



NEWS FROM

*Cadillac*

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FOR RELEASE

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CADILLAC PRODUCES FINAL AMERICAN CONVERTIBLE

DETROIT--An important and nostalgic era in the history of the American automobile ended shortly after 10:00 o'clock this morning when the last American production convertible was driven off the Cadillac Motor Car Division's Detroit assembly line.

Amid employe fanfare and end of the line festivity, the division's top officials drove the last convertible away from the production line with plant employes as passengers while members of the local and national press looked on.

This last convertible, a white 1976 Fleetwood Eldorado, is identical to 200 preceding convertibles, and will be retained by Cadillac for historical purposes.

Edward C. Kennard, Cadillac's general manager and a General Motors vice president, reported his division was determined to make the "Last of the Convertibles" a memorable event for loyalists and collectors alike. The final 200 Eldorado convertibles were produced as identical replicas of the very last one, white with white tops and wheel covers, white leather seat trim with red piping and matching red carpeting and instrument panel, and red and blue hood accent stripes. Each of these replica cars also received an instrument panel plaque proclaiming it as one of the final 200 U.S. production convertibles.

The Cadillac chief executive added an interesting note, "With today's milestone, Cadillac's 1976 Fleetwood Eldorado convertible production totaled exactly 14,000 units, which is a 60 percent volume increase over the 8,950 convertibles built in 1975.

"The 1976 convertible volume was regulated by the supply of folding top mechanisms," Kennard pointed out. "When many automakers left the convertible marketplace, the independent suppliers who made the tops began to cease operations. Cadillac bought every available convertible top two years ago, and this proved enough to manufacture exactly 14,000 1976 convertibles."

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Mr. Kennard said demand for one of the last convertibles has been unbelievable, and he stated, "I can say without a doubt in my mind, if we had enough top mechanisms to build 20,000 convertibles, we could have sold every one."

Mr. Kennard told the newsmen he had received daily requests from hundreds of people asking his help in buying one of the last convertibles, which have been sold out for months. He said many came from longtime Cadillac loyalists, as well as many from people who simply wished to purchase the last of something.

He also reported that having the only domestic convertible has aided total divisional sales, which have set quarterly records the past four consecutive quarters. And, he pointed out, the recently concluded quarter, January through March, is 57.7 percent ahead of the first quarter of 1975.

In commenting on the last of the American convertibles, Mr. Kennard noted, "When I joined General Motors almost 30 years ago, it was post World War II ... and it was unthinkable to picture U.S. streets minus the 'ragtops', but the idea of an international size Cadillac in those days also was unheard of."

He continued, "Like the running board and rumble seat, the convertible is an item which history has passed by."

Domestic convertible popularity declined steadily since the mid-1960's and Cadillac was the only American automaker offering a 1976 model convertible, this in the Fleetwood Eldorado line.

Mr. Kennard reported he felt there were several reasons for the decline in convertible popularity, among them the improved styling of hardtop coupes, the increased use of automobile air conditioning, and more frequent high speed expressway travel.

The Cadillac Motor Car Division is no stranger to the American convertible, having produced its first 60 years ago in 1916. The Cadillac convertible concept was a logical outgrowth of the division's first cars produced 74 years ago in 1902. These open Model A's offered a detachable top.

There has always been an "open car" in the Cadillac lineup, but the evolution of the convertible as we know it today began to solidify and increase in popularity with the 1930 Cadillac two passenger convertible coupe. This car advertised, "...its distinctive feature is the fully collapsible top with an extra interior lining which completely conceals the folding mechanism and top supports."

The most successful convertible years at Cadillac were post World War II, with sales and production of the "soft top," sporty luxury models peaking in the mid-1960's. Since the 1946 model year, Cadillac has produced almost 368,000 convertibles, with nearly two-thirds of them coming between 1959 and 1970.

During the highest volume convertible years at Cadillac, 1963 through 1966, with production near or exceeding 20,000 units per year, approximately one out of every eight Cadillac drivers owned a convertible.

This popularity was never again duplicated. Since 1971 Cadillac has offered its convertible model exclusively in the Eldorado series and production has remained consistent at between 7,500 and 9,000 units per model year.

Mr. Kennard concluded, "To add a unique historical touch to this final convertible, the car has been registered in the state of Michigan and assigned personalized 1976 Michigan license plates which simply read LAST.

"This license plate, with just four letters, says it all as Cadillac has ended a memorable segment of the American automobile business."