

# 1970 Oldsmobile 442 - Definitely Not Your Father's Olds

By Allen Pogach

I guess you could say that I've been a "motor-head" most of my life. Before I could even drive, I lusted for a Chevrolet Corvette, my vision of the perfect car – power, speed, and sporty looks.

In 1969 I graduated from Maryland and landed a job at Springfield Hospital. After I passed my probationary period, I started to think about getting a Corvette. I was young, had a good job, and a girl friend. But I needed that Corvette to complete the picture.

One day after work in early 1970, I stopped at Neal Chevrolet-Oldsmobile, which was near the hospital. I described the options I wanted to the dealer's son. They had a similarly equipped Corvette in stock, but in the wrong color, which meant it had to be a special order.

I was so enthused about my impending sports car purchase that I asked my girl friend, and future wife, Janice and my dad to go with me to the dealer on a Saturday to see the car of my dreams. Janice and my dad saw an entirely different type of car with shortcomings like – it was a two-seat car, so friends couldn't drive with us; it had no room for luggage if we took a trip; insurance would be much higher on a sports car, etc. They convinced me that maybe a Corvette was not practical for me.

The dealer's son knew I wanted a sporty car that had good performance. We went back into the dealership so that he could show us what he thought would appeal to me and overcome the objections of Janice and my dad. Sitting on the showroom floor was an Oldsmobile 442 convertible that had just arrived. My heart was captured by this awesome machine.

I wrestled with the decision for several days. Toward the end of the month, I went back to the dealer and ordered the replacement car of my dreams: an Olds 442 convertible, 455 CI big block,



*A magazine ad announcing the 1970 Olds 442 as the pace car for the 1970 Indianapolis 500 race. This pace car was a W25 model. Olds had a funky, counter-culture ad campaign featuring Dr. Oldsmobile's W-Machines, which were performance enhanced models.*

four-speed transmission, A/C, and Am/Fm. I've since learned that there were only 294 made with factory A/C in 1970. I was asked if I wanted SS I or SS II wheels. It didn't matter because I was going to replace the factory wheels with Cragers, which were the rage at the time. And I also installed a set of Thrush side pipes. You could hear the 442 coming two blocks away.

Some historical perspective on the Olds 442. It first appeared during 1964 as an option package for the F-85 and Cutlass models. The 442 became a separate Olds model in 1968, continuing through 1971, and then the 442 reverted to a Cutlass option through the mid-1970s. The 442 identification was based on its combination of four-barrel carburetor,

four-speed transmission, and dual exhaust.

GM divisions were always in sales competition with each other and the 442 began as a hasty response to the Pontiac Tempest GTO, which had proved to be an unexpected sales success during 1964.

The early 442 was the B09 Police Apprehender option powered by a beefed-up V-8. The package also included significant frame, suspension, braking, and handling modifications. The result was a muscle car that was entirely different than other Olds models.

In 1970 the Oldsmobile 442 was the pace car for the Indianapolis 500 race on Memorial Day. The 1970 V-8 was a 365 HP, 455 CI engine. 1970 was the last time the race was actually held on the original Memorial Day – May 30<sup>th</sup>.

My '70 442 was everything I wanted and more, and life was good. One drawback was the low rear ratio of 3.23:1 because of the A/C. Road Runners, Cudas, Challengers all blew me off the line with their quickness. However, once those bad-boys went through their gears; here came the 442 with the power. One day I took a friend from work out on Route 97 towards Westminster. We wanted to see what the 442 could do. Result: around 50 mph in first, 85 mph in second, 109 in third, there was no need to try fourth.

In 1973 Janice and I became parents and an Olds 442 convertible was definitely not a family car. So the Olds was sold and we bought a Thunderbird.

I retired in 2005 due to health reasons, but my car interest continued. After looking at Corvettes again, I realized that I needed something with more room. So I began a search for my second 1970 Olds 442. I looked throughout the mid Atlantic states, but found my current 442 in California. I'm no longer testing the performance limits of the 442, but I do enjoy the car.

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The ad logo for the  
1970 W series 442



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Allen Pogach's 1970 Oldsmobile 442 at the B&O Railroad Museum – Read about this car on page 15.