

First Claimed Muscle

By Bob Schmeichel

My father had one of the first GTOs in Sioux Falls in 1964. It was a black two-door sedan with a white interior, black wheels, dog dish hubcaps and Firestone redline "Tiger Paw" tires, as Pontiac called them. It was rather a plain, unsuspecting car until you opened the hood and saw the 348 HP 389 with three two-barrel carburetors hooked to a 4-speed trans behind it. Because I was so engrossed about cars at the age of 15 then, I always took the opportunity to open the hood and show others the engine with its chrome valve covers and air cleaners that it came with from the factory. Because it had 3.08 rear end gears, the car seemed to have unlimited power after 135mph even when you let off and stepped on it again as I witnessed one night while riding with my dad and my uncle, Roy, driving. Oh, and there is nothing like the sound of three two-barrel carburetors when they are all wide open sounding like someone gargling with mouth wash in their throat. I really liked that '64 GTO because it was a factory hot rod during that time frame and has always been claimed to have started the muscle car era as has been noted in Hot Rod Magazine for many years thereafter. Oldsmobile, Chevrolet, Buick, Ford, Dodge and Plymouth all followed with their own versions of muscle cars shortly after the GTO came out. The muscle car era grew stronger every year until 1970 when the government started imposing emissions regulations forcing horse power ratings down. It would take another thirty-some years before the public would see horsepower and speed come back mainly because of consumer demand. Factory cars are faster today than they have ever been, creating new excitement for anyone loving acceleration along with getting great gas mileage. Having both was always unheard of.

Cory Enderson's first car was a 1972 Pontiac Lemans. Because of that car, he developed a real love for Pontiacs, more specifically '66 and '67 GTOs. He said the thing that excited him more than anything else was his first impression of the car's body style looking like it was all muscle with its big back end and its powerful stance prevailing as it moved. A longtime friend of Cory's, knowing of Cory's fondness, found a listing of a 1967 GTO for sale on Craigslist in August of 2012 and mentioned it to tease him. As Cory dug into getting information about the car for sale, he found out it was originally a California car now located in Rapid City. The present owner was a retired police officer who already had one restored 1967 GTO and because of health issues, was selling two other GTOs he had intended on doing down the road, but now couldn't. After visiting a bit, Cory was the new owner of not one, but two '67 GTOs and a bunch of boxes of extra parts. With the engine and transmission work already done for one of the two cars he had bought, Cory enlisted a friend to do a few small patch panel repairs on the better body while getting the body work done and into the first stages of painting. After getting the body on the top side to an acceptable state of restoration along with painting the body bottom and frame, the complete drivetrain was then put in place. After that the car was then taken to another friend to do the finishing paint with applying color and clear. It turned out gorgeous!! A year and a half pasted during this beginning process, so next came the interior. Even though Cory had enough parts to do two complete interiors with all that he had bought, he ordered complete new interior kit and utilized the best parts of what he had to install the new seat covers on and anything else inside the car that needed refurbishing. The end result inside with all the little details yielded quite a clean and stunning appearance making the car have a better-than-new look. After adding his last pieces to finish the restoration and seeing the end, Cory knew he had to get some time on the engine by driving it to break it in since it was supposedly rebuilt and never run by the last owner. So finally with the last step of getting a new exhaust system on to keep it quiet, off he went and for the first time really enjoying this new '67 GTO. After a second day of driving the car with about 300 miles on it now, he noticed the engine was starting to get hot and knocking. Not knowing what was going on, he turned around and idled back home full of discouragement. Later a decision was made to pull the engine and take it apart to figure out what was going on. After getting it disassembled and getting everything to a machine shop, it was discovered that there was some fiberglass blasting media left inside the heads by whoever had done the previous engine work. This caused the engine to run hot, spin a couple rod bearings and ruin the crank shaft. Cory was lucky enough to have another complete engine that came with the other parts car

that gave up its crankshaft so he could correct this part of his dilemma. After everything else about the engine checked out okay, Cory was relieved, allowing him to rebuild the engine with confidence and put it all back together again one last time. That was two years ago and Cory has been driving it ever since. One thing I have to say about the cars from the sixties when they are kept that way, and that is they are pretty understandable as people learn by doing or playing around with them. Cory is a true testament as to what a person can achieve when he puts his mind to it and sticks to it no matter the obstacles or how long it takes.

