1963 PONTIAC LEMANS SUPER DUTY FACTORY LIGHTWEIGHT

Lost, found and sold

Courtesy of Russo and Steele

In a sport where victories are often measured in hundredths of seconds, this car had a huge advantage

VIN: 263P76752

by Tom Glatch

This 1963 Pontiac Tempest LeMans 421 Super Duty Factory Experimental Lightweight is one of six examples produced and it is one of only two remaining. Built on December 12, 1962, at the Pontiac, MI, assembly plant, the purpose-built LeMans coupes were all painted white and given blue interiors with bucket seats.

Pontiac Engineering fitted high-compression dual-quad 421 Super Duty engines connected to unique rear-mounted 4-speed automatic transmissions. All used aluminum front sheet metal and brake drums, acid-dipped bumpers and mounting brackets, and lightweight windshield glass, resulting in almost perfect 48/52 weight distribution while keeping the cars in line with the NHRA's 7.5-pounds-per-cubic-inch A/FX class weight limit.

This LeMans coupe was delivered to Stan Long Pontiac on Grand River Road in Detroit. Driver Stan Antlocer campaigned the car through a busy and successful 1963 season that included the all-important Indy Nationals. Along the way, he made an important change to the car. Since the 4-speed transaxle accommodated only up to a 3.90:1 final-drive ratio and was somewhat prone to breaking under the 421's explosive power, Antlocer replaced the factory driveline with a heavy-duty Borg-Warner 3-speed manual transmission and a full-size Pontiac rear end with a 4.30:1 gear set. The change paid off in spades, earning Antlocer the title of "World's Fastest Tempest" after tearing off an 11.93 ET at 123.95 mph at U.S. 131 Dragway in Martin, MI.

ACC Analysis *This car, Lot S743, sold for $335,630, including buyer's premium, at Russo and Steele's auction in Scottsdale, AZ, on January 18, 2014.*

Lost and found

A few years ago, a garage-find discovery rocked the American collector car community. In November 2008, the Internet lit up after an eBay auction was started that read:

1963 PONTIAC LeMANS TEMPEST.

WAS MANUFACTURED IN 63 AND ON A 1/4 MILE TRACK IN 64.

I KNOW LITTLE ABOUT THIS VEHICLE FOR THE OWNER PASSED AWAY LAST YEAR.

THERE IS NO MOTOR, TRANSMISSION, OR KEYS FOR IT.

APPEARS TO HAVE ORIGINAL WINDSHIELD, SIDE GLASS COMES WITH IT BUT APPEARS TO HAVE PLEXIGLASS IN ITS PLACE.

The car was owned by the seller's next-door neighbor, who stored the LeMans for years in the seller's garage. The owner passed away, and the seller was able to take possession of the car based on rent owed. Now, Dale, the seller, wanted his garage space back.

Bidding started at $500, then skyrocketed as word spread that this was no ordinary Pontiac. It was, in fact, a lost Super Duty LeMans racer. Stan Antlocer, who raced it in the 1960s, even joined in on the eBay discussions to confirm that it was his car. One bidder tried to get the owner to take $160k and call off the auction, which he wisely rejected. When the four-day auction ended on November 9, 2008, Dale was $226,521 richer.

Rare racer

The 1963 Super Duty LeMans and Tempest are some of the rarest vehicles to ever come out of Detroit — two Tempest coupes, six LeMans coupes, and six Tempest wagons were built. They were incredibly fast for that time — a good half-second faster than the drag-strip competition. In a sport where victories are often measured in hundredths of seconds, this was a huge advantage.

And of the Super Duty compacts, Stan Antlocer's was the fastest. Stan and his father ran a speed shop in the Detroit area, and Stan had driven Super Duty Catalinas in previous years. "I was notified to pick the car up at the factory the first week of February 1963," Antlocer told Pontiac authority Paul Zazarine. "I drove the car from the factory to the shop, and we pulled the motor. We balanced and blueprinted it, and got the rest of the car race-ready."

The first tests at Detroit Dragway were disappointing. "I made at least a half-dozen runs," Antlocer continued, "and it just wasn't there. The car just wouldn't E.T. like we thought it should with the big 405-hp motor in it. It wouldn't mile-per-hour that great, either. We brought the car back to the shop and talked about what to do. We thought we ought to put a full-sized Pontiac rear end in it like Mickey Thompson did with his '62 Tempest."

"I called Bill Klinger at the factory, he was our engineering liaison. I asked him if it would be possible to put a big Pontiac rear in the Tempest. Klinger said Pontiac would assign part numbers on them and submit them to the NHRA, and then the car would be legal."

Fifteen minutes of victory

One Super Duty LeMans even competed in a sports car race on the high banks of Daytona International Speedway. In an occasional rain, Paul Goldsmith, driving the LeMans sent to Ray Nichels Engineering,

lapped the second-place finisher, A.J. Foyt in the "Mystery" 427 Corvette, twice. Goldsmith even lapped a Ferrari GTO eight times before taking the checker in the 250-mile event. Dominating the competition — that's how legends are made.

But GM issued its infamous anti-racing edict on January 24, 1963, just a few weeks after the six Tempest Super Duty wagons were built. Factory support stopped immediately, although racers had a special phone number to call if they needed parts. That supply of parts eventually dried up, and most of the Super Duty racers were sold at the end of the '63 season. As of the time this car was listed on eBay Motors, only three of the 14 cars were known to survive. Most were documented as having been destroyed, and the others were presumed lost to history.

A complete project

The buyer of the Stan Antlocer Super Duty LeMans was John Riconda from New York. A serious Pontiac enthusiast, John had been collecting 421 Super Duty engine parts with the hope of installing the engine in a Catalina someday. Instead, his focus shifted to the long-lost Super Duty compact.

The car was shipped to Scott Tiemann's Super Car Specialties in Portland, MI — the expert in Pontiac restorations. Scott already had experience with these cars, restoring the Wynn Engineering Super Duty coupe and Union Park Pontiac Super Duty wagon owned by the late Randy Williams.

While finding parts for a car this rare is exceedingly difficult, the garage-find LeMans was mostly complete. The engine and transmission were missing, but John Riconda already had many of the engine components needed. He also had the unique "Powershift" 4-speed semi-automatic transaxle available as well, but Stan Antlocer had installed a standard 3-speed manual and solid rear end in place of the original trans, and the decision had been made to restore the LeMans to its as-raced state. Most of the other unique Super Duty pieces were already with the car, including the special headers created by George DeLorean.

The lightweight components were another issue.

Detailing

Year produced: 1963
Number produced: 14 (coupe and wagon)
Original list price: $3,500
Current ACC Valuation: $400,000–$450,000
Tune-up/major service: $200
Distributor cap: $19.99
Chassis #: VIN plate on driver's side door frame
Engine #: Pad on front of block below right cylinder head
Club: Pontiac Owners Club International
More: www.poci.org
Alternatives: 1964 Ford Fairlane Thunderbolt, 1968 Dodge Dart Hemi, 1969 Chevrolet Camaro ZL1
ACC Investment Grade: A-

Comps

1963 Pontiac Tempest Super Duty wagon
Lot S114, VIN: 163P99224
Condition: 1
Sold at $487,600
Mecum Auctions, Indianapolis, IN, 5/19/2010
ACC# 162784

1963 Pontiac Tempest Super Duty coupe
Lot S111, VIN: 263P76227
Condition: 2+
Not sold at $925,000 (offered as a pair with Lot S111.1, a Tempest Super Duty wagon)
Mecum Auctions, St. Charles, IL, 10/5/2007
ACC# 47034

1963 Pontiac Tempest Super Duty wagon
Lot S113, VIN: 163P99224
Condition: 1
Sold at $656,250
Mecum Auctions, St. Charles, IL, 10/6/2006
ACC# 43090

The original front clip was located in Florida, in poor condition, and the owner was rumored to be asking $50,000. Scott Tiemann turned to Randy Ferguson of Ferguson Coachbuilding in Robinson, IL, to re-create these body parts. Tom DeWitt in Howell, MI, created a perfect replacement of the unique aluminum "stack-and-plate" Harrison radiator, and Tiemann created a set of acid-dipped bumpers to replace the missing originals.

Big money

Total cost of restoring the Stan Antlocer Super Duty LeMans to its as-raced glory was about $120,000 — not at all unusual for a vintage racer.

Based on the historic value of the Super Duty compacts, this should have been a fine investment. On October 6, 2006, Mecum auctioned the Pontiac collection of the late Randy Williams, including the two Super Duty compacts. The wagon sold for $656,250 that day (ACC# 43090). The wagon ended up back at Mecum, and on October 5, 2007, Mecum again auctioned the two Super Duty compacts, this time as a set. Bidding reached $925,000 for the pair but did not meet reserve (ACC# 47034). Both cars became part of Dana Mecum's collection, and then on May 19, 2010, they sold the wagon again, this time for $487,600 (ACC# 162784).

Mecum tried selling the Stan Antlocer Super Duty in January 2013, but it was a no-sale at $325,000. This year, Russo and Steele sold it, but the price had to be a bit of a disappointment to John Riconda, as he obviously lost money once the restoration price was factored into the deal.

The flip side to that is that the new owner got a fantastic car for a lot less than some similar lots brought in the not-so-distant past. There simply aren't that many factory-built GM racers out there, and to find one with both great racing history as well as the garage-find story is pretty rare. I'd call this one very well bought at the price paid.

(Introductory description courtesy of Russo and Steele.)

1963 Pontiac Tempest Super Duty coupes

VIN	Build date	Paint	Sold to
163P55754	11/19/1962	F Yorktown Blue	Mickey Thompson
163P55781	11/26/1962	D Silvermist Gray	Ray Nichels

1963 Pontiac LeMans Super Duty coupes

VIN	Build date	Paint	Sold to
263P76227	12/12/1962	C Cameo Ivory	George DeLorean
263P76237	12/12/1962	C Cameo Ivory	N/A
263P76752	12/12/1962	C Cameo Ivory	Stan Antlocer through Stan Long Pontiac, Detroit, MI
263P76861	12/12/1962	C Cameo Ivory	N/A
263P76881	12/12/1962	C Cameo Ivory	N/A
263P76971	12/13/1962	C Cameo Ivory	N/A

1963 Pontiac Tempest Super Duty wagons

VIN	Build date	Paint	Sold to
163P95462	1/08/1963	C Cameo Ivory	N/A
163P95476	1/08/1963	C Cameo Ivory	N/A
163P98420	1/10/1963	C Cameo Ivory	N/A
163P98422	1/10/1963	C Cameo Ivory	N/A
163P99224	1/11/1963	C Cameo Ivory	Union Park Pontiac, Wilmington, DE
163P100134	1/14/1963	C Cameo Ivory	N/A

FULL PG AD