



The Criterion

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHEAST CHAPTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY
SECOND QUARTER 1998

GREGG D. MERKSAMER, EDITOR

NOREASTERS STORM SPRING OPEN HOUSES

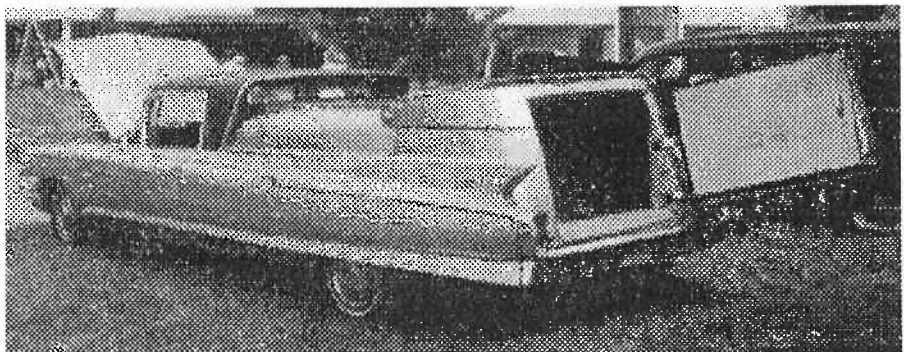


Mike Barruzza's 1974 Superior Cadillac flower car and Bill O'Brien's 1963 S&S combination coach attend the Atwood-Peterson-Guthlein Funeral Home open house on May 31st. - Mike Barruzza photo

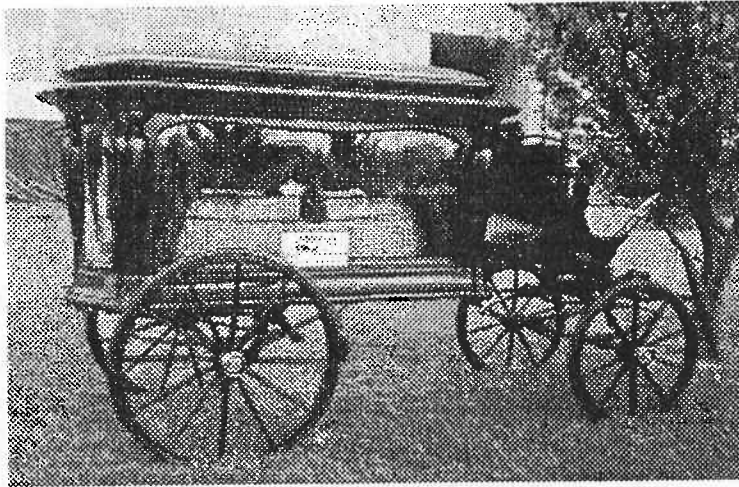
Hot on the heels of its well-attended brunch at the Renault Winery in Egg Harbor, NJ on March 22nd (covered in *The Criterion's* last issue), the PCS Northeast Chapter welcomed spring in a big way with two group appearances at the first car shows of the season. The first was a May 3rd open house at the Northampton County Community College outside Bethlehem, PA, to which the Chapter was invited by the college's mortuary science department.

Via e-mail Barry Caselli reports that the NCCC open house was more of a "family fun expo, like a big carnival except for the lack of rides" than a vocational pitch to prospective students. "There was a big display of regular cars there, while a pumper, a ladder truck, a tanker and an airport crash truck were brought by area fire departments." Professional cars on display included Barry's 1974 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Criterion "walk through"

ambulance, Bob Behr's 1949 Flxible Buick Premier ambulance, Andy Toton's '70 Miller-Meteor Cadillac hearse/ambulance combination and a Superior-bodied 1974 Cadillac Coupe DeFleur flower car and 1977 hightop ambulance brought by Mike Barruzza & Dottie Forvour. Dale Schmidt brought a pair of impressively well-preserved funeral coaches purchased new by his family's firm, an "Art Carved" 1935 Chrysler side-loader and a 1962 Cadillac casket-carrying flower car by Miller-Meteor (*below*), while the Heritage Coach Co. of Norristown, PA brought a



Dale Schmidt's 1962 Cadillac flower car by Miller-Meteor.



1890s Crane & Breed has been owned since new by the Ashton funeral home of Easton, PA. - Barry Caselli photo

brand-new Eureka-bodied front wheel drive Cadillac landau stickered at an incredible \$76,000! The Ashton Funeral Home in nearby Easton, PA also displayed an 1890s Crane & Breed horse-drawn hearse (*above left*) with glass sides and a domed deck supported by four urn-shaped columns: owned by that funeral home (which has itself been in business since 1847) since new, this exquisitely carved coach was in regular service until a Dodge automobile hearse took its place in 1919.

On May 31st, PCS Northeast Chapter member Bill O'Brien invited his clubmates to an encore *en masse* appearance at the Atwood-Peterson-Guthlein

Funeral Home in Egg Harbor, NJ. "While traffic for the open house was a little on the light side, Bill received a lot of follow-up phone calls from folks who drove by that day," Mike Barruzza reports. Climaxed by a tour and a catered lunch, the event celebrated the completion of renovation work required after a Nor'easter last fall collapsed a nearby storm drain and flooded the facility with sixteen inches of water. "There were photos on display showing the water line," Barry Caselli recalls, and "all the walls had to be torn out and replaced." Cars on display included Bill O'Brien's silver blue 1963 S&S Park Row Cadillac combination (*below*), Bill Marcy's 1978 McClain Cadillac flower car, Barry Caselli's 1974 Miller-Meteor Criterion and Mike Barruzza's Cadillac-chassied 1973

S&S Victoria hearse and 1974 Superior Coupe DeFleur. Another local enthusiast also brought a 1980 Cadillac 6-door limo built by Armbruster-Stageway of Fort Smith, Arkansas.

NOTES ON OUR JUNE 7th MEETING

Ongoing preparations for our hosting of the 1999 PCS International Meet in Lancaster, PA were the main focus of the Northeast Chapter's most recent meeting, held at the Long Hill First Aid Squad headquarters in Stirling, NJ on June 7th. Chapter President Leo Maren urged anyone heading to the

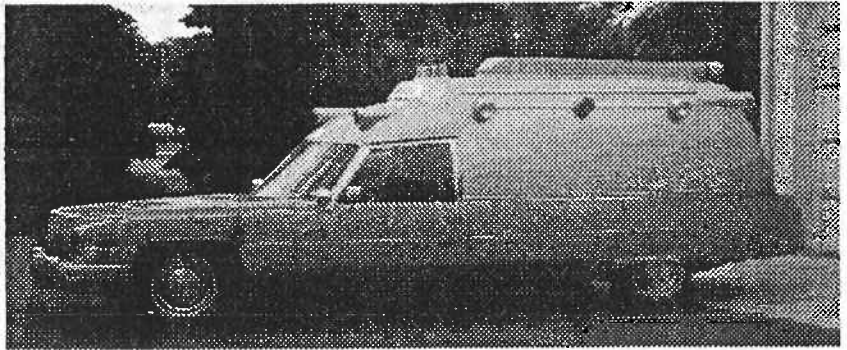


Bill O'Brien's 1963 S&S Cadillac Park Row hearse/ambulance combination. - Mike Barruzza photo

1998 PCS International in Chicago this August 12-15 to "take notes on what you saw, what you liked, and how they did things so that we can talk about them" at the fall meeting. Leo also asked for security volunteers, especially ones willing to take on short overnight shifts of four hours maximum, to keep an eye on the show cars in the parking lot at the host hotel. The logic behind this, explains Chapter Vice-President &

Activities Director Bill Marcy, is that "security guards and other outside hires won't be as watchful as members watching members."

Since Lancaster has a surfeit of tourist diversions, next year's meet will have a lot of what Leo called "whatever you want" time, and brochures on area attractions will make up a large part of the registration package. A video shown at the meeting gave a virtual tour of the Best Western Eden Resort (which offers both indoor and outdoor pools as well as 2nd floor balconies overlooking the PCS' parking lot) and an overview of the activities being considered for the formal itinerary including a family-style Pennsylvania Dutch dinner, horsedrawn buggy tours through the Lancaster County countryside and a ride on the Strasburg Railroad. A professional car convoy to the Harley-Davidson motorcycle factory in nearby York is another possibility.



Leo Maren's 1974 Miller-Meteor Criterion was purchased from the Long Hill First Aid Squad last August. - Gregg D. Merksamer photo

In addition to Leo Maren (who displayed the red-and-silver 1974 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Criterion that he purchased from the Long Hill First Aid Squad last August) and Bill & Lucille Marcy (who brought the 1964 Olds Vista Cruiser Amblewagon discussed below), attendees at the June 7th meeting included Dan McCann, Barry Caselli (bringing his own 1974 MM Criterion), Ron Fedele (the self-professed owner of a "1942 Henney-Packard in pieces"), your editor Gregg D. Merksamer and recently transplanted Floridians John Giacomantonio and Chuck Six.

OLDS MEN THAT WE SEE

Lest you regard the Cadillac crest as a prerequisite to professional car ownership, a handsome pair of Oldsmobile-based procars has recently been acquired by members of the Northeast Chapter. "I was frankly getting sick of Cadillacs," Bill Marcy admitted after arriving at the June 7th meeting in his 1964 Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser Amblewagon (*left*), a standard-wheelbase rig that's surely one of the most maneuverable and economical emergency vehicles in the Chapter. "I bought it about a year ago on a tip from Bob Behr," Bill says, adding that "of the six or seven procars we've had so far, this is the nicest driving." Showing only 25,111 original miles and



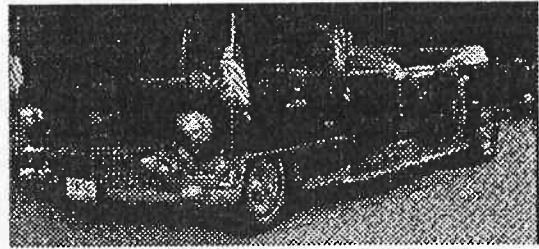
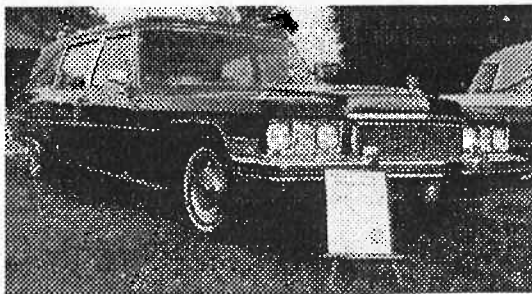
Bill Marcy's 1964 Olds Vista Cruiser Amblewagon originally saw service at the GM pavilion of the NY World's Fair. - Gregg D. Merksamer photo

equipped with a period "gumball" beacon and coaster siren, Bill's car first saw duty at the General Motors pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair and subsequently served the Fairmount Fire Company in Lansdale, PA. In 1989 the Vista Cruiser was acquired by the owner of Harris Buick-Oldsmobile in Quakertown, PA, whom Bill recalls added "early 1970s Cutlass Rallye wheels to play up the Oldsmobile aspect." They will soon be coming off in the interests of authenticity.

Dan McCann is another PCS Noreaster driving one of Lansing's best, having purchased a Cotner-Bevington-bodied 1973 Oldsmobile hightop ambulance that he found in Wall Township on the Jersey Shore. "Only the nose was sticking out of the trees," Dan recalls about his recent discovery. "It had belonged to a PCS member who had stopped paying the garage rent on it - one of our stickers was still in the back window. I still haven't taken the plastic bucket off the roof beacon."

THE ULTIMATE ROAD TRIP

Mike Barruzza's 1973 S&S Cadillac Victoria hearse (*below*) is featured on the cover of Simon Mayle's new softcover book *The Burial Brothers: From New York to Rio in a '73 Cadillac Hearse* (published by Ballantine, ISBN 0-345-41357-1, and priced at \$10.95 in bookstores), which chronicles how the author and two friends fought 15,000 miles of rough, sun-baked roads to reach Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in time for Carnival. Mayle bought his own 1973 Cadillac hearse specifically for this epic journey, figuring that funeral directors would endure less harassment than the average American tourist in Central and South America. Mike adds that the image of his car was "flipped" during printing, converting it into a right-hand drive model!



PRESIDENTIAL PARADE CARS SOLD

The Imperial Palace Auto Collection paid \$1.6 million for a pair of US Secret Service parade cars offered as a single lot at auction in its hometown of Las Vegas March 21-22. The first was the original "Queen Mary," one of two V-16 powered 1938 convertible sedans constructed by Fleetwood for Franklin Roosevelt's White House (the other was the "Queen Elizabeth") on a gargantuan 165-inch wheelbase. The second car was the "Queen Mary II" built by Hess & Eisenhardt of Cincinnati in 1956 (*above*), which was immortalized in history's most analyzed film clip as the follow-up car to John F. Kennedy's Lincoln X-100 during that dark day in Dallas. Both cars, which will join Hitler's bulletproof Mercedes and Benito Mussolini's Alfa Romeo in the Imperial Palace Collection, feature fender-mounted Federal coaster sirens, hidden weaponry compartments and extra-wide running boards for the Secret Service agents.

TAX BREAK PROPOSED FOR EMTs

Rockland County, NY has asked the state legislature for permission to grant a 10 percent break on real estate and other county taxes to volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel with ten or more years of active service. "It's a token of our appreciation for those who protect our lives," explained Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoff after signing the resolution on June 8th. If the state Legislature approves the resolution Rockland will become the first county in NY state to grant such a tax break, though other counties have expressed interest in enacting similar legislation.

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

Motorcycle daredevil Robbie Knieval jumped over 30 stretch limousines parked side-by-side in Las Vegas February 24th, a stunt witnessed by thousands of spectators in the Tropicana casino parking lot and a live nationwide TV audience tuned into the Fox network show "Daredevils Live!" Aside from Robbie the most relieved person present after the world's record 230 foot jump was probably Brent Bell of Las Vegas-based Bell Trans, who supplied the limousines free of charge from his fleet of 200 stretches in exchange for a brief mention during the broadcast and a credit at the end of the show.

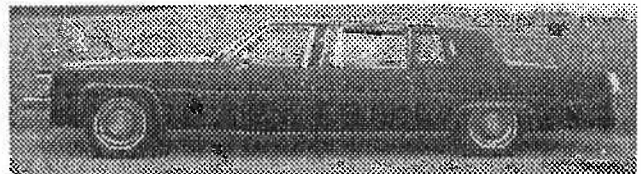
Spring Shopping, As Only We Can: Trenton, NJ PCS member Gregory Miller sent your editor a rather witty catalog of mortuary-themed gifts from Vinden USA (PO Box 21, Royal Oak, MI or phone 248-616-0662). Stuff on sale includes a scale model of John F. Kennedy's funeral cortege, a bottle of "Old Croak Kentucky Straight Embalming Fluid" (honey, actually) and an ashtray bearing the legend "Thank You For Smoking - Your Local Undertaker." Those of you in the market for firemans' helmets, EMT bumper stickers and other emergency memorabilia might want to take a scenic drive north to Port Jervis, NY (where PA, NY and the northwest corner of NJ intersect) to The Fire Factory at the corner of highways 209 and 97, where proprietor George K. Hartman is on hand to provide the grand tour every day except Tuesday. Having surveyed the aftermath of a serious motorcycle accident on the way into town, I was particularly intrigued by the stock of folding beacons used to border landing areas for "lifeflight" helicopters.

Cadillac Series 75 registry formed: Mark Steven Koenigsmann of Masspaequa Park, NY has a 1949 Cadillac Series 75 touring sedan and seeks to set up a registry for other owners of 75 Series and Commercial Chassis Cadillacs constructed from 1938 to 1971. His e-mail address is MSK.4975@worldnet.att.com.

WILNER'S LIVERY TURNS 75

The Edison, NJ-based livery firm founded by PCS member Dave Wilner's father (and toured by the Northeast Chapter last July) is celebrating its 75th year in business, according to the May, 1998 issue of *Limousine & Chauffeured Transportation*. When he started in 1923, Alex Wilner's entire fleet consisted of two Packards (a touring car and a 7-passenger sedan) and he took customer calls by climbing up a phone pole at the local train station. The firm had 24 vehicles when Dave Wilner came on board in 1953, and nearly 110 today; his son Jonathan now serves as vice president and general manager of the company.

MEET MY TANK



Since it refused to start for our Chapter's June 7th meeting (despite having two batteries), I thought I'd use this space to celebrate the first year anniversary of my very first professional car purchase: an *armor-plated* 1984 Cadillac Formal Limousine that used to belong to the Saudi Arabian Mission to the United Nations in New York City. I found it in *Hemmings* and bought it sight unseen from Ted Vernon's Export Specialists in Miami, who himself had bought it along with twenty-four other cars from Terry O'Neill's Specialty Hearse and Limousine Sales on Long Island; the car ended up for sale because it was either broken into on the streets of New York or the Saudis locked themselves out of it and damaged the driver's door getting back in (I spent the winter having the frame surrounding the driver's window welded back on). The builder is a company called Protective Materials, which I'd frankly never heard of before buying the car so I'm eager to learn more about the firm. The U.S. State Department-issued title that came with my Cadillac says it weighs "3,734" (if my assumption is correct that that's kilograms this car weighs a whopping 8,215 pounds!). The chrome-framed multi-layered windows are 1 1/4" thick and only those on the left side of the car are designed to go up and down.

CRITERION CLASSIFIEDS:

1948 Packard Super Eight 7-Passenger Formal Sedan. \$13,000. Lou Europa, (973) 764-6697.

1950 Chrysler Crown Imperial Limousine. Complete and running but needs restoration. \$3000. Sal Anicito, (201) 440-5337 days.

1959 Superior Pontiac Bonneville Ambulance. Former Kodak factory ambulance. Rare 3-speed stick with 389 V8, only 6,000 original miles. \$4200. **Also selling rare 1963 Flexible Buick long-wheelbase hearse with parts car included.** Main Street Motors, Somerville, NJ, (908) 231-1144.

1967 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Embassy Flower Car, one of six built during 1967 model year. 50,000 miles, Inverness Green with black crinkle-finish roof. Trophy winner at several PCS International Meets and the 1995 Cadillac-LaSalle Grand National. \$15,995. Carlton Ham, (603)934-4913 or e-mail whtmtman@together.net.

1969 Superior Cadillac Flower Car. One of 24 made, complete project car, runs good. \$2300 OBO. John Giacomantonio or Chuck Six, (732) 286-6753.

1978 Miller-Meteor Cadillac limousine-style hearse. 1st place prize winner at 1997 PCS International. Grey ext. with black top, 34k original miles, ice-cold a/c, new tires & exhaust. \$5,800. Bill Marcy, (201) 342-4871.

WANTED: Pre-1916 Brass Era procar or police car. Any type considered if it is brass trimmed. Information and photos please. Sam Jaffe, 32 Woodcrest Drive, Scotia, NY 12302 or (518) 399-5910.

WANTED: 1959-74 Cadillac Ambulance. Mike Murphy, (301) 577-7923 or E-mail murphy_m@bls.gov.

WANTED: NOS or excellent 1974 Cadillac DeVille/Fleetwood grille and round hi-lo power beam headlights, Repair/Service Manual for 1970s Superior Flower Car deck. Mike Barruzza, (215) 788-8105.

CRITERION CALENDAR:

July 31st-August 2nd (Fri.-Sun.), Macungie, PA: 35th Annual Das Awkscht Fescht car show at Memorial Park. Cadillac-LaSalle Club (up to 1973) displays in Class 9 on Sunday.

August 8-9 (Sat.-Sun.), New Hope, PA: Professional car class featured. Info: Mike Barruzza, (215) 788-8105.

August 12-15 (Wed.-Sat.), Chicago, IL: 22nd Annual Professional Car Society Intl. Meet at Best Western-Burr Ridge on US 66/I-55. Info: Gene Dybinski, (773) 778-8463 or write 8041 Fawn Trail, Justice, Illinois 60458.

Aug. 23rd (Sun.), Basking Ridge, NJ: 1st Annual Salute to Horsepower at the Lord Stirling Stable, 256 South Maple Avenue. Sponsored by the Somerset County Park Commission. \$10 registration donation supports children's horseback riding programs. Info: Leo Maren, (908) 647-3738.

Aug. 23rd (Sun.), Carlstadt, NJ: 4th Annual Car Show celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Carlstadt Volunteer Ambulance Corps. \$10 pre-registration before August 14th, \$15 day of show. Info: Bob or Roly at (201) 438-8886 or write CVAC Car Show, PO Box 84, Carlstadt, NJ 07072.

Sept. 11th (Fri.), West Chester, PA: Police vehicle cruise night at Faulkner Pontiac-Buick-GMC, Westtown Road at US 202. Info: Don Miller, (610) 436-5600 days or (610) 647-1358 evenings.

Sept. 13th (Sun.), New Berlinville, PA: Ambulance class at Fire Truck Muster Public Safety Expo & Flea Market at Liberty Park, North Reading Avenue. Info: (610) 367-7857 or write Tri-County Fire Prevention Association, PO Box 85, New Berlinville, PA 19545.

Sept. 17-19 (Thu.-Sat.), Treose, PA: 1998 SPAAMFAA National Convention and Fire Apparatus Muster. Info: (215) 245-1545 or write Gibson Road Antique Fire Association, 1545 Gibson Road, Bensalem, PA 19020. Via E-mail or web: GRAFA@FIREFIGHTING.COM or www.firefighting.com/grafa.

Sept. 6th (Sun.) Langhorne, Pa.: Sixth Annual Bucks County Automobile Show, Core Creek Park, Professional Car Class. Info: Mike Barruzza (215) 788-8105.

THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY

"Dedicated to the restoration and preservation of vintage ambulances, funeral cars & livery vehicles"

NORTHEAST CHAPTER

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Servicing Professional Car Society members in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, the Northeast Chapter of the PCS operates under a charter granted by the Society's Board of Directors on August 19th, 1986. Subscription to this publication is by membership in the Chapter through the Membership Director listed above. **Membership in the national organization of the PCS is a prerequisite to membership in any of its regional chapters.** Details on joining can be obtained from National Secretary Beverly Ruff at P.O. Box 9636, Columbus, Ohio 43209 or by accessing the official PCS home page at <http://www.professionalcar.org>.



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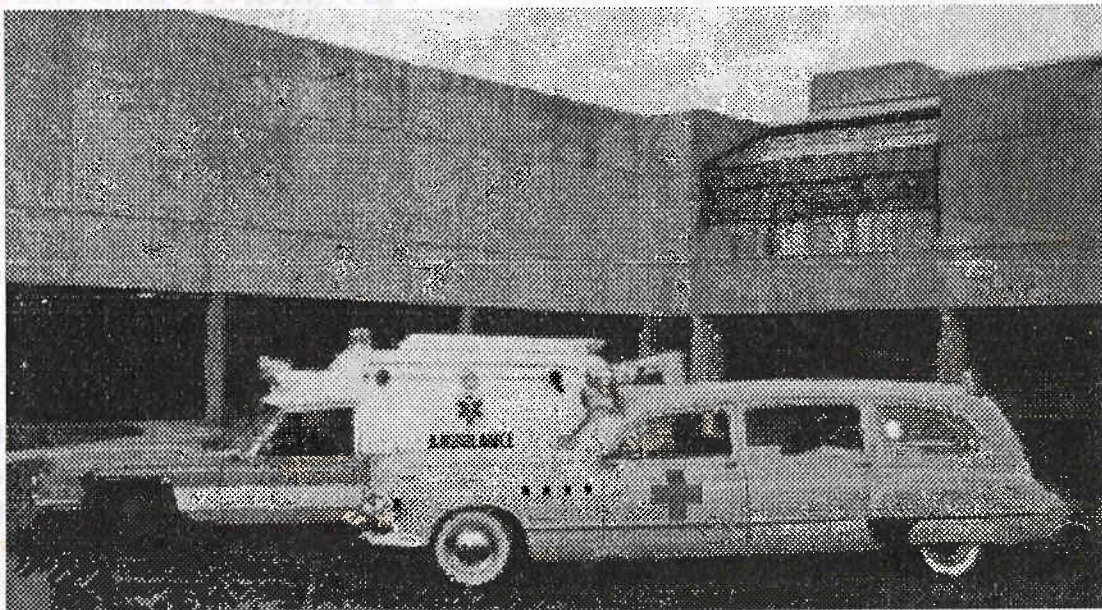
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The Criterion

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OF THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY



Barry Caselli's 1974 Miller-Meteor Criterion Cadillac ambulance and Bob Behr's 1949 Flixible Buick proudly represent the PCS at the Northampton County Community College's open house in Bethlehem, PA May 3rd. - Barry Caselli photo

