

Air-cooled

22/04/2018 Patrick Long, Porsche factory driver, has two Porsches that he loves above all others—the water-cooled Porsche 911 GT3 R he drives on the racetrack and a classic 1973 911 E. His favorite event with the 911 E is Luftgekühlt, an annual gathering that he initiated in Los Angeles for vintage air-cooled Porsches.

Lemon Yellow, Albert Blue, Bahia Red, Speedway Green. These vibrant synthetic resin paints immediately signal that this Porsche gathering is something very special. While the colors of the cars are popular, so too is the founder of Luftgekühlt: thirty-five-year-old Patrick Long. Luftgekühlt is a laid-back affair in the middle of Los Angeles, and its name describes its purpose. Luftgekühlt means "air-cooled," and the gathering is for vintage cars with air-cooled engines. There's a Porsche 914/6 GT Lufthansa, which is one of the lightweight racing cars that clocked record laps on the Nürburgring and the Hockenheimring Baden-Württemberg from 1970 to 1972. Close by is a brilliant Porsche master model, a Gmünd coupe from 1949. Only fifty-two of them were made before Porsche production was moved from Austria to Stuttgart. Next to that is a 904 GTS from the collection of star comedian Jerry Seinfeld, who stands next to his car like everyone else and chats with visitors. Another rare vehicle is a German–Italian mix: the 1960 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth. It drove in three consecutive Gran Turismo World Championship races for Porsche. Just twenty of these cars were ever built, and only a few still

exist.

Patrick Dempsey, the actor and race-car driver, is also there. Legendary collector Magnus Walker strolls by in his cool dreadlocks. But for a moment, most of the visitors only have eyes for a 1984 Porsche 911 Carrera 3.2 in Grand Prix White. Sponsored by Luftgekühlt, this car is being auctioned by RM Sotheby's for a good cause. The price goes up in increments of US $10,000 and finally stops at US $275,000. The money will go to the Autumn Leaves Project founded by the musician Butch Walker. It funds research to combat pancreatic cancer. The 911 was donated by supporters of the gathering.

Patrick Long looks avidly at the white Carrera. "Basically this car could enter the next rally. It has everything that a Porsche needs for it." Long is wearing shorts, a baseball cap, and flip-flops. Here at this gathering in Vernon, near downtown Los Angeles, Long is a star, regardless of his attire. He's currently Porsche's only factory driver from the USA. He has driven to two victories in Le Mans. The first was in 2004, in a Porsche 911 (996) GT3 RSR with copilots Jörg Bergmeister and Sascha Maassen. The second was in 2007, behind the wheel of a Porsche 911 (997) GT3 RSR, together with Raymond Narac and Richard Lietz.

Long loves racing. But he has a special place in his heart for early sports cars from Porsche. Some time ago, while talking with a friend, the idea of a casual gathering for Porsche enthusiasts happened to come up. Not a big deal, just a get-together. But then it acquired a life of its own. Long has held three Luftgekühlt events so far. The last one drew 450 classic sports cars. The fourth will take place this year on the first weekend in May. The idea has become an institution—with Long at its head, just like at the wheel of his race car.

Even as a boy, Long was interested in racing. At six he started navigating curves in a kart built by his father. He entered his first race at the age of eight. After completing a course for young drivers in Le Mans at eighteen, he attracted the attention of Porsche Motorsport. Long won the classification and was subsequently sponsored as a Porsche Junior. In 2003 he climbed into his first company car, a 911 (996) GT3, and entered his first Carrera Cup race together with Mike Rockenfeller. Following his victory at the Norisring in Nuremberg, Porsche invited him to join the factory team.

Between history and now

Before the fourth Luftgekühlt gathering, Long will have driven his Porsche 911 GT3 R in the first races of this year's Pirelli World Challenge. During this period, Long will have little time for his private passion of driving classic Porsche cars but will still try to take his ivory Porsche 911 E from 1973 out of the garage as often as possible. In addition to this beloved vehicle, which is outfitted with a mechanical manifold injection system, he owns another classic from Zuffenhausen—an Irish Green 912 from 1966. This four-cylinder car was produced from 1965 to 1969, primarily as an entry-level model for the American market.

Long's garage also houses both a Cayenne and a Panamera S E-Hybrid. These two four-door sedans are

the cars that Long and his wife, Lauren, use every day. One thing is absolutely clear: Porsche racing is his vocation. No visitor to the Long family home can fail to notice that. A dozen racing helmets decorate the office, and each one has had a shamrock sticker applied to it. It's a nod to the national emblem of Ireland and the country of Long's ancestors. It's his only concession to something approaching superstition. Otherwise, he depends on his fitness and his detailed knowledge of the racetracks around the world.
As for the Luftgekühlt gathering, he's thinking of that in international terms too. "I'd love to hold the event soon in Germany and Japan. First in Munich or Stuttgart, then in Tokyo."

Link Collection

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