

HATS OFF

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EXPECT to hear a lot of requests for "G.T.O." by Ronny and the Daytonas on oldies radio this weekend. The 1964 hit is the perfect theme song for the 30th annual convention of the Pontiac Oakland Club International in downtown Charleston.

More than 700 vintage cars and 4,000 visitors are expected, thanks to the efforts of Nitro's own Bill Fortune. He is a retired high school shop teacher well known for his ability to get parts for old Pontiacs.

Fortune lobbied hard to land this convention, which he says will pump half a million dollars into the local economy. He sold his fellow directors on the group's board on the idea of having the convention here. One small problem: There was no local chapter to host it.

So Fortune went out and organized the Almost Heaven West Virginia Chapter.

That is a can-do spirit. His love of his state is admirable.

What distinguishes Fortune most is his new job. Since retiring, he works for the West Virginia Council of Churches at its Good News Mountaineer Garage. That group obtains donated cars, rebuilds them, and gives them to people who are coming off welfare and need transportation to employment sites.

By the way, Fortune does not have a G.T.O. His Pontiacs are a 1957 Safari and a 1965 LeMans.