

Fill with fluids and START

By Damien Shalfoon



Some people say that the car is possibly the greatest invention of the 20th century, symbolising the need for enhanced mobility and freedom. And we all, I think, have stories of motoring adventures that form a memorable bond between man/woman and machine.

In my case the successive cars that I have been fortunate to own have overridingly provided a conduit to friendship and love – more particularly through my rewarding association with the Porsche marque and its fellowship locally and abroad.

In laying out the trail that recently took me from regular to higher octane motoring enthusiast, it is necessary to recall the summer of '93 when my dear mother and I went car shopping. Lower back pain (eventually remedied) caused her for the first time in my family's long history of genteel motoring to consider automatic transmission.

Our quest eventually led us to Great North Road where we simultaneously spotted a seductive silver form in pride of place under the high-intensity illumination of Giltrap's showroom. As our BMW turned in we were approached by the dapper Ivan Marinovich, very familiar to me through previous purchases in the days of the company's Coutts Cars incarnation.

Ivan's offer to us to drive the lovely new 911 Carrera 2 tip-tronic quickly turned into a flurry of activity, followed by the air-cooled basso profundo sound of the 911's flat six as we departed the showroom for a life-changing experience. And whilst I've locked away my thesaurus, I have to tell you that I always considered some of my predecessor cars (examples: Lotus +2S130 and BMW Motorsport) to be reasonably well screwed together and road-tight. However, I immediately sensed in the Porsche a whole new level of engineering accomplishment, unequivocally confirmed some years later in more extreme tests in other 911's at Mt Cotton, Queensland. And mother, who was unhesitatingly complicit, found the car's driving position and controls very much to her liking. I always admired her taste for style, distinction and performance - all encapsulated in the Porsche Carrera, together with exotic romance, as I later read, derived from the 1952 to 1954 Carrera Panamericana Mexico road races.

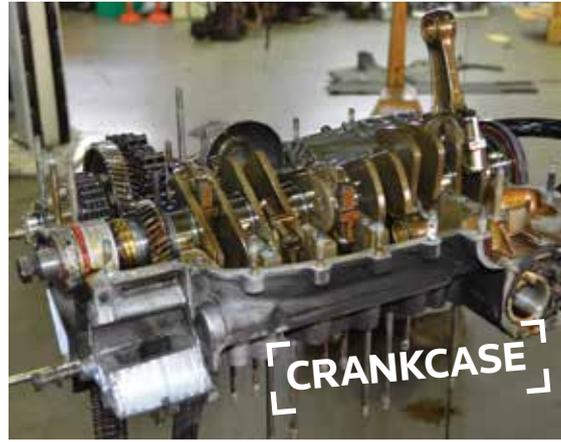
Although my family usually ordered

bespoke cars, everything about the 911, including its options, put mother and me immediately into the Goldilocks zone. And because the car's silver with black leather upholstery combination would have been our

first choice, it was not necessary to consult Goethe's *Theory of Colours*, or to even remotely consider returning the car to the ownership of the dealer. Almost from the outset it was obvious that the home for the 911 would be our home. And that was what happened. Accordingly, our BMW rapidly became the property of a South Island farmer and we set about exploring our magic carpet.

What followed were 22 trouble-free and enjoyable years of numerous club activities and other motoring adventures with mother and I, and later my darling partner Lucy, swapping seats evenly between passenger and driver, circumnavigating in all seasons





New Zealand's forests, mountains, lakes and homely riverside farms with nasturtiums and colourful washing on lines, waving at us as we sped by on warm summer days with a picnic hamper.

We enjoyed coastal roads with silent foam in the distance; glistening ski fields; cornfields flashing in the sun; stone churches with ecclesiastical fences; glades basking in dappled light; forest floors smothered in beautiful flowers; vast expanses of grazing land incorporating gorgeous villas with breezy verandas and hanging flower baskets at the end of long driveways lined with gum trees and beds of colourful standard roses.

Throughout these golden salad days I was always chivalrous to anyone who either expressed an interest in the 911, or was mildly alarmed by my sometimes sporty driving. After all, I have always taken the opportunity to share the 911 in goodwill

and to promote its marque to anyone who would share my enthusiasm.

The 911 was a semi-regular visitor to the South Island where we traversed passes, stopping once in torrential rain to assist the driver of a Mitsubishi GTO with a defunct radiator hose. Like drenched mariners we filled containers from a spontaneous waterfall to keep the Mitsi cool enough to reach the next town for repairs.

Homeward bound, the 911 was always tightly packed with bric-a-brac, mementoes and souvenirs of our travels – but not quite so tightly packed as it has often been with my full kit of Gretsch drums, cymbals and stands. And whilst the drummer/driver may have missed an occasional beat from time to time, the 911, metronomic in its performance, never has.

As some members may recall from my 911's trip to the Omapere WOTY in 2013,

the car was beflowered with a set of hippie decals which remained in place for a further two weeks, simply because the car in its psychedelic guise created so much goodwill and fun that it seemed a travesty to remove them. Whilst travelling to Napier in the still hippie-themed car, I stopped outside a vineyard to make a telephone call. Nearby, the vineyard's goat was diligently involved in its mowing duties but became deeply interested in the bright flower decals and decided to test their authenticity by placing its forelegs on the 911's front guard to sample a potential meal. Fortunately for the enterprising goat, the car's paintwork was unharmed and I dined that evening on chicken.

In fast-forwarding to the present, the 911 became due late last year for a major factory service, including its engine-out replacement of certain seals and gaskets. Whilst I could have lived for a while longer with a few intermittent cc's of oil on my garage floor, a little flywheel of enthusiasm started whirring in my chest.

In undertaking the 911's successive annual servicing, my very knowledgeable and patient engineer, Peter Booth, kept ready-to-hand a tourniquet to stem the flow of blood to my head whenever I raised the possibility of modification. To be fair, Peter's considerable expertise and advice

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about the ex-factory qualities of the 911 were sufficiently well-reasoned to subdue my enthusiasm. After all, I would not wish, as Peter cautioned, to make the car less efficient or risk no appreciable change. Besides, it was probably more economic for me to seek a short spell of remedial counselling from a specialist in petrolheadism, rather than to stand on ceremony.

However, approaching Christmas last year like a dog with a bone, I took the opportunity leading up to the car's imminent service to test Peter's resolve and was pleasantly surprised by a change in his attitude. After all, as neither the car nor its owner had ceased to age, it was now or never. And whilst there are various schools of thought pertaining to modification, please bear in mind four things: a) if necessary, certain modifications are reversible, b) my 911 is not a legacy car for family preservation, c) there would be little point in stripping the engine to remedy oil leaks without taking the opportunity to return the engine to its former unbridled glory, and d) because the clock of life is wound but once and no one knows when its hands will stop, why not have additional fun now with an indulgence?

Accordingly, days later as I sat in the dark peering into my computer screen with the combined glow of a nervously lit cigarette

IN FAST-FORWARDING TO THE PRESENT, THE 911 BECAME DUE LATE LAST YEAR FOR A MAJOR FACTORY SERVICE, INCLUDING ITS ENGINE-OUT REPLACEMENT OF CERTAIN SEALS AND GASKETS.

(for effect only – I don't smoke), three options consigned to the ether by Peter materialised to satisfy my growing mechanical thirst. Which Christmas present to myself should I select? Plan 1 (repair the oil leaks and rebuild and refresh the engine for rejuvenated performance); Plan 2 (conversion from 3.6 litres to 3.8 litres with a higher compression ratio to deliver greater mid-range torque, together with a chip and optional suspension kit); or a more radical Plan 3, the full Monty (no, not a three piece suit acquired from Montague Burton's Bradford factory of the 1930's that gave rise to the expression), but 3.8 litres plus a new intake manifold to individual throttle bodies, so that the engine would have a retro appearance and induction sound. Well, dear reader, to foreshorten any suspense, the tourniquet was partially relaxed and Plan 2 received a willing tick.

Now, as I say, down to business. In

sequencing a project of this sort it was first necessary to assemble in advance the correct "Meccano set". The list of essential parts/services (condensed from their original three page inventory) included the following: Mahle motorsport barrels, pistons and rings, new main and intermediate shaft bearings, new cam chains, exhaust guides, 993 Turbo barrel studs, cylinder heads stripped and cleaned, valve faces and seats cut, crank shaft crack tested and polished, con rods crack tested and re-aligned, centre plug from intermediate shaft removed and cleaned, oil galleries flushed, new bearings, bolts, nuts, seals, motorsport o-rings and gaskets, cam timing set with 993 cam bolts/washers, new distributor drive belt, fan and housing re-coated, new spark plugs, fluids, sealants, and an ECU chip.

The foregoing summarises what is essentially a complete re-build to higher spec

without altering the camshafts to maintain smoothness in idle and running.

In addition to the usual wheel alignment, 964 H&R front/rear springs with RS bump stops have been set up to provide a balance between improved road handling and practicality.

The car's original 16" cup rims have been retained and fitted with Michelin Pilot Sport three tyres in standard 205 and 225 sizes. And following the addition of wheel spacers, the rear track is now 50mm wider.

Overriding all of this was my flexible brief to allow Peter to re-build the engine as he saw fit without compromise. The only caveat was that we were to confer if any "big ticket" parts were considered marginal for replacement due to wear. The only item that fell into this category was the oil pump with its slowly degrading magnesium casing which, for the sake of being prudent, was replaced with a new aluminium unit.

Finally, three weeks later, with everything bolted into place, and with the little flywheel again spinning furiously in my chest, the final act of replacing all necessary fluids was completed to allow the flat six, now reborn with 12.3:1 compression, to be imperiously fired up to produce a lovely edgy sound.

Having now thoroughly enjoyed the car on long road trips, operating with turbine-like smoothness, I am more than pleased (thrilled actually!!) with my 911's overall increase

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in engine performance and road handling. Racing Ray, who recently enjoyed a turn at the wheel in a relatively benign setting, kindly gave the conversion a big "thumb's up" remarking that the Carrera's acceleration is now akin to that of his 930 Turbo in its original factory spec. After all, with an estimated 300bhp and commensurate increase in seamless torque on tap, a considerable difference can be discerned from the standard 964. And whilst such values may be academic other than on tracks, it is always useful to have defensive power and handling available.

In May 2013, after returning to my home from watching some 400 Porsches circulating at Eastern Creek in Sydney over a weekend of amazing Porsche saturation, I awoke early the next morning and opened my garage door to see the 911's familiar silhouette just visible in the breaking dawn light. My subconscious voice immediately summed up the emotion: My God, I own one.

My garage continues to be honoured by an almost immortal classic.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to his mechanical work, I wish to recognise Peter Booth's contribution to this article with valuable suggestions, explanations, photographs and captions.

I thank most gratefully Peter Stewart for recording a further photographic record of the entire process, together with his telephoned updates whenever I was unable to attend the workshop.

Lastly, I express my appreciation of the outstanding assistance and service provided by Justin Edgington of TyreLine Distributors Limited and Steve Rowe of Rowes Tyres who conjured up the exceptional Michelin tyres to suit the 911's rims.