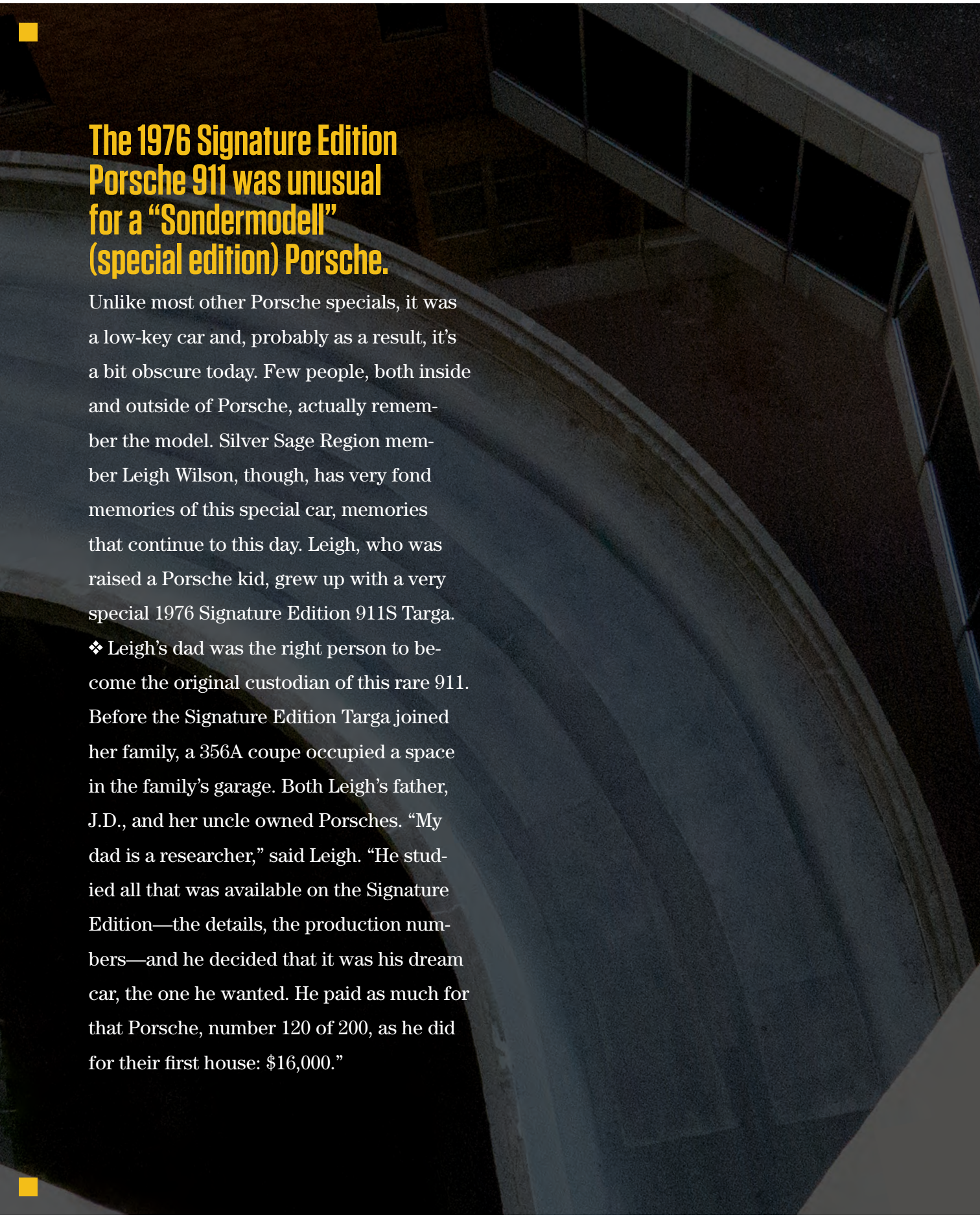


The Signature



THIS SPECIAL-EDITION PORSCHE IS AS GOOD AS GOLD FOR ONE PCA FAMILY.

STORY BY **DAVID MATHEWS** PHOTOS BY **MICHAEL ALAN ROSS**



The 1976 Signature Edition Porsche 911 was unusual for a “Sondermodell” (special edition) Porsche.

Unlike most other Porsche specials, it was a low-key car and, probably as a result, it's a bit obscure today. Few people, both inside and outside of Porsche, actually remember the model. Silver Sage Region member Leigh Wilson, though, has very fond memories of this special car, memories that continue to this day. Leigh, who was raised a Porsche kid, grew up with a very special 1976 Signature Edition 911S Targa.

❖ Leigh's dad was the right person to become the original custodian of this rare 911. Before the Signature Edition Targa joined her family, a 356A coupe occupied a space in the family's garage. Both Leigh's father, J.D., and her uncle owned Porsches. “My dad is a researcher,” said Leigh. “He studied all that was available on the Signature Edition—the details, the production numbers—and he decided that it was his dream car, the one he wanted. He paid as much for that Porsche, number 120 of 200, as he did for their first house: \$16,000.”

Was J.D. drawn to the model because of its fancy cachet? Not exactly. He preferred the 911S model, slotted between the rather sedate 912E and the fire-breathing Turbo. He also liked the “elephant ear” door mirror that was electrically adjusted and heated, introduced in 1976.

In J.D.'s own words, “It was not *because* it was a Signature Edition. It was because of all of the things that went into making it [a Signature Edition]...the gold color, the total lack of chrome. Overall, it was understated, kind of like the current 911. No bright colors that say arrest me. Also, I was especially interested in a Targa at the time.”

Almost immediately after taking delivery, J.D. installed rear speakers so he could better listen to classical music. Leigh, of course, thought rock-and-roll played well through those speakers. “It was a bonus that they fit in the window like they were designed for it,” she added.

J.D. and his wife both enjoyed

driving their Porsche, and with it taught Leigh to master the machinations of a type 915 transmission. “Our driveway approach was very steep. It was good practice,” she recalled. That practice was well and good and productive, but all for naught. “I was not allowed to drive it on the street. Dad let my boyfriend drive it. Never could figure that one out.”

Maybe J.D.'s embargo on Leigh's driving resulted from her rebellious nature. “I did the teenage thing and snuck out the key to have a copy made,” she confessed. “Although I was not brave enough to use it, at least I had it. We still have that copy today, keeping it as an addition to the two original keys that came with the car.”

Because Leigh was the only child, she spent a *lot* of time bouncing around in those jump seats in the back. It was only reasonable for her to think that she would inherit the SE when the time came. During

Leigh's college years, J.D. mentioned that he might sell the Targa. “You can't sell that car,” she told him. “I want it when the time comes.”

AS GOOD FORTUNE would have it, that time came sooner than expected, perhaps prompted by Leigh's inordinate concern over her father's well-being. “My dad gave me the car in October of 2001 when we went to visit them in Sequim, Washington. He told me that he was tired of me asking how his health was.”

In 2002, the Silver Sage Region hosted Parade in Boise, Idaho. Because it was so close to home, Leigh and J.D. attended that Parade, their first, together. She drove. “I auto-crossed, and Dad and I did the TSD rally and the parade of Porsches,” she told us. It was the first time Leigh drove aggressively with her dad as co-pilot. After they completed the rally, J.D. affirmed his confidence in her ability. “‘You really know how to drive,’ Dad said. I re-





plied, 'I learned from you.'"

Now, Leigh's driving partner is her son, Rob. "He has a love for the car," she said. "He was 12 when I got it, just like I was 12 when Dad bought it new. Rob does Cars and Coffee with me. Together, we took fifth place in the Spokane TSD rally, R05 Unequipped. Rob drove. He also autocrossed in class P06M, improving his time each run."

So how is the 41-year-old Porsche running? "It runs great," replied Rob. "Last year we replaced the struts and the brakes. The engine was gone through and given a clean bill of health. The car now has 146,000 miles on it. I did add the Porsche short shift kit to make it a little faster to change gears."

Rob also found new speakers to fit those vintage rear window boxes. The 40-year-old speakers had blown—probably a bit too much Led Zeppelin. Leigh added, "Mom and Dad used it as a daily driver

for years. Dad replaced the fabric seat inserts and door panels when they became worn some years back. They couldn't find the correct fabric and actually liked the solid cork interior better. Rob and I drive it whenever we can, even in winter if the weather is good. I don't drive it in 100-degree weather, of course. No air-conditioning."

WHAT DOES LEIGH like most about her 911S Signature Edition? "I like it because it's unique. I'm the only one around here who has one. And it has that sound...that old Porsche sound."

"When you sit in an old one, you get it," added Rob. "You begin to understand Porsche at a different level. The new ones are great. Everything works, they're fast, they have nice stereos, Bluetooth. But with the old cars, you go back a bit. They have only one purpose—to drive."

"Face it," Leigh chimed in. "There are no cupholders."

Like a family jewel, this golden 1976 Signature Edition 911S has been passed from generation to generation. Leigh's grandson, Devon, will eventually take ownership. Will a steep driveway be included in Devon's training regimen? Probably. It seems only natural, given the family history. ☯



Opposite: Distinctive Platinum Diamond Metallic paint reflects the warm glow of late afternoon sunlight. Devoid of chrome, the matte black Targa hoop and trim complement the golden hue of this Signature Edition 911S. **Left:** Leigh Wilson is the current custodian of the family Porsche. **Below:** The steering wheel pad, embossed with Ferry Porsche's signature, identifies this car as special indeed.



Special Edition Models



With a sponsorship by Martini & Rossi that began in 1968, Porsche dominated the FIA Group 5 class for several years. The Martini 924 commemorated that winning streak.

BY THEIR VERY NATURE, special edition (SE) models are, well, special. Produced in limited numbers, they have been offered to the buying public as Anniversary Editions, Commemorative Editions, Limited Editions...you name the event, and Porsche created a model to memorialize it. And capitalize on it.

Some SE models offered performance enhancements—juiced engines and reduced heft. The RS America, for example, could be considered a purely performance-driven SE. According to a Porsche press release dated January 6, 1992: “The 1993 911 RS will be unique to the U.S. market. Labeled by company executives as the ‘Pure Protein Porsche 911,’ the 911 RS America is designed to handle more like a competition 911.” The RS America came with larger wheels, a stiffer suspension, and interior-delete items like no rear seats and fabric pulls rather than door handles.

Some SEs were special primarily for their unique cosmetics. The March 1974 Porsche-Audi dealership newsletter heralded the introduction of the 914 LE cars. “Only 1,000 American customers will have the opportunity to buy a Porsche 914 2-liter Limited Edition sports car. The specially equipped 914s...will feature, in addition to the standard appearance group, special all-black interior, pressure cast alloy wheels, front spoiler, limited-edition paint and trim, front and rear stabilizer bars, and a striking ‘negative’ stripe.”

The 1977 Martini 924 celebrated various racing victories. It was distinguished by an E19 option designation that included red, white, and blue side stripes, a leather-covered steering wheel, white rims, red carpet, striped headrests, and front and rear sway bars.

Still other special-edition models combined a little bit of both performance enhancements and special cosmetics. In its press release dated November 7, 2007, Porsche introduced the limited-edition Boxster RS60 Spyder. “The new Boxster RS60 Spyder evokes the stance and style of this historic mid-engine two-seater race car [the Type 718 RS60 Spyder that won the 1960 12 Hours of Sebring]. Its posture is made even more dynamic with the addition of spacer plates that move the 19-inch Porsche SportDesign wheels into an even more prominent position in the wheel arches. Likewise, the Porsche Active Suspension Management (PASM) is standard on this limited-edition model and ensures both sporting and comfortable driving characteristics in all conditions. Modifications to the exhaust flow coupled with a dual tailpipe sports exhaust system increase engine output to 303 horsepower. The exclusive GT silver metallic paintwork is further accentuated by the contrasting colors of the Natural Leather interior in Carrera Red with a matching red convertible top.”

The Signature Edition 911S like the one featured in this issue falls into the cosmetics-only SE category. This model featured special Platinum Diamond Metallic paint (color code 944-9-3), cast alloy ATS “cookie cutter” wheels painted to match the body color, black anodized trim replacing all chrome trim, cork-colored leatherette interior with fabric seat inserts and door panels, and a three-spoke leather-covered steering wheel with the embossed signature of Ferry Porsche. Only 200 coupe and Targa examples of this 911S were produced, perhaps offered to commemorate Ferry Porsche’s retirement from direct leadership of the company. The Signature Edition 911S shared specifications with the other 911S offered that year: 2.7-liter flat six, Bosch K-Jetronic fuel injection, five-speed manual transmission, and 165 hp at 5800 rpm. —DM



Originally planned to be marketed as the 914 Can Am Edition, the model was renamed 914 Limited Edition when Porsche pulled out of the Can-Am racing series to protest adverse rule changes. Shown below is one of the 914 Can Am prototypes sporting a unique Can Am side stripe.



The RS America was the “bad boy” of the Porsche world. A trim welterweight, it could be considered the precursor of the GT3 and GT4.

Extroverts could order a red top and interior for the RS60 Spyder. Raked windshield, GT Silver exterior, and 19-inch wheels complete the image.



Thanks to Joseph DeMeo of the Los Angeles Region for providing invaluable information about the Signature Edition 911S.