

Cadillac Heaven has many stories to tell

By Patti Slaughter Jeffersonian Democrat Staff Writer Jun 11, 2021

BROOKVILLE — Behind every classic car is a story, and there are many stories to be told in “Cadillac Heaven” in Brookville.

When Dr. Steven Greenberg retired as an eye surgeon, he found he needed something to keep his hands busy. He found that something in adding to his collection of Cadillacs, which he began with a 1966 Cadillac.

He sees each of the Cadillacs as a piece of history. Each of the cars “has its own story,” he said, and he is more than willing to share those stories with those visiting the museum.

He has a green 1951 Cadillac he calls “the Jetsons’ car,” because the large windows in the car “make you feel like there is a dome around you.” Another, brighter green car is a 1929 Fleetwood Chicago Car, “one of the most interesting” in his collection. “It was called a Chicago Car because the gangsters wanted a big, long car so they could put their whiskey in the back. The Fleetwood had a bigger engine, so they could outrun the police cars. So the police went out and bought a bunch of Cadillac Fleetwood. The police colors were black and green, so the gangsters painted their cars black and green.” Greenberg has a picture of Al Capone’s car, which is the same color as his 1929 Chicago Car.

Painted in an army green is a 1942 Cadillac Series 63. Greenberg said, “1942 Cadillacs are very rare, because they fell in production due to the war. The Series 63 was a special model, made only two years. It was longer to make people more comfortable in the back seat, and as such was favored by the generals in World War II. A number of these cars were shipped over to Europe for use by the military.”

Although he isn’t sure if it was actually a military car, “I restored it as a military car — what was painted, what was chrome, the size of the stars, all the details.” As a tribute to his father, Jerome, who “was a lieutenant colonel in the European Theatre under Eisenhower,” Greenberg placed his father’s original footlocker in the trunk of the car. One of his uniforms is also in the car.

A 2004 limousine in his collection was originally owned by the New York Times. They “used it to pick up celebrities from the airport,” he said. “I’m going to write to the New York Times and see if they have any pictures of celebrities in the limousine.”

Greenberg noted, “our first Cadillac was a ‘56 Coupe de Ville convertible. It finally died, so I got a ‘56 Eldorado and painted it the same colors as my original car.”

Occasionally he drives the cars. One of the cars, which he purchased in Florida, is a 2000 Seville. “When we got it here, Deena said, ‘I want that car.’ She drove it for three or four years. It’s a wonderful car.” He retired it at 50,000 miles.

Because of his reputation as a collector of Cadillacs, Greenberg receives calls from all over the country when someone has a Cadillac to sell. “One of the mechanics that works with me got a call from someone selling a 1989 Eldorado. It was a lady who got old and lost her driver’s license,” he said. When they went to get the car, “her son was there and he said, ‘My mother really loved this car and I really don’t want it to be abused or turned into a hot rod.’ My friend turned to the guy and said, ‘Sir, this car is going to Cadillac Heaven.’”

Greenberg is meticulous as he restores each of the cars, making them as identical to the original as possible. “You feel like you are doing something when you take a car that’s really not been cared for” and restore it to its original beauty. “It isn’t so much just buying the cars, I like to work on them. I don’t like to buy cars that have already been restored. It is more fun for me to buy an original car that has the original carpet and original upholstery so I can match it, so that I know it is accurate. I like the authenticity.”

Before he begins restoring a Cadillac, he researches the model’s history. “I have to get it exactly the way it came from the factory,” he said. “That’s the beauty of it.”

With more than 70 restored Cadillacs, dating from 1905, in his museum, his collection continues to grow. Two more cars are on their way to Brookville, coming from Arkansas and Rhode Island. He said he hopes one day to have a Cadillac from each year. He is currently restoring a 1973 Eldorado convertible. “This is a very important, historic car,” Greenberg said. “In 1973 Cadillac was the Indy pace car. Cadillac built two cars to run on the track to lead the cars. Then they built 550 replicas and they built 37 cars to run on the track, driven by celebrities and drivers. This is one of the original track-run cars. We are rebuilding the original pace car, with a 500 hp engine.”

Assisting Greenberg with the restorations are Terry Schuckers and Mark Buck. Sometimes his wife, Deena, also lends a hand.

The Greenberg Cadillac Museum is located at 67 South White St. in Brookville, and will be open at select times during the summer and fall. Admission will be by donation, with proceeds benefiting the Jefferson County Historical Society (JCHS).

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As a tribute to his father Steven Greenberg has placed his father's original footlocker in the trunk of his 1942 Cadillac Series 63 restored as one of the Cadillacs used by the military officers like General Eisenhower during World War II.



Restored as closely as possible to its original beauty is Steven Greenberg's favorite Cadillac, a 1958 Eldorado Biarritz convertible.



One of the most interesting cars in the collection is the 1929 Fleetwood Chicago Car, popular with both police and gangsters in that city.



A 1905 Cadillac is the oldest car in the collection of more than 70 vintage Cadillacs.