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1994-96 Chevrolet Impala SS: Second Act

The Compact Cars of 1954: Independent Thinking

1968-70 American Motors Javelin: On Target



- 1961-67 Ford Econoline: Inside the Box
- Glen Durmisevich Personality Profile

1954 Willys Aero Lark DeLuxe Two-Door Sedan

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1968-70 American Motors Javelin: On Target

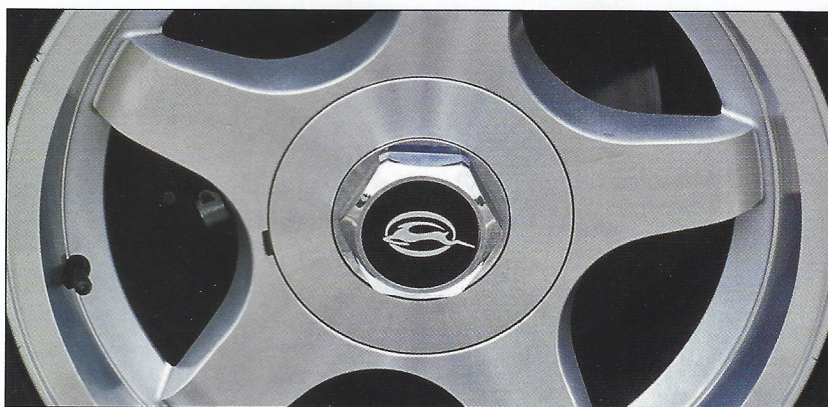
The Javelin was more than a response to Ford's Mustang. Patrick Foster explains how it helped reshape the perception of American Motors.



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1994-96 Chevrolet Impala SS: An Unlikely Second Act

Gary Witzenburg tells the tale of how an inspired idea and a talented crew transformed the slow-selling 1991 Chevy Caprice into the unexpected and unforgettable Impala SS.



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Independent Thinking: The Compact Cars of 1954

The 1950 Nash Rambler helped jump-start the small car in America. Kit Foster lays out how by 1954 the quickly evolving new market had clear winners and losers.



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Paul G. McLaughlin recounts how Ford successfully expanded its light-duty truck line with the thrifty Econoline series.



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Glen Durmisevich: General Motors and Navistar Designer

Gary Witzenburg sits down for a fascinating interview with GM's pioneer and internal spokesman for Alias computer design.

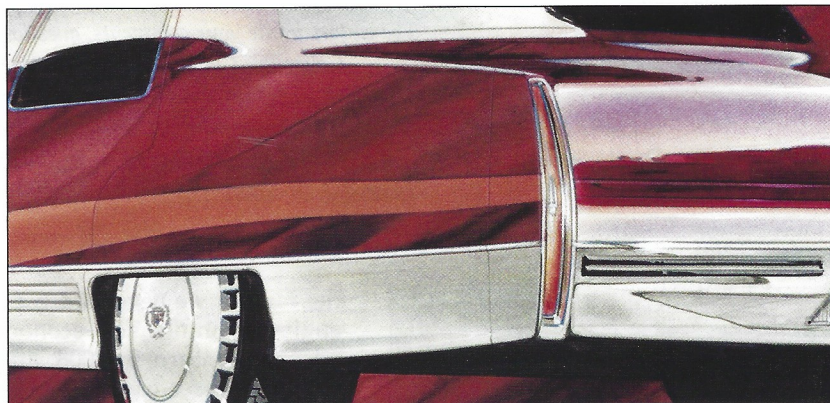
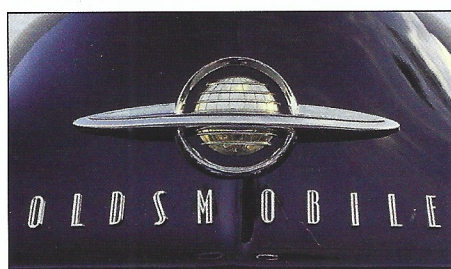


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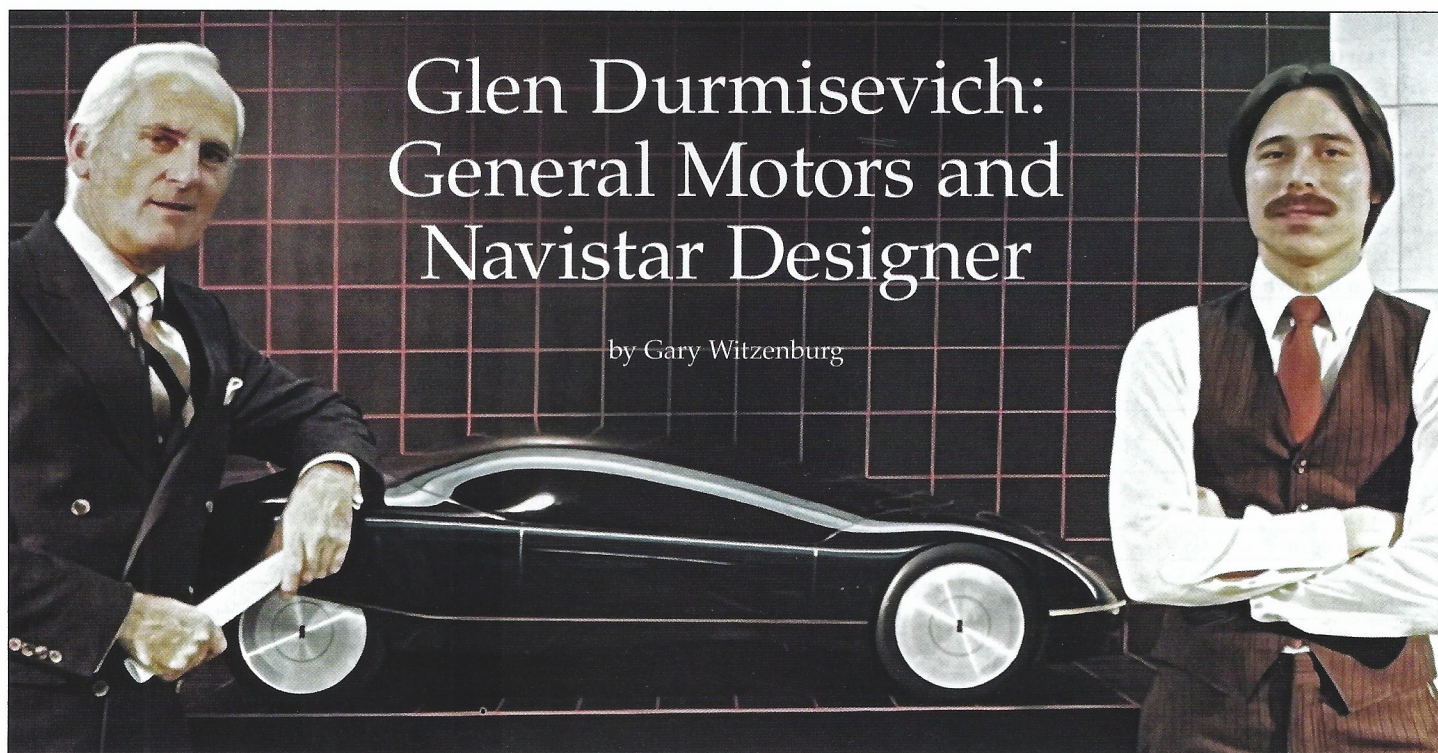
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Glen Durmisevich: General Motors and Navistar Designer

by Gary Witzenburg



When Glen Durmisevich was still in high school, his mother saw a newspaper article about ex-GM designer Bruce Bollinger, who ran the Academy of Automobile Design, teaching auto design classes in a Frank Lloyd Wright designed guest house at Barnsdall Park in Hollywood. "I had been drawing cars in my notebook at school," he says, "and that is when I discovered that someone might pay me to draw cars instead of becoming an engineer or something else."

"I and a few others had worked our way up to an advanced class doing full-size renderings and scale clay models. Bollinger invited GM design executive Chuck Jordan to visit whenever he was in Los Angeles to review students' work at the Art Center College of Design, so I had the opportunity to meet him and present some of my work."

Born and raised in LA, Durmisevich attended Los Angeles Community College before being offered a full scholarship to Detroit's College for Creative Studies. He had also applied to Art Center, but when the CCS scholarship came through, he couldn't turn it down. He moved to Detroit at age 19 and spent three years going through their program. "That gave me an opportunity to get to know people from the American companies and get an

understanding of how they approached design," he relates, "and an idea of where I wanted to work."

Times were tough in the mid-Seventies, and no car companies were hiring. In his junior year at CCS, GM sent design executive Dave Holls to see the students' work. And when Holls was reviewing the juniors' work, he spotted Glen's full-size rendering and a foam model. "Halfway through my senior year, Holls asked to see my portfolio. So, I borrowed money to buy a portfolio case and frantically put together pretty much everything I had done." He took that to his senior transportation teacher, Homer LaGassey, an influential Ford designer who ran a transportation design class there and asked him to go over it, and LaGassey offered some good advice. "Then, when I graduated in 1977, Jordan interviewed me and offered me a job, but I think it was Holls who pushed to get me hired."

That was the last year of Bill Mitchell's reign as General Motors' Styling vice president, and Durmisevich would work on a variety of interesting programs in 16 GM studios for 32 years under the next four GM Design VPs before taking early retirement in 2009. Among the vehicles he helped design in those 32 years were mid-engine Corvette, two-seat Cadillac and Buick Aero concepts,

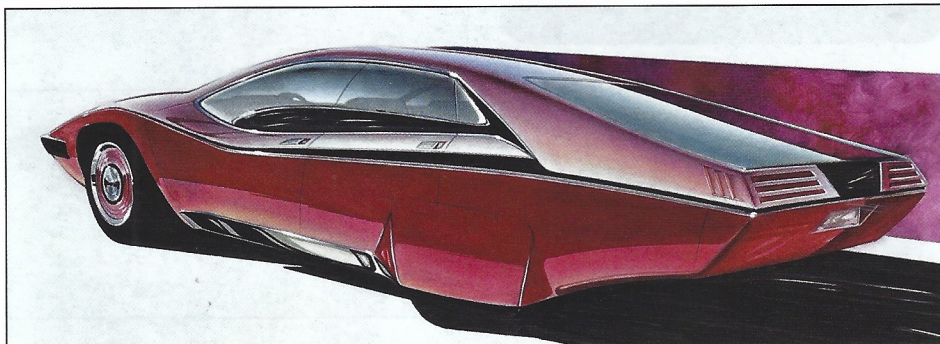
Oldsmobile and Cadillac PPG Pace Cars, the '83 15th Anniversary Hurst Olds, the '90 Olds Toronado, the '95 Aurora, the '97 Chevrolet Malibu, a Tommy Hilfiger GMC Jimmy, the '99 Oldsmobile Recon Concept, and the '03 Chevrolet SSR. And he became GM Design's pioneer and internal spokesperson for the Alias computer design process that evolved into the way most vehicles are designed today.

Following his early retirement from GM, he worked at Navistar designing trucks for nine years and did some teaching at Lawrence Tech University. He has also served as chairman in 2005, for the Detroit Institute of Ophthalmology's very popular EyesOn Design annual Automotive Design Exhibition and is currently chief judge and theme director. He has designed a rebodied 1930 Cord L-29 Boattail Speedster good enough for recognition by the Classic Car Club of America and is personally restoring his own 1957 Cadillac Eldorado Brougham. We recently caught up with him to discuss the highlights of his long and distinguished career.

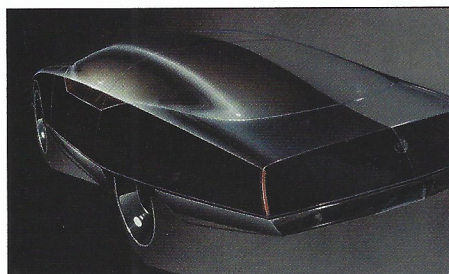
Design VP Irv Rybicki - 1977-86

CA: What was your first job at GM?

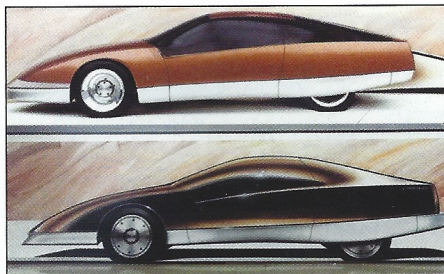
Durmisevich: All new hires would go into one of the advanced studios, and I was assigned to Advanced 5 under



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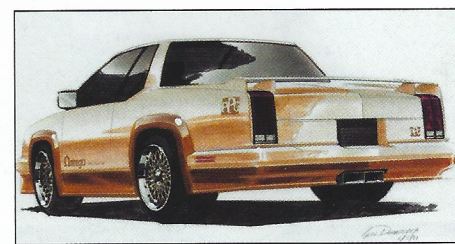


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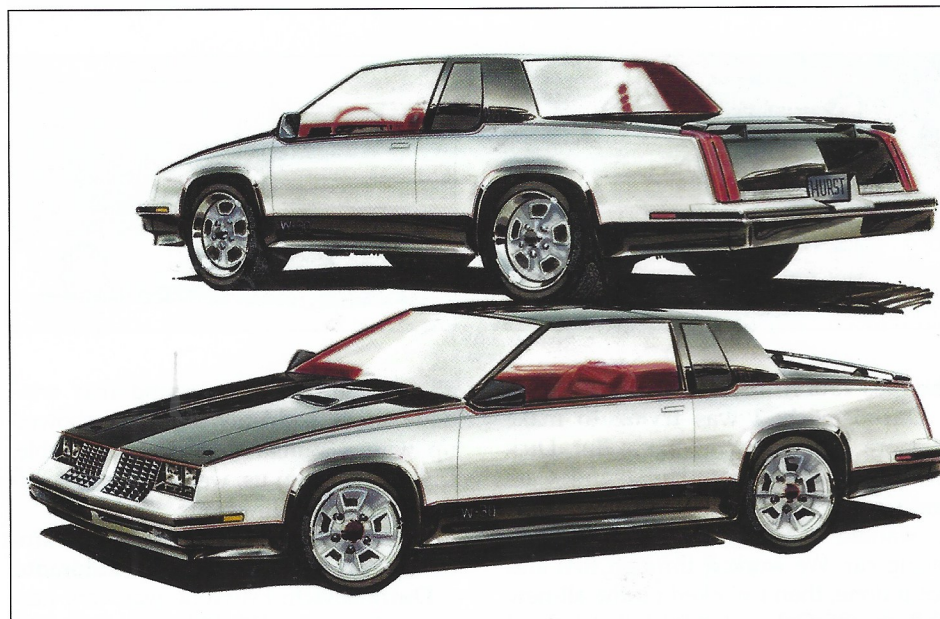


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1. Chuck Jordan (left) and Glen Durmisevich pose with the latter's clay model—the same one that caught Irv Rybicki's eye in the Oldsmobile studio. 2. A Turbine Car design created while Durmisevich was studying at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. 3, 4. Advanced two-seat ideas for Cadillac (3) and Buick (4). 5. A proposal for the '81 Oldsmobile Omega PPG Pace Car. 6, 7. The initial design proposal for the 1983 Hurst Olds (6) and the production version (7). 8. An April 1981 rendering of the coupe that debuted as the 1985 Oldsmobile Calais.



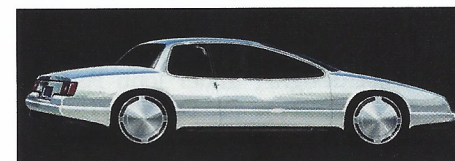
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chief designer Alan Young for about a year working on various projects from midsize cars to mid-engine Corvette concepts. It was amazing to work in an environment with that level of talent all around you. Everyone there is so talented, and you begin to pick up their techniques and approaches to renderings and sketching. On the day I started there, they announced on the PA system that Irv Rybicki was going to take over for Mitchell when he would retire in a couple of months.

CA: Did the culture change when Rybicki succeeded Mitchell?

Durmisevich: Mitchell was very flam-

boyant, and there was always this underlying fear of him when he came into the studio because of his reputation. But everyone respected him because of all the great work he had done. When Rybicki came in, the change was not just a new VP but also the state of the economy, the world and everything else going on with the corporate and popular culture. I think one reason Irv got that job was that he would work better with management, and everything seemed to settle down and get more subdued.

CA: Irv had a tough challenge downsizing cars with more corporate influence.

Durmisevich: Engineering had more say in things, and everything was thought through more for production than for flamboyant design. The wind tunnel was completed, so we were getting into aerodynamics and working in there. On the Cutlass Calais, the aero told us to do a faster rear window, but Irv kept pushing us to tighten it up for more of a skullcap look. It had almost the same profile as the '86 Toronado they were working on next door in Oldsmobile 1, but Irv said, "That's enough difference."

CA: You worked on a two-seat Cadillac concept, then transferred to Buick 2.

Durmisevich: Every now and then, a designer must take time to express himself creatively, and I did some sketches of a really wild Aero Buick concept and a full-size rendering in my spare time. Dave Clark, the chief designer, wasn't thrilled about it, but Jordan came in one day and said, "You should do a scale

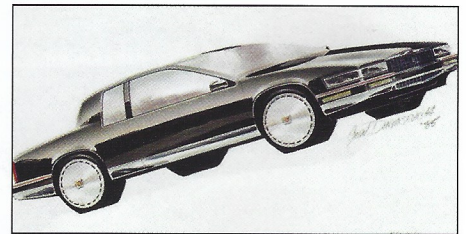
Personality Profile



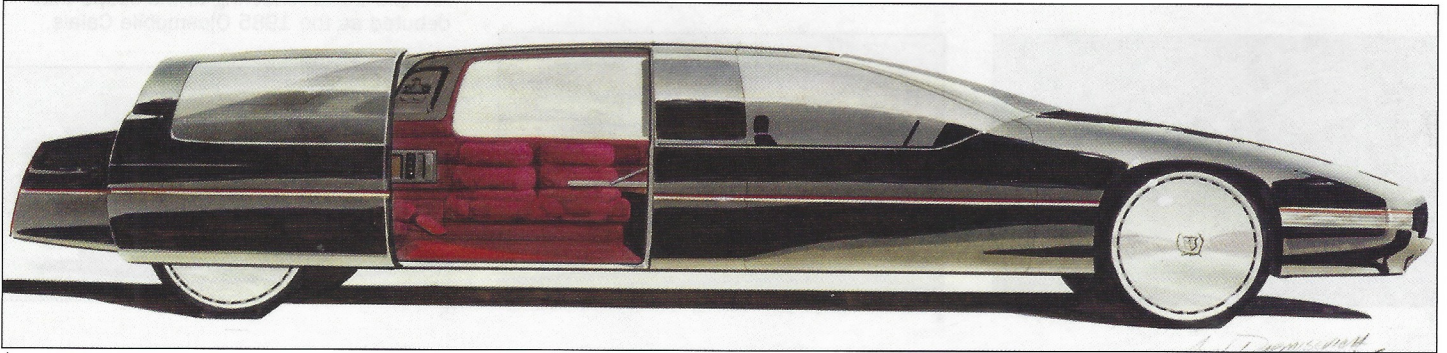
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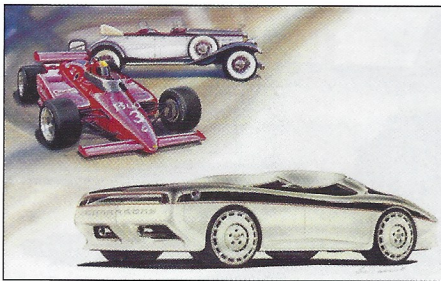
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model of that." That made it okay in Clark's book, and we ended up putting a scale model together. It didn't evolve into anything, but I think it did influence some Buick designs and concepts after I left that studio.

CA: You moved to Oldsmobile 2 in 1980.

Durmisevich: Ed Welburn was assistant chief designer under John Perkins, and Ed allowed me and Dave Rand to do scale models off to the side on our own time. We were not supposed to work on things that were not production oriented, but I was working on my clay model one day when, the next thing I knew, Irv was standing there looking at it. He said, pointing his cigarette, "What the hell is that?" We thought we were in big trouble. We told him we had been working on these scale models on our off time. He suddenly proclaimed, "That's one of the best-looking things I've seen in this building today!" In fact, most of the designers were working on scale models off to the side, and Dave's and mine were kind of the wildest. Irv said, "Let's bring them all together and look at them," and they picked our two to turn into fiberglass scale models...a good end to that story after we were caught doing something we shouldn't have been doing. One good assignment I got in that studio was working on the '81 [Oldsmobile Omega] PPG pace car. I did the rear-end design for that car.

CA: You were also assigned to design



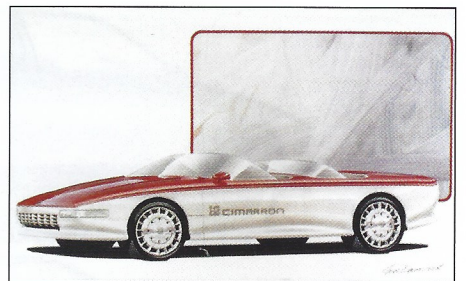
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the 1983 15th Anniversary Hurst Olds.

Durmisevich: I was trying to make it more aero contemporary. But Dick Chrysler, who owned Hurst and Cars and Concepts, which was going to build it, wanted to make it more of a drag-racing car. We worked through that and got it done, then I worked on the all-new N-Body '85 Calais. I think what helped that car was that Olds initially wanted it to be the next-generation Cutlass Supreme even though it was a lot smaller, and Pontiac was working on their version to be the next Grand Prix. When they fortunately realized that would be too big of a leap, all the divisions decided that theirs would be new cars instead of downsized old cars, and we created the new Calais line out of it. And because of that, the styling ended up a bit more upscale.

CA: And you worked on the '88 Cutlass Supreme on the all-new GM10 platform.

Durmisevich: That was fun because we were trying to push the envelope a bit with no wheel flares and a wraparound backlight. We had the design direction



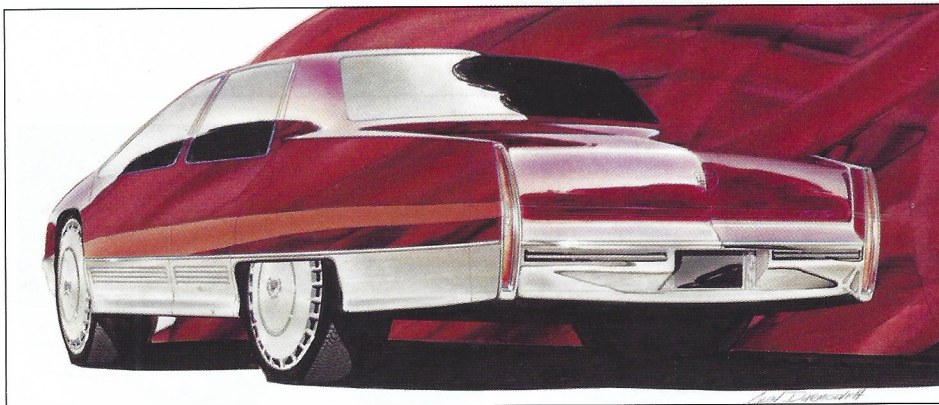
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all set with the wraparound rear window, when suddenly Mercury showed up with a similar design on the Sable. Unbeknownst to us, we were both heading in a similar direction.

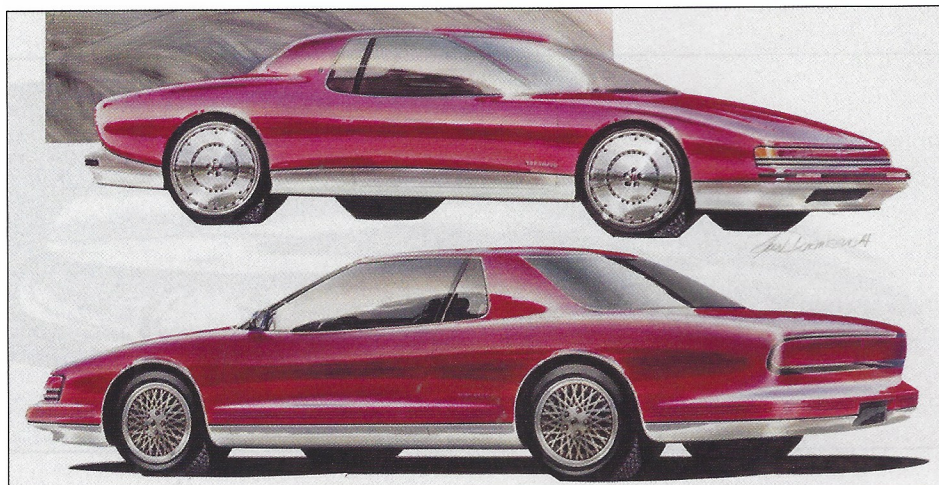
CA: You transferred to the Cadillac studio in 1984 to work on the '88 Eldorado.

Durmisevich: Everyone was very nervous about the '86 Eldorado that was downsized so much, so the first thing they wanted me to work on was a new rear end and rear quarter design for the '88 Eldo. Some of that was analyzing what made the '86 not as good as it needed to be, and a lot of it was just that the rear quarter looked so short. So, I did a more traditional rear quarter that carried into the C pillar, rather than the C pillar dropping down into the quarter, which had made it look shorter and the roof look taller. Then, once Cadillac bought into it, they decided to also do a new front end, and we worked on that. So, I helped fix the '86 Eldorado with the '88 version.

CA: Did you also work on an all-new limousine for then-CEO Roger Smith?



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1, 2. Durmisevich also worked on the 1988 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme coupe (1), along with the car's 1992 facelift (2). 3. In the Cadillac studio, Durmisevich was assigned to work on the 1988 Eldorado facelift. 4. This Cadillac Limousine project was started at the request of then-CEO Roger Smith. 5, 6. The Cadillac Cimmaron PPG Pace Car was a wild dual-cowl phaeton. Here it's shown as an early proposal (5) and in a PPG brochure (6). 7. A proposal for the 1989 Cadillac Fleetwood. 8. Two views of the 1990 Oldsmobile Toronado rework.

Durmisevich: Smith came in one day and asked us to design a limousine from the ground up, not a stretched car but an all-new one starting from a clean sheet of paper. I came up with a sketch, and he wanted me to do a full-size rendering. The board in the design studio was about 20 feet long, but the limousine was longer. When we showed it outside, they had to take one of the 20-foot rolling boards and extend it another two or three feet. We depicted it with the rear door as a separate piece that could be a sliding door. The interior studio designed an interior, and I helped with that, but that's as far as it went. It would have been very interesting if Cadillac had decided to do a ground-up new limousine.

Design VP Chuck Jordan - 1986-92

CA: Did the culture change dramatically again when Jordan was elevated to VP?

Durmisevich: When Jordan came in, he had all these pent-up ideas, and he encouraged what I called "Religious Retreats." Even though, theoretically, you were not allowed in other studios, he expected designers to find ways to see what was going on throughout the building. He would see something in one studio, then walk other designers from another studio down the hall into that studio to see their latest design innovation.

CA: Jordan had a reputation for being highly critical and tough to work for.

Durmisevich: Chuck had his ways, but he was always pushing for better designs. Even if he liked something that you or someone else did, it was never good enough, and he kept trying to push it further. He wanted us to try to break the mold and do something unique and different and beautiful. Some cars are different but not necessarily beautiful,

but Chuck had that sense of beauty and taste and would try to get you to factor that into everything you did.

CA: Then you moved to Oldsmobile 1.

Durmisevich: We did a new rear body structure for that '90 Toronado. It was supposed to be just new front and rear facelifts, but as we were sketching on those, I came up with some designs that eventually convinced the decision makers to also change the front fenders, the doors and the upper. We ended up changing just about all the exterior sheet metal using the longer rear structure that Buick had set up, which is what those E-Body cars needed.

CA: You worked on the 1995 Oldsmobile Aurora.

Durmisevich: There was a car that Bud Chandler had designed, called the Tube Car, in one of the advanced studios that was kind of an aerodynamic study. It was a little tall, round, and bulbous but had some character that Chuck liked, so when we got the assignment, he instructed us to use the central body form pulling the fender forms sculpturally from it. The production proportions and criteria helped pull out some of the bubbiness and made it more serious, and some of my sketches helped generate our version. It was a very shapely car that we were trying to fit over a C-Body Olds 98 structure. Buick was working on a new Riviera at the time, and we were both trying to do something that had more form sculpture. The engineers agreed to change some of the structure to allow a lower hood and fender with all-new sheet metal to create that Aurora and Riviera, which were totally different from each other and from all other vehicles in their product lines.

CA: Was that when you got into Alias computer design technology?

Durmisevich: The Alias software came out when I went back to Buick 2 a second time. I was one of the first production studio designers to learn it and figure out how to apply it to design cars. Jordan was not 100 percent into it at first, but we were on his tour route when he would bring dignitaries through. Chuck would walk them by our big monitor and say, "They're playing with computer stuff over there." I thought the way to get him into it was to keep flashing provocative things up on the screen, and eventually he started bringing the people over and asking, "What are you doing?" He even-

tually became more acquainted with the computer and what we were able to do with it, and Alias launched me along a different path.

CA: Tell us how.

Durmisevich: When Jordan was approaching retirement, Jerry Palmer, who was in charge of the Advanced studios, was a good candidate to succeed him. He was overseeing some of the Alias work and made a commitment to Chuck to design a car all in Alias and mill out a full-size clay model from it before the end of the year. Then, about halfway through the year, he asked me if I would do that for him. I was still working in Buick 2 but said I would love to do that. So, he transferred me down to Advanced 2, which was called the "Studio of the Future," where they worked with Alias to develop it into more of an automotive product design software. But then they decided to turn that studio back into a normal studio, so Palmer moved me down to Advanced 4 under Tom Peters. Tom was finishing up a Corvette proposal in full size, and after that we developed a 2+2 Pontiac-type vehicle in Alias. We generated several designs and managed to get the final one milled out and showed it to Chuck before the end of the year. We had to do it very quickly, so it was pretty intense, but we met Jerry's commitment.

CA: You got a visit from new CEO Bob Stempel during that process.

Durmisevich: I was working late on modeling the vehicle in Alias, sitting at my desk at the computer monitor, when Chuck came in with GM chairman Bob Stempel, walked him over to my desk and said, "Why don't you talk to Bob and tell him what you're doing?" And Bob—being an engineer—understood. That was kind of a big deal.

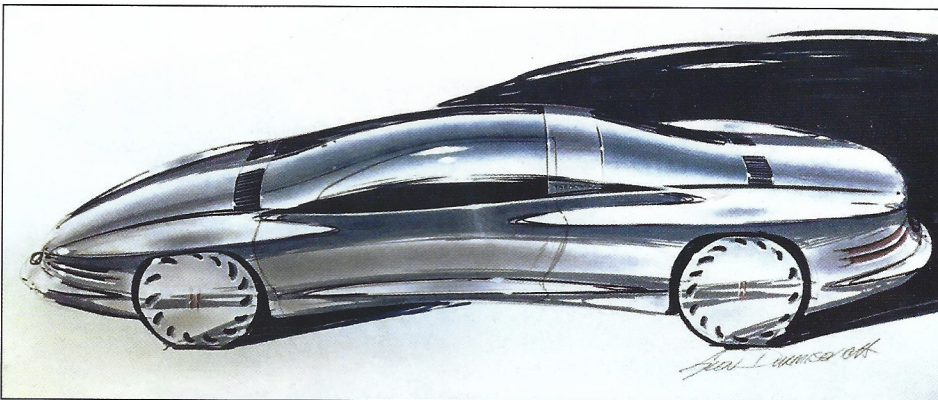
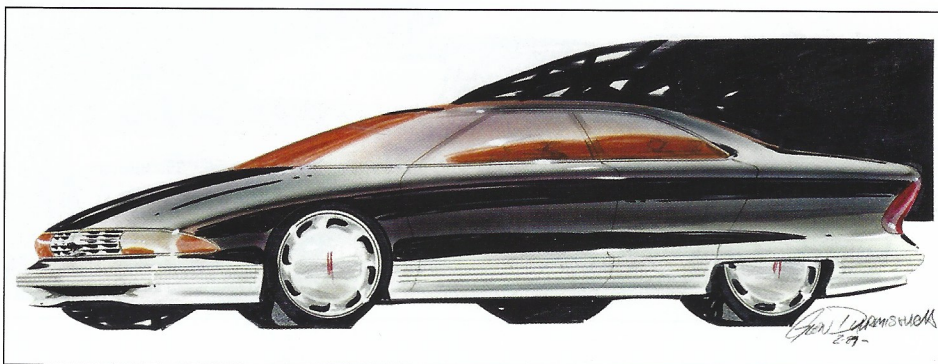
CA: So how did that work change your path?

Durmisevich: It changed my path from designing facelifts on production vehicles to more of a strategic role as I evolved into kind of the spokesman for this new digital design process.

Design VP Wayne Cherry 1992-2004

CA: Then Cherry took over in 1992, and the culture changed again.

Durmisevich: Very much so. Chuck was more hands-on. He was intimately involved in the design and execution of every vehicle in every studio and very critical of the execution of each design.



Wayne was a thinker, very thoughtful about the purpose and execution of each vehicle. "What does that mean to the design?" he would ask. To some extent that was good because he would mostly leave details up to the studios. But if a design was not successful, then you assumed the responsibility. That was really a culture shock.

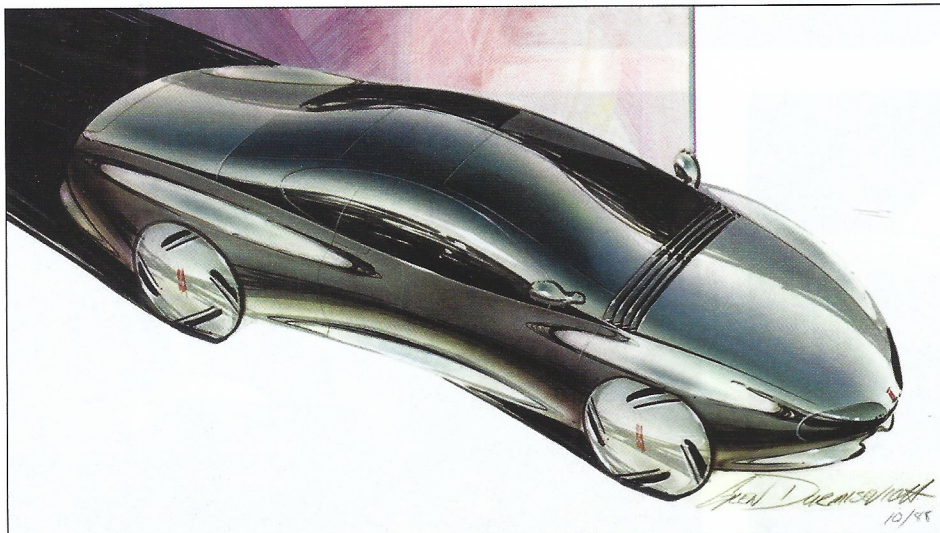
CA: He rearranged the studios and had exterior and interior working side-by-side.

Durmisevich: Until then, the studios were brand oriented, but Wayne set everything up to be more platform oriented, which was the way most of the rest of the industry was working. That had advantages because, in the past, different studios would be working on different versions of the same vehicles. I would be working on the '91 Olds 98 and had to share and negotiate things with the Buick or Pontiac studio. Once one studio became the lead, everyone else had to figure out how to change their designs to fit without changing the engineering requirements. But when we had one studio in charge of all the different divisional designs, after the basic design was picked, we had the same people working on the best ways to differentiate

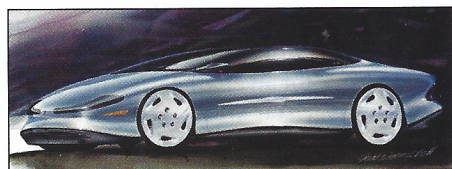
them. Wayne understood that the methodology had changed and reoriented the whole building toward that, where we had brand character studios that came up with designs and production studios that productionized them. There was also a lot of emphasis on speeding up the process, which helped things move along a little more quickly.

CA: Cherry also had you doing shows for the GM Board of Directors.

Durmisevich: In October before the January Detroit Auto Show, we would have media in to preview—under strict embargo—some of the things we were doing, and we had this setup showing how we interacted between the engineering work and the sketching and 3D modeling all done in Alias to the point where we could eventually release the surface. After the media went through, the Board of Directors wanted to see what they saw. I came in on the morning when they were supposed to see this presentation, and someone had started disassembling some of our computers and moving them out of the room. We had only about a half hour to get the monitors connected to different computers, load in the software and get all the programs up and running. Everything came up just as the



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1. A February 1987 drawing for the 1991 Oldsmobile Ninety Eight. 2. An early sketch for the Oldsmobile Aurora. The lettering at the base of the roof pillar reads Toronado. 3. In Durmisevich's two-door Aurora sketch from October 1988, some of shapes that made it to the production sedan are starting to be developed. 4. This four-door Aurora proposal wears an Aerotech nameplate on the front door. 5. The Aurora as it reached production for 1995.

Board came in, and we went through the presentation flawlessly and were wiping sweat off our brows afterward. One of the Board members asked, "This is great, but what's the downside?" All I could think of to say was that every now and then there's a bit of a computer glitch, not explaining all the hassle we had to go through to demonstrate it to them.

CA: Those reviews became a regular thing?

Durmisevich: Yes, and one year we did a big show with about 16 full-size clay and foam-milled models, and only a few of the designs were done. We had all the people who had picked up Alias skills modeling overtime early in the morning or late at night generating digital models of all the future design proposals. And to keep Wayne and other management involved, we scheduled reviews of what we had done the previous night on full-size power walls in the morning. They would come in, we would spin the models around for them in close to full size, they would say, "Change this, change that," and we would schedule another review at the end of the day. This went on for a couple of weeks, with morning and evening reviews.

CA: Cherry was comfortable with Alias?

Durmisevich: I did several presentations of the design process and how we worked back and forth with engineering...essentially the system they still use today. Wayne was all for doing everything in Alias, but it took him and the rest of the managers a little time to understand how to interact with it. They were used to coming into a studio and seeing the state of a design on a clay model, and if they wanted to change something—"Move that line here or change this there"—the sculptors would jump in, clay would fly, and 10 minutes later they would see what they had asked for. But when everyone was doing it on computers and the skill sets were still being developed, they would say, "Can you change this?" And I would have to disassemble my model and rebuild it. So, we had to tell them that it will take two or three hours, maybe more, depending on what they asked, so can they come back later today or tomorrow? They didn't like that. They wanted to see immediate change.

CA: So your managers learned to appreciate that process?

Durmisevich: They got to understand

how to interact with the digital models a lot better to the point where now it's become the way car design is executed.

CA: In 1998, after stints at Holden in Australia and in a Truck Brand Character studio, you were part of a group called "Speed Vision."

Durmisevich: Wayne wanted a definition of the brand character for each division that would live into the future, similar to how Harley Earl in his day had dictated that Pontiac needed a silver streak and Buick needed portholes. So, at the suggestion of Brian Baker, he created the Speed Vision group and said, "You guys put something together." We worked with the executive design directors to define graphics and form vocabularies for each division. One thing we did for Wayne's brand character exercise was create speed forms for each brand. Speed forms don't have wheels but define the three-dimensional surface character of a vehicle or brand. They demonstrated form vocabularies that were all different, and we executed them in scale for all the American brands. I designed and modeled the Buick version, which influenced some future Buicks. It culminated in a presentation to the designers. We did establish a lot of things going forward that still carry on today, like Cadillac's vertical lights.

CA: What happened when Bob Lutz arrived as product vice chairman in 2001?

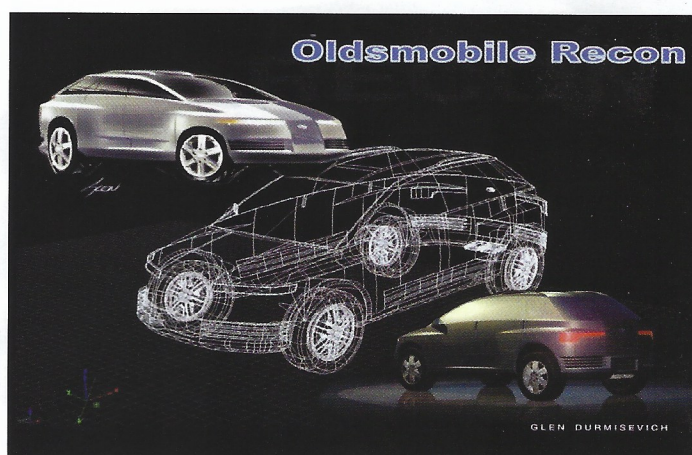
Durmisevich: Bob may not have been a big believer in what he called the "cook-book style of brand character," but he supported Design and had a tremendous influence on the design quality of GM cars. His ability to balance all aspects of the vehicle development process changed the culture.

CA: Did that lead to the corporate brand character studio that Ed Welburn ran?

Durmisevich: Yes, the idea was to set up an all-digital studio that would explore various ideas for new vehicles. The Brand Character studio would take these ideas and determine which brand or marketing division would be best suited to this design in the corporate product portfolio. Then we would design an initial vehicle and generate a full-size foam model to show people. And that led us into doing animations because a lot of these concepts had things inherent in their function that we wanted to demonstrate. So,



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after we modeled the vehicle, we did an animation to show the full-size model and how it functioned. That was the next step in the digital design world. Some ideas would come from the Advanced Exploration Studio (APEX), which generated new ideas. One that I executed was the '99 Oldsmobile Recon concept. It was one of the first crossover SUVs proposing a "what-if," and Wayne and Design management decided to make it the concept vehicle for the 1999 auto show.

CA: You even explored front-wheel-drive full-size pickups.

Durmisevich: The research people had determined, based on the results of a number of clinics, that there was a market for a front-drive full-size pickup. Everybody said, "You've got to be kidding." But they had data that showed that a lot of people were using pickups not for work but for daily light use and that front drive would be good up to a certain level of load. With a front-drive platform, you can do an SUV with a lower load floor, so we took on the project to design a line of vehicles, including an SUV and a van, and the SUV evolved into the Lambda program, which is still out there with the Chevy Traverse, Buick Enclave, and GMC Acadia.

CA: You also worked on the 2003 Chevy SSR "hotrod" pickup.

Durmisevich: As design manager for mid-size trucks From 2000 to 2004 I was assigned to productionize the Chevrolet SSR, a project that Wayne proposed and initiated in Corporate Brand Character Center.

Design VP Ed Welburn 2003-2009

CA: Ed Welburn took charge in 2003.

Durmisevich: I had worked with Ed

in Oldsmobile 2, in the Corporate Brand Character studio, and when he was over trucks just before becoming vice president. He is a very good designer and was a little more involved in developing proposals, and his role really expanded when he became Global Design vice president. He enjoyed being part of the team, but he had to manage several design studios around the world, which kept him very busy operating at a higher level with corporate meetings and responsibilities.

CA: Buick adopted the form language from the Enclave concept, which helped it survive while Pontiac, Saturn, Saab and Hummer were killed post-bankruptcy.

Durmisevich: My second stint in Buick 2 back in 1991, working for Wayne Kady, I was pushing for more shapely Buicks. People said customers worked their ways up the GM ladder from Chevrolet through Pontiac and Oldsmobile to Buick, then they would die. So, Buick wouldn't have a lot of repeat sales. Everyone realized it had to lower the age of its customers, yet its cars were not allowed to be expressive enough to do that. But Ed was able to push Buick to where its cars became beautiful and exciting, which made them more successful. Under Ed, I setup and managed the Accessory Design Studio from 2004 to 2007, then was manager of Design Appearance Quality from 2007 to 2009.

Navistar

CA: You took early retirement in 2009.

Durmisevich: After the bankruptcy, GM was canceling programs and brands, so they didn't need all the people they had and offered an early retirement program. I decided to take the early out as I

was still relatively young and could probably find something else. I did some consulting work for an engineering firm, and they said Navistar was looking for some design help, so would I be interested?

CA: How was Navistar compared to GM?

Durmisevich: They were in Fort Wayne at the time and were at a high point with a lot of projects going on and good profits and market share, and they were pulling in a lot of auto industry people who were looking for jobs after the downturn. I thought that might be fun temporarily, so I went down there. A lot of their management came from Ford because Ford had been hit with an earlier wave of downsizing, and the few ex-GM people there included Denny Mooney, who I had worked with at GM, and [ex-GM president] Troy Clark.

CA: What did you work on there?

Durmisevich: I was put in charge to help finish a cab-over truck that they were planning to sell in Brazil. The design was pretty well done, but we took it to production release. It had to be assembled in Brazil, and a lot of the parts had to be purchased in Brazil, and when they realized the cost involved in having to ship additional parts, those costs ended up canceling the program. Then they moved all their product design and engineering to Lisle, Illinois, not far from their headquarters, and offered everyone direct employment rather than contract. I was offered a position as chief designer, North American Trucks, which I accepted.

CA: How did that work out?

Durmisevich: Initially, little design work went on as the engineers spent a couple years revamping their vehi-



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1. As the design manager for GM's mid-size trucks from 2000-04, Durmisevich worked on the production version of the '03 Chevrolet SSR. 2. The design of the 1999 Oldsmobile Recon concept was done digitally. 3. Durmisevich poses with television host Joan Lunden and the Olds Recon concept vehicle. 4. Mr. Durmisevich owns this beautiful 1957 Cadillac Eldorado Brougham. It's a very nice original car and he's currently working on its restoration.

cle architecture to switch over to diesel exhaust fluid after a failed attempt by the previous CEO to meet emissions with just engine add-ons failed. There was an interim CEO for about a year, then Troy Clark took over as CEO, and he asked us to do a new truck to highlight the fact that it was a new vehicle architecture. He gave us 10 weeks to design and build a full-size on-highway Class 8 show truck for the big Mid-America truck show in Louisville, Kentucky, in March. Navistar had basically one cab for all their different products large and small, so we shared the cab and sleeper but did an all-new front and skirting on a concept vehicle for that show, and that became a design statement for the production truck that they're currently selling as the International LT series Class 8.

CA: What else?

Durmisevich: After that, we worked on revamping the heavy-duty HX trucks. We also did a joint venture with Chevrolet because they had dropped their medium-duty trucks when the market turned down. We used a Chevy pickup cab and a Duramax diesel engine and did a joint design for the front clip, with Navistar designing the frame and vehicle. That was a fun project because I got to work with some of my friends back at GM. We also did a couple of programs with Caterpillar until they decided to do their own trucks, then dropped out of the business altogether. The last truck I was responsible for was the medium-duty MV which is also sold as the eMV with electric powertrain.

CA: Any lessons from your time at

GM that helped you there?

Durmisevich: Coming from the auto industry, we would not accept poor quality. So, the suppliers had to get acquainted with the level of quality we expected in every part, and the build quality of the trucks today is so much better than it was at the time I went there. People invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in those vehicles, millions of dollars in fleets of them, and they must attract and retain drivers, so they expect them to function and operate. And the nicer the interiors, the nicer the trucks are to drive, the less chance they will lose drivers. That was one thing that we all contributed to and made a big change.

CA: You also taught some at Lawrence Technological University.

Durmisevich: Yes, that was fun. Keith Nagara, who was running the program at Lawrence Tech, was looking for someone to teach a history of transportation design class, so I agreed to do that as an adjunct professor because I like the history of cars, design, and transportation. I did that for a couple years, but working out of state it became tough to do on a regular basis, so I bowed out.

CA: What are your favorite designs?

Durmisevich: Probably the '90 Olds Toronado, the '91 Olds 88, the '95 Aurora and that '99 Recon concept vehicle. Also, the Chevrolet SSR, although I just took that concept to production.

CA: The most challenging?

Durmisevich: Probably the '97 Chevy Malibu, which was meant to be a high-volume, low-cost, popular vehicle. We went through five clinics in five months in scale model form, eventually selecting my design. The clinic process finally changed to understanding the packaging, the market, and their perceptions of design as opposed to just selecting a design. It was a learning experience that was very frustrating. In the meantime, I had jumped to the interior so wasn't able to work on the final exterior details. It was not how I would have liked to see it come out.

CA: Any do-overs?

Durmisevich: Not really. I'm pretty happy with most of the work I've done and how it turned out considering all the people involved in all the different aspects of any design. I feel good that I was able to generate and contribute to designs that will be out there for some time to come.