

A Decade's Worth of GTO

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On February 27th 2004, I received a phone call that would change things forever. It was something that I had been waiting on for nine months. I anxiously answered the phone and heard the following..."Brian, I have in my hands the keys to your new GTO." Up to this point, it had all been a waiting game. I put in my order at the dealership, sight unseen in June of 2003. From there I started reading everything I could from the internet and car magazines. I joined a forum called LS1GTO.com



GTOs fresh off the boat from Australia.

where we had insiders at GM actually tracking everything from the cars production to shipping dates and even the name of boats that they were being transported on. It was a really awesome experience. When I saw that my boat had landed, I knew it was only a matter of days. Following that fateful phone call I packed up things at work, told the boss where I was headed and ran out the door. I dropped by my parent's house, picked up my dad and my brother and I made a bee-line for the dealership. I arrived there in record time, and there it was waiting for me...my brand new GTO. The first time I started it up, I couldn't help but to smile. It gave me that gut feeling of anticipation, the same one that hits when you start climbing that first hill on a rollercoaster. I was hooked.

When I picked up the car, the salesman handed me a small pamphlet for the Gateway GTO Association. I filled out the info card and handed it back. Not long after that, I received a call from Jim Kiburz. We talked for a while and he told me about the club and what sort of activities they offered. I was a little apprehensive at first. On LS1GTO we had already heard about how some of the other clubs felt about the new GTOs (the Cruising Tigers in particular) and that they would either not let them join, or they were being treated like second class citizens. Jim assured me that the GGTOA was not one of those clubs and that they were thrilled to have the new cars and their owners become a part of their organization. At the first meeting I was met warmly and everyone seemed genuinely interested in having the new GTOs on board. It was amazing for me to be able to hang out with the people that owned and loved the classic muscle cars that I had been drooling over since I was a little kid playing with my Hotwheels. That year I participated in every club activity that I could. I wanted to soak in all that this hobby could offer. Since that time I've made so many new friends, that without the GTO I would likely never have met. It's been awesome talking to other people who are so passionate about cars (GTO or otherwise). Between online forums,



The new kid and the original muscle car.

the GTO club and just meeting random people at automotive events, I've learned so much and had a great time doing it. That following year brought me a lot of firsts. Car club membership, drag racing, autocross, car shows, cruises, drive-in movies, road trips, and the first date with a girl named Amy.



Wow, five GTOs!

The first road trip in the GTO was a small weekend run to Kansas City. A few members from LS1GTO.com and I decided to meet up in early 2004. At that point there were very few of these cars in the country. I had one of first ones in the whole St. Louis area. So when we all met in KC, we were all ecstatic to have five cars show up. That was the first time we'd see that many of the new GTOs in one place. There were three cars from Missouri, one from

Kansas and one from Iowa. It was a relatively short trip, but I made a few friends that I would end up talking to and actually hanging out with several times throughout the years.

As I mentioned earlier during the fall of that first year, I met a girl named Amy. We hit it off right away and began to hang out more and more. She humored me with my car obsession and went to so many car shows and cruises, that I lost count. All the while she had to share me with the GTO. I'd say they've gotten along pretty well, maybe a little jealousy here and there (the car thought I was spending too much time with her). Amy stuck with me despite the competition and in 2007 we married and moved into our first house. The GTO even managed to sneak into a few of our engagement photos. I've been working on turning her into a regular car nut. She even had a *gasp* Mustang for a while and she enjoyed it until the first really harsh snow storm, where rear wheel drive became a problem. Since then she's moved on other vehicles, but think I've at least got her hooked on power. Now she's not happy unless she can mash the go peddle and have it respond accordingly.



Engagement picture: You might see the GTO hiding in the background somewhere.

In 2008 my good friend and former club member, Bob Ploof reluctantly decided it was time to sell his GTO. It was an Impulse Blue 2004 almost identical to mine. He asked if I knew anyone who might be in the market for a used GTO. I mentioned it in passing to my brother Andrew, who since I'd joined the club had gotten to ride along and have fun with me on my GTO adventures. As it turned out he was very interested in buying. It was really a win-win situation. Bob knew his car (that he loved) was going to a good home, and my brother knew that the previous owner had taken good care of it. Now he could go and actually



The Blues Mobiles

participate in everything with his very own car. Being two brothers with two blue GTOs naturally led us to be known as "The Blues Brothers" within the club. That worked out because The Blues Brothers just so happens to be one of my favorite movies of all time. So Andrew and I attended the Halloween party and the Stars & Cars gala dressed as Jake and Elwood. We were even coaxed into an improvised dance routine, which actually didn't turn out too bad (I'm sure the alcohol helped).

Over the years I've partaken in numerous activities and a few really stick out in my mind. I attended and worked the Nationals in 2005 held by the Gateway GTO Association. Winning 3rd in class at the 06 Nationals in Louisville was an unexpected surprise. I got to display my car with Gateway club at the World of Wheels show that was held inside the America Center down town. The club cruises to Cuba Missouri, Springfield Illinois and Warm Springs Ranch in Boonville were all excellent. I participated in several car shows in Ames Iowa that were organized by one of my friends from the KC meet, and that was always a good time. The club picnics, Christmas parties and various other get-togethers are a

continual source of enjoyment. I would have to say though, of all the different car hobby related activities I've tried, my absolute favorite is autocross. For anyone who is unaware, autocross is basically road track racing on a smaller safer scale. It is a timed racing circuit laid out with parking cones on a large parking lot. Since the tracks are smaller than a real road course the speed is generally limited to safer speeds that won't put as much wear and tear on your tires and brakes. What you get instead is a very technical tight wound lay out that can show just what your car can (or can't) do. It's a great excuse to go out and throw the car around a bit without worrying about damaging it. If you hit cone, it'll buff out. So if you're a little bored with drag racing and want to try something new, I highly recommend it.



Yay, autocross!!

Now it is ten years later and the GTO is still my daily driver. It's starting to show its age and needs a little work, but whenever I fire it up I still get that roller coaster feeling. Some times are stronger than others, but it's still almost always there. I can only hope that every GTO owner has had as much fun with their Goat as I've had with mine. I've officially had one full decade's worth of good times with the GTO. Hopefully there will be many more to follow.