



My Best Friend Is Not A Dog!

By: Jerry Eckerle Edit & Comment: Jim Stern

In most cases, people say a dog is man's best friend. In the case of Jerry Eckerle of Batesville, Indiana, his best friend is his GTO Convertible. When the urge to buy a GTO first hit Jerry, he was just three years out of the army. He had owned '67 and '69 Firebird convertibles, but found they just didn't possess the power he was seeking. He wanted something faster and roomier because he was about to get married, which dictated the need for extra room.

He got his first GTO experience from a friend who had owned a '66 hardtop. At the local drag strip, which consisted of a country road with ¼ mile markers, Jerry got his first taste of the GTO power. Then and there he knew he had to have one of his own.

So, in February 1970, Jerry drove down to McEntee Motor Sales in Brookville, Indiana and ordered his GTO convertible. He had to wait a month a half, but then on April 30, 1970 he watched his car roll off the car carrier and then into his garage at home. Not long after, he visited that same country ¼ mile strip for a test run. He was so impressed with its performance, he decided to keep the car forever. Now, 32 years later, Jerry is still behind the wheel of his '70 GTO.

When Jerry bought his GTO, money was a little tight. Nevertheless, he decided not to scrimp on the options and has never regretted spending \$4,397.20. Below is a list of the essentials he decided to have.

- Motor: 400c.i. 350hp
- 4-speed close ratio transmission
- 3:90 posi-trak rear end
- Exterior color – Atoll Blue
- Interior color – Dark Blue
- Convertible – White top





Now for the extras:

- Décor group
- G70 X 14 white letter fiberglass tires
- AM + FM radio and w/s/ antenna
- Rear speaker
- Mirror – OS – LH – remote control
- Custom belts – seat Fr. & Rr. Shldr-Fr.
- Steering wheel – custom sport
- Rally II wheels
- Rally gauges cluster – clock
- Tachometer – hood mounted
- Console
- Soft-ray windshield only
- Custom gear shift knob
- Springs + Shocks – ride & handling
- Luggage lamp
- Underhood lamp
- Door edge guards
- Heavy duty radiator

Twenty-five years later, in 1995, the car was finally showing its age. Jerry decided it was time for a restoration. He restored it back to its original factory condition, just as it left the assembly line in Pontiac, Michigan twenty-five years prior.

He started by having the engine over-hauled with the major restoration coming in 1995. He awarded the work to Pulskamp's Auto Body Restoration in the winter of 1995. With a limited amount of time, Jerry hunted for parts and let the pros do the major job. He got the car back at the end of the summer season in 1997 with just enough time to take a few cruises.

During the restoration, there were many ups and downs. One surprise was the fact the undercarriage of the car was in excellent condition and required no work. However,



there are always problems with the restoration of a quarter century old muscle car. Jerry's challenge was locating both the rear quarters and the outer fender wells on both sides.

Now that Jerry has started showing his car at cruise-ins and shows, he has found some interesting things about it. In researching Pontiac's production numbers for 1970, he found 3,783 convertibles were manufactured with only 887 having a 4-speed transmission. He also discovered from other owners of '70 convertibles that the shoulder belts his GTO possesses are a rare option.

The future of Jerry's '70 convertible will be full of highway miles as he and his wife take their usual Sunday afternoon cruises.

Jerry is a member of the GTOAA and also a member of the Ohio Valley GTO Association located in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Awards:

1999 - 2nd Place Woodward GTO Car Show
2001 - 1st Place Woodward GTO Car Show

Along with numerous trophies won at local hometown shows.

Jerry: Thanks for sharing the story of your Best Friend with us. GTO's have become part of the family for many of us. We wish you many more years of happiness together!

Do you have a GTO story to tell? Would you like your GTO featured in The Legend? Contact:

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