

My 1965 GTO

By Doug Wollgast



I can say that my affection for cars has always centered around (A body) Pontiacs, but my favorite is the 1965 GTO. If it was up to me, my first car would have been a 1965 GTO, but my dad wouldn't put his blessing on a Tri-Power, 4-speed 389 with me being a 15 year old kid. My "first car" designation belongs to a 1965 326 Le Mans, cameo ivory hardtop with a dark blue interior. It was a very nice car and I have great memories of dad and I working to restore it. A couple years later dad relented and I had my first GTO – a 1967 – which I still have. During the time I owned the Le Mans I had become friends with fellow Gateway GTO member John Novelli. We met each other at a Cecil Whittaker's Pizza car cruise in Bellefontaine Neighbors. John was my main source for parts and information and advice about GTO's. John



also was the source for lots of GTO's for me to look over – as he bought and sold many over the years. My favorite was his 1965 reef turquoise sport coupe. The least produced sedan body style was my favorite along with the green/blue color of the turquoise paint and interior. I am sure it was this car's colors that formed my preference for these colors that I still have today. The other manda-

tory features that I believed must accompany the rigid sport coupe body – Tri-Power, 4-speed and 3:55 saf-t-trak rear end were all there as well. As an added bonus - the car also had a rally gauge cluster, AM/FM radio and reverb.

John purchased this car in the mid 1980's from a guy in Jefferson City Missouri that had it brought up by a car dealer friend from Arizona. John recalls that the guy had requested his pal to just find him a really nice "sports car". He showed up with this GTO on a trailer. At that time the car was a 30000 mile original paint car. John's cars usually changed pretty regularly (as they do still) but he was partial to the coupe and it stayed with him for quite a few years. John raced the car on occasion and his best time was 13.10 at over 100 mph in the quarter. When he sold it in the late 1990's it went to a collector in Ohio who had the faded original paint stripped and nicely repainted. He then later sold the GTO to Doug Reno, in Indiana, who I ultimately purchased it from in 2009. Having missed the first opportunity to buy the car from John - due to lack of funds, I was fortunate to have a second chance – and I took it!





The car was a very nice car that showed very well – and I was content to leave it that way. Things changed in 2011 when I broke second gear in the transmission. Pulling the transmission ultimately led to me pulling the entire frame and drive train for a “frame off” restoration. Since the car was an Arizona car it was very nice – but I wanted it to be “like new” and have it concourse judged. Doug Reno had put it thru the concourse judging in around 2007 or 2008 and scored a silver after driving the car to the show in the rain. With the help of John Novelli and Ray Mansering, I restored the entire chassis to like new condition. This meant full







dis-assembly, glass beading, plating and painting everything down to the last nut and bolt. As a machinist by trade, I am used to paying attention to detail and tried to do everything like the factory would have built the car in Fremont California in late December 1964. After completing the car in 2012 I was ready for the nationals! I was able to attend the 2013 co-vention in Ohio where the GTO received a Concourse Gold award in both the POCI and the GTOAA. The GTO was also featured in both the GTOAA Legend magazine and the POCI Smoke Signals magazine.

