



GTO of the Month



Replacement GTO

by **Brian Ray**



Two years ago, I told the story of my 68 GTO, and that story ended in 1989 with it getting stolen from our driveway in Tucson, AZ. After finally settling on a dollar figure from my insurance company, I went on a search for a replacement GTO. This time, I was searching for a 70 GTO Hardtop, preferably a 4-speed, but, since we lived in AZ, it **NEEDED** to have A/C. At that time, a 4-speed with air was like finding a needle in a haystack...but I did find a 70 GTO with A/C and a whole lot more, including a 455, in Eagleville, TN, about 30 miles south of Nashville. The car needed paint, but it ran pretty well and it had most of the options available on a 70 GTO, including the 455, TH400 transmission, 3.07:1 12-bolt posi-track, power front disc brakes, power steering, power windows, power door locks, power trunk release, power drivers seat, map light, vanity mirrors, (simulated) wood steering wheel, tilt, AM/FM radio, 8-track tape player, rally gauges, in-dash tachometer, and it was originally atoll blue with black vinyl top. In 1970 (and 71), the speedometer goes to 140 mph, and the guy I bought it from said that it would bury the speedo...so I had to try it out on the 1600 mile drive back to Tucson. With nobody but me on I-20 in West Texas on a sunny Sunday morning, I verified that claim!

The first thing I did to the car was to buy new tires as I had a rear tire blowout on the way back. Within a year I had the car painted, and then had the engine rebuilt. We were very active in the AZ Chapter of the POCI in those days and drove the car to quite a few local shows and went on cruises with the club. Thom Sherwood (who now owns two of the xXx GTOS, a cool black 70 GTO w/orange pinstripes, & more) was the president of the club at the time and remains a good friend.

I was transferred to Hill AFB near Ogden UT in Dec 1991, so Mary Ann loaded up our



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husky in the GTO while I towed our daily driver Grand Am behind my Jeep Comanche PU, spending Christmas in a Super 8. We went to quite a few cruises and car shows in UT and even helped start the Great Salt Lake POCI chapter up there. We cruised with friends to the 1992 POCI Western Regional Convention in Lake Havasu, AZ and to the 1993 POCI Convention in S. CA, Eric's first Pontiac Convention at 3 months old. Of course, while in Utah I couldn't resist checking out the Bonneville Salt Flats during Speed Week. I didn't race since I didn't have any safety gear, and besides, that salt gets EVERYWHERE!

I was transferred to Edwards AFB, CA, in the fall of 1995. Edwards sits in the Mohave Desert about 100 miles north of LA and is close to nothing, which is good for testing aircraft. Pontiac Drag Days (PDD) was one of the few "local" events that I did while in CA as it was held at the now defunct Los Angeles County Raceway in Palmdale, about a 40-minute drive. PDD usually had 40-60 racers broken up into three different classes – A (No limits, cash payout) B (No electronics, cash payout), and Trophy. Both Jim Wangers and Pete McCarthy brought racecar(s) out, and at one of the races, since he was out west for the California Hot Rod Reunion in Bakersfield, Arnie Beswick showed up with his Tameless Tiger. I usually drove the GTO and in 1996, I showed up enough, got lucky enough, and occasionally cut descent lights and I won the Trophy Class for the year. I got progressively worse over the next two years, getting 4th overall, then not placing, but I still had a lot of fun racing. Best time/speed in the high dessert was 14.28/95 mph, not fast, but fairly consistent. We did do a few car shows while in CA, and this is when we joined GTOAA, attending the 1996 Western Regional Convention in Long Beach just across from the Queen Mary. We also attended the first annual "Tour de Wangers" which was an open house at Jim Wangers' shop. While there the group headed over to Carlsbad Raceway for a little sea level drag racing. (I couldn't get the tires to grip, unfortu-



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nately).

On our next adventure, I was stationed at Little Rock AFB just northeast of Little Rock, AR. The trip to LR featured Mary Ann once again piloting the 70 GTO while I towed the 65





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GTO that we currently own. Since I had begun the restoration on the 65 (engine & transmission removed, frame sandblasted, over my head), the hunt was on to maybe find someone who could finish that car. Because I had done one or two things at a time on the 70, I was finding that I was having to redo things that I had done shortly after I got it. After I dropped a valve and had to have the engine rebuilt again, I knew I couldn't afford two car projects. Now, the 70 was a mostly numbers matching, highly optioned 455 HO car, delivered to the Pontiac Retail Store in Pontiac, Michigan in October 1969, so I knew it was worth a lot more than the Chicago-area rust-bucket that was the 65. I also knew I couldn't cut up a numbers-matching car to get the 6-speed that I wanted but the 65 didn't have any of the original drivetrain. So I decided to keep the 65 and the only way to be able to afford to do the 65 right, was to sell the 70. I sold the car in February 1991 to a guy who had been searching the nation for a 70 GTO...he lived less than 10 miles from us and he was originally from N. IL (like me).

We moved back to AR in 2006 and although I have heard he still owns the car, though I have never seen it out. While I love my 65, 1970 is still my favorite year GTO, and someday...

