

CHRIS LANSBURY

A distressing and potentially expensive disaster has a very happy outcome thanks to the power of social media

Growing up, I was always in awe of the Porsche brand. As a teenager, never did I think I'd end up owning an independent Porsche specialist, let alone find myself writing a guest column for *GT Porsche* magazine! So, what to write about? My favourite Porsche? How to get the best bang for your buck? As fun as those subjects sound (to me, at least!) I've decided to focus this article on something many of us ignore, at least until it happens. I'm talking about car theft. More specifically, I'm referring to my father's stolen 1986 911 SuperSport, which was liberated from his garage a couple of weeks before I sat down to write these words.

This is where it gets silly. My company, PIE Performance, is an authorised installer of Trakker automotive tracking systems. All PIE technicians are qualified to fit this very capable security equipment, but like many, I'm guilty of thinking 'it'll never happen to us'. Unfortunately, it did. To make matters worse, we hadn't added a Trakker product to the car. Stolen without a trace, Dad's SuperSport looked to be lost forever. He was devastated.

Naturally, our first call was to the police, followed by a conversation with the insurance company. I also posted a cry for help on social media in a bid to raise awareness. Perhaps someone in the Porsche community knew what had happened to the car? I reasoned it had been stolen to order.

My phone started to ping. Again. Ping. And Again. Ping, ping, ping. The post had been seen by hundreds of fellow Porsche fans in just under ten minutes. An hour passed and a tally of two thousand people had reacted to the post. Two thousand rose to four thousand. The day came to an end with almost five thousand hits and a huge number of shares from Porsche enthusiasts all over the UK.

By the following morning, more than 10,000 people had seen my post. News of the theft had gone viral! I drove to PIE's Sudbury headquarters and, within an hour, I received a telephone call from someone who thought they'd seen the car. I immediately passed the information to the police.

Another day passed. 24,000 people reached, but no further information, no word from the police and, sadly, no recovered car. Into day four. Yet more social media interaction, but before I got the chance to give up all hope of finding Dad's treasured SuperSport, I received the phone call I'd been hoping for, but not before ignoring my ringing phone in response to not recognising the incoming number. Telepest? Whoever was trying to get hold of me was persistent. The phone rang again and again. I end up pulling over to find out who was on the other end of the line.

It was someone who said they'd seen my Facebook post and thought they'd spotted Dad's car dumped on the side of the road. The chap calling said he'd drive back to where he saw the abandoned 911, take a smartphone photo and send it my way. To my astonishment, I was soon looking at a picture of my father's missing SuperSport.

We decided to head straight to where we were told the car had been dumped. An hour later, we were stunned to be standing next to the classic Porsche we didn't think we'd ever see again. Yes, there was damage to the car, but the overriding sense of relief more than countered any feeling of upset concerning the required remedial work.

I'm immensely thankful for the power of social media, and to everyone who took time to share my Facebook post. Without this interaction, we'd never have seen the car again. Of course, had we fitted a Trakker system, we could have located the car in an instant, although I wouldn't have this story to share with you! Lesson learned. Needless to say, the car is now equipped with an active tracker, as are all the other cars in the Lansbury family fleet.

We were lucky to have been able to recover Dad's 911. My advice is for you not to wait until your car is stolen before taking preventative measures. Act now and make sure your Porsche is secure. How much would you pay to get it back if it was missing? A tracker costs from as little as £250 with a yearly subscription. And you know where to come for purchase and installation!



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