

## My GTO By Earl Lewis



My name is Earl Lewis and I am married to the beautiful Barbara Lewis. We just celebrated our 27<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. I am a Farmers Insurance agent and have been in the insurance business for over 30 years. Barb is the gas manager of J.D.Streett. We have five children. Scott is the police chief of Cottleville, Mike is in construction, Kristie is a photographer and graphic artist, Travis is looking forward to joining a local law enforcement agency, and DJ is a lead mechanic with Sears, and pursuing a career with a local law enforcement agency as well.

My love of GTO's began in the fall of 1967. I was going to pick up a friend who needed a ride home, who just happened to work for a Pontiac dealer. As I came down the hill in my 1962 Chevy Bel Aire with a 283 bored-out to 301 with 13/1 popper piston and an Isky no float cam milled head 4 speed and I saw it. A 1967 Plum GTO-Wow!

As I began talking to the salesman I learned it was a 400, 4 speed with a lot of power because it had no extras. No air conditioning, no power steering, and no power brakes. I took it for a test drive and knew I had to have it. After much negotiation, the goat was mine.

After that the goat and I became one. We were at Alton every Sunday at MAR-"where the big ones are." The goat and I had a big reputation stretching from the North end of St. Charles to West Alton. It was the greatest car I have ever had.

I sold it to my brother in 1972 for \$450.00. He blew the engine and wrecked it twice.

The years went by, and before I knew it, it was 2003. I had wanted a GTO, and Barb finally struck a deal with me. I had to stop smoking and a classic GTO would be mine.

Not long after that, my son Scott called. "I saw a red, '67 GTO for sale. You should go look at it." I went to check it out, and although it was in good shape, it needed some major repairs. It would need a new vinyl top, paint work, windshield, along with a laundry list of

smaller details. I made the man an offer, he declined. He wouldn't drop his price, and I wouldn't up mine. The search would have to continue.

I was on a mission, and found a GTO for sale in Minnesota. Off I went with my friend Pat Loy (a body man) to Minnesota. Barb packed us a lunch and we were on the road. When we arrived I saw a black '67 with a 421. Pat took one look, and said, "Let's go, it's a Lemans and not in good shape. It's aged pretty poorly." Homeward bound we were, without a GTO.

After countless phone calls, I discovered another GTO (out-of-state, of course) that I just had to have. This one was white, 67 GTO, 4 speed, and very nice from the photos attached to the ad. Here we go again, Pat in the car with a lunch packed from Barb in the seat between us. Off we were to somewhere near Chicago. I brought the picture and the ad with me. The first thing we saw was bad rust in the trunk. Not a good start, I thought. Pat went around to check under the driver's side dash, and when he put his hand on the floorboard, he was in water up to his wrist. I could go on, but let's just say it WOULD start, but would not move. Then, I let the guy have it and left him by saying, "Photoshop is an amazing thing, isn't it." And back home we came, once again without a GTO.

Pat and I left for our third GTO adventure, along with those lunches Barb so famously made for us, when I received a call from my son. The first GTO I looked at, the '67 red one, well the seller was ready to sell, and at my price. Needless to say we turned around and headed home. We had been everywhere, and my GTO was sitting 2 miles from my home the whole time.

Barb loved the car, and Barb's mom Rosemary, was kind enough to let me keep it in her garage while we restored it. New vinyl top, engine dress-up, side pipe, windshield, headers, MSD box wires, and new paint job, and the goat was ready. Shortly thereafter, a new flywheel (thanks Tom!) and clutch. As a final touch, a white Tiger sits perched atop the roof at car shows.

One night, after the goats completion, we were at Sonic in St. Charles for a car cruise. I noticed there were 3 other GTO's there and started talking to one of their owners. His name was Don Bright. He told me about the GTO club and I was hooked. Barb and I joined and have had such a great time with the shows, parties and the lifelong friends we've made. The trips we've taken-the Nationals in Daytona were a blast, if you know what I mean, Rodger, 10-4.

The goat has won countless trophies, including 3 best of shows. I hope the goat will go in this winter for a makeover. I think everyone will enjoy what happens.

Barb and I currently have a lot of work going on now in order to get over the shop fire at our home. We lost a '68 RS-SS and '97 Camaro and all the tools and equipment.

We are both very happy to be a part of the Gateway GTO Club.

