



# Ice Age

Renée and Christina Brinkerhoff of the Valkyrie Racing team compete in rallies all over the world in their Porsche 356 A. Their mission: they want to protect children from human trafficking. But for the mother and daughter, the biggest adventure is yet to come – Antarctica.

**Destination Union Glacier Camp:** The Brinkerhoffs undergoing a cold test in a cold store in Loveland, north of Denver.



**Transformation:** The Porsche 356 as a chain-driven snowmobile for Antarctica and (on the right) in Africa in 2019.

She loves adventure and her Porsche. But most of all she loves them together. "The bigger the challenge, the better," says Renée Brinkerhoff. And that's why the 65-year-old from Colorado made the decision nearly ten years ago to compete in Carrera Panamericana, one of the world's most dangerous races. She initially drove a smaller section of the route and then, in 2013, covered the entire course through Mexico, which is around 3,500 kilometers long, in her own Porsche 356 A built in 1956. This was followed by other extreme endurance races such as TARGA Tasmania, the Peking to Paris rally, and the East Africa Safari Classic Rally. "The car is my alter ego. We have a very close connection and were even born in the same year," says the driver with delight. "We've experienced so many emotional things together – so many highs and lows. Porsche experts have always been able to help us even in the most exotic countries." Together they've not only survived multiple accidents, but have also celebrated successes: in 2013, she was the first woman to win her class in Carrera Panamericana and has frequently made it onto the podium ever since. "We're usually competing against cars with five or six times more power," she emphasizes.

Before launching her racing career, Brinkerhoff spent nearly two decades teaching and developing curricula for her four children, who she educated at home. Her experience behind the wheel was limited to driving her kids around in the family's SUV, she explains laughing. It wasn't until they left the nest that she bid farewell to automotive boredom for good. "I could have done any number



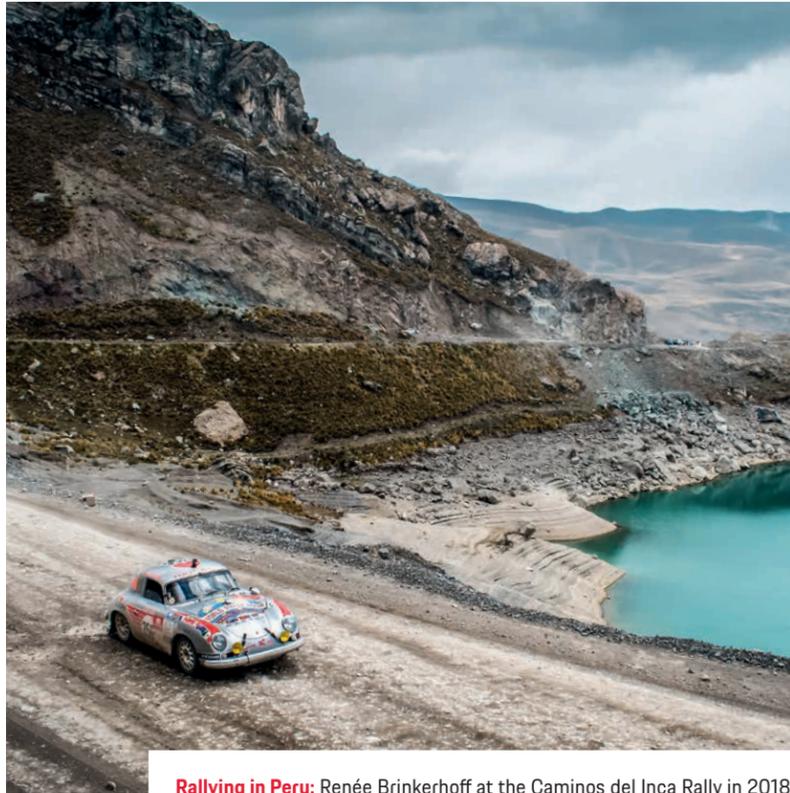
of things to begin a new life. But my inner voice told me that one day I would become a race car driver. It's just something I had to do!" She eagerly took lessons on vehicle control. Her most famous teacher was none other than US racing legend Hurley Haywood.

All that was missing was a suitable car, which she found with the help of a relative. "I had never seen a 356 before," she says. "It was love at first sight."

Her daughter Christina experienced her mother's transformation in person at the first major rally in Mexico in 2012. "I was there to take photographs," explains the 34-year-old, who works in the film industry. "It was a very special moment for me when I saw her for the first time in her racing suit in her 356." But that's not to say she was especially surprised by her mother's ambitions: "I knew her after all and was well aware that she always follows through whenever she puts her mind to something." That's how it has always been. "Just like when she decided not to send us kids to school, but to teach us herself at home." That was a pioneering feat back then, and there was no talking her out of it.



When we get together with the mother and daughter for an interview at the end of 2021, they're just about to embark on the adventure of their lives: they plan to travel to Antarctica and cover a route of at least 356 miles (about 573 kilometers) toward the south pole in the 356. "It's not really something you can prepare for, as there are no comparable conditions anywhere else on earth," says Renée. Christina chimes in: "All we know is that we could encounter



**Rallying in Peru:** Renée Brinkerhoff at the Caminos del Inca Rally in 2018.

**“Rallying has not only changed my life. It has shown me who I am.”**

Renée BRINKERHOFF

Norse mythology. “Valkyrie Gives is the reason for everything we do. The rallies are our vehicle for achieving recognition and asking for donations,” she says. Her mother explains that today you have to do something extraordinary to gain attention. “We’re always surrounded by spectators and reporters at races because we’re such a rarity. That gives us the opportunity to talk about issues that are important to us.” Valkyrie Racing and Valkyrie Gives have collected almost half a million US dollars and provided organizations that are directly combating human trafficking with money. These include locations in remote regions of China, Mongolia, Peru, and Kenya, which they have visited themselves. They attach great importance to ensuring that 100% of the donations are used exclusively for the projects. The rallies themselves are financed by sponsors.

In conversation with the two adventurers, you get a real sense for just how dedicated and sincere they are when it comes to their work. “It would be an honor and privilege to be able to help even a single child in the world,” says Renée. “We’ve experienced so many intense moments during the rallies, which have brought us closer together,” adds Christina. “Sometimes I forget that we’re mother and daughter.” Renée is thankful for the opportunity to share this humanitarian effort with her daughter: “Our talents complement each other, and we respect each other as colleagues. Rallying has not only changed my life. It has shown me who I am.” •

By **Thomas AMMANN**  
Photos by **Paul WEDLAKE, Mark RICCIONI**

Additional photos are available online at [christophorus.porsche.com](http://christophorus.porsche.com)

anything from severe storms and ice walls several yards tall to deep crevasses.”

The daring mother-and-daughter team is supported by experienced adventurers and world record holders in polar expeditions. The British Jason De Carteret, who has explored the regions at the north and south poles dozens of times, will be their navigator during the expedition. Kieron Bradley was his partner when they set a world record on a south pole expedition on four wheels. As a chassis design engineer, he also directed, over a period of a year and a half, the transformation of the 356 into a futuristic vehicle just like in *Back to the Future*. Wide, steerable skis are installed at the front axle, while massive continuous tracks at the back offer propulsion. “We’d immediately sink into the ice with standard wheels,” explains Renée. A sail measuring approximately one-and-a-half meters in length extends out of the nose to prevent a life-threatening fall into a crevasse and is

equipped with solar panels to generate additional energy. “It will be easy to remove all this equipment again afterwards,” adds the vehicle’s owner, who is certain of one thing above all else: “The 356 and I want to continue competing in rallies for humanitarian causes after this expedition.”

The Antarctic adventure is the current highlight of the 356 World Rally Tour project, which is taking Renée Brinkerhoff and her Porsche to all of the continents in the world. Over time, this passion has evolved into a mission. Brinkerhoff’s Valkyrie Gives foundation represents her commitment to helping at-risk women and children, with a particular focus on child trafficking – an issue she was first confronted with during her rallies through Latin America and which transformed her race car into an ambassador.

Christina Brinkerhoff manages the race team and runs the nonprofit organization named after the valiant female figures of



**Double the fun:** There’s another shiny 356 in the garage.