

## **GTO OF THE MONTH BOB BLATTEL'S 1968 GTO**

Hello, my name is Bob Blattel and I have been a member of the GTO club for about three years. I've lived in the St. Charles area for about 30 years. My wife Chris and I raised four children, two boys and two girls with our youngest starting his first year at Iowa State.

I enjoy hobbies that include magic, astronomy, model trains, independent movies, old board game collecting and last, but not least, muscle cars. While growing up in north St. Louis, I did not own any cool cars. My first car was actually a 6-cylinder 1963 Chevrolet Bel Air with a three on the tree shifter. The car was in pretty poor shape.

The thought of owning a muscle car as an adult never crossed my mind until my birthday in September of 2005. My wife suggested renting a classic car for a day. I'm not really a car guy, so I got on the internet and found a web site called, "Classic Cars Plus." They rented classic cars! I decided that coolest car they had was a 1968 Pontiac GTO. I arranged to rent the car and looked forward to my birthday cruise.

The big day arrived and my first experience with the rented GTO was to make sure I could handle the 4-speed floor shifter. After a short trial run, I was off. My excitement level was off the chart. I drove to everyone's house I knew to show off the GTO. The sound of the 4 barrel kicking in was music to my ears. I drove and drove and drove. I was most definitely hooked. The next day, as I drove the GTO back, I felt a sense of let down.

Well, I started doing some research on the internet about the costs of purchasing a 1968 or 1969 GTO. I ran into a web site called, "Gateway GTO" and noticed one of people listed was Terri Oxler, who happened to live a short distance away from me. She and her husband Tom invited me to GTO club meeting. I decided to join the club even though I didn't own a GTO or a Pontiac car. Mark Melrose and Tom Oxler were especially helpful with ideas on purchasing a GTO. Mark kept emailing me info on



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what to look for. Will Bower also added helpful advice. They kept me excited and hopeful.

After a few disappointments, I found a 1968 GTO at Holt Auto near Lansing, Michigan. It was delivered to me shortly thereafter and the rest is history.



This past winter and spring some modifications were made under the hood and to the rear of the car. My mechanic, Randy Bardle, found a 428 engine he thought I needed. Between Randy and Bob Stiegemeier, the 428 was reworked with forged pistons, roller rockers, different heads and a Ram Air exhaust manifold. A MSD electric system was installed along with a Stiegemeier racing carb

and an Optima battery. Randy took out the rear end (not a GTO rear end) and installed a w30 rear end from an Olds 442. The car sits and rides better and the modifications also allowed for wider tires in the back.

I enjoy the GTO club because of all the friends that I have made and it's just a neat place to hang out. Thanks for putting up with me!

PS. I now own 3 Pontiacs: 1968 GTO, 1976 Trans Am and a 2000 6-speed Formula Firehawk. Maybe now I'm a car guy!

