



1955 SUPERIOR CADILLAC SERVICE CAR

NUMBER 65 THIRD QUARTER 1992

THE SERVICE CAR - THEN AND NOW

# THE PROFESSIONAL CAR

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ON OUR COVER: In this issue we pay photographic homage to that unsung workhorse of every funeral home automotive fleet, the lowly Service Car. But service cars weren't always lowly. During the Golden Age of the funeral coach, from the 1930s into the mid-1950s, American funeral coach manufacturers offered service cars on premium chassis: Packard, Cadillac, LaSalle and Buick, as well as the more pedestrian Pontiacs, Dodges, Studebakers and Chevrolets. Larger funeral firms would typically have a Packard or Cadillac-chassised service car to match their front-line hearses, limos and flower cars. The introduction of stylish sedan deliveries and, later, compact vans, killed off the custom-built service car. By the mid-1950s, long-wheelbase luxury service cars were rare. Our cover photo is of a classic 1955 Superior Cadillac Service Car built by the Superior Coach Corporation of Lima, O. Today, converted station wagons, minivans and suburbans are used for service and first-call work by funeral homes across the U.S. and Canada. Our thanks to Canadian PCS member Kent Roduck who provided the modern service car photos we needed to illustrate this article.

INSIDE BACK COVER: The Breeden Hearse Hardware Company of Pittsburgh was a major supplier of interior and exterior hardware to U.S. funeral coach manufacturers. Among the company's products were wreath ornaments, torch emblems, side lamps, stylized initials and nameplates. The vehicle shown in this 1965 ad appears to be a Jeep Fleetvan, relatively few of which were used as professional cars.

BACK COVER PHOTO: The Shop of Siebert Associates in Toledo, Ohio built many extended-wheelbase service car conversions of standard Ford passenger cars and light sedan delivery trucks. The company also offered multi-purpose conversions of the all-new Ford panel truck introduced in 1948. The Siebert Ford "Triple Purpose Car" shown here was designed for use as a service car, hearse or emergency ambulance. This one wears typical service car trim.