



# The Criterion

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHEAST CHAPTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY  
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## POSTCARDS FROM PCS ST. PAUL '96



Led by Floyd Miller's 1930 Eureka Buick 3-way and Mark Dahlstrom's 1934 Superior Studebaker, the PCS motorcades to St. Paul's Forest Lawn Cemetery for the Saturday afternoon photo session.

Although it required a 2,400 mile round trip drive in at least two cases, the Northeast Chapter was well represented at the Professional Car Society's 20th annual International Meet in St. Paul, Minnesota August 14-17. Meet Chairman **Tony Karsnia**, ably assisted by **Joe and Barbara Klein**, **David Meyers**, **Jonathan Wurm**, **Larry Dunn** and other members of the PCS Northland Chapter, delivered brilliantly on his promise "to show you several vehicles you had never seen before" and attract people who had never before had access to a PCS International Meet.

The gathering at the Arden Hills Holiday Inn officially spanned more than half the globe as it attracted both a PCS member from Melbourne, Australia (**Phil Smith** purchased a 1964 M-M Cadillac combination from Doug Scott's L.A. area dealership last year to complement his right-hand drive Eldorado and Australian-bodied 1964 Canadian

Pontiac hearse) and an ambulance driver from Basingstoke, England whose son lived in St. Paul. Northeast Chapter members that attended included PCS President **Mike Barruzza**, **Dottie Forvour**, Chapter President **Leo Maren III**, **Craig and Roseanne Stewart**, **Mahlon and Bonnie Thompson** and yours truly, PCS Publicity Chairman and new *Criterion* editor **Gregg D. Merksamer**.

Adding 1,206 miles to the odometer of Mike's 1977 Superior Cadillac ambulance, the first of only 10 completed by Superior in that first year of downsizing, Mike and Leo drove directly to Minnesota from the big classic car show in New Hope, Pennsylvania (covered elsewhere in this issue) that ended three days before the PCS convened; Dottie flew to St. Paul soon afterwards, gave her return ticket to Leo and drove home with Mike at the meet's conclusion. "I had two different co-pilots," Mike says of meet week, which

concluded with his '77 taking home a First Place Award in the high-top ambulance category.

The Stewarts' journey to St. Paul by way of Newark Airport was also a one-way ticket as they purchased a 1978 Miller-Meteor Cadillac ambulance from Jonathan Wurm; one of only four built in M-M's Piqua, Ohio plant that year and originally used in Omaha, Nebraska, this ambulance is a real stunner finished in a 1974 Oldsmobile color called Cotillion Bronze accented by a white hood center and top. It was a genuine surprise to learn that the car had more than 100,000 miles on its odometer; if I had a garage I would have certainly wanted this car for my own! Mahlon & Bonnie Thompson came to St. Paul by car as well, but their recent move dictated that the trip take place in their recent vintage Sedan DeVille versus their handsome Henney Junior service car.

From my usual vantage point in the casket compartment of several different coaches, it was exciting to watch the motorcycle officers from the St. Paul Funeral Escort Service, who looked as much like cops as it was legal to do so, race from the rear to the front of our long motorcades through the streets of the Twin Cities. The first convoy of the meet on Wednesday took the PCS 30 miles north of St. Paul to the General Fire Apparatus plant in Wyoming, where the work is so intensely customized that only about 50 trucks a year are completed by the firm's 57 employees! After explaining that the final step in the typically six month long construction process is a six-

hour UL test because "if there's anything you want to work when it pulls up to your burning barn for the first time, it's a fire truck," plant manager Donald King assured us that the most popular color was still "by far red" despite the flirtation with yellow in the 70s and 80s. "Yellow was like the Metric system," King said. "Trucks that come back to us for refurbishing often have us taking a yellow truck and painting it red."

Thursday morning saw the PCS convoy to Ford's 30 acre, 2 million square foot Twin Cities Assembly Plant, which employs 1,805 hourly workers and is capable of building 720 Ranger pickups in two shifts or nearly 200,000 trucks a year. Job 1 at this site, chosen partially because there was sandstone beneath the soil to use for glassmaking, was a Model T Tudor sedan completed May 4, 1925. One of the most mesmerizing displays involved fully automated robots administering 2,500 spot welds to each pickup cab, with the robots swinging their welding heads in, out and around the Ranger bodyshells like Gozilla battling Rodan in a Japanese monster movie. In areas where humans manned the line ergonomics were obviously a high priority, with the frames continuing to move at shoulder level even after the wheels were attached and a phase in final assembly where the trucks are turned sideways to facilitate the attachment of grilles, headlights and taillights.

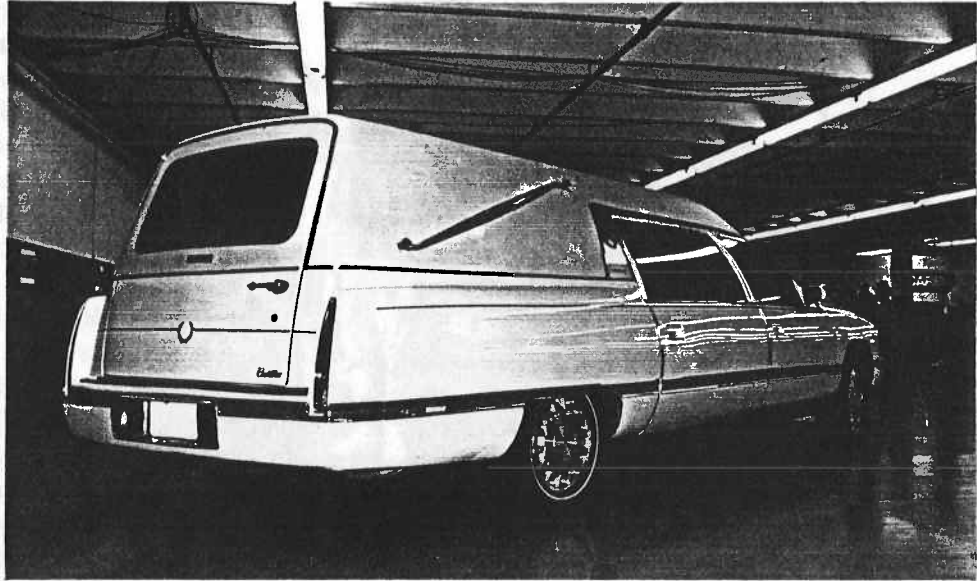
PCS's subsequent tour through the Road Rescue ambulance factory presents several startling contrasts to the Ford Twin Cities complex. Celebrating its 20th

birthday in business, Road Rescue finished its 3000th ambulance this past spring and on average completes only one vehicle a day. Leading the tour, Sales Manager Dave Weiland takes particular pride in how Road Rescue's all-aluminum bodies and cabinets permit more payload and operating economy in an industry where "the standard is still wood" and that corners and door openings are formed instead of



Interesting cars had already arrived by Wednesday afternoon's tour of the General Fire Apparatus plant, including Lloyd & Karen Ray's 1962 Cotner-Bevington Chevrolet and Wayne & Shiela Kempfert's 1939 Henney-Packard ambulance, which would ultimately win the Best-of-Show award.

extruded to enhance durability. Everything in the interior has been designed for easy cleaning; seat cushions are beadless and seamless to keep bloodborne pathogens from seeping into the upholstery, the edges of the floors have rounded corners and the sliding doors of the medical supply compartments flip up for quick restocking. Most of the ambulances built by Road Rescue are based on the Ford Econoline



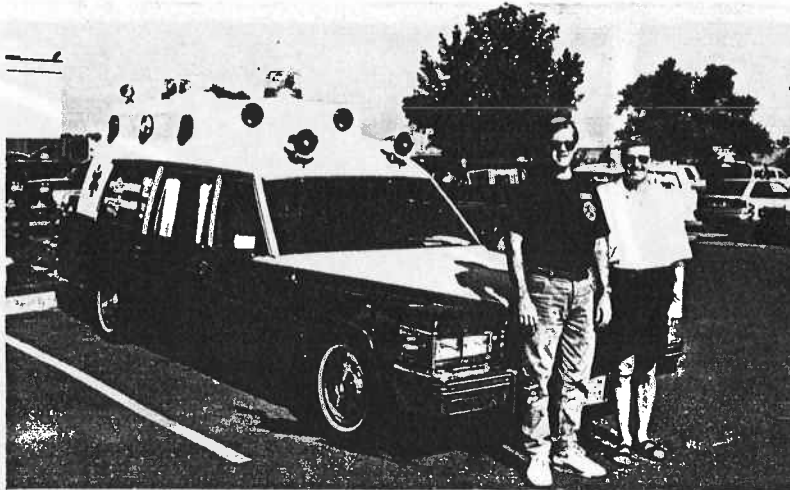
Eureka's front-wheel drive Cadillac DeVille prototype hearse was the center of intense scrutiny at the Johnson-Williams Livery barbecue Friday evening.

chassis-cab with the PowerStroke turbodiesel engine because, Weiland explains, "a diesel has a lot of advantages over gasoline when it's used as a stationary powerplant (in deference to these duties Road Rescue's standard ambulances feature four batteries, a 110v/12v "shore power" inverter and a 215-amp alternator)." Following the tour, Road Rescue employees delight in scrutinizing the two vintage ambulances that have been parked inside their plant, Mike Barruzza's 1977 Superior Cadillac and a "big and white" 1939 Henney-Packard which would ultimately win the Best of Show award for Wayne and Shiela Kempfert of Plymouth, MN.

Non-automotive activities at PCS St. Paul '96 included Thursday evening's paddlewheel cruise down the Mississippi River to the site of Fort Snelling. A particularly fun fact revealed during Friday morning's bus tour of the Twin Cities is that, with an yearly average temperature of 40 degrees, 96% of the world is warmer than Minnesota. After taking in St. Paul's Cathedral, the Walker Art Center's sculpture garden and the house where Mary Tyler Moore's character lived (heavily renovated to deter the Nick-at-Nite nuts), the tour concluded with an afternoon at the 2.4 million square foot Mall of America in Bloomington, where yours truly bought himself a 1/43rd scale "Vintage Manure Spreader" from Al's Farm Toys simply because he can't do so in New York. At the nearby Thunderbird Hotel the Heartland Region of the

Buick club was staging its 8th Annual Meet, and having heard about the PCS get-together across town several attendees of this show drove to Arden Hills for a courtesy visit.

Friday evening's convoy took the PCS to Larry and Ardelle Dunn's Johnson-Williams Funeral Car Service in Minneapolis, where the 55-car fleet of this Carey Limousine concessionaire had been cleared from the surgically clean garage area to make room for a catered indoor barbeque (complete with an ice sculpture of a 1959 Cadillac flower car) and a stunning display of vintage professional cars. Our feasting space overlooked a 1930 Eureka Buick 3-way funeral coach brought from Aberdeen, South Dakota by Floyd Miller and the very last Cadillac-chassied ambulance ever built, a Superior-bodied 1979 model delivered to Dr. Roger White on February 19, 1980. Nearby, a horsedrawn 1894 Cunningham passed down through three generations of Millville, Minnesota funeral directors named August Schleicher stood beside Eureka's prototype front-wheel drive DeVille hearse. At the annual general business meeting, Mike Barruzza was re-elected PCS President, Steve Lichtman gave a preview of the 1997 International to be held in Baltimore next August 19-24 and Leo Maren III made a bid for the 1999 meet on behalf of the Northeast Chapter. Chicago is already slated to host the 1998 meet and there is a chance that the PCS might return to Pittsburgh in 2000.



**Joined by Dr. Roger White, owner of the last Cadillac ambulance manufactured, Craig Stewart (at left) poses with the 1978 M-M high-top he purchased from Jonathan Wurm at PCS St. Paul '96.**

PCS people from Iowa brought some of the most interesting cars seen on show day Saturday, such as Tim and Leigh Gustin's flexible-bodied 1941 Buick hearse, Paul Holmberg's very rare 1973 Superior Pontiac Consort standard-wheelbase Landau hearse ("The distance between the funeral home and the cemetery was six blocks. That was all the original owner ever drove it," asserted driver Ron Pinta) and a truly out-of-the-ordinary 1962 Cotner-Bevington Chevrolet high-top amblewagon with a hearse-style rear door brought by Lloyd and Karen Ray of Council Bluffs. Two people attending their first PCS International came with Studebaker hearses; George Quast had a 1915 model purchased new by his grandfather that was making its first public appearance since Hutchinson, MN's 100th birthday parade in 1955, while Mark Dahlstrom of Oakes, ND displayed a 1934 Superior Westminster limousine-type hearse, handsomely finished in maroon and black, that took home both the Funeral Director's Choice Award and a 1st Place prize in the pre-war funeral coach class. Photos taken just three years ago show car in much sadder shape, its exterior painted orange and lettered up as an HVAC technician's service wagon and its top held together with several hundred feet of duct tape.

Instead of the usual hanging around the Holiday Inn as show day progressed into the afternoon, the motorcycle escorts were called in one last time for a 3pm procession to Forest Lawn Cemetery that, according to the trip computer in the front-drive Cadillac prototype hearse, averaged a stately 12.8

miles per hour. Mike Barruzza was allowed to drive the DeVille on its return trip and recalled that "it doesn't feel all that different size-wise. And with the Northstar engine performance is truly awe-inspiring."

At the Saturday night closing banquet (held underground, ironically, in the Holiday Inn's Lexington Ballroom), Dr. Roger White recalled his efforts to keep passenger car-based ambulances in production; allowed to observe Superior's efforts to develop a downsized Cadillac ambulance for the 1977 model year, the Mayo Clinic anaesthesiologist's slide show included styling sketches, clay models and pictures of Mike Barruzza's car

when Superior was still using it in their advertising. Dr. White has actually been able to document the first customers for all thirty of the Cadillac ambulances Superior built during the 1977, 1978, and 1979 model years, and with only one exception get photos of them as they were originally delivered.

At the trophy presentations Florida PCS members Martin and Barbara Schmeisser became the big winners with their "his and hearse" 1966 and 1967 Miller-Meteor Cadillac 3-ways earning five awards, from 2nd and 1st Place in the postwar funeral coach class to distance awards for the 2,070 miles *each car* was driven to attend (Barbara's '67 even won the Hard Luck Trophy for losing its alternator enroute). The traditional post-banquet sound and light show featured a special guest appearance by this year's PCS trophy makers Mike and Kathy Kieffer, who drove a faithful replica of Barney Fife's 1963 Ford Galaxie Sheriff's Car that whistled the theme from *The Andy Griffith Show* over hidden speakers (presumably to subdue miscreants as effectively as tear gas); Don Knotts had applied his autograph over the driver's door handle at a recent Ohio rendezvous of Mayberry squad cars. And we thought the PCS had a specialty!

## HEARSES & HIGHTOPS HIT NEW HOPE

As this was the first year since 1993 that the dates for the PCS International Meet and the huge classic car show at New Hope, PA (typically drawing more

than 1000 cars judged in forty different classes) haven't overlapped, members of the Northeast Chapter were able to bring six vehicles to the August 11th gathering at the New Hope Solesbury High School. Ted Collins' drive from Wilkes-Barre was rewarded with a First Place prize in the meet's professional car class for his 1967 S&S Cadillac Victoria funeral coach. Second Place went to the 1977 Superior Cadillac high-top ambulance of PCS President Mike Barruzza (who also brought his 1974 Superior Cadillac flower car to the show), while Third Place went to Harvey Schofield's 1967 Lincoln Continental with its discreet 6" center stretch by Lehmann-Peterson. These PCS people were invited to participate in New Hope's "Parade of Champions," where the trophy-winning cars from each class passed through a huge tent equipped with reviewing stands and a public address system powerful enough to reach all corners of the show field. The meet's professional car class was also graced by Ramon Garcia's 1958 Cadillac Series 75 limousine and the 1975 Superior 54XL Cadillac ambulance belonging to Northeast Chapter Treasurer and Membership Chairman Pete Grave and his wife Jeannette of Ottsville, PA.

## PCS ON THE INTERNET

PCS members who have a PC and a modem are well advised to get on the World Wide Web and visit the temporary Professional Car Society home page at [http://www.forte-systems.com/naparish/prof\\_car](http://www.forte-systems.com/naparish/prof_car). This was set up by Berkeley, California computer consultant Neal A. Parish, who joined the Society about a year ago and owns a 1959 Eureka Cadillac ambulance. "I found out about the PCS from the seller of my rig," Parish recalls. "About the same time I began participating in two Internet newsgroups dedicated to discussions about antique autos. Through my participation, I discovered that many people who were interested in hearses and other professional cars were unaware that the PCS existed." The fact that Web sites already existed for the Bay Area Grimriders and other groups that feel a hearse is no fun without a casket or a skeleton inside offered extra impetus for the PCS to take itself online.

Parish's temporary PCS Web Site contains a brief statement about the Society's scope and goals, photographs from the 1993-95 International Meets and the address of Secretary and Membership Director

Beverly Ruff, who has already taken to E-mailing PCS applications to prospective members. With the Board of Directors voting to make the Web Site official during the 20th International Meet in St. Paul, actions are already being undertaken to coin a shorter and more descriptive URL address for the PCS home page (suggestions can actually be forwarded to the editor) and provide it with more material on a regular basis.

## BEFORE WE GO TO THE "TOP TEN" LIST...

If you spend 20 years in "the trade" you might get to sell a used car to **David Letterman**, just as Northeast Chapter PCS Member **Bill Marcy** recently did in an encounter televised June 3rd on Letterman's perpetually irreverent *Late Show*. It seemed that Bob Borden, the mail room kid for the hit CBS program, needed some wheels to get to work so Letterman gathered a camera crew and took him shopping on the Route 46 automile in New Jersey. After poking fun at a dealer who offered them a black Chrysler Fifth Avenue whose trunk wouldn't latch, Letterman and his crew came to Marcy's lot in Lodi at the junction of Route 46 and Money Street. "Even though I've watched the show I didn't know who they were," Marcy recalled. "They introduced him only as 'Dave' and I'm very bad with faces. I thought it was a practical joke until I noticed that a crowd was starting to gather. Word that he was here sure got out fast!"

The punchline of the skit was that Borden wanted a convertible and that Letterman would oblige him by sawing the roof off any sedan on the lot. "They were all set to cut the roof off a 1990 Ford Crown Victoria," Marcy recalled, "when I said that they should do this car instead, it's a lot cheaper," redirecting their sawblades to a 1984 Cadillac Cimarron adorned with an aftermarket Rolls-Royce grille. "The car was a 4-cylinder model, a real rat but it looked good on TV," Marcy added, pointing out that later V-6 versions of the Cavalier-based Cadillac compact were not all that bad to drive. Back in New York a week later, Bob Borden drove his new "convertible" onto the stage of the Ed Sullivan Theater to wild applause from the studio audience, after which the stagehands moved the car out to 53rd Street and hand-painted it red as *The Late Show* went to commercial.

