

Jim Wangers

"Godfather of the GTO"

Jim Wangers understands the importance of creative marketing, perhaps as well as anyone in the auto industry today. The legendary "ad man" for Pontiac and the marketer behind the Pontiac GTO and several other Pontiac specialty cars, Wangers helped establish the "musclecar" of the Sixties to its rightful niche in the history of American car marketing. No, he didn't invent the GTO. That credit goes to John DeLorean, Russ Gee and Bill Collins, but Wangers was certainly the man who created the mystique that surrounds America's original musclecar, the Pontiac GTO. Now that many of the folks who were teenagers when the GTO first came out in 1964 are older and wealthy enough to afford near-perfect restored versions of their dream machines, Wangers is more well-known and more in-demand than ever.

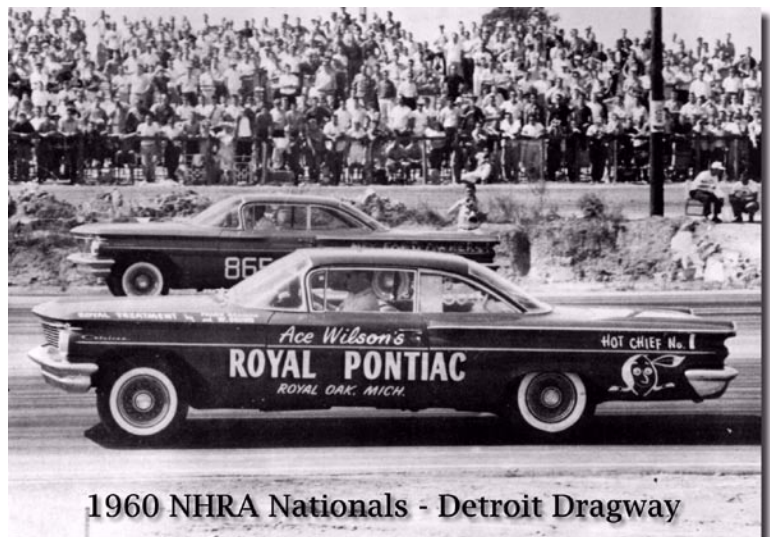


Wangers was born in Chicago. After returning from a stint in the Navy, he enrolled in college with dreams of becoming an automotive engineer, only to learn he wasn't very good in math. With the advice of a counselor, he soon discovered that while designing cars was great, someone also has to think about selling them! So Wangers entered the marketing, advertising and public relations field, which he found, much to every future car nut's benefit, he really loved.

He first found work in the auto-advertising field in New York City, eventually finding his way to Detroit, working at Campbell Ewald, the advertising agency then servicing Chevrolet. Wangers' personal career theme was then, as it is now, "If you want to be perceived as a winner, you have to beat somebody." This is the concept which has guided his career to this day.

In 1956, he persuaded Chevrolet to back a young factory engineer named Zora Arkus-Duntov to drive a Chevy up the famed Pike's Peak road course, blowing away records that had existed for years, proving the capabilities of their hot new V8 engine. The stunt worked—Wangers would go on to prominence with another GM Division, Pontiac, while Zora Arkus-Duntov would later become known as the "Father of the Corvette."

Throughout the early '60's Wangers' marketing style was pronounced throughout the Pontiac Division. Wangers himself drove a Catalina Coupe to the Division's first-ever NHRA National drag racing title at the 1960 Nationals in Detroit. He conceived many of the finest and best-known marketing programs of that day or any other day, from the Thom McAm GTO shoe ("The world's first high-performance shoe") to the Division's involvement with the incredibly popular NBC-TV show "The Monkees". He also was closely-connected to the writing,



production and promotion of some of the musclecar-world's best-known songs, including "GTO" by Ronnie and the Daytona's. Wangers also was instrumental in getting the then-popular rock group "Paul Revere and the Raiders" involved in the 1969 advertising launch of the famous GTO Judge.

Royal Pontiac became the "unofficial" testing garage for Pontiac's high performance cars and equipment. Wangers organized the entire Royal Pontiac program, which remains to this day one of the most respected and important landmark mail-order performance automotive sources ever established. A Royal "Bobcat" is today one of the hobby's most collectible musclecars.



Perhaps the single car Wangers was closest to, and still his personal favorite is the 1969 GTO Judge, the wildest GTO ever created. In a 1969 *ESQUIRE Magazine* article written by Dan Jedlika, now automotive editor of the Chicago Sun-Times, Wangers was called "the man who invented Woodward Avenue" (Detroit's legendary drag racing street). If anyone in the auto industry put Detroit's Woodward Avenue, the mythical epitome of muscle-car "cruising" into the legendary status it now holds, it was Jim Wangers and his now-famous late-night "testing" sessions with some of the hottest cars Detroit ever produced. In fact, for the last several years, while the famed "Woodward Dream Cruise" has drawn more than a million enthusiasts each year to the still hot suburban Detroit site, Wangers has been an honored guest and speaker.

He is the author of the best-selling book **Glory Days** which has proven to be one of the most authoritative books on Pontiac performance history ever printed. After all it was written by the guy who was "there" both behind the scenes and out on the streets. Released in 2007, Wangers' newest book **Pontiac PIZAZZ** is co-authoring with Art Fitzpatrick. It features Wangers selection of the all-time 15 most significant Pontiacs—with explanation on each car. And like no other, Fitz packs the book with new artwork illustrating the styling of these great cars.

Today at 82 years young, Jim Wangers is as active as ever. For 2008 Wangers will attend more than 20 events around the country sharing his love for all things Pontiac. He is known to have type "P" blood—for Pontiac. His greatest joys are gained by spending time with Pontiac musclecar enthusiasts of all ages.

For more on Jim Wangers, the Godfather of the GTO visit www.geetotiger.com.

