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FEBRUARY 2005





THE STORY  
OF THE  
MAX MORITZ  
914-6 GT

# Back In Orbit





## STORY AND PHOTOS BY ZACHARY MAYNE

**T**here aren't too many significant race cars that have been raced by NASA astronauts. And this 914-6, driven at Sebring by Gemini V and Apollo XII astronaut Pete Conrad, may be the only Porsche that can lay claim to that particular distinction. At the 1971 running of the 12 Hours, Conrad would match his motor skills with Steve

Behr and rally ace John Buffum to lead in the early stages, only to be tormented by transmission problems.

Sebring's racing result, while hardly distinguished, would not define the history of 9140430691 — a Porsche that earned some of the earliest successes on the European racing scene for the much-maligned mid-engined model.

Built in February, 1970 as a standard European production 914-6, 9140430691 was first delivered to Autohaus Max Moritz GmbH, a German Porsche dealer that was, and still is, active in motorsports. Once the Ivory 914-6 arrived at Max Moritz's shop in Reutlingen, it was converted to an FIA Group 4 contender with factory-supplied parts.





While that would forever separate this 914-6 from those 50-odd factory-built GTs that would be constructed, it certainly had the factory's blessing and support from the word go. In 1982, Director of Porsche Motorsports Jurgen Barth documented 9140430691 as being "modified for sports racing purposes with factory parts per our instructions." That support was well placed, as this little Porsche would go on to become one of the winningest 914-6s ever raced, with significant on-track accomplishments in both Europe and North America.

At Max Moritz's workshop, the 1991-cc Type 901/36 motor (number 640 0295) was modified to produce around 220 hp. Braking on GTs was upgraded with either alloy 911S calipers or — as in the case of 9140430691 — far more exotic 908 clippers. At the rear, stock calipers were widened to take vented rotors instead of the stock solid discs. As with factory-built 914-6 GTs, extensive chassis reinforcements were welded in and a larger, 100-liter gas tank was installed. The new tank necessitated the removal of the front bulkhead to allow adequate clearance. The bodywork on the car was modified to accept the distinctive steel fender flares of the 914-6 GT and the Ivory paint was covered by a far more interesting and recognizable Conda Green hue.

The first race for 9140430691 was on

May 31, 1970 at the ADAC 1000-kilometer on the Nurburgring. There, drivers Gerhard Quist and Dietrich Krumm piloted the #96 914 to a fifth-place finish in the Group 4 class. Throughout the 1970 racing season, Max Moritz entered this 914 in 12 more international events in Europe, winning nine times, including three overall GT wins and six 2.0-liter class wins. The 914 saw time at Le Mans, where it lasted for 15 hours before gearbox troubles ended Quist and Krumm's efforts. The fast green 914 is also reputed to have set lap records at Hockenheim and Zolder, and was described by the German press as "Europe's Fastest GT" after helping Porsche secure the prized International GT Trophy.

This undeniable success in Europe would pave the way for 9140430691's purchase and shipment to America. The accomplished Six soon caught the attention of U.S. Porsche racer Ralph Meaney of Boston, Massachusetts. Meaney had built what he claims was one of the first 914-6 GTs in North America with parts that Porsche offered to its customers.

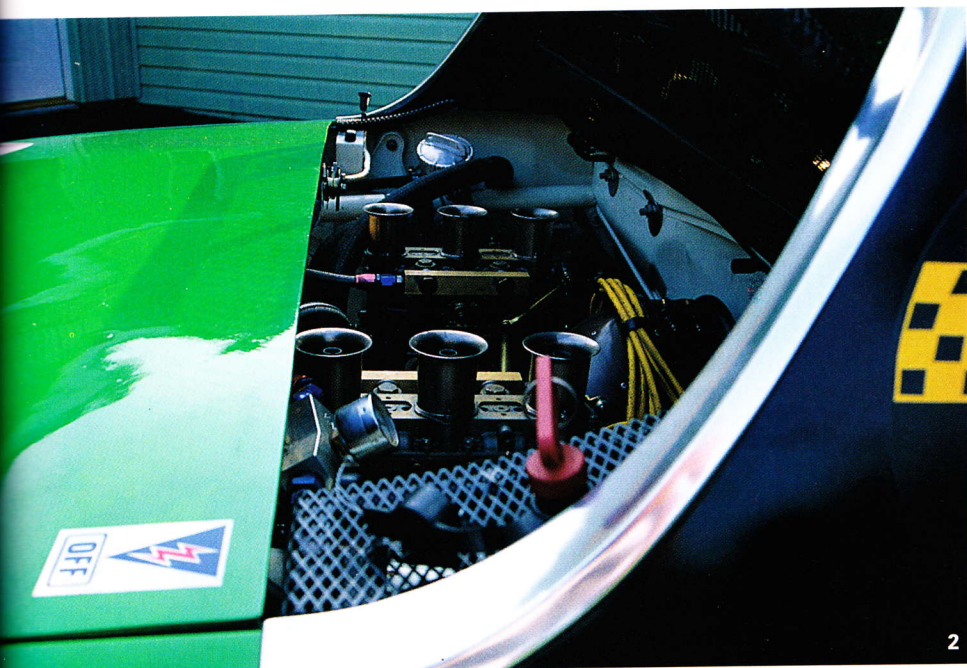
"I bought one of the first 914-6s off the boat from the dealer in Norwood, Massachusetts," recalls Meaney today. "And, three weeks after I bought it, I had stripped it down and was converting it to a GT." Meaney campaigned his first 914-6 in 1970 along with a 911. That

year, Meaney won the GTU class at Daytona in his 911. Steve Behr, then an employee of Porsche North America, had been following Meaney's efforts with the GT-ized 914-6 and contacted him. Behr's suggestion? Enter the 1971 24 Hours of Daytona with two 914s — and Behr knew just where to get the second car after witnessing the success of Max Moritz's 914-6 campaign.

"In December of 1970, I flew over to Germany to see the car in person," says Meaney. "I went with Steve Behr, who spoke German." After the pair inspected the 914-6 GT at Moritz's shop, Meaney decided to buy it. The 914 arrived at the Port of Boston only a few weeks before Daytona and was entered in the race exactly as Meaney had purchased it.

"The car was well taken care of, ready to race, and came with some spare sets of wheels," recalls Meaney. On the banks of Daytona, driven by Steve Behr, Erwin Kremer, and John Buffum, the bright green 914-6 finished eighth overall and an impressive second in the GTU class. As Meaney recalls, the team might have finished first had it not been for a change to rain tires in the afternoon: "I didn't think we had to change tires. I thought it was going to be a short rain, and it was — like only 10 or 15 minutes. But everyone else said we had to change to rain tires." The pit stop was enough to open up an irre-





9140430691 makes its return to Daytona in anger (1), fully restored to its famous Conda Green livery. Sexy six-pot motor sits in an appropriately white engine bay (2), while the drilled-for-lightness door handles and fuel-filler cap (3-4) are extra points of interest. The fat rear tires mount on the mid-engined racer's period-correct Minilite alloy wheels (5).



trievable lead for the Sunoco-sponsored 914-6 GT, which bagged first in GTU.

After the car's impressive showing at Daytona, Meaney tore the motor down for a rebuild to prepare for the 12-hour race at Sebring. In the process, he claims to have found a little more power from the previously prepped engine. In March, the ex-Max Moritz 914, now

badged number 29 but proudly wearing its Conda Green paint, lined up on the starting grid of the 12 Hours of Sebring. Driven by Behr, Buffum, and astronaut Conrad, the 914-6 led early in the race until transmission problems stranded it in the pits for several hours while the gearbox was being rebuilt. "A mechanic left out two pins in the intermediate plate.

The plate moved and damaged a gas-ket and all of the fluid leaked out," recalls Meaney. The 914 was back on track in time to finish 29th out of 57 starters.

After Sebring's race, 9140430691 was entered in the very first IMSA GT event — the Danville 300 — on April 18, 1971 at Virginia International Raceway (VIR). Meaney himself drove the car to a third-



place overall finish and second in class. The overall race-winner in IMSA's first-ever race was also a 914-6 GT, the number 59 car driven by Peter Gregg and Hurley Haywood. Brumos' 914-6 beat the second-place Corvette by a two-lap margin and would go on to win IMSA's inaugural championship, as well.

For the rest of 1971, Meaney continued to enter the car in IMSA events and competed in the Northeastern region of the SCCA. "It was extremely fast," recalls Meaney of his 914-6 today. "At one track, it was neck-and-neck with a 427 Cobra." Initially classified as a B Production racer, the 914 won several SCCA contests with Behr driving before being reclassified into the B Sports category. Throughout the 1971 season, Meaney continued to develop and improve the car's performance — particularly in handling terms.

"We were at a race at Bridgehampton and, during practice, Behr came into the pits and said the car wasn't handling very

well," explains Meaney. "I took off the rear sway bar without telling him and told him to come back in after two laps. When he came back in, he told me it was handling a lot better. It turned out that the 914-6 didn't need a rear sway bar!"

Meaney also lightened the already bantamweight 914 as much as possible during the season, liberally drilling holes in everything from the outer door handles to the inner doorskins. "We got it so light we had to bolt some flywheels from big American cars under the passenger seat to get it back up to the minimum weight of 1,865 pounds required by the SCCA," claims Meaney.

The last professional appearance for 9140430691 in a road race was at the IMSA GT 250 on September 19, 1971. The race was staged at Summit Point, where Meaney would finish 11th in the GTU class. In 1972, Meaney decided to refocus his attention on 911s, so the ex-Max Moritz 914-6 was sold to one of his sponsors, Forry C. Laucks of Needham,

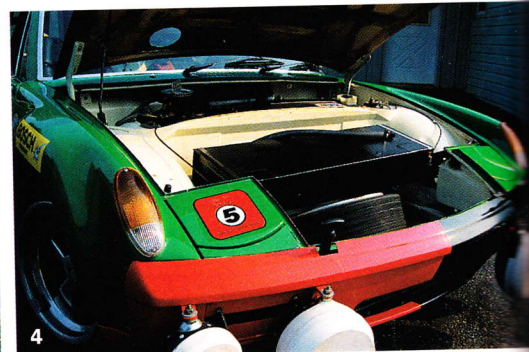
Massachusetts. "Forry just parked it in his yard and didn't do anything with it," recalls Meaney. At this point, the history of the venerable 914-6 gets a bit hazy.

After presumably languishing unused for years, it was purchased by Gil Meyer in 1982. Meyer went vintage racing with the 914 after painting it black. Even after coming out of its retirement, 9140430691 was still a fast car. In December of 1984, Meyer won the Governor's Cup at the Bahamas Vintage Speedweek. Sadly, an automobile crash would claim the life of Meyer a few years later. His widow then put 9140430691 into a garage for good, sometime around 1986.

Though the existence, not to mention the significance, of one of the most successful 914-6 GT racers may have been forgotten about by most, one 914 enthusiast never forgot about 9140430691. Patrick Scalli of Boston was a budding Porsche enthusiast in the early 1970s when he became aware of the 914-6 GT. Meaney campaigned at Daytona.



9140430691's original white paint shows through in the interior (1), while Porsche center caps in the Minilites are a curious fit (2)—as are Fuchs front wheels and aftermarket rears (3), but *that's* how the car ran. Front trunk (4) has been updated with a fuel cell, but the oversize rally lights remain. Cue vintage *night* racing, please...







5

"When I was 16, I saw an article in a magazine about this guy who showed up at Daytona with two 914-6 GTs," says Scalli. "And then I read that the guy was local and lived about 30 miles from me." The owner of the two cars was of course Ralph Meaney, and Scalli, in his youthful enthusiasm, drove to Framingham, Massachusetts in his 1959 Dodge — just to see if he could see the cars in person. "When I got to Meaney's shop, I just peeked my head in and, sure enough, there were the cars."

Scalli would go on to race cars — primarily Porsches — himself and still does to this day. Recently, he competed in the Le Mans Classic in Europe driving a 911 RSR. Throughout the years, he has competed in everything from SCCA to IMSA to vintage racing — driving a wide range of Porsches from 917s to 914s. But it's

the latter mid-engined mount that has been a lasting presence in his long-term passion for Porsches.

"Over the years, I always had 914s," says Scalli. "I've had three GTs and about a dozen 914s." But the memory of seeing Meaney's 914 racers in person was strong enough to motivate him, 20 years later, to try and buy one of the very same cars that had been indelibly burned into his memory as a teen. The year Scalli began his search was 1995.

"It took two years to find the car," recalls Scalli. "People would say, 'I have the Meaney car!' and I would fly out to see it. But it wouldn't be the same car." Scalli even flew out to Washington and met with Meaney, who had moved west in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, Meaney didn't know his old 914-6's whereabouts, but he did know that, at some point, it

had been sold to Gil Meyer. "Meaney didn't know where it was, but he had the VIN and the engine number as well as historical documents on the car."

Armed with more clues to help him find the real car, Scalli returned home to Boston and continued his search for the elusive ex-Max Moritz 914. "There was a black 914-6 GT that I had seen at a Porsche Parade one year, and it was a local car," he says. In fact, the car was owned by the widow of Gil Meyer and Scalli decided to check the serial numbers on the off chance it was the 914 he had been looking for. When Scalli finally arrived in Andover, Massachusetts — where the 914 was in storage and probably had been since Meyer's untimely death — he found the black 914-6 GT he saw at the Parade in a garage that was connected to a horse stable.





PHOTO RICH CHENET

**Limbert heads through Daytona's infield for the high banks in the company of 550 Spydors, RSKs, 911s, and 356s...**

"It was so covered with dirt that it looked gray," says Scalli of the sight that met his eyes when Mrs. Meyer opened the garage door. A check of the numbers revealed that this was 9140430691 — the same 914-6 GT that conquered tracks from Western Europe to North America. Ironically, the car he'd been trying to track down for two years had been right under his nose all along.

"This car really was forgotten about," remarks Scalli today of the famous 914 racer. "Nobody knew what it was. People thought it might be something special, but nobody was really sure. The owner's widow knew it was something, though, since her husband told her it was worth a lot of money. Spares included the original rear Minilites, which had rock-hard Firestone race tires — probably the same ones it ran on at Daytona and Sebring."

Meyer's widow agreed to sell the 914 to Scalli and, once it was in his possession, he went through everything before taking it to Watkins Glen for its first event in decades. For the next couple of years, Scalli actively vintage raced the 914-6 at various venues, often accompanied by 914-6 GT enthusiast Gary Wigglesworth, who happens to own the Sunoco 914-6 GT, the same car that beat 9140430691 to finish first at Daytona in 1971.

"We had big fun chasing each other at all the tracks," chuckles Scalli. "When Wigglesworth won, he would say '*that's* how it should be!'" In late 1997, Scalli decided to put the Max Moritz car right and returned it to the livery it wore on the high banks of Daytona in 1971. That process entailed a ground-up restoration.

At the time, Scalli was the owner of Scalli Motorsports, a shop specializing in the restoration of historic Porsche cars. As the ex-Moritz 914 was stripped to bare metal, the telltale layers of paint were revealed.

"We uncovered the layer of Conda Green under the black paint, and then the layer of Ivory paint under that," claims Scalli. "There were no dents or modifications, either. It really was unmolested — it even had the original aluminum rollcage with FIA stamping on it." The only parts Scalli says he *had* to replace were the front and rear decklids, which suffered from "layers of paint and bondo." Scalli managed to locate an OEM set of the trick, balsa-wood reinforced 914-6 GT decklids to replace the originals. Scalli also reports that, when the engine was disassembled for a rebuild, it still had the original, 906-style race pistons.

Scalli took his reborn ex-Max Moritz/Ralph Meaney car to the big anniversary celebration at 1998's Monterey Historics, its first public showing. It was a big hit, says Scalli: "It was sitting between a 935 and a 910 and people were walking right past those historically significant cars to look at the 914. That fresh Conda Green paint was just so brilliant. It's really an odd looking car, with those big lights up front and that color."

But while he's enjoyed driving the car in its restored state, he enjoyed the hunt and challenge of restoring it properly every bit as much. "The process of finding the car and then researching and restoring it was very satisfying," says Scalli. And, while he readily admits that 9140430691 isn't one of the super-rare factory-built GTs, it certainly has the documentation to prove its merit as one of the earliest 914-6s to receive the GT treatment package. As for the infamous GT

list that circulates among 914-6 GT aficionados? It was, he claims, a list created for the SCCA to prove that enough GTs were made to allow them to race in a particular SCCA class. "This list doesn't include the very early cars," he argues. Cars like this ex-Max Moritz 914-6.

Scalli sold the 914-6 to Ed Mettleman a couple of years later. He says it was updated during Mettleman's ownership. The original aluminum FIA rollcage was replaced with a welded-in steel cage, the hand-held fire extinguisher was ditched for a safer system, and the gas tank was replaced with a fuel cell. Mettleman used the 914 for vintage racing for a few years before selling it to its present owner, Steve Limbert, in January of 2003.

Limbert has been campaigning an E-Production 914-6 in SCCA racing since 1978 and has been to the SCCA Runoffs in a 914 more than any other driver — so 9140430691 definitely found a good home. Limbert owns Aircooled Racing in Wellsville, Pennsylvania — which he runs out of a large garage behind his house. There, he works on Porsche race cars, predominantly 914s and 911s.

"I do it more for fun, to see how much fun an old retired guy can have," laughs Limbert. Inside his garage there are some pretty interesting cars, including an old SCCA Speedster and an ex-Bruce Jennings 911S — a car that was built as a back-up for the Monte Carlo Rally but never used. Clearly, Limbert appreciates the history behind old Porsche race cars. And, with the ex-Max Moritz 914-6 GT, Limbert feels he's living the dream.

When Steve towed the green Porsche back to his shop, he put it on the lift to take a closer look. After a compression test, a rebuild of the carbs, an alignment, and a brake bleed, he was off to his first event — May's Brian Redman Jefferson 500 at Summit Point. "I didn't go to race, though, just to shake the car down," says Limbert. The ex-Max Moritz 914, true to form, didn't disappoint. Its latest outing was 2004's Rennsport Reunion II at Daytona Speedway, where it was displayed alongside the Lufthansa-sponsored 914-6 GT owned by Mark Allin and the famous 914-6 GT from Florida's Brumos Porsche museum.

PCNA's vintage spectacle was special for Limbert and 9140430691, as it was a chance to savor this historic mid-engined race car at the venue that introduced it to road racing in North America. While Pete Conrad wasn't on hand to return the 914-6 GT to the high banks, Limbert got a chance to do a little bit of orbiting all his own... ■