

# MOTORHOME

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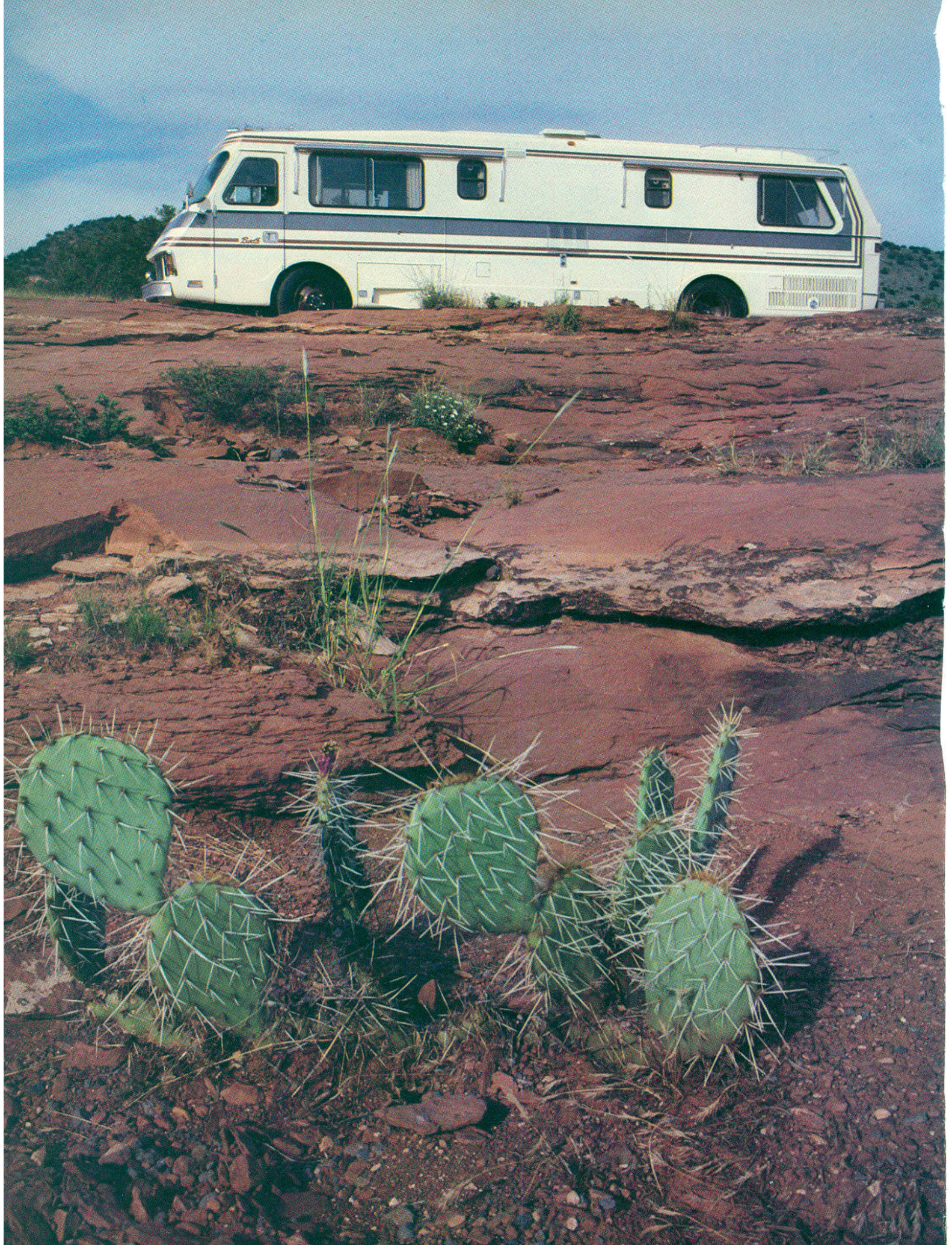
**Motorhome Shimmy:  
How To Cure It**

**Mexico – With and  
Without Hookups**

**Who's Running Our  
National Parks?**



**Barth Resurrects The FMC**



# The Rebirth of a Classic

## BARTH 35-foot MCC

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### MOTORHOME TEST

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**T**hanks to a small recreational vehicle company in Milford, Indiana, the classic lines of the FMC motorhome can be seen on the road once again. The old FMC that turned so many RVers' heads during the 1970s is gone, replaced by a longer, more luxurious and emphatically more expensive model built by Barth, Incorporated. The coach is now called the MCC, and it is produced by Barth in cooperation with Motor Coach Corporation of California, the exclusive licensee of FMC Corporation's technology, engineering and tooling. Instead of the 29-footer which graced the highways and the campgrounds a few years ago, the new MCC is 35 feet long and is outfitted with some of the most expensive accessories available. Barth calls the MCC "the ultimate motor coach," and indeed, its \$149,900 base retail price places it in a motorhome category shared primarily by Blue Birds, Newells and Custom Coaches.

MH staff members borrowed two of the MCCs for evaluation in midsummer. One was driven to Arizona for

photography sessions, and the second was used on a northern Indiana camping trip. Editors who used both coaches agreed: The Barth MCC is an excellent, livable, easy-to-handle and well-built motorhome—with a price tag that demands these qualities.

Price/value relationships are difficult, if not impossible, to measure, and they are strictly based on subjective, seat-of-the-pants impressions. We can't say the MCC is not worth the \$150,000 Barth dealers are asking for it; but potential buyers will have to use a different measuring stick than any now available in order to judge whether they can get \$150,000 worth of value from the coach. The MCC is, in reality, in a class by itself. It doesn't have the gadgets and gizmos, the bells and buzzers of a Newell, a Custom Coach or a Blue Bird, and it's built on an entirely different kind of chassis with totally different construction techniques. It's more of a motorhome, in the traditional sense of the word, than the equally expensive bus-like coaches. On the other hand, it's several steps beyond some of the typical Class A luxury coaches, so it can't be compared fairly with those either.

The word that best

described the MCC we tested was "elegant." The old FMC was elegant too, but this new one had special features not available in the old unit—primarily because Barth, as a solid and justifiably respected RV company, knows how to build comfortable coaches with an optimum number of the convenience features demanded by RVers. Thus, the MCC was not just beautiful; it was livable too.

During the time we ran the MCC, we showed it to a couple of executives with other well known RV companies and they asked us the same question: "How can a manufacturer find \$150,000 worth of equipment to put into a motorhome?" That was a hard question to answer because a great deal of the luxury of the Barth coach was subtle: There were, for example, the cherry cabinets, accented by cherry-type Formica; there was beige carpeting that cost \$50 a yard and caramel-and-tan front cab seats made of soft leather; there was recessed lighting, woven aluminum aircraft-style window shades and a hand-sewn leather-wrapped steering wheel; there was a driver's door with easy-access steps. Some of the coach's cost was accounted for by its 8.2-liter Detroit Diesel turbocharged V-8 engine and its 125-gallon fuel

tank; its Allison four-speed automatic transmission; its air/hydraulic actuated disc brakes; its 7.5 kw propane-fueled generator; its 250-pound LP-gas tank; its central air-conditioning system; its two large furnaces and its big refrigerator with a built-in icemaker.

The MCC also featured little touches not usually found in a recreational vehicle of any price, from a built-in cupholder at the copilot's right knee and six-position power seats that also swiveled and reclined to a flat-on-top dashboard that furnished good driving visibility and a systems monitor panel (one of two in the coach) within easy reach of the driver. There was very little exposed hardware anywhere in the unit; overhead cabinet doors were built with poston hinges and spring latches and grip notches instead of grab handles. Both the double-drain stainless steel sink and the three-burner range were recessed so that covers could be fit flush with the galley countertop. All drawers were spring-loaded on rollers. A two-seat dinette was built so it could be expanded to accommodate four persons as well as converted into a single bunk. Courtesy lights were provided at floor level throughout the unit.

# BARTH

Disdaining the usual slide-out pantry furnished with most luxury RVs, Barth outfitted the MCC with a seven-level pantry equipped with long, individually sliding drawers. The rear double bed was fitted with a firm Sealy Posturepedic mattress, and the bedroom itself featured a nightstand, overhead cabinets, large storage drawers under the bed and a hinged TV shelf.

Our test unit had several optional features, too: chrome-plated bumpers, hydraulic leveling jacks, roof-mounted spotlight, air horns, microwave oven, blender, burglar alarm system and exterior awnings. Those, along with a \$300 retail checkout charge, hiked the suggested retail price of the coach to \$157,345, F.O.B. Milford, Indiana.

Like all the 35-foot MCCs, our test unit was designed with a rear bedroom, facing bathroom and closet area forward of the bedroom, the curbside dinette opposite the roadside V-shaped galley, and a roadside sofa/bed facing two cocktail chairs and a self-storing table just behind the driving compartment. The only variation from that floorplan was a twin-bed rear bedroom instead of a double bed. With a couple of exceptions, the layout and furnishing worked well. We thought the pantry (which was built-in opposite the bathroom) was too far from the galley, and we objected to the use of a van conversion-type seat, mounted on a tripod pedestal, in the living area.

A Barth executive told us the upholstery fabrics were meant to be a "mix-and-match" selection, but in our view, they neither mixed nor matched well, and they resulted in flowered drapes with checked chairs, a blue-upholstered couch clashing with the light caramel-and-tan cab seats. When told Barth offered three varieties of color schemes, one MHL staff member asked with tongue in cheek, "Why did you put all three of them into this coach?" Later, we were informed changes in color selections would be considered.

We were critical of a few other points which we probably would not have found objectionable in a much less expensive motorhome. We felt, for example, that the aluminum trim on the unit's recessed lights cheapened the decor and should be replaced by wood trim. We thought the vents for the automotive air-conditioner were poorly situated and were told the

vents will be relocated in future models. We disliked the way we had to crawl partly under the

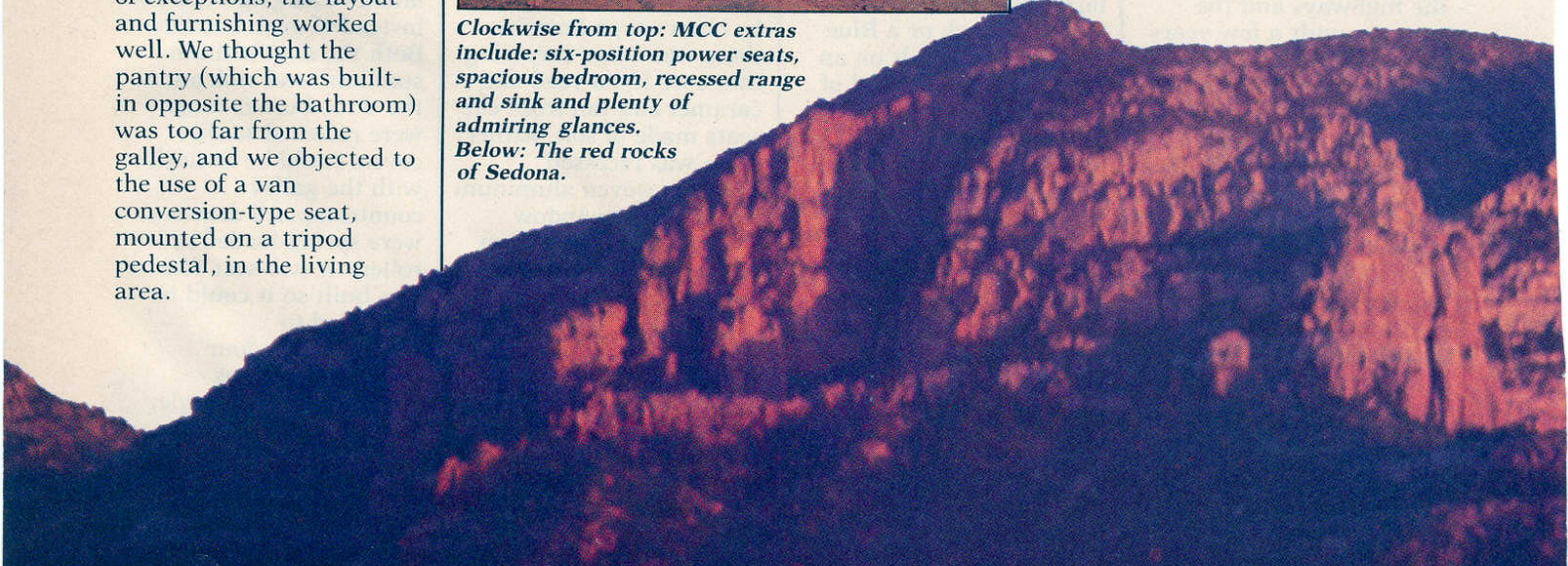
coach in order to connect and disconnect our water hose. And although we considered the convertible

## 35' BARTH MCC Performance

Performance		Chassis (MCP Model 225)	
Mileage .....	11 mpg (approx.)	Engine .....	8.2-liter turbocharged diesel V-8, 205 hp.
Acceleration		Transmission .....	4-speed auto.
0-60 mph .....	36 sec.	Axle ratio .....	4.63-1
40-60 mph .....	18 sec.	Tires .....	Michelin 9R x 22.5 (12-ply)
<b>Specifications</b>		Wheelbase .....	225"
Ext. length .....	35'	Suspension .....	Independent.
Ext. width .....	95"	Transverse leaf spring front, Trailing arm w/torsion bar spring rear	
Frame const. ....	Aluminum	Brakes .....	Air/hydraulic disc
Insulation .....	Urethane foam	Fuel cap. ....	125 gal.
Water cap. ....	84 gal.	Wet weight .....	19,000 lbs. (approx)
Holding tank cap. ....	37 gal.	Front GAWR .....	7,500 lbs.
Sink/shower holding cap. ....	63 gal.	Rear GAWR .....	12,500 lbs.
Propane cap. ....	240 lb.	GVWR .....	20,000 lbs.
Water system type .....	Demand	Base retail price .....	\$149,900
Refrigerator .....	10 cu. ft.	Sugg. retail, as tested .....	\$157,345
Furnaces .....	Two 30,000 BTU main		
Electrical .....	7.5-kw gen.		
Air-conditioners .....	20,000 BTU rear aux. 27,000 BTU central		



*Clockwise from top: MCC extras include: six-position power seats, spacious bedroom, recessed range and sink and plenty of admiring glances. Below: The red rocks of Sedona.*



dinette a good feature, we did not like having to store the extra cushions for it in our closet while traveling.

The MCC handles extremely well—more like a 30-foot motorhome than a 35-footer. Its handling was, in fact, noticeably better than that of bus-like coaches we've driven. It was neither harder nor easier than any standard luxury Class A to drive and park; anyone with experience in driving a motorhome longer than 25 feet could handle the MCC without difficulty. The unit was quiet-running on the inside,

**In terms of appearance, there aren't many motorhomes that can surpass the MCC for attractiveness.**



primarily because the noise from the rear diesel engine was vented effectively out the back. Nighttime parking was made easier by equipping the coach with two optional, rear-facing docking lights, but we strongly urged Barth to redesign its exterior rearview mirrors for improved visibility. On the highway, the coach rolled along very smoothly; it was totally unaffected by moderately heavy crosswinds or by the air turbulence of passing trucks.

In terms of appearance, there aren't many motorhomes that can surpass the MCC for

attractiveness. It is one of the most eye-catching motorhomes we've ever used; even in Elkhart, Indiana, where unusual RVs are seen almost daily, the coach drew quite a lot of admiring attention. The all-fiberglass body was sloped and rounded and contoured for visual appeal and aerodynamics, its design at least a few years ahead of its time.

The chassis and fiberglass body components were provided to Barth by Motor Coach Corporation. The Indiana company assembled those into the coach shell, added an inner aluminum cage frame, sprayed on a thick

layer of foam insulation and attached aluminum armor alloy sheets that served as the coach's interior sidewalls and ceiling. Completed, the coach weighed approximately 19,000 pounds, with full fuel and water tanks.

We were not able to check fuel consumption extensively, due to time constraints, but we figured we recorded about 11 mpg for more than 200 miles of combined city/highway driving. A Barth executive told us that company drivers and MCC owners have reported fuel economy figures ranging from 10-14 mpg. □

## The Location: Sedona

Part of our route for the Barth review took the *MotorHome* staff through the spectacular red-rock areas of Sedona and Oak Creek Canyon, an area well-known for a different kind of shooting—the backdrops for several Hollywood westerns, as well as the setting for the Zane Grey novel, *Call of the Canyon*.

From Phoenix, we took I-17 north toward Flagstaff, cutting off at the Highway 69 junction toward Prescott. From Prescott, we continued north, veering onto 89-A to Sedona where we eventually made the turn south and back to Phoenix.

Highway 89-A was the visual crescendo of our loop trip through the soft, glowing red-rock area. With these rocks as a background—particularly sensational at

dusk—the route encompasses the former state copper capital of Jerome. The small town may have been booming years ago, but now it's an even smaller tourist attraction/ghost town actually built on the side of Cleopatra Mountain. (The mountain, by the way, gives the feeling that it's not going to make it much longer, either; when it goes, it'll no doubt take the town with it.) Neighboring Clarksdale, a ghost town dating back even further than Jerome, boasts Tuzigoot National Monument, a prehistoric ruin staring down onto the Verde River and dating back to 1300 A.D.

