

The Alternative Line

by Joe Holzer

for Publication in CNY-PCA Redline Report

Copyright 2001 im@holzerent.com

Dear friends (he said, half-expectedly); My last diatribe dealt with the electrical problems facing California. As I write this I am almost half a world away in the birthplace of our favorite toys (no; our Porsches!). I am in eastern Berlin to qualify a battery plant because, as you probably never thought about it, if a power station STOPS generating power, there is no electricity to power all the necessary pumps and cooling and what-not necessary to keep a generator and turbine set from self-destructing as it spools down. Which can take as much as a DAY!

Little of that has anything to do with the purpose of this article, but it is the reason I am able to write this today. Since I was first aware of the internal combustion process, I have been a fan of personal automobiles, and a Porsche nut since the first time I saw the "basket handle" on an early 911 Targa. No matter how many watches and sunglasses he does, Butzi will never equal that simple, elegant, functional beauty. You cannot conceive the angst its elimination from the Porsche line caused me. Should it ever come to pass, I will surely find a way to own the last remaining example on earth.

But since my first encounter with same, and my gradual awakening to the world automotive scene, I have set myself a number of personal objectives. Note that most have not realistically been assigned a timeframe, as I have regularly been convinced that the only way to truly meet five year plans was to be like the Soviets and lie to yourself. No can do. So instead they have been like "... before I die, I want to ..." plans. For example; On Friday the 13th exactly twenty years ago tomorrow, at 11 PM in Dayton OH, I became the proud owner (well, with a bank) of a 1977 Porsche 911S Targa with 30,000 miles on the clock, which you dear readers have come to know as "The Silver Bullet", or as the car which has sold more Porsches than any salesman alive. It leaked oil that day, and has yet to fail to do so again. I look forward to its 3.2 carrying on the tradition. Next month makes two years since I could say I owned more than one Porsche, which at least is a statistically REALLY rare person (like there was ANY question of MY rarity, they said thankfully). Last year my sole heir finally could take up the torch of the task for which she has been prepared since she was a sperm, and I look fondly toward the day she has HER first student.

Among others still on the plate, however, is the plan to go to Porschestrasse in Stuttgart to see MY Porsche built bolt by bolt, then introduce my virginal machine to the joys of mechanical love on the roads for which it was engineered. I would ask a moment's reflection on that statement, because those of you with grey hair certainly remember the terrible junk to come from our own domestic car makers in the eighties, simply because they saw NO REASON to make a car capable of exceeding 65 mph with any competence whatsoever, while the double nickel was the law of the land. Germany, however, has steadfastly held to the view that personal transport was a personal responsibility, and that multi-lane limited-access roadways were intended to allow travel with a capital NOW, however much the Greens lobby to the contrary.

So how many of you have been perfectly safe and legal and found your car suddenly stumbling as though someone had pulled a plug or two, as you were travelling in a string of cars down the interstate? Happened to me three times in the past as many days. And two of those days were in the rain. The car in question was a station wagon. A BMW, to be precise. And the reason was because BMW thinks 6800 rpm in top gear is fast enough, thank you. Never did reach that 240 km/h on the dial, but I got a touch over 230 and left it there long enough to be sure it was not going to change its mind. Damn. It felt good to drive competently the whole time at over 100 mph legally, with bursts to just below 150, and actually have people sharing the same road who both checked a mirror once in awhile and actually moved right even if it slightly inconvenienced them. Oh, I was with a friend I had met at Christmas in, of all places, Jamaica. She has an M3, which was reason enough for me to want to reconnect with her in Straubing, north of Munich. Gas, oil, room and board were my treat, while reading road signs in time for me to do something about them was her job, along with actually witnessing my transport to highway heaven, as she is a regular visitor herself. We drove from Straubing to Zurich, up to Stuttgart, then back to Straubing. I then had to return the car to Munich before flying to Berlin. I recommend the trip highly, especially if you can get the sun we never saw. That has to be absolutely godlike joy. I miss it already, and it's only been six hours. And another milestone has been blasted past.