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Road trips sparked my love of driving

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Article by David Newton

Photo by Damon Lowney

As far back as I can remember, any road trip was the source of anticipation. From a Sunday drive to a weekend excursion, there was nothing like jumping in the family Volkswagen and heading somewhere else. Before I could even conceptualize navigating a car of my own, I delighted in the possibilities it represented.

My father once told me that our VW Beetle had spawned the Porsche 356, the patriarch of the 911 Carrera. I thought he was kidding. Dad's boss often came by in his black-over-orange 1972 911 Targa, but the only connection I could make between that gorgeous creation and the rather odd-looking sedan in our driveway was a slightly familiar tone from the tailpipes.

I grew up in a modest suburban neighborhood, and the back of our house emptied into a small yard that concluded at the edge of what we referred to as The Woods – a tract of land between neighborhoods that has long since subdivided.

A path led from the fringes of our yard through the dense undergrowth, and just off the trail sat a two-toned 1962 Dodge Coronet that had long been stripped of everything valuable except its substantial steering wheel, complete with a horn that I swear was operating at some point.

Summer days would find me with my friends huddled inside that jalopy, squatting on a steel milk crate we used as a racing seat, and a length of beach-chair webbing fashioned as a racing harness (conveniently discovered in the lidless trunk).

Cruising everywhere our imagination allowed, the open road was ours. We merely picked a destination and miraculously arrived before the first of us was called to dinner. Never mind that you can't drive to Australia – at that age, we had no perception of distance and little concept of reality.

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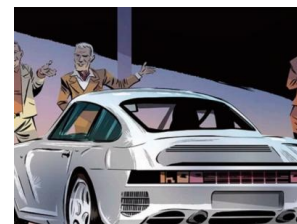
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Video by Valkyr Productions

Words by Matt Stone

Throughout my childhood, family trips and weekend escapes formed permanent memories. One summer, my parents loaded us into a rented Winnebago and took my family across the country on an unforgettable six-week vacation adventure.

Stops included the Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore, Zion National Park, Yosemite, Crater Lake, Mesa Verde, Disney Land, Sequoia National Forest, Death Valley, the Bad Lands, Yellowstone, Niagara Falls, and the Great Lakes. It's only as I list these amazing points of interest that I realize the significance of that trip on the development of my obsession with driving.

But what I remember most vividly from that trip was the incredible drive, particularly as viewed from the motorhome captain's chair, a giant windshield the only separation between me and miles of nothing but open highway and the next destination.

It wasn't until high school that I appreciated that what I drove contributed significantly to the experience. I recognized quickly that power and response subsidized the ecstasy of acceleration. The thrill of rocketing through gears from a standing start was breathtaking.

Later I learned that merging this activity with the quickness and agility of a worthy coupé on a serpentine back road was simply magical. Suddenly my interests turned from the muscle cars of the sixties and seventies to sports cars of the same era.

Initially, the ingredients of power and handling seem fundamentally opposed, but Porsche was one of those rare and exceptional brands that consistently delivered the appropriate combination of both. I grew up watching the German marque build a reputation on the track, and legend on the street.

Of the two-dozen cars I have owned in my life, my Porsches have been the hardest to keep contained. For that reason, I've never understood the mindset of collectors and owners of garage-queens – an obsession with the odometer and a fear of the elements.

Porsche embodies the spirit of the open road – it's nearly impossible to take the shortest route between any two points, whether charting a weekend adventure or navigating the daily commute. I find myself searching for other alternatives, just to add to the experience.

As an active PCA member, I've found a collection of like-minded friends who understand this very concept – that the best restaurant options are not the ones with the finest menu, a comprehensive wine cellar, or unique ambiance. They're little more than a destination at the end of the best driving routes.

Several times a year we carefully chart our trips, whether a dinner in the country or a weekend trek to a swap meet. The course requires much more than Google-mapping points A and B. And it's not unusual for the organizer to complete a trial run, if nothing but to gauge the experience.

I get the fact that the majority of drivers might view their cars as appliances – hardware representing nothing more than a means to an end. The route is therefore an unbearable annoyance, an obstruction between where they are now, and where they want to be.

But every time I climb into my Porsche, I'm reminded of what I like about driving – listening to the splendid burble when I fire up the motor, finding each gear with a flick of my wrist, searching for the apex of every corner and mashing the accelerator on the exit.

Each of these components adds immeasurably to the

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*Article by Rob Sass
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driving experience – a definition of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Driving a Porsche makes it difficult for me to think of transportation as a mechanical exercise. And when you combine this activity with a well-conceived excursion, the result is indescribably satisfying.

So I don't need much incentive to get behind the wheel of my Porsche and point it aimlessly in an ambiguous direction. Each opportunity behind the wheel presents the possibility of adventure – an incredible and memorable road trip.



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