

**How old are you, what is your occupation, and where do you live?** I'm 63. I work as a radio astronomer at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) headquarters in Charlottesville. The NRAO designs, builds, and operates large radio telescopes including the 100 m dish in Green Bank, WV (a good destination for a day tour from our area) and the Very Large Array in New Mexico (that Jody Foster used to detect aliens in the movie *Contact*). I am using these telescopes to detect natural radio emission from water masers orbiting massive black holes in galaxies, measure the expansion rate of the universe, and learn how strongly "dark energy" is affecting that expansion. I also moonlight (so to speak) as an astronomy professor at the University of Virginia, where I teach the graduate course in radio astronomy. I live with my wife, Sherry Westfall, about ten miles south of Charlottesville in a rural area called North Garden. Every workday I get to commute in my Porsche on a winding and hilly country road.

**What was your first car?** My first car was a new 1965 Oldsmobile 442, a "muscle" car similar to the better-known Pontiac GTO but with slightly better handling. It was well matched to the straight and level roads of southwestern Michigan, where the only form of racing among my peers was drag racing. It was also the only American car I ever bought.

**What was your first Porsche? Current Porsche? Any modifications?** My first Porsche was a 1973 914 that I bought new for the princely sum of \$4000. It was light and fairly nimble, but it was not a great car. The 1.7 liter engine was anemic, the bright yellow paint soon faded on exposure to sunlight, the heat exchanger/muffler system rusted quickly and was expensive to replace, and the skinny tires could let go with little warning. After its body starting rusting in 1979, I sold the car to a man who promptly totaled it by spinning into one of those deep ditches lurking alongside so many country roads in Virginia.

My current Porsche is an "arena red" (burgundy) 1999 996 Carrera coupe that I bought used in 2004. It started life as a garage queen, owned by a doctor who only drove it on sunny weekends. After five years it had only 11,000 miles on the odometer. Now it is a daily driver and DE car with over 75,000 miles. The main modifications are for the track, but they are consistent with the car remaining a daily driver. A new set of stock brake

pads will wear out in a three-day DE at VIR, so I now use Pagid Yellow brake pads. They squeal, but they last. GT3RS front brake ducts help keep the brakes cool. I installed wide Rennline pedals for easier heel/toe shifting because Sherry and I have narrow feet. I added a fire extinguisher, a CG Lock seat-belt clip to hold my butt down firmly in the seat, the Porsche RoW M030 sport suspension, and a set of track wheels with Pilot Sport Cup tires. The sport suspension is a great improvement even for everyday driving, and I highly recommend it.

**Why did you choose this model?** I followed the standard advice to buy the best and most modern Porsche that I could afford, and there are a lot of low-mileage 996's out there in excellent condition for reasonable prices. Also, it is much lighter, more agile, faster, and less expensive to maintain than the 1989 964 C4 that it replaced. I miss the classic 911 looks of the 964, but I wouldn't go back. Early 996's seem to provide the most Porsche bang for the buck.

**What is your earliest Porsche memory?** My family doctor bought a black 356 cabriolet in 1960, and he paid me and a friend to wax it. I didn't take it very seriously as a car. It looked bulbous compared with the ubiquitous American cars in Michigan and it was no drag racer. All red-blooded teenage boys wanted something more like a 1957 Chevy. Besides, what good is a Porsche in the flatlands? I also clearly remember seeing one of the first 911 coupes around 1965. I immediately decided it was the only beautiful car on the road. I still think so.

**What is your dream Porsche and why?** A GT3, because it is the "sportiest" sports car that Porsche makes today. More realistically, the new Cayman S with direct fuel injection, PASM, and (maybe) the PDK transmission looks very attractive.

**What is your favorite Porsche-related activity?** DE. As Aldous Huxley said, "Speed provides the one genuinely modern pleasure." It's exciting to drive at high speed and a challenge to be smooth and accurate enough to stay near the limits of traction. Autocross is



exciting, too, but it happens too fast for me to plan ahead, experiment, and learn. Sherry and I like to take scenic drives as well.

**What is your all-time favorite Porsche and why?** The 1973 Carrera because it is so small, light, focused, and minimalist. Porsche should try to repeat that success by coming out with a "Cayman sport" model. I wouldn't complain about having to roll up the windows or adjust the seats myself.

**What is your favorite driving song?** None, actually. When I'm driving, music is a distraction. A moving car is so noisy that only CONSTANTLY LOUD music can be heard; that rules out most of the music I like. Plus, the passenger cabin of a Porsche is a small tin can with such terrible acoustics that even the fanciest Bose sound system still sounds bad.

**What non-Porsche activities do you enjoy?** My work isn't just a job; it is an opportunity to solve challenging problems in physics and engineering. I like to travel and visit new places with Sherry, dance (Sherry and I met swing dancing), work out at the gym, listen to classical music, restore old radios, amateur radio, photography, ...