

# Roughing It Smoothly®



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Tiffin Management Team



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## Roughing it Smoothly®

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*On our cover:* War Eagle Mill in northwest Arkansas near Rogers.

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### Editor's Note

With this issue (5:4), *Roughing It Smoothly* reaches the end of its fifth year of publication—20 issues! And at 72 pages, it is our largest issue. It has been a pleasure publishing *RIS*, and we look forward to writing and producing the magazine for another five years. We have made a few design changes in this issue and we hope you like the results.

If you have suggestions and ideas for the magazine, please write to me at P.O. Box 292912, Tampa, FL 33687-2912. Editorial contributions are welcomed but not returnable unless you include return postage. Items accepted for publication are subject to editing. Send **address changes** to the above address or email them to [fredthompson1941@hotmail.com](mailto:fredthompson1941@hotmail.com). The subject line of email should say "RIS address change." Include your old name and address as it appears on the label and then your new address.



## Thinking About Those Who Have Influenced Our Lives

by Bob Tiffin

There is often time for reflection when I make the one hour drive twice each day between my home and the plant. Earlier this week I thought a lot about the Stallings family and the loss they had just suffered. On August 2, John Mark Stallings, 46, passed from this life. His father, Gene Stallings, said, "Johnny has a one way ticket to heaven." On another occasion, he said, "Johnny doesn't have a mean bone in his body."

If you haven't been in Alabama very much over the last 20 years, you may not have heard of John Mark or his famous father, Coach Gene Stallings, who led the Alabama Crimson Tide to a national championship in 1992 and seven winning seasons. Coach Stallings played for and later served on Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant's coaching staff. Just like his mentor, his toughness as a player and later as a coach was the stuff of legend.

As a young coach with a promising career ahead of him, Stallings and his wife, Ruth Ann, were very happy when they became the parents of a boy in 1962. He envisioned one day coaching Johnny Stallings to become an outstanding quarterback. But the doctor brought them shocking news. Johnny had Down syndrome.

At first Stallings felt very disappointed, even anger, that his son would be so afflicted. They were advised to place the little boy in an institution, as was often done a half century ago. But they refused. John Mark would get the same loving care his two older sisters were receiving. Little did they realize in 1962 how much Johnny would influence and change their lives.

As the years went by, Gene and Ruth Ann realized how much Johnny was teaching them about determination, patience, and love as he struggled to master the simplest tasks and then flashed his winning smile in triumph. His sisters spent endless hours with him when they came in from school. Johnny's parents soon realized what a treasured blessing they had in their son and began to share him with the outside world. He was not an embarrassment to be hidden away—Johnny was an



inspiration to all who had the opportunity to meet him. Several times Coach Stallings sponsored a benefit golf tournament for Down syndrome children and I was able to attend two of the tournaments.

He was often at his father's side wherever Coach Stallings went, showing the confidence of a child who knows he is cherished. When Stallings took a position on the Dallas Cowboys coaching staff, he took John Mark to meet Coach Landry. He primed Johnny to address his boss as "Coach Landry." But when they met, John Mark spouted, "Hi Tom!" Irrepressible, Landry loved it.

When the Stallings family finally landed in Tuscaloosa, Johnny was 28. He became the ultimate Crimson Tide fan.

He was in the dressing room, the equipment room, the weight room trying to help the players in any way he could, and he was always on the sidelines for every game. He was always smiling, wanted to shake your hand. He was a delight to be around. As soon as Alabama fans got to the stadium for a game, they would look to see where John Mark was on the sidelines.

When they could get close enough, fans would ask for Johnny's autograph on their programs and he would reward them with a scrawled "Johnny," although he could neither read nor write. John Mark may have been more beloved by Alabama fans than his famous father. And Gene Stallings would have had it no other way.

After Alabama beat Miami for the 1992 national championship, Coach Stallings and John Mark gave the local reporters a brief meeting prior to standing before the national media's microphones. Johnny summed it up quickly for the reporters and put everything in perspective: "Way to go, Pop."

Johnny's parents and his sisters with unlimited love and devotion lifted him to achieve the maximum of his potential. By showing so openly their unrestrained, uninhibited, unconditional love for John Mark, they influenced and taught us how to treat children with Down syndrome. John Mark influenced his world by returning that love a thousand times over to all

who knew him or knew about him. Their examples will have a lasting influence on me and my life.

For most of us, our parents have the greatest influence on our lives: who we are, how we treat others, what we become. My mother, Katie Sparks Tiffin, was always there for us. The most important thing she did for our family was teach us our spiritual responsibility to God. She was the most punctual person I have ever known. We were never late getting to church—always early. That influenced my work ethic. Today I leave the house a little before four each morning and get to the plant by five.

When I was six, Mother took me to school on the first day. It was the same school where she went to first grade. She let me out on the circular drive in front of the school and told me, "When you get to the big hall, turn right and go to the end of the hall. Miss Dillard's class will be on the right side." I still remember her instructions as if she had said it only an hour ago. I got a little bit turned around, but Miss Dillard saw me and said, "Come on in here, Bob Tiffin. You're in my class."

Miss Dillard had a great influence on my life. She never married and dedicated herself to teaching young people. She lived only 50 yards from the school building, which made it easier for her to care for her invalid father. She also taught Judy, Tim, and Van.

In 1955, Mr. E.G. Butler came to Red Bay to be our principal. He was a young man in his thirties who only had one arm. He was a strict disciplinarian and he loved athletics—football in particular. Mr. Butler had a great influence on all of us.

We got acquainted and by the time I was in the eighth grade, he often asked me to stay after school and help him do little jobs. The school didn't have a PA system, which made it necessary for him or an assistant to walk all over the school to get messages to the teachers and students. He asked me to run wire all through the building. I had to go under the floor and crawl the length of the

*Continued on page 53*

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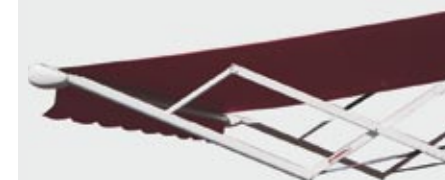
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# Allegro 35 QBA

## The “Bunkhouse” Exceeds Buyers’ Expectations

Text by Fred Thompson   Photography by Jeff Williams

It has been a long time since any of the top five motorhome manufacturers built a Class A that could sleep eight. Tiffin Motorhomes did the research and knew the market was there.

Now in its second model year of production, this 35-foot coach with four slide-outs has the right features and amenities to provide the all-American family with fun, entertainment, convenience, and economy.

For 2009 the Allegro brand underwent major redesign. All of the interiors of the brand’s five floorplans had to be re-engineered when the ceiling height was increased from 78 inches to 83.5 inches. Including the roof air units, the exterior height moved from 12’3" to 12’7", although the company continues to recommend a minimum garage height of 13 feet. The extra 5½ inches really open up the coach and give it the same spaciousness of its bigger brothers. The wall cabinet storage increased accordingly.

As part of the re-engineering process, Tiffin made several features standard which have been optional. Perhaps the most notable is the A&E 16’3" automatic awning with five wind-retract settings and a hand-held fob for deployment. The high-def TV antenna and the LCD 32-inch mid-ship Panasonic HDMI television were also made standard. The standard 5.5 kw Onan generator has the capacity to power both of the roof ACs.

### The Options

Built on a Ford chassis (242" wheelbase) using the 362-hp V-10 Triton engine, the test coach has a base MSRP of \$111,930. It was enhanced with \$15,610 in options, each of which added amenities and value far above the dollar amounts. To make the real value of this coach stand out, let’s take a look at the options.

For entry level coaches, Tiffin has set the standard in full body paint designs. While the patterns are the same, the buyer can choose from an amazing nine sets of color combinations. Our test coach was Sunlit Sand. At an MSRP\* of just \$5,600,

full body paint is a definite “YES” for the beauty and value it will add to your coach.

The cabinetry in our coach was Medium Alderwood, the standard for the Allegro. Natural Maple and Cherry Bark are excellent bargains at an optional cost of only \$700. Natural Maple, for example, would be a perfect complement to the Matisse interior in this coach.

Tiffin continues to offer the driver’s door as an option in the Allegro. For many, it is a convenient way to exit to pump fuel and check the vitals on the coach. If you pick up a little grease on your shoes, you can quickly switch back in the cockpit to your “in-coach” footwear to keep the floors and carpet clean. The driver’s door with a power window lists at only \$1,050.

Two 13,500 BTU roof-mounted air conditioners are standard equipment on the 35 QBA. Both can be operated simultaneously with the standard 5.5 kw Onan generator. The forward unit was upgraded to a 15,000 BTU unit with heat pump for \$490. This option gives you the ability to heat the coach in cool weather without firing up your propane furnace.

Some of us are news addicts and can’t miss the morning and evening national news programs. Some have favorite weekly shows they don’t want to miss. Sports broadcasts are a *must* for so many of us. Although Tiffin’s new high-def TV antenna may pick up stations as far away as 100 miles, there are spots throughout the U.S. where satellite reception is the only way to go. After years of testing, Tiffin has found that the King Dome satellite is its first choice. With a satellite service subscription, this \$1,400 option will allow you to set up the “Local Channels” as your home stations, providing you a great way to stay in touch with what’s going on back at the ranch.

On the Allegro, side view cameras, at just \$630, are a safety option that is very beneficial. The camera gives a side sweep view from the forward edge of the coach. You will never have a blind spot again.

While cell phones have brought a new dimension to com-

munication, the “old reliable” of the road is the CB radio. For a mere \$70, a CB antenna was optioned on this coach, making it ready to add a CB radio. For traffic conditions and problems ahead, nothing beats the information you can pick up on a citizens band radio. And sometimes it is pretty entertaining!

Tiffin’s surround sound system is offered this year for the first time on the Allegro as an option for only \$539 plus \$140 for the 5-disc Panasonic DVD-CD player. The system receives HD and surround sound broadcasts. The company’s screen-selectable input (standard digital-analog television, satellite, and DVD), a standard feature on all of its brands, has become the envy of other motorhome manufacturers.

Sleeping accommodations in the 35 QBA are top-notch. Mom and Dad have a full queen bed in the master bedroom. The Flexsteel Air Coil Hide-a-Bed Sofa Sleeper (included in the options at \$700) sleeps two adults very comfortably. The bed is slightly smaller than queen size. The two bunk beds (30 x 72 inches) will handle most teenagers (we’ll come back to their entertainment center in a minute). The dinette makes into a bed for two children whose maximum height is 54 inches.

Now, let’s touch on the entertainment systems in this coach. In addition to the standard 32-inch mid-section television, the master bedroom sports a 26-inch HD flat panel television (optional, \$770) mounted on the back wall. It extends in front of the bed and pulls reception from the roof antenna, satellite, and DVD. The front OH dash 26-inch television (optional, \$1,260) receives the same input plus the surround sound which is configured for entertainment in the living area.

The teens get special attention in this coach. In the ceilings above their bunk beds, two DVD-CD players with 15-inch screens drop down for movies or games (optional, \$1,260). It’s a super way to keep them entertained on a long trip.

\*NOTE: The prices of all options mentioned in the story are quoted at MSRP (Manufacturer’s Suggested Retail Price). Dealers are at liberty to reduce the base and optional prices as they see fit.







- Each bunk has a drop-down DVD player/video game station. Occupants can compete against each other from his/her respective bunk (a).
- Storage drawers for each bunk help children organize their clothes and “stuff” (b). Not visible in picture, a storage shelf with retaining bar is built-in above the foot of each bed (c).
- The eye-level HD television is the feature in greatest demand this year. The above-below cabinets add practical, convenient storage for entertainment accessories or supplies for the galley (d).

On a more utilitarian side, the options include front cap paint protective film (\$700), day/night shades in the bedroom (\$91), additional Fan-tastic fan in the water closet (\$280), wood panel inserts for the refrigerator (\$280), and a built-in vacuum cleaner system (\$350). We have the built-in vac on our motor-home. In 10 minutes I can have the whole coach vacuumed and the equipment stored.

The 35 QBA coach is nicely configured. Actually, there are even more options but we will cover those on the specifications page.

### Living in the Allegro 35 QBA

When you first enter the 35 QBA, you will be impressed at the spaciousness of the living-galley area. With the slides deployed, the room measures 12'4" wide by 15'6" long. Seating includes three on the sofa, two in the rotated driver and passenger chairs, one in the barrel chair, and two to four in the dinette.

The light beige, browns, and leaf patterns in the Matisse interior are emphasized in the dinette seating, the valances, the sofa

bed, the wallpaper, and the bedspreads. Except for the carpeted cockpit and bedroom, the floors are fully tiled and invite the owner to personalize the decor with area rugs, a coffee table, or even a floor lamp.

The passenger seat is served by a large writing table which slides out of the dash. A storage tray under the writing surface will secure correspondence materials. Owners will likely find the writing table a handy place for their laptop computer.

Let's talk about a coach that's really designed for entertainment! With the 32-inch mid-coach television at eye level in the hutch and the optional 26-inch television mounted in the traditional over-dash position, there will be no blocked views or craned necks. If it's football season, you can keep up with two games in the living area—make that three if you tune in the optional wall-mounted bedroom television easily in view from the living room. While you're tailgating, you will know all of the current scores in the conference before you head for the stadium. Having fun in the 35 QBA is a sure thing.

While you are watching the games, the designated chef has plenty of room to serve up the afternoon fare of barbecue, slaw, beans, and potato salad on the coach's 18 square foot galley countertop. The 3-burner cooktop will keep everything hot while you use the gas oven to turn out nachos as fast as your guests can consume them. With a case of Coke and Pepsi at the ready in the 10 cubic feet (CF) fridge and the icemaker pumping out the cubes, the 35 QBA will keep your party rolling.

As the Fall weekends get cooler, put out your electric awning and take the party outside. With over 65 CF of storage in the

basement compartments, take the lawn chairs, grill, and folding tables along for added convenience.

The Tiffin designers did their homework and planned well for storing all of the culinary provisions you'll want to have at easy access. Do the math: 7.4 CF in the two cabinets over the galley; 6.1 CF in the cabinet under the double sink; six drawers with depths of 14 and 17 inches; and 9 CF in the two cabinets over/under the 32-inch wall-mounted television. You must resist the urge to ask our designers to freelance your kitchen at home.

For your travel-related literature and your CDs/DVDs, the overhead cabinets in the cockpit area offer 7 CF of convenient storage. When you are ready to head for your favorite fishing spots, you will be glad to know that the storage compartment in the forward driver side slide-out is over 10 feet long. When the slide-out is extended, a side-opening door to the compartment gives you full access for storing your longest fishing rods.

The 35 QBA is a natural for dry camping in parks that offer no hookups. The 5.5 kw Onan genset will power both HVAC units, the refrigerator and the water heater. Of course, you can switch to propane to power the heating system, the fridge, and the water heater.

### When It's Time for Bed and a Little More Fun . . .

Like we said, the Allegro 35 QBA was designed for all-American family outings and trips. If you've got three and they each want to bring a friend along, you're ready! If Joe, 14, Judy, 11, and Jill, 8, each brings a friend his or her age, here's how your 35 QBA will accommodate the group.

After the S'mores are finished and the campfire has just about burned out, the boys take the bunks, drop down their DVD/CD players, put on their headsets, and challenge each other to a game—or watch movies. The two 11-year-olds make up their Flexsteel Hide-a-Bed Air Coil bed, put on their PJs, and play their favorite card game. Dad makes up the dinette bed for Jill and her best friend. They'll have fun watching their favorite kiddie movies Mom recorded for the occasion..

And what about Mom and Dad? They plan to catch a late movie on TV or watch Letterman after they close the door to the private master bedroom. Their full-size queen bed is one of the most comfortable on which I have ever stretched out.

### Can You Really Get Everybody's Stuff Into This Coach?

You bet! For the four kids who sleep on the Flexsteel Hide-a-Bed Sofa Sleeper and the dinette bed, how about 10.6 CF for clothes and personal paraphernalia in the overhead cabinets above the dinette and sofa. And the guys in the bunks? 3 CF in the two drawers under the dinette benches, 2.7 CF in the cabinet above the passenger-side chair, plus a drawer for each under the lower bunk. There's also a deep shelf over the foot of each bunk.

Mom and Dad get the grand prize: the 30 CF wardrobe, 4 CF in the six drawers under the wardrobe, and 11 CF in the cabinets





above their queen-size bed. Two built-in end tables with cabinets, 110v outlets, and two reading lamps complete the handsome master bedroom.

The fully enclosed bath includes a 45 × 28-inch elliptically shaped shower, an 18 × 40-inch vanity-lavatory with 3 CF of storage, and a toilet. A 24 × 34-inch wall cabinet with a three-panel mirror provides enough shelf space for everyone’s toiletries. Two narrow floor-to-ceiling cabinets tucked neatly between the shower and the inside wall can easily store dozens of rolled hand and bath towels.

### What Goes In The Basement?

Anything that suits your fancy. Except for the six doors that enclose the storage compartments suspended under the forward slide-outs, all of the storage compartments on the Allegro have side-opening doors for 2009. New center-positioned opening handles and locks are easier to reach. And one thing that is very impressive: Tiffin makes good solid doors, even for their entry level coach. Be sure to make this comparison with other brands similarly priced.

Let’s do a walk-around starting on the passenger side. Conveniently located right beside the entry door, you’ve got 6+ CF of storage with a side-opening door. As we walk toward the rear of the coach, you have 13+ CF of storage suspended under the galley slide-out. It’s very easy to reach—you don’t have to duck under the slide-out to access the doors.

The next four compartments all have side-opening doors: 9



- The compact galley slide-out provides two stacks of drawers (a).
- You’ll find a drawer with two cubic feet of storage under each dinette bench (b).
- Ford placed cruise control on its steering wheel (c).
- A computer slide-out table makes it easy to run navigation software en route (d).
- Bedroom features an eight-foot-wide wardrobe plus six large drawers (e).
- The queen-size bed has end tables with cabinet storage (f).

CF of storage; the propane tank; 6.8 CF of storage; and 8.3 CF of storage. All of the storage compartments with side-opening doors are felt lined. The total storage space on the passenger side is 43.7 CF.

Starting from the front on the driver’s side, the compartment suspended under the forward slide-out presents an uninterrupted 21.7 CF of storage space with four top-hinged doors to access any part of the space. After the slide is deployed, a small side-opening door is exposed that offers access to the entire length of the compartment. You could carry skis, fishing rods, or 2 × 4s to start framing the shed at the fishing camp—you name it.

The next three compartments take care of your utilities and have wide side-opening doors. The first one houses the sewer connections and the central vacuum. The engineers listened to Tiffin owners when they said, “Put the sewer connections and the water panel in separate compartments.” Your letters, emails, and Allegro Campground surveys are studied carefully by Tiffin



designers and engineers as they make improvements each year.

The Onan 5.5 genset is located in the second compartment, and the water/utilities panel and 50-amp service are located in the third. The clearly arranged and labeled water/utilities panel makes all of the following connections easily accessible: city water/tank fill valve; city water input connection; sewer flush water input connection; outside shower; water pump switch; connections for cable, tripod, and park-ready phone; Shur-Flo pump; drain valves; and cargo light.

### Driving the Allegro 35 QBA with the Ford Engine/Transmission/Chassis

For this review I cannot offer our readers any extended road trip experience like the 14,000 miles I have put on the 2008 Allegro Bay 35 TSB with front-end diesel in the last nine months. However, I can tell you the 35 QBA handles very firmly on the curving rural roads of Franklin County, Alabama. There is almost no front-wheel wandering that has to be corrected with over-steering. The leaf suspension with tuned shocks provides a good ride.

The coach uses Ford’s five-speed automatic transmission with overdrive. Starting off from a standing stop, you will feel a smooth transition through the gears. Once you get into 4th gear at driving speed, the noise level is very low and you can carry on




a normal volume conversation or listen to the radio.

The engine/transmission handled the long hills quite well, losing only five percent of its speed on a three percent grade that was three-quarters of a mile long. The coach was at UVW plus two passengers.

The GVWR of this coach is 22,000 lbs. The UVW is 17,730. The cargo carrying capacity is 2,908 lbs. That’s almost 1½ tons — not bad for a gas-powered entry level coach!

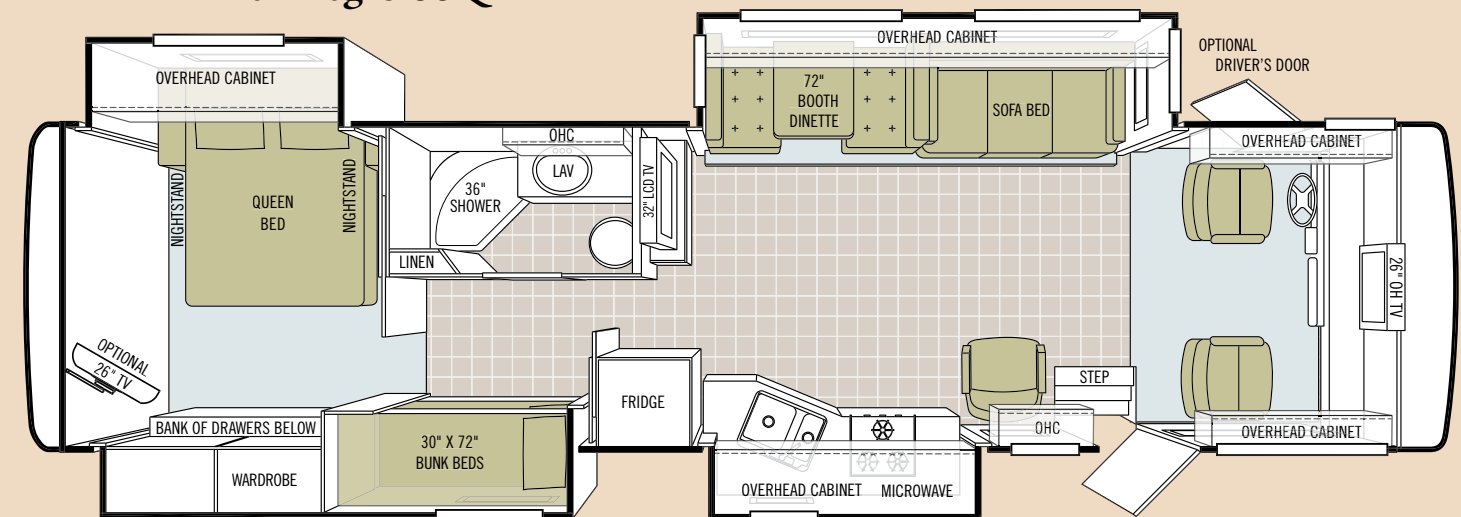
The 35 QBA can also be built on the Workhorse chassis with the 340-hp GM engine and the 6-speed Allison transmission, *or* the Freightliner chassis with the 300-hp Cummins diesel and the 6-speed Allison transmission.

### In Summary . . .

This is a great motorhome for a young family who loves to camp and enjoy the great outdoors. It’s also a great solution for grandparents who are young at heart and want to share their love of camping with their grandchildren. What a wonderful moment when Papaw watches his five-year-old grandson pull a one-pound trout from a mountain stream and Mamaw cooks it for supper! This motorhome was designed to create memories. Whether dry camping on a football Saturday or set up near a beautiful stream in the mountains, this coach is ready for friends and family. 



### The Allegro 35 QBA





SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2009 Allegro 35 QBA, Quad Slide, Base MSRP\* – \$111,930 MSRP as tested with options – \$127,540

STANDARD FEATURES

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

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

**Exterior**  
Fiberglass front & rear caps  
Tinted one-piece windshield  
5.5 Onan® gas generator  
Two 13,500 BTU high profile roof Coleman ACs (high efficiency)  
Quiet AC roof-ducted system  
Double electric step  
¼-inch thick single pane windows  
Horizontal mounted wipers  
Heated power mirrors  
Gel-coat fiberglass walls  
Exterior graphics and paint  
Exterior patio light  
Power patio awning  
Slide-out awnings  
Atwood automatic leveling jacks  
Convenient access doors with gas shocks  
Ridged long-life storage boxes  
Chrome wheels  
Single handle lockable storage door latches  
Heated water and holding tank compartments

Two 6v auxiliary batteries  
Park telephone ready  
Digital-analog TV antenna  
Cable ready TV  
50-amp service  
Black holding tank flush system  
Exterior rinse hose/shower  
Back-up monitor  
110v exterior receptacle  
110v/12v converter  
Undercoating  
Roof ladder  
External tripod satellite hook-up

**Driver's Compartment**  
Entry floor light  
Step switch and 12v disconnect switch  
Non-powered cloth passenger & driver seats (Flexsteel®)  
Lighted instrument panel

Single CD player & stereo AM/FM radio  
Passenger slide tray/computer drawer  
12v dash receptacle  
Tilt steering wheel  
Dual dash fans  
Windshield privacy curtain  
Fire extinguisher  
Snack/beverage tray

**Living Area/Dinette**  
Large pull-out storage drawers in booth dinette  
Booth dinette  
Cloth swivel chair  
Cloth sofa bed  
Decorative wall hanging

**Kitchen**  
Single lever satin nickel sink faucet  
Double bowl kitchen sink  
Solid surface countertop accent edging  
Solid surface backsplashes  
3-burner cooktop with oven  
Microwave  
10 cubic foot refrigerator/freezer

**Bath**  
Medicine cabinet  
Skylight in shower  
Satin nickel vanity faucet  
Toilet  
Fiberglass molded shower

**Bedroom**  
Wardrobe with automatic light  
Bed comforter  
Innerspring mattress  
Carbon monoxide detector  
LPG leak detector  
Bed pillows  
Phone jack  
Wall-to-wall carpeting

**General Interior**  
Raised panel cabinet doors  
Vinyl headliner  
Medium alderwood solid cabinet doors & drawer fronts  
Wall-to-wall vinyl tile flooring in living room, kitchen, & bath  
Ball bearing drawer slides  
Scotchgard® treated carpet and fabrics  
Day/night pleated shades in living room  
Power roof vents  
Tank level monitor system  
Smoke detector  
6-gallon DSI gas/electric water heater  
Compartment door with single point latch  
Two 35,000 BTU ducted furnaces

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Full body paint  
Driver's door with power window  
King Dome automatic satellite receiver  
15,000 BTU AC w/heat pump (front) IPO 13,500 BTU unit  
CB antenna  
Surround sound system  
DVD player  
Side view cameras activated by turn signal  
LCD front OH TV  
LCD bedroom TV  
Two drop down TV monitors over bunk beds  
One bedroom day/night shade  
Air coil hide-a-bed Flexsteel® sofa sleeper  
Solid wood refrigerator panels  
Additional Fan-tastic fan in water closet  
Vacuum cleaner system  
Paint protective film

OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Free standing dinette  
Powered driver's seat  
Convection/microwave oven  
Ice maker in refrigerator  
Natural Maple solid wood cabinet doors & drawer fronts  
Cherry Bark solid wood cabinet doors & drawer fronts

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 242"  
Overall length – 35' 10"  
Overall height with roof air – 12' 7"  
Interior height – 83.5"  
Overall width – 101"  
Interior width – 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 22,000 lbs.  
Front GAWR – 7,500 lbs.  
Rear GAWR – 14,500 lbs.  
GCWR – 26,000 lbs.  
UVW – 17,730 lbs.  
CCC – 2,908 lbs.  
Trailer hitch capacity – 5,000 lbs.

POWER TRAIN

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

CHASSIS

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

CONSTRUCTION

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

ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – Eight (six adults, 2 children)  
Fuel tank – 75 gallons  
Fresh water – 80 gallons  
Black water – 35 gallons  
Grey water – 70 gallons  
LPG tank – 24 gallons (can be filled to 80% capacity)

MSRP\*

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

UVW

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

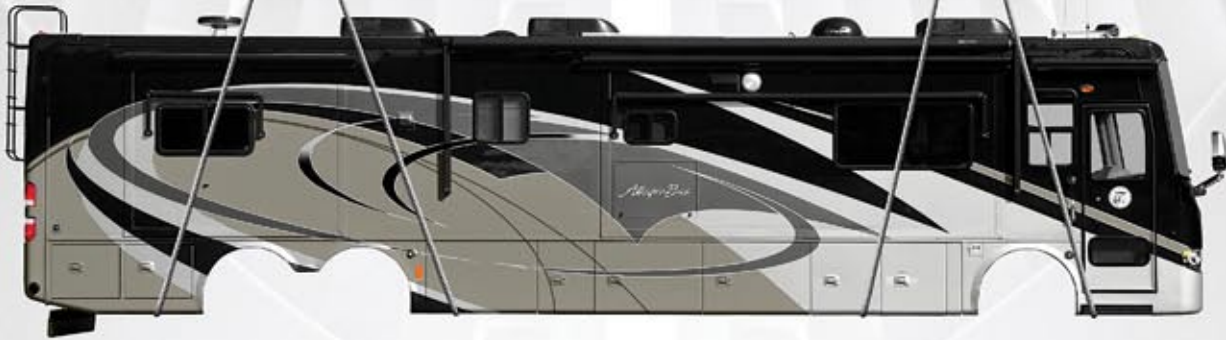
DEALERS

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

PLEASE NOTE

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

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DESERVES A PERFECT FRAME.



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We figure the best way to guarantee a top-of-the-line chassis, is to build one yourself. So we do. Right here in Red Bay, Alabama. We design, custom-build, and install the chassis with the same quality standards we've used since 1972. The end result is a chassis that delivers superior performance, reliability, and customization. A true thing of beauty.

[TIFFINMOTORHOMES.COM/POWERGLIDE](http://TIFFINMOTORHOMES.COM/POWERGLIDE)





## Branson, Missouri

July 20 – 23, 2008

### Top 10 Dealer Awards

After a gourmet dinner at the Candlelight Inn tucked into a mountainside overlooking Branson, Tiffin Motorhomes honored its **Top 10 Dealers**. Poulsbo RV, the largest dealer in the state of Washington

with seven stores, joined the Top 10 this year for the first time. Lazy Days and La Mesa continue to vie for first and second place and Bankston placed a strong third again this year.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 · Lazy Days RV SuperCenter<br>Patrick Oversby, Ken Jacobson | 6 · JC's RVs<br>No representative present                      |
| 2 · La Mesa RV<br>Jim Kimbrell, Bob Upton,<br>Jim Walters     | 7 · Southern Comfort RV Center<br>Dan Lassitter                |
| 3 · Bankston Motorhomes<br>Harrison Bankston, Chase Baerlin   | 8 · Dandy RV SuperCenter<br>Jim Cooley                         |
| 4 · Horizon-Lussier<br>Jean-Francois, Phillippe Freschette    | 9 · Vogt RV<br>Tony & Paulette Mechura,<br>Joe & Bonnie Dalton |
| 5 · Sherman RV<br>Lori & Mark Castor                          | 10 · Poulsbo RV<br>Jim Elliott, Deborah Grover                 |



*Back Row:* Harrison Bankston & Chase Baerlin (Bankston Motorhomes); Tony Mechura & Joe Dalton (Vogt RV); Jim Elliott (Poulsbo RV); Ken Jacobson (Lazy Days); Jim Kimbrell & Jim Walters (La Mesa RV). *Middle Row:* Paulette Mechura & Bonnie Dalton (Vogt RV); Patrick Oversby (Lazy Days); Lori Castor

(Sherman RV); Bob Upton (La Mesa RV). *Front Row:* Jean-Francois Lussier & Phillippe Freschette (Horizon-Lussier); Deborah Grover (Poulsbo RV); Mark Castor (Sherman RV); Tim Tiffin; Jim Cooley (Dandy RV SuperCenter); Dan Lassitter (Southern Comfort RV).

### Tiffin Motorhomes Honors Dan & Lynn Blanke

The National Dealers Meeting officially opened on Monday evening with dinner set in the product display area. Following dinner, emcee Nick Palm surprised Dan and Lynn Blanke with a ceremony to recognize and honor Dan's 14 years of service to Tiffin Motorhomes. The Tiffin Family and corporate sales manager Jerry Williamson joined Palm on stage to honor the Blankes. Dan joined the company in June 1994 after a very successful run with El Dorado, Revcon, Rockwell, and Cobra. Dan and Lynn are planning an active retirement with golf, fishing, and cruises. Their new home is located in Shell Knob, Missouri, just a short drive from Branson. An active Shriner, Dan also plans to spend time working with the organization's charities.

Before the evening ceremonies ended, Mark Lane, TMH mid-west sales representative, interrupted Nick Palm with the big news from the May stats for national Class A diesel pusher sales. Phaeton continues to maintain its dominance in the #1 position. The big news was that the Allegro Bus jumped ahead of the Discovery by one notch to take the #2 position.

### Van Tiffin Introduces Dealers to Upgrades and New Features for 2009

The meeting began at nine Tuesday morning to provide dealers with an introduction to the upgrades and changes to 2009 models.

The **Allegro** received a complete makeover this year when the company decided to raise its interior ceiling to seven feet. The Allegro was the last of the five brands to receive that major change.

Van Tiffin, director of product development, took the dealers through a point-by-point makeover. "We focused on functional changes based on customer demand which we gathered from the surveys we do in the Allegro campground and elsewhere. Our goal this year was not to necessarily

make the Allegro a prettier coach, but a more functional and easy-to-use product," he said.

The 84-inch ceiling made it necessary to redesign all of the furniture and cabinetry inside the coach as well as the front and rear caps. The exterior design includes a totally new graphics package and the decision to abandon partial paint schemes and go to full body paint. Solid surface edging is now used on counter-tops and tables to improve their durability and appearance.

TMH made LCD and HDMI technology standard for all the televisions in the Allegro brand. Surround sound is now offered as an option. The digital TV antenna with high definition reception is now standard. It is mounted in a fixed position and does not have to be cranked to an elevated position for use.



Van Tiffin

New sensing probes for tanks now make the monitor panels much more accurate. On the outside, power awnings were made standard this year. Storage compartments not attached to the slide-outs have side-swinging doors.

The **Allegro Bay**, which offers many features found on diesel pushers, continues to be a very popular coach for customers who do not want to make the price jump to the pusher class. This year the Bay received a new window shade system which replaces the day/night shades

that slide up and down on a vertical cord. A plastic beaded chain runs through a concealed hub to raise and lower both a solar daytime screen and an opaque night shade. The product is marketed under the name of Roll Ease and is standard.

The windshield has powered MCD full-span solar and opaque window shades are standard equipment in 2009 for both of the side windows in the cockpit. Other standard upgrades include the ceiling fan in the bedroom, an exterior vent for the microwave, 12 x 12-inch tiles, wood louvered heat vents, light block for the shower skydome, curved shower doors on most plans, a new mixing valve and shower handle, and a double entry step.

New options include a Panasonic in-dash GPS system, memory foam mattress, and an exterior 26-inch television



Tim Tiffin

mounted in the passenger slide-out wall.

The **Phaeton** received equally impressive upgrades. Responding to customer surveys, the driver's console has been reconfigured to place the Allison shifter panel in the forward-most position to locate it conveniently at the driver's fingertips. Function switches have been turned about 35 degrees out toward the driver rather than the earlier north-south position.

The windshield has powered MCD full-span solar and opaque shades. Manual

MCD solar and opaque window shades are standard equipment in 2009 for both of the side windows in the cockpit.

Features now standard on the 2009 Phaeton include bedroom ceiling fan, chrome mirrors, a window awning package, and an automatic entrance door key fob (does not operate storage doors).

Upgrades and standard features include a residential 22 cu.ft. refrigerator, new valances, pull-out drawers on the first shelf of overhead galley cabinets, wiring for satellite and DVD in the bedroom, and stainless steel panel for the utility cabinet that is powder-coated.

The battery rack has been moved to the driver's side front and the LP tank to the passenger side front to give the coach better balance.

New options include three low-profile air conditioners with a 10kw generator, the Flexsteel Air Coil sofa on the passenger side, and the memory foam mattress.

The **Allegro Bus**, of course, has all of the standard features of the Phaeton and then some. Handsome new designs for the tile floor and solid surface backsplash were added to the interior appointments along with a recessed cherry molding ring in the ceiling. New options include a U-shaped dinette/sofa sectional, cherry glazed cabinets, white chocolate-glazed water closet, in-dash GPS system, GE electric refrigerator, 3000-watt pure sine wave inverter (standard with electric refrigerator), MCD power shades in the cockpit and living room area, and memory foam mattress.

### Tim Tiffin Points to Early Success of Powerglide® Chassis

Tim Tiffin, general manager of Tiffin Motorhomes, focused attention on the success of the Powerglide chassis and five reasons why the company continues to be a success in the current market.

"We hit a home run with the Powerglide chassis," Tiffin said, leading off with a major selling feature for the Allegro Bus.

*Continued on page 57*





# Margaret Miya

TIFFIN LANDS EXCLUSIVE WITH ONE OF THE MOTORHOME INDUSTRY'S LEADING INTERIOR DESIGNERS

On May 1 Margaret Miya, one of the industry's leading interior designers, joined the product development team at Tiffin Motorhomes. While creating the Tiffin interiors on a freelance basis since 2004, Miya and TMH developed a synergy that led to the exclusive full-time agreement.

From 1996 to 2004 Miya was under exclusive contract to Monaco. "The job involved a lot of travel and very long hours," she said. To be able to spend more time with her family, Miya decided to return to freelance in Chino Hills, California.

While a well-known fabric supplier was making a sales call at TMH in 2004, Bob Tiffin asked if he could recommend an interior designer. Judy Tiffin, who had served as the company's

interior designer since its beginning, had already announced her retirement. Margaret Miya was number one on the supplier's list of recommendations. Her résumé included most of the major Class A and fifth wheel manufacturers.

"Going back on my own in 2004 was a major decision and I welcomed Tiffin Motorhomes as my first Class A account," she related recently while attending the National Tiffin Dealers Meeting in Branson, Missouri. Other manufacturers including National RV, Western RV, Teton, and two marine companies soon joined her list of accounts.

"It's not unusual for me to work 10-12 hours on weekdays and a half day on Saturday. So I really didn't feel too pressed with six accounts. Freelancing allows me to work in my shop at home and be near Frank and Lauren, our daughter," she said.

Margaret is an artist first and an interior designer second, which explains her creativity in the accents and appointments throughout each of the company's brands. "Managing the interior design for five brands was certainly a challenge," she admitted. "Working directly with Van Tiffin made my job much easier. He has such a creative mind for product development."

Initially Margaret created several design packages each year for the five Tiffin brands. A design package includes all of the fabrics and designs for the chairs, valances, pillows, and bed comforters, plus materials for the floors and wall coverings. From the choices she prepared, Van and his team selected three packages for each brand. Margaret generally made one trip a year to Red Bay and spent several days assisting the product development team in making their selections.

Competing with the top ten Class A manufacturers was never a walk in the park. But Margaret's experience in having previously worked for most of Tiffin's competitors made that task easier. Her ability to create illustrations showing the interiors with the combinations of selected fabrics and materials helped the product development staff to visualize exactly what they were getting with each package.

Margaret often goes on model home tours. "In southern California where I live we see some of the best showcase homes in the country. The ergonomics for houses and motorhomes are really the same—chairs, sofas, flooring, fabrics, bathroom appointments, cooktops, cabinetry. Buyers want their motorhomes to look residential," she observed.

Now working exclusively for Tiffin, Margaret plans to spend more time on detail. "I want to create each year at least 20 new ideas for every product. I like the challenge," she continued. "Even woodworking. That's not my forte, but I look forward to designing moldings and other uses of wood in the coaches."

The diversity in Margaret Miya's education and on-the-job training explains her success in this business. Born in Yokohama,

*Continued on page 18*

## Ultra Surfaces Responsible Innovation.



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Japan, she has two sisters. Her parents moved to Nebraska where her grandparents were living after the war. She had not learned English when they moved, which led to a humorous story about how American culture had already seeped into her young life.

“My favorite TV show in Japan was Lassie,” she said. “My Nebraska cousins also liked Lassie, and I began to watch it with them,” she continued as her infectious smile spread quickly across her face. With great disappointment, she told her grandmother, “We should have brought our TV from Japan because I can’t understand your TV in English.”

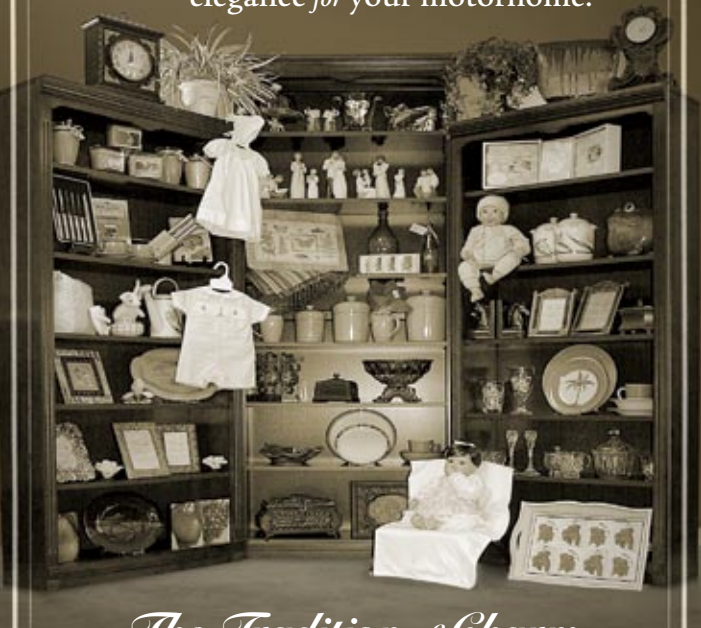
She loved to draw even as a pre-schooler. “I knew her career would be in art,” her mother said, “because Margaret took her crayons and drew all over the walls in our home. I finally gave up and put large sheets of paper on the walls.”

“My sisters and I had to help clean the house each week,” Margaret remembered. “I always volunteered to clean the bathtub. I would use Comet and make it thick enough to fingerpaint on the walls of the tub.” Margaret had a teacher in high school who wanted her to become a doctor because she was so good at drawing the detail of the human anatomy.

“I went to UCLA and majored in art — painting and drawing,” she said. “I also studied theater costume design. Mom taught me to sew. I did my own patterns and created my clothes,” she continued. She still follows the trends in fashion design as a side interest.

When she graduated, Margaret accepted a position with the

Unique gifts *and* home decor  
elegance *for* your motorhome.



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256-356-8355

Broadway Department Store designing window displays. “I really enjoyed arranging the products and clothing. People visualized themselves wearing the clothing in the window, and we sold out of those items almost as soon as we finished the displays,” she laughed. “I guess that meant we were really doing our job well.”

Not seeing a great future for department store window designers, Margaret went back to school to study drafting. Her new skills got her a position with Weber Aircraft. Following her new career path, she then answered an ad and was hired for a position in the drafting department at Fleetwood motorhomes. In a tour of the company, Margaret discovered the interior design department. She knew immediately it was where she wanted to work. So it was back to school for a degree in interior design.

Upward mobility was a bit slow until she was asked to fill in while one of the company’s interior designers took pregnancy leave. “I was really supposed to just answer the phone and be a gopher,” she recalled, “but I had plenty of time at my desk to do valance and pillow design.” One of the department managers saw her designs and had the prototype shop create them. It wasn’t long until Margaret had an assistant interior design position in Fleetwood’s travel trailer plant that lasted for nine years.

After she and husband Frank decided it was time to start their family, Margaret took time off and Lauren was born in 1989. She maintained her connections to the RV industry and accepted a position in 1990 with Pat McCarthy, a well-known interior designer whose shop had contracts with most of the major manufacturers of Class A’s and fifth wheels. Doors began opening for Margaret’s career.

“We had accounts with Monaco, Holiday Rambler, Winnebago, National RV, Western RV, Bluebird, and Foretravel,” she said, “plus fifth wheel business with Teton, King of the Road, and Alpine. When we visited the accounts, I got to meet the presidents and CEOs.”

In 1994 Margaret bought half of Pat McCarthy’s business and Miya Designs was born. Monaco CEO Kay Toolson immediately negotiated a Class A exclusive contract with Miya Designs to create the interiors for Monaco and Holiday Rambler. The contract left Margaret free to accept contracts with fifth wheel manufacturers Teton, King of the Road, and Alpine.

Two years later she began an eight-year tenure exclusively with Monaco and Holiday Rambler. After leaving in 2004 to reestablish Miya Designs, Margaret had the opportunity to observe the management style at Tiffin Motorhomes in an “arm’s length” kind of way while she freelanced their interiors.

“I came to love this company,” she said. “Their philosophy about life and putting their customers and employees first is very special to me. One company, five brands, and the opportunity to make the Tiffin interiors the most attractive and functional in our industry,” she smiled. “Although I plan to work in my Chino Hills office, I look forward to being in Red Bay every six weeks to work side-by-side with the product development team.” 



# You’ve Been Packing!

You probably packed a little extra for whatever adventures you might encounter on your trip. If you’re not sure of the axle end weight of your vehicle, your RV is most likely overloaded. The new Michelin® 305/70R22.5 XRV, with its expanded load capacity\*, is ready to take on more weight than ever.

\*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.





# Arkansas in the Fall: *The Natural State*

by Fred Thompson

A WELL-KNOWN AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIST ONCE SAID, “IF WE BUILT A 10-foot wall around Arkansas and did not let anything in or out, the people could completely sustain themselves.”

Arkansas shares the beautiful Ozark Mountains with Missouri, its northern neighbor, and boasts two other ranges in its west central mid-section, the Boston and the Ouachita Mountains. Although the ranges are separated by the Arkansas River valley, they are the only major mountain ranges between the Rockies and the Appalachians. They also interrupt America’s Grand Prairie which originates with the flat, fertile Mississippi Delta on the state’s eastern boundary.

The state’s highest point at 2,753 feet is Mount Magazine. The mountains offer other distinctions: Mammoth Spring is one of the world’s largest and Blanchard Springs Caverns provides some of the most beautiful cave formations in North America. And who would believe, Arkansas has the only operating diamond mine in the United States.

This diversity plus some of country’s best state parks make Arkansas one of the best RVing destinations in the U.S. Unless you have several months to spend on your first visit, you will be returning several times to enjoy all this state has to offer.

Like throwing a dart at the bull’s eye, we spent our first night in Arkansas at **Toad Suck Ferry**, nearly in the center of the state, a Corps of Engineers campground on the Arkansas River just a few miles west of Conway. With 97 Corps campgrounds, Arkansas has more than twice as many as any other state. If you can develop a good procedure to deal with the absence of on-site sewer connections, the Corps’ price-value factor will put them at the top of your list for well-maintained and scenic campgrounds, usually with major water features. If you have a Golden Age Passport (replaced by the Senior Pass in January 2007), you can stay at Corps campgrounds for half price.

Actually there was a better reason for selecting Toad Suck: my first cousin, Harold Thompson, and his wife Joyce live in Conway and have been motorhoming far longer than Carolyn and I. They had made arrangements for us to tour the newly opened Winthrop Rockefeller Institute on Petit Jean Mountain.

Soon after we selected our campsite and set-up the Allegro Bay, Joyce and Harold arrived to take us to their favorite catfish

A fall hike in Mt. Magazine State Park will reward you with magnificent views of the Petit Jean River Valley. Six trails with varying degrees of difficulty make up the 14-mile system.

ARKANSAS DEPT OF PARKS & TOURISM A.C. HARALSON





The instructional facilities for seminars at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute are state-of-the-art. Carolyn Thompson could only wish for a culinary arts lab like this one when she was teaching home economics.

emporium. In many towns throughout the South, catfish emporiums are running a close second to barbeque joints!

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. spent millions developing historic Williamsburg, Virginia, and the Acadia National Park. Following in his father’s footsteps, Winthrop Rockefeller arrived in Arkansas in 1953 and purchased a 927-acre tract on Petit Jean Mountain to raise Santa Gertrudis cattle. *Winrock Farms* became a textbook operation with Rockefeller bringing in top talent from the cattle industry as well as academic consultants from the University of Arkansas College of Agriculture. He was an innovator who wanted to share knowledge to improve agricultural practices and cattle operations methodology.

In addition to his farming and cattle operation, Winthrop Rockefeller initiated several philanthropies and projects to benefit the people of Arkansas including a model school at Morrilton and the construction of medical clinics in some of the state’s poorest counties. He spearheaded a fund raising campaign to establish the Arkansas Arts Center which opened in 1963 and today sends its traveling exhibits to Europe and New York.

Dismayed by the provincial politics that dominated all levels of government in the state, Rockefeller began supporting Republican candidates and was eventually elected governor in the Fall of 1966. After serving two terms, he died from pancreatic cancer in 1973. His untiring efforts for excellence in government, industrial development, education, medicine, and race relations left a legacy from which the people of Arkansas continue to reap benefits.

### Three Free Books You Will Need For This Trip

The State of Arkansas publishes great resource booklets. Pick up these three at visitor centers throughout the state:

- Arkansas: The Natural State. *Calendar of Events Fall 2008.*
- Arkansas: The Natural State. *Adventure Guide.*
- Arkansas: The Natural State. *State Parks Guide 2008.*



Several overlooks on Petit Jean Mountain offer magnificent views of the Arkansas River Valley. The river is navigable for shipping across the entire state.

The *Winthrop Rockefeller Institute* of the University of Arkansas System was established in July 2005 with a grant from the Winthrop Rockefeller Charitable Trust. A \$21 million capital improvement program produced a 30-room lodge, the River Rock Grill, conference center, classrooms, and office space. It is an amazing learning center offering a wide variety of short courses focused on improving our quality of life and knowledge of our environment. It is located on the original property occupied by Winrock Farms.

In the reception area of the conference center, a visual history, “A Sphere of Power and Influence Dropped into a River of Need,” presents WR’s life and contributions to Arkansas.

Classes are offered in archaeology, arts, culinary arts, environment, health and wellness, heritage, language instruction, and public affairs. To get a schedule of the course offerings and restaurant hours at the upscale River Rock Grill, visit [www.uawri.org](http://www.uawri.org)

The expansive farm which visitors may explore includes the wildflower and butterfly gardens; the farmstead which re-creates the type of farms that were here when WR arrived; an orchard, vineyard, melon patch, and vegetable garden; and field crops for kids to learn that peanuts don’t grow on tree limbs.

*Petit Jean* was Arkansas’s first state park. Begun in 1933 by Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps, the campground now offers 125 spacious sites. Upgrades through the years include 35 sites (Area A) with 50-amp service, water, and sewer, including 26 pull-throughs. The rustic Mather Lodge and Restaurant offers full menu or casual dining featuring a panoramic view of Cedar Creek Canyon through eight-foot high glass walls. The park is a short drive from the Institute.

Founded in 1964 by WR, the *Museum of Automobiles* on Petit Jean Mountain is a short distance from the park. Open every-day except Christmas from 10–5, the museum displays about 56 cars. The oldest car in the collection is a 1904 Oldsmobile French Front. There are several cars whose parent companies are no longer in existence, including the 1908 Sears Model J Runabout and the 1912 Paige Beverly Touring car.

Concluding our visit to the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, we headed back to Conway and turned north on US 65 to Marshall toward the *Buffalo National River* (1). The Buffalo won its status as America’s first national river on March 1, 1972, the 100th anniversary of Yellowstone National Park, America’s first national park. We had made reservations for two nights at Buffalo Point and soon extended our stay to five.

When the Corps of Engineers proposed building two dams on the Buffalo in the 1950s for flood control and power production, conservationists and local people argued the Buffalo offered far more value to the public as a free-flowing, wild river than as a river with two dams producing power.

With its headwaters in the Ozark National Forest in Newton County, the river flows 150 miles to Buffalo City where it joins the White River. There are three ranger stations along the river and park headquarters in Harrison where you can acquire the necessary literature to plan your visit: Pruitt Ranger Station on SR 7 about 12 miles south of Harrison; Tyler Bend Visitor Center on US 65 southeast of St. Joe; and Buffalo Point Ranger Station just off SR 14 on SR 268. The exhibits plus a 17-minute film in the auditorium at the Tyler Bend Visitor Center explore the vast cultural and natural history of the river. Check the box below for a list of booklets and brochures available at the visitor center and bookstore to help plan your visit.

There are three campgrounds for motorhomes. Tyler Bend and Erbie have 28 and 14 sites, but no hook-ups. Buffalo Point is the best choice with 30-amp, water, and a dump station. Reserve a site at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov). Loop C has the best sites. Reserve C54 if it’s available. Rates are \$20 per night (\$10 with the Golden Age Passport or the NPS Park Pass).

*Currents* will help you plan your stay with respect to hiking, canoeing, and fishing. If you did not bring your own watercraft, the booklet lists outfitters for canoes, johnboats, kayaks, and rafts. All the outfitters are concessionaires permitted by the National Park Service. Canoes rent for about \$45–50 per day and the shuttle fee is usually \$6–10 per person depending on distance. Twenty miles will make a nice day-trip if you start early, stop for lunch, and do a little fishing.

If you plan to fish, catch and release is encouraged. But if you are planning a fish fry, be sure to check the limit and size restriction for each specie. Non-resident licenses for 3-, 7-, and 14-days are \$11, \$17, and \$22. Or \$40 annually.

### Literature for Exploring the Buffalo National River

1. NPS brochure and map entitled *Buffalo National River: Official Map and Guide*
2. *Currents*, 2008, 20<sup>th</sup> Edition. NPS Visitor’s Guide, Buffalo National River, Arkansas
3. *Buffalo National River: A Guide to America’s First National River*. \$7.95. 24 pp



4. For Hikers—Three brochures printed on very heavy stock: “Hiking Trails: Upper River,” “Hiking Trails: Middle District,” “Hiking Trails: Lower District.”
5. For Fishermen—Go to [www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com) and request a current issue of the “Arkansas Fishing Guidebook” for limits and size restrictions. The *Arkansas Fishing & Outdoors Guide* (free) provides information about fish identification, fish found in each stream and lake, and how to fish each location. Hiking and wildlife viewing is also given good treatment.



There is nothing more relaxing than a leisurely float trip on a cool, sunny, Fall day. The reflections of the Fall colors in the Buffalo’s calm, deep, blue-green pools will give you tantalizing photo opps. Consult with your outfitter for daily schedules and available trip lengths.

The *Buffalo National River* paperback book provides a good narrative about special points of interest along the river that you will want to stop and explore. You can visit the Parker-Hickman Farmstead, the homes of James Villines, Boxley Valley, Lost Valley, the Collier Homestead, the Indian Rockhouse Shelter, and the Rush Mining Community.

The three brochures for hiking trails along the river show the trailheads, distances, hiking times, difficulty levels, and features. Ask at one of the ranger stations for maps and for specific directions to reach each trailhead. We saw an eagle swoop low through the woods with its hapless prey in its claws. The Great Blue Heron population is plentiful. Early morning and late afternoon walks will likely reward you with wild turkey and deer sightings if you walk quietly and speak softly.

We extended our stay at Buffalo Point because of its proximity to Blanchard Springs Caverns, the Ozark Folk Center State Park, and Mountain View.

**Branchard Springs Caverns** is about an hour’s drive east from Buffalo Point on SR 14 and 15 miles northwest of Mountain View. Considered the greatest underground discovery of the last century, the caverns were first professionally explored in 1960, although the first documented visit was in 1934 by CCC planner Willard Hadley. Operated by the U.S. Forest Service, the cavern’s *Dripstone Trail Tour* was opened to the public in 1973 after ten years of planning and development. It is a shorter, easier trail than the *Discovery Trail*, and is wheelchair accessible with strong assistance. The tour begins with an elevator ride 216 feet below ground. The half-mile walk through two beautifully lighted, highly decorated rooms filled with stalactites, soda straws, and a natural bridge takes about an hour. The Cathedral Room (2), which is more than 1,100 feet long and 180 feet wide, includes a glistening flowstone column more than six stories tall. The caverns are designated an “active” or “living” cave due to the constant change caused by the mineral-laden dripping water.

There are two year-round constants: the temperature is 58 degrees and the humidity is 100 percent. A lightweight jacket will feel good and rubber-soled shoes will give you better footing on the paved walkways that are always damp. An orientation movie, “The Amazing World Below,” is offered at the visitor center. Flash photography down under is welcome, but you will need an extra-powerful flash.

The *Discovery Trail* uses the same path the first explorers took through the natural entrance and follows the water-carved passageways and the cave stream. You will enjoy enormous, beautiful rooms and pay for the views by climbing and descending over 700 steps. If you have a problem with shortness of breath, this tour is not recommended.

The *Wild Cave Tour* takes three to four hours and is open by



**Dripstone & Discovery Trails**  
RATES: Adults, \$10; Children 6–15 and seniors 62+ with Golden Age Passport, \$5. Free with POW/PH card.

<i>Dripstone</i> April – October open every day at 9:30 Last tour 4:15 p.m. November – March closed Mon. and Tues. Half mile, 1 hour	<i>Discovery</i> Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day open every day at 9:30. Last tour begins at 4:00 1.2 miles, 1.5 hours
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**Wild Cave Tour**  
RATES: Adults, \$75 (\$25 non-refundable deposit at date of reservation); Golden Age Passport, \$10.  
April – October, by reservation only.  
November – March, closed Mon. and Tues.  
3–4 hours

reservation only. There must be at least three participants but no more than twelve. Participants should be in good physical shape and wear old clothes and sturdy boots. The tour goes through undeveloped sections of the caverns middle level. You will get dirty and have fun. Hard hats, kneepads, gloves, lights, and belts are provided. Participants are rewarded with a souvenir T-shirt.

If you are consulting a AAA map to find **Mountain View**, you will note that only two-lane, “black line” roads come into the town. No red line highways. This is Ozark Mountain country, 44 miles south of the Missouri line (as the crow flies) and smack in the middle of the state east-to-west. Established in the 1870s, Mountain View has played a major role in the preservation of folkways and traditional music. The Arkansas Folk Festival

began here in 1963 and the Ozark Folk Center State Park followed a decade later. The state’s largest craft cooperative, the Arkansas Craft Guild maintains its headquarters on the town’s historic square.

This year, 2008, the festival begins on the Court Square Thursday afternoon, Oct. 23, with impromptu gatherings. You’ll hear a mix of folk, bluegrass, Cajun, and gospel styles. No acoustic guitars or other magnification of the instruments. One group (3) can be playing 20 yards from another without disturbing each other. The folks call it “pickin’ and a-grinnin’.” The leads and the melodic harmonies are easy to follow. The roots of each style run deep in the families who have lived in these mountains for generations. While other “distractions” (the dog show, the bean cook-off, the outhouse race) may divert a few members of the audience, they always come back to the music.

The “Third Annual Beanie Weenie” Dog Show begins Thursday at 5 p.m. There are categories for every dog in Stone County—any Heinz 57 or registered pedigree can enter. Good fun for the owners, the dogs, and the audience.

On Friday, Oct. 24, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., the impromptu groups will assemble again to entertain. It’s really more than entertainment. Members of the audience are very serious listeners, reminiscing as they recall the heritage of the music, songs, and hymns the musicians play and sing, and appreciate the skill and talent of the artists.

Mountain View has several music theaters which present a wide variety of country, folk, and gospel, all with a liberal amount of slapstick comedy. Most have shows on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. The theaters in town are small, the experience is intimate, and tickets are very reasonably priced. We picked The Leatherwoods, a five-member band plus a talented nine-year-old singer and an award winning clogger. Buy tickets by 3 p.m. for the evening shows.

As we left the theater Friday evening, the Bean Fest managers had 41 large antique cast iron pots with propane burners set up and loaded with 2,000 pounds of Great Value pinto beans on the north and west sides of the court square. No one was there to guard the premises all night — this is small town, rural America. This year, just like the past 25, the Bean Fest Committee will light the fires at 7 a.m., Saturday, Oct. 25, to launch the **26th Annual Arkansas Bean Fest**. By 10:30 the aroma from the simmering pots will fill the air. The judges begin their work at 11 a.m., with winners to be announced at noon along with the winners of the Martha White Cornbread Cook-off.

Last year, the dinner bell rang at noon as small cups of beans and plastic spoons were passed out to all comers (4). Carolyn and I taste-tested as as many variations as we could and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

One of the cook-off participants was Charlie Mink (5), a transplanted Floridian. In his costume, which won third place, we thought he was a native from one of the nearby hollers. Actually, Charlie was born in New York City, grew up in south Georgia, and spent 45 years in Pensacola. “It’s the music,” he







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said. On a McSpadden Mountain Dulcimer made in Mountain View, he finger picks Celtic music. “Susan and I live in a cabin on Scrappy Mountain in the national forest. I was joined one night by a Celtic harp and flute and we played ’till 1 a.m.,” he averred. After entertaining for several years in the coffee houses and antique stores of the Arkansas Ozarks, Mink recorded a CD called “Mostly Celtic,” which I am listening to as I write this story.

At 1 p.m. the Parade of Outhouses began while the crowd cheered their favorite “people powered potty” team of driver and pusher. To say the least, the costumes and outhouses demonstrated an ingenuity that could only be found in the Ozark Mountains. The race produced three winners of the Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards.

The crafts and merchandise displayed on Main Street will keep you busy for the rest of the day. There are no hawkers, just craftspeople who modestly display what they have made—like Leon Creasy, 65, formerly the sheriff of Woodruff County (6), who turns exquisite wood bowls on his lathe, and Leon Jennings, 86, who started making white oak baskets (7) in 1985. “I get my oak right out of the woods here in Stone County,” he said.

The diamond of this beautiful mountain setting is the **Ozark Folk Center State Park**. The Crafts Village with 24 separate buildings, the Theater, the Conference Center, and the Cultural Resource Center combine to tell the story of the Ozark way of life that produced a resourceful, self-reliant, religious, and joyful people who survived the hardships of pioneer days. That process generated a rich cultural heritage of storytelling, music,

### Three Special Places to Visit in the St. Joe–Mountain Home–Mountain View Triangle

#### ❖ Ferguson’s Country Store

Located one mile north of the Buffalo River on US 65, Ferguson’s is a general store that serves up country cooking from 8–4 daily, and specializes in hot homemade cinnamon rolls. Ozark crafts, gifts, and Buffalo River outdoor clothing is what you might expect to find. But this country store also sells solid oak and cherry furniture made in its own woodworking plant. Visit Ferguson’s website at [www.buffalorivertradingco.com](http://www.buffalorivertradingco.com)

#### ❖ Mellon’s Country Store

Just north of Mountain View about two miles on SR 9-14 and advertised as a “step back in time,” this store will sell you a hand-made Ozark broom, a country cured ham, or a vintage musical instrument. Its antiques and collectibles will entertain you for at least an hour. Then if you really want to jump back 75 years, ask for an RC and a moon pie.

#### ❖ Sodie’s Fountain & Grill

From US 62-412 at Flippin, take SR 178 one mile north to Sodie’s on your left as you cross the tracks. Breakfast, lunch, or dinner, it’s all good. Order made-from-scratch buttermilk pancakes with real butter and maple syrup for breakfast, a cobb salad or a bowl of chili for lunch, or pork tenderloin for dinner. The old-timey soda fountain with stained glass logo over huge mirrors, marble counter, and cast-iron stools will take you back 100 years. Hand-dipped ice cream for sundaes, floats, and banana splits may have a few calories you don’t need, but you may not find a place like Sodie’s for another decade. Close your eyes and order!



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dance, domestic skills, and ingenious tools and crafts.

As we visited the Crafts Village, we found a two-generation age spread among those who demonstrate and teach at the Folk Center. Laura Brook Barksdale (8) makes fiddles and guitars from spruce (top) and maple (sides and bottoms) in the Violin Shop. She plays both fiddle and guitar with Charlie Mink on the dulcimer at shops and stores in the area. Eighteen years at the center, Erlene Carter, 76, makes corn shuck dolls and flowers (9) in the Doll and Toy Shop. Mrs. Carter was born six miles out in the country in the same house where her mother was born 100 years ago. The Folk Center cherishes both the younger people in the mountains who learn the old skills and the older people who keep tradition alive by teaching the young. The center is an experience in living history.

The Folk Center runs limited Pre-Season Events from mid-February to mid-April, and then runs a full event schedule from mid-April through mid-December. You can view the Calendar of Events at [www.ozarkfolkcenter.com](http://www.ozarkfolkcenter.com).

During the Harvest Festival (Oct. 19–Nov. 1), the Folk Center will run an expanded program concurrent with the Mountain View Bean Fest and other Fall events throughout the Ozarks. Parking is at a premium. Use outlying private lots and the main parking area at the State Park. Shuttles run every few minutes to move visitors from the downtown area to the State Park.

Although we did not move our coach to the campground at Bull Shoals–White River State Park, we did detour to visit the scenic area created by the Bull Shoals Dam about 15 miles west of Mountain Home. The 45,440-acre lake created by damming the White River has created two distinct venues for fishermen. In addition to the lunker bass, crappie, and bream in the lake, the clear cold water of the river has produced the world record for brown trout and legends about the fighting rainbow. Make your first stop at the Visitor Center for excellent exhibits and views of the dam from the deck. The campground along the river has 83 sites with electric and water hookups. At the Trout Dock Store you can get current fishing reports and rent canoes, kayaks, or boat and motor to put you out on the river. Of course, bait and tackle are available, too.

The weekend over, it was time to retrace our steps south on



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US 65 and then west on I-40 to Russellville and **Lake Dardanelle State Park**. The Arkansas River’s headwaters are in Colorado. From there it drops 4,600 feet in 120 miles and flows into the Great Plains across Kansas, then Oklahoma and Arkansas, terminating its 1,469-mile course at the Mississippi. The sixth longest river in the United States, it is navigable by barges from Tulsa to the Mississippi thanks to a series of dams that turn the river into a series of reservoirs. Lake Dardanelle is one of those reservoirs. The 34,000-acre lake is bounded by the Ouachita Mountains on the south and the Boston Mountain Range of the Ozarks on the north.

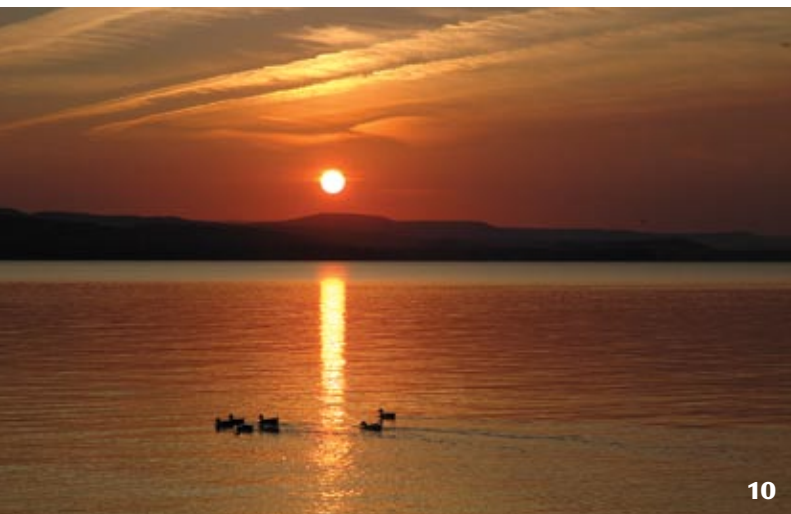
Just for sheer relaxation at a lake campsite with magnificent scenery, you are in the right place. You can reserve a campsite online at [www.arkansasstateparks.com](http://www.arkansasstateparks.com). Click on “Camping” and then “Book Online.” At Dardanelle, reserve one of the AAA sites in the “A” area, and down on the point if it is available. Arkansas classifies their campsites as AAA (50-amp, water, sewer), AA (30-amp, water, sewer), and B (30-amp, water). The rates are \$27, \$24, and \$17 respectively.

Arkansas residents 62 and over will receive a 50 percent discount Sunday through Thursday nights and 25 percent on Friday and Saturday nights. Out-of-state citizens age 62 and over will receive a 25 percent discount Sunday through Thursday nights.

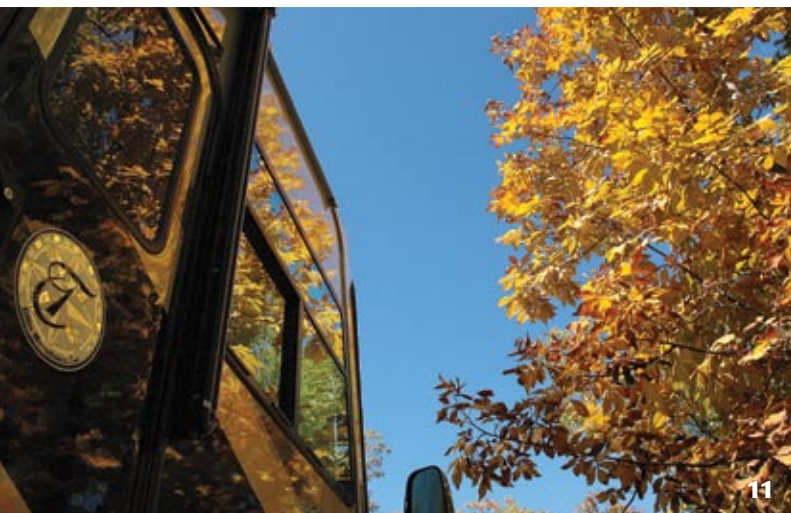
Lake Dardanelle is known for its world-class bass fishing tournaments. A mid-week fishing report is issued by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission at [www.afgc.com](http://www.afgc.com) An aquatic exhibit in the Visitor Center has four aquariums featuring the 95 species of fish found in the lake and the river. Daily feedings are quite an event. The mid-west flyways bring many species of ducks to Lake Dardanelle. Migrating white pelicans congregate and feed near the spillways of the dam. Kayaks and bicycles may be rented at the Visitor Center. Each day’s main event takes place as the sun drops below the Ouachita Mountains (10) across the lake.

From an elevation at Lake Dardanelle of approximately 325 feet above sea level, we spent two hours on a bright sunny morning ascending 2,500 feet to **Mount Magazine State Park**, only 25 crow miles away to the southwest. At 2,753 feet above sea level, it is the highest point in Arkansas. From several lookout points on the mountain’s ridge, on a clear day one can see nearly a fourth





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of Arkansas. And what a beautiful state it is!

We selected a campsite at the Cameron Bluff Campground (11) which has 18 nicely spaced sites, all with electric, water, and sewer (two with 50-amp, 16 with 30-amp).

Mount Magazine's hiking trails offer an accommodating variety for ability, endurance, and time available. A copy of "Hiking Trails" available at the Visitor Center gives a detailed

description of the park's eight trails including a difficulty level from easy to strenuous, length from 1 to 9.7 miles, and time required from one to five hours. We chose the Signal Hill Trail because it promised to take us to the highest point in the state. It is a well-groomed trail with a wide variety of plants to enjoy. Other helpful brochures on wildflowers, ferns, butterflies, and birds are available.

The lodge has a very good restaurant at moderate prices. Broad windows offer grand views to the south of the Petit Jean River valley which stretches from east to west. An early morning visit to the lodge's flagstone porch was rewarded with an ethereal expanse of low clouds covering the valley with small hills pushing through like islands in a white sea (12).

Moving on . . . we descended the mountain on SR 309 and headed west again on SR 10 for 50 miles until it merged into US 71 north. We were soon on I-540 headed north to Fayetteville ("the Wal-Mart Highway"). We exited on US 412 East to go over to Withrow Springs State Park, our base of operations for the next three days while we visited the famed *War Eagle Mill*. Sites 18–47 offer 50-amp, water, sewer service for \$27/night.

The mill (13) itself has gone through four rebirths. First built in the 1830s by Sylvanus Blackburn, a young homesteader from Tennessee, the mill became part of a thriving community that included the grist mill, a blacksmith shop, a carpentry shop, and a saw mill. He returned to Tennessee and brought his wife, Catherine, to the valley in 1833 when their two-story log home was completed. They raised five boys and three girls. The mill washed away in a flood in 1848 and was rebuilt by Blackburn the following year.

During the Civil War, all five boys joined the Confederate Army while Sylvanus and Catherine went to Texas to wait out the war. The mill was burned by the Confederates to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Union Army. Blackburn's son, James, rebuilt it again in 1873 and it once again became the center of a thriving community. The turbine waterwheel powered both a flour grinder and a saw mill. As fate would have it, the mill burned again in 1924 and remained in ruins for nearly 50 years.

Perceiving the mill as a symbol of their Ozark heritage, Jewell and Leta Medlin, with their daughter Zoe Leta Caywood, did extensive research in undershot waterwheel design (14) and rebuilt War Eagle Mill in 1973 for the fourth time. The mill grinds stone buhr whole wheat flour, cornmeal, rye flour, buckwheat flour, grits, cereals, and wholegrain mixes. The second floor of the mill houses the War Eagle Mercantile store which specializes in native crafts. And the third floor (my favorite floor!) is the home of the Bean Palace Restaurant, serving breakfast (great blueberry buckwheat pancakes) and lunch daily except during January and February when it operates on weekends.

The ownership of the Blackburn home, the mill, and the surrounding property has passed through several individuals, all of whom fell in love with the area. Picking up toward the end of the story, Blanche Elliott visited War Eagle as a child and later participated as a home demonstration agent in camps held

there for farm women. She learned in the early 1950s that the historic old farm and the Blackburn house were for sale and encouraged her husband Lester to buy it. Lester and Blanche bought the place in 1953 and he farmed and raised cattle in the valley until his death in 1976.

In 1953 Blanche invited the Ozark Weavers Club to her home for a week of weaving and relaxation. At the end of the week, she opened her home to the public to show the many beautiful pieces the members had created. The Ozark Arts and Crafts Fair was born and the following year several residents opened their homes for a much larger display on Oct. 29–31, 1954. The members sent invitations and 2,253 accepted. In the years to come, Blanche served as the executive director of the War Eagle Fair which quickly became the state's largest arts and crafts fair. When Blanche died in December 1990, she had seen her dream of encouraging the rural people of Arkansas to preserve their heritage fulfilled many times over. Her daughter Shirley picked up the mantle. In recent years the four-day attendance pushes 200,000.

This year the *55th War Eagle Mill Arts & Crafts Fair* (15) is scheduled for Oct. 16–19; 8–5 Thurs–Sat, 8–4 Sun. You will find master weavers, woodworkers, carvers, basket makers, artisans in stained glass, pewter, leather, and scores of other arts and crafts, including oil and acrylic painting, watercolors, sculpture, metal-working and photography.

Just 20 miles north of Withrow Springs State Park is the late Victorian village of *Eureka Springs*. The entire town is on the National Register of Historic Places. With streets carved into steep hillsides, some buildings have street level entrances on several floors. The local Catholic Church actually has a street-level entrance to its bell tower. In 2001 the National Trust for Historic Preservation selected Eureka Springs as one of the *Top 12 Distinctive Destinations in America*.

Most of the buildings were constructed from local stone and residents claim that 54 miles of the town's stone retaining walls built in the 1880s are still in place. Actually, that decade was very important in the town's growth. In 1882 the Eureka Springs Improvement Company was formed to attract a railroad to the village. When the goal was met, Eureka Springs became a flourishing city, spa, and tourist destination. Even before the Civil War, Dr. Alvah Jackson claimed the waters from Basin Spring had curative powers for his patients.

The Crescent Hotel was built in 1886 and today is referred to as the "Grand Old Lady of the Ozarks." With a magnificent columned entrance, the hotel's richly appointed lobby will quickly take you back 125 years. Dr. Baker's Lounge on the fourth floor with a bannistered porch overlooking the town is a gathering place for guests. The New Moon Day Spa and Salon in a fully restored section on the lower level offers full services including Swedish and deep tissue massage, plus hot stone and scalp speciality massages. Water therapy, relaxation and resurfacing facials, body wraps and polishes, and nail and hair services are all offered in the salon. The season runs from May through October. Reservations recommended.



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An artists' retreat since the mid-1800s, Eureka Springs has over 200 working artists and more than 20 art galleries. The 2008 Annual Artists Studio Tour is scheduled for Sept. 25–28 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. You can meet more than 20 artists in their working environments, view tools and art demonstrations, and ask questions.

Eureka Springs is home to *The Great Passion Play*, presented





nightly from May 2 to Oct. 25. Performed in a 4,100 seat panoramic outdoor amphitheater, the play, now in its fortieth year, features state-of-the art sound and lighting effects and original music in a dramatic two-hour presentation of the last week in the life of Jesus. The last two months sell out early. If you wish to attend, buy tickets online.

Eureka Springs is full of interesting shops with unusual products. We found one shop, for example, that had a full range of Rada Cutlery, high carbon steel knives and tools that are perfect for the motorhome galley.

Be sure to visit the Bank of Eureka Springs (16), an old-time bank right out of the 1880s with antique safes and brass teller cages. The building really isn't that old. John Fuller Cross, 73, played a leading role in the town's centennial celebration in 1979. He decided to completely redecorate the bank with 19th century furniture and hardware. The brass chandelier, pressed tin ceiling, potbelly stove, and hand-crafted oak give the bank the Victorian look to fit in perfectly with the town's architectural themes.

When you are ready for good Arkansas homestyle cooking, go to Myrtie Mae's located in the Best Western Inn of the Ozarks at 207 W. Van Buren. For a full history on this Arkansas culinary legend, go to [www.myrtiemaes.com](http://www.myrtiemaes.com) For the best buffet in northwest Arkansas, bring your appetite on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 11-2. The rest of the week menu service is offered for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and that's good, too.

Two miles from Eureka Springs on US 62 West, we "discovered" the Thorncrown Chapel. Catching a glimpse of it on the hill, I whipped off the road into the parking area. Unique, exquisite, inspiring. Built on a natural vantage point for viewing the Ozark mountains, the chapel was the dream of Jim Reed, a native of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. The location was to have been the site of his retirement home. But the views inspired him to seek out an architect at the University of Arkansas in nearby Fay-

etteville who designed a chapel with 6,000 square feet of glass to emphasize the beauty of God's creation to all who enter. The chapel won the American Institute of Architecture's Design of the Year Award for 1981 and the Design of the Decade Award for the 1980s. It was then voted fourth on the AIA list of top buildings constructed in the 20th century. It has been called "one of the finest religious spaces of modern times."

No visit to Arkansas would be complete without a visit to the Hot Springs National Park. Old documents verify that American Indians visited and bathed in the springs in the late 1700s. After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, President Jefferson sent an expedition led by William Dunbar and George Hunter to explore the newly acquired springs. Their widely publicized report stirred up great public interest.

Long before the days of scientific medicine, people believed the springs offered curative benefits. Soon the idea of protecting the springs as a national resource was introduced by territorial representative Ambrose Sevier. In 1832 the federal government set aside four sections of land which became the first U.S. reservation created to protect a natural resource. In the early years, private entrepreneurs filed land claims on the reservation and erected crude structures of canvas over wooden frames that covered individual springs and served as the first bathhouses. With no controlled planning, the entrepreneurs looked more like squatters and created an eyesore. In 1877 the government took over, settled land claims, and approved professional architectural blueprints for bathhouses ranging from the simple to luxurious. The Golden Age of Bathing was born and lasted from 1880 to 1950.

In the 1800s, the various springs were categorized by their supposed mineral contents: sulphur, magnesium, iron and others, with each type considered to be medicinal for specific ailments. The 1875 promotional flyers for the Three Sisters

Springs located in the Lake Ouachita State Park provide what now are amusing assumptions about the curative benefits for each of the three springs. But there was no FDA to regulate the entrepreneurs' wild claims in those days, and the ailing would grasp for any hope of getting well.

In 1921 the Hot Springs Reservation had become a mecca for both vacationers and seekers of health remedies. Stephen Mather, director of the National Park Service, convinced Congress to declare the reservation the country's 18th national park. By that time the bathing establishments had become monumental in size and were known as Bathhouse Row, each with its own connections to hot springs sourcing the 143 degree water into its facility.

The hot springs waters rise to the surface from an estimated depth of 8,000 feet, having fallen as rain over 4,000 years ago—about the time the pyramids in Egypt were being built. Approximately 700,000 gallons are collected daily from the springs.

After World War II, the bathing business and especially the curative processes began to decline with the advent of modern medicine. Most of the bathhouses closed and by 1985 only the Buckstaff remained open, having successfully adapted its offerings to relaxing mineral baths, massages, and manicure-facial services. It has operated continuously since 1912.

This summer the Quapaw Bathhouse reopened, restored to a new level of architectural excellence and service. "The reopening . . . marks the renaissance for Bathhouse Row and will enhance our visitor's experience at the national park," said Josie Fernandez, superintendent of the Hot Springs National Park. The bathhouse offers communal pools so the whole family can enjoy the hot spring water together. In addition to private personal and couples bathing, the Quapaw offers a wide variety of massages. [www.quapawbaths.com](http://www.quapawbaths.com) Hours: Wed-Mon, 10-6 except Sun 10-3. Closed Tuesday.

The National Park Service took over the Fordyce Bathhouse, probably the most luxurious of all (17), and preserved its furnishings and therapy equipment to recall an age when the well-heeled came to Hot Springs, stayed in its fine hotels, and sought rejuvenation of their bodies and renewal of their health.

For camping, we chose the Lake Ouachita State Park. Area A has forty sites with full hookups (50-amp) at \$27/night.

Before leaving for home we decided to spend a Sunday afternoon at the Clinton Presidential Library (18) in Little Rock. The library houses the largest archival collection in American presidential history. The heart of the library on the second floor is the Timeline which introduces each year of President Clinton's administration with a video. Interactive stations allow visitors to delve into any level of detail. On either side of the main gallery, multimedia exhibits in alcoves explore significant policy areas as they affected domestic and international issues and events.

To absorb history at a somewhat personal level, a docent welcomes you to a full-scale replica of the White House Cabinet Room. As you sit in the chair of a former cabinet member, the docent will tell you about situations in which that particular member helped make history.

A full-scale reconstruction of the Oval Office brings a reality to the place where President Clinton worked and met with congressmen, heads of state, and citizens.

The architecture of the library alone may be worth the trip. However, whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, you will be amazed at how the level of technology facilitates a fascinating presentation of the Clinton years which led the nation into the 21st century.

We barely covered the northern half of Arkansas. We promise to do the southern half on a future trip. Its diversity has something to offer everyone. As I said in the beginning, Arkansas will keep drawing you back. It's kinda like going home. **RIS**



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## ON THE PRODUCTION LINE



# Solid Surface Countertops

CREATING INNOVATIVE DESIGN WITH COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

by Fred Thompson

As owners began to ask for more residential features in their motorhomes in the 1990s, solid surface countertops were always in the top five on the "I want" list. With a 10-year headstart in the home market, Avonite, Corian, and WilsonArt were knocking on RV manufacturers' doors to get their share of the market. While granite was available, it did not get its foot in the door with most manufacturers because of weight and cost.

The trend began with galley countertops, quickly expanded to lavatories, and found its way to dinettes, end tables, vanities, and hutches. Visual appeal, durability, and ease of cleaning account for the popularity of the smooth, polished material.

After working with several manufacturers, Tiffin Motorhomes selected Avonite Surfaces as its solid surface supplier. Made with a special blend of polyester, acrylic resins, and mineral fillers, Avonite offers many benefits over laminate, tile, and granite. Solid surface seams are inconspicuous, hygienic, and non-porous. This means it will not support the growth of bacteria.

Avonite patterns allow for complete design flexibility. Because of the company's unique, patented manufacturing process, Avonite Surfaces

creates a depth of color and clarity not found in any other solid surface products. Patterns run through the entire thickness of the product, allowing nicks and scratches to be easily sanded out in a matte finish.

Aristech Acrylics LLC, the parent company of Avonite Surfaces, for more than 30 years has been a global leader in acrylic sheet technology. The company's state-of-the-art plant in Florence, Kentucky, is the largest continuous casting facility in the world, boasting four continuous casting machines, each longer than a football field.

Just as Tiffin's high-tech woodworking division purchases large pallets of three different hardwoods to manufacture every piece of molding, raised panel doors, and cabinets in their coaches, the company also begins its manufacturing process of solid surface countertops with large pallets of Avonite that measure 30" wide x 12' long x ½" thick. The company's philosophy of controlling every manufacturing process accounts for two of its marketing advantages: quality and price.

Following is a sequential picture story that will take you through the manufacturing process of backsplashes, countertops, and showers. At the end of the story, you will find some tips on using and maintaining the functionality and beauty of the solid surface countertops in your coach.





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With galleys as attractive as this one found in a 2009 Allegro Bus (1), there is no doubt as to why Tiffin customers expect solid surface countertops. Let's take a step-by-step look at the manufacturing process. Department supervisor Sergio Lopez and David Baggett (2) discuss the day's plans to schedule and process the raw materials into the manufacturing system. Baggett prepares one of the 12-ft. sheets of Avonite (3) with a 3000-grit water sanding followed by a polishing process.

Since all of the galleys in Tiffin motorhomes are wider than 30 inches, two sheets must be glued together. To join the two sheets, the two opposing edges are reciprocally routed with a wavy router bit to create a larger glued surface area. The two sheets are then mounted in a Pinske vertical seaming table (4) that uses electrical clamps to increase the pressure during the gluing process and drying time. Baggett has 14 years of experience. "When we began solid surface, we thought six coaches per week was a big week," he said. "Now at full production we can do 11-12 units per day!" Two joined sheets (5) stand on a frame ready to be placed on the CNC router. On the average, it takes four sheets of Avonite to create all of the solid surface countertops and features in a motorhome.

Jamey Kennedy reviews (6) the cutting plan for the backsplashes of an Allegro Bus. "The engineers will send a galley top or a backsplash and accompanying pieces to be cut on the CNC-router," Kennedy said. "I plan the tool path of the router and the bits that will be used. It is critical to get as many parts as possible on one sheet to minimize waste. The backsplashes (7) are the most difficult to program because of all the intricate cuts."

Cade Boyd, the primary operator on the CNC-router, works closely with Kennedy and Baggett to be sure every part is included in the cutting plan. Boyd is responsible for all of the solid surface pieces that are produced on the routing equipment. Ninety percent of all the solid

surface parts are cut for "just-in-time" production. Approximately 10 percent of the smaller standard parts are stockpiled.

When completed in about 30 minutes, the CNC-router will have cut all of the deep squares into which black solid surface accents will be inserted. The router also cuts deep 1/8-inch wide channels which will be grouted to give the backsplash the appearance of a complex assembly.

Chase Coats checks the fit of the separate pieces (8) for the backsplash. Two corner pieces are placed in a 90-degree frame to assure the 45-degree angles (9) for the black accent bars are accurately cut. Coats uses pressurized air (10) to remove all of the residual cutting debris left by the router. Prepared for the channels in the backsplash, colored grout is carefully pressed into place to emphasize the intricate patterns (11). Several passes with sponges (12) remove the excess while keeping the grout moist during the operation. With the grout operation completed, the backsplashes are left to dry (13). The completed polished backsplash is shown here (14) at the production table. The same pattern is shown after installation (15) in an Allegro Bus ready for shipment.

While the cuts made on galley countertops are far simpler than those made on the backsplashes, accuracy and perfection are nonetheless important. Here the initial cuts for the sink and the cooktop (16) have been made with two covers cut from the major openings. Additional pieces will be cut from the foreground as the computer-directed cutting program progresses.

Working from the bottom side up, Cliff Stidham dry-assembles 1/2-inch thick solid surface strips of Avonite that will form the front molding profiles of a Phaeton galley countertop (17). Larger pieces of Avonite are used to form the recess for the cooktop. Small wood blocks are hot-glued to the bottom of the countertop as assembly guides to provide accurate alignment after the glue is applied to the strips and they are reassembled. The side



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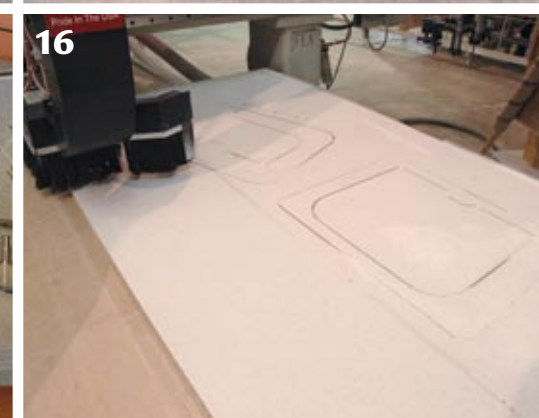
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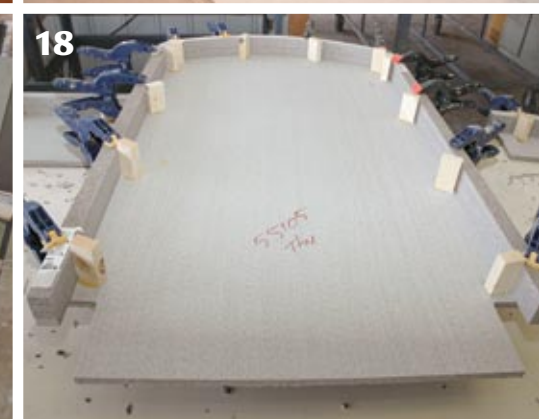
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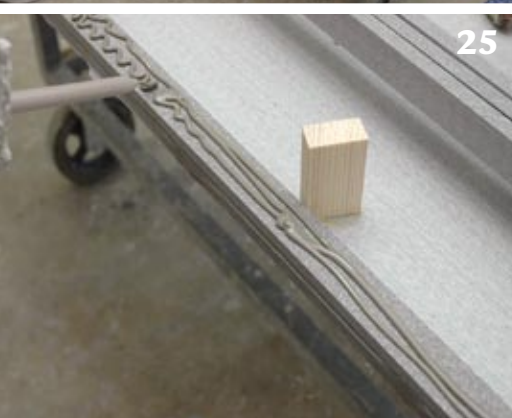
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profile for a free standing dinette table **(18)** requires curved pieces on the front edge that were cut on the CNC-router. Straight profile pieces are run in bulk on another router. The front profile of a lavatory assembly **(19)** requires three curved pieces that were cut from the 30" x 12' sheets. Stidham positions a lavatory on a jig and marks its position with notches **(20)**. Note the vertical bolt that will be used later to hold the bowl tightly against the countertop during the glue and drying process. The second bowl of a double lavatory for the rear bath of a Phaeton is positioned and marked **(21)**. The one in the background has hot-glued blocks already attached to assure perfect repositioning after gluing. Notice the front profiles with 90-degree angles that require special programming for cutting on the CNC-router. The solid surface bowls are made by Schock in Germany. The vertical molding profiles get a bit complicated for the solid surface tops **(22)** that attach to the small cabinets next to the sofas.

Angela Oliver sequentially glues a four-layer vertical profile **(23-26)** for a solid surface countertop that will attach to the cabinet of a computer workstation in a free standing dinette assembly. A bead of glue on the top edge of the solid surface lavatory bowl **(27)** is the only adhesive required to hold it firmly in place. After repositioning the bowl with the help of the hot-glued wood blocks, Oliver applies the color adhesive and builds the curved front profile assembly **(28-30)** which after drying will be sent to Bobby Hopkins who will use a router to create the beautiful curved front molding **(31-32)**. Sometimes moldings are created with two colors by adding a second colored strip when the profile assembly is glued together.

Sanding and wet sanding – polishing are divided into two departments to produce the desired gloss finish. Tania Day spends approximately 30 minutes sanding a dinette table **(33)** with three different grits. Starting with a 30-grit

disk, Day removes the imperfections and then continues with 30- and 15-grit disks to achieve the finish required at this stage. Julio Aguilar operates a 3-disk sander **(34)** to address the larger surfaces in an Allegro Bay solid surface galley top. Note the color layer in the profile molding.

In the final finish stage, Alberto Macias attaches three disks to a 3000-grit water sander which is used to perfect large surfaces **(35-36)**. Nicole Mauldin uses a soft disk and a liquid polish to bring a high gloss shine to the solid surface countertop for the hutch to which the free standing dinette is attached **(37)**. Macias follows the water sanding on a Phaeton galley with the same soft disk, liquid polish process **(38)** to achieve the high gloss shine. A protective blue adhesive is applied to all finished surfaces while the solid surface countertops and other surfaces are installed on cabinets and taken to the assembly line **(39)**. In the galley assembly line, the Phaeton countertop is attached to its cabinet **(40)**. David O'Neal immediately starts the installation of the double sink's hardware **(41)**.

Returning to the CNC-router, we will follow the cutting of parts to fabricate a shower for the Zephyr. Using Mystera, another solid surface product which takes on the appearance of black granite after polishing, the router cuts a large number of parts to fabricate the bottom half of the shower **(42)**. Using a jig built by David Baggett, the assembly begins in a horizontal position as Chris Smith installs the two major side pieces **(43)**. A deep corner is avoided by attaching a diagonal cross member **(44)**. Smith applies glue to a triangular shelf **(45)** which can be seen in the sheet on the router bed in picture #42. The triangle encloses the cavity formed by the diagonals to create a shelf for shampoos and other bathing items **(46)**. The shower base and the Mystera solid surface enclosure is mounted into a frame **(47)** which now goes to Tiffin's ceramic tile shop in Belmont. The assembly of small, matching parts is



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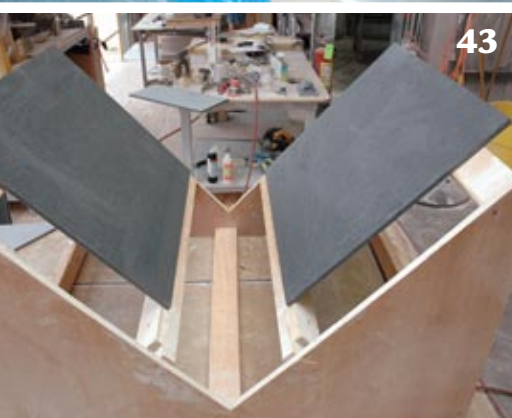




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shown in this picture of a soap dish and foot pedestal (48).

The versatility of the CNC-router and Avonite materials is demonstrated in the six furnace vent covers (49) to be used in the Zephyr's rear bath. After the vent cover is heated, it will be placed in a curving frame and cooled. The vent will cover the heating duct outlet at the base of the shower. Cade Boyd displays one of the vent covers (50) he has just removed from the Avonite sheet after cutting. RIS

### Care and Maintenance of Avonite Surfaces

Following are some helpful suggestions for the care and maintenance of Avonite solid surface countertops:

- \* Always use a hot pad or trivet under hot pots or heat producing appliances.
- \* Always use a cutting board when preparing vegetables and meats.
- \* Never sit on your countertops or place any unusually heavy objects on them.
- \* Avoid harsh chemicals such as drain cleaners and paint removers.
- \* If you have high gloss countertops, place felt protectors on the bottom of pottery or other hard objects.
- \* Avoid sliding hard objects across the glossy surfaces.
- \* If you have white solid surface sinks in your coach, always run cool water in the sink when pouring out boiling water.

A very helpful FAQ is offered by Avonite Surfaces at: [www.avonite-surfaces.com/about/faq.asp](http://www.avonite-surfaces.com/about/faq.asp)

Cleaning directions for Avonite solid surface countertops can be found at [www.onlinetips.org/avonite-countertops](http://www.onlinetips.org/avonite-countertops)

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## NIAGARA FALLS RALLY

by Gail Johnson

Mid-June in Western New York on beautiful Lake Ontario—a welcome delight, especially for those of us who came from the hot and humid South! June 16 marked the beginning of a week full of fun, good food, and fellowship with Tiffin owners from all over the country. This rally, which had been a sell-out for months before its actual date, achieved all expectations.

In addition to the pleasure of having the campground located literally on the banks of Lake Ontario, the weather was great—cool nights, warm days, with some rain but plenty of sunshine. The meals were excellent, with a nice variety prepared expertly on site and efficiently served at the tables.

Our first full day was, as is customary, devoted to displays and vendor seminars. Some of our regular presenters—Harold Kimbrough with Onan Generators, David Humphries with Triple H Electronics, Tom Webber with Tiffin Customer Support, and Gail Johnson with Tiffin Sharp Convection Microwave Cooking—had excellent participation in their seminars. Our dealer co-sponsor, Colton RV of North Tonawanda, was quite successful in generating interest in the show units which were on hand for viewing. In fact, several of the new rigs left the campground with new owners!

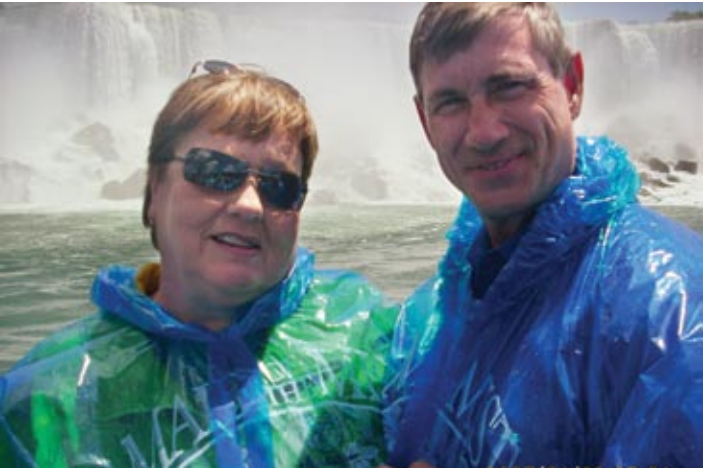
As usual, games were offered to encourage interaction among our rally attendees. We played bingo, back-your-wagon, and offered a challenging scavenger hunt. On Wednesday, our evening event was designated Sports Theme Night, and sports attire

was encouraged. We mingled with football players, cheerleaders, umpires, and enthusiastic fans for various teams! After a delicious meal, we viewed a sports-themed movie, “The Greatest Game Ever Played”, on a big screen, complete with popcorn!


On Thursday, we enjoyed what was the highlight of the rally for many, an outing to majestic Niagara Falls. After being served box picnic lunches, we were taken by buses to the Niagara Park. There, we walked the grounds, visited the shops, experienced the fantastic overlooks, and rode on the tour boat, Maid of the Mist, to the base of the awe-inspiring falls. What an unforgettable experience!

Our Thursday evening meal was highlighted with entertain-

Club secretary and president Gail and Jimmy Johnson put on their rain jackets to take the *Maid of the Mist* trip near the falls.



ment by a very good traditional country and western band, Ninety West. Their toe-tapping rendition of familiar country classics was the perfect ending to a very full and enjoyable day.

If you have never experienced one of our Allegro Club rallies, we would encourage you to consider the upcoming ones. We have New Hampshire in October, Key West in the spring of '09, Branson in May of '09, and Las Vegas, Albuquerque, the Boston area, and others in the works. We would be thrilled to have you join us, “Roughing it Smoothly!” 

## Tiffin Motorhomes/JC’s RVs Northwestern Rally in the Valley

by Jimmy Johnson


Warm temperatures, hazy sunshine and a constant brisk breeze provided the late June setting for the Northwestern Rally in the Valley at French Camp RV Park just south of Stockton, California. Over one hundred Tiffin-built motor homes checked in on June 24 for three days of enlightening seminars, delicious food, fun, games and entertaining activities.

Tiffin Regional Sales Representatives Brian Granlund and George Victorine teamed up with JC’s RV’s to plan and host this delightful event. JC’s RV’s displayed a variety of factory fresh Tiffin-built motorhomes at the French Camp RV Park for the participants to examine, inspect and acquire. Over 20 members of Chapter 38 Golden Bear Allegros provided the manpower for registration and activities coordination. Outdoor activities included horseshoes, bolo ball, bocce and golf. A craft class was available for those who wanted to learn to make personal greeting cards.

Educational information and hands-on help was provided by OEM suppliers. Onan Generators, Freightliner, Triple H Electronics, Xantrex and Thetford-Norcold had representatives present. Jan Sadlack provided instruction on the effective operation of the Sharp Convection- Microwave Oven.

Charles Suniga provided Wednesday evening’s show of vocals and instrumentals with comedy generously scattered throughout. Thursday night after dinner we were treated to a high-energy musical performance by the California Cowboys.

One of the highlights of every Tiffin/Allegro Club rally is the service provided by technicians from Tiffin and the sponsoring dealership. The several technicians worked long hours in order to get to all the coaches there. And, as always, they answered a myriad of questions as they worked.

We hope you will join the fun at a Tiffin/Allegro Club rally sometime soon. Until then, travel safely and keep on “Roughing it Smoothly.” 

## ALLEGRO CLUB 2008 — 2009 RALLY SCHEDULE

**ALLEGRO CLUB BRANSON OR BUST**  
America’s Best Campground, Branson, MO  
September 22-26, 2008 (Checkout Sept. 27)

**ALLEGRO CLUB FALL FOLIAGE FEST**  
Cold Springs Camp Resort, Weare, NH  
October 6-9, 2008 (Checkout Oct. 10)

**ALLEGRO CLUB KEY LIME RALLY**  
Boyd’s Key West Campground, Key West, FL  
April 6–9, 2009 (Checkout April 10)

**TIFFIN MH / JOHNNIE WALKER RV  
VIVA LAS VEGAS RALLY**  
Oasis Las Vegas RV Resort, Las Vegas, NV  
April 21–23, 2009 (Checkout April 24)

**ALLEGRO CLUB BRANSON RETURN RALLY**  
America’s Best Campground, Branson, MO  
May 12–16, 2009 (Checkout May 17)

**NORTHWEST RALLY**  
TBA  
June 2009

**ALLEGRO CLUB FREEDOM TRAIL RALLY**  
Normandy Farms Family Camping Resort  
Foxboro, Massachusetts  
September 21-24, 2009 (September 25)

**FALL RALLY**  
TBA  
Oct/Nov2009

**Other possible venues:**  
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OH/PA Amish; DuQuoin, IL; OK; Nashville; Smoky Mtns; KY;  
SW TX; Gadsden, AL; Guntersville, AL; Chattanooga, TN;  
Orlando; Lake Okeechobee; Virginia; Wyoming; Nebraska

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## Thetford's New Line of "Green" RV-Care Products

Responding to customer demand for more environmentally friendly products, Thetford Corporation has created a new RV-care product line using recently developed vegetable-based detergents.

The company is replacing petroleum-based detergents with corn-based cleansers in ten of its popular products. The new cleaning products are equal in performance to petroleum-based cleaning agents, but are milder to the skin and derived from renewable resources.

"RV owners are environmentally conscious buyers and we have seen a tremendous increase in demand for 'green' products as a result," said Mary Burrows, Thetford's manager of chemical development. "We are committed to providing high-quality cleaning agents that contain a favorable environmental profile."

Thetford's new Premium RV Care products contain wetting agents made entirely from corn. The new cleansers are 100 percent biodegradable and are derived from renewable resources. Premium RV Care products are packaged in containers made with 25 percent post-consumer recycled high-density polyethylene and are recyclable.

The development of the corn-based products took over a year to complete. Formulas were compared and ranked for performance, safety, and biodegradability. The top-scoring versions were chosen for production.

"As petroleum costs continue to rise, we moved immediately toward developing products from alternative, renewable resources," Burrows noted. "Thetford plans to stay in the forefront of this new market."

Green products currently in Thetford's Premium RV Care line include Premium Awning Cleaner, Premium UltraFoam™ Awning Cleaner, Premium Rubber Roof Cleaner, and Premium Wash & Wax. Burrows notes that the company expects to release other Premium RV Care products over the next 6 to 12 months.

Headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Thetford is the world's leading supplier of sanitation and refrigeration products for the recreational vehicle market. The privately held company has more than 1,500 employees at eight manufacturing facilities in four countries. One of Thetford's most recognized subsidiaries in the RV market is Norcold, America's leading manufacturer of gas-absorption refrigerators and freezers.

## Make Your Coach Look Brand New Again

*[Editor's Note: A year ago we ran this brief story about Ricky Johnson's wash, wax, and detail service at Red Bay. He's been busy since. For those of you who missed it, here it is.]*

While traveling America's highways, and especially its Interstates, your coach can acquire a lot of residues and films that

dull its beautiful factory finish. When you visit Red Bay for service, call Ricky Johnson at (256) 668-0211 and ask him to restore the luster and beauty of your coach's paint. As an independent contractor, Johnson began his cleaning service 13 years ago and makes it his personal mission to have satisfied customers. For the last 17 years, he has worked in Tiffin's parts and service department. Johnson offers a (1) full wash, (2) wash/wax, (3) all interior cleaning, and (4) carpet cleaning.

## First Class Storage for Your Motorhome

With diesel still hovering around \$4 per gallon and gas not far behind, snowbirds are finding it practical to leave their motorhomes in Florida for the summer rather than driving them back to the northern states.

Located on main artery US 301 just north of the Fowler Avenue intersection in northeastern Hillsborough County (Tampa), **Big Toy Storage** opened this summer with over 370 stalls for motorhomes up to 52 feet in length. Local residents who can't park their coaches at their homes will also find this storage facility a good solution.

Stalls have 30- and 50-amp power supply to keep the inside temperature of the coach at 80 degrees. The heavy structural steel covered stalls are designed to withstand winds of 125 mph or a Category 3 hurricane.

The company provides on-site 24/7 management security plus double-coded computer-controlled steel gates. The perimeters of the fifteen-acre property are chain-link fenced and monitored by photo beams which sound alarms if breached. Twenty-four surveillance cameras are monitored in the facility's office. Access is offered 365 days of the year.

Other services include a dump station and two wash stations. Trip preparation services including interior cleaning, exterior washing, and checking tire pressure and fluid levels will be offered in the future.

For more information, contact Rick Berry at rick@bigtoy-storage.us or (813) 986-8697 or visit the facility at 11915 US Hwy 301 North. Also see [www.bigtoystorage.us](http://www.bigtoystorage.us)

## DirecTV Contracts: Buyer Beware

If you are considering a subscription with DirecTV for satellite service in your motorhome, you should read your contract very carefully. DirecTV will request a credit card against which they will charge the monthly fee for the service. They will also ask for your social security number which you should refuse to supply. Your SSN is not fair game for this contract.

You should establish a **fixed monthly charge** for the service which cannot be escalated. My contract had two increases applied within 12 months. No refusal option was offered—the

escalated charge just started showing up on my credit card.

Demand a 12-month contract. If you find the service to be unacceptable, you at least have an out. Better yet, demand that they send a monthly bill just like you would receive from Verizon or Brighthouse. For more information, go online to [www.ripoffreport.com](http://www.ripoffreport.com) which was founded by Fox 11 News.

## New Trap Shooting Range Near Red Bay

If you enjoy shooting trap, you will be glad to learn there is a new trap shooting range within 20 minutes of Red Bay. The Cedar Hill Trap Range has two certified ATA coaches who have produced national champions.

The range is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-9, Saturdays noon-9. Rates: \$4 per round (25 birds). Bring your own shells. From Red Bay, drive east on Hwy 24 for 3.3 miles. Turn left onto Hwy 247 and go 9.5 miles. Turn right onto Hwy 84 and 4.2 miles to sign on left. Driveway on the left.

## Tiffin Employees Recognized for 20+ Years of Service

TMH management wishes to recognize the service of 58 employees who have 20+ years of service (20-29 years). Recognition of employees with 30+ years of service (30-39 years) appeared in an earlier issue this year. In future years, recognition will be given to individuals as they reach the 20- and 30-year marks.



**Front row, left-to-right:** W. Oneal Funderburk, Keith Burleson, Donnie George, B.D. Stacy, Brian Self, Nickey Henson, Gary Puckett, Roney Wigginton, Nathan Johnson, Jimmy Deaton, Bearl DeFoor and David Sparks. **Middle row:** David Parrish, Charles Spencer, Hugh Bates, Donnie Henson, Terry Elliott, Barry Page, Danny Young, Oneal Hammock, Mike Hester, Cutaw Manasco, Steve Brown, Dorothy Gober, Jerry Humphries, David Hester, Paul Kelton, Joey Kuykendall, Joe McCalpin, Loyd

Wright, and Stuart Pearson. **Back row:** Craig Ozborn, Garry Williams, Donald King, Harmon Ginn, Chuck Hamm, Stan Patterson, Scotty Martin, Roger Boyd, Johnny Hill, Joel Garrison, Terry Barksdale, Dwain Emerson, Andy Pounds, Phillip Orrick, James Gentle, Tim Tiffin, Tony Barksdale, Kenny Holland and Macky Massey. **Not shown:** Van Tiffin, Tim Massey, Danny Garrison, Paul Danley, Mike McDowell, Paul Danley, James Deaton, and Chris Wigginton





# MENDOCINO COUNTY COAST

## California's Coolest Best Kept Secret

Text and photography by Norman Spray

Fewer than 2,500 people live in this quaint village perched on magnificent headland bluffs above pristine beaches alternately kissed and pounded by waves of the mighty Pacific Ocean. Many of the town's lovingly preserved wood buildings have been here well over 150 years.

The town is called Mendocino. Located some three hours north of San Francisco, its charms are well known both to Bay area folk and sweat-weary California inlanders searching for a cool place to relax, play, and enjoy cultural pursuits when their summer turns hot. One has to wonder whether those in the know conspire to keep this place hidden from the rest of the country. Certainly Mendocino has not the notoriety of say Carmel or Monterey, coastal cities south of San Francisco. But, oh, how much it has to offer!

Mendocino, the county, has a coastline stretching about 80 miles from its southern border with Sonoma County to Humboldt County to the north. Mendocino, the town, lies roughly half-way up the county's coast, a cool place where temperatures seldom rise over 70 degrees. We'd heard about its unique features and the county's coastal attractions for years. Even so, we were hardly prepared for Mendocino when, coming from the north, we turned our 33' Allegro off coastal Hwy. 1 and followed Lansing Street down to Main.

### **Town Without a Traffic Light**

Many of the houses and buildings could have been moved here from New England. Gingerbread architecture, filigree mouldings, steep gables, picket fences and gardens seemed almost out of place in this rugged part of the world. Curiously, redwood water tanks topped towers all over town. And there was a feeling something was amiss, almost surreal. It took a minute for the light to dawn: No traffic lights. No fast-food chain outlets. No billboards. No big box stores. No supermarkets per se. No parking garages—and, consequently, few open parking spaces for patrons of dozens of shops, art galleries and non-chain restaurants nestled on this village's few streets.

*Left:* One example of the unique redwood water storage tanks found in Mendocino. Many are in use today, providing water to residents.

Strolling around Mendocino, a national historic preservation district, brings to mind images of a time when huge redwood logs milled here supported San Francisco's Gold Rush building boom. But, as we were soon to learn, there's plenty going on today, here and up and down the Mendocino County coast.

Deep sea, surf, pier and stream fishing, whale watching, canoeing, swimming, surf boarding, scuba diving, kayaking, hiking, biking, shell-hunting, and horseback riding are popular and rewarding. And this coast is one of few places left where skin divers can pry up prized abalone from shoreline rocks. (No commercial abalone fishing is legal, nor is it legal to use scuba gear when hunting this delicacy.) There are lighthouses and amazing gardens to visit.

### **Boat Wreck, Then a Town**

On the cultural side, museums tell the story of logging, shipping and even shipwrecks past. There are classical and popular musical concerts and live theater. Mendocino Art Center displays works of acclaimed area artists and offers over 300 unique courses each year in ceramics, computer arts, fine arts, jewelry, sculpture and textiles. These one to five-day courses are done in a retreat-style setting.

Mendocino, the town, was founded after the lone survivor of a shipwreck was pulled ashore by searchers and saw opportunity in the redwood forests stretching inland. The man, German immigrant William Kasten, started a mill that found a ready and hungry lumber market in San Francisco. Homesick New Englanders who rounded the horn to join the timber boom influenced much of Mendocino's building styles, ranging from Salt Box to Queen Anne to Italianate to Gothic Revival.

Still standing alongside many of the old buildings are the town's water towers—tall ones, short ones, open ones, enclosed ones, towers of many colors, some even supporting two big redwood tanks. Most were erected late in the 1800s before electricity came to Mendocino and filled by water pumped from wells by windmills. Since Mendocino still does not have a water system, many of the towers remain in use. Today electric pumps move water from wells to the towers. (See Mendocino Water Towers box, page 49).





Many Mendocino houses have a New England look but numerous styles exist in this town designated as a National Historic Preservation District.

### Trails of the Mendocino Headlands

Our personal tour of attractions outside the town started logically on the headlands that form a completely undeveloped buffer between three sides of the town and the ocean. Rising some 50- to 75-ft. above the Pacific, these headlands bluffs make the Mendocino Headlands State Park one of the coast's most visited attractions. Hiking along three miles of trails atop these cliffs, you may see whales (in winter), seals and sea lions, and dozens of bird species. There'll be wildflowers in the spring and autumn colors in the fall.

The nearby Ford House Museum on Main Street serves as

the park's visitor center offering current and historical information. Exhibits include models of 19<sup>th</sup> century ships, logging tools, photographs, Indian artifacts and a model of the town as it existed in 1890. Itself an important page in Mendocino's history, the house was built in 1854 by Jerome and Martha Ford after Jerome arrived in 1851 hoping to recover treasures from the great Frolic shipwreck. Instead he and a partner founded a successful mill and helped establish the town.

Flowing into Mendocino Bay to the south, Big River provides access to the park's beachfront and outstanding scuba diving, fishing and beachcombing opportunities. Further inland lies the 7,300-plus acre Big River State Park where you can swim, sunbathe on sandy beaches, bike, canoe, jog, or walk leashed dogs beside this lovely river. The river's lower four miles are excellent for canoes, sail boats, kayaks and row boats. With 1,500 acres of wetlands, the park is the largest coastal estuary north of San Francisco. Great blues, herons, ospreys, ducks, river otters and over 27 endangered species may be seen along the miles of trails that wind along the river and into adjoining forest land.

Mendocino declined rapidly when logging slowed in the years following World War II, only to revive in the late 1950's as an artist's colony. It has become a cultural center displaying outstanding art in the nationally-recognized Mendocino Art Center and several other galleries and producing theater plays, opera, orchestral, chamber music and jazz concerts through much of the year.

### Other Towns, Other Attractions

Unique as it is, Mendocino is but one of many delightful attractions on the Mendocino Coast. From the south, coastal Hwy. 1

A couple enjoys one of the walks over bays, lagoons and the Pacific available to visitors in the Mendocino Headlands State Park. Three miles of walking, jogging and (on some) biking trails take visitors over bluffs above the rocky, sometimes roaring and storming beach.



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enters the county at Guala and skirts the ocean for some 60 miles before turning inland north of Westport. Along the way it passes numerous towns and villages. These include Anchor Bay, Point Arena, Manchester, Elk, Albion, and Little River south of Mendocino. Casper, Fort Bragg, and Westport hug the coast north of Mendocino. Ocean views alone make this a memorable drive but you'll pass dozens of attractions including beaches, lagoons, headlands and harbors inviting outdoor enthusiasts. Most all have good restaurants, views and unique attractions.

Two lighthouses make interesting stops. The Point Cabrillo Light Station, just two miles north of Mendocino, was erected in 1908 to guide "doghole schooners" that hauled lumber from the North Coast to San Francisco which needed it to rebuild after the disastrous 1906 earthquake. The Cabrillo lighthouse's Third Order Fresnel lens, first lit in 1909, flashed warnings from a 47-ft. tall tower and still is visible 14 to 15 miles at sea. Its fog signal sent warning blasts audible for seven miles. Deer often are seen along bluff-top trails and there are 17 catalogued archeological sites within the 270-acre Point Cabrillo Lighthouse and Preserve, one of 24 state parks in Mendocino County.

The second lighthouse at Point Arena, some 22 miles south of Mendocino, is both older and newer, having been first built in 1870 then rebuilt after sustaining irreparable damage during the infamous 1906 earthquake. Rising 115 feet above the ocean cliffs, Point Arena is one of the tallest lighthouses on the Pacific Coast. Its 1st Order Fresnel lens, made up of 666 hand-ground glass prisms, is over six feet in diameter and weighs more than six

Visitors enjoy view and morning coffee at a bluff-side observation area provided by the Sea Rock Inn in Mendocino. • In winter and early spring, migrating gray whales often can be seen from these famous headlands cliffs in Mendocino Headlands State Park. Seals, sea lions, and many bird species may be seen along these trails. • Campers hooked up at nearby Caspar Beach RV Park, called "Mendocino's Best Kept Secret," walk dogs on Caspar Beach in the shadow of bluffs of Caspar Headlands State Reserve.

tons. Meadows around this lighthouse are resplendent with wildflowers in April and May. Migrating gray whales often can be seen from the bluffs between November and March.

#### **Fort Bragg: Lots to Do, Lots to See**

Fort Bragg, biggest town on the county's coast with a population over 14,000, is only nine miles north of Mendocino. Like Mendocino, it traces its beginning to the 1850s when it was established as a military outpost to keep things quiet on the Mendocino Indian reservation. Both Mendocino and Fort Bragg stage whale-watching festivals on successive weekends in March.

Entering Fort Bragg from the south on Hwy 1 is dramatic. You arrive on a high bridge spanning the Noyo River. Looking inland (east) to your right, you see Noyo Harbor. Looking to your left (west), you see where the Noyo River pours into Noyo Bay and the Pacific. This picturesque harbor is a working port with a commercial fleet, fish markets and processing plants. Here, you can watch fishing boats docking with their catches as you dine on fresh local seafood at any of several restaurants. You can arrange for trips to view whales from December through February or in March and April. Boats and guides are available to take you out to fish for salmon, rock cod or crab. The harbor also is an excellent place to put in your own or rented craft for ocean kayaking. It is a haven for local seals and sea lions.

One of Fort Bragg's most popular attractions is riding the 122-year-old "skunk train" over tracks originally built to haul logs from the redwood forests to coastal mills. Now reputed to be one of the 10 best scenic train trips in North America, it criss-crosses the Noyo River, rolling inland through coastal mountains and towering redwoods. Depending on conditions, the train is pulled by a diesel engine or guests may ride in a historic motor car. On Wednesdays through Saturdays in summer the company's #45 steam engine pulls the train from Fort Bragg to the line's Northspur station.

Gardeners should make a tour of the

### **MENDOCINO WATER TOWERS: WORKING RELICS OF THE PAST**

In a town designated a National Historic Preservation District, you'd expect historical "flashbacks." There are plenty of those in Mendocino, but none more visible perhaps than water towers scattered about the town. These dot the skyline in different sizes and colors and, one soon learns, residents who work to keep Mendocino's past alive are not about to change that.

Outsiders may think the towers a little weird in the modern world but they truly played a significant role in Mendocino's history. Most were originally erected before 1900 to supply the town with water which was pumped by windmills from shallow wells into redwood storage tanks atop the towers. Though rainfall usually totals 40 to 60-in. a year in Mendocino, most of it falls from November through April. Storage was needed to assure a supply through the dry months when the shallow water table could go dry.

Besides, gravity assured dependable delivery of water flowing from the elevated tanks. In the days before electricity came to Mendocino, the windmills often were erected atop the towers for maximum exposure to the wind. The water towers were at least 30-ft. tall and some were as tall as 60-ft. This exposed them to the elements.

Over the years, storms destroyed many of the original towers and forced rebuilding of others. Visitors often are surprised to learn that some towers still are in use since Mendocino does not have a municipal water system. Tanks on these towers are filled by electric pumps instead of windmills. Other homes and businesses depend on electric systems to provide water drawn from wells.

Makes no difference to townsfolk whether the towers are useful. The towers have become a beloved signature landmark. Businesses can come and go. But in Mendocino, the water towers stay!

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ON THE MENDOCINO COAST: WHALES, SEALS, SEA LIONS AND ABALONE

Unless you live or spend a lot of time on the West Coast, there’s a good chance a visit to the Mendocino County coast will expand the list of sea critters you are familiar with. If you come at the right time, for instance, you may be fortunate enough to spot or even boat alongside a 50-ft. gray whale. You certainly can expect to see big seals and sea lions. And, depending on how enterprising you are, you may catch your own abalone to prepare a delicacy hard to come by these days.

**Whale watching** is one of the biggest activities on this coast—but it’s only productive from December through February and again March through April. That’s because the gray whales, now estimated to be 20,000 in number, migrate through the area in winter on their 5,000-mile journey from summer stays in the Bering Sea to calving grounds in Baja California lagoons. Then they pass back through—calves beside them—on the return trip in early spring.

The gray, though not the largest of the species, can weigh 40 tons and normally grows to a length of 45-ft. Two-month-old calves seen on the return migration usually are about 15-ft.

Along the Mendocino coast, one of the best in the lower U.S. for sighting whales, are many good watching locations. Among them: Point Arena, Navarro Point, the Mendocino Headlands, Point Cabillo, Pomo Bluffs Park south of Fort Bragg, Laguna Point in MacKerricher State Park and the town of Westport. All you need is access to the coast, clear weather, a warm jacket and binoculars. If you board one of the party boats plying out of Noyo Harbor at Fort Bragg, you may get an up-close and personal encounter with one or more of these monster animals.

**Seals and sea lions** are common all along the Mendocino coast. Harbor seals, among the most common, are often

sighted on coastal rocks, in harbors, and even on fishing piers and boat docks. In summer, breeding sea lions go south to give birth and mate. Non-breeding large males can be seen on the docks at Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg.

Sea lions are larger than seals and have visible external ears, which harbor seals do not. Sea lions bark much like dogs. In summer sea lions sometimes travel along the shore in rafts of 50 or more.

Elephant seal pups, which are abandoned by their mothers at only a month to six weeks of age and have yet to learn adequate fishing skills, sometimes strand themselves on Mendocino Coast beaches, boat ramps, or rocks. These “weaners” usually are four to five feet long. Yearlings are five to seven feet long.

**Abalone**, a delicacy for the table, is a mollusk that requires a rocky exposed shoreline with cool, heavily-salted water, and seaweed. Nine species reside on the U. S. west coast (there are 68 worldwide) but only one, the Red Abalone, is legal to fish and this only in northern California.

Red abalone can be taken only by fishermen with a sports license and must be pried off the rocks with a proper iron. No commercial abalone fishing is allowed. Most are taken by skin divers (no air tanks) though “shore-picking” tidal pools is okay for those brave enough to risk being carried out by the undertow of a rogue wave.

Abalone fishing is best in June. The season also includes April, May, August, September, October and November. The daily limit is three and any taken must be at least seven inches measured with a legal gauge. Harvesting can get to be work but there are those who swear there’s no better seafood on earth than properly tenderized and prepared Abalone.

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens a priority. Located off Hwy 1, two miles south of Fort Bragg and seven miles north of Mendocino, these gardens occupy 47 acres between the road and the beach. An easy half-mile walk winds through fields of flowering species, ending at the beach. Rhododendron, the gardens’ signature plant, usually peaks in blooming beauty from mid-April to mid-May. Seasonal highlights include camellias, daffodils, magnolias, flowering plums and Pacific Coast Iris February through April; perennials, foxgloves, heritage roses, cactus, lilies, summer heathers and forest wildflowers May through July; peaking perennials, dahlias, fuchsias, heritage roses and heathers August through October; and Japanese maples, late perennials, winter heather and mushrooms November through January.

In all seasons there are quiet forests and the trail takes you through a fern-covered canyon to vistas at the ocean’s edge. From the garden’s bluff meadows, you may see migrating gray whales

in season. Main trails to the ocean are wheel chair accessible. Electric carts are available on a first come, first served basis. Picnic tables are scattered over the grounds and visitors are invited to enjoy picnic lunches while absorbing the Gardens’ beauty.

Platform for Whale Watching

Another great shore-based place to watch for gray whales in season is MacKerricher State Park, three miles north of Fort Bragg. Boardwalks line much of this park’s seven-mile beach-side stretch. Observation decks at Laguna Point overlook waters where whales often can be seen. A resident colony of harbor seals is present.

Scuba divers can explore an underwater park where legend has it that five wrecked ships lie. Horseback riders, bikers and even picnickers using rented llamas to carry their stuff enjoy miles of open beach. There are 148 camp sites and Wi-Fi service



to connect computers to the internet.

Much of the Mendocino coast’s history is documented in exhibits at the Guest House Museum, a three-story Victorian redwood structure built as a home in 1892. Logging, fishing, trains, and wood and glass craftsmanship artifacts and photographs are displayed.

North to a Wilderness

An unpaved road (4-wheel drive recommended) continues up the coast northward beyond the point Hwy. 1 turns inland to join Interstate 101. This road takes you to Sinkyone Wilderness State Park, 7,367 acres of the “Lost Coast” encompassing what is said to be one of the most uncluttered, undeveloped, pristine beaches and coastlines in the U.S.

Hardy hikers in Sinkyone find dramatic ocean views, rugged terrain and black sand beaches. Fishing here is said to be second

to none, whether its in a stream, river, or the ocean surf. Hiking, biking, guided tours and horseback riding are available to those who complete the difficult drive into the park.

Avenue of Giants is for Real

Inland is a different world. A highlight for us, as we came southward out of Oregon, was a 32-mile drive through “The Avenue of Giants” in the 52,000-acre Humboldt Redwoods State Park just north of Mendocino County. This scenic byway meanders along the Eel River, roughly paralleling the U.S. Interstate 101 north-south route. You drive under towering redwoods so high they seem to join branches over the road – and sometimes do just that. You motor through part of the Rockefeller Forest where the world’s largest contiguous stand of old growth redwoods is sure to inspire you to reflect on nature and its wonders.

At Leggett, where coastal Hwy. 1 and Interstate 101 meet in

Above: Noyo Harbor in Fort Bragg is home base for a number of commercial fishing and charter boats. This view looks across harbor to the “Tara Dawn” ocean-going boat. • Fish markets and restaurants alike make fresh fish available in Noyo Harbor. There are processing plants and services of all kinds for sea-going sportsmen.







northern Mendocino County, we were amazed -- as others have been for over 50 years—as we gazed through and up another giant, the star attraction at the Chandelier Tree Drive-Thru Park. A “tunnel” cut through this 315-ft. tall “chandelier tree,” a coastal redwood, lets sedan-sized autos follow a road through the tree. The “hole” in the tree’s 21-ft. diameter base is some 7-ft. high and about that wide. Our Allegro was much too big to pass through but the Chevy Tracker we pull could have made it with plenty of room to spare.

The tree was hollowed out in the 1930s, one of several cut through by enterprising promoters to attract visitors to the redwood forests—and collect fees from those who drove their cars



through then usually stopped to photograph the unusual event. The Chandelier Tree, named for unique branching that begins 100-ft. above the ground, is one of three open-trunk trees remaining near the Humboldt Redwoods State Park. All are privately owned but open to the public for nominal fees.

Leaving Leggett, we followed the tortuous, curving, up-and-down, twisting, turning Hwy 1 for 22 miles to the coast. There the road straightened and enthralling awe-striking views of the Pacific opened on one side and hills, flowering meadows, valleys and forests appeared on the other. We knew we’d come to a place fellow RVers would love to visit—even before we rolled into the surprise that was Mendocino, the town. **RIS**

*Above left:* The “skunk train” which daily carries riders through spectacular inland vistas, leaves from Fort Bragg crossing the Noyo River into forests of towering redwood trees. • Much of the history of Fort Bragg from military outpost in the 1850s to lumber town and shipping center to today’s working city is documented in this Guest House Museum on the town’s Main Street. • That’s our Allegro seen through a tunnel cut through a 315-ft. tall coastal redwood tree in the Chandelier Drive-Thru Tree Park in Leggett. The Tree’s base diameter is 21 feet across. The Chandelier is one of three open-trunk trees in the area hollowed out in the 1930s to attract tourists.



### Where to get Mendocino Coast Information

For general information about attractions and events in all towns along the coast:

**Mendocino Coast Chamber of Commerce:**  
707-961-6300 [www.mendocinocoast.com](http://www.mendocinocoast.com)

For info about attractions and events specific to Mendocino:

**Visitors Center**  
707-937-5397 [www.mendocino.com](http://www.mendocino.com)

### PRESIDENT’S CORNER

*Continued from page 5*

auditorium. I never saw so many cobwebs and spiders in my life. The boilers for the heating system were fired by coal and there was coal dust everywhere. They tapped on the stage floor to help me find the hole they had drilled to bring up the wire. The tapping knocked the coal dust loose causing it to fall on me, but I wasn’t aware of it. When I got out, I walked to the back of the auditorium where they were working and they burst out laughing when they saw me. “Bob, you’re black as soot.” He always called on me and I appreciated that.

The biggest job required a lot of the boys. Starting in early 1958 we worked at recess, after school, and during the summer to dig out the slope of a hill and make the forms to pour concrete seating for a new stadium. We built both sides—a larger seating for the home side and smaller for the visitors. It took a year and a half to finish the job and we were proud of what we had accomplished. There was something about his leadership that persuaded people to work together and get things done. His example sure influenced me. We were lucky to have Mr. Butler as our principal. We played our first game in the new stadium in the fall of 1959.

The school hired Olen Cunningham as our football coach in the fall of 1958. I had been away for two years at Harding Academy in Arkansas for my ninth and tenth grade years. We didn’t have much of a team at Harding and I wanted to stay home and play here. The boys I grew up with were really good athletes.

Coach Cunningham was a great motivator and he knew how to teach football. We only lost one game my junior year and we went undefeated my senior year. He would not let you quit, no matter what the circumstances. A young person really learns from that kind of experience.

When I started working for Daddy in the summers, we got to the store at five. I loved going to work even at the age of six. I wanted to be there and do my part. I thought I had to go to work just like he did, and I still feel that way. I think everybody is born with the attribute of wanting to work.

Daddy was dedicated to his customers. He wanted to help them in any way he could. Tiffin Supply sold to everybody on credit, farmers in particular. He extended credit for their farm supplies and groceries in the spring and summer, and collected when the farmers sold their cotton or other crops in the fall. Daddy had ongoing business relationships with some families for three generations. He had a strong influence with his customers because he was honest and treated them right. My being so close to him for so many years continues to have a big effect on our business today.

Daddy knew who was credit worthy. “How do you know he will pay you next fall?” I would ask him. “Everyone in that family works hard including the children,” he would say. “They don’t

have a lazy bone in them. They will find a way to pay it back.” That didn’t happen just once. It happened over and over. One or two generations later, those folks still trade at Tiffin Supply.

We have so many good people like that in this community, and we are fortunate to have them working at Tiffin Motorhomes. Our supervisors have the same kind of work ethic that I learned from Daddy as a child. All of these people have had a great influence on me and blessed my life in so many ways.

But the greatest influence and the greatest blessings of all come from our Lord. Without Him this company would not be here today. **RIS**

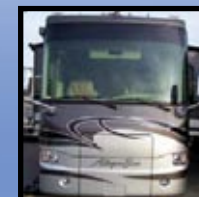
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# POULSBO RV

HOW A JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN BUILT THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S LARGEST RV DEALERSHIP IN THE QUIANT NORWEGIAN VILLAGE OF POULSBO, WASHINGTON, AND THEN TURNED THE THRIVING BUSINESS OVER TO HIS SON-IN-LAW.

Jorgen Eliason is credited with founding the village of Poulsbo, Washington. He arrived in 1883 from Fordefjord, Norway, with his sister Rakel and his six-year-old son. Coming from Paulsbo, Norway, just one month later, Ivar Moe with his wife and three sons chose the location because of its majestic mountains and fjords. In 1886 Ivar Moe decided the growing village should have a post office and made an application. The U.S. Postmaster General misread Moe's handwriting and changed the "a" to an "o." In the early days, Poulsbo could be reached by boat, horseback, and on foot. True to their Scandinavian heritage, many of the town's inhabitants made their living from the sea. The town had one of the Northwest's largest codfish processing plants.

Exactly 100 years later in 1986, a savvy Japanese businessman with a genius for marketing launched a company which he named Poulsbo Auto and Marine. Ken Wakazuru, who had broken away from the family flower business to sell cars several years earlier, decided the time was right to start his own business. Never mind that the ferry was the only practical way to get to Poulsbo.

Bob Cravens of Skyline RV called on Ken and convinced him to stock two of Skyline's travel trailers. Ken sold them quickly and ordered two more, then two more, and you've got the picture. Pretty soon Ken was selling more RVs than he was selling cars, and the die was cast.

With a new level of confidence, Ken ordered six Southwind motorhomes. But that, he discovered, was a different ballgame. The motorhomes sat on his lot like beached whales for nine months. It was then Wakazuru realized television advertising might be the answer, and he hired an actor to do TV spots. "People drove to Poulsbo on that ferry and bought all six motorhomes the first day. The ads," says his son-in-law Jim Elliott, now the company's COO, "were just as good as the RV ad spots you see on television today."

Wakazuru refined his approach as he went along and by the

early 1990s Poulsbo RV had become the Number One dealer in the U.S. He added stores in Everett and Auburn and increased the number of brands both in motorized and towable RVs. Sales continued to grow. "Ken always hired people who were talented in areas he wasn't," Jim noted. "His talent was in managing the team, a very synergistic ability."

In 1998 Ken's daughter, Robyn, married Jim Elliott. "I saw great potential in my 30-year-old son-in-law and began to hatch a plan for Jim's career and my own retirement," Wakazuru said.

"I grew up in Sacramento," Jim related. "After high school and a short time in the Marine Corps, I enrolled at the University of Washington. Both my parents and grandparents are UW alumni."

Jim majored in speech communications with concentrations in argument and persuasion. He minored in psychology and sociology. Upon graduation Jim accepted a position with Bank of America. "One of my colleagues at the bank arranged a blind date with Robyn in 1996. We dated for two years before getting married," he continued. "My background at the bank involved working with family-owned, private companies to help them develop the financial structure for succession plans. I discovered good succession planning is rare in the RV industry." Elliott also logged considerable time as a financial analyst for the bank.

Ken convinced Jim to leave banking and come to work for Poulsbo RV. "Where I go, you will go. You'll ride on my hip. If it does not work for you," he promised, "you can go to work for anyone you like. What I can teach you that the bank cannot teach you is business."

"I got treated like everyone else," Jim explained. "I worked in sales, then as a closer, a manager, and a senior manager. Finally, Ken brought me into his office. I watched him work. I learned

text by Fred Thompson



what he did on a daily basis. I attended key meetings. Ken is a master marketer. Merchandising is his speciality. I especially wanted to learn from his marketing experience, so we focused on that area two days a week."

Jim became the chief operating officer in 2003. "Today there are two synergies at work in our relationship," Jim explained. "First: Ken as boss, Jim as employee. We talk very straight with each other. But if he wishes to make the final decision, I execute his ideas to the letter. Second: Most of the time we function as father-in-law/son-in-law. Really though, we have more of a father/son relationship than an in-law relationship. I admit to making some mistakes, yet Ken would say, 'If you aren't making a mistake now and then, you're not trying hard enough. Just learn from it and try not to repeat it,' he has said."

"Two other key management spokes in our wheel," Jim continued, "are Rick Wakazuru and Tony Labrolia. Rick (Ken's brother) serves as company president and manages all of our banking relationships. Tony, our marketing director and graphic arts specialist, produces our advertising, both print and television."

"A key point Ken taught us about marketing: When you are in tough times, a sluggish and down economy, you should increase your advertising and marketing effort. The pie is smaller and you must get a larger percentage of it to stay on top of the

game," Jim said. "Bankers don't think outside the box in marketing. Street savvy marketing people do."

"Two years ago we were doing more institutional advertising. Today we tell the buyer *why* he needs to buy," Jim continued. "We are doing fewer institutional messages and more creative approaches. Now we are trying things in television that are more on the edge. We are spending more on targeted direct mail than on TV. We were one of the top five TV advertisers in the state, but now it is critical to segment our marketing effort to the various clienteles. You don't sell toy haulers to the same clientele who buy Phaetons."

When Jim joined the company in 1998, Wakazuru had three stores in Poulsbo, Everett, and Auburn, all in the I-5 corridor. Ken admired Valley RV in Kent which began in the 1950s. He wanted to own a store like it and finally bought it in 2000. "After I became the chief operating officer, we continued our expansion, buying the Vancouver store in 2003, building the Mt. Vernon store in 2005, and opening the Chehalis store in 2007," Jim said. "We actually consider our website our eighth store."

Today Poulsbo RV has a 32 percent share in the Washington

Ken and Jim review last quarter's results during Wakazuru's visit from Hawaii where he now lives.





recreational vehicle market. “That’s the highest market share in a state held by any U.S. dealer,” he noted. “And our percentage is growing.”

The company has approximately 300 employees. All of the stores are full service. The company boasts 20 master certified technicians and 35 certified technicians by RVIA standards. The Kent store does minor Freightliner and Spartan chassis service. All of the stores offer engine and genset oil changes along with other minor engine-related services. The company has 70 service bays in its seven stores. Parts and camping supplies are offered in all of the stores, but Kent, Everett, and Vancouver carry more substantial inventories. The Tiffin brands are carried in all of the stores except Vancouver and Chehalis.

Elliott plans to reduce the number of Class A manufacturers it now represents. “I spent a lot of time doing my homework on that subject,” he said. “In fact, I worked seven years to get the Tiffin brands in our stores. They are very careful about selecting their dealers and I like that.”

When comparing Tiffin Motorhomes to other manufacturers, he discovered a dramatic difference. “TMH focuses on the dealer’s needs and stands behind him. We appreciate so much the way Tiffin deals with us in parts and service, especially their paying for warranty work in a fair and timely manner,” he said. “Our service philosophy matches theirs.”

“I also wanted to represent Tiffin because of the uniqueness in their management. The very backbone of the company is based on a family culture,” Jim said with a great deal of vocal emphasis. “When Bob said last night at the National Dealers

Meeting, ‘We appreciate your being here,’ I knew he meant that. When I hear Tim refer to Bob as ‘Daddy,’ I know there is an honest respect for the father-son relationship. We all come from a father-son background, and that really impressed me. There is a cohesiveness to this family that often is missing in other companies.”

Meeting, ‘We appreciate your being here,’ I knew he meant that. When I hear Tim refer to Bob as ‘Daddy,’ I know there is an honest respect for the father-son relationship. We all come from a father-son background, and that really impressed me. There is a cohesiveness to this family that often is missing in other companies.”

Depending on the time of year, Poulsbo RV has 80 to 120 sales people serving its seven stores. Each store has a sales manager and a general manager. Elliott’s market strategy aims at being a volume dealer, but he emphasizes that goal must never exclude providing the client with a great buying experience. “Poulsbo takes a somewhat different approach to sales training. I teach ethics, product knowledge, time management, personal style, and sales techniques. I know that the better I train you, the more successful you will become, and the more successful I will be,” he said.

Elliott noted that corporate management at both Tiffin and Poulsbo RV demonstrates professionalism and civility. “The standards for culture, integrity, and excellence are clear. The only way to do anything is *the right way*,” Jim emphasized. “Ken often tells me, ‘You must hold your group to high expectations and accountability.’”

Like all of the dealers at the Tiffin National Dealers Meeting

*Continued on page 63*

## 2008 NATIONAL DEALERS MEETING

*Continued from page 15*

“We are three years ahead of where we thought we would be when we launched this project. We have been rather low key about it to assure perfection in the chassis’s production. Gary Harris, manager of the chassis plant, has done a great job with this product and customer response has been very good.”

“The Powerglide has brought a new level of engineering excellence to the motorhome chassis industry. It’s ride quality and weight distribution is better than we expected. Our construction method with huck bolts is the best technique in the business,” Tiffin continued.

He continued to list the chassis’s outstanding features. Bilstein shocks specifically designed and built for the Powerglide chassis, the Tuthill suspension system, and the unique devices to control the air bags produce separate leveling values on both sides when cornering. The cooling cap is certified by Cummins. The fuel tanks have been moved forward to counter-balance the engine weight. All hoses are color coded for easier servicing. And the chassis goes through an on-site Dynamometer test before it is released to the assembly line.

“One thing that separates TMH from our competition is that we continue to invest in and upgrade our technology. You can’t buy a Powerglide® chassis elsewhere. It is perfectly designed for our motorhomes and we have the on-site engineering ability to modify it whenever needed,” Tiffin said.

“This achievement points to the fact that we are here for the long-term and want to provide you with a good comfort level whenever you place an order with this company,” he said.

The general manager listed five keys to the success of Tiffin Motorhomes.

1. We have successful dealers. Our reps do a good job of selecting our dealer-partners.
2. We have great customer acceptance of our products and the company itself.
3. We have a successful product-brand

strategy. We do not try to cut up the market too much.

4. We have the ability in our production to adjust to market conditions. Tim Massey and Brad Witt have done a remarkable job managing our production line.
5. Challenges in the past have prepared us for today’s market conditions. I have talked to everybody at the plant to assure them we will be here for you. We have the resources to last this thing out. We will be back on a regular 5-day schedule soon.

### TMH President Addresses Dealers

Bob Tiffin suggested to the dealers five simple factors to assure that they and Tiffin Motorhomes will be here when the market improves.

1. Dan Blanke came up with a sales training plan that has benefitted TMH over and over again.
2. The market is never wrong.
3. Being wise is knowing you’re going down the wrong road again—and making adjustments en route.
4. There is nothing more important in this business than a satisfied customer.
5. We have to get from “here” to “there.” And when we get to “there,” we will all have a good time again.



Bob Tiffin

### Phil Ingrassia, RVDA, and Richard Coon, RVIA, Answered Dealers Questions\*

#### *How do you foresee the retail market for RV sales in 2009?*

COON: RVIA retains Dr. Richard Curtin at the University of Michigan for consultation and research on the recreational vehicle industry. Dr. Curtin expects the market to stabilize after the end of the first quarter next year, and then experience slow growth through the rest of the year. Travel trailers will be the first to come back. Motorhomes will start coming back toward the end of the year.

INGRASSIA: Inventories now are 207 days supply. A year ago we had 246 days supply. The best ever was 136 days supply in Fall of 2004. The good news is that inventories are not as high now as they were a year ago.

#### *What has our industry done to combat the rising cost of fuel?*

COON: Recreational vehicle owners as a group are a very small entity in the overall consumption of fuels. From 2002 to 2005 the moderately smooth increase of fuel prices did not impact the sale of recreational vehicles. In fact, the industry had record sales during those years. Then in 2007, prices shot up with huge monthly gains and the impact on sales was severe. All of us together use a small amount of fuel compared to 18-wheelers hauling year-round. Motorhomes on the average are on the road 26 days a year. As an organization, we do not have the financial or political clout to affect the market or Congress.

#### *What can you do to deal with parking and zoning issues that affect owners of RVs?*

INGRASSIA: We have an information and media kit for individuals or organizations to use in working with city councils, planning, and zoning boards. The suggestions in the kit have worked in other communities. Parking of recreational vehicles is a

*Continued on page 63*

\*Questions were selected for publication based on the interests of RIS readers.



# Bob Showalter *Renaissance Man*

by Fred Thompson

Bob Showalter's thirst for knowledge and new experiences is insatiable. He is a polymath, a renaissance man—and he drives an Allegro.

As a pilot he flies almost anything that rises above the ground. As an athlete he runs 10Ks, bikes 25 miles just for fun, and loves skiing and snowshoeing. Sailing, yes, that too. The arts: singing, acting, playing the guitar, and dancing. Avid pet owner: an African Grey parrot. Technology: amateur radio operator, builds transmitters. Teaching: studies the Bible at the level of Greek etymology and has taught adult classes at church and home Bible studies via television. Current project: learning sign language to be able to share aviation with deaf children. Age: 74.

Born in the small farming community of Rose Hill, Kansas, on the southeastern edge of Wichita, Bob grew up watching planes from the Cessna, Beechcraft, and Boeing factories sweep low over his father's cattle farm as the new aircraft were checked out. "I told myself time and again as I looked up to see those planes that one day I would be flying, too," Bob said as we began talking.

When the war broke out, the Showalter family moved into town. The old farm house had at one time been a granary and needed extensive repairs. "I rode my scooter to do a paper route every morning," he said. When Bob started to high school, his athletic bent kicked in and he made the baseball team as first baseman, and at 5' 8" was probably the shortest first baseman in Kansas. "I lettered three years and we won the Dodge City Invitational my sophomore and junior years. I still have my first baseman's glove," he recalled fondly.

He was off to Kansas State in 1952 and initially decided to major in geology. But the strong influence of aviation in Kansas and his fascination from childhood with those planes flying over his father's farm eventually caused him to move to the business school which had an aviation concentration in their curriculum.

With his credentials in hand, he got a job as a draftsman at Boeing working on the B-47. One day on the elevator, he met Gerda Eva Krupp. Not one to waste any time, Bob asked her to go to the Engineers Dance and she accepted. Gerda earned her degree from Kansas State in business and home economics.

Noting that both he and Gerda were of German ancestry, Bob

digressed into an interesting story. His name, Showalter, has been severely Anglicized over the several generations the family has been in America. It was originally Schoenwaldern in the Fatherland. Bob's grandfather remained a strict German family patriarch. When his grandchildren found a potential mate with deep German roots, he gave a "very good" nod of approval. Of course, there was no question about Bob's intended—Gerda Eva Krupp was about as German as one could be. Bob and Gerda married in 1955 and had two daughters: Diana and Janelle.

"I took my first paycheck at Boeing and went to a little grass airport called Rawdon Field to start working on my first pilot's license," he remembered. "I got my private pilot's license, airplane single engine land, VFR, and started logging hours whenever I could. My sister and mother were among my first passengers. It wasn't long before I had my IFR and my commercial pilot's licenses."

In 1956 Bob got his first pilot's job with Central Exploration Company, an outfit that used aerial surveys to do oil exploration. After several years with Central, he moved his family to Akron, Ohio, to fly for a company that made tire molds. That company eventually merged with Abex which had a considerably larger corporate fleet. By this time he had upgraded his license to Airline Transport Pilot. "I was the youngest corporate pilot in northeastern Ohio at that time," Bob said.

Abex's flying schedules allowed Showalter to do freelance

flying for other companies, giving him new contacts that would eventually advance his career. Abex continued to expand their fleet which now included jets. After training on the Israeli-built Westwind 1124, Lears, and the Falcon 50, Bob broke into international flying—again adding major points to his resume.

"In 1983 the Edward J. DeBartolo Corporation offered me a part-time position. At the time the company was one of the leading developers of shopping malls in the United States. DeBartolo also owned four racetracks, a hockey team, and the San Francisco 49ers," he related. "About the same time I began flying part-time for Saeca, a Venezuelan company. I had met one of their pilots when we were both doing check rides on the Westwind. They needed an English speaker in the cockpit when flying into U.S. airports and I could manage fairly well in Spanish, too. So it was a match."

Then things got a little complicated. Saeca offered Bob a full-time position. "When Mr. DeBartolo heard about that, he asked his director of flight operations to make me a better offer. It was sure nice being in demand. So in 1984 I went full-time with the DeBartolo Corporation and remained with them until I retired in 1999," he continued. "They started me on the Falcon 50 because of my international jet experience."

"They maintained a fleet of four planes that included a Lear, two Falcon 50s, and the Falcon 900. The job was sometimes demanding," Bob explained. "When I was on duty, from the time

someone in management phoned I had to have a plane ready to fly in 90 minutes."

"The majority of my flying was for the San Francisco 49ers. We flew the family to all of the NFL games. On one occasion we took the Falcon 900 to Tokyo via Anchorage for a pre-season exhibition game. It is a great plane with a 51,000-ft. ceiling. We cruised at Mach .87," Bob recalled. "I love to fly the weather. Coming out of a 200-foot ceiling with a half-mile of visibility and seeing the center of the runway in front of you—that's a great feeling, no way to really describe it. It's elation. We had the best equipment available. The airline pilots would sometimes come over to look at our cockpit and just shake their heads in amazement."

"One of my favorite flights was to and from Europe over the North Atlantic at night. We would often see the Aurora Borealis which is an unforgettable experience," he said with a wistful smile.

Showalter flew 16 years for the DeBartolo Corporation. "We had some challenging situations come up—but because we were well-trained and had the best equipment in the air, we were able to handle them safely," he said. "If I believed all the stuff you and I have seen in the movies about aviation, I probably never would have flown," he laughed. When Bob retired, the company had four planes and eight pilots. "I was the senior pilot and trained the new hires." At retirement, he had over 20,000 hours in fixed wing aircraft and he continues to add to his 750 hours in helicopters.



Bob Showalter at a fueling stop on Ohio's I-71 en route to an annual helicopter meet near Hillsboro.





Today Bob Showalter has a farm in Atwater, Ohio, where he has a landing strip and a hangar to store his two flying machines: a Robinson R-22 helicopter and a 1972 Ballanca Citabria **(1)**, a stunt plane he occasionally takes to air shows.

When I called for an appointment to do this story the third week of July, Bob had already scheduled an annual “Helicopter Meet” just south of Hillsboro. “No problem. Come to the meet,” he said without hesitation. “After you fly into Columbus, go southwest on I-71 to the Flying J and I’ll be there at 13:45 hours.” His ETA was perfect, but who could have missed an Allegro pulling a helicopter mounted securely on a trailer. As he positioned his coach for fueling, the gregarious former first baseman popped his head out the window and yelled, “You must be Fred Thompson.”

A few minutes later, best friend and fellow heli-pilot, Bob Lloyd, arrived in his 1994 Newmar. After lunch we spent the next hour navigating the rural roads of southwest Ohio in search of Homer Bell’s soybean farm and Air Ranch **(2)**—me in my Saturn following that trailer-bound R-22 that could have gotten us there much faster. The verdant fields of corn and soybeans suddenly parted to reveal two hangars, a home, a long row of motorhomes, lots of trailers, and 62 helicopters parked in a recently mowed field. Helicopter enthusiasts as far away as Australia, Norway, and Spain had converged at Homer’s place to spend three days of sharing, flying, and learning more about their hobby.



It took an hour for Bob and several friends to carefully unpack his R-22 and get it ready for him to fly it off the trailer **(3, 4)**. Shortly after that, I got a ride and photo opps with the doors off. For the next 24 hours I had more fun than a teenager at Six Flags.

After things quieted down a bit, Bob introduced me to Joe, his African Grey parrot. As Bob and I talked, Joe seemed to resent my presence by frequently squawking, “I’m here!” A little later Bob got out his guitar and put Joe on his shoulder **(5)** while he played and sang several ballads. Joe seemed appeased.

After attending this same meet two years ago, Bob stopped to call Gerda at a nearby parking lot as he left for home. After a brief conversation, Gerda called his name loudly and Bob heard her slump to the floor. She had suffered a massive heart attack. Nine months ago a friend gave Bob the African Grey and he has found Joe to be great company. “Good therapy,” he said.

I left on Friday afternoon to catch my flight to Nashville. A few days later Bob emailed to tell me about the results of the meet. “The event was a great success,” he said. “I made 24 flights. We flew to restaurants, Wal-Mart, Radio Shack, and to an RV place for a light bulb—real helicopter stuff.” I’m sure he was grinning when he keyed that last line. I could only imagine dozens of small helicopters landing on a field next to a Hillsboro restaurant.

Bob has developed so many skills and hobbies over the years that today he must plan and schedule his time to enjoy them all. Staying in good physical condition has always been a major priority. “In my forties I got interested in long distance running. I did two 6-milers, two 8-milers, and one 12-miler every week. I



ran the Marine Corps marathon and the Philadelphia marathon. I have won six 10K trophies in my age class,” he said. “Today I stay in shape by riding my bicycle. Last week I did a 27.5-mile ride. A great bike path has been opened on the old Erie-Ohio Canal Towpath between Akron and Cleveland. We stop at a farmers’ market for a break and finish the ride at the Winkin’ Lizard for beer and popcorn. Then we can ride the train back home,” he informed me, almost like a travel rep promoting the state. “In running and biking you find people with very positive attitudes. I don’t hang out with losers,” he laughed.

Showalter loves to deal with the forces of nature and turn the situations into exciting and exhilarating experiences. “I ran a glider operation near Akron in the 1960s. You get to take natural energy and harness it in the same way you do when you are sailing. It is a constant challenge to use the natural elements to sail from point to point. I have a 16-ft. sloop: one main sail and a jib. I am a day-sailer on Ohio’s inland lakes,” he said. “I also have enjoyed the opportunity to use my seaplane rating on the lakes.”

“Soaring in a sailplane **(6)** is a whole different world,” he said. “The skill is finding the thermal air columns to get your lift, then soaring and skipping to another column. There are so many facets to aviation. I have flown ultralights—you literally strap yourself to the flying machine. The air is swooshing by you. You’re not enclosed like you are in a sailplane.”

“At the beginning of my flying career when I was only 20, I owned a 1936 Meyers open cockpit bi-plane **(7)**. By the time I retired, I had graduated to a Falcon 900, a three-engine jet **(8)**. God is gracious,” Bob said humbly.

I said in the beginning that Bob Showalter is a renaissance man. Yes, there’s more. “I learned to downhill ski in my late thirties. If there’s no snow, I don’t like winter. You need a good reason to endure the cold,” he said. “We go to Peak-N-Peak in western New York. I do the Seniors Day and last year I skied with Judy who was 91 years young. At Boston Mills near Akron, the over-70 bunch ski free. I start early, ski until noon, and go home.” With one of his younger outdoor buddies, Bob enjoys snow shoeing deep snow on some of northern Ohio’s great winter trails. “We get deep into the national forests, camp and make hot soup, and come back the next day,” he said.

Showalter loves to share the outdoor life with others. “I am a Yamaha motorcycle ‘Learn-to-Ride’ instructor,” he disclosed. “Women are by far the best students. Men often have a macho attitude about learning and don’t listen that well,” he observed. He bought his Yamaha 650 after it had been wrecked with only 132 miles on it, and spent the winter rebuilding it in a hangar.

Yes, there’s still more. “In my late forties, I decided I wanted to learn to parachute. I was in a group class to start. Didn’t like that. So the next morning I handed the instructor a \$100 bill and said, ‘You’re mine for a day,’” he laughed. “We folded parachutes and went through emergency procedures three times. Then we went up and jumped together from 2,800 feet with a static line. After several more jumps with the old round chutes and landing at 20-feet per second, I got my fill. They didn’t have the rectangular





chutes then that you can steer and do a walk-in landing.”

Perhaps as a spinoff from his career in aviation, Bob’s fascination with electronics has led him into other useful hobbies and service to others. He is an amateur radio operator (WA8ZXF) and has built several rigs. After he obtained his license, his strong religious background led him to assist missionaries in patching their telephone traffic to relatives back home. That eventually led to an introduction to JAARS, Jungle Aviation and Radio Service, the transportation department for Wycliffe Bible Translators. Founded in 1942, WBT linguists study the heart (verbal) language of remote peoples and from that create a phonetic written language which tribespeople can learn and understand. The next step is to translate the Bible into their newly learned written language. “They become believers because they read it themselves and teach their children,” Bob explained. “It is marvelous to see the results that God’s Word produces in a heart uncontaminated by the religious politics of this world,” he said.

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Bob first became involved with JAARS to assist in pilot training. He built a transmitter designed for installation in the false bottom of a large gift basket. The basket was lowered from a plane as it was flown in a tight circle over the jungle village. Knowing what items in the basket the villagers were talking about, the linguists at Wycliffe began to decipher the words of their spoken language.

To later teach the people how to read their language, the translators had to get accepted by the tribe. Apprehensive tribesmen have been known to kill a translator.

Showalter and his wife and daughters accompanied the Wycliffe team on one occasion. “The chief invited us to his hut. Diana was walking along with him and he appeared to be fascinated by her long blond hair. Following protocol, the chief usually went in and out first. But this time he motioned for Diana to enter first. He accorded her an honor,” Bob related.

Sharing his knowledge and ability with others has been a lifelong practice that gives Bob great satisfaction. Two nephews, Chris and Tommy, wanted to learn amateur radio from their uncle. “I told them if they would study and get their general license, I would build them each a rig,” he said. “They took me up on the offer and I delivered. Today, they have their master’s degrees in electrical engineering. Chris was on the R&D team that developed the smart missile. Tommy is also involved in the U.S. missile program.”

Bob loves to sing and karaoke really fits his style. “A couple of times each month one of my buddies and I hit the karaoke bars and have a great time,” he said. “Once we were in a karaoke place where they were doing line dancing. A lady 25 years my junior came over and asked me to dance,” he continued. “I told her I couldn’t line dance but I would be glad to teach her ballroom dancing. She took me up on my offer and she’s really a great dancer. Once a week we go dancing—just for the fun of it—and we often get compliments on our skills.” It wouldn’t surprise me a bit to see Bob Showalter on *Dancing with the Stars*.

Oh, we’re not through yet. He’s in community theatre. “I had the part of the mayor in the stage play, *Inherit the Wind*,” he said. I really wasn’t surprised. By this time I knew there was an extrovert in that small frame. And we won’t even get into the model railroading layout in his basement. But you should know about the last paragraph in his email last week.

“I like to share my interest in aviation with others. It has been a rewarding career and a lifelong interest for me. I still get the same pleasure now 54 years later as I did when I took my first flying lesson. I hope to share aviation with a group of deaf children soon. The school I attended to take sign language lessons wants to bring them to the farm. I am excited about it.” I would have expected that.

If you happen to be traveling on I-70 early this fall, you may see an Allegro headed for Kansas pulling a trailer loaded with an R-22 helicopter. “I have a sister plus nieces and nephews to take for a helicopter ride,” he smiled. “I find life interesting and love living it.” RIS

DEALER PROFILE

Continued from page 56

in July, Jim Elliott does not expect a miracle recovery of the market in the next 12 months. “Some of the smartest minds in this country are dealing with the current market conditions and laying strategies for a recovery. There may be quite a few dealers who will not survive, but we are prepared,” he said. “I was not surprised by this market. We have been planning for these conditions for six years. Most of us did not think it would happen this fast. We expected to reduce our inventories and staffing levels by 25 percent,” he continued. “I made choices in February that many dealers are not making until now. We haven’t seen the total impact yet of the ‘down market’ conditions.”

“We’ve been there before, but things are different now,” he reflected. “Consumer debt is in the trillions. Oil prices have fallen recently, but are still far too high to allow a true recovery

to begin forming. We are going to see a purification of dealers and manufacturers,” he believes. “The towables market has not been impacted as much as the motorized market. I don’t see the Class A market recovering in less than 18 months. This is a time that requires fortitude and dedication to stay in this business. I’m not taking any time off. I arrive first in the morning and leave last in the evening. I don’t know how many of our dealers are prepared for this kind of shift.”

“Ken and I like this business. We like the ups and downs, the challenge of the fight. It’s never boring. We are in the business because we love the RV lifestyle and the people we meet,” Elliott said passionately. “This business gets in your bones; it personifies the entrepreneurial spirit. It’s like a sporting event. When the game is on the line, I want the ball!” RIS

2008 NATIONAL DEALERS MEETING

Continued from page 57

very local issue, and outside organizations like RVDA will have very little influence.

**What do you see as the most important issue for dealers to focus on today?**

COON: Very few dealers keep their eyes on what their customers want. For example, parking is a big problem for RV owners. They go out and buy an RV and then find out they can’t park it in their driveway. Dealers should come up with a place for customers to park their RVs. The younger generation (35 and younger) is our fastest-growing group. Most of them don’t know how to fix anything. Dealers should build a concierge program. You provide parking, wash and clean it, and get it ready for the next trip when he calls. You will make more money parking them

than you will fixing them! I am currently working on a program with the National Park Service to provide a storage facility near the entrance of a national park. Owners will use the RV in the park and leave it there when they go home. It’s a very “green” program and NPS seems to like it.

You need to improve your service on the back end of the sale. Once you sign the papers to sell an RV, it’s the beginning of the sale, not the end. Think of everything you can do for that customer to keep him coming back. It costs far more to get a new customer than it does to keep an old one coming back.

Concurrently, you will need to develop a different strategy to market to the 50+ group. There are 11,000 people turning 50 every day. They will use their RVs differently than the 35+ group. RIS



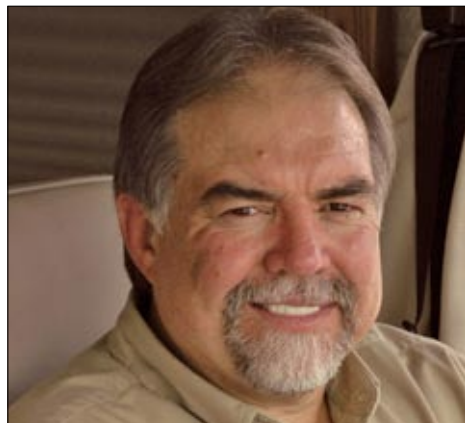
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## Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, 32-year veteran with Tiffin Motorhomes, invites your questions.

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

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

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

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

### Dear Danny . . .

I would like to know if Tiffin is planning on building smaller motorhomes like the Class C you built several years ago. We are getting up in age and want to continue traveling, but we don't need such a large unit. A compact, light weight RV would be fine for us, especially if we could get by without towing a car. We are now on our second Allegro Bay, after having three other brands. We like the concept that one company has of a slide-out through the back cap for a bed plus a galley/LR slide.

We really enjoy the *Roughing It Smoothly* magazine and it keeps getting better.

Jerry Begue  
Slidell, Louisiana

Dear Jerry,  
Tiffin's marketing department has several new ideas and concepts under consideration for a more fuel efficient and smaller motorhome, but one that still offers most of the features that our owners want. It is a challenging task in light of our current economic climate, but we are working on it— but not ready to announce anything yet.

We always enjoy this section of *Roughing It Smoothly*. We have a cleaning problem. Our coach has venetian blinds on the galley and bathroom windows. How do we get these down to clean them? The one in the galley has picked up oils normally found in a cooking area.

Kerry & Sharon Layton  
Rapid City, South Dakota

Dear Kerry & Sharon,  
The aluminum encasement for the mechanism that raises and lowers the venetian blinds is held in place on each end by a clear plastic cube open on one end to receive the encasement. Another side of the cube is hinged and can be lifted to allow the encasement to be removed. However, the latch that holds it in is very stiff and tight and will be difficult to open in the confined area under the valance. My advice is to get a blinds brush and a long tray or baking pan and wash the blinds in place with dish washing detergent.



Mounting cube for venetian blind

We own a 2005 Allegro Bus and have a problem with the 12v water pump. The pump light will intermittently flash on/off as we go down the road. Sometimes the pump will not shut off and at other times it will not turn on. Once while

underway in the rain, it worked perfectly. Another time I could make the switch light go on/off by jumping up/down on the living room floor. We stopped in Red Bay last Spring. The repair consisted of replacing a module where several wires terminate plus cleaning and checking all of the connections at the on/off pump switches. When we left, it seemed to be working, but now we have the same problem.

Ron Schleder  
Iowa City, Iowa

Dear Ron,  
It could be the module again creating the problem, but it is more likely a loose ground wire. First, check the ground wire at the module board. It is more than likely the module board is faulty. But it also could be a loose connection at the back of the module board or at the water pump. The module board is located in the utility bay on the back side of the panel that presents all of the utility connections.

We have a 2008 Allegro Bay 37QDB with the FRED chassis. We love the coach except for the cockpit noise. When the weather is hot, we hear the noise coming from the cooler fans. The noise is not unbearable, but can anything be done post-sale to dampen it? We didn't notice the noise so much until we started driving in this hot Texas summer. When do these fans engage? I enjoy your column in each magazine.

James Dixon  
Fairview, Texas

Dear James,  
The 2008 units have the 340-hp engines and are a little more noisy just because of the extra power. The fan noise you hear is the clutch fan engaging. Once the engine reaches a certain temperature, the clutch fan engages and turns at a higher RPM to reduce the temperature more quickly. There is not a lot more we can do to reduce the noise without damaging the cosmetic appearance of the cockpit.

On my 2001 Allegro Bus, the Onan generator will start up on its own, usually at night while parked. I was told by Onan people that the cause is moisture. Any help on how to stop this problem will be appreciated.

Clarence Kelly  
Pearl, Mississippi

Dear Clarence,  
The generator switch uses a ground to activate starting and stopping the unit. If moisture is

introduced it can cause a grounding problem that will start or stop the generator. You have to be certain that the circuit board and the wiring harness going to the dash switch is sealed so that water and moisture cannot penetrate into the wiring.

We have a 1998 Allegro Bay, the third Allegro we have owned. The windshield is allowing outside air to enter as we drive. Apparently the seal is not tight enough to keep the breeze out. Is there a product we can use to seal this gap? Or should we take it to a dealer or to Red Bay for repair?

Bill & Joanne Giddens  
Franklin, Tennessee

Dear Bill & Joanne,  
The Tiffin Service Center uses SIMSON ISR 70-08 adhesive. Google the name to locate a retailer for the adhesive. Removing and regluing a windshield is a non-trivial job. If the gasket is loose where it attaches to the fiberglass body, then lift the gasket with a smooth plastic or fiberglass rod and insert the adhesive with a caulking gun. The excess glue cleans up with soapy water and denatured alcohol will clean up any residual. If you have any problems or questions, call 256-356-0261, x3175, and ask to speak with David Hester. Franklin is a three-hour drive from Red Bay. If you have difficulty making the repair, bring the coach to the Service Center and let one of our specialists take care of it.

We purchased a new 2006 Allegro. Every year the cords in the day-night shades fray and break, and that requires us to go to our dealer to have them restrung. On the last repair, we had to wait three weeks to get the repair completed. I suggest Tiffin Motorhomes look into installing more reliable window treatments. The next time the shade cords break, we will install our own.

Norma Ulmer  
Georgetown, Kentucky

Dear Norma,  
In our 2009 models we are installing roller shades and privacy shades at each window. Eliminating the cords offers a much more reliable functionality. See Moog letter, page 67.

We recently purchased a 2008 Allegro Open Road. We love the coach except for one small problem. We take our four grandchildren on short trips and they usually sleep two on the sofa bed and two on the dinette which used to make down into a bed in our earlier motorhome. The table in this model will not lay down flat. It has hinges

next to the wall to lower the table top even with the seats, but trim that retains the seat cushions in place also holds the table top up at an angle. We asked our dealer about this and he told us that the dinette was not designed to be used as a bed. Can this problem be corrected?

Nita Fogg  
Pearl River, Louisiana

Dear Nita,  
Remove the seat cushions. The forward edge of each bench has a 2 × 4 which is held in place with two dowels. Lift the 2 × 4s up and remove them and the table top will fit flush with the bench. The seat cushions when pressed tightly in place will fill the area and make a nice bed.

I have a 2004 Allegro 32BA. I am considering putting in a flat screen TV to replace the Panasonic that came with the coach. I can't figure out how to remove the Panasonic. I see two screws on the bottom, but how do I remove the wood trim on the front so I can slide it out?

Larry Wegner  
Clinton, Michigan

Dear Larry,  
Open the doors to the two cabinets on either side of the TV box and you will find two screws that attach the front trim ring to the television box. Remove them and it will release the trim ring.

In a recent issue, you answered questions about keeping batteries charged. I keep our 2006 Allegro Bus plugged in to 30 amps at its own shed. I also run an extension cord to a "battery minder" attached to the batteries. Is this an OK practice? What is the best way? You are Tiffin's best asset. Thanks for all the time you put in providing information to owners.

Steve Ecton  
Heber Springs, Arkansas

Dear Steve,  
It is not necessary to hook the Battery Minder to the house batteries if you are leaving it connected to the 30-amps. Hooking the Minder to your engine batteries will keep them properly trickle charged.

We own a 2003 Allegro 29OA. Two years ago on a very rough stretch of interstate, I hit what appeared to be a badly patched pothole. Immediately the entire coach began to shake violently. Vibration like that caused by a badly out-of-balance tire is nowhere near what we experienced. The shaking continued until I brought the coach

to a complete stop. The steering felt light but sluggish, as if the tires may have been bouncing. An inspection on the side of the expressway did not reveal any damage. We headed for the next exit a mile away and the coach rode and handled normally. When we got home, our local dealer could find nothing wrong. My husband reasoned that the chassis and suspension may have been shocked into harmonic resonance. It felt as though the entire chassis was twisting and torquing. The amplitude and the severity of the vibrations did not halt until the coach came to a complete stop.

We did not have any problems on further trips until this Spring. The second time it happened I was accelerating after exiting a tight interchange and probably was driving about 50 mph. Again we were driving on a rough road, but we had driven on other rough road over the last two years and the phenomenon did not occur.

Do you think our self-diagnosis is correct or do you have any other explanation? Have you ever heard of this happening to anyone else? We haven't. Could this be something unique to the Ford chassis with the 178-inch wheelbase and what, if anything, could be done to prevent it?

We are considering replacing the coach to get a different floorplan. We like the Ford V10 otherwise, but we are wondering now if it is the right choice. We did not know how to bring this to the attention of Ford's engineers, but thought you would know.

James & Adele Hoelscher  
Rochester, New York

Dear James & Adele,  
This is the first time I have heard of the problem you are describing. I want to run your story in this column to see if other owners have had the same experience. Readers, let us hear from you.

We bought a new 2005 Phaeton 40-ft. in November 2004. It is very satisfactory. We had a 36-ft. Allegro Bus before that. We have been very pleased with Tiffin. Their products and service are tops. There are two things we would like to have changed. Is it possible to get a white background instrument panel? The black panel is very difficult for me to see. Secondly, my wife would like to have a door for the under-the-bed storage compartment, as it is too hard for her to lift. Can the service center make a modification?

We have only been back to the factory one time for minor repairs. Every other question and repair has been handled by phone with no problems. There is nothing like a Tiffin coach!

Keith Maxwell  
Cleburne, Texas



Dear Keith,  
The chassis manufacturer supplies the gauges which are used on the Phaeton. You can get after-market gauges like you are describing, but the cost will likely be substantial. Silverleaf makes an electronic dash which is easy to view in both daylight and dark, but it is also quite expensive.  
The Tiffin Service Center can create a door to access the under-bed storage without having to lift the bed. Contact Wade Humphres at Service Center to make an appointment. 256-356-0261.

I have a 2008 40QSH Phaeton. The 2009 Phaeton features a much-needed forward location for the transmission shifter pad. As you know, mine is set way back on the console and is hard to see while driving. My guess is that both years use the same wire bundling. If so, is it feasible to switch to the new configuration and get the 2009 console? As for driving our new Phaeton after motor-homing for 20 years, it is a delight with power, comfort, and surprisingly good fuel economy.

Rick Bouckhout  
Scottsdale, Arizona

Dear Rick,  
The technician who makes the conversion will have to accommodate changes in the lengths of the wiring that reaches different points on the two opposing consoles, as well as convert several switches which were changed on the 2009 console. Even one mistake could cause you great difficulty. If you decide to do the conversion, make sure that your new console is thoroughly tested before you take it on a trip.

Regarding our 2008 Phaeton QTH, we are very satisfied with this unit, except for one very major item, the transmission shifter pad. I have had two near serious situations with the location of the shifter pad “Not visible to view selector position.” Can the 2009 shifter pad and console switch module be installed in our unit?

Ernie Daviduck  
Lacombe, Alberta, Canada

Dear Ernie,  
Yes, it can, but a significant amount of wiring will have to be extended and altered.

We purchased our 2007 Phaeton in San Bernardino, CA, from LaMesa RV. We just returned from Wyoming. One continuing problem is that the coach batteries go down after two days when camping, even though plugged into a campground 30- or 50-amp. This was “declared” fixed

on two occasions but has plagued us from the purchase and continues today. My question is, just what is supposed to keep the house batteries up when we are plugged in? The four house batteries are shot!

On a separate note, while in Cheyenne, we had the two chassis batteries replaced by a CAT dealer. Couldn’t get the motorhome started, even with help from the auto club! The starting batteries were shot! Alternator is fine. Something wrong here? Please respond.

W.A. MacMillan  
Homeland, CA

Dear Mr. MacMillan,  
When plugged into shore power or running your generator, the house batteries are charged with a converter built into the inverter. The engine batteries are charged only by the alternator while the engine is running. This also charges the house batteries. Without an on-site technical analysis, it would be impossible for me to say why both house and chassis batteries failed and had to be replaced.

We love our 2005 Allegro, but we hate getting only 8 mpg. We do not tow and generally maintain an average speed of 60 mph on highways. We understand Tiffin Motorhomes does not make the engines, but we believe motorhome manufacturers may collectively have the leverage to demand much more fuel efficient engines. Such engines exist in Europe, in national park busses, and in some city bus systems. What is TMH doing to get improved engines into production?

Jim Rawlins  
Bigflow, Arkansas

Dear Jim,  
Now that Tiffin Motorhomes is building its own chassis, we have the latitude to consider different engines. We hope to find new options that will give our customers a cost-value choice that makes sense.

In 2002 I purchased a new Zephyr from La Mesa RV in San Diego. You guys build a great product. Your literature indicates this coach has a 150-gallon fuel tank. I have never been able to pump more than 75 gallons starting from what appears to be empty on my fuel gauge. Is this accurate and your literature has a misprint?

Billy Graves  
Los Angeles, California

Dear Billy,  
The Zephyr as well as the Allegro Bus comes standard with a 150-gallon fuel tank. Your situation

points to a problem with the fuel gauge. You should take your coach to a Spartan-recommended service center. Call 800-543-4277 for information. They will either repair or replace the fuel gauge.

My Allegro Bay (like most Allegros) has two TVs (living area and bedroom). I understand that I will need a converter after February to watch television. Will I need two converters or can I hook up one between the antenna and the switchbox? If not, where should they be hooked up?

Tom Cambron  
Hendersonville, Tennessee

Dear Tom,  
If you buy one converter and place it between the antenna and switchbox, viewers using both TVs simultaneously will have to watch the same program. Buying two converters and placing one on each TV will allow different programming on the two TVs.

I own a 2008 35TSB Allegro Bay. I was told everything in the coach was wired for high definition and to contact DirecTV for service. The DirecTV service tech told me that the King Dome could not be used for high definition service because it could only receive three satellites and that high def reception requires five satellites. He also insisted that high def service should not be used on a motorhome because the dish set-up would be too critical. Please advise.

Wayne Hempel  
Saugerties, New York

Dear Wayne,  
The service tech with whom you spoke is totally misinformed. We suggest you contact his competitor or find another DirecTV service tech who has been trained on the King Dome receiver. Our owners successfully use the King Dome receiver for HD reception, and it is the only brand we used on the 2008 Tiffin motorhomes.

I have a 1992 Allegro Bay 28-ft. Do you know where I can buy a 13-inch flat screen AC/DC TV to replace the old one that is mounted in the center console just above the engine cover? I do not have an inverter.

David C. Naumann  
Enterprise, AL

Dear David,  
We have not seen a 13-inch flat screen that works off of 12v/110v. You will have to add a 300-watt inverter for the 110v power. You may have to

modify the framing to get another brand to fit in the center console area. Best Buy or a catalog store should be able to find this size TV for you.

I own a 1988 27-ft. Allegro that is giving me generator problems. When I plug into power, my air conditioner operates normally. However, when I try to run the air conditioner off the generator, it will not work. It will provide power for lights, but not air. I plan to do some dry camping this year and will need the generator. Can you tell me what to do to correct this problem?

Craig W. Brown  
Arnold, MO

Dear Craig,  
Check the breaker on the generator and be sure you have power coming out of the generator. Next have a certified technician check the automatic changeover box to see if it is operating properly. The changeover box connects the generator power cord and the shore power to make the automatic flip between power sources. This is most likely the source of your problem and requires dealer assistance to fix it.

We own a 2003 Allegro Bus. We love it! We expect to be in Red Bay this summer. Our toilet bowl has yellow water marks. The well water on our property has lots of iron. We were there for three months and that’s when the yellow marks began showing up. Any suggestions on how to remove them?

Jim & Bonnie Yates  
Picayune, Mississippi

Dear Jim & Bonnie,  
SeaLand (Dometic) markets a product called Toilet Bowl Cleaner. The Tiffin Service Center uses it for removing stains without harming rubber seals and plastic parts. It is made specifically for RV and marine toilets. Every stain can have different chemicals in it, but hopefully this product will work in your situation.

I have a 2004 37DB on a 2003 gasoline Workhorse chassis. From day one, a couple of times a year while driving down the road, the gas gauge will drop to Empty, sound the low-fuel chime, and immediately return to normal. Also a couple of times a year, the ABS warning light will come on and stay on through several on/off cycles, but go out before I can get it to a repair shop for a read-out. Because of other problems, the in-tank fuel pump and the instrument cluster have been replaced. The Master Brake cylinder was replaced in 2005 and I had brakes and rotors replaced in

2007. Any thoughts on the cause of these two concerns?

Ned Fenton, III  
Salamanca, NY

Dear Ned,  
The problem is likely in the Workhorse electrical controls which are built into your chassis. Intermittent problems, as you have noted, are very difficult to track down and fix. The ABS sensor could be a moisture problem with it going on and off. The fuel gauge misreading temporarily may be a loose connection on the sending unit inside the gas tank.

Our 36-ft. Phaeton will run both air conditioners and the microwave, but the toaster oven and a space heater are not possible. What are we doing wrong?

Henry and Mary Nugteren  
La Jolla, CA

Dear Henry and Mary,  
Both the AC and the microwave are on 20-amp breakers. According to the RVIA electrical code, the 110v outlets in the motorhome have to be on 15-amp breakers. If both these appliances are plugged into outlets on the same circuit, it will trip the breaker. Try connecting the two items to outlets on different circuits.

I have a 1989 Allegro 31-ft. motorhome. I am the second owner. I have a little over 80,000 miles. The problem is this: The lower panels on each side have rusted (or whatever aluminum does). Do you know what would cause this to happen?

Do you have sheets of aluminum like what is on there? Also, do you have spray cans of paint that I can use to redo the aluminum, and the white paint for touch-up?

Dick Dennis  
Franklin, IN

Dear Dick,  
The aluminum deterioration is called electrolysis. Most of the time this is caused by road salt getting between the aluminum siding and the steel framing and producing electrolysis. We do have aluminum sheeting for replacement. The repair can be done at much less expense here at the Tiffin Service Center rather than having rolls of aluminum crated and shipped to your location. We do not have small cans of spray paint available.

Our coach is a 2008 Phaeton 36QSH with Michelin 275/80R 22.5 LRH XZA3 tires. The sticker on

the tire shows recommended cold inflation tire pressure for front and rear at 110 psi. When you cross-reference these pressures with the Michelin inflation chart, you would calculate the front at 13,360 pounds and the rear at 24,660 pounds, for a total weight of 38,020 pounds on a 32,000 pound chassis. Why does Tiffin’s recommended PSI differ so much from Michelin’s?

Jerry Evans  
Harvest, Alabama

Dear Jerry,  
TMH cannot take into account all of the variable weights for each owner’s coach. The 110 psi is a pretty safe constant. After you have weighed your coach, follow the Michelin charts for the best inflation based on your coach’s weight.

I have just purchased a 2008 Phaeton. We would like to tow my wife’s 2005 Toyota Sienna Limited. This is front wheel drive, automatic. I do not want to use a tow dolly nor a trailer. What are your recommendations on towing this car. We plan on going full-time and will need a car. Please advise me in the right way to go. There seem to be a lot of different choices.

Jim and Nancy Tayfel  
Edgewater, Florida

Dear Jim and Nancy,  
Because there are so many different choices for towing and modifying, I do not attempt to specialize in offering this kind of advice. *MotorHome* magazine publishes a supplement each year on towing which will provide you with the information you need.

For a 2004 Allegro 32 BA, the strings or cords of more than half of the window shades have broken. How do we get them repaired? Thanks for your help.

Gordon and Beverly Moog  
Nine Mile Falls, Washington

Dear Gordon and Beverly,  
Ship the window shades via UPS to the attention of Wade Umphres at the Tiffin Service Center, 1402 Seventh St. SW, Red Bay, AL 35582. Put heavy rubber bands around the shades in the “up” position and enclose a cover letter detailing what you want done. Include a contact phone number.

I have a 2001 31-foot Allegro with the V10 engine. I had the cooling system flushed at about 20,000 miles, and now at 33,000 miles. I have never had any problems until now. I lose about 3/4-inch



coolant from the reservoir every 100 miles. I took the unit back to the Ford dealer who checked pressure and all hoses, and said it was OK. They also said there were no air pockets in the system. Your help please. Thanks.

Tom Tully  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Dear Tom,  
This is a subtle problem that is going to manifest itself in the future with obvious clues. Your Ford dealer made all of the correct checks. Watch the situation closely and keep records of what happens.

We have an '05 Phaeton. We do love ours. However, I am wondering if Tiffin could customize one to our needs? If we gave specific things we wanted, etc. We have looked at others, but like Tiffin the best. There's just some things that would help us be more comfortable.

Kim Dugdale  
Choudrant, Louisiana

Dear Kim,  
We cannot customize in a production line environment if it interferes with the schedule of the line moving at each interval. However, there are some things we can do that might not interfere. You will have to be more specific with your requests. You can call Tiffin's sales department for more information.

I have a Phaeton 35 DH that I bought new in August '05. When the motorhome is closed up without the air conditioner on, the formaldehyde fumes are overpowering. They are not noticeable when the air conditioner is on. With all I've heard about formaldehyde fumes, is this a health hazard?

Larry Bordelon  
Keithville, Louisiana

Dear Larry,  
I am referring you to an article that appeared in *RV Trade Digest* about formaldehyde in recreational vehicles. With regard to your Phaeton, ventilation is the key to dissipating the very small

percentage of formaldehyde that remains in the glue after it is used to assemble the motorhome. Read the article and see what you think: <http://www.rvtradedigest.com/interactive/2007/09/25/the-formaldehyde-fuss/>

Our 2003 40-foot Phaeton was purchased new. Now having over 85,000 miles on it, with surviving cross country plus two months touring Alaska and the Yukon, I have a question.

Do you ever clean out the vents the AC blows through? Does dust collect inside throughout the unit? We had an extreme amount of "silt" collect even in our closets and especially underneath storage.

Needless to say, I believe if dust collected in those areas, then how about it clinging inside the ventilation system. Would it be wise to have it blown out? The air gets so dry sometimes my throat hurts. Now having been full-timers for one year with two dogs, a cat and a bird, I'm very concerned as they shed constantly.

I'm a true ambassador for Bob Tiffin and his product. I've driven RVs over 30 years. This one is the best. Where should my concerns now navigate toward with this many miles? Thanks to everyone in Red Bay who have made us part of the family.

Annette Ruhmann  
Pasadena, Maryland

P.S. Our coach was featured in several catalogs: FMCA, Trailer Life, and Lazy Days for several months this year. I'm so proud of it. Oh yeah, Bud, my husband, doesn't do any of the driving. Lots of tales to tell—later!

Dear Annette,  
If you feel like there may be debris in the duct work that was left over from the manufacturing process, then blow it out with pressurized air one time. After that you should only need to wash the filters on a regular basis. We are glad you are enjoying your coach, and thanks for all the good words about TMH. Word-of-mouth is the best advertising Tiffin can get. As for your next coach, the new Phaeton still is the best-selling Diesel

Pusher because it's the best price-value unit on the market.

When I plug my 2006 Phaeton into a 20-amp outlet, with GFCI ground fault capability, the circuit always trips at the shore power service outlet. I have determined that tripping occurs only when the Xantrex (Model Freedom 458) inverter is turned to "on." What are the types of things that can cause the GFCI to trip? Could my coach be improperly wired? I can stop the tripping if I use an adaptor with the ground prong removed - but isn't that unsafe?

Wayne Kunze  
Rochester, Michigan

Dear Wayne,  
Somewhere in the ground fault system, the neutral and the ground wire are making contact. This could be inside one of the appliances and possibly in one of the plugs. There should not be any danger to you with this happening, but the problem can be traced down with time and equipment.

## Reader Response

Thanks for your answer to my 6-volt battery problem of water level. I am checking the water level more often. My converter is putting out about 13.5 volts but I notice that after being plugged into shore power for two to three days, the batteries bubble a lot and I have to add distilled water. My question is: What can you tell me about the Lifeline brand lead acid batteries which are deep cycle and come in a 6-volt version for motorhomes. Will this type of battery last longer than a regular acid type?

Dwight Caler  
Capshaw, Alabama

Dear Dwight,  
We have not used the Lifeline battery in any of our coaches and have not tested it in R&D. Thank you for calling our attention to this product. We will try to look into the possibilities it offers.

## LET US HEAR FROM YOU

"Serious Tech Talk" is a very important section of *Roughing It Smoothly* in which information sharing flows in both directions. Please continue to send your questions to Danny Inman on the enclosed postcard. A separate postcard is enclosed for "From the Road," a fun part of the magazine for readers to share their motorhoming experiences. If you choose to email us at: [fredthompson1941@hotmail.com](mailto:fredthompson1941@hotmail.com), be sure to put "RIS From the Road" in the subject line of your email. If your communication requires an entire letter, mail it to us at: PO Box 292912, Tampa, FL 33687-2912. Share with us the interesting places you've been, an unusual experience, a great destination, or just a good place to camp and hang out. "From the Road" contributors will receive a free *Roughing It Smoothly* T-shirt. What's your size?

—Fred Thompson, editor

On May 31, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. we kicked off our annual Tiffin Motorhomes company picnic. This annual event is sponsored and paid for by the Tiffin family, along with contributions from select vendors, in appreciation for the hard work and dedication of Tiffin Motorhomes employees and their families. The picnic was held this year at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in Tusculumbia, Alabama.

The picnic provides entertainment for all ages. For the kids this included jumpolines, a paddle boat ride, a climbing rock and clowns making balloons and providing face paintings. For the adults there were displays of the antique cars of employees and vendors as well as three new motorhomes opened for the employees and their families to tour. Providing musical entertainment were two live bands performing different styles of music and composed entirely of Tiffin employees.

What would a picnic be without plenty of food and drinks? This year employees were treated to a delicious meal consisting of BBQ pork, fried chicken fingers and several side items. Also provided were snow cones and roasted peanuts. A steady stream of people were offered their choice of vanilla, strawberry or chocolate ice cream homemade on the picnic grounds. Coca-Cola generously provided an ample supply of soft drinks and water for the event.

For the second year the picnic ended with a choreographed fireworks show performed by Pyro Shows. This incredible fireworks display awed the crowd just as it did in the previous year.

Tiffin Motorhomes would like to take this opportunity to thank the vendors who donated their time and supplies, including Coca-Cola, Onan, Suntrust Bank, Scott Lovelace and Harold Kimbrough as well as our valued employees and their families that worked to make this company picnic a great success. **RIS**

by Amanda Hester







# FROM THE ROAD

## The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

### My Escape Vehicle

My granddaughter had to write an essay about a “learning experience in her life” as part of her college application. Until then I did not realize how much my Allegro meant to my grandchildren. It hurt to have to sell the motorhome, but I plan to replace it as soon as I can — for my other 13 grandchildren.

— Marilyn Christel, Northport, New York

### Stephanie’s essay:

The thought of her selling it mortified me. My grandma’s old motorhome had practically become my “summer house.” Some kids had summer homes on the East End or down in North Carolina and I had a 15-year-old motorhome way past its prime, but I loved every moment in it.

Over the years I had come to discover every inch, every nook and cranny, and knew exactly where everything was: the playing cards, beach chairs, and especially the Hershey’s chocolate for s’mores. It had given me so many special memories, and I didn’t want the memories to go away with it.

*Allegro*, the decaled name on the faded brown and orange-striped side, taught me something no person could ever have taught me: the beauty and grandeur of nature. It had taken me across thousands of miles of coast, desert lands, and cities, and I cherish the memories I have from each and every adventure I took in it. When I was nine, my parents and “Meemo” took me on a cross-country trip in *Allegro*. We saw so many gorgeous places, such as Mount Rushmore and Yellowstone, and each was so mind boggling that I would stay up late every night we were traveling, open the blinds, and stare at everything going past, while trying to take in as much as a nine year old possibly could. Those memories are some of my most precious, and that old motorhome made it all possible.

It’s also my escape vehicle. Every year it took me to Montauk, New York—my perfect world. Traveling to Montauk is a family tradition which I intend to keep with my children. Montauk is my haven of water, shopping, sun, and sand. It is there that I can have the time of my life no matter who goes with me or what I end up doing. There I can be completely myself and totally unwind.

That motorhome was also the memory of my grandpa, and as my “Meemo” told me that she was selling it, images of him flooded my head. That old *Allegro* motorhome was one of the few places I could truly remember him, and I didn’t want to give that up. It was terrifying to think I might forget how he acted or what he sounded like.

Now that *Allegro* has been gone for over a year, I still have those memories. They haven’t become dulled or lost their worth. On the contrary, they have become worth more. I think about at least one of the adventures it has led me on almost

daily now and losing it has turned into a learning experience for me. Change, as I have come to realize, can be a good thing and make you a stronger person. *Allegro* is still teaching me lessons, lessons that will last much longer than I ever thought possible.

— Stephanie Christel

[Editor’s note: If you are a grandparent, and this story didn’t bring tears to your eyes, you had better check your pulse. Thanks, Stephanie, for making us grandparents (and parents) realize what great life experiences we can give our grandchildren (and children) through traveling and camping together in our motorhomes—no matter how old or new they are.]



Stephanie at 9 looking forward to the family’s cross-country trip in her beloved *Allegro*.

### Great Places to Visit or Stay Awhile

- While in the El Paso area, I found the best park since I have owned an RV (11 years). The park is located at exit 6 on I-10 in Canutillo, Texas. Gaslight Square Mobile Estates has paved patios with full hook-ups (50-amp), cable TV for \$20/night. Excellent showers, large rec hall with pool. Many shade trees.

— Dwight Caler, Capshaw, Alabama

- Zephyr Cove RV Park at the south end of Lake Tahoe is a great year-round park. In winter we enjoyed great skiing and casino night life plus snowmobiling in the mountains. In summer there is hiking, fishing, and other great outdoor activities. Reservations are required in summer. A local bus stops at all of the attractions (bus stop across the street). The Fourth of July fireworks are fantastic. Never crowded.

— Roy Crabb, Show Low, Arizona

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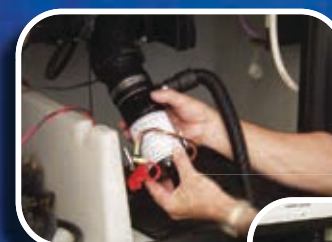
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## The Millers Take Their Grandsons Fishing in the High Sierras

We took our three grandsons (ages 9, 5, and 4) to the High Sierras in our 2002 Zephyr to catch some trout. The water was really too low on Rock Creek at Tom's Place, so we drove farther north to Walker. The fishing was great and the boys had a ball learning

to fish (and Papa had a great time teaching them). The oldest, Kody, fished right by Papa and caught just as many as he did. The mountain scenery made the trip all the more enjoyable.

— Roy and Bertha Miller, Ontario, California



Papa demonstrates his technique to the boys.



Kody, 9, has his gear ready to go for the day's expedition.



Parker, 5, with his big catch.



Christian, 4, "I caught one too!"

## A Minor Disability Leads to a New Lifestyle

I am 45 and I have a minor heart problem that put me on full disability from my work as an airline captain with Continental Airlines. I have a farmer Mom & Dad in Nebraska who have never been out of the state. I also have a new bride for the first time, Beth. I have seen everything on this earth from the air. Now I want to see it from the ground with the family in my 42-ft. 2008 Phaeton. My Mom has MS so I bought a car caddy to pull their handicap mini-van and bought a fold-up wheel chair ramp for the front door. Our first trip was to the Black Hills and around South Dakota to see family we had not seen in 20 years. 5 nights, 6 days. A HUGE SUCCESS!

— Mike Thompson, Greenfield, Indiana

Each contributor to "From the Road" will receive a *Roughing It Smoothly* T-shirt. Please be sure to indicate on your card or letter your size: Medium, Large, or Extra Large. We are looking forward to receiving a landslide of responses. Space is limited, so mail early!

## Those Treacherous Yellowstone Mountain Passes

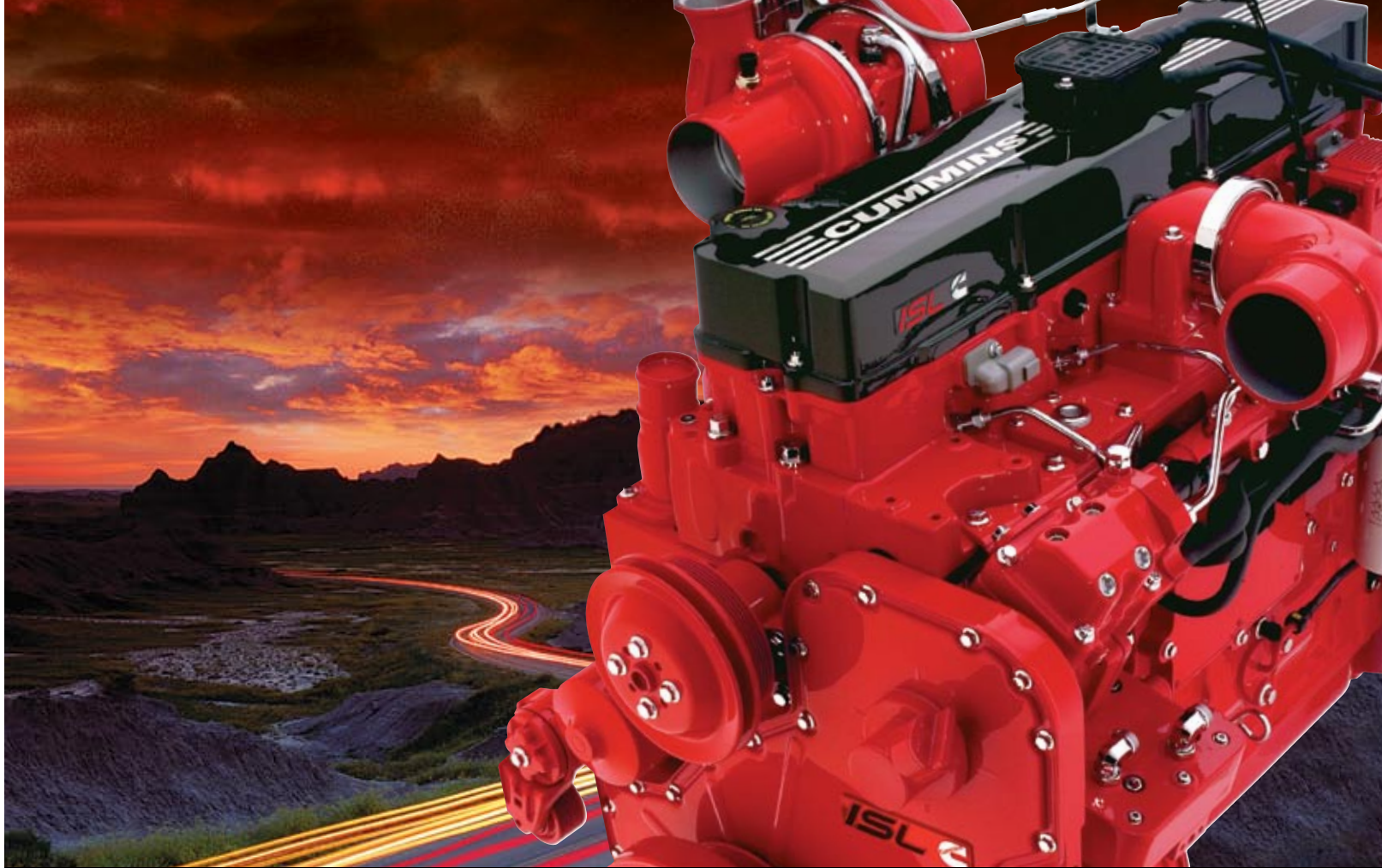
I enjoyed Norm Spray's story on "Yellowstone." I have traveled this area and would like to offer a few suggestions. The North-east Entrance via Hwy. 212 includes going over Beartooth Pass (elev. 10,947 ft.), if you don't know better. I have taken my 28-ft. Allegro over the pass in both directions — very carefully. I would not recommend any RV longer than 32 ft. attempting this pass. At the top, turns are tight forcing you to the edges. An alternate is Chief Joseph Hwy. 296/120 to Cody, Wyoming from 212.

Beartooth is not the highest pass we have tried. But at the top (if it is plowed free of snow by July), it is the most beautiful. It has the tightest and narrowest turns. Lanes are 8' 6" wide at the most, so passing even a Class C or B means someone has to stop!

The map of the park itself is good. The Bridge Bay Marina is the closest to a full service RV park, but it does not have pull-throughs and other amenities. Still, if you can't have fun here, then don't come West!

— Al Bender, Sandy, Utah

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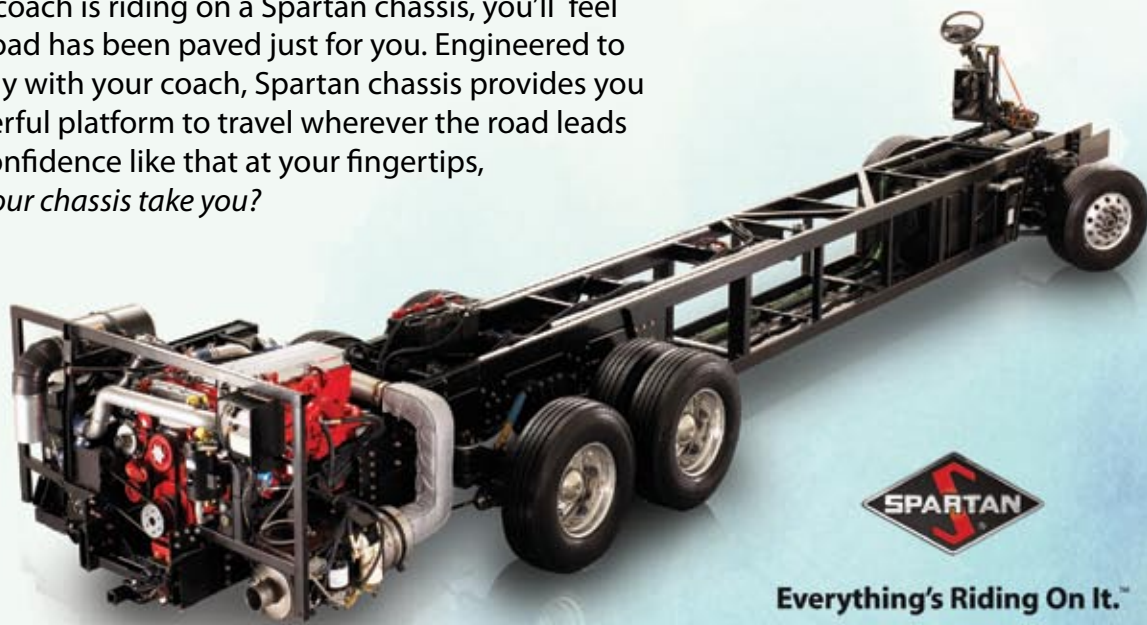
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