

The Company

Farewell to Dr. Wendelin Wiedeking

The End of an Era

Dr. Wendelin Wiedeking was the CEO of Porsche AG for seventeen years. “He led the company out of hard times to heights that no one had imagined before,” said Supervisory Board Chairman Dr. Wolfgang Porsche of Wiedeking, who stepped down from his post on July 23, 2009.

By
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It was midday, following the twenty-hour meeting of the supervisory board. In pouring rain, Dr. Wendelin Wiedeking strode to the microphone in the courtyard of Zuffenhausen Plant 2 and announced to more than five thousand Porsche employees, “I am no longer your boss.” The departing CEO explained his resignation by stating, “Porsche CFO Holger Härter and I have come to the conclusion that it is better for the future strategic development of Porsche SE and AG if we are not on board.”

Wiedeking’s success story at Porsche thus came to an end, but it will be talked about for a long time to come. A native of Westphalia, Dr. Wiedeking became the spokesperson for the executive board on October 1, 1992, and its chairman on August 1, 1993. He began by steering Porsche successfully out of a crisis that threatened its existence and went on to make the sports-car manufacturer the most profitable carmaker in the

Wiedeking as “Mister High Tech,” rendered by the painter Jan Peter Tripp

world. “Dr. Wiedeking led the company out of hard times to heights that no one had imagined before,” said Supervisory Board Chairman Dr. Wolfgang Porsche. This was due in part to Wiedeking’s keen sense for market development. And that is reflected not least of all in the successful new vehicles launched during his tenure.

1993 – Boxster. With this 201-hp mid-engine roadster that cost about \$40,000 at the time, Wiedeking reached a new class of buyers. “This is a car you can feel,” wrote automotive tester Wolfgang Peters in the German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. And drivers felt the same way. Sales of this “entry” Porsche, which evoked memories of the 550 Spyder, at times exceeded 27,000 vehicles a year. Not even the professional optimists at the company had anticipated that level of demand—the Boxster became the company’s “savior” in the late 1990s.

2002 – Cayenne. For the first time, Porsche was building not only sports cars, but also a performance-oriented sport-utility vehicle with all the Porsche genes. And this third Porsche series was characteristically quick on its feet. With its naturally aspirated and turbocharged V-8 engines, the Cayenne was

an immediate success. In the 2003/04 business year, more than 39,000 units were purchased worldwide, making it the top seller among Porsche models.

2003 – Carrera GT. The dream car. In Leipzig, Wiedeking had a limited edition of 1,270 supercars built with a mid-mounted V-10 that had initially been designed for long-distance endurance races. This technological flagship accelerated from 0 to 200 km/h (124 mph) in a dizzying 9.9 seconds. Moreover, the Carrera GT was the first road vehicle with a chassis and assembly mounts made entirely of carbon-reinforced plastic.

2005 – Cayman. Based on the Boxster, Porsche presented a sports coupe that redefines driving pleasure, especially through its agility. The Cayman was the star of the International Motor Show (IAA) in Frankfurt. And again, Wiedeking succeeded in attracting new customers to Porsche.

2009 – Panamera. Wiedeking introduces a new class of Porsche—a Gran Turismo with room and comfort for four. Its many technological innovations and dynamic control systems allow the Panamera driver to tailor the car’s driving character to a fine degree. With its naturally aspirated and turbocharged V-8 engines, the Panamera can assume every role, from a long-distance luxury sedan to a rewarding sports car. “The Panamera is the brand’s legacy for the future,” writes the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.

It is also the legacy of Wendelin Wiedeking. In his long-serving fellow board member Michael Macht, the 57-year-old Wiedeking found a successor who also has a passion for automobiles. “It’s not enough to be a manager in this business,” Wiedeking once said. And his work reflects that observation. His love of sports cars and his sense for what customers expect from the brand were major factors in Porsche’s economic success. And so in passing on his responsibilities to Macht, Wiedeking was certain that “with its powerful overall industrial and commercial approach, the Porsche company will show even greater strengths in the future.”

