

Porsche mourns Harald Wagner

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01/04/2023 Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche AG mourns the death of Harald Wagner. The long-time Director of Sales of Porsche Germany and special representative of the Executive Board died on 20 March 2023 at the age of 99.

Wagner was the man who gave the Targa its name, played a key role in setting up the sales and dealer network throughout Germany, introduced the factory delivery in Zuffenhausen and managed the company's VIP customers with exceptional dedication. “The news of his death has touched us all. Our thoughts are with his family,” says Detlev von Platen, Member of the Executive Board Sales and Marketing. “We thank Harald Wagner for his extraordinary dedication on behalf of the brand. His particular commitment to customer relations will never be forgotten.”

Harald Wagner was born in Stuttgart on 28 August 1923. He would later have four younger siblings. His mother was the sister of Dorothea Porsche, née Reitz. As a 13-year-old, he got his first ride in the

prototype of the VW Beetle over the Großglockner. In the driver's seat: Ferdinand Porsche. In the summer of 1945, Wagner fled a Russian POW camp to Öhringen in the German state of Baden-Württemberg. There he began a commercial apprenticeship at a car dealership. Eleven years later, in January 1954, he started working for Porsche as an assistant to the head of domestic sales. Just two months later, the trained salesman had attained the position of Porsche Sales Director for Germany. After 34 years, Wagner retired in 1988. He remained a special representative of the Executive Board and continued to work with the company's VIP customers for many years.

"It's always a special moment," Wagner once said of factory deliveries, in which customers personally took delivery of their new Porsche model in Zuffenhausen. As the Director of Sales, he was usually on hand when the special moment took place; he was, after all, the man who had introduced the practice in the first place. He was present, for example, when Gloria von Thurn und Thaxis and star director Herbert von Karajan picked up their 911 models. Wagner enjoyed the theatrical staging of the brand; he always wished for customers to have the opportunity to appreciate the exquisite craftsmanship of their cars at their birthplace.

Porsche owes not only the factory delivery concept to Wagner, but also the variant designation Targa. The first model was presented in Frankfurt at the IAA in September 1965. Not a Cabriolet, not a Coupé – the Targa was the first safety cabriolet in the world with a fixed roll-over bar to come to the market. It was a completely new concept at the time, and introduced an unprecedented driving experience.

The Targa was Porsche's answer to more stringent safety requirements for open-top vehicles – particularly on the American market. When it came time to name the new variant, those involved looked to the race circuits on which the brand had been particularly successful. They quickly homed in on the Sicilian "Targa Florio", a meaningful race in the company's history of motorsport triumphs. As discussions briefly centred around the name "911 Flori", Wagner countered: "Why don't we just say Targa?" The name soon came to define the category. That the Italian term meant "plate" and thus subliminally suggested protection, was not the decisive factor at the moment, but a nice side-effect all the same.

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Astrid Böttinger

Spokesperson Heritage and Porsche Museum
+49 (0) 170 / 911 2065
astrid.boettinger@porsche.de

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Title: Ferdinand Porsche, Harald Wagner, Grossglockner, 1950, Porsche AG
Subline: September 7, 1950: Prof. Ferdinand Porsche and Harald Wagner on the Großglockner.

Path: Porsche mourns Harald Wagner/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Harald Wagner, 1974, Porsche AG
Subline: 1974: Personal customer delivery at the plant ("Werk") 2; 911 Carrera 2.7 Coupé; left: Harald Wagner.

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Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche Aktiengesellschaft
Porscheplatz 1
70435 Stuttgart