

Those Lines

BY JEFF KINZLER

What are the distinguishing characteristics that always made a Cadillac look like a Cadillac? Why is it that you could always pick a Cadillac out from other cars on the road?

I examined some archive photos and noticed at least one styling theme that continued from year to year for at least 30 years. Some people said that “the Caddy had nice lines.” I never knew exactly what that meant, but there are lines - actually creases in the sheet metal - that its designers used to distinguish the Cadillac’s styling from other cars.

Take a look at the 1939 Sixty Special below. Notice that the headlight shell had a horizontal line dividing it in half.



The 1940 models had the same feature.



In 1941 Cadillac went to a radically different front ensemble with an alligator type hood and headlights faired into the front fenders. The horizontal line morphed from the headlight bucket to the outside edge of the front fender and gradually

disappeared as it extended rearward.



1942-1947 Cadillacs had similar styling and maintained the same line, as the front fenders grew longer, extending past the leading edge of the door.



In 1948-49 with its first all new, post-war body, Cadillac again designed a horizontal line leading rearward from the headlight and blending back into the fender as it proceeded along the body.



The redesign for 1950-53 kept up the same theme along the front fender.



In 1954 Cadillac again came out with an all new body. However, one element

carried over from previous styles, the horizontal crease from the headlight rearward, fading into the sheet metal of the front fender, as before.



In 1957 a new body carried the front fender line farther back where it faded into the door panel.



In 1958, the same line was accentuated with a bright moulding.



With the new body style of 1959, the moulding disappeared and the crease, which now began above the headlamp, was once again shortened to terminate within the front fender.



In 1961 another revision of the body featured a line that ran the full length of the car where it rounded the rear fender and aligned with the edge of the trunk lid,

providing one of the more imaginative treatments of the rear ensemble.



1962 was a variant of the same body, but this time the line extend to the rear fender, stopping short of the bumper, turning downward and reversing direction where it blended into the body near the rear wheel opening.



In 1963 and 1964 the line appeared on the new body style, but was again shortened to fade into the door behind the front fender.



In 1965 and 1966 the line appeared as a subtle edge between the top and side surfaces of the front fender, and was again stretched out to the full length of the car.



In 1967 and 1968 the line began as an edge that started at the front fender and became a sharp crease that swept the entire length of the body as it faded into the rear fender. The top of the rear fender line kicked up sharply at the C pillar and slanted downward suggesting a long sweeping fin or blade, not unlike the rear quarter of the '63 and '64 body styles.



The 1967 Eldorado's front fenders had razor-edge tops that faded into the upper door panel, marking the first time an Eldorado (other than the Eldorado Broughams) had different front end sheet metal from standard full-size Cadillacs.



For the 1969-1970 body style, the line again traced the full length of the car starting as an edge between the top and side surfaces of the front fender and sharpening into a blade like crease along their rear quarter.



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1971-74 saw the line appear again as a front fender crease only to have it disappear completely in the front-end face lift of 1975-76.



So, we can see from this brief photo history, that Cadillac stylists created horizontal lines sweeping backward from the headlamps of the car perhaps to suggest length, or forward motion, or to make the car seem lower and longer. Whatever their intent, this styling element appeared each year in one form or another, from about 1939 through the early 1970's as a distinguishing characteristic of Cadillac automobiles.

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