



The Criterion

NEWSLETTER of the NORTHEAST CHAPTER of the PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY

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MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello everyone! So far as the Northeast Chapter is concerned, it has been a wonderful year so far, with a couple of nice surprises in addition to the shows and cruise nights we usually look forward to.

During the first week of August, several Chapter members headed to Denver for the 29th Annual PCS International Meet, and a good time was had by all who attended this nice, friendly event. We met lots of people who had never been to a PCS International before, and most of the cars were newcomers as well. Congratulations are in order to Leo Maren III and his Meet Committee, since the event saw the PCS Board of Directors select the Northeast Chapter as the host of the 2008 PCS International Meet, right here in New Jersey! Naturally, Leo will be speaking about our preparations and plans for this important project at our November 6th meeting, and I would think that anyone who would like to work on it should attend.

A few weeks later, on August 20th, Donna and Paul Vickery hosted the second annual Northeast Chapter picnic at their terrific home in Millington, N.J. Not only was the weather perfect, there were about seven professional cars in attendance, including a 3-way loading 1976 Superior Cadillac hearse recently acquired by Jeff Beyer and a '78 Miller-Meteor combination that Dan Herrick picked up in Minnesota on the way home from Denver. We all stayed until well after dark and left very reluctantly after a full day of food, fellowship and fun. For all your hospitality, THANK YOU Donna & Paul!

In mid-September, the PCS Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Chapters joined forces to show our cars at the Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware. All I can say here is "what a show!", though I have contributed additional recollections to the official event report found inside this issue.

In addition to his hard work on the Northeast Chapter's successful bid to host the 2008 PCS International Meet, Leo Maren III deserves further congratulations on becoming the new President of the Miller-Meteor Chapter of the PCS. If you own a Miller-Meteor or simply love the cars from Piqua, Ohio as much as I do, I am sure you will want to join.

Looking to our November 6th business meeting, which will commence 1 pm sharp at the Sparta Ambulance Corps HQ in Sparta, N.J., the nominations and election of 2006 Chapter officers will be another important part of the agenda. We will also be discussing several events in which we plan to show our cars or otherwise participate during 2006, including our own, 5th Anniversary Charity Car Show at Peddler's Village in Lahaska, Pennsylvania next June. Your input is needed and appreciated on all of these matters, so please attend.

If you would like to run for a particular office, simply have someone nominate you at the Sparta meeting. Positions are open to ALL Chapter members. The current slate of officers has been in place for a number of years, and I want to take this opportunity to thank every one of them for making my job as Chapter President so easy and pleasant. In fact, I want to thank the entire Northeast Chapter for its support and for affording me the privilege of serving as your President. The pleasure has been all mine, and I would be pleased and very proud to continue as President if the Chapter so desires.

Enjoy the rest of the season! - **BILL MARCY**

PICNIC AT THE VICKERY'S

With two kids, four cats, one dog, three chickens, a bearded dragon lizard and a 1956 Miller Cadillac ambulance, the Revolutionary War era homestead of Paul & Donna Vickery in Millington, N.J. proved itself, as was the case last summer, a wonderful setting for the PCS Northeast Chapter's 2nd Annual Summer Picnic on Saturday, August 20th, 2005. Not only did the weather cooperate with the proceedings, which lasted from around 3:30 pm until well after dark, the turnout of vintage autos turned the suitably-spacious back yard into a full-fledged mini-meet.

"Civilian" vehicles included Jeff and Mary Hookway's 1966 Cadillac DeVille convertible from upstate Sparta, N.J. and Joseph C. Buono's impeccable 1976 Buick Riviera coupe from Harrington Park, N.J. (Your Editor, being a big fan of station wagons, was intrigued to learn at the picnic that he also owns a 1976 Oldsmobile Custom Cruiser), while the pro-car contingent touted Dawson Blackmore, Jr.'s extremely-rare 1957 Memphian DeSoto high-top ambulance from West Haven, CT; Peter & Skeeter DiMattia's 1989 Dodge Caravan "first call" coach from Hewitt, N.J.; and a red-and-silver, 1974 vintage Miller-Meteor Cadillac Criterion ambulance brought from nearby Stirling, N.J. by Leo Maren III, who, appropriately-enough, recently assumed the presidency of the PCS Miller-Meteor Chapter from Minnesota enthusiast Tony Karsnia. Though they had to leave before the barbeque reached critical mass, Steve and Laura Goldner of Hackettstown, N.J. made their presence known with a Toronto-built 1985 Eureka Cadillac commercial glass hearse they named "Urn, as in cremation urn." Via eBay, they had found the car in Sarasota, Florida and picked it up during the 4th of July weekend, and a set of false teeth was found inside during the initial clean-out.

With his 1955 Studebaker Ambulet, along with the Vickerys' 1940 Flxible Buick ambulance, temporarily on display at the Northeast Classic Car Museum in Norwich, N.Y., Jeff Beyer traveled from New Tripoli, PA in a cream-colored 1976 Superior Cadillac electric 3-way hearse with 60,000 original miles. While it had not appeared at any previous PCS event, Jeff reported that "I've had it about a year. I saw it on (California dealer) Doug Scott's website and bought it sight unseen. I would buy another one from him tomorrow.



Dan Herrick purchased this 1978 Miller-Meteor combination coach from Tony Karsnia, picking it up in Minnesota on the way home from PCS Denver.

It interested me because it was a 3-way and the last of the big Cadillacs, and the pro-car choices among Studebakers are pretty limited." The lack of a vinyl roof was another plus "because you never know what's underneath," and the exterior had undergone several thought-provoking transitions over the years; originally finished in antique white, the car had once been repainted purple-and-white (in spite of its brown paisley interior) for an earlier purchaser by the Superior Western Company of Santa Fe Springs, California.

Dan Herrick earned the event's unofficial distance award, driving 158 miles from Chatham, N.Y. in a 1978 Miller-Meteor Classic Duplex limousine-style combination coach. "Tony Karsnia put it on the PCS web page in April or May of this year," Dan recalled. "I wasn't in the market, but how could I resist it once I saw it? I called immediately, and made a deal within an hour of the posting." Aside from having only 44,000 original miles, the car's history is known from new, with the original purchaser being the Ingram Funeral Home of West Salem, Ohio. An invoice dated June 28th, 1978 records that the coach cost them \$20,322 new delivered, with the \$24,800 list price adjusted by a generous \$6,200 discount and \$1,592 worth of accessories. Finished in Cotillion White with a black crinkle top, it was the 51st of 348 Cadillac professional cars built by Miller-Meteor in 1978 (the Piqua, Ohio plant would be shuttered just a year later), and one of only fourteen finished that season as a hearse/ambulance combination with removable landau panels, plexiglass ambulance signs, a pair of dual-lens Unity spotlights and a low-profile, combination-specific Ferno Washington stretcher. "Tony's e-mail wasn't

totally honest," Dan joked, "in that he forgot to mention the tilt-and-telescope steering wheel and the pre-wiring for a mechanical siren. Part of the deal was that Tony had to keep it this summer and take it to a few shows, to keep it on the road until I could get to Minnesota. I picked it up on the way home from Denver. When the fuel gauge reads one-quarter full, it's actually empty, but it basically ran fine." Since it seats six people - three up front, two in the patient compartment attendants' seats and one in the stretcher - Dan had no trouble registering the car in New York State as a Cadillac "suburban," and it has proven a perfect compliment to the all-white 1977 Miller-Meteor Cadillac he also owns.



Pro-cars at the PCS Northeast Chapter's August 20th Summer Picnic included Dawson Blackmore, Jr.'s 1957 Memphian DeSoto ambulance.

HAGLEY SHOW WORTH THE DRIVE TO DELAWARE

Though Your Editor was stuck at home compiling the 2006 Professional Vehicle Preview issue for *American Funeral Director* magazine, he did receive glowing reports from Bill Marcy and Steve Lichtman on the Tenth Annual Car Show at the Hagley Museum in Wilmington, Delaware, which the PCS Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Chapters attended together on Sunday, September 18th, 2005. "When I tell you that this is the best car show I have ever attended, I mean it," Marcy said. "There were approximately six hundred cars and trucks of every description on the show field. There were steam cars, brass cars, trucks, busses, muscle cars, customs and cars from every decade right up into the 1980s. The feature display this year was emergency vehicles, and there was a huge



Members of the Millville Volunteer Fire Co. brought this magnificent 1955 Superior Cadillac to the Hagley Museum Show held September 18th in Wilmington, Delaware.

assortment of fire apparatus, police cars and ambulances."

The evening before, several Northeast Chapter members met at the nearby Courtyard by Marriott, where Marcy recalls that "we talked out in the parking lot until around midnight." An early breakfast preceded the professional car convoy to the privately-owned show site, which, Lichtman adds, was at the end of "a two-mile drive along the Brandywine River, through quiet woods and past the remains of buildings" that were once involved "in the manufacture of gunpowder, the first product manufactured by E.I. DuPont beginning after the Revolutionary War. A restored DuPont mansion remains on the grounds as well." The PCS' specially-reserved display spaces, meanwhile, were under the trees in front of the Hagley Library, which houses an important collection of manuscripts, photos, books, and pamphlets documenting the history of American business and technology.

"To say the least," Marcy adds, "the day was spectacular. There were many food vendors and a hot air balloon to ride on, and old car songs and old car commercials were being played by a deejay for our enjoyment." Accompanied by beautifully-restored fire engines and about 35 vintage police cars, the PCS exhibit featured total of seven chronologically-arranged antique ambulances and combination coaches, including George Hamlin's 1953 Henney Packard Senior Ambulance from Clarksville, MD; a 1955 Superior Cadillac Rescuer Ambulance that Robert Herrington of Ocean View, DE donated to the Millville Volunteer Fire Company founded by his parents; Gene & Steve Lichtman's 1960 Flixible Buick Premier Ambulance from Mt. Airy, MD; Rich Litton's 1965 Superior Pontiac 48-inch Ambulance from

Moorestown, N.J.; Wayne Guy's 1970 Superior Pontiac Combination from Clarksboro, N.J.; Andy & Karen Toton's 1970 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Combination from Philadelphia; and Mike & Vicki Baruzza's 1977 Superior Cadillac Transport Ambulance from Bristol, PA. On the main show field, a 1972 Fleetwood 7533 Cadillac Factory Formal Limousine that Bill Marcy discovered in Swedesboro, N.J. over the summer was joined on display by Harvey Schofield's 1967 Lehman Peterson mini-stretch limousine, while Steve Lichtman spotted an early, box-bodied 1977 Swab Chevrolet ambulance but was unable to obtain the owner's name. During the course of the day, Steve adds further, hourly vehicle parades were staged and "the PCS members in attendance caught up on friendships and viewed books of photos brought by Rich Litton and Steve Lichtman. A PCS display table attracted attention and, hopefully, a couple of new members."

NEW COACHES DEBUT AT NFDA CHICAGO

After spending two days at the 2005 National Funeral Directors Association Convention held at McCormick Place in Chicago from Monday, October 3rd to Wednesday, October 5th, Merrillville, Indiana PCS member Richard J. Conjalka kindly sent Your Editor an enthusiastic and impressively-thorough report. Not only was this just the third time in four decades, after 1993 and 1965, that the NFDA Convention took place in the Windy City, this event was also significant for hosting the public debut of the 2006 Cadillac funeral coaches and six-door limousines, which are based upon a significantly restyled and re-engineered DeVille successor called the DTS. "While the 2006 Lincoln coaches and limousines remain basically unchanged from last year," Richard wrote Your Editor, "Cadillac's all-new styling is a fresh and welcome change after a five-year previous edition of the current DeVille's model run."

While Cadillac's Master Coachbuilders completed their display vehicles only a few days before the NFDA convention opened, what the DTS would look like has actually been public knowledge since January 20th, 2005, when its front and rear end designs were previewed on two of the heavily-armored, hand-built high-top limousines used in President George W. Bush's Second Inauguration (this was, no doubt, the first time that the quadrennial parade down

Pennsylvania Avenue had been used to unveil a new model). Since its roof, door panels and basic front-wheel drive power train are carried over from the DeVille, the DTS is billed as more of a "mid-cycle enhancement" than an entirely new car. It looks distinctly different from its predecessor, to be sure, taking up the angular, assertive styling cues originally debuted on the "entry luxury" CTS sedan in 2002 and adopted by the larger STS that succeeded the Seville last year. Notable exterior elements include a satin nickel egg-crate grille with a more-prominent Cadillac medallion in the center, vertically-oriented Xenon gas discharge headlamps and "dihedral" hood contours, while the license plate enclosure has been moved to the rear bumper to allow the trunk lid to incorporate a "tailored" center peak and a larger wreath-and-crest emblem.



The all-new Cadillac DTS serves as the basis for this 2006 Eagle Ultimate Elite funeral coach unveiled at NFDA Chicago.

Well aware that the Lincoln Town Car is not its only competition anymore, Cadillac has reported that the Lexus LS 400 was used as a quality benchmark for the new DTS. Thanks to improved manufacturing tolerances, the average gap between body panels has been reduced to four millimeters between the hood and front fascia, 2 mm between the tail lamps and trunk lid, and just 1 mm between the fenders, headlamps and hood. Wind and road noise has also been reduced through the addition of structure-less wiper blades with built-in airfoils, new windshield moldings that are shaped to deter high-frequency "whistles" at expressway speeds, a larger, stiffer engine cradle and structural nylon baffles that suppress resonances in hollow spaces like the roof pillars and rocker panels. Front seat spaciousness and visibility have been

similarly-enhanced by fitting one-inch longer adjustment tracks and moving the instrument panel approximately 40 mm forward and 10 mm down, while tactile quality benefits from soft-backed urethane surfaces for the upper door trim and dash pad, chrome-plated door handles, and "protein" vinyl trim for the armrests and seatbacks that's blended with silk to achieve its supple, pliable feel.

The Accubuilt exhibit, Richard reports, was the largest devoted to professional vehicles at McCormick place, with "no less than six cars present on Lincoln and Cadillac chassis." The Lima, Ohio company's top-of-the-line, commercial glass S&S Cadillac funeral coaches (used for the services of Ronald Reagan and Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist) were represented by an Thunder Gray (a 2005 color) Masterpiece that was, with its \$94,700 MSRP, "probably the most expensive car in the show." This spectacular hearse was joined on display by an all black 65-inch stretch commercial glass S&S Cadillac Presidential limousine; a standard-glass Superior Cadillac Statesman with silver exterior paintwork and an electric extension casket table; and an S&S Lincoln Majestic funeral coach and a Superior Cadillac 6-door limousine that were finished in black as well. Accubuilt's exhibit also featured its interesting new "Commemorative Carriage," which enables funeral directors to handle cremation urns and infant caskets with the same dignity and respect afforded a full-sized casket, even giving the frailest family members the option of serving as pall bearers. Fitted with built-in folding legs to enhance the overall presentation, this device locks securely into the vehicle's bier pin system and also available for purchase as a stand alone accessory through Accubuilt dealers.

The Eagle Coach Co., a well-regarded, family-owned firm based in the Cincinnati suburb of Amelia, Ohio, featured a Cadillac Coupe de Fleur in its NFDA display. With its deep black paintwork and optional gold trim complimented by a stainless steel deck and a matching interior, this \$90,000-plus vehicle is the only extended-wheelbase, casket-carrying flower car available from a Cadillac-certified Master Coachbuilder, and no more than ten a year are typically built to special order. Other cars in the Eagle exhibit included a 2006 Cadillac DTS Ultimate Elite funeral coach with a silver exterior and oval quarter windows, a white 2006 Lincoln Ultimate, a deep blue Chrysler

Town & Country "first call" van, and a sky blue 2006 Buick Tradition. This latter vehicle, based on the luxurious Buick Terraza "Crossover Sport Van" launched last year (the cheaper Chevrolet Uplander version is called the Eagle Alternative), is a particularly-interesting conversion aimed at smaller, budget-minded funeral homes performing 40-60 services a year, adding a hearse-style loading door and a 13-inch quarter panel extension that allows a 96-inch long casket floor to be combined with the full-travel front seats and a driver's compartment partition. "Our first Terraza-based Traditions were completed this past spring," Eagle's Sales V.P. Wolfinger recently reported to Your Editor, "and they were extremely well-received because Buick is still a respected name in the funeral industry. It's been ten years since you could buy a brand new Roadmaster hearse, but a lot of those cars are still in service." Another novelty at Eagle given much attention at NFDA Chicago is an automatically-deployed cremation urn presenter that's neatly-concealed beneath the floor at the rear of the coach. "In principle, it's a lot like the reversing casket rollers you used to see in the old combination cars," Wolfinger explains, "except that it's hydraulically-operated when you press a button inside the loading door frame." In common with Accubuilt's Commemorative Carriage, it is hoped that this new option will encourage the use of hearses in the fast-growing cremation market.

Right next door to Eagle was the limousine builder LCW, which has its corporate HQ in San Antonio, Texas and its factory in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Its displays included a Cadillac Commuter six-door with a black exterior and a three-inch raised roof, and a gleaming white Lincoln "VIP" limousine whose 120-inch center stretch incorporated a curbside fifth door. On Monday, October 3rd, it was announced at the convention that Accubuilt had purchased the intellectual rights to LCW's Lincoln and Cadillac 6-door funeral limousines, up to the 100-inch center stretches. These models will now carry "LCW by Accubuilt" badging, while LCW will continue to produce its own four-and-five door limousines for corporate, casino and funeral customers.

Federal Coach, descended from the Armbruster/Stageway firm that put Fort Smith, Arkansas on the map by inventing the six-door limousine seven decades ago, welcomed NFDA delegates to its display by offering freshly-baked

