

The Professional Car

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COVER PHOTO – We chose this vehicle for our cover photo because it nicely shows the key styling elements of the classic limousine-type funeral coach of the 1920s and 1930s – elongated, drapeless windows on each side of the car and flower trays above the casket compartment. Note also the heavy-duty steel disc wheels. This economy model limousine hearse was built on a ca. 1930 Ford Model “AA” truck chassis, but the body builder, alas, is unknown. The photo was taken in front of the Ford Motor Company’s Engineering Offices in Dearborn, Michigan, behind the famed Henry Ford Museum. We found this interesting photo in the Ford Motor Company of Canada Ltd. archives many years ago.

BACK COVER PHOTO – In the fall of 1956, the Superior Coach Corporation of Lima, Ohio held a Broadway-style stage revue to introduce its dazzling new 1957 models to its dealers and distributors. The attractive young lady in this photo is showing the dealers the 1957 Superior Cadillac limousine combination funeral coach and ambulance. Note the distinctly 1950s-style airline-type window curtains and 2-stage, stepped roof also used on the company’s Cadillac hightop ambulances.

EDITOR’S MESSAGE – In the early 1920s, the American hearse industry underwent its first major styling revolution. Almost overnight, in 1921-22, the long, low limousine became the body design of choice for style-conscious funeral directors. While limousine-type funeral cars, ambulances, and combinations had been around in one form or the other since the ’teens, they were very much in the minority compared with the tall, gloomy carved-panel hearse. The sleek new limousine funeral car pleasingly blended in with the other automobiles in the funeral procession instead of towering high over them as the carved-panel hearse had. Although later challenged by fresh new body styles such as the streamlined carved hearse and elegant landau, the limousine body style endured and is still with us today. With contemporary offerings like Eagle’s Echelon, Federal’s Renaissance, MK’s Grand Legacy Limited, and S&S/Superior’s limousine window option, limousine funeral-car styling has enjoyed something of a comeback. But who knows what’s next?

Walt McCall