



The Criterion

NEWSLETTER of the NORTHEAST CHAPTER of the PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY

First Quarter 2004 - Ted Collins, Publisher - Gregg D. Merksamer, Editor

MARCH 7TH BRUNCH, BIZ MEETING IN WAYNE, NJ KICK OFF CHAPTER'S SPRING ACTIVITIES: **Agenda led by June 13th Charity Meet in Lahaska, PA**

After some last-minute deliberation with his officers, PCS Northeast Chapter President Bill Marcy has announced that a short business meeting will be combined with the noon-to-2pm brunch that he has already scheduled for Sunday, March 7th. The venue for this gathering will be the Grand Chalet located at 1377 Route 23 South in Wayne, NJ, which is conveniently situated 2.5 miles north of the Interstate 80 interchange and 2.5 miles south of Interstate 287 (if necessary, further directions can be obtained by calling 973-633-5111). "Lucille and I have been here twice and this is a beautiful restaurant with delicious food and great service," Bill says. "They offer a fantastic brunch selection including omelettes made to order, a full breakfast buffet and a delicious lunch menu including meat dishes, seafood, pasta, fresh fruit and dessert. This will be a two hour brunch so please arrive promptly at noon so you can enjoy the food and the company of your fellow Northeast Chapter members. I will also try to arrange an activity of interest afterwards, hopefully something nearby." Though the \$20 cost for the brunch can be paid at the door, the restaurant needs a head count so please RSVP to Bill Marcy at (201) 342-4871 at least five days prior to the event.

Inevitably, the most important item on the agenda of the March 7th meeting will be initial planning for the PCS Northeast Chapter's Third Annual Charity Car and Truck Show at Peddler's Village in Lahaska, PA, which will take place on Sunday, June 13th. Like last year's event, the beneficiary will be the Bucks County SPCA, and Bill Marcy is counting on "a beautiful day as Mother Nature owes us one. All types of cars and trucks will be welcome in addition to professional cars, so be sure to get the word out to other clubs

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello and Happy New Year everyone! After coping with the coldest winter in recent memory, there is no doubt we are all looking forward to spring and I very much hope that the arrival of warmer weather will encourage you to attend the Chapter activities we have already scheduled. Our March 7th Brunch and Business Meeting at the Grand Chalet in Wayne, NJ should prove a fine place to make new friends or catch up with old ones, while our Third Annual Charity Car & Truck Show at Peddler's Village in Lahaska, PA June 13th will give you a great excuse to bring out your procar or any other interesting vehicle you might happen to have in your garage. The national level PCS calendar is very full this year as well, with a Miller-Meteor Reunion taking place in Piqua OH from June 17th-20th and an International Meet in sunny Daytona Beach, FL, organized by our good friend Bill Wright, scheduled for July 27th-31st.

I would especially like to welcome our newest members to the PCS Northeast Chapter, and stress that it will be our pleasure to meet you, your family and your friends at any of the aforementioned activities, all of which are discussed in greater detail in this issue. Please participate and get involved. With or without a professional car you are always welcome, and our activities almost always offer you the opportunity to pick one up if you're inclined. I strongly believe that everyone should own at least two or three procars, preferably all at the same time.

Lastly, I want to apologize for the lack of a fourth quarter Criterion, which we had to keep postponing as our calendar of events was in flux until the very week that this issue went to press. I hope that this oversized first quarter newsletter will make up for it.

See You Soon, Bill Marcy

you might be a member of." He also adds that "you should bring your spouse and family along as they will love the little shops, antique stores and restaurants surrounding the show field. If you've never been to an event at Peddler's Village, you are in for a special treat." Pre-registration for display vehicles costs just \$10 while the day-of-show fee is \$15, and further details concerning the event are found in the ENCLOSED FLYER and the "Criterion Calendar" section at the end of this newsletter.

NOTES FROM THE NOVEMBER MEETING

Representing a record as far as anyone could recall, eighteen people attended the PCS Northeast Chapter's November 9th business meeting hosted by Fred & Tracy Goerlitz at the Mansfield Township First Aid Squad in Hackettstown, NJ and there was much on the agenda to discuss. As newly-elected National PCS President John Ehmer had tapped Bill Marcy to be his Vice-President at the August International Meet in Pittsburgh, some had wondered whether Bill might need to step aside as Northeast Chapter President on the grounds that an extra vote might be needed at a future PCS Board Meeting. Craig Stewart noted, however, that the National Board meeting was a "once-a-year deal," and Andy Toton pointed out that the procedures used at union meetings presented a solution: "The President can temporarily resign in writing. It's legally done, and done every day." As Bill Marcy asserted he "would be happy to be Northeast Chapter President forever," the assembled members voted to re-nominate him for another term with Dan McCann continuing to serve as Vice-President and Activities Director while Jeff and Mary Hookway continue in their respective roles as Chapter Treasurer and Secretary.

With regards to the Northeast Chapter's dealings with the National PCS, Bill Marcy reported that he hears from John Ehmer "at least once or twice a month," and that there's been "more communication between the President and the regional chapters than there has been in several years. This is just what the PCS needs today." Bill's chief regret with regards to Pittsburgh was that there was no opportunity at the Board Meeting, which turned into a two-day affair due to the volume of old business,

to volunteer the PCS Northeast Chapter as the host of the 2007 International Meet (the 2005 and 2006 events are respectively slated for Denver, CO and Kingsport, TN), though the prospect remains open to discussion.

Convinced that "we will have a hundred cars on the field if it doesn't rain," Bill Marcy also put out the call for volunteers at the Chapter's Third Annual Charity Car and Truck Show in Lahaska, PA scheduled for Sunday, June 13th, and urged Chapter members to contact Vice-President Dan McCann at (732) 292-2770 if they have an idea for an activity. Millington, NJ ambulance dealer Paul Vickery has already broached the possibility of hosting a picnic at his house, where there is enough space to put a dozen professional cars on display.

Discussing Old Business, PCS Northeast Chapter Secretary Mary Hookway reported that she had received a thank you from Anne Irwin, Executive Director of the Bucks County SPCA, for the \$655 that the Chapter raised at its Second Annual Charity Car & Truck at Peddler's Village in Lahaska, PA last May 25th. Written thanks were also received for the \$25 contribution that the Chapter made to the Canton, OH humane society from the family of longtime PCS member Joe Ross, an avid Miller-Meteor enthusiast who passed away all-too-early at the age of 48 on August 27th, 2003 following a valiant battle with cancer. In light of Joe's passing, the similarly-unexpected death of 18-year-old John R. Keel in December, 2002 and word from Columbus, OH that former PCS National Membership Secretary Beverly Ruff is ailing, Mary said that the Chapter needs to establish a standard "good and welfare" procedure when a member of the PCS family gets sick or dies since "these days are going to come and we will need a hard and fast rule for dealing with them." Typically, she sends a fruit basket or a charitable donation in lieu of flowers when news of this sort reaches her, but who should be afforded such an honor was open to discussion as the monies expended do add up. Ted Collins suggested, and the assembled members approved, that those qualified should include "Chapter people, Presidents and family members of other chapters, and at our President's discretion. The general rule is that they should feel like family, or their family should feel like family." To provide a fund for such contingencies, and due to the increasing costs of the newsletter and other

fund for such contingencies, and due to the increasing costs of the newsletter and other expenses, the re-imposition of member dues at a rate of \$12 per year was also approved at the meeting.

In the realm of New Business, former Northeast Chapter President Leo Maren III asked for fresh material regarding cars and events that he can place on the Chapter's recently-revised web site at www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Garage/1074, which can be e-mailed to him at caddy@bellatlantic.net. Impressed with the patch that the Ohio Chapter presented to new members at the tent they erected on the show field at PCS Pittsburgh 2003, Leo was also authorized to spend \$500 on the development of a conceptually similar patch for the Northeast Chapter and have it put on baseball caps; offering to waive setup charges, the same vendor that produced T-shirts for the 1999 International Meet in Lancaster, PA has preliminarily estimated that a six-color patch would cost \$2.60 apiece for a 3-inch design, or \$2.99 for a 3.5-inch version, plus 16 cents each for the heat transfer backing, while a second vendor quoted \$3.75 a unit for 100 patches plus setup and backing.

MILLER-METEOR REUNION SET FOR JUNE

Respectively-founded in 1853 and 1914, the A.J. Miller Company of Bellefontaine, OH and the Meteor Motor Car Company of Piqua, OH earned enviable reputations in the professional vehicle field, and the pooling of their resources under the Miller-Meteor nameplate in the 1957 model year represented one of the most-important mergers in the history of the industry. There is no doubt that admirers of the company's funeral cars and ambulances will have much to look forward to when the PCS Miller-Meteor Chapter hosts a Miller-Meteor Reunion at the Piqua, OH Comfort Inn from Thursday, June 17th through Sunday, June 20th, 2004. This event will be co-chaired by PCS Archivist Tony Karsnia and Tom Caserta, who joined M-M in 1962 and worked his way up from prepping cars for delivery to the serving as the national sales and service manager by 1974; his interest in the firm had been piqued in childhood, as his father ran a restaurant, tavern and grocery store

down the street from the plant, and he still recalls with sadness that he was the fifth-to-last person to leave the facility when it closed on May 16th, 1980.

While Caserta keeps Piqua's coachbuilding traditions alive with the Meteor Mort and Carmelita hearses that he builds on small numbers from unaltered-wheelbase Mercury Marquis sedans, the old Miller-Meteor plant at 125 Clark Avenue is now vacant and this reunion will likely be the last time that professional car enthusiasts can get a look inside before the building is demolished. The formal itinerary will begin in Lima, OH on Thursday, June 17th, where a tour of the Central Point Parkway facility where Accubuilt currently manufactures Miller-Meteors will be followed by a motorcade south to Piqua; a block of rooms at the Comfort Inn has been reserved at a special rate of just \$59.46 a night, and guests can take advantage of a swimming pool and a number of fine restaurants nearby. Friday's schedule includes a trip to the Eagle Coach plant in the Cincinnati suburb of Amelia, which will be followed by an evening social at the Comfort Inn where several retired Miller-Meteor employees will be on hand for questions and discussion. A tour and photo session at the Clark Street plant and showroom will take place on Saturday, June 19th, with retired employees returning to their old stations on the line to recall their tasks when the factory was in full operation. Updates regarding this once-in-a-lifetime event will be appearing on the PCS Message Board at www.professionalcar.org, and further information can also be obtained by contacting Tony Karsnia at (651) 278-2421, tcriterion@prodigy.net or 344 West University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55103.

NEW CHAPTER MEMBER SEEKS ASSISTANCE

One of the newest members to join the Northeast Chapter, Wes Shelton, is looking for an ambulance to put on display at the Chatterbox Drive-In Restaurant in Augusta, New Jersey. The ambulance would be inside the restaurant for EMS week, which is May 16-22. Wes is a member of the Blue Ridge Rescue Squad and the restaurant is doing this to support the squad's volunteer efforts. If anyone is interested please contact Wes at (973) 948-7754.

DAYTONA BEACH BECKONS PCS IN JULY

Taking place at the Hilton Oceanfront Resort in Daytona Beach, FL from Tuesday, July 27th through Saturday, July 31st, 2004, the Professional Car Society's 28th Annual International Meet promises to be the perfect antidote for the blues induced by an overly long and cold winter. Event chairman Bill Wright, who remains an enthusiastic Northeast Chapter member even though he departed snowy Dutchess County, NY several years ago, has secured a large block of rooms at a specially-discounted \$99 rate (the nicest "ocean front" rooms cost \$30 extra) that's especially-tempting in light of the regular \$160-\$170 tariff, and the itinerary he's assembling should prove to be a similarly strong inducement to attend.

Starting with a catered reception at Bill's funeral home on Tuesday evening, the schedule of events is slated to include a bus tour of the Kennedy Space Center, a lap of the Daytona International Speedway and a professional car photo shoot on Daytona's world famous drive-on beach. There will still be plenty of time, Bill promises, to soak up the sun, take a swim or visit other local landmarks like the Daytona Flea Market, the Volusia County EVAC station, Emery Riddle Aeronautical University with its full-sized statue of the 1903 Wright Flier, the Museum of Arts and Sciences, the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse Museum and the famous (or notorious, depending on your point of view) Boot Hill Saloon that's "Ground Zero" during bike week. "Come early, stay late, and leave your procar with me while you rent a car and go see Mickey Mouse," he urges us.

While Bill noted in his meet preview at the general membership meeting last August that "I drove a 1953 Henney (Packard) Junior from Daytona Beach to Pittsburgh, so I want to see everyone down there," PCS Northeast Chapter President Bill Marcy stresses that "you don't have to drive all the way to Florida unless you want to." Charged the same rate for their ambulance that a high-top conversion van is charged (\$470 for the vehicle and \$90 for each passenger, or \$180 each for a sleeper compartment), he and Lucille have made a reservation for Amtrak's Auto Train, which departs Lorton, VA outside of Washington,



D.C. at 4 pm each afternoon, arriving in Sanford, FL near Orlando (just an hour's drive from the host hotel) sixteen hours later. "As it's going to be a nice event the hotel, and probably the train, will fill up early, so it will pay to make your reservations as soon as possible," Bill Marcy advises, adding that "Bill Wright could also use some Northeast manpower during meet week so you shouldn't be bashful about volunteering." Registration information can be obtained by phoning him at (386) 255-4704, e-mailing Fantafuss1@aol.com or dropping a note to his residence at 364 Aleatha Drive, Daytona Beach, FL 32114.

KEARNY WELCOMES THE PCS FOR HALLOWEEN

Mary Hookway recently e-mailed Your Editor that "a good time was had by all" when Northeast Chapter PCS members participated in an open house that the Kearny, NJ Volunteer Emergency Rescue Squad staged on Sunday, October 26th to coincide with the town's annual Halloween parade. Joined on display by a fire engine from the NBC-TV series "Third Watch," classic Cadillac ambulances in attendance included Leo Maren III's 1974 Miller-Meteor Criterion, Paul Vickery's A.J. Miller-bodied 1956 low-top (brought by Jeff and Mary Hookway) and a

1976 Miller-Meteor Lifeliner owned by Craig and Roseanne Stewart that, having been completed on September 24th, 1976, is thought to be the very last ambulance the Piqua, OH coachbuilder delivered to New Jersey, where it served with the Martinsville and Passaic Township squads before Mike Barruzza brought it into the PCS orbit in the early 1990s.

The club's intense interest in the event, Mary added, was attributable to the fact that Northeast Chapter Vice-President Dan McCann is an officer of KVERS and the Stewarts are founding members.

WALLINGTON, NJ'S THANKSGIVING PARADE

Mandating that all participating vehicles be adorned with lights or Christmas ornaments, the Wallington, NJ Fire Department's 2nd Annual Ride Through Holiday Parade offered Philadelphia PCS members Andy and Karen Toton an irresistible



opportunity to make a memorable impression with their 1970 Miller-Meteor Cadillac funeral coach/ambulance combination. Their first step in preparing for the November 29th procession was to find a seat for Santa Claus and three teddy bears wearing Santa suits in the patient compartment, after which tinsel and twinkle lights were hung from the interior ceiling and a large golden star was affixed to the inside rear window. The exterior's festivity factor was similarly enhanced with multi-colored tinsel, strings of tinkle lights to compliment the rooftop beacon and a big red ribbon on the hood.

"The parade itself was extremely enjoyable and the Wallington Police and Fire Department Personnel were very polite and helpful while directing us throughout the entire parade route," Andy also reported to Your Editor. "I personally would say there were between

sixty and seventy decorated fire trucks and ambulances joined by various floats and a few antique cars. All the town people clapped, waved and cheered in Polish as well as English since 80% of the residents are Polish-American." While photos were ruled out by the parade's post-sunset start, Andy confirmed our impressions that the holiday-decorated fire trucks were "a sight to see. They had fire trucks with eight-foot antlers extending from each side of the cab roof, fire trucks dressed up to look like gigantic railroad steam engines, and a hook-and-ladder with a tiller man and more than 5,000 lights. They even had some 40-year old open cab fire trucks though it was real cold and windy that night, but everyone participating really enjoyed themselves." Awards were limited to fire engines and modern, in-service ambulances, but Andy declared that "this parade is a MUST and Karen and I are already scheduling our 2004 calendar for the next Wallington Third Annual Holiday Parade. Maybe if our PCS Northeast Chapter can sponsor a trophy class, it would entice other PCS members to bring their ambulances and combinations. Judging from the all-positive feedback we received, the organizers and spectators certainly want to see more of our vehicles."

A FAMOUS 1956 CHEVY AMBULANCE CROSSES KRUSE'S AUCTION BLOCK

As one is extremely fortunate to spot one or maybe two Chevrolets for every fifty Cadillacs, fifteen Buicks or half-dozen Packards that show up at the typical Professional Car Society International Meet, it is well worth while keeping close tabs on the most interesting examples that have surfaced over the years. Attractively-bodied by National Coaches of Knightstown, IN, this extended-wheelbase 1956 Chevrolet 150 ambulance turned many heads when it was shown by Charles and Carol Havelka of LaGrange, IL at the 1995 PCS International Meet in Fort Wayne.

It was originally built for an Anaconda Copper plant in Butte, Montana, whose insurance carrier required an on-site ambulance no matter how rarely it was used, and had covered only 17,000 miles by the time that the Havelkas purchased it in 1991.

