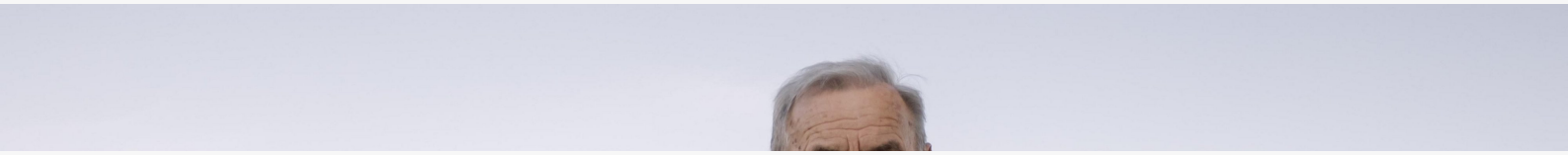

Porsche congratulates Valentin Schäffer on his 95th birthday

06/10/2026 With technical precision, practical experience and an exceptional understanding of complex engineering relationships, Valentin Schäffer is one of the defining figures in Porsche engine development. His work ranges from early racing engines to the most powerful prototype engines of their time. On October 8 2026, Schäffer will turn 95.

Atlanta. Valentin Schäffer is one of the people who has had a lasting influence on engine development at Porsche. On October 8, 2026, the former Porsche engineer will celebrate his 95th birthday. "Valentin Schäffer never viewed racing engines as machines, but as precisely tuned systems that have to function under extreme conditions," says Thomas Laudenbach, Head of Porsche Motorsport. "His work continues to demonstrate today just how closely technical understanding must be intertwined with practical experience in order to succeed in motorsport. We thank him for his tireless commitment to engine design and development and wish him all the best on his 95th birthday."

Schäffer was born in Hungary on October 8, 1931. In 1955, in his mid-20s, he began his career as an engine mechanic at Porsche. At the time, development work focused on the physical object itself. In the

1950s, engineers dismantled, measured and reassembled components instead of calculating their performance. This hands-on approach gave Schäffer, and others in the field, a deep understanding of technical processes that extended beyond theoretical knowledge.

Learning at the limits

In 1961, he passed his technician and master craftsman examinations. At the same time, his responsibilities in the workshop grew. Schäffer worked on various engine designs, analyzed their performance in use and developed solutions that had to prove themselves not only on the test bench but also on the track. The engines he helped develop ranged from compact four-cylinder units to complex 12-cylinder powerplants. As early as 1956, Schäffer was involved in work on the Type 547/2, a four-cylinder engine for the Porsche 550A RS Spyder. This was followed by the Type 753 and 771 eight-cylinder cross-plane engines, with which Porsche celebrated victories in Formula 1, the European Hill Climb Championship and the World Sportscar Championship.

"The eight-cylinder 771 was my absolute favorite engine. And it was the best engine for hill climbs. I spent a long time working on this engine every day, tinkering with the exhaust system to squeeze out a few more PS," says the father of two, referring to the racing engine with a power output of 138 PS per liter. Sometimes he'd even get the urge on a Sunday morning: "I'd drive to the test bench and keep tinkering until I'd got the engine running," says Schäffer.

The wide variety of projects helped Schäffer develop a historical understanding of engine development. Each engine presented different challenges in performance, cooling and durability.

Responsibility for key engine projects

In 1966, Schäffer, known for his work ethic and technical expertise, took over as head of racing engine development. In that role, he demonstrated his ability to manage complex processes. His superior was Ferdinand Piëch, who had led the entire development department since 1965. Hans Mezger was also among his colleagues.

Under Schäffer's leadership, Porsche developed the six-cylinder engines for the 906 Carrera 6 and 910. At the same time, he continued work on the eight-cylinder engine for the Porsche 908, as well as the Type 916 six-cylinder boxer engine, which served as the basis for the Porsche 908 and for testing the Type 912 12-cylinder engine in the Porsche 917.

His work on the vehicle's 12-cylinder engines proved to be particularly influential. The 912, 912/51 and 912/52 engine variants marked successive stages in the development of the Porsche 917. Here, Schäffer's ability to increase performance while integrating it into a stable overall system became most evident.

Performance under extreme conditions

One particularly significant day for Schäffer came on August 9, 1975. On that day, a Porsche 917/30 equipped with the 912/52 turbo engine set a world speed record at Talladega Superspeedway. Mark Donohue achieved an average speed of 221.07 mph on the 1.65 mile oval.

From 1956 to 1982, Schäffer oversaw numerous racing campaigns, including the Targa Florio, the Can-Am Series and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Each presented unique challenges, but all demanded immediate engine response. For engineers, that reality meant testing theory against real-world performance on the track. Schäffer remained committed to that philosophy throughout his career.

He was present on June 14, 1970, when Porsche secured its first Le Mans victory with the 917 KH, driven by Hans Herrmann and Richard Attwood. A year later, he completely redesigned the turbo engine from the ground up, quickly earning the nickname “Turbo-Valentin.”

Alongside his development work, he attended numerous races and directly incorporated the insights he gained into the design process. In 1989, Schäffer’s active career at Porsche came to an end, and he retired. However, he remained in Porsche’s service for many years afterward.

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Image Sublines

Path: media/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Valentin Schäffer, former Porsche engineer, 2026, Porsche AG
Subline: Valentin Schäffer

Path: media/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Valentin Schäffer and Karl Dubies (l-r), on the way to the pretraining at Le Mans, on the van a 904, 1964, Porsche AG
Subline: 1964 on the way to the pretraining at Le Mans, on the van a 904. Valentin Schäffer (left) and Karl Dubies.

Path: media/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Gerhard Küchle and Valentin Schäffer (left), manufacturing an engine for the Porsche Type 917, 1969/70, Porsche AG
Subline: Gerhard Küchle and Valentin Schäffer (left) manufacturing an engine for the Porsche Type 917, 1969/70.

Path: media/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Le Mans 1974 with 911 Carrera RSR Turbo 2.1. Persons in the back (from left to right): 2nd from left Gijs van Lennep, Herbert Müller and Norbert Singer, in the front (from left to right): Fritz Spingler, Roland Bemsel, Martin Müller, Wolfgang Stuible (with red cap), Ludwig Lehner, Valentin Schäffer, 1974, Porsche AG
Subline: Le Mans 1974 with 911 Carrera RSR Turbo 2.1. Persons in the back (from left to right): 2nd from left Gijs van Lennep, Herbert Müller and Norbert Singer, in the front (from left to right): Fritz Spingler, Roland Bemsel, Martin Müller, Wolfgang Stuible (with red cap), Ludwig Lehner, Valentin Schäffer.

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