

*Big Chief's Corner*

## Dollars and Sense

Oldsmobile is gone. The Firebird and Camaro nameplates are being retired after this year. What the heck is going on?

I remember the days when you chose between a GMC, Ford or Chrysler product. The "Big Three" owned the domestic market.

What happened was the oil embargo of the early seventies. Increasing gas prices and skyrocketing insurance rates had already killed the muscle car. The oil embargo smashed the domestic automaker's grip on American car buying public.

When lines started forming at the pumps and gas prices started getting higher than hippies, Americans started looking for a cheap way to get to work.

That's when the crack formed in the foundation of American auto manufacturing. Honda Civics, Datsun B210s and Toyota Corollas started seeping into American garages. They were cheap to buy and cheap to drive.

Americans no longer really cared about how fast they could get from stop light to stop light. Now they wanted to know who had the best MPG rating.

Things have been in a constant state of flux ever since. The world now faces even bigger challenges. It's not just the price of gas, but the environment that's at stake.

Automakers are in the unenviable position of meeting government mandated emissions standards while still providing the buyer with a stylish, functional and reasonably priced product. That means that our old friend, performance, is on the blocks again.

GM has done an outstanding job of offering us performance in recent years with the LT1, LS1 and various supercharged offerings. All of these have come at a premium price.

Price, unfortunately, is the key. While many of us are willing to dip into the checkbook for the added oomph, most are not. That's why the Firebird and the Camaro are going away. They cost more than the general public was willing to spend. Mustangs and Celicas didn't.

As Pontiac enthusiasts the forecast is not all gloom and doom. Even though there's no talk of the Firebird nameplate coming back later, which is the popular rumor for Camaro, there are some other signs of life in the performance division.

The concept car Grand Prix G8 was back on the show circuit this year. This LS1 powered, all-wheel-drive beast could be a new standard for American performance.

The newest concept is the Solstice. This nifty little two seater weighs in at 2900 pounds and has a 2.2 liter, DOHC, supercharged motor. It's cranking out 240 horsepower. You also get 225 ft. lbs. of torque in this package. It is more of a roadster concept but judging from number BMW Z3s and Mazda Miatas you see on the road today it makes sense.

Bottom line? It's \$20,000 and that makes it marketable.



Members Bruce Rhoads (left) and Brian Ray (right) get to know each other after the meeting.

# Planning The New Year

Planning for events in the upcoming year took center stage at the January meeting of the Arkansas Pontiac Association.

Velma Spradlin reported that she contacted Children's Hospital and had the requisite paperwork to set up charitable contributions. President Chris Ritter will be responsible for getting them filled out.

A logo, designed by Ritter, was adopted by the group. It can be seen in the masthead of this newsletter.

Member Stacy Major agreed to investigate the costs involved in producing embroidered shirts using the logo for club members. She will report her findings at the next meeting. Jerry and Velma Spradlin volunteered to purchase a banner with the logo for club use.

Ritter advised the club of his meeting with Carl Reed of Sherwood Pontiac regarding a spring car show. It was decided that the April 6th date he wanted was too soon and that we would not attempt that show. Ritter will contact Reed and offer to have our club show up for display purposes only.

A fall car show is being planned. A tentative date of October 5th was selected by the group. The show will be open to all makes of cars. Classes and whether or not it will be a points judged show will be decided at the next meeting. Ritter will be checking on the availability of Maumelle City Park as a location for the show.

Ritter asked members to consider attending the Pontiac Southern Nationals, sponsored by the Dallas Area Pontiac Association, on June 1st and 2nd. This would be a weekend trip for those not involved in the High Performance Pontiac shootout on Monday.

Plans were also made for a trip to the Centerville Dragway on February 24th. Members interested in attending should meet at the Conway Cracker Barrel (along side I40) at 8:30am for breakfast and then caravan to the track. It is a test and tune session at the track. Cost is \$10.00 to race, \$5.00 to watch.

It was decided that cruise-ins would be scheduled on a monthly basis. Weather will determine when the cruise ins will begin but Ritter expressed his hopes that it could start as early as April.

## Logo Design Incorporates Old & New

At the first meeting of the Arkansas Pontiac Association we talked about a logo for our group. I knew I wanted an identity for our organization and it needed to reflect the broad span of interest our association has for Pontiacs.

I started out by doing a lot of surfing of the internet. This led me to the old "Indian Head" logo of Pontiac legend. Unfortunately, I couldn't find one with a high enough resolution to download.

Enter Archie Williams. While attending the CAMS car club cruise in, Archie produced a metal plaque with the "chief's" head that I needed.

The head and circle logo was scanned in. This gave me the base for the logo and the tie to the older style Pontiacs.

Lucky for me, Pontiac has been very consistent in their branding and logos for the past century. The next most common logo for Pontiac is still



used today. This is where the arrow-head logo comes in. I picked up that element from the advertising clip files where I work.

All that remained was to get our Arkansas connection into the design. An outline of the state fit that blank

spot perfectly.

We don't print the newsletter in color so I'll tell you the circle is filled in dark blue, the logos are filled with red and everything is outlined in gold.

I hope you like it and will wear it proudly when we have shirts made.

# The Story Of The Pontiac Engine That Never Was

James Matchett raised a lot of eyebrows when he arrived for his first meeting driving a highly modified 1989 Firebird that was more Hollywood than Arkansas. It turns out his creativity isn't limited to body panels.

(The following tale was written by James Matchett. He had me going for a while with his Pontiac 349 HO emblems on the valve covers. I hope you get as much fun out of it as I did - Editor)

The 349H.O. is a very rare engine. Less than 200 of them were ever produced, including prototypes.

Previous to 1982, when the

third generation Pontiac Firebird was introduced, it became known to the engineers in the engine department that it would use the generic GM V-8 engine.

Unhappy with the reality that their beloved Firebird would not have a real Pontiac engine under the hood, they started working nights and weekends on a

Pontiac V-8 that would use the basic short block of generic GM engine but would have heads designed by Pontiac engineers.

The goal was to increase the flow by 35% without decreasing the low and mid-range torque.

They did this by using experience they gained while working with Mickey Thompson back in the glory days of Pontiac muscle cars. Thompson had experi-

mented with 3 valve heads for Pontiacs. The heads they designed were equipped with two 1.5 inch intake valves and one 1.77 inch exhaust valve. This allowed the spark plug to be centrally located for short flame travel. This made it possible to have 11.5:1 compression without detonation on 92 octane, unleaded fuel. The introduction of E.F.I. in the mid-eighties also contributed to the feasibility of the concept.

It was possible, with two intake runners, to use one for low/midrange and one for top end powers. This was accomplished with sliding valves in the intake plenum that opened and closed the high speed intake runners.

The E.F.I. computer opened and closed the high speed injectors and enriched the mixture for best performance and fuel mileage.

Getting all those valves and mechanisms under the valve cover were a problem. It was solved by incorporating a small .500 diameter rocker arm shaft for the intake valves and stud mounted, needle bearing rocker arms for the exhaust valves. This way the intake rocker arms could be kept short and light.

The exhaust rocker arms work as usual but the intake rockers work in reverse, much like the Chrysler Hemi and Buick nailhead engines.

Another feature that makes the short rocker arms feasible and also reduced the weight of the valve train is the use of cone

shaped valve springs that use small .75 valve retainers.

Due to the light weight of the valve train, low inertia roller rocker arms and springs with less pressure they were able to gain 20 horsepower.

They achieved the magical 1 horsepower per cubic inch or 349 HP by adding 104 horsepower through better breathing and less friction. With the lighter weight and better traction of this car it was able to achieve a 1/4 mile time of 12.84 at 116 MPH. Not bad for 1989.

It's a shame that high manufacturing

costs and outrageous insurance premiums killed the Pontiac 349 H.O.

I hope you found the story of the Pontiac 349 H.O. interesting because it's only a story. If only it were true.



## Mark Your Calendar

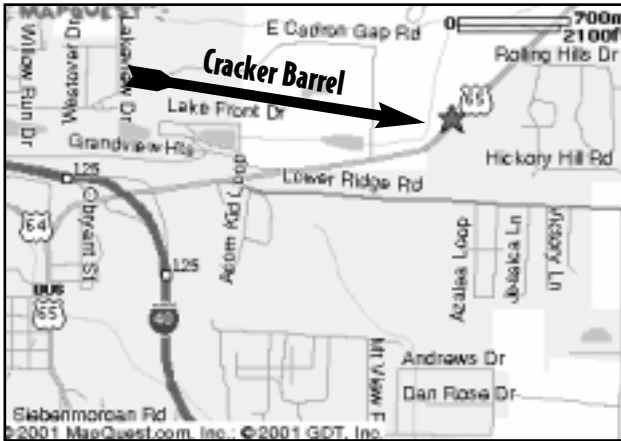
**February 17th**  
**Regular Meeting - Arkansas Pontiac Association**  
**1:00 PM**  
**Westland Apartment Complex**

**February 24th**  
**RACE DAY!**

Anyone interested in a day of test and tune at the Centerville Dragway are invited to attend.

Cost is \$10.00 to race and \$5.00 to watch.

Club members will gather at 8:30am in Conway at the Cracker Barrel restaurant. We'll have breakfast there, then caravan up to the track for a day of grudge racing. Bring your coolers and pack a sandwich if you want lunch.



**April 13th**

**North East Arkansas Street Rod Association**  
**Open Auto Show**

**Craighead Forest Park - Pavilion #3 & #4**  
**Jonesboro, AR**

**Roy Coble 870-932-6110**

**rojocoble@cox-internet.com**

**Entry fee is \$15.00. Registration is from 8am - 12pm.**

**March 23rd**

**Pratt's Antique Vehicle Show**  
**620 Pratt Road (Hwy. 65-530)**

**Little Rock, AR**

**Clint Cusick - 501-316-1203**

**Limited to 60 entries - Divisions based on years 1925-1977- No entry fee**

**Friday, May 31st thru Sunday, June 2nd**

**Pontiac Southern Nationals**

**Dallas Area Pontiac Association**

**www.pontiacsouthernationals.com**

**972-618-0700**

## SALE OR TRADE

### CARS.....

**1972 LeMans. Over \$10,000 invested but will sacrifice for \$7,500. Dealer paperwork comes with it. Very nice car. Call Shane Shelton at fbodyman@iwon.com or call 501-315-3881.**

### PARTS.....

**455 short block. 1973 date code. Standard bore, standard crank. Slight ridge at the top of cylinder. Includes oil pan and damaged, but repairable windage tray. \$425.00, OBO. Chris Ritter - 501-803-9219**

**Header panel for 1974 Trans Am. Refinished and ready for final prep work/paint. \$125.00, OBO. Chris Ritter - 501-803-9219**

**1969 GTO standard differential. Code WC. 2.78 gears. Solid housing with good 28 spline axles. \$100.00. Call Bryan Blocker at 501-529-8020.**

**Set of 7M5 and 4X, 455 heads. \$50 for each pair. Call Bryan Blocker at 501-529-8020..**

**Complete set of five, 15X7 rally wheels off a 1977 Grand Prix. Trim rings and center caps included. \$100.00. Contact Claudio Garcia at 501-843-0731**