

TWICE AS NICE

HUSBAND AND WIFE LOVE TO DRIVE
AND SHARE THEIR GT3 RS TWINS.

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



A toy, left in absentminded haste. A little girl's treasure, found in a sandbox. An impossible dream, realized.

Christian Hartinger, president of the Porsche Club-Leipzig since March 2018, began the remarkable story about his wife, Ortrun, and her against-all-odds story that started in that sandbox by saying, "As a young girl in kindergarten, Ortrun found a toy Porsche 911 in a sandbox on her street. She was so fascinated that she took it home and told her mother, 'I'll buy a car like this when I grow up.' Her mother responded, 'It will not be possible for you to buy or drive such a car.' Back then, Ortrun was too young to understand the stark economic realities of life in the GDR (German Democratic Republic, commonly called East Germany)."



Insouciant? No, simply pragmatic. You see, in the '70s and '80s, the choice of cars in the GDR was pretty much limited to either the Trabant or the slightly more upscale, but equally depressing (and unfortunately monickered), Wartburg.

The Trabant, or Trabi as it was derisively called, cost the average worker a year's wages, paid in advance, with a pre-delivery time measured in years. One automotive journalist described the Trabi this way: "The Trabant's build quality was poor, reliability was terrible, and it was loud, slow, and poorly designed. It came with no turn signals, no seatbelts, no fuel gauge, and no trunk liner. Its two-stroke engine required an oil/gas mixture.

world champion. My dream as an 18-year-old with a new driver license was an Audi Quattro."

An Audi? Just wait. Hold your horses. Christian continued, "I was not a fan of the 996, but when the 997 was introduced, a different goal entered my life—buying a new Porsche! I ordered my first Carrera in 2004." But as a staunch disciple of the "more is better" doctrine, Christian longed for more horsepower. "I read about, heard about, the GT3. In 2009, I signed my order for a 997.2 GT3."

How did two people from different parts of the country, with disparate backgrounds except for a fondness for Porsche, meet? At a Porsche Club event, of course. "Or-



The Trabi smoked like an Iraqi oil fire."

Although considerably more expensive than the Trabi, the Wartburg 353 was only marginally better. Production of the Wartburg began in 1966 at its factory in Eisenach, GDR. Its three-cylinder, two-stroke engine generated 55-58 horsepower, good for a yawn-inducing 19-second 0-60 mph acceleration time. Without sound deadening, the passenger compartment was so loud that most owners did not order the optional stereo system.

UNDETERRED, ORTRUN FOLLOWED her dream. Christian continued, "After many obstacles, Ortrun began her study of pharmacy at Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, in 1988. In this time, the political turn starts and ended with the German Reunification in 1990. Ortrun's goal was now within reach. She finished her study, founded her own pharmacy, and worked hard. Her first Porsche was a 996 Carrera 4S. A dream—her dream—came true."

Christian's upbringing was considerably different. "I was born and raised in Bavaria, with all the good things like a model railway, and model cars like Mattel, Siku, and Revell," he said. "We had beautiful cars on the street. In the '70s, my favorite car was the 911 Turbo. In the '80s, I changed from street cars to rally cars. Walter Röhl lived near my family's home. He became a famous

trun and I met for the first time at the 15th anniversary of the Porsche Club Chemnitz-West Sachsen at Schloss Augustusburg on August 4, 2010," Christian said.

AS ANYONE WHO has experienced the visceral, gut-wrenching, wahoo-inspiring rush of a GT3 as its flat six howls past 8000 rpm knows, power was both intoxicating and addicting. Once again, the siren's song entranced Christian. "In 2012, she told me that I could buy a new Porsche," he said. "More than a GT3, I thought? Crazy! We found a 997.2 GT3 RS at Porsche Stuttgart. The White One. Then in 2014, I sent Ortrun an email link to an Aqua Blue Metallic 2010 997.2 GT3 RS. She answered, 'I'm in love.' A few days later we picked up the Blue One. It was love at first view."

Two GT3 RS behemoths, neatly parked side by side? Christian continued, "We bought the white one as a highlight of my Porsche history. Its blue twin entered our life more like a coincidence. Ortrun fell in love with it."

"We didn't think about the colors at first. The noise of the Mezger engine when starting was unforgettable. I will never sell her, but in Germany we always say 'he' when describing a Porsche. The blue one looks beautiful with its red stickers, yellow ceramic brakes (PCCB) and the blue details inside. At first, we didn't realize how lucky we could be—two, in one garage!"

Opposite: Ortrun and Christian, as in love with each other as they are with their GT3 RS Porsches. Above: Decals and stickers reflect a worldwide travel itinerary.



Porsche enthusiasts to the core, the Hartingers do not coddle their cars. Of course they like to show them, but more importantly, they drive them.

Christian explained, “Before we started our U.S. tour, we stayed one or two times a year on a racetrack with both. In 2019, I participated the first time in a Porsche Club Cup race at Sachsenring, a racetrack in Hohenstein-Ernstthal near Chemnitz in Saxony, Germany. I thought about a whole racing season in 2020, but we changed our plan during 2019.

“We always drive with the two Porsches. We drove to

Monaco, Italy, Switzerland, France, and Austria. Always together. First the white one, then the blue one. In May, Walter Röhrl drove both RSs on the Autodrom in Most, the oldest permanent racing circuit in the Czech Republic. The Rally Legend was to our left, we on the right.”

Traveling throughout Europe was a precursor to the U.S. trip they planned for 2020. Eight months of planning and preparation. Their goal was to attend the Werks Reunions, the PCA Parade in Palm Springs, and various other Porsche-related events. Christian explained, “A good friend shipped the twins from Leipzig,

Germany, to Bremerhaven, Germany. From there, the twins went to Miami, Florida. Ortrun and I then flew to Miami to pick up our cars and begin our tour. Our first destination was Key West. Ortrun promised great views of turquoise water. Instead, I could only see the crash barriers bordering Highway 1. The view from a sports car is not the same as from a tour bus or SUV.

“FROM KEY WEST, we drove to Naples for our first Porsche meeting with the Paradise Region Gruppe (unaffiliated with PCA.) Our first national PCA event was

the Werks Reunion at Amelia Island. I didn’t know what a ‘Judged Field’ was, but I registered both cars. The twins won first place in the GT class, the first time ever that two cars shared first prize. Everyone was curious about our story, our trip, and our cars. Two Euro-spec’d 997.2 GT3 RS Porsches with German license plates. After this weekend, we knew that our tour would be the greatest experience of our lives.”

Then COVID turned the Hartingers’ trip on its ear. Werks Reunion—Amelia Island proved to be the only U.S. event on their dance card in 2020. “We planned



Above and opposite: Mixing track and tour accommodations is always a bit dicey, but the twins are appropriately equipped for both. Walter Röhrl's autograph is proudly displayed on the wing of Christian's GT3 RS.

to drive (in the U.S.) from February 2020 through December 2020, from Florida to California and back. But after three weeks, we had to return home (to Germany) on March 12 because of the pandemic. For a long time we believed we would return to the U.S. that summer. Our goal was to participate in each big Porsche Club event in 2020—the Werks Reunions, both Amelia Island and Monterey, and the Porsche Parade in Palm Springs, California.

“SOME DAYS WE thought that we must ship our twins back to Germany after those three weeks. We looked forward from week to week, month to month, to come back (to the U.S.). In November 2020, we started to get an extension of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permit for the twins. Normally, this permit is for one year only. We tried frequently and failed often. But one day I sent my email to the right person. Because of our story and COVID-19, we received our extension within a few hours. However, COVID-19 still mastered

our lives. No traveling. No public activities. Nothing but waiting and hoping.”

Christmas, 2020: Christian and Ortun began a 15-day holiday in Costa Rica. From Central America, they traveled to Atlanta to restart their delayed “twins tour.” After connecting with Paul Gregor, project manager—Global Community Management, Porsche AG, they were treated to a guided tour at the Porsche Track Experience at Barber Motorsports Park, near Birmingham, Alabama. Following Barber came a quick visit with friends in Knoxville, Tennessee, a wrestle with the “Tail of the Dragon” in Swain County, North Carolina, then on to the Porsche Experience Center Atlanta for a tour of the museum, lunch at Restaurant 356, and hot laps on the track. “All in three days,” Christian added.

The grand tour continued unabated. En route to California, the Hartingers traveled back to Florida, then through New Orleans, Houston, the Painted Desert, the Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, the PCA Treffen Scottsdale (all in Arizona), Arches Park, Utah, and Col-



Purchasing a Porsche in Germany

Buying a "Rest of World" (ROW) Porsche is both similar to and different from a U.S. purchase. Choosing the model is the first step. That means scouring online sites, talking with friends, and visiting dealerships, trade shows, and exhibitions. According to Christian, "You then contact your salesperson to discuss your ideas and wishes. For a non-GT or Exclusive model, it was always possible to get an allocation before 2021. Now the wait is from six to 12 months. After you make your configuration and are ready to order, you agree on the price. Depending on the model and your personal buying history, you may get a discount of 3 to 6 percent. For GT cars, there is never a discount. On the other hand, there is never an added surcharge (markup over MSRP.) Porsche Germany has forbidden dealerships from taking a surcharge.

"For a special Porsche like a GT or Exclusive, the dealer looks at your (buying) history. If you are a loyal customer, plan to drive your Porsche and not buy it on speculation, there is a good chance you will get an allocation."





orado Springs. “The Werks Reunion Monterey was perfect for our next PCA event,” explained Christian. “Both cars were judged, with PCA Juniors awarding second place to the white one. The blue one received first place in the GT class. We drove the famous Corkscrew at Laguna Seca. While in California, we met Porsche notables Bruce Canepa, ‘Big’ Ron, Alex Ross, owner of Sharkwerks, and Pete Stout.”

A BREATHTAKING TOUR at breakneck speed, right? But more lay ahead. From California, Christian and Ortrun piloted their twins back over the Rockies to Colorado, through Durango, Cottonwood, and over Independence Pass. They met Jeff Zwart and drove Pikes Peak. “For Walter Röhrl, it took ten minutes,” continued Christian. “For us, it took an hour, but it was my Race to the Clouds. Unbelievable, but not a dream.”

Then, after new tires, it was back to California, through Death Valley, for a visit to the Porsche Experience Center Los Angeles. “Ours were the first Porsches ever to drive on the tracks, both at PECLA

and the Porsche Experience Center—Leipzig, with regular German plates. We met up with Ilko Nechev, who spent a day with us in his 997.2 GT3 RS. We then drove to the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California, where we were invited to do charity laps by Suesan Carter, the power behind California’s Festival of Speed.”

Of course, the trip was not complete without meeting the colorful lady with the colorful Porsches, Lisa Taylor, at her Flying L Ranch, or a personal meeting with famous artist Nicolas Hunziker, or Loren Beggs, the founder of 911 Design, or a visit to Singer Vehicle Design.

Christian concluded, “On November 8, we parked the twins at our shipping agency in Torrance, California, and flew back to Leipzig, Germany, our hometown. The tour covered 18,000 miles in total. It’s all about the people. We love the worldwide Porsche Club family and community. We plan to return to the U.S. for the Porsche Parade and the Rennsport Reunion at Laguna Seca. We thank all of our friends.” ☉

Opposite:
A cacophony of color perfectly reflects the raucous personality of Ortrun’s GT3 RS. Brash Aqua Blue Metallic dash and console accents play well with softer Alcantara features.