

# Rob Mairs

## Trip to the Transmission Doctor (Dr. Evil)

Dr. Evil's clinic sounds like something that belongs in a rap song or an Eagles' follow on to "Hotel California" rather than a group get-together where attendees take their transmissions apart. But as strange as it may sound Dr. Evil runs clinics all over the country on rebuilding Porsche transmissions. Dr. Evil, aka Mike Lesniak, is actually a family practice physician living and practicing just outside Pittsburgh, PA. However he also seems to have a strange desire to help other oddball car guys rebuild their transmissions. I learned about Dr. Evil and one of his clinics on one of the local car forums: Dorkiphus.net. Another car guy, Scotty Burnett of Kahiko Customs & Restorations in Charles City, VA was hosting one of the clinics at his shop the same weekend as our slot car night.



I recently bought a Porsche 914/6 that had been prepared for SCCA races primarily at the Portland International Raceway. The gears in the transmission had been changed to what is commonly called an "airport or gymkhana" gear set – much closer together and lower than normal. The result being a car that at 55mph was turning 3400 rpm – not conducive to reasonable highway driving! Therefore when I saw the forum thread in Dorkiphus about a clinic nearby I signed up. Although my transmission didn't need to be rebuilt, I badly needed to change the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> gears so I could cruise at 65mph at around 2700 rpm.

So on Saturday morning, February 8<sup>th</sup>, at 9am I showed up at the shop near Richmond, VA along



with 10 other guys with their transmissions. We were to bring a more or less standard set of wrenches, sockets, screw drivers, rags and rubber gloves along with either a table or stands with a board. I assumed it would be like a class where the teacher started taking the transmission apart and we would follow. Instead Dr. Evil wanders from table to table giving advice as we begin to take the tranny apart. Luckily for me he came over to my table as I started to open up mine. As I lifted off the section opposite the clutch end, about 6 pieces fell to the floor (gears, bearings and others)! Not knowing where they belonged, I was already panicking but not to worry says Dr. Evil as he tosses them onto the table. He then shows me how to pull the main and pinion shaft out of the case and begins taking it apart.

If I had been taking it apart I would have carefully lined up the pieces in order so I could put it back together the same way it came off. back together!

But not Dr. Evil who has done this so many times he knows where all the pieces go. The result – a table full of parts and I had no idea how I was going to get this thing

The next step was for us to clean all the parts as Dr. Evil goes from table to table assessing the condition of gears, synchronizer rings, synchro hubs, bearings, sliders, forks, washers, etc.

Dr. Evil carries with him a bunch of parts he has either been given or taken out of donated transmissions as well as new parts. Whatever is needed he has it. All I needed was two standard 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> gears and I traded Dr. Evil the two out of my transmission. He also thought one of my synchro hubs needed to be replaced.

As the day wound down, 4 of us could see that without too much more effort we could finish that day. As others started drinking beer and chit-chatting the 4 of us began the reassembly – with the help of Dr. Evil. There are several special tools needed in both disassembly and the reassembly so going to the clinic solved that problem as Dr. Evil has them all plus some special ones he

has made. At 9 pm, the 4 of us had finished and began cleaning up our messes. Luckily I didn't have any left over parts and I am just hoping I have 5 gears forward and not 5 in reverse! Cost for a rebuilt transmission with two new gears - \$300. That is what the good Dr. charges for attendance. Spectators are free and we had about a dozen. Most of those who brought transmissions came from Potomac region, one from Tennessee and one from North Carolina.

My Tech Committee co-chair Doug Ehmann and I have talked about having a clinic closer than Richmond, VA and if there is enough interest Mike (Dr. Evil) would be happy to oblige.

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