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PANORAMA





DUEL AT DAYTONA

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY FROM VAS



OM VASEK POLAK AND DAVEY JORDAN

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **RANDY WELLS**



Racing rivalries

invariably come down to a single compelling event. Decades later, memories of that duel vividly replay in the minds of those who were there. For drivers Davey Jordan and Alan Johnson, that contest was the 1967 American Road Race of Champions at Daytona. ❖ By all accounts, Jordan and Johnson were like chalk and cheese. They were both skilled at driving to within an inch of their lives, but they were dissimilar enough in character that they didn't hang out too much after the race was run. ❖ Jordan is extremely talented, with a racer's heart, yet humble to the point of being self-deprecating. Johnson has always been sure of himself, with a businessman's mind and a reputation for having the best-prepared car. Their racing history before 1967 confirms that the two drivers were very closely matched, trading victories or podium finishes when they raced 356s against one another.



PHOTO JOHN WILSON

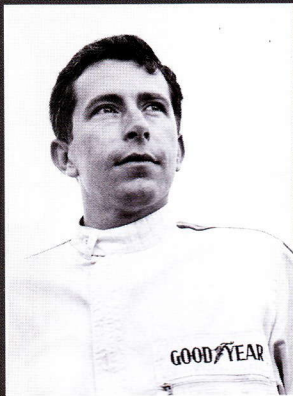
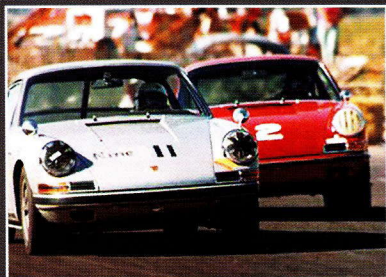
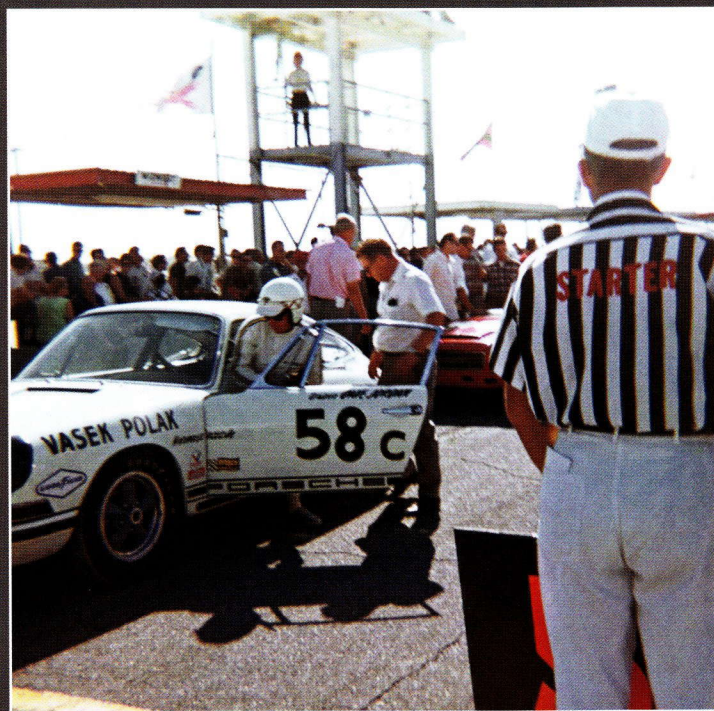
BY THE END OF 1966, Porsche was experiencing a golden era on race tracks in the United States. Team owner Vasek Polak and driver Jerry Titus had captured the 1966 Sports Car Club of America Pacific Coast Championship and then went on to take the SCCA's D Production national title at the American Road Race of Champions (ARRC) in Riverside, California.

For 1967, the SCCA decided to move the new 911S model to C Production. In addition, Titus would be unable to drive for Polak due to an expanded schedule for the newly developed Trans-Am series, so he recommended Davey Jordan. In the meantime, Alan Johnson had joined Roger Bursch's team and would pilot a rival 1967 911S.

Alan Johnson (#61) and Davey Jordan (#58) drove for Roger Bursch and Vasek Polak, respectively. Polak's gamble to enter a brand-new 1968 911S didn't go as planned for the 1967 ARRC finale at Daytona (above).

Polak was an impetuous Czech and a brilliant mechanic who immigrated to the U.S. in 1951 with his toolbox. His first stop was Max Hoffman's shop in New York. Seven years later, Polak moved to Hermosa Beach, where he opened the first exclusive Porsche dealership in California. Bursch, a brilliant engineer of a far less hard-driving nature, opened his Pasadena shop, Scientific Automotive, around the same time and developed the extractor exhaust system that still bears his name.

Then there were the cars. Team owner Bob Kirby bought a red 1967 911S for Bursch and Johnson to develop for the 12 Hours of Sebring race in April. There it won both its class and the GT category, finishing ninth



Davey Jordan's relationship with Vasek Polak proved to be mutually beneficial. In early 1967, Jordan drove a modified 1967 911S for Polak that won the C Production SCCA Southern Pacific Division title (top and bottom). For Daytona's AARC national championship race on November 26, they showed up with a factory-prepared 1968 911S in Light Ivory (center).

overall. Polak's choice for the 1967 season was also a 911S. Both 911s started out stock, complete with underseal, but were soon transformed into racers with a roll bar, 15x6-inch American Mag wheels, a larger gas tank, limited-slip differential, and competition brake pads.

WITH THE GT WIN AT SEBRING in 1967, Johnson achieved some notoriety. Goal-oriented and a natural self-promoter, he would go on to manage Porsche dealerships in Monrovia, Phoenix, Scottsdale, San Diego, and Carlsbad, as well as establishing his own company, AJ-USA, in 1975.

Jordan was less flashy. He would start and end his racing career as a sheetmetal worker. "I started racing in '59 in my own 1958 Speedster, just for one race to see what it was like," he recalls. His first drive for Polak was in 1964, when he piloted a Porsche RS60 that was having trouble beating a well-driven Lotus 23.

At the time, Jordan told Polak, "If we can't make this car any better, then I don't want to drive it." The notoriously stubborn Polak replied, "Goodbye, Davey." That was the last time Jordan gave an ultimatum to the Czech. The dismissed driver went on to drive a 904 and 906 for Otto Zipper in 1965 and 1966.

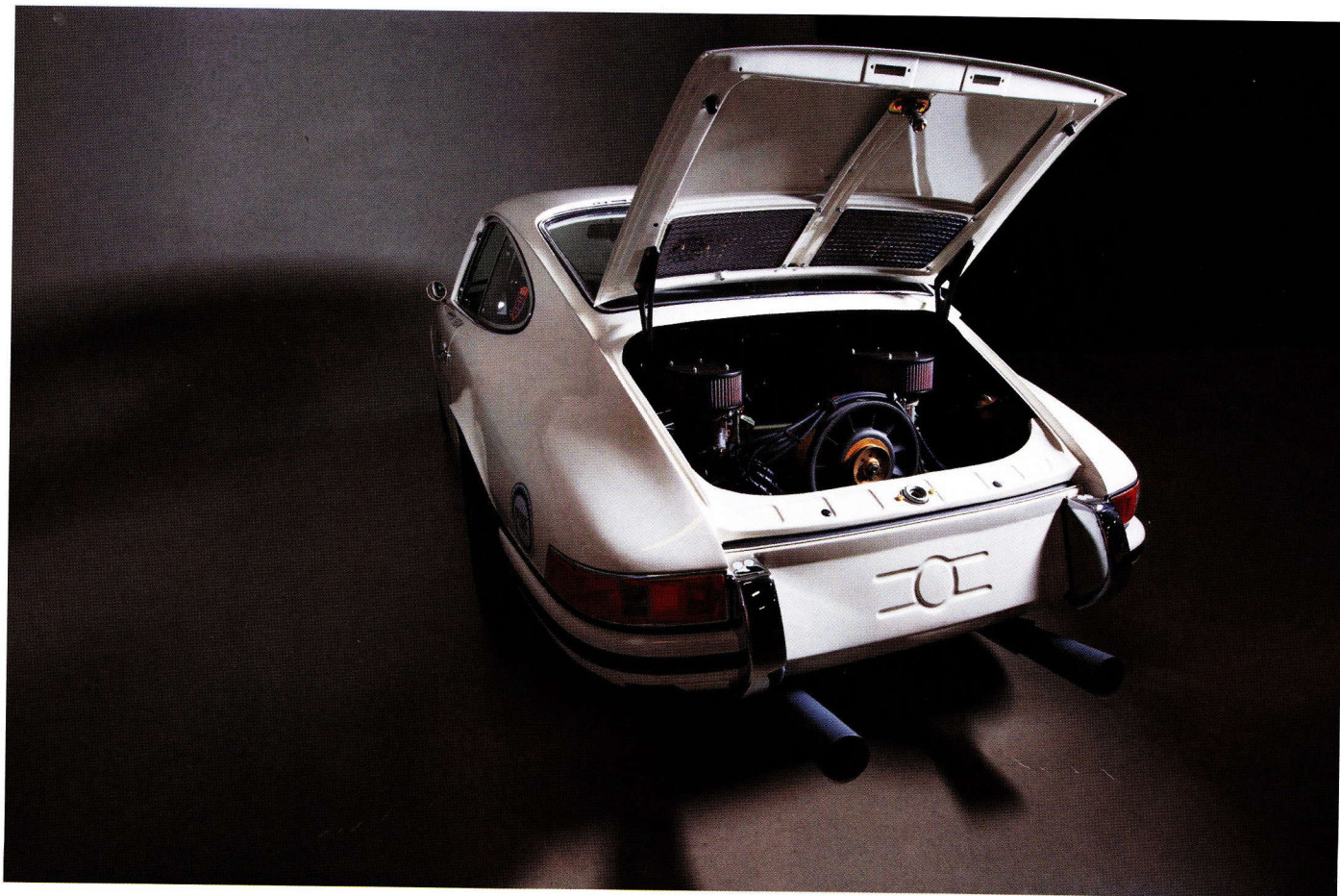
When Polak asked Jordan to drive again in 1967, he said yes and kept his mouth shut. Polak took a Light Ivory 1967 911S off the showroom floor and gave it to Jordan to break in for a week. The next time Jordan saw the car, it was at Willow Springs Raceway, painted silver and with Polak's livery.

"Vasek and I would fly to some of the events," recalls Jordan. "I am the type of person who likes to leave for the airport early and have plenty of time for parking and checking in. Vasek was the exact opposite. I would be waiting at the plane being boarded, afraid we might miss our flight. My tireless boss would come bustling by with his tie flying and suit coat flapping, duffel bag in hand. He would always say the same thing, 'Davey, hurry, we must run,' while he passed me at full speed."

THE POLAK/JORDAN 911S was the class of C Production in 1967, with twelve wins, three second-place finishes, a third, and three DNFs. Johnson, meanwhile, competed in eleven regional and national SCCA C Production races that year. At the two races where they met, Laguna Seca and Santa Barbara, Johnson finished slightly higher than Jordan. Nevertheless, by October, Jordan had managed to chalk up enough points to clinch the SCCA Southern Pacific Division Championship.

Because of their high finishes, Jordan and Johnson were invited, along with 37 other entries, to attend the year-end ARRC/SCCA amateur runoffs in Daytona Beach, Florida. This final race of the season was to be held on the fabled 3.1-mile "roval" layout, complete with oval banking and infield esses.

In an effort to secure a second consecutive SCCA



national championship, the determined Polak asked Porsche to build the best FIA-legal sports purpose car it could. To that end, a special-order 1968 Light Ivory 911S left the factory for California on September 23, 1967. It carried a list price of \$6,637.42.

That 911S, chassis number 11800208, may be one of only two such models imported to the U.S. from new, as the 1968 911S did not meet U.S. emissions regulations and thus was not sold here. Team owner Roger Bursch and driver Alan Johnson also received one of the European-market 1968 911S coupes, but not in time for the 1967 Daytona race.

Straight out of the box, the Light Ivory 1968 911S wearing #58 seemed faster than the team's 1967 911S.



Chassis 11800208 had the latest sports purpose items installed when it came off the line in September 1967. Both the Rallye Kit and Sport-Kit 2 were added to the lightweight chassis.

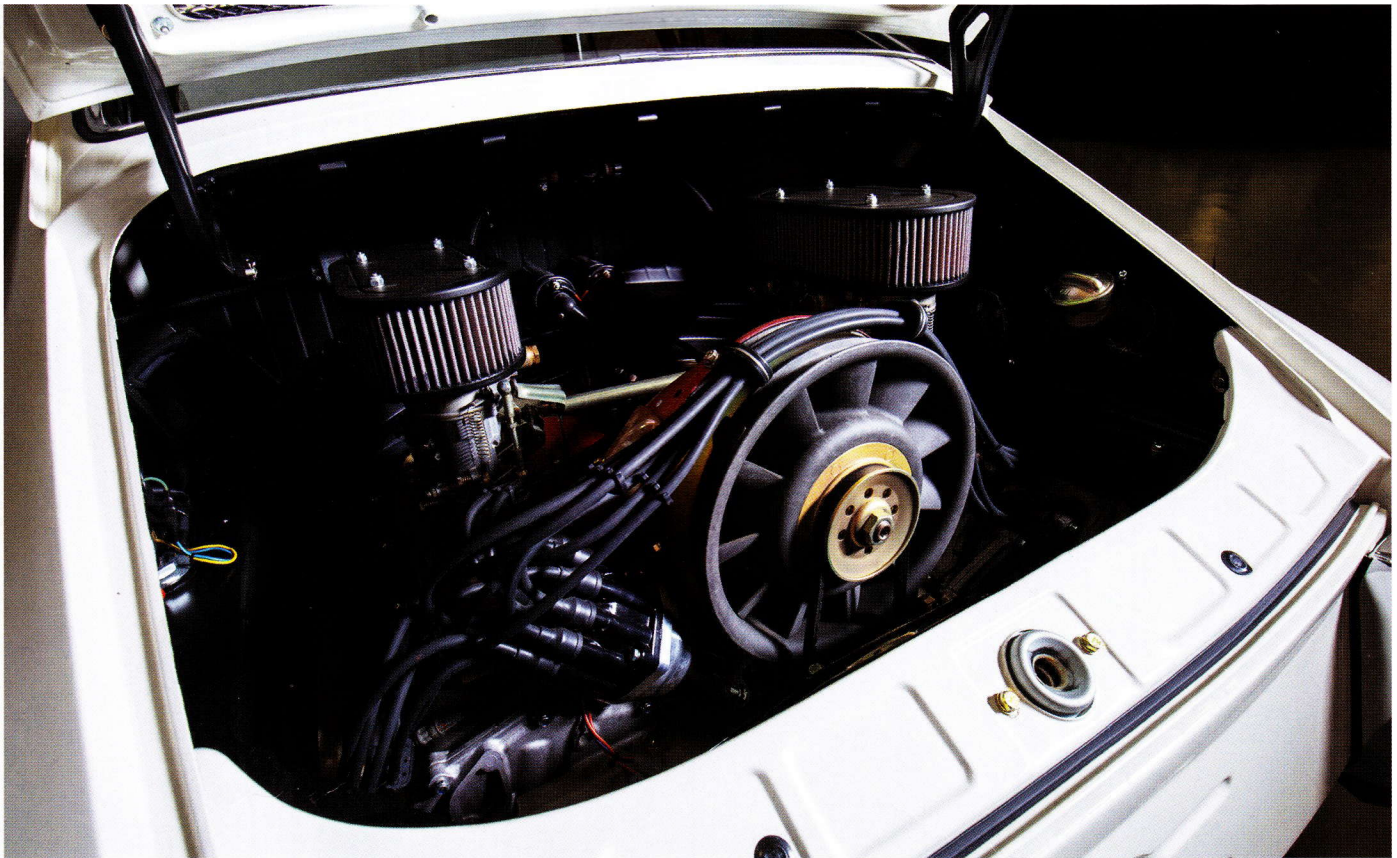
In fact, there were several characteristics of the new factory race car that were appealing. It came with Koni shocks and 15-mm stabilizer bars as standard equipment. Factory options included the Rallye Kit, Sport-Kit 2, 100-liter fuel tank, limited-slip differential, roll bar, and lowered suspension.

The Rallye Kit option included a lightened front bumper, rubber floor mats, a dead pedal, racing brake pads, a competition clutch, special spark plug caps, a unique alternator, and engine modifications such as polishing and port matching of the intake manifolds and cylinder heads.

The Sport-Kit 2 consisted of larger carburetor jets and venturis, velocity stacks, rain shields, an oil collection bottle, and megaphone exhausts. With no underseal, carpet, or sound-deadening and a cabin stripped of all unnecessary components, the 1968 911S weighed only 2,060 pounds, compared to 2,150 for the 1967 model.

WHEN THE TWO California teams showed up for qualifying at Daytona, the cars looked similar right down to their 15x8.30 Goodyear "Blue Streak" racing tires mounted on 15x6 American Racing magnesium wheels. But each team's approach to this new-to-them track couldn't have been more different.

"When we received our entry, we learned that for this



race a different track configuration would be used," remembers Johnson. "The start/finish line would be at the same spot, but we would be running clockwise. And, after going through the full east banking and halfway down the back straight, we would be entering the infield. There was a slight corner off the back straight and then just three basic infield corners, the last one a right-hand, opening-radius corner leading up onto the banking just before the start/finish line. It looked to us that more than two-thirds of the course would be flat-out, so we decided that the car with the best top speed would have the best chance of winning."

Another choice Johnson and Bursch made was to tune the car with the best gasoline available. "We brought our own gas with us to Daytona," says Johnson. "Our experience from Sebring earlier in the year had shown us that the fuel available in Florida was different from what was in California."

In addition, Bursch enlisted the guidance of Daytona legend Smokey Yunick, who advised taping any area that might cause drag at high speed. Jordan remembers that his rivals waited until the last minute to tape the headlights, front bumper, and windshield. When Jordan asked Polak if their team should do the same, the intractable Czech said no.

In contrast to the efforts of Bursch and Johnson, Polak and Jordan made minimal changes to their brand-new 911S, which was guaranteed to be race-ready from

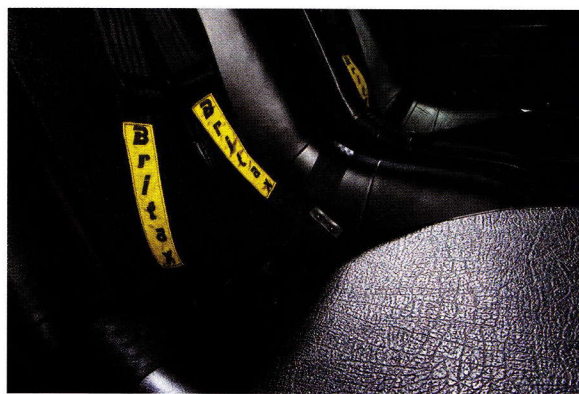
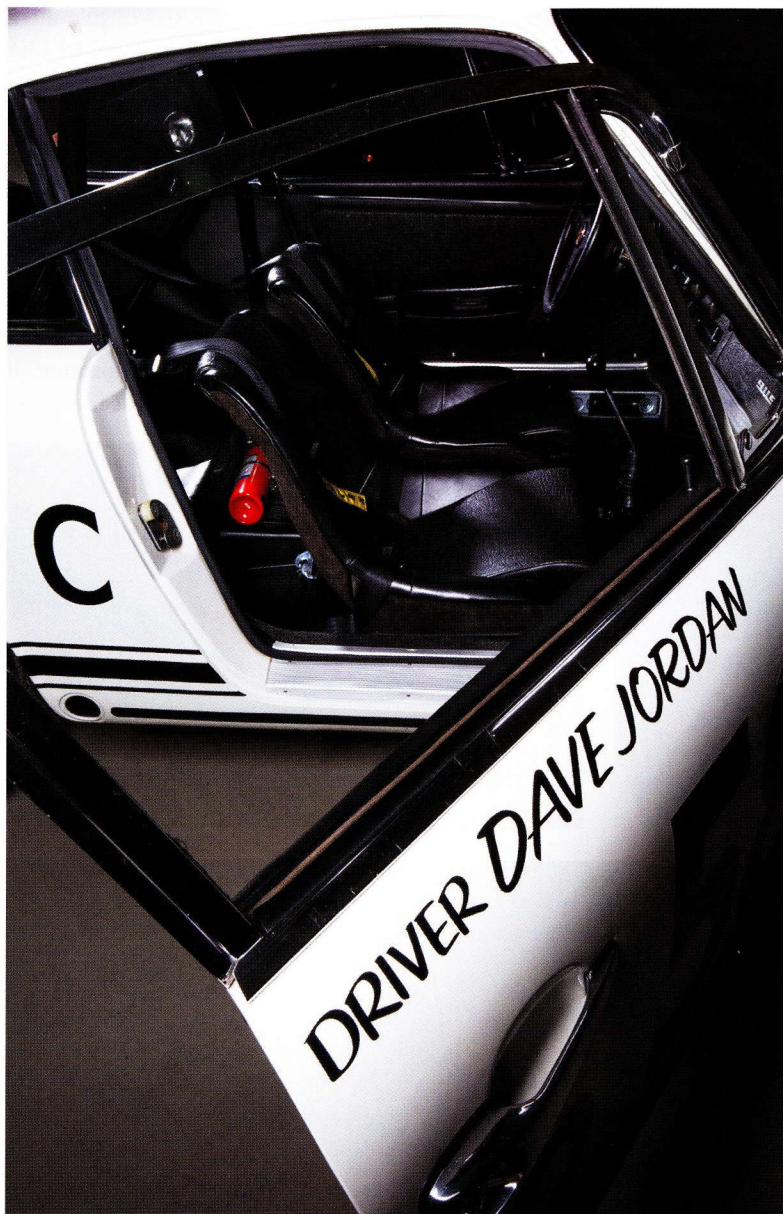
The factory kits converted the stock 2.0-liter 911S engine for competition with new carburetors, velocity stacks, and port matched manifolds and cylinder heads.

Porsche. It was delivered with super-close "airport" gear ratios, but we have to assume these were changed for a course that was more like the Nürburgring and other high-speed circuits. Mechanic Dieter Schoepflin trailered the coupe from Hermosa Beach and prepared it with different carburetor venturis, jets, and engine camshafts borrowed from race car driver Richie Ginther. "We could have changed any of the gears at the track, too," reports Schoepflin. "But nobody ever told me to do that."

In qualifying, the two drivers both averaged 98 mph and were tied for the pole position. Mistakenly, Jordan never attempted to pass Johnson, and consequently never knew if he was holding back. But Jordan was aware that fifth gear seemed too short for Daytona and complained to Polak about it. According to Jordan, the old man just shrugged.

At the rolling start, Johnson took the lead on the first straight and never gave it up. Jordan would get close in the infield and then Johnson would pull away by up to 15 car lengths on the straight. Jordan was running the engine at 8700 rpm on the straights, 700 rpm higher than he ever had, just to keep up. That went on for 24 laps. Jordan's engine didn't blow and he finished second, eight seconds behind Johnson.

The required teardown at tech inspection was watched closely by Polak, who was sure the winning car had an illegal engine. Johnson made a point of requesting that the inspectors not allow anyone to see the engine



apart. Polak stood about 20 feet away, hoping something illegal would be discovered, but the Bursch/Johnson entry passed inspection.

Decades later, early 911 enthusiast Chuck Miller was at one of Jordan's annual barbecues, and Roger Bursch was also there. "Roger had become a good friend of Davey's," says Miller. "We were at a picnic table inside the garage, eating chili and drinking beer, and the discussion eventually led to the Daytona race. Davey said, 'Yeah, we had a gearing issue.' Then Roger reached for his wallet and pulled out this old piece of paper. It was the gear chart he used for Daytona in 1967! By then, everybody knew that Roger bought the very highest gear Porsche ever made for that one race."

"DAYTONA WOULD BE MY LAST RACE for Vasek for a while," says Jordan. "I had signed a contract with Shelby

Porsche installed a roll bar for this special-order 911S, which features "elephant hide" upholstery. What it didn't add was a gearset for high-speed circuits.

American to race the new Toyota 2000GT in C Production, and Milt Minter had agreed to fill my seat in Vasek's 911 for the first half of 1968." That was also the last time Jordan drove Polak's 1968 911S. Yet, according to Jordan, it's still the best 911 he's ever raced.

Meanwhile, Johnson and his victorious red 1967 911S adorned a full-page Union 76 ad in car magazines for months after the Daytona win. Johnson and Bursch won the C Production title again in 1968 with their special-ordered 1968 911S sponsored by Don Burns.

Unfortunately, after 1969, the narrow-bodied 911 was no longer competitive in SCCA events and was disallowed in the Trans-Am series. The future of Porsche racing needed to make way for the faster 911 ST, 911 RS, and 911 RSR, and the old cars were often discarded. Polak's 1967 911S and Bursch's 1968 911S have since gone missing.

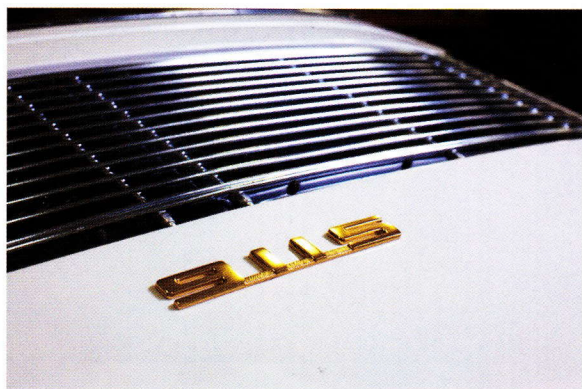
Fortunately, the Polak/Jordan 1968 911S, chassis 11800208, remains in pristine form. Porsche writer Dave Conklin tells us how this came about: “[In the spring of ’68], a frustrated amateur Alfa Romeo racer walked into the Vasek Polak dealership and proclaimed that he was tired of getting beaten by Porsches, and he wanted to buy a factory-prepped racing car. To his surprise, [there was one on the showroom floor] that had been raced only once.... By the end of the day, Timothy Startup of Rockford, Illinois had his racing car for the 1968 season.”

Unfortunately, at one of Startup’s first races in Marlboro, Maryland, the 2.0-liter engine blew up. “I flew back

Now fully restored, this rare Euro-only U.S.-imported 911S proudly wears its period badging, graphics, decals, and factory fender-fill 100-liter gas tank.

out to California and demanded that Vasek give me a new engine,” Startup told Conklin. “I assumed that he had swapped the good race engine out and given me a worn-out engine.” It would be 45 years before he found out about the harsh treatment the engine had endured during its one prior race.

After a couple of seasons, and an eighth-place finish at the 1968 ARRC Runoffs in Riverside, Startup sold the car to Pride Motors Inc. of Wisconsin. It sat there for just one month before Gerald Frydenlund traded in his 1961 356 Roadster for the still intact race car in March of 1970. Frydenlund raced the 911S for a short period and then put it in storage for the next four decades.



WHEN DON AHEARN, a vintage Porsche collector, racer, and dealer from Long Island, New York, found the car in 2010, it had a few modifications. The twin-plug 2.0-liter flat six was built on a blank factory crankcase. Other non-original components included modern air filters, a front oil cooler, a fuel cell, and a fire-suppression system. There were also “bump” flares on the rear bodywork. But he recognized how rare this Euro race car was and bought it on sight. Dave Hammers from Werks 1 in nearby Seacliff was enlisted to go over the mechanicals while Ahearn searched for the missing pieces.

Among the pieces Ahearn added was a pair of rare GT seats like the ones he had seen in photos of the



Like Polak, Johnson (right) became a celebrated U.S. Porsche dealer, thanks to his racing history, hard work, and good fortune.



1967 SCCA Class C Production Champion Alan Johnson knows that Royal 76 is

powerful enough to make a difference

Alan Johnson and Roger Bursch took no chances on gasoline for their Porsche 911 S in the 1967 American Road Race of Champions. They took Union Oil's Royal 76 premium with them—all the way from California to Daytona Beach. Why Royal 76? Winner Alan Johnson puts it this way, "Roger and I have experimented with a lot of gasolines in the years we've been racing together. We learned by experience that Royal 76 works better—delivers maximum power, mileage and performance." Royal 76, a balanced blend of eight powerful fuels, reaches the same gasoline you get at any Union Oil station. Exactly the same gasoline that won the Can-Am series at Monterey—at Riverside—at St. Louis. Why not try a tankful of championship performance in your car?

UNI 76 N

Bursch/Johnson 1968 911S. The seats had the correct elephant hide upholstery and were already on Ahearn's shelf, having been purchased in California years earlier in the hopes that a suitable project would come along.

After applying an exact reproduction of the original livery, Ahearn sold chassis 11800208 to John Binion of Austin, Texas in 2013. Binion made the decision to treat the car to a high-level preservation/restoration at Canepa in Scotts Valley, California. In the process, all mechanicals, from the brakes to the steering linkage, were disassembled and rebuilt as needed. The underside and front trunk were media-blasted and repainted to factory standards, the engine and transmission were resealed, and every bolt, washer, and nut was replated or appropriately refinished.

Unveiled at PCA's 2014 Werks Reunion in Monterey, chassis 11800208 was again race-ready, with only 16,000 original miles on the clock. It quickly attracted a crowd of appreciative onlookers with its sympathetic restoration and unique history. There, it won the Sonderwunsch, Special Interest/Modified class trophy. Binion has been taking it to events ever since for people to see.

IT'S A SMALL WORLD, and the Porsche community is even smaller. Perhaps this story is a lesson in humility and the importance of life after racing. Johnson went on to become a board member of the San Diego Automotive Museum. Jordan and his wife, Norma, contribute to the Riverside International Automotive Museum to this day.

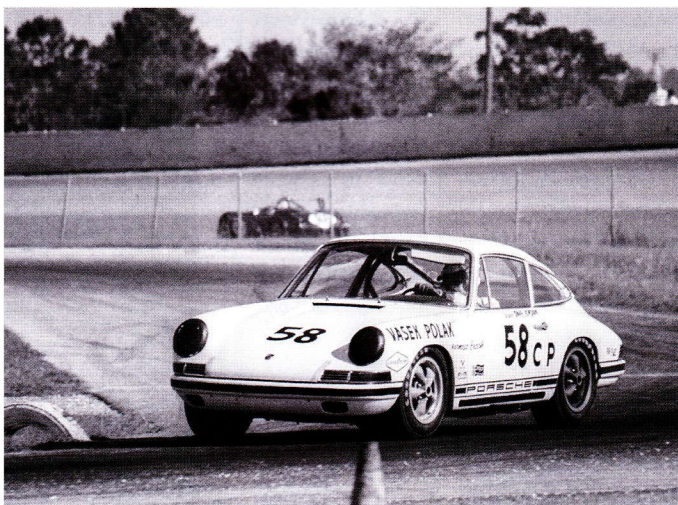


PHOTO JOHN WILSON



Both men were goal driven, but in different ways. Bashful or brazen, they were destined to meet on a path that brought them to the extreme edge of competition. "We never touched cars that I can remember," says Jordan. "Alan raced me clean."

The Vasek Polak 1968 911S was, for all purposes, a "one-hit wonder." It did not compete in the Trans-Am series like many other racing 911s of the day, and its subsequent owners protected it from any major modifi-

Jordan reflects on his past success in motorsports. The "one that got away" serves as a reminder of the fickleness of racing.

cations. Like Davey Jordan, it remains an unsung hero and a reminder of the fickleness of racing. Both Polak and Bursch have passed away, but Jordan and Johnson are still with us to tell the vivid story that neither man has forgotten.

Survivors all, Johnson, Jordan, and the 1968 911S we see here have their own stories to tell. Yet, on that one day in November of 1967, they were brought together to take their place in Porsche racing history. ●

