

Simplicity Redefined

A 1957 356 COUPE
WITH ATTITUDE.

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When famed Porsche designer Harm Lagaaij described the shape of the iconic 356 as *bäuerlich* (“farmerish”) in the September 2016 issue of *Panorama*, he didn’t intend to demean the car. Rather, he was trying to put the car in its proper context. He was underscoring the fact that when the 356 was introduced, it appealed to the masses. It was simple, bordering on common, not flashy like a Ferrari. Curvy, not cut. The “bathtub” Porsche. Its timeless silhouette persevered, even as fins, flip-up headlights, and other fads came and went. ❖ Perhaps that was why this 1957 coupe seemed right at home, nestled among feral cats and cattle, at Mountain View Farm near Jay Peak, Vermont during the 2016 Parade. The barn, with its red paint faded and peeling, reflected the enduring quality of the car.



Yet there was something different about this 1600S. It had an attitude, squatting low on the gravel driveway. A gas filler cap jutted from a hole in the hood, for crying out loud. Those wheels? They weren’t original equipment. And the extractor exhaust? It hinted of something healthier beneath the engine lid. *Bäuerlich*? Yes, but reframed.

“The car makes people smile; makes people happy,” says Steve Moore, a member of the Chicago Region. “It brings back memories of simpler times.” Steve’s personal memories of Porsche reach back to his childhood. His first ride was in a 1953 Pre-A coupe that was owned by an optometrist friend of his father. As a ten-year-old, Steve fawned over his neighbor’s 1959 GS/GT Speedster, a car that was regularly raced at local tracks—and occasionally around the neighborhood.

Steve’s Porsche ownership began with the purchase of a 1967 Irish Green 912 after he graduated from Ohio State in 1970 with a degree in mechanical engineering. Porsches have remained a part of his life ever since. In addition to this ’57 coupe, ragtops are also on Steve’s radar—and in his garage. He currently owns a 1964 356C Cab, a 1983 911 SC Cab (first year for the 911 cabriolet), and a 1996 993 Cab. “I prefer to drive convertibles, but this one...” remarked Steve, as he smiled and nodded back at his silver coupe.

Steve’s purchase of this 356 emanated from a chance meeting at Road America. “I met Scott Hiss [the coupe’s former owner] while at a race up there,” begins Steve. He was not only enamored by the coupe but also by the

Steve Moore cruises the back roads near Jay Peak, Vermont. Tecno-Magnesio alloys and open-ended lugnuts shout the coupe’s sassy nature; chrome caps whisper its elegance.

tale that came with it. The thing was, Scott was not in the mood to sell. He told Steve he intended to hold onto the little coupe, to keep it in the family.

HOW SCOTT HISS got the car is another tale worth telling. He relates the story. “Jeff, a friend of mine and an eccentric fellow who would buy anything he could get a deal on, owned the coupe before me,” says Scott. “Jeff purchased the 356 from some guy he called Fast Eddie. This Fast Eddie character, deeply involved in the unlicensed pharmaceutical business, had just been busted and was in desperate need of money.” Jeff, cash in hand, took advantage of the situation.

“Now, Jeff and I were close friends, and he knew my affection for 356s,” continues Scott. “So he sold me the car for \$5,000. I don’t recall the exact year, sometime in the mid ’80s, but I do remember it was late November. Snow began to fall while I was on my way home with the car.”

Scott patiently endured four months of Chicago winter, longing to take the car for a drive. “By early March, I could stand it no more. I threw some clothes in a bag, grabbed my girlfriend, and pointed the car toward Florida for the 12 Hours of Sebring. I remember two things about that trip—the car didn’t have heat, and I never shut off the car, even for gas. What a joy that drive was—hours of high-speed driving in the car of my dreams.”

So, how did Steve get his hands on the car? During the two years following their chance encounter, Steve regularly called, asking Scott to reconsider selling it.



Finally, his persistence paid off. As Steve recalls, the year was 1993. “One day while at work, I called Scott and bugged him again about selling the coupe. He finally caved. He said, ‘If you want it, the price is \$15,000.’ That was a Friday.”

It was not all milk and honey in the promised land, however. Steve had two sons in college, and the words *you don’t need another Porsche* rang in his head. Still, his mind was made up; he had to have that car.

“The next morning I drove to Scott’s business with checkbook in hand, bought the car, and drove it home,” he says. “I also bought a spare engine from him.” Although there was not a modicum of buyer’s remorse, Scott remembers having some regrets about selling the 356. “When Steve picked up the car, I will never forget thinking as he drove away that I had just turned loose the best car I ever owned.”

Because Steve thought the original engine was weak, he pulled the engine out of his 356C Cab and stuck it in the coupe. He kept it that way until 2002. “Then the darn crank broke,” laments Steve, “so the car sat in storage until 2010.”

Whether it’s the Nardi steering wheel, the custom Speedster-era seats with houndstooth insets, or the competition-style safety belts, the interior is definitely one of a kind.



DURING THAT DORMANT PERIOD, Steve considered just what to do with his car—sell it as is, bring it back to original, or... “I decided to restore it and keep it drivable. I wanted to make it a driver, but better.” His plans led to a conversation with Skip McCabe, owner of McCabe Automotive Restoration in Mundelein, Illinois. McCabe’s work has a decidedly Italian focus, dealing primarily with Ferraris.

“In late 2009, Skip called me and asked if I wanted to begin the restoration,” says Steve. “The Ferrari business had slowed down due to the economic debacle we faced then, and he had room, so I brought the car to his shop.”

For the next six years, the coupe was a near-permanent fixture at McCabe’s as it went through various stages of disassembly and reassembly. “Surrounded by Ferrari 275 GTBs and GTOs during its stay, a little Italian influence rubbed off on ZUFEHSE [the coupe’s nickname, as displayed on its license plate],” continues Steve. “I replaced the original steering wheel with a Nardi that I bought while at a Christmas party and bolted on those TecnoMagnesio alloy wheels that you see there. They are a bit lighter than the original steel wheels.”



Steve overlooked nothing during the restoration. He decided to replace the seats with something more supportive and substantial, something in keeping with the ongoing outlaw metamorphosis. He contacted Stefan Schleissing, owner of GTS Classic Seats, for a suitable alternative. Stefan crafts seats for all types of cars, from priceless antiques to in-your-face street rods. Steve wanted seats that were a throwback to the Speedster era—the minimally padded, narrow-at-the-hip variety.

There was a hitch in the giddy-up however. Steve needed the passenger seat to be widened to conform to the breadth and ballast of his frequent traveling companion. Up to the challenge, Stefan modified the passenger seat, adding an inch or so to the seat width. What a difference an inch made. Both seats, incorporating original German wool houndstooth and black leather, now comfortably accommodated both driver and passenger.

Facing page:
Velocity stacks
top a healthy
120-hp engine.
The St. Christo-
pher medallion
adorning the
shifter is appro-
priate—this coupe
is a long-distance
traveler.

Stefan sent along a complimentary tape measure as a quirky remembrance of the modification.

Steve is a hot rod kind of guy—75 horsepower was not going to be enough. Consequently, he added a bit more juice to his outlaw. “I purchased a 912 short block from Carquip, then added a SCAT crank, Shasta pistons, Solex PII 40 carburetors, modified cam, and Sebring exhaust.” With that, 120 healthy horses now pushed his coupe. Vic Skirmants rebuilt the transmission with a longer fourth gear so that the 356 could cruise at highway speed without distress. “70 mph at 2900 rpm all day long,” notes Steve.

THE SIX-YEAR PROJECT was nearly complete in early June 2016. Steve, eager to attend Parade and visit his son in Burlington, Vermont, chose to put off small tasks like re-installing the bumper overrides and set out with just 150 miles on his fresh restoration. Nothing like a

950-mile drive to, you know, sort everything out. The car ran flawlessly.

However, Steve did experience a hiccup while stopped for gas on the New York State Thruway. Some hooligan stole the gas cap that so prominently protruded from the hood. Realizing that his prized adornment was long gone, Steve improvised. He placed a roadside call to Robert Kann, owner of GTwerk in Los Alamitos, California for help. Robert immediately expedited a replacement cap to Steve’s son in Burlington. It arrived just in time for the final leg to Jay Peak.

The chrome axle caps, the velocity stacks, and the St. Christopher medallions on the dash and the shift knob underscore Steve Moore’s attention to detail. “My personality is in this car,” he says. “Yet I consider myself not an owner, but simply a caretaker.” This snarly, silver 1957 coupe is in pretty good hands. ☯

