

Charley's 1966 GTO

By
Danny Schmidt



This story is about a 1966 GTO. Charley Schmidt (also a Gateway GTO member) was 17 years old in 2005. Still in high school, he was looking for a race car and it had to be a GTO. His mom wasn't too thrilled about the idea at the time. It was in a storage unit in St. Louis. The owner had traded for it. Charley went back and forth with the guy on the price and eventually brought her home. The car was a little rough but it was already back halved with a Dana rear and no motor or transmission.

Charley built the motor himself from a 455 bored to 461. He built a 400 transmission with 4500 RPM stall converter. During his senior year in high school he took body shop trade class. He and his teacher put an awesome paint job on the GTO. That summer we did a lot of test and tune at Gateway and went to a lot of Pontiac sanctioned meets.

When we were racing at a regular race and the hood's off, spectators walk by and see the Pontiac motor, take a step back and say that's no Chevy Rat that's a Pontiac. There's not

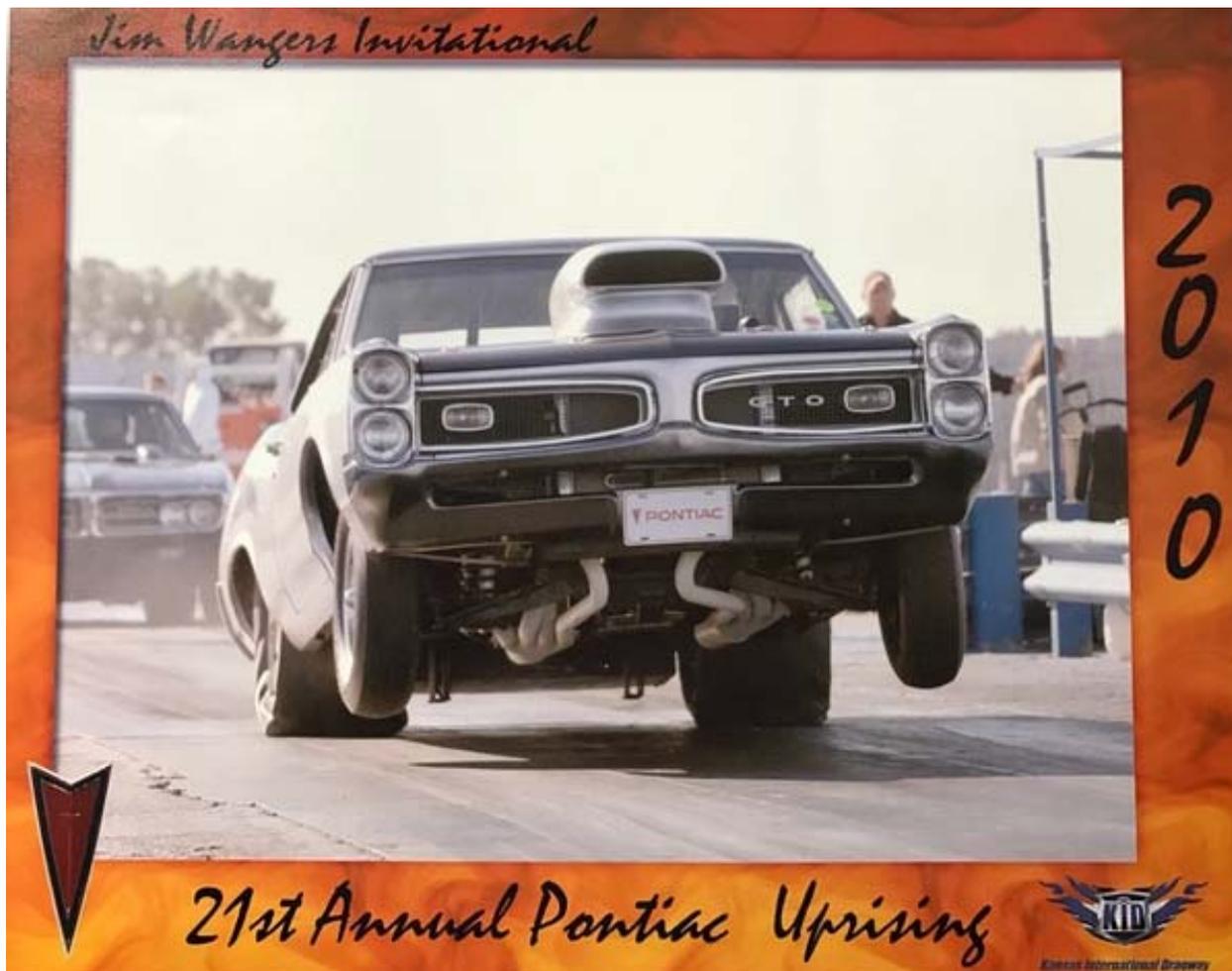
that many around with Pontiac motors, unless you go to Norwalk. We have been there every year since 2006 except this year. We had a lot of other things going on.

Charley and the GTO have done quite well at Norwalk. In 2007, he won the Gamblers Race against all that was there on Friday night. In 2008 he won the whole works on Saturday to lose to the final winner on Sunday. Runner up is not bad when here is over 400 race cars involved.

We've been to the Pontiac meets in Tulsa, Wichita, and Beach Bend Raceway in Kentucky. The GTO has actually been down George Ray's Wildcat Dragstrip in Paragold, Arkansas. That was on a Sunday. On the way there, Saturday night, we stopped and ran the Sikeston locals at the Sikeston Drag Strip. It was all Chevy, Ford and Mopar. Out of towners brings his GTO in and won the Saturday night special.

I've watched his car pulling front tires higher and higher every year, and going from mid 11s to breaking into the 9s. You know the story, Charley wanted to go faster and bought a Haas Engineered Firebird. I asked what he was going to do with the GTO. He said he needed to sell it to help pay for the Firebird. What was I supposed to do? I bought it. I couldn't let it go. With Charley's help, I am going to see what this 62 year old man can do.

I love the memories that were made with this GTO. It now shares the stable with a 70 GTO, 61 Catalina 2 door Bubbletop, 61 Bonneville, 64 Catalina 2 door hardtop, 75 Trans Am



and a 51 GMC. Some purist might ask why make a 66 GTO factory 4 speed and A/C car into a race car. Because when this GTO came to Charley it had been altered to the point of no return to stock. This car was saved but for another purpose as you can see by the pictures. If we can just get our youth involved even more, who knows how long this will last.



