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A BRIGHT-EYED FARMER, TEACHER, AND PCA MEMBER BOUGHT THIS EXTREMELY EARLY 1971 914 NEW—AND HAS DRIVEN IT 39,555 MILES IN THE 45 YEARS SINCE.

STORY BY **DAVID MATHEWS** PHOTOS BY **MICHAEL ALAN ROSS**



**WITH HIS SHOCK** of curly white hair, Donegal beard, and yoked western shirt with pearl snap buttons, AK Kissell looks like he would be more comfortable straddling the seat of an old farm tractor or hauling grain to storage than squeezed behind the steering wheel of a diminutive German sports car. However, those initial impressions can be misleading.

The fact of the matter is this: AK is every bit as comfortable piloting his 1971 914 over Pennsylvania back roads as he is tilling fields with his International tractor or hauling 60,000 pounds of soybeans to the ADM grain elevator. And he teaches agriculture to elementary school-age students as well as to adults. *And*, as PCA Delaware Region Historian—a position that he has held since 2004—he's happy to provide a detailed history of the club at the drop of a hat.

"I guess my age helped me get the job," he quips. The long-term PCA member, who is a little older than most other folks in the group, may have a point. His collection of German cars and Porsche tractors probably didn't hurt, either.

**"MY FIRST PORSCHE** was a Smyrna Green 1963 356B T6," says AK. "I purchased it in December 1967 from a gentleman who owned several drugstores around Logan, Ohio. I was working with the Hocking County Soil and Water Conservation District at the time. I worked across the alley from this drugstore. I'd go over there for lunch—they served soup and sandwiches at the counter." He developed a friendship with the proprietor, who just happened to own that little green sports car. As their friendship grew, so did AK's infatuation with the 356.



**Above:** Passenger footrest and the lack of fresh-air outlets on either side of the dash reflect this 914's pre-1972 vintage. **Right (from left to right):** AK, Arno, and Ronald Kissell—fans of the brand.



"When you decide to sell it," said AK, "let me know." Sure enough AK got a surprise phone call a few years later. The drugstore owner had just purchased a new Porsche, and rather than trading his 356, he asked if AK still wanted to buy it. "Although I hadn't seen the car in a few years," says AK, "I bought it for \$1,800 right over the phone."

That 356 was followed by this

1971 914, which was featured in the Historics Display at the 2015 Porsche Parade. Of the 116,000 914-4s built between model years 1970 and 1976, what makes AK's car so special? He says that the car, which bears serial number 4712900003, was the first 1971 914-4 sold to the public.

How did AK come to purchase 0003? A stickler for research, he considered many cars that were

popular at that time—sports cars from Alfa Romeo, BMW, Porsche, and Sunbeam, plus the Datsun 240Z, Opel GT, and Triumph TR6. Porsche's engineering prowess and reputation won out.

"I had several goals (to achieve) by the time I was 30, one of which was to own a new Porsche—preferably red," says AK. "I waited for the 914 introduction because of its design and engineering."

During 1970, AK shopped for his red Porsche in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, but he could not find a 914 or a 914-6 that he liked.

**WHEN THE FIRST** 1971 Porsches arrived at AK's local dealer, Stein Motors, the shipment included two identical Bahia Red 914s. Well, *almost* identical.

"I started looking them over," explains AK. "One was cleaned up and sitting in the showroom, and the other was outside in the lot, just the



**Clockwise:** Beauty lies in this car's simple, utilitarian design. As with all U.S.-spec 914s, this car proudly displays the Porsche name across its engine grille. Although used a time or two, the tools remain pristine.

way it came off the ship. I selected the one outside for two reasons: It had Michelin tires instead of Dunlops, and it had the low serial number—0003."

AK still has the window sticker that shows the retail price of \$3,595. The optional Appearance Group added \$290 to the cost. "The Blaupunkt radio was dealer installed. I first had a Motorola radio, which I didn't like," adds AK.

Now that he owned his red Porsche, how did AK enjoy it? "I used the car for trips," he says. "I could make it from Newark, Delaware to Newark, Ohio—a distance of 420 miles—in six hours, nonstop. It was quick, usually traveling at 75 mph—before the national 55-mph limit [was imposed]. It was economical, frequently getting 30 miles per gallon. I didn't have to fill the 16.4-gallon tank. The car was comfortable, a great touring car."

A benefit of the car's mid-engine

configuration was its solid handling, even in terrible weather. AK recalls getting caught in a typical Pennsylvania winter storm, with rain showers developing into a raging blizzard. "What normally took six hours took 16 hours that day. We were frequently down to one [passable] lane. But the car handled beautifully in the snow. People who never owned a 914 don't know what they missed."

**AK TRAVELED PLENTY** back in the 1970s. Well-educated and with diverse interests, AK acquired a bachelor of science degree from Ohio State University with dual majors in agricultural engineering and agricultural education, *and* a master of science degree from Penn State. He taught agriculture in three states—Delaware, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—from a one-room schoolhouse in Lancaster County to an 1,800-student high school. "I taught adult education and even gun safety, ulti-

mately certifying over 500 people in the hunter safety course," says AK.

AK's daily driver was a Royal Red 1966 Volkswagen Beetle. After he and Helga got married, they frequently drove her 1973 two-door, four-speed Volkswagen 412 because it was a bit more spacious. If you are getting the idea that AK had a thing for German cars, you're right.

Not only did AK have an affinity for German machinery, so did Helga, their son Arno, and AK's brother Ronald. Their stable includes Audis, BMWs, a Mercedes-Benz, and Porsches (the 914-4 and a 1970 914-6), as well as Volkswagens. Arno is responsible for performance and tuning at Smith Volkswagen in Wilmington, Delaware, and Ronald owns a Porsche 924. And AK didn't stop with German cars; he also owns several Porsche-Diesel tractors, one of which also made the trip to the 2015 Porsche Parade in French Lick.

Well, we got a little off track,



**Above:** Sharp and angular, the 914 was a departure from its more softly shaped siblings. **Opposite:** Against the backdrop of vintage Monon railcars and a renovated freight depot, AK's 914 offers its own piece of history.

considering this story is supposed to be about a Porsche 914, but with AK, it's easy to get sidetracked. He knew his 914 was special because of its low serial number, but he wanted to know how special it really was.

Consequently, on December 10, 1993, AK sent an inquiry letter to Howard Adams at Porsche Cars North America in Reno, Nevada to see if he could find out what happened to 0001 and 0002. A parts department employee at the time, Adams had earned a reputation for assisting Porsche owners with specific build questions relating to VINs. Adams predated the Certificate of Authenticity program.

AK received Adam's handwritten response a few weeks later. "0001, Irish Green, and 0002, Adriatic Blue—both cars crushed as part of crash testing. Hope this has been helpful." Signed, H. Adams. Why, yes. That information was most helpful, indeed. Adams had just confirmed that

AK's 914 carried the first VIN of the 1971 model year offered for sale. Interesting? Yes, especially for a Porsche buff like AK.

**IN JANUARY 2015**, PCA's *e-Brake* online newsletter published a request for unique vehicles to be displayed in the 60-4-60 and Historics Displays at the upcoming 60th Porsche Parade in June. Certainly, 0003 qualified as unique.

"I emailed Caren Cooper, the PCA President," relates AK. "Soon I got a reply from Ron Gordon, the Concours Co-Chair, saying they were interested. The email also went to Bob Gutjahr. Ron contacted Hank Weil, who requested more information and asked if we could supply a Porsche-Diesel tractor for the Historics Display. On May 19, the 914 was assigned to the Historics Display at Ron Gordon's direction."

AK and crew immediately began preparing his 39,555-mile 914 for the

"Really Big Shew." Certainly not a garage queen and never a concours entrant, the 914 nevertheless took a shine to all of the care showered upon it. Parade-goers marveled at its classic design and unassuming appearance. No fender bulges. No fat tires. No deep-dish alloy wheels. The simplicity of its originality spoke volumes.

"It still has its original five tires," adds AK. And the original tool kit. And the original invoices and paperwork. But admirers, pushing in for a closer look, were admonished by AK and Arno, "Don't look too close. There may be cobwebs underneath." Cobwebs or not, AK did pretty well at his first-ever concours—first in Preservation Group PS 02F.

**DESPITE STORMY WEATHER**, many PCA members drove their vehicles to the 2015 Parade—some driving thousands of miles—because driving is simply a part of the experi-

ence. A large contingent of Parade Concours participants who chose to drive spent countless hours cleaning and preparing for competition.

AK's entries presented a different kind of challenge. John Kassay, Social Media Chair of the Delaware Region and a good friend of AK's, provided the details: "In order to bring both his Porsche-Diesel tractor and his 914 to the event, he had to go the extra measure."

Extra measure? Yes, and then some. AK's 914 needed some mechanical TLC before heading to Parade. Nothing serious, he figured, just a few things to check out and check over. AK borrowed a trailer to haul the 914 to Patterson Automotive in Wilmington, Delaware for the last-minute work. Sam Patterson is well-known in those parts for his work on Volkswagens and other German cars. However, what initially looked like a minor inconvenience turned into a major headache.

The 914's brake lines were shot and all four of its calipers were frozen. After replacing the brake lines and installing borrowed calipers from a friend in the Delaware Region, Sam thought the car was ready to go. It wasn't. A leaky master cylinder had to be replaced. Sam made several phone calls searching for the part and then burned the midnight oil installing it. Finally, two days before Parade opened, the 914 was ready for the trip.

But that's not all. AK's Porsche-Diesel tractor was in storage an hour away from his Delaware home. AK borrowed another piece of equipment, this time a flatbed truck, to retrieve the tractor.

To make a long story short, AK and company, with the help of family, friends, and borrowed equipment, caravaned his precious cargo to southern Indiana, loading, unloading, and reloading a time or two on the way. Working without sleep

for more than 24 hours, AK arrived in time for the Parade with both car and tractor.

At the conclusion of the 60th Porsche Parade, AK and company commandeered the nearby railroad freight depot, chugged his Porsche tractor up the loading ramp, and onto the bed of his borrowed truck.

"All in a day's work for AK," said John. "No big deal!"

**AK'S FRIENDS HAVE** described him as a character. "I'm not sure what that means," says AK with a scratch of his chin whiskers. "But I guess I do dance to my own fiddler. We try to stay busy—sometimes too busy—and don't leave much grass growing under our feet. I have lived, worked, or studied in two countries, three states, and twelve counties."

For AK, life is pretty normal—which means teaching, trucking, farming, and driving his 914 as if his curly white hair is ablaze. ●