



BARN FIND... NO, REALLY!

This North Carolina Discovery Proves Some Gems are Still Out There

By David Mathews

Photography by Bruce Sweetman and Evan Lomas

The Barn Find: the Holy Grail. The Golden Fleece. The *Crème de la Crème*. The very thought of a barn-find car makes one's knees weak. And although most of us will never discover a barn find, reading about one who has sparks the imagination... it stirs one's soul.

What bugs me when I start such a story is that, frequently, no actual barn is involved. You know, that kind of ruins it. An old garage, dilapidated warehouse, or some forgotten storage unit may qualify, but it's not the same, at least not for me. There's a nostalgia, a romance shared between an old car and an old barn... a barn with cobwebs and hay bales, a rusty metal roof, dry yellowish straw strewn on the floor, wooden timbers, and dusty sunlight seeping through knotholes. So, when you run across a barn find that actually involves a barn, well heck, now you're cooking. The story you're about to read involves not one, but two barns.

Evan Lomas, a 356 Registry and PCA member, begins the story. "During a casual phone conversation with my friend Don Froelich, a man I met from swapping vintage Volkswagen parts online, he mentioned an old Porsche he'd heard was in a barn in North Carolina. Don originally told me he was going to try to buy the car."

What at first might have seemed a missed opportunity for Evan changed during the summer of 2018. "Don called to tell me that the owner of the old car was eager to move it, and someone in Virginia had found out about the car and made him an offer. Don couldn't buy the car right then and suggested that if I wanted the car, I'd better move quickly. So, he gave me the phone number. The owner told me that I could come down to take a look at the car but that [the Virginia guy] had already made an offer."

Early the next morning, Evan headed south to meet the owner and see the Porsche, with hope in his heart and a wad of cash in his pocket.



Opposite: Evan Lomas's B coupe stands tall at the Owen-Primm Estate in Brentwood, Tennessee. **Above:** The Super 90 shown as-found within the North Carolina barn shown at right.

Nine hours and 600 miles later, Evan shook hands with the owner, a retired judge in his late 70s. The barn was ghostly... an apparition from the past. It was exactly as Evan envisioned, and the old Porsche, an Aetna Blue over red 1961 T-5 Super 90 coupe, was pretty much the same. Covered with years of dust and detritus, it looked pretty forlorn. Boards, bricks, and farm stuff were squeezed next to it.

In the mid-1970s, the T-5 was parked in a barn adjacent the Pamlico River near Washington, North Carolina. A hurricane blew through in the early '90s, destroying the barn and damaging much of what was in it. A beam from the barn's roof fell onto the car's roof, denting it and breaking the rear window, and torquing the left door frame a bit. Subsequently the owner hauled the car to its present location, his brother's barn in a nearby town, and let it set, unattended, for another 20 years.

Be that as it may, the car looked solid, complete, and a little sassy, with those Abarth "peashooter" exhaust pipes jutting just below the rear bumper. Evan quickly made an offer that, as it turned out, was \$5,000 higher than the Virginia guy's lowball offer.

"Then, the owner called the Virginia guy to tell him that I made an offer substantially more than he had," Evan said. "After a pointed (and pointless) exchange between those two, the Virginia guy said he'd beat my offer by \$500. So I upped my offer by \$2,500."

Evan and the Virginia guy were now embroiled in a cross-country bidding war with the judge squeezed in the middle. More often than not, these things become contentious. This one did too, and the judge didn't like it. And because the judge was an honorable guy, befitting his former profession, the negotiation took an unexpected turn.



"The judge told me, 'No, I'm a man of my word, and I'll take the other guy's offer even though it's lower,'" Evan said. "I couldn't believe it. Here I was, cash in hand, offering \$7,500 more than the other guy who was out-of-state, and the judge would not sell me the car. I didn't want to go home without the car, so I doubled my offer... all the money I had. The judge still said no. I was dumbfounded."

Kind of convoluted, right? Just wait.

"Finally, the judge asked *me* to talk with the Virginia guy directly to try to work out something with him," Evan said. "So I called the Virginia guy and told him, 'Hey, I'm here with the car, with the money, 600 miles



For some, the condition of the coupe might have seemed abysmal. For Lomas it represented a hidden treasure.

from home . . . how about letting me buy the car?' The guy said, 'Too bad . . . the owner is selling the car to me.'"

Evan left the judge with Freddie Fender's ballad, "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights" ringing in his ears.

Down but not out, Evan tried one more angle. About ten minutes after leaving the judge, Evan pulled to the side of the road and sent a text message to the Virginia guy, offering him \$2,500 just to walk away from the deal. The Virginia guy responded with a text of his own . . . a photo of his garage housing a 356 and several vintage VWs with the arrogant reply: "You've got a *long* drive home, buddy."

Evan shared that text exchange with the judge. What followed was unexpected. Apparently, the Virginia guy had given the good judge a song and dance about how he'd always wanted a 356, and he and his dad were going to restore it. You know, a real bonding experience. Offended, the judge called the Virginia guy and told him he would not sell the car to him . . . and furthermore, he wasn't going to sell the car at all. He was fed up with the entire debacle and was *taking the car off the market!* What a kick in the pants.

Evan remained persistent. "I kept in contact with the judge for the next several months," he said. "I would send him a text every couple of weeks, thanking him for showing me the car, indicating I was still very interested in the car if he changed his mind and decided to sell it. No response."

Summer cooled, the kids returned to school, and leaves began to color. Evan tried once more. "I texted the judge saying that winter was around the corner, and I would love to buy that car and work on it during my slow time. If he could find it in his heart to sell me the car, I'd give it a good home."

Finally, the judge replied. If Evan could be there the next day, cashier's check in hand, the judge would sell the car to him. Pumping his fist, Evan shouted, "Done!" At four o'clock the next morning, Evan was on the road to North Carolina to pick up his "new" Porsche.

Once back in Nashville, Evan obtained a Certificate of Authenticity and confirmed that his Super 90 was indeed a numbers-matching car. The wheels were date stamped, 05-60. "The spare was missing, but I was able to find another 05-60-stamped wheel, so now all five match." The body panels, the hood hinge, and the deck lid all matched. The floor was original. The glass was original (including the shards found on the floor).

As a young officer, the judge had been stationed at Fort Bragg. A base parking permit remained stuck to a rear overrider. A 1977 vehicle registration sticker, from the last year it was on the road, was affixed to the windshield. Crammed in the glovebox was paperwork documenting the car's service history from new. Current mileage: 74,775. This Porsche was the real deal.

Assessing what was needed to make the T-5 roadworthy was an immediate priority. The storm wreaked havoc on the first barn but was more kind to Evan's car. The roof suffered four dents; the largest was 24 inches

long and four inches deep. The fallen beam missed the sunroof but brought an untimely end to the rear window. The driver's door was kinked open.

What goes around comes around. Evan's friend Don, who first alerted him to the car, is a talented metalsmith, a good complement to his passion for old Volkswagens. In late November 2018, Evan hauled the 356 to Alabama so Don could repair the roof. It took a week of hammer and dolly work to reshape the roof.

"The driver's door closes perfectly now," Evan says. "There are a few small dents left in the roof, nothing that a professional body shop couldn't take care of, but I'm going to leave them. They add to the character of the car." Evan had the wheels stripped and repainted. Coker Tire provided new rubber—Michelin XAS tires.

After removing the motor and stripping it down to the long block, Evan enlisted the help of friend and former Goldmeister tech, Michael

The dent in the roof, once an eyesore, has been reduced to just a "character" line. The refreshed engine is now robust and 90hp strong.



Cremonini, to bring the engine back to life. Mike split the case and took it down to the crank, and cleaned and measured everything. The bearings showed wear, so new rod and main bearings were sourced. He maintained the engine's original specs; it had not been line bored or punched out. The engine tin was sandblasted and painted. New stickers added to the look. The pistons and cylinders were good. So were the valves. The Solex carburetors were rebuilt and synchronized. As a nod to safety, Evan replaced the original front brakes with discs, keeping the rear brakes stock. "It's far superior technology, and with the stock wheels and hubcaps, you never know." Evan kept the six-volt electrical system. The previous owner had drained the fuel before parking the car, so the tank was in great shape.

The Abarth exhaust needed help. Rust perforated the pipes. "I found another Abarth exhaust online," Evan said. "It wasn't perfect, but between the two units, we were able to make one good one. We cleaned it up, removed and replaced the old packing, patched a few spots, and that was that."

Evan replaced the carpet, window seals, and headliner; before his ownership, the headliner and carpet had been removed. The front seats had been recovered, but the rear seats and the door panels were original. Part of the dash was missing, so Evan sourced another. All the gauges and the Blaupunkt radio worked.

"The interior is a hodgepodge of new and old stuff, but it's okay," Evan said. "I think it works pretty well."

The most difficult part of the restoration? "I've worked on a lot of old cars, and this one was not that bad, despite sitting in barns for years," Evan said. "We didn't break one bolt... it came apart and went back together pretty well. Well, the brake lights didn't work, so we had to disassemble the steering column to get the turn signal switch out. (The brake lights route through the turn signal switch.) It was missing a spring, so we replaced that, cleaned all the contacts, and luckily everything worked. I didn't have to buy a \$900 turn signal switch. Probably the most frustrating part of





Above: Engine man Michael Cremonini, fine-tunes the Solex carburetors.
Below: Driving the Super 90 always brings a smile to Evan's face.



the restoration was getting the sunroof mechanism to work smoothly. The storm didn't damage it. It was just missing a couple of pieces, including part of the framework the headliner glues to. I used one from another car, but had to trim it two or three times, a millimeter at a time, to get it to fit right. It was a trial and error thing because we didn't have another car to look at and there wasn't much (technical) support online to check. But we got through it."

For Evan, the most gratifying part of the experience has been the reaction people have when they see the car. "We love to drive it... to share the story with people. They light up when they see the car. This is the first 356 I was able to drive; I had nothing really to compare it to. It's been great for the local car community. Many of my friends helped me with the car, so the camaraderie was cool, and of course, how I acquired the car was pretty neat. Delving into its history, like finding the old receipts and matchbooks, was crazy exciting. I even found an old Miller Lite 'Steinie' bottle from back in the '70s under the front seat. And best of all, I can put my two young daughters in the back seat. Now that's fun!" **356**



SUPER B

What the GT3 is to Porsche's 911 Carrera line, the Super 90 was to the 356B. For those "hot shoes" who preferred driving like their hair was on fire, Porsche answered the call with a new engine and a chassis set up to match. This engine, Type 616/7, boasted 90 horsepower, compared to 75 horsepower of the 1600S. This freer-breathing engine featured 40mm Solex 40 PII-4 carburetors, air filters used by the Carrera de Luxe, stiffer valve springs, and high piston crowns that increased the compression ratio to 9.0:1. Connecting rods and main bearings were made bigger and stronger and the flywheel was lighter.

Keeping this thoroughbred steady were Koni shocks and, standard only on the Super 90, was the *Ausgleichfeder*, or compensating spring. As noted in Karl Ludvigsen's *Excellence Was Expected*

(Vol. 1, pg. 207), this spring was designed to direct more steering effort to the front tires when cornering. This additional rear leaf spring extended "...from right to left under the transmission, extending to the ends of the swing axles. Its ends were attached to the axles by short tension rods and bushings. At its center, this transverse leaf was attached to the underside of the transmission by a pin that left it free to move." Adding to the Super 90's surefootedness were standard-equipment radial tires.

What did automotive journalists say about the Super 90? The following quote from *Road & Track* spoke for most: "Power in the lower ranges is astonishing. Below 3,000 rpm with full throttle, not much happens; but at exactly this point one gets a kick in the back and then things really begin to move."