

PORSCHE *Sixty Years*

Randy Leffingwell
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Coffee-table books and Porsches are made for each other. Porsche cars represent industrial art at its finest, and the camera loves them whether racing on a track, rallying through a desert, cruising down a scenic coastal highway, or just standing still in front of an aristocratic mansion. "Porsche: Sixty Years" is another massive hardcover coffee-table book by well-known author, journalist, photographer, and car enthusiast Randy Leffingwell. What distinguishes this new book from its numerous competitors, including Leffingwell's equally massive "Porsche 911: Perfection by Design" published in 2005?

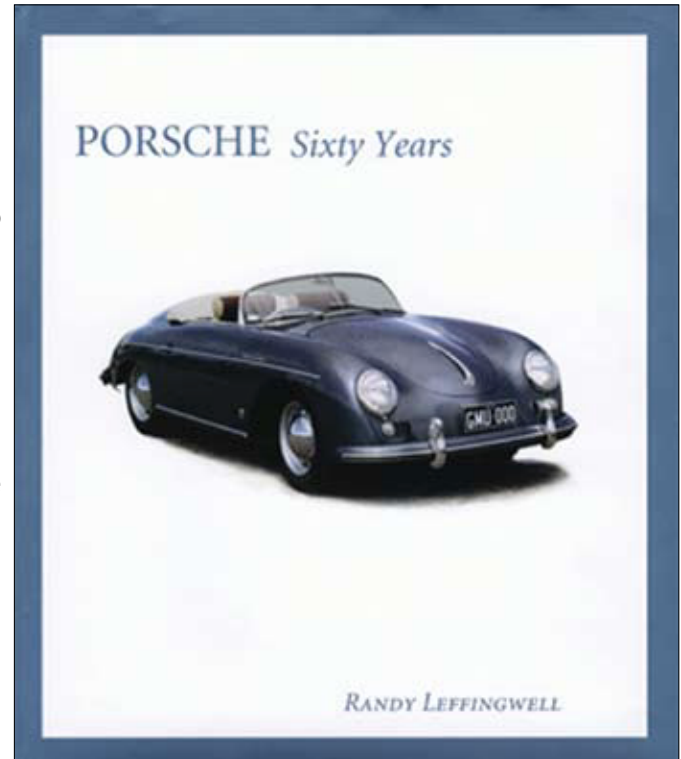
First, it is wide-ranging and up-to-date. Leffingwell was a writer and photographer at the Los Angeles Times, so he knows how to research a story. He developed many contacts at Porsche AG and interviewed many key people working at Porsche over the years. Porsche Archiv let him use great photos of Porsche sports cars going back to the grandfather of them all, the Typ60K 10, which could pass for a 1938 Cayman. There is a chapter on every major road and racing Porsche from the first 356 through the today's Cayenne, Carrera GT, and Cayman. Even minor players such as the lightened 190-hp 916 evolution of the 914 have their moments on stage. Finally, many of the competing Porsche books were written when the 964, 993, or 986/996 was the latest thing, and their second editions were hastily updated by authors who supplied little more than recent Porsche publicity photos and advertising text.

The author is a professional photographer, and he took most of the 300-plus color photos in this book. He lives in southern California where some of the finest privately owned Porsches

can be found. You can expect to find several outstanding shots of your favorite Porsche model.

This book isn't limited to pretty pictures. Randy Leffingwell wove quotes from Porsche leaders into fascinating and insightful stories about the ups and downs of Porsche over the years. My favorite recounts the arrival of Peter Schutz to take over Porsche when morale was low and the 911 was slated for termination in 1981. Watching Porsches being passed on the track, he immediately made the famous rule "As long as I am in charge of this organization, we will never go to any race without the objective of winning it." When he saw a bar graph on the wall in Helmut Bott's office with the line for the 911 ending in 1981, he picked up a permanent marker and extended the line off the end of the chart, along the wall, and around the corner onto the next wall. Unfortunately, a number of these 911 stories were lifted almost verbatim from Leffingwell's earlier book "Porsche 911: Perfection by Design."

The chapter describing Pinky Lai's work on the Cayman shows how Porsche culture and values have changed since Ferry Porsche built the first 356: "I didn't listen to anybody. I simply built my dream car and thought that others would share my dream." Now Pinky Lai says "The customers never expect any revolution from us. We are not supposed to offer them a revolution in design. That is rule number one. What they expect is something new, and appealing. But it has to say—without looking at the badge—that this is the new Porsche or in the Porsche family." And Wendelin



Wiedeking admonishes "We have to be profitable. Doing something beautiful is not enough. We have to survive!"

What isn't in the book? It doesn't give detailed technical descriptions and specifications; for that you still need something like "Porsche 911 Story" by Paul Frère. It's not a buyer's guide telling you what's good and bad about a 1979 911SC or what price you should pay for one (although Leffingwell wrote the "Porsche 911 Buyer's Guide").

Who should buy this book? "Porsche: Sixty Years" lists for \$60, but you can get one from Amazon.com for only \$37.80, making it a bargain Christmas present for any actual or potential Porsche fan. It is the most complete Porsche coffee-table book available, and it is worth reading from cover to cover after you have looked at the pictures. If I could keep only one Porsche coffee-table book, this would be it. Even if you are a motorhead and your collection of Porsche books includes "Porsche 911: Perfection by Design," there is enough new material to make it a worthwhile addition to your bookshelf.