

PORSCHE PANORAMA

SEPTEMBER 2012



“

I think he just wanted to see what people did with his cars.” It was 1977 and lifelong Salt Lake area resident Jerry Jensen was about to have an “up close and personal” encounter with Dr. Ferry Porsche at the San Diego Parade Concours where Jensen had entered his unique scalloped three-tone green 912 in the Modified category.

“Strolling along and looking around, it was as if Dr. Porsche wanted to see what people really did with his cars. When he stopped to talk with me, it wasn’t as the

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BOB LAPINE



*“After all, it’s mine.
Because it’s also a part of me,
I did it the way I wanted.”*

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CONSPICUOUSLY UNUSUAL: ONE MAN'S PORSCHE

BY BILL OURSLER

*Jerry Jensen painted his
1966 912 himself, then
added the scallops as well.
It was the first time he had
ever painted a vehicle.*



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The rear is stock except for the addition of the "6" to the 912 insignia, hinting at the six-cylinder engine under the deck.



BOB LAPINE

Hot rodders and custom car builders will recognize the sophisticated techniques Jensen uses when he paints. When he replaced the 912 engine with a 911 powerplant, it was painted to match the exterior.

head of Porsche, but as one car guy to another. It was an obvious thrill, but what made it even more memorable was that he was so human."

It is that observation about the blending of humanity and the mechanical which is at the heart of this story about a man and his Porsche. While Jensen's 1966 912, like the 1968 912 of his long time close friend Lynn Anderson, both draw attention for their rarity, they represent polar opposites in how the two friends have approached ownership. Anderson has faithfully preserved his 912 precisely as it left Zuffenhausen,

while Jensen, a member of Intermountain Region since 1967, took a different fork in the road, his car evolving in a free-spirited and highly individual way.

First there is the car itself, which, aside from its vivid, eye-catching paint, is a 912 in name only. Lift the rear decklid and one finds not the original four-cylinder powerplant, but rather a 911 flat six that is equally hard to miss because it is painted in the same bright green that dominates the Porsche's exterior, which is set off by the darker and lighter scalloping.

As striking as all this is, what makes the tale so

special is that Jensen didn't farm the work out, but did it all himself. Astonishingly, he had never before done any painting or metal work, both of which were key to the 912's transformation from the ordinary to the conspicuously unusual. And while one might think that there was some grand scheme involved, the truth is that for Jensen it was a simple matter of practicality.

"I've been a car guy all my life. In the early 1960s, after graduating from high school, I bought an Austin Healy, but it wasn't suited to our winters in Salt Lake and in 1966 I started thinking about a 356. By then Porsche had introduced the 911, which I knew I couldn't afford. On the other hand, the 356-powered

912 was another matter."

Actually buying one, though, wasn't all that easy because the new 911s and 912s were hard to find on a showroom floor. Then again, there were always the back door, as Jensen remembers well. "It wasn't uncommon for people to purchase one, drive it for a little bit and then sell it for what they had paid for it, or perhaps even a little more. In my case, I bought my 912 used from a man who had taken it on a three-month vacation trip before he sold it to me."

While the 912 turned out to be a great daily driver, it wasn't perfect, as he discovered a couple of years later. "The problem with all of those cars at that time,"



JENSEN ARCHIVE

Jensen with Ferry Porsche at the San Diego Porsche Parade in 1977. Always interested in what owners do with their cars, Porsche took note of the green car.

Virtually all of the Porsche, born a 912, has been modified to meet Jerry's vision of the car he wanted. A five-gauge 911 dash has been added to the interior.



60/PORSCHE PANORAMA

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Today Jerry Jensen saves the 912 for pleasure. Though he's owned other Porsches, this is the one for which there is no substitute.

Looking at the cost of a new paint job, Jensen decided he would do it himself.

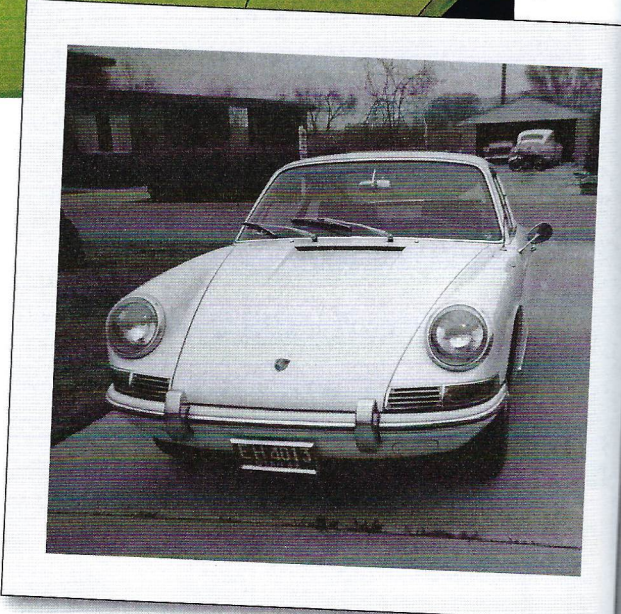
he says, "was that their paint was terrible. It was so bad that Porsche repainted them under warranty. But since mine was used, it wasn't covered."

Looking at the cost of a new paint job, Jensen decided he would do it himself, in spite of the fact that he knew next to nothing about bodywork. "I knew a guy who was a body and fender man, and when I told him my dilemma, he suggested I should paint it myself."

With his help, Jensen learned the necessary skills, test painting many cans along the way to get just the right technique. In spite of the practice, his first attempt at actually painting his car was not a success. "I had decided that it should be silver, but in those days, when all you used was either lacquer or enamel, silver was one of the most difficult colors to get right."

Jensen didn't get it right. "I had a car which was half white and half silver when I realized the silver just wasn't going to work. I had to find another color that was easier to apply."

But what color? His answer proves that inspiration



In May of 1967, the 912 had not begun its transformation into the beautiful and completely individual car that it would become.

can come from anywhere.

"I was working in retail shoe sales when I saw a pair of bright green ladies shoes that attracted my eye. I thought they were the perfect color for the 912 so that's what I painted it." The job took him between three and four months to complete but when it was done, he was happy with it. Today, four decades later, the 912 remains resplendent and unrestored, wearing the same green paint from all those years ago.

Despite the care that had gone into making his car an attention-getter, Jensen believed the 912 was a car to be enjoyed for what it did on the road, and he used

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... Million Dollar Shine

the Porsche as a daily driver through the first part of the 1970s. He hints at just how hard he might have pushed it back then when he notes that today, at the age of 72, he's slowed his pace somewhat, now keeping the speedometer down to around 80 or so when he takes the car out. However, even while it served as his basic form of transportation, he was also preening it for show.

"I've always been a concours person. In fact, Lynn Anderson and I put together a string of local concours, including one that is a charity event with our local area senior citizens." Inevitably there came a time when he realized that the slings and arrows or, in this case, stone chips of everyday driving meant that he had to consider saving the car purely for pleasure when the mood suited him.

"The problem with the stone chips," he notes, "is their potential for being a source of rust, particularly in the winter when the roads are covered in salt." Not wanting to incur any further damage, Jensen came down on the side of preservation. That meant he had to make a decision about what to do about the already stone chipped paint. Jensen's solution was different, if not unique.

"What I decided was to repair the chips by painting two-tone scallops over them, one a slightly darker

green than the base color, and the other in a lighter shade of the car's overall color by the same amount. So I mixed three parts of the base green with one part of silver for the lighter scallops, and one part black for the darker ones."

Mixing the colors was easy. The hard part was laying out the design with masking tape to get the perfect look that Jensen was after. Once done, the result was visually stunning, attracting Ferry Porsche's attention at the 1977 Parade. Whether you like what Jensen has done or not, few who've ever seen the 912 have forgotten it. Still, this Porsche reflects Jensen's tastes, not those of the world. As he puts it, "This car is a part of me, and I care for it that way."

He has had other Porsches including two Carreras, a Turbo and a Boxster, but it is the green 912 that has remained. "I loved all those cars, and each was hard to get rid of. However, my 912 is different. When it comes time that I can't enjoy it anymore, I want it to go to someone who will treat it with the same respect and care that I have given it over the years."

With that attitude, you might suspect that Jensen has always planned carefully when it comes to his prize. In fact, just as was the case with the paint, changes have been driven by necessity more than design. Certainly that was the case when it came to

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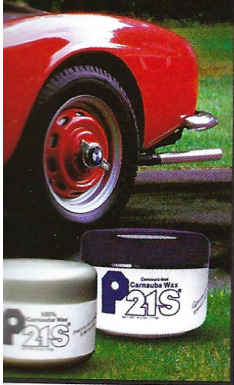
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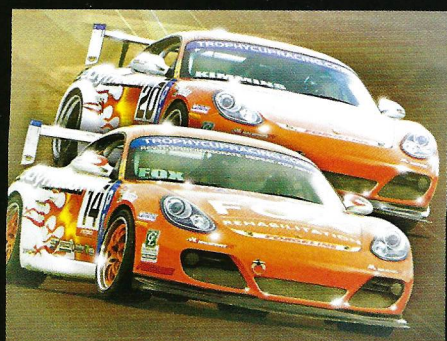
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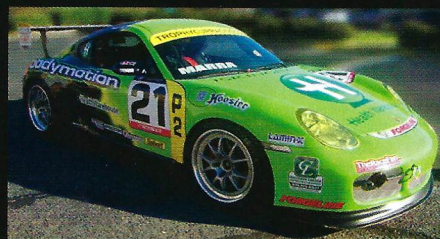
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the engine compartment. Having driven his 912 for several years, Jensen came to the point, where, like others, he wanted the extra power offered by the 911. Wanting one and affording one were two different things, however. At that juncture, fate stepped in.

"I had a friend who was the shop foreman where I had the 912 serviced. He had acquired a nearly perfect 911 six cylinder out of a wreck and had spent some time looking for a car to put it in with no success. Back then I was in the landscaping business, and since he wanted his backyard landscaped, I suggested a trade. I would design his backyard in trade for the engine. Actually, making the swap seemed daunting to me, but it turned out to be a lot easier than I thought."

The 912 was in many respects identical to the 911. Even the wiring harness was the same—the wiring that was 911-specific had just been tied off at the factory. So the most difficult part of the installation came down to the engine mounts.

"By then I was competent in metal work, knew how to weld, so there was no problem grinding off the original mounts and grinding down the rest of the body structure until it was smooth. The problem for me was replacing them, because I thought I would have to fabricate the new ones. That was solved when my friend told me the six cylinder mounts were in Porsche's

parts catalog. From there it was just a matter of welding them in and installing the engine."

One interesting sidelight of the exchange was that the lower gearbox ratios used for the 912 made Jensen's newly minted "911" quicker off the line than its factory produced counterparts of the same age.

Only a close examination of the revised inner rear body structure would reveal that the Porsche wasn't born as a 911.

Only a close examination of the revised inner rear body structure would reveal that the Porsche wasn't born as a 911. That doesn't mean it's exactly stock appearing, however. Jensen painted the six cylinder engine in the same shade of green as the main body color. "It's not that I didn't like the way the factory painted it, I just wanted it to match the rest of the car. After all it's mine, and because it's also a part of me, I

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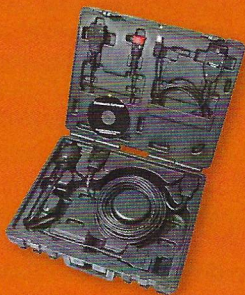
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did it the way I wanted.”

Decades have passed since Jensen got it the way he wanted it. He keeps it today with the same meticulous attention to its preservation that Lynn Anderson focuses on his pristine original 912.

Over time, the legend of Jensen's expertise has brought him customers wanting his magic touch applied to their Porsches. In all, Jensen says he's done about a half dozen cars in the small shop he's built since he first started working on the 912. Yet his remains a personal journey, one shaped more by the realities of life than anything else, and exemplified by his ongoing dilemma over what shift knob to use.

“I've replaced the original steering wheel with a more modern one and installed a 911 instrument panel, but I can't decide about the shift knob. I've got one from a 356, but I'm hesitant to use it. One day soon I'll make up my mind, I always do.”

When the decision is made, it won't be in aid of authenticity or correctness. It'll be because Jerry Jensen wants it that way. ☺

Jerry Jensen and Lynn Anderson began their Porsche journey together more than four decades ago. Lynn's story is also featured in this issue.

