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# Foretravel's Company History

Information compiled from many sources including [Dodge Travcos, ForeForums & Foretravel History 1967-2005](#) which was Written by Warren MacKenzie, a friend of CM Fore and the first Motorcade Club manager after Foretravel purchased Travco.

## Early Years

The Fore family's tradition for travel began in 1876, when CM. Fore's grandparents first traveled from the East and settled in Nacogdoches, the Gateway to Texas. This tradition was carried on by James E. Fore (CM.'s father), who began his travels around the turn of the century as a peddler, living and selling from a covered wagon.

CM Fore and his new bride, Marie, continued this family tradition of travel through numerous family vacations, and as their family grew, requirements for a suitable vehicle changed. They went from cars to station wagons, and even used a small fold-out trailer during the early days of the RV industry in America. CM. and Marie finally decided that if they were ever going to own the perfect vehicle for family travel, they were going to have to build it themselves.

It began as a high school Distributive Education project for their son, Ray, and soon turned into a real family endeavor. They began working together to build the first Foretravel motorhome, a 21' class "A". It was built from lightweight aluminum on a Dodge chassis, which weighed less than 4000 pounds. Upon completion, they promptly drove their new creation to Washington state for a visit with their eldest son, Roy, who was stationed there in the military. The Fore's "coach" generated so much interest along the way, that by the time they arrived back home, they had also concluded there was definitely a need for high quality motorhomes such as theirs. So they decided to go into the business of building motorhomes under the "Foretravel" name.

## The Foretravel Super Luxura

The original production facility was a small building located on the family property, and for the first five years, the company manufactured and sold units at a loss. However, in 1973, their firm commitment to quality and success led them to make their first major exterior design change. The [Super Luxura](#) boasted a fiberglass front cap, rear cap, and side panels, which sparked great interest across the country. Foretravel continued to grow during the 70s.

Originally, Foretravels were built on Dodge van chassis, some were built on Chevy chassis and then truck chassis, mostly Dodge. When they shifted to diesel power, they shifted to Oshkosh chassis as they were the most readily available heavy duty truck chassis.

Earliest ones were front engine models (OFED<sup>1)</sup>, OFEG<sup>2)</sup>). Then they shifted to rear engine models (ORED<sup>3)</sup>, OREG<sup>4)</sup>). The body design remained such that it would work for either configuration - all the way up to 1994

In 1974 they had pioneered the first use of a diesel engine in a conventional motorhome.

## Ten Years

In 1977 Foretravel celebrated ten years in business with the introduction of the FTX (Foretravel Ten). The FTX offered features not common in the RV industry at the time ... TVs, VCRs, dual roof air conditioners, icemakers, central vacuums, and more. The FTX was truly the way to travel in style. FTX was built from 1977 to 1986. By

October of 1978, the FTX became the first conventional motorhome to be powered by a rear engine diesel.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Foretravel purchased the manufacturing rights to Travco and GTC (Avco) motorhomes.

Foretravel continued to manufacture motorhomes on many types of chassis.

In the 1980's & 1990's, Foretravel manufactured most of the non-Unihome type diesel motorhomes on an Oshkosh V-917 Frame rail type chassis which consisted of air suspension, air brakes, Caterpillar 3208-T V-8 diesel engine coupled with an Allison MT-643 four speed transmission.

There were however some of these Grand Villa motorhomes manufactured with a 300 hp 3208 and a MT647 Allison 4 speed. They used these chassis from model years 1982 thru 1992 in both Foretravel FTX(old orange & white) and Grand Villa's.

## Travco

Chrysler had to leave the motor home business to focus on their core businesses in a time of bankruptcy avoidance. Travco, meanwhile, had made numerous questionable decisions from 1973 onwards, and the company was eventually sold to competitor Foretravel at public auction.

Foretravel bought truckloads of Travco parts at the public auction. The remaining items went to the high bidder. Beneath it all, Foretravel was really after ownership of the Travco Motorcade Club. It was the largest of its kind. Control of this large band of motor home owners meant steering membership towards newer products - developed by Foretravel. The plan worked out as a number of Travco owners became Foretravel owners.

The Travco body shells were used until around 1990.

## The Grand Villa

In 1986, Foretravel introduced an innovative new motorhome with aerodynamic styling and an unusually spacious interior. Because of its grandeur and beauty, Marie Fore dubbed it the Grand Villa, and it quickly became one of the best-selling motorhomes in history.

After that, things got pretty confusing. For 5 or 6 years you could get a GV, OREG/OFEG/ORED/OFED, or a Unihome GV. They also offered a 'comfort ride' Torsilastic suspension- same suspension used in the old Greyhound chassis.

## 1987-1996 Grand Villa Unihome (U-280/U-300)

The 'U' series first appeared in 1988 as a designation to the Unihome body design.

During model year 1987, Foretravel introduced the Grand Villa Unihome (all mid entry coaches). The first conventional motorhome to utilize a **monocoque** chassis design, an eight-bag outboard suspension system, and an air leveling system. This innovative design concept revolutionized the motorhome industry and quickly set the standard by which most quality motorhomes are built today.

The Torsilastic Velvet Ride suspension came on both the U225 and U240 models.

## Total Quality Process

In 1991, Foretravel embarked on a mission of product and process improvement called the Total Quality Process, through which all Foretravel employees are involved with customer satisfaction and product and process improvement.

This revolutionary process provides the tools people need to do their jobs better, by allowing and encouraging them to control the quality of their own work, and then holding them responsible for it. One result of this new attitude toward employees is an extremely low turnover rate, which enables Foretravel to produce a quality product more efficiently in a very labor-intensive industry.

## 1991-1995 Grand Villa Unihome

The older Grandvilla was on a Gillig chassis with a side door. The U225 and U240's built in the 1990's were Unihome construction but did not have the 'high' profile of the U280 and U300 series which had huge basement storage. The reason the U225 and U240 coaches did not have the high profile of the U280 and the U300 is that they did not have the air suspension. They had the torsilastic suspension, better than steel springs, but inferior to air.

The U300 bumpers were Stainless Steel until 1990 and was double stacked compared to U225 & U240.

## Silver Anniversary

In 1992 Foretravel proudly introduced the luxurious 102" wide-body Unihome and at the same time, celebrated their 25th year in business with the introduction of the [Silver Anniversary Unihome U300](#). Easily identified by specially ordered angled side windows.

The 1992 U-280 and U-300's were the first FT's to have complete air bag (8 - 2 per axle on each side) suspension- i.e., no jacks at all, wide body & low profile.

1992 was the transition year between old generation Cat V8 3208 with 4 speed Allison and the newer in line 6 cylinder Cat 3116 with Allison 6 speed.

Nearly every year after that up until the advent of the Nimbus/Phenix there were Special Edition (SE) and/or Limited Edition models with special trim/option packages. **Special Edition' models** were available in the 280s and 300s from (at least) 1993 on with different graphics and 'upscale' (300 interiors with more glass doors, Gaggenau cook top) interiors. Since each coach could be custom designed or go back for upgrades, a lot of differences exists coach to coach).

## Unicoaches

In 1994 the all new Foretravel Unicoach was introduced. With this new coach, Foretravel was able to integrate the high 'U' performance, smooth ride and easy handling characteristics of the Unihome, but with massive bus styling, which provided greater interior space. The Unicoach quickly became Foretravel's best-selling model.

Grand Villa is a body style, sloped nose, and came out before the Unihome. Unihome is a type of construction – unibody = monocoque. Not all Grand Villas were Unihomes, but all Unihomes were Grand Villas.

**1995 was the 1st year of the front door bus style**, the name changed from Unihome to Unicoach, which started with the U-270 (low end regarding standard accessories) which provided the Foretravel quality which consumers have come to expect, but in a more affordable coach.

Starting in 1995, Unicoach U270, U295 and U320 model numbers refer to standard factory trim levels/appointments and each model number was available in several different lengths and thus (logically) several different weight ratings, depending upon each year's specific designs and options. The 1995 GV had a **full width hatch** in front as access for Dash AC while earlier GV's had two small hatches.

Some special order Grand Villa Unicoaches were built in later years

|      |    |
|------|----|
| 2000 | 10 |
| 2001 | 3  |
| 2002 | 3  |
| 2003 | 8  |

## Continuing Evolution

1999: In late 1999, Foretravel introduced a slide out.

2001: Introduces painted Foretravels as opposed to decals (optional).

2001: Introduces tag axles to 40' U320 & GV 320

2003: Full body paint becomes standard

2004: Introduces Quad Slide

## Financial Problems

In 1999, the company turned a profit of \$2.4 million. In 2000, the profit began to shrink, with a \$1.8 million profit. In 2001, the company reported its first large net loss of \$3.3 million. In 2002, the reported loss shrunk slightly to \$483,000.

By 2003, the net loss was \$5.2 million. This was a year when Foretravel initially reduced its manufacturing workforce by up to 60 employees, and closed five of its six factory-owned stores, shifting to using existing dealers. Following the closure of the factory stores, the company announced a slowdown that would affect up to 175 more jobs. Overall, in 2003, the company went from 550 employees to about 200 employees.

At the time, company officials said the reduction in sales and manufacturing was based on higher interest rates and the stock market decline following the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001. Despite workforce reductions, slow downs and the divestment of factory-owned stores, by 2004 the net loss had grown to \$7.6 million.

## 2005 Foretravel Changes Ownership

Foretravel announced that Lyle Reed, Frisco, Texas, and two other principals will take over Foretravel on Feb. 15, 2005. Ray Fore, the company's president, stepped down on Thursday, following the \$9 million buyout. Reed is the former president and CEO of Chicago, Central and Pacific Railroad, retiring in 1996 after a 30-year-career in the

railroad industry.

Speculation about Foretravel's future has been around for several years. The company was the subject of sales rumors in 2000, which Ray Fore publicly denied. In 2003, Foretravel sold or closed five company-owned stores in Texas, Washington, California and Tennessee that it had operated for years as part of its core business strategy and instead established a small network of independent dealers.

## New Models

2005: Introduced Phenix line

2007: Introduced Nimbus line

2010: Introduced IH45 line

2015: Introduced the Realm, a return to more of a production model coach for Foretravel while also being developed and sold exclusively with Motor Home Specialist (MHS) of Alvarado, Texas.

2020: Introduced the IC37

Additional Information: [Foretravel Model Lineage 1967-Present](#)

<sup>1)</sup>  
Oshkosh Front Engine Diesel

<sup>2)</sup> <sup>4)</sup>  
,  
Oshkosh Front Engine Gas

<sup>3)</sup>  
Oshkosh Rear Engine Diesel

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