

Porsche 356 Registry



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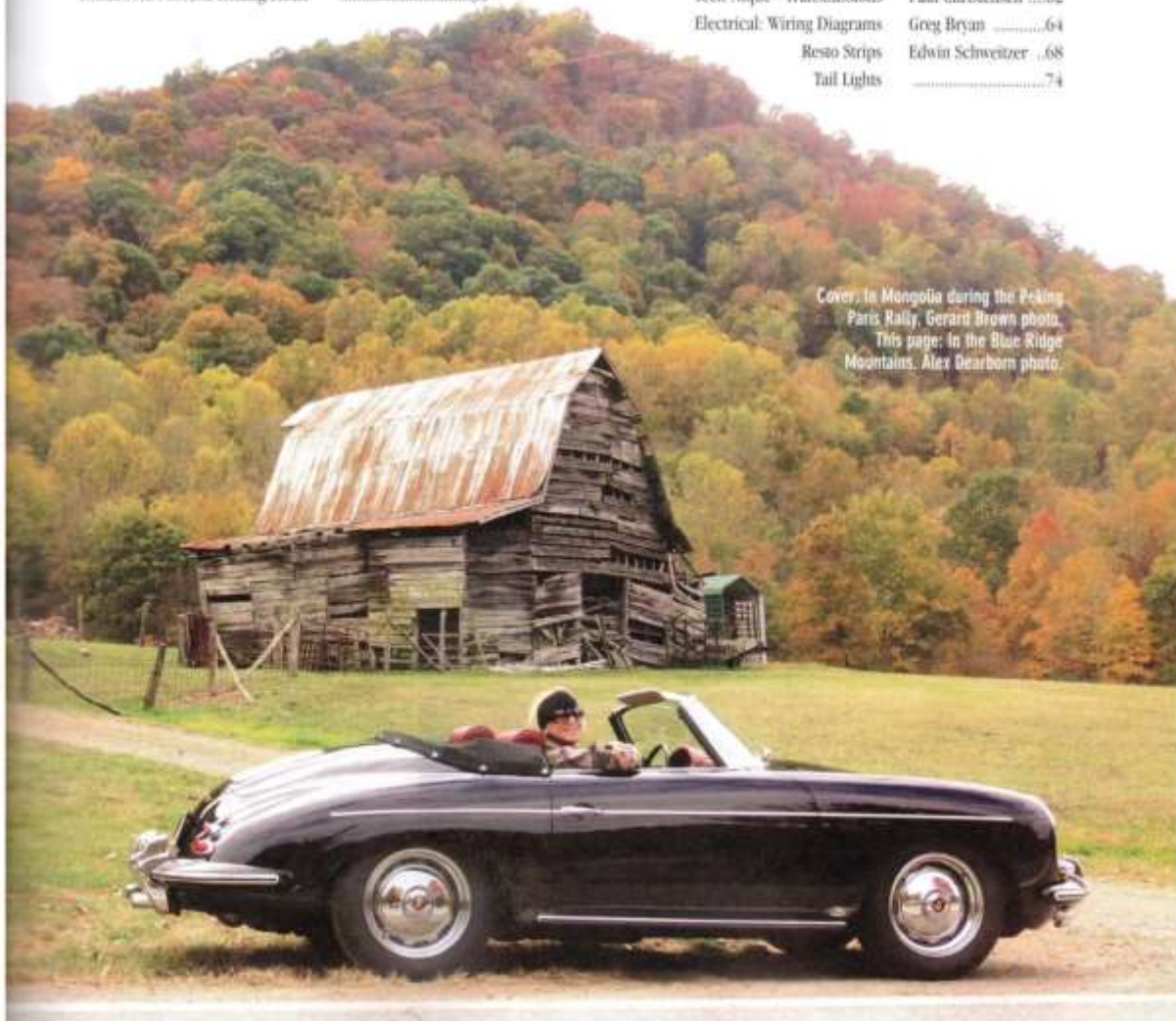
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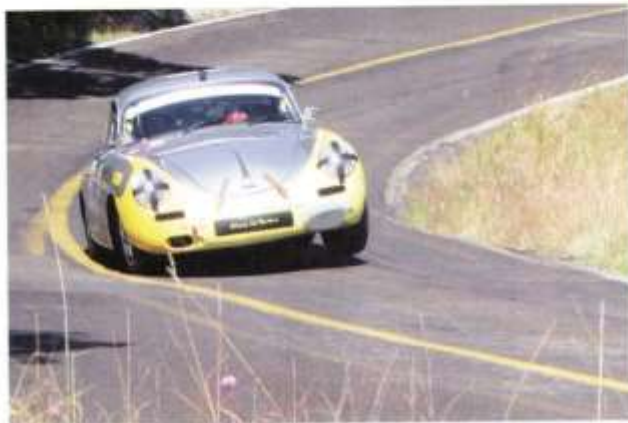


Cover: In Mongolia during the Peking Paris Rally. Gerard Brown photo.
This page: In the Blue Ridge Mountains. Alex Dearborn photo.

La Carrera '16

Six 356s take on Mexican roads.
And rain, rocks, ditches and cows.

By Karlo Flores



Karlo Flores and co-driver Joan Carlos Salgado had their share of problems but took second in class.



And there I was again for the second time. Mexico at La Panamericana "La Pana" road rally race, "ready" and extremely happy to face the next eight days of transit and speed sections totaling approx 2,200 miles.

The start location was new for me in Queretaro and after months of coordinated mega-preparation with Farben Motors of Mexico City of my strong and beautiful 1960 356B "Nina", I was relieved to find out our scrutineering was taking place at a race track which competitors could use to test and tune before the race! How fortunate to have this, as the previous race in Nina had been six months before in the Chihuahua Express (three days of unlimited racing in northern Mexico) and with tweaks to the brakes and engine any saddle time is good date time.

Competition in our class (Sport Menor - under 2 Liters) was somewhat strong with 8 competitors of which 7 were 356s! This race is a marathon, meaning pacing oneself (as advised by organizers) is a good thing. Most accidents and mechanical failures take place in the first two days when adrenaline and excitement are at their peak. Unfortunately for some competitors this was true and some were out early on.

Nina behaved like a queen. We had a shift linkage issue on day 2 (our transmission was stuck in 2nd gear) but we made it out of the last speed section to the mid-day service and got that repaired in five minutes. My concern then was to be rear ended in the speed section, so with hazards blinking and staying far to the right with heavy eyes on mirrors we were able to point the cars behind us around, to pass without issues.

Enjoying it all

What great views and countryside and cities we enjoyed. What a driving experience: to be able to go "as fast as you can/dare/choose to go" on two-lane highways which are blocked off for our play time. I do not know anywhere else in the world one can do this. We were fully supported by municipal, state and federal police, going by and stopping in small towns and cities I would never go to as a regular tourist. The police-escorted entrances to the main cities were something to behold. We were rock stars only because we were the drivers/navigators in this race. The people so warm and polite, asking if they could take a picture with us, or have us sign an autograph, or asking if they could have one of the postcards we had made, school children coming to the side of the road cheering us on as we transited through their cities and towns. It was a beautiful experience all around. The food was delicious as always and hotels were of the highest quality one can get in Mexico.

Another aspect was the competitors. Passionate drivers make great company and at La Pana we were surrounded by touching camaraderie throughout.

Safety fast

La Pana is a race where one has to be constantly aware that there could be an unannounced road hazard (dog, cat, cow, horse, rock, gravel, mud, sand, stalled/crashed competitor etc.). But once one knows that, one gets a feeling as to where it could be OK to push and when to be conservative. The safety demanded by organizers and built into the cars has proven time and again to be our best friend should anything go wrong.

We stayed in first place overall until the last day, when we hit a "dip with bump" so hard that the ignition system failed. This took place in a transit section, the whole race went past us before our service sweeper could come and fix. Once fixed we were able to complete the last two speed sections but we were saddened to find out they did not count as we missed crossing a control point. Penalties incremented for the day amounted to over 8 minutes and our lead for first place disappeared. Nonetheless we finished second in class and 15th overall - a great improvement on our overall standing last year of 36th place!

I've reserved #155 for next year already and am very much looking forward to next year's race! Who's in?

Renee Brinkerhoff, who last reported on the Carrera in these pages, was also scheduled to start the race, but a serious shunt in the 2015 event left her 356A unfinished for this year. "But there was no way I could stay away," she writes, "so we went down and produced daily recap videos of this year's 356s racing."

You can see her video report on YouTube at https://youtu.be/5EY32c_eg28.



José Juan Gutiérrez Sobero and Carlos Colomer wrecked during a qualifying run but repaired the car in time to start the race. Their perseverance paid off with a Sport Menor Class win on the last day over Karlo Flores.



Below: Scenes from the YouTube video by Renee Brinkerhoff of Valkyrie Racing



Christian Jaeger and Frauke Feess of Germany in car 153 (left) suffered two motor failures, a crash and a spin out but on the seventh day were still smiling (right).



Hector Vasquez in car 166 (left) explained how he had to buy a battery and cables after his alternator stopped working, but he was determined to finish. Brothers Oscar and Mauricio Balsa (right) took a third in class and vowed to be back next year. "Bigger engine, better brakes," they said. John Benton from California (right) built the engine in car 154, maybe more suited to drag racing, he admits. The last day brought rain and disappointment for Karlo Flores who was leading as the day began.

