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**The Collectible GMC Motor Home**

**By J Shipper**

In the 1970's, General Motors entered the RV market. Drawing on the exuberance of the times, the company set out to create the ultimate American Motor home. Their aim was to produce a top-of-the-line vehicle with cutting-edge design and construction, not just another competitor in the already crowded vacation vehicle market. The common design in this era was a boxy, ungainly and top-heavy unit on a truck chassis. The GMC vehicle was intended to be a completely new design in every way. Design work began in 1970, with the market introduction planned for 1973. "Doesn't look like a box or ride like a truck" was the GMC ad slogan.

The new vehicle would be unusual for this era in several ways. First of all, it was to have a front wheel drive, a rare concept in cars of that day and unheard-of in mobile homes. The drive train and suspension were taken from the design of the Oldsmobile Toronado. The 265 horsepower 455 cubic inch Oldsmobile engine was attached to a Turbohydramatic 425 transmission with torsion bar suspension. The rear suspension was a product of GM's bus design, using dual swing arms, one leading and one trailing, with a single air spring on each side. Instead of a auto body steel, the body was to be made of lightweight aluminum and molded fiberglass-reinforced plastic such as was used in the Chevrolet Corvette.

The front wheel drive and independent swing arm rear suspension brought great improvement to the standard motor home design. The lack of drive shafts and axles underneath the coach allowed a very low floor height, leading in turn to a low overall vehicle height and lower center of gravity. Aside from easier entry and exit, this reduced rollover risk and wind resistance and made the vehicle much safer and easier to operate for buyers accustomed only to car driving. A six-wheel braking system, with disc brakes on the front and drum brakes on all four rear wheels, further enhanced drivability.

Previous motor home design focused mainly on the use of the vehicle as a temporary home once it had reached its destination, an extended stay in a mobile home park or a camping spot. Ease of getting to the destination was of secondary concern, and cumbersome handling on the road was taken for granted. GMC made a special point of targeting this feature for improvement by adding visibility from the driver's seat with a panoramic expanse of glass.

The motor home was featured in 23 foot and 26 foot lengths, fairly small even for this era. Nowadays,

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much larger models are common. The motor home's interior design was compact, with no permanent sleeping areas in the original design. All beds were converted from seating areas when required.

Hot water was provided by water heaters using engine coolant loops, which produced water so hot it could actually present a scalding hazard since coolant temperatures usually exceed 200 degrees Fahrenheit. The refrigerator was powered by a standard automotive battery, adequate only for overnight use before recharging.

The prototype was first displayed in May 1972 at the Transpro '72 trade show in Washington, D.C. Production started in 1973 with two models, Model 230 and Model 260, 23 and 26 feet long respectively. They were sold with a finished interior for the public as well as unfinished to other RV manufacturers such as Avion and Coachman, who then provided their own interiors before reselling to

consumers. 30 different floor plans were available, and models were priced from \$35,000 to \$40,000.

The GMC vehicle changed slightly over time, the most notable alteration coming in 1977 when the 455 cubic inch engine was replaced by a 403 cubic inch model in response to the energy crisis. This decade caused hardship for all RV manufacturers as the increased price of fuel pushed large gas guzzling vehicles out of the market. The GMC motor home had never sold at high volumes, and the company decided that the RV production facilities could be more profitably used to make light trucks. After the manufacture of 12,921 vehicles, production of motor homes was discontinued after the 1978 model year.

Almost immediately after production ceased, GMC motor homes became collectors' items, with owners' associations being established to provide parts and service for these vehicles. Small manufacturers and garages developed a cottage industry servicing them. In 1992, as General Motors prepared to scrap all remaining tools and parts, Cinnabar Engineering purchased all the motor home manufacturing supplies and negotiated a deal to continue to provide parts for the discontinued vehicles. In 1992, a monthly magazine called GMC Motor home Marketplace was introduced, and in 1994 Cinnabar started publishing a quarterly newsletter called GMC Motor home News.

The vehicle's futuristic design has even found a place in pop culture: Mattel Toys created die-cast versions of the GMC motor home for its Hot Wheels line. More than 50 different GMC Hot Wheels are available, and in 1977, Mattel released three toy GMC versions in a Barbie Doll Star Traveler promotion.

In an amazing example of customer loyalty and product durability, more than 8,000 units are still registered by owners. An internet search of "GMC Motor home" produces 771,000 results, as sites advertise motor home parts, engines and upgrades as well as classic car rallies for owners. Used GMC motor homes sell for \$10,000 to \$15,000 depending on the condition of the vehicle.

J Shipper is really interested in the GMC collectible motorhome.

<http://www.gmc-now.info>

and

<http://car-donations-charitable-donations-aacharity.info>

## **The Rapid Vehicle Motor Company**

**By Frank Hague**

The Rapid Motor Vehicle Company was started in 1902 by Max Grabowski.

It was the manufacturer of some of the earliest trucks and was purchased in 1909 by GM. In 1912 the name GMC was first used at the New York Auto Show and in 1996 the suffix Truck was dropped.

What most people don't know is that GMC also makes cars.

In 1902 Max Grabowski founded a company called the "Rapid Motor Vehicle Company", which developed some of the earliest commercial trucks ever designed. In 1909 the company was bought by General Motors to form the basis of the General Motors Truck Company, from which GMC Truck was made. In 1912 the name "GMC Truck" was first shown at the New York Auto Show. In 1996 GM dropped the word 'truck' from the GMC Truck name, thus creating the GMC name as we know it today. There never was a Grabowski Motor Company or a Grabowski Motor Corp.

They now make personal automobiles, as well as pickup truck and bus engines.

General Motors Corporation NYSE: GM, also known as GM, is a United States-based automobile maker with worldwide operations and brands including Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Daewoo, GMC, Holden, Hummer, Opel, Pontiac, Saturn, Saab, and Vauxhall Chevrolet and GMC divisions produce trucks, as well as passenger vehicles. Other brands include ACDelco, Allison Transmission, and General Motors Electro-Motive Division that produces diesel-electric locomotives. GM also has stakes in Isuzu, Subaru, and Suzuki in Japan and a joint venture with AutoVAZ (Lada) in Russia. In December 2003, it acquired Delta in South Africa, in which it had taken a 45 percent stake in 1997, and which is now a fully-owned subsidiary, General Motors South Africa.

GM's headquarters are in the Renaissance Center in Detroit, Michigan.

General Motors is the world's largest vehicle manufacturer and employs over 340,000 people. In 2001, GM sold 8.5 million vehicles through all its branches. In 2002, GM sold 15 percent of all cars and trucks in the world. They also owned Electronic Data Systems from 1984 to 1996 which is a former Ross Perot company and, prior to selling it to News Corporation, DirecTV. GM owned Frigidaire from 1918 to 1979.

The current chairman (since May 1, 2003) and chief executive officer (since June 1, 2000) is Rick Wagoner, succeeding John F. Smith, Jr.

General Motors is selling its 20 percent stake in Fuji Heavy Industries, the parent of Subaru, in a deal

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that could raise more than \$700 million as per news released on October 6, 2005.

Also, General Motors Canada auto workers voted on Sunday to ratify a new contract that will lay off 1,000 workers over the next three years, the Canadian Auto Workers and GM said.

General Motors lost 2.5 billion dollars last year, and would have made a profit if it was not saddled with 6 billion dollars in health costs.

The UAW and GM are now reaching agreement to reduce this health cost by about 1 billion dollars annually.

Frank Hague has owned several GM made vehicles. For more information please look at:

<http://www.gmc-now.info>



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