

Hilton Head Island Concours d'Elegance

Lee Fowler

Photos by Dave Schroetter and Suzanne Fowler

Contrary to what people think, Suzanne and I are not serious Concours participants. We usually enter the Concours at Rennfest, Winterfest, and Spring Thing. Never the big events like Amelia Island or even Parade. We spend less than a day prepping the car and always drive it to the event. Sure, we win a lot of first-in-class trophies. When the car is a 1965 or 1967 model it's usually the only car in the class. But when the trophy is proudly displayed, that fact ain't mentioned.

This story is about our recent experience at a major Concours event. However, be warned that at times some facts may be a bit distorted. Or a better term could be stretching the truth just a bit.

Sometime back in the August timeframe I was in my workshop working on a project when my cell phone rang with an out-of-state area code. I usually don't answer those, and I never give out my cell phone number. But for some reason I did answer it. "I'm calling for the Hilton Head Island Concours d'Elegance event. Since this is the 75th year of Porsche cars we want to showcase different Porsche models. We would

like for you to bring your 912 to represent the 1967 model year."

Now I'm rarely speechless but here I am not knowing what to say. So, I said, "I'll have to check with the wife and call you back." We've cut back on our PCA activities so I figured she would give it a thumbs down. I explained the call and her reply was, "ABSOLUTELY!" Not what I expected but I got my answer.

The Concours will be held on Sunday, November 5th. Plenty of time to plan the trip and get the car ready. It hasn't been out of the garage in way too many months, and it's covered with dust. We always drive our car to a Concours but this time it was strongly recommended that we bring it in a trailer. I have a small utility trailer, but the car won't fit on it. I put out a distress message to a couple of HOD members asking where I could rent a trailer. Joe Still was willing for us to use his but I would need a dual-wheel monster to pull it. My truck is a Toyota Tacoma six-cylinder. Martin Folgmann responded with an offer. "I have a small, enclosed car trailer and you can borrow it." What can I say? Thanks Martin, you saved the day. I saw the trailer when we went on the

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Savoy Museum tour. It's small and light enough to tow with my truck. Then son Mark voiced his concern. "Why don't you take my truck. Your truck is too wimpy. Mine is a GMC 1500 Turbo Diesel." It wasn't exactly a question. I asked the opinion of our other two boys, Scott and Brad. They both agreed with Mark. That's three of them against one of me so I still outnumber them. I didn't ask Suzanne for her opinion because I knew I'd lose. I finally acquiesced and agreed to take the 912 to the Concours with a borrowed truck and borrowed trailer.

Not too long after we made the decision to attend the Concours I mentioned it to Dave and Ann Schroetter. Ann piped up, "We'll go, too!" Later that day Dave made reservations for them at the hotel. They both enjoy attending Concours events, even driving to Rhode Island every year to attend one. They apparently have friends that they like



to visit with. See picture. I was going to have them introduce us to him, but he apparently didn't attend this Concours. Since they have experience attending these large events, we're happy that they're going to help us find our way around.

Over the course of a couple of months we had conversations about traveling to Hilton Head Island and I mentioned that we would be driving Mark's big diesel truck. Dave said, "You're too old to be driving a big truck and pulling a trailer." Okay, he didn't actually say that, but I can read between the lines. Later Suzanne and I contemplated cancelling due to my severe back problems. We called Dave to talk to him about it and he took the bait. He said, "We can carpool, and I'll drive the truck". Dave and Ann spent many years living on boats and trailered them all over the country. He told me about his towing experience and the fact that he raced at Sebring years ago. Said that he could pull a trailer really fast. I acquiesced and told him that he could drive. However, I drew the line with Ann sitting up front and navigating. If you've ever been on a Schroetter tour with Ann navigating, then you know what a disaster that

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would be. Unfortunately, as it turns out, sitting in the back seat didn't keep her from trying.

Dave must have been reading my mind because I then started thinking about how I was going to be able to get in and out of that car to clean it. This old body ain't able to bend and twist enough anymore to get to all the interior spaces. Dave said, "Why don't you take the 912 to AutoworkZ and have them detail it for you?" I thought that was a brilliant idea and so did Suzanne." Don't know why I didn't think of it.

On October 23rd we took the car to AutoworkZ. We also told them to apply the ceramic coating. It really makes the color stand out. And we changed our travel plans. Instead of leaving on Friday the 3rd, we will load the car on Wednesday and leave on Thursday and spend the night on the road. It takes at least nine hours, so we decided to make it a two-day drive.

The plan that I so carefully laid out was to pick up the trailer at Martin's barn and bring it to the house. We would have to park it on the street, and we could load the car there. Dave and Ann would come to our house,

and we would depart from there.

Great plan! What actually happened was that the trailer would be moved to Martin's shop on Putman. We could pick up the 912 at AutoworkZ and drive it the short distance to the shop. Dave and I would load the car there. Except we mostly watched as Jacob did all of the tying the car down and hitching the trailer to the truck. I told Jacob to write up a service ticket to cover his time. He said, "Naw. I'll just stick it to you next you bring one of your cars in for service." Fair enough, but I know he was just pulling my leg.

Left Huntsville about 9:30 AM and headed South to I20. Then took I20 to Atlanta. That part of the trip went smoothly. Interstate 75 South out of Atlanta was "stop and go" for miles. Added an hour or so to the trip.

Stopped in Macon, Georgia, for the night with plans to depart for Hilton Head Island early the next morning for the three-and-a-half hour drive.

That was great because Brad and family drove over from Hancock County to join us for dinner.

Dave had made it clear that he was going to concentrate on driving, so I had to provide the navigation and let

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him know of upcoming turns, etc.

Good plan except that he had to put up with me, Ann, and the truck's navigation system all giving him directions at the same time.

Occasionally Suzanne would throw in her opinion. And none of them matched. But Dave soldiered through and got us there.

Our first stop on arriving at the island would be to drop off the trailer. There is an area reserved for this with twenty-four-hour security. We pulled into the area and couldn't believe what we saw. We've never been to an event like this. A very large area was already filled with trailers and large car hauling rigs. I began to wonder, "What are we doing here? This is big time!" We checked in and were guided to our parking spot by two men in a golf cart. That's how big the area was. These two photos only cover a small portion of the parking area, but it will give you an idea of what I'm talking about.



After disconnecting the trailer, we drove to another area where we registered for the Concours. I had explained to the organizers earlier that Dave and Ann were there to assist us, so they were given exhibitors badges also. And tickets to the exhibitors lunch pavilion. Later the four of us dined together at the hotel. Saturday will be a day of relaxation.

Wrong again! My plan to get the car out of the trailer Sunday morning and take it to the Concours area was great. We had a two-hour window to get that accomplished. Dave said, "Why don't we go ahead and get the car out of the trailer and park it in the underground garage?" Suzanne agreed. Ann didn't care. So, Dave, Suzanne, and I drove the several miles to the trailer parking area and proceeded to remove the car. I cranked the engine and Dave said, "If we back the car out the trailer will tilt up. I eased it back a little and again,



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he was right. We hooked up the truck to the trailer and successfully backed out the car. Drove it back to the hotel and put the cover on it.

Later the four of us met for a leisurely late lunch at one of the outdoor eateries available at the hotel. Dave mentioned that they had some wine and why didn't we get together later at one of our rooms for a snack and sip some wine. Ann, being a Master Chef, always travels with an abundance of food. We selected our room since it had an ocean view. Our fourth-floor room had a balcony that gave us a spectacular view of the Atlantic. Suzanne and I sat out there the remainder of the afternoon watching the waves and looking for ships on the distant horizon. During this time, I spotted an occasional break in the water way out in the distance. After watching a number of these I realized that it was a whale or some other large sea creature coming to the surface for a minute or so then diving back underwater. We watched a large number of them for a couple of hours. Ann showed up before Dave and she was also enthralled with watching them. As the temperature drops, whales migrate from up north to warmer waters. It was interesting

to see those magnificent mammals swimming south during their annual migration. Dave came out to the balcony, looked at what we were watching and said, "Those are waves!" Obviously, he didn't see what we were seeing. We could see where the waves were breaking over a long sand bar. But these whales were further out. Several hours later with the tide going out we could see that the sandbar extended further out and what we had been watching were indeed, waves. Sigh!

Bright and early Sunday morning we uncovered the car in the underground parking garage and drove to the first fairway of the golf course. Dave, Suzanne, and Ann led in the truck. Spoiler alert! We didn't win a trophy! Both the first and eighteenth fairways were lined on both sides with cars that were some of most amazing automobiles imaginable. Some of them you may only see once in a lifetime, if then. Suzanne and I stayed with our car all day. Ann actually helped wipe down the car. The car is about as ready as it is going to get. Dave and Ann walked around to see other cars but never made it over to the eighteenth fairway. The attendance was amazing. We were

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parked at the entrance to the fairway, so we were able to see the spectators coming in continually throughout the entire day. Admission was eighty-five dollars per person.



Three inch binder with every invoice and service ticket for restoration. Window sticker showing \$5,491.10 we paid for the car on July 3, 1967. Certificate of Authentication. Original key fob and keys, owners manual, and service coupon booklet.

We are required to have a fire extinguisher behind the drivers rear tire and wheel chocks around the front tires. I wasn't satisfied to have just any old wheel chocks. See photo of what we used.



We were told that this would not be a regular Concours judging. The judges would be most interested in provenance, so we just parked the car, wiped off a little dust and waited for the judging to start. I was told that I may be asked to open the trunk. And I was asked that. Then I was asked to open the tool case. A judge then proceeded to move the tools to their respective pockets and inform me that two tools were missing. Then they asked me to open the driver's door and get in and start the engine. They checked the headlights, back up lights, horn, and turn signals. The backup lights don't work. But when's the last time anybody checked to see if their back up lights were working? They also told me that the clock wasn't working, which I already knew. The valve stems have support pieces that hold them to the wheel. One of the judges pointed out to me that they were the wrong type for disc brake wheels. They were for drum brake wheels. I certainly didn't know there was a difference. Later, checking with Porsche parts suppliers I saw that there was only one part number for those valve stem supports. Suzanne spent most of the day standing in front of the car telling

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people about it. I sat back behind the car and watched. I firmly believe that there were more pictures taken of the 912 than any other car there. Just about everybody that walked by stopped and took multiple photos. They didn't do that with the other cars that were parked nearby. At one point I looked up and saw Suzanne talking to a familiar person. It was our son Brad who lives in Hancock County, Georgia. He made the four-hour drive over to Hilton Head Island to see us. Here's the four exhibitors with the car.



Here we are getting the car out of the garage and ready for the show.



Three "Porsche Experts" judged the cars in our class. Let the judging begin.



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We weren't supposed to leave the event until four o'clock. At a little after three Dave and I started talking about packing up and leaving. About

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that time the Concours volunteer who was responsible for our area came over and said that we could leave if we wanted to since we were close to the entrance and no other cars would be coming in. Dave and I went back to the hotel in the 912. I parked in the underground garage and covered the car. We then headed back to pick up Suzanne and Ann.

Now picture this. A two-lane road that leads to the entrance to the first fairway. Only one lane is open. The other lane is completely occupied with parked tractor-trailer car haulers. Some of them double-deckers. We get near the entrance and Dave sees a gap between two tractor-trailers. Dave said, "I think I can squeeze in there". I replied, "I don't think there's enough room!" "Why do you care? It's not your truck!", Dave replied. So, he put the truck into this small space and said, "I'll go get Ann and Suzanne." He was being considerate of my back problems. But I told him, "No, you're the driver. I'll go get them". We loaded up our chairs, coolers and other items and drove back to the hotel. Tired, but really happy with the day's events.

The plan for the return to Huntsville was to get up at a reasonable time and load the car into the trailer. We will spend the night in Macon and arrive home at a reasonable time Tuesday. The worst part of this is loading the car into the trailer. By now Dave and I are pretty much spent physically. I have a very bad back and Dave will get a new left knee on Wednesday. The ramps on the trailer have to be pulled completely out, moved to the edge of the trailer, then slid into slots. That requires two robust humans to lift those very long metal ramps. Here is a photo of the two broken down old geezers trying to do just that. Naturally, Suzanne got my best side.



As usual our plans changed while enroute. The desire to get home was strong so we decided to keep on trucking (pun intended) and get home

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late Monday. After a long nine-plus hour ride back, Dave and I will both be too tired to unload the trailer. I called our son Scott to have him and one of his boys to come over to our house and help unload the car. I'm just going to have to tell Martin to get a new, better trailer if he wants me to borrow it again.

Dave Schroetter, Ann Schroetter, Jacob Holt, Martin Folgmann; Scott, Mark, Brad, and Ryan Fowler. I have to mention their names since their contributions helped us have such a memorable weekend.

Our 912 was a daily driver, a touring car, autocross car, rally car and it spent a number of sessions on two different speedways in Maryland and West Virginia driven by both Suzanne and me. We've had a lot of fun with that car. But the invitation to and attendance at the Hilton Head Island Concours d'Elegance was the Crown Jewel of our fifty-seven years of owning and driving Porsches.