



GTO of the Month



GTO of the Month (Sept 1991)

By Will Bowers



Editors Note: This article is from the Sept 1991 Hoodscoop

If it had not been for some bad weather, I might never have purchased my first, GTO. The first Pontiac I owned was a '62 Ventura with a 425A motor (346 HP Tri-Power), 4 speed, 3:90 posi and 8 lug wheels. It was a beautiful automobile and one that I was not considering selling until it got caught in a golf ball size hall storm. I took the insurance settlement and traded the Ventura for a '64 Aqua GTO Sport Coupe with matching interior, which was sitting on the dealer's floor. It had all the right stuff Tri- Power, 4 speed, tach, 3:90 posi, handling package, splitters, red lines and three bar spinners. It was basically the same set up as the Ventura; but much lighter and faster. I always considered it best car I ever owned.

In 1983, I started getting the bug for a GTO again. It was really Vic Nettle's cars that were the final straw. I was working for McDonnell Douglas and kept seeing all these great looking GTOs and Grand Prix's that he was driving to work. After watching the local papers for some time, I finally purchased a '65 GTO (which I still have) for \$800. I really like the '65 but I always wanted another '64.

I spotted a '64 In Hemmings that was advertised as having the original motor and being an almost rust-free Florida car. After several discussions with the owner, who had brought the car to Chicago, I bought a plane ticket and headed North. It's funny how things are never quite how they are described. The car was supposed to be drivable and the tri-power had just been rebuilt. The owner picked me up at the airport and we drove to his home in Park Ridge. During the drive, he mentioned that the car was not actually, running (not for 2 years) 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.



The car was the ugliest thing I had ever seen. It had been painted burgundy and was chalked so bad 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 motor and was a 4 speed. After going over the body, his friend 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 it and take me back to the airport. I hated to say it because under burgundy was 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 on a '64, 4 speed Catalina he had for sale and we could use the carbs. They were in pretty good shape and even had the original tags which were the correct number for a GTO, so we installed them on the Goat. We poured in some fresh gas, but it would not fire. After some further checking we determined that the points were not opening. After adjusting the dwell it fired and we took it for a test drive. The battery was not charging so we replaced the voltage regulator and continued with the test drive. It actually did not run bad and was not over-heating.

After some serious negotiations, we agreed on a price and the sale was concluded about 9:30 P.M. Believe it or not, I drove home that night with bumpers and trim stuffed in the trunk. I arrived home without incident about 3:30 A.M.

I purchased the car in July and played around with it over the winter and decided to have the paint and body work done that spring. Over the next couple of years more work was done including rebuilding the motor to original specs except for .030 over bore and the addition of a '65 068 cam. The front end has been rebuilt with new components including springs, and the 4 speed has been checked out with new synchro's, bearings and a couple of gears. An Olds 3:43 posi has been added, since the original 3:55 had disappeared.

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As far as I can determine, it was an 80K mile car when I purchased it. This conclusion was supported by the condition of the interior, which was nearly perfect, and the fact that the motor was unmolested prior to the rebuild. Overall the body was very solid. No patch panels were required in the quarters, and only minor rust was found in the trunk. A good deal of the trim has been upgraded and all of the stainless has been buffed. Original options included radio, tach, console, tri-power, 4 speed, 3:55 posi, handling package, windshield washers and deluxe hubcaps. A wood wheel and spinners have been added. It's almost the way I remember it in 1964 except on nice days the top goes down!

