

Members Profile
Pat and Dean Atkinson
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Pat currently serves as the Secretary of the Cruisers, a position she has had for some time. She was born in Pasadena California where her father was a Pastor of a church. She remembers traveling with her parents in a 1948 Chevrolet from California to Miami Florida. They were on their way to Cuba and missionary work. During the trip she remembers a blow out or the wheel coming off of the old Chevy and rolling down the road. This event left her with a vivid and exciting memory for a girl of four.

She spent the next eleven years going to school in Cuba which explains her mastery of the Spanish language. She had just returned to the States with her Sister, who needed heart surgery, when Castro began his revolution to take over Cuba. Her parents remained safe by fleeing the city for the country and having a pillow painted up to look like an American flag on their car. Castro's men saluted them and assisted in their trip. Her trip back to the States was also a memorable one considering a 15 year old girl riding a train from Miami to Chicago and on to California. Quite a long trip, which included eating and sleeping on a train for that amount of time. Wow! She graduated High School in Nashville Tennessee after attending school at Pomona High School in California. She continued her education by enrolling at the Nazarene College that had previously been her high school and graduating with a degree in Education.

Dean was born in Ardmore Oklahoma and grew up kicking around there and in Kansas City. He planned to graduate high school in Kansas City but went back to Ardmore High School after being told that he would have to go an additional year in Kansas City. After graduation, Dean worked at various jobs in the Kansas City area, including the Nazarene Publishing House, mechanic at a local garage, and the General Motors Plant, Fisher Body, and started messing around with upholstery. He was drafted into the Army and served in Korea. After getting out of the Army he enrolled at Bethany Nazarene College in Bethany Oklahoma.

When Pat graduated college she got her first car, a 1964 Chevelle. She drove it to Kansas City and met Dean's family. They thought that she should meet them. They were married the next summer. After Dean graduated from Bethany they took a church in Hollis Oklahoma. Pat stayed home to care for the first of their two sons. She continued her role as a stay at home mother and eventually home school both boys. She got back into teaching, went to work at the Green House at Oklahoma State University (OSU) in Stillwater Oklahoma and finished her Masters Degree at Southern Nazarene University, and served as a Graduate Assistant at OSU while working on and earning her Doctorate (EDD) from there in 2001. She is currently teaching English as a Second Language at Overholser Elementary.

Dean worked in Kansas City with his brother, at Chuck's Body Shop in Bethany, served as caretaker of the Nazarene Church Camp in Anadarko, and lived in Oklahoma City and Ardmore sometimes commuting back and forth to Bethany and at Heiliger's Body Shop

in Blanchard. They settled in Newcastle in 1980 where Dean built their beautiful home. Dean's love of cars started early, learning to drive in a 1941 LaSalle. He lived at the edge of town and his father would let him drive up to the main road, park it and walk to town from there. His first car was a 1941 Plymouth Convertible which his dad bought for him to drive to school. When he graduated college he purchased his first new car, a 1964 Pontiac Catalina, 2 door hardtop. He has owned quite a number of cars, some of which he would like to have back. Included in this list are a 1954 Buick Special, 2 door hardtop; a 1932 Ford pickup; and a 1950 Ford Custom Convertible with a removable hardtop. He has built/rebuilt countless numbers of cars with his 1951 customized white Pontiac with the 1984 Olds Toronado front wheel drive engine/running gear, the current ride.

Pat learned to drive a stick shift in a 1969 Camaro with the 396 engine and four on the floor. That must have been exciting! Her choice of cars today is quite simple; comfort, air, power, push buttons everywhere. Nothing else matters. Dean asked her if he could build her a custom ride and she said "I sure would like a Van.", to enable her to assist folks and kids to Church and events. Just a note, she has a van today to do just that, but the van Dean has in mind would be a little different. He has selected a 1940 Ford Delivery Van. When she saw the body for the first time her reply was "OK", obviously aware of Dean's unlimited talent. This machine will be OSU Orange with Tan stand out flames and a nice off Orange and Tan interior. Powered by a 1979 Lincoln 302 engine and transmission, sitting on a 1978 Pontiac Trans-Am sub frame, it should run and drive just as nice as it will look. Oh, by the way, it will have all the power and bells and whistles just like Pat likes them.

When Pat had by-pass surgery in 2005, Dean stayed home from his job at Heiligers to take care of her and has finally taken up Upholstery as a full time vocation. The Church and Children's Ministries has been and will continue to be a central part of their lives. Charter Members of the Cruisers since 1997, they are appreciated by all.