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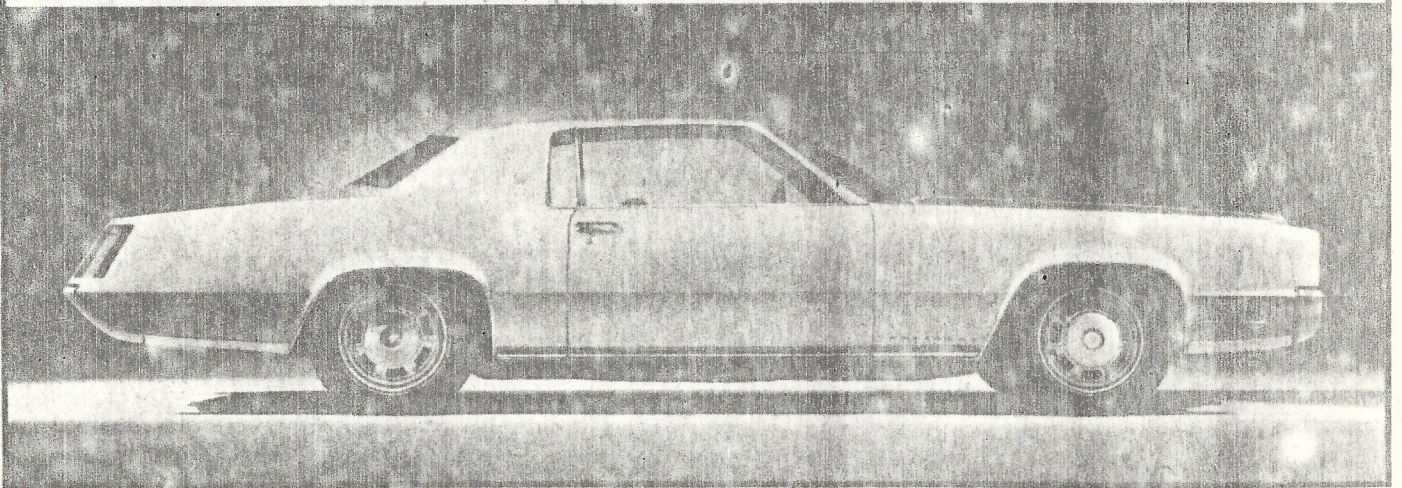
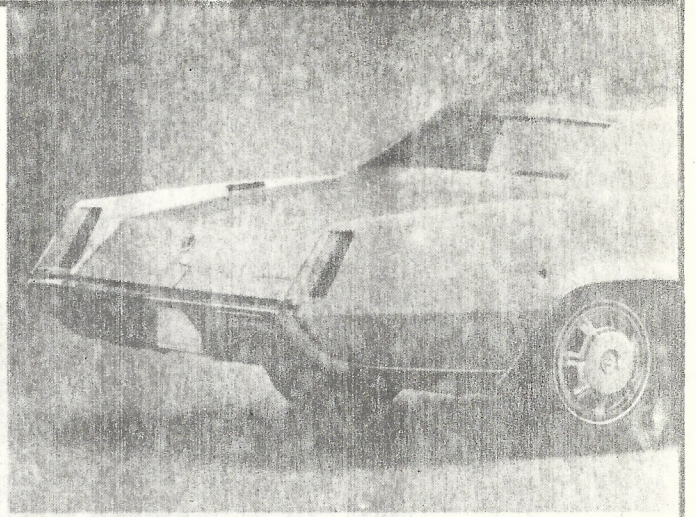
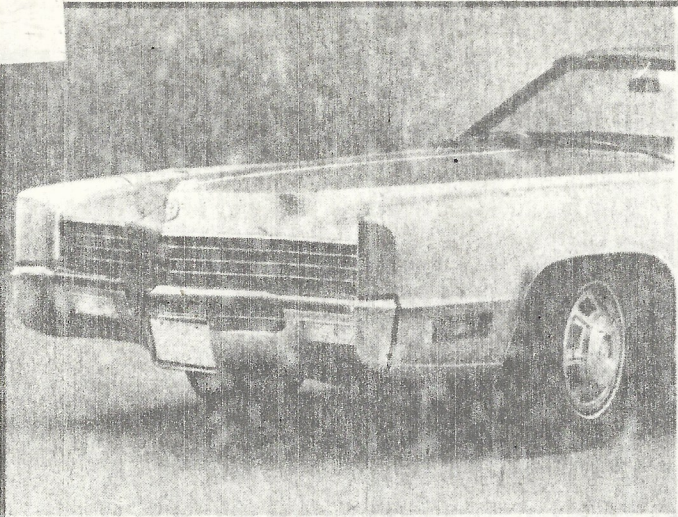
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## Buick/Olds luxury muscle run-off



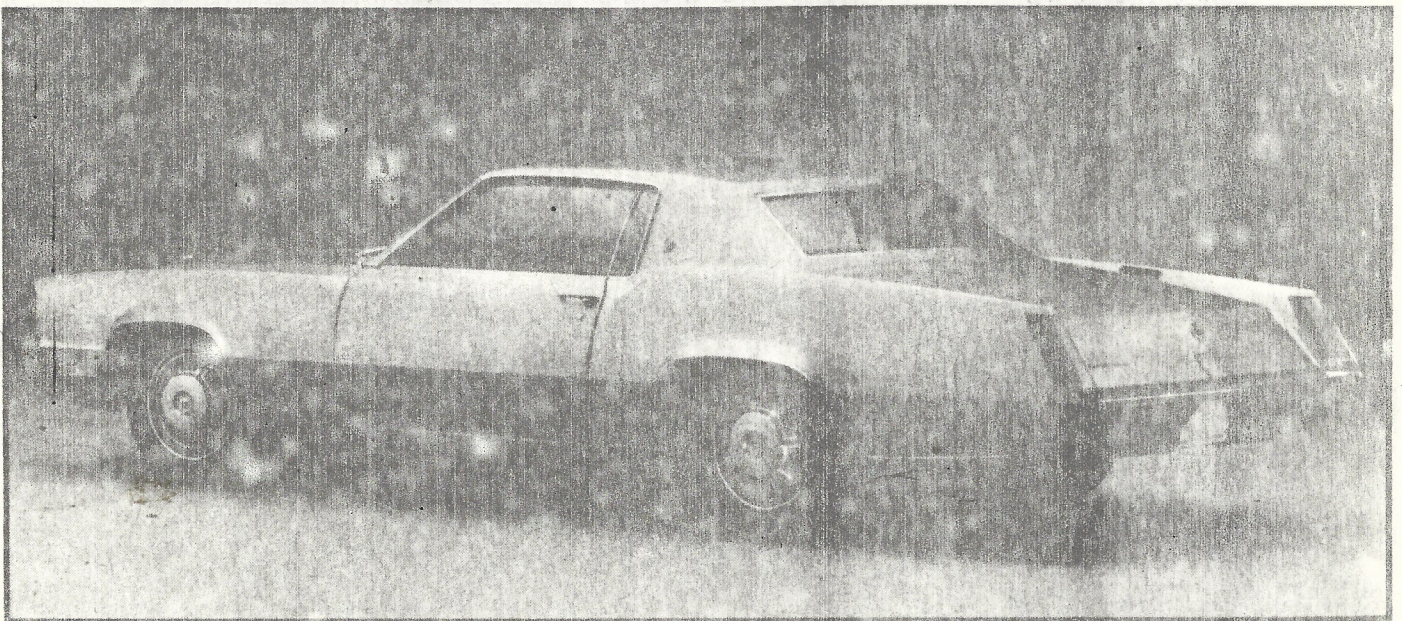
## Cadillac: '67 Fleetwood Eldorado





1967 Cadillac

# Fleetwood Eldorado



When GM's prestige division was about to unveil its all new, front drive, personal luxury car, choosing its name was a simple matter. "Eldorado is a distinctive nameplate historically given only to the division's specially luxurious cars," said then Cadillac general manager Calvin J. Werner. "The word itself refers to an imaginary South American kingdom of fabulous wealth. Translated from Spanish, Eldorado means gold — and the golden cars of the Eldorado era rightly deserve the name. From the first Eldorado sports convertible in 1953 to the 1967 Fleetwood Eldorado, they have been a breed apart from the regular Cadillac line."

The project that eventually became the 1967 Eldorado was initiated some eight years earlier in late 1959. Dan Adams and Tom LaRue, then Cadillac's assistant chief engineer and assistant general sales manager, approached general manager Harold G. Warner with the idea of developing a very special sort of personal car . . . the ultimate in its field. At the same time, a select group of GM engineers was starting development of what would become GM's first front wheel drive system, then called the Unit Power Package. Warner gave the ok to begin preliminary work on the special Cadillac envisioned by Adams and LaRue, with the proposed front drive package an interesting possibility to power it.

Not knowing at first whether or not the car would use this fledgling front drive system, Cadillac stylists began with design concepts that could incorporate conventional rear drive as well. The first full size clay model, XP-727, was completed early in 1960, but it was soon scrapped and replaced by XP-727 No. 2. This model was memorable chiefly for its interesting, slightly shaped windshield; but enclosed rear wheel wells, a sweptdown roofline and squared off rear deck gave its rear quarter a heavy somewhat clumsy appearance. It, too, was discarded after several months of development.

XP-727 No.3 completed in late 1962, is sleeker and sportier with its cleanly shaped roofline, large, round wheel arches, front fender gills and sharply pointed nose. The V'd windshield idea was carried over from No. 2 and a novel headlamp treatment featuring low beams far out on the front fenders and high beams hidden behind available doors. It was a definite im-

provement, but there was still too much gingerbread to its look.

With approval of the front drive system in May, 1963, a fourth model (XP-784) was built especially to incorporate it. This one was decidedly more

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By Gary Witzenburg

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modern; low, side and squat, with a horizontal theme grille wrapping around into the front wheel openings and a third try at the bent windshield idea. Unfortunately, it suffered from an uninspired rear roof shape and a heavy look to the rear quarter. It also, some said, looked more like the then current Thunderbird than a Cadillac.

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**"From the first Eldorado . . . in 1953, they have been a breed apart from the regular Cadillac line . . ."**

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Another year went by while the design team wrestled with their special Cadillac on paper. GM's first personal luxury coupé, the '63 Buick Riviera, was well accepted in the marketplace; and the '66 Toronado, which would be first to get the new front drive package, was already taking shape over in the Oldsmobile studio. What Cadillac needed was something distinctively different from both of these corporate rivals, as well as from Ford's Thunderbird, which had started the whole concept by sprouting rear seats in 1958.

By September, 1964, they were on the right track at last. After almost a year of development, a model called XP-820 was starting to look right. The bent glass idea had been moved to the rear window where it blended nicely with a sharply sloped roofline and a high, flat rear deck. The side glass ended abruptly with a small, nearly vertical quarter window, then swooped forward long a low beltline into the long, low hood. Most striking were the sharply creased rear fenders, which protruded above the deck and beyond the bumper, extending forward into an abbreviated downswop just aft of the quarter windows. Complimented by tall, nearly round wheel arches, this new shaped was at once crisp and sheer, elegant and aggressive.

From that point on, the rear half remained virtually unchanged while the designers fiddled with the front and the myriad minor details that make up a car's visual character. At one point a convertible version was fashioned from this same basic design, but it and various other ideas were ultimately discarded. By December, the group had settled on a final clay model designated XP-825, which at first had a concave windshield and headlamps mounted under the grille. These ideas had been dropped, however, by the time the car was deemed ready to show to corporate and Cadillac divisional executives. A cleaned up and highly detailed fiberglass model was prepared and shown in the Design Center viewing area in May, 1964, and it was approved almost intact for '67 model year production.

Meanwhile the engineers had been busily working the bugs out of their new front drive system. Prototype tests had been conducted as early as the winter of 1959-60 on an airport course at Grayling in Northern Michigan (one test driver found that he could negotiate glare ice with the front drive car at almost twice the speed that he could with a rear drive version), and the system was well along in its development by the time the Eldorado's styling approval was received.

"Throughout the development of the Eldorado," said chief engineer Carl Rasmussen, "Cadillac engineers had in mind that this car had to be exceptional or there was no use in producing it . . . it was not to be just another car." The unique suspension system incorporated a torsion bar arrangement in front and single leaf springs with quad shock absorbers on a drop center axle in the rear. Soft spring rates for a traditional luxury ride were compensated for by an automatic level control system, and Cadillac's variable rate power steering gave a nimble and sporty handling feel.

An improved version of Cadillac's 340 hp, 429 CID V-8 engine (with a redesigned valve train, a new quadrajet carburetor new design oil rings and a slicker cylinder bore finish) was adapted for front drive duty by fitting unique exhaust manifolds, oil pan, engine mounts and accessory mounts and belts. As in the Toronado, the transmission was mounted alongside the engine (driven by a specially designed chain), connected directly to the

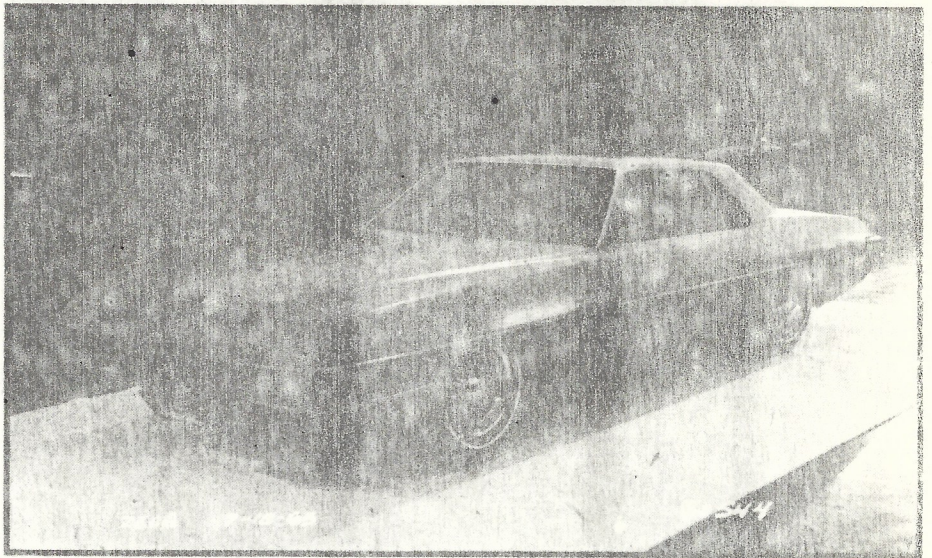
differential, which in turn drove the front axles and wheels. At one point, according to Maurice D. Hendry's *Cadillac, the Complete History*, an overhead cam V-12 was seriously considered to power this very special new Cadillac.

With a wheelbase of 120 inches and an overall length just three inches shorter at 221 inches, the car was far from small, but its abbreviated roof, extra long hood and short rear deck gave it a sleeker and sportier look than any standard luxury car on the road. A wall to wall eggcrate grille (with quad headlamps behind vacuum actuated doors) accentuated the low and wide appearance in front, while the razor edge, sculptured look was finished off just right around back by the crisp, molded in taillamps split by slender chrome and body colored bars.

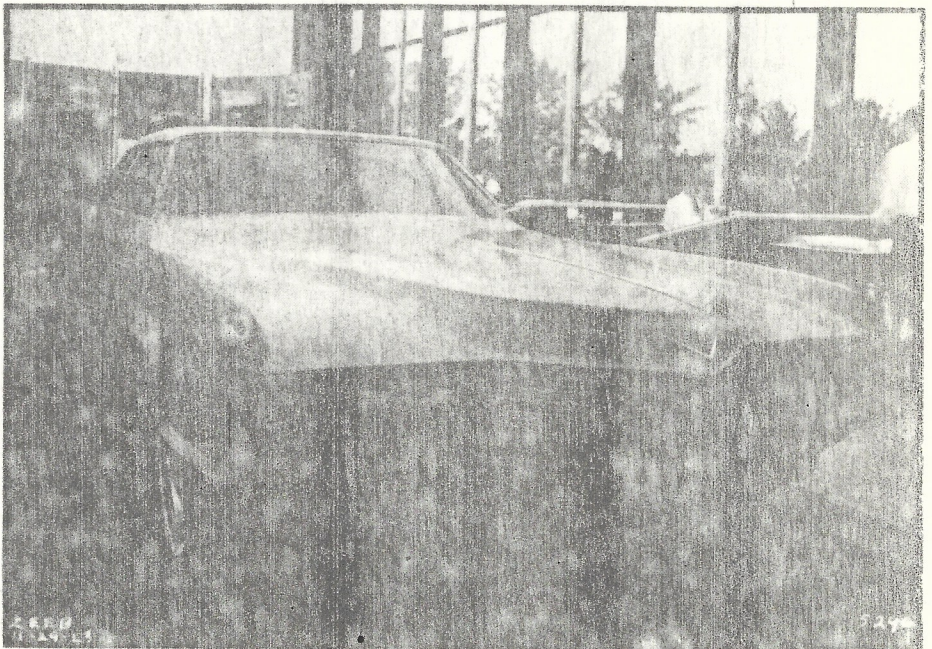
*Automobile Quarterly* chose the '67 Eldorado for special recognition with its prestigious Design and Engineering Excellence Award, only the third time such an award had been given and the first time for a production car. (The first two recipients had been Bill Mitchell's Corvair Super Spider concept car in 1962 and Ford's first GT racing car in 1964.) "All of the traditional characteristics of front wheel drive cars, most of which are unpleasant, have been totally eliminated in the Eldorado," said the magazine. "Cadillac's variable ratio steering imparts a nimbleness and agility that makes their cars feel much smaller than they are, and the excellent automatic leveling system completely eliminates the pitching and heaving that most cars display when heavily laden.

"The Eldorado's interior is everything the habitual Cadillac owner has come to expect. The materials are the finest in the industry. The range of comfort and convenience options is practically endless, and includes GM's Climate Control air conditioning, heating, ventilating system . . . All this, combined with Eldorado's nimble handling and striking appearance, adds up to a very impressive motorcar . . . We think it is the most outstanding automobile in both design and engineering introduced for 1967."

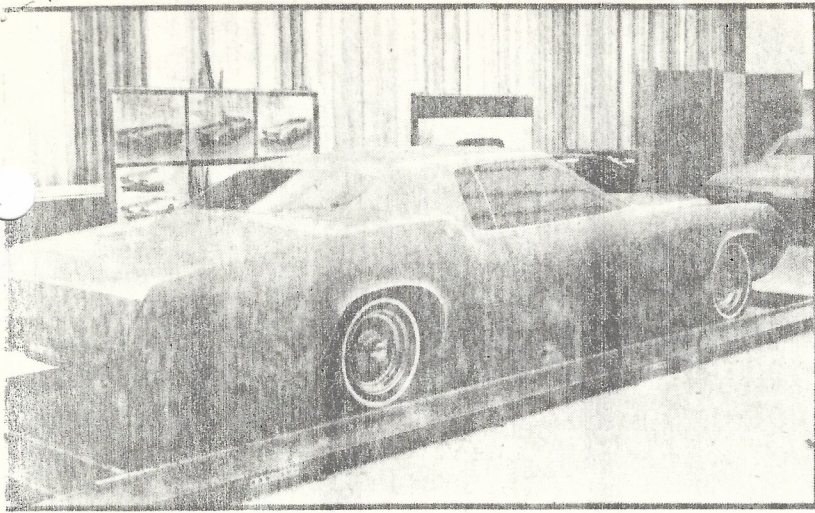
*Car and Driver* magazine was not quite so enamoured with the Eldorado's handling in its November, 1966, road test and lambasted the car's four wheel drum brakes (the optional front disc system worked much better), but had kind words nonetheless for its per-



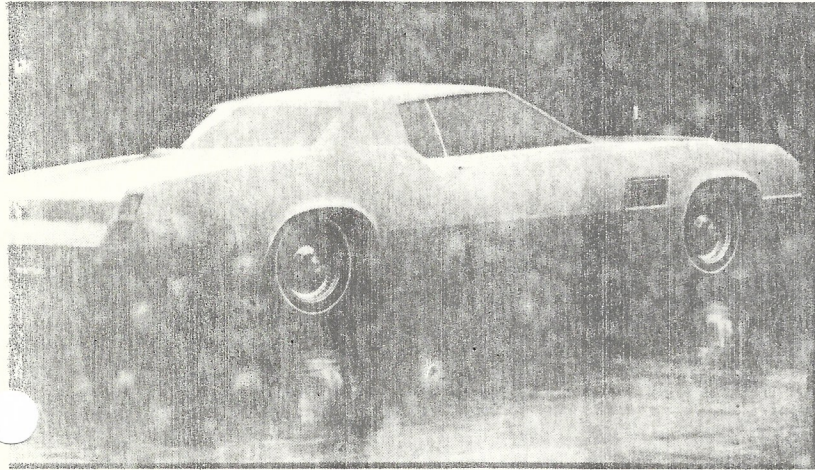
Clay XP-784.



Clay XP-818 convertible.



P-820.



P-825.

formance and quality of construction; "Cadillac's lightweight, low revving 429 CID engine," said the article, "is quiet and trouble free and pumps out gobs of torque and enough horse power to tow a 4,950-pound mammoth around with surprising alacrity . . . We found our test car to be impeccably assembled, with the kind of panel fit and paint work that stands up against the best that Stuttgart-Unterturkheim and Crewe can produce."

Like other '67 models, the new Eldorado received the first few items from Washington's lengthy shopping list of mandated safety equipment: energy absorbing steering column and wheel, dual circuit brake system, locking front seatbacks, redesigned and well padded interior features and controls, safety door locks and four-way hazard warning flashers. A lane change feature was added to the turn signal lever, and other electrical improvements included a handy slide out fuse box and solid state electronics for the instrument panel wiring and the optional Guide-Matic automatic headlamp dimmer. Side marker lamps did not appear until the following year; and their absence, plus the blank front fender extensions (park lamps were incorporated in the bumper in '67 only), provide the best quick clues for distinguishing this model from the '68.

Inside, the wide, flat, humpless floor provides uncommon roominess both front and rear (making an early Eldorado a perfect rich kid's passion pit conveyance). The instrument panel and controls are sensibly and tastefully arranged, the huge glove box will store a fair sized picnic lunch, and (for smokers) there are even dual ashtrays in a ball bearinged, pull out panel. The soft but sure suspension in its day represented the domestic industry's most masterful compromise between the opposite poles of boulevard ride and race track handling. And, properly optioned, the car provides its occupants with stereo sound, climate control and a system that turns the headlamps on and off automatically and then dims them when appropriate.

The 1967 Fleetwood Eldorado was a new direction in concept, styling and engineering for GM's luxury car division. It was the first front drive Cadillac in history, the first smaller, personal Cadillac and the first ever to rate its own separate assembly line at the division's Clark Street, Detroit, manufacturing complex. CC

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