

# *The* **PROFESSIONAL** *CAR*



**STATION WAGON**  
**PROFESSIONAL CAR**  
**CONVERSIONS**



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# The Professional Car

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**COVER PHOTO** – Gregg Merksamer took our idyllic cover photo at the 2013 PCS International Meet in Milwaukee. As the cars exited the show field late in the day they lined up on the pier for our official photo session, with a sparkling Lake Michigan as a backdrop. The sailboat added a nice nautical touch. The featured car is a 1957 Ford Amblewagon owned by the late Bo Pounds, of Gold Cross Ambulance in Augusta, Georgia.

**CENTERSTRETCH** – Canadian PCS member Ted Kalinowski of Windsor, Ontario took the fine portrait of Jim Vowell's 1964 Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser Amblewagon that graces our centerspread this time around. The photo was taken August 30th in a park near the Romeo, Michigan firehouse where Jim works as a firefighter.

**BACK COVER PHOTO** – Tom McPherson photographed Robert Smith's 1956 Ford Country Sedan station wagon ambulance during the photo session at the record-setting 2011 PCS International Meet in Hudson, Ohio. With its gaudy red lettering and fender-mounted siren, this car fairly screams "1950s". Robert L. Smith's funeral home (and ambulance collection) is in Dover, Ohio.

**FROM THE EDITOR** – In TPC#161 we published a well-received history of the sedan-type ambulance. The principal feature in this issue is a similar tribute to another often overlooked and under-appreciated type of professional car – hearse, ambulance, and combination conversions of standard family-type station wagons. Prior to the Second World War, wood-trimmed station wagons were largely limited to the country-club set, but with the postwar economic and interstate highway building boom, the station wagon emerged as a popular family vacation hauler. Post-1950 steel-bodied station wagons without *faux* exterior wood décor found favor with funeral directors and ambulance operators who saw them as attractive alternatives to big commercial-chassis Packard and Cadillac funeral cars and ambulances, especially as light-duty service cars for first-call work. We're indebted to Tom McPherson and Gregg Merksamer who enthusiastically deluged us with great photos to illustrate this piece. Part II will be a parallel history of the sedan-delivery-based professional car and the sub-industry the station wagon's close cousin spawned in the years following WWII. Watch for it.

– Walt McCall, Editor