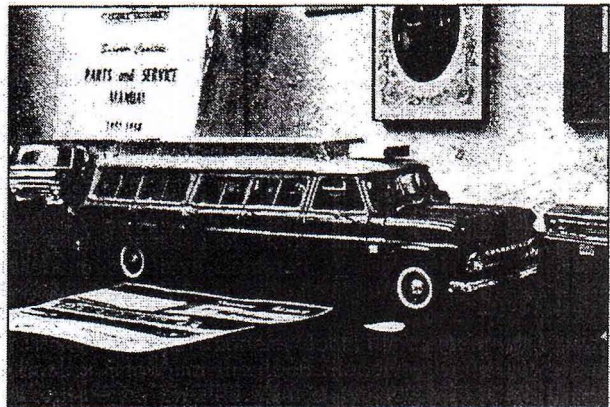


Ted Kalinowski's award-winning PCS shoot diorama.



Best Of Show: John Kline's 1966 Stageman limo.

FLINT'S GRAND FINALE Terrific Turnout For The PCS Michigan Chapter's Pre-Pandemic Leap Day Micro-Meet

By Gregg D. Merksamer, PCS Publicity Chair

Under normal circumstances, the PCS Michigan Chapter's 16th Annual Micro-Meet would have been plenty memorable, between its first-ever "Leap Day" scheduling and the sad confirmation this would be its final staging at Brady & Janet Smith's spacious and reliably welcoming "Garage Mahal" in Flint, Michigan's rural Grand Blanc outskirts. Once the subsequent Coronavirus outbreak, however, sealed its fate as our extended family's final face-to-face gathering for the foreseeable future, we all had added reason to be grateful it was so well attended by model hearse-, ambulance-, and livery-vehicle fanciers from no fewer than a dozen states, and the province of Ontario.

On top of supervising registration, keyboard entertainment, and a 2020 Diabolical Quiz challenging us to recall advertising "spokes-toons" both famous and obscure, PCS Co-Founder George Hamlin augmented this year's turnout of 1/43-scale models with his previously admired diorama of a PCS Henney Chapter Spring Meet at the Route 66 Motel; a scenically back-dropped quartet of Great Smoky Mountains National Park sightseeing buses based on 1935-41 Packards; and Brooklin of Britain's hefty, white-metal replica of Pope Pius XII's 1947 Henney Packard Custom Super Clipper limousine flying Vatican flags from its front fenders in front of St. Peter's Basilica. Fellow Maryland PCS stalwart Steve Lichtman debuted a 1957 Ford Courier sedan delivery "Keller FD" ambulance created from a 1/25th-scale SpecCast diecast model, while Tennessee attendee Jeremy Ledford was awarded ribbons in both the "Rescue" and "Funeral" sub-categories of kit-bashed or scratch-built model Class 1 for the 1966 Miller-Meteor Cadillac ambulance and matching hearse "parts car" he based on Jo-Han's iconic 1/25-scale kits.

Ontario was equally well represented at the Smiths' by

the 1/22-scale 1959 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Sentinel ambulance Len Langlois fitted with a "moon roof" to showcase its patient compartment and Chief Judge Walt McCall's large collection of coachbuilder nameplates and professional cars replicated in 1/43 and 1/18 scales. Fellow Windsor ambassador Ted Kalinowski earned Most Interesting Display honors for his 1/87 (HO scale) diorama of a 1917 Ford Model T hearse being photographed by mini-likenesses of Brady Smith, Steve Loftin, Gregg Merksamer, Steve Lichtman, Walt McCall, and Ted Kalinowski in front of a suitably tiny cemetery gate.

Milford, Michigan modeler John Kline, meanwhile, won "Best of Show" for the 1966 Stageman Chevrolet airport limousine he created from a pair of 1/25-scale Revell Chevrolet Suburban kits. The typically long build he started last September and completed one week prior to the Micro-Meet entailed such detailing as a rooftop luggage rack derived from the top section of AMT's Fruehauf tanker trailer kit, and the sourcing of an auxiliary air conditioner and cab lights from AMT's 1974 White Road Boss big rig. John also earned the 2020 Senior Award for his previously First Place-honored Eagle Coach "First Call" conversion of a 1996 Dodge Grand Caravan and treated Micro-Meet regulars to an encore display of such past achievements as a Weller Brothers 1957 Ford and his fantasy rendition of a 1976 Miller-Meteor Chevrolet Caprice ambulance.

No Micro-Meet is complete without a pre-awards presentation examining some important aspect of funeral- or emergency-vehicle history, and Rick Duffy and Andy Blenko (EMS veterans who have known each other since they were 13 years old) truly excelled with their program on how Pittsburgh's Freedom House Enterprises warrants wider recognition as the country's first active paramedic corps. Its 1967 founding, in common with the

slightly later but far better known Los Angeles County and Miami initiatives, was inspired by the landmark 1966 National Academy of Sciences study that concluded soldiers wounded in Vietnam had better odds of surviving than civilians suffering a coronary or accident on a state-side city street. Rick and Andy explained this was because the funeral directors providing much of America's ambulance service at the time (as "they owned the only vehicle in town long enough to carry someone lying down") had "little if any formal training and even less equipment despite the best of intentions." In Pittsburgh's case, most ambulance service in the 1960s and '70s was provided by police officers driving a paddy-wagon-like panel truck "with an army cot and no oxygen on board - this outdated 'scoop and scoot' service was basically a race to the hospital" whose "medically dangerous" deficiencies were underscored by Pennsylvania Governor David Lawrence's fatal heart attack during his November, 1966 speech at a Pittsburgh mosque.

In addition to providing ambulance service in the mostly African-American and poverty-plagued Hill District where even the police might not respond unless the incident involved guns, knives, or other criminal activity, Freedom House's founding by Pittsburgh's United Negro Protest Committee was envisioned as a job-training program for former felons and the long-term unemployed "languishing in the streets." Duffy recalled "50% of the trainees had no high-school diploma" and "they cherished their empowered roles" upon completing a nine-month program that included six weeks of hospital training. They handled 5,800 calls the first year after formally hitting the streets in two donated former International Travelall police wagons in June, 1968, earning \$42 a week while performing airway procedures, EKGs, IVs, and obstetric deliveries. "The Hill's residents were happy to have their own kind providing help and the police were happy to NOT go in there," Andy said, and it wasn't long before people in Pittsburgh's more affluent areas started asking for the "Freedom Boys" instead of the police meat wagons: "You didn't have to be a doctor to see the difference."

Freedom House greatly benefited from the guidance and encouragement of such EMS pioneers as Dr. Peter Safar of Pittsburgh's University Hospital (a three-time Nobel Prize in Medicine nominee whose ambulance-design ideas became the basis for NHTSA's KKK-A-1822 standard in the 1970s), and Nancy L. Caroline, M.D., a five-foot-tall Mossad alumna lauded as the "Mother of Paramedicine" after authoring the definitive training book *Emergency Care in the Streets* (she died too young, alas, of multiple myeloma at the age of 58 in 2002). The 1970 election of Pete Flaherty as Pittsburgh's mayor would nonetheless torpedo Freedom House as he was, remembered Andy, "a small-government fiscal conservative who hated public/private partnerships like Freedom House, and opposed its expansion into wealthier, whiter areas" where bill collection wouldn't be such a challenge. The \$100,000 yearly subsidy Freedom House got from Pittsburgh's previous mayor Joe Barr was discontinued by his successor, who also outlawed the use of lights and sirens by Freedom House ambulances in 1974 on the excuse that they "disturbed business people."

When Mayor Flaherty announced in early 1975 that Pittsburgh would start setting up a county-wide EMS system built from scratch with all-white paramedics, Dr. Caroline rejected his request to head it unless 30 Freedom House medics and dispatchers were worked into the program. "Mayor Flaherty agreed, but there was no ceremony or announcement," Andy added, and only half of the 26 Freedom House people that went into Pittsburgh EMS remained 12 months later as "they weren't forced to keep us" (one recalled ruefully), and crews that had worked together for years were separated. Their contributions to early EMS history might have been entirely forgotten were it not for Pittsburgh paramedic-turned-filmmaker Gene Starzenski's 2007 documentary *Freedom House: Street Saviors*, even though a distribution deal that might have brought it to PBS never panned out, and the film has screened only sporadically ever since at EMS conventions.

After Andy & Rick concluded their presentation with a screening of the documentary's trailer, they requested a show of hands that revealed Steve Lichtman and western Pennsylvania resident Chuck "Papa Smurf" Snyder were the only people in the room who had already been aware of what Steve called "the first attempt to teach non-medical people to do medical things in an ambulance, and it was African-American people." Dr. Dennis Lloyd thought it "such a shame we have to be this old before we found out the truth about this. PBS would have been a perfect fit," even if PCS people can now visit freedomhousedoc.com on the Internet to learn more about how this enterprise became what Andy Blenko called in closing "the nation's mold for pre-hospital emergency medicine. Its story isn't about being the first, but about individuals achieving success."

Once the award presentation was concluded, meet host Brady Smith sent everyone off to dinner on their own by declaring "it's your garage, too. All the junk on the wall of this building was stuff we had in our basement, and it would all be useless and meaningless if we couldn't share it with you. This is not a car club - this is kind of a family. I know a lot of you can remember when the twins were little enough to be in car seats. We used to get to see our best friends only once a year, so this is double the fun. It's not just about the models but about getting together. It reminds me of a time umpteen years ago during a nice warm night at an International Meet when 100 people were in the parking lot at midnight and Hamlin quipped, 'This is it right here. This is why we started this club.' I love all of you, and thank you for being here."

