

COMPANY PROFILE



Photos courtesy of Home & Park Motorhomes

Three Decades of Home & Park Motorhomes

The beauty and the backwoods of Ontario, Canada, inspired the creation of the first camper van that eventually would be called a Roadtrek.

In 1974 Jac Hanemaayer successfully built a small fully self-contained motorhome that his family could use as they enjoyed the backwoods, the skiing, the boating, and other outdoor recreation opportunities in Ontario, Canada. Today this multimillion-dollar corporation based in Kitchener, a city west of Toronto, is guided by his son, Jeff.

Jeff was 10 years old in 1974. He

recalled that his father's first camper van was not just another van shell with a bed in it. It featured all of the systems (plumbing and electrical, including an auxiliary generator and holding tanks) to make it a stand-alone unit. A convertible dinette immediately aft of the cockpit could be used as dining, relaxing, and sleeping quarters for two. It also included another bed configuration above, a center galley area, and a rear bath.

Jac designed the coach and had a small, fledgling area-based company called Home & Park Vehicles build it.

But this was not enough for the successful businessman, who was involved in land development and homebuilding in the Toronto area. Jac's casual affair with building type B motorhomes became a passion, and quickly led to his purchase of Home & Park. In addition to being intimately involved in the design and continued enhancement of his personal motorhomes (a new one each year), he now could shepherd the production processes associated with building Home & Park's type B motorhomes.

The secrets to more than 30 years of successful motorhome-building involve working with a proactive plan.

For the rest of the 1970s Home & Park built between 40 and 50 units a year, but in 1981 all of that changed. That year Jac totally redesigned the product and took his newly created Roadtrek Motorhome Van to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) trade show, and the reception was astounding. The rest is history.

During the three summers following Roadtrek's entry into the much broader American market, Jeff Hanemaayer began working for Home & Park while going to school the rest of the year. After these first three summers, he himself became immersed in the RV business and in 1985, at the age of 21, Jeff took over the reins of the company. Through his efforts and his own pas-

sion for the products, the company has grown to where it now offers six models in three different lengths: the 170-, 190-, and 210-Popular; the 190- and 210-Versatile; and the RS-Adventurous. The company bases its motorhomes on the Chevrolet Express van and the Dodge Sprinter van. And it now also offers a four-wheel-drive option on 190 models.

Circa 1980 the company's dealer network consisted of a handful of auto dealers in Ontario; today its dealer network includes 100 facilities located in most Canadian provinces and American states. Furthermore, Roadtrek has cultivated a following in Japan, where clients demand units that are small in size yet offer a full complement of inte-

rior features. Each year Home & Park ships approximately 50 Roadtreks to Japanese buyers.

In 1974 the company had two employees; in 1980, a handful. Today Home & Park employs a solid and consistent workforce of almost 200 people, who average eight years on the job. Together they produce 1,500 motorhomes each year, all inside a 120,000-square-foot facility that sits

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Opposite: Jeff Hanemaayer (standing) and his father, Jac, with a current Roadtrek, the 190-Popular. Previous Home & Park models have included the 1978 Holiday Cruiser (below) and the 1984 Roadtrek II (below, left).



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Approximately 30 to 35 Roadtreks are manufactured each week on three U-shaped assembly lines at Home & Park's 120,000-square-foot facility in Ontario, Canada.

on 11 acres. In-house specialists create and assemble the handcrafted woodwork and cabinetry that dress the interior of each coach, as well as the solid-surface countertops. Body prep and paint also are handled in-house. All of this helps to maintain quality assurance and quality control.

The plant consistently runs at 90-plus percent production efficiency. The company's warranty claims are well below industry average, and have been reduced by more than 40 percent since 2001. Employees have worked an astounding 1.25 million hours without a lost-time injury. That's more than 600 man-years without an injury serious enough to keep someone from working the next day.

Home & Park officials have taken innovative steps in establishing conti-



nity and quality in the company's manufacturing. It was one of the first two RV manufacturers in North America to totally embrace and adopt what is called ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and the first to be certified to the latest ver-

sion of the standard: ISO9001: 2000. A business model and program that has yielded huge rewards for companies in Europe, ISO is not simply another standard that includes quality assurance and quality control. It far exceeds that,

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A standard-body Roadtrek is produced in approximately 3½ weeks. Wide-body models require an additional 2½ weeks of construction to allow for chassis modification and installation of the fiberglass body and floor.

and includes a much broader scope of planning and control.

To begin with, it involves a significant commitment of resources to implement the ISO standard. It is a labor-intensive effort that clearly establishes a company's mission statement, the objectives for each department within the company, and how each position within the departments must function to effectively achieve those objectives. ISO gives uniform procedures for every aspect of doing business, from administration to design and manufacturing, purchasing, writing client orders, and facilities maintenance. It also helps keep work activity on target and in harmony with company objectives. Equally important is that ISO includes the mechanisms needed to change programs when change is deemed necessary.

The implementation of ISO was no simple undertaking. It involved analyzing each individual position, developing job descriptions for every position, setting performance standards, and devel-

oping methods for measuring individual performance against those standards. It took Home & Park 18 months to organize around ISO and to implement it. Jeff told me that overall performance improvements have made the efforts worthwhile.

The employees at Home & Park enjoy competitive pay, profit-sharing opportunities, and an excellent benefits package. But to sustain a productive workforce, they have been proactive in other ways as well. For instance, the company offers positive programs that assist employees who wish to stop smoking or lose weight.

The Roadtrek has developed a loyal following among its customer base. FMCA's Roadtrek International chapter (www.roadtrekchapter.org), which was established in 1993, currently is the association's sixth-largest chapter, with more than 1,800 member families. It is open to all FMCA members who own Roadtrek motorhomes. The chapter holds rallies at sites around North

America, publishes a bimonthly newsletter, and hosts an e-mail group.

What does the future hold for Home & Park? Jeff said he wants to continue to offer an "unrivalled combination of product design, quality, price, and customer service."

Jeff sees Roadtrek motorhomes as very compatible with the baby boomer generation as it ages, for these people will want to continue enjoying the RV lifestyle but with a more manageable-size coach. Currently 30 percent of Roadtrek owners are 70 years of age and older. Jeff sees the future of this market segment as robust and larger than ever before.

Home & Park will continue to offer enhanced, new, and innovative products that are functional, look good, and are great to live in. But Jeff said he recognizes that the Roadtrek also offers great opportunities for those who need and want a motorhome with off-road capability, such as the outdoor sports enthusiast and families who enjoy winter sports. So, the company is cautiously but concertedly going after a new market by offering a four-wheel-drive option that is available on the Chevy 3500 van chassis. (See the accompanying review of the 190-Popular, which begins on page 72.) "To have an all-season, drive-anywhere motorhome that can double as the family car to run kids to soccer games or go down to the market just makes sense," Jeff said.

Home & Park keeps the type B motorhome industry lively with innovative and timely product enhancements and new product development. The Roadtrek fills several niches in the motorhome market, which bodes well for the future of the company.

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