

When John Fore and his son, James E., built their covered wagon more than 100 years ago they couldn't have known that they were setting more than wooden wheels in motion. Their examples of industry and ingenuity were destined to reach forward through a generation to spark the beginnings of a successful motorhome manufacturing company that would bear their name.

Foretravel Inc., founded by James' son Clarence, and his son, Ray, grew rapidly after its first motorhome was virtually hand built on a 1967 Dodge chassis. The factory is also Clarence's creation and is a living testament to the mechanical genius that the Fores have demonstrated through the years. More than merely

modern, the facility has a sense of logic and organization that is reflected in a product which seems to bear the mark of old-world craftsmanship. The latest improvement is the first Foretravel to be powered by the turbocharged Caterpillar rear-mounted engine.

Stepping inside this elegant motorhome is a graphic demonstration of how far today's coach has evolved from the simple canvas walls and plank seats of its pioneer predecessors. The deep-brown color, the texture of real wood and wood-grained veneers and an overall feeling of elegance are the dominant first impressions. Upholstery is a compatible rust, and the pulley-mounted curtains, done in a much lighter fabric but accented with browns and rust, breathe just the right degree of lightness into the whole color scheme. The large side windows are also equipped with

transparent, tinted roll-down shades, blocking some of the sun's rays, while providing daytime privacy without blocking the view. And when a floor-covering expert saw the lush carpets in this coach he whistled and exclaimed, "They really went first cabin here!"

Both interior and exterior storage are strong factors in this coach. Overhead cabinets with smoothly operating roller-doors fill virtually all of the available space from front to back. Drawers are also generously distributed throughout the coach, substantially enhancing utility. Cupboards are large and easily accessible. Exterior under-chassis compartments are spacious, carpeted and lockable with sturdy hardware.

If you've experienced the "average" motorhome, you'll instantly recognize that the living area seating is arranged in a conventional plan, but here it is decidedly more plush. The convertible couch with its adjustable side bolsters is the most obvious attraction (there is lit-

John Thompson



Foretravel 38'

The first of its line to be powered by a turbocharged Caterpillar diesel is a proud descendant of a century-old tradition

John Thompson

tle storage under this couch as live-aboard components consume most of that area), but you enter the real comfort zone as you sample the two side-mounted swivel chairs. One of them is a recliner model with a footrest that elevates as the back lowers to ease your body into a restful posture. That's the way to view the color television mounted above the driving stage.

The galley, a focal point in any rig, is well-appointed with useful features. The fine assortment of appliances for the serious cook include a Magic Chef four-burner gas range and overhead oven plus a Sharp carousel convection and microwave oven, a large Dometic RM1303 energy-selector refrigerator (the one which automatically switches from gas to electric operation without your having to remember), a built-in countertop NuTone blender, a Dometic icemaker and even a Roper trash compacter. Overall kitchen

storage is abundant in many cupboards and drawers, and there is a large cupboard with no less than 10 sliding drawers for those who want to lay in a good supply of canned edibles. And the undersink storage area, unlike many, is only minimally disrupted by the routing of utility lines. The generously proportioned and scratch-resistant countertop presents a more than ample surface for creative cookery. Furthermore, this area can be expanded by using the matching sink covers and the slide-out cutting board.

To serve the meals that come from this beautiful kitchen, you have the option of using a 30 x 30-inch table which easily extends from its receptacle between the two living area lounge chairs. This makes a fine arrangement for a cozy dinner for two. You'll probably want an extra pillow, though, as the deeply plush

swivel chairs offer minimal support for comfortably sitting up straight for dining. Alternatively, twin 24 x 16-inch pedestal tables may be installed in front of the convertible sofa. For more casual dining or entertaining, the kitchen counter is also a bar complete with two very comfortable stools and the traditional brass foot rail.

The bedroom in this floorplan features a queen-size bed with aisles on both sides. The decor is a continuation of the earth tones used in the forward section of the coach. The abundance of features for gracious living include the vanity table, with its drawer and cupboard offering a multitude of functional uses and the mirrors above it making the entire room appear larger. Naturally there



FORETRAVEL

is a built-in color television set positioned for convenient viewing from the bed. Also in the entertainment department, an AM/FM/cassette stereo unit is mounted beneath the television, rather than beside the bed as most manufacturers position it. A separate gas furnace and thermostat plus a second Coleman TSR Mach III roof air-conditioner quietly control the room's environment. Mirrors on two walls over the vanity serve a functional purpose as well as visually giving the already spacious room an even more expansive feeling. A separate control switch for the generator is mounted in the wall, along with the TV antenna booster switch and interior light switch.

The bathroom is the one area that changes wall tones; lighter colors are used to contrast attractively with the wood hues of the cabinetry. Here again, storage is well-executed with large under-counter areas, a convenient single drawer and a very large double sliding-door medicine cabinet with three shelves. There is a separate control for operating the water pump at this point also. And the tub in the shower stall is larger than most found in Class A's.

Adjacent to the bedroom is the full-length 24-inch-deep x 58-inch-tall x 52-inch-long hanging wardrobe closet with an additional 10-inch-high overhead shelf. And adjoining that is a five-shelf 21-inch-deep x 16-inch-wide floor-to-ceiling linen closet. There is simply no question about there being ample room for the amenities of life in this motorhome.

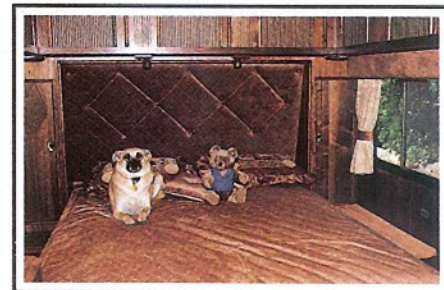
Lighting aboard this Foretravel is a subject which receives a rare *MotorHome* grade of A + +. There are probably more Thin-Lite fluorescent fixtures attached to the ceiling and under cupboards than anyone would want to count. You can virtually stand anywhere in the coach and reach out to turn on at least one of these handy fixtures. Additionally, very attractive incandescent bullet-type lights have been scattered throughout the coach for providing either a lower light or direct illumination on specific seats for reading. And beneath the window valances, long fluorescent tubes provide attractive indirect lighting at the flip of a wall switch.

On the Road

If you haven't yet driven a motorhome powered by Caterpillar's 3208 turbocharged diesel engine, don't do it — unless you are also willing to buy one. It's an impressive power plant!

In this Foretravel, the engine is called a "pusher" because it is mounted at the rear of the chassis. The first obvious advantage of this configuration is the welcome absence of an all-pervading dog-house on the driving stage. Thus it's very easy to get in and out of both front seats. The next advantage becomes evident as soon as the engine is started; it's remarkably quieter in the front of the motorhome with the engine in the rear. That relative silence is profound at cruising speed, when the hum of the tires is louder than the powerful diesel engine. The third, and maybe premier, advantage is manifested while

The galley's scratch-resistant countertop can be expanded with matching sink covers and a slide-out cutting board. A bedroom boasting vanity table and built-in color television for viewing from the queen-size bed has all the amenities of gracious living.



bearing down on the accelerator and leaving other traffic standing at the light. This big 636-cubic-inch (10.4-liter) displacement V-8 engine with direct fuel injection has power! It is rated at 250 hp (210 hp in California) and the power curve runs fairly steep up to about 2200 rpm; hence the good initial get-away push. Then head for the nearest hill and see how the excellent low-end torque dispels that old motorhome's inferiority complex about holding up traffic.

While the 3208-T is used in only a few motorhomes, it has seen extensive service in marine and industrial applications since 1967. One reason for the engine's commercial popularity is the hefty construction. The 3208-T also features a maintenance-free fuel system, meaning that the individual fuel injection pumps have built-in calibration and never need adjustment during routine maintenance, overhaul or even when fuel injector nozzles are

replaced. And this engine was actually designed for the greater component stresses of turbocharging. With the turbo option, the engine delivers rated power to at least 8,200 feet. The turbo system is a low-inertia design for a fast response to accelerator demand.

Long-haul industrial users demand engines that can be quickly rebuilt, and this model offers several possibilities; the cylinders can be re-bored three times and fitted with oversize rings and pistons and the crankshaft can be reground. There is also fast availability of remanufactured engines, short blocks and many parts with full warranties (at 50 to 60 percent of the new cost) through 2,000 nationwide Caterpillar dealers, and there are in-frame and out-of-frame overhaul options. Most motorhomes, however, don't log enough mileage for rebuildability to be important.

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To accompany this professional driver's engine and chassis, Foretravel provides an exceedingly well-arranged instrument panel; every gauge or control is within easy reach. Important extras such as a transmission oil temperature gauge, coolant temperature gauge, oil pressure gauge, voltmeter, air pressure gauges, the speedometer and tachometer are tightly grouped, so they can all be quickly surveyed. Readily available to the driver's left are the rocker switches controlling the windshield washer and wipers, ICC courtesy lights, independent controls for the left and right fans, and the air pressure-actuated parking brake. (Incidentally, the air-operated doorstep automatically extends when the parking brake is applied and retracts when the brake is released.)

Foretravel uses a dash-mounted Bendix heavy-duty cruise control in this area, rather than the steering-column mounted type. The only small disadvantage to this placement occurs when the driver moves his seat back and must then lean forward to reach the control switch. Easily reached by his right hand, though, is the above-average quality Audiovox SPS AM/FM/cassette stereo entertainment center, the dash heater and air-conditioner, plus a digital display monitor panel showing the current status of everything from the charge in the batteries to the temperature inside the refrigerator.

tor, simply by touching the name of that item. This monitor panel also has an integral alarm system which will signal whenever any of the nine conditions that it monitors reaches the critical point which you have preset into the system. And, finally, the piece de resistance for some RVers: a selector switch for the electronic musical horns which have a repertoire of more than 40 songs.

The top of the instrument panel is attractively padded and hinged along the full length, so that it can be easily lifted to access the instrument panel fuse box and electrical, heating and radio connections. A peek into this environment also shows you something about the methods used by Foretravel; all the wires are arranged in a neat manner. That orderliness and good house-keeping also was readily apparent in the Foretravel factory as workers progressed at an efficient, but not hasty, pace.

Sitting in the comfortable, electrically controlled driver's lounge chair, you'll notice that your vision in almost all directions is exemplary due to the generous proportions of the RV windows. And, because there is no driver's side door on any Foretravel coach (a feature which might be missed by some owners), the narrow front pillar doesn't present a large blind spot. The two side mirrors conform with the current style being used by most manufacturers; in my opinion, they are slightly small. While the larger truck-type mirrors definitely aren't as pretty, they do provide a more generous view to the rear. This shortcoming is compensated, however, by the closed-circuit television monitor which displays a 45-degree view behind the coach. I had some trouble with this device, as condensation would form between the camera lens and its protective outer covering, thus obscuring my vision. Nevertheless, when it functions, this rearview television is one of the greatest motorhome driving aids that has come down the road in a long time. The only addition to rear-vision safety that we would suggest the buyer might consider adding is the optional side-mounted docking lights for safer nighttime backing.

The gear lever on the left wall of the driver's compartment controls a powerful Allison 643 four-speed-forward automatic transmission which, for a heavy-duty item of this kind, shifts gears quite smoothly. The transmission can be downshifted at speeds in excess of

the maximum allowable engine rpm, and it simply refuses to actualize the shift until the vehicle has slowed sufficiently. The transmission also features a lockup clutch in the third and fourth gears that automatically engages to provide a direct drive between engine and transmission when the peak power demand drops. The operation of this feature feels like another shift in gears; it is not bothersome and it does contribute to better fuel economy.

Far from the timbers and nails of those early Foretravels, today's luxury product is built with state-of-the-art components. The body sits atop an Oshkosh chassis designed specifically for Foretravel motorhomes. The sidewalls and ceiling are of the latest sandwich panel (Styrofoam chemically bonded between a 1/8-inch plywood panel and the 1/4-inch veneered walnut panels in the living areas and cedar paneling in the wardrobe closet). The walls, floors and ceilings are also reinforced with welded tubular steel frames, forming a steel cage superstructure.

The coach is built for comfortable cold-weather living so most of the waterlines are routed where they will benefit from operation of the interior furnaces. The water tank also directly receives a blast of air from the furnace. Therefore only the holding tanks really require antifreeze. And that big Caterpillar engine is designed to turn over happily at low temperatures. The chassis is equipped with a cold-weather start assist capacity as well as an engine heater that can be plugged into 120-volt power. Air pressure for the air brakes will fall substantially overnight, a fact reflected in the dash-mounted air pressure gauge. The automatic pumps, however, rapidly bring pressure back to the 90-120 PSI range by the time you get the seat belt fastened and your seat comfortably positioned.

Overall, this new coach drove very comfortably through an approximately 1,500-mile shakedown cruise across the Southwest. It was quite easy to drive, the good power response was a welcomed relief, and the motorhome, with almost all the amenities you could want, is exceedingly comfortable to live in. Truly it is the next step forward in a long line of excellent products from Foretravel. □

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