

## MOTORING

E4-14 / CLASSIFIEDS  
AUTOMOTIVE

## Porsche's latest 928 steps out front

**Gary Witzenburg**CAR  
REVIEW

There were no legal spaces, so I parked the Porsche at the curb directly in front of the camera store. It wasn't in anyone's way, and I was in major league rush. All I had to do was drop off some film.

The camera store lady was busy, but it still only took maybe a minute and a half. When I rushed back out, the sheriff's deputy was already halfway through writing the ticket.

The Christmas shopper traffic was backed up in both directions from where we stood. "Look," I said with a sweeping gesture. "There are no spaces." I pointed to her black-and-white. "Your car is in the way over there. Mine isn't."

The pen stopped, the eyes rose again and narrowed into that disdainful glare that law officers everywhere reserve for the lowest criminal vermin. "This curb is red," she pointed out. "That one is not. You could have parked over there." And she ripped off the ticket and thrust it toward me. "Merry Christmas!"

They never give breaks to people with Porsches. They hate people with Porsches. So do a lot of other regular folks who can't afford them and resent gold-chain types who can.

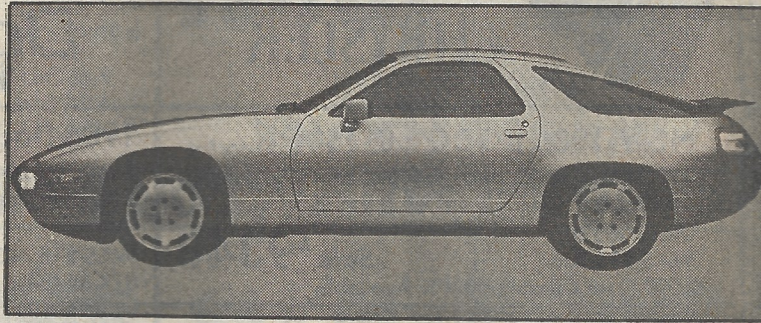
Then again, you get equally many worshipful reactions when you're driving a 928. Especially from people in other (lesser) Porsches.

When I last reviewed a 928, it was the '85 928S. It had just received a new four-cam, 32-valve aluminum V-8 that boosted its performance into the 150-mph supercar range and its price to about \$50,000.

A bit too heavy and plush for true sports-car status, it was nevertheless a marvelous high-performance GT that could blow its closest rival, Mercedes' aging SL roadster, clean into the weeds.

On the other hand, it had nothing on Chevrolet's Corvette at the time but Porsche prestige and a higher level of finish and quality.

But that was then; this is now. And now is when the latest 928 steps at

**1987 Porsche 928S 4**

| Engine              |                      | Speed              |                           |
|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 5.0-liter V-8 ..... | 316 hp               | Mph ....           | 165/manual, 162/automatic |
| Transmissions       |                      | Prices             |                           |
| Standard .....      | five-speed manual    | Base .....         | \$58,900                  |
| Optional .....      | four-speed automatic | With options ..... | \$63,331                  |

last to the head of its class as the biggest, baddest, fastest production Porsche ever built.

Faster than the '87 Corvette. Faster than the latest Mercedes 560SL. Faster even than its legendary in-house rival, the rear-engine 911 Turbo. Fact is, if you really cared to, you would have to invest well over six figures for a Ferrari Testarossa or a Lamborghini Countach to outrun this Teutonic bullet.

How fast is it? The factory says 165 mph with the five-speed manual transmission, 162 with the four-speed automatic. But the factory is conservative. On Aug. 7, 1986, ace Porsche racer Al Holbert drove a stock 928S 4 to a record 171.9 mph for the flying kilometer and 171.1 mph for the flying mile at the Bonneville Salt Flats.

That's fast.

Why the moniker "928S 4" (not 928-S4 or 928S-4 or 928S4)? Well, every current Porsche carries a 900-series model number indicating something (I'm sure) about the vintage, power and pecking order, but there seems to be no logical system.

The original 928 came in 1977 — after the four-cylinder 924 and before the 944 — and is V-8 powered. But the 911 (introduced in 1966) is six-cylinder, not one-cylinder, powered.

Suffice it to say, the fastest, best-equipped, top-of-the-line versions

within each model series (except 911s and Turbos) carry the "S" designation, and the "4" means fourth-generation. Awkward? Confusing? Yes. Does Porsche care? No.

What makes the 928S 4 so significant is not only its newly-massaged (tuned resonance induction) 316 horsepower 5.0-liter engine and its prodigious performance (5.7 seconds 0-60, 14.1 seconds for the standing quarter-mile), but also its new and much more aerodynamic nose and tail.

I personally like the changes, and I'm finally beginning to appreciate the 928's smooth, round, thick-hipped shape — though I still think it looks like a decorated dinosaur egg with eyes.

More important than pure aesthetics, however, the smoother front and rear, in conjunction with other aerodynamics improvements, drop the 928S 4's drag coefficient to a respectable .34 from the '86 928's rather blunt .39.

The large rear spoiler reduces high-speed lift, a new belly pan under the engine improves airflow beneath the car, and there's even a computerized louver system in the nose that minimizes drag by admitting only as much cooling air as the engine needs.

Also under "what's new" are refinements to the highly sophisticated suspension, which (along with wider

245/45VR16 rear tires on a wheels) improve both handling and roadholding.

This is still a big, heavy GT at over two tons, but it now manages to feel somewhat more nimble and spongy than previous 928s.

One reason the 928S 4 is so heavy (despite its high aluminum content in both body and chassis) is that folks' GTs are expected to come with almost every comfort and convenience known to man. It does.

Besides the expected automatic climate control, premium stereo, leather power seats, power windows and doorlocks, there are also a lock brakes, heated power mirrors, power sunroof, a rear window wiper, even little nozzles up front to wash the pop-up headlamps.

But, then, what's three grand worth of options on a \$58,900 car? Bottom line on mine was \$63,331, including a \$650 government "guzzler tax," \$578 destination charge and \$245 dealer prep. I put it on my Master Card, thank you.

Among the many things right with this car is the wonderful multi-speaker cassette stereo, which is even easy to figure out and operate without a manual or an electrical engineering degree.

On the short negative list are the industry's last "racing-type" manual shift pattern (first is left, back) and a central doorlock system that works from inside the cockpit only with the ignition on.

Where can you test such a car on public roads? I have my secret twisty section, but the night I aside for testing there turned out foggy to see.

I took it up my favorite mountain switchbacks but found it too slow from frost (yes, we do get that here to push very hard. I tried briefly unleashing its awesome acceleration a couple of times, but had no chance to punch a stopwatch.

Both Porsche and driver's license emerged intact, but you'll have to take the factory's word for the performance numbers.

Gary Witzenburg, a Los Angeles-based free-lance writer with a background in automotive engineering and racing, is president of The Car Consultants company in Agoura Hills, Calif. His car reviews run twice each month in The Courant Motoring section.