

THE BUMMER BUMPER “BLUE CAR” - CHAPTER 22

“A Tribute to Jim Wangers’ 1964 GTO ‘Test Car’ built for Car and Driver’s March 1964 Road Test”



The question of whether the bumpers needed re-chroming sparked more debate than expected, but with the rest of the car executed at such a high level, skipping a detail this visible felt wrong. Even though the originals were in admirable condition, six decades of aging left the chrome looking dull against the fresh Nocturne Blue now draped over the Blue Car. A friend in Southern California hauled them down to our neighbors to the south, Tijuana Mexico, where a re-chrome was completed for what seemed like a bargain... or so we thought. After installation, at first glance everything appeared fine, but a closer look inspired the title of this chapter: **“Bummer Bumper.”**

The re-chromed bumpers were supposed to be one of the easiest victories in the resurrection of the 1964 GTO Blue Pilot Car, after all, both pieces had fit perfectly when they were removed. The Blue Pilot Car, originally built for the Car and Driver test article, would have carried those factory-fitted lines that Pontiac engineering was so proud of. Every contour, every gap, every shadow line had been dead-on. So when the bumpers were sent out for fresh chrome, the expectation was simple: they’d come back gleaming, ready to bolt on, and the car would reclaim its original presence.

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But the moment the front bumper returned from Mexico, the problem was obvious. The center nose section had been pressed inward, almost imperceptibly at first glance, but enough to throw off the entire geometry. That subtle distortion forced the outer “ears” of the bumper to flare outward, breaking the crisp alignment that had defined the Blue Pilot Car’s front end. Instead of hugging the fenders with factory precision, the bumper sat proud and wide, a visual reminder that even small deviations in metalwork can echo loudly across a classic car’s face.

The contrast was even more striking when compared to the Raymond Family 1964 GTO Convertible. This car, a benchmark example of factory craftsmanship, showed the exact gaps Pontiac intended.

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The photographs tell the story clearly: tight, even spacing at the fenders, a centered nose, and a bumper that followed the body lines like it had been sculpted for that specific car. The Raymond GTO became the reference point, proof of how the Blue Pilot’s bumper should look, and motivation to make it right.



Fortunately, not all the news was bad. The rear bumper made the trip back without issue, retaining its original shape and fitting the car exactly as it had before. Its chrome finish was flawless, and seeing it bolt up perfectly was a welcome relief in the middle of the front-end setback. At least half of the car’s bright-work was ready to shine.



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In the end, the solution came from a trusted source: **The Bumper Factory**. Their team stepped in with a perfect triple-chrome plated replacement, restoring the Blue Pilot Car’s front end to its rightful appearance. The new bumper fit exactly as the original had, tight, correct, and true to Pontiac’s 1964 design. Their craftsmanship brought the car back to life, and for that, the project owes them a sincere thank you.

