

FLY GTO

By

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FLY GTO fits my job and hobby perfectly, and it is the custom license plate on our 1965 GTO. As a retired AF pilot (flying only a simulator these days) I sometimes miss flying. While it doesn't actually get airborne, I occasionally take the GTO out of the hangar for a little "flight time" and I manage to pull some "g's" while still on the ground!



We bought the car in 1994 in N. IL, and, after a lot of cleaning, I drove it to the POCI convention in Springfield, IL. I put it in the display class since the trunk was full with a block from a 455 that an uncle had given to me (the rest was in the hotel – they would later go in the front and back seat to balance the car for the trip home). After the convention, I drove it all the



way to Utah, where I was stationed at the time. Normally, I love road trips, but this car had a weak 350, a TH400, and 4.10:1 gears. Any rpm over 3000 made it overheat, so I drove a grand total of 1400 miles at no more than 53 mph. Never again! The car didn't look bad from 50 feet and I loved the American CP-200

wheels, but I had a vision of owning a true road car...one that we could get in, start it up, drive 1000 miles and not have to worry about it. I drove the car around some in UT and got it to run okay in the high altitude air, but it was still a worn out 350.

In 1995 we moved to Edwards AFB in CA and I began to do a lot more to the car there. I pulled the 350 and sand blasted the front frame and engine compartment. I had the engine built by a reputable Pontiac engine builder (I thought) and I bought quite a few more parts. I wasn't completely sure which direction I wanted to take with the car, but when I test-fit the 455 with the headers that a certain dis-reputable person sold me a year before, it was clear, they would not work. The problem was I had the then-new Edelbrock "round-port" aluminum heads and there were very few people who made headers to fit the frame...and I couldn't afford the ones I knew would fit (Doug's).

We moved again in 1998, this time to Arkansas and it was then that I began to look for a shop to completely rebuild the car. My 70 GTO was having issues since I did that car piece-meal and I was tired of always fixing it...I wanted a car that was completely done. So I sold the 70 to help pay for the 65 resto. I found a shop in town with a good reputation (not anymore) that



tore into it and got it about 50-60% done in the 2 ½ years they had it. I was transferred to Scott AFB in 2002 (when we joined GGTOA) and had to drag the GTO in pieces up a couple of months later since that shop basically gave up and were incapable of finishing it.

Dave Trokey took on the project and finished it in time for the 2003 POCI show in Collinsville...and what a beautiful job he did! Finished in Sapphire Blue Metallic Pearl, the car looks black unless it is in direct light. The 455 has a Comp Cams XE274, so it has a little lump to it, but is still very streetable. Dave made RA exhaust manifolds work on the car, so, while they aren't quite as efficient as headers, they don't leak and they don't make the engine compartment hot. I also had to have air conditioning, so he installed the Vintage Air system with some factory brackets to make it look more like it should. The seats were done in Little Rock – custom cloth with the same grain as the original vinyl seats and stitched to match the originals. This combo earned it a Modified Gold at the 2004 POCI convention in Joplin and then we drove it to Pontiac for the 2004 GTOAA convention. I won my class at our 2005 GTOAA convention and I took it drag racing and I won my autocross class there as well (that was a great convention).

We drove the car for several years, having to rebuild the engine in 2006 due to premature failure of the camshaft due to the lack of zinc in modern oils, and having to have the clear-coat resprayed after the incident at the POCI convention in Tulsa. I've had to do a few other things to keep it going such as add an electric fuel pump, but the most notable change recently is the new wheels & tires. When I got the car back from Dave in 2003, the CP-200s didn't fit the new suspension pieces, so I quickly had to find wheels that would fit. The only ones I could get in time for the 2003 convention were Weld Rodlites. They looked good and were very light so I was satisfied at the time. Fast forward to 2012 and when considering getting new tires, I noticed the each of the wheels had slight cracks in them. After some research I discovered that I wasn't supposed to autocross with them...so now I have Centerline Legend Retro wheels – 17x7 front and 17x8 rear. I know a lot of folks don't like the larger rims on classic muscle cars, but I like driving this car hard around corners as well as in a straight line and you can't get V-rated (or higher) tires for 15-inch wheels anymore.



At some point I'd like to put fuel injection on the GTO since the gaskets in the carburetor don't like today's ethanol-enhanced gas, but that will have to wait for the money tree to bloom again. In the mean time, we plan to drive it to this year's GTOAA Convention in Columbus, IN and hopefully it will live up to my original vision of get in, start it up and drive 1000 miles without having to worry about it. And it may do a little flying during the trip.

