

'Old Blue'- by Will Corbett

(Note: Will Corbett is the great grandson of Josie and has Old Blue now.)

As some of you know, when we were in Tennessee, Bob Taro was nice enough to offer me the opportunity to take over the guardianship of the 1939 Buick Special that you folks in the older generation of cousins will remember from the farm on Pauline Avenue. I gladly accepted.

Some of my earliest memories in life revolve around visiting my grandparents at that farm. I remember watching the TV show "Then Came Bronson" in the living room with both of them, I remember riding on an old tractor with my Grandpa Milton, and going to the MID office with him once, and I remember "the car." I remember it being in the "garage" building near the house, walking around it, being a little scared of it, and thinking, "Wow, this must be REALLY old,"



(ABOVE) Will Corbett, Bob Taro, Wade Corbett with 'Old Blue' (1939 Buick), Modesto. July 24, 2009.

Later, after my Grandpa died, I used to visit my Grandma there fairly often (as most of you know, since I visited all of you many times at one point or another), and "the car" was still there, in the garage, where it had always been (as far as I knew anyway). In 1974, when my Grandma had to sell the farm, I remember helping my uncle Dave pull it out of that garage building, and then riding in it as we were pulled down the road to the Taros' farm on Garrison Avenue by a truck or tractor, where Bob then kept it until the Taros moved to their 'new' place on Maze Boulevard.

That ride is vivid in my mind. After all those years of seeing it just sit there, to know that it could still roll, and being able to ride in it, was very exciting. As I grew older, I would still visit my Grandma often at her 'new' house in town (which is how I always thought of it, even though she lived there for almost 25 years, and I had only visited the farm for nine). Sometimes she would take me out to the Taros to visit, and I would occasionally stay there overnight. Those were great times. Kathryn and Rob and I would play outside, have fun in their rooms, and occasionally, I would get short glimpses of the car in the back of the barn. As I recall, we didn't go in the barn much (probably at Bob's direction), and yet I remember looking to see if "the car" was still there. It was!

After I graduated high school, I visited Modesto (and all of the cousins) less. In fact, much less than I should have, in my opinion, and for that I will always be sorry. With the exception of the influence of my parents, I believe that those experiences on the farm, and in Modesto as a whole, have shaped me as a person more than anything else in my life. They all are truly treasured memories.

After doing all the "life" things (graduating college, getting married, getting a job, buying a house, having children, etc.), I began to get "reacquainted" with you all as we began to make regular visits to my Grandma's for Easter. These yearly trips became a real highlight, as Dave & Nina, most times Daryll, my folks, and us (Des, Wade and I) would all come together to visit, see Grandma, go to church, and see some of you when we could. I'm very glad this happened, for many reasons. As I recall, during one of these visits, Bob and I were talking, and I asked about "the car". I mentioned that if he were to ever want to get rid of it, that I would be interested in having it. He assured me he still had it, but wasn't sure what would become of it. He mentioned that Kathryn was interested in keeping it, but wasn't sure what to do with it. He said he didn't think Rob was interested in it, but didn't know for sure, and that he had several people he knew that wanted it (friends who were Buick collectors). He then said to me, "but I told them that I figured that the grandson of the folks that bought it, should have it." Needless to say, I was excited!

As time went on, we would see each other periodically, and occasionally, "the car" would come up, but not much more would come of it, and time would continue on. A couple of years ago, at my Dad's 70th birthday, Bob again mentioned his thought about "the grandson, etc." and I joked that if he needed me to come down and get it, he should just let me know, I got the impression that maybe I had pushed a little too hard, and being the quintessential farmer, he wasn't going to get rid of it until he was damn good and ready. Being a collector of stuff, I understand completely.

So now here we are. This morning, Des, Wade, Des' Dad and I went down to the Taros, and picked up "the car." We pulled it out of the barn, up onto a trailer, and drove it up to our place here in Grass Valley. We gave it a bath, washed the windows, rinsed a little old mud out of the wheel wells, and generally crawled around it. This was the first time I'd seen the interior since that ride in 1974. While not pristine, the condition is on one hand remarkable, but on the other, not unexpected, considering its "one owner" status. It is obvious that it was a farm car. Used, but not abused. Worn, but well kept. If it had come from some unknown farm, with an unknown history, it would not be terribly interesting. But it didn't, it came from our farm, with our history, and it is incredibly interesting.

To think that my great-grandmother rode in it (who was born over 100 years ago in a cabin on property in Tennessee I just visited less than a month ago), and all of her sons, and their wives, and all of their children, is overwhelming to consider, and yet I can't help thinking about it. Without really knowing I had it, a lifelong dream of mine was fulfilled today. As I mentioned in my first sentence, I view taking possession of "the car" as a transfer of guardianship. I'm lucky enough to have the facilities to store it, and hopefully the skills to put it back on the road, but in my mind, it really belongs to ALL of us.