

Fifty Years of 1970 GTO's

by Frank and Cheryl Chapman



After owning several Pontiacs during my young adult life, my first exposure to the 1970 GTO was when I graduated from college. As a present to myself I purchased a 1970 Judge Ram Air 4. I did this with the help of my friendly banker. At the time I did not have a job, the banker told me since I had a college degree and a good past history with him to find a car I liked and write the check and he would take care of the paperwork later. Try doing that today.

I drove this on a daily basis after college, and drove it fairly hard. During this time I taught myself the dangers of taking the RPM's too high and what could happen. The factory warranty was good to me on three different occasions.

Among the memorable things that took place during this time was the marriage to my wife of 47 years, Cheryl. We were married in the car and had to take the car to the car wash before we went on our honeymoon. Her Dad was a Ford dealer and would not let me park my car in his driveway, jealous I guess. I sold the car in 1974 because of the difficulty in purchasing premium fuel dur-



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ing this time. The Ram Air 4 did not like regular octane gas and told me so with bent push rods on several occasions. I sold the car with only 34,000 miles on it and was paid \$2500 and felt good about the price at the time. The bad part of selling the car was that it was wrecked two weeks after I sold it and was sent to a salvage yard.

After selling the Judge I went until 2001 without a GTO. I did have some other Pontiac during this time to include a 1987 Firebird. Then in 2001, with the help of one of my sons, I found a 1970 triple black Ram Air 3 Judge. It was in Indy on a used car lot and had been sitting for some time and it took me quite a while to get it running so I could test drive it. I purchased the Judge and told the salesman to get the fluids changed and I would come back and drive it to St. Louis. He thought I was a bit crazy but after I told him if it wouldn't make the trip I did not want it, he agreed to do it. The trip home was interesting as the car had 456 gears in the rear and at 60mph it was turning 4,000 rpm. As a result three tanks of gas later we made it home. This started a frame on restoration that only took about two years. At that time you could find about anything you needed on the internet. I think it turned out alright. To date we have driven it to several national shows and put around 80,000 miles on the car.

In 2004 my wife decided she needed a 1970 GTO. The search began and I found one that had the options she required. It had air conditioning and an automatic. What I did not tell her was it had a 455 with three deuces and 373 gears and street slicks. She found this out



when I test drove it. Her only comment about it was "Now I understand why you like it. We purchase the car in Independence, Kansas and drove it home. This was a great car to take to cruises and the drag strip, with it's three inch exhaust and nice cam. It did draw a lot of attention. We did drive it to Detroit to the nationals, only issue we had is our credit card called to inquire if we really purchased gas every 150 miles. We kept this car until 2017, at which time I decided to thin the herd down and sold the car.

Our next 1970 is a Atoll Blue convertible. We decided a convertible would be nice to have so we could cruise with Harry Timmermann in his 1965 Lemans convertible. We found this in Lansing, Michigan and drove it





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home. At the time we purchased it, it was cloned to a Judge and since I did not want this we took it back to stock condition. We have made several long trips in this including Route 66 to Seattle and home. It is a good cruiser and does well in shows as well.

In 2012 I had retired and with some time on my hands I decided that we needed another Judge like the Ram Air 4 we were married in. I started looking for one and after several



months found one on Ebay. It was the correct color, had the correct equipment and was priced in the range I was looking for. It was in a restoration shop by Seattle getting a mechanical restoration. I contact the seller and after some discussion and research determined it was, in fact, the car I had purchase in 1970. I did not disclose this to the seller at that time. I did contact the person that owned the car previously and got the past history, we were able to verify the history of the car with the exception of one owner. The car had sit in various location waiting to be restored for several years. When I purchase the car it was near Seattle. A friend and I flew to Seattle picked up the car and drove it home to Illi-

nois. It had 390 gears and we drove 60mph all the way home. At this speed it was turning 3,000 rpm and I did not want to push too hard at this time. As I mentioned earlier it had 34,000 miles when I sold the car, when it came back home it was showing 45,000 miles. Currently it has around 60,000 and still rolling along.

We enjoy our cars and drive them as often as we can. I do not own a trailer, so if you see one of ours on a trailer it is either broke or stolen, either way give me a call.

