

CLASSIC DRIVER

The 17-year-old student who realised his Porsche dream

Lead

Once upon a time, Hanno Hagen discovered a rather unhealthy Porsche 356 in San Francisco. Today, it's a gleaming jewel of a car. And in between were many years of hard work, trouble... and love...

Californian liaison



He wasn't the first young man to meet the love of his life when still a student. But in Hanno Hagen's case, it wasn't a *California Girl*. The 17-year-old discovered something quite different in the streets of San Francisco: his dream car, a [Porsche 356](#) A 1600 Coupé. "I always say it was meant to happen," explains Hagen. "My parents and I were driving through San Francisco, when all of a sudden my mother pointed out a beautiful old 'Jaguar'. My father and I convinced her that it was actually a [Porsche](#). It was our last day in town, and although I was only there as an exchange student, I instinctively knew that I had to own that car – and return it to its former glory." Without hesitation, he took steps to persuade the owner to sell it to him, and some months later the Porsche arrived by container ship in Germany. Hagen would then have his hands full for the next eight years. All this took place 11 years ago, and while the student has become a dentist, the battered Porsche has become a uniquely beautiful gem.

A buyer without a licence



"The engine started," recalls Hanno Hagen, describing the circumstances of this fateful meeting, "but you could see the street through the floor of the car. It must also have been involved in an accident, because the both the front and rear bodywork was pretty battered." Further evidence of the Porsche's lively past came when Hanno later discovered four previous owners. For the young man – still without a driving licence – the purchase of such a car was a (very expensive) dream. But even as a young boy, he had helped his father, a passionate amateur mechanic with his own workshop, to restore a classic moped. Which probably explains why Hagen Senior didn't throw up his hands in horror when his son decided to buy the car on the spot.

Eight years to fulfil a dream



Over the next eight years, the classic Porsche was completely stripped down – including the four-cylinder engine – and rebuilt. "You could say that the 356 consists of 100 per cent original parts," says Hagen today, "but when removing the engine, we found that it had already been exchanged once before – so it's not a case of matching numbers." Needless to say, the father-and-son team called in expert help when they hit their own limitations. To repair the body damage, for example, Porsche specialists Boxer Motors in Dotternhausen came to their aid, while a specialist took care of the restoration of the leather seats in the passenger compartment. "To pay for all this, I had to earn money while I was a student. The agreement with Boxer Motors was that the cost of the repair shouldn't exceed the market value of such a classic." And that's a target he's achieved, despite the fact that the total money invested by Hanno Hagen over the years is around 70,000 euros.

A rare gem in Fjord Green



Today, the 356 A is not only in amazingly good condition, it's also a very rare example of its genre, as the (now) 28-year-old discovered when he turned to the experts at Porsche Classic in Zuffenhausen to explore the history of the coupé. He learned that his Porsche 356 A, built in 1958, was first sold by the well-known US importer Max Hoffmann and is considered a so-called 'hybrid' model that marks the transition from the 356 model series A to B. And understandably, the 75HP Fjord Green coupé has been kept true to its original and rare specification, even down to the cognac brown leather in the interior. "I even have a certificate," says Hanno, not without pride. Of course, selling the love of his life is completely out of the question, especially when he has already taken his beloved to second place in the Schauinsland Klassik rally.

A project to follow the project



But what does one do when one has fulfilled a lifelong dream, and Hagen's roadworthy Porsche now awaits him in the garage? Well, he's currently toying with the idea of converting an old motorcycle to a café racer.

Photos: [Frederik Dulay](#) / Post production: [Manuel Wagner](#)

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