

# 20th Annual 928 Frenzy, 2016

Story by Curt Austin, Hudson-Champlain Region



*Curt Austin*

**P**orsche intended the 928 to be the ultimate GT, a car that can get you places fast and comfortably. It broke new design ground in several ways when it was introduced in 1977, and fulfilled the Porsche mandate of timeless design – clean and uncomplicated. Not so simple underneath, as many know; it features the scariest fuse panel you’ll ever see, as well as many elaborately-engineered mechanical systems. It has a certain reputation owing to these complexities. Porsche’s historian Dieter Landenberger has said “It’s much easier to own a vintage 911, so whenever I see one of these cars on the street I’m very happy.”



And yet, despite the challenges of keeping these cars on the road, owners confidently drove them from 17 states and provinces to the 928 Frenzy. Where does this confidence come from? We’ll get back to this question, but here’s a hint: it’s not about the cars, it’s about the people.

This was the 20th year of the Frenzy, always held on the weekend closest to 9/28. It was headquartered at the Holiday Inn in Sterling under the auspices of the Potomac Region of

PCA. "Frenzy" derives from the 928's nickname – sharks – and what happens when excited sharks gather. Study a side view of a 928 and you'll understand. The first Frenzy was organized by Ed Ruiz as a social and technical gathering of DC-area 928 owners. Current organizer Greg Nichols started attending the next year and has been at every event since. He and his crew put together a new format this year that was very successful.

Generous support was provided by 928 Specialists, 928sRus, Classic 9 Leather Shop and the 928 Owners Club. J.P. Thal-Larsen designed and produced the T-shirts. Bruce Bade coordinated with Summit Point Raceway. Greg's son James was always at his side.

Frenzy 20 attracted 65 cars and over 100 people from 17 states and provinces. Six owners came all the way from Canada, but Trey Johnson won the "greatest distance" award by driving his 1990 S4 from Florida. One contingent flew in from Texas.



*Orlando Emmanuelli*

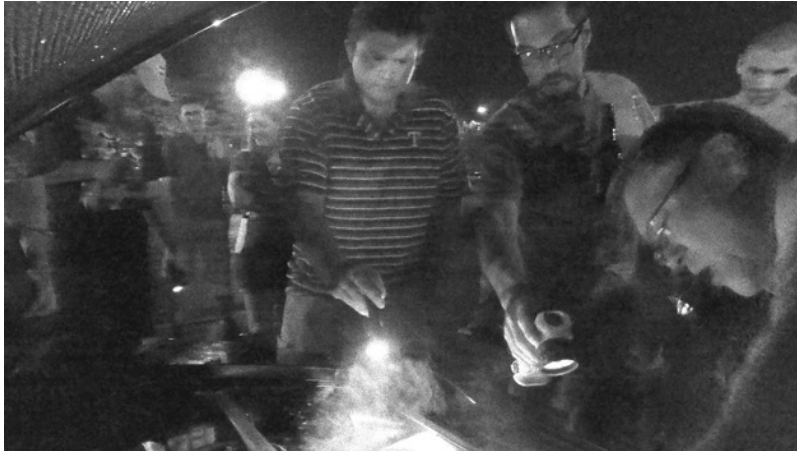
Interest in the 928 seems to be increasing. It was originally viewed as a dangerous heretic by air-cooled rear-engine aficionados, but as it enters vintage status, sentiment is shifting to recognize its profound influence on automotive design. There are folks who wonder if Porsche should try again, in the form of a 2+2 version of the Panamera.

The event began Friday afternoon with the now-traditional cleaning of the cars at nearby Odds and Ends Detailing, courtesy of its owner, Darryl Nichols. The cars were scrutinized while dodging the suds and spray, as old friends caught up with each other. Actually, most are always caught up courtesy of the Rennlist 928 forum, one of the most active forums in all of Porsche-dom. It's always a delight to meet a forum member face-to-face the first time, along with their cars.

The festivities shifted to the hotel parking lot (a very accommodating hotel, I must add). A larger crowd gathered, first under the harsh light of a hot sun, then later under sodium vapor light. More cars were inspected and discussed, stories were shared, suggestions were gently offered, and coolers were opened. This year, owners were treated to a live show of mechanical legerdemain: a new member of the 928 community, Alex Grogan, limped in from Nazereth, Pennsylvania with a troubled car. It had to be fixed by Sunday morning - no cars are left behind

at Frenzy! Among the crowd were the most accomplished 928 mechanics this side of the Rockies, legends of the Rennlist 928 forum.

Alex is a young man who gained his mechanical chops from rebuilding the engine of his Geo Metro. He got the itch for a vintage Porsche and thought a 944 might be appropriate. Then he was introduced to a 1983 928 S in fair condition. "I was hooked and bought it on the spot. My plans were to get it more road worthy, enjoy it for the summer, and then decide to keep it or sell it." But he fell into the WYAIT rabbit hole and it took him nearly three months to climb out.



*Sean Ratts attempts to smoke out problem. Photo: Curt Austin*

The 1983 features the infamous Green Wire. The first team to attack the problem went straight to this evil cable, which informs the fuel system that the engine is turning over. The fans cheered when an onlooker held up his spare green wire. Other onlookers held up flashlights, illuminating the big V-8 through a haze of cigar smoke.

With an economy of motion that brought gasps from the crowd, Sean Ratts and Roger Tyson installed the new wire.

But this was destined to be a true puzzler – nothing so obvious as a green wire problem. They ran through a sequence of other troubleshooting steps. They even checked the most feared component of any 928, the longest timing belt ever used in a car, for a jumped cog.

There was no joy in Frenzy that night for Alex. Everyone was a little disturbed that his car had stumped perhaps the greatest number of 928 specialists ever assembled in one place. But one member of this brain trust had a theory, so far untested. There would be another session Saturday night....

Formal Frenzy activities began Saturday morning in Franklin Park. Among cars of all types and colors, there were two national award winners: Bob Voskian brought his meticulously prepared Guards Red 1991 928GT, which won first place in his Touring Class this year at Parade in Vermont. George Michaels (First Settlers Region) brought his Coral Red 1991 928GT, which won the prestigious Honorary Judges Choice Award; his car was one of three placed on display at the elegant Parade Concours dinner.

Doughnuts were consumed, spare parts were bought and sold, someone named Jason fixed my kick down switch, tall tales were exchanged, and lunch was served. Stan Kolen demonstrated how to align a hood, and how to install a new oil pan gasket without dropping the cross member.

A spirited Fun Run followed, devised by Jon Pruess, that took us on smooth and windy roads through Virginia wine country and quaint villages. The destination was a parking area reserved just for us at Lovettesville's Octoberfest, where we were welcomed by lederhosen-clad



townspeople. We ate German food, watched a beer stein carrying contest, and returned to the hotel for the weekend-ending conclusion of "Fix this 928".



*The main event at Franklin Park. Photo: Adam Henderson*



*Frenzy Fun Run. Photo: Orlando Emmanuelli*

Our luxury of 928 mechanics was such that a different all-star team took charge of the troubled car, including Stan Kolen. More theories were tested. Suspect parts were swapped into running cars to see if they worked. They did, narrowing the possibilities. Finally, Pete Krassas - a quiet giant of 928 mechanical lore - had his theory tested. Bingo! A failure mode the other giants had not seen before: a pin fixing an important doodad within the distributor had fallen out. Stan - known as MrMerlin on Rennlist - pounded it back in using improvised tooling. Ok, it was a rock.



*928's at Summit Point. Photo: Jay Barker*

Alex emerged smiling from the hotel the next morning, climbed into his 928, and we all drove off to Summit Point Raceway where a major PCA Club Racing event was taking place. While flat-sixes screamed by, we were led into a classroom and briefed on the protocols of running parade laps. I was not given a briefing for the NJ Turnpike, so this was welcome. We anxiously waited in our staging area - parade laps are subject to racing mishaps - and were very happy to see our pace car arrive. We were limited to 55 mph, but our leader did not slow down much for the corners, showing off his nimble Cayman. We kept up, making a distinctly different sound.

After joining the 928 community myself two years ago, I became indoctrinated in the idea of getting my old car to run like new, and reliably, through preventative maintenance and many new parts. A "wait until it breaks, then fix it" attitude will be punished if you drive these cars, and we love driving them. Fortunately, the community of owners fully supports this mission of mechanical excellence. When someone gets into trouble, as did Alex, it's all hands on deck, whether in the forums or in parking lots. After Frenzy, one person after another said there was no way they could own a 928 without this community. As for Alex, he says "My mind is 100% made up - I am keeping my 928 for good."

Are these people, these heroic owners of complex vintage cars, different from other Porsche owners? I asked around, I looked, I prodded ... it's difficult to pinpoint, but it seems so. The answer lies somewhere in the challenge they have accepted, their ability to meet it, and the help they give to, and get from, others doing the same.



*Alex Grogan after some laps. Photo: Curt Austin*