

GOAT OF THE MONTH – DECEMBER, 2009  
PART II – The Search Is Over or How I Got My Own Goat!  
By Marty Howard



Besides purchasing a brand new '67 4-4-2, the only other muscle car I have ever owned is my '69 GTO. I bought the 4-4-2 at the end of 1966 when you actually ordered a car the way you wanted it and you didn't mind waiting months for delivery! Black convertible, black top and yellow interior, 4-speed, no power anything, 456 gears. I used to race it every weekend at Englishtown Raceway in New Jersey. Before I left for the strip, I packed my slicks in the trunk, opened the "plumber pipes" and the Olds stayed this way until I returned home, usually without a trophy. There was always this guy that raced me with his Roadrunner. Always seemed to beat me at the end of the track. Bummer! But I tried and tried until I finally got a win over him. I raced that 4-4-2 for 2 summers before I gave it up for a Fiat Sport Coupe. The gas crisis was about to hit New York as well as other states and I just couldn't afford to keep the Olds.

For well over a year, before March 28, 1989 (the day I purchased my GTO) I wasn't sure exactly what brand of muscle car I was going to own, I just knew that I did want a muscle car. During that year, I looked at 4-4-2's, Stage I Buicks, and 454 Chevy's. Finally, I thought about a GTO. Now, back in 1966 when I bought my 4-4-2, I didn't even consider a GTO. Everyone had one! I wanted to be different by upgrading to the next line of GM performance cars. Now, 22 years later, I decided that I had to have "the original muscle car". So began my search.

The first thing that I did was to join the GTO Association of Greater New York, which was headquartered in Long Island. I attended a few meetings and met some great people

that blew me away with their knowledge of the GTO. Now, mind you, I had never been at a car club meeting of any kind before. I found it hard to believe that these members lived and breathed the gospel according to The Goat. They seemed to know everything about the GTO and I was hooked.

Suddenly, I had a collection of Pontiac and GTO books. I hadn't decided what my favorite year was but I knew it had to be black and a convertible since my first car was a black convertible. Each year GTO had its own personality and looks. This was going to be a hard decision. I started buying Hemmings at the newsstand and then ordered a subscription. At the same time, I was buying every magazine on the newsstand that referenced classic cars. I couldn't get enough.

I was told about a restoration shop in Long Island. As soon as I walked into the shop, there was a '65 GTO convertible, black, black, black, 4-speed, tri-power. It was being completed and I loved it. Right then and there I put down a deposit and signed for the rest. I was excited. I took my video camera with me during that first week and showed it to the NY Club the following weekend at their meeting. Someone noticed that the wheels on this car were not 'correct'; seemed to have too many or too few spokes and must be Chevy wheels. The group cautioned me to be very careful about buying this car. My heart was broken (over wheels???) and I was not happy after leaving this meeting. I went back to the resto shop and spoke to the owner. I told him about this wheel issue and he said that he would be happy to replace them with the correct ones. I was still bummed out and requested my deposit back. He said no problem. So, I got back my deposit and the search continued. To this day, I think that he was happy to give me my money back because I purchased the car for \$15k and someone else made him a much better offer.

The next car I saw was a red '64. I thought I'd better take someone with me this time. I found a guy (Ray) in New Jersey that was selling parts and was very knowledgeable about GTO's, especially '64's because he had owned many. We went to look at this car that was located in a garage/repair shop and turned out to be the owner's car. Another convertible, tri-power, 4-speed, but it was red. OK, by now I could live with red. Ray looked at the codes and "numbers" (this was the first time I had ever heard this term out of school) and he noticed that the color of the red paint did not match the red in the data plate on the firewall. So, he cautioned me about buying this car and I passed on it. Would I ever be able to find the "right" car? Why should this search be so difficult?

I finally decided that I loved the looks of the '69 best of all. Over the next several months I looked at many GTO's in the New York area and beyond, even traveling to New Hampshire in the dead of winter. This guy was nice enough to take his '69 convertible out of the garage in the snow, even while it was falling. Most memorable thing about this car was that it was painted Judge Orange which the owner showed me was the correct color and the data plate verified this. I had no idea what I was looking at. I was so 'cautioned' by this time that this was enough to pass on this car. I had read all about the Judge with the orange paint so I believed that only the Judge had this color. To find a non-Judge with this paint made me think that this was not a color that was available in '69.

Back in New York City, working (?) for the U.S. Postal Service in the Computer and Systems Department, I was busy at my desk looking at all the new ads on that Monday morning. I had business acquaintances all around the country and I let everyone of them know that I was looking for a '69 GTO and would they please check their local papers and magazines for one that I might be interested in. So, this day, I get a phone call from a co-worker in Washington, D.C. He says that he thinks he has found my car. The ad read: "1969 GTO convertible, red, red, black top, \$6,500". I phoned the number at 9:30 that morning. The owner explained to me that the car was originally a 4-speed, but he had converted it to an automatic so that his wife could drive it. That didn't seem to be a deal breaker to me. By 10:30 I was on a train headed for Baltimore. I told the owner that I would meet him at the train station at 1:00 pm (I had called Penn Station to find out what the schedule was). I went to my boss and told him that I was leaving early. I didn't wait for an answer, just rushed out of the office. I went to my bank and took out \$6,500 in cash, walked 2 blocks to Penn station and arrived in Baltimore on time. I walked out into the daylight and saw the GTO waiting for me. I was thrilled! Just what I wanted! Well, almost. It was RED but by this time I was very flexible. We drove to his home. His wife and children were there. He was in the middle of a divorce. By this time I had learned that 'paperwork' was important. So, he gave me as much as he had and after agreeing on a \$6,300 price tag, I had the keys and title in my hand. I got behind the wheel and felt like I owned the world.

The car had huge tires and rims on the back and little ones on the front. Looked like a real hot rod. Driving through the tollbooths, I got my first "nice car" comments. With no problem at all, I got the car home 5 hours later and put it in my garage. Finally! I owned a GTO!!

I wanted to bring the car back to a "numbers matching" original. Boy, did I have a very large learning experience. Ed, the VP of the NY Club, went over every detail of the car with me. I learned that the engine was a '68 so that needed to be changed if I wanted the car to be "correct". Oy, Vey!! THAT was just the START. Over the next year or so, my car would be in various states of disrepair and disorder from ordering completely new (and correct) interior, finding and changing the complete engine (correct codes), new wiring harnesses, 4-speed, etc., etc., etc. My dining room looked like a car parts store. You could not get to the table for months.

During this time, I tried to find out about previous owners of my GTO so that I would have a history of my car. I wrote to the Maryland Motor Vehicle Bureau and they did supply me with one previous owner. To this date, I have no idea how many people have owned my car. I did send away to Pontiac Historical Society and received the expected information about my GTO. Although I did want to get my car back to 'original', I realized that I could never do that. It was cost in-effective. One little part here, another little part there, a more expensive part somewhere else and all these added up. I had to stop and be happy with what I had. Finally, I gave in. And, I was OK with all of it. I really did love my car.

During the installation of the newly rebuilt motor and transmission, the engine stand tilted forward and landed on the rubber bumper. Ugh! Of course, I had to have it repaired at once and I did. Another couple of hundred dollars. Oh, well. The car was finally completed after about a year and a half after I drove it home from Baltimore. I was happy. The only time I really cried was on March 10, 1996 when an accident occurred at 5:00 pm. I was at a dead stop when I looked in my rearview mirror and saw a car coming at me while the driver was on a cell phone. I cringed as I watched him hit my left quarter panel and bumper. The police arrive a few minutes later as I was wringing out the 'crying towel'. Oh, well. These cars were meant to be driven. Right?

Since the purchase I have saved just about every receipt for every part purchased as well as peoples' names that have helped me in this quest. I am now on loose-leaf binder number 3. I have collected as much literature and magazines as I possibly could and learned a lot about GTO's. I had to stop buying '69 GTO models after purchasing about 50 of them. Unless, I just HAVE TO HAVE that model. I wish these companies would stop putting out more and more models. It's so addicting! (And, I have so little willpower.) I have attended a number of National GTO and Pontiac events. I have made friends over these past 16 years almost all in our GTO Club. I couldn't have done it without you. THANKS to YOUSE GUYS!