



# More Than Words

HOW AN UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP EXEMPLIFIES PCA'S MOTTO.

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**JANUARY 21, 2015.** *“Porsche Club of America is excited to announce the new Porsche 911 GTS Club Coupe, the product of collaboration between PCA and Porsche to honor our club’s 60th anniversary. ...Handcrafted at Porsche Exclusive and based on the 911 Carrera GTS, it was developed with input from members of PCA’s Executive Council to include features that can’t be found on any other Porsche model. Only 60 GTS Club Coupes will be made, for PCA members only. ...the most visible bespoke feature is the non-metallic color, named Club Blau.”* ❖ *“Porsche will give one GTS Club Coupe away to a lucky PCA member (details will be made available soon), and the other 59 will be available for purchase for \$136,060 (not including \$995 destination fee) by PCA members through a lottery.”*—National News, Porsche Club of America, Atlanta.



Alex Llorente, a rabid Porsche enthusiast since his teens, a PCA member since 1971, and member of the First Settlers Region, perked up at the news. A lottery. Wow, what are the chances...what if...no, I couldn't be that lucky. But lightning did strike. His name was one of the first five drawn from the thousands entered. One of those special cars would be his.

What you're about to read is more than the details of a fancy blue sports car. It's way more than that. It's about the human spirit in the face of peril. It's about generosity in its purest form. It's about two strangers from disparate backgrounds who connected because of a common interest—a passion for Porsche. And how, despite the most trying of circumstances, they developed a friendship that clearly defined PCA's mantra, "It's not just the cars. It's the people."

Among the thousands who made the perilous exodus from Havana, Cuba, 13-year-old Alex and his family arrived in Miami on February 13, 1963. With hope in their hearts, minimal understanding of English, and \$5 collectively among them, the Llorente family immigrated to the United States in search of a better future. Soon after fleeing from the crime of Miami's toughest barrios, the Llorentes moved north to Spartanburg, South Carolina, at the behest of a relative. "My dad's cousin offered housing and good-paying jobs," recalled Alex. With better opportunities and living conditions, the family prospered.

So how did Alex, an immigrant kid in South Carolina, develop an interest in Porsche?

"I was a senior in high school," he said. "I met a girl who loved 914s. Now, I had no idea what a 914 was, or a

Porsche, for that matter. Personally, I liked Mustangs." Alex's ambition and amorous proclivity rose to the occasion. "I worked four jobs that summer—assembly line work making beer barrels and automobile parts, maintenance work at a local factory, delivering newspapers on the weekend, and cutting grass around the neighborhood," he said. "By summer's end, I had just enough money to buy a bare-bones 1971 914 1.7L for \$3,595. It was my daily driver. I joined in on a few local Porsche road rallies and had a great time."

**HIS "DAILY DRIVER"** briefly landed on a racetrack in SCCA E-Production. Did his racing exploits segue into spellbinding stories he could tell his grandchildren? "Hot shoe? No, more like controlled out of control," he said. "If you can't be good, be bold. Racing was not my

forte. Years later, when I attended the Porsche Driver Experience at Road Atlanta, professional racer/instructor David Murry told me I could not hit an apex if it was under my nose."

Alex's high school romance cooled, but his infatuation with Porsche never did. From that 914, Alex moved through the model line—911, 928, 924, and a first-year 996. A fan of technology over tradition, he fell in love with the silkiness of the 996. "It purred like a kitten instead of roaring like a lion," he said. "I was shocked at how smooth it was."

How did Alex make the move to PCA? "I filled out a membership (PCA) card in September 1970," he said. "I never heard a word. After attending a few more events, I inquired about my application status. I was told that members didn't recognize the 914 as a 'real' Porsche.





Never being one to quit, I continued attending events, and finally Harold Leatherman, one of the members, convinced the region to accept my membership in October, 1971. I've been a PCA member ever since."

Alex attended his first PCA parade in 1974—Pocono Manor, Pennsylvania—but the Parade that nudged him into his current passion was the 1981 Smoky Mountains Parade in Asheville, North Carolina. "I entered my 1978 Targa SC in the concours, not having a clue what to expect," he said. "After watching judges dissect my car, I knew I wanted to be a judge. I started helping by being a runner, then a timer, until I actually helped judge a local event. Shortly after, PCA developed several judging training sessions, from which you became a regional, then national, judge. I've judged consecutive Parades since 2009, except 2016 at Jay Peak, Vermont." More about that later.

For Alex, 2015 began with a bang. He was feeling good, life was going well, and his children were happy and successful. As far as his Porsche madness was concerned, he planned to drive his 996 to French Lick, Indiana, once again to judge the national concours event. Then on March 23, he was notified that he would be one of the lucky 60 to own a Club Blau GTS Coupe later that year.

**LIFE WAS GOOD** until April 21. During a routine physical, Alex's doctor discovered an enlarged prostate. She directed Alex to see a urologist, who in turn scheduled a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test and recommended Active Cancer Surveillance (ACS). ACS protocol calls for quarterly PSA testing. Throughout the summer and fall of 2015, Alex's PSA levels remained constant. His gorgeous 2016 Club Coupe arrived on Labor Day, and Alex took delivery that Monday. Perhaps he'd dodged a bullet. On December 1, 2015, Alex's urologist called with bad news. His PSA levels had spiked.

Alex recalled another conversation with his urologist, who was a Porsche guy himself. "You may not be driving your car much," he said. After discussing an uncertain future with his children, Alex decided, "I didn't want the car just sitting. I wanted someone to enjoy the car as it was meant to be enjoyed, so we decided to sell it." Alex's oldest son, Christopher, placed the ad on PCA.org on December 9, 2015, and a classified ad in Porsche Panorama to be run in the February 2016 issue. The listing for Club Blau didn't last that long.

January 31, 2016. Richard "Richie" Horowitz, a 20-year PCA member living in Manhattan, purchased Club Blau, sight unseen. "My father taught me not to haggle about price," recalled Richie. "Haggling always created hard feelings. He told me, if you wanted something,

**Alex Llorente, a fixture at most PCA national events, is the proud "re-owner" of this 911 GT5 Club Coupe. Special details abound on this beauty, from deviating stitching to carbon-fiber accents.**







whatever it was, and the price seemed fair, buy it. From my first conversation with Alex, I knew he was a good guy. I wanted to do right by him.”

Not only did Alex suffer from Porsche withdrawal, he grew more anxious about his impending surgery and his future. Alex continued, “On February 26, my kids convinced me to buy another Porsche, if for no other reason than to serve as a distraction in that difficult period. Christopher found a car for me at Hennessy Porsche in Atlanta, a Black Edition Carrera.” The Carrera was a great car, but it was not the Club Coupe.

“On May 3, 2016, PSA testing indicated my condition had worsened,” Alex said. “The numbers went through the roof. My cancer was spreading. On May 24, I met with the surgeon who scheduled the procedure for June 8, 2016.”

And then... “The first 30 days of recovery, you are in a fog,” Alex said. “You merely exist. But once you face the fears head on, the real soul healing begins. Richie was very supportive and encouraging. He would frequently check on me, which was uncanny because many lifelong friends did not reach out as much as he did. Our friendship was cultivated from the sale of a car to an incredible bond like we had known each other for years. Richie and a couple of other folks became a lifeline.

**“THEIR KIND WORDS,** frequent calls, and messages helped me focus on the main issue—to get back to normal, or more accurately, the new normal. Once I was successfully treated (doctors do not use the word ‘cured’), my kids encouraged me to get back into Porsche. The Black Edition became a part of my life.”

As Alex’s strength returned, so did his zest for life. Short drives became longer, then morphed into road trips. His Black Edition Carrera became known as Black Majic. Not one to shy away from extended time behind the wheel, he embarked on a 30-day, 8,000-mile round-trip journey to the 2017 Spokane Parade with his black Carrera. A victory tour of sorts. Well-deserved.

February 2, 2018. *“The Petersen Automotive Museum will be home for the next year to the most comprehensive gathering of historic Porsche cars ever assembled outside Germany. ‘The Porsche Effect,’ opening to the public Saturday, will feature 48 iconic sports cars, including early models, race winners, bestsellers and record holders, along with other important bits of Porsche development and history. ...The exhaustive collection is the result of a ‘transatlantic’ collaboration between the Petersen and many Porsche-related organizations—the company itself, its museum, its owners’ groups and other stakeholders, Petersen staff said.”* —Charles Fleming, Los Angeles Times.

**Unique features like the retro-style “Ducktail” spoiler, Sport Design side mirrors, distinctive front fascia, and striking “Club Blau” blue exterior identify this GTS as a 1 in 60 Club Coupe model.**





Alex gets cross-country seat time in the luxurious Alcantara leather interior. GTS Club Coupe script on the brushed aluminum door sills declares its heritage to both driver and passenger.



Alex continued, “In advance of this event, the Club Coupe Registry reached out to its 60 members asking for an owner to lend a Club Coupe to display at ‘The Porsche Effect.’ I called Richie and told him about the need for a Club Coupe and he quickly agreed.”

“Of course I agreed,” Richie said. “I wasn’t driving it much and I had other cars. Remember, I live in Manhattan. Not the greatest place to drive anyway.”

**THE CLUB COUPE** was shipped to the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. Club Blau was displayed, along with many historically significant models, including “the 1938 Bertin-Rome Type 64 race car, a 906 race car, the 919 endurance racer, the Petersen Collection’s 901 and Continental, a rare model ‘X83’ Turbo S Flachbau 964, a rally-spec Type 953 911, the world-beating Gulf 917K, the Jägermeister 962, and the legendary Porsche 935 K3 Le Mans winner belonging to Petersen vice-chairman Bruce Meyer.”—“The Porsche Effect” February 10, 2018, Porsche Newsroom.

Alex flew to Los Angeles to meet Richie and his wife, Lauren, for the debut. Alex, Lauren, and Richie rubbed shoulders with racing legends and personalities like Tommy Kendall, Hurley Haywood, Patrick Dempsey, Jeff Zwart, and C.J. Wilson. The exhibit was so successful that it was extended to April 2019 so that more visitors could enjoy it.

Alex continued to cultivate his Porsche passion, driving to the Lake of the Ozarks Parade in 2018, the Amelia Island Werks Reunion in 2019, and the Boca Parade in 2019. Enjoying life. Putting the miles on Black Majic. And regularly engaging with Richie by phone, text, and email—just regular “guy” stuff, until...

“In August 2019, Richie called me. He said, ‘I have been thinking about this for a long time and I’ve decided I want to gift the Club Coupe back to you. Living in the city I don’t have the time to really enjoy the car as you would. And because you’ve been declared cancer-free as well as turning 70 years old, I want you to have the car. You know I’ve always referred to it as your car.’”

Alex was stunned. “I told Richie I couldn’t accept the car, that it was his to enjoy. He said, ‘Come and get it or I’ll ship it to you.’ So in early September 2019, I took the train to New York City, met Richie, and had a great dinner. Then he handed me the keys and the paperwork. Just that quick, the Club Coupe was back in my life.”

What may seem masochistic to some concours contenders is that Club Blau is no Garage Queen. “There are the daily drivers using their cars as they were meant to be,” Alex said. “And then there are others (whose cars) will dry rot in humidity-control garages, never seeing the light of day. Those guys just don’t know what they’re missing.

“In January 2020, I decided to enter the concours at the Amelia Island Werks Reunion. Knowing the caliber of the competition at that event, I worked for weeks getting the Club Coupe ready, only to drive through four hours of the hardest rainstorms I’ve encountered. Finally arriving at my motel, I worked for 19 hours getting the car ready for the show.”

All that hard work paid off. Alex’s fancy blue coupe achieved a first-in-class win and an invitation to show the car the following day at the Porsche display.

“It’s not just the cars.” The bond that developed between Alex and Richie, strangers who became friends because of a shared passion for cars and for life, exemplified PCA’s motto: “It’s the people.” ☉

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