



# THE BUILD SHEET

August Edition Issue 2



# The Buick Performance Group

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67745

## Buick Performance Group Mission Statement

**The Buick Performance Group (BPG) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the performance, preservation, maintenance and restoration of Buick powered performance cars. The BPG offers a member focused, family oriented community environment that encourages and promotes: (1) the sharing of information; (2) the development of new products; and (3) interaction and participation between all members.**

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The Buick Performance Group is a non-profit, member run organization. We value all input from our members, and would love to include your car, tech tips and any article that you would take the time to submit to us.

To submit an article or your car for a feature, fax, email or postal mail your information and pictures to this address:

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“The Build Sheet” is a bi-monthly production of The Buick Performance Group Inc. This Newsletter is mailed in the last week of the odd number month that precedes the publication date...i.e. June-July issue mailed in the last week of May. Please notify the club office of changes in your mailing address, at least 2 weeks before the mailing date, to insure prompt, correct postal delivery.

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# What The EL!!!!

**By: Duane Heckman, BCA #35259,  
Rutledge, Pa.**

My friends and I are into Buicks; we talk, breathe, and sleep Buicks. This has progressed to such a point that my wife refers to our annual trip to the GSCA Nationals as "Buick Camp". For years one of our recurring topics was why Buick never built an El Camino, and if they had, what would it have looked like.

I have always liked the 1970 to 1972 Skylark based Gran Sports, especially the GSX's and thought that an El Camino version would look great. With this in mind I took photocopied pictures of GSX's and El Camino's and pasted them together. The resultant car, actually a truck, looked wonderful. I showed this picture to my friends and they all agreed that it should have been built. The more I looked at the picture the more I wanted to make one. Finally, after years of thinking about this, I told my friends that if one didn't show up at the next Nationals I would make one. Needless to say I was stuck.

One thing that everyone agrees about me is that I am an "originality nut." I know this sounds strange, because here I am preparing to make a custom car, but that's how I am. The goal I set for this project was to make a "stock appearing" custom car. I wanted to create a vehicle that could have been built in 1970 and was so correct in detail it would look "factory built".

I bought a nice El Camino shell from a junkyard and started fabricating the doors. I took Skylark Sport Coupe doors and grafted El Camino inner panels and window frames into them. Once this was done I mounted them on the car and then assembled the front-end sheetmetal. El Camino's have a wheel base that is 4" longer than 2 door Skylarks, therefore the distance between the back of the doors and the rear wheel opening is 4" longer. To fill this space, the front portion of a pair of quarter panels from a rusty GS were cut out and welded onto the shell, thus creating my own door gaps. Next, a pair of reproduction rear quarter panels were welded on. This left a space of approximately 1 foot at the rear of each quarter panel that required hand fabrication.

At this time the car took its first trip to the body shop. At Iron Hill Auto body the shell and major front-end sheetmetal was plastic media blasted and everything from the rear wheels-

forward was epoxy primed. Next, the front-end sheetmetal was painted, "cut in," and reassembled onto the shell.

Once the car returned from the shop I turned my attention to finishing the rear quarter panels. I figured if El Camino's used Chevelle Station Wagon taillights then a Buick version would use Skylark Sport Wagon taillights. The taillights and bezels came from a 1970 Sport Wagon that was in a junkyard. I altered the housings and then hand fabricated the pieces to finish the quarter panels. Another thing I noticed was that Skylark wagons had the backup lights in the rear bumper. To do this I removed the backup lights from the tailgate and welded the holes shut. Next I found a pair of 1968 El Camino backup light lenses with housings and installed them in the rear bumper. To keep the GSX stripes clean and unbroken the gas tank filler neck was relocated to the interior side access panel inside the bed area. (See below)





While this was being done I cut out the Chevelle dash and upper firewall and replaced it with a dash from a junked 1970 Buick GS 455 Sport Coupe. Next, the firewall was painted and the entire dash assembly installed. Years before I sold a GSX "look-a-like" minus the drive train, so the Stage 1 spec motor, Turbo 400 transmission, and 3:23 10 bolt Buick posi traction rear were incorporated into the project. With the major body panels completed and the car now in running condition it was ready to go back to the body shop for final painting.

This time, at Brandywine Coachworks, the rear of the shell was plastic media blasted and epoxy primed. Next came the bodywork on the rear quarters, quarter panel extensions, and tailgate. My friend Tim Garland then sealed, painted, and striped the entire car.

At this point it was 6 days before the Nationals and I was determined to take the car with me. The car had no glass, headliner, carpet, seats, door panels, dash pad, exterior chrome moldings,

bumpers, lights, grille, hood tach, light wiring harness, etc. However, with the inexhaustible help of my friends Rich Garland, Jeremy Sprang, and Bill Jennings the car was finished in time to leave for the Nationals.

That year at the Nationals it rained, and rained, and... you get the picture. Well the first night there every time we looked out our hotel room window we saw people standing in the rain looking at the car. We have a Restoration Clinic and try to bring in different vehicles every year. For me the highlight of that trip was when my friend Brad Conley talked me into bringing my car into the Restoration Clinic to sit along side his 1970 GSX Prototype. I said it was not a restored car, but he said, "Tonight we'll have Prototype Night." I thought it was a very nice gesture for him to place his piece of "Buick History" next to something I pieced together in my backyard from 6 different vehicles, but that's just the kind of guy he is.

I call the vehicle the "X-Camino." This name does double duty because it looks like a GSX-Camino while parts of it were an "Ex" Camino. Once the work was finished it came time to title the beast. With such heavy modifications it became necessary to title it as a reconstructed vehicle. With a Buick GS 455 Coupe VIN number and truck rear end it was registered as a 1970 Buick GS Truck. At car shows I hear comments like, "It looks Factory." or "I didn't know that Buick built a truck." but I explain that it's not a factory vehicle and that I built it. Once, a professional Street Rod builder looked at the car, and told me he knew the amount of work that was involved and was impressed with the fact that it looked untouched. But the finest compliment I ever received was when a friend of mine asked me, "How does it feel to drive a sculpture?" I looked at him and said, "I never thought about it like that, but it does feel pretty good."

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- **Tons of info, member cars, and this publication online**
- **Links to Other Buick websites**
- **Online Member directory**
- **Event Information**
- **And the latest Buick performance Bulletin Board to talk to the directors, submit suggestions, and get your questions answered!**

# ***THE GSX PROTOTYPE, BRAD CONLEY, AND ME***

***By: Duane Heckman, BPG # 1031***

I met Brad Conley when I attended the 1988 GS Nationals. It was my first trip to the Nats, and I was really excited. The previous year I started my company, Classic Car Interiors, and began making GS interiors. That year I had '69 and '70 seat covers only, and was in the process of locating patterns for other year interiors. It was the first showing for the '69 & '70 interiors and they sold like hotcakes.

Anyway getting back to the story, on the way to my first day of the Nats my father and I stopped for breakfast at Shoneys on Scottsville Road in Bowling Green. The place was really packed. In line directly in front of us was a guy wearing a GS jacket with an older gentleman. We got to talking and decided to sit together. We introduced ourselves as Duane and Roy Heckman. They introduced themselves as Brad and his father Marvin Conley. A few weeks earlier I had talked to Dave Kleiner from GS Enterprises. He was going to do the restoration of the prototype and he asked me to do the interior. Once I heard who this guy was I said, "Well, I'm going to be doing the interior of your car." Brad said, "Well, who are you, and how do you know you are doing my interior?" I said, "Well I own Classic Car Interiors and according to Dave Kleiner I am the only one that he will let touch it." Brad comes back with, "Well if that's what Dave said it's good enough for me." That's the story of how we met.

Years later when the interior showed up at my shop the real fun began. The following description gives you an idea of how the Buick Engineering people achieved the look they were after. The interior pieces were made up of a series of black and white squares with an off centered set of red and orange racing stripes. The entire interior was leather, including front and rear seats, door panels, rear armrests, steering wheel, and shifter handle, but there was a problem. The thing you need to keep in mind is this, when Buick turned this vehicle into a "Show Car" it was designed to be a display model only, it was not built for everyday use. All the leather colors were painted on, not vat dyed like regular production cars. That meant that when we took apart the panels to make patterns **everything** stuck together, the paint glued the pieces together. This also made it harder to find un-faded pieces from inside the seats for color matches. You also

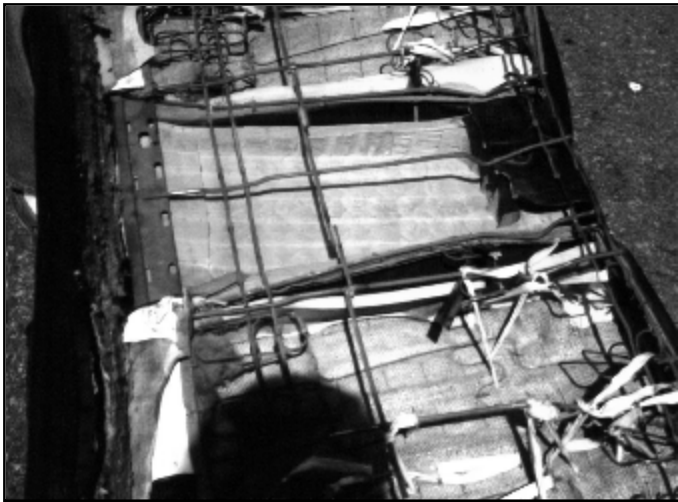
cannot use steam to iron out leather to make patterns, like you can with vinyl. If you do the leather shrinks and your seat covers won't fit. Another problem was the plastic bucket seat pieces. The car originally came with a Pearl White Custom Bucket Seat interior. When Buick Engineering built the "Show" interior they used the original white plastic panels and painted them black. These black painted panels were starting to crumble and everywhere the paint flaked off white showed through. They were a mess, and needed replaced.

The method they used to create the seats was amazing. For the front seats the raised beading was trimmed off the headrests with a razor knife before being installed in the down position. Next a layer of padding similar to the white filter elements in home air conditioning units was installed over the seat cushions and headrests. This assured a smooth surface beneath the seat covers.



The front and rear seat covers themselves were wild. They were not installed like traditional automobile upholstery, with wires and hog rings. Instead they were installed like covers on antique furniture. They attached long pull cords to the covers, pushed them through the seat cushions, and then tied these to the seat springs. The rear seats were different also. Here they wanted to make the illusion of rear bucket seats. To do this they cut out the center part of the



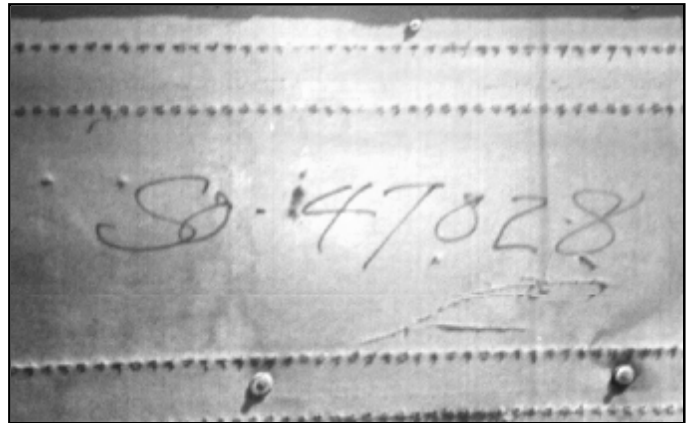


top and bottom cushions and added padding to the remaining areas until they resembled the front seats. In the center cutout areas, and at the sides of the rear seat tops, they hand carved blocks of wood, Maple I think, and covered these in black leather. (See the attached pictures.) The rear shelf board was covered in black vinyl and had a long tongue that came down between the rear seat tops. Once installed the center section was recessed in relation to the seats, finishing the bucket seat look.



The door panels were another story. They were leather covered and padded at the top with black carpeting at the bottom. The center section was the interesting part. It was **the** pair of original fiberglass molds used to make the production molds for 1970 Riviera front armrests and had a vacuum molded skin on it. The GSX Door emblems are also unique. At first glance it looked like they took original GSX grille emblems and cut off everything that surrounds the letters. This left the letter G as a separate letter. But here's the cool part, the emblems were not cast from pot metal but were made of brass and were thicker than standard emblems. Actually, it appears they were machined

or cast as separate flat backed emblems and then chrome plated. These emblems had to be thicker so they could be drilled and tapped for the thin all thread rods that mount them to the door panels. The armrests were also bolted to the door panel boards. You can easily see this on the picture of the reverse side of the door panels.



Other unique interior related items include the outside sport mirrors, steering wheel, dash veneer, dash emblem, and seat belts. The mirrors were the design study pieces used to create the 1971-1972



sport mirrors we know today. They were solid cast pieces with the mirrored glass glued in place. These mirrors were not movable; therefore both mirrors were non-remote. They were also so heavy they split the outer door skins. For the steering wheel they used the existing 16" Black Rallye wheel, covered it with a layer of foam padding, and wrapped it in leather. The dash assembly, console lid, power window bezels, and rear ash trays are covered with a "machine turned" metal veneer instead of the normal wood grain. The dash emblem is also unique; it is a large rectangular brushed metal emblem with "GSX by BUICK" cut into it. The seat belts look more like something from a jet fighter, then an automobile. The belts are labeled "exptl. Belt." (Short for experimental belts.)

From the above description you can get a good idea of how the engineering design process evolved. They did the same thing designers do today, they used parts that were available to them,

and altered them to fit their needs. The goal was to build an automobile with a large "Wow Factor." That way everyone who saw it would remember it and want to purchase that car. That was their job.

When it came time to reproduce the interior my employee, Alan Wance, and I were very careful when making the patterns, we only had 1 shot at this. I even had Alan make a front seat cover from vinyl scraps and install it on the cushions to make sure it would fit. We did this before we dared to cut one piece of leather. We built the entire interior exactly like it was for the show circuit, with a non-remote mirror, no front door speakers, and no rear shelf speakers. Once the seats, door panels, and rear shelf were finished it left the steering wheel to reproduce. Brad told me that originally you could see the finger grip ridges on the reverse side of the leather wrapped steering wheel. He also stated he wanted that look retained if possible. Well it took a while but I found a material that created the same look, the only problem was to put a leather wrap over it. We tried time and again to make a wrap that was tight around the outside and not bunched up in the center, probably 10 times. Finally I got one that worked. For the next 3 nights my wife Beth and I punched small holes around the perimeter of the leather wrap and sewed the cover on by hand. It had to be really tight to work and by the end Beth's hands were bleeding in several places, but our part of the interior was done.

One thing I want to say is this. I was proud to do this interior. I wanted to help bring back a piece of Buick history that will be enjoyed many years after I am gone. When it came time to charge Brad for doing this interior I did it for cost. I know he saved for over 10 years to do this restoration; he even paid for the leather when it came in because I could not afford to put out that much cash at the time. I just didn't feel right making anything on it; I wanted it to be my gift to the hobby. We kept track of the time and materials spent on the project and even at cost it was 3 times more expensive than any other interior my company ever produced.

I also helped locate or reproduce other parts for the car, like the turned metal dash veneer and the Ram Air foam seals, but that's another story.

It is amazing how few of the original "Design Study" cars got out of General Motors and are with us today. Many were destroyed in testing. Many more were destroyed because they didn't meet current safety standards, and could not be sold.

If you want to bring things full circle, and try to understand the fervor cars like Brad's caused when new it's easy. All you have to do is look at the response Buicks new Blackhawk Show Car is

causing today. They built a hand-sculptured body and put it on a current Corvette chassis. The passenger compartment is based on a modified Riviera interior with custom touches. Again they used existing pieces they had in inventory and modified them to fit their design needs.

With the Blackhawk, Buick has done a complete 180 from its current line of automobiles. They are comfortable sedate cars that are dependable and good for everyday transportation. The Blackhawk, on the other hand, has a body that screams for attention. With a full leather custom interior, a retractable top, and a modified 455 big block that just wants to go. It is a complete divergence from Buick's accepted way of thinking. Exactly the same can be said for the GSX Prototype that was built over 30 years ago. That's what makes these two cars so special. Seems to me that history is again repeating itself.

***Mike & Cindy Garrison***

*Topeka, Kansas  
Region 4 Director*

Hello to all the BPG members I am writing this so those who don't already know me will get an idea where I come from. I work for Bill Kobach Buick GMC as the body shop manager. My wife works for Blue Cross. We have 2 kids, one boy 8 and girl 10. If you ask them what car rules the street you will get the normal brainwashed answer.... BUICKS!! We as a family enjoy going to the races, shows, and other car related things. One thing we do is spend time in church. I believe that without God I would not have anything like I do. God has definitely blessed my family with all we have and all the friends I have.

I was 17 when I got my first Buick GS 455. I still have it too. My wife and I were a blind date (she was blind I was her date) after the normal uncomfortable feeling of being on a blind date we went out in my GS. While on our way somewhere I got in a race with a '57 Chevy and after spanking him for the \$5 he had in pocket we have still stayed together. I own a '70 GS that has become faster throughout the years including this year's [10.18@131.20](mailto:10.18@131.20) pass. I was sliding around the whole track. But that's another story.

I have been in the GSCA club since 1981 and I have seen the club change thru the years. I was part of the original set of people who founded this club and I expect great things from it. I am into making repro parts. I know how hard it is to get parts for any Buick product. I started in the early 80's making hose hooks and TH400 brackets. I have an entire line of parts now including the stick flywheel covers and the stud for the block/z-bar. I also seem to have a lot of parts from cars that are sent my way. They seem to call me to sell some of the cars. I hate to see them crushed until all of the useable parts are removed. I have owned about 30 Buick's throughout the years including a 70 GSX 4 speed that was restored by Dave Kliener. I have currently a 70 GS 455/535, 70 Stage 1, 73 Century 2 door, 84 Regal 350 stick project. And I have a pro-street go-cart that has a fiberglass regal body on it, for the kids.



I have to my credit a ton of trophies for car shows and races. I am the five year in a row winner of the Salina Kansas stop light drags. I won Bracket 1 at the GS Nationals in Columbus Ohio. My wife even won the ladies bracket at the GS Nationals in 1991. She has a 70 Stage 1 Aqua mist automatic car. It just goes to show you how dedicated my wife and I are to Buick's and their owners.

My goal for this club and the chapter we have started in our area is to be attentive to MEMBERS needs. This is something I haven't seen from the other club in years. As the regional director for this area and now chapter head I will do my best to follow thru with the above actions. I have had my Buick for over 25 years I plan on keeping it for along time to come. I love to get together with other Buick owners and just bench race and chat about our cars. I hope this quick note helps you get to know me better. The next time I'm at a race don't hesitate to say howdy.

## Buick Ladies Racing Association

***Founded by; Roberta Vasilow***

e-mail: [buickracer@comcast.net](mailto:buickracer@comcast.net)

Roberta has informed us that there are a large contingency of women racings out there that want to be heard. She has formed a close knit (Did I say knit as in knitting...J ed.) group of dedicated and quick thinking lovely ladies that love to be at the race track behind the wheel.

They have a motto, "We'll Spank Ya, After We Exchange Recipes!" And of course that's recipes for going fast! Anyway, without further a due, the list of the Buick Ladies Racing Association.

### Charter Member

1. Roberta Vasilow
2. Renee Moore
3. Leann Jones
4. Sandy Paine
5. Christine Jasko
6. Jamie Foster-Wolcott
7. Amy Makley
8. Alison Ritchie
9. Kristen Taubitz
10. Robin Stevens

(When John gets the car done!)

### Associate Members

1. Sharon Hannen ('70 GSX)
2. Barb Birdsley ('86 T-Type Designer Package)
3. Brenda Oldeck ('72 Sun Coupe)
4. Barbara Stewart (Steve Caruso, '72 GSX)
5. Theresa Livesay

### Supporting Members

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Dayna Dechent                       | 14. Dave Dechent |
| 2. Cindy Ketchum                       | 15. Geof Ketchum |
| 3. Bobb Makley                         | 16. Bill Wills   |
| 4. Chris Taubitz                       | 17. Joe Taubitz  |
| 5. Dale Birdsley                       | 18. David Roland |
| 6. Carol Roland                        | 19. Wally Snyder |
| 7. Michelle Brandt                     | 20. Clark Bowman |
| 8. Steve Caruso                        | 21. Gary Paine   |
| 9. Bob Hannen                          | 22. Denny Moore  |
| 10. Steve Gray                         | 23. John Stevens |
| 11. Karl Wolcott                       | 24. Joe Shepard  |
| 12. Todd Berdan                        | 25. John Vorwerk |
| 13. Dennis Mayday (Printwear Graphics) |                  |

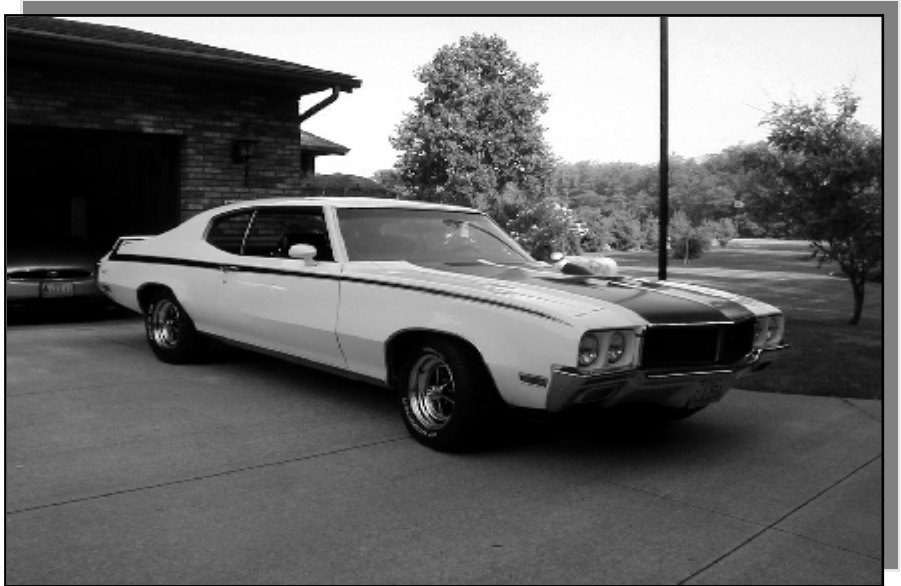
This is a great concept by Roberta! The main point is, "having fun"! How about the "Real Women Drive Buick" shirts with either the Turbo or GS with the above motto on back? No dues, just buy a shirt! If your interested give Roberta a call or e-mail her to let her know what sizes you want and she will get moving on this!



# ***My First (Buick) Love***

*By; Glen Stringfield – Seville, Ohio*

My love of Buicks started at an early age. My mother and father preferred to drive them over any other make of car so naturally my fondest memories during childhood involved riding in many different models. From the 1956 special that took me to kindergarten, to the '57 convertible that took us to many, family picnics. The car that I loved the most was mom's new 1971 Buick Skylark. I received my driver's license in that car in 1976. In 1977, I was ready for my own car and I was looking for a GS. My Brother came home from work one day and mentioned to me that there was a white GS sitting at a very small car lot in town and he thought I should go take a look at it. I headed straight for the car lot after school the next day. I never could have imagined how that trip to the lot would affect my life the way it has. This is the story of how I became a first time GS owner.



I pulled into the car lot and saw it sitting in the back row. It was white all right but it had these black stripes and black hood with a cool hood tach. I got closer and noticed it had a rear wing on the deck lid. It was unlike any GS I had ever seen and thought that the previous owner most likely added these items. I got out of my car and headed over to it. I looked in the window and saw a 4 speed shifter. I was sold on the car as soon as I saw the manual trans. I went around the front to open the hood. I was amazed to find the 455 Stage 1 engine that I had read so many articles about during my pre-drivers license days. By that time, the lot owner came over to talk to me. He began to tell me of this car called a GSX and that it was a factory option, not items added by the previous owner. I thought I was on top of all the Buick machines but I never knew that Buick built a car called the GSX. I thought to myself, I must have this car. I asked the owner how much he was asking for it and he said \$1,500.00. The next day my mother and I went to the bank for my first loan. I had the money the next week and went down to buy it. I never even drove the car before I bought it. I did start it up and run it through the gears. It was mine, my first GS.

I had a blast in high school with this car, cruising the local McDonalds on Friday and Saturday nights with my buddies looking for women or maybe picking on jocks driving their daddy's Corvette. I was taking the automotives program at school so that meant that all of us could work on our cars during class. I learned a lot about what made the GSX go so fast. What really amazes me is that during these times when everybody was taking off the exhaust manifolds and putting on headers, removing the intake and carb to install aftermarket pieces, I never did any of that. I kept it all stock. It was probably because it ran so well the way it was, why mess with it.



I had a blast in high school with this car, cruising the local McDonalds on Friday and Saturday nights with my buddies looking for women or maybe picking on jocks driving their daddy's Corvette. I was taking the automotives program at school so that meant that all of us could work on our cars during class. I learned a lot about what made the GSX go so fast. What really amazes me is that during these times when everybody was taking off the exhaust manifolds and putting on headers, removing the intake and carb to install aftermarket pieces, I never did any of that. I kept it all stock. It was probably because it ran so well the way it was, why mess with it.

I graduated from high school in 1978 and then went on to college for a couple of years until the money ran out. I hung on to the GSX, never driving it in the winter. Those were the good old days when you could buy a \$200.00 Skylark or Electra and drive it for three years as a winter beater. My wife and I bought our first house in 1982 and we enjoyed the GSX, taking it to the GS Nationals in 1983. In 1986, after living with hand-me down furniture for four years, my wife and I decided to sell the GSX to buy new furniture and build a new garage. I put an add in Hemmings Motor News and the first guy that called bought it. The gentleman was from Minnesota and told me he would fly his wife and son to Ohio to drive the car back home. It sure was hard to see that car leave the driveway and head out of town.



Fast forward to Christmas of 2000, my wife and I were in Pigeon Forge Tennessee for the holiday. I had visited Floyd Garrett's muscle car museum and was talking to him about the Buick GSX that I used to have. I told him that with all the fine cars he had, he really needed a GSX to complete the collection. It was a day or two later, while at a bookstore in Pigeon Forge, I found a Muscle Car Review magazine with a yellow GSX on the cover. Reading that magazine really got me thinking about my old car and what had happened to it after 14 years. When I got back home to Ohio, I did an Internet search on the last name of the guy from Minnesota. I got a hold of his son and he informed me that his dad still owned the car but he had moved to Washington State. He gave me his father's phone number and I called him the very next day. I must have talked to this gentleman for 2 hours the first time. He told me that the car was currently undergoing a restoration at Dave Kleiner's shop in Wisconsin. We talked about every nut and bolt on the car. At the end of the phone call I asked him if he would ever consider selling the car and if so, please give me a call. We exchanged phone numbers and e-mail addresses. He also gave me Mr. Kleiner's number so that I could talk to him about the restoration. I talked with Dave many times and he was very nice about taking time from his busy schedule to talk details on a car that I didn't even own. Several weeks went by and then the phone rang, it was the GSX owner from Washington and he wants to sell my old car back to me. I was so excited I just about fell over! I thanked him and he told me that it was done at Mr. Kleiner's shop that week so he would make arrangements to pick it up and trailer it to my house in Ohio.

The car finally arrived a couple of weeks later. I had not seen the car in 15 years mind you and the anticipation of that enclosed trailer door opening up to get a glimpse of that white machine inside was agonizing. I had not even seen any pictures of the car but after talking with Mr. Kleiner so many times and him taking the time to describe the work he had done to it, I had a good picture in my mind of what it was going to look like. The rear door opened up and there it was, better than I imagined. It was the best this car had ever looked since I first bought it in 1977. The GSX was back to its original northeast Ohio home where it was delivered from Buick in 1970. We exchanged a check for title and I pulled the X in the garage.

I have had the car for one year now. I replaced the original interior over this last winter with a Legendary Kit and installed a nos grille (thanks John). This winter I plan on sending my five wheels in to Dave Kleiner for restoration and adding a set of Polyglass GT's. It is great to have my old high school car back again and I have to thank my wife (Susan) for her understanding in the re-purchase of this car.

1970 Buick GSX, Apollo white, stage 1, 4 speed  
Number 574 of 678  
Original 69,000 miles  
Original engine, transmission and rear differential

*...And Loving Every Bit Of IT!!!*

## Department of Sad Fates Update

I am the former owner of the burning Buick SportWagon pictured on page 22 of the Apr. 2000 issue of *Car Craft*.

I want to clear up a few points about how the wagon burned. The gas tank did not fall out! The only

things that came off the wagon were the two rear wheels. The left rear axle broke in two under the outer bearing and let the wheel go free. The wagon dropped down on the wheel, and the left inner fender panel was crushed into the full gas tank. The tank ruptured and started throwing gas out.

When the wagon landed, it dropped back on a Class IV Reese hitch and the rear sway bar. Needless to say, there was a giant shower of sparks and this ignited the spewing gas.

I don't want anyone thinking I am so slack as to let my gas tank fall out from under the wagon. Before I go for the Ford, Pontiac and Chevy guys: The wagon had a warmed-over 455 engine with a TH400 and a 3.42

Posi under it. I didn't have much trouble with late-model Mustangs, Camaros, and Firebirds.

Race Lutz  
Via e-mail

I just picked up the April issue and was shocked at the photo on page 22 of the Buick wagon on fire. You see, I bought this car from a friend of mine last June as a parts/donor car for my '72 SportWagon GS project. I have used the entire drivetrain in my wagon, and everything in front of the doors lived as well. The two wheels on the car in the picture are even on my wagon right now! This car lives on.

Kurt "Wolfgang" Peterson  
Fayetteville, NC



10/CAR CRAFT/AUGUST/2000

# Fire Breathing - Stump Pulling Wagon

By: Kurt Peterson – Spring Lake, NC  
BPG - Region 2 Director

Well, here is the story of how my wagon came to be, it all starts back in about 1987 when I first thought about how cool it would be to build a "Gran Sport Wagon" or a "Sport Wagon GS 455" whatever you want to call it but a fire breathing, butt-hauling' tank of a car, I've always had a thing for wagons, can't really explain it but it might be the fact that my family never had one so I don't have horrible memories of cross country road trips in the "Metallic Pea Road King Family Truckster". Every time I considered building myself a wagon I got sidetracked, either by a more worthy project or just by life in general, but the wagon was always there in my mind. Jump to 1999, I was finishing up my SCCA race car, a 1984 Mazda RX-7 GSL-SE set up to compete in SCCA ITS road racing(improved touring class S) even though the car was street legal and had plates I knew I needed a tow rig, I'd just gotten out of the Air Force on a medical discharge in June 99 and had a chunk of severance pay in my bank account, I was looking into options on tow vehicles, old pick-up's, old conversion vans stuff like that when it hit me.....now is the time to build the wagon! So I set about the search for a 70-72 Sport Wagon, I found a 70 in upstate NY that already had a 70 455 in it and a GS hood, did have some body issues but I was going to do it when the owner called me to let me know that the engine had developed a knock, this was an issue since I would have to drive the car to NC so that one was out.

I put the word out again and found that Race Lutz, an old friend, had a 1971 that had burned outside of Rockingham in 1997, but it had a good GS hood a 455/TH400 and a 3.42 posi that only needed axles and a wicked class IV trailer hitch, I drove to Waco NC to look at it and bought it and a trailer from a local trailer dealer, so now I had my Sport Wagon GS "kit" just needed a good solid body for it, through the grapevine I located a very nice 1972 Sport Wagon in Georgia, it had belonged to a local chapter member a couple of years before so I was told just how nice the car was so I bought it sight unseen, hitched a ride down there with some friends that would be passing through on their way to an SCCA race and bought the car and drove it home, this was August 1999, within a month I had the 3.42 posi with a TA Girdle in it as well as a set of 15x7 Buick Rally wheels on it with 245/60/15 Dunlop GT Qualifiers and drove it this way for a while that way. The 72 was very nice, it was



Sandalwood with a Cortez Gold painted top, I didn't much care for the painted roof and really didn't like the color of the top either but knew that the car would be getting painted soon enough.



In February 2000 I started the build up I had been prepping the body for paint for a while and decided to pull the front clip to make the swap easier as well as getting a better paint job on it. I pulled it down and began the drivetrain swap, I had added an Edelbrock Performer intake as well as a set of M/T scavenger headers from Torque Tech as well as one of their 3 inch exhaust systems with 20" walker super turbo mufflers. I finished up the swap and squirted a fresh coat of Dupont Centurai Sandalwood and added a rear air deflector as well as a hood tach, a set of sport mirrors and a

full set of GS 455 badges and we were ready....so I thought, the engine had been sitting for several years and about 30 minutes into the test drive it spun a rod bearing, the last 2 owners of the engine had thought that it had been gone through but weren't sure, when I opened up the engine I discovered that what had happened in the past was that the engine had gotten a top end job, it had a couple of cracked pistons and broken rings and the crank was scored up pretty bad on the journal that spun the bearing, luckily I had a 1970 crank, pistons and rods lying around so I did a quick hone and thrashed the engine back together and was also able to identify the "mystery cam" that was in there, it was an old Crane Hi-Intensity grind (HI-228/3000-2S-12) with a .480 intake and a .500 exhaust lift with a 228 duration on a 112 lobe center, this cam makes noise....I like it....A LOT. I installed a Brute force billet steel timing chain and gears from Torque Tech and stuffed it back in the car, ran like a champ, still does over 2 years later and 40,000 some miles, the engine had an HEI distributor at first but I swapped that out with a re-curved 70 unit with a Pertronix Igniter and an MSD 6A, I eventually had to go back to points since the Pertronix didn't get along with my MSD, I tried 2 different igniters and had the same ignition problems, Mike T told me that I should be OK with the points since I am not winding the engine over 6000 rpm and right he was. I've made about 350 passes down the ¼ mile with it with good results, with me in it the car tips the scales at just over 4800 lbs and to date has turned in a best time of [13.31@102](#) on street tires and pump gas!



This is also my daily driver except when I'm on my motorcycle. I also threw in a set of bucket seats and a floor shifter with long center console and converted my tilt steering column to a floor shift style by grinding off the shifter "nub" filling and shaping it and repainting it, looks factory, yes this is now a 5 passenger wagon!

I've had many people ask if it's the same car that was in Car Craft on fire, technically it is a different car, it has so many parts from the burned car, I owned the burned car first so I would just say

that it at least has the soul of the burned car...it's like the best of the two wagons! I do have to say that this has been the most fun car I've ever had, I really love the looks it gets at the strip, people who have never seen it run point and say "what is this guy thinking" and then I swat down some Z-28 or 5.0 with a blistering run and then they know exactly what I'm thinking!

# Two Tons of Fun

By: Jeff Holthenrichs

When I bought my Riviera I wasn't looking for a one. In fact I hadn't even given serious thought of owning a muscle car since I sold my 1969 GTO before college in 1978. But then I drove past this brown, bent hulk as it sat for sale on the side of the road. The sign said \$950, and I was in love with the car. It had a leaky windshield and rear window, so the carpet and the interior were really scummy, moldy and bacteria infested. Coming from New Mexico a couple of years before, the Riviera was still in super solid shape. The buckets were tossed and replaced with a split bench from a '78 Riviera. Even so, I fought with my wife, swore I was just going to fix it up a little and just drive it.

Yeah, right! What began as a little fun turned into a LOT of trial and error and fun. Man, it is sick how badly you get burned when you own a Buick and when you are pretty green around cars. But as you learn, you grow. And with what comes with that knowledge is an idea that puts you on the right track. The Riv ran pretty good, turning a best of 14.39 at 94.7 mph with a used Lunati cam that was degreed who-knows-where, a pretty stock B4B, a Holley and HEI ignition.

In less than 2 years I had rebuilt the engine twice, swapping from the original cam, to the Lunati cam, and from the stock intake to the Poston intake to a B4B. I had an idiot rebuilt the transmission, and then had to buy another one from Jim Burek immediately thereafter. I drove to Boston (6 hours one way) and retrieved a 3.42 posi rear (thanks Santa), had another idiot rebuild that piece, and then immediately had to find a real rear builder. I did get lucky before the 3.42 was toast. Now that the car ran good, I was unhappy that it looked liked a beater. So I slapped a ton of Bondo on it and shot the paint in my garage. I'm hoping to get another 3-4 years out of it before I hand new quarters on it and strip it down.

Then I found a set of ported and polished Stage 1 heads for dirt cheap. Hmmmm. How could I pass them up? So, I convinced Santa to drop TA Shorty Headers down my chimney, traded my pretty stock dual-pattern B4B to Gary Paine for a square bore B4B that is pretty well ported. When all that came together it was obvious that suddenly something wasn't right. It just didn't seem right, lacking power and being overall sluggish. When in

comes Jim Weise! Jim graciously agreed to drop over to my house (9 ½ hour trip from Norwalk, which is a light-year from Minneapolis) and set it right. Again, how could I pass it up? So, on a beautiful sunny Tuesday in early May, about a dozen members of the BPG met Jim and me at my house for the day to just have fun and talk cars. It was a day I'll never forget. Jim installed a new cam and cam bearings, degreed it just where it needs to be, and put a nice tune on it. My Riviera runs stronger than I ever hoped! Jim did one helluva job setting it up, and we all made some great new friends!



*Check out the rear cover for another nice shot of Jeff's Riviera. The word "Perfection" should be included in the definition of a Buick enthusiast. Jeff's Riv is a perfect example. -Ed*

## Thanks Again!

We would like to mention a big thanks to the following BPG Members; Patty Charney, Mike Garrison, Mike Trommeter, Alan Wander, and John Csordas for sending in some great pictures of recent Buick events. We also would like to take the time to thank all of the BPG members that have sent in articles and write-ups on their Buicks. You members will no doubt inspire others to send in articles and photos. We would love to hear from all of you! If you are not sure about writing an article on your Buick just e-mail me the info. I will reach back to you if I need any additional information. Also a nice picture of your Buick will do.



## Keeping My GN Stock and Having Fun!

By Tony Rose

Well I bought the car 3 years ago, when it had only 22,000 miles on it and since then I only put about 4,000 miles on it as it still wears the original tires. My '87 Grand National came with a ton of extras, including a black tint and options such as the digital dash, power astroroof, ac, power brakes, power mirrors, it is fully loaded including a symbol intercooler on the right side of the trunk lid, which no one has been able to tell me how it got there.

I am the second owner off the car and I have made some changes since buying it. I had installed an ATR 2 ½" exhaust with no catalytic converter on



it. A TA49 turbo was also added along with a volt booster, Reds Chip, Quad Air Fuel Pump, boost gauge and adjustable fuel pressure regulator. I plan on installing new shocks as we speak.

Currently I attend college in Mobile, Alabama, at the Spring Hill College, a small Jesuit College. I am originally from Cleveland, Ohio. By next year I will be moving to a new house back to the area, in Kirtland, Ohio, and I hope to make most of the upcoming meets in the area. I drive my GN sparingly, as it has only been in the rain once and I ran it at Norwalk, bone stock a 13.96 at 98 mph! Congrats to all of the BPG members and I am glad to be a part of it!



## Membership Information

- We will be starting up a "Want Ad – For Sale Section" in the newsletter. You can email or fax your posts to Rick Martinez or any of the officers as they will forward it. We only ask that there would be at least a price listed on the parts or car and a name and contact phone or email number.
- For Vendors looking to advertise. Please contact Jim Weise regarding particulars via telephone or email. Advertising space will then be made available on a first come first serve basis as space can be limited. We will try to accommodate all reasonable requests.

## Parts Information

BPG member, Phil Green informed us that when he went to order pistons for his 455 they were on a Nation wide six month back order list of the Federal Mogal / Speed Pro Forged Pistons. (\$395 - \$455 notched). These pistons are sold by both TA and Poston. A second choice of available pistons, are the ones made by Ross. Another choice is pistons made by JE. The problem with JE is that all pistons .030 are special ordered, which may take some time to get. Phil did mention that he was informed the problem is from Federal Mogal filing for bankruptcy. So the advise here is if you are planning to build an engine, start now checking for your parts. It could save you a ton of time and aggravation.

## **Restoration Literature - Part One**

By Mike Trommeter, BPG Member 1047  
[mtromm@yahoo.com](mailto:mtromm@yahoo.com)

Those of us who are not fortunate enough to have the original window price sticker for our cars are often out of luck when it comes to finding information on what options were available and what the cost was for each option. This was the case with my 1968 GS400 convertible so I decided to hunt down as much information as possible on the options that were available from 1965 to 1972. The information that I have gathered is mostly for the Skylark bodied Gran Sports and even though the option code may be the same between different Buick models of the same year the option pricing is often different.

**NOTE:** I am still looking for a copy of a 1965 Gran Sport Wholesale Car Order Form along with complete dealer price lists for 1967 and 1970. If anyone has a copy of this information and would like to share / trade information please contact me at. Upcoming issues we will be featuring other years of Factory Option Forms.

### **1966 Buick Gran Sport Skylark Factory Installed Option Pricing**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>MSRP Price</b>
B1	Super Turbine Transmission	\$205.24
B3	4 Speed Synchromesh	\$184.31
B7	Consolette	\$36.86
C6	Power Steering	\$94.79
C7	Power Brakes	\$41.60
D1	Sonomatic Radio W/Manual Antenna	\$64.25
D5	AM-FM Radio W/Manual Antenna	\$133.76
D6	Rear Seat Speaker	\$16.64
F8	Red-Line Tires 7.75 x 14	No Extra Charge
G1	Performance Axle W/Positive Traction Differential (3.36:1 W/Auto trans. / 3.55:1 W/3 & 4 sp.)	\$42.13
G2	Performance Axle Var.#1 W/Positive Traction (3.90:1)	\$42.13
G3	Performance Axle Var.#2 W/Positive Traction (3.55:1 W/Auto trans only)	\$42.13
G4	Positive Traction Differential (included with G1, G2 & G3)	\$42.13
G5	Economy Axle (2.78:1 W/Auto. Trans only)	No Extra Charge
H1	Trailer Springs – Rear	\$3.69
I6	Air Conditioner	\$343.20
I7	Air conditioner Modification	\$17.06
I8	Delete Heater & Defroster	\$71.50 credit
J1	Custom Seat Belts 2 Rear Plus 2 Retractable Front Seat Belts	\$10.53
L1	Soft-Ray Tinted Glass	\$30.54
L2	Soft-Ray Tinted Windshield	\$19.49
M7	Rear Window Defroster	\$21.06
O4	Door Guards	\$4.74
O5	Outside Rear View Mirror, Remote Control	\$7.10
P1	Carpet Savers & Handy Mats	\$12.19
P2	Carpet Savers	\$6.77
Q5	Power Seat – 4 way tilt adjuster	\$69.51
R1	Power Windows	\$100.05
S7	Tilt Steering Wheel	\$42.13
U3	Convenience Group (Trunk light, Electric clock, Glare proof mirror)	\$22.43
U5	Tachometer	\$47.39
V2	Chrome Plated Wheels	\$73.72
V3	Wire Wheel Covers	\$63.19
W5	Custom Bright Exterior Moldings – Belt Reveal	\$12.64
X3	Floor Console – Non-Operating (with bucket seats)	\$31.60
1B	Reclining Passenger Seat with Headrest for Driver & Passenger (Bucket Seats Only)	\$83.10
1C	Headrest Driver and Passenger (Bench Seats)	\$41.60
1D	Headrest Driver and Passenger (Bucket Seats)	\$51.93

**Skylark Gran Sport – V8**

2 Dr. Coupe	\$2,956.00
2 Dr. Sport Coupe	\$3,019.00
2 Dr. Convertible	\$3,167.00

\*All pricing taken from 1966 Buick Dealer Price Sheet dated March 8, 1966.

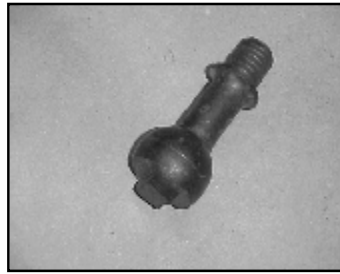
\*\* All option descriptions and codes taken from a 1966 Gran Sport Skylark wholesale car order form.

Due to numerous price changes and tax revisions during the model year some option prices may differ slightly than those listed depending on the delivery date of the car.

## New Products – Remanufactured Parts

I have been reproducing several of these parts for years (20 actually on a couple of them). The following is a list of what I have available along with the prices. I hope these parts can help.

- Th400 Console Shifter Cable Bracket \$20.
- Th300-400 Console Shifter Lever \$20.
- 4-Speed Lockout Bracket \$35.
- 4-Speed Reverse Lockout Bracket Stud \$12.
- 4-Speed Reverse Lever \$14.
- '69-'70 Fan shroud Hose hook \$20.
- '70-'72 Skylark/GS Core Support Repair Kit Left Side \$99.
- '70-'72 Skylark/GS Core Support Repair Kit Right Side \$99.
- '70-'76 Console U-Shaped Shift Handle Clip (Polished Aluminum) \$40.
- '70-'76 Console U-Shape Shift Handle Clip Springs \$2.50
- '70-'72 Transmission Crossmember Repair Kit \$15.
- '70-'74 4-Speed Reverse Lockout Rod \$29.
- 4-Speed Rod Clips .50
- Block Stud for the Zbar \$18.



### **Now Available!!**

1967-74 4-Speed Bellhousing inspection cover –  
Buick 350-455 \$69 each

If anyone would be interested in any of these email me at [mrbuick@networksplus.net](mailto:mrbuick@networksplus.net) or call me eves at home 785-246-2661 between 6-10 pm central time.

**Michael Garrison**  
**5220 North East Ashby Lane**  
**Topeka Kansas 66617**



## Editors Corner

By: Rick Martinez

I would like to first start off by saying, “Thank You”, to all of the members for your generous support. The BPG is a true club owned and controlled by its members, and I am extremely proud to be a part of it.

I have recently heard some rumblings in the Buick Community saying that the BPG was formed by persons with hidden agendas, looking to fragment the Buick Community. This I found to be rather disturbing as I know myself and the other Board Members do not get paid. And we do not receive any perks or under the table hand-outs. We were just fed up with all the secret squirrel stuff and decided to bring the word “club” back into reality. I could only figure these “certain” people have “other” agendas and are seeing us as a threatening factor to a cash cow. Go figure. I guess the word “threatening” has an all new meaning, that being “honest and up front”. Well like my father always says, “You have to do what you feel in your heart is right and what you know in your mind to be good, to treat people with respect.” If they don’t want you then at least you have your self dignity and respect as a good person.

By being a part of the BPG I have taken a page from the way we run the Northeast GS/GN Club. That is always to be honest to the members and keep them involved and informed. As for the finances of the BPG the books will be open to all of its paid members, there is “no hidden agenda here”. Even the cost of the newsletter will be known, and my friends you will find that we actually shopped around the entire country to get the best quality COLOR newsletter for the lowest cost. I actually do the newsletter master at home with volunteers doing some of the proofing and the master is shipped out to Kansas to the printer. Hell, I do the newsletter and I still had to pay my dues. The bottom line here is, or I should say the only “agenda” here is to create a Car Club that truly stands by the definition of word. And most of all to have a great time together!

For those who see us as a selfish greedy mean nasty group of conspirator, all I can say is, “Have a good life” and keep watching the X-Files. I will not attempt to convince these people by telling tall tales and giving candy coated reasons and excuses. It’s their decision.

On closing I would just like to remind everyone that this is YOUR club! Use it and enjoy it. You can call anyone of us and we will actually talk to you “directly” or we will get back to you on “our” dime. Not yours or the club’s. As for the newsletter, “Yes” I will print what ever you send me and if I forget, PLEASE call me and tell me, because I would want to know so that it will be in the following issue. The entire concept of the BPG was to bring the control to the members, and to have a club that we can all have a great time enjoying our Buicks instead of squabbling about agendas.



## Automatic Transmission Identification

The information below is to assist in the identification of your Buick Automatic Transmissions. First is a chart with the code numbers from the Transmission Identification Tag that is located on the right (Passenger) side of the transmission. Basically, its a plate that is riveted to the transmission case and contains serial number and identification codes. The identification code is a 2 letter code and the letters are located on the far left and far right side of the ID Tag. The actual serial number is in the box at the very bottom of the tag. The first 2 numbers are the year. Then the ID Code letters appear. Finally, the last 6 digits of the car's VIN number appear. To identify the particular transmission you have, first identify the year. Locate the table for that year and then identify the 2 letter code. The table will then tell you the car and motor that the transmission was used in.

**NOTE:** Some transmissions may have been used in several models and mated to several different engines.

### THIS TABLE covers only the TH 375, 400 and 475.

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BJ		401	Column Shift
BK		401	Console Shift
BL		425	Column Shift
BN		425	Single Carb Column Shift
BP		425	Dual Carb Column Shift
BQ		425	Dual Carb Console Shift
BU		300	

**1964**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BJ		401	3.07 Rear Axle Ratio
BN		425	4 BBL Carb, 3.07 Axle Ratio
BQ		425	Dual Carb, 3.07 Axle Ratio
BR	Riviera	401	3.23 Rear Axle Ratio
BS	Riviera	425	Dual Carb, 3.42 Axle Ratio
BT		425	3.23 Rear Axle Ratio
BU		300	

**1965**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BR		401	
BS	Riviera	401	GS and non-GS
BT	All	425	
BU		340	

**1966**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BA	GS 400	400	
BT	Wildcat, Electra, Riviera	430	
BU		340	
BW	Sportwagon 400	430	

**1967**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BA	GS 400	400	
BT	Wildcat, Electra Riviera	400	
BU		350	
BW	Sportwagon	400	

**1968**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BA	GS 400	400	non-Stage 1 cars only
BB	GS 400	400	Stage 1 cars ONLY
BC	Wildcat, Electra	430	
BT	Riviera	430	GS and Non-GS
BU		350	
BW	Sportwagon	400	

**1969**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BA	GS 455	455	
BB	GS 455 Stage 1	455	Stage 1 ONLY
BC	All	455	
BT	Riviera	455	

**1970**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BB	GS 455 Stage 1	455	Stage 1 ONLY
BC	All	455	
BS	GS 455	455	
BT	Riviera	455	

**1971**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BB	GS 455 Stage 1	455	Stage 1 ONLY
BC	All	455	
BK	All	455	
BS	GS 455	455	
BT	Riviera GS	455	Perf. axle on all models
BU	Centurion	455	Hi-Performance Option

**1972**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BB	GS 455 Stage 1 Century	455	Stage 1 ONLY
BC	All	455	
BS	Century and Regal	455	
BT	All High Perf. (GS Riv)	455	

**1973-1974**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BC	All	455	
BK	LeSabre (TH 375)	350	
BT	All	455	

**1975**

2 Letter ID Code	Car	Engine	Notes
BC	All	455	
BK	LeSabre (TH 375)	350	
BT	All	455	

**1976**

## **Buick Performance Group Region 1 Meet**

I thought I would post this here. I am interested in having Region 1 members of the BPG, and any other Buick lover that want to show up, over to my house for a get together. The date for the Party is **Saturday August 17th**. I figured if we have it on a Saturday and it rains we could use Sunday as the rain date. I will have my X-Camino here along with my friend Jim's un-restored '69 Motion GS 400. If you have any questions about your car my library will be available. This could be our first Region 1 get-together. Everyone will need to bring his or her Lawn Chairs. I would supply the eats, burgers and dogs on the grille. It would be nice if I could get some idea of who wants to come. If you need directions I can get them to you. I live about 7 miles south of Philadelphia International Airport, 2 miles from I-95. It wouldn't be a bad drive from NYC or Baltimore. Here is my address and phone number.

**Duane Heckman, 120 President Ave. Rutledge, Pa. 19070 (610)-544-6776**

Thanks, Duane



September 21-29, 2002

After a successful 2001 event, we will be returning to **Bristol Dragway**, located in beautiful northeast Tennessee, for our second annual **BOP event**. **Bristol Dragway** was selected from over two dozen initial suggestions because it offers the best central location, beautiful NEW facilities and plenty of good old “down home hospitality!” Speedway Motorsports, Inc., owners of Bristol Dragway, have proven that they can deliver everything necessary to assure this event will be a continual success. The event directors feel overwhelmingly comfortable with our choice of this gorgeous facility, as it is **easily a days drive** for most participants and their families.

The directors of **BOP Nationals** polled over 1500 BOP enthusiasts, and traveled to several events over the last six years, to gather the thoughts of what participants want from an event. All this information was compiled and this event is a culmination of those efforts. No expense was spared in the gathering of this information.

Whether it be for racing, show or just mingling and spectating, **we will have something for everyone to enjoy for 3 fun filled days.**

I would encourage anybody thinking of attending this event to **MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATIONS NOW** to secure the great room rates.

**DON'T MISS THIS EVENT!!!**

*For further information contact*

[www.bop-nationals](http://www.bop-nationals) or Jim Haas



The Buick Performance Group  
P.O. Box 103  
McDonald, KS. 67745

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL – PLEASE DO NOT DELAY