

My love of cars has been with me since I was very young. When I was little I used to ride in the rumble seat of my Grandpa's 1931 Chevy Independence 5 Window, even in the rain one time, but that is a story for another day. My first car was a 1991 Pontiac Grand AM with a 5 speed and the "big" 2.5 four-cylinder engine. Being 16, I thought it was fast, boy what I didn't know. My friends and I had many great times racing up HWY 40 to HWY N back when nothing was there. Try that today and your joyride will come with a hefty ticket.

After graduating college, I needed to get a new car for my wife (now ex-wife) and we were looking at several models. I was able to convince her to stay with Pontiac. I knew it was going to be a GM due to the family discount after my Grandpa's 40 years working in the Defiance OH plant. We looked at the Oldsmobile as well due to the price since they were closing that division, but they just didn't have the driving excitement of the Pontiac. We decided on another Grand Am, but this time it was the Ram Air version.

The first time I saw the Pontiac G8 was at the winter car show in January 2008, to say I was disappointed in the look was an understatement. The show car they had was all black and up on one of the spinning tables, so it was not at eye level. I just didn't think the lines of the car matched what I saw in the magazines leading up to the release. That being said, I had read all the great things about the performance and driving mentioned in all the magazines. I also had driven a coworker's 2004 GTO so I knew what Holden could do. I was driving a 2000 Z28 Camaro at the time and after picking the car up from the shop after getting some repair work completed, I decided to go over to Suntrup Pontiac on the way home. They just happened to have the first G8 GT in St. Louis sitting in the bay. The first 888 cars were special serial numbered and it was number 041. The gleaming "liquid red" paint on this car was impressive and totally out shown the model at the car show. After arguing with the Sales Manager to honor the GM Employee Pricing, the car was mine. Thankfully it was the end of the month and they wanted to meet their sales numbers. The drive home was the first time behind the wheel as they would not allow me to test drive their prized possession, or should I now say mine!

I attended the drag day at Benson with the Gateway GTO club as a guest where I met a fellow car enthusiast driving a Dodge Charger R/T. We made several passes and I don't think the G8 had 1,000 miles on it, but I was still able to let the other driver know that Pontiac was the better choice. We put a friendly wager on the day of racing that whomever won would have to pay for dinner at the restaurant where the other club members were meeting later on. That sure was a tasty free dinner on the way home.

Due to life events, I had to sell the G8 that was a hard day for me to say the least. I did find out that the red 041 G8 still lives, but had a locked motor, had to have the engine replaced, and a salvaged title. I don't know where it is today, but hope it is still on the road.

My parents were gracious to give me their Pontiac Grand Prix GXP special edition when they got a new car so I was able to stay with a Pontiac, but it just wasn't the same. The Grand Prix served me well for a few years, but it had over 150,000 miles and was starting to need major work. I happened to be looking on Craigslist for cars and saw a G8 GT with 85,000 miles for what seemed like a reasonable price. I had

been keeping an eye on the prices and they were holding strong. Gretchen and I went to IL to look at the car, it was at Wood River Nissan of all places. I don't know much about the history of the car, but I do know the car was from the Northeastern area of the country. It was white with a blue racing stripe and a cold air intake, but everything else appeared to be factory. After the test drive, I knew I had to get this car. It was Father's Day weekend, so WHY NOT! It felt so good to be back in a G8 again.

I daily drove the car and was very active on the forums learning all I could. I was lucky enough to buy a set of the original Firehawk wheels directly from SLP when they stopped production. They only ended up producing a total of 27 Firehawk due to Pontiac going under. Some of the upgrades I have done to the car are full Kooks 1 7/8" headers, Borla mufflers, full Pedders supercar coilovers and bushings, 3.27 Camaro rear end, HSV club sport steering wheel and several small appearance changes. Shane Hinds custom tuned the car and it runs great. I have raced on the road course at Gateway, many auto-x with both the SCCA and Route 66 Corvette Club. It has been down the drag strip at 12.9 and 108 MPH on bald street tires during a hot August night.

While running a PDX at Gateway, I found out that I can only run 8 laps before the brakes overheat trying to slow a 4,000 lb car from 130 MPH on the straightway. Luckily, I was able to stay on the oval, get the car slowed down, and brought into the pits safely. I have most of the parts to upgrade to Brembos from the CTS-Vs which will solve that issue. I just need to get them to the powder coater. I also plan to upgrade the sway bars in time. I sure wish they would bring Pontiac back, but enjoy the "*driving excitement*" every time I turn the key!









