



Harley Earl has held the future in his hands before, in the form of the first LaSalle. Now GM's Vice President in Charge of Styling, he is the man behind the Eldorado

EXIT: DREAM ENTER: REALITY

The story behind the birth of Cadillac's Eldorado Brougham

By Don MacDonald

IT WASN'T ENTIRELY by accident that we chose the Cadillac Eldorado Brougham as the Motorama show car we would follow from conception to birth. We suspected that this one was not going to be just another dreamboat, ending up its short-lived usefulness at the last stop (Boston) on the Motorama circuit. Our hunch was a good one; we have every reason to think that the car is *destined for limited production* before the snows come again.

General Motors builds products for everyone, ranging from purposeful Chevy business coupes to huge Euclid earth movers. Since the war, there have been 2 obvious gaps in this otherwise complete range of automotive merchandise. One was an austere economy car. This was actually designed and readied for post-war production, but GM's vast and sensitive consumer research organization warned that prosperous America wouldn't be too interested in it. It was *not* the car that ended up in Australia, produced (by GM) as the Holden, as so many people seem to think. A similar concept may still be revived (see page 21), but emphasis will be on *luxury* in a small package. The other gap, of course, is the 10-grand Cadillac, aimed at the man who can afford whatever he considers best in an automobile.

This man previously had to satisfy himself with a couple of ordinary Cadillacs (or

Lincolns, or Packards). He was not necessarily enough of an enthusiast to put up with the service problems inherent in finicky 5-figure imports such as the Ferrari or Pegaso. Neither was he particularly impressed by the stuffy appearance of a Rolls-Royce. Its purchase involved too much money to sink into perpetuating the past. He may not have known it, but his longings were being duly recorded by the same research organization that warned rightly against producing the austerity car.

It was obvious that the GM car to tap this market had to be a Cadillac, but what kind of Cadillac? Styling VP Harley Earl spent 2 years and 2 Motoramas to find out. The Cadillac stand at 1953's show featured the spectacular (and inappropriately named) "Le Mans" convertible. The crowds swarmed around it and generally approved, but those who could back up their approval with a check paid closer attention to a less showy car off in a corner. This was the Cadillac "Orleans," America's first genuine 4-door hardtop. The new-for-its-time wrap-around windshield and pillarless roof were not exactly at home on the standard 1953 lower-body, but reaction to the car indicated that the majority of solid citizens wanted at least 4 seats, 4 doors, and a metal roof.

This was checked again at 1954's Motorama. Here, the Cadillac stand featured

the El Camino coupe, the La Espada roadster, and the Park Avenue sedan. The crowds surrounded the 2 pseudo-sports cars, but those who could afford to covet inspected the Park Avenue closely. By the time the 1954 Motorama had played to its 6 cities, the route, to Harley Earl, was crystal clear. You can see that it had little to do with the forthcoming Continental. Let's let him tell what happened next in his own words, written exclusively for MT. Mr. Earl's story is in italics, so you will know when we interrupt.

"The Eldorado Brougham, as a show car destined for possible production, was created with the intent of capturing the appeal of those who demand the finest product, whether it may be their home, clothing, jewelry, or their car—and specifically things exclusively tailored to their taste.

"There was never any question, except perhaps for esthetics involved, about the nature and physical qualities of this car. Our intentions are to provide our exclusive clientele with a compact, personalized automobile, easy to operate and employing our latest knowledge of style and engineering. From the outset, it was apparent that we must incorporate certain features known to be acceptable to our customers by virtue of Motorama experience and reception of our regular

production cars, such as pillarless body construction, panoramic windshield, pivoting front seats, and such landmarks as gull-type front bumper, 'egg-crate' grille, rear fender fins, and the projectile shapes on the rear fenders similar to the 1955 Eldorado convertible.

"The first minutes of meetings concerning the Eldorado Brougham were recorded on May 4, 1954, and included preliminary specifications of the passenger compartment. The 4-passenger seating arrangement was tentatively agreed upon as well as general seating dimensions. Shortly afterwards, the wheelbase and treads were pegged and a 'seating buck' was fabricated with seats, steering wheel, and foot controls installed in accordance with our full size layouts. At the same time, I gave approval to start immediately on a clay model."

Each GM Division has a separate styling studio operating under the overall direction of Mr. Earl. The meeting referred to above constituted a go-ahead for Ed Glowicke, who heads the Cadillac Studio, to create a finished automobile from the theme set by Mr. Earl.

"The general upper structure design of the 'Park Avenue' was decided upon and then greatly improved by allowing the window frames to drop with the side glass and by eliminating entirely the side pillar. The brushed aluminum roof and the paint panel toward the rear were retained."

You will note that windows are 1-piece without ventipanes. The car was designed specifically for air-conditioning (integral with heater). Even with windows open, curvature of windshield is designed to minimize wind blast.

"By August 10, 1954, most major changes had been made. The rear overhang was reduced several inches to gain compact proportions and improve handling and parking qualities. Rear tread was reduced to effect the lean, selfish look of the car. Ventilator windows

were eliminated in favor of vertical exhaust slots on the rear door. Aircraft-type airscoops were modelled on the upper front fender surfaces for the pressurized ventilating system. The model, at this point, was then moved under wraps to the Styling Section auditorium and previewed by top management. The usual adjustments of major lines and surfaces were noted, and the model was returned to the Cadillac studio for further refinement."

We can't help but comment on the "... lean, selfish look" of the car. Critics of past GM styling efforts should note that this is the first time Mr. Earl and his staff have had a chance to design for the connoisseur. The result is more than just lean and selfish; it's a GM masterpiece complete with quadruple exhaust system. But to continue . . .

"Meanwhile, drawings were under way for the instrument panel and interior, and mock-ups of all controls, instruments, and compartments were installed in the trim buck. It was decided that the space between the 2 front seats and 2 rear seats be utilized for map and vanity compartments. All control locations were readjusted many times to provide the greatest accessibility and legibility for the driver. The seat contours were altered several times and the cushion construction changed to provide maximum comfort for all seats. Because of the nature of this car, being 4-passenger, each seat is larger than would normally be necessary and they create a feeling of extreme luxury.

"The interior clay buck was started in late September, and under the direction of the interior department, seat contours and trim design were modelled with information we gained from the seating buck. Interior renderings and layouts had been started, and leather and cloth distribution was determined. We contacted domestic and foreign manufacturers of fine fabrics and leather

goods, and specially prepared materials were gathered for a final choice. Special paint was also being formulated. On November 6, the Cadillac Division delivered the special chassis and underbody to our shop, and assembly of the body components began."

November 6th was exactly 74 working days away from Motorama time, Saturdays and Sundays included. Ever try to hand-build a new automobile of metal in a shade over 2 months?

"All details during this period, such as insignia, instruments, trim mouldings, and general coachwork, were carefully scrutinized for richness of quality and jeweler finish. Samples of various sections of the car were fabricated to make certain of the final appearance—nothing was left to chance.

"From the outset, contrary to the belief that many sketches and drawings are necessary, our target of accomplishment was well known, and except for a few instances, all that remained was proper execution of the program.

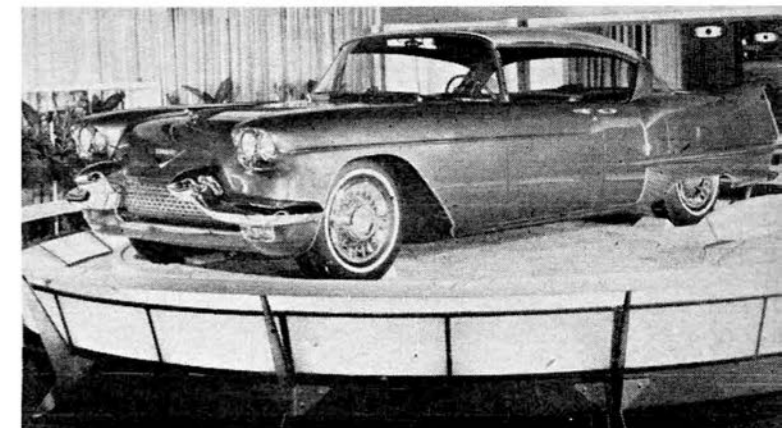
"The car 'in white' was ready for paint on January 10, 1955, and shortly afterwards, assembly of trim and hardware was begun. To the designer, this stage is perhaps the most exhilarating; he sees the mating of gleaming, hand-finished parts, the glisten of freshly polished paint, and the scent of new leather. There is an additional thrill to see the finished car being hoisted into position in the van as the shipping deadline approaches, craftsmen still applying finishing touches."

Since Motorama was previewed in New York on January 19 and the Eldorado was getting its "finishing touches" in Detroit, 2 days trucking time away, you can see that things were a little close.

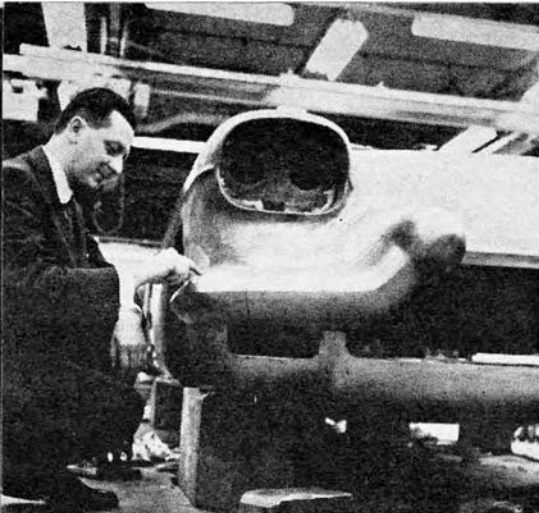
The car got to New York by the skin of its "egg-crate" grille, but not without incident. Those in charge of it shuddered as brawny, 300-pound stevedores with calluses like walnut shells pushed and



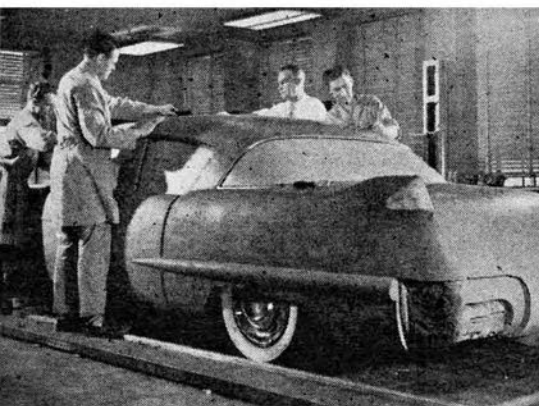
As usual, 1955's Motorama is creating hundreds of eager future customers for GM products, including the most desirable



The Eldorado is an evolutionary affair, with little to produce squeals or frowns of displeasure from Motorama crowds



Designer Ed Glowacke lurked about at all stages of production, affectionately touching his offspring from time to time



One of the most ticklish stages in the whole assignment: final contour changes must be made in clay model at this time



This mass of scarred metal doesn't look much like the public's concept of a dream. But soon it was off to New York



This is the not-so-serene journey to the East of the Eldorado Brougham and its cousins. Work had ended just before

shoved on the high-metallic paint that had not had time to properly set. At 2 A.M. the morning of the show, the car fell off its jacks, tearing the front fender and gouging the rear bumper. Some pretty frantic panel beating ensued.

Yet, when the invitational preview (a nice, private little party of 5100 people) started at 4 P.M. that day (January 19), the car was ready and revolving sedately on its turntable as though nothing had happened. We watched and listened as stylists from competitive companies (they were all invited) inspected the Eldorado for the first time. Again, it is interesting to note that while the uninitiated flocked around the more radical and obviously one-of-a-kind exhibits, the professionals spent most of their time at the Cadillac stand. Those who didn't already know through the grapevine that the car might be produced had heard Harley Earl drop a strong hint to this effect on the Arthur Godfrey TV show the morning before.

The thing that caused competition to do the biggest flip was, without doubt, the dual headlight installation. The prime purpose of using 2 5-inch lenses in each fender is to do away with the prismatic compromises involved in using a larger, single unit for 2 beams. On the Eldorado, the outer lights are for city driving and passing, while the inner units give a much better open-road beam. An Autronic Eye switches from one to the other as necessary. However, the legality of this set-up according to current and varying laws in all the 48 states is somewhat indefinite to say the least. Even though Cadillac could back out at the last minute and install single lenses without affecting the basic fender structure, we hope that they will forge ahead and bust the ridiculous "gentlemen's agreement" (between car and lamp manufacturers and the states) that has hitherto delayed the normal pace of automotive lighting development. Anyway, this is what caused competitive stylists to flip: their own designs for 1956 and beyond probably involved single headlights.

If Cadillac goes ahead, watch for it to set an industry pattern.

Other features universally admired by the professionals were the way the belt line on the rear door has been carried up to the drip moulding; the crisp, narrow A posts; and the subdued treatment of the traditional tailfins. Overall, they felt that here at last was a Cadillac that was unashamedly a motor car. Not universally admired were the rear doors opening into the windstream. However, few people know that GM has developed adequate safety devices to overcome this objection. Also, the "Chameleon Green" paint job which (like its little lizard namesake) spottily changed shades of green as the car revolved. It had the unfortunate effect of looking like mismatched paint after a repair job under artificial light. Those who have seen it outside say it looks real fine.

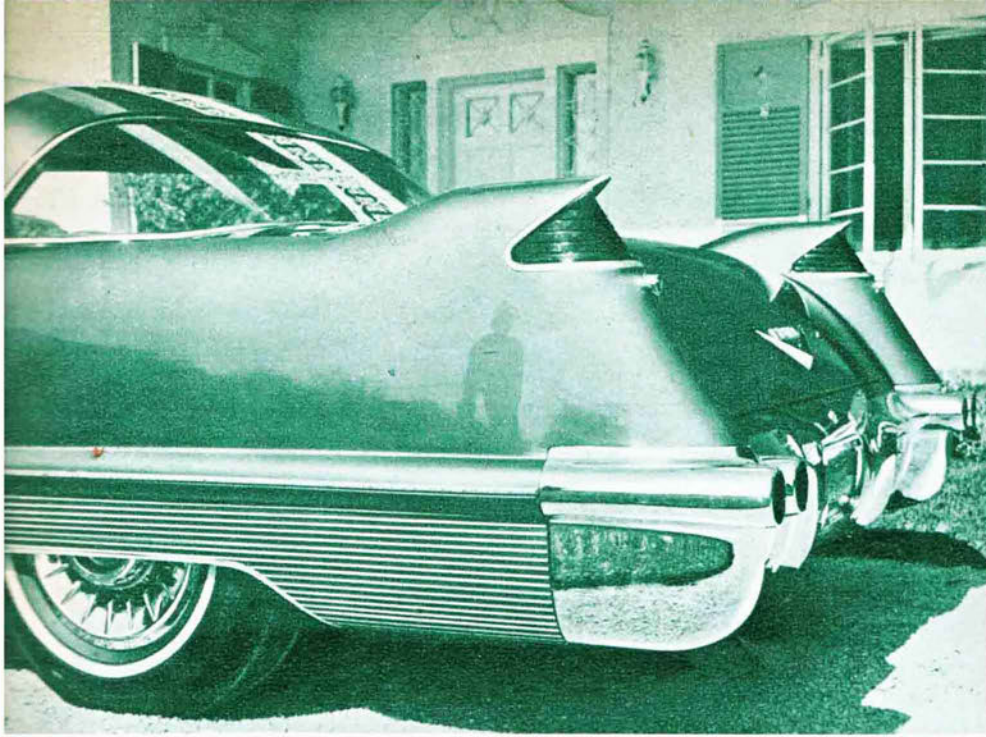
When the general public thronged into the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf the next day, we eavesdropped again. We hate to admit it, but the question most often asked of the uniformed attendant was: "Where's the gas tank?" People meant the filler, of course, and it's right where it always is on a Cadillac—hidden in the tail-light. The usual mechanism is bolted tightly together on show cars nowadays, because at the 1953 Motorama, people stole gas caps right and left and actually dumped sand and cigarette butts into the fortunately empty tanks. Generally speaking, public reaction (the public who appeared as though they could pay for a car like the Eldorado) was about the same as that of the professional stylists the day before. It could be summed up by one Homburg-hatted gentleman who audibly remarked to himself: "Gad, I'd like to own that."

We find ourselves inclined to agree with him, without reservation.

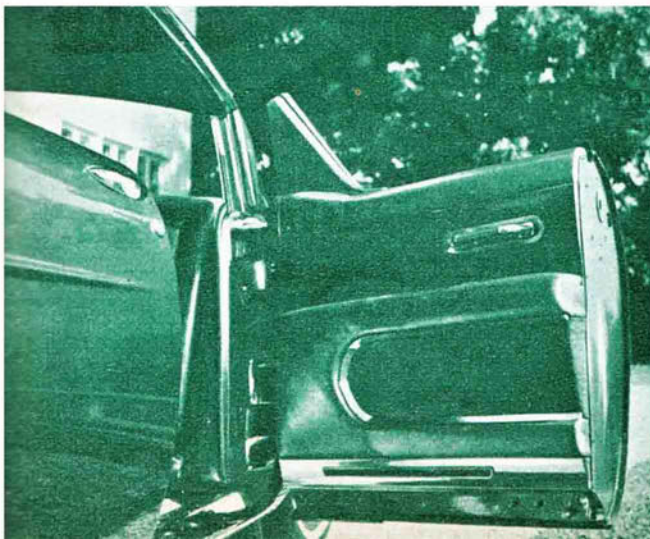
	ELDORADO BROUGHAM	STANDARD SERIES 62
Wheelbase:	124 inches	129 inches
Width:	77.5	80
Length:	209.6	216.3
Height:	54.4	62.1



Hasty unloading at Miami Motorama finds Eldorado showing no discernible sign of its hasty assembly, sundry mishaps

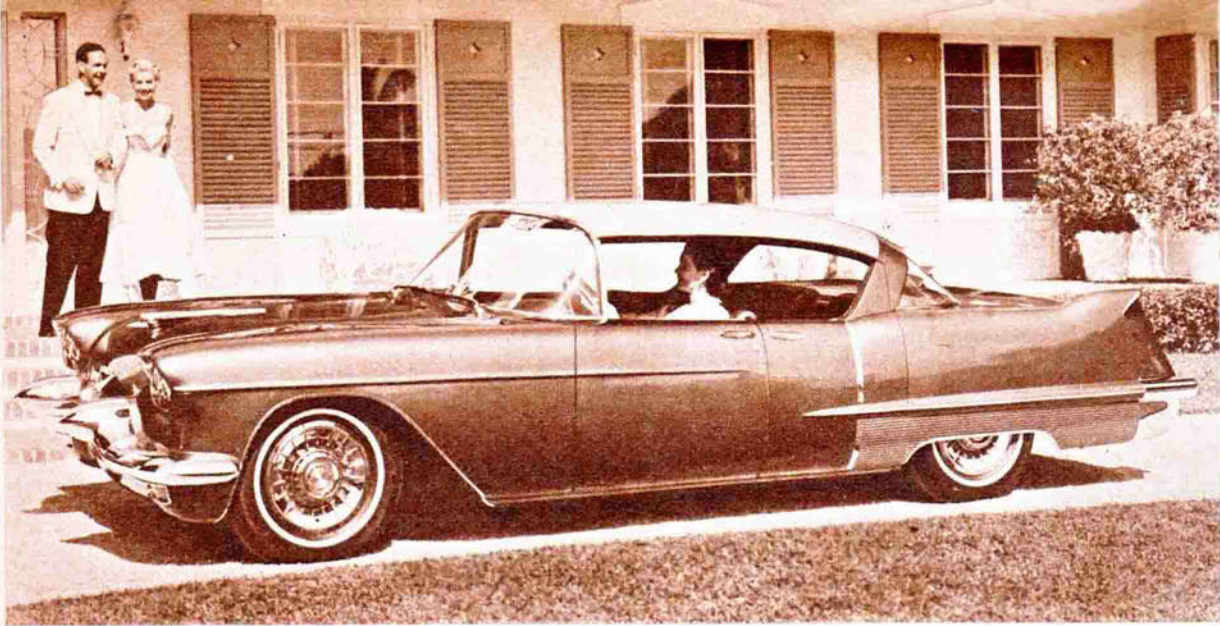


Cadillac's Eldorado Brougham

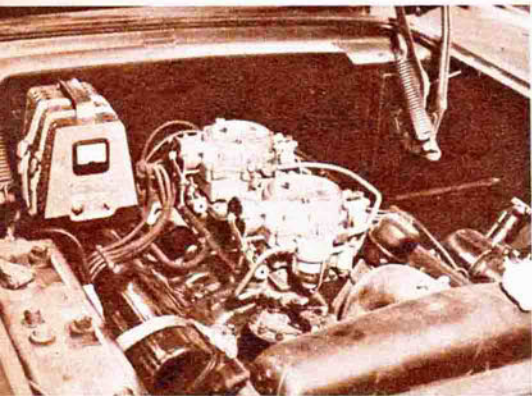


The completed car, unlike some of the other GM dream cars, is completely functional in every detail. Tail fins are characteristic Cadillac trademark. Dual headlights provide efficient road lighting. Outer lights are flat beam city lights; the inner ones are highly penetrating highway lights. Both sets are automatically controlled by Autronic Eye. Interior gives hint of evolution of Cadillac design, with controls recessed even more for greater safety. Radio speaker is below dash panel and tilted upward for better tone qualities

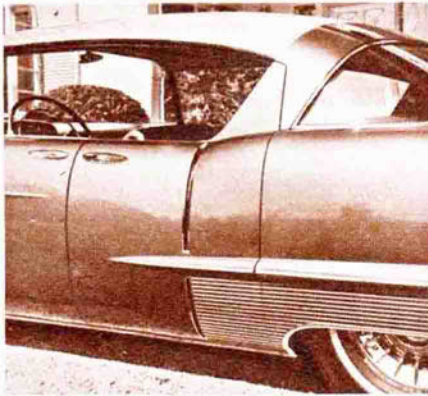
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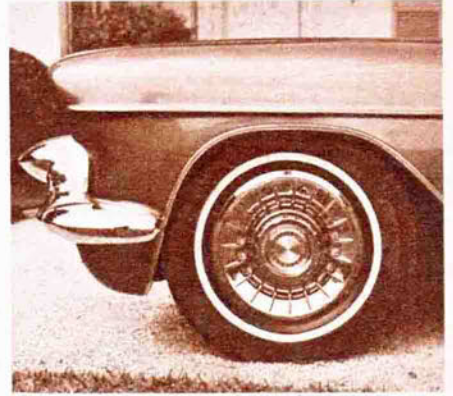
Overall height is only 54½ inches; absence of center door pillar augments sleekness. Fender lines remain smooth



Evolution of the first production V8 engine developed by Cadillac in 1914 is this compact, 270-horsepower powerplant



Air outlets are located in rear doors flush with body panel, which resembles traditional Cadillac styling treatment



GM's hubcaps, as indicated by the one on Cadillac's Eldorado show car, will become more highly stylized in future models

Projectile-shaped rear fenders flow back into outer rear bumpers forming the "quad" exhaust system. Note back-up lights

