

The **PROFESSIONAL** *CAR*



NUMBER 137

3rd Quarter 2010

The Professional Car

Number 137

Third Quarter 2010

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1977 DOWNSIZING AND THE DEMISE OF THE INDUSTRY
- WALT AND SCOTT'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE
- LINCOLN MAN: REMEMBERING HARVEY SCHOFIELD
- OWNER'S PRIDE: 1917 OWEN BROTHERS REO HEARSE
- GET LOW EXPERIENCE: BILL PEOPLES & MISS HENNEY

FRONT COVER – The principal feature in this issue is a look back at the introduction 34 years ago of the American professional car funeral industry's "downsized" 1977 funeral coaches and ambulances and the devastating, permanent effect this government-mandated change had on the industry's largest players. If this subject sounds vaguely familiar it's because we covered this major industry milestone in TPC #84 (Second Quarter 1997). But this time around, industry veteran and author Tom McPherson covers this landmark upheaval and its dire consequences from a different perspective and in far more detail. Driven by foreign oil embargoes and scary fuel shortages earlier in the decade, U.S. auto industry downsizing – led by General Motors -- forever changed the much-smaller professional car industry. Overnight, combination coaches and passenger car-based ambulances were all but outlawed. Within three years Miller-Meteor went out of business, Sheller-Globe dumped its Superior Coach Division and Hess & Eisenhardt sold its iconic S&S brand to Superior. In the wake of this unprecedented upheaval, van and modular ambulances took over and a number of upstarts – like McPherson's very own Eureka Coach Company – sprang up. Things have never been the same since. Our cover photo, also provided by Tom, showcases the all-new, slimmed-down 1977 Superior, Miller-Meteor and S&S Cadillac landau funeral coaches which, because of their smaller size and sharply higher price tags, got a decidedly cool reception from American funeral directors when they made their bow at the 1976 NFDA convention in Houston, Texas in October of that year.

CENTERSTRETCH– PCS Past President Brady Smith of Flint, Michigan bought his 1977 Miller-Meteor Cadillac *Lifeline* Ambulance from the original owner in Alabama five years ago. He has since restored it and was able to bring it to the Miller-Meteor Reunion Meet in Piqua, Ohio., -- where his car was built -- last May.

BACK COVER – Superior Coach built only 30 "downsized" Cadillac *Transport Ambulances* between 1977 and 1979 – just ten in each of those three years. Two of the 1979's went to the New York City Police Department. Here's one of them in the NYPD's famed blue-and-white livery, before lettering, numbering, etc.