

Roughing It Smoothly®

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- Lex Tiffin & Quality Assurance
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Raising the Bar

Most motorhome manufacturers today offer service at their plants *only* on warranty work. They expect their dealers to handle all non-warranty repair and service problems.

With forethought and planning, Tiffin Motorhomes has taken a different approach. Although we want our dealers to develop the expertise to repair and service our coaches since they are usually closer to you, we take pride in the policy that we service anything we have ever built.

Why such a policy? Because we build our coaches to last for a lifetime of service. You paid good money for your motorhome and we'll fix it as long as you want to drive it. When you decide you want to upgrade to a new coach, we will be here to serve you. Our name is on every motorhome we have ever built, and the Tiffin name stands for solid quality and service.

As many of you know who have been to Red Bay for service, our present service facilities were originally designed for manufacturing. Lord willing, in 2005 that's going to change. On the property adjacent to the Allegro Campground, we are in the process of building a new service facility designed exclusively for that purpose. We believe it will be ready for use by early summer.

The new building will have 40 service bays, each designed to handle specific types of service problems. Following our present policy, owners will receive a service num-

ber when they check into the campground unless they made a service appointment at an earlier date. As the service number comes up in the rotation, the coach will be moved from the campground into an adjacent service bay. In most cases, the coach will be returned to the campground for evening use by the owner. When it takes



Bob Tiffin

several days to complete the required service, this method will make the process as convenient as possible.

Our service planners are also looking at the possibility of doing mobile service within the campground area like we do at rallies. If this approach materializes, we will be able to take care of minor service problems quickly and have you on your way.

To take care of paint problems, we will have two 20 x 60 OSHA-approved paint booths. The quality of work performed here will equal that done in the new Belmont painting plant.

J.C. and Kyle Blackburn will move from the current service shops and develop full electrical, mechanical, and diagnosing shops in the new service facility. Brent Bullard, Steve Brown, and Johnny Hill will open a new service welding shop. Dennis Scott will operate his own cabinet shop and have the equipment to address any repair problem presented to us. There will also be a shop to handle repairs to solid surface countertops. We are bringing some of our top level experienced technicians to provide our customers with the

best possible service in this new facility.

We also will offer small tire balancing up to 19.5 inches, chassis and coach electrical work, shock absorber repair on both gas and diesel models, and generator service for changing fluids and diagnosing problems.

We are designing a very comfortable customer lounge that will offer a television viewing room, a reading room, and a lunch area with vending machines. Of course, there are restaurants nearby and in downtown Red Bay. Dog owners will have a nice mowed grassy area along the pipeline to walk their pets. There will also be an unattended leash area.

While offering a complete service facility, I have always maintained that it is very important for the owner to stay with his motorhome during the repair process for three reasons:

- (1) he knows exactly how he wants his motorhome repaired;
- (2) when questions arise, the owner is right there to help our techs get it right;
- (3) the customer can approve the job as it is in progress.

The last item is very important because we sometimes get into a repair project and find that mid-course corrections need to be made to the repair plans. If the owner is nearby, he can participate in and approve the changes being made.

We understand that owners have business or personal interests and cannot always remain with their coaches. In such cases, the coach can be left in a secure fenced location and will be repaired in the sequenced service rotation. Following the owners written instructions, a customer advocate will oversee the work being performed and contact the owner if questions arise. But the owner will always be better satisfied if he can stay with the coach during repairs.

The Parts Department will be moved a new building adjacent to the 40-bay repair facility. The department will have a new order fulfillment system to serve both dealers and owners. A new phone system is being designed just for the parts and service department.

Continued on page 32

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RVDA Quality Circle Award

FOR THE SIXTH TIME IN EIGHT YEARS, Tiffin Motorhomes received the top award given by the Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association.

Three Class A motorhome manufacturers and five trailer manufacturers earned the coveted *Quality Circle Award* out of a total field of 35 who received enough dealer responses to participate in the competition.

The three Class A manufacturers were Tiffin Motorhomes, Winnebago Industries, and Newmar Motorhomes. The companies were ranked in 21 categories by 503 dealers who participated in the extensive survey.

Tiffin Motorhomes earned a first, sec-

ond, or third place ranking in 18 out of 21 categories considered by the dealers. The survey ranked the top manufacturers by the total percentage of votes received in each category. The other two Class A coach manufacturers earned top three rankings six and three times respectively out of the 21 categories.

Tiffin earned First Place slots in

- (1) Reasonable/Timely Warranty Policies/Payment;
- (2) Top Management Accessibility; and
- (3) Quality Sales Support and Training

In receiving the award for the company, Bob Tiffin, president and CEO of Tiffin

Motorhomes, said, "Our sales staff, sales support team, service-parts department, quality assurance and product design teams worked diligently throughout the year to earn this award. They deserve all the credit. We are fortunate to have so many dedicated people in this company."

Low Interest Rates Continue to Spur Class A Sales

Today's relatively low interest rates are continuing to boost Class A motorhome sales by making purchasing a very attractive option. That's a real bonus to consumers, experts say, along with the tax advantages of RV ownership.

Financial institutions across the country are also offering flexible payment plans to meet buyers' needs. This has made it easier to purchase an RV because loan terms are being extended to make monthly payment more affordable, according to a survey by the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association.

Loan terms for both new and used large coaches now extend up to 15 or 18 years. Whether the purchase is financed through a bank, savings and loan, finance company, credit union, or RV dealer, the average minimum down payment is 12 percent for motorhomes.

Lenders consider RVers to be reliable buyers. Less than 1.3 percent of all RV loans are delinquent.

Financing an RV purchase can be a smarter choice than tapping into savings

Continued on page 8



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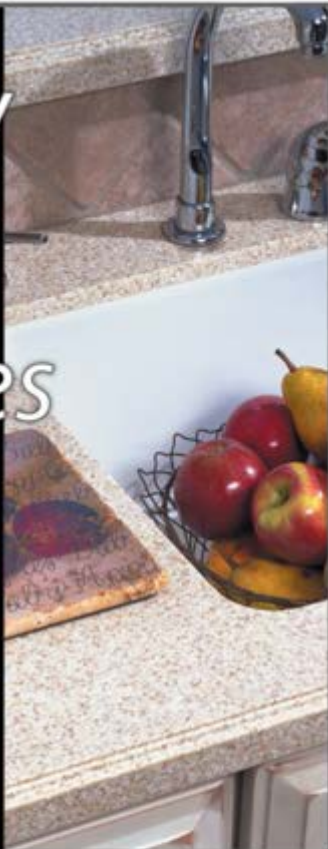
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or cashing in assets to pay cash, experts advise. This option offers more economic flexibility, allowing the owner to invest his money and obtain returns greater than the cost of financing. Because RV loans are now offered for longer periods that yield lower monthly payments, financing may allow the consumer to buy a larger RV than might have been expected.

For the majority of RV buyers, the interest on the loan is deductible as second home mortgage interest. To qualify, interest expense deductions on the RV must exceed the taxpayer's standard deduction. In addition, the RV must:

- Be used as security for the loan.
- Be rented out less than 15 days per year.
- Have basic sleeping, toilet, and cooking facilities.

The IRS publishes two booklets with helpful information regarding the tax deductibility of RV loan interest. Call 800-829-3676 and ask for Publications 936 and 523.

Motorhomes are specialized vehicles with unique insurance needs. Coverage on furnishings, fixtures, appliances, and personal items are among the many differences between regular automobile insurance and RV insurance. Insuring for depreciated value and replacement value is another major issue. Insurers who specialize in motorhomes will provide the best coverage and insurance with the lowest premium costs.

Freightliner Offers Multiple Module Data Computer on XC Chassis

Freightliner Custom Chassis Corporation is now providing as standard equipment on its XC Chassis a Multiple Module Data Computer (MMDC) with a liquid crystal display that mounts in the dash. The system offers the driver a trip computer, diagnostics, and chassis information.

Using the chassis' standard wiring system, the computer takes data from the engine control module, the transmission control unit, and the ABS electronic control unit and distributes it to gauges, warning lights and buzzers, and displays it in a double tier lighted array positioned just above the gauges.

The Info Center displays text messages and graphics to communicate real-time information to the driver about the status and performance of the vehicle. Freightliner is the first chassis maker to offer the MMDC as standard equipment.

REPORTING SAFETY DEFECTS

If you believe that your motorhome has a defect which could cause a crash or could cause injury or death, you should immediately inform the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in addition to notifying Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc., at 256-356-8661.

If NHTSA receives similar complaints, it may open an investigation, and if it find that a safety defect exists in a group of vehicles, it may order a recall and remedy campaign. However, NHTSA cannot become involved in individual problems between you, your dealer, or Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc.

To contact NHTSA, you may either call the Auto Safety Hotline toll-free at 800-424-9393 (or 202-366-0123 in the Washington, DC area) or write to:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
United States Department of Transportation
Washington, DC 20590

You can also obtain other information about motor vehicle safety from the Hotline.

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All the Bells & Whistles In a 35-foot Diesel

The Phaeton 35DH

by Fred Thompson

Planning to move up to a diesel, but the eight-foot jump from your 32-ft. gas burner to a 40-footer sounds like too much of a stretch? But you really *would* like the extra kick and confidence that you get in a diesel?

Tiffin engineers are listening! The new Phaeton 35DH which went into production in late November offers all the features of the longer diesel coaches in a more compact version. Teaming up with Freightliner Custom Chassis Corporation, Tiffin is of-

fering this Phaeton with a CAT C7 350-hp powerplant, air bag suspension, air brakes with automatic slack adjusters, ABS, and an industry-leading 50-degree wheel cut in the steering system.

The 35DH is one of five floorplans currently offered in Tiffin's Phaeton series, the most popular of its diesel brands. The 35's two slides are both on the streetside with the stated purpose of creating a larger outdoor entertainment area under the curbside awning, uninterrupted by slideouts. By minimizing



With the slide out adding 35 square feet to the living area, the Phaeton 35DH offers comfortable quarters to its owners. As in all Tiffin motorhomes, quality-

built cabinets are apparent as soon as you enter the coach. Rich carpet and Armstrong simulated plank flooring complement the room.

the length, Tiffin has created a full-featured diesel that will still meet the restrictions of most of our state parks.

Just a quick overview: The forward living room in the 35DH has a 12-ft. 4-in. slideout that houses the dinette and 74-in. sofa. Opposite the sofa on the curbside wall is a leather recliner with a handy wall-mounted folding table. Facing the dinette on the curbside, the galley including the standard 4-door refrigerator is nearly 10-ft. in length. The interior width of the coach is 96 inches.

The walk-through bath provides a shower curbside and a separately enclosed lavatory streetside. A feature offered on all Tiffin diesels, the second lavatory has been retained on the 35DH and is conveniently located in the corner just as you enter the bedroom. The bedroom slide is 76.5-in. wide and 23-in. deep. Tiffin offers the full 60 × 80-inch queen bed with innerspring mattress as standard. The buyer can option the pillow-top mattress, an addition that we found delightfully comfortable.

The coach has a GVWR of 29,410 lbs. With a trailer hitch capacity of 10,000, the GCWR is 39,410 lbs. With a UVW of 23,790 lbs., the CCC is approximately 4,500 lbs., after figuring in two passengers, 75 gallons of water, and an 80% full LP tank.

First Impressions

The first thing you will notice on a walk-around of this coach is the incredibly beautiful full body paint job. After Tiffin opened its new 113,000 SF painting plant last May, the perfection of the finishes took a quantum leap forward. The identical paint designs are offered in three color schemes: Titanium Pearl, Forest Rose, and Sunlit Sand. The flow of the lines almost make the coach appear to be in motion, even when sitting still. We were very pleased with the Sunlit Sand on our test coach and received several compliments on it when we stopped evenings at campgrounds. The exterior components (sidewalls, front and rear caps, domed fiberglass roof) are flawlessly joined.

The basement storage compartment doors supported by gas struts are easily opened but fit tightly into the frame when closed. The paint designs blend perfectly over the door joints as if they were not there. While the basement's capacity obviously isn't as large as a 40-ft. coach, it will serve the needs of any couple who aren't planning to hit all the flea markets! It should be pointed out that the standard raised rail chassis adds significant pass-through storage capacity. All basement storage compartments are lighted and heated. An optional sliding tray optimized easy access to basement storage.

On the streetside, the utilities cabinet is lighted and neatly arranged. With concealed outlets, the compartment can be closed and locked after hookups are completed. The adjacent 50-amp service is similarly designed. Just under the driver's window, an exterior compartment houses the very competently designed and labeled fuse box. Curbside at the rear you will find the compartments for the coach/engine batteries and the control panel for the fully computerized automatic leveling HWH hydraulic jacks. The front cap conceals the 7.5 Kw Onan Generator which has a manual slideout.

The standard automatic patio awning adds immediate extra value to this coach with an "outside room" that will be in constant use. An optional automatic door awning will protect the interior floors during rainy weather. Awnings over the slideouts are standard equipment.



PETER FINGER



PETER FINGER

(Top) With the captain's and passenger's chairs rotated, seating in the living room is increased to six with the added benefit of a game area. (Above) The cook will enjoy preparing meals on the Gibraltar hard-surface countertops. The stainless steel sink and double door refrigerator are standard equipment. (Below) The Phaeton 35DH powered by the CAT C7 350 moved effortlessly through the Mississippi Piedmont and the hills of Tennessee, shown below crossing the Tennessee River on the Natchez Trace.



PETER FINGER

The Interior

Tiffin added a touch of class to the Phaeton not usually found on entry-level diesels when it made the Flexsteel Ultra Leather 6-Way Power Driver and Passenger Seats standard equipment. The passenger seat also has an elevated leg rest. In this coach, optional Ultra Leather was chosen for the 74-in. Magic Bed sofa in the slideout and the curbside recliner chair. While the entry landing has Armstrong simulated plank flooring, the living room floor is covered with a rich, beige carpet.

But perhaps the first feature you will notice is the 7-ft. ceiling height. It is amazing how much the additional four inches has added to the interior spaciousness of the 2004 diesels. Plus, in the Phaeton, the soft-touch vinyl is standard.

The living room slideout is an architectural engineering marvel. The carpeted 12-ft. 4-in. unit houses the sofa and dinette, adding 35 SF to the living area. The length of the slide is fitted with six overhead cabinets and recessed reading lamps

The lavatory enclosure is attractively appointed with a single-mold hard-surface counter and bowl with single lever faucet, a triple mirror medicine cabinet, vanity with magazine rack, cabinet and drawer, plus a vitreous china toilet.

over the sofa. An attractive double-lamp fixture over the dinette plus designer window treatments complete the interior design. With convenient phone and electrical outlets under the edge, the hard surface dinette table can be used as an office. The seats have storage drawers underneath. The slide has two five-foot sliding windows on the outside wall plus windows in both ends. All windows in the coach are dual pane, a standard Tiffin feature on this coach that adds to the heating-cooling efficiency and deadens unwelcome noise from the campground.

Living room seating is increased by two when you rotate the driver's and passenger's seats 180 degrees. The passenger's seat also positions opposite the reclining chair, with the folding table in between for a game or a snack tray while you catch the news on the 24-inch wide-screen, flat-panel television over the dash. The living area occupants will enjoy surround-sound stereo from the in-dash radio-CD player or the standard 5-disc changer in the electronics cabinet. A DVD player, also in the electronics cabinet, and a 6-disc in-dash CD player are optional, but the VCR player is standard equipment. This coach was equipped with an optional King Dome automatic satellite receiver. Just like a home system, you subscribe to your choice of service with monthly or annual payments.

The well-equipped galley features a side-by-side refrigerator with ice maker and raised panel hardwood doors to match the cabinets. There is ample space on the Gibraltar hard surface counters for food preparation as well as small appliances. All countertops in wet areas throughout the coach have color-coordinated hard-surface backsplashes. A standard microwave/convection oven is positioned over a three-burner LP stove with a large double-door storage cabinet underneath for pots and pans. Adjacent is an under-counter sliding pantry with multiple shelves. The cabinet housing the double stainless steel sink turns into the room at a 45-degree angle, providing additional counter space for storage containers behind the chrome single-lever faucet with extendable sprayer. With a double-door storage area under the sink next to a stack of three drawers for kitchen items, plus five overhead cabinets, Tiffin provides this galley with ample storage. Both the sink and the stove have laser-cut hard surface covers. Our cook added accent throw rugs to the attractive plank flooring in the galley. If only our kitchen at home had been designed so efficiently!

The walk-through bath area can quickly be converted into a private compartment with front and aft sliding doors. The 41-in. shower stall on the curbside has built-in shelves and natural lighting from a skydome. The enclosure is completed with translucent rainglass. Separately enclosed, the toilet features a Gibraltar single-mold countertop and lavatory and a vitreous china toilet. A panel at counter level controls the pump, water heater, overhead power vent, and lighting. Mirrors with designer lighting conceal a medicine cabinet the width of the room. All of the bath area in this coach has the standard Armstrong plank flooring.

In the bedroom, the decor is beautifully coordinated with the comforter, headboard, throw pillows, two reading lights, and window treatments. The queen bed moves out 23 inches within the 76-in. wide slideout and features handy night stands with drawers, plus ample walking space on all three sides of



PETER FINGER

the bed. Small windows in the sides of the slideout allow cross ventilation, while four overhead cabinets provide generous and unobtrusive storage space. As with all the Phaeton floorplans, the rear of the coach has a six-foot wide closet with full-length mirrors on the double sliding doors.

The curbside rear corner has a floor-to-ceiling cabinet which the owner can option for a washer-dryer or generous additional storage. The 20-in. flat panel television faces the queen bed and is connected to the VCR system in the living room. Two ceiling speakers bring the stereo system to the rear compartment. Under the curbside bedroom window, a cabinet with hard-surface countertop offers two large storage drawers and a deep tip-out clothes hamper. The second lavatory in the bedroom is accented with decorator lighting, a mirrored medicine cabinet, and a storage compartment with three stacked drawers under the hard-surface countertop.

Driving the 35DH

If you feel comfortable at the controls of a large SUV, you will have no difficulty handling this coach. Taking advantage of the 50-degree wheel cut and the 208-in. wheelbase, you can make a 180-degree turn in a radius of only 55 feet.

The first thing you will notice when you get this coach on the road is the enormous one-piece picture window that you and your traveling mate are enjoying. We used to call this a windshield! With the curvature, it literally measures 106 inches wide by 53 inches high. To further enhance the view, the wipers are mounted horizontally to keep them out of sight when not in use. In addition to your view of the world in front of you, the split sideview heated mirrors with interior controls and the rear-view dash-mounted monitor give you a high confidence level in dealing with traffic on all sides of the coach. The array of dashboard instruments provide separate gauges for RPM, odometer and speed, volts, fuel, oil pressure, engine temp, and front/rear air pressure for the air bag suspension system. A two-level multi-color array across the top will alert you to any system problems.

The adjoining panel to the left contains the generator ignition, an information center, mirror controls, and the two-speed wiper switch with an intermittent control and sprayer. The adjoining right panel presents the stereo radio system, a CD player, the automotive heating and AC, and two 12-volt outlets for accessories. The cruise control is a standard GM device located in the directional signal lever on the steering column.

A well-designed lighted panel of switches along the sidewall provides the driver with features to enhance the operation of the coach. Left to right in rows are the exhaust brake, the adjustable control, and auxiliary start; step cover, radio, and left / right powered sun visors; map light, docking lights; ICC Flasher, and left and right windshield fans. The passenger seat also has controls to activate the step cover, map light, and sun visor.

The sidewall bank also houses the 6-speed Allison transmission control that offers standard and economy modes of operation, and the HWH computerized leveling system. You need not concern yourself with lowering each jack individually. One button does it all.

As you crank the CAT, you are aware of the quiet, gentle hum of the engine in its muffled box over 30 feet behind you. Punching the "D" will give you the smooth, powerful acceleration en-



PETER FINGER

A second convenience lavatory faces into the bedroom and connects to a chest of drawers with a tip-out laundry hamper.

gineered into this coach by mating the Freightliner chassis with the 350-horse diesel. After thirty minutes in this coach, you may forget there are other options.

Most of the miles on this test run were driven in the Piedmont regions of Alabama and Mississippi. In the 350 miles of Interstate driving, the coach cruised effortlessly at 70 MPH and 2,000 RPM and still had the power to compete with 18-wheelers when necessary. The 14.5-ton weight of this coach eliminates swaying when changing lanes or being passed by truck drivers who were ignoring the speed limit. Acceleration from ramp to full Interstate speed takes approximately 35 seconds.

With a blend of travel in mind, we logged approximately 600 miles on rural roads. At 55 MPH, the engine speed dropped to approximately 1,500 RPM. In hill country on an estimated four percent grade, we started the quarter-mile run at 65 MPH at 1,950 RPM and topped the hill at 62 MPH. I wanted to try the Chattanooga-Montevalle run on Interstate 24, but it was just too far away. When I did make occasional use of the exhaust brake, pedal braking was almost unnecessary.

Cornering at reasonable speed on the highway and in traffic was flat, producing very little body roll. Braking was always straight-line and effective. Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters and ABS are standard on the Phaeton.

Summing Up

The new Phaeton 35DH will serve a well-planned niche in the Tiffin's line-up of diesel coaches. As intended by Tiffin's management and engineering teams, the 35DH will make the transition from gas to diesel an easy one for those who have been RVing for several years. However, most first-time buyers will not find this motorhome intimidating. It is a fine choice for those who are looking for a full-featured diesel coach in a shorter overall length. It is easy to back it into the smaller spaces offered in many state and national parks, and you can still hit the road with the confidence and power of a diesel.

SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2005 Phaeton 35DH, Double Slide Base MSRP* \$181,440 (Calif. delivery) MSRP as tested with options \$196,903

STANDARD FEATURES

Structural:

Raised rail chassis frame
Steel/aluminum reinforced structure
Automated leveling jacks
Double electric step, frame welded

Exterior:
Large tinted one-piece windshield
Laminated floor, sidewall, & roof
Fiberglass front & rear caps
Gel-coat fiberglass walls
Domed fiberglass roof
¼-inch dual pane windows
Single handle, lockable storage latches
Exterior flip-up storage doors with gas struts

Automotive:

Caterpillar CJ 350-hp diesel engine
Allison 3000 MH 6-speed automatic transmission with lock-up
Air ride (4 bags)
Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters
ABS brakes
Cruise control
Goodyear tires
Emergency start switch
Exhaust brake

General:
Dual fuel fills (100-gallon tank)
Fog lights
7.5 Kw Onan manual slideout generator
Heated power mirrors w/remote adjustment
Single motor intermittent wipers
Entrance door with screen door and deadbolt
Exterior patio light
Automatic patio awning
Slideout awnings
Wheel liners
Mud flap
Lighted storage bays
Docking lights
Heated water & holding tank compartments
Two 6v chassis batteries
2000 watt inverter with 100 amp converter & transfer switching + four 6v house batteries
Park telephone ready
Cable ready TV
Black tank flush system
110v exterior receptacle
110v/12v converter
Undercoating
TV & CB antennas

Power Fan-Tastic roof vent with 3-speed fan
Two 15,000 BTU high profile roof AC with heat pump
One 42,000 BTU ducted furnace
AC condensation drains
Roof ladder
Backup camera and monitor
Water filter
Flexsteel UltraLeather power driver and passenger seats with foot rest
Manual sun screens on driver & passenger windows
Windshield privacy curtain
Automotive padded dash
Dual dash fans
Snack/beverage tray with drawer
Step switch and 12v disconnect switch
12v dash receptacles
Single CD player AM/FM stereo
One 24" flat screen color TV
One 20" flat screen color TV
VCR
Fire extinguisher
Cloth Easy-Bed sofa
Booth dinette with laminate table top and solid surface edging
Solid surface countertops with stainless steel sink
Solid surface sink and stove covers
Single lever sink faucet with pull-out sprayer
Convection/Microwave oven
Side-by-side refrigerator with ice maker
Medicine cabinet with vanity lights
Solid surface vanity top and bowl
Fiberglass molded tub or shower
Rain glass shower door and enclosure
Skylight in shower
China toilet
Wardrobe with mirror sliding doors
Bed comforter with throw pillows
Bed slide with built-in storage
Innerspring mattress
Night stands
Carbon monoxide detector
LPG leak detector
Chest of drawers with laundry hamper
7-foot ceilings
Soft touch vinyl ceiling
Armstrong® plank flooring in kitchen, bath, and landing

Carpeting with Scotchgard® in bedroom and driver's compartment
Raised panel hardwood cabinet doors
Oak cabinetry simulated
Treated carpet and fabrics
Day/Night pleated shades
12v fluorescent lights
Home Theatre Sound System
Power roof vents with 3-speed fans
Tank level monitor system
Smoke detector
10-gal gas/electric water heater
Air-driven step well cover

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Sunlit Sand full body paint
Automatic satellite system
Automatic door awning
Exterior slide tray
Chrome mirrors
Power sun visors
Prep washer/dryer cabinet
Leather recliner w/table
Leather Magic Bed
Fan-Tastic roof vent
Pillowtop mattress
King size bed (not offered now)

OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Spotlight
Manual door awning
Window awning package
Aluminum wheels
Hadley air horns
Semi-automatic satellite dish
Cell phone antenna
6-disc CD changer - in dash
Computer navigational system
Ultra Leather EZ Bed sofa
Cloth Magic Bed
Cloth Hide-a-Bed
Ultra Leather Hide-a-Bed
Free standing dinette w/laminate table top, solid surface edging, & built-in cabinet
Natural maple cabinetry (simulated)
Walnut cabinetry (simulated)
Ceramic tile flooring in kitchen, bath, and entrance landing
Washer/Dryer
Central vacuum cleaner

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase - 208"
Overall Length (approx.) - 35'6"
Overall Height w/roof air - 12'7"
Interior Height - 83"
Overall Width - 101"
Interior Width - 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR - 29,410 lb.
GAWR (front) - 10,410 lb.
GAWR (rear) - 19,000 lb.
GCWR - 39,410 lb.
UVW - 22,855 lb.
Trailer hitch capacity - 10,000 lb.

POWER TRAIN

Engine - 350 hp
Torque (Lbs.-Ft., max. net) - 860@1440 rpm
Transmission - Allison 3000 MH 6-speed automatic transmission with Lock-up
Tire Size - 275/80R 22.5
Alternator (amps) - 130

CHASSIS

Frame - Freightliner
Brakes - Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters; ABS brakes
Suspension (front and rear) - Neway airbags
Leveling jacks - HWH automatic hydraulic leveling jacks

CONSTRUCTION

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

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Sleeps - Four adults
Fuel tank - 100 gal.
Fresh water - 90 gal.
Black water - 45 gal.
Grey water - 70 gal.
LPG tank (filled to 80% capacity) - 35.7 gal.

MSRP

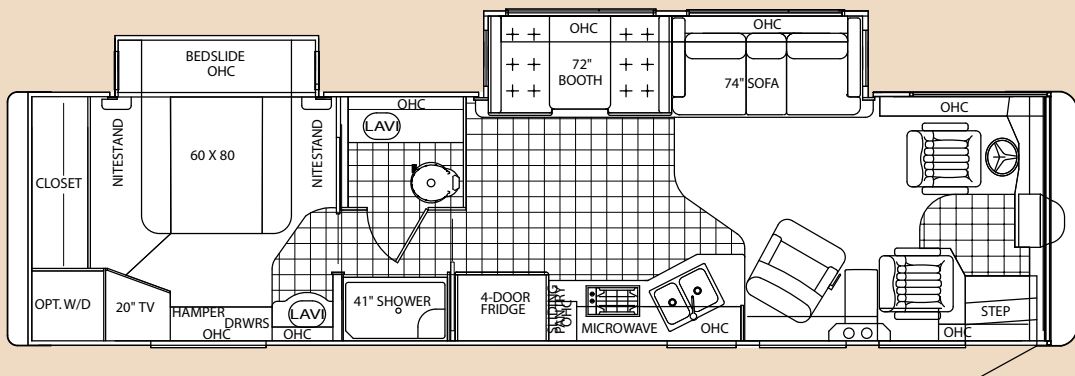
MSRP is the manufacturer's suggested retail price and does not include dealer prep or options. Manufacturer reserves the right to change or discontinue models offered, standard features, optional equipment, and prices without prior notice. Dealer prices may vary.

DEALERS

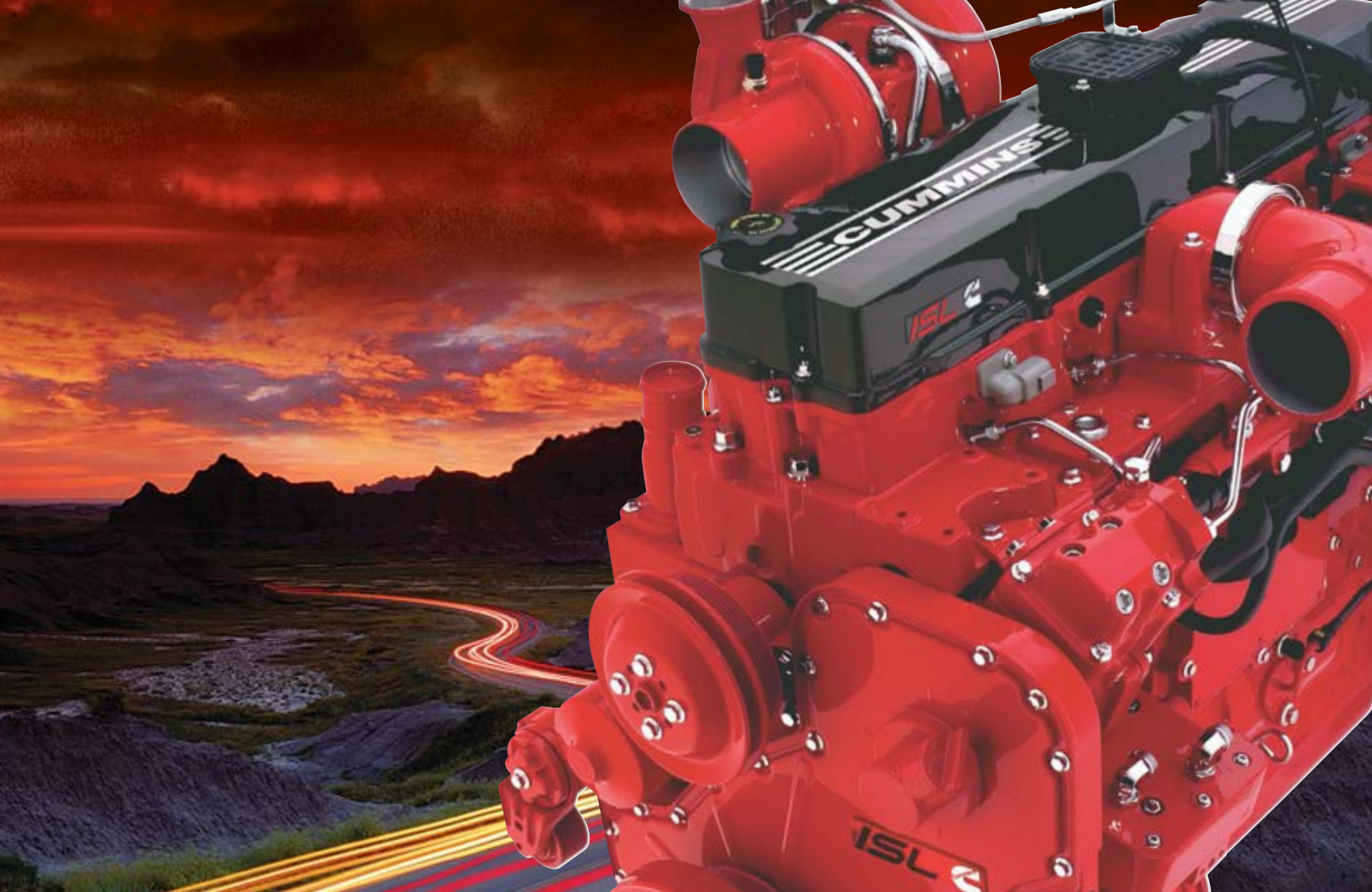
To locate the Tiffin dealer nearest you, go to www.tiffinmotorhomes.com and click on "dealer locator." If internet access is not available, call 256-356-8661 and ask the operator for the Tiffin dealer location nearest to you.

PLEASE NOTE

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



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Lex Tiffin – Mr. Quality Assurance

by Fred Thompson

LEX TIFFIN BROUGHT a new dimension to motorhome production management at Tiffin when he organized the Quality Assurance Department in January 1998.

Usually referred to in most manufacturing plants as “quality control,” the word assurance to Lex means “we’re gonna get it right.”

“Quality is something you build into the product every step of the way,” he explains. “It’s not something you add on at the end of the assembly line. Everybody involved – employees on the assembly line and in the sub-assembly shops, plus our outside suppliers – must understand that building it right every time is the only way!”

“There has probably never been a perfect motorhome built – by Tiffin Motorhomes or anyone else. But perfection is what we focus on,” the young executive expounded. “We know that less than perfect probably produces two results: the owner is not pleased when he finds a flaw, and it’s going to cost us more to fix it later.”

“So that’s what motivates us: happy customers and lower costs by doing it right the first time,” he smiled knowingly. “We’re gittin pretty good at it, too.” That soft-spoken Southern drawl is rooted at least six generations deep in northwest Alabama. It not only reflects patience but also the good listening skills required to get to the bottom of a problem and fix it.

In developing the Quality Assurance Department, Lex has four team members in the assembly plant, one in the welding shop, one in after-assembly, and four in the new painting plant at Belmont, Miss.



Lex sometimes makes on-line modifications to production line procedures. Here he speaks with Marshall Deavers who works in “final finish.”

Lex has set a tone in the plant with department managers and employees that the QA team are not “watch dogs.” Quite the contrary, they are “problem solvers.”

“Nothing adversarial here,” he says. “We’re all on the same team trying to accomplish the same result: excellence! Quality problems are going to come up every day. We’re here to identify the problem and help find the right solution.”

Finding the right solution to a problem is a very analytical process. For example, a full QA check is made on every coach at the end of the assembly line. When repeated deviations occur, a process called “root cause analysis” is launched. Usually, it is a design, materials, production method, or training issue.

Computer records are charted for each problem to assure appropriate solutions and follow-ups in the future. The “corrective action” procedure asks the questions: (1) Why did the complaint occur? (2) Why was it not detected during production? (3) Was the problem caused by design, materials, production method, or employee? (4) How do we correct and prevent a reoccurrence of the problem?

Those questions are not answered by the flip of a coin. Sometimes it takes hours of meetings, engineering analysis, line interviews, materials testing, and even video time and motion studies.

One example involved the storage door hinges and latches. Getting a door open was a two-handed operation. More than likely, the owner would be holding something for basement storage as he tried to open the door. Inconvenient to say the least. Van Tiffin made changes in the design of the latches that solved the problem.

In perfecting the sidewall lamination, the plant used a method that required a heated catalyst to activate the glue. When the heating was not uniform, the lamination was not perfect and that sidewall would have to be rejected. A moisture-cured urethane solved the problem.

Tiffin installed a new stack press in 2002 to produce the laminated sidewalls. When the components are assembled, they are held under specified pressure for approximately 20 minutes. The result is a cleaner, faster, better product. Engineering, process, materials, and quality assurance produce the best sidewall in the RV industry.

To make it all work, the QA team starts at 5 A.M. before line production begins at 6. Shortly after that, Lex and brothers, Tim and Van, meet with Bob to discuss the business, problems, and who is traveling where for meetings with dealers and suppliers. Each man has a great respect for the talent and responsibilities of the other three. But amusingly, the deep family relationships (and respect) always surface when the boys call Bob “daddy.” At the end of the day, this is a family business. And family values set

Continued on page 18

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50,000	\$ 614.00	325,000	\$ 1841.00
60,000	\$ 680.00	350,000	\$ 1948.00
70,000	\$ 717.00	375,000	\$ 2235.00
80,000	\$ 755.00	400,000	\$ 2342.00
90,000	\$ 791.00	425,000	\$ 2448.00
100,000	\$ 827.00	450,000	\$ 2555.00
110,000	\$ 866.00	475,000	\$ 2662.00
125,000	\$ 926.00	500,000	\$ 2769.00
150,000	\$ 1026.00	575,000	\$ 3090.00
175,000	\$ 1219.00	600,000	\$ 3197.00
200,000	\$ 1318.00	650,000	\$ 3411.00
225,000	\$ 1418.00		
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The early morning meetings continue as the production lines start up. Lex has a meeting at six with engineering, seven with purchasing and supply, eight with the plant supervisors. One QA team member attends this meeting on rotation to address immediately any quality issues raised.

At 10:30 Lex drives the six miles to the painting plant in Belmont to meet with the QA team. QA analysis shows that 25 percent of the quality problems are supplier issues while 70 percent are production-caused issues. But the main thing is to *identify* the problem, Lex says. "Then we can fix it."

Lex oversees the implementation of a Quality Monitoring System. The system measures defect occurrences on a daily basis, identifies the problems with the greatest frequencies, and creates a Quality Index by department.

Brooke Carnes runs the QA office with efficiency, creating all of the input data for graphs, charts, and information required for the daily meetings.

Wayne Emerson in the service department oversees another area of Quality Assurance by recording and analyzing the problems on recent models brought to the plant's attention by current owners. The data and information sometimes produces changes in system design or production methods.

Brooke and Wayne are developing a coded system tied to software that will make it easier for team members to identify and record the frequency of QA issues arising in production and final quality inspections.

Lex Tiffin knows that QA is not just a job. "When I was in grade school, mother would check me out of school so I could go to rallies with them. I remember the customers at the rallies. Daddy always encouraged me to go talk to the them — me, just a kid talking to customers! Customers and dealers are our life blood. We must listen to them, understand, and know their needs."

To Lex Tiffin, TMH is a heritage. "Getting it right" to Lex means that customers will always be able to depend on the company's product integrity. But it goes deeper than that — "getting it right" means personal integrity.

"Our name is on every motorhome that rolls out of Red Bay. That's a responsibility."

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The Natchez Trace Parkway

R&R and History Blended

by Fred Thompson



WITHOUT QUESTION ONE OF America's most beautiful drives, the Natchez Trace is a 444-mile ribbon of asphalt connecting Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee. Administered by the National Park Service, the parkway, always bordered by neatly mown expanses of fescue, slices through forests of live oaks, cypress swamps, thick stands of pines, pastures, and cotton fields, and somehow weaves its way unobtrusively through the metropolises of Jackson and Tupelo.

As a two- or three-day stress reliever, an RVer could gather his favorite CDs, fill up the fridge, set the cruise control on 45, and glide unimpeded into a pleasant interlude of R&R. Two or three campground stops with an early-to-bed, early-to-rise regimen would fulfill the doctor's order. But, you would miss so much!

This parkway begins, traverses, and ends in a region that is rich in history, recreational opportunities, and a marvelous texture of scenery that changes with the seasons. Crossing the ancestral lands of the Natchez, Chickasaw, and the Choctaw Indians, the Trace is dotted every few miles with well-placed historical markers that cut through centuries, even millenniums, to tell the story of native Americans as well as the transplants who made this road one of our first national highways. The rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs touching the Trace invite the traveler to go fishing, boating, and canoeing. The nature trails are generally short, but they make great leg-stretchers to keep you alert. And the scenery – well, it ranges from the pastoral to calendar shots to spectacular rivers. At Natchez or Grand Gulf Military Park, you may get a glimpse of the Delta Queen plying the Mississippi or long barges being pushed up the Tennessee near Colbert Ferry. You must bring your camera!

If you are thinking of a Spring 2005 trip, you should begin your journey in Natchez during the **Spring Pilgrimage** which begins March 12 and ends April 16. To arrive during the peak blooming of the azaleas and dogwoods, call 800-647-6742 for exact information.

DAYS 1 and 2 – Natchez: This beautiful town at the very minimum is worth a two-day visit, especially during the Spring Pilgrimage. But first things first. Ten miles north of town on US 61 (mp 8.1), Natchez State Park offers 50 sites



DICK DIETRICH BY PERMISSION

Completed in 1858, Stanton Hall is considered by many architectural historians to be the most palatial house in Natchez. Occupying an entire block, the home takes a sentinel position over the city. An elaborate wrought-iron fence surrounds the property.

Who were the Natchez Indians?

With a strong agrarian-based society in what is now southwest Mississippi, the Natchez Indians occupied several hundred



The Natchez built sturdy homes with cane and other native materials.

square miles of territory for a millennium ending in 1730. Between 1682 and 1729, the 128-acre Grand Village was their main ceremonial center. Although they provided the name for the city which soon became a center of culture and commerce on the western fringe of a developing nation, the Natchez Indians' interactions with the Spanish and French were ultimately tragic for both the tribe and the growing village of Europeans who sought to live in their midst. Because their population may not have exceeded 3,500, we seldom read about the Natchez in our history books. However, their social traditions, economic infrastructure, and religious practices were well-developed.

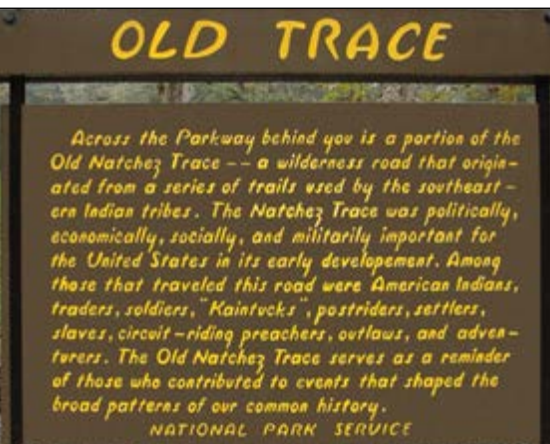
Continued on page 27

with concrete pads and full hookups including some pull-throughs (\$14/night, seniors/\$11). Pick up a Natchez map at the registration office. If you like to park your motorhome on Wal-Mart property, there is a Supercenter at 314 Prentiss Drive (US 61 & 84) on the east side of the city. During the Spring Pilgrimage, the parking area may be crowded.

From the Natchez State Park, follow US 61 into town where you will pick up US 84 West. Just before you cross the Mississippi, you will see the Natchez National Historical Park Visitor Center on your right. In addition to a very informative video about the history of the area, you will find museum-quality exhibits and an excellent bookstore offering regional material. During the Spring Pilgrimage, twenty-nine homes are open for tours. Eight tours are offered with either three or four homes per tour (\$21 or \$28/person). Longwood is scheduled on each morning tour. No tickets are sold at each individual house. In-depth, historical tours with private guides may be arranged at additional charge at the Park Visitor



Swiss-born John Blommart first built a 16 x 20 cabin that later became Mount Locust, an inn that served travelers on the Trace for 50 years. A reconstructed living room is shown above.



Center. Eight tours offer 29 homes. Flash photography is not permitted, but high-speed digital will work in most settings.

If you plan your visit during the Spring Pilgrimage, you can take advantage of two other major events. The **Historic Natchez Pageant** is presented on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from March 11 through April 9 at 8 p.m. each evening in the Natchez City Auditorium. A spectacular presentation, it gives you a window into the gracious living, beautiful costumes, and romantic music of Natchez society from the late 1700s to 1860.

If you are interested in native American history, the **Grand Village of the Natchez Indians** will host the **Natchez Powwow** on March 19–20. Members of the tribes that gave refuge to the displaced Natchez Indians will present colorful dances beginning at 1 p.m. Saturday with evening performances at 7 and 8 p.m. Sunday events will be offered at 1 and 2 p.m. The Grand Village is located on Jeff Davis Boulevard just east of US 61 South. The village is open daily Monday – Saturday from 9 to 5, and Sunday from 1:30 to 5 [see sidebar].

Southern cooking is alive and well in Natchez. You must plan at least one experience at the **Carriage House Restaurant** on the grounds of Stanton Hall. The restaurant’s buttered biscuits are legendary and are placed at your table as soon as you are seated. The quiet, gracious ambience of the dining room is seldom found in our twenty-first century. I recommend the Southern Fried Chicken or the Pork Tenderloin. Don’t leave without enjoying a piece of pecan pie.

DAY 3 – Our first major stop for the day was **Emerald Mound** at MP 10.3. A few miles off the parkway, you will find adequate parking and turnaround space for your motorhome at the mound site. The second largest mound from the Ceremonial Mound Period in North America, the eight-acre Emerald Mound was built and used from about 1300 to 1600 A.D. by the Mississippians, ancestors of the Natchez Indians. Emerald Mound supported temples, ceremonial structures, and burials of a complex society’s civic and religious leaders.

Mount Locust at MP 15.5 will require at least an hour. Swiss-born John Blommart, who had served in the British Royal Navy, built a 16-by-20 one room cabin

on the property to meet the conditions of a 1779 British land grant. Later that year when Spain went to war with Britain, the Spanish reoccupied the Natchez district and required the British settlers to make fidelity oaths to Spain. In 1781 Blommart led a successful British military action against the fort at Natchez while the rest of the surrounding territory fell under Spanish control. The resulting legal entanglement nearly cost him his life and forced his exile to the British West Indies.

William Ferguson, Blommart’s business associate, eventually acquired the 600-acre land grant. In 1783 Ferguson married Paulina Burch and expanded his interests by purchasing an adjacent 615 acres. Since the Trace ran through the Ferguson property, it soon became one of the best known “stands” on the Natchez–Nashville journey. At the time of his death in 1801, the couple had seven children, a thriving plantation, and a successful inn. A year later Paulina married James Chamberlain. Three more children were born and the property continued to provide a comfortable living for the family.

The Chamberlains built a four-room, two-story annex behind the house which became known as “Sleepy Hollow.” After traffic on the Trace waned in 1825, the property became more of an inn for Natchez residents who wanted a respite from city life. Paulina died in 1849 after living there for 66 years. In 1937 descendants of the Ferguson–Chamberlain family were still living at Mount Locust. Be sure to buy a copy of the National Park Service (NPS) booklet about Mount Locust and read “the rest of the story.”

If you started your trip early this morning, it should be about time for lunch. Just two miles up the road is **Coles Creek** (MP 17.5), a great spot for a picnic and a leg-stretching walk.

About a half hour’s drive from Coles Creek at MP 41.1, exit on Mississippi Route (MR) 18 and drive west about a mile to US 61 on the north side of Port Gibson. You are on your way to the **Grand Gulf Military Park**. Go north on US 61 for about four miles and turn west on Grand Gulf Road for six miles. Once a thriving town where planters loaded their cotton bales onto paddle wheelers, Grand Gulf suffered three fatal blows: a yellow fever epidemic in 1843, a devastating tornado in 1853, and finally a Mississippi

A Short History Primer on Natchez and the Trace

To really enjoy Natchez and the Natchez Trace Parkway, you will find the following historical perspective helpful.

As the eighteenth century began, the Natchez district fell under French influence and later rule. The French-Natchez Indians relations ranged from détente, tensions, skirmishes, and finally to all out war. By 1732 the Natchez tribe had been annihilated, with only scattered remnants left who integrated with the Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Creeks.

With the failure of colonization in the Mississippi Valley, the French ceded French Louisiana to Spain in 1762. A year later Spain ceded to England their claims east of the Mississippi River. By 1764 the Natchez district including Fort Rosalie came under British rule and was known as West Florida. The British offered land for settlement to the pro-British colonists which gave Natchez an English flavor.

After Spain declared war on England in 1779, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, Bernardo de Galvez, quickly occupied British posts from New Orleans to points north of Natchez. By 1782 Spain ruled all of West Florida and awarded land grants generously. Spanish engineers laid out the city of Natchez in squares. With improvements in both land and river transportation, and the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, cotton became “king” on the thousands of acres of plantations surrounding Natchez.

In 1775 an unexpected boat from Fort Pitt loaded with flour glided into the landing at Natchez. The occasion marked the beginning of trade with the farmers of the Ohio Valley. Under Spanish rule, the acting governor of Louisiana knew there were no treaties to do business. The colonists had barely gotten rid of the British and Washington’s election was still four years away. The Spanish looked the other way for two years as trade continued and was finally legalized. Flour, pork, tobacco, hemp, and iron came in increasing quantities. By 1790, sixty-four flatboats with the products of Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Virginia had arrived in Natchez. During the 1790s the volume increased ten times.

Seeing the importance of enlarging western trade through river transportation, the fledgling United States government pressed Spain to give up control of the Natchez district. In a treaty signed in 1795, Spain agreed to withdraw above the 31st parallel (the current east-west boundary line between Mississippi and Louisiana) although the Spanish flag continued to fly over Natchez until 1798. In that year the U.S. created the Mississippi Territory with Natchez as its capital.

During the Spanish period, several planters built fine homes in Natchez, including Hope Farm (1775), Richmond (1784), Texada and Elgin (1792), Cherokee (1794), and Cottage Gardens (1794), the home of the Spanish Consul Don Jose Vidal. All of these homes are included on the Spring Pilgrimage tours.

After the boatmen reached Natchez and marketed their cargo, they dismantled the flatboats and sold the lumber. Spanish records in 1790 show that 240 boatmen walked or rode the Natchez Trace the 450 miles back to Nashville and points beyond. That number quadrupled annually during the next decade and finally grew to approximately 8,000 in 1810.

Historically, there were several Natchez Traces. The first was the one used by the Indians, segments that were usually not connected but served their regional travel patterns. The second Trace was the one trudged out by the boatmen whom the Natchezians referred to as the “Kaintucks,” since most of them came from Kentucky. And the third Trace was the one opened by the U.S. government after President Jefferson instructed the army to clear out a road between Nashville and Natchez.

As capital of the Mississippi Territory, the little village of Natchez had become important for both military and diplomatic affairs, and economically as the center of development of the western plantation economy. Postal service between Nashville and Natchez began in 1800. By 1802 there were two trips a month each way. Since communication was Jefferson’s primary reason for developing the road, he placed the responsibility for construction on the Postmaster General. After writing clear specifications for its construction, Jefferson instructed the postmaster to advertise for bids:

1st. The road must be made at least twenty feet wide, and all the timber and underbrush taken off for that distance.

2nd. All marshy places are to be causewayed, and all causeways to be at least ten feet wide.

3rd. All streams under 40 feet in width . . . are to be bridged by good secure bridges . . . at least twelve feet wide.

4th. A tree shall be laid across all larger streams. . . . [supposedly to create a breakwater for successfully fording the stream].

When the work was completed in 1807, it became possible to travel on public roads from Washington to Natchez. Unfortunately, the federal government provided no funding for maintenance. In an 1811 address to his legislature, the governor of Tennessee complained that the road was “in very bad order.”

A growing population, a thriving down-river flatboat trade from the Ohio Valley, and a crisis with England over New Orleans increased

the use and importance of the Natchez Trace. Concerned about commercial and military access, a special congressional committee recommended an appropriation for the improvement and maintenance of the Trace. Before Congress could take action, news of Andrew Jackson’s victory over the British at New Orleans reached Washington. Federal interest in maintaining the road quickly waned.

In 1804 the first inn was built to serve travelers along the Trace, and by 1820 more than twenty inns, called “stands,” were in operation. But an end to the heavy use of the Trace was already on the horizon.

In January 1812, the steamer *New Orleans* completed a downstream trip from Pittsburgh to Natchez. A few weeks later a steamboat ran upstream from New Orleans to Natchez at a rate of three miles per hour. In the next seven years, the growth of steam transportation on the Mississippi was incredible. By 1819 at least twenty steamboats were operating out of New Orleans to interior points north. If a boatman had the fare to take a steamboat for the return trip home, it was no longer necessary to make the arduous 500-mile trip overland back to Nashville.

Although no history of the Trace was published in the 1800s, thousands of stories became embedded in the folklore of the region. Ironically, when the road was heavily used, few referred to it as the “Natchez Trace.” It was called the Natchez Road, the Nashville Road, the Mail Road, and sometimes the Cumberland Road. It seems to have been called “the Natchez Trace” first in Tennessee land survey records from the 1820s.

In a 1905 issue of *Everybody’s Magazine*, an article titled “The Natchez Trace” may have inspired the Mississippi Daughters of the American Revolution to initiate a movement to commemorate the Trace. In 1909 the DAR placed a stone monument in Natchez on the bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. In the next twenty-five years, the organization placed a monument in every county through which the Trace had passed. The monument dedications were reported in county and state newspapers, resulting in the publication of significant amounts of local history, folklore, and traditions.

When Roosevelt’s New Deal was searching for local projects to provide mass employment for the jobless, a freelance journalist who had written articles about the Trace for weekly newspapers in Mississippi suggested to Mississippi Congressman Jeff Busby that he sponsor legislation to pave the old Trace. After a personal investigation, Busby decided the idea had merit. On May 18, 1938, Congress created the Natchez Trace Parkway as a unit of the National Park System.

River flood that wiped out 55 city blocks in the late 1850s.

When Gen. U.S. Grant planned his assault on Vicksburg by land from the east, he decided to cross the Mississippi at Grand Gulf. The Confederates anticipated Grant's plans and successfully foiled the Union troops crossing. After Grant's troops crossed further south, they took Port Gibson and outflanked Grand Gulf, forcing the defenders to abandon the town.

Today the Grand Gulf Military Monument Park is a restored village. Beginning with an excellent Civil War museum at the entrance (where you also check-in and register for camping), a one-mile circle takes you to the Carriage House that houses a Civil War ambulance, the blacksmith shop, the old Grand Gulf jail, an early 1800s Catholic Church, a dog trot house, and the 1790 Spanish House, which is one of two original Grand Gulf homes. A 75-ft. observation tower, hiking trails, pavilions, and picnic areas complete the park. The park offers 42 level concrete pads with full hookups for \$12/night.

A half-mile hike to the west will take you to the river where

you just might get to see the Delta Queen passing by or a tug moving barges.

Days 4 and 5 – If you are ready for a refreshing morning hike, retrace your route back to the Trace and stop at **Rocky Springs** (MP 54.8). Founded in 1837, this once prosperous town of 2,600 souls suffered one setback after another until today only the once impressive brick church, the cemetery, and abandoned cisterns remain. A 2.5 mile trail will take you to Owens Creek; self-guiding trails lead you to the springs and through the old town site; and a three-quarter mile trail on the Old Trace links the town site with Little Sand Creek. With 22 campsites, Rocky Springs is one of three NPS campgrounds on the parkway. Although the park is well-maintained, there are no hookups, no fees, and no reservations.

As you leave Rocky Springs, you have some choices to make. You can continue your pastoral trip along the Trace or opt for spending the rest of the day and tomorrow in metropolitan Jackson. At MP 88 you will reach the temporary interruption of the parkway and take a detour around the Mississippi capital city. Simply take I-20 East to I-220 North through the city. As I-220 connects with I-55 North, you will see the familiar brown Natchez Trace Parkway sign pointing you to the very next exit. Turn right onto the parkway and within a few hundred yards you will see the **Mississippi Crafts Center** on the right. The craft center offers a wide variety of art and useful products created by native Americans and regional artisans who are members of the Craftsmen's Guild of Mississippi. You will find Choctaw blankets, handwoven wool garments, pottery both decorative and functional, exquisite baskets made with longleaf pine needles, books, wooden toys, brooms, quilts, and ironwork.

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Now the choices: (Option 1) Delve into 200 years of colorful Mississippi history, spending the rest of the day at the **Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum**, and tomorrow at the **Museum of Natural Science**, the **Jackson Zoo**, and the **Mississippi Museum of Art**.

(Option 2) See the Agriculture and Forestry Museum this afternoon and then camp tonight at the **Timber Lake Campground** on the Barnett Reservoir.

(Option 3) Head north now on the Trace for 90 miles to the **Jeff Busby NPS Campground** and skip the sightseeing.

If you selected Option #3, turn right out of the Crafts Center parking lot and enjoy your drive to Busby at MP 193.1. **Jeff Busby** is an NPS park with 18 sites and no hookups. However, a store offering gas and groceries is conveniently located at the entrance.

On the way to Busby you will notice several interesting historical markers and hiking opportunities. If you happen to pass through on April 30, Kosciusko (MP 159) will treat you to the **Natchez Trace Festival**, a 36-year-old event featuring over 200 booths with crafts, handmade items, art, and regional food. In addition you will find a children's area with petting zoo, bands, the "Gasoline Alley" antique car and motorcycle show, and helicopter rides. No charge to enter the festival area. You can update your plans with visits to these websites: natcheztracefestival.com, scenictrace.com, and kosciuskotourism.com.

A stop at **French Camp** (MP 180-181) will tell you the sto-

ry of Louis LeFleur, a French Canadian who married a Choctaw wife, Rebecca Cravat. They opened a stand on the Trace in 1812. Their son, Greenwood LeFleur, later became the chief of the Choctaw nation and administered the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. Pioneers sent their children to school at French Camp. Founded in 1885, the French Camp Academy now sprawls over 1,000 acres. Each October the Academy hosts a Fall Festival which is renowned for its quilt auction and a mule-powered cane grinding mill which produces the syrup to make sorghum. In 2005 the festival will run from 9:30–4 on Saturday, October 8. Local residents from the area bring favorite family dishes for a giant “Dinner on the Grounds” at noon. Those who did not contribute food can enjoy the event for just \$2. The afternoon features singing groups, Civil War reenactments, and demonstrations of pioneer skills.

Using a 1950 recipe, the Academy’s Welcome Center produces 150 2-lb. loaves of freshly baked bread (\$5.00/ea) which are shipped all over the South at Christmas and Easter. Next door is the Council House Café, constructed of logs which came from Chief Greenwood LeFleur’s original council house. The café serves five gourmet sandwiches, plus soups and salads (and desserts, too!). Hours 10–2:30 daily.

If you selected **Option #2**, go back to I-55 and travel south for approximately five miles to Lakeland Drive (exit 98-B). Turn left (east) and go to the second light. The Museum will be on your left. After you’ve finished your tour, turn left out of the parking lot and travel east on Lakeland Drive (SR 25). After several miles you will turn left on SR 468 going north. In 4.5 miles you will come to a traffic light at Spillway Road. Proceed through the light and the second left will be Timber Lake Campground (601)992-9100. 108 sites. Full hookups are \$17/night; seniors (62+), \$15.

If you selected **Option #1**, drive past the Museum entrance and you will immediately see a sign for **Lefleur’s Bluff State Park**. The park offers 30 paved back-in sites with water and 30- or 50-amp hookups. Dump station is nearby. A destination in itself, Lefleur’s Bluff has a fishing/recreation lake with boat rentals, a 9-hole golf course with driving range, and hiking trails in a 350-acre setting. \$14/night with hookups; seniors (65+), \$12; reserved sites, \$20 first night, \$14 add’l nights. Call (601) 987-3923 to reserve. Get your RV situated on a site and let’s go touring.

Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum may be the best entertainment you will ever buy for \$4 (seniors, \$3). Put on your best walking shoes and make your first stop at the Heritage Exhibit Center. Smithsonian-class exhibits will present the development of agriculture, forestry, and agricultural aviation in Mississippi. Then stay as long as you can to see the Fortenberry-Parkman Farmstead; a working sugarcane mill, sawmill, cotton gin, blacksmith shop, and grist mill; a doctor’s office with herb garden; a two-room schoolhouse and a filling station from the 1920s; a church built in 1843; the first commercial oil well in Mississippi; and much more. This is “nostalgia city.” The Museum Café serves a Southern-style buffet M–F, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

If you’re working on **Option #1** and staying at LeFleur’s Bluff tonight, we’re not through with Jackson just yet. If you have children with you, or you’ve still got your child-like curiosity, the **Museum of Natural Science** adjacent to the Lefleur’s Bluff State Park is a “must see.” With exhibits and activities that change frequently, you and your children or grandchildren will

find your interests and intellect stimulated in every room of this 73,000 sq. ft. facility. M – F, 8–5; Sat., 9–5; Sun., 1–5. Adults, \$4; seniors (60+), \$3; children 3–18, \$2.

And there’s more! Especially if children are aboard, you will want to visit the **Jackson Zoo**. With more than 350 animals representing 130 species, the Zoo is designed as a learning center for children (and adults). You can burrow through prairie dog town, negotiate a giant spider’s web, tread like a turtle, and hatch out of a people-sized egg. Be sure to bring your camera! Daily 9–5. Adults, \$5.30; seniors (65+), \$3.25; children 2–12, \$2.70.

You won’t want to miss visiting the **Mississippi Museum of Art**. To reach the museum, take I-55 South to Pearl Street (exit 96-A). Turn left at Lamar Street and go one block south to the corner of Lamar and Pascagoula Streets. Just two years past its 25th anniversary, the MMA collection has grown to include more than 3,100 works of art spanning thousands of years of art history. *Picture Show: Photographs from the Permanent Collection*, an exhibit that includes the works of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Yousuf Karsh, and Eudora Welty, ranges from vintage to contemporary photographs and digital mediums. It will continue through March 27, 2005. Check the website www.msmuseumart.org for current offerings. Mon.– Sat., 10–5; Sun., noon–5. Adults, \$5; seniors, \$4; students age 6–college, \$3.

DAY 5 or 6 (depending on your options) – If you are leaving this morning from Timber Lake, refer to the text for Option #3 to cover the Trace from MP 102 to 193.

As you follow the Trace from Jeff Busby northeast to Nashville, you find many opportunities to absorb the history of the area from brown signs at stopping points like Pigeon Roost, Line Creek, and Witch Dance. For native American history, be sure to stop at Bynum Mounds, Chickasaw Agency, Monroe Mission, the Chickasaw Council House, and the Chickasaw Village Site.

If you are nearing Tupelo and ready for a camping spot, we recommend **Davis Lake** (a U.S. Forest Recreation Area) and Trace State Park. For Davis Lake exit the parkway at MP 243 and drive four miles west to the entrance. Currently under construction to add two modern restroom and shower facilities plus concrete pads and sewer service to each campsite, the park is still fully operational and offers several completed campsites along the lake. The 200-acre lake is stocked with bream, crappie, largemouth and hybrid striped bass, and catfish. Boating is permitted and an unsupervised swimming area is available. \$13/night; \$9.50 with Golden Age or Access Passports. Thirteen sites are set aside for reservations through the National Recreation Service toll-free number (877) 444-6777. If you’re not in a hurry, this is a relaxing spot to spend several days.

Trace State Park offers a quiet retreat with excellent facilities just six miles off the parkway at MP 259.7. The recreational opportunities include a 600-acre lake (stocked with bass, catfish, redear, bluegill, and crappie) with sections designated for fishing only and for skiing; a 25-mile trail system with sections for hikers only, ATVs and horses, and mountain bikes; access to an 18-hole golf course with no greens fees; and a disc golf course in the park free to campers. Campsites offer water, electric, & concrete pads. \$14/night; seniors (62+) \$11. Reserved sites, \$15/first night; call 662-489-2958. 50-amp service available on nine sites.

The **Natchez Trace Tupelo Visitor Center and Parkway Headquarters** is located at MP 266. The Center offers a self-

guiding trail, an excellent orientation presentation, and a broad selection of books about the Trace, regional, and native American history.

Other points of interest in Tupelo include the Elvis Presley Birthplace, the Tupelo Automobile Museum, and the Tupelo Buffalo Park.

For Elvis fans, a visit to the two-room **Presley Home and Museum** is a “must see” stop. The home and the museum are open Mon.–Sat., 9–5:30, Sun. 1–5. Combined ticket, adults, \$7; children, \$3.50. 662-841-1245. Vintage car buffs will want to return to Tupelo for the **Blue Suede Cruise**, scheduled for April 29 to May 1. See www.bluesc.com for more information.

In a 120,000 sq. ft. museum, the **Tupelo Automobile Museum** showcases over 100 restored automobiles beginning with an 1886 Benz and ending with a 1994 Dodge Viper. Open Tues.–Sun., 10–6, closed Mondays and Christmas Day. Adults, \$10; seniors and AAA, \$8; children up to 12, \$5. 662-842-4245.

The **Tupelo Buffalo Park** boasts the largest bison herd east of the Mississippi. Along with a regular zoo, a petting zoo, and rides, the Park provides enough events for at least a half-day outing. Open at 9 Mon.–Sat., Sundays at 1. Adults, \$10; children, \$8. 662-844-8709.

DAY 6 or 7 – If you have never been to Red Bay (or if it has been a while since you were there), plan on stopping for the night at Tishomingo State Park which is only 15 miles from the **Tiffin Motorhomes** plant.

Tours are offered every weekday at 10 and 2. The plant will be closed the week of July 4th, Nov. 24–25, and Dec. 23–Jan. 1. The park offers 62 back-in sites on concrete pads with water and electric, most situated on a beautiful lake. Half of the sites have 50-amp service and the rest 30-amp. With canoe and boat rentals available, the well-stocked lake can be fished all year with a Mississippi license. Hot showers and laundry facilities. \$14/night; seniors (65+), \$11. Call 662-438-6914 to reserve campsites (\$20/first night).

DAY 7 or 8 – Using your Natchez Trace Parkway map, you will continue to find interesting places to stop and explore. **Colbert Ferry** represents decades of history that emphasizes the ties between the U.S. and the Chickasaws. The Indians were shrewd traders. In negotiating treaties for ceding their lands, they always reserved the operation of ferries for the tribe. The concessions yielded great fortunes to their owners, usually the tribal chiefs. It is estimated that the operation of Colbert’s Ferry on the Natchez Trace was worth \$20,000 annually to Levi and George Colbert, which would be equal to approximately \$500,000 in today’s currency. Jose Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara recorded in his journal in 1811 that a “rich Indian” lived in a house “several stories high” that “looks like a country palace with its abundance of glass in door and windows,” owned two ferry boats, and made a great deal of money. A myth started in 1817 in a travel book authored by Samuel Brown asserted that George Col-



bert charged the U.S. \$75,000 to ferry Andrew Jackson’s provisions, horses, and men across the river during the War of 1812. In the *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, the general said that Colbert charged 50 cents for an individual and a dollar for both a horse and a man. At those rates, the government would have paid only a few thousand dollars. Nevertheless, a sign erected by the National Park Service represents the \$75,000 charge as a fact. Military re-

Springtime flowers along the Natchez Trace Parkway brighten the traveler’s journey. Dogwood and redbud proliferate in late March.





Meriwether Lewis, 1774-1809

cords show that Col. Colbert served with honor under both George Washington and Andrew Jackson.

Nearby Attractions: If you are making your Trace journey in June or July, you may want to see “**The Miracle Worker**,” a play telling the story of Helen Keller, presented on Friday and Saturday evenings at Ivy Green, her childhood home, in Tusculum. Call 888-329-2124 for times and prices. During the first full week of August, the city of Florence honors its native son with the **W.C. Handy Music Festival**. Call 800-344-0783 for events, times, and prices.

Although we spent our next night camped at **Davy Crockett State Park** in Tennessee, we cannot recommend it for larger motorhomes. The back-in sites are far from being level and trees are sometimes too close to permit extending slideouts. However, the restaurant at the park offers a very good buffet at reasonable prices.

Perhaps the most intriguing stop on the Trace at MP 386 is the **Meriwether Lewis Memorial** site. Born in Virginia in 1774, Lewis was a private secretary and personal favorite of President Jefferson. The president selected Lewis and William Clark to explore the vast territory purchased from France, to discover the source of the Missouri river, and find a passage to the Pacific Ocean. Pleased with the results of their expedition, Jefferson rewarded Lewis with the governorship of the Louisiana Territory and Clark with the superintendency of Indian Affairs at St. Louis.

Not happy with his position, Lewis embarked in September 1809 on a trip to

Who were the Natchez Indians? Continued from page 21

In the mid-1500s, Hernando de Soto's three-year expedition across the southeastern part of North America had a devastating effect on many Indian tribes: they had no natural immunities against European diseases. Since research indicates that their social structures seemed to have remained intact, the Natchez apparently escaped. However, archaeological and linguistic evidence indicates that their nation was in decline by the late 1600s.

After the French founded a colony at Biloxi in 1699, Pierre LeMoynes, Sieur d'Iberville, visited the Natchez in 1700 in an attempt to improve the tribe's relationship with France. As French missionaries, traders, and militia traveled the Mississippi, they often stopped for provisions at Natchez.

With initial acquiescence from the Natchez chiefs, the French began to press into tribal territory with agricultural settlements that were only moderately successful. Over the next two decades, the French presence became overbearing to the Natchez, resulting in clashes and loss of life.

Concurrently, English agents began making secret visits to the fringe areas of Natchez territory in an attempt to win their support against the French. The tribe was soon divided into pro-English and pro-French factions. Continued friction with the French resulted in a scheme by the Natchez on November 28, 1729, to get inside Fort Rosalie on the pretext of preparing for a communal hunt. At a given signal, the Indians attacked and slaughtered nearly 300 of the colonists, wiped out the entire French military attachment, and burned Fort Rosalie.

On January 27, 1730, a French military force allied with Choctaw and Tunica Indians attacked the Natchez at the Grand Village and fought intermittently for a month. Finally, they reached an agreement: the French withdrew from Grand Village and the Natchez returned the hostages they had taken at Fort Rosalie two months earlier.

The Natchez waged guerrilla warfare for another year until the governor of the territory himself led an army of 350 that found them barricaded in a fort. After bombardment of the fort for several days by the French, the Natchez surrendered. Governor Périer captured three tribal chiefs and 235 tribe members, most of whom were women and children. An investigation revealed that most of the men had never been in the fort and had escaped during a heavy rain storm. All of those captured were eventually deported as slaves to work on plantations in what is now Hispaniola.

Several months later, approximately 200 Natchez who escaped capture by Périer attacked a French outpost at Natchitoches, Louisiana. Guerrilla attacks continued for many years. Unable to return to the Grand Village of the Natchez, the guerrillas eventually found refuge with the Chickasaws who were bitter enemies of the French, while others joined the Creeks and Cherokees. After several generations of intermarriage, anthropologists can no longer find any native speakers of the Natchez language. Sadly, they are now a “lost tribe.”

The French rebuilt Fort Rosalie, but recolonization of the area fizzled. France's colonial dreams in the New World came to an end in 1763 with the Treaty of Paris.

Washington via the Mississippi River to Memphis. He then used the Natchez Trace to proceed east toward Nashville. On October 6, he stayed at Robert Grinder's stand. During the night he suffered two gunshot wounds. It is debatable whether he was a victim of a robber and murdered or took his own life. Be sure to visit the exhibit and Lewis's broken shaft memorial, a symbol of a life cut short. And then make your own decision: was it murder or suicide?

The NPS campground at Meriwether Lewis is quite nice as dry camps go. Paved pads, no services, no fees. 32 sites, water,

dump station. Good hiking trails. You may prefer to stay at Fall Hollow Village, MP 392, which has hookups, dump station, restaurant, and camp store.

If you are a “finisher,” you have just 58 miles to go. Be sure to stop at the **Tobacco Farm** at MP 401.4. If you are pulling a dinghy, do the two-mile drive on the Old Trace to see what it was really like 185 years ago. If no dinghy, then stop at MP 403.7 and experience a 1/3-mile walk on the Old Trace.

Depending on the time you have to spend, the Trace could be a five day trip or a 15-day trip. You make the rules!

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(Left) This authentically designed paddle-wheeler makes several trips each day over the lakes. (Center) The Grand Hotel on Mackinaw Island is on the U.S. Register of Historic Buildings.

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Site TBA
New England
August 2006

ALLEGRO CLUB MOUNTAIN RETREAT

Site TBA, Smoky Mountains
October 2006

jimmy.johnson@tiffinmotorhomes.com
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(Right) Motor-driven vehicles are not allowed on Mackinaw Island. But you will enjoy the slower pace of life for a few days.

CLUB BENEFITS

1. The Allegro Club's new newsletter entitled *Side Roads* is published quarterly to keep our membership informed about rallies, caravans, chapter news, safety information, factory news, and other informative and helpful information.

2. The opportunity to purchase insurances at discounted rates:

- Emergency Road Service through Coach-Net at 1-877-801-0333.
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Your Allegro Club membership must be maintained and kept up-to-date in order to continue receiving the discounts.

3. The Allegro Store will carry a selection of shirts, caps and jackets with the Tiffin name brands embroidered on them. Many other items will be added to the store soon.

4. Allegro Club members have the opportunity to attend several rallies or caravans throughout the year. Our rallies are usually a package deal which includes your campground fees, entertainment, most meals, transportation to and from planned activities, suppliers' seminars, plenty of door prizes, dealers display units for your viewing, sales representatives

from Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc., to answer questions about your motorhome and much more. Servicemen from Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc., attend the rally to do minor repairs to rally-goers coaches. We also schedule some free time at our rallies for rest, shopping, or to do things on your own.

Recent rallies have been at Gulf Shores, Ala., Chesapeake, Va., Gettysburg, Pa., Amana Colonies, Iowa, and Renfro Valley, Ky.

Future rallies are currently scheduled for Myrtle Beach, S.C., Branson, Mo., Colorado Springs, Colo., and Mackinaw City, Mich. Caravans have been conducted into Canada, Alaska, and Mexico.

5. Local Allegro Club chapters are also available to International members. These provide fun, fellowship, and entertainment on a local basis each month. But you must be an International Club member in order to join a local chapter.

6. Starting immediately we have a new Happy Camper 1/2 price club for an incredible savings for our Allegro Family Membership in good standing. The price to you is \$29.95 for your first year (a \$20.00 discount) and only \$39.95 every year thereafter when you renew. (See ad in our Allegro Family Hotline in regards to the New Happy Camper 1/2 price club.)

7. A 10% discount is available to current Allegro Club members at Tiffin's Campers Choice Store on parts and accessories for your motorhome. You must ask for the discount and provide your membership number.

For more information call (256) 356-8522.



J. D. and Dot Sanders “Salt of the Earth” RV Dealers

by Fred Thompson

JANUARY 1944. The war on both sides of the globe was raging. J.D. Sanders, a senior in high school in Gainesville, Florida, and not yet 18, was ready to serve his country. Not old enough to join the Army, he left school early and joined the merchant marine.

Two years later he mustered out and returned to Gainesville to take care of unfinished business. Dorothy, J.D.’s high school sweetheart, was waiting to greet him. Fifty-five years ago it wasn’t unusual at all for a guy to marry his high school sweetheart. But first things first; J.D. wanted to finish high school and get that diploma.

Ironically, the day he graduated, he received his Army draft call. Uncomplaining, J.D. fulfilled an obligation he had wanted to do earlier. As troop requirements began to be reduced, he was discharged in December 1947. It was a four-year whirlwind. But the “greatest generation” was now moving quickly into the workforce.

Now the time was right. In 1948 J.D. married Dorothy Moore, the girl he used to walk to school with every morning. J.D. and Dot immediately went into a two-decade building mode: building a career and building a family. Both efforts were very successful. “We have always been 50-50 partners in everything we have done,” Dorothy said recently as they told me about their careers. “I quit work when we got married — well, you know what I mean. Having and raising three boys every day wasn’t exactly a vacation, now was it?” she smiled.

J.D. accepted a position with a snack food manufacturer, a job that relocated them to Charlotte, N.C., for 19 years. But Gainesville was always “home” and the couple wanted to move back. Finally, they took the plunge. Leaving a 23-year career behind in 1970, they returned to Gainesville ready to start over.

“We had seen a small trailer with a couple of flip-out beds on either side. Then you put up a frame to hold a tent over the whole affair. It worked pretty good. Made by a company called Apache, we got a dealership in January 1971. Then Fleetwood let us have a dealership for their Prowler travel trailers,” J.D. explained. “We found a small one-and-a-quarter acre lot on US 441 in Gainesville and opened up in February 1971. You know, that’s been a third-of-a-century ago,” he said looking over at Dot. “I was the president and Dot was the vice president, secretary, and treasurer. She handled the money, and that’s probably why we’re still here,” J.D. grinned.

“Then about two years later in ’73 we picked up the dealership with Tiffin. Bob told me a couple of years ago that we were his oldest dealership in continuous service. We’re proud of that. There’s not a more sincere man in this business than Bob Tiffin. I have high respect for him,” J.D. said thoughtfully.

“The main reason I wanted to sell Allegros was because of a true story I heard. Some folks here in Florida bought one from a car dealer and took a trip out West. In Texas they hit a horse with it. The accident killed the horse, but they were able to drive that Allegro back to Red Bay to get the front-end repaired. When



The Sanders family developed a team approach over 20 years ago. L to R: Hal, service; David, parts and accessories; founders J.D. and Dot; Dell and Shirley, general manager and financial services.

I heard that story, I knew that was the brand I wanted to sell — something that was well-built that would hold up good after the sale. You know, if you sell a poorly made product, you’ll never have a happy customer,” Sanders said.

In 1973 an RVer could buy the very best Apache with everything on it for \$1,725. The 25-ft. Allegro with a generator and air conditioner sold for about \$14,000 and you could sleep six in it, Sanders told us. Today the company sells from 12 to 20 Allegros and Bays annually. While Sanders offers one Class B brand, the Allegro is still the only Class A motorhome the company sells.

Dot and J.D.’s three sons have joined the firm. Coming on board in the sales department in 1984, Dell now serves the company as general manager. He is a past chairman of the FRVTA and now serves on the 2004 RVDA Board of Directors. This year he is first vice chairman and will serve as chairman next year. Dell’s wife, Shirley, manages the business financially.

David runs the parts and accessories department and manages the retail store. “Our parts manager orders parts for all brands, and that requires a tremendous familiarity with RV parts,” he explained. Starting with the company in 1973, David says the work is fun and the companies are good to work with.

Hal oversees the repair and service department which has seven employees who are trained for body shop, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, interior appliances, slideouts, roof repair, and siding (metal and fiberglass).

“Parts and service are a major part of our business plan,” David and Hal emphasized. “Whatever we sell, we make sure we can service it. We are a part of the RVDA Certified Technician program and dedicate 1½ hours one afternoon a week to their training films and systems. The RV industry is falling in right behind the automotive industry in the level of training: they require ASE certifications and we require RVIA–RVDA certifications,” Hal said.

J.D. Sanders planned from the beginning that the company’s growth would be based on excellent service and satisfied customers.

Dot and J.D. retired 13 years ago. They have enjoyed several

Continued on page 32



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Our engineers carefully planned and reinstalled the gantry system, overhead

cranes, mezzanines, and scaffolding to accommodate two production lines. The benefits will be immediate. Our employees will now specialize in the tasks for building either gas or diesel units. Specialization will result in better quality, greater efficiency, and faster production when each person concentrates on doing the same job. As retraining is completed in the coming weeks, we expect to increase production to 12 units a day.

Our off-line sub-assembly shops also are being re-engineered. At present production

levels, we are now building 28 to 36 slide-out boxes per day. By moving this shop to a larger production area, quality will be enhanced and overall efficiency increased.

Tiffin Motorhomes is a very dynamic organization. We continually make improvement to enhance the design, production, and quality of our motorhomes. That is what our systems are designed to do. Please see page 7 to read about our sixth Quality Circle Award given to TMH by the Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association on November 29 in Louisville.

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“Salt of the Earth” • Continued from page 30

extended trips in their motorhome including a six-week jaunt throughout the U.S., six trips to Branson, and two winters in South Texas. A quad bypass in 1998 doesn't seem to have slowed J.D. down too much. Stopping by just to “check on the business” is almost a daily routine.

Looking back over the years, the Sanders find a lot of satisfaction in their careers in the RV business. “This town didn't know what a camper looked like when we opened our lot,” she laughed. “But most important, this business has held our family together.”

J.D. agreed. “Since our boys have been with us all these years, we have been able to expand the business. It is very gratifying to leave a nice business like this to our sons. God has been good to us.”

In 2001 after 30 years on the 1.25 acre lot in downtown Gainesville, the family decided to make the move seven miles north to Alachua to take advantage of a 6.5 acre lot. It was like getting out of a closet and living in the whole house. The attractive country-style building has four 60-ft. drive-through bays that serve two units at a time. Plenty of room for an expanded parts and accessories inventory have caused that segment of the business to grow steadily. But the sheer acreage for the increased rolling inventory is what the potential customer sees when passing by on US 441.

With direct mail, cable, and radio advertising, J.D. Sanders, Inc., keeps stirring the market in a state where they are forced to compete with the mega-dealers. “We regard service as being just as important as sales,” Dell said. “As a dealer we are responsible for what we sell. That's the premise on which we have built this company.”



**Folks You're Likely to Meet
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Red Davis
plant tour guide
He can tell you more in 90 minutes about how to build a motorhome than anybody else on the planet.



Liz Jones
warranty and recalls
Keeping track of just about everything is her specialty.



Candace Petree
receptionist
When you call the plant, press zero and Candace will make sure your call gets to the right person.



Danny Inman
SE sales & specialist in 1980s Allegros
With 30+ years at Tiffin Motorhomes, Danny can answer any question on models produced in the '70s and '80s



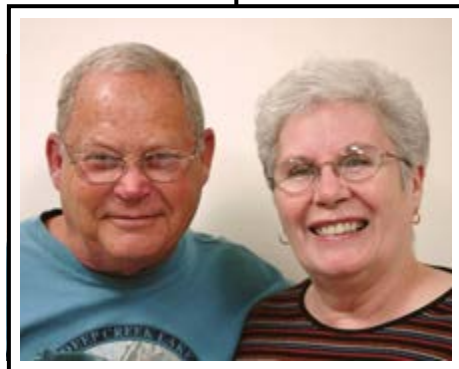
Torino Smith
repair technician
After 12 years at Tiffin, Torino has probably seen it all and found a way to fix it.



Bearl DeFoor
service coordinator
When you check in at the campground, Bearl will be the first to greet you the next morning. 21 years at Tiffin.



Ralph & Hildred Funderburk
campground hosts
Ralph and Hildred just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. But marriage counselling is not included in hosting services.



Jimmy & Peggy Davis
campground hosts
Jimmy and Peggy just celebrated their 50th also. Actually, being married 50 years has just been written into the job description.

Foods that Warm

Carrot & Cumin Soup

by Maureen Callahan

When the weather turns cold the most inviting meals help take the chill out of the air and make you feel all warm and toasty on the inside. Soups always fit the bill. So do grilled sandwiches. But if you want to put supper on the table quickly, why not combine the two strategies for a fast soup and sandwich meal. The varieties are endless, but instead of opening boring old canned soup, try making soup from scratch. It doesn't have to be difficult. Our easy carrot soup makes only two servings so doesn't require a lot of chopping and preparation. Nor will it need to simmer on the stove all day. In fact, it relies on ingredients you probably already have in the cupboard and refrigerator and turns them into warm, thick, spicy soup. To round out the meal, pull together your favorite hot open-faced sandwich and toast it under the broiler. Our suggestion is a Turkey, Spinach and Fontina melt made with fresh spinach, sliced tomatoes, deli turkey and grated cheese. While the carrots are simmering for the soup you can put together the sandwiches and have them ready to toast. Once the soup is cooked, slide the sandwiches under the broiler and within a few minutes they'll be piping hot. But the best part of this hot meal is that you can have it on the table in less than 30 minutes. There are no bothersome leftovers. And clean up is a snap with only one small soup pot, one cutting board, and one skillet to wash.

Sweet and savory spices give this thick carrot soup a rich, full flavor. If you can, try using reduced sodium chicken broth since regular canned chicken broth is extremely salty.

Carrot and Cumin Soup

Serves 2

- 1 tablespoon butter or olive oil
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped onion
- ¼ teaspoon salt, divided
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- Dash nutmeg
- Dash cayenne
- 2 cups reduced sodium chicken broth
- 3 carrots (about 10 ounces), peeled and coarsely chopped into ½-inch pieces
- ¼ cup half and half or low fat milk
- Chopped chives (optional)

Heat butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add onions and



sauté for 3-4 minutes or until they begin to soften. Add 1/8 teaspoon salt, cumin, and a generous dash of nutmeg and cayenne; cook 1 minute. Add chicken broth and carrots. Increase heat to high and bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until carrots are tender, about 12-15 minutes.

Place soup in a blender, leaving the top ajar slightly so that steam can escape, and puree until smooth. Return soup to saucepan and stir in half and half and remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt. Cook until warmed throughout, about 2-3 minutes. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish with chives, if desired.

Yield: 2 servings (serving size: about 1 1/2 cups)

Turkey, Spinach & Fontina Melt

Spread a light coating of grainy mustard on two 1/2-inch thick slices of hearty ciabatta or sourdough bread. Top each with 2 large basil leaves and a few thin slices of deli turkey and set aside. Drizzle a small amount of olive oil in a large nonstick ovenproof skillet and heat over medium heat. Stir in 2 tightly packed cups of prewashed baby spinach, about 2 ounces, and cook until spinach wilts and leaves turn dark green, about 2-3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and spread spinach mixture on top of turkey. Top each with a few thin slices of Roma tomato, 2 tablespoons shredded fontina cheese and sprinkling of grated Parmesan and broil about 4-6 inches from heat until cheese melts and begins to brown. Serve immediately.

Sandwich Substitutions: Toppings for open-faced sandwiches are as endless as your imagination. Try replacing the turkey and fontina with other meat and cheese pairs. Ham and Havarti. Roast beef and white cheddar. Salami and Provolone. Or skip the meat all together and make a pizza style open-faced sandwich by layering fresh sliced mozzarella, basil leaves, and thinly sliced tomato.

Ovenproof skillet tip: Skillets with plastic handles are not geared for high oven temperatures, particularly if they're put under the direct heat of a broiler. But you can make them temporarily ovenproof to broil sandwiches by covering the handle with heavy-duty aluminum foil.

Award winning food writer MAUREEN CALLAHAN studied at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. A native Floridian, she now resides in Denver, Colorado.

Photography by FRED THOMPSON, Temple Terrace, Florida • Food Styling by CAROLYN BREUER, Tampa, Florida.

Bring Out Your Best Recipe For a “One Dish Meal” and a \$100 Prize

Every good cook has a favorite recipe for a one-dish meal. It may be a savory vegetable stew, a family recipe for pot roast, or a tasty lasagne made with “start from scratch” pasta.

In the last five issues of *Roughing It Smoothly*, “Gourmet Quick and Easy” has offered recipes for you to enjoy that were created by culinary expert Maureen Callahan. In the Spring 2005 issue we want to find the “experts” among our 46,000 readers.

So here is the challenge: Give us your best shot with your favorite recipe for a “one-dish meal.” The entries will be judged by Chef Instructor Kathleen Reddy, who teaches Culinary Operations in the Hillsborough County School System, Tampa, Florida. From your submissions, Chef Reddy will prepare a selection of the recipes in her test kitchen and then award the three best with first, second, and third place prizes. First Prize – \$100, Second Prize – \$75, Third Prize – \$50. The winners will be invited to the 50,000th Motorhome Celebration on February 24, 2005, in Red Bay, Alabama.

Here are the criteria for the contest:

1. The recipe should be a “one-dish” meal that is easy to prepare in a motorhome galley.
2. Please state in your application that your original recipe has never been published in a copyrighted publication.
3. The recipe should be typed on 8.5 x 11 paper and submitted to *Roughing It Smoothly* Recipe Contest, P.O. Box 292912, Tampa, FL 33687-2912.
4. All recipe submissions must be received in Tampa by February 4, 2005.



50,000 Motorhomes and Looking For the Oldest Allegro Still in Use

During the week of February 21st, Tiffin Motorhomes expects to build its 50,000th coach! It has been an amazing 32 years of growth. Tiffin Motorhomes has touched thousands of lives – both employees and coach owners. Because of the philosophy of Bob Tiffin about treating everyone fairly and with kindness, these many thousands feel like “family.” Perhaps Tim Tiffin said it best a few months ago, “Dad just practices the Golden Rule every day.”

If Bob had his way, we would probably just put out a little press release and say, “Tiffin Motorhomes just built its 50,000th coach on February 22, 2005.” But company admirers decided that the milestone had to be marked with at least a little hoopla.

The Milestone Coach will be a 40-ft. Allegro Bus QDP. And we want to find the oldest Allegro motorhome to park beside it to show what 32 years of progress really means. **Number 1 & 2** were built in December 1972. It would be great to find either one. If you have a 13-character Serial Number that begins with “CPY”, please call Fred Thompson at 877-538-7467. The owner will receive a Grand Prize of \$1,000, a full detailing job on your motorhome, and a seat front and center in the celebration. We will close the search on **February 4, 2005.**

5. Contestants should include name, address, phone number, and email address (if available). Please include comments about your recipe, including its history if it has been in your family for a long time.

6. Recipes will not be returned to the contestants. Winners will be notified on February 18, 2005.

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Warm Weather, Warm Welcome

That's the Primary Goal— But Maybe Not the Only Reason Millions of Motorhome Owners Will Head South This Winter

by Norman G. Spray

THEY'RE OFTEN CALLED SNOWBIRDS, a misnomer if ever there was one, since they come to escape snow and cold — not flit about in it. “They” are RV owners who leave homes in icy climes to “camp” through the winter months where they bask most days in shirt-sleeve sunshine.

They come by the millions to RV resorts, camps, and even remote desert parking spots with no hookups. Their numbers grow every year as more people, retired or not, buy motorhomes and enjoy a mobile way of life. Thousands of RV resorts and camps across Florida, Gulf States beaches, the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, and arid Arizona and California areas roll out the welcome mat to make these winter residents happy. In fact, the resorts' survival (and profits) depend on their ability to do just that.

To enhance the experience, many of these resorts have professional activities directors who organize and plan dozens of programs to keep winter escapees actively engaged with others who have similar interests, and make them aware of the natural, cultural, shopping, dining, and entertainment attractions of their area. Shuffleboard, ping pong, horseshoes, boccie and volleyball are standard. Others often include card, domino, billiard, and tennis tournaments; excellent golf links; facilities, tools, and instructors for crafts of all kinds; fishing, hunting, bird watching, and ecotour excursions; world class exercise and spa facilities; live music dancing; and guided tours of area attractions, to name a few. The Victoria Palms Resort at Donna, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley has as many as 500 guests in church on Sunday in its sumptuous recreation facility. Residents — up to 2,000 of them in the peak winter season — have even organized their own choir, a great one by all accounts.

Participating in so many activities, these snowbirds (called “winter Texans” in Texas) form lasting friendships and return to the same resorts or camps to renew the relationships each winter. Others, perhaps born under wandering stars, like to visit

several states during the winter season. “Motorhomes are made to motor, after all,” says Rex Carlyle of Ashville, Ohio. He and wife Bea usually park their 42-ft. 2000 Zephyr in Florida in January, Texas during February, then wind up the season in Arizona and California.

If you decide to join this winter-time north-to-south exodus, where you find your own comfort zone will depend on:

- personal preferences and interests,
- what you like to do,
- where you have relatives to visit,
- where friends and acquaintances go,
- how much your budget can afford, and the
- quality of hospitality extended.

If you decide full-scale resorts loaded with amenities are your cup of tea, our limited survey leads to a general conclusion that your costs will be highest in the more popular keys and South Florida areas; somewhat less elsewhere in Florida, other Gulf States, and California; and less still in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas and in some areas in Arizona. Published rates run as high as \$3,000 a month for choicest beach front sites at the upscale America Outdoors Camper Resort at Key Largo. By contrast, you'll pay \$575/month for the best sites in the most-costly peak month of February at Victoria Palms in Donna, Texas. These are full-scale resorts in desirable locations with excellent activity programs, first-class pads, and most every amenity and service imaginable.

You can beat these prices significantly if you are not interested in all the “extras.” Full hookup sites average between \$125 and \$235/month plus metered electricity in Quartzsite, Arizona, a desert phenomenon that has become one of the nation's most visited winter destinations. Sandra McAllister, manager at the 270-site Desert Gardens RV Park, offers a full hookup site at \$150/month plus electric. Park-planned activities usually are limited since most come here to do their own thing.

For \$140 for a long-term permit, you can park as long as sev-



Dorothy Votava has wintered in Palm Beach County, Florida, for over 20 years. Long-term friendships and reasonable rates keep Dorothy and her friends returning year after year.

en months on designated Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land near Quartzsite. This gives you access to well water, a dump station, and trash pickup. Short-term permits cost \$30 for 14 days in the same BLM areas and can be extended as desired. Excluding a 160,000-acre area where RV parking is banned, you can dry camp free provided you're 100 feet off any road. No services are provided — but, for a fee, you can hire local firms to deliver water and provide “honey wagon” sewage pickup.

Even in Florida, enterprising RVers find cost-friendly docking inland. Dorothy Votava, an 80-year-old grandmother who lives full-time aboard her 36-ft. Allegro Bay, has for 20 years wintered near Lake Worth, Florida, where she pays only \$400/month in Palm Beach County. Amenities? “I have friends. We make our own,” she says.

Most state, county, and federal public parks charge less than \$25/day but rules often require move-out after 14 days and for at least one or more nights before returning. Many year-round traditional private parks (not amenities-rich resorts) quote cheaper rates. At Sun Runners RV Park near the beach at Gulf Shores, Alabama, for example, you get cable TV and shaded pull-through sites for \$16/day if you are happy with 30-amp electricity and a dump station. At Rio Hondo in the Rio Grande Valley, full hook-ups at the Twin Palms RV Park run \$249/month. You can stay three months for \$649. Thirty amp service is billed separately.

For sure, there's no shortage of sunbelt places to stay. There are at least 700 in Florida; over 300 in the Rio Grande Valley; some 100 along the Texas coast; 72 inside the town of Quartzsite, Arizona, plus 100 in the immediate area; and over 200 in the Phoenix, Mesa, Tuscon, Casa Grande, and Yuma Arizona, and southern California desert areas. Las Cruces, named by one national magazine as the country's best place to retire, and other southern New Mexico spots also are becoming popular among winter expatriates. If you are looking for a warm weather winter haven, start early by checking standard campground directories for listings in areas you are considering. The directories will provide telephone numbers, mail, E-mail, and web page addresses for city, county, and

state tourist bureaus, chambers of commerce, and other agencies happy to supply data about attractions, temperatures, RV parks, hotels, and restaurants. An internet search by city-state often delivers a wealth of useful information. Once you've decided on an area, spend some time on the telephone with RV resorts or camps. Be sure to ask about weekly, monthly, and season rates since directories usually list only daily rates.

Given the impossibility of reviewing so many destinations in this article, we've prepared thumbnail sketches for a few and asked some veteran “snowbirds” to share their thoughts and experiences. Many snowbirds look forward to returning to the same parks to visit friends rather than looking for new destinations every winter. Following are some of the choices:

FLORIDA

Atlantic-side or Gulf-side, you usually can count on agreeable weather once the hurricane season passes. Amusements range from the great theme parks to opera. Most anywhere in Florida, world class golf courses are nearby. Some resorts have their own and many others arrange discount greens fee deals for their residents. Winter residents enjoy diving, snorkeling, manatee viewing, and all water sports as well as deep sea, lake, and river fishing. Many parks have recreation guides who make arrangements for any of these activities. Many RV parks are located on waterways with facilities for boat docking and launching.

Resorts' rates vary widely based on location, facilities, and activities offered. Beachfront sites (only eight are available) at Key Largo's lovely American Outdoors Camper Beach Resort run \$100/day with no monthly rate. Other full-hookup sites range upwards from \$1,380 a month (\$1,580 for people staying only the month of February).

Costs can be considerably less as you leave the Keys. When Rex and Bea Carlyle of Ashville, Ohio, pulled their Zephyr into Fisherman's Cove near Palmetto just south of Tampa Bay, they

Rex and Bea Carlyle move across the southern states during the winter months in their 2000 Zephyr to take advantage of a wide variety of activities and geography.



BY PERMISSION OF THE CARLYLES



BY PERMISSION OF THE BUZZELLIS

Ellen and Geno Buzzelli, Columbus, Ohio, enjoy the five-star Elite Resorts at Salt Springs on Lake Kerr, through a membership they purchased for only \$800 several years ago.

found a glorious resort with a 780-foot fishing pier and many amenities for \$695/month. Had they stayed three months, the price would have dropped to \$665/month.

Rex and Bea usually stay in Ohio through Christmas to be with family. Then they head south. "Meeting new friends and going back to places we have met friends is one of the things we enjoy in our travels," says Rex, who retired 10 years ago from maintenance management at Anheuser Busch. "Last summer we had to spend three weeks in a motel while Tiffin did work on our Zephyr at Red Bay. We did not strike up a single friendship there. Had we been in an RV camp, we'd have known most everybody in camp."

Having purchased membership in Western Horizons, a growing organization that owns 24 members-only upscale resorts in 13 states and a retreat in Mexico, the Carlyles usually look first for a Western Horizons location since membership entitles them to free hookups. It also entitles them to \$6/night stays at Adventure Outdoor Resorts, a private-membership RV network with approximately 550 parks affiliated with WH. In Florida and in Texas, Rex and Bea seek camps "near the water." Even more important to Rex is open exposure to the southern skies since his high speed internet system depends on satellite signals.

Further north in Florida, Geno and Ellen Buzzelli, of Columbus, Ohio, enjoy the five-star Elite Resorts at Salt Springs on Lake Kerr in the Ocala National Forest for less than \$350 a year. That's because they bought a membership (no longer available) years ago for \$800 and now pay only a yearly "maintenance" fee. However, after a two-week stay, they must move their 33-ft. 2002 Allegro out for a week before returning for another two weeks or pay \$101.50 plus tax for the week they are supposed to be "out."

Geno, a semi-retired stucco and stone craftsman, still takes on some jobs at age 80. He and Ellen (who is "a little younger — not much") participate in card and domino games, play bingo twice

a week, and dance on Saturday nights. Geno golfs nearby and, on occasion, goes to the resort's diamond and "bats and pitches the ball around" with a buddy, a winter dodger from Iowa whose farm Geno and Ellen visited in the summer of 2003. The weather usually is pleasant in central Florida, but temperatures can dip below freezing on occasion. That's still better than Columbus, where winters can be relatively mild but where ice, snow, and temperatures at zero or below are not all that uncommon.

Pete and Dorothy Greendyke of Orchard Park, Illinois., owners of a 26-ft. Allegro in which they've been to Alaska, made a wise decision several years ago when they paid \$110,000 for a fifth-floor condo with a Gulf view at Bonita Springs, Florida. They travel in their motorhome in summers and enjoy winters in the condo, which has appreciated to a worth over \$400,000.

SOUTH TEXAS

Rio Grande Valley. Climate (average January low is 50, high is 69) is only one reason this area stretching from Laredo to the southern tip of Texas at Brownsville has become one of the most popular places for northerners and Canadians to winter.

Over 30 communities (Brownsville, McAllen, and Harlingen are the largest) welcome "winter Texans" in RV parks ranging from five-star facilities to mom/pop operations at rates most find affordable. The Valley Partnership/Chamber of Commerce at Weslaco is an excellent source of information about all Valley locations, attractions, etc. Phone: 956-968-3141 or <http://www.valleychamber.com>.

Fishing (freshwater, saltwater bays, and deep sea) is excellent, whether in the Rio Grande or Arroyo Colorado rivers; Delta, Guerrero, or Falcon lakes; Laguna Madre or other bays; or in the Gulf of Mexico. Scuba divers enjoy their sport at two artificial reefs that attract grouper, snapper, amberjack, triggerfish, tarpon, and shark. Excellent golf courses and tennis courts are usually available within the park or resort or nearby.

Situated at the confluence of two migratory flyways between

Author Norman Spray peruses an exhibit in the Victoria Palms Activities Center. The center's two directors arrange events and activities that allow the winter residents to associate with those who have similar interests.



BARBARA SPRAY

North and South America, the area is a top birding destination for more than 450 bird species. Twenty wildlife refuge parks and nature centers offer rewarding days for birders. These include nine sites in a World Birding Center network that stretches along the 120-mile historic Los Caminos del Rio river road from Roma to South Padre Island.

A big event is Harlingen's Annual Birding Festival, scheduled for Nov. 9–13 this year (800-531-7346 for more information). The festival includes lectures, workshops, seminars, and field trips to dozens of birding locations. Early winter visitors may arrive in time for the Texas Butterfly Festival Oct. 20–23 in Mission, Texas (call 800-580-2700).

One pleasure most winter Texans enjoy during their stay is visiting across the river in Mexico to shop, dine, and just look. Vendors line the streets of Mexican border towns and shops are filled with leather goods, wicker, and crafts of all types. Strolling mariachi bands, sizzling cabrito, and frosty margaritas assault the ears and taste buds.

Many visitors have medical prescriptions filled at significantly lower prices, although regulations now require prescriptions and limit each purchase to a two-month supply. Dining across the Rio Grande is not limited to traditional Mexican or "TexMex" fare. Excellent restaurants are renowned for international cuisine. Some of the best and most famous include La Cucaracha and Sam's at Reynosa, across from McAllen; Arturo's and Angels (a personal favorite) in Nuevo Progreso, a quaint small town minutes south of Weslaco; and Garcia's and Aroma's Café in Matamoros, across from Brownsville.

In February, a famous grito, or shout, opens festivities for Charro Days, a joint Brownsville–Matamoros party that features parades, mariachi bands, folkloric dancing, and Mexican cuisine.

At most points of entry to Mexico (there are 11 border crossings in the Valley), it is easy to park on the U.S. side and hire Mexican drivers who can carry you to points of interest and bring you back. Make sure the driver can cross the international bridge —

Michael and Carolynne Fuller manage the Victoria Palms Resort in Donna, Texas, which also includes a Howard Johnson Hotel. "People who come here for the winter often are in the market for new friends," Michael says. "Through our activities, we try to help."



BY PERMISSION OF THE YOUNGS



After shopping different resorts in the Rio Grande Valley over several seasons, full-timers Terry and Marilyn Young chose Victoria Palms where they found elbow room and pleasant amenities.

then get the price, which should include border crossing fees and usually is cheap by U.S. taxi standards. Make sure your insurance covers you if you decide to drive your own vehicle across. Typically, you'll have to buy coverage from a Mexican firm. This is easily done at most border crossing towns, but rates can be pricey. Proof of citizenship (passports, birth certificates, or voter registration cards all are okay) is required for border crossings.

Michael Fuller, the general manager at Victoria Palms Resort in Donna, says many northerners and Canadians, who now bring their RVs year after year, first sampled the resort by staying at its Howard Johnson hotel, which is managed by his wife, Carolynne. The resort has just opened an expanded 11,000-sq. ft. craft center where visitors may use a large variety of tools and receive professional instruction in wood carving, sewing, stained glass and many other crafts. The resort's two activities directors arrange events and activities "so the winter residents can associate with those who have similar interests," Fuller explains. "People who come here for winters often are in the market for new friends," he adds. "They've mostly lost old high school, college, and career-associated friendships. Friendships formed here become a major reason the winter Texans come back year after year," an observation shared by many other resort operators.

"Dental and medical services are less expensive and often excellent across the border," Fuller points out. "Carolynne uses a dentist who has offices both in Texas and Mexico. Work that costs her \$300 in the U.S. costs \$75 in Mexico."

Terry and Marilyn Young, formerly of St. Louis and now full-timers, are among those who seek pleasant amenities when

NORMI SPRAY



NORM SPRAY

The author's Allegro is nestled among the palms and grapefruit trees at Victoria Palms RV Resort in the Rio Grande Valley. There are 2,000 grapefruit trees in the park and guests are invited to harvest their own famous Ruby Red grapefruits for breakfast.

they settle in for a winter. "We first came to a traditional park in the Rio Grande Valley at the invitation of friends who were members of our dance club," Terry says. "Spaces were crowded and amenities were few, and we decided quickly that we didn't retire to watch our neighbors cooking breakfast," Terry laughs.

But the easy living in the Valley was appealing, so the Youngs shopped resorts and landed at Victoria Palms. In five winters, Terry says, "It froze only once and then only for two hours one night." Terry, formerly a deputy chief financial officer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in St. Louis, and Marilyn are firm believers in staying active in retirement. They jumped in to produce the resort newspaper and a guest directory. They are dancers "and there's always a dance going on in the Valley, if not at Victoria Palms, then at another park in the area," Terry says. McAllen, in

Steve Hamlett, director of operations at Destination South Padre RV Park, says the park's spaces are fully occupied during the winter season. In the background, one of two unique "renovated" water tanks serves as offices and condos while the other houses the park's activities center.



NORM SPRAY

fact, claims to be the square dancing capital of the world. The Youngs also enjoy bird watching in the area and, Terry says, some of the best fresh vegetables and citrus fruit available anywhere can be found here in the winter months.

Even so, Terry and Marilyn have decided to try a change of scenery this winter, probably in the Tucson area. "So far, it looks like it'll cost \$100 to \$300 more a month to get amenities similar to those we've enjoyed in the Rio Grande Valley," Terry reported last August. Changing winter locations may mean missing visits with friends who are regulars at Victoria Palms. "That's a bit of a concern as some of us have become pretty close," Terry declares. "Last summer we had a reunion of several Victoria Palms friends at the Iowa State Fair."

South Padre Island/Port Isabel. Just offshore from the Valley's eastern terminus at the Gulf of Mexico lies Padre Island, a thin 110-mile long stretch of sand that sweeps southward from Corpus Christi, separating Laguna Madre Bay and the open Gulf of Mexico. It terminates only 30 miles north of the Mexican border. From Port Isabel, drive east across the free Queen Isabella Causeway and you enter South Padre Island, a small resort town that's populated by some 2,500 permanent residents and thousands of visitors in all seasons, including many winter Texans. Probably Texas' premier beach resort, South Padre is a mecca for water sports: jet skiing; bay, surf, and deep-sea fishing; parasailing; dolphin cruises; and wind surfing. Horseback riding on the beach, bicycling, tennis, golf, and shelling also are popular. The Laguna Madre Nature Trail north of town attracts nature enthusiasts and bird watchers. Further north, the island is natural — sand dunes, sea oats, and beach morning glory.

Only two RV facilities, one a five-star resort and the other one of the best county parks in Texas, serve snowbirds on the island proper. Others are available in Port Isabel and nearby areas. Cameron County's Isla Blanca Park occupies the southernmost tip of the island. The monthly rent of \$299/month plus electric (20, 30, or 50 amp) gives snowbirds access to over a mile of clean, white-sand beach; picnic and playground areas; two beach-front pavilions; a fishing jetty; restaurants and clubs; a full-service marina with daily charters; a water park, a 1,000-foot sea walk, and a boat ramp. Park managers say their 600 RV spaces are "100 percent occupied" November through March. To reserve a space, call 956-761-5493.

With 200 spaces at Destination South Padre RV Resort, Director of Operations Steve Hamlett says winter residents book two years in advance. Rates here run \$648/month for full hookup and cable TV at most sites, plus an additional \$162/month for premium water view sites. The amenities include a fishing pier, boat launch facilities, deep sea fishing trips from the park's own harbor, and a staff that arranges tours, equipment rentals, and more. Call 800-867-2373 or 956-761-5665 to reserve a space.

Gary and Faye McCarney of Atlanta are among those who hook up their 40-ft. motorhome for winters at Destination South Padre. Gary includes great weather, good restaurants, continuing friendships, and the economy as their main reasons for choosing South Padre. When Gary took early retirement from Hewlett-Packard Company in 2002, he and Faye first rented a motorhome to test the life style. "We planned to compare this area to the Florida keys," he recalls. "We found three things right off: in general, people in Florida did not seem as friendly;

we didn't find many good beaches where we looked; and park fees and living expenses were higher." Gary puts a small inflatable boat in at the park dock to fish in the bay. When a granddaughter visited from Maryland, she enticed him for his first horseback ride along the beach.

Robert and Pat Pratt, of Le Mars, Iowa, have wintered at Destination South Padre since it opened in 1997. They share the McCarneys' fondness for the island and South Texas people. "We've found Arizona and Florida prices to be higher and we receive a warmer welcome in Texas," Pat says. "Folks really seem glad to have winter Texans. They appreciate our impact on the economy."

ARIZONA

Among all "snowbirds," few leave more of the white stuff behind than Robert and Marie Ann Brooke. From the deck of their lovely home at Deer Park, north of Newberry, Michigan, there's a breathtaking view of what Robert calls "Our dependable snow making machine — Lake Superior." That machine drops an average of 246 inches of snow on their roof every winter. That's more than 20 feet!

By late October, the lake produces ominous-looking clouds and the temperatures dip. Bob and Marie winterize their home, load their 2003 diesel-powered Allegro Bus (40-ft. with two slideouts) and head southwest to Arizona, taking a new route each time. They don't come back until sometime in May. "It's always a thrill being on the open road in our Bus and always a thrill when we get home again," says Marie.

Ironically, retirement was not supposed to work this way for the Brookes. They never meant to run from snow. Bob and Marie selected their homesite on Michigan's gorgeous, once heavily-forested, Upper Peninsula precisely because they could count on a heavy winter snow cover. The idea, when Bob retired after 30 years in manufacturing with General Motors' Delco-Remy division, was to enjoy pleasant summer days, then, with snow flying, seriously pursue their passion for snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and other winter sports. Then, while using the snowblower, a freak accident left Marie with broken neck bones that had to be reconstructed using implanted titanium. After that, extreme cold became painful for her.

The accident brought Plan B into focus. "Since we wanted to see the country, we decided to buy an RV and travel in warmer climates during the winter months," Bob says. After first experimenting with a fifth wheel rig, they bought a Rexhall motorhome which they replaced in 2003 with the Allegro Bus. For the past four years, they've spent most of each winter in Arizona, where Marie has two sisters. They arrive in Dewey in November where they celebrate Thanksgiving with Pat and Ron Allbe. As the weather turns cooler in Dewey (elevation 5,368 ft.), the Brookes make their way southeast to Sierra Vista, where Marie's sister, Ruth, lives. Bob calls this area "my favorite place in all of Arizona."

Sierra Vista. Also a mountain town (elevation 4,635 ft.), Sierra Vista is surrounded by the Huachuca, Dragoon, and Mule Mountains. "There are a number of nice RV parks in the area, itself historic, and many sights to see," Marie says. "The weather is pleasant and the scenery is beautiful."

The "sights to see" include Kartchner Caverns and many old



BY PERMISSION OF THE BROOKES

Robert and Marie Brooke board their 2003 Allegro Bus in late October each year and take a new route to Arizona where they spend the winter. Their home in

Deer Park, Michigan, a "summer paradise," overlooks Lake Superior, which Robert calls a dependable snowmaking machine.

mining towns including Tombstone, a registered national historic landmark founded as a silver mining town in 1878, home of the famous O.K. Corral, the Bird Cage Theatre, and the world's largest rose tree. Popular activities include ghost town tours, mining tours, stagecoach tours, art galleries, museums, horseback riding, biking, birding (nearby Ramsey Canyon Preserve and other area canyons are called the hummingbird capital of the U.S.), and golfing at either of two championship courses. Sierra Vista hosts an all-women's rodeo in January.

At Pueblo del Sol RV Resort, one of the parks the Brookes visit, the monthly rate for pull-through spaces is \$425. Back-in spaces are \$375/month which drops to only \$350 if staying two or more months. There's a flat five-month rate of \$1,625 and a yearly rate of \$2,400. Marie's appraisal: "It is very nice with all the amenities and large sites." She also recommends Cochise Terrace RV Resort at I-10 and Hwy 90 in Benson and the Tombstone Territories RV Resort on Hwy 82 near Tombstone. All three parks honor Passport America memberships which, Marie says, "we use a lot when we travel."

Though further south than Tucson, Sierra Vista averages temperatures as much as 10 to 15 degrees cooler than Tucson because of its altitude, Bob says. "It can get chilly at night, even down to freezing, but most days are sunny and it warms right up. By afternoon, golfers are on the greens in shirtsleeves." The area claims 350 or more days of sunshine in an average year. Average highs and lows for January are 58.4 and 34.2 degrees F.

Though Bob readily admits his "favorite place in Arizona" might not be as appealing to others, he and Marie formed their opinion after sampling winter life at other popular Arizona destinations. "We like to move around a little," Bob says, "so we usually rent a space for no more than one month at a time. That saves a little expense but still gives us the freedom to move when we feel like it."



BY PERMISSION OF THE WESTS

Rine and Virginia West found reverse snowbirding to their liking. After buying a 14 × 60 mobile home and lot in Casa Grande, Arizona, the Wests spend the summer traveling in cooler climates in their 1985 Allegro.

Their roaming, Marie recalls, has put them in parks all over the state: Grand Canyon, Overgaard, Yuma, Salome near Quartzsite, Prescott, Phoenix, Wilcox, Tucson and points between. Though not his choice, Robert thinks folks looking for ideal winter temperatures should check out areas like Phoenix, Globe, Mesa, and Apache Junction. “One year we camped a couple of days at Quartzsite (see below),” Bob recalls. “If you’ve never been, you should do it at least once. It is almost unbelievable. All the camps and the desert around are full of campers and dry campers. Many spend the entire winter and love it. For us, well, we’ve been there, done that. Too many people. We prefer the smaller towns.”

To winterize their home before leaving in October, the Brookes board windows, shut down appliances, and drain water lines. “It is a bit of a hassle,” Robert admits, “but it is worth it.” The Brookes “just love” their Allegro Bus which Bob calls “a beautiful motorhome in every way.” They make a standing appointment to stop by the Tiffin service center in Red Bay on their way home each spring. “There you don’t hassle about anything,” Bob says. “If it’s not right, they fix it . . . and they are good at it. Bob Tiffin and his people do a wonderful job.”

By the time the Brookes get back home, their own area is transforming from a white playground for snowmobilers and skiers to one where tourists and the relatively few year-round residents enjoy “perfect summer weather.” Bob has a small boat for fishing or just pleasure-riding. But mostly, he says, “After being gone six months, I just enjoy catching up, doing maintenance around the place, cutting wood, and mowing the lawn.” Marie, meantime, is gardening, crocheting, and putting up the produce from the garden: beets, raspberries, strawberries, and those famous Michigan blueberries that grow wild.

“Using the Bus to escape winter’s cold and bring us back to this summer paradise lets us enjoy the best of both worlds,” Bob says. “Retirement has not worked exactly as planned but RVing has become a most pleasant alternative to snowmobiling.” Adds Marie, “We are blessed with the good life.”

Casa Grande. Rine and Virginia West, retirees originally from the Sioux City, Iowa, area, might be called reverse snowbirds. When Rine retired from the Iowa Air National Guard in 1987 after 31 years maintaining jet aircraft, he and Virginia figured there were better places to spend winters than Sioux City, which last year had some 20-below zero days and plenty of snow. They bought a 31-ft. 1985 Allegro, which they still own—only now it’s their “summer home.”

“Our plan was to try one year in Arizona, one in South Texas, and one in Florida and then decide where we liked wintering best,” Rine says. “We went to Arizona first and liked it so much we’ve never been anywhere else.” After five years living as motorhome full-timers, they bought a 14 × 60-ft. mobile home and lot at the Safari RV Park in Casa Grande, Arizona. Now they are northerners with a permanent address in Arizona. Instead of using the Allegro to escape winter, they board it to escape Arizona’s summer heat and spend summers in home country. In 2004 after a long stay in the Sioux City area, they spent time in Kentucky, then stopped by the Tiffin service center in Red Bay before returning to Casa Grande, where they’ve wintered since 1993.

They usually park the Allegro in a storage area and take it out for special activities or use it as an extra bedroom for visitors.

Rine and Virginia find the climate agreeable in Casa Grande, which is some 50 miles southeast of Phoenix. “It gets cold enough at nights that we often run the furnace,” Rine says, “but most days are sunny and it warms up quickly. On coldest days, a sweat shirt or light jacket usually is warm enough. No need for parkas like it takes to survive the Sioux City cold.”

The Wests tow a 2003 Saturn L200 and keep a Jeep in Arizona. Rine likes “jeeping,” both in the desert and in the Mineral Mountains near Globe. “We often drive to Yuma to visit friends, and then turn south into Old Mexico to get dental work done. Many snowbirds go there for dental work, doctor visits, and to buy prescription drugs at a big savings,” she says.

All in all, the Wests find that reverse snowbirding suits them just fine.

Quartzsite. Probably the snowbird capital of the country, this small town of 3,500 attracts hundreds of thousands of RVers every winter. By the end of February 2005, it will have hosted 2.3 million visitors, most of them arriving by motorhome or pulling other RV equipment. Walt Akin, publisher of the town’s newspaper and Quartzsite Business Chamber of Commerce spokesman expects 250,000 or more coaches to park in the town’s 72 RV parks and surrounding desert. What brings them and what do they do out there on the desert?

They come, first, for the warm sunshine with temperatures above 70 most winter days. They come to visit friends made previously. And, perhaps just as important, they come to experience Quartzsite’s shows and entertainment and its huge Pow Wow Swap Meet. Those who love the outdoors will enjoy birding, hiking, and exploring the desert ATVs.

The 22nd Annual Quartzsite Sports, Vacation & RV Show, biggest of all the shows, is scheduled for Jan. 22–30, 2005. The 8th Annual Quartzsite Hobby, Craft & Gem Show is slated for Feb. 2–6 and the 7th Annual Rock & Roll Classic Car Show runs Feb. 5 and 6. Exhibits run 9 A.M. until 5 P.M. each show date.

Over 350 companies were represented at the RV show in 2004 with at least that many expected in 2005. The show is held inside

a huge carpeted tent 60-ft. wide and 640 ft. long. In addition, 250 exhibitor's RVs were parked outside the tent. The 20-acre show site, with 15 acres of visitor parking, is asphalted to minimize dust. Service bays are provided for RV equipment, service, and installation.

Quartzsite begins its transformation from a sweltering sleepy summer village to a teeming "RV-opolis" with a "welcome back" celebration Nov. 6. There'll be a Christmas parade and then business activity begins in earnest with vendors showing, selling, and swapping wares at hundreds of flea markets through March. Shops and outdoor street booths offer gems, minerals, and rocks; jewelry, arts, and crafts; and goods of all kinds from the world over.

"You can buy and sell anything from soup to nuts," says the town's Walt Akin. Adds Robert Brooke, who took his Allegro Bus to Quartzsite one year, "It was almost unbelievable. Everything you can think of connected to RVing is either displayed or for sale at the show and even afterwards. All the camps and the desert around are full of campers and dry campers."

Music is big with jam sessions most every night somewhere in town. Many RV parks sponsor dances open to all campers, not just their own. Bingo, crafts, potluck dinners, rock classes, and other special events are open to visitors. There are nearby golf courses, day tours to points of interest, and a chili cook-off the last weekend in March that more-or-less closes the season.

Competition between the many RV parks keep hookup costs low, plus dry camping on BLM land is available for a nominal fee. In addition to full hookups at \$150/month plus electric, Sandra McAllister at Desert Gardens offers 60 dry camp sites for \$70/month. That's only \$10 more than a camper would pay for two 14-day permits to camp on BLM land. But the camper is in town, near all the activities, close to water, and has access to the Desert Gardens' showers, laundry, dump, and dumpster. Costs are a little higher outside the immediate area, depending on amenities offered. Ramblin Roads RV Resort at Hope, Arizona, east of Quartzsite, offers full hookup and satellite TV for \$250 plus electric for the first month and reduces that \$10 for each month thereafter. Rates are almost identical at the Desert Palms Golf



LA MESA RV AND JEAN BARNEY

Tiffin coach owners have long found Quartzsite to be a top destination to escape winter's cold. Many RV parks offer very reasonable monthly rates and don't charge any extra for the spectacular scenery.

and RV Resort at Salome, some 37 miles northeast of Quartzsite, and an adjacent 18-hole golf course is a part of the package. For a site on the golf course, the monthly fee is \$25 higher or \$275 plus utilities. Long-term residents can stay four months for \$850 plus utilities. The resort also sells 3-acre lots for \$2,999, says Office Manager Linda Dubbelde. Electric service and meter are provided, but the buyer must pay extra for a septic system of his choosing. Ownership of lots seems to be growing in popularity among snowbirds who have decided on the one place they want to winter. Either way, even high fuel costs aren't expected to stem the southerly flow of motorhomes this winter. From Florida to California, warm weather and warm welcomes await them.

Nestled in a valley between scenic mountain ranges, Quartzsite has experienced phenomenal growth as a winter destination for RVers.



BOB LANKFORD PHOTOGRAPHY

From Chassis Frame to Raw Interior

by Fred Thompson

if you are interested in motorhome production, you must come to Red Bay and take a plant tour. The attention to the most inscrutably small details, the incredible complexity, the thousands of parts — and yet, it all comes together.

The first work station is numbered **00**, and then **0**. Perhaps, Station **1** was the beginning point at some time in the past and the engineers had to add two earlier stations.

With 20 years of experience, Tim Massey supervises the assembly of the critical infrastructure in stations 00 – 6, with the exception of station 4 where Mickey Collum takes over to assure the perfect alignment and setting of all the cabinets and interior walls.

Station 00: The basement is being completed. Perfectly cut basement flooring, a 3/4-inch exterior grade waterproofed plywood called Darko, is dropped into channeled steel rails that were previously installed in the welding shop. The storage bays are sprayed with an adhesive and smoothly covered with a gray felt lining. All wet-area bays get Darko on both sides. Pre-formed metal boxes are quickly installed to create the equipment bays: power cords, inverters, control boxes for jacks, batteries, and the water-sewer assembly which also receives a white fiberglass surround. The engine is cranked and the chassis is driven to Station 0.

Station 0: With every motion seemingly rehearsed, Casey Blanton builds the water service boards — the neat, clean assembly you see when you open the bay door to connect your water and sewer lines. The red and blue pipes (for hot and cold water) are deftly cut and assembled with elbows and clamps. Each piece of the assembly is marked with adhesive-backed labels. It seems impossible, but Blanton cuts the parts and builds ten service boards on each shift.

O’Neal Hammock, a 20-year veteran, installs the water assembly board while Mark Smith and Terri Cantral install the water lines to service the toilets, lavatories, sinks, shower, and ice maker. The grey and black holding tanks slide into positions that soon will never be seen again.

At a workbench nearby, Rusty Holland cuts and assembles the half-inch black iron pipes for the LP gas system to service the refrigerator, furnace, water heater and stove. The installation follows rigorous RVIA standards. Dale Galloway installs lighting for each storage bay with wiring that drops into place from the harness overhead.

It all happened at Station 0 in just 50 minutes.

Station 1: From here the production line forms and moves in a “U-shaped” path through the plant. Technicians Chris Stamphill, Ryan Lancaster, and Kathy George pull the appropriate color-coded wires from the several harnesses positioned



Casey Blanton assembles a water service board at Station 0.



Built as a sub-assembly, the entire floor is installed at Station 2.



Pre-assembled ceramic tile or simulated hardwood floors are choices when the motorhome is custom-ordered. A vacuum crane lowers the assembly perfectly into place at Station 3.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE AUTHOR

throughout the chassis and begin to attach the water pump and switches, phone jacks, TV co-ax hook-ups, and countless other devices. A foam barrier goes down between the chassis and a floor which will be positioned at the next station. The heat ducts are run from the furnace's future location to imaginary vents throughout the chassis. Everything that goes under the floor must be in place before the chassis leaves Station 1. The steps are prepped with wood to receive carpet. Additional sealing is done after all the installations have been made. It's time to move on.

Station 2: From a sub-assembly location, the complete floor is transported by an overhead crane and placed alongside the arriving chassis. Holes are cut in the floor to gain access to wiring and other assemblies that will service the living area. The crane again lifts the floor and hoists it into position over the assembly as workers align it with the chassis underneath. While levering the floor into alignment, three men with air drills plunge 60 screws and 1/4-inch bolts through the floor, attaching it to the steel frames of the chassis. If the chassis is carrying a diesel pusher, a fiberglass "doghouse" that eventually will be hidden by the bed and closet is installed over the engine. Just before the chassis leaves this station, 4 1/2-inch screws are threaded through both the outside perimeter of the chassis frame and the outside steel members of the floor frame. At Station 6, these screws will be air-driven into the bottom aluminum members of the wall frames.

Station 3: Every model has several options for flooring and carpet. The diesel coaches offer ceramic tile with mortar and simulated hardwood flooring. Built as one-piece sub-assemblies in



At Station 4 cabinets and partitions are perfectly aligned with jigs and frames to hold them in position until the sidewalls are installed.

the Belmont plant six miles away, the flooring units are delivered to Station 3 just in time to meet the models into which they will go. Foam padding and carpet go down next, with double plastic tacked into position for protection until assembly is completed.

Station 4: The custom-built cabinet shop is supervised by 31-year veteran Mickey Collum. The fit and finish of the cabinets in Tiffin-built coaches attests to the quality of wood, design, planning, and skilled workmanship that goes into their construction. But it doesn't stop there. To avoid spoiling the beautiful workmanship, the cabinets have to be perfectly installed — squared and flushed from every angle. As the installations progress at Station 4, jigs and frames are positioned to

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hold the cabinet assemblies perfectly in place until the sidewalls are installed. Interesting, don't you think? In a site-built house, the walls go up first and then the interiors. Not so with a motorhome.

After the cabinets are set with their accompanying appliances and fixtures in place (and before the walls are attached), all the plumbing and electrical is done from the backside of the cabinets while they are still exposed.

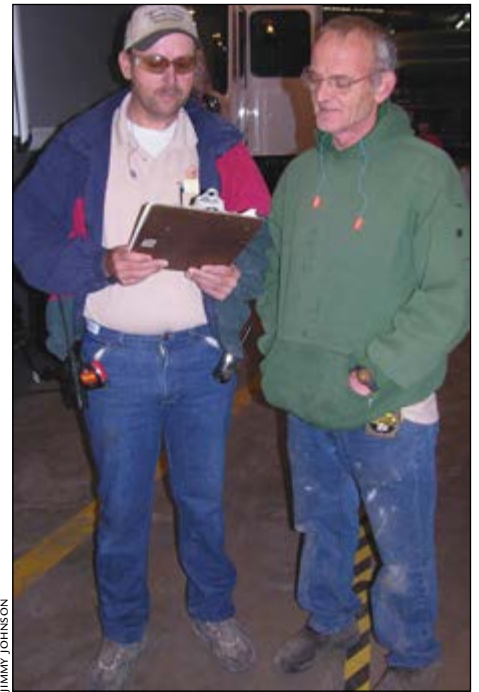
On diesel models, the front steel cage and back-end wall are installed at Station 4.

Station 5: With the cabinets still exposed, the water lines are stubbed in and every fixture requiring water is attached: two lavatories, kitchen sink, toilet, washer-dryer combo, shower-tub, and the refrigerator. Keep in mind the speed that the line moves. Rarely does a unit remain at a station more than 45 minutes.

Station 6: Built on a sub-assembly line nearby, the correct walls for each motorhome meet the chassis at Station 6 at just the right time. That phrase, "just the right time," is critical. To meet production orders from the dealers, the assembly line must be kept moving at the prescribed pace. And every sub-assembly must arrive "just in time" for that to happen. Production line orchestration is an amazing feat of engineering within itself. The inverted 4.5-inch screws that were threaded into the frame at Station 2 are now air-driven into the aluminum wall member to attach them solidly to the base frame that was built in the welding shop. The joining wall members are caulked with clear GE silicone as they are connected to the floor, and to each other at the vertical corners.

Station 7. The floor and overhead cabinets along with the interior walls are attached to the newly installed sidewalls.

After wall installations at Station 6, floor cabinets and partitions are joined to the walls to give the coach stability and strength. Overhead cabinets are then attached at Station 7.



JIMMY JOHNSON

During a morning break, supervisors Tim Massey and Mickey Collum review production specs.

Additional strength is added to the structure when the partition walls are attached to the sidewalls.

At this point, you can still see the sky (if we were outside), but it's beginning to really look like a motorhome! This article was written in November. Over the Christmas-New Year's break, the entire plant will be reorganized with two separate assembly lines: one for diesels and one for gas burners. You have noticed as we described the work done at each station that mention was made of certain features that pertained only to diesels and some only to gas models. Specialization will improve both efficiency and production quality.

In the next issue, we will continue this series on motorhome production.





The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

Connor's First RV Ride

This past summer, we were in the market to purchase our second Tiffin Motorhome so my wife and I went to the manufacturing plant in Red Bay to look at different models, colors, options etc. While there, I got a call from my daughter in Knoxville who was expecting our first grandchild. The news wasn't good. Through an ultrasound, the doctors found that our soon-to-be grandson had some rather complicated and unique heart problems. It was then determined that he would need the best surgeon and hospital care possible, so Children's National Hospital in Washington DC was where we would be going.



Jennifer and Connor

We wanted to find our motorhome with the colors and options of our choice and have it ready to go to DC in approximately eight weeks. Luckily we found a dealer, Sherman RV, nearby who had a 2005 Phaeton QDH on order with the right exterior color and most of the interior options we wanted. Since they had just recently placed the order, we were able to add the few extra options that we wanted to the existing order.

We took possession of our beautiful 40-ft. Sunlit Sand Phaeton with not much time to spare. Connor was born five days early in Knoxville so we scrambled to load up and get on our way to see our prized grandson. While we were

getting set up at a local Knoxville campground, we met a nice couple from Ohio who were parked adjacent to our site. They both were very complimentary of the outside appearance of our new Tiffin motorhome. We invited them to come inside and they immediately fell in love with what they saw. I answered as many of their questions as I could, then they asked for the phone number of the dealership and salesman with whom we had dealt. They were ready to trade their 2004 Brand-X motorhome for one just like ours!

Three days after Connor was born, he was airlifted from Knoxville to Children's National in DC to prepare for the first of three planned surgeries. At five days old, he had his first successful heart surgery and at nine days old, Connor was riding comfortably with his family in his first RV ride all the way from Washington DC back to Knoxville.

Our "new found friends" from Ohio called to inquire about Connor and to let us know they, too, were proud owners of a new 40-ft. 2005 Phaeton QDH purchased from the same dealer in Mississippi as we bought from. We're planning to camp with them next spring and share more of our RV-ing experiences.

And someday when I tell Connor this story, he will more than likely be a candidate for a new Tiffin Motorhome himself.

David and Dianne Young
Pickwick Lake, Tennessee

Air Bubbles in Power Steering Fluid

We have a 1991 34-ft. Allegro Bay. After erratic power and losing power completely in both the brakes and power steering, our mechanic changed the power steering pump which did not solve the problem.

After a referral from Crowder RV Center, we went to Edgehill Motors in Johnson City, Tennessee. The technician threaded a tiny flexible hose about 12 inches long

through the power steering reservoir and into its connecting line. With the motor running and turning the wheel back and forth to the extreme left and right, he was able to relieve the bubbles from the hydraulic fluid system. Air bubbles in the line had caused the intermittent and sometimes complete loss of power in the brakes and steering.

After the repair, we made a wonderful 600-mile trip to Poppy Mountain Campground (six miles east of Morehead, Kentucky, on Hwy. 60) to enjoy the largest Bluegrass Festival in the U.S. — over 1,000 acres. It takes place the first week in September.

Keep on roughing it smoothly!

Walter T. Adams
Mountain City, Tennessee

Taking Guns into Mexico

My wife and I have been camping for 35 years and have gone from tent to pop-up to trailer and just last year bought our first motorhome, a beautiful 1984 Allegro that we both just love.

We enjoy *Roughing It Smoothly* magazine and think the articles are well-written and researched. However, the sidebar in the October issue about what you need if you travel into Mexico contained one glaring omission. "What not to take" did not mention firearms. We have driven down to Tampico several times to visit my

daughter when she lived there and were told under no circumstances would the Federales allow weapons across the border. This will land you in a Mexican jail with little recourse for release.

This information might come in handy for someone planning a "Bump Down Baja."

Richard and Doris Evers
Hanceville, Alabama

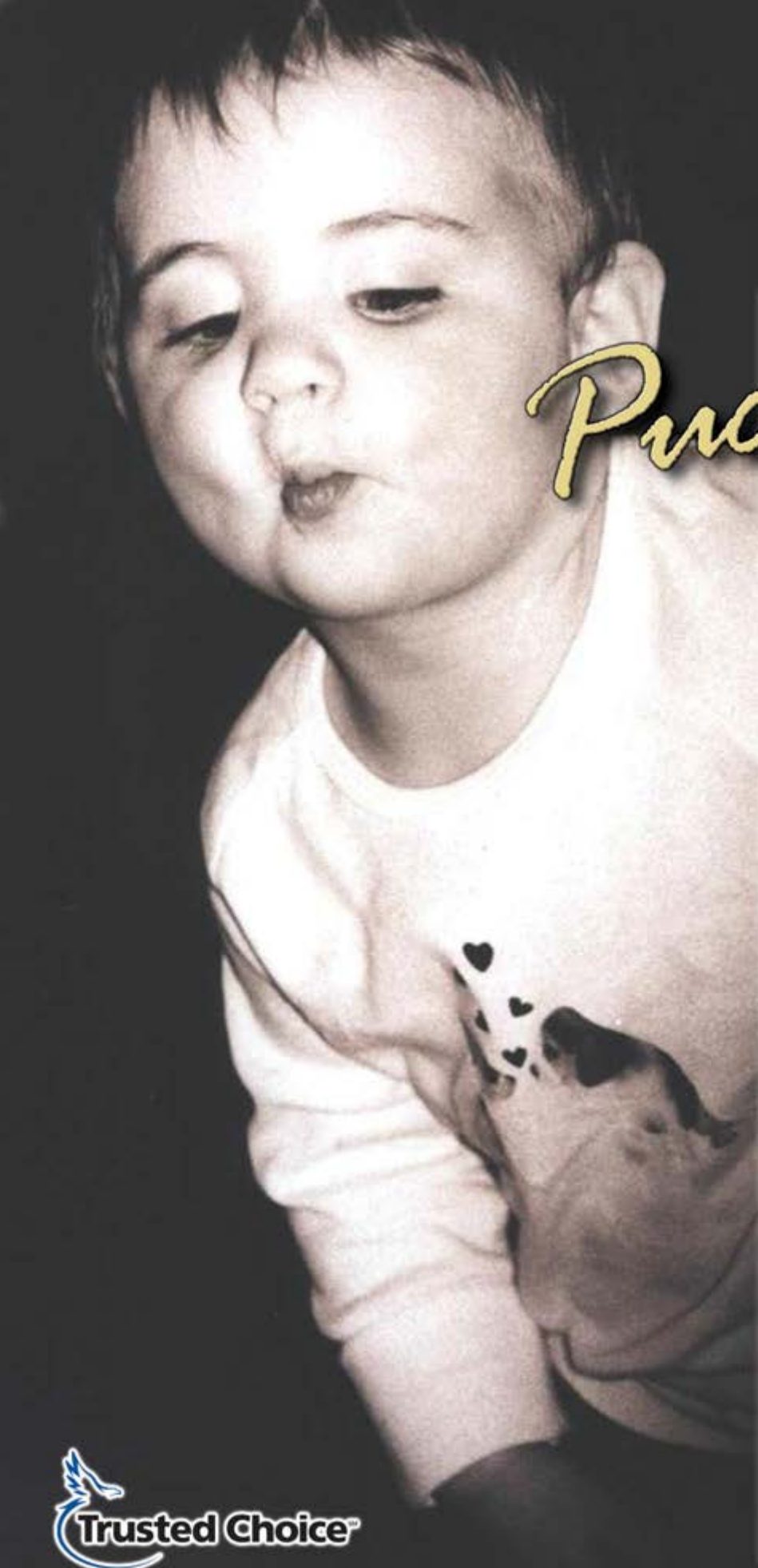
Bar-B-Que on Wheels

Harold Loftin, of Tupelo, Mississippi, launched his Bar-B-Que on Wheels business in 1995. He originally hauled his big BBQ cooker with a pickup, but switched two years later to a 1978 Allegro. Working on weekends only, Harold is employed during the week by the Mississippi Health Department. As you would expect, his business has the required MHD certificate and license.

In March 2002, he found a good deal on a 1997 34-ft. Allegro Bay which he now uses to pull his cooker. He operates on Fridays and Saturdays alternately in Tupelo and Aberdeen. Specializing in pulled pork and chicken, Harold offers sandwiches, or a plate which includes your choice of meat, plus slaw, baked beans, and bread. You also can engage BBQ on Wheels for catered events. To find Harold's exact location on a weekend, call 662-369-5237.

Entrepreneurship in this case mixes an Allegro Bay with a commercial BBQ cooker. Harold Loftin's weekend business has flourished in northeast Mississippi.





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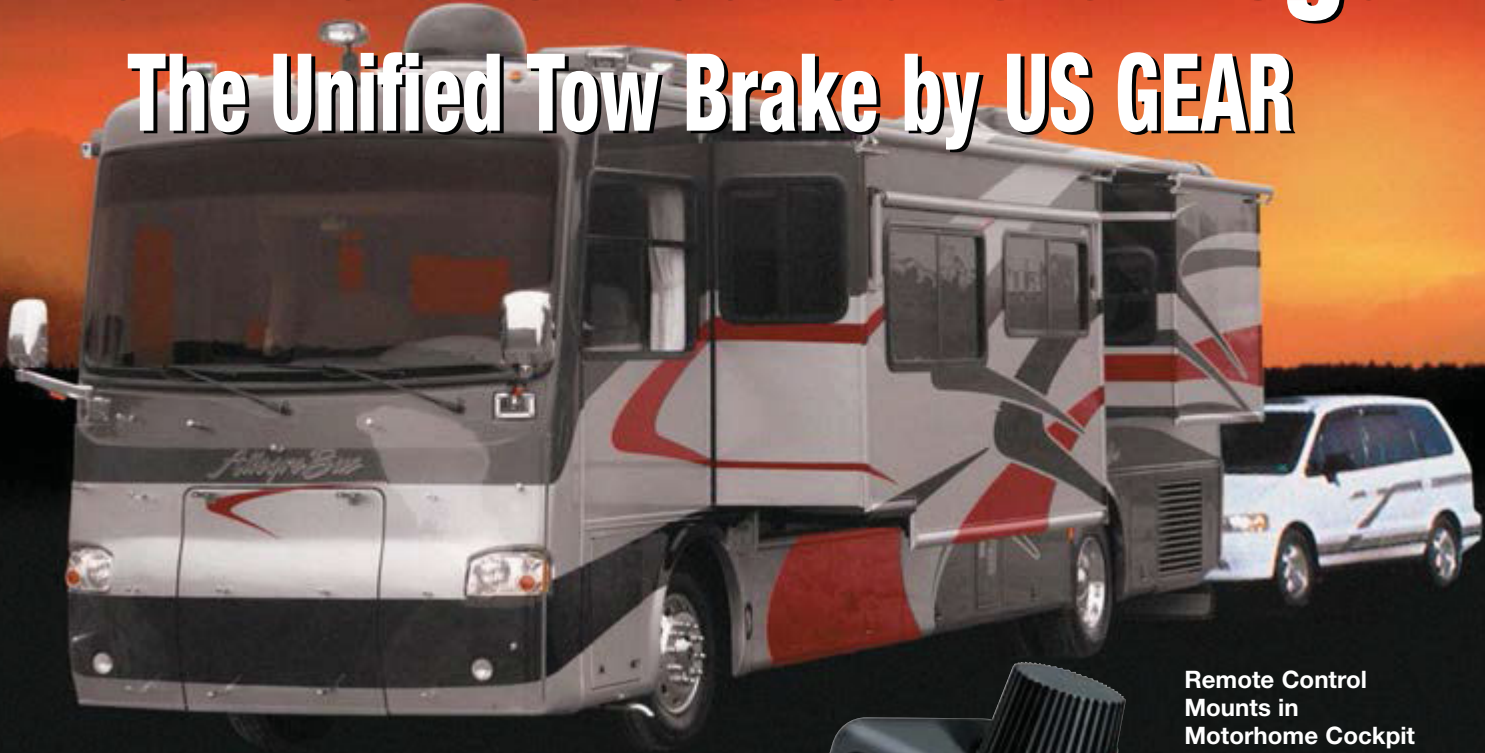
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Bob & Bobbie

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There's nothing like strapping yourself into something called the Cyclone to test the limits of your digestive system. But when you're RVing, the last thing you want is a road trip like a carnival ride. That's why Workhorse made Transmission Grade Braking standard on the W-Series gas chassis. TGB enables



the driver to control vehicle speed during a steep decline simply by tapping the brakes and letting the transmission slow the vehicle down.

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It's safe to say the right type of brakes are pretty important. That's why we created Transmission Grade Braking, designed to help you navigate steep declines and avoid unnecessary wear on your brakes. Because let's be honest, RVs are much more fun to drive when you decide how, when and where you're going to stop.



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