

AutoWeek

1955 Buick Century 'Broderick Crawford Special' And the Lawman Growled "10-4"

By Patrick C. Paternie - Published: April 24, 2005

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To some car-crazy kids who grew up in the 1950s, a black-and-white '55 Buick sedan will always be Broderick Crawford. The man and the car are inseparable. The burly Oscar-winning actor did not appear to stretch far to portray Dan Mathews, gruff, trench-coated chief in the *Highway Patrol* television series that debuted in October 1955.

Over four years Mathews drove an assortment of Oldsmobiles, Mercury's, Plymouths and Dodges, but it is the Buick from those first episodes, with Crawford leaning out the driver's door growling "10-4" into the two-way radio mic, people recall. The blocky, broad-shouldered Buick not only had a similar physique, but like Crawford's Mathews, was a no-nonsense, kick-ass law enforcement tool at a time when sorting out the bad guys from the good guys was as black-and-white as its paint job. Mathews' Buick (a Model 68 Century) rated star quality as one of 270 cars built especially for the California Highway Patrol.

They were special Buicks, but not exactly Buick Specials, because they mated the base Special two-door sedan body and chassis, which normally carried a 264-cid 188-hp V8, with the larger, 322-cid 236-hp engine of the more expensive Century, Super and Roadmaster models. Production Specials carried three Buick trademark portholes on the front fenders while the more upscale models featured four, as does the Model 68.

Buick beat out five other manufacturers to supply the CHP with new vehicles. Not that it needed the extra business. In 1955 Buick, with sales of more than 737,000 cars, ranked third behind Chevrolet and Ford. The Model 68 Century police pursuit car won out in top speed (108 mph on the dyno before tearing the tread off its state-of-the-art tubeless tires), acceleration, and perhaps more remarkably given the engineering effort involved, the lowest bid, \$2,490.

The CHP ordered 135 cars with Dyna-flow "variable pitch" automatic transmissions and 135 with three-speed column-mounted manual transmissions to see which would be preferable for future purchases. Some say the manuals were retired for tempting patrolmen to abuse the valvetrain by doing 70 mph in second gear.

Fifty-one-year-old Gary Goltz has been a *Highway Patrol* fan since he was six. He is an expert on the show's history, owning copies of all 156 episodes and many original scripts. Goltz's office is cluttered with posters, models and memorabilia (see).

"The way Broderick acted in the show reminded me of things I do, so obviously he influenced me as a little boy," Goltz said, donning a fedora like Crawford's.

With his husky voice and stature, Goltz is almost as good a reproduction of Dan Mathews as the 1955 Buick Special he converted to look like Mathews' Model 68 Century. Goltz has invested more than \$35,000 and eight years to make it look as authentic as possible, with spotlights, sirens, red and blue flashing lights, two-way radio and the logos on the doors. Crawford's call sign, "21-50," appears on the hood and trunk. A CD player plays the safety tips that ended each episode: "Leave your blood at the Red Cross, not on the highway."

Goltz retained the smaller V8, so acceleration of the 3800-pound behemoth is best described as majestic, as are the ride and handling, i.e. bobbing and weaving. Steering response is just as leisurely, so directional changes must be anticipated well in advance. Ditto for braking. The overall impression is of piloting a large seagoing vessel.

Goltz drives his Buick in parades, CHP functions and charity rides around California. To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Route 66, Goltz, with Crawford's son Kelly, drove from Chicago to Los Angeles.

Four of the original CHP cars are said to exist, but after riding with Goltz, we think his car is the one that would make Broderick growl "10-4."

1955 Buick Broderick Crawford Highway Patrol Replica

Patrick Paternie, October 21, 2010



I write about cars, but it is the people who are associated with those cars that make my job really enjoyable. One of the most entertaining and fun to be around is Gary Goltz. I met Gary a few years ago when I saw his 1955 Buick at a car show. Not that I'm enamored with mid-century Buicks, but his car represents one driven by one of my childhood heroes.

To car crazy kids who grew up in the fifties a black-and-white 1955 Buick sedan will always be Broderick Crawford. The man and the car are inseparable. The burly Oscar winning actor did not appear to stretch far to portray Dan Mathews, the gruff, trench coated chief in the *Highway Patrol* television series that first aired in October 1955.

Over the course of four years and 156 episodes, Mathews drove an assortment of Oldsmobiles, Mercury's, Plymouths and Dodges, but it is the Buick from those first episodes, with Crawford leaning out the driver's door growling "10-4" into the 2-way radio mic, that most people recall.

The blocky, broad-shouldered Buick not only had a similar physique, but like Crawford's Mathews it was also a no-nonsense, kick ass law enforcement tool in a time when sorting out the bad guys from the good guys was as black-and-white as its paint job.

Mathews' Buick (specifically a Model 68 Century) rated star quality as one of 270 cars built especially for the California Highway Patrol. They were special Buicks, but not exactly Buick Specials because they mated the base Special 2-door sedan body and chassis, which normally carried a 264 cubic inch 188 horsepower V8, with the larger, more powerful 322 cubic inch, 236 horsepower engine of the more expensive Century, Super, and Roadmaster models.

Production Specials also carried only three of Buick's trademark portholes on the front fenders while the more upscale models featured four, as does the Model 68.

Gary Goltz has been a Highway Patrol fan since he was six years old. He is an expert on the show's history, owning copies of all 156 episodes and many of the original scripts. His office is cluttered with posters, models, and memorabilia.

With his husky voice and stature, Goltz is almost as good a reproduction of Dan Mathews as the 1955 Buick Special he converted to look like Mathews' Model 68 Century. The car looks like it stepped off the TV set complete with period correct spotlights, sirens, red and blue flashing lights, 2-way radio and the logos on the doors.

Crawford's call sign '21-50' appears on the hood and trunk. A CD player plays the safety tips, barked out by Crawford at the end of each episode. "Leave your blood at the Red Cross not on the highway." Of course, Goltz can also blast out the stirring dun-dun-dun-dadadadum chorus of the show's theme song.

Goltz drives his Buick in parades, CHP functions and charity rides around California. To celebrate the 75th anniversary of Route 66, Goltz, with Crawford's son Kelly, drove from Chicago to L.A.

Mechanically, Gary's car is basically stock. He has not attempted recreating the performance of the police Buicks. But, what makes him fun to be around is the performance he recreates of Broderick Crawford. When he tugs his fedora down over one eye and picks up the 2-way mic, he instantly morphs into Dan Mathews.

Check out the photos and see for yourself at garysbuick.com '10-4'!