

# The French Seductress

Photos and Story by Sean Cridland

As printed in the September/October 2014 issue of 356 Registry Magazine



# Porsche 356 Registry

38-3 • 9-10 / 2014



# Porsche 356 Registry



Volume 38, Number 3 • September / October 2014



42



24



48



30

Cover: Tom Spiegel photo on the way to the Friday night Road America Race Car Concours, Elkhart Lake WI

This page: Photo by Sean Cridland



## Contents

Upcoming Events	7	Dana Point Concours	Chuck Frisbey	44	
The Miscellany File	Gordon Maltby	8	BBB at Road America	Tom Spiegel	45
President's Letter	George Dann	10	Waukegan Reunion		46
356 Registry: In the Beginning	Jim Perrin	12	Carmel Concours		48
Hall of Fame	Bill Durland	14	Laguna Seca		50
356 Registry at 40	Vic Skirmants	15	Triple Reunion	Del Sessions	52
	Chuck House	16	Years Ago	Jim Perrin	54
	Brett Johnson	18	Barn Finding	Adam Wright	56
Registry Holidays		20	Net Worth	Sebastian Gaeta	58
Swap Meets		24	Resto-Sings	Edwin Schweitzer	60
North Meets SoDin at 30	Steve Douglas	26	Tech-Nique: Exploding Coils	Paul Christensen	62
Michael May	John Koning	30	356 Wiring: Turn Signals, Instruments	Greg Bryan	66
The French Seductress	Sean Cridland	38	Jet Setting	Brigid Smith	68
Ted Melzheimer		40	Tail Lights	John Summer	74
LeMans Classic 2014	Hugo Sheers	42			

# The French Seductress



By Sean Cridland



Dark tan leather now covers the interior along with oatmeal carpet, a nice complement to the dark blue paint hue. The Sonauto engine badge specifies All-Season Castrol 30 engine oil and Castrol 90 gear lube.



When Steven Stacy was looking for 356s back in 2005, he didn't anticipate the French seductress that would show up at his door a couple weeks later. (No, it's not as intriguing or as sexy as it sounds, but it's not far off.)

One late night, he was looking for a Speedster on the internet and found a red 1955 with black interior in immaculate condition. Delivery time, however, was two weeks off because the hauler still had an empty space. So, he thought, why not fill the space if he could find something interesting and... Sacré bleu! There was a 1960 single-owner 356B 1600 (plain engine 616/1), that had its original delivery at Auguste Veuille's Sonauto in Paris to an American who eventually had it shipped to the US. Though it wasn't in the best of shape—Stacy says it was about a C+—it was intriguing for its Sonauto badge, French engine labels, additional rear fog reflectors, and a European gauge cluster that includes an oil-pressure gauge, clock, and amperage gauge.

It was perfect for the second car Stacy was looking for. Only a couple problems really stood out: its exterior was in a faded Aetna blue, a color Stacy didn't like for its association with dreary German taxicabs of the cold-war era, and its vinyl interior was haggard and already painted over a few times with that sticky vinyl "paint."

Still, its French heritage brought back memories for Stacy, who lived in Paris during the late 1970s and '80s. Though it lived in the shadows of his Speedster for a couple years, it soon took on an aura of its own when he realized that it would make a much better driver for a couple of reasons: it's a coupe and its value in relation to the Speedster.

In 2009 Stacy set about redoing the car. He dismantled it in his own back-yard shop. Local body and paint guy Gilbert Sanborn stripped the paint, had it media-blasted to bare metal, did all the body prep. It took three months to finish the work, allowed Stacy time to pore through endless varieties of color possibilities. He eventually landed on the ever-appealing Bali blue because of its deep lustrous midnight hues. At the same time, Stacy sent the chrome bits to El Paso for re-plating. During re-trimming the windows and seals were all replaced.

Rather than go for new vinyl, he shipped the seats to Autos International of Escondido, California to be re-sprung and recovered with a buckskin tan color that perfectly contrasts and complements the Bali Blue exterior paint. Matching headliner and mats completed the soft portion of the interior. Along with a reconditioned wheel and shifter, the gauges were rebuilt by North Hollywood Speedometer and Mo-Ma of Albuquerque.

As he neared completion of his project there was one last, but very important detail that proved troublesome: the original Sonauto badge which is so small but so important to the car's heritage and personality. It was originally made from pot-metal and none of the plating shops would touch it for fear of wrecking it. Instead, Stacy put his professional skills to work. As a self-taught jeweler who has built a very successful business in the charm-bracelet industry, he decided to simply re-make it. He made a mold directly from the original, cast it in a higher quality of steel and then sent it off for gold-plating. Problem solved. It looks like new and he still has the original.

Mechanically, he wasn't sure how deep he wanted to delve. On longer trips to participate with the Arizona Outlaws 356 group, he had encountered an overheating problem. During the body and paint process he considered whether to have the engine rebuilt. He weighed several solutions until friend Ibrahim Kuzu suggested Stacy just ship the motor to Bob Garretson for assessment and possible rebuild. Fully expecting another delay and more money spent, instead Garretson admonished: "Son, you don't need to do anything to that motor! Just put a new aluminum oil cooler on it and you'll be good to go." Other than that, Stacy had the valves adjusted, installed a point-less distributor and traded out the Zenith carbs for Webers with Red-line air-filters. Nothing more. The exhaust is original OEM. Stacy describes the car's performance as "peppy," estimating that the car still produces very close to its original 75 horsepower.



Handling-wise, it's more than adequate for his purposes. It doesn't carry the optional compensating spring first engineered for use on the B, but Stacy did put a new set of Koni performance shocks on the car during its refresh. He uses it mostly for long jaunts; not for barn-burning autocrosses or hill-climbs. Larger width Cooper Arizonian tires on slightly wider-than-stock rims provide for a nicer ride and great gas mileage. They also wear well and are considerably less expensive to replace than the fashionable Michelins or Continentals he might use if the car only went to local Cars and Coffee meets. This car is a driver, the one he calls his "distance car." Though the 356 shows 17,064 on its odometer, Stacy is confident from



Street lights give the Bali blue paint an ethereal glow in the New Mexico moonlight.

looking back through the service records that its actual mileage is in the 117,000 range with about 10,000 of those miles put on since he's had the car.

Upon completion, Stacy was very pleased with the outcome and took it to an event in Sedona. While talking with fellow 356ers, several of them marveled at its headlights. "What about them?" he asked. Through all of the process, he never noticed that they weren't stock B headlights. In fact, they weren't even 356 headlights. Instead, they appear to be from a 1966 911. At first he was dumbfounded, but then realized the practicality of the move—whoever made it—was a very sensible alternative to the original 356B headlights that get broken so easily - and he really likes the way they look. They add to its aura of a French seductress, warming its way into the heart of its viewers with a look deep with mystery and charm and something just a little off. After all, it's a well-known adage: the eyes are the windows to the soul. 🚗

Registry and Zia 356 member Steven Stacy of Albuquerque and the garage bookend to his 356 Speedster.

