

GOAT OF THE MONTH – OCTOBER 2009  
PART I – The Search Is On or How I Got My Own Goat!  
By Marty Howard



OK, OK, so I was goaded (goated?) into doing this article 2 months prior to when I was scheduled to do so. I'm not complaining but just wanted to get things straight ☺. I had all kinds of plans to do a really terrific article and spend oodles amount of time getting my old pictures and info about how, why, where and when I finally decided to own a GTO. Some of that info is somewhere buried in my garage and I gotta find time to dig it out. You know that I'm retired and my time is very limited. HA!

Well, here goes my 'intro' or, the appetizer before the meat, or the main course:

I was born in a log cabin....oh, wait...that's another article I'm writing for "Old People's Magazine". C'mon, Marty. Get back on track....

My love of cars started like most of us: in high school where the 'older' kids showed off their rides. I was about 17 (you have to be 18 to legally drive in New York City) and one of my friends had a '61 Impala convertible, triple white. Not only was this car fabulous to look at in 1961 but his father owned a gas station. I don't remember if they were called repair stations but back 'then', but most gas stations did various repairs along with selling gas. I went with him as often as I could to his gas station and watched as he turned this Impala into a screamer by installing 456 gears, a 3-speed stick on the floor (not a 4-speed as he wanted something different, although I did see a few 3-speeds in other cars, too) and triple carbs on a 348. Wow! Then, there was another student (I really don't think that he was a student) who would come by in his '59 Impala

convertible (also, with a 3-speed stick on the floor). He seemed to know all the guys but he usually piled in all the girls that would fit in the front and back seats. I asked if I could get in too but either he didn't think I was cool enough (imagine!) or that he had enough kids in the car. On another beautiful sunny day he cruised by and told me to get in after the car was filled (with girls, of course). I think that I lit up brighter than the daylight. So, there I was, cruising in this fantastic car with four girls (maybe more?). I think that's when I really got hooked on owning a car, especially a convertible (I'll leave the girls out of it, for now).

The few weeks before I turned 18, I paid and went to a "driving school" since I did not have anyone in my family that drove nor had a car. I had 5 lessons and did very well. A week before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, during my last lesson, the driving instructor asked me when my birthday was. When I told him, he let out a big "whew" as we were ending our last lesson. He said that he did not know that I was just 17 and was not allowed to give driving instructions to anyone under the age of 18. So, the following week, I went to The Motor Vehicle Bureau (that's the New York term for your "License Bureau" here) and passed my driver's test and obtained my driver's license.

Within that following week, I saw the car I wanted in the local Chevrolet showroom. The 1964 models had just arrived, being it was September and back then all the new cars came out in September. There was a brand new 409 and I wanted one. I sat down with a salesman and ordered one (there was not a stockpile of cars back 'then'): Black, black, black, 425 HP, 456 LSD (this was NOT the 60's), 4-speed, bench seat convertible. No power steering, no power brakes, nothing that would rob horsepower. I wanted what the Beach Boys were singing about. The price tag was about \$3,800 or so. I had just started a job (in Manhattan) at AT&T as a 'mail room delivery boy' and was not making enough money to get a loan. So, I dragged my mother into the showroom the next day and we applied for the loan. Since she had been working for a long time, she co-signed for me. I thought that the deal was done. I bragged to my friends, especially the one with the '61 Chevy about the car I was about to receive in a few weeks. Then, I got a call, just a few days after signing the contract that the loan did not go through since my mother and I did not qualify. I think that fate stepped in because I, probably, would have trashed that car in short order. I did not have a garage to keep it in and living in the "projects" there was a community parking lot that gave access to anyone. I didn't even know what "solid" lifters were much less how to take care of them. So, I picked myself up, dried my tears, and went to a local "used car" lot in Brooklyn (currently that name is replaced with "pre-owned") where I purchased my first car, a 1960 black Impala convertible. I loved that car and owned it for only about 1 year, but that's another story.

30+ years go by, and I find myself wanting to own that first car. I think I was going through my 2<sup>nd</sup> childhood (there have been many more since then; I think I'm on my 7<sup>th</sup>). I went to a New Jersey event called Lead East. This was my first forage into the world of classic cars. I was astonished at the vast amount of cars and the array. Not only were there cars at this event but it was a back-to-the-fifties ("World's Biggest 50's Party – check out their web site) show. There were acapella groups roaming through the hotel, merchandise and just fun and music and seminars everywhere. It was so nostalgic for me

that I felt right at home. After taking it all in, I went to see the cars. I was on a mission to find that Chevy of mine. I had about \$5k in my pocket and I had a good feeling that I was going to bring home (I finally had a garage) a fabulous toy. I did find a '60 Impala convertible but it was white. When I asked the guy how much he wanted for that car, I almost fainted: \$12,000!! How could that BE??? I recalled that I paid \$1,200 for that car in 1964 and it was 4 years old. How could it be so much MORE money so much LATER??? When it was A LOT OLDER!!! What a rude awakening! Welcome to "The Land of Classic Cars vs. Available Money" I walked away thinking that the guy was crazy but I was just trying to get over the shock. What really put this in perspective, for me, was talking to another guy at this event who had a fabulous '57 black Chevy convertible. Looked pristine to me. After telling him my story about my encounter with the Chevy guy, he told me that he recently turned down \$25k for his car. Remember that this was somewhere in the mid 1980's just about the time of the astronomical price increases of these cars. After I walked away with my head down, I realized that I was NOT taking home any car that day. Boo hoo...poor Marty...It was then that I decided that I wanted a muscle car and that I needed to prepare myself to spend a lot more money.

See Part II Next Month.

