

A Girl and Her Goat



Part of the Invitational display in Building T

**Gerry Kerna's
Starlight Black
GTO is a work
of art after
restoration**

by Amy Beck

Gerry Kerna is the proud owner of a '71 GTO Coupe. Yes, a woman is the owner – it's a rare thing.

Gerry has often arrived at shows and pulled out the windshield card to find the owner's name listed as Jim Kerna. Jim is Gerry's husband. The menacing black '71 GTO is Gerry's. It has been for a long time. In fact, she knew the car before she knew Jim. Her husband is very interested and supportive of her love for her vehicle. They both go to shows and stand proudly next to the GTO, no matter whose name is on the windshield card.

Gerry always had affection for muscle cars. When she was done with college and done with wringing out her 1970 Chevelle SS, it was time for a GTO. It was 1977, in a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pa., when Gerry went through the automotive classified ads. Then she spotted the ad: 1971 GTO, never raced, always garaged, original owner. It didn't take long to make this beauty hers. With 64,000 miles on the car, Gerry drove it with pride for five years. Then realizing that routine use would eventually compromise the GTO's condition, she set it aside for pleasure use. For the next 14 years, Gerry held onto her prize possession.

In May 1996, she brought the GTO to a friend from high school who now owned a body shop in Wexford, Pa. Bill Hahn was the restorer for the shop, at that time. The 82,000-mile Pontiac needed several rust spots repaired. Once started, additional rust was

found on the inner rocker panels, hidden behind the frame. The only way to properly repair these areas would require the body to be removed from the frame. This was when serious talk began for doing the entire car. "As Bill Hahn's talent and abilities became evident, I embarked on a full restoration project," Gerry explains.

The first step with the GTO, as with any restoration, was researching and gathering of information and documentation. Gerry had the original bill of



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sale, so it was easy to track down the owner of the dealership that originally sold the car. In spite of the dealership changing hands three times, Hahn was able to track down Robert Burrell. He is the former owner of the Pontiac-Buick dealership near Harrisburg and still remembered selling the classic muscle car to the original owner. The hulking Starlight Black coupe boasts a 300-horsepower, 400-cubic-inch engine, a four-speed floor-mounted shifter, distinctive green-yellow-white "judge" striping, tan upholstery and a factory-equipped formula steering wheel which had been a special order item. After contacting Burrell, he told Hahn he would send out his only remaining company decal – an emblem which graces the GTO's bumper.

Hahn states, "It was a very original example, therefore easy to restore." Only 406 Starlight Black GTOs were built in 1971. A car like this would have been special ordered because the factory standard issue judge stripes were blue-yellow-red stripes on Starlight Black. The car was disassembled and each piece of hardware was logged into a notebook, categorized by the type of plating the metal received. The frame and all its hardware were then alkaline dipped. The underside of the body was sandblasted. The quarter panels, rocker panels and radiator core support were replaced with NOS units. Two new doors from Arizona were installed. The engine was rebuilt at Dunk's performance shop.

The interior was in good condition. The original door trim and dash panels were retained. Hahn said, "Although they were not perfect, all they needed was some TLC to look as good as new." The seat covers and carpets were replaced. The replacement carpet was modified to exactly match the factory carpet. When Hahn gave Gerry the option of having the radio converted to a modern AM/FM stereo, she opted to keep the original AM. Gerry said, "When I drive a car like this, I want to hear the motor, not the radio."

The chassis was treated to some new and restored parts, as well as headmark correct