



The Criterion

NEWSLETTER of the NORTHEAST CHAPTER of the PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY

Forth Quarter 2002 - Ted Collins, Publisher - Gregg D. Merksamer, Editor

HANGING WITH THE HOOSIERS Tanks-a-plenty at Indiana Chapter Fall Meet



Prior to touring McClain's Historical Military Armor Museum in Anderson, IN, Rosemarie and Rich Conjalka, Nick Bliss and Gregg D. Merksamer pose by Nick's 1973 Superior Cadillac

This past November, Your Editor spent nearly two weeks driving around the Midwest in search of photos for his upcoming book on funeral cars and ambulances. After taking in a once-a-decade literature/photo sale at the Detroit Public Library's National Automotive History Collection and Accubuilt's engineering archives in Lima, OH, this 2,200-mile trek took me to the home of Merrillville, IN PCS member Rich Conjalka, whose exceptional generosity with his time and materiel will pay big dividends when Krause Publications puts my book to bed this April. I also to thank his wife Rosemarie for the patience and good humor she demonstrated while we spent three days all-but-camped-out at the local Kinko's.

Once our work was done, the three of us convoyed down to Anderson, IN for the PCS Indiana Chapter's November 9th Fall Meet at McClain's Historical Military Armor Museum. This name no doubt rings a bell with many of you, as museum

founder Joe McClain's father turned nearly 400 vehicles (mostly Cadillac Coupe DeVilles) into inexpensive flower cars over a 40-year period. Having collected military vehicles for about a decade beforehand, Joe started his museum in 1989, and it's claimed to house the largest collection of light tanks in the United States along with a myriad variety of halftracks, trucks and military motorcycles.

Others in attendance included Greg & Barbara Yoder in their Cadillac 1976 Fleetwood, *Minute Man Monitor* Editor Nick Bliss in his 1973 Superior

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Happy New Year! Let's plan to make 2003 a great year for ourselves, our club and our hobby. Please plan to attend the Chapter's 2nd annual charity car show on May 25th at Peddler's Village in Lahaska, PA. This event will be open to ALL cars and trucks, not just procars, and the proceeds will benefit the Bucks County SPCA. This year's International Meet in Pittsburgh also promises to be the biggest and best in years, so come!

As for other activities, we are also planning a brunch for sometime in May or June, with more details to come in the next Criterion. If you have any ideas for activities, please let us know by mail, phone or by attending our next Chapter business meeting, which we've scheduled for 1 pm Sunday, March 23rd at the Sparta Volunteer Ambulance Squad building in Sparta, NJ.

Take care, Bill Marcy

Cadillac Landau hearse, Indiana Chapter President John Rabold at the wheel of his 1968 S&S Park Row Cadillac combination and Gene Smith & Janet Keener in Gene's all-white 1973 Cotner-Bevington Oldsmobile ambulance.



Joe McClain discusses his museum's oldest tank, a World War I vintage U.S. copy of a French Renault design. It carries two men and offers a top speed of only 3.4 mph.

Recalling how he got into military vehicle collecting, Joe McClain said "I started finding out all this stuff was being destroyed, aside from stuff the government wanted for its own museums at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland and Fort Knox, KY." About 80% of his collection, resting on requisitely-sturdy concrete floors (the building, located at 2330 Crystal Street on the northeast side of Anderson, was once used to manufacture glass making machinery), is on display at any one time and he's currently in the process of expanding exhibit space another 15,000 square feet. "The paperwork is the hardest part of buying a tank," Joe adds. "It takes two years to acquire the necessary government permits. It's much easier to purchase a tank from a Third World country, but we've gotten to the point where the U.S. Army is happy to deal with us (even then, the guns must be made inoperative by plugging the barrel and cutting the breech)." The tanks that run, and only three or four don't, are regularly trucked to movie sets as far off as Arizona and the East coast.

The Indiana Chapter's tour began in the restoration shop on the north end of the museum, where a 1946 Jeep awaiting reassembly and a U.S. Navy Shore Patrol paint job shared space with a Vietnam-vintage target drone that was remote-controlled from a C-130 to divert the enemy's

surface-to-air missiles from American fighter planes. It was even painted orange to reflect radar and "look" bigger. "Before we started using these," McClain recalled, "we went in hoping to outrun the SAMs." The oldest tank on exhibit is a World War I era U.S. model that's one of only five examples known to exist. Essentially a copy of a French Renault design, it weighs six tons, carries two men, and offers a top speed of only 3.4 mph. McClain explained that the tank derived its name from being "developed under the code name Project Water Tank. The top and bottom halves were even built in different factories to fool German spies into thinking that it was intended for carrying water to the trenches."

The tank really came into its own during World War II, as recalled by a 1943 M24 Chaffee (notable as first tank whose gun could be pointed down at a target in a valley) that appeared in the what-if-America-was-invaded movie "Red Dawn," an M37 mobile howitzer that was discovered in halves and welded back together using a jig, and a Cadillac-built M19-A1 anti-aircraft gun from 1941 that McClain said "was obviously designed by a guy who never drove a tank before. The machine gunner is exposed from the waist up, and the main guns tended to shoot off the radio antenna until a retractable design was fitted." The opposition was represented by a sidecar-equipped 1938 BMW R-12 motorcycle that McClain called "my almost famous vehicle," as it was the backup for the cycle that appeared in "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade." Soviet-bloc armor included a Red Chinese copy of a T-34 tank seized in South Korea and a Syrian army BTR-40 command car captured by the Israelis during the 1967 Six Day War, which McClain asserted had "an excellent copy of a Dodge straight six engine."

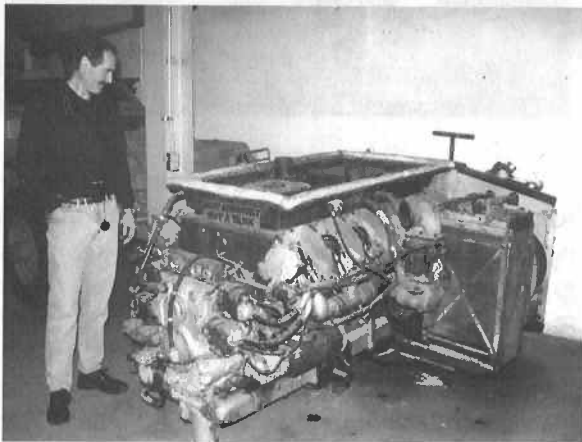


Soviet-bloc armor included this BTR-40 command car captured from Syria during the Six Day War.



The restoration shop was re-assembling a 1946 Jeep that will be finished in U.S. Navy Shore Patrol livery.

The U.S. Army's modern capabilities were showcased by the only M1 Abrams "they'll never let into private hands" (weighing 126,000 pounds and costing \$3.5 million new), a fresh-from-the-box 1996 Kawasaki special forces scout cycle showing only four original miles and a 1982 Chenworth Racing Products Delta Force dune buggy, capable of 84 mph, fitted with a lethal-looking M-60 machine gun. While it was in storage during the Indiana Chapter's visit, the museum's collection does include one interesting professional car - 1947 Cadillac limousine with a bomb-proof floor that was used by President Truman.



Gene Smith examines a Continental V-12 air-cooled tank engine from a Korean War era M-48, which weighs more than 7,200 pounds.

Topping off an afternoon full of surprises, the tour concluded in front of large chain link indoor/outdoor cage occupied by an 11-year old

lioness named Terra. Having had business with an animal breeder, McClain has had her since she was a day old and, while she weighs 425 pounds today, her mother considered her the runt of the litter and refused to feed her; she eats 15 pounds of raw meat a day now. "When we close up, we let her out to guard the place," McClain said. "The local police know that if the alarm goes off during the night, they should just wait until morning and look for some empty tennis shoes."

Indiana-bound PCS members who might be interested in visiting McClain's Historical Military Armor Museum on their own can take Interstate 69, Exit 26 and go north on State Highway 9, after which they turn left (west) onto Scatterfield Road and right (north) onto Crystal Street. Regular hours are 1-4 pm Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, though group tours at other hours can be arranged by calling (765)649-TANK.



Reconnaissance cars in McClain's collection included a VW 181 Thing prototype built for the Federal German Army in 1963, a 1950's DKW Munga and a 1982 Chenworth Racing Products Delta Force FASV.

CHAPTER TO MEET IN SPARTA MARCH 23rd

To help plan the Lahaska show and discuss other business, Jeff & Mary Hookway will be hosting a PCS Northeast Chapter meeting that starts 1 pm Sunday, March 23rd at the Sparta Volunteer Ambulance Service HQ in Sparta, NJ.

Take westbound Interstate 80 to NJ 15 north, exit the expressway at route 517 and turn left at the end of the ramp. Turn left again at the next traffic signal onto Sparta Avenue (NJ 181 south), and the squad building is situated about a half mile on the right. If you need 11th hour guidance the building's phone number is (973) 729-7560.

BEFORE HIS TIME, A TRUE PROCAR PRODIGY PASSES ON



John R. Keel, photographed admiring a Eureka Lincoln limousine style hearse at a recent PCS Indiana Chapter meet - *John Rabold photo*

It is with great sadness that The Criterion must report the accidental death of Freeland, MI PCS member John R. Keel on Christmas night, who succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning while working on a running car in his grandparents' garage. As he had turned only 18 this past October, those of us who met John at the 2000, 2001 and 2002 PCS International Meets cannot help but sense that a one-in-a-million individual has left us much too early, and will join me in expressing condolences to his mother Ann, grandparents Donald and Marilyn Keel and 10-year old half-brother Shervin.



Led by Patrick Martin's 1985 Bayliff Packard and Eric Chapman's 1973 Superior Cadillac, John R. Keel's funeral procession departs the Cunningham-Taylor Funeral Home in Freeland, Michigan - *Tim Fantin photo*

Afforded the privilege of sitting across from John and Ann Keel at the awards banquet in Grand Rapids this past August, I was very much intrigued to learn that John had grown up across the street from a cemetery, become captivated by the cars going in and out of the gates and could identify the coachbuilders by the time that he was three years old. Given that one of the toughest things a young man must do is figure out where he fits into the world and is ultimately-happiest, I really admired John for deciding on his path with such certainty so early.

Here was a true professional car prodigy, who exhibited greater knowledge of the subject than enthusiasts two or three times his age, and who demonstrated a zeal for sharing it as a meet judge and videographer. His focus on the things that make the old car hobby fun earned him friends in every corner, and his omnipresent tapes and scholarly, well-written articles will no doubt be enjoyed by professional car fans for many years to come.



In my capacity as national Publicity Chairman, I was extremely proud to hear of the role that PCS people played in comforting John's family and giving him the sort of send-off he deserved. Thanks to Tim Fantin and Eric Chapman's efforts in getting the word out via telephone and Internet, PCS members from five states convened for John's December 28th funeral at the Cunningham-Taylor Funeral Home in Freeland, where the pallbearers included Eric, Tim, Nick Bliss, Patrick Martin, Sarah Snook and Jerry Jacobson. Just had John had done for every funeral entering LaPorte Cemetery in recent years, PCS Chief Judge George Hamlin flew out from Maryland to tape the funeral procession.

Lou Farah of the Southern California Chapter announced on the PCS message board that the Best-of-Show Award at this summer's Go West Again Convention will be renamed the John Keel Memorial Award.

Many PCS members and regional chapters (Northeast included) sent flowers, which were carried in the back of Patrick Martin's 1985 Bayliff Packard funeral coach, while Eric Chapman's 1973 Superior Cadillac Combination carried John's casket. "John had remarked repeatedly that Eric's coach was one of the sharpest he had ever seen," Tim Fantin recalls in one of many testimonials on the PCS website, "(so) we both agreed it would only be fitting. As a matter of fact the last time the '73 was even driven was when John, Eric and I cruised around on Halloween night." I am told that John's dark red 1973 Superior Cadillac Crown Combination, purchased only this summer, will be restored in his memory.



1968 Superior Cadillac Rescuer photographed by Peter Hamilton Travis for his essay "Anatomy of an Ambulance."

1968 SUPERIOR SITTING IN A FIELD PHOTOGRAPHED ARTFULLY:

Peter Hamilton Travis, an artist from East Hampton, NY, recently contacted Your Editor to say he had selected a derelict 1968 Superior Cadillac Rescuer high-headroom ambulance as the subject for his latest photo essay. "I've been drawn to Cadillacs from the 1960s for some time," he explained. "I discovered this 1968 Superior on a farm a couple of towns away and became obsessed with it."

The introduction to "Anatomy of an Ambulance" elaborates that Peter's luminous, carefully-composed photographs were intended to emphasize that, "prior to any restoration (whether on a vehicle or one's self, I'm assuming) we are required to study without fear or judgment the defects that define our current state. Sometimes grace intervenes and what is dead hosts an otherworldly blush" – making this Superior a "jewel in the rough" by any other name! Copies of the book, or art prints of its images, are available at (631) 329-6868 or



www.peterhamiltontravis.com.

CRITERION CLASSIFIEDS:

PHOTOS WANTED for my upcoming book about funeral cars and ambulances, which is scheduled to go to press this April. Publication-quality vintage photos, contemporary 3.5-by-5 inch or larger prints from 35 mm-or-bigger negatives, Kodak Picture Maker-type print-to-print duplicates, transparencies and sales brochure illustrations are all acceptable, and contributors will be gratefully acknowledged in print. Call Gregg D. Merksamer at (845) 986-6857 or e-mail merks62@warwick.net.

PHOTOS WANTED of mobster funeral processions for article in-progress. Contact John Rabold at (317) 687-6541 (work), (317) 570-4978 (home) or e-mail indianapcs@yahoo.com.

1952 Chrysler Imperial Limousine: Four-door with divider. Runs, drives, for restoration or parts. Best offer. Call (631) 751-7232.

1978 S&S Cadillac Victoria Hearse: All-white exterior, 38,000 original miles, award winner at 1999 and 2000 PCS International Meets. \$7,000. Call Jeff McQuaid at (610) 926-7675.

1982 Cadillac Station Wagon: Based on Buick body. \$6,000. Call Fred Kanter at (973) 334-2400.

Armor-plated 1984 Cadillac "Factory Formal" Limousine: Built by Protective Materials of Miami for Saudi Arabia's Mission to the UN. Features chrome-framed, 1/4-inch thick bullet-resistant windows, ballistic steel door liners, Kevlar floor & fuel tank shielding, 368 V-8 engine, copy of original State Department-issued title. Needs cosmetics but runs, drives, N.Y.S. inspected, handles well for a 6,800-pounder thanks to five new Goodrich XL tires mounted on five new HD wheels. Original cost likely exceeded \$150,000, I'm asking \$9,000. Call Gregg D. Merksamer at (845) 986-6857 or e-mail merks62@warwick.net.

CRITERION CALENDAR:

February 1st, 2003 (Sat.), Savage, MD: PCS Mid-Atlantic Chapter multimedia show-and-tell, 1pm at the Savage Library, 9525 Durness Lane, off Gorman Road between US 29 and US 1. For further information contact Steve Lichtman at (301) 607-8068 or SteveL200@worldnet.att.net.

March 23rd, 2003 (Sun.), Sparta, NJ: PCS Northeast Chapter winter business meeting, 1 pm at Sparta Volunteer Ambulance Squad HQ. For further info or directions contact Jeff or Mary Hookway at hookjch@ptd.net or (973) 729-8083.

May 25th, 2003 (Sun.), Lahaska, PA: PCS Northeast Chapter's Second Annual Charity Car Show at Peddler's Village, intersection of US 202 and Street Road. Open to all makes of cars. Pre-registration \$10, or \$15 day-of-show. Proceeds benefit the Bucks County SPCA. For further information phone Bill Marcy at (201) 342-4871.

July 22nd-26th, 2003 (Tue.-Sat.), Pittsburgh, PA: Tri-State Chapter hosts the 27th Annual PCS International Meet, headquartered at the Four Points Sheraton in Mars, PA. For hotel reservations at the \$89 PCS special rate phone (724) 766-6900; for registration/itinerary information contact Rick Duffy at (412) 551-0020 or duffyfc@pop.pitt.edu.

