

### **An X-File... Part 1 - The Birth**

*You know... I remember it like it was just yesterday. It was the fall of '87 and a friend and I were cruising up town late one afternoon when we happened to go by Bill Ahl Buick. As was often the case, we decided to go ahead, pull in and roam through the lot to check out the inventory (like we always did every other lot in town - and there were several back then), hoping (futilely it always seemed) to spy the always elusive buy-of-a-lifetime. Maybe something like a '71 GSX someone had gotten tired of paying the insurance on and had traded it in on a car more economical - like a Skylark or maybe a used late model Cutlass.*

Once, we stumbled across a really clean '73 Z-28 over on the Chevy dealer's lot that someone no longer was in love with - but it had a huge "SOLD" sign laying on the dash. It was a beauty too - maroon, with white stripes boldly saying how much this car wanted other drivers to mess with it. The humdrum GM black vinyl interior, resplendent with buckets and a console that the previous owner had installed a Hurst shifter within, it's large white shifter ball showing the world it's huge "H" atop of it. But alas... it was destined to be picked up the next morning by someone quicker than Bill and I.

*Bill was my motor head brother-in-law, a guy who lived-ate-and-slept cars as much as I did. Often, he and I would make this classic journey... like two long departed souls who could not escape earth's bonds and were condemned to traverse the earth looking for "it" - the perfect car. So it was that September afternoon... we were haunting our favorite lots (actually, every lot was a favorite - after all, "it" might be found on the lot you least expected it, right?) and were winding up our trip through automotive Mecca when we saw some activity at the back of Ahl's lot.*

"What's that they're unloading off that transporter?" I asked, pointing to a very shiny black car being backed down the ramps. Bill mumbled something unintelligible but it didn't matter - we both were spellbound by what we were seeing.

We were sitting about 40 yards away and just happened to see the autumn sun glisten off the muscular flanks of a car that looked to be very wet - on a very dry day. The transporter driver was gently easing the vehicle off the weathered trailer; it's tractor idling slowly with the smell of burnt diesel heavy in the air. I eased off the brakes of my '85 4x4 Chevy and allowed the truck to roll towards the "New Car Unload" area, our eyes still transfixed upon what surely was as captivating as watching a newborn infant enter the world. We were witnessing something special; something that few get to see - the "birth" of a street terror.

We could hear the exhaust note of the shiny black car's powerful motor, yet it was strangely subdued. It was as if something was rumbling but you weren't close enough to tell just what it was... kind of like hearing the baritone growl of a wolf that has its eyes transfixed upon you - just before it leaps for your throat. This car rumbled - just like that.

"Man, Bill... I've never seen a car like this. What the hell is it?"

"Damned if I know. My guess is that it's a Regal, maybe one of those new T-Types - or is that the Turbo T this year? But - it sure doesn't sound like one. And that paint..." His voice just trailed off as we saw the rear tires of the car touch asphalt for the first time, the driver just gently letting the car get its footing. Slowly, ever so slowly, the front tires came on down the ramps and then they too were upon the pavement. "It" - was awake now... it's swept back exhaust continuing to rumble,

small drops of condensate dripping from the passenger side pipe...

By this time, we were close enough to see the new car window sticker in the passenger side window, some other smaller stickers in various places on the front windshield, and a funny emblem upon the cars' flank. Sort of a "6" but with an arrow going through it.

Otherwise, the car was all black.

No chrome to be easily seen other than the lugs of the wheels... the bumpers were black; the door handles were black; the moldings were black; the tiny duck-tail spoiler was black; no stripes - nothing. Just a black car that demanded your eyes not stray from it.

We sat there quietly and I shut off the truck. The driver opened the very long driver's door and slid out the seat to stand beside the car, an odd grin upon his face. It was then he noticed us watching him complete his after hours delivery.

"Yours?" he asked with a nod toward the hardtop before him.

"No..." I answered longingly. "What IS it?" I HAD to know. Even the usually vociferous Bill was quiet, the both of us feeling as if we were either in the presence of something either unimaginably evil - or, that if we were to look away, it would be gone...

"Well, I don't rightly know myself" the driver shrugged as we stepped out of the truck into the warm air. "It's supposed to be damn fast... maybe?" he seemed to ask us, the now-humbled self-proclaimed car experts. "There - on the grill - that's what it is. A GNX." The driver just stood there mesmerized, just as we were, sort of talking to us... but maybe to himself... or to the car.

"Yeah... this one's special alright... aren't you?... I could feel it the minute I sat in the seat... this car is unlike any other." Bill and I stood looking, feeling as if we were upon Holy ground, not worthy to see what our eyes beheld. "Yeah... this car is going to make someone VERY happy..." he continued, "I guess it's not sold - yet. But it won't take long... no sir-ree... not long at all... you're not 'just' a GN, are you?..."

*I walked up to the passenger window, wishing I could remember what I had heard about "GN's" - which was little of nothing since I had long ago erroneously dismissed them as being a "serious" performance car. The air was crisp and cool, carrying an occasionally whiff of that new exhaust smell, the musky odor of new steel after being heated.*

*But the best smells of all were those from the new lacquer paint overlaid with the scent of rubber from expensive performance tires. The scents dreams are made of...*

*The window sticker was revealing and proclaimed a heady price - including the ASC/McClaren mods - of almost \$30000! My God, I thought... what kind of mods could justify a package price of over ten grand?*

*I slowly circled the car, Bill right behind me, and looked in the still open driver's door. A complete gauge cluster was on the dash and the new car interior smell was equally intoxicating. The stereo was an AM-FM-Cassette with something called*

*"Concert Sound" lettered upon it near the small Equalizer sliders. A small gray console was tucked between two gray/black-striped buckets with the same orange/red/white "arrow-6" emblem on the headrest. I was amazed at the size of the rear seat! It was enormous and looked very comfortable. This was indeed a very unusual car.*

*But the oddest thing to me was this tiny emblem on the dash. On the passenger side was a numbered plate that was covered with a semi-transparent film. I couldn't make out the number and the transporter driver saw me staring.*

"That, my friend, is the sequential build number of this car. I think it's in the high 200's or so." Oddly, I was jealous of his knowledge about this exotic/domestic... that HE knew more about "it" than I did.

I stepped back and stood up straight. Bill knelt on the ground and looked at the wheels, beautiful in themselves but still not chrome. They were a lace-effect/cross-hatch that had polished outer rims with the lace being black, apparently composed of mostly aluminum. Large flares kept the huge Goodyear Gatorback's barely tucked beneath the car... the little edge nubs still protruding like porcupine needles off the tires. The car was breathtaking.

"Look at this!" Bill shouted from beneath the rear bumper. Kneeling down beside him, I saw his finger pointing at an odd-looking bar attached to the right side of the rear axle going towards the front of the car and differential cover that had GNX upon it. Cool, I thought... very, very cool.

"Here, watch this," said the driver stepping back toward the driver's door. He slid the key in and immediately we could hear a ding-ding-ding-ding sound as he slid the key to the "Run" position. He then reached further into the car, opened the glove box, and seemed to press a button that immediately caused the trunk to pop open.

"That's the big deal?" asked Bill. "A remote trunk release? C'mon, man. That's been around for years."

The driver was now back out of the car and looked at Bill annoyingly.

"No... that's not 'the big deal'" he smirked. "This is..."

He pointed into the trunk. Wrapped in plastic was a heavily bound book.

"What's that?" the now humbled Bill asked respectfully.

"A book - that goes with the car, about the car - and no, it's NOT the warranty manual. THESE books are VERY rare."

I was dumbfounded. I had heard a little about the Turbo Buicks but had not even considered them for a couple of reasons. One - everyone I had ever seen before (and that wasn't many because there were hardly any around) looked like something my mom would drive to the local grocer. Two - I really didn't think they were anything special... certainly not a car I wanted. I mean, after all... what kind of performance could one expect from a mid-eighties new car - with a V6? From what I knew, the Vette was the "King of the Hill" and an car that had gotten a lot of press was the new IROC Camaro/Trans-Am GTA that now had the 5.7 litre motor available.

Sure, a few guys supposedly were getting some of the 5.0's to run decent but they couldn't keep 'em together.

But looking at this car I just knew it was something different... this was NOT a car my parents would drive... I had to have THIS car. THIS car was my "It".

It just sat there in the sun... bold. Black... very, very black. And confident. Off in the distance someone mashed the go-pedal on a barely muffled V8 that had to be modded. I touched the cool metal for the first time and was surprised to feel a warmth from cold steel. The paint was the best I had EVER seen on a GM car... wet looking, deep and lustrous, even though it had just come off of a transporter.

I had to sit in it.

*I walked around to the driver's side and before the transporter guy could protest, I slid into the seat. I reached down to my left and moved the little multi-positional knob I'd seen earlier and heard the immediate whirring of the power seat motors doing my bidding. A little higher up and more to the rear I adjusted the tilt angle of the seatback. I reached up with my left hand and pulled back on the tilt lever just behind the multi-function turn signal lever, adjusting the wheel to the perfect angle for me. My eyes caressed the dash now as my right hand slid over the shifter handle and the console. I admired the instrumentation and the vast expanses of gray before me, only to settle again upon the build plate. I just had to know... what was this car's ID? I reached over and lifted the corner of the covering... and felt a burly hand upon my shoulder.*

"DO NOT do that" the gruff voice of the driver said. "That's only for the owner to do."

"I'm *going* to own this car" I blurted out - not even knowing why OR how I said it - noting Bill's eyes popping from his head as he stared in through the windshield. Quickly I ripped the protective plastic away as I heard the driver curse - 281. This was car #281. And somehow, some way, I had to have *this* car.

GNX #281 was "It"...

A very cool breeze on that still autumn afternoon suddenly ruffled my hair and then slid down the collar of my shirt, giving me a chill unfelt before. Only then did I realize what happened.

It was then I knew - that at that very moment - this car just owned **me**...