

My GTO
By Jim McCarthy



Guys have been known to do some crazy things as they approach 50. Whether it's a sense of lost time or regrets over life not lived, taking a turn at the wild side is often the result. For me it was a love affair with a "sweet 66 GTO". As I was approaching my 45th birthday I started to think about getting a 60's muscle car. I was looking for one of three cars, a tri-power 64 – 66 GTO, a 69 Roadrunner or a Hurst Oldsmobile 442.

At the time I was living in San Diego and one Saturday morning I went to the neighborhood Starbucks and in the line in front of me was a gentleman wearing an 'antique Drag Racing' tee shirt. We struck up a conversation and I told him what I was looking for. He told me that we should get together as he had a couple of cars, was active in local car clubs and that he would ask around if someone had such a vehicle for sale.

He sent a note inviting me to call him which I did and he then invited me to his home. I went to visit his house, which was just a couple of blocks from my house. There he was working on a very well detailed 56 Chevy with a couple of other local car guys. He raced this Chevy in the Antique Drag Races which were held at Carlsbad Drag Strip north of San Diego. He had another vehicle in the garage which was covered. After talking for awhile about cars, he pulled off the cover of 66 GTO.

I left his house that day and I continued my hunt, but my mind kept coming back to that GTO. Eventually one day he asked if I was really interested in the GTO and he gave me a price. We struck the deal and the GTO became mine.

I know little about the history of the car. She was born in Fremont, California and was originally equipped with a 389, 4 barrel, with a 2 speed automatic and air.



She is now modified, but great efforts were taken to retain a factory look to her. Her power plant utilizes the best of two generations, the tri-power carbs from a 65 GTO and a big block 455 HO from a 73. GES engineering from San Diego bore the short block .030 over to obtain 462 CI, and added few trick items such as forged TRW flat top pistons and push rods, Speed Pro rings, a roller chain and rockers, and an ISKY 270 MegaCam. The heads were milled to accept the hypercoated three-deuce intake manifold. A three-angle valve job and enlarging the seats for bigger valves was also done to increase the breathing. Erson chrome valve covers provide some shine to the heads, although I am looking to replace these with aluminum covers from the Tin Indian.

Air flow comes from the GTO hood scoop which is opened up to actually scoop cooler ram air under the hood into a reproduction cold-air pan, where three Rochester two-barrel carbs are topped with K&N filters. Spent fumes exit through hypercoated Doug Thorley headers with Quickie 3" cut out at the collector, and are quieted by MagnaFlow Stainless Steel Mufflers.

Electric is delivered by a PowerMaster 140 amp alternator to an all MSD component ignition. Startup is initiated by a trunk mounted Optima battery thru a PowerMaster mini high torque starter.



All this great torque is delivered through a three speed TH400 transmission with a 2400 stall converter, which is backed up with a Gear Vendor Overdrive/Underdrive unit. The car is equipped with a B&M Quicksilver shifter and a modified console. The axle is a GM 12 bolt posi equipped with 3:73:1 Richmond gears. Wheels are Weld Pro Star 15 X 7 wheels with B.F. Goodrich Radial T/A 245/60 X 15 tires. Helping it all stick are Lakewood Hop Stop traction bars.

Suspension modifications include HO Racing springs with Edelbrock shocks. Sway bars are 1 3/8" diameter HO Racing bars on the front and rear, with GM control arms and Energy Suspension polygraphite bushings. Front brakes are Stainless Steel disk brakes and the rear brakes are drum.

She is not just nice under the hood, but has a lovely body as well. Iron Hill Body in Bear, Delaware, stripped her down to the bare metal and sprayed DuPont Corvette Metallic Black Rose. The firewall and inner fenders are painted gray and the light bezels, the door reveals and bumpers were re-chromed. The bumper brackets were powder coated.

Interior restoration was done with Ames Performance reproduction seat covers and foam seat pads. Shoulder harnesses were added for safety. All metal surfaces were painted

black and the dash pad was replaced. She has a quality sound system for playing favorite 'oldies', the sound system is from Classic Sound.

I do share this ride with my fiancé Mary who is the love of my life, and Mary knows about my classic girl and enjoys traveling down the road with the three of us.