

Our Porsche History By Lee Fowler

Suzanne and I have attended three Treffens, including the very first one sponsored by Potomac Region. The other two we attended were held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Eureka Springs, Arkansas. These enjoyable events consisted of tours and social activities. Jim and Suki Cambron also attended the Albuquerque Treffen. Bill and Karen Trevey, Paul and Donna Webb, and Jim and Suzanne Ferrell traveled to Eureka Springs for that event.

The initial Treffens years ago were quite different, although they did include tours. Those Treffens involved traveling to Europe. Tours were arranged for different countries, including Russia. Attendees could order a car, pick it up at the factory and then tour Europe. PCA'ers traveled to Europe in style. Here is a photo of a PCA group about to depart.

Two individuals in the photo pointed to by the white arrow are Don and Lucille Communale. Lucille wrote Treffen "trip reports" for Panorama magazine. They participated in just about every Treffen and changed cars yearly. They're Uncle Don and Aunt Lucille to me. They are the ones who introduced me to Porsches back in the mid 1950's. They lived in Park Ridge, Illinois, and belonged to that PCA Region. I guess Aunt Lucille inspired me to continue the tradition and write "trip reports" about the events Suzanne and I attend.



They often visited their poor Southern relatives in Georgia. On one such visit Uncle Don asked if there was any place where he could get some fresh peanuts. I suggested that we try the local feed store in Marietta. He parked in a parallel spot

behind a really funny looking car. I asked him what it was. He said that it was a Volkswagen. I asked him how much they cost, and he told me. Then I asked him how much the Porsche we were in cost, and he told me. I told him that I was going to own a Volkswagen and then a Porsche. I was about 13 or 14 years old at the time. About ten years later while in college, I traded my 1960 Pontiac in on a brand-new 1964 VW. Two years after that, Suzanne and I took the VW with 18,000 miles on it to the local VW-Porsche dealer and traded it in for a new 1966 912. I carried out my promise to myself.

Suzanne's dad made sure she could drive a manual transmission by teaching her in a 1950 Plymouth. We were dating when I bought the VW, but made it known that nobody else would be allowed to drive it. One day, I offered to take her home and handed her the keys to the VW. She was in shock, but she drove it. Before our relationship turned too serious, I wanted to make sure she could drive a straight shift. She should have picked up on my intentions. She could have cut and run but obviously didn't. We drove that VW on our honeymoon.

We first joined PCA as members of Peachstate Region, then transferred to Potomac when the U.S. Navy assigned me to the Bureau of Naval Personnel just across the river from the Pentagon. I served as Vice-President and then President of Potomac Region. Suzanne was Secretary. We were invited back by Potomac Region several years ago to help celebrate their anniversary. After I made my speech at the banquet a fellow came up to me and said, "I'm Chuck Drake and was president of Heart O' Dixie." So, I said, "We're having our 50th celebration soon so why don't you come to it?" He traveled to Huntsville to join us in the celebration and then moved here.

Our first PCA Parade attendance was the 12th Parade held in Arlington, Virginia. I volunteered to help with the Concours even though I didn't have the slightest idea what it was. I was assigned to assist Max Bunnell, a past PCA president. I asked Max what I needed to do. He said, "You can hold my clipboard!" But I made the national news. A photo of me working the Concours was published in an article in the November issue of Sports Car Graphic magazine. I have a copy of that issue. I would like to claim that I started my Concours judging back in 1967 but that would be a stretch. Here we are driving into a Parade rally checkpoint in our first Porsche.



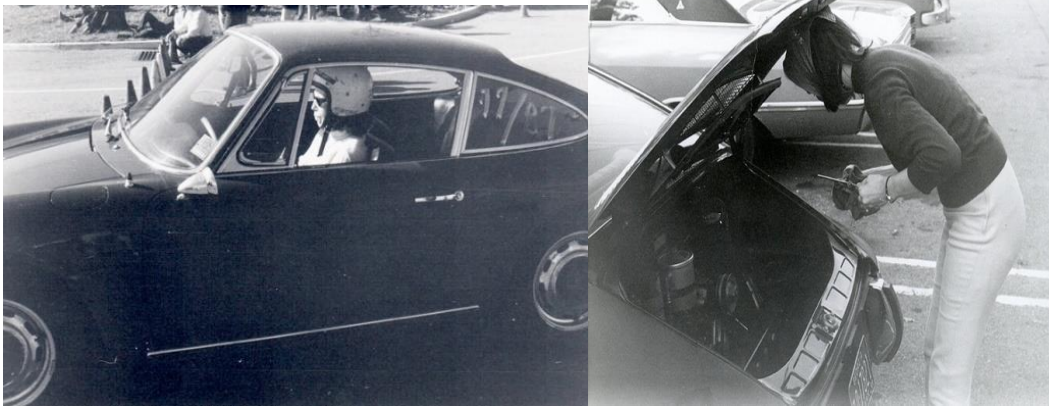
Suzanne and I have owned 11 different Porsches and we owe it all to these two people. Here we are at the 12th Parade banquet with Aunt Lucille and Uncle Don. You can tell by the fact that I'm somewhat smiling that I wasn't the Supreme Curmudgeon back then. Donna Webb inadvertently created that persona. A brand new red 911 Targa was the door prize at

the banquet. We didn't win it.

On our way back home from a Parade event, we topped a hill in the highway only to see a 356 from Elizabeth, New Jersey sitting in the road. The driver had stopped because a shovel had fallen off a truck in front of him. The front of our 912 met the rear of his 356. We got it fixed but were very disgusted that our fairly new Porsche was marred. I called the dealer in Marietta and asked the sales manager if we could trade it in on another car. He replied that a "spec" 912 had just landed in Jacksonville and we could have it. So, we left work on a Friday afternoon and made the twelve-hour drive to Georgia, arriving early Saturday morning. Upon arriving at the dealership, we were greeted by a "loaded" Irish Green 1967 912. We drove that car back to Virginia the next day and it's still with us.

Our primary focus in PCA was autocrosses and running DEs at Summit Point and Marlboro Speedways. Autocross events occupied just about every weekend during the summer months. We had an Autocross Association that coordinated the events and most of the sports car clubs in the area participated. Suzanne was the women's autocross champion two years in a row.

Here she is checking the oil and getting ready for her second run of the day.



We took extra tires to use at the Autocross. Great big wide Goodyear tires. We had an understanding. We both drove the car so we both got it ready. That's why you see her checking the oil in the picture above. We used the jack that came with the car to raise it up. It's a VW type jack. The front wheels came off the ground first and by the time the rear wheels lifted, the front wheels were very high. I quickly changed the rear tire. That left Suzanne to remove the front street tire and lift the very heavy Goodyear. It probably was half her weight. I got a lot of stares for not helping her. I said, "She drives the car, so she helps with the preparation." I believed in "Women's Lib" before it became popular.

We traveled to Georgia a lot to see our families. On one trip back to Virginia we were going through Thomasville, North Carolina, when the engine quit. This was long before Interstate highways. I was stopped at a light but was able to get the 912 off the road. It was a Sunday and all I could think about was "Where can I possibly get this exotic foreign car worked on in North Carolina on a Sunday?" This was before I started working on the car myself. I lifted the engine lid and saw nothing out of order. At least that I could see. I jiggled some hardware pieces then got back in to crank the engine. No luck! Did this several times with no success. Finally, Suzanne got out of the car and came around and looked into the engine compartment. She said, "Is that wire supposed to be hanging loose?" A wire had fallen off the connection to the coil. Reattached it and the engine started right up. That wasn't the last time she saved the day.

We also had a VW bus and both vehicles were daily drivers. We found that if I drove the VW to work every day then I wouldn't do well at the Autocross on Sunday. Suzanne, driving the 912 would usually win a trophy. If she drove the VW, then she wouldn't do very well at the Autocross. So, we alternated our daily drivers during the week. It made a difference in our Autocross performance. Didn't increase my trophy collection, but I made better times.

Of course, a 356 was always in our crosshairs, so when a PCA friend decided to sell his green 1965 356C we bought it. Sold the VW bus. Later we saw an advertisement in Panorama for an Irish Green 1967 912 Targa for sale in Louisville, Kentucky. Now wouldn't it be nice to have matching 912's. One coupe and one Targa. So, we drove to Louisville in the 356 and bought another 912.

After a time passed, we saw an advertisement for an Irish Green 1967 911S Targa for sale. We needed that car! We sold the 912 Targa and bought the 911S. Against a friend's advice. It had Koni shocks on it. Koni's weren't installed on Targas because they were too stiff. The Targa body was designed to flex. Three Porsches were too many! That's when I discovered that the more Porsches you have, the fewer you have running. At one point we almost had to rent a car to get to work.

The 912 needed a new clutch. Autocrossing is tough on clutches. I called our mechanic to let him know about it. He said, "Lee, you're not going to be happy until you work on that car yourself. Why don't you replace the clutch?". We lived in an apartment, so Suzanne and I borrowed a friend's garage. After several hours and many calls to the mechanic, we pulled the engine, replaced the clutch and pressure plate.

After that experience, I started doing all the maintenance. including engine and transmission rebuilds. I just couldn't keep up with it, so we sold the 356. Then we sold the 911S. Our best friends and Autocross mentors offered to sell us their 1957 Speedster. Couldn't pass that up. Now we're back to two Porsches. The 912 and the Speedster.

Then Suzanne quit work to become a full-time mother. She had a very successful career as a FORTRAN programmer developing top-secret software. But she was ready to make the change. As a result, one of the cars had to go. We sold the

Speedster for \$3,000. It had both a soft and hard top plus a tonneau cover. I never worry about decisions we made yesterday because we can't change them. But this is one case where I'm sorry we sold that car.



All of our PCA activities came to a screeching halt after son number one was born. I had a choice to make. Either buy parts for the car or food for the kid. I made the logical decision. But I got tired of not getting any sleep when the kid cried all night 'cause he was hungry. So, the 912 got parked.

Fast forward thirty-plus years. All three boys are out of college, and we can restart our PCA activities. But no more competitive events. We don't even watch autocrosses being run. We tried that once several years ago and realized that the autocross bug could bite. We're now satisfied to attend social events and tours.

Did I say no more competitive events? We were attending Tennessee Region's Winterfest back in 2010 with the Carrera. All the cars were parked indoors so we were mixed in with the Concours participants. We didn't believe in participating in Concours events. No way! No how! Dumb thing to do!

One of the Tennessee Region's members browbeat us into registering for the Concours. He said, "As long as your car is sitting here you might as well register it." Very logical, so we relented. We wiped off the car a little bit but there were still bug parts spattered on the headlights and a lot of other grime on the car. We

won a 3rd place trophy. Well, if it's that easy why don't we do it again, was our thinking.

Suzanne and I both attended several Concours judging schools put on by Peachstate. Even one of their members told us not to start entering Concours. He said it was a "sickness"! But we didn't listen. In getting ready for Spring Thing 2023, I came back into the house after crawling in and out of the 356 and announced to Suzanne, "I'm getting too old for this!" I left out another word I'd intended to end the previous sentence with.

In 1990, we bought number three son a used 914. He was a senior in high school. He drove it through his first year at Alabama, but we had to sell it. He grew to be six feet five inches and couldn't fit in the car without bending like a pretzel.

The 912 had deteriorated after sitting neglected for way too many years. We were driving a Ford Crown Victoria as our primary car, given to us by Suzanne's dad. It had 60,000 miles on it and he thought it was worn out. It wasn't!

One evening we started talking about replacing it. Suzanne said, "What are you thinking about? A Mercedes or BMW?" Incredulous, I said, "No! I'm thinking a Honda or something similar." She said that if we could afford a Porsche, she would like for it to be green or maroon. A couple days later I attended a Tech Session at Century. There sat a brand-new 2006 Carmine Red Cayman. I thought that was interesting, so I called her and told her about the coincidence with the colors. She said that she wanted to come and look at it. Later that day Ray Diaz at Century had the Crown Vic and we drove home in the Cayman. I'm still wondering if that really was a coincidence or if she had driven down University and saw that car.

A couple years later I made a turn off Whitesburg Drive in the Cayman and did a curb check. It tore the right rear tire. The pump that came with the car didn't work so I had to call number one son to bring an air compressor to inflate the tire. This was a Sunday and I drove the car straight to Century, parked it, and left a note. Never saw it again. The next day I went to see Ray to order the 2009 Carrera.

I claim that we're not spontaneous in our decision-making process. Very deliberative we are! For instance, at Peachstate's Rennfest on Labor Day weekend back in 2013, I was talking to Jeff Frye from Peachstate Region. Not being comfortable socially, I tried to find something to talk about. So, I spontaneously

blurted out, “Suzanne wants another 356 but it would have to be Irish Green with a tan interior.” Jeff said, “I have an Irish Green 356 with tan interior and it’s for sale.” I could have let the conversation drop right then and there. But no, I told Suzanne about the conversation when I returned to our room. It was a full two weeks later before we went to Atlanta to pick up Jeff’s 1965 Irish Green 356C with tan interior. Sigh!

A couple of years ago we went to Century to pick up the Carrera after it was serviced. Our daily driver was a Subaru. George Jones and Ron Volinski came into the showroom, and we started talking. Unbeknownst to me, Bradley Dale took Suzanne outside to show her a used 2008 Boxster. He did this while George and Ron had me distracted. When I discovered what was going on, I told Bradley firmly that the Subaru was a leased car so we couldn’t trade it in. He replied, “We take leased cars in on trade.” So now we have four Porsches: The 912, the 356C, the Carrera, and the Boxster. Plus, my Toyota Tacoma. I should have foreseen what would happen. The Boxster is blue. The other three Porsches are green. Guess whose favorite color is green. To be safe I’ve banned Suzanne from visiting any car dealerships.

I’m not foolish enough to think my edicts carry much weight. In October 2022, following Suzanne’s bible study class, we were driving over Cecil B Ashburn Drive to visit Dave and Ann Schroetter up on Keel Mountain in Gurley. Suzanne said, “On the way home from bible study I saw a couple of Mini Coopers. They seem like really nice little cars.” I was familiar with that brand of car from back in our autocrossing days in the late 1960’s. Fantastic little automobile! But I hadn’t seen any up close since then. I let the conversation drop. The next day we drove to Nashville and came home with a 2023 Mini Cooper convertible. Green, of course! The blue Boxster is history. The downside is that she had to give up her manual transmission. She hates driving automatic transmission cars.

Of the 44 different cars we’ve owned, one-fourth of them have been (or are) Porsches. I guess my aunt and uncle unleashed a monster in me and then I created one. Is Suzanne to blame for all our different Porsches? I’d like to think so, but I have to admit that I’m a Porsche addict also. I can’t predict the future. Don’t know what’s going to happen to the three Porsches. I’d like to sell the Carrera and 356 but Suzanne vetoes that every time I mention it. I guess I’ll have to be content to let Scott, Mark, and Brad figure out what to do with them.