

PORSCHE

PANORAMA

July 1984



Moment of Glory:

Miles Collier has rescued one of Porsche's three winners from the 1970 Marathon de la Route

In 1970 Porsche's first and most important competition goal was to secure the World Championship of Makes with their formidable fleet of 917s. Although necessarily secondary to the 917 program, Porsche had a further racing goal for 1970. In the fall of the previous year at the Frankfurt Auto Show, the new mid-

engined 914 and 914/6 roadster models had been introduced amidst great controversy and in an effort to bolster the sales of these new cars, Porsche decided to develop a competition version of the 914/6.

The story goes that an apparent loophole in FIA regulations made it possible for Porsche to homologate the 914/6 GT by building a specified number of conversion kits for the standard 914/6. The kits consisted of steel fender flares, six frame reinforcement plates, upgraded brakes, front oil coolers, oil lines and other parts and most 914/6 GT's were produced by conversion of production models. The factory built a limited number of complete 914/6 GT's for its own use or that went to friends of the factory and racers. The number

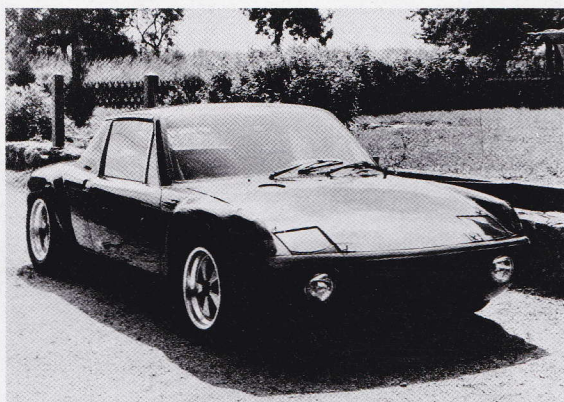


The 914/6 GT

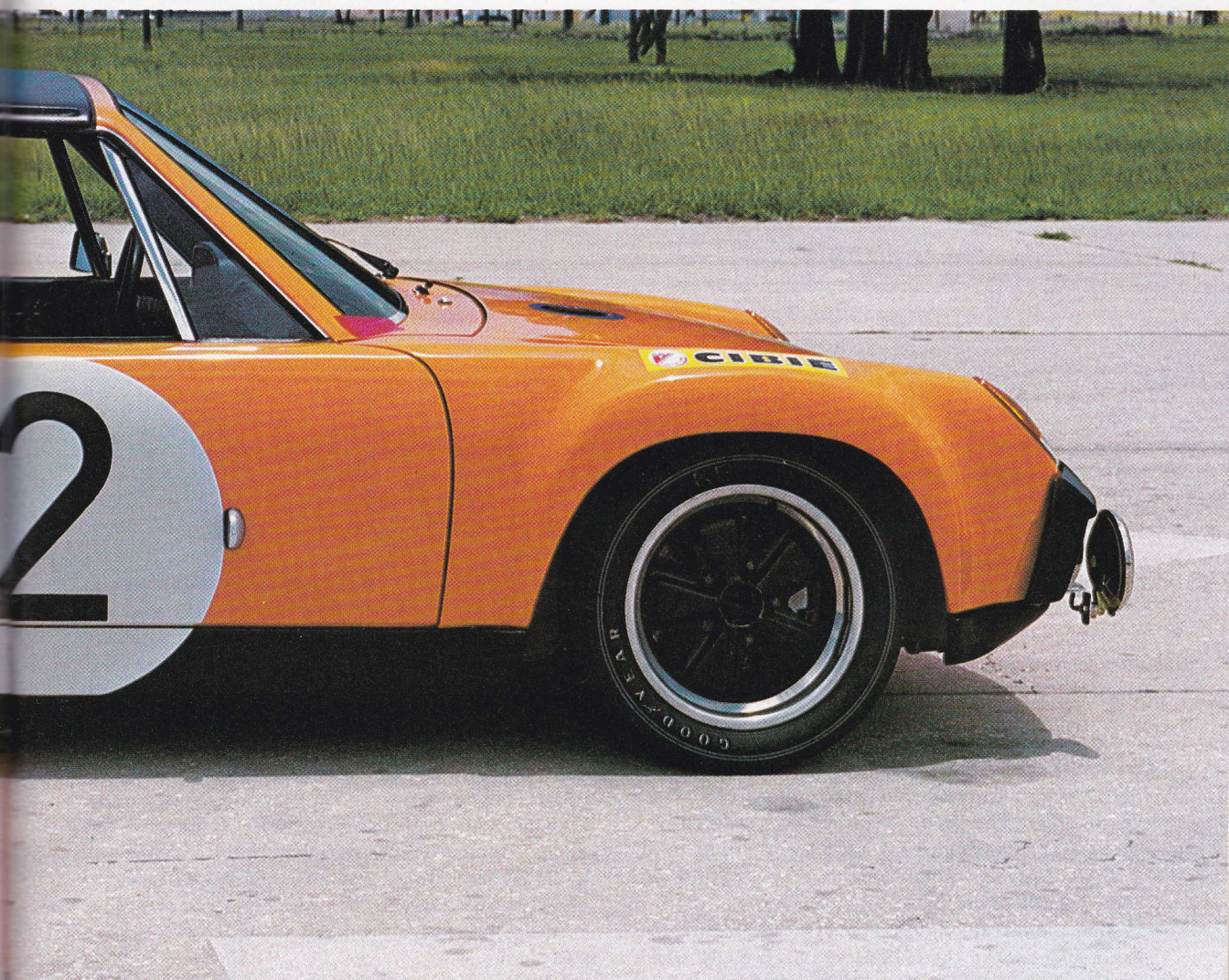
of cars that Porsche produced out of its own competition department is unclear but is estimated at fewer than ten vehicles.

The 914/6 GT featured here is a car that Porsche built for its own use. Owned today by Miles Collier of West Palm Beach, Florida, it was built as one of a series of three automobiles prepared for the 86-hour Marathon de la Route in August 1970. Traditionally run at the Nürburgring, this ultimate endurance contest was frequently chosen by Porsche in those years as a

As Collier found it, the 914/6 GT had been painted royal blue; it had spent most of the years since 1971 as a European street car.



DIRK HERBERT





At the end of the 1970 Marathon de la Route, Porsche's orange roadsters crossed the finish line in victory formation, the two Group 6 Prototypes ahead of Collier's Group 4 car.

test arena for new production ideas. Porsche won in 1967 with a 911 fitted with Sportomatic transmission and again in 1968 when they entered a 911E with the new fuel injection and self-adjusting front struts. Seeking competition luster for the 914/6 in 1970, they once again tackled the grueling Marathon de la Route.

Of the three 914/6 GT's entered, two ran as Group 6 Prototypes because of extra wide eight-inch rims on the rear and therefore fender extensions that exceeded the two inches allowed by Group 4 rules. The cars ran with competition numbers 1, 2 and 3 and license plate numbers 1947, 1948 and 1949. Drivers included Guy Chasseuil, Gérard Larrouse, Björn Waldegaard, Claude Ballot-Lena, Claude Haldi, Gunther Steckkönig and Helmut Marko. Collier's car was the Group 4 GT car, carrying competition number 2 and license number 1948, driven by Ballot-Lena, Steckkönig and Koob.

For the Marathon, the cars were equipped with stock two-liter, 160-horsepower 911S motors rather than the 901/35 racing engine intended for the 914/6 GT which was essentially a Carrera 6 engine based on the standard 911 big-fan case. Rules required that the cars run muffled and whatever equipment was needed for the enduro had to be carried on board.

At the end of 86 hours, Porsche's orange roadsters crossed the finish line in one-two-three victory formation, the two Group 6 Prototypes ahead of Collier's Group 4 car. The Group 4 car had been delayed by a problem changing a tire and lost a lap, finishing third. It was a satisfying win for Porsche, as only 23 of 64 entrants made it to the finish.

After the Marathon, the three 914/6 GT's were used as training cars for the 1971 Monte Carlo Rally, where Porsche had made what was retrospectively a bad deci-

sion to compete with 914/6 GT's instead of proven 911 models. Porsche felt a Monte Carlo win was sure to ignite sales of the 914/6 which had nearly ceased production at Stuttgart so slight was the demand for it. It was not meant to be, however. The weather was the worst in a decade and the best Waldegaard could do was a third place finish which virtually ended the 914/6 GT's factory career in international motor sport.

Collier's 914/6 GT, in its present state of restoration, duplicates as closely as possible the appearance of the car as it ran at the Marathon de la Route, with some concessions made in the engine compartment to make the car competitive for today's vintage racing. He has installed a full race 914/6 engine in it and therefore runs megaphones rather than the original Marathon rally muffler. Collier also installed the roll bar, which was not in the car for the Marathon or the Monte Carlo Rally. The car has a center mounted handbrake which was added during the training for the Monte Carlo Rally. For the 86-hour race, it had no handbrake at all.

The two-tone black and dayglo red front bumper is original. Each of the three Marathon cars had a different bright color on the bumper for quick recognition from the pits. The yellow dotted line on the passenger's side pillar indicates that the car was in the Group 4 GT class. The Group 6 Prototypes wore a white patch containing a black X on the pillar.

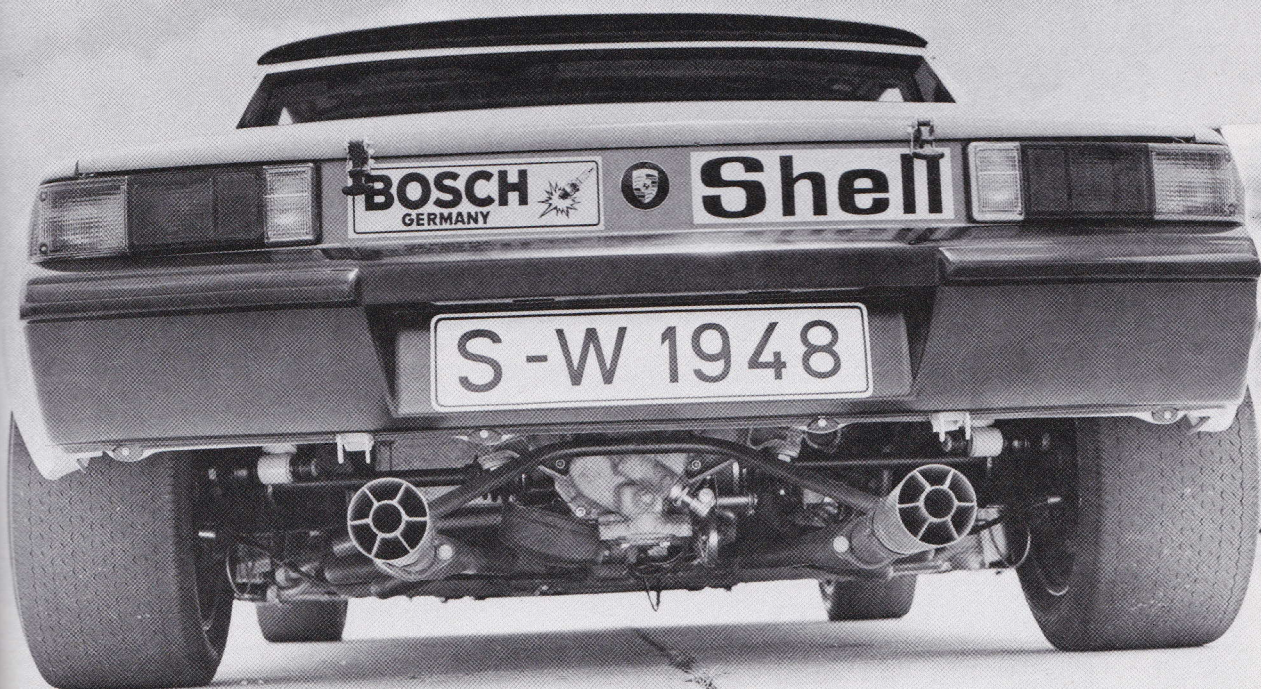
After Monte Carlo the car was sold to a factory mechanic who drove it on the street. Collier has the original German registration for the car which shows the initial registrant as Porsche, followed by a succession of European owners. For most of the rest of its days in Europe, the 914/6 GT was a street car with a stock 911S motor.

Collier bought the car after a trip to Porsche's



LEONARD TURNER

The interior of the car is as it ran the Marathon de la Route with the exception of the center-mounted handbrake which was added during training for the Monte Carlo Rally.



LEONARD TURNER

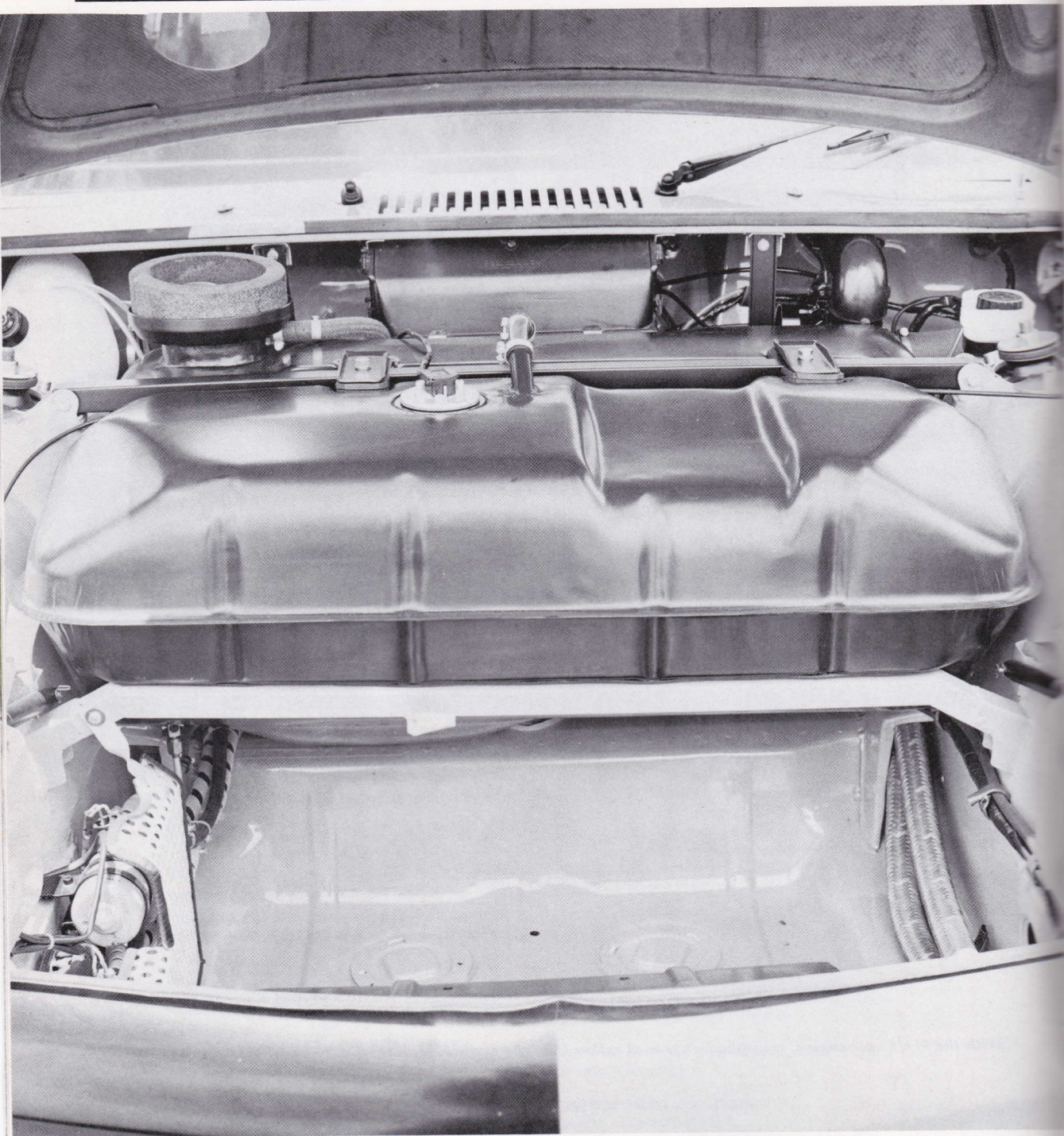
With the 914/6 race engine, megaphones are used rather than the original Marathon rally muffler.

Golden Anniversary Jubilee at the Nürburgring in 1981, a celebration similar to the Monterey Historic Races in this country the following year. At the Nürburgring, he saw a replica of the #1 Marathon 914/6 GT, built by Armin Hardy, and was so impressed by it that he resolved to find one of the original three.

According to Collier, the car was in abysmal condition when he bought it although it was cosmetically attractive. Painted royal blue, it had been fitted with a blue leather interior. When it was disassembled for

restoration, however, he discovered the car had suffered from massive electrolysis. Subjected to frequent driving in salt in Europe, the car fell prey to electrical currents created between its light alloys and steel which virtually destroyed every piece of light alloy on the car. About halfway through the corrosion process, someone had rustproofed the bottom which only served to lock all the corrosion in.

The body was salvageable, but the mechanical components were not restorable. "We were able to save the



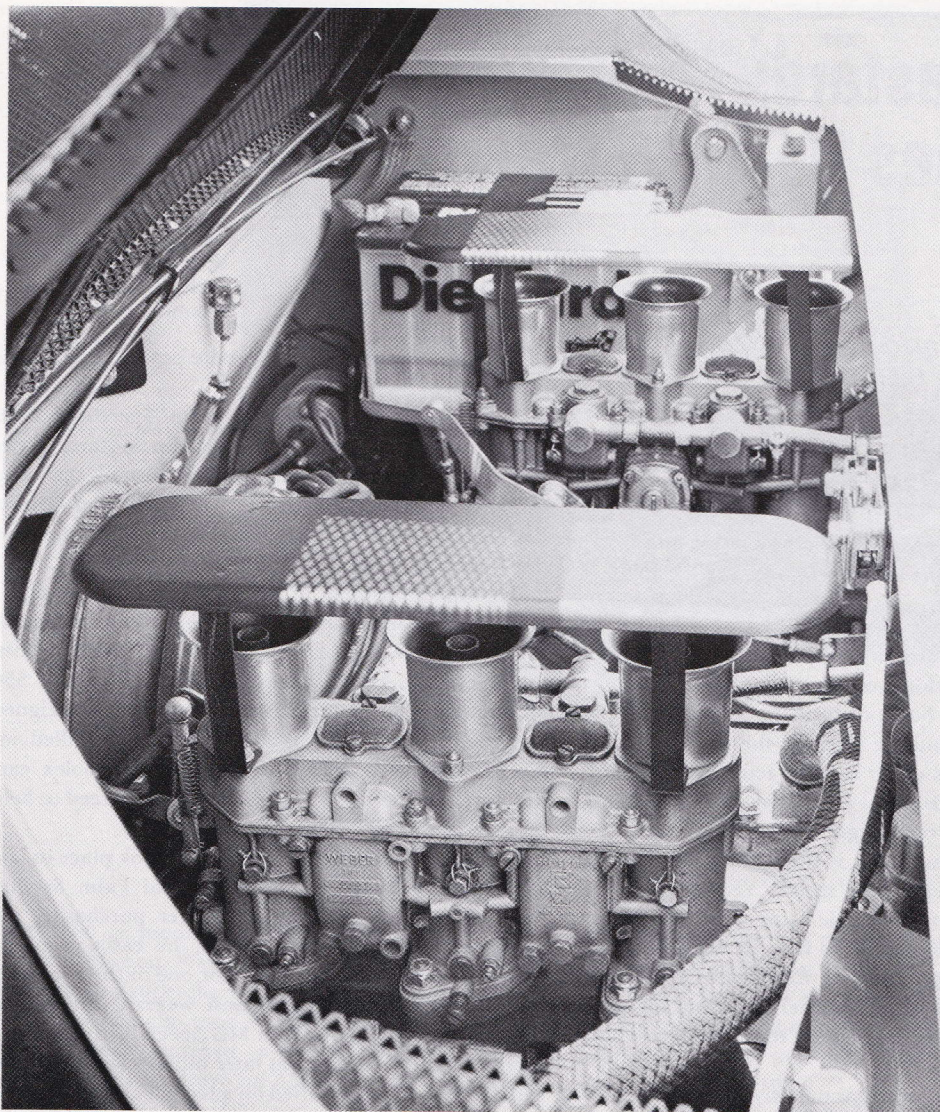
The trunk compartments were a restoration challenge. They had been shotgun sprayed black over fittings, wires, bugs and dirt.

lower front A-arms and torsion bars, the rear bananas, the rear hubs, the main transmission case, and that was it," says Collier.

Some 90 percent of the mechanical parts are brand new, as is 100 percent of the trim. Many of the trim items, which should have been restorable, had to be

junked because the interiors of the front and rear trunk compartments had been shotgun sprayed black, laminating everything with bugs and dirt, in an effort to hide the original orange paint when the exterior was changed to blue.

Remarkably, Collier did not have to fabricate any



LEONARD TURNER

For vintage racing, the car has been fitted with a full race 914/6 engine. For the Marathon it used a stock two-liter 911S motor.

missing parts. Because so many 914/6 GT kits were made for cars that were never built, a fair supply of 914/6 GT components remain available. Collier was able to find new interior door trim panels, a complete brand new 914/6 GT carpet kit, as well as brand new hood and trunk lids. Some of the street 914/6 parts, like the dash pad, proved to be harder to obtain than the competition parts.

As a vintage racer, the 914/6 GT has been enormously competitive. On any kind of reasonably twisty course like Lime Rock or Laguna Seca, there isn't a 289 Cobra that can stay with it. Collier, whose collection encompasses many Porsches from Carrera Speedster to 917, finds that the 914/6 GT and a 910 are his two favorite cars to drive.

"The 914/6 GT is enormously forgiving," he says, "It's got a low polar moment, which means that once you spin it, it'll spin like a top, but the car gives you so

much warning that it's going to let go that you never really seem to be approaching the edge of disaster. It's got 908 brakes, which give it enormous braking power."

The Porsche 914/6 could not be saved by the competitive vigor of the 914/6 GT. In 1971, production had dwindled to barely enough to meet racing needs, while cars in stock were gradually sold. Though officially still available in 1972, few 914/6s were actually produced. Porsche's great experiment in mid-engined production had lasted less than three model years.

The years since then have served to validate the worth of that experiment. The 914/6 was, as Karl Ludvigsen calls it, a car of great character. Miles Collier agrees, "In retrospect, I think it's going to turn out to be a good car, because technically it *was* a good car. Perhaps the styling was questionable, but technically they were a great pleasure to drive."

—BJT