior trim code indicates bucket seats, but this car has a bench seat and the star is next to the paint code, K1, which is turquoise.

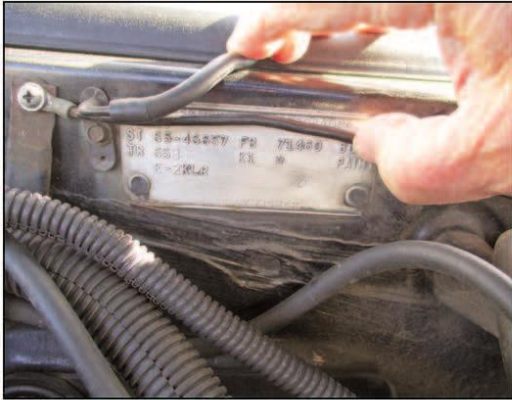
Bob's Wildcat is one of 14 Wildcat Custom series convertibles to have the optional 425 engine and the dual quad carburetors with the four-speed transmission in 1965. When you include the factory air-conditioning with those features, it is one of four! Thanks, Bob and Nancy, for bringing this rare gem to the meet. ♦



Bob's Wildcat is the real thing — and he bought it new in 1965.
The car was driven to the meet from Washington.



'65 Wildcat Details



Notice the star on the data plate--what does it mean?



Bob Heaton poses with the four-speed 1965 Wildcat that he bought new.



Here's what makes it special: Four-speed floor shift and factory air-conditioning.



The black vinyl interior is immaculate. The car has a bench seat with the mini-console housing the four-speed shifter.



Optional chrome wheels with the Wildcat center caps



Dual-quad Super Wildcat engine with the chrome air cleaner and ribbed aluminum valve covers.

Bob Heaton: 1941 to 2021

by Jack Gerstkemper

Bob Heaton and his 1965 Wildcat convertible were a familiar sight at BCA National Meets and Pacific Northwest BCA regional events. Bob and Nancy Heaton lived in Kelso, Washington, 40 miles north of the Columbia River. They were members of the Portland Area Chapter, but they were also active in their church, and they had a large circle of family and friends in Kelso. They missed many of our chapter's one-day events, but Bob loved big BCA events where he and Nancy could show their Wildcat to Buick enthusiasts who appreciated it for the unique vehicle it is.

Bob and Nancy special-ordered their Wildcat in 1964. Bob chose all the go-fast options. Nancy picked the color. The result was Lucille; their teal-blue convertible with a 425 cubic inch V-8, dual quad carburetors, air conditioning, and 4 speed stick shift. Lucille was very fast. Bob raced Lucille a few times at a drag strip in Shelton WA until Nancy asked Bob to stop abusing their family car. Too much fun and abuse eventually resulted in a tired Lucille. So Bob put Lucille in storage while he and Nancy raised a family. After the kids were raised, Lucille began calling to Bob from the back of the garage. Eventually, Bob answered the call and restored Lucille to her original glory. Then he began taking Lucille to local car shows. I first met Bob at a local BCA meet.

The BCA's Portland Area Chapter held one memorable All Buick Show at the Pearson Airfield in Vancouver, Washington, in conjunction with an Antique Aircraft Association. The combination of biplanes and Buicks on the same show field drew a huge crowd. Bob Heaton heard about the show and drove over to check it out in his daily driver, a late model Cadillac. Outside the show, Bob encountered Gene and Jodi Sorensen sitting in their bright red, 1965 Wildcat convertible waiting to be admitted to the show.

"Hey there young fella," said Bob to Gene, "I've got a Wildcat at home just like yours."

"Well go home and get it", replied Gene.

The actual conversation was more involved, but you get the idea. Gene Sorensen was very excited when he found me a few minutes later. Gene is a factory-trained Buick mechanic who owned and operated a commercial auto and truck repair shop in the Seattle area with his wife Jodi. Gene is also a former member of the BCA National Board of Directors. Gene can talk Buicks 'til the cows come home. Gene knew that four-speeds in 1965 Wildcats were a very rare factory option.

Bob Heaton was duly impressed that day at Pearson Air Field. He had found a club that put on an impressive car show, but best of all, Bob had found a group of Buick enthusiasts who appreciated Lucille for the rare car she was. Bob was hooked. A short while later, Bob and Nancy drove Lucille to the 2010

BCA National Meet in Ames Iowa. Unfortunately, Bob encountered some doubters in Ames similar to the doubters he had met at other car shows.

Doubter: "Buick never put a four-speed in a Wildcat."

Bob Heaton: "They did in this one. I special-ordered it with that four-speed."

Doubter: "Yeah, right pal. I've heard that story before."

Bob was concerned he might get similar doubts from the BCA judges in Ames. "Buick never put a four-speed in a Wildcat. Your car has been modified. It's not original."

I listened to Bob's concern on the Iowa show field and suggested to him, "Bob, the man you need to find here in Ames is Pete Phillips. He'll see that your Wildcat gets a fair shake from the judges."

Pete Phillips was the Judges Training Chairman at the Ames Meet. Pete was also the editor of the *Buick Bugle* and the owner of his own vintage car restoration business in Leonard, Texas. If you want to see how excited Pete Phillips gets when he "discovers" a rare Buick, then you really should read Pete's article on Lucille in the October 2010 issue of the *Buick Bugle*, pages 16-17. That's the 2010 National Meet edition of the magazine. Most National Meet attendees are delighted if their Buick warrants one small picture in the *Bugle's* National Meet edition. The Heaton's Wildcat got five pictures and two full pages in Pete's 2010 article. Among Pete's many superlatives was his mind-boggling speculation that Lucille might be "the ultimate Buick that was ever built in the 1960's". When reading Pete's 2010 article, you can almost feel Pete jumping up and down with excitement during his initial introduction to Lucille.

In the year 2010, Bob Heaton found a permanent home in the car hobby. Finally, an organization that truly appreciated his car! Bob, Nancy, and Lucille became regular attendees at BCA National Meets. Pete Phillips wrote more articles about them. Pete was impressed that Bob always drove Lucille to the National meets. Pete probably heard Bob's opinion that "trailers are for horses and hay." Pete Phillips believes Buicks are meant to be driven. Even the rare ones.

Fast forward six years after Ames Iowa to the 2016 BCA 50th Anniversary celebration in Allentown, Pennsylvania. The BCA's 50th Anniversary Meet was very well promoted. Several of my Australian friends planned to attend. Barbara and I reserved a block of hotel rooms in Allentown so our Aussie friends could stay in the same hotel with us. Among the visiting Aussies was Tom Kunek, a 1965 Riviera owner from Melbourne. Tom was having no success in convincing the hotel's desk clerk that Jack Gerstkemper had booked a block of rooms for the Aussies and Tom was, indeed, one of those Aussies. The young Pennsylvania desk clerk had never encountered an Australian accent. It was a foreign language to her. She simply could not understand Tom's Australian English. In an exasperated act of desperation, Tom Kunek turned to a total stranger standing in line behind Tom at the front desk and asked, "Do you know Jack Gerstkemper?" That stranger standing behind Tom was Bob Heaton, waiting in line to register for his own room at the same hotel. Bob Heaton and Lucille were 3,000 miles from their home in Washington State. Tom Kunek was half a planet from his home in Australia.

“Why, yes, I do, young fella,” said Bob to Tom. “I do know Jack Gerstkemper. How can I help?”

Bob patiently translated Tom’s Australian English into East Coast American English for the befuddled young desk clerk. By the time I arrived at the same hotel, Bob and Tom were each telling their own version of the desk clerk story to anyone who would listen. Both versions were equally entertaining.

Bob Heaton’s final wishes included a desire for Lucille to end up in a museum. Before that occurs, however, Nancy plans to have more family fun with the car she helped order new from the factory. Nancy’s plans for Lucille include a grandson-chauffeured drive to the 2023 BCA National Meet in Spokane, Washington. Nancy and Lucille are likely to meet a lot of old friends in Spokane. Bob would be delighted.

ONLINE SWAP MEET

March 2021

New—Autogage 3&3/4 inch tachometer still in box—\$75.00 obo—Duke Charpentier—360-904-7191

Used—Autogage 3&3/4 inch tachometer with all components and box—\$50.00 obo—Duke Charpentier—360-904-7191

New—PUI window sweep set—1967 Buick Convertible—\$50.00 obo—Duke Charpentier—360-904-7191

1984 Buick Estate Wagon

I inherited this **1984 Buick Estate Wagon** from my mother. I would like to pass it on to someone in the Buick Club of America. It is quite low mileage at 127,127 miles. I thought that I would start with people from the Portland area and then maybe the PNW before selling it to anyone on the open market. There is slight damage to the right side of the car, the wood-grained wrap is in weathered shape and the headliner is loose. It does sound as though there is one stuck lifter on the #3 cylinder. As with any car of this vintage and weight, the shocks most likely need to be replaced. I put in a new battery and there are new tires on it which have seen very few miles. It has been garaged its entire life except for the last five years. Please give me a call if you have any ideas for a home for this car.

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