

1968 CADILLAC Coupe DeVille- Bruce Bouret

Written by Double Dragon

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The Coupe DeVille name first appeared as a trim option on the 1949 Cadillac 62 Series 2 door and quickly gained popularity. The DeVille's pillarless hardtop clean style attracted so many buyers that in 1956 Cadillac added a 4 door hardtop version of the 62 Series named the Sedan DeVille. The DeVilles also provided a higher level of inside trim which increased their sales momentum further. In 1959 Cadillac upgraded the DeVille name from trim option to its own series.



By 1964 the DeVille was the best selling name in the Cadillac lineup which spurred the addition of a convertible. In 1965 the car was redesigned. Cadillac then made incremental changes to the car for the next few years. Part of the Cadillac success relied on a continuity between not just models within the lineup but also from year to year. No one had trouble recognizing a Cadillac. The slow evolution in styling created a sense of tradition which appeals to the Cadillac buyer.

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The big news for 1968 was the increase in engine size from the already huge 429 to a massive 472 cubic inch monster. Eventually Cadillac would produce a 500 cubic inch engine which was the largest production engine at the time. Chrysler eventually beat that decades later with the 512 cubic inch Viper, but for years the Cadillac 500 was a highwater mark.

Many engines became larger in the 1968 USA domestic scene. The new emissions laws choked out some of the power of the engines which the increase in cubic inch capacity was partly designed to compensate for. The core reason behind the 1968 cube increase traces to a policy of stroking existing engines because 'strokers' pass emissions more readily than oversquare engines.



This 1968 black Cadillac Coupe DeVille is now a third generation owned car. First generation owner Charles L Fieldhouse fit the typical portrait of the Cadillac buyer of the 1960s. He had 'made it'. Charles was the sales manager at Dominion Furniture. He bought a nice house in North Vancouver, British Columbia in 1953. Next on the list was a new Cadillac. A

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new Cadillac was your reward for hard work and an outward symbol of your success. Charles had owned used Coupe DeVilles prior to this (1955 and 1961) and appreciated the Cadillac beyond its symbolic meaning. He also liked Packards. Charles savoured the ride and build quality of high end cars in addition to being drawn to the Cadillac image.



On October 18, 1968 Charles finally bought his first new car. His new Cadillac Coupe DeVille cost \$7,000.00 which was a lot of money in 1968. Charles purchased his prize from Bowell McLean's downtown dealership location. See a story on 'Bow-Mac' in the DEALERSHIPS section of this website filed under BRITISH COLUMBIA/ VANCOUVER Defunct Dealers.

The Coupe DeVille was bought off the lot. The original buyer for the car had ordered it but

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refused to take delivery because it lacked the air conditioning and FM radio specified on the order form.

The paperwork states that this is model L8347 Color code 10, trim code 369

VIN L8347J8252d0 decodes

L= 6 window DeVille

8= 1968 model year

The price was \$8,891.00 minus trade in \$3,016.00. The remaining \$5,875.00 with tax (\$293.75) and license transfer (\$13.13) totaled \$6,181.98 which Charles paid by check on Oct. 22, 1968.

Charles was pleased to discover that his new DeVille was ordered with a rarely seen bucket seat with console interior.



Bucket seats in a Cadillac? Almost seems sacrilegious! Granted it seemed that as the 1960s drew to a close almost all GM cars offered buckets and console in the hardtop models. Back then it was considered a pretty sporty interior although usually the 'bucket' seats were just individual seats lacking much of the support offered by true bucket seats found in imported

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sports cars.

By the late 1960s Cadillac had extended their boundaries a bit with the new Eldorado which was marketed as a personal sports luxury car. In truth it was a big car with better handling than the average Cadillac but in no one's wildest dreams was it a 'sports car'. It was however one of the most beautiful cars of 1967. The deviation from the usual staid restrained Cadillac image began with the Eldorado's introduction in 1967 finally bearing fruit in recent years with the high performance Cadillac CTS-V.



The back of this console is pretty interesting. Cadillac built in vents to duct air to the rear passengers (heated or air conditioned depending on the settings).



Charles modified the garage of his North Vancouver, British Columbia house with an extension to accommodate the extra long DeVille. The 1968 Coupe DeVille is 224.7 inches long (18 feet 8 inches) and 79.9 inches wide. From 1968 until Charles passed away in 1980 the car was used as a special pleasure driver. In a wild juxtaposition, Charles used a small Morris Mini 1000 as his daily driver! Minis are usually about 120 inches long and 55 inches wide. That's more than 8 feet shorter than the Cadillac!

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In the dashboard shot above you can see that the Cadillac wheel had already assumed the classic shape seen all the way through the 1970s.



The model on the dashboard is of course of this particular car. Note the compass on the dashboard. Nowadays modern computer cars often have a built in compass but it is usually approximate (ie 'south' or 'south west'). Nothing beats a dial compass like this that allows you to see incremental variations in your direction. Below are some details of the power controls inset into the driver's arm rest.



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When Charles became older his daughter Barbara drove him around in his cherished Cadillac. Eventually as the world downsized it became very tricky to maneuver

the Caddy into the tight parking spots in parkades. It was taken out less frequently, but

Barbara continued to use the Cadillac for Friday shopping until her father passed away. With minimal mileage on it, second generation Barbara inherited it in 1980. Barbara drove the Cadillac occasionally. She eventually realized that she holding onto it for sentimental reasons. The proud old Cadillac was starting to deteriorate due to lack of use and it seemed time to sell. In 2009 a deal to sell the DeVille fell through. This gave her time to rethink her strategy. It seemed to make more sense to keep the DeVille in the family.



Aside from keeping the Cadillac in the family, Bruce had the knowledge and resources to keep the Cadillac in good condition. Bruce came by his car collecting via his father, Frank Bouvet. Frank was a new car salesman for Lawson Oates Chrysler. See a story on Lawson Oates on this website in the DEALERSHIPS section filed under BRITISH COLUMBIA/ Vancouver Defunct Dealers. In 1968 Bruce was living across the street from his grandfather, Charles. He took note of the new black DeVille when it came home but it didn't get his heart racing at the time. Bruce was a 16 year old kid smitten with the high performance Mopar demonstrators that his dad was regularly bringing home from the dealership. This was the musclecar era and kids were drooling over 340s and big blocks, not 'old man' luxury cars.

One incident related to Frank Bouvet's Chrysler dealership days also influenced the future of the Cadillac. Frank bought his wife Barbara a used 1965 Barracuda convertible in 1970. Her son Bruce bought it off her in 1972 and has maintained it in pristine condition ever since. Bruce's stewardship of the Barracuda inspired Barbara to sign over the Cadillac to Bruce July 2, 2010. Bruce created a new addition on his house to garage the Cadillac.

The Cadillac had been sitting idle in Barbara's garage up in North Vancouver for quite awhile

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and only had 32,000 original miles. The Cadillac was still riding on original bias ply tires and using original belts, hoses, and spark plugs. When Bruce made the trip over from Vancouver Island he became the third generation owner of the Cadillac. Once he got the Cadillac home he started getting things sorted out. Aside from fluid changes (including new brake fluid!) there really wasn't too much wrong with the car. A radiator re-core, new tires, shocks, alternator and water pump had things purring like they always did.

The interior of the DeVille showed no wear which is not a surprise given the careful attention to the car and low miles. The back seat had virtually never been sat in.



Two mechanical details were addressed. The clock needed some lube to spur it into ticking again. The radio speakers had stopped working and needed replacement.

The exterior of the car was good, but the original black lacquer paint was getting rough. Bruce had the bumpers rechromed and repainted the car. He found a set of 'Bow Mac' badges and put them on the car so it looks like new again.

The 472 delivers about 9 MPG in the city which is not that bad for a massive engine hauling a lot of weight around. And the Cadillac can also 'haul ass' if required. On the way to a car show in the early A.M. hours Bruce was trying to make some time. The highway was flat, straight and at that time in the early morning completely empty. The Cadillac was devouring the road at a good pace with no float or wander at all. Bruce was pleased to be making progress until he looked down to see that the speedometer read 110 MPH. The Cadillac is so effective at insulating occupants from road noise and vibration that Bruce had no idea he was going that fast. He adjusted the speed back down from supersonic speed to comfortable rapid pace where the Cadillac felt exactly the same as it had up at 110.

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Aside from car shows Bruce has taken a trip to California in the Cadillac. He's making sure that it gets used nowadays and enjoying it quite a bit and has moved the mileage along to 34,000 miles which is still pretty low!

