

SMOKE SIGNALS



One Family
SINCE
1928



The Official Publication of the Pontiac - Oakland Club International

February 2016

- 2016 POCI Board Election • Vote Now!
- Tech: Freshen-Up Your Seatbelts

Pontiac's Ladybirds

Colorful 'Birds Designed for Women



The First GT-37

Exclusive Details Revealed

'69 GMC Handi-Van

A GMC Auto Parts Company Tribute

Oakland True Blue Travelers

Testing the '24 Oakland's Endurance - Durability



Jim Turner's 1967 Ram Air GTO • Unrestored Street Menace

1969 GMC Handi-Van



VAN LETTERING MODIFIED WITH PERMISSION

THE JIMMY CORNER
BY JIM LUIKENS

For the past seven years Bob Ashton and his merry band of helpers have put together the Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals on the weekend before Thanksgiving. Held indoors at Rosemont's (Chicago)

Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, the show brings together 550 of the most fabulous Corvettes and exceptional muscle cars that you have never seen before.

Everywhere you look you'll see COPO-this or HEMI-that.

For those of you that are not familiar, a *Central Office Production Order* (COPO) was/is a way to get a group of General Motors cars or trucks built all alike in a certain way. It was originally intended to allow, for example, 100 taxicabs to be ordered in a certain color. GM performance boss Vince Piggins most famously exploited that system back in 1969 when he used this ordering procedure as a "loophole" to get a batch of 427cid Camaros and Chevelles built that would have otherwise been banned by the General.

The MCACN show typically features plenty of rare Detroit perfor-

mance and COPOs of every ilk. However, out in the lobby during this year's event, a COPO of a different stripe could be found on display. It was Dru Diesner's 1969 GMC Handi-Van, and it drew every bit as much attention as any of the muscle COPOs inside.

Dru's van was originally ordered by a Wisconsin Fire Department and features several COPO-specific items, like the probably Fire Engine Red paint (which is now long gone), and twin factory spot lights.

It also has some very nice *Regular Production Option* (RPO) equipment including a 307cid small block V8 engine and a Powerglide transmission. Although I knew a V8 engine was an option in these vans I had never actually seen one in-person until I encountered Dru's GMC.

Dru originally heard about the Handi-Van from a friend of his. The van is rust-free and has very low miles, relatively speaking, despite having



The Factory A/C Experts!



HIGH PERFORMANCE A/C UPGRADES AND REPLACEMENT PARTS

Being cool has never been easier!

Whether you just need a replacement part or you're looking to improve the performance of your factory air conditioning system, the factory A/C experts are here to help!

Custom & Model-Specific!

CALL OR VISIT US ONLINE

had three prior owners. Once Dru had the van in his possession he had to decide what to do with it.

After considering several possibilities, he came up with the idea of lettering it in the spirit of a Chicago tradition. For more than 100 years the Warshawsky family has sold auto parts and speed equipment on Chicago's near south side. For the retail portion of their business they used their Warshawsky family name and for their mail-order parts business they used the familiar name of J.C. Whitney.

Dru employed Chicago's race car letterer to the stars, Jim Brando, to letter his van in a well-faded look. On the left side of the van, Jim uses the Warshawsky name along with their popular "Everything Automotive" tag line. On the passenger side, Jim pays tribute to the J.C. Whitney mail-order brand while using the rear tailgate doors to highlight Warshawsky's Dis-



count Muffler Man installation center.

Dru is one of Bob Ashton's helpers and it was Bob that suggested displaying some vintage speed equipment of the type that the Warshawsky/Whitney combine would have sold back in the day to round-out the exhibit.

The Muscle Car and Corvette Nationals is held

adjacent to Chicago's O'Hare airport to make it easier for those that want to fly, instead of drive, in. The next show will be held November 19-20, 2016. I heartily suggest you start making your plans now to attend the "Pebble Beach of Muscle Cars." To paraphrase the old car dealer ads, "It's worth the drive (or flight) from anywhere!"

Vintage Illinois Repossessor license plates, a decal from Chicago's legendary WLS rock-n-roll radio station and a vintage rear license plate topper round-out the visual treats of this one-of-a-kind van.



ORIGINAL A/C PART RESTORATION

The perfect A/C restoration has never been easier!

Whether you need a single part or an entire system restored, the factory A/C experts can custom restore all of them to like new appearance and performance!

Custom & Model-Specific!

1.866.390.7676

CLASSIC AUTO AIR

Since 1977



WWW.COOLMYHOTCAR.COM