

# *Holding Disappearing Evolution*

By Bob Schmeichel

I have to believe Steve Ollerich was heavily influenced by America's first muscle car, the Pontiac GTO's at a young age. He told me that he and his brother, while working on the family dairy farm near Garretson in the early 1970's, bought a 1966 GTO together for something to play around with. He said it was nothing to see 6 or 8 GTO's advertised in the Shopping News at one time back then. So they fixed it up with the funds they had together and enjoyed the car however they could until someone offered to buy it from them. It wasn't their intent to sell the car, but led them into buying more GTO's one at a time, doing what was necessary to improve the car, and selling them while not really making much of a profit for their time.

He said if they made \$150.00 to \$200.00 more than they actually had in the car that was good. After all it was more

about the fun and gaining experience with these cars in their younger years than it was the money. As they got older, priorities changed with each getting married and starting families. After 25 years of raising kids and still working hard in the cattle field, Steve and his wife Rhonda soon were facing an empty nest syndrome. I am not exactly sure how the GTO thing got started again about 14 years ago when Steve started collecting, but he noted that Rhonda was not always been happy about him purchasing another old GTO when he did it without telling her. I think that got underlined pretty heavy the day Steve took his grandkids along to look at a tractor and came home with a red GTO convertible. I don't really think it was his intent as much as just being in the right place at the right time and recognizing the value.

Steve expressed to me that he has had a lot of friends over the years who said they were going to get their first car back, or do something with a car they had for a long time that they were passionate about, only to get ill or pass away before their ideas or dreams were realized. He said it has been really kind of sad to see that happen to so many people he knew, which I believe has been the driving force with Steve collecting GTO's. It was always an additional enjoyable time to him when he was younger, so why not capture some of that as we get older, so our kids and grand children can experience what made us happy when we were their age. Ask Steve about teaching his granddaughter to do a burn out. Steve told me he doesn't always buy if it is too expensive or if it needs more work than he wants to put into it, but it is more the thrill of the hunt that intrigues him. About 4 years ago Steve decided to build a building to house his growing collection so they weren't stored and spread out all over the area. It is kind of nice to have everything under one roof. So far Steve has collected one if not two of every year GTO from 1964 to 1974 along with a couple newer versions created in 2004 thru 2006. This time around he is collecting them to keep rather than selling. GTO's specifically have been collectable for quite a while, and since General Motors dropped the Pontiac brand, it has only made the GTO name more desirable and valuable.

This kind of leads up to the story of the last two GTO's Steve purchased. When he has any free time, he usually is scanning local publications for GTO's that might be for sale. While on a business trip in Minnesota 3 years ago, a flyer fell out of a Trader Magazine he had grabbed, that was good for a free ad. He thought what the heck and promptly posted a want ad looking for Pontiac GTO's with his phone number attached just to see what would happen. A few days later he got a number of calls of which really went nowhere when checked out, until he received one from a gentleman in Lake Benton Minnesota. Being interested in what the gentleman said he had for cars, Steve made the trip to Lake Benton a couple days later. To Steve's surprise, the gentleman has a really nice collection of everything automotive related in a huge climate controlled building. He reiterated to Steve about 3 cars he was thinking about selling. An orange 1969 GTO Judge hardtop, a light yellow 1970 GTO convertible, and a Hurst Olds. After seeing the cars, Steve told the owner he was really interested in the Judge but not so much the convertible even though it was really nice. The owner said he needed to thin his collection down a bit and made a gentleman's agreement with Steve to sell him both GTO's with the understanding that he couldn't take them home to resell. A hand shake agreement was made and the deal done. Steve went back a couple days later to retrieve both cars. Steve had a high school kid he knows come along and drive the pickup with a trailer hauling the Judge home while Steve drove the convertible behind. Steve said the kid driving the pickup was pretty nervous slowing to 50mph sometimes but did a good job all the way home at the same time. As far as Steve driving the convertible behind the trailer, he said he fell in love with the car that day on the way home because everything worked as it should making it his favorite car today out of all he has. It is a totally numbers matching car and being one of 174 Ram Air 111 convertibles with a 366HP 400" engine and 4-speed out of 3615 convertibles produced, it has got to be one of his most



prized GTO's. Steve lovingly mentioned that Rhonda has couple years and watches the side roads and streets when they are out and about while pointing out old cars along the way making Steve smile.

