

## 1947 CADILLAC 75 SERIES FORMAL LIMOUSINE, FLEETWOOD (DERHAM)

# A Tale From Two Perspectives

*As told by a very special 1947 Cadillac*

I was built August 13, 1947 as a Fleetwood seven-passenger, division window limousine painted Antoinette blue (code 2) with rear interior of tan (code 94) delivered to Scott Smith Cadillac Company in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania weighing 4,945 pounds. My invoice amount (at time of delivery) was \$3,725.71, which included all delivery charges. I had no idea what I was in store for the rest of my life but the story below is the best I can remember.

Apparently I was sold to Mr. William Samuel Paley (founder of CBS Broadcasting) sometime after my delivery. Mr. Paley then commissioned the Derham Body Company of Rosemont, Pennsylvania to execute a complete makeover as he wanted a “Formal blind quarter” limousine and Cadillac no longer offered one.

### Modifications made by Derham

1. The entire rear tan interior was removed and was replaced with blue material to match the body color (I still retain this interior color and material to this day). Rear side windows were removed and sealed up (creating blind quarters) and my rear window was removed and refitted with a smaller oval window, allowing for additional privacy. A rear radio was installed along with power antenna.
2. Script covers were attached to all four of the door sill plates to cover my birth name of Fleetwood. The only place which identifies my Fleetwood origins is the data plate attached to my cowl.
3. My two rear doors were contoured at the top rear to match the lines of my new padded top.
4. A padded, tan fabric top was then fitted and finally, the Derham script was added to rear corners of my hood which completed my “transformation”.
5. My current owners have an original photo of me when I left Derham along with many photos of what I looked like following neglect from later owners.

Prior to my completion, Mr. Paley and his first wife divorced and Mr. Paley “gave me” to his sister, Blanche Paley Levy whose husband (a prominent dentist and horse racing enthusiast) was partners with Mr. Paley in several broadcasting ventures in the Philadelphia area, as well. Mr. Levy had the initials “BPL” painted on my rear doors.

I remained in the Levy family until 1978 when they traded me to the Keenan Rolls-Royce dealership in Gladwyne, Pennsylvania (also friends of the Levys) for an undisclosed sum for two Rolls-Royces (models and years unknown).

At this point, Mr. Keenan sold me to Mr. Gilbert Dobbins who kept me until 1993. However, the last five years of ownership were not kind to me. Mr. Dobbins sold me to Mr. Charlie Smith who over the next three years provided me with a new top and chrome.

My bright work was polished and my rust-free, never damaged body was stripped and a fresh coat of black lacquer (not my correct color) was applied. A new, dark blue top was fitted which accents the blue interior, making for a stunning combination. >>>



> Top photo: Derham covered up the traditional Fleetwood nameplate.  
Bottom photo: The car before paint and new top.



> Another view of the car prior to new paint and top.



> A rear view with the Derham top modification.



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## My New Life

In 1996 Mr. Smith sold me to my current family, the Voigts and this where my new life starts and at this point I'll let the Voigt family continue on with this saga as written by Eric Voigt.

Early in 1996, my dad, Monty Voigt, had me search for a Cadillac formal limousine so I ran a "wanted" ad in the CCCA Bulletin and after several months I received a lengthy letter (not email) from Mr. Smith stating he had this 1947 formal and mentioned the history of the Paley ownership. When I shared this letter with dad he immediately came back with "get photos and let's get this car!" I was shocked he acted



this quickly as he normally had to think things through in detail (it must have been the engineer in him). What made this even more interesting was the car was a manual transmission, not an automatic (as most Cadillacs were configured this way). I thought the reason he wanted this was because of the manual transmission, but I was in for a surprise.

Charlie did a really good job describing the car as he was finishing the restoration and providing accurate and detailed photos of the car before and after. Finally, in September of 1996, the car was completed and delivered to us with 48,000 miles on the odometer.

From that time, dad spent the coming years researching the history and I had no idea why. I knew dad was a very successful television engineer with several patents and I assumed the connection was that Paley was a pioneer in the television industry. I later learned from dad prior to his passing in 2013 that when he was in college he wrote his thesis called "The History of the Television" which focused on the accomplishments of Paley. Viola! The connection!

In 2008, dad finally decided it was time to repair the clock mounted in the division window panel and when he removed it, he noticed written in pencil was "Levy 47" and a sticker from the repair service with a phone number, as well. Dad immediately called the number to see if by chance they were still open for business and if anyone knew anything about the car's history. The gentleman who answered the phone was the owner and knew the Levys and remembered the car and also provided dad with the phone of Mr. Keenan to contact, as well. Dad then called Mr. Keenan, relaying that he now owned this particular 1947 Cadillac and to dad's surprise, Keenan then proceed to recite the entire history of the car.

To date, the Derham has 55,391 miles on it and has been on several CCCA CARavans and still looks like the day we brought it home 19 years ago.

*Thanks to Eric Voigt for sharing a bit of family history.*

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> From top: Derham fender script; View of the rear interior; The stately Cadillac as it appears today.

