

# 1956 Buick Special Riviera Helps Fill Some Spare Time

By Bill Schmuck, Jr.

For many years I had an interest in antique automobiles, but never became involved in collecting, restoring and being part of the hobby. About twenty-four years ago, in 1986, I had some spare time and decided to pursue a hobby. I thought Buicks were interesting so I joined the Buick Owners of Maryland (BOOM) just to become more familiar with the hobby and possibly find an appropriate car.

I went to BOOM meetings and events and met several club members including Bill Wagner, who suggested someone he knew who had a 1956 hardtop for sale. The car turned out to be a Special Riviera, coupe, which needed to be restored. I liked the hardtop styling and decided that it would be a good car for me.

I began a restoration on my newly acquired 1956 Buick. The mechanicals were looked over, the chrome was sent out for re-plating, body work was done, and the car was repainted the factory original color. The interior was redone with upgrade tufted style seating that was an available '56 option.

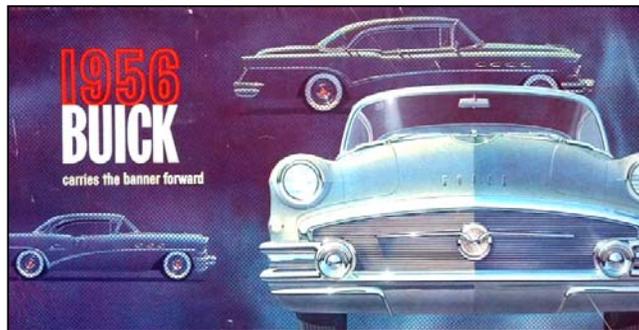
Most of the restoration work was done locally by shops that were recommended by BOOM members. The paint was done by Rich Berger in the original Cadet Blue and Dove White. Cadet Blue looked different than the sun-faded original paint, but was an exact match to the paint chip. Rich's paint job has been on the Buick for about twenty-four years and still looks very good today.

The Buick 1956 advertising campaigns had a theme of "Best Buick yet" and showed sedans, hardtops, convertibles, and station wagons in Roadmaster, Century, Super and Special series; nine-

teen models plus chassis were available. Of the 572,000 cars Buick made in



Bill Schmuck, Jr. at a recent car show



*Shown above are pages from different showroom sales literature pieces.*

*With nineteen models to display, the sales literature gives potential buyers a mind-numbing selection of models.*

1956, the largest volume model was the Special Riviera coupe at 20% of the total.

Specifications for the '56 Special series Riviera coupe are: wheelbase – 122 in.; overall length – 205 in.; and weight – 3,775 lbs. The original base price was \$2,204, about two-thirds the price of the Roadmaster,

The engine is the famed "Nailhead" V-8 – the replacement engine for Buick's legendary Fireball straight-eight that was used from 1936 to 1952.

The Nailhead has very small valve heads that look like nails when open. This first generation V-8 was used from 1953 to 1956. The engine is a 322 cu. in., dual carb, overhead valve V-8 that produces 220 horsepower @ 4,400 RPM, and 319 pounds of torque @ 2,400 RPM. This engine produced, in its day, what design engineers tried to achieve as optimum – one foot-pound of torque per cubic inch of displacement.

With this powerful V-8 engine mated to the twin-turbine Dynaflow automatic transmission, my '56 Buick Special is an enjoyable driver. Over the years, I've driven it to several Buick club national meets and other events. The car received its AACA First Junior award at a Hershey Fall Meet and has won several trophies at local car shows. But I'm not in the hobby just to win trophies, which are nice to receive as confirmation that the car is nice. But, I really just enjoy the driving experience.

When I joined BOOM, I didn't realize all the benefits of being a member of a car club. The help I've received in restoring the car and the friendships developed over the years in BOOM and Chesapeake Region are what the antique car hobby is all about.

THE CHESAPEAKE BULLETIN  
CIRCULATION MANAGER  
6505 UPLAND RD.  
FORK, MD 21051

OUR 55<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Towson Independence Day Parade – Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Fire Museum Antique Car Show – July 10<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Crab Feast – July 24<sup>th</sup> – Registration on page 5  
Howard County Fair Car & Truck Show – Aug. 8<sup>th</sup>  
Ladew Topiary Gardens Antique Car Show – Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>

Find more Chesapeake Region info. at  
[www.aaca.org/chesapeake](http://www.aaca.org/chesapeake)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Flowermart Tradition Continues  
MVA Centennial Car Show  
Spare Time Turns Into Car Hobby  
AACA Grand National Results  
A Word From Our Leader  
Dr. Frederick Weinstein  
Sunshine Grill & Arts in the Park

# THE CHESAPEAKE BULLETIN



VOLUME 50 – NUMBER 4

JULY & AUGUST 2010



*A common sales pitch  
in 1956 Buick ads*

Bill Schmuck's 1956 Buick Special Riviera at the Streetcar Museum – Read about this car on page 15.