

GM Journal

Highway Patrol

Keeping TV history alive and promoting real police work

BY JON G. ROBINSON ■ GARY GOLTZ NEVER FORGOT THE TITLE SEQUENCE TO *HIGHWAY PATROL*. THE 1955 MERCURY CONVERTIBLE TRAVELS ALONE ON A FOUR-LANE HIGHWAY. AS IT COMES AROUND A BEND, IT FACES A WALL OF 1955 BUICKS AND GROUP OF ARMED PATROLMEN AT A ROADBLOCK.

Then, thundering music and Art Gilmore's robust oratory:

Whenever the laws of any state are broken, or when the welfare of its citizens is in danger, each state has a duly authorized organization that swings into action. It may be called the state militia, or the state police, or the highway patrol. These are the stories of the men whose training, skill, and courage have enforced and preserved our state laws.

Goltz was born in 1953 and raised in Pennsylvania. He and his grandmother never missed *Highway Patrol* when it was in daily reruns in the early 1960s. Happy memories of the show eventually led Goltz to California and to recreating *Highway Patrol's* most famous squad car.

The 1955 Buicks in the first season of *Highway Patrol* were real California Highway Patrol cars, and they were special models built just for the CHP. By this time, Buick had been making the Century off and on for 20 years. The Century had the small Special body with the big Roadmaster engine and long Roadmaster front clip. In 1955, the Special two-door post sedan was the model 48. The Century two-door hardtop was the model 66R, but there was no Century two-door post sedan. The CHP wanted a Century two-door post sedan, and Buick created 268 of them especially for the CHP, designating them the model 68. Roughly half of them had manual transmissions, while the rest had Dynaflo.



Broderick Crawford barks orders into the radio while standing outside his 1955 Buick pursuit vehicle during the first season of *Highway Patrol*.

Highway Patrol used these real CHP Buicks through the first half of the first season, and covered the CHP door logos with a special emblem just for the show. Actor Broderick Crawford played Dan Matthews, but the show was careful to not clarify his police rank. He seemed to be the captain of the station and lead detective. With no rank or state specified, *Highway Patrol* took place in Any-State, USA, and with every big case, Dan Matthews and his boys sprang into action.

The internet was not widespread in 1993 when Gary Goltz started his search for *Highway Patrol* videos and memorabilia. Having sold his health care business, he was concentrating on teaching judo, and much of the time, his judo students were police officers. In 1995, he heard of a 1955 Buick Special two-door hardtop for sale, bought it, and recreated Dan Matthews' patrol car as accurately as possible.

Halfway through the first season of the show, Mercurys were phased in as the starring cars, but they were not real CHP cars, so Goltz chose the Buick for the recreation. He enlisted the help of California Buick expert Les Randolph to authentically outfit the car with period CHP lighting, equipment, and paint scheme.

"The car still has the 288ci V-8 instead of the 322ci V-8," Goltz tells. "If it ever needs to be rebuilt, I'll find a 322 Century engine for it. I kept the

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Dynaflo because I need my hands free to operate the sound system and lights during parades. We added power brakes and 1956 power steering."

Without meaning to, Goltz has become a minor celebrity in southern California. Goltz is a strapping man, and with a suit, tie, and fedora, he strikes a convincing Broderick Crawford pose. He appears in parades and at police functions, and he brings the sounds of *Highway Patrol* with him.

"I have an audio system with outdoor speakers in my rear fenders," Goltz tells. "I have the *Highway Patrol* opening in English and Spanish. I also have other show openings such as *Dragnet*, *CHiPs*, and *Adam-12*. I also have a PA system in the car to announce things to people at parades. Sometimes, I do the narration from the show and modify it for the LAPD. I can bark out orders just like Broderick did. I have a scanner so you can hear real CHP calls, and I have the lights all working."

The Buick has introduced Goltz to *Adam-12* star Kent McCord, *CHiPs* stars Erik Estrada and Larry Wilcox, *Highway Patrol* director Herbert Strock, and actor Bill Boyett, who was a veteran of *Highway Patrol*, *Dragnet*, *Emergency!*, and *Adam-12*.

Goltz introduced Crawford's son, Kelly, to the CHP 11-99 Foundation. On the CHP radio, "11-99" is the code for an officer needing assistance, and the foundation assists CHP families through work-related emergencies. Through a generous gift from Kelly Crawford, the foundation formed the Broderick Crawford Benefits Program.

When in southern California, be on the lookout for a black-and-white 1955 Buick. The driver is a large, Caucasian male named Goltz. You'll know it's Goltz when you hear him say, "21-50 to base! I'm heading in!"

You can watch classic episodes of *Highway Patrol* for free on your computer. Visit www.hulu.com. The earliest episodes are the best, such as when Broderick Crawford's Buick peels out of a parking lot in "Desert Town" or chases a Thunderbird in "Escort."



Here is a shot of Gary Goltz's accurate recreation of Broderick Crawford's squad car from the television series. For most of the show's first season, the Buicks were real California Highway Patrol cars.