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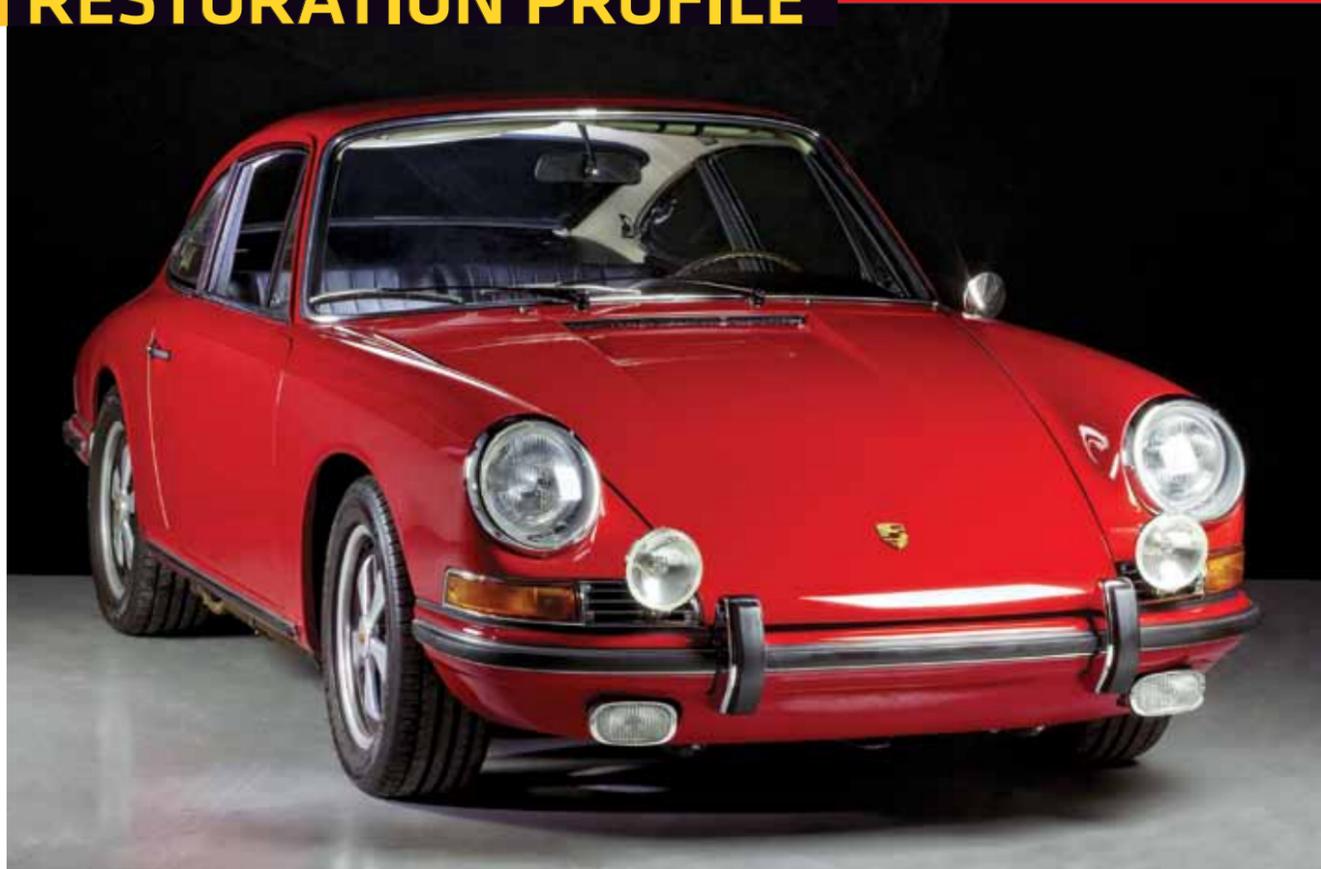


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1967 PORSCHE 911S



THE FAMILY PRACTICE

Insurance CEO McKeel Hagerty was a teenager when he and his dad gave this 1967 Porsche 911S its first restoration

BY DAVID LaCHANCE

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF HAGERTY
RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF DARIN IRVINE

There were always older cars in the family when McKeel Hagerty was growing up. His father had accumulated a half-dozen or so vintage cars, and the family treated them not like collector's items, but like any other vehicle. "In my family, if you were going somewhere, to go to the store, or to go on a date in high school or whatever, it was, 'Well, take one of the old cars. Just take it. And just bring it back clean,'" he says. "I learned to be able to wash a car in 12 minutes. That was what you did."

"It's always been kind of funny to me—the evolution of cars to collector cars has been one that I've lived very closely," he continues. "Because I've lived in this world of very coveted automobiles that are valuable, and to me they were always just cars.

And that's one reason I'm a big advocate of people getting out there and driving them and touching them and letting kids touch them. You know, you can't break them by just touching them. Just fix it if something happens. Maybe I am in the right business!" That business, in case you don't recognize the name, is the collector-car insurance business; he's the CEO of Hagerty Insurance in Traverse City, Michigan.

McKeel's father, Frank, had been in the general insurance business, and in his spare time had projects going on in the garage. "He grew up in Detroit and went through a kind of early hot-rodding phase back in the Fifties, working on a bunch of different, mostly Ford products," McKeel recalls. Frank's first older car was a 1956 Ford Thunderbird, bought out of a junkyard

in 1962 and repaired. "That was his daily driver in the summer, and we still have that—I own that car now."

Frank involved McKeel and his two older sisters, Kim and Tammy, in the hobby as well. Each was given the opportunity to buy and, with Frank's help, restore an older car. "It was just sort of family practice," he explains. All three children chose well. Kim, the elder sister, found a Corvair Lakewood station wagon that once was ice-raced by Augie Pabst; Tammy, the younger sister, bought a 1960 Porsche 356B advertised in a newspaper "for fifty bucks, I think it was," McKeel said. Then there was his choice.

"I had this lifelong dream of being James Bond, so what I really wanted was an Aston Martin," he says with a smile. "We



McKeel Hagerty was a teenager when he and his dad first restored his 1967 Porsche 911S. A hard life of ice racing had taken its toll on the ungalvanized body, while the flat-six had been left in a snowbank.



During the second restoration, Custom Automotive Restoration removed the paint with aircraft stripper, cut out rusted sections and braced the door openings before sending the shell out to be media blasted.



Sandblasting could not touch parts of the inner structure, such as the base of the A pillar. The bodies of 911s have sandwiches of steel in places, which gives them great strength, but makes them tricky to repair.



Rust-through in the panel next to the engine lid hinge was exposed by sandblasting. This is a view of the underside of the rear parcel shelf, seen from the engine compartment.

didn't have any of those sitting around in northern Michigan, but my dad knew where there was an old guy with a couple of old 911s parked behind his house. One was a '66 912, and the other was this '67 911S that he had turned into an ice racer—I don't know why we had this ice racing theme running through all of this. He was a race car driver and kind of a body man.

"There was about a year's worth of negotiations, starting when I was 12. We got the car and pulled it out of the snowbank, and it was a rusty mess. We got both cars for \$1,000," he recalls. "The engines were sitting out of both cars in a snowbank with the carburetor stacks wide open to the snow so that the engines were just rusty

masses. It was quite a project, quite honestly. But it was my Aston Martin—let's put it that way. I was pretty motivated."

1967 was the first year for the 911S, or "Super," which offered enthusiasts a 160hp, 1,991cc flat-six, as well as 14-inch Fuchs alloy wheels, ventilated brake discs, Koni shock absorbers, and the addition of a rear anti-roll bar. It was a popular car in the U.S., even with a steep \$6,990 price tag. In spite of the chassis upgrades, its extra 30hp, short wheelbase and skinny tires made it a challenge to drive at the limit.

McKeel describes himself and his dad as "shade-tree mechanics," possessing little more than a rudimentary set of tools and loads of enthusiasm. "Of course, I didn't





To repair the parcel shelf area, a piece of the outer body at the lower corner of the rear window had to be cut away. The restoration shop fabricated repair panels, and TIG welded them with a Lincoln welder.



The driver's side front fender was sound, except for the turn signal box. The original pinch welds were recreated by drilling the new part, and plug welding with a MIG welder, Custom's Darin Irvine explains.



A new, factory crossmember was welded into place. This component carries not only the striker plate mount, but the rear engine mounts. "It's a structurally important part of the car," Darin explains.



The original rear fenders were damaged beyond economical repair, so a factory replacement pair was installed. After they were welded into place, the seams were filled with lead, as the factory had done.



The driver's side heater tube has been removed in preparation for the installation of a new middle sill panel. The floor pans, the same ones installed at the factory, were still sound, and just needed touching up.



A rusted section of the inner rear fender was cut away and replaced. This area must be absolutely sound, because it supports the rear crossmember, which is crucial to the strength of the back end of the car.



Once the driver's door was re-skinned, the edges were carefully ground and filed to ensure an absolutely perfect door gap. Typically, body panels are assembled and disassembled many times during a restoration.



McKeel did not want the look of modern sport seats, so Darin modified the original seats with steel bolsters covered in foam to help keep the driver and passenger in place during spirited rally driving.



know what I was doing—we didn't even have a shop manual when we restored it. We just sort of took apart what was there," he says.

The restoration "amounted to about a year of scraping rust into my face, and learning how to fabricate and rivet panels together and all that sort of thing. In the end, I think neither of us really knew how to deal with the really difficult rust in a 911. But we did a darn good job of removing what we could and covering up what we had to and putting the car together." He cheerfully volunteers his missteps: "I didn't realize that I never re-secured the fuel tank, I never put the sway bars in—didn't know they were missing. I couldn't afford

the heat exchangers because they were \$1,000 or whatever at the time, so the car never had heat."

He regrets that he chose to replace the damaged transmission with one from another car, but remains proud of the engine rebuild he performed. His sister's 356B had provided opportunity for practice: "I don't know if there was a flaw in the engine or something in the original engine work, but we kept having a lot of problems with it. By the time I was 13, I could get that engine out of that 356 in about an hour. When I got to dig into the 911 engine, it was pretty simple, it was just two more cylinders, basically the same setup.

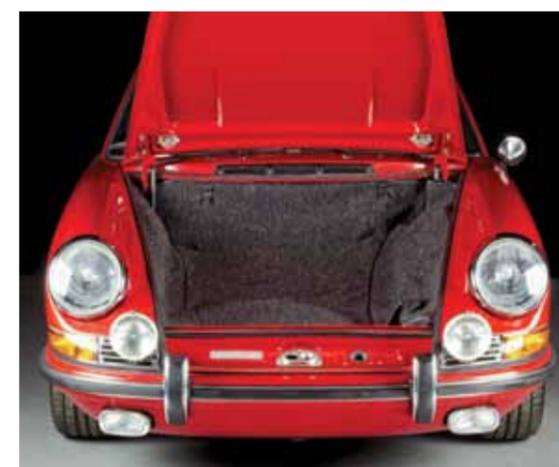
"Let's face it—something that's kind of being lost today are those shop classes that were around when I was in school. I think there's nothing that can make a young guy or gal stand three inches taller than hearing an engine that you've put back together run for the first time. And I'm just glad I've had that experience."

McKeel considered the car's original color, Polo Red, unsuitable—"to me, Porsches were meant to be silver or some Teutonic color"—and so he refinined the 911 in black lacquer. It took two years and all of the \$2,500 he had saved up from mowing lawns, but the 911S was finally completed in 1983-'84. McKeel drove the Porsche to high school when the weather

was nice, resorting to his father's pickup ("it was a '47 Ford with a crashbox in it. Oh, it was terrible!" he recalls) when the winter came. "It was a cool 911, and it was the only one like it at my high school, I can guarantee you that," he says.

Eventually, McKeel went off to college, and then graduate school, and the Porsche stayed behind. The car became harder to keep running, and its lacquer finish started to deteriorate; eventually, he stopped taking the car out at all. It wasn't until 2003 or so that he once again began thinking seriously about the 911S.

"I was running this business and I kept getting asked, constantly, 'Hey, what kind of vintage cars do you have, what was your





Countless hours were spent adjusting the body before it was ready for the application of primer. The front lid was the original, while the right front fender and front bulkhead were replacement panels.



Two coats of PPG DP50 epoxy primer were applied to the entire tub. Then, the exterior panels were sprayed with two to three coats of PPG K36 primer-surfacer, and the body was assembled for final block-sanding.



Because Polo Red is nonmetallic, the panels could be painted off the car, allowing no masking lines between the body and jambs. Two coats of PPG DBC basecoat were followed by three coats of PPG 8150 clearcoat.



After the clear had cured, it was wet sanded with 1,500-grade paper, using flexible blocks. 3M Perfect-It II polish was applied with a wool finishing pad; a 3M glaze, applied with a waffle pad, was the final touch.



first car?" And I realized that I had this great car and this great story," McKeel said. "So I decided to have it really nicely professionally restored, put back red, and that's what put it in its current state. That, and an awful lot more money than \$2,500."

He chose Van's Garage of Leland, Michigan, to do the mechanical restoration, and Custom Automotive Restoration of Northport, Michigan, to handle the bodywork. Both were known for their quality Porsche restorations, and had already done Tammy's 356B, which had stayed in the family. (The Lakewood was sold; if you know its whereabouts, McKeel is dying to hear from you.) "Porsches are pretty simple mechanically, but they're not terribly easy when it comes to dealing with

large amounts of body repair and rust and that sort of thing, so I knew it was going to take somebody who had some experience with it," McKeel said.

Van's did the initial assessment, noting a variety of engine oil leaks and transmission fluid leaks, as well as some previous rust repair that would have to be addressed. They disassembled the car, mounting it to the same rolling dolly that had been built for Tammy's car, and rebuilt all of the mechanical systems. The engine received new pistons and cylinders, bringing displacement to 2.7 liters. A new crankshaft was installed to accommodate that upgrade, connected to new Pauter connecting rods. The cylinder heads were replaced with refurbished, standard

Porsche 2.7-liter heads. The original three-barrel Weber downdraft carburetors were retained, but given larger venturis and altered jetting for higher performance, and PMO intakes were installed. As a result of its period of idleness, the car's brake pistons were all stuck; Van's rebuilt the system, and refabricated the stock heater system as well.

Engine case work, including modifications to fit later timing chain boxes, Carrera hydraulic chain tensioners and intermediate shaft bearings, was trusted to Rennsport Systems of Portland, Oregon. Rennsport also rebuilt the five-speed transaxle.

At Custom Automotive Restoration, the shell was stripped of its glass, interior, trim and other components. The exterior panels

were stripped with aircraft paint remover, and the shell sent out for sandblasting.

The rusted portions of the body were replaced with fresh metal, either factory panels sourced through Stoddard Restoration Parts Worldwide, or smaller pieces fabricated in the shop. Custom Automotive Restoration's Darin Irvine sprayed on the Polo Red, using a PPG basecoat/clearcoat system. Tracy, the wife of Van's owner J.P. Van Raalte, fabricated new seat covers, using period-correct materials.

Since getting the Porsche back, McKeel has been making up for lost time. "The very first event it drove on, I used my privilege as a sponsor of the Colorado Grand to break the 1960 rule, and drive it in the

Colorado Grand one year. I can tell you that I've never had four better days behind the wheel in my life," he says. "It's what the car was built for. People who read a lot of car magazines always get so hung up on acceleration and top speed and all these sorts of things, and what they forget about is that a Porsche, the 911 in particular, was built for how you actually would drive in a high-performance way. Which is not super-fast, but fast driving, hard braking through corners. That's what's fun. It's just a perfect car for that."

The fact that the 911S is a coveted collector car? That's insignificant to McKeel. "To me, it wouldn't matter whether it was worth \$15,000 or \$150,000. It's just my car," he says. 🇺🇸