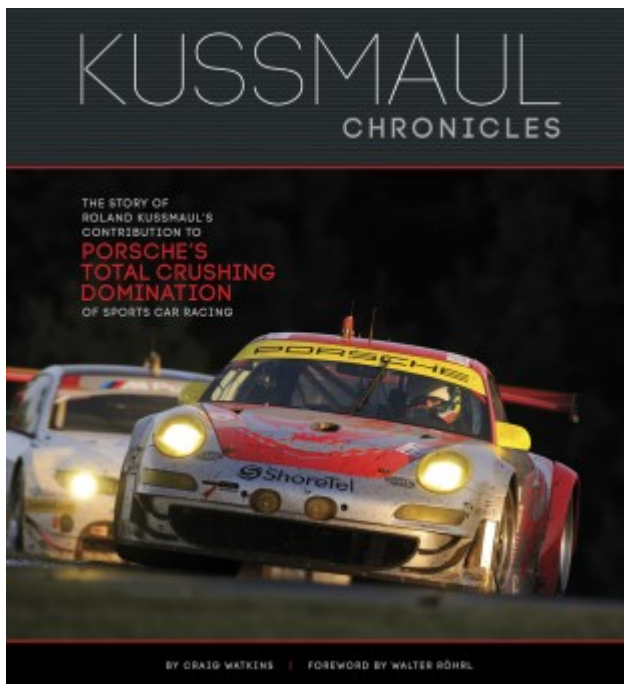


Kussmaul Chronicles

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Online version: <https://www.porscheroadandrace.com/kussmaul-chronicles/>



For starters, when you pick up your copy of *Kussmaul Chronicles*, you can jettison any preconceived ideas of reading a 'normal' book on the story of an engineer and his years spent at Porsche. That way, with a clear mind, you will be better prepared for the unexpected when you turn the first page.

Author Craig Watkins, whom I have had the pleasure of exchanging many emails with some years back, makes it quite clear right up front that he has not written the biography of a great engineer, in the normal sense of the word. In fact, Watkins is quite open when he says that he is himself an engineer and he did not believe that he had the necessary skills to write a long, narrative-rich book of this kind. But what he set out to do was talk with Roland Kussmaul at length, as one engineer to another, and to record the numerous discussions they had together. These discussions, interviews and exchanges have been transcribed (I guess) almost verbatim into the book. This style is unusual to say the least, but what it gives the reader is an unedited and raw account, warts and all, of what it was like in Porsche's hallowed motorsport kingdom. So with this in mind, the *Kussmaul Chronicles* does not follow a typical chronological path from beginning to end, it is not that kind of book, so get ready for a surprise.

I mentioned at the start that the reader should be prepared for the unexpected, and here is the second surprise. Displayed at numerous places throughout the book are QR codes, which the reader can scan on his/her mobile phone, and this takes you directly into the discussion that the author had with Kussmaul. Not only can you hear the actual conversation, but some of the QR codes will also give you a video of the car(s) being spoken about, or a short snippet where you are driven around Porsche's Weissach test track. Publishing has changed hugely over the last decade, but this takes the printed book into a new realm.



A young Roland Kussmaul sits astride his Honda CB450, circa 1973 (copyright: Anita Kussmaul)



The Indy car roll-out in 1980 was not without its problems
(copyright: Porsche)



Refuelling the works Porsche 956 during the 1983 Le Mans 24-Hour race (copyright: Porsche)

I have written many book reviews before this one, and I have even written seven books on Porsche sports and racing cars, and there is one important factor that I have said time and time again on this point. Porsche must be one of the only companies to have employed engineers who worked on their cars Monday to Friday, and then raced them in international events on weekends. This gave them an unequalled advantage over the opposition, because those same engineers would come into the workshop on Monday morning and be able to give a detailed debrief on how the car behaved, and then work on modifying the race car themselves for the next event. Other smaller race car manufacturers may have done this, but Porsche was one of the only large race car manufacturers to have done this, and it paid huge dividends. From as far back as Herbert Linge in the 1940s, through to the days of Kussmaul, Porsche has benefitted from this relationship between engineer and racing driver. Kussmaul has been able to reveal his reasons for doing what he did on a race car, be

it a 959 rally car or a prototype, because he had a hand in developing the car, driving it and improving it.



Mud...glorious mud on the Paris-Dakar rally (copyright: SPORTSlive/Kussmaul Collection)



Kussmaul up before dawn making coffee for the team on the Paris-Dakar rally - nice coffee table! (copyright: Porsche)

And now to the content itself. Well, what can one expect from the experiences of a man like Roland Kussmaul? The *Kussmaul Chronicles* covers Kussmaul's 42-year career (36 of these in the racing department) at Porsche, during which time he not only developed and tested roadgoing and race cars, but he drove them extensively in competition. He was a well-liked engineer and was equally well-liked outside of work, being an accomplished saxophone player. The book is packed with accounts of his participation in the most arduous of international rallies, namely the East African Safari and the Paris-Dakar rallies. Kussmaul would be up before dawn making coffee for the team, and he assisted with engine repairs,

gearbox issues, cooling problems - in other words he was a hands-on engineer. He was in the pits when Norbert Singer was so badly burned during the Hockenheim 1000km in July 1985 and was instrumental in getting Singer away from danger until the doctor arrived, and then returned to get the car back into the race. Kussmaul was the engineer who worked alongside the mechanics, and he knew first-hand what to do and how to do it. That kind of boss is the best kind!



Roland Kussmaul sits on the fender of the Carrera GT, the car he helped develop (copyright: Porsche)

Kussmaul was in the race department at Porsche from the early 1970s right through to RS Spyder in the late noughties. In his down-to-earth style, he described to the author his experiences and stories from behind the wheel, from the workbench or in the pit lane. The *Kussmaul Chronicles* is not a book you want to be without, it is engaging, humorous, factual



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and above all, entertaining. This book will be of huge interest to anyone who is a Porsche enthusiast.

Key Information

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