



LIGHTNING STRIKES

A VILLAGE OF 356ERS
CAME TOGETHER TO OVERCOME
ONE OWNER'S IMPROBABLE
RUN OF BAD LUCK

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Photographs by Andi Hedrick

Being struck by lightning is extremely rare. Being struck by lightning a second time is unheard of. Tell that to Sugie Young. What began as a routine occurrence of an annual event turned into a heart-rending disaster—twice over.

In June 2021, Sugie arranged to have her 1960 356B cabriolet transported for its yearly service to a European repair shop about 30 miles from her home. Although there were closer shops, Sugie didn't mind the distance. She was a repeat customer and confident in the shop's work. After all, this service was nothing serious, just an oil change and a good going-over.

She'd fastidiously cared for her Porsche since she purchased it in 1963. She had immediately traded her Ford Thunderbird for a Porsche after seeing one on the road.

"Boy, that was it," Sugie said. "It fit me perfectly." Her 356 was her daily driver for years. She loved driving it, showing it, and doing what long-term Porsche owners do with their cars. So when it returned from the shop after a week or so, Sugie was eager to drive her pride and joy around the neighborhood for a shake-down cruise. Just like last year. And the year before that. She didn't get far.

"After a quick spin, I drove down my driveway, headed toward my garage," Sugie recalled. "My neighbor, who was standing at the top of my driveway, began screaming at me. I had no idea what he was saying or why he was acting that way. He yelled at me to get out of the car. When I did, I realized the entire rear end of my car was on fire. Fortunately, a garden hose lay nearby, so my neighbor shot

water onto the back of the car and into the engine compartment to put the fire out."

Although it took only minutes to extinguish, the fire thoroughly scorched the rear deck. The rear fenders and engine lid were blistered and burnt. The engine bay was a mess, insulation and wiring charred. The stench of acrid smoke filled the air. Sugie's cabriolet sat smoldering before her eyes. Cosmetically, the rear of the car was a disaster. Traumatized but determined, Sugie wasted no time picking up the pieces.

"I immediately made arrangements with a local shop—obviously a different shop—to fix the car. A driver with a flatbed truck showed up the next day to take it in for repairs."

Sugie's dilemma soon went from bad to worse. Due to the driver's befuddled absentmindedness or simple inexperience, her car broke free as it was being loaded onto the tilted bed. Gravity took control and her little cab rolled backward down her steep driveway, confirming once again one of Newton's basic laws, "*An object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.*" Crashing to a stop against a brick wall proved to be that unbalanced force.

Shock. Horror. Disbelief. A flood of tears. Her beautiful Porsche cabriolet, first burned and now banged-up. What Sugie had witnessed caused such profound stress that she actually required an emergency trip to the hospital. My God, what next?

Sugie called her son, Luke, to seek guidance and advice. They knew that the Porsche needed repairs that were beyond the scope of local shops. They wanted a world-class, reputable solution. After a

First and foremost, Sugie Young is a driver. There is nothing better than open-air driving on Michigan backroads.





Pat Yanahan (pictured below with Sugie) gathered a crew of professionals and volunteers to resurrect this 356B, from a charred and dented beginning to perfection. **Opposite Page:** Paul Masanek rebuilt the engine and renewed the electrical system after the catastrophic fire.

consoling and commiserating conversation, Luke told his mom he'd see what he could do. Luke was a good son.

Luke reached out to his friend, Robert. Robert was a Porsche guy—a Porsche guy whose 1955 Speedster had been recently restored to perfection. Robert told Luke that if he wanted the job done right, he had to call *that* person. Perhaps he would take on Sugie's project. *That* person was Pat Yanahan.

"When I called Pat and told him about my mom and what happened, we immediately formed a bond," related Luke. Pat arranged for the car to be flat-bedded from Sugie's home in Holland, Michigan, to his shop in Burr Ridge, Illinois.

"When I saw the car, *I started crying,*" joked Pat. After the shock wore off, Pat and his crew got to work. "First of all, we removed the engine. We determined it was totally cremated. When the good



neighbor sprayed the car to stop the fire, the engine sucked in the water, bending rods and camshafts. It was the only way they could stop the fire, but the water did a lot of damage.”

From the engine they moved to the body. “We removed the damaged bumper and continued to assess. The left rear quarter was kinked. The engine grille bent.” Luckily, the fire was limited to the rear of the car. The fabric top was unharmed, although the plastic

rear window was smoked up. The leather interior was unscathed. But that engine...

Paul Masanek, an expert engine builder and electrical engineer, picks up the story. “When Pat asked me to help with the engine, it first appeared only to have cosmetic and wiring damage. When we removed the engine, it became apparent water had remained inside. The water pooled in the engine, eventually resulting in rust damage to the engine’s internals. I discovered that the mechanical fuel pump must have failed at some point [in the car’s past], and some mechanic installed an electric fuel pump. I imagine that when the fire started, the electric fuel pump continued to fuel the fire even [after] the engine stopped.”

Pat continued to apprise Sugie and Luke with details about the damage and progress being made. Damage was extensive and progress was slow. “We received the okay to rebuild the engine and perform all the engine compartment repairs,” Paul said. “I procured a set of pistons and cylinders from a nationally known supplier. Unfortunately, the cylinders were defective. The cast iron crumbled and flaked into the oil, creating an abrasive slurry.” This killed the engine yet again. “Replacement pistons and cylinders, a new crank, rods, and re-machined cam journals were now needed.” From bad to worse, right?

Chicago-area machine shops couldn’t complete the work in a timely fashion, so Paul sent the case and replacement rods to Martin Willis at the Machine Shop in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

“As a favor to me, Martin did the work in less than two weeks. Unfortunately during the return shipping, UPS dropped the container and damaged the case. When Martin heard this, he exclaimed, ‘This engine must be cursed.’”

Fortunately, Martin expertly repaired the case, preserving the numbers-matching engine. Also, the mechanical fuel pump was repaired and a switch was installed to operate the electric fuel pump, but only to prime the carburetors. Not only did Paul build more horsepower into the car, he also improved its stopping power. He replaced the original single-circuit brake system with a safer,



The beautiful leather interior of Sugie’s cab was cleaned, oiled, and re-dyed to complement its Ruby Red exterior.



Above: No Bondo here! Mike Louis and Fred Mayer banged the dents smooth, then resprayed the entire car better than factory-new. **Below:** Sugie Young stands proudly with her cabriolet once again, after its two-year restoration. She will check the tie-down straps personally next time her car is flat-bedded.

more effective, dual-circuit system. New Koni shocks firmed up the ride. Properly-dated Vredestein tires were mounted on the original chrome wheels.

“As you can imagine, I was very careful with this engine and car,” Paul concluded. “The project presented many challenges. Funny thing happened on my initial test drive—a black cat ran across my path. I thought, oh no... really? But it all turned out well.”

While Paul rehabilitated the mechanics of the car, a pair of experts tended to the body. Mike Luurs and Fred Mayer of Luurs Hot Rod Shop in Romeoville, Illinois, worked for weeks to restore the car to better than new. Fred did all the body work, banging out the dents and wrinkles by hand—no Bondo shortcuts. Mike removed all the surface rust from the pan and the wheel wells, then applied Wurth



Underbody Seal Schutz. After prepping the body for paint, Mike used PPG single-stage paint to exactly match its factory finish—Ruby Red. Although undamaged by the fire, the interior was tired. Pat cleaned the smoky haze from the plastic rear window. He removed the original leather seats and cleaned, oiled, and re-dyed the leather to restore its buttery soft, caramel-colored texture. Prestige Auto Interiors rebuilt the seats, tightening the springs and replenishing padding. With all the starts, stops, and supply-chain delays, the restoration took nearly two years to complete. The car returned to Sugie by flatbed, this time securely immobilized.

Plans for the car? Sugie always has been and always will be a driver, and her son Luke and her grandchildren all will get a turn behind the wheel. Her 1960 cabriolet’s a family gem, a real Red Ruby. 356

