



A RARE BIRD

ONCE A DAILY DRIVER, THIS HELLBLAU METALLIC 924 WAS RESUSCITATED AFTER BEING PARKED FOR 20 YEARS.

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“I WAS LIVING near Granville, Ohio, home of Denison University, and had recently taken a job in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,” stated Ronald (R.E.) Kissell. “I needed dependable transportation back and forth, so I went over to the Porsche-Audi dealer in Columbus to see what they had. It just so happened that one of their customers had two cars, and he’d married a gal with two cars. The two of them didn’t need four cars so that dealership bought this one back. I saw it parked in the service area, liked the look of it, and got interested. I returned a second time to look at the car, and it was sitting on the showroom floor.”

The car Ronald is talking about was a 1982 924, and it was a real looker. The Hellblau Metallic exterior (only offered on the 924 for the 1982 model year) perfectly suited its smooth silhouette. Dealer-added body stripes complemented the two-tone brown/beige leather interior. A removable sunroof and 15-inch mesh wheels added



Porsche expanded its design concept with the 924, incorporating angular shapes with ovals, as well as multicolored interior pieces. Beige, dark brown, and black accents work well together.



to the sporty look. “So anyway, I bought the car and took it with me to Philadelphia.”

Why a Porsche sports car for a year-round, long-distance driver? Why not a Ford or a Chevy? “Well, my brother [A.K. Kissell] and I had been interested in Porsche since the '50s. We were familiar with the 356s and of course the Volkswagens. We followed them through their development. This model was reliable and affordable—and the car was available. And of course, it was a good road car. It could make the entire trip, about 450 miles, without stopping for fuel.”

The 924 was Ronald's daily driver for a number of years until he moved to Indiana for a different job. As life changed, so did his use of the Porsche. He eventually parked his car, and it stayed parked for the next

20 years. Although he did not drive the 924, Ronald remained interested in Porsche. At his brother's suggestion, he joined PCA in 2013.

Ronald intended to enter his 924 in the 2015 Parade but couldn't get it roadworthy in time. “The fuel system was a mess,” he noted. “The gasoline had turned to varnish. That was an experience in itself. It took a long time to clean it up.” It was no small task. Ronald first replaced the relay for the fuel pump, then replaced both fuel pumps and gaskets, the pressure accumulator, and the fuel filter, but still there were problems.

“I then took apart the fuel injection system,” he continued. “The fuel distributor was full of varnish. I rigged up a pressure pot, a lubricator can of sorts, that uses air to force fluid out. I used a special nozzle to shoot air



into all the ports of the fuel distributor until the metering pin would start to float again, and then lubricated it with WD-40. Then I pulled out each of the injectors—only one was working halfway properly. I got them to provide a decent spray pattern. I also flushed out the fuel tank. Once everything was clean and lubricated and working properly, I bolted it back together. Before starting the car I squirted a little Marvel Mystery Oil into each cylinder. Then I cranked it over without the spark plugs to make sure the fuel pump was working okay. I then put the plugs in, and the motor fired right up.”

With a mechanical engineering background, a floor jack, and “lots of blocks,” Ronald did the restorative work himself, frequently referring to his Haynes manual and Google searches. “I remember working on the engine of my dad’s combine when I was 11 years old,” he said. “I was in the 4-H tractor club back then, so that was good training. Dad trusted us to take things apart and put them back together. No mechanic other than me

has ever touched the Porsche.”

Once the internals were taken care of, Ronald began to prepare the car for concours competition. “The outside of the car was in good shape. I vacuumed out the interior and applied leather dressing to the seats. It has a leather interior. Because of that big rear window, the interior can get pretty hot. I keep the car covered, even inside, because the UV light can do a number on the leather.”

Once he got his 924 in excellent running condition, Ronald planned to take the car to shows and club meetings. “People have heard about my car and are interested in seeing it.” No driving competitions or long-distance driving, however. The tires on his 924 are original.

Because Ronald’s 924, a front-engine, water-cooled, transaxle car, established a new paradigm in the Porsche lineup, did he have thoughts about the emerging electric technology? “I’ve followed the development of the all-electric cars. When they get the range worked out, I’d be interested.”

Opposite: 15-inch four-bolt, mesh alloy wheels and the dealer-added side stripe add a distinctive touch to Ronald’s 924. The brown tone of the stripe complements the car’s interior. Above: The 924 at judicious speed—40-year-old tires demand caution.



924 Gestation

THE SALES SUCCESS of the 914 in the early 1970s piqued the interest of Porsche's management team. Marketing research indicated that an entry-level model was critical to their overall sales plan. A Porsche "Lite" appealed to first-time buyers, as well as those who simply didn't have the financial means or the desire to have an expensive sports car sitting in the driveway. Research also underscored that the 914's successor needed more interior space and a higher degree of comfort.

Designers were tasked with blending the look and feel of this new entry-level model with the upscale 928 currently under development and earmarked to become Porsche's next big deal. At the same time, the new model had to maintain a family resemblance to the 911/912 and the beloved 356. Unlike its upscale sibling, a clean sheet, cost-no-object creation, the entry-level 924 incorporated existing VW technology and shared componentry in order to lower production costs. Finally, the new model had to connote the feeling and the mystique inherent in the Porsche brand.

Engineers got busy, as did the team of designers. The 924 program had both a project director and a project father working within a new development structure at Weissach. The director oversaw the day-to-day issues involved in shepherding the car through production. The father, a higher level Porsche executive, smoothed the production path with senior executives if and when snags occurred.

A wedge-shaped profile, enveloping a front engine/transaxle setup, eventually found favor. While providing a front/rear balance of nearly 50/50, the new design offered generous interior room and a spacious cargo area.

The team chose the Audi four-cylinder water-cooled engine that first saw light in 1965. Modifications and updates included an overhead camshaft, a bigger bore, and a modified water pump and oil pump. The updated Audi engine was also used in the Volkswagen LT van, the Audi 100, and later in the AMC Gremlin. Engineers further massaged and "Porscheified" the four-cylinder engine using larger main bearings and a forged-steel crankshaft.

Because the engine was tilted 40 degrees to the right in order to fit beneath the low-profile hood, a deeper aluminum oil pan was used. Other modifications and adaptations were made during the design phase, as described in Karl Ludvigsen's *Porsche: Excellence was Expected, Volume 2*. It was noted that the European version of the modified 2.0-liter Audi engine, destined for VW trucks and passenger cars as well as the new Porsche sports car, produced more horsepower and torque than the 2.0-liter 914 four-cylinder, and was nearly as powerful as the 2.0-liter six used in the early 911s.

Under the direction of Anatole Lapine, the styling of the 924 was crafted to resemble the more expensive 928 while harking back to the softer lines of the more rounded earlier models. Despite the front engine placement, no grille opening was used. A large glass window, hatched over an expansive cargo area, and bold, rectangular taillights became key design elements of the car.

Introduced as a 1976 model in West Germany, the 924 had a base price of about \$8,900. The American base price of the 1977 model (95 horsepower/four-speed manual transmission) was \$9,395. As was always the case, options including air-conditioning, a removable roof panel, front and rear antiroll bars, upgraded radio speakers, a right side passenger mirror, and a rear window wiper drove up the price.

As one would expect, public reception driven by automotive journalists, was mixed. *Autoweek* noted that "the shape easily stopped traffic wherever the cars was taken..." and *Motor Sport* wrote that "performance in general is good."

Continuous improvement was always the name of the game. The U.S.-market 924 Turbo, producing 150 horsepower (170 horsepower ROW) became available in 1980. Easily identifiable by their distinctive hood air intake, nearly 5,900 Turbos were sold in North America. The 924S was introduced to the U.S. market in 1987-1988. The 924S featured the more powerful 2.5-liter 944 engine and other mechanicals. Keeping its slimmer profile (and lower cost), this 924S swan song was a popular choice for Porsche enthusiasts. —DM

Porsche engineering at its best—the 924's silhouette provided favorable aerodynamics. Its transaxle configuration provided a 50/50 weight distribution.

