

A vintage light blue Porsche convertible is parked on a paved street in front of a historic building with a large stone fountain. The fountain features a statue of a man holding a staff, set within a large, arched stone frame. The building has a warm, terracotta-colored facade with arched windows and doorways. The scene is captured during the "blue hour" of twilight, with soft ambient light and the car's headlights on.

# Into the Blue

A 1959 CONVERTIBLE D IS RESTORED  
BY A MOTIVATED SECOND OWNER.

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# About 300 miles northeast of Stuttgart,

in the Free State of Saxony, lies the town of Meissen, Germany. With a population of 30,000 residents and encompassing an area of less than 12 square miles, Meissen, founded in 929 AD, is roughly the size of Laramie, Wyoming. ❖ Meissen's rather small size does not obscure its fame, as it is known throughout the world for producing world-class porcelain. Three-hundred years ago, local artisans began using the area's abundant deposits of kaolin and potter's clay to create porcelain dinnerware and figurines that rivaled products from Asia. In a process known as underglazing, craftsmen painted intricate scenes and designs onto the pottery, often in blue, before wiping the white clay with a transparent glaze and firing it in a kiln. Beautifully delicate yet durable, Meissen porcelain was treasured by wealthy Europeans. The color, known as Meissen Blue, was likely inspired by the striking blue of the Elbe River that flows through the town.





Perhaps as a tribute to the unique porcelain created in Meissen, or because the soft shade of blue perfectly complemented the rounded lines of the Convertible D, Porsche chose the color as one of the four initially offered for the model. As announced in a July 31, 1958 directive, “The Convertible D can only be had in our standard colors: 5702-Ruby Red; 5703-Meissen Blue; 5704-Ivory; 5706-Silver Metallic.” Although Porsche kept production costs low by limiting frills and options on this base model, the company would acquiesce to customer requests (such as different colors) for an extra charge. Eventually, 241 Convertible Ds left the factory in Meissen Blue—a stunning color for a stunning car. Today, Gold Coast Region members Steve and Lynn Bamdas own one of those Meissen Blue Convertible Ds. How they acquired their Porsche is a tale worth telling.

**“I STARTED MY SEARCH** for a Convertible D back in 2012,” began Steve. “I found nothing to my liking in my price range until I came across an ad in the printed

version of *Autotrader* in 2014. A 1959 Porsche Cabriolet was advertised by a dealership in Chicago, but the small black-and-white photo in the ad appeared to show a Convertible D. So I called the dealership and asked what they could tell me about the car. They said that the previous owner had traded it for a Bentley, and they’d had it for a while. They said the car was bright red with a light tan interior. I asked if it had been taken care of. They replied that a local Porsche shop, 356 Works, had gone over the car and declared it absolutely perfect.

“That was on a Friday. Being I was in Florida, I told them I would be there [the dealership] on Monday. After I got my plane ticket, I called Tom Funk, the owner of 356 Works. We discussed the car and he agreed to accompany me to the dealership in downtown Chicago to take another look at it. The dealership must have spent hours cleaning the car, but although the paint was shiny, the rest was pretty rough. They said the upholstery was original, but it wasn’t. It was a much lighter shade.”

Was there any good news that would justify Steve’s

journey to Chicago? Or was this Porsche just another old tub, repainted, reupholstered, and frankly, not in the best of shape? “I’d call it a 20-footer. From 20 feet away, it looked good. But when you got close to it, examined it with a paint meter, it was, well...

“Tom told me that when he initially looked at the car for the dealership, he checked as many body panels as he could to see if they matched,” said Steve. “Back then, the factory stamped each body panel with the last two digits of the serial number. They matched.”

Nothing about the Convertible D’s condition was a deal breaker. Numbers matched, and the title was in order. Steve had found what appeared to be a hidden gem. Wasting no time, he negotiated the price and bought the Porsche. “I was so afraid they [the dealership] would find out what they really had that I stayed on their premises and called an automobile transporter I had used in the past,” he said. “Lynn wired the funds to the dealer. I waited until the carrier arrived and loaded the car. After the transaction was complete and the carrier left the dealership, I

drove back to the airport and flew home.” Did the dealership know the true value of the car they had sold, or did they think it was just another old Porsche? Who knows?

**AFTER RESEARCHING THE** car’s history, Steve found that he was just the second owner of the D. The odometer showed around 73,000 miles when he bought it (it currently has around 78,000 miles on it). The condition of the car seemed to fit with the mileage. The VIN indicated a late-in-the-model-year build.

A month after the red Convertible D arrived in Florida, Steve began the process of returning the car to its former glory. “It was a very detailed, engine-out restoration with everything returned to factory specs,” he told us. As always, there were hiccups. The car came with Weber carburetors and fancy air filters. The original carburetors, Zeniths, were virtually unobtainable. The car had a very nice, wooden Nardi steering wheel, but it wasn’t original.

Good fortune shined on Steve throughout the restoration process. “I was able to track down and talk with

**The original steering wheel, included in a box of spare parts provided by the first owner, replaced an aftermarket Nardi. Steve and Lynn have driven more than 5,000 miles in their Convertible D since 2014.**





**Before and after:** Restoring this 356 to its original glory included a color change from Guards Red to the original Meissen Blue. **Opposite:** The new vinyl interior is nearly identical to the original brown leatherette. Drauz Karosserie gave the Convertible D its name.

the previous owner,” he continued. “I told him I purchased his car and asked if he had kept any parts from it. And he said ‘Yes, I have the old Zenith carburetors, the original air filters, the original steering wheel, hub-caps, luggage rack, and a lot of other small parts, mostly electrical parts.’”

Steve was ecstatic. The former owner was willing to sell what he had for a reasonable price. “He boxed up

all the parts and shipped them to me. The Zenith carburetors were in bad shape but salvageable. I sent them to Carb Rescue to be rebuilt. The air filters had the original stickers on them.”

Together with KMW Motorsports in Boca Raton, Steve completed the engine work. “The bottom end was perfect. I did the rings and valves, rebuilt the fuel pump...carburetor tuning, and plating and painting was done by Klub Sport Racing in Riviera Beach.”

What about the red paint? “The previous owner painted it. He just liked red. He wanted red. I told him, ‘But it was born Meissen Blue.’ He quickly responded, ‘I liked red,’ and that was that.”

**STEVE’S AIM FOR THE D** was to return it to a condition as original as possible. He did the initial preparation for paint but had the final bodywork and painting done by a small shop that he had used before, Dynamic Auto Body in Pompano Beach. The interior and the carpeting, roof, tonneau cover, and boot were done by Charlie’s Cus-



PHOTO COURTESY STEVE BAWDAS

tom Upholstery, a local artisan working out of a one-bay shop, also in Pompano Beach.

“No patterns...he cut the fabric to fit the car because all Convertible Ds are different,” said Steve. “Pre-cut stuff never fits right. The people I used for the outside work [independent shops] were all local. No famous names, but I’d used them before. They all did excellent work. The windshield posts, the little parts, the fasteners are all original. I just had them rechromed.”

Regarding the interior, “I contacted Porsche. They provided a sample of the material thought to be original to the car, so Charlie found a comparable fabric.” The seats, vinyl not leather, showed a slightly weathered, textured look. “These were ‘wet’ cars, and this car is a driver. I didn’t buy it to sit around and look at it.” Lynn quickly agreed. “We travel with towels; this is Florida, after all.”

What drew Steve to a Convertible D in the first place? It was his penchant for cars that are different. The Convertible D fit the bill. As sales of the stripped-down Speedster began to decline in 1957-’58, Porsche saw the need for

a replacement that offered a few more creature comforts, but at a price point lower than the cabriolet. Porsche’s answer was the Convertible D, which drew its mundane moniker from the coachwork company that built the bodies—Karosseriewerke Drauz KG. A taller windshield (still removable for racing addicts), a new fabric top, a larger rear window, upholstered (non-reclining) bucket seats, and roll-up windows came at a price of less than \$2,800, or \$3,100 for the Super version. The one-model-year-only 356A Convertible D was the last of its line. Porsche produced 1,331 Convertible Ds for model year 1959. The newly designed 1960 356B Roadster was Porsche’s replacement as low man on its open-car totem pole.

The Meissen Blue Convertible D is far from the only Porsche in Steve’s collection. He also owns a 1964 SC coupe, a 1974 914 2.0 “that’s completely original,” an 18,000-mile 1987 930 Turbo, a 1989 944 Turbo he calls “a wonderful handling car,” a 1995 928 GTS, a 2016 Boxster Spyder, and a 2017 Turbo S that Steve and Lynn drive on longer trips. But Lynn’s favorite is a 1988 Targa that





Detail is everything for this concours winner. Correct Zenith carburetors, luggage rack, and hubcaps all reflect this D's originality.

Steve rebuilt from a wreck to resemble a Gemini Blue Metallic 1973 911S Targa they owned in younger days.

"Lynn loved that car, so I decided to build that '88 Targa to resemble the '73. To an untrained eye, the car looks like the old Targa, but with '88 running gear—numbers-matching engine, transmission, original radio, custom upholstery. It's a pristine car. A show winner." The color? Gemini Blue Metallic, of course.

**BUYING, FIXING, SELLING** (and sometimes keeping) old cars has always been a part of Steve and Lynn's life. "My dad bought a 1955 Austin-Healey when I was 11 years old. That's what got me going. I started out with mostly English cars: Austin-Healeys, MGs, an Ace-Bristol, two Jaguars, two Abarths, a Maserati Ghibli—we built 30 cars when we were younger."

The very first car they restored was a 1953 MG TD. "We bought it for \$600 and sold it for \$1,800," said Steve. "Made a killing! Thought we were rich. That's how we lived, how I worked my way through college, how we bought our

first house." Lynn added, "We've been restoring cars since we were kids. I was 14. Steve was 15. We love it."

Originally from New Jersey, Steve, Lynn, and four children moved to Florida in 1979 and "changed our lives." Because of a love for boating and open cars, they started a family motorsports business, selling and servicing watercraft, boats up to 45 feet long, motorcycles, and ATVs. "Basically all the fun stuff. We have 200 employees in three locations."

"Lynn and I have attended seven Parades, but this is our first Parade concours," said Steve of the 2019 Parade in Boca. "We've always driven long distances and just didn't have the energy to prep the car. But this was local so we decided to give it a go. We've done local shows and also the Florida Owner's Group [FOG] 356 events. We do nearly all of the preparation ourselves, with a little help on the wheels and the undercarriage. We've always done well."

How well at their first PCA National Concours? How about First in Class and People's Choice. A rare car and a unique couple. ●

