

THE TALISMAN

The Newsletter of the Western New York Region of the Cadillac-LaSalle Club, Inc.

SUMMER 2006

The Good Cimarron

By Bernie Daily

I have always been intrigued by Cadillac's Cimarron. I looked at this model not as a "real" Cadillac, but an extremely nice Chevy Cavalier. I guess that is why I was never disappointed with the basic car. We had two of them.

Four years ago I had been searching for a nice 1994 to 1996 Fleetwood Brougham. I had just sold my Buick Park Avenue Ultra and had a very strong desire to get back into a car with a separate body and frame. The Fleetwood with its LT1 engine and bolt on body were just the thing. I was having a problem finding a clean car with "eyes". That is a term car salesmen use for those particular vehicles with a combination of shape, color, wheels, and stance that just stop you in your tracks. Nothing suited my taste.

Since the Ultra was gone I needed transportation. I had a daily routine

of scanning Trader Online for local Cadillac's. I thought for sure that Fleetwood would pop up. One day a 1988 Cimarron showed up on the list. I had to at least look at it. Discussions about that model had come up at Cadillac Club meetings and previous owners had fond memories. They really liked their little cars. The ones doing the grumbling were those who probably never even sat in one. I figured I should at least pay a visit. Anyway, the price was well under \$1,000.

Have you ever seen one of those benevolently neglected cars? The little white Cimarron was one of those. The car sat nice on it's aluminum wheels, tires round and nicely pumped up, level at all four corners. The body was arrow straight. Getting close you could see the big old GM rust blisters brush painted over with white paint. The car obviously had spent

its life in a driveway arched over by pines. Pine needles were everywhere. The plastic lower panels hid underlying rust pretty well until you opened the door. Rusty doors, but, oh, the nice blue cloth interior and the mileage was around 70,000. Some good and some bad, I had not been scared away yet.

The owner was selling it in some weird and convoluted deal involving him, his wife, and his mother in law. He was very happy to be the pawn in this deal. He painted himself as a pillar of kindness and honesty, but driven by the evil women into non-negotiability. The car had a dealer plate that he had "borrowed". I was invited to take a ride.

I do not think I had driven the car more than a mile and a half before I knew I would buy it. A couple of residential neighborhood streets, a short jaunt on a four lane street, and the feeder heading north onto 390 North in Greece did it. Actually stepping on the gas to get on 390 was the decision point. The car was smooth and tight and very quick. I was hooked. The deal was fast and the man followed me home with the car that afternoon. I wonder if his women got some of the money, if he surrendered all of it, or if there were women.

As Murphy's Law would have it, about two weeks later I found the official family car, a 1994 Buick Roadmaster with the



(Continued on page 9)



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The Talefin is the official publication of the Western New York Region of the Cadillac-LaSalle Club, Inc. Opinions and editorials in The Talefin are not necessarily the policy of the club.

Mailing labels are updated to reflect region membership at the time of each issue.

They are provided by Roger Libby, with assistance from our membership director, Dick Walther.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our season of events is well underway. We have enjoyed a very pleasant brunch at the Grand Island Holiday Inn in May and also our annual car show at Keyser Cadillac. Many thanks to those hardy souls who braved what began as an inauspicious Sunday morn to bring their cars to the show. As the day progressed the weather Gods smiled upon the proceedings and the show ended on a very enjoyable and successful note for all present.

We have a date of August 12th for the show in the Rochester area at Valley Cadillac. (See show info and application) We are also working to set up a gathering at Doug Monroe's in Lockport, where we can bring our cars and appetites for some camaraderie, conviviality and consumption of clams and lobster. More on this later.

Let's not forget our club is only as solid as we members make it, so participate whenever you can and let's have your articles for the Talefin and ideas for showing these beautiful examples of the American auto crafting art upon which we lavish so much time and effort.

Till next time, Drive Safely.

Peter Arnoldo

CLASSIC LOGO



CLASSIC QUOTE

"Car Manufacturer's formula for a successful marriage: Stick to one model!"
-Unknown

Look what car is on the July cover of Hemmings!
It's a 1939 LaSalle Coupe, Model 5027. Still handsome after 66 years.

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JULY 2006

Hemmings

Motor News

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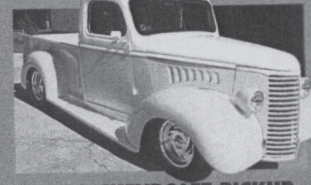
1982 DETOMASO PANTERA GT5



1971 OLDSMOBILE 4-4-2

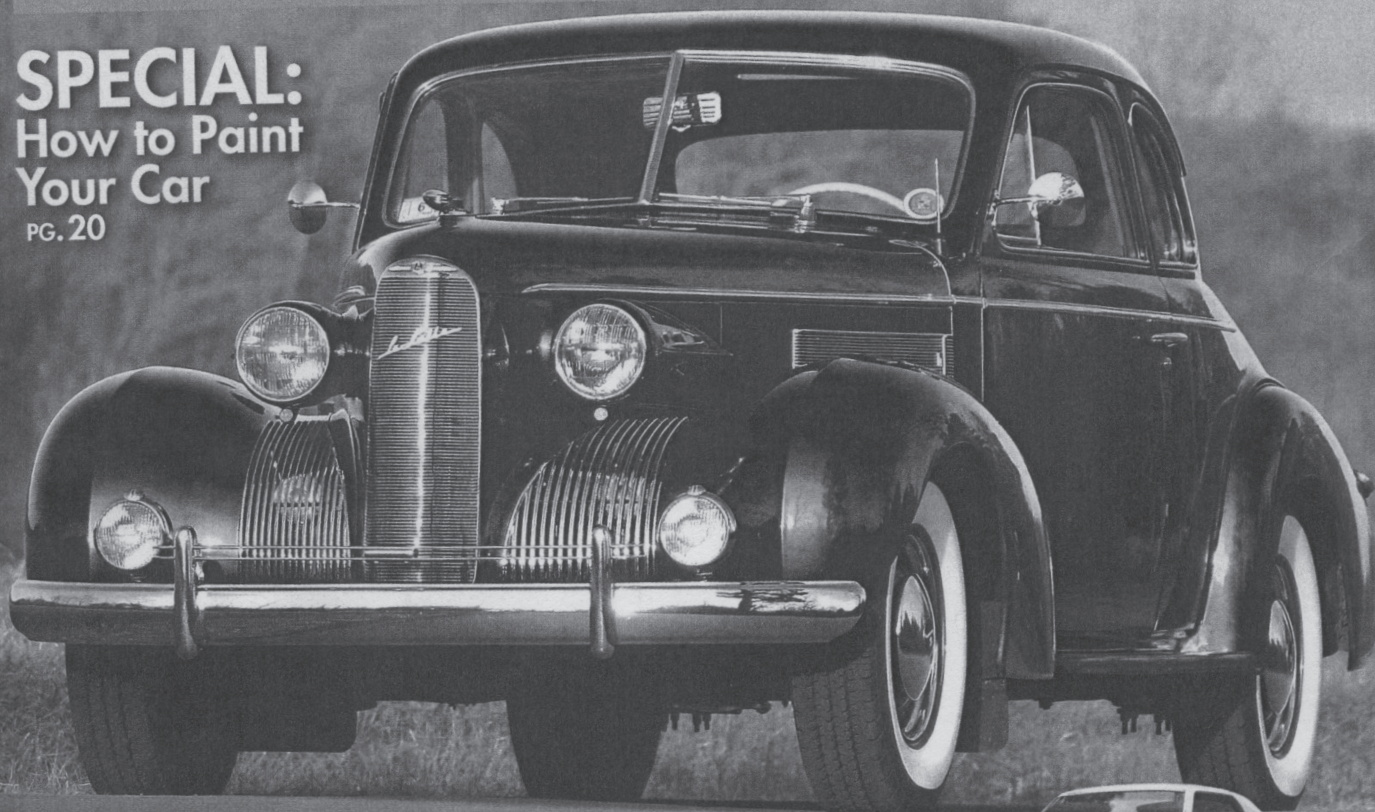


1967 AUSTIN-HEALEY BJB



1939 CHEVROLET PICKUP

SPECIAL:
How to Paint
Your Car
PG. 20

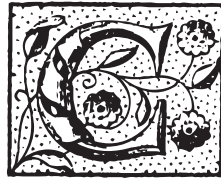


PROFILES:
'59 Chevrolet Impala PG.18
'66 Ford Galaxie 7-Litre PG.64





Martha's



adillac

By Jerry Puma

I remember the day I met Martha Torge, as vividly as if it were yesterday. The date was June 30, 1990, the day of the Western NY Region Cadillac-LaSalle Club Car Show. I was showing my 1964 Cadillac Eldorado, when I noticed a distinctive looking elderly woman carefully examining every square inch of my car. She was dressed entirely in black, except for a tan pith helmet, a large Louis Vuitton bag, and her school-bus-yellow Reebok sneakers.

She introduced herself and began to ask me questions about my car, especially concerning the care of the leather interior. We chatted for a while, and it became apparent she was well-versed in vintage Cadillacs. Soon she said, in an almost hushed tone, "I drive a 1965 Eldorado." Somewhat surprised at this revelation, I immediately began to flip through my mental Rolodex (there were no PDA's in 1990) of vintage Eldorados in the Buffalo area. I asked her if it was black and if it used to be parked at 1217 Delaware Avenue in Buffalo. A look of surprise came over her, and she said, "How did you know that?" I told her that I was always watching out for old Cadillacs, and I remembered seeing a 1965 Eldorado always parked in the same spot

at the high-rise apartment building on Delaware Ave., but that I had not seen it in a few years. She replied that it actually was her brother's car and that she was its "caretaker." When she said "brother", I said, "Are you George R. Torge's sister?" She responded in the affirmative and had a look on her face like she had just met the Amazing Kreskin.

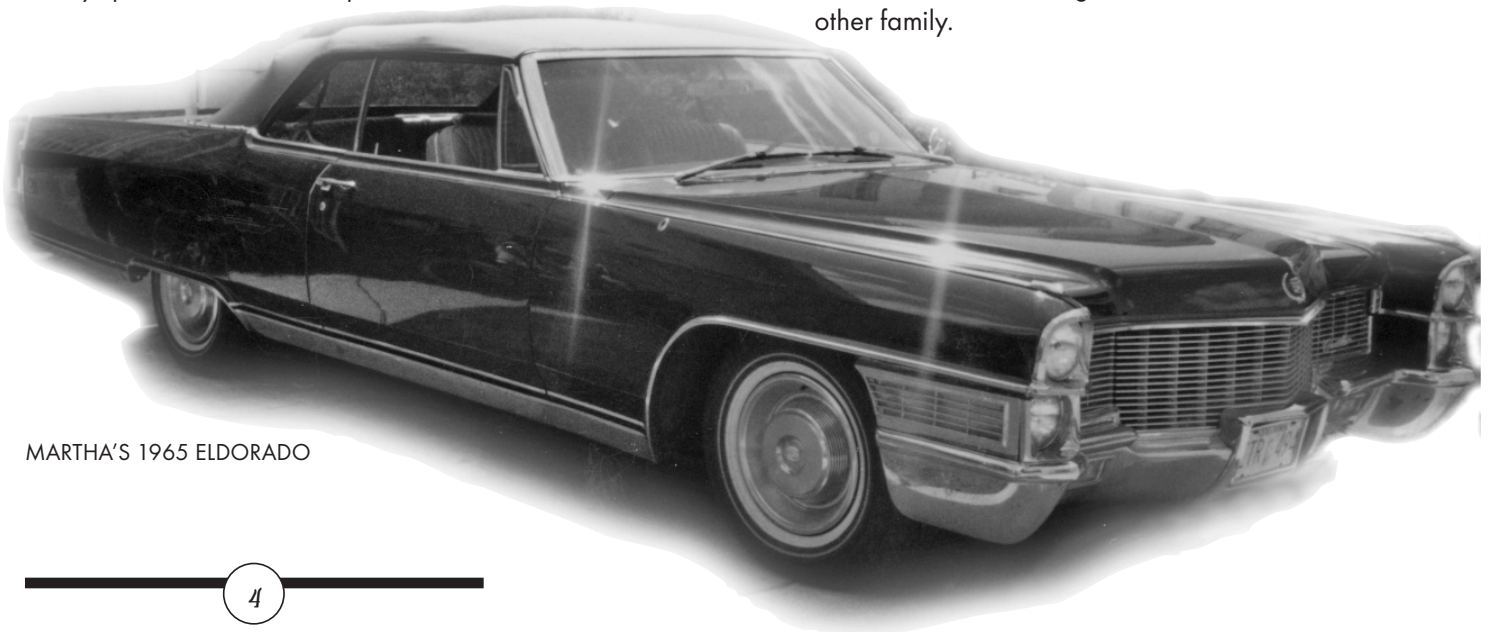
George R. Torge was Martha's "big brother". He was a pioneer in radio and television broadcasting at WBEN radio and TV. A very recognizable personality in Buffalo, he was best remembered for his "editorial comments" at the end of each television newscast. Martha went on to say that her brother bought the Eldorado new in 1965 from Tinney Cadillac Corp. in Buffalo, and it was the last car he had ever purchased. He never had a desire to buy a new model because he liked his '65 so much, and George would never part with it, as it was his most prized possession. Martha also mentioned that the car was originally white; but George had it painted black shortly after he bought it, because he thought it was "too flashy".

Martha and George were natives of Buffalo. Neither one married, they were devoted to each other and had no other family.

George stayed close to home and worked at WBEN for over forty years. As Martha became more comfortable talking with me, she said that she lived in New York City, where she had worked for many years in her "career". She said that she visited Buffalo every few months to see her brother and to "take care of the car" stating that it was still at 1217 Delaware, but now it stayed in one of the garages.

It seems as though fate had dealt a cruel blow to George R. Torge. After he retired from broadcasting, he suffered a debilitating stroke that left him paralyzed and speechless. He was a resident in the rehab unit at Veteran's Hospital for many years. He kept his apartment on Delaware and the Eldorado in the garage for Martha's use when she came to Buffalo.

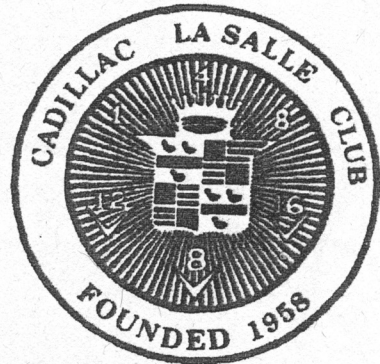
Before Martha left the car show on that June day, she returned to the subject of the leather interior of the 1965 Eldorado. It seems as though she wanted to have it cleaned, and she explained how she had taken the car to a well-known local auto restoration shop during her last visit to Buffalo to have the leather cleaned and dressed. She was perplexed; because, when she had asked the owner what the cost would be, he replied, "I won't know until I get into it."



MARTHA'S 1965 ELDORADO

**19th ANNUAL WESTERN N.Y. REGION
CADILLAC-LASALLE CLUB
INTERNATIONAL CAR SHOW
SATURDAY, AUGUST 12th 2006
11:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.
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CLASS 2 1950-1958
CLASS 3 1995-1964
CLASS 4 1965-1976
CLASS 5 1977-1996**

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MAKE (CADILLAC OR LASALLE) AND YEAR OF CAR _____

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1st Place: Don Ulrich, 1940 Cadillac 60 Special, Divider Window
2nd Place John Bray, 1939 LaSalle Coupe

Class 2

1st Place Frank Puma, 1958 Cadillac Coupe
2nd Place John Kanutsu, 1957 Cadillac Coupe
3rd Place Rich Nasca, 1958 Cadillac Coupe

Class 3

1st Place Joe Mannarino, 1964 Cadillac Coupe
2nd Place Sally Banach, 1959 Cadillac Eldorado Convertible
3rd Place Scott Zak, 1964, Cadillac Convertible

Class 4

1st Place Peter Arnoldo,
1976 Cadillac Eldorado Convertible
2nd Place Chris Rizzo, 1975 Cadillac Coupe DeVille
3rd Place Cecilio Diaz,
1976 Cadillac Eldorado Convertible

Class 5

1st Place Joe Mannarino, 1984 Cadillac Coupe
2nd Place Dan Marinola, 1978 Cadillac Eldorado
3rd Place Mike Punturiero,
1980 Cadillac Fleetwood coupe



Now, Martha did not find that to be an acceptable answer, so she left. She then mentioned that it seemed as though every time she took the car in for repairs, she could never leave without paying somebody at least \$500! Admittedly, at least 20 years of driving in Buffalo winters had taken its toll on the Eldorado, and now its recent lack of regular use was having a negative impact on the car. It seemed to me that certain unscrupulous types had been taking advantage of Martha.

As we parted that day, we walked to where she had parked the car to attend the show, and we noticed that the Eldorado was leaking coolant. Martha sighed that it looked as though she was about to spend more money. We both spoke of how much we enjoyed talking with each other – it seemed as though we had similar interests and personalities. She said that she was flying back to New York, (Martha traveled everywhere with her pet Chihuahuas – long before that was made popular by Paris Hilton!) and I suggested

that we should keep in touch. I also told her that as long as she promised to tell more “Martha stories”, that I would invite her to my home and spend the whole day detailing her car the next time she came back to Buffalo.

We kept in touch by phone (no e-mail in 1990!) throughout the summer. She returned to Buffalo later in the summer for an extended stay, during which she attended her 50th reunion of her Bennett High School graduating class. She remarked that it was fun, but “everyone else had gotten so old.” I had the opportunity to finally detail the car’s interior, which was actually in near-perfect condition. However, Martha was quite concerned when I showed her two 12-inch diameter holes in the floor under each side of the rear seat cushion, the result of rain and snow draining through a convertible. That day of manual labor was greatly over-shadowed by many hours of conversation with Martha. Intelligent, worldly, funny and earthy, Martha recapped her life that day – and what a life it was!

It seems as though Martha left Buffalo in the late 1940’s to attain fame and fortune in the “big city”. She became a publicist for RKO Studios in New York City and was profiled in the July 1951 issue of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. She had contact with almost every movie star and entertainment personality one could name – and had story about each one of them. Martha spoke of how Grace Kelly had ridden in the 1965 Eldorado when Martha and George took her to Niagara Falls when she came to Buffalo for “a visit”.

She told about her brother George’s experiences during World War II, and how he had won five battle stars. She mentioned, matter-of-factly, that her brother was part of the contingent that stormed Hitler’s headquarters and that she had Hitler’s movie camera and his rug in her apartment in New York City. We then discovered we had a mutual interest in Frank Lloyd Wright, as she described how her brother George was the first tenant in Frank Lloyd Wright’s Darwin



THE AUTHOR AND MARTHA TORGE WITH THE 1965 CADILLAC ELDORADO

Martin house when it was converted to apartments, residing there from 1954 to 1967. Needless to say, that was a detailed discussion.

Martha remained in the entertainment industry for many years. She worked with Walt Disney and was presented with the first known "Duckster" in 1952, which is known as the Academy Award of Disney. She co-authored a book of Charlie Chan quotations, and eventually retired as the Vice-President of Public Relations of Warner Brothers.

Later in 1990, she made another trip to Buffalo and asked to take my wife and me out to dinner. She called the day of our date, and said she was afraid she had to cancel because she was driving the Eldorado and discovered that her driver's door window would not go up and she did not want to leave the car open and unlocked. She mentioned that she was going to have the Cadillac dealer pick up the car, and she would be without transportation. After I groaned at that, I told her I'd be right over to see if I could fix it.

I drove to the apartment on Delaware, where she was meeting with her lawyer. Martha said she was still attempting to "work on her brother's affairs". I went to look at the car, and the problem was simply a loose wire on the master window switch. In the meanwhile, I found out that the attorney had questioned Martha about "who I was and what I wanted". Martha convinced her that I was "OK". The apartment was like a museum - filled with art, Disney cels, and fine furnishings. When Martha mentioned in front of the lawyer that her main concern was what would happen to her brother's car upon his passing, the lawyer had a quizzical look on her face. I suggested that she specifically state, in writing, what she wanted to do with the car. That never happened....

That evening at dinner, Martha announced that she was going to move to Buffalo; live in the apartment; and, most importantly to her, drive the Eldorado! She said that the only thing she was unsure of was whether she would be able to find her favorite nail polish in Buffalo - Elizabeth

Arden Red Door Red. Martha was very particular - my wife promised to help!

We kept in contact through the Christmas holidays, and Martha was preparing for her move to Buffalo. She sorted through her belongings and packed all the treasures that she wished to keep close at hand and had them shipped to the apartment in Buffalo. She sold many of her other possessions through Sotheby's in New York. Martha sent a letter in February and wrote, "In closing a lifetime chapter in 'The City' - my concern saps the time for remembering dear deeds - one wants to say forgive - instead as the years toll for 'you youngsters', perhaps one day you'll understand. You are in my thoughts, - in the months ahead, we'll meet again." That was the last time I heard from Martha.

George R. Torge died on June 29, 1991. I sent Martha a note of sympathy and an offer of any assistance. I did not receive a reply. I speculated that she was quite busy handling "the affairs" of her brother. At the end of October, I noticed a three-line death notice in the Buffalo News - "Martha J. Torge, October 31, 1991 in New York City, sister of the late George R. Torge. Private interment."

Shocked and saddened, I contacted the News to see who placed the death notice, and they referred me to the funeral director. I explained my concern and the undertaker gave me the name of the executor of Martha's estate. I learned that Martha had been stricken with cancer upon her return to New York and passed away after several months of suffering. The executor was given the task of liquidating the estate, and mentioned that he had the Eldorado at his house, which turned out to be one block from my in-laws' home. I visited him and spent much time telling "Martha stories".

On February 27, 1992, a spectacular estate auction of the personal belongings of George and Martha was held in Buffalo. These were the very items that Martha had shipped to Buffalo to start her new life. Her most prized possessions had never been unpacked. There were hundreds of autographed photos of Martha with every movie star and celebrity you could possibly name. The image with

Salvador Dali was memorable. I was able to purchase some items for my own collection. Included in the auction was Martha's 1952 "Duckster" presented to her by Walt Disney. I noticed it; but having no idea of its significance, I decided to pass on a statue of Donald Duck. Big mistake - I learned that it recently sold at auction for \$5701. You can see Martha's Duckster at <http://www.stairstars.com/duckster.html>.

There was one important item missing at the auction - the 1965 Cadillac Eldorado. I learned that the auctioneer planned to sell it at an auction along with some other cars. On March 28, 1992, an auction of a large collection of Willys automobiles and other cars and trucks took place. Martha's 1965 Eldorado was included. There were quite a few people at the auction, and it received prominent notice on the television news and in the next day's newspaper - not because of the presence of Martha's Eldorado, but because the body of a murder victim was found in a fire truck that was up for auction! I was trying to speculate what Martha would have said about that!

Money in hand, I was prepared to give Martha's Eldorado the "good home" that she had mentioned several times to me. It was disheartening to see that the car had deteriorated from being outdoors. I just shook my head and was grateful that Martha did not have to see the condition of the car. A local collector purchased the car for \$6750. The next month, he had the Eldorado in Hemmings Motor News advertised for \$13,000. It would be three more years before the car was sold to a member of the local Cadillac club.

Sadly, the new owner passed away in 2003; and Martha's Eldorado was again offered at an estate auction, and I was there once again. The car was shiny, the chrome had been replated, but the holes were still in the floor under the back seat! The car sold at auction for \$11,500, but not to me. I've not seen the car since then, but I have the feeling that it may surface one day...

After Martha's estate was settled, I made a trip to Surrogate's Court and read her last will and testament. Coupled with her own personal assets, the addition

of the estate inherited from her brother made Martha a very wealthy woman. She never did update her will while she was in Buffalo, so her previous will written in 1955 was amended while she lay dying in New York City. There was no specific provision for the car in her will, but her generosity to local organizations in Buffalo was evident. Specifically, she wrote: "To the organization known as the Historical Society of Buffalo and Erie County located at 25 Nottingham Court, Buffalo, NY, my collection of

Adolph Hitler memorabilia." She left one-seventh of her estate to the SPCA "to provide free spaying of dogs and cats"; one-seventh to her brother George's fraternity at Hamilton College and over \$125,000 to the Historical Society for the "preservation, collection and public education dealing with the history of the development of the television industry in Buffalo, NY". At a recent exhibit about local television at the Historical Society, the name "Torge" was nowhere to be found in the exhibit....

I recently went to Forest Lawn Cemetery to look after Martha's grave site. Her marker was sunken and overgrown with weeds. I cleaned and weeded her plot. Martha would have liked that.....



THE GRAVE MARKER OF MARTHA TORGE IN FOREST LAWN CEMETERY, BUFFALO, NY

(Cimarron continued from page 1)

LT1 as in the Fleetwood. My luck finding a Fleetwood was so bad I started looking at other GM brands. That Roadmaster is now my daughter's and I have purchased my second one. The GM B-body cars are simply amazing.

The hot little Cimarron became my wife's daily driver. She loved it. It scooted around and she had fun. She drove to Geneva, New York from Brockport and thought the gas gauge was broken. Sometimes I would wrestle the car away from her and drive it to work. It was not a traditional Cadillac, really a very nice Cavalier. The rust got worse as we drove the car through the winter. I knew we were near the end of that car's life and I started shopping for another Cimarron. That leads to a sequel to this story, "The Cimarron from Hell"

The white '88 passed from us to a friend who needed transportation and then to a friend of my son. It will be remembered as a fast and sporty little car by my wife and I. I would buy another. But, boy, do I know the places to look before the next purchase.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Classified ads will run for two issues and are free for paid up region members. All ads must include price of item(s) being advertised and MUST be Cadillac/LaSalle related. Business card size ads are \$50 for members and \$60 for non-members for one year (about 5 issues).



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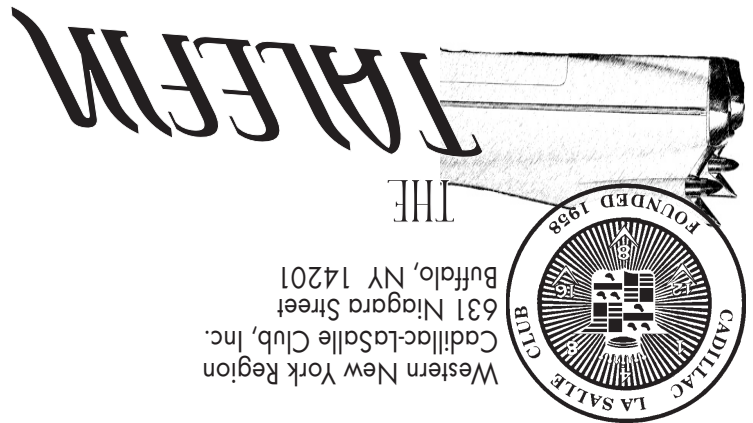
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