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# American Racers

A tale of two racers: Former Trans-Am and C Production 911s

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVID CONKLIN

**P**oised in the gravel lot with their megaphone exhausts burbling, the two early 911s look like they could be in the paddock of some long lost racing circuit. The white 1968 911 S tugs at my heart because of its famous Vasek livery and indisputable Daytona history. The menacing blue 1967 “normal” has a more modest yet still impressive racing provenance but a little more originality. I focus on the pair through my telephoto lens, willing the pregnant rain clouds to part and offer up just a little sunshine to warm the cold Long Island morning. While waiting, my imagination conjures up one

of my pitifully modest fantasies. Given the choice, which one would I take home? Yep, even in my fantasies, I can’t imagine having both of them.

As decisions go, this would be a tough one. Setting color and details to the side, these cars are very similar in philosophy as well as in history. Each was what is often referred to as a factory-built “Sports Purposes” car. Both raced in the SCCA Trans-Am and C Production series when new, and both were campaigned in the Midwest and West Coast during the late ’60s. Even more coincidentally, both cars were later purchased by the same enthu-

siast, enjoyed for a short time and then stashed away for roughly forty years before being discovered by Don Ahearn of Long Island, New York.

The similarities continue. The cars have both found new homes with caretakers who each owned late-model Porsches before being bitten by the early 911 bug. Both of them bought ’67 S coupes as their first early 911, and both of them were considering purchasing a ’73 Carrera RS before buying these fantastic old race cars. The coincidences are kinda freaky, actually.

Yet, each of these cars should stand on its own merits, so let’s take a closer look.









## The Blue '67 911

In 1958, Erhard Dahm and his wife emigrated from Germany to America. A racing and sports car enthusiast, Dahm opened a pair of small filling stations that morphed into a bustling BMW dealership. It remains one of the most respected in Michigan today. Bavarian sedans were not the only thing he sold, though. Porsches were added, which played right into Erhard's affinity for racing. His first racing car was a VW Beetle with a 356 powerplant. "It was fast, but too heavy in the rear end," explains Erhard. A 356 Speedster was found to be much more suited for racing, but better things were to come.

In January of 1967, Erhard inquired Porsche of America about ordering a 911 specially outfitted for racing. The response came from Mr. Herbert Dramm, general service manager of Porsche of America.

"Please fill in regular car order form for your racing 911 and submit it to our Midwest Zone Office for immediate handling. Mark your order *Wettbewerbsfahrzeug fuer Trans-Am Rennen*. (Competition car for Trans-Am race)." Mr. Dramm continued to instruct Dahm on what options to specify, even suggesting that "transmission 901/54 is the most versatile one for all races." Retail price was estimated between \$6,100 and \$6,200. Yes, those were different times!

Mr. Dahm proceeded to order a Sports-Purpose dream car. His "Trans-Am" car would be equipped with rallye-kit, roll bar, special fuel tank, limited slip differential, leather steering wheel, Talbot mirrors L/R, 911 S instrumentation, airport gear ratios, and "Horsepower Increase of Engine," which was most likely what we now know as Sport-Kit II. As if all this hardware weren't enough, he selected color #6604, a wonderfully muted shade of blue called "Aga."

Is this the early 911 equivalent to a supermodel? Heck, this car was Elle MacPherson with a bottle of 10-year-old Macallan in one hand and a coffee-rubbed steak in the other. So much for those modest fantasies...okay, where were we?

Once the car arrived in Michigan, Dahm and one of his mechanics, a fellow German by the name of Bernd Leckow, campaigned the car at a couple races at Marlboro. Dahm recalls that one of his favorite period photos was of him in the 911 passing a Cobra in the middle of a corner at Marlboro. "It was a quick little car!"

Before long, though, he decided that "business came first and fun came second" and sold the 911 to Leckow, who was already racing an NSU in the SCCA Trans-Am series. Leckow switched to the 911 mid-season with good results in the Under 2-Liter class. Some highlights were a second place at the Riverside Trans-Am race in September '67, followed a few weeks later with a third-place finish in the Stardust 400 in Las Vegas, Nevada, and another at Kent, Washington. The Aga Blue 911 sporting racing #77 even ended up on the back cover of a period brochure published by Porsche entitled, "Auto Racing: By the Letters & the Numbers."

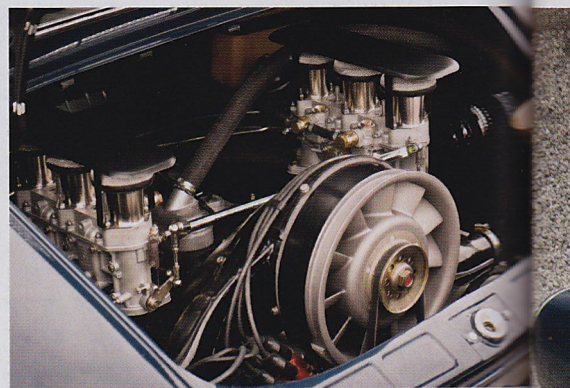
Leckow tells a great story about the Stardust race. "During practice, I was at the end of a long straight when Parnelli Jones missed his braking point and hit me from behind."

Jones' Mercury Cougar punted the smaller 911 off of the track where it flipped upside down in the soft sand that made up the infield of this desert track. Leckow awoke in the hospital to learn that while unconscious he had been dug out of the sand by onlookers. After being checked out by the doctors, he returned to the track to find that some locals who owned a body shop had straightened the roof out and that his two crewmembers had the engine removed and were sorting out a jumped timing chain. After an all-night repair session, the engine was back in and the car was ready to go...with one exception.

"The windshield and back window had both been busted out, so we went to the parking lot, found another 911 and took the windows out of it. We left a note on the seat explaining what had happened and telling them where to go in the pits to find us. People were a lot friendlier then!"

Leckow started the race near the back of the pack, having had very little time to practice. Making things more complicated, the race started late in the afternoon due to the Las Vegas heat and ran well into the dark. The darkness and lack of familiarity with the course meant that Leckow had to drive slowly for the first half until he began to learn the circuit. Before long, Parnelli lapped him. The earlier accident, combined with the frustration of having to drive slower than he was accustomed to, resulted in a questionable split-second decision.

"Parnelli Jones came by and I just hit him in the rear corner, forcing him off track, caving in the rear corner and cutting his tire! Later, after they handed out the prize money, Parnelli called me over and asked if I was the rookie who hit him. He called me a crazy German and a few other things that I don't remember, and I thought it might lead to something more serious. We exchanged words but resolved things, and it ended up that we became



Amazingly the Aga Blue '67, which was outfitted as a competition car for Trans-Am use, retains its original race-prepared engine that was built on a '67 standard 901/06 engine case. Talbot mirrors were factory installed on both front fenders instead of the typical door-mounted mirror. The dash and gauges are original to the car and have likely never been removed. The odometer reads 17,479 miles.



respected friends. I could always walk up to Parnelli and Gurney and those guys after that and be welcomed."

Lekow sold the car in April of 1969 to Gerald Frydenlund, but teamed up with him for a few more Trans-Am races, including a second in class at St Jovite, before retiring it from racing and using it as a street car for a short time. Then, curiously in the early '70s, Frydenlund put #308162 into storage...for a long time!

els were inexplicably imported into the USA for a select few "favored" race teams. Now, the "S" wasn't a legal production car in the U.S., so we can assume that a fair bit of skullduggery was involved in getting the cars past government officials. Due to their questionable legality, one must wonder if they were even kosher to be raced as production cars. Legal or not, Vasek Polak, Alan Johnson, Don Pike and perhaps one

option modified the engine with larger carburetor venturies, different jetting and spark plugs, and a firewall-mounted oil collection bottle. The air cleaners were replaced with simple rain shields perched over the velocity stacks, and the muffler was replaced with straight-through megaphone exhausts. Porsche claimed a 15-hp increase with Sport-Kit II.

However, before you could order the Sport-Kit, you were required to order what



### The White 1968 911 S

"That white Daytona car was the best 911 S that I raced. I'm happy that it still exists."

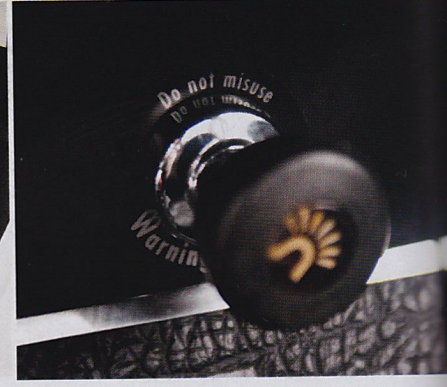
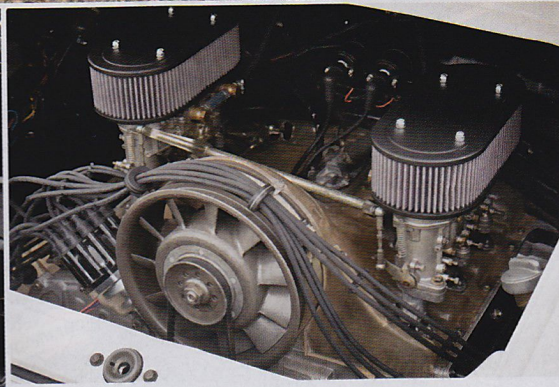
Strong praise indeed coming from Davey Jordan, the driver who pedaled Vasek Polak's #11800208 around the Daytona International Speedway to a second-place finish in the 1967 SCCA Finals. In late summer of 1967, a small handful of brand-new 1968 911 S mod-

other team had themselves some pretty sweet racing cars for the '68 season.

Vasek and his main driver, Davey Jordan, had already racked up a pretty successful season with their silver '67 911. This white '68, a textbook "unfair advantage," promised to expand that success going forward. Car #11800208 was equipped with what is now a fantasy list of factory options. Primary in the option list was the Sport-Kit II. This \$115.00 competition

was called the "Rallye-Kit" option. Checking this box netted your choice of Recaro buckets or "Speedster style" competition seats. Rubber floor mats replaced the carpeting, and a foot rest was welded to the left-hand footwell. Larger 15mm front/16mm rear stabilizer bars were installed along with Koni adjustable shocks, racing brake pads and special Dunlop SP tires. To lighten the car, the front bumper weights were removed along





with the Webasto gas heater. Perhaps the most important components of the Rallye-Kit were the engine modifications comprised of polishing and port matching of the intake manifolds and cylinder heads, a competition clutch, special spark plug caps, and a special alternator.

As if all of this were not enough, additional boxes were ticked authorizing a 100-liter racing fuel tank, roll bar, limited slip differential and special *Flugplatzubers* or what we would call “airport gears.” These super-close-ratio gears will become very important later in our story. Oh, and in case you are wondering, the Rallye-Kit was a no-charge option in 1968. Talk about a value-added option!

The car hit American shores in September of 1967, so very little time was

had for preparation before shipping it to Daytona Beach to compete in the SCCA finals at Daytona International Speedway in November. Race prep was likely limited to the hand-lettered racing livery and the installation of a set of 6.0-in. magnesium American Racing wheels.

Once in Daytona, Jordan qualified the car on the pole for the C Production Championship race...but not without problems. Jordan recalls, “The engine went through a lot of stress at the Daytona race, as we had too low of a 5th gear and it turned 8700 rpm every lap on the Daytona straight—700 revs more than we normally used. I told Vasek that the gear was too low after the first practice, but he just shrugged his shoulders.”

The gearing would be their undoing,

and they would lose the race to Alan Johnson in his '67 911. “I decided to hold the throttle wide open regardless of the rpm. If we had [swapped to] a taller 5th gear, we might have been able to beat Alan Johnson for the championship, although his car was beautifully prepared by Roger Bursch and was very fast! After the race Alan came over and said he was picking up two seconds a lap on the straight, and I was getting the two seconds back on the infield.”

Three months later a frustrated amateur Alfa Romeo racer from Illinois 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, right in the middle of the showroom was a white '68 S that had been raced only once. Vasek



put the young man in the passenger seat, threw open the doors of the dealership, and off they sped for a quick test drive that would seal the deal. By the end of the day, Timothy Startup of Rockford, Illinois, had his racing car for 1968.

Startup's happiness was short-lived: At one of his first races at Marlboro, Maryland, the 2.0-liter exploded spectacularly and catastrophically. "I flew back out to California and demanded that Vasek give me a new engine. I assumed that he had swapped the good race engine out and given me a worn-out engine." It was 45 years before Tim learned the truth about how his engine had been treated during that one race before he purchased it.

Startup raced the car with modest success for a couple of seasons. In February of 1970, the 911 was sold to Pride Motors Inc. in Wisconsin, where it rested for only a month before the very same Gerald Frydenlund as was involved in the Aga Blue '67 traded a '61 356 Roadster towards the rather impressive \$5,295 price tag. Mr. Frydenlund was a very detail oriented person, listing all of the additional

**Ex-SCCA racer sports incredibly rare Speedster-style race seats with very early '68 S-only "Elephant Hide" vinyl. Most works race cars in '68 were built from 911 Ts. The 2.0-liter twin-plug engine is a later addition; the original motor expired early in 1968. "Do not misuse" is an appropriate warning for the entire car, not just the emergency flasher.**

parts that came with the car—several gearsets, seven additional mag wheels, jets, venturies, etc. Frydenlund apparently raced the car for a short period in the early '70s and then put it into storage, where it would stay parked next to the blue '67 for nearly 40 years, the disuse likely saving them both from the "updating" and general abuse that happened to most old race cars.

## Modern Times

Stepping forward several decades finds us in 2010. Don Ahearn, a rabid collector of everything vintage Porsche, gets a lead from one of his contacts about a ratty but complete '67 911 race car that might be available for purchase. Don finds this

intriguing, because his specialty is pre-'69 short wheelbase Sports-Purpose cars. He has a knack for finding long-lost but significant short wheelbase race cars and returning them to their original glory. In fact, the list currently stands at nine factory-built SWB Sports-Purpose cars he has unearthed and returned to the hobby.

One look at the blue '67 and Don knew that he had to own the car. A deal was arranged with Mr. Frydenlund, the very same fellow who had mothballed the car in the early '70s, and the car was shipped down to Florida where Klub-Sport racing would give it a sympathetic restoration, retaining as much of the original car as possible. As had been the style in the late '60s, the rear flares had been widened in a rather amateurish fashion. The flares were retained but tidied up and made more presentable. A fresh coat of Aga Blue was applied to the car, but great effort was made to make it accurate for the era—smooth but not polished to a mirror and buried under numerous coats of clear. In other words, not over-restored.

All of the instruments, trim and other fittings are original to the car, validating the original mileage of 17,400. Even more amazing than the ultra-low mileage is that the original engine and transmission remain in the car, making it one of the most unusual 45-year-old racing Porsches left in the world.

As the restoration was being performed on the blue car, Don's "source" was telling him that Mr. Frydenlund had a similar car—this one white—in the same storage where the blue car was found. Supposedly the car had California racing history, but the story was pretty murky. The white car had been updated a bit with a more modern-spec twin-plug 2.0-liter engine, front oil cooler and a modern fuel cell and fire suppression system. Aside from these updates the car was mostly unmolested, so Don decided to purchase it as well and determine the full history later.

Very little work was needed to bring the white car to the state it is here. Some paint touch-up was performed before the Vasek livery was applied. Dave Hammers from Werks 1 in Seacliff, New York, was called in to do the mechanical sorting. Other than that, it was just a case of buying new tires, finding a few critical missing parts, and hopefully determining the actual history of the car.

One of the big motivating factors for

buying the car was the perfect '68 S only "elephant hide" interior that remained in the car. The interior was complete with one major exception—the rare factory Speedster-style racing seats were missing. Now, remember, no '68 911 S models were imported to the U.S. with the exception of likely two of these quasi-factory racing cars. Where would Don ever find a pair of Speedster-style racing seats with original elephant hide upholstery? Incredibly, a pair was already on his shelf, having been purchased in California several years earlier in the hopes that a project would come along that would suit them. What's the chance, right? In fact, how much of a leap of faith is it to assume that these may likely be the very seats that had gone missing from this car?

Noted on the title of the mystery '68 was the name of the previous owner, the aforementioned Tim Startup. A factory Kardex was sourced for the car, which also references Tim Startup and an address in Rockford, Illinois. Searches for Mr. Startup eventually led to a small wood-working business in Wisconsin. Hoping that this was the correct person, a message was sent, followed by a phone call: The mystery of the '68 S was solved as Mr. Startup recounted his shopping trip to Vasek's dealership and his subsequent racing history with the car.

Restoration of the two cars was wrapped up at nearly the same time. Shortly after these photos were taken, the cars headed to their new caretakers, the blue car to Ohio and the white car to Texas. Both of the new owners are ecstatic about their Porsches. When asked how he could bear to sell such great cars, Don responded, "It's all about the treasure hunt for me. There are still great cars out there, tucked away and waiting to be discovered."

True to his word, not long after these cars were delivered, Don located a red '67 Trans-Am 911 that's the sister to the blue car with engine numbers only 4 digits apart. There is an old saying that goes, "Good stories come to people who can tell them." In the case of Don Ahearn, good cars come to the person who searches for them.

So, given the choice, which one would you take home with you. The blue '67 or the white '68 S? In this case, it's pure fantasy; both are already spoken for. But, like Don says, the treasures are still out there. Perhaps it's time we get up from our sofas and start searching for them. But you gotta be quick, because I am already gon.... ■