

True 911 love

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25/07/2016 Everybody knows WhatsApp. But only a few people know the man behind it—Jan Koum. There was a special incentive for his success: “The desire to buy a Porsche motivated me to work even harder.”

A native of Ukraine, he invented the messaging app that is now used by more than a billion people worldwide. Koum coded WhatsApp and made it into the highly coveted entity that was bought by Facebook two years ago for $19 billion. Koum became a member of the Facebook board of directors and is one of the two hundred richest people in the world. A modern-day fairy tale.

But Koum doesn’t flaunt his wealth. He makes public appearances wearing T-shirts, jeans, and sneakers—the unmistakable outfit of a programmer. Nor does he make any compromises when it comes to his cars. “My brand is Porsche,” he says. “I had always wanted to own one, but couldn’t afford it.” He grew up in a suburb of Kiev and immigrated to the United States with his mother in 1992, at the age of sixteen. Initially they both lived on welfare. He worked as a cleaner at a supermarket and she did

ironing on a piecework basis. Every time he happened to see a Porsche back then, it reminded him of his goal. “For me, a Porsche always represented the epitome of success,” he recalls. “And the desire to have a car like that was a key incentive to learn more and to work even harder.” Which is exactly what he did: he learned how to program. After nine years at Yahoo, he founded WhatsApp in 2009—and the rest is digital history.

Koum bought his first 911, a 2003 Cabriolet, exactly ten years ago. He smiles as he describes what he calls his “convertible phase.” Now he's a fan of coupes in the 964 and 993 series. “There's nothing better than the joy of driving an original air-cooled Porsche from the 1990s.” For his growing collection of 911s, the WhatsApp founder is still on the lookout for two models: a 964 RS 3.8 and a 964 Turbo S Leichtbau. “I prefer to buy cars that have a ‘radio delete’ option,” he says. “Because the best music of all is the sound of the six-cylinder boxer engine.”

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