



HISTORY OF FMCA



In the Spring of 1962, Bill Christensen F28, of Winona, Minnesota, wrote to 40 or 50 "house car" owners, suggesting that they form an organization. Some responded, but no immediate action was taken.

On June 20, 1963, a meeting of house car owners was held in Corunna, Michigan. The few who attended this meeting formed a casual group of motorhome enthusiasts, later to become the core of the Michigan Knights of the Highway Chapter of Family Motor Coach Association.

On July 20, 1963, under the guidance of Bob and Jean Richter L1, of Hanson, Massachusetts, 26 families from eight states and Canada met at the Hinckley School in Hinckley, Maine, to socialize and become acquainted with other house car owners. Here, the decision was made to organize themselves into a motorhome owners' common interest group.

The next day the Family Motor Coach Association (FMCA) was born, so named after the "house car" owners who decided to term their vehicles "motor coaches." There were 18 original member families, from the attending 26.

The following September 7, 1963, the first Constitution Committee met at Wolf Den State Park in Pomfret, Connecticut. The Articles of Incorporation were filed on October 15, 1963, and the following were elected as the first officers of FMCA: Robert L. Richter L1, national president; J. Raymond Fritz L4, national vice president; Mary L. Whiting F7, national secretary; Willard E. Whipple F15, national treasurer; and John T. Samuelson F19, Charles E. Owens L44, Dennis McGuire F11, Hubert S. Sharp F2, and Dr. George L. Whiting F7, national directors, the voting body of the association. The Constitution of FMCA was unanimously ratified December 15, 1963.

By New Year's Day, 1964, membership totaled 184 families from 31 states and Canada. Since that time, FMCA has experienced phenomenal growth. On December 29, 1965, membership number F1000 was assigned to William C. Lewis, Jr. of Big Flats, New York. There were 5,000 members by April, 1971; 10,000 by April, 1973; 15,000 by March, 1975; 20,000 by April, 1976; 25,000 by March, 1977; 30,000 by March, 1978; 40,000 by May, 1981; 50,000 by May, 1983; 60,000 by May, 1984; 70,000 by June, 1985; 80,000 by July, 1986; 90,000 by February, 1987; 100,000 by March, 1988; 110,000 by November, 1988; 120,000 by July, 1989; 130,000 by March, 1990; 140,000 by December, 1990; 150,000 by November, 1991; 160,000 by August, 1992; and 170,000 by June, 1993.

In January, 1964, the first commercial member, Crown Coach Corporation, joined FMCA. Camperama, Inc. became the 100th member in November, 1967; Motor Vacations Unlimited the 500th member in September, 1972; World of Recreation the 1,000th member in June, 1975; Ocala Springs RV Park the 1,500th member in February, 1978; Powers Travel Center the 2,000th member in July, 1980; National Service Organization the 2,500th member in April, 1983; A.E.G. Telefunken the 3,000th member in March, 1985; Joey Bed, Inc. the 3,500th member in August, 1986; Avery's Enterprises the 4,000th member in January, 1988; Chip Art Designs the 4,500th member in May, 1989; Quality Motor Coach the 5,000th member in September, 1990; Birkenstock Store Comfort Zone the 5,500th member in April, 1992; and River Camp U.S.A. the 6,000th member in July, 1993.

Since its first appearance, *FAMILY MOTOR COACHING* magazine has been an important part of FMCA. Volume 1, Issue 1 was published under the editorship of Bob Richter on February 15, 1964, shortly after the inception of the association. It appeared regularly as a quarterly magazine until February, 1971, when it became a bi-monthly publication. In January, 1978, it became a monthly publication. Today, *FAMILY MOTOR COACHING* magazine remains a viable monthly publication containing livability reviews of the newest motorhomes, technical and coach modification informa-

tion, helpful motor coaching hints, association news, new products information, travel features and much much more. Sold at a normal subscription price of \$24.00 per year. FMC magazine is a free FMCA member benefit.

The association has had several national offices during its brief 30-year history. For the first two years of its existence, it was located in a store-front office at the Richters' home in Hanson, Massachusetts. Then on March 15, 1965, the association moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where it was housed in the family room of Kenneth T. Scott L63, who was named executive director and served as chief operating executive until his retirement in 1978.

In June, 1967, the association moved into "the ivy-covered cottage" on Beechmont Avenue in Cincinnati, where it remained until it outgrew its space. The fourth home of FMCA at 5200 Beechmont housed the association for over six years, from July, 1970, until November 30, 1976.

In early 1976, the association began to search in earnest for a new permanent headquarters. Attention was focused on a building at 8291 Clough Pike, which had first been spotted almost a year earlier.

At the summer convention in Centreville, Michigan, in 1976, plans to purchase the building—provided the funds could be raised—were announced to the FMCA membership. During that convention \$260,000 in cash was raised by the membership to purchase the new building.

Two principal methods of obtaining funds were used. Fifteen members chose to make \$1,000 donations to FMCA; these contributors make up the Thousand Club. Full lifetime memberships in the association were sold at \$500 each; over 600 members are now lifetime members.

On November 30, 1976, FMCA moved into its new building with a staff of 15.

During the 22nd annual summer convention in Puyallup, Washington, the governing board approved a \$1,000,000 expansion of the Clough Pike facilities which was completed during 1987. The present staff now totals 32 full-time and 15 part-time employees.

Fourteen men have served as president of the organization: Robert Richter L1, 1963-64; Raymond Fritz L4, 1964-66; Charles Owens L44, 1966-69; Tom Duck L257, 1969-72; Harry Palmer L481, 1972-74; Phil Johnson L3221, 1974-77; John Morris L4372, 1977-79; Harry Palmer L481, 1979-81; John E. Linebaugh L12971, 1981-83 (passed away while serving his 3rd term); Charles Cheneweth L9986, 1983-86; Glen Key L26355, 1986-88; Dick Hammann L40104, 1988-90; Delmer Davis L4346, 1990-93; and Jim Ballentine L8780, 1993 to present.

FMCA continues to grow rapidly, and changes come almost as quickly. Over 177,000 numbers are now assigned and active chapters total 325. Chapters have been important to association members almost from the very founding of FMCA. Recognizing that it would be impossible to assemble the entire membership for as many activities and as frequently as the members wanted, chapters were formed based on locale, special interests or coach model. Three chapters were chartered on April 10, 1965: the Michigan Knights of the Highway; the Midwest Coachmen, operating in Ohio and Kentucky; and Northeastern, connecting Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and southern Quebec. A California chapter was formed in June that year, and each passing year, except 1971, has seen the formation of new FMCA chapters.

FMCA member benefits currently include *FAMILY MOTOR COACHING* magazine, motor coach insurance, trip routing, identification emblems, accidental death coverage, limited emergency message service, emergency driver program, classified advertising, youth activities, anti-theft program, KOA discounted value cards, national conventions, stoppin' spot fellowship, local service information, mail forwarding service, motor coach financing, emergency road service, a credit card program, and an emergency air ambulance program. One of the greatest benefits of FMCA membership is the opportunity it provides for enjoying the fellowship of friends from all over the country who share a common interest, "motorhoming."