

T/A STORY

So how does a long time Mopar nut wind up owning a Pontiac Trans Am? Well first you have a friend by the name of Paul Neumann, (no not the actor). Then your friend goes out and buys himself a 1974 Trans Am, but doesn't quite possess the know how, and especially the proper tools to work on it. Of course, as you could guess by now, yours truly wound up being the wrench man on that 1974 Trans Am my friend Paul bought. I didn't mind though, as Paul was always willing to lend a hand if I needed spare set when I was working on my car. Well one thing led to another, and another friend of mine, Steve, also bought himself a Trans Am, a 1975 model. Steve was a bit better able to handle work on his T/A, possessing first of all the necessary complement of tools, and the ability to use them. However, since Steve had also helped me out with my car projects, I often helped him when he needed an extra pair of hands to complete projects on his T/A. All this assisting did pay off. For one thing, I had the chance to probe a vehicle other than my own, decide if I liked it, or not, and I wasn't stuck with the car if I didn't like it.

I caught the bug, and decided I wanted my own T/A. After some time of searching, and with the help of my friend Steve, I came across a "carousel red" 1976 Trans Am, in October 1981, which was to become mine. The car had relatively low mileage for its age, approximately 49,000 miles, and the body was in fair condition. Upon finishing my inspection of the car, I sat down with its owner to discuss price. At first the owner was asking a rather high price for the car, considering it had rot in the bottoms of both quarters, needed all new hoses, belts, the interior a thorough scrub job, and the front seats some upholstery work. After some back and forth negotiations over what was, or wasn't in need of repair/replacement, the owner of the T/A came down to a price I felt was reasonable, \$3,300.00. I gave the owner a deposit, and returned the next evening, mischief night, to pick up my new toy.

I took care of the mechanical repairs immediately, (i.e. the hoses, belts, and a new battery tray), and then pressed my T/A into daily service, so I could get back to finishing a restoration project that was in the works for about six years at that point in time.

Not content to leave things alone, and with just a little gentle persuasion from my friend Steve, I decided to engage in some amateur bodywork on my T/A about 2 years after purchasing it. What started out as a minor effort on just my T/A, turned into just a wee bit more. Seems a few friends decided that while the garage was open, and tools were available, heh, why not work on their cars too. By the time all

was said, and done, I had five other vehicles scattered about the back driveway, street, and my car up along side the garage. We all took turns helping each other out, and by around 10:00 p.m. we had finished all our projects. Thank g-d I had understanding neighbors, and still do. The bodywork was, as I said, amateur, but it was an improvement over what the car had looked like before I started. The professional job would have to wait until much later when I could scrape up the money.

The time line by this point in our story had brought me to 1987, when I had begun to realize that I needed to get serious about saving my money for bodywork, having blown a goodly sum souping up the engine. I also had expended some of my funds on some suspension upgrades, in the form of urethane bushings in the shock mounts, and front and rear sway bars. Finally, there was that nice set of gas shocks to top things off. Thus by the time would I be able to save the money for the body work, my T/A would have to endure ten years of service, in all kinds of weather, over just about every kind of road. Of course ten years of New Jersey winters, and gobs of road salt, eroded major portions of my car's structure. Some additional quick and dirty bodywork jobs kept things looking good on the surface, but the bondo was beginning to become the major component of the car. In addition to that, there was the growing problem of floor rot to deal with.

Of course there was to be another development that impacted my progress on saving money for the T/A's bodywork, I started dating a young lady in late 1987. This is not to say she had any problem with my plans for my T/A. As a matter of fact this young lady I was dating, and who later became my wife, said- "she always wanted to date a guy with one of those sports cars". I oft wonder if that's why she married me. Do you think? Nah. However, given my tendencies to show off the T/A's cornering abilities, I think it's a miracle she married me at all. One thing though she didn't seem to mind, were the stints of straight line acceleration, other than to in later years strongly suggest I buy one of those magnet stickers that says: "get in, sit down, shut up, and hold on". No matter what though, I think the girl who was to become my wife would have vehemently objected to paying for her dates with me, so guess what, that's right, progress toward saving up for the T/A's body restoration slowed again. Oh well, but I did get the girl, and she liked the car.

Finally, on August 12, 1991, one day after my wedding, my T/A went into V & F Autobody in Metuchen, New Jersey. I visited my car periodically over the next 2½ months, both to check on its progress, and to authorize any additional work. It seems that each time a panel was removed, more rot was found hiding. By the time the job

was done, the only body panels which were completely original, were the hood, roof, and decklid. Every other major panel had either been completely been replaced, or some portion of it had. The cost, let's just say I try not think about it for health reasons, mine that is!

Looking better than it had after the numerous intermediate bondo jobs I had done, I took my toy home. The bodyshop's work got rave reviews from all, even Dad. About a year later I added a nice new set of wheels, which unfortunately dad was no longer here to give his review on them. I also upgraded the stereo. Now my T/A leads a life of quiet semi-retirement, only coming out of its snug garage on sunny days for shows, parades, and the occasional test blast after whatever work has, shall we say, given rise to the need for a test blast.

There is one little extra detail though I haven't quite figured out how to fix. In June 1993, my wife and I, became the proud parents of a bouncing baby boy. This little boy, now 24 years old, had decided, when he was 4, that, "he will have my T/A when he grows up", his exact words by the way. He seemed quite determined to make good on his promise, if you can consider the fact he called his pedal car his Trans Am, any indication of his interest in the big car. When the time comes, I figure if I crazy glue the car to the garage floor, that will slow him a little. If that doesn't work, I'll try praying.

So far, the time hasn't come ☹, and given my Son now has his own Hotrod to play with, not too mention having very handily displayed his engine building skills with that car, I think all I have to worry about now, is when I can pony up the money, so he can build a killer Pontiac Engine for my Trans Am.

SPECIFICATIONS

Engine:

1. Cloyes "True Roller" timing chain,
2. Crane Cam (272/480 @.050 with a 110' centerline)
3. Anti-pump up lifters,
4. Chrome Moly Pushrods,
5. Comp Cams "Roller Tip" rockers,
6. Performer Intake, Holley 650 Double Pumper with Mechanical Secondaries

Transmission:

1. Turbo 700R-4
2. "Heavy Duty" "Clutch Packs"
3. 2200-2500 RPM Stall Speed" Converter
4. "Shift kit"

IGNITION:

1. MSD 6A Capacitive Discharge Ignition System Booster
2. Accel "Super Coil"
3. Distributor Curve Kit

Exhaust:

1. Blackjack headers, dual exhaust through twin cats, and turbo mufflers

Wheels:

American Racing "Outlaw II's"

Stereo:

Pioneer "Head Unit" (Model DEH-P4400), Kicker 9 band equalizer, "Phoenix Gold" 350 watt internally bridged amp in trunk, (2) 8" "Free Air" "Oz" speakers in Package Shelf,
(2) 6 x 9 "Infinity" speakers in rear side panels, (2) 3-1/2" "Polk" speakers in Dashboard