

Ties That Bind – the Ingram family and their magnificent Porsche collection

16/03/2021 Two generations, one passion: a visit to the Ingrams and their magnificent Porsche collection in North Carolina. A story about passion for the brand – and the worst thing that can happen to a collector.

There are places where magic happens. There are places that carry a piece of the past within them. And there are places that seem like a promise to the future. It's as if their day has yet to come. If you ever have the good fortune to behold the Ingram family collection, you'll feel a bit of all of it: magic, a glimpse into the past, and the hint of a grand future. Since the end of the 1990s, Robert "Bob" Ingram and his wife Jeanie have assembled a collection of some eighty exquisite Porsche models, representing a fascinating cross-section of the sports-car brand's more than seventy-year history. The couple from Durham, North Carolina, shares a passion for Porsche with their sons Rory and Cam. It's a love affair across the generations.

The magic of Porsche

A tour of the collection is like a journey through time. Starting with one of the early Coupés from the production in Gmünd, Austria, it spans the decades to some of the latest Porsche masterpieces, such as the Porsche 911 Speedster of the 991 generation of 2019. "We are incredibly proud and at the same time feel very honored," says Ingram, "that we are allowed to take care of these cars."

Especially with the older models, the seventy-eight-year-old says with shining eyes, he always has the former owners, their pride and enthusiasm, in mind. "It is in that spirit that we want to preserve them for the future." They owe it to the people and to the cars, as he puts it. "There is no other company in the world that can draw on such a loyal fan base," says Ingram, noting one of the things that fascinate him about Porsche. Son Cam adds, "The most exciting thing is the stories behind the cars." It could be the famous racing history of a particular model, or the moving biography of its previous owner. "Through our collection, we become part of contemporary history, of the cars and the people."

They want the collection to be a living thing, and that manifests itself in two ways. First, the cars are driven regularly, whether on family outings on the weekend or at club meetings and racing events. "It is important to us that our collection pieces are ready to drive," says Bob Ingram. All of them, even the race cars like the Porsche 906 Carrera 6 from the 1960s, were registered for road traffic—with one exception: the exclusive new edition of the Porsche 935, of which only seventy-seven units were built, may only be driven at club sport events or training sessions on private racetracks. Second, the collection serves as a setting for charity events.

The Ingrams enjoy the opportunity not only to cultivate their passion personally, but also to share it with others. "Our goal," Jeanie Ingram explains, "was to create a place where people could feel comfortable: with art, a beautiful setting, and many memories."

The origins of the collection

Whenever Bob Ingram is on the road in one of his many Porsches, he feels transported back to the year 1971, when he had the chance to ride in the Porsche 911 S of an acquaintance for the first time. It was an experience that left a deep impression on him: "When it started, a symphony of mechanical sounds began," recalls Ingram. After three-quarters of an hour, young Bob was allowed to take the wheel himself. "I was completely nervous; I stalled the engine at first," he recalls with a chuckle. "But the feeling of the space, the smell, and the sound were unlike anything else." When he got home later, he said to Jeanie, "One day I'll drive a Porsche."

It would be some time before the aspiration became a reality. Other things were more pressing for the young family. Ingram comes from Charleston, a small city in rural Illinois—"humble circumstances," as he puts it today. He earned his first money next door to the schoolhouse in the corner shop run by his single mother. "I saved it all up to buy the coolest ride in town when I finally got my license," he says with a smile. He had always been a "car guy," a car enthusiast who drove to the races in Indianapolis or Sebring, and ran the occasional drag race against friends.

Career-wise, things were looking up: after his studies, Bob Ingram began a precipitous rise as a pharmaceutical sales representative, a path that would take him to the highest echelons of the industry. For many years he was CEO of one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world, with all the consequences that the life of a top executive entails. "We moved nineteen times over the years," he says. "I still thank my wife and sons for putting up with it. Today, Jeanie looks back on it all with equanimity: "It was a wild time. But sticking together as a family has always been the most important thing."

Though he eventually retired, Ingram by no means went into retirement. He is still a partner in an investment firm in the pharmaceutical sector. But he could finally take more time for his passion: Porsche. A dark blue Porsche 911 Carrera Cabriolet (generation 964) was soon joined by a 911 Carrera Coupé (generation 993) in Amethyst Metallic, and in the late 1990s a 911 Turbo S Coupé (generation 993) was added to the burgeoning collection. "The rest is history," says the senior Ingram, beaming. "The best part of it, as always, is being able to share the passion with the whole family." And that's in a rather extended sense as well: "As a family, we've made many friends within this wonderful fan base, worldwide."

The next generation of Ingrams is now adding its own touches. Son Rory manages the collection and created the Ingram Driving Experience, a group of motorsport enthusiasts who meet for private racing events and invite friends such as former factory driver Mark Webber. Younger son Cam also devotes himself to automotive rarities.

In April 2019, the family experienced a nightmare. A gas pipe exploded in front of the warehouse in which large parts of the collection were housed. Two people died, the neighboring building was completely destroyed, and the Ingrams' hall was badly damaged as well. The roof collapsed and damaged about half of the precious pieces. "It was the saddest day of our lives," Ingram recalls. "Our thoughts are still with the people who were hurt and the families who lost loved ones."

The rebuilding after the nightmare

The toll after the first clean-up operations was steep: four vehicles were so badly damaged that they seemed irretrievably lost, including an extremely rare Porsche 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth. This unusual specimen comes from Sweden. Vehicles of this model made their mark in legendary races such as the Targa Florio and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The value of that jewel alone was in the millions. But it was a date on the calendar that stressed the family all the more: the Abarth was scheduled to take part in the Concours d'Elegance in Pebble Beach, one of the world's most prestigious competitions for classic cars. It was barely four months until the illustrious, invitation-only event. "It was a great honor for us," emphasizes Bob Ingram. As he stood in front of the severely fire-damaged wreckage, he looked at Cam and wondered aloud, "Can we get this done in time?" "And I had to admit to him that I didn't know," Cam says. "That was hard on all of us."

In the weeks to follow, he recalls, he and his team practically lived in the workshop, putting in sixteen-hour days and more to rebuild the car from scratch. As Cam Ingram notes, "We were lucky that despite its extensive racing history, it never had any serious damage from accidents or anything like that. The aluminum body was still in excellent condition, as was the chassis. It's only because it didn't have the damage typical of race cars its age that we were able to accomplish in four months what would otherwise take years."

The 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth at Pebble Beach

Just in time for a perfect appearance at Pebble Beach. "It was a very emotional moment," admits Bob Ingram. "The whole experience brought us even closer together as a family." Cam had learned from his father to ask himself the question, "What are my goals and what am I willing to do for them?" And here the goal was clear: to preserve the magic of the collection—for the family, for the future, and for the love of Porsche.

The heroic effort was rewarded at the Concours d'Elegance with a class win for the perfectly restored 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth. It was "almost surreal," says Cam Ingram, as he drove with his father in the winning car across the grass of Pebble Beach to receive the trophy. "This will to persevere is absolutely typical of Porsche; it comes from the brand," says Bob Ingram in sum. "You don't ever give up while you still have a chance." And the memory of that 911 S from 1971 was no doubt along for the ride.

Video

https://newstv.porsche.com/porschevideos/174597_en_3000000.mp4

Image Sublines

Path: media/Images/img_1.jpg

Title: Porsche 356 Coupé, 906 Carrera 6, 356 A Coupé, 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth, 356 America Roadster, 356 B Roadster (l-r), 2021, Porsche AG

Subline: Love affair: The family from North Carolina keeps an exquisite Porsche collection. They drive whenever possible, and enjoy inviting guests. It's important to the Ingrams to share their passion with others. "The most exciting thing," Cam emphasizes, "is the stories behind the cars." Gems from left to right: the Porsche 356 Coupé, 906 Carrera 6, 356 A Coupé, 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth, 356 America Roadster, 356 B Roadster.

Path: media/Images/img_2.jpg

Title: Robert "Bob" Ingram, 2021, Porsche AG

Subline: Bob Ingram

Path: media/Images/img_3.jpg

Title: Joint outings on weekends mean a lot to the family, 2021, Porsche AG

Subline: Model for the generations: Joint outings on weekends mean a lot to the family. The collection brings them together.

Path: media/Images/img_4.jpg

Title: 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth, 2021, Porsche AG

Subline: Reconstruction: The Porsche 356 B Carrera GTL Abarth once drove successfully in Sweden. In 2019, the rare model was almost completely destroyed in an explosion.

Link Collection

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