



# The Criterion

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHEAST CHAPTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY  
SECOND QUARTER 1997 GREGG D. MERKSAMER, EDITOR

## RENDEZVOUS IN EDISON:

Grand tour of Wilner's Limo Service set for Sunday, July 20th



Bill Marcy bought his 1978 McClain Cadillac Flower Car from Dave Wilner's Limousine Service in Edison, NJ. Perhaps something similar will tempt you on our upcoming tour? These clever and relatively cheap Coupe DeVille conversions were built in Anderson, Indiana from the late 1960s to the early 1980s.

Northeast Chapter Vice President and Activities Director Bill Marcy has announced that he is planning a tour of PCS member Dave Wilner's Limousine Service and Auto Sales at 1710 Oak Tree Road in Edison, NJ for Sunday, July 20th. Northeast Chapter President Leo Maren is currently compiling directions to this event and he'll soon have a computer-generated map available to prospective participants.

The highlight of the tour will be Dave's 110 car fleet of funeral coaches, flower cars and limousines, which includes such collectibles as "2 horsepower" hearse built around 1850 and a Centennial Edition 1976 S&S Cadillac. Dave's father started in the livery business back in 1923, and the growth of this family operation over the last 75 years will be a central topic of his 1-1 1/2 hour tour. If we're extra lucky we'll witness one of Wilner's flower car conversions being

built, or how his company takes 1980 Cadillacs and turns them into 1992 models with a few clever substitutions of trim and equipment ("This process is still harder than it looks, though," Bill says). Wilner's also has professional cars for sale from time to time, and those who attend might see something as enticing as the 1978 McClain Cadillac flower car Bill Marcy purchased from this firm.

Requesting that Northeast Chapter members R.S.V.P. him at (201) 342-4871 regarding their intention to participate, Bill promises that "if we get a good turnout we'll be going on a lot more outings like these. Bring your procar with you July 20th if you can but, more importantly, please bring yourself since it's our first tour in some time." He adds that "suggestions for future tours and get-togethers are always welcome, of course."

## MINUTES & MOMENTS FROM OUR APRIL 20th MEETING

Hosted by **Craig & Roseanne Stewart**, the Northeast Chapter of the PCS held its spring business meeting at the First Presbyterian Church in Wood Ridge, NJ on April 20th. Attendees included National PCS President **Mike Barruzza**, **Dottie Forvour**, Chapter President **Leo Maren III**, **Jeff & Mary Hookway**, PCS Publicity Chairman and *Criterion* Editor **Gregg D. Merksamer** and **John Casiello**, the owner of a 1941 Cadillac Imperial Limousine who learned of the PCS through Craig's involvement in the North Jersey Cadillac Club. As for procars in the parking area Craig and Roseanne drove their rare 1978 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Limousine Style Ambulance (*above right*), while Northeast Chapter VP **Bill Marcy** brought his McClain Flower Car conversion of a 1978 Cadillac Coupe DeVille (*on page one*). Introducing us to his charming fiancée **Tracy Carroll**, **Fred Goerlitz** was even happier than if he'd had a new professional car to show off.

Until the Northeast Chapter settled down to new business, the early attendees imbibed chocolates shaped like Dodge Shadows and had great fun looking over the thick photo albums and procar catalogs Craig has been compiling since childhood (*below*). His



most intriguing holdings include a 1956 brochure for the Superior Beau Monde pillarless hardtop funeral coach, a 1956 "Meteorama" promo piece featuring this Piqua, Ohio coachbuilder's wood-veneered "Crestwood" models, and an interior detail shot from a '64 S&S ambulance



where the fire axe hooked into the seatback must have made a most threatening random element in a rollover! Looking at a 1957 Superior Criterion ad in one album, Mary Hookway looked at one model costumed as a nurse and quipped "you think they ever worked like that, wearing five inch stiletto heels?"

The continuing success of the national PCS Internet site at <http://www.professionalcar.org> (which has had more than 8,500 visits or "hits" since setting up shop last September) led Leo Maren to ask all PCS members with e-mail capability to send their address to him at [caddy@bellatlantic.net](mailto:caddy@bellatlantic.net). "With the show season getting underway, we should be taking full advantage of it to improve communications between PCS members," he said. "It's faster and cheaper than writing a letter and you don't have to think about the best time call someone back." Mike Barruzza added that both he and National PCS Secretary Beverly Ruff believe "it's a good idea" to add e-mail addresses to the next PCS roster.

In his capacity as the Chapter's Activities Director, Bill Marcy fielded suggestions for other outings in addition to the Wilner's Limousine Tour already scheduled for July 20th in Edison, NJ. A cookout along the Delaware River near Milford, PA or the shores of Lake Hopatcong in north central New Jersey were both suggested since these sites have plenty of parking as well as access to boat and beach-related activities. Roseanne Stewart also suggested Ringwood Manor, which has some securable parking facilities and is particularly convenient to New York City metropolitan area PCS members.

The April 20th meeting also proved that it wasn't too early to discuss the 1999 PCS International Meet,

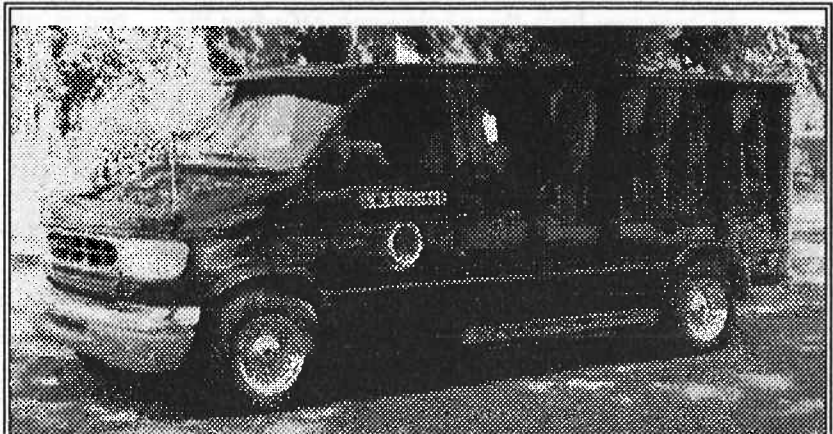
which the Northeast Chapter will host in Lancaster, PA. A block of hotel rooms has already been secured for 1999 at the Best Western Eden Resort Inn & Conference Center, located just east of Lancaster near the junction of U.S. Highway 30 and PA 272 on Eden Road, at the rate of \$90 a night (only \$8 more than the 1997 meet in Baltimore this August 19-24). In addition to both indoor and outdoor swimming pools, two banquet halls with the ability to handle either 125 or 300 diners and a miniature refrigerator in every room, Mike said "this was definitely the best place we looked at. They gave us everything we wanted without any discussion. This was also the only hotel we went to that had its own professional car."

Bringing to bear their extensive experience in planning several Cadillac-LaSalle Grand National Meets, Northeast Chapter Co-Treasurers /Membership Directors **Andy & Karen Toton** have already volunteered to handle registration and show field layout. In addition, Bill Marcy volunteered to handle the awards, Dottie Forvour the banquet planning, Gregg Merksamer the publicity and Roseanne Stewart the activities arrangements. It goes without saying that volunteers are encouraged to get involved with any aspect of the meet that particularly interests them.

While Leo stresses that attendees will have at least one day to explore Lancaster County's attractions on their own, possible tour destinations were discussed including the Reading factory outlets and the Harley-Davidson motorcycle factory in York. The next Northeast Chapter meeting is tentatively scheduled for the middle of September, where further planning for the 1999 International Meet will take place.

## OTHER CAR CLUBS ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET FOR PCS

PCS members with Pontiac-chassied professional cars might be interested in becoming a charter member in a proposed non-regional Specialty Chapter in the Pontiac-Oakland Club International (POCI). To sign the chapter petition form, contact Paul Bergstrom at



### VERY VANCY, RANCE!

Lowell, Michigan PCS member, professional car dealer and bookseller *extraordinaire* Rance Bennett has begun to offer old-fashioned carved panel hearses custom built from modern Ford Econoline vans. Bennett adds decorative drapery panels flanked by ornate columns complete with capitals and brackets to the bodysides and the rear loading doors. The exterior effect is completed with coach lamps, funeral flag stanchions, wreaths and nameplates on the front doors and genuine wire wheels.

The casket compartment features cathedral style cherry wood paneling, ornate brass lanterns and a remote controlled electric casket table that also opens the rear doors automatically. The division panel is etched with a scene of an ornate carved panel hearse drawn by four horses. Stained and beveled glass are also available as options, and other exterior colors and interior woods can be fitted on request.

Rance's firm can also build service cars, flower cars and children's hearses, even though there's probably not as much call for the latter as there was at the turn of the century! Those wanting further information can contact Rance at (616) 897-5710, e-mail him at [rbennett@iserv.net](mailto:rbennett@iserv.net) or access his Web site at [www.hearse.com](http://www.hearse.com). His mailing address is 319 East Main Street, Lowell, Michigan 49331.



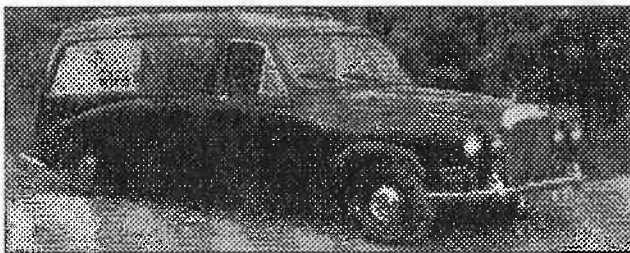
1250 Briar Street, Wayzata, Minnesota 55391 or call (612) 449-8811.

With the **Buick Club of America** meeting in **St. Louis, Missouri** from **July 16-20**, Pittsburgh area PCS member John Ehmer says that the BCA is looking for Buick-chassied procars to attend. The hosting chapter will even waive the registration fee for any procar displayed, although you'll still be obligated to pay for any connected tours, events and meals. For more information call John at (412) 563-4779 or write him at 1542 Princess Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15246.

In case you have the whole week off when the PCS meets in Baltimore and you're also a member of the **Cadillac-LaSalle Club**, their **1997 Grand National** in **Chicago August 13-16** also features a professional car class. "Andy Toton met with their national board in February and made a presentation about the PCS, which convinced them to create this special subclass for commercial chassis Cadillacs," recalled National PCS President Mike Barruzza. "Most clubs do not have a class like this, so this is a very important opportunity for us. We made the big pitch, showed them the caliber of cars we have and got what we asked for, and now we need the cars to come out and support this new class." For further information on the meet call Tom or Jan McGuire in Lake Zurich, IL at (847) 540-5708. Next year's Cadillac-LaSalle Grand National will take place even closer to home, in Long Island.

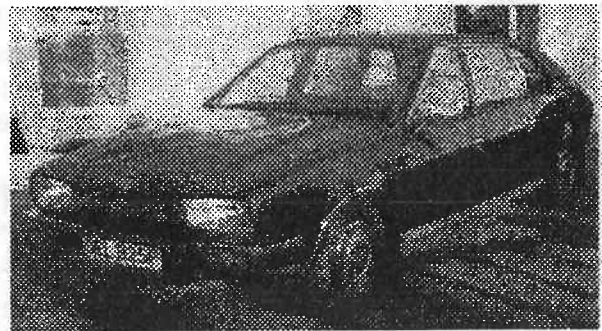
## PROCARS ACROSS THE POND

I frequently enjoy thumbing through British old car magazines that allow me to learn more about the vehicles Americans might get to see only when they travel overseas or watch PBS. Their classified sections sometimes yield an interesting photo or two of a



European professional car, such as this 1976 Daimler DS420 hearse placed in the May issue of *Classic Cars* by Zenith Classics of Westhoughton, Lancashire. While the coachbuilder wasn't identified (the photo was meant to represent one of five on offer for just £2995, the equivalent of \$5500) the styling features the big one-piece windows typically used on most British hearses to display the casket and flowers. Beneath windowsill level there is most likely a second compartment for removals and chair-carrying duties.

Often mistaken for a Rolls-Royce when the odd one is imported to the U.S. and painted white for weddings, the limousine version of the DS 420 was introduced in 1968 and built by Jaguar until only a couple of years ago at its Browns Lane Works in Coventry. When I toured this otherwise up-to-date factory back in 1989, my group visited a separate building where about a dozen of these ministerial behemoths were being hand-built with no "assembly line" to speak of and each car sitting on its own trolley. The bodysHELLS destined for conversion into a funeral coach by an outside firm were identified by the steel tubes welded across their rear door openings. The standard of workmanship was obviously very high, with flaws in the paint invisible to the naked eye circled in chalk for later rectification.



"DEL 825P" (British cars wear one license plate from delivery to dismantlement) is a late 1970s Austin Princess (nicknamed "the wedge" for obvious reasons) stretched into a classy formal limousine by Woodall Nicholson of Halifax. It must have been a sharp one since the April issue of *Classic & Sportscar* said it sold for £4650 at a Parkes Auction compared to the £650 or thereabouts some sell for in the adverts.

