



Spring 2008  
Volume 10, Number 1

## ***In Memory of Chapter Members Lost Doing What They Loved***



*Custom Safari Chapter*

*Pontiac Oakland Club International*

# From the Prez's Garage

*By Steve Cook*

Hello All,

*I usually try to start this column with a chipper greeting, but this time I carry a solemn message for all to read about and reflect on. It is with a heavy heart that I must report the recent sudden and tragic death of two of our POCI and fellow Custom Safari Chapter members, Norm and Bird White. Both were killed instantly on Friday, May 23 when the '55 Pontiac they were driving to a car show veered to the opposite lane and collided head on with a pickup truck. Full details as available are found in the following pages. This issue of *Safari News* will be brief, because my fellow officers and I feel it is important to make everyone aware of this tragedy right away with an express edition.*

*Besides the '55 Pontiac Norm and Bird were driving at the time of the accident, they also owned a 1955 Safari that was an unrestored original survivor. Andrea and I did not know Norm and Bird as well as most of the membership, but we have enjoyed talking with them several times over the years about their Safari, their love of Pontiacs and their 50+ years of marriage. I believe it was on a lot in Ontario, Ca. where we visited as Norm lovingly cleaned the Safari and Bird relayed the tale of how this unrestored beauty took them on fun adventures wherever and whenever they cared to go from their home in Minden, Nevada.*

*Though sudden and shocking, Norm and Bird passed from this life doing what they enjoyed, driving a cool old car to a car show , and with each other. We should all be as fortunate when our time comes. Rest in Peace.*

*The Spearfish Convention is fast approaching, so I will add a few quick, last minute thoughts. Rich, Robin, and I have decided to honor the Whites with a Memorial Addition to the CSC Chapter Display at the Spearfish Convention, so be sure to check it out if you make South Dakota this year.*

*Our annual CSC meeting will be held from 10AM to 11AM on Thursday, July 10th at a meeting room of the host hotel. Watch for a posting at the convention of the exact location. Please plan to attend if possible, we have some important business to discuss, including chapter tee shirts.*

*The convention schedule has a lot of activity planned at meal times, so we are tentatively planning for a 12:30 Thursday "get together for lunch", rather than an evening dinner cruise. Details to be posted at convention and discussed at meeting, hope you can attend!*

*Please make yourself a note to gather at 1 PM on Saturday, July 12th near the Custom Safari Class on the show field for a group picture and to vote for your "Best Safari" at the 2008 Convention.*

See you there,

*Steve Cook, "The Prez".*

# Behind the Wheel in the Editor's Seat

*By Rick Pye*

*Hello Everyone,*

*This was a difficult newsletter to write with the tragic passing of fellow Safarians, Bird and Norm White. I hope that this issue memorializes them adequately and pays them the respect they so deserve.*

*I've included some of the items that appeared in local papers and quotes from friend Rich Gabrielson, in addition to past items that Bird had sent into the club for publication. While it's difficult to say goodbye, especially under the circumstances, one article did describe the situation well, "Norman and Virginia (Bird) White...Passed away together May 23, 2008, while driving their 1955 Pontiac to a car show at Topaz Lodge. They died the way they lived—together doing what they loved." We will miss you.*

*Hopefully this issue will arrive in time for you to know what is planned at the 2008 POCI convention in Spearfish, SD. Steve Cook has outlined the details in his message and hopes as many people as possible will be able to attend the CSC Annual Meeting. We are also setting up the conference call number, 1-866-337-4758, Participant Code 1110310595#, for those that can't attend and want to listen in to the discussions. The meeting starts at 10am, MDT.*

*We are also trying to get a gauge on how many people still prefer hardcopy newsletters vs. getting the content on the web site only. The officers continually look at these types of things to meet the needs of the members and make sure the cost of membership aligns with member's willingness to pay. At this point we're looking for feedback and will be discussing the issue at the convention. We're also looking at the production of a chapter T-Shirt and need feedback there.*

*I would like to hear from any members who have modified their Safari's or other similar vintage Pontiacs to a modern dual master cylinder power brake unit. This could be with or without a modification to accept rotor/caliper combinations vs. drum brakes. I'd like to do as little modification in the firewall area as possible. Does anyone know if the '55-'57 Chevy conversion kit for a dual master cylinder can be modified to work on a '55-'57 Pontiac? If anyone has any input, please let me know. I'm at that contemplation stage, seriously looking at the safety angle.....*



*Pontiac's flair for years-ahead styling was never more evident than in the fabulous all-new Safari.*

*Until next time, have a safe and enjoyable summer. I will talk to you all at the convention.*

*Rick Pye*

# In Memory of Old Friends

NevadaAppeal.com Friday, May 30, 2008

*Norman and Virginia White  
AKA Bird and Wormy*

*Passed away together May 23, 2008, while driving their 1955 Pontiac to a car show at Topaz Lodge. They died the way they lived—together doing what they loved. They traveled across the country many times in their old cars; sometimes Bird driving her Safari and Norm driving the sedan.*

*Norman was born April 4, 1935, in Kansas City, Mo. to Burl and Cecil White.*

*Virginia was born December 5, 1937 in Reno to Burnice and Edwin (Pappy) Rhodes.*

*Norman's family migrated west living in Arizona, Las Vegas, Beatty and then his final school years in Carson City.*

*Virginia's family after leaving Reno lived in Lovelock, Fallon then settled in Carson City in 1945, where she finished school.*

*They grew up in the same neighborhood; New Empire, which is now Airport Road. They married October 28, 1956, in Minden, began married life in Reno, and then bought their home on Nichols Lane in New Empire where they remained for several years until moving to Minden.*

*They had five boys; four graduated from Douglas High School; Sam Harrison and wife Laura of Spanish Springs, Maurice Early of Carson City Dennis Walter of Sparks, Henry Norman and wife Paige of Georgetown, Calif., and Jerry David who passed away as an infant.*

*Eight Grandchildren: Shawn White, Jerry White, Heidi Gainey, David White, Christian White, Jacob White, Nicholas White, Casey White.*

*Three great grandchildren: Michael, Trisha and Steven.*

*Sisters and brothers: Karen and husband Bob Bowman of Dayton, Paul and wife Charlene Rhodes of Sparks, Bob White of Mina, Nevada, John and wife Cheryl Shorter of Sparks, Jerry and wife Judy Shorter of Gardnerville, Ryan Shorter and wife Cherie of Reno. Numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.*

# In Memory of Old Friends

NevadaAppeal.com Friday, May 30, 2008

*They bought the '55 sedan when they were first married from Norm's foster Dad, Andy Gottelli. When it was time to move on to another vehicle, they couldn't bare to part with it so it remained parked in their yard for several years. Secretly, their children had it restored as an anniversary surprise. Bird bought her Safari in its original condition with the sale papers still in the glove compartment—it, also had been sold by Gottelli Motors. They were very proud of their cars and spent much of their time pulling their teardrop trailers to various shows.*

*When they weren't "on the road" in their classic cars, they were attending whatever events their family was participating in. They volunteered to organize or assist in events whenever needed. In their down time, they were hosting fabulous dinners for whoever could come.*

*Every Memorial Day IF the snow was off Jobs Peak, they would organize a trek up to the top. This event attracted a variety of people. Their children would come in the day before and spend the night. Virginia would be up early fixing breakfast for her crew. The hearty folks would go with Norman to make the climb and the others would stay at the house and help prepare a meal for their return.*

*Carson Valley Days would see them up early preparing a beef stew feast in Norm's cast iron Dutch ovens. They would bury the ovens in a trench of hot coals, jump in their classic cars, participate in the festivities downtown with their car club buddies, then rush home to dig up the ovens and play host to the car club and anyone else who showed up. They never ran out of food.*

*Their accomplishments were many and their rewards were always shared because they did everything together. Norman worked for Sierra Pacific Power Company before retirement. Virginia stayed home and tended to the many duties of wife, mother, and grandmother.*

*When Norm was a lineman and out in a raging storm during a power outage, Virginia would be home keeping the home fires burning. When he spent hours working to build and improve Governor's Field, she would be in the concession stand or working with other wives running errands and preparing meals for the guys.*

*She was meticulous with her needlework and their home is adorned with cross stitch wall hangings, afghans and various projects. She could sit amid total chaos and work on a project while her rough 'n tumble boys did their best to distract her. If she did miss a stitch, she would make up a story about why it was a good thing.*

# In Memory of Old Friends

NevadaAppeal.com Friday, May 30, 2008

*They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 2006. They discovered that more people came than were invited. That is the way they were. People were always welcome, invited or not.*

*They were compassionate; always ready to help a friend or family member with a hug or whatever was needed.*

*Adventurous; never hesitated to set out to discover something new and overcame any obstacle that might prevent their quest. Humor helped them through many dark times. They always had a funny story to tell, even in the sad times; they put people at ease with their kind, living ways. They put their own health issues aside to cheer a friend in trouble. Their boys inherited these traits.*

*Bird and Norman you will be missed by all who knew and loved you.*

*A memorial fund has been set up by City National Bank for Norm and Birdie: 1647 Hwy 395, Minden NV 89423, Account #366211144.*

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## **Thoughts from close friend Rich Gabrielson:**

*Norm and Bird were '55 Pontiac people through and through. Both believed in keeping their cars stock, although Norm told me once he really liked what I did to my orange Chieftain and wished he had the guts to modify at least one. But Bird would never allow it. Norm bought a Nomad liftgate that was in better shape than the one on Bird's Safari and she said NO WAY IS THAT CHEVY PART GOING ON MY SAFARI!!! We tried to tell her they were the same part, but it fell on deaf ears.*

*The previous owner of her Safari had installed fog lights in the front and dented the fender and as far as Bird was concerned they were part of the car's history and would stay that way. And that way they still are. Her Safari is going to stay in the family and be exhibited from time to time in their memory by their sons and grandchildren.*

*We attended and there were about 150 to 200 classic cars in the high school parking lot and the gymnasium was full. They were just amazing people.*

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**POCI Chapter #10**

[www.customsafari.org](http://www.customsafari.org)

# Safari Member of the Quarter Winter 2003

**Your Name:** Virginia "Bird" White

**Spouse's name:** Norm

**Child(ren)'s name(s) and age(s):** Sam (46), Maurie (45), Dennis (42), Hank (35), 3 Daughters-in-law, 7 Grandsons, 1 Granddaughter, and 5 Great Grandkids

**Safari(s) Owned:** 1955 Custom Safari

**When/Where did you acquire your first Safari?** Carson City, Nevada in 1990

**What was your first car?** 1949 Chevrolet Convertible

**What was your first Pontiac?** 1955 Chieftain 860, 2 door, we still have it!

**Reason for "collecting" Safaris:** '55 Pontiacs are best

**Reason for joining the Custom Safari Chapter:** Learn more, meet nice people

**Favorite Safari Accessory owned:** Swing out tissue box dispenser

**Most wanted Safari Accessory:** none

**Do you have "other" Pontiacs? If so, list model and year:** '55 Chieftain 860 and 4 parts-cars

**What are your favorite non-Pontiac hobbies?** Grandkids, knitting, traveling

**Least favorite car task:** Washing it

**Most favorite car task:** Polishing it

**Best thing about being a Pontiac Custom Safari Owner:** Showing off!

**Favorite non-Safari car:** 1990 Cadillac Brougham

**Favorite car-related web site:** none

**Favorite parts vendor:** Bill Fortune

**Best car care tip to share:** Use Meguiars Polish

# Safari Member of the Quarter

*By Bird White - 2003*

*In 1991 Norm and I had been discussing finding a Safari, and one just fell in our laps. It was owned by a woman named Cindy, the granddaughter of the first owner, Dorothy, who lived in Carson City, Nevada. Dorothy and her husband had purchased the Safari new from Andy Gotelli Motors in Carson City in June of 1955. We purchased our first car, together, from Gotelli, in January 1957. It was a 1955 Pontiac Chieftain 860, 2 door, and we still have it.*

*Cindy didn't know what to do with a classic car and really had no interest in it, so she sold it to us. It had 64,000 original miles on the odometer, and foglights that were dealer installed, because they drove to San Diego, CA twice. They also had a Mark IV air conditioning unit dealer installed. It has a windshield washer that doesn't work, and a reel out underhood troublelight that does work. The back tailgate window warped and leaked badly, so we had it fixed. The carpets were ruined, so we had them replaced also. The original leather seats are still in reasonable shape.*

*The Safari has a dent in the front bumper where Dorothy hit the cement post in a service station when she was 85. She was so short that she sat on a pillow and looked through the horn ring to see out the front window. It has never been re-painted, except for the right front fender, which appears to have been wrecked. The engine has never been repaired or replaced. It doesn't burn oil and gets about 17 miles per gallon. The transmission is what Gotelli calls a "Jerk-a-Matic", but it shifts fine.*

*We drive the car. We don't tow it! I drove it to Colorado in 1997 to the POCI Convention, and Norm drove the Chieftain. We entered the Survivor Class and the Safari took a Silver Medal. The Chieftain missed by about 5 points. We've been to Portland, OR., the Western Regionals in Santa Clara, CA., Lake Havasu, AZ., and last year in Ventura, CA. Norm has threatened to turn his taillights off, so I can't find my way home! We're planning to go to Joplin, MO. this summer, towing a 1957 Serro Scotty tear drop trailer. Hope to see you there.*



*If you're wondering what happened to Dorothy, she passed away the day after we bought the Safari from Cindy. She was 95 and had been in a coma for awhile. She rides with me when I go on a trip, and we send postcards home to Cindy.*