

# Roughing It Smoothly<sup>®</sup>



## SPECIAL

The Allegro Bay 37 QDB  
With the Front-End Diesel  
See Page 8

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Old Florida: It's Still Waiting for You
- Moab: Utah's Incredible Red Rock Country

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## Roughing it Smoothly®

April 2006 Volume 3, Number 2

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### Editor's Note

This issue brings you two extensive travel stories on Moab, Utah, and Old Florida. We hope you also enjoy the story on Tiffin's new front-end diesel which is now available on all of the Allegro Bay floorplans.

Danny Inman continues to answer your questions in "Serious Tech Talk."

Your ideas, suggestions, innovations, and questions are welcomed, and will be printed in "From the Road." Through your interest and postcards, we look forward to seeing this column grow larger with each issue.

If you have suggestions and ideas for the magazine, please write to me at P.O. Box 292912, Tampa, FL 33687-2912 or call me toll-free at 877-538-7467. Editorial contributions are welcomed but not returnable unless you include return postage. Items accepted for publication are subject to editing.

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## How Do We Do It?

by Bob Tiffin

At the Dealers Show in Louisville the week after Thanksgiving, Tiffin Motorhomes swept the RVDA's annual ratings of RV manufacturers. Our company was the Number One Class A motorhome manufacturer in 18 out of 24 categories. This was the seventh time out of the last nine years that Tiffin has been so honored. Frankly, I don't know how we could ever top this rating. Obviously, we were pleased but somewhat amazed with the results.

Many have and continue to ask, "How do we do it?"

I think it may boil down to one word that has a lot of far reaching implications: *selflessness*. As far as I know, there is not one person in our organization that thinks of himself or herself as the most important cog in the wheel.

It is very important that each person, whether in management or in production, be given the latitude to find the best way to accomplish a certain task or just do their job on a day-to-day basis. But, each of us at the same time must be gracious enough to consider a suggestion that might help us find a solution or reach a goal.

TMH is now over 1,000 employees strong. That was quite a milestone for our company. But milestones aside. We are now a 1,000 person *TEAM*. When we have our managers' meeting at 6 a.m. each morning, it is a thrill for me to hear each person calmly bring a problem to the table and then watch how the cooperation and ideas flow from all sides to find a solution. There's a "give and take" across that conference table that excludes *teamwork*.

What's even better, all of our managers *lead by example*. They do not go back to their departments and dictate to their associates how to solve a problem, accomplish a task, or reach a goal. Each manager respects the *personal ability and talent* that every team member can contribute. And there's not a manager in the company who's not willing to get his hands dirty.

In this issue, the Owner Profile features Rob and Linda Marshall. Rob noticed something that he called the "Alabama culture." I think I can define that *culture*. It is a willingness to listen to someone and learn about their point of view, how they go about what they do, and their interests. It is an unassuming acceptance of a person's good intentions. We assume that each person wants to do a good job because of their own humanity and self-respect. Simply said, we just *trust* people (unless they show us otherwise — we're not gullible!).

Fred Thompson related a brief experience to me the other day that wasn't really surprising. He needed props to go inside the Allegro Bay 37QDB where he and Peter Finger were doing a photoshoot for his next story. He went to two stores in town and told the owners what he needed. Although he offered to buy what he needed, both owners said, "Just take what you need and bring it back when you're through." Neither owner asked Fred to make a list of what he took or even asked for his name or an ID. That's our "Alabama culture." We *trust* each other.

So, to answer the question, "How do we do it?" Our formula is:

- Selflessness
- Teamwork
- Personal ability and talent
- Leading by example
- Trust

Now just for a moment, let's go back to the dealer ratings. I would like to briefly talk about how we at Tiffin Motorhomes address five of those categories.

**Competitive Product Design.** There two ways we stay competitive in this area: (1) an innovative R&D Department, and (2) a Purchasing Department that looks for better products with

*Continued on page 39*



## Drastic Career Change Puts Michigan Native in Mississippi

by Fred Thompson

Ten minutes into the interview with Mr. Tiffin, I knew Tiffin Motorhomes was where I wanted to be,” Jim Shillito said, explaining how he became the general manager of Water-Way, Inc., TMH’s sister company that builds front and rear caps plus many other fiberglass parts for all five brands.

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in accounting and a master’s degree in finance in 1986 from Walsh College, the Michigan native accepted an accounting position with Borg-Warner.

Five years later he went with ITT Automotive, a job that eventually brought him south to Selmer, Tennessee. There he began a transition into plant management. The corporate world of ITT had a department that dealt with quoting and estimating and “that got me deep into the shop floor,” Jim said. “As I spent more time with the operations people at ITT, I was drawn more to production management.” But the finance and accounting background became very important in

production management: “I knew where all the dollars were.”

Eventually, ITT Automotive’s Selmer plant was sold to a German company. Jim stayed on for three more years. Keeping his options open, he was offered another position with ITT that would have required moving back north, but by that time Jim and his family knew they wanted to remain in the South. “We really miss the winter in our native state, but Corinth is a great place to raise children.”

His contact with Tiffin resulted from networking with an old acquaintance, one of the original shareholders in Water-Way, Inc. “It was a drastic change coming from the old ITT plant where we were high volume to the Water-Way fiberglass operation where we are basically a low-volume captive plant,” the general manager said. “Of course, our primary customer is Tiffin Motorhomes. The fiberglass operation is a unique product that creates a very strong production entity. It really does need its own environment.”

Before Shillito was scheduled for his interview with Bob Tiffin, he did his homework on the company. He was aware of the excellent product service Tiffin Motorhomes provided to its coach owners, as well as Bob Tiffin’s personal reputation with his competitors, his peers, and his customers. “It took two days for Bob to make me an offer, and about two seconds for me to say ‘yes,’” Shillito said.

“I identified three key reasons why I wanted to work for Tiffin,” the general manager said with a quick smile. “First, the plant makes great products, which involve very aesthetic and constantly changing design. That appeals and challenges me. Second, I appreciate and enjoy the tie that the company has to the Tiffin family, who are now majority owners of the plant. They are great people to work for and deal with on a business level. And, third, we have a great work force here at Water-Way and that makes it so much easier to work through production problems than if we were in a different loca-

tion. The stress level here is so much lower than other places in this country.”

Jim continued his reflecting about the company: “You know, the Tiffin influence on each motorhome is a factor that has made this company so successful.”

At six feet five inches tall, Shillito towers almost a foot over most members of the Tiffin family. When Bob Tiffin asked me to go find Jim one day when he was visiting the Red Bay plant and make the appointment for an interview, I said, “Tell me what he looks like so I can find him.” Bob’s quickly replied, “You won’t have any trouble—he’s the tallest man in Red Bay.”

As Jim gave me directions to find the fiberglass operation located north of Iuka, Mississippi, near the Tennessee River, he explained that “you’ll think you are lost before you get there, but just keep on coming.” He didn’t drop his “g” on “coming” so I knew he was from somewhere north of Kentucky.

A few days later, I sat in Jim’s office as he began to tell me about Water-Way. The industrial complex was originally a part of the space program. After the Challenger disaster, most of the companies in the complex lost their contracts and closed, leaving something of an industrial ghost town. The Tishomingo County government finally took control of the property and leased the facilities at very favorable rates to attract new businesses and create jobs.

“We now employ 62 in the fiberglass plant. We are lean administratively — employing a receptionist, a purchasing-payables person, a production manager, an engineer, and me,” he explained. “We are a separate company with its own purchasing, payroll, and receivables.”

Today, the plant manufactures the front and back caps for eleven motorhomes per day, plus wheelwell covers, tubs, and showers.

Seemingly looking forward to a little faster pace, he continued. “We have the space to handle several more units per day. Water-Way leased three buildings from the county which gives us a total of 126,000 sq.ft. Plus we have an independent warehouse where we store all of our old molds.” Like all of Tiffin’s divisions,

Water-Way’s service policy is to retain all of their old molds—anything it takes to make a fiberglass part to repair a motorhome that has been damaged. But unlike many companies that have control of the manufacture of unique parts, Tiffin charges a very reasonable price to supply a replacement—and probably at a loss if an accountant actually tracked the costs incurred to make an out-of-date part that had to be especially created away from system manufacturing.

“We build many of our own molds now which shortens the lead time on bringing out components for the model year changeovers. When you have control over the quality of the mold, you gain control over the quality of the final component,” Jim said. “Working with outside design sources and Tiffin’s engineers, Van is the governing entity of what our caps will look like. Virtually every component mold is cut on a CNC router to produce a dimensionally perfect part,” he explained. “Correct fit is a huge issue. Everything is measured in thousandths of an inch with auto-cad systems.”

“You know, the most rewarding and satisfying part of my job is seeing the finished product and knowing that our employees created so many of the components that make the Tiffin motorhomes so attractive,” he said.

While Jim Shillito finds his job intensely interesting, he reserves a large part of his life for his family. He married his high school sweetheart, Debbie, in 1982. The couple have two sons: Brad, 19, is a freshman at the Naval Academy in Annapolis; Rob is a junior and a standout on the high school football team. With experience as a high school center and first baseman, Jim enjoyed the opportunity to coach his sons as they grew up. Although Debbie had a degree in nursing when they arrived in Corinth, she decided to change careers. After earning an education degree from Mississippi State, she now teaches fifth grade in the Corinth school system.

The Shillitos have put their roots down in the South. “We’ve found the place where we belong,” Jim said.



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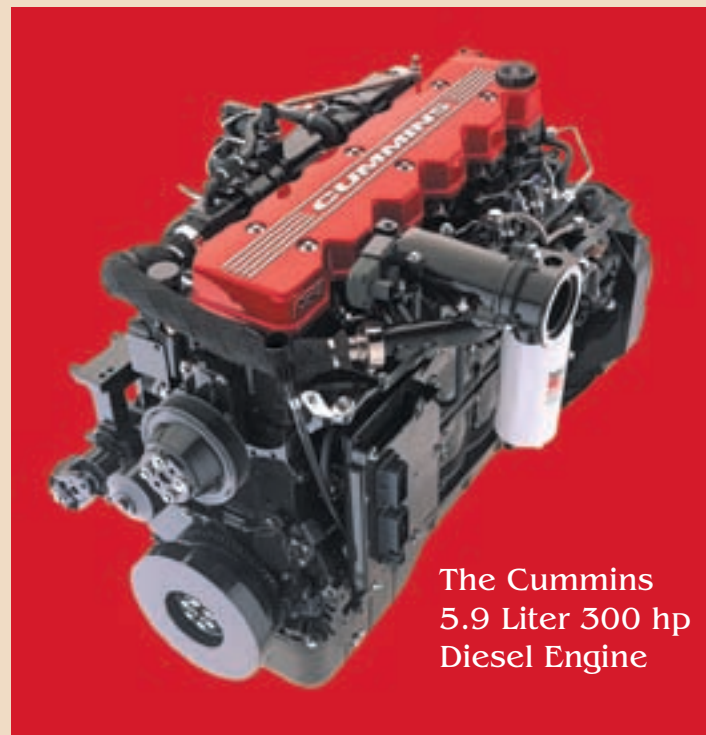


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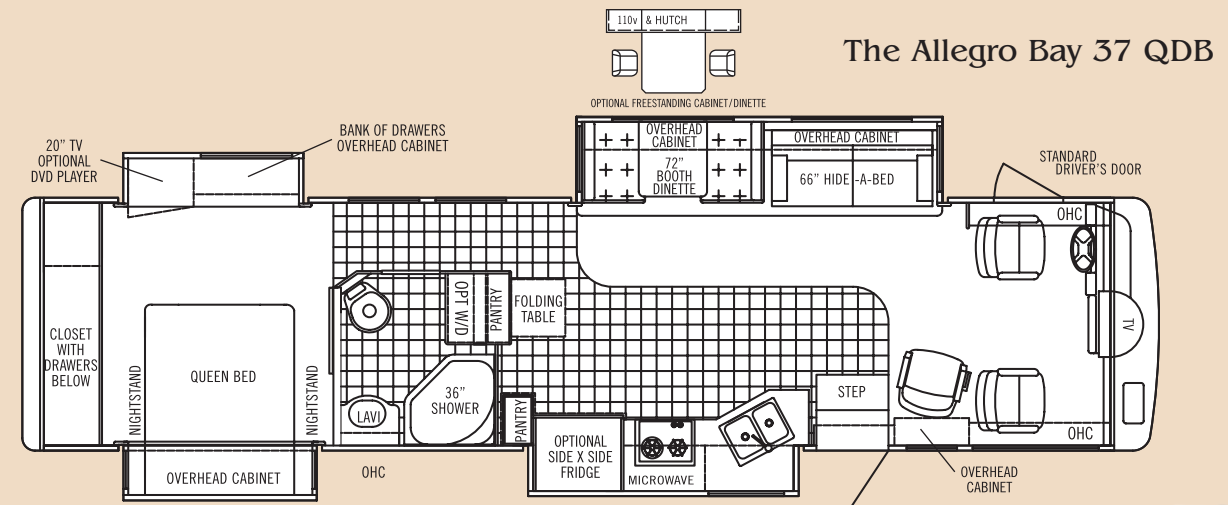
# FRED & a New Floorplan Produce Another Winner

**Tiffin, Freightliner, and Cummins teamed up to create another winning combination: the Allegro Bay 37QDB floorplan, the Freightliner chassis with Front End Diesel engineering, and the 300 hp Cummins diesel.**

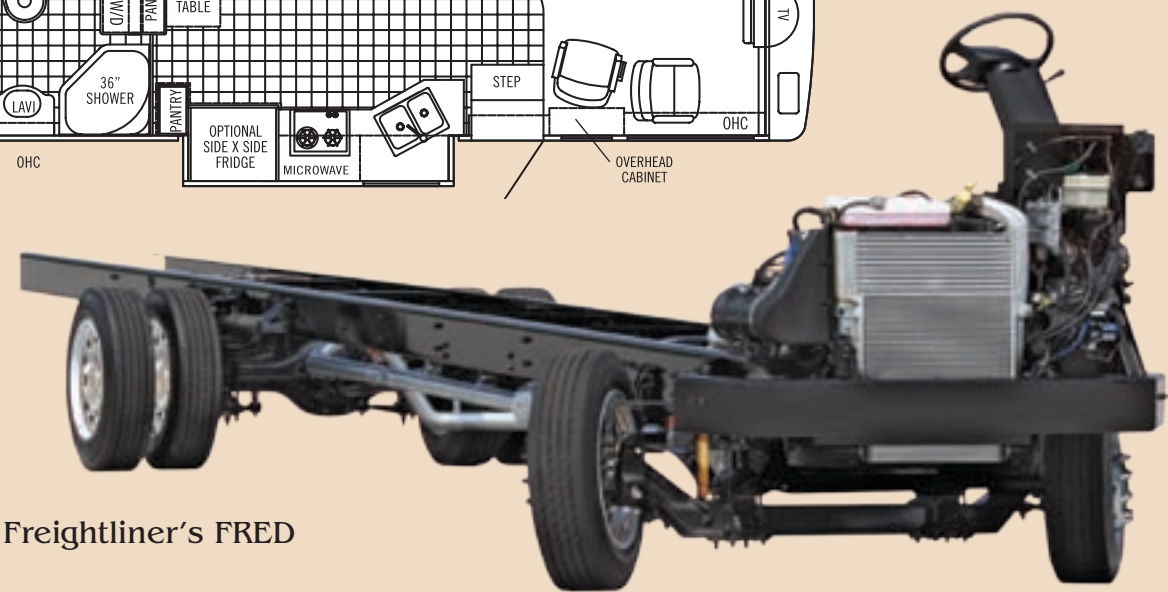


The Cummins 5.9 Liter 300 hp Diesel Engine

Text by Fred Thompson  
Photography by Peter Finger



Freightliner's FRED



FUEL ECONOMY, diesel power, creative design, a feature-rich coach, Tiffin quality and service, and a U.S.-wide engine-chassis service network are successfully packaged in a price range that challenges similar coaches with gas powerplants.

Tiffin's R&D engineers built the first prototype last summer and surprised the company's dealers at its annual meeting in July. After many test drives, enthusiastic dealers were asking "how soon can you get the FREDs to us?"

The Bays with FREDs started rolling off the assembly line in late December and the production dials were turned up by the end of January as more chassis became available. Based on current orders, Tiffin sales manager Jerry Williamson expects the Allegro Bay with the FRED option to be one of the company's hottest products ever.

Demand, of course, is driven in large part by Freightliner's fuel economy tests which show that the Allegro Bays will get 10 to 12 miles per gallon, depending on driving habits, environment, and road conditions.

Demand has also been driven by the low differential price between the gas and diesel power plants. Customers have been pleasantly surprised to learn that they could move up to a diesel

in the Allegro Bay line for less than an eight percent increase in the total price.

Since interested buyers had already seen the Bay's three floorplans in the 2006 literature published last summer, we decided to feature the 37QDB floorplan which was introduced to dealers in the Annual Louisville Show the week after Thanksgiving. "Q" stands for "quad" as in *four* slides.

That's right! A 37-foot motorhome with four slides powered by a 300-hp Cummins diesel. And did we say *feature rich*? You bet! You must take a minute and turn to the last page of this story to read all of the *standard* features — such as solid surface counter tops, chrome single lever sink faucet with pull-out sprayer, double bowl stainless steel kitchen sink, residential-sized stainless microwave-convection oven, two-burner gas-on-glass cooktop, china toilet, rainglass shower door, automatic electric jacks, heated power mirrors, automotive computer, surround sound with hidden speakers, just to name a few.

Now, let's add a few options and see how we come out. Starting with a base price of \$149,420, we dressed the test coach with a side-by-side refrigerator; full body paint; a 15,000 BTU roof AC with a heat pump; the King Dome satellite system; dual pane in-

sulated windows; chrome mirrors; natural maple interior; a 1500-watt inverter; side visors and powered sun visors; a living room VCR and a bedroom DVD; free standing extendable dining table; built-in vacuum cleaner; Ultraleather™ full power driver's and passenger's seats; Ultraleather™ recliner and magic bed; Select Comfort™ mattress; plus an extra Fantastic fan in the hall. The extras maxxed out the price at \$169,393. If you opted to leave off the full body paint, you could reduce your MSRP to \$162,393.

To give you a full description of the 37QDB, an outside walk-around is a good place to start. Good exterior design focuses on convenient access to the coach's infrastructure and utilities. In a relatively small compartment just forward of the entrance door on the passenger side, Tiffin placed the Xantrex inverter system and the power controls for the Dometic awning. The inverter provides short-term 110v service for the front TV and other appliances when you are dry camping, making it unnecessary to start the generator each time you need power. It is well-worth its \$840 price tag.

Just aft of the entrance, three bays connected to the galley slide offer 21.5 cubic feet (CF) of storage. The uninterrupted space is 7ft 9in long and can be accessed from a side door to store unusually long items such as skis. Continuing toward the

end of the coach, two rear bays house the furnace and the LPG tank, and another 19 CF storage compartment.

The rear cap houses the diesel fuel fill to afford fueling from either side and a ladder to reach the top of the coach for service. Moving up the driver's side from the rear, the first bay houses the electrical service and 11.6 CF of storage. The adjacent bay contains the phone jack and cable hook-ups, the water panel, grey and black sewer dumps, and the standard tank flushing system, all properly labeled for first-timers.

The Onan Quiet Diesel generator is positioned in a bay just forward of the rear wheel. A four bay compartment providing 34 CF of storage is attached to the dining-sofa slideout. The standard driver's door has been retained by Tiffin although many competing manufacturers have dropped it to bring down their costs.

Back inside, a visit to the cockpit will increase your appreciation of Tiffin's design engineers. All of the primary instrumentation is located in a 6 × 12-inch display. Centered around two 4-inch dials showing the RPM and MPH with easily read numerals, the oil, water, and fuel are displayed on 2-inch dials. The odometer and voltage plus a trip meter both in hours and miles are offered on an LED display. A horizontal display presents



warning signals related to braking, electrical, and engine functionality.

The transmission is operated with pushbuttons and an LED display. The engine parking brake is also controlled by a pushbutton on the Arens Controls. A pedal next to the steering column adjusts the steering wheel to a comfortable angle as well as the brake and accelerator pedals.

Another panel to the left of the main dials houses the mirror positioning and heating controls, genset starter, exhaust brake, windshield wiper/washer, headlights, map light, and left and right fans. To the right of the transmission control, Tiffin provides a standard Sony color back-up monitor. Automotive air/heat, left and right powered sun shades, Sirius radio and CD player, and the Atwood® Levellegs™ automatic leveling system complete the dash display.

The passenger compartment has connections for 110v (with inverter), 12v, and phone. A vanity is recessed in the dash. Both compartments offer both automotive and central HVAC.

The test coach had the optional Ultraleather™ seating with fully powered seats for both the driver and passenger. The Flexsteel™ lumbar and thigh support brings a comfort level that makes the additional cost insignificant. This writer strongly recommends buying

the best when your back and endurance for a long trip are at stake.

Tiffin gives their entertainment system a high priority. Concealed speakers built into the cabinetry are positioned for surround sound, plus a base woofer is stashed in the hutch under the dining table. The optional Sirius radio (subscription required) with CD and cassette player in the dash along with a standard 5-disk player overhead offers continuous music. A 24-inch flat panel television is standard equipment. Entertainment may be extended to the bedroom with the optional DVD player and the standard 20-inch flat panel television.

Individually controlled power sun visors are optional but a very important accessory that is recommended. The test coach also had optional manually operated side visors, also recommended when you have the wide, expansive view from the cockpit.

TMH has long been known in the industry for their ability to design an exceptional amount of cabinet storage into a motorhome. The eight overhead cabinets in the forward section surrounding the cockpit boast 8.5 cubic feet of storage space.

The galley in the 37QDB presents the cook with over 20 sf of counter space, including a fold-out island that is 24 x 27 inches. The solid surface countertops have contrasting color coordinated backsplashes with corresponding front edging. The

wealth of galley cabinets includes 5.4 CF over the sink, a deep pots-and-pans drawer under the cooktop, a 3-drawer bank in the forward section, two pantrys with a total of 8.75 CF of space, for a grand total of over 22 CF of storage. Cooking odors and heat are quickly removed by the 2-speed vent in the microwave as well as the Fan-Tastic fan in the ceiling. The residential-size microwave-convection oven, a stainless steel double sink measuring 18 x 24 inches, a 12 CF refrigerator-freezer-icemaker, and a two-burner gas-on-glass cooktop complete a very comprehensive motorhome kitchen.

The retractable dining table (41.5 x 28 inches) extends from a 66-inch hutch and comfortably seats four. The 4-door hutch provides another 7.4 CF of storage. Two handsomely upholstered chairs plus two folding chairs which stow in the bedroom closet provide the seating. A 46-inch window brings the outside in as you enjoy your meal. The 4-door hutch yields another 7.4 CF of storage. The six cabinets in the slide-out above the hutch and sofa have 10.4 CF of storage.

The Magic Bed sofa and the recliner were covered in the optional Ultraleather™, a material that has an appealingly comfortable softness. The interior fabrics in the dining chairs, the valances, pillows, tile, and wallpaper complement each other

handsomely to create a pleasing environment in the living area.

As you walk down the side aisle leading to the bath and master bedroom, you find yourself in front of a full-length mirror, which functionally adds dimension to the room and at the same time gives you a chance to check your appearance before you present yourself to the world. Double 53-inch windows bring in lots of light and fresh breezes. All of the windows throughout the motorhome, except the small one at the galley sink and the large windshield, are equipped with day-night shades.

With 28 sf of floor space, the fully enclosed bath is so well-designed that it includes a large shower, a washer-dryer cabinet, a china toilet, and a lavy with vanity. In the test coach, the optional washer-dryer was omitted and the cabinet with three shelves offered over 10 CF of storage, perfect for bed linens, blankets, and towels. The recessed double-door cabinet on top of the washer-dryer provides shallow multi-shelved storage for all of the containers used in the laundry. Overhead, the Fan-Tastic fan will quickly remove the shower's steam and moisture. The medicine cabinet with mirror and theater lighting will please the ladies. The flecked gray solid surface lavy with white bowl and black backsplashes is accented with brushed nickel hardware. Bath and hand towel racks are plentiful. The coordinating colors create an attractive mini-spa



in this innovative new Tiffin floorplan. Collectively, without the washer-dryer, the bath has 16.6 CF of storage.

The master bedroom with the slides extended measures 11'3" across by 9'6" from the bath to the back wall. With nearly four feet of space from the end of the queen bed to the cabinets in the slide, plus 15 inches of walking space on either side, the occupant enjoys a spaciousness similar to FRED's larger cousins. A mirrored headboard the full width of the queen bed gives even more dimension to the room. The entire rear of the coach is a well-designed storage console: (1) Lined with cedar, the major closet with two sliding glass doors is 67 x 20 x 59 inches high. (2) A shirt closet is 23 x 23 x 49 inches high. Three deep drawers add 3.5 CF of storage. In the hutch facing the foot of the bed, six drawers and a clothes hamper add 4.4 CF of storage. Two overhead cabinets by the television and four overhead cabinets in the bed slide-out add over 12 CF of space. Is there more? Yep! On an air strut supported lift, you can stash most of your winter clothes in the lined cavity under the bed.

Now let's talk about comfort. Tiffin optioned the Sleep Comfort bed in this coach for an additional \$1,540 (MSRP). Is it worth it? You betcha! Each bed partner has a "sleep number" that defines the level of firmness or softness that provides the

most restful sleep. With a control on each bedside table, the sleeper experiments over several nights and decides which level gives the most restful night. If you are a full-timer and you keep the coach for four years, you are spending just one dollar per night for both of you to get the ultimate rest. It's worth it.

The fabrics, wallpaper, carpet, and pillows are professionally coordinated to create a pleasant harmony in a room where you will consistently spend at least eight hours a day. Tiffin Motorhomes has become a leader in RV interior design.

Well, that brings us to interior environmental comfort. For heating, the coach has two zones with separate thermostats that are each serviced by 30,000 BTU ducted furnaces. For cooling, standard equipment is two 13,500 BTU high profile roof air conditioners. The test coach was outfitted with optional 15,000 BTU units with heat pumps. When operating with 50-amp service, the heat pumps obviously will conserve your propane. Both systems provide even heating and cooling throughout the coach.

So is the 37QDB Allegro Bay with a FRED for you? It's feature rich. It offers additional economy with 10-12 mpg. It has an innovative floorplan with tons of storage. We think full-timers will be examining this coach very closely. And seasonal trippers will like it for its economy. Get in line—Tiffin expects high demand.

## SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2006 Allegro Bay 37 QDP, Quad Slide Base MSRP\* – \$149,420 MSRP as tested with options – \$169,134

### STANDARD FEATURES

#### Structural

Laminated floor, sidewall & roof  
Steel/aluminum reinforced structure

#### Exterior

Fiberglass front & rear caps  
Large tinted windshield  
Atwood automatic electric jacks  
5.5 Onan® Quiet Diesel generator  
Single motor intermittent wipers  
Heated power mirrors with remote adjustment  
Gel-coat fiberglass exterior  
Painted exterior graphics  
Entrance door with screen door & deadbolt

Triple electric step  
¼-inch single pane windows  
Exterior patio light  
Slideout awning(s)  
Wheel liners  
Exterior storage doors with gas shocks  
Single handle, lockable storage door latches

Ridged long-life storage boxes  
Luggage compartment lights  
Heated water and holding-tank compartments  
Two 6-volt auxiliary batteries  
50-amp service  
Park ready telephone  
Cable ready TV  
Black holding tank flush  
Exterior rinse hose/shower  
110-volt exterior receptacle  
110v/12v converter (55 amp)

Undercoating  
Driver's door with power window  
Domed fiberglass roof  
TV antenna  
CB antenna  
Power Fan-Tastic roof vent with 3-speed fan  
Two 13,500 BTU high profile roof A/C  
Roof ladder  
Backup camera and monitor  
Water filter  
10-gallon gas/electric water heater

#### Driver's Compartment

Entry floor light  
Snack/beverage tray  
Single CD player AM-FM stereo  
12-volt dash receptacle  
110-volt receptacle  
Tilt steering wheel  
Dual dash fans  
Color backup monitor  
Windshield privacy curtain  
Large flat-screen color TV (front)  
Driver's door  
Fire extinguisher  
Phone/modem receptacle  
Non-powered cloth driver & passenger seats by Flexsteel®

Step switch and 12v disconnect switch

#### Living Area / Dinette

Cloth recliner by Flexsteel®  
Cloth hide-a-bed by Flexsteel®  
Booth dinette  
Carbon monoxide detector

#### Kitchen

Solid surface countertops  
Solid surface sink covers  
Single lever sink faucet with pullout sprayer  
Full extension ball bearing drawer slides  
Double bowl kitchen sink (stainless steel)  
2-burner cook top  
Convection microwave (stainless steel)  
8-cubic ft. refrigerator (stainless steel)  
Solid wood dinette table  
Upholstered dinette booth with storage drawers underneath

#### Bath

Medicine cabinet  
Skylight in shower  
China toilet  
Glass shower door  
Solid surface countertops  
Solid surface sink bowls  
Single lever faucet  
Water pump switch  
Vanity light  
36-inch corner fiberglass shower

#### Bedroom

Bed comforter with throw pillows  
Innerspring queen mattress  
Flat screen color television  
LPG leak detector  
Nightstands with 110-volt receptacles  
Solid wood vanity with storage

#### General Interior

Soft touch vinyl ceiling  
Raised panel, solid hardwood cabinet doors  
Oak cabinetry (simulated)  
Armstrong® vinyl tile flooring in kitchen, bath & entrance  
Wall-to-wall carpeting in bedroom & driver's compartment  
Scotchgard® treated carpet and fabrics  
Day-night pleated shades  
Tank level monitor system  
Home theater surround system  
Concealed speakers  
Smoke detector  
Two 30,000 BTU ducted furnaces

### OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Side-by-side 12-cu.ft. refrigerator with icemaker (stainless steel)

Fire Red full body paint  
Two 15,000 Roof ACs with heat pumps  
King Dome automatic satellite system  
Dual-pane insulated windows  
Chrome mirrors  
Natural maple cabinetry  
1500-watt inverter  
Side visors  
Power front windshield sun visors  
Living room VCR  
Bedroom DVD player  
Free standing dinette with shelf and storage  
Prep washer-dryer cabinet  
Central vacuum cleaner  
Powered Ultraleather® passenger/driver seats by Flexsteel®  
Ultraleather® recliner by Flexsteel®  
Ultraleather® Magic Bed – 66"  
Select Comfort dual control bed system  
Fan-Tastic Fan in hall  
Sirius radio (requires subscription)

### OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE ON THE ALLEGRO BAY

Powered cloth driver seat by Flexsteel®  
Cloth Magic Bed  
Ultraleather® Hide-A-Bed by Flexsteel®  
Cloth Magic Bed – 66"  
Bedroom AM-FM-CD stereo  
Cell phone antenna  
3-burner cooktop with oven  
10-cu.ft. 4-door refrigerator with icemaker (stainless steel)  
Wood plank galley floor (not available with Cherry Bark cabinets)  
Semi-automatic satellite system  
Cherry Bark cabinetry  
Washer/dryer

### MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 254"  
Overall Length (approx.) – 37'8"  
Overall Height w/roof air – 12'4"  
Interior Height – 80"  
Overall Width – 101"  
Interior Width – 96"

### WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 26,000 lb.  
GAWR (Front) – 10,000 lb.  
GAWR (Rear) – 17,500 lb.  
GCWR – 30,000 lb.  
UVW – 19,200  
Trailer Hitch Capacity – 6,000 lb.

### POWER TRAIN

Engine – 300 hp Cummins 5.9L Torque (Lbs.-Ft.) – 600  
Transmission – Allison 1000 Series Automatic 5-speed w/elec control

Tire Size – 255/70R 22.5  
Alternator (amps) – 160

### CHASSIS

Frame – Freightliner 26,000  
Brakes – Disk brakes front & rear  
Suspension (front and rear) – Leaf springs with Bilstein shocks  
Leveling jacks – Atwood automatic electric jacks

### CONSTRUCTION:

Body – Laminated floor, sidewalls, and roof  
Support – Steel-aluminum reinforced  
Front-Rear caps – Fiberglass  
Exterior side panels – Gel-coat fiberglass walls with painted graphics or full body paint

### ACCOMMODATIONS:

Sleeps – Four adults  
Fuel tank – 75 gal.  
Fresh water – 84 gal.  
Black water – 45 gal.  
Grey water – 52 gal.  
LPG tank (filled to 80% capacity) – 31.3 gal.

### MSRP

MSRP is the manufacturer's suggested retail price and does not include dealer prep or options. Manufacturer reserves the right to change or discontinue models offered, standard features, optional equipment, and prices without prior notice. Dealer prices may vary.

### UVW

This is the approximate weight of the vehicle with a full fuel tank, engine oil, and coolants. The UVW does not include cargo, fresh water, LP gas, passengers, or dealer-installed accessories.

### DEALERS

To locate the Tiffin dealer nearest you, go to [www.tiffinmotorhomes.com](http://www.tiffinmotorhomes.com) and click on "dealer locator." If internet access is not available, call 256-356-8661 and ask the operator for the Tiffin dealer location nearest to you.

### PLEASE NOTE

All options may not be available in all models. Because of progressive improvement during a model year, specifications, standard and optional equipment are subject to change without notice or obligation.





# Old Florida

Text and photography by Fred Thompson with a journal by Jerry and Mary Etta Robison

I had decided last year to do a travel story about Old Florida and try to include some of the wonderful attractions that drew visitors prior to Disney. Some have disappeared, unable to compete. But many survived and thrive today. To make the story more interesting, I decided to bring a couple into the story who had never traveled in a motorhome, but who loved to travel and meet people. Jerry and Mary Etta Robison from Decatur, Alabama, seemed like the perfect couple for this assignment.

Jerry retired in 1994 from a position as senior mechanical engineer with Monsanto. He worked in the Apollo program both in Huntsville and the Cape from 1965 through 1967. Mary Etta retired from AmSouth Bank the same year as a secretary in both the trust and loan departments. She and Jerry continued to operate a successful catering business that thrived on Mary Etta's reputation for delicious food. Because of the Cape assignment, they saw Florida before Disney: Weeki-Wachee, Silver Springs, Cypress Gardens, Sarasota Jungle Gardens, Marineland, St. Augustine, Bok Tower, and many others. They were anxious to revisit and see how their favorite spots were doing.

Today Jerry is 70, walks about six miles a day and loves to lead hikes into Alabama's Sipsey Wilderness southwest of Decatur. He also hikes and camps out of his 2002 Chrysler Town 'N Country on trips he has made throughout the United States. Mary Etta is not a camper or hiker and stays home to do her crafts and visit with friends while Jerry is gone for as long as 16 days. They stay in touch every night via his cell phone. His trip out west took him on a 5,600-mile odyssey.

Together they have taken trips where they often fly to their primary destination, rent a car, and then see the area in which they are interested. Long trips into the mid-west, west, and northeast were fairly regular in the fall months while they both pursued their careers. But their accommodations were always hotels, and meals were taken in nice restaurants that locals would recommend. Jerry never met a stranger and can find the best places to eat and shop in about 15 minutes.

Cruises are another passion with six trips in their travel history, including a crossing on the QE2 and a return trip on the Concorde. Other cruises have in-

cluded most of the Central American countries and several throughout the Caribbean. We could say that the Robisons are seasoned travelers. But they had never traveled in a motorhome.

This trip was made in the lap of Tiffin luxury. Having just written a story about the 40-foot Allegro Bus in the January issue, I was thrilled when Bob Tiffin arranged with Bankston Motor Homes for us to travel in a new 2006 Allegro Bus QSP. With Hydro-Hot and Sleep Comfort amenities, this was to be a very comfortable journey.

Mary Etta was nearly overwhelmed with the sheer luxury of the Allegro Bus. A few days later a manager at a Wal-Mart took a peek inside and asked her if they were opening for Garth Brooks. Being a caterer, she was astonished at the size of the coach's galley: the size of the refrigerator, the deep stainless sink with an additional rinsing sink, the convection oven—and a dishwasher. "I never expected that!" she gushed.

"I found the entire coach very comfortable and efficient; the interior decoration was excellent. I really like the way the bath was designed so that we could use the doors

## *It's Still Waiting For You!*

to divide the bath from both the bedroom and the living quarters. The shower was as large as the one we have at home and the two lavatories made it so convenient as we both got ready for the day."

"The amount of cabinet space in this coach is incredible. There is space for taking everything you could need for a one-month trip. I can see how people could go full time in this coach," she continued. "If we were to take a really long trip, I am sure Jerry and I would want to take several short trips first to get accustomed to operating a coach of this size and with this many amenities."

Jerry continued the dialog. "Having worked in the Apollo program, and knowing how critical it is to utilize every inch

of space in the modules, I am impressed with the job that Tiffin has done in their design and utilization of the base 320 square feet in the primary footprint of the coach. In the space industry, system integration and variable use was crucial. Tiffin's engineers have done a fabulous job of integrating all of the systems that are on board, such as the Hydro-Hot heating of the coach and the water, the water system for both dry camping and hook-ups, the refrigerator's functionality for 12v, 110v, and gas, the inverter to power certain appliances and electrical outlets, and the monitoring panels to inform the operator of the condition of all systems. It is amazing. I would like to see

the wiring harnesses as they are designed and made. Then on top of that, you have all of the issues with weight distribution, carriage, and balance of the coach. That was Tiffin's job, not Freightliner's. As we traveled each day, I was pleased with how easy it was to drive the Allegro Bus and how smooth the ride is in this coach."

"It seemed nearly impossible that we left north Alabama with sleet and snow forecast on Saturday morning, Feb. 18, and that evening rolled into Tampa with balmy breezes at 8 p.m.," Mary Etta said. "The trip was so easy. I sat on the couch and read and worked on my sewing while Jerry and Fred piloted this home on wheels. What a way to get there!"

MONDAY: Ringling's home, Ca'd Zan, Ringling Circus Museum, Tibbals Learning Center, and the Ringling Museum. The Robisons had not seen these attractions, but had enjoyed the Ringling Bros. & Barnum Bailey Circus in Florida nearly 40 years ago. Ample parking was available for the motorhome, although it was a long walk to the gate.

"The home was magnificent," Mary Etta said. "The amount of gold leaf incorporated into the Venetian Gothic architecture was incredible. Being a caterer, I was intrigued with the old electric stoves and ovens. It was so clever how the kitchens had been turned into an interesting gift shop. But still, in my opinion, it was not a liveable home. How could one relax in a Louis XV chair?"

"The Venetian Gothic design added a new dimension to my appreciation of architecture. The setting on the bay with the marble terraces dramatized the elegance of the home," Jerry said.

Built in 1926 at a cost of \$1.5 million with another \$400,000 spent on the furnishings, the Ringling Foundation has just completed a \$15 million restoration.

"The artifacts exhibited in the Circus Museum brought back an era that I can barely remember when the Big Top was still in use. The advertising posters with the big blocky type and yellow-red backgrounds recalled the sensationalism of the claims for the performers and the animals," Jerry said.

The latest addition to the Ringling property is the Tibbals Learning Center. Howard Tibbals has spent a lifetime building a

perfectly scaled model of the circus arriving into a town. Seeing the circus as a child near his grandparents' home in West Virginia ignited Tibbals' fascination with the artistry of the circus as well as its mechanized organization that facilitated moving the huge show every day to a new location. It wasn't long until he began crafting small circus wagons and other circus pieces.

After earning an engineering degree, Tibbals operated a fam-

John Ringling's home was completed in 1926 at a cost of \$1.5 million.





The courtyard of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art focuses on a replica of Michaelangelo's *David*.

ily-owned flooring manufacturing company in Oneida, Tennessee. He began spending three hours each night after work building a 3/4-inch scale model that eventually included eight major tents, 152 circus wagons that fit perfectly on 55-car train, 1,500 performers and workers, 700 animals, and 7,000 folding chairs. Some of the tiny miniatures even represented specific performers from the early 1930s that Tibbals uncovered through his meticulous research of circus memorabilia. After being refused by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus to use their typography and logos in creating the expansive model, Tibbals created the fictional Howard Bros. Circus.

Today the model covers 3,800 sq. ft. and is the centerpiece of the \$16 million 30,600 sq. ft. Learning Center which doubles the size of the nearby Circus Museum. Howard and Janice Tibbals gave \$6.5 million for the building and endowments for future programs.

The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art completes the Ringling campus. It has been designated the State Art Museum of Florida. The Ringlings' admiration of Italian Baroque art, as well as that country's antiquities and architecture, provided the focus for the extensive collections which John Ringling purchased during the first quarter of the 20th century as the couple made annual trips to Europe. The architecture of the U-shaped museum with its detailed motifs reflects the Italian Renaissance. A replica of Michelangelo's *David* is centered on a bridge connecting the top of the U.

Now owned by the state of Florida, the 66-acre Ringling property is an institution in its own right. You don't want to

**NOTE:** Except for information provided on the campgrounds in the Everglades National Park, we did not offer campground suggestions since Florida has an abundance of them. If you take this trip in the first quarter of next year when it is cooler in Florida, be sure to select campgrounds and make reservations far in advance. Otherwise, you may be camping at Wal-Mart most of the time.



The lumber for Edison's post-and-beam home was cut in Maine and assembled in Ft. Myers. Edison paid \$6,700 for the completed house.



Mary Etta and Jerry were intrigued by the simple interiors in Henry Ford's home which he purchased from Edison for \$20,000 in 1916.

miss a full day's visit here. Open daily 10-5:30 except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Adults, \$15; seniors and active military, \$13. Call 941-351-1660 for special events and programs or visit [www.ringling.org](http://www.ringling.org).

**TUESDAY:** The Edison and Ford Homes in Ft. Myers. "It is amazing how much Thomas Edison's inventions affect our lives today," Mary Etta said. "I was not aware of the useful friendship that Edison and Henry Ford had. They complemented each other in so many ways."

"I wish I had spent more time in the museum to understand the extent of Edison's work. I was really impressed with the botanical laboratory that has been left totally undisturbed since Edison was last there. That's amazing. It was just like he had walked out and was coming back after lunch," Jerry said.

Thomas Edison first came by boat in 1885 to the frontier

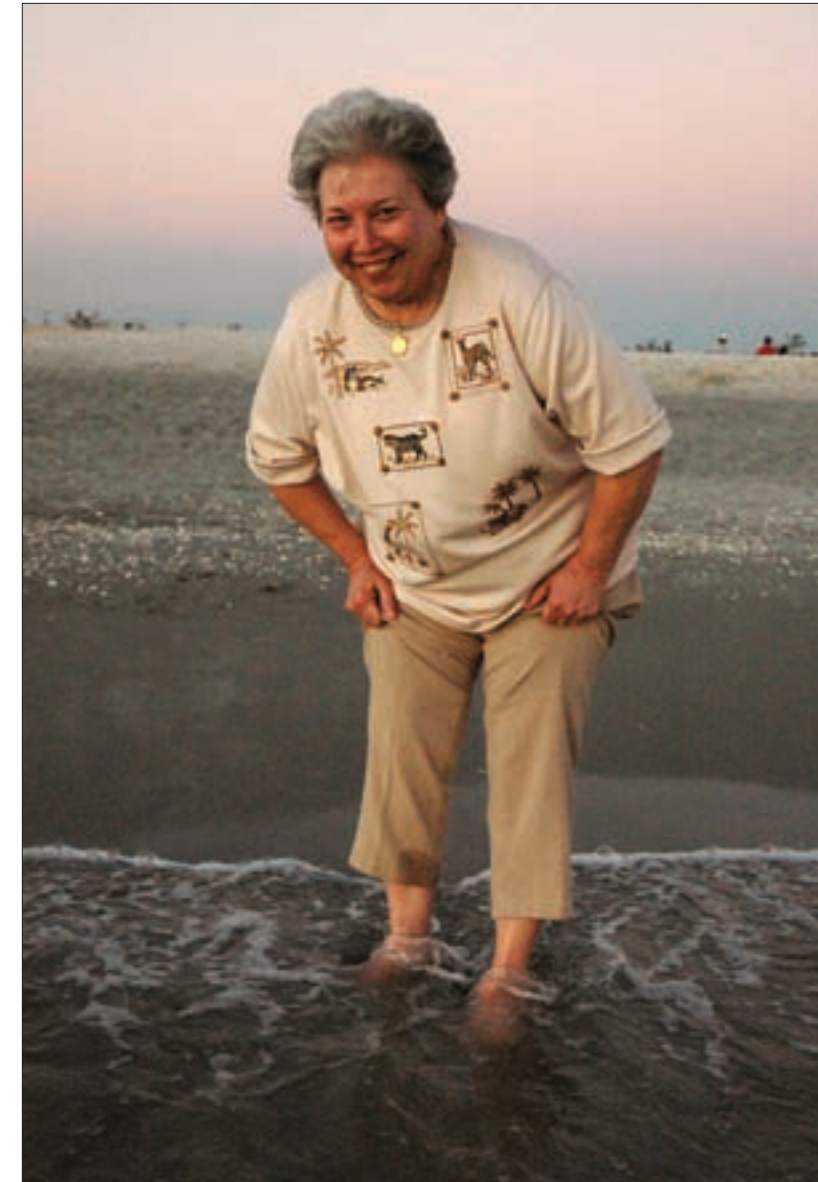


It had been many years since the Robisons had enjoyed a Florida west coast sunset. This one on Sanibel Island brought back many memories.

town of Ft. Myers after his family physician advised him to spend the winters there for his health. After buying 14 acres on the Caloosahatchee River, he made pencil sketches of how he wanted to develop the property and gave them to his architect. The lumber for the post-and-beam home was cut in Maine, each piece numbered for its location in the architect's houseplan, shipped to Ft. Myers by boat, and assembled by local workmen. Edison paid \$2,700 for the property and \$6,700 for the house, which he later named Seminole Lodge.

Despite being 95 percent deaf, a diabetic, and often subject to pleurisy, Edison was the most prolific inventor in the history of our country with 1,093 patents to his credit. He may be best known for the invention of the cylinder phonograph, the kinoscope, and improvements on the electric light bulb that made incandescent light practical, safe, and economical.

In 1906 Edison added a guest house where notable visitors



Mary Etta had no intention of wading into the surf, but the photographer and her husband tricked her into it.

included Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, and President Herbert Hoover. In 1916 Henry Ford bought the guest house and spent the next 15 winters there.

To see the museum and grounds, plan for at least a half day. Open Mon-Sat, 9-5:30; Sun noon-5:30. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas. Daily guided tours include the homes, museum, laboratory, and gardens. Last tour leaves at 4 p.m. General admission for Homes and Gardens Tour, \$16. Boat cruises on weekdays. In-depth botanical tours, Thurs and Sat at 9 a.m., \$19. Edison's Electric Launch Cruises, Mon-Fri 9-3, \$7. 2350 MacGregor Blvd. in historic section. 239-334-7419. [www.edison-ford-estate.com](http://www.edison-ford-estate.com).

Leaving the Edison-Ford Estate, we headed southwest down MacGregor Blvd. along the Caloosahatchee River for a visit to Sanibel. Although sea shell hunters plan sunrise visits, we were looking for a beautiful sunset and dinner. After crossing the toll bridge, stay on the main road through the island for about five



Before the trip down to the Everglades, Jerry and Mary Etta enjoy a few moments of a cool Florida morning.

miles. Most entrance roads to the beach are private and tightly controlled by developments. You will come to a public park on the left with metered parking. A short walk will lead you to a beautiful expanse of beach facing toward the southwest.

“Mary Etta and I shared a memorable experience watching a winter sunset on Sanibel Island,” Jerry said. “We had to race the sun going down to get there in time. Mary Etta had a hard time deciding if she really wanted to get her feet wet, much less wade. Fred finally talked her into it.”

**WEDNESDAY:** We decided to experience the Everglades at its northwest corner, approximately 75 miles from Ft. Myers. Taking the Old Tamiami Trail (US 41) out of Naples, we pointed our coach toward Everglades City for a first stop at the Gulf Coast Visitor Center, one of four visitor centers and entry points. There are private campgrounds with full hookups at Everglades City and Chokoloskee in the northwest corner and at Florida City and Homestead just outside the eastern border of the park. Park campgrounds at Flamingo and Long Pine Key inside the park on Route 9336 can accommodate 40-foot rigs, but they offer no hookups. Water is available, but has a sulfurous taste.

Covering the entire southern tip of the Florida peninsula, the Everglades National Park hosts both temperate and tropical plants, including the invincible mangrove and cypress swamps, pines and hardwoods, marine and estuarine environments, and the ubiquitous sawgrass prairies. With the highest point of the Everglades only eight feet above sea level, the water in the mangrove swamps along its perimeter with the Gulf of Mexico is very brackish, limiting the variety of the aquatic plants found there.

“The vastness of the sawgrass flats just a few feet above sea level is impressive. It is an ecology that we just did not understand. We are glad that we had an opportunity to visit and learn so much about the effect the Everglades have on the water supply of Florida,” Mary Etta said.



Due to very shallow depths, the air boat is the only practical motor-driven conveyance in the Everglades. Speeds of 45 mph are common.



Alligators cruise effortlessly through the mangrove swamps. Twelve foot specimens are not unusual.



Dolphins followed our boat as we toured Ten Thousand Islands, but the photographer was unable to capture one leaping from the water.

In addition to being the only place in the world where alligators and crocodiles live side by side, along with a few elusive manatees, the park is a haven for wading birds, including many varieties of storks, herons, egrets, and the roseate spoonbill. Perhaps one of the most interesting is the anhinga, a swimmer that dives and chases fish underwater, spearing its prey with a pointed beak. Because the anhinga has no oil glands for waterproofing its feathers, it must spread its wings to air and sun dry

before it can fly again proficiently. Birders visit the Everglades from all over the world.

To really see the Everglades up close and personal, you must get out on the water one way or another. The choices are canoes and kayaks, and professionally operated air boats and tour boats. Even though it is not summer, remember to use sunscreen. Most of the television stations and newspapers show the “burn time” if you are out in the sun for a continuous period.

Now for the fun: The Robisons elected to take an air boat ride through the mangrove swamp just north of Everglades City. Under the skilled hands of Cliff Weeks, a fourth generation glader whose family came to the sawgrass country in 1887, they were thrilled with the 45-mph ride through the narrow channels of the mangroves. Cliff told us that area fishermen prosper on stone crab, mullet, and oysters. Naturalists estimate there are about two million alligators and 800 salt water crocodiles in the Everglades. We saw quite a few ‘gators but only two manatees. Since there are only three to four thousand left in the state, the manatee is on the endangered list.

“I can’t believe that Mary Etta was so thrilled with that ride,” Jerry said. “She would run from the rides at a fair, but she really got a kick from that air boat trip.”

Later in the afternoon, the couple took the Ten Thousand Islands tour operated by the Everglades National Park. Satellite mapping now tells us that there are really over 14,000 islands. Captain Paul navigated our boat through the shallow channels around the impenetrable mangrove islands, where pirates and scoundrels found shelter nearly two centuries ago, to the Gulf of Mexico where the average depths were only 50 feet. Unless you are an experienced sailor, or have a GPS navigation system, you should not try to navigate the Ten Thousand Islands by yourself. Once you are in the island maze, they all look alike and you can become hopelessly lost.

“We were thrilled with the porpoises following our boat,” Jerry said. “They were actually just a few feet from the front of the boat. They are so playful and look like they are smiling.”

With discount coupons readily available, you should expect to pay about \$35 per person for the air boat ride. Daily 9-4. The National Park Ten Thousand Islands Tour Boat is \$26.50, with boats leaving hourly until 4:30 p.m.

**THURSDAY:** “We left Ft. Myers bright and early and skippered the Allegro Bus across the state on SR 80, stopping on the way for lunch at a lovely rest area on the south shore of Lake Okeechobee. The vastness of this lake is really impressive,” Mary Etta wrote in her daily journal.

“Leaving there, we motored on to Palm Beach to visit the palatial Whitehall, the 55-room Gilded Age estate built by Henry M. Flagler for his third wife, Mary Lily Kenan Flagler.

“What a stop this was. With only a \$10 entrance fee, this was the ‘bargain attraction’ of the entire trip,” she continued.

After completing the eighth grade in Hopewell, New York, in 1844, Henry Flagler, the son of a Presbyterian minister, moved



The Robisons anticipate touring Henry Flagler’s Whitehall mansion located on the Intracoastal Waterway in Palm Beach.

to Bellevue, Ohio, to work in his uncle’s grain store at a salary of \$5 per month plus room and board. Five years later Flagler formed a partnership with his half-brother, Dan Harkness, and unknowingly created an avenue for him to meet John D. Rockefeller, a grain commission agent, in the late 1850s.

Needing investment capital for his oil business, Rockefeller approached Flagler who obtained \$100,000 from Steven Harkness. By 1870 Rockefeller, Andrews, and Flagler emerged as a joint-stock corporation named Standard Oil. The Flaglers moved to Cleveland which at that time was the center of the oil refining industry in the U.S.

Standard Oil moved its headquarters to New York City and the Flaglers bought a fashionable home at 509 Fifth Avenue. At a time when corporate law required companies to maintain business operations in every state in which they operated, Rockefeller was quick to give Flagler the credit for creating a new corporate structure both functionally and legally that allowed companies to establish headquarters in one central location. The fiat thrust Flagler into the limelight and garnered recognition for his management skills.

In 1878, for the sake of Mary’s health, the Flaglers spent the winter in Jacksonville. After her death in 1881 and his later marriage to Ida Shourds, the new couple traveled to St. Augustine where he found hotel facilities and transportation woefully inadequate. He purchased the Jacksonville, St. Augustine & Halifax Railroad in 1885. Three years later he opened the 540-room Ponce de Leon Hotel which was an immediate success. Henry Flagler had found his formula.

The astute Flagler positioned luxury hotels in Ormand Beach, Palm Beach, and Miami and extended his railway each time to bring guests to the new vacation facilities. Flagler envisioned Key West as a major seaport and began plans in 1905 to build an overseas railway which he had earlier named the Florida East Coast Railway.

*Continued on page 40*

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## Old Time Florida Cuisine

by Maureen Callahan

Before Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon landed near present day St. Augustine in 1513, researchers say native Floridians dined plainly on what they could forage—shellfish, nuts, plants and small animals. But once the Spanish began to settle in Florida, local cuisine became a melting pot of new spices and ingredients. First there was the Spanish influence along with flavors brought by the Moors and Africans that traveled with these conquistadors. Next came the French settlers. And close on their heels were Greeks, Cubans and Minorcans, each pairing their own rich history of spices and ingredients with native Floridian foods. From Conch Chowder, to Key Lime Pie, to Gazpacho, old time Florida cuisine grew to be as diverse as the many cultures that influenced it. So next time you travel down the roads of the Sunshine State, plan a dinner that lets you sample some of that old time history. Make your first stop a local seafood shop for a few pounds of Grouper, a mild flavored, firm-textured white fish that is native to the waters off Florida's coast. It can be grilled, fried, or slipped into a rich, savory fish chowder like the one below.

### Grouper Chowder

*Florida is number two in the country when it comes to cattle production, but it is seafood that stands out as a frontrunner of Floridian cuisine. This simple chowder uses grouper, one of the most popular native fish. Serve it with homemade breadsticks and a big salad made with fresh Florida tomatoes, the other famous Floridian fruit.*

Award winning food writer MAUREEN CALLAHAN studied at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. A native Floridian, she now resides in Denver, Colorado. • Photography by FRED THOMPSON, Temple Terrace, Florida • Food Styling by CAROLYN BREUER, Tampa, Florida.

### Serves 6

- 2 lbs Yukon gold or red skinned potatoes, about 5-6, peeled and cut into 1½ inch chunks
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1½ cups finely chopped onion
- ¾ cup finely chopped celery or fennel
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 cup fresh corn kernels or frozen kernels, thawed
- 2 (8-ounce) bottles clam juice or chicken broth
- 1½ pounds grouper fillets, cut into 2-inch chunks
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ cups half and half
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Place the potatoes in a large Dutch oven or stockpot and cover with cold water, about 2 inches above potatoes. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and cook, uncovered, until potatoes are tender, about 15-20 minutes. Drain and transfer to a bowl. Partially mash potatoes with a potato masher or fork and set aside.

Wipe out saucepan with a paper towel. Add butter and place pan over medium heat. Add onions and celery and sauté for 4-5 minutes or until vegetables are tender; do not let vegetables brown. Stir in ¼ teaspoon salt. Add corn, mashed potatoes and stock to pan and simmer, uncovered, until the soup thickens, about 15-20 minutes. Add grouper and pepper and reduce heat to low; cook for 5 minutes. Add cream, parsley, chives and remaining 1¼ teaspoon salt. Let cook until warmed throughout, about 2-3 minutes. Serve with homemade breadsticks, if desired.



### Homemade Breadsticks

Thaw 2 or more frozen bread dough rolls (such as Rhodes) according to package directions. Preheat oven to 400°. Cut each roll into four sections. Roll each section between hands to make a long rope, about 8 inches long. Brush ropes with olive oil and sprinkle with kosher or coarse salt, dried herbs or seeds like sesame, poppy, and fennel. Bake for 6-8 minutes or until nicely browned. Serve with soup. Note: Each roll will make 4 breadsticks.

**Lighter Options:** For less fat and calories, substitute reduced fat milk for half and half in the chowder and cut the amount of butter in half.

Nutrition Information per serving: Calories 395; Protein 25g; Carbohydrates 42g; Fat 13g; Saturated fat 7.9g; Monounsaturated fat 3.8g; Polyunsaturated fat 0.7g; Sodium 495mg; Cholesterol 82mg; Fiber 4g

# When You Arrive at the Allegro Campground . . .

## Here Are the Folks Whom You'll Meet First

by Robert Wilson



### Joe and Nancy Soloman

After five years of full-timing and tens of thousands of miles in their Allegro Bus, Joe and Nancy Soloman decided it was time to sink some roots.

But they really didn't get very far from the Tiffin Motorhomes culture, because they quit full-timing to become one of two host couples at the Allegro Campground in Red Bay, Ala.

The Solomans were based in Okeechobee, Fla., while rolling up the vacation miles on their 2001 Allegro Bus, visiting Newfoundland, most of the U.S., Mexico, and Alaska.

Joe had been in the construction industry in Florida, having come there when his union put out the call for people to help rebuild after Hurricane Andrew. But an on-the-job injury in 1994 cut his construction career a little short.

The Solomans' full-time RVing brought them through Red Bay several times, and each time Nancy would ask Bob Tiffin about the host job, saying that if it ever came open they would be interested in it.

Joe was still waiting on the call when he sold his RV early last year. Two months later Bob Tiffin called.

The Solomans relocated to Red Bay in May 2005, bought 30 acres of farm land that Joe describes as "rough," and took on the task of managing the campground. "It is our job to make sure our visitors have what they need and are being taken care of," Joe said.

They share the duty with Rod and Marsha Schultz. Each couple works two weeks—14 straight days—from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the campground and then they have two weeks off.



### Norris Lewey

If service work at Tiffin Motorhomes is a journey, Norris Lewey is the guy who punches your ticket.

It's Norris' job to consult all new visitors to the Allegro Campground in Red Bay, Ala., and to expedite getting their service work done as rapidly and smoothly as possible. Norris is a lanky 53-year-old who has lived in the Red Bay area all his life and is Alabama to the core. He started work at Tiffin in 1974 spraying insulation on sidewalls, tops, and undercarriages of motorhomes. There was no campground then.

But about five years ago he moved over to be the man on the frontline of the service department, checking with visitors to see what they need done and ordering parts whenever necessary.

"And if they are mad," he says, "I get to tame them down. Ninety-nine percent of them are happy when they leave."

Norris' service at Tiffin is surpassed only by his service to his country. He has been a member of the Alabama National Guard for 36 years and holds the rank of staff sergeant at his unit based in Russellville, Ala. His military commitment took him away from Red Bay in 2003 for a yearlong tour of duty in Iraq. He was stationed in Mosul "handling communications for all of northern Iraq. It was rough."

With a serious demeanor he recalls the mortar shells that were regularly lobbed into his base camp.

"They were trying to hit the mess hall," he said, where the insurgents knew there would be a concentration of service personnel at cer-



### Rod and Marsha Schultz

The Schultzes knew their lives were changing markedly that first day out as full-time RVers. What they didn't know is that on some level everyone else's life also would change that day.

"It was our first day on the road as full-timers," Marsha said. "We were headed to Wisconsin."

That was Sept. 11, 2001.

But just like most of the rest of us, they endured the pain and anger, came to grips with some new realities, and went on with their lives. They are still full-timing in their 38-ft 2003 Allegro Bus with three slides, and their base camp is the Allegro Campground in Red Bay Ala., where they serve as campground hosts to other Tiffin motorhome owners who come to the facility for service on their coaches.

Rod and Marsha spent 90 percent of their married lives in Denver, where Rod was a supervisor at a Coors brewery. He also was involved in a family land development business with his brother. Marsha "has never worked outside the home," although having had four children to rear to adulthood, there was plenty of work "inside." The Schultzes, outgoing and friendly, do not look old enough to have "five grandchildren and one on the way," but they do.

Camping has long been a major family activity. Over the last 28 years, they have had two pop-ups, two fifth-wheel trailers, and now the Allegro Bus they ordered and took delivery on in 2003.

Prior to buying their Allegro Bus, the Schultzes bought a home in Custer, S.D., "that we have never lived in." They use the house to store all the possessions they accumulated

### Soloman (continued)

"The job is ideal," Nancy said. They are working hard getting the fencing up at their farm, hard physical labor. Nancy adds that the two weeks they spend at the campground is like a time of rest.

"Managing the Allegro Campground is not like working at most such facilities," Nancy said.

"The customer comes here because he is having trouble with his coach, so it's not like they are coming just for pleasure."

Joe adds, "I make sure things work. I troubleshoot." A large part of their job is to turn frustrated Allegro owners into—literally—happy campers.

One way they are able to do that is to connect with the campground visitors on multiple levels. As former full-timers, the Solomans have experienced a lot of the same problems that the visitors are having. But they also are able to talk about the places they have been and the things they have seen, thus establishing an all-important personal connection with campground visitors and putting them at ease.

"We know what it's like," Nancy said. "We discuss our adventures with them because we have been some of the same places as our customers."

Joe and Nancy use their collective sense of humor to spar and kid with their guests. His Martin guitar is never far away if he thinks a little down home country tune will put everyone in a better mood. Joe's occasional pickin' has grown into a weekly Thursday night hoedown in the customer lounge. His friends, musicians from 50 miles around Red Bay, gather for a couple of hours of bluegrass gospel, country, and western. On a recent Thursday night, nearly 100 RVers came to enjoy the music. See page 24 for pictures of a recent jam session.

### An Old Florida Bibliography and Other Suggestions:

Our "Old Florida" trip was limited to six major attractions. There is so much more of the historical Florida to see and enjoy. Consider adding these to your itinerary: Key West and the Overseas Highway, Daytona Beach, St. Augustine, the Panhandle Scenic Drive from Pensacola to Panama City, Weeki Wachee, Sarasota Jungle Gardens, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, Historic Spanish Point in Osprey, Leu Gardens in Orlando, Mt. Dora and Renninger's Antique Center, and Micanopy and the home of Marjorie Kennan Rawlings

#### Bibliography:

- One Tank Trips with Bill Murphy* (3 volumes; Seaside Publishing, \$9.95/ea)
- Off the Beaten Path: Florida* by Diana and Bill Gleason (Insiders' Guide, \$13.95)
- Florida Camping* by Marilyn A. Moore (Foghorn Outdoors, Avalon Travel, \$21.95)
- Guide to Scenic Highways and Byways* (National Geographic, \$25.00)

### Lewey (continued)

tain times of the day. "You would never know when one was coming in."

Norris entered the Guard as a 17-year-old in 1970 during the height of the Vietnam War, a time when National Guard units nationwide normally had far more applications than available positions. His older brother was already in the guard and one day came home to tell Norris and his twin brother, Horace, that there were some openings and that he had been asked if he knew anyone interested. Both the Lewey twins were. Norris said his brother stayed in about six years. Norris has been in six times that long.

Norris is also a 12-year veteran of the Franklin County Commission, the county's legislative body. His effectiveness as an elected official is attested to by the fact that he was re-elected while serving thousands of miles away in Iraq.

Norris' current enlistment will expire in 2007, but he plans to stay in the Guard until he is 60. At Tiffin, Norris says part of his job is to "make people happy before they leave." If they have a complaint, Norris is the first to hear it and allow them to "get it off their chest."

His skills at being a good listener who knows the right action to take have made him successful in both customer service and politics.

### Schultz (continued)

during their marriage, and one of their children lives there to maintain it.

Early on in their Allegro Bus ownership odyssey, the Schultzes visited Red Bay four times and told CEO Bob Tiffin that if the job of campground manager ever came open, they would like to try it. He took their names and in June 2005 called to offer the job. The Schultzes had a prior commitment right then, which Tiffin allowed them to fulfill. They came to the campground in September, parked their Bus, and that became home. The camaraderie of the campground seems to fit their personalities perfectly. Upgrades in the overall service and campground facility continue to impress the Schultzes. Rod pointed out that a wi-fi network is already available in the campground office and washateria, and will soon be available throughout the entire campground.

As hosts, the Schultzes alternate with the Solomans working from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. for 14 straight days and then take 14 days off. It is during these off periods that they visit places like Destin, Fla., DisneyWorld, Tucson, Denver, South Dakota, and Pigeon Forge, Tenn., sometimes taking the Allegro, sometimes the Dodge pickup, and occasionally their motorcycle. It's a lifestyle that seems to suit them just fine.

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# Hard Work, Dedication, Determination

HARRISON BANKSTON'S BUSINESS PLAN FOR A SUCCESSFUL DEALERSHIP

by Robert Wilson

**P**LAIN HARD WORK, COUPLED WITH A determination to survive against all odds! That's what Harrison Bankston of Bankston Motor Homes attributes his company's success to over the last 36 years. He says his employees are an intricate part of that success with their hard work and dedication.

Bankston Motor Homes ranks among Tiffin's top dealers in the nation, a status that Harrison Bankston and his employees wear proudly.

Indeed, Bankston, by his own account, has acted as more than just a sales outlet for Tiffin. He actually has participated at times in both the design and marketing of Allegros, his company functioning as a de facto partner in growing the Tiffin reputation for quality and customer service.

Bankston Motor Homes was founded in 1970, just as the motorhome industry was emerging. Working in the space industry in the sixties, Bankston had the vision to recognize the growth potential in motorhomes and migrated to a new vocation which turned out to be a solid decision both personally and professionally.

Harrison Bankston is a man of kindness and faith, lanky and distinguished with a full head of white hair, and a mind that seems perpetually running a few beats ahead of his words. He speaks with modesty and an Alabama down-hominess that would make a magnolia blossom envious.

Over the course of more than 30 years, Bankston has sold in the neighborhood of 5,000 Tiffin motorhomes, according to Tiffin records. Based on a customer service philosophy that is basically in line with Tiffin's—do whatever it takes to make the customer happy—Bankston has



Harrison Bankston discusses the plans for a motorhome delivery with one of his drivers.

grown to a five-location dealership with more than 50 employees and doing about \$80 million in volume annually.

With stores in Huntsville, Nashville, Montgomery and Florence, Ala., and Jonesboro, Ga., near Atlanta, the Bankston organization consistently ranks as one of the top three Tiffin dealers.

Harrison says it is no accident his customer service mirrors Tiffin's. "It all started with Bob Tiffin," he said. "He not only goes the second mile (for the customer) but the 10th mile. He is one great individual."

In the early days of Tiffin Motorhomes, Bankston said, model lines were not quite so well-defined and Tiffin would pretty much custom-build anything the cus-

tomers wanted. That included Bankston calling Bob one day and asking him to build a vehicle with only the cockpit finished out and nothing on the chassis behind. The customer wanted to put a rollback vehicle hauler on there. And that is what Tiffin produced, Bankston said. Eventually the owner didn't need the vehicle anymore and Bankston sent it back to Tiffin, where it was converted back into a full-fledged motor home.

Bankston said his company has been "an integral part" of his friend Bob Tiffin's business, sometimes even sending him ideas for floor plans and other modifications.

The motorhome industry, like many

*Continued on page 27*



## Thursday Night Jam at Allegro Campground

Clockwise from top left: Ann Wiley, Lynn Grisson on banjo, Leon Shotts, vocalist, Carnie Grimes, Joe Soloman, and Clyde Erwin find spontaneous harmony in bluegrass gospel, country, and western. • Leon and Carnie have sung bluegrass gospel for many years. • Leon keeps 'em smilin'. • Ann picks up a tune as quickly as the lead guitarist begins. • Buford Parker sang a special arrangement of "Danny Boy." • Joe Soloman sings his evening solo.



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## DEALER PROFILE



THIS WAS THE GUY WHO KNEW I WAS GOING TO MARRY CATHY BEFORE I DID, AND I SWORE HE WAS GOING TO BE PRESIDENT ONE DAY. HE COULD ALWAYS READ ME LIKE A BOOK. AND NOTHING ABOUT 30 YEARS OR 2000 MILES OF DISTANCE HAD CHANGED ANY OF THAT. HIS HAIR WAS GRAYER, BUT THE LAUGH WAS EXACTLY THE SAME. IT WAS JUST LIKE COLLEGE ALL OVER AGAIN. WASN'T 10 MINUTES BEFORE WE WERE RIGHT BACK IN THE RHYTHM OF THINGS, TRADING OLD STORIES AND REMEMBERING OUR RIDICULOUS ANTICS, HE WAS RIGHT ABOUT CATHY ANYWAY. AS FOR MY PREDICTION: AMERICA'S PROBABLY SAFER WITHOUT HIM.



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others, rises and falls to some degree with the price of fuel, and that is partly reflected in the exterior design of the vehicles, Bankston said. Stemming from his background in the space program, aerodynamics is one area in which he always has been keenly interested. He worked on some of the "heat points" of the space shuttle before changing career directions.

Bankston does not take full credit for improving the aerodynamics of motorhomes over the years, but he says it is an area where he has pushed manufacturers to make improvements.

The Allegro line is Bankston's "bread and butter," and his dealership has been Tiffin's No. 1 representative "off and on for more than 20 years." The only determining factor in whether Bankston is the No. 1, 2, or 3 dealer is the ability "to get product."

In the early days, Bankston said, Tiffin would produce motorhomes all through the winter months in preparation for the spring buying season. "Sometimes Bob would run out of space to park the coaches at the Red Bay plant and he would call here to ask if he could park part of his stockpile on our lot," he related. "Of course, we always accommodated him." Now, all Tiffin motorhomes are ordered by the dealers and are readied for immediate delivery when they come off the assembly line, Bankston said.

Their friendship has remained strong through the years. Bob has even been known to come to the Huntsville dealership and spend an afternoon helping sell vehicles while his wife, Judy, shopped in nearby stores. "Tiffin brands have been our number one selling product for more than 25 years," Bankston said.

Harrison Bankston spent most of his teenage years in Africa, where his parents were serving as missionaries in what was then the British colony of Rhodesia in the southeastern part of the African continent. After Rhodesia declared its independence from Britain in 1965, it quickly became a nation ripe for internal struggle as the minority white government continued to rule a black majority country. Eventually the struggle erupted in a guerrilla uprising that led to elections in 1979, resulting in the formation of Zimbabwe in 1980.

During his parents sojourn sharing the gospel in Rhodesia, Bankston tells fascinating stories about native groups bringing ashes into the meeting house and tossing them in the air to chase out the evil spirits. While their experiences were often unusual and sometimes trying, it is clear that his parents' work ethic was taught and deeply woven into the fabric that became Harrison Bankston. Today, his personal faith is also strong and by all accounts his business is characterized by fairness and honesty. He makes it a point not to try to buy success by recruiting employees from nearby competitors. Competitors' employees, however, have been known to seek out jobs with Bankston Motor Homes.

Family is a major consideration for Bankston. Married for 42 years, he met his wife, Carol, in Rhodesia. Her parents emigrated from England when she was five. The Bankstons have two daughters, both University of Alabama graduates. One has three children and the other 11. That's nine boys, five girls, and a very crowded Thanksgiving table.



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### New Phone Number for Tiffin Parts and Service

**256-356-0261**

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Workhorse Chassis	877-946-7731
Freightliner Chassis	800-385-4357
Ford Chassis / Engine	800-444-3311
Spartan Chassis	800-543-4277
Caterpillar	800-447-4986

Cummins	800-343-7357
Allison	800-352-5283
Onan	800-888-6626
Shurflo	800-762-8094
Norcold	800-543-1219
Dometic	800-544-4881



**TIFFIN MOTORHOMES**

WHEREVER YOU GO, WE GO.



# MOAB SMALL TOWN, SPECTACULAR SCENERY, BIG ON ADVENTURE

text and photography by Norman Spray

One thing is certain about Moab, Utah: you have to be going there to get there. Moab is not on a major road to anywhere else, though only about 30 miles south of Interstate 70, the major east-west route connecting Denver and Salt Lake City. You can be certain that getting to Moab and the big sky, red rock canyon land is worth the drive. Adventuring through breathtaking, nearly surreal, vistas on back country trails and rivers, both wild and placid, brings motorhome travelers back year after year.

One visit and you know why. Moab has to rate among the best, most professionally organized, yet least commercialized, tourist destinations anywhere. Tourism is the biggest industry in this once-bustling center for uranium mining. Yet the 5,000 friendly folk here make you feel as much at home as you do plopping down on the glider on grandma's front porch.

Services from adventure outfitters and guides, restaurants, and campgrounds are superb. No organization anywhere could give you better advance planning help than the Moab Area Travel Council. Once in town, you can learn what there is to see and do, and where it all is, with just one stop at the Moab Information Center. Expect to spend a little time. You'll come out with enough guide books, maps, service directories and background data to keep you reading for hours and busy for days.

## RV Parks: Lush or Primitive

With over 1,000 camp sites in the area, you can dock your motorhome at a full service RV park in the middle of town; at a river-side park on the edge of town where lawn grass is greener than a field of clover after a good rain; on a rocky mountain

side; or at a dry camp in a bare wilderness where there's sun, moon, stars, no neighbors, no water, with the quiet solitude broken only by howling coyotes.

From any of these, you are set for some of the west's most eye-popping sight seeing and such a variety of adventuring activities that some are sure to interest you, whether you take part in organized events or do things you like to do alone at your own speed. On a single trail in a half-day's time you can cross high desert plains, run through deep red-walled canyons beside a river, and climb 1,000 feet to a flat mesa overlook. Four rivers flow into this desert landscape. Moab is itself located on the largest, the Colorado River.

Rafters, hikers, bikers (both those who pedal and those who motor), four wheelers, golfers, rock climbers, fishers, photographers, extreme sports addicts, and those studying heritage culture all find this area's scenery, terrain, backwoods trails and facilities ideal.

There's no bad time to visit Moab, but spring appeals to many motorcycle enthusiasts like Cinda and Brad Mobley, of Lake Palo Pinto, Texas., who plan to be in Moab again this April for the fourth straight year. They'll enjoy temperatures with average highs of 72 degrees and lows of 40. In May the average high moves up to 82 degrees and the average low to 48.

## Back Country Trails Attract

The Mobleys drive over 1,000 miles to meet a group of some 40 friends and fellow motorcycle enthusiasts from several states who set up camp at the Portal RV Camp on the Colorado River just outside Moab. "For a week, we all ride the trails by day, cook

out and share dinner together in camp in the evenings," Brad says. "Then we take one 'night on the town,' and visit a good restaurant, sometimes one that offers live entertainment."

Why Moab? "It's the scenery and the trails that attract us," Cinda says. "We love the mountain trails. Moab is unique, different. It's absolutely the best place we know for bikes, ATVs, Jeeps, and four-wheel drive vehicles of all kinds."

So far, Cinda and Brad have ridden 18 of the some 50 trails available to bikers and four-wheelers in the area, including one 100-mile trail that required an entire day. Cinda drives a 230 Honda CRF sporting motorcycle made street legal by the addition of a Baja kit. Brad's is a Kawasaki KLX 400. "Guidebooks and trail maps classify the trails (and/or unpaved roads) so that you know in advance how difficult and how long each is," Brad explains. "We've seen families in pickup trucks enjoying outings on the easier trails. We've also ridden some trails with deep water crossings and slopes so steep and difficult that only four-wheelers equipped with winches could pull themselves over some crevices and rocks."

The Mobleys use *Guide to Moab, UT Backroads & 4-Wheel Drive Trails* by Charles A. Wells (Shelly Mayer publ., \$24.95) in which trails are mapped and rated from "easy family runs" to "difficult hard core challenges." Maps and books by F. A. Barnes also include data on geography, geology, archeology, and history of virtually every backcountry point of interest. In addition to off-highway driving, his works cover hiking, backpacking, biking, climbing, and even hang-gliding. You can pick up free trail information and maps at the Information Center.

Many of the trails course through national parks in the area as well as through Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private lands. Park visitor centers also supply information on trails within the parks. Blind canyons, straight-down cliffs, and winding river valleys make for rewarding travel by foot, mountain bike, raft, or motorized vehicle.

## Big Easter Jeep Safari

Availability and quality of the backcountry trails spawned what has become one of Moab's biggest events, the annual Easter Jeep Safari which started as a one-day event in 1967. This year it spans nine days, April 8-16. Participants use four-wheel drive vehicles of all types (not limited to Jeeps) on nine different trail rides starting in Moab each morning and usually lasting all day. Drivers provide their own (or rented) vehicles, food, and water. Hosted by the local Red Rock 4-Wheelers Inc. Club, the event climaxes on "Big Saturday" when over 1,000 vehicles line up in 30 groups to head out in all directions to drive 30 different trails. It is quite an event to see or to take part in, but be forewarned: Moab can be very crowded then.

On June 22-23, an unusual Jeep event occurs when owners of the unique Jeep CJ-8 Scrambler gather to drive trails in some of the only 27,000 Scrambler units ever built (in the years 1981-86). That model, an elongated version with a miniature pickup bed on back, has reached near-collector status. Non-Scrambler ve-

hicles can participate in the Moab Scramble if driven by guests of Scrambler owners.

Four-wheeling of all kinds, including in ATVs and other OHV (off highway vehicles), is always popular around Moab. You can bring your own or rent Jeeps, ATVs, and OHVs to a number of reputable outfitting locations (see "How to get the Poop on Moab," below). You can explore on your own or sign up to travel with a guide and/or group. Because many of the trails take drivers to extremely remote areas, travel with at least another "buddy" vehicle is safest. To join a 4-wheeling group, just show up on the City Market parking lot on weekend mornings. Unassociated groups hook up there.

## How to Get the Poop on Moab

It's easy to get information on Moab activities and attractions. The best source for everything you'll need for advance planning is the Moab Area Travel Council. In addition to information on parks, attractions, activities (including fees, pet policies, etc.), the council will provide 100 per cent complete listings of every private and public campground, every tour operator, outfitter and guide, bike shop, and every restaurant in the county. These listings are complete with phone numbers.

The material covers equipment needed, where to rent it if you don't bring your own, regulations covering 4-wheeling, operating all terrain ATV and Off Highway OHV vehicles, biking, motorcycling, rafting, kayaking, golfing, hiking and more. Most of this information is available in brochures the Council will mail to you. But the fastest and best way to get the info is to visit their web site, a truly artful work, at <http://discovermoab.com>.

Once in Moab, go to the Visitor Information Center at the intersection of Main and Center Streets in the middle of town. You'll get information on every attraction and most services at the center which is operated by the Canyonlands Natural History Association and supported by the Travel Council, the National Park Service, The Bureau of Land Management, the U. S. Forest Service, Grand County and Utah State Lands.

They'll provide all the material developed by the Travel Council, the parks, by the Natural History Association, businesses and services in town, and others. Visitor centers at The Arches and Canyonlands National Parks provide details about the parks, fees, permits, policies etc. Here are the numbers and/or addresses you may need:

**Moab Area Travel Council**  
P.O. Box 550  
Moab, Utah 84532  
Phone: 435-259-1370  
[www/discovermoab.com](http://www.discovermoab.com)

**Moab Information Center**  
435-259-8825

**Moab Area CoC**  
217 East Center St.  
435-259-7814  
[www.moabchamber.com](http://www.moabchamber.com)

**Dead Horse Point State Park**  
435-259-2614  
[stateparks.utah.us](http://stateparks.utah.us)

**Canyonlands National Park**  
2282 SW Resource Blvd.  
Moab, UT 84532  
Phone: 435-719-2313  
[www.nps.gov/cany](http://www.nps.gov/cany)

**Bureau of Land Management**  
435-259-2100

**Utah National Forests**  
801-625-5306

**Arches National Park**  
P.O. Box 907  
Moab, UT 84532  
Phone: 435-719-2299  
[www.nps.gov/arch](http://www.nps.gov/arch)





Left-to-right: • The Arches National Park rock wonder is called “The Organ.” • An apparently precariously balanced rock viewed from the Park Avenue parking area. • This huge balanced rock is a popular stop for visitors at Arches National Park. No tourist with a camera can resist this shot.

Left-to-right: • Look closely and you will see a rock climber making his way up the steep wall near Arches National Parks’ Park Avenue overlook. • This sandstone monolith in Arches National Park has been named “Tower of Babel.” • We renamed this one “Linus and His Blanket.”

### Mountain Biking’s Mecca

The myriad, diversified variety of trails that thrill 4-wheelers also validate Moab’s claim to offer “the greatest mountain biking on the planet.” Beginners and experienced bikers find routes through river’s edge canyons, across sand flats and mesa tops that match their levels of experience. Perhaps the most famous is the physically and technically difficult 9.6 mile Slickrock Bike Trail, originally established for motorcycle riding in 1969. Brad Mobley found it “challenging, to say the least” when he motor-

cycled over it in 2005. Winding over a heavily-eroded sandstone plateau, the trail constantly changes in elevation, crosses steep slopes, short sections of sand, and puts bikers on narrow high altitude ledges in places. Open to both motorcycles and moun-

Below left: • Brad Mobley enjoys a view of the Green River after riding to plateau overlooking the valley. • Below: • Cinda Mobley takes a breather and enjoys the view after riding up the Klondike Trail. “You walk about a mile to the end of the trail and look over into the Arches National Park,” she recalls. “It was very high,” she adds.



tain bikes, Slickrock is not suitable (or safe) for three or four-wheel ATV vehicles.

A mountain bike race, “Tour of the Canyonlands,” is scheduled for this April. Dates were yet to be announced at press time. Sponsored by the International Star Riders Association, a national Memorial Day motorcycle event open to all brands of motorcycles is scheduled from May 31 through June 3. Called “Canyonlands Cruise,” it will include bike shows, rides, pig roasts, and biker rodeos.

### Attractions Aplenty

At once unique, varied, and spectacular, the landscape makes all these trails and scenic drives so appealing, attracting thousands of sightseers, and even movie makers, to Grand County. (All or portions of *Thelma and Louise*, *Wagon Master*, *Rio Grande*, *Son of Cochise*, and *Comancheros* were filmed near Moab, to name a few.)

### Major attractions:

**Arches National Park**, only five miles north of Moab, has over

### Spring Doings in Moab

When tourism is your town’s biggest industry, you plan events to keep tourists interested. That, at least, is what they try to do in Moab. In addition to activities mentioned in the accompanying story, here’s a look at other events planned for Spring 2006:

- April 1 Moab 26.2 K Marathon
- April 6-9 AdventureXscapes Retreat (women only)
- April 8-9 Dog Agility Trials, Horse Racing and Roping
- April 22-23 Horse Racing and Roping
- April 27-30 Spring Quarter Horse Show
- April 28-31 Annual Action Car Show, featuring classic cars, hot rods, trucks, customs, street rods and muscle cars.
- May 3-7 Rocky Mountain Outdoor Writers and Photographers Conference
- May 6 Rodeo Queen Contest and Dead Horse Moab Marathon
- May 13 Quarter Horse Show;
- May 27-28 Annual Moab Arts Festival
- June 8-10 Annual Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association Rodeo, including bull riding, barrel racing, team and individual roping, saddle bronc and bareback riding, mutton bustin’ and clowns
- June 17 Quarter Horse Show

### Finding a Campsite in or Near Moab

In the Moab area, 15 campgrounds are run by private owners; 19 by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), only seven which have RV sites; three by the National Park Service; and one by the state. Most of the private RV parks have full hookups with 30- and 50-amp power, water and sewer.

The BLM sites have no hookups and only one equipped for RVs has drinking water. Most have open air vault toilets, grills, metal fire rings, picnic tables, and trash receptacles. All are on a first come, first serve basis. None have dump sites.

Devils Garden, the only campground in the Arches National Park, offers no hookups but does have drinking water. It’s the same at the Squaw Flat campground in the Canyonlands National Park (Needles District), but Willow Flat in the Island in the Sky District does not have drinking water. None have dump sites.

The National Forest Service Warner Lake Campground, highest of them all at 9,500-ft altitude, has drinking water but no hookups and dump site.

The Dead Horse Point State Park (6,000-ft altitude) has 21 sites with water and electric hookups and a dump site.

Complete information including camping fees charged, regulations, facilities available, telephone numbers and locations can be obtained from information sources discussed in “How to Get the Poop on Moab,” page 29.



2,000 salmon-colored sandstone arches within its 76,518 acres, plus gigantic spires and pinnacles, fins, and gravity-defying balanced rocks. Many of the arches can be seen from autos or even motorhomes traveling paved roads. Nearly all are within a short walking distance from parking areas. Thirteen hiking trails, some easy and some difficult, range from only 100 yards to 4.2 miles long. Devils Garden RV park at the end of the 18-mile Arches Scenic Drive offers 24 sites on a first-come, first-served basis. Flush toilets and drinking water are available, but no hookups.

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Top left-to-right: • Brad Mobley “tops out” and negotiates down “Lion’s Back” slope on the famed Slick Rock bike trail outside Moab. • Brad Mobley, far right, with Jack Farr, in blue, owner of Motorsport Ranch in Cresson, and other friends from Texas. • Cinda Mobley, in full riding gear, stops for a rest overlooking salt evaporation pools in the distance. • Bikers often ride on trails that are dangerously close to cliffs.

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Bottom left-to-right: • Norman Spray and Billie Huggins plan a day at the Arches National Park. Underground salt beds were responsible for the arches, spires, balanced rocks, sandstone fins, and eroded monoliths. • Billie Huggins negotiates to purchase jewelry from an Indian woman at Wilson Arch. • An Allegro Bus awaits the return of hikers at Moab Valley RV Resort just outside of Moab. • Looking down on Arches National Park Visitors Center from park’s first overlook.

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**Canyonlands National Park**, largest of Utah’s five national parks, is a 525 square mile scenic wonder, much of which is explorable only in a high-centered 4-wheel drive vehicle. This park encompasses three districts divided by the Colorado and Green Rivers. No bridges cross rivers within the park so Island in the Sky, Needles, and the Maze districts are isolated from each other. No services exist within any of the park districts, though water is available at Island and Needles visitor centers. Be sure and arrive with a full tank of gas.



Over 20 miles of paved road carry visitors easily over a good portion of Island in the Sky, which sits atop a wide mesa 1,500 feet above the confluence of the Green and Colorado Rivers. You can enjoy views of the rivers and look down on canyon after canyon from overlooks along the way. The paved road ends at Grand View Point Overlook, but 4-wheel drive roads and hiking trails can be taken for overnight trips.

A nine-mile paved scenic drive between the Needles visitor center and the Big Spring Overlook displays massive sandstone spires. Most other areas are accessible only by long hikes or rough 4-wheel drive roads. The same is true of all the Maze District, a rocky wilderness where only 4-wheel drive vehicles or mountain bikes can negotiate roads and trails. RV length is limited to 28 feet at the Willow Flat Campground in Island in the Sky and Squaw Flat Campground in Needles. Drinking water is available at Willow Flat, but not in the Needles facility.



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**Dead Horse Point State Park** sits 2,000 feet above the Colorado River, providing panoramic views of the canyon country's buttes and other features. There's a campground with 21 hookup sites that can be reserved in advance. A dump site is available.

**La Sal Mountains**, the second highest range in Utah, rise up to 13,000 feet above the desert floor only 24 miles south of Moab. Spring wildflowers bring riotous color to the cool Manti-La Sal National Forest of which these mountains are a part.

**Rivers** in the Moab area thrill sightseers and water sports enthusiasts alike. The Colorado, Green, Dolores, and San Juan Rivers all are an easy drive from Moab.

Settings range from isolated steep-walled, red-hued canyons to easily accessible banks. Hiking, rafting, canoeing, kayaking, rock climbing and camping attract young and gray hairs alike. The truly adventurous select a treacherous 14-mile stretch of roiling whitewater rapids through Cataract and Westwater Canyons below the confluence of the Green and Colorado rivers. It (not tried by this gray-haired senior) is said to rival even the toughest Grand Canyon rapids.

North of their junction, both the Green and Colorado glide slowly through the deep canyons. Family-oriented moderate whitewater trips are common on the Colorado north of Moab. Tranquil calm water float trips down the Green and other areas of the Colorado are usually possible even in spring when snow melt and/or storms can make a difference.

Indian art including petroglyphs (pictures scratched into rock surfaces) and pictographs (paintings or drawings made with mineral pigments and plant dyes) fascinate those studying native American heritage. The Parianuche or Grand River Ute people called this area home. Among others leaving art and artifacts were the Desert Archaic, the Fremont, and transients including the Ancestral Pueblo people who called themselves Hisatsinom (also known by their Navajo name, Anasazi). The Moab Visitor Center offers a brochure, "Moab Area Rock Art Auto Tour," with directions to and background information on some of the best examples.

Moab seems to have something for everyone and most who go there come back with favorite memories." For motorcyclist Cinda Mobley, it is the Spring Canyon Bottom Trail. "All the Moab trails we have ridden are beautiful," she says, "but for me, this one is special. For nine miles, you're riding along easily on a wide straight road. Then in less than half a mile, you drop 800 feet to the canyon floor passing over a ledge road with a sheer cliff on the left. Once you've reached Spring Canyon Bottom, you ride for miles alongside the lush and lovely Green River. It is indescribably beautiful . . . just wonderful. And it was almost as if we had it all to ourselves. We hardly saw a vehicle other than those in our group. It's the best trail I've ever ridden."

Others surely have favorite memories of their own. In Moab, making memories is easy.



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## Interviews from Oregon

by Harold Breuninger



### Mike & Ardeth Hammach

Home: Zillah, Washington  
Interviewed at Outdoor Resorts, Newport, Oregon, August 11, 2005

- The Hammachs are enjoying a 2005 Phaeton.
- It is their fourth rig, but their first Tiffin product (two travel trailers and two motorhomes).
- They are lot owners at Outdoor Resorts, where they have made lovely improvements.
- They travel back and forth from Zillah to Newport frequently.
- Ardeth is a retired school principal from the Toppenish, Wash. school district.
- Mike is a retired computer specialist from the same school district.
- Mike is the sole driver.
- The Hammach's have four grown children, three in Washington and one in Nevada, plus three grandchildren.
- They have not been to Red Bay.
- They definitely would buy from Tiffin again – no problems, just little stuff.



### Denise Glasscock & Ceci Land

(Denise was away on business when I did the interview.)

- They own a 2005 Allegro Bus.
- Denise is a computer systems architect and Ceci is a retired biochemist researcher.
- Their pets are Ginger, a Chichewa Mix, and Sidney, a Toy Fox Terrier.
- They have been full timing since 2002. With Denise traveling on business, they need to be near an airport and use the coach for a virtual office.
- Since they stay three or four months in one place, they tow a 20-ft. Pleasure Way Class B which can be used for side trips.
- Ceci's hobby is photography Web site: [www.ceciland.smugmug.com](http://www.ceciland.smugmug.com) with seven galleries of over 130 photos from Michigan to Mississippi, from Oregon to Florida. Check it out!
- Interesting sight: When Lake Mead was at its lowest point, the entire submerged city of St. Thomas became visible. St. Thomas is an underwater ghost town.
- Previous RVs: 20-ft. Class C; 32-ft. Monaco Class A, and a 2003 Allegro Bus.



### Roger and Alice Campbell

Home: Evansville, Indiana  
Interviewed at Outdoor Resorts, Newport, Oregon, August 11, 2005

- Their one and only coach, a 2002 Allegro Bus bought in February 2005.
- They tow a Jeep Cherokee.
- They are presently touring Shrine Hospitals throughout the country. The Campbells have been transporting kids to these hospitals for five years. They have made over 100 trips, usually to St. Louis, Cincinnati, or Chicago.
- At this writing, they were on a three-week trip that was stretched into five plus weeks. They had visited Moab, Utah, Salt Lake City, Portland, Spokane, and were heading for the Badlands.
- They have visited Red Bay once and were pleased with the experience. The Campbells understand why folks stay with Tiffin Motorhomes, year after year.
- Alice is retired and Roger is semi-retired from their Screen Printing and Embroidery Company, which their adult children are now operating.

**Editor's Note:** Harold Breuninger has been a contributor to *Roughing It Smoothly* from the beginning. Originally from South Carolina, he and Lynne are full-timers. These interviews were done in Oregon last fall prior to Harold being side-lined with surgery. They give you a good flavor of Tiffin owners who travel the country extensively.

# Volunteering and Travel Go Hand in Hand

*Rob and Linda Marshall Find Service Opportunities in Their Allegro Bay*

by Robert Wilson

**R**OB AND LINDA MARSHALL WERE ANXIOUS to get back on the road, as are most of those who visit Tiffin Motorhomes' Allegro Campground in Red Bay, Ala.

But the Marshalls, who live in Broken Arrow, Okla., had matters on their minds more pressing than some minor "cosmetic" repairs to their 2004 Allegro Bay 34XB. Rob and Linda were headed to Bayou La Batre, Ala., a community that found itself in the way when Hurricane Katrina hurled her Category 4 anger at the nation's Gulf Coast.

There were people in L.A.—Lower Alabama, the locals call it—who were still in trouble 5½ months after the storm, and Rob and Linda are the kind of folks who hear a call for help and respond.



"We volunteer locally with different things through our church, including Habitat for Humanity," Rob said. But when they read an article in *Roughing It Smoothly* about Franklin County people coming together to assist victims of the hurricane, they knew they had to help.

You get the impression that is just simply the kind of people the Marshalls are. They are there to help when needed, and they are very gracious in their dealings with their fellow human beings.

"We had several service issues that we wanted the new Tiffin service facility to address," Rob said, "like paint, so coming to Red Bay was the right decision for now. But the article also helped us decide that's what we wanted to do."

The Marshalls, married 30 years and with no children, had owned a successful party supply rental business for 22 years when an opportunity to sell came along.

"We had talked about selling at 25 years," Rob said, "and when this opportunity came we decided we wanted to do other things with our lives, help our families, and do volunteer work."

Now, with the independence to answer the call to Bayou La Batre, the Marshalls are thankful they have the motorhome to provide the added degree of independence—a place to come back to after a day of construction work.

"This gives us a way to actually be there," Linda said. "Owning the Allegro Bay makes it so much easier to do mission work." In Bayou La Batre, Rob and Linda were planning to meet folks from their church, Asbury United Methodist in Tulsa, the week of Feb. 20 to help hurricane victims rebuild their homes.

"We will be parking our motorhome at Christ United Methodist in Mobile," Rob said, "and be dispatched from there to wherever their coordinator wants us to go."

"It's a way of giving back," Linda said, "and it seems there is always someplace that needs us."

"We were inspired by others who have done so much more," Rob said.

"You meet a lot of RV people," Linda said, "who want to find purpose in helping others."

"The Allegro Bay gives us the opportunity to do volunteer work with all the comforts of home," Rob said. "Other volunteers will sacrifice their comfort and sleep on cots in the church fellowship hall."

"We are planning on having a cookout for them," Linda said. At the church parking lot the motorhome may have shore power, but if not, "we'll be fine using the generator," Rob said.

To be able to stay on the church lot, Rob and Linda had to agree not to use alcohol, tobacco, or profanity during their stay. "The alcohol and tobacco were no problem," Rob laughed. "But when you have the 'no profanity rule' and hammers involved, that could be touch and go."

"This trip," Linda said, "allows us to combine an RV vacation with mission work."

Rob said the basement bins of their Allegro Bay were full of tubs of toys and other things to be distributed to the children in Bayou La Batre.

Travel—and not just by motorhome—is what Rob and Linda call their hobby. A devoted couple, they have been all over the world, including two trips to China, where they worshiped at a church in Beijing. "Chinese soldiers were stationed at the church to make sure things were done in an orderly way," Rob said.

"When one service was over, the people inside the church would have to vacate the sanctuary very rapidly because others were pressing in," Linda said. "I was just in tears the whole time."

In their Allegro Bay, the Marshalls' longest trip took them to Ontario, Canada. In their first year, they logged about 9,000 miles. They have found an added benefit in using the coach when they visit their family about three hours from Broken Arrow.

After spending about a week in Bayou La Batre helping with hurricane relief, the Marshalls planned on doing an east coast trip to St. Augustine, Jacksonville, Savannah, and Charleston, before heading back to Oklahoma.

Rob said that he and Linda really enjoyed their first visit to Red Bay, where they toured the Tiffin plant and visited points of interest in the vicinity, including Tishomingo State Park in Mississippi.

Rob spoke with fondness of the town's "uniqueness" and the "Alabama culture" that they found there. But still, there was a detectable impatience in his words. He wanted to get to the Gulf Coast and begin the task that was calling his and Linda's names.

*Continued from page 5*

more competitive pricing from companies that offer quality assurance. There is no advantage in using the most inexpensive product if its vendor does not provide substantive quality and service. If a vendor's product does not have a history of longevity and dependability, then you really hurt your product design. We are constantly looking for vendors who will keep us competitive not only with design, but also with quality assurance. To meet our expectations, we must buy products that last because we purchase 80 percent of the motorhome from outside vendors.

**Innovative Product Design.** To be innovative in product design requires extensive research. We do thorough research through our customers and our service department. If our service department reports that a product is not working well, then we have made a mistake in selection. So we lean heavily on our service department as well as what our customers tell us. Of course, innovation in the overall design of the motorhome as a product reflects the collective ability of our exterior and interior designers, our floorplan architects, and our infrastructure engineers to correctly assess current trends and customer demand.

**Competitive Product Quality** depends completely on Competitive Product Design and Innovative Product Design. Your production process has to be such that you can *engineer* and *build* quality into your vehicle without sacrificing how the product looks and functions. Of course, you must have overall quality to be competitive in today's market because of the internet. Never in the history of this industry has information been so readily available to our customers about product quality.

**Considers Dealer Input.** We very much want input from our dealers and customers alike so we can streamline product evaluation, satisfaction, and service back into the overall design and production of our motorhomes. We certainly do not

have all the answers to every question or problem. When someone shows us a better way to do something, we usually change immediately.

**Product Value for Dealership's Success.** There are several factors to providing product value to our dealers, and I'm sure they could probably add to my list. Those factors are:

- Product Design
- Competitive Pricing
- Floorplans demanded by customers
- Options that customers want
- Dealing fairly and timely with dealers' requests

These factors create the *product value* that produce sales and profitability for our dealers.

We have planned for each dealer's profitability with our motorhomes by giving them a sufficiently large territory. We do

not stack several dealerships in one locale. We have so many dealers who have been with us for over 20 years. They are J. D. Sanders, Vogt Motorhomes, All-American Coach, Marlin Ingram's RV Center, Lazy Days, Cherokee Camper Sales, J.C.'s RVs, Dickey-Stout Motor Ranch, Quality RV, Davis Camper Sales, Ancira Motor Homes, Bankston Motor Homes, Mountain Family RV, Scotty's Camper Sales, and Kite Brothers. Gentlemen, please forgive me if I missed any of our 20-year dealers.

In the meantime, folks, keep on *roughing it smoothly*.

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# Old Florida

*It's Still  
Waiting  
For You!*

Continued from page 19

During these years of expansion, his wife, Ida Alice, was institutionalized for mental illness. In 1901 after the Florida Legislature passed a law making incurable insanity grounds for divorce, Flagler divorced his wife and married Mary Lily Kenan later that year. As a wedding gift for Mary Lily, Flagler commissioned architects John Carrère and Thomas Hastings to design Whitehall. Drawing on all of the new technology of that day, the ornate Gilded Age mansion was finished in 18 months.

In 1912 at the age of 82, Henry Flagler rode the first train into Key West on January 21. Over 10,000 cheered his achievement. Sixteen months later he died at Whitehall and was buried next to his daughter, Jennie Louise, and his first wife, Mary Harkness, in the St. Augustine church built as a memorial to his daughter.

When Whitehall was completed, the New York Herald proclaimed it “more wonderful than any palace in Europe, grander and more magnificent than any other private dwelling in the world.” Flagler followed Andrew Carnegie’s philosophy regarding fine houses: “It is well, yea, essential for the progress of the race that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and arts.”

“The rooms are decorated in so many different styles of the Beaux Arts period. Jerry’s favorite was the elegant Grand Ballroom, with over 3,000 sq. ft. for the incredible parties and functions the Flaglers sponsored,” Mary Etta wrote. “It is the second largest room in the home, the Grand Foyer being the largest. Can you imagine having a room that large in your home? Vice President and Mrs. Cheney sponsored the restoration of two upstairs bedrooms,” she continued. “For me, Whitehall remains a favorite attraction of the entire trip.”

Jerry wrote, “Mr. Flagler’s personal railroad car has been restored and is displayed in a new pavilion facing the intracoastal waterway. Even with his copper-lined shower, two toilets, a bedroom, lounge, and coal cookstove, the railroad car was nowhere near as nice as our Allegro Bus. The pavilion also housed a café serving a very nice lunch by reservation only.”

Flagler blended business leadership and culture, and realized that the corporation was for the benefit of all in society. He was one of many self-made men in the Gilded Age who became architects of a new kind of society, not one based on inherited titles, but on high culture, technological innovation, and competitive drive. He saw his success as a responsibility to create new opportunities for individual Americans.

Today, Whitehall perpetuates Flagler’s vision. The Flagler Museum with non-profit status serves as an educational institution providing concerts, lectures, and educational opportunities to the public.

The museum is open Tuesday–Saturday, 10-5; Sunday, noon to 5. Closed Mondays, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year’s Day. Adults, \$10; children 6-12, \$3. . Motorhome parking available. Located in Palm Beach at the corner of Cocconut Row and Whitehall Way. For detailed directions, visit [www.flagler-museum.us](http://www.flagler-museum.us)

FRIDAY: “Leaving our St. Cloud campsite, we traveled west to Winter Haven to recapture a family memory—a picture of our daughter Vicki, 8, and me standing on a bridge in Cypress Gardens,” Mary Etta wrote in her journal.

“While retaining the former glory of the ‘old’ Cypress Gardens, the current owner has added several attractions to make the ‘new’ Cypress Gardens even more enjoyable. A water theme park and an amusement park with rides was added to entertain the younger generation. But the main attraction of Cypress Gardens has always been the Water Ski Show, and it was as good as in times past. This show was the highlight of the day for the Robisons since it brought back fond memories of their many visits to the gardens with their young daughter, both while living in Florida and making vacation trips back to Florida in the 60s and 70s. One of the added attractions was the ‘Cypress Gardens on Ice,’ performed on stage at The Royal Palm Theater.

“The Botanical Gardens were just as beautiful as they used to be, maybe better. The new Topiary Gardens were a magnificent display of animals, birds, and a wooly worm formed from greenery and flowers. I was captivated by the display and went by several times.”

Jerry’s journal: “I tried all the rides, some more than once. I was feeling much younger than my actual age (70). I talked Fred’s daughter, Nancy, 25, into being my ride partner since Mary Etta doesn’t do rides. We gave the rides a thumbs up. The only disappointments in the park, from the Robisons’ previous visits, were the deterioration of the Esther Williams swimming pool and the lack of the pretty young ladies dressed in beautiful antebellum attire. But still, we gave this day a ‘10.’”

Dick Pope Sr. carved a garden out of a Cypress swamp more than 70 years ago. His dream grew into a landmark of grace and beauty recognized around the globe. He surely could not have realized that he was creating one of the most famous gardens in the world. Cypress Gardens still stands as a vision of natural beauty and testimony to the strength of a dream fueled by perseverance and hard work. The original 35 acres is still guarded by the 70-year-old Banyan tree that Dick himself planted. Both native and exotic plant species thrive in the gardens. The famed gazebo, where many marriage vows have been exchanged, still stands facing the emerald green lawn and huge beds of brightly colored annuals. The Topiary Garden, a landscape of flowers and shrubs pruned into the shapes of animals, is bordered by



Jerry took this picture of Vicki and Mary Etta on a bridge in Cypress Gardens the summer of 1963.



The Robisons thought they had found the same location, but a new bridge had replaced the one in the picture above. • They continued to be impressed with the flowers throughout the new Cypress Gardens.



the sparkling waterfall. Countless millions of family pictures have been made in this setting.

The Snively Plantation is still the setting for four traditional gardens: herbs, vegetables, roses, and the butterfly gardens. And here, you can kick off your shoes and walk on the grass.

There are dozens of interesting shops to browse. Of course, souvenirs are offered, but there are shops for collectors, too.

All-star concerts and special events are scheduled throughout the year, including performances from Paul Anka, Frank Sinatra, Jr., Merle Haggard, Three Dog Night, the Beach Boys, Montgomery Gentry, Hank Williams, Jr., Tricia Yearwood, George Jones and more. Special events include the first annual Blooms & Blossoms Flower and Gardens Show, Taste of the South Food and Fun Festival, Celebrate America, Kidzpalooza, Phobia and An Old-Fashioned Christmas.

Before you make plans, be sure to visit [www.cypressgardens.com](http://www.cypressgardens.com). Admission: Adults, \$39.95; Seniors 55+, \$34.95; Juniors, \$34.95; 2 and under, Free. Passport good till Dec. 31, \$64.95. Closed April 16, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Open at 10 a.m. daily. See web site for variable closing times.

SATURDAY: “This day took us north to Ocala where we visited Silver Springs, the home of the famous glass bottom boats. One of the parks we visited so many years ago, this property has been well maintained,” Mary Etta said.

“The glass bottom boat rides along the Silver River give clear views of the springs that provide the water for the river and home for the fish, turtles, alligators, and birds that live in the river or on its banks.

“A bonus when visiting Silver Springs are the live concerts provided by many entertainers throughout the year. These concerts are held on various dates and you are given an annual schedule with your ticket purchase. The entertainer the day we were there was Pam Tillis. You may purchase an annual pass and enjoy unlimited visits to the park. This is a great incentive and gives you a chance to see all of your favorite entertainers,” our trip evaluator concluded.

Silver Springs is the quintessential natural Florida tourist attraction. If you mentally remove the buildings and the development, you will see what life was like here more than 10,000 years ago. Just as they did then, the springs pump 550 million gallons of sparkling-clear artesian water a day that is 99.8% pure — enough to supply the entire city of New York.

Recorded history traces settlements of Timucuan Indians in the Silver Springs area in the early 1500s. Sometimes called the Ocali tribe, their claimed territory was invaded by Hernando de Soto. After several battles, the natives retained their territory.

Some time later, the Seminole Indians settled and controlled the area. The Seminole Wars began in the 1830s when the U.S. tried to move the Seminoles to reservations in Oklahoma. Led by Chief Osceola, the Seminoles retreated into the swamps and defeated the government’s attempts. Today, the glass-bottom boats are named in honor of the Seminole chiefs.



Tourists began coming to Silver Springs in 1878 after Hullam Jones installed a glass viewing box in the bottom of a dugout canoe. • The flora and fauna (below) seen on the river cruises will excite children and adults as well.



Today's modern glass-bottom boats allow visitors to see clearly into depths of 80 feet. • In the picture below, you can easily see a turtle at more than 60 feet in the springs area.



In the 1850s, the river began to be used for commerce, which eventually attracted the attention of those who wanted to see and explore the incredible springs. The area's popularity began to flourish in 1878 after Hullam Jones installed a glass viewing box into the bottom of a dugout canoe.

In order for Silver Springs to continue to compete with the Orlando-based attractions which draw millions annually, its management has added nationally known entertainment, activities for children, and annual passes for extremely reasonable rates. The big name entertainment is included in the price of general admission. The 12-month pass will get you into at least 12 shows plus many festivals offered between August and December.

Entertainers earlier this year included Pat Boone and Kenny Rogers. Glen Campbell will appear April 8; Grand Ole Opry's Bill Anderson and Jim Ed Brown plus Southern Gospel's Kingsmen Quartet, April 15; The Association and Gary Puckett, April 22; Little Texas and Restless Heart, April 29; The Bellamy Brothers, July 4; Roy Clark, Dec. 9; and Ronnie Milsap, Dec. 16.

For the kids, wildlife exhibits include Big Gators Lagoon, Ross

Allen Island, Panther Prowl, Kritter Korral (petting zoo), and World of Bears. Three different river cruises take you back into the areas where animals roam in their native habitats.

Throughout 2006, everyone is admitted for \$24.99 plus tax if you bring a Coca-Cola product (even a 12-ounce can of Coke). Regular admission: Adults, \$32.95; 55+, \$29.95; Juniors, \$23.95; 2 & under, free. The 12-month pass is only \$49.99. Rates are additional if you include the Wild Waters Water Park. Silver Springs is open 365 days/year from 10 to 5.

**SUNDAY:** Mary Etta's journal: "We headed home after a wonderful week of 'Old Florida' entertainment. This trip provided fond memories of the Florida we knew before Disney. Jerry and I recommend these more relaxed attractions to you, and they are definitely easier on the budget. One thing is for sure: you will spend more time seeing and enjoying park attractions and not standing in long lines. As you guys say, 'Keep on roughing it smoothly.'"

**Please see page 23 for a bibliography of other interesting places to visit in Old Florida.**

## 2006 RALLY SCHEDULE

### TIFFIN NORTHWEST RALLY

Blackwell Island RV Park, Coeur d'Alene, ID  
June 20-23, 2006

### ALLEGRO CLUB FMCA PRE-RALLY

Happy Holiday RV Park, Cherokee, NC  
August 10-13, 2006 (break camp 13th)

### ALLEGRO CLUB NEW ENGLAND GETAWAY

Champlain Valley Exposition, Essex Junction, VT  
October 9-13, 2006 (break camp 14th)

### ALLEGRO CLUB FALL FIESTA

Texas location to be announced  
Nov. 6-10, 2006 (break camp 11th)

**BEGIN PLANNING NOW FOR 2006!**

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### Happy Holiday RV Park in the Great Smoky Mountains



### New England Getaway Lake Champagne Valley



## Allegro Club Enjoys Florida's Warm February Winter at Rally Park Near Tampa

**Imagine yourself** sitting at a roadside fruit stand with friends, enjoying the sunny skies and mild temperature of central Florida in late February, feasting on a luscious fresh strawberry shortcake made with berries straight from the surrounding fields! This scenario was in fact reality for many who attended the recent Allegro Club Rally in Seffner, Florida at the Lazy Days Rally Park.

The Strawberry Festival in nearby Plant City was just one of many destinations for rally-goers during the week.

After settling into their campsites the first day, attendees enjoyed a delicious evening meal catered by Lupton's at the Rally Park's event center. After dinner, laughter permeated the air as guests were treated to comedic and musical entertainment.

Tuesday's bountiful breakfast was followed by a common-sense safety seminar and a down-to basics microwave-convection cooking seminar. Other vendors were on site with information and displays available to Allegro Club members who needed specific help. Also, as is customary, the very popular Tiffin technicians were on hand during the entire rally to do minor repairs for rally attendees. This service, which Mr. Tiffin generously provides free of charge for Allegro Club rally-goers, is enough reason alone to make our rallies an excellent value!

After receiving many suggestions on our questionnaires at previous rallies, we decided to provide some free time at this rally to take advantage of some of the many and varied activities, events, places to see, and good restaurants in the central Florida region. The following list includes some (but, I am sure, not all) of the free-time activities our club members pursued. Many attended the Strawberry Festival, which included not only

fresh berries, but exhibits, rides, and celebrity entertainment. There were many opportunities for shopping, with several large malls and specialty shops nearby. As many of you know, the Tampa-St. Petersburg area is surrounded by water. Many took the drive over Tampa Bay to the Gulf Coast area, and traveled from Clearwater Beach down the coast. Others went further south to the Longboat Key area. Seafood lovers were not disappointed with many fine dining choices along the way. We enjoyed a beautiful sunset one evening while dining at a beachside outdoor café. Wow! February in central Florida! We also heard of those who took a day trip to Orlando and visited Downtown Disney, some who went to historic Ybor City, and yet others who enjoyed concerts, museums, golf, spring-training baseball, Busch Gardens and on and on.

While there was much available to do at this rally location, there were some who simply chose to stay in the rally park and visit, or take advantage of the lovely amenities, including a heated pool and spa, tennis court, and game room. The staff members at the Rally Park were friendly, helpful, and courteous.

Thursday evening we gathered for an evening meal, while an entertaining duo from Arkansas provided after-dinner music and laughter. Our Friday evening meal was followed by the giving of door prizes. Special recognition was made and awards given to four chapters which had at least 4 and up to 12 coaches present from their chapter. Goodbyes were said, and plans were being made for the next time, when we can all get together and continue "roughing it smoothly"!

Hope to see you in Myrtle Beach in April!

Gail Johnson

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### Inman's Answers

As the new editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, 31-year veteran with Tiffin Motorhomes, invites your questions.

Please send Danny your questions about your motorhome and its operation, especially those questions that may be useful to all of our readers. Address your letter to:

Danny Inman  
Roughing It Smoothly  
PO Box 292912  
Tampa, FL 33637-2912

Danny would also like to hear your ideas, suggestions, and innovations that would make our motorhomes more useful and functional. If you have a photograph to send, please put the postcard and photo in an envelope and send it to the same address. Please send a SASE if you would like for us to return your photographs, disk files, and manuscript.

We look forward to seeing this column grow larger with each issue. For [answers to urgent questions and problems](#), call the new Parts and Service number at 256-356-0261.

### Dear Danny...

We have a 1987 27-foot Allegro. We bought it new in Waukegan, Illinois. We like it very much, but we have to stay away from high altitudes. If we camp anywhere above 4,500 feet, the furnace does not work. Up to now, no one has been able to fix it. Many years ago we went to Red Bay to ask the service department at the plant to solve the problem. We were told that we must have a good 12-volt system. We installed new batteries and started the generator when we camped. But when we are in high altitudes, nothing works. So "Motel 6" here we come or freeze. It has been like this for all

these years. We hope you can help us. Thank you very much. —Louis Ricchio, Kenosha, Wis.

Dear Louis,

Twelve volt power is very important for furnace operation. Once battery power goes below 10.5 volts the gas valve automatically shuts off. The only effect high altitude should have on your furnace is air flow. At higher altitudes the air is thinner than at sea level. There is a component in the furnace called a sail switch, which will turn the furnace off if there is not sufficient air flow to and from the furnace.

If there is dust and dirt buildup on the furnace fan blades or the sail switch, this could create a problem. The furnace will need to be disassembled, cleaned, and checked for air flow restrictions. Also the sail switch will need to be inspected for proper operation.

You should inspect your furnace intake and exhaust vent at least twice a year for insect nests and other objects that could get into the vents. Every two to three years your furnace should be cleaned and serviced by a professional.

I have a 2001 Allegro with a Royale RM3862 Dometic gas-electric refrigerator. The unit has a water leak in the line going to the ice maker. After removing the vent cover, I can see water by looking into the back of the fridge. There is also water on the floor inside. I was told there is a connection half way up the back of the fridge that has come loose. Can I fix this? If so, what do I need to do the job? Is it necessary to remove the unit to do this repair? I am concerned with the gas and electric lines with this water leaking.

Tom Tully, Baton Rouge, La.

Dear Tom,

It is likely that the leak has occurred where the plastic water line connects to the ice maker. If so, you can access the back of the refrigerator by removing it from the cabinet.

Remove the refrigerator doors to access the screws that secure the refrigerator to the cabinet. Through the outside vent, turn off and disconnect the gas and water lines from the back of the refrigerator. Then remove two screws at the base of the refrigerator to release it from the cabinet.

There is a silicone seal at the bottom front of the refrigerator that will have to be cut and broken loose in order to get the refrigerator out of the cabinet. However, the refrigerator does not have to be completely removed from the cabinet. With help, you can tilt the top of

the refrigerator forward to access the water line at the top of the refrigerator. Replace the water line and clamp at the ice maker fitting with new parts. Reinstall refrigerator in cabinet and reconnect the water and gas lines. Be sure to check for gas and water leakage after reinstalling the refrigerator.

This is not an easy job. You may want to seek professional help with this problem.

When we go to Florida for the winter, we are there for three to four months. I run my generator and engine in my coach about every 30 days. How long do you recommend that I run the diesel engine? Some people say about 10 minutes and others say about 40 minutes.

Billy Yarbrough, Athens, Ala.

Dear Billy,

Running your engine while parked for long periods of time is a good idea. This is done more for your engine batteries and electronic systems than for your engine.

About every two weeks you should start and run your engine for about 20 to 30 minutes at fast idle (1000 to 1100 RPM). This will recharge batteries which may have been drained from electrical components on the chassis. This will also bring your engine up to temperature and lubricate engine components.

You should also run your Onan generator with a load such as the air conditioner for about 20 minutes every month.

We have a 2004 Allegro Bus 38 TGP which we purchased new in April 2005. After reviewing the owner's manual, I did not find any detailed procedures on how to start the engine in cold or freezing temperatures and the need or frequency to run the engine while in storage.

There was no information on the purpose of and how to use the engine block heater switch found at the end of the frame under the bed. Also there seems to be no information on the use and purpose of the battery switch found in the battery compartment. Is there any advantage in turning the switch off during storage?

Charles Radle, Harrisburg, Pa.

Dear Charles,

Cold weather makes all engines hard to start, but especially diesel engines. This is the purpose of the engine block heater. The engine block heater is a 110-volt powered electronic rod that is inserted into the engine block

*Continued on page 47*





## The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

### Our Grandchildren Got to See the Shuttle Launch

I've attached a photo of my husband, Joe, and two of our grandchildren, Christopher, 13, and Ashley, 9, taken on the pier at Titusville, Florida, during the July 26, 2005, shuttle launch. Anxious for a long road trip in our brand new 2006 Allegro Bay, we booked a few days at Bryn Mawr RV Resort in St. Augustine, Florida. Just before heading out, we learned that the space shuttle launch had been rescheduled for Tuesday, July 26, two days after our arrival.

Both Joe and I had always wanted to see a launch and thought it was an opportunity of a lifetime for the kids. So with Titusville just two hours south of our destination, we put together a last-minute "side trip." The kids actually agreed to pass up a trip to Atlanta to see a Braves game in order to make the shuttle launch. On Tuesday morning, we packed a cooler, left the Bay in St. Augustine and drove our "tow" down the coast where thousands of people lined the streets and beaches to view the launch. We were awe struck!



Joe Lucius and grandchildren, Ashley and Christopher, anxiously await the shuttle launch.

The atmosphere was that of a 4th of July celebration, with lots of American flags waving and an excited, cheering crowd including loads of foreign tourists! And what a photo opportunity! The launch was spectacular! The Allegro Bay, by the way, exceeds all our expectations. It is named "Roadhouse II." "Roadhouse I" was our first motorhome, a 2003 Allegro that had served us for 14,000 miles. We look forward to seeing much of this great country in the coming years in "Roadhouse II." We suggest that anyone looking to get into RVing do it in an Allegro!

Loretta Lucius  
Senatobia, Miss.

### Customer Service That Was Just Unbelievable!

I would like to thank you *so much* for the extraordinary help you gave me while I was on the road last Fall.

At a Reno, Nevada, service station (honest, I was not drunk, just stupid), I turned sharply away from the gas pump, causing the rear end of my Allegro to pivot

into the protective metal pipe adjacent to the pump.

The damage was saddening—the main impact was to the last compartment door, the one that covers the water and electric connections. The next night that compartment door fell off when I was setting up.

Mr. Mobile, an RV repairman in Salt Lake City, called you folks in Red Bay. Although you did not have the compartment door in stock, you manufactured one that same day and shipped it to me by overnight courier. It was installed on my RV by the next afternoon!

I cannot believe you could or would do that! Talk about customer service!

Again, thank you !!!

Margie Rutbell  
New Hope, Pa.

### Lauren, You Should've Called Me First!

Life can certainly take some funny twists. I never dreamed I'd be writing my Uncle Fred, my father's brother and editor of *Roughing It Smoothly*, for the purpose of sharing my family's experience as owners of an Allegro. But then, I never expected to own an Allegro or any other recreational vehicle. I also didn't expect Hurricane Katrina to hit the home of my husband's parents in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Hit it did, with a twenty-foot surge. It changed their beautiful two-story home into a one-story on stilts. If that weren't enough, Katrina turned my sister-in-law's house into a very large washing machine with six feet of contaminated water. Needless to say, both houses were destroyed.

On the day of this disaster, my husband was in California on business. The next day a short phone call was relayed to us that our three loved ones were safe. That afternoon the *Washington Post* ran a picture of his parents' house, which is located right on the ocean. My husband and I desperately wanted to get there

to help them with the recovery. However, racing down there in a car wouldn't have helped a bit. There were no hotel rooms available, no restaurants, no clean water, no facilities. The one thing we didn't want was to add to their burden.

My husband called the third morning to tell me he was flying back home. My assignment, until he arrived, was to shop for a used recreational vehicle. We were headed to Pascagoula and taking our own version of a B & B with us!

My first shopping stop was Madison RV. My sales person was Mark Walton. I knew I wasn't in the best bargaining position so I just laid out our plight to him. We had to buy an RV now, and it had to be reliable. If something went wrong with our motor home, we couldn't count on repair help because our destination was much like a war zone. Mark first took me through a 1996 Allegro that was near our price range, then several other brands. Finally, I asked the question, "Which one would you trust?" Without hesitation his response was, "Definitely, the Allegro."

On Thursday morning, three days following Katrina, my husband saw the 31-ft Allegro. We didn't even have time to test drive it. We bought it on faith. We had faith that Mark was honestly dealing with us. We had faith that everything we had ever heard about Allegro was true. Our trust was rewarded. During our nine days in Pascagoula, we felt like our presence was a blessing instead of a burden. We were able to cook fresh meals, serve morning coffee, watch the news, provide electricity for power tools and truly help them salvage a lifetime collection of memories. We feel so grateful.

Like I said in my opening paragraph, we never intended to be RV owners. We sold our beautiful Allegro two months after we bought it. We felt quite con-

fidant during the selling process because we had truly been "*roughing it smoothly*." The Allegro sold quickly. We even had a waiting list of potential buyers who were hoping the first buyer's deal would fall through. It didn't. The new owners plan to use it "for the glory of God," they said—missionary work, I think. Anyway, it's funny about those twists in life. I don't know what the Allegro's life was about before us, but she sure was, and continues to be, faithful in her mission.

Lauren Hartung  
Madison, Ala.

### Why did I buy a Tiffin??

I did a lot of looking and research before I bought a diesel coach. I heard that Tiffin Motorhomes has the best reputation for support after the sale. I looked at MANY coaches and found the Allegro Bus to be the most impressively built motorhome on the market. Mine is a 39-ft 1999 model and is better than most of the new coaches I have looked at. I tripped a circuit breaker and emailed Tiffin to find out where it was. They called me back 15 minutes later and seemed glad to help me! I am IMPRESSED!

Gil Hebert  
Houma, La.

### LET US HEAR FROM YOU

"From the Road" is a fun part of the magazine to read and we hope more of you will pick up your pens and write to us. Please email us at: fred@bookproduction.com. Be sure to put "Roughing It Smoothly" in the subject line of your email. If your communication requires an entire letter, mail it to us at: PO Box 292912, Tampa, FL 33687-2912. Tell us about the interesting places you've been, an unusual experience, a great destination, or just a good place to camp and hang out. Please share.

—Fred Thompson,  
editor

Continued from page 35

water cavity. When plugged into 110-volt power or running the generator, you can activate your block heater. Depending on the outside temperature, it could take approximately 8 to 10 hours for your engine block heater to sufficiently warm the engine.

It will not hurt to leave the block heater on for long periods of time, but it does pull electrical power. So it would be a good idea to turn the block heater off when not needed or parked for long periods of time.

The two switches in the battery compartment are for disconnecting engine and house batteries. To prevent drainage on the batteries, you should turn the switches to the off position when the unit is in storage or not in use for long periods of time.

When a 2005 Allegro Bus is connected to outside power (like in an RV park) or when you are running your generator, are all six batteries being charged? When the engine is running, are all six batteries being charged by the alternator? Louis Pekar, Amarillo, Tex.

Dear Louis,  
The only time all six batteries are being charged is when the engine is running. Once the ignition is turned off, a relay separates the engine batteries from the house batteries. When you are plugged in to 110-volt power or the generator is running, it only charges the house batteries.

When I plug in my 50-amp cable to shore power, I have been advised not to leave the excess cable coiled up in the storage bay because it will create excess heat. Is that true? Should I always leave the excess cable on the ground? Ron Bell, Kingsville, Md.

Dear Ron,  
Your Tiffin motorhome came equipped with a 25-ft 50-amp power cord. Using this heavy-duty

power cord, you should have no problem leaving the excess cable in your storage bay. However, if you use a lighter extension cord to reach your power source, and leave it coiled up in the storage bay, this could become a problem.

Using a power source beyond the length of your factory-supplied, heavy-duty power cord is not recommended. However, if it does become necessary to use an extension cord, use the same heavy gauge cord like the one supplied by the factory. It should be as short as possible to reach your

power source. In other words, do not use a 50-ft cord to go 10 feet.

I have seen many RVers use a pressure washer to clean their motorhomes, both metal siding and fiberglass. Is it safe for me to use a pressure washer on my 2001 Allegro Bus? Allen Van Blaricom Titus, Ala.

Dear Allen,  
High pressure washers will damage decals. A low pressure unit on full body paint is okay if you keep the nozzle at least a foot away from the surface. But, still avoid the decals.

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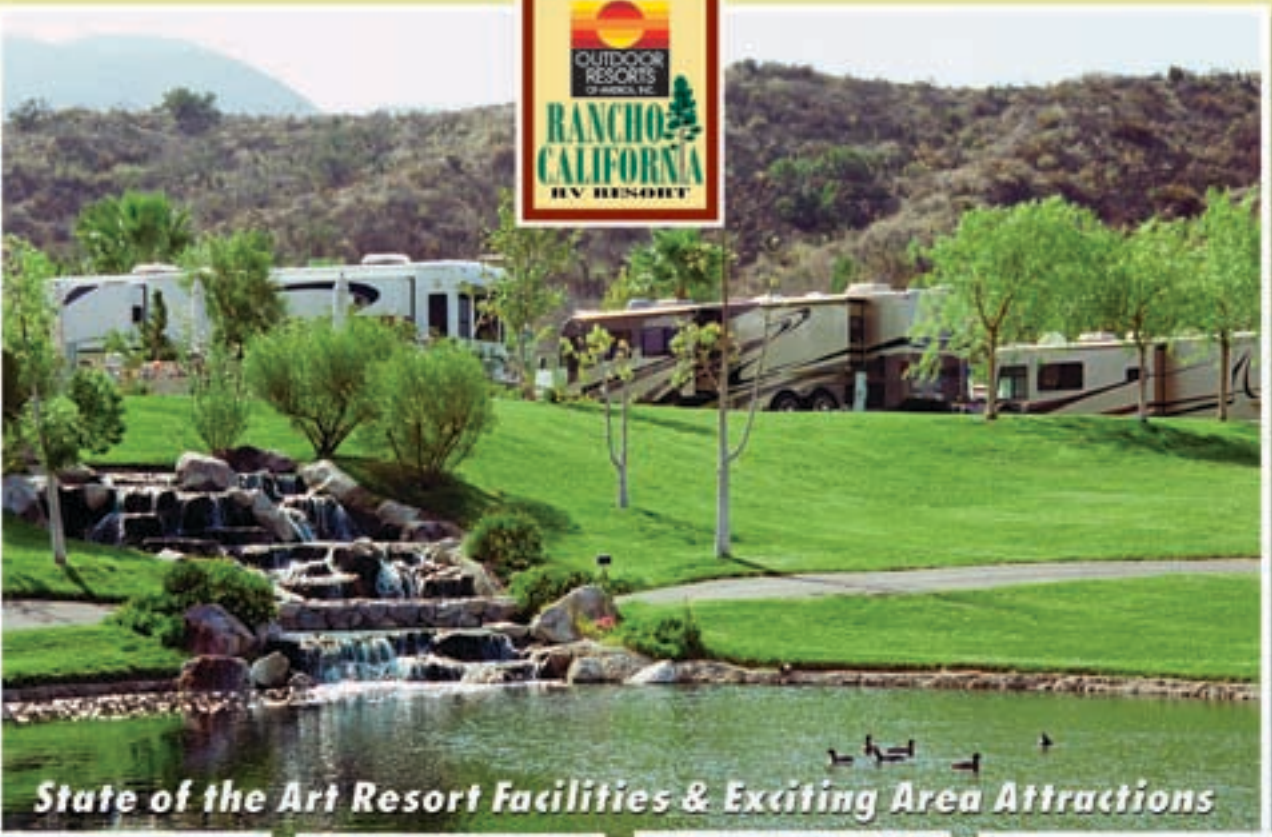
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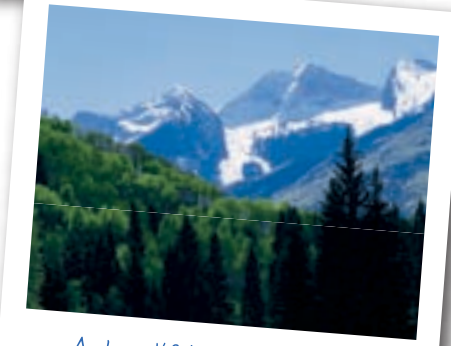


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