

Roughing It Smoothly®



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- Georgia's Golden Isles: St. Simons Island
- Destination: Jefferson, Texas



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Roughing it Smoothly®

January 2017

Volume 14, Number 1

Roughing It Smoothly® magazine is published four times a year by Book Production Resources for Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc., 105 2nd Street NW, Red Bay, Alabama 35582. BPR offices are located at 1403 Cedar Point Way, Monroe, Georgia 30656. Periodical postage paid at Monroe, GA and additional mailing offices.

**Postmaster: Send all changes of address to Book Production Resources
PO Box 1150
Monroe, GA 30655-1150**

This issue of *Roughing It Smoothly®* has a printed distribution of approximately 28,000 copies, an online distribution of 42,000 copies, and a dealer distribution of 12,000 copies. It was printed by American Printing Co., 428 Industrial Lane, Birmingham, AL 35211.

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Gary & Carol Davis Gar-Mar Farms			

***Roughing It Smoothly* circulation jumps to 82,000 printed and online magazines.**

Over 28,000 Tiffin owners are now receiving *Roughing It Smoothly* through the U.S. and Canadian postal service. Over 42,000 have chosen to read *RIS* online at the Tiffin website. Our dealers are distributing 12,000 copies in their showrooms. *Roughing It Smoothly* is in its 14th year and is the largest magazine published by an RV manufacturer in number of pages and total distribution.

In each issue you will still find two cards for sending information to the editorial office in Monroe, Georgia. Using the "From the Road" card, we invite you to tell fellow Tiffin coach owners about your experiences and the special places you have discovered in your travels. If the card is not large enough, please type a whole page double-spaced, and mail it to Fred Thompson, Book Production Resources, P.O. Box 1150, Monroe, GA 30655-1150. Be sure to include your name and address, phone number, and email address in case we need to edit or ask for more information. Color prints are welcome and we will use

them if we have the space. We do not return color prints or manuscript. You can also send your "From the Road" contribution by email to fredthompson1941@hotmail.com You may attach your images to your email. Images should be at least one megabyte in size. On the subject line of the email, please write FROM THE ROAD.

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address as it appears on your magazine label. Second, please enter your new three-line address including the zip code. **We do not accept phone calls for changes of address.**

Serious Tech Talk

To address your technical questions to Danny Inman, use the postcard bound in this issue, send a longer letter to the address on the postcard, or send an email to RIS techtalk@gmail.com **If you need an immediate answer to a service problem, you should call 256-356-0261.**

New Subscribers

If you have just purchased a new Tiffin motorhome, your name will be added to our mailing list automatically. If you purchased a pre-owned Tiffin motorhome, send the year, brand, length & floorplan, your name and address, and VIN to *Roughing It Smoothly*, PO Box 1150, Monroe, GA 30655-1150.

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Quality Circle Award

Bob Tiffin was notified on November 16 by Phil Ingrassia, president of Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association, that Tiffin Motorhomes had been selected for the 10th consecutive year to receive the Quality Circle Award.

RVDA each year sends to its members a survey that measures dealer attitudes in key policy, product, and procedure areas that dealers say are the most important elements in their business partnerships with manufacturers. The survey uses a Dealer Satisfaction Index (DSI) as a measuring tool to score the manufacturers' performance.

In 2016 the threshold for a manufacturer receiving a Quality Circle Award was increased to a cumulative score of 85 percent, up five percent over the 2015 threshold.

The motorized RV manufacturers receiving the award for 2016 are Tiffin, Airstream, Triple E, Newmar, and Pleasure-Way. When



Tim Tiffin, general manager, receives the company's 10th Quality Circle Award from Darrel Friesen, RVDA chairman, as Andy Baer, national sales manager, looks on. The awards ceremony took place at the RVDA National RV Show in Louisville the week after Thanksgiving.

rating the manufacturers, RVDA asks dealers to express confidentially their level of

satisfaction on four core issues: parts, warranty, reliability/quality, and sales support.

In the 23rd Annual DSI Survey that was conducted between August and October 2016, 481 dealers responded and provided 2,755 brand ratings.

In the four core areas, dealers rated the manufacturer on a scale of 1 to 5. The "ultimate question" the dealer was asked, "How likely are you to recommend this brand to a friend in a different market to sell at his dealership?" The responses were categorized as promoters, passives, or detractors. A Net Promoter Score (promoters minus detractors) was given to each manufacturer. Tiffin Motorhomes' NPS was 84.0%. The Net Promoter Score for all motorized brands was 22.9%. There was a total of 429 dealer responses. Tiffin's NPS was based on 25 dealer responses.

PHOTO BY SHAWN SPENCE

Family Values and Tiffin Dealers Near You

by Bob Tiffin

It is amazing how many father-son(s) dealerships are a part of the Tiffin Motorhomes network of dealerships in the U.S. and Canada. Of the 47 dealer profiles we have published in *Roughing It Smoothly* over the last 13 years, 20 are father-son(s) operations, one is a mother-son operation, and another is a father-daughter operation. Of the 22 noted, ten father-son(s) operations have multiple locations! This phenomenon in the RV industry emphasizes the viability and success of the family business built on family values. These 10 dealerships are so successful they have gone out and established multiple locations.

Our business is built on family values. We have 65 dealers and 100 dealerships in the U.S. and Canada. When I can talk to the owner of one of our dealerships, I know I have a connection to the heart of the business. It is so much easier to discuss business, to address a problem, to talk about a suggestion when you can talk to the owner. It's like President Truman said, "The buck stops here!" You never have to go through three layers of management when you start with the president. That's why my office door is always open.

If you have the house plans to build a new home, you find a contractor you can trust. But you don't walk off and come back four months later. You want to see the progress the builder is making each day, and maybe make some mid-course corrections.

In the business of building motorhomes, it is going to be more and more important to really know the manufacturer and the dealership. You want to know the manufacturer's intentions for staying in business. Will the same dealership that sells you the motorhome be there next year to give you excellent service for the complex machine you bought from him?

If your dealer sells out to a national RV chain, you will be confronted with a whole different set of values because everything has to go through their chain of command. You can spend days trying to find the right person to help you with a problem. You wind up with four or five different employees to deal with and none of them can help. No one can make a decision.

With a family-owned dealership, you can always find the right person who can make a decision. The owner feels far more responsible to his customer than a big public company that



trades on the New York Stock Exchange.

Have you ever received a notice from your bank saying that they were making a change to their financial relationship with you? If you do not respond in the stated number of days, the new policy goes into effect. If you disagree, you can cancel your relationship with your bank. No options.


Policies in large public companies get changed when they issue similar no-option ultimatums. These policy changes are made for the benefit of the company, not necessarily for the benefit of their customers. The changes usually have an adverse effect on the owner or end user of one of their products.

Answers to owners' questions need to be immediate. Over the last nine months in the Tiffin Service Center, we have received 6,000 to 9,000 calls a week for information and assistance at our help desk. Each week we ship 1,200 to 1,500 parts orders to dealers and owners. We support at least half of our owners through family-owned service centers.

Buyers want and deserve a personal touch, personal care. I try to recognize everybody I see and speak to them with a friendly greeting. If I don't know you the first time I speak to you, maybe I will get a second chance to meet you later if you know I am approachable. If you have an issue with your motorhome, I want to take care of it. Some problems are very easy to solve with a simple explanation and understanding.

In order for Tiffin Motorhomes and your dealer to stay in business to help you when you need it, we have to make a profit. My daddy told me many years ago, "You'll never go broke making a profit."

Think about this. Some folks in the market for a motorhome will send out bid requests to our dealers all over the country. If the dealer nearest them did not offer the lowest price, they will buy from someone hundreds, maybe thousands of miles away and be pleased that they got the lowest price. But then how sheepish the new owner will feel when he has to visit his local Tiffin dealer to get service.

It is okay for your local dealer to make a profit. They have to make a profit to be able to be there for you when you need them. 

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The 2017 Allegro Breeze 31BR

A STORY OF CONCISE PRECISION ENGINEERING

After one year of tremendous success with the new Cummins 275hp ISV5.0 V8 diesel in the Allegro Breeze 32BR, Tiffin Motorhomes in September introduced the 2017 Allegro Breeze 31BR, a long-awaited floorplan with an east-west DS rear slide-out and a rear closet extending across the entire width of the coach. The concise use of space in the industry's smallest diesel pusher belies the fact that the Breeze was

conceived as a downsized Class A motorhome. Indeed, the bedroom, galley, and living room all convey a sense of spaciousness.

Our Daytime Hours in a Breeze

Let's take a close look first at the living room.

From north to south, this space claims 12 feet of the coach's total length. With both slides deployed, the east-west dimension measures 11'7", giving us a room of approximately 130 square feet.

The living room area is handsomely appointed with a 60-inch Flexsteel air coil hide-a-bed sofa upholstered in UltraLeather™ and accented with brown piping. With seat belts in the sofa for three passengers, you can bring friends and family along for a full day's outing at the beach.

The driver and passenger chairs can be rotated 180 degrees to become part of the living room seating. Both chairs have six-

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



way power movements to allow any directional change that will make the occupant more comfortable, both while you are traveling or just relaxing in your living room. The passenger chair has a power footrest to elevate your legs, turning it into a luxury recliner. The chairs are made by Flexsteel, the industry's leading manufacturer of RV furniture.

The UltraLeather booth dinette seats four with a 25 × 42-inch dining table. It also provides additional seating when extra campers drop in for a visit. When it's time for "lights out," the dinette table drops down to seat level to create a 42 × 70-inch bed for children. The sofa becomes a very comfortable double bed. All of the features described are standard in the 31BR, making the living room a pleasant area for visiting or a personal space for quiet repose. The cabinetry featured in this coach is Mocha and the interior décor is Raffia. The UltraLeather is Oatstraw.

For the first time since the Breeze was introduced in 2011, the 31BR floor plan offers the popular dinette-computer workstation (not shown), an option at \$725 (MSRP). Those who will use the Breeze in their business, or as a convenient way to store their computer equipment and travel records, will find the option very attractive. In addition to the well-designed cabinet for a laptop and printer on the north side of the extend-

able table, the south side has two drawers for office materials plus a filing drawer with rails for hanging folders. Two doors under the table open to even more storage. The dinette-computer workstation is wired for 110v and USB.

We Love Being Entertained

Because entertainment is always a major consideration in the design of Tiffin coaches, there are three entertainment centers in the Breeze 31BR — the living area, the bedroom, and the patio — requiring four televisions, all standard equipment.

The mid-section 40-inch HDTV is the

primary display for the surround sound entertainment system. It is complemented by a 32-inch over-the-dash television, an accommodation to the person facing forward in the dinette. If you are having breakfast, lunch, or dinner, each person in the coach can see the programming on a big screen.

Four speakers, flush with the ceiling, give you the "big theater," surround sound effects that make music productions, big sound movies, and NASCAR events so much fun to watch. The four speakers are enhanced by a mid-tone speaker in the cabinet just below the television and a sub-woofer under the dinette.





LG's Smart TV technology for the entertainment center is located in a louvered cabinet in the rear PS corner of the bedroom. It will allow you to select programming from Today, Netflix, Hulu Plus, Amazon, Facebook, YouTube, Skype, M-Go, and more. You can switch back and forth between apps, movies, and TV shows using the on-screen interfaces. Shows, movies, and games come to life in high definition on the LH5700 Series. LED backlighting displays images with superb color detail, and your Smart TV makes streaming easy.

If you want to watch TV without disturbing those nearby, you can use the LG remote app and wirelessly send the audio from the TV to your compatible smartphone. Put on your headphones and only you can hear the audio. You can also use your smartphone to stream music wirelessly using the Bluetooth® feature in both devices. Note: All devices must be connected to the home theater system for private sound mode and Bluetooth features.

Input includes CDs, USB devices, MKV playback, external HDD playback, and

Blu-Ray 3D discs. When you add the DVR module to your DirecTV or Dish receivers, you can record current programming and play it back at your convenience. The standard inverter on the Breeze supports the televisions and the surround sound.

When you are en route, big, full sound can be a part of your traveling pleasure with the Kenwood radio/CD/Sirius in-dash music system. Four ceiling speakers, two each just in front of and behind the driver and passenger chairs, enhance the experience of listening to your favorite CDs or selections from Sirius (with subscription). The Kenwood system can be paired with your iPhones for hands-free conversations.

We Enjoy Cooking in Our Motorhome

A solid surface countertop (SSCT) measuring 87 inches wide by 29 inches deep provides ample space for preparing meals with the 3-burner propane cooktop complemented by a Sharp microwave-convection oven. The galley has a full-height, designer backsplash, adding elegance seldom found in a coach at this price point.

The galley is brightly lit with four task

lights recessed into the overhead cabinets, plus two more built into the frame for the exhaust fan directly above the propane cooktop. Served by a single-lever faucet, the double stainless steel sink has SSCT flush covers to increase the countertop workspace or serving area if you are presenting a buffet for your guests. Three 110-volt outlets spaced across the backsplash provide service for electric skillets, toasters, mixers, juicers, etc.

If the three-burner cooktop and double stainless-steel sink are in full use, you still have over six square feet of countertop space for appliances or the staging of your ingredients for the cooking process. In addition to the cooktop exhaust fan, TMH features a Fan-Tastic Vent 3-speed ceiling exhaust fan powerful enough to exchange the air in the entire coach in just a few minutes.

The residential refrigerator with an ice-maker is standard with four batteries. The unit has approximately 9.3 cubic feet in the fridge and 2.8 cubic feet in the freezer.

With four cabinets above the galley's workspace providing nearly 10 cubic feet

of storage, the cook has quick access to any items needed during food preparation. The open cabinet design provides space for big box items in the rear and smaller food containers in the front.

Under the countertop, you will be pleased to find a stack of three drawers. The top drawer is sectioned for tableware with a larger space for cooking utensils. The next two drawers are 23-inches long \times 12.5 inches wide \times 6 inches deep. The drawer under the microwave-convection oven is 19 inches square and 3.5 inches deep, perfect for storing skillets or a large griddle for pancakes.

The trash receptacle tucks nicely under the double sink into the space behind the left door, leaving you a large space for kitchen cleaning products. Now for the surprise: a slide-out pantry that extends 22 inches. It is 22 inches tall with three shelves that are 7 inches wide. Nothing slack about this galley!

The living area and galley certainly meet the Tiffin Store-It-All™ Assurance. When we did the math, we found that the cabinets over the dinette offered 6 cubic feet of storage. The two drawers in the dinette's bench seats conceal another 3.3 cubic feet. In the DS slide-out, the cabinets above the sleep sofa provide 5.5 cubic feet. When you visit other Class A coaches of a similar size, be sure to check out their comparative storage.

R&R Is a Must in Our Breeze

Now for a look at the bedroom. With the DS slide-out extended, the footprint of the bedroom is 9'9" \times 8'9". It features a full queen size bed (60" \times 80") and a closet that extends across the entire width of the coach and has two mirrored sliding doors. The closet has two interior lights, a depth of 19.5 inches, and a vertical height of 60 inches. Cooling and return air ducts will keep your clothes fresh in hot weather.

Each of the bedside end tables has enclosed compartments, 110-volt service, and two USB ports. Softly lit Spyder switch controls provide master ON/OFF switches, and switches for the front door light, bedroom lights, and the hall lights. You will never have to turn off the



coach's lights at some central point and then grope your way in the dark to find the bed. The lighted Spyder switches and controls are well placed throughout the coach to give the user multiple choices from multiple locations.

If catching the early morning news in bed is your favorite thing, or stretching out for a late movie, the Breeze's second entertainment center could not be more conveniently located. The LG system with all of its options plus a CD player is right at the foot of the bed.

Tiffin has a reputation for creating significant storage space in the bedroom. You will find 10 cubic feet of storage above the

bed's headboard plus an additional 6.3 cubic feet under the bed. Two chests with SSCT offer six drawers for clothing storage. The larger chest houses a louvered compartment for the electronics.

A "picture window" above the smaller chest measures 45 inches wide by 19 inches high, begging you to find a park that offers a beautiful view each morning. Above that window is a three-door compartment providing yet another 2.6 cubic feet of storage. We acclimate ourselves to living in smaller spaces when we acquire a motorhome. Tiffin makes that a lot easier with its innovative storage and creative living space throughout the coach.



Our Breeze Has a Full-Featured Bath

Moving back to the mid-section of the 31BR to check out the bath, I was surprised when I measured the floor of the shower stall: 38" × 24" — a really large shower for any Class A coach. It has a 3-piece sliding Plexiglas door, a seat, a recessed receptacle for soap and toiletries, and a skylight. The handheld shower head is mounted on a sliding vertical pole



to put it at the correct height for anyone. The solid surface countertop vanity is 39 inches wide with a ceramic lavatory and a pump style single lever faucet. The 36-inch wide medicine cabinet has three shelves enclosed by mirrored double doors. The vanity has one drawer and a cabinet under the lavatory for a trash can and the toilet paper holder.

We Like Our Room Temps Just So

As standard equipment, the Breeze 31BR has two 13,500 BTU air conditioners. This coach has an optional upgrade (MSRP \$580) that replaces the front 13,500 BTU air conditioner with a 15,000 BTU unit with a heat pump. This makes it possible to heat the coach with the heat pump as long as the outside temp is 38 degrees or warmer. The optional fireplace

(MSRP \$725) located under the 40-inch mid-section TV does a great job of knocking off the chill on a cool morning.

The Extraordinaire™ AC system in Tiffin coaches is enhanced by a state-of-the-art heating and cooling technology developed by Tiffin engineers. Modeled on the residential method of moving air, the system uses directional registers and return air vents placed on opposing sides of the ceiling: cooled air through the duct work on the PS and return air through the vents connected to the DS ducts. This keeps air moving in a circular pattern to maintain the desired interior temperature.

When the temperature really gets cold, two propane furnaces kick in to keep the coach toasty warm. The rear furnace serves the bedroom and bath, while the front furnace heats the galley and living area.



Outdoor Activities in a Breeze

The 2017 Allegro Breeze adds a third entertainment center to its outdoor living experience. The coach's 22-foot awning extending from the roof shelters you from the hot summer sun or a shower that might otherwise have cancelled the cookout. While you are grilling your hamburgers, you can watch the evening news on the Breeze's 32-inch HDTV (standard equipment) concealed by a flip-up door in the outside wall or you can keep up with your favorite team on a football Saturday.

The New Exterior Design & Basement

For 2017 the Breeze's new front cap raised eyebrows and got a lot of high-fives. Some referred to the design as the "little Zephyr." The large front slide-out provides easy access to the 6,000KB Onan Quiet Diesel generator, the Denso HVAC, the windshield wash tank, and other service points in front of the firewall. The two extra house batteries to accommodate the residential refrigerator are located here.

The lighted basement storage compartment, accessible from both sides of the coach, provides approximately 79 cubic feet of storage capacity—plenty of room for a folding table, lawn chairs, an outdoor grill, your tools, and cleaning supplies.

Beginning at the front of the coach on the passenger side, the first basement compartment offers several cubic feet of storage with service for 110v, 12v, and cable. The second compartment is lighted and provides pass-through storage. The next compartment also has pass-through storage and is much larger. The fourth door gives access to the wet tanks. The fifth compartment houses the cooling fan, primary and secondary tank drains,



Tiffin has the best designed utility bays in the industry, bar none.

and the customer compressed air supply—a very useful option that allows the owner to check tire pressure in the campsite before you travel. The last compartment on the passenger side has a small storage area, the chassis batteries, the rear chassis power breaker, and the chassis battery cut-off switch.

At the rear of the coach, the large strut-supported door swings up and away for easy access to the engine check points.

Moving from front-to-back on the driver's side of the coach, the first compartment houses the fuse/relay module and the pull cord to open the front slide-out. Next is the propane compartment,

followed by the third and fourth doors that open to the pass-through storage. The fifth door conceals the utility bay, followed by compartments for the DEF tank and the 50-amp service.

The entire basement with 13 doors on both sides is concisely designed with all components carefully labeled.

OUR BREEZE IS BUILT ON THE POWERGLIDE™ CHASSIS

When the motorhome manufacturer controls the design and engineering of the chassis, the perfect integration of the coach's basic box (floor, walls, and roof) with the chassis can be assured. TMH began building the PowerGlide seven years ago. With research and over-the-road testing, the chassis engineering department has focused on better handling and control, a smoother ride, and reliable performance year after year.

Tiffin's Five Star Warranty. The PowerGlide chassis is backed for (1) three years or 50,000 miles (whichever comes first) against structural defects in the materials and workmanship on the chassis, drive train, and suspension; (2) five years or 100,000 miles for Cummins ISV5.0 V8 engine; and (3) five years or 200,000 miles on the Allison transmission.

The Cummins Diesel Engine. The Cummins ISV5.0 V8 diesel is the result of a three-year collaboration between Tiffin Motorhomes and Cummins Power Generation. After the engine was designed and built, it was tested on a PowerGlide chassis for a continuous non-stop run of 200,000 miles. Drivers stopped only for service at the prescribed times. The ISV5.0 exceeds traditional engines in durability, reliability, and performance. Unusually quiet, it delivers 275 horsepower at 3,200 rpm and 560 lb-ft of max torque at 1,600 rpm.

PRECISIONTRACK™ TECHNOLOGY. When you first drive the Breeze, you will notice immediately how responsively it maneuvers and how firmly it handles cornering. To achieve these features, PrecisionTrack technology deftly merges independent front suspension with the coach's air-ride system. Each wheel is engineered

to continually adjust to unanticipated surfaces and changing road conditions.

Multiplex Wiring. The electrical system of a Class A motorhome is characteristically very complex. The PowerGlide chassis reduces that complexity with multiplex wiring. Conventional wiring systems use separate wires to control each electrical function. A multiplex system allows control modules to remotely send electronic messages back and forth through the same datalink wire, monitoring components and interpreting the transmissions, just as broadband cable allows telephone, television, and internet to travel through the same line. Onboard computers capture fault data and relay it to the electronic instrument cluster in the dash, alerting the driver to a problem. Fault information may be downloaded by a service technician for diagnosing and correcting the problem.



Easier Service. Since Tiffin Motorhomes builds the Breeze from the top to the ground, the owner can enjoy one-stop service for the entire coach and the chassis. If your Breeze is being serviced in the Tiffin Service Center in Red Bay, diesel service is just two miles away at Bay Diesel.

Fuel Efficiency. The Breeze's power plant, chassis, and total weight have been carefully designed and integrated to create a very efficient coach. I recorded in my travel diary in July 1996 that I paid \$1.36/gallon for diesel. If the CPI Inflation Calculator is correct, that price would be \$2.09 today. I paid \$2.31 for diesel in Georgia on December 28, only a 10 percent increase in 20 years. Combined with getting 11 to 12 miles per gallon, the Breeze is a bargain to operate. Knowing that I am cruising down the highway for only nineteen cents per mile for fuel makes motorhoming even more fun.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS & TECHNOLOGY

Tiffin Motorhomes' innovations are the epitome of the cliché, "Necessity is the mother of invention." In the beginning, most RV component manufacturers were hundreds, even thousands of miles away from Red Bay, Alabama. Shipping costs were higher and delivery schedules were longer. After a few bad experiences with suppliers that failed him miserably, Bob Tiffin saw self-sufficiency as a key avenue to success. Elbow grease, common sense, and business savvy kept the company moving in its early years. As trickle-down technology from the space age affected every type of manufacturing, Tiffin Motorhomes recruited talent from the South's best engineering schools and found local talent emerging from nearby high schools and community colleges. Native ability and a "yes, we can" attitude has propelled TMH to the top of the motorhome industry, manufacturing coaches named Phaeton, Allegro Bus, and Allegro RED that have led Class A diesel pusher sales for the last decade. Following are a few recent innovative ideas that keep Tiffin on top.

THE TIFFIN STORE-IT-ALL™ ASSURANCE

The motorhomes manufactured under each of Tiffin's six brands will surpass the quantity and quality of storage space in any competitor's Class A motorhome of equivalent length and similar price. Tiffin owners rate the company's storage design and technology as the benchmark for the industry.



SMARTSLIDES

A game-changer in RV design, Tiffin's SmartSlides are built as a single fiberglass box with only one side of the box open — the side that faces the interior of the motorhome. The design of the slide-out makes it air- and watertight when it is deployed. When the slide-out is retracted, it's location in the sidewall is virtually undetectable.



TIFFIN-BUILT COMPONENTS

Tiffin coaches feature custom-made components designed and built by Tiffin craftsmen, such as our heavyweight metal cargo doors and latches. Computer designed and laser-cut, their construction guarantees quality and consistency and ensures replacement parts are always available. In the Allegro Bus and Zephyr, solid cherry doors open or slide smoothly to provide privacy in the bedroom and bath that you will appreciate.



DRY-STEP

Water run-off from the air conditioning systems is drained through tubing enclosed in the wall on the driver's side of the coach, ensuring the surfaces near the entry door remain safe and dry. In all of the diesel-powered brands, separate awnings over the entry doors are designed to remain extended during inclement weather to give you protection while you open or close your umbrella during exit or entry.



FORM-FITTED SEAMLESS ROOF CAP

An innovation in motorhome construction, Tiffin's one-piece fiberglass roof is designed with a curved extension that overlaps the top edge of the coach's walls, interlocking the two units along the side of the wall rather than the corner of the wall and roof which would be far more difficult to seal. Tiffin creates all of its fiberglass components with patented technology in a plant near Iuka, Mississippi, giving them complete quality control in this area that most of its competitors do not enjoy.



ARTISAN WOODCRAFTS

Working with unblemished hardwood (cherry in the Zephyr and Bus, alder in the Phaeton, RED, Breeze, and Allegro), master craftsmen meticulously create custom-made moldings, insets, raised panel doors, carved fascias, crowns, tray ceilings, and headboards that demonstrate imagination at work. Sliding bedroom doors with translucent panels highlight flowing curved wood frames. Recessed wood surrounds laser-cut metal patterns that are repeated at other points in the coach's décor.



MORE PLANS

As Tiffin architects and engineers consider a new floor plan, they must meet four essential criteria: Maximum space. Optimum organization. Relaxation plus. Elegant atmosphere.



PRECISIONTRACK

PrecisionTrack technology merges independent front suspension with an air ride system, enhancing steering control for quicker cornering and easier maneuvering.



Driving the 2017 Allegro Breeze 31BR

One thing I appreciate is simplicity and I found it in the Breeze cockpit. Redesigned for 2017, the three center instruments can be read easily day or night—white characters on a black background covered with a stylish hood. The center dial, of course, displays miles per hour with a larger numeric display at bottom center. If you are in Canada, you can change the numeric display to kilometers per hour. The dial also recalibrates, but the maximum of 120 printed on the dial is equal to 75 mph (i.e., 120 kph = 75 mph). Two trip meters are available to keep tabs on your FROM-TO distances. A display below the center dial provides all of the warning symbols which you can study in your driver's manual and memorize. The left dial displays RPM in the upper half and FUEL and DEF in the lower half. The right dial shows OIL PRESSURE, COOLANT, FRONT AIR, and REAR AIR.

The center console at finger-tip length is equally easy to read and access. The monitor for the side and rear cameras is tilted slightly toward the driver and flanked by USB and 12-volt outlets. The Kenwood entertainment system with stereo speakers in the ceiling is Bluetooth compatible and ready for XM-Sirius radio. To the left and right of the Kenwood are toggles (left) for SOLAR SHADE, NIGHT SHADE, & DRIVER FAN, and (right) RADIO, MAP LIGHT, and GEN START. And just below is Denso's new controls and service for automotive heating, cooling, and windshield defrosting. Two drawers complete the console.

On the dash to the left of the steering column, you will notice the control knob for windshield wipers and washing. Below are five toggles for ENG BRAKE, HEAD LIGHTS, PANEL LAMPS, AUX START, & PEDALS IN/OUT.

In the side console, you will see the air brake (yellow knob), the Aens transmission shifter, and the controls for the heated outside mirrors. In the separate panel just behind the cup holder, the console houses the operator's panel for the HWH air leveling system.



Tiffin included a toggle switch to control the position of the gas and brake pedals. After you have selected the best position for the driver's chair, you can move the pedals in and out to accommodate the height of any driver. The Flexsteel chair has 6-way directional controls and a lever for setting the angle of the back.

In the road test, my partner used an altimeter on an iPad. In 0.80 mile (4200 ft.), the vehicle ascended 141 feet. The Breeze had a full tank of fuel, a full tank of water (70 gal.), two people on board, and was

pulling a tow car weighing 3,550 lbs. We entered the incline at 65 mph and completed it at 60 mph.

In an acceleration test to simulate a ramp speed of 30 mph merging onto an interstate highway, the Breeze went from 30 to 60 mph in 23 seconds. Starting from zero, the coach reached 60 mph in 32.6 seconds. This test was made pulling the tow car with the same load in the coach.

With its independent front suspension and new steering box, driving the 2017 Breeze is comparable to driving a

Chevy Suburban. The low ratio steering means almost zero play in the steering wheel. On a level straightaway pulling the Saturn, I took my hands off the wheel to see how long it would run true — over 10 seconds. This is a coach that the ladies will love to drive.

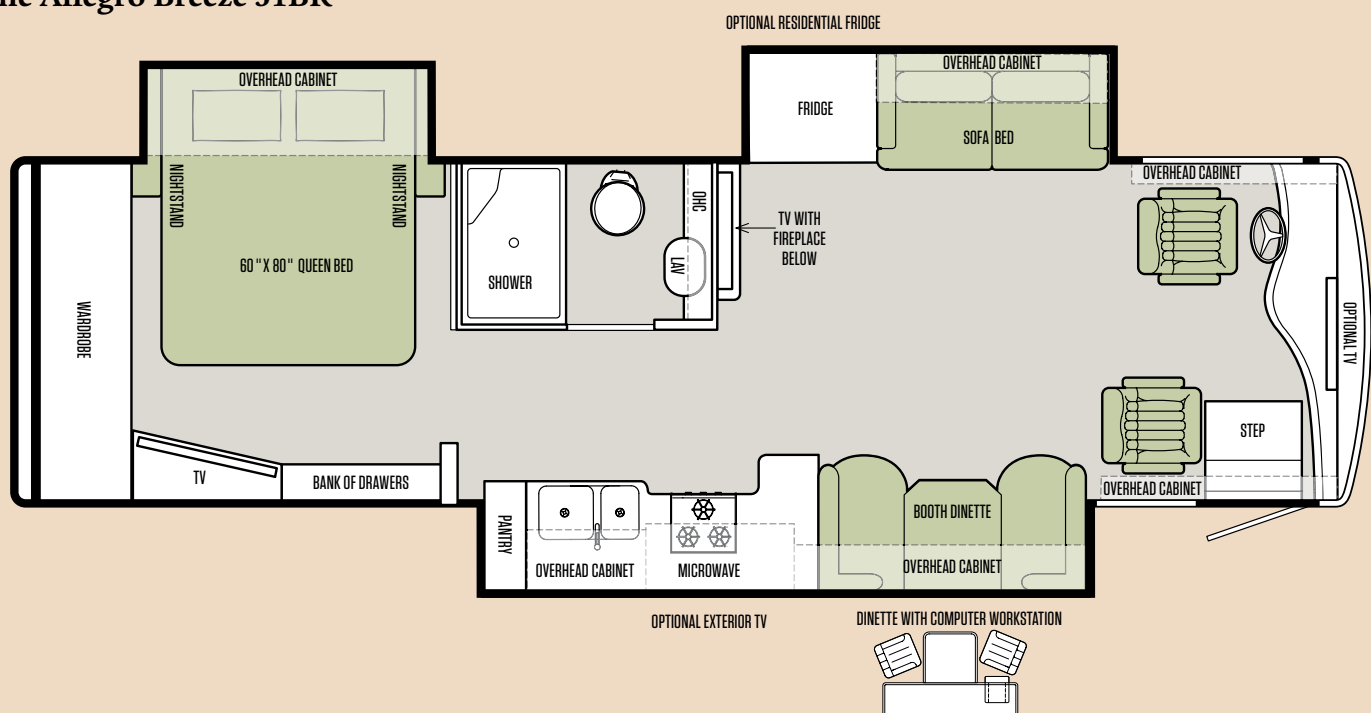
If you are a couple moving up from a towable to a motorhome, the 2017 Breeze would be an excellent choice. The power and performance of the Cummins rear engine diesel and the build quality of a Tiffin coach create one of the best choices on the road today.

On the other end of the spectrum, if you are seasoned RVers who wish to downsize and make changes to your RV lifestyle — but want to retain most of the features of a full-size Class A— then you, too, will find the Breeze an excellent choice: rear engine diesel, air ride suspension, and the interior features of a big Class A.

The 2017 Allegro Breeze 32BR was reviewed one year ago in the Winter 2016 (13:1) issue. Everything I said then is still true with the 31BR, which you can read online at tiffinmotorhomes.com (see pages 14 and 80).

Just remember, Tiffin wants you to enjoy roughing it smoothly — and “wherever you go, we go.” Our hallmark service begins with the sale. **RIS**

The Allegro Breeze 31BR



SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2017 Allegro Breeze 31BR, Three Slides

Base MSRP* – \$237,945 MSRP as tested with options – \$240,374

STANDARD FEATURES

Structural

Laminated floor, sidewall, and roof
Steel/aluminum reinforced structure
Full one-piece fiberglass roof cap

Automotive

Allison 2100 MH 6-speed transmission
Cummins ISV5.0 V8 diesel engine
560 lb-ft torque @ 1600 rpm
275 hp @ 3,200 rpm
Four air bags
Independent front suspension
Exhaust brake
Fog lights
Daytime running lights

Exterior

Fiberglass front & rear caps
Tinted one-piece windshield
6kw Onan® Quiet Diesel generator
Two 13,500 BTU low profile roof AC (high efficiency)
Quiet AC roof-ducted system
Single electric step
¾-inch thick single pane windows
Horizontal mounted wipers
Heated power mirrors
Gel-coat fiberglass walls
Full body paint
Paint protective film on front cap
Aluminum wheels
Exterior LED patio lights
Power patio awning
Power entry door awning
Slide-out awnings
32-inch TV in PS wall under awning
HWH automatic air leveling system
Seamless, one-piece fiberglass composite slide-out box construction
Convenient storage doors with gas shocks
Rigid long-life storage boxes
Exterior storage compartment lights
Single handle lockable storage door latches
Heated water and holding tank compartments
Two 6v auxiliary batteries
Digital/analog TV antenna
Cable ready TV
50-amp service
Battery Minder Plus
Black holding tank flush system
Exterior rinse hose/shower
Back-up camera with color dash monitor
Side cameras activated by turn signals
Inverter for televisions & entertainment center only
110v exterior receptacle
110v/12v converter
Undercoating
Roof ladder
External tripod satellite hook-up

Driver's Compartment

UltraLeather 6-way powered driver seat & passenger seat with powered foot-rest (Flexsteel®)
Lighted instrument panel
Back-up monitor
Contemporary styled dash

Single CD player & stereo AM/FM radio
XM receiver and antenna
One 12v dash receptacle
Two USB ports in dash
Dash gauges with diagnostic system
Tilt/telescope steering wheel
Adjustable gas & brake pedals
Auxiliary start
Cruise control
Dual dash fans
Power solar & privacy shades for windshield
Roll-Ease® solar & privacy shades for driver & passenger side windows
Fire extinguisher
Snack tray with two cupholders

Living Area/Dinette

UltraLeather™ booth dinette with large pull-out storage drawers
Home theater surround sound system with Blu-ray DVD player
UltraLeather 60" air coil hide-a-bed sofa by Flexsteel –DS
Mid-section 40" HDTV
Inverter for television & surround sound
Over-the-dash 32" HDTV

Kitchen

Single lever satin nickel sink faucet
Double bowl stainless steel sink with solid surface countertop covers
Solid surface countertops
Solid surface backsplashes and splash guard
3-burner cooktop
Convection-microwave oven with exterior venting
Residential refrigerator with icemaker
3-shelf slide-out pantry
Single door vertical pantry (2 shelves)

Bath

Medicine cabinet
Skylight in shower
LED light in shower
Satin nickel faucet
Vanity with drawer, magazine rack, & cabinet
Solid surface countertop with molded lavatory
Toilet with foot flush
Fiberglass shower with 3-piece sliding Plexiglas door
3-speed exhaust fan
Vanity lighting
LED ceiling lights

Bedroom

91-inch wide wardrobe with double sliding mirrored doors
Full queen size bed
Bed comforter with four matching pillows
Memory foam mattress
32-inch HDTV
Large picture window with solar/privacy shades
Two chests with six drawers
Two OH storage compartments, one under bed

Carbon monoxide detector
LPG leak detector
110v outlet in each bedside table
Two USB ports in each bedside table

General Interior

Choose from three interior hardwood finishes
Choose from three designer fabric suites
Self-locking pocket door hardware
High gloss raised panel hardwood cabinet doors
Vinyl headliner
Solid hardwood cabinet faces & drawer fronts
Wall-to-wall vinyl tile flooring throughout coach
Ball bearing drawer slides
Scotchgard® treated carpet & fabrics
Roll-Ease® solar & privacy shades in living area windows
LED lighting throughout coach
Two power roof vents
Tank level monitor system
Smoke detector
6-gallon DSI gas/electric water heater
Two 30,000 BTU ducted furnaces

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

15,000 AC with heat pump (front only)
IPO 13,500 AC
In-motion satellite dish
Mocha interior hardwood finish
Raffia designer fabric suite
Central vacuum system

OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

English Chestnut interior hardwood finish
Cordovan interior hardwood finish
Zest designer fabric suite
Toasted Almond designer fabric suite
Fireplace in mid-section
Dinette-computer workstation

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 182"
Overall length – 31'6"
Overall height with roof air – 11'2"
Interior height – 78"
Overall width – 95"
Interior width – 91"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 24,500 lbs.
Front GAWR – 9,500 lbs.
Rear GAWR – 15,000 lbs.
GCWR – 29,000 lbs.
UVW – 19,920 lbs.
CCC – 3,213 lbs.
Trailer hitch capacity – 4,500 lbs.

POWER TRAIN

Engine – Cummins ISV 5.0 V8
Horsepower – 275 hp @ 3,200 rpm
Torque – 560 lb.ft. @ 1,600 rpm

Transmission – Allison 6-speed MH 2100
Tire size – 265/70R19.5
Alternator – 170 amps

CHASSIS

Frame – Full length ladder type design
Frame design – Low floor, one-piece construction
Anti-locking braking system – Standard 4-wheel anti-lock brakes
Independent front suspension
Shock absorbers – Bilstein custom tuned
Axles – Front: Reyco-Granning IFS 1000. Rear: Dana S130
Leveling – HWH Level Air system

CONSTRUCTION

Body – Laminated floor, sidewalls, roof
Roof – One-piece fiberglass
Support – Steel/aluminum reinforced structure
Front/rear body panels – One-piece fiberglass caps
Exterior side panels – Gel-coat fiberglass walls

ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – Four adults, two children
Fuel tank – 70 gallons
Fresh water – 70 gallons
Black water – 33 gallons
Grey water – 55 gallons
LPG tank – 20 gallons (can be filled to 80% capacity)

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 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 on all models. Because of progressive improvements made in a model year, specifications, and standard and optional equipment are subject to change without notice or obligation.



Unveiling the Most Coveted In-Dash AC on the Road

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DENSO

**COMMERCIAL &
HEAVY DUTY**

You don't worry too much about your In-Dash AC... until it stops working. When it comes to building In-Dash AC systems, DENSO is a name you can trust. As one of the global leaders in AC system technology, design, and manufacturing our components meet the stringent requirements of the top RV manufacturers and automakers around the world. Our newest model offers high performance cooling, heating and defrost, with a track record of reliability coupled with a luxurious new panel. So when you're ready to hit the open road, you'll never have to worry about your DENSO In-Dash AC unit.

For more information or to find a distributor, visit www.DENSOHeavyDuty.com

Tricky Cleaning Dilemmas

by Mary Findley

As warm temperatures of early Spring nudge memories of ice and snow into the forgotten past, Snowbirds begin their trek North as Northern folks trek south far away from early spring snowstorms. No matter the direction you head, start with a thorough cleaning. My past five articles laid the foundation for both inside and outside cleaning. Let's wrap up the last of the nooks and crannies.

Ceilings

Use great care when cleaning fabric ceilings that were popular a few years back. Degreasing agents found in most cleaners and liquid dish soap loosens the adhesive holding the fabric to the ceiling. Avoid their use.

Cloth ceilings pose two problems: brown spots caused by a water leak and grey or black spots that develop around vents, fans or across the ceiling.

Water Spots: Head to the grocery store for some white garbage bags, a fresh box of baking soda and a fresh bottle of hydrogen peroxide. Both products lose their cleaning ability after they have been opened for 6 or more months. Place the plastic bags on the floor and on any furniture directly below the spot to be treated. Mix a very thin paste of baking soda and peroxide. The old Brylcreem commercial reminded us that "a little dab will do ya." Well, "a little dab will do ya" when applying this mixture to the ceiling as more than a dab makes for mega headaches. Lightly blot the mixture on the spot. Do not rub it into the fabric.

Remember in my first article when I gave the advice to give your product time to work? It is the best cleaning tip ever. Wait 30 minutes then spray the area with more peroxide. Let the mixture set over night. When combined, peroxide and baking soda bubbles and fizzes, which helps aerate out the stain while the peroxide removes the stain. Spray the spot the next morning if any stain remains. When dry, gently wipe off the excess baking soda. No need to rinse.

Grey or black smudges: Spray a bit of foaming shaving cream (gel does not work) in the palm of one hand. Gently pat onto the spot and wait 30 minutes. Dampen a soft cloth in one part food grade distilled white vinegar to four parts water. Blot to remove the shaving cream.

Ultra Leather or vinyl ceilings: Clean and condition these ceilings regularly to prevent drying and cracking. Mary Moppins' Leather Care cleans and conditions in one step. Once a year pour Leather Care onto a barely damp soft cotton cloth like Mary Moppins' Baby Diapers or an old white cotton T-shirt to deep condition and clean. Dilute one part Leather Care to five parts water to clean regularly.

Leather Care also does an excel-

lent job cleaning and conditioning leather, ultra-leather, vinyl wall sections and vinyl furniture and window shades. This is the only leather cleaner Mary tested that removes dirt from the small grooves in leather and vinyl.

TV Screens

1) Avoid the use of microfiber on TV screens or any surface other than windows or glass unless you prefer that freshly scratched look. 2) Never use standard glass cleaners on TV screens. 3) Clean them as infrequently as possible and keep your hands off the surface or the pixels within the screen will be damaged. 4) Avoid using too much moisture or spraying a liquid directly on the screen as it can work under the screen and appear on the screen.

First unplug the TV, then lightly spritz a soft 100% cotton cloth like Mary's Baby Diaper Cloth with water and very gently wipe the screen working horizontally



Mary Findley is a veteran cleaning expert, cleaning consultant to the RV industry, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Green Cleaning*, and original owner of Mary Moppins. Mary's cleaning tips have appeared in magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *This Old House*, *Woman's World* and other national publications. For more information visit: goclean.com or call 541-607-9498.

with the grain of the screen. Lightly spritz a cloth with water to dust. Remember – hands off the screen!

Wood Surfaces

Use only 100% clean, cotton cloths for dusting and cleaning wood cabinets and furniture, like an old white cotton T-shirt or Baby Diaper Cloths. Once a year deep treat wood furniture and cabinets using full strength Wood Care by Mary Moppins on a dry or barely damp soft cloth. Apply a light touch of elbow grease to work the cleaner into the wood. Wood Care cleans and conditions in one step. It restores color to dry wood and even helps remove light scratches and water marks.

Wood only needs deep conditioning once a year unless your coach is stored in a dry hot state like Arizona or Southern California. Then twice a year is necessary to prevent the wood from drying and cracking. Dilute Wood Care five parts water to one part Wood Care for weekly cleanings.

Clean around the door pulls once a week with the diluted Wood Care to remove oil residue from fingertips that can damage the finish. A word to the wise: if you have been using a product like Endust or Pledge continue using that product. Some wood products are not compatible. Mixing them could damage the finish. Most wood products are compatible with Wood Care, however, test a small spot first.

Laundry Day Blues

Laundry days quickly turn blue when white clothes turn a dingy grey. Isn't bleach supposed to whiten clothes? Yes, bleach is supposed to brighten whites, but it only happens on non-reality shows called TV commercials. In reality, bleach turns whites a grungy color of grey.

For top loading machines, pour a full cup of hydrogen peroxide into the bleach dispenser, adding the regular amount of laundry detergent. When the tub has filled, turn off the machine and soak

the clothes for 30 minutes before finishing the laundry cycle. Peroxide perks up colored clothes as well. Use half a cup of peroxide for the front loading machine in your Tiffin.


Small capacity washers in motorhomes leave little room for error. For instance, when light-weight clothes are washed with heavy items such as towels or jeans, the heavier items can push lighter weight clothing into the holes of the tub. When that happens, unsightly round marks are permanently left on the clothes. When ever possible, wash heavy items separately.

Never overstuff a washing machine. Laundry cleans in two ways: One is by the movement of water and detergent amongst the clothes. The other is the agitation of clothing when it rubs against itself or another piece of laundry. Either way the cleaning action halts when the

machine is over-filled, thus the cause of most towels smelling rancid.

A final word of caution—heat sets a stain. Never put clothing in a washing machine unless the stain has been removed and thoroughly rinsed.

Headlight Fog and Scratch Solution

Questions keep cropping up regarding an effective way to remove the fog or scratches on headlights. After tackling these headlights at an RV rally, I found that Mary Moppins RenewzIt removed both the fog and scratches. It takes elbow grease but it works. Plus it removes water spots, scratches, and swirl marks. Then apply a couple of coats of Advantage to help seal the headlights to prevent moisture from gaining access to the inside of the headlights and continuing to wreak havoc on them. 

Tired of the Old Tank Monitor Issues? Here is the Solution!!



Tank Sender



714 Display



709 Display

- ❖ All SeeLevel models have been designed for retrofit, the existing wiring in your coach can be used to install the system.
- ❖ Percentage readouts are every 3/8 inch instead of the old way of "1/3" or "1/4" fractions.
- ❖ External sender board technology eliminates fouling on the black and gray tanks.
- ❖ Digital design completely eliminates installation calibrations and any future recalibrations.
- ❖ Senders are custom fitted to your tank by cutting the sender with a pair of scissors!
- ❖ The Model 714 is the latest design that is always on for easy viewing, includes one temperature sender with a second optional temperature.

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Georgia's Golden Isles

PART 3 ST. SIMONS ISLAND

A HISTORY OF FORT FREDERICA AND CHRIST CHURCH



Text and photography by Fred Thompson

THE ISLAND'S EARLY INHABITANTS

THE story of St. Simons begins long before recorded history. Before 1936 very little was known about the inhabitants of St. Simons except for the shell banks found on nearly every one of the island's bluffs. Refuse heaps, usually called "kitchen middens," contained pottery shards, oyster and clam shells, primitive tools made from shells and animal bones, and bones from animals that were probably eaten by the inhabitants.

The construction of the airport on St. Simons in 1936 unearthed the site of a complete village that included over 20,000 artifacts as well as the skeletal remains of many of the village's inhabitants. Archaeologists determined that most of the graves predated 1500. Comparative archeological records indicated the inhabitants were Creeks of Muskogean stock.

The approximately eleven Creek villages on St. Simons revealed advanced social, political, and agricultural organization. Tobacco was cultivated and used in both religious and social rituals, and clay pipes for smoking tobacco were the personal possessions of both men and women. Agriculturally, they were successful in raising legumes, melons, corn, and fruit.

The villages were composed of individual homes and common buildings that were identified by over 3,000 post molds. The crude cabins were made with upright poles, a vertical rather than a horizontal use of logs with the spaces in between filled

with moss, dirt, and leaves. The excavations indicate the floors were hardened clay. The chief or "mico" had a larger dwelling that usually was finished out somewhat better than the cabins of his subjects. Villages in close proximity were governed by a "mico mayer" or head chief.

The Creeks were divided politically into many tribes or provinces. The islands between St. Catherines and St. Andrews Sounds were included in the province of Guale, named after an Indian chief who lived on St. Catherines Island.

The "coastal Creeks" enjoyed a mild climate that made it relatively easy for them to have a good supply of food, clothing, and shelter. They enjoyed simple pleasures and lived free of the diseases that had plagued Europe for hundreds of years. They were unaware of the civilization across the "great waters" that would soon change their way of life forever.

THE SPANISH AND THEIR MISSIONS

After nearly two decades of exploring Peru, Central America, and the Caribbean, Hernando de Soto in 1539 sailed from Cuba to Tampa Bay. By fall of the following year, he was in northern Florida with his sights on the coastal islands of what would become Georgia and South Carolina. With his enormous army of 620 soldiers, eight priests, and 220 horses transported in nine

PAINTING COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



ships, de Soto cavalierly sailed past Georgia's Golden Isles and the coast of South Carolina, claiming them for Spain.

With some degree of irony, the French were the first to colonize the area in 1562 with a settlement in Ft. Royal, South Carolina and later Ft. Caroline on the St. Johns River in Florida. This annoyed the Spanish king who sent Pedro Menendez de Avilles to rout the French and reestablish Spain's claim.

De Avilles established St. Augustine in September 1565 as his base and then paid a visit to St. Catherines Island where he found the old Creek indian chief named Guale with whom he made friends. He wrote in his journal that they "sat on the beach and ate biscuits and honey."

De Avilles left his nephew and a few soldiers behind and returned in two months with 50 settlers and two priests to start a mission and strengthen Spain's claim. Spain's strategy for colonization is often called "The Cross and the Sword." King Philip II selected the Jesuits to build missions at several locations along the coast. The Creeks resisted, sometimes

with hostility. By 1570 most of the missions had been deserted.

The king did not give up. Finally, using Franciscan priests, he constructed substantial mission buildings. Two missions were built on St. Simons Island in the 1600s: (1) Asao [translated San Simón], near the present ruins of Fort Frederica, and (2) San Buenaventura on the southern tip of the island.

When the missions began to prosper again, the Franciscans imposed their customs and pressed for conformity from the Indians. They unwittingly created a seedbed for dissatisfaction. One friar intervened and prevented a prominent son of the chief of Guale from becoming a “mico mayer.” A widespread revolt ensued and the Spanish hunted out the recalcitrant Indians to punish them. They were often frustrated by the easy way the Indians vanished into the wilderness out of sight.

In 1670 the English founded Charleston. Although a “colonization by occupation” treaty existed between England and Spain, a “debatable land” conflict soon developed that lasted for the next 75 years.

Ruthless pirate raids in 1684 sacked the vulnerable missions, carrying off the valuables and even the mission bells. The Spanish began to withdraw and by 1686 most of the missions had vanished. The Spanish retreated to St. Augustine to lick their wounds. But they weren’t out of the picture yet.

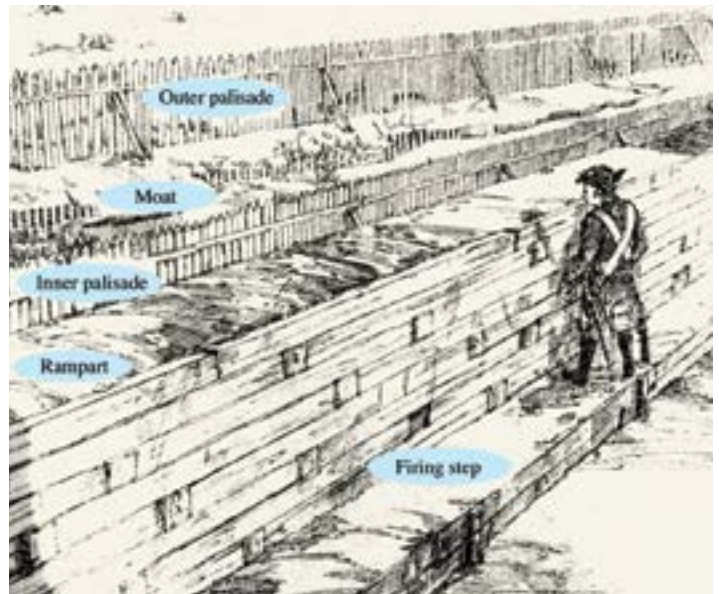
THE ENGLISH BEGIN TO COLONIZE: SAVANNAH & FORT FREDERICA

A century-old colonization treaty between England and Spain granted England the right to establish settlements as far south as Charleston, South Carolina. When King George II realized that Spain had retreated to St. Augustine and left behind only a few weak missions, he signed a charter authorizing the establishing of a colony in America between South Carolina and Florida “for the settling of the poor persons of London.”

The charter sounded altruistic, but the king knew Spain had been building its military strength in St. Augustine and might easily decide to push north and take over the English colonies one by one. Applicants were interviewed and 120 were selected in 1732 to establish the new colony. General James Edward Oglethorpe was tapped to lead the colonists to the New World. At just 35 years old, he had already distinguished himself as a soldier and a member of Parliament.

After a rough crossing in November 1732 on the 200-ton frigate Anne, 114 emigrants plus Oglethorpe, a doctor, an engineer, and a druggist safely anchored in the harbor at Charles Town. A second ship, the Volant, loaded with freight and four emigrants was close behind. The general inspected lands to the south and selected a bluff on the Savannah River for the new colony. The colonists were transported in February 1733 in boats provided by the colony’s provisional governor.

They cleared the land and built a town in one year. Pleased with their rapid progress, Oglethorpe decided to explore the coastal territory to the south. He located the perfect place for a fort on a somewhat concealed point in the mid-section of St.



The town wall around the village was designed to deter the assault of a brigade. The enemy would first have to cross the outer palisade under fire, cross a flooded moat (not clearly shown here), and then ascend another palisade. The defenders could crouch behind the rampart to reload and then rise to discharge their weapon.



Broad Street was Frederica’s main avenue, leading from the town gate to the fort. Some of the town’s most prosperous citizens built their houses here of brick and tabby. Frederica was a small English town on the edge of the Great American Wilderness. ♦ Perimeter foundations with a double fireplace, like the one below, are typical of the excavations made along Broad Street.





The thick tabby walls are all that remain of the original fort. ♦ Cannon emplacements shown here could hurl 18 pound shells one mile into the shallow sound. ♦ The three story north and south storehouses were constructed of brick and timber. The third floor of the south storehouse was used for church services. The foundation of the north storehouse is shown above.

Simons Island. He reasoned that a fort was necessary because the Spanish in northern Florida still claimed Georgia's coastal islands and the mainland. With no authorization to colonize farther south than Savannah, Oglethorpe returned to England to give a report to the trustees and the king. He was enthusiastically received as a popular hero.

King George agreed with Oglethorpe's proposal, which was essentially a military plan that warranted government financing. Men with the skills to build a fort were carefully recruited from among the Salzburgers and the Scottish Highlanders. Approximately 75 men with their families—230 people in all—anchored off of Cockspur Island in the mouth of the Savannah River in February 1736, almost exactly three years after the colonists had arrived to build their town.

The general acted quickly to move his team to the site where they would build the fort and its supporting village. Arriving in March 1736, each family was given a lot for a house and garden. There were 44 men and 72 women and children. Wells were dug, fields were fenced for cattle and horses, and a large public garden was planted.

Twenty men were assigned to construct the fort and another 10 to dig the ditch that surrounded it. The dirt was thrown up as a rampart and sodded to prevent erosion. Superstructures were built with tabby upon which several 18-pounders mounted on Ravelins commanded the river in both directions.

Oglethorpe named the town and the fort in honor of the Prince of Wales, Frederick Louis. A typical English village, Frederica was planned to be a self-sustaining community. Especially skilled members included a bricklayer, a locksmith, a shoemaker, a baker, a carpenter, a constable, and a doctor. The primary task was completing the fort. Once that goal was met, the temporary thatched houses were replaced with wood and brick homes.

To provide early warning to the town and fort at Frederica, Oglethorpe built Fort St. Simons on the south end of the island where 350 soldiers were garrisoned. The fort was defended with several cannons.

WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

England and Spain continued to have skirmishes over territory, trade, and free shipping. Anticipating war, Oglethorpe recruited 650 soldiers in England. Finally, on October 30, 1739, England declared war on Spain. In May 1740 Oglethorpe was ordered to secure additional soldiers from South Carolina and invade St. Augustine. His ships laid siege to the heavily fortified city on June 13 with fusillades that were ineffective. Two Spanish galleys ran the gauntlet after four weeks, carrying fresh supplies to the fort. On July 20, with many of his troops suffering from dysentery, Oglethorpe withdrew.

For the next two years, the Spanish took only defensive measures, although Oglethorpe was certain they were gathering a larger force to retaliate. His hunch was correct. On July 5, 1742, an armada of 52 ships and about 3,000 soldiers [a different re-

port recorded 32 ships and 2,000 soldiers] entered St. Simons Sound despite heavy fire from the fort and British ships in the harbor. Believing it hopeless to try to hold Fort St. Simons, Oglethorpe destroyed supplies, disabled the cannons, and withdrew to defend Fort Frederica. During the night, Spanish troops landed at Gascoigne Bluff, marched three miles southeast, and occupied Fort St. Simons.

On July 7, a large scouting party of 200 Spaniards found the military road and advanced north toward Fort Frederica undiscovered until they were within a few miles of the town. A few rangers and the Highlander troops attacked the Spanish with such force that they were temporarily routed. While Oglethorpe raced back to the fort to marshal more troops, Spanish reinforcements poured in and the English company was driven back. As the Highlanders brought up the rear of the retreat, they wheeled aside at a bend, concealed themselves in a grove of palmettoes, and planned an ambush.

Reaching this bend in the road and observing the footprints in the sand of the English in retreat, the Spanish concluded in the dusk of the evening that the fighting was over for the day. They stacked their guns, made cooking fires, and began to eat their supper. The Highlanders waited for the opportune time and attacked, killing, wounding, and capturing a large number of Spanish soldiers. The strategy worked perfectly and the encounter became known as the Battle of Bloody Marsh because

“the marsh ran red with the blood of the dead and wounded.”

In disarray with panicked soldiers and officers unheeded, the Spaniards retreated to Fort St. Simons while Oglethorpe collected his forces at Fort Frederica. Learning of the panic and retreat, Oglethorpe decided to make a night attack to drive them from the island. When they were within sight of the enemy’s camp, one of his soldiers, a Frenchman, deserted to the Spaniards. Knowing that the deserter would disclose the small number of soldiers in his command, Oglethorpe quickly created a ruse to send a POW into the enemy camp with a letter written in French giving the deserter further directions. The Spanish officers were perplexed and decided the Frenchman was a double agent. During two days of indecision, three British ships sent by the governor of South Carolina to observe the situation could be seen off the bar in St. Simons Sound. The Spanish commander interpreted their appearance as reinforcements large enough to threaten the loss of his troops. Not willing to risk his whole army, the Spanish burned Fort St. Simons and fled to Florida.

With a handful of troops, Oglethorpe had outwitted the Spanish and saved Georgia from an invasion. If Fort Frederica had fallen, all of the other colonies up the coast would have been in jeopardy. Oglethorpe expected the Spanish to return and continued to strengthen his forces. But they never did. Five years later a treaty restored the peace between the two nations.

In 1743 Oglethorpe returned to England and his regiment

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was disbanded in 1749. Without the support of several hundred soldiers' regular wages, the town with its shopkeepers and skilled craftsmen could not continue to prosper. Six years later a visitor described Frederica as "houses without inhabitants, barracks without soldiers, carriages without cannons, and streets overgrown with weeds." A fire in 1758 destroyed some of the homes. Some of the fortifications were hauled off to construct other buildings. Fort Frederica had outlived its purpose.

In 1760 a large part of the Fort Frederica property was acquired by Donald Mackay. He and his business partner, a much younger Scotsman named James Spalding, had formed a branch company of Mackay and Spalding, a London firm well known throughout colonial America. Using the central storehouse at the fort, they shipped English goods to their Indian trading posts along the coast.

Commerce on the island was restored. When William Bartram visited the town and fort in 1774 he found many of the "spacious and expensive buildings of Frederica in ruins, but a number of neat houses in good repair and inhabited." He gave credit to "J. Spalding, Esqr., who is President of the island."

When the Revolutionary War began, Spalding and several of his friends who were loyal to the Crown, fled to Florida. Upon his return after the war, he found his storehouses empty and his business ruined. Not a farmer, but an astute businessman, he turned to agriculture and became a very successful planter of Sea Island long-staple cotton. More planters bought land on St. Simons and their collective production was sought after by the textile mills in New England and Great Britain.

Although the plantations flourished, Fort Frederica and its town continued to deteriorate. During the War of 1812, the planters fled to the mainland while the British occupied the island for three weeks and plundered the planter's supplies, equipment, cotton, and livestock. The plantations quickly recovered, but Frederica was now only a gathering place for July Fourth celebrations.

In 1819 James Frewin, a London native who had served many years in the British Navy, settled on St. Simons Island. He bought property in Frederica and built a house in the old town. In 1828 he bought the old fort and much of the town property surrounding it at a sheriff's sale and continued to add adjoining property as he had the opportunity. After a member of the Frewin clan, Sarah Dorothy Hay, married Captain Charles Stevens, the Frewin-Stevens descending families eventually acquired all of the land that encompassed the fort, the town, and much of the vicinity. James Frewin lived to a ripe old age and was buried in the Christ Church cemetery. When the Civil War finally reached the island in 1864, Captain Stevens became a POW after he refused to cooperate with Federal officers. He died in a Maryland prison shortly before the war ended.

By the turn of the century, the fort and its surrounding property, now in ruins, were owned by Mrs. Belle Stevens Taylor. In 1903 Mrs. Taylor conveyed the property to the Georgia Society of Colonial Dames of America. The society launched their plans to restore and preserve the fort by founding the Fort Frederica Association. Funds were contributed by the generosity of Georgians and the citizens of several other states. Their work was rewarded in 1945 when the U.S. government established the "Fort Frederica National Monument." The entire area is now administered by the National Park Service.

In November 1951 archaeological excavations began in the old town. Specific foundations of homes were tied to homeowners of record. Six filled-in wells were opened that produced thousands of articles used by archaeologists and historians to determine the lifestyles of the early residents.

In 1954 the site of the Battle of Bloody Marsh was given to the National Park System. In 1958 the Fort Frederica Museum and Visitor Center was dedicated in ceremonies that included more than a hundred descendants of the original settlers and the soldiers who had served at the fort.



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CHRIST CHURCH

Charles Wesley arrived in St. Simons in March 1736 at the age of 28 to serve General James Oglethorpe as a private secretary. His older brother John, schooled in the ministry at Oxford, came to pastor the Savannah church and work with the mission serving the Indians. While Charles' primary job was serving the general, he was also effective in organizing the colonists to begin worshiping on Sundays near Fort Frederica, preaching to them under the great live oaks.

After the Wesleys returned to England in 1737, the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts sent other clergymen to serve the colony from 1743 to 1766. When St. Simons moved to an agricultural economy after the Revolutionary War, the plantation families often met in their homes. In 1807 Christ Church was organized by several planters. They petitioned the state legislature for land and were granted one hundred acres. They were registered as the second Episcopal church in the diocese of Georgia.

The Reverend William Best of Savannah served as the first rector. His skills as a minister of the gospel were immortalized by a sermon he preached to the Trustees of the Colony of Georgia on March 18, 1742, entitled "The Merit and Reward of a Good Intention." The early services of Christ Church were held in the home of John Beck. Plans were made to construct a meeting house, but the financial reverses suffered by the plant-

ers during the War of 1812 delayed that project until 1820. The new meeting house drew worshippers from the entire island. In 1836 the church celebrated the centennial of the first religious service held on the island.

After the Civil War, the residents returned to find their church in ruins. During the Federal occupation of the island, the pews were burned, the altar and organ smashed, and the windows broken. The church's funds were lost in a Savannah bank that failed. The people resorted again to house churches, notably in the home of Horace Bunch Gould.

The beautiful church where residents and visitors alike worship today is credited to the generosity of Anson Greene Phelps Dodge, whose family operated the lumber mills on the island. The church was completed in 1884 as a memorial to his first wife, Ellen, who died unexpectedly during the young couple's around-the-world wedding trip. The minister later married Anna Deborah Gould and they had one son who died in a tragic accident. Anson Dodge died in 1898 at the age of 38.

The church is a gothic style building with a tall belfry and narrow stained glass windows that commemorate the early history of the church, some of the apostles, John and Charles Wesley, and members of the Dodge family. The steeple cross was carved from a large, single block of wood by a Portuguese craftsman.

The oldest graves in the cemetery are not marked, but records indicate they date to 1796. The oldest marked grave is

dated 1803. Visitors may respectfully walk the grounds and the cemetery during daylight hours except during the times when services are in progress: daily at 5 p.m.; Noon Wednesday; and every Sunday 8 a.m.–noon. The church is open for tours Tuesday through Friday from 2–5 p.m.

AFTER THE CIVIL WAR AND INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

Throughout the South, the plantations quickly disappeared. On St. Simons Island, none of the former owners could afford to hire the labor to run a large cotton plantation. Sea Island long-staple cotton disappeared from the marketplace.

It took over two decades before tourism even began to bring in enough revenue to create a viable economy. Summer hotels and boarding houses attracted people from within the state. But it was the turn of the century and later before the perma-

nent residents began to realize that tourism might have long-term potential.

The opening of the F. J. Torras Causeway in 1924 opened the island to automobiles, but did not create a rush of new traffic. Unfortunately, it was World War II that turned St. Simons Island upside down. A Naval Air Base and Radar School, two shipyards in Brunswick that were turning out Liberty ships by the dozens, and a military facility to build barrage balloons to protect regions vulnerable to hostile aircraft changed the economy almost overnight.

Military personnel and employees from across the U.S. who came here to work for the new companies became the verbal publicity that the coastal islands needed to make the area a well-known destination for vacationers. Georgia's Golden Isles had finally transitioned from an agricultural to a tourism economy. **RIS**

John and Charles Wesley in St. Simons, Georgia



JOHN WESLEY



CHARLES WESLEY

Oglethorpe did not overlook the spiritual needs of the colonists. He recruited John and Charles Wesley. Charles, 28, served as Oglethorpe's personal secretary and went immediately to Frederica. He also conducted religious services and organized the fort's residents into a congregation that still exists today as the continuing congregation of Christ Church. Charles is best known for the 6,000 hymns that he wrote, many of which are still used in our worship today, such as "Love Divine, All Love Excelling" and "Soldiers of Christ, Arise."

John, 32, had just completed seminary at Oxford and came to minister to the colonists in Savannah and serve as a missionary to the Indians. The Indians rejected the Church of England's brand of Christianity, just as they had rejected Catholicism a hundred years earlier. The colonists in Savannah and Frederica did not care for the "high church" rituals, choosing instead simpler Protestant services.

Discouraged and disheartened, the Wesley brothers returned to England after less than a year in the colony, believing their ministry in Georgia was a failure. However, history has proved otherwise. Their work here is called the second rise of Methodism.

Wesley Memorial Garden

In 1984, A.W. Jones, Jr. proposed a generous gift of 20 acres of land to be divided equally between Christ Church Frederica (Episcopal) and the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church with the understanding that the two denominations come together to create a memorial honoring John and Charles Wesley, Anglican priests in Georgia and founders of Methodism.

Both denominations set aside one adjoining acre for the development of the Wesley Memorial Garden. They established a foundation to build and maintain the garden in perpetuity. Henry D. Green, working with landscape architect, Candace Brewer, designed the garden and managed its construction. The focal point of the azalea woods garden is the 18-ft, 15-ton Celtic cross cut from granite in Elberton, Georgia. The garden was dedicated on June 12, 1988.



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Georgia's Golden Isles

PART 3 ST. SIMONS: ENJOYING THE ISLAND TODAY



For a rewarding view of St. Simons Sound, climb to the top of the lighthouse on the island's southern tip.

Georgia's coastal islands are often called The Golden Isles. The marshes of Glynn County, made famous by the poet Sidney Lanier, are the first thing that you will see as you leave the mainland and cross over to St. Simons Island. The Golden Isles take their name from the marsh wetlands that take on a golden hue in the winter months.

St. Simons has a unique geographical position seldom noticed by visitors. It is the farthest point west on the eastern coast of the United States. Its longitude is nearly identical to the longitude of Cleveland, Ohio. Its latitude corresponds to that of North Africa. Snow and ice are a rarity on the island.

When you arrive on St. Simons, your first stop should be the Golden Isles Welcome Center at 529 Beachview Drive on the southern tip of the island. After you cross the Torres Causeway, bear right onto Kings Way Loop and follow it past the McKinnon Airport on your left until you get to Mallery Street. Turn right and then left onto Beachview Drive.

Unfortunately, St. Simons Island is not a motorhome-friendly place. In our visits to the area to photograph and write the stories about Jekyll and St. Simons, we enjoyed our stay at Coastal Georgia RV Resort just off of I-95. There are no RV campgrounds on St. Simons although we wished several times we could have parked our Allegro Bus on a site with a view of the Atlantic.

The Welcome Center is staffed with talented residents who can help you plan your visit based on your interests and time. You can easily begin your visit with a walking tour to attractions within a few hundred yards of the Center: the St. Simons Lighthouse, the Fishing Pier, Neptune Park, and Postell Park. The canopies of the great live oaks completely shade the parks. You can walk across the parks on the grass (everybody does). But if you do, keep your head up and eyes peeled for the low hanging branches of the live oaks. I didn't as I took a phone call and found myself laying on my back in a mild daze. So, heads up and let's go.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

The climb to the top—129 steps—is a small price to pay for the magnificent view of the channel and the suspension bridge to the west. For over 200 years the St. Simons lighthouse has guided ships into its harbor. John Couper, who is buried in the Christ Church cemetery, gave the land for the first lighthouse that was completed in 1811, a 75-foot octagonal

structure. In 1857 it was one of the first lighthouses on the east coast of the U.S. to receive a Fresnel lens. After the port was blockaded in 1861, Confederate forces in retreat blew up the lighthouse to prevent the Federals from using it as a point of navigation.

A completely redesigned lighthouse was built in 1868 and a third order Fresnel lens was installed in 1872. It could be

seen 20 miles out at sea, limited only by the curvature of the earth. The light was converted from oil to electricity in 1934 and automated in the 1950s, ending the need for a resident keeper. From 1872 until 1945 there were only eight keepers of the lighthouse who lived there. Their comfortable residence occupied two floors at the base of the structure.



From its entrance facing 12th Street, the St. Simons lighthouse is open from 10–5 Monday–Saturday, 1:30–5 Sunday. Admission is \$12 adults and \$5 children six and over. A gift shop and museum occupy

the building connected to the base of the lighthouse. The lightkeepers quarters have been preserved as they were when the lighthouse was completed in 1872.

THE TROLLEY TOURS

The Saint Simons Colonial Island Trolley Tours is owned and operated by Captain Rod. You won't be disappointed with the narration of the sites and historical areas that Captain Rod provides. Questions are welcomed. The tour leaves from the circle near the entrance to the pier at 10 a.m. and 12 noon daily. Adults, \$20; children 10–15, \$10; under 10, free. ColonialTrolley.com. The tour lasts for about an hour and 45 minutes.



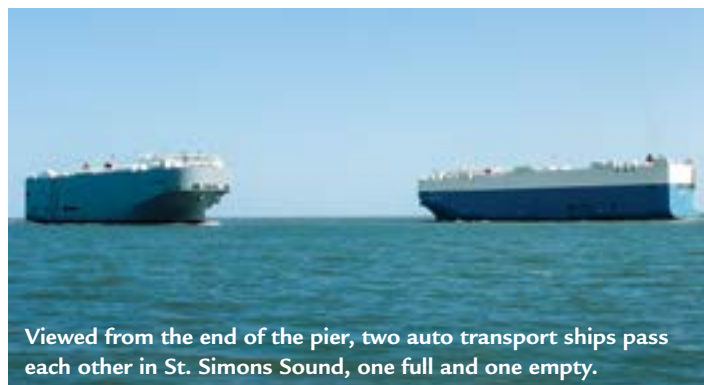


THE PIER

Located at the end of Mallery Street, the pier is the perfect place for an evening stroll after dinner. You may be able to catch a glimpse of a North Atlantic Right Whale, between December and March when they migrate from the northeastern United States to the calving area in southeastern United States. Throughout the year you can spot dolphins feeding along the coast. Cargo ships cruise to and from the Port of Brunswick to deliver hundreds of imported automobiles.

You will see fishermen on the pier from early morning until late in the evening, using the tray tables and water hoses along the railings to prepare their bait or clean their catch. Along each side and at the end of the pier, benches offer a place to sit and enjoy the views of Jekyll Island to the south.

Day or night, the pier is a social gathering place for sightseeing, fishing, and people watching. This view photographed from the lighthouse shows the double suspension bridge that spans St. Simons Sound.



Viewed from the end of the pier, two auto transport ships pass each other in St. Simons Sound, one full and one empty.



KAYAKING AND CANOEING

On both Jekyll and St. Simons, we enjoyed canoeing. Visitors were also kayaking through the marshes, getting up close experiences. Winter, spring, and fall are the best times for this

activity. Summer on the water can sometimes be blistering hot, except for early mornings and late afternoons. The marshes are a calm and serene place to explore. Always keep a point of reference so you will be able to navigate back to your starting point.



LIVE OAK ALLEY

The Avenue of Oaks is located on Retreat Avenue. Local historians believe Anne Page King planted this famous oak-lined pathway more than 150 years ago to serve as the entrance to Retreat Plantation, an antebellum plantation known for its quality Sea Island cotton.

Southern live oak grows in only three places in the world: the southeastern United States, two areas of Central America, and a small portion of the west coast of Cuba. The U.S. has over 90 percent of the world's standing growth. Live oaks grow along the coast from southern Virginia to Texas, including all of Florida and a large portion of East Texas.

Live oak is very dense wood that will barely float in water.

One cubic foot of live oak weighs about 75 pounds compared to 55 pounds for a cubic foot of white oak. President George Washington appointed Philadelphia shipbuilder Joshua Humphreys to design six frigates for the U.S. Navy. Humphreys pointed out that ships built from white oak would only last 10 years, while those built from live oak would last for 50 years.

The framing timbers of the U.S. Constitution were supplied from southern live oak harvested on St. Simons Island at Cannons Point. The density of the wood grain repelled many cannonades, resulting in its nickname, "Old Ironsides." In 1874, timbers from the island were used in the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge. The average life span of a live oak is 300 years.

DINING ON THE ISLAND

For breakfast, we recommend Palmer's Village Café at 223 Mallery. BTW, breakfast is served all day. Do lunch at Southern Soul BBQ at 220 Demere Road. Echo at the King and Prince is an oceanfront restaurant with dining indoors with a view or outside with a breeze. Great place for lunch. We liked Del Sur (delsurstsimons.com) for homemade artisan sandwiches at lunch (under \$10) and a creative Argentinian menu for evening with great presentation. Located at the corner of Ocean Blvd. and Mallery.

Four-Hour Lamb Shank (Ossobucco Style) on a bed of Creamy Polenta from Del Sur's artisan menu.





THE BEACHES

Even at high tide, St. Simons has wide beaches from East Beach south to the old Coast Guard Station. At low tide the beaches are 200 yards wide and perfect for jogging and riding

a bicycle. Having lived in Georgia for over 30 years and visited here many times, we have never found the beaches crowded (major holidays excluded). Low tide reveals depressions that create tidal pools visitors love to explore for shells and aquatic life.

BICYCLING ON ST. SIMONS


One of the best ways to see the island is pedaling. If you can't bring your own bike that you are familiar with, you will find several rental companies. You can maintain a slow pace using the bike paths around the airport, through the village, and along the marshes at East Beach. If you are a long distance cyclist, Fort Frederica, Christ Church, and Cannon's Point Preserve are destinations you might choose. The Preserve is owned by the St. Simons Land Trust and is open from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. If you are into the history of the island, pick up a copy of "A Guide to Historical Markers on St. Simons Island." Using the map in the brochure, you can bike from marker to marker. Be sure to ask for a "Tree Spirits Map" before you leave the Welcome Center. The "spirits" are carved into trees at four locations on the island, the most impressive of which is found on the oak tree in the Center's parking lot. 



PHOTO BY BEN GALLAND



Interviews from Florida

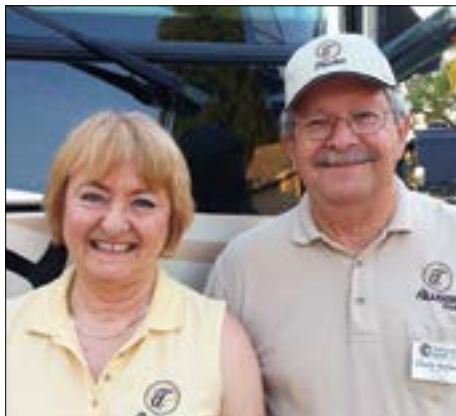


Jim & Ada Doering

Home State: Florida

Interviewed: Silver Springs, Florida

- Jim and Ada purchased a 2015 Tiffin RED 33AA w/Cummins engine and Freightliner chassis. The coach was purchased new in Lexington, KY. The RED is their second motorhome.
- They have been married 20 years and have two sons, Keith and Aaron, and five grandchildren: Jada, Payten, Riley, Zoe, and Harmony.
- Because they try to leave Florida during the summer, they call themselves half-timers.
- In the past they have traveled from Alaska to New England. They are planning to head west to Texas, Colorado, California, Utah, New Mexico, and Nevada, which they missed on an earlier trip west.
- Their favorite personal journey was to Alaska, but they really enjoyed taking the grandkids to Lion Country Safari KOA in Loxahatchee, FL.
- Jim got a Yorkie-poo for Christmas, who travels with them. Her name is "Izzy."
- Prior to retirement, Jim was an insurance adjuster. He retired in 2011. Ada was a paralegal and retired in 2014.
- Jim and Ada have met many wonderful RVers during their travels. They are members of the Seacoast Allegro Club. Rallies include playing a variety of games, watching football and NASCAR races.
- They would love to return to Alaska.



Charlie & Linda Hoffman

Hometown: Tampa, Florida

Interviewed: Silver Springs, Florida

- Charlie and Linda are the proud owners of a 2008 Phaeton 36QSH with a 360 Cummins on a Freightliner chassis.
- They have been married 48 years and have one son and four grandchildren.
- Traveling approximately 120 days per year, they have visited in 24 years all of the lower 48 states except North Dakota. Two of their favorite states are Colorado and Utah, because of the beautiful parks located there.
- One of their reasons for camping is due to Linda being an amateur astronomer. She prefers to camp in the darkest part of campgrounds so visibility to the stars is clearer. Their main goal is to see the USA, particularly the national parks.
- Linda is secretary of the Suncoast Allegro Club #152. The club members hold many fun-filled rallies throughout Florida.
- Charlie and Linda retired in 2008. Charles worked as an engineer/staff support for 30 years and then 12 years in security at Ceridian-Unix. Linda worked as an accountant for the Hillsborough County Clerk of Courts.
- Charlie's interests and hobbies are astro photography and participating as 'Chas' on the Tiffin network. Linda enjoys her service as a volunteer for a hospice thrift store.
- Future travel plans include trips to Banff & Jasper in the Canadian Rockies.



Mike & Judy Johnson

Hometown: Plant City, Florida

Interviewed: Silver Springs, Florida

- Mike and Judy Johnson own a 2009 Phaeton 40QDH with a Cummins power plant on a Freightliner chassis. They purchased it in Largo, FL from a private individual.
- Married 27 years, they have 2 children and 4 grandchildren: Twins Leann and Lindsey, Ethan and Heaven.
- They are currently employed, and call themselves "half-time" RVers.
- Mike is a business analyst for public works in Hillsborough County, Tampa, FL. Judy is director of information technology services for the Tampa International Airport.
- Within their five years of camping, a special trip was with friends Larry and Sharon to the Maritime Provinces, and on to Newfoundland in 2014.
- They love the convenience of having their home on wheels with them. Some of their favorite places include Massachusetts, Maine, Red Apple campground, River Bend RV Resort, Mountain Falls RV Resort, St. Augustine, Nashville, and New Orleans. They are planning a trip to Alaska in 2017.
- Their dachshund "Buddy" travels with them.
- Club affiliations include Suncoast Allegro Club, KOA, Good Sam, Freightliner, and Passport America.
- Judy is an avid quilter and Mike keeps busy working on their motorhome.



Editor's Note: Dave has been camping for 52 years in tents to motorhomes. Two years after they acquired a new 2008 Phaeton 40QSH, Dave and Terri sold their home and bought a 2.8 acre lot in the Berkshire Mountains (Peru, MA) for summer use. They named their mini-campground "Beech-Wood Acres." In 2012 they purchased an RV lot at Wilderness RV Park Estates in Silver Springs for use in the winter months. Dave and Terri are now full-timers and living their dream.



PHOTO BY RON HENRY

Giant Recreation World—Palm Bay

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL FATHER-SONS COMPANY IN MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

Giant Recreation World (GRW) with stores in Palm Bay, Winter Garden, and Ormond Beach, Florida, is part of a large group of Tiffin dealerships, each of which was started by the family's patriarch which his children now operate and play key roles in the business.

Donald McNamara, a South Dakota native, was aware of Florida's 78 percent population growth during the 1960s as well as the wonderful weather there. He decided to sell the insurance agency in New Jersey where he had insured primarily RV dealerships. In February of 1977, he moved the family to the Sunshine State. He also brought with him a Winnebago Chieftain and four class C motorhomes, renting them out from an intersection on Highway 192 in Kissimmee. Larry, his son still in middle school, washed the units when they came in so they would be ready to go out again to other rental customers. McNamara worked in the RV industry in Florida for Campers World in Orlando as a rental manager and later as general sales manager for Holiday RV Superstores. He accepted a position in dealer development management with Coachmen Industries at a dealership in Winter Garden in 1980, bought the business in 1983 and be-

gan doing business as Giant Recreation World, which eventually became the corporate name. The company soon began to blossom into a profitable business.

GRW gained ample frontage on I-95 in the new Palm Bay location, and now uses it to display a large inventory of Tiffin motorhomes.



Text by Fred Thompson

McNamara began to look for new and existing locations to expand his company. He opened his second dealership in Lake Park, Georgia. Selling both motorized and towable, the location was an exclusively Coachmen dealership. Further expansion included stores in Tampa, Cocoa, Stuart, Ormond Beach, Clermont, and Melbourne, Florida, and Marietta, Georgia.

All of the stores operated with different names with no obvious connection to McNamara as the corporate owner. The stores were encouraged to compete against each other, a marketing strategy that proved to be quite successful. As the stores matured, most of them were sold as McNamara began to focus on his most profitable markets: Ormond Beach (near Daytona on I-95), Palm Bay, and Winter Garden (Orlando).

Today, Don's oldest son, Larry, serves as the corporate president and CEO of Giant Recreation World. Sons Joe, Dan, and Scott work in the Palm Bay location as service manager, RV technician, and salesman respectively.

In 2012 a Tiffin dealership for the Palm Bay-Melbourne area became available as GRW was in the process of planning major improvements to the stores in Ormond Beach and Melbourne. Tiffin Motorhomes contacted the McNamaras and negotiations ensued. Giant Recreation World soon became the new Tiffin dealer for Brevard County.

When 26 prime acres fronting on I-95 became available at exit 176, the decision was made to acquire the land, move the store 17 miles south, and build a totally new facility. The result is an impressive 30,000 sq. ft. building with 18 service bays; a parts and general RV products store; offices with meeting and training rooms; and a 5,000 sq. ft. indoor show room. Perhaps the biggest surprise is 15 acres of concrete to display all of the

Giant Recreation World displayed in its new showroom the 2017 Phaeton 36GH, the first Class A motorhome to receive the honor.

store's massive inventory selection. With a fleet of electric carts parked at their door, ten sales associates can transport you quickly (and smoothly) to the RV you want to see on their huge lot.

"Overall we run Giant Recreation World as a big corporation, but each dealership is run like a family store," Larry explained. "The three stores are about 100 miles apart. My job is to oversee the corporate operation and enhance the effectiveness of each of our general managers. Each of the stores carries different brands in motorized and towables to allow them to compete against each other in the general recreation vehicle market. If a customer doesn't find what they want at one of our stores, they are likely to find it in one of the other two locations. It is a strategy my father started 40 years ago and it has worked well for us."

Larry began his training in a high school business development program. "I worked in both the parts and service departments as part of my 'from-the-ground-up' training program," he said. "That gave me the experience and background to open and hire for those departments as we expanded into new stores. In our approach to running the business, parts and service should be able to cover the operating expenses. Sales should furnish the profit margins."

The three stores now have 138 full-time and 20 part-time employees.

Don McNamara's original business plan still plays a major role in today's operation. "We have rentals in all three of our

Corporate staff left to right: Carla Fernandez, IT / graphic design / marketing asst.; Yomaira Ruiz, administrative asst.; Dawn Oberlander, human resource mgr.; Eleanor Bates, office mgr./asst. controller; Larry McNamara, CEO / president; Donald McNamara, founder / chairman; Pete Berger, VIP Camping Club co-director; Karen Berger, VIP Camping Club director; Matthew Harrison, marketing director; Richard Rocha, corporate back up mgr.; Stewart Mederos, CFO / controller.

PHOTO BY RON HENRY





PHOTO BY RON HENRY

The sales professionals at Giant Recreation World—Palm Bay. *Back row left to right:* Brian Freins, Ryan Kremelberg. *Front row, left-to-right:* Skip Davis, Tony Niarhos, Chris Smith, rental associate, Kevin Page. The sales team works on alternating days. The following associates are not shown: Dewayne Carter, Jon Scott, Scott McNamara, Steve Yoder.

locations,” Larry said. “As of January first of this year we have 70 new Class C units for rent in Palm Bay and Ormond Beach as the inventory in our rental department increases with demand. We impose a three-night minimum on our units, but most of our customers rent for a week or longer.

“Our Class C’s are top-of-the-line units, fully equipped,” he said. “We also put together package deals that include a prime campground with tickets to nearby attractions. Fort Wilderness at Disney World is a good example.”

Giant Recreation World has significant competition in the motorized rental business. However, they have no difficulty keeping their units rented. “We buy our rental units fully equipped, not stripped down to the bare necessities as our competition does. If a unit is damaged at all, it is repaired before it goes back out. And, we turn our rental units over every year. We have customers waiting to buy them as soon as they are pulled out of our rental fleet. Our units are under full warranty during the year they are in our fleet,” Larry continued. “They are virtually ‘like new’ when we sell them.”

“Rentals create positive traffic in our dealerships,” he noted. “If customers have a good experience, they may decide to buy a motorhome. If a renter buys a Class A, Class C, or a trailer within 90 days after the rental, we refund the full price of the rental. We are also now making 36-foot Class A gas coaches and travel trailers available in our rental fleet.”



The service team at Giant Recreation World—Palm Bay. *Back row left to right:* Danny McNamara, Travis Curry, Mike Kosak, Joe Pelton, Steve Mervine, Chris Koons, David Atkinson, Chris Smith, and Elizabeth Gibson. *Front row, left-to-right:* Tom Sherman, Lisa Cantlon, Matt Carr, Jim Lawson, Joe Egan, Tom Cox, Kim Smith, and Tim Heller.

Giant Recreation World genuinely wants new owners to have great camping experiences after they buy a motorhome, a camper, or a towable. The VIP Camping Club has an activity’s director and co-director to insure owners have the opportunity to be involved in camp-outs to learn about their RVs, meet people and families with similar interests, and have a lot of fun building memories.

The club offers 30 camp-outs a year. The GRW owners can register online for a camp-out that fits into their family’s schedule. The two directors scout out every location and plan the themed camp-outs a year in advance. The camp-outs include catered meals, games and activities for all ages, dinner shows, golf matches, bus excursions, Vegas acts, country music performances, and themed events. There is an annual rally that hundreds of our loyal customers attend. This is the highlight of their camping trips throughout the year. Four days of fun are carefully planned for all age groups and it is the ultimate VIP experience that is only offered by Giant Recreation World. Also, four caravan specialty trips are scheduled throughout the year.

“The loyalty that the VIP Camping Club has inspired over the years is amazing,” Larry said. “Several people have bought a new motorhome brand that we did not offer, which disqualified them for membership. To remain qualified for club membership, they purchased a less expensive trailer which they towed for the kids to sleep in at the camp-outs.”



General Management, Sales, and Service

Patrick White, general manager, joined Giant Recreation World in 2012 as sales manager when the company was in nearby Palm Shores. “I began my career in the RV industry 16 years ago in a sales position,” he related. “GRW has given me the opportunities over the last five years to move into management, first as sales manager, and now as the general manager of this beautiful new facility here in Palm Bay. With 26 acres, we have nearly four times the acreage that we had in Palm Shores.”

Working closely with CEO Larry McNamara, Patrick insures the Palm Bay location maintains the best mix of inventory, organized by motorized and towable, brands and floorplans. “I also plan our staffing,” he continued. “We are emphasizing quality control in staffing which means putting the right skills where they are needed to provide our customers with a good experience every time they visit Giant Recreation World.

“Currently we have nine people in sales, most of whom have been with GRW for two to four years,” Patrick said. “When we moved here in October, we hired three new salesmen. Our sales manager and our finance manager both came from our sales staff.”

A NEW QC POSITION IN SALES

“To further emphasize quality control in sales, we recently created the position of ‘New Delivery Coordinator,’” Patrick explained. “Once we write the contract for a sale, we introduce the buyer to Jimmy Turner. As the new delivery coordinator, he will be the buyer’s main point of contact for the remainder of the sales experience. We will have one of two coordinators working at all times to insure the customer’s expectations are being met. The coordinator will go over all of the options

The management team at Giant Recreation World—Palm Bay. *Left to right:* David Dillard, parts manager; Taran King, office manager; Patrick White, general manager; Ed Marusa, business manager; Jimmy Turner, new delivery coordinator. Not shown are Joe McNamara, service manager; Ron Henry, manager, business development center; Jim Templeton, sales manager; Larry McNamara, president and CEO.

available for the coach, service plans, delivery date, training for the operation of the coach, and continued contact to assure the customer’s satisfaction with his/her motorhome. Our forecast shows that we should sell 720 units in 2017, of which 25 percent will be motorized and 75 percent towables.

“A Tiffin dealer since 2012, we expect in 2017 to move 50 to 55 coaches,” Patrick said. “We have 40 on order now and 15 in stock. Right now our most popular Tiffin brand is the Allegro Open Road. With our expanded acreage, we have the space to stock a lot more units. Our motorized inventory is 65 percent gas and 35 percent diesel.”

PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

“To address the opportunities that this new location provides, we must expand our customer base,” Patrick explained. “We are retaining a lot of customers through the VIP Camping Club. Our traffic count has improved significantly since moving here. Quality control both in sales and service is a major priority for 2017.”

GRW—Palm Bay has nine members on its management team: Patrick White, general manager; Jim Templeton, sales manager; Joe McNamara, service manager; David Dillard, parts manager; Ed Maruso, business manager; Taran King, office manager; Ron Henry, business development center manager; Jimmy Turner, new



David Dillard, parts and RV store manager, maintains an active inventory that he rotates regularly to keep the most requested items available for his customers.

delivery coordinator; and Larry McNamara, president and CEO.

“Collectively, we have defined four challenges and goals,” Patrick said. “First, we are training and coordinating in each department to keep us performing in unison and complementing each other’s work. Second, based on our records and customer feedback, we must constantly evaluate what is selling in our market so we can keep those items in stock: RVs, parts, and aftermarket products in our store. Third, we must provide a quality level in our service department that our customers cannot get from our competitors. Fourth, we want RV owners to know that when they buy from GRW, they will go to the head of the service line.”

Jim Templeton serves as GRW’s sales manager. Fascinated with flying, he joined the United States Air Force soon after finishing high school. After a four-year stint, he was honorably discharged and accepted a position with Winnebago in 1976 to serve as the owner relations representative for the east coast. In 1985 an automotive dealership in Ft. Myers, Florida, that sold Winnebagos offered him a position to manage their RV division. In 1995 Coachmen offered Jim a position to develop dealerships, a job that led to a meeting with Don McNamara and ultimately to several management positions in the GRW network of stores.

When the new Palm Bay store opened in October, Don and Larry asked Jim to become the sales manager and to back up Patrick White as the general manager. It was a good fit for Jim and he accepted the position.

He immediately began the search to add three sales people to the expanding Palm Bay location. “New hires begin with formal classroom training at GRW and then move to hands-on product training,” Jim explained. “We like to bring in people who have prior sales experience, but sometimes we have to break old habits that don’t work in our business. Don sees the importance of factory training, therefore we often fly our sales and service team members in our company jet to spend two or three days at Tiffin and other manufacturers. There is nothing like seeing a motorhome built starting with the naked chassis and finishing it at the paint plant.

“Each coach or trailer that we receive from the factory becomes a training tool. The sales team has to learn that product as we do the PDI,” Jim continued. “TomWebber, Tiffin’s representative who is based in Tampa, conducts quarterly training here for the entire dealership. While the sessions focus on our new sales and service employees, I still attend along with our seasoned salesmen and we learn something new every time. Tom also does special training on new products.

“We now have nine salesmen on board and enough product to justify a few more on the team,” Jim said confidently. “I want our customers to be greeted and helped as soon as they arrive.

“After a salesman shows several RVs to a potential customer, he follows up immediately with an email that has links to the units the person was shown,” Jim noted. “An emailed letter is also waiting for the customer thanking him for the privilege of showing him our products.”

Jim emphasized that taking care of each customer after the sale is the foundation for building a strong business. “We call our new owners the next day after the sale to see if they have any questions. We also want their feedback about the process of buying an RV, positive or negative,” Jim averred. “It’s the only way to improve on the way you run your business. Customer perception is critical. We continue to make check-up calls seven to ten days out, and then once a month. We check to make sure they got home okay with their new RV and ask if they are still satisfied with the unit a week and a month later. I also like to ask, ‘How were you treated when you were here?’

“One thing I am sure you’ve heard before,” he said, “but it’s true. If a Tiffin owner comes in who wants to trade for a new coach, I can assure you that he will only buy another Allegro. Tiffin’s owner loyalty is phenomenal. We sold five Tifins this week and we took two Allegros in on trade. We have a waiting list for pre-owned Allegros. They will be sold as soon as we check them out. Our only complaint is they can’t build ’em fast enough.”

Interviewing all nine of the sales professionals at GRW–Palm Bay was not possible. Following are brief interviews of the ones who were available the day I was visiting the dealership.

Tony Niarhos. “I have owned motorhomes all of my adult life. All of my grandparents are from Greece. Our fami-

lies have had motorhomes since the mid-1970s. Two families that became lifetime friends traveled in a Class A 30-foot Dodge Swinger all summer: four adults and five kids. Helping customers find the right RV for their camping style gives me great satisfaction.”

Jon Scott. “I began my career with GRW in 1996 and did detailing for seven years. I got my first experience in sales with Suncoast RV from 2003–2008. After the economic downturn, I was able to return to GRW last year. We are located in an RVing mecca, with close proximity to Vero Beach, Fort Pierce, and Port St. Lucie. We have the opportunity to offer our services to so many RVers heading south on I-95. A South Carolina customer on his way to Fort Lauderdale stopped to visit with us. Before he left, he ordered an Allegro Open Road 34PA. I get a thrill from making people happy.”

Jimmy Turner, new delivery coordinator. Turner spent 23 years with Foretravel in

Nacogdoches, Texas. “I’ve always had a camper,” he began. “With three kids, camping was always our primary recreation.”

“When an RV sale is finalized, I take over from the salesman and begin an introduction and teaching process,” he explained. “I make sure the new owners meet every key person in our business and receive business cards with phone numbers. That includes our service manager, service advisor, and parts manager.

“Then we go over the coach — step by step, from the basement to the roof and everything in between. I don’t want to frighten a new owner, but motorhomes are complex machines. The sooner you take control and learn all you can about your coach, the more you will enjoy it and the happier you will be with your acquisition,” Jimmy emphasized. “For most owners, the electronics for the entertainment system and the new Spyder controls can be the most confusing. We spend a lot of time there. It is also very important to learn all of the controls in the dash be-

fore you drive your coach. Try everything while you are not under pressure to make it work.”

New owners are surprised when they are offered a lifetime warranty for as long as they own the coach. They are incredulous when they learn the warranty is free. Obviously, it does not cover things that wear out, such as your brake pads, windshield wipers, and tires. It does not cover towing and roadside assistance. But it does cover components for suspension, brakes, the water system, air conditioning, the LP gas system, the heating system, deluxe appliances, and most of the components in your galley including the fridge, microwave-convection oven, and cooktop. It covers 100% on parts and labor, no deductibles, and no maximum term. So what’s the catch? The owner must agree to annual scheduled service by a certified technician that is reported to the company issuing the warranty. See warrantyforever.com for details.

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*According to independent mattress review site, sleeplikethedead.com (May 2016)





GRW's new service facility boasts 18 bays and offers a fully enclosed paint booth. ♦ Collision and paint specialists can handle a wide array of damages. Here an Allegro Open Road receives taped masking readying it for a short session in the paint booth.



to fix a customer's propane furnace that was two months out of warranty. That's a delicate line."

Joe emphasized GRW's intention to provide the best quality response possible for every service event. "Good service drives sales. I can earn a future sale from a customer if I can provide the best service possible," Joe said. "I may not make the next sale to him, but I will probably get the first opportunity to show him an RV he is interested in.

"In our collision center, we can repair all facets of damage that happen in RV accidents, including structural damage," he continued. "We do a lot of insurance claims for Nationwide, State Farm, and Geico. Nationwide has an insurance program that is specifically designed for motorhomes and towables. GRW is certified to perform all warranty work on TMH coaches," Joe said. "We do not do chassis work, but we can schedule it with qualified companies within a 50- to 100-mile radius.

Giant Recreation World belongs to Priority RV Network, an industry group that provides financial benefits, advantages, and services to RV owners and dealers. Over 100 dealerships participate in volume parts buying to make them competitive with much larger organizations. When owners are far away from their dealer, a Priority RV Network dealership will provide the prompt service their local customers receive. The network also has favorable agreements with insurers and road care providers.

While we were visiting in the service center, Joe changed the topic from taking care of customers to taking care of employees. "We have a low turnover of our employees. If you are a seasonal Florida resident, you will most likely get the same technician who helped when you were here last year," he said. "We try to do whatever it takes to make this a great place to work. GRW was voted one of the

blanket before they leave: my cell phone number!" Jimmy laughed. "I will answer my cell phone throughout the day and up until 10 p.m. at night. Please shoot me a text message after 10 and I will get back to you first thing in the morning. When we treat each other right, the results are always positive."

Joe McNamara, service manager, oversees the service center at Palm Bay with a staff of 16. "We have two service writers, one warranty writer, 10 certified technicians, two RV specialists who are also trainers, and one service department porter," Joe began. "We moved into our new facility here in Palm Bay on October 28 and went

from eight bays to 18 bays. What a huge difference that made! We also added a temperature and humidity controlled paint booth. It almost eliminates the post painting work and allows us to deliver a much better final product."

GRW sends its service techs to Red Bay for training in repairs that are specific to Tiffin's motorhomes. "We send them back every two years to participate in all the manufacturer's training programs available to us," he noted. "In covering repairs made under the manufacturer's warranty, most RV manufacturers will do for the customer what they have to do. Tiffin does whatever is the right thing to do. I saw a situation where it was fair

best places to work by the *Orlando Business Journal*. When the recession hurt our industry in 2008, we never cut our benefits package. We did have to cut back on the total hours the employees worked based on the volume of work we had in the shop. GRW pays part of the health insurance premium and offers a 401K savings program. If an employee loses a member of his/her immediate family who did not live in Florida, we buy the plane ticket for the employee to attend the funeral."

The company's interest in supporting charitable efforts is admirable. The VIP Camping Club raised \$24,000 with several fundraisers to benefit Orlando's homeless veterans. GRW matched the club's fund. "When you are a profitable company, we think you have a responsibility to participate in civic and charitable efforts to benefit those in need," Joe said. "Every Veteran's Day, we select a restaurant or diner and pay for the meals of veterans and their families who dine there for breakfast or lunch. Doesn't the Bible

say, 'It's better to give than to receive?' It definitely makes us feel good to help out whenever we can."

Service advisors **Tim Heller** and **Kim Smith** are usually the first to greet owners who bring their RVs in for service. Their office is adjacent to service manager Joe McNamara.

"We prefer to schedule appointments whenever possible since it gives us the opportunity to interview the owner by phone and discover the reason for the service visit and the parts that we may need," Tim said. "When the owner arrives with his RV, we walk through the unit as he explains the repairs or service that needs to be done. Each problem is marked with blue tape and the information recorded on an iPad. Whenever possible we take a picture with our iPads. The data and images are transferred to a work order, printed, and signed by the owner. The owner indicates how he should be contacted: phone, email, or both. After a closer examination of the requested re-

pairs and service, we email the owner with the estimated cost and time required to complete the work."

"We update the owner as we get into the repair phase," Kim explained. "After getting into a repair, we may find that it is more extensive than anticipated. If we have to order parts, we advise within the week regarding the ETA. Any changes or discoveries made throughout the repair warrant an advisory update. We never want to surprise an owner with an unanticipated charge when he arrives to get his unit."

The parts department directed by David Dillard stocks air conditioners, water pumps, step motors, and a wide assortment of other items that are needed regularly.

"Among the manufacturers who build our RVs, Tiffin has the best track record for correctly identifying parts and shipping the order quickly," Tim noted.

"One service we offer almost without asking is the installation of screen on heaters and air conditioners to keep the mud daubers out," Kim said. "Of course,

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we have to charge for it, but if they do not have the protective screens we always recommend it to the owner as a necessity here in Florida. We try to be proactive with service, parts, and repairs if we see something that will assure the owner of having a great RV experience.”

“Paint fading and decal deterioration is a problem that we see in our hot Florida climate much more than you see up north,” Tim noted. “A local company makes patterns for decals. We are able to remove old decals that are faded or frayed and replace them with new ones. Better yet, we can remove the decals and replace them with painted decals with the same color scheme or one of your choice. Our new fully enclosed paint booth has become a major factor in taking care of this problem and drawing new business for full body paint. We can send a coach out of here looking brand new.”

The service department recently added a full-time warranty adviser. Lisa Cantlon checks each motorhome coming in for repairs to see if there are any existing warranties still in force that will help the owner pay for repairs. “Many owners are not aware of what their warranties will cover and whether they have expired,” she said.

Ron Henry joined GRW seven years ago and now heads up the business development center. A 22-year Army veteran, Ron focuses on maximizing opportunities through better organization and communication.

“Inquiries are critical to our successful sales effort,” Ron began. “We did not have a process and follow-up system. After we acquired the IDS Astra G2 software, we had the software structure to organize leads and inquiries and create reminders. Before Astra G2, leads and inquiries were floating around the office on Post-It tabs. Now I enter all of our internet leads into the program and assign them to salesmen for follow-up. After I did training in the use of the program, our sales team went from three inquiries a month that resulted in a sale to 14 a month that produced a sale. And that number is climbing.

“I process all of our incoming inventory, new and used, to make YouTube videos with a host as well as still shots for the category listings on our website,” he said. “The videos really help our website visitors to narrow the scope of what they are looking for.”

Ron also has the responsibility to develop an annual corporate schedule. “The schedule is organic in that it is continually being updated by all of the departments at all levels,” he explained. “Information flows across all departments so that everyone can see what is happening in the company currently and in the future.

“Palm Bay became the guinea pig for using the Astra G2 software for lead development, intra-company communications, and general organization,” he continued. “I am now doing training in our other two locations to utilize the software. It is exciting to see the improvements that begin taking place immediately.”

Successfully branding GRW in the tourist-packed Space

Coast is another goal that Ron has in his sights. “There is a great business climate and diversity in Florida’s mid-coastal region,” he explained. “Port Canaveral is a huge tourist location for the cruise lines. There are five major, high-end restaurants; the Exploration Tower and Information Center; a major county campground; and frequent combination shows for outdoor products. We will be doing events with other companies in what often develops into a carnival atmosphere.”

Patrick White’s sales philosophy has synced with Ron’s lead development. “We have been on the same page from the beginning,” Ron said. “Before our move to our new 26-acre site with a much larger facility for sales and service, we had seen 21 deals per month climb to 40 per month. Patrick is forecasting 60 deals per month for 2017. GRW is an exciting place to work.”

David Dillard, parts manager, plays a major supporting role in the daily operations at Giant Recreation World. On his résumé David counts over 10 years in the Army with three deployments in Iraq.

“We stock \$165,000 in parts and RV Store inventory,” he said. “Our aftermarket sales focus on both interior and exterior products. In the exterior area, we stock vent lids and covers, slide-out seals, topper covers, Blue Ox towing equipment including base plate installation, Roadmaster dollies with surge brakes, as well as outdoor cooking equipment and metal campfire containments,” David listed. “Of course, we stock all of the convenience consumables—paper products and tank treatments.”

If an owner wishes to do an interior upgrade, the RV Store offers chairs, sofas, and recovering materials for passenger and driver chairs. Repairs can be made to solid surface counter tops and cabinetry.

After service orders are taken for motorized and towable RVs, David’s department places orders and schedules deliveries for the required parts. “We work with Karen at Tiffin Parts and Service,” he said. “She does a great job for us.”

Ed Marusa had just become GRW’s business manager one month before our visit to Palm Bay to do this story. His primary focus is finding the best financing for his customers.

“We have four well-known banks that specialize in lending for Tiffin’s upscale motorhomes,” Ed began. “That list includes Bank of America, Bank of the West, Bank of the Ozarks, Ally, and several credit unions. We are seeing interest rates floating between 4.25 and 4.99 for a 20-year loan. At this time, most of our buyers are bringing their own insurance policies. American Guardian seems to be very competitive right now.”

Since banks are now allowing lower down payments, Ed recommends gap insurance in the event the owner encounters a financial or medical emergency that demands an earlier than anticipated sale of the coach. If the owner is bringing a trade-in, he will evaluate the owner’s current policy to determine if any part of the premium can be refunded and reapplied to the policy for the new coach. Ed is long on experience in the RV industry, hav-

ing begun his career in 2005 with GRW's Ormond Beach store. **Taran King**, office manager, has been with GRW for five years. As most entrepreneurs know, the office manager provides the records and paperwork that keep the company running smoothly. New owners will be pleased that she will have your tag and title ready to go when it's time to get on the road. The sales tax rate for Brevard County is 6.5%.

Taran handles the company's accounts payable to local vendors and parts suppliers. She also oversees and checks the weekly payroll.

Giant Recreation World's Corporate Center and Business Philosophy

GRW's corporate center in Winter Garden provides services common to each of the three stores in Ormond Beach, Palm Bay, and Winter Garden. "From our corporate offices, we provide information technology, website development and maintenance, plus advertising and marketing services," Larry McNamara said. "When we do campaigns, the corporate center selects specific media; all of the digital effort including search engine optimization and buying key search words; planning and buying TV and radio time as well as newspaper ads; and email blasts. Matthew Harrison, our marketing director, works closely with each store to select and coordinate the brands and products that will be featured."


The guiding light of Giant Recreation World is founder and

Plant Tours

Monday–Friday at 9:30. Meet in the Allegro Welcome Center 15 minutes before departure. Tour headsets and protective glasses provided. You'll be on the production lines seeing it up close and personal. Questions are always encouraged.

chairman of the board Don McNamara. He once wrote in a brochure, "We have been going the extra mile to exceed customer expectations since the day we opened. We will continue to practice the Golden Rule of doing unto others as we would have them do unto us."

"When you allow us to serve you in any of our three locations, we will go above and beyond to make the experience a great one," Larry continued. "Last year we passed a 40-year anniversary as a family-owned and operated company. If you ever feel the need, you can always talk with an owner. Everyone at GRW—employees, managers, and owners—will treat you like family.

"Our goal is to be large enough to offer you the best deals on an RV, but responsive enough to remember your name long after you leave one of our stores," Larry said. "We want to make every customer a customer for life. Feel free to email me anytime at larry@grwrv.com and you will get an appropriate response." 



The advertisement features a large image of a black Winegard Connect WiFi extender with three antennas. Above the device is a blue Wi-Fi symbol. To the right, the text reads "Secure, Simple Internet" in green. Below that, "WINEGARD® Connect™" is written in blue, followed by "LONG RANGE, HIGH PERFORMANCE WIFI EXTENDER" in smaller blue text. A blue box contains four features: "Increased WiFi range" with a Wi-Fi icon, "Secure personal connection" with a padlock icon, "Simple to scan and find network" with a power icon, and "Connect to WiFi where others can't" with a group of people icon. At the bottom left is the URL "winegard.com/connect" in blue. At the bottom right are two photos: one of a family taking a selfie and another of a family looking at a tablet.

Gary & Carol Davis

SUCCESSFUL CAREERS BUILT ON PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS



The nerve center of Gar-Mar Farms is located on Dublin Road in Delaware, Ohio. Gary and Carol's home can be seen in the lower foreground

In their 55 years as marriage and business partners, Gary and Carol Davis have proven that today's "family farm" can be a very successful multi-generational family business. With four great-grandchildren, they hope the fourth generation may one day take a leading role in operating Gar-Mar Farms.

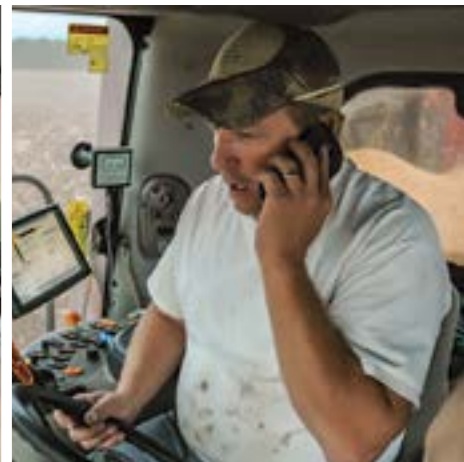
When we arrived at their farm in Delaware, Ohio, the third week of October, Carol was waiting for us at their home. We parked our Allegro Bus and Carol chauffeured us to the fields of corn and soybeans that Gary, John (their son), and Bob Belt were harvesting with three combines. When he got to the end of

the row, Gary stopped the huge machine and motioned me to come aboard. Excited with the opportunity, I climbed the ladder with camera and notebook in hand.

I first sat in the buddy seat as Gary began to explain how the big Case combine was operated by the onboard computer providing a mountain of real-time information including the moisture content and bushels/acre being harvested. Guided by data from multiple satellites, the combine could almost be operated without a driver except for the 180-degree turnaround at the end of each row. Even that could be programmed, Gary assured me.

As the combine cruised on my second pass across the soybean field, Gary pulled himself out of the driver's seat and motioned

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



to me to slide over and take the controls. The computer was really driving the combine, but the end of the row was looming up ahead. Now I was the driver and he enjoyed my surprised expression as he motioned for me to make the 180 turn-around. I did it, aligned the left corner of the combine with the unharvested row and engaged the auto-guidance system.

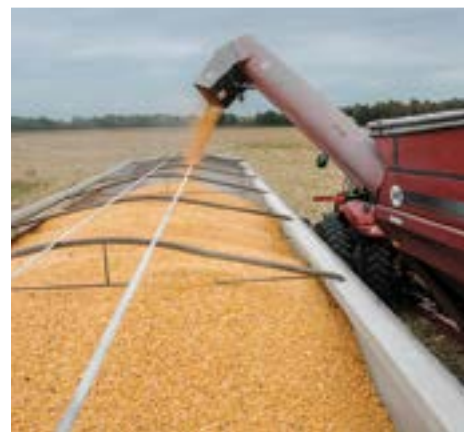
Carolyn and I had met Gary and Carol six weeks earlier in Red Bay when they parked their 2016 Allegro Bus 45OP next to the 45OPP where I was doing a photo-shoot and story for the Fall issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*. The identical paint jobs of the two coaches made us look like twins and that started a conversation that led to our visit.

Gary Davis and Carol Baker grew up on farms in adjacent counties in southwestern Ohio. Gary's parents operated a dairy and swine farm and Carol's family raised purebred Angus cattle and swine. Sundays found both families in church. The Davises were Quakers and the Bakers

were Methodists. In the summer, the two churches worked together for their Vacation Bible School. Highland and Fayette counties were the epitome of rural America in the mid-twentieth century when agriculture was a dominant player in the local economy.

As you might expect, they both were in 4-H, and from the ninth grade forward they went to the same school, graduating in a class of 44 in 1960. Since a high school courtship had been in progress for at least a year, they both decided to attend Ohio State in Columbus, less than two hours away by car. Carol decided on a major in home economics and Gary set his sights on veterinary medicine. A year later they decided to study at OSU as a married couple and tied the knot in June 1961.

Gary's first two undergraduate years at Ohio State went really well and he was accepted at the end of his sophomore year into the university's four-year doctoral program in veterinary medicine. Carol was awarded her BS degree in 1964 and



Clockwise from top: One of Gar-Mar's three Case combines is seen here harvesting soybeans.

♦ Gary sits in an enclosed, air-conditioned cab checking the data on the combine's computer as the crop is harvested. ♦ In a nearby corn field, John Davis checks on his cell phone with one of the semi-truck drivers to coordinate emptying the carts he is filling with corn. ♦ As the combine completes a circumference of the field, a receiving cart pulls alongside to empty the grain from the combine. ♦ After the carts are loaded from the combine, they are pulled to the edge of the field where the contents are transferred into a waiting semi that can haul 1,000 bushels at a time to the storage bins or grain elevators.



Gary earned his DVM degree in 1966. He continued his academic career with a master's degree (1968) and a PhD (1970) in veterinary pathology.

As Gary's academic credentials increased every two years, so did the size of their family. Mark was born in 1962, Lori in 1964, Cheri in 1966, and John in 1968. Carol taught home economics at the high school level for three years and then started a pre-school daycare center in Linworth. "Since we were not in the 'stop-for-a-drink-after-work' circuit, I unwittingly named my daycare center 'Happy Hour.' That drew a few raised eyebrows," she laughed. Carol operated the preschool in facilities provided by her church.

Gary began a teaching career at Ohio State, focusing, of course, on veterinary pathology. He and Carol purchased a home in a Columbus suburb and immediately realized how much they missed the open spaces they enjoyed as they grew up. "After church services each Sunday, we grabbed lunch at a fast-food restaurant and checked the Sunday paper's real estate ads for local farms for sale," Gary explained. "With the whole family in our station wagon, we combed the extended area around Columbus."

Their search was rewarded in early

1971 when they found 85 acres in the Dublin area on the northwest side of Columbus. "We bought the farm from Hal-den and Marceta Harris," Gary related.

"It included a 30-foot square two-story farm house and eight barns. They called their property Hal-Mar Farm and we re-named it Gar-Mar Farms. They were like a third set of grandparents to us, so we wanted to keep part of their name in the farm," Carol added. "We remodeled the farm house by building an L-shaped addition on the first floor and a whole new second floor with five bedrooms. The bedrooms open onto a balcony that overlooks the living room with its high ceiling."

The Davises began farming their 85 acres that spring. "We planted soybeans and had a field of hay," Gary noted. "We had a small purebred Angus herd. As the children were old enough to be in 4-H, each were given cattle to manage. We began to expand the next year with owned and leased land. I taught at OSU and farmed part-time in the evenings and on Saturday."

In 1977 Gary and a partner formed Greenbriar Veterinary Service, Inc. (GVS) to do contract research in veterinary medicine, focusing on developing new products for cattle and swine for larger



Clockwise from top: Farmers may be the original tailgaters. Carol brings a feast of Ohio barbeque with all the trimmings to reward John, Gary, Bob, and guests. ♦ The storage bins at the farm's main location can handle 185,000 bushels of soybeans and corn. ♦ The semi trailers can be elevated to dump corn from the rear of the trailer to a conveyor belt transporting it into the bin. ♦ The soybeans are unloaded from the bottom of the trailer into conveyers underneath. ♦ An aerator monitors the moisture content of the grains and keeps them at the desired percentage. ♦ Garages store the equipment in winter. ♦ A fully enclosed shop with floors heated by hot water supports maintenance operations through the winter months.

companies to market. “After the Good Laboratory Practices Act was passed by the Food and Drug Administration, stringent policies were imposed that made it difficult to perform confidential research in the university environment,” he said. “It became easier for a company in the private sector to successfully implement and maintain the policies.”

Gary continued to teach at OSU until 1980, oversee Greenbriar’s work and growth, and farm with the help of several employees. “I was multi-tasking big time,” he smiled. “I focused on farming in spring and fall and research at GVS in winter and summer.”

Carol was multi-tasking, too! In addition to being wife and mom, she managed and taught at the preschool center and kept the books for the farm and Greenbriar Veterinary Service. “We learned as we went along,” she said. “We bought our first business computer in 1984 and installed accounting software. The ’80s were a tough time in agriculture. Ohio lost a lot of farms. We are not CPAs, but we made careful decisions and got through it.”

As land became available to lease or buy, Gary and Carol increased the acreage they farmed. “We grew from a few hundred acres to several thousand acres over the years,” Gary explained. “You are constantly moving toward an equilibrium between the amount of land you can farm and the amount of equipment and labor you have available to meet that demand. There is also the time factor. You have a certain window in the spring when the planting has to be done and you must have enough equipment to plant all of your acreage in that window. And in the fall you must have enough combines, tractors, trucks, and trailers to harvest at just the right time.”

When they bought the Harris farm, Mark was 9; Lori, 7; Cheri, 5; and John, 3. Today, 45 years later, all four have attended The Ohio State University, married, and have children of their own.

Mark lives nearby and is employed by National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC). He consults with elec-

tric co-ops to provide the latest technology. NRTC also maintains a lobbying effort for the co-ops. Mark has two children, Jarred and Jordan, from a previous marriage, and two grandchildren. Mark and his wife Belinda have a daughter, Anna.

Lori is married to Ed Zimmerman. They met in high school and earned degrees from OSU in animal science and agriculture. After their first farm was acquired by the city for a reservoir, they acquired a larger farm 15 miles north of

Gar-Mar Farms where they raise soybeans and corn. “It gave them the unique opportunity to plan their complete farm layout, building a new house, barns, and grain bins from scratch,” Gary related.

“Lori and Ed have two children, Mary and Daniel,” Carol said. “They were both in 4-H. Now they are out of college and married. By the time you mail your January magazine with our story, both couples will have new babies—and we will have our third and fourth great-grandchildren.”

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“Very helpful resource! We are heading west for the next 5 months and I’ve depended on your book/online info for the last year and don’t plan on stopping it! Take care, -Lynn” (April 2016)

BIG RIGS Best Bets

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Jill has a small equine breeding operation that includes a stable and an indoor riding ring for training in the winter months. Frank joined Carol & Gary and Jill & John for a “family” picture.
♦ Gary and Carol garage their 2016 Allegro Bus 45OP when they are not traveling.



Cheri graduated from OSU as a medical technologist, and currently works in a local hospital. She is married to Matt Maxim who is a CPA. They have a daughter, Mia, whom they adopted from Guatemala.

John graduated from Ohio State in 1991 with a degree in animal science and immediately returned home to begin his own career in agriculture. “I began farming land that I leased, plus I helped Dad during spring planting and fall harvest,” he said. “I met and married Jill at OSU while she was also studying for a degree in animal science.” They have two sons. Cole is a sophomore in high school, and Luke is a sophomore at OSU. When not in school, they work on the farm along with their cousin Jarred.

In 2005, after 28 years of successfully running Greenbriar Pathology Service, Gary and his partner decided to sell the company. In 2011 Gary and John formed a corporate partnership. By 2016, they were farming about 5,000 acres.

“We lease or own the land that we farm. Developers own some of the acreage that we farm,” Gary explained. “Much of that land will be developed soon. The encroaching growth of Columbus and smaller municipalities is reducing the land available for farming in our area. Land does not come up for sale very often.

“We also farm approximately 500 acres as a remote operation. It includes Carol’s parent’s farm plus two adjacent farms we own. We put that land in soybeans this year. At harvest time, we stay on the backroads and drive two combines 77 miles down to Fayette County,” Gary said.

The amount of labor required varies during spring, summer, and fall. John and Jill, Gary and Carol, and full-time employees Jason Damron and Bob Belt handle the spring tillage, planting, and spraying. The crunch hits during the fall harvest. Three grandsons, Jarred, Luke, and Cole, also help. Part-time help is hired during the harvest season to drive

semis, tractors, trucks, and combines.

The amount of equipment needed to operate at this level is staggering to the uninitiated observer. Seven large grain bins on the primary farm on Dublin Road in Delaware, Ohio, can accommodate 185,000 bushels—155,000 for corn and 30,000 for soybeans. These grain bins can be equipped with moisture control systems that monitor the moisture content at preset times and aerate them to preserve the quality of the grain. Grains are stored until the market reaches a price advantageous to the seller. Large quantities of soybeans are stored at several off-site locations on leased farmland.

Other equipment required to operate at this scale includes four semis to haul the harvested grain from the fields back to the storage bins. When the optimum time comes in the market to sell the corn or beans, these same semis haul the grains to grain elevators or grain processors.

During harvest time, three combines operate 12 to 16 hours a day. As they make their routes through the fields, three grain carts pulled by tractors pull alongside the combines to unload them while the com-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROL & GARY DAVIS

bines continue operating. The grain carts are pulled to the edge of the field to a waiting semi that can haul 1,000 bushels at a time to the storage bins or directly to the elevators. The enterprise has 10 tractors and nine pickups, some of which are dedicated to special applications.

In the spring, Gar-Mar Farms utilizes three corn and three bean planters. They use two planters that can plant corn or beans—32 rows of beans or 16 rows of corn. A corn planter can plant approximately 15 acres per hour. With rows 30 inches apart, a seed goes into the ground every 6 inches, resulting in about 35,000 seeds per acre.

“Seed depth and spacing is critical,” Gary explained. “Each plant must come up at the same time. If a seed is not in sync, it basically produces a weed (non-productive).”

“Each row has a no-till coultter that makes a narrow furrow two inches deep followed by double disk openers,” he continued. “Then the seed is dropped in. Side wheels control the depth of the furrow. Closure wheels at the end of the assembly close the furrow. The planter runs at about five miles per hour.”

The Davis Family in 2009

From left sitting across the tractor: Jordan, Anna, Cole, Luke, Jill & John, and Mary. From the front of the tractor and right: Jarred, Mark & Belinda, Carol & Gary, Cheri & Matt seated with Mia, Ed & Laurie, and Daniel. The 1970 Allis-Chalmers was Gary's first tractor.

Jill is the company's accountant, bookkeeper, and payroll clerk, having taken over those jobs from Carol several years ago. “We run a very lean operation,” Jill said. “We rarely sub out work to specialty suppliers. We fertilize and spray our crops. Many farms sub-contract that work.” Jill also serves as the chief financial officer in the township where they live.

Carol continues to stay involved. “Today my job on the farm is to be available when and wherever needed. I can drive the pickups, move equipment, or drive a grain cart when we are harvesting,” she said. “I used to drive the pickups that hauled the 300-bushel goosenecks. But then we switched to semis in the nineties and I don't drive semis!”

Gary coordinates the overall risk management at Gar-Mar Farms. “Being on top of the market when it peaks and making the decision when to sell our beans and corn is a significant part of managing our family farm,” he acknowledged.

Field records are carefully maintained on each piece of land that they farm. “John and I develop plans for crop rotation, using multiple seed varieties for soybeans and corn, and experimenting with insect resistant seeds,” Gary said. “Our records show what works best for selected fertilizers and insect deterrents.”

In 2011 the company was reorganized as a corporate partnership with Gary, Carol, John, and Jill as the partners. A farm office, farm shop, and adjacent storage for equipment was added at the main location. The farm shop has heated floors to make year-round maintenance operations possible for Jason Damron, the farm's full-time mechanic. Most of the preventive maintenance is done during the winter months.

Gar-Mar became a distributor for Pioneer Seeds in 2001. “We buy untreated seed for our inventory. When a farmer orders seed, we provide specialized treat-

Continued on page 62

Plant Tour Leaders

FLOYD PADEN, BRENDA HALL, JEANNETTE PEARSON, AND HAROLD ENTREKIN

For most of the years that Tiffin Motorhomes has been in operation, tours have been offered to the public and especially to those who were buying a motorhome and wanted to see exactly how it was built. Tiffin's up-close approach to showing infinite detail and allowing photography raises the eyebrows of other manufacturers, most of whom allow neither.

Offered daily at 9:30, the tours begin in the Visitor Center located at the plant entrance on Second Street. After a brief in-

troduction to TMH and a talk on safety measures during the tour, the guides distribute eye protection glasses and individual FM headsets.

Tiffin now employs four tour guides who work in two-person teams and hand-off the narration to each other as the tour moves through different departments. Since Tiffin tour guides enjoy contact with Tiffin owners, we want you to meet them at a more personal level in addition to a name-only introduction.

Floyd Paden finished high school in nearby Belmont, Mississippi in 1958. He took a position in manufacturing in 1966 with Reynolds Metals Company. Floyd retired in 2001 after a 35-year career with Reynolds. His friendship with Red Davis, one of Tiffin's first tour guides, led to an offer in 2002 for him to join Red as a trainee.

Floyd's wife, Dorothy Jean, grew up in Red Bay. She studied at the University of North Alabama in Florence to become a registered nurse. Their daughter, Cindy, also studied at UNA and earned a BS degree in accounting. She is married to Sandy Russell and they have three children: Brittany, Jonathan, and Isabella. Their son David has six children: Kristin, Brianna, Jessica, Brittany, and twins Nicholas and Nichole.

"I enjoy meeting so many different people from the U.S. and Canada," Floyd said. "A part-time job really works well for me. We begin at 8 and are finished by noon, which leaves me plenty of time for projects around the house. If we want to be away for a trip, we cover for each other. Since my retirement from Reynolds, Jean and I have made trips to California, Washington, Louisiana, and Michigan."



For 30 years the couple enjoyed competing in Western Square Dancing. "Jean made all of our matching dance costumes," Floyd explained. "We have retired from square dancing," he laughed.

Brenda Hall was born in Parma near Sikeston, in Missouri's bootheel. After high school, she earned a BS in social science at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. Through a referral from her uncle here in Franklin County, Brenda began her first teaching position in Belgreen, 15 miles east of Red Bay.

"I met my husband, Jimmy Hall, at a county teachers meeting—how romantic!" she laughed. "My next job was here at the Red Bay High School where Jimmy was teaching."

The Halls had two daughters before Jimmy died in 1995 following a fall from a ladder when he was working in a summer job. After teaching 27 years in Red Bay, Brenda retired in 2000.



Not long after she retired, Community Spirit Bank created the Heritage Club. In addition to financial investment benefits, the club offered tours. "For eight and a half years, I planned and escorted tours throughout the U.S. and Canada," Brenda said. "We went by bus, plane, and ship. I really enjoyed working as a travel coordinator. When the bank discontinued the club's travel benefits, I started an independent travel club and led several overseas tours, including one to Australia. When the position opened here at Tiffin Motorhomes, I applied for it immediately.

"I love talking to our visitors and hearing about their travel experiences," Brenda continued. "Relating the Tiffin story to RVers who come from all over the U.S. and Canada is a pleasure. Red Bay also has a great story to tell the world."

Jeannette Pearson grew up in Red Bay where she attended grades one through twelve. After earning a bachelor's degree in geography and a master's in secondary education, she taught at the high school level in Rockwood, Vina, and Red Bay.

She retired from teaching in 2005 and launched a second career offering childcare exclusively to school teachers with babies and pre-schoolers. "The school teachers' schedule worked well for me," she said, "but the tour guide job in only the morning hours is even better. I enjoy meeting our visitors from across the U.S. and Canada and hearing about their travels.

"Our production process is interesting and I like to show it up close and personal," Jeannette continued. "I appreciate Bob Tiffin standing behind his product. He's an example to the industry."

Jeannette is married to Danny Pearson. "We live about five miles just over the state line in Mississippi on a 135-acre farm," she explained. "We actually live in the house where Danny was born and enjoy being able to hunt and fish on our own land. Danny and I do what we call 'truck farming.' We raise purple hull peas, watermelon, and tomatoes that we take to the Farmers Market on the weekend. But people throughout the area know about us and come by the farm to get what they need."

Harold Entrekin grew up in Phil Campbell, a small town about 12 miles south of Russellville. "My dad, Basil, was a bookkeeper and my mom, Estelle, worked in the sewing factory at Phil Campbell," Harold began. "They both went to school in Belgreen. So we have a long history here in Franklin County."

Harold played basketball in high school and in his first two years at Northwest Alabama Junior College. He completed his college work at the University of North Alabama with a major in physical education and a minor in biology. He later earned a master's degree in secondary education at UNA.

Continued on page 62

Since there are four tour guides who can conduct the tours, they often cover for each other when one needs to be gone for a while. "The flexibility of working as a Tiffin tour guide really works well in my travel business," Brenda said. "I will be taking a group to Hawaii on June 16 and another group of 76 to California in September." She uses several companies to set up her tours and sends out newsletters to sign up members.

"Working at Tiffin Motorhomes is like being part of a family," Brenda continued.

"Lex and our two daughters grew up together and I taught all three of the Tiffin boys in school," Brenda related. "I am blessed to have two interesting positions that provide the flexibility to let me do both jobs."



Jeannette and Danny have two daughters, Alaina and Adrienne. Alaina and Caleb, who both have BS degrees from the University of North Alabama, have two daughters, Hattie and Lydia. Adrienne also earned a BS from UNA and a master's from the University of Alabama. She has a position in social services at Dugan Memorial Hospital in West Point, Mississippi.



CHANGES IN SUMMER RALLY SCHEDULE

Effective November 7, 2016 the Tiffin Allegro Club rally scheduled for the New York State Fairgrounds in **Syracuse, New York** in June 2017 has been **cancelled**. The fairground is just completing a major renovation of the campground and many issues have arisen regarding the placement of their sewer hook-ups. This is a beautiful facility and we may revisit hosting a Tiffin rally at this location in the future if their sewer issues are resolved.

Instead of Syracuse, we will host our summer rally in the beautiful mountains of Lewisburg, West Virginia at the **West Virginia State Fairgrounds**.

We are sorry our plans to visit Syracuse didn't work out, but we believe everyone will be very pleased with the rally in West Virginia!

Kelly & Sally Moore

Tiffin Allegro Club Rally Lewisburg, West Virginia

June 5-8, 2017

REGISTRATION OPENED Tuesday,
January 24, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. CST

Join us in the scenic Appalachian Mountains at the State Fairgrounds of West Virginia on June 5-8th for our summer Tiffin Allegro Club rally! We are prepared to host up to 300 coaches at this facility. A display of beautiful new Tiffin Motorhomes will be available to tempt you!

The campground has 30 AMP electrical service, water, wi-fi and sewer hook-ups. Average temperatures in June are highs in the 70's and lows in the 50's. Our

rally begins on Monday, June 5th and coaches will depart on Friday, June 9th. If you wish to arrive at the fairgrounds prior to the rally or stay afterwards, you can make reservations directly with the fairgrounds staff and make payment to them for any pre or post nights. The fairgrounds' telephone number is 304-645-1090. The rally buildings will be closed and there will be no rally activities before the rally begins.

Your rally fee will include multiple catered meals, ice cream socials, live entertainment, four nights' camping, seminars, shopping with RV suppliers and local vendors, and other fun activities. Your rally fee also includes our terrific Tiffin technicians performing up to three

minor repairs on your coaches. You have made a sizeable investment in purchasing a beautiful motor coach. Take this valuable opportunity at our rallies to learn all you can by attending our seminars and talking with representatives from Tiffin suppliers such as Freightliner, Onan, Triple H Electronics, and others.

The cost for one coach and two adults is only \$459. We will begin accepting reservations on Tuesday, January 24, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. Central Time. Our rallies sell out quickly – the Okeechobee Rally sold out in less than two hours! Don't delay if you are interested in attending! The only way to register for this rally will be online at Tiffinmotorhomes.com. (The Registration Form will not be avail-



TIFFIN SERVICE POLICY FOR RALLY ATTENDEES

In appreciation for your loyalty, Tiffin Motorhomes whenever possible sends Tiffin service technicians to Tiffin Allegro Club rallies and the FMCA International Conventions. These technicians perform minor repairs/adjustments on Tiffin coaches and are assisted by technicians from the local Tiffin dealership.

In order to visit everyone, your cooperation is requested. Only minor repairs or adjustments can be made and the

work is limited to parts on hand and one visit per coach. You may request repairs for a maximum of three items that require no more than 30 minutes per coach at the Tiffin Allegro Club rallies. At the FMCA International Convention that changes to a maximum of three items that require no more than 15 minutes per coach.

We appreciate your loyalty to the Tiffin brand and want to say 'Thank You' at every possible opportunity. Happy Trails!

able until registration opens and it will be removed when the rally is full.) Click on the Owner's tab, select Tiffin Allegro Club, and click on Rallies. Open the Registration Form by clicking on the space as instructed.

Information required for this form:

Tiffin Allegro Club membership #

Name, address, cell #

Tiffin Allegro Club Chapter #

(if applicable)

Model, year & length of Tiffin coach

First time rally attendee?

Request for handicap parking area?

Complete the required information by filling in the blanks and click SUBMIT.

Pay for the rally on the next page by entering your credit card information into this secure PayPal site. It is not necessary to have a PayPal account for payment. You can pay as a "guest" the same as those who have an account. If the rally sells out before you register, don't despair! Add your name to our waiting list and we will contact you if a space becomes available.

An outside vendor accumulates all registration forms and provides them to the club in the order in which they are received. This eliminates the problems with overloading our email server, jamming the fax machine, etc. No registrations will be accepted by mail, in person or by

telephone. Anyone not having access to the internet can ask a friend or family member to register for them. This rally will sell out quickly so don't delay in getting your registration completed online. Call our office at 256-356-8522 ahead of time if you have any questions. *We do not recommend trying to register for the rally on a smart phone or mini-tablet!* Too much information in too small a space!

We hope your 2017 travel plans include spending time with us at a Tiffin Allegro Club rally! The comradery with other owners and local chapters is invaluable. Tiffin representatives from Red Bay will be on hand. Make your plans now!





Vintage Allegro Helps to Set a New Trend at the Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-in Theatre

Everything old is new again, especially among the trendiest of Austin-cool places like the Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-in Theatre. Helping to establish the Blue Starlite vibe is a classic Allegro that serves as the drive-in's concession stand. The Blue Starlite has been received so well in Austin, Texas, that entrepreneur-owner Josh Frank has opened sister drive-ins in Vail Valley, Colorado and Miami, Florida.

Frank seeks out vintage Allegros for his drive-ins "because they have the right look and feel. I looked at a lot of RVs before I found the Allegro. Once I laid eyes on it I knew I'd found the right one; it had a look about it that set the creative vibe I wanted."

When Frank started the business in 2009 he was just a guy buying up vintage drive-in movie speakers off of eBay and teaching himself to restore them. Fast forward, the Blue Starlite opened and he sold snacks from his small "hub" trailer. He quickly discovered that was a solution viable for audiences of 30 cars or less, at best.

Word of the mini urban drive-in soon spread and the drive-in garnered a loyal following. That's when Frank knew he wanted to upgrade to a full-sized RV for the concession stand. "I wanted an RV but I needed one with personality; it couldn't be just another box," said Frank. He found what he was looking for in the classic Allegro which now serves conces-

When Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-in entrepreneur-owner Josh Frank first hatched his idea and got to work on it, he was just a guy in Austin, Texas buying vintage drive-in movie speakers on eBay and teaching himself how to restore them. Today the business has grown in popularity and so has the number of mini drive-ins he owns and operates with three separate locations in Austin, Vail Valley, and Miami.

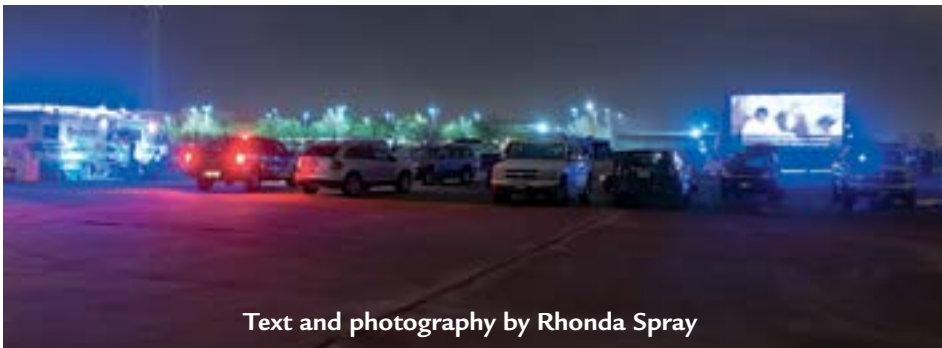
sion customers at his flagship drive-in located in Austin.

The unique Allegro turned concession stand does not disappoint when it comes to snacks. In addition to the traditional popcorn, hot dogs, candies, and sodas, big sellers include s'mores kits for two.

Audiences here are as eclectic and unique as the drive-in itself. Families pull up to a spot, pull out lawn chairs, blankets, pillows, and head for the concession stand. Meanwhile, circa 1950 black-and-white movie reels that tout dancing movie snacks and provide the all important countdown to the movie are shown on the 25 x 14 foot screen. In addition to families, audiences often include retirees out to enjoy the nostalgia of a trip down memory lane. Another staple of Blue Starlite audiences are all types of convertible vehicles. On this particular evening a recently graduated film student and her boyfriend drove from New Orleans to Austin to enjoy the outdoor drive-in experience.

Although the Blue Starlite has hosted crowds of over 200 vehicles, Frank is intent on keeping it an intimate affair. "We're not trying to imitate the sprawling drive-ins in the more rural areas," says Frank. "I like to provide a place right in the city where people can come, socialize with other people, but then return to their own mobile living room to watch a movie in private."

If you are interested in visiting the Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-in, check the website bluestarlite.com for directions and show times. RVs are welcomed but by necessity are relegated to spots in the back. Even then, that's not a problem as there's plenty of outdoor seating near the front.



Text and photography by Rhonda Spray



Proud to Be a Tiffin Owner

We purchased our 2010 Phaeton 40QTH in February 2016 in Seminole, Florida where we spend the winter. Then we drove it to Red Bay to have it checked out. We had always heard about Tiffin's exemplary service, and we experienced just that. My dad would buy a new car every two years, but would have the dealer take their name off and fill in the holes. I was thinking how proud I was to have the Tiffin name on my coach. I promote Tiffin everywhere I go. Great company. Keep it up!

Alan & Judy Holmes
Denver, North Carolina

PS: While Red Bay might not be as exciting as Yellowstone, we really enjoyed it. Friendliest place we have ever been. We will be back.

Lucky to Live in Oregon

I love my Tiffin Allegro 30GA! I am lucky to live in Oregon where there is so much to do, especially if you own an RV. I love visiting central Oregon, especially the Bend area and fishing on the Crooked River. I also enjoy the incredible beauty of the central coast. Come and visit our state.

James Thurber
Portland, Oregon

10 Weeks and 7,500 Miles in 2016—Alaska Here We Come!

I thought I would take you up on the invite to send you our travel story of the 2016 summer. My wife and I recently took a break from corporate America after about 30 years. This past February we bought our first motorhome—a 2016 Tiffin 34PA. After six months of research, we knew the Tiffin was the best choice. We have had no regrets. We took a few week-long trips to get our feet wet before taking on a 7,500 mile, 10-week trip from Florida to Canada and back. Having relatives in Canada, we had made the trip several times in a car and could not wait to try it out in our new Tiffin — what a difference!

We loved taking our time, meeting great people, and seeing incredible sights along the way. Being an avid fisherman, we were able to bring back a freezer full of halibut (thanks to our residential size fridge). We found that living full time in our coach for almost three months was so enjoyable and very comfortable. Unless you have ever experienced it, you don't really realize how little you need on the road to be content and happy. Our journey took us up through the center of the country across Arkansas, the Dakotas, and into Saskatchewan, Canada, then over to British Columbia and back home

through Seattle and many other beautiful states. For the upcoming summer of 2017, we are planning an even longer trip—this time across Alaska. We can't wait!

Thanks to Tiffin for making a great product. I traveled to Red Bay, Alabama to see our Tiffin being built back in January. I met Mr. Tiffin and he told me to call him if we ever needed anything. That is personal service from the man himself. One seldom finds this level of customer interaction in the business world today. You don't have to look far to find the secret to Tiffin's success.

Henry Jordan, Port St. Joe, Florida

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Jefferson, Texas

SEE NOW ‘THE WAY IT WAS’

Town’s “Golden Age” Washed Away But Unique Historic Attractions Delight Visitors

In the deep, dark Piney Woods of East Texas there’s a quaint, small town with attractions and unparalleled historical exhibits that can keep you royally entertained for a couple or more days after you hook up at a local RV park. Jefferson, Texas is the place. It is on U.S.59 just 30 miles north of its intersection with I-20 at Marshall, some 50 miles west of Shreveport, Louisiana.

To visit Jefferson, we found, is to step back into a fascinating chapter of history in a town that in some ways more resembles the affluent St. Charles Ave./Garden districts of New Orleans in the 1800s than any Texas stereotype. You’ll explore a town made rich by steamboats and river trade in a “Golden Era” though there was no river. It “dried up” when its harbor did. The town, with fierce dedication to its history, has faithfully preserved much of how it looked during its “Golden Era” days. Now it thrives as a tourist, hunting, and fishing destination.

Nearly a hundred structures in one 47-block area are on the National Register of Historic Places, many of them open for tours. The town lies between two great fishing lakes, the man-made Lake O’ The Pines and Caddo Lake, largest natural lake in the South. Shaded by thousands of tall cypress trees draped with gently-waving Spanish moss, Caddo spreads over the state line to cover more than 30,000 acres in Texas and Louisiana.

Once upon a time, say about 175 years ago, Jefferson’s road to riches began when men saw opportunity in an unusual, natural phenomena: a centuries-old log jam at least 100 miles long that dammed up the Red River in Louisiana. This backed waters up over lakes and bayous north and west of Shreveport, making them unnaturally deep.

The opportunity investors in a newly-formed “Jefferson Town Company” hoped to develop was a chance to float steam ships from New Orleans further west than they had come before: to a place on Big Cypress Bayou deep and wide enough to turn paddle wheelers around for return trips. Capt. William Perry, a shipper, steamboat owner, and later a Jefferson mayor, helped dredge the “turning basin” and places along the route to make passage possible. Allen Urquhart, a professional surveyor who had a headright on land facing the bayou, laid out the planned new town’s business district with streets facing the water to make it easy to move cargo in and out.

Daniel Alley, a real estate developer, bought a 586-acre parcel of land and, unlike Urquhart, designed streets running according to east-west,



Text by Norman Spray / Photography by Rhonda Spray



north-south points of the compass in an “Alley Addition” residential area. The resulting mismatch still exists, sometimes confounding visitors.

Urquhart, Alley, and Perry, almost certainly among the venture capitalists who formed the Jefferson Town Company, went with other investors to the port in Shreveport to board the “Lama,” a paddle wheel steamer chosen to make the first trial run into what would become Jefferson. Capt. W.W. Withenberry, owner of the “Lama,” had the helm, guided by Perry who knew first-hand where dredging had been completed to clear the way. The “Lama” arrived without recorded incident on February 26, 1845! Though an event destined to change history, there probably were no bands playing and little if any fanfare since the town had only one resident at the time, Ferry Operator Berry Durham. That all changed, and fast! The town populated in months.

Even before that year was out, steamboats began arriving regularly, sometimes with more than 100 passengers on board, among them a genteel, graceful society of successful and well-bred families; immigrants determined to make a new start in a new land; nefarious opportunists; and probably some outright crooks, con men, and hoodlums among other eclectic personages.

Jefferson boomed. Boat owners found ready markets transporting people and supplies into Texas from New Orleans after a “short” sail of only four or five days. Maybe more important, the “packet boats” returned with loads of cotton and other agricultural products brought in wagons from as far away as Dallas. Receiving, forwarding, and commission agents prospered. In the “Golden Era” years between 1845 and 1875, Jefferson’s population reportedly grew from a single resident to 30,000, making it the sixth largest town in Texas. Jefferson docked up to 250 steamboats a year, some moving over 425 tons or 1800 bales of cotton to market, mostly to New Orleans but some also to St. Louis. In Texas, Jefferson’s riverport ranked second only to the Galveston seaport in total tonnage.

Alas, the “Golden Era” rusted. What nature provided for some, other men took away. After the U.S. Corps of Engineers failed several times over the years to break up the log jam dam blocking the Red River, nitroglycerin became available. With it, the Corps finally blew apart the log jam that clogged the Red in 1873, presumably to eliminate a “transportation hazard.”

With all those logs, backed-up waters on the bayous and lakes drained off to the Gulf, eventually getting so shallow that steamboats could no longer run between Jefferson and New Orleans. The last boat left Jefferson, never to return, in 1903. Today only private pleasure craft and excursion boats move through the Big Cypress turning basin. It’s the same where Big Cypress crosses Caddo Lake, once a most important link in the steamboat waterway to Jefferson. The economy was further tanked when Jay Gould’s Texas and Pacific Railroad chose Marshall instead of Jefferson as a major shipping center, leaving the town that had prospered as a shipping center with little economical way to ship. By 1885 only 3500 people lived in Jefferson. Now it’s less than 2500.

The Jefferson Historical Museum houses four floors of history documenting Jefferson’s unique founding, prestige as a riverport, and the “down” years later. In addition to historical artifacts, there’s a large collection of antique dolls. It is one of six museums in town.



Left: This “Singleton’s Virginia Cross House,” one of several historic homes open for tours in Jefferson, was built in 1859. Capt. W.E. Singleton, who had served with the Confederacy, purchased it in 1885 and it remained in his family until 1985. It is considered a fine example of early Texas Greek Revival architecture that was patterned after 18th century Virginia houses of the cross plan, hence “Virginia Cross.” The two-story front portico with gabled pediment and second floor balcony are unusual.

Right: Tours of this “House of the Seasons” are popular among Jefferson visitors. Built in 1872, the house is considered an excellent example of a transition period between Greek Revival and Victorian styles. Though basically Greek Revival, much of the detailing is Victorian with certain Italianate characteristics (tall arched windows, bracketed cornices, cupola and bay windows). House got its name from the cupola where stained glass windows create an illusion of the four seasons.

Gone is that golden era of prosperity, of petticoats and parasols, of southern grace and romance — but much of it, a genuine artifact of yesteryear, awaits today’s visitors. You can walk or take a horse-drawn carriage tour along original brick streets lined now by antique shops, boutiques, historic homes and structures. You can ride in open cars behind an ancient steam locomotive that chugs along tree-shaded tracks skirting Big Cypress Bayou. Well-versed tour guides keep you accurately informed and sometimes entertained whether you’re in a carriage, on the train, or in a boat on Big Cypress or the lovely, beguiling Caddo Lake. You can stroll along a nature trail lined with native plants or even take a “ghost walk” stroll to places in a town that’s been called the most haunted in Texas.

You might justifiably think the entire town is a museum — and there are six: the Jefferson Historical Museum, four floors of historical artifacts and antique dolls; Scarlet O’Hardy’s *Gone With the Wind* Museum that houses one of the largest private collections of memorabilia from the epic story of the Old South; the R.D. Moses Model Train Museum that features 193 feet of rail in a 14 x 48 foot model layout of the Texas and Pacific Railroad in a West Texas setting; a Museum of Measurement and Time that displays land surveying and time keeping devices; the Mason Dixon Line Military and Civil War Museum; and the Lafayette Street Vintage Car Museum where all like-new vehicles are over 50 years old. And that doesn’t count the Carnegie Library, one of 36 that Andrew Carnegie funded. Built in 1907, it is one of only four that still operates as a library in Texas.

With a little luck or advance planning, you may be in town when something special is going on. Jefferson hosts festivals, parades, car shows, theatrical plays, concerts, and special events

on different weekends. Most noted is the “Annual Historic Jefferson Pilgrimage” when period-dressed docents guide visitors through selected historic homes. The Pilgrimage also features stage “re-enactments” of the infamous “Diamond Bessie Murder Trial,” a play based on the murder in Jefferson in 1877 of a beautiful, high-dollar lady of the night, a former society matron. (Abe Rothschild, her husband, was tried but never convicted.) The Pilgrimage, including performances of this play, usually is scheduled for the first weekend in May. In 2017, it will run for its 70th straight year.

A “Jefferson Candlelight Tour of Homes” in December also features tours of selected historic residences lavishly decorated with natural greenery and candles as they would have been in the “Golden Era” days. Trained docents in traditional costumes answer questions and share stories of the homes and Jefferson’s history as they escort visitors through the properties. Activities include an “enchanted forest” with 1,000 lighted trees and Christmas-themed and lighted carriage rides, train rides, and boat trips on the bayou.

A tour of the Excelsior House Hotel, claimed to be the second oldest still operating in Texas, should be a “must.” This handsome brick and mortar edifice, the epitome of wealth, comfort, and class in its day, has welcomed guests since the 1850s when the earliest part was built by Steamboat Capt. William Perry. Its glory days faded, along with the Jefferson economy, when steamboat traffic was lost. It fell into a ragged memory of its earlier grandeur until the Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club bought it in 1961. Members and volunteers spent thousands of hours restoring it to make the Excelsior today, as before, a focal point for southern hospitality and social functions.



On our own tour, we found awesome the large ballroom and adjacent dining room, each displaying Oriental rugs and large French chandeliers said to be worth a million dollars. Looking on two pianos, oil paintings and myriad antiques scattered about, we could all but hear the music and imagine stylish folk waltzing across the floor. Rich rosewood, cherry, and mahogany furnishings grace the Excelsior's 15 guest rooms.

The guest book is itself a piece of history. Notables registered

Outstanding features on a tour of the Excelsior House Hotel include this spacious ballroom with French chandeliers, a New Orleans-like courtyard, and 15 guest rooms with mahogany, rosewood, and cherry furnishings. The Excelsior's guest book includes the names of Presidents Ulysses Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes along with Oscar Wilde and Lady Bird Johnson.



were Presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes, Oscar Wilde and Lady Bird Johnson, among others. A wall plaque in one hall recounts some of the life of Capt. Perry including, sadly, how he was shot dead when walking home after midnight the morning of January 2, 1869. The case was not solved but authorities came to believe he was killed by an ambusher who mistook him for someone else.

The Excelsior serves only breakfast, no other meal, and only to registered guests and those who reserve in advance. Having ourselves enjoyed this old south morning creation served with real silver, perhaps antique, in a lovely sunny dining room that looks out on a New Orleans-style courtyard, we expect it to be the best you'll have in a month of Sundays. Space is limited, so reserve early (903-665-2513). If you don't get seated, not to worry. Just step next door into the Bayou Café. Breakfasts there are outstanding and relatively inexpensive.

The "Atlanta," personal rail car of railroad tycoon Jay Gould, is parked under a protective roof cover just across the street. As we strolled through the car Gould traveled in with his family, it was hard to picture the opulence some people could afford back when the car was built to Gould's specifications in 1886. There are four staterooms, two observation rooms, two baths, an office, a kitchen, and a butler's pantry. All are outfitted with the finest materials including silver spigots and handles in the baths. There was electricity, a water heater, and heat in every room.

How that fancy rail car came to reside in Jefferson is an ironic story, some of which may even be true. The story goes that Gould, often called a robber baron, was infuriated when town fathers, then enjoying rich returns from their riverport, turned

This railroad car, now open for public tours in Jefferson, Texas, originally was used by railroad tycoon Jay Gould and his family. Built to Gould's personal specifications in 1888 by the American Car and Foundry Company in St. Charles, Missouri, it is elegant to the smallest details such as silver bathroom accessories and crystal light fixtures. Mahogany and curly maple adorn interior halls and state rooms. After Gould died in 1892, his son used the car. It remained in the family until the 1930s. It was sold then and brought to Texas where it was used to house drilling crews during an early East Texas oil boom.



down his request for land and cash to support a plan to build a rail yard, shops, and infrastructure in Jefferson. All that went to Marshall instead. It's said that in writing in the Excelsior register, Gould predicted "the end of Jefferson." It's said he warned that "grass will grow in your streets and bats will roost in your belfry." The irony is that his luxurious personal rail car was bought and moved to Jefferson by the Garden Club in 1954 after members found it in a weed patch where

it had been left after serving as housing for oilfield drilling crews.

The murders of Diamond Bessie and Capt. Perry are two of many tragic events that saw numerous souls enter the world of the dead—and there are many who believe some of them remain to haunt places they choose. A guide who claims to have had personal odd ghostly encounters will tell you all about Jefferson's murders, tragedies and spooky haunts as she leads you by glow of lantern through gloomy


alleyways and courtyards on a "Historic Ghost Walk." We did not ourselves join this walk but did visit The Grove, "one of the most haunted" of Jefferson's historic homes, where we heard tales of how people had, Scout's Honor, seen a woman walk through walls.

We visited many of the homes, all impressive, particularly, for us, Carol Harrell's Haywood House with its authentic antique furnishings; took a 40-minute train ride in an open car into dark woods on narrow-gauge rails beside Big Cypress Bayou that steamboats once traversed; boarded an excursion boat for an hour-long narrated ride down the tree-shaded bayou that started at the "turning basin" where freight-laden steamboats could turn around; and enjoyed another amazing boat trip through Cypress forests on the still waters of Caddo Lake.

Educational (sometimes amusing) narration on all was done by real people using effective sound systems who knew the history and answered questions. That day the train was pulled by a little gas-powered Plymouth industrial locomotive called "The Critter" because Jefferson Railway's steam-powered engine, Old No.7 Robert E. Lee, had a bad bearing. However, the railroad's management promises that the Robert E. Lee, a Crown Metal reproduction of the American Class 4-4-0 locomotive, will be repaired and put in service on holidays and for special events like its "Halloween Theater on Wheels" in October and its Christmas-themed "Rail of Lights" in November and December.

Capt. John Nance was at the wheel of the small Turning Basin Riverboat Tour excursion boat we rode. He told how things were when the steamboat business was big. And he talked about the trees, plants and wildlife we saw on the banks (one deer and birds galore).

The Jefferson Visitor Center (903-665-3733) provides information for tours, activities, and special events. For restaurant listings go to jefferson-texas.com.

Jefferson may seldom make the pages of major travel publications (it is a small town, after all), but it is a fascinating small town big in uncommon history. 

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Caddo Lake

MYSTERIOUS, BEAUTIFUL, LIKE NO OTHER

Slipping out of the Caddo Lake Big Cypress Tours mooring onto the waters of Caddo Lake shortly after sunrise, we enter a strange, mysterious yet captivating world that seems completely out-of-place in the location it somehow occupies. Instead of the sturdy oak trees lining the roads we traveled to Caddo, we're now gliding through the world's largest Bald Cypress forest. Thousands of trees tower above our boat, draped eerily in wispy Spanish moss, "knees" surfacing all around them.

It is an experience like no other because this truly is a lake like no other, part lake and part swamp, that covers over 30,000 acres in Texas and Louisiana. The waters, still this morning, are quite shallow even where the Big Cypress Bayou channel cuts through. Overall, our tour captain is saying, the lake was perhaps 20 feet deeper in the 1800s when steamboats plowed across it on their way to Jefferson.

That loss of water depth happened after the Corps of Engineers finally broke a log jam in 1873 that had backed up water from the Red River and deepened Caddo, other lakes, and bayous north and west of Shreveport, Louisiana.

But did that log jam create Caddo, the largest naturally-formed lake in the South and the only natural lake in Texas?

Maybe. Then again, maybe not. Opinion varies. Some naturalists think Caddo may have been formed in 1811 when the new Madrid earthquake changed many things. But the "raft" that blocked the Red River existed long before that. More likely than either of those theories, some experts say, the lake was itself forming for hundreds of years before flooding from the Red River deepened it. They point out that growth rings indicate that some of the cypress trees in Caddo are at least 600 years old, proving that water must have been here for at least that long since cypress seed will not root on dry ground.

Whatever. The fact is, *it is*. And Caddo is a world unto itself, complete with storied history, not all pleasant. In 1869 a fire sank a paddle wheel steamboat on Caddo, taking over 60 lives. On the lake's shore, a settlement of saloons and brothels attracted outlaws seemingly bent on killing each other at a rate of a murder a day. The mayhem got so bad that locals formed a vigilante group called "The Regulators," hoping to end it all.

Trouble was, the job was so tough that "The Regulators" themselves became too abusive for gentler folk to abide. So, says local history, a group known as "The Moderators" formed to bring Regulators in line. The two groups finally engaged in outright war with forts built and cannons fired. So much for the peacekeepers!

After the Red River was cleared and Caddo water levels dropped, folk camped on the shores to harvest fresh water pearls, a short-lived profession. Soon thereafter, discovery of oil at the turn of the century created new industrial life on and around the lake where it is believed the world's first offshore oil drilling rig was erected. Today oil is still pumped from beneath Caddo waters.


Little of that is apparent to us this day as we simply absorb

the wonders of a place that is ranked by international treaty as one of the world's 13 greatest wetlands. According to a 1993 study, Caddo is home to 189 species of trees and shrubs, 75 grasses, 42 woody vines, 216 kinds of birds (we spotted several Blue Herons), 90 fish and reptiles (though few alligators) and 47 mammals. All this, says our captain/guide, with a wry smile, is in addition to numerous sightings of Big Foot or the Boggy Creek Monster! It is not the kind of weather where you'd expect to see the Abominable Snow Man, to be sure.

Take a boat ride on Caddo Lake, near Jefferson, and you'll float beneath thousands of moss-draped Cypress trees, some more than 600 years old. ♦ A scaled-down replica of steamboats that once crossed Caddo Lake to Jefferson is docked beside the popular Big Pines Lodge restaurant. This small paddle wheeler takes paying passengers on lake tours.



The Jefferson Visitor Center can recommend qualified guides happy to boat you on Caddo at reasonable cost. Caddo Lake Big Cypress Tours (903-570-3319) is the one we took. Billy Carter's

Guide Service (903-789-3268), billy@caddoguideservice.com is equally popular and qualified. However you explore Caddo, you may find it a time and place to remember. We did. 

Motorhome Accommodations in and Near Jefferson

In Jefferson

Diamond Don RV Park (903)742-2041, info@DiamondDon.com or RVPar-konTheRiver.com. 60 pull-through sites on wooded acreage. On the April 20-23, 2017 weekend, Diamond Don hosts its 13th Annual Riverport National Vintage Motocross race meet which had 625 entries in 2016. Reserve early.

Jefferson Ice Express and RV Park (903) 431-0043 or (903) 407-5599, jef-fersoniceexpress_rvpark@yahoo.com or jeffersoniceexpress-rvpark.com. Ten full hookup spaces.

Caddo Lake Area

Backwater Jack's RV Park and Cabins, Karnack, Texas. (903) 679-3427, back-

waterjacksrv.com. 29 full hookup sites, all 30/50 amp, eight pull-throughs. **Caddo Lake State Park**, Karnack, TX. (903) 679-3351, caddolakestatepark.org. Eight full hookup sites, 50 amp.

Lake O' The Pines Area

lakeothepines.org/lakes provides information on five Corps of Engineers camps at different locations on Lake O'The Pines: **Cedar Springs Park**, Ore City (903) 665-2336, 28 sites; **Alley Creek Park**, Jefferson, (903) 755-2637, seven sites; **Brushy Creek**, Jefferson (903) 777-3491, 36 sites of which 11 are pull-throughs; **Buckhorn Creek**, Jefferson (903) 665-8261, 40 sites; **Johnson Creek Campground**, Jefferson (903) 755-2435, 33 sites.

OWNER PROFILE *Continued from page 49*

ment based on his requests," John explained. "We tell the computer to coat the seed with selected insecticides, fungicides, or inoculants to enhance nodulation. After the treatments are processed, we deliver the seed in a specially designed trailer that can transfer the seed directly into the farmer's planter."

"A major factor in our success is the good people we work with," Gary reflected. "The land owners from whom we lease the land that we farm have really been good to us. We have worked with some of them for several decades and we appreciate them so much."


"We never expected Gar-Mar Farms to be this large an operation," Carol said. "It is a blessing to do what you enjoy doing and have your adult children nearby, plus one who is in business with us."

"Based on the amount of land that we farm, we are in the top 10 percent of farms in Ohio," Gary added. "It is still a hobby to me. It's my 'golf game.' We will do this as long as we can because we just enjoy doing it. I don't run the combine until midnight like I used to, but it is still fun to operate it."

Gary maintains active memberships in the National Corn Growers Association and the American Soybean Association.

He is a former chairman of the Research Action Team for the NCGA. "We have done research jointly funded by corn growers, industry, and government grants to improve and expand the science behind better agricultural methods for both the producer and consumer of our products," he said.

Gary and Carol have been going south in the winter in their motorhome for at least a decade. "For several years, I have been watching Tiffin Motorhomes build a good Class A coach. Almost every year I visited with Bob at North Trail RV or the January RV Show at the Tampa Fairgrounds. I would tell him, 'Bob, when you build a 45-foot coach with a real bathtub for Carol, we'll buy it.' Last year, he called to tell me my coach was ready. We bought the 2016 Allegro Bus 45OP with the first bathtub Tiffin has ever offered as a production option. And Carol loves it!"

"This winter we will be at Crystal Lake RV Resort in Naples," Carol said. "We plan to leave home the day after Thanksgiving, stay for two weeks, and come back for Christmas. We plan to return to Florida right after New Year's and stay until after the Tiffin rally. After the planting season is over, we are looking forward to traveling during the summer in our new Allegro Bus. Life is good and we have been so blessed." 

TIFFIN MANAGMENT TEAM *Continued from page 51*

"I began my teaching career in 1976 at Belgreen and coached seventh and eighth grade basketball. In 1978, I moved up to coaching the B-team and the varsity," Harold said. "During the summer, the coaching job in Red Bay opened. I got the job and coached the varsity team for the next 10 years."


In 1984 Harold married Carolyn Sue Dawson from Florence who was teaching art in Red Bay and Vina. "I have to credit Brenda Hall for introducing us," he smiled. "Her husband Jimmy and I taught in adjacent classrooms for 17 years and became great friends."

Carolyn and Harold have two children: Drew and Elizabeth, born in 1987 and 1988. "I quit coaching basketball to be able to spend more time with our children. During the basketball season I barely got to see them since the team practiced until late in the afternoon and all of the games were at night," Harold said.

"Later I coached the junior team for seven years."

Drew married Morgan McKinney. "I was her daddy's high school basketball coach," Harold noted. "Drew teaches science at Florence Middle School and Morgan has an MA in speech pathology. Our daughter Elizabeth is a speech pathologist in the Lauderdale County school system. Earlier she worked at Helen Keller Hospital. When she left the position at Helen Keller, Morgan got that job," he laughed. "I guess we were keeping all the speech pathologist jobs in the family."

Elizabeth is married to Jody King, a mechanical engineer. They have one daughter Amelia. Harold assured me that Amelia does not suffer from a lack of attention.

"In May 2012 I retired on a Friday and started at Tiffin the following Tuesday," Harold said. "I am coming up on five years here. I really like having something I enjoy doing every morning." 

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Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, a 43-year veteran with Tiffin Motorhomes, invites your questions.

Please use the enclosed postcard and send Danny your questions about your motorhome and its operation, especially those questions that may be useful to all of our readers. If you need more space, address your letter to:

Danny Inman
Roughing It Smoothly
PO Box 1150
Monroe, GA 30656-1150

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, or manuscript.

For answers to urgent questions and problems, call the Parts and Service number at 256-356-0261.

In the Q&A text, we abbreviate "passenger side" as PS, and "driver side" as DS.

Dear Danny . . .

A Special "Thank You" for Your Service

Thank you. I enjoyed reading your most recent "Serious Tech Talk" and just wanted to let you know that I, and countless others, truly appreciate everything you and Tiffin do for your customers. We have never spoken. But when I recently ordered our

new coach (our fourth coach in four years), my sales person at Lazydays, Rod Nichols, called you while I was in his office. I had a special request that he wanted to discuss with you while we were ordering. I only heard half of the conversation, of course, but it was obvious that there is a very strong and friendly working relationship between you and the sales force. It's this type of relationship and dedication, such as your 43 years of service, that makes Tiffin such a great company. You know that, of course, and so do we, your customers.

So, I have no questions or special requests. I just wanted to say "Thank You" for who you are and all the good people like you at Tiffin Motorhomes.

Phil Turner, Oldsmar, Florida

Dear Phil,

Thanks for your kind remarks. It's always nice to know that your work is appreciated.

Modifying the Paint Colors on a 2013 Allegro Bus

We are interested in buying a 2013 Allegro Bus that is just perfect except for the exterior colors. It is a "Sunlit Sand" scheme that sounds neutral enough, but it has a definite garnet and black theme that we find unacceptable. How feasible is it to paint over the garnet with lapis blue? Can you give me an idea on how involved that would be and what the cost might be?

Teri & Rick Walker, Seabrook, South Carolina

Dear Teri & Rick,

Modifying the outside color of a Tiffin motorhome is something that we cannot do in our paint facility. However, there are two local body shops that do repairs and aftermarket specialty painting. You can call Custom Paint of Red Bay and the Red Bay Body Shop for a quotation.

Insulating Ducts to Eliminate Condensation

In our 2016 Allegro Bus when using the dash air conditioner during a period of high humidity, we have noticed significant condensation on the duct that supplies air to the unit. I have had as much as a quarter-inch of water in the cup holder in the center console slide-out drawer. Is it possible to have the duct work insulated during the building phase? This should minimize the problem.

Ken Mercer, Village Mills, Texas

Dear Ken,

This is something we have received several reports on and we are looking for a good solution during the production process. At this time we have not been able to find an insulated hose that is the correct diameter.

Installing a CB on My 2014 Phaeton

I've owned my 2014 Phaeton since new, and I'm finally get-

ting around to installing a CB radio in preparation for a cross-country trip in about a month. However, I have not been able to find the wires under the dash to do the installation.

The sales statement showing "Optional Features" indicates my coach is pre-wired for a CB unit. After following the directions offered by two Tiffin technicians at the service center, I still could not locate the wires. The first tech indicated I would find them under the dash near the center of the coach, to the right of the gas pedal. I could not find anything that resembled coax wires or 12v feed wires there (other than an unused feed and ground marked for the spotlight option). The second tech suggested I look under the dashboard in the left-front-most corner of the coach. I gave that a try, but again I spotted no obvious spare wires to support a CB installation. Could you make a digital photo and email it to me, showing the location where the wires are supposed to be found and what the color codes are?

I enjoyed the great article by Mary Findley about the care and cleaning of tires, wheels, awnings, etc. in the Summer 2016 edition of RIS. Regarding the wheels, she points out the first thing an owner needs to know is whether the aluminum wheels are sealed or not. My owner's manual does not provide this particular information. Can you advise if the AccuRide wheels that were

delivered on my 2014 Phaeton 42LH are sealed or not sealed?

James Clark, South Lyon, Michigan

Dear James,

On your model, the only thing TMH installed was the CB antenna and the coax cable that was run down the A-pillar on the driver's side. You may find that it is bundled with other wires under the dash. It will have an end on it that screws onto the back of the CB. There was no 12-volt power supplied. You will need to pick that wire up from another source, either battery power or ignition if you want to go on/off with the ignition. You will also need a ground source.

The AccuRide wheels that came on the 2014 Phaetons were not coated and sealed.

Water Odor in 2000 Allegro Bus

We have a 2000 Allegro Bus. The hot water in the bath is fine. However, the hot water in the galley has a bad odor when you run it for any length of time. We have an inlet filter. Thanks for your help.

Laren Srb, Stayton, Oregon

Dear Laren,

You may have some foreign material that has become embed-

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ded inside the water line causing the foul odor. After you have flushed the line with fresh water, try flushing it again with a solution that is 50 percent bleach. Then, flush it out again with fresh water. If this does not work, the supply line to the galley will probably have to be replaced.

Dimplex Fireplace/Heater Is Over-Heating

We have a 2013 Allegro RED 33AA that has a Dimplex model DWF36 "fireplace/heater." The fireplace makes pretty faux flames. The heater does not heat the room very well, but it does heat the floor. My infrared thermometer shows that the

floor is heated to 150 degrees Fahrenheit and the unit's air distribution box/vent is at approximately 200 degrees. I am worried that the floor temperature may be dangerous. At the very least, I am concerned that my linoleum floor tiles could be damaged. After about ten minutes, the heater's over-temperature safety switch shuts the heater off. After another ten minutes, I can turn it on again.

I am tempted to remove this 40-pound hunk of glass and metal and put in a "very shallow" bookcase. I have been in other owners' coaches and was favorably impressed with the effectiveness of their fireplace heaters. None of those units were built by Dimplex.

Are the operating temperatures in my Dimplex normal? Should it be replaced? Is this heater potentially dangerous or could it damage my linoleum floor tiles?

William Olsen


Jemez Springs, New Mexico

Dear William,

For units with this problem, Tiffin Motorhomes issued a work instruction for the 2013 Allegro RED 33AA that have Dimplex model DWF36 fireplaces with a bottom discharge. The service department recommends the installation of a heat deflector shield to prevent the heat from blowing directly onto the floor. If you do decide to keep the fireplace, please call the Tiffin Service Center at 256-356-0161 for further instructions on the modification.

Lighting the Dash Display on an Allegro 32SA

In the Fall issue (13:4) of RIS, Charles Cooper asked about a Heads Up Display (HUD) for his 31SA. I have a 32SA and understand that the dash instruments are sometimes hard to read during daylight hours. I went to Wal-Mart and bought a 12-inch white light strip that can be applied with an adhesive strip backing. I peeled off the paper from the adhesive backing and attached the light strip to



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the upper inside of the hood above the dash instruments. I also purchased an OFF-ON push-button switch that plugs into the cigarette lighter or 12v outlet in the dash. I wired the light strip to the switch, concealing the wire behind the dash panel. When I need the light, I just touch the push-button switch and it illuminates the dash instruments.

Jerry M. Miller
Kingsport, Tennessee

Dear Jerry,
We checked out your digital images and the way you attached the light strip to the push-button switch. Great solution!

Batteries Overcharging on a 2009 Allegro Bay FRED

I have a problem with the house batteries on my 2009 Allegro Bay 34XB FRED. I am adding water at the rate of a quart between two 6v batteries every five days or so. I do not see any boil over showing on the top of the batteries but they must be overcharging. Where is the charger that charges the house batteries; what is the part number and price? Thanks.

Fred Powell
Lake Wales, Florida

Dear Fred,
The inverter for the 2009 Allegro Bay FRED should be located in the outside compartment between the entrance door and the front wheel. The unit is a Xantrex Prosine XM1800. You can replace it with a similarly sized unit, but it may be necessary to change the wiring and control panel. Our Service Center can advise you on the current replacement and price.

Anticipating Maintenance on a 2002 Allegro Bus

We own a 2002 Allegro Bus that we bought in 2004 with 7,500 miles on it, and now we have 95,000 miles on the odometer. It has given us good service with few problems. We recently bought new tires and batteries. Although everything in the coach is currently working,

we are wondering if there are any components that should be replaced at this time based on your long experience with failure rates. Thanks.

Ed & Sue Crawford
West Branch, Michigan

Dear Ed & Sue,
Check the shower domes, vent domes,

and the vent cover over the refrigerator for brittleness or deterioration. Things you may want to check are the seals on the roof and the plastic components that are connected to the roof. Be sure to check the patio awnings and the awnings that cover the slide-outs since the awning material can deteriorate over time.

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S E R I O U S T E

Check the covers of the awnings to see if the plastic has become brittle. Check the radiator hoses, belts, and any rubber fuel lines. Routine maintenance and cleaning of your coach should keep it running for years to come.

RR Crossings and Windshields

We have a 2015 Allegro RED and love the coach. We have had a problem with the windshield cracking from top to bottom. We had the windshield replaced last January because of rock chips. In February after a rough railroad crossing, it cracked from top to bottom. After replacing it in May, it cracked again in July after another RR crossing. Can anyone venture a guess as to what is causing our problem? We have to cross railroad tracks.

Bill Bouffroux

Fort St. John, British Columbia

Dear Bill,

This problem is not something that we see very often. The fiberglass and steel frame that encases the windshield has a certain amount of flexibility. There may be something in that framework such as a screw that is exerting pressure on the windshield and causing it to crack. When you have the next replacement, ask the technician to call the Tiffin Service Center and talk to our windshield service techs for suggestions on what to look for.

Cabinet Door Alignment in 2014

Allegro RED

We own a 2014 Allegro RED 36QSA and we love it. The cabinets in our galley slide-out are out of whack. None of the doors line up and it is very apparent. Is the whole slide-out out of plumb? Our nearest dealer is in Wausau, Wisconsin. Do they have the carpentry technology to correct this problem?

Steve Gorder

Friendship, Wisconsin

Dear Steve,

Kings Campers in Wausau has one of the best service departments in our dealer

network. They should be capable of correcting the problem.

2016 Allegro RED 33AA Is a Great Motorhome

To say the least, we absolutely love our Allegro RED. We have a short list of only six problems that are small. However, I do have two questions. First, the piece of wood trim between the TV and the fireplace seems to have some movement. Is this piece supposed to open? Second, we have a Kenwood system with navigation. I was told by Kenwood there is supposed to be a USB connection in the panel just below the radio. It's not there. Can it be retrofitted to connect MP3 and other resources to the radio?

Sandee Hill & Cheryl McKee

Livermore, Colorado

Dear Sandee & Cheryl,

The piece of wood trim is installed with Velcro to permit easy removal and access to electrical components. There should be a USB port with the radio. Most likely it was left underneath the dash and not pulled out for access. You should be able to expose it under the bottom edge of the radio.

Suggestions for the Allegro Bus

We have a 2014 Allegro Bus and have owned three Tiffin motorhomes. We will be taking delivery on January 20 of a 2017 Allegro Bus 45OPP, very similar to the one you featured in your Fall 2016 issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*. I have a few suggestions to offer.

I installed a roof gutter over the entrance door. As you probably know, the rain pours right down in the center of the door without this gutter. I made it from 1-inch channel aluminum with 3/4-inch sides, 36 inches long. I attached it with auto grade 3M tape and painted it the same color as the exterior.

The dash lights can be dimmed for night driving, but the center digital speed and odometer portal cannot be dimmed.

It is very bothersome and I usually tape a piece of paper over it which is not a good solution.

I have used my docking lights only one time in several years. I think they could also be used as turn signals with an orange LED bulb for turns and a white one for docking. A turn signal on the sides of the motorhome would be a good safety feature when another vehicle is alongside the motorhome as you signal a turn.

I visited the factory recently to have the splitter boxes replaced. I learned that when I store my motorhome and turn off the 12-volt switch on the passenger spark rest, the fan which is supposed to keep the splitter boxes cool is also turned off. I now know to turn the boxes off when not using the satellite antenna. It would make life easier if there was a switch on the outside of the cabinet to turn off the two boxes, instead of having to jerk out the cover and reach in and turn each one off.

Thank you for your answers to all of the tech questions. I really like your column and look forward to reading it each quarter. Keep up the good work.

Elvin Price
Monroe, Georgia

Dear Elvin,
Your suggestion for turn signals on the side of the motorhome will be a good safety feature. We hope to incorporate that soon. With regard to the excessive brightness of the digital speedometer, I suggest you visit a company that does window tinting and get a piece of scrap. Cut it exactly to the size of the too bright display and attach it. We have made improvements on the 12-volt splitter boxes so you should not have any issues with them on your new coach.

Tire Alignment on a 2016 Allegro 31SA

I am starting to get noticeable tire wear on my front tires. The Ford dealer will align them at a cost of \$295-\$350. The dealer stated that when Tiffin builds the motorhome on the chassis that it changes

the alignment specs. He said they should do an alignment just prior to delivery. I called my Tiffin motorhome dealer and he said the front-end alignment will be at my expense since it is considered maintenance. Then I called Ford Motor Company's RV chassis tech department, and they also said the alignment should have been done by the motorhome manufacturer prior to shipment to the dealer. The coach only has 6,024 miles on it and 1,965 of those miles were pre-delivery. I have driven the coach only 4,059 miles. Who should pay for the alignment?

Dennis Marbury
Mesa, Arizona

Dear Dennis,

In the production process, once the motorhome is built on the chassis, one of the steps is a four-point realignment to the front-end before the coach is shipped. With the few number of miles on your coach, Tiffin may be able to participate in the cost of having the alignment done again. Check with our Tiffin Service Center at 256-356-0261 for more information.


Installing a New TV Cable in a 2012 Phaeton


I have a 2012 Phaeton 40QTH. The end came off of the HDMI cable that connects the source box over the passenger chair with the mid-section television. I have a new cable, but I don't know how to string it across between the box and the TV. Suggestions?

Jimmy Davis
Mesa, Arizona

Dear Jimmy,

These cables are very difficult to re-route. The biggest problem you will have is getting the cable up into the bedroom slide-out. From behind the TV, take the cable down into the floor and over the wet tanks. The tanks are covered by an outside panel which can be removed. You have to leave enough slack to allow the cable to move in and out with the slide-out. My main suggestion is, "have patience!"


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Two Concerns About My Phaeton 40QBH

I am on my third Tiffin. This one is a 2016 Phaeton 40QBH. On all three of those coaches, if you are parked in the rain, the slide toppers hold water — a lot of water! Can this be corrected? I have to close the slide-outs very slowly to remove the water without creating a waterfall.

In the Fall 2016 issue (13:4), Joe Richardson asked about white streaks from the roof down the sides of his coach. You told him the white streaks were not oxidation. Go look in the Tiffin campground. If your RV stays outside, it gets full of white streaks from the roof. Why?

Paul Duplantis
Raceland, Louisiana

Dear Paul,

There is not really a correction for water pooling on the slide-out awnings. To correct it, we would have to reengineer

the walls and shorten the height of the slide-out to increase the slant of the awning from the top edge of the side wall. We would rather have the greater interior height of the slide-out room rather than cutting it down to improve the drainage from the awnings.

If you are confident the white streaks are caused by oxidation, you could try applying a coat of good automotive wax to cut down on the oxidation.

Handheld Door Remote Operates Sporadically

My wife and I purchased a new 2015 Phaeton (our second new Tiffin) and we love it. We have one problem that our local dealer cannot repair. Since delivery, the handheld remote control system that opens the outside door has worked sporadically. While it was still under war-

ranty, we brought the coach to our local dealer at least three times to correct the problem. The dealer supplied new handheld remotes that worked for a short time but did not solve the problem. I asked them to replace the receiving unit, which is readily visible in the basement storage area, but they did not think this was the issue. I tried to shut off all power to reset the Spyder system, but to no avail. When the coach is not in use, it is plugged into an outlet from our house to trickle charge the battery. But even when it is plugged in, it does not work. I would like to have this problem resolved without a 1,300-mile trip to Red Bay. Your analysis will be greatly appreciated.

Frank & Gail DePiano
Salem, New Hampshire

Dear Frank & Gail,

One of the things to check is the brass



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connecting pins at the hinge side of the door to make sure they are lining up and not obstructed. Other than that, the problem most likely is in the control box. However, the antenna wire on the box may not be receiving a good signal.

Toilet Flush Button in Difficult to Reach Position

We own a 2014 Allegro RED 38QRA that we purchased new. I have one major complaint and I hope you can suggest a workaround. The toilet in the rear bath is extremely difficult to flush because the activation button is recessed and located in the back sidewall of the adjacent vanity. I have even gone to the extent of gluing a small bumper over the spot so it is raised enough to find, let alone to push. Can this toilet be replaced with a whole new system that has a different flushing

device, or is what we have fixable?

The toilet paper holders on this model were poorly placed. In both cases, you have to reach behind to reach the paper. This is not always so easy for seniors. In the front bath, we swapped the towel ring with the paper holder. In the rear bath, we mounted the holder inside the bottom vanity door. We won't be taking the motorhome on the road again until February and am hoping we can find a "fix" by then.

I absolutely love your column and have found it most useful!

Mary Doty
Saline, Michigan

Dear Mary,

I understand the problem, but we do not have another more accessible location for the electronic flush switch. The wall to the left of the toilet supports the sliding door

to the bathroom and is not thick enough to support the switch and the mechanism behind it. We have to use a macerator toilet at this location to pump the sewage to the black tank in the center of the coach. A foot flushed toilet requires the black tank to be directly below the toilet. It is conceivable that a handheld remote could be designed, but I don't think one is currently available on the market.

In stores like Bed, Bath & Beyond, I have seen freestanding toilet paper holders that are very fashionable. At least, this will solve part of your problem.

How the Chassis Charging System Works in a 2010 Phaeton

I own a 2010 40QTH. I am hopeful you can shed some light on how the chassis charging system works as it relates to charging the coach batteries while underway.

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In my particular situation, I have found the system to operate intermittently. The Magnum monitor verifies this problem. Incidentally, the hardware that makes all of this work is housed in the right rear corner of the coach on an assembly made by Tiffin. There is an isolator relay on this board that isolates the two battery systems and joins them when appropriate. The coach batteries are being charged continuously while underway and when the start assist button is depressed inside the coach. I am sure there is a strategy built into the electronics that determines how the charging system is supposed to work and parameters that must be met. For example, there is a set of components under cover of the heat shrink tubing that is connected to the coil

(small wires) of the relay contactor. Is this a resistive capacitor network that is engineered to engage the relay at a certain voltage level? Without knowing what is inside this heat shrink tubing and how it is supposed to work, I am unable to determine if it is functioning properly. Can you help?

Tom Frost, Vero Beach, Florida

Dear Tom,

The solenoid should send a continuous charge to both the engine and house batteries when the engine is running. The amount of charge that goes into the battery is regulated by the alternator. When the charges in the two batteries equalize, the alternator's regulator will cut back. The smaller wires with the heat shrink on them are diodes that will prevent feedback to the switches and other electronics.

Location of Splitters Switch

In your "Serious Tech Talk" column, you have mentioned a switch to turn off the 8-port splitters. I have a 2014 Allegro Bus 37AP. Heat is a problem in the electronics compartment, but I have never seen a switch to turn them off. Where is it?

Brian Leiding, Naples, Florida

Dear Brian,

The switch we were talking about is on the Allegro and the Allegro Red. On the Bus and the Phaeton, the silver-colored OFF/ON switch is located on the splitter box itself.

Replacing Amber Side Marker Lights

I bought my 2007 Allegro Bay FRED new in 2007 and love it. After nine years, the sun has taken its toll on some plastic items such as the amber side marker lamps. It has broken and fallen off. These markers were made by Glo-Brite, a company that is no longer in business. Can Tiffin supply replacements or do you know of an alternative provider for this item? Thank you very much.

Wayne L. Vincent, Jr., Polk City, Florida

Dear Wayne,

A good source for discontinued parts is Bunk House Conversions and RV in Red Bay, close to our service center. Their number is 256-356-8634. Take a picture on your cell phone and send it to them.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

A separate postcard is enclosed for "From the Road," a fun part of the magazine for readers to share their motorhoming experiences. If you choose to email us at: fredthompson1941@hotmail.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 1150, Monroe, GA 30656-1150. 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. We welcome your pictures. Please attach high resolution images if you email. "From the Road" contributors will receive a free tee shirt while supplies last.

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