

'41 Cadillacs take a bow

By William C. "Bill" Anderson, P.E.

1941 Cadillacs were featured at the Cadillac & LaSalle Club Potomac Region Fall Car Show at Capitol Cadillac in Greenbelt, Md., Oct. 23. The 1941s displayed included a carved-side hearse; a Series 61 sedan; a Series 63 sedan; two Series 62 convertible coupes; a Series 67 limousine; an unrestored Series 75 formal sedan; and a wood-bodied station wagon.

The 1941 model year was a banner year for automobile sales and most marques recorded record sales. Undoubtedly, the inescapable reality that America was going to be drawn into World War II was becoming clear, and that reality encouraged many to buy for the duration. In the case of General Motors, the new styling of its 1941 models was a definite motivator. The innovative and dynamic appearance of 1941 GM products represented a culmination of "Art Deco-Modern" design and a clear difference from their competitors. More GM cars were sold than ever before, Cadillac included. There were 66,130 1941 Cadillacs sold, about 75 percent more than the 37,176 Cadillacs sold in 1940. The 1941 Cadillac sales record would not be exceeded until 1949.

To entice the customer, 1941 also marked a proliferation of models and features not seen before in the Cadillac line. Most models came in standard and Deluxe models that provided upscale interior appointments and exterior trim. The Sixty Special was loaded with special features and options. There were 85 different colors and exclusive upholstery design; all components were color-coordinated with burl walnut and Carpathian elm veneered window moldings. Two-tone interiors and all leather were options. However, there were no longer V-16 models or LaSalle.

A new series, the Series 61, provided an entry-level Cadillac to replace the LaSalle. It proved to be very popular and accounted for nearly half of all 1941 Cadillacs sold. It came in a four-door sedan and two-door coupe versions both in fastback or streamlined styles advertised as being "aerodynamic."

The elimination of the LaSalle after planning was already in progress left Cadillac with a unique body intended for the LaSalle. This problem was solved by creating the 63 Series using the bodies intended for the LaSalle version of the Sixty Special. These cars were produced in only a semi-fastback style sedan with a beltline molding and Deluxe Fleetwood interior. It was not very popular, selling only 5,050 cars and lasting just one year. One of these cars was present at the Potomac Region Show; it had even been sold at Capitol Cadillac in 1941!

Another new model was the Series 67; it lasted only two years. It was a low-slung, long-wheelbase sedan offered in five- and seven-passenger configuration. Intra-marque rivalry created this unusual car. At Buick, General Manager Harlow Curtice was leading an aggressive division with sales more than five times that of Cadillac and he wanted more. He commissioned Brunn to design a new Series 90 Limited and to construct five prototypes. These were intended to be coachbuilt with features custom-tailored to each



Cadillac offered a commercial chassis to coachbuilders that built hearses and ambulances upon the chassis. Perhaps the most spectacular of these professional bodies to be mounted on the 1941 Cadillac commercial chassis was this carved-side hearse.



Very few station wagons were built on the Cadillac chassis for 1941, and this wood-bodied example is believed to be one of only a few.



Many collectors consider the 1941 Cadillac to be the most beautiful Cadillac built, and among those hobbyists, the Series 62 convertible coupe is an ever-green favorite.

customer. When Cadillac learned of this audacious encroachment on their turf, they had Curtice stopped. To protect its market, Cadillac offered the Series 67 as a secondary ultra-fine automobile. It was 2-1/2 inches lower than the Series 75 and was mounted on a 3-inch longer wheelbase (139 inches). It was the longest Cadillac at 228 inches. The lower silhouette sans beltline molding proved to be particularly handsome. One of these cars was present at the Potomac Region Show.



The Potomac Region of the Cadillac & LaSalle Club holds its annual meet inside and around Capitol Cadillac, a well established dealership that sold many of the club cars when they were new.

The 1941 Fleetwood Series 75 became the top offering with the loss of the V-16 engine and the Series 90 that used it. The Series 75 and Series 90 had shared bodies, and along with the loss of the engine choice, options for Series 75 body types also decreased. For 1941, the Series 75 lost all models except the five-, seven- and nine-passenger sedans and limousines.

To create the Series 75 for 1941, Cadillac carried over the Series 72 body from 1940, but successfully integrated the 1941 styling along with new brightwork and an extra high hood to create an exceptionally pleasing design. The interiors of the Series 75 continued Fleetwood's reputation for luxury and built upon it. Real wood, in solid pieces and veneers, adorned

the cabin with sumptuous fittings. Exclusive fabrics and gold-plated trim added to the luxury. An original, unrestored Series 75 formal limousine graced the Capitol Cadillac showroom. Its well-preserved condition and decades-earned patina gave testimony to the elegance offered by the series.

The Series 62 offered Cadillac's fullest line of sedans, coupes and convertibles for 1941. It was the last year for the convertible sedan with only 400 produced. The convertible coupes were more popular with 3,100 produced, and remain the most popular in the collector car hobby. Two of these convertibles were on display at the Potomac Region Show.

Besides the draw provided by the focus on the ever-popular 1941s, a sun-shiny, warm fall day attracted hundreds of participants and spectators. There were 80 other Cadillacs displayed ranging from a 1930 V-16 town car to a 2006 XLR. Also displayed was a 1941 four-door woodie station wagon. Only two or three of these cars were produced. Daniel Jobe, owner of Capitol Cadillac, is fortunate to have one of these very rare cars in his collection.

Learn more about the club at www.clcpotomacregion.org.

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