

# Special-Interest AuTos

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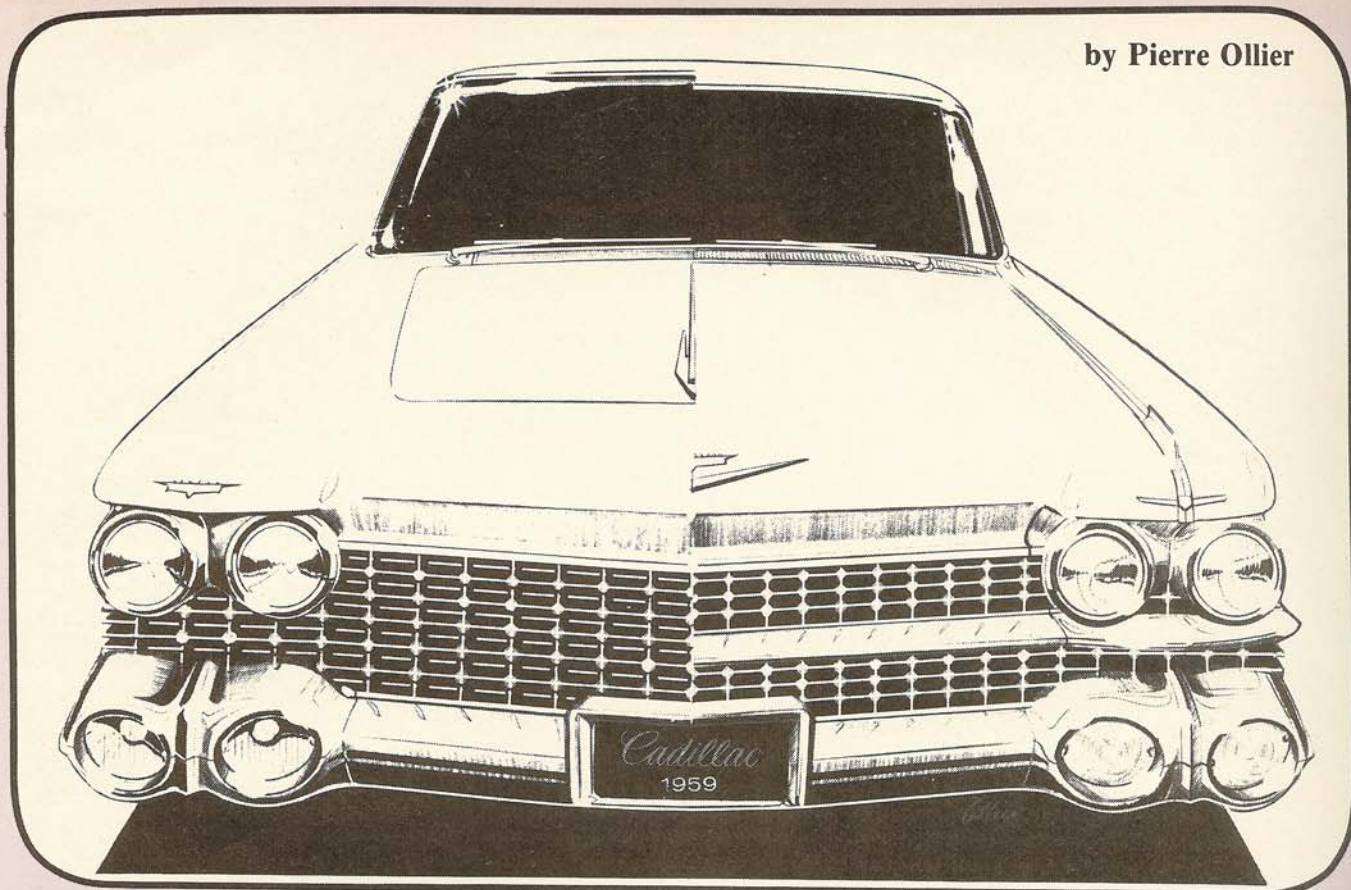
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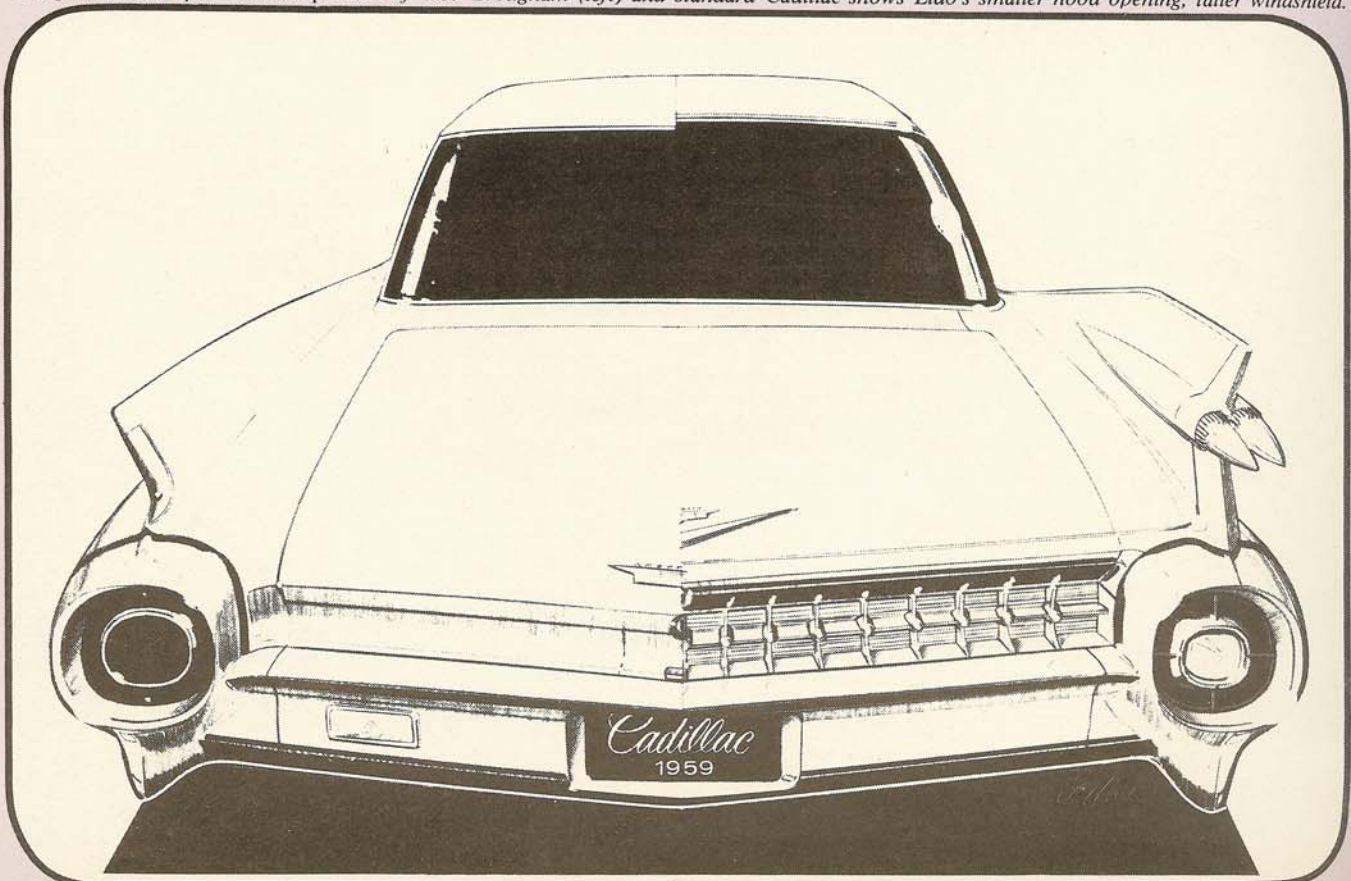
by Pierre Ollier



The second generation—the rare 1959-60 series—marked the last handcrafted factory customs Cadillac ever built.

## *The Final Broughams*

Designer Ollier's split-view comparison of 1959 Brougham (left) and standard Cadillac shows Eldo's smaller hood opening, taller windshield.





OF ALL NOTABLE CARS that practically no one's ever heard of and fewer people have actually seen, the 1959-60 Cadillac Eldorado Brougham surely heads the list. If you happen to run across one on a used-car lot, you might not even recognize it as being anything special.

Yet the 1959-60 Eldo is *very* special and a lot rarer than the first generation of 1957-58 Broughams. The 1959-60 marks the last handcrafted "production" Cadillac ever made—a milestone by any measure, especially since GM designers still work under the 1959-60 Brougham's lasting influence.

Anyone can identify a 1957-58 Eldorado Brougham half a mile down the road. Its brushed stainless steel roof, unique styling, and compact size make it a dead giveaway.

But there are no easy i.d. tricks to spot the 1959-60 models, and you have to be almost a student of the marque to know one if you trip over it. Yet amazingly enough, very little in its makeup interchanged with conventional 1959-60 Cads—not a single outer panel of sheetmetal, not grille nor trim, and very little in the interior. For all practical purposes, the latter-day Brougham could have been as unique-looking as the first generation.

As an aside, the original Brougham had been conceived before the 1956 Lincoln Continental Mark II. When Ford heard about the Brougham, they designed and quickly put the Mark II into production. And as soon as GM got wind of Ford's Continental decision, Cadillac got the green light on productionizing the Brougham.

Lincoln's idea was to take a shot at out-luxurying and eventually outselling The Standard of the World. So the Brougham came in as a holding action. After Lincoln discontinued the Mark II in Aug. 1957, Cadillac decided to keep the Brougham—at least for a while longer—so the holding action wouldn't look too contrived.

If all this sounds confusing, and especially the bringing out of a second

**About the author:** Pierre Ollier is a vehicle designer at General Motors. His collection includes two latter-day Eldorado Broughams plus the SR-2 racing Corvette.

generation of the Eldorado Brougham, it might be well to begin at the beginning.

On Sept. 15, 1955, GM Styling (as it was then called) moved from its old quarters in downtown Detroit out to the modernly spacious, Saarinen-designed General Motors Technical Center in suburban Warren, Mich. The new building affected GM designers more than it's ever gotten credit for. The glass and color and openness gave them a new feeling, a freedom, a discipline they hadn't felt at the old location.

All GM car lines created in the new quarters began to look cleaner. When the move took place, the 1959 models were just getting started, almost as a reaction to the '58s. Ask a GM designer about 1958 and you get a furrowed brow; ask him about 1959 and he'll likely launch into enthusiastic reminiscences.

Some people feel the styling advances marked by the 1959-60 models might also reflect a changing of the guard. Harley Earl had announced his successor, William L. (Bill) Mitchell, as early as May 1954, but Earl still made the final decisions at GM Styling until his retirement on the last day of 1958. By that time the 1960 models were all in fiberglass, and preliminary designs were pretty firm for 1961.

Former Cadillac studio head Ed Glowacke had moved up to become Bill Mitchell's assistant, and to replace Glowacke, Charles M. (Chuck) Jordan became Cadillac's chief designer. Chuck had worked in Special Studio Four, where he'd created futuristic experimentals like the L'Universelle van, the Aero Train, and the TC-12 Euclid crawler.

Working with Chuck was Dave Holls, who'd been in the Cadillac studio since 1952. These two men were largely

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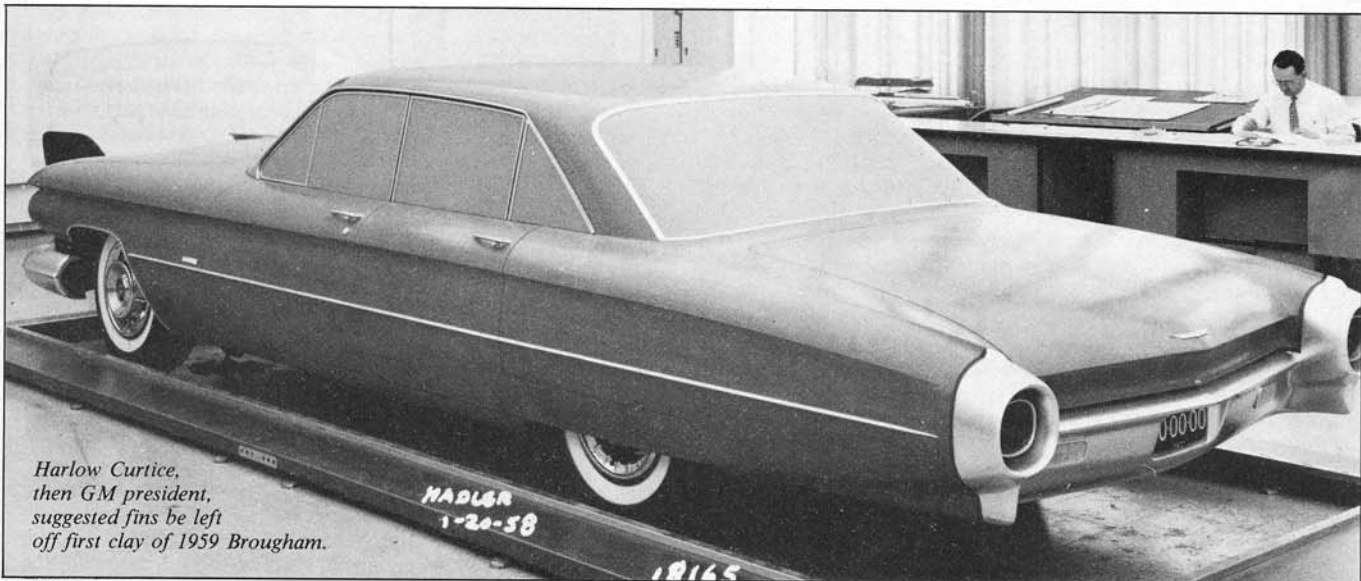
Part of the reason for new lines of 1959 models was the move of GM Design Staff from downtown Detroit to its much more modern quarters at the GM Technical Center in Warren, Mich.

responsible for the 1959 Brougham—a car that would influence GM design for years to come. Holls' proposal for the greenhouse (roof) was chosen; later this design was applied to C-bodied Cads, Buicks, and Oldses from 1961 to 1964.

One reason the 1959-60 Brougham came out looking so much like conventional Cadillacs was that the big cost factors of the 1957-58 Eldos had to be cut. It was decided that the second generation would share the production Cadillac chassis and inner body panels. And for the first time in Cadillac history—and perhaps the last—the body would be built not in the Fleetwood plant but 4000 miles away in Italy, where manpower cost a good deal less.

Another first at this point: Harlow Curtice had asked to see the 1959 Brougham prototype without tailfins!

Borrowed directly from the standard 1959 Cadillac were all the Brougham's mechanical parts, floorpan, lower body inner panels, seat structures, instrument



Harlow Curtice, then GM president, suggested fins be left off first clay of 1959 Brougham.

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## The Final Broughams

*continued*

panel and dashboard, pillars and hinges, modified door inner panels with stock hardware, front bumpers, front wheel-lip moldings, grille blades, headlamp bezels, and rear skirts. Wheel discs would be the same as Fleetwood-bodied Cadillacs. The rear bumper became a production-modified unit: the center blade accommodated the relocated backup lamps, and the ends had to be handfinished to compensate for the vanished tailfins.

All other items were exclusively Brougham. As mentioned, none of the outer sheetmetal interchanged with standard Cadillacs. Nor did any glass. The windshield became one of the tallest ever used in a passenger car. It swooped far up into the roof at a 61-degree angle, and its center stretched three feet high. It no longer wrapped around—a radical departure from GM's dogleg windshields of the latter 1950s.

GM had started the wraparound windshield movement when it unveiled the LeSabre showcar in Dec. 1950. Cadillac first put a wraparound on the market in the 1953 Cadillac Eldorado convertible. But Cadillac was also first to drop the wraparound windshield with the 1959 Brougham. Corvair followed a few months later.

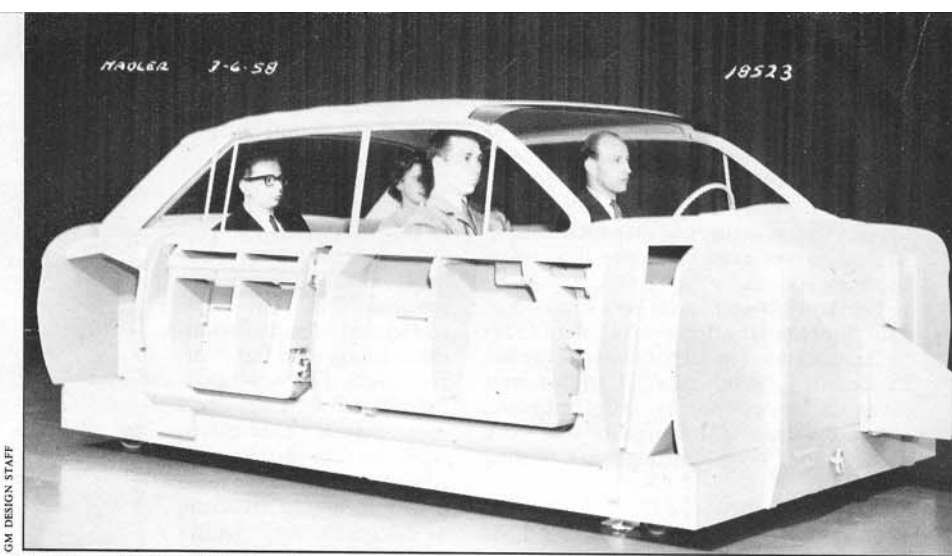
The 1959 Brougham's hood was only 45 inches wide, compared with 61 inches on standard Cadillacs. It was shorter, too, and hinged from the front, with torque rods to counterbalance it.

Around back, since fins were initially eliminated, the decklid stood some three inches lower than standard to follow the rear fender line.

As on the Cadillac Series 62, the Brougham had a side molding at mid-height. It's too bad that the cars at the top of the line and those at the bottom had nearly the same lipstick application. On the '62, the molding was cast; the Brougham's was fabricated from an extrusion, but who could tell? Also fabricated were the hood center spear, the stylized hood emblem, and the air intakes at the base of the windshield. There were no chrome strips atop the front fenders nor any ornamentation above the rear bumper. Everything became subdued. Nowhere did the names Cadillac or Eldorado Brougham appear, other than on a tiny front-fender emblem carried over from the first generation Eldo.

Toward the end of Jan. 1958, Harley Earl got his first look at the clay mockup and immediately decided the car needed its fins back. Back they went, but in more subdued height and with no chrome relief moldings as on standard models. At this point, the roof line was also sharpened and a small cloisonne emblem went onto the front fenders. Those were the only changes before production.

Production—on a series-custom scale—was to take place at the Pinin Farina factory in Turin, Italy. Farina agreed to build 100 bodies a year. His company had by



Seating buck for 1959 Brougham ensures head- and leg room, door openings, was used to check glare from tall windshield. Brougham was the first GM car to get rid of wraparound glass.

then graduated from being a rather small *carrozzeria* into a good-sized plant. He'd just moved from the quiet Corso Trapani to the Via Lesna industrial complex, and his operation covered about 15 acres. The new Pinin Farina works could handle up to 40 cars a day, mostly small series of his custom designed roadsters and coupes for Ferrari, Lancia, Alfa, and Fiat.

George Ryder, the styling engineer in charge of the 1959 Brougham in the Cadillac studio, was dispatched to Pinin Farina with a full-sized plaster model so that bucks and forms could be made in Italy. George mentions it took him three weeks of negotiating with the Italian customs authorities to clear entry of the plaster model. It seems Italy has a law prohibiting the importation of plaster objects to protect the native statue industry.

Cadillac chassis—operable and tested—left the standard assembly line in the U.S., were crated, additional body items were boxed separately, and everything except for small hardware items was shipped to Genoa by boat, about 100 miles from Turin. Cy Strickler, president of the Brougham Owners Assn., tells us an unconfirmed report that one chassis was accidentally dropped into the harbor here in the U.S. during loading. It was later supposedly replaced by a 1960 chassis. That might explain the uneven 99 cars produced in 1959 and 101 in 1960.

At any rate, Pinin Farina built 1959-60 Broughams on stationary lines, and the cars were entirely handbuilt. Outer panels were roughly approximated on male wooden structures, then welded and bolted together, the surfaces later smoothed with lead. In this context, 100 bodies a year came to quite a job, and considering the Brougham's complexity the Italian craftsmen did a splendid job.

Precision, though, wasn't the best. Take, for example, the headlamp brows. They were supposed to come out perfectly horizontal. Many didn't. So for you owners who suspect your droop-browed Eldo got bashed at some point, take heart—it was probably just built that way!

Job #1 made its debut at the 1959 Chicago Auto Show that January, nearly four months behind the standard '59

Cadillac. A styling modification had been made at the Pinin Farina plant after viewing the first car. The spacing of grille blades was too wide, leaving mechanical parts exposed behind the grille. Thus a recessed blade was added between every horizontal spacing, without the ornamental bullets.

Cadillac hardly acknowledged the 1959-60 Broughams' Pinin Farina heritage. Nowhere did the coachbuilder's emblem appear. Scuff plates carried the Fleetwood bug. Cadillac explained the situation this way. Pinin Farina was a designer as well as a coachbuilder. And although he fabricated the Brougham, he didn't participate in its design, so it would have been unfair for Cadillac to capitalize on his styling reputation.

On the engineering side, the 1959-60 Brougham continued with air suspension, a controversial carryover from the first generation. Air-spring bellows and domes were not the same as on the 1957-58 Broughams but did interchange with all other air-suspended Cads, 1957-60. While the 1957-58 Brougham used an electric air compressor that worked only when air was needed, the 1959-60 had a belt-driven, twin-piston air pump incorporated into the power steering pump. It supplied air constantly, had a relief valve, and was lubricated from the engine's bypass oil filter with a return line to the engine block.

GM Parts Div. scrapped (S-C-R-A-P-E-D) all its air suspension spares in 1975, but I was lucky enough to salvage four new bellows and one manual valve. I presently own two 1959 Broughams, one a beat-up, high-mileage car whose original air suspension still works fine. Yes, it leaks, but it takes two weeks of immobility to put the car "on its knees." I can feel no difference between air suspension and coil springs on smooth highways. However, on rough dirt roads the air suspension gives an incomparably better ride—it's fantastic.

I do realize that many Brougham owners have switched to coil-spring suspension, and I can sympathize. I should mention, though, that riding-height valves can still be purchased and modified to fit. Cadillac's valves from post-1965 Fleetwood air shocks convert nicely. As for compressors for earlier models, the GMC motorhome





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Handcrafted entirely in Italy, '59 Brougham's details were subtler than production models. No sheetmetal, no glass, no trim, and relatively little hardware interchanged between '59 Brougham and standard Cadillacs.



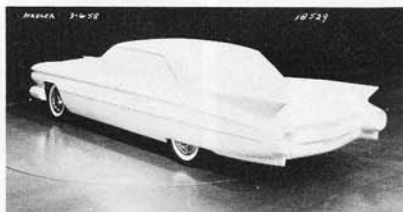
CADILLAC MOTOR DIV.

Standard '59 Sedan deVille shows more flamboyant fins, cantilevered roof, other differences.



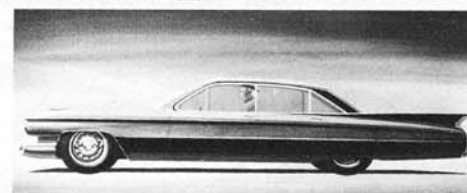
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CHARLES M. JORDAN COLLECTION



BUFORD BRAY PHOTO

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Above: Charles M. Jordan created the final (1960) Brougham, emphasized length and thin roof. Car has become a transitional link between the more rounded lines of the 1950s and the crisp edges of the '70s. Left: Plaster molds of both 1959 and '60 (shown) were sent to Italy so wooden forms could be made to hammer the metal components over.

## Inside the 1959-60 Broughams

**T**HE 1959-60 BROUGHAM'S interior became subdued in comparison with the 1957-58 models. Gone were the silver drinking cups, the digital clock, the perfume bottles, the vanity and cigarette case.

Yet interior sumptuousness didn't suffer. The standard 1959 Cadillac had enough glamor to be converted to Brougham sobriety without great change. On the dashboard, the stock insert on each side of the radio dial was replaced by a smooth, brushed, stainless-steel panel adorned with the Eldorado Brougham emblem. And with no dogleg, switches for the power windows and wiper moved into the door.

The 1959-60 Broughams carried an abundance of courtesy lamps, and a magazine rack filled the width of the front seatback. Two flush lockable compartments were located on each side of the radio speaker on the rear package shelf. A rectangular clock, shared with limos, was mounted on the seatback, surrounded by a wood veneer insert, with veneer appliques on the front-seat side panel.

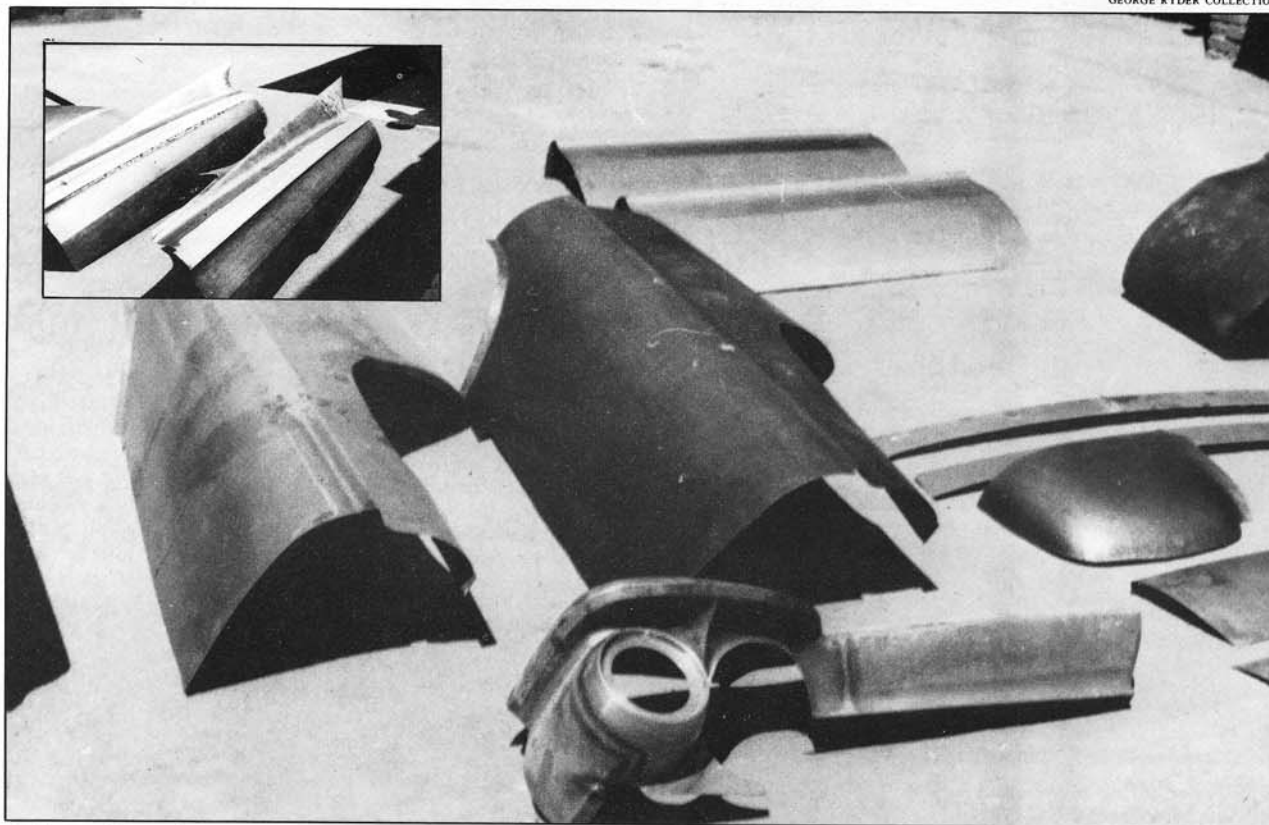
Interior upholstery combinations for 1959 were down from 44 in the 1957-58 Broughams to 15. Two typical materials were used: broadcloth (plain or striped) and leather. Headliners were always broadcloth. Leather interiors had tufted seats, and broadcloth interiors had plain bolsters with moderate stitching. Three horizontal lines of stitching were found on broadcloth interiors, but leather door trim was plain.

As in the 1957 Brougham, carpets were either nylon/wool karakul or genuine mouton. It seems that leather interiors had the karakul, and broadcloth went with the plushiest sort of mouton ever found.

The trunk was lined with a nylon material, including the inner decklid, and the hood was insulated with a thick pad of insulation. □

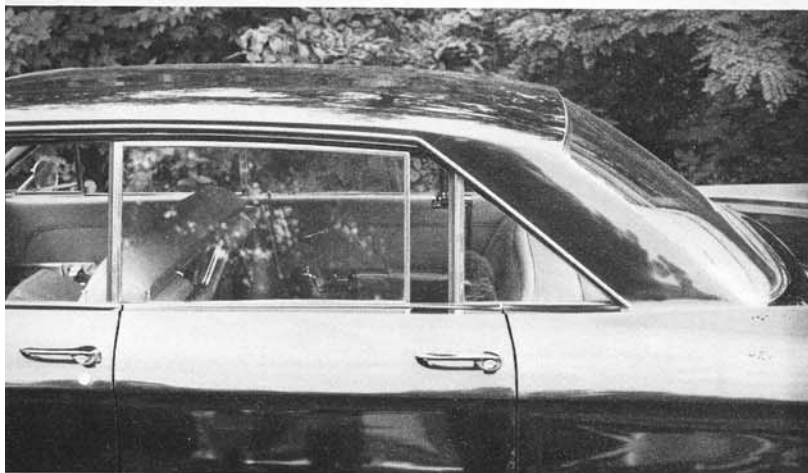


Considerably changed again from its 1959 self, '60 Brougham sports different side treatment that includes skegs along rocker. Once more, no sheetmetal interchanged with standard 1960 Cads.



*Italian craftsmen hammered out Eldorado's body panels by hand in Pinin Farina's shops. The cars were then assembled on stationary lines.*

BUFORD BRAY PHOTOS



*Upper left: Considerable lead went into Farina Broughams, and most haven't weathered well. Wheelcovers look almost exactly like 1957-58 alloy wheels. Upper right: Latter-day Broughams used modifications of standard instrument panel but carried almost all available options and unique upholstery and interior trim. Lower left: Brougham's rear quarter window moves several inches rearward automatically when back door is opened. Lower right: Totally padded trunk carries battery; it's more accessible here than under hood. Padding on decklid helps insulate and silence.*





**Left:** Easily recognized 1957-58 Eldorado Broughams have become collectors' favorites. All years of Broughams used air suspension system. **Below:** The 1961 Cadillac (Sedan deVille shown) were almost a direct copy of the 1960 Eldo.

CADILLAC MOTOR DIV.



## The Final Broughams

*continued*

uses two types of electric compressor, one of which is similar to the unit used in 1957-58 Broughams. Anyway, working air suspensions are now rare and priceless!

The 1959-60 Brougham engine was Cadillac's 365-cid V-8 with the Tri-Power carburetion setup. It delivered 345 bhp and gave good fuel economy when driven gently and whopping acceleration when trounced. The fore and aft 2-barrel carbs opened by vacuum at full throttle, whereas only the center carburetor worked at part throttle.

The 1959-60 Broughams cost \$13,074 new, same as the first generation. The greatest number was sold along the Eastern Seaboard (60), with 41 going to California. Six cars were exported, and 17 U.S. states got none at all.

Styling changes in the 1960 Eldorado Brougham were slight. Borrowed from the standard 1960 Cadillac was the front bumper, minus its turn-signal pods. Rear bumper ends were elongated vertically, with two round lights floating inside a concave, brushed-aluminum panel. The vertical light in the tailfin was removed.

An important change in body section for 1960 meant new side panels from front to rear. The Brougham received skegs, borrowed from the Cadillac XP-74 Cyclone showcar, and the small side molding gave way to a raised peak. Combined, these 1960 changes produced a slimmer look and made the Brougham more distinctive from the common Cadillac line. The cloisonne emblem went onto the rear

fender, and Brougham nameplates were used above the grille and on the rear splash panel above the bumper.

By the way, from the 1957 model on, all Broughams came with narrow whitewall tires, so you restorers who are mounting fat whites better watch it.

The Brougham features didn't really die after 1960—they got productionized. Initial Cadillac proposals for 1961 didn't especially excite anyone in GM Styling, so it was finally decided to adapt the 1960 Brougham's lines to standard 1961 Cads. That's another reason it's so hard to recognize second-generation Broughams today. The '61 Cadillac became a higher, smaller car than the '60 Brougham, with less glass and the tail-lamp housing placed horizontally. The '61 production Cadillac turned out to be very successful, and no one has ever regretted the decision. GM Styling kept working on projects to extend or revive the Brougham concept, and the project culminated in one of Cadillac's most exciting recent models, the 1967 Eldorado.

Of the 200 Broughams produced in 1959-60, only 39 cars have been located by the Brougham Owners Assn.: 17 1959 models and 22 1960s. Another 30 might still be out there in the bushes, but probably no more than that.

The Italian-built Broughams didn't hold up too well. With the large amounts of lead used, paint usually cracked and chipped. And just as on standard Cadillacs, fenders, doors, and rockers tended to rust at the weld lines. You'll also probably find a curious plug on the inner front door panels, on dead center with the door handles. It's unique to the 1959-60

Broughams and came about because the Pinin Farina workmen apparently didn't have the patience to install the door handle with a standard box-end wrench, which required tightening the nut an eighth turn at a time. Instead, they just cut a hole in the panel and used a screwdriver.

In 1961, by Italian presidential decree, Pinin Farina became known as Pininfarina—all one word. His brother ran a competing enterprise known as Farina Stabilimento.

The 1959-60 Eldorado Brougham's historical impact stems from two significances: First, it marked the end of the era of factory-custom Cadillacs—the last of the not-for-profit prestige cars. Since that time, Cadillac has become wary of offbeat projects and isn't likely to develop anything so controversial again.

Second, it launched a new styling trend into the era in which we still live and work today. It wasn't a definite statement; rather it represented a transition between the generous, rounded, overly decorated shapes of the 1950s and the lean, austere, crisp styling of the 1970s.

Collectors will argue and bicker about the status of the 1959-1960 Brougham, but one thing is certain. The few remaining examples will become recognized and more prized as time passes. □

*Our thanks to Charles M. Jordan, Dave Hollis, and Bob Scheelk of GM Design Staff; Fred Cowin and Dan Adams of Cadillac Motor Div.; George Ryder, GM Overseas Design Staff; John and Bonnie Miller, Natick, Mass.; and Cy Strickler, Brougham Owners Assn., 14 W. Andrews Dr. NW, Atlanta, Ga. 30305.*