On Sunday, Oct. 16, the showroom of Capitol Cadillac in Greenbelt, Md., resembled an exclusive Cadillac salon of the ’30s. Cadillac V-12 and V-16 motorcars, in a wide variety of body styles and colors, were displayed in resplendent beauty. A gleaming black 2006 XLR was the viewer’s sole reminder that World War II has come and gone and that the multi-cylinder giants are no longer Cadillac’s latest offerings.

Using the special theme of “Celebrating V-12 and V-16 Cadillacs,” the Potomac Region CLC Fall Show recorded its largest turnout ever. Ninety Cadillacs and one LaSalle came from as far away as Islip Terrace, N.Y., and Norfolk, Va., to participate. The Cadillacs included six V-16s and five V-12s. In this writer’s experience, it is seldom that even a Grand National Meet attracts so many of these limited-production cars.

Potomac Region Director Vince Taliano asked each owner of a V-12 or V-16 to prepare in advance a written summary of the background and history of his or her car. This information, along with a brief history of V-12 and V-16 Cadillacs, was included in a commemorative program distributed to the show’s participants. Disc jockey Bill Lemon’s repertoire of musical oldies completed the ambience.

In chronological order, the featured cars (as described by the owners) included:

1930 V-16 #4330
5-PASSENGER IMPERIAL SEDAN

Owned by Barbara and Chris Cummings of Manassas, Va. This is a largely original unrestored car in a remarkable state of
A 1931 V-16 452-A #4380
4-Passenger All-Weather Phaeton owned by Charles B. Gillet of Baltimore. This body is one of 67 made that year and one of the last built by the original Fleetwood Co. in Pennsylvania. Historical Services revealed that the car was shipped in October 1931 to the Cunliffe Cadillac Co. in Pennsylvania. A substantial example of the coachbuilder’s art.

preservation. It was sold new in Dallas, spent years in a collection in Oklahoma and was acquired by the Cummingses in July 2005.

1930 V-16 #4161S “MADAME X”
Owned by Sharon and Pete Sanders of McLean, Va. This “Madame X” model, named after a popular stage play of the era, is one of an exclusive, limited-production series of V-16 sedans. The subject of a 27-month restoration completed in 2001, this car was judged Best of Show at the 2004 Hildene Antique & Classic Car Show in Manchester, Vt.

1931 V-12 #4702 ROADSTER
Owned by Fran and Woody Rohrbach of Emmaus, Pa. Body No. 23 of 91, this car was delivered new to Don Lee Cadillac in San Francisco. It was first restored in the early ’50s; its most recent restoration was completed in February 2005, resulting in numerous awards, including a CCCA First Senior Award in September 2005 with 100.0 pts.

1931 V-12 #4780
ALL-WEATHER PHAETON
Owned by Robert S. Penenburgh of McLean, Va. This car had a frame-off, every-nut-and-bolt, no-expense-spared restoration this past year by John Sanders at Antique Auto in Rockford, Ill. It is finished in bright 1931 Cadillac colors of green and yellow with an ostrich skin interior—a sure way to beat the blues of the Great Depression!

1931 V-16 #4235 CONVERTIBLE COUPE
Owned by Brenda and Jim George, of Haymarket, Va. This Detroit-built Fleetwood car was sold new in Minneapolis with a base price of $6,900. Its distinctive features include a curved body sill, two golf club doors and a...
remote rumble seat door handle. It has received numerous awards, including Best of Show at the 2004 Central Pennsylvania Region CLC show at Brenner Cadillac in Harrisburg, Pa.

1931 V-16 #4380
ALL-WEATHER PHAETON
Owned by Charles B. Gillet of Baltimore. This multi-award-winning car was restored over four years by Al Prueitt & Sons in Glen Rock, Pa. The build sheet provided by Cadillac Historical Services revealed that the car was shipped in October 1931 to the Cunliffe Cadillac Co., Baltimore, Md. So after nearly 75 years, it is “back home.” The body is one of the last built by the original Fleetwood Co. in Pennsylvania.

1933 V-12 #272 5-PASSENGER COUPE
Owned by Jim and Ruth Synodinos of Towson, Md. This two-tone, beige and brown Five-Passenger Coupe illustrated the styling modernization that took place in 1933. As described by Walter M.P. McCall in “80 Years of Cadillac LaSalle,” 1933 started the trend “...toward streamlined, integrated body lines that flowed smoothly from bumper to bumper.” Vent windows, known as Fisher No-Draft Ventilation, made their first appearance on this year Cadillac.

1936 V-12 #8529 5-PASSENGER CONVERTIBLE SEDAN
Owned by Alida and Byron Alsop of Oak Hill, Va. One of only 44 built, this four-door convertible sedan with roll-up glass divider received a complete body-off restoration completed by Classic Coachworks in Saskatoon, Canada, in 1988–89. For a number of years, it was on display in the Murphy Auto Museum in Ventura, Calif.

1938 V-16 #9033
7-PASSENGER IMPERIAL SEDAN
Owned by Rita and George Boxley, of Oak Hill, Va. One of only 44 built, this four-door convertible sedan with roll-up glass divider received a complete body-off restoration completed by Classic Coachworks in Saskatoon, Canada, in 1988–89. For a number of years, it was on display in the Murphy Auto Museum in Ventura, Calif.

1939 V-16 SERIES 90
Owned by Andrea and Andy Jacoby of Huntington Valley, Pa. The Jacobys purchased this great car five years ago and thanks to the experience and assistance of other Valley Forge Region CLC members, Andy reports that it is running better than it has in 60 years.

The V-12s and V-16s were not the only unusual cars in attendance. Barton Mitchell’s exquisitely restored Azure Blue 1953 Eldorado was one of only 532 produced that year. With an original base price of $7,750, it cost almost twice as much as the Series 62 convertible. Richard Sisson displayed a 1970 Cadillac four-door convertible that he recently bought from the estate of longtime Club member Robert Webster, who owned the car since 1972. Richard’s car may be the one pictured on page 388 of “80 Years of Cadillac LaSalle.”

Fanciers of fine original unrestored cars had plenty to occupy their attention. Several notable cars that were largely original, but still in exquisite show condition, were Chris Cummings’ 1930 V-16 limousine, Juan Aranda’s 1947 Fleetwood 60 Special (winner of the Dealer’s Choice Award), Paul Habicht’s 1959 Sedan de Ville and Gerry Gordon’s 1961 Sedan de Ville.

Before awards were presented, the Potomac Region unveiled its new logo, designed by CLC member and renowned automotive artist Dan Reed of Hamburg, Pa. The logo features a 1953 Eldorado against the background of the Capitol dome in Washington, D.C. The Capitol dome is a recognizable symbol of the area, and the 1953 Eldorado attracted worldwide attention in January of that year when newly-elected President Eisenhower used it for his inaugural parade.

In its sales catalog for 1931, the London (England) agent for General Motors, Lendrum & Hartman, had this to say about Cadillac’s 16-cylinder models: “With the 16-cylinder model Cadillac has achieved at once the greatest sensation and the foremost engineering triumph of the season.” Almost the same words could be used to describe the fall show sponsored by the Potomac Region CLC. The Club salutes all those who helped make it possible.

Richard Sills is the immediate past president of the Cadillac-LaSalle Club.