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1957 356A CARRERA GS/GT SPEEDSTER

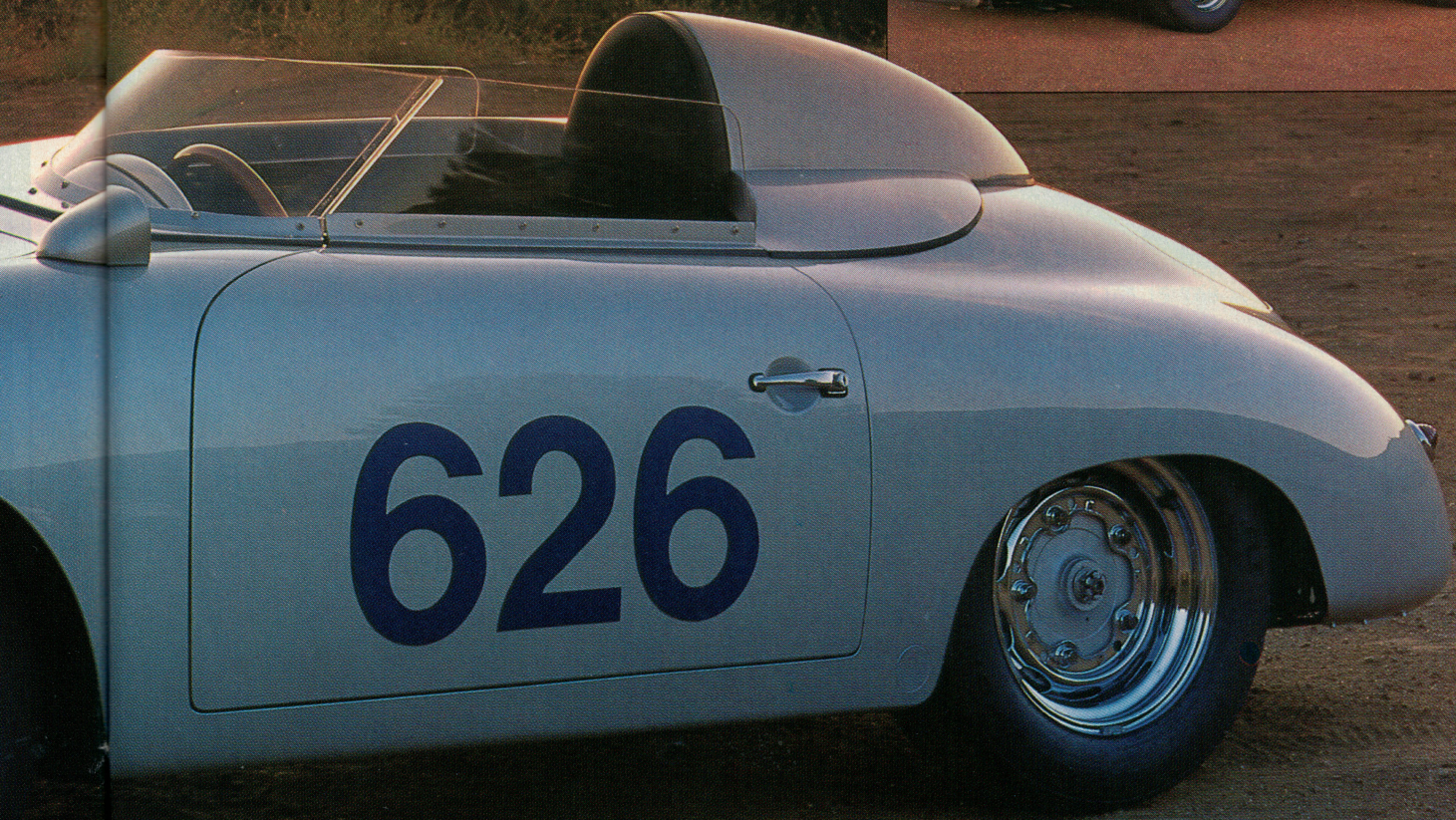
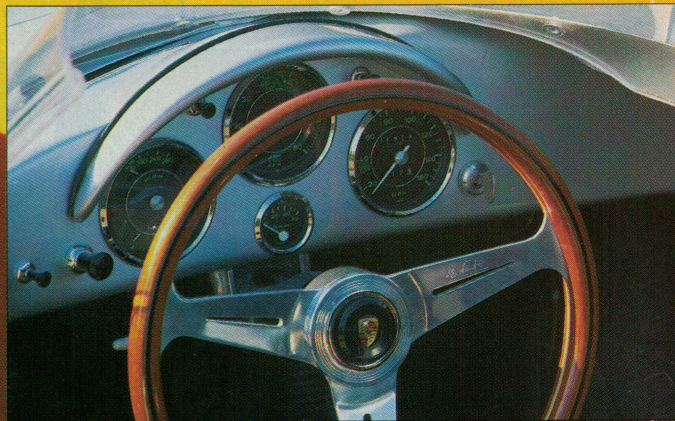
his is without question one of the most controversial 356s that has graced the pages of this publication in years. What you are looking at is a modified 1957 Carrera GS/GT Speedster. It's the kind of car that

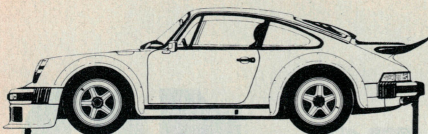
drives purists mad and leaves sports car enthusiasts with their tongues wagging. It's the kind of car vintage racers would kill for and competitors in SCCA and VARA get killed by. In many ways, this is the ultimate 356A Carrera—a car built in the Zuffenhausen tradition with a singular purpose in mind—to win.



Back when the Porsche Carreras were brand new, in 1955, the 4-cam option was available for the Coupe, Cabriolet and Speedster models. Speedsters, however, were rare. In theory, there were none in 1955, although pictures of one example exist, showing the car in racing trim complete with head fairing and tonneau. The car reportedly went to Montlhery, France. The 1500cc engine was bored to 86 mm to get into the 2-liter class, where it set records for 1000 miles, 2000 kilometers and 12 hours, all at speeds at or above 115 mph, with a best lap of 127.8 mph.

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GS/GT SPEEDSTER

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The same car appeared again at Monza in March '57, with Rolf Goetz, Paul Strahle and Richard von Frankenberg establishing new 2-liter class records up to 12 hours. And it was this car that inspired the '57 Carrera Speedster pictured. This is not a replica, mind you, it is an original 1957 356A Carrera Speedster, reconfigured by owner Peter Pearce, to resemble the Goetz car.

A Race Car from the Start

Imported by Max Hoffman, the Speedster was campaigned in East Coast SCCA events throughout the late '50s and early '60s. Pearce purchased the car as a vintage racer in 1985 and two years later began a complete ground-up restoration that has since made him an authority by rote on the intricacies of the 4-cam motor, 356A Carrera suspension and Reutter bodywork.

When we say that this car is controversial, it is due in part to the fact that it is better built and more technologically advanced than the production 356A Carreras that Zuffenhausen manufactured in the '50s. And in some respects it's superior even to the factory works cars.

In 1957, Porsche offered a competition GT Speedster equipped with Weber carburetors, 21-gallon fuel tank and a

1500cc 547/1 engine, developing better than 120 hp at 6400 rpm. Pearce's car, powered by a later 547/5 series engine brought up to RSK/RS-60 specs, displaces 1750 cc with an output of 175 hp at 7500 rpm. One of the last roller crank 4-cam engines produced, it is almost as rare as the car. The spare Carrera engine (pictured) is an early 547/1 brought up to GT specifications, displacing 1600 cc and developing 140 hp. When Pearce took delivery of the Speedster, it was equipped with the larger aluminum-finned RSK Spyder drum brakes and an original ZF limited-slip differential.

Winning Looks

Although there are other 356 Carreras in vintage racing fitted with head fairings, the combination tonneau/head fairing and windscreen on this car is its most stunning feature, and perhaps the one visual point where it gracefully slips beyond Porsche technology of the era. Designed by Pearce in 1989, the one-piece unit was fashioned out of aluminum by English Wheel specialist Bruce Henderson, and is based on authentic configurations used on Carrera Speedsters in the '50s. Certainly better proportioned and better built than anything Porsche had at the time (see page

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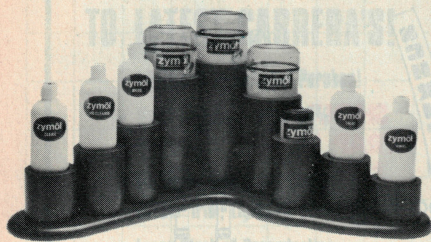
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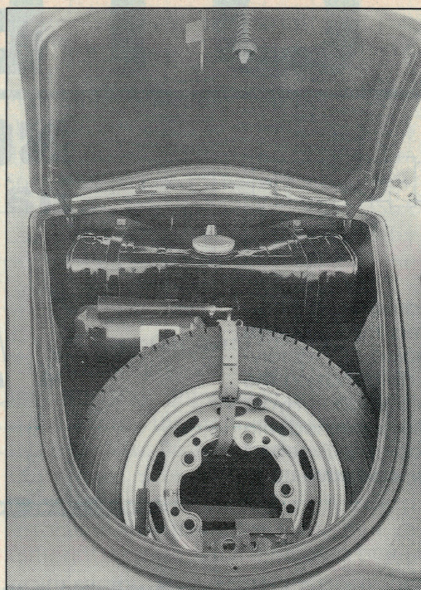
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356 TECH TIPS

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hoses if there is any question as to their age or condition.

The king and link pins in the front suspension are difficult and expensive to rebuild. For the best longevity, keep them well greased. Before starting, jack up the front of the car to take the weight off the front wheels and clean not only the fittings but the joints, too (even the really difficult-to-reach ones). Grease should be pumped in until it squeezes out of the adjoining joint. You may have to turn the wheels to one side or the other in order to reach all the fittings. If the fitting will not admit grease, replace it with one that will. The recommended interval is 3000 miles, so you can do this at the same time you change the oil. Be sure to wipe off all extra grease when finished.

- If your 356 does not have an Empi Camber Compensator or a Z-bar, you can radically improve the handling with a S-A-W Camber Stop. Proper mounting of the Camber Stop requires that the urethane pads be in light contact with the swing-axle tubes, so if your car has been lowered, you may need to bend the Camber Stop enough to create a slight preload.

- Always raise and lower the front hood yourself. Once you raise the hood, do not leave the car unattended, as there will always be a willing bystander who knows nothing about the hood mechanism on the 356 to attempt to force the hood shut, which of course bends the hood beyond hope of repair.

- When replacing axle boots, always put the seam on top, but do not put the seam straight up in line with the motion of the axle. Instead, put the seam off to one side a little so that as the axle swings up, the seam will not be jammed into itself. ❧

GS/GT SPEEDSTER

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82 of *Porsche The 4-Cylinder, 4-Cam Sports & Racing Cars* by Jerry Sloniger and page 191 of *Excellence Was Expected* by Karl Ludvigsen), the tonneau/head fairing also conceals a sophisticated bolt-in triangulated chrome-moly tubing roll cage, engineered and built by Pearce. This gives the car cleaner lines without compromising its safety. The entire structure, tonneau/head fairing and wraparound acrylic windscreen, are removable so the car can be returned to an original Carrera GT Speedster configuration at will.

The cockpit features a fully restored GT interior with the vinyl longitudinal and rear surfaces, black leather door panels, door tops and leather Speedster seats.

One of the fastest Carrera GTs in the country, Pearce attributes much of the car's competition success to its specially-gear transmission. "We use short gears," which Pearce claims is the key to getting performance out of the car on race courses like Laguna Seca and Sears Point. "The power range is from about 5500 to 7500 rpm," explains Pearce. "We gear the transmission so that you have a 1500-rpm split between changes, and while this limits top speed to about 105 mph, we more than make up for it in acceleration."

Built in December of '56, the Reutter body is all-steel construction (later Speedsters had aluminum hoods, deck-lids and doors) and has the original-style "beehive" taillights, rather than the teardrop lenses that came out in late '57.

As a race car, Pearce says that his Carrera is a better car today than it was in 1957. "Some of the alloys used in rebuilding the engine are superior to those Porsche had in the '50s, which makes the motor far more reliable, and then too, the tires we race on, even though they're the same size used some 30 years ago, are far superior in design and composition. I think that truly affects the overall outcome of how this car does today, compared to how an original Carrera GT Speedster might have fared in the old Pebble Beach races of the '50s."

Although the Carrera has been modified, Pearce has not gone beyond the spirit of vintage racing. Mechanically, everything used on the car was available at the time Porsche produced the GT Speedsters.

In a class of vintage racers that is populated by such memorable sports cars as the Alfa Giuliettas, Lotus Elites, MGA twin cams, ACE Bristols, and pushrod 356A Porsches, Peter Pearce's Carrera GS/GT Speedster can be singled out as one car that is truly greater than the sum of its parts! ❧