



Rock-Solid Reliable

A 912 TARGA PROVIDES 50 YEARS OF FAITHFUL DAILY USE.

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In 1965, Bill Wilson was a recent college graduate with a bright future and a hankering for a sports car. But it wasn't a Porsche he coveted. You see, four years earlier, the Jaguar E-type had been introduced at the Geneva Motor Show. In the opinion of many, including Enzo Ferrari, it was "the most beautiful sports car in the world." Not only was the E-type gorgeous, it was blindingly fast for the time, with a purported top speed of 150 mph and a 0-60 time of less than seven seconds. It was also modestly priced (comparatively speaking); one could be had for less than \$6,000. ♦ So it surprised no one when, upon passing his pharmacy board exams and completing his internship, Bill parked a black 4.2-liter Jaguar E-type coupe with a contrasting tan leather interior in his driveway.

However, all that glitters was not gold. "I owned a 1965 Jaguar—a beautiful car," recalled Bill. "But it had major quality and mechanical issues." He chuckled and said he could tell Jaguar stories for hours. "One of the fan belts broke. Gosh, I hadn't had the car for more than a couple of months, and there were no spare fan belts available anywhere on the West Coast." And this: "The headliner just fell off—the rubber, fabric, everything. It just let loose." Making it worse, the nearest service was in Portland, Oregon, seven hours from Bill's home in Lewiston, Idaho.

TWO YEARS WAS ENOUGH. Although Bill briefly considered other sports cars, including Corvettes, he kept returning to Porsche. "My college fraternity brother purchased a 1964 Porsche 356 and loved his car for all the reasons I disliked the Jaguar," said Bill. "Porsche had great reviews in all the auto magazines [touting] their quality workmanship and simplicity. The Porsche name was well known for racing and superior handling." Bill

wanted a car that was not only good-looking and fun to drive, it had to be dependable. And the Porsche dealer was only a two-hour drive from home.

So he paid a visit to Bright Volkswagen on Sprague Street in Spokane, Washington to get a first-hand look at the new Porsches. Unfortunately, there were none to be seen—they had all been sold. But Dick Morgan, Bill's resourceful sales representative, had a solution. After a couple of quick calls, he arranged for Bill to see the cars of two recent customers. Glowing reports from enthusiastic owners, as well as Dick's personal assessment that the four-cylinder engine in the 912 was easy to maintain, sealed the deal. Bill did consider buying a 911 coupe—then as now, the price of Porsche options added up quickly, so the price differential was minimal with the options he wanted on his 912—but the simplicity and reliability of the 912's proven four-cylinder engine (essentially a carryover from the 356 SC) won the day. The versatility and open-air appeal of the Targa just sweetened the deal.



Above: An original option, 15-inch chrome wheels and hubcaps contrast nicely with the Targa's Burgundy Red paint. Opposite: H4s replaced the original headlights to enhance night driving.

Bill traded in his temperamental Jag and placed his order for a Burgundy Red 912 with black leatherette interior. Options added to the sales order—one loudspeaker, a wood steering wheel, ventilated chrome wheels, and Semperit tires, size 165/15—brought the final price to \$5,350. The dealer “loaned” Bill a Beetle to drive for three months, until his new car arrived on January 26, 1968. The new Porsche would not go 150 mph like the E-type, but neither would it break down and shed parts with regularity.

The car arrived in Spokane with a surprise. “I thought I was getting that removable soft rear window,

but when the car arrived, it had the new tinted glass window,” said Bill. “It was a late 1967 production car, the first hard window Targa in Spokane.” He was unfazed by this unannounced change. “It didn’t make any difference to me.”

Later, Bill added some enhancements. “I had the dealer put white Porsche stripes on the side of the car; the stripes were an option. But after they went on, I didn’t like them. I thought they made the car look like a circus wagon, so I took them back off. I also found some 15x5.5-inch Fuchs wheels and put them on, but I really prefer the look of the chrome wheels and hubcaps.”

SIX MONTHS AFTER taking delivery of his new Porsche, Bill married his wife, Kathy. They had met several years earlier, in 1962, while they both attended Oregon State University. They waited to tie the knot for several good reasons. “He had to have a sports car, and I wanted to travel in Europe before we were married,” said Kathy.

The Targa has been an integral part of the family ever since. An elementary school teacher, Kathy enlisted the help of her third-graders to decorate the Targa for the wedding. “They smeared it with maple syrup, then wrapped it up in toilet paper and sprinkled it with rice.” Although appropriately adorned for wedding festivities, the look did not last long. “We stopped at a car wash on our way to the hotel right after the reception,” recalled Bill.

Kathy used the car twice a week during the winters of 1969 and 1970 to commute to graduate school at the University of Idaho in Moscow. Her route included the infamous Old Lewiston Grade, an eight-mile tangle of curves that includes a 2,000-foot change in elevation. On one particularly snowy evening, Kathy slid off the road backwards at 10:30 at night and ran into a barbed wire fence. “A trucker who had been following me stopped to help, taking me safely to the bottom of that hill.”

Bill campaigned the Targa throughout the early 1970s, competing in PCA rallies, autocross events, and

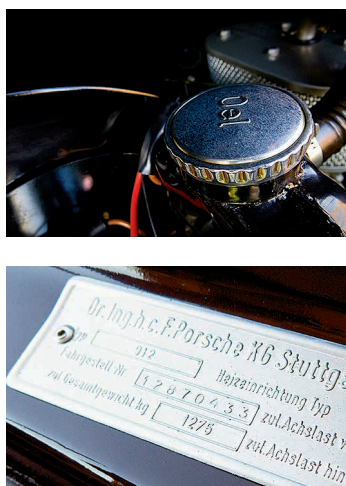
hill climbs. “Back then, SCCA ran what they called the Winchester Hill Climb, an annual event, on Winchester Hill, south of Lewiston. They would close a curvy section of highway for that event,” recalled Bill. “It was horrible, so rocky and cliffy,” added Kathy. “It was like that race in Mexico. I think they closed down the hill climb because it was so dangerous.” (The first organized road race on the old road took place in 1964; among the participants was one Robert Knievel of Butte, Montana, later known as daredevil Evel Knievel.)

Both of Kathy and Bill’s daughters were brought home from the hospital in the Targa, the first in 1972 and the second in 1974. The Targa was still in the family when the girls learned to drive. “They are both really good shifters, never an accident, never a dent.” Following the tradition established by their parents, both girls used the Targa as their “wedding car” years later.

As Bill advanced through the ranks at Payless Drugs, eventually becoming senior vice president of health services, his travel increased. The family needed another vehicle, so Bill purchased a Ford pickup. However, the Targa continued to be driven daily.

With promotions came changes of address. The Wilson family lived in nearly all of the western states, and the Targa made every move with them. When there were soccer practices to attend, Kathy would fill the small





Despite 50 years of rigorous driving and two engine rehabs, the 1.6-liter retained factory specs. With Solex 40 PII-4 dual-throat carbs, it produced 100 hp and 28 mpg.

back seat with as many nine-year-old girls as could squeeze in. “When we lived in Denver, I drove that car to work every single day,” recalled Bill.

BY 1980, AFTER more than a decade of daily use, being parked outside, getting entangled with a barbed wire fence, having a front hood dented due to an exuberant pet pooch, as well as multiple door dings, bumps, and bruises, the car was ready for rehab. It was disassembled, the interior was removed, and the engine

was pulled. While the engine was out, it was freshened and resealed. A new clutch was also installed. After the bodywork was complete and all crevices were treated with anti-rust protectant, the car was resprayed in the original Burgundy Red (6808).

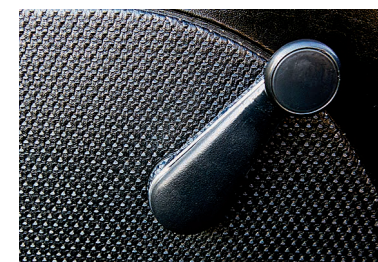
The refresh lasted for many years, but in 1997, with the 912 nearly 30 years old, the engine was pulled again. This time it got a complete rebuild by Heckmann & Thiemann Motors, a well known Porsche shop in Portland, Oregon. Resisting the urge to heat the engine up a bit,

Bill directed the shop to maintain factory specs. “We did make some updates to the car—H4 headlights, for example. Night driving was tough with the original headlights, although I did keep the original parts I replaced.”

TODAY, THE 912 is nearly 50 years old. The Wilsons have enjoyed membership in PCA’s High Desert Region for the past ten years because of all the group’s activities. “We have monthly dinners, go on tours, and learned to do the concours events,” said Kathy. At the Spokane Parade, the Wilsons competed in Preparation Class, where

the emphasis was on preparation and cleanliness. Although originality was not mandated, competing cars were to be shown and maintained in a fashion similar to original. Despite years of schoolbooks, boyfriends, and hamburgers, the interior of the Wilson family’s 912—original, by the way—was judged outstanding, receiving the maximum allowable points for the category. They were awarded first in class PP03T.

Since buying the 912, the Wilsons have become true Porsche fans, having owned five of them. They are down to “only” three now—a Cayenne, a 996 Carrera, and the



1968 was a transition year for the 912. The larger Durant side mirror, white-lettered gauges, and rubber-padded knobs, buttons, and window cranks reflect safety changes.



Bill, Kathy, and their 912—still a team after 50 years. The wood steering wheel was one of the few options Bill added to his new Porsche.

Targa. Bill and Kathy ensured that the Porsche fever passed to their daughters—they purchased a 1973 914 2.0 for them for school transportation. But the 1968 Targa remains the family favorite.

“It was, and still is, a blast to drive. It is a driver’s car. The Carrera is nice, but the Targa demands that you drive it,” said Bill. “Everything works, even after all of these years. We’ve never had a lick of problem. It was easy to work on. I have all my maintenance records, but you won’t see oil changes or valve adjustments. I did

those myself. When our daughters come home to visit, they love to hop into the car. They appreciate it.”

Kathy added, “No matter where in the country we’ve lived, we always enjoyed PCA people. Lots of camaraderie and very accepting, no matter if you have an old car or a GT3. It’s really a cross-section of people.”

Wherever they go, it’s a good bet that Bill and Kathy Wilson take their concours-winning Porsche with them. And why not? After 50 years of rock-solid dependability, what is there to worry about? 🌀



912 Targa Genealogy



COMBINING A sultry new body style with the reliable 1.6-liter four-cylinder engine from the outgoing 356 SC proved to be a marketing bonanza for Porsche. For enthusiasts not yet ready for the more complicated, more expensive, 2.0-liter six-cylinder 911, the 912 was the perfect solution.

Introduced to the public in the spring of 1965, the 912’s popularity was overwhelming, initially out-selling the more powerful 911 nearly two to one. During its five-year production run, more than 32,000 models were built.

Porsche added an open-air model to its lineup in 1967—the Targa. The name commemorated Porsche’s winning performance in the famous Targa Florio road race. Distinguished from the coupe by its fixed steel roll bar clad with stainless steel and a removable fabric top, the Targa initially came with a plastic rear window that zippered and buttoned into place.

Although the aesthetics of the fixed roll bar did not appeal to everyone, it did comply with safety requirements in America. It also added rigidity to the body. The gold Targa script added a distinctive touch. Model year 1968 saw the introduction of the fixed glass rear window that contributed to a quieter ride and better rear visibility. Approximately 2,500 Targa models were produced from 1967 through 1969. —DM