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MotorHome Life

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MHL Exclusive:

DIESEL POWER
For The Foretravel 30'

Caterpillar
522-Cubic-Inch
V-8 Diesel


Foretravel

Foretravel Diesel 30'

Caterpillar V-8 and 4-speed Allison automatic produce some fascinating results in this luxury-class coach.

by BILL ESTES

MENTION THE WORD *diesel* to a motorhome owner or prospective buyer and watch his ears perk up. Put a diesel engine in a motorhome which actually has a real-life reclining chair, in addition to exceptional quality, and the result is a combination which is bound to be the center of attention.

There is a motorhome like this, and it's the Foretravel 30RB. The diesel engine is the Caterpillar Model 1145, a 522-cubic-inch V-8. And the recliner is *so* comfortable you wouldn't think it has any right to be in something on wheels.

But that's the way Foretravel does business: doing the unusual. You wouldn't think real wood paneling is an exotic feature, but the plastic-coated wood print paneling is used widely enough in the industry these days that Foretravel's natural Barcelona pecan is a refreshing change.

The Foretravel 30RB (left), equipped here with V-8 diesel engine but available also with gasoline engine, is built on stretched-wheelbase International chassis.

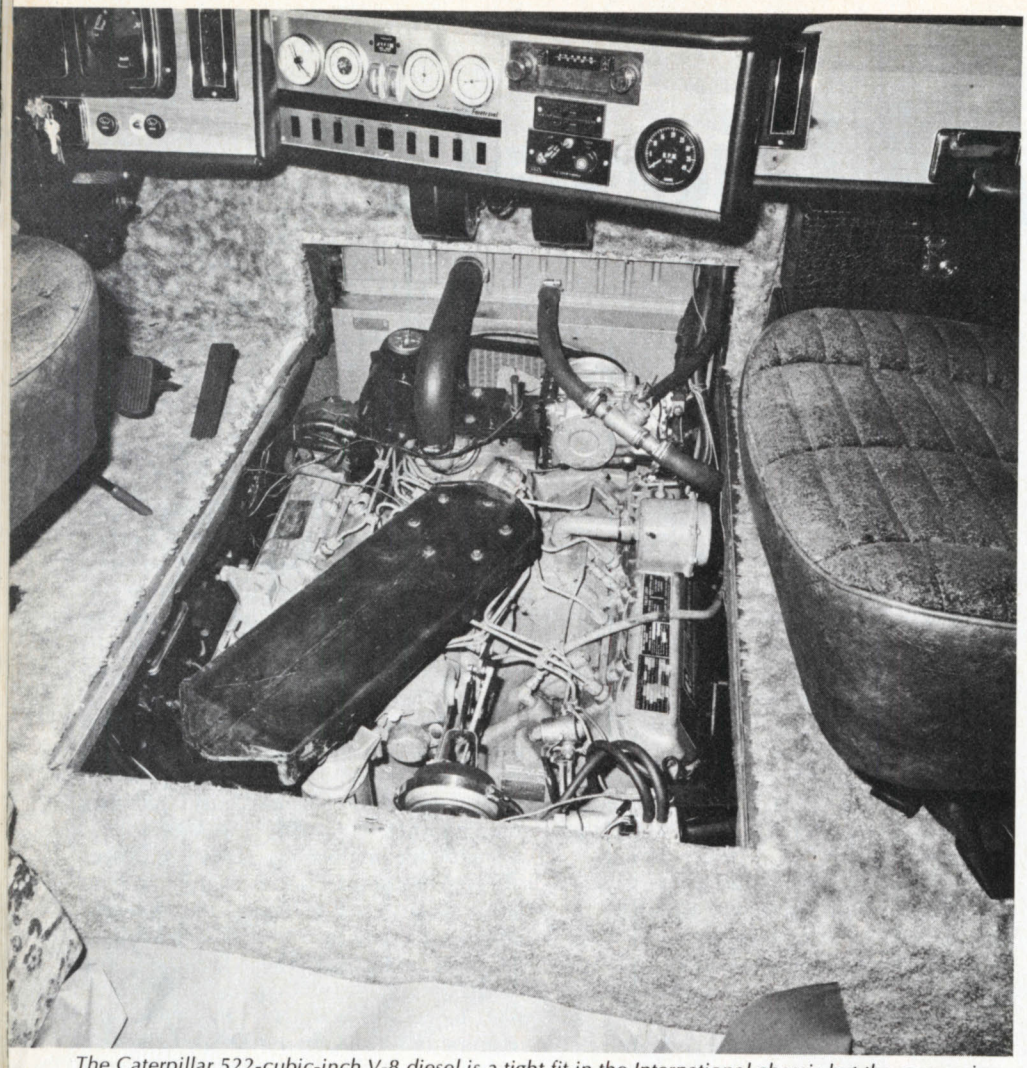
However, the most unusual feature of this particular test vehicle is the diesel, combined with a 4-speed Allison automatic transmission, installed for Foretravel by ATP Inc. of Longview, Tex. The diesel is not fast, but in the Foretravel 30RB it simply flattens steep grades climbed at moderate to low speeds. The engine, rated at 175 hp at 3200 rpm, actually develops 55 hp less than the popular gasoline-powered Dodge 440 V-8. In torque output, they're about equal, with the Cat engine developing 354 lb.-ft. at 1700 rpm while the Dodge gets 350 at 3200 rpm.

In some ways, the figures are deceiving. The Cat-powered Foretravel aided by an Allison AT 540 4-speed automatic transmission appeared to easily outdo a conventional gasoline V-8 on winding mountain roads such as the route we took into California's Sequoia National Park. The test motorhome loafed up the grades in second and third gears. However, on the open highway at 50 mph, attempting to pass another vehicle, a big gasoline V-8 would have provided noticeably quicker acceleration. And our road speed of 55 mph dropped fairly quickly to 40 or 45 mph on steep grades. But in third gear the Cat engine will pull 6% grades all day long with hardly any increase in engine oil or engine coolant temperatures. Nor did the transmission have any heat problems.

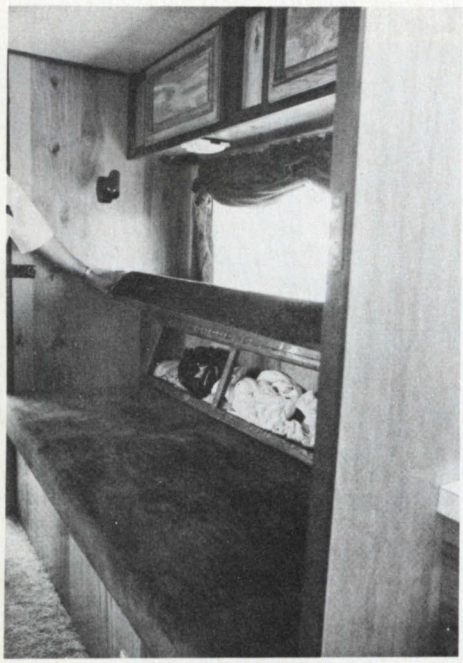
Transmission oil was cooled in a special heat exchanger tank below the radiator. The Allison transmission is a fine piece of equipment, with quick, solid shifting characteristics (no mushy shifts), good gear versatility for uphill pulls as well as downhill engine-compression braking, and no danger whatsoever of having any problems handling the job in a motorhome such as the Foretravel 30RB. The AT 540 is rated for use in vehicles with gross weight from 6700 to 36,000 pounds, with engines developing not more than 200 hp. One item we missed in this transmission is a park position. In industrial applications, the park position for an automatic transmission usually is eliminated because it's not a fool-

Galley cabinetry slants inward at the bottom and includes ample storage. Motorhome is well lighted by large windows, many 12-volt lights.

The Foretravel interior is luxuriously furnished, and even includes a reclining chair across from built-in icemaker at end of sofa.



The Caterpillar 522-cubic-inch V-8 diesel is a tight fit in the International chassis but the conversion mechanically was very successful.



Twin 32 x 75-inch spring-cushioned beds serve as lounge seats during day.

proof vehicle holding mechanism. The Allison includes a large output-shaft-mounted parking brake.

The choice of the Caterpillar 1145 engine was a logical one because of its rpm characteristics. The engine's maximum rpm under load is 3200 rpm, while many of the large V-8 engines used in long-haul trucks are limited to 2000 rpm. A low-rpm engine would require changing the axle ratios which motorhome chassis manufacturers use with gasoline engines (4.56 or 4.88 to 1), whereas use of a high-rpm diesel would not.

The caterpillar 1145 engine used in the Foretravel has been changed and now is designated the 3208, and it has a higher rpm limit of 2800 rpm, which makes it even more suitable for motorhomes. Diesels have fuel governors which prevent rpm excesses. Regarding the operating temperatures which we monitor (see accompanying charts), the Cat diesel beat everything we've ever tested, by a country mile.

It was in the areas of fuel economy and engine noise that Foretravel's Clarence Fore was treading thin ice. He had no concrete idea while planning the conversion whether the diesel would come through with better mileage than his gasoline-powered motorhomes, nor was he sure he could keep the noisy diesel from being a distinct annoyance to occupants of the motorhome.

But the Cat came through well in the mileage department. And Fore's work in sound-deadening with thin sheet lead, although not completed in time for our test, appears to have promise of holding engine noise reaching the driver and passenger to levels considered normal for gasoline engines. Our noise rating of *acceptable* with the test motorhome undoubtedly would have been *excellent* if the motorhome had been equipped with a gasoline engine, because the sandwich construction of this motorhome and particularly of the removable engine cover is quite good.

It's possible to keep most of the diesel noise from getting inside, but outside it's another story. Diesels are noisy, period. The noise has to go someplace, and good sound-deadening aims it toward the ground. Bystanders get a full dose.

What about smog? Diesels belch clouds of black smoke, but it does not contain as great a volume of invisible pollutants as with gasoline engines. Caterpillar says their diesels emit only about 35% of the carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and hydrocarbons that a heavy-duty gasoline engine produces. Gasoline engines used in passenger cars and light trucks are more tightly controlled, so the comparison between those types and the diesel undoubtedly would not be quite as favorable to the diesel.

In our customary flat-highway fuel economy test, the Cat-powered Foretravel appeared to have an average economy edge of about 40% over what we have recorded with large-displacement gasoline engines on the same course, under similar conditions with similar motorhomes. We usually record between 7 and 8 mpg for a large V-8 powered motorhome on this course, which reflects ideal driving conditions, no use of air-conditioner, no headwinds, strict adherence to the 55-mph speed limit, and with a corrected odometer. Fuel is accurately measured (according to weight) and is pumped from a separate container to eliminate error which usually occurs with conventional fuel tank-filling procedures.

The trip average test also is with a corrected odometer, although the conventional fuel tank is used. Extended length of the test holds effect of fuel tank filling error to a minimum. The motorhome is parked at the same spot in the same service station, to limit tank-fill error caused by varying attitude of the motorhome.

In the flat-highway test the Foretravel did 10.3 mpg, and in our trip-average test the mileage figure was 9.1, including a climb from about 2000 to about 8000 feet elevation followed by descent. Fore's average mileage during his trip from Texas to

California was 9.3, driving about 58 mph. Our trip average test reflects strict adherence to the 55 mph-limit.

What the tests indicate is significant: the bottom does not fall out of the diesel economy picture when the accelerator pedal goes down. With gasoline engines being operated under heavy throttle in the mountains, mileage falls badly, to 5 mpg or below. The Caterpillar V-8 seems to take very little notice of heavy-throttle use, which means the fuel economy difference between the Cat and a large gasoline-powered V-8 may be as high as 80% in mountainous terrain.

That brings up the question of financial feasibility. Because his diesel conversions are one-at-a-time jobs, with no volume in which tooling and production set-up costs can be recovered gradually, Fore has had to price the Caterpillar/Allison conversion at $9990. If his conversion business increases, the price my go down. But it probably will not increase substantially, due in part to the fact that the engines are in short supply. Fore practically had to bribe a few people to get this first engine in the test motorhome. Availability of the Allison AT 540 is not as critical, although it is an expensive transmission compared to the 3-speed automatic found in conventional motorhomes.

How the cost picture might work out can be illustrated in an example. For instance, let's look at a 30-foot motorhome which is driven 45,000 miles in three years. Let's assume No. 2 diesel fuel costs about the same as regular gasoline, which is what both Fore and I found on our respective trips. Let's assume the average fuel economy bonus of diesel is 40%, or 3 mpg. With gasoline, at 6.5 mpg, fuel cost would be $3460 in three years, ast 50¢ a gallon. With diesel at 9.5 mpg cost would be $2370, or about $1100 difference.

Obviously, this diesel conversion would not pay for itself in fuel economy alone, until the motorhome odometer reaches a high mileage mark. Consider, though, that many of the conventional gasoline-engine maintenance chores are eliminated. The diesel engine has no spark plugs, no breaker points or other attendant devices. It has no carburetor. How much is spent on maintenance will vary, but if it's $100 per year, that can be added to the $1100 fuel cost savings, for a $1400 benefit in three years. Six years of operation probably would have the gasoline-powered motorhome at the point where it needs a valve job, so our 6-year total economy figure could be pushed to about $3000. Shortly after the 100,000-mile mark, a gasoline engine may need an overhaul, whereas the diesel, properly maintained, should go well beyond 200,000 miles before overhaul.

So, even in 10 years the diesel conversion would not pay for itself if travel is limited to 15,000 a year. However, if it's 30,000 a year, the savings doubles, to $6000 in six years. Somewhere in that

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How A Diesel Engine Works

NOT ONLY IS DIESEL engine theory of operation quite different from that of the gasoline engine, the two fuels are quite different as well.

Gasoline is more volatile than diesel fuel, but gasoline is not intended to self-ignite in an engine. It's intended to be ignited at the opportune moment by the spark plug, after being compressed (along with air) on roughly an 8 to 1 ratio.

In the diesel engine, the compression ratio is much higher (between 16 and 17 to 1). This high compression heats the air which has been ingested in normal fashion, through valves. At the opportune time, the diesel fuel is injected into the combustion chamber with the highly compressed air. Spontaneous combustion, or self-ignition, occurs. Thus, the diesel engine has no spark plugs, coil, condenser, distributor and none of the attendant wiring. The engine has an air intake but no carburetor. The cylinders are filled with a given amount of air whether or not any power is produced. Only when fuel is injected does the engine produce power. How much power depends on how much fuel is injected.

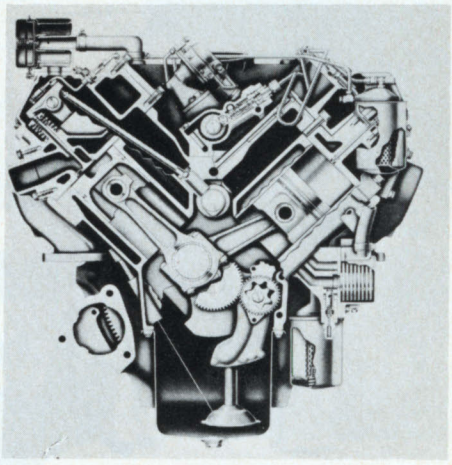
The diesel engine is cooled in much the same way as a gasoline engine, although its heat rejection is better. In other words, less of the heat generated by the fuel gets through the walls of the combustion chamber and is carried away by the coolant. A diesel theoretically is more efficient in its use of fuel.

Why do diesels cost more? First, quality and structural durability must be better or the engine would come apart under the heavy compression pressures. Tolerances are much more precise. Second, industrial uses dictate that it must last.

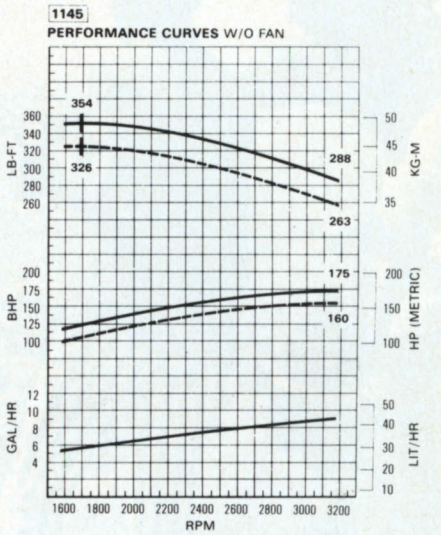
There are 2-stroke diesels and there are 4-stroke diesels. The 2-stroke engines fire every time each piston comes to the top of its stroke. The 4-stroke engines fire every other time. In years past, diesels had very low rpm capability. An engine with 1000-rpm capability was rather fast. Today, many of the huge V-8 and V-12 engines in cross-country trucks are limited to 2000 rpm. But development of higher rpm capability by such companies as Caterpillar is broadening diesel usage.

Many diesels are turbocharged. It's costly but quite effective in increasing horsepower without the necessity for increased engine size. Turbochargers pump air into the engine, which allows the engine to ingest more air and fuel in addition to sustaining combustion for a longer period.

The diesel engine was invented by German mechanical engineer Rudolf Diesel in 1896, and incredibly, it could run on crude oil, kerosene, soybean oil or peanut oil.



Cross-section of the Caterpillar diesel shows fuel injection system at center top, with fuel lines running to each cylinder. Engine weighs 1200 pounds, compared to 700-800 for conventional large-displacement V-8. Curves represent performance corrected to sea level, ambient conditions, 29.92 in. Hg., 60 degrees F. (solid line) and performance at SAE standard conditions, 29.38 in. Hg. and 85 degrees F. (dotted line).



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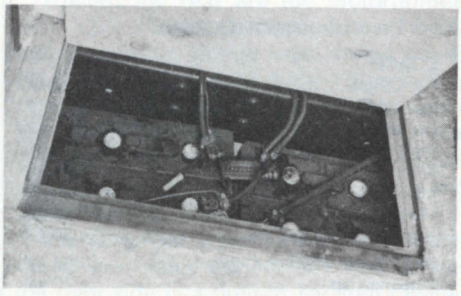
period the gasoline engine would have to be overhauled, which would be about $1000. As mileage per year increases, the Foretravel diesel conversion comes closer to paying for itself.

What would be the case if the conversion cost instead were $5000? Your guess is as good as mine on what a chassis builder such as Dodge or International would charge for an optional Caterpillar-Allison combination, but I would bet it would be below $6000 because they wouldn't need to recover tooling and production set-up costs as quickly as must Foretravel and they can get better prices. Why don't they offer it? Numbers. A chassis builder must believe the diesel/4-speed option capable of selling in great enough numbers to make it pay. Obviously, they're not yet convinced, although they undoubtedly have been looking at it more seriously these days.



The diesel-powered Foretravel was equipped with twin large 8D diesel-starting batteries, one isolated for engine starting and the other used as auxiliary.

There are areas in which the diesel is more expensive. Oil changes are considerably more expensive, because the Cat engine requires 12 quarts and has two filters. Oil change interval is three months or 6000 miles. The fuel filter also must be changed regularly, because dirt or water spell disaster to a diesel engine fuel injection system. Due to elimination of troublesome ignition and carburetion components, the diesel engine has a much better reputation for dependability than does the gasoline engine. But when trouble does occur, you won't find anyone in resort or out-of-the-way areas who can help. The diesel repair centers are congregated along major trucking routes. The truck repair centers have the reputation for being more cordial, more helpful and more interested in the owner's problems than do typical garages which handle gasoline-powered vehicles. The big-truck repair shops undoubtedly also could handle any chassis/suspension problems which might occur, although not chassis warranty work.

Foretravel builds coaches on Dodge, Chevrolet, International and Ford chassis, according to buyer request, and production is relatively small. While some custom work is done, the company primarily concentrates on production-line 23, 26 and 30-foot units.

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Our 30RB reflects a great deal of planning and obviously is aimed at the owner who may spend several months each year on the road. It's very comfortable. Just *how* comfortable should be evident upon learning that the motorhome actually is equipped with a reclining chair. It's bolted to the floor just inside the entry door. Although it is larger than most chairs used in motorhomes and does cramp the aisle a bit, there's nothing like relaxing in a recliner at the end of the day. The recliner faces a conventional chair, across the main dining table. Fore has been experimenting with various dining accommodations, ranging from free-standing pedestal tables (which he says many buyers dislike) to the setup in our test motorhome: a large hinged table which doubles in size and extends across the aisle when the top leaf is folded outward. We didn't care for the setup because the table was hard to manipulate, in addition to blocking the aisle. When the fold-out section is not used the table serves nicely for 2-person dining, although it's still hard to remove from its storage position against the wall. Fore says many of his customers actually have asked for the large table, which they believe serves a good role in such situations as card-playing, entertaining, etc. It's simply a matter of personal opinion. Fore will equip the coach either way — with the large table or with pedestal tables.

Across the aisle is a very comfortable convertible sofa. In the front, the driver and passenger seats swivel to form a sitting room for as many as seven adults.

The color scheme is very well done and decorator slat-style shades add a definite measure of eye appeal.

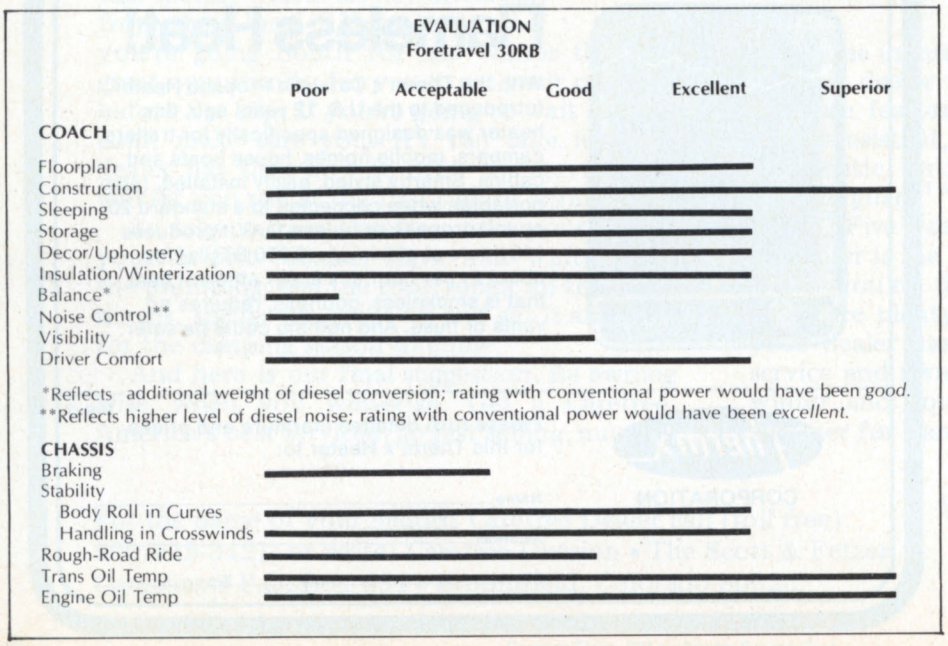
For late sleepers, these shades block light quite well. Couple that with the fact that side drapes in the bedroom area and forward drape which encircles the driver/passenger area are of heavy material, and the result is one of the darkest motorhomes for daytime nappers.

The galley separates the living area from the bedroom and rear bath, in a floorplan which is found in a great many 28 to 31-foot coaches these days, with some variations. The Foretravel's large, luxurious recliner, opposite a galley counter extension which overhangs the handy built-in icemaker, creates something of a traffic bottleneck when the chair is positioned in anything but straight-ahead position. You have to dodge the chair and the counter extension at the same time. Our suggestion was that the counter overhang should be hinged, as a drop-leaf. Fore has the idea that a return spring on the swiveling recliner would return it to an out-of-the-way position when its occupant gets up. Either change would solve the problem and still allow the Foretravel owner the unexcelled comfort of the recliner, a feature we have never seen in any other motorhome.

A rather unusual feature in the cabinetry below the galley is that it slants inward toward the bottom, which allows the cook to stand closer to the work surface. Five drawers, a single-door cabinet and a double-door cabinet below the counter, plus the usual overhead cabinets provide good storage capability, which is typical throughout this coach. Cabinet doors are rich natural wood and cabinet facings are black Naugahyde, while wall paneling is natural Barcelona pecan. It's a beautiful combination.

One item of complaint must be mentioned. The 8-cubic-foot Norcold ac/dc refrigerator across the aisle from the galley did a good job of maintaining proper temperature for food preservation, but the door wouldn't stay closed. On two occasions when the motorhome was subjected to sharp or moderately sharp lateral motion such as when exiting a driveway at speeds slightly higher than normal, the latch failed to retain the door and on the second occa-

EVALUATION
Foretravel 30RB



*Reflects additional weight of diesel conversion; rating with conventional power would have been *good*.
**Reflects higher level of diesel noise; rating with conventional power would have been *excellent*.

PERFORMANCE

Foretravel 30RB

Mileage*
- Flat Highway ..... 10.3 mpg
- Trip Average ..... 9.1 mpg

Engine Coolant Temp
- Level 175
- Uphill 184

Trans Oil Temp
- Level 176
- Uphill 195

Engine Oil Temp
- Level 207
- Uphill 223

Acceleration Time
- 0-60 MPH ..... 30 sec
- 40-60 MPH ..... 20 sec

*Flat highway mileage recorded at 50-55 mph, 800 feet elevation. Trip average in mountains round trip, between base at 500 feet elevation and 8000 feet. Operating temperatures recorded at 40-45 mph, 3rd gear (4-speed automatic trans), full throttle, on 6% grade. Ambient temperature 95 degrees F.

SPECIFICATIONS

COACH

Ext. Length	30'½"
Ext. Width	95"
Ext. Height	10' 4" (Inc. a/c)
Int. Height	76½"
Frame Const.	Full steel
Insulation	Styrofoam 1½"
Water Cap.	60 gal.
Waste Holding Cap	30 gal.
Sink/Shower Holding Cap.	70 gal.
Propane Cap.	20 gal.
Water Syst. Type	Demand
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Refrigerator	8 cu. ft. ac/dc
Toilet	Marine
Electrical	25A converter, 6.5 kw generator, twin 204-amp-hour batteries, two 13,500-Btu air-conditioners

CHASSIS

Engine	522-cu.-in. Caterpillar diesel, 175 net hp @ 3200 rpm, 354 lb.-ft. torque @ 1700 rpm, 17 to 1 comp. ratio
Transmission	4-speed automatic Allison AT 540, ratios 3.45, 2.25, 1.41, and 1 to 1 plus 3.45 to 1 torque converter stall ratio
Axle Ratio	4.88 to 1
Tire Size	8-19.5 D, max. 2800 lbs. @ 75 psi as single, 2460 lbs. at 65 psi as dual
Wheelbase	206"
Brakes	All drum, 14 x 2½" front, 14⅛ x 3" rear
Suspension	Leaf front springs, Mor-Ryde rubber rear suspension, ATI hydraulic rear stabilizer system
Cooling system	HD, 26-qt.
Trans Oil Cooling	Radiator heat exchanger
Fuel Capacity	100 gal. plus 50 gal. tank for AC generator

WET WEIGHT

(Water, fuel, propane tanks full but no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	5585 lbs.
Rear Axle	7685 lbs.
Left Side	6745 lbs.
Right Side	6525 lbs.
TOTAL	13,270 lbs.

Chassis Ratings

Front GAWR*	4700 lbs.
Rear GAWR*	10,000 lbs.
GVWR*	14,000 lbs.

Owner may add up to 730 lbs. in weight of passengers, supplies to motorhome equipped as test unit, without violating chassis mfr. maximum GVWR.

*GAWR: gross axle weight rating. GVWR: gross vehicle weight rating.

sion it resulted in a quart of orange juice and a quart of tea on the Foretravel's luxurious carpet. The latch is sorely inadequate.

Toward the rear are the motorhome's twin 32 x 75-inch spring-cushioned beds, which serve as lounge seats during travel. Cushioned seat backs hide 76-inch-long storage compartments against the walls, just below the large windows, which are covered with sheer curtains while drapes are open. Again, the drapes are heavy and quite effective in shutting out light.

The 60-gallon water tank and the water heater are under the left-side bed. Under the right side is a built-in vacuum cleaner and the 30,000 Btu forced-air furnace.

While the water system is limited to the left side and the heating system to the right, positioning of the water heater in the compartment with the tank, pump and most of the pipes would seem to preclude any likelihood of winter freeze problems in view of the fact that the motorhome is insulated throughout with 1½ inches of Styrofoam. Only at one point did we find marginal insulation: the metal rear wheel housings were not completely wrapped.

The power converter module used by Foretravel is quite a convenient unit because it includes the main 115-volt power distribution panel and is accessible behind a metal cover just below the left-side twin bed. Its power rating as a power supply for appliances is 25 amps, which is marginal in itself. But the unit has battery charge capability of about 5 amps, which is not worthy of notice considering the fact that the test motorhome was equipped with two huge 8D diesel starting batteries rated at 204-amp-hours each. Separated by an isolator device, one is reserved for engine starting while the other serves as the auxiliary. Both are charged by the engine alternator. Fore is considering addition of a converter of the type which can produce up to 60 amps for battery charging, depending on how much of the output is used for motorhome appliances.

A strong battery charge rate is particularly important with the large 204-amp-hour batteries. Both the starting and aux-

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iliary batteries are accessible through a removable floor panel just inside the motorhome door.

In the rear of the coach is a large bathroom, with a tub-shower combination on one side and a large wardrobe on the other. A large overhead cabinet has a mirror door. The bathroom door is accordian-style, while we prefer a solid door.

This motorhome's plumbing self-containment is exceptional with 70 gallons of holding capacity for sink/shower water and 30 gallons for waste.

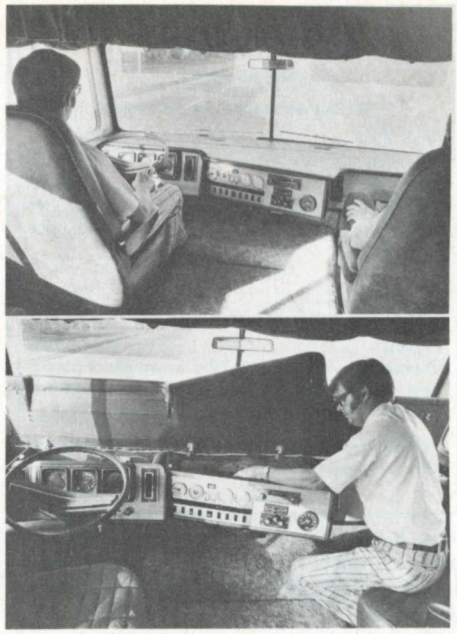
Outside storage also is good, with a large rear trunk and a lockable side storage compartment.

The Foretravel frame is all-steel, which puts it in the frame integrity class where it should be. The $28,595 price tag with options was boosted in our test motorhome by the diesel conversion to $38,585. The 1-1/2-inch tube steel frame members are part of the wall/roof/floor sandwich which consists of the interior paneling, the Styrofoam, 3/16-inch plywood and the outer covering of fiberglass or aluminum.

One problem with the test motorhome is of critical importance, but Fore hopes he can solve it before the next conversion is tackled. As our weight charts indicate, front axle weight of the diesel-converted Foretravel is 5585 pounds, with full gasoline (for the generator), diesel fuel, water and propane tanks but without passengers or supplies. Front axle weight with two passengers sitting over the axle would be around 5850 pounds, which is much too high for the International 1510 chassis, or any other conventional motorhome chassis. All have front axle/suspension ratings (gawr) of 4700 to 5000 pounds when the gvw rating is 14,000 pounds. The International rating is 4700 pounds, so the test motorhome was about 1000 pounds overloaded on the front axle with passengers aboard. The Dodge front rating is 5000 pounds.

Front springs on the International chassis were loaded to the point where they were flat or beginning to reverse (downward curve), which is not the major problem because a couple of additional spring leaves would solve it. The basic axle rating is the primary limitation. The axle itself is rated at 4700 pounds in this case. The Dodge RM400 chassis front axle is the FA-50, rated at 5000 pounds, but the FA-55 axle is rated at 5500 pounds and possibly could be substituted. It has identical length and height. Whether or not International has a heavier axle which could be substituted was not clear at press time. Fore's reason for use of the International chassis was its adaptability to the conversion but he may go to Dodge next time, for the heavier axle.

In gross weight, the Foretravel with diesel conversion came out to 13,270 pounds with fuel and water but no supplies or passengers, which means the payload-passengers plus supplied-must be limited to about 730 pounds if the gvw rating is not violated. Obviously, this is cutting it too close and Fore is working on the payload factor as well as on the front axle weight situation. The reason front axle weight was so high in this diesel prototype coach, he says, is some erroneous weight figures given him for some of the conversion components. One obvious item which would help both payload and front axle weight is deletion of the 150-pound front overhead optional bunk, since the motorhome will comfortably sleep four adults without it. Other items which can result in paring of weight are a smaller fuel tank, in view of the mileage and driving range produced by the diesel. A 50-gallon tank replacing the 100-gallon tank in the test motorhome would pare about 410 pounds, about 60 to 70% of which is carried by the front axle. Fore is confident he can get the front axle weight down, now that his prototype has shown him what is necessary. The Caterpillar 1145 diesel engine weighs 1200 pounds,compared to 765 pounds for the 392 V-8 engine it replaced.



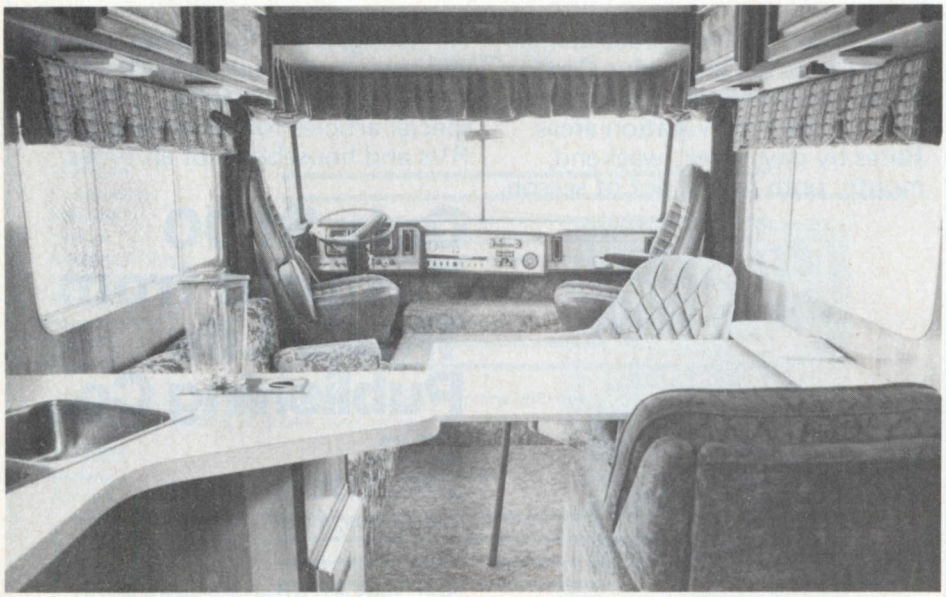
Instrument panel has hinged Naugahyde top for easy repair access.

Regarding brakes, the International, with drum brakes on all wheels, had more brake fade than we like to see. The coach was able to make one downhill stop from 60 mph on a 6% grade without substantial fade, but the second stop faded the brakes almost totally. Level-pavement braking deceleration tests later substantiated those early impressions. Weight during the tests was 13,700 pounds. We have found braking with the front disc brake-equipped motorhomes somewhat better.

Fore's trip west with four adults and one child, plus all the supplies they could stack aboard for a month-long trip, resulted in gross weight of 14,200 pounds, so he sees no problem with the gvw rating when the coach is more reasonably loaded, even with the diesel conversion. Obviously, with conventional power, neither the front axle rating nor the gvw rating would normally present problems.

In summary, The Foretravel 30RB stacks up well on its own merits, with conventional power. It's an exceptionally well-made motorhome, well insulated and with fine quality control. Add the Caterpillar/Allison combination and the mileage situation takes a decided turn for the better, although the prospective buyer must have a very strong desire for the diesel/4-speed combination in order to justify the $9990 conversion price.

Even if the conversion is not realistic for most owners, Clarence Fore's project seems to provide the answer to that old question: is diesel right for motorhomes?



Two-section dining table, hinged in center, can be used folded for 2-person dining, or unfolds across aisle to accommodate diners seated on sofa.

The right diesel looks *great* for motorhomes. Probably not until the chassis makers come to that conclusion, and offer optional diesel engines in motorhome chassis, will the price come down. Until then, diesel will continue to be exotic for conventional motorhome chassis and Nacogdoches, Texas, will continue to be unique for more reasons than just a funny-sounding name.

Company Address: Foretravel Inc., 1221 N. Stallings Dr., Dept. MHL, Nacogdoches, Texas 75961. MHL

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lined avenues and so many entertainment facilities designed to lure vacationers.

"Yet, interesting it is that two natural springs and green meadows made the Las Vegas valley a favorite camping place in the 1840s for the caravans following the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to California. It was first settled by Americans in 1855 when Brigham Young sent 30 men to build a fort and stockade there. The Mormons tried mining in the area but found that the ore was hard to smelt and that the metal made poor bullets. They abandoned the settlement in 1857 (later it was discovered that the 'lead' was a galena ore carrying silver!) and for about 40 years or so it was operated as a ranch. Las Vegas was really born in 1905 with the advent of the railroad," he describes.

He says that Nevada has a rich history and tradition, magnificent scenery and some of the wildest desert country on the continent and shouldn't be overlooked by a motorhome traveler.

Greg, who was named "Los Angeles Times Father of the Year" in 1969 and "Television Father of the Year" by the National Father's Day Committee in 1971, says proudly that "the kids were very helpful to me and Lee in taking care of the Travco, doing their share of chores and in general making themselves useful."

They had to return to Los Angeles for one day in order that Greg could finalize some business with his agency. The kids brought along three of their friends – now a total of eight travelers – for the rest of the trip. They headed south to Escondido, the San Diego area and Chula Vista.

They visited many attractions in the busy San Diego area and also took a happy side trip down to Tijuana, Mexico – all told, a total of six days in this last part of the trip, before heading back to Hollywood.

Greg says the motorhome drove so well "I forgot it was a 27-footer." He's introduced friends to this mode of travel and one of them, his attorney, is crazy about it, too. More people are buying motorhomes and renting them out

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