

Managing a small foreign car salvage yard in east central Indiana, I ran adds in different newspapers and national magazines wanting to buy wrecked, rundown, inoperative foreign cars. This was around 1970 and following.

PURCHASE

Somewhere around the fall of 1971, I received a call from a man in Mississippi. He had an old Porsche for sale. He sent pictures of the car. I agreed to buy the car. He brought the old Porsche up on the bed of a pick-up truck. The car was in primer, and had all the insides and engine out, these were included in the cardboard boxes that went with the car. The man I bought the car from was a Mr. Clark from Greenville, Mississippi. The thing that caught my eye was that the doors opened from the front or in other words "Suicide Doors". Being interested in Porsches for quite awhile, as this was the first sports car I had ever owned being a 1957 Coupe. Having been first introduced to Porsches while I was in the Army in Germany from 1958 to 1960.

My first correspondence with the factory concerning this car was in 1972. In which they said that this was one of the very first cars built. Mostly general information but very courteous. So I put the old car in the back yard and kind of forgot it. So through the following five or six years the car remained a conversation piece, because of the doors. I had the opportunity to talk with many people over the years that came to the salvage yard, concerning the old Porsche. Most Porsche "experts" believed it to be some "shade-tree" modification. So it remained a mystery. Around 1975 I wrote another letter to the Porsche Factory and this time sending photos of the car. The courteous reply was that Porsche had never built a car with the doors opening from the front. They almost had me convinced, but not quite.

MYSTERY MAN WITH MAGAZINE

Around 1977 a man stopped in at the salvage yard for some parts. He said he had been discussing the old Porsche earlier and we had been discussing the old Porsche. He said that he went to a lot of swap meets and old car shows. And that he had found an old issue of a magazine called _____ and in this issue which was the _____ issue. There was a 6 page article and photos of the Porsche I owned. The article was entitled "Porsche Germanys Racing Jewel" one of the photos showed a car on a racetrack. The car was stopped and there was several people around the car. The car had a German license plate on the front. But the important thing was that the doors opened from the front. I had copies made of the article and then I wrote the factory and sent the pictures along. The reply was courteous but they said that they knew nothing of this car and again that Porsche had never, never built a car with the doors opening from the front. But I had documented proof, the photo, that there was such a car. Oh, well, I'll just wait awhile longer but the photo had really whetted my interest concerning the history of this car.

I believe I wrote once more in the fall of 1978 to the factory. This time they were again courteous as usual, and told me according to the serial number on the car that it was one of 170 Cabriolets built in 1951, and that this was the one sold to a Porsche dealer in Kiel West Germany. But I still wasn't convinced.

LETTER TO EDITOR IN VW & PORSCHE MAGAZINE

Somewhere around 1977 or 1978 someone came into the office with a copy of a magazine called VW & Porsche, looking through it one day I thought I would write them a letter with the current photo of this car and see if they would have any knowledge of this car. I had no idea that they were going to put it in the letters to the editor, and publish my letter. I never received a reply

from them and forgot all about it. About two years later I started getting a lot of calls concerning the article in VW & Porschemagazine. I honestly didn't know what they were talking about until I got a copy of the magazine. I received a lot of calls. Probably the most fruitful information came from a call from a man in Indianapolis, a Mr. Mike Robbins. Mr. Robbins called and said he had seen the old Porsche here at the salvage yard years earlier. and that he had recently purchased a book called "Excellence Was Expected", and in the book there was a photo of this car and three paragraphs describing how it came into being. He was kind enough to send me copies of the pages in the book that pertained to the old Porsche. If you are not familiar with this book, it is quite a lengthy book concerning the history of Porsche.. On the one page it describes this car and having been built by a Mr. Henrich Sauter and was the prototype for the America Roadster, and that the doors opened from the front.

Also one night I received a call from a Mr. Clark in southern Mississippi. He said he was down to the drugstore, bought a copy of "VW & Porsche" and there was his old car. As it turned out, I had bought the car from his brother but the car had belonged to him, we talked awhile about the car, and I was to call him again in getting more information.

"TRYING TO FIND HENRICH SAUTER"

My thoughts now were that the factory either would not or could not help me. So I thought that I would try to establish a European contact that would help me locate Mr. Sauter. So I sent an add and photo to Road and Track Magazine and had it published in the classified section. Seeking background information on the car. I received many letters, but only one proved to be fruitful. I received a letter from a Mr. Cox in Minneapolis, telling

of a friend of his that had photos of this car. I called this man, a Mr. Countryman. He had been at the factory in 1951 or 1952, and had taken around 20 photos of the factory. In walking around he spotted a car that had suicide doors, and because of this unusual feature took two Photos* of this car. He was so kind to send me two 8x10 pictures and they were absolutely outstanding pictures of the car just outside the factory, the details were very good.

So armed with these photos and the information in "Excellence Was Expected", I again wrote the factory*, addressing my letter to Mr. Ferry Porsche himself. Asking direct questions about who was Henrich Sauter, and who built the car. When it was built, but in the return letter, these questions were not answered. The letter states this car was the first America Roadster built. And that it was sold to a Mr. F. Picard from Niesce, in May or June 1951. Mr. Jurgen Barth signed the letter/ I didn't know what to make of the letter.

So, still no information on Henrich Sauter. In the meantime I received a copy of a page from a book concerning Porsches, obtained from Mr. Mike Robbins. The book was published in England and in telling the history of the America Roadster it talked about Henrich Sauter. It said Max Hoffman the American importer convinced Porsche to build a car similar to the English idea of what a sports car should be. The book says that the factory already had on the drawing boards such a car for a young enthusiast Mr. Sauter.

So not wanting to wear out my welcome at the factory, I decided to try another avenue. I had obtained the address of a German auto magazine called Vom Motor zum Motor, they were based in Stuttgart. I thought they perhaps might know of some old Porsche employees. That if contacted might remember the

5

car and Henrich Sauter. So I wrote them a letter and received a reply. The reply was again mostly general information.

While looking through a copy of VW & Porsche, there was an article written about a Mr. Hans Klausner. He went to work at Porsche in 1948 and recently retired. The article was written by a Mr. Jerry Sloniger who is the European correspondent for VW & Porsche magazine. I called the publishers and talked to the editor concerning getting in contact with Mr. Sloniger. Believing that if Mr. Sloniger had enough information on Mr. Klausner to write the article that he could, furthur contact Mr. Klausner and see if he could remember anything about the old Porsche and Mr. Henrich Sauter.

THE MISSISSIPPI STORY

After Mr. Clark called about seeing his car in "VW & Porsche" I tried to find out where he got the car so through many calls to Mr. Clark I found out that in the mid-sixties he lived in northern Mississippi. Near Greenville Mississippi. As best as he could remember one of his buddies bought this old Porsche from a man in Helena Arkansas, and for a few years the car was traded around to different friends in the Greenville area. And that no one ever got the car to running and that after a few years everyone lost interest in the car and it remained in the backyard of Mr. Clarks until his brother called me wanting to sell the car.

I did locate the man that had bought the car in Arkansas. His name was . In talking to him he said someone had told him there was this man across the river in Helena, Ark. that had a lot of old cars sitting around his house. In two visits to this man he bought the Porsche and another car from him. That he didn't really want to sell. But finally did. Mr. Smith said the Porsche had been sitting so long the tires were all

(4)

flat and rotted. The floorboards were rusted through, and generally it was in sad shape. Now I was getting somewhere. This was in 1980 and Mr. Smith could not remember the mans name or address, He did however give me a general description fo the type of house the man lived in and the general part of town. His estimated age, and that was all he could could tell me.

THE CALIFORNIA STORY

Fall of 1980, having a collection of Road & Track Magazines from 1952 to 1975, for relaxation sometimes I look through them from time to time. The magazines are in binders for each year. I have the collection at home, but I had brought the 1954 binder to town to show my brother an article from one of the magazines. The binder layed around his garage for months. One day I was visiting him and noticed the binder, so I took it to work with me. Later in the week I was looking thru the magazines. And for some reason I stated looking at the classified adds in the back of the magazines. There was a very interesting add in the July issue. It said, "Porsche Roadster, factory modified, for sale. The add gave a name and phone number of a Mr. Mullin in Los Angeles, California. I called information, the operator had a number for the business phone of a Mr. J.S. Mullin. I called the number, Mr. Mullin is an attorney. His secretary said he was gone for a week. I asked her if Mr. Mullin drove sports cars and she said he did. I could hardly wait to talk to him. In a week he called me. I have left my number. We talked for quite awhile, Mr. Mullin was the man who had put the add in the magazine. We talked about the car for awhile. But he could not remember if his car had doors which opened from the front, he said, he would research this out and get back with me. I received a letter from him later, with 2* good photos fo

the car. His car did indeed have the doors opening from the front. He raced the car in 7 races in 1953 and 1 in 1954. All of these were on the west coast. He sent a list of the races, and also the racing numbers that he had used. He said a friend of his a Mr. Jack Armstrong was visiting Europe in the Spring of 1953 and had stopped in at the Porsche factory, saw the car, the factory offered it for sale. He called Mr. Mullin, who authorized the purchase, he bought the car and had it shipped to the United States-East Coast I believe.

And then offered it for sale in July* issue of Road and Track. He could not remember who he sold the car to. All he could remember was that the man was from Tennessee, and that he was a manufacturer of Christmas Fruit Cakes.

Also, Mr. Mullin said there was a photo of this car in a new book about *Pebble Beach. A book concerning itself of the Sports Car Races from 1950 thru 1956, and of the later car shows I bought the book and there was indeed a good photo of the car, spinning out on a turn.

I would like to talk with Mr. Armstrong concerning the details of the purchase of the Porsche.

THE ARKANSAS STORY

Who was the man from Tennessee that bought the old Porsche from Mr. Mullin? This proved to be quite a project with no leads to speak of other than trying to find the man in Helena Arkansas who had sold the car to the man from Mississippi.

Since I bought the car from a man in Northern Mississippi, which is near Memphis, Tennessee, also Helena, Arkansas is only 90 miles south of Memphis. So with Mr. Mullin stating he sold the car to a man from Tennessee, I thought that maybe he lived in the Memphis area. With nothing to go on I called the Sports Car Club in Memphis. I talked to one of the officers and asked if he

would check with some of the older members to see if they could ever remember seeing this old Porsche in races or rallys around Memphis. He checked, no one had ever saw it or heard of it.

I called the newspaper in Helena Arkansas. While generally discussing trying to find the man who owned the Porsche, the person to whom I was talking suggested I contact a Mrs. Carolyn Cunningham. It seems Mrs. Cunningham knew almost everyone in Helena. She wrote back and suggested I cal a Mr. Shell Namour. She believed he was the man who owned the car. I called him the day I received the letter. And in our conversation he said he was the previous owner. He said he bought the car over the telephoe from Mr. Mullin. He had a friend of his go to California and pick up the car. He said he never raced the car, but used it for pleasure driving. He drove it to New Orleans, Memphis,etc. The engine gave away in 1958 and he never repaired it and that it remained in his front yard until the mid-sixties. He said he had no photos of the car, he also said he had owned many other sports cars, a rare XK120 Jaguar, and a Siata and others. He talked about his Christmas Fruit Cake business and how he used to go to the West Coast and promote them.