



11th Annual GTOAA Regional Car Show



By Chris Winslow



We officially entered our second decade of supporting the Pontiac Museum in Pontiac Illinois this month as we sponsored the 11th annual GTOAA Regional Car Show at the Museum. As Tim Dye noted in his remarks during the trophy presentations, this show has managed to go on uninterrupted since our initial event in 2012. This includes 2020, a year when this was probably the only major Pontiac car show (or car show in general) in this part of the country.

As has become the tradition for this show, several of us met up at the Hen House in Illinois for a late breakfast/early lunch on Friday before beginning the drive up to Pontiac for the weekend. Joining us this year were Barb and Earl Lewis, Mark Melrose, Rich and Sue Vie, and Ron and Sharon Wildebrandt. After lunch we piled into our cars and headed north.

The trip was fortunately uneventful and we rolled into Pontiac late in the afternoon. The first event for the weekend is our Friday night Bar-B-Q at the Finkenbinder's. This event has expanded in recent years to include more than just Gateway GTO and Heart of Illinois members. It also included some of the folks from the City of Pontiac who help us put on the show each year as well as Tim and Penny Dye and a number of other GTOAA members from other clubs. It is always a great time and a good chance for a little relaxing and socializing before the start of the busy weekend.



Saturday morning, we rolled into the Pontiac town square to find that the City had our registration pop ups and tables set and ready to go. They had also stuffed all of the goody bags, including the car show ballots and the dash plaques. This all made our set up a lot smoother.

The first big event for the day was the car cruise and lunch. Alan had once again planned a great cruise. We did not get an exact count but we estimated that at least 60 cars participated. The event included a visit to local collections and a lunch stop. Paula and I stayed behind to cover the registration, but everyone I spoke with that went on the cruise had a great time. This was particularly true for the Fiero enthusiast that participated as one of the stops included some memorabilia from a Fiero racing team.

When this event first started, the Saturday evening activity was a chicken dinner and ice cream social followed by a live show performed by a local theatre group in Pontiac. That tradition has been updated with a new one. Our new Saturday activity has been a cruise in with a live band. This is a great activity as it gives us the opportunity to see a lot of the cars from local



11th Annual GTOAA Regional Car Show



automotive enthusiasts while at the same time listening to some great music and, of course, having some ice cream. This year the band was the Neverly Brothers. Although their name would suggest that they are a tribute band for the Everly Brothers, they actually covered music from a variety of artist including Elvis and the Beatles.

For most of the week leading up to the weekend, the weather predictions for Sunday had been for dry weather. Unfortunately, by Saturday predictions of morning rain had crept into the forecast for Sunday and indeed when we rolled into the town square early Sunday morning, a light drizzle was falling. The good news was that the weather reports predicted that by 8:00 or 8:30 the weather would clear. And, indeed, those predictions were correct. By 9:00 the weather was dry and the skies quickly cleared.

As the morning progressed, Pontiacs filled the town square. Members of Gateway manned the street corners to control traffic and help guide participants onto the show field. As has become a tradition at the event, the Museum brought out the Pontiac balloons. Unfortunately, one of the two balloons developed a tear while they were in the process of blowing it up, so only the Pontiac emblem balloon was successfully erected this year. But with a crystal clear blue sky and the courthouse in the background, it still made for a great photo!

Another tradition at this event that was still going strong this year was Gateway's own Earl Lewis, this year assisted by Barb, selling 50/50 tickets to help raise additional money for the Museum. Earl, outdid himself again this year selling thousands of tickets and single handedly raising \$533..

Tabulation for the show awards has historically been covered by the Heart of Illinois GTO club for this event. Unfortunately some conflicts had their numbers down a bit. Gateway members, as usual stepped up to fill in. This included Paula along with Rich and Sue Vie, John and Diana Johnson (who stayed later than they had originally planned just to help out) and our former president Kerry Friedman. And, of course, we could not pull off this tabulation every year without the help of Tammy Hedrick, who pulls all the registration information into a spreadsheet and prepares the tabulation





11th Annual GTOAA Regional Car Show



sheets that we use to score each class. Without her help, we would never be able to complete the balloting on schedule.

The awards presentation went very smoothly, particularly considering that was the first time we had pulled the awards program for this event together without Brian Sorensen. Gateway members did take home a number of trophies. These included:

- Roger Johnson - 1st Place in Class 1
- Debbie Johnson - 1st Place in Class 2
- Steve Hedrick - 1st Place in Class 4
- Earl Lewis - 2nd Place in Class 4
- Will Bowers - 3rd Place in Class 4
- Mark Melrose - 1st Place in Class 5
- Jesse Gill - 3rd Place in Class 6
- Larry Baker - 1st Place in Class 8

Overall this was a very successful event. After all the dust settled, we raised \$4000 for the museum. This is off a bit from previous years. Part of that was due to a 30% increase in the price of the trophies this year compared to last year due to inflation. Also, despite extra effort promoting the event, including a lot of work by Steve Hedrick promoting it at a number of events, our attendance was down. This was likely due to that early morning rain convincing the Chicago folks that normally come down on Sunday morning to stay home combined with a number of competing Pontiac shows in our corner of the Midwest for the weekend.





11th Annual GTOAA Regional Car Show



As always, a huge factor in our ability to pull off a show like this so far from home are the efforts of Liz Vincent and the rest of the City of Pontiac staff. They work tirelessly every year to help us pull it off. Also many thanks to our local Gateway members Alan and Liane Finkenbinder who are our eyes and ears in Pontiac as we make the preparations each year. And, of course, all the help from Terry and Gail Schott in the planning and execution of this show.



11th Annual GTOAA Regional Car Show



