



Item: Fast Lane News #52 in 2023 (#199 since 2020) on Sat. Dec. 23rd I'm writing from our Family Home at 109 East Carlton Road in Steubenville, in the beautiful Ohio Valley.

To: Our Fast Lane Travel Family and Friends in Australia, Canada, Europe, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa and in USA!

Subjects: Rückblick; Ausblick Part One; 12 Alpine Passes; and My Final Thoughts: My First Christmas in America.



I. **Rückblick to 2023** – It's a descriptive German word meaning "to look back." But it's not like looking in the rearview mirror when you are backing up. It is more a reflective review of what you have done in a period of time or even in your whole life to date.

Well, let's reflect on Fast Lane's 2023. Three years ago in January, we were high-fiving each other what a fantastic year 2020 would be. Demand for our trips was off the charts, deposits were flowing in, and we confidently sent reservations deposits to European hotels to secure the space we needed. Then COVID hit the fan and our planned, and ultimately actual, revenues dropped 92% and, as many others, our business teetered on the abyss. Europe was "closed" and no one travelled. Our losses were staggering, and we were on the brink. On one hand, some hotels refused refunds, i.e., we were here – you didn't show up and on the other hand some customers wanted refunds.

As any business would do, we closed our location which had four private offices, a conference room, a staging area and 4 cubicles with airline computers. We reduced our office space size by 75%, and painfully, terminated staff and started to focus on domestic trips. We would not have survived had it not been for the enormous financial generosity, support and encouragement of three of our wonderful customers and friends who did not want to see us leap into the abyss.

That's when I started the Petergram which conveyed to all past customers, vendors, European and domestic hotel contacts, and the wonderful folks at the Porsche Company in Stuttgart. With your support we will continue to provide

exemplary, unequalled, and unique travel experiences and double down on our motto: "It's our business to do pleasure!"

Our repeat customer rate is 44% with an average number of 8.6 repeat trips. The record holders are Eddy & Susie Yates who have completed 24 Porsche trips with us. On their last trip, at the farewell dinner, Eddy stood up and extolled the magnificent drives, wonderful cars, exquisite 5-star hotels, superb cuisine and all the new friends they made. He concluded with: "We're going to keep coming back until Peter and Fast Lane get it right!" We're working on it.

I'm also happy to report that the Porsche European Delivery Business is growing considerably. After a two-year hiatus it's ramping up. Why is that important, you ask? Let me give you a couple of actual examples. A very excited young man calls me and tells me that he will pick up a GT3 RS and he and his buddy want to drive the most awesome Austrian and Swiss Passes. He was very specific: the legendary Passo dello Stelvio; Pflügen Pass; Timmelsjoch Pass etc. "When are you picking up your car?" He responded: "Can't wait, May 8th. I told him "You are not going anywhere because the passes don't open till June 6th!" I didn't have to tell him twice to move his trip to June. He was very happy. A GT3 RS with winter tires and no Swiss mountain passes would not have been the driving experience he was looking for. We have developed a specific set of questions when you are taking European Delivery. Most importantly, we tell you what NOT to do. We publish a booklet "Driving is Different in Europe" that will help you to keep out of trouble and make your Porsche driving experience the joy you expected.

We concluded this year with 99.8% very happy customers. The only trip that registered compelling critiques was the 100th anniversary of Le Mans. It was, of course, horrendously expensive because of the Chateau close to the track; the helicopter over the race; and the various exclusive entry passes, like the pit passes at about \$2,000 each, for example. Nevertheless, all attendees loved the race. However, the French sponsor of the race, the Automobile Club del Ouest (ACO), after the race, opened the "exclusive grid walk," for which we paid a very high premium, to all attendees, thus, creating a flood of human locusts tearing down every possible souvenir of the track and in the pit area. There was no way for our guests to get close to the cars or drivers. Thankfully, experienced race attendees took the French "organization" challenges in stride.

Otherwise, we have a thick accolades file with grateful comments like: “could never have done this on our own” - “the accommodations and views were awesome.” - “Where do you find a place like this?” - ‘Thank you so much, we’ll be back next year!’ You’ll find more on our website www.fastlanetravel.com scroll to TOURS, scroll all the way down to “People are Talking.”

II. Ausblick to 2024, Part One – of course, it’s the opposite of Rückblick. Translated it also means “view” as in amazing vistas. But in the context of our Porsche Tours and Fast Lane’s plans – we are looking ahead. Of course, the BIG story is that it is our **50th Anniversary!**

The last trip this year – the Tuscany Porsche Fest was our 232nd Porsche trip. We have brought thousands of Porsche lovers and many who have never sat in a Porsche to Stuttgart and Leipzig. We have “sold” over 500 Porsches to people who have never thought about buying one solely to the experience they had on our trips.



One of the best examples of “I’ve got to have one of those” was Mrs. Galloway from North Carolina who was on our Porsche trip with her son Alex, and we arranged a rental of a Panamera for her. She drove the rental Porsche for a week in Europe and loved it. When they returned to the US and landed in Charlotte, NC, after a Transatlantic flight, from the CLT airport, they went straight to Hendrick PORSCHE in Charlotte, and she immediately ordered a Panamera.

Frankly, the same thing happened to me. After my first experience in a Panamera in the spring of 2012 on the Autobahn, I had the same reaction – this is the car I always wanted. After I returned to Tampa, I did sleep a night, but then went to Bert Smith PORSCHE in St. Petersburg, Florida and ordered my Panamera GTS. It’s one of a kind in memory of Ferry Porsche. I used to be his translator at the



various functions he attended on our trips in the 70's. This picture was taken after dinner in 1984 when I escorted Prof. Dr. h.c. Ferry Porsche to his car.

The color was always Jagdgrün mit hellbraunem Leder interior. His son suggested I should get the same color combination. Since they no longer offer Jagdgrün, I custom ordered my Panamera GTS with Jet exterior and Cognac leather interior with yachting mahogany trim. Let's just say driving it through Europe and guiding several of our Porsche trips, especially to Austria with it was the most exhilarating experience you can imagine.



This picture was taken by the only PCA Executive who has ever been on a trip with us. Since that picture was taken, my Panamera has been across the Atlantic three times. When I'm guiding Porsche trips in Europe, It is less expensive to ship my car than to rent a Porsche for the duration of my stay.



Here I am entering the medieval village of Rothenburg ob der Tauber. How do you like the Florida License Plate? This car drew enormous attention while I was in Europe with it. There is nothing more wonderful than driving a US Porsche, especially one without front license plates, in Europe where most speed cameras get you from the front.

I will continue with **Part Two of the 2024 Ausblick**, as appropriate, in my New Years **Petergram #200** next Saturday, December 30th, 2023.

III. In the meanwhile, don't forget to sign up for the Trip of the week: The breathtaking 12 Alpine Passes, Mon. June 17th – Wed. June 26th 2024. IMAGINE . . . the adrenaline increasing as you drive a high-performance PORSCHE of your choice, and traverse across 7 breathtaking passes within 3 days! Unless you're behind the wheel or a lucky passenger in this fabulous sports car, you can't appreciate the breathtaking views as you drive through Austria, Switzerland, and Italy!

Source: This paragraph was contributed by Wendy Clarke, Director of Customer Relations, Fast Lane Travel, Inc.

Driving is more fun when you're behind the wheel of a Porsche! In the last few days of this awesome trip, you will enjoy the breathtaking views of the alps while you take tight curves along the Grimsel and Furka passes.

Source: This paragraph was contributed by Kasey Waller, Executive Assistant, Fast Lane Travel, Inc.

IV. My Final Thoughts: My First Christmas in America



After my first summer in 1960 in this wonderful land called America, it was now December, my sixth month in Steubenville, Ohio. Fall transitioned into the real autumn with bare trees, piles of leaves, and eventually snow on the ground. Dick (my American adoptive dad) and Toodie (my American adoptive mom) started to get the house ready for X-Mas (that's how it was called). About a couple weeks before December 24th (that's the day when they celebrate the "Heiligen Abend und Weihnachten" in Austria) Dick schlepped this pine tree home and set it up to the left of the fireplace in the living room. That weekend the whole family decorated the tree under the strict supervision of Toodie. First, I thought it strange that a tree would be put up so far before the actual holiday? Then they didn't hang cookies, nuts, apples, or paper wrapped candies on the tree. What was even stranger was that they used colorful electric lights on the tree – not even real wax candles. On the other hand, I found it charming that each evening when it was dark the tree was "switched on" generating a soft colorful glow in the house. Then some people in the neighborhood even attached colorful lights on the outside of the houses – they stayed on even when it snowed.

Mark (my adoptive brother) at age 7 believed, or so he pretended, in Santa Claus. This person apparently appears during the night on December 24th and leaves presents for "all the good children." In fact, I was told that one must leave a plate of cookies and milk by the fireplace as refreshment. In addition, stockings would be hung by the fireplace for Santa Claus to fill. Dick and I occasionally went out to shop for toys for Mark which were then hidden in the attic of the garage or in some dark corner in the basement. Toodie then would retrieve them late at night and wrap them diligently in colorful Christmas paper in the dining room. This had to be done late at night because it was essential that Mark was asleep. Toodie was an amazing wrapper she carefully folded all the paper and then doubled the Scotch tape over on itself so that it was always hidden – there was never a Scotch tape on the outside of the paper.

On December 24th of course the anticipation and excitement had reached palpable levels with Mark. Dick emphasized that if he "isn't good" and goes to bed on a timely basis then Santa might not come. Mark was dispatched to bed in his room. I sat on the bed and read him a story, as I did frequently. Then his

parents came in and kissed him good night. I then had to check periodically that he wouldn't peek and was actually asleep. Then the most amazing feverish activity started . . . packages, items too big to wrap, like a bicycle, were all spirited from their various hiding crevices and placed in a huge 270-degree pattern around the tree. The presents covered practically half the living room. There were enough presents to stock a medium size toy store in Austria. All this for one kid . . . amazing. What a lucky boy . . . surely this WAS paradise. I was then sent to bed, and I heard more rustling. It must have been one in the morning or so when I finally fell asleep, and the house quieted down.

BANG- - - At 6:00 am my bedroom door slammed open. Mark, in his little pajamas and bathrobe, at full speed leaped on top of me. Skillfully took both my eyelids and pulled them up over my eyebrows all the while exclaiming: "Santa was here, Santa was here . . . "As an afterthought he added: "Are you awake?" I told him to lie next to me and sleep another hour or so – it was still pitch black dark outside. I held him so he couldn't escape, but really never fell asleep . . . it was pointless. So finally, an hour later or so, I let him run into his parents' bedroom and wake them up.

Everybody put on their respective bathrobes and in various stages of grumpiness went to the living room all the while feigning surprise at the wealth of presents on display. It was my first Christmas morning in America. Toodie insisted that she make coffee first and have her morning Winston before she could function. Dick then switched on the tree – it was still dark outside. Then he picked his way through the gift labyrinth and selected certain items for Mark – apparently there was a sequence to this gift giving.

Mark tore into the presents with anticipation and fervor. Wrapping paper was flying everywhere. The content of the boxes was quickly checked then tossed onto a pile and on to the next one. There was a Schwinn bicycle, a metal sled with wooden slats called a Flexible Flyer, games, tanks, building sets, sporting equipment, electric racing car sets and on and on. There were no clothes. There were enough toys to stock the shelves in that little toy store in Mürzzuschlag. Almost as an afterthought Mark then raced to the fireplace and removed THE stocking, which was laden with sweets, little puzzles and "gag" gifts (note to myself that I needed to find out more about what a "chocking" gift was).

I even got gifts – shirts, a sweater, a .22 lever action Marlin Rifle, a couple of Revell model kits and a few other things . . . yes it was truly my "first" Christmas.

I received more presents on December 25th, 1960, than in all other 17 Christmases of my entire life.

My first two Christmases were spent among cowering, wailing old women in a bomb shelter, three stories underground, where their crying was frequently interrupted by distant deafening concussions that shook the floor and a century of dust and pieces of mortar rained from the arched ceiling like falling snow. I was held tightly by mother and as a two-year old accepted the world I was born into.

Back in 1960 Ohio: Slowly daylight broke, and the morning was spent playing with various toys. At some point the decision was made to go outside and try out the new sled which worked marvelously zipping down the hill on the east side of the house. Of course, we ended up flipping over on the bottom. Ultimately with red cheeks, frozen hands, and a huge appetite we went back in to have some ham and cheese sandwiches – but were cautioned not to spoil our appetite for the Christmas dinner. At that age (I was 17 and Mark was 7) “spoiling one’s appetite” was really not an issue. The Christmas dinner, in essence, was a repeat of the Thanksgiving dinner, except the Turkey was replaced with a monstrous ham which Dick skillfully sliced with the twin bladed oscillating electric, yes electric, knife. I had learned my lesson from my faux pas at the Thanksgiving dinner and avoided any mention of an appropriate wine with Christmas dinner. Although a Pinot Noir would have been nice.

Later, we walked around the neighborhood stopping in at the Hatchers, Sparrs, Cribbses, and Grunewalds. At each house we admired the various presents adults and kids had received; were treated to nut rolls, cookies, Pizzelles, and punch or eggnog. Adults added “spice” to their eggnogs consisting mostly of C & C, Jack Daniels or Calverts. I don’t recall anyone drinking cognac. Nutmeg was sprinkled on top. It was a wonderful time of year – cold and snowy outside, but warm, engaging, caring, and loving inside. I truly felt I was part of a family – I was on the inside – I belonged. For Toodie, this was her annual social highlight. Dick was proud that he could provide so extensively. Mark was concerned as to where to put all the stuff he got and how much time he and I would have to play together. He was always very generous and shared everything. I was just



happy to be in America. Christmas confirmed that I had made the correct choice. I really wanted to be an American.

Postscript: I earned my American citizenship in 1971

I hope you will all have a **Merry Christmas** and/or a **Happy Hanukkah** with your family and friends and be grateful for living in this magnificent country called the USA. The resilience of our Nation will prevail, and we will elect new leadership next year that will restore our top standing in the world and return our economy to the powerful engine it always was. I wish you the very best of health and happiness.



Please take care of yourself and stay young; be happy and remember those who love you...Let's look forward to the great times we will have together again on one of our fabulous PORSCHE Tours in 2024. **I will see you there in Stuttgart. Can't wait to see you. Yours truly, Peter**