

1976

50TH ANNIVERSARY GRAND PRIX

by Tim Dye



To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first Pontiac, which was introduced in January, 1926 Pontiac created a special limited production Grand Prix. I thought it would be interesting to take a look at this special car and some of the related memorabilia.

The earliest piece I have related to the "1976 Pontiac Golden Anniversary Grand Prix" (Pontiac's official name for the car) is a memo dated August 1, 1975. The memo was from R.E. Benson who was sales promotion manager, and the memo was only sent to zone managers. The first paragraph reminds the zone managers of their first look at the car on July 30 at the Summer Masters Conference.

This brings up an interesting point about the debut of this special car. POCI member Chuck Cochren provided some pictures from the 1975 POCI national convention held in Pontiac, Michigan August 22-24. It was



Photo of the 1976 Pontiac Golden Anniversary Grand Prix attached to memo sent to Pontiac zone managers.

here Pontiac brought out the prototype Anniversary Grand Prix. This meant that those attending the convention were the first of the general public to see the car, only the zone managers were able to see it prior to this time. Don Bougher, POCI founder recalled a photo from that convention taken in front of the car. Along with himself the photo included POCI members Tracy Dowler and Rick Kornmier along with Mr. Huber who was a Pontiac dealer from the mid-west. All three ordered anniversary Grand Prix's from Mr. Huber and had them drop shipped. Don and Tracy ordered a 455 while Rick went with the 400. Don also recalled that the transmission went out in his with less than 200 miles on it.

The memo from R.E. Benson contains some other interesting information. It says "This car will be used to represent the 50 years of fine Pontiac's which we celebrate during the 1976 model year." It also states that production will begin on October 1, 1975 at the rate of 50 per day and end on December 12, 1975. In pencil the recipient of this memo wrote 2,500, which I know from other information I have was the projected amount to be produced. As we know a total of 4,807 were produced. This brings up another question, did they produce more than 50 per day to end up with the 4,807 total, or did they extend the production time period? The



Pre-production 1976 Golden Anniversary Grand Prix with 1926 Pontiac owned by Pontiac (now part of Heritage Collection). This rainy day at the 1975 POCI convention was the first public viewing of the 50th Anniversary Grand Prix. Photos from the collection of Chuck Cochren.

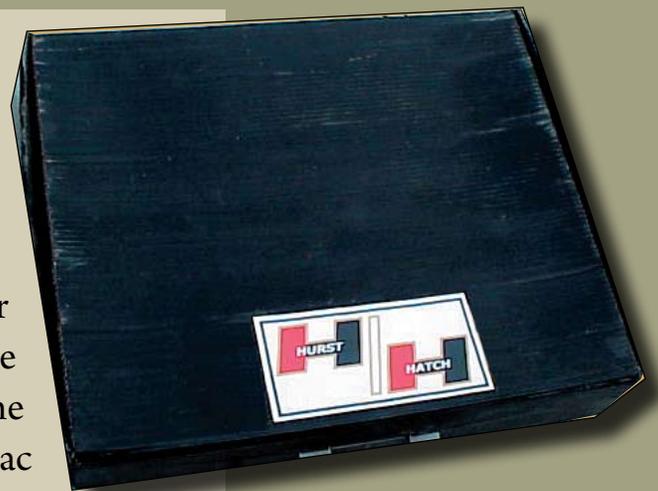


Far left: 50th Anniversary leather keychain.

one example I have access to has a date of "11A" which is the first week of November, right in the middle of the production period the memo stated.

Accompanying the memo was a full color photograph of the special Grand Prix. The memo had this to say about the photo, "The attached photograph is for the use of Pontiac Zone Field Personnel only, and is not to leave the possession of the person to whom this is addressed." The seemingly top secret handling instructions seem kind of strange now that we know the car would be seen and photographed three weeks later. I have a press release with a black and white photo about the car dated September 15, 1975, just two weeks before production began.

Another paper item associated with this car includes a Dealer Service Bulletin dated 9/15/75. This bulletin is all about the Hurst/Hatch roof panels installed by Hurst Performance. The first sentence of the bulletin says "The Pontiac Anniversary Grand Prix (Y82 Option) includes Hurst/Hatch roof glass panels and storage case installed by Hurst Performance, Inc." It went on to state that all the Hurst items had a 12 months or 12,000 mile warranty and it gave contact information. On the back was a list of parts and the cost. Attached to this was a Hurst/Hatch warranty and maintenance brochure just for the 50th Anniversary Grand Prix. Maybe someone can fill me in, but the 50th Anniversary GP I looked at had an option code of "Y83" not "Y82"?



Original Hurst/Hatch storage case as described in dealer service bulletin.



Hurst/Hatch warranty papers.



That gold color Hurst/Hatch brochure that was attached to the service bulletin also found its way into the glove box of every anniversary Grand Prix, along with a green card stock paper that had more warranty information.

Another paper that is always interesting to have is the window sticker, and the one I have for a 50th Anniversary Grand Prix indicates that this option cost \$550.00. All Golden Anniversary cars were built as a Grand Prix SJ with the LJ luxury appointments group as standard equipment. The LJ option was \$520.00 which brought the final cost of this particular example with all the options to \$8,116.80. The base price of a 1976 Grand Prix was \$5,222.80. This car was delivered to Halling Buick, Pontiac, GMC La Crosse, Kansas. On the background of the window sticker there is a screened image of the 50th Anniversary logo. This is not only found on the window stickers of special anniversary cars, but I also have a window sticker from a 1976 Catalina and it has it too.

Other memorabilia include a leather 50th Anniversary key chain, a 50th Anniversary lapel pin and a special license plate in black with a gold "50" on it and pin-back button. I am sure there is more.

Another couple of things interesting to note is that they did not mention the gold rally II wheels on the list of features. And you can impress your Pontiac

Far left: 50th Anniversary lapel pin.

50TH ANNIVERSARY GRAND PRIX FEATURES

- SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY GOLD PAINT COLOR
- SPECIAL "HURST" REMOVABLE ROOF PANELS, DEEPLY TINTED
- WHITE PADDED LANDAU ROOF
- SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY HOOD ORNAMENT AND DECK LID LOCK COVER
- DISTINCTIVE ACCENT STRIPES
- SPECIAL DOESKIN INTERIOR TRIM IN BUCKSKIN VINYL
- BUCKSKIN LEATHER IS THE ONLY OPTIONAL TRIM



50th Anniversary pin-back button.

friends with some trivia by asking them what was the last production Pontiac to have a Chief Pontiac logo on it? As far as I know the answer would have to be the 50th Anniversary Grand Prix. The hood ornament and trunk lock cover has a beautiful logo of the Indian Head and Pontiac Crest along with the number "50" (see heading of this story). Of course you would have to give them credit if they said the 50th Anniversary Trans Am, only it just had a sticker, but that's another story.

PONTIAC		Division of General Motors Corporation		
MAKE	PONTIAC	MODEL	GRAND PRIX SJ HARDTOP COUPE	
DEALER TO WHOM DELIVERED	HALLING BUICK-PONTIAC-GMC LA CROSSE		STATE	KS
DEALER AT	(FROM ABOVE)		FINAL ASSEMBLY POINT	PONTIAC, MI.
THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE STANDING ON THIS MODEL			MANUFACTURER'S SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE OF THIS VEHICLE	5,222.80
NO EXTRA CHARGE			DESTINATION CHARGE	276.00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 V8 ENG • TURBOHYDRAMATIC TRANSMISSION • STEEL BELTED RADIAL TIRES/RTS • POWER STEERING • VARIABLE RATIO • PWR DISC BRAKES • CATALYTIC CONVERTER • HIGH ENERGY IGNITION SYSTEM • SINGLE BUCKLE SEAT + SHOULDER BELTS-CUSTOM • KILOMETRES/MILES PER HOUR SPEEDO • DUAL RECTANGULAR HEADLAMPS • PROTECTIVE RUBBER BUMPER STRIPS • CUSTOM CUSHION STEERING WHEEL • ELECTRIC CLOCK • LATERAL SUPPORT BUCKET SEATS • FRT SEAT CONSOLE • ROOF DRIP MLDGS • WHEEL OPENING MOLDINGS • DLX WHEEL COVERS 			THE VEHICLE WAS MANUFACTURED IN COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE FEDERAL MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY AND EMISSION CONTROL STANDARDS MANUFACTURER'S SUGGESTED RETAIL DELIVERED PRICES FOR OPTIONS AND ACCESSORIES INSTALLED ON THIS VEHICLE BY MANUFACTURER: LJ LUXURY APPOINTMENTS OPTION CONSIST OF: SPECIAL SOLID PAINT SPECIAL VELOUR CLOTH SEATS LANDAU TOP-THICK PADDED LH REMOT CONTROL SPORT MIRR-RH FIXED CARPETED TRUNK CARPETED SPARE TIRE COVER REAR OTR COURTESY LAMPS ACCENT STRIPES DELUXE CARPETING RALLY GAUGES "LJ IDENTIFICATION" GR 78X15 WV STEEL BELTED RADIAL TIRES AM+FM ST RADIO+STEREO 8 TAPE PLAYER 6WAY POWER SEAT ADJUSTER DRIVER ST POWER WINDOWS REMOTE CONTROL DECK LID RELEASE SAF-T-LOK POWER DOOR LOCKS SOFT RAY GLASS-ALL WINDOWS TILT STEERING WHEEL CUSTOM AIR CONDITIONING CRUISE CONTROL FOUR B/C RALLY II WLS & TRIM RINGS FRONT FLOOR MATS REAR FLOOR MATS BODY SIDE MOLDINGS DOOR EDGE GUARDS FRONT BUMPER GUARDS REAR BUMPER GUARDS 60/40 NOTCHBACK SEAT GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY PACKAGE CONSIST OF: "HURST HATCH" REMOVABLE GLASS PANELS SPECIAL GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY ID LJ	SUB TOTAL 5,498.80 520.00 37.00 337.00 124.00 99.00 17.00 62.00 60.00 52.00 505.00 78.00 65.00 9.00 8.00 36.00 8.00 18.00 18.00 15.00 550.00 .00
3333 9999 R 333333 999999 T 33 99 99 G 333 999999 C 333 999999 O 33 99 D 333333 999999 E 3333 9999			ANNIVERSARY GOLD-WHITE FACTORY INSTALLED OPTIONS AND ACCESSORIES SUB-TOTAL 2,618.00	
13-185 S16315 SHIP-TO 13-185			(TOTAL AMOUNT does not include dealer installed options or accessories, state or local taxes or license fees) TOTAL AMOUNT \$ 8,116.80	



Original window sticker from a 1976 50th Anniversary Grand Prix.

Official 50th Anniversary license plate.

All memorabilia and literature featured in this story are from the collections at the Pontiac Vintage Press & Library.