

GOODGUYS 2016 VINTAGE AIR

## CUSTOM ROD OF THE YEAR

FINALIST

TEXT &amp; PHOTOS ■ MIKE HARRINGTON

The Buick Invicta was a short-lived model with only 5-years in production from 1959 till 1963. It was Buick's mid level model, fancier trim and more stainless than the LeSabre, but not quite as high-end as the Electra. In 1961 Buick produced 6,382 two door hard tops. This is a story of one of those few.

Tom Karp owned a 61 bubble top Impala, but his way of thinking was, "So did everyone else." He wanted a cruiser that was not a common sight on the

## TOM KARP — YORBA LINDA, CA • 1961 BUICK INVICTA

roads of Southern California. While at the Long Beach swap meet, Karp came across a fairly decent '61 Buick Invicta. It was exactly what he was looking for, something that not everyone else had, and he drove it "as is" for a short time.

However, "as is" wasn't good enough, and Karp (not a big budget guy) crawled under the car, and started work on the suspension and brakes. He added air springs from Ridetech, and then ordered Impala disc brakes from CPP. Frustratingly enough in the world of Buick, Olds, Pontiac, parts are not always interchangeable from Chevrolet; even though they are all GM. He contacted Scarebird Classic Brakes, which make adapter kits that fit the Impala aftermarket brakes onto his Buick. The 4,180-pound Invicta now has proper stopping power for any traffic situation, which may occur.

Content for the time being, Karp cruised the Invicta for the next year, before the 2nd round of improvements started.

Karp did a majority of work in his home garage. He shaved all the excess molding and emblems, filled in the body seams, filled in the gas tank door, and shaved the door handles.

Martin Lange smoothed the firewall, and customized the inner fender panels. Karp ever so gently lifted the body off the frame while he repainted it and the underside of the Buick.

The 401 Nailhead, (Invicta's signature engine) was sent to Superior Automotive Engineering for a complete rebuild. While at Superior, the Offenhauser dual quad intake was added along with a March Performance serpentine kit. The 401 Nailhead may not throw out as much horsepower as the 425 Nailhead, or even a SBC, but the 400-plus ft.-lbs of torque now pull this heavy weight cruiser out of its own shadow. Last on the list was a trip to Mahood's Hot Rods and Muscle Cars, for a generous coat of PPG black paint. And if you know Mark Mahood — black is what he does best!

Tom Karp's Invicta won't carve up a canyon road, but he'll cruise it there all the same. With his red leather interior from Westminster Auto Upholstery, he'll cruise in style and forget about being "as is" anymore.

