



# GTO of the Month



## Our GTO Goes Full Circle By Will Bowers



I really wasn't looking for another car; however, it was a slow day at work being the Friday before Labor Day weekend in 1989. Someone had brought in a copy of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, so, out of habit, I started scanning the classic car ads. The car was advertised as a '67 HO, 4 speed with Tri-Power added and Rally 1 wheels. Needless to say, I called the number several times that day but didn't get an answer until about 4:00 PM. The seller asked if I had called before because his answer machine was not working and he had just gotten home. He did not want to show the car until Saturday; however, he agreed to let me see it since I was going out of town for the holiday weekend. At that time I was working at McDonnell Douglas and he was located in Florissant. I immediately hit a cash machine for deposit money and was on my way. This was great...I would be the first person to see the car! As soon as the garage door went up, I wanted it. After driving it, I knew it was sold. I didn't even try to get him down on price, (which is totally unlike me). After giving him a deposit, I returned after the holiday and paid the remaining balance. Over the weekend, he had received over 30 calls on the car. Most of the people were offering more than the full asking price. Fortunately, he honored our deal and the car was mine. I later learned that Terry Schott, Gateway GTO Association President, was one of the unlucky callers.

In addition to the options listed in the ad, it had A/C, full tinted glass, power disc brakes, power steering, rally dash, wood wheel, Cordova top, 3:73 12 bolt posi, front and rear seat belts, and a push button radio with a rear speaker. Over the years I added a number options including; AM/FM, 8 track, defogger, map lights, rear headrests and a reclining passenger bucket seat. The rear end had been replaced with a date correct and proper 3:23,10 bolt rear end. The A/C had been stripped out by one of the previous owners. I was able to locate original replacement parts and eventually converted to 134A. The car retains its original interior and a few

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worn spots were repaired with material from another set of original seat covers that had been found at a swap meet.

The build date was November 1966. With the rare combination of options, it was obviously an early special order car. The PHS documents included the engine unit number that confirmed it still retained its original HO motor. All that could be determined from PHS was that it had been delivered to a dealer in Pontiac's Northern District.



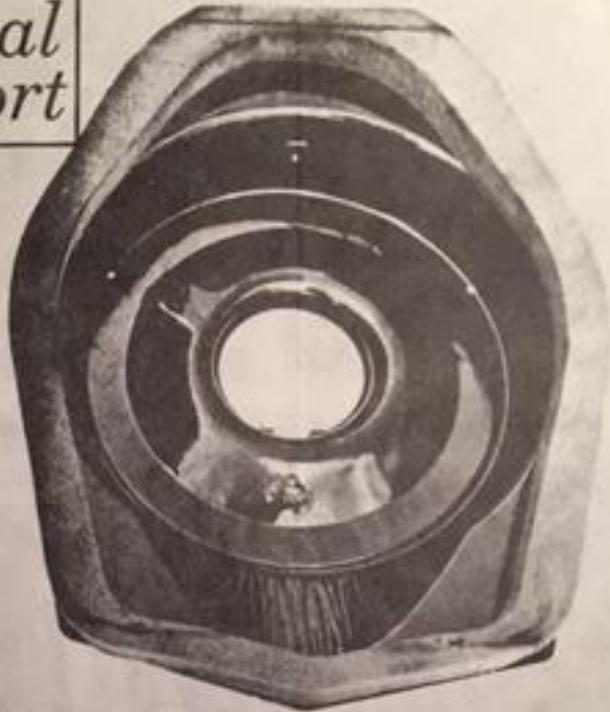
Prior to having a base coat clear coat finish applied in the original Gulf Turquoise color, I had to replace several panels. All parts were replaced with available NOS or reproduction items. The motor has always performed well and has not required a rebuild. However I returned it to a 4 barrel with a correct Q-jet carburetor. The first year for the Q-Jet Pontiac was 1967. Pontiac was apparently concerned that performance minded buyers would be concerned that Tri-Power was no longer being offered. They included a re-print from Super Stock magazine in the glove compartment comparing the two carburetor configurations, confirming that they performed almost identically.

Shortly after the purchase, I decided a trip to Mid America Raceway in Wentzville. MO was in order. My first time out; it turned in the 13.90's with street tires.

In the fall of 1990, my luck continued. While attending a Behlmann Pontiac display, I noticed a young guy looking the car over very closely and said he thought it was in his dad's car that he had bought new. Since I knew it was sold through a dealer in Wisconsin, it seemed unlikely. Later his dad, Nick Decker, stopped by and was able to confirm that it was indeed his.

*Norman*

**SUPER STOCK MAGAZINE** *Technical Report*



## '67 GTO CARBURETOR TESTS PROVE THAT **3=4!**

If you're worried that Pontiac's '67 GTO won't measure up to last year's model because the Tri-power has been dropped . . . forget it!!

WHEN THE WORD got out that GM was eliminating multiple carburetion on all '67 models except the 427-cu. in. Corvette, many drag racing enthusiasts automatically assumed the '67's would be slower.

We decided that a little comparison test would be in order so we contacted our good friends at Bill Knafel Pontiac in Akron, Ohio, and asked them if it would be possible to come up with some concrete answers. Their answer was an emphatic "Yes!"

At that time a complete '67 car was not available but the new 400-cubic inch engine was. The basic difference in this engine from last year's 389 was an increase of 11 cubic inches, the addition of the first really new heads for Pontiac since 1955, and a Quadra-jet four-barrel carb. The plan was to take the '66 GTO "Tin Indian" and make several runs under controlled conditions with the original 389 engine installed. It would then be removed and the 400-cubic inch engine dropped in and additional runs made under the same conditions.

The '66 engine and car was set up as follows: Tri-power, ram-induction scoop, 4-speed close-ratio trans, 4.56 safety-track rear, 9.00 x 15 7-inch Firestone tires, Forgedtrue pistons at zero deck clearance and the heads cr'd at 65. The '67 engine in the same car was set up identically except for the Quadra-jet carburetor instead of the tri-power. (For you fellows that aren't interested in running NHRA legal, you might like to know that the '66 tri-power manifold will bolt directly to the new '67 heads.) Both engines used Doug's Headers and Champion G66Y spark plugs.

Well-known engine tuner Arlen Vanko and equally competent Bill Abraham, both employed at Knafel Pontiac, performed the work on both engines. The tests were conducted with Vanko and Doc Dixon driving at Quaker City Dragway in Salem, Ohio. (Comparison tests have shown that approximately .25-second must be taken off all listed elapsed times to correct for the fact that this particular strip is uphill. In other words, an  $\frac{1}{4}$  given at 12.83 should be corrected to 12.60.)





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Fortunately, he was a very meticulous individual who had kept all the correspondence with the dealer, the order form, the original window sticker, and other associated documentation. He confirmed that it had been special ordered through Hames Pontiac in Eau Claire, WI. Nick had been attending the University of Wisconsin and ordered it just prior to graduation and returning to the St. Louis area. Initially, Nick gave me copies of the documentation. Later he invited Donna and I to his home for a slide show and gave us the original documents. He also made several prints for us from the slides. Included was one picturing his son, Jeff, standing in front of the car at an early age. We have kept in touch over the years and usually see him at the Easter Show. He is always disappointed if I bring one of my other cars. In 2015, I emailed him that the car would be there and he was actually waiting at the entrance with his camera to see the car and take pictures of the car when we arrived.

Years ago, individuals were allowed to run a title history on a vehicle. Apparently, the car remained in Missouri until I purchased and titled it in Illinois. and then back to Missouri. The research indicated there were 5 previous owners between 1967 and 1989. The state actually



sent photocopies of each of the previous titles providing the names and addresses of the previous owners. In 1994, the GTO Club was having a charity car wash at a filling station in South County to raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. As luck would have it, the second owner saw all the GTO's and couldn't resist stopping. I was able to get his picture with the car. Over the years I have met all but the third owner.

I have had a number of interesting experiences with the car. I don't recall the exact year,

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but, the Club did a road trip to Indy for their clubs show called “A Day at the Track”. It was on the grounds of the Indianapolis Speedway and was reminiscent of the early GTOAA Nationals that were held at the track. We did some driving around the night before the show, even going to a local cruise night. While driving the car I noticed that the timing seemed to be off and had to adjust the distributor several times. On the way home the engine popped and we experienced a total shut down. After opening the hood it was obvious what had happened. The distributor had locked up, spun around, tangling and damaging all of the plug wires. We were stopped on the shoulder of I-70 being blown around by 18 wheelers doing 70 plus MPH! This was before cell phones. I recalled that a club member had also had problems with his car and was waiting at the motel for his father to trailer him home. One of the club members agreed to go back to the motel to see if I could borrow his distributor, and wires, while I pulled the damaged one. As luck would have it, the club member was still there and loaned me the needed parts. We were back on the road in a little over an hour.

Another adventure took place on a club cruise up the River Road concluding with a ferry trip to St. Charles County. The river was high at that time and the ferry could not dock at its regular location. The ferry was loaded with cars 3 across. I was in the first row on the far right. We were sitting high enough that the ramp could not be seen from the car. A crewmember was in charge of the unloading process, when it was my turn he motioned me forward. Unfortunately, when I pulled forward, the ramp was not there. He should have motioned me to the center. The good news was that I did not end up in the river! The bad news was that I ran into a heavy duty metal “T” that was used to tie up the ferry when docking. We pushed the car off and called a rollback to pick us up. Fortunately, the “T” was low enough that it went under the bumper and hit the core support and lower radiator tank. If I recall correctly, it was covered by insurance including the towing.

These cars are intended to be driven and sooner or later you are bound to have a misadventure!



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This car has always been Donna's favorite. In 1990, we drove her to the church when we got married. (My luck with this car continued once again). They say you cannot put a price on your wife's happiness. In this case, I got the car and Donna too!!

Nick Decker's family also had a strong relationship with the GTO. In addition to Jeff, who had moved to Indianapolis, his sister Cindy contacted me in 2017. She was turning 50 and



so was the GTO. She wanted to see it, go for a ride and take some pictures. We agreed and even popped open a bottle of wine to celebrate her birthday.

Nick has not been getting around too well and has not been able to attend the Easter Show. However the next year she, Cindy, Nick's grandson and former-wife came to the show for more

pictures.

About a year later I got a call from the second owner wanting to know if I knew where the '67 was, I told him it better be in my garage! He wanted to know if it was for sale. I told him that if it was he would be second in line after the original owner's family.

Moving on to 2020, Donna and I are in the process of downsizing, selling our house and leaving the great state of Illinois and moving to Missouri. I decided to contact Jeff to see if he was interested in purchasing the car. He said he was definitely interested and wanted time to sell his Firebird and ZR1 Corvette. I told him no problem I would





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hold it for 60 days with no deposit required. We continued to correspond by email and more information on the car was provided, along with pictures and several phone calls. After a couple of weeks he said he definitely wanted the GTO back in the family. I suggested a visit. He and his wife arrived the day after Labor Day. After an inspection and a drive he wrote out a check and they drove it 250 miles home with no problems.

After 31 years almost to the day the '67 was gone. It was a sad day for Donna and I since we also had a special connection to the car; however, were glad that if the GTO was going to be sold that it was going full circle back to the original owner's family! Jeff and I continue to keep in touch. I send more information as I come across it and he keeps me up to date on the work he is doing on the GTO.

Jeff gives me updates on little things he is sorting on the car. I enjoyed a couple of his early texts. He said when he comes home from work he always goes into the house through the garage. The first time he came home after buying the GTO he could not believe it when he opened the garage door and it was sitting there. Another text said he and his wife would go out in the evening sit in their lawn chairs and look at the trees and flowers. Now they turn their chairs around and enjoy the view with garage door open!

I had another set of seats that I gave Jeff since I didn't think I was going to need them. He actually converted them to an office chair!

If we were going to sell the '67 we are happy that the GTO was able to go full circle back to the original owner's family.

