



The *Miller-Meteor*

Volunteer

*Official Publication of
The PCS Miller-Meteor Chapter*

April 2009



Plan to attend the 2009 M-M Reunion ! Details on Page 3



History and Purpose of The Miller-Meteor Chapter

By Tony Karsnia,
Chapter President

The Professional Car Society, Inc. granted a charter for this, The Miller-Meteor Chapter, in August of 2002 pursuant to a petition signed by PCS members Larri Dirks, Chuck Kramer, Jon Wurm, Dennis Goethe, and myself. Based on feedback we'd received from fellow PCS members, combined with our strong personal interests and ties to Miller-Meteor vehicles, we were pleased to have established an organization that would facilitate the coming together of like-minded Miller-Meteor enthusiasts.

What we did next was team up with former Miller-Meteor executive, Tom Caserta, and proceed to co-host not one but two Miller-Meteor Reunions in the Piqua, Ohio area. These events, held in 2004 and 2007, made more of an impact than simply bringing some hearses and ambulances back to their "birthplace." These reunions brought dozens of people together to truly celebrate the Miller-Meteor heritage. Many of these people were Miller-Meteor retirees who still live in the Piqua area. Our first Reunion was even attended by two great-granddaughters of A.J. Miller! Imagine enthusiastic Miller-Meteor collectors from all over the country converging on Piqua, joined by the men and women who so proudly crafted these cars we now cherish. For many of these retirees, this was the first time they'd had an avenue to relive those Miller-Meteor days and they loved every minute of sharing the stories with us.

Now, we're going to do it all again. That's right, a THIRD Miller-Meteor Reunion! This one will be bittersweet from the sense that it marks the 30th anniversary of Miller-Meteor's closing in 1979. Nevertheless, PCS members will once again make the trek to Piqua to spend a few exciting days with the folks from Miller-Meteor while participating in the city's Heritage Festival. See the complete agenda and lodging information in this issue of *The Miller-Meteor Volunteer*.

When the Miller-Meteor Chapter was formed, a decision quickly made was the name of this newsletter. Larri Dirks suggested (and the rest of us agreed) that *The Miller-Meteor Volunteer* was appropriate for two reasons. First, it is obviously reminiscent of a popular Cadillac ambulance made by Miller-Meteor (one of which is featured in this issue!) But we also felt that this name would signify this journal as an ongoing tribute to the men and women of ambulance and funeral service who have worked so proudly and faithfully out of these cars. Countless people have selflessly volunteered their time to saving lives and helping others in need. In other words, we intended for this chapter to honor the people in addition to the cars.

It is our continued hope that the efforts of the Miller-Meteor Chapter are recognized and appreciated. Contrary to what has recently been written in another PCS chapter's publication, this chapter is standing tall and proud on it's own and has not become absorbed as part of any other chapter.

Let's make the 2009 Miller-Meteor Reunion the most memorable yet.

See you in Piqua!

Call For Nominations

The Miller-Meteor Chapter will hold an election of officers at the Reunion in Piqua later this year. Offices include:

President
Vice-President
Secretary / Treasurer
Newsletter Editor

Nominees must be current PCS members, willing to accept the nomination.

Please mail your nominations to:

Jon Wurm
6709 Greenway Lane
Forest Lake, MN 55025

All nominations must be received no later than June 1, 2009.

Questions? Contact the current chapter President, Tony Karsnia at (612) 325-2344 or kars971@aol.com

Chapter Dues

In the grand scheme of things, the only need this chapter has for dues is to keep this publication coming to you on a regular basis and in living color. Thanks to today's technology, it can be emailed as a PDF, greatly reducing the expense of printed copies and postage. Of course, there are some folks who prefer to receive the physical, printed copy via the postal service, and that's fine too. The more we can email, the less dues money we need to collect.

This issue of *The Miller-Meteor Volunteer* will be emailed to all members and PCS officers who's email addresses we have on file. Copies will be printed and mailed to those we know cannot receive the publication electronically.

To join the chapter, please contact current chapter President, Tony Karsnia at (612) 325-2344 or kars971@aol.com



Check out the Miller-Meteor Chapter Online!

The Northland Chapter hosts a special Miller-Meteor news section and showroom, linked directly from their main page at:

www.northlandpcs.com



2009 MILLER-METEOR REUNION

Our host hotel is the **Piqua Comfort Inn**, conveniently located just off I-75 at Ash St. in the Miami Centre Mall. The hospitality is down-home comfortable, there is a mall adjacent to the hotel, many restaurants nearby, a large parking lot for our cars, and an indoor heated pool. The Comfort Inn has extended a very special rate of \$60/night (+ tax) for double occupancy with two queen beds or one king bed. Make reservations directly with the Comfort Inn by calling 937-778-8100. Mention *Miller-Meteor* to receive the special rate.

PIQUA COMFORT INN
 987 E. Ash Street Miami Centre Mall
 Piqua, OH 45356
 937-778-8100
www.comfortinn.com



[All event transportation is on your own. Carpooling is encouraged. All times are Eastern.]

Wednesday, September 2

Arrive in the Piqua area so you'll be ready to go early Thursday morning! Look for the roped-off area to park the professional cars. Don't forget your lawn chairs (and coolers) for those nights of parking-lot visiting!

Thursday, September 3

Breakfast: A free Continental breakfast is served at the hotel.

8:00 A.M. Leave Comfort Inn for the two-hour trip to **Eagle Coach Company** plant (3344 State Route 132, Amelia, OH 45102; 513-797-4100; www.eaglecoachcompany.com) for a tour of the Eagle factory. Following the Eagle plant tour, we will drive about 45 minutes to **CW Coach Sales** (7707 Vine St., Cincinnati, OH 45216; 513-821-0000; www.cwcoach.com) for a tour of the always-interesting inventory at CW Coach.

Lunch: **Cici's Pizza Buffet** (8528 Winton Rd. Cincinnati OH 45239; 513-522-1111; 5 minutes from CW Coach).

Dinner: On your own. There are several great restaurants in Piqua!

Evening Social: After dinner, we'll gather over beverages to swap stories at **Caserta's Bar** (331 S. Roosevelt Ave., Piqua OH 45356, at the corner of Roosevelt & Young St.; 937-778-9314).

Friday, September 4

Breakfast: A free Continental breakfast is served at the hotel. Eat hearty, you won't want to leave the parking lot gathering at Accubuilt to get something to eat prior to the tour!

10:00 A.M. Leave Comfort Inn for one-hour trip to the **Accubuilt** plant (2550 Central Point Parkway, Lima, OH 45804; 419-222-1501 www.accubuilt.com). After we arrive at Accubuilt, there will be plenty of time to look at the cars in the outside lots before the tour.

1:00 P.M. Tour of the Accubuilt plant, then return to Piqua.

Dinner: **7:00 P.M. Dinner with Miller-Meteor Retirees** at China East Restaurant (1239 E. Ash St., Piqua, OH 45356; 937-778-8688).

Saturday, September 5

Breakfast: A free Continental breakfast is served at the hotel.

8:45 A.M. Leave Comfort Inn for the 10 minute trip to the former **Meteor and Miller-Meteor plants** (Clark St. at Main St.). Entry inside the facilities is not guaranteed. After photography sessions at the plant with the professional cars, we will proceed to the **Piqua Heritage Festival** (3 ½ miles north of town at State Route 66 and Hardin Rd.) where our cars will be on special display. To learn more about the Festival, visit www.piquaheritagefestival.com.

Lunch: On your own. There are concessions available at the Heritage Festival.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening Social: After dinner, we'll close out the meet with a gathering at **Caserta's Bar**.

"Reunion" continued on page 7

1973 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Volunteer Ambulance

Owned by Dr. David Richards
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan



This 1973 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Volunteer 48" ambulance -- the first ever purchased by Washington County Ambulance Service (WCAS) -- originally served a spacious area surrounding the small community of Akron, Colorado, located northeast of Denver. It was used there actively, accumulating close to 100,000 miles in the process, from 1973 until 1985. Subsequent to the ambulance's retirement from active duty, it has been owned, preserved and well maintained -- attested to by the remarkable condition it remains in today! -- by Professional Car Society members Fred McPeck -- whose company originally sold the car to WCAS in July 1973 -- as well as by Tom Hutton and Tim Fantin... prior to joining Dr. Richards' collection of vintage EMS vehicles in 2008.

Part of the excitement that comes with preserving old ambulances is the search for photos taken of the cars when they were new and during their years of service. Dr. Richards obtained the above photo from Fred McPeck. He received it from fellow PCS member and long-standing friend, Jim LoSasso. Jim, who worked for the Denver-based McPeck Motor Coach Company in the 1970s, snapped this photo of the car on the McPeck lot, just prior to delivery to the original owner (WCAS) on July 27, 1973.

The Volunteer was one of three emergency ambulance offerings from Miller-Meteor in 1973. It was the mid-range car, in popular demand between the Lifeline with 54-inches of headroom in the patient area, and the standard roofline Guardian, featuring 43-inches of rear headroom.. These were beautifully styled cars that, according to the 1973 Miller-Meteor ambulance catalog, "have the steadiness, stability and soft ride needed to protect patients from travel-induced aggravation of injury.



Shown above is the emergency center of this fully-equipped ambulance. Note the abundance of storage space, thanks to the custom-designed partition dispensary and right rear wheel-house cabinets. There is stretcher storage under the rear floor and plenty of space for linens behind the tambour roll-up door in the bulkhead. One would expect nothing less than the perfectly folded, color coordinated cot blankets and linens in an impeccable ambulance such as this.

The front interior (below) is appropriately finished in Cordovan vinyl with a deluxe two-tone seat pattern. Notice the General Electric 2-way communications radio, dash mounted Phillips intercom system, and color coordinated floor mats. This ambulance is equipped with a dual battery system, evidenced by the presence of the large, round Cole-Hersee switch mounted on the transmission hump. Dashboard vents indicate optional air conditioning.

Photos by Dr. David Richards





Last hearses leave Miller-Meteor Co.

This morning was a sad time for officials from the Miller-Meteor Co. as the last two hearses left the plant for delivery in sales distribution coordinator Thomas Kessler (left). He explained the company delivered the last truck-type emergency vehicle to the Piqua Fire Department Thursday. "It's the end of an era," he lamented. The hearse was the mainstay of the company, which ceased production Oct. 31. The Meteor Motor Car Co. was founded in Piqua in 1913, and it merged with the Miller Co. in 1956. The Meteor company first made pleasure cars, then later switched to funeral cars and ambulances. Shown with Kessler

are Bill Baillie (center), parts and service manager, and Beecher Lynne, plant supervisor. Among the three they have 94 years experience with the company. Lynne has 42 years experience, Kessler 30 and Baillie 22. Kessler said the remaining factory paper work that has to be completed and office workers will remain for a few weeks. He also noted there are a few van-type ambulances which will soon be picked up by buyers. He said the plant is up for sale or lease, but he doesn't know whether anything has yet been decided. (Fogt photo)



Miller-Meteor ceases production

Miller-Meteor Division of Wayne Corporation, 125 Clark Ave., closed down its production line of hearses and ambulances Wednesday. The parent company in Richmond, Ind., announced in September the Piqua operation would be phased out by the end of October. A corporation spokesman said this morning. "We're just about closed out as planned." About 22 persons still are working at the plant, but the spokesman wasn't sure for how long. All that's left to do are "finishing up and final touches," he said. Of the 225 people employed at Miller-Meteor when the decision to close down was made, only "a very small percentage has found other jobs," said Charles White, president of the United Auto Workers Local 643. Union employees numbered 195, he said. Officials from the Piqua office of the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services report a

number of ex-Miller-Meteor employees have applied for unemployment benefits. Wayne Corporation plans to sell the building on Clark Avenue and announced this morning it is available for sale or lease. According to Wayne Corporation President Dwayne A. Shields, "The decision to discontinue the Piqua manufacturing operations was made only after an in-depth study of many factors. In the final analysis, the projection simply did not justify the corporation's continued commitment of design, engineering and manufacturing operations in so limited a segment of the automotive market." Shields said the market for highest quality vehicles has been progressively shrinking because of a significant shift in the type of equipment used by funeral directors and ambulance operators. (Fogt photo)

These two items were among many media reports in The Piqua Daily Call and other area newspapers about the closing of Miller-Meteor. A sad time, indeed...

"Reunion" continued from page 3

The Reunion officially concludes on Saturday evening, but the Heritage Festival continues until Labor Day. If you have questions or would like more information about the **2009 MILLER-METEOR REUNION**, please contact Tom Caserta, Reunion Chairman, at (937) 570-0110.

Piqua Restaurants

B-K Root Beer Drive-In - 1407 South Street.

The Backyard Bistro - 1876 Commerce Dr. 937-615-9554. Soups, salads and bistro-style sandwiches.

Bob Evans - 999 E. Ash St. 773-7466. Family Dining.

Caserta's Restaurant - 331 S. Roosevelt. 778-9314.

Cassano's Pizza & Subs - 414 W. Water St. 773-6482. Pizza, Sub Sandwiches.

China East - 1239 E. Ash St. 778-8688. Oriental Dining.

Cracker Barrel, exit 82, I-75 & State Rte. 36, 980 East Ash Street, 937-773-6605, family dining and old country gift store.

Dave's Place - 1106 Fisk St., 773-3373. Family Dining.

Dragon City - 1556 Covington Ave., 773-8813. Chinese Dining.

El Sombrero - in the Miami Valley Crossings Shopping Center 778-2100 Mexican Dining.

Faith's Pizza - 536 Wilson 773-5250 Family Dining.

Javawocky - 413 N. Main St., 773-5600, Family Dining: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner.

Nicklin Avenue Market & Carry-Out - 1601 Nicklin Ave. 778-9317. Pizza, subs, wings and a variety of sandwiches and salads. Delivery available.

Red Lobster - 991 E. Ash St. 773-9845. Fine Dining.

Susie's Big Dipper - 323 N. Main St. 937-615-0700. Ice cream plus soup and sandwiches.

Upper Valley Inn - 8811 Career Drive (inside Upper Valley Joint Vocational School) 778-1980. Lunch only (Tuesday - Friday during the school year).

Waffle House - 1232 E. Ash Street 615-0233. Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner. 24 hours.

w.g. Grinders - in the Miami Valley Crossings Shopping Center. Gourmet over-baked sandwiches and homemade deli salads, soups and desserts.

Z's Sports Bar & Grill - Corner of Ash & Wayne Streets, 773-9190. Lunch and Dinner.

Zender's of Ohio - 311 N. Main Street 773-4777. Lunch & Dinner. Specializes in burgers, tenderloins and has "Spot" pies and soups.

Fast Food: East Piqua (E. Ash Street) - Arby's, Taco Bell/Pizza Hut, Wendy's, A&W Root Beer/Long John Silver's, McDonalds, Miami Valley Centre Mall Food Court (pizza, cookies, Subway, Hershey's Ice Cream)

Fast Food: East Piqua (County Road 25-A, Exit 83 off I-75) - Citgo Subs & Pizza.

Fast Food: West Piqua - Lee's Famous Recipe, Subway, McDonalds, Burger King, Domino's Pizza, East of Chicago Pizza, Marco's Pizza, Michalo's Pizza.

Fast Food: Other Piqua - Rally's (corner of W. Water & College).

Ice Cream: Hun Buns Tasty Treat (129 S. College St. 773-7004), George's Dairy Bar (329 Spring St. 773-1451), Nicklin Avenue Market and Carryout (1601 Nicklin Avenue 778-9317), Susie's Big Dipper (323 N. Main St. 615-0700), and Tommie's Premium Lite (1300 South St. 773-5433).

CARWASHES

From hotel, turn left (west) on Ash St. towards downtown. Continue on Ash Street to Dowling St. Turn left on Dowling, go 4 blocks to self-service car wash on the right. **OR...**

From hotel, turn right (East) on Ash St., cross over I-75 to the Wal-Mart Plaza. The self-service car wash is at the far south-east corner of the Wal-Mart parking lot.



1973 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Volunteer Ambulance



The Volunteer

Tony Karsnia, Editor
3634 Viking Boulevard NE
East Bethel, MN 55092