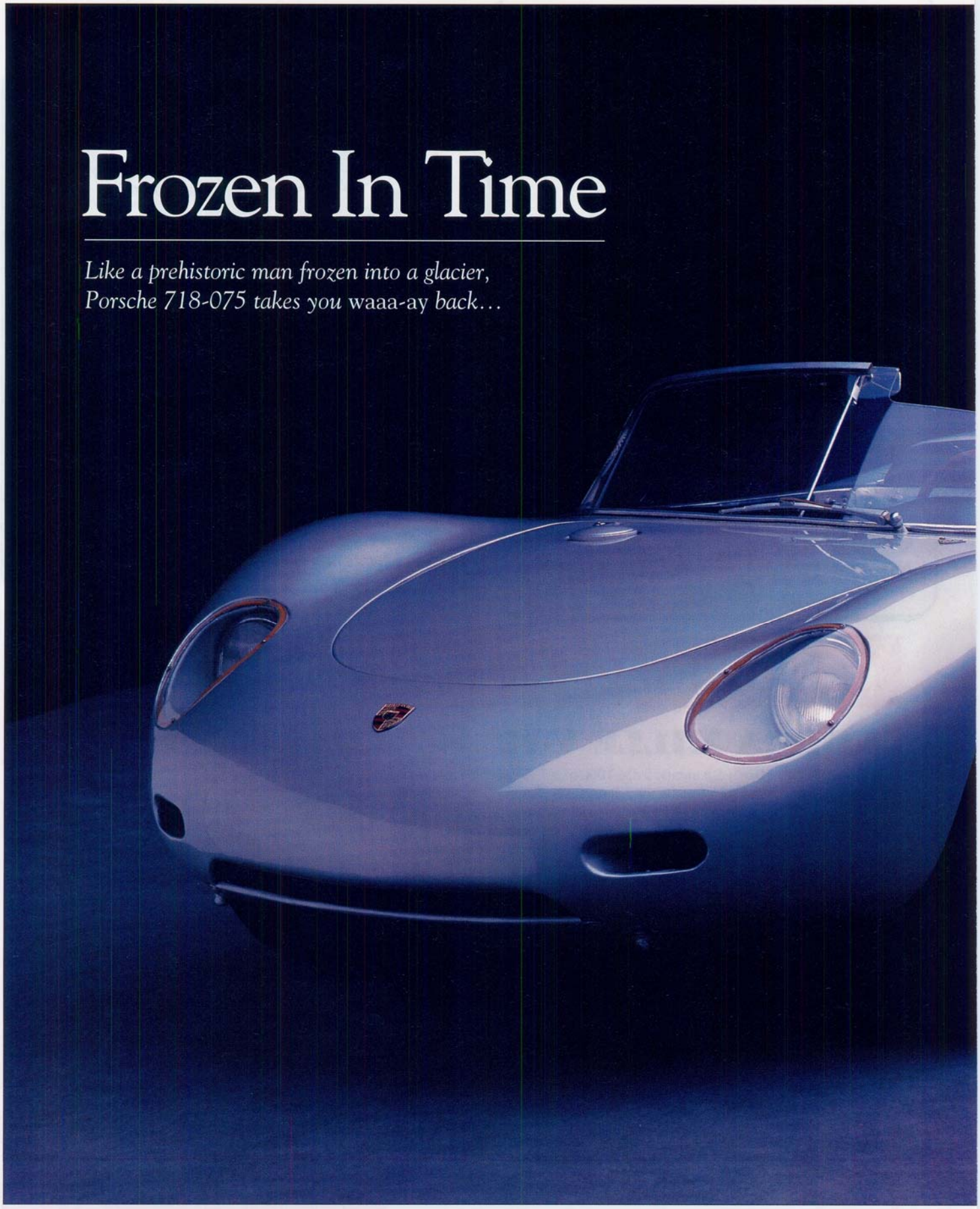
Frozen In Time

Like a prehistoric man frozen into a glacier, Porsche 718-075 takes you waaa-ay *back…*



BY TED WEST

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DON HEINY

Anyone seriously interested in the racing of the 1950s and '60s is familiar with the Porsche RS—for *Rennsport*, or sports-racing. And if you happen to be a fool for Porsches, as is the person typing this story, the dimunitive, giant-killer RS is an object of stupefying beauty, bravery and grit.

Why so?

I'll explain. The first sports-car race I ever saw was at Pomona Fairgrounds, 1960, and two bright-silver Porsche RS60s, driven by the great Ken Miles and the even greater Dan Gurney, flat ran away with it. Nose to tail, by the end they were miles (and gurneys) ahead, passing and repassing as if they were starring in a really bad racing movie. Gurney won by a paint job. From that moment, I devoutly vowed to carve out a life around racing. (As they say, be careful what you pray for.)

RS60s and 61s were demonic, reducing huge-engined oxen like Corvettes and Cheetahs to red-faced, wheel-spinning self-satire. With less than one third the cubic capacity, an RS simply streaked ahead like a turbocharged roach, while behind the spectator fence, we pointed and whooped like fans at a Buster Keaton festival.

Which brings us to the present 1961 RS61. Whether RS60 or RS61 (they're all but identical save for their model-year designation), an RS personified resourcefulness, efficiency and contempt for the big boomers all around it. But imagine, then, the impact such a doughty device would have if discovered untouched today, 40 years later—no surgical implants, no tummy tucks or grille-lifts…nothing but The Real Thing.

Like the frozen prehistoric man found recently in a Swiss glacier, the pictured RS61 is untouched—with one exception—since the 1960s. That exception was a 1977 vintage race at the Nürburgring, at which this all-original car's authenticity caused a sensation. And from 1977 until just three months ago, the car has been in deep storage in Europe, its mechanical components carefully preserved. Its new owner as of three months ago, Bud Lyon, was guided to the car by Alex Finnigan of the Paul Russell restoration shop, and now Lyon has brought the car to the US. It still has its ultra-hot final- generation cam, intended to stretch its former competitive life. It will hardly run at all below 4000 rpm, and getting it rolling requires revving hard, slipping the clutch and stooping to ungentlemanly violence. It may get a milder cam.

But Lyons' intentions are entirely honorable. One of the most original RS's anywhere, it won't be romanced in any way. If

you experienced such cars in your youth, studying this treasure up close won't make you any younger. (I tried.) But it *will* tell you more about the racing of the 1960s than any three dozen "restored" cars.

By specification, the RS60 and RS61 had a four-inch longer wheelbase than the earlier 1959 RSK (for *kurz*, short). This made it far more stable at speed and helped it achieve tremendous success wherever it raced. The car's model number is Type 718, and of all RS61s this one is number 075. Power is produced by a four-cam flat-four of just 1587cc. With a 10:1 compression ratio, the RS61 generated 160-hp at 7600 rpm. (The RS60 made the same power at a slightly higher 7800 rpm.)

As with all Porsche racing cars well into the '70s, the RS61 had a tubular spaceframe, while its competitors were upgrading to monocoque. Traditional Porsche trailing-arm suspension was used in front. An unequal-length wishbone rear suspension, first tried in the 1959 RSK factory racers, was adopted and provided

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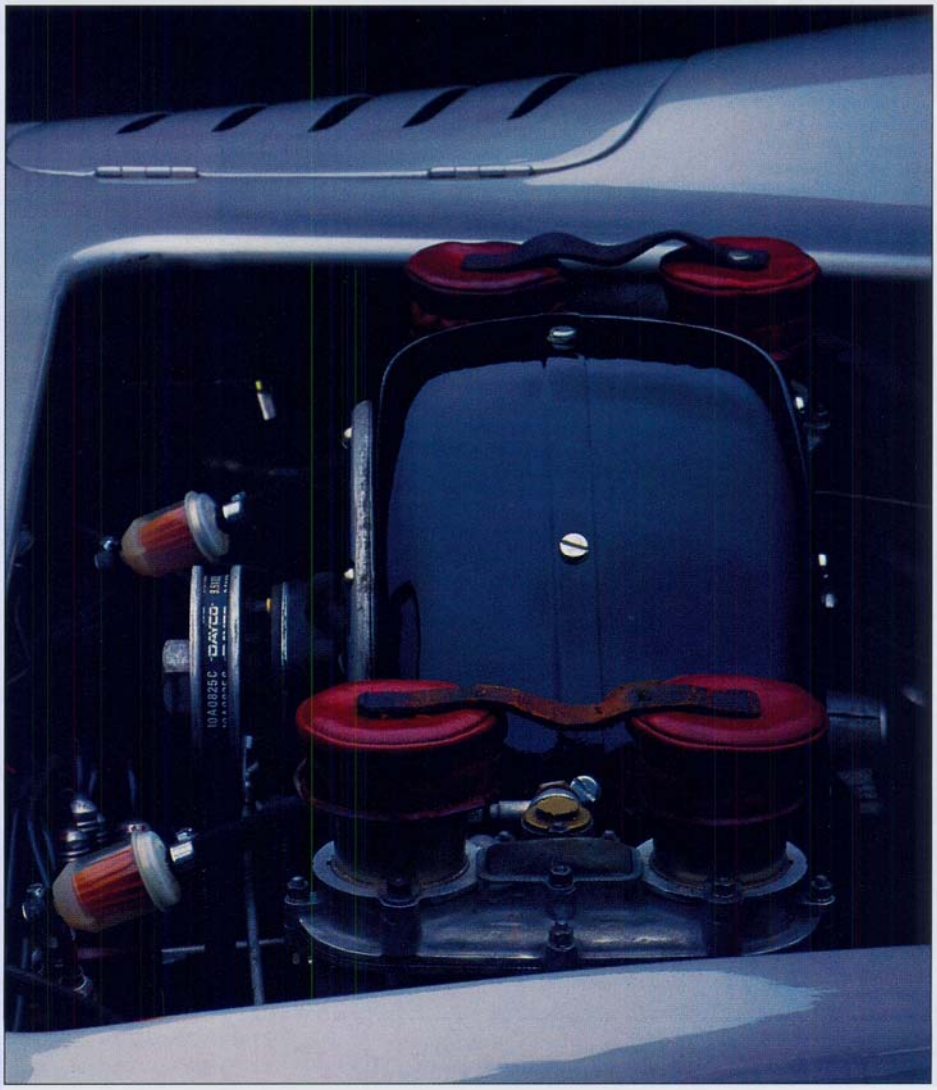
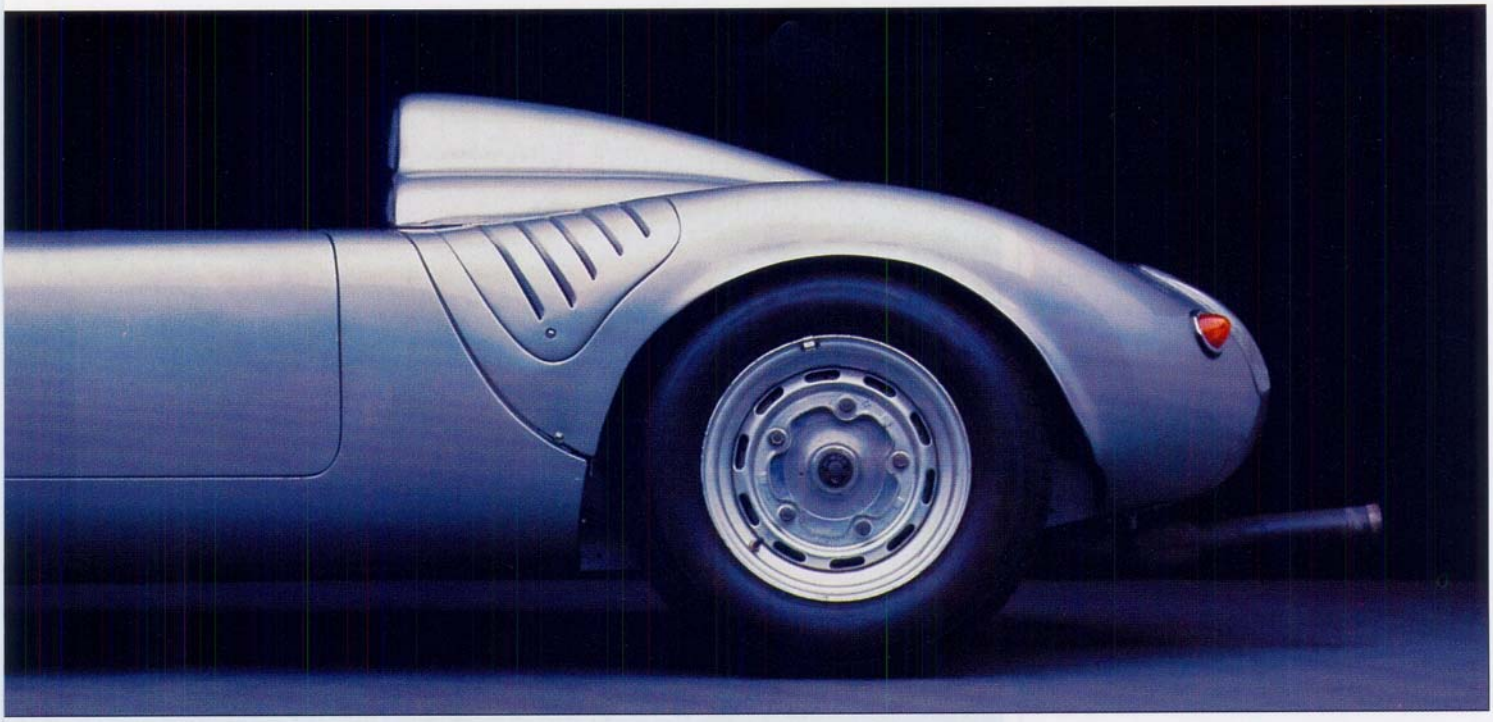
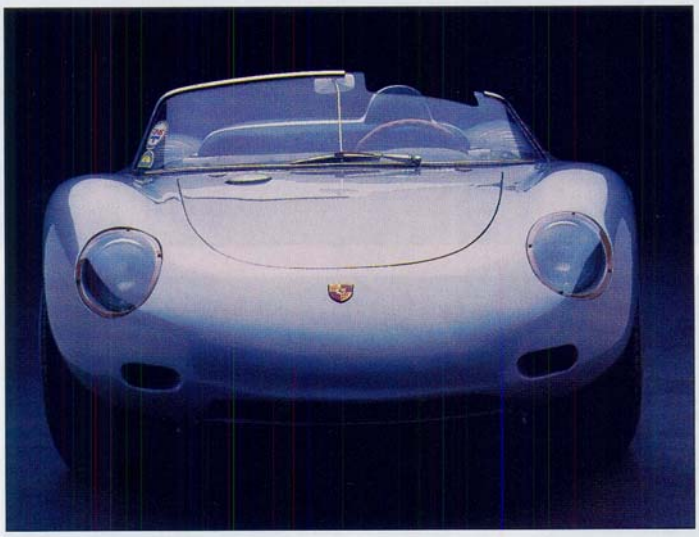
highly advanced geometry and wheel control. Eleven-inch drum brakes were used in a time when other teams had converted to discs. Tire size was skinny—5.50-15 in front and 6.00-15 in the rear. Recommended tire pressure in front was 26-29 lbs, 29-32 lbs. at the rear. Dry weight was a skimpy 1210 lbs.

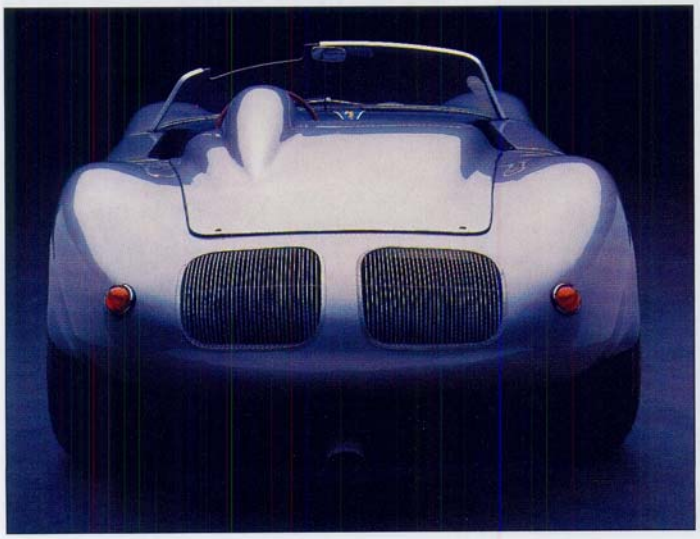
The F.I.A.'s GT rules were nothing if not fussie in 1961. Space had to be made for the "F.I.A. suitcase," a piece of imaginary luggage. The RS found space under the rear deck just aft of the engine. Fortunately, no suitcase was carried in competition, for the air-cooled RS's air intakes would have been badly blocked.

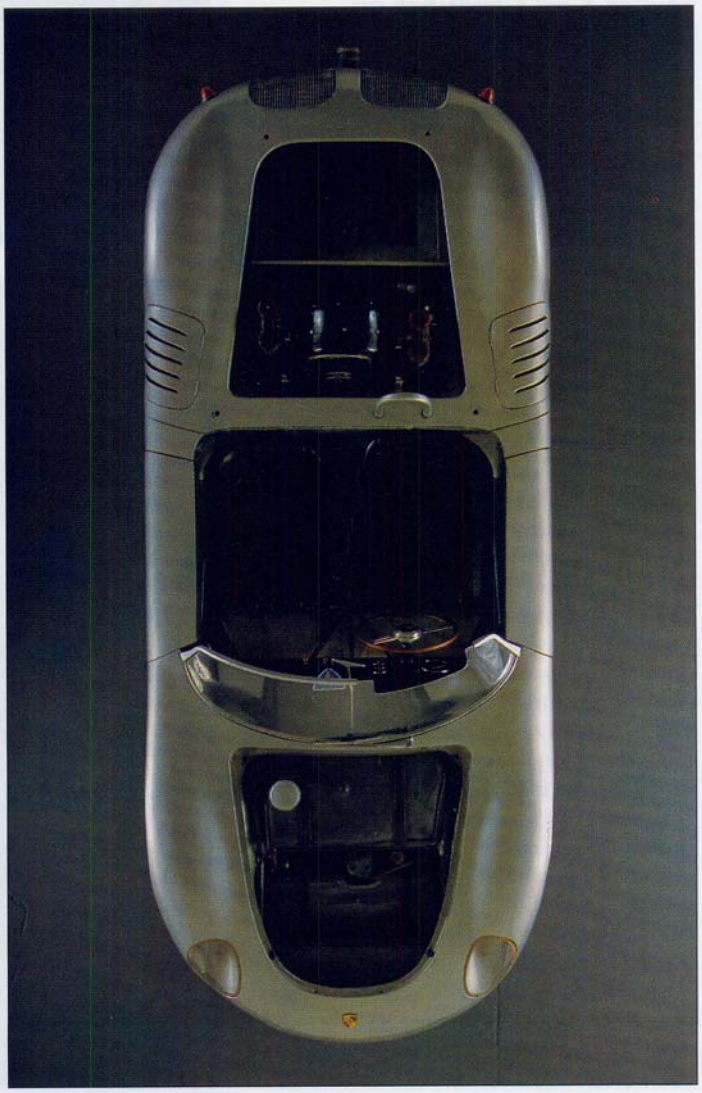
Similarly, new GT rules required a tall safety-glass windshield. The resulting added drag was onerous for the small-engined Porsches, and on 718-075 a large notch has been cut out of the windshield. For taller drivers, the Speedster-like chrome windshield frame impeded the view forward, and











cutting it down both improved vision and reduced drag, while meeting the mandated overall windscreen height.

RS61 number 718-075 was delivered to original Austrian owner Karl Orthuber on February 14, 1961 for use in the European Hillclimb Championship. It won both of its classes in its first event, the 1961 Hasselgraben Bergrennen. This was followed by second-place finishes at both the Mt.Ventoux Hillclimb in France and the Austrian Platschberg Rennen. In the Grosser Bergpreis in Freiburg, Germany, Orthuber placed fifth in under-1600cc and seventh in the overall European Hillclimb Championship event. He finished the season with a third at the Grosser Bergpreis in Austria. In 1962, the

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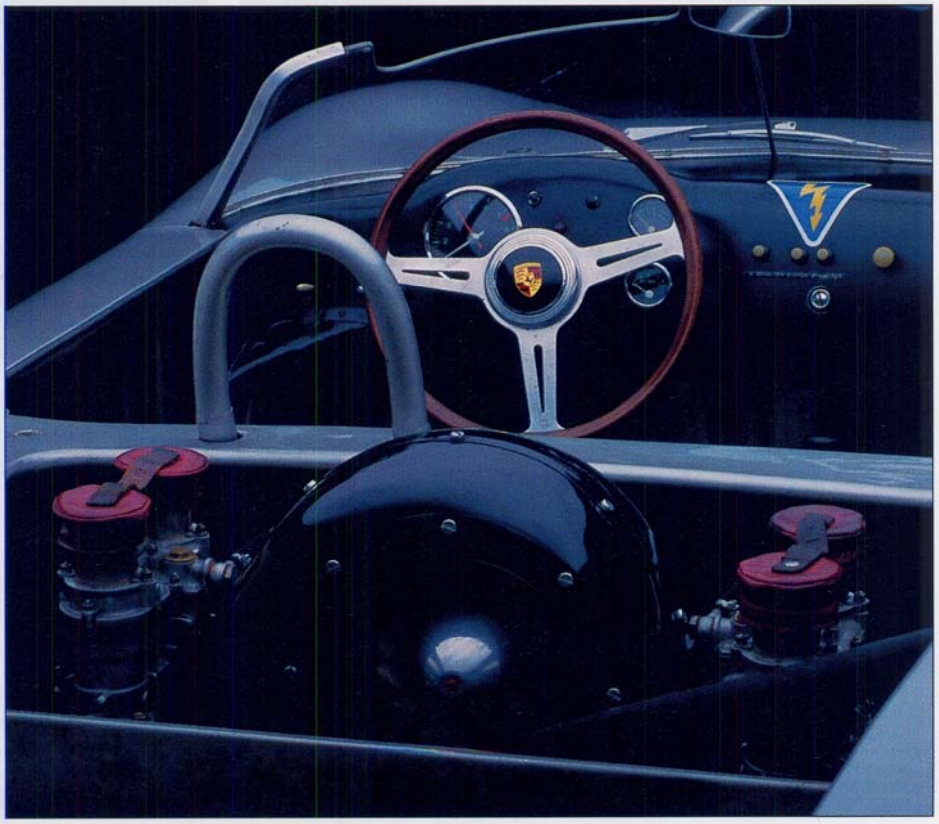
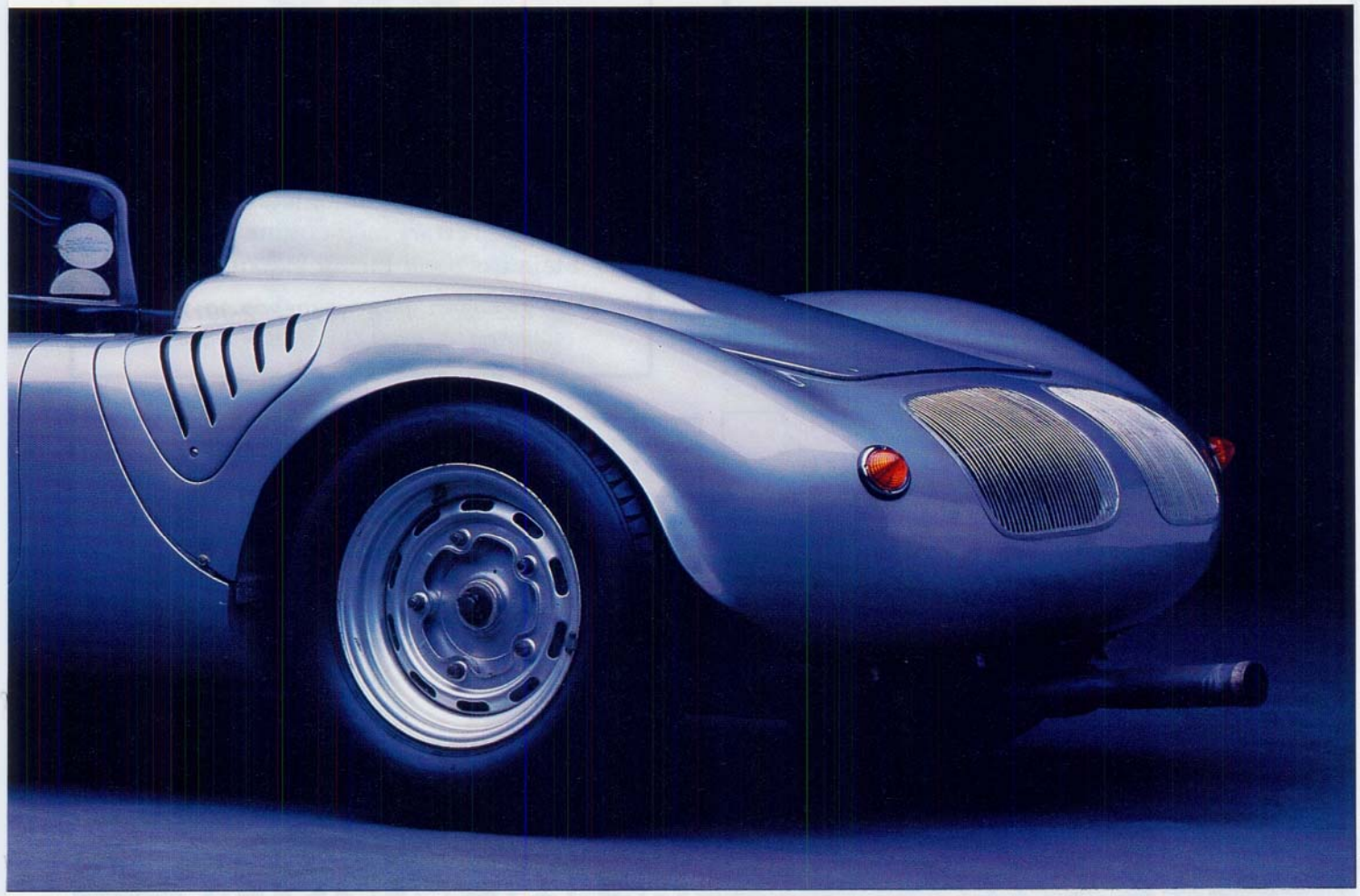
car placed fourth and fifth in its two races at the Rossfeld Bergrennen.

But in its most significant races, 718-075 was loaned to well-known international Porsche driver Edgar Barth. At one of these, Pescara in August, 1961, Barth placed the car a superb second overall in the World Manufacturer's Championship race. This result was not enough, however, to keep Porsche from falling to third behind Ferrari and Maserati in the championship. The car's competitive career waned, and it was sold in the late 1960s, reappearing only once at the aforementioned 1977 Nürburgring vintage event. On this occasion, it was driven by Edgar Barth's son, the fast-rising young Jürgen Barth.

Today the car is being prepared for Brian Redman's Targa 66 vintage event this October. Lyon is redoing only the necessary safety-related components—oil, fuel and brake lines and the like. A milder cam is likely as well. But otherwise, 718-075 will be a vision of utter originality, virtually untouched in 30 years. Vintage racing cars are all time-machines, but this one will take you *waaa-ay* back...even if you weren't born yet. ◆





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