

## *Big and Chrome*

By Bob Schmeichel

If you were born after 1980, you may have never known what is meant by the term “big car.” Up to that year most big cars, even two door cars like the one my story is about, could truly hold six full-sized adults without feeling crowded. They were usually loaded with big engines along lots of exterior chrome trim not only to set them off, but to individualize them from other cars. Because of that trend going back quite a few years, you could tell what kind of a car was coming at you from a half mile away. Those days have gone by the way side with big being replaced by intermediate-sized cars and chrome substituted with painted plastic or rubber. I have a hard time identifying a car these days without looking at a name tag and I don't think I am the only one with that issue. To me they all look alike any more.

Anyway, Dale and Joyce Aurit bought a 1973 Buick Centurion Limited Edition 2-door hardtop in 1980 from its original owners. It was a big wonderful riding car that Joyce used for the next five years to car pool with going back and forth to work. Towards the end of that five-year time frame, gas was closing in on \$1.80 at gallon, which made Dale look for a more economical way for Joyce to get everyone to work. So the Buick was put into storage and a smaller car was found for the car pooling duties.

The Buick remained in storage for nineteen years until Dale retired in 2004. The car had deteriorated outwardly a bit from water dripping on it because of a leaky roof at the storage facility. Dale's first agenda into retirement was to restore the Buick that he and his wife loved so much. So he bought a building out near the Tea Airport, got the Buick out of storage and began tearing into it. First thing he did was to pull the engine out and have Jerry Ross freshen it up so it ran like new again. Then he had some friends in Marion install new exhaust to make it quiet. The last on a list of things to do was to take the car to Pat Fokken to do the body work and repaint the car along with installing a new vinyl top. The car was finished just in time in 2008 to enter its first car show at the Ramkota. During the car show, the original owners came by with a tear in their eyes after seeing the restored car. The wife commented that she had gotten more speeding tickets with the Buick because it was so smooth and secure that she never really paid attention how fast she was going most of the time. Every time I see Dale and Joyce in the Buick, they have a smile on their faces. I am sure they have the same feelings about the comfort of their big car as the original owners. I know the feeling all too well also after having a '72 Pontiac Catalina once 40 years ago and wishing I had it back.



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