

The Alternative Line

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The Torch is Passed...

with apologies to JFK...

“We observe today not a victory of partying but a celebration of freedom - symbolizing an end as well as a beginning - signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before you and Dr. Porsche the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed since the first class win at Le Mans nearly a half century ago.

The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of SUV and all forms of human transport. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe - the belief that the rights of drivers come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of Engineers and the laws of physics.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Porscephiles - children born of the Baby Boomers, tempered by Carter, Clinton & Claybook, disciplined by a hard and bitter double-nickel, proud of our ancient heritage - and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those velocities to which this club has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every marque know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any shmoe, to assure the survival and the success of velocity. This much we pledge - and more. To those old air cooled gladiators whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United, there is little we cannot do in a host of cooperative ventures, despite more cylinders and wierd wet coolant. Divided, there is little we can do - for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder, save to toss our cookies at the thought of a Porsche SUV... “

And it came to pass on the 27th of May in the year of our lord two grand, that the annointed offspring of yours truly, groomed for this task since a sperm, did verily reach from the safety of her cosseted compartment, protected by the Targa rollbar, and impart unto the gathered throng a sign, symbol of all that is holy, that they might pass on the right in rapid succession, the path of the Silver Bullet. And I saw it for myself, and pronounced it GOOD! And so, too, didst her chariot belch forth the blue smoke for which it is rightly famous (infamous?), and blast down the straights, and scream through the curves, which comprise the long course at Watkins Glen. And Dad was an emotional wreck!

Prudence forces me to avoid a few administrative details, but the results were everything I have been anxiously hoping for since my daughter Jessica first made more noise than the loud pedal could ever match. Dave Weber graciously accepted the challenge of the role of “adult” in taking my child from her experience driving mostly in the Subaru to her climbing from the Porsche exclaiming excitedly “Dad, I passed a 928!” Chris Kirby and Dick Hyland provided the ritual “busting of chops” necessary to welcoming anyone to the fold of we lovers of speed, and everyone else made her feel welcome as well.

It was not always a certainty. While she inherited her father’s sense of humor, and heavy right foot, she got her mother’s affinity for tools (NADA!) and her own unique outlook. So it was with trepidation that I forced this track driving on her, knowing that she might simply participate merely as a way to get me off her case, rather than sharing the passion it instills in me.

It could readily be suggested that she could have pulled off a “sting”. She certainly has the intellectual prowess and manipulative skills to do so, having gotten into Wellesley College via early decision for the fall. But the truth was confirmed as she and Ann, her close friend from school, returned from the Glen following the Niagara event in early June. Prudence again constrains me on details, lest her uncle and godfather, a NYS Trooper, might ever read this, but the two of them blew by me in the 993 on the Thruway as I drove the motorhome and car trailer back, and those who know me recognize that I grow no moss beneath my wheels, even in that colossus.

When I overheard the two of them through the day comparing notes on how fast they had been going and where, each returning from their next run group to index up the bar, I knew that their respective mothers would soon view me like Dr. Frankenstein, for having created these monsters from their sweet innocents. And Proud of it!

The epiphany was not without its penalties; the Silver Bullet started making bad engine noises during a final day session while I drove it with Ann in the right seat, as I wanted to show her what it was capable of safely doing in competent hands despite 210K miles on the clock. To their great credit, and my immense relief, they both took to the 993 like they had been practicing with it all along. (Hmmm...) Anyway, after considering the options, which included selling it as-is and replacing/upgrading the powerplant, I think I’ll have the engine rebuilt completely, if they can assure me it will be free of oil leaks (for at least a LITTLE while). That way Jess will have a good car for learning to develop SKILL instead of one which merely allows her to plant her right foot, no matter how poorly she has driven the rest of the curve. And maybe she can pass it down to her children. In about 2027 when IT is 50.

And I want to express my deepest appreciation to those who made it possible for me to fulfill my dream. It will not soon be forgotten, and you know who you are.