

Buick Says, 'Tanks for the Memories'

And the Hellcats kept rolling along – to the tune of 60 mph.

Able to “seek, strike and destroy” German tanks with their speed, the M18 tank destroyer was built by Buick during World War II.

While Buick production lines have been rolling for 110 consecutive years, during “the Big War,” the vehicles that Buick made looked decidedly different.

In honor of VE Day, which was first celebrated on May 8, 1945, Buick this year celebrated its contribution to the war effort, noting that, in February of 1942, the last civilian car left a Buick facility before full attention was placed on producing aircraft engines, ammunition and the M18, better known as the Hellcat.

The M18 originated in the design studio of Harley Earl, whose team also worked extensively on early camouflage paint. Even the Hellcat logo on the M18's front corner and patches worn by its crew was designed by Earl's staff.

Flanked by the words, “Seek, Strike, Destroy,” the logo depicts a wildcat biting down on crushed treads, signifying the Hellcat's mission of targeting enemy tanks.

Buick engineers brought the Hellcat to life from the design team's sketches and developed an innovative torsion bar suspension that provided a steady ride. Though it weighed about 20 tons – the same as almost nine modern day Buick Enclaves – the Hellcat was designed to be one of

the fastest tanks on the battlefield and was capable of traveling upwards of 60 mph.

Its power came from a nine-cylinder, 450-horsepower radial-type aircraft engine paired with a three-speed Hydramatic transmission.

“The Hellcat was considered the hot rod of World War II,” said Bill Gross, a historian who restored an M18 now on display at the Sloan Museum in Flint, Mich. “To give perspective, most German tanks of the day were capable of just 20 mph – and even today's M1 Abrams tank is outpaced by the Hellcat.”

Once developed, the Hellcat was tested in the same manner as millions of Buick passenger cars before and after it – at the General Motors Milford Proving Ground. Top speed testing was done on a paved, banked oval

and ride quality tests were done over specially developed stretches of bumps.

Of course, the M18 also required unique tests of its ability to ford six feet of water, climb small walls, and ram through structures.

Production of the M18 Hellcat began in mid-1943 and ended in October 1944. The project was so secretive that a story about the “new” tank destroyer ran in newspapers just a month before production ended.

“The men and women who developed the Hellcat and assembled them on the Buick line in Flint contributed a great deal to the war effort and to military engineering history,” said Gross.

“These people were instrumental in bringing such a great conflict to a close and their innovations are still in use today – the



A restored M18 Hellcat tank sits beside a 2013 Buick Enclave crossover.

M18's suspension remains a common design inspiration for modern military vehicles.”

In addition to 2,507 M18 tank destroyers, Buick factory work-

ers produced nearly 20,000 powertrains, a half-million cartridge cases, 9.7 million 20-mm shells, and a number of other war goods during WWII.

GM's Green Effort Earns EPA Award

Three General Motors buildings are being recognized for superior performance in the EPA's 2012 ENERGY STAR National Building Competition: Battle of the Buildings.

Those buildings include the Martinsburg (W.Va.) Customer Care and Aftersales, named a Top Water Performer for reducing water use by 51 percent.

The company's Ypsilanti Customer Care and Aftersales was ranked No. 14 overall for reducing energy use by 31 percent, resulting in more than \$4.5 million in energy cost savings.

Also, the Fontana, Calif., Customer Care and Aftersales was recognized for “20 Percent or Better Improvement,” reducing energy usage by more than 30 percent.

“Through diligent monitoring of our energy use and continuous improvement activities, the buildings that completed the competition cut energy use by more than 20,000 metric tons of CO2,” said Al Hildreth, GM's Company Energy manager. “The continued recognition of our energy efficient work is testament to the work our team does daily to improve the efficiency of our plants and facilities.”

GM reduced its energy use through a variety of strategies, including tracking energy use, making the most of heating and cooling ventilation systems, and controlling light levels and turning lights off when unneeded. Water reductions were possible from leak repair and conservation.

“The impressive results of the third annual National Building Competition are proof-positive that any building can take simple steps to improve the energy efficiency of the buildings where we all work, play and learn,” said Jean Lupinacci, chief of ENERGY STAR for commercial buildings and industrial plants.

“All of the participants in the Energy Star National Building Competition are finding more and more ways to cut energy use, saving thousands of dollars and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.”

Recently the EPA named General Motors its 2013 ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year for Sustained Excellence.

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