

Vol. 30, No. 3

Ragtops & Rumbleseats

Mar 2023



• See the 2023 Raffle Car!

Not merely content with one of the most satisfying automobiles ever to grace the macadam, we made the '67 Grand Prix into the most exciting thing that's happened to convertible lovers since windblown hair.

And we did it by taking things off!

The top, obviously. But we also hid the headlights, recessed the parking lights and made

the windshield wipers disappear.

Of course we added a lot of new things. Like interiors that look better than those on some luxury cars. A 350-hp V-8. New options. New safety features.

In fact we're not sure whether we'd like to be known by what we put on cars or take off. After all, we still make a Grand Prix hardtop.

Turning the Grand Prix into a convertible was the best idea we've had since the Grand Prix.



Did you know? GM design chief Bill Mitchell built himself a custom 1962 Grand Prix convertible, dubbed X-400. It was based on a Catalina ragtop, featured a unique grille and headlights, and exhaust ports exiting the rear fenders. Under the hood was a 421 V-8 with a GMC blower and four 1954 Corvette sidedraft carbs.

Trivia Question: What American auto executive once said, "A car should make people's eyes light up when they step into the showroom. Rebates are merely a way of convincing customers to buy bland cars they're not interested in."?

Answer: John DeLorean, who began his career at Chrysler and Packard before long stints at Pontiac and GM.

Vintage Advertising

Pontiac's best idea since the Grand Prix? It seemed so at the time, but sales told a different story. Pontiac built only 5,856 Grand Prix convertibles in 1967, which ended up being the first and last year for a GP ragtop. Both coupes and convertibles that year featured new styling, which included concealed headlights and parking lights behind three horizontal slots on the front fender edges.

That year saw some engine changes, too. 389 and 421 V-8's were replaced with 400's or 428's. They were both bored out versions of their predecessors with bigger valves.

In hindsight, Pontiac's best idea since the Grand Prix debut in 1962 wasn't the GP ragtop, but rather the GTO.

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Old wrecks along Arbutus Ave.

Pontiac GTO convertible in the SIRAACA Garage

The SIRAACA Time Machine passes by a couple of forgotten service stations

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Minutes of the 563rd Meeting

February 7, 2023

1. The 563rd meeting of the Staten Island Region AACA was called to order at 7:20 on February 7 at Nucci's. After reciting the Pledge of allegiance and offering a moment of silence, there were no previous month's minutes to read.
2. Members offered a happy 79th birthday to Paul Arena and get well wishes to Andy Barcellona, who is recovering from heart surgery.
3. Paul Jr. handed out a few remaining incentive payouts from last year's raffle and trophy sales.
4. Our show dates are confirmed as follows: Spring Dust-Off is April 23 (Rain Date April 30); Fall Show is September 17 (rain Date September 24). The membership approved a \$25 show car entry fee for the fall to help cover rising costs. No one can recall the last time we raised an entry fee.
5. The raffle car hunt continues. Artie Guarnieri spoke about a mid-70's Corvette we looked at, and Mike Signorile covered several other offerings that were well shy of consideration. We will next look at a 2002 Firebird for sale near Montclair, NJ.
6. The Hot Rods & Harleys show is May 13. Our club will once again need volunteers to help them judge, as well as sell tickets on our raffle car. Please make every effort to help us that day. Between the donation we receive to help, plus the raffle sales, it's a potential \$3,000 day.
7. Other upcoming shows include NJRAACA Show in E. Hanover on May 7 and New Dorp High School show on June 4.
8. The club agreed to return the \$400 donation made to us out of the pocket of the Linden car show organizer, suggesting it go to support its charity instead.
9. New member Ray Ocello was introduced. He recently bought a 1926 Ford Model T sedan.
10. Paul Jr, has been in contact with several former members from many years ago, hoping to further reveal the club's history to us all.
11. Phil Boffa gave an updated treasury report, with all in order.
12. The meeting was adjourned at 8:33. The 50/50 collected \$46. Mike Signorile won \$23.

Respectfully submitted,
Tony DiAngelo, Secretary

Resting and Rotting

After driving along Arbutus Avenue enough times this winter to finally want to know more about the abandoned vehicles exposed within the woods there, we turned to neighboring resident Mike Gorgia for an explanation. In short, they are all that remain on a large piece of property once owned by the Halfpenny family. In turn, Mike ventured in among the thorny brambles and snapped photos of the rotting relics. They include an old Tornquist Plumbing van similar to our grinding truck, and an early 50's Chevy truck with a pair of Cushman-style three-wheeled scooters in back.



Tornquist Plumbing is still in business, in Annadale.



Door says J Ballard Sr., Lone Star Ranch, Tennent NJ



Potentially restorable? No idea if they still have their motors.

2023 Dust-Off Flyer

The Staten Island Region AACA presents its

16th Annual Spring Dust-Off Car Show & Flea Market

April 23, 2023



Commons Cafe
2 Teleport Drive
off of South Avenue

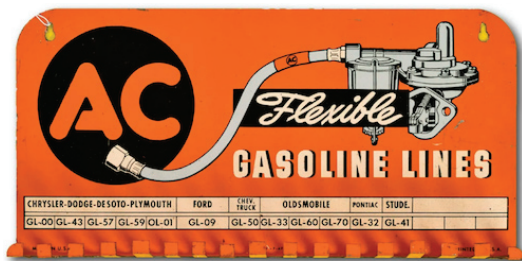


- \$20 vehicle entry fee • no classes • no cut-off year • rain date April 30 •
- no points judging • red carpet awards in expanded categories •
- gates open at 8:00 am • dash plaques to first 200 vehicles •
- spectator entry fee: adults \$5, children \$2 • \$40 vendor fee •
- food & drinks • music • 50/50 drawings • raffle car tickets •
- info: call 917-626-0233 or e-mail siraaca@yahoo.com •
- visit us on www.siraaca.aaca.com or [facebook.com/siraaca](https://www.facebook.com/siraaca) •

Adherence to Any Covid Protocols In Effect Required

From the President

Who was I kidding? Last month, I was alerted to an auction of vintage auto and gasoline company signs being held in Greenville, SC. The auction was also run online via LiveAuctioneers. I browsed the offerings, saved as my favorites those that would look good in my garage, and made preliminary bids on three signs, none more than \$100. Treating it like a pure online auction like eBay, I was hoping I might sneak by and score one if no one else happened to bid. Then the live auction commenced. Suddenly, competing four-figure bids exploded and when the dust settled, I was left shaking my head while laughing at my naivete. A 5-foot metal MoPar Parts and Accessories sign sold for \$6000. A 5-foot vertical Delco Batteries sign sold for \$3,400. A neat AC Flexible Gasoline Lines" sign and rack from 1947 (image below) sold for "only" \$850. Oh well. Like waiting for lottery results, it was fun to dream of the win. - Paul Jr.



- NEXT MEETING - March 7

Our March meeting takes place on Tuesday, March 7th at new location **Nucci's Restaurant** at 4842 Arthur Kill Road (near the foot of the Outerbridge). The club will buy pizza and soda, and members have the option of buying their own food separately.

Here is the 2023 Raffle Car

Here is your first look at our raffle car for 2023. It is a 2002 Pontiac Firebird. We came across this car on a Facebook Marketplace listing in nearby Bloomfield, NJ. Mike Signorile arranged to meet with owner Tommy Burgos, with Artie Guarneri and Bob Ferone along for the ride. After Artie explained our club's mission, Tommy agreed to let us have it for \$6,500. It has less than 72,000 miles, an excellent interior, and some paint and clear coat issues that we'll have repaired. Raffle tickets are already printed and Mike Gorgia has hit the ground running in pursuit of a new raffle sales record. Pat Colabella helped research the final year of Firebird production. A total of 30,690 were built, all in Canada. Ours is one of 8,423 V-6 coupes. Only 6,573 of those have T-tops like ours. Only 1,505 V-6 coupes were painted red like ours (the second most popular color behind black). Ours is also only one of 425 V-6 coupes with RPO Code NG1 for Emissions equipment, which we believe is California certified as a low emission vehicle. The car was sold new at Miller Buick Pontiac GMC in Woodbridge, and then bought from that owner by Tommy's aunt in 2004.



(photo by Paul Jr.)



Inside the SIRAACA Garage

There is an unintentional Pontiac theme across this newsletter, considering our vintage ad, Dust-Off flyer, and raffle car. The SIRAACA Garage continues that with Pat Colabella's 1966 Pontiac GTO convertible.

The tale of Pat and his GTO goes back many years, and reads like a novel. Young man falls in love with a car, eventually has to give it up, and vows to someday find another. Years later, he finds this car. Throw in a widow, some thieves, a pair of New York State Troopers, an insurance claim, and a second chance, and Pat gets his storybook ending. We'll let him tell the tale.

Pat's Goat is a numbers matching car with optional power windows, tilt steering wheel, and reclining passenger seat. Despite that, Pat hopes to replace the four barrel with a Tri-Power set up. That's what he had on the '66 convertible he owned when he was 18 years old. That one was the same color as this one - Barrier Blue.

Pontiac built 96,946 GTO's in 1966. 12,798 of those were convertibles. Unlike other GTO colors, Barrier Blue didn't have an equivalent across GM's other marques in 1966.

The SIRAACA Garage is home to all of our members' cars, past and present. Has your car been featured yet? Make sure you get the details to Paul Jr. if you want to share your car with us all.



Pat Colabella's love of cars can be traced to his father's 1949 Oldsmobile, and the smell of that car is still ingrained in his memory. Other childhood memories that fueled his interest in the hobby include watching his neighbor pull the engine out of his 1959 Ford. None are more important, however, than getting a ride in his neighbor's 1965 GTO convertible. The way he slammed through those gears and the excitement that followed put Pat on his own GTO quest. (photo by Pat Colabella).

Upcoming Events

Tell your friends, load up your car and head out to one of these events:



- 41st Annual Spring Englishtown, Raceway Park - April 14-16
- SIRAACA 16th Annual Spring Dust-Off, Commons Cafe - April 23
- NJRAACA 70th Annual Car Show, East Hanover, NJ - May 7
- 20th Annual Hot Rods & Harleys Show, Rahway, NJ - May 13
- AACA Eastern National Spring Meet, Gettysburg, PA - May 17-20
- New Dorp High School Car Show - June 4
- Buick Club All Makes Car Show, Wall Township, NJ - July 15



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The SIRAACA Time Machine

We've found plenty of places to fix the SIRAACA Time Machine as we visit Staten Island's past (even if the mechanics don't recognize our DeLorean). The Tompkins Ave. Garage seen top right was on the corner of Tompkins and Virginia in Rosebank. Note the 1920's-era wrecker parked on the side. Odds are great that was originally a long-wheelbase sedan or tourer that was modified to fit a hand-operated crane behind the driver's seat. The location was also a Great Bear in the 1980's and is now J&S Auto Center. The repair shop and gas station below right was Doc's General Garage, located at 184 Gordon Street near Broad Street. Doc specialized in carburetor repairs while pumping Mobilgas to cars such as the typical early-40's sedan out front. This address no longer exists today.



(photos from NYC Municipal Records).



Once again, the signs on these buildings are of great value today. Note the tin or porcelain signs for Willard and Exide batteries, and Lee and Goodrich Tires. Globe topped gas pumps and curbside signs, lamps and banners all fuel a collector frenzy as well (pun intended).

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year and condition.
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