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# The Long Shot

by Chris Troniak

*There I was .. entering the same search I had seemingly entered a million and one times. I'm not sure if I was feeling lucky that day, or not. I don't recall.*

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I can't tell you how many times I entered "1970 Hemi Orange GTX" into the Google machine, but I did it faithfully for the better part of ten plus years. Even though "Hemi Orange" wasn't correct, "Tor Red" was never a lucky roll for me. I was all but convinced it would never happen but it became somewhat of a game. You know, like checking your lottery ticket if there was a winner in your area. Fat chance, but if you don't check, how will you ever know? The odds seemed even worse than winning the lottery as my list of "must haves" was leaning to the lofty side, to say the least.

It had to be a numbers matching car, in Tor Red with a white vinyl roof, stripe and white interior with buckets. Just to make it more interesting the N96 hood option had to be there. The options that weren't on the list were a V or R code option. THAT was out of my budget and would likely put me out of my mind searching even if the funds were available!

These thoughts were rolling around inside my head and there sat my existing GTX project car. It was a 1970 numbers matching car, and a Canadian import car. It had buckets and a console. I was the third owner and it was all there, nothing really missing. Ok, so the trunk floor and wheelhouses were missing. That made me the third owner of a car with a "fresh air" trunk. But it wasn't a Tor Red car with white vinyl and interior...with an N96 hood.

I digress.

**I typed in my search and hit the enter button....and there it was.**

I sat there somewhat mesmerized, wondering if I was reading the ad correctly. Funny how coming up empty handed for so long could make me second guess. After re-reading the ad several times I sat in confusion wondering what to do next. I hadn't really considered actually finding the car. It didn't have a console and it was a column shift. But that was the only



thing missing from the list, and how lucky did I really think I was? Besides that, the car was in great condition and needed very little!

The car was in Washington State and the next thing I knew, I was on my way. I had contacted the owner and he still had the car. It was time to put up, or shut up. I packed my bag and hit the road on what was possibly the most exciting part of anything I could remember for a very long time. I was actually nervous about getting there!

There she was, in all her glory. Just like the ad stated. The numbers matching motor had a fresh rebuild, and most of it other than the trunk, had new paint. The interior was professionally done and looked great. There was a file folder as thick as a New York phone book and it was very detailed along with the titles and build sheets. Turns out the owner had the hood stripes painted the way he personally liked them, and the hood lip badge relocated along with it.

I could get over that. The paint was too nice to worry about that at the moment. The car was oddly optioned and still strikes me so, to this day. A column shift, but it had bucket seats with the buddy seat in the middle (this turns out to be the best thing ever, by the way). Tic Toc Tach but a column shift. No remote drivers mirror, kind of strange for a GTX, but a column shift? No power or disc brakes, with a column shift. N96 hood with

turn signals and a column shift? Skid plate on the K member, and a column shift. Damn, that column shift!! I couldn't get it out of my head!! I didn't want it, but when would I ever find another car that fit the bill?? I'd have to go home and think on it. So, after a handshake, off I went. There were a few "what have I done?" moments along the way, I can tell you that.

After arriving home and a long thought process I realized "this was it", and to hell with the column shift. I called him up and we settled on a price. Now all I had to do was make payment, send in the appropriate documentation to the border then go pick it up.

About two week later I rented a trailer and my brother David and I headed back for the car. All was good and the trip down was even more exciting this time! The owner was torn with the idea, and I could really sympathize with that. He had to sell the car to keep his business going. After assuring him that I would take care of his baby, we loaded it up and headed for home. I was now the third owner of the car and it felt almost surreal. When we'd stop to check tires or get fuel, I would open the trailer door to check on the car, and although it sounds crazy, part of me was checking to make sure it was real.

After getting it home and driving it that summer I had a set of Magnum 500's made up for it with 10 inch rears to give it a bit of a hot rod look and still keep the Mopar theme alive at the same time. After a few thousand miles and a couple summers

later the 727 needed to be rebuilt as it wasn't staying in third gear. I called up Dennis Palmarchuk and he agreed to do the job for me. So I dropped the trans out of the car and took it down to Lethbridge. While he was working on it, I thought it over and decided to retire the numbers matching motor for safety sake and build a new motor that I wouldn't have to

worry about. I went over some ideas with Rod at D&W custom engines and we had a plan. He put together a 512 stroker short block with a Scat crank, Eagle rods and Icon pistons. To keep it old school I went with the Mopar 509 cam.

I thought it over and really wanted to keep the stock look under the hood and keep things as era correct as I could. I got a set of 906 heads from Larry Gammon and took my stock intake and handed them over to Dennis to have them machined by Conrad Syrker. He gave the heads a bowl cut, un-shrouded the combustion chambers and ported and polished them. Next were the 2:14 intake and 1:81

exhaust valves to help in the breathing department. He also matched the intake manifold to the heads while he was at it. I know there are folks that will be saying that I should have went with aluminum heads and intake and make use of the newer technology but in my heart I wanted it to look stock. The way it looked when it rolled off the assembly line.

While those gents were working on that I blasted the K member, reinforced it with some new welds and added a gusset up to the steering box perch. All brake lines were replaced, front to





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back as well as new upper control arms, bushings, ball joints and sway arm bushings. New torsion bar springs were added as well as new rear leafs from Mopar performance.

Dennis called and it was time to head to Lethbridge and pick up my trans, heads and intake. Dennis has a set up in his shop that is so clean you could eat off the benches. It was also clear

by the display of organization that he is a master at what he does and takes a great deal of pride in his work. I was very confident that I made the right choice. The head work was incredible with a high level of expertise and workmanship. I could not wait to get things back together!

Next, David and I assembled the long block, bolted up the 727 to it then bolted it up to the K member and lowered the car back on to it. After setting up everything for the cam break in, all that was left to do was turn it over and rev it up to 2500 rpm and wait for 30 nerve racking minutes. All worked out well and she came through with flying colours.

Then life came along and Mary and I moved to Cranbrook BC from Calgary and the car sat for 5 years while we built a new shop, got settled and started a small business. I finally got around to installing a bigger fuel line, quick time fuel pump and sending unit to feed the new Holley 850. I had a few issues with the new fuel set up and the air cleaner base. By the time I got a spacer under the carb to get the fuel line to clear the intake, the hood wouldn't close properly. Some milling on the spacer and a lower profile filter element (that fit a BMW) and things came together nicely.

We hauled the car up to Calgary this past summer to have it dyno tuned and get it back on the road so we could finally enjoy driving it again! I won't mention names but we had a lot of trouble with the shop and they declared the car "not tunable". After taking the car out of the shop we called on Rod at D&W once again and he set us up with Rich from his shop to tune the car. We left the car with Rich and after he had time to look at it, he had it running perfectly in a few hours.

We had a great time driving it this summer and surprisingly we had very few bugs to work out of the changes. I couldn't really deal with having the 4.10 rear in the car anymore so I called Dean Tilleman and he got me set up with a third member in 3.55 ratio. I got that swapped out and things are as right as they can be.

We've had the car 14 years now, time flies! It's been part of our lives including our wedding and remains special to us in many ways (even with a column shift).

We'd like to extend our thanks to all the club members and others we've mentioned, that helped us along with the small project. It wouldn't have been possible without your help.



**OH!!! Almost forgot to mention. Watch what you Google for..you just might find it.**