Porsche’s Legacy Essay, Research Paper

The Porsche is a legacy of Ferdinand Porsche, and his belief in what an automobile should be. Porsche believed that cars should be the products of engineering innovation, careful development and diligent craftsmanship.

Dr. Ferdinand Porsche was born in 1875 in Bohemia, and early on he devoted his time to mechanical and electric structures. When he was 15, his family was delighted to learn it had the second electrically lighted structure in town, for he had built a generator and everything else he needed, including the bulb, to light their house. This would be just the beginning of what was to come for Ferdinand Porsche.

The first Porsche name created a sensation when it debuted at the Paris Exposition in 1900. Called the Lohner-Porsche, it was a battery-powered two-seater that used electric motors in the front wheel hubs. Ferdinand Porsche designed the hub motors at just 25 years old. Mr. Lohner, an employer of Porsche boasted to the press: “He is very young, but he is a man with a big career before him. You will hear of him again.” This quote is what drove Porsche to create the type of car that he is much acclaimed for.

The first car that Porsche produced was something that he had been working on for a lifetime. With a light chassis and a low center of gravity, the production car had a fundamental purpose, while a racing version, which was capable of 37 mph, was also planned.

In 1906, the Austrian branch of the Daimler Motor Company hired Porsche as its new Technical Director. Porsche designed a number of landmark cars, eventually assuming the position of Chief Engineer at Daimler headquarters in 1923. In 1924, he produced a Mercedes-Benz, which proved its design winning the Targa Florio. (A competitive racing event.)

At Daimler-Benz, Porsche created one of the most exquisite cars of all time; the Mercedes-Benz S-series. People now could speed and be comfortable while racing in a car that was a street-legal racing car. Porsche then created the Mercedes-Benz S, SS and SSK, which were models of the late 1920s. During his stay at Daimler-Benz, Porsche proposed that the

Mercedes-Benz S class should be mass-produced so that people in the bourgeois class could afford a luxury car. The board of directors quickly turned down this idea. Disturbed by this decision, Porsche decided to quit and start his own kind of car company. Unaware where his funds would come from, investors who were interested in his strategy gave him the financial support that he needed. Porsche finally went into business for himself. On March 6th, 1931, Porsche was established in Stuttgart, Germany.

Porsche and his designers began the beginning work on a vehicle that would become the Volkswagen (The people s car). In a series of prototypes created throughout the mid-1930s, it’s easy to see Porsche s philosophy in practice. First it starts with a design concept, and through a process of evolution, prove the engineering of each component. Porsche designed, built and tested 20 different engines before coming back to his starting point, an air-cooled four-stroke flat four. During this time, Porsche designed three aerodynamic coupe versions of the Volkswagen for racing, the Berlin-Rome rally cars. It’s easy to see why they are considered prototypes of the Porsche coupes.

The Porsche firm moved in 1938, to new headquarters in Zuffenhausen, just outside of Stuttgart. When war engulfed Europe, Porsche was involved in the design of a number of projects that included farm tractors, planes, and ship engines.

Never far away from the automotive work of his father, Ferry Porsche was soon behind the wheel of a car and, by the age of twelve, he was even permitted to run in the class winning Targo Florio car, the lightweight Austro-Daimler Sascha. While building a family, his son, Ferdinand jr. (Ferry) was always central to their concept of automobile design. So it was natural that in the postwar years, when Porsche finally had an opportunity to build a car of its own, they built sports cars. That vehicle was the legendary Type 356. Production began in the spring of 1948 in Gmund, Austria, where the Porsche firm had temporarily relocated towards the end of the war. As with every Porsche, you could see that it followed a certain philosophy that could be seen in every car manufactured. The car was light, aerodynamic, responsive, and possessed character. There was an air-cooled engine located behind the driver, but forward of the rear axle. These have been the characteristics that have made Porsche unique and continue to make Porsche the most envied and desirable car on the market.

Joseph Stalin once invited the designer to Russia, just to visit, but in reality to feel him out on the possibility of his becoming the Soviet Union’s minister of technology. There was no racing in Russia, though Stalin and Porsche both liked racing. So Porsche headed back to

Germany and designed the P-wagon of 1932, a car resembling the racers of the 1960s and 1970s. It was a pacesetter that gave the Mercedes Benz entries their best competition.

Porsche himself laid out everything in the Volkswagen, including the Beetle shape, as early as 1931. The car was announced in 1938, when hundreds of orders were taken for the car at $400 per unit. Porsche had a creative lifetime of some 40 years. Unlike most automotive engineers, he was amazingly diversified in his work with creating cars, trucks, aircraft engines, tank and other military vehicle, windmills, motorcycles. Porsche came out with more that 70 vehicle designs, some that stand out in particular are the Prince Henry Austro-Daimler, the 38/250 Mercedes Benz, the P-wagon Auto Union Grand Prix car, the Volkswagen, and the Tiger Tanks of World War II.

Although the company was formed on April 25, 1931 as “designers and consultants for land, sea and air vehicles,” it was Professor Dr. Ferry Porsche, who took the company to be one of the world’s leading automotive engineering design companies, and specialist manufacturer of sports cars. From the time he designed the first Porsche, the Type 356 in 1948, it was his personal involvement that made Porsche the great automobile it is today.

With the success of Ferry Porsche s cars, he was later to lead the newly founded Auto Union Company. They had decided to appoint Professor Porsche as the designer of a new Grand Prix car to meet the new 750 kgs. maximum weight formula.

The Auto Union was the most advanced racing car design concept. He designed a car that featured a 16-cylinder super-charged engine, with a distinctive valve control mounted just behind the driver; an engine position which is standard for all modern generation F1 cars. Ferry s role was dominating in its design and construction. Ferry Porsche conducted much of the initial test driving of the cars, his father declared one day, I have enough drivers, but only one son.”

One other car which the Porsche firm designed before World War II was to have an important influence on both Ferry Porsche and the rest of the world. It was, of course, the most produced car of all time, the Volkswagen Beetle.

WWII had put a block in the road for the Porsche family business. Demolishing Stuttgart, Ferry Porsche and a few colleagues had to start again from scratch in 1945 by keeping busy with repair jobs and the construction of simple farm machinery.

Meanwhile, the French held Ferry’s father, Professor Ferdinand Porsche until 1947, when Ferry Porsche’s family managed to raise enough money from new contracts in Italy to buy his freedom. One of these design projects resulted in the Cisitalia Formula 1 racecar, unveiled at the Turin Motor Show that same year. It was the first race car with a mid-mounted engine and four-wheel drive.

Ferry Porsche decided to build his own sports car, effectively the first “Porsche.” He took out plans he made back in 1939 for a light, compact car based on the Volkswagen, practically the only components available in Germany at the time. Besides providing speedy acceleration, unmatched braking and good road holding an essential criterion was the car had to be practical for everyday use. Its “marketing concept” adopted by Ferry Porsche was, “If I build a car that gives me satisfaction, then there must be others with the same sort of dreams who would be prepared to buy such a car.”

The first car to bear the Porsche name, the Type 356, was delivered on June 8, 1948. It boasted a tubular space frame chassis, an aluminum body and a rear-mounted four-cylinder 1.131 cc VW engine. The following year, in order to ensure continued production of the 356, Ferry Porsche negotiated a new contract with the then head of Volkswagen, Heinz Nordoff, for the supply of parts. The contract appointed Dr. Ing h.c.F Porsche K.G. as a consultant engineer to VW, sole importer of Volkswagen’s for Austria and recipient of a royalty sum on every VW Beetle produced at Wolfsburg.

A total of fifty-two 356 cars were built at Gmund in Austria before the company returned to Stuttgart. Production remained there in March 1950. During the same year, Porsche began designing its own engine, the Carrera. The 356 model, which was initially forecast to have a world sales potential of 500 units, was last produced in 1965 after over 78,000 cars had been built. The policy of model endurance is continued today with the Porsche 911, which enters its 35th year of production.

Professor Dr. Ferry Porsche was happy and grateful that his father witnessed, and with approval, the start of Porsche as a specialist sports car manufacturer. Since 1948, he also further enhanced the Porsche product, which enjoyed a fine reputation from the beginning, by expanding customer service and marketing, accelerating product development through motor racing, and put in decades of hard, dedicated work. But Ferdinand Porsche suffered a stroke and died in 1951. Professor Porsche will be remembered for his entrepreneurial achievements in the international automobile industry. Nearly 50 years ago in Gmund, Austria, he conceived and built the first sports car named “Porsche.” Under his guidance and from very humble beginnings, the car company developed into an internationally renowned enterprise.

“For his work on the development of the original Volkswagen Beetle as well as the 16-cylinder Auto Union Grand Prix race cars and Porsche sports cars, Professor Porsche played an important part in automotive history. His leadership will be greatly missed at Porsche operations around the world.”

Since entering Le Mans in 1951 and achieving a class win, the name Porsche has been the same with success in motor sports. Amongst its victories, Porsche has been crowned World Endurance Champion in sports car racing 14 times, and since 1970, has won the Le Mans 24-hour race a record 15 times. The world famous Monte Carlo rally was won

four times by Porsche 911s, and an experimental 4WD 911 Carrera won the 1984 Paris-Dakar desert race first time out, the very first sports car ever to achieve this honor. Subsequently in 1986, Porsche 959s finished first, second and sixth on their debut outing in the event as well as becoming the first all-wheel drive racing car to enter and win its class at Le Mans.

Professor Dr. Ferry Porsche demanded a great deal from his engineers, mechanics and drivers. He made bold investments in new developments and by this means founded the worldwide status of his firm as a privately controlled, independent producer of technologically advanced sports, and racing cars for worldwide use.

In 1972, the year the Porsche family withdrew from active management of the company, Weissach was opened. Today, Weissach is world famous as a site for research and development, where 30%, of all work is undertaken on behalf of other manufacturers, Governments and NATO.

Back in 1965, the Technical University of Vienna awarded an Honorary Doctorate Ferry Porsche in recognition of his achievements in so many branches of the automobile world. In 1984 on his 75th birthday he was awarded the honorary title of ‘Professor.’