

West Michigan POCI
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West Olive, MI 49460



**PONTIAC-OAKLAND
CLUB INTERNATIONAL**

*west michigan
chapter*

the arrowhead

Newsletter for the Pontiac Enthusiast

February 2008

The following is a piece written in the March 1992 edition of The Arrowhead! It was written under a heading entitled: Warrior of the Month. We recently moved into a new home and I can't believe I still had some of these older newsletters and could find them!!!! We are still up to our knees in boxes here and there. I suppose 21 years in one house translates into stuff. Anyway, I thought I would resurrect something of the past. This also reminds me of the present. I would love to receive articles on your cars, tech talk, car events you have traveled to, etc. I know you have some stories to tell. This is your newsletter and since I don't personally know the detailed in and outs of Pontiacs, I'd like you to do the work! You can reach me at lakemithor@gmail.com. I'll try to fit in the articles as space permits each month. Thanks much. Hope you enjoy the article. Melanie.

Warrior of the Month

1973/74 Pontiac Super Duty 455 Firebirds

Owner: 1295 Fortunate SD-455 Owners in the US & Abroad

The Super Duty 455 Firebirds were cars that shouldn't have been produced because they were against all the odds...First, and foremost, was the Environmental Protection Agency that forced all the auto manufacturers into lowering the compression ratios in all engines in order to run on no-lead 91 octane fuel. This meant that compression ratios of 8.5:1 or lower would be the limit given the technology of the day. Second, the insurance industry was cracking down hard on young drivers buying muscle cars by socking surcharges of 100 to 500% over and above the standard rates depending on the advertised horsepower rating. Third, the public was beginning to see the muscle car as being socially and environmentally brutal since the "save the earth" and "anti-establishment" movements were in full swing. The muscle car was seen as a representation of the "establishment" and VW Microbuses were the choice of Hippies everywhere. Fourth, the years of 1971 & '72 saw Trans Am sales erode to only 2116 and 1286 units respectively, and PMD almost axed the line-up all together, but fortunately decided to gut out the sales drought. 1973 and 1974 were terrible years for the pony cars. Chrysler dropped their E-body Barracuda and Challenger, AMC their Javelin/AMX, and Ford downsized the Mustang into a boring 4-cylinder compact. Fifth, late 1972 saw the conservative Marin J. Caserio replace the performance minded F. James McDonald as PMD's general manager. He quickly shelved the Super Duty 455 project even though the factory manufactured enough parts to assemble 1000 engines.

Actually the Super Duty 455 project began as a "grassroots" type program by a group of young PMD engineers who were basically responsible for the second generation Trans AM development and actively involved with SCCA and NASCAR racing all the while trying to make Pontiac a viable racing force. Herb Adams, Skip McCully, Jeff Young, Tom Nell, Dan Hardin, and others were instrumental in the development of the SD-455 engine which was originally intended to be an engine option

of 1971. The L-S2 SD-455 was designed in early 1970 to be a streetable racing engine and was developed side by side with the NASCAR 366 motor. It was to have 11:1 compression ratio, Ram Air V Heads, the solid lifter version of the RA IV cam, forged crankshaft with smaller 3" main Journals, RA V aluminum intake with the 800cfm Holley carb, and huge runner exhaust manifolds with 3 1/2' diameter dumps. This was a serious street (read race) motor, but due to swift and ever increasing restrictions in the emissions department and corporate policy, the engine was continuously detuned to the point where it was just a mere shadow of the original concept. The 455 H.O. for 1971 was a quick, but well thought out stop gap offering while the engineers tried to figure out how to save the Super Duty from oblivion. 1972 was a repeat year for the 455 H.O., though slightly modified for tighter emissions, and our hero's were becoming disenchanting and frustrated as their creation was always being challenged and opposed by management. The Super Duty 455 lost it's Ram Air V heads, intake, Holley, exhaust, cam, valve train, and forged small journal crankshaft by late 1972, but it still had it's beefier block, forged pistons and rods, Air Flow Research designed "constant cross section" style Ram Air IV type cylinder heads, high rise-high flow cast iron intake manifold with an 800 cfm Q-Jet carb, and previous years H.O. exhaust manifolds to fall back on. The camshaft was changed again in early 1973 to meet even stricter emission requirements from the hydraulic lifter Ram Air IV grind to a milder unit with specs similar to the early Ram Air's (298/310 degrees int/ex @ .410" lift). Also, at this time, PMD had to alter their EGR (exhaust gas recirculation) and TCS (transmission controlled spark) systems, and paint all subsequent engines a darker shade of blue. It wasn't until this final change that the SD-455 finally received EPA approval and certification! A battle was won, but the war wasn't over yet. Caserio still was reluctant to release the engine, but eventually had to due to outside pressures from Pontiac dealers demanding the release of the option of 600 irritated customers. May, 1973 saw the first SD-455 powered Firebirds roll off the assembly line and into the hands of only 295 lucky (and patient) customers. During the delay, many of the good engine parts were starting to disappear. It was obvious that the workers knew what they were taking. This created an engine shortage so less than half of the more than 600 orders could be fulfilled. This shortage also caused long delays in the production of 1974 Firebirds ordered with the SD-455. 1974 saw exactly 1000 SD-455 equipped Firebirds produced and that was the end of true Pontiac Performance! Out of 295 SD-455 Firebirds in 1973, 252 were Trans Ams (72 4-speeds) and 43 were Formulas. In 1974, 943 were Trans Ams (212 4-speeds) and 57 were Formulas. It was clearly evident that "Performance" could still sell and sell big. Also, very clear was that Pontiac could have easily sold every SD-455 equipped car that they produced! (cont.)

produced! Too bad Caserio didn't listen to his hard working engineers. They tried to convince him, but couldn't. Even though Firebird sales were way up over 1972 figures, the unhampered production of the SD-455 could have further increased sales. It's interesting to note that the A-bodies were also intended to receive the SD engine option (GTO, Grand Am, and Grand Prix), but Caserio only allowed the installation in the performance Firebirds. Again, who knows how many more cars would have been sold if it wasn't for Caserio's short-sightedness!

The excitement created by the 1974/74 SD-455's turned the almost dead high performance market around and it's momentum has grown ever since! The Trans Am was to the 70's what the GTO was to the 60's, and those dedicated Pontiac engineers proved to the unbelieving corporate know-it-alls that performance does sell and that's what Pontiac was all about!

February Meeting Minutes

Dan Jensen was absent at the February Meeting. Judy Hirdes was kind enough to take the minutes. Thanks much.

The club thanked Doug Troost for the past year as President of the West Michigan Pontiac Club. The club gave him a small token of our appreciation for all his hard work.

After much technical difficulty and with Carl T's help, Cary showed pictures of the restoration of his '67 LeMans.

Roxy DeBoer won the 50/50 of \$11.00.
Fred Rosendall's name was pulled in the club lotto but he was not present so the money pot grows larger!!!!

We Need Your Vote

We need all of our club members to vote for their Regional POCI Directors and Officers. The information to vote will be in the April or May issue of the Smoke Signals. The club with the greatest percentage of members who vote will win \$200 for their Club. So VOTE!!!!

Chief's Chatter

As I sit writing this, the sun is still out and I just got done snow blowing the driveway again. Will this stuff ever quit! At least I got to watch the Daytona Race without any call outs. I looked for Doug and Joan but could not find them in the Daytona seats. I hope all our travelers enjoyed the warm weather and will bring it back to Michigan with them. Spring cannot get here soon enough for me.

I'm thankful for the amount of people we had at the last meeting. Some faces we had not seen in a while were there and I hope they keep coming. I know we have quite a group gone to warmer climates and we still had a good room full.

The board is still working on the schedule of events for the coming season. Talking about events, did anyone get to the Kalamazoo Swap Meet and pick up car show fliers? We are going to try to get out a schedule of car shows in the newsletter so any help will be appreciated. See ya'll in March.

Cary

January was 'dues' month. The Club would appreciate any member who owes dues to pay them as soon as possible. The dues help to pay for the this years' events and newsletter. Please send your checks for \$25 (made out to WMPOCI) to Terri Miller, 8830 Taylor Street, Zeeland, MI, 49464 or bring your dues to the March meeting. Thanks much. See the back page of this newsletter for more information.

THE ARROWHEAD

The Preamble

The West Michigan Chapter of the Pontiac-Oakland Club International is dedicated to the ownership and preservation of Pontiacs, all models and years. It is the goal of the chapter to encourage and unite area Pontiac enthusiasts in Chapter sponsored activities and events. The Arrowhead serves as one of the tools to which the Club can fulfill its goals as well as provide information and services to its members.

Club Officers

President	Cary Hirdes	616-772-5494
Vice President	Robert DeBoer	616-538-6712
Treasurer	Terri Miller	616-875-8069
Secretary	Dan Jensen	517-647-2474
Arrowhead Editors	Greg & Melanie Thorwall	616-399-4701

Website: WWW.POCI.ORG, click on 'Links' to West Michigan Chapter

***Tuesday, March 4, 2008
at Famous Dave's***

We will have a presentation by one of our long time members, Dan Jensen, for our March meeting. The meeting will start at 7:30 PM. Come earlier and order some good food and chat with other Pontiac enthusiasts. We always have a good time!!! See you in March. Famous Dave's is located near I196 and 44th Street in Grandville.

Membership Info

Chapter Dues are to be paid January 1st
\$25.00 payable to WMPOCI
Please give to Terri Miller at the meeting, or mail them to:
Terri Miller 8830 Taylor St. Zeeland, MI 49464

National Dues are YOUR responsibility
You must be a member of the National POCI
to be a member of the West Michigan POCI.
Log onto www.poci.org for more information or to
register.

Membership Application

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Pontiac Owned _____

Year _____ Model _____

Style _____ Motor _____

National POCI # (must have) _____

Birthday _____ Spouse's Birthday _____

Anniversary _____

\$25.00 Payable to WMPOCI