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THE KUNKEL STORY

THE PROFESSIONAL CAR

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IN THIS ISSUE - THE HISTORY OF THE KUNKEL CARRIAGE COMPANY  
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- OWNER'S PRIDE: 1955 SUPERIOR CADILLAC AMBULANCE

ON OUR COVERS - The principal feature in this issue is a history of the Kunkel Carriage Company of Galion, Ohio. Kunkel was one of the smaller regional hearse and ambulance manufacturers which successfully made the difficult transition from the horse-drawn era to the motor age, only to eventually succumb to intense competitive pressure as many new companies entered an already overcrowded field. This interesting, well-researched history was written for TPC by well-known funeral car industry historian and author Thomas A. McPherson. We're delighted to be able to publish some of Tom's work, and hope to be able to publish more such stories in the future. All of the photos used to illustrate this story came from Tom's personal collection of professional car photos and sales literature, which could easily provide enough content for this journal for the next fifty years.

The two photos on our cover are of Kunkel-built hearses. The horse-drawn hearse is the only one we have ever seen with an enclosed cab. This rubber-tired "Funeral Car" was built about 1910. The closed cab strongly suggests that this hearse was built for an undertaker in the northern climes. The other vehicle is an eight-column Kunkel hearse built on a 1922 Chandler chassis for the William Wise & Sons Funeral Home of Bucyrus, Ohio. This hearse uses a combination of carved drapery panels with plate glass windows in the center.

The photo on our back cover is of a 1924 Dodge Brothers chassis with Kunkel service car body built for the Erving Dress Funeral Home which was in business at 8624 Lorain Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio. Note the plain sides and small oval windows just behind the front doors.

Inside back cover: We couldn't resist running the this whimsical ad which ran in a recent issue of a funeral service publication called the YB (Yellow Book) News. The coach on the lowering device is a 1971 or '72 Superior Cadillac Sovereign Landaulet.