

## **A VISIT TO WHEATBELT AUTOS - OKLAHOMA**

After the big Buick bash in Flint, Michigan, Alan and Lois Haime together with Tony and Marny Howe drove back to Chicago and set off down Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles in a rented 2003 Buick Le Sabre. Route 66 passes through eight American states, one of them being Oklahoma. Once we had crossed the border into Oklahoma from Kansas, it was decided that we couldn't pass up the opportunity of visiting Wheatbelt Autos, situated near a small town called Carrier in Garfield County, although this meant a detour off Route 66.

A right turn off "66" to Highway 35 led us north through very flat crop country to Enid, capital of Garfield county. A few miles further on and we were in Carrier, a small rural farming community town.

Wheatbelt Autos is aptly named and is indeed situated in the middle of the wheatbelt area. Sue and Ken Reeves have some 1,600 wrecked Buicks and some other makes in the paddock adjoining their house and large parts shed.

Ken has been collecting Buicks for years and is well known in the area and also internationally for mail order Buick parts. Whenever anyone comes across a wrecked Buick or wants to donate one from their yard, Ken is the recipient of all such cars.

Alan and Tony with noses pressed up against the windows, could barely wait until the wheels of our car had stopped turning before leaping out and inspecting. Sue and Ken were very welcoming and pointed out which rows certain cars could be found in. I asked about what might be living in the grass under these cars and Ken replied rabbits and snakes but apparently their snakes aren't as venomous as ours.

We had arrived about 2 pm on a blisteringly hot day which wasn't ideal for climbing over cars in an unshaded area. Walking nervously through the dry grass I managed to scare a few rabbits and vice versa. It was quite sad to see that all these Buicks had ended up wrecked here.

Alan and Tony had their shopping lists in hands and parts were found, Alan managing to find some nice unscratched windows for his '72, a clock, headlight bezels and park light lenses and Tony found parts for his '56 and also a clock. Ken was arranging to ship sports wheels which Tony had purchased in Flint. While the blokes were attending to shipping details, Marny and I took refuge from the heat inside the nicely airconditioned house for iced tea with Sue.

Sue informed us that the nearby Kay county held the world record for twisters, the actual film "Twister" being filmed in nearby Waquita.

This led to twister stories and Sue told how the previous year a neighbour had rung her and said a twister was heading directly towards the farm. She had looked out of the window and there it was - barrelling down towards the house!

She had grabbed a doona, a torch and a mobile phone and lay down on the floor in the passage. The noise was incredible and then it went very quiet. She looked out of the window and everything was bathed in an eerie green light. She realised it was the “eye” of the twister. Luckily it moved on, missing the house but the 1,600 cars in the paddock were rearranged somewhat.

We asked about a cellar and she said they did have one outside but it had been damaged and was unusable. I think I would have had it repaired quick smart.

Despite Sue and Ken’s kind invitation to stay for supper, we had lost time deviating off “66” and spending the afternoon at Wheatbelt Autos, and we reluctantly refused and got on our way. Perhaps because they were teetotal and we were all hanging out for a cold beer might have influenced our decision as well.

The heat seemed to intensify as we drove a few hours due south and eventually we stopped at a little town called El Reno back on Route 66. By now we were expert at picking out a motel and were soon checked in. We headed out to view the handful of restaurants in town and luckily picked a real ripper. It was a Mexican place called Serapio’s run by the Sanchez family. The service and food were probably the best we had encountered on “66”. The Tecata beer served in a huge margarita glass with salt around the rim was a winner as well. We toasted our decision to move on!

All in all it had been a great day for seeing Buicks and also Main Street USA - Route 66.

*Lois Haime Western Buicks*



**Resting Place of a Road Warrior**