

# Roughing It Smoothly<sup>®</sup>



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1880 Train

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# Roughing It Smoothly®

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## Letters, We Get Letters . . . and Postcards and Emails

### Time for Housecleaning

When we started the magazine nine years ago, we had a mailing list of only 29,000. Our list has grown to over 44,000, but it is obvious that many of our addresses may no longer be correct. As I'm sure you know, it is not inexpensive to write, produce, print, and mail *Roughing It Smoothly*. We need to remove from our list those who no longer need or want the magazine. Therefore, we need to burden you one time and ask that you return the card on the back cover by June 1, 2012. If you do not return the card, we will assume you do not want *RIS* and will drop you from the mailing list.

### Serious Tech Talk

To address your technical questions to Danny Inman, you may use

the postcard bound in this issue, send a longer letter to the address on the postcard, or send an email to [RIStechtalk@gmail.com](mailto:RIStechtalk@gmail.com). If you need an immediate answer to a service problem, you should call 256-356-0261.

### New Procedure for Changes of Address

Please do not call to make a change of address. We are often traveling when your calls come in and it is very difficult to handle the call on a cell phone. Please use a standard change of address card from USPS and send it to *Roughing It Smoothly*, PO Box 1738, Monroe, GA 30655-1738. You can also change your address by email. Send your old address as it appears on your label along with your new address. The email address is [RISNCOA@hotmail.com](mailto:RISNCOA@hotmail.com).

### Riding the Rails

This issue introduces a new column which we think many of you will enjoy—actually riding the rails in our stories, or just having fun reading about the amazing steam locomotives that were instrumental in expanding and building this country. Our first story is about the 1880 Train that runs between Keystone and Hill City, South Dakota. It is only a 10-mile run but it is packed with beautiful scenery, not the least of which is Mt. Rushmore.

### Our Special Friends

Some of our friends are so dependable that they deserve special recognition. Morris Morrison is one of Tiffin's special friends. He has been calling on Bob and the TMH staff for 40 years. He was there the week the

company opened and helped Sylvia Massey order the office supplies they needed to get started. "Bob and I were just boys. He was 30 and I was 28," Morris said. The name of the office supply company changed a couple of times over the years.

### First Time Subscribers

Tiffin coach owners may receive a free subscription by **writing** to *Roughing It Smoothly*®, 1403 Cedar Point Way, Monroe, GA 30656 or **emailing** [fredthompson1941@hotmail.com](mailto:fredthompson1941@hotmail.com). Please include your phone number, the last six characters of your vehicle identification number (VIN), and the year and model of your coach. If you sell your coach, **email** [stephanie.mccarley@tiffinmotorhomes.com](mailto:stephanie.mccarley@tiffinmotorhomes.com) with your VIN, year and model, and the new owner's address.

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## Our 40th Anniversary and Not Looking Back

by Bob Tiffin

What has worked in the past will continue to work in the future. It is all about taking care of customers. The biggest obstacle we have is determining *who* is actually going to purchase our motorhomes.

In our 40-year history, there are some very interesting correlations. When we started Tiffin Motorhomes, our customers were the veterans from World War II. Nearly all of them were in their fifties. Our motorhomes were not complicated in their construction, and there were no electronics. During the 1970s, we had one brand and owners often traded every two or three years.

The next generation were the veterans of the Korean War from the 1950s. We still had the draft and most veterans were born in the early 1930s. They, too, were in their fifties when they provided the surge in our sales during the eighties.

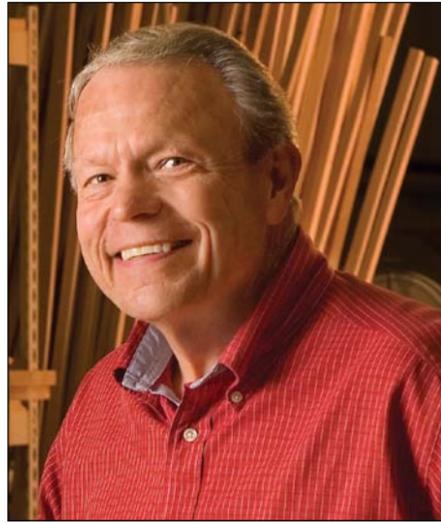
Then we were involved in the Vietnam War. Most of those veterans were born in the 1940s and early fifties. They went to school, war, or got married. They were our next generation. We began to see their impact on our sales during the 1990s and into the first decade of the 21st century. Now we are beginning to deal with the guys from the Desert Storm era.

A good example of our current owners is Col. V. W. Cain. He recently bought a new 40-ft. Allegro Bus and took delivery on February 14. Col. Cain retired with 36 years of service. He is in his late fifties.

This group is different from the owners in the earlier generations. Our current generation of owners has been exposed to high technology through most of their careers and they are not intimidated by all of the electronic devices that are used in our motorhomes.

Today, it is almost unbelievable the kind of hi-tech equipment we are using to build Tiffin motorhomes. We do not buy a cutting machine of any kind unless it is driven by programmable computer software.

Looking forward, our customers will demand more hi-tech equipment in their coaches. On-board computers and systems will be performing tasks that we did not even dream of 10 years ago. Computer technology, both in the plant and on board our motorhomes, will assist us in reaching our most important goal — building a trouble-free motorhome. I will be the first to admit that is really a tough job.



In our motorhomes, we have almost every system that you have in your home and car, plus we have the nicest woodwork that money can buy. I am going to expand that statement. Actually, you have everything in your motorhome that you have in your car and home — plus what's on the farm. We have as much hydraulics in our diesel pushers as you will find in a big John Deere tractor.

I really enjoy getting to talk with Tiffin owners who have worked in manufacturing companies that build complicated products. One of our recent buyers worked for Boeing. It was his job when

Boeing delivered a plane to certify it for delivery to the air carrier. His inspection, combined with the inspection by personnel from the air carrier, produced a list of defects to fix that was usually 30 pages. Our defects list is rarely one page long.

He really surprised me when he said, "If you take away the cockpit area, the wiring in one of our jets is no more complicated than the wiring in my new motorhome."

Going forward toward our 50th anniversary, we have to continue to improve. Nobody in this industry works any harder to achieve that goal than we do. TMH improves its building process every day. For example, we recently improved the quality of our one-piece roof cap. Jim Shillito, manager of our Water-Way fiberglass plant, worked with composite industry experts to achieve significant improvements in raw material characteristics. A resin initially designed for military applications was modified for our use and put into production March 1. This rubberized vinyl-ester resin has 5 times more flexibility and 70 degrees more heat tolerance than the previous resin. In addition to this recent change, in June 2011 we added a directional weave glass to all our roof radiuses. This change significantly increased the roof strength by placing the glass fibers in a pattern that supported the stress that the roof incurs. These two changes have eliminated our concerns regarding the roof cracking issue.

If you have taken our plant tour, you know that we build our motorhomes on an assembly line. Our process engineering team led by Brad Witt just started our fourth assembly line. This line almost exclusively builds the gas-powered Allegro coaches. Instead of building a Phaeton, then an Allegro Bus, and then

*Continued on page 64*

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Interviews from Colorado, Alabama, and Missouri



**Nick & Rita Amendola**  
Hometown: Polk City, Florida  
Interviewed in Fort Collins, Colorado

- Nick & Rita own a 2008 Phaeton 40 QSH with a Cummins 360 on a Freightliner Chassis.
- They have been married 33 years.
- They have 2 children & 5 grandchildren: Julianne has 3 children & lives in Fort Collins, CO; Frank has 2 children & lives in Hazlet, NJ.
- Their Bijon-Poodle, Pepe, travels with them & "is the love of their life" & "is 1st in their will."
- This Phaeton is Nick & Rita's 1st RV and Nick does 100% of the driving.
- They've driven 33,000+ miles thru 40 states & prefer to drive less than 400 miles daily.
- Julianne motivated Nick & Rita to start RVing & their love of travel influenced going full-time for 2½ yrs. Now they part-time 4 mos. each year.
- Nick enjoys visiting Glacier National Park, MT and Lake Louise, Alberta.
- Rita's favorite area is Yosemite National Park.
- Their 'bucket list' includes New Brunswick, Eastern Canada and Mexico.
- Nick has owned 2 software development co's; 1 for 10 yrs. - the 2nd for 21 yrs. & currently he has a part-time involvement.
- His hobbies include: woodworking, writing software and inventing things.
- Rita was a Mattel Rep for 5 yrs. & has helped raise 4 of their 5 grandchildren.
- Her hobbies are: bike riding, exercise, reading and movies.
- They give Tiffin a rate of 11 for their service!



**Leonard & Mary Lou McCurley**  
Hometown: Eckerman, Michigan  
Interviewed in Red Bay, Alabama

- Leonard & Mary Lou are the original owners of a 1994 Allegro Bus 39 ft, wide-body, 1 slide with a Cummins 300 on an Oshkosh Chassis.
- They have been married 58 years.
- They have 5 children: Cheryl lives in Sanger, TX; Paul in Chattanooga, TN; Lou Ann in Killbuck, OH; Bryan in Bellfountain, OH; & Lori's in Vicksburg, MI. Plus, they have 10 grandchildren & 7 great-grandchildren.
- Poodles: Nikki & Kody travel with them.
- Leonard was drafted by the U.S. Army and served in Germany from 1954 thru 1956.
- His career as a heavy equipment operator & mechanic required travel. The family full-timed 3 years in their 1st coach 1974-1977 & 10 years in their 2nd coach 1977-1987.
- This is Leonard & Mary Lou's 3rd coach & their Bus is one of the 1st 5 that Tiffin built!
- In 2001 the Bus was re-painted; and Tiffin recently added the front Allegro Bus decal.
- Leonard has driven 174,664 miles; drives 10,000 mi.yr; prefers driving 400 mi.day; & has driven in most of the lower 48 states.
- "We love our Bus & eventually it'll become our 'assisted-living motorhome' - we will park the Bus in one of our children's yards & when they get tired of us, that child will drive us to another child's yard, and so on."
- His hobbies: 4 wheeler, jeep & gardening;
- Hers are: sewing, reading & woodworking.



**Bob Mathers & Teddy Renfrow**  
Hometown: Brownsville, Texas  
Interviewed in Branson, Missouri

- Bob & Teddy own a 2010 Phaeton 40QTH with a Cummins 360 on a Freightliner Chassis.
- They have been together for 13 years.
- Their 7 sons, 4 daughters, 11 grandsons & 7 granddaughters all live in either Texas or North Carolina.
- Bob & Teddy have owned 4 RVs - the last 3 were all 40 ft. Phaetons - 2004, 2005 & 2010.
- They began RVing in 2003 and currently travel 2-3 months annually.
- Bob drives 100% of the time; he prefers to drive 300 miles each day & has driven over 12,000 miles in their 2010 Phaeton.
- Since 2003 they have traveled in Canada and in 47 of the lower 48 states, all but Iowa!
- Bob enjoys the countryside, the mountains in CO, driving & getting into desirable climates.
- Teddy enjoys the eastern coastal states, likes traveling with friends & meeting new people.
- Bucket list: Hilton Head & Myrtle Beach.
- Bob retired in 1990 after 30 years of farming.
- Teddy retired after a 40 year career in book-keeping & accounting.
- His hobbies: gourmet cooking, tinkering & he takes pride in their 3 acres of land.
- Her hobbies: bird watching, working with plants, plays mahjong weekly, volunteers at the Costumes of the Americas Museum & is a member and past president of P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization).

**Editor's Note:** Elaine and Mike Austin retired in 2007 at the urging of their children who wanted them to realize their dream: buy a luxury motorhome, go full time, and spend several years just enjoying themselves and seeing the country. After a career turning around failing steel companies, Mike connected with the University of South Alabama as a guest lecturer in their Business Institute. Elaine discovered a whole new career in real estate. In March 2008, they bailed out, bought a new Allegro Bus, and "hit the road." In 2011 they traded for a new Phaeton 40 QBH.



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# Packing the Features into a 2012 Allegro 36 LA

TIFFIN RESPONDS TO CUSTOMER DEMAND FOR FEATURE-RICH, GAS-POWERED COACHES



**I**N THE TIFFIN MOTORHOMES Service Area in Red Bay, Alabama, there may be 120 coaches in the campground on any given day. Not only does this facility provide the best service in the industry to Tiffin owners, it also gives the company an opportunity to listen to ideas that owners want in their future motorhomes. The Allegro 36LA was the aggregate answer to several new ideas.

In the last 12 months, there has been a surge of interest in gas-powered motorhomes. Tiffin's research showed that the Ford chassis with the V-10 Triton powerplant was the right choice for the units they are building. There were many requests for a bath-and-a-half floorplan in a shorter coach—yes, even a 36-footer! And many owners asked for Splendide's combo washer-dryer. Other amenities? You bet. Owners asked for a full-service galley including a large, gas-electric,

4-door refrigerator; stainless steel double-sink; three-burner gas cooktop with oven and a microwave-convection oven. More? Yep! They loved the leather L-shaped chaise lounge-sofa bed option offered in Tiffin's big, diesel-powered coaches. And they wanted the recliner with leg rest, along with the mid-section 42- or 37-inch HD flat-panel television positioned over the 1500-BTU electric fireplace. And don't forget the surround sound.

In the past, basement storage in gas-powered coaches has been somewhat limited because of the driveshaft right down the center of what would have been the basement area in a rear engine diesel coach. Was there a way to solve that problem?

## Here Are the Results

### The Powerplant and Chassis

The Ford twin-rail motorhome chassis with its 362-hp, V-10, 6.8 liter powerplant

was the best choice for the Allegro brand based on its price point and the features it delivers. The combo provides 457 lb-ft of maximum torque at 3,250 rpm. For you the owner, that means the power to take off with 26,000 GCWR from an interstate ramp and merge with traffic without straining a muscle. The system also supports a trailer hitch capacity of 5,000 lbs. The transmission is Ford's own TorqShift with 5-speed automatic (including overdrive), plus the tow/haul mode. When you are in the mountains, you can downshift into gears 3, 2, and 1 to control your descent speed and avoid overheating your brakes. The electrical system puts out 175 amps and Ford mounts a 75-gallon fuel tank to give you a five- to six-hundred mile driving range.

Text and photography  
by Fred Thompson



Two compartment doors open to show the double storage bays with a pass-through at the top to accommodate skis, fishing equipment, and other things we haven't thought of yet.

In this mid-section compartment, the propane tank occupies the PS with the generator on the DS. The space above can be used to store your 8-ft. ladder rather than tying it on the back.

The two rear storage compartments are made of galvanized steel covered with felt, much like the trunk of a car. The pass-through storage design is found in six of the bays

### What Does TMH Build into the Infrastructure?

When Tiffin builds the infrastructure and the box, here's what you get. TMH's exclusive one-piece, saddle storage units (that straddle the driveshaft) provide not only pass-through storage over the driveshaft, but also offer a weather-proof, tough polyethylene construction that keeps your stowables completely dry. The smaller compartments are made of galvanized steel and finished on the inside with felt, much like the trunk of your car. The pictures in this story and the production stories in RIS Volume 7:2 and 8:3 show how the storage compartments are manufactured. After measuring each compartment, we determined that the 36 LA has 203 cubic feet of basement storage.

This 36' 10" coach is built on a chassis with a 252-inch wheelbase. It has generously sized storage tanks: fresh water, 70 gal.; grey water, 66 gal.; and black water, 50 gal. The LP tank carries 24 gallons.

The construction design and production technology make Tiffin coaches the most durable in the industry. (See the illustrations shown on page 14). Tiffin engineers estimate that TMH coaches have 400 pounds more steel in their sub-floors, outriggers, and skirts than any other U.S. manufacturer's units.

Let's take a look at some of the standard features in an "entry level" coach that new and seasoned RVers never have to think about when they look at a Tiffin coach. They are just there!

Top-of-the-line HWH hydraulic jacks.  
Two 13,500 BTU high profile roof ACs (high efficiency).  
One piece fiberglass roof cap.  
Full-body paint (5 choices).  
Diamond Shield protective film on the front cap (one competitor offers Diamond Shield as a \$1,225 option on its entry level gas coach).  
Rustproof, solid aluminum bay doors with full-length vertical hinges (they are so strong that they sound like a car door when you shut them).  
Complete water filtration system at entry point.  
Lowest-point water drain lines to make winterization a simple job.  
A lighted utility bay with every point permanently labeled.  
Heated water and holding tanks.  
Black holding tank flush system.  
Lighted basement storage.

External tripod satellite hook-up.  
Color back-up monitor.  
Full undercoating.

There are a few infrastructure options you may want to select: an upgrade to one 15,000 BTU high profile roof AC with heat pump which requires an upgrade on your generator from 5.5 kw to 7.0 kw (\$1,540); an automatic satellite dish (\$1,120); and possibly a CB antenna (\$70). That's it! Everything else in the infrastructure list is standard (and I didn't even list them all).

### Excellence in Design & Quality Are Built into a Tiffin Coach

While the Allegro brand is considered to be Tiffin's "entry level" motorhome, the company remembers its roots. It is the brand that drove Tiffin Motorhomes to become one of the top four Class A manufacturers in the U.S. Because of that



The lighted Tiffin utility bay conveniently locates the water filter, communications, tank flush, fresh water fill, outdoor shower for cleanup, water heater bypass, sewer connection, and low-point drain lines in one place. The 50-amp power supply is in a DS rear compartment.



distinction, Tiffin continues to upgrade the Allegro every year. No other manufacturer offers an “entry level” Class A coach that even gets close with its list of *standard* features and amenities.

#### CHECK OUT THE COCKPIT

The nicest feature for the passenger is the desk that slides out of the dash to perfectly position the laptop’s keyboard at your fingertips. As shown, a printer can be placed on the flat area by the dashboard to present a complete office. Supplies can be stored in the four cabinets that surround the cockpit. The passenger also has access to two 12v outlets and one 110v outlet, conveniently located power sources for a navigation system.

Along with the features you would expect to find in any automotive cockpit, there are many *standard* items on the Allegro 36LA:

- One rear and two side cameras with in-dash color monitor. Cameras’ aim can be adjusted by computer control.

- Heated power mirrors.

- Dual dash fans for moisture and humidity control.

- Full windshield-width, powered solar and privacy shades.

- Manual solar and privacy shades on the side windows.

- Tilt steering wheel.

- Map lights for both driver and passenger.
- Auto genset start and auxiliary start.

Since nearly everything is standard, there are only a few options you may wish to exercise when you order your Al-

legro 36 LA. You can order:

- 6-way powered driver & passenger seats; cloth or leather.

- Driver’s door with power window.

- Front overhead television.

Now, let’s look at the functionality of the cockpit. The on-board computer has an LED display that offers a lot of information. Using the System Check, you can review engine and transmission temperatures, oil pressure, and brake fluid level without leaving your seat. The computer also provides “miles to empty,” engine hours, trip meter, outside temperature, and, of course, the odometer. The cruise control is mounted on the steering wheel.

On the left side of the steering column you will find toggle switches for the Gen-Start, AuxStart, and Map Light. In the driver’s door (optional), or sidewall, you will see the heat and directional control for both outside mirrors. On the right side of the column, you will see toggles for the DS windshield fan, both the Solar and Privacy shades, and the Radio.

The 7-inch LCD Triple Vision color monitor provides full views of your sides and rear when you are changing lanes or backing. When you are parked for the night, one button will give you security views on both sides and the rear of the coach without an encroacher knowing that you are watching. The monitor can be adjusted for brightness, color, tint, and contrast – very helpful when transitioning between day and night use.

The right side of the dash houses the AM-FM radio and CD player. For your maximum listening pleasure, stereo

The desk slide-out places the keyboard in easy reach. The expanse of the level dash allows space to place a take-along printer conveniently beside the laptop – a perfect office setup.

speakers are built into the cockpit’s cabinetry. Your automotive heating and air conditioning controls are within easy reach of your passenger – it’s helpful to have assistance when you are driving. Both the driver and passenger have two dash-mounted ducts and also one duct each at floor level. The HWH Computerized Leveling System is mounted at the bottom right corner of the dash display.

#### LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT THE GALLEY

Tiffin Motorhomes’ designers never skimp when it comes to planning a galley.



Everyone at TMH knows that the galley can be a deal maker. With the 2012 model year of the Allegro brand, solid surface countertops became standard. The double stainless steel sink is bottom mounted, making possible the practical solid surface countertop covers that give you more space when you serve buffet style. This year the Allegro’s three-burner cooktop is recessed to also permit solid surface covers. Included in the cooking package is Atwood’s Wedgwood Vision gas oven and Sharp’s overhead microwave oven with exterior venting. Handsome backsplashes feature laser-cut decorative scrolls accented with contrasting diamond-shaped

insets. Overhead LED lighting gives the chef a brightly illuminated workspace. All of the above is *standard*. And here are a few more standard features:

- Solid hardwood cabinet faces.

- High gloss raised panel hardwood cabinet doors.

- Ball bearing drawer slides.

- LED bulbs in ceiling lights.

The galley is six feet six inches wide, providing the chef with plenty of room for cooking and food preparation.

The major option for the galley is the 4-door Dometic refrigerator-freezer with icemaker (\$2,590). As usual in a Tiffin coach, cabinets are cavernous. The four

overhead cabinets in the galley offer 13.4 cubic feet of storage. One pots & pans drawer hides under the gas oven; there’s seven cubic feet under the double sink; plus an additional two stacks of three drawers, each 23 inches deep in the galley cabinets.

The dinette is nothing short of plush with buff leather seating, complemented with a handsome leaf print from the Marble Fabric Suite covering the back cushions. Two other interior décor options, French Roast and Raven are available, and can be viewed at [tiffinmotorhomes.com](http://tiffinmotorhomes.com). The dinette’s two benches each conceal large storage drawers (3.7 cubic feet). The table drops down even with the benches and the back cushions move to the tabletop to make a 37 x 68-inch bed for two of the grandkids.

#### THE LIVING ROOM: JUST RELAX AND ENJOY

The living space and entertainment area in the 36 LA really includes the driver and passenger chairs since they can be rotated to accommodate your visitors. The entire room measures 10' 8" wide by 19 feet long. The L-shaped chaise lounge is 94 inches long by 60 inches wide when the “leg of the L” is extended. It is a standard feature with cloth upholstery.





This coach featured the optional leather at \$1,540. It's worth it! The plush feel and comfort of leather seating is hard to beat. It holds up well and definitely adds to the future resale value. The lounge adds more value with its air coil hide-a-bed. Not to be missed is the standard leather recliner with separate leg rest. The L-shaped lounge provides the right floor dimensions for a coffee table, which is cleverly designed with folding legs for storage during travel.

The spaciousness of the living room is attributable to one of Tiffin's largest slide-outs, which has an interior width of 16' 8". It also accommodates 16 cubic feet of storage accessed by eight raised panel doors.

The entertainment center in the 36LA is top notch. On the passenger-side, a 37-inch Panasonic HD flat panel television faces the chaise lounge and recliner at just the right viewing distance to make the screen impressive, very comparable to the perception of being in a theater. The optional surround sound system (\$560) really puts you on stage. It's great!

Adding to the ambience of the living room, you can option an electric fireplace (\$700) which not only puts out 1,500 BTUs, but also looks as real as the gas logs in my home.

While it is unseen and doesn't make you more comfortable, it certainly makes it easier to clean the coach. I am talking about the central vacuum system, a \$350 option that you'll be glad you added to your list.

### THE Z-Z-Z-Z ROOM

The older we get the more we like our creature comforts. Thirty years ago I never gave a thought to sleeping on the ground in a tent with my two boys. Today the quality of my bed is a major factor. The queen size (full 60 x 80) bed in the 36 LA has an innerspring mattress that does the job. Bedside tables have a spot for your glasses, a deep magazine/book rack, 110v service, and a small cabinet on the front face. A king size bed is not offered in this floorplan.

The 32-inch Panasonic HD television is the only option in the bedroom (\$770). It is positioned over the passenger side window, which doubles as the coach's emergency rear escape route. The flat panel television is mounted on a hinged door which lifts up and out of the way on air struts to reveal the electronics cabinet for the DVD player and the satellite receiver for either DISH or DirectTV, both, of course, at a subscriber fee. The equipment is at eye level and easy to reach and program. It makes watching movies in bed just a little easier.

With one slide-out in the bedroom (aren't we spoiled?), you still have all of the drawers, wardrobe, and storage space you could possibly need. Five deep drawers (16.5 x 10 inches), a clothes hamper, overhead storage in the bed slide-out (10.5 cubic feet), and a steamer trunk under the bed (11 cubic feet). Two fluted pilasters frame a soft faux leather headboard with a rolled top form. Sconces on both sides of the bed take care of your night time reading. Each end of the slide-out houses a window to draw pleasant summer breezes in your favorite campground. It's compact, but it feels so comfortable!

### THE BIG FEATURE: A BATH AND A HALF

When you study the floorplan, you will notice that the half bath is hidden mid-ship behind the TV-fireplace. This accommodating half bath is large: 3 x 5 feet. It has the obligatory Fan-Tastic overhead vent, a pedal-flush toilet, a window, 110v service, a "shaving bowl" lavatory (just the right size), medicine cabinet, and the most important feature—a magazine and book rack.

The depth of the rear bath is 4' 8", and, of course, 96 inches across. The top of the lavatory vanity and the top of the optional combo washer-dryer (\$1,540) are one continuous surface (35 x 56 inches), which provides milady with a lot of counter space for her toiletries. The washer-dryer is certainly one of the key features in this coach, and it fits very neatly into the cabinetry.

The cabinet under the lavatory yields approximately six cubic feet of storage space, plenty for the laundry detergent, bleach, etc., as well as paper products and other bathroom supplies. The medicine cabinet has a 17 x 20 mirror on its door, and two deep shelves within. In the diagonally opposite corner, a towel and linen cabinet and a stack of four drawers complete the amazing amount of useful storage that TMH can create in small spaces.

The optional "tub-shower" is a Tiffin-designed fiberglass creation that has been very popular for many years. Perhaps it can be accurately described as an irregular oval — 46 inches across

The optional tub-shower at right in the rear bath is elliptical in shape, 46 inches across by 28 inches wide. • The lavatory and vanity is one continuous countertop, 35 x 56 inches. The vented double door at lower right in the picture conceals the combo washer-dryer. • Below, the half bath in the middle of the coach is surprisingly large and fully appointed with every option.

by 28 inches wide. The "tub" is 10 inches deep, perfect for young grandchildren traveling with you.

### DRIVING THE ALLEGRO 36 LA

To put experience behind the wheel, I asked Danny Inman, our 38-year Tiffin veteran who writes the answers to your questions in Serious Tech Talk, to drive the Allegro 36 LA and give us his first impressions. Danny has driven just about everything TMH has built over its 40-year history. Since the 36 LA just began shipping in February, this was his first time to drive it. We took SR 247 northeast of Red Bay to the county line. It has some really steep hills. Without quotation marks, the following paragraphs are his responses:

No vibrations. That's good. It means the box is solid and balanced on the chassis. The steering response is very good. It moves in and out of the gears smoothly. It drives great, handles good, it's not wandering. It's not top heavy at all, no sway. Cruising in 5th gear, the cockpit is amazingly quiet.

Let's time it on these five percent grades. At the bottom of this half-mile, five percent grade hill, we are doing 60 mph, and it looks like we are going to top out at 54. The transmission dropped from fifth to third gear. [In all fairness to the reader, we have two passengers on board and a full tank of fuel].

We are in the flats east of Red Bay. Let's simulate an Interstate highway entry and merge. Rolling at 15 mph, pedal to the metal — we hit 60 in 20 seconds. At 65 we are doing 2500 rpm.

Now we are on a long hill with an approximate five percent grade. Starting out at 20 mph, we are topping the hill in 15 seconds at 50 mph. We've got some transmission-engine noise, but after we get to



5th gear, we can listen to the stereo.

Deceleration is important, too. We are entering a long downhill grade at 60 mph. I am pushing in the Ford's tow-haul button on the end of the gear lever. That drops the transmission out of overdrive to 4th gear, and as you can see, it is slowing our speed to 54 without my touching the brakes. For greater retardation in the mountains, you can move the gear lever to third or even second gear.

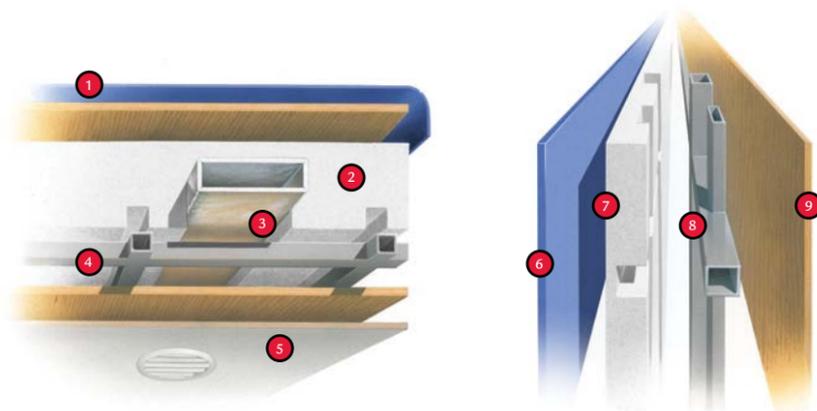
The coach really handles well right now as we are running at 70 mph. With this coach, your temporary maximum

passing speed is going to top out at 78 mph. But I think you will find that most of our owners will drive this coach at 60 to 65 mph.

I really like this instrument cluster because you have full view of it regardless of where you set the tilt steering wheel. You've got the large RPM and MPH gauges, plus smaller gauges for oil pressure and fuel on the left, and on the right transmission and engine temperatures.

Owners will enjoy cruising in the 36 LA. And one thing is for sure: you can't beat the picture window! **RIS**

## Structural/Construction



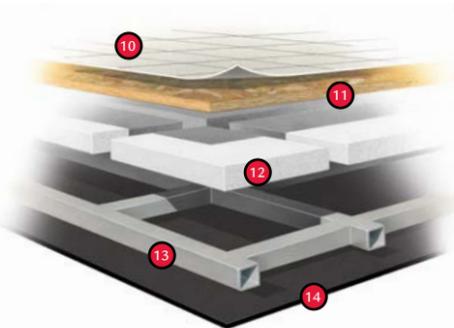
### Roof

- 1 One-piece, moisture resistant molded fiberglass roof cap provides insulation and strength and prevents water intrusion
- 2 5½" formed insulation
- 3 Quiet Air Cooling System with return air and foil-wrapped cooling exhaust ducts
- 4 Durable, tubular aluminum roof skeleton
- 5 Easy-to-clean soft touch vinyl ceiling panel

### Sidewall\*

- 6 Gel-coat fiberglass outside wall panel
- 7 High-performance thermal insulation
- 8 Durable, yet lightweight, tubular aluminum wall skeleton
- 9 Decorative inside wall panel

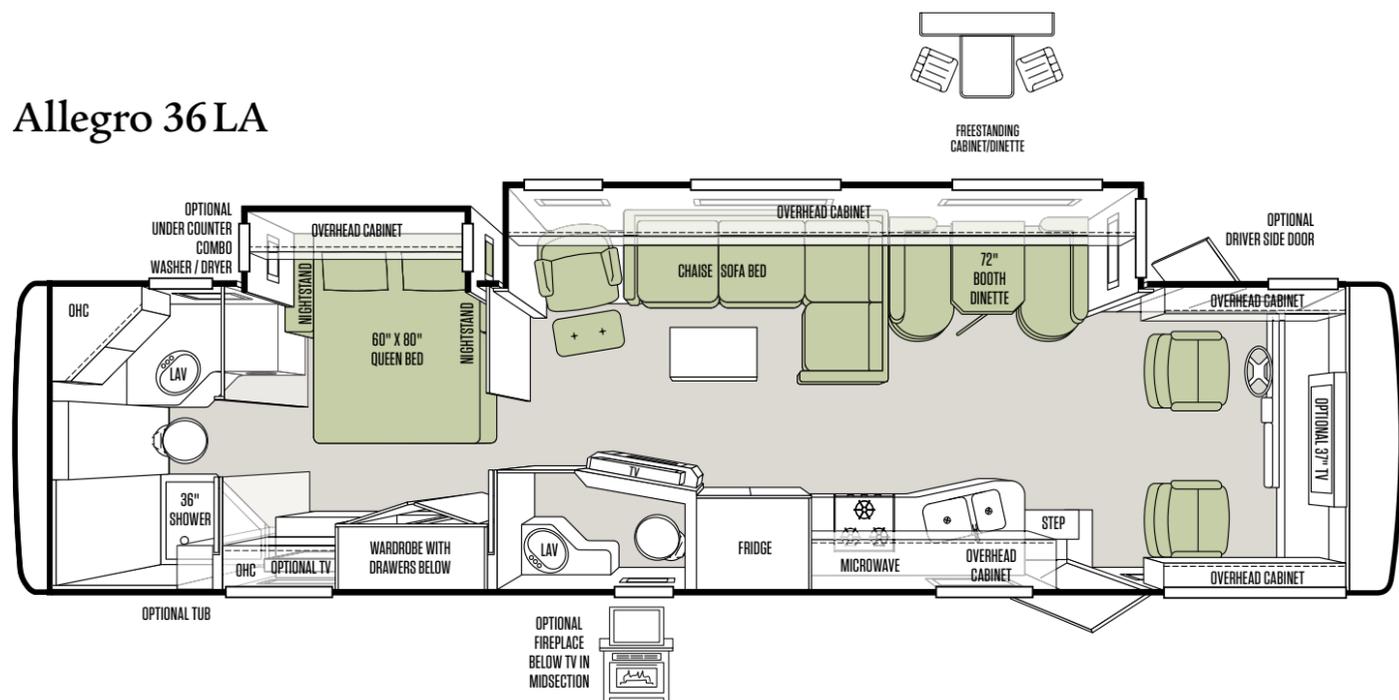
\*All sidewalls are approximately 2" thick.



### Floor

- 10 Vinyl tile floor bonded to high-impact oriented strand board
- 11 High-level engineered oriented strand board
- 12 High-performance thermal insulation
- 13 Durable, tubular floor skeleton
- 14 Woven moisture barrier material

## Allegro 36 LA



## SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2012 Allegro 36 LA, Two Slides, Base MSRP\* - \$128,940. MSRP as tested with options - \$141,960.

### STANDARD FEATURES

#### Structural

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

#### Automotive

Ford TorqShift® 5-speed transmission with overdrive and Tow/Haul mode  
Ford 362-hp 6.8 L, Triton V-10 engine  
457 lb-ft torque @ 3250 rpm  
Cruise control with steering wheel controls  
Fog lights  
Daytime running lights  
Emergency start switch

#### Exterior

Fiberglass front & rear caps  
Fiberglass roof cap  
Gel-coat fiberglass walls  
Tinted one-piece windshield  
5.5 Onan® gas generator  
Two 13,500 BTU high profile roof ACs (high efficiency)  
Quiet AC roof-ducted system  
Double electric step  
¼-inch thick single pane windows  
Park telephone ready  
Horizontal mounted wipers  
Heated power mirrors  
Exterior patio light  
Slide-out awnings  
Hydraulic automatic leveling jacks  
BASF full-body paint with protective film on front cap  
Two 6v auxiliary batteries  
Exterior rinse hose/shower  
Water filtration system  
Low-point water drain lines  
Lighted utilities compartment  
Convenient access doors with gas shocks  
Rigid long-life storage boxes  
Single handle lockable storage door latches  
Heated water & holding tank compartments

Digital TV antenna & cable-ready TV  
Side view cameras activated by turn signals  
Power patio awning with aluminum weather shield  
Water heater bypass system  
50-amp service  
Black holding tank flush system  
Gravity water fill  
Color back-up monitor  
110v exterior receptacle  
110v - 12v inverter  
Undercoating  
Roof ladder  
External tripod satellite hook-up  
Lighted basement storage

#### Bedroom

Wardrobe with automatic light  
Bed comforter & throw pillows  
Innerspring queen mattress (60" x 80")  
Storage under bed, lift top w/gas struts  
Tile flooring  
Solar/privacy Roll-Ease shades  
Carbon monoxide detector  
LPG leak detector  
110v outlets in bedside tables  
Bedside tables with book/magazine racks  
Individual reading lamps

#### Driver's Compartment

Entry floor light  
Step switch and 12v disconnect switch  
Back-up camera with color monitor  
Non-powered cloth passenger & driver seats  
Lighted instrument panel  
Single CD player & stereo AM/FM radio  
Two cup holders & tray

Passenger slide-out desk  
Two 12v dash receptacles  
Tilt steering wheel with cruise control  
Dual dash fans  
Power solar & privacy windshield shades  
Manual solar & privacy shades for driver & passenger side windows  
Fire extinguisher

#### Living Area / Dinette

Contemporary booth dinette with large pull-out storage drawers  
Mid-section TV in entertainment center  
Cloth chaise sofa/sleeper on driver side  
Recliner and ottoman  
Decorative wall art  
Coffee Table

#### Kitchen

Single lever bronze sink faucet  
Spray rinser next to sink faucet  
Under counter mount double bowl stainless steel sink  
Solid surface sink covers  
Solid surface backsplashes  
3-burner recessed cooktop with solid surface covers  
Gas oven  
Microwave with exterior venting  
Gas/electric 8 cubic foot refrigerator/freezer  
Fantastic 3-speed fan w/cabinet switch

#### Rear Bath

Medicine cabinet  
Skylight in shower  
Water pump switch  
Electric macerator toilet  
Fantastic fan with wall switch  
Molded fiberglass one-piece shower  
Bronze vanity faucet  
Solid surface backsplash

#### Half Bath

Medicine cabinet  
Fantastic fan with wall switch  
Water pump switch  
Bronze vanity faucet  
Vanity cabinet  
Solid surface backsplash

#### Bedroom

Wardrobe with automatic light  
Bed comforter & throw pillows  
Innerspring queen mattress (60" x 80")  
Storage under bed, lift top w/gas struts  
Tile flooring  
Solar/privacy Roll-Ease shades  
Carbon monoxide detector  
LPG leak detector  
110v outlets in bedside tables  
Bedside tables with book/magazine racks  
Individual reading lamps

#### General Interior

High gloss raised panel hardwood cabinet doors & drawer fronts  
Solid wood cabinet faces  
Medium Alderwood or English Chestnut finishes  
Soft touch vinyl ceiling  
Ball bearing drawer slides

Wall-to-wall vinyl tile flooring throughout coach  
LED bulbs in ceiling lights only  
Scotchgard® treated fabrics  
Roll-Ease® solar & privacy shades  
Three power roof vents  
Tank level monitor system  
Smoke detector  
10-gallon DSI gas / electric water heater  
Two 35,000 BTU ducted furnaces  
Carbon monoxide detector  
LPG leak detector

### OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Power driver & passenger seats, Halo leather  
Winegard automatic satellite  
Surround sound system with DVD player  
Vacuum cleaner system  
4-door refrigerator  
Ice maker in refrigerator  
15,000 AC w/heat pump  
7.0 kw Onan generator  
LCD front overhead TV  
Fireplace  
LCD bedroom TV  
Chaise lounge, Halo leather, sofa-bed  
Washer-dryer combo  
Tub instead of shower

### OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

DVD player (NA with surround sound system)  
Power passenger & driver seats, cloth  
Driver door w/ power window  
Cooktop & convection-microwave oven  
Freestanding dinette with cabinets  
Solid wood refrigerator panels  
CB antenna  
Cherry bark solid wood cabinet doors, cabinet facings, & drawer fronts

### MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase - 252"  
Overall length - 36'10"  
Overall height with roof air - 12' 7"  
Interior height - 83.5"  
Overall width - 101"  
Interior width - 96"

### WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR - 24,000 lbs.  
Front GAWR - 9,000 lbs.  
Rear GAWR - 15,500 lbs.  
GCWR - 30,000 lbs.  
UVW - 20,300 lbs.  
CCC - 2,421 lbs.  
Trailer hitch capacity - 5,000 lbs.

### POWER TRAIN

Engine - 362-hp Ford 6.8 L, Triton V-10  
Torque - 457 lb.ft. @ 3250 rpm  
Transmission - TorqShift® 5-speed automatic overdrive with tow/haul mode  
Tire size - 235/80R 22.5 - GXRV  
Alternator - 130 amps

### CHASSIS

Frame - Single channel, ladder type  
Frame design - 50 psi hi-strength steel with deep C-channel side rails  
Steering - 50 degree wheel cut  
Anti-locking braking system - Standard 4-wheel anti-lock brakes  
Suspension (front and rear) - Tapered multi-leaf springs  
Shock absorbers - Bilstein gas pressured  
Axles - Heavy-duty Dana 17060S  
Leveling jacks - HWH hydraulic automatic

### 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 - Eight (six adults, 2 children)  
Fuel tank - 75 gallons  
Fresh water - 70 gallons  
Black water - 50 gallons  
Grey water - 66 gallons  
LPG tank - 24 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](http://www.tiffinmotorhomes.com) and click on "dealer locator." If internet access is not available, call 256-356-8661 and ask the operator for the Tiffin dealer location nearest to you.

### PLEASE NOTE

All options may not be available 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.

## Utopia: A Pipe Dream or a Reality?

### VISITING THE AMANA COLONIES IN IOWA



Ronneburg Castle

**To understand how Amana came to be, one must know something of the religious origins of the True Inspirationists. The story begins in 18th century Germany.**

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

**M**ANY FULL TIMERS will tell you they are traveling the country to enjoy its incredible scenery, to take advantage of the best locations for seasonable weather, or to make periodic visits to see their parents, children, and grandchildren. Most will also tell you they are looking for the “best place” to retire when they decide to give up their peripatetic lifestyle.

Nearly 500 years ago Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor to King Henry VIII of England, coined the word “utopia,” a name he gave to an ideal and imaginary island nation. In his novel, *Utopia*, published in 1516, More created a traveler, Raphael Hythlodæus (in Greek, his name means “speaker of nonsense”) who describes the political arrangements of the imaginary island country of Utopia (a Greek pun on *ou-topos*, meaning “no place”). Raphael describes the city of Amaurote by saying, “Of them all, this is the worthiest and of most dignity.” More’s character was looking for a “best place,” just like so many of us today.

Sir Thomas More contrasts the oppression of individual rights in European states with the orderly and reasonable social arrangements of Amaurote. With the communal ownership of land in *Utopia*, private property does not exist. Some take the novel’s principal message to be the social need for order and discipline rather than personal liberty.

While scholars remember Sir Thomas More as the ghost writer of many doctrinal treatises defending Henry VIII from the literary attacks of Martin Luther, social idealists remember him

for *Utopia*. Over the next 200 years, the word firmly ensconced itself in the English language.

Move the clock forward two centuries to the second quarter of the eighteenth century. Historians describe the Great Awakening as a revitalizing Christian movement that swept across western Europe and British America, picking up where the Protestant Reformation left off. Luther’s reforms did not endure and he eventually returned to the Catholic Church. John Calvin’s theology left his followers wondering if they were really numbered among “the elect.”

In Germany a religious group emerged in 1714 known as the Community of True Inspiration. Founded by J. F. Rock and E. L. Gruber in Himbach, the members sought “a more meaningful religious experience than what the established churches were providing.”

Rock and Gruber maintained that the Lutheran Church had become bogged-down in intellectual debate and formalized worship and thus neglected the spiritual needs of the congregation. An increasing desire to return to the basics of Christianity gained popularity in the doctrines articulated by this movement which became known as Pietism. For Pietists, religion was a personal experience with an emphasis on sincere humility and earnest study of the Bible. The Community of True Inspiration was one of several groups which emerged from Pietism.

The Community of True Inspiration believed that God selected certain believers through whom He spoke, just as He did through Old Testament prophets. Inspired leaders were called *Werkzeuge*. Rock was a saddlemaker and Gruber a former Lutheran minister. Gruber assumed leadership of the group and Rock became an “inspired instrument,” delivering testimonies for 35 years. Gruber was never inspired, but he provided members with *Twenty-one Rules for the Examination of Daily Life*, a guide that is still used today.

From 1714 to 1720, ten individuals were accepted as *Werkzeuge*. They traveled throughout Germany, Switzerland, and what is now the Czech Republic, visiting Communities that were springing up and giving testimonies recorded by scribes who traveled with them. Their periods of inspiration ranged from three months to a few years. After 1720, Johann F. Rock was the only surviving *Werkzeuge*. His commitment to the movement was seen in more than ninety-four journeys he made to Inspirationist congregations.

Following Gruber’s death in 1728, Rock became the leader of the sect and continued until he died in March 1749. His scribe, Paul Nagel, became the sect’s leader and continued to visit and encourage the scattered congregations. Under Nagel’s leadership, Ronneburg Castle in Hessen, Germany, became the center of the Inspirationist movement, although the group did not have a *Werkzeuge*. After Nagel’s death in 1779, the movement waned over the next forty years as its leaders died.

In 1817, a Strassburg tailor proclaimed he was an inspired *Werkzeuge* and began visiting surviving Inspirationist congregations. Michael Krausert was not widely accepted within the dying movement after many refused to recognize him as a true *Werkzeuge*. A year later the friends of an illiterate maid from Alsace compared her unusual visions and inner promptings to those of an Inspirationist *Werkzeuge*. After a visitation with Barbara Heinemann, Krausert immediately accepted her as a *Werkzeuge*.

Concurrently, Christian Metz (1794–1867), who grew up in an Inspirationist community at Ronneburg Castle, began to speak in Inspiration. In the 1820s civil authorities began to question the rights of the Inspirationists to educate their own children and to refuse military service. The Lutheran clergy saw the Inspirationists as a threat when many left the rigid and formal services of the state-supported church to find more meaningful spiritual experiences. The clergy leveraged their position with the government to persecute the Inspirationists with fines, imprisonment, and public beatings.

View of Lower Ebenezer (ca. 1850). This view is from the village grist mill of Casenovia Cap Creek, looking toward the main village. The frame building in the lower right was a kitchen house.

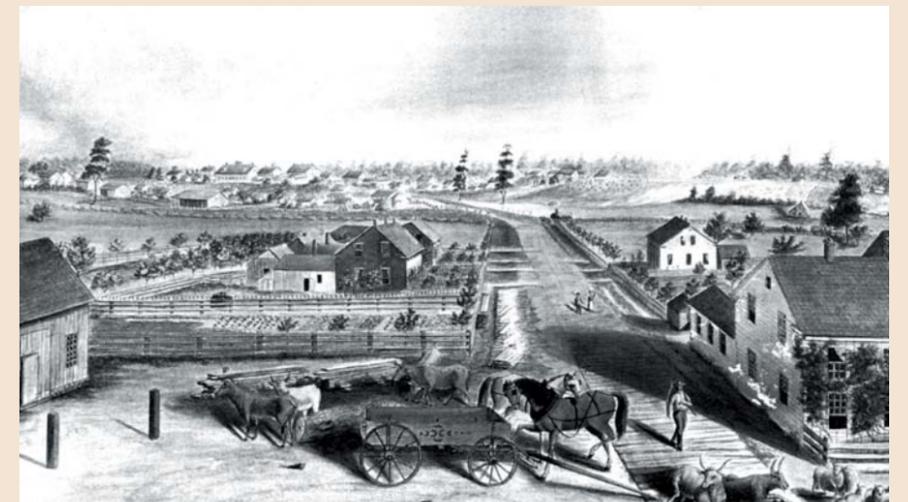
Artist: Friedrich Jeck (1821 – 1906)

Unable to draw support for his leadership in dealing with the government or for his claim to be a true *Werkzeuge*, a domineering Krausert was ordered to leave in 1819 by the leading elders. Metz ceased to speak in Inspiration, which left Heinemann as the only *Werkzeuge*.

Heinemann’s marriage in 1823 was regarded as a spiritual downfall by the Inspirationists, who held celibacy as most pleasing to God, and she ceased to speak inspired testimonies. Christian Metz began that Winter to speak in Inspiration and replaced Heinemann as the sect’s only *Werkzeuge*. He remained the group’s leader for the next forty-four years.

Over the next seven years Metz leased additional properties as sanctuaries where four hundred of the faithful congregated. While they maintained their property and money separately, they lived communally on the leased estates. They farmed together and established woolen factories to provide employment and income for the sect. They took their meals and held their church services in large common rooms on the estates. The members of the four communities became accustomed to living and working together, and, perhaps more importantly, accepted the authority of Metz and the other elders in both secular and spiritual matters. By the late 1830s, the stage was set for expansion of the highly organized, communal, religious society.

By 1840 the Community of True Inspiration had attracted nearly 1,000 members, in spite of persecution from German officials. Higher rents, rising taxes, political threats, and several droughts caused despair. In 1842 Metz delivered a testimony: “Your goal and your way shall lead towards the west to the land which still is open to you and your faith. . . .” Members poor and rich pooled their wealth to provide Metz with the resources to buy land, with the intention that in the beginning all property would be held in common. The long-range plan called for the land to be divided among the members based on their contributions and labor. Three weeks later Metz and three associates boarded a sailing ship for New York. After a stormy voyage and months of searching, they purchased a 5,000-acre tract in western New York, near Buffalo.





This building, now in the village of West Seneca, New York, was photographed in 1937 by Peter Stuck. It was built by the Inspirationists and served as the Middle Ebenezer Brewery.

By the end of 1843, nearly 350 Inspirationists immigrated to the settlement which they named “Ebenezer,” meaning “hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” Ultimately, more than 800 members would make the trip, part of a large wave of German, Irish, and Scandinavian immigrants who came to America, not on steamships, but on sailing ships. It often took two months to cross the Atlantic to the New York harbor.

By 1846 Metz realized that the disparity in wealth, skills, and age would make it very difficult for all to purchase a portion of land, and that it likely would lead to the dissolution of the settlement. Debate was avoided when Metz delivered a divine testimony endorsing the communal system. By 1854 Ebenezer was flourishing with 1,200 residents. Six villages had been established as independent economic systems — mills, shops, homes, communal kitchens, schools, and churches. More land was needed, but expansion was frustrated by rising prices caused by the booming growth of Buffalo. Metz and the elders were concerned that the worldly influence and materialism of nearby cities

was corrupting the spiritual focus of the Inspirationist community. They decided it was time to move west.

In September a scouting party left Ebenezer to investigate the new territory of Kansas, but were unsuccessful in locating suitable property. In the Spring of 1855, a second committee went to Iowa and located land 20 miles west of Iowa City in the Iowa River valley, which offered extensive timberland, quarries of limestone and sandstone, and thousands of acres of rich, black soil. A third committee arrived in June and began purchasing tracts which aggregated to more than 40 square miles. They funded their acquisitions with the sale of their Ebenezer villages and farms.

Within days after the purchases were completed, thirty-three hand-picked settlers left Ebenezer on July 9 to clear land and build roads, houses, and barns at a site that would soon become Amana.

By the Summer of 1862 the Inspirationists had built six villages: Amana, West Amana, South Amana, High Amana, East Amana, and Middle Amana. On the southeast corner of the large tract, Homestead was strategically located on

the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad. The group purchased the village in 1861, giving them access to markets for their agricultural and woolen products. Each village was allotted approximately 2,000 acres to farm.

Within 20 miles of Iowa City and now connected by rail to the outside world, the Amana colonies were ready for business with U.S. markets, but at the same time they were far enough away to maintain the social separation which facilitated their simple, communal lifestyle. In 1859 the Community of True Inspiration wrote a new constitution, became a legal corporation, and called itself the “Amana Society”.

The workers were assigned by the elders to two-story, apartment-like buildings. Each family usually had a parlor and a number of bedrooms appropriate to the size of the family. Homes were furnished with Amana-made furniture as well as store-bought items, needle work, and family heirlooms brought from Germany. While their theology strongly encouraged celibacy, records show that 87 percent of the mendicants married. The elders decreed that men could not marry until they were 24 and women were 20.

Although the Civil War was in progress from 1861 to 1865, the decade for the Amana Colonies was a prosperous one: agricultural methods were developed for each village; homes, communal kitchens, barns, shops, and factories were built. Each village was planned so that the meetinghouse was centrally located, and the shops, barns, and factories were located on the edges of the town. Connected to the Iowa River, a seven-mile-long millrace was completed in 1869 to provide waterpower to the woolen mills, the calico mill, machine shops at Main and Middle Amana, a starch factory at

This 1874 engraving of the street leading toward the Amana Woolen Mill is one of the earliest dated images of the Amana villages. The tower at left contained the watch room, where lookouts sat at night to watch for signs of fire in the village. The woolen mill is the large building at the end of the street. With the exception of one house, all of the buildings visible in this engraving are still standing.



Middle, and a flour mill at Main.

Christian Metz died two years after the close of the war on July 24, 1867. A beloved leader, he was remembered as “a man of deep personal humility and piety” who was also a gifted administrator, knowing when to compromise and when to stand firm. Metz’s role as *Wertzzeug* was assumed by Barbara Heinemann Landmann, who had regained her gift of Inspiration in 1849. She continued to spiritually guide the community until her death in 1883.

Since the Inspirationists’ religious views were pacifistic, they refused to take part in the conflict. However, they did make substantial contributions of clothing and funds to soldiers’ aid organizations. Their benevolence continued when the devastating earthquake struck San Francisco, and many years later during the Great Depression they never turned away a hungry traveler.

The colonies had over 50 communal kitchens, each with a kitchen boss and two assistants who rotated their responsibilities. Each kitchen had a garden from which it fed 20 to 40 residents, whose homes were in close proximity. Several women were assigned to tend the garden and to report to the kitchen at designated times to peel potatoes, scrape carrots, and otherwise prepare vegetables for meals. Larger fields were farmed by the community for food and trade. Each village had a baker who made daily rounds to supply the kitchens. Meals were served at 6 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 6:30 p.m. Two snacks were distributed to workers in between the main meals. Men and women sat at separate tables for meals. Conversation was forbidden.

Communal life in Amana followed routines that went unchanged for 70 years. Children remained with their mothers until they were three, and then attended a *Kinderschule* for a part of each day while mothers reentered the workforce. At five, children entered one of the village schools which combined classroom instruction in the “three R’s” with manual training and playtime. The younger children — boys and girls — learned to knit while older students tended school gardens, then the onion fields and orchards. Children filled their

free time with ice skating, fishing, walks, picnics, and organized games. At age 14, young people finished school and accepted the job assigned to them by village elders.

Men had a large variety of jobs. Each of the seven villages had shops related to agricultural equipment and the animals needed to operate the farms, including harness makers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights and wagon builders. In most of the villages you would find cobblers, cabinet shops, locksmiths, coopers, plumb-

ers, carpet weavers, shopkeepers, butchers, bakers, basket weavers, woolen and calico mill operators, hoteliers, tinsmiths, printers, bookbinders, tailors, and brewers. Women had limited opportunities in domestic jobs: daycare, kitchen work, gardening, and mill work. Boys who exhibited academic ability were sent to nearby villages to complete a high school education, and then on to college to become doctors or pharmacists, all paid for by the Society.

Construction materials were plentiful.



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Each village had 40 to 100 buildings built from timber harvested from their land and nearby sandstone quarries. Each village had its own sawmill. Four of the villages had brickyards with kilns. As needs became apparent, homes, kitchens, and farm buildings were constructed in a village, and garden acreage was increased. Beef cattle, hogs, and chickens were raised in each village.

Every village had a general store to supply a family's everyday needs. Since wages were not paid, each adult member received a line of credit at the general store, which was augmented by the number of children a couple had. The provisions for food, shelter, and fuel were not included in the credit system.

Having the members dispersed in seven villages avoided the possibility of developing one large urban city which the elders felt encouraged immorality. The network of small villages kept everyone close to their spiritual leadership. For the Inspirationists, their successful businesses were secondary to their religious purpose: to live a godly, pious life and to never become enamored with worldly materialism. To this end, church services were held 11 times each week: every evening; Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday mornings; and Sunday afternoon. While they had special observances for Easter and Christmas, they also had services and observances peculiar to their society. Their most important religious service was the biannual *Liebesmahl*, or communion. It included foot washing, an extensive dinner emulating the Last Supper, and then a reconvening of the congregation to partake of sacramental wine and bread while seated around long wooden tables.

Annually they gathered for the *Unterredung*, a service in which each member confessed the sins they had committed that year. On Thanksgiving Day, each village congregation observed the *Bundesschiessung*, a covenant renewal service. By shaking the hands of the elders, each member reaffirmed his religious covenant with God and the church.

A member's assigned seating position in the meetinghouse was such an important social index that it provided the only punishment that was needed in the colonies. For infractions, the elders seated the offender on the first two or three benches, a form of severe disgrace. The system had a remarkable influence on public behavior. There were no jails, no police officers, no thefts, fights, or murder. Divorce was unheard of.

Life in the Amana colonies was simple and routine. The homes were well-kept and the individual lots were delineated with neat fences and landscaped with a profusion of flowers. Visitors from neighboring towns admired the beauty of the villages and came often to purchase quality staples as well as furniture, woolen and calico fabrics, and the handiwork that villagers produced to earn cash to supplement their credits at the general store. The well-tended economic system functioned quite well, providing for everyone's needs from the cradle to the grave. When the inevitable happened, the village carpenter was sent to measure the body for a coffin. After the funeral service at the meetinghouse, the villagers walked to the home of the deceased where the corpse and coffin were loaded on a farm wagon and hauled to the cemetery. The cortege followed the wagon and the

deceased was interred in the next available space, marked by a simple concrete headstone bearing name, date of death, and age.

Amana's woolen and calico factories gained a national reputation for the superior fabrics they produced. By 1908 the two woolen mills in Amana and Middle Amana were producing a half-million yards of fabric annually. The calico factory daily produced 4,500 yards of its famous cloth until it was forced to close when World War I cut off the German dyes necessary to create the product's beautiful colors. Two flour mills processed the grains from Amana's collective farms as well as those of nearby farmers. Potatoes and onions were shipped by rail to midwestern markets.

Iowans knew the Inspirationists were conscientious objectors to war. They were also aware of their German heritage. Despite their young men's service as noncombatants in World War I, the Society's investing thousands in war bonds, devoting its mills to government contracts, and spearheading scrap metal drives, charges of disloyalty were frequently made.

By the end of the war, the economic climate began to undergo rapid change. Following the removal of wartime price supports in 1919, both the textile industry and agriculture declined. In August 1923, a major fire destroyed the uninsured Amana flour mill and most of the adjacent woolen mill. With the onset of the Great Depression, the Society's combined debt climbed to nearly a half million dollars (\$8.2 million in 2012 dollars). The elders had failed to adapt the communal system to the modern labor and business management practices used by the Society's competitors. The price points of their products were too high in the competitive marketplace.

Radio broadcasts, magazines, and tourists transported the moral and social mores of the Roaring Twenties into the colonies, eroding the religious values of the Society's youth. Already dissatisfied with communal life, they left the villages in increasing numbers each year. Even without the country's financial decline caused by the Depression, "it was clear the Amana Society was falling apart at the seams by 1931."

A "Committee of Forty-Seven" was elected in April to develop plans for the Society's future. A letter to each member offered two options: return to a life of communal living and self-denial, or a complete financial reorganization, casting aside the old ways. The members were 74 percent in favor of the latter option. Several months later the committee with extensive legal assistance offered a joint stock business corporation that retained the name "Amana Society," and a separate entity called the "Amana Church Society" to oversee the religious affairs. In a referendum, 96 percent of the members approved the plan on February 1, 1932. The communal kitchens served their last meal the evening of April 11, 1932. The colonies had been without the spiritual guidance of a *Wertzeuge* for nearly half a century.

As a result of this "Great Change," each adult member received one share of voting common stock, and distributive stock based on his/her years of service. The plan provided for the immediate appraisal of real estate and assured members the right

to purchase their homes. Many used their stock to buy their homes. The new organization guaranteed jobs to every member. In May 1932 the Amana Society Corporation made its first payroll. From mill and factory managers down to farm hands, everyone earned ten cents an hour, but all of the Societies sold their groceries and products at cost. The Society continued to provide medical services and prescriptions at no cost. Many of Amana's young people jumped at the chance to finish high school.

In 1934, George C. Foerstner, 26, designed a product and started a company that forever placed the Amana name on America's industrial map. In a shed across the street from his father's store in High Amana, George sold and installed refrigeration coolers. Two years later he started manufacturing the coolers under the name "Amana Electric Company." The Amana Society purchased and capitalized the company which in the 1940s marketed the first upright home freezer and affordable home air conditioning systems. A group of private investors, including Foerstner, purchased the company from the Society in 1950. It became the sixth largest refrigeration manufacturer in the U.S., employing more than 3,000. Unemployment in the villages was practically zero. After merging with the Raytheon Corporation in 1965, Amana produced the first home microwave oven in 1967. The company is now a division of Whirlpool.

The thirties and forties saw social changes which included organizations found in most towns: Boy and Girl Scout troops and

ladies' and men's clubs that provided social events such as dances, picnics, ball games, and holiday programs. Bands were formed to provide festive German music. During World War II, the residents of the seven villages set aside their former views on pacifism and sent 140 men and women into military service. The members of the Amana Society had entered mainstream America.

The Society in the thirties first took advantage of the opportunity to serve tourists with gas stations, sandwich shops, and four hotels (originally built before 1932 to serve salemen). An Amana resident in 1934 purchased the old Amana Hotel and remodeled it as the Colony Inn Restaurant. It was followed by the Ox Yoke Inn, Zuber's Restaurant, the Ronneburg, the Colony Marketplace, the Brick Haus, and the Barn Restaurant. Today, most of the restaurants feature family-style dining and continue to make Amana famous for its German cuisine and reasonable prices.

Now, if I haven't drowned you in history, let's visit Amana today. Hopefully, the history primer will give you a greater appreciation for what you will see.

The following resources were used in writing this story:

1. "Origins of the Colonies." www.nps.com / The Amana Colonies.
2. Peter Hoehnle, *The Amana People: The History of a Religious Community*. Penfield Books (Iowa City, Iowa, 2003), 12-78.
3. Historical plaques, Amana Heritage Museum.
4. Barbara S. Yambura, *A Change and a Parting: My Story of Amana*. Penfield Books, 2nd ed. (Iowa City, Iowa: 2001), 102-3.

The first indented quotation and the etchings were taken from Peter Hoehnle's book; the second quotation on page 25 came from Barbara Yambura's book.

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## Visiting Amana Today

The “Great Change” in 1932 ended 89 years of rigid communal life since the Inspirationists had settled Ebenezer in western New York. The seven colonies in Iowa lasted 70 years under the communal system. The homes were auctioned to members who also received stock in the newly formed Amana Society.

### The Amana Society’s New Role as a Stockheld Corporation

The Amana Society created seven businesses that in time rewarded the stockholders with an increasing value of their shares. Use your Guide Map to locate and visit these businesses: the Amana Meat Shop and Smokehouse, the Amana Woolen Mill, the Amana Furniture & Clock Shop, the Amana General Store, the Amana General Store Appliances, the Little Amana General Store & Woolens (I-80 at exit 225), and the Amana Farms.

The **Amana Meat Shop and Smokehouse**, 4513 F Street, Amana, is open daily (9-5, M-F; 9-6, Sat; 10-6, Sun). Opened in 1858, the shop is now in its 154th year. Famous for hams shipped throughout the U.S., the shop also specializes in German sausages and cured bacon. You will also find many varieties of European cheeses and a selection of Amana breads.

The **Amana Woolen Mill** is Iowa’s only operating woolen mill. The Inspirationists’ skills learned in 18th century Germany created an industry that became a financial mainstay of the colonies. Destroyed by fire in 1923, the mill was not put back into operation until the mid-thirties. Today you will see warping and weaving departments producing quality blankets in wool and cotton. The mill has two computerized Sulzer looms in operation that were built in Switzerland in 1981. The harness



lifts and separates the warp to allow the shuttle to make 275 to 375 passes per minute. Threads are wound on the *warping reel* in sections to determine the width and length of the warp. The reel in the picture was patented in 1886. Cones of yarn are placed on the warping creel to set up the color patterns of the warp (threads running lengthwise). The creel can hold up to 240 cones. One blanket can be woven every five minutes on the Sulzer loom. Their beautiful patterns are again in great de-

Dave Alpert, loom technician, constantly monitors the operation as the loom produces a wool blanket every five minutes. • Cones of yarn are strategically placed on the warping creel to create the color patterns in Amana’s popular blankets. • Rudy Kraft, a furniture craftsman with 30 years of experience, works on the bonnet of a grandfather clock. • *Right:* The Furniture and Clock Shop has already sold 125 of the The Limited Edition Winzenreid Grandfather Clock.

mand. You will also find a variety of other wool products in the salesroom. Located in Amana at 800 48th Avenue, the mill is open daily. Call 800-222-6430 for hours. [www.amanawoolenmill.com](http://www.amanawoolenmill.com).

Just a few steps away at 724 48th Avenue, you will find the **Amana Furniture & Clock Shop**. Fine hardwoods—walnut, maple, oak, and cherry—are carefully selected by skilled craftsmen to create clocks of every description from desk size to the wall and grandfather varieties. It is easy to memorize their distinctive chimes to tell you the time wherever you are in your home. The shop is currently engaged in building a Limited Edition of 250 Winzenreid Grandfather Clocks to honor Carl Winzenreid, an Inspirationist in Germany who financed the passage of a large number of the faithful who followed Christian Metz to western New York in the 1850s. He was instrumental in the Iowa land acquisition and the layout of the new villages. At the end of March 2012, the shop had sold half of the Winzenreid edition.

Jerry Ennen, shop foreman, studied



cabinet making at Bemidj Tech in the early seventies. He has 38 years of experience in building fine furniture. Ron Olsword has worked at the shop since 1976. In addition to producing fine pieces of furniture, he lovingly builds coffins for each member of the Amana Church. To view the shops wide selection of living and dining room furniture, visit their website at [www.amanafurniture.com](http://www.amanafurniture.com).

Debbie Olsword stains each piece by

hand, and follows with a process of five coats of varnish with hand sanding after each application. “Our process gives our furniture a nice satiny finish. The process takes four to six weeks,” Debbie said. “Most other companies complete the finishing process in 48 to 72 hours.”

Today only eight people work in the shop which includes wood preparation, bench craftsmen, and skilled finishers. For showroom hours, call 800-247-5088.

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Built in 1860 from brown sandstone quarried locally, the Amana General Store rarely sold its goods for cash. Members had annual lines of credit which they watched carefully to be sure they could purchase their essentials throughout the year. • The general store's merchandise today is quite different. Shoppers will find household accessories, regional jams and jellies, and a tea and coffee shop. • A handmade rocking horse in the Amana Heritage Museum, along with smaller toys, shows the simplicity of presents parents could purchase for their children. • Beginning with breakfast at 6:30 a.m., communal kitchens routinely served 200 to 300 meals per day.

Step back in time and visit the **Amana General Store** located at 4423 220th Trail in the village of Amana. The store was built in 1858 from sandstone quarried nearby. During the communal era of the colonies, each member used his line of credit to buy a variety of items that were not produced in the colonies. A resident could find everything from salted herring out of a 50-gallon barrel, to iron skillets, bulk candy from a bin, dry goods and clothing.

Today you will find books, gift baskets, gourmet food collections, coffee and teas from around the world, candles, and a broad array of gourmet jams and sweets. In the Spring quarter, the general store will be open daily 10 to 5. For summer and fall visits, call 800-373-6328 to check store hours.

**Amana General Store Appliances**, now located at 836 48th Avenue in Amana, has a long history dating back to when appliances were sold at the Amana General Store. Since the Amana appliance manufacturing plant was only two miles away, the Amana General Store in the late thirties became a retailer for locally built appliances. Over the years, the Amana General Store grew to be one of Amana Refrigeration's leading retailers. The General Store had to build warehouse space and a larger display area to accommodate their customers. In 1997, the appliance division of the Amana General Store was moved to its new location behind the Amana Woolen Mill. Amana General Store remained part of the name and Appliances was added. Amana General Store Appliances continues to sell Amana Appliances along with Electrolux, Frigidaire, and Maytag. The store is one of Iowa's leading appliance dealers.

With the Amana villages five miles away from Interstate 80, the Society realized it was missing thousands of customers who had no plans to delay their trips for a visit to the villages. To attract some of that buying power, they built the **Little Amana General Store & Woolens** to present their most popular products. If you are one of those busy travelers, a rest stop at exit 225 would be a good place to take a break.

While the actual **Amana Farms** are not open for tours, you can see how it was done during the communal era by stopping in South Amana to visit the ox and horse barns, the Barn Museum, and the Communal Agricultural Museum.

#### The Seven Amana Heritage Museum Sites

To really grasp an understanding of communal society in Amana, you should visit the Heritage Museum sites first before the present-day stores and their merchandise steal away your attention.

The story of the American communal society with the longest

history is told at the **Amana Heritage Museum**, through exhibits, a 15-minute film presentation, and oral accounts by the docents. The museum's well-designed exhibits depict Amana's history from its German's roots to present day. Roughing It Smoothly could not hold all of the pictures I took here, but the simplicity of the children's toys (notice the small ones on the floor) speaks to a life that was not dependent on their possessions. They had secure, warm living quarters, good clothes and shoes, fresh vegetables and meat, and basic healthcare. But it was a very structured life — a plan from the cradle to the grave.

While there were general stores in all of the villages, the **High Amana General Store**, which was first opened in 1857, is the only store surviving with very few physical changes to the building. Today, however, it is stocked with folk art, crafts, nostalgic toys, and candies. It is located in High Amana about four miles west of Amana on the 220th Trail.

The **Communal Kitchen** is the only intact communal kitchen preserved exactly as it was the day the kitchen boss and her assistants served the last meal of the communal era on April 11, 1932. As guides explain the daily routines, you can imagine members walking from the nearby homes to take their meals here. Barbara Yambura described the dining procedures in her book.

The first breakfast, served at 6:30 a.m., was generous, for Amana people worked hard and had hearty appetites. The kitchen helpers often ate a second breakfast and those who went off to work in the fields and shops usually carried lunches for mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks. . . . At 11 a.m., we had our main meal with a menu so routine that you could tell the day of the week by the food you were served.

Emily Oehl, 84, a very gracious host, showed us the **Amana Community Church Museum** in the village of Homestead, which was built in 1875. Standing in the *Saal* (sanctuary, the word means "God's room in His house"), she pointed out the Canadian pine benches made without nails. The

wood for the floors was brought from the buildings in Ebenezer. "The ladies scrubbed the floors and benches with lye soap to re-finish them and get that white color," Emily said. "The ladies and gentlemen came in through separate doors and sat on opposite sides of the *Saal*," she continued. "They met every evening after supper and had regular services on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday. They practiced their religion and that's what kept them together."

Just down the street you will find the

**Homestead Store Museum**. Although it once was a general store, today it presents a comprehensive view of Amana's crafts and trades, industry, and commerce.

The **Homestead Blacksmith Shop** is open only on Saturdays through the first weekend in September. With its forge and farrier tools, you will see just how the shop operated before it closed in the 1940s.

The **Communal Agriculture Exhibit** in South Amana is open for tours, but by appointment only. Schedule your tour

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The Inspirationists met every evening after supper for devotional services in the *Saal*. With no electricity, the worshippers used the large windows for interior light on Sundays. Evening services were lighted by candle chandeliers. • The Broom and Basket Shop in West Amana has a broom for every imaginable purpose. Basket makers, many trained by Joanna Schanz, offer a large variety of both functional and decorative baskets. • Joanna Schanz learned her initial basket making skills in 1975 from Philip Dickel, the last surviving basket maker from the communal period. • Executing intricate patterns and detail requires strong, nimble fingers and concentration.



at the Heritage Society office in Amana. Guides will show you the equipment and barns, and describe the methods used in the 1800s and well into the 20th century.

The **Broom and Basket Shop** in West Amana. When Joanna Schanz, the author of *Willow Basketry of the Amana Colonies*, asked Philip Dickel in 1975, the last active basket maker in the colonies, to tell her about willow basketry, he replied, “I’ll do more than tell you; I’ll show you.” From that day forward, after spending months learning from Philip, Joanna orchestrated the revival of the art by writing instructive books on the subject and teaching new generations how to make useful baskets. Her outdoor demonstrations draw daily audiences who eagerly ask questions. In the shop, artisans demonstrate the making of many different types of brooms and brushes.



About a half mile east of South Amana on SR 6, you will find the **Schanz Furniture Shop**, where Joanna’s husband, Norman, and son, Mike, highly skilled cabinet and chair makers, create heirloom pieces everyday. The Schanz business goes back six generations when Norman’s great-great-grandfather, Johnnes (1803 – 1870), left Germany with the Inspirationists for their first settlement in western New York. Mike’s three sons may be the seventh generation to maintain the family’s tradition. Norman and Mike use walnut, cherry, and oak to build custom orders. They also repair and refinish your old pieces with their hand-rubbed satin finishes. Cane and woven chair seats are another specialty.

Christine Williams at the **Amana Arts Guild** in High Amana left us in awe with her knitting talent. She took over four-and-a-half months and spent approximately 300 hours creating the German openwork knitting patterns seen here. Knitting is generational in her family. Her grandmother did it. Her mother, left-handed, was hesitant to teach Christine and decided to ask a lady in town to teach her.

**Bill Metz, tinsmith**, opens his workshop and studio on Saturdays to demonstrate how he creates cookie cutters of all shapes, as well as larger culinary pieces. He orders tin from Cornwall in England and from Bolivia. His basement shop is in a building that once was a communal kitchen, built in 1868. His grandmother fed 30 to 35 workers each day in her kitchen. The adjacent building has a hallway down the center. Three related families lived in the house, each couple being assigned a bedroom and a parlor. Bill’s parents bought the property in 1932 during the Great Change.

Other shops we especially enjoyed were the **Custom Cutlery**

German openwork knitting can involve several patterns in one sweater. If Christine Williams were paid a mere ten dollars per hour for her work, this sweater would be worth more than \$3,000. It’s the love of the art that keeps good knitters going. • Bill Metz began practicing the art of tinsmithing in 1980. He creates large cake pans, like the one at right, as well as an infinite variety of cookie cutters, many made for special requests • Cane-back rockers are one of Norman Schanz’s specialties which he usually keeps in stock. • The Ox Yoke Inn (shown here) competes with the nearby Ronneburg Restaurant to see who makes the best wiener schnitzel. We tried them both and could not decide.

& **Ironworks** and **Lehm Books & Gifts** in Amana. For local and regional art, visit the **Michele Maring Miller Studio & Gallery** in West Amana. If you have a yen for wonderful breads and coffee cakes baked in an open hearth oven, you must visit the **Hahn Bakery** in Middle Amana. They begin baking in the wee hours of the morning and open at 7 a.m. They stay open until they are sold out (which is usually by 10). After you decide on your options on your first visit, place your order for pickup early the next morning. It’s hard to beat the Hahn’s coffee cake and a hot cup of java. 319-622-3439.

Transportation in the colonies is usually in your own car. For a learning experience, the CD driving tour (mentioned earlier) is the best way to see the high points. If cycling is your thing, be sure to do the Amana *Kolonieweg* (German for “colony trail”). The 3.1 mile trail connects the villages of Amana and Middle Amana, but you also get great views of the waterways, Lily Lake, and the colony farmlands. Village Voyage offers a three-hour van tour Monday – Friday at 11. Call 800-579-2294 for rates and options. A guided walking tour, the Village Stroll leaves the Visitors Center at 11 each weekday and lasts approximately one hour (depending on how many questions you ask). \$7 adults, \$2 children. Call 800-579-2294 for more information.

The choices for full meals, lunches, and snacks are numerous. But if you like German cuisine, you can’t go wrong at the **Ronneburg** or the **Ox Yoke** restaurants on the main street. There are sandwich and cookie shops on the main drag for quick lunches.

The history of the Community of True Inspiration still has a strong influence on the Amana Colonies today. When you visit with the descendants of the Inspirationists, you will see it coming through – even today, 80 years after the Great Change. **RIS**



## Brad Witt Process Engineering Manager

LOCAL MAN'S CAREER PATH LEADS TO KEY ENGINEERING POSITION

**Brad Witt began his career** at Tiffin Motorhomes in 2002. After earning his B.S. degree in 1996 in industrial engineering at Mississippi State University, the Belmont native's career seems to have followed planned steps to bring him to his present position at TMH – process engineering manager. Belmont is only five miles from Red Bay, just across the state line, and the location of Tiffin's state-of-the-art full-body paint plant.

Brad spent his first two years out of high school at Northeast

Mississippi Community College in Booneville and then transferred to the engineering school at Mississippi State. He chose a five-year plan to get his degree at State in 1996, which involved co-oping at Action Industries. During his two years at NMCC, Brad began dating Lori Dexter, a Belmont girl who later studied for her degree in nursing at NMCC. They married in 1997.

When he graduated, Action offered him a position in process engineering, a job that requires careful analysis of every step required to build a product with the purpose of finding and implementing better fabrication and construction methodology, more effective equipment applications, cost efficiencies, and quality improvement. He applied his new skills to the assembly line production of reclining chairs.

Just 18 months later, another furniture company located in his hometown hired Brad to do cost analysis and process engineering for the construction of tables and upholstered furniture. For the next three-and-a-half years, he built a core of experience in

developing more efficient assembly line construction processes.

In the spring of 2001, he accepted a position in process engineering with GBC, a nationally known company that offers professional office and print finishing solutions. GBC's company in Booneville, Mississippi, manufactures Quartet bulletin boards.

In 2002 Tiffin Motorhomes retained AFME Consulting Company to study specific needs and make recommendations for expanding its engineering department. The consultants recommended that TMH hire a process engineer. Brad saw the ad in the *Tupelo Daily Journal* and applied for the position. In May 2002 he began a new career path that led to his current position of Process Engineering Manager.

"At Tiffin Motorhomes, process engineering means anything that improves and streamlines the manufacturing and construction process by automation, redesign of the assembly line, new manufacturing equipment and systems, and new plant layout," Brad explained. "The ongoing goal is to reduce time and materials and produce a better motorhome at a lower price than our competition can offer."

Brad focused on standardization. He designed standard jigs to build repetitively the steel structures that are fabricated in the welding shop. "Most of my early work at TMH was done in the welding shop," he said. "Tim Tiffin and I had lengthy discussions about cost standardizations and labor efficiencies. They both are essential to cost control and the ability to be competitive."

The single assembly line in 2002 handled all of the variations that Tiffin offered: gas and rear diesels, 28-ft. to 45-ft lengths, simple floor plans and options in the Allegros to complex modules, options, and floorplans in the diesels. It was common to see a 28-ft. Allegro following a 45-ft. Zephyr in the line.

"In 2004-05, we went to two assembly lines, mainly to separate the large and small units," Brad began. "The change required new overhead crane systems that were free standing and not attached to reinforced roof beams, 11-ft. catwalks down both sides of the line at the stations where we installed the side-walls and roof systems, and careful mapping of the floor plans to create lanes for delivery of components by forklift trucks."

The long-term planning for two assembly lines paid off when the change-over was made in one intensive shutdown week. "Fine tuning went on for several months," Brad said. "But we increased production by 43 percent – 7 units a day to 10 units a day."

The process engineering department divided up into two groups to do the 2-line project. "There is a real challenge in building motorhomes that you don't see in most manufacturing companies," Brad continued. "Most companies build thou-

sands of units each day with very few variations. TMH builds a few units each day with thousands of variations."

The Breeze and the gas-powered Allegros have shorter wheel-bases, require fewer modules to create the floorplans, and have a smaller number of components for general functionality. "Last year we opened a separate assembly line for the Breeze because it takes about half of the work stations to build it. That made our third line," Brad pointed out. "Recently, we just opened a fourth line for the Allegros. And with four lines in place, we are building 11 motorhomes per day."

"By placing similar units in a production line, you reduce the variations and give the employees the opportunity to improve their skills while improving the quality of each unit," he noted.



Brad Witt (right) discusses with Charles Spencer, slide-out department manager, the best way to modify a structural member in one of the slide-out boxes.

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Even with four assembly lines in place, TMH has decided to hold production to 11 units per day. “Bob Tiffin emphasizes the importance of building troublefree motorhomes,” Brad said. “With four lines in place, we could build more units per day. But by slowing down the lines and creating two new lines, we are making very positive steps toward that goal.”

As process engineering manager, Brad reviews production orders from the sales department and with two weeks lead time schedules the units appropriately into each line. “Even in the two primary lines which we opened in 2005, we can schedule similar units consecutively,” he said, “but, of course, there are significant variations in the diesel brands.”

Even while the assembly lines were being reconfigured, another major project was getting underway. In the last decade, CNC routers, saws, and laser cutters have been popping up wherever they were needed in the plant. CNC means “computer numerical control.” In production, CNC-driven systems mean accuracy, precision, and quality improvement.

In the sidewall manufacturing area of the main assembly plant, Brad and Steven Coon, design engineering manager (RIS, 9:1), collaborated on the planning, installation, and programming of a 10 × 45-ft. CNC router. It is one of the largest in the nation.

“The machine creates programmed, routed tracks in 1.75-inch thick high-density styrofoam slabs backed with exterior fiberglass that will become the inner core of each motorhome’s sidewalls,” Brad explained. “The strength of the sidewall depends on the tubular aluminum studs that will be pressed into the spaced recesses and welded to cross members top and bottom. When the stud tracks are created, the programmed router simultaneously routes paths for wiring harnesses and flexible water pipes. At a subsequent workstation, the interior wall panels are laminated to the wall sandwich which will eventually be attached to the steel floor on the assembly line. The walls attach after all the interior modules are in place.”

Every floorplan has different sidewalls. As each chassis enters

*Above:* Brad discusses production line schedules daily with his administrative assistant, Jaime Green. • Lori and Brad, with their two children, Grayson and Greta, enjoy vacations in the Southeast when they can get away — this time at a beach in the Florida panhandle.

the assembly line, the router receives a sequence of programmed routing patterns to create wall cores. Each core will become a sidewall that will be sequenced in the correct order to meet its chassis in the assembly line.

“Using this router to efficiently create sidewalls is what process engineering is all about,” Brad said. “It involved analyzing the task and finding the equipment to do the job. This router could be used in making other products in different industries. Our challenge was to write the programming to guide the router in making all of the recesses in the styrofoam. Steven Coon, the company’s design process engineer, worked endless hours programming this computer.”

In the last ten years, the process engineering department has installed and programmed seven other CNC routers in TMH plants, two automated rip saws, a dust collection system in the cabinet shop with a centralized bag house, a 50,000 psi waterjet to cut the perimeters and insets of the ceramic tile floors that go down on the floor as one unit, and a long list of overhead bridge cranes.

“Perhaps the key factor in successful scheduling is the software we use,” Brad pointed out. “We went live with SAP in November 2007. Although it does so much more, SAP has the most versatile MRP (materials requirements planning) soft-



ware, which is applicable to almost any manufacturing process. It creates a bill of materials for each motorhome. Then a PPR (purchasing parts report) is the follow-up document that insures that all the parts are available when that unit goes on the assembly line. Every unit is built to an order from one of our dealers. We have no inventory of motorhomes lined up in fields like automotive manufacturers.”

Two major machines were added recently to make the manufacturing process more efficient. The Trumpf Laser Cutter (TLC) is used to make precision fabricated parts from both aluminum and steel sheets. The machine’s major expense was easily cost justified by its speed and accuracy. The Trumpf Press Brake bends and forms steel parts that can be designed for any application. If a new base were needed to mount the passenger chair to the steel sub-floor, it could be created on the Press Brake.

Brad served as the process engineering manager during his first four years at TMH. For the next four years, he oversaw both process and design engineering. In the middle of that period as the recession gripped the industry, Brad planned the units going onto the assembly line when sales got down to two and three motorhomes a day. “We lost a lot of good people and talent during the recession,” he lamented. “It was really painful to decide where we had to make cuts. We are rebuilding and retraining our workforce very carefully as we get back to full production.”

As production orders began to rise in 2010, general manager

Tim Tiffin reorganized engineering into three divisions. Brad Witt is process engineering manager; Steven Coon is design engineering manager; and Brad Warner is chassis engineering manager.

Brad’s staff includes Buddy Wiltshire, process engineering in the paint plant; Mike Neighbors, process engineering, cabinet shop; Craig Davis and Robert Kelly, process engineering in the main assembly plant; Josh Lundy, reports and scheduling; Daniel Allen, electrical engineer for products and machinery; and Peter Thomas, variable programming of machines.

“I love not knowing what I will be doing each day,” Brad said. “The two things that make me really enjoy this job is the access to top management. I can see any of the Tiffins on short notice when I need to consult on solving a problem. And, it has really been gratifying to get to implement new ideas and processes.”

Brad and Tim Tiffin have worked closely in reshaping the assembly lines. “Brad has taken our ideas and brought them to life,” Tim said recently. “He has been an integral player in the engineering decisions in plant layout and design.”

Brad arrives at the plant around 5:30 a.m. He attends “the 6 a.m. meeting” that covers design issues and changes needed. Bob and Van Tiffin attend. The assembly line starts at 6 a.m. and the next hour and a half is spent in problem solving. He attends “the 8 a.m. production meeting” where all of the department and production supervisors check issues affecting the

*Continued on page 64*

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# North Trail RV in Fort Myers

## A DIFFERENT WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

**This story is really about a family.** More than that, it is about a family who treats customers as if they were guests visiting in their home. As a matter of fact, the word “customer” is banned from their business vocabulary.

Al Erp has owned several businesses. Guest service seems to be wired into his psyche and he knows how to ensure you are going to buy the right motorhome for your lifestyle. “We spend a lot of time listening to how our *guests* plan to use their motorhomes,” Al began. “Then, we begin to match one or more of our coaches to our guest’s plans. It may take a while. That’s okay. Our guest may decide to take a day or two to evaluate what he has seen here.

“After our guest has spent more time with the coach, driven it, made notes, asked more questions and received the answers, he may decide to give us an order,” Al continued. “Then we will go over all of the accessories available on the chosen coach, make the selections, agree on the price, and have them installed. Keep in mind, our guest has not paid for the unit until everything has been completed to his satisfaction.

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

“Two delivery specialists will take over from North Trail’s sales associate and spend several hours with our guest,” he said. “After completing the orientation and training on how to use everything correctly, they then sign the order and purchase the coach.”

North Trail RV is almost as far south into Florida as you can get on I-75. The company uses well-placed billboards all along the interstate to encourage RVers to “keep on driving ’till you get to Fort Myers.” If they do, they will be rewarded with the largest selection of new Tiffin motorhomes offered on one site by any dealer in the Tiffin network. North Trail keeps 40 to 50 new Tiffin coaches in stock with a nice distribution between five of the six Tiffin brands.

Al Erp began his career as an entrepreneur in 1973 when he opened an aluminum fabrication company in Punta Gorda and expanded operations later with another facility in Ocala. In 1978, his wife, Evelyn, was diagnosed with breast cancer. She fought the disease valiantly as Al began to spend more time away from the business to be with her and their two children, Alan and Jenny. In 1982 he bought a new Bluebird motorcoach to tour the west and in ’83 he sold the fabrication business. The Erps loved Montana and decided to settle there. Al enjoyed

hunting and fishing trips to the high country near Thompson Falls, about 80 miles north of Missoula. He sold the Bluebird and bought a home on Flathead Lake.

True entrepreneurs never really free themselves from the great satisfaction they receive from building and operating a business. The children were teenagers in high school, Evelyn seemed to be recovering, and Al found a telecommunications business that was for sale. He bought it and began to learn the ropes of a totally different business from the one he sold in Florida.

Sadly, Evelyn lost her battle with cancer in 1985 and Al decided in 1986 to move his family back to Florida. The family had always enjoyed camping in tents, trailers, and small motorhomes when the children were young. Al wanted something to keep himself busy and found a small RV dealership for sale on U.S. 41 in Fort Myers. Alan had just finished high school and decided to remain in Montana. After a year at Montana State College, he worked as a lumberjack for two years. In February 1989, he decided to join his dad at North Trail RV.

Realizing the importance of locating the company at a major intersection on I-75, Al found a strip of land at Exit 141 in 1990. “The footprint of the lot we bought looked like a banana, but it was a new beginning. We had been in business for five years and we were just not selling many RVs,” he related. “It took 11 acquisitions to put together 9.3 acres. Later on, we were able to expand it to 13 acres.”

The business began to grow. “It was the location,” he emphasized. That year the company became a dealer for four motorhome manufacturers. North Trail RV had 12 employees—three in service and nine in sales and the business office. “In 1994 we took on Newmar, and they had slide-outs. We thought

North Trail RV’s “New Facility” is scheduled to open in Spring 2013. The company is expanding on 50 additional acres which lie between their present collision center to the south and the sales and service center to the north at exit 141 on I-75. The service center will have 44 bays under roof with an additional 96 outside bays. A new parts and accessories store will more than triple the company’s present retail store. A service camping area will offer full hookups for repairs requiring more than one day. North Trail RV’s expansion is designed to make the company a destination dealer in the peninsula state.

we were really something,” he laughed. In 1996, Al sold the telecommunications business. “It was time to focus totally on the RV company,” he concluded.

America’s wars and international politics frequently have an effect on the recreational vehicle industry. “It took a couple of years after the Gulf War for us to get rolling again,” Al noted. “By the mid-nineties, our sales in towable and motorhome units were about equal.”

The Erp family was growing. Alan married Shawnica and they had two boys, Kyle and Bryan. It would be another 10 years before Bailey was born. Jenny married and by the end of the nineties had Evalena and Kaylee. Today, she works in marketing at North Trail RV. Alan’s sons are also employed in the family business. Kyle, 22, is a service advisor, and Bryan, 20, handles insurance claims for their guests.

Key employees began to find their niches in the business. There are many interesting, personal career stories at North Trail RV. Looking for new opportunities in 1978, Steve Graham left Massachusetts and relocated to Florida where he worked at various positions in the auto industry over the next 18 years. The skills he acquired positioned him to become the service manager at North Trail RV in October 1999. He is now the general manager, and assists Alan with the daily operations of the dealerships.

Nelda Iacono joined the company in 1995. As controller, she manages the business end of North Trail RV including general accounting, risk management, and insurance. With two assistants and one part-timer, she supervises the financial activities for a company with 170 employees and annual sales of \$107 million. “I either do or oversee all of the paperwork to receive each new motorhome arriving from a manufacturer,” she volunteered. “Let me tell you, Tiffin’s paperwork is always perfect.” Nelda selected and supervised the installation of IDS software with its modules for sales, service, and general accounting. She has held several leadership positions with the Florida RV Trade Association, and is now serving as president of Region 1.

On a 17-acre property just one exit south of the North Trail sales and service facility, the Erps built their collision and



chassis center. Operating under a two-acre pavilion that also covers their offices and service planning, the center is authorized by Freightliner and Spartan to do chassis work, including alignments. They are also the preferred repair facility for Progressive, Nationwide, and GMAC, and are authorized by all other insurance companies. The fabrication shop can shape and create exterior compartment doors and roof radiuses for any brand. A 60 foot state-of-the-art downdraft painting booth handles coaches up to 45 feet. In addition to a full-service body shop, the center offers tire replacements, balancing, and alignments. Between them, Greg Reppert, Jonathan Rapp, and Scott Dolloff have over 100 years of experience. Greg is the collision repair director; Jonathan is the body shop manager; and Scott

Dolloff is the chassis service consultant. Michael Bonne brings rare skills to North Trail RV. His resume includes coppersmith, blacksmith, and tinsmith. Using metal forming equipment and techniques found in shops from 1890 to 1930, he can create almost any part that is needed for a restoration or repair. Since several RV manufacturers closed in the last four years, the parts unique to their coaches are no longer available for purchase. And, if you would like a personally designed weathervane to put on a pole outside your coach, Michael can make it. Al and Alan Erp are in total agreement on the company's primary reason for existence. "We are a service-based organization," Al began. "That's where our dedication lies. An RV dealership's success is based on service."

Al Erp's children and grandchildren are actively involved in North Trail RV. From left, Brian and Kyle (Alan's sons) are collision consultant and service consultant, respectively. Alan oversees general operations and serves as vice president. Al, president, built the company from its inception and continues to provide inspiration and advice to both his family and employees. Jennifer found her niche in the company as a marketing consultant. • North Trail RV, with 40 to 50 units in stock at any given time, carries the largest inventory of new Tiffin motorhomes in the Tiffin network of dealers.

Alan nodded vigorously in agreement. "When owners experience our service attitudes and policies — our employees commitment to take care of them, we will never lose them as our guests," he emphasized. (There's that word again.)

"We have a culture that makes our guests feel comfortable," Alan continued. "We do not treat people like they are a 'customer being processed' through a sales or service system. We genuinely want them to feel like they are guests in our home. An associate here at North Trail will never attempt to 'process' a person quickly in order to get to the next 'customer,' with an attitude of maximizing our profit. Good service takes time."

North Trail's service manager, Derek Marks, has been with the company for 12 years. He began as a delivery coordinator, teaching owners how to use everything in their coaches. When the delivery was completed, he gave the new owner his cell phone number. Derek was promoted to service consultant, and then three years ago became service manager. He still gives his cell phone number to new owners!

"We have 26 technicians with various levels of certification in different areas," he explained. The company takes advantage of the training offered by component manufacturers who hold seminars at the dealership. Motorhome manufacturers, including Tiffin, conduct training on-site and at their plants. Satellite training courses are offered by RVIA through which certifications can be earned.

Everyone at North Trail RV is excited about the "New Facility" which will be opening in the spring of 2013. "We are expanding on 50 additional acres with a

new state-of-the-art service facility," Derek said. "We will have 44 RV service bays under roof with an additional 96 outside! We expect to employ more certified technicians from the surrounding area," he assured.

"We schedule 'waiters' whose repairs are usually completed in one day," Derek said. "But our new facility will have overnight camping available so that our guests can stay in their coaches while repairs are underway. Of course, new owners will also camp with us while they are getting accustomed to using all of the features in their coaches. Now we send them to a nearby campground."

When parts must be ordered for a repair, the service department uses a software feature called Bridge Speak. "When the part arrives, Bridge Speak calls the owner and notifies them that the part has arrived to complete the repair," Derek said. "After the repair is made, a quality control person inspects the work. QC must sign off on it before the service advisor calls the owner to pick up the coach."

Rob Sanders, who has been with North Trail RV for 10 years, serves as the supervisor of the service consultants. Rob and service consultants Kyle Erp, Tim Roncaglione, and Jose Rodriguez are the first to greet guests coming in for service.

Mike Provost has been the parts manager at North Trail RV for almost a decade, after logging 18 years with Camping World. He also manages the accessories store. "Inventory management is quite a challenge. The inventory can move off our shelves very quickly for order fulfillment to the service department. For the sake of capital management, we try not to overstock," Mike explained. "But at the same time, you don't want to run out of critical parts." Including the Fort Lauderdale location, the company maintains over a million dollar parts inventory. Mike uses IDS software to track inventory and reorder. "We can get almost anything overnight if it is not in stock," he noted. "Our owners empower us to take care of our guests and that's what we do."

North Trail RV Center became a Tiffin dealer in May 2009. The sales department reports to Alan Erp and he makes it his primary responsibility to assess what his guests wish to see in brands, floorplans, and options. "When evaluating the motorhomes of the companies we represent, I experience a warm, inviting feeling every time I enter a Tiffin motorhome," Alan said. "The fine interiors with carefully selected fabrics, beautiful cabinetry, and excellent lighting create an outstanding motorhome. Tiffin continues to come out with new features that make a great coach even better."

Alan places all of the orders for Tiffin coaches, and specifies the options and features he is certain will please his guests. "Out of the five Tiffin brands, the Phaeton represents about 40

*Above right:* Sales and Business Management Team (from left) Steve Kidan, business manager; Joe Jackson, sales manager; Joe Biela, general sales manager; Trent Turner, sales manager; Michael Engh, business manager. • Service Consultant Team (from left) Kyle Erp, service consultant; Rob Sanders, senior service consultant; Tim Roncaglione, service consultant; Jose Rodriguez, service consultant. • Management Team (from left) Steve Graham, general manager; Alan Erp, vice president.





Service Team (left to right) Scott Graham, shop foreman; Dee Stanger, service assistant; Carolyn Irish, warranty assistant; Monica Rutledge, service assistant; Jennifer Rodriguez, warranty assistant; Tami Meredith, warranty coordinator; Derek Marks, service manager; Kathy Dowdel, service dispatcher; Chis Estrada, delivery manager.



Nelda Iacono is in her 17th year with North Trail RV. As controller, she oversees general accounting, risk management, and insurance. • Mike Provost is completing a decade of service as the parts director and accessories store manager, following 18 years of service at Camping World. He enjoys the opportunity to help his guests find just the right item they are looking for.

percent of our orders. So far this year we are selling twice as many Allegro Buses as we sold last year,” he said. “We have had a good run on the Breeze, and all the Allegros are doing great as well.

“A lot of factors that we constantly evaluate determine what I order today,” Alan noted. “The Breeze is definitely the choice when owners want to downsize. We notice that people are retiring earlier. Eight years ago we would not have had a bunkhouse coach on this lot. But older RVers like the RED and Phaeton bunkhouses for their grandchildren, and younger families go for the Allegro bunkhouse for their kids. Since we are in the southern part of Florida, I try to inventory a lot of units and the variety that people seem to want.”

Alan wears several hats. Working hands-on with the marketing and advertising director, Tim Lowry, is one he enjoys. “We have really made our website a primary tool in reaching the public,” he said. “Unlike newspapers, television, and billboards, it is not limited geographically. We have a full-time webmaster to manage the website,” he explained. “It is not unusual for him to take 50 shots or more of a motorhome.” Jenny creates videos for the website, and assists Tim in marketing.

Crediting the website, Al noted that North Trail has developed a nationwide market. “The majority drive, but we are

seeing more people fly to Fort Myers to do business here,” he said.

In addition, Alan makes effective use of billboards (“Keep ’em driving south.”); TV advertising (Tampa and areas south); trade shows (several a year); and direct mail (very good for selective audiences). “Word of mouth continues to be our best advertising,” he said. “Referrals mean more to us than anything because it represents the effort of a satisfied owner sending us business,” Alan noted with pride. “Sometimes we call it campfire marketing.”

From 2004 to 2006, the Erps focused on motorhomes over towables. “By the time the recession hit, 89 percent of the units sold at North Trail were motorhomes. Like most dealers, we stubbed our toe but we didn’t break a leg. The people who were shopping still came to see us,” Al said.

“Sales went down by 50 percent,” Alan said. “By the third quarter of 2007, we began to feel it. Our biggest losses were caused by the bankruptcies of Holiday Rambler, Monaco, Weekend Warrior, and Travel Supreme. We had to sell over 100 coaches at less than what we paid for them. We are back today to where we were pre-recession. Tiffin replaced Holiday Rambler, Monaco, and Travel Supreme, helping us get through the recession, and is a driving force in our continued success. Tiffin has the right price points for dealers and own-

ers. You don’t need 20 floorplans in one brand; that just runs up the overhead. On the Allegro Bus, for example, you have five floorplans and they are all good ones. Plus you’ve got good options.”

In June 2009 the Erps opened a new store on Interstate 95 in Fort Lauderdale. “We really opened there initially to move our older units,” Alan said. “But when we became a Tiffin dealer, we decided to make the Fort Lauderdale store a full sales-service Tiffin dealership. Don Sisler opened the store for us, and then Ryan Lewis followed a year later to launch the service department. We also have a very nice accessories store. One thing we have noticed: our pre-owned Tiffins go very fast. In our experience, pre-owned Tiffin coaches hold their value better than any other brand.”

Joe Biela joined North Trail RV eight years ago as general sales manager, bringing over 30 years of sales experience to the position. Sales managers Joe Jackson and Trent Turner in Fort Myers, and Don Sisler and Steve Rowin in Fort Lauderdale work with a team of 29 sales professionals: 19 in Fort Myers and 10 in the Fort Lauderdale store.

“Sales training and product knowledge are essential for our associates to be able

to serve our guests effectively,” Joe said. “We have a sales meeting every morning to conduct a review of the incoming and outgoing units. We are a no-pressure sales group. We send our associates to Tiffin Motorhomes in Red Bay for sales training, and Tiffin sends their representatives here. It is an excellent relationship. Our delivery coordinators in service also go to TMH for sales training. Each associate goes ‘on stage’ frequently to present a coach to his fellow associates, followed with a critique by his peers. It keeps everyone on their toes.” The sales mantra for 2012 is “12 in 12” which means 1,200 units sold (new and used) in 2012.

Joe is very plain spoken about three reasons for North Trail RV’s success story.

*The owners:* This is a hands-on, family-operated business. They really care about their owners. It’s not just hype. “Honored guest” is a habit. Everyone believes in it. Every employee is treated with respect.

*Financial stability.* The company is financially stable with its bank and with its lenders. North Trail has generated strong buying power with its manufacturers. Even during the recession, there was no doubt about our survival. As other dealer-

ships were failing, we continued to go forward. Perhaps this is the key point a buyer should look for in a dealership.

*Sales and service* work together to take care of our guests. Communication between the two departments is excellent. Every new owner leaves with several cell phone numbers, including those of the delivery coordinators who trained them. We realize the complexity of a motorhome and will be there 24/7 for our owners.

“When I was in service,” Steve Graham recalled, “I talked new owners through problems late into the night. Most of the time it was just a lack of understanding about operating the equipment. We want our owners’ experiences with RVing to be fulfilling. If we can’t take care of the issue over the phone, we will find the nearest dealer or certified service center, and schedule an appointment for them.”

“We believe in the lifestyle and the industry,” Al reassures. “And we will spend whatever it takes to be sure our guests have a good RVing experience.”

“Al is the vision of this company,” Steve says. “Alan is the driver, the nuts and bolts, the energy guy. They are the poster guys for family-owned businesses.” RIS

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## John & Sheila Smart

THE SMART WAY TO DO BUSINESS

I was trying to court Sheila’s best friend,” John began rather sheepishly. “No, you were asking my best friend out!” Sheila corrected. And so began a fun interview of two Canadians from the town of Owen Sound, Ontario, a city of 30,000 on the southern shores of Georgian Bay.

They met at a school dance in 1964 and it didn’t take John that long to figure out his best prospect was not Sheila’s friend. Ever full of life with smiles and quick responses, Sheila bewitched the unsuspecting John Smart and they were married two years later.

Not flush with funds, they launched their honeymoon on the cheap, camping in his uncle’s old army tent which they had to pitch in the rain on their wedding night. Both good natured, they “weathered the storm” and made the best of it.

During the next decade, John worked for several companies including a manufacturer that supplied wiring harnesses to the automotive industry. In 1977 his career path led him to Kralinator, a manufacturer of automotive filters. Two years later the Dana Corporation bought Kralinator and Wix Filters in an attempt to dominate that part of the automotive market. Dana dropped the Kralinator name and made Wix the industry’s leading truck and automotive filter manufacturer. For John Smart, it meant new opportunities to develop his skill sets and latent management talent.

The Dana Corporation’s roots go back to 1904 when Clarence Spicer, an engineering student at Cornell University, patented an innovative design for the first practical universal joint to power an automobile.

John soon found himself in Dana University, the company’s corporate training facility for developing managerial talent. He was invited to join an 18-member team to study successful Japanese and Korean companies. “They were doing simple, smart things that collectively involved management and production employees,” John said. “The members in my study group were from six countries—what a perspective! After studying the Edwards Deming philosophy of production management and the products manufactured at a given location, we went to the production line and stood beside employees who trained us to do

Text by Fred Thompson

their jobs. We moved to different segments of the line to learn the skills and challenges faced by employees at every stage of the manufacturing process. It was an exciting time.”

When he returned to Canada, John began to implement what he had learned. “I worked in the plant one day a week with my managers,” he said. “It was something they had not done before and the employees were quite surprised.”

“One employee asked a very reasonable question: ‘Why are you doing my job in my department?’ I explained that we could learn to manage better when we knew how to do each job and understood the problems and difficulties,” John said. “Each employee stood beside me and trained me.” The experiences built valuable camaraderie and bonds between management and employees.

After John’s career in plant management reached a high in Canada, he was “loaned” in 1997 to Dana–U.S. for five years. Leaving their two daughters, Michelle and Dione, in Ontario, John and Sheila moved to Bristol, Virginia.

For ten years prior to their move to the U.S., Sheila established her career with Revenue Canada (equivalent to IRS in the U.S.). “My job was collecting the withholding tax from corporations,” she said. “We were recognized for our customer service. We treated taxpayers with dignity and respect. Our job was to work with taxpayers to resolve their debt in a timely and fair manner.”

While Dana was able to take care of John’s green card, Sheila had to wait a year for her work visa. During that time she studied American sign language and volunteered to work with a client who was deaf and blind. “Signing was done against his hand,” Sheila explained. “I took him to socials for the deaf that he seemed to really enjoy.” In Indiana she worked as a substitute sign interpreter in a public school that included deaf Amish students who lived on nearby farms.

In Michigan, Sheila found another opportunity at a community college to teach adults who needed sign language to enhance their skills for public service. Sheila’s students came to her classes for two hours prior to their scheduled college classes.

Using the same techniques he had previously used at Dana in Canada to correct the problems in the Virginia plant, John went a step further and asked every manager to take pad and pen into the plant and report on a daily basis anything that was unsafe or a productivity problem such as bad lighting or excess waste from the production line getting in the way. The employees were invited to participate with the managers. “I promised them that within 24 hours we would correct any problem they reported,” John said. “We corrected problems on a daily basis — problems that they identified. It was a whole new ballgame and the results were amazing. Participating in the process produced a pride in their work and an *esprit de corps* the plant had not seen before,” he explained.

“As a plant manager, I was expected to do 40 hours of training annually with my managers, and my managers were expected to plan and execute 40 hours of training with each employee,” John said.

Dana University offers supervisory courses. But they are not free. Each plant or division had to pay for their employees to attend and that expense goes into the plant’s overhead. The course series was called “Excellence in Manufacturing.”

“When the students return to their respective plants from the University, they have to start applying what they learned immediately,” John noted. “Then they have to complete reports answering questions such as:

‘What changes did you make when you got back?’

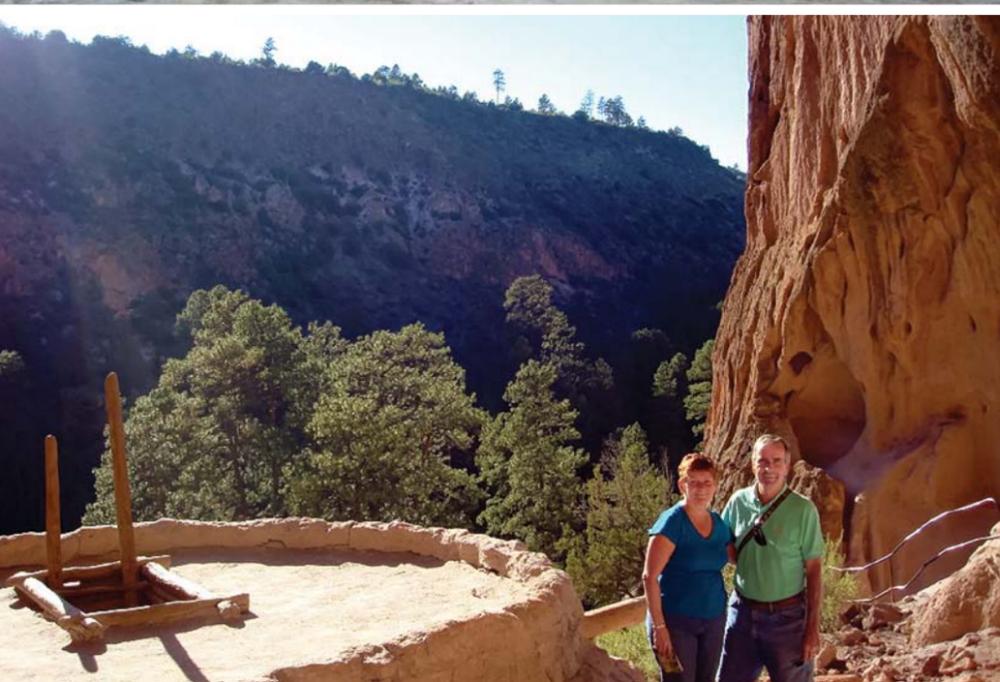
‘Did the changes work?’”

The Spicer Driveshaft Division, which the Bristol, Virginia, plant was part of, won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 2000, given annually by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The plant also won the Virginia Governor’s Award for Productivity and Quality. *Industry Week* magazine named the Dana facility “Plant of the Year.”

“Plant managers have their specialties for which they are recognized in the Dana Corporation,” John said. “It might be financial, automation, or productivity. My specialty was manufacturing.”

During their 2011 road trip, John and Sheila’s six grandchildren posed with Charlie Brown at Canada’s Wonderland in Maple, Ontario. From left to right, Ty, 12; Jack, 6; Sarah, 4; Grace, 8; Abby, 10; and Tate, 7.





John and Sheila's next stop was Auburn Hills, Michigan, where he took over as North American Operations Manager for Dana Corporation's Fluid Systems Division. "That was my last assignment for Dana," John said. "We spent two-and-a-half years in Michigan and I retired in 2002."

John had just turned 55 and was not quite ready for retirement. He took a position with TriMas Corporation, a diversified manufacturer. In July 2006, he and Sheila made the decision to "follow their dream" and John retired.

"We purchased our first motorhome in 2000," John said. "As I could take time off from my job, we began to make some trips."

"It wasn't long before I realized I could make RVing a full-time affair," Sheila said. "John wasn't so sure."

"I like having a town that I can call my home — there is a sense of place when you pull into your own driveway," he said.

"We love this country. The opportunities are so good here," Sheila continued. "We applied for citizenship in 2005 and achieved that goal on February 7, 2006."

The Smarts studied the market in the Fall of 2007 and decided on a 2008 Phaeton 42 QRH.

The dialogue continued. SHEILA: "Give me six months; and if you don't like it, we will buy a house." JOHN: "Since I traveled so much for the company, I want to be able to come home."

Then they took the big step and sold their house. "Once we got rid of the house, it was easier," John allowed. "I spent the morning moving stuff from one side of the garage to the other when I realized that it was just stuff. After lunch, I went back out and got rid of everything I previously wanted to keep."

When they began their odyssey, their

John Smart waits for Sheila to take a picture of the glacier before they join a group to traverse it. Nearby Lake Louise was still frozen solid in May. • John compares his height to the wheel well of the tank that transported them across the glacier in Jasper National Park. The Rocky Mountains are in the background • John and Sheila climbed a 140-ft. vertical ladder to reach this cave. They are standing beside a kiva, one of the ancient ruins found at the Frijoles Canyon, Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico.

daughters had given them four grandchildren. Two more have come along since. Michelle married Tim Brenner and they live in Baden, Ontario. They have two avid hockey players, Ty, 12, and Tate, 7. Dione and her husband, Bob Hildenbrand, live in Belmont, Ontario. They have Abby, 10; Grace, 8; Jack, 6; and Sarah, 4 — all of whom are also hockey players.

"We do a road trip each year with all six grandchildren in the coach," John said with a smile and a nod, as if I might doubt his story. "When Jack was recovering from cancer, we did the trip with four, an 11-day trip that encircled Georgian Bay and included a ferry trip across the expanse where the Bay blends in with Lake Huron."

"Wherever we are, we fly home to Canada for Christmas. Then, every other year our entire family gets together at Disney World for a week in the Spring. These are great experiences for all of us."

"This winter we decided to spend seven months in Florida as working at Disney World is on our 'Bucket List,'" Sheila said. "Staying in one place for this long is unusual for us."

"Our number one issue we had when we left the house was, the kids couldn't come and see us there," Sheila continued. "Now our children are proud that we stepped out of our comfort zone and are living our dream. Having our grandchildren participate with us at every opportunity makes it even better. Our daughters encourage us to keep full timing as long as we

have our health. We use Skype to stay in touch with the kids. I put the iPad on the dash to show the kids where we are traveling. And they really like that— like watching a travelogue on TV."

The Smarts have visited 38 states so far. "We did the west coast of the U.S. in 2011 and included Vancouver, British Columbia, and Alberta," John said. "We really enjoyed Banff National Park. The Canadian Rockies are breathtaking—still snow-capped in mid-May. Lake Louise was still frozen."

"We have made so many friends from coast to coast in both countries. Many are friends for life," John said. "After spending time with us, four couples (that we know of for sure) have gone home, sold their houses, upgraded their motorhomes or bought new ones, and hit the open road full time."

"One thing is certain," Sheila added, "no matter where in Canada and the United States we park and call home for a week or a month, we are always surrounded by friends — some we haven't even met yet."

"We are thinking about trading for a new Tiffin this year," John volunteered. "Sheila wants the residential fridge and I want the bath and a half."

"We want to continue to travel for a few more years while we are still healthy," John said.

"There is just so much to see and do in the United States and Canada. We made a good decision to sell the house and go full time in our Tiffin motorhome." RIS

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## The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

# Our Maiden Voyage from Albuquerque to Maine by Way of the Dakotas and Canada

**After spending four months and over 1,500 miles on the Appalachian Trail this summer,** my husband returned home to declare “it’s time to Rough it Smoothly.” For the past eight years we had spent countless hours in RV dealer lots and RV shows dreaming of the day we could take the big step. My husband would often share his thoughts of living a full-timer’s life with just about anyone who would listen. And so, our big day finally arrived.

**We purchased our 2011 Allegro Open Road on September 9, 2011. Eager to start living our dream, we took the RV home and immediately stocked it up to leave out the next day.**

In the middle of the night we packed, stocked and decorated, not wasting a minute. Our maiden voyage began from our home in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the very next morning as we headed north through Colorado with our sights set on our final destination of Baxter State Park, Maine. You see, my husband left our son, Joshua, back on the Appalachian Trail with a promise that he would return in time to summit Mt. Katahdin during the final miles of their summer hike. Summer was coming to a close and we had miles to go.

**We became fast friends with Walmart parking lots.**

In all my years of shopping at Walmart I confess I never paid much attention to the RVs in the back of the lot. We heard that Walmart is a friendly rest stop for RV travelers so we decided to give it a try. Sure enough, there is almost always a Walmart nearby when it’s time to rest or resupply the RV. What was our first RV lesson on this voyage? Chart a course with Walmart in mind.

Our journey took us north through Colorado, cutting through Wyoming and Nebraska, east through South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan (including the UP), across Ontario, Canada, New York, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire and finally to Maine. We braved the mountains, the interstates, state highways and county roads.

**I believe we really pushed the limits and enjoyed amazing sites and adventures together.**

Early in our journey, we stopped to view Mt. Rushmore and Crazy Horse—both spectacular works of art. I find it incredible

to imagine how human hands crafted these monuments! We also stayed at our first KOA at Mt. Rushmore. Because it was off-season, we had our choice of sites, settling on a pull-through spot. The beautiful mountain views provided a perfect background for our evening as we drifted off to sleep to the sound of crickets and frogs singing to us in the evening.

**This being our first trip out, we tried to travel along secondary roads when possible.**

The countryside along the way was amazing, from the free roaming bison, to the many farm market stands overflowing with pumpkins and vegetables and let me not forget to mention the dairy products in Wisconsin – now wishing I would’ve stocked up on more cheese!

Our next rest stop was in quaint Upper Peninsula Michigan where we camped for a few nights in Mackinac City at another KOA Campground. The fall weather was perfect with plenty of sunshine and a slight chill in the air during the evening. While visiting the area we jumped aboard the ferry taking us to Mackinac Island to enjoy the peace and quiet of “no auto’s allowed.” As we strolled along the walkways we couldn’t resist the smell of caramel apples and fudge, stocking up on treats for our next stretch of road.

Onward, down through Michigan we were able to visit family at The Vernon Hill Dairy Farm in Rosebush. Filling up on fresh milk, we relaxed in the smell of fresh air and admired the trees filled with crisp leaves beginning to change with the season.

**Continuing south we cut across to Canada with a quick stop at Niagara Falls. We had no idea that this section of Canada had so many wineries.**

The best surprise of all was the incredible beauty of Niagara. What a magnificent display of nature the falls were! The water is so powerful, yet so beautiful. It was certainly worth the stop in every way, even if once we made it to the RV parking lots following the signs for miles it seemed, finding out that they were all closed for the season leaving us to improvise as RV owners know happens occasionally when traveling!

Traveling out of Canada and through New York we began to make our final push towards Maine. Having traveled more than 2,500 miles, we were eager to reach the eastern seaboard.

Our next destination would be Trenton, Maine. Once we arrived, we decided to spend the week at a comfy family-owned campground called Timberland Acres RV Park.

During our stay we were able to relax, meet some interesting fellow campers full of wisdom and knowledge to share, and even got to partake in the local Harvest Dinner at the campground. Of course, no visit to this area would be complete without visiting Bar Harbor where we spent three days exploring and eating our way through fishing towns determined to find the best lobster roll in the state, (realizing after four, there is no such thing as a bad lobster roll!).

**Acadia National Park was full of breathtaking views from the top of Cadillac Mountain**

to the shoreline brimming with wildlife (Bald Eagles included) and glacier-formed areas. People from all over the world come to this park to hike, bike, shop, and enjoy the views that mother nature has to share.

As stated in the beginning of our story, one of the primary reasons for this intense road trip was to meet our son.

**Having hiked 2,180 miles from Georgia to Maine on the Appalachian Trail, our son was approaching the last big hurdle of the trail**

—a summit of Mt. Katahdin. On September 30, father and son reunited and with joy-filled hearts they spent the entire day climbing the mountain and retracing all the memories of their summer together. They had nursed blisters, bruises, and pains. They braved hot and cold temperatures, rain and hail. They survived on oatmeal, freeze dried food, and too many blackberries to count.

**Most importantly, they created memories of a lifetime that only few will share.**

I watched them proudly limp back to camp reflecting on what an accomplishment for both of them. Our RV was now reading over 3,000 miles on its maiden voyage.

**Many warned us that our first RV outing should be a short one so that we could become acquainted with the lifestyle. Only halfway through the summer journey, we were now certain that the RV life is the life for us.**

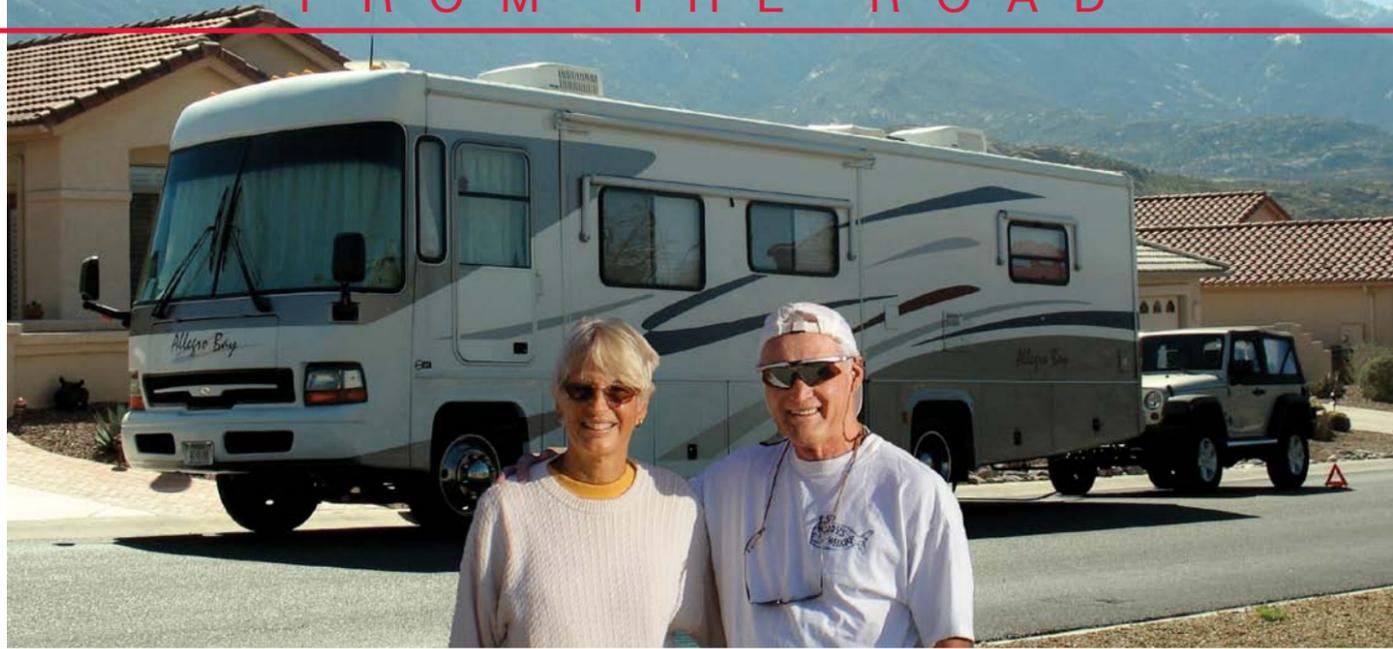
Onward we traveled down through Virginia and back across the heart of the United States to our home in New Mexico. We continued our routine of sticking to the back roads and sleeping

*Continued on page 64*



Joshua and Shad reached the top of Mt. Katahdin on September 30, 2011 in bright sunshine which is a rarity. They limped back into camp for a much easier trip home in Federico Tiffin. • Shad, Kristie, and Danté enjoy a camping stop at Houghton Lake, Michigan after visiting family at Mackinaw City.

FROM THE ROAD



## Buying Our Tiffin – What an Experience!

“Let’s just stop and look” said Sybil in December 2007, as she and Peter passed a Phoenix, Arizona, RV dealership while heading back to Tucson after a visit with friends. Now what you don’t know is that Peter had spent the last 17 years of their life together trying to convince Sybil to see the country in an RV but she was completely horrified at the thought . . . so who was this “stop and look” person all of a sudden?

It was November 2007 when one day, after being in our Arizona home (as retirees from California) for over four years, we looked at each other and said “Is this all there is?” And that’s why we stopped to “look”!

Now I’d like to point out that we knew zero about RVs, had never looked at one seriously or, of course, driven one. Nor had we done any research whatsoever. We told the salespeople we could come up with around \$80K. They looked at us sadly when suddenly someone mentioned “that used coach that just came in on consignment.” Oh boy, oh boy, how they inveigled and enticed us into the anticipation of viewing this rolling wonder. Finally, a tag team of four salespeople, after having us each drive it around the parking lot, turned our intrigue into a sale.

That night we both awakened in a cold sweat, thinking we should have given this purchase and change in life-style more thought. Then we both came to the conclusion that if we had given it any thought at all, we never would have done it and what a shame that would have been!

We had no idea that we were buying one of the country’s finest and most reliably manufactured RVs, a 2003 36-ft. Allegro Bay by Tiffin Motorhomes.

When the dealer took us through an orientation and

handed us the keys, saying “Happy Trails,” we were left with a 110-mile drive home, car and RV separately as we had no tow (“tow” . . . what’s that?). And the big question (OK, one of the big questions) was, how and where will we park it when we get there, that is, if we do get there?

So we took turns driving this giant new possession down I-10, finding ourselves for the first time being road peers of truck drivers . . . wow, what a feeling . . . but wait! It’s Friday afternoon and we had Phoenix rush hour threatening. Peter drove it thru the bumper-to-bumper traffic even though he was certain the RV was twice as wide as the freeway lanes, while Sybil’s job was to direct him to the correct exit. She was just one exit short and Peter had to make a u-turn in a medical building parking lot . . . you know, the ones with covered parking spaces about six inches lower than an RV? We did get turned around without too much angst, got home still speaking to each other, and actually found a permanent site for parking it about five miles from our house.

We enrolled, after the purchase, of course, (why would anybody do that before the purchase?) in a week of RV seminars at “Life on Wheels” and a half-day driving course for each of us.

The rest is history, so to speak. We’re still here, four years later, after 42K miles and 50 states, and the RV is still intact and running smoothly! It’s been “trial by fire” more often than not, but so enjoyable that we have put our house up for sale and are anticipating being full-timers. We will be upgrading to a larger, newer Tiffin product, a Phaeton or an Allegro Bus.

Thank you, Bob Tiffin and company!

Sybil Byrnes & Peter Hickey  
Tucson, Arizona

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# Tiffin Motorhomes Celebrates Anniversary With Super Buddy Rally in Sarasota

March 1 – 4, 2012

by Gail Johnson

*Perfect weather, excellent facilities, enthusiastic participants* — all of these factors and more worked together to make the Allegro Club’s first effort to sponsor a larger than usual rally a huge success!

The Sarasota County Agricultural Fairgrounds was the site where 250 rigs assembled during the first few days of March for what was billed as a “Buddy Rally”, where owners of “other brands” were invited to join Tiffin owners for three days of good food, fun, and fellowship. According to estimates, we had about 10% of our participants in the rally who were driving “other brands,” and they received a great dose of Allegro Club hospitality!

Day one was devoted to parking, setting up, orientation, and greetings. The perfect ending to a busy day was a delicious meal of pulled pork with the trimmings in the Robards Arena on site. After dinner we were entertained by funnyman/songster Ron Berringer.

With this larger rally, our format was a bit different. Two Florida RV Dealerships, Lazy Days and North Trail, combined their efforts to put together a fantastic display of new Tiffin products in the front area of the grounds. There were more than 30 new Tiffin coaches to view, and many activities centered around the display. Thursday afternoon a “Meet-and-Greet” was held, Friday and Saturday mornings, coffee and donuts were on hand for rally participants, and on both Friday and Saturday there were several special activities going on in the display area. We were treated to

games, a Pet Parade, and a Chain Saw art demonstration, given by Tiffin’s own Tom Webber. Two of Tom’s creations were given away as door prizes.

In addition to activities at the display, there were aftermarket vendors on hand with displays and seminars offered on both Friday and Saturday. We learned new skills from “Getting the Smart Out of Smart Phones,” a practical technology seminar held by Lou Sansevero; “Growing on the Go,” an Earthbox demonstration by Bob Whisenant on how to grow your own vegetables in special containers, even if you are traveling; Convection Microwave Cooking with Gail Johnson; Line Dancing with our favorite Canadian dance instructor, Tammy Wyatt; Microwave cooking with Tupperware; an overview of houseplants that might travel well, by master gardener Patricia Porchy; jewelry demonstrations, plus an ice cream social.

The vendors who are usually featured at rallies were present to share their valuable information: Freightliner (Brian Caudell); Triple H Electronics (David Humphries and Marty Vanderford); Cummins (Mark Phillips); and Onan (Harold & Debra Kimbrough and Ross Fischer). Furthermore, some of these vendors, and others, had display areas set up in a designated area during the entire rally.

So, as you might conclude, there was a lot going on every

day, and things did not slow down at night, either! Each of the three nights provided excellent catered meals, and delightful entertainment!

Friday night provided a real treat; after a wonderful meal of Chicken Parmesan, we enjoyed one of the most fantastic concerts ever—Elvis was in the house!! Now we have seen Elvis impersonators before, but this guy was a “tribute artist” and could have passed for the real Elvis!! He was just great! Dwight Icenhower, fresh off of a tour in Asia, appeared for us with his full band and wowed the cheering crowd with Elvis’s early hits, as well as his later Las Vegas repertoire. And, this guy looked a lot better in that white sequined jumpsuit than old Elvis ever did!

Saturday night was a homerun all the way around, with a hearty steak dinner, capped off with strawberry shortcake for dessert, and entertainment by the well-known country group, the Bellamy Brothers. They delighted us with all their hits as some of the more energetic got up and line danced (under Tammy’s leadership, of course!).

So many people worked very diligently to make this rally the success that it was. Besides Allegro Club president Jimmy Johnson and his office personnel Cynthia Skinner and Verbon Jones, kudos should go to Tom and Pat Webber (Tiffin dealer support in central Florida), Robert Gober and David Sparks (Tiffin tech-

nicians from Red Bay, Alabama, who worked tirelessly the entire rally), Jerry Williamson (Tiffin general sales manager), and, of course, Bob Tiffin, founder and CEO of Tiffin Motorhomes.

Sarasota County Agricultural Fairgrounds manager Rory Martin and his staff, including electrician Jimmy Johnson (no relation), are to be commended for the outstanding job that they did in helping to put this event together. Rory went overboard in making certain that everything ran smoothly.

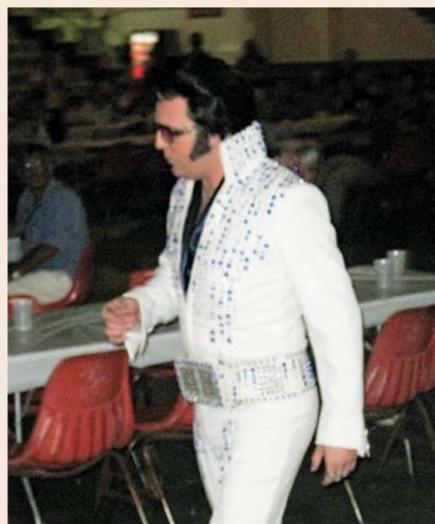
Another vital link in this huge effort was a group of about 50 volunteers who came in early and went through orientation, instruction, and practice in bringing this rally together. Bruce Stevenson’s parking plan worked beautifully, and other team leaders (Bob & Joanne Brown, Dave & LaVon Steinborn, Sharon Buckingham and Tammy Wyatt) had their groups functioning like clockwork! Hats off to these folks...we couldn’t have done it without you!

This rally opened our eyes to new possibilities with the Allegro Club and Tiffin Motorhomes. We learned some important lessons about what works well, and what doesn’t. We hope to be able to do more rallies on this scale. Our next rally is the end of March 2012 in Arizona; it is sold out and will be history by the time you read this. **RIS**

Plans are being made for a **Virginia rally on the Chesapeake Bay**. Mark your calendars for Spring 2013, end of April or first of May. Watch for information on the Tiffin website and in TMH publications.

The Allegro Club has two new sponsors to add to your membership benefits list: HealthCompare and Michelin Advantage. Check [www.tiffinmotorhomes.com/owners](http://www.tiffinmotorhomes.com/owners) for more information.

The quick and hardy attempt to prove themselves in a session of Minute-To-Win-It. • Gail Johnson thought our Elvis impersonator was better than Elvis himself. • Tom Webber, from Tiffin dealer support in Tampa, demonstrated his new hobby— chainsaw art. • Gail and Jimmy Johnson enjoy a few minutes visiting with the Bellamy Brothers, Homer and David.





Left: Old Number 110 steam locomotive crosses a highway along its 10-mile route between Hill City and Keystone, South Dakota. Usually pulling six coaches that carry an average of 2,500 passengers every day during the season, the locomotive is 47 feet long, builds steam pressure to 200 PSI, and delivers 37,500 pounds of tractive effort (pulling power). Adults pay \$24 for a 20 mile, two hour and 15 minute ride.



If you're a devotee or maybe just fascinated by the bygone steam train era, digging into BHCR's own history or studying its steamer equipment may be as rewarding as the trip itself. It harks back to an era that began when the first steam-powered locomotives came to the U.S. from England in 1827. Those first engines never saw service but industry quickly realized the potential. By the mid-1830's, less than 10 years later, several American manufacturers were building steam railroad engines. Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia became the largest.

Thousands of miles of track were laid. Steam trains helped build eastern industry and populate the plains and western states. Steam ruled the rails for 125 years or so until diesels began replacing them in the 1950s. The last main line steamer was retired in 1960 after an estimated 130,000 steam locomotives had been manufactured. All but some 1,900 of these have been scrapped.

# 1880 TRAIN { It runs only 10 miles, but it makes Black Hills history come alive. }

A stop at the Mount Rushmore National Memorial is a given if you're touring the Black Hills of South Dakota this summer. Almost in the shadow of that famously-sculptured Shrine of Democracy is another attraction that transports you, literally, into a bygone era.

Make a note to board the "1880 Train" at either Keystone, only three miles from Rushmore, or at Hill City ten miles further west. For \$24 (half that for kids), you'll get a two hour and 15 minute round trip ride through 10 miles of eye-popping scenery that made mining history – and you'll be riding a historic relic: one of few steam-powered trains operating in the U.S. today.

Two or three years ago, Bob Tiffin told me he had paid a little extra at a tourist attraction to ride in the cab of a steam-powered locomotive. When he reached to climb in, the engineer warned him that it was a dirty job and he had best come back with work shoes, old shirt, and bib overalls. Disappointed, he rode with Judy in the open-air passenger car and promised himself that someday he would go back dressed like an engineer. After relating the story, Bob suggested that we do a few features on steam locomotives still in operation today. Here is our first offering. – Editor.

Most days between May 11 and October 13 this year, you'll be in one of six coaches (some open-air) pulled by Black Hills Central Railroad (BHCR) locomotive Number 110, a powerful old steamer with a fascinating if checkered history identified by its two small leading "guide" wheels, two sets of six "driver" wheels and two smaller trailing wheels (making it a 2-6-6-2T under railroading's accepted Whyte classification system.)

Old 110 will pull you, huffing and puffing with a 200 PSI head of steam pressure, over rails originally laid in the 1890's to haul gold, tungsten, tin and other ores from area mines and lumber from sawmills. Along the route, the locomotive chugs up four to six per cent grades topping Tin Mill Hill at 5160 feet elevation compared to 4352 feet at Keystone and 4974 feet at the Hill City end of the line. Riders view abandoned mines and mills, wooded hillsides, steep cliffs, nearby mountains and, often, deer and other wildlife.

Text by Norman Spray  
Photography courtesy of Black Hills Central Railroad

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Many of those remaining are displayed in parks, museums, and railroad facilities.

Most of the few still operating pull excursion trains, like BHCR's 1880 Train, or are fired up only for special occasions.

In the Black Hills, declining mine and mill activity dropped so low by the 1980s that the Hill City to Keystone run became only a three times per week side trip for Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. original builder of the line. Today, all trackage that once linked Black Hills mines and mills to the "outside world" has been abandoned, leaving BHCR "isolated."

The 1880 Train story began in 1956 when Bill Heckman, a Chicago railroad public relations man, teamed with Robert Freer, a diesel locomotive sales engineer, to organize investors who'd share a belief that "there should be in operation at least one working steam railroad."

A man who knew how to attract publicity and promote, Heckman put these talents to work. He coined the name "1880 Train," a complete misnomer but, said Heckman, it described a nostalgic atmosphere easy to promote. With Freer and others, he looked for ways to equip a railroad. The group first leased narrow gauge equipment, including a coal burning 2-6-0 steamer. Going narrow gauge meant they had to lay a third rail between the existing standard gauge rails. The 2-6-0 engine, it turned out, could not be used since coal burners were not allowed to operate in the Black Hills National Forest for fear coal cinders might set fires.

Heckman next arranged to buy a 2-8-0 Baldwin from the White Pass and Yukon Railroad in Skagway, Alaska. He named it "Klondike Casey" and, true to his calling, promoted its journey to Hill City into a big media event that built public anticipation. Finally, in August, 1957, "Klondike Casey" pulled the first tourists 4.36 miles from Hill City to a turnaround "wye" half-way between Hill City and Keystone. BHCR was in business. In the next year, the train attracted 30,000 riders who paid \$1.65 each. Fifty three years later 1880 Train boarded 300,000 passengers in 2011, a down year for tourism. BHCR expects some 2500 daily through the 2012 season.

There have been harder, leaner times, though. After Burlington (and its maintenance support) moved on in 1986, BHCR's management let equipment run down to the point a cloudy future loomed. This all changed after Hill City Residents Robert and Jo Anna Warder purchased the railroad in 1990 and insti-

tuted re-vitalizing restoration and serious upgrading. Now the line has new maintenance facilities, qualified railroad maintenance and operational professionals, better equipment, modernized station facilities – and an upbeat attitude.

Over the years, BHCR has used an array of steam locomotives, none more illustrious than the 2-6-6-2T Number 110 Baldwin articulated Mallet that will work most days this summer. Both Mallet (named after a Swiss Engineer) and Duplex locomotives are articulated designs, meaning that they have two sets of drive wheels on a frame that bends laterally, making it easier to negotiate sharp curves. The "T" after the wheel configuration numbers means that the locomotive has a built-in water tank instead of pulling a tender.

BHCR's 110 is 47 feet long, weighs 222,000 pounds with axle load of 30,500 pounds. It has 37,500 pounds of tractive effort, much more powerful than the 23,000 pounds of tractive effort BHCR's other locomotives deliver. The drive wheels are 38 inches in diameter. The cylinder measures 17 inches by 24 inches. Number 110 can carry 2,700 gallons of water and 1,200 gallons of the recycled oil that fires the boiler.

Baldwin built Number 110 in 1928 for Weyerhaeuser Timber Company's use in Washington state. Rayonier Lumber Company bought it next, retiring it in 1968. It was later displayed at the Wasatch Mountain Railway in Heber City, Utah, then sold to the Nevada State Railway Museum. There it remained until BHCR bought it in 1999. Four semi-trailers trucked it to Hill City. Restoration was completed there in 2001. It is the only 2-6-6-2 Mallet in service in the world today.

On occasion when Number 110 is out for maintenance, the 1880 Train is led by Number 7, a 2-6-2 tender also built by Baldwin, originally for the Ozan-Graysonia Lumber Company in 1919. Later it was operated by the Caddo and Choctaw Railroad, then sold to the Prescott and Northwestern in Arkansas in 1938. It came to Black Hills in 1962. Number 7 is 52 feet long, weighs 210,000 pounds and has tractive effort of 23,100 pounds. Water capacity is 4,000 gallons. Driver wheels are 40 inches in diameter.

Whichever locomotive pulls the 1880 Train you board, you'll be living a page of history. On the main lines, the steamer's time has come and gone. But here, in the Black Hills, nostalgia hangs heavy as smoke billows from the stack and sound waves blasting from the steam train's whistle echo across canyons and bounce off cliff walls. **RIS**



## Bad Habits Corrected

by Dr. John Pilarczyk

There are certain behaviors that canine owners should not accept. These behaviors include: barking, biting, digging, resource guarding, and leash pulling.

Let's start with barking. Dogs bark to alert or protect their owner, get attention, or to entertain themselves. When your dog is left alone, their barking could be a sign of separation anxiety. All dogs will bark but the amount and duration will vary and sometimes proves to be a problem. Prevent this type of barking by not leaving your dog alone for extended periods of time and by giving them plenty of exercise.

If you have a recreational barker, try feeding him by stuffing his kibble in the hollow toys available in pet stores. This will keep him busy and reward him for being quiet and lying down.

The alarm barker should be taught to bark and stop on cue. Have an assistant ring the door bell. Praise your dog when he barks, then say "quiet" and reward him for stopping. By setting up different situations, you can teach your dog when and when not to bark.

Biting is another bad habit to be addressed. Most dogs bite because of fear, aggression, pain, guarding their territory, or as a result of too much pestering. Do not push your dog beyond his comfort zone. Socializing him is very important. The more isolated a dog is, the more apt they will be to continue this unacceptable behavior. Most dogs snap rather than bite. You must desensitize your dog and help him learn to enjoy the things that bring on biting or snapping.

Dogs are often sensitive about their collars, ears, paws and being hugged or stared at. Hand feeding your dog while handling him in these areas will help to desensitize him.

Digging is a problem at home but not

so much while on the road in your RV. Most dogs dig from boredom. While at home, filled frozen chew toys can alleviate this boredom. Do not leave your dog out for long periods of time. If you must leave him in the yard for an extended time, then hide toys and treats in certain areas to reinforce that it is okay to dig in those sections only and not okay to tear up the whole yard.

If your dog growls when he has a toy or food and you or someone else approaches him, this is resource guarding. Dogs in the wild protected their den and pups and the food they hunted. If your dog has plenty of food, toys, and attention, then they are much less likely to guard them. Preven-

tion occurs when you teach your dog that hands give things rather than take things away. For a dog that guards his food, sit next to his bowl and add one piece at a time until he eats it. Then as he gets more comfortable when you are around his food, add cheese or chicken as a treat so he learns that you are there to give him tasty things and not take them away.

Finally, leash pulling is a habit that can cause problems for you. Don't let your dog drag you anywhere, ever. Most dogs get out of the house and want to go at their speed, not yours. Dogs should be trained to walk beside you. Never give them enough leash to go beyond your side. When your dog starts pulling the leash taut, calmly turn around and start walking in the opposite direction. When he pulls again, turn around again. Reward and praise him when he walks along without pulling.

Continued on page 64

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



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# Morris Morrison

IT'S NOT JUST A JOB – IT'S A RELATIONSHIP

Morris Morrison has held the same job for 42 years – in fact, his only job since he graduated from the University of West Alabama in May 1970.

After earning a degree in business administration with a minor in history, Morrison accepted a position as sales representative for Besco, a company that supplied office products and printing to businesses in Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee. “I’m a people person, and I really enjoy seeing my customers,” he said recently on one of his regular Thursday visits to call on Phyllis Williams and Candace Petree in the administrative offices at Tiffin Motorhomes.

Phyllis had told me about Morris several months ago. She has a nose for a good story. “You’ve got to meet him. We look forward to seeing him every week. Morris comes in like a breath of fresh air, always cheerful, upbeat, and smiling,” Phyllis said. “Candace is responsible for our requests for office supplies. She does a great job of making sure orders are processed correctly

and promptly. Morris prepares and faxes the orders to his company in Tupelo. And then we get next day delivery.”

In the intervening years Besco was bought by MyOfficeProducts. Because of the many accounts he had established in north-east Mississippi and Red Bay, Morris retained his territory. He and the folks at Tiffin Motorhomes were pleased. “I have 100 accounts in 11 cities and Tiffin is by far my largest account,” he explained. “Many of my customers have become like extended family. It’s not just a job, it’s a relationship. I feel at home when I visit my accounts. Bob Tiffin and I were just boys when he started Tiffin Motorhomes. He was 30 and I was 28. I called on him the first week he was in business. He and Sylvia Massey were looking for all the help they could get in setting up their new office,” he laughed.

While Tiffin Motorhomes has done business with a few other companies for the entire 40 years, Morrison is the only representative who has called on TMH uninterrupted for the entire 40

years. “We weren’t really trying to set a record,” Morris said. “It just worked out that way and I am so glad it did.”

The internet and technology has changed the office supply business. Today many businesses order through the office supply company’s website. MyOfficeProducts offers that channel, too, but Morris believes that personal service is the best way to take care of his customers. He certainly won’t get an argument out of Bob Tiffin on that point. Prior to his company providing next day delivery following his sales call, Morris drove a big station wagon and actually delivered his own orders the next week.

“By calling on my customers, I know what’s going on inside the business,” Morris said. “When TMH remodeled and expanded their administrative offices a few years ago, I took on the role of consultant in showing the many options and choices they had.”

While the job of sales representative has not changed that much over the years, the technology for taking care of order fulfillment has. “The biggest single change in sales tech is my iPad,” Morris noted. “When I returned to my office in Tupelo late in the day, I would have to spend another hour or so completing orders that would be delivered to my customers the next morning. Now, with the iPad, I skip the late office visit and get home in time for supper at the regular time. Then later in the evening I can spend a half hour completing my orders and forwarding them to the office system via the iPad.”

Morris gladly accepts the fact that his daily personal sales calls make for a longer work day. “I just like doing it this way,” he said with a smile and a slight shrug. He has always worked on straight commission and he avers that it is a great motivator. “The biggest month I have ever had in my career is the month I delivered all of the new office equipment for the TMH expansion,” he said.

Morris likes the personal opportunity to introduce new products such as a fully featured electronic adding machine or a fax machine. “We are a full service printer for businesses, too. And that kind of order usually takes some planning time with a customer. Doing it over the phone is just not the best way,” he pointed out.

Since Tiffin Motorhomes is his largest account, Morris allows at least two hours to service the six people he sees in the different plants and offices. In addition to TMH, he has 14 other accounts in Red Bay. “You have to have competitive prices to sell to Tiffin,” he stated candidly. “And if there is a problem, we fix it.”

“God has blessed me and my family,” Morris said. “I am still in good health, I enjoy working, and I plan to work as long as I can.”

Over the years, many in the TMH offices and elsewhere have benefitted by getting to know Morris Morrison. A Vietnam veteran, he is a very patriotic man who enjoys sharing his experi-

ences and his love of history, always peppered with wonderful stories and facts. “I don’t read novels. Biography and history are really my hobby,” he said.

Morris is married to Marilyn, who is a counselor in an elementary school in Tupelo. Interestingly, he met her in Red Bay where she was working for the Southern Rural Healthcare Consortium. Married for 33 years, the Morrises have two children. Jenny is a pediatrician practicing in San Antonio. She is married to a doctor who is serving in the military. Their son, Lee, is a construction tradesman who lives in Tupelo. 



Candace Petree, receptionist and office supplies coordinator, meets each Thursday with Morris to place orders with his company, MyOfficeProducts in Tupelo Mississippi.



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## Dorothy Gober Announces Retirement

Tiffin dealers throughout the country will be disappointed to learn that Dorothy Gober will be retiring on May 4, completing a 25-year career at Tiffin Motorhomes. Her knowledge of motorhome floorplans, features, and options is nearly encyclopedic. Dorothy's efficiency at processing dealer orders and tracking the shipping dates has helped sales departments keep their buyers informed and happy.

"Bob Tiffin called to ask if I would like to work part time typing price sheets in September 1987," Dorothy remembered. "Two months later I was working full time." Working first as the company's receptionist, Dorothy learned accounts payable while Phyllis Williams was on maternity leave. She added payroll processing when she filled in for Barbara McDowell.

In 1995 Dorothy transferred to the Tiffin sales department, bringing the clerical skills to keep the paperwork moving smoothly for the growing sales force. Danny Inman and Jack Elliott, in-house manufacturer's sales reps, know they can depend on her for the information required to service their regional territories.

"Dorothy will be deeply missed after she retires," general sales manager Jerry Williamson said this week. "She has spent many years here at TMH building solid relationships with co-workers, dealers, and customers. I know that she will be happy in her new lifestyle that will allow her plenty of time to enjoy her family, especially her grandchildren. Dorothy deserves a great retirement. She has earned it."

Dorothy's husband, Donald, retired last year from Occidental Chemical Corporation and is enjoying the early spring weather to play golf and get their garden started. "Because we both stayed so busy with our careers, children, and grandchildren, we have never had much time for gardening," Dorothy said. "This spring is a pilot effort and maybe we will be expanding to a bigger garden next year."

In celebration of their retirement, Donald and Dorothy are tak-



Standing, Jerry Williamson and Danny Inman. Seated, Jack Elliott, Stephanie McCarley, and Dorothy Gober.

ing the entire family to Disney World in April. This fall they look forward to attending most of the Crimson Tide's football games. They are also looking forward to trips to the mountains of eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, and especially to Gatlinburg.

Of course, their primary focus in retirement will be their grandchildren. Makenzie, 7, is already into T-ball, and Miles, 6, is playing golf. Bailey Ann, 1, is certain to join the family's sports tradition in a couple of years.

## Grandmaw's House

If you are an RV owner coming to Red Bay for extensive repairs or to watch your new coach being built, you should contact Jerry and Esta McKinney. They have renovated an attractive three bedroom, two bath home just two miles from the Tiffin Motorhomes assembly plant and made it available at very reasonable rates.

In a quiet neighborhood, the home offers a full kitchen, washer and dryer, a sunroom that opens onto a deck, a dining room, and a living room with satellite television. The house has central heating and air, a carport, and a front porch.

To make reservations, call Esta McKinney at 256-668-2190.

## Aqua-Hot Debuts Website to Better Educate Consumers

To help the expert in hydronic heating systems educate consumers in more markets, Aqua-Hot Heating Systems redesigned its website. The new site is the path to learning about hydronic systems that exist now for RVs and UTVs, street rods, farm tractors and construction equipment. It's also a great place to check frequently for new product introductions, including boat, long-haul trucks, and work trailer applications.

Located at [www.aquahot.com](http://www.aquahot.com), the website is an education source for consumers to learn how hydronic heating systems function. It also explains the benefits of Aqua-Hot's Comfort

Zones, such as quiet, comfortable and moist interior heat; continuous, on-demand hot water; and low emissions. Resale studies show that an Aqua-Hot heating system adds value to a coach.

Easy to maintain, there are 160 factory-trained service centers across North America. Using the site's dealer locator, users can find their closest service facility. It also helps connect coach owners looking for Aqua-Hot's Comfort Zones with OEM partners.

Contact Aqua-Hot Heating Systems, 15549 E Hwy 52, Fort Lupton, CO 80621. Toll free: 800-685-4298 or 303-659-8221; Fax: 303-857-9000.

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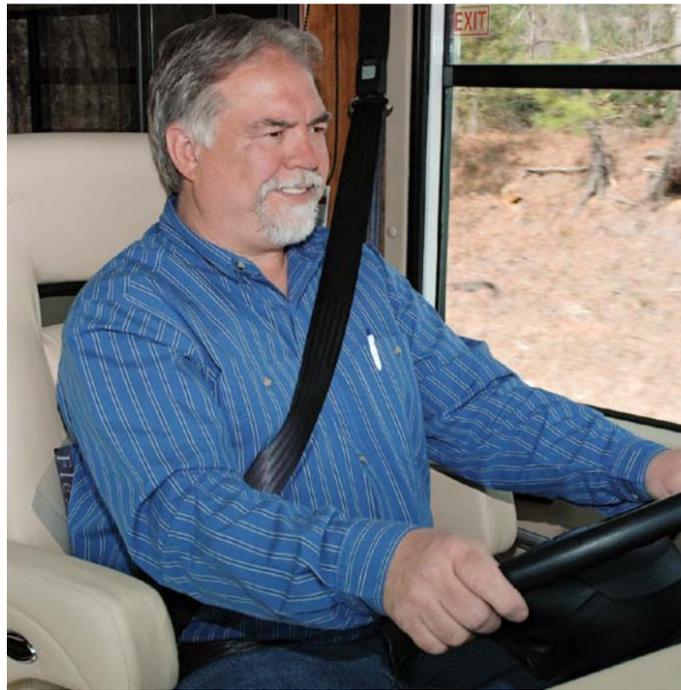


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### Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, 38-year veteran with Tiffin Motorhomes, invites your questions.

Please use the attached 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 1738  
Monroe, GA 30656-1738

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.

Dear Danny . . .

#### Maintenance of Air Braking System

I own a 2008 Phaeton 40QSH on a Freightliner chassis. I have questions about the air brakes.

The Freightliner Chassis Manual states in the maintenance procedures that the air reservoir must be manually drained daily. It reads as follows:

1. Drain manually drained brake system air reservoirs. Water

and oil normally enter the air reservoir in the form of vapor because of the heat generated during compression. After the water and oil condense, drain the resulting emulsion as follows:

- 1.1. Open the wet tank valve. The drain cock or lanyard is located on the forward end of the supply air reservoir, which is connected directly to the air compressor. Block the valve open...

I have read other manuals on air brakes including the information at rvtechlibrary.com and they all advise this procedure. I have asked a Freightliner tech about this and was told that this only applied to vehicles without an air dryer. I have also read that even though I have an air dryer the wet tank can still hold some water and should be checked periodically. Draining the tank would indicate failure of the air dryer should it release excessive moisture.

What are your thoughts on this? How do I safely bleed the wet tank on my Phaeton if necessary? I would be concerned about bleeding the tanks if I had to go under the coach to do this.

To whom do I turn for replacement of the desiccant air dryer? Is this a Cummins or Freightliner component? Your advice is appreciated.

Doug Weber  
New Orleans, Louisiana

P.S.: I recently made my first visit to Red Bay with my coach, our second Phaeton. I came there for a few repairs and modifications. I want to express my sincere appreciation to all the friendly Tiffin employees that I came in contact with. I was very impressed with the repair facility and the personnel. My tour of the plant really served to reinforce our wise decision to buy a Tiffin.

Dear Doug,  
All Tiffin products with the air brakes and air ride come with an air dryer equipped with an automatic moisture ejector in the air tanks. That will eliminate the need for you to drain your system daily. Every six months you should release any residual moisture that has built up in the tanks. On your Freightliner chassis, you will pull a looped cable that is located on the chassis rails above both of the front tires in the wheel wells. If an owner is driving Tiffin's PowerGlide chassis, two simple on-off drain valves found in one of the rear compartments on the passenger side are used to drain off any moisture.

#### 12v Disconnect & Turn Signal Problems

I have a 2003 Allegro that was purchased new and I need some assistance on two matters.

1. The battery on-off switch at the door works some of the time, but not every time. I have taken the cover off but I don't see a switch to replace. What do I need to do to fix this?
2. When I am traveling and turn on the lane changer, the cruise control disengages most of the time. I have had two places work on it, including a Workhorse service center and neither

one could fix it, or if they did, it didn't stay fixed. This has gone on for about five years. Any advice or suggestions?

Steve Wilhite  
West Chester, Ohio

Dear Steve,  
The solution to your problem could be one of three things: a simple loose connection; the switch at the entrance door not working properly; or the most likely suspect will be the solenoid which allows the power from the battery to be transferred into the motorhome. This solenoid should be located out front underneath the hood on a plate above the radiator. It will be black with two fuse holders at the top of the solenoid. This is a temporary on-off power solenoid which can be purchased from our parts department or from most RV dealers.

The cruise control problem is most likely going to be in the turn signal indicator's wiring inside the steering column. You possibly are getting a temporary back-feed going into the brake wiring which activates the cruise control's "brain" and makes it "think" you have hit the motorhome's brake. This is something we have had happen with other Workhorse units. It is very difficult to trace.

#### Repairing a Sewer Compartment Door

We have a 1997 Allegro Bus. Upon arriving at our Texas destination this winter, I discovered that the aluminum face, on the sewer compartment door, has come apart from the frame at the top. It is protruding out from the frame almost an inch at one end.

What would be the method to repair it; or is there a special glue to use to re-attach it? Any suggestions that you have will be appreciated.

Olonzo W. Wood, Jr.  
Alamo, Texas

Dear Olonzo,  
A strong epoxy glue (that has to be mixed), or a metal to metal adhesive, will work on your project. Be sure that all surfaces are

clean and dry. Use clamps and allow the drying process to set up over night.

#### Retrofitting Color Monitor into 2011 RED

Would it be technically feasible to retrofit the new color LCD rear monitor and cameras that are now available in the 2012 Allegro Red into our 2011 Red? If so, what would be the cost?

Glen & Lois Savage  
Henderson, Nevada

Dear Glen & Lois,  
It is possible to retrofit the new color monitor and cameras on the Allegro and the Allegro Red. Due to the size difference of the monitors, you will have to change the face plate that holds the monitor into the dash. The monitor and cameras will have to be changed out, but the present wiring in the 2011 will work fine.

#### Questions about Our New Breeze

We own a 2011 Allegro Breeze BR 32. We are planning on taking a trip to Florida and have some questions.

(1) There are two red lights on the left-hand side of the dash in our Breeze - one is a combination light/button. What are they for? There is no information in the manual on these lights.

(2) Does the International engine in our unit require DEF and if so, what maintenance is required? Again, there is no information in the manual on DEF.

(3) In the winter, how do I protect the basement waterline and tanks in the Breeze when traveling? Is there some way cabin heat can enter the basement?

Steve & Joan Rogers  
Foristell, Missouri

Dear Steve & Joan,  
The two red lights to the left of the steering column are for the air leveling system on the chassis. The light farthest to the left is an indicator light showing the unit is not in "travel mode." If this red light comes on while you are traveling, reach over and hit your "travel mode" button on the leveling pad and it will put it back



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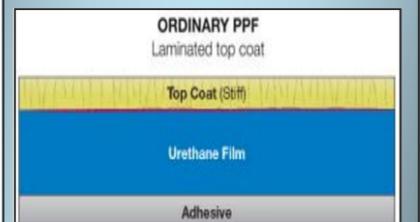


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in "travel mode." If it does not go back into "travel mode," the light to the right is a default reset button that will restore the memory on the leveling system's computer if the unit did not revert automatically into travel mode.

This engine does not require DEF.

There is heat from the furnace that goes into the basement area. Under extreme cold conditions, use of heat strips around water lines is recommended.

**Cruise Control Works After 30 Minutes**

I have a 2005 Allegro Bay 34XB with a Workhorse W22 chassis and an Allison 1000 transmission. The odometer reads 55,224. At the first start-up in the morning, the cruise control will not work until we have traveled 10 to 30 minutes. After that point, it works correctly for the remainder of a 400-mile day. Any suggestions?

Jim Wimberly  
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Dear Jim,  
Most likely the problem is going to be in the Throttle Control Module (TCM). This is the brains for the cruise control. If this is the problem, it will have to be replaced. But first, check the brake light switch which is located on the brake arm below the steering column. If this is sticking, it will not allow the cruise control to engage. Be sure that the switch and brake arm have about a quarter-inch gap.

**Using Brake Fluid to Lubricate Rubber Ring in Commode**

I have a 2002 Allegro Bay 36-ft., a wonderful unit which had only small problems until this past September. While getting ready for our winter trip, all the drain lines and valves from the waste tank just dissolved in place. Now water is in the lines and tank. I put four ounces of brake fluid in the commode to treat the rubber ring since it had been leaking. This stopped the leak in the commode, but my other trouble started. Could the brake fluid have affected the drain pipes and

drain valves? All has been repaired now.  
Jerry McNeese  
Jal, New Mexico

Dear Jerry,  
Excessive contact with brake fluid will deteriorate the valves and seals.

**Downshifting on the Allegro Breeze**

I wrote earlier regarding the steering problem on my Allegro Breeze BR28. I see in the last issue of *RIS* a reference to being able to downshift lower than 4th gear. Is there now an easy fix for this? Where would I have to go for this upgrade? Here in the West with so much mountain driving, being able to shift no lower than 4th gear is totally unacceptable. On a recent trip with only moderate downhill terrain, the brakes overheated. What recommendations do you have about how to use the brakes on long, steep downhills?

Gerry Hoffer  
Lantzville, British Columbia

Dear Gerry,  
Contact the Tiffin chassis information center at 256-356-8661, x2173, and they will assist in finding a service center to install a new program which permits full downshifting.

**Charging the Starting Batteries on Shore Power**

I have a 2007 Allegro Bay 37 QDB front engine diesel. The starting batteries are on the rail. The batteries charge during travel. However, they do not charge while using external power. Please explain the circuitry for charging the starting batteries while plugged into AC power.

Wayne L. Vincent, Sr.  
Sebring, Florida

Dear Wayne,  
The engine batteries on the front engine diesels only charge when the engine is running. A system such as the Battery Tender like the one we use on our rear engine diesels will be your best solution. To install it, you will need a 110v power source, and access to a cable leading di-

rectly to the engine batteries which can be found on the passenger front storage compartment next to your inverter. The power side of the Battery Tender needs to be connected to the engine side of the charge solenoid, which is also located in this compartment. I recommend that you employ an electrical technician who is master certified to do this job.

**Changing the Oil on the Maxxforce Engine**

I have a 2011 Allegro Breeze 28BR purchased in February 2011. We have over 14,000 miles on it and love it. My question has to do with the engine oil change frequency. According to the Tiffin manual, it needs to be changed every six months or 10,000 miles, whichever comes first. On the Maxxforce 7 website, it shows 10,000 miles or 350 hours, but no 6-month requirement. As you know, many of us in a particular 6-month interval may put only 3,000 miles on our RVs. It seems rather wasteful to change the oil after only a few thousand miles.

Paul Brunelle  
Bluffton, South Carolina

Dear Paul,  
Once a year or 10,000 miles is sufficient, unless you are in extremely dusty conditions or driving a lot on dirt roads.

**Blue Shower Wall and Floor**

Our 2011 Allegro Red's shower faucet is turning our shower wall and floor blue. Why?

How many weeks in Red Bay will it take to get this fixed? Other faucets are not blue — yet. It is a 38 QBA.

Carolyn Beeger  
San Benito, Texas

Dear Carolyn,  
I have never encountered this problem before. It is going to take some sleuth work to figure out what is causing it.

**No Low Beams on Our Allegro Breeze**

We have a 2011 Allegro Breeze 28BR. We

have never been able to get the low beam headlights to work. Lazydays removed and replaced the module in the steering column, but the low beams still do not work. Our warranty expires on March 20. What should be our next course of action? We put 10,000 miles on the Breeze last summer and fall. The only problem was a broken hose clamp while we were in Vermont. We got 12.6 mpg for the entire trip and we were pulling a Mazda Tribute. Thanks for a great product! P.S.: We love Lazydays!

Rick Wagar  
Englewood, Florida

Dear Rick,  
The first thing to do is to make sure that the low beam bulbs are not shot. The headlights go through the multiplex wiring system on the Breeze. In the outside

front compartment under the driver's seat, you will find two VMM control boxes which is part of your multiplex system. With the headlights on high beam, the red light on input #2 on the VMM2 control box should be lit. Once you turn the low beams on, the output side #3 should be lit. If both are lit, the problem will be at some point between the control box and the headlight, likely caused by a loose connection. If the lights do not come on, the system may need rebooting. Here's how you reboot: with the ignition switch in the on position, turn the engine battery disconnect to the off position.

Once you turn it off, leave it off for 30 seconds. Turn it back on, then go inside and turn the ignition off. Allow two minutes and then turn the switch back on.

The control box should reset, putting the low beams back on.

**Checking Electrical Outlet in Allegro 35TSA**

I have a 2006 Allegro 35TSA. The bedroom closet electrical outlet does not work. I realize that the passenger-side bedroom slide must be extended in order for it to work. Therefore, it is probably related to a switch of some sort that activates when the slide is out. I have checked the 12-volt fuses beneath the refrigerator door and they are all OK. Thanks for your help.

Tom Hurd  
Blackwood, New Jersey

Dear Tom,  
There is no switch that will disconnect 110v power to the slide-out when it is in

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or out. If this is the only box that has lost power, there is probably a loose connection. The 110v connection for the slide-out will be located in the bottom of the bath vanity. If you have additional outlets that have lost power, check your ground fault receptacle to be sure that it has not tripped.

**Tungsten Halogen Lamps Burn Out Frequently**

We have difficulty with the little two-prong lights (tungsten halogen lamps) going out frequently. We bought our 2011 Allegro Bus new in May 2011 and have replaced at least 30 so far. Any idea why they are burning out so fast?

Truman Dobbins  
Livingston, Texas

Dear Truman,  
These bulbs are very sensitive to the moisture and oil on your fingers. You should wear cotton gloves (purchase from a photo supply store) or something similar to hold the bulbs while you are installing them. If you do touch the bulb, use a Q-tip and alcohol to clean it before or after installation.

**Storage Compartments Getting Wet**

We own a 2010 Allegro Red 36QSA with 4,500 miles on it. When traveling on rainy wet roads, the interiors of the storage compartments before and after the rear wheels get soaked and I have to use the Shop-Vac to remove the water and then leave the doors open to dry out the compartments. This happens on both sides in the last two compartments after the rear wheels and the first compartment before the rear wheels. Sometimes there is water standing in the bay where the water and sewer hook-ups are located. I am thinking of applying another foam weather stripping where the present stripping is. What suggestions do you have to keep these compartments dry? Thanks for your help.

Don Majerle  
Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Dear Don,  
Double check the inside of the wheel wells

where the compartment boxes fit against the sidewall. If these are not sealed properly, even up on the very top, water from the wheels can be forced into the storage box from the wheel well side. A good weather caulking should be used on these areas.

**Gas Fueling Nozzles in California**

We live in California where the gas fueling nozzles are different. We have difficulty fueling our 2011 Allegro Open Road. The way the gas orifice is positioned we have a devil of a time putting gas in. Is there an adaptor for this problem?

Norma Whitney  
Indio, California

Dear Norma,  
We are aware of several owners in California who have had a problem with this. The filler neck can be loosened, shimmed at a different angle, and resealed to allow the fueling nozzle to align at a different angle.

**Three Problems on the 34 QFA**

We have a 2011 Allegro Red 34 QFA. (1) When I bring up the rear jack on the passenger side, it hits the frame and tilts sideways. Is this a future problem? (2) Why do they suggest in the manual the use of soap instead of a wash-wax product that I buy at the RV store? (3) How do you keep the slide box on the driver's side from scraping the tile floor and taking the coating off? BTW, we love our Red!

James & Barbara Brown

Dear James & Barbara,  
(1)The leveling jacks by design have a little side travel in them. If it is only rubbing and not putting excessive pressure on the frame, take it to a dealer to check it out. It is possible that it has been bent slightly. (2) To get the story about washing your motorhome, go to [www.tiffin-motorhomes.com](http://www.tiffin-motorhomes.com) and click on OWNERS and then on MAGAZINE. Scroll to the bottom and you will see the magazine covers for the back issues. Click on 7:2. Turn to page 16 and read "Washing the Exterior." Mary Moppins recommends

baby shampoo and food grade distilled white vinegar. She explains why. (3) This can be solved by adjusting the slide box up/down where it will not put pressure on the tile, or possibly adjusting the rollers to keep them square in their housing. This should be done by a Tiffin dealer or the Tiffin Service Center in Red Bay.

**Only One Fuel Filter Needed for Onan Generator**

I had a leaking fuel filter on the Onan generator (the filter by the carburetor). I took it off and went to the Cummins-Onan dealer in Amarillo to get a replacement. They said the filter is no longer being used or replaced, and gave me a metal gas line to bypass where the filter had been. The technician said they had been having a lot of problems with that filter leaking. There is another filter below the generator on the gas line. He said the second defective filter has been discontinued and is not necessary. What is your opinion on this development?

James Riley  
Amarillo, Texas

Dear James,  
We are not aware of any filters being discontinued. However, as long as the system has one filter in the fuel line within two to three feet of the generator, you are getting adequate filtration.

**2004 Allegro Repairs, Replacements**

I have a 2004 Allegro. Three questions: (1) I would like to replace the main television, but it is mounted inside a cabinet. Can you explain how to remove it? I will replace it with a new flat screen. What brand does TMH use in their new motorhomes? Is it the same type of television that you would buy for your home? (2) I have two house batteries under the entrance steps. How do I hook up a battery charger-tender during the winter months? (3) I have day-night shades with the tiny strings in them. I had them repaired by Tiffin some time ago, but now

they are breaking again. What can be done about this problem?

William J. Thompson  
Williamstown, New Jersey

Dear William,  
(1) Open the cabinet doors on either side of the TV box. On the inside of each cabinet next to the television, you will see two screws that hold the bezel in place around the television. Remove the two screws on each side, take out the bezel, and you will see how the TV is secured by bolts. You will need to design a rack to mount your new flat panel TV. Tiffin is currently using Panasonic in all of its coaches, but you can use any standard household television that you prefer.

(2) You could hook a battery charger unit to the house batteries, but it would be simpler to plug the motorhome into 110v power and allow the converter to keep the batteries charged. Just remember to check the water level in your batteries once a month.

(3) The only choice we can offer is to have them repaired or replace them with the new Roll-Ease shades that we currently offer at the Tiffin Service Center in Red Bay. See Vol. 8, No. 1, pages 47-51, 62, for a complete discussion of your options.

**Random Engine Shutdown & Weak Lights on Low Beam**

While driving my 2005 Allegro 32 BA (Workhorse chassis), the unit will randomly shut down and then restart while the coach is in motion. The dash lights go out and come back on and the computer systems all reboot automatically. It all happens very quickly and does not

seem to affect the performance — it's just weird. Also, the low-beam headlights provide very little light. Can I replace them with a brighter bulb?

Bob Hensley  
West Sudbury, Connecticut

Dear Bob,  
The most likely source of the problem is a loose connection, probably on the ground side. Check all of the battery connections from the battery up to the engine. Pay special attention to the ground cable that grounds the engine to the motorhome chassis. If this does not solve your problem, it will have to go to a dealer who has the equipment to check for fault codes in the computer. Regarding the low beam problem, you can replace the bulb with a brighter one. If possible, check the specs printed on the old bulb before you buy a new one.

**Water Damage in Rear Wall**

What began as a simple problem has now grown into a major situation. I have a 2001 Allegro 28-ft. that had three large cracks in the top of the fiberglass rear cap. I repaired the cracks with good results. However, we now have wrinkles in the wallpaper on the passenger side of the rear wall under the storage cabinet. After inspection, I can feel the wood along the back wall crumbling. Water damage! Please recommend how this damage can be repaired. Who can do it?

James Kimbrough  
San Antonio, Texas

Dear James,  
The water damaged paneling will have to be replaced by cutting and removing the affected area. After you remove the old panel-

ing, let it dry out and then spray it with Kilz to prevent any mold growth. The Tiffin Service Center offers this type of repair, or you may be able to get recommendations on a reliable company nearer to you.

**Pinging Sound in Bedroom Ceiling**

We have a 2011 Allegro 34 TGA. There is a pinging sound coming at random times from somewhere in the ceiling of the bedroom. It sounds like a sensor or a relay tripping, but aside from the lights there is nothing in the ceiling. Can you tell us what this could be?

Ronald & Ann Sims  
Stanwood, Washington

Dear Ronald & Ann,  
On a 34TGA the only other moving components would be in the air conditioner located directly over the bedroom. The noise from the relays and controls for the air conditioner could be coming through the ducts.

**Correct Zone Wiring on AquaHot Thermostat**

We own a 2009 Allegro Bus with bath and a half. The AquaHot heating unit has two zoned thermostats which are reversed. Zone 1 is the bedroom and Zone 3 is in the kitchen-living area. Can you tell me how to rewire it?

Robert Harrah  
Fernley, Nevada

Dear Robert,  
First, remove the thermostat from the wall. It will have nine wires going into the wall. The white and the yellow wires need to be disconnected and reversed. That should put the system in correct sequence.

**LET US HEAR FROM YOU**

"Serious Tech Talk" is a very important section of *Roughing It Smoothly* in which information sharing flows in both directions. Please continue to send your questions to Danny Inman on the enclosed postcard. 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](mailto: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 1738, Monroe, GA 30656-1738. Tell us about the interesting places you've been, an unusual experience, a great destination, or just a good place to camp and hang out. Please share. "From the Road" contributors will receive a free tee shirt while supplies last.

—Fred Thompson, editor

Reader Response

**Chassis Sway on Allegros**

Just reading an article on chassis sway on a 2008 Allegro 32DA in the Tech Talk section of your latest magazine. I am assuming it was a Workhorse chassis — a common issue with this chassis. I installed a set of after-market Koni FSD shocks on my 2009 Allegro 38QBA and it pretty well corrected the problem.

Jim Hanna  
Welland, Ontario, Canada

Dear Jim,  
Upgrading the shocks will almost always help. Thanks for sharing your experience.

**Cleaning the Radiator & Remedying Side Sway on the Phaeton**

I had the same problem as Bruce Russell (*RIS*, 9:1) with my 2005 Phaeton. When I contacted Tiffin, I was referred to Freightliner where I received a prompt response recommending cleaning the radiator with Simple Green, which I used full strength, since it gets diluted in the pressure washer.

Another problem I had, which may be common to many motorhomes, was severe side sway any time the rear wheels hit surface changes at different times. Elton Brigham described the same problem. Depending on the particular axle, Roadmaster may not have a solution, as in my case. Roadmaster referred me to Henderson's Lineup, and their Super Steer restrictors which go in the air lines to the air suspension. That solved my problem.

Colton Meyer  
Walnut Creek, California

Dear Colton,  
Thanks for your feedback on this issue.

**Keeping Mice & Rodents Out of Your Coach**

With regard to using dryer softener sheets, there is a proven product used by many farmers to keep mice and rats out of equipment. It is called Fresh Cab Rodent Repellant. You will find it on the internet

at [www.earthkindstore.com](http://www.earthkindstore.com). Contains all natural products. I enjoy your section of the magazine!

Brad Bailey  
Sanger, Texas

Dear Brad,  
We checked the website and it looks like a good product to solve the rodent-mice problem. Have any of our readers tried it? Thanks, Brad.

**No More Refrigerator Problems**

We purchased our 1999 Allegro Bus in December 1998 and have been living in it full time for 13 years. It is a lifestyle we enjoy and plan to continue. We recently replaced our 4-door Norcold refrigerator with a Hotpoint residential unit. The problem was the cooling unit in the Norcold. In October 2002, they replaced it and exactly three years later we had to pay \$1,606 to replace it again. After numerous recall notices (which we took care of each time), we decided to remove it when it failed again in October last year. After seeing two motorhomes destroyed because of refrigerator fires, we felt this was a good decision. Now I don't have to defrost the fins or the freezer any more.

Jerry Wilson  
Deming, New Mexico

Dear Jerry,  
With the new energy-efficient refrigerators, we are seeing this type of replacement more often on older motorhomes.

**Radiator Overheating Solution & Taking Care of Musty Smell Near Washer**

We have a 2009 Phaeton 40QSH with a 2008 Freightliner chassis. We had the same overheating problem about which Joe Rousseau wrote to you. A Cummins Service Center in Indiana corrected our problem with a new radiator cap.

With regard to a musty smell in the rear of their coach that another reader wrote about recently, we had the same problem. Check the washer hookup con-

nection. It just may not be tight enough. Ours leaked onto the carpet, causing the musty smell.

Harvey & Linda Turner  
Amboy, Illinois

Dear Harvey & Linda,  
Thanks for your letter. Sometimes the solution to a problem can be very simple.

**White / Black Pull Chain Colors**

We have a 2012 Phaeton 40QBH and are very pleased with the unit. Here is a suggestion: The pull chains for the privacy and solar shades would be more user friendly if they were color coded--white chains for the white privacy shades and black chains for the black solar shades.

Jerry Alderson  
Hendersonville, Tennessee

Dear Jerry,  
That's a good idea. We will check to see if the white chains are available.

**Suggestions for Future Allegro REDs**

I love my 2011 Allegro RED 36QSA. Here are a few things that I hope Bob Tiffin will incorporate in future years. (1) Locks on fuel doors. (2) Slide-outs for better generator access (like other Tiffin brands). (3) Access to engine in rear left compartment. (4) Locks on generator and engine access.

Richard Bagley  
Petal, Mississippi

Dear Richard,  
Some of these changes were not incorporated into the RED in order to keep the unit at the price point where it is competitive, specifically item (2). The other items could be incorporated into future units and we will pass your suggestions on to our design engineers.

**Top Heavy Rocking on 2011 Allegro**

We have a 2011 Allegro 34 TSA. After 4,000 miles, we began having the top heavy rocking that Elton Brigham described on his coach. It turned out that two bolts had loosened on the rear sta-

bilizer bar hold-down bracket (one had fallen out). With the assistance of a Ford service center, it was fixed with an application of Lock-Tite. Problem solved.

Ronald Fleckinger  
Elwood, Illinois

Dear Ronald,  
Thank you for relating your experience. Reader responses make Serious Tech Talk so helpful to everyone in the Tiffin family of coach owners.

**Kudos for the 2011 Allegro Open Road**

TMH's support for their customers is outstanding. I had a water leak inside my new 2011 Allegro Open Road from the refrigerator. Tiffin authorized my dealer to find it no matter how long it took. The leak was found and the work done by General RV in Sandy, Utah, was professional and satisfactory. Thank you for caring about your owners and for arranging the repair. Please say "hello" for us to Bob Tiffin. We met Mr. Tiffin at Mike Thompson's RV in Palm Springs in January 2012.

Robert & Doretta Van Parys  
Elk Ridge, Utah

Dear Robert & Doretta,  
Thank you for the compliments.

**Engine Overheating Problem Solved**

In the "Engine Overheating Problem" letter from Joe Rousseau (*RIS*, 9:1), he describes a problem which we also experienced.

Our 2010 Phaeton 40QTH (Freightliner chassis, Cummins engine) was purchased new in September 2010. On our first trip, after driving on the interstate for a few hours, we pulled off to refuel. Leaving the engine on the entire time, we were at the fuel stop about 10 minutes. On departing and accelerating to highway speed, the engine temp gauge went up, the dash data display showed 225 degrees, and the overheating alarm sounded. Within a few minutes after pulling over, the alarm ceased and gauges went back to normal. The event did not reoccur on

this trip, even after several refueling stops.

A few weeks later on another trip, after slowing to go through a small town, the problem reoccurred as we accelerated back to highway speed. Within minutes after pulling over, the temperature dropped back to normal range.

A Freightliner service center diagnosed the problem as a faulty cooling fan clutch ("fan hub"). The fan clutch was replaced under warranty by Freightliner. The problem has not reoccurred. I hope this experience will be useful to Mr. Rousseau and other Tiffin owners.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Continued from page 4*

an Allegro in the same line, we created a special line just for Allegros. Building similar modules and performing similar tasks on the same line will allow our employees to become specialists, and will result in a better quality coach.

We just installed a Trumpf laser cutter that will precision cut aluminum and steel sheets to fabricate parts that fit together perfectly. A new Trumpf press brake gives our design engineers a new tool to create special parts that are unique. Such items improve our quality and durability, and reduce costs at the same time.

While staying on top of technology is very important, we know good communication with our owners is critical. We want to be as approachable and hospitable with our customers as possible. When you get down to it, you have to talk with people to make things work. At Tiffin Motorhomes, we also work at being good listeners. We appreciate the confidence you placed in us when you bought a Tiffin motorhome, and we want to understand how you feel about the way we build and service your motorhomes.

Our dealers tell us that Tiffin owners know they can always bring their coaches back here to Red Bay for repairs of any kind. It is our policy maintained throughout our 40-year history to work on and service any coach we have ever built. That policy is unmatched in our industry.

It is important for you to get in touch with us any time you have a problem or need to talk with one of our service staff. As I said, motorhomes are hi-tech equipment. If you are having difficulty operating anything on your coach, don't allow yourself to become frustrated. Call us for assistance. When you leave the Tiffin Service Center, be sure you have all of the phone numbers (and extension numbers) to contact everyone who can help.

When you visit one of our dealers, do the same thing. The most effective thing a dealer can do to be successful is to have knowledgeable service techs. When you visit one of our dealers, or any RV service center, ask them how many RVIA certified and master certified technicians they have on their staff. Our dealers are striving to improve their service skills. TMH runs training sessions here at the Service Center, and many dealers also send their techs to component manufacturers for training.

I have a very privileged job working each day with our dealers and owners. From our owners' surveys taken each day at the Tiffin Service Center campground, I learn firsthand what our owners want in their coaches. Between January and April, I will spend two to three days at sales-service events at nine of our dealerships throughout the U.S. During the year, I will work with our sales teams at seven RV shows, and focus on three major events in the Fall.

I just turned 70. There are always questions about when I might retire. My answer is pretty simple. "What in the world would I do?" I am doing what I enjoy the most— working at Tiffin Motorhomes. 

TIFFIN MANAGEMENT TEAM *Continued from page 31*

assembly line. Tim and Lex Tiffin sit in to keep abreast of what is happening in the plant.

The next eight hours will find Brad Witt in staff meetings, planning, analyzing, scheduling, and seeing supervisors to help solve problems. Thriving on diversity, he is obviously a high energy manager who sets a fast pace.

Brad and Lori live in the small town of Dennis, Mississippi, just a few miles north of Belmont. They have two children, Grayson, 11, and Greta, 6. When he arrives home at five, he shuts out the business whirl and becomes daddy and husband. Lori is a stay-at-home mom and enjoys her job as mother and homemaker. During the summer, the family enjoys boating and camping. "Over the last 10 years, we have had all sorts of campers, trailers, and motorhomes," Brad said. The family also does short vacations on long weekends. 

FROM THE ROAD *Continued from page 43*

in Walmart parking lots when possible. We even found time to stop over at the Tulsa State Fair in Oklahoma. Having endured all the fried food imaginable, catching our very first rodeo and meeting up with family, we realized our summer adventure was quickly coming to a close. We decided on one last splurge as we crossed the panhandle of Texas. We knew our trip through the heartland just would not be complete without a stop at the Big Texan in Amarillo, home of the free 72 oz. steak. The answer is no. Neither one of us even contemplated eating the full 72 oz. steak. We had all the adventure that we could muster and were ready to get back home. We rolled back into Albuquerque where Federico Tiffin (of course we christened the RV on the road) was ready to rest its wheels for a while. What a maiden voyage we had and we both agree we can't wait to get back out on the road again, where, "Roughing it is done Smoothly!"

Shad & Kristie Adair  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

TRAVELING WITH YOUR PETS *Continued from page 51*

Another annoying habit that owners are embarrassed about is canine mounting. Most people believe this is sexual in nature and will cease when the dog is neutered. Another assumption is that this behavior is a dominance trait. Canine mounting can be attributed to various motivations and will be discussed in full in my next article.

Most of these unacceptable pet behaviors can be managed with praise, treats, and consistency. You need to be most cautious in regard to the biting behavior, and may need professional help in stopping it.

Enjoy your traveling companion and have safe travels! 



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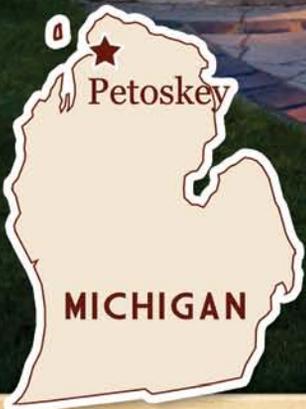
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