

My 1964 GTO Convertible

By
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If it had not been for some bad weather, I might never have purchased my first GTO. The first Pontiac I owned was a 1962 Ventura with a 348 HP Tri-Power motor, 4 speed, 3:90 posi, and 8 lug wheels. It was a beautiful automobile and one that I was not considering selling until I got caught in a golf ball size hail storm. I took the insurance settlement and traded the Ventura to the local Pontiac dealer. On the show room floor were 2 new 1964 GTO's. A black hard top with red interior, 4 barrel, 4 speed and an Aqua GTO Sport Coupe with matching Aqua interior that was sitting on the dealer's floor. It had all the right stuff: Tri-Power, 4 speed, tach, 3:90 posi, handling package, splitters, read lines and 3 bar spinners. When in doubt always go for the Tri-Power. It was basically the same set up as the Ventura but much lighter and faster.

Fast forward to 1983, I was again bit by the muscle car bug and after watching the local paper for sometime I purchased a 1965 GTO. I really liked the '65 but the '64 was always my favorite.

In 1986 I spotted a '64 convertible in Hemmings that was advertised as having the original Tri-Power motor, 4 speed and being an almost rust free Florida Car. After several telephone conversations with the seller who had brought the car to Chicago, I bought an airplane ticket and headed North. It is funny how things are never quite the way they were described. The car was advertised as being drivable with a newly rebuilt Tri-Power. The owner picked me up at the airport and drove me to his home in Park Ridge. During the drive he mentioned that the car had not actually been running for at least 2 year and that the carbs were off the car. He said not to worry as his buddy had rebuilt them and would meet us at his house.

It was the ugliest thing I had ever seen!! It had been painted burgundy and was chalked so bad that it almost looked like red primer. All the trim and bumpers had been removed; however, it was almost rust free and straight. It did have the correct 76 X motor and was a 4 speed. After going over the body with a magnet, his buddy arrived with the "rebuilt carbs". They were greasy and rusty, but he offered to rebuild them on the spot if we could get some hot water to boil them out. I told the owner to forget about it and take me back to the airport. I hated to say that because under the burgundy paint there were traces of the original Aqua paint, the same color as my original '64. He said if I was really interested in the car, there was a complete Tri-Power '64 Catalina he had for sale and he would install the carbs. They appeared to be in fairly good shape, even had the original tags that were the correct numbers for the GTO, so we installed the on the Goat. We poured in some fresh gas, but it would not fire. After some further checking we determined the points were not opening. After adjusting the dwell it fired and we took it for a test drive. The battery light was on and apparently not charging so we replaced the voltage regulator which solved the problem. We continued the test drive and it actually was not running bad and not over heating.

After some serious negotiation, we agreed on a price and the sale was concluded about 9PM. Believe it or not, I drove the car home that night with the bumper and trim stuffed in the trunk and back seat. Amazingly, I arrived home without a problem about 3:30 AM!!

I played around with car over the winter and decided to have some paint and body work





done in the Spring. Obviously, it went back to the original Aqua color. Over the next couple of years more work was done including rebuild the motor going .030 over and adding a '65 068 Tri-Power cam. I have continued to rebuild the 4 speed, front end and other components. I located and installed a correct '64 3:55 posi, upgraded the trim with NOS when possible and added options including wood wheel, tilt column and tissue dispenser.

I was never actually satisfied with the initial restoration and decided to do it again in 1996. It turned out beautifully as the pictures indicate. After completion, my wife Donna purchased the Hurst wheels a surprise birthday present!!

I have taken the car to several POCI and GTOAA National events entering it in the Popular Vote class. It has always done well winning several First Place awards. The car has been featured in three magazines and was featured on the cover of Paul Zazarine's Pontiac's Greatest Decade and was photographed and used as a model for Polar Lights plastic model of their 1964 GTO convertible. It took a couple years for the model to be produce but Polar Lights eventually sent me a case of the models.

It is almost the way I remember my original '64 except on nice days the top goes down.

