

CADILLAC HEAVEN

BY JEFF KINZLER

If I could have my wish list of favorites Cadillacs, I would have to have at least a 20 car garage and an unlimited supply of time and money. Since this is already a dream scenario, I will allow myself to fantasize about all the wonderful Cadillacs I would own and enjoy driving if I could.

The first would be a single cylinder, the original design worked out by Cadillac's founder, Henry Leland. I could touch and operate the very same machinery that Leland conceived and perfected when he devised one of the first practical automobiles ever produced. What fun it would be to scoot around the neighborhood on a sunny day in a single-cylinder Cadillac.



Next I would want to own an early Cadillac V-8. A car so reliable, smooth and powerful that it defined an entire class of automobiles: the high quality, moderately priced American luxury car. The first Cadillac V-8 was an immediate hit and so reliable that it was selected as an official US Army staff car during WW I.



My next stop would be in the early 1930's, the Classic era of automobile design. Cadillacs were well represented during this era under the pen of Cadillac styling chief, Harley Earl, and stood proudly among the Duesenbergs, Packards and Pierce-Arrows of their day.



Then there was the Cadillac I dreamed most about in high school when I started in the old car hobby. At a Long Island AACA meet I became smitten with art-deco Cadillacs of the late 1930's, particularly the coupes with those long, elegant rear lines.



An AACA friend, who also had an old car showroom in Woodmere, NY had a 1940 convertible coupe for sale. It was out of my price range, but I fell in love with it and still would like to have one some day. To me, these were the most stylish of the pre-war designs, with their flowing organic shapes, aerodynamic grills and sweeping fenders. They spoke elegance.



And what collection would be complete without the revolutionary post-war style of 1948. Although the OHV V-8 of 1949 was the big news, I was particularly awed by the rounded trunk lines and the chrome chevrons on the tail fins of the '48 convertible. This design was a masterpiece, plain and simple.



My next favorite design is the 1955 convertible. This car symbolizes Cadillac's emergence as the preeminent surviving luxury marque after the war. Cadillac's last great rival, Packard, fell by the wayside and Chrysler and Lincoln, while making some great cars, never could quite catch up to Cadillac's dominance in the American luxury market. This '55 convertible in its triple-black color scheme exudes a sensual

elegance that few other cars could match.



While the slimming down of body lines and tail fins in 1957 did not prove as popular with the public as Cadillac had hoped, the 1958 model with its quad headlights and bulked-up rear quarters brought back the strong sense of identity that said "Cadillac style." To my eye, the proportions of the 1958 Cadillac are well balanced and the styling features, from the jumbo jet fins to the extended rear quarters of the Fleetwood sedan, symbolize ebullient 1950's American optimism.



I know that the 59's and 60's are very well liked because of the amount of "wow" they packed into their shapes but I have become particularly fond of the 1961. This seems to be an overlooked year in a lot of collections, yet Cadillac, along with the Thunderbird and Lincoln Continental of that year were all breakthrough designs that featured restrained, elegant good taste and were a reaction to some of the excessive styling treatments of the late fifties.

The 1961 Cadillac had upper tail fins emerging from its rear deck short of its rounded trunk edges, and lower fins called "strakes." The influence of GM show cars like the "Firebird III" was apparent, yet the styling details of the car were well worked out, with surface

interest and balance, so that the treatment of fins somehow enhanced the overall design, but did not dominate or detract from flow of the car's lines.



My favorite Cadillac before coming to the one I actually own, is the 1963 Coupe DeVille. A car that from most angles has a pleasing balance of roof and rear deck lines and a restrained elegance that represents one of the high points of 1960's Cadillac styling. You always knew a Cadillac when you saw one, and the '63 preserved all the familiar cues that said "Cadillac" but presented them in highly refined manner.



Whenever I would see those tail fin stoplights illuminate, I always felt that the Cadillac was pointing a finger at me and saying: "Now, you stop!"

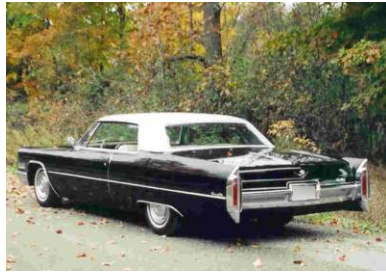
Of course the gorgeous of gorgeous Cadillacs in my personal collection would be the one I first noticed at the age of ten and never got over, the 1964 Eldorado. I have one and hope to enjoy it for a long time to come.



Another high water mark in 60's Cadillac design was the 1966 Fleetwood Brougham. Radical changes took place in 1965 with the perimeter frame, extinction of tail fins and addition of curved window glass. By 1966, the stylists had refined the details and softened the edges to create a beautiful and timeless automobile. This car looked good the day it appeared and still looks good today.



The 1966 Coupe DeVille has many of the same qualities and stands out as one I would enjoy owning as well.



My final two in the collection would be a 1969 60 Special and a 1973 Coupe DeVille.



The 60 Special represents a stylistic connection to the 1955, especially the tail light treatment and was a slightly simpler variant of two Fleetwood sedans offered that year. Unlike the padded top Fleetwood Brougham, it featured a painted roof, and on its extended wheelbase, had great proportions for a big sedan.

The '73 Coupe represented a refinement of the body style introduced in 1971 that continued through 1976. I like the bolder front and rear details on this model and the preservation of the coupe rear quarter window styling, before it was changed to fixed rear "opera window" in 1974.



The cars shown are: ca. 1905 runabout, 1918 Touring Car, 1931 custom phaeton, a 1938 coupe, 1940 convertible coupe, 1948 convertible, 1955 convertible, 1961 convertible, 1963 coupe deville 1964 Eldorado convertible, 1966 Fleetwood Brougham and Coupe deville, 1969 60 Special and 1973 Coupe deville.