



THIS 'HIGHWAY PATROL' SUPER-FAN PERFECTLY RECREATED THE SHOW'S FLASHY 1955 BUICK

WARNING: THIS POST WILL INDUCE CAR ENVY. AS DAN MATHEWS SAID: "IT ISN'T WHAT YOU DRIVE, BUT HOW YOU DRIVE THAT COUNTS!"

BY: METV STAFF POSTED: OCTOBER 3, 2017, 10:42AM



Photo by Patrick Ecclesine

Between 1955 and 1959, TV audiences tuned in for 30-minute episodes of Highway Patrol. Filmed in striking locations and artfully shot, the show was a stunner, and it featured Oscar-winning actor Broderick Crawford singlehandedly delivering justice, speaking gruff orders into his police radio while he leaned against his trusty 1955 Buick.



It was the kind of car that doctors drove at that time, and not typically associated with cops. It was a flashy show that got attention.

That's probably why, for a lot of young kids glued to TVs back then, Crawford's role as the head of Highway Patrol Dan Mathews was not just a barking authority. Dan Mathews was as invincible as a superhero.

Highway Patrol super-fan Gary Goltz was one of those young kids, and police chief Dan Mathews was his idol. He especially loved the early episodes produced by Herb Strock, which had plots driven more by mystery and suspense, like "Father Zee" and "Desert Town."

“In one half hour, he cracked the case, he got the **bad guys, he usually shot them, and he made restitution to the victims,**” Goltz tells MeTV. “If that’s not a superhero, you tell me what is.”

Today, Goltz has grown to become a different kind of authority — an expert on all things Highway Patrol. He’s run the [top Highway Patrol fan site](#) since 1996, and to fit the part, he’s also built a replica of Crawford’s signature vehicle. Goltz has gone to great lengths to match his modified 1955 Buick so that it looks as close as possible to Crawford’s original.

Goltz bought his Buick in 1995 after stumbling upon the exact model he wanted in an old car trader magazine. This was before eBay and other internet tools simplified how people search for collectibles. It so happened that he was going on a business trip where the car was stored, and it took just one good look at the vehicle for him to agree to buy it for \$6,500.

At the time, Goltz did not consider himself a “car guy.” The Buick was missing a gas cap, and he knew he could start by fixing that. As it turns out, that gas cap was the key to the door that led Goltz to recreate the car of his dreams.



"When I got the car, it was just a regular Buick, three-tone, and the first thing I noticed, the gas cap was missing," Goltz says. "I looked up in the Yellow Pages and there was a place called Classic Buick not too far from me, so I drove down there to buy a gas cap."

"While I'm buying the gas cap, I see a picture of a Highway Patrol Buick up on the wall, and I'm looking at it and I'm telling the guy, 'That's why I bought the car, because I love that show and Broderick Crawford.'"

"And he says, 'Well, I always tell my customers if they get a classic car like this, they should follow their dream and do what you want with it.'" He added, 'You know, I don't usually do this, but here's a guy's phone number, I think you should give him a call.'"

Goltz called the number and met Les Randolph a classic car restorer who has helped him chase every detail ever since, to exactly modify his Buick to mimic the features of the Highway Patrol Buick. He's since spent close to \$200,000 to become the proud owner of his Buick replica, based on the ones he first fell in love with watching episodes of Highway Patrol.

"As a kid, I'm watching this show with these Buicks and this guy in a suit instead of a uniform, and unlike like the rest of [cop shows], helicopters," Goltz says. "And Broderick Crawford is there, being a big-time Academy Award-winning film actor, and doing this show with his eyes closed. He owns the character. He just mesmerized everyone. I remember seeing my grandmother watch that show in the '50s. I looked at that guy and said to myself, 'I want to be like him when I grow up!'"



Gary Goltz with 'Highway Patrol' producer Herb Stroock, actor Bill Boyett, and CHP officer Frank Runyon who served as the program's technical advisor.

Although Goltz didn't grow up to become a police chief as you might suspect, he does help lead initiatives that benefit and raise awareness for police today. Not only is he a Lifetime Member of the California Highway Patrol (CHP) 11-99 Foundation — which provides emergency benefits to CHP employees and families in times of crisis — he is also the brains behind 10-4 Day, an event that takes place every year on October 4 and recognizes the service and sacrifice of highway patrol officers and public safety officials.

If you remember the little messages at the end of each Highway Patrol episode that urged viewers to practice safety first, you'll be pleased to know the Annual 10-4 Day Parade keeps that spirit alive each year.

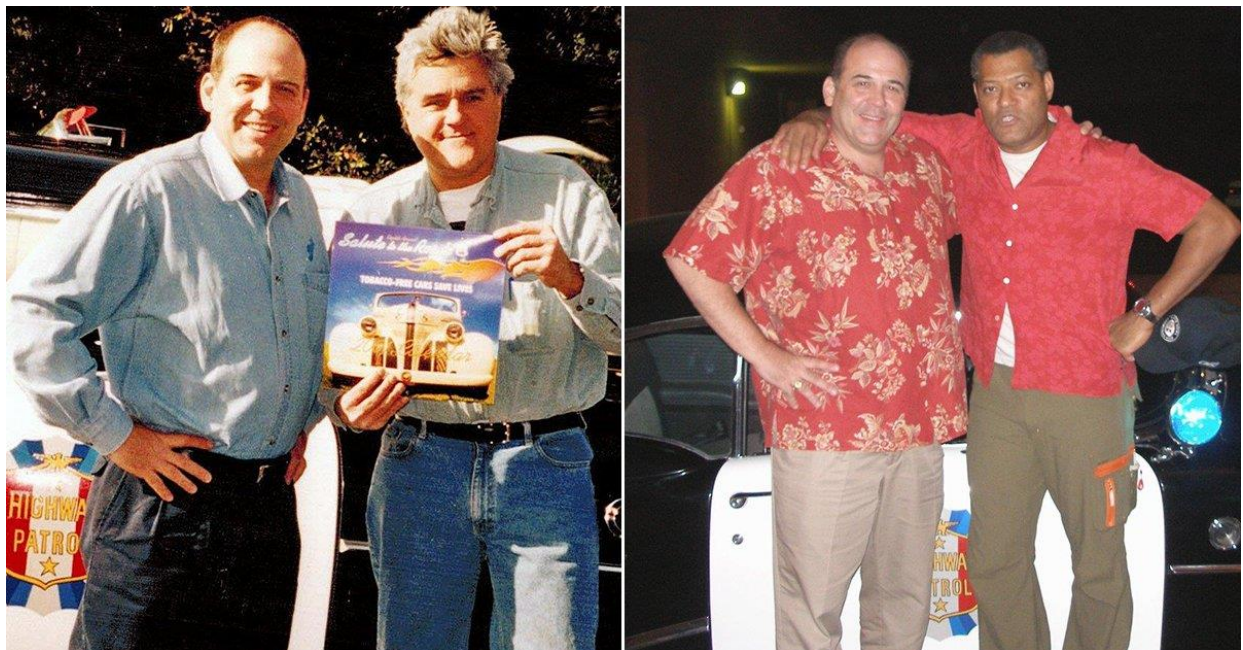
Goltz's involvement with 10-4 Day came about the way many things do for Goltz: because of the car.

After participating in parades for years, Goltz was named as then-Los Angeles City Councilman Tom LaBonge's "Dollar a Year Man" in charge of parades. In 2004, LaBonge asked Goltz how they could commemorate the 75th anniversary of CHP, and Goltz immediately came up with 10-4 Day.

"I said, 'Let's gather all the cars like mine and drive down Hollywood Boulevard,'" Goltz explains. And that's just what they do, as replicas of famous TV and movie cars drive alongside police vehicles. The parade visiting both of Crawford's stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Yes, the acclaimed actor has two.

Of course, there aren't many cars quite like Goltz's Buick, which is souped up even beyond the car that fans will remember from Highway Patrol. He rigged a complete light arrangement and added a loud siren. He's also got a sound system that allows him to blast the Highway Patrol theme song or entertain parade-goers with his impressions of Crawford and Highway Patrol narrator Art Gilmore.

"I can change the narration, talk about 10-4 Day, and that's what I do when I take it into parades," Goltz says. "Between the sirens going and the music blaring and the lights all flashing, it's a homerun. It's been in tons of parades. I've done a lot of stuff with the car and taken a lot of celebrities in the car."

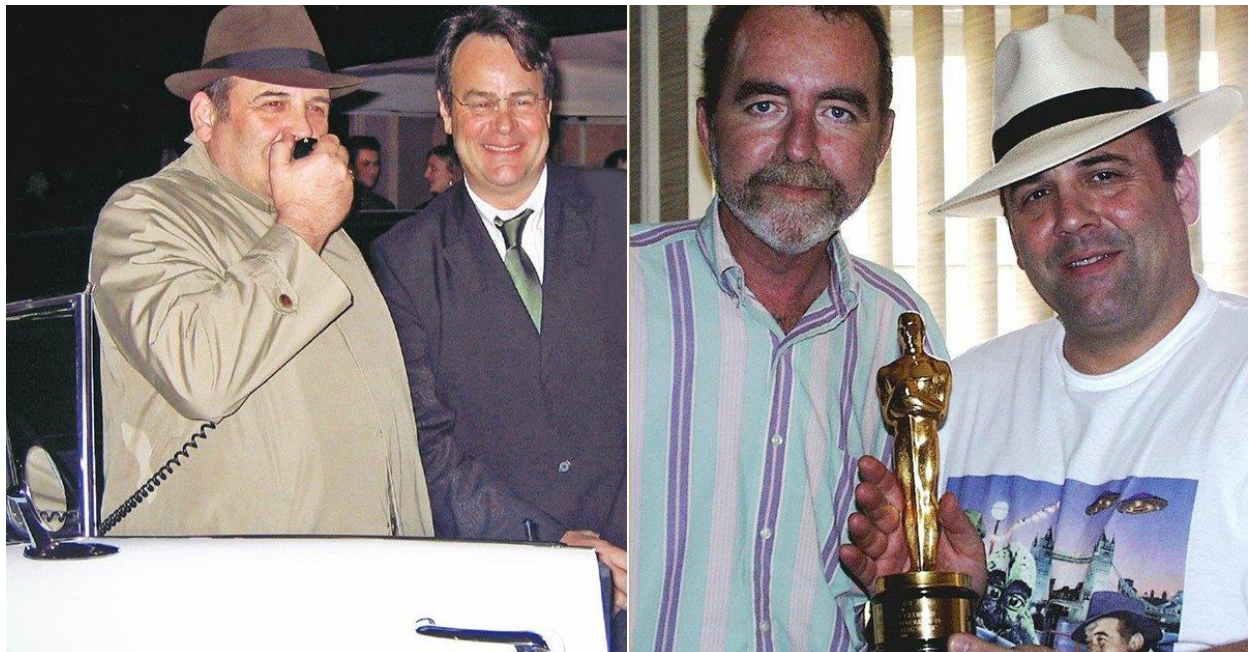


Gary Goltz with Jay Leno and Laurence Fishburne

The list of celebrities Goltz has met through the car is long, including huge car aficionados like Jay Leno, Adam Carolla, Laurence Fishburne, Neil Young and many more. It also includes Highway Patrol fans like Dan Aykroyd, with whom Goltz once performed, when he was unexpectedly called onstage at a fundraiser for the LAPD.

"I get up there and I do my best Broderick impersonation, and I went, 'Oh, I'm on highway patrol and we have Sergeant Friday from the LAPD come out here in a minute, come out here!' and Aykroyd comes out, and we're trading barbs!" Goltz fondly recalls. "He's doing Jack Webb (impressions from Dragnet), and I'm doing Broderick Crawford. I'm telling you, it was all impromptu, and I'm thinking to myself, 'How many people get themselves in a situation like this?'"

Goltz adds with a laugh, "And you wanna know something? Between me and you, I did Broderick Crawford better than he did Jack Webb."



Gary Goltz as Fan Mathews with Dan Aykroyd; to the right, Goltz with Kelly Crawford admiring Broderick Crawford's Oscar

His fandom has also introduced him to people involved with the show like Herb Strock, Bill Boyett, Frank Runyon and more. Of all the places the car has taken Goltz, though, perhaps the most memorable was when he and Crawford's son, Kelly, went on a trip down Route 66 that lasted two weeks. It cemented a real friendship between the Highway Patrol superfan Gary Goltz and the son of the show's star, who even invited Goltz to see his father's Oscar statuette. It seems that everywhere the Buick goes with Goltz, it helps connect him more meaningfully with fans and people who were connected to the show, its star and its most famous car.

"It's just amazing how things happen," Goltz says. "I've been blessed that I got to know these people as real people. Most are gone now but I'll always consider them to be real friends of mine."

During that time, Goltz was also driven to become a success in the healthcare business. In addition, he operates a judo school as an eighth-degree black belt. That talent brought him a different sort of fame after Goltz sent in a fan correction to Conan, which Conan O'Brien aired, sending half a million people to watch Goltz's video where he corrected the actor Jack Black's flawed judo tiger roll. You can watch his video, Conan's commentary and Black's response by clicking on the photo below:



Although Goltz is a fan of Conan, the top show in his heart remains Highway Patrol, which transports him to a different time, when he remembers TV was just better. "The way it's filmed, the way it's written," Goltz says. "It's great pulp fiction."



If you're in Los Angeles, California, you can check out Goltz's Highway Patrol car this week at the Annual 10-4 Day Parade of classic emergency vehicles on Wednesday, October 4. Participants in the parade will meet at 11AM by the Los Angeles Fire Museum, or you can watch the parade as it travels north down Cahuenga Boulevard and west on Hollywood Boulevard.

The parade will also feature Shotgun Tom Kelly and actors from additional TV cop shows. You can find [more details here](#) & [watch video of event here](#).

HIGHWAY PATROL

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SUNDAYS AT 5 AM  Remind Me

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