

# CLASSIC BUICK CONNECTION

INTRODUCTION BY **JOHN MILLIKEN** • ONE NICE THING ABOUT HAVING YOUR CAR FEATURED IN A MAGAZINE, PARTICULARLY A NATIONAL PUBLICATION LIKE THE CCCA'S *THE CLASSIC CAR*, IS THAT IT SOMETIMES ELICITS AN INTERESTING RESPONSE FROM THE READER, ESPECIALLY IF THAT READER ALSO HAS THE SAME MODEL CAR AS YOU.

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF OUR REGION'S *SIDE MOUNT MIRROR*, AS WELL AS OUR NATIONAL PUBLICATION, MY 1939 BUICK ROADMASTER MODEL 81-C WAS FEATURED IN AN ARTICLE ABOUT OUR INDIA TOUR WITH THAT CAR. AFTER THE ARTICLE APPEARED I RECEIVED AN INTERESTING EMAIL FROM ITHACA, NEW YORK CCCA MEMBER TOM COLBERT, ABOUT HIS OWN 1939 BUICK ROADMASTER CONVERTIBLE SEDAN, ALSO A MODEL 81-C. HIS CAR HAS QUITE A HISTORY, AS IT WAS OWNED BY THE ROYAL FAMILY OF NORWAY AND WAS HIDDEN AWAY DURING WORLD WAR II SO AS NOT TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE NAZI'S. THE FOLLOWING IS TOM'S STORY OF HIS 1939 BUICK.

BY TOM COLBERT

During the late 1930s and early 1940s Buick was very much in the ascendency. This was due to a combination of factors related to both its products and the company itself. These cars were equipped with a powerful straight-eight, overhead valve engine, excellent engineering and attractive styling. Led by General Manager Harlow Curtice, sale grew from 47,000 in 1933 to 377,000 by 1941 with

a product lineup that spanned the entry level 40 series to catalog-customs by Brun in the Limited series.

Buick's senior series cars of this period were favored by notables around the world. They could be found in the Vatican garage and were preferred by King Edward VIII (later the Duke of Windsor). They were used as the ceremonial car for King George VI on the royal tour of >



Photos top to bottom: John Milliken's 1939 Buick 81-C Convertible Sedan; 1939 Buick ad for the 81-C.

H. M. Kongens Kabinetssekretariat

Royal Palace, Oslo  
3 June 1987

Mr Thomas B Colbert  
120 White Park Road  
ITHACA, N Y 14850

Dear Mr Colbert,

HM The King has instructed me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 30 March 1987 requesting information concerning His Majesty's 1939 Buick Roadmaster convertible which The King received as a gift from General Motors when he first visited The USA as Crown Prince in 1939.

The car was successfully concealed when the Royal Family had to leave Norway as a result of the German invasion in 1940 and reappeared undamaged at the time of the liberation in 1945.

It is still in its original condition, apart from an extra windscreen in front of the back seat.

The car's "odometer" indicates that it has been driven 43,600 miles.

I enclose a copy of a photograph taken of the Buick when it was used on the return of the Royal Family to Norway after World War II. In addition some new photographs showing details of the car are enclosed for your information.

Yours sincerely,

*P. Hagen*  
P. Hagen  
Private Secretary to  
HM The King of Norway

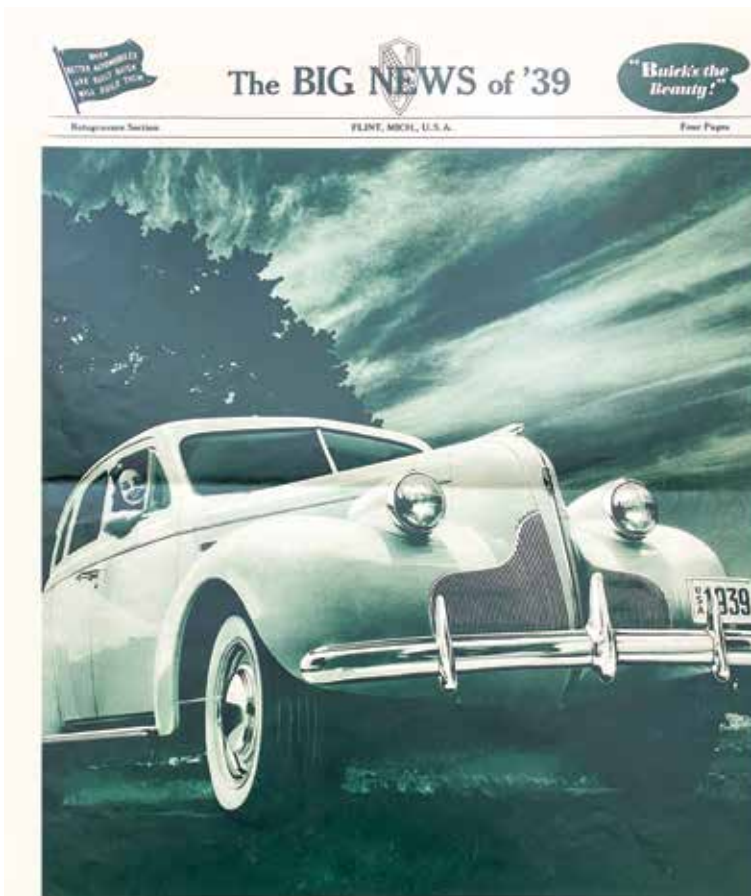
*Letter describing the history of Tom Colbert's Buick*

Canada and the U.S., and they also served as transport for the Norwegian royal family.

The Norwegian royal Buick, a model 81-C phaeton, was one of 364 such cars built in 1939. Additionally, model 80-C, a "Sport Phaeton" version of this model featuring a slope back trunk was offered with only three produced. This letter (left) from the King's private secretary states the royal Buick was given by General Motors to the Crown Prince, later King Olav V, during his tour of the United States. It was brought back to Norway at the end of the American tour and shortly thereafter hidden from the invading German army, which was no small accomplishment in itself.

After the nation's liberation it was removed from hiding to serve as the royal car for many years. At a recent event covering royal Norwegian transport over the years, the royal Buick, registered A-1, was displayed in Trondheim,. King Harald, son of Olav V, cited it as his favorite, given the role it played at this critical period of Norway's history. I acquired my 81-C 34 years ago in the Cleveland, Ohio area. I know little else of its history. This was after a search for just such a car. I have always admired the '39s for their beautiful flowing grille, Buick's first of many to come "waterfall" grilles. Buick literature of the time states it was inspired by the Grand Prix cars of the times and the shape is much like that of the Mercedes-Benz Silver Arrow race cars.

Notables around the world, including the Norwegian royal family and Classic Buick enthusiasts today can appreciate Harlow Curtice's credo: "Do it the hard way. Do it better than it needs to be done."



“The Buick was brought back to Norway at the end of the American tour and shortly thereafter hidden from the invading German army, which was no small accomplishment in itself.”

Photos clockwise from top:  
Tom Colbert's 1939 Buick;  
Steve Rostam, another SCR  
Board member, owns this 1939  
Buick 81-C Convertible Sedan;  
Promotion for the 1939 Buick