



MacMcNeal (left), from North Carolina, shows off his collection of vintage GMC motorhome dashboards for sale to Patricia and John Shotwell from Ohio. The three enthusiasts were attending the GMC Eastern State Motorhome Club spring rally last weekend at the Calhoun KOA campgrounds.

Vintage motorcoaches bring more than meets the eye

GMC Eastern
States Motorhome
Club Visits
Gordon County

By **ELIZABETH
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What's so special about an old motorhome rumbly up and down the Interstate?

It may just be one of a handful that GMC manufactured between 1973 and 1978.

Just 12,500 of these vehicles were made according to enthusiast Don Hart, who owns four of them. Of those, about 8,000 have been accounted for, he said.

About 50 of these vintage motorcoaches were parked at the Calhoun

KOA campgrounds Friday afternoon, their owners lounging in the shade of swapping stories while gazing at spare engine parts.

It was the second day of the GMC Eastern States Motorhome Club spring rally, which ran through Sunday. Unlike many similar gatherings, this one included informative

presentations, said club president Byron Songer.

He said club members chose the KOA campground because they knew they would need an enclosed building and electrical outlets for computers, a projector and a sound system.



PHOTOS BY TRICIA DILLARD / Staff

GMC Eastern States Motorhome Club President Byron Songer with his 1978 model motorcoach. Songer bought the vehicle three years ago; he said he had wanted on since first seeing them in the 1970's.

“This is rare that a campground will have facilities like this,” he said.

The Eastern States club is a chapter of GMC Motorhomes International. There are more than 20 chapters scattered across the U.S., and most of them have rallies several times each year, providing plenty of opportunity for owners to exchange trivia and repair stories.

Hart, of Corunna, Mich., said he travels to a rally every three months or so.

“Everybody helps each other,” he said.

The “Black List,” a networking tool begun by motorcoach enthusiast Roger Black, is a prime example of this spirit. People on the list are available to help



The Calhoun KOA campgrounds hosted about 50 vintage GMC motorcoaches like this one last weekend. The motorcoaches were all manufactured between 1973 and 1978 and feature Oldsmobile Toronado engines and are front wheel drive.

owners experiencing problems like a broken down vehicle far from home.

What’s so special?

The unique thing about these motorcoaches, Songer explained, is that GMC was the only company at the time that manufactured them “from the ground up” as motorhomes. Other companies commonly started their designs using truck chassis.

The GMC motorhomes feature Oldsmobile Toronado engines and are front wheel drive, he said.

He estimated 85 percent of these vehicles are 26 feet long. There was a 23-foot option, but it didn’t sell very well.

Each motorcoach typically features two fold-away beds, a dinette area and a bathroom.

Songer bought this motorcoach, a 1978 model, about three years ago, having pined after them since he first saw one in

It's unusual to see an original ceiling intact, Songer observed admiringly. They usually fall down long before now.

Shag carpet adorned the booth-style seating toward the front of the coach.



Don Hart, Corunna, Mich., with "Flat Stanley," a paper doll he promised his granddaughter he would take with him as he journeyed across the country to motorhome rallies. Hart said he owns four vintage GMC motorhomes.



Each vintage motorhome features two folding beds, a tiny kitchen, a bathroom and a dinette like this one.

the 1970's. The vehicles can be licensed as antiques, he said, and some go as long as 400,000 miles. though most engines have been rebuilt at one point or another.

Bill Brown, also of Coshocton, chose to go the restoration route and apparently dedicated the redesign of his motorcoach to Ohio State University. Red, black and grey prevailed, and references to the Buckeyes were scattered liberally across the vehicle's exterior.

For more information about vintage GMC motorhomes visit the GMC Eastern States website at gmceast.com

Original or restored?

Some coaches undergo restorations, Songer explained, while other owners prefer to keep theirs as original as possible.

Rick Little, of Coshocton, Ohio, displayed his largely unrestored 1978 model. The original refrigerator and wall covering — a shimmery gray and brown multi-colored affair — as well as the two-toned ceiling, were still in place.



Bill Brown of Cochocton, Ohio is proud to be a fan of the Ohio State Buckeyes.