

Owning an Invicta a Childhood Dream for This Villager



Mike Stemen wanted a 1959 Buick Invicta from the time they hit the showroom.

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By Maddie Cutler

When Mike Stemen graduated high school in 1959, he dreamed of owning his own Buick Invicta. The car was released in the same year, and he thought it was the prettiest car he'd seen in his whole life.

It took Stemen, of the Village of Dunedin, almost six decades to buy an Invicta of his own.

Stemen is a longstanding fan of Buicks and has multiple cars. He said there was a certain drop-off in style before the brand saw an upswing.

"1958 was the last year that Harley Earl had a hand in design, and he was a famous designer for GM," Stemen said. "He kind of lost that touch, and the last car he created was slathered in huge chunks of chrome."

While there is always someone for every car, Earl's denouement was not well received by consumers, Stemen included.

Stemen said the next year's models were a dramatic change, with clean lines and jet-age design.

"The old-fashioned Buick customer, some of them didn't understand this redesign," Stemen said. "They also did something that year where they changed the names of all the Buick models that had been used for over 50 years."

Stemen searched dealerships and classified ads, but every Invicta he found was not up to snuff.

Finally in 2016, he saw what is now his Invicta at a dealership lot in Michigan.

“At the time I had no place to put it because I had too many cars,” Stemen said. “I waited to sell my Cadillac Eldorado before I bought the Invicta.”

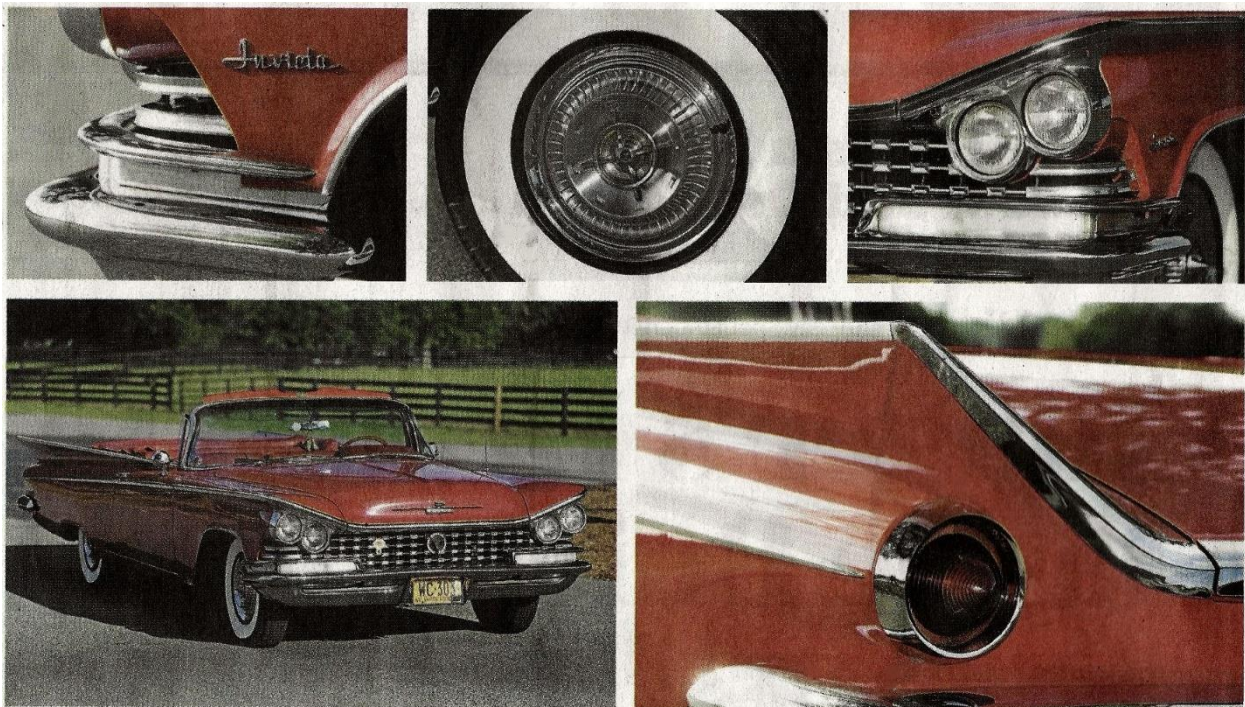
It took Stemen a little longer to sell the Cadillac than he thought, and by the time he had an open spot in his garage, his dream car disappeared from the dealership.

One year later, to Stemen’s utter surprise, the same exact car appeared in an issue of Hemmings Motor News. It was being sold in Washington state by the man who’d bought it from the dealership in Michigan.

Stemen was unsure it was the same car until he learned about the other owner’s history.

“It was owned by a man who collects everything and who is very rich – he collected boats, planes and cars,” Stemen said. “He liked to buy things and use them for a little while before selling them soon after.”

Stemen said the car was fundamentally the same as it was the year before and was hardly driven by the previous owner.



Despite being 65 years old, the Invicta only has about 70,000 miles on it. Stemen keeps the car in good condition, and it was refurbished but never restored.

It has the original engine and some parts have been re-chromed, and beyond a new interior, top and a fresh paint job, the car looks like it rolled out of the factory last month.

“It has never been apart,” Stemen said. “You would never guess because it is in such nice condition and drives so well.”

The car is an Antique Automobile Club of America Senior Car, with two awards to its name. “There are certain requirements AACA demands for its competitions,” Stemen said, “usually revolving around the age and level of prestige of the car.”

Stemen is also a member of the Villages Classic Automobile Club, and loves to show his cars on a rotation with the various car events he attends.

When Stemen took the first drive in the Invicta, he felt like a kid again and was transported back to 1959. When he has his wife, Nancy, beside him on the bench seat, it’s like they are teens once more.