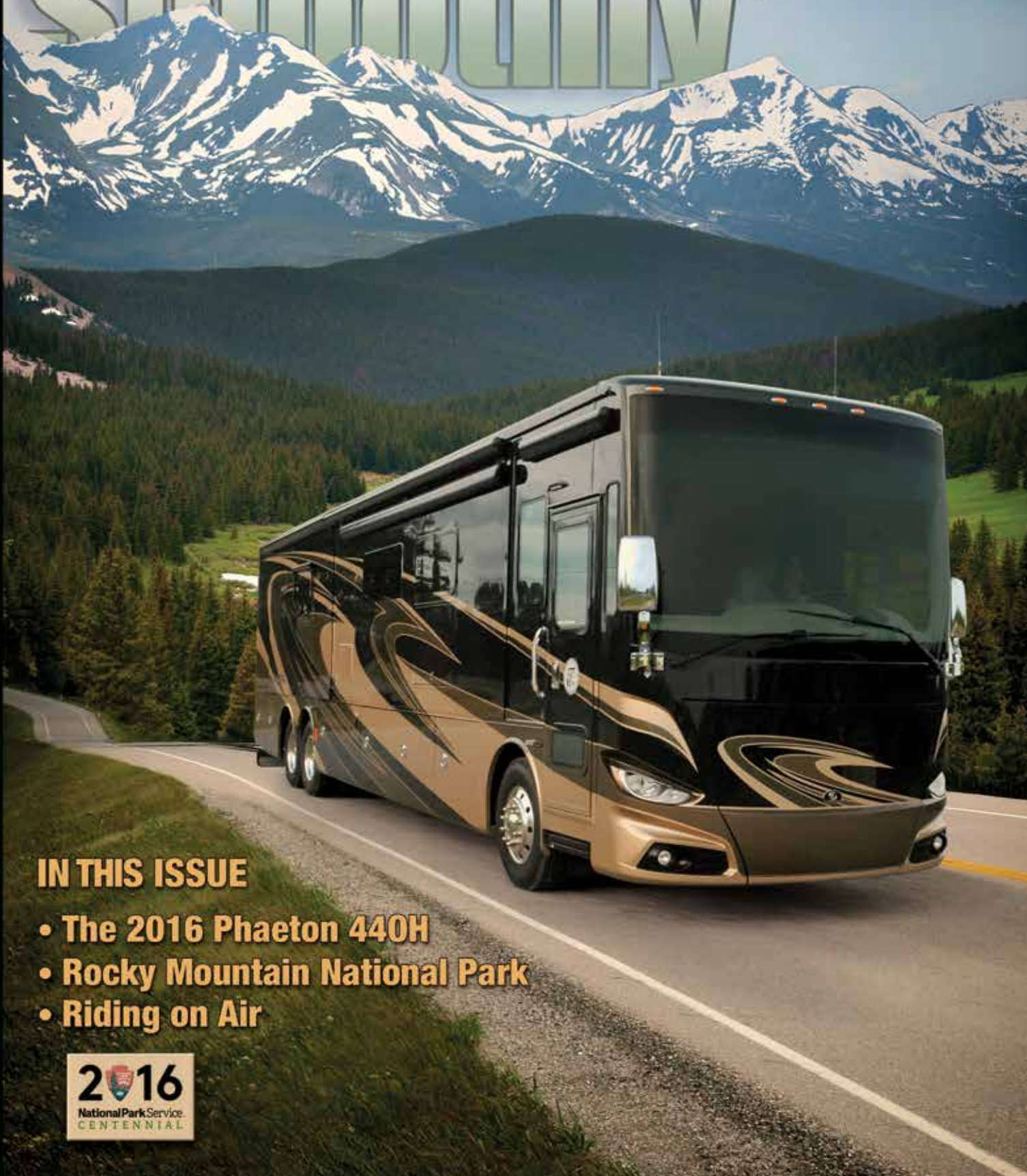


Roughing It Smoothly[®]



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- Rocky Mountain National Park
- Riding on Air



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Roughing it Smoothly®

April 2016

Volume 13, Number 2

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

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

This issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*® has a printed distribution of approximately 26,000 copies, an online distribution of 42,000 copies, and a dealer distribution of 12,000 copies. It was printed by Quad Graphics, Inc., N63 W23075 State Hwy. 74, Sussex, WI 53089.

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Manager, Information Office RMNP.**



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Roughing It Smoothly circulation jumps to 80,000 printed and online magazines.

Over 26,000 Tiffin owners are now receiving *Roughing It Smoothly* through the U.S. and Canadian postal service. Over 42,000 have chosen to read *RIS* online at the Tiffin website. Our dealers are distributing 12,000 copies in their showrooms. *Roughing It Smoothly* is in its 13th year and is the largest magazine published by an RV manufacturer in number of pages and total distribution.

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

dress in case we need to edit or ask for more information. Color prints are welcome and we will use them if we have the space. You can also send your "From the Road" contribution by email to fredthompson1941@hotmail.com You may attach your images to your email. Images should be at least one megabyte in size. On the subject line of the email, please write FROM THE ROAD. We do not open emails without subject lines.

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dress including the zip code. **We do not accept phone calls for changes of address.**

Serious Tech Talk

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

New Subscribers

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

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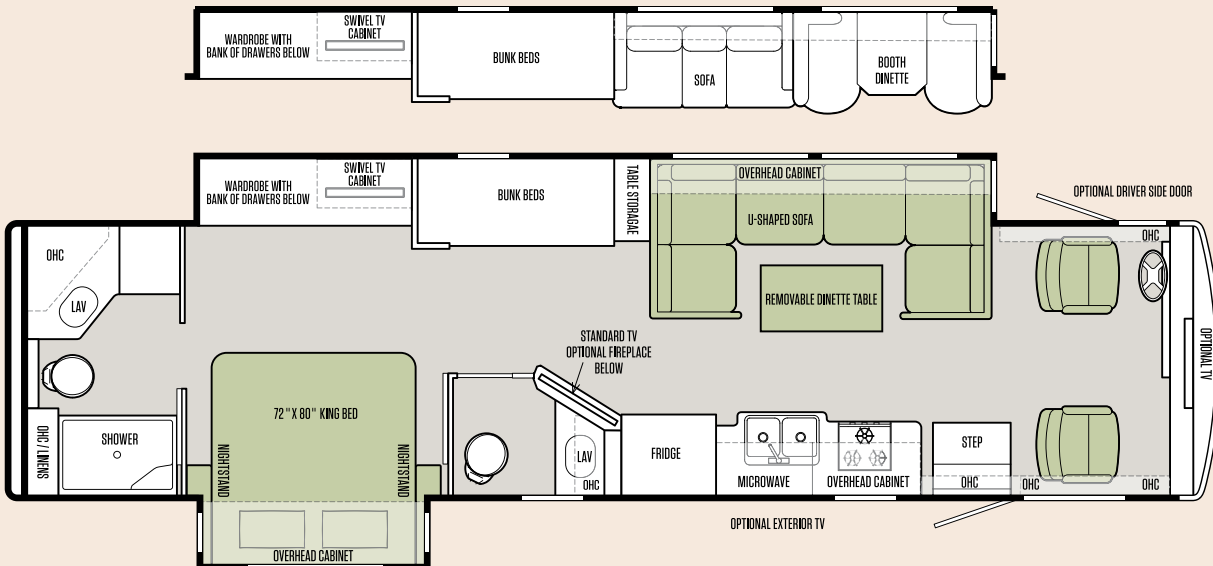


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The Railroad Is Tiny But Love for Steam Power Is Big. *See page 63*

The Allegro 36UA with a DS 24-foot slide-out is now shipping to our dealerships. With the alternate floor plan and drop down bunk over the cockpit, you have sleeping quarters for eight.



How Our Motorhomes Got Longer and Wider

by Bob Tiffin

When anybody builds anything, the first thought is, “What size do I need to build?” When I started Tiffin Motorhomes in August 1972, I looked at what everybody else was building. A little research showed that the average length of a Class A motorhome was 24 feet. Winnebago was building a little 18; its medium size was 23, and the largest was 26. So I decided to build 21-foot and 25-foot Class A campers.

The first one was a 25 and the second was a 21. They were just 7½ feet, or 90 inches, wide. We ran our models 90 inches wide until the last part of 1974 and then went to 96 inches. If you had 90 on the outside, you had 87 inches interior width. When we went to 96, we had 93 inches interior width. Change comes gradually in this business. In 1995 we went to the “wide body 102” which actually had a 100-inch outside measurement. It was a misnomer that stuck and was used by all of the manufacturers. With 2-inch thick walls, we have an interior width slightly over 96 inches. The width allows us to use standard 96-inch wide building materials for cost and construction efficiency.

During the first 25 years we saw some very interesting developments in motorhome floor plans and interior design. In 1975 we came out with a 29-foot model with a rear bath. We copied a similar floor plan made by Banner (Commodore). It actually had a 54-inch residential tub across the back wall. We put two entrance doors on the passenger side, one into the bath and one just behind the PS front chair. In front of the bath, we had two big wardrobes and chests on both sides. Gaucho seats pulled out into beds with two fold-down bunks above. Counting the drop-down bed over the dash, plus the double beds from the dinette and sofa, that little 29-foot coach could sleep two adults and six children. That’s what our customers wanted then. Camping was a family affair and we called our motorhomes “campers.” For two years it was the largest motorhome that we built.

In 1977 we built a 30-foot camper and later that year we really expanded with a 33-foot unit built on a Chevrolet chassis with a tag axle. When we bought the Chevy chassis, it did not have the tag axle. Johnson Machine Shop here in Red Bay extended the length of the chassis and added a Reyco-Granning tag axle. It had side and rear bath floor plans.

We built a 35-foot tag axle in 1978. Representing a big advance in our floor plans, it had a full-size dinette, two recliners in front with a table in the middle, plus a sofa-bed.

In 1978 we also built a 37-foot tag axle that had a split bath and in October of that year we used the split bath floor plan in a 27-foot camper. The split bath was popular because you could

have a larger shower on one side of the aisle and more space in the toilet-lavatory compartment. When you closed the front and rear doors, the aisle became part of the bath, giving you a lot more space.

Motorhome manufacturers throughout the industry began using the split bath floor plan. We were soon building 12 a day and could not keep up with the orders. All of the split bath floor plans that we build today are the grandchildren of that initial plan. By the end of 1978, we were building 11 floor plans from 21 to 37 feet in length.

The meltdown hit the industry in 1979. Gas lines were several blocks long. Interest rates rose to 22 percent. We reduced the number of lengths we were building. In late 1979 and ’80 we started building 38- and 40-foot diesel pushers on Oshkosh chassis using the CAT 3208 V-8 175-hp engine. We also used a V-8 Detroit engine on an X-Line Oshkosh chassis that developed 225 horsepower. We built 300 of those coaches between 1980 and 1983. By the time the recession had eased up, there were only 10 Class A manufacturers left. When gas prices came down, we dropped the diesels.

In 1983 we went back to gas engines on both the Chevrolet and Dodge chassis. With the Chevy chassis and a tag axle, we built 33-, 35- and 37-foot floor plans. On the Dodge chassis, we built 23-, 26-, 27-, and 32-foot campers. But Dodge stopped building chassis and we terminated our shorter length campers.



John Crean made 1986 a milestone year at Fleetwood with the introduction of the 32- and 34-foot Bounders. They billed it as the first basement model in the industry. That really was not correct because we built the first basements in our 38- and 40-foot diesel pushers on the Oshkosh chassis.

That's a good story. Our 1980 diesel pushers had the engine on the Oshkosh chassis set up so high you would have needed a 3-step ladder to get into the bed that was built above the engine — if we had not solved the problem by welding 12-inch rails above the chassis rails. The chassis also required a step up into the driver's compartment. That created a level floor front to back and reduced the height of the bed over the hump. It also required a higher ceiling and roof. By using a secondary cap with 4-inch horizontal windows in it, we incorporated the higher roof. The unanticipated benefit was a much higher area under the floor on either side of the chassis rails. We quickly modified the side walls with doors, welded a frame for the basement, and offered our customers the first basement in the industry. We continued building the basements on the Oshkosh chassis with a diesel engine through 1983 when the demand resumed for gas engines.

In 1990 Oshkosh built a less expensive diesel chassis using the Model B Cummins engine. We began building 34- and 37-foot coaches with the single rear axle, the precursor to our 40-foot coaches with a single rear axle. This was an important milestone because we no longer had to use a tag axle for floor plans in the mid 30-foot lengths.

Slide-outs were introduced in 1992, another milestone that changed the industry. We put single slide-outs in all of coaches from the 32-foot gas models to the 37-foot diesels.

In 1992 Spartan offered a heavier diesel chassis with the Model C Cummins engine. We began building 38- and 40-foot coaches that we called "Allegro Pushers." Our owners began referring to them as "buses." We liked the idea and that was the beginning of the Allegro Bus brand.

As I noted earlier, in 1995 we started building the 102-inch wide body. That feature gave us the opportunity to create more floor plans within individual brand designations and we came out with 32, 34, 37, 38 and 40-foot diesel pushers. The 32 and

34-foot units were put into the Allegro Bay Pusher line and the 37, 38, and 40-foot units became Allegro Buses.

Motorhome lengths became longer when heavier chassis were offered by Spartan and Oshkosh (later bought out by Freightliner). In 1998 we discontinued the Allegro Bay Pusher and introduced the Phaeton in 38 and 40-foot lengths. We continued the Allegro Bus on the Freightliner chassis.

In February 1999 we introduced the 42-foot Zephyr on a single rear axle and placed it in our 2000 model year. Then in 2002, we reached another milestone when we offered the Zephyr 43RZ on a Spartan chassis with a tag axle. We used the 500-hp Cummins M-11 engine with a side radiator.

Custom coaches built on Prevost and MCI chassis had already hit the 45-foot milestone length, but our 2005 Zephyr 45QDZ may have been the first 45-foot coach built on an assembly line. Its introduction caused quite a stir in the Class A industry.

In addition to changes in coach lengths, we marked other milestones. In 2004 we made a huge design change with the one-piece windshield on the Allegro Bus. Our owners called it the "picture window." That same year we also introduced the Expand-an-Island, a slide-out that created an L-shaped galley. We still use it on the Phaeton, Allegro Bus, and Zephyr.

In 2005 we offered the Allegro Bus 42QDP on a Freightliner chassis with a tag axle. It was another milestone in the chassis lengths that would be offered in the Tiffin brands.

In 2006, 2007, and 2009, Tiffin offered the Zephyr in two 45-foot floor plans. In 2007 the Zephyr got the first residential refrigerator. In 2008 with three floor plans in the mix, TMH put its first bath-and-a-half in the Zephyr 45QBZ. Along with slide-outs, the bath-and-a-half has become a staple in our floor plans.

The residential refrigerator became available as an option on the Allegro Bus in 2008 and by 2011 it was a standard. In successive years, the demand for the residential refrigerator on all brands went viral. First appearing as an option on most of the floor plans in the remaining brands, it is now standard in the Phaeton.

As the heavier chassis became available from Freightliner and Spartan, we added 40-foot floor plans to the Allegro Bus and Phaeton brands to meet the demand. In 2001 we built the Allegro Bus 40OP and kept adding more 40-footers each year until 2009 when four of our six Bus floor plans were 40-footers.

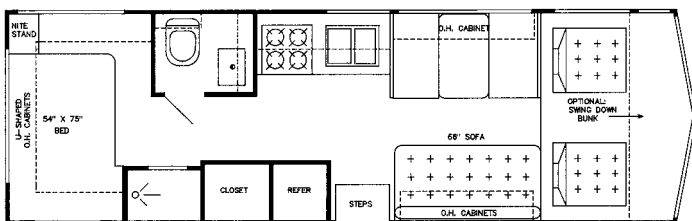
The demand in the Phaeton brand was just as strong. In 2003 we had two 40-footers. In 2004 and 2005 we had three, and in 2006 we had four choices in 40-foot floor plans.

After the Zephyr's lead in 2002, the Allegro Bus got the next floor plan with a tag axle in 2005 when we introduced the 42QDP. In 2007 the Phaeton brand got the 42QRH with a Cummins 8.9L 350-hp engine. At this point Tiffin Motorhomes was really doing well in the competition of Class A coaches over 40 feet in length.

In 2010 and 2011, three of the Allegro Bus brand's five floor plans were 43-footers with tag axles. In the last ten model years, the Phaeton brand has offered a tag axle floor plan every year, and

Continued on page 76

Bob and Horace Stepp reminisced about the early Allegros and the now-archived floor plans that Horace drafted from the very beginning. Below is a 27-foot camper with the very popular "split bath" that facilitated a larger shower on the passenger side and more space in the toilet-lavatory compartment on the driver side. The split bath plan has continued in current Allegro models.



Tiffin Allegro Club Rally

SARASOTA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

SARASOTA, FLORIDA



by Sally Moore

Wednesday, March 2, saw the highways around Sarasota dotted with beautiful Tiffin coaches as they began rolling into the Sarasota County Fairgrounds for a few days of food, fun and fellowship! Move-in and parking was seamless thanks to everyone's cooperation and the help of our wonderful volunteer parking committee. This was the largest Tiffin rally to date with 331 coaches present! Added to this were the new units on display as well as the vendors coaches for a total of approximately 375 motorhomes.

Lazydays RV was present with 17 beautiful new 2016 Tiffin coaches. We appreciate their participation! Lazydays was able to make several folks' dream come true by helping them move into a new Tiffin coach. Congratulations to these new owners!

After parking, registering and receiving a welcome bag of Tiffin goodies, everyone was free to enjoy the beautiful Sarasota weather and spend time getting to know their new neighbors in Tiffinville! The vendors & suppliers building was open and many indulged in shopping for accessories for their home on wheels. The rally kicked off at dinner Wednesday night with

BBQ and all the trimmings. The rally schedule was reviewed, announcements made, and Bob Tiffin welcomed the group. Everyone is always excited about the opportunity to meet Bob & Judy Tiffin, founders of Tiffin Motorhomes. After dinner everyone enjoyed competitive rounds of Tiffin Bingo where the winners must call out "Allegro" to win Tiffin prizes.

Thursday started bright and early for a few dedicated souls who met to walk for better health. Great job, folks! After a delicious country buffet breakfast, seminars were held designed to help owners learn more about their coaches and other RV related topics. These informative sessions covered a variety of subjects. We were fortunate to have several highly skilled service

Food, fun and fellowship multiplied by 700 smiling faces—exciting times at Tiffin rallies! ♦ Carl Baehner, winner of our beach/pirate site decoration contest. ♦ Willy & Co. saluted our veterans during an amazing evening of songs, jokes and entertainment. ♦ Tiffin pirate, Barbara Hollen-Hugg was generous with beads and pirate's booty.



technicians from Red Bay as well as Lazydays present to perform minor service repairs to owners' coaches. These are the hardest working individuals at the rally! They start early and stay late to insure everyone receives a visit to their coach.

Another fun activity at our Tiffin rally was the line dance class offered each afternoon. Our professional line dance instructor made this an enjoyable time of fellowship and fun. After all that rigorous exercise, we had to treat everyone to an ice cream sundae! Many thanks to Hearthside Grove RV Resort for the delicious summertime treat! Willie & Co. made an appearance during the ice cream social to entertain everyone. Willie returned after dinner Thursday night to everyone's delight. The voice behind Willie is Peggy Miller. She is a ventriloquist with the unique ability to make the audience forget that it is she who is talking and singing. Willie's ability to steal the show is a credit to Peggy's remarkable talent and technique!

Friday morning saw our energetic walkers out again bright and early. Seminars were held again followed by a tailgate buffet lunch of grilled burgers and hot dogs for the group. A craft and hobby show immediately followed lunch where owners were invited to share their favorite crafts/hobbies with others. Thank you to everyone who demonstrated their ingenuity and talents by decorating their RV site in a tropical beach/pirate theme. Lots of great scenes! Prizes were awarded during dinner for the top three scenes. After dinner on Friday evening we enjoyed the performance of Kenny Evans featuring golden oldies from the 50's & 60's as well as a salute to our veterans.

Once again on Saturday morning we enjoyed a bountiful breakfast buffet including fresh Florida strawberries, melons and other seasonal fruits. Seminars began promptly after breakfast. Several new seminars were included at this rally such as "Tips for Terrified RV Drivers," "Tiffin RV Electrical 101," and "Pampered Chef." Following the seminars, attendees were treated to a swap meet. We supplied the tables and owners provided the merchandise. One never knows what will be found! Mr. & Mrs. Tiffin graciously provided ice cream treats for everyone



2016 Tiffin Allegro Club Rallies

We are in the midst of our 2016 Tiffin Rally Season! The Sarasota Rally was a huge success – please see the accompanying article. Our rally in Casa Grande sold out immediately and is taking place approximately at the time you are receiving this magazine.


In June we will be traveling to Gillette, Wyoming for a rally. All of our rallies in 2016 are sold out and we are very grateful for your continued support of the Tiffin Allegro Club. If you are interested in attending the Gillette rally but have not registered, visit TiffinMotorhomes.com and go to the Club's section. Add your contact information to the waitlist. If we have cancellations for this rally, we will contact you to see if you want to attend. No fees are paid until a site becomes available and we contact you to see if you are still interested.

Online Dues / Renewals Available

For your convenience and financial safety, we have added the ability for members to renew their Tiffin Allegro Club membership dues online. New members can join or current members can renew and pay the annual dues either as a Paypal member or as a Paypal guest. This secure website eliminates mailing credit card numbers or personal checks through the US Mail. If you prefer to call us or mail your information, that is still acceptable. Give us a call at 256-356-8522 if you have any questions.

Saturday afternoon immediately following the swap meet.

Our farewell dinner and beach party was held in Robarts Arena Saturday evening. Guests continued the pirate/beach theme with cute costumes. So much fun to see everyone's attire! The Landsharks Band provided beach music made popular by superstars such as Jimmy Buffet, the Beach Boys, etc. Guests especially enjoyed the steel drums and the sing-alongs! The hula hoop contest, the Congo line and demonstrating their "twisting" dance moves were loads of fun! It was a fun-filled evening that was a perfect ending to the rally. We simply cannot thank our happy, smiling volunteers enough for their fantastic help during the rally! A rally cannot occur without the assistance of many willing hands and feet. Our volunteers are PRICELESS! Another fantastic group we had at the rally were the students from the Sarasota Military Academy who served our meals each night. These polite, helpful young adults were a joy and blessing to everyone!

Sunday morning saw everyone saying their last minute farewells. Coaches began their orderly exit as everyone continued their journey on to another destination. Until next time, "Keep on Roughing It Smoothly!" 

Tiffin Assures Phaeton's Continued Popularity with the 2016 Phaeton 440H

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



To assure the Phaeton's number one position in its brand category and satisfy customer demand, Tiffin for the 2016 model year added the Phaeton 44OH to the mix. Phaeton's loyal owners will be pleased they now have an option that rivals the 45-ft. floor plans in the Allegro Bus brand. The Phaeton brand now offers a 36-ft. coach, three 40-ft. coaches, a 42-footer with a tag axle, and the new 44OH built on Tiffin's PowerGlide chassis with a tag axle.

The Phaeton as a single brand dominated the 2015 model year as the #1 diesel pusher in U.S. motorhome sales. A Tiffin has held that distinction for the last 10 years: nine times by the Phaeton and once by the Allegro Bus.

In the 2015 model year, Tiffin offered for the first time the all-electric option for the Phaeton, giving owners the opportunity to choose the Aqua-Hot heating system, the induction cooktop, and heated tile floors for slightly over \$13,000 MSRP. It proved to be a favorite option.

This year the 44OH is offered *only* as an all-electric coach. It adds \$8,120 MSRP to the base price but that includes Aqua-Hot and the induction cooktop. Owners can still decide to option the heated tile floors (\$5,075 MSRP). From personal experience, heated tile floors will be appreciated on cold days since they add remarkably to the overall evenness of heating the rooms.

The Living Room

The functional spaces in the living area of the Phaeton 44OH work well as a composite to provide a large open area that includes the living room, the galley, and the dinette-computer workstation. RVers who have traveled in smaller motorhomes are always amazed when they enter a Tiffin coach and see a living area that is 12' 9" x 22' 6". The advent of double facing slide-outs made motorhomes spaciouly residential. Then residential refrigerators, double sinks, induction cooktops, dishwashers, and leather rocker-recliners were added. We will talk more about residential features as we take a look at the galley, bedroom, laundry, and bath-and-a-half areas.

In the living room's standard layout, you have opposing sofas. The driver's side boasts a 90-inch Ultraleather™ sofa-sleeper comfortably seating four. When you have guests, it opens into an Air Comfort queen (and they may stay longer than you anticipated). Also standard is the PS Ultraleather jack knife sofa-bed that accommodates two children.

There are three décor schemes in the Phaeton, offering choices that will appeal to the buyers' preferences in wood finishes; the fabrics used to create the pillows, bedspreads, and valences; and the solid surface countertop (SSCT) options for the

backsplashes, galley, lavatories, and chests. The décor scheme in the reviewed coach was Vintage, featuring fabric patterns that may have originated in the 1920s, leatherette used for seat covers and mixed leatherette-fabrics for pillows, dark browns for the SSCT, and contrasting buff SSCT to create interesting patterns for the backsplashes.

In the coach under review, the luxury recliner with angled TV cabinet (\$1,160 MSRP) was optioned to replace the jack knife sofa.

The ambiance of the living room is enhanced with the electric fireplace (\$761 MSRP), outputting 1,500 BTUs and doing a great job of knocking off the chill of a cold morning without turning on the Aqua-Hot hydronic heat. Two large-screen televisions (42.5" and 49.5") provide double programming in the living room, especially during the college football season when you are tailgating and keeping up with two or more games. If the fall football season is your passion, you can keep track of four games simultaneously with a 42.5" screen in the bedroom and another exterior 42.5" screen with sound bar (optional \$1,740 MSRP) in the PS wall under the patio awning.

After settling into your pleasant campsite in the RV resort, the driver and passenger chairs rotate 180 degrees to increase



the Ultraleather seating to seven. Both of the Flexsteel monogrammed chairs have reclining backs, multi-position armrests, and a forward-rear tilt that puts you in just the right spot to make you comfortable. The passenger chair also has a leg lift. For the same optional price, you can choose two luxury recliners (giving up the angled TV cabinetry for the space to accommo-

date the second recliner). When traveling, the recliner(s) tuck into the wall between the entertainment center and the credenza for the dinette-computer workstation. Of course, when you are in port, you can slide the recliner(s) toward the middle of the room to provide optimum viewing position for both televisions. The TV in the slideout is part of the surround sound system.

The Galley

When you are preparing a meal, the amount of countertop space is very important. In the 44OH, the galley is 7' 6" wide and varies from 33 to 42 inches in depth. The countertop measures 21 sq. ft. and the Expand-an-Island offers 3.2 additional sq. ft. The handmade backsplash is not only attractive, it is also practical in that it protects your back wall from the countertop

A storage rack designed for the sink's SSCT covers is hidden in the cabinet below the sink.

The larger bowl of the double stainless steel sink measures 15.75w × 18.5d × 8.5h, and the smaller 13 × 16.5 × 6.5. Compare those measurements to the double sink in your home. The single lever gooseneck faucet with extendable sprayer is brushed



to the bottom of the cabinets. The backsplash wall has three 110v GFCI protected outlets to service your electric appliances.

Here's where we go residential. The lighting for the countertop/cooking area is provided by four recessed LED lights mounted in the overhead cabinets. There are eight more recessed LED lights mounted in the ceiling area directly above the countertop.

When you are traveling this summer and have the opportunity to visit a farmers market, you will appreciate the two big sinks for washing and cleaning your fresh vegetables. The extension sprayer on the faucet will put the water right where you want it.

nickel. Reasonable care will maintain their lustrous finish for as long as you own the coach.

When owners become proficient with the induction double eye cooktop, they rarely wish to return to gas. Induction cooking requires ferro-magnetic cookware. Your food will cook faster and more evenly than gas and it is less expensive. Keep in mind you are using the electricity provided by the campground, not the propane that costs extra.

Three more appointments in the galley emphasize Tiffin's residential design: the Sharp Carousel Sensor Microwave Convection oven, the Fisher & Paykel drawer-type dishwasher, and

the 22-cubic-foot residential size refrigerator-freezer with a water/ice dispenser through the door and individual settings to monitor the fridge and freezer. The microwave convection oven and the refrigerator are standard equipment; the dishwasher is optional at \$1,378 MSRP.

Although the microwave oven has a vent just above the cooktop that exhausts both the heat of the cooktop and the microwave directly to the outside, TMH exhausts the air faster with a full-featured Fan-Tastic vent in the ceiling. The fan is bi-directional and has a thermostat with a warm-to-cold color scale. You can experiment and use it like you would an attic fan in your stationary home to pleasantly cool the coach on warm summer nights. If the night air gets too cool, the selected color setting will turn the fan off. As noted, you must experiment with the color scale to find your comfort level.

A galley is not an efficient galley without planned storage. Over the sinks, you will find 9.4 cubic feet of storage in three cabinets. Measuring $11.75 \times 18.5 \times 4$, two slide-out trays have full extension to let you see what is in the back of your cabinet. Each cabinet has an adjustable shelf.

Under the SSCT you will find the storage you would expect in a residence. The island slide-out has a three-drawer stack, each measuring $10.25 \times 25.75 \times 3.25$. Under the dishwasher, the pots and pans drawer easily stores the entire four-piece induction cookware set. Under the double sink you will find a bonus of 7.5 cubic feet of storage. To the left of the sink, the cabinet offers another three-drawer stack with one already sub-divided for your table service. Again, the **Store-It-All™** guarantee! No other Class A manufacturer has matched Tiffin's carefully planned and attractively concealed storage compartments throughout the coach.



The Dinette

The buyer has three choices for the dining furniture. The booth dinette has always been popular with families. In the evening, the table can be dropped down even with bench seats. The back cushions are placed over the table, creating a double bed for two children.

If small children are not regular passengers, many couples select the U-shaped dinette with plush seating upholstered in luxurious Ultraleather. Both options have long, deep drawers under each seat.

About 10 years ago Tiffin introduced the Dinette-Computer Workstation that found immediate acceptance. TMH estimates at least 95 percent of motorhome buyers today have handheld, tablet, or laptop computers onboard that are used for business, communications, navigation, and entertainment. The workstation is centered in a handsome credenza that measures 18×72 inches and is capped with solid surface countertop material. A 110v/USB 6-inch tower pops up from the credenza to serve the

computer equipment. The 25×40 -inch dining table/desk has a sliding cantilever mount that retracts to 25×24 inches when traveling. Immediately below the countertop, the north side of the credenza has a concealed tray for a full-size keyboard. Just below the keyboard, a double door opens to a larger slide-out tray for a printer. Under the dining table/desk, two doors hide 5.8 cubic feet of storage space. On the south side of the credenza, you will find two drawers ($12w \times 14d \times 3h$)¹ for office supplies and paraphernalia, plus a well-designed filing drawer with rails for hanging folders.

The storage compartments above the dinette, recliner, and television provide 15 cubic feet of storage, and there's another eight cubic of storage space in the middle and bottom compartments of the credenza. The cabinets in the DS slide-out offer 17.5 cubic feet. Tiffin's **Store-It-All™** guarantee is not just idle talk.

1. Drawer measurements in inches: w = width across the front; d = measured front to back; h = inside vertical depth of the drawer.

Ceiling and Directional Lighting

Eight years ago in its top three brands, Tiffin replaced fluorescent lighting in the main ceiling with recessed, incandescent barrel lights. In the 2012 model year, incandescents were replaced with LED lights to remove “hot spots” and create a more even distribution of light in the Zephyr and Allegro Bus. The Phaeton got LED lights in 2013. In the living area of the 2016 Phaeton 44OH, there are 37 recessed LED lights in the ceiling of the two slide-outs and the primary center ceiling.

With obvious planning, the lighting is both general and specific. Barrel lights are positioned in sufficient quantities to provide a general, even lighting throughout the living area. Then you will notice the directional and specific lights placed over the sofa, recliner, passenger and driver chairs, and dinette for reading and dining. Task lights are carefully placed over the galley



for the chef’s benefit. The 11-foot tray ceiling bordered by an elegant hardwood molding is a touch of class. Within the tray, a 2.5" drop ceiling creates a recess for soft indirect lighting that is perfect for watching a movie.

In the bath and half bath, several barrel lights provide general lighting. Touching the VANITY switch produces bright lighting over the mirror for shaving or applying makeup.

Exterior and entry lighting is important, too. As you touch the ENTRY UNLOCK on your key fob, you will get headlights and an LED entry light over the steps, plus two entry lamps in the stairwell and an LED ceiling light. An exterior keypad also accommodates keyless entry. The outside lights go off in 30 seconds and the interior ones have a switch on the lighted display to the left of the stairwell.

The LED lights for the door, porch, and awning fully illuminate the area for a late cookout or card games on the picnic table.



Entertainment 2016 Style

The LG Smart+ TV using the system’s Magic Remote will allow you to select programming at the on-screen Launcher Bar from Netflix, Hulu Plus, Amazon, Facebook, Today, YouTube, Skype, M-Go, and all of your standard channels from aerial, cable, and satellite. You can switch back and forth between apps, movies, and TV shows using the Launcher and its quick, nimble interface.

Input includes data discs, USB devices, MKV playback, external HDD playback, and Blu-Ray 3D discs. Stereo surround sound output in the living area emanates from four speakers in the ceiling and a sub-woofer concealed in the floor of the credenza.

For two very good demos on how to use the system, google “Getting to know your new LG Smart TV.” To use your laptop to demo the use of the Magic Remote, go to amazonlg.siiguides.com

The television itself, an LG ULTRA HDTV 4K, displays 8.3 million pixels, making the resolution four times that of full HD. The television uses a revolutionary technology called OLED (organic light-emitting diodes). Unlike traditional, synthetic LEDs (light-emitting diodes), OLED uses an organic substance that



glows when an electric current is introduced. This revolutionary material is part of a new design approach that drastically reduces the thickness and weight of the TV. The light passes through a combination of filters to reproduce spectacular high-definition images.

Touch Switch Panels

Lighted touch panels with six to 12 switches in each panel are custom designed for TMH coaches by Spyder Controls Corp. Each switch is backlit in blue but turns to white when activated. A “Panel Lights” switch can deactivate the backlighting feature if you prefer a totally dark room for sleeping.

A panel mounted near the door to the half bath uses a digital screen to display the fluid levels in exact percentages for the fresh, grey, and black tanks. The touch switches in the same panel take care of extending and retracting the rear PS and DS bedroom slide-outs, the AquaHot heat sources (electric or diesel), and the lights for the bedroom.

Wall-mounted inside the half bath, the Spyder panel uses a black and white screen to display the temperature setting for the heated floors and the floor’s current temperature. Touch switches activate the overhead and vanity lights, the exhaust vent’s fan and lid, the water pump, and the panel lights. Other panels in the coach control similar lights and functions.

Shades: Pulled and Powered

After an inventor figured out how to attach a tiny motor to a window shade, the technology took the RV industry by storm. Before the technology came along, we used day-night shades, curtains, and sun visors — all hand-operated, of course.

On the 2016 Phaetons, the individual solar and privacy shades covering the windshield can be adjusted at the touch of a toggle switch on the dash. They operate in tandem to allow you to use the opaque privacy shade as a sun visor near the top of the expansive windshield and the solar shade to move a little lower to reduce the glare. If you are driving directly into the evening sun, you can bring the opaque privacy shade as low as safety permits. At night the privacy shade lowers all the way to the dash.

The solar and privacy shades for the side windows in the Phaeton’s cockpit can be raised or lowered by a quick tug on the bottom rail of the shade that releases a tension spring. A second tug will make the shade stop wherever you wish. When you are traveling, position the side shades about 10 inches above your head so you can easily reach them for adjustment while you are underway. The shades in the living area, bedroom, and bath operate with the same ease to bring into the coach the amount of light you wish to have.



Conditioning Your Air and Water

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

All of the Phaeton floor plans except the 36GH utilize three roof-mounted 15,000 BTU air conditioners with heat pumps. When the temperatures drop to the 40s on cool mornings, you can utilize the campground’s power to warm your coach with your heat pumps.

In the spring and fall months when you have warm days, Tiffin’s thermal wrap within the walls will retain a significant amount of the day’s solar warmth. With the optional fireplace (\$761 MSRP), you can knock off the morning chill until the sun reaches the top of your coach.

When the temps really drop, Aqua-Hot’s hydronic heating system pumps a hot liquid into five to seven heat exchangers that quietly disperse heated air into the living, bedroom, and bath areas. Operating fume free, the system maintains an even distribution of warm air without creating hot and cold spots in the coach. With potable water running through coils wrapped around the boiler, hot water is distributed endlessly and instantly to the galley, shower, faucets, and dishwasher. All water coming into the coach is filtered at the utility bay.

The optional heated floors have two zones: bedroom & baths and galley & living area. We found it so comfortable and effective that we lowered the temperature on the thermostats for the Aqua-Hot system by five degrees. When your feet are cold, you never quite get completely warm. Choose a selectable setting between 1 and 5 for the floor heat and you will enjoy a “new warm.”



The Master Bedroom

The king size bed is probably the most popular option with Class A motorhome buyers. The queen memory foam mattress is standard, but it only costs \$290 to upgrade to the king. Tiffin makes the king available in five of the six Phaeton floor plans. The optional Sleep Number king bed (\$1,450 MSRP) was selected for this coach. It is very popular because the firmness is selectable for each side of the bed.



With the slide-outs extended, the bedroom measures 11'9" east-west and 7'10" north-south. End tables on each side of the bed are 10 inches wide at the front and 36 inches deep. Both sides of the tables facing the bed have 18 × 14 inch book/magazine compartments. Each end table has a double USB port, 110v service, plus a front-facing enclosed compartment. The rounded headboard with an art deco theme surrounds a padded Ultraleather centerpiece. In the side walls of the bed's slide-out, the valances frame screened windows with both opaque and solar shades. A two-speed ceiling fan is controlled by a Spyder panel conveniently positioned in the slide-out's side wall. The panel also has switches for the recessed bedroom ceiling lights, the

front door light, a master switch for turning off all of the lights in the coach, and a panel light switch. Reading lamps are wall-mounted on both sides of the bed.

The bedroom storage compartments in both slide-outs are generous. Tiffin begins with over 14 cubic feet of storage space in the slide-out above the head of the bed. For items used less frequently, you will find nearly 21 cubic feet of storage space under the bed. The mattress base lifts and suspends easily on two air struts.

commodating bath, which we will come back to in a moment. A hanging rod runs eight feet across the entire back wall of the closet. On the left side of the closet, a floor-to-ceiling chest doubles the number of drawers offered in the bedroom plus four box compartments that work well for towels. On the right side of the closet, Tiffin offers the optional, fully featured Splendide washer and dryer (MSRP \$1,740) that has almost all of the settings you have on your residential appliances.



Designed primarily for clothing storage, the multi-functional PS slide-out houses two chests, each with solid surface countertops. The 30-inch high chest under the window offers two large drawers (39 × 11 × 7). Over the window, a double-door cabinet that is nine inches deep conceals 2.5 cubic feet of storage space.

The coach's entertainment system is located in the adjoining chest. A double louvered door conceals LG's electronics and the DirecTV receiver (subscription required), both of which are standard equipment on Tiffin coaches. Under the technology compartment, Tiffin included two more clothing drawers (14 × 11 × 7) and a hamper (1.7 cubic feet).

The closet is at the rear of the coach, separated from the bedroom by a very ac-



A Bath and a Half

The bath is positioned between the bedroom and the walk-in rear closet, which places it functionally in the right location for bathing and dressing. The vanity with four recessed LED barrel lights is brightly illuminated. Each of the oval lavatories is seamlessly molded into the solid surface countertop. A handmade backsplash covers the entire back wall under the twin cabinets, each with a large mirror. The

to the walk-in closet. We will notice this again when we discuss the basement.

The shower stall is designed with a large seat plus a shelf for toiletries. With the floor of the stall measuring 27 × 35 inches, you won't bump your elbows against the walls. The polished nickel hardware, flexible hose, and adjustable showerhead coupled with Aqua-Hot's continuous supply of hot water will make showering a relaxing experience. The skylight above the shower will bring

mirrored door is brilliantly lit with six recessed vanity lights. The corner cabinet is flanked on both sides with double-door cabinets designed for smaller bathroom items. Under the lavatory, you'll find another cubic foot of storage space. On the south wall below the SSCT, the large recessed magazine/newspaper rack could turn this bathroom into a small library. Above the rack is a brushed chrome towel bar. A 3-speed exhaust fan is controlled by dual wall switches for the lid and the fan.



single-lever, nickel-plated faucets have a pump design, coordinated with plated towel rings and soap dispensers.

Each lavatory has a 21 × 15-inch mirror/door, both of which enclose a cabinet that is 56 inches wide, 21 inches high, and 7.25 inches deep. A stack of three 15-inch drawers is centered between separate storage cabinets under each lavatory. A second cabinet mounted on the wall above the toilet is in the right place for storing bathroom supplies. Two towel bars are mounted on the north wall.

The vanity is built into the rear PS slide-out, creating a large floor space when it's deployed. And noticeably, the bathroom floor is not raised a step higher to accommodate the usual hump for the engine. The floor is level from the cockpit

in the sunshine and freshen up your morning. If the morning is a little cool, you can pull an insulated slide to cover the skylight and retain the heat. In the middle of the bathroom ceiling, a 3-speed Fan-Tastic vent will remove the humidity in a few seconds.

The half bath is positioned almost in the middle of the coach. It has been eight years since Tiffin first introduced the half bath in the Zephyr. Called a "necessary" by our colonial ancestors, this half bath has a one-piece SSCT integrated with an oval, molded lavatory that boasts a single lever brushed nickel faucet and soap dispenser. Matching the ones in the galley and full bath, a 15.5" backsplash surrounds the corner lavatory on both sides. The corner toiletries cabinet with



The Flight Deck

Certainly one of Tiffin's most ergonomically designed cockpits, the curved hoods over the three main combination gauges are its most prominent feature. Using white type against a black background, the center gauge displays the MPH / KPH. The left gauge presents the RPM in the top half, with the fuel, DEF, and battery in the lower half. The right gauge is quartered for front and rear PSI, oil pressure, and coolant temp. The Info Center collects and presents monitoring data for all of the coach's systems in large, easy-to-read type. When necessary, System Alerts in panels on both sides of the Info Center will appear in bright colors with a repeating tone that you can't ignore.

With safety as the key factor in the design, several controls are located in the steering wheel at thumbs reach. Cruise control and the dimmer switch are positioned on the left side of the wheel. On the right side you will find the windshield wiper/wash controls and the ICC switch.

Moving to the left side of the steering column, you will see two banks each with three toggle switches. The first bank has the headlights/parking switch, the fog lights, and the bright/dim switch for the dash display. The second bank has the engine preheat, auxiliary start, and pedal height adjustment.

The controls in the left console under the DS window begin at the front with the parking brake, the Allison transmission gear selector at your fingertip position, and the controls



for adjusting the outside mirrors. By using the air horn toggle, you move from an automotive strength to a truck strength horn when you press the center of the steering wheel. Next to the air horn toggle, you will see the compression brake, easily accessed when you need it for mountain driving or expedited speed reduction. The driver is favored with two cup holders, one in the left console and another in the center console drawer under the HVAC dials. After you get into your campsite, the HWH leveling system provides automatic leveling, although it does have controls for manual adjustments.

In the dash to the right of the steering column, TMH has positioned eight toggle switches easily reached without having to take your eyes off the road. From left-to-right, you will see the STEP CVR, DRIVER FAN, SOLAR SHADE, NIGHT SHADE, GEN START, MAP LIGHT, DOCK LIGHT, and RADIO. Two 6-inch fans mounted in the upper corners of the windshield help with defrosting the large glass expanse and can also be turned to cool the driver and passenger. Sometimes moving air feels better than air conditioning.

With speakers at ceiling level on the left and right, the AM-FM RADIO-CD with DOLBY STEREO will keep you entertained while traveling. The radio is XM-ready with a six month free trial subscription. The in-motion satellite (subscription required) can bring in TV programming for the mid-section television.

To the right of the radio, the camera monitor with a color display keeps the driver alert to traffic on both sides and the rear of the coach. You can split the monitor display for views of both sides or rear and side at the same time. The automotive heating and cooling controls are located just below the monitor. Eight air vents are located at both dash and floor level. As the dash curves toward the stairwell, three outlets for USB and 12v electronic devices are available. On the PS of the dash deck, a slide-out box is handily positioned for storage of receipts, note pads, etc.

The passenger side of the cockpit is integral to the coach's operation. The top of the console at elbow level has toggles for the PASSENGER FAN, STEP COVER, and MAP LIGHT. Built as a part of the console, but facing the stairwell as you enter the coach, a 12-position Spyder panel allows occupants to control the ENTRY LIGHTS, OUTSIDE DOOR LIGHT, PORCH LIGHT, INSIDE MAIN CEILING LIGHTS, CARGO LIGHTS, ROAD LIGHT, and the DOOR AWNING. Two additional switches allow you to turn ON/OFF the 12v battery system and the exit step.

Following previous cockpit design, the cabinets over the captain's chair house controls for several items. Moving clockwise, Cabinet A contains the Magnum inverter/converter, the Carefree awning control, the Winegard satellite ON/OFF switch, and the controls for the front slide-outs. Cabinet B conceals the Power Control System. Cabinet C [left of the TV], storage. Cabinet D [right of the TV], the control for selecting antenna or cable input; and two 110v outlets. Cabinet E [over the exit door], storage. Cabinet F [over the passenger chair], two thermostats to control the two forward AC/heat pumps.

The Basement

When I am looking at a house I am interested in buying, I usually save the basement until last. You may want to check out the basement in the 44OH first. It is a big one — 253 cubic feet of storage space. The basement has an additional 5.5 inches of vertical height created by an additional rail between the upper and lower rails of the PowerGlide chassis. However, a level floor from the cockpit to the rear walk-in closet was the primary reason for the additional rail. There is no step up into the bathroom.

During the 12 years I have been producing Tiffin's motorhome reviews, the improvements are phenomenal in the neatness of the basement's construction, its organization, and its accessibility. When you open the basement doors and walk all the way around, you are gazing at the guts of the machine: the wiring, plumbing, heating, hydraulics, compressed air, the storage areas, the engine, and the generator. It is a complex piece of engineering.

On the driver's side, front-to-back: (1) The electronics, the carefully labeled fuse block, compressed air, etc. in the DS front compartment. (2) The house batteries, neatly connected on a slide-out tray. (3) The double bay storage compartment with lighting and slide-out tray(s). (4) The carefully labeled utility bay. (5) The compartment for Aqua-Hot. (6) DEF tank and 50-amp power cord. (7) A flat storage area with access to the engine air filter.

On the passenger's side, front-to-back: (1) The HWH hydraulic system. (2) A large storage compartment, also housing the central vacuum cleaner. (3-4) Double bay storage [picture shown from DS only]. (4) Chassis batteries, chassis disconnect, power train fuse, chassis main fuse. (5) Power train bus bar, chassis power bus bar, rear chassis power breaker, front chassis power breaker.

The radiator for the 450-hp Cummins rear engine diesel occupies most of the opening in the rear cap. All of the check points for the engine are arranged on the perimeter of the radiator.

In the DS front compartment, a pull handle in the upper right corner will release the manual slide-out for servicing the Onan 10kw Quiet Diesel generator.


The basement compartments can be viewed at rismag.com.

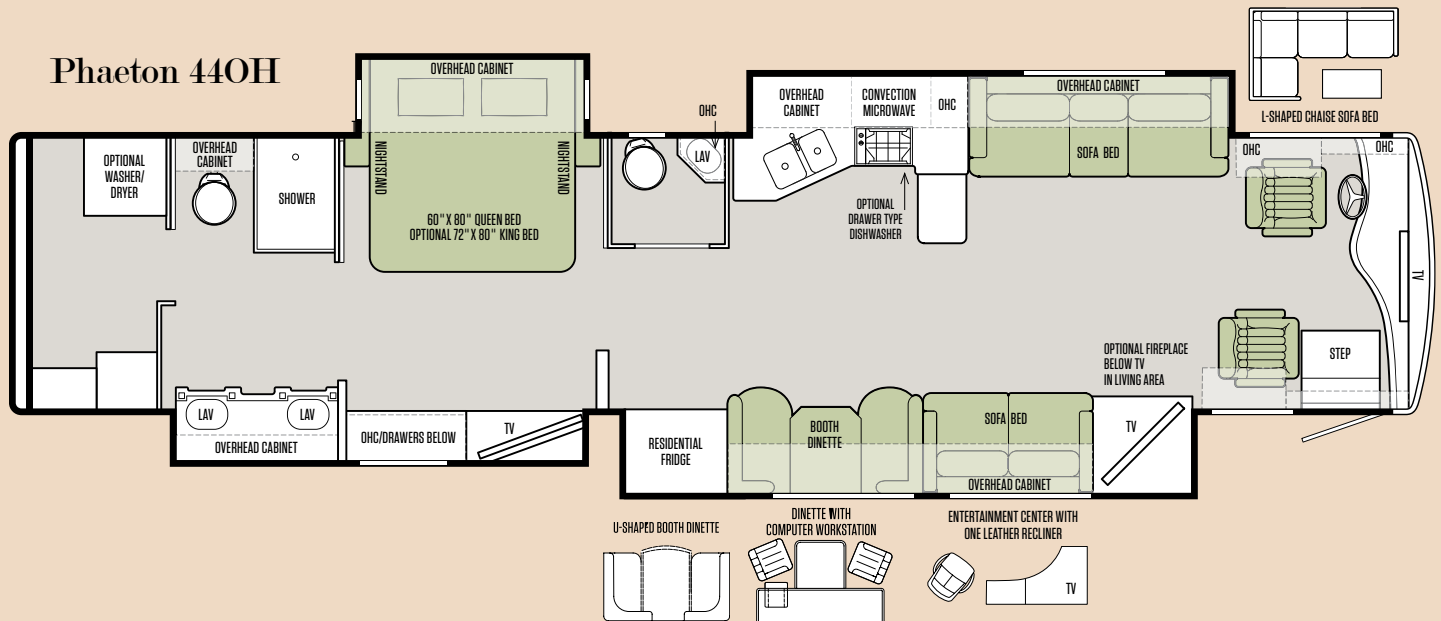
Driving the 2016 Phaeton 44OH

When the decision was made to add the 44OH floor plan to the Phaeton's 2016 lineup, Tiffin's chassis engineering department, under the direction of Brad Warner, had over seven years of experience in designing and building the PowerGlide chassis with a tag axle. After building chassis for several hundred 43-foot PowerGlide chassis beginning in 2009 and in 2013 launching PowerGlides for three 45-foot Allegro Bus floor plans, Warner, chassis plant manager Gary Harris, and the technicians on the chassis production line had no difficulty making the adjustments to build the chassis for the 2016 Phaeton 44OH. There was also a sense of déjà vu. The last time the Phaeton rode on a PowerGlide chassis was during the 2012 model year.

The 44OH is a cruising machine. With 450 horsepower and 1,250 lb.-ft. of torque, it has the power to move through interstate traffic and successfully take on five percent grades in the mountains. Independent front suspension, tuned shocks, and six air bags smooth out those rough road surfaces.

The wheel cut with the 295/80R22.5 tires is approximately 60 degrees. The ride-height adjusters provide the balance to take curves as if centrifugal force did not exist. Owners will be pleased with the coach's low ratio steering that does not require constant steering correction to prevent wandering. The Flex-steel driver and passenger chairs with six-way adjustments leave you ready for a nice evening on the town after you finish a 500-mile jaunt.

Offering six distinctive floor plans from 36 to 44 feet in length, America's favorite diesel pusher Class A motorhome will continue to please its owners and lead the parade. 



SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2016 Phaeton 44OH, Quad Slide

Base MSRP* – \$369,750 MSRP as tested with options – \$395,777.50

STANDARD FEATURES

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

Automotive
PowerGlide chassis
Allison 3000 MH six-speed automatic transmission with lock-up (torque converter)
Cummins 450-hp, ISL 8.9L, electronic/turbocharged diesel with 1,250 lbs.-ft. torque
Air ride (6 air bags)
Aluminum wheels
60° wheel cut
Independent front suspension
Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters and ABS disc in front
Compression brakes
Adjustable accelerator and brake pedals
18-inch VIP steering wheel
Cruise control
Fog lights
Daytime running lights
Emergency start switch

General Exterior
Fiberglass front & rear caps
Dual fuel fills
Large tinted one-piece windshield
10Kw Onan® manual slide-out generator
Hydraulic automatic leveling jacks
Heated power mirrors with integrated cameras
Three power roof vents with 3-speed fans
Single motor intermittent wipers
Gel-coat fiberglass walls
Full-body paint with protective film on front cap
Foil wrap insulation barrier
Deadbolt front entrance door
Double electric step
Dual pane windows
Exterior patio LED light
Automatic door awning
Metal wrapped automatic patio awning
Window awning package (2 windows)
Slide-out covers
Custom mud flap
Lockable swing-out storage doors with gas shocks
Motion sensor lighting for exterior storage
Remote locking system for entry door
Chrome handles on compartment doors
Flush mounted & painted frame dual pane windows
Roof ladder
Electric hose reel
Electric power cord reel
Docking lights
Back-up camera
Side-view cameras activated by turn signals
Heated water and holding tank compartments
Six 6v auxiliary batteries
2000 watt sine wave inverter with 100 amp converter & transfer switching
Black tank flush system
Water filter
Gravity water fill
Undercoating
110v exterior receptacle
110v / 12v converter
Digital TV antenna
Pre-wired for in-motion or automatic satellite dish
Cable TV ready hookup
Three 15,000 BTU low profile roof A/C systems with heat pumps
A/C condensation drains

Driver's Compartment
Power Ultraleather™ driver and passenger seats with passenger footrest
Contemporary wraparound dash
Courtesy drawer in step well
Courtesy lights in step well
Dual dash fans
One drawer in dash with compartment and sliding cup holder
One 12v dash receptacle

One USB connector to radio for MP3
Single CD player & AM/FM stereo
XM satellite-ready radio prep includes receiver and antenna (requires subscription)
Dash overhead 42.5" LG Smart+ TV
Two USB dash receptacles
Computer slide-out tray in PS dash with lock-out rails
Power solar & privacy windshield shades
Driver & passenger solar & privacy shades for side windows
Solid non-opening PS window
Custom infrared repeater system on all TVs
Solar / privacy shades for driver & passenger side windows
Color rear vision monitor system with side-view cameras activated by turn signals
Seatbelts integrated into driver & passenger chairs
Fire extinguisher

Living Area / Dinette
Ultraleather™ booth dinette/sleeper with solid surface tabletop
12v, 110v, & USB receptacles at dinette
Mid-section 49.5" LG Smart+ color TV, surround sound
Ultraleather sofa with Air Comfort hide-a-bed-DS
Ultraleather DE Sofa/Sleeper-PS

Kitchen
Solid surface counter top with residential stainless steel sink
Solid surface sink covers
Sink cover storage rack underneath sink
Expand-an-Island
Permanently mounted folding solid surface cooktop cover
Single lever sink faucet with sprayer
Built-in soap dispenser
Stainless steel convection/microwave oven
2-burner induction cooktop
Exterior vent for convection/microwave oven
Galley backsplash guards
Stainless steel residential refrigerator with ice & water dispenser in door
Built-in soap dispenser
Built-in waste can (not available with dishwasher option)
Power roof vent with 3-speed fan

Full Bath
Two medicine cabinets with large mirrors over vanity in full bath
Solid surface vanity top with molded lavatories
One medicine cabinet over toilet
Macerator toilet with sprayer
Skylight in shower with LED light in sliding solar cover
Aqua-Hot continuous hot water
Curved molded fiberglass shower surround
Residential-size shower
Hand-held shower head on flex hose with on-off switch
Power roof vent with 3-speed fan in full bath

Half Bath
One medicine cabinet in corner over lavatory with two side cabinets
Six vanity lights
Solid surface vanity top with molded lavatory
Toilet with sprayer
Power roof vent with 3-speed fan

Bedroom
Ceiling fan
Four OH storage cabinets in bed slide-out
Bed comforter with designer pillows
Sleeping pillows with shams
Queen-size bed with pillow-top mattress
Under bed storage
Night stands with 110v and USB outlets
Ultraleather upholstered headboard framed with curved wood molding
Two chests of drawers with solid surface countertops
Pre-wired for second satellite receiver

Entertainment system concealed with louvered doors in chest
42.5" LG Smart+ television
DirecTV® receiver (subscription required)
DVD player with surround sound for living room
Carbon monoxide and LPG leak detectors

Walk-in Closet
Storage cabinet wired & plumbed for washer/dryer
Floor-to-ceiling chest with six drawers, four open compartments
96" clothes hanging rod across rear of coach

General Interior
7-ft. ceilings
Soft touch vinyl ceilings with trey ceiling in living area
Porcelain tile floor throughout the coach
Treated carpet in slide-outs
High gloss raised-panel hardwood cabinet doors and drawers
Aqua-Hot hydronic heat
Extraordinaire™ AC system
Solid wood cabinet fascias & doors with concealed hinges
Medium alderwood cabinetry
12v disconnect switch
LED lighting
Complete cable wiring (interfacing with surround sound & satellite system)
Home theater surround sound system with concealed speakers
Electric step well cover
Chainless solar & privacy shades
Tank level monitor system
Smoke detector
Power roof vent with 3-speed fan
Vacuum cleaner

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

All electric coach (required option) includes induction cooktop and Aqua-Hot hydronic heating (water & air)
Heated tile floors
Dinette-computer workstation
In-dash navigation
Dishwasher, drawer type
Entertainment center w/one leather recliner and flip-up table-DS
Fireplace
In-Motion satellite dish
Basement slide-out tray
Exterior 42.5" LG Smart+ TV with sound bar
Stacked washer/dryer
Select Number mattress, king
Hadley air horns
Solar panel prep
Safe located in rear closet
Mocha cabinet finish (NC)

OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Automatic in-motion satellite dish
Additional basement slide-out tray
Ultraleather U-shaped dinette (non-sleeper)
Passenger side:
Ultraleather DE (jack knife) sofa/bed (NC)
Two leather recliners
Driver side:
L-shaped chaise sofa with hide-a-bed
Two leather recliners
Cordovan cabinet finish (NC)
English Chestnut cabinet finish (NC)
Sleep Number bed, queen
Memory foam mattress, queen
Memory foam mattress, king

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 310"
Overall length – 45'
Overall height w/roof air – 13'2"
Interior height – 83"
Overall width – 101"
Interior width – 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 47,600 lb.
Front GAWR – 15,600 lb.
Rear GAWR – 22,000 lb.
Tag GAWR – 10,000 lb.
GCWR – 57,600 lb.
UVW – 34,981 lb. as tested
CCC – 9,055 lb.
Trailer hitch capacity – 10,000 lb.

POWER TRAIN

Engine – Cummins 450-hp, ISL 8.9 liter, electronic, turbocharged diesel
Torque – 1,250 lb.-ft. at 1,400 rpm
Transmission – Allison 3000MH electronic six speed with two overdrives
Tire Size – 295/80R22.5 Michelin
Alternator – 210 amps

CHASSIS

Frame – PowerGlide chassis
Frame Design – Raised rail
Anti-locking Braking System – Full air brakes with Anti-locking Braking System (ABS)
Air Suspension (front) – ZF independent front suspension
Air Suspension (rear) – Dana axle with Reyco suspension
Air Suspension (tag) – Reyco axle and air suspension
Shock Absorbers (front) – Sachs tuned
Shock Absorbers (rear) – Bilstein tuned
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 with full body paint

ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – 4 adults
Fuel tank – 100 gallons
Freshwater – 100 gallons
Black water – 55 gallons
Grey water – 100 gallons

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 a Tiffin dealer nearest you, go to www.tiffinmotorhomes.com and click on "dealer locator." If internet access is not available, call 256-356-8661 and ask the operator for the Tiffin dealer location nearest to you.

PLEASE NOTE

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



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The Lowdown on Dirt

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Six years ago, Mr. Tiffin invited me to Red Bay to resolve some cleaning issues with his motorhomes. Various interior and exterior surfaces had changed to the point where prior cleaning techniques could damage the new surfaces. We set up cleaning directions for the factory and Tiffin dealers, and then I began a series of cleaning articles for *Roughing It Smoothly*.

As often happens with the passage of time, the guidelines became a blurred memory. Mr. Tiffin recently asked me to re-establish these techniques with his dealers and you, his customers. In the next several issues of *Roughing It Smoothly*, I combine years of professional cleaning experience with hundreds of hours researching the care of various surfaces. This research is then matched to the right combination of cleaning agents and tools to insure these surfaces remain in top condition. Let's start with the exterior cleaning.

Washing the Exterior

Since 2003, VOC regulations prohibit the use of lead in paint, which hardened the paint to deter oxidation. Many paint manufacturers now use a polyurethane base, which does little to safeguard the paint from oxidation. To combat oxidation, Tiffin Motorhomes applies layers of a clear coat sealant on top of the paint as protection against the elements. Proper care of the clear coat insures lifelong stability of the paint.

Paint manufacturers advise against the use of harsh degreasing cleaners and liquid dish washing soaps. The degreasing agents in these cleaners leave a residue on the sealant that is difficult to rinse clean. Eventually they soften the sealant, which leads to oxidation. Take a trip down memory lane back to the days when conscientious housekeepers used a heavy duty cleaner to mop their kitchen floors. The sticky residue left on the floor eventually softened the finish and destroyed the shine - the precise reaction of clear coat finishes.

Baby shampoo provides an effective yet gentle cleaner. Without the heavy degreasing agents, baby shampoo cleans without fear of leaving a residue to gum up the clear coat or gel coat finish of an automobile. Add a quarter cup per five gallon bucket of

water. Additionally toss in a half cup of 'made from grain' distilled white vinegar* to your wash bucket. Increase the vinegar to two-thirds cup for hard water. Start with one-half cup. If water spots are visible as you dry then increase the amount of vinegar.

Vinegar serves two purposes. First it boosts the cleaning ability of the baby shampoo or any cleaner so you don't need as much. Next vinegar is slightly acidic. The naturally occurring acid neutralizes the alkaline in the water to prevent water spots from forming. The acid in vinegar will not damage the paint like muriatic or phosphoric acids often referred to in magazine articles.

*NOTE: Do not use vinegar that says "Food Grade" or "Safe for Pickles." It is made from petroleum and should never be consumed or used for cleaning purposes. Look for the words "made from grain."

The Right Tools for the Job

Since the introduction of lead free paints, Lambswool is the recommended product to wash a motorhome, vehicle, boat or other people movers. The Lambswool carried by Mary Moppins is used by Tiffin and their dealers. Specifically designed to fit our four-way swivel pad holder, it allows you to safely wash your coach from the ground. We also carry a 100% Lambswool hand mitt for your vehicle.

Do not mistake Lambswool with imitations. Read the package label carefully. The front of the package reads 'Lambswool' while the small print on the back states "made from manmade fabrics" or similar wording. Imitation pads are made from 100% polyester or plastic. Plastic scratches and will scratch the finish off your coach, vehicle, boat, floor, cabinets and furniture. The scratches are so minute that they are barely noticeable—at first. For this reason, avoid the use of microfiber cloths, towels and pads as they are made from 80% polyester.

Likewise avoid brushes. Even though you may not see brush marks now, the damage happens as the bristles wear down. One washing and your coach is fine but the next washing leaves it covered with scratches. Use Lambswool wash pads to avoid these issues.



Mary Findley is a veteran cleaning expert, cleaning consultant to the RV industry, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Green Cleaning*, and owner of Mary Moppins. Mary's cleaning tips appear in magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *This Old House*, *Woman's World* and other national publications. Mary Moppins is now for sale. You may reach Mary through her website goclean.com or call 541-607-9498.

Use only 100% cotton towels to dry your coach. Be cautious of terry towels made in Taiwan or China. They are not checked for fiber content as they enter the States and generally contain up to 30% polyester.

Add the vinegar to the wash bucket then wash in the morning or evening to prevent water spots. Water spots eventually etch the paint like they do glass shower doors. Prevention becomes the key. Start with the roof (directions below) then wash one side at a time, rinse, and dry quickly, first using Mary Moppins EZE Squeegee followed by a towel placed over a Mary Moppins Cleaning Head. If caught immediately most water spots buff off with a damp terry towel and light elbow grease. If they have set a bit and the coach is more than six months old, rub with a damp cloth and a 1000 grit polishing compound or our RenewzIt. For paint under six months old, bring straight distilled white vinegar to a boil. Wear gloves and wipe the vinegar on with a soft cloth. Keep the area damp for 10 minutes then buff with a soft cloth dipped in water.

To remove oil and grease, remember Mary's #1 rule of cleaning: Give your product time to work. Dab a bit of a concentrated cleaner like our CleanEz — never an orange based cleaner or one

with petroleum distillates — onto a damp, soft cloth. Apply to the oil spot and wait 10 to 15 minutes before rubbing lightly to remove the oil. Rinse immediately. Remember, always rub parallel to the ground. Never rub in circles or vertical unless you like that fresh swirl mark look.

Roofs

Remove tree sap by freezing it with ice then gently scraping it off with a plastic scraper held flat against the roof. Use extreme care not to gouge the surface. Follow up with CleanEz or a concentrated cleaner to remove any remaining sap.

Tuck a stiff bristled toothbrush in your back pocket when you clean the roof to scrub the gaskets around fans and vents. Rubber naturally oxidizes and must be scrubbed to prevent drying and cracking. Treat with a silicone lubricant if the gaskets appear dry.

It is important to use a protectant like Mary's Advantage on the roof more frequently than the rest of your coach. The sun's direct line of attack on roofs causes rapid oxidation, which shows up as white caulk that cascades down the side when it rains or the coach is washed.

However, frequent application of a protectant results in a

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slick roof, which can cause falls. Solution? Purchase a pair of boat shoes made by Merrill or Teva called Non-Skid. Designed for clambering around wet boat decks, the soles on these shoes have a death grip on slick surfaces yet do not mar the finish. They also provide extra traction ascending and descending ladders.

To Wax, Seal or Protect

If ever there were a smorgasbord of options concerning care of an RV, it certainly surrounds the use of wax and protectants. Let’s solve the confusion.

What is the difference between wax, protectants and sealants? Wax is made from Carnauba. The problem with Carnauba is that it penetrates the clear coat and the paint, reaching the fiberglass, and seals it. Fiberglass must breathe or it suffocates and turns yellow over time. Carnauba does not yellow metal but it dulls the paint.

Advantage is specially formulated for Mary Moppins to contain polymers or protectants. Polymers sit on the surface to protect the clear coat and paint against UV ray damage. In addition they make the surface slick. Dirt and bugs slide right off, including off the back of rear view mirrors.

Furthermore, paint companies specifically state not to use products that contain petroleum distillates. Distillates can deteriorate the clear coat, which in turn causes the paint to oxidize. Unfortunately companies are allowed to put small amounts of distillates in a product without stating so on the bottle. You must read an MSDS (material safety data sheet) to determine if a product contains distillates. Type in ‘MSDS sheet for Ultra Wax by XYZ company’ into a browser on your computer. Look for the words: aliphatic hydrocarbon, mineral oil, hydrocarbon or petroleum, which are alternative names for petroleum distil-

lates. Mary’s Advantage is formulated without petroleum distillates as stated on the bottle.

Sealants, like Mary’s RenewzIt, are only necessary if the coach or vehicle is oxidized, scratched, has swirl marks, water spots or foggy headlights. Alternately look for a 1000 grit polishing compound that states “heavy duty cleaning” or “oxidation remover.” After removing the oxidation, wait 24 hours, then apply Advantage or a polymer based protectant to guard against further oxidation and restore the color and shine. Re-apply the protectant in three months, then again six months later to re-establish a protective coat.

Remember when applying a sealant or protectant to work with the grain of the paint, which is left to right. Circular motions leave swirl marks. Avoid the use of cloths that contain polyester, especially microfiber. Allow Advantage or your protectant to haze over, then remove it with a 100% cotton cloth like an old cotton t-shirt.

Testing for Oxidation

Test your coach or tow vehicle every six months for oxidation by pouring a bit of your protectant on a soft, white cotton cloth. Rub one spot for a bit. Any paint that appears on the cloth indicates oxidation. If you apply wax three to four times a year then your wax contains a distillate or silicone that has damaged the finish. Remove the oxidation with a sealant like RenewzIt or a new paint job is in your future.

If you apply a protectant once or twice a year, check the content of your protectant for distillates or silicone and increase the application to two to three times a year. Keep a keen eye out for oxidation on your roof. Wash it four times a year and test

Continued on page 76



While the Mary Moppins company does carry an excellent 4- to 8-foot fiberglass handle, all Mary Moppins products attach to any standard threaded handle.



Riding on Air

by Dave McClellan

The air in our RV tires is just as important to our health as the air we breathe. The correct pressure and maintenance is the safety net for long motorhome journeys. Understanding how to apply the right tire pressure depends on more than the size and strength of the tires. There are many factors that must be considered before, during, and after your travels. RVers should realize that tires are continuously under stress fighting the weight they carry, centrifugal force, cross winds, rough roads, wet pavement, and all aspects of road conditions and handling.

Before travel, the very first item on your to-do list is to check the pressure in each tire including the spare. Most larger motorhomes do not carry a spare because the tires are too cumbersome and heavy to change on the road. Every owner should have a professional road emergency service to fall back on. At the very least, keep the Michelin website available and map out your route. As you travel, the website will automatically update you with information regarding the nearest Michelin service center.

Next on your to-do list is to have your motorhome weighed. In order to get the weight properly distributed, you should follow the procedure found on the Michelin website michelin-rvtires.com.*

Pressure should be checked when the tires are cold and not driven more than one mile. The best time to check them is before leaving on your trip and every day thereafter while you are traveling. You cannot depend on everything you read or hear from a friend or RV dealer for proper tire inflation. All motorhomes and tires are not alike and use different air pressure depending on the coach weight. However, all tires on the same axle should always carry the same air pressure. Tire manufacturers offer charts on air pressure based on the weight of the coach. Also, look for the maximum air pressure which should be stamped on the rim. The Michelin website will give you all the information you will ever need to purchase and service your coach tires.

If you need to increase the tire pressure, you can do this with a 50-ft. air hose and use the motorhome's compressor. Check

*Tiffin, and/or *Roughing It Smoothly* do not endorse or support any tire website, tire manufacturer, or information gathered from the Internet.

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your manual for the location of the air hose hookup. While stopped at a rest area or other parking place, a quick check for tires while on the road is to hit each tire tread with a hammer. Each tire should have the same sound when you hit it. If a tire is low or flat you'll feel the difference and hear an unusual thud.

There are many tire pressure monitors on the market that can be viewed from the pilot seat as you are driving. The monitor will detect low air pressure and sound an alarm to let you know when a tire is low. It's a great safety system for your peace of mind while on the road. They are well worth the investment for your safety and can save you from having to manually check your tires. Before a trip, check your tires for physical damage and compare the monitors to a gauge check of the tires.

There are numerous places to weigh your coach. Many large truck fuel stops have scales to use or there may be a gravel pit, or truck sales/service near you. Sometimes you may not be able to weigh each individual tire, each axle weight, front to back, or side to side. All RVs have the max total weight and tire air pressure listed on a plaque or sticker. On a Tiffin coach, the max weight and tire pressure is usually listed on a sticker inside near the driver's seat. Before weighing your motorhome, be sure to have all of the tanks full. That means water, fuel, propane, total weight of family members, dingy if you tow one, and the contents of cupboards, closets, basements, and refrigerator. In the description of your coach you will find each holding tank volume so you can estimate that weight also. It all adds up quickly. It's best to have your motorhome ready for travel before you get on the scales so you can get an accurate weight reading. The Michelin website will tell you, step by step, all the procedure for weighing your motorhome.

If you need to adjust the load, it's important to keep each side as close to the same weight as possible. Front to back weight depends on whether you have a diesel pusher or gas engine. If




you have a diesel, you should distribute weight in the mid-section to achieve the recommended axle weights. In a front engine coach, move weight toward the rear if needed.

When you are ready to replace your tires, you may want to consider upgrading the tire rating to get less flex and more stability during highway driving or high winds. I purchased six new "H" rated tires (stepped up from "G" rating) for my 40-ft. Phaeton after a rear inside blowout on one of my original tires with 24,000 miles. No cause could be determined for the blowout but it was an 8-year-old tire. Most tire manufacturers will tell you, "that's about the average max tire age." You should also be reminded that the chassis of a motorhome is delivered with tires that can already be a year old before the coach is built and sold. This is the case because both the tire and the chassis manufacturers have to maintain production inventories. You can check the date code on your tires. Information about checking a tire's age can be found on the Michelin website.

What happens when you have a tire blowout? This is a driver's nightmare. There is a very informative and live demonstration online of a motorhome tire blowout. It includes the proper reaction that should be taken when a blowout occurs. It's a method that is contrary to what most drivers are tempted to do and a very interesting, safe way to control and stop your coach after a blowout. That demonstration can be seen at the Michelin website or at: [youtube.com/watch?v=lkwOE1yKY5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkwOE1yKY5c) *

To improve the life of the tires, I keep mine covered from the sun, wash them often with a mild detergent, and use a protectant dressing. I also use rubber pads under the tires when parked for any length of time.

I did make the wrong decision to have a balancing agent called silica sand put into all the tires. This has been a nightmare when checking the air pressure. The sand is very fine. When I use my tire pressure gauge, the sand is pushed back into the valve stem and plugs it up so that it will not close letting air escape back out the valve. To clear the valve I have to put air into the tire, which pushes the sand back down through the valve and into the tire. After the valve closes, I can proceed to check the air pressure. It doesn't happen all the time but often enough for me to report this warning, and it's certainly a nuisance you will want to avoid.

If your tires are running true and have the correct pressure for the load, you will not need to rotate them. If you notice uneven wear on the tires, rotation may be advisable but it requires dismounting the tires from the wheels and rebalancing them. Be sure you are working with a company that specializes in tires for Class A coaches before you decide to rotate and rebalance your tires. REMEMBER: You're riding on air. Tires and pressure, along with weight distribution, are the most important safety factors to consider before and during any journey. 



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IMPORTANT SAFETY RECALL NHTSA RECALL #15V-880

This recall is for the Coach Step brand of Electric Double and Triple Entry Steps

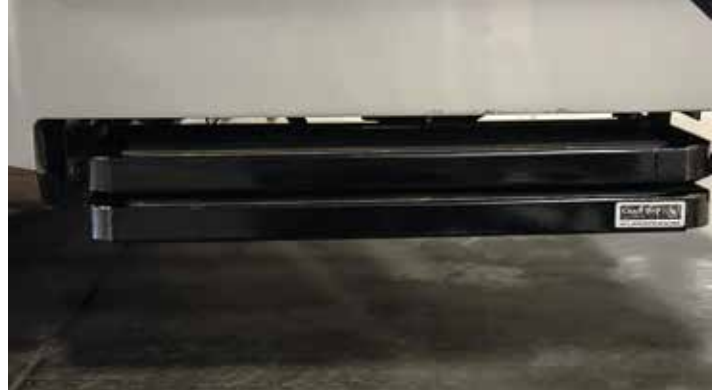
This notice is sent to you in accordance with the requirements of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, could exist on the following models of motorhomes: 2007-2010 Allegro Bays, 2008-2015 Allegro Open Roads and REDs, 2008-2015 Allegro Buses, 2008-2015 Phaetons. The specific motorhomes contain Coach Step Electric Double or Triple entry steps that were manufactured between May 25, 2007 and December 18, 2014 by Lippert Components, Inc. On certain motorhomes equipped with these Coach Step electric entry steps, an internal bolt on the steps that attaches the fan gear assembly to the steps could fracture. This results in the fan gear disengaging from the steps, which could cause the steps to stop in an unexpected position and appear to be loose or unstable. If the steps become unstable, it could cause a person to fall, resulting in injury.

Lippert Components has devised a remedy that involves installing a step retainer bracket to reinforce the operating mechanism. This will prevent the fan gear assembly from disengaging from the steps in the event that the center bolt was to fracture and that also reinforces a stable platform. This repair will be made at no cost to you. Please allow up to 30 minutes for the repair to be completed, depending on if there are double or triple steps installed on your motorhome.

Tiffin Motorhomes is aware that not all of the units identified above will have Coach Step brand entry steps installed. To confirm whether your motorhome is involved, you can look to see if your steps have a sticker identifying them as “Coach Step” brand steps. This sticker will be in the right corner of the bottom step. Please note that if your steps do not have a sticker or if the sticker has been painted over, the steps will have to be examined by a service center or dealer to determine if they are involved.

If you determine that you do not have Coach Step entry steps, please make note of the brand installed and call Jeannie Madden at 256-356-8661 extension 2176 or send an email to jeannie.madden@tiffinmotorhomes.com so that we can clear this recall from your motorhome.



This is a Coach Step brand step



This is a different brand step

To arrange for the completion of this recall, please call Lippert Components at 574-537-8900.

If you are unable to have the defect remedied without charge and within a reasonable time after you tender the vehicle for repair, please contact the Tiffin Warranty Department, at 1-256-356-8661, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Central Time. You may also wish to notify the Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington DC 20590, or phone 1-888-327-4236 (TTY: 1-800-424-9153); or go to <http://www.safercar.gov>.

We regret any inconvenience this action may cause, but feel certain you understand our interest in motor vehicle safety.

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The Greeting Problem

by Dr. John Pilarczyk

We have all had this experience while walking in a campground. We stroll down the lane and see a beautiful dog approaching with owners in tow, only to have the dog jump up and greet us by knocking us over or getting paw prints on our new clean outfit. The same response can occur when a knock on the RV door brings your pet to a hysterical run, and as soon as guests open the door, they are flattened by an exuberant ball of fur.

Being greeted like this by a ten-pound dog is one thing; but a 100-pound Labrador is another matter. As pet owners, we sometimes think this is cute and that our dog just loves the guests at the door or on the trail. Most guests would disagree. An energized dog that sits and wags its tail for the new guest is much more appreciated.

As pet owners, we should recognize that this behavior is not wanted and that your pet needs to have all four feet on the floor when greeting people. We must be consistent with our training. If we allow our dog to jump up on us and reward him when he does, but then expect him to stay down when guests arrive, then we are gearing up for failure. No jumping up on guests requires all four on the floor for everyone.

When your pet hears the door knock or you meet someone on the trail, you must redirect their energy to jump up and greet someone, which means giving your dog a treat if he sits and does not jump. A reward of some kind needs to be associated with the “sit” response or the “off” response. You might throw a toy or other object that your pet likes and have him take it to his bed until the guests are inside your RV and then call him/her and give a reward for the desired response. You must be consistent, but if you make learning fun and reinforce success with rewards, you will get the response you want.

If you can get some volunteers to help you, have them line up and approach each one with your dog. If your dog sits when the person is reached, then reward him. If he jumps up, turn around

and walk away and remove the treat. This technique needs to be repeated until your dog sits when reaching the volunteer.

The treat itself does not have to be large, just a bite-size portion will suffice. Your dog will not get fat from these treats during training as long as the treat is small.

Some dogs are picky eaters and do not take treats, so you must change the reward by using personal attention and petting your dog when you get the desired response.

A lot of people recommend kneeling the dog in his chest or stepping on its toes but this may only work at the time. These actions do not teach your dog that the desired response to greeting is to sit and wait for the treat – the treat being either food or a pat on the head.

Sometimes there will be a break in the training and your dog will relapse and jump up on someone. If so, it is best to turn around and ignore him. If he does it again, keep turning and do not give any attention or treat until all four feet are on the floor.

Eventually your pet will realize that jumping up will get them nothing. Remember you must be consistent in your training so do not give mixed signals. Your dog and your guests will appreciate your interest in their comfort and welfare. Enjoy that next trip down the campground road and look forward to greeting your friends.

Happy Travels, John and Kay



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Interviews from South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida



Dan & Flo Kleine

Hometown: Titusville, Florida

Interviewed: New Green Acres RV Park,
South Carolina

- Dan and Flo purchased a 2007 40' Phaeton at Lazy Days in Florida. The Good Sam consultants traveled half-time and have been full-timers for 7 years.
- Dan & Flo have 2 sons, 4 grandchildren and a great-grandson Chase.
- Dan says that they have come a long way from sleeping under the stars 47 years ago at Meramec State Park in Missouri.
- They are an RV family and have always enjoyed camping, beginning with 2 cots, 1 tent, then 1 pop-up, a trailer, 2 fifth wheels and finally a motorhome.
- Dan was a franchised Snap-on tool dealer for 30 years with 4 trucks. Flo was a plant manager at an automotive supplier for 22 years.
- They have traveled to the Maritime Provinces and every state except Alaska & Hawaii. A 15 year-old Chiweenie named Roxie Rue, who holds their hearts, travels with them.
- RV affiliations: Good Sam, Allegro Club
- Since retirement, Flo has been a member of Mad Hatters of T60 and 2016 chairperson for their vintage luncheon.
- Dan is a huge fan of NASCAR racing and loves watching the grass grow.



Ken & Maryanne Sturtz

Hometown: Sinking Springs, Pennsylvania

Interviewed: Carolina Crossroads at Roanoke
Rapids, North Carolina

- Ken and Maryanne purchased a 2011 Allegro Red at Stoltzfuss RV & Marine, West Chester, Pennsylvania. It has a Cummins engine on a Freightliner chassis.
- The couple met at Kent State University and have been married over 50 years. They have 4 children: Janseen, Michael, Matthew, and Kevin; and 12 grandchildren.
- They are currently part-time RVers 4 to 6 months of the year, and Snowbirds at the Emerald Coast RV Resort in Panama City Beach, Florida.
- Camping for 40 years, they have traveled to the Maritime Provinces and 46 states. They started with a pop top conversion van, then a trailer and a class A Coachman before buying the RED.
- Ken retired from Burnham Boiler in 2008 as Senior Vice President. Since retiring they have enjoyed traveling with their 3 Labradors to Virginia, Pennsylvania, the Grand Canyon and the Outer Banks.
- Ken has numerous interesting hobbies including coin and stamp collecting, photography, sports, and writing. He has a particular interest in Civil War era literature.
- Future plans include Washington and Oregon, and then a cruise to Alaska.



Michael & Idamae Picheco

Hometown in Florida

Interviewed: Wilderness RV Park Estates, Silver
Springs, Florida

- Michael and Idamae purchased a new 2014 Phaeton 40QBH from Lazydays in Florida.
- They have been married 51 years, since meeting in high school.
- They have three daughters: Michelle, Christine, and Melissa.
- They enjoy their six granddaughters and one grandson.
- Michael and Idamae are RV travelers half-time and have been RVing for four years in the Midwest and on the East Coast.
- They enjoy Florida weather during the winter.
- They have visited many states but their favorite states for RVing are Indiana and Michigan.
- They love the lifestyle, meeting new people and seeing new places, and the freedom to travel where they want in the comfort of their Phaeton.
- Before retiring, Michael was self-employed in the area of transportation and logistics.
- They are both active in the Timber Pines RV Club in Florida. Michael is the treasurer and Idamae is the secretary.
- Michael and Idamae travel with their dog, an adorable Havanese; with big brown eyes, wagging tail and shaggy face.



Editor's Note: Dave has been camping for 52 years in tents to motorhomes. Dave and Terri purchased a new 2008 Phaeton 40QSH. In 2010, they sold their home and purchased a 2.8 acre lot in the Berkshire Mountains (Peru, MA) for summer use. They named their mini-campground "Beech-Wood Acres." In 2012 they purchased an RV lot at Wilderness RV Park Estates in Silver Springs for use in the winter months. Dave and Terri are now full-timers who are living their dream.

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Rocky Mountain National Park



THE THIRD MOST VISITED NATIONAL PARK CELEBRATED ITS CENTENNIAL IN 2015

We had the good fortune to visit Rocky Mountain National Park in July 2015 while the citizens of Grand Lake and Estes Park and the National Park Service were celebrating the park's 100th Anniversary. It was a celebration of history and mountain majesty that left visitors in awe — in fact, over three million visitors in awe!

The park was dedicated on September 4, 1915. Those speaking on that late summer day unanimously agreed: “We only gave it a name. We did not create Rocky Mountain National Park.” President Woodrow Wilson signed the Rocky Mountain National Park Act on January 26, 1915, that officially designated the area as a national park.

No one in Estes Park or Grand Lake was quite sure what a national park was 101 years ago, but three leaders committed to Rocky Mountain National Park's preservation pressed relentlessly for the recognition. The nine parks who had earlier claimed the Congressional designation were operating with a variety of supervision and governance. It would be another year before the National Park Service was created when the president signed the Organic Act on August 25, 1916.

The new agency's mission as managers of national parks and monuments was clearly stated: “. . . to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by

such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

My grandparents were in their late forties and my parents were teenagers when the National Park Service was established. After reading the condensed mission statement, I began to feel very much a part of those “future generations.” And how much more are my children and my grandchildren now sharing in the legacy preserved by the NPS.

Human history in the United States always begins with Native Americans. It is interesting as you hike the trails and enjoy the scenery in this national park to reflect on who was here before the Europeans arrived. Archaeological evidence shows prehistoric occupation of the park goes back 12,000 years.

These tribes were hunter-gatherers, an activity in the higher elevations that was limited to the warmer months, late April to early October. In the fall, they organized elk drives by building two stone walls, wide apart initially and narrowing to a point that led into traps where they killed the elk for their winter sustenance. After the meat was dried into a jerky, it was ground and mixed with berries, roots, and animal fat to make pemmican. Formed into small bars, it was a very nutritious food that could be stored and used through the winter months. Radiocarbon dating of the projectile points used in the elk drives indicate the hunting technique was used as early as 4,000 B.C. At lower



Text by Fred Thompson
Images by contributing photographers

PHOTO BY SUE CLEMENZ

elevations, the drives were used to harvest bison, antelope, and deer. This hunting technique faded out once the tribes began to acquire horses that allowed them to use a hunt, chase, and kill system of pursuing game.

The major inhabitants during the past 400 years were the Ute and Arapaho. Pottery evidence indicates the Apache also occupied this area 300 years ago and historical records point to their battle with the Arapaho in the 1830s. The Apache eventually migrated into the Southwest. By 1880 the Utes and the Arapaho had been forced to move to reservations, the Utes to Colorado and Utah and the Arapaho to Oklahoma and Wyoming.

The Colorado Rockies were not explored by the Louis and Clark Expedition (1804–1806). Following the Missouri River west, they took a northern route across the Rocky Mountains and were not looking for more mountains to cross on their way home. They left that opportunity for a native of New Hampshire and a graduate of Dartmouth College in topographical engineering. Stephen H. Long led five expeditions in the early 1800s covering 26,000 miles.

In 1820 President James Monroe appointed Long to lead an expedition up the Platte River to the Rocky Mountains. A member of the expedition, Edwin P. James, made the first recorded ascent of Pikes Peak. After several friendly encounters with Pawnee, Otoe, and Omaha Indians, the expedition moved into the northeast corner of what eventually became the Colorado Territory. In late October, the forward team found what appeared to

be the highest mountain in that area and named it Longs Peak.

Departing the region, they followed the South Platte River to the Arkansas River watershed where they split into two groups to explore more territory. After encountering hostile Indians, Long's group barely survived before meeting up with the other part of his expedition at Fort Smith. Long's report to the President and the nation served as a guide to future adventurers and miners heading for Colorado.

Mountain men and trappers who had preceded Long in the Rockies continued to pursue their trade for several decades. Farmers seeking free and fertile land followed the exodus to Oregon. Very few had any interest in the treacherous mountains due west of the Kansas plains. An unusual exception to that trend was Joel and Patsey Estes with their 13 children who moved to Colorado in 1832 from St. Joseph, Missouri, to find ranching land. After half of their children were grown, Joel and Patsey took the remaining six kids and joined the California Gold Rush in 1849. Joel and a son staked a claim that they sold the following year for \$30,000. Depending on the index used for a comparison, that amount at a minimum would be worth over \$1 million today.

On June 22, 1850, a wagon train bound for California crossed the South Platte near its confluence with Clear Creek. Lewis Ralston dipped his gold pan in a small stream flowing into Clear Creek and immediately found gold. A friend in his diary called the stream Ralston's Creek and made note of where it was on his map. Ralston was intent on getting to California, but he returned in 1858 and touched off the gold rush to the Rockies. Within a year over 100,000 gold seekers rushed to Colorado, resulting in a population boom.

With their previous success in the California gold rush, Estes, his wife, and a son decided to evaluate the "new gold rush" and returned to Colorado in 1859, moving to Denver. When the gold rush turned into a bust, they escaped the disappointed crowds and traveled north along the Platte to Fort St. Vrain, looking for ranching land. On an exploring and hunting trip into the mountains on horseback, Joel and his son Milton followed the North St. Vrain River into higher elevations. Topping a hill, they discovered a beautiful blue valley where they built two cabins. Joel moved the rest of the family in before October. Patsey wrote in her diary, "We were monarchs of all we surveyed."

The Colorado Territory was organized in 1861 and the territory became a state on August 1, 1876, gaining the distinction of being called the "Centennial State."

William N. Byers, a successful newspaperman from Denver who owned the *Rocky Mountain News* and was also a capable cartographer, stayed with the Estes family in the early 1860s while he explored the area and made a failed attempt to climb Longs Peak. Equally impressed with the beauty of the valley and the gracious hospitality of the Estes family, he named the valley Estes Park. Facing failure from long, successive, harsh winters, Joel and Patsey sold all of their land in the valley in 1866 and returned to St. Joseph. Patsey later wrote in her diary that

their summers in Estes Park were “like living on the doorstep of heaven.” William Byers returned to Estes Park in 1868 to climb Longs Peak with John Wesley Powell.

Estes Park by 1870 certainly was not on very many “bucket lists,” but those who looked for unusual places to visit were finding it and spreading the word.

A nobleman from Ireland who wanted to tour the American West arrived in Estes Park in December 1872 and stayed at the Evans Ranch, the former Estes Ranch acquired by Griff Evans in 1867, himself an Irishman. A. Q. MacGregor made a land claim and built the MacGregor Ranch in 1873. The nobleman, Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quin, Fourth Earl of Dunraven, returned two years after his first visit and established a private hunting reserve and in 1874 established the Estes Park Hotel.

The James, Hupp, and Sprague families homesteaded in the area. The James family moved to the present site of Elkhorn Lodge and opened a tourist home. Elkanah Lamb built Longs Peak House in 1878 for guests in the Tahosa Valley. His son, Carlyle Lamb, became a professional guide and led 146 trips for climbers to summit Longs Peak.

In 1884 **Enos Mills** arrived from Kansas to visit his mother’s cousin, Mrs. Elkanah Lamb. Mills was 14 and came for the summer in hopes of healing a chronic ailment. The next year he made his first ascent of Longs Peak.

More hotels were built as climbers, photographers, and scenery seekers came to visit from May through October. A few stayed for winter skiing and snowshoeing.

In 1887 Mills moved to Butte, Montana. He spent his summers traveling and studying the coastal ecology of the Pacific states, and visiting in Alaska and Europe. In 1889 Mills had a life-changing meeting with naturalist John Muir in San Francisco. From that day forward he dedicated his life to conservation activism, lecturing, and writing.

In 1902 he purchased his aunt’s home he had visited as a teenager and opened Longs Peak Inn. During his lifetime, he climbed Longs Peak 40 times by himself and nearly 300 times as a guide for his guests. He also treated his guests to excursions into the wilderness and nature lectures.

Mills realized the urgency to philosophically and legally protect the pristine mountains between Estes Park and Grand Lake just for the sake of preserving them for the future. He enlisted the Sierra Club, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and any other groups who would listen to his passionate lectures. Local residents were ambivalent about losing their freedom to do whatever they wished on the land that would become the national park: cutting firewood, hunting and fishing wherever they wished without any restrictions, camping wherever it suited them. But the majority realized that protecting the park lands with restrictive use was worth doing in order to cultivate and develop the tourism economy.

In 1903 **Freelan Oscar Stanley** arrived in Estes Park seeking clean air and a dry climate to cure tuberculosis. He and his twin brother, Francis Edger Stanley, were making concert



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF NPS



Four of the five key principals in the organizational thrust to create Rocky Mountain National Park are shown above shortly after the dedication on September 4, 1915: Enos Mills, F.O. Stanley, Edward Taylor, and Mary Belle King Sherman. Not shown, James Grafton Rogers. ♦ Over 300 enthusiastic supporters of the new national park attended the dedication ceremony on a cold, cloudy September day. The country already had nine national parks, but no centralized management and oversight. The National Park Service under the leadership of Stephen Mather was in a conceptual stage but legislation for its creation would not be signed by President Wilson for another year. ♦ Park Superintendent Vaughn Baker spoke at the Rocky Mountain National Park's rededication ceremony September 4, 2015 to an audience of several hundred enthusiastic celebrants.



violins by the age of 12. They also developed the first practical dry photographic plate process which was sold to Eastman Kodak, making them very wealthy. The twins were best known for their improvement of the steam engine and making the engine feasible for use in powering an automobile. Operating under the name Stanley Steamer, Freelan drove a steam-powered vehicle successfully over the rough wagon road from Lyons to Estes Park in two hours. In 1909 he built the Stanley Hotel on a hill overlooking Estes Park, with luxury accommodations that included tiled bathrooms and electricity. The hotel is still in operation today. F.O.

Stanley bought into Enos Mills' dream of a protected park and recruited others to support the mission.

Stanley was a great example of a successful entrepreneur giving back to his community. After he opened his hotel in 1909, he built a hydro plant to generate electricity for the town, a waste disposal site, and a water system, and also donated the land for the school.

Edward Taylor came from the Midwest and started his career in Colorado as a high school principal. He went on to law school, practiced law for several years, and was elected to the Colorado Senate. After he was elected to the U.S. Congress, he shepherded the bill to create the Rocky Mountain National Park through the House and Senate until it was signed by the president on January 26, 1915.

Mary Belle King Sherman, a college-educated woman from Chicago, was a member of the Federated Women's Clubs. She and her husband, John, a newspaper editor in Chicago, owned a home in Estes Park. In her civic roles, she supported the creation of six national parks and became known as the "National Park Lady."

James Grafton Rogers (not shown in this photograph) was a key person in the establishment of the Rocky Mountain National Park. He was a realist in working behind the scenes to bring people together. He founded the Colorado Mountain Club, bringing together those who were anxious to see the area set aside. An avid outdoorsman, he had climbed many of Colorado's Fourteeners (mountains over 14,000 feet in elevation). These five dedicated individuals stand out as the key principles who were instrumental in obtaining the national park status.

On September 4, 1915, Enos Mills led the ceremony for the dedication of Rocky Mountain National Park. He emphasized to the gathering of 300 that "the love of our land must be inspired by the magnificence of our national parks."

In recognizing Mills tireless work over the past quarter century, F. O. Stanley called him "the father of Rocky Mountain National Park." Stephen T. Mather, who one year later would become the first director of the National Park Service, spoke in honor of Mills and those who worked with him to make it happen.

Mills continued to write books and lecture until his untimely death in 1922 from blood poisoning created by a tooth infection.

The Superlatives

With only 415 square miles within its borders, Rocky Mountain National Park is only one-eighth the size of Yellowstone. But when you recognize the extremes in its topography in that relatively small footprint, it packs a wallop!

Obviously, its first claim as a national park is mountains. There are 60 peaks over 12,000 feet and 23 over 13,000 feet. Longs Peak, the highest inside the park, tops out at 14,259 feet and is the fifteenth highest peak in Colorado. The elevation of the park's lowest valley is 7,840 feet – that's 1.5 miles high. The elevation variance is 6,419 feet. The park's lowest valley is 1,156 feet higher than North Carolina's Mt. Mitchell, the highest point east of the Mississippi River.

This national park within its 415 square miles has 450 miles of streams and rivers, 150 lakes, all above 7,840 feet in elevation. It is a hiker's paradise with 350 miles of mapped trails. Back-country camping is allowed with permits.

Trail Ridge Road, 48 miles of two-lane paved highway, connects Estes Park on the east side of RMNP to Grand Lake on the west side. Eleven miles of this national scenic byway are above the tree line, laying claim to being the highest paved highway in

the U.S. Due to heavy snow, it is open only four months a year.

Geologists tell us the mountains were formed by glaciers over the last 20 millenniums, creating a habitat diversity almost unprecedented in an area this small. Valleys are often wetlands with cottonwoods and willows. Slopes are open forests of pine and aspen. The upper elevations to the tree line are covered with spruce and Douglas fir. The tundra above the tree line is covered with low growing mosses and a profusion of summer flowers.

The Old Fall River Road

Grand Lake must have felt left out of the national park awakening in Colorado. They lobbied for a road across the mountains from Estes Park. Work on the Fall River Road had actually started in 1913, but at the time of the dedication only two miles had been completed. The 37-mile road was opened exactly five years later in September 1920. Tight switchbacks, no protected

shoulders, and extremely tight clearance with cars traveling in opposite directions made most of the trip a white-knuckles experience. Today, an abbreviated section of the Old Fall River Road runs one-way from the Fall River Visitor Center to the Alpine Visitor Center. We spent four hours on the road, finding numerous places to stop for scenic photography and hiking.



The gravel road with sharp switchbacks and steep embankments takes intrepid drivers to beautiful waterfalls, riparian valleys with lush summer plants, slopes rising to 12,000 feet, and a jaw-dropping cirque just before reaching the Alpine Visitor Center at 11,796 feet.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRED THOMPSON

The Trail Ridge Road

In 1924 Stephen Mather, NPS director, lobbied Congress relentlessly until it agreed to spend millions building new roads inside the national parks. Rocky Mountain received the necessary funding to begin work on the Trail Ridge Road in 1926.

Construction was restricted by the short summers, frozen soil that resisted drilling, and the extra time that it took to protect the alpine plants in the fragile tundra. The stringent design criteria was intended to ensure the road would “lie lightly on the land,” displaying the region’s rich scenic diversity with minimal impact on the natural environment. The road was opened in 1932 with a gravel surface and paved in 1940.

Unlike the narrow Fall River Road, the 48-mile Trail Ridge Road was designed as a two-lane with a 22-foot roadbed. Long continuous curves were used to gain elevation with grades generally less than five percent and never exceeding seven. Wide stone-walled turnouts provide space for visitors to park and

soak up the scenery. More than eleven miles of the road lie above the tree line. The highest point on Trail Ridge Road is 12,183 feet, located between Lava Cliffs and the Gore Range Overlook.

Plan to take a drive on Trail Ridge Road at night. Pick up an inexpensive stargazer’s guide at a visitor center and download the SkyView® app to your iPad or iPhone. At 11,000 feet you are above almost 50 percent of the earth’s atmosphere that reflects the light pollution back to earth. A late evening drive will present one of nature’s greatest light shows. Dress warmly, even in mid-summer, because the temp drops quickly after sunset. Give your eyes a chance to adjust after you get out of your vehicle. You can easily see the Milky Way, and find the Big Dipper, North Star, Orion, Sirius, and Virgo. If you don’t have a telescope, field glasses will enhance considerably what you can see and identify. A light-year is approximately six trillion miles. You are looking into a universe with stars thousands of light-years away.

Following the Trail Ridge Road

Using the RMNP’s “Guide to Trail Ridge Road” (\$2 at Welcome Centers), we began a full one-day trip following the 12 Tour Stops in the 24-page guidebook. You will travel through four ecosystems, cross the Continental Divide, and ascend 3,243 feet. Presenting all the expansive vistas in *RIS* of this “Highway in the Sky” is impossible, so only selected images are shown here.

Tour Stop 1. Deer Ridge Junction. The road actually follows a route once used by Ute and Arapaho Indians. Archaeologists as well as visitors have found projectile points and aboriginal fire rings common at the tree line.

The Montane Ecosystem. Even though you are 1.7 miles high at this stop, it is considered the “lower elevation.” However, it is a warmer, drier climate here with open meadows and stands of ponderosa pines. This ecosystem provides food for mammals and birds: grasses, wildflowers, and berry-producing shrubs. You will see mule deer grazing throughout the area.

Tour Stop 2. Hidden Valley. Forests of spruce and fir cover the slopes between 9,000 and 11,000 feet. This valley at 9,240 feet offers seasonal recreation throughout the year. Check with a ranger at the visitor center for scheduled valley recreation.



Tour Stop 3. Many Parks Curve. In Colorado, grassy meadows enclosed by mountains were called “parks”— e.g. Estes Park. At this overlook, several parks are separated by forested ridges. Wildlife is abundant.

Tour Stop 4. Rainbow Curve. At 10,829 feet, this stop on the Trail Ridge Road is over two miles above sea level (10,560 ft.). Perspective: think of stopping for a moment while walking on a beach and seeing an airliner two miles up. It’s only a tiny speck in the sky on a clear day. The big trees are below on the lower slopes and vegetation is reduced to scrubby trees and shrubs.



Rainbow Curve

PHOTO BY ANN SCHONLAU

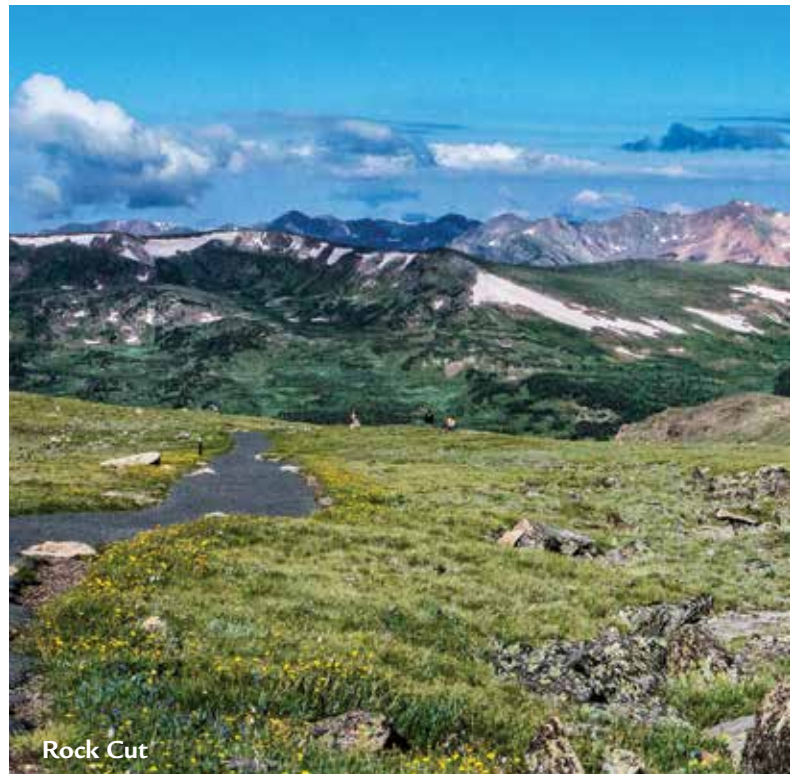
Tour Stop 5. Forest Canyon Overlook. In slightly over two miles from Stop 4, you have gained nearly a thousand feet in elevation (11,716 feet). A brief walk will present a view of Forest Canyon, Hayden Gorge, and Gorge Lakes, all of which were formed by glacial ice. This stop is in a tundra protected area. Elk bulls often feed on the tundra at this location.



Forest Canyon Overlook

PHOTO BY FRED THOMPSON

The Alpine Ecosystem. Approximately one-third of the RMNP is above the tree line in northern Colorado. The Alpine Tundra Ecosystem starts between elevations of 11,000 and 11,500 feet. Most alpine plants are perennials, dwarfed by strong winds and cold temperatures. Some of the perennials take two or three years to form flower buds which survive the winter below the surface and then open and produce blossoms with seeds in the few weeks of summer. Non-flowering lichens cling to rocks and soil, adding color as well. Tread lightly and stay on the trails. Repeated footsteps will destroy tundra plants. Recovery may take hundreds of years. Remember the keyword: Fragile.



Rock Cut

Tour Stop 6. Rock Cut. At 12,110 feet, you are only 70 feet below the highest point on the parkway, an 11-mile stretch often called the “Roof of the Rockies.” The paved Tundra Communities Trail (at left) at this stop presents 360-degree panoramas of the Rockies and bend-over-and-look-closely views of 100 species of flowering plants growing on the alpine tundra. Set your camera for close-up focus and take home an explosion of color you can frame.

Tour Stop 7. Lava Cliffs. Over 24 million years ago, volcanic eruptions repeatedly deposited debris on this area. A hot, incandescent flow of ash cooled over the debris to form the dark formations northwest of the parking area. Eons later, glacial ice took out part of the hillside and exposed the volcanic rock you see today. Leaving the parking lot, you will come to the highest point on Trail Ridge Road: 12,183 feet.



Lava Cliffs

PHOTO BY JOHN MARINO



PHOTO BY ANN SCHONLAU

Tour Stop 8. Alpine Visitor Center. The visitor center sits atop a natural glacial cirque which collects all the way into June enormous amounts of snow. An unusual architectural feature, heavy logs above the roof support the structure and catch the snow. If you did not pack your own lunch, the visitor center has a restaurant and a large store.



PHOTO BY FRED THOMPSON

Tour Stop 9. Medicine Bow Curve. On a reasonably clear day, you can see the Medicine Bow Mountains extending into Wyoming. In this vista, the subalpine forest on the slopes reveals two tree limits: above the tree line where it is too cold for trees; and below on the valley floor where it is too wet for trees to grow.

Tour Stop 10. Milner Pass. While in the western mountains of the North America, everyone gets a kick out of crossing the Continental Divide. In the U.S., everything flowing east goes into the Gulf of Mexico. Rivers flowing west go to the Pacific or the Gulf of California. The Trail Ridge Road crosses the Continental Divide at Milner Pass (10,758 feet).

The Subalpine Ecosystem. Occupying elevations between 9,000 and 11,000 feet, subalpine forests consist mostly of fir and Engelmann spruce and receive a lot of snow, some of which does not melt until mid-June. As it melts, wildflowers and thick grasses carpet the forest openings and stream banks, providing food for a wide variety of species that inhabit this ecosystem.



Milner Pass

Tour Stop 11. Farview Curve. The Colorado River originates five miles north of this overlook at La Poudre Pass. **The Riparian Ecosystem** is evident in the rivers, streams, ponds, and water sources from the plains to the subalpine ecosystem, including cattail marshes, cottonwood, willow, and birch. Seventy-five percent of regional wildlife depends on this ecosystem.



Farview Curve

PHOTO BY RACHEL WILLIAMS

Tour Stop 12. Holzwarth Historic Site. Ranching in the mountain valleys was far more feasible than farming due to the length of the growing season. John Holzwarth staked a homestead claim in 1917 with a plan for a cattle ranch. The opening of the Fall River Road in 1920 changed his mind and he redeveloped his lodge into the Holzwarth Trout Ranch. Rustic cabins were added on both sides of the river. John Holzwarth Jr. later took over the operation and ran it until 1973 when The Nature Conservancy bought the property, and transferred it to the National Park Service in 1975. Several of the structures have been restored. The Holzwarth Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. Tours are offered.

The National Parks: The Big Picture Isn't the Only One

It is so easy in any national park to become riveted by the main attraction that the park is famous for, that sometimes smaller wonders get ignored.

As a naive 21-year-old, I was returning from Canada's Banff National Park through Yellowstone National Park for the first time, and wasn't sure I needed to see Old Faithful erupt. My best friend and traveling companion said, "Well, since we're here, I suppose we might as well see it." Then we were so stupefied by the spectacle that we stayed overnight to see it a few times more before we left.

Years later I returned with my late husband to photograph Yellowstone. On my first trip I had completely missed the spurting mud pots, the bison, hearing the wolf song, Yellowstone Falls, the lodgepole pines, and many other delights. Fortunately, after decades of criss-crossing the country with my husband to photograph its scenic wonders for our stock photo agency, the lesser things became part of what I sought out from each park from day one.

Often it is the plants—the limber pines and tundra flowers of Rocky Mountain National Park, wild roses at the Grand Canyon's North Rim, red penstemon growing out of the pebbly black volcanic soil at Sunset Crater National Monument, or four foot high sword ferns or oceans of lupine cascading down hillsides at Redwoods National Park. Time your trip to Big Bend to see the giant Dagger yuccas in bloom. And oh, for the crunch of red huckleberries between your teeth at Mount Rainier National Park.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, besides its misty views from the Blue Ridge Parkway, has a wealth of historic log houses, log barns, and other structures. At North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt National Park, after you've admired the bison herds and prairie wildflowers,

Text by Suzanne Clemenz
Photography by Fred Thompson

Roadside flowers



Tundra flowers



look for cannonball concretions in the colorfully banded badlands. Approach each park with a curiosity about what else you can find beyond the major attraction.

Wildlife abounds at many National Parks. Caribou, wolves, ptarmigan, the Grizzly bear families are visible on the wonderful bus ride into the interior of Denali. Fast little whipsnakes and families of javelinas (collared peccaries) are among the critters at Organ Pipe Cactus National Park. Look for otters at Everglades and beavers or beaver lodges at Grand Tetons.

Have you caught on to birds yet? You're missing many wonderful opportunities if you don't seek some of the feathered beauties each park hosts. Ask if there are guided bird walks. After visiting several national parks, you'll become aware of how different the habitats and winged inhabitants are not only from park to park and region to region, but also at different elevations and in different habitats within each park. Look for them enroute, as well, in farmlands, deserts, marshes and bayous, and even in cities and small towns. A field guide and a decent pair of binoculars are all you need. Jot down when and where you saw a species right on the bird's write-up in the book. How many species can you identify on this trip?

Take a geology or archeology walk, or a horseback ride. Push yourself to get out of your comfort zone.

Of course, don't miss that once-in-a-lifetime view and photos of a sunrise from atop Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park. There's seldom a reason to be bored, even on a cloudy, drizzly day, if you explore all the other attractions that each national park has to offer. Spend four full days or more at each park, and you'll take away a deeper, richer understanding, and even better memories than the last time you visited.

Hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park

While there are very few overnight backpackers among our readers, there are many regular “exercise walkers” who will enjoy the scenic round-trip day hikes in this great national park. To learn about trails appropriate for your interests and physical ability, purchase a copy (\$1) of “Rocky Mountain National Park Hiking Adventures,” an 8-page tabloid size information gold mine produced by the Rocky Mountain Nature Association and the Rocky Mountain National Park. Page 1 is a must-read primer about hiking in the park: weather, safety, altitude adjustment, lightning, and the “leave no trace” policy, plus a 12-point essential items list that prepared hikers wear and carry.

For a more detailed guide to day hiking, buy a copy of *Best Easy Day Hikes Rocky Mountain National Park* (A Falcon Guide) by Kent Dannen (\$9.95). If overnight backpackers are reading this article, get a copy of *Hiking Rocky Mountain National Park*, 10th edition, also by Ken Dannen.

Best Easy Day Hikes is organized geographically based on where trailheads are concentrated. Another helpful section is the Trail Finder that categorizes best hikes for great views, waterfalls, children, wildlife viewing, photography, summits, and solitude. The trail we liked best was Bridal Veil Falls north of Estes Park. It is listed in three of the seven categories: waterfalls, wildlife, and solitude. It is six miles round trip with an elevation gain of about 1,000 feet. We didn’t see elk, but the falls are beautiful.

The Bear Lake Road that begins at the Beaver Meadows Entrance to the park on U.S. 36 offers a concentration of eight hiking trails described in *Best Easy Day Hikes*. Since the parking lots at the trailheads are often full, try parking at the fairgrounds in

Estes Park and use the free Bear Lake Shuttle Bus Service. The bus driver will supply a map of his stops that will put you close to all of the trailheads.

After reading most of the hiking book the night before, we decided to use the shuttle bus and get off at the Bear Lake Trailhead. Begin with a stretcher-warm-up half-mile hike around Bear Lake. Thirty-two info posts around the lake will make your hike very interesting. You will get a great photo opp at Post 12, a terrific view across the lake with Longs Peak deep in the background. After the warm-up, we did four hours of moderate to easy hiking.

From the Bear Lake Ranger Station, follow the signs to Emerald Lake. After you pass Nymph Lake, you will come to a fork in the trail where a left turn will take you on a two-hour side trail to Lake Haiyaha. Back track to the Emerald Trail and take a left for a 40-minute hike past Dream Lake and on to Emerald Lake. Make like Thoreau and find a place to sit down and write in your notebook. Hopefully, you arrived before the crowds. Solitude. Contemplation. Pictures to take home. A 90-minute walk back to the trailhead.

There are 24 hikes in the summer section of *Best Easy Day Hikes*. To enjoy maximum high country scenery, be sure to do one of the three hikes from the Trail Ridge Road. If you have a respiratory condition, remember that the elevations of these three trails are above 11,000 feet.

If you are a “map freak” and like to trace exactly where you are on a hike, buy a copy of “Rocky Mountain National Park Trail and Recreation Map” (\$11.95) at one of the visitor centers.



Bear Lake with Longs Peak in the background

PHOTO BY SUE CLEMENZ

The Baldpate Inn



There was no plan to acquire land in the Rocky Mountains and open a hotel. It was one of those things that just happened.

Newly married Gordon and Ethel Mace selected Estes Park, Colorado, as their destination for a honeymoon in the summer of 1911. You would think that honeymooners would want to escape into anonymity for their special time together, but Gordon's two brothers, Charles and Stuart, visited there at the same time.

They were all blown away with the scenery of the valley and the grandeur of the mountains. Charles discovered that

land was available for homesteading and got the ball rolling. The Homesteading Act required improvements to the property and cultivation of sustainable crops.

The young couple selected property and homesteaded it. Trying to follow the rules, they planted rhubarb and built a small cabin. Farming was never an option, so Gordon started building small tourist cabins to provide income. The rustic cabins were a roaring success that fired up a plan for a hotel. While they charged ahead to build the hotel, Ethel confessed that "neither of us knew anything about hotels. I had been in one once and Gordon

had about three or four times. . . . When we had finished, there were more guests than we could accommodate."

Seasoned with his prior experience as a mechanical patternmaker, Gordon hand-hewed the logs to build the hotel. Massive stone fireplaces provided the heat and a hot water system. With amazing ingenuity, he crafted the furniture from smaller limbs of the trees he harvested for the project.

The Maces kept thinking about a name for the hotel. After reading *Seven Keys to Baldpate* by Earl Derr Biggers, they both loved the name "Baldpate" and the similarity of their location to





the setting of the romantic novel. In coincidental irony, shortly after his book was published in 1913, Biggers visited the area to climb Longs Peak and stayed with the Maces while Gordon was constructing the hotel. Also struck with the similarities of the area and the hotel to the setting in his story, Biggers wondered if the Maces might like to name their hotel “The Baldpate Inn.” Gordon and Ethel were thinking along the same track. They mutually decided that naming the new hotel “The Baldpate Inn” would give a reality to the “imaginary” Baldpate Inn.

The Mace’s homestead patent was registered as completed on January 22, 1917. The Baldpate Inn opened that summer with all the amenities: indoor plumbing with hot running water, electric lights, and a full service restaurant.

Today the Baldpate Inn is on the National Register of Historic Places as a prime example of “western stick architecture,” and the only facility in that classification still used for tourist accommodations in the general area of the Rocky Mountain National Park.

Gordon and Ethel opened the hotel with seven guest rooms built over the porch and lobby, natural gathering places

for their customers. Soon, a main dining room and eight more guest rooms were added. In 1921 a west wing addition was built that eventually became the now famous Key Room that opened in 1935.

When it was first built, the west wing housed a dance hall and casino that attracted big name entertainment, including Lawrence Welk, Harry James, and Tommy Dorsey. With a number of Hollywood connections, the Inn over the years attracted Jack Dempsey, Betty Grable, Gregory Peck, and Mae West as guests. The Inn has all of the original guest register books for its years of operation.

The story of The Baldpate Inn Key Collection is best explained by a quotation from the lodge’s own history, *The 2008 Legacy Edition, The Baldpate Collections*.

“The mystery novel, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, not only gave the inn its name, but is also the basis for the inn’s most famous collection. The original plan was for each Baldpate guest to be given a key. The idea was to follow the book’s mystery plot in which seven people believe they each have the only key to unlock The Baldpate Inn. When giving a key to every guest proved too costly, a turn-about took place and the guests began to leave or send back a key.”

The book’s author, Earl Derr Biggers, was believed by some to have left the first key. Other accounts suggested Clarence Darrow donated the first key. Now that thousands have been left by guests or mailed later, there are many classifications of keys to interest those with time to peruse the walls and rafters and read the accompanying tags: ancient, historical, political dignitaries, cathedrals, castles, palaces, famous homes, imaginary places, jails, and, of course, other hotels.

A major reason to visit the Baldpate Inn today is the dining room. When Gordon Mace died in 1959, the dining room was closed to the public. It reopened for the summer season in 1984. In 1986 the inn was acquired by Innkeeper / Chef Lois Smith who brought back the scrumptious meals that older patrons in the community remembered so well. The lunch menu offers soups and salads with delicious pies. We learned from the desk clerk last summer that Ms. Smith had put the inn up for sale “to the right buyer” – someone who appreciates and wants to perpetuate the 100-year-old tradition of a wonderful hotel in a perfect setting that enjoys the status of being on the National Register.

Continued on page 76

Indianapolis Dealership Raises the Bar for RV Sales & Service in Indiana



In business for barely a decade

in the Indy suburb of Greenfield, Mount Comfort RV has received the prestigious *RV Business* “Top 50 Dealers” award every year since it was first presented five years ago. Ken Eckstein, chief operating officer for the company, has been active in the Indiana recreational vehicle industry for 44 years, if we count the years in high school when he worked weekends washing trailers. We will come back to his RV career after a few paragraphs about how he got to Indianapolis.

Ken grew up in Batesville, Indiana, about an hour’s drive southeast of Indianapolis. His mother wanted Ken to study at a boys Catholic boarding school in Indianapolis, and he enrolled there as a sophomore in 1972. Already a very gregarious young man, he made new friends quickly, one of whom was Mark Duffin whose father owned Duffin’s Trailer Sales. Mark’s father offered Ken two dollars an hour to wash travel trailers.

After graduating from high school in 1975, Ken matriculated at Marian College (now Marian University) and lived in a rooming house during his freshman and sophomore years.

Indiana University in Bloomington and Purdue University in Lafayette opened a joint campus in Indianapolis in the late sixties. Ken transferred from Marian and began his junior year at

IU in 1977 while working full time as a mechanic at Jack Duffin RV. “I was very concerned that I had over \$3,000 in school debt,” he laughed. “Students today are graduating with huge debts to pay off.”

Ken’s entrepreneurial bent kicked in while he was studying at IU. “I bought a house in Indianapolis that had been built in 1868,” he related. “Descendants of the original owner had put the property up for sale. It had a big yard with a stable and was initially built without wiring and plumbing. Both were added



Text and photography by Fred Thompson

later. Although the plumbing and the roof needed immediate repairs, I was impressed with its oak floors and hand-carved mantels over the fireplaces and decided I could make it livable again. I paid \$9,000 for the house and incurred a monthly payment of \$127.

“With the help of my brothers and a buddy, painting the house was our first project,” Ken continued. “Then the roof. A man living across the street said he was a ‘transplanted Kentuckian.’ He taught us how to put on a new roof, but he could do more in an hour than we could do in a whole day.”

Ken and his friends lived in the house until he finished college at IU and then he created his first revenue source by renting it out.

While he was attending the boarding school, Ken discovered a girls Catholic boarding school. “We recruited our cheerleaders from the girls school,” he joked. “I met Gail when we were 16. I am only one month older. Our ‘romance’ was on again, off again. If we weren’t making up, we were breaking up. We dated four years during the next nine, and we finally decided to get married when we were 25.”

The RV industry in Indiana was flourishing in the seventies. In 1977 there were 12 RV dealerships on a four-mile stretch of Indianapolis’ Pendleton Pike. There were over 300 RV manufacturers within a 50-mile radius of Elkhart.

“During the Carter administration, the Iranian embargo combined with increasing fuel prices created havoc in the RV industry, manufacturing and sales,” Ken remembered. “Interest rates soared to 21 percent. By 1981 the Elkhart area had less than 50 manufacturers left. In 1977 there were 44 dealerships in nine central Indiana counties. Only six dealerships survived through 1981.”

Ken held on to his job as a mechanic-technician with Duffin’s Trailer Sales. In August 1980 he had some vacation time coming and decided to take it. “I was supposed to get a raise from \$4.50 to \$4.75 an hour when I returned from my vaca-

tion,” he recalled. “But Jack assumed that I would move on to a better job as soon as I graduated from college, leaving the RV business behind. So rather than give a raise to a tech who would be leaving soon, he gave me a pink slip. Was I ever surprised!”

Over the next 25 years, Ken Eckstein continued his career in Indiana’s recreational vehicle industry, building his experience in service, sales, sales management, and business management.

Even during the early 1980s recession, RV dealerships could still be found on Pendleton Pike who would offer positions to talented salesmen. After a three-year tenure at Fun Time RV, Eckstein spent a decade with Stout’s RV and served as the general sales manager for nine years. During his tenure, sales advanced from \$6 million annually to \$30 million in 1991. It was the beginning of a long relationship with the Stout family that would eventually culminate in his buying Mount Comfort RV.

“Stout’s RV was my first experience with Tiffin Motorhomes,” he recalled. “We sold a lot of Tiffin’s ‘brown and whites,’ as we called them back then. Those motorhomes were solid performers.

“Mark Stout, Harold’s nephew, learned the RV business working for his uncle. In 1985 Mark left Stout’s RV and purchased the assets of Jack Duffin’s company that was in bankruptcy,” Eckstein continued. “He named his new enterprise Mark’s RV. I left Harold Stout in 1991 to enter the automotive arena, serving as the truck sales manager for a prominent car dealership. It did not take me very long to realize how much I missed the RV business.”

Below left: Mount Comfort RV has won the prestigious *RV Business* award for recognition as one of the “Top 50 RV Dealers” in America every year since the competition began in 2011. Ken and Rusty Eckstein receive the award from Beverly Gardner, vice president of G&G Media Group and Sherman Goldenberg, publisher of *RV Business* ♦ The business is a family affair. *Standing:* Ken and Gail; *seated l-r:* Steve and Veronica Belickis holding their children, Briella, 3, and Henry, 4 months; Addie and Rusty with Amelia, 15 months. ♦ Ken and Rusty like to inventory at least 12 Tiffin coaches at all times.





Management BACK: Jason Black, Ken Eckstein, Paul Marci, Toney Crawford. FRONT: Jo Literal, Eddie Reid, Rusty Eckstein, Addie Eckstein.

Sales BACK: Pat Starling, Bobby Sparks, Scott Bell, Josh Staton, Chris Anderson, Scott Jones, Gerry Logsdon. FRONT: Mike Miller, Jeff Jevtic, Scott Mohr, Allen Schwartz, Steve Belickis.

Service BACK: Mike Dawson, Stan Bryant, Brian Fields, Mike Gorney, Greg Shane, Izzy Teague, Kirby Griffin, Roger Eckstein. MIDDLE: Bruce Hampton, Rob Day, Gary Fowler, Jim Winingham, Neil Bragdon. FRONT: Crystal Lucas, Carmen Keller, Kerry Christian, Kyle Hudleston, Mary Spitz, Larry Kolthoff.



In 1995 Mark Stout asked Eckstein to become the sales manager at Mark's RV. "It was like coming full circle—back to where I had started washing trailers in 1972 for Jack Duffin," Eckstein said. "We became a Tiffin dealership in 1996, starting my second experience with Tiffin Motorhomes."

Mark Stout saw the opportunity to expand with a second location in Fort Myers, Florida. "We opened Mark's RV—Fort Myers in 1997, just across the highway from North Trail RV," Eckstein said. "I stayed with Mark until 1999."

Three years later in 2002, Stout bought a property on a major intersection of I-70 in Greenfield, about 15 miles east of Indianapolis. "Mark saw the value of the interstate location," Eckstein continued, "and moved the Pendleton Pike store to Greenfield. The primary building was originally designed for a truck stop with a retail store and restrooms and showers for the truckers. It had a large parking lot for the overnights. They gutted the interior and reworked the floor plan for reception, sales offices, and a parts and accessories store. The truck stop's service center became a four-bay body shop and Mark added a 14-bay service center."

Over the next seven years, Eckstein held management positions with three companies. In April 2006, to his surprise, he learned that Stout was interested in selling the Greenfield store. "Mark worked with me to create a very accommodating financial arrangement for the acquisition," Eckstein said. "Things had not gone well for this location for a few

years and Mark was ready to close it down. When he learned of my interest in acquiring it, he was eager to work something out to preserve jobs for his employees.

“Because Gail and I have two children, Rusty and Veronica, we saw this as an opportunity to build a family business, although we did not want to push an RV business on them if they developed careers that led in other directions,” Ken said. “Rusty started working in the wash bay in 1997 at Mark’s RV. Then he operated the parts and accessories store at Bill Byrd’s RV and later worked as a technician at Fun Time RV. It was good that he could get experience in the RV business without being under my supervision.”

Rusty finished high school in 2001, enrolled in Indiana University, and completed a double-major degree in international studies and business management. He continued with an MBA program focusing on marketing that he completed in 2007.

“With his academic background, I expected to lose him to one of the big companies conducting interviews on the IU campus,” Ken said with a smile as Rusty listened to the interview. “I could not have been happier when he said, ‘Dad, I want to sell RVs and help you run this company.’”

Today Rusty serves as president and general manager and is playing an instrumental role in the company’s plans to revamp its facilities. His wife, Addie, a Georgia girl, serves as the company’s office manager. They have a little girl named Amelia who is 15 months old.

The euphoria of launching the family business in 2006 was not threatened or even dampened by the recession in 2008 that had a devastating effect on many companies in Indiana.

“Our intention when we started was not to focus on motorhome sales,” Ken began. “However, in the 2008 downturn, our competitors began to stock fewer motorhomes and we correctly assessed there was still some demand from customers who had the resources to buy a motorhome or had non-commercial bank financing arranged. We went deep with Coachmen and Newmar and had a good

year in 2008. We were flat in 2009, but we did not lose money. Every other year we showed a decent profit. There were no layoffs, but in December 2009 we asked if anyone would like to take time off without pay, and we only had one taker.”

During 2007, the company’s first full year in business, Mount Comfort RV notched \$9.7 million in sales; 20 percent of the units sold were motorhomes. In their tenth year of operation (2015), sales topped \$33 million with motorhomes ac-

counting for 25 percent of the units sold. Mount Comfort became a Tiffin dealer last summer, but for Ken Eckstein it was a comfortable fit. He had been there twice earlier.

Beginning in 2006 with 17 employees, Mount Comfort RV now has 15 on the sales force including two sales managers; one person in F&I; 18 in service including one shop foreman; one service manager and two service writers; and three employees in the wash bay. If you’re counting, that’s 40 employees.



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Eckstein has carefully crafted what may be Mount Comfort's mission statement. "We are not in the RV business. We are in the people business. We sell vacations, sunsets, mountains, catching fish, hiking, and opportunities to meet interesting people. We deal in wholesome family fun, dreams, and thoughtfully planned retirements."

Mount Comfort RV's customers, he says, recognize and commend the professionalism of the company's employees.

The company is using social media to bring RVers to their website: Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Toney Crawford answered the company's ad for a "Manager of Social Media." He had done e-commerce for a clothing company that specialized in clothing for dancers. He managed mobile retail stores throughout the U.S. at conventions and dance competitions for ages 8-18. The website and the advertising material posted on the five media sites are averaging 10,000 hits per day, far more than they ever expected.

YouTube has been their most successful media. "We encourage our sales people to do walk-through and walk-around (outside) videos explaining the features and functionality of a motorhome or a towable," Toney explained. "Our customers often say, 'We learned so much about our own coach from your video.' I use a video editor to remove any part of the video that doesn't flow well.

"After viewing videos of RVs they like, many customers arrive with definite ideas about what they wish to see. And the unexpected result is they often ask for the salesperson who did the video," he laughed. "Our salespeople are doing a good job of selling themselves through YouTube."

Steve Belickis supervises the parts and accessories department and maintains a \$200,000 inventory. He uses sales software to track and stock the most popular items that customers need.

Crawford also stays very active with his camera. Every new unit arriving at Mount Comfort RV receives a thorough photo session that usually includes 360-degree scans of each main area. Future software will include the functionality to allow the viewer to scope in and out for close-ups of any feature in the room.

Media that is interactive often requires a response to the person who posted it, requiring Crawford to check with sales or service to provide the right answer. Without a doubt, using social media in sales is certainly taking center stage in the RV industry.

Eckstein asserts that Mount Comfort's successful ranking on the Internet is "organic." He points out that Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are "word-of-mouth."

"Some of our competitors spend heavily on TV ads, billboards, and getting the top search position for key words used by their potential clients," he said. "One company in a 20-group indicated they were spending approximately \$600 in advertising for each serious customer who visited their store. We believe the majority of our customers are quite sophisticated at using the Internet and social media to find Mount Comfort RV and view our inventory, and our cost to attract a customer visit is only a fraction of that amount."

With more than 35 years in sales, Eckstein takes an active role in sales training every week. He focuses on a positive experience from the greeting to the delivery to the campsite. "We want a personal touch that gets away from the big box experience. We don't want to be a big box store (BBS) or anything similar," he emphasizes. "We want to be the best of the family-owned stores in this country. But it is also important to control your own backyard, to be the best RV dealership in this state.

"I have had the benefit of so much training, guidance, and good influence from the RV dealership owners for whom I have worked as well as mentors who were interested in my profes-



sional development,” Eckstein said. “And I want to pass that on to those who work here.

“Over the years I have worked with sales training curriculums created by Bill Gorman, Grayson Schwepfinger, and Spader 20 Groups. From those curriculums, I have created a hybrid of 26 weeks of sales training,” Eckstein explained. “Then I spend several weeks on situational sales training. During the week we focus on product, sales technique, closing, rallying, and motivation. On Saturday we spend 15 minutes reviewing what happened during the week with sales, trades, and inventory.”

Eckstein still makes the final decision on every hire in sales and service. “The work history of an applicant for a sales position at Mount Comfort RV should show a consistent pattern of growth. You nearly always see that pattern in applicants who have owned a business,” he pointed out. “A good salesperson must have the ability to sell himself. If a client is not comfortable with the salesperson, it is very likely he will not make the sale. A salesperson must be bold enough to ask for the order. You can teach how to close, but for some it is a real talent. And last but not least, as they say, a good salesperson must genuinely care about people and want the best for his customer.

“The big box stores have ‘sales people’ who are just order takers—they press and stress,” he said. “On a good Saturday, we will have 30 to 50 people visit the store. At least five have been

frustrated by a BBS negative experience. We stress caring for our customers — not stressing our customers.”

The three sales people Eckstein hired in 2006 are still with the company. Eight of the 11 who completed the 2015 year have been with him for over six years. In his search for a sales manager, Eckstein opted for depth in managerial experience over extensive direct sales experience after he interviewed Jason Black.

Black had 10 years of experience in F&I with an RV dealership and several prior years with a car dealership. When the dealership’s F&I department was slow during the recession, Black split his time in sales management and picked up valuable skills. He joined Mount Comfort RV in 2013.

“Our sales staff retention is the highest of any place I have ever worked,” Black said. “The sales person stays involved with the customer after the sale to enhance the owner’s knowledge of the RV and to put them in touch with any of our staff who can answer questions, improve their RV experience, and resolve any problems. Staying in touch is very important. The sales person sends a handwritten thank you card and calls the new owner within three days after he or she completes the purchase and leaves with the RV. We also send handwritten birthday and Christmas cards at a good point in time to remind our owners that we are here for them and care very much about their continuing to enjoy a positive experience in RVing.



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“At Mount Comfort RV, Ken is the expert in classroom training for our sales team,” Black continued. “I am more into hands-on training while the sales person is working with a customer. I provide guidance on what to show a customer based on his personal preferences and camping style.”

During the interview with Black, I asked for the #1 reason why he accepted the job at Mount Comfort RV. He didn’t hesitate. “We have an owner who cares about his employees as well as his customers. That is huge for me. Any customer’s questions or problems come to me first and I know Mr. Eckstein will back me up for doing what is right. I’m not here just for my salary. I am very concerned with how my customers are treated and their complete satisfaction.

“Repeat business and referrals are at least a quarter of our business,” Black continued. “Because of that, we don’t allocate a big part of our budget on advertising. The growth potential here is tremendous. I get great satisfaction in knowing that I have contributed to that growth. This is a well-run business that will survive the historic downturns in the RV industry.”

The entire staff at Mount Comfort RV is very proud of the fact that the company has been named five times as one of the “50 Top Dealers” in the U.S. by *RV Business* magazine. Black points to three reasons for Mount Comfort’s repeated selection. “It comes down to creating total customer care by everyone who works here, outstanding customer service and follow-up, and a very innovative online presence,” he said. “The company and

Mike Dawson supervises 16 technicians in the Mount Comfort RV service center, offering 12 service bays, two wash and prep bays, and four body shop bays. The center has a lift system that will handle 45-ft. coaches.

the employees are involved in many civic endeavors including Make-a-Wish Foundation, ALS (providing free rentals), Home Makeovers, the American Cancer Society, and the Gabriel Project (customizing a Class C motorhome with UltraSound equipment). Giving back is very important.”

Service management and experience runs deep at Mount Comfort RV. During 2016, the company’s service manager, Mike Dawson, will mark the 33rd year of his career in the RV industry. “My first four years in the RV business were on the Fleetwood production line building trailers and fifth wheels,” Dawson began. “Then I moved up to utility man. You have to learn every job in your area and then fill in when someone is absent. The next three years I worked in system maintenance.”

In 1990 Dawson applied at Mark’s RV for a technician’s position and was hired by Ken Eckstein who was the general manager at that time. In 1999 he became a service writer and a year later moved up to service supervisor. “In my first job as a technician, I specialized in metalwork siding. I could ‘re-skin’ a trailer or a motorhome in one day. RV construction technology was much simpler then than it is now,” he noted.

Today Dawson supervises 16 technicians in the company’s service center that offers 12 service bays, two wash and prep bays, and four bays dedicated to the body shop. “We have three certified technicians and one specialist in non-warranty chassis work,” he explained. “Our other technicians are cross-trained in all areas of service. We encourage our techs to become RVIA-certified by paying for their online training time to earn both general and specific certifications. Service techs advance in pay grades when they become RVIA-certified. New hires are mentored by senior technicians.”



When a new motorhome arrives from the manufacturer, Dawson assigns one of the technicians to do the pre-delivery inspection (PDI). The technician familiarizes himself with that particular coach and will later do owner training when the coach is sold. “We usually spend about four hours with a first-time motorhome owner,” Dawson said. “They are usually overwhelmed with the amount of information we offer and do not know the right questions to ask to clarify their understanding. We ask them to stay overnight in the coach—two or three nights if they prefer, assimilate what they have learned, and come back the next day with questions. When the owner calls in the future, he will talk to the same technician who did the initial training.

“Owner training with previous owners usually takes twice the initial time because they know the questions to ask and recognize the deficiencies in their personal knowledge base,” Dawson continued. “The most difficult and time-consuming things that we teach are electronics: satellites and receivers, televisions, in-dash radios, and navigation.”

Mount Comfort RV offers a full complement of services for motorhomes. In the chassis department, owners can schedule service for brakes, oil and filter changes, and automotive heating and air. Service is offered for all the components in the motorhome, including propane heating, air conditioners, Aqua-Hot, gensets, plumbing, 12v and 110v electrical, roof repair and replacement, floors, slide-outs, cabinetry repair or replacement, awnings, all appliances, pumps, wet tanks and bays, window replacements, electronics, and inverters. The body shop offers collision repair and painting, and windshield replacement. They do not offer full-body masking and painting.

Mount Comfort RV offers full service for Roadmaster’s towing and braking products, including the full wiring and preparation of a vehicle for towing with all four wheels down.

“We have two very thorough service advisors in Crystal Lucas and Andrew Hall,” Dawson said. “I want them to tell you about their work with our owners.”

“We go out of our way every day to make sure our owners are satisfied,” Andrew began. “It’s just the philosophy of this dealership. When an owner arrives with his motorhome, we do walk-throughs and walk-arounds with the owner, taking pictures and making notes. Each service point is tagged with painter’s tape. Then we upload the information into our computer system and provide the owner with a copy of everything that is to be done. If our technician finds that a repair is more extensive than what the owner anticipated, we call for an approval with an update on the estimate. Our technicians can do parts requests from the workstations in the repair bay.

“Most service events begin with a phone call from the owner,” Hall continued. “Crystal and I will set a service date and try to establish if the repair will be warranty or non-warranty work. The warranty information is transmitted to Mary Spitz, our warranty manager. When the owner arrives with his RV, it is very important to establish his perspective and expectations for the required service or repairs. Photography goes with our notes

to explain the job to the technician, but a thorough job is also necessary to document warranty claims.

“The most challenging aspect of the service advisor’s job is finding a way to meet the owner’s expectations while making sure the costs are covered by the manufacturer’s or the owner-purchased extended warranty,” Hall noted. “How much the owner believes should be paid by the manufacturer and how much the manufacturer is willing to pay usually leaves us in the middle. A big part of my job is providing the lubrication between the owner and the manufacturer. On an average, 60 percent of our service and repair work is covered by the manufacturer’s warranties or extended warranties. When we provide substantiated labor and parts quotations, we rarely have a problem.

“A challenging part of our job is maintaining continued contact with the owner during the service and repair process,” Lucas said. “Phone calls or the owner’s designated media is used to

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keep in touch. The contact frequency is based on changes in the schedule, unanticipated parts and repairs, and the customer's expressed need for information."

Tied very closely to the success of the service center is the parts department, supervised and operated by Steve Belickis. He initially joined the company two years ago in the sales department. He is married to Veronica, Ken and Gail's daughter. They met at Xavier University in Cincinnati where Steve studied political science and Veronica majored in occupational therapy, earning bachelor's and master's degrees. Steve joined the Army after graduation and did two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Belickises have two children, Briella, 3, and Henry, 4 months.

"When I got out of the Army in 2011, we moved to Virginia for a while and then to Ohio where I grew up. Influenced by the success of Ken and Rusty in the RV industry, I took a position in RV sales with an Ohio dealer and enjoyed the work," Belickis related. "They offered me a position here at Mount Comfort which was a great opportunity to bring the family together in this business. I found my skills for organizing and making operations flow smoothly could be used in the parts department and made the switch from sales.

"Every part for repairing a motorhome or towable goes through the parts department," Belickis noted. "If a repair job requires parts that are not warranty items, those orders flow through my right hand man, Bernie Greulich, or me. If warranty processing is required, the parts order flows through Mary Spitz.

"Tiffin Motorhomes does a great job in processing our parts orders," Belickis said. "They are close to 100 percent in order fulfillment accuracy. They provide consistent two-day turnaround time on our orders. Karen Timbs handles our orders and is the face of Tiffin Motorhomes for us."

The parts department maintains a \$200,000 inventory of frequently used repair parts and components and tracks usage to modify the inventory to improve quick turnarounds for owners who are waiting on their coaches.

"To improve the efficiency in getting parts to the service techs, we hired Tom Carrier to work right in the service center placing orders to our manufacturers and distributors. He oversees incoming parts orders and gets them to the service bays by 7:30 each morning. This arrangement maxes out the time our techs can spend working on RVs without having to stop, place orders, and go get them.

"We were monitoring our phone messages in the parts and accessories store about every 20 minutes," Belickis said. "Having Tom in our service department will help improve prompt handling of our customers' phone inquiries and orders. This will allow Bernie to concentrate more on the customers coming into the store and calling over the phone, while Tom processes most of our internal parts orders. I'll oversee both areas and assist when the internal or external order fulfillments get to be a little more work than one person can handle effectively. Bernie also works the floor to make sure our customers in the accessories department are served promptly. He is redesigning our

product shelving and displays to make them more user-friendly. Our computer software will track the sales made through our checkout counter and alert us to the prescribed reorder points in our inventory."

Belickis and his staff are looking forward to the new building that will put the parts department much closer to the service center. "I have put in my request to Rusty to be sure our new accessories store has an abundance of electrical floor outlets for our manufacturers' displays and special lighting as needed. Everything will be designed for the best possible customer experience from the point they arrive in the store, or call in, to the time they receive their parts and accessories."


To close out our story on Mount Comfort RV, we went back to Ken Eckstein for a review of "now and the future" plans for the company.

"We have been blessed in the last two years with so much success," he began. "Our displayed inventory has grown from 275 to 423 units. In 2013 we notched 400 deliveries. This past year we met our goal of 800 deliveries. This year we will increase our efficiency and customer satisfaction. It would be wrong for us to increase our sales by 10 percent but go backward in efficiency and customer satisfaction. We did suffer some growing pains over the last two years. This year we are adding two positions in sales and three in service. Our goal will be to improve the delivery experience.

"In our sales meetings, we review our goals once a month. If we can do the same dollar volume in sales this year that we did in 2015, I will be very happy," Eckstein continued. "I think goals are overrated. The reality is that you must do the best you can with the person in front of you. A baseball pitcher whose goal it is to win 20+ games in the season should not be thinking '20 games' each time he faces a new batter. He needs to think, 'I'm going to do the best I can with this pitch right now.' That's the focus I want our sales team to have. If you take care of the person in front of you, the numbers will take care of themselves."

I asked Ken about his 5-year and 10-year plans for Mount Comfort RV.

"Well, that's a good question. Over the next two to five years, we plan to demolish this building we are in and build a 20,000 sq. ft. showroom with high ceilings and a lot of glass. Our sales offices will be on the perimeter of the showroom. The additional segments of the building will include modern administrative offices, a customer lounge, and an expanded parts and accessories store," he elaborated. "We are also planning a campground with 10 sites and full hook-ups where new owners can camp while they become accustomed to their coaches. The campground will also serve full-timers who need to continue living in their coaches while we are making repairs.

"Ten years from now I want to be making the coffee and cutting the grass," Ken laughed, but with a serious look in eyes. "I will still sit on the board and be involved in major decisions. Old dogs can still contribute," he emphasized. 



Tammy Roberson

PLUMBING ENGINEER

A small petite woman, Tammy Roberson, 42, has a definite edge over anyone who might like to have her job. She is a savvy, smart plumbing engineer who can squeeze into tight places in an RV's basement to figure out how a new plumbing configuration can be modified to make it work better. "I like to get my hands dirty and figure out if the way we designed the plumbing for a particular floor plan is working perfectly — just like we figured. The infrastructure of a motorhome is complicated. I want to be sure it can be assembled with no problems when we get it on the production line. If I can put it together, then I know the production techs on the line can do it."

Tammy Reno grew up in Tishomingo, Mississippi, just 16 miles north of Red Bay, Alabama, where she works today in Tiffin's main assembly plant. "I graduated from Tishomingo High School in 1991 and got married," she began.

With Northeast Community College just 22 miles away in Booneville, she enrolled that fall and majored in Computer Aided Design and Drafting Technology, a two-year program with an A.A. degree. "I finished the coursework for my degree and gave birth to Tyler," she smiled. "Two big accomplishments all in the same year."

Tammy's first job was in a sawmill that had a machine shop. "They made parts for their own equipment, but we also took in

other shop work for individuals and businesses in the area," she explained. "I used the CAD computer to create the drawings for the parts which provided the machinists with accurate measurements to make them. Customers usually were surprised to see a woman in a machine shop, but I got used to that pretty quick."

After a short stint at the sawmill, Tammy took a more secure position with an architect. "It was interesting because I did not use the CAD system. For the next five years I did all of his house plans on the drafting table. While I was working there, Jessica was born in 1995."

Her skills in computer aided design finally paid off after she accepted a position with Falcon Manufacturing in Belmont, Mississippi. "We designed and manufactured every type of commercial and office seating," Tammy said. "It was a good position and I stayed there for seven years. When I heard that Tiffin Motorhomes was hiring, I put in an application and came to work here in August 2005."

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



“My first job was in the wiring harness department under Leesha Shotts,” Tammy said. “Leesha had completely reorganized the department and made it very efficient. In the short time I was in her department, I learned a lot from her.”

Tammy got the break she wanted on December 12, 2005 when there was an opening in the engineering department. “I was so excited,” she recalled. “I started working for Rodney Johnson in the plumbing department.”

“I started on the assembly line to get hands-on experience and learn how the plumbing lines and parts went together,” she continued. “Bill Jackson did a lot of my training. Then I came back into the office.”

Tammy’s first project was the plumbing for the 2006 Zephyr. “It was sink or swim,” she grimaced just thinking about it. “It was complex; it was my baptism of fire. Tim Massey was the supervisor of that part of the line. I could not have blamed him if he had killed me on the spot.”

“I regained my confidence,” she smiled. “There is a lot of support in engineering. We are really like a big family, working across department lines and exchanging

information. The example of cooperation comes from the top. Bob Tiffin is a very patient man and he wants you to succeed.”

“I want our infrastructure to be organized and neat, which is necessary for everything in the motorhome to work correctly,” she said. “We have married wiring and plumbing together with regard to routing them through the motorhome.”

Since most of an RV’s plumbing is in the basement and not that easy to see and figure out, Tammy does one of the classes for dealers’ technicians who are sent to Red Bay for training. “Troubleshooting and knowing where to look is about 95 percent of solving a plumbing problem in a motorhome,” she said. “A frequent problem is repairing or replacing a See-Level or Touch sensor on the wet tanks. That’s a troubleshooting problem.”

Today, Tammy’s areas of responsibility have expanded beyond designing and overseeing plumbing installations on new floor plan prototypes that are running for the first time. She helps with RVIA code compliance documents and oversees the submission of documents for the states of Washington, Oregon, and Nebraska

Tammy consults with Leah Shewbart on a plumbing installation that involves the use of a sliding plenum to accommodate the drain line for the galley sink. After the drain line is installed, it is the backbone for the water line, wires, and gas lines that will also feed the galley. Once all the components are installed in the plenum, Leah will then tape the water lines, wires, and gas lines to the drain line insuring that the proper length is left under the floor when the galley slide moves in and out.

which require their own versions of compliance documentation. She stays abreast of RVIA’s “Standard News” and distributes to each engineer any new requirements or regulations that affects his or her department.

From the time she leaves her home in Dennis, Mississippi, until the time she returns home in the late afternoon, Tammy often puts in a 12-hour day. “I’m in bed by eight, up at 3:30, out of my house by 4:30, and in my office by five,” she said. “That one hour before the production line starts at six is my down time for planning my day. After the line shuts down at 2:30, I return service and tech calls and answer emails. It’s an intense job, but I always feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day.”

From late May and through most of the summer, the production line undergoes model year changeovers in the design and production for each of the six brands. “We are super busy during that time,” Tammy emphasized. “I work closely with Van to make sure we have all of the new hardware for the faucets, showers, towel bars and rings, and the toilets. Toilets can be a major upgrade item for a brand. And every time there is a floor plan change, there is usually a plumbing change that takes place under the floor. We work where the sun don’t shine,” she joked.

There is at least one good story about every person in the Tiffin plant where something amusing happens while performing his or her job. This story came from Bob Tiffin.

“There is not a job that’s too hard or too rough for her. I can call Tammy with any kind of problem and she is on top of it immediately. If she doesn’t know

the answer right then, she calls me back in a few minutes,” Bob begins. “During one of the model year changeovers, I was walking through one of the units on the production line. Tammy was all the way under a galley slide-out and all I could see was her shoes. ‘Tammy,’ I called out. ‘What are you doing under there.’

“‘Mister Bob, I’m trying to get this sink plumbed right,’ she hollered back. I watched for a few minutes and here she came, wiggling her way out of a tight space that none of us men could have gotten into.”

Tammy’s husband, Noonie Roberson, is a plant floater, meaning he is on call wherever he is needed in the plant. “Noonie is our ‘go-to-guy’ if a cabinet or wall unit gets bumped, scratched, or dented during the production process on the assembly line,” Bob said. “It is amazing how he can repair and restore a piece of wood so that it is impossible to see where it was damaged. Noonie saves us thousands of dollars by making perfect restorations.”

Tammy and Noonie have a hobby they both enjoy very much. “If Noonie and I aren’t working here at the plant, we are working on a project in our home. We have restored or rebuilt nearly every room in the house,” Tammy said. “Our other hobby is ‘antique-ing.’ On our weekends, we map out the antique stores we want to visit and hit several a day.”


One of their “finds” is a 1950s Coke machine that holds 36 of the green 6.5-oz. bottles. “It takes a dime and we keep it full of Cokes for our visitors who get a kick out of ‘buying’ a Coke for a dime. Of course,” she laughs, “that’s a losing business!

“We also found a 1939 Hewitt parlor stove with porcelain handles,” she said. “And we have vintage tables and chairs to go with it in a special room.”

The Reno family is proud of their military service and justly so. “We are a Navy family,” Tammy said. “My dad, Donald, was in the Navy and has been the chief of police in Belmont for 33 years. My son, Tyler, went into the submariner service

when he graduated from high school. He is now getting ready to start college. And Jessica, our daughter, is currently serving on the USS Boxer, an assault ship that transports 1,500 Navy personnel and 1,800 Marines. Both Jessica and Tyler specialized in information technology. My mom, Cindy, is the administrator over the Dennis Water Association, the municipal water supply system. She is the rock of the family.”

When Tyler and Jessica graduated from naval training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center north of Chicago, Noonie and Tammy drove the 650 miles on both occasions to see them graduate. “Noonie doesn’t fly,” Tammy said with some resignation. “But he did once, when Bob Tiffin asked him to join our engineers and suppliers in a two-day training seminar in California. It was just too far to drive to California!”

It is obvious that the Robersons are valuable assets to the established quality of Tiffin motorhomes. 



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Harold and Renea Mahaffey

SEVERAL INTERESTING JOBS LED TO A DYNAMIC, PROFITABLE BUSINESS IN SENECA, SOUTH CAROLINA



Text and photography by Fred Thompson

Harold Mahaffey's camping experiences where he grew up in South Carolina go back 45 years, but one special night stands out in his memory. "When we went camping, it was three generations — Granny, my parents, and the kids. We were camping in our tent one spring night, all seven of us on the ground in our bed rolls, when a storm blew in with heavy rain," he recalled. "The sides of the tent were flapping in the wind, rain was pouring in, and all of us got soaked. We piled in the car to wait out the storm, all of us soggy and shivering.

"That's the last time we're going to do this," Granny announced decisively."

"When we got home, she went shopping and bought a Cox camper," Harold said. "A Cox camper had an aluminum trailer with double beds that folded out on each side. A tent on pole frames folded out over the beds and trailer and securely fastened all the way around. It had a zippered door and screened windows with canvas covers that zipped down. It was pretty crowded with seven of us, but we never got washed out again. My Granny is 96 now and my mom takes care of her."

Harold finished high school and decided not to attend college. He soon found he liked jobs where he was in control of the outcome, hands-on, and interacting

with his customer or the public. Those factors demanded persistence and hard work and he was always ready to make the required sacrifices to get the results he wanted.

He became a fireman and later a policeman in Charleston, South Carolina, and in both vocations moved up in the ranks. His skill in deduction and sorting out the facts as a police officer led him to focus on becoming a private investigator.

Along the way he met his future wife, married, and had two children. As a team they operated two daycare centers, managed them well, and watched their business grow. Unfortunately, they often

P R O F I L E

disagreed on how to best operate their business which led to a divorce. "I had hoped we could split it down the middle, she could take one daycare center and I take the other," Harold said. "But it didn't work out that way. I went back to ground zero, restarting my life and looking for a new business."

In October 1995 while riding his motorcycle with two friends, the lead cyclist collided with a car that turned right in front of him. The motorcycle was catapulted back across Harold and his rider, putting both of them in the hospital for several weeks plus a long rehab. "It changed my life and taught me to really focus on what is most important to me," he said.

Harold's ability to handle a lot of issues at the same time led him to managing two McDonalds. "It really wasn't that bad a job," he laughed. "But it was not where I wanted to recover and build a new career."

Always a big hockey fan, Harold often went to watch the Charleston Stingrays play. "I get a real kick out of the rough and tumble of hockey play and watching the fans really get into the game," he said. "The more guys who get put in the penalty box, the more fun it is."

At one of those hockey games in 1996, Harold found himself sitting right behind some of his old police buddies. It did not escape his notice that one of the guys was escorting a very attractive young woman. "They introduced me to Renea, who at that time was working as a court reporter. After the game, they suggested we go out for dinner and one of my buddies said, 'Renea, why don't you ride with Harold.'"

"That was okay with me," Renea interjected. "I didn't want to ride with three off-duty officers anyway. They were nice guys, but three-to-one is not a good ratio! I was 27 at the time." Renea and Harold began dating the next week after they met.

In the fall of 1998, Harold accepted a position with Rick Hendrick Honda in

Charleston, South Carolina, as a sales consultant. "Talking and working with people has always been a very natural process for me. After I had been there a month, I won the 'Top Salesman of the Month' award for 13 straight months," Harold said.

In late 1999, I was recruited as the general sales manager with Piedmont Honda in Anderson, South Carolina. Harold accepted the offer and Renea quit her job as a court reporter and moved to Anderson.

Harold had a salesman working for him who was not doing very well. Renea was interested in starting a business of her own. "To launch them both in a new business, I bought a blind cleaning business for Renea and my salesman to operate," Harold said.

"Harold became our salesman for the business," Renea explained. "He was really good at selling the new accounts we needed, but it was putting him into overtime and a lot of stress. After six months, I asked him to quit his job with Piedmont Honda. He was getting repeat business accounts by selling our services to restaurants."

"When I announced my intention to resign from my position at Piedmont Honda, the owners thought I had been hired by another car dealership," Harold said. "When I told them Renea and I were expanding our blind cleaning business, their jaws dropped. They were incredulous!"

Harold hit a jackpot account soon after he left Piedmont. "We picked up the blind cleaning account for all of the Waffle Houses in North and South Carolina and Georgia," Harold said. "I don't remember how many locations that was in 1999, but today they have 667 restaurants in those three states," Harold said. "Because the restaurants were so close together, we could clean the blinds in six restaurants a day for \$125 each."

After finding a manufacturer/supplier, Harold and Renea decided to sell blinds by placing an ad in the Yellow Pages. Their product was a simple, two-inch wide

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Harold and Renea at their store in Seneca with design consultant Katherine Greer.

mini-blind. “Our first call generated by the ad was from a Texas man who was moving here to manage the new mall,” Renea said. “He offered us a kiosk in the mall and we told him we didn’t think we could afford it. He countered and assured us there would be no charge if it didn’t work out after three months.”

Bob Miller, a friend from the Piedmont Honda dealership, made attractive frames to display the samples of the blinds supplied by the manufacturer. Renea talked to interested customers at the kiosk and Harold went to their homes to sell the blinds and install them. They did \$12,000 the first month.

Amid the fast-moving frenzy of getting their business launched, Renea and Harold eloped on New Year’s Eve 1999 and got married in Germantown, Tennessee. “After listening to all the Y2K rumors about what might happen at the end of the millennium, we felt like we were tempting fate,” Renea said.

Realizing they needed to expand their product offerings, Harold called a business owner in Charleston to ask about his

line. As a result of the contact, he attended an orientation and training school at Hilton Head for business owners who sold window blinds and treatments.

“With the usual networking at a meeting like this,” Harold explained, “I met a principal from the Elmar Window Fashions company, a fabricator for window treatments, who was signing stores to represent their products. He introduced me to Bob Watt, the Hunter-Douglas manufacturer’s rep. I quickly realized I

was talking to the rep who could provide me with a top quality product line.

“Knowing that the samples were not free, I brashly told him, ‘I’ll be your best salesman if you give me a chance.’ He responded without hesitation, ‘Prove it!’”

Watt provided Harold with a limited set of samples at a reduced price. Renea displayed them in their 8 × 8-foot kiosk to get appointments. “I sold \$20,000 in product the first month. In six months, we were his largest dealer in South Carolina. Since



then, he has provided us with a complete line of free samples,” Harold said.

In 2001 the Mahaffey's expanded their business with a second kiosk in the mall at Greenville, South Carolina. After he fielded a call from a business owner in Georgia who wanted to install a kiosk in the Athens Mall, Harold sold him a “business opportunity.” For a substantial fee, Harold and Renea planned and designed his kiosk, combined the two company's orders to Hunter-Douglas for higher discounts, and took an override fee of 10 percent on all sales. They handled three more “business opportunity” arrangements over the next three years. They sold the blind cleaning business after operating it for four years.

By 2003 their successes in kiosk stores qualified the Mahaffey's to become an exclusive Hunter-Douglas Window Fashions Gallery dealer. “We had grown from getting appointments, selling, measuring, and installing to general store management,” Renea explained. “Our new status required a free-standing store.”

The couple opened their first gallery store in Seneca, South Carolina in 2003. “We expanded our company with gallery stores in Greenville in 2005 and Asheville in 2007,” Renea said, “but we later sold them so we could concentrate on serving our customers here in the Seneca-Ander-son area. We believe so strongly in customer service.

“We do home calls anytime a customer has a concern about the installation or functionality of a window treatment,” Renea continued. “We have been so fortunate to have Charles Evans, our installer, with us for 13 years. He is a ‘superstar’ in this business. Charles will not leave a home until the owners are completely satisfied. Our whole staff is determined to be the best we can be, and nothing else. Katherine Greer, our design consultant, will work tirelessly with a client to offer suggestions and create appropriate options.”

In addition to greeting and working in the store with clients, Renea follows up every sale and installation with a handwritten thank you letter. The company's

referral program often brings them new business. She frequently advertises in specialized magazines serving residential subdivisions and communities that are close knit. She regards “word-of-mouth” as the best advertising a company can get and that includes Facebook.

“We only offer Hunter-Douglas products now,” she emphasized. “Their quality makes the difference in this business. We reached the status of Centurion Dealer in 2012 and that brings us early releases on new products, 75 percent reimbursement on specialized advertising and costs, free promotions, and extensive samples and literature for our clients.”

With their diligence and hard work, they both say the business has been very good to them. “We are blessed with two of the best employees in this world, great clients with whom we enjoy working, and financial independence,” Renea said. Harold noted that they had traveled all over the world with the many sales awards they had earned from Hunter-Douglas.

“We are really blessed in that our per-

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Sport cruising and backcountry off-roading are two of Harold and Renea’s favorite recreational activities when they are not redecorating homes with Hunter-Douglas blinds.

sonalities complement each other,” Renea said. “I am very conservative. Harold has taught me to take a chance and lose a little bit of control to get ahead or reach a goal. And I temper somewhat his tendency to overreach and take too big a chance.”

One big thing they agree on is that customer service is the key to success in almost any business. “If you don’t offer excellent customer service, you will never succeed,” Harold said. “I don’t think you could name five companies the size of Tiffin Motorhomes where you can walk in and talk to the president about the product you bought from him. Our company still services every product we have ever sold and we render service at the owner’s home. We don’t tell anyone to send their blinds to Hunter-Douglas to get them repaired. I left our Phaeton in Red Bay a few weeks ago to have the front cap repaired and repainted, and to have new Diamond-Shield put on it. They have called me three times to keep me informed on the progress of the work.”

“Our hobbies are riding motorcycles, playing poker, and traveling in our Phaeton,” Harold said. “We began RVing with a Four Winds Class A that we bought in 2012. After putting 13,000 miles on it, we traded the next year for a 2005 Minnie Winnie. It had a queen bed and with my height, I really wanted a king.”

“Harold researches to the N-th degree anything he plans to buy,” Renea smiled. “After hours on the Internet reading everything he could find about Tiffin motorhomes, he began to look for one that was five or six years old with relatively low mileage.”

“I found what I was looking for in Jackson, Tennessee and bought it in May of last year,” Harold said. “We went straight

to Red Bay to get a few things fixed in the express bay. I wanted to find out if everything the first owner told me about Tiffin Motorhomes was really true. It was! Everybody was so nice—from check-in to check-out. We took the assembly plant tour and then went over to Belmont to walk through the paint plant. And then, of course, we got to meet Bob Tiffin and that really capped off our visit to Red Bay.”

Harold and Renea are still quite young, only 53 and 47. They hope to retire early, maybe buy a newer Phaeton and see a lot more of the U.S. and Canada. They have a rustic lake home in Anderson that they designed — perfect for a couple who are obviously very much in love.

“We enjoy traveling with our boys: Yogi, a Maltese, and Scooter, a Maltese-Shih Tzu mix,” Renea said. “They love riding in the motorhome.”

Renea several years ago became a student of astrology and spiritual healing through Reiki I and II. Part of her DNA is Native American which may have influenced her interest in becoming a Reverend in the Alliance of Divine Love. She offers spiritual counseling to those of all faiths.

When Harold left law enforcement, he decided to get an elaborate tattoo on his arm. “It was like an expression of my new-found freedom,” he said. Several years later after many sessions with his tattoo artist, he now has his entire body tattooed from the neck down. “I don’t want to incur the prejudice of people in my business, so I wear long sleeve shirts while I am at the store. Those who know me don’t seem to mind — the most important being Renea.” **RIS**

The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

Following Your Trail

We just got the last edition of *Roughing it Smoothly* and thought you had published our fall trip. We left Canada Aug. 20th and headed for Glacier National Park. We loved it and the weather was the warmest for that month in years. From there we pretty much followed your trip and spent two and a half months doing it. We had one day of rain the entire time we were on the road. The rainy day happened in Yellowstone, coincident to the same day we were headed up the mountain, allowing us to watch the rain turn into a blizzard.

We had three other couples with us who were on their first big road trip, so weather wise it turned out to be an awesome trip. We hiked, rode horses into Bryce Canyon, took boat trips, and toured every interesting thing we could. We also converted one of our friends to becoming a Tiffin owner.

Our new Allegro Bus 45LP worked like a charm. We had one small issue and Tiffin shipped the part to an Albuquerque dealer. The part was there when we arrived for the Balloon Festival, and we were in and out in two hours. Again, the weather was fantastic and balloons were launched every day for the first time in years.

Our trip was really a great experience for us and our friends. They are looking forward to many more now that they have completed their first big trip.

Your article brought back many memories and also gave us some interesting things to look forward to when we go back out that way again.

Keep writing those interesting articles. We love them.

John & Sheila Smart, Davenport, Florida

Scotty's Camper Sales

Deb and I live in New Iberia, Louisiana, and we own our second Allegro Bay, a 2006 model, that we bought from Scotty's Camper Sales. I would like to offer our comments on the Dealer Profile story about them in the Winter 2015 issue.

Maybe it was serendipity by the Cheezums from Finksburg, Maryland, to have found Scotty's when they needed good customer service. Scotty's Camper Sales provides that immediate level of service to us locals and we certainly do appreciate it as well. All of the employees are eager to serve and get you back on the road as quickly as possible. We always are grateful to have

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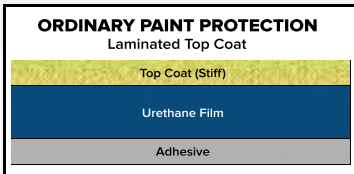
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New Iberia, Louisiana

Fond Memories at 95

I am 95 years old. My husband, Ellsworth Hanson, passed away five years ago. I've always read *Roughing It Smoothly* ever since you started the magazine many years ago. Thank you for sending it to me. From the last issue, I cut out the Grand Canyon story and sent it to my son-in-law. I sent the Big Bend National Park article some time ago to my daughter, as they have been there. We had five different motorhomes and traveled to 49 states—and flew to Hawaii. Thank you for all the fun we had in our Tiffin motorhomes.

Evelyn Hanson
Tucson, Arizona

An Allegro RED in Hibernation

No story to tell, but I thought the readers of *Roughing It Smoothly* might like to see a picture of my Allegro RED 33AA in hibernation. She usually wakes up in late March and wants to travel. My first Tiffin was a 28-ft. 2011 Allegro Breeze.

James Herron
Ashville, New York

The Beautiful 1000 Islands Region

We love to travel to the 1000 Islands region in upstate New York. We stay in the Gross Point State Park, right on the water. The view of the 1000 Island Bridge is amazing and we enjoy watching the numerous large barges. The campsites are primitive, but with our self-contained Allegro Open Road our visits are very comfortable. We can tie up our boat at the water's edge 50 feet in front of us and the comfort of home at our campsite makes our family vacation unforgettable each year!

Greg & Sara Fulkerson
Lebanon, Pennsylvania

A 12,000 Mile Circle Through the U.S.

My wife and I and the dog took a 12,000 mile trip across the southern U.S. and then turned north through Utah and Salt Lake into the Rocky Mountains, and then circled back to Florida. We visited friends and family, and camped in 15 state parks. We stayed at Elks and Moose Lodges as well as campgrounds. What a great experience! Our 2006 Phaeton (purchased new) performed perfectly. Not even a burned out light bulb! We have owned Allegros since 1985. We are privileged to live in a great country and own a great motorhome.

Steve Welch
Deerfield Beach, Florida



The Railroad Is Tiny But Love for Steam Power Is Big

by Norman Spray



PHOTO BY DONALD HENNEN

The “best farm land in the world” surrounds Freeport, Illinois, a city of over 27,000 on the Pecatonica River 110 miles north and west of Chicago. There are no forested steep hills or lumber mills. Corn is king. Yet here you can ride a train powered by a 104-year-old steam-powered locomotive geared specifically to climb up mountainsides on poorly-laid rails to haul down heavy loads of timber or minerals from mines.

For only \$7.00, you can take a 45-minute, 3.4-mile trip on the Silver Creek and Stephenson Railroad founded by The Stephenson County Antique Engine Club. You’ll be in an old passenger car pushed (and pulled) by a “geared” locomotive, one of the least-romanticized of the 138,000 locomotives built and operated in this country in the 125 years steam power ruled the rails.

This engine, a Heisler built in 1912, moves you along at *break-neck speeds* up to eight miles per hour, whistle screaming, smoke from its wood fire filling the air with nostalgic aromas. It is one of the last surviving locomotives geared to power every one of its drive wheels mounted on swiveling “trucks,” an unconventional design that increased power and maneuverability needed to negotiate twisting climbs into upland forests.

How this Heisler, one of only 625 ever built and one of only eight still operating, came to the mostly

flat farm country here is a story of how a few people who love old-time steam engines had the drive and determination to make it happen, says Ronald Pieper, one of the instigators who founded the railroad. He is the retired farmer who, after 42 years farming it, calls this country’s the “best farm land in the world.”

**An Antique Engine Club Bought
a Steam Locomotive, then
Built an Excursion Railroad**



PHOTO BY DONALD HENNING

Silver Creek and Stephenson's 104-year-old Heisler locomotive crosses the Yellow Creek bridge on a short run carrying tourists.

Why would the Stephenson County Antique Engine Club build a railroad and bring a mountain-climbing locomotive to the flatlands? "Well," adds Pieper, "we had the idea that you couldn't really have an antique engine museum without a steam locomotive since steam trains had so much to do with building this nation. We thought maybe a railroad could bring more tourists to our town. Then, again, maybe we were a little crazy."

In truth, the way the club built its railroad could be called unusual, sort of like putting the cart before the horse. First, the club found and bought the Heisler from the White Water Valley Railroad in Indiana. That was back in 1982. A year later it bought 1.72 miles of railroad bed right-of-way that the Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad had abandoned. Unfortunately, that was *after* the rails already had been scrapped. The club then bought rails from places as distant as Mankato, Minnesota and ties salvaged throughout Illinois. Finally, by May 28, 1985, volunteers laid the first track – three years after they'd moved in a locomotive that had no place to go.

Another seven years passed before this little railroad dedicated its own Silver Creek Depot, one based on plans from the Illinois Central depot in Eleroy, Illinois.

The Silver Creek and Stephenson Railroad has carried tourists over its short route every summer since, usually operating on weekends and certain holidays between Memorial Day and Halloween. This year the train will be operating on Sunday and Monday, May 29 and 30; Monday, July 4; Saturday and Sunday June 18 and 19; August 5, 6 and 7; September 5, Labor Day; and October 1 and 2. On Saturday, October 15 and Sunday, October 16, the railroad will make afternoon trips during the club's Fall Harvest Demonstration. That Saturday night it will make the season's first fun Halloween-themed after-dark "Train of Terror" run. Special night "Train of Terror" excursions are sched-

uled also for Saturday, October 8, and Saturday, October 22.

On scheduled dates, the train makes six trips, leaving the depot at 11 a.m., noon, and every hour on the hour thereafter until the final run at 4 p.m. The "Train of Terror" makes four one-hour night-time trips on each scheduled date beginning at 6 p.m. and each hour on the hour afterwards until final boarding at 9 p.m. Spooks, ghosts, ghouls, and goblins show up at unexpected places to frighten and delight passengers.

Seating is open. You can decide whether to ride in an open flat car or in a caboose, one of which is the oldest in Illinois, having been built in 1889 for the Hannibal and St. Joe Railroad.

Most of the time, even on holidays, you can get a seat on one of these trains without a reservation. On days when the train is operating, call 815-235-2198. On other days, 815-232-2306. Information at: thefreeporshow.com/scs.htm. For only \$15, you can ride in the cab with the engineer. For \$100, you can even *be the engineer*. To arrange this in advance, contact Roger at q5632@yahoo.com.

Though trips start from a depot within the city, riders often are surprised at the country-side diversity as they click clack across a three-span I-beam trestle over Yellow Creek, a stream so large some call it a river; roll beside corn fields; and pass under wooded areas shaded by maple, box elder, elm, oak and other trees. It is not unusual to sight deer, wild turkey, squirrels, hawks and owls during this short 3.4-mile round trip.

Railroad buffs, particularly those fascinated by steam locomotive history, may find the engine's operation even more interesting than the scenery. Geared locomotives like Silver Creek and Stephenson's Heisler are equipped with reduction gearing in the drive train to apply more power to the drive wheels than did conventional designs of the day.

Most locomotives that pulled passenger trains had pistons directly attached to cranks on driving wheels so that one revolution of the crank (requiring two power strokes per piston) resulted in one revolution of the drive wheel. On geared loco-



PHOTO BY ROGER HOLMES

Donald Hennen, left, and Ronald Pieper load wood into the firebox of the railroad club's Heisler engine.

motives, the crank is not directly linked to the wheels but the wheels are powered through gearing that reduces rotational speed. This gives the locomotive more starting tractive effort.

Though slower, the geared locomotive met the needs of mines, quarries, loggers and some other industrial jobs where the engines had to climb steep grades on tracks that were often poorly laid. There were others, but most engines of this type were made by three companies. They were the Shay, made by Lima Locomotive Works of Lima, Ohio; the Climax made by Climax Locomotive Works of Corry, Pennsylvania; and the Heisler from the Heisler Locomotive Works of Erie, Pennsylvania.

His was not the first but Ephraim Shay, a Michigan logger, generally gets credit for developing one of the first practical geared locomotives. His design was patented in 1881. Lima built 2,767 Shays between 1880 and 1945. Climax, second largest manufacturer of geared engines, sold 1,694 before it closed down in 1928. Before stopping production in 1941, Heisler Locomotive, last of these three to reach the market, made only 625 of the 5,086 geared locomotives built by these three companies.

The two-truck Heisler, like Silver Creek and Stephenson's, was invented by mechanical engineer Charles L. Heisler who patented it in 1892. The first Heisler prototype was built by Charles Heisler's then-employer, Dunkirk Engineering Company of Dunkirk, New York. However, Dunkirk, a manufacturer of

some geared engines of its own design, elected not to produce the Heisler. Stearns Manufacturing Company of Erie, Pennsylvania, started producing the Heisler in 1894. Reorganized in 1907 as the Heisler Locomotive Works, it turned out Heislers until 1941.

Silver Creek and Stephenson Railroad's Heisler (their Engine No. 2) was built in 1912. It has two steam cylinders positioned in a 45-degree "V" angle, one on each side under the boiler. Piston rods from the cylinders are attached to the "crankshaft" beneath the center of the boiler. Drive shafts at either end of the crankshaft are linked to gear boxes on each truck's wheel set. Power is supplied to the other wheel set on that truck by an outboard tie rod that connects the two wheel sets. Driver wheels measure 33 inches in diameter. If

you watch the engine pull out or move down the track, you can see all this linkage in operation.

No. 2 Heisler was made to use coal to fire the boiler. Often wood is used instead at Silver Creek and Stephenson, says Donald (Shaggy) Hennen, who could be called the stoker or "hostler" who often loads the wood and fires up the Heisler. "Coal is not too easy to come by where we are," Hennen says. "We often heat the boiler with a wood fire, especially if a tree falls or a storm knocks one down along our right-of-way." Normally there's a 160 or 165 psi head of steam pressure as No. 2 rolls along the tracks.

The Heisler usually is the work horse pulling the Silver Creek excursion train but the railroad owns other interesting relics of an earlier age. Included are a gasoline-powered, 60-horsepower 12-ton engine built in 1938 by Plymouth Locomotive Works of Plymouth, Ohio; a 150 horsepower, 14-ton 1945 engine built by Brookville Locomotive Works of Brookville, Pennsylvania that starts on gasoline then burns diesel; a 44-ton 1954 diesel built by Davenport Locomotive Works of Davenport, Iowa; and three little section hand "speeders" used by the volunteers who repair and maintain the tracks.

This is a railroad operated by volunteers, most of whom are members of the Stephenson County Antique Engine Club. Few of them have previous railroad experience. Even so, says Donald Hennen, "our people are trained to do their jobs well. We're steam power fans dedicated to letting our visitors experience first-hand the thrill of short-line railroading the way it used to be." RIS

Some Things to Do After the Train Ride



You won't see much of Stephenson County, Illinois when you ride the Silver Creek and Stephenson Railroad in Freeport. The train may take you 100 years into the past in your "mind's eye" but it travels only 1.72 miles from the depot, after all. Fortunately for motorhome travelers, other absorbing attractions are available in this agricultural land of rolling hills.

Rustic farms, roadside farm stands, outstanding multi-use hiking/biking/snow trails, a scenic river, golf courses, and the gracious 100-year-old homes along tree-shaded boulevards in Freeport itself make a visit interesting. But there's more. For directions and advice, contact the Freeport/Stephenson County Convention and Visitors Bureau (815-233-1357 or stephcvb@aeroinc.net).

SOME PLACES TO VISIT

Silver Creek Museum. There's no better place to start a tour of attractions than the Antique Engine Club's Silver Creek Museum across the street from the railroad's depot (815-235-2198 or thefreeportshow.com/museum.htm). Here 28 rooms contain artifacts and displays documenting local and national historical heritage. Among them: a winning Soap Box Derby car built and raced in 1950-51 by a local 12-year-old boy; and model trains zipping along multiple tracks that fill one of those 28 rooms. The museum is open on the same days the railroad operates. Lunch, including homemade pie, is served in the kitchen.

Giant steam engine. A huge 130-ton steam-powered Cooper Corliss engine stands in

a separate building on the same grounds. This 130-ton behemoth's twenty five foot, four inch flywheel is made up of five five-ton sections joined by 24 bolts that are three inches in diameter plus 96 "dogbone"-shaped keys 2.5 inches square and 30 inches long. It is turned by a 25-ton crankshaft. The engine originally served the Matthiesen-Hegeler Zinc Company of LaSalle, Illinois. It can turn at a rate of 45 revolutions per minute. There is no admission fee but donations are appreciated. **Fever River Model Railroad.** Model train aficionados are sure to admire the Stephenson Society of Model Trainmen's 120 by 24 foot scale model of a hypothetical railroad that runs multiple trains between Duluth, Minnesota and St. Louis, Missouri. Fully operational, it has detailed scenery, rail yards, factories and interchanges with many other railroads. It is open on certain weekends or by appointment (815-908-9611 or feverriver.org.)

Stephenson County Historical Museum. Among featured attractions here, a must for history buffs, this museum features an Arcade Toys Museum displaying a collection of highly collectible cast iron toys that were manufactured in Freeport in the 1800s. (815-232-8419 or stephcoh.org).

Cedarville Historical Museum. Located in an 1889 school building in the nearby town of Cedarville, this museum features a permanent exhibit honoring Jane Addams, a native of this town who became an internationally famous humanitarian and social worker. She founded Hull House in Chicago and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The museum is open 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays May through October and/or by appointment. Admission: \$3.00. (815-563-4202 or cedarvilleareahistoricalociety.org).

Freeport Art Museum. European, near and far east, Native American, African and Oceanic arts and crafts are displayed in five permanent galleries. The museum is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and noon to 5 p.m. on Saturday. It is closed on major holidays (815-235-9755 or freeportartuseum.org).

RV PARKS IN STEPHENSON COUNTY

Though there's plenty of room to park big rigs near the Silver Creek and Stephenson Railroad, there are no hookups. We could find no RV park listing in Freeport, but it's a short distance to parks elsewhere in Stephenson County.

In Pearl City: *Emerald Acres Campground II* has 46 spaces with electric and water, some also with sewer connection when available. Open May 1 to October 15 (815-443-2550).

In Lena: *Le-Aqua-Na State Park Campground* has 132 sites with electrical connection. There are 12 hy-

drants for water. Dump station available. Open May 1 to October 31. Equestrian campground and trails open April 15 to November 15, weather permitting. (815-369-4282, web: dnr.state.il.us; for reservations: reserveamerica.com).

Lena KOA, 90 full hookup sites; big rig long and level pull through sites with 50 amp electric. (815-369-2612 or 800-562-5361, lenakoa.com).

In Winslow: *Winslow Village Park Campground.* Nine sites with electrical and water hookups. One dump station. Maximum length: 30 feet. (815-291-5282).

SOME THINGS TO DO

Jane Addams Trail. This popular multi-use trail, named to honor the county's famous native, has been completed to let travelers coming from the north reach Tutty's Crossing Trailhead, a gateway into the historic downtown area restaurants, specialty shops and attractions like the Lincoln-Douglas Debate Site and the Union Dairy, a place to get a dip of ice cream or Turtle Sundae that's served Freeport for over 102 years.

There's paved parking, boat access, and information kiosks near Tutty's Trailhead, located on the banks of the Pecatonica River. The Addams trail continues 17 miles northward to the state line where it connects with Wisconsin's Badger Trail which continues 40 miles to Madison. On the way to Wisconsin, hikers, bikers and winter snowmobilers and cross-country skiers enjoy scenic beauty. They cross 22 bridges, one being the historic Van Buren Bridge that dates back to 1885. There's also a covered bridge near Orangeville.

Lincoln-Douglas Debate Site. A short walk on the Jane Addams Trail brings you to an elegant walkway to the Lincoln-Douglas Debate Site, the place where one of the most significant events in Freeport's history took place on August 28, 1858. Here you'll see statues of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, positioned as the real men might have been in the second of the debates they had as they campaigned for the U.S. senate. Historians believe that, though Douglas won that election and retained his Senate seat, his reply to a question about slavery alienated southern states, split the Democratic Party, and cleared the way for Lincoln to win the presidency in 1860.

Also at this site is a monument to the debate that was dedicated in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt. Storyboards along the walkway to this impeccably-landscaped site explain the slavery question, issues discussed in that famous debate, and how it impacted the momentous events that followed.

Another renowned statue of Lincoln, "Lincoln the Debator," stands in Freeport's Taylor Park.

Critter Camp. Make a short drive to German Valley southeast of Freeport and you can see more animals at the Critter Camp Exotic Pet Sanctuary than you'd normally see in a month of Sundays. In fact, there are some 350 rescued animals representing 30 different species, many of which visitors can feed, pet, and hold. Admission is \$10 per person or the equivalent in supplies. Guided tours are available every day for up to six people per tour but all tours are by appointment at this non-profit, no-kill facility that does not buy, breed, sell or exploit animals. (815-266-1342 or crittercamp.org)

Golf Courses. Park Hills Golf Course operated by the Freeport Park District has two 18-hole courses. (815-235-6511 for course or 235-8203 for city hall or ci.freeport.il.us).

Brush Creek Golf Course at Orangeville is a nine-hole, 36-par, 3,218-yard course on challenging terrain. Green fees: \$10 for nine holes, \$13 for 18. (815-789-4042 or brushcreekgolf.com).

A FEW PLACES TO EAT

As in most cities, you'll find fast food and the more upscale restaurant chain outlets. Listed below are a few "local color" diners you are not likely to find elsewhere. **Bobber's River Tap** in Winslow, Illinois (about 17 miles north of Freeport) is an open-deck, outdoor bar on the Pecatonica River where you can bring your own pole or simply relax with a cold drink. Open May through October (815-291-2486).

The Cedar Inn is a small town bar and grill just south of the Village of Cedarville. Specialties: Friday night fish fry and Saturday ribeye steak dinner (815-563-5014). **Cannova's** is an Italian Restaurant and lounge, a Freeport tradition for 95 years. Pasta, pizza, steak, fish, and chicken. (815-233-0032, cannovasfreeport.com).

Beach's Supper Club on Galena Road (Stagecoach trail) in Lena, north of Freeport, has served outstanding prime rib on Saturday nights since 1975. Steaks, seafood, pork and chicken are menu staples. (815-369-4630, beachssupperclub.com).

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



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709 Display

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

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Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, a 42-year veteran with Tiffin Motorhomes, invites your questions.

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

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

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

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

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

Dear Danny . . .

Heated Floors in Phaeton's Rear Bath

We have a 2014 Phaeton 40QBH and we love it. It has the optional heated tile floors. Are the tile floors in the rear bath included in the "rear zone"? When we have the "rear zone" in the ON position, I am not sure we are getting heat in the rear bath-

room floors. As you will recall, the rear bath is raised one step above the bedroom floors.

Roger Hannay, Westerlo, New York

Dear Roger,

The heated floor includes the bathroom on all of our models. We start behind the driver and passenger seats and go through the living room and kitchen in Zone 1. If the floorplan has a half bath, normally it is on Zone 1. The bedroom and all of the bath floors are in Zone 2. If your rear bath floor is not heating, hopefully it will not be a serious problem, maybe something as simple as a loose connection. But it will take a trained technician to locate the problem.

Jacks Up or Down When Coach Is Stored?

We own an Allegro RED 37PA. It is our third Tiffin. I have read two conflicting opinions on the use of hydraulic jacks when the coach is stored. Is it better to store the coach with the jacks deployed or retracted? Thanks for your response.

Larry Metz, Navarre, Florida

Dear Larry,

It is okay to store your coach with the jacks in the down position. It will help relieve some of the pressure on the tires and prevent flat places from forming on the tires. It is always good to store your unit in a level area, or as near level as possible. If you store the coach for a long period of time, start the engine and generator once a month and if possible bring the engine to operating temperature. Let your jacks up and down. Turn on the furnaces and the air conditioners for a few minutes.

Inverter on 2012 Allegro 34TGA

I really enjoy *Roughing It Smoothly* and your column. My question is, where is the inverter on my 2012 Allegro 34TGA and how do I turn it off?

Walter Floyd, Cocoa, Florida

Dear Walter,

If your coach came with the optional factory-installed inverter, it should be located in the DS compartment just behind the front wheel. There is a small off-on switch on the inverter itself. You will probably need your glasses and a flashlight to see it. There is an OFF position, a CHARGE ONLY position, and an AUTO-ON position for inverting.

Heated Tile Floor in 2016 Allegro Bus

We bought a 2016 Allegro Bus 37AP at the Hershey RV Show in September 2015. Actually, it was Bob Tiffin's demo. We love it. However, because of a health problem, we were not able to use it until a week ago. We realized the front zone floors were not heating up, while the rear zone floors were getting toasty warm. All of the circuit breakers checked out OK. We can't get the fire-

place going either. Could you help us troubleshoot these two problems? What should we check next?

Walter Robison, McMurray, Pennsylvania

Dear Walter,

First, let's start with the fireplace which will be the simplest to troubleshoot. Behind the fireplace you will find a 110v outlet that is accessible by removing the raised panel in the hall facing the galley (attached with Velcro). Hopefully, it is only the plug that is not seated well into the outlet. Other appliances not on the inverter are connected here on the same line.

The heated tile floor may be more complicated to troubleshoot. If all of the breakers are OK and the thermostat seems to be working properly, you will need to have a service center check the sensors and also look for any disconnected wiring.

Suggestions for the Allegro RED

We own a 2015 Allegro RED 38QBA. Our granddaughters love the bunk beds. We put 19,000 miles on it during our first year, traveling the upper U.S. and the West Coast. We also visited most of Florida and made a stop in Red Bay. The factory tour was amazing.

We have some ideas for the Allegro RED: (1) Outside DS and PS 110v outlets. (2) Outside speakers for the entertainment system. (3) An outside galley or at least an outside fridge. (4) The lettering on front cap needs to be permanently attached. (5) DS window awnings as standard equipment.

Kent & Meg Richter, Amherst, New York

Dear Kent & Meg,

Thanks for the suggestions and I will definitely pass them on to the design department. In regard to the 110v outlets on the outside wall, we place the 110v outlet just inside one of the basement doors due to the possibility of water getting into an outlet. You can run your extension cord around the bottom edge of the door closure with no difficulty.

Cost Effective Resolution of FRED Park Brake Failure

I read with great interest Anthony Baune's discussion of his FRED parking brake failure in RIS Volume 13, Number 1 "News You Can Use." I experienced the same failure last year during a 10,000 mile trip around the USA. I also received the same advice from Freightliner (FTL): Retrofit the coach to the #3602 configuration for approximately \$6,000.00. Fortunately, I discovered

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a cost effective solution to my problem which I detail below.

The root cause of my park brake problem was diagnosed at FTL as a failed control module. No replacement modules were available at FTL or in the aftermarket. Further, I was told that the parking brake manufacturer was out of business and no longer supported the brake or control module. FTL's only solution was the aforementioned #3602 retrofit.

Once again, internet to the rescue! I was alerted to a modification of the parking brake that included a new design control module replacing the original design. I contacted the developer (Brazel's RV Performance of Centralia, Washington) and arranged to have the modification performed. The cost to me was \$700 for the modification kit hardware and \$150 for installation (both inclusive of Washington sales taxes). The modification performed flawlessly and I was able to complete the remaining 4,000 miles of my journey with no further issues.

For you other FRED drivers out there, here is the part number of the park brake modification kit and contact information for the supplier:

PN US20-78: J72 Park Brake Control Replacement Kit

Brazel's RV Performance, 3912 Harrison Ave., Centralia, WA 98531, brazelsrv.com, 360-736-9494

Don Buckingham
Sebastian, Florida

Dear Don,

Thank you very much for relating your solution. Your experience is the first time I've been made aware of this option to correct the problem. I hope this will help others who have the same difficulty.

Parking Brake Failure on 2007 Allegro Bay FRED

I own a 2007 Allegro Bay FRED with a Cummins ISB 6.7 engine (VIN 4UZACLBW67Y48712). I read the article in Vol. 13 No. 1 of *Roughing It Smoothly* about the

parking brake failure on an Allegro Bay FRED. Are there any active recalls on my unit? The article states that Freightliner will provide replacement parts, but not labor. Is this true and can you tell me if my coach has this type of parking brake (Carlisle), and if the "grade brake" is involved? I have had two brake failures and a replacement of all of the wheel brakes, which is considerably more dangerous.

Russell Carroll
Brunswick, Georgia

Dear Russell,

Your unit definitely has the Carlisle parking brake system. The park brake and the grade brake are one and the same on your coach. With any question regarding the brake system, we recommend you contact the Freightliner hotline number which is 800-385-4357, as they are very aware of the problem and the solution. Also check with Freightliner for any recalls that could be outstanding on your chassis.

Anthony Baune's suggestion, mentioned in the preceding letter, may be helpful to you. However, since we have not tested his solution here at TMH, we cannot endorse it at this time. We still recommend you contact Freightliner before you decide on the best course of action for your coach.

Just to clarify your two concerns with our readers, the problem with the parking brake and the wheel brakes are two separate issues.

Toilet Blowback Creates Mess in 2015 Phaeton 40 QBH

We have a major problem with our black tank. On three occasions over the past year, we have flushed the toilet in the half bath and got unpleasantly surprised with a blow-back that made a huge mess. In one instance, the gauge indicated the black tank was half full. On the other two occasions, the black tank was two-thirds full. No exhaust or supply fans were running at the time and no windows or doors were open. Our RV service shop checked

for blockage in the vent pipes and said all was clear. We are resorting to a very poor solution of just closing the toilet lid before flushing. Thanks for any suggestions that might solve this problem.

Doug & Dawn Polt
Fallston, Maryland

Dear Doug & Dawn,

It definitely sounds like a venting problem. The best way to check for a correct vent is to take a water hose on the roof and put it in the vent opening, and with the dump valve open let water run through the vent. There should be two pipes exiting on the roof, one for the grey and one for the black. Do it for the grey water and then for the black water, one tank at a time. If the water seems to be running freely through the tanks, you will have to look for another cause of the problem. There is a remote possibility that the washing machine drain is going into the black tank instead of the grey tank. You will need to take the coach to a service center to determine if there is a misplaced vent line.

Cross-Country Trip Leaves House Batteries Weak

We have a 35-foot 2002 Allegro Bus with a 335-hp Caterpillar engine. On a trip from California to Pennsylvania last September, we arrived with the house batteries very low and we could not start the generator. We did not run the diesel generator or connect to shore power during the trip. Since the house batteries were just three years old, how do we know when the engine alternator is charging the house batteries? What role does the inverter play in this engine alternator charging process? We did install four new AGM batteries in Pennsylvania and we ran the generator on the way home.

Our slide-out is actuated by a Power-Gear IN-OUT toggle controlled by the key switch. We have replaced this unit three times because the "IN" switch control does not work consistently. The

“OUT” switch has never been a problem. My theory is the 12-gauge wires on the back are too stiff and when mounted affect the internal connectors inside the switch. What is the solution?

Roger Auch
Truckee, California

Dear Roger,

The inverter-converter will not charge the house batteries unless the unit is plugged into 110v shore power or you are running your generator. The alternator from the engine is supposed to charge your house batteries while you are underway through a solenoid referred to as a charging solenoid which should be located in a storage compartment in the rear of the motorhome probably on the passenger side. This solenoid has a battery cable from the engine battery and also one from the house battery. Once you start the engine, the ignition will activate the solenoid which in turn ties your batteries together for the charge, so both sets of batteries will be charged. To determine if this is happening, check your battery condition at your monitor (where the grey and black water gauges are located). The battery monitor on your particular unit should indicate a full charge. On the monitor that reads voltage, you should see a readout of 13 volts or higher. If this is not the case, you are likely not getting a charge from the alternator.

With regard to your toggle switch, if you think the 12-gauge wire is causing the problem, try splicing in a more flexible wire using the same gauge to the stiff wire and see if that corrects the problem.

Speakers Outside?

When we are in camp, we are usually outside and like to listen to music. Can Tiffin mount speakers outside that are connected to the audio system? We currently have a 2010 Allegro and are looking for a way to do this.

John & Debbie Daniluk
Butler, Pennsylvania

Dear John & Debbie,
This is something that Tiffin does not do in our service center because of the amount of time it takes. To set up outside speakers, you would have to run wiring from the dash radio down through the basement and then to the exterior speakers. Before you attempt this, you might

want to investigate what is available in Bluetooth technology that would allow you to have wireless speakers outside.

Floor Marks on a 2016 Allegro 36LA

I have been following Tech Talk in *Roughing It Smoothly* for several months to find a solution for floor marks from the large

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slide-out on my 2016 Allegro 36LA that I purchased from Lazydays in July 2015. I could replace the tiles, but wouldn't this keep happening? Has Tiffin found a solution yet to this problem?

Mark Thompson
Cape Coral, Florida

Dear Mark,

This is a problem we have had for several years. We have not been able to find rollers that do not mark the tile. Other manufacturers are dealing with the same problem. We suggest for now that you find a thin rubber-based material to put down before you bring the slide-outs in while we continue working on a better solution.

Installing a Lift in the Stairwell of the Allegro Breeze

I ordered an Allegro Breeze in January. My wife is handicapped with MS and I want to add hand holds and a lift in the stairwell. The lift I am considering installs easily and could plug into the 110v outlet near the stairwell. To avoid starting the generator to use the lift when we are dry camping, a technician at the Tiffin Service Center suggested connecting the outlet to the inverter. The motor on the lift draws 8 amps under full load. Can the coach batteries handle that load and how difficult is it to wire the outlet through the inverter?

On the vertical face of the dash trim, I want to add a hand hold. If she decides not to use the lift, there will be something to grab coming up the steps. What is the best method to attach the handle to that material? If I used a spring toggle bolt, will there be enough room behind the dash for the length of the screw and the wings that spring open? If the material is thick enough or has a backing, I could drill and tap into it. Thank you for your help.

Jim Glanden
Newark, Delaware

Dear Jim,

There is a 110v outlet on the sidewall adjacent to the passenger seat. It is not on

the inverter, but it could be changed to an inverter supplied outlet. On the grab handle, I don't believe the dash would have enough strength to support the pull that could be exerted on a grab handle. You will have to have a custom grab handle designed that can be supported by screwing it into the floor and the metal frame of the entrance door.

Maintenance on a 2000 Zephyr

I would love to come back to Red Bay for a visit and some maintenance, but I can do it myself with a little more information. How do I get access to the engine air filter on my 2000 Zephyr? Does the water heater have a replaceable heating element? Thanks.

Willis Eadens
Somerset, Kentucky

Dear Willis,

Your 2000 Zephyr was built on a Freightliner chassis. The air filter is located right above the muffler system. The easiest way to access the filter is to loosen the muffler and slide it out of the way. That will give you the space to remove the filter and install a new one.

The heating element is replaceable on the water heater and can be ordered from Tiffin or a local supply store.

Electrical Problem in a 2005 Allegro 31DA

I own a 2005 Allegro 31DA on a Workhorse chassis. The back-up camera and the DS power window do not work. I checked the electrical pages in the manual for the 31DA and found there is a reset relay somewhere located within the front panel. I cannot find it either by name or part number. Can you send me a location guide or let me know where to locate the reset relay or is it within the solenoid panel under the passenger side compartment? If I am correct, I'm looking for a 30-amp relay. Could it be located in the exterior fuse panel under the hood? If so, which is it? It's not marked. My ignition works okay, it's just the camera and the power window.

I do not read any 12-volt on the connecting wires within the panel above the steering wheel where the fuses and connections are. I am using the spare 12-volt lines within the panel to make these work. How can I get them back to work normally? Do I need to take my motorhome to an RV repair shop or a Tiffin dealer?

Everett Fernandez
Augusta, Georgia

Dear Everett,

The relay for the backup camera and the power to the door window should be located under the PS compartment in front of the entrance door. It is a relay that can be manually reset with a small black button.

Finding Wheel Alignment Service for 2008 Phaeton

I have a 2008 Phaeton and would like to get a wheel alignment. I live in Hebron, Kentucky, near Cincinnati, and I have been unable to find a service center that can do the job. Could you recommend a facility within a 100-mile radius of my home?

Carl E. Power, Jr.
Hebron, Kentucky

Dear Carl,

Your best bet would be to contact your local Freightliner service center. Your suspension is similar to that used on Freightliner trucks. If they don't do the work, they will have a supplier they can recommend.

Windshield in 2008 Allegro Cracked Several Times

We purchased a 2008 Allegro in October 2013. We did not use it until June 2014, but we noticed a cracked windshield in March 2014. We had it replaced in October 2014. In June 2015, cracks appeared on the first replacement. We had it replaced and four days later the second replacement cracked again. We have not done a third replacement since the insurance will not pay for it.

All of the cracks have been in the upper right hand corner of the windshield.

From the edge, it cracks across and down the windshield, like a spider web.

We checked online and found there was a problem with 2006–2008 Allegro windshields cracking. I have driven about 3,000 miles during this problem. This is very frustrating. What can we do? What is your suggestion?

Jim & Dar Watsaw
Wevertown, New York

Dear Jim & Dar,

There could be several things that could cause this problem. Before you have the windshield replaced a fourth time, have your installer call the windshield department in the Tiffin Service Center (256-356-0261) and ask for ideas about what to look for that may be causing the repeated cracks. If you are planning a trip to the southeast, plan on stopping at our service center and allow us to troubleshoot and make the repair.

Regarding the picture you sent, the round disk on top of your coach is the prep for installing the satellite receiver should you decide to buy one.

Glare in Mirrors When Backing at Night

We have a problem when backing up our 2014 Allegro 32SA at night. The glare and reflection in my primary mirrors completely blinds rear visibility. The glare is the bushes and trees in front of the RV that are illuminated by my headlights. The glare seems to be a reflection off the windshield that is worse, of course, when the headlights are on—but it's still bad even with just the parking lights, and there's no option to turn them off with the backup lights on. The glare doesn't seem to affect the convex side-view mirrors, but those are not very useful when navigating into a site. I have posted on the Tiffin forum, and the only answers I received were along the lines of "that's why I don't drive at night." What causes the glare and what can be done about it?

Bill Carberry
Woodinville, Washington

Dear Bill,
We hear about this problem occasionally. Apparently, the mirrors extending from the corners of the coach are picking up the reflected image on the windshield. Hopefully, the side and rear cameras will provide assistance when parking at night.

If our readers have any ideas to solve the problem, we hope they will write.

Black Tank Gauge Incorrect

We own a 2014 Allegro 31SA. The gauge for the black tank suddenly stopped giving correct status. It stays on one-third

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full after it has been emptied and never goes past two-thirds full when we are certain the tank is full. Is there an easy fix for this problem?

Oliver Brown
Menlo Park, California

Dear Oliver,
Hopefully it is just a loose wire or connection at the tank. You can check the connection by looking with a flashlight behind the utility panel where the dump station is located. Behind the panel you will see the ends of the grey and black tanks. Look for loose or broken wires and make sure the sensors are well attached to the tank.

Separate Emergency Brake for 2007 Allegro Bay FRED

We have a 2006/2007 Allegro Bay FRED 37QDB. It has a park brake but no auxiliary brake. Is there a separate emergency brake on the motorhome? It is an extremely well built coach. The design and quality is unsurpassed. My wife and I have full-timed in this coach for several years and we are totally pleased with it.

Harold & Sylvia Dickson
Livingston, Texas

Dear Harold & Sylvia,
On the FRED, the parking brake and the auxiliary brake are one and the same.

Once you put it in the park position, it locks the brake around the drive shaft.

Air Flow from Furnaces Varies in 2011 Allegro RED

We are the second owners of a 2011 Allegro RED QFA. There are two furnaces in the coach. The front furnace is on the PS in the kitchen and the one in the rear is on the DS. There are three vents from the front furnace where there is plenty of output. The rear furnace appears to have only two vents: one in the bathroom and the other between the bed and the wall of the bathroom. The rear outlets put out a weaker air flow compared to the front furnace. I was able to get between the closet

and the head of the bed to see two ducts. One duct goes toward the front of the rig and the other duct disappears, going somewhere other than the inside of the coach. Does the rear furnace have a weaker blower than the front or is part of the airflow going somewhere else in the rig?

John Cluff
Livingston, Texas

Dear John,
The air flow from the rear furnace will be a little weaker than the front unit because it is a lower BTU furnace. The duct that you see disappearing goes into the basement to keep the wet tanks from freezing in the winter months when you are camping.

Leaving the Pump Switch On or Off

My husband and I have a disagreement on leaving the water pump on. We have been in several situations where we are using water only from the fresh water tank (no hookups). He insists the switch in the coach should be off until you need to use the water. Does it do any harm to leave the switch on? Thanks for settling this.

Celeste Krahl
North Branford, Connecticut

Dear Celeste,
In a sense, you both are right. It will not hurt to leave the pump in the ON position for long periods of time while you are in the coach and using it. But it is recommended that you turn the pump OFF if you are going to be away for an extended time. If you are in a campground, turn the water off if you plan to be gone for a few days so that you won't come home to a flooded coach if one of the appliances failed.

If you hear the water pump coming on and shutting off frequently and you have nothing on, you may have a leak causing the pump to do that.

Phaeton Screens Difficult to Remove for Cleaning

The window screens in our 2014 Phaeton 40QTH are almost impossible to remove for cleaning. This is our fifth motorhome

and we have not encountered this problem in our earlier coaches.

Ron Doster
Depew, New York

Dear Ron,
The newly designed windows have screens that are more difficult to remove. It is a two-person job with one person pressing the screen toward the top and the other pushing it out from the bottom.

Defective Pump or a Faulty Switch

I have a 2014 Allegro 34TGA. At the present time, the water pump is acting up. It takes several button presses to turn it on. After it finally turns the pump on, it continues to run when there is a demand for water at the galley or bath. The technician who worked on it says he cannot find the problem. How can we determine if it is the pump or the switch?

Lawrence D. Jones
N. Fort Myers, Florida

Dear Lawrence,
Your pump is probably okay. More than likely the connection at the back of the switch is the problem. On the multiplex wiring, sometimes it is difficult to get a good connection with the small gauge wire. The technician should have a bright light, and even a magnifying glass, to be sure the small gauge wire is connected tightly.

My Auto Steps Are Autonomous

I have a 1996 Allegro Bus. The auto steps seem to have a mind of their own. They go in for no reason and occasionally they will not come out when the door is opened. The magnet has been replaced. I have taken the motorhome to an RV service center three times to get it fixed. Of course, it will not act up while I am there.

Norma Rossman
Almond, New York

Dear Norma,
It could be several different things causing the problem. If the magnet itself and the wire going to the magnet are in good

shape, it is likely that the control box has moisture in it. Also it is possible the ground is corroded and not making good contact. The ground wire is on the step itself.

Tubeless Tires on a 1988 Allegro

My 1988 Allegro 27-ft. motorhome needs four new tires on the rear. I want to put tubeless tires on the back, but I may need spacers between the dual tires. This could move the outside tire too close to the aluminum body skirt. Using tube tires again would solve the problem, but most tire shops do not stock them anymore. If tubeless tires will fit, what size should I install? The original tires for this motorhome were 750×16.

William R. O'Connor
Apopka, Florida

Dear William,

Your cheapest route would be to order tires, tubes, and liners. The wheels on your motorhome are not rated for tubeless tires. You will have to replace the wheels if you want to use tubeless tires. If you go with the tubes, be sure to replace the liners to keep the tube from rubbing against the steel wheels.

Tank Problems on 2012 Allegro Breeze 32BR

We have a 2012 Breeze. Bought it new and love it! After our grey tank stops draining (just dribbling), we assume it is "empty." However, the monitor shows that it is still one-third full. Is this normal? Is that the way it was designed to work?

It is very difficult to fill our fuel tank completely full. The diesel starts bubbling out as though it were full, but the gauge on the dash shows it is three-fourths full. Do we have a problem with our gauges?

Mary Walker
Payson, Arizona

Dear Mary,

The monitor is usually not the problem. It could be the #1 sensor is mounted too close to the bottom of the tank and is sensing the moisture that is left in the

tank after you have drained it. The easiest fix will be to order a new sensor and move it up about a half inch to an inch above the position of the existing sensor. Regarding the fuel gauge, it sounds like the vent that goes with the fill tube is positioned too low. If the vent is lower than the fill tube connecting to the spout, it will cause this problem. Even though you could have a bad gauge, it is seldom that this is the problem.

Electric Step Retracts Sporadically

I have a 2003 Phaeton. Sometimes when I close the entry door, the electric step retracts about three-fourths of the way. When I open the door, it fully extends. I can reach in and wiggle the magnet on the door post and it may fully retract the next time I close the door. When I am driving, I never know if the step is fully retracted. Thanks for your response.

Jim Hapgood
Turlock, California

Dear Jim,

Check all connections at the magnet and at the step itself. It sounds like you have a loose connection behind the magnetic switch. If not, it could be the motor or the control board causing the problem.

The step assembly is 13 years old, so it probably just needs general checking and maintenance.

Optional Heat Pump on a 2013 Allegro

I own a 2013 Allegro 34TGA. When I bought it, I was told it had a heat pump. After I used a half tank of propane, the dealer changed his mind and said I did not have a heat pump. Can I install a heat pump now? I have a 5000kw generator. If I am dry camping, would it be cheaper to heat the coach with propane or with the heat pump powered by the gas generator? Is the AC with heat pump an installation I can do myself? I am pretty skilled at building and wiring.

William Hough
Bear Lake, Michigan

Dear William,

It would be cheaper to run the furnace than the heat pump. The LP furnace is more energy efficient than running the generator to create power to run the heat pump. The LP system puts out 30,000 BTUs while the heat pump puts out 15,000 BTUs. I did not try to do the math to compute the BTUs per dollar of fuel cost when you compare the price of LP compared to the price of gas.

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Next time you are in Red Bay, Alabama,
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Continued from page 5*

in four of those years, two tag axle floor plans. For 2016, Tiffin added to the Phaeton's popularity with the 44OH (which actually measures 45 feet) that includes a bath-and-a-half floor plan.

In the 2016 model year, half of the Allegro Bus brand's six floor plans are 45-footers (45LP, 45UP, and 45OP). Topping off the excitement, the Allegro Bus 45UP and the 45OP are offered with 600-hp Cummins engines with 1,900 lb-ft of torque. Four of the six are bath-and-a-half floor plans.

In 2009 the Phaeton got its first bath-and-a-half floor plan with the 42QBH. Since 2011, the Phaeton brand has offered two or three bath-and-a-half floor plans each year. The demand for

the extra half bath in the Allegro and Allegro RED brands was heard loud and clear. Tiffin responded with the Allegro 36LA and the Allegro RED 38QRA.

As I began this column, my purpose was to tell the story of the unstoppable progression of our motorhomes doubling in length since we began building them in 1972. As most of you probably know, a federal law prevents us from building a motorhome longer than 45 feet. We will continue to concentrate on a smoother ride and making them more durable, easier to drive, and safer. Next time we will do a brief history on the amazing features that have been developed for our motorhomes over the last 44 years. Until then, drive safely and keep on Roughing It Smoothly. 

NEWS YOU CAN USE *Continued from page 22*


for oxidation every six months. Apply a protectant three times a year to keep ahead of oxidation.

A buffer is generally required to remove oxidation, swirl marks and scratches as it gives even results when compared to hand buffing. Cyclo is my favorite buffer. It is used by several of my detailers and highly recommended. Made here in the USA, their customer service is as outstanding as their products. cyclotoolmakers.com or 303-485-1990.

Use sheepskin buffing pads on oxidized paint, scratches and swirl marks. The paint must be cured a year before sheepskin is safe to use. Foam pads are the choice for light scratches, swirl marks or newer paint. Avoid microfiber pads. Spray the sheepskin or foam pads lightly with water then add a drop or two of


RenewzIt. Keep the pads moist with water to prevent the polishing compound from drying too quickly. Then buff off the compound. The next day a film will generally appear on the finish. The RenewzIt continues to pull out the oxidation from the paint. Repeat with the RenewzIt* to remove the remainder of the oxidation. Wait 24 hours then apply Advantage or a polymer based protectant.

*NOTE: Do not use RenewzIt or other sealant or oxidation remover on uncured paint. I am working with her supplier to develop a polishing compound for use on new paints.

Please call Mary or email her from the contact section of her website with any interior or exterior cleaning questions. She is here to help solve problems. Her seminar videos are posted on her website. 

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK *Continued from page 43*

2016 Rocky Mountain Field Institute EDUCATIONAL ADVENTURES IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

The Rocky Mountain Conservancy was established in 1931 to provide educational literature to park visitors. In 1962 the RMC began the Field Institute to provide field-based learning experiences in the park on a wide range of topics taught by qualified instructors. Classes begin on April 15 and run for six months. Subject areas include archaeology, botany, entomology, geology, zoology, ornithology, area history, photography, watercolor painting, hiking and fly fishing for kids, CCC history in the park, Old Fall River road trip, butterflies, elk expeditions, and more. To see the breakdown of courses in each category, visit RMConservancy.org and sign up soon. Class sizes may be limited. On demand, Day-trek Adventures are designed to introduce families to the wonders of nature through guided discovery. You select the day and topic and the institute provides the instructor. A family membership in the Conservancy (\$50) will reduce the fee for each course and support a valuable park resource. 

Camping in the RMNP and Vicinity

There are four RMNP campgrounds that accept motorhomes [max. length in parentheses; D=dump station; R=reservations; FF=first come, first served]: Aspenglen (30)R; Glacier Basin (35) D, R, C-loop FF; Moraine Park (40)D, FF; Timber Creek (30) D, FF. No hookups. Water available. Flush toilets. No showers. \$20/night. Senior Pass & Golden Eagle / \$10. recreation.gov

RV Parks

There are no RV *resort* parks on the west side of RMNP near Estes Park. We selected Manor RV Park and got a nice spot by the river with satisfactory hookups for \$67/night. We occupied Lot 37. Lots 37-52 border the River Walk, which means guests can walk along the river between the back of your coach and the river. There are seats and picnic tables along the River Walk.

Restaurants

Except for the enjoyable lunch at The Baldpate Inn, we packed lunches every day and spent most of our time in the park. There are plenty of restaurants and interesting shops on the main drag of Estes Park.

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*The MICHELIN® 305/70R22.5 XRV® has a per-axle maximum load capacity of 15,660 lbs in singles and 27,760 lbs in duals at 120 psi cold pressure. You should always weigh each axle and check Michelin's Load and Inflation Tables to determine proper fitment and air pressure for your vehicle.



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