

12th Annual GTOAA Regional in Pontiac, Illinois

By Chris Winslow



After months of planning and preparation it was finally time for our big car show at the Pontiac Museum. To start the weekend, Paula and I met up with the Bowers, the Schotts, the Lewises, and the Vies at the Cracker Barrel in Troy Illinois Friday morning for a late breakfast/early lunch. We all then headed north to Pontiac.

As has become our tradition, the first event for the weekend is the Bar B Que at Alan and Liane's house. As usual they put on a great spread and there were lots of great desserts. The dinner was attended by all of the folks from Gateway that had arrived on Friday as well as members of Heart of Illinois and other GTOAA chapters. We took advantage of the event to get a photo of the Ladies of Gateway (and friends) in their GTO shirts that were intended for the Parking Lot Party at the GTOAA Nationals back in June. Also in attendance were Tim Dye and Mayor Alvey and his wife. This event is a lot of work for Alan and Liane but they always do a great job and everyone really enjoyed the evening.

We rolled into Pontiac early on Saturday to set up registration and found that the City already had our tents and tables in place. We got registration set up and soon had over 60 cars registered.

Typically on Saturday, Paula and I stay with registration for the day, but this year Tom and Terrie Oxler graciously offered to run registration so that we could go on the cruise that Alan had organized.



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With registration in good hands, Paula and I jumped into the back of Alan and Liane's convertible and we headed out of town for the first stop on the cruise, Fairbury Speedway.

Fairbury Speedway is a historic banked 1/4 mile dirt track. The roots for the speedway go back to 1876. Initially it was a horse track but by 1922 it was hosting automobile and motorcycle races. The track had various uses in the years that followed but it still operates today as an auto race track. In fact, they had racing planned later in the day on the day we visited.

As is usually the case with the cruises that Alan plans, they are well attended. There were close to 90 people at the track from our cruise. We had a great lunch there of fried chicken and pulled pork sandwiches.

After Fairbury, Alan had arranged for us to see some private collections nearby. This included the home and hot rod shop of one of the local citizens who actually has a 2 seat race car that he runs at the track.

As we started to leave the private collections to head back, we had to put up the top on the convertible because we had heard that it was already raining in Pontiac. We only got a few miles away, however, before we heard from Debbie Johnson that her car had broken down on the way out of Fairbury. We turned around and headed back with Terry and Gail Schott and Will and Donna Bowers in Terry's car behind us.

We did not know exactly where Roger and Debbie were, but as we were retracing our path out of town we pulled up just as the owner of the hot rod shop was pushing Debbie's GTO into his garage to put it up on the lift. They had diagnosed it with a bad fuel pump.

I asked Alan from the back seat where we were going to find a fuel pump for a GTO in Fairbury at 3:00 on a Saturday afternoon. Alan had the answer: In his trunk! Alan had a spare pump with him. At it turns out, it was not exactly the right one, but close enough.

So, with Debbie's 1965 convertible up on the lift, Roger and the rest of us took turns wrenching on it to get the old pump out and get the new pump in. Since it was not exactly the right pump, this also included some modifications to the fuel lines to get it all plumbed up.



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Of course, while we were all scraping up our knuckles and forearms shoehorning in that new fuel pump, the ladies were watching our progress intently.

Our efforts were successful and once we lowered the GTO and primed the center carb a bit with some high test racing fuel she roared to life and we were back on our way.

When we rolled back into town we found that the weather had really slowed the regis-



tration process. By then it was 5:00 so we went ahead and closed up registration and headed over to Bob and Ringo's for some dinner.

We woke up Sunday morning to a less than ideal weather report. As we all know, no matter how much time and effort we put into planning a car show, the one thing you cannot control is that weather. And, worse than the weather report showing rain on the way to Pontiac was the report showing that it was already raining in Chicago. For our Sunday show, a lot of



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cars from the Chicago area drive down on Sunday morning, but not, of course, when it is raining.

With the worrisome weather on the way, we arrived at the Museum and started up registration. Normally we would put up the Pontiac balloons from the Museum for car show day, but with this much rain on the way, we decided not to do that this year.

The weather did put a serious damper on our attendance with the total number of cars registered topping out at 106. But the folks that did attend gamely stuck it out. Many of them drying off their cars multiple times as the rain came and went.

And then there was Earl and Barb Lewis. Despite the rain Earl and Barb gamely soldiered on and managed to raise \$407 in 50/50 money for the Museum.



With our usual excellent support from Tammy Hedrick creating our tabulation sheets, Brian Sorensen and members from Heart of Illinois with support from Tom Oxler and a number of other Gateway GTO members performed the tabulation and determined who would get the trophies.

The next challenge was to find a long enough break in the rain to announce the winners and hand out the trophies. We finally took advantage of a break in the weather shortly after 2:00 and proceeded to hand out the awards as quickly as we could. As it turns out it was not quick enough as we did end up getting rain towards the end. (Many thanks to Justin Sidener



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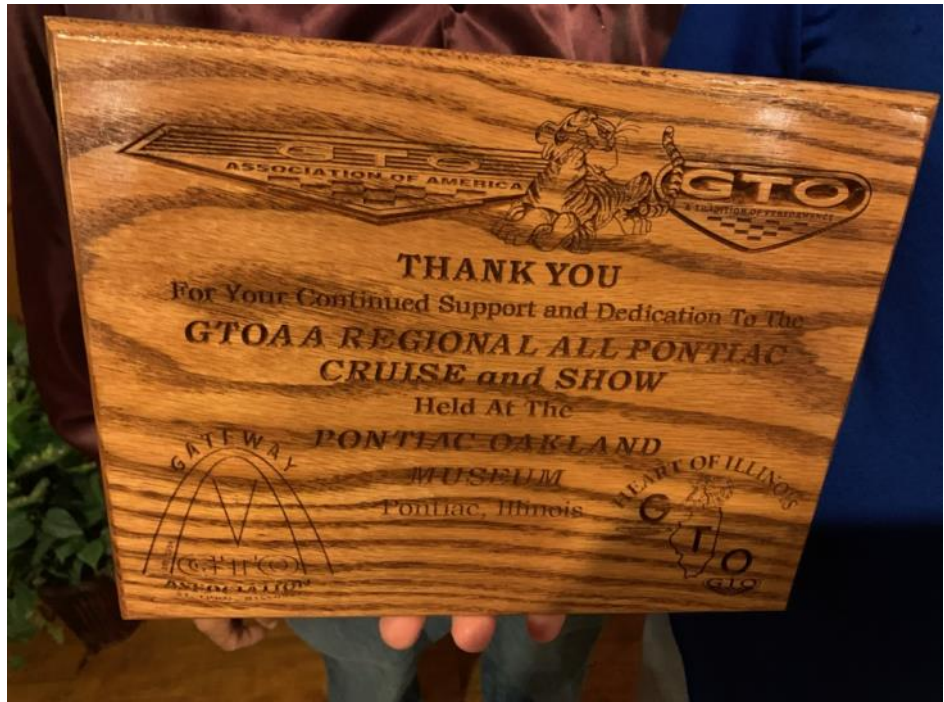


who grabbed an umbrella and kept me dry enough that the ink was not running on the judging sheets I was trying to read!).

One bright spot is that Tim Dye presented Gateway GTO and Heart of Illinois with a plaque thanking us for our years of supporting the museum. We decided to leave the plaque with Tim so that it could be put on display at the Museum.

It is really disappointing to spend most of the year planning and preparing for an event this big only to have the weather interfere with it so significantly. But, as usual, Gateway’s members stepped up and made the best of it. Will and I are still working on the totals, but based on my preliminary count, and including the money that Earl raised, I think we will end up with a donation to the Pontiac Museum of just over \$3000.

Planning is already underway for 2024. The date is set as September 20-22. We are due for a really nice weekend after two years of rainy Sundays, so everyone start putting your requests in now.



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