



Automotive

THE LIST

Money guzzlers

According to CBSMoneyWatch.com, here are 3 ways you waste money on your car:

1. Changing oil every 3,000 miles.
2. Using premium fuel unnecessarily.
3. Failing to change your air filter.

DID YOU KNOW? China is doing a "cash for clunkers" program to help spur auto sales, paying up to \$2,800 for farm vehicles, heavy trucks and buses.

AUTO BITS

TIP OF THE WEEK

Safe driving around big rigs

Big rigs are involved in just 2.4 percent of all vehicle accidents, according to Truck-Info.net. Regular vehicle drivers can do a lot to avoid accidents:

- Be aware of the distance a big truck needs to stop. Never cut in front of a big truck and then hit the brakes.
- If you can't see the truck's mirrors, it means the driver can't see you. Avoid traveling in the truck's blind spots.
- If a trucker driver is signaling to merge into your lane, it's courteous and safer to slow down and let him.

—ARA

CAR Q & A

No spare tire

Q: I recently bought a 2011 Hyundai Elantra and was never told that the car did not have a spare tire or doughnut. Instead, there is a kit-type setup of a pump and a sealant. Where can I purchase a wheel/tire?

A: You are not alone with not having a spare tire in the truck. Three of my cars have just the tire repair kit. Check to make sure a full-size tire will fit in the spare-tire well area before you buy a spare tire. Try TireRack.com for a spare tire and wheel.

—Junior Damato,
Talking Cars columnist

CARS WE REMEMBER

1964 Pontiac GTO: The birth of a legend

Of all the muscle cars ever built, the 1964 Pontiac GTO ranks at or near the top of this popular class. The GTO is also acknowledged as the car that started the mid-size muscle craze, coming to market well before the competition.

The story of how the car really came to be is quite interesting. In 1964, Pontiac's ad agency head-and-winning Pontiac drag racer Jim Wangers, who drove the Ace Wilson Royal Pontiac drag cars, approached Pete Estes, then Pontiac's general manager, about building a Pontiac LeMans with a huge 389 engine.

Since the General Motors front office had given a "no racing" edict in 1963 and shelved all NASCAR and NHRA programs, Estes felt Wangers had flipped his lid.

Wangers, however, persisted. He told Estes that since Pontiac wouldn't be racing officially, building a high-performance street machine instead of a racecar made sense. Wangers explained that a racecar program and a fast street car were different beasts.

Wangers then had Estes call Pontiac's chief engineer at the time — none other than John DeLorean — who was already in on the GTO deal. Along with Russ Gee and Bill Collins, he was one of the actual inventors of the GTO. When Estes called, DeLorean said "no problem," and the GTO was born.

The car was an immediate hit. The GTO option RPO382 was an



Greg Zyla

add-on to the base Tempest LeMans, featuring a 389-inch V-8, GTO badges, three-speed manual, dual exhaust, heavy-duty clutch, tweaked suspension and special tires for \$295.90.

Two 389 engines were available: One rated at 325 horses with a single four-barrel (standard) and, for \$115 more, the 348 horse with the Tri-Power three two-barrel carbs. Add a four-speed gearbox for \$188 and a nice \$75 package that included limited slip differential, metallic brake linings and a heavy-duty radiator, and you were ready to cruise the boulevard or hit the quarter-mile.

When Car & Driver magazine wanted to road test the GTO, Wangers pulled a fast one and quickly oversaw installation of a 421-inch Super Duty V-8, instead of the 389. Both engines look identical to the eye.

Most enthusiasts don't know this fact, but Wangers tells all in his book titled "Glory Days" — it's a great read. When the March 1964 issue of Car & Driver came



Jim Wangers, the "godfather" of the GTO. JIM WANGERS COLLECTION

out, the magazine roared the praises of the fastest car in America, unbeknownst to the crew that a 421-incher was under the hood.

Pontiac hoped to sell 5,000 GTO's in 1964, but it ended up selling 32,450. Production included 7,384 Sport Coupes (window post), 18,422 Hardtop Coupes (no post) and 6,644 convertibles, which were all built on a 115-inch wheelbase.

More than half a million GTO's were produced during its initial

11-model-year run. Totals ranged from a high of 96,946 in 1966 to a low of 4,806 in 1973.

It was, indeed, a great time. Today, Wangers is known as the "godfather" of the GTO. He's still going strong, turning 85 on June 26.

Happy birthday, Jim! Greg Zyla writes weekly for GateHouse Media and welcomes reader inquiries at 303 Roosevelt St., Sayre, PA 18840, or at greg@gregzyla.com.

