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# "The Buick Tape"

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— Richard Lasseter

## Introduction ...

For the first time *ever* many of these privately held tapes have been released to our Buick community at large. Furthermore, they've all been compiled into one volume of Buick Musclicar History. This is the definitive tape when it comes to events which have established the rightful reputation of Buick musclicars. Please bear in mind that few of these clips were done "professionally," so don't expect perfect video quality. We tried to use as close to 1st generation tapes as we could, but in some cases it was not possible to know what generation tape we were reproducing from. Some of the 1st generation tapes themselves were of amateur quality, the person having filmed it not knowing at the time the significance of what they were filming. To minimize "graininess," picture frame size was slightly reduced. Everything was done to give you the best picture possible. With all this being said, we're sure you'll enjoy it all, so turn on your TV and VCR and let the good times roll!

### Segment 1

This segment on the Historical Perspective of the Buick GS is self explanatory. Except for the guy with the 1968 "Stage 2" convertible, this Perspective is correct. A Stage 2 decal does not a Stage 2 make, and he doesn't have Stage 2 heads/headers which a real Stage 2 must have.

### Segment 2

Much of the problem that MCR magazine had with doing a Round 2 and 3 "Stage 1 vs. Hemi" shootout was finding a Hemi owner who wasn't afraid he'd blow up his oh-so-valuable Hemi. That's why this segment is so entertaining. Here we are out in the "no man's land" of Saskatchewan with clubmember Kevin Snelling and his stock 1970 GS 455 non-Stage 1 with stock 2.93 gears. This all-original Burgandy Mist beauty has only 45,000 miles on the clock. He and his buddy, a non-wussie Hemi owner, flog the hell out of these two rare pieces of musclicar history to near photo-finishes. By the way, the '68 Hemi GTX was also low mileage stock with a 4-speed and 3.54 gears. Hat's off to the backroad enjoyment of musclicars used as they were intended!

### Segment 3

This is one of the earliest film clips of all ... made in early December 1984. It was reproduced here in black & white because the original video had a blueish tint to it so black & white offered the best contrast. According to then-Editor Donald Farr, this race put MCR magazine "on the map" since no other magazine had ever done such a thing and then featured it on the cover of their magazine (March 1985 issue). It also really grabbed the attention for the GS in the collector car market. Musclicar enthusiasts were beginning to rewrite their notes!

Nothing was ever mentioned about our two cars being "stock" ... only that they should be equally modified "street cars" that would

be DRIVEN to the track. Badie violated that rule right off the bat. In trailering his GTX, he complained of race gas consumption with the 4.10 gears. The magazine never mentioned his red-light in the second race nor the race with his buddy in the Hemi-cuda (who promptly missed a gear after being smoked off the line so badly). Roy Badie was in shock after the race and at the time was quite congenial ... until he got back home, and I suppose, began to think of being beaten by a car he claimed ran "like it was tied to a tree."

That early December was high-80's and my GS was hot from being briskly freeway driven down to Gainesville (125 miles), plus I had to constantly move it around for the pre-race photo session. So the engine was constantly being "heat soaked" immediately before our race. The trailered Hemi was cool to begin with. I refused the "shakedown" pass that Badie made in order to have a few minutes for my GS to cool. By the way, the annoying racket you hear in the background was a remote control airplane. The up-close engine shots were made by our amateur cameraman to show how optionless those Hemis were!

### Segment 4

Rare musclicars abound at special musclicar-only events. This was at the 1991 Musclicar Nationals in Gainesville, FL on a 105° day in late May. I still remember the brutal heat and humidity! I raced a '72 Trans Am HO455 in the semis and a very rare '67 Fairlane with side-oiler 427 2-4 bbl. engine in the finals. This was in Junior Stock Big Block where "real" street tires were mandatory and other mods were minimal. Due to the heat and stringent rules, everyone was running a bit slow. The Fairlane guy was not happy at being beat by a "Buick." Winning times were high 11's and most entries were in the mid-12's.

### Segment 5

When "My Classic Car" wanted to do a documentary on the 1970 GS Stage 1, they chose John Chamberlain's GS. Host Dennis Gage was obviously impressed and the rest is history. Note that the times turned were on radial tires with Dennis as the passenger in this 1997 film clip.

### Segment 6

GS Stage 1 vs. Hemi Round 3. Here we are in July 1993 in Montreal, Quebec Canada where the Diabo brothers' 1970 GSX Stage 1 is about to sew up a victory for the Buick side in Round 3. Be sure to note that these are **three versions** of the **same race**, just taken for different perspectives. The Hemicuda red-lighted and was run down and passed, so after just one run, he called it quits! 12.01/111.76 mph for the GSX and 12.49/110.15 for the Hemicuda. Notice the furor in the pits as the magazine photographer (with beard and white shirt) tries to cajole the Hemi owner into making the agreed-upon 2 out of 3 runs. But it didn't work! Our own Frank Urbinati humorously narrates much of this race from the grandstands.

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# "The Buick Tape" Continued ...

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## Segment 7

This segment includes a rather lame test of a 1987 GN that still laid waste to the competition, both in straight-line performance and handling. Funny how nowadays even the average small truck V-6 will put out more power than the anemic Grand Prix and Olds 442! Even at the lack-lustre performance numbers given for this GN, it's intercorporate rivals never stood a chance!

## Segment 8

This early 1987 GNX Preview foreshadows the production GNX which, of course, did *not* have ported and polished heads. The GNX turbocharger was also not significantly larger than the stock T-R turbo, but it did have the lighter ceramic silicon nitride exhaust wheel for slightly quicker spool-up.

## Segment 9

Here is the only film clip in existence that shows production of the GNX and some of the principal people involved. It's all self-explanatory but I must address two comments you'll hear. The comment about the "'87 Porsche 911" is a joke, as they were mid-14 second cars in 1987. Then there's Jim Wangers' comments. Many of you know that Wangers was considered the Father of the GTO. His opinion about the GNX was like saying that Larry Bird would've been a great basketball player if he'd been black. I met Jim Wangers at the Pure Stock Musclegar Drags on Sept. 11, 1999. He was there at a table autographing his book **Glory Days** about the GTO. He also had someone there driving his low 14 second 4-speed 1969 Royal Bobcat GTO Judge. I couldn't resist it! I approached him with the statement: "Jim Wangers! Wow, if I'd known you were going to be here I'd brought my GNX book for you to autograph! You know, Buick GNX ... the car that would've been a great musclegar if it had been a Pontiac or Chevrolet." His eyebrows raised and his mouth opened a bit before his thoughts caught up with my comment. Then he stammered a few lines about what he *really meant* ... something about Buick never promoting the GNX properly. But the humorous part that told me Jim was really an ok guy was when he admitted "*Well, you know I don't own a GNX*" ... then he exaggeratedly looked to his left and then to his right, and leaned forward to almost whisper "*But I do own a Grand National!*"

## Segment 10

We thought you'd get a kick out of this 1962 commercial showing America's first turbocharged car. It used the all-aluminum 215 cu. in. Buick V-8 with extra head bolts to keep everything glued together. The "fluid injection" mentioned is simple alcohol/water injection where the recommended fluid was simply GM windshield washer fluid.

These are three different versions of the basically same 1984 GN ad. These were broadcast regionally.

## Segment 11

The two "baddest" factory cars in 1987 were the GNX and twin turbo Callaway Corvette. Although the GNX was considered quite pricey, you could buy nearly two of them for the cost of a Callaway 'vette! It was just a matter of time before the automotive press conjured up this race which took place on a blustery winter day in Milan, Michigan. This famous match-up was on the cover of both **Popular Mechanics** and **Cars Illustrated**. The GNX clipped off a best of 13.26/104 mph while the Callaway managed a best of 13.41/106 mph, thanks to far superior aerodynamics.

## Segment 12

Here's an old 1988 Hypertech ad featuring chip development using Mark Heffington's GNX (he owned two at the time). Mark attended the GS Nats. with his 12.70 GNX in 1989.

## Segment 13

It goes without saying that low aspect ratio road race tires will spin farther than 14" wide race slicks. Now just put 'em on the dragstrip and watch Kenny's GN half-track Tim Allen's Mustang. This was just a promo for the masses.

## Segment 14

Lawrence's "Tweaked" had just run some low 8's when this feature was produced.

## Segment 15

The time and place was summer of 1989 at the Ohio Musclegar Nationals. Bill Phillis had just put his GNX into the 11's. Notice the crowd reaction! This was one of the very first T-R's in the 11's and *the* first GNX in the 11's.

## Segment 16

It took several years from their introduction for the turbo Regals to make a real impression on the Brand X musclegar owners. The potential in these little V-6 *wunderkinds* was hard for the average 440 Mopar guy to believe. We big block Buick guys were in a position to know it and see it first hand at our Nationals. So this clipping from the 1989 NMCA Musclegar Nationals in Bowling Green, KY was especially sweet. The GS's by now had become a known quantity to respect, but here for the first time at a National Musclegar event, the T-R's made their fierce presence known to the surprised competition.