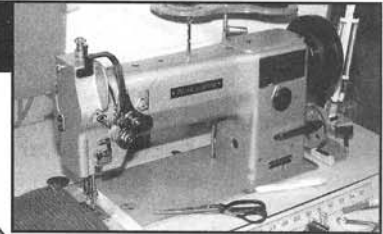


Auto Restorer™

THE HOW-TO GUIDE FOR CAR & TRUCK ENTHUSIASTS

9 SEW YOUR OWN—

Starting an Upholstery Series



12



1970 Mustang 428

IT REALLY DID BELONG TO A LADY WHO SELDOM DROVE IT

RICHARD PRINCE

9 Sew & Install Upholstery

In this first of a six-part series, we'll look at the machine and tools you'll need.

16 Painting Project Components

This month, Project Charger meets the DuPont Single Stage Refinishing System.

20 Eldorado Brougham Town Car

This 1956 Cadillac show car escaped a "guaranteed" scrapyard fate.

22 Coast-to-Coast, Pt. 2

Encountering muffler repairs, a gas leak and flying objects.

26 Molding Repair Tools

Make them from a dowel.

28 1930 Ford Fire Truck

Ready for action once again.

31 Tool Talk—Remove rust and clean your hands and wheels.

32 Larry Lyles' Resto Videos

Departments

<input type="checkbox"/> Rearview Mirror	2
<input type="checkbox"/> News	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Letters	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Mechanic on Duty	6
<input type="checkbox"/> Readers' Cars & Trucks.....	30
<input type="checkbox"/> Readers' Tips.....	32

Eldorado Brougham Town Car

This 1956 Cinderella Cadillac Escaped a "Guaranteed" Scrapyard Fate

BY DON SHERMAN

TALES OF THOSE that got away—family heirlooms sold for a song, spectacular concept cars dispatched to the crusher—are all too familiar to car enthusiasts. But this time we're lucky enough to enjoy the story of one priceless memento that did *not* slip through our grasp. Cadillac's 1956 Eldorado Brougham Town Car dream machine has been rescued from obscurity and restored to its original show-circuit splendor. The automobile you see here in full formal attire is about to serve as the splendid centerpiece for the Cadillac-LaSalle Club's Centennial Grand National to be held at the Dearborn Hyatt Regency in suburban Detroit Aug. 4-10.

General Motors once showcased its current products and future concepts in the grandest possible style with a series of Motorama spectacles commencing in earnest in 1953. Cadillac used such an occasion to preview its coming four-door hardtop body style with the Orleans while the Le Mans two-seat convertible offered an accurate look at the 1954 model year's front-end motif. An observant Harley Earl, GM's first styling chief, noted a stronger preference for the more subdued Orleans sedan and confirmed his belief the following year when Cadillac concepts included the El Camino coupe and La Espada sports roadster two-door models displayed with a stylish four-door sedan called Park Avenue.

Since the point of the Motorama exhibitions was to gauge the public's reaction to potential design trends, Earl thoughtfully mapped a course for Cadillac in which closed four-door models would thereafter define the brand's pride and prestige. Shortly after the 1954 Motorama road show visited Chicago in the spring, planning began for a limited-edition ultra-luxury four-door production model to be called the Eldorado Brougham. Concurrently, work began on a 1955 showpiece charged with introducing both that name and several of the future styling elements—reverse-hinged rear doors, quad headlamps and a brushed-metal roof—to the ever-inquisitive public.

Throughout the Motorama years, fiberglass was the material of choice for GM's dream cars because it drastically reduced the time and expense of creating a one-



The Cadillac Eldorado Brougham Town Car in a vintage publicity photo. Note the uniformed driver awaiting his formally attired passengers.

off property. Artisans quickly learned how to mold and finish compound curves to perfection for the show circuit. But the 1955 Eldorado Brougham show car was a notable exception. Since planning was underway for it to become a 1957 production model, the '55 show car featured steel coachwork over current production mechanical components. More than 2 million spectators had the opportunity to inspect this preview of coming Cadillacs during the 1955 Motorama's five-city tour.

The Featured Town Car

Since production Eldorado Brougham sedans were not scheduled for introduction until the end of 1956, Cadillac needed one more showpiece to fan the flames of enthusiasm while engineers and craftsmen tooled up for the limited-production run. Every detail of the production version had long ago been frozen, so Cadillac designers exercised a rare opportunity to toy with a few special attributes never intended to make the leap to the assembly line. For example, tailfins were given significantly more altitude than those planned for production. But their most notable indulgence was an open-to-the-elements front seat separated from a closed rear compartment by a sliding glass partition. During the 1930s and early 1940s heyday of coach-built limousines, such a configuration was customarily called a town car to describe a

chauffeur-driven automobile for local trips to the prominent owner's club or social event.

On the Drawing Board

Robert Cumberford joined GM's Styling department in the fall of 1954 at the ripe age of 19. One of his first assignments was the Cadillac show car for the 1956 season—under the watchful eye of his boss Herb Cadeau.

"I drew every line for that car," recalls Cumberford, currently *Automobile* magazine's Design Editor. "But when Harley Earl came by to critique the design, he spoke only to Herb. While I sat at the drawing board, the two discussed changes they thought would improve my creation. After they left, I altered the drawings in accord with their wishes.

"One feature from the Town Car that made the leap to production models was a steel roof creased at the rear with the convertible-top-bow witness lines. Cadillac introduced this motif successfully on its 1959 Fleetwood Seventy-Five Sedan and Limousine models and, by 1962, it had trickled all the way down to Chevrolet. Millions of GM cars were built with that fillip."

Logically, the centerpiece of GM's 1956 Motorama was christened the Cadillac Eldorado Brougham Town Car. It was crafted in fiberglass so expeditiously that there was no opportunity to fit a powertrain or make the car drivable before it

was shipped to New York for its Waldorf-Astoria Hotel debut in January of 1956. During GM's "Key to the Future" five-city Motorama excursion, some 2.3-million spectators were entertained. The last hurrah was a December trip to France for presentation at the Paris Auto Salon.

From France to the Scrapyard

At the end of the Town Car's Cinderella year, the production Eldorado Broughams elbowed it out of the limelight and towards its unfortunate fate. The standard course of action at GM was to store show cars for a period and then to dispose of them at local scrapyards.

According to the car's current owner, Richard Baruk of Canton, Michigan, the unwanted Town Car arrived at Warhoops Used Auto & Truck Parts in Sterling Heights, Michigan—conveniently located a few miles north of GM's Technical Center—in the early 1960s. Proprietor Harry Warholak (now deceased) had received many concept cars from GM over the years, typically with instructions to destroy them, thereby avoiding potential liabilities in the event an under-engineered automobile were to find its way into the hands of some unsuspecting owner.

In this case, however, Warhoops was the second post-GM stop for the Town Car. When the first salvage yard determined that the fiberglass body had little or no scrap value, it wasted no time pawning it off.

Therefore, given the circumstances, Warholak was under no obligation to destroy the car. He secured the Town Car in a storage trailer for 30 or more years where it was protected from both the elements and prying eyes.

Rumors that Warholak's facility was the repository of some of the most interesting cars ever created by GM and other Detroit car makers began leaking out by the mid-1980s. Finally, noted dream car collector Joe Bortz of Highland Park, Illinois, penetrated the Warhoops perimeter and made Warholak an offer he couldn't refuse. Bortz negotiated a package deal and hauled the Town Car and three other dream cars off to the Chicago suburbs around 1990.

Bortz, in turn, sold the Town Car to Roy Warshawsky, owner of J.C. Whitney and Co., who intended to restore this prize and add the necessary equipment to make it roadworthy. Unfortunately, illness scotched those plans. The car was offered for sale and Baruk, who has four pristine Eldorado Broughams in his 40-car (principally Cadillac) collection, offered the highest bid in a 1996 telephone auction to obtain the Town Car.

A Unique Restoration Project

"Warholak had earlier sold the Town Car's sabre wheels," Baruk said, "and afterward it was moved out of its storage container and left under a tarp for five or more years." The added exposure resulted in the paint and chrome peeling right off the car's exterior. The one thing that really saved it from extinction is that every molding was hand-crafted of solid bronze. As a result, none of the trim was pitted and it could be re-plated to perfection.

"All the trim pieces were individually hand-made. The ventilation grille at the base of the windshield consists of 20 or more metal ribs, each of which is sequentially marked and secured to a base plate. Naturally a few components—such as the rear-view mirrors—had to be remade from scratch. I was lucky enough to obtain what may be the same 15-inch sabre wheels that Warhoops sold off the car. They came with two unique hubcaps which I used as patterns to create two more.

oroughly cleaning, then repainting the underside. The frame—which is a standard Cadillac component—is like new.

"The front bumper is fiberglass finished with chrome plating. The job came out so perfect you'd never know it. The rear bumper, on the other hand, is steel with a cast-aluminum license-plate housing."

Some of the details are exquisite. The door handles are more delicately designed than production hardware with a micro-switch in place of the usual large thumb button to release the latch electrically. A mock intercom system is provided to pass destination instructions to Jeeves. All of the front compartment brightwork is chrome-plated while all rear-cabin trim is gold-finished. Baruk admits that his plating bill was astronomical without revealing the number of zeros involved. Rear-compartment amenities include a set of six beverage tumblers, a designer thermos and a cigar humidor. The thermos is unusually shaped and not functional. Baruk had no idea what it was



Riding in style requires certain amenities, such as gold-finished trim in the rear compartment and a bar, of course.

"The interior is a mix of unique components and standard Eldorado Brougham pieces. The dash that came with the car was made of wood and was so badly deteriorated it couldn't be used.

"I was particularly worried about the condition of the fiberglass due to the peeling paint. Fortunately, when I drilled an area in the back to replace a reinforcement, it was clear that this material is still rock solid. The panels are about a quarter-inch thick all around and they're functionally as good as new.

"Since this car has never been on the road, the underside of the chassis had never been exposed to salt, slush or debris. We left the body on the frame and commenced the restoration by thor-

until he obtained and inspected photos taken at one of the auto shows which depicted rear-compartment details.

Except for components reluctantly farmed out to specialists, Baruk and friends at his Westland, Michigan, tool shop completed all the restoration work.

Unlike Warshawsky, Baruk has no intention of bolting in a driveline so this precious time capsule can be driven, but he is anxious to share the enjoyment of the Town Car with Cadillac-LaSalle club members planning to attend the Grand National.

Forty-six years after wowing the French in Paris, Cadillac's Eldorado Brougham Town Car will once again beguile an adoring crowd. ■