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COVER PHOTOS – On January 20, the United States got a new president – *and* a new presidential limousine. Millions watched Barack Obama ride to his inauguration in the custom-built Cadillac as both hit the streets of Washington D.C. at the same time. Limo enthusiast Gregg Merksamer describes the nation's new "First Car," which bears license plate "1." Front cover features an official United States Secret Service Photo. Back cover photo courtesy of the Cadillac Motor Division of General Motors.

CENTER STRETCH – Gainesville, Florida PCS member Gene Williams displayed his 1940 Henney Packard Nu-3-Way hearse and 1955 Miller Cadillac ambulance at the 2008 NFDA Convention held in Orlando last October. Here's his stunning white A.J. Miller.

One hundred years ago – in January, 1909 – the first motorized funeral procession in America wound its way from a Chicago funeral parlor to a suburban cemetery. The journey took a fraction of the time the same trip would have taken the usual horse-drawn cortege with its tall hearse and line of horse-drawn carriages. Two months later another Chicago undertaker conducted an automobile funeral using a big White steamer fitted with a horse-drawn hearse body. Three months later, in June, 1909, the Crane & Breed Mfg. Co. of Cincinnati introduced the industry's first factory-built automobile hearse. Not long before, the James Cunningham, Son Co. of Rochester N.Y. marketed the first commercially-produced motor-driven ambulance.

By any measure, 1909 was an epochal year for the professional car industry, heralding as it did the arrival of the motor hearse and the beginning of the end of the colorful horse-drawn era. While the speedy motor ambulance was enthusiastically received, the auto hearse was much slower in gaining professional, and public, acceptance. Horse-drawn hearses were still being built as late as 1917. In this issue, well-known funeral car historian and author Tom McPherson traces the origin and introduction of the automobile hearse. His story is an updated, more complete iteration of the one he wrote for *The Professional Car* nearly 20 years ago. The *good* news is that this is just the first of a series of historical articles Tom will write for TPC. We're delighted to have him back with us.