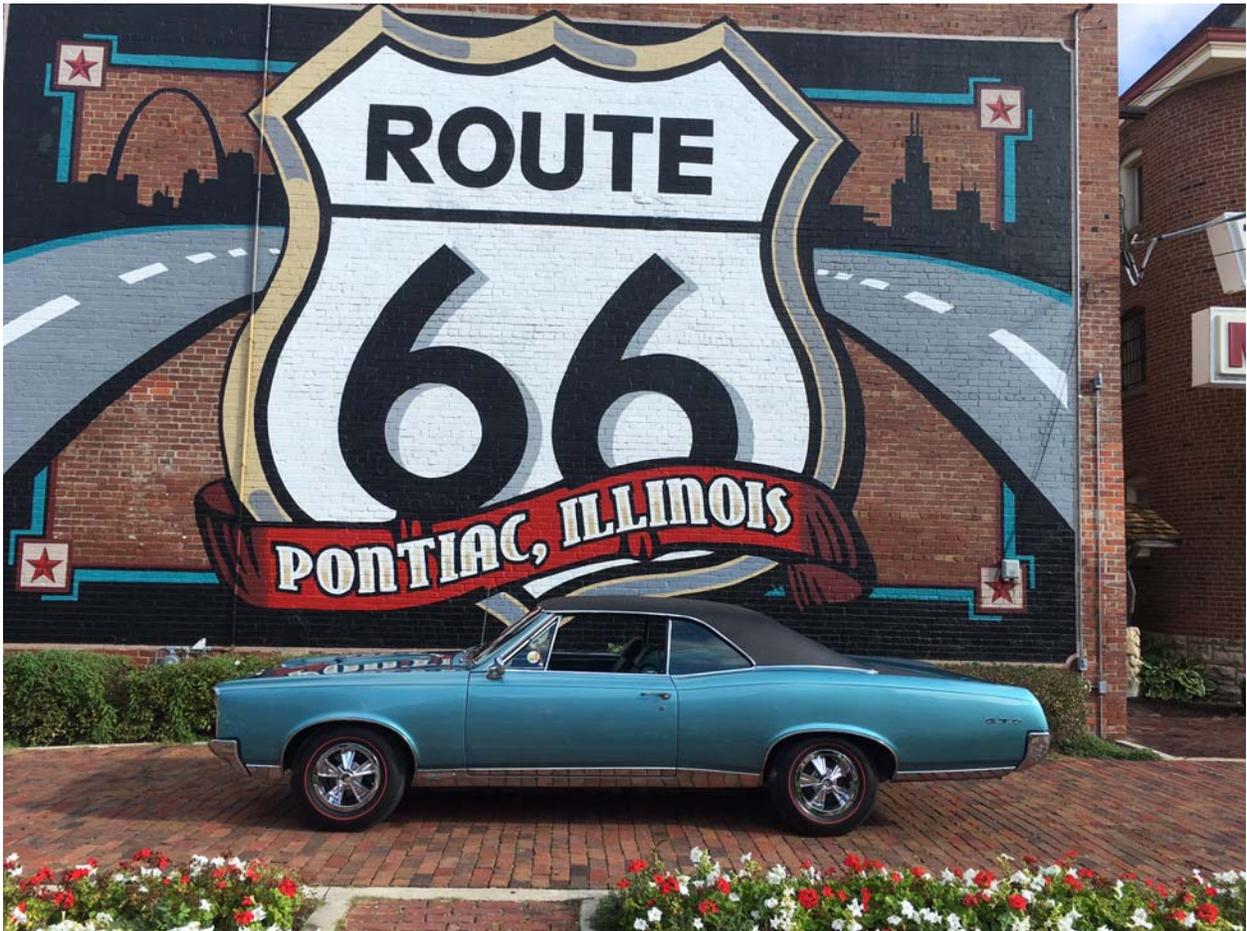


My GTO
By
Wil Bowers



I really wasn't looking for another car; however, it was a slow day at work being the Friday before Labor Day weekend in 1989. Someone had brought in a copy of the Post-Dispatch, so, out of habit, I started scanning the classic car ads. The car was advertised as a '67 HO, 4 speed with Tri-Power added, with Rally I wheels. Needless to say, I called the number several times that day but didn't get an answer until about 4:00 PM. The seller asked if I had called before because his answer machine was not working and he had just gotten home. He did not want to show the car until Saturday; however, he agreed to let me see it since I was going out of town for the holiday weekend. At that time I was working at McDonnell Douglas and he was located in Florissant. I immediately hit a cash machine for deposit money and was on my way. This was great...I would be the first person to see the car! As soon as the garage door went up, I wanted it. After driving it, I knew it was sold. I didn't even try to get him down on price, (which is totally unlike me). After giving him a deposit, I returned after the holiday and paid the remaining balance. Over the weekend, he had received over 30 calls on the car. Most of the



people were offering more than the full asking price. Fortunately, he honored our deal and the car was mine. I later learned that Terry Schott was one of the unlucky callers.

In addition to the options listed in the ad, it had A/C, full tinted glass, power disc brakes, power steering, rally dash, wood wheel, Cordova top, 3:73 12 bolt posi, front and rear seat belts, and a push button radio with a rear speaker. Additional options had been added over the years including; AM/FM, 8 track, defogger, map lights, rare headrests and a reclining passenger bucket seat. The rear end had been replaced with a correct 3:23, 10 bolt rear end. The A/C had been stripped out by one of the previous owners and had been replaced and converted to 134A. The car retained its original interior and a few worn spots were repaired with material from another set of original seat covers that had been found at a swap meet.

The build date was November 1966. With the rare combination of options, this was obviously a special ordered car. PHS confirmed that it still had the original HO motor. All that could be determined from PHS was that it had been delivered to a dealer in Pontiac's Northern District.

Prior to having a base coat clear coat finish applied in the original Gulf Turquoise color, I had to replace several panels. All parts were replaced with available NOS or reproduction items. The motor has always performed well and has not required a rebuild. However it was returned to a 4 barrel with a correct Q-jet carburetor. The first year for the Q-Jet Pontiac was 1967. Pontiac was apparently concerned that performance minded buyers would be concerned that Tri-Power was no longer being offered. They included a re-print from Super Stock magazine in the glove compartment comparing the two carburetor configurations, confirming that they performed almost identically.

Shortly after the purchase, I decided a trip to Mid America Raceway in Wentzville. MO was in order, my first time out; it turned in the 13.90's with street tires.

In the fall of 1990, my luck continued. While attending a Behlmann Pontiac display, I noticed a young guy looking the car over very closely and said he thought it was in his dad's car that he had bought new. Since I knew it was sold through a dealer in Wisconsin, it seemed unlikely. Later his Dad, Nick Decker, stopped by and was able to confirm that it was indeed his. Fortunately, he was a very meticulous individual who had kept all the correspondence with the dealer, the order form, the original window sticker, and other associated documentation. Unfortunately, the warranty book with Protect-O Plate had gone with the car when Nick sold it. He confirmed that it had been special ordered through Hames Pontiac in Eau Claire, WI. Nick had been attending the University of Wisconsin and ordered it just prior to graduation and returning to the St. Louis area. Initially, Nick gave me copies of the documentation. Later he invited Donna and I to his home for a slide show and gave us the original documents. He also made several prints for us from the slides. Included was one picturing his son, Jeff, standing in front of the car. We have kept in touch over the years and usually see him the Easter Show. He is always disappointed if I bring one of my other cars. In 2015, I emailed him that the car would be there and he was actually waiting at the entrance with his camera to see the car and take pictures of the car when we arrived.

Years ago, individuals were allowed to run a title history on a vehicle. Apparently, the car remained in Missouri until I purchased and titled it in Illinois. The research indicated there





were 5 previous owners between 1967 and 1989. The state actually sent photocopies of each of the previous titles providing the names and addresses of the previous owners. After I had the car restored and painted in 1991, I took a picture of the newly restored car and sent a brief letter to second, third and fourth owners under the pretense that they might enjoy knowing that their car was alive and well but, also asking if happened to keep the warranty book with the Protect-O-Plate. No luck, but it was worth a try! In 1994, the GTO Club was having a charity car wash at a filling station in South County to raise money for the Make-A Wish Foundation. As luck would have it, the second owner saw all the GTO's and couldn't resist stopping. I was able to get his picture with the car. Over the years I have met all but the third owner.

I have had a number of interesting experiences with the car. I don't recall the exact year, but, the Club did a road trip to Indy for their clubs show called "A Day at the Track". It was on the grounds of the Indianapolis Speedway and was reminiscent of the early GTOAA Nationals that had been held at the track. We did some driving around the night before the show, even going to a local cruise night. I notice that the timing seemed to be off and had to adjust the distributor several times. On the way home the engine popped and we experienced a total shut down. After opening the hood it was obvious what had happened. The distributor had locked up, spun around, tangling and damaging all of the plug wires. We were stopped on the shoulder of I-70 being blown around by 18 wheelers doing 70 plus MPH! This was before cell phones. I recalled that a club member had also had problems with his car and was waiting at the motel for his father to trailer him home. One of the club members agreed to go back to the motel to see if

I could borrow his distributor, and wires, while I pulled the damaged one. As luck would have it, the club member was still there and loaned me the need parts. We were back on the road in a little over an hour.

Another adventure took place on a club cruise up the River Road concluding with a ferry trip to St. Charles County. The river was high at that time and the ferry could not dock at its regular location. The ferry was load with cars 3 across. I was in the first row on the far right. We were sitting high enough that the ramp could not be seen from the car. A crewmember was in charge of the unloading process, when it was my turn he motioned me forward. Unfortunately, when I pulled forward, the ramp was not there. He should have motioned me to the center. The good news was that I did not end up in the river! The bad news was that I ran into a heavy duty metal “T” that was used to tie up the ferry when docking. We pushed the car off and called a rollback to pick is up. Fortunately, the “T” was low enough that it went under the bumper and hit the core support and lower radiator tank. If I recall correctly, it was covered by insurance including the towing.

These cars are intended to be driven and sooner or later you are bound to have a misadventure!

This car has always been Donna’s favorite. In 1990, I drove her to the church in it when we got married. (My luck with this car continued once again). They say you cannot put a price on your wife’s happiness. In this case, I got the car and Donna too!!

