

Motorhoming: More Than 40 Years And Counting

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Motorhomes have been a part of my family's life for 45 years. And over that span of time, we often mixed business with pleasure.

My wife, Beverly, and I have four children — Paul, Mark, Tim, and Teresa — all of whom were born in the 1960s. Beverly ran the office and I ran the shop for a business that specialized in the repair and overhaul of Hughes helicopters.

We've always lived in Alva, Oklahoma, but with customers from coast to coast, we needed a vehicle with complete living accommodations that also could pull a commercial trailer. Back then, finding a vehicle with enough power was difficult.

In 1969 we purchased a new Ford van. The interior was bare, except for the driver's seat. We cut out the top to raise the roof 15 inches and used 16-gauge steel for the extension, as well as for all the cabinet work. (Our expertise with metal exceeded our abilities with wood.) We insulated the vehicle with Styrofoam, laid carpet, and added more windows. It looked like a factory job.

We outfitted the vehicle with a sink, water heater, water pump, propane tank (under the floor), overhead oven, stovetop, refrigerator, toilet, shower, holding tank, a very narrow closet, and a bench seat above a water tank, all on the driver's side. On the other side was a longer bench seat with storage, a Suburban furnace, and a drop-down table/sleeping area. Shelves in the front and rear could double as storage space or kids' sleeping areas. The front passenger seat and the one immediately behind it were reclining aircraft seats. The retracting side step was removed to make room for a 30-gallon fuel tank. All six doors remained usable. Cold water flowed from a filter mounted inside the refrigerator to a drinking fountain at the sink.

After five years and 198,000 miles of hard usage, the van was retired to our personal museum.

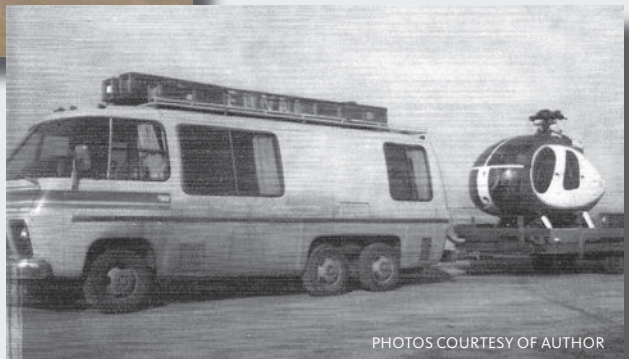
During the energy crisis of 1974, bargains on motorhomes were plentiful. We bought two GMC models, a 23-footer and a 26-footer. To help justify our purchases, we rented to eager

friends. The GMC advertisement — “it doesn't drive like a truck or look like a box” — was correct. Built from 1973 to 1978, GMCs were fantastic machines, with power to pull a good load.

Many times our children's teachers would assign lessons in advance so we could take the kids on trips. Beverly and I took turns driving at night, and then conducted business and saw sights during the day. Typically, after several days and several thousand miles, the kids were fresh, while Beverly and I were exhausted.

In the 1980s, our operation changed to more of a mail-order business. The kids were getting older. By the time they graduated from high school, we had visited all 50 states. When we sold the GMC motorhomes (for more than we paid for them), each had been driven 130,000 miles.

We sold our business in 2000, but in retirement we stay busy and continue



PHOTOS COURTESY OF AUTHOR

The Kinzie family (top) often traveled

with a helicopter in tow and helicopter rotor blades secured to the top of their GMC motorhome (above).

to travel. We now have another 23-foot GMC motorhome. It was completely overhauled by Cinnabar Engineering Inc., a Sandusky, Michigan, shop that specializes in the renovation of classic motorhomes.

Motorhoming is still part of our family's life. The difference is that Beverly and I enjoy it at a more leisurely pace than in past years, and now we sometimes take our grandchildren. **FMC**