

THE 550

1955 PORSCHE 550/1500 RS SPYDER

Chassis No. 550-0077



From The Peter and Cheryl Dunkel Collection



PORSCHE

PORSCHE

Speeder

Cheryl Dunham

Driver: Pilot Christian Goethals
1980 place GP Spa-Francorchamps Belgium
1981 1st GP Spa-Francorchamps Belgium
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2021 1st GP Spa-Francorchamps Belgium
2022 1st GP Spa-Francorchamps Belgium
2023 1st GP Spa-Francorchamps Belgium
2024 1st GP Spa-Francorchamps Belgium
2025 1st GP Spa-Francorchamps Belgium



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1955 PORSCHE 550/1500 RS SPYDER
Chassis No. 550-0077

BY **Kane Rogers**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **David Newhardt**

This book contains new information including a more complete racing history for 550-0077 recently discovered by Porsche historian and author R. Stephen Heinrichs via Porsche Archives while researching for his upcoming book on purpose-built Porsches.

Vehicle to be offered as Lot S134 from the Peter and Cheryl Dunkel Collection at Mecum's Daytime Auction in Monterey August 15- 17, 2013 at the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel and Spa on Del Monte Golf Course Monterey, California U.S.A.

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1955 PORSCHE 550/1500 RS SPYDER
Chassis No. 550-0077

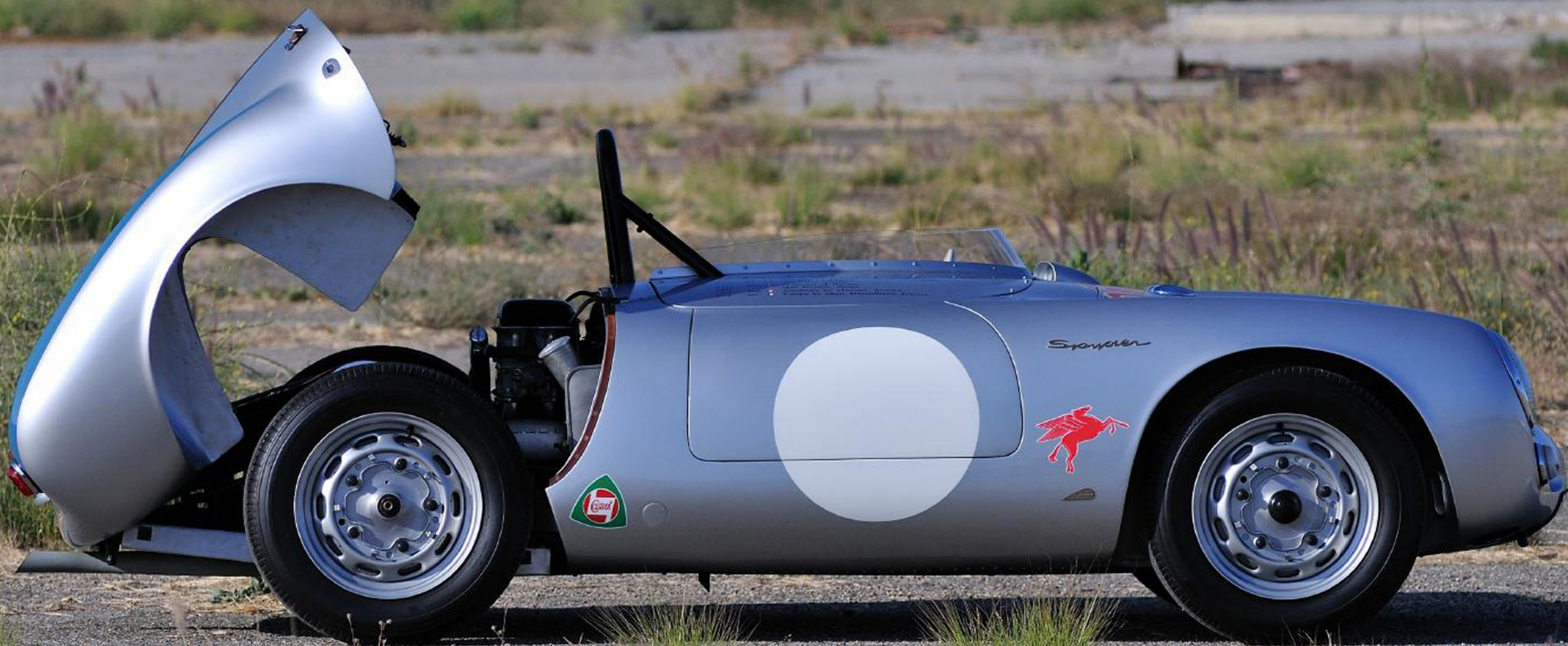
Introduced to the public at the 1953 Paris Motor Show, the 550 was Porsche's first dedicated sports racer, an open-cockpit design inspired by the earlier sports cars built and campaigned by German Volkswagen dealer Walter Glockler in 1949-50 using Porsche mechanicals in lightweight tubular frames. It was Glockler's success that encouraged Ferry Porsche to authorize the 550 project in 1952.



The need for such a car had become quite evident by then. Porsche was beginning to face stiff competition from a new breed of sports cars specifically geared for racing on the larger European circuits. The dual-purpose production Porsches were no match for such barely streetable competition machines as the Mercedes-Benz 300SL and Jaguar C-Type racers. Worse, companies such as Gordini and OSCA were fielding the same type of racers – “production” cars stripped down and practically devoid of creature comforts – in direct competition with Porsches at the class level as well. There was obviously no future for production-based Porsches against such competition; only a dedicated sports racer could solve the problem, and Glockler had already shown the way, collaborating with Porsche on a series of German championship-winning specials that wore the Porsche nameplate. Indeed, the most famous of the Glockler specials was widely promoted as a Porsche, even appearing on the company stand at the Geneva and Frankfurt auto shows in 1953.









BOSCH

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Unlike the rear-engined production 356, the 550 followed both the original Porsche and the Glockler designs, its engine mounted ahead of the rear axle in a simple ladder-type frame layout. To accommodate the design, the entire powertrain and rear suspension was reversed, placing the engine ahead of the transaxle and using leading rather than trailing arms to operate the torsion bars. The front suspension was typical Porsche, with trailing arms and transverse torsion bars.

The first two prototypes used alloy bodies built by Weidenhausen of Frankfurt, who had earlier dressed the Glockler cars. The goal was to enter them at Le Mans in June 1953, but in a rain-soaked trial race at the Nurburgring on May 31, Walter Glockler's cousin Helm staved off entries from Borgward and East Germany's EMW to make the first prototype, 550-01, a winner on its very first outing. That victory and a 1-2 class win at Le Mans were accomplished with the 1500 Super engine, which developed 80 HP on pump gasoline. The two prototypes were raced in Europe for the rest of the season, during which they made another appearance





at the Nurburgring along with a third prototype. It did not race, but onlookers noted the distinctly harsh bark emanating from its single large exhaust outlet, the source of which was a brand new powerplant designed in conjunction with the 550: the Type 547 engine.

Designed with considerable input from Dr. Ernst Fuhrmann, an expert engineer who later became chairman of Porsche, the 547 was much more than the 356's 1,500 CC 4-cylinder air-cooled boxer engine; it was the first Porsche engine to use twin camshafts per cylinder bank. Conventional thinking dictated an end-mounted chain or gear drive system that would have added to the overall length of the engine. However, Fuhrmann wanted to ensure that the Type 547 would fit within the confines of a regular production 356, an inspired foresight that soon spawned the legendary Carrera. Fuhrmann drew on his experience with the ingenious and ill-fated Cisitalia Grand Prix car to design a diabolically complicated cam-drive system using nine drive shafts and 14 bevel gears to route the crank's rotation first to the exhaust cams and





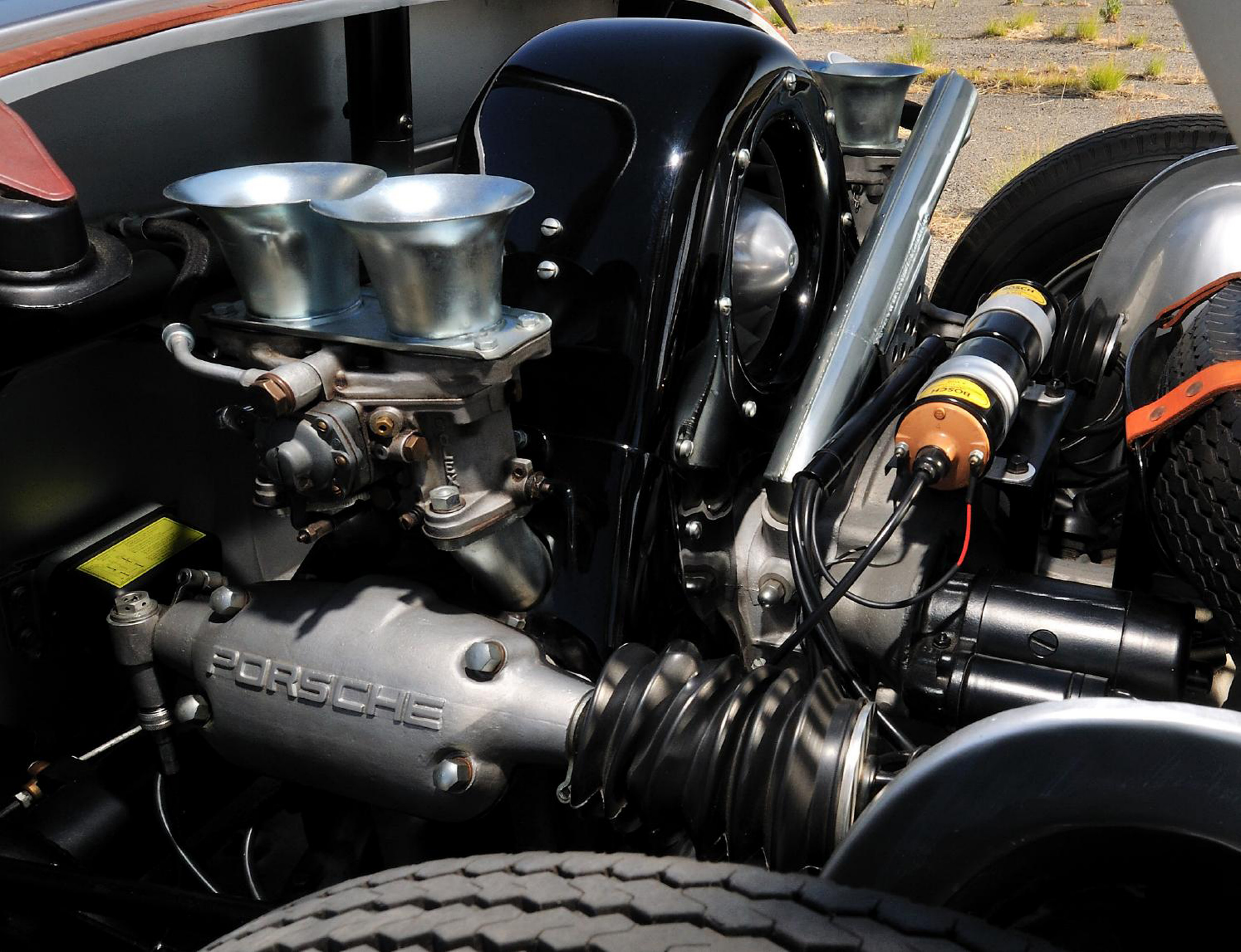






Spencer





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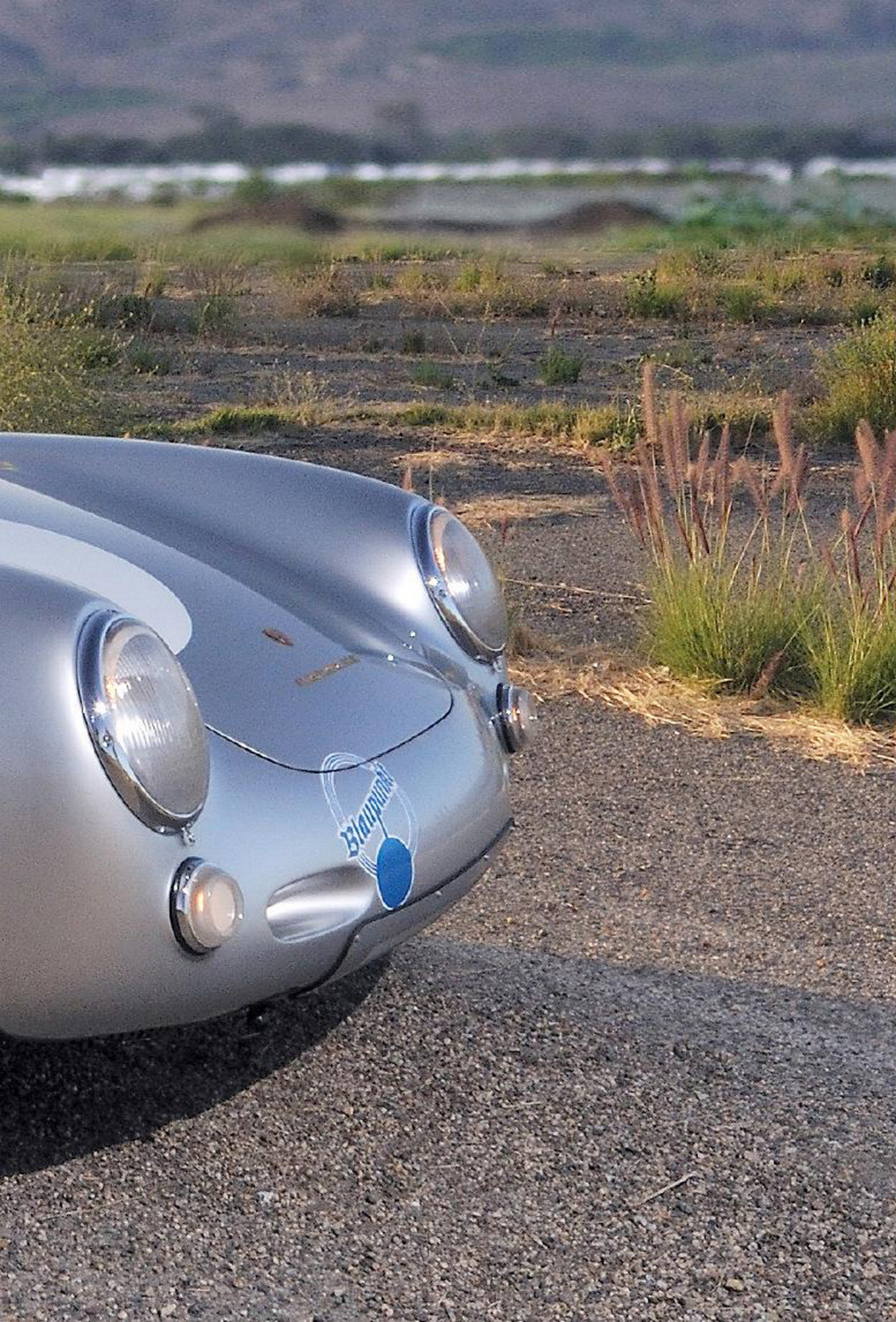
then to the intake cams. The entire affair was tightly packaged between the cylinder banks to further complicate the 547, which also bristled with roller crank bearings, dual distributors for its twin-plug combustion chambers, twin Solex 2-barrel downdraft carburetors and a highly efficient dual-inlet cooling fan arrangement.

The 547's unparalleled complexity meant that it took a skilled mechanic over 120 hours to assemble one; Fuhrmann himself once observed that it took a minimum of 8 hours to properly set the timing if one was lucky, and up to double that if tolerances were not exactly right. The first Type 547 engines produced 110 HP at 7,000 RPM but subsequent tuning revisions eventually raised that figure to 180 HP. This incredibly complicated yet powerful and reliable engine was at the heart of the 550 legend, which grew by leaps and bounds.

Soon after class wins at the Mille Miglia, Le Mans and the Carrera Panamericana in 1954, Porsche began building customer cars using alloy bodies by Wendler. Late in







1955 Porsche improved the 550's high-speed stability by replacing the ladder-type frame with a lighter and far stronger space frame. This 1955 550/1500 RS Spyder, chassis number 550-0077 is believed to be the first car fitted with the new space frame chassis. In January 1956 the car was delivered to Belgian race driver Christian Goethals, and in February 1956 was featured by Porsche as the Brussels Salon Auto Show Car. Goethals actively campaigned the car in Europe, winning the 1500CC class at the GP des Frontiers in Chimay and the Coupe de Salon in Montlhery among numerous excellent overall showings before heading to the United States, where it would continue racing for the next 5 years at the hands of female racing pioneer Suzy Dietrich and future Shelby team driver Tom Payne. Following 550-0077's long and successful racing career, it was acquired by Peter Zobian via Tom Payne's car dealership and utilized as a hillclimber throughout Michigan in the mid 1960s.

After a small handful of subsequent owners, Chassis 550-0077 was acquired by collectors and present owners Peter and Cheryl Dunkel in





Snowater



late 1989 from the estate of Harry Keeler. The Dunkels later commissioned a full restoration that was completed by Bill Perrone's Part Shop in Huntington Beach, California, and Jim Ansite's Ansite Inc. in Los Alamitos, California. The car's engine restoration was completed by Bill Doyle, the world's leading authority on the 547 4-cam engine.

Porsche historian and author R. Stephen Heinrichs has determined that three different 4-cam Type 547 engines were installed in the car by the Porsche factory, and that the present engine, which bears both the stamped factory internal number 212 and the serial number 90089, was the third and final engine installed, after the car was delivered to Goethals. It is correctly equipped with dual Solex 40 PPJ double-downdraft carburetors and mated to a racing-spec 4-speed gearbox. During the restoration the Dunkels decided to have Bad Company of Sun Valley, California, paint the car in a later factory Metallic Silver, with Blue rear fender scallops and the Porsche name emblazoned across the front bonnet for high visibility during vintage track events. A

Dr. Ing. h. C. F. Porsche KG Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen

Typ

550/1500RS

Fahrgestell-Nr.

550-0077

zul. Gesamtgewicht kg

900

Baujahr

1955

zul. Achslast vorn kg

450

zul. Achslast hinten kg

450



prominent and interesting detail is the list of races run by original owner Goethals painted on the aluminum tonneau cover as part of the restoration. The cockpit demonstrates the stark simplicity of the 550's design, with Blue fabric upholstery on the seats and inner door panels, a three-point roll bar; banjo-style steering wheel, floor-mounted shifter and pedals, tach, speedometer and oil temperature and fuel gauges.

Chassis no. 550-0077 is a well-known member of the Porsche community. In 2011 it was shown at the Quail Lodge Porsche Race Car Classic to benefit lung cancer research and at Rennsport, the largest-ever gathering of 550 and 4-cam Porsches, where Brian Redman and other judges gave 550-0077 an award for its history and restoration. That same year it was also named winner of the Design Achievement Award at the Dana Point Concours d'Elegance in Orange County, California. Now being offered after 25 years in the Peter and Cheryl Dunkel Collection, Porsche 550/1500 RS number 550-0077 is a seminal machine in Porsche's long and storied racing history.



550-0077 Racing Record

Race Date	Race	Start Number	Pilot	Car Class	Results Overall	Results Class
13th May 1956	Spa GP Spa, Francorchamps	7	Goethals, Christian	S 1500	7	3
20th May 1956	GP des Frontieres, Chimay	28	Goethals, Christian	S2.0	4	1
27th May 1956	1000 km Nürburgring	44	Rousselle, Freddy	1500	DNS	
29th June 1956	Rheims 12 h Rheims. GP France	26	Goethals, Christian	S1.5	8	2
21st July 1956	Solitude	24	Goethals, Christian			
5th August 1956	Nürburgring GP, Germany	44	Goethals, Christian			
16th September 1956	Avus GP Berlin, German Sportscar Championship	22	Goethals, Christian	Ser. S1.5		
1st October 1956	Namur Citadelle de Namurs		Goethals, Christian	1600		2
7th October 1956	Monthéry Coupes de Salon	58	Goethals, Christian	S1.5	5	1
3rd December 1956	Nassau Speed Week (Ladies Heat 1)	107	Dietrich, Suzy	F	4	
3rd December 1956	Nassau Speed Week (Ladies Heat 2)	107	Dietrich, Suzy	F	3	
17th May 1957	Cumberland Race, SCCA National Championship Races (Round 1)	161	Dietrich, Suzy	FM	2	
1st June 1957	Lake Erie International Race, SCCA Regionals (Main Race)	60	Payne, Tom			3
1st June 1957	Lake Erie International Race, SCCA Regionals (Other Race)	60	Payne, Tom			1
1st June 1957	Lake Erie International Race, SCCA Regionals (Women's Race)		Dietrich, Suzy			2
23rd June 1957	Elkhart Lake June Sprints, SCCA Road America (EM-GM, Race 2)	13	Payne, Tom	FM	10	5
5th July 1957	Watkins Glen GP Watkins Glen (BM-GM)	46	Payne, Tom	FM	3	2
5th July 1957	Watkins Glen GP Watkins Glen (Race 3, Preliminary BM-GM)	46	Payne, Tom	GM	3	2
1st September 1957	Akron	184	Payne, Tom			2
6th September 1957	Elkhart Lake Road America 500 Miles (Race 3)	13	Payne, Tom	FM	DNA	
20th September 1957	Watkins Glen International Sports Car GP of Watkins Glen (Ladies Race 1)	131	Dietrich, Suzy		2	
20th September 1957	Watkins Glen International Sports Car GP of Watkins Glen (Queen Catherine Cup)	131	Dietrich, Suzy	FM	12	4
16th May 1958	Cumberland SCCA National Sports Car Championship	30	Dietrich, Suzy	FM/1500	3	2
1st August 1958	Akron NE Ohio		Dietrich, Suzy			1
13th September 1958	Harewood Acres (1 hour race)		Dietrich, Chuck		2	
18th September 1958	Watkins Glen GP Watkins Glen, SCCA National Sports Car Championship	38	Dietrich, Suzy	FM/1500	DNF	1
18th September 1958	Watkins Glen GP Watkins Glen, SCCA National Sports Car Championship	38	Dietrich, Suzy	FM	DNA	
April 1961	Lawrenceville Regional Races		Dietrich, Chuck	Ser. F		1
August 1961	Connellsville Race, Pennsylvania Regional Race (race 2)		Dietrich, Suzy		4	



PORSCHE



550-0077

Known Ownership History:

February 1956

Delivered by Porsche to Brussels Salon Auto Show

February 1956 – November 1956

Christian Goethals – Brussels, Belgium

December 1956 – Early 1960s*

Charles and Suzy Dietrich – Sandusky, Ohio

Early 1960s – 1967**

Peter Zobian – Ann Arbor, Michigan

1967 – 1968

Jesse James Smith Service Center – Austin, Texas

1968

Bob Tescione – Austin, Texas

1968 – 1981

Franklin Rudolph – Sacramento, California

1981 – 1989

Harry Keeler – California

1989 – Present

Peter and Cheryl Dunkel – Newport Beach, California

*Believed to have been imported by Tom Payne's Michigan car dealership via Nassau, Bahamas for Speed Week before being sold to Charles and Suzy Dietrich.

**550-0077 was either consigned to Payne's dealership by Dietrich or purchased by Tom Payne and later resold to Zobian.





Female racing pioneer Suzy Dietrich at Cumberland, May 1957



550-0077 in 1968 after being purchased by Bob Tescione while stationed with the Air Force in Austin, Texas.
Photo courtesy of Bob Tescione



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