Prof. Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche


LASCO

"I COULDN'T FIND QUITE THE CAR I DREAMED OF. SO I DECIDED TO BUILD IT MYSELF."

In 1947, Porsche was a respected automotive design company. But not an auto manufacturer. Having worked on everything from race cars to tractors to road cars for leading automakers, Ferdinand Anton Ernst Porsche had definite ideas about what a car should be.

Looking around the world, this car did not exist. Cars were too big. Too heavy. They did not let the driver feel in touch with the road. They relied too much on brute strength rather than agility and technology to achieve performance.

The only answer was to build it. A small, light sports car that could cover long distances comfortably. Handcrafted, yet built to endure the rigors of racing. This car was to duplicate as nearly as possible the feel achieved in an open-wheeled racer. Yet serve as durable, everyday transportation.

In the spring of 1948, this car rolled out into the sunshine for the first time. In what would become true Porsche fashion, it ignored virtually every accepted convention of the day. The engine was mounted just ahead of the rear axle. The body was of hand-hammered aluminum. Trim was minimal. It was powered by just 35 hp. Yet because of light weight and aerodynamic design, it had a top speed of nearly 85 mph, which was impressive for the time.

So, independence from day one has been the attitude at Porsche. We make cars which we like to drive.

Whereas most automakers create an idea based on market trends, then alter it to fit production practicalities and available materials, at Porsche the design is all-important. The best possible technical solution is found. Then, if components necessary to build this design aren't available, we create them. Even to the smallest screw or bolt. If needed, we even design the tools.

It is only by remaining small and independent that Porsche is able to operate this way. From 1948, right up to today, Professor Porsche has continued to believe that if you ignore the so-called rules and do what you believe is right, rather than what is expected, there will be those who appreciate what you create and want to share it.

"IT WAS NEVER MY INTENTION TO BUILD A LOT OF CARS. OUR ORIGINAL GOAL WAS 500."

It has never been the desire at Porsche to create huge numbers of cars. Merely to create special ones. In fact, initially Professor Porsche hoped he could find 500 others who would appreciate his car and want one.

This, of course, turned out to be a bit of an underestimation. The first 500 cars were completed by the end of the first year in the Stuttgart factory constructed in 1950. Just over 5 months later, the total had reached 1,000.

Still, even with this enthusiastic response, we at Porsche resisted any temptation to turn to typical assembly line methods. Part of the special qualities of any Porsche lie in this very belief. Machines have no feelings. They cannot take pride in what they are doing. Automation and robots are used only where they can provide added precision, or where they can do a job which might be unpleasant for our craftsmen.

To this day, each Porsche is very much a handcrafted car. Engines are meticulously constructed by a team of four workers. The supervisor then signs it, taking responsibility for it. Interior leather is hand-fitted. Special lights are used to find and correct almost imperceptible blemishes in the finish. This type of treatment extends throughout the car.

Many Porsche workers take such pride in their work that if you disassemble one of the cars, removing seat covers and the like, you will find their signatures underneath.

Compared to work stations on a typical auto assembly line, Porsche keeps cars at each station an average of 10 to 30 times longer. If necessary, more. Only experienced specialists work on the cars, and these specialists train 3½ years as apprentices.

A good example is the new 911 Carrera 4. When Porsche starts a new model such as this, things are taken even more slowly than normal. Recently, Porsche's head of production pointed out, "This week, we built 12 Carrera 4s. Next week, perhaps we will build 16. We shall see. Quality must come first. We will worry about the numbers later."

Whereas a large automaker might produce from 2 million to 4 million cars each year, in over 40 years only about 650,000 Porsches have been built. And 2 out of 3 of them are still on the road.

1948

Porsche No. 1 is hand-built in Gmund, Austria, ignoring the conventional rules applied to most motor cars of the day. It sets a precedent Porsche will become renowned for; doing things their own way, using the solution they believe is most technically correct.

The engine is placed just ahead of the rear axle for excellent weight distribution and traction. The body is of hand-hammered aluminum to reduce weight. Everything about the car is planned purely for performance. Garish decoration typical of the day is avoided. Unlike mass-produced cars that are based on trends and what will sell, Porsche uses one prerequisite only; what type of car would be most enjoyable to drive.

1950

Porsches are designed to be raced, as well as serve as practical everyday cars. In this day, many of the great races use running starts, with the first part of the race being on foot to the cars themselves.

Because of this, the 356 has been given a unique format for a production car; the key is placed to the left of the steering wheel. This is intended to make a running start as fast and efficient as possible, allowing the driver to start the car virtually as he is entering, and leaving the right hand free for shifting duties.

The 911, the last Porsche created in the era of running starts, retains this idiosyncratic feature to this day as a legacy of its heritage.

1956

To win, race cars must perform reliably and safely. As performance of Porsche production cars increases and more racing features are built in, a commitment to reliability and safety beyond industry norms is maintained.

American statistics at this time show that 49% of all accident injuries are head injuries, and that contact with the dashboard accounts for many of these. Taking note of this, Porsche adds foam rubber padding to the top and front edge of the dash on all their production models for 1956.

It will not be until 1968, a full 12 years later, that Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards tests will prompt all manufacturers selling cars in the U.S. to do so.

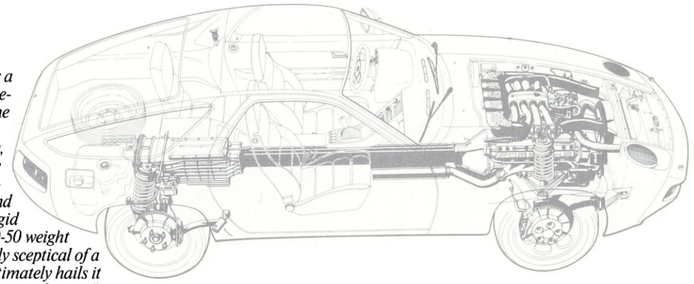
1965

As rumors spread that safety laws may prohibit convertibles in America, most manufacturers simply make plans to abandon them. Professor Porsche does not accept this. A sports car company must, in his opinion, offer an open-top car. Relying as so often on racing experience, an integrated roll bar is developed, and the world's first safety convertible is born. It is dubbed "Targa" after the Targa Florio race in Sicily, for two reasons: First, this is the site of repeated Porsche conquests. Second, and quite appropriately, the word "Targa" in Italian means "shield."

1977

Pondering directions for the 80s, Porsche sees a need for a more comfortable, luxurious sports car. All standard executions are considered, including front engine, rear engine and mid-engine. Typically, a unique route is chosen.

For comfort, space, safety and to use a larger engine, a front mounted V-8 is selected. However, to maintain the Porsche dedication to handling, a transaxle concept is developed. The transmission is separated from the engine and placed over the rear axle, with the two connected by a rigid tube. Among other benefits, this provides a near-perfect 50-50 weight balance. The 928 is born. Initially sceptical of a "different" Porsche, the press ultimately hails it repeatedly as "the world's most perfect car."



1985

People who buy Porsches, like the people who create them, continually prove quite individualistic. One man sends in his girlfriend's lipstick and asks that the color be matched for his car. A woman requests a match of her favorite dress. An eastern sheik even orders a solid gold stick shift for his 928, which is handmade by a Stuttgart jeweler and engraved with the Porsche crest.

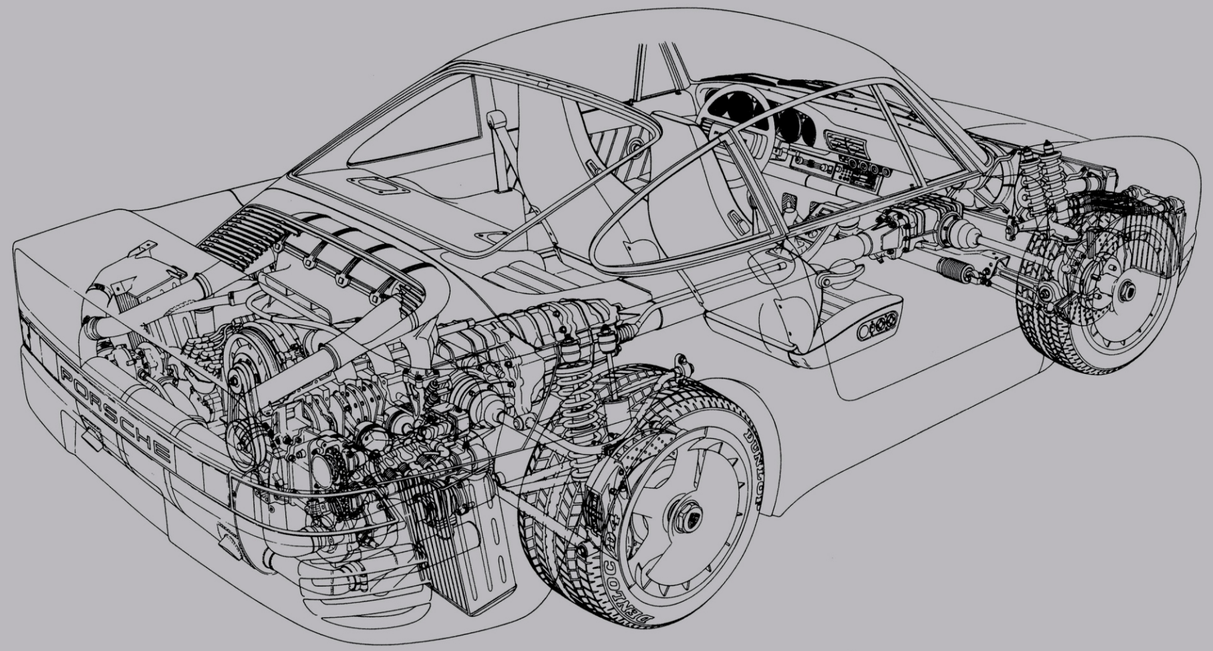
To make these special requests easier to fill, the Porsche Exclusive Program is officially begun. Says Porsche's director of production, "A sports car is a very personal statement. You must be able to make it so."

1989

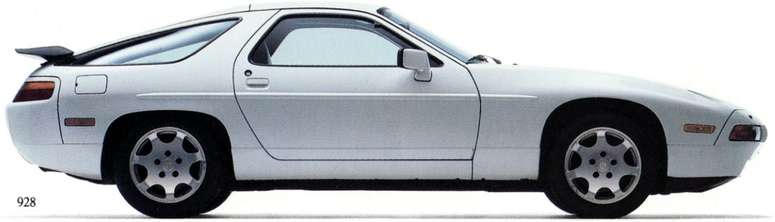
Having employed all-wheel drive on a 911 and the 959 "Supercar" to win the Paris-Dakar desert rallye in 1984 and 1986, Porsche sees new opportunities for the concept.

Not merely for traction in off-road or bad weather conditions, but to improve handling in conditions such as hard cornering.

Porsche develops an "intelligent" electronic system that uses sensors to analyze traction at each wheel with every revolution, adjusting torque continuously both between front and rear axles, and left to right in the rear. This is introduced on the new 911 Carrera 4; the world's first production car with electronic all-wheel drive. It provides a whole new threshold of useable power and control in motoring.



911 Carrera 4



928

944 S2

"YOU MUST HAVE THE FREEDOM TO LOOK BEYOND WHAT HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE."

In 1972, Porsche made its boldest statement of independence. Overlooking the quiet village of Weissach, Porsche established one of the world's leading technological think-tanks. Unprecedented in scope, it includes personnel, laboratories and workshops for taking ideas from initial concept to completed prototypes, as well as the facilities to test them.

It is a Porsche policy, however, to not put any given technology in our production cars until it is reliable and practical. No feature is ever used as a gimmick. This means that a great deal of technology exists for years at Porsche before it appears on our cars. If it is not ready, it remains on the shelf until it is.

In 1982 it was decided to build a car which let our engineers implement all of these dreams. No compromises were to be made. It was to be a rolling test-bed, making use of all the knowledge gained since Porsche No. 1 in 1948. It would be known as Type 959.

This was far more than a concept car; it was an acceleration toward the Porsches of the future. Ideas seen as valuable for coming years were to be tested and developed on this car, but used in a realistic fashion.

The 959 employed alloys and composite materials until then used primarily in racing cars for their strength-to-weight ratio. A computerized suspension was developed to raise the car when road conditions required greater clearance, and lower it at high speed on the highway. A sophisticated all-wheel drive system was developed.

The project was not motivated by profit. In fact, it would be a considerable investment. In a more bureaucratic environment, it would have probably never happened.

In the end, it proved extremely valuable. Ideas were implemented, developed and improved. New knowledge was uncovered which will make use of futuristic materials more practical in production.

The results are already being seen in Porsche's current models. Among these are electronic all-wheel drive on the new 911 Carrera 4, a system considered a step beyond that on the 959, plus a tire air pressure monitoring device, and new ABS braking knowledge which is being used to improve the systems which are already standard on all our production models.

Most importantly, other aspects of the 959 are now just around the corner, as opposed to somewhere down the road.

"THOSE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BUILD A BUSINESS OUT OF A DREAM OWE IT TO THE WORLD TO BE THE CARETAKERS OF DREAMS."

It seems there are fewer and fewer individuals in the world today pursuing dreams. More and more people looking for someone else's ideas to make money from.

This leads to sad phenomena.

So many creations today are simply mirrors of the world around them. There is increasing pressure on those with new concepts to "sell out." If not literally, then often idealistically, in order to compete.

Many of the most creative companies of the past century exist today in name only; the spirit that founded them long gone.

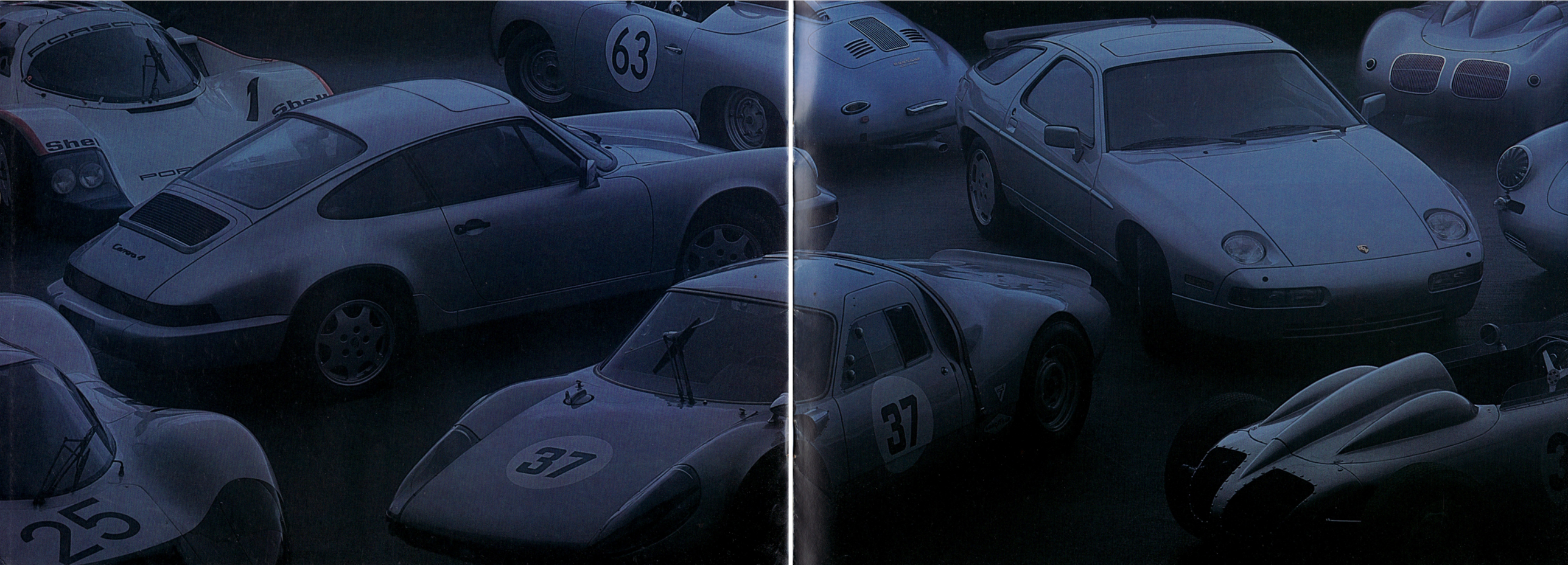
It is the duty of those who, through ingenuity, insight and hard work are able to make a dream a reality, to defend this right. To continue to build upon their ideas.

For forty years we have built cars which we like, our own way, with their own unique characteristics. We will continue to do so. And those who can appreciate them will get something very special.

It remains Professor Porsche's belief that if you look upon rules as limits, either rules of nature or of man, following obediently along and never taking risks, you will inherently be like everyone else.

For those who share this commitment to independence, we will continue to craft cars which reflect it.

"COMMITTEES ARE, BY NATURE, TIMID. THEY ARE BASED ON THE PREMISE OF SAFETY IN NUMBERS; CONTENT TO SURVIVE INCONSPICUOUSLY, RATHER THAN TAKE RISKS AND MOVE INDEPENDENTLY AHEAD. WITHOUT INDEPENDENCE, WITHOUT THE FREEDOM FOR NEW IDEAS TO BE TRIED, TO FAIL, AND TO ULTIMATELY SUCCEED, THE WORLD WILL NOT MOVE AHEAD, BUT LIVE IN FEAR OF ITS OWN POTENTIAL."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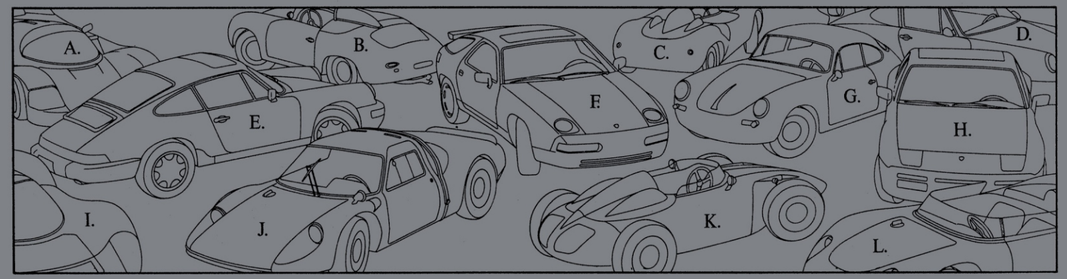

A) Type 962 B) Type 356GT Speedster C) Center Seat RSK D) Type 911 Carrera RSR Turbo E) Type 911 Carrera 4
F) Type 928 G) Type 356 Carrera 2 Coupé H) Type 944 S2 I) Type 908 Longtail Coupé J) Type 904 GTS K) Behra Formula 2 L) Type 718 RS 61