

GTO of the Month

My GTO

By Jim Mutz



I got started with more than a driving interest in cars when I was a teenager. I had a friend whose father agreed to rebuild his 1955 Mercury. His dad said he would buy the parts if my friend would do the work, with dad's supervision of course. My buddy asked me if I would be interested in helping, and I said "you bet". So, while his dad provided tools, parts and training, we provided the grunt work through pulling the engine, breaking it down, honing the cylinders, rebuilding top and bottom, and reassembly. The feeling of accomplishment the first time we started it was awesome. Since then, and until I got too busy, I've always performed the basic maintenance procedures on my vehicles.

My first car was a used 1957 Chevy Bel Air 4 door hardtop, 283 CID 4 barrel, power glide. I really wanted a 57 Chevy because my dad had a 1957 Bel Air 2 door hardtop. With the popularity of these vehicles today, its mind boggling to think we had 2 of these in the garage at one point in time. If only this were still the case! What a lost opportunity.

Next came an unsuccessful attempt to purchase a used 1962 Corvette convertible, 283 CID 4 barrel, 4 speed. My father wouldn't co-sign the loan for me. His reasoning was something about concern for me killing myself. Go figure! I eventually ended up with a Rambler American 2



ted my appetite more for a “real” muscle car.

Fast forward about 20 years to when my eldest son was in college. At the time, I had given him our 1976 Dodge California Surfer Van, to travel back and forth to school in Warrensburg, Missouri. It was old and well traveled, so one year during Christmas break, I made him a deal. I would buy the parts to rebuild the van if he and his brother would supply the labor. Sound familiar? I had a friend who was

door hardtop, 6 cylinder 3 on the floor. What a change enforced common sense can make! I don’t think I could have hurt myself with it if I tried.

This was followed by a 4 year tour of duty in the US Air Force during which I married Ginnie, the love of my life and wife of 45 years and started our family of two sons, Jim and Scott. Since then they have blessed us with four grandchildren.

a very knowledgeable mechanic with an engine hoist and was willing to provide the technical training, so the project began. The look on the boy’s faces when they started it for the first time after the rebuild brought back sweet memories. I was very happy that I could provide this experience for them.

Fast forward through another 20 some years of very conservative family and business life, raising children and grand-children, trying to

Shortly after my discharge from the service, I traded off the 1962 Volkswagen Bug that I had brought back from Germany for my first NEW vehicle. This was a 1969 Pontiac Firebird, 350 CID, 2 barrel, 4 on the floor. This was as close to a “muscle” car I came. The common sense enforced by my father earlier in life was still with me. During some senseless moments, I tried to run my Firebird against the likes of real muscle cars and of course, always got beat. This just wet-



be president of something, and finally retiring. When I got close to retirement, I decided that I needed to get a second opinion on whether or not I was in a financial position to retire, so I sought and found a Financial Planner who confirmed that retirement could be financially supported. As it turned out, this Financial Planner has a hobby, muscle cars.

I retired in 2008 and toyed with the idea of either buying a “third childhood” 2 seater sports car or an old muscle car. I looked at the Pontiac Solstice and Saturn Sky Redline series, but could not pull the trigger on either and let the idea die of apathy. By this time I had gone “cruising” in a couple of muscle cars and was bitten by the bug again.

When I’m asked how retirement is, I usually respond that “Life is good” and “My accomplishment of note is that my wife hasn’t locked me in the basement, yet.” One day my wonderful wife told me that I needed to find a hobby or something that would get me out of the house occasionally. I guess she needed a break, from me. You think? Anyway, my response to her was that I could quickly think of 4 different things I could get involved with. 1) a Red-head, 2) a Brunette, 3) a Blond, or 4) a Muscle car. She liked the muscle car idea. So I went shopping.

In August of 2009 I purchased my 1970 GTO 2 door hardtop, 455 CID, 4 on the floor. The color is the biggest detractor, Palisades Green (Granny Green as I call it.), but

the original interior really caught my interest. After I purchased the GTO, my wife, who is into quilting, was looking to upgrade her sewing machine. She was very interested in an embroidery machine and when I asked “How much does it cost?”, she responded “Less than a GTO!” Ouch!! I won’t ask that question again. Yes, she bought the sewing machine, and yes, I know exactly how much it cost!

The car needs some mechanical work to build my confidence. I plan on having that done after the current cruising season, although the season never really ends, it just presents fewer opportunities to take it for a ride. I have purchased a rear spoiler for it and also want to add an in hood tachometer. Since I’ve only owned it for about a year, I haven’t done much with it but drive it, which was my main reason for buying it. I really want a cruiser rather than a real show car or a real performance car. I guess I have never really overcome that enforced common sense. There must be something to it I’m writing this article.

