



# The Criterion

NEWSLETTER of the NORTHEAST CHAPTER of the PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY

[www.PCSNortheast.com](http://www.PCSNortheast.com)

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## President's Message

by Fred Goerlitz

I hope this edition of the Criterion finds everyone well. The summer seems to have flown by. There are still a few events on the calendar this fall and I encourage you to bring your car (or just yourself) and enjoy the upcoming events. The Northeast Chapter's display of antique ambulances at the EMS Council of New Jersey's annual convention will be held on Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at the Sheraton Hotel in Parsippany, NJ.

The Chapter is currently seeking someone to take over the reins as Newsletter Editor as Bill Marcy, our current newsletter editor, has decided to step down. Bill has done a phenomenal job since taking over the newsletter and leaves big shoes to fill. If you are interested please contact a chapter officer.

*Fred*

## Editor's Message

by Bill Marcy

Here we are, at the end of another summer. It seems like we just finished with the cold weather and we are already thinking about the end of the season that most of us look forward to. As of this date, Lucille and I have only attended a few shows and only one we brought our ambulance to, but we hope to finish the season strong. There are a number of shows still to come this season. You can find upcoming show information elsewhere in this edition. Maybe we will see you at one of these upcoming events; I sure hope so!

On a personal level, it has been an interesting year, especially where our Superior Pontiac ambulance is concerned. As many of you may be aware, we have had it for sale for months. Part of the reason for selling, was impossible access at the garage where we have it stored. Long story short, we needed to bring the car home, so I could show it to a gentleman looking at it for a friend in Germany. As we were riding home with the car, Lucille said "are you sure we should sell it?" to which I assured her we should. So after some negotiation, we agreed, the ambulance would go to Germany. It would be a week, or so, before the buyer would send the money. Meanwhile, I received a phone call from a movie car guy; he told me that they want our ambulance three times for a TV show called *Gotham* and once for a Sylvester Stalone movie called *The Irishman*. So, between Lucille and the movie opportunities, I told the buyer that we had decided not to sell. I really like to be a man of my word, no matter what, but it could not be done. The buyer, being a true gentleman, was very gracious, and said he completely understood and asked me to let him know, should we decide to sell in the future.

On Sunday August 6<sup>th</sup>, we drove to Macungie, PA for their "Club Day" although we did not bring a car to show. We met some people we knew, even a few PCS members. PCS members in attendance with their cars were; Nick Elias, with his lady-friend Genny and their 1963 Eureka Cadillac landau hearse, Larry Farrell and family with their 1966 Cotner Bevington Oldsmobile limousine and Ray Wotkowski with his 1981 Cadillac flower car conversion. Also in attendance were past PCS members Andy and Karen Toton, with their stunning two-tone green 1957 Caddy Coupe de Ville. There were literally hundreds of cars and trucks at this 54<sup>th</sup> Annual three day event. I heartily recommend putting next year's show on your 2018 calendar.

We have a couple of "new" classic professional cars to our Northeast Chapter roster and they will be featured, either in this, or the next edition of *The Criterion*.

We have several articles from our members and lots of professional car pictures throughout this edition of *The Criterion*. Please enjoy the read!

The following cars were seen at Macungie, PA on August 6<sup>th</sup> :



**Left:** Nick Elias and lady-friend Genny's 1963 Eureka Cadillac landau hearse

**Right:** Larry Farrell and family's 1966 Cotner Bevington Oldsmobile limousine



**Left:** Ray Wotkowski's 1981 Cadillac flower car conversion

**Right:** I know, it isn't a professional car, but it is owned by past PCS members Andy and Karen Toton, it is their 1957 Cadillac Coupe de Ville and it looks mighty professional to your editor.

## PCS Northeast Chapter at M&M Memorial Madness Car Show

by Mary Hookway

Members of the PCS Northeast Chapter got together at the 2017 Memorial Motor Madness car show on Sunday, May 28 at Mars Chocolate North America in Hackettstown, New Jersey. The newspapers say more than 500 cars were on the show field that day. Fred Goerlitz displayed his 1976 Superior Cadillac ambulance and Michael Hysek showed his 1991 Eureka Cadillac Brougham six door limousine. Additional chapter members joining in on the fun were Jeff and Mary Hookway, Gregg Merksamer, and Jenn Morin.



## 2017 Memorial Motor Madness

by Gregg D. Merksamer

Classics, customs, imports and street rods of every sort came out in force for the 23rd Annual Memorial Motor Madness car show staged at Mars Chocolate North America's Hackettstown, NJ HQ on Sunday, May 28th, 2017. The Hackettstown Rotary Club Foundation sponsors this event to benefit local charities like the Foundation for Hackettstown Medical Center, and their expectations of a big turnout were pre-emphasized by the promise of dash plaques to the first 400 entries even before perfect weather conditions fulfilled the attendance forecast by a hundred-car margin. Not only was there class judging by the show participants and a Best-of-Show award decided by a People's Choice vote, the registrants' goody bags had packets of M&Ms within!

Though PCS Nor'easters contributed only two professional cars to the tremendous, almost sardine-packed assemblage, they got prime space in proximity to the giant M&M mascot figures flanking and topping the front doors at Mars Chocolate. Chapter President Fred Goerlitz, a Hackettstown local, was joined by our V.P. Jennifer Morin while he displayed his Omaha Orange-and-white 1976 Superior "54" Cadillac High-Top Ambulance. Michael Hysek drove all the way up from Bristol, PA to grace the adjacent space with a nearly-flawless, silver-colored, 35,000-mile 1991 Eureka Cadillac six-door limousine he'd discovered on Craigslist and acquired from the Hall & Stone Funeral Home of Steelton, PA south of Harrisburg precisely one month prior on April 28th. "The seller got it from the previous owner when he bought the funeral home," Mike said, thoroughly justified in declaring his \$5,000 purchase "a steal."



Another professional Cadillac that turned heads at Hackettstown was a 1990 Miller-Meteor Traditional commercial glass rear-wheel-drive hearse, even if PCS Authenticity Police had cause to be aghast at the coffin-inspired speaker box sticking out its loading door and the two additional Kenwood speakers flanking the landau bars in each quarter panel. It was all for a good cause, at least, as Anthony Muzikar of Lake Hopatcong, NJ had just acquired it to help promote the "Dog Walk of the Dead" animal rescue fundraiser he's staging for the fifth time at the Sussex County Fairgrounds in Augusta, NJ from 11 am to 4 pm Saturday, October 21st. "I'm not a car guy - I'm a Halloween guy and the opportunity presented itself," he explained.



While PCS National Membership Director Jeff Hookway and his wife Mary were denied the chance to show their 1966 Cadillac De Ville Convertible when their transmission failed en route from Lafayette, NJ, the Pale Jade 1978 Ford LTD 4-door pillared hardtop owned by PCS Publicity Chair Gregg D. Merksamer successfully completed its hour-long trip from Warwick, NY with 32,868 miles clocked in total by the time it got parked tail-to-tail with a metallic ginger, 37,173-mile 1975 Ford Thunderbird fielded by John & Lois Seletyn of Hackettstown. This Blue Oval cluster soon added a Tahoe Turquoise 1966 LTD “shoebox” 4-door hardtop built in-state at Ford’s Mahwah, NJ plant; “Jeff & Michelle of Belvidere, NJ” found it just north of Philadelphia this past February and had edged its odometer to 65,250 miles by show day.

As Your Correspondent had attended a big screen 40th Anniversary showing of SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT in Paramus the preceding Wednesday, he was thrilled to see a Hackettstown enthusiast surnamed Valentino exhibit a Starlight Black 1977 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am “Special Edition” faithfully evoking Burt Reynolds’ ride with its T-tops, gold pin stripes, “shaker” hood scoop and “Screaming Chicken” decal. A far rarer and therefore even-niftier 1977 Pontiac two spaces down was the Cameo White LeMans Can Am coupe (one of an estimated 1,300 made) that Joe Komarek of Asbury, NJ has owned since he was a North Hunterdon High School student back in 1978 (incredibly, he somehow managed to find replacements for the model-specific “shaker” hood and trunk spoiler after a snow-induced garage collapse in 2014).



Show participants ultimately decided the 1970s Class trophy should go to a Bimini Beige 1977 Cadillac Eldorado Coupe belonging to David Pretino of Pompton Plains, NJ, as it touted 15,000 original miles, a gold-tinted glass Astrorooft and saffron-colored “Edinburgh Cloth” hound’s-tooth pattern upholstery that was as hard to ignore as an original window sticker detailing the MSRP was a once-lofty \$14,416.80. Dave’s long eBay search was color-specific as “my dad owned one just like this except that he had leather and no sunroof. I’m still hunting for an original Tri-Band antenna so the factory CB radio works again.”



Hackettstown’s import contingent included a row of Volkswagen Beetles bearing everything from banana bikes to beer kegs on their roof racks; a rarely-seen, front-engined Porsche 928 of 1979 vintage that Richard Sage equipped with “SCRFCE” QQ classic plates to recall how Al Pacino’s drug kingpin character Tony Montana drove one as well; and a bright red 1960 Austin-Healey “Bugeye” Sprite (shown by Mike & Carol Adams of Lake Hopatcong, NJ) that was almost toy-like in juxtaposition with the camouflage-finish 1987 AM General Humvee that Carlos Jacome brought out from Astoria, Queens, NY.



Custom and Street Rod entries ran the gamut from a Candy Apple Red Citroën Traction Avant converted from front to rear-wheel drive to accommodate a chromed V-8 and the truly-wild “Parisian 2” built by Joe Sulpy of Andover, NJ, which sported a hand-made roof with a reverse-angle backlight and a removable section over the front seats; free-standing Chrysler Imperial headlights; a 1954 Ford “skylight” dash pod; and a 1959 Chevrolet trunk lid teamed with deeply-veed steel tube bumpers. A strong MAD MAX vibe was evoked by John Anione’s 1968 Torino GT fastback from Phillipsburg, NJ, thanks to bodywork painted with the same bed liner material many PCS people use to re-create “crinkle” finish roofs (“you can’t get keyed,” it was pointed out) and a centrally-split “butterfly hood” for unorthodox access to a camper-sourced 460 V-8 topped with a belt-driven GM blower. “I had the motor first, so I called Crites,” Anione added; “you tell them the car and the motor, and they’ll find a mount to fit even if the engine was never offered with the car.”



The show's biggest attention-getter in the most-literal sense was the 1930 Ford AA Bus that Bruce Acheson of Highland Lakes, NJ and William McGeehan of Tranquility, NJ needed three years to finish working nights and weekends through 2003; "There are not a lot of Model A busses left," McGeehan said, "but I knew a guy who knew a guy who knew a guy" in Scottsdale, Arizona. Crown Coach of Los Angeles originally built the body using steel-paneled oak framing with redwood roofing that would have been as common as pine was in New Jersey. The roof, re-framed with Swedish pine, was lowered eight inches during the restoration to enhance garageability, while a more-modern 351 CID Ford V-8 linked to a 5-speed manual gearbox and a 2-speed rear axle from a 1948 Ford Medium Duty truck was also retrofitted to improve performance to the extent 85 mph was managed during a 13,000-mile "hill and dale" round trip to Vancouver a couple of years ago. The exterior signage coyly identified the bus' operator as the Tranquility Intertown Transit Service connecting such northern New Jersey towns as Tranquility, Andover, Springdale, Newton, Lafayette, Hamburg and Vernon; another sign above the interior exit offered "Thanks for riding T.I.T.S." in case anyone missed the joke!



## **UNSAFE AT 50:**

### **How Ralph Nader's book shook the auto industry in '65 & '66**

OLD CARS WEEKLY retrospective by GREGG D. MERKSAMER

By traditional measures, 1965 was a banner year for the auto business in America. Boosted by a growing suburban market for second and third cars that was tailor-made for exciting newcomers like the Baby Boomer-targeted Ford Mustang and the front-drive Oldsmobile Toronado debuted as a 1966 model on September 24th, a new record of 9,313,912 brand new autos were registered in the United States. Individual buyers could also cheer how their purchase likely had no twin in terms of finish or equipment, given Hal Higdon's report in THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE that "a Yale University physicist calculated that since Chevy offered 46 models, 32 engines, 20 transmissions, 21 colors (plus nine 2-tone combinations) and more than 400 accessories and options, the number of different cars that a Chevrolet customer could conceivably order was greater than the number of atoms in the universe."

Nineteen sixty-five was also the year that remediation of the car culture's worst excesses shifted into high gear with Congress' passage of a \$320 million program to beautify the nation's highways by eliminating roadside billboards and junkyards, as well as a Vehicle Air Pollution and Control Act mandating all 1968 models sold in the U.S. fit the smog control devices California had required since 1963. Since Uncle Sam bought a LOT of cars, it was no less significant that June 30th, 1965 went into history as the date the General Services Administration codified 1963 House Resolution H.R. 1341, which demanded all cars purchased by the federal government come equipped with 17 safety items including padded dashboards and sun visors, seat belt anchorages, dual-circuit brakes and backup lights.

On November 30th, 1965, a 31-year-old Connecticut lawyer named Ralph Nader also saw his book UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED: THE DESIGNED-IN DANGERS OF THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE put out by Grossman Publishers of New York City with his dedication to a Harvard Law School classmate paralyzed in a car crash. Though it remains most famous for the first chapter's criticisms of the compact Chevrolet Corvair for reasons to be detailed later, the central thesis of this inflammatory, influential best seller was that bad American car design was more than irritating and frivolous - it was greatly responsible for 45,000 deaths and four million injuries annually. To prove his case, Nader deftly summarized the work of university researchers who relied on accident data and crash simulations to determine by the mid-1950s that most of this carnage was caused by a "second collision" with the interior's sharp knobs and hard, unpadded dashboards. University of Michigan Medical School Researchers observed, for example, that a "ramrod effect produced the majority of steering assembly deaths. Even if the driver had been restrained with a lap belt and upper torso restraint, so as not to be able to move forward and contact the steering assembly, he would have been killed anyway by the marked backward displacement of the steering column." Aviation specialists such as William Stieglitz also told Nader how aircraft design research had "proved the value of shape coded knobs and standard location of controls in minimizing operator errors; none of this has been applied to automobiles." Ross McFarland's group at Harvard even documented "one serious accident (which) resulted when a driver, while proceeding at high speed in a modern car, shut off his headlights in the belief that he was operating the cigarette lighter. The knobs for these two controls were identical in shape and size and were located near each other on the dashboard."

With the zeal of a prosecutor, Nader charged the stylist, tasked “by automobile company top management” with selling cars “to people who have no other reason to buy them with such frequency,” was responsible for other safety-compromising flourishes that included chrome-trimmed dashboards and corner posts, optically distorted wrap-around windshields and hardtop sedans offering inferior rollover protection and no center pillars or other structurally suitable mounting points for shoulder harnesses. A study of Manhattan pedestrian fatalities by Henry Wakeland at the University of California found “case after case showed the victim’s body penetrated by ornaments, sharp bumper and fender edges, headlight hoods, medallions and fins,” while “bumpers shaped like sled runners and sloping grille work above the bumpers, which give the appearance of ‘leaning into the wind,’ increased the probability that the pedestrian would be forced down and underneath” the car that struck him. After recounting the tale of Peggy Swan - a nine-year-old Maryland girl who fatally cut her own throat open when she bicycled into a parked 1962 Cadillac’s tail fin - Nader asserted indignantly (and not incorrectly) that later models were more pedestrian friendly only “to conform to the new ‘clean look’ that is the trademark of current styling. New styles bring new hazards or the return of old ones.”

Nader subjected the Chevrolet Corvair to specially-harsh scrutiny because General Motors’ “abject worship of that bitch-goddess cost reduction” made the radical compact, with its rear mounted air-cooled engine and four-wheel independent suspension, a less predictable and more dangerous car than its designers intended. Because first generation 1960-64 models lacked a rear stabilizer bar and a set of universal joints at the outboard end of each rear axle half-shaft (two of these straddled the centrally-mounted transmission), the rear wheels could tuck under the body on rough surfaces or sharp curves. The resulting loss of traction caused the tail, over which 60 to 63 percent of the Corvair’s weight was carried, to swing around with what CAR AND DRIVER called “a vengeance few drivers could cope with . . . like a three pound hammer on a thirty foot string.”

While several performance equipment makers sold components through the enthusiast magazines that promised to improve the Corvair’s handling, and the restyled 1965 model received a new four-link rear suspension with universal joints at both ends of the axle half-shafts, Nader noted disdainfully how the 1,100,000 Corvairs produced beforehand were made to behave on the cheap, “by recommending to the owner certain critical tire pressure differentials which he should maintain between the front (15 pounds) and rear (26 pounds) wheels . . . in the little read and often lost owners manual.” Not only did the manual warn “oversteer problems may . . . be encountered with incorrect pressures” without defining “oversteer” for the Average Joe who didn’t read CAR AND DRIVER, Nader found many Washington, D.C. area mechanics refused to abide by the recommended pressures and quoted a number of tire specialists and race drivers who asserted fifteen pounds of tire pressure, no matter the car, was dangerously low for high speed driving, hard cornering or a vehicle loaded to capacity. Counting on an ordinary motorist “to monitor closely and persistently tire pressure differentials” to compensate for the early Corvair’s inherent instability, he declared, “cannot be described as sound or sane engineering practice.”

UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED is at its acerbic best, nonetheless, quoting Detroit executives and “engineer-employees” who refused to acknowledge (at least publicly) auto design’s role in traffic injuries. When a New York banker wrote General Motors in 1954 to suggest that dashboard padding might have kept his eight-year-old son from breaking a tooth during a recent panic stop, he got this reply from the company’s chief safety engineer Howard Gandelot . . .

“Driving with young children in an automobile always presents some problems. As soon as the youngsters get large enough to be able to see out when standing up, that's what they want to do and I don't blame them. When this time arrived with both our boys I made it a practice to train them so at the command "Hands!" they would immediately place their hands on the instrument panel . . . to protect themselves against sudden stops . . . I frequently give these commands even when there is no occasion to do so, just so we all keep in practice.”

Gandelot also told a physician who suggested seat belts in another 1954 letter “I find it difficult to believe that the seat belt can afford the driver any great amount of protection over and above that which is available to him . . . if he has his hands on the wheel and grips the rim sufficiently tight . . . and also takes advantage of the shock absorbing action which can be achieved by correct positioning of the feet and legs.” Three years before this opinion was written, Nader countered, Cornell University's Aeronautical Laboratory filmed a modest 20 MPH barrier crash where a mannequin the size and weight of a six-year-old child took less than half a second to fly from its back seat position, strike the windshield at several times the force of gravity and bounce back into the rear seat. Even if tests like these showed the auto makers that “Hands!” would not suffice and compelled them to offer seat belts as extra cost options in 1956 models, Nader claimed they were rarely promoted and often difficult to install. Though front seat belts, under pressure from several state-level legislative initiatives such as Edward Speno's in New York, finally became standard on all new cars January 1964, Nader thought this too little, too late, stating “The seat belt should have been introduced in the twenties and rendered obsolete by the early fifties” by a second stage in passenger restraint development which “would not rely on the active participation of the passenger to take effect; it would be the superior passive safety design which would come into use only when needed.”

The fact that airbags and motorized seat belts realizing this vision wouldn't be compulsory until 1990 only bolstered Nader's 1965 statements about industry intransigence, as exemplified by the Los Angeles Air Pollution Control District's fifteen year battle with the automakers for the installation of basic smog control devices (“It has given this country a history of how the car makers react to public efforts at curbing harmful effects of their products”). He was equally pessimistic the industry could police itself through organizations such as the Society of Automotive Engineers, asserting its strictly advisory standards for “safety features which had become the subject of legislation or threatened legislation” (such as door latches) were set at such “an unusually weak level that some automobile manufacturers have recently felt necessary to exceed.” It was a closely kept secret, Nader found, which cars and equipment failed to meet these watered-down standards - even some of the university-sourced crash data he summarized didn't mention brand names - an environment compelling “men like Stonex, Haynes and Haeusler (the 1960s safety chiefs at GM, Ford and Chrysler respectively) to subordinate whatever initiatives might flow from professional dictates in favor of preserving their passive roles as engineer-employees”; Chrysler engineer Sumner Twiss, more euphemistically, called this the “identification of personal objectives with the objectives of the company.”

Nader also decried how public service groups like the National Safety Council and the President's Committee For Traffic Safety had chosen to downplay the unsafe car's role in death and injury. “Today almost every program is aimed at the driver,” he wrote of a safety establishment heavily financed or even staffed by auto and insurance interests, “at educating him, exhorting him, watching him, judging him, punishing him, compiling records about his driving violations, and organizing him in citizen support activities.” This emphasis on the “nut behind the wheel,” Nader charged, allowed Detroit to divide and conquer, as “a driver oriented safety program does not disrupt the traditional state jurisdiction over traffic safety matters” and

“damage or injury in automobiles is attributed, by definition, to some legal violation by the driver.” That General Motors’ safety engineers were so focused on improving the crash friendliness of bridge abutments, lamp poles and other roadside structures also irked Nader, since “safer highways, obviously, are paid for by the public, not by General Motors.” While he acknowledged such work “a useful contribution to the standards already employed in building the new Interstate system,” he thought it illogical at best that GM devoted “the bulk of its staff and resources in crash safety research to the area where it has no implementing power, rather than put its talents to work on vehicle design, where it has full power and control.”

For vehicle safety to be openly addressed, DESIGN NEWS editor Ernest Cunningham told Nader, a change of emphasis was required of “executive management responsible for policy direction, which year after year ignores design safety.” With industry leaders such as Henry Ford II opining (to author Booton Herndon in 1969) that Nader was “full of crap,” it was perhaps inevitable the consumer advocate would conclude “only the federal government can undertake the critical task of stimulating and guiding public and private initiatives for safety. A democratic government is far better equipped to resolve competing interests and determine whatever is required from the vast spectrum of available science and technology to achieve a safer highway transport environment than are firms whose all-absorbing aim is higher and higher profits.” Ships, trains and aircraft, Nader added, had been subject to federal regulation for decades, and without similar outside discipline he was insistent auto makers would either not install safety kit because “the customer doesn’t demand it” (an excuse ignoring how advertising had created demand for two-tone paint and tail fins) or restrict demand to “those limited safety features which the companies decide to reveal to the market.”

General Motors, notoriously, decided their best response to Nader’s activism was to hire private eyes to question his associates and friends, but this heavy-handed attempt to impugn his character backfired epically. “The bungling of GM and its gumshoes really evoked images from the movies of the ‘30s,” Nader recalled in an April 29th, 1999 interview with AUTOMOTIVE NEWS Staff Reporter Harry Stoffer, elaborating “they made the added mistake of following me down to the U.S. Senate building when I was already slated to be a witness. That is a federal crime - to harass a witness, a potential witness before a congressional investigating committee. Then they made the added mistake of mistaking me for a WASHINGTON POST reporter,” ensuring their malfeasance would make headlines.

By the time the dust settled, Nader had collected \$425,000 in an invasion of privacy suit and GM Chairman James Roche was forced to make a public apology during a March 22nd, 1966 appearance before Connecticut Senator Abraham Ribicoff’s hearings on traffic safety, which also brought to light the even more embarrassing revelation that a \$40 billion-a-year industry was spending less than \$2 million annually on safety research - less than 22 cents per car sold! Less than six months later on September 9th, 1966, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act, which required all American market cars to fit shoulder belts, padded dashboards, 4-way emergency flashers, back-up lights and impact-absorbing steering columns as standard equipment. It also established the Traffic Safety Bureau and Highway Safety Bureau - merged to form the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) on December 31st, 1970 - to enforce these regulations, implement new ones and oversee recalls by auto manufacturers.

No matter how much libertarians and old car hobbyists have bemoaned it in the decades since, there’s no denying UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED played an essential role in initiating the U.S. government’s three-stage entry into the auto design process, which Nader summarized as “the stage of public awareness and demand for action, the stage of legislation, and the stage of

continuing administration.” Despite the many NHTSA mandates sidetracked by politics or industry pushback that gave us such fiascos as the seat belt/starter interlock of 1974, it must also be noted every single auto safety advance beyond lap belts Nader championed - from passenger “safety cells” to anti-lock brakes, 3-point combination seat belt/shoulder harnesses and air bags - became federally required or popular optional equipment on their way to being taken for granted in every new car sold today. Were that not the case, it’s unlikely U.S. auto fatalities could have fallen from 1966’s figure of 50,894 or 5.5 per 100 million miles traveled to 32,719 and 1.1 in 2013 - all the more impressive when one realizes this time span saw the country’s population soar from 196 to 316 million while the number of vehicle miles traveled more than tripled from 925 to 2,946 billion.

## Welcome New Members!

Please join me in welcoming our newest Northeast Chapter members: Steve and Helen Ahlstedt. Together they purchased the 1976 Cadillac Superior ambulance which saw service in Franklin Lakes and then was donated to the Bergen County Police & Fire Academy in Mahwah. When Bergen County was finished with the unit, it was returned to Franklin Lakes who placed the unit on the GovDeals.com auction site.

Steve and Helen were high bidders and together spent the summer restoring and refitting the interior. They chased the worst of the rust and primed the exterior. Holes in the front floor were covered with steel and the ruined floor mat was replaced with carpet. The torn front seats were re-upholstered and the rear plywood floor was replaced as needed.

Steve has been a member of the emergency services since 1965. He completed his first EMT class in 1970. He was active in the Ramsey Rescue Squad and served 20 years as Chief. He also served several terms as Ambulance Corps Chief and is presently Chief of Operations for the local Office of Emergency Management. During the time Steve served at the Police & Fire Academy, one of his tasks was to maintain the Cadillac ambulance used to train students. He still teaches the EMT program with PCS Life Members Craig and Roseanne Stewart. Long time Northeast Chapter members will remember Craig as a past Editor of The Criterion.

The ambulance is now running and driving and attending some local shows and events. We met Steve and Helen back in May at the North Jersey Auto Show, where they were proudly showing the ambulance and graciously answering questions.

Welcome to the PCS and the Northeast Chapter. We hope to see you and your ambulance at our events.



## America on Wheels

by Gregg D. Merksamer

While *THE CRITERION*'s Second Quarter issue offered event host Nick Elias' brief overview on the PCS Northeast Chapter's April 8th, 2017 outdoor display at Allentown, PA's America on Wheels Museum, our former Editor Gregg D. Merksamer has captioned additional photos from that day to give the readers of this issue more details on the action. These images might also spur non-present members to check out the Museum's special "Pony Cars Then & Now" exhibit before it closes in October; phone [\(610\) 432-4200](tel:6104324200) or log onto [www.americaonwheels.org](http://www.americaonwheels.org) for full info on hours, directions and other attractions.



The PCS Northeast Chapter's all-Cadillac April 8th display outside America on Wheels included the 1963 Eureka Landau, 1973 Superior 54-inch headroom High-Top Ambulance and 2008 S&S Medalist Hearse of Allentown funeral director Nicos Elias, as well as Fred Goerlitz's 1976 Superior "54" (driven from New Jersey by Jeff & Mary Hookway) and (*shown*) Michael & Victoria Barruzza's somewhat smaller 1977 Superior from Bensalem, PA.



The America on Wheels PCS display attracted three Allentown hearses affiliated with Shawn Koenig's Mohnton (PA) Professional Car Club, all of which also appeared at our August, 2016 International Meet in Gettysburg. The group's standout was this Sheffield Gray Firemist 1984 Superior Cadillac Sovereign Landauet touting three-way casket loading and 59,396 accumulated miles, which 24-year-old Nicole Maurer drove home from western Pennsylvania the day after Christmas, 2015 on a tip from PCS President *emeritus* John Ehmer.



A special April 8th-only attraction at America on Wheels was George King's 1916 Ford Model T field ambulance from North Franklin, Connecticut, in order to commemorate the Centennial of America's April 6th, 1917 entry into World War I and recall how Allentown, PA's Camp Crane served as the U.S. Army Ambulance Corps' main mobilization and training center during the conflict. Its "three stretcher" body - badged as Kellner coachwork made in Billancourt, Paris using ash, oak and

"French colonial" Ivory Coast mahogany - was measured off the sole surviving original enshrined at the Musée de la Voiture in Compiègne where the 1918 Armistice was signed. While the short wheelbase and long rear overhang might look comical today, this combination afforded superb battlefield maneuverability and a surprisingly comfortable ride for the patients. King's ambulance also participated in the 2012 National Memorial Day Parade in Washington, D.C. and President Obama's Second Inaugural in 2013.



The original tenant of America on Wheels' Allentown, PA museum building was the Arbogast & Bastian meat packing plant. This concern is appropriately honored by this company-liveried 1911 Mack Junior Series beef truck, whose 32-horse, 350 cubic inch engine, chain drive transmission and solid tires afforded a once-impressive two-ton cargo capacity and 16 mph top speed.



This 1918 Mack AC fire truck dominating America on Wheels' first floor corridor is on loan from the Mack Trucks Historical Museum also located in Allentown, PA. The Baltimore F.D. used a war surplus chassis originally intended for a dump truck body to build this 600 GPM pumper in 1923 and kept it on reserve as late as 1958. Note the adjacent 1930s vintage Mack AC pedal car sharing its "coal scuttle" hood and firefighting aspirations.



While 19th Century horseless carriages are rarely seen even in museums, America on Wheels touts this Allentown-made 1891 Nadig single-cylinder gasoline buggy exhibited by *AUTOMOBILE* Magazine at the very first New York Auto Show staged in the old Madison Square Garden on Madison Square in November, 1900. The antique signage does not entirely exaggerate as Henry Nadig evidently started engine work in 1889.



Another big draw in America on Wheels' North Gallery is veteran Concours judge Jed Rapoport's 1920 Briggs & Stratton "buckboard," which was originally sold to a Northampton, PA family whose son couldn't ride a bicycle because one of his legs was shorter than the other. The lever seen below the steering wheel actually lifts the fifth wheel and its gasoline engine entirely off the ground to put the vehicle in neutral.



America on Wheels' South Gallery has a huge display of Art Deco pedal cars from the Macungie, PA collection of Loren Hulber, who reportedly shifted focus after running out of garage space for full-sized classics.



The "Pony Cars Then & Now" exhibit occupying America on Wheels' upstairs gallery through October 2017 stars the Detroit Historical Society's original and unrestored 1963 Mustang II concept. This four-seat convertible with removable fiberglass hardtop (and wider market appeal than the two-seat Mustang I of 1962) debuted at the October 1963 U.S. Grand Prix in Watkins Glen, NY to preview the production version put on sale April 17th, 1964.



A notable permanent attraction on the Museum's top floor is a Restoration Learning Center comparing a 1946 Pontiac Club Coupe "as found in barn" with a fully-restored Torpedo 8 Sedan Coupe from the same model year. It was most intriguing to see on the former how the front door fender extensions were separate bolt-on stampings.



A rare survivor visiting America on Wheels the same day as the PCS was this amazingly pristine 1984 Subaru GL front-drive station wagon that Allentown local Bonnie Strunk-Brasted (joined here by her husband Jim) bought brand new from Becker Subaru in Wescosville, PA 33 years and 133,113 miles earlier. "Everywhere I go, someone leaves me a note in the windshield wiper," Bonnie said, adding the PI-SEAS vanity plate alluded to her early March birthday while the 5-speed manual stick-shift is an effective "theft deterrent these days."

## Upcoming Events

### **October 14, 2017: EMS Council of NJ Convention**

EMS Annual Convention will be held on Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at the Sheraton Hotel in Parsippany, NJ.

### **October 22, 2017, 9:00AM to 3:00 PM: Cadillac Club of North Jersey**

The North Jersey Region of the Cadillac & LaSalle Club will be holding its 2017 Fall Car Show on Sunday October 22 (Rain Date: October 29) at The Hermitage National Historic Landmark, 335 North Franklin Turnpike, Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423. Open to all Cadillac and LaSalle vehicles. Pre-registration: \$15/car and \$25/two cars. Day of Show registration: \$20/car

# 1936 S&S Buick Ambulance

by Ray Wotkowski

My PCS interest began with the acquisition of the '36 Buick Ambulance. I first saw the car as a true barn find and passed on it as I was not ready to bring it back to life. The story began with a year-long school project entitled, "the Automobile: Our Vehicle for Learning". The project was kind of personal as the students and staff knew their principal (me) was an antique car enthusiast/owner. Our project was featured on fourteen pages of the July/August 2002 AACA Antique Automobile Magazine. Our sharing of knowledge with the community was accomplished with our "Celebration of the Automobile", where students spoke with visitors about their specific aspects of the automobile which covered 27 different areas. Mr. Costello owned a farm which was adjacent to our school, owned a few old cars and was in attendance.

He invited me over to the farm to share his collection, as well as a voluminous display of old toys. To be honest about it I think I invited myself. That is when I saw the '36 Buick, behind a 1960 dump truck and in front of an old bulldozer. The white chicken droppings decorated the exterior and Mother Nature was attempting to absorb the ambulance back to its earthly beginnings. I thought how "cool" it would be to bring this 22 foot 6 inch monster back to life.

Finances, no networking, lack of garage space, lack of personal knowledge and two daughters in college were all signs that pointed against the purchase. The car was donated to the local fire department when the farm was sold and I superficially followed its whereabouts. Thoughts of how cool it would be to possibly drive the car never diminished. A telephone call came my way "out of the blue" five years later as the local fire department did not have the resources or space to move the project forward. Within a few days I made a nominal donation/purchase of the ambulance and it was roll-backed to my garage, with the understanding that one day I would drive it back to the station and it would be included in any community activities, upon request.



OK, I am pretty good at cleaning up things, but where do I start? The motor was stuck, no brakes, fuel system was yucky, gas tank was holey, But....The Ambulance was "all there". Wouldn't it be so cool to drive it some day! I met Buick guy, Jon Henry at Hershey and we looked for a replacement engine as rebuilding the original would be pricey. Oh, and Jon Henry is his real name; another story. We spoke several times as

he thought he found one for me and two or three years later found one. The motor was in a yellow hot rod (yes, every part was yellow) and Jon actually drove the car as an evaluation. The hot rod guy was replacing the original engine for something more "hot roddy" (my word) and thus a good engine was found. Jon actually delivered the engine from Massachusetts as he was on his way to a Buick meet. I can't believe I spelled Massachusetts correctly!

OK, now what? A year went by before I met a friend, Dave Hostetter, who said he would replace the engine for me and bring the car back to life. Dave was taught so many "old school" tricks of the trade and did not like cleaning parts, which was the perfect match for me. Most of last winter was spent on parts procurement and detailing. I am two to three inches taller than Dave so he didn't have to deal with the concussions I endured under the car lift. Needless to say,

the entire underside was brushed and rustoleumed, the fuel system was replaced, the brake system was replaced and progress was being accomplished. This was a lot of fun and there was no pressure, so I thought? Then I was informed that Summerhill was having their 125 celebration in the second week of this June. Oh crap, I need to get the ambulance down there. The motor started and sounded awesome, the brakes were working and the drivers door was 15 miles away, as we disassembled it months ago. Three days before the celebration, my friend Barry Eash (34 years restoration business) looked at the door and said "you have a situation here" as the wood was rotted near the hinges and was in need of replacement. No problem, we can bungie, super glue, wire tie, the door but it has to be in Summerhill in two days. That is when My Friend Rick Lang came on the scene. He is a very skilled woodworker and didn't change his phone number when I asked if he could come over to look at the door. The door was rebuilt and operating as new by the next afternoon. Wow! I think we made it. I called Fire Chief Bob Burkett and confirmed a promise I made a week before that the ambulance would be a part of the 125th. I almost am there; all I need is gas and a road test before driving the five or six miles to the celebration. I learned that no matter how much you think you vacuumed a car that was sitting for 40-50 years, the dust, dirt, fillings, and waste product remnants freely sand-blast you as they exit the open windows. Needless to say an additional shower was necessary before the maiden voyage to the festival. I was greeted by three fire department elders, who each had a little kid smile as I pulled up. They all drove the ambulance back in the 50s and were shocked to see it "Alive" again. It felt "so cool" to drive that 20 foot 6 inch monster for the first time and worth every bit of effort from all of my friends.

We have to do a few more checklist items before it is truly roadworthy and I can't wait to share it with others.



## **Congratulations!**

Congratulations to Jeff and Mary Hookway on their purchase of a spectacular red and white 1966 Superior Cadillac Rescuer ambulance. This ambulance will have the Hookways' 1966 Cadillac de Ville convertible for a stablemate in a huge garage they built specifically for this joyous occasion.

Enjoy your "new" ambulance; you have waited a long time for it. We can't wait to see it in person!



**THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY**

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PCS member Ray Wotkowski's  
1936 S&S Buick ambulance