

# Rare Cammer

With cheap V-8s and gasoline, not many customers opted for the economical OHC 6 in their LeMans

Text and photography by Thomas Glatch

**Timing is everything, or so the adage goes. That certainly was the case with Pontiac's sporty Sprint OHC 6, but not in a good way. The performance version of the economy overhead-cam six could humble many small-bore V-8s, yet deliver comparatively great fuel economy—at least, it was great for the late '60s.**

The Sprint was launched in 1966 and was last produced in 1969. In its day, regular gas was around 23 cents per gallon and super high-octane premium was just a few cents more. A GTO cost a few hundred dollars more than a LeMans Sprint and the insurance companies had

yet to penalize performance cars—and their owners—with high rates.

So, a six-cylinder Pontiac? Why bother!

A decade later things were quite different. Regular gas was over a dollar per gallon (when OPEC was not shutting down the supply), and led

fuels were almost extinct. The insurance rates on a musclecar owned by someone with just one or two violations on their driving record could be \$1,500 or more a year. And except for the 400-cube Firebird, the classic Detroit muscle car was history. Those spunky

LeMans and Firebird Sprints suddenly made much more sense—but they were already gone, passing before their time came around.

Roland Eggebrecht, of West Allis, Wisconsin, saw the value in the OHC 6-equipped LeMans. In 1979 he wanted to buy a restoration project that he and his children could work on. It had to be a Pontiac and he wanted a convertible. He thought of buying a GTO, but then he saw a '69 LeMans OHC 6 convertible for sale in the local newspaper. The price was just \$800 making the decision rather easy.

By 1981, the LeMans was stripped bare and under restoration. Wisconsin's infamous winters had rusted much of the Pontiac's sheetmetal—more so than Roland could have imagined. Reproduction parts for A-body Pontiacs were much less plentiful back then and many



of the six-cylinder LeMans' unique parts were especially hard to find in either NOS or boneyard form.

The help Roland had hoped for from his kids never materialized either, as they had other interests. But the LeMans had endeared itself to Roland and he stuck with the restoration. Prog-

ress moved slowly until Roland retired in 1993. The time was then right to finish the project.

"The engine needed a 0.030-inch bore and we added the 230-horsepower manual-transmission cam," says Roland.

Amazingly, the OHC 6 cam was still

available from GM back in the '80s. Roland also upgraded the engine with the four-barrel Rochester carb and manifold from a Sprint, but kept the standard lower-compression head. The Sprint's 10.5:1 compression ratio was fine for the '60s, but no longer seemed practical for the '80s, '90s and beyond.

"It's fun to drive and will perform on reformulated fuel under normal road conditions," he reports.

During the '80s Roland acquired a number of rare factory options for the LeMans; items which would be difficult if not impossible to find today. The list includes the Rally Gauge Cluster, bucket seats, console, and floor shifter for the Turbo Hydra-Matic transmission, as well as a factory eight-track player, SoftRay glass, and a Custom Sports steering wheel and tilt column. On the outside



he added a factory power antenna, cornering lamps, and the famous hood-mounted 5,500-rpm tach. He also added the Sprint side stripes on the fresh Espresso Brown paint.

A total of 5,676 LeMans convertibles were sold in 1969 and Roland estimates only 17 to 20 were originally equipped with the Sprint option. Roland could have had a GTO, but he opted for something different. He's thankful he did. ■

#### 1969 OHC 6 ENGINE CODES

CODE	VERSION	HORSEPOWER	TRANSMISSION
ZC	standard	175	manual
ZK	standard	175	manual
ZF	standard	175	automatic
ZN	standard	175	automatic
ZH	Sprint, 4-bbl	230	manual
ZD	Sprint, 4-bbl	230	manual
ZL	Sprint, 4-bbl	215	automatic
ZE	Sprint, 4-bbl	215	automatic

#### 1969 OHC 6 COMPARISON: STANDARD vs. SPRINT

	STANDARD	SPRINT
Displacement	250 cid	250 cid
Bore	3.875 in	3.875 in
Stroke	3.531 in	3.531 in
Compression ratio	9:1	10.5:1
Carburetor	1-bbl	4-bbl
Horsepower (man trans)	175	230
Horsepower (auto trans)	175	215

