

# **Early 911 Pleasure**

**by Sean Cridland**

**article as printed in 9 Magazine  
July/August 2011, p. 18**

**circulation: approximately 40,000**



# 9 Magazine

BY ENTHUSIASTS FOR ENTHUSIASTS

www.9Magazine.com

JULY/AUGUST 2011

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- ▶ 944 TURBO BARN FIND
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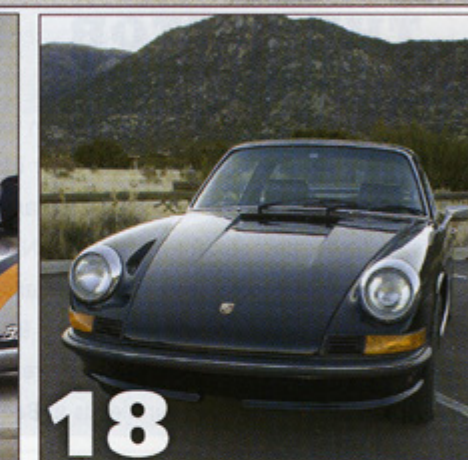
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# Early 911 Pleasure

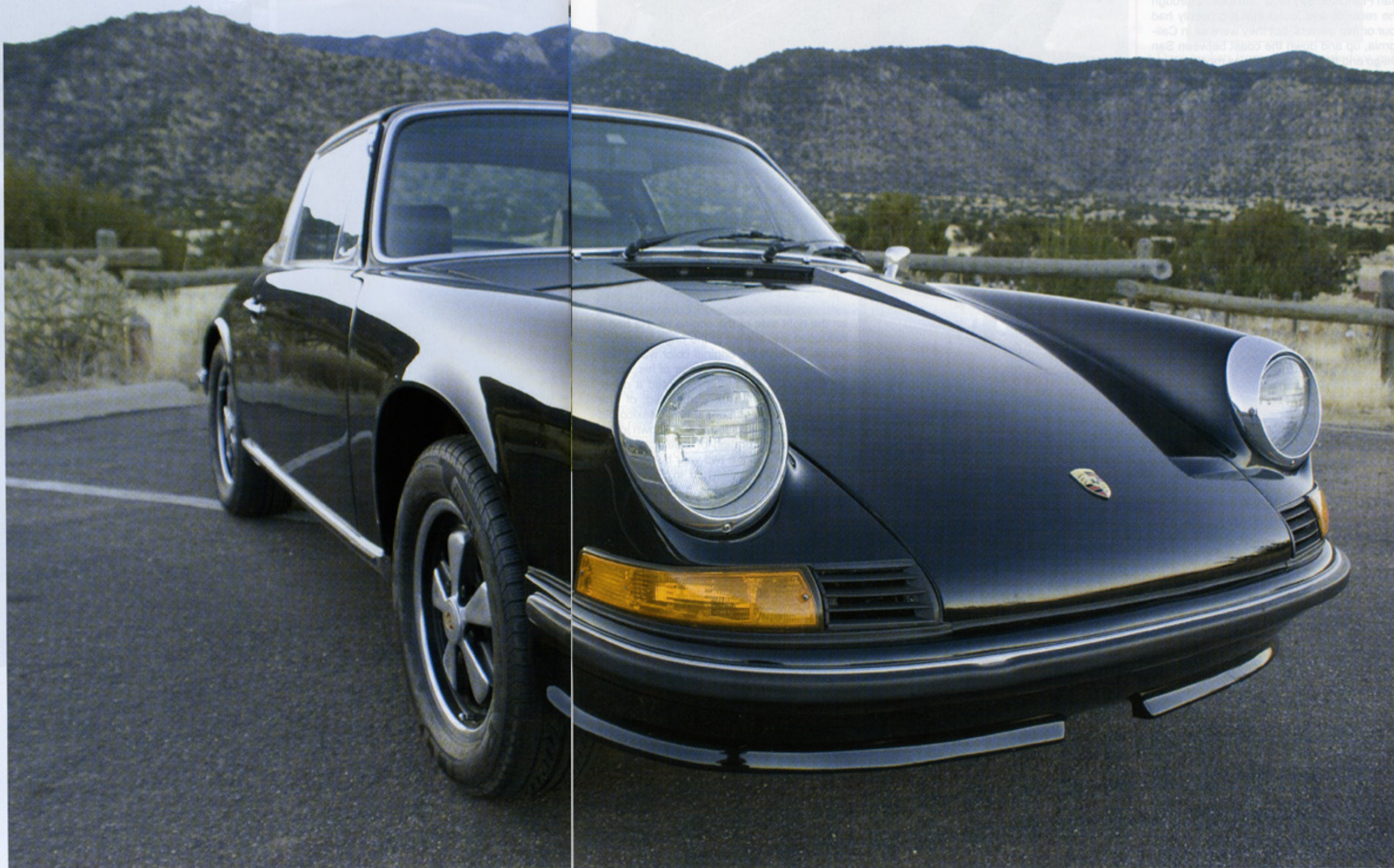
The unique look and quality attracted this owner to the Porsche brand

Text & Photos By: Sean Cridland

A couple years after Jim DeBlois graduated from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces in 1969 and moved to Southern California to begin his banking career, he was infected by the sports-car bug. The affordable fun cars of the time were the Opel GT and the Datsun 240Z. He bought one of the first Datsun 240Zs to come off the ship from Japan. Someone at the same apartment complex bought a Porsche 911T, which cost almost three times as much. At the time the Datsun was an economic giant-killer, performing as well as many cars two or three times its price. But it didn't take to long to notice that the car didn't hold together well over use and time, like the Porsche did.

Over time, he realized that the paint discolored, the interior stitching was weak and the performance trailed off, while the neighbor's Porsche continued to hold its luster, held together well and ran and ran and ran. Not to mention the unique 911 look and the strong reputation of the Porsche brand. Since then, Jim has owned, to the best of his recollection somewhere in the neighborhood of 20-23 Porsches, including two different 914s, a 912, a series of 911s including two different early 70s 911S's, a couple of Turbo's, a Ferry Porsche Commemorative Edition, two different 964 RSAs, and a 944 turbo S. While he says that he has nothing against any of the modern water-cooled 911s, he just likes the original 911 shape, air-cooled engines, and the two rear-wheel-drive power-trains. He admits that pricing has had something to do with that, but not overwhelmingly so. He also notes that to own and drive a Porsche means to participate in the Porsche reputation for panache, exclusivity of ownership, and that PCA has built a great organization that keeps everyone interested. Porsche as a company builds performance automobiles which continue to evolve and improve. A Porsche owner participates in that reputation no matter if they have the latest turbo Panamera or the earliest 356 or anything in between.

Still, when looking to purchase a car, uniqueness enters in. Whatever the model series, he looks for the most exclusive, iconic models. Hence, the 911S's, the turbos, the RSA's, the Ferry Porsche edition, etc. He's looking for something that will be fun to drive, will show well, and will hold its value when it comes time to passing it on to the next owner. As a matter of personal preference, he eschews the cars from 74-77 because of their weight gains and complexity from conforming to NHTSA bumpers, and EPA emissions controls. According to DeBlois, that's when the shifted from performance cars to



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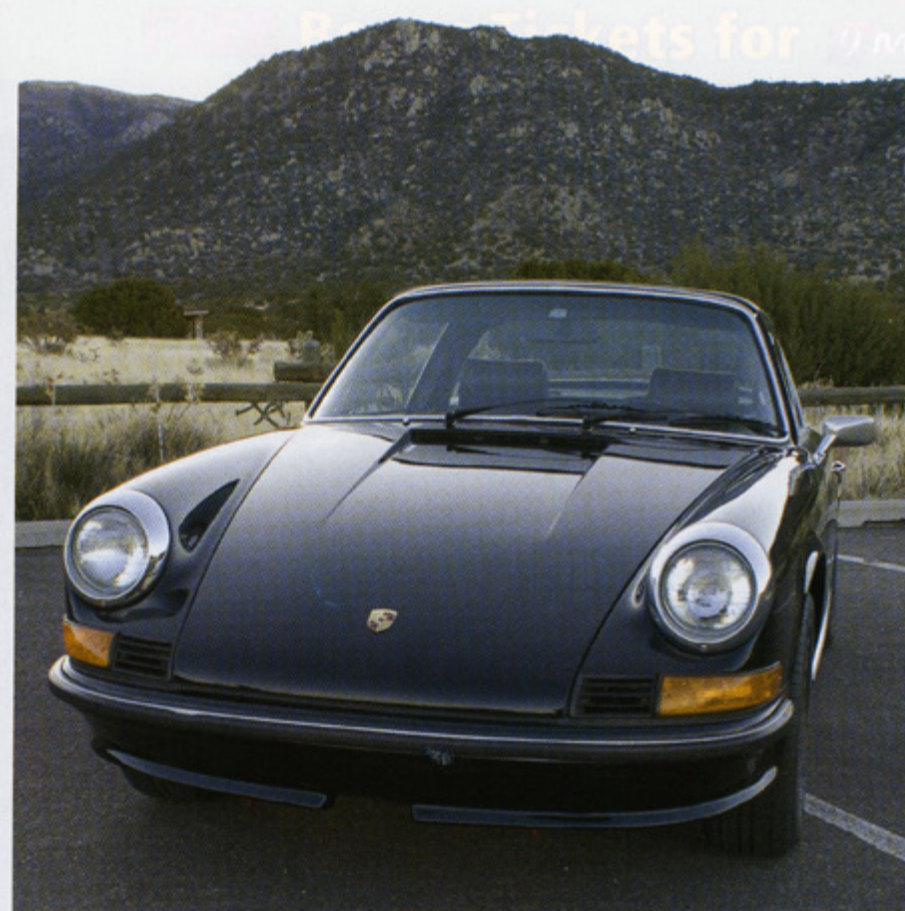
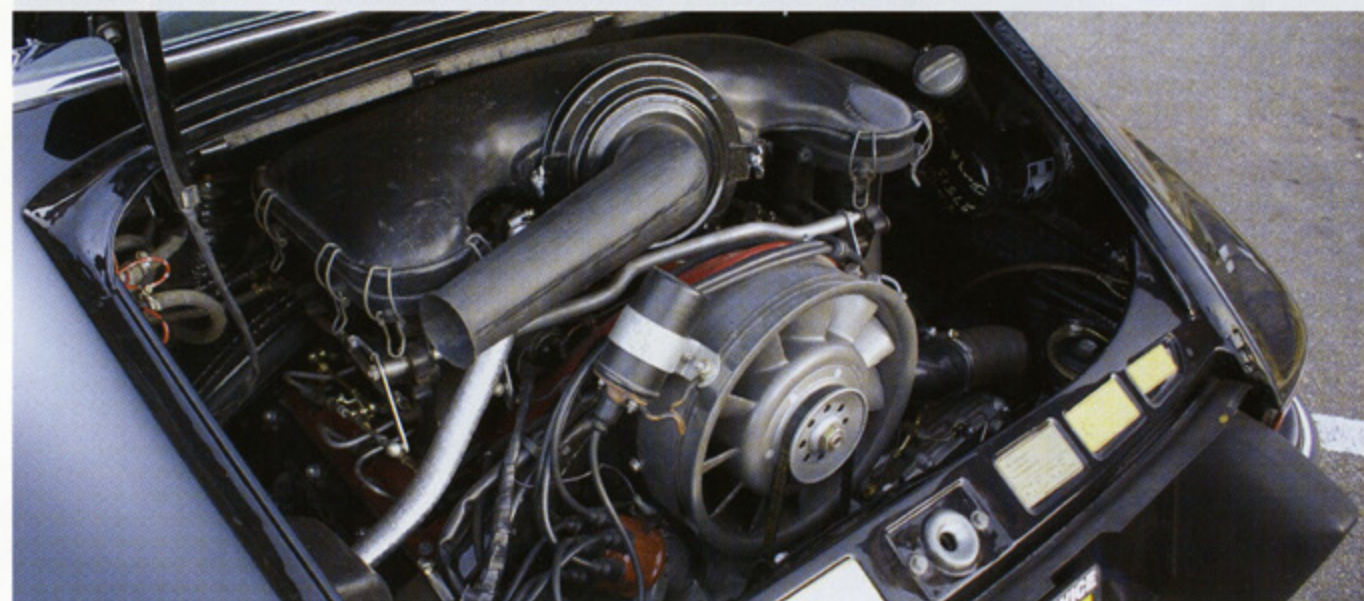


touring cars. Later on, with the SCs and the Carreras, Porsche found suitable solutions to return and improve performance levels.

In 2000, Jim was in the market for an early 911. Now living in Albuquerque, New Mexico the 60s and early 70s represented a time and era in his life that was the most fun and one of the best periods for the 911 too. He had recently sold his 73 911S coupe and had seller's remorse. He decided to get another one if it became available. Not long after, an Albuquerque-area Navy man returned home with the Targa. He'd bought it in the San Francisco Bay area. Jim looked through the receipts and found that it probably had four or five owners, but they were all in California, up and down the coast between San Deigo and the Bay area. It was mostly stock, but had an aftermarket Sony radio, a Momo steering wheel, a cracked dash, some upholstery wear, and the original mechanical fuel injection had been replaced by Weber carburetors, a popular aftermarket fix for the often-difficult to adjust injection system.



Though the five-figure odometer shows 27,000 miles, Jim reasons from its level of usage that it must be more like 127,000, with the speedometer turning over once. Of the car, he says "it cost me \$8,000 and it was an \$8,000 car." The paint was weak, having faded and oxidized, so he dismantled the car and stripped it to bare-metal himself. Along the way, he found some bondo on the right side of the engine lid. He had it reshaped and leaded to the original, perfect shape. Though the original color was silver, it's never been a favorite color of his, so after stripping it, he had it repainted a deep, lustrous black. Chuck Rumschlag, of The Color Works in Los Lunas, New Mexico did the painting. Rumschlag is well known in the area for his restoration of older cars of all sorts, so there was a two year backlog. The body painting was finished in February of 2004. Still, DeBlois notes, it was worth the wait. The car shows a beautiful, deep luster



that only a well prepared surface and a good pain-job can pull off.

The black interior remained black. Rumschlag got the replacement carpet kit from Germany, Jim had the seats from a 911T. He put a new dash in it, replaced the Momo with the original steering wheel, and bought some reproduction door pockets. The Targa top was refurbished by Dave Brown in Boulder, CO. Brown's been doing them since 1974. He recreates the dimensions of the targa itself, that was in 02, 1276 dollars. Jim called around to find a radio and found one, so the radio is an original model Blaupunkt such as you would find in 1973.

DeBlois, who is familiar with early 911s, felt that the engine was down on power. It just didn't run as expected. So, he removed the engine, transmission, and drive line put them on his flat-bed trailer and drove them to Carl Young at Porschehaus of Las Vegas, NV. Young would work on the engine for DeBlois on one condition: "that you don't call me, don't bug me and you don't question me." Jim agreed to the conditions, but had one of his own: "You don't die on me." They agreed. Young completely rebuilt the engine, transmission, replaced the clutch and flywheel, replaced the original mechanical injectors, and repainted the engine shroud. Young, also instrumental in starting the Las Vegas Region for PCA finished the engine in April of 2004. Jim took the body to Las Vegas and Carl and his staff re-installed the

drive-line. A few things that hadn't been addressed, such as bumper guards and other minor trim issues were finished off by Albuquerque's Mickey Hollingshead, owner of Jim's Fine Cars.

There was only one problem. DeBlois and crew had finished the car to such perfection that he became overly cautious about where and when he drove it. It was restored to such a high quality that it became a garage queen. He's only put about 500 miles on it since the restoration was finished in 2004. After sitting in the garage for several years, he's decided it time to pass on to the next owner. Someone who will love and appreciate it and continue its maintenance and improvement. He enjoyed the process so much that he couldn't bear to see anything happen to it. And...there's the value. We'll restored early 70s 911S's are now reaching over the \$100,000 mark, enough to buy another one and start all over again! Will he? According to DeBlois, "this is the last Porsche I have left. But I've had a lot of them and still like them. It's very possible."

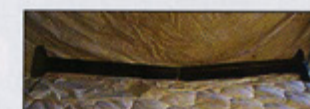
Right now, he doesn't have anything in his sights. He's also into restoring British motorcycles. Nortons, BSAs, etc. Bikes of the same era as his favorite Porsches. When riding one of his old bikes, he was recently asked how old he was. His answer: 14. Isn't that how old we all were when we had our first crush on a bike, a car, or a plane?

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