

Porsche: The Rally Story

By Laurence Meredith
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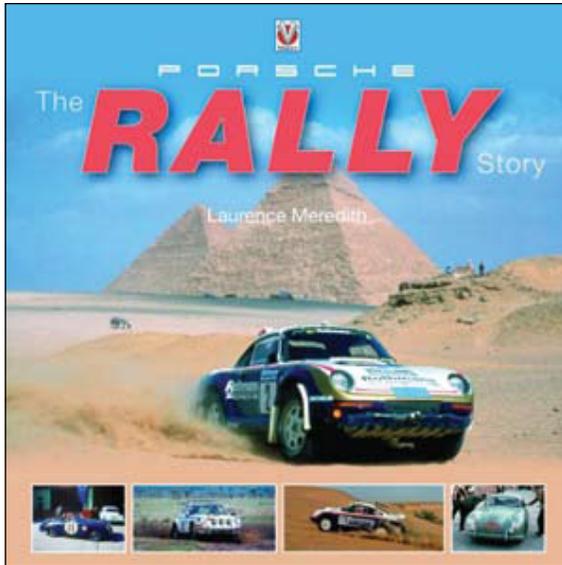
Porsches are competitive in a plethora of motor sports. Most enthusiasts do not realize how long and how successful the marque has been at rallying. This volume is a very thorough documentation of Porsches rally history. It is rich with rare photos and information.

Laurence Meredith is a lifelong motorsports enthusiast. He has written well over thirty books on cars and

motor racing. He has spent most of his life at race tracks whether as participant or spectator. His devout enthusiasm shows from the first page to the last of this wonderful book. And it should. Meredith was actually present in 1968 to watch first hand Porsches foray into international rallying begin. Vic Elford was at the wheel of the orange works 911S as it screamed sideways past Meredith and the small group of onlookers at the RAC Rally in Wales. He follows the Porsche rally story right up to Cayenne and 996 participation but the majority of the book and certainly the authors heart focuses on Porsches glory years in the sport.

Rallying drives engineers crazy. Unlike other forms of motorsport, rallying encompasses so many variables that no one manufacturer seems able to get a lock on championships for long. Porsche became interested in the sport early on and lent cars and mechanics

to privateers as early as the days of the 356. The advent of the 911 gave them an instrument they could really develop for rallying. With hugely talented drivers like Elford rallying 911s would become a marketing tool. From this point Porsches became high profile and achieved great technological feats culminating in many



opinions with the Paris-Dakar Rally overall win in 1984 by Rene Metge in a 959. Photos from this era fill the book.

But Meredith is obviously a historian. He begins at the beginning of Porsches production of automobiles just after

World War Two and gives us a loving history of the cars and the men behind the cars as they were developed. This hardbound volume has more than 250 pages with over 400 photos both color and black and white that show off the privateer and factory rally machines. Though not highly technical, the book has plenty in the way of specs and mechanical information to satisfy most of us motorheads.

The authors soft spot for the 550's and 904's, Porsches more focused street/competition machines is evident in that he devotes 22 pages to these two models. These were Porsches wildly successful sports racers and were dominant at nearly all the track events they entered, some notable examples being the LeMans 24 and the Carrera PanAmericana. Rally teams began to realize the benefits that light weight sports cars may have in their sport and

so cars like these two began to show up in rally competition. The 904 with its mid engine set up and lightweight fiberglass monocoque type bodywork was super rigid and well balanced allowing superior handling in the elements found in most winter rallying. The 904 was campaigned for two seasons with four, six and eight cylinder engines and according to Meredith could have been further developed as a successful rally and road race machine had not Ferdinand Piech insisted on making his mark within the Porsche racing department by pushing the development of more pure competition models such as the 906, 908 etcetera. I have to admit that the era from 1953 to 1965 is also my favorite. Porsches most beautiful finely crafted, technically advanced and versatile cars came from this period. These machines finessed their way into the record books with jewel like power plants capable of amazing horsepower for their size.

Meredith has obviously been a rally driver as well and his belief that rallying was and is the last form of motorsport that the 'common man' can get involved in with the expectation of rising to the top of the game cannot be missed. His passion for the cars and rallies of the 1950's through the '70's when they were most accessible to everyman fills the bulk of the book. More than once there are references to how over litigated things are these days how bureaucrats have ruined the sport with their 'misguided' sense of the public good. So the author is a bit of a dinosaur...he lived through a time when competition was more pure and certainly less regulated and for producing this delightful book I think we can indulge him.

This is a great read, well produced with photos I have not seen before. Obviously Laurence Meredith is a man passionate about Porsches and driven to make sure their place in history is well documented. I give it five stars.