



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

DOT Auto Safety Hotline
Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire
To Report Vehicle Safety Defects
1-888-DASH-2-DOT
(1-888-327-4236)
INTERNET: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/hotline

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY 100079

Date Received

Repository ☐

15-SEP-2004

Reference No.
10092291

2004 OCT 15 AM 10:47

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name

Daytime Telephone Number

E-mail Address

Address

Evening Telephone Number

City LUTHERVILLE

State MD

Zip Code

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? ☒ YES ☐ NO
In the absence of an authorized address to the vehicle manufacturer.
Signature of Owner _____ Date 10.13.04

VEHICLE INFORMATION

17 digit Vehicle Identification Number located at bottom of windshield on driver's side
1G4CW52L6R1

Make
BUICK

Model
PARK AVENUE

Model Year
1994

Date Purchased

Dealer's Name and Telephone Number

Engine:
No. Cylinders 6

Fuel Type:
Gas

Original Owner
☐

Dealer's City

State

Zip Code

Transmission Type
AUTOMATIC

☒ Antilock Brakes
☒ Cruise Control

Powertrain
FRONT WHEEL DRIVE

Vehicle Component Code
161000 STRUCTURE:FRAME AND MEMBERS

Multiple Failure: 1

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Incident Date(s)
12-SEP-2004

Failure Mileage
114,994

Failure Speed
25

ENGINE MOUNTS AND STEERING

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A TIRE FAILURE

Tire Make

Tire Model (Name or Number)

Tire Size (Example P215/65R15)

DOT No. (Example: DOTM19ABC036)

☐ Original Equipment
☐ Prior Repair

Failure Location:

Tire Component Code

Tire Failure Type

ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO BE COMPLETED WHEN REPORTING A CHILD SEAT FAILURE

Make:

Date Manufactured:

Model No./Name:

Seat Type:

Installation System

Child Seat Component Code:

Failed Part:

APPLICABLE INCIDENT INFORMATION

(Please describe in detail the incident(s), failure(s), crash(es), and injury(es).)

Crash

Fire

Number of Persons Injured

Number of Deaths

Reported to Police

☐ Yes ☒ No

☐ Yes ☒ No

N

Narrative Description of Incident(s), Crash(es), and Injury(es).

Please describe (1) events leading up to the failure, (2) failure and its consequences, and (3) what was done to correct the failure; i.e., parts repaired or replaced (and if old part is available).

WHILE DRIVING AT 25 MPH. THE CONSUMER HEARD A LOUD NOISE COMING FROM THE FRONT END. AS RESULT, THE CONSUMER LOST THE STEERING AND CONTROL OF THE VEHICLE. WHEN THE VEHICLE STOPPED, THE CONSUMER FOUND THE BACK OF THE ENGINE FELL ON THE STREET. THE VEHICLE WAS TOWED TO AN INDEPENDENT SHOP AND THE MECHANIC INDICATED TO THE CONSUMER THE BOTH BOLTS AND THE SUB-FRAME WERE BROKE. PLEASE PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION. *JB

SEE ATTACHED DETAILED EXPLANATION OF INCIDENT.

Include, if available: Police/Fire Department Report, Photos, and Repair Invoice.

ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF NECESSARY

The Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579) This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a Manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

Lutherville, Maryland
22 September 2004

Mr. G. Richard Wagoner, Jr.
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
General Motors Corporation
300 Renaissance Circle
Detroit, MI
48265

Dear Mr. Wagoner,

Since the early '80's I have been driving Buick Park Avenues - - and I have always found them to be reliable, comfortable, and stylish cars. Our present Park Avenue has been well cared for and is still a good-looking and very comfortable car but, unfortunately, it is beginning to age (1994) and my wife and I have decided that it is about time to replace the vehicle. Less than two weeks ago, we visited a local Buick dealer to take a look at a new car. While we didn't buy one that day, we did pick up a brochure, sit in the floor model and, generally, go through the steps that we would normally take before buying a new car. It was unfortunate that we didn't buy a replacement car that day. Here's why I say unfortunate:

On Sunday, Sept. 12th, my wife and I were driving in Pennsylvania, just over the Maryland state line, when suddenly (and without any warning), the motor of our Park Avenue dropped to the roadway - - taking out the steering as it went. Without steering, I immediately lost control of the car, drifted to the left (crossing the oncoming lane of traffic), and came to a stop on the lawn of a school. Had any vehicles been coming in the opposite direction, we would have crashed head-on and probably been killed. We were both extremely fortunate to walk away from this mishap without injury to ourselves or anyone else. We are quite thankful for the way this turned out.

Since this happened at around 2 o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, we had no other choice but to call the AAA and have our car towed to a Shrewsbury, PA, garage.

Since I'd never heard of an engine falling out of a car (no matter how old) - - and since something was obviously defective - - I called Buick Customer Service to inform them of this mishap and - - since this was such a freak occurrence - - to determine if Buick would assume the responsibility for remounting the engine and making the necessary repairs.

Following a series of phone calls (two of which resulted in my holding on the phone for just over an hour to talk to one of your customer service representatives) I was finally told that in order for Buick to cover anything, I would first have to call Buick Roadside

Leaving northbound Interstate 83 (where we had just been driving at high speed) near Loganville, Pennsylvania, we turned south on Route 45 heading back toward Maryland. As we were making our left turn onto Rt. 45 (and were just coming out of our turn into the southbound lane of the older two-lane road connecting Baltimore, Maryland and York, Pennsylvania) we were moving at about 20-25 mph when we heard a sudden and very loud "bang" from the front of our car. We immediately lost our steering - - and since we were just coming out of a left turn, our wheels were still turned slightly to the left -- and our car crossed over the northbound lane of the highway and on to the lawn of the Loganville-Springfield Elementary School. Had another vehicle been coming north on the highway at that moment, we would have had a head-on collision and probably been killed. After stopping the car - - just three feet short of a large tree - - we found that the rear engine mounts had given way and that the rear of the engine was practically touching the ground. When the engine fell, it had disconnected our steering!

The frightening thing about this incident is that we may have been killed in a head-on collision and the accident investigators would have had no way of knowing that the accident was caused by the car losing steering. The police investigators would probably have concluded that the accident was a result of "driver error" or the driver possibly "falling asleep at the wheel." This raises the interesting question of "How many other Buick Park Avenues may have lost steering and crashed because of a similar failure in the engine mounts?" If it happened to one well-cared-for-car like ours, it has probably happened to many others. And, perhaps, the drivers of those cars may well have been highway fatalities!

Following this incident, we called for AAA roadside assistance. Our car was subsequently picked up by a "flat-bed" tow truck and taken to a local AAA contract garage where we later learned that the rear engine mounts and subframe had broken loose causing the engine to drop - - which, in turn, caused our steering failure.

I subsequently called General Motors to inform them of this parts failure. I also told them that I thought GM should cover the cost of this repair because, in my way of thinking, no engine should ever break loose in this manner. GM gave me no satisfaction whatsoever. I finally told the AAA garage to make the necessary repairs (copy of Repair Invoice enclosed) - - and I sent a letter to the president of General Motors detailing the entire incident and the manner in which GM failed to take any responsibility for the parts failure that led to this possible deadly crash.

Assistance and have the car towed to a Buick or GM dealership for a diagnosis- - which may or may not result in Buick making necessary repairs to the car. I was also told that I would have to pay a towing Pick-Up fee of \$45 to \$55 - - plus \$3 to \$5 per mile towing fee to the dealership. If I had to pay a \$50 pick-up fee plus \$5 per mile (for about 25miles) that would have cost me \$175 just to have the car moved. Then (after spending the \$175) Buick would probably find some excuse for not covering the cost of the repairs and I would have to pay considerably more to have the car repaired by a Buick dealership than I would have to pay at an independent garage. I was in a Catch-22 situation and I opted to have the repairs made by the independent AAA garage in Pennsylvania. With parts needed to replace those that were broken when the engine fell out, the cost to me was about \$1,000.00.

My wife and I are still planning on replacing our Park Avenue but, I can assure you Mr. Wagoner, that after this experience, our next car will not be another Park Avenue - - or any other GM vehicle. In addition, I will recommend to my children, relatives, neighbors and friends that they not purchase another GM vehicle because of this experience.

Yours truly,

Copy to:

Mr. Robert A. Lutz
Vice Chairman, GM North America

Mr. Gary L. Conger,
GM Vice President, North America

THE ATTACHMENTS TO THIS
DOCUMENT HAVE BEEN REMOVED
TO PROTECT UNWARRANTED
INVASION OF PERSONAL PRIVACY
PURSUANT TO EXEMPTION 6 OF
THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(6).