

In The Beginning...a brief history of the Club

By Jack & Jan Gossett, founding (and lifetime) members of Country Coach International

In the beginning, a long time ago (1983), in a land far away (Wisconsin), we attended our first Family Motor Coach Association rally and saw that the various motorhome clubs were having such a good time together. We thought, why not form a club for Country Camper? We contacted Bob Lee. He liked the idea, suggesting a get together at the November 1983 Dodger RV Show in Los Angeles.

We put an article in the FMCA Magazine inviting any interested Country Campers to the Dodger Stadium for a get-together during the RV Show. To our surprise, 49 Country Campers lined up in the parking lot on the hill overlooking Los Angeles. During the next few days of camaraderie and RV shopping, the group decided to start a club and selected President and Secretary/Treasurer. We collected money (\$223.25) for postage and the club and the treasury were born. How great it was to meet fellow CC owners. The group looked forward to a rally in the spring.

The first official meeting of the Club was held on March 1st through the 3rd, 1985 in Mesa, Arizona at Greenfield Village Resort. There were over 100 coaches in attendance. We knew we were truly an International RV Club, when our first arrivals at the rally were Sir Richard and Lady Ann Prince-Smith from Augres House, Great Britain and Rancho Mirage, California. At this rally we were treated to the first of many famous Bob Lee Chicken Barbecues. The Company flew in several factory technicians for much appreciated coach service.

The Mesa Rally was a pre-rally to the Tucson FMCA Winter Convention. It was certainly a new experience for us to organize a caravan and then successfully park 55 motorhomes in our parking area. When a Pace Arrow joined us with one of our CC numbers in their window, the parking crew thought there was a mistake, but we parked with the CC's. It was good thing because they came with CC friends and left the convention owning a new Country Camper.

Since the 1985 FMCA Summer Convention was scheduled for Puyallup, Washington, at the Mesa Rally it was decided this would be a perfect time to have a pre-rally at the factory in Junction City, Oregon. Many of the owners had never been to the factory, so this was a big event. Country Camper paid for much of the rally and the employees were very instrumental in making it a fantastic success. Sixty eight coaches were in attendance for this rally and 46 of them caravanned to Puyallup.

The events for the Club in 1986 were in Kerrville, Texas, pre-rally to the San Antonio FMCA and Bowling Green, Kentucky, pre-rally to the FMCA Summer Convention in Lexington, KY.

The first Class Reunion was held in 1987 in Junction City, and we always tried to hold it during Scandinavian Festival time. By 1993, the rally had outgrown the factory parking areas (and the school) so it was moved to the Lane County Fairgrounds in Eugene, Oregon.

The Club was named International Country Coach Country Club at the first rally and this didn't change until 1992 when it became Country Coach International.

Early on we realized we needed a newsletter. Seventy-nine name suggestions were received and "On the Road Again" as submitted by JoAnne Merlo of Woodland Hills, California won. That name of our quarterly newsletter remained intact until it was incorporated in the Country Coach Destinations magazine in 1995 (in fact, it remained the identifying name across every page of the Club's section within that company's magazine).

Many people helped the Club during its formation years. We met Blanche Miller of Junction City, Oregon at Dodger Stadium, and when she volunteered her services, we knew we had a person who could handle anything. For many, many years she wore many hats. Blanche remained an inspiration to all right up to her passing in 2008. In addition to the ubiquitous Blanche, Dennis,

Diane and Mandy Frank of Santa Ana California edited and published the newsletter for four years. In 1988, the newsletter won the top prize for the best newsletter of any club in FMCA. The Franks brought home a beautiful plaque from the convention in South Bend, IN. The first officers of the club were Robert Schmidt, Monroe, Washington-National FMCA Director; Paul Ollenberger, Fresno and Charles Durling, Santa Barbara, California-Vice Presidents.

Of special note as we reflect on this club's early years are Brenda Kozachuk, of Houston, Texas and our second president, who took that gavel and ran with it, and Don and Mary Dolan who gave many hours to the club as Executive Directors. The club got its good start with the help and support of the Lee Brothers and their wives—Bob & Terry, Leonard & Alice, and Ron & Cookie. Of course, all the company employees played a prominent role during these early years, including Carol Taylor Clay who served as company liaison for many years, and Gary Dwyer who headed up the factory service back then, to list a couple of the many employees by name.

This is just a short history of the Club's beginning. When we left office in 1986, we had 289 coaches in the club—today the CCI Club membership tops 2,000 coaches! Now, when we attend a rally and hear the treasurer's report, hear how many member coaches we have, see friends we made 20+ ago, get a hug from a person who went on one of our 47 Class Act Tours, and on and on, we are proud we had a hand in its early days. **** Note:** *This article originally appeared in the Summer 2004 Country Coach Destinations Magazine.*

Today the Club remains committed to providing a robust ownership experience rich with camaraderie and a shared affinity of like-minded recreation enthusiasts. Your Club Board of Directors led by the visionary Ted Wright, and ably assisted by 18-year CC veteran Sherry Fanning, Club Manager and your Club Office Coordinator Leslie May, are hard at work on rallies, enhanced member benefits, and more, all just around the corner this year! Country Coach International has grown to be one of the larger FMCA chapters in America. CCI touches its membership coach families monthly through the Electronic Newsletter, On The Road Again. In 2009, Country Coach International celebrated its 25th anniversary as a chapter of FMCA, launched its own independent website, www.countrycoachclub.com, and introduced a Members Only Forum for fellow CCI members to exchange information.

Country Coach International, 800-537-0622, Email: Club@countrycoachclub.com

Through the Years...YOUR CLUB PRESIDENTS

1984-1986	Jack Gossett
1986-1989	Brenda Kozachuk
1989-1990	Bill Koerner
1991-1993	George Shallbetter
1993-1995	Mark Layton
1995-1997	Bill Pontsler
1997-1999	Ed Carter
1999-2001	Bob Colclazier
2001-2002	Ray Stevens
2002-2004	Bob Pastorello
2004-2008	Jerry O'Connor
2008-	Ted Wright