



# The Criterion

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHEAST CHAPTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY  
THIRD QUARTER 1998 GREGG D. MERKSAMER, EDITOR

## MY KIND OF TOWN, CHICAGO . . .



A grand total of four 1974 Miller-Meteor Criterions attended the 22nd Annual PCS International Meet in Burr Ridge, Illinois August 12-15. Owned left-to-right by Barry Caselli, Jeff Stanton, Tony Karsnia & Leo Maren, these "walk through" Cadillacs with their blind quarters, center aisles and swiveling bucket seats heralded the transition to even more spacious truck-based ambulances in the 1980s.

With historic Route 66 serving as the setting, more than ninety ambulances, limousines and funeral cars from all over the USA and Canada attended the 22nd Annual PCS International Meet in the southwestern Chicago suburb of Burr Ridge, Illinois from August 12-15. While PCS Northeast Chapter members Mike Barruzza, Dottie Forvour, Bill & Lucille Marcy, Barry

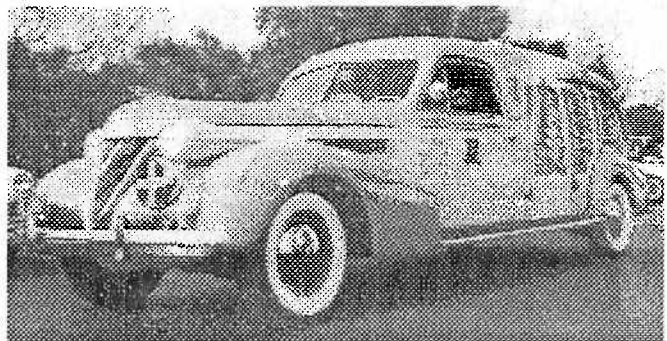
Caselli and Leo Maren all made the 900 mile trip by car, Jeremy Illingworth trumped all comers to earn his second consecutive distance trophy for driving 3,300 miles from Victoria, British Columbia even though his 1972 Superior Cadillac hearse stalled at nearly every stop. Camping out in the casket compartment with his intrepid girlfriend Candee Clarke. Jeremy's route took

### CHAPTER TO MEET DEC. 6th

The purpose of this meeting is to elect chapter officers and continue preparations for the 1999 meet in Lancaster.

We will be meeting at The First Presbyterian Church Columbia & Valley Blvds. Woodridge, N.J.

SEE ATTACHED DIRECTIONS



Jerry Kayser's 1939 S&S Cadillac carved hearse won Best of Show at PCS Chicago. Note the purple-lensed "Silent Siren" processional light on the front bumper.



After suffering a fatal coronary Saturday morning, Don Alley returned to Texas in the back of his own 1965 Superior Consort.

him past Seattle, Mt. Rushmore and "Carhenge" outside Alliance, Nebraska, which he noticed included "a 1965 or '66 Miller-Meteor Cadillac ambulance sticking straight up." Once in Chicago this documentary-filmmaker-by-trade kept us entertained with home-made Viewmaster and stereo-opticon pictures of funeral cars and photographed all the vehicles in attendance with a 3-D camera.

Starting with Wednesday's tour of Federal Signal in University Park (beloved by ambulance buffs as the home of the "Q" siren) and a welcoming dinner bash and swing session by the Rhythm Rockets at Dell Rhea's Chicken Basket on Route 66, national PCS President Gene Dybinski and other volunteers from the "Illini" Chapter worked hard to keep the itinerary full and interesting. Thursday saw the PCS bus to Mayor Richard Daley's "old neighborhood" of Bridgeport for heaping helpings of Frank & Sam Ricobene's famous Italian sausage and a tour of their classic car collection. This was followed by a visit to the Chicago Fire Department's sprawling service shops at 38th and Sacramento, where Ron Howard filmed a scene for "Backdraft" and the ceiling is high enough to house a hundred-foot ladder truck fully extended. Our guide to the facility was Assisant Director Jack Connors, whose wife is the SPAAMFA membership secretary. He said that Chicago's 99 engine and 59 hook & ladder companies handle between 30,000 and 50,000 calls a year (most are EMS-related, thanks to modern fireproofing and safety education) and trucks on average come in for maintenance twice a year. "Nowadays there's more punch on initial calls,"

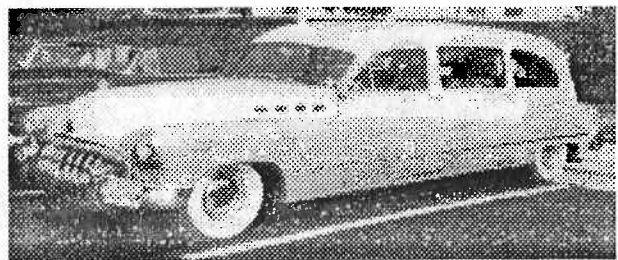
Connors explained, "so that we knock fires out sooner." 85 people in seven trades ranging from blacksmith to electrician work in this union shop, taking care of repairs on as many as twenty trucks simultaneously while also maintaining the department's Hurst tools and K-12 saws.

Friday's activities included a professional car convoy down Route 66 to the Egyptian-themed Empress Riverboat Casino at Joliet, after which the PCS imbibed some more poultry family-style at the delightfully kitschy White Fence Farm (the decor featured

penny-farthing bicycles hung between the ceiling beams, huge collections of Hummel figurines and fossils, a row of fun house mirrors and an "under glass" indoor car corral with a 1946 Ford "Woodie" wagon and an early Porsche 911).

Sadly, Saturday's car show was irreparably marred by the fatal coronary of Plainview, Texas PCS member Don Alley. "Dad had been planning to attend for three years." Don's son Chris said afterward, "and he was real excited about coming up here." Gene Dybinski recalled that Don had been the third person to register for the meet, while Northeast Chapter VP Bill Marcy added that "even though he came up here against his doctor's advice, at least he died where he wanted to be. Frankly, I hope I'm that lucky when my time comes." In perhaps the only concession to the PCS rule against displaying caskets in its cars, Mr. Alley went home Sunday morning in the back of his own 1965 Superior Pontiac Consort short wheelbase hearse.

Despite the morning's tragedy, Saturday still proved a great opportunity to hear the growl of an old-



Larry D. Sheppard's toothy 1950 Flxible-Buick traveled 1,220 miles from Lampassas, TX, taking home a 3rd place prize in the combination class.

## FALL FUN SCHEDULED

Even if we emptied our wallets in Chicago - is the Empress Riverboat Casino our prime suspect? - that's no excuse to throw the tarp on your procar and take the autumn off. Chapter VP & Activities Director Bill Marcy (201-342-4871) has scheduled a 1950s-style lunch meet for 1pm Sunday, November 15th at Sonny's Drive-In, a wonderfully retro-flavored eatery in Augusta, NJ located at the junction of US 206 and NJ 15. Unless El Nino decides to pass us by, lunch will be followed by a professional car convoy through the scenic countryside of northwest New Jersey.

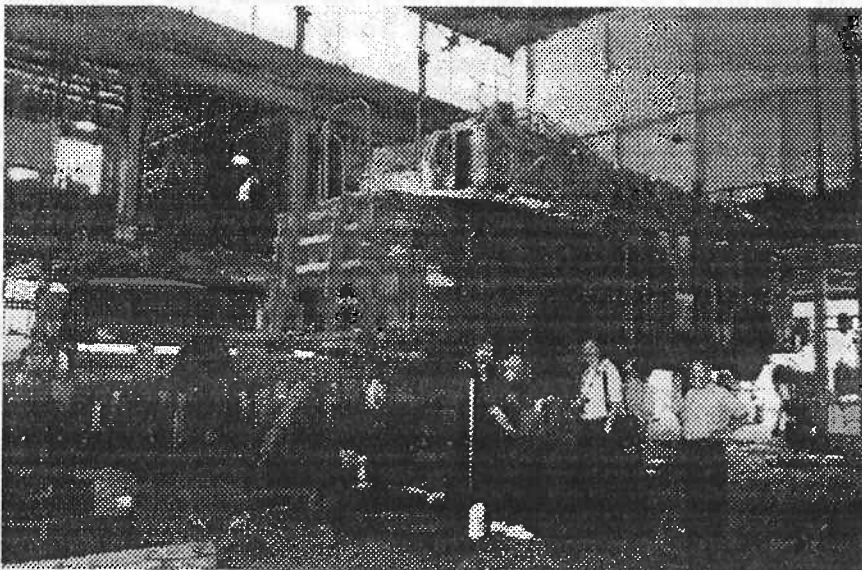
Another event of particular interest to the owners of car-chassied ambulances is the October 25th open house at the Kearny, NJ Volunteer Emergency Squad, which is located on Liberty Street between Kearny Avenue and Maple Street. Car coordinators Craig Stewart (201-438-1757 days) and Dan McCann (201-997-7500 Saturday evenings) ask that participants arrive by 11am for this 12-4pm event.



**Steve Rankin pattered around the parking lot in the only ambulance at PCS Chicago that could fit inside another ambulance.**

fashioned coaster siren or scrutinize the intricate aluminum drapes, "Silent Siren" bumper beacon and Gothic-themed interior of the eventual Best-of-Show winner, a 1939 Sayers & Scovill Cadillac carved hearse brought from Moses Lake, Washington by Jerry Kayser. Entering a car in the show was even enough for funeral directors to earn two hours of continuing education credit from the State of Illinois.

Many of the most interesting cars at Burr Ridge had never seen the inside a restoration shop. The clutch was the only non-original component on the 11,000 mile 1947 Miller-Cadillac ambulance that the local Western Springs Fire Department had purchased with the proceeds from its World War II scrap drive. "We were very lucky to have two hospitals at either end of town," explained squad spokesman Frank Madler, "and it was our policy to wash and dry it after every run." Accompanied by his father Michael's matching pair of 1954 Henney-Packard Junior ambulances, Brian Reichenbach displayed a beautifully patinaed



**Thursday's itinerary included a visit to the Chicago Fire Department's massive service shop, which was originally constructed as a foundry by Ryerson Steel in 1914.**



**Professional cars convoy down US 66 to Joliet.**

1958 Edsel Villager rescue wagon with 17,744 miles on the odometer and the make's trademark rotating drum speedometer and "Teletouch" transmission shift. Bernie Brown's similarly all-original 1941 Meteor Cadillac Gothic panel hearse featured a neon "FUNERAL" sign in the rear window and a Gentleman Products "singing chapel on wheels," which piped music from an underhood record player to a set of speakers under the casket compartment.

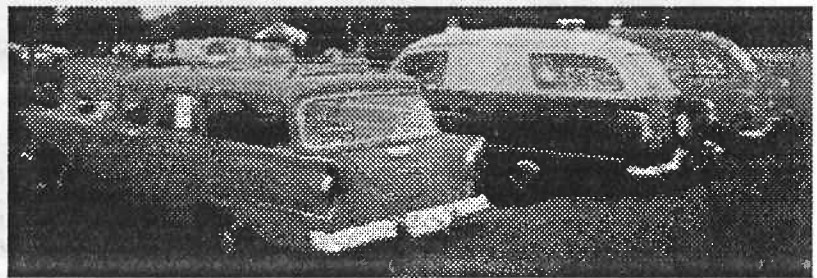
Prior to the traditional post-banquet "sound and light show" in the hotel parking lot (where one participant, in addition to firing up the lights and siren in his rig, hooked a couple of stray sirens up to an extra battery), Northeast Chapter members took home their fair share of awards as Mike Barruzza's 1973 S&S Cadillac hearse earned 1st place in the Postwar Hearse Class while Bill Marcy's 1964 Oldsmobile Amblewagon won 2nd place among conversion cars. The weekend's proceedings made a deep impression on dinner speaker Todd Van Beck, a Cincinnati funeral director and "Modern Day Will Rogers" who does continuing education seminars for The Loewen Group, who penned a whole new speech in place of his originally planned talk on Presidential funerals. "When I walked down the aisle of cars outside my brain exploded with memories of the early years of this profession, when the mortuaries supplied ambulance service," Van Beck said. He remembered how the Omaha funeral home where he began his career "had a 1962 Hess & Eisenhardt with every light God created, and an oxygen mask I recalled us reusing. Even though things



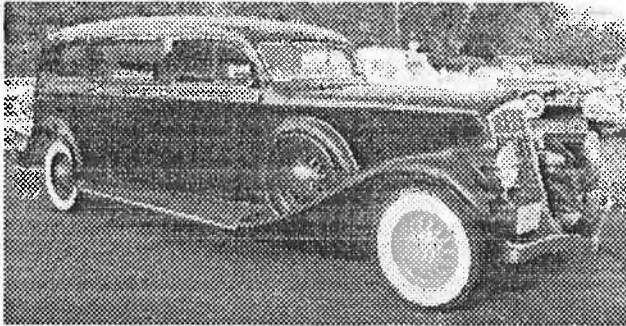
**Bill & Lucille Marcy enjoy Thursday evening's cruise down the Chicago River.**

changed for the better, we operated what was state-of-the-art 24-hour emergency service at the time. We were the only people in the community with the training and a car big enough for the job and, by God, we did it. Young whippersnappers might think of us as amateurs, but in our day we saved a hell of a lot of lives and we should be proud of that history."

Having grown up across the street from a mortuary in Avoca, Iowa, Van Beck's humorous recollections of his early years in the funeral trade proved to be real crowd pleasers. Six months after getting his first job at the Heaphy & Heaphy Mortuary in Omaha, he was given the opportunity to drive the flower car to the cemetery ahead of the procession; he was so excited he forgot to stop at the office and deposited the flowers at the wrong open grave. "While I waited for the funeral to arrive, doing that rock we do while we're waiting for the priest, my boss drove by and shot me a look that



**Brian & Mike Reichenbach brought a 1958 Edsel rescue wagon and a pair of 1954 Henney-Packard Juniors from Michigan.**



Mike Reifer's extremely rare 1934 Henney Pierce-Arrow V-12 Arrowline 3-way won first place honors in the Prewar Funeral Coach class.

made my mouth dry and me wet everywhere else."

With Don Alley's passing still fresh in everyone's minds, Van Beck's concluding remarks had particular resonance. "Ambulances and hearses are a symbol of life's fragilities. If you pull up to one at a red light you can be totally illiterate but still know what that car means, and it instills an urgency to live life to the fullest. I am very pleased to say that you're looking at the newest member of your organization."

## BUCKS COUNTY SHOW

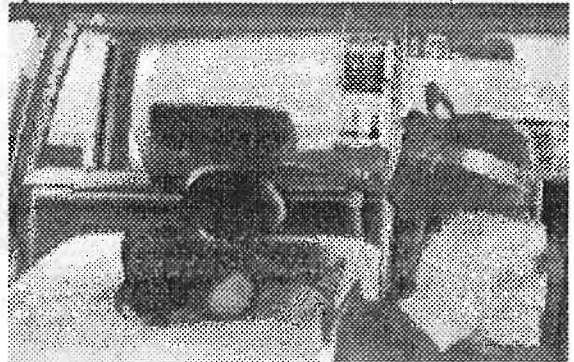
Seven professional cars comprised nearly ten percent of the vehicles attending the 6th Annual Bucks County Auto Show at Core Creek Park in Bridgetown, PA August 30th. "This was a most impressive turnout on our part for such a small show," recalls Chapter VP & Activities Director Bill Marcy. "It was also a very nice place to be, with plenty of shade and the music wasn't so obtrusive." First place honors in the procar class went to Harvey Schofield's 1967 Lincoln 8-inch limousine by Lehmann-Peterson, while 2nd place was earned by the silver blue 1963 S&S Cadillac combination coach that Mike Barruzza & Dottie Forvour recently purchased from Bill O'Brien (its picture appeared in the last issue of *The Criterion*) and 3rd place went to Bill Marcy's 1964 Oldsmobile Amblewagon. Other procars at Core Creek included Rich Litton's 1965 Superior Pontiac ambulance, Mike Barruzza's 1973 S&S Cadillac Victoria, Leo Maren's 1974 M-M Criterion and a 1971 or 1972 Superior Sovereign hearse owned by an unrecorded enthusiast.

## NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

PCS Northeast Chapter members returned to Carlstadt, NJ on August 23rd for the annual open house at the volunteer ambulance squad HQ. Grateful sponsor awards went to Craig Stewart's orange 1976 and bronze 1978 Miller-Meteor hightop ambulances as well as to Bill Marcy's 1964 Olds Vista Cruiser Amblewagon.

*Forbes Magazine* recently reported that Leif Technologies of Lebanon, Ohio has put a computerized grave marker on the market. This \$5000 cybertomb features a 5-by-4 inch screen that can access up to 85 pages of bibliographical data including photos and poems. Company founder and ex-Apple sales exec Deac Manross came up with the idea after his sister began researching their family's genealogy and found that conventional granite gravestones gave her little info to work with. The company also has a computerized cremation urn in the works.

While PCS Northeast Chapter Treasurer *Emeritus* Andy Toton had to promise his wife Karen that he would re-carpet and repaint half the house to obtain her blessing for the 1970 Miller-Meteor Cadillac combination coach he purchased two years ago, a recent letter from the Philadelphia couple shows how she has found her own way to enjoy this multiple trophy winner. Her composition "Dr. Grizzly Bear and Sleep Bear" won a special award for creativity at last year's "paws and claws" car show in Mavern, PA.



## CRITERION CLASSIFIEDS:

**1948 Packard Super Eight 7-Passenger Formal Sedan.** \$13,000. Lou Europa, (973) 764-6697.

**1950 Chrysler Crown Imperial Limousine.** Complete and running but needs restoration. \$3000. Sal Anicito, (201) 440-5337 days.

**1959 Superior Pontiac Bonneville Ambulance.** Former Kodak factory ambulance. Rare 3-speed stick with 389 V8, only 6,000 original miles. \$4200. Also selling rare 1963 Flexible Buick long-wheelbase hearse with parts car included. Main Street Motors, Somerville, NJ, (908) 231-1144.

**1966 Austin Princess 8-passenger Limousine:** Just like The Royal Family's! Right hand drive, 4-speed manual transmission, divider window, runs and drives. \$2500. Ron Babino, (201) 487-5903.

**1967 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Embassy Flower Car.** one of six built during 1967 model year. 50,000 miles, Inverness Green with black crinkle-finish roof. Trophy winner at several PCS International Meets and the 1995 Cadillac-LaSalle Grand National. \$15,995. Carlton Ham, (603)934-4913 or e-mail whtmtman@together.net.

**1968 Cadillac Fleetwood Limousine:** Black. \$3500. Barry, (717) 639-2625 days or (717) 961-3788 evenings.

**1969 Superior Cadillac Flower Car.** One of 24 made, complete project car, runs good. \$2300 OBO. John Graecomantonio or Chuck Six, (732) 286-6753.

**1972 Cadillac Fleetwood Limousine:** Silver with black top and blue interior. Garage-kept, only 50,000 miles. Gorgeous! \$5000 OBO. Eve Schmidt, (717) 732-2750.

**1972 Cadillac Sedan DeVille:** Excellent dark blue exterior with white vinyl top. Garage-kept, only 84,000 miles. Solid steel behind the front rocker panels and rear fender skirts. Rare options like trailer towing package, cruise control and cloth split bench seat. Asking \$5000. Whitey Nilsen, Dover Sunoco, (973) 328-9038.

**1973 Cadillac Fleetwood Formal Limousine.** Black with matching crinkle finish top. \$2995 OBO. Dave Wilner, (732) 549-5500.

**WANTED:** Pre-1916 Brass Era procar or police car. Any type considered if it is brass trimmed. Information and photos please. Sam Jaffe, 32 Woodcrest Drive, Scotia, NY 12302 or (518) 399-5910.

**WANTED:** 1959-74 Cadillac Ambulance. Mike Murphy, (301) 577-7923 or E-mail murphy\_m@bls.gov.

**WANTED:** NOS or excellent 1974 Cadillac DeVille/Fleetwood grille and round hi-lo power beam headlights, Repair/Service Manual for 1970s Superior Flower Car deck. Mike Barruzza, (215) 788-8105.

## CRITERION CALENDAR:

**Nov. 15th (Sun.), Augusta, NJ:** PCS Northeast Chapter fall foliage tour. Lunch starts 1pm at Sonny's Drive-In, intersection of US highway 206 and NJ 15. Call Bill Marcy at (201) 342-4871 for more information.

**Dec. 6th (Sun) Woodridge, N.J.:** PCS Northeast Chapter meeting

**Aug. 18th-21st, 1999 (Wed.-Sat.), Lancaster, PA:** PCS Northeast Chapter hosts the Professional Car Society's 23rd Annual International Meet at the Best Western Eden Inn Resort. Call Leo Maren at (908) 647-3738 or E-mail caddy@bellatlantic.net to volunteer or request further information.

# THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY

*"Dedicated to the restoration and preservation of vintage ambulances, funeral cars & livery vehicles"*

## NORTHEAST CHAPTER

[www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Garage/1074](http://www.geocities.com/MotorCity/Garage/1074)

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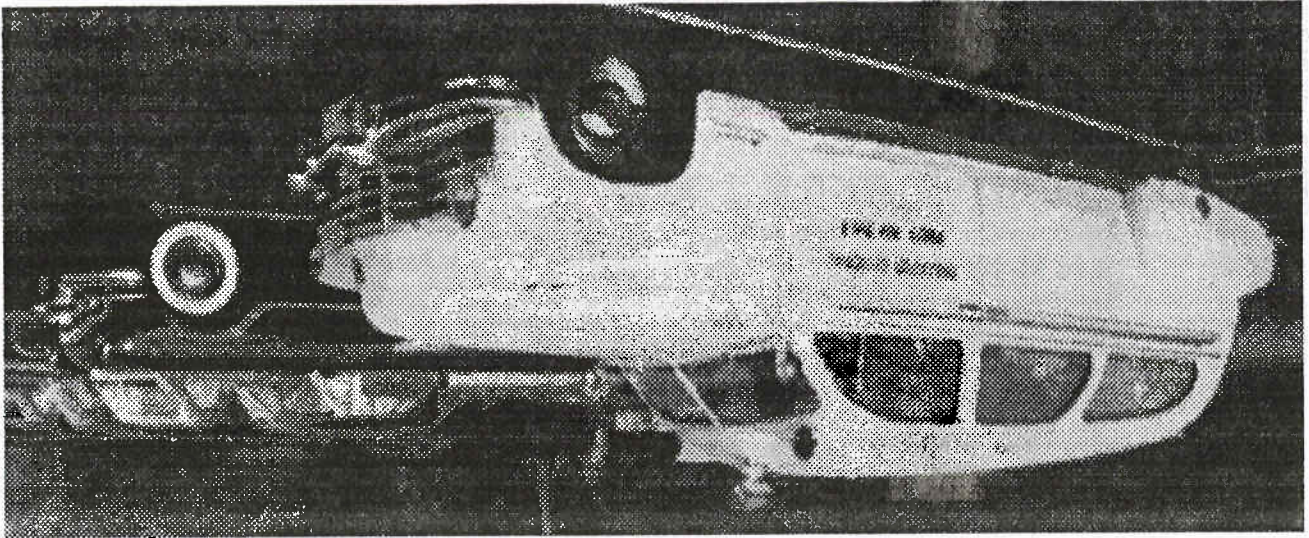
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Servicing Professional Car Society members in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, the Northeast Chapter of the PCS operates under a charter granted by the Society's Board of Directors on August 19th, 1986. Subscription to this publication is by membership in the Chapter through the Membership Director listed above. **Membership in the national organization of the PCS is a prerequisite to membership in any of its regional chapters.** Details on joining can be obtained from National Secretary Beverly Ruff at P.O. Box 9636, Columbus, Ohio 43209 or by accessing the official PCS home page at <http://www.professionalcar.org>.

Two of the most interesting cars at the 22nd Annual PCS International Meet in Chicago August 12-15 were the Western Springs Fire Department's 1947 Miller Cadillac ambulance and Maurice Baier's 1953 Henney-Packard flower car.



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