

Celebrating Jim Wangers' 93rd Birthday!

by Thom Sherwood

Legendary Pontiac adman Jim Wangers, often referred to as "The Godfather of the GTO," recently turned 93. I made a special effort to visit him in Escondido, California on Wednesday, June 26, 2019 to help him celebrate that birthday.

Jim's exalted reputation within the world of Pontiac enthusiasts is nothing short of stellar. For many years, he made an effort to attend nearly every POCI and GTOAA convention along with regional events, including "Pontiac Weekend '99" which was hosted in Tucson by the Arizona Chapter POCI. As our featured guest speaker, Jim would regale us with tales from his many years in the automotive advertising business including how he refined Pontiac's original Wide-Track campaign, crafted the GTO's famous "Tiger" image and later helped bring to market the 1969 GTO Judge.

Sadly, Jim's mental health has been failing with the onset of Alzheimers in recent years. He is now in an assisted living and memory care facility where he is treated quite well. He still has the brightest of smiles and the sharpest of memories from Pontiac's glory years. He specifically wanted me to say "hello" to everyone in the Arizona Chapter and to share how much he misses us and our great Pontiacs!



ABOVE: Jim and Thom with Inga & Hanna in Escondido.

RIGHT: The last time Jim Wangers visited Tucson was in 1999 during the Arizona Chapter's Pontiac Weekend '99 events which included a Pontiac caravan "loop" that traveled through Sonoita, Patagonia, Nogales and Green Valley, Arizona. Our big car show that weekend was held in Tucson's Reid Park where Jim displayed his Pontiac-powered "Ponte Carlo" race car. A very special dinner held that very same evening at the Pima Air & Space Museum featured Jim Wangers as one of three great guest speakers. Also featured there were WS-6 Engineer George Collins and retired Pontiac Studio designer Jim Ewen. Pictured from left are Ed Dufrene (Jim's race driver and assistant), Jim Wangers, Rose and Jim Ewen (who turns 90 later this year!), and Thom Sherwood in the background preparing the evening's festivities.

