

Futurliner News

GM Futurliner Restoration Project
(See more on our web site: www.Futurliner.org)
Newsletter #36 November 2009



Futurliner on display in front of NATMUS Auburn, IN - May 2009

This 35th issue of our newsletter continues the semi-annual newsletters now that the vehicle is completed and on the summer show circuit. This project has been an all-volunteer effort starting in 1998 with the goal of restoring one of the twelve GM Futurliners, originally built in 1940, to its original and functional condition. The vehicle was donated to the National Automotive and Truck Museum by Joe Bortz in the early 1990's and is still owned by the museum in Auburn, Indiana. The restoration project was led by volunteer **Don Mayton** in Zeeland, Michigan with a group of nearly 40 volunteers participating.

You can also see in this photo the low-boy trailer that the project had to buy to accommodate transportation to shows. The Futurliner rides backwards on the trailer, mostly to protect the expensive and irreplaceable windshield.

2009 Shows Completed

- May 29 – NATMUS Fund raiser in Auburn, Indiana, Fri evening event.
- June 10 – Grand Rapids, MI, (Wed.) Millennium Park, AACA event.
- June 19-21 – “Motor Muster” at the Greenfield Village in Dearborn, MI,
- July 25 – Cedar Springs Museum, MI – 10 AM – 2 PM
- Aug 14-15 – Woodward Dream Cruise, Detroit, MI
- Aug 28-29 – Grand Rapids Metro Cruise, Rogers Mall
- Sept. 26 & 27 – Martinsburg, WV at the Fair Grounds
- Sept. 30 -Oct. 4 – Carlisle, PA – Located at the big car show and swap meet field (see photos on page 4)
- Oct. 7-10 – Hershey, PA - AACA show at Hershey Park
- Oct 11 thru Spring 2010 – To be displayed at the AACA Museum, Hershey, PA

As you can see, 2009 was a busy year and the dedicated group of volunteers (including many of the spouses) had their hands full covering all of the shows. This was the first time we had been at Carlisle, the week before Hershey and we had dozens of people tell us that this exhibit made their trip to Pennsylvania worthwhile. The Carlisle swap meet and show tends to attract a younger crowd than Hershey so we had a lot of first time spectators.

2010 Shows Planned:

- Jan thru April – Our Futurliner continues to be on display at the AACA Museum in Hershey PA
- June 18-20 – St. Paul, MN, “Back to the 50’s”, Minn. State Fairgrounds
- July 9-11 – Iola WI, their big annual car show and swap meet

2010 Shows Under Consideration:

- May 1-3 – Ottawa, Canada, ARNPRIOR show
- May 14-16 – Dunkirk NY
- May 21-23 – Grand Rapids MI, MTA (Michigan Truck Assoc.)
- Aug 10-13 – Stowe, Vermont

2011-2012 Shows Being Planned:

- May 19-21, 2011 – South Bend IN, AHS Truck show
- March 3, 2012 – Cleveland, OH, Auto-Rama

What’s Happening Lately:

- The crew gets back together each April for the annual maintenance, touch-ups and upgrades. The heavy show schedule requires continued work on their part to keep the vehicle in tip top condition but it is well worth the joy it brings to visitors (and to the crew).
- Their Nov meeting concentrated on planning for next year’s shows as noted above. There continues to be a big demand for having us visit various shows around the country.

History of the Futurliners:

At our Martinsburg, WV show in Sept., Donny Orebaugh of Harrisonburg VA told us that a Chevrolet dealer in Harrisonburg had a Futurliner sometime between 1965 and 1972 and it was used for band concerts in the area. Donny visited us again at the Carlisle show and provided the name of the retired dealer (Dale Wegner). Dale lives in Harrisonburg and Stu Allen (one of our volunteers from Staunton, VA) was able to visit him to talk about the Futurliner.

So far, we know that Dale Wegner was one of a group of dealers that purchased ten Futurliners in the mid 60's. He says that Dick Knapp who ran Anchor Motor Freight, (car haulers for GM) got them all involved in buying these surplus GM vehicles. Dale's mentor, Tom Dreisbach, had two more Futurliners at his Cadillac dealership in Michigan. Dale had his wrecker driver pick up the Futurliner in Detroit and drive it to Virginia. Dale had it repainted mostly white with his Chevrolet dealership logo (Wegner Chevrolet) and used it for advertising his dealership. He loaned the vehicle to community groups as a travelling stage around the area and it was used at the county fairgrounds. Dale says that some time in the early 70's he talked to Tom Dreisbach and found out that the Dreisbach Futurliner had a broken windshield. Since the Wegner Chevrolet Futurliner was no longer being used he gave it to Dreisbach and it was returned to Detroit. Our #10 Futurliner had the Dreisbach and Cadillac logo still visible when we got it.

We have information that around 1990 or 1991, Dreisbach sold the three Futurliners which were taken to Chicago. Most likely, our #10 Futurliner, the Wegner Chevrolet Futurliner and a third unit were the three that ended up with Joe Bortz in Chicago.

Mr. Wegner gave Stu one picture of his Futurliner and believes he has more. He is going to follow up with some of his contacts from Dreisbach Cadillac to give us some additional history. We'll update as more information becomes available.

Other Futurliner Status:

- **Nicklas Jonsson** has purchased one from Brad Boyajian in Calif. and it is now in Sweden. Restoration has started. Nicklas has been to Michigan recently, was hosted by Don and the crew and took a lot of photos to help their project.
- **Tom Learned** has another Futurliner in Maine and restoration is underway. He reports he has installed a GM 366 gas engine with an Allison transmission.
- **Brad Boyajian** in Calif. has a Futurliner vehicle for sale. His ad says it is a 1939 (when all were built for use in 1940), the most complete and only remaining restorable Futurliner in existence today, \$600,000, Brad can be reached at 818-419-99889 or brad@advancedbrain.com.

Financial status - Poster, Hats, "T" Shirts & Video:

- Items available thru NATMUS serve as both fund-raisers for the Futurliner Restoration Project and interesting memorabilia for all of you. The video, titled "**Miracle at Beaverdam**", is available on either VHS or DVD and can be requested from NATMUS for \$25 (including S&H).
- If you are interested in the full history of the Parade of Progress and the restoration project, pick up a copy of "**General Motors Parade of Progress & A Futurliner Returns.**" With 232 glossy 8 1/2 x 11 pages (24 in color) and 380 pictures, the book tells two big stories: 1) the story of the General Motors Parade of Progress from 1933 to 1956 and 2) the story of the restoration of Futurliner #10 in Beaverdam, Michigan by a group of highly motivated volunteers referred to as The Restoration Team.

The book is available through the Futurliner web site www.Futurliner.org with links to the NATMUS store or by calling NATMUS at (260) 925-9100. The price by mail is \$35 (which includes postage, taxes and handling) or \$29.95 at the NATMUS museum store. Proceeds go towards the preservation, show expenses and the ongoing exhibit of Futurliner #10.

- A scale model is available for \$45 plus \$10 S/H. It is 1/64 scale or about 6" long and comes in a clear plastic display case. Posters, polo and "T" shirts and hats are available thru NATMUS. Prices and photos are on the web site - (<http://www.futurliner.com/poster.htm>)
- Donations are still required for on-going repairs and maintenance of the Futurliner. Many people have been very generous in their financial support of the project and all donations are deeply appreciated. Donations can be sent to NATMUS, 1000 Gordon M. Buehrig Place, Auburn, IN 46706 and they are fully tax deductible.

Miscellaneous:

- We get numerous requests to bring the Futurliner to shows around the country. This is no small effort of course with a vehicle this size and which requires a sizable staff to accompany it. Because of this complexity, the crew and NATMUS have established the guidelines that were detailed in a recent issue (#31 – Nov 2007). If anyone is interested requesting the Futurliner for your show in 2010 or later, contact Don Mayton (address below)
- I need to thank Jim Crame, our web site guru, for not only printing the Futurliner News but for doing a lot of the special graphics that make it colorful.
- We learned recently that Parader Ed Wheelden has passed away. He and his wife Florence attended the 2002 reunion in Michigan that visited the restoration project in Zeeland.

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Carlisle, PA



Our first visit to Carlisle PA



The Carlisle Swap meet field