

# It's All About the NUMBERS.....

By Judy Badgley

Over the years I have been involved with the Hurst/Olds cars (that is 30 years to be exact) I have noticed that it is very unusual to have a 1973 H/O at any of our events. As a matter of fact it is pretty rare to see one anywhere. There are members among us who have mentioned they have never seen one in person, only in photos. Hmmm, this is a good time to see why that might be!



**1973 Hurst/Olds owned by the Katterson's of Pennsylvania**

1973 was the introduction of an all-new Cutlass body by Oldsmobile. The 1968-1972 models had been basically very much the same style. They were a very successful style that contributed to making Olds #3 in industry sales (up from #6). But five years is about the average NUMBER of years the car builders run a particular basic body design. Then it is time for a change to keep the buyers interested in going "out with the old and in with the new" and buying a new car. After all, that is why they are in business.

The new design for the 1973 models was longer and lower in appearance. These cars were definitely a bigger car. The title weight for our 1972 H/O hardtop is about 3400#. The average 1973 was a heavy 3800#. That is a big difference! These cars didn't really look as "sporty" as the previous Cutlass designs. The all-new design was referred to as the "little limousine".

Although these cars are more rare, there were many more of them built. During the 5-year production of 1968-1972 Cutlass, the most cars sold per model year were in

1972 at 302,669 units. In 1973 they sold 381,094 units. The production run for the limited-production Hurst/Olds went from 633 cars in 1972 to 1097 cars in 1973. But yet there are very few survivors of these cars. It is almost as rare to see a 1973 Cutlass or 442 as it is a Hurst/Olds.

General Motors had a problem with the recycled metal they were using in 1973. The explanation given was that there was not enough rust inhibitor used in the metal for building the cars. This caused a major rust issue. It really didn't matter what part of the country the cars were used or which GM product it was. They all had serious rust. From a Chevrolet Vega to a Cadillac, all fell victim to the rust equally.

There are some exceptions to this rule and there doesn't seem to be an explanation for this. I know of a 1973 Cutlass still owned by the original owner and it has been in Michigan its whole life. The car did not have a rust problem ever. This car is one of those exceptions.

As for the 1973 Hurst/Olds where did they go? The Membership Reference Manual indicates there are 23 H/OCA members with a 73 H/O. Assuming each of those listed only own one 73 H/O, that is only a survival rate of 2%. No wonder we don't see them at our shows.

I would also like to share some information about the building of the 1973 Hurst/Olds. The proposal for the 1973 H/O began before the finish of the production of the 1972. As soon as there was a body to work with Hurst and Olds were working on the design. The all-new body design meant an all-new Hurst creation. As far as we know, there were 2 prototype cars prepared a black one and a white one. The proposal cars were basically very similar. The most visible difference in the proposal cars is the wheels and stripping on the rear of the cars.

The white car had a gold strip on



top of each rear quarter that ran from behind the door to the top of the taillight.

The black car has the wide stripe



going L to R on the lower trunk lid like the production cars had.

Once Hurst and Oldsmobile agreed on a final design and it was time to get into production. The conversion would include:

1. Landau-styled half vinyl top with opera window, using stock GM moldings
2. Mylar etching (actually a decal) in the newly styled rear quarter window
3. Nassau hood duct that bolts onto the original hood
4. Hurst gold body accents (decals)
5. Hurst shifter installed in the stock Oldsmobile console
6. Custom hood ornament
7. Taillight bezels to match the body color
8. Flat black colored grille
9. Custom chrome taillights

According to the records in our files, there were problems with the conversions right from the beginning. Basically, the labor force provided for the Hurst conversion was not properly trained and therefore production slowed. They needed to complete 30 cars per day to meet the schedule and they were only barely able to make 25 per day.



**73 H/O's being converted. Rear windows are being blocked and the vinyl tops applied.**

To solve this problem, more workers were hired and trained and they all worked 6 day weeks to meet the deadline.

An additional problem that occurred was the rear window block-off panel covered the "LOF Safety Glass" logo on the original window. This Federal Regulation could not be overlooked. Makers of the glass were contacted and they changed the location of the logo on the glass from that point forward. They also supplied a decal to be applied to the windows of the cars already completed.



**In this conversion photo you can see 1 of the sunroof cars in the foreground.**

There was also a problem of water leakage that was discovered. This was a result of the man installing the molding on the vinyl top not replacing the caulking needed to seal the drip edge molding to the roof and the new vinyl top. Oldsmobile then requested each car be water tested before shipment. With that procedure in place, all of the cars passed the Olds inspection.

The Hurst workers also had difficulty in the area of the hood scoop alignment. Several hoods required re-drilling to elongate the holes to properly align the scoop. \*\*There is a note in the H/OCA Research Library that a recommendation was made

to stay away from bolt-on scoops in the future!

With all of the problems worked out the production total ended at 1097 Hurst/Olds in 1973. The original cost for the Hurst portion of the conversion was estimated at \$595 per car. The final cost to the customer was an additional \$635 per car. Also added to the window sticker was a charge of \$635 by Oldsmobile for the additional work that was done on their production line. The total cost that was added to the window sticker price for a Hurst/Olds would be \$1270.

Hurst Performance also would offer buyers additional items for their new Hurst/Olds at an additional cost. These items were Hurst air shocks, digital computer, digital tachometer, and an alarm system. We have no record of how many of these were sold/installed or how much the cost was.

According to our records there were 19 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees working on the Hurst conversion. This does not include designers, planners, supervisors, etc. If the estimates of time are correct, all of the cars were completed in about 45 working days. There were over 40 different vendors supplying parts for the Hurst portion of the conversion.



**The Hurst/Olds are ready to go! This would be the first year you could have a choice in color when you ordered an H/O.**