

Members Profile
Bob and Gerlinde Williams (Club Secretary)
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This month's member profile brings the story of our club secretary Gerlinde Williams, which by the way is a very difficult office to hold. You try making sense out of what is being said in one of our business meetings and writing it down. Gerlinde and her husband of 25 years, Bob, have been members of the Tri-City Cruisers since about 2000. She was born in Mannheim, a small town in the Southwest portion of Germany. Life in Germany after the war was to say the least, tough. Automobiles were rare, most people rode bicycles or walked, travel was limited and business was attended to first. Gerlinde went to school like all Germans then did for 8 years, 6 days a week, 365 days a year, no summer breaks. A two-hour break for lunch, which included the walk to and from home, broke up the day. Saturday's schedule was half a day. After graduation students at about 14 years of age contacted local businesses and signed 3-year contracts for internships in business. School in the morning and very low paying hard work the afternoon. Gerlinde signed up with an accounting firm and served her internship but three years later decided that accounting wasn't all that much fun and went to work at an insurance company with National recognition. She was happy with the career and never planned to leave the company, which is often the case.

Her life took a detour when the opportunity to come to the United States opened up. Landing in New York she was shocked by the sea of humanity, mixed races and hustle and bustle. With a final destination of Oklahoma in the works she was shocked to hear stories that Oklahoma was the home of Indians, wild Indians. What have I done, she thought? A friend pointed out an Indian sitting on a bus in New York, Gerlinde was puzzled as well as relieved when she discovered the guy wasn't wearing feathers.

Arrival in Oklahoma was scary, being picked up by relatives who had never seen her before, only had a picture. They found her and took her home. Oklahoma was the first telephone she had ever had. A call home to Germany meant a call to the local Post Office who would go tell her Mother that she had a Telephone call. A waitress job at a Howard Johnson's restaurant turned out to be quite educational and an important steppingstone in a remarkable career. English not well spoken nor understood proved quite a challenge but forced her to read people's body language to determine how things were going. A skill that she still draws on today. Home sick to the bone the frequent trips back home kept her in touch with family, and kept that come back home feeling tugging on her. Then one day she just decided that I'm here and I'm going to stay and I'm going to become a success. And she did.

A customer whom she didn't know called her at work one day, wanted to talk to her about a job. He had been impressed with her attention to business and an interview resulted in a job in the printing business. With her training in accounting she considered this a step down and often when asked about the ink on her hands would not correct assumptions that she was a hairdresser. Out of respect to the man giving her the job, she remained a loyal employee until his death.

While working her job at Howard Johnson's her daily trip took her by the State Capitol and she dreamed of a job in State Government. That dream came true when she joined the print shop there. Her climb to the top was quick and she was the top Administrator there until her retirement earlier this year. This job included the printing requirements of the Governor, the State Senate and the House and that of the Supreme Court. Quite some responsibility!

Gerlinde and cars never really mixed well. Due to her upbringing, cars were transportation only and driving was something you had to do to get to work. Her first attempt at driving, a 1955 Ford with a three speed standard shift on the column resulted in a trip into a cornfield. Automatic became the transmission of choice as well as of necessity. She finally learned to drive in an Aunt's Buick Riviera, not a bad ride. Her first car to own was a basic Rambler, rubber floor mats and all! A basic Chevrolet Nova came next, a step in the right direction. Then came the Black 82 Nissan 200SX with red interior, her favorite car. This car had a voice that would remind you to buckle up, your getting low on gas and etc. The voice was that of a female and Gerlinde liked the reminders. One vivid memory was one icy day on the way to work she slid off the road into a neighbor's yard. While trying to walk back home while wearing 6 inch heels a local dog decided to bite her. Cars and ice are not a good combination for her.

The social aspect of car ownership and cars as an art form i.e. restoration, car clubs and such was a concept that took a while to sink in. She says she didn't realize how talented Bob was until she saw him transform a pile of rust into a show car. But she now gets it. She loves to help Bob build the engines for their hot rods. Her hobbies include gardening, wild animal watching and feeding and enjoying her retirement. Travel is something she is looking forward too. She has one brother and one sister and her mother is still living at the young age of 94.

Bob was born in Capitol Hill General Hospital and grew up in the area between Walker and Robinson around S.W. 10th street. He attended Riverside Elementary, Jackson Junior High and Capitol Hill High School. Bob, like many 14 year olds in the city, started riding Cushman motorcycles. He rode a Highlander, not the Eagle as they were out of his price range. He also dreamed of owning a Mustang Motorcycle. His interest in cars was increased with his work as a mechanic on a factory stock roundy round car at Goldsby and OKC raceway in the early 80's. His first car was a 1952 4-door Plymouth much like Earl Rowland's, except his had the original 6 cylinder. He did have dual exhaust, probably as loud as the law would allow in those days. A long line of nice cars then followed including a 1956 Ford two door V-8, a 1958 Ford Fairlane 500 with a 352 with the special "Overdrive" transmission. Other cars included a 1964 Corvette, and a 1963 Ford Station Wagon. He once owned a 1934 Ford Coupe that had a cracked block. He would drive it, let it sit, drain the water out of the pan until oil started coming out and drive it again. He bought the car for \$45.00 and sold it for \$75.00. They currently drive a 39 Ford Deluxe, a 1964 Ford Falcon Convertible, a 1964 Ford Comet project car and a 1961 Ford Econoline E-100 project car. Bob has spent most of his working career in the printing business, and at one time worked special printing jobs in the basement of the building where Gerlinde worked, this was after they were married. He lived in Houston Texas for 10 years. Currently they are the head of the family that includes 5 Children, 10

Grandchildren and 2 Great Grand Children. They bring a voice of reason to our car club. Always to be counted on to provide support and an opinion that is valued. As car club members go they are the “Cats Meow”. Thanks for all you do.