

My 1966 GTO Convertible “project car”.

by John Schiffko



Back in February of 2014 I heard about a project GTO for sale from a friend at work. The car was an original 1966 convertible four speed with the 389 tri-power motor. Unfortunately, I found out it was for sale too late. A work associate named Andy already told the owner he wanted the car. I knew that Andy wasn't a car guy and never restored a car so I told both Andy and the lady selling the car I would like to buy it if the deal falls through. About two months later, Andy walked up to me and said "It's yours"! Instantly I knew what he meant and sent a quick message to the lady selling the car. She said we could discuss the details the next day. I told her that I first needed to see the GTO in person. A few photos of the car were shown to me on Andy's cell phone a month earlier. Andy told me the car was taken apart to be restored about 15 years prior and the parts were scattered in the garage. You never know what's missing when you buy a car that's all apart especially when you're not familiar with that make of car! I mostly restore AMC muscle cars and I'm very familiar with that brand. However, I always wanted a convertible and I knew this car was both rare and great looking. I was in touch with club member Jim McCarthy during the purchase of the GTO. Jim and I became friends at work a few years earlier when he told me his racing stories from Bee Line drag way

in Phoenix. Jim was very helpful answering most of my questions during the purchase of the car, and as you all know he has one very sweet looking GTO!

Eventually a price was decided upon for the car and the money was exchanged. This was a one owner car and came with the original 1966 title which I was able to keep. A few days later I had my friend Doug and his son Austin bring his truck over to the Ballwin garage so we could start removing the parts hanging on the walls, the rafters, and from the interior and trunk section of the car. In another trip my brother and nephew helped removed a few more items. I determined earlier that the only items missing were the Muncie 4 speed, shift rods, and the flywheel. The Hurst shifter, bellhousing, and attaching parts were found in the trunk. We also had to free up the front right brake drum. I met my friend Steve at his house and we headed over to pick up the car with his trailer.



The GTO is maroon with a metallic red interior. The front clip was already off of the car but the engine was never removed. The glove box contained the small service booklet and protect-o-plate. Soon after I sent away for the window sticker and discovered it came from Carson Pontiac on Manchester road. The car came equipped with 11 options totaling \$609 dollars including the 389 WS engine, the 4 speed manual, rally gauges, and a SAF-T-Track differential. The sticker on the front windshield shows it was last driven around 1982.

Eventually I'll tear the engine down and have it rebuilt. The carbs will be sent out to be



rebuilt by a tri-power expert. Overall there's very little rust on the car. The carpet was already out and I could not find any rust on the floorboards. The frame looks good. The main areas of rust are located on both lower fenders. And what's odd is there's one spot on the top of the driver's side quarter panel above the taillight. Maybe that's common with convertibles. I have not yet started the main restoration process on the GTO but I have started purchasing small inte-



rior parts from AMES along with seat covers from Legendary. I already restored and painted the four speed console because it had holes drilled for a CB microphone mount. My plan is to do more research on the correct restoration colors, markings, etc. and to talk to club members before I begin the actual restoration. I've learned a long time ago that the best resource is fellow club members.

Over the years I have owned other Pontiac's. I still own a 1990 GTA that needs an engine, and back in the 90's I owned a 1986 Pontiac 2+2 aero-coupe. I loved that car and drove it all the time! Not sure when I will focus on the GTO restoration. Right now I am in the middle of restoring my father's 1969 Big Bad Orange 390 AMX. Also working on a 1969 SC/Rambler. Earlier in 2015 I purchased a 1970 Rebel Machine that's always been located in the St. Louis area. I also own a rare 1971 Javelin AMX that I purchased back in 1987 along with a few other AMC cars. But as I do for all of my restoration projects I will continue to create lists and buy the parts required so they are ready when the time comes. I already have the metallic red interior from Legendary. I feel very lucky to be the 2nd owner of this classic GTO.

