

The Last Eleven

Type 356 SL — The First Porsche Factory Race Cars

by Philip Carney & Jacques Mertens

The title of this book, *The Last Eleven*, refers to the last eleven aluminum 356s. The chassis for these cars were built in Gmünd and were stamped with the number series 356/2-053 through 356/2-063. The bodies were built by Tatra Vienna and from there they were shipped to Salzburg where they were placed in storage.

In the fall of 1950 Porsche received an invitation to the 1951 Le Mans race. With little deliberation it was realized that the aluminum 356 was their best race option because it was lighter, stiffer and because there were surplus cars. The Salzburg aluminum 356 stock was sent to Zuffenhausen and, in a rented two-car garage, Porsche engineers used these skeletons to create the Type 356 SL. It was the first race car to wear the Porsche brand name on its nose.

This book recounts the trials Porsche went through to bring their first race cars to Le Mans and succeeding accomplishments in the Liège-Rome-Liège, the Mille Miglia and Monza. And it was not just the factory throwing the cars around the tracks of Europe. Max Hoffman imported three 356 SL cars to the United States in late 1951 and it was only a matter of months before they were class winners from coast to coast.

The Last Eleven provides a comprehensive look at the special features Porsche engineers put into the cars to eke out every bit of performance: wheel shrouds belly pans, hotter cams, lowered roofs, and even the installation of a four-cam engine.

The story of each car is included, when it was rebuilt into race form and what fate held for it. Somewhat surprising, seven of these famous cars endured numerous race battles and the decay of time and still exist today. While it is true that some of the survivors are never-ending restoration projects, others are excellent examples of Porsche's first race veterans.

***The Last Eleven* is the most comprehensive story of the first Porsche factory race cars.**

Foreword by Karl Ludvigsen



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