



GTOAA National Convention



THE 42ND ANNUAL GTOAA NATIONAL CONVENTION By Gail Schott



The Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells was host to over 230 cars for the 42nd annual GTOAA National Convention. There were cars, cars, and more cars. Whether you drove your car there or trailered it there, the cars were fantastic.

Unfortunately, some of our Gateway people came upon a several hour delay coming in to the Dells. There had been a horrific accident on I-39 and it had shut down both north and south bound traffic on the interstate. Needless to say, every other vehicle from the interstate was trying to get around the closure using the same side roads. Frustration abounded, but once getting to Chula Vista and enjoying a cold beverage, things calmed down and fun began.

83 cars had signed up for Concours judging.
119 cars were in Popular Vote.
34 cars were in the Street Legend class, and
3 Original Owners

The Gateway GTO chapter had 43 members in attendance, plus additional kids/grandkids. The best reason to attend a national convention is to meet other GTO enthusiasts and see the friends from previous years' conventions. People from all across the country show up and even though you may only get to see them once a year, you still become close friends. Or... you may only know them for the car that they have! Whether it's the members with the Royal Bobcat, or the G-r-r-reat Judge, you see them year after year and can always have something to talk about.

Thanks to Sharon Wildebrandt, we have info on the Tuesday car cruise to the EAA Aviation Museum.

On Tuesday we took the driving tour to the Aviation Museum in Oshkosh. There were 14 cars: most of them GTO's. The drive was on a 2 lane Hwy through the beautiful countryside of Wisconsin taking about 2 hours to get to our destination. At the Aviation Museum we were given an hour and a half to look through the museum (not near enough time). We hit the large displays of real planes and enjoyed the stories about them. We gathered about noon to head down the road for lunch at TJ's Harbor Restaurant on Winnebago Lake. While we were there, heavy rain and wind came up. A "Good Samaritan" from our group rolled windows up and got the tops up on the convertibles. We left the restaurant when our tour guides checked their weather apps saying we had a window of clear weather to return to the resort. It was a great afternoon!



The Wisconsin Dells saw some wide swings in temperature and a mix of rain and sunshine. Monday and Tuesday started HOT and HUMID with temps in the 90's. The rain and potential storms predicted for Tuesday evening prompted the much-anticipated river cruise (with "surf & turf" the scheduled meal) to be canceled. With chances of lightning and storms, the boat company felt it best to cancel the cruise portion, keeping safety in mind for their passengers. They did, however, deliver the tasty meal to the hotel and the hotel staff had to make quick arrangements for the banquet room to accommodate those who had signed up for the meal cruise.

With the cruise canceled, we had an evening with nowhere to go and nothing to do. Never fear! The Gateway Gang had perused the complex and came upon a number of patio tables and chairs that no one else seemed to find. But WE did! We gathered, along with several other GTOAA members, just outside the lower indoor concourse area with our snacks and beverages and laughed and talked the night away, all the while watching the heat-lightning light up the evening sky. The predicted rain came later that night and into Wednesday. With the rain, it brought much cooler temperatures! We awoke to low-mid 50's and the need for a light jacket.

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The rainy Wednesday forced any outdoor activities, such as at the outdoor waterpark, or walking through the popular vintage and street legend cars to be postponed to another day. Some of us took the opportunity to visit the Indoor Waterpark. Let me tell you, that DARK, LONG, STEEP, SCREAMING, TOILET-BOWL, of a waterslide is something else! Some of us came out of it too dizzy to get out of our tubes, and too dizzy to even climb the couple of steps to get out of the pool!

It was a BLAST!





Wednesday was also the Street Legends cruise into the downtown Dells. Per Frank and Cheryl Chapman who attended, it was rather uneventful due to the weather conditions. There were only 7 - 8 cars in the cruise, but the highlight was that there was a police escort! (And it was to designated parking, not the local jail!)

Thursday was the Popular-Vote Day. The parking lot was set up with clearly marked alphabetized stanchions marking the way for the different classes. For the GTO gals that did not prefer to walk the lot and cast ballots, there was a beading class/session. They made beaded necklaces with arrowheads (like a Pontiac arrowhead) as the center focal point of the necklace, very nice! Others were enthusiastically tabulating the popular votes as they came in and enjoyed a hearty lunch of lasagna.

Thursday evening came and we enjoyed the Ames sponsored "indoor" Parking Lot Party. The hot dogs and burgers helped to fill that empty spot in our tummies. The DJ was a super-fun guy that tried to get everyone involved. He started with all of the kids that were in attendance. He had them on the floor dancing and gyrating to win Dum-Dum lollypops! By the time they were done with The Twist, The Floss, The Macarena, and many others, each had won a lollypop. Some BIG kids joined them on the floor, too!



We also had a big celebration for several members celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries this year. Gateway members, Tom & Terrie Oxler and Ron & Sharon Wildebrandt



celebrated along with fellow GTOAA members, Tom (Tug) & Debby Arzberger from Florida, and Dale & Marlene Gruenwald from South Dakota. The DJ was again keeping the party going by having a special dance just for them. He then asked all other married couples to join them on the floor. He then asked those couples married less than 10, 20, 25, 30, years and so on, to leave the floor anticipating just the 50th anniversary couples to re-

main. However, Joe and Bev Mayweather had them all “kicked to the curb” by being the longest married couple at **62 years!** Congratulations to Joe & Bev and to everyone! Dancing continued and the night was extremely enjoyable.

Thanks to Brian O’Sullivan for his info on the Friday car cruise.

The Cave of the Mounds/Baraboo Candy Company Cruise

It started promptly at 9:00AM with some beautiful weather to boot. We had 11 cars in attendance including a good mix of old and new GTOs, a Lemans, a G8 and a Yukon bringing up the rear. For the early portion of the cruise, we took a scenic drive through the countryside. We continued through parks and past Devil’s Lake, which was really picturesque.

Our first stop was at the Cave of the Mounds. A large number of the group chose to explore the cave. It was a self-directed tour



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with guides spread throughout with information about the history of the cave and some of its formations.

After everyone re-grouped, we proceeded to the town of Black Earth to stop for lunch at the Macker-Backer restaurant. We were able to park all of the cars in a row on the street for an excellent photo op.

From there we headed to the Baraboo Candy Company. Unfortunately, we arrived too late for a tour, but the storefront was open for business. They had a ton of excellent confections to choose from. I can attest that their caramel pecan Cow Pies were fantastic.

As we left that location the group split up. Some chose to drive back to the hotel and the rest ventured on to Wisconsin Dells Raceway Park. It is a 1/3rd mile banked oval track. After we signed a waiver, we were allowed to run on the track as fast as we dared. Most of us ran about a dozen laps before it was time to go. It was a well put



together trip and everyone seemed to have a great time.

Since several members that had signed up for the river dinner cruise, that did not happen, they decided to take a river cruise on Friday. The cruise took us to the Upper Dells area and was absolutely beautiful. The boat captain and tour guide were well versed in the area's surroundings and history. It was a 2-hour tour, had 2 stops along the way for exploration and photos, the day was beautifully



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sun-shiny and gorgeous, and all had a great time. If you ever get the chance, it is a highly recommended excursion.

Friday's Awards Banquet started out with our meal and then memorial tributes to both Steve Ames and Milt Schornack. Unfortunately, the hotel's outdated audio/visual equipment left a lot to be desired. The speakers were either too loud and crackly on one side of the room, or too weak to be heard on the other side. There was some amicable banter back and forth and even an attempt to "sign" the verbiage, that brought a chuckle to the room. Then the visual portion went awry and only the center of the room could see the slides. It was quite the mess, but the GTOAA admin peeps, as always, did their best and carried on. They completed the evening as best they could with the hotel's equipment. As it turned out, several Gateway members came out winners. Some of the awards were anticipated, but one was definitely not expected. We had the following winners:

- Will Bowers, Bronze Award in Concours, for his 1964 convertible
- Frank Chapman, 1st Place Popular Vote, Judges, for his 1970 black Judge
- Earl Lewis, 3rd Place Popular Vote, in Modified, for his 1967 hardtop
- Joe Mayweather, 1st Place, Sr. Models
- Terry Schott, 1st Place Popular Vote, Stock Convertibles, for their 1970 convertible
- Dave Sindelar, 1st Place, Popular Vote, Modified, for his silver 1966 hardtop
- Harry Timmerman, 1st place, Popular Vote, All Other Pontiacs

There were also some "Special" awards handed out that evening.

- Tammy Hedrick, 1st Place for the "Scratch & Dent" division on her Ford Excursion (explanation below*)
- And Ron Wildebrandt, the "Green with Envy" award in Street Legends

The "Scratch & Dent" award, the first-ever of its kind, came about as a result of a Chula Vista maintenance truck hitting a personal vehicle, thank goodness not a GTO, nor any pedestrians in the driveway! Tammy's vehicle was parked in the hotel parking lot, minding its own business, when the driverless maintenance truck, which had been left in an upper parking lot, somehow came out of gear, rolled down the hill, jumped a curb, crossed through a mulched area, barely missed bollards and a well-connection, only to hit her Excursion broadside in the passenger doors, hitting it hard enough to push it into the neighboring Lexus parked next to it causing minor damage to its tail light and fender. (The Dalmatian that had been left in the maintenance truck had quite the ride!) Some of us were wondering how he stepped on the brake in order to take it out of gear!? Again, thank goodness no one was hurt.

Saturday was the load 'em up, and pull 'em out day. Since further harsh weather was anticipated for Saturday morning, GTOAA had made the situation a little better by allowing those cars that could, to leave the indoor concours area on Friday evening. As we waved our goodbye's to having seen our annual acquaintances, it was time to hit the road for home. Another GTOAA national convention is in the history books. It was a fun time.



