



# PAGODA SL GROUP WORLD



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# Our Cars, Our Stories, Our Photos

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I first became aware of the W113 SL as a young boy in the early 1980s when my father pointed one out— it was white with a black soft top. He joked with me, saying that if it weren't for me, he'd be driving a similar car.

I instantly liked it even though my favorite car of all was the one my father already had, a deep maroon SAAB 900 Turbo. It had the silhouette of a Porsche 911, in my eyes, and more mid-range grunt.

Back in 1974, my dad was looking to buy a red W113. At that time, it was affordable second-hand because the R107 had just come out. Cars are massively expensive in Norway due to import tax that frequently exceeds 100 percent.

The car salesman pointed toward my pregnant mother's baby bump and asked, "What about him?" So the two-seater was ditched and my parents ended up with an orange Volvo station wagon. I do sympathize with my dad's predicament then, but at least the 900 Turbo made up for it later.

Many cars later —a few more SAABs, a Mercedes-Benz W123, a ghastly Ford Scorpio, a Peugeot and a Mercedes-Benz W124— my father suddenly and unexpectedly passed away. I was 23 at the time. As an only child, my mother was rather concerned about my future, so she gave me an advance on my inheritance so that I could pay down my student loan. I had just returned from four years abroad in Australia between army service and studies.

Instead of migrating to Australia with my Aussie girlfriend at the time, I responded to the circumstances by getting a job with an international ocean freight company based in Norway. Coincidentally, they shipped many cars.

I thought paying down my student loans would make for a rather dull memory of my father, so I started looking for the car he originally wanted to buy in the 1970s but never did.

I found the car in Houston— an orient red 1969 Mercedes-Benz 280SL with a black MB-Tex interior.

An elderly couple sold the car. They were only the second owners and had taken possession of the car just a few months after it was new.

It came with a complete history —from the sales receipt to the last oil service— and was in sound mechanical shape (though a repaint done in the U.S. was less than stellar).

This was in 1998, and due to work I was not able to fly over to look at it. I found a Houston-based Mercedes mechanic in the Yellow Pages and arranged to have the car checked out.

It turned out to be in good condition, as described, and I arranged for the freight forwarder to collect the car and bring it to port —buying the car sight-unseen, save for two photos I received in the mail. Luckily, the Clemmons in Houston were trustworthy sellers.

I had this car until 2013, driving it all year except in the winter —which in Norway usually translates to April through October— and it never had any serious issues. It was one of the few cars that started without electrical assistance, being free from electronics draining the battery.

I had to put snow tires on for the drive from Gothenburg, Sweden to Norway when it came off the boat. This was the one and only time it was driven in wintery conditions. Rear wheel drive and a heavy front kept me alert all the way back to Oslo.





My mother was not impressed when I told her that I had not paid my student loan, but instead squandered the money on an old car. At first, she did not want to know anything about it. But when she finally came to see it and saw that it was a Pagoda gleaming red in the evening light, she went quiet.

For many years, it was my only car. I remember freezing under the hard winter sky of Oslo waiting for the tram or going places by foot while the car sat comfortably in my mother's garage. More than once during those long winter months I made my mind up to sell it. But then spring came and I felt like Steve McQueen when I took it out for the first ride, smelling and sounding like a real car. And every time I thought, "Nah...I'll never sell it!"



Yet, I did. In 2013 I came across a 1968 mint-condition silver 280SL. Immediately, I realized I would never be able to bring my red SL up to the same standard —mechanically it was sound, but it was in need of much other work. So, I seized the opportunity and purchased the silver SL, which I still have today.

My years of Pagoda ownership have overcome an additional six years abroad, the addition of a wife, a dog, and quite recently, our son Sixten. I still lovingly walk around the car twice when approaching it parked on the street. And I still enjoy polishing it twice a year.



I use the hard top more often than before and last summer I took it on a trip from Oslo to Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark. On the return trip, I had the soft top down. It was like riding on velvet when the sleek Pagoda laid back its ears and breezed along the highway. Again I reminded myself to always keep a Pagoda in my garage. ■