

The Collier Porsche Collection

By Philip Ewald

The new format for the modern bride is the “destination wedding”. They are very fun, romantic and picturesque events. I have now been to four. They involve travel to exotic locations for the wedding ceremony. The latest destination wedding I attended was on a sunset beach on Honeymoon Island in Florida.



“You may now kiss the bride!”

While planning these trips to these far off locals, I try to stay a few extra days for sightseeing, and this recent trip was no exception. I added Key West, the Sanibel /Captiva Islands and Naples to the itinerary. A co-worker mentioned she grew up in Naples and knowing that I liked cars said, I should visit the Collier Automotive Museum. She also added, “They have a 917.”

She knew me well enough to know that she did not need to say “Porsche” in front of the number 917. So the Collier Automotive Museum was on the agenda. She got the address: 2500 Horseshoe Drive, Naples, Florida, no directions, but it’s a small town and the hotel will know how to get there.

Naples is located in Collier County named after Baron Collier, who in 1911 had the foresight to buy like a million acres of Florida swampland, almost two counties worth. I guess you can figure out how this ended up. Air conditioning is invented, he builds

a highway through the swamp and today we have Tampa, St Petersburg, Fort Myers and Naples. His grandson Miles Collier was listed in 1988 as one of the 400 richest Americans and this is before the recent real estate boom. His father and uncles were avid race car drivers and they formed the Sports Car Club of America. So Miles has sports cars in his blood. In 1987 he bought the museum car collection of race car driver Briggs Cunningham. These famous racing cars were added to his own sizable car collection. Shortly thereafter, he opened a sleek new museum dedicated to sports racing cars.

In 2005 Miles was awarded the Vasek Polak Award which is given to individuals who have shown great affinity with Porsche. The sculptured bronze award is kept at Porsche Cars of North America. Previous winners include Hurley Haywood, Brian Redman and Jacky Ickx. Miles is obviously my kind of hero. His museum contains one of the greatest privately held Porsche collections on Earth.

So with the newlyweds happily off on their honeymoon, I headed south from Tampa to Naples. The Naples hotel clerk had not heard of the museum, but gave me directions to the address. Horseshoe Drive is right near the airport and it was easy to find. I take the horseshoe shaped road and end up back on the main highway: no museum. I more carefully retrace my path again and this time I find, set back from the road, an unnamed grey one story building with few windows. The building looks expensive, but there are no signs whatsoever. On a hunch, I drive along one side of the building and find a loading dock area. There are a few ordinary cars parked nearby. I also see a small sign at the side door. It only says: C. H. Motorcars L.L.C. By appointment only and a telephone number: 643-5784. A man in crisp automotive overalls exits the door and I ask, “Is this the Collier Automotive Museum?” He replies, “The museum closed in 1994.” I ask, “Who would I need to talk to about seeing the cars?” He says, “Scott.”

The museum is closed, but obviously the cars are still here. On the other side of these grey plaster walls is one of the greatest Porsche collections and I am not going to leave Naples without seeing at least one car. So, out comes the cell phone and I ask for Scott. “I’m sorry Scott is out for the day” answers the pleasant voice at the other end of the phone. Uh oh. Ok don’t panic. “Hi, I’m Philip Ewald and I am an avid Porsche enthusiast and would it be possi-