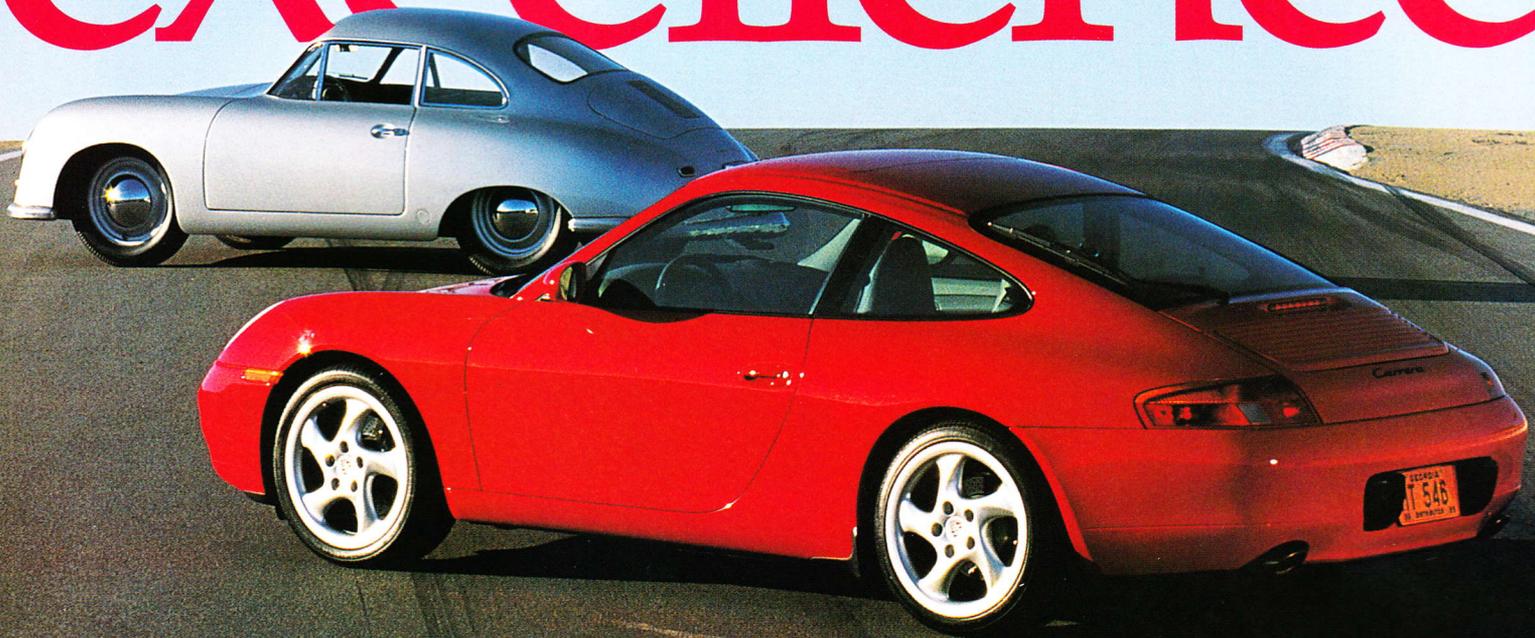


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# 50 Years of Porsche Honored at Monterey Historics

*By David Colman*

**I**n a year when Porsche is busy celebrating its 50th anniversary, it's not surprising that a number of big events are taking place around the globe. But no single vintage automobile event in the world can compete with the enormity of the annual Monterey weekend that includes the Monterey Historic Races, the Pebble Beach Concours, and the Concours Italiano, all scheduled to happen within three days and a few miles of each other.

Throw in the world's largest car auction, nightly street parties, and an enthusiastic crowd from around the world and it's easy to see why this weekend has become the world's premier vintage car event. This year's Monterey weekend, however, would

have a further distinction, as Porsche AG chose to celebrate its 50th anniversary at Laguna Seca during the Monterey Historics weekend.

The most notable aspect of the weekend at the track was the opportunity to relish 20 cars I will probably never see together again, all of which were from the factory collection in Germany. Topping the hit parade was Dr. Ferdinand Porsche's first effort at designing a sports car — the spindly but effective 1922 Sascha that he designed for Austro-Daimler. It took Alfred Neubauer to 19th overall in the '22 Targa Florio. Neubauer would go on to a stellar career as a team manager for Mercedes while Porsche would go on to win the Targa outright in the fifties. The diminutive Sascha

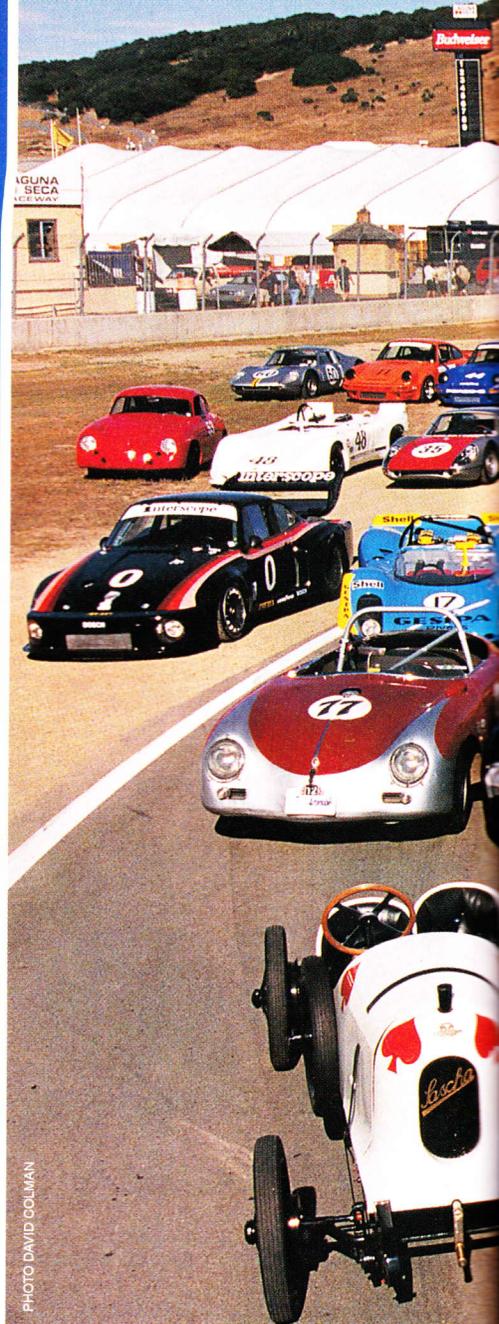


PHOTO DAVID COLMAN

hardly looked like the progenitor of all those snorting beasts that surrounded it in Laguna's pit lane.

The first Porsche built at Gmünd after the war, 356 001, was supposed to lap the track this year with Dr. Wolfgang Porsche at the controls. This seminal car last visited the U.S. in 1982, when it took pride of place at the Porsche Parade Concours at Reno. Unfortunately, it was damaged upon arrival in the U.S. and was unable to be repaired in time for the event. Even the 356 specialists at Stoddard threw up their hands in dismay when asked to perform a quick rebuild. So the remains of 356 001 are back in Germany now, waiting for repair. Dr. Wolfgang Porsche did his laps aboard a 1951 twin-windscreen



■ The most extensive lineup of Porsche race cars in history.

roadster first raced by Sauter.

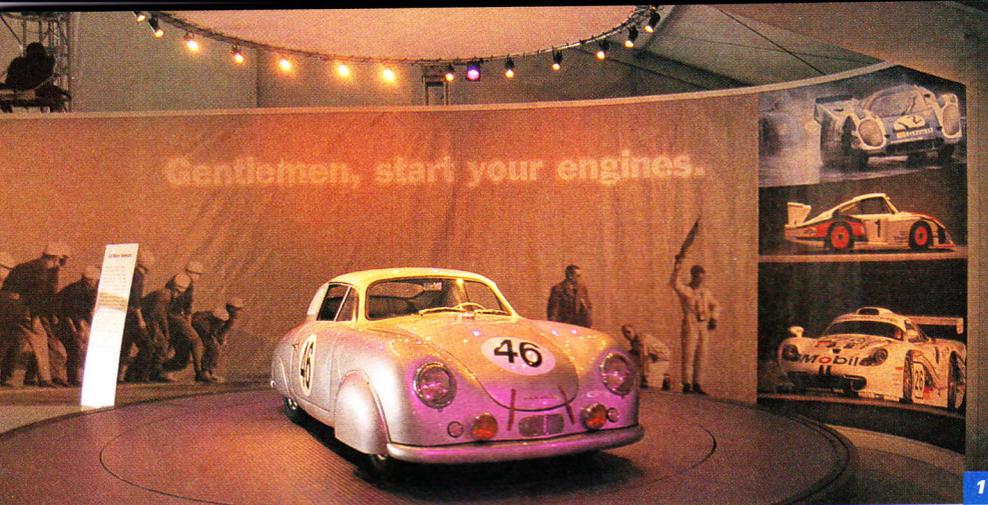
Those who attended the Historics 16 years ago may recall that 001 did four parade laps of the track at Laguna Seca on August 21, 1982 — the last time Steve Earle's General Racing, Ltd. chose Porsche as the marque of honor for the Historics. Only Ferrari, Alfa, and Jaguar share, with Porsche, the distinction of having been selected as double honorees in the 25 year history of this event.

So much has changed since I attended that first celebration of the Stuttgart sports car maker some 16 years ago. In 1982, Ferry Porsche took the back cover of the ninth annual Monterey Historic event program to "invite you to test drive the newest Porsche — the 944." Inside, we

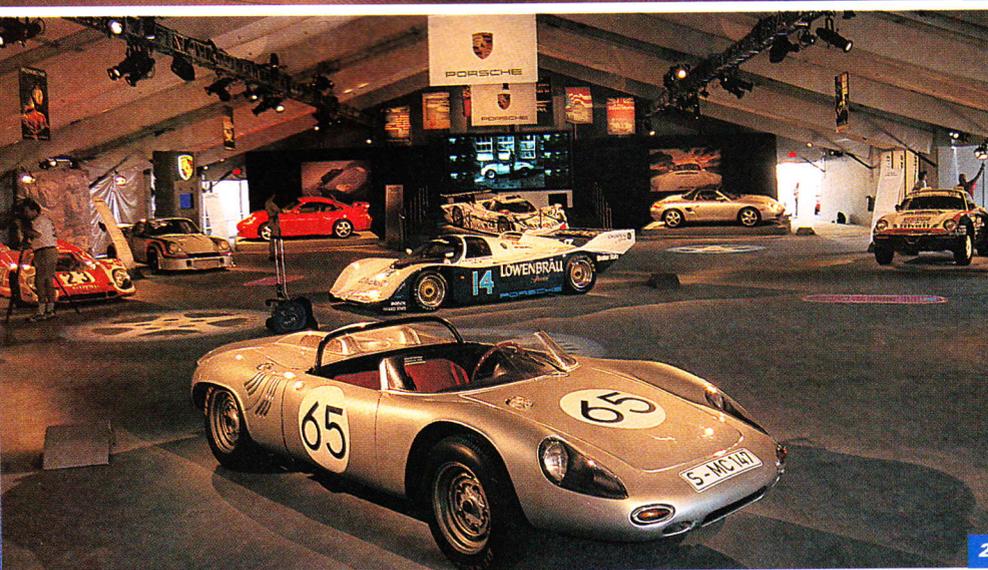
learned that Andial's new facility in Santa Ana would "Open Late 1982." Their ad featured a line drawing of Porsche's hottest race car, the Moby Dick-style Kremer K-3 evo. A full page photo of Don Orosco's RS 60 proclaimed him winner of the previous year's "Pebble Beach Trophy" for excellence "in both performance and appearance." And a starting grid worth of former and current Porsche race pilots immortalized in the program took to the track over the weekend. What sticks in my memory most of all is the squadron of Porsche race cars Vasek Polak disgorged from his transporter for that event. Topping the list were a pair of 917/10s for Hurley Haywood and George Follmer, and a 908/02 for Davey Jordan.

Ferry Porsche and Vasek Polak are gone now, but the excellence they exhibited lingers on. This year, the legions of drivers who pinned their careers on Porsche returned again to pay tribute. Most notable were Herbert Linge, Derek Bell, George Follmer, Hans Herrmann, Hurley Haywood, John Fitzpatrick, Jack McAfee, and Walter Röhrl. Throughout the weekend, they took turns streaking around the course at Laguna in a wide variety of vintage race cars.

In the paddock, Porsche set up an impressive exhibit dubbed the "Porsche Experience," a huge tent designed to display famous Porsche racing cars from the past. The exhibit was well executed and visitors were able to peruse the interior of the tent or



1—Porsche's first Le Mans victory came from this Gmünd coupe.



2—The interior of the Porsche Experience tent contained a variety of racing cars from a storied history.

3—Dr. Wendelin Wiedeking suits up for a few laps of Laguna Seca.

4—A Martini-sponsored 917 sits in the factory pits around the perimeter of the Porsche Experience.

5—A rare Carrera Abarth takes to the track. No fewer than five of the twenty or so produced were present.

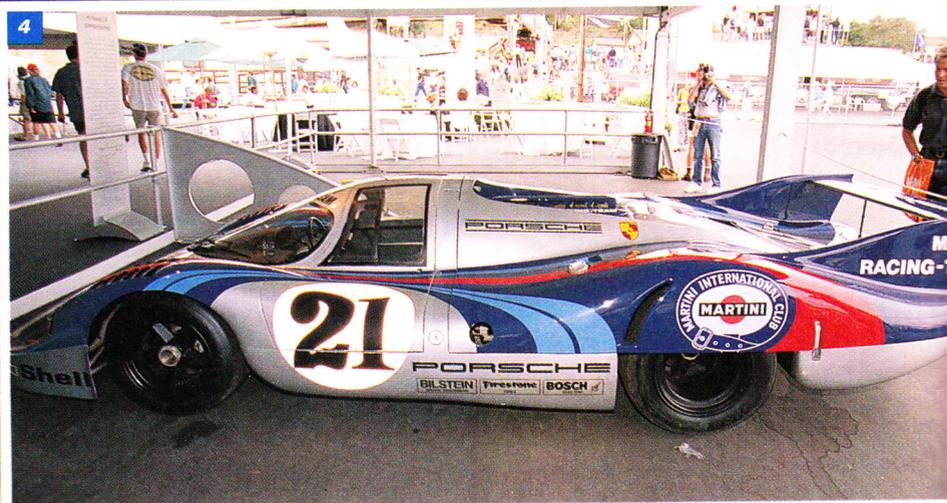
6—A Porsche 904 Carrera GTS takes a pack of sports cars out of a turn.

7—356 Speedsters were plentiful in both the pits and on the track.

8—A Martini-liveried 911 2.1 Turbo from Porsche's early turbo days.

9—A Gulf-Wyer 917K.

10—Hurley Haywood drove this 914-6 GT, which won the first-ever IMSA race and championship.



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PHOTO: DAVID COLEMAN



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PHOTO DAVID COLMAN

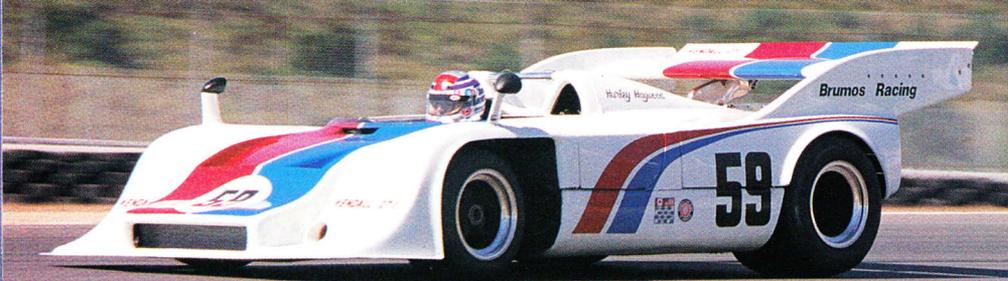
venture to the outside "pits," where various factory race cars sat ready for action. Indicating just how seriously Porsche took the level of their presentation, workers ripped out the beautiful, light grey entryway carpeting on Saturday night to replace it with more of the same after thousands of race fans had tracked grease from the paddock through there. The message that Porsche is prosperous again was loud and clear.

Sitting in a prime position inside the Porsche tent was the 1951 aluminum Gmünd coupe that won that year's 751-1100 cc Le Mans class in the hands of Veuillet and Mouche. It was a shock to view this primordial Porsche, which I had previously seen only on coins and calendars. Next came the ex-Tom Trabue Carrera Panamericana car, now ensconced in the Porsche factory collection.

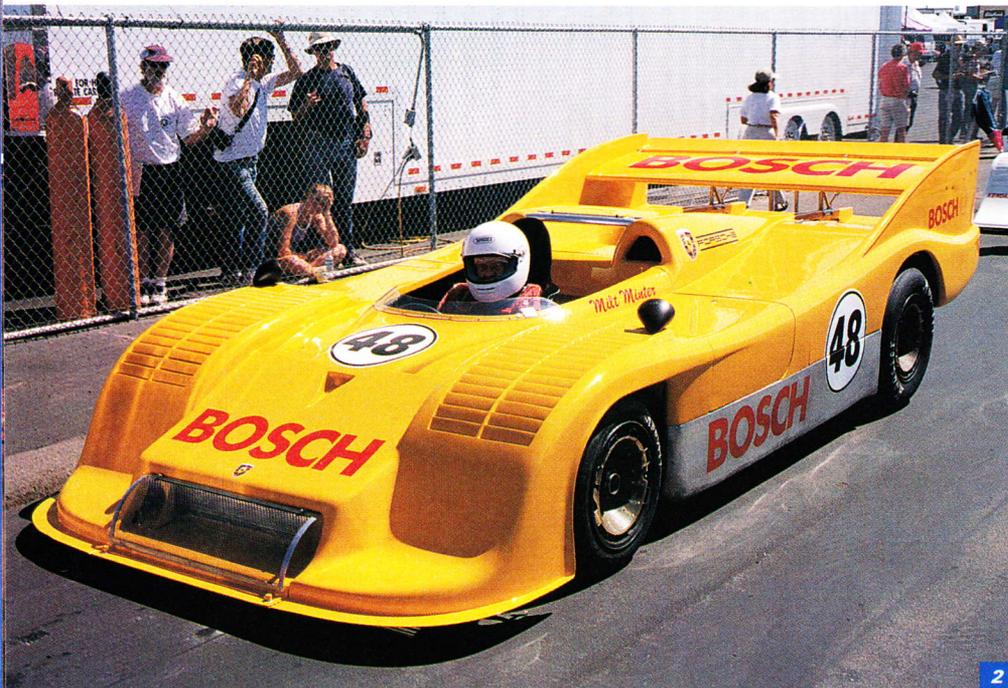
The 1960 718/2 Formula 2 car was sitting quietly across the room. In its prime, this stubby cigar took wins for Joachim Bonnier, Stirling Moss, Edgar Barth, Wolfgang Berghe von Trips, Graham Hill, Dan Gurney, and Hans Herrmann. In those days, the 1.5-liter flat four powering this car reached 8000 rpm in each of six gears. What a racket to produce only 150 hp! Even more unnerving must have been the shriek of the 1962 Type 804 F1 car, Porsche's only effort to build an entire Formula 1 car from scratch. Also displacing 1.5 liters, the flat eight-cylinder engine made 180 hp at 9200 rpm.

A 904 prototype sporting a raucous flat eight amidships concluded the pre-sponsorship parade of pure silver Porsches. From the advent of Gulf-backing for the azure 1970 908/3, Porsche sublimated its national racing color of silver (or white) to the livery of the sponsor du jour. Amidst all of these road racing cars, the Martini 1978 "Safari" 911 striped in red, white, and blue was an unexpected sight. This latter car, driven by Vic Preston, took second in the 1978 Safari after rally leader Bjorn Waldegaard's similar car fell from first to fourth place due to a suspension failure.

Unlike racing in the real world, the game at Monterey goes not to the swift but the showman. And that goes for not only the drivers, but the fans. It's undoubtedly rewarding to win one of the 14 race groups outright, but it's not really important to do so. Just ask Steve Earle, who will be the first to tell you about zero tolerance for driver



1—Hurley Haywood drove many of his old mounts, including this 917/10.



2—This beautiful 917/30 is a brand-new car, built with a spare chassis (with number) and parts by Vasek Polak Competition.

3—911 RSRs and IROC cars from the seventies were crowd pleasers.

4—The 956 race cars were impressive, but couldn't steal the thunder from the earlier Can Am cars.

5—Brian Redman was ever-present during the weekend, as many Porsche factory drivers were.

6—A 962, 917, and 936 (right to left) on the grid. Derek Bell is behind the wheel in the foreground.

7—Harm Lagaay and Olaf Lange.

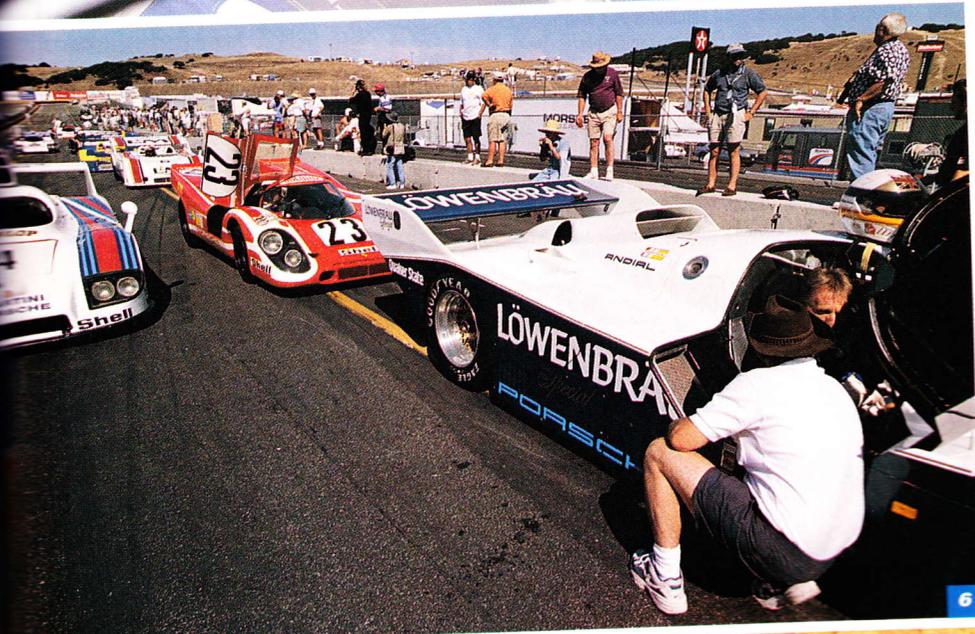
8—A 924 GTR displays front-engined prowess on the racetrack.

9—A pair of 936 race cars head down the straight.

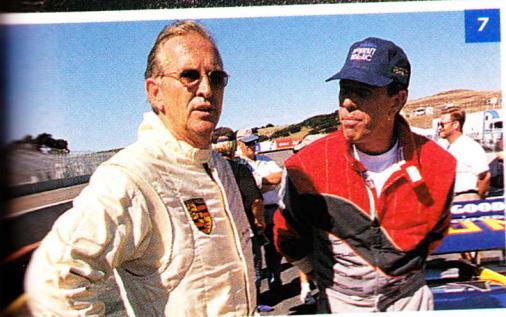




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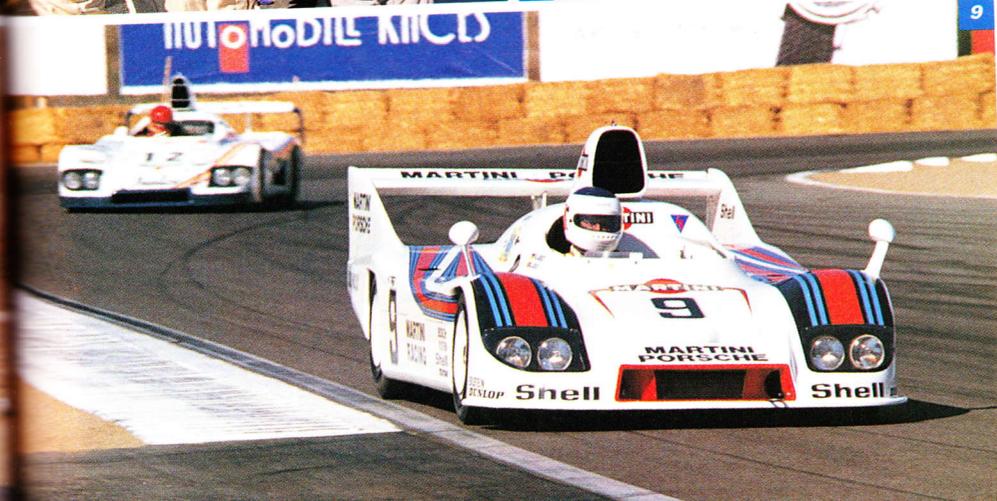
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error. This event isn't so much an appreciation of driver aptitude as a celebration of the machine. And if you're going to celebrate the attributes of a vehicle, it matters not at all what "place" a car achieves on the track at the end of the race. If you have had a chance to savor its performance, then the car has won the day. A lot of Porsches won the day this year.

By the same token, the spectator at Monterey needs to experience the proceedings at a leisurely pace. There's always too much competing for your attention, so going slow insures you won't miss out. The midway of booths hawking Porsche artifacts this year was almost as rewarding as the racing on the track. Topping the list was the photo expo of Jesse Alexander's work covering 40 of Porsche's 50 years. Next came the factory store, selling everything from bikes and sunglasses to calendars and autographed posters. The 400 Maisto commemorative models of Porsche 356 001 in 1:18 scale sold out by Friday — the first day of the event.

Looking back on the weekend, two experiences remain indelible. The first came while sitting in the cool shade of the Porsche pavilion and watching an excellent and surprisingly frank movie detailing the history of the marque. One of the tent's flaps opened onto the area where the tech inspections were conducted on Thursday afternoon. Every few minutes, a 908 or 917 would rumble past the open tent flap, providing simultaneous real time backdrop to the flickering images on the screen in front of me.

The other defining moment of the event came when I had the chance to stand right next to the starter's bridge on the front straight as the 917 Can Am cars of Olaf Lange, George Follmer, and Hurley Haywood screamed past, dueling for position. I may have missed the ultimate turbo Porsches when they raced at Laguna in 1972 and 1973, but I didn't make that mistake this time.

That might have been the best part about the 1998 Monterey Historics — it gave Porsche fans the chance to experience 50 years of Porsche excellence in just one weekend. Through the hard work of the Porsche factory and the legions of Porsche privateers and fans, the Porsche experience everybody savored at Monterey this year will not be soon forgotten. Ferry would have been proud. ■