

Finally, The Buick Was Home

Text and photos by Dennis Holland





In 1981 I bought a 1960 Buick LeSabre station wagon. It was a clean, straight and rust free car, painted a faded chalky white with a bit of a greenish yellow tint. I bought the car to drive back and forth to work, and that's what I did for several years. It was basically a good reliable beater that we also used for hauling trash to the landfill and for camping. The back was filled up with firewood many times.

By 1987, time and hard use eventually caught up to the old wagon. With a cracked windshield and reverse out in the transmission, I parked her behind the horse's shed, and there she sat for a couple years. But I kept looking at the car, thinking that it was far too straight and rust free to let sit out and deteriorate. So in 1988 I dragged the car out and put it back in the garage to begin the restoration.

The first order of business was to fix the obvious problems. The transmission was pulled and a friend and I replaced the broken part that prevented the shift into reverse. We had done that once before. A new windshield was located and installed. Then the radiator, gas tank, starter, generator, carburetor, and just about everything else mechanical was replaced or rebuilt except the engine itself. It was strong and didn't seem to need a rebuild.

The car was then sent out for paint and upholstery. Because the car was perfectly straight I decided that black was the color to lend some elegance to the project. The upholstery work needed was done, which involved redoing the carpeting and the front seat in the correct original materials. A couple of panels in the back seat was all that was needed there. After many months

the car was completed and we enjoyed driving and touring in the car for the next year or so. Then I was transferred to Germany.

Although originally I expected to be in Germany for only six months, after a couple of years it became obvious that we would be there for some time. So when a dealer friend called and asked if I would sell, I said yes. He had a buyer, which turned out to be the museum of Ionia Body Works, the company that made GM station wagon bodies during that period.

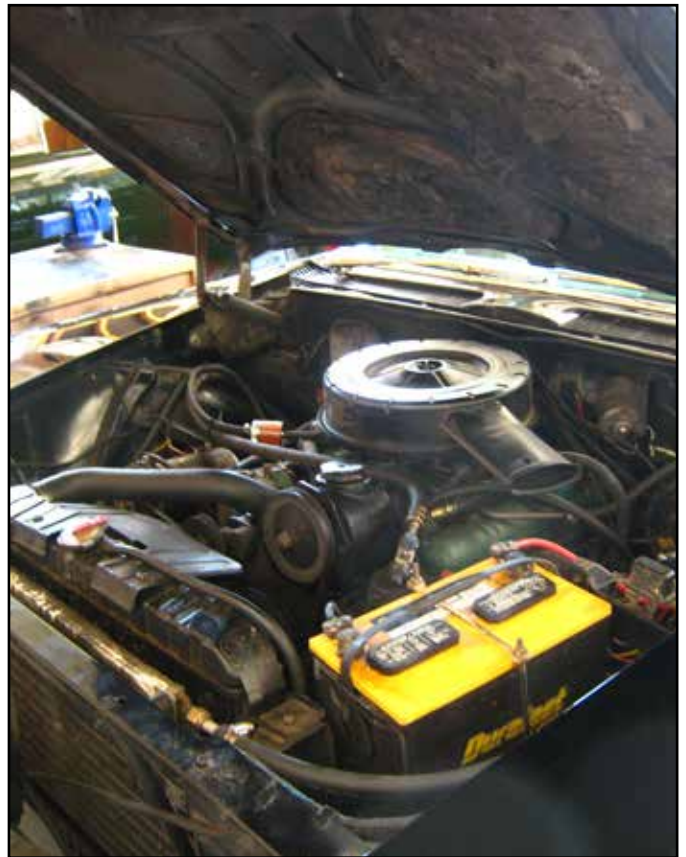
I always regretted letting that car go. When we returned from Germany in 1999, I immediately began a quest to look for the Buick in the hope of buying it back. As it happens, we have a neighbor in law enforcement. I gave him the VIN number and he did a nation-wide search as if it was a stolen car.



1960 BUICK LE SABRE STATION WAGON

This is a very original and rare model equipped with unusual options for the time including air conditioning, power steering, power brakes, Dynaflo transmission, tinted glass, white wall tires, power tail gate window and much more. Interior is correct original and in immaculate condition. Rides and drives like a brand new car. Car has #134 A/C and prior owner put insulation under carpet from front to rear to deaden sound. New shocks, new springs, and all new exhaust.

Bid Range: \$18 – 30K



We found that the museum had sold the car after a couple years to a man in Kansas. I called him and spoke to his wife. The man had a terminal illness and the car had been sold. She didn't know to whom. The trail went cold.

Then in the May 2003 Hemmings, there it was - a feature car in the Leake Tulsa Auction. A little internet research revealed that it had been in two previous Leake auctions and had failed to make the reserve. It had been driven down to the auction from

North Carolina. It was to be offered again June 8.

I made the arrangements to bid by phone. I was successful and immediately arranged for transportation to Colorado. Four days later the car was delivered. The Buick was finally home.

In the seven years since the Buick's return, it has seen a lot of miles of touring. We call ourselves "The Touring Club" and for good reason. I don't own a trailer - it is driven to wherever we are going whether that is Rapid City,

South Dakota or Galveston, Texas. It has always been a pretty reliable tour car that gets a lot of looks wherever it goes.

The car is driven regularly and, in the last few years, has visited Utah, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, and of course, Colorado where I live.

