

Roughing It Smoothly[®]

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- Snowmobiling in Yellowstone

SPECIAL

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On our cover: Tower of the Americas in San Antonio, Texas.

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Editor's Note

As we move into winter and the holiday season, there is no need to store your motorhome. San Antonio warmly beckons visitors in winter while Yellowstone challenges RVers with exciting snowmobile adventures. By mid-January, Tiffin dealers across the U.S. will be planning their late-winter shows. Be sure to read Bob Tiffin's column first and you may decide it's time for a new coach.

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

A Window of Opportunity

by Bob Tiffin

Once or twice every 20 to 25 years there is a real *window of opportunity* for a retail customer to purchase a new motorhome. Right now we are in that perfect window because of several factors:

- The barrel price for oil (Dec. 5) is down 72 percent to \$40.81 from this summer's high of \$148 (see my column in the Spring RIS). Pump prices have fallen significantly and will continue to adjust to the drop in barrel prices.
- The prime has dropped to 4.0, bringing consumer interest rates to their lowest point in many years.
- Motorhome inventories are high.

Now is the time to get into the motorhome market and buy that new Tiffin coach. It will be a long time before you see a window of opportunity as advantageous to the buyer as this one.

Because Tiffin Motorhomes has been in business for 36 years, we had the experience of seeing the financial crisis of 1979-81. Compared to our current crisis, the "Crisis of '79" for this company had notable differences.

When I visit with our customers at shows or here at the plant, they usually ask, "How are you doing?" Translated, that means "How is production holding up or how many are you selling?"

Getting to the point quickly,



production is off 75 percent. Even though production is down, at the same time our service and warranty activity is normal. That gives us a real good indication that business will pick up in the near future.

I base this projection on our past experience in August and September 1979. At that time, our service at the plant was non-existent. We were not shipping parts to customers or dealers, and our telephone literally quit ringing.

The retail shows in 1979 just basically went away, but this time the underlying foundations of our business — service and parts — are as strong as ever. This year the retail shows have been elaborate and well attended.

Interest is high, but confidence is down. A financial analyst on the


evening news this week pointed out that the plunge in the stock market was in large measure controlled by emotion, and some have called it fear. FDR's rallying cry has become an American legend: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

As the analyst continued to speak, he pointed out that all of the factors of a strong economy are still in place: a skilled labor force, incredible technology, plant capacity, and capital.

Fear is a four-letter word that is controlled by reason. When our rational minds take control, fear will go away and confidence will be restored.

When the market is down, savvy buyers begin to search, find, and snap up *value stocks*. They are the winners. But really, we all become winners when we follow the lead of the savvy buyers. The RV market in general, and Tiffin in particular, is at the same threshold as the stock market.

Our motorhomes are like value stocks. Now is the time to buy — the window of opportunity. We need the savvy buyers to step up to the plate and lead the charge. It will only take a few hundred buyers to get the snowball rolling again. Current Tiffin owners need this company to be here for you now and in the future. Tiffin Motorhomes needs you to restore confidence in the market.

Together we can do it! 

Reader Response

Tammy Kuipers, an owner of Veurinks RV Center in Grand Rapids, wrote to thank me for my column in the Summer issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*. With her permission, I want to share her letter with you:

Dear Mr. Tiffin:

I just finished reading your article in the Summer issue of *Roughing It Smoothly* and want to thank you for the reminder and the history lesson.

As you know, we are a family-owned business. I can remember my Dad talking about 1973 and what a tough year it was. I remember working for him later in 1979 and wondering if we would ever sell another motorhome. My father had to lay me off and I went to work for a stock brokerage firm.

I watched first hand the effect oil and interest rates had on the stock market. I can remember people telling me when I worked there that I would never be able to go back and sell motorhomes again. I was frustrated. I love the RV business, so I researched Winnebago stock and decided to put my money into the stock just to make a statement, believing that people would still buy motorhomes. Over a year later the stock had tripled. Motorhomes were selling again and we weathered the storm.

I came back to Veurinks in 1983 and in 1990 we bought the business from my father. These times are tough for us right now and we are really seeking wisdom. But sometimes conditions like these force us into better business practices and also increase our faith. We continue to pray for wisdom.

Thank you again. Your article was inspiring and gives us hope. God bless you.

Tammy Kuipers
Veurinks RV Center

Top 10 Tiffin Dealer Dies in Amarillo

Royal F. Yarbrough, 69, of Lake Tanglewood, Texas, died on November 4, 2008. Yarbrough was the owner of Dickey Stout Motor Ranch, one of Tiffin Motorhome's top 10 dealers. His other enterprises included Royal Imports and Royal Chevrolet.

"He always did whatever he said he would do," Bob Tiffin recalled upon learning of Royal's death. "We here at Tiffin Motorhomes

extend our sympathy to Royal's family. His leadership will be a major loss to his company and family as well as to the RV industry."

Mr. Yarbrough graduated from Amarillo High School in 1957 and attended Amarillo College and West Texas State University.

He married Christeen Harmon on Nov. 26, 1960. In addition to his wife, his survivors include one son, Royal Harmon, three daughters, Robin, Stephanie, and Melinda; and nine grandchildren.

The two-minute shower just went down the drain.

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THE ALLEGRO BUS 40 QXP is all about comfort and space. But while the interior design team was creating the feeling of a residential living space, they were also packing in both standard and optional features for you to choose from as you customize your coach and create your own special approach to RVing.

For example, you can option one or two leather recliners with ottomans. Or a 74-inch Ultraleather™ sofa with eight-inch deep seat cushions plus firm back cushions that conform perfectly into the small of your back: comfort! And it's not *just* a sofa. It is a Flexsteel Air Coil® Hide-A-Bed sofa. No apology needed when you put your guests on this sofa. They'll love it.

Manually operated solar and opaque MCD window shades are a major new feature on the Allegro Bus this year. Also new this year is the optional automated system that activates the shades collectively or individually. The entire front windshield is now covered by two one-piece shades with pushbutton controls: a solar screen to reduce glare and an opaque shade that serves as a privacy curtain by night and a sun visor by day. The driver and passenger side windows have solar and opaque shades which also are pushbutton controlled. With the exception of the venetian blind at the galley window, an optional MCD power control panel will raise and lower the solar and privacy shades on all of the windows in the living area.

Company's coming! Do a 180 on the driver and passenger chairs and you have seven in the conversation, seated in Ultra-

leather comfort. Don't try to watch a good movie in the passenger chair. It has a comfort index that's off the chart. With leg lift, 8-way power, plus a recliner, you will be asleep in five minutes. The driver's chair has all of the same features except for the leg lift. The living room area measures 12' 4" × 10' 3", giving this area very residential proportions.

The Ultraleather seating is accented by bold fabric designs in earth tones used in the pillows and valances. The corners of the valances are complemented with handsome carved cherry insets. Roman-influenced sconces provide decorative lighting in the slide-outs while recessed overhead and bullet lights accommodate those who want to kick back and read a book or the evening paper.

The last time you were in Italy and visited some of the fine homes or public buildings, did you notice the floors? Ceramic tile with intricate inlays? Be prepared for the Allegro Bus. You're going to love these beautiful floors.

Fine homes deserve fine furniture, and Tiffin Motorhomes makes certain their owners get the finest in the Allegro Bus. Natural maple and cherry five ways: Natural Cherry, Cherry, Glazed Cherry, Cherry Bark, and White Chocolate (an option for the bath in combination with Glazed Cherry). All of the exterior cabinetry is solid hardwood and features raised-panel doors, surround sound speakers concealed with handsome grills, exquisite custom molding in the slide-out fascias, and heating vent covers.

Let's Talk Entertainment

Watching the latest movie on DVD, listening to the Eagles or Beethoven, connecting your MP3 player to the system, or enjoying your favorite college or professional team playing in high definition, Tiffin's home theater with fully balanced surround sound offers a visual-listening experience unsurpassed in the RV industry. A 32-inch flat panel mid-section HDMI television mounted at eye level is standard. An identical optional 32-inch television is offered in the traditional location over the dash. You can have it both ways, depending on where you are seated in the room and which viewing position is best for you.

Designed by Triple H Electronics exclusively for Tiffin coaches, the entertainment system uses component audio-video cables and HDMI to distribute input/output data from a central, easily serviced black box (mounted under the floor). The box receives high definition broadcast *input* from the King Dome system which pulls programming from network satellites. Additional *input* comes from (1) a high-def enclosed rotating TV antenna (another Triple H invention) receiving local programming broadcast in high definition, (2) HD programming via cable service, and (3) a 5-disc DVD-CD player with high quality picture and digital sound technology. The system transmits *output* to the coach's HD-ready Panasonic televisions and sound equipment. If you are in the mood for a Carnegie Hall concert, turn the lights down low, put both recliners in the middle of the



The Allegro Bus 40 QXP

FACTORING COMFORT, SPACE, & FEATURES

by Fred Thompson

living area, and enjoy. It's therapeutic. All of the described systems are standard on the Allegro Bus.

When any of the four televisions in the coach are turned on, one click on the remote activates a selection screen which offers "TV, DBS, and DVD." Your selection will source *input* for (1) standard television reception provided by the hi-def antenna, (2) cable, (3) satellite reception (DIRECTV or DISH which you purchase separately), or (4) DVD-CD (movies or music) from the standard Panasonic 5-disc player.

You can carry your entertainment outside to the optional 32-inch HD television mounted in the outside wall of the forward passenger-side slide-out. With the 17-foot patio awning extended, you can enjoy the football game while you keep watch over the steaks on the grill.

When It's Time for Dinner . . .

Whether preparing a salad, a sandwich, or a gourmet dinner, the chef will love the galley in this coach. Nearly eight feet wide and supplemented by an island slide-out, the galley features a two-burner gas-on-glass cooktop that is completely sealed. No spill or crumbs can get below the cooktop's surface. The solid surface countertop and backsplash are elegantly designed, yet practical for quick clean-up. Tiffin designers selected a very large residential stainless steel double sink with a brushed nickel single-lever faucet-sprayer and detergent dispenser. You may not need it after you discover the optional automatic dishwasher under the cooktop. Overhead fluorescent fixtures provide excellent lighting for the galley. A residential microwave-convection oven is mounted directly above the cooktop and is vented to the outside. A three-speed roof fan offers additional ventilation in the galley-dining area.

In the 40QXP floorplan, TMH designers offer a 22-cubic foot all-electric refrigerator-freezer as optional equipment. It comes with two additional house batteries (for a total of six) which are recharged periodically when dry camping by auto gen-start software built into the



3000-watt pure sine wave Xantrex inverter. Considerably more floorspace has been added by tucking the fridge into the slide-out. With floorspace equal to the living room, this galley will make you forget you ever left home.

Storage areas for the galley are well-conceived and designed. Deep cabinets on either side of the microwave-convection oven feature a slide-out shelf giving easy access to their contents. The island slide-out offers three drawers, each 13 inches wide by 26.5 inches long. The hutch beneath the television conceals a slide-out cabinet with three shelves—very handy for selecting pantry items as you add them into a recipe, or for storing favorite DVDs or CDs. On the opposite side in front of the refrigerator, a second pantry offers an even larger space. A lighted cabinet above the pantry can be used to showcase glassware or other decorative items. Another bank of three drawers to the right of the sink easily stores tableware, hot pads, dish towels, and napkins.

The optional free-standing dining table with solid surface countertop extends to 41 inches to serve four. Its adjoining hutch provides plenty of space for serving dishes, leaving the table uncluttered.

The Computer Office Option

Tiffin designers offer the option of increasing the width of the hutch to 18½ inches to create a very accommodating

office for a nominal cost. If you want a desktop computer, the cabinet under the north side (assuming a south-front, north-rear orientation) of the hutch offers a slide-out tray for the keyboard, a slide-out shelf for the printer, and a compartment under the printer for the computer. Place your monitor on top of the hutch and you're in business. If you are using a laptop, place it on top of the hutch, a full-featured keyboard on the tray, and the printer on its intended shelf. Use the dinette's free-standing chair turned 90 degrees facing into the hutch. The dinette's table provides ample desk space to spread out your working materials.

On the south side of the hutch, the cabinet has two drawers (12 × 14 × 3.5 inches) for office supplies plus a full depth filing drawer with rails for hanging folders. A double-door storage compartment opening out under the dinette table provides over six cubic feet of storage. The overhead cabinetry across the width of the slide-out yields over 12 cubic feet of storage. In the opposing slide-out over the sofa, you have a much deeper cabinet with 10½ cubic feet of storage. For a home-based business, or just the usual personal bills and record keeping, this office really works.

The Bedroom / Bath / Laundry

Over the last five years as I have reviewed Tiffin motorhomes, I have found it great



fun to “discover” all of the neat places the coach architects have created for storage. The bedroom-bath area always reveals innovation. The 40QXP bath is a walk-through design separated fore and aft with heavy solid cherry doors framing translucent glass. When closed, privacy is assured but the lighting effect is intriguing.

Moving north, on your left is a very spacious elliptical shower measuring 41 × 32 inches. The skylight above the shower can be closed with a sliding panel built into the ceiling. The Price-Pfister hardware, handle, large soap dish, and shower seat make this one of the nicest bathing compartments offered in class A coaches. The translucent curved glass doors slide open on a track, instead of opening out into the room. Good design!

Also on your left you will find quite possibly the largest single-lavatory vanity in any motorhome currently in production—would you believe 24 × 40 inches. Behind the lavatory is a 19 × 24-inch solid surface countertop area with a mirrored door above the lavatory that conceals two 16 × 24-inch shelves. This feature will undoubtedly sell many 40QXP coaches. And, yes, there’s more. One of those interesting discoveries, two drawers in the vanity measuring 27 inches in length, 6 inches wide, and 3 inches deep. Plus a cabinet in the vanity 29 × 12 × 12 inches. The lighting for the vanity is perfect—theater lights just above the mirror for applying make-

up and overhead recessed barrel lights for great overall illumination.

Now, gentlemen, you will find your territory on the right side of the walk-through bath. Otherwise euphemistically known as the water closet, this compartment measures slightly over four feet by three feet. It has a nice reading rack and a handsomely finished wood interior. TMH provided generously for your collection of masculine toiletries with cabinets on three sides of this nicely appointed “closet.” You get three additional drawers (10½ × 10 × 5) in a solid surface countertop vanity. The “closet” also has a separate overhead exhaust fan, and there is another fan near the shower to remove humidity and moisture—all standard equipment in the 40QXP.

Moving farther north into the bedroom, this version of the 40QXP was optioned with a king-size Sleep Comfort bed. Having slept on a Sleep Comfort mattress for the last 15 months, I can recommend it without reservation. It is certainly not a “one size fits all” product. The firmness can be adjusted on both sides to suit either party. The king-size bed permits a large bedside table on the south side with one drawer (27 length × 3½ width and 5¼ inches depth)—another “discovery” that is perfect for storing your paperbacks, especially if you’re a bedtime reader. A smaller ledge-type table on the north side (see picture) is just big enough

for your watch and glasses. The queen-size bed permits a wider bedside table with two nice size drawers.

The slide-out on the east side houses a 26-inch HDMI television, 3.6 cubic feet of overhead cabinetry, plus a handsomely finished two-level chest-of-drawers with solid surface countertops. The lower chest has six drawers: two measuring 14½ × 10 × 7 inches and four measuring 7½ × 10 × 7 inches. The taller chest has a three-cubic-foot clothes hamper under a double-door compartment with two shelves designed and wired for a satellite receiver and a DVD-CD player.

The westside slide-out accommodates the bed. The overhead storage compartment offers a generous 12½ cubic feet, convenient for extra pillows, bedding, and off-season clothing. Another 10 cubic feet is easily accessible under the lower half of the bed. A beautiful comforter is accented with the complementary colors found in the cloth of the cherry-framed headboard. Two sets of lights will take care of your nocturnal reading. For 2009, Tiffin added a ceiling fan in the bedroom which has a bedside control next to switches for the generator and overhead lights. With a window in the sidewall of the bed slide-out and another larger window on the east side, you can get good cross ventilation in the evening. Remember that the Fantastic Vent fan in the galley area has a thermostat you can set to turn off the fan if the evening temperature gets too cool. It functions just like the attic fans we used to have in our homes before the days of central air conditioning.

Infrastructure

Tiffin Motorhomes new Powerglide™ chassis introduced last year has been getting excellent reviews by owners. Optioned on this coach, the chassis is currently available only on the Allegro Bus. To enhance balance, ride, and handling, chassis designer Gary Jones addressed several features. He noted most diesel pusher chassis have 70 percent of their weight in the rear. By moving the propane tank to a position just behind the front passenger-side wheel, and also shifting the



fuel tank and the holding tanks forward, Jones got a 60-40 balance, significantly improving driver control. He adjusted brake timing to get a definite activation of the rear brakes first, causing the coach to squat rather than nose dive. By using four height control valves instead of the three used by most manufacturers, he was able to achieve far better balance. Bilstein custom-built and tuned shocks for the Powerglide and Tuthill did the same for the four airbag suspension system.

The chassis' reliability is guaranteed by powder-coated bracketry, huck-bolt frame assembly, multiplexed electrical systems, digital testing of wiring harnesses, and ultra-sonic welding of all wiring connections. Design and state-of-the-art technology come together to make this Class A chassis the most trouble-free foundation in the industry. See *RIS*, vol. 4, no. 4, for a complete description and analysis of the Powerglide chassis.

In warmer climates, owners of 40-ft. and longer coaches have discovered that having three HVAC units is often needed, if not required. The Tiffin units are low profile air conditioners with heat pumps. Unless you are in nighttime temps below freezing, you should be able to heat your coach with the heat pumps. The 10,000-watt generator is optioned to provide the power to run all three at the same time if you are dry camping.

An Aqua-Hot heating system was also optioned on this coach. The system provides on-demand hot water fueled by a diesel heating unit. It can also be operated with an electrical heating unit. In addition to producing hot water for the galley and bathroom, the Aqua-Hot system heats the coach through the use of five heat exchangers using hot water. Also used in houses, this fuel-efficient system has become very popular in motorhomes over the last ten years.

A 125-watt solar panel on the roof is also a popular option, although the technology is certainly not new. Tiffin uses this green energy source to trickle charge the batteries through the inverter.

Tiffin's 10-Year Limited Unitized Construction Warranty and 5-Year Limited Lamination Warranty are the best in the industry.

In the Cockpit

The new 2009 cockpit with Tiffin-designed instrumentation predicated on the Powerglide chassis has been getting high marks on internet review sites. The easy-to-read gauges have white backgrounds with black graphics and type. The primary gauges, of course, are MPH and RPM in two four-inch circle displays. The odometer and trip meter are LEDs with large type against an orange background in the speedometer circle. The lower half of the RPM circle presents the fuel and battery gauges. A third four-inch circle display presents the gauges for oil



pressure, engine temperature, front PSI, and rear PSI.

The Tiffin-monogrammed steering wheel has fingertip controls for cruise and headlights. To the right of the steering column, the dash houses GPS navigation (optional) and the XM radio (optional, subscription required), the HVAC controls, back up and turns monitor, and two 12v outlets. The dash on the left side of the column houses the mirror control and heater, genset hours, genset start, jacks down warning light, headlights, and spotlight control.

The control console along the sidewall

presents the gear selection panel at fingertip position, function switches conveniently angled toward the driver's view, and wall-mounted controls for the solar and privacy side window shades. The HWH control panel for the leveling jacks is positioned at the rear of the console.

The overhead cabinet above the driver's window houses monitoring and controls for the King Dome satellite, water heater (gas & electric switches), slide-outs, Xantrex inverter, tank monitoring panel, and Aqua-Hot. An adjacent cabinet houses a monitor showing the charging activity from the solar roof panel. On the pas-

senger side of the overhead television, one cabinet houses the handheld control for the TV antenna and a second cabinet houses the Dometic awning control. In its usual position over the passenger chair, a larger cabinet houses the DVD-CD and the satellite receiver (subscription required).

The Walk-Around

As you become familiar with the Powerglide chassis, you will notice a few changes in the locations of equipment. Beginning at the front cap, you will, of course, find the Onan generator in its traditional location. Its auto slide-out makes it easy for you to do frequent oil and coolant checks. Fuel fills are located just above the wheel wells on both sides. Moving to your left along the passenger side, you will notice immediately that the propane tank has been moved to the first door position behind the wheel well. This was done to improve the balance of weight on the chassis. Although you can't see them, holding and water tanks were also moved forward for the same reason.

The second and third doors have 43-inch openings to access the chassis's cavernous pass-through storage area. Including all of the basement areas, you will find approximately 145 cubic feet of storage space. The test coach was optioned with one slide-out tray which pulls out on either side of the coach.

The fourth door accesses a small compartment used exclusively to house the HWH hydraulic system controlling the leveling jacks, making it very easy to service the equipment. The fifth door gives you a storage compartment which would be perfect for a grill or other outdoor equipment that you use often. The sixth compartment is reserved for infrastructure and electrical panels.

Now you are at the business end of this coach. Its Cummins ISL 8.9L diesel turbocharged aftercooled engine develops 425 horsepower at 2000 RPM. It offers peak torque of 1200 lb-ft at 1300 RPM. Its Allison electronic transmission is a 3000 MH six-speed automatic with two overdrive gears. The Leece-Neville alternator produces 170 amps of electrical chassis



power. The two Interstate chassis batteries are maintenance free. Its 150-gallon fuel tank will assure long intervals between fuel stops. Computing fuel prices at this writing, you should be able to go coast-to-coast for about \$1,070. Just for comparison, price two first class tickets from New York to LA. Or even two business or coach class!

When you open the rear engine doors, you will notice everything is easy to reach. Service items include the coolant and oil fill and the transmission and engine dip rods. Easily checked gauges include fuel/water separator, fuel filter, power steering, and air filter minder. Electrical items easily accessed include an on/off switch for the chassis batteries, and fuses for the power train, air inlet, and the chassis main.

Checking out the driver's side from back to front, in the first compartment you will find the customer's air supply. In this unit, it is easy to check and maintain the correct air pressure in your tires every day you travel. You will also find primary and secondary tank drains, Tiffin's patented Auto Transfer Switch, and the Battery Keeper™.

The utility cabinet in the next compartment has everything efficiently positioned for quick hook-ups when you arrive at your next resort. The auto-rewind water hose for city water service also has a single-lever switch to fill your water tank. The sewer outlet, sensors for tank levels, tank flush, and hot water by-pass, plus the outside shower clean-up, are all presented on a white, neatly labeled panel. Inside the next door you will find your 50-amp power cord, also on an auto-retract reel.

The fourth and fifth doors open to the pass-through storage on the driver's side. The sixth door accesses the house

batteries which are on a slide-out tray for easy servicing.

Just in front of the wheel well, the seventh compartment houses some of the Powerglide chassis' high technology. The multiplex wiring and computer-soldered fuse blocks have simplified and appreciably reduced the size of this nerve center. Owners should find it easy to troubleshoot a blown fuse or other problem.


Driving the Allegro Bus on a Powerglide Chassis

The emphasis should be on the "glide." This coach is really easy to handle. Its smooth take-off and firm control in stops are amazing.

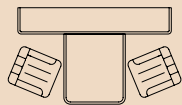
When you enter an Interstate ramp and head for the merge lane, you will feel the power surge from the Cummins 425-hp engine as you easily reach the speed of the traffic flow. The power to pass and move around slower traffic is there when you need it. If you have to move quickly from one lane to another, there is no rocking or uneven motion in the coach. The suspension system does a great job in absorbing the bumps of uneven pavement.

Driving in the cities is really easy with the 55-degree wheel cut and the side cameras. I run with the rear monitor on at all times in order to watch the traffic around my tow car.

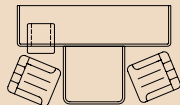
The GPS navigation system is an option you must have. Whether you are entering an address a thousand miles away or just looking for a good Italian restaurant for dinner, the system makes it easy with map displays and voice instruction.

But the feature I like the best is the quietness of the cabin. I can put in a CD, settle into that comfortable 8-way power captain's chair, and really enjoy the trip. Delta can pass out free tickets and I'll still take the bus – an Allegro Bus, that is! 

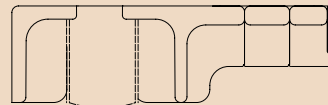
40 QXP



FREESTANDING CABINET/DINETTE



FREESTANDING DINETTE WITH COMPUTER WORKSTATION



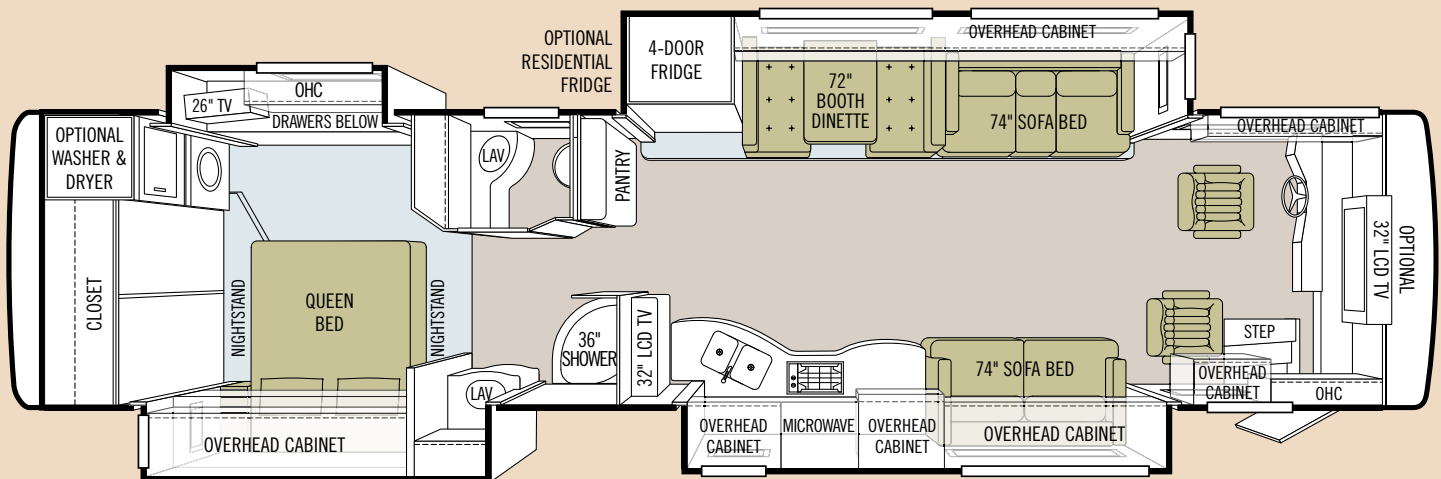
ULTRA LEATHER U-SHAPED DINETTE & SLEEPER SOFA



EURO RECLINER WITH COMPUTER/END TABLE



EURO RECLINERS



OPTIONAL 32" LCD EXTERIOR TV

SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2009 Allegro Bus 40 QXP, Quad Slide, Base MSRP* – \$284,620 MSRP as tested with options – \$313,838

STANDARD FEATURES

Structural

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

Automotive

The Tiffin Powerglide™ chassis
Allison 3000 MH electronic 6-speed automatic transmission with two overdrives and lock-up (torque converter), new push-button shift pad
Cummins ISL 8.9 liter 425 hp electronic/turbocharged diesel
1,200 lbs.-ft. torque @ 1,300 rpm
Side-mounted radiator
Two-stage compression engine brake
Cast aluminum wheels
Four air bags
Emergency start switch
Cruise control
Fully automatic electric leveling jacks
Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters and ABS
55E wheel cut
18-inch custom Tiffin steering wheel with cruise and light controls
Tilt steering column
Independent front suspension

Exterior

Fiberglass front and rear caps
Dual fuel fills
Full body paint
Large one-piece tinted windshield
17.5-inch heated chrome power mirrors with remote adjustment
Single motor intermittent wiper
Undercoating
Fog lights
Daytime running lights
30-inch wide entry door with deadbolt
Keyless entry door system
Double electric step
Auto generator start
Dual pane tinted windows
Exterior patio light on driver's side
Exterior patio light on passenger's side
Electric door awning
Electric patio awning
Window awning package
Slide-out awnings with metal-wrapped covers
Pass-through basement storage
Swing-out exterior storage doors
Single handle auto-lockable storage door latches
Heated water and holding tank compartments
Docking lights
Four house batteries
Two low profile roof air conditioners with heat pumps
2000 watt inverter
Custom full-width mud flap
50-amp service
Power cord reel, 50-amp
Park telephone ready
Cable ready TV
Black holding tank flush system
110v exterior receptacle
Water filter
Tank monitor pad located at dump station
Exterior rinse hose with soap dispenser & paper towel holder
Spotlight with remote
Hadley air horns
Automatic satellite dish
Analog/digital TV antenna
CB radio antenna
Power Fantastic® roof vent with 3-speed fan in galley
Two Fantastic® roof vents with 3-speed fans in bath area
Roof ladder
Color back-up camera

Two side cameras activated with turn signal
Quiet A/C roof-ducted system
Atwood electric jacks
Luggage compartment lights

Driver's Compartment

Entry floor light
12v disconnect switch
Padded dash
Lighted instrument panel
Adjustable fuel/brake pedals
Flexsteel® 8-way power driver's seat with Ultraleather™
Flexsteel® 8-way power passenger's seat with Ultraleather™ and footrest
Passenger seat console box with built-in magazine rack
Color rear vision monitor system with side-view cameras activated by turn signals
Power MCD solar/privacy full-width windshield shades
Solar/privacy shades for driver & passenger side windows
Single CD player & AM-FM stereo
Fire extinguisher
Dual dash fans
Slide-out drawer and writing desk in dash
12v/110v/phone jack receptacle
Beverage tray

Living area/dinette

Booth dinette with solid surface table top
12v and 110v receptacles, park ready phone jack at dinette
Full ceramic tile floor in living room and galley
32-inch flat screen HDMI color television wall-mounted in entertainment center
Ultraleather™ DE sofa bed (passenger's side)
Cloth DE sofa bed (passenger's side, N/C)

Kitchen

Polished solid surface countertops
Expand-an-island
2½-inch deep lighted toe kick
4-door raised panel refrigerator with ice maker
Single lever sink faucet with built-in sprayer
Residential double bowl stainless steel sink
Two 12v fluorescent lights
Stainless steel convection microwave oven with exterior vent
2-burner gas-on-glass cooktop
3-burner cooktop with oven (N/C)
One 3-speed Fantastic® fan
Galley soap dispenser
Solid surface covers for sink and cooktop
Storage racks for covers in cabinet under sink
Cherry cabinetry

Bath

Two medicine cabinets with vanity lights
Skylight in shower
Solid surface vanity tops and bowls
Custom raised-panel bath door to water closet
Curved shower enclosure and door on track
Two 3-speed Fantastic® fans
Fiberglass molded shower

Bedroom

Innerspring pillow-top mattress
Queen-size bed
Bed comforter with throw pillows
Solid wood and fabric headboard
Wall-to-wall carpeting
Solid surface nightstand tops
Cedar-lined wardrobe with automatic lights
MDC solar/privacy shades
Pre-wired for DVD-CD player & satellite receiver
Laundry hamper
26-inch flat panel HDMI color television
Ceiling fan
Carbon monoxide detector
LPG leak detector

General Interior

7-foot ceilings

Soft touch vinyl ceiling
Raised panel cabinet doors
Recessed ceiling lighting
12v fluorescent lights
Adjustable shelving in some cabinets
Enclosed surround sound speakers
Plumbed for washer/dryer with cabinet
Tank level monitor system
Smoke detector
Central vacuum system
Air-driven step well cover
Wall-to-wall carpeting in bedroom
Solar shades and privacy MCD shades on all windows except galley and water closet
Ceramic tile flooring in kitchen, bath, entrance landing, and living room
Complete HD ready television system (HD satellite receivers required)
Complete cable wiring interfacing with surround sound and satellite receiver
Enclosed surround sound speakers

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

In motion low profile satellite dish
Hydronic heating system
Residential refrigerator with 3000 watt pure sine inverter
One slide-out storage tray
32-inch exterior television mounted in slide-out wall
Onan 10,000kw generator with 3 low profile ACs
Satellite radio (subscription required)
Diamond Shield paint protective film
MCD powered shade controls for cockpit and living area
In-dash navigation system
Handheld CB radio
32-inch dash overhead television
Dishwasher, drawer type
Stacked washer and dryer
Dinette/computer workstation
Ultraleather™ air coil hide-a-bed sofa/sleeper (PS)
Two leather Euro recliners
Sleep Comfort king mattress
HWH hydraulic leveling jacks

OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Second storage compartment slide-out tray
Extended drop down awning
Rear view mirror with compass and outside temperature
Cloth air coil hide-a-bed sofa/sleeper (PS)
DRIVER'S SIDE
Ultraleather™ DE sofa/sleeper
One leather Euro recliner with computer end table
Cloth magic bed
Ultraleather™ magic bed
Sofa/booth dinette combination
Select Comfort mattress, queen
Combo washer/dryer
Natural maple cabinetry
Natural cherry cabinetry
Cherry bark cabinetry
Memory foam mattress, queen
Memory foam mattress, king

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 276"
Overall length – 40' 7"
Overall height with roof air – 12' 7"
Interior height – 84"
Overall width – 101"
Interior width – 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 36,600 lb.
Front GAWR – 14,600 lb.

Rear GAWR – 22,000 lb.
GCWR – 46,600 lb.
UVW – 31,820
CCC – 4,780
Trailer hitch capacity – 10,000 lb.

POWER TRAIN

Engine – Cummins ISL 8.9 liter 425 hp electronic diesel
Torque – 1,200 lb.-ft. @ 1,300 rpm
Transmission – Allison electronic 3000 MH 6-speed automatic with 2 overdrives
Tire Size – 295/80R 22.5 XZA2 LRH
Alternator – Leece-Neville 160 amps

CHASSIS

Frame – Powerglide™ chassis
Frame design – Raised rail
Anti-locking braking system – (front) Bendix ADB225 17" vented air disc (rear) Bendix/Spicer 16.5" x 7" drum
Suspension (front) – Tuthill IFS 1460 custom tuned (air)
Suspension (rear) – Tuthill RD 2300 custom tuned (air)
Shock absorbers – Bilstein front /rear custom tuned
Leveling jacks – Atwood electric

CONSTRUCTION

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

ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – Four adults
Fuel tank – 150 gallons
Freshwater – 90 gallons
Black water – 50 gallons
Grey water – 56 gallons
LPG tank – (35 gallons; can be filled to 80% capacity)

MSRP*

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

UVW

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

DEALERS

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

PLEASE NOTE

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

Tiffin Introduces Two New Floor plans at National Dealers' Show

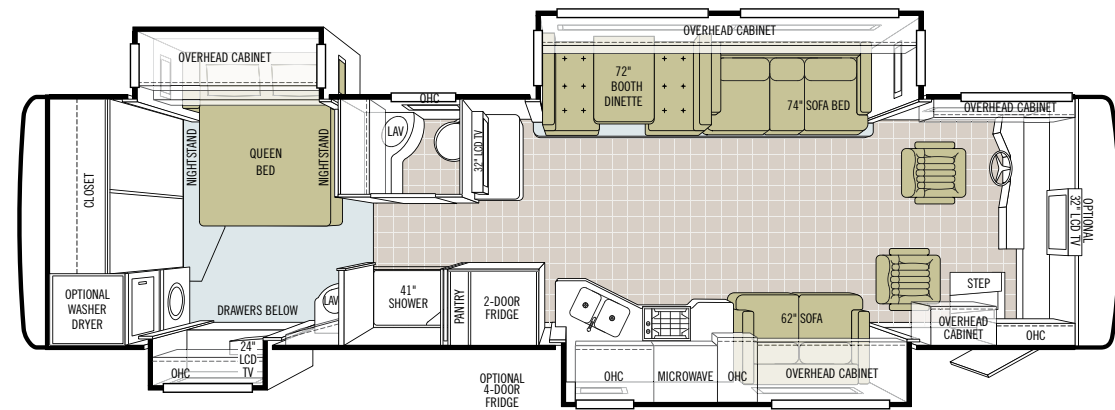
The 36 QSA Allegro RED

Many of Tiffin's customers got very excited three years ago when the company announced the FRED. Tim Tiffin recently christened the Allegro brand's first Rear End Diesel the "RED" with a certain amount of marketing humor. "We expect the Allegro RED to really fill a niche in the diesel market that our competitors haven't touched," he said. With a base MSRP of \$177,380, the 36-ft. coach has four slides and a floorplan very similar to its bigger brother, the Phaeton 36 QSH.

With a 340-hp ISB Cummins engine on a Freightliner raised rail chassis, the Allegro RED passed its handling and roadability tests with flying colors. Tiffin has made several features standard on the RED that are currently options on the other floorplans

in the Allegro brand. Those features are full body paint, solid surface countertops, side view cameras, a 6.0 genset (5.5 is std), an LCD bedroom television, paint protective film on the front cap, and two 13,000 BTU roof air conditioners. Pass-through storage and side-opening doors are also standard.

The coach's MSRP with options is \$183,855. Those options include the Flexsteel Air Coil Hide-a-Bed Sofa Sleeper, the automatic entry door awning, a CB antenna, Hadley air horn, ice maker in the refrigerator, convection microwave, wood panel inserts on the refrigerator doors, 6-way power driver & passenger seats, an automatic King Dome satellite receiver (requires subscription), and a surround sound system.



The Allegro Bus 43 QBP

The eagerly awaited Allegro Bus with a rear bath has arrived. Dealers were also pleased with the trendy floorplan that included a front galley featuring two options: a 22-cu.ft. residential refrigerator along with the U-shaped dinette/sofa in Ultraleather™. It is nothing short of elegant.

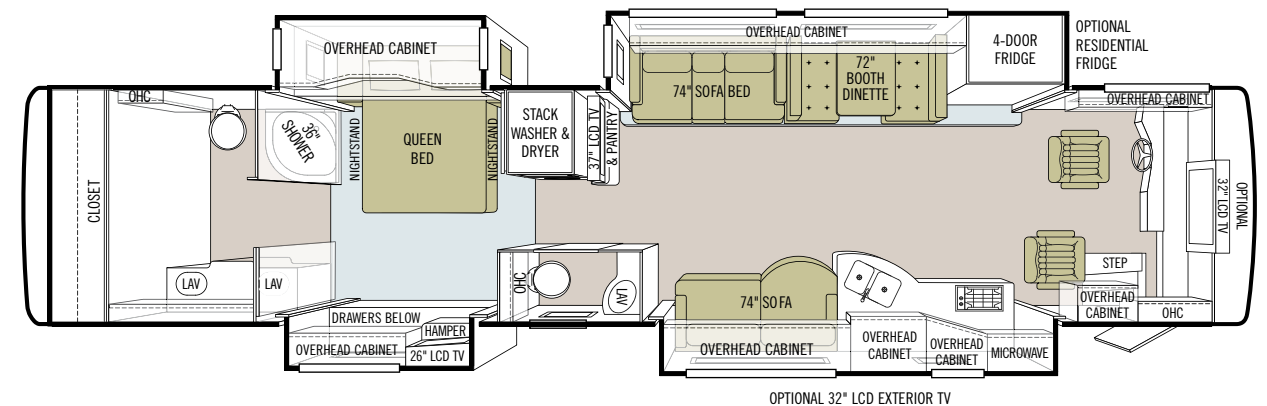
The DS sofa faces a 74-inch curved Ultraleather sofa on the passenger side to create an intimate relaxing alcove in which you can enjoy a surround sound concert, visit with friends, or watch television on the mid-section 37-inch LCD TV.

The 43-foot coach is now offered on a Powerglide® chassis with the tandem rear axle. Buyers can also select the Freightliner or Spartan chassis for this coach. With a 425-hp Cummins ISL power plant mated with the Allison 3000 MH 6-speed automatic transmission with lock-up (torque converter), the coach cruises at Interstate speeds with power to spare. With six air bags and four Haldex pneumatic ride height valves, the quality ride on

the 43 QBP easily rivals coaches priced \$200,000 higher.

The 43 QBP has far too many standard features to mention. But perhaps the three most important *standard* items are the 37-inch mid-section LCD television, the 10,000 Kw Onan genset, and the three low-profile roof air conditioners with heat pumps.

The base MSRP on this coach is \$321,300. With the following options, the MSRP is \$344,309. Those options include glazed cherry cabinets, in-dash navigation, U-shaped dinette/sofa combination, drawer-type dishwasher, extended drop-down awning, 22-cu.ft. residential refrigerator with inverter, exterior slide tray, exterior LCD television, 32-inch dash overhead television, in-motion satellite receiver (requires subscription), paint protective film, MCD power shades in cockpit and living room area with a master control panel, rear view mirror with compass and temp display, Select Comfort king mattress, satellite radio (requires subscription), 125-watt solar panel, and stacked washer-dryer.





She Likes a Challenge

Leesha Shotts is the supervisor of the Wire Harness Shop at Tiffin Motorhomes, a department that has 12 employees at low tide and 30 when TMH is running at full production producing 65 motorhomes per week. She likes a challenge.

As with most of Tiffin's supervisors, Leesha is native to this area. She grew up in Belmont, Mississippi, just a few miles from Red Bay where the TMH paint plant is now located. "When I was in high school, I played basketball and softball, ran track, and was a cheerleader for the football team," she said, having recently attended her thirtieth class reunion. "In high school my favorite subjects were home ec and biology. I loved the labs in biology, dissecting the frogs to learn how their bodies functioned."

Leesha was the second of four children, "Two girls and two boys, in that order," she laughed, "and my sister was nine years older than me. I started to school when I was five. I didn't have any girls to play with, grew up around my brothers and cousins, and had to compete with boys for everything. A girl has to be pretty assertive not to be intimidated by the boys. My daddy would say, 'You're not my kid.' His little girl was just not like

what he thought a little girl should be. My siblings say they don't know where I came from because I am totally unlike them — don't look like them, don't act like them," she continued.

Leesha finished high school with top grades and began her career as cashier in a supermarket. Several years later she landed a position with Schnadig Furniture just as the company began to manufacture high-end furniture that sold at Haverty's and other fine stores.

The company initially employed her to dispatch components to the assembly line. She was later moved to quality control, but Leesha asked to work in production. "I wanted to learn how to build the furniture, how to use the tools and equipment, how the pieces were made, fit together, and assembled. I loved the job and everything I did there," she said.

When an engineering job came open, she applied for and got the position. "I used my computer training from high school and

Leesha works with Billy Darracott as they make the final check on the 110-volt floor harness for an Allegro Bus.

did data collection on how to build individual sub-assemblies," she explained. "I compiled the specifications and drawings for outside vendors to bid on the components. The setting of rates for the upholstery operations soon followed."

Schnadig Furniture became a significant player in southern furniture manufacturing, eventually employing 600 at the Belmont plant. Leesha continued to enjoy her job at Schnadig, but it became all too obvious that significant sub-assemblies were being sent to China. After 17 years at Schnadig, she began to look elsewhere for job security.

"I resigned my position at Schnadig on February 14, 2004, and began work here at Tiffin the following Monday," she said. "When I applied, I offered to take any position available, and for the next three months I built floor harnesses. When the wire harness shop was moved to Belmont, I worked as a dispatcher, taking orders for lighting, harnesses, and miscellaneous parts in the warehouse at Belmont and delivering them to the assembly line."

Leesha's penchant for detail and organization caught the attention of upper management while TMH was experiencing record growth. In June 2005 she was offered and accepted the supervisor's position over the wiring harness shop. The shop had been sharing a large building with warehousing. With permission from upper management, Leesha and other wire shop employees moved the warehoused contents to another building to separate it from manufacturing.

Knowing that most people are very visual in learning manufacturing routines, she began creating graphics to go on the harness assembly board at key peg positions to make the process easier and more accurate. "We began to set more manufacturing standards," Leesha explained. "If engineering changes were made to the wiring diagrams on the fly, we insisted on documentation to update the 60- to 70-page laminated guides that we maintain for each floorplan here in the wire shop."

Last year Tiffin upper management brought in manufacturing consultant Paul Wagar to introduce *The Lean Enterprise* system. "I have never been so enthusiastic and excited about anything in my career," she said. "It has transformed my department and made the shop significantly more efficient. Lean Enterprise concepts will make every person and every department more productive. Many of the concepts and ideas are just common sense. But when you are so focused on making daily production, you don't see the forest for the trees."

"For example," she continued, "Lean Enterprise identifies seven types of waste in manufacturing: overproduction, waiting, transport, extra processing, inventory, motion, and defects. When each type of waste is corrected, the production process is much more efficient."

"Another thrill for me as a supervisor is seeing people grow in their personal self-confidence as they learn new job skills,"

Leesha said with enthusiasm written on her face. "This is an exciting department. We must strive for perfection here because the motorhome will not work properly if we send out a wiring harness with a mistake in it."

To create accountability, Leesha has broken each section of manufacturing in the shop into separate and easily identifiable tasks. "I didn't do this so we could point fingers when someone makes a mistake. The system allows us to quickly identify a problem, correct it in the production process, and build a harness with zero defects. Everyone in the department takes great pride in our quality control methods," she said.

"**I can't** is something I am not willing to accept from anybody in this department. You can learn," Leesha said. "We are not going to settle for 'almost right' or 'second best' in the wire harness shop. Attitude is a big factor in working here."

"Another thing that is really important to me: there aren't *men jobs* and *women jobs*," she said with a smile. "Do you cook?" she asked, putting me, the interviewer, on the spot. "Not if I can help it," I stammered. "Well, if you can read and follow a recipe, then you *can* cook. Some day you might have to cook if your wife gets sick."

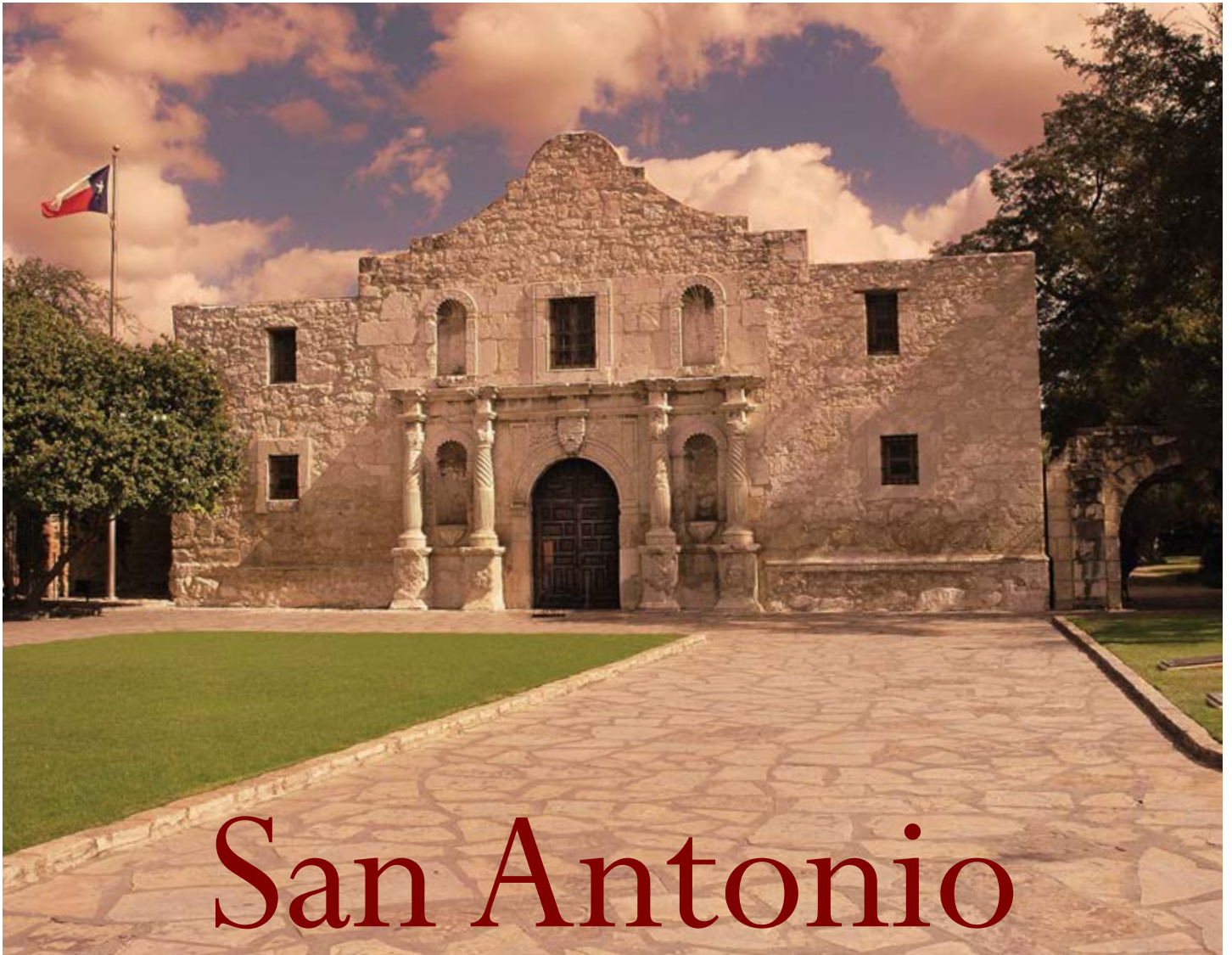
"I love working outside in my yard, and some people probably think that's a man's job," Leesha said as she continued to make her point. "But I like to trim the trees, clean out gutters, do whatever needs to be done. I have my own tools, always have."

"A few months ago we moved the wire harness department to Red Bay," she said. "It is now located in the front corner of the assembly plant, an area that had been used as a catch-all spot for a lot of stuff and it looked pretty rough. Our department came in here and we swept it clean, then scrubbed the floors, and painted. Now it looks like the bright, clean place where you would like to work, right? Mr. Tiffin happened to come by after we completed the renovation and complimented the new look," Leesha continued. "When he asked, 'Who did this?' we were pleased to tell him we did it ourselves. We wanted to make this *our* department and get everything just like we wanted it to create an efficient production flow. The principles we learned in the Lean Enterprise seminars had a strong influence on how we set up this department. It was great because we had the opportunity to apply everything we had just learned."

Leesha and her husband, Kenn, live in Red Bay. In addition to their two sons, Nickolas and Chase, they have two grandchildren, Baylee, 8, and Dean, 3.

The next time you are in Red Bay be sure to ask Red Davis to show you the Wire Harness Department and meet Leesha and her staff. I am certain you will be favorably impressed. **RIS**

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



PARENT PHOTOGRAPHY, AUSTIN

San Antonio

A Rich Multicultural Heritage

Five hundred years after Spain injected itself into the western hemisphere, its influence is still very obvious in the rich multicultural heritage of San Antonio, the seventh largest city in the United States. A significant part of San Antonio's story can be told through the history of Spain's attempt to colonize its land claims in the New World through its Franciscan-run missions.

Just three brief decades after Columbus made his famous voyage from Palos, Spain, to a small island in the Bahamas, landing there on October 12, 1492, the Spanish Crown sent its navy to many points throughout the New World to search for riches and gain control of vast new territories.

Spanish Colonialism and the San Antonio Missions

After plundering the Aztec empires in 1521 and conquering the Incas in 1531, Spain's explorers traversed the southeast, the southwest, and the areas that are now Texas and California.

Finally accepting their failure to find great wealth in North America after 180 years of exploration, Spain made an about face in foreign policy and decided colonization was the practical way to expand the empire. The Crown then concentrated its effort to build colonies by spreading the Catholic faith.

Financially supported by the Spanish rulers, the Franciscan order built missions that served both church and state. Serving their spiritual interests, the order converted the Indians to Catholicism. As agents of the state, the missions pushed the empire northward from New Spain (present-day Mexico) into what is now Texas.

In June 1691, Damián Massanet of the Franciscan order arrived in the San Antonio Valley and christened the river the San Antonio de Padua in honor of St. Anthony.

Text by Fred Thompson



Twenty-five years later Captain Domingo Ramón and several missionaries visited the same area and camped along a spring-fed creek that the captain named San Pedro. At the recommendation of Captain Ramón, Spanish governor Martín de Alarcón and Franciscan Antonio Olivares founded Mission San Antonio de Valero on May 1, 1718, in a mud hut near San Pedro Springs. A few days later, a military fort and the town of Villa de Béjar were established along San Pedro Creek. After two moves to better sites, stones were laid for the first church building in May 1744. The building collapsed twelve years later, but a small town had sprung up around it, populated by Coahuiltecan Indians living in adobe huts. The mission thrived and in 1756 the second stone church was begun, which is the present historic Alamo Shrine.



Eventually five San Antonio missions became the largest and most successful presence of Spain in what was to become the United States. In 1720 Fray Antonio Margil de Jesús founded the best known of the Texas missions, *San José y San Miguel de Aguayo*. Because it was regarded as a model of mission organization and a major social center, it was often called the “Queen of the Missions.”

The missions of *Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción*, *San Francisco de la Espada*, and *San Juan Capistrano* were founded in East Texas and moved to the San Antonio River area in 1731. *Espada*, the southernmost of the chain of San Antonio missions, is almost as remote today as it was in the 1700s. Originally founded in 1690, it is the oldest of the East Texas missions. They all followed the economic and operational model of the “Queen.”

As the missions fulfilled their purpose of creating subjects for the Spanish Crown, the ancient living habits of the Coahuiltecan Indians were forever altered. A peaceful society of hunter-gatherers who moved with the seasons, the Franciscans taught the Indians to be blacksmiths, masons, farmers, weavers, and millers. In exchange for their labor and conversion to Catholicism, the Indians received a stable lifestyle, food, and protection from their enemies to the north, the Apaches and Comanches.



Clockwise from left: For Texans, the Alamo is a sacred shrine to the heroes who defended it in 1836. • The quiet walkway adjacent to Long Barrack creates a reverence for those who lived their last moments fighting valiantly for freedom and liberty. • Mission San José is called the “Queen of the Missions” for its comprehensive service to the Indians. • The simplicity of the church at Mission San José is inspiring. • Dating from 1785, Mission Concepción is the oldest stone church in the United States that has never been restored. • *Following page:* The exquisite work of Spanish artisans in creating Mission San José’s Rose Window is undiminished after 260 years.

But the friars could not protect the Indians from another enemy—the European diseases which decimated their numbers. In some cases 70 percent of the Indians died within ten years of entering the missions. Military recruiting parties were sent out to bring in more Indians, but repopulation was not successful.

Although the San Antonio de Valero mission grew in size and importance for nearly eighty years, the church building itself was never completed. In 1778 a commandant general declared the right of the Spanish Crown to seize possession of all unbranded cattle, and levied a fee per head for all livestock captured, sold, or slaughtered. It was an economic blow to the missions whose wealth was based on its free range cattle. The Spanish governance only insured their failure in Texas.

By 1793 secularization of the missions had begun. In some cases the properties were given to the Indians. As the population of the missions continued to decline, the Franciscans no longer had the workers needed to maintain their agricultural economy. Eventually, they also left.

In September 1810, a series of revolts against Spanish rule began. In San Antonio, a small army organized and briefly occupied the Alamo until royal Spanish forces recaptured it. Control of the Alamo changed several times during the next decade. On July 19, 1821, in San Antonio de Bejar, the last Spanish governor of Texas, Antonio Martinez, inaugurated Mexico's independence from Spain.

Before losing Texas in the War of Mexican Independence, Spain was acutely aware that it had a territory with a very small population. With no funds to recruit new Spanish settlers or defend the people from the Indians, Spain floated a plan to repopulate its province with Anglo-Americans. Settlers were offered generous land grants in exchange for becoming Spanish citizens, joining the Catholic Church, and investing their own money and labor to develop and defend the country.

In 1820 Moses Austin obtained permission from the Spanish governor to bring 300 American families to colonize east Texas. Austin died before he could carry out his plan, but his son, Stephen F. Austin, led the colonists to Texas in 1821. After Spain withdrew, Mexican authorities found themselves in the same predicament that Spain had faced, but they had no intention of giving up their northern province.

With land now being offered at four cents an acre, immigration was vigorously stimulated. By 1830 the Anglo-American population in Texas had grown to 25,000. Concerned at losing their province, the Mexicans stopped American immigration and encouraged Europeans to come by advertising throughout western Europe. To maintain control, they beefed up their

military presence in Texas and began a strong trade through the Texas coast. Unfortunately, the Mexican government made the mistake of trying to collect tariffs and customs while still not providing government services or protection.

Each attempt by Mexico to enforce its authority led to small rebellions by the settlers. Each act of civil disobedience led Mexico to crack down even harder. Between October and December 1835, a volunteer Texan army eliminated the Mexican garrisons in the province. After the skirmishes, most of the volunteers returned to their homes.

In January 1836 about 100 men commanded by James C. Neill occupied the Alamo and were supplemented by twenty-five volunteers commanded by James Bowie. Ordered by Governor Henry Smith, Col. William Barrett Travis arrived on February 3 with thirty men from the regular army.

Army engineer G. B. Jameson believed the Alamo was indefensible, but both Neill and Bowie saw the old mission as a strategic post. Sam Houston preferred to avoid fixed fortifications and ordered Bowie, subject to the governor's approval, to blow up the building.

In 1835 Santa Anna established himself as a dictator in Mexico as the call for Texas independence grew louder. Santa Anna crossed the Rio Grande on February

12, 1836, and arrived in San Antonio on February 23. Travis, now in command because of Bowie's illness, dispatched a rider to Gonzales asking for reinforcements which arrived on March 1. With the arrival of the last of Santa Anna's forces, Travis was able to send out one last appeal for help on March 3. Concurrently, a delegation at Washington-on-the-Brazos adopted the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2 and gave birth to the Republic of Texas.

After the siege on the Alamo had lasted thirteen days, Santa Anna ordered a full charge which began before dawn on Sunday morning, March 6. The defenders threw back two charges, but the third overran the walls. While the official list shows 189 defenders were slain, ongoing research may increase the number of dead to as many as 257. The Mexican Army is said to have lost over 600.

The war was not over. On March 27 the Mexican Army massacred over 300 unarmed Texas prisoners at Goliad. Sam Houston's revolutionary army continued its retreat to bayou country near present-day Houston. On April 21, 1836, the Texan army attacked Santa Anna's forces while they were sleeping and routed them in a battle lasting only eighteen minutes. The Republic of Texas had become a reality. The republic was admitted as the 36th state nine years later on December 29, 1845, with an estimated population of 150,000.



PARENT PHOTOGRAPHY, AUSTIN

Seeing San Antonio

With a current population of over 1.3 million, San Antonio offers enough attractions, events, festivals, historical sites, art and history museums, and entertainment venues to keep a visitor busy for several weeks. We found it best to schedule no more than two items per day on our calendar.

First things first. If you are a member of AAA, pick up a copy of the city map of San Antonio. The association describes San Antonio's streets as a "skillet of snakes." Every family should have a good driver and a good navigator. You will certainly need both in this town. Streets often are not well marked, and the signs are especially hard to see at night.

Institute of Texan Cultures

While connected irrevocably to its Spanish heritage, the city has blended at least thirty ethnicities over the last 150 years. The melting pot process has been splendidly documented by the Institute of Texan Cultures located on the campus of the University of Texas at San Antonio. To appreciate the diversity of this city, make the ITC your first stop.

When the Belgians came to Texas, they brought along their sabots or wooden shoes which they wore for farm work and other outdoor activities. *Below:* The Henry and Clement Studebaker blacksmith shop opened in 1852 in South Bend, Indiana. In 1868 the Studebaker Wagon Manufacturing Company was formed to build wagons to carry settlers west. The Studebaker wagon was rigged as a chuck wagon about 1870.



The Institute was built as the Texas exhibit at HemisFair '68 to demonstrate to visitors that Texas is a concentrated, one-state example of the melting pot phenomenon that created this country. In 1998 John L. Davis published *Texans One and All*, an excellent guide to the exhibit, but also a brief history of the peoples from eastern and western Europe, Scandinavia, the Mediterranean, Africa, China, and Japan, as well as Tejanos, Native Americans, and Jews who made Texas their home. More than likely, you will learn something about your own heritage during your visit. Docents are stationed throughout the museum to answer your questions and contribute to your experience. Crow Yellow Sky, a Lipan Apache, brought the exhibits to life in the Native American section as he told stories about the artifacts and murals.

The ITC is located in the downtown area. Take Durango east from I-35. After you cross Alamo Street, look across the median for the entrance on your left to the Tower of the Americas. Make a U-turn just before you get to the traffic light and come back to the driveway. Free parking is available on your right just before you get to the gated parking lot for the Tower.

Tower of the Americas

If you spend most of your day at the ITC, you may want to enjoy a 360-degree view of San Antonio while you dine at the Chart House, a revolving restaurant perched at 750-feet atop the Tower of the Americas. You can also have lunch at the Chart House from 11 until 2. Although it is located just a few minutes walk from the ITC, you will have to move your car to the Tower's parking lot. The evening experience is much more dramatic, but it will flatten your wallet just a bit.

The Alamo

Before visiting the Alamo, you will want to read the historical primer preceding this article. Your high school history teacher surely included at least a brief mention of the Alamo and the brave men who chose to stand against the Mexican dictator Santa Anna. If you grew up in Texas, you know the story by heart.

The defense of the Alamo ended on March 6, 1836. The defenders heroically threw back the first two waves of the Mexican Army. The third wave overran the former mission turned outpost. The remaining defenders retreated into the Long Barrack, the living quarters built with thick stone walls. The sheer numbers of the Mexican Army

Institute of Texan Cultures

Tu-Sa, 10-5; Su, 12-5.
Closed Mon.
Adults, \$7; Srs (65+), mil, chd, \$4.
Closed Xmas/NYs eves & days; Thksgiv, Easter
www.texancultures.utsa.edu
Parking: Free

Tower of the Americas

TOWER Su-Th, 10-10;
Fr-Sa, 10-11
RESTAURANT Su-Th,
11-10; Fr-Sa, 11-11
Lunch menu: 11-2
Adults, \$11; Srs/mil, \$10
4-D multi-sensory theater ride. Chart House operated by Landry's.
www.toweroftheamericas.com
Parking: \$6, gated lot

The Alamo

Mo-Sa, 9-5:30; Su, 10-5.
Admission: Free
Closed Xmas eve and day
www.thealamo.org
Parking: Several commercial lots in area, \$5-8/day.
Three hours free at Rivercenter on Crockett St. if you purchase tickets to the IMAX theater.
Figure one hr in IMAX, two hrs in Alamo.

The Missions

Daily 9-5
Admission: Free
Closed Thksgiv, Xmas, New Year's Day
www.nps.gov/saan
Parking: Free

Paseo del Río

Daily, 9-9
Adult, \$7.75; 60+ and mil, \$5.
35-40 minute tour time; boats leave every 15 minutes.
Be sure to pick up copies of *Fiesta* and *Río* for current attractions, events, and festivals.
www.riosanantonio.com & www.thesanantonio.riverwalk.com
Parking: Several commercial lots in area, \$5-8/day

La Villita Historic Arts Village

Daily, 10-6
Admission: Free
Located downtown, South Alamo at Nuevo; or enter from River Walk at the Arneson Theatre. Pick up a map and brochure guide when you enter the area.
www.lavillita.com
Parking: On street or in nearby hotel lot, \$6.

The Buckhorn Saloon and Museum

Daily, 10-5 (10-6, summer)
Adm: Free to the saloon and restaurant area. Combo ticket to both museums: \$15
Located downtown two blocks from Alamo at Houston and North Presa St.
www.buckhornmuseum.com
Parking: Nearby commercial lots. On street.

The Witte Museum

Mo & We-Sa, 10-5; Tu, 10-8; Su, 12-5.
\$7; 65+ & mil, \$6
Located north of downtown at 3801 Broadway.
www.wittemuseum.com
Call 210-357-1900 for current traveling exhibits.
Parking: Free

The McNay Art Museum

Su, 12-5; Tu, We, Fr, 10-4; Th, 10-9; Sa, 10-5.
Adults, \$13; 65+ & mil, \$10
Located 1/2-block north of Austin Hwy at 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave.
www.mcnayart.org
Parking: Free
Call 210-824-5368 for current offerings.

Fiesta Magazine

A free monthly guide and calendar to the current events in San Antonio

Río Magazine

A free guide and calendar to the attractions on River Walk

finally overwhelmed the defenders in hand-to-hand fighting. Santa Anna's forces suffered losses over three times the number of Texans killed in action. The bodies of the defenders were burned to strike fear into the hearts of the Texas homesteaders who had dared to defy Mexico's attempt to force the province of Texas to remain a part of Mexico as it established its independence from Spain.

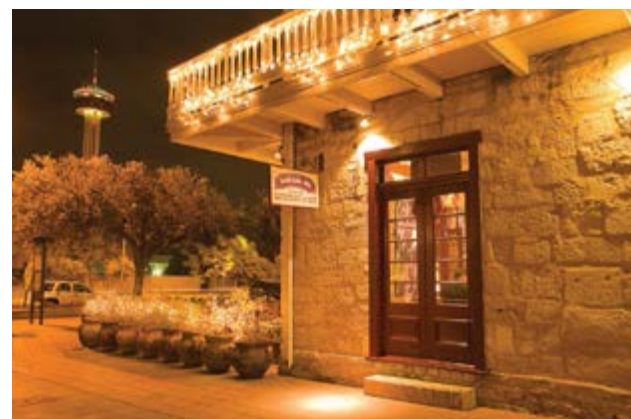
The Alamo remained in ruins for many years until the U.S. Army leased the ground and repaired what had been the mission's church. The most notable change was the addition of the distinctive church parapet, which has come to symbolize the Alamo.

In 1876, all of the property with the exception of the church was sold to private individuals. By 1900 the historic Alamo was surrounded by commercial properties, leaving original parts of the mission in danger of being lost forever. Adina De Zavala, a granddaughter of the first vice president of the Republic, recognized the importance of preserving the site and persuaded the Daughters of the Republic of Texas (DRT) to adopt the Alamo as a project. In 1905 a Texas law granted the DRT custodianship of the Alamo. The DRT acquired most of the original mission properties. Gardens connecting the mission and the Long Barrack were designed and exterior walls were built to distinguish the Shrine's historical integrity from modern-day San Antonio. Now functioning as a museum, the Long Barrack presents the visitor with excellent exhibits and a film explaining the history and transition of San Antonio de Valero to the Alamo. No photography is allowed inside the Long Barrack or the Alamo. Before you leave the Alamo, be sure to pick up a copy of the National Park Service's brochure titled "San Antonio Missions."

The San Antonio IMAX Theater is located about two blocks to the rear of the Alamo on Crockett Street. It offers a very good docudrama (45 min.) of the battle. The IMAX hours are from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m. Call ahead for showtimes. There are other movies offered. 210-247-4629. Go to www.imax-sa.com to purchase discounted tickets. Prices at theater: \$9.71.

The San Antonio Missions

Now that you are into the history of the missions, you'll want to tour Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo. The map found in the National Park Service brochure will take you to your first stop. While there are four missions you can visit on The Mission Trail, Mission



The centograph in front of the Alamo shows the defenders in bold relief. • The cloisters at Mission San José once housed Franciscan friars. • The slow-moving boats, shops, and restaurants along River Walk create a romantic ambiance. • The restored buildings in La Villita take you back many decades into a calmer, quieter time.

San José is referred to as the “Queen of the Missions.”

The Visitor Center at Mission San José screens a 24-minute movie continuously throughout the day that explains the story of the mission Indians. *Gente de Razón* (People of the Missions) describes the transition of the Coahuiltecans (kwa-WEEL-tekens), a hunter-gatherer society, into a people with productive skills who could survive in an 18th century European culture.

Although the preservation of the missions is under the direction of the United States National Park Service, each of the four churches offer services on Sunday to members, most of whom have descended from the mission Indians. The stark simplicities of the sanctuaries are impressive. After viewing *Gente de Razón*, it is easy to visualize the Coahuiltecans working in the fields, at the blacksmith shop, at the mill, or worshipping in the churches that clearly show the influence of Spanish-Moorish architecture. The contrasts between the European and Coahuiltecan civilizations are incredible.

First, visit the compound of Mission San José. Then drive the few miles north and south for visits to Concepción, San Juan, and Espada.

Now that you’ve covered some of San Antonio’s history, you’ve got much more to see in this great city. Aside from the Alamo, San Antonio’s Paseo del Río (or River Walk for us gringos) has become its signature attraction.

Paseo del Río

Along two-and-a-half miles of beautifully landscaped, tree-lined, rock-paved walks and bridges, River Walk integrates an engaging mix of restaurants, shops, museums, galleries, nightspots, and theater along the San Antonio River. One can easily spend a day or two exploring this plethora of entertainment and dining opportunities. First, take the tour, hear the history, and experience the variety with the boat trip. Tickets are available online or at Historia (Market St. Bridge & Alamo St.) or Clearwater (Rivercenter Mall at Commerce & Bowie).

La Villita

This is a “don’t miss it” area. La Villita was originally a settlement used by the Spanish soldiers who were stationed at Mission San Antonio de Valero. After a flood in 1819, brick, stone, and adobe homes were built, creating San Antonio’s first neighborhood. In the late 1800s, German and French immigrants populated the area and provided the city with business leaders, bankers, educators, and craftsmen. The diversity of architecture from that period is still very obvious. As the residents moved to more affluent suburbs in the early 1900s, La Villita became a slum that was finally reclaimed as a thriving art community when River Walk’s development began in the 1950s.

You will find galleries offering a wide variety of artistic styles



NEW! Dometic Recall Information

Dometic Corporation has voluntarily extended the two-door refrigerator recall started in August 2006 by recalling additional refrigerators as part of a continual commitment to maintaining a high level of satisfaction and excellence now and in the future.

Previous Recall Announcement

This recall affects Dometic two-door refrigerators manufactured between April 1997 and May 2003.

Current Recall Announcement

This recall affects Dometic two-door refrigerators manufactured between June 2003 and September 2006.

The well-being of Dometic customers is of highest concern. A serious problem resulting in a fire may occur in an exceptionally small fraction of Dometic two-door refrigerators, but to address that potential risk, please contact us immediately for more information.

RECALL 08E-076, 08E-032

www.Dometic.com/Recall
Recall Hotline: 1-888-446-5157





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and media, weavers, jewelers, coppersmiths, stained glass, and leather. My favorite gallery was Casa Clasal Copper Gallery. Salvador Negrete creates one-of-a-kind, handmade copper art with a natural patina which may be enhanced with enameled paintings. I am certain you won't leave La Villita without finding a treasure to take home. There are several small restaurants in La Villita which make it convenient to spend a whole day visiting the shops without having to leave the area for lunch.

Market Square / El Mercado

With over 100 interesting shops that reflect San Antonio's cultural diversity, El Mercado (or Market Square) presents the eclectic to the practical. Artists and craftsmen offer live demonstrations and creations which can be personalized. Available products include pottery, musical instruments, wood carvings, and leather goods.

You must not miss Mi Tierra Café and Panadería. First opened in 1941 as a small three-table café, Pete and Cruz Cortez's tiny eatery has grown into a 500-seat restaurant with a renowned bakery. Its Mexican cuisine is authentic and served with flair by the costumed waitstaff. Open 24 hours a day, every day of the year, any native can tell you about the bakery's panes dulces (sweet breads).

The Buckhorn Saloon & Museum

First opened in 1881 by Albert Friedrich at a different location, the Buckhorn's bar and historical artifacts take you back 150 years for a look at what would have been at that time a very classy saloon. The mounted heads of nearly every trophy animal that roamed in Texas adorn the walls. The collection began when Friedrich made a standing offer to "bring your deer antlers and you can trade them for a shot of whiskey or a beer." In 1899 Friedrich got a world's record 78-point buck for which he paid \$100.

The Buckhorn has two very interesting attractions that may be entered from the saloon: The Buckhorn Museum (which was expanded from the Hall of Horns to include the Hall of Feathers and Hall of Fins) and the Texas Ranger Museum. The individual

collections at the Ranger Museum depict rangers who achieved fame in their line of duty, including Frank Hamer who with five other officers ambushed Bonnie and Clyde in 1934 on a desolate road in Louisiana.

The Witte Museum


The Witte explores the state's natural history and anthropology. *Texas Wild: Ecology Illustrated* was particularly interesting as it presented the seven ecological areas of Texas. The ecology of water and the food chain will be educational for everyone.

Traveling exhibits rotate frequently. Call for current offerings. I thoroughly enjoyed *A Personal Portrait of Tejanos and Mexicanos*, a collection of 38 toned silver gelatin prints. Al Rendon, photographer, explained the candor of his work: "We are a people spread through the Americas, carrying a spirit, a flavor, a heart that makes no secret of our identity . . . with a distinct expression weaving through our religion, our music, our work, our ethos. . . ." The frames for each print were hand carved by Enrique Rendon, the artist's father. The exhibit continues through Jan. 25, 2009.

The McNay Art Museum

Marion Koogler McNay, a painter and art teacher, left the fortune inherited from her father to establish San Antonio's first museum of modern art. Today the museum is housed in her Spanish Colonial revival-style mansion. With holdings of more than 16,000 nineteenth and twentieth century paintings, prints, drawings, and sculpture, the museum features a surprising collection beginning with Cézanne, Van Gogh, Rodin, Matisse, and Picasso to Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keefe, John Sloan, and Marsden Hartley.

The McNay also brings to San Antonio a wide variety of traveling exhibits. Check their website for upcoming exhibits.

These are the attractions we selected. There are many more from which to choose, such as the San Antonio Zoo, the Botanical Gardens, Sea World, and Six Flags. 



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The pleasant streets in La Villita add to the visitors shopping experience. • The Panadería at Mi Tierra Restaurant in Market Square offers a fresh supply of panes dulces 24 hours a day. • The Buckhorn Saloon

and Museum greets visitors with an amazing trophy collection that was begun in 1881 by Albert Friedrich. • The McNay Art Museum opens the grounds of its beautiful, 27-acre estate for picnics and strolls.

Restaurants We Recommend

Rudy's – Be prepared for a different approach to barbeque. Rudy's sells it by the pound served up on butcher paper. You can order brisket, turkey, pork ribs, chicken, sausage, or baby back ribs. Sides come a la carte, including beans, creamed corn, potato salad, cole slaw, and peach cobbler. Call 210-653-7839 for the location nearest you. Or go to www.rudys.com

Acadiana Café – Down home cookin' that you're sure to enjoy. It's Cajun-Louisiana cuisine that includes crawfish, catfish, shrimp, and chicken. A plate of four veggies with cornbread is \$6.67. Located at 1289 Southwest, Loop 410. 210-674-0019. www.acadianacafe.com

Mi Tierra Café and Panadería—Also mentioned in the text at Market Square. You will enjoy Mi Tierra if you like Mexican cuisine. During festivals or busy times, call ahead for reservations: 210-225-1262. 218 Produce Row. Exit I-35 at Durango. Turn north on Santa Rosa for three blocks, turn left on Commerce and go a half mile to San Saba. Turn left and take the first left into the parking deck. www.mitierracafe.com

Tiago's Cabo Grille—Excellent Mexican cuisine within ten minutes drive of Admiralty RV Resort. 8403 State Hwy 151, #101, San Antonio. 210-647-3600. www.tiagoscabogrille.com

Upcoming Events

2009 Rodeo San Antonio – 60th Anniversary, Feb. 5–22, 2009. www.sarodeo.com for events and tickets.

AT&T Center – 1/5, Dancing with the Stars; 1/7, Celene Dion; 1/24, Freestyle Motocross. www.attcenter.net for events and tickets.

Nearby Attractions

LBJ Library and Museum, Austin. 512-721-0200. www.lbjlib.utexas.edu

Natural Bridge Caverns, take I-35 northeast of San Antonio to exit 175. Winter hours, 9am–4pm. 210-651-6101. www.naturalbridgecaverns.com

Historic Gruene. An authentic German town with restaurants and shops you will enjoy. From I-35 northeast of San Antonio, take exit 191. Go west 1.5 miles to Hunter Rd., turn left and go a half mile.

Where We Stayed

Admiralty RV Resort. We selected the Admiralty for its location, amenities, and excellent service. Located at 1485 N. Ellison Dr. From the intersection of I-410 and Hwy

151, go approx. two miles northeast on 151 and take the Military Dr. exit (Sea World). Turn left at the light and go over the bridge a half mile to Ellison. Turn left. Admiralty will be on your right. 238 sites with full hookups incl. cable, 180 with 50-amp. WIFI throughout the park. Brick patios. Jr. Olympic heated pool (90°); adult jacuzzi (102°); playground; two doggie playgrounds w/training equipment. Free shuttles to Sea World. City bus service year-round to downtown. Propane delivery twice a week. New laundromat. Rental cars delivered to park. Storage area for trailers, car haulers, etc. RV repair service at park. Rig washing service. Activities director with daily schedule. 210-647-7878. www.admiraltyrvresort.com



The Wiring Harness

A STUDY IN STRIVING FOR PERFECTION

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

If you compare a motorhome to a human being, the wiring harness in the motorhome would be the nervous system in your body. The primary control system in your body is your brain, with signals sent out constantly to your hands, arms, feet, and legs through your thought processes to direct what you wish to do at any given moment.

In your motorhome, you manage the computers and the controls to send out signals through the wiring harness to direct nearly everything going on in your coach. However, you've got help! The on-board computer is performing many functions you do not have to anticipate. The wiring harness is the nervous system transmitting all of the directions that you and your computer are orchestrating.

If you were to go on-line and "google" the human nervous system, you would find bundles of nerves extending from your brain to every extremity in your body. The same is true when you examine the wiring harness. Of course, your magnificent brain and its nervous system are far more complex than the motorhome's wiring harness. But the comparison will help us understand the process.

The size of the wiring system is almost overwhelming when you first see it. Large bundles of wire or harnesses are protected by plastic loom conduits and laid into the chassis before the floor system is installed. Openings in the floor permit the branches from the main floor harness to supply power and computer connections to all appliances, lights, controls and

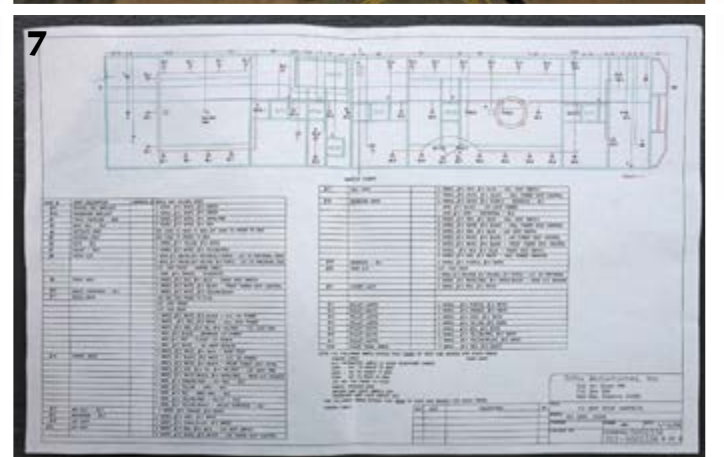
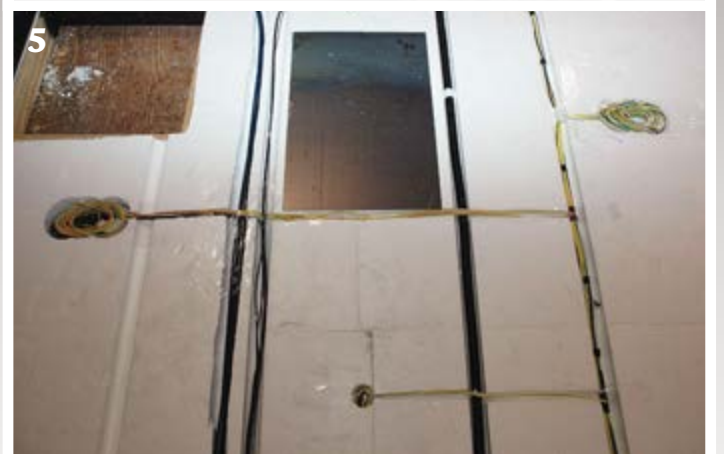
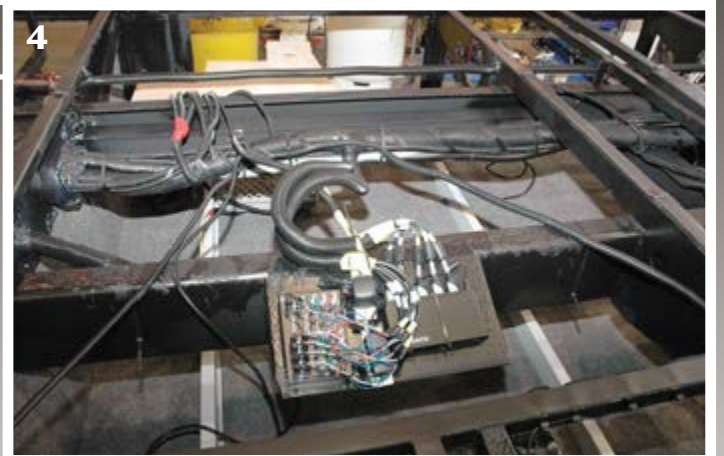
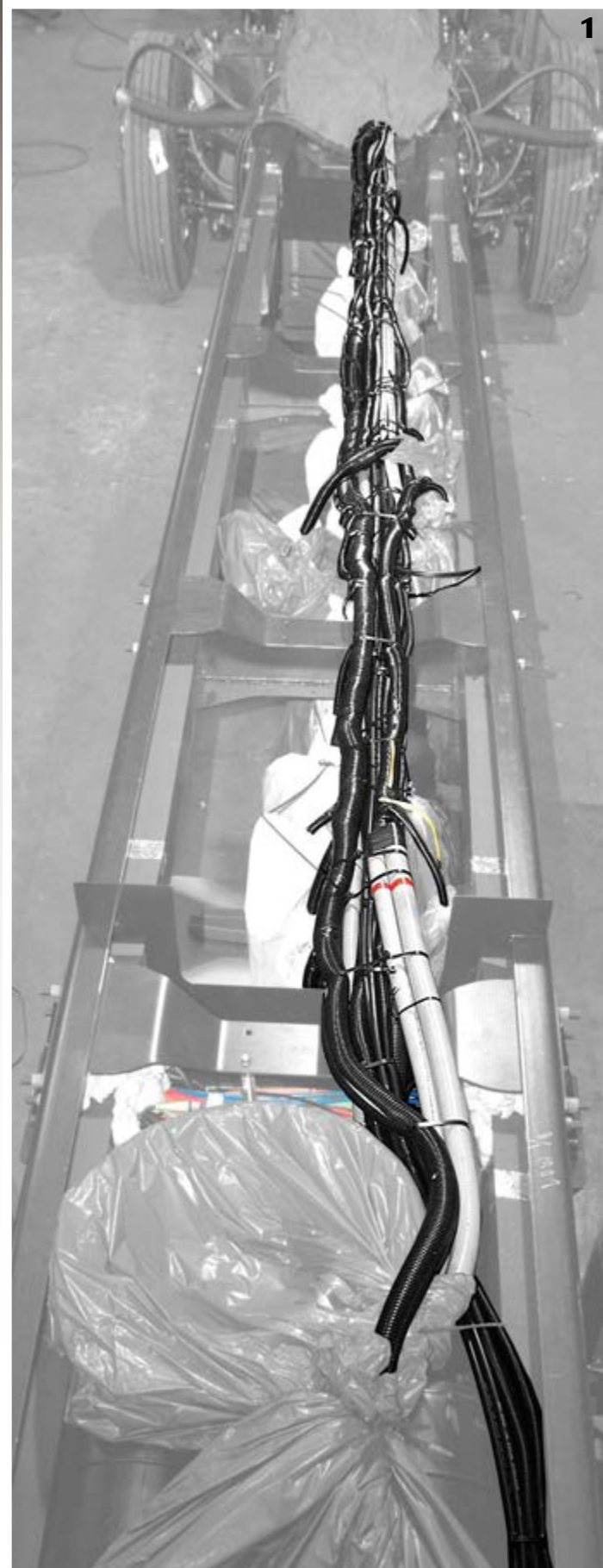
monitor boards, entertainment centers, switches, and finally to the power supply points of 50-amp shore or genset input.

As you view the chassis without the floor in the adjacent pictures, you can see the floor harness in place with the branches leading off to different areas of the coach (1). The black wiring at the front corner on the passenger side (2) is a branch from the floor harness that will serve the entertainment center above the passenger chair. The coil of yellow and white wire will take 12-volt power to the patio awning and sensors, tank monitors, fans, shades, and mirrors. After the floor has been installed (3), openings allow the appropriate branches to be lifted through the floor to serve the appliances, lights, switches, and equipment in each area of the coach. A branch of the harness connects the HDMI Splitter (4) to three programming inputs which are distributed to the HD televisions.

The roof harness is produced separately and laid in channels (5) recessed into the insulation by a CNC-router (see vol. 5, no. 1, pages 44-45). The harness in the loom and the separate wiring coils at the end of the roof assembly (6) will go into the switch box at the rear of the coach.

Now that you have seen the wiring harnesses in place as the coach is assembled, let's go back to the Wiring Harness Shop and see how wiring harnesses are made.

When a new floorplan is submitted to the Electrical Engineering Department, the engineers create a detailed diagram (7) for the wiring that will support every area of the coach. The primary





8

No.	Name	Length	Qty.	Total	Ln	Ln	Ln	Ln	Ln	Ln	Ln
4	-WIRTE FRONT VENT GROUND 400P	475.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
5	-WIRTE MID LAV VENT CONTROL 400P	254.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
6	-WIRTE REAR HALL VENT CONTROL 400P	390.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
7	-WIRTE REAR HALL VENT GROUND 400P	141.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
8	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 22"	302.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
9	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 40"	49.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
10	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 25"	25.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
11	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 25"	25.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
12	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 12"	12.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
13	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 40"	40.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
14	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 22"	22.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
15	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 12"	12.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE
16	-WIRTE 12V LIGHT GROUNDING 400P 12"	12.000	1.1	1							AWG12 WHITE

9



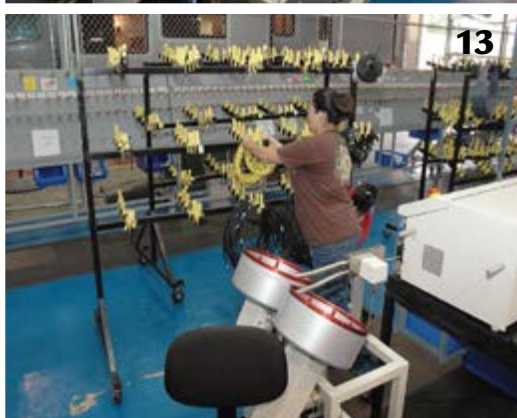
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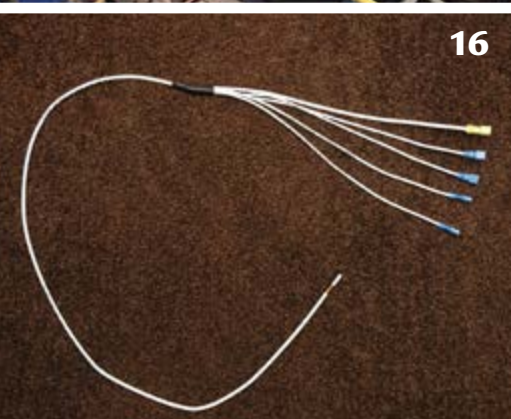
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14



15



16



17

harness or trunk will have the correct gauge wire to carry the amperage to supply each harness kit that branches off the trunk to support specific areas. When questions arise about a kit, technicians can refer to the electrical diagrams. Barry Page, line supervisor at the station where the harnesses are installed in the chassis, gets an answer for his question from Angel Garner and Michael Mims, wire shop employees (8).

When a new electrical diagram is submitted to the wire shop, an employee will analyze the diagram and create a wire cutting and labeling program (9) that will make each wire in the kit a specified length measured in inches and label it (10) with the floorplan, wire gauge, harness peg position, and destination to which it will connect.

After receiving a harness build order, Suzy Carter pulls up a series of parts (specified wire lengths) on her computer (11) that have been programmed to drive the wire cutting and labeling machine. From supply barrels, wire is drawn into the machine (12) at lower left, cut, labeled, and collected in coiling tubs. As each sub-assembly is completed, the operator hangs it on a "tree" (13) which eventually will hold all of the wiring required for the floor harness.

Since each coach being built is ordered by a dealer or a customer, it has options specific to that order. And, of course, those options will each require special wiring. Specified options require another production step to select the correct wiring for items such as a third television in the sidewall, a dishwasher, or a residential refrigerator. Stephen Hendrix handles the job of option puller (14), measuring the specific lengths required to tie the wiring for each option into the floor harness.

Ultrasonic welding has significantly reduced the amount of wire required in a harness. Felecia Rogers welds a dash ground assembly for an Allegro Bay (15 & 16). Instead of five full-length ground wires, one wire supplies the ground for most of the way and the ultrasonic weld provides five branches, each with conductance equal to a single wire. Ultrasonic welding works perfectly for recessed ceiling lights where two one-foot wire drop-downs for each light are welded to parallel wiring in the ceiling, ensuring the connections won't work loose in the future.


When a wiring "tree" is fully loaded (17) and waiting for assembly, it is easy to spot

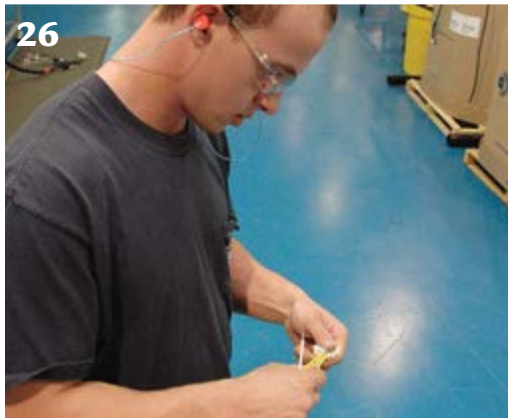
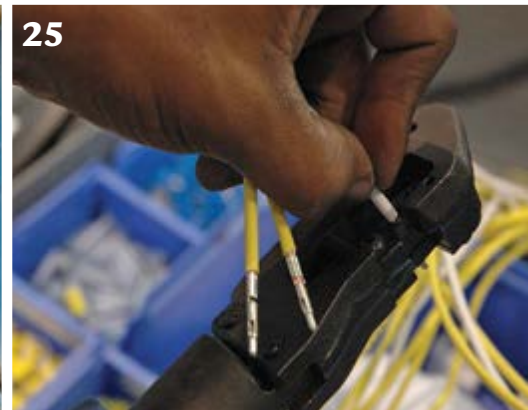
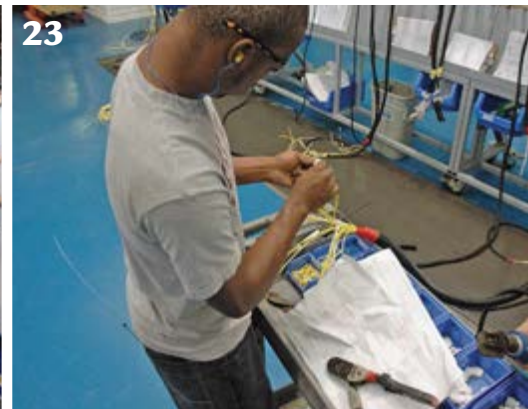
the option wiring on the lowest rack. In the next illustration, electrician Roger Boyd has pulled most of the wiring from the “tree” and positioned it on the harness board (18). Notice the numbers on the pegs. Each peg can represent a point on the length of the harness where a branch leaves the trunk. Branches laying over the top of the board will serve items on the passenger’s side. Those hanging down will bring power to points along the driver’s side.

After all the wiring is in place, the main trunk is taped together (19). In this picture it is easy to see two branches coming from the trunk line, one to the driver’s side and one to the passenger’s side. After the taping is completed, Michael Mims slides the protective harness loom over the main trunk (20). Chris Young uses smaller looms to cover the branches (21). After all the branches are covered with protective looms, Stephen Hendrix begins checking the assembly from back to front and taping the junctions of the branch looms to the main trunk loom (22).

With the wiring assembly completed, Chris Southward and Chris Young check the wire labels at the ends of each branch to determine the pins or plugs to be attached (23). Out of one break-out, Southward assembles three plugs (24). An automated crimping tool is used to attach connector pins. The crimping tool applies perfect pressure and prevents severe hand fatigue (25). Attaching the connector pins and plugs in the Wire Harness Shop makes the harness installation on the assembly line a “plug and play” affair.

Young and Southward constantly double check one another to eliminate errors. Young checks the pin connectors in a plug to be certain it was assembled correctly (26). Leesha Shotts, wire shop supervisor, checks a recent wiring change with Southward to make sure it was implemented (27).

Shotts emphasizes “zero defects” constantly. “Our motto is ‘build by the prints.’ We are continually checking one another as we cut, label, and fabricate the wiring components and as we assemble the harness. We are a team and no one feels offended when someone catches another’s mistake. Each person strives for perfection, but everyone is going to make an error occasionally. Teamwork makes the difference. That’s what it’s all about,” she stressed. 





My name is Dr. John P. Pilarczyk. I am a 1970 Michigan State University graduate in veterinary medicine. I practiced for 38 years in Tampa, Florida, managing my own practice and treating small animals. At the invitation of your editor, Fred Thompson, I agreed to begin this new feature in *Roughing It Smoothly*.

Welcome to *On the Road with Your Pets*

After nearly four decades of treating small animals, I fully understand the attachment owners have to their pets. They really do become family members who richly reward us with loyalty and affection.

My wife, Kay, and I have finally retired after selling our practice. We are full-timing now, which has been a dream of ours for some time. We are experiencing our dream in a 2007 Phaeton, which we just drove to Alaska this past summer, returning along the coast of Washington and Oregon. We are heading for Tucson, Arizona, for the winter to visit friends.

The purpose of this new column is to entertain questions from pet owners as they travel with their furry friends as full-timers or extended travelers. I will try to offer some travel tips as well. I would like to hear about any problems you have encountered while traveling and hopefully I can offer some solutions.


Before traveling, I highly recommend that you microchip your pet using either AVID or Home Again. This came to light one evening as I was walking through the campground and observed a fellow camper calling for his cat. It was about 10 p.m. and he was leaving in the morning. We had a hard time finding the black cat in the dark. Luckily, the cat returned an hour later to his rig.

I have heard of dogs running away or being

accidentally left behind. But most owners do not think about their cats escaping. If this fellow camper's cat had not come back, hopefully it would have been picked up by a good samaritan and taken to an animal hospital, Humane Society, or Animal Control. They will scan the pet to identify its owner and phone number. I cannot stress enough the importance of chipping your pet.

All of you know it is very important to keep vaccines current, especially while traveling and going into Canada. Keep those vaccines updated since your pet will have more exposure than when you are at home. Rabies, distemper, and bordetella are the most common infections caused by contact with other animals, and lyme disease is a threat especially when you are traveling in states where ticks are prevalent.

Lastly, please keep up your heartworm medication year round. Most heartworm medication will also protect your pet against hookworms, roundworms, and whipworms. Since all of you are using communal areas at campgrounds on your travels, exposure to these parasites is increased.

Please send us your questions for the next issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*. Your questions can be emailed to: fredthompson1941@hotmail.com. These questions will be forwarded to me as we travel the USA. 



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Custom-Built Commercial Coaches

You Design It — L&S Coaches Will Build It

LOCATED IN THE SMALL FLORIDA WEST COAST TOWN OF HUDSON, L&S Custom Coaches has been building custom-designed commercial vehicles for over 30 years. In most cases Steve and Lynn Scott begin with a 40-foot shell purchased from Blue Bird. All conversions are customized to meet the client's interior and exterior specifications based on the vehicles end use: bloodmobiles, mobile dentistry clinics, bookmobiles, law enforcement mobile command posts, mobile mammography clinics, computer training labs, mobile commercial offices, and many others.

Amazingly, Steve and Lynn and their workforce of 17 skilled employees can build and deliver every month three of these efficiently designed, highly specialized, but very utilitarian coaches. Obviously, L & S Custom Coaches did not sprout overnight. It's history is also amazing.

Lynn Scott is a fifth generation Floridian who is proud to be called a Florida Cracker. Her great-great-grandparents homesteaded 100 acres near Jacksonville and Lynn today owns an old tractor that her grandfather used to farm 100 acres in LaCrosse, Florida.

She moved to St. Petersburg in 1973 where her father worked for the phone company and built houses on the side. Perhaps influenced by her dad's business, Lynn went to drafting school but later found employment in the parts department at Burt

Smith Oldsmobile. That job put her in the right spot for an opportunity that would launch her into a whole new career.

The Oldsmobile dealer operated a shop for repairing motor-homes. A local blood bank owned a "bloodmobile" that needed several interior repairs. The conversion company who had built the unit was no longer in business. The dealer's shop was focused on motor and chassis work and was not equipped to do interior coach work. Lynn and her first husband saw the repair work as an opportunity.

"My husband and I went to Sarasota to visit a builder who was doing conversions," Lynn recalled. "We thought his work was shoddy and we knew we could do better." The pieces for the new business were beginning to fall into place. They had a garage out back of their Pinellas Park home. A neighbor on one side of their house was a cabinet maker. A neighbor on the other side was an upholsterer. The blood bank company was very pleased with the restoration and word began to circulate about the little company tucked away in a Pinellas Park subdivision.

Blue Bird Bus Corporation in Fort Valley, Georgia, for a brief time offered custom-built bloodmobiles, but ultimately decided there was not enough demand to justify a separate division in their company which concentrated primarily on school buses.

This 40-ft. unit is a bloodmobile ordered by an agency in Texas. Airbrushing was used to create the full-body paint job.

While trying to get out of that business, they were pleased to find Lynn's operation and began to send her the restoration work they didn't want.

"Old orders to build new bloodmobile coaches were still pending at Blue Bird, some nearly two years old," Lynn said. "One morning we awoke to find a Blue Bird in our front yard. Inside were rolls of carpet and a note to call the owner, the John Elliott Blood Bank in Miami. They had been waiting for two years for Blue Bird to build them a new bloodmobile."

Blue Bird had employed a driver to deliver the coach to their home. He arrived late at night and decided to leave the shell without a word. The couple was shocked and excited at the same time.

John Elliott was pleased with the outcome. The little company began to grow as word-of-mouth advertising brought in both restoration and new conversion jobs. "We were there for two years," Lynn continued, "but we knew we were inviting zoning violations." Again, the pieces kept falling into place just at the right time.

"Friends of ours who had a home with two acres on 66th Street were being hounded by realtors to sell after the property was rezoned commercial," Lynn said. "They knew our predicament and asked 'how much can you handle on a mortgage?'"

"We figured \$700 a month and they said, 'Done.'" Completed in 1978, the deal included the home and a building that allowed them to expand their operation. Lynn used her drafting skills to create the detailed plans, production specifications, and materials lists to build the coaches. She became the interface between the customer and production, spending hours understanding how each client planned to use the coach.

It wasn't long before Leah was born. The family was growing, the business was growing, but the marriage was not. Lynn found herself heading up a very successful operation by herself. As the months went by, Steve Scott, one of her key suppliers, began to cover many of the bases for her in the production area. Working to improve production efficiencies and quality, Steve began to appreciate the management talent and planning skills that Lynn brought to the table. They both realized a personal bond was forming which soon led to their marriage. The new blended family included Steve's daughter, Michelle, from his first marriage. The company became L&S Custom Coaches and a few years later Brent was born.

Steve grew up in his father's construction business which built high rises and steel buildings. His familiarity with heavy equipment, engines, welding, and production assembling brought skills to the company that it needed for the more sophisticated coaches it was now building.

Steve put on two more hats: sales and purchasing. He excelled in both areas and led the company to profitability and national visibility. L&S Custom Coaches expanded their market into multi-function health coaches, including dentistry, mammog-

raphy, and chest X-rays. "On our dental, X-ray, and medical coaches, we bring in their techs after we install the equipment to make certain everything works properly before we deliver the coach to our client," Steve said.

After the region of operation is established, Steve purchases the compatible components. If the area of use is concentrated in the mountains, he orders an Allison transmission with gear ratios to address steep grades. Tropical or sub-tropical deliveries get special attention for heavy duty air conditioning equipment.

Since a large percentage of their clients are in medical fields, L&S's engineers design power backup into their coaches with dual generators. "We use 20 Kw Cummins, PowerTec, or Kubota, depending on the application," Steve said. "We are scrupulous about meeting electrical codes. We do not tie into any of the 12v electrical components on the chassis. All 110v power for on-board equipment is direct conversion from the generators or from shore power through a selector switch."

The company has gotten excellent results from the Cummins 6.7-liter ISL engine. An order for standard terrain use gets a 210-hp power plant. Coaches to be used in the mountains receive a 280-hp engine with twice the torque. Steve is a loyal Freightliner buyer due in large part to Freightliner's network of service centers throughout North America and in most of the countries to which L&S exports its units.

Another interesting application for mountain buses is automatic snow chains. The driver can select snow chains from the cockpit. A spinning turret with 24-inch lengths of chain attached drops down from a housing beside the rear tires and provides the necessary traction to keep the bus moving.

By 1980 the company was selling beyond Florida's borders. Eleven years later L&S made its first international sale to Singapore. After that door opened and Steve gained experience with the intricacies of exporting, coaches were sold in England, Saudi Arabia, Germany, and South America to name a few.

By the mid-nineties L&S had outgrown its facilities on 66th Street in St. Petersburg and the area had become far too congested. Two employees already had moved to the Hudson area, a coastal town 30 miles to the north. Steve and Lynn liked the area and found five acres in an industrial park just off of U.S. 19, a four-lane artery into Clearwater-St. Pete. An eight-acre property in an equestrian subdivision, which happened to fit perfectly with Leah's interest in horses, sealed the deal. The new plant in Hudson was completed in 1998 and the Scotts' move to the country was "the best thing we ever did."

Today, L&S is very much a family business. Leah and Brent have full-time positions. Leah is helping customers design exterior paint schemes and learning bookkeeping. Brent is applying his computer savvy to on-board electronics, doing public relations, and training owners how to use their new coaches. The

Story by Fred Thompson
Photos courtesy of Steve and Lynn Scott



couple's two preschool-age granddaughters are often taking naps or playing in Lynn's office. The relaxed atmosphere and the lack of traffic congestion make it easier for customers to come to the plant for consultation, planning, and deliveries.

"One of our most interesting experiences was a sale to a German company. The buyer sent a company engineer to thoroughly check us out," Steve related. "Meeting German import certifications was certainly a challenge." But after two weeks of scrutiny, the engineer found very little to question.

"At first, he was very stiff and stern in his demeanor," Lynn said. "We had planned for him to stay in a nearby hotel. But he was interested in American culture and our way of life. He asked, 'Where do you live?' So we took him home for a meal and a little Southern hospitality," she continued. "Pretty soon we had him riding on our 4-wheelers and our horses. When we told him the eight acres was our 'back yard,' he exclaimed, 'Back yard? This is a park!'"

Even though his name is Scott, Steve is very much an Italian. His mother's maiden name was Daminao. Among other businesses, the family owned a restaurant and Steve's mother taught him to cook. Today he does all the cooking at home—another surprise for their German visitor.

When Steve went to Germany to deliver the coach, the engineer reciprocated with a tour of the BMW plant and a visit to the National Equestrian Training Center in the Black Forest.

The company's exports continued, providing Steve with some very interesting experiences:

- Singapore – "I like the culture and safeness of the city. Amazing weekend markets."
- United Arab Emirates – "They wanted

Above left: Flagler County schools ordered this 40-ft. mobile computer repair learning center. *Center:* In the repair center, a wireless network was used to connect all of the monitors to the computers. *Left:* In addition to enjoying their Allegro Bay, Steve and Lynn usually take their Kawasaki and BMW bikes for touring while traveling in their motorhome.

us to move there and build for them. Offered to build us a plant.

- Saudi Arabia – “Very strict. We had to stay with our host at all times. But they love our tech.”
- Puerto Rico – “We sold a variety of coaches in Puerto Rico, including command coaches for Shell Oil Exploration, AT&T mobile offices, water testing labs and dental coaches with sleeping quarters.”

During the past year as the economy slowed down, L&S increased its refurbishing business. “We have a good refurbishing program,” Steve said. “It gives us a good opportunity to see how well our products hold up. We expect our coaches to be abused,” he continued. “We can take a 10-year-old coach, strip it out down to the shell, and totally rebuilt it for half the cost of a new coach,” Steve said. “Most of the engines don’t have high mileage since they are not generally used for long trips.”

Steve continually searches for new materials and products to improve L&S’s coaches. In-dash GPS computers, back-up monitors and sideview cameras, and 15-ton Atwood electric jacks are recent additions. Actually, Steve first discovered Atwood’s electric jacks on the couple’s 2008 Allegro Bay and asked the company to provide a heavy duty version for their commercial applications.

Late this year the company switched from Blue Bird shells to International shells. Blue Bird stopped building shells with solid walls and could offer only school bus shells with windows from front to back – which L&S had to immediately replace.

“We use a flooring material from Germany. It has solid color all the way through – so when it wears a little, you don’t see layers of substrate coming through,” he explained. “It is breathable and very flexible. We just removed it from a 10-year-old coach in refurb and it was still in very good condition.”

L&S pioneered another innovation with stainless steel holding tanks. By using a very high-grade stainless, they can build a flawless tank in any size or shape to fit specific applications. “It is rare for

one of our tanks to leak or a seam to break,” he said.

For its very durable cabinets, L&S now uses a formaldehyde-free ½” or ¾” plywood. “That was really important in our medical applications,” he said. The cabinet work is all modular, allowing the company to replace components without tearing the coach apart.


Unusual applications are welcome at L&S. “We can custom build just about anything,” Steve said. That willingness may have been tested when a well-heeled public school system in Georgia asked L&S to build a replica of NASA’s space shuttle with wings that would deploy. “It had computers, monitors, and lab equipment that NASA shipped to us from a simulator,” Steve laughed. “We even made faux engines that spewed white smoke.” The company’s build time for its more standard designs is usually eight weeks. The unique jobs may take up to 14 weeks.

To watch the level of activity in the plant, one might think there was little or no time for vacations. But Lynn and Steve

didn’t buy a new Allegro Bay as an extra bedroom for their visitors. “We love what we do in our business, but we really wanted to travel. We have good managers and feel comfortable getting away for a few weeks at a time,” Lynn said. “It is really fun to meet so many interesting people who are RVing.”

They were planning a Fall trip to Pennsylvania when I visited in mid-September. Both are avid motorcyclists and cruising the byways and backroads is their way to really experience the countryside. Lynn rides a BMW K1200 LT and Steve cruises on a Kawasaki C-14 Sport Touring bike. Lynn learned to ride in the 1970s on a Honda 250 that she used to bop around town. “We both stopped riding while we were raising the kids,” she said. “But when they were old enough to take care of themselves, we bought bikes again. We love mountain riding in the Colorado Rockies.”

Lynn’s helmet is painted on the side with “Ride fast or be last.”

“That’s the motto of her life,” Leah said. 

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From Vinyl Tops to Zephyrs

Bill Colton Started in 1962—His Sons Chris & Jim Today Operate Colton RV, a Tiffin Top 10 Dealer

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

As an upholsterer in Tonawanda, New York, Bill Colton loved to apply his considerable skills to cars. Turning old cars into flashy street rods became his passion during the sixties and seventies. He found a satisfaction in his work that really pumped up his adrenaline. That passion also led Bill Colton into racing, a first love that he never got out of his system.

Colton was adaptable. When he saw a trend or a new market developing, he refocused his skills to jump in and take advantage. When after-market vinyl tops became the rage in the sixties, Colton set up a shop with a sewing machine in his van, and sold the tops he created to both new and used car dealers. Working at the dealer's site, his finished vinyl tops added value and a touch of class. The quality of his work and the lifetime guarantee he provided made his business grow almost exponentially. He trained new hires and soon had mobile trucks making and installing vinyl tops at dealer locations in the Buffalo area.

In the early seventies, Colton opened a used car business where he customized many of the cars to be sold with vinyl tops and other features that would attract buyers. Throughout the years that his businesses were evolving, Bill continued to operate his upholstery shop in Tonawanda. His primary competitor was also the city's building inspector, who seemed to make a career out of finding absurd reasons to cite him for violations. Disgusted with something he couldn't correct, he bought several acres in the Township of Wheatfield, an adjacent municipality.

Although the property was "out in the country" at the time, it was located on what eventually became a major artery. Soon after relocating his used car business to North Tonawanda, Colton saw another trend developing—van conversions. His talent for automotive upholstery made it easy for him to start a very successful van conversion operation. He struck a deal with a small Ford dealer to supply van shells with no money exchanged. When the van conversion sold, Bill paid the dealer. The turnover times were quick and both companies found the arrangement profitable.

Bill's sons, Chris and Jim, who own and operate Colton RV today, recall their Dad's fast-paced businesses during their high

school years. "We were converting and selling over 200 vans a year," Jim remembered. "But Dad had a problem. Some people have an alcohol or gambling problem. Dad had a 'race car' problem. It was his hobby and passion and it took a lot of his capital."

"Our older brother, Bill III, got the 'bug' too, and went into the business of building race cars," Jim continued. "Of course, we cheered them on at the races and 'hated' Maynard Troyer who won most of the races during the seventies and eighties. Bill eventually went to work for Troyer, building sheet metal exteriors for the cars. After working for Maynard for a few years, he bought into the business. Today Bill owns 100 percent of Troyer Race Cars."

"When Chris finished high school, Dad wanted him to continue working in the company and run the financial end of the business. Chris told him, 'Only if business comes first and racing second,'" Jim related, explaining how the second generation joined the operation.

Cars in western New York didn't last very long due to the salt used on the roads in the winter. There was a solid demand in Buffalo for good used cars from the southern states that didn't have any rust. Bill Colton saw another opportunity. The Martinsville Speedway in western Virginia was Mecca for Colton and his eldest son. "We went there to race. On each trip we would buy used cars and parts and bring them back here to sell. Virginia didn't use salt on their roads in the winter, so we could get three-year-old cars in good condition," Jim said. "As soon as I could drive, I made the Buffalo-Martinsville run on a regular basis. But then auto leasing to individuals came along. People would lease for three years and get a new one. That killed our southern used car business," Jim continued, "but our van conversion business continued to grow through the eighties. People around here called them 'love vans.'"

Bill Colton was a perfectionist when it came to van conversions, and for that matter, just about anything he decided to do.

Jim Colton took a unique opportunity to display the company's inventory at a large mall in Buffalo when one of the anchor stores cancelled their lease. The store furnishes many good sales leads.

He stood behind his workmanship for as long as the original owner had one of his vans. By 1990 the local van conversion market had attracted a bigger player. The largest Ford dealer in western New York decided to go into the van conversion business. The economies of scale he was able to create soon began to squeeze Colton out of that market.

Bill Colton's adaptability made the difference again. "Look around you and see what people need and what they are buying," he advised his sons. This time Colton starting building adaptive equipment for the handicapped and for the Veterans Administration. He bought a U-Haul franchise largely because the CEO for U-Haul was also into racing. That connection soon became pivotal in setting a new direction for Colton enterprises.

In 1984 U-Haul started renting Southwind motorhomes, but their venture only lasted for two years. "We rather liked the business and began buying used motorhomes for resale," Jim said. "Coachman approached us in 1987 about becoming a dealer. But when they asked us to floorplan a \$1.5 million inventory, we backed off pretty quickly," Jim said, as he continued to relate the company's history.

In 1992 Colton RV began selling Gulfstream towables. A year later they took on Cobras, their first new motorized product. During the 1993-94 model year, Chris and Jim went to a show in Rochester where they approached a Fleetwood executive to discuss becoming a dealer. They were snubbed, but an alert Southwind rep saved their business cards.

The Southwind rep was Mike Andes who had just signed on

with Tiffin Motorhomes. He still had those business cards and made a call to Jim. Shortly thereafter, the Coltons became a Tiffin dealer. At the Tiffin Motorhomes National Dealers Show in 1995 at the famed Peabody Hotel in Nashville, Bob Tiffin wanted to meet this young RV entrepreneur from Buffalo.

"After some brief introductions, Mr. Tiffin asked me, 'Jim, where do you see yourself in five years?'" he remembered, still seeming to feel some of that excitement from 13 years ago. "I responded in a heartbeat, 'Mr. Tiffin, I would like for Colton RV to represent Tiffin Motorhomes at the Harrisburg Show.'" The two men continued their conversation about manufacturing and dealerships.

"Within a month, Mike called me and asked if we would do the Harrisburg Show," Jim said. "We couldn't have been more thrilled. We gave it a 110-percent effort and sold more units than their dealer had the previous year. That show really launched us into the Class A market."

Chris and Jim are rabid Buffalo Bills fans, attending all the games and tailgating with hundreds of fans every weekend. With their marketing eyes wide open, they noted that the Bills' quarterback, Jim Kelly, was driving an old dilapidated motorhome. "We got Jim into one of our new units and created a 'Jim Kelly edition,'" Jim said.

"He used it very publicly throughout the football season and fans knew it was a Colton RV motorhome. At the end of the season, there was always competition among the fans to buy Kelly's motorhome. It was probably the best thing we have ever done in



marketing. It really launched our business in the Buffalo area," Jim related. An immensely popular quarterback, Kelly led the Bills to the Super Bowl for four straight years beginning in 1990.

While Jim's exuberance and people skills make him the obvious choice to head up sales and marketing for Colton RV, Chris's business management and accounting talent have brought stability and planned growth to the company. They complement one another really well.

For his obvious success in financial management, Chris gives a lot of credit to his mentor, Dan Knoll, who made a small fortune in service stations throughout the Buffalo area. Although

The Colton RV management team works constantly to improve customers' RV experiences. *Lower front*, Jim Colton, director, sales and marketing. *From left*, Glenn Ohar, director, parts and service; Chris Colton, general manager; Jackie Rao, finance manager; David Lea, sales manager.



Knoll never became a partner in Colton RV, he often provided short-term capital loans to Chris and Jim. "He enjoyed seeing us succeed," Chris said. "It all began with a \$25,000 loan in 1985. When we sold something from our floorplan, Dan expected to be paid that day. He made it clear that he did not want to ask for a check."

In the mid-1990s when manufacturers began making Class B recreational vehicles, the three-year residual values on the popular Colton-built conversion vans dropped to a low that essentially killed that facet of their business. The Coltons immediately began to focus on the sale of towables and motorized RVs.

"We realized how important customer service was in this industry and began thinking about a new facility," Chris said. "Dan helped us acquire five pieces of property totaling 13 acres through the years. With his backing and knowledge, we succeeded in the van conversion business and then in the motorhome business."

Jim and Chris visited several successful dealers to see their sales and service facilities, and then hired an architect to create a floorplan that would work for their business. The new facility completed in late 2001 has 20 service bays, two lifts to handle motorhomes up to 45 feet and 50,000 pounds, two bays for collision and repairs, and four bays for reconditioning.

"Although Dan was not well, we brought him over to see the construction that was underway in July 2001. All he could say was, 'Too big, too big,'" Chris said. Dan died in August and the new facility was finished in November. "It was completed under budget and we credit Dan for continuing to advocate cost control," Chris continued. "We built an office for Dad. He would spend a few hours a week there working on his racing deals and custom cars. Dad passed away in February 2003. Our mother, Christine, stops by regularly to join us for lunch."

"Dad and Dan wanted to see things done immediately when they made suggestions. If I didn't get things done quickly enough to suit them, they would call and 'yell' at me," Chris reminisced. "Oddly enough, I missed that. One day in 2004 I asked Joyce, Dan's wife, to just pick up the phone and yell at me."

In their first year of operation in the new facility, total sales increased 22 percent. By the end of the business year in 2005, they had realized an 82 percent increase since opening the doors of their new building. "We just looked more professional," Chris said. "We had been operating out of a double-wide trailer!"

Chris and Jim are operating Colton RV with over 50 years of collective management experience to their credit. They both emphasize the importance of good customer service. "If you don't, then somebody else is going to service your customer for you. We built training rooms and meeting rooms which are used to train both our service techs and sales people," Chris said.

"We do customer training as a part of the sales experience," Jim continued. "Every customer gets hands-on instruction in our walk-through program. Then we ask them to stay overnight in our campground and try to use everything in the coach."

The company built six campsites for on-site training. A service person knocks on the new owner's door each morning to

take questions and offer additional instruction.

"If they are buying a towable, we have the customer hook up and unhook two or three times," Chris said. "We want to make sure they are confident in handling the hookup."

Jim kids Chris about refusing to buy a new desk when they moved into the new facility. "Well, it was either a new lift or a new desk," Chris says, putting on his accountant's hat. "We built a building that is efficient and serviceable. It is heated with hot water in the floors. We have bays designed for different kinds of service."

Chris returns the compliment. "Jim is very innovative in our sales and marketing efforts. He found 35,000 square feet for lease at Galleria Mall when one of the anchor stores closed. With a good layout, he gets 45 to 50 units in that store which gets a lot of walk-in traffic," he said.

"We are not on an Interstate at our primary facility. The Galleria store generates a lot of good leads for us," Jim continued. "We stock about 80 percent towables and 20 percent motorized."

Jim has a staff of 11 in the sales department. A desk manager and a sales manager oversee nine sales people. Jim emphasizes the necessity for product knowledge and the ability of each sales person to learn about a customer's interests and needs in order to show them the right RV equipment. The sales staff also makes a point of introducing customers to the company's extensive parts and service facility.

Glenn Ohar, service manager, oversees a staff of 15 techs and 10 parts and service counter people. Bob Lemma is the company's new parts manager. Tom Mohring, a retired police officer and lifelong RVer and Colton customer, does deliveries and works the counter in parts and accessories. Steve Roberts is retired from the Air Force and serves as reconditioning manager. His team, almost all retired military, put pre-owned RVs in top notch condition before they go into the sales inventory. Needless to say, the service and parts department runs a tight ship.


Of course, the current economy concerns the Coltons. "We are still profitable," Chris says. "And it is really our people who make the difference. I am having a meeting today with all of our managers. Each one will bring three ideas to the meeting which will help us save money or be more efficient."

The company had a great Hershey Show in September 2007, and followed it with good sales in October and November. "By January 2008 we had definite signs that the market was going to be off for quite a while," Chris said. "We began stocking less inventory, especially the high end units."

Chris has a five-point plan to keep Colton RV viable during the current market downturn, but a plan that will continue to work when the market turns around. (1) Control inventory and costs. (2) Work to take better care of our customer base. (3) Push customer service to greater heights. (4) If other dealers in our area fail, we will be here to take care of their customers. (5) We will be aggressive in sales, but always with the purpose of serving the needs of our customers.

"The person who is already in the RV lifestyle will find a way to stay in it. I am concerned about those who would have tried

it, but are put off by the market conditions. They may find other recreation sources," he said. "Our government needs to get our banking system stabilized quickly. Thirty percent of the banks we did business with have ceased serving this market in the retail area. Approximately 75 percent of what we sell is financed. The retail credit for the average buyer must be relaxed for this industry to fully recover," Chris observed. "We must have a return to normalcy, which means restoring reasonable fuel prices and getting our banking system fixed."

In the meantime, Chris and Jim Colton know that interest in the RVing lifestyle has not waned. "It will come back and we will continue to be here to serve our current customers now and our new customers whom we have yet to meet," Jim said. 

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Snowmobiling in Yellowstone



LOUISIANA COUPLE HEADS FOR THE ROCKIES FOR A CHRISTMAS – NEW YEAR’S ADVENTURE

Photography by Michael, Sylvia,
Don, and Sharon Jackson

Text by Fred Thompson

You first met Michael and Sylvia Jackson in our Spring 2008 magazine. A master river pilot who guided freighters and cruise ships from around the world 156 miles up the Mississippi River to the Port of New Orleans, Mike had just retired after a 30-year career on the river.

Still in his early fifties, Mike and his wife, Sylvia, were looking for adventure. While Mike’s schedule as a river pilot was two weeks on and two weeks off, they learned to drive 18-wheelers and delivered loads across the U.S. A Greek freighter captain invited them to visit him in Greece and they accepted, which resulted in a thrilling motorcycle tour of that country’s mountainous seacoast villages.

Motorhoming sounded like an adventure. So they took delivery of a 2006 Phaeton only a few days after his retirement on December 31, 2006. Carolyn and I met Mike and Sylvia at an Allegro Club rally ten months later in Vermont and knew our readers would enjoy learning about their travels.

On December 20, 2007, they decided snowmobiling in the Rockies suited their fancy for a different Christmas-New Year’s experience. Mike called his uncle and aunt, Don and Sharon Jackson, in Little Rock and asked them to go along. Mike and Sylvia left on the 21st and ten hours later arrived in Little Rock where Don and Sharon were waiting to board the Phaeton. The two men took turns driving straight through to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

“We couldn’t have gone to sleep if we had wanted to,” Mike said. “When Don was driving, he got if from Sharon and Sylvia both. When I took over, Sylvia stayed on me, too. It was a fun trip all the way.”

After a rest stop in Cheyenne, they arrived in Jackson Hole on

December 23rd. “Sylvia and I had bought snow boots in Canada the winter after we did the Allegro Club rally in Vermont. But that was just the beginning of the gear that we needed to go snowmobiling,” Mike explained. “When the temps are below zero every day, you have to take special precautions. We bought silk long johns that cover you from head to foot and rented insulated coveralls, helmets, and boots.”

The Jacksons selected the Grand Teton Park RV Resort as their base. They made reservations for their snowmobiles in Jackson Hole with a tour company that took them to Yellowstone National Park in special buses with Caterpillar-type tracks in place of front and rear wheels. “We knew there was no chance of getting stuck anywhere in those contraptions,” Sylvia said.

“We bit off just about as much as we could chew,” she laughed. “This was a 124-mile snowmobile trip that left at 8 a.m. The tour company provided a guide that led a group of eight snowmobiles. My feet got so cold I couldn’t feel them. What I didn’t know the first day is that you can buy chemical heat pads for your boots. On the next trip, I knew better.”

The guide took his entourage through the southwest entrance into Yellowstone. “We went to Old Faithful first and saw the geyser. They had lunch prepared for us—hot stew, breads, desserts, and hot drinks. It was great,” Mike said.

“After lunch we began touring. It was a bright, sunny day,” Sylvia remembered. “We saw several different herds of buffalo, elk, and moose. Then we snowmobiled to waterfalls and rivers with ice floes. The winter beauty of Yellowstone and the Rockies is just incredible.”

By five o’clock it was dark and the headlights were turned

on as the guide led them back to Jackson Hole. The next day was spent shopping in Jackson Hole. "That was our indoor entertainment. Much warmer, too. It takes a lot of energy to stay outside in the snow all day," Sylvia said.

That evening the two couples headed for the Mill Iron Ranch and Cattle Pit, a family-owned operation that offers hunting and fishing, trail rides and sleigh rides, and a restaurant that turns out great steaks grilled over a wood-fired pit. Located north of Jackson Hole on the way to Yellowstone, the ranch takes its winter guests on a one-hour sleigh ride that usually passes through an elk herd. The Jacksons ranked the steaks as some of the best they had ever eaten.

Not quite having had their fill yet of snowmobiling, the Jacksons scheduled another trip. They rented their snowmobiles from the campground, followed a road to the trail, and then through the mountains to a lodge in Yellowstone at 12,000 feet. "There were many hairpin turns all the way to the lodge," Mike said. "On our way we crossed an open field at about 11,000 feet and had to get off the trail for a snowmobile in the way. Our snowmobile slipped over on its side. Don and I struggled to get it righted, but with the lower oxygen at high altitude we were exhausted in a few minutes. Lucky for us, some young men who were playing out in the field saw our predicament, came over and gunned it around, and drove it right back on the trail."

"We got to the lodge in time for lunch," Sylvia continued their story. "The food was excellent. The young people who work at the lodge stay there throughout



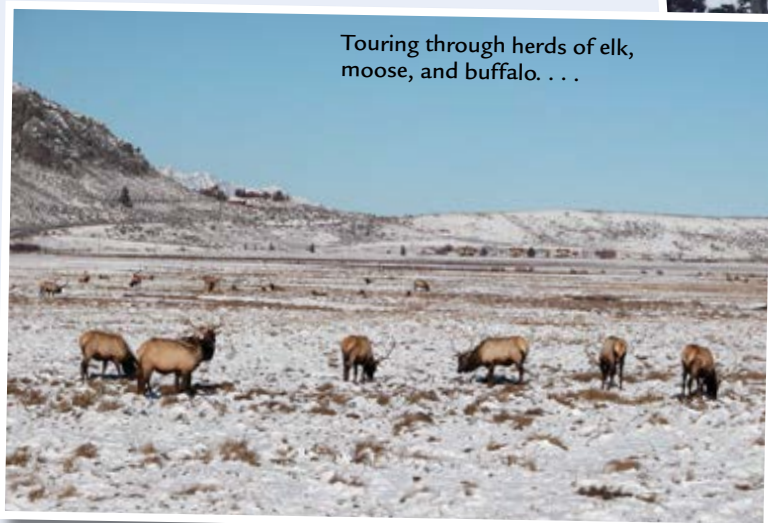
Sylvia and Don enjoy the Wyoming winter sun.



Anticipating their first snowmobile trip, Sharon and Sylvia wait for the guys to get the equipment ready.



The first day out—124 miles, wow! Destination Yellowstone.



Touring through herds of elk, moose, and buffalo. . . .



Snowmobiling to remote waterfalls



The cook at the Mill Iron Ranch and Cattle Pit prepares thick steaks for the wood-fired grill.

The ranch offers guests a delightful one-hour sleigh ride through memorable winter scenes.



The destination for our last snowmobile trip was a lodge at 12,000 ft. We crossed the continental divide at 8,262 ft. Arriving back after dark, the snowcats picked us up and returned us to the campground.



the winter. Supplies are brought in on busses that have snow tracks instead of tires on their axles."

"On the way back down the mountain to the RV resort, we had to really reduce our speed to maintain control. We encountered a moose cow on the road that literally stood there and stared at us for a while until she decided to move. With early darkness in the winter, the temperatures begin to drop rapidly," Mike said. "The campground operators told us to call them if we did not want to complete the trip on the snowmobiles and they would come get us in the snow tractor which has a heated cabin. I'm sure Sharon and Sylvia were really glad we opted to do that."

"Getting back to the motorhome and turning up the heat really felt good that night," Sylvia admitted. "But we stayed toasty warm even when the temperature went as low as -21 degrees one night."

Keeping track of the weather reports every day, the Jacksons became aware of a major storm moving west to east from the Rockies across the plains states. It was time to head for home. Moving quickly to get on Interstate 80 to Cheyenne and then across Nebraska, they were able to stay just a few hours ahead of the front. Radio reports told them the state police were closing the interstate just a few hours behind them. Don and Mike knew they did not want to get trapped at a truck stop in the "frozen north," so they relieved each other and kept the Phaeton moving toward warmer climes.

It had been an exciting week, a Christmas-New Year's far different from any the two Jackson families had ever experienced. **RIS**



Interviews from Las Vegas, Nevada



Steve and Barbara Gordon

Home: Leesburg, Florida
 Interviewed at Sam's Town RV Park
 Las Vegas, Nevada

- The Gordons own a 2003 Allegro Bay.
- They have been camping for 34 years.
- They started with a pop-up camper in 1974, then a 35-ft. trailer and finally their present rig, which they absolutely love.
- They are both retired from Rohm & Haas Chemical Company where Steve was a Chemical Engineer and Barbara was an Administrative Assistant.
- They have been married 46 years.
- They have three children—twin girls Geri and Teri, both nurses and both married to washer/dryer repairmen for Sears, and a son, Kevin who is a paramedic.
- They have nine grandchildren—6 girls and 3 boys.
- Steve does all of the driving.
- Barbara states that Steve “drives, drives, and drives.” He does not stop unless it’s for lunch or the end of the day. Meanwhile, Barbara crochets and enjoys the scenery.
- The Gordons take short trips all during the year with their club, the Pennbrooke Fairways RV Club. One of their favorite places to visit is New Smyrna Beach, Florida.
- They have been to Red Bay and were very impressed.
- They are extremely active and enjoy dancing (jitterbug is their specialty), riding motorcycles, softball and pickle ball.



Gailen and Charlene Magnuson

Home: Brookings, Oregon & Surprise, Arizona
 Interviewed at Sam's Town RV Park
 Las Vegas, Nevada

- The Magnusons own a 2007 Phaeton.
- They have been camping for 50 years.
- They started camping in the back of a station wagon and progressed to their present rig.
- They travel with a longhaired dachshund named Gretchen who is 10 years old.
- Gailen is retired from the FAA and Margie is retired from being a “Domestic Engineer.”
- They have been married 52 years.
- They have one daughter who lives in Lansing, Michigan.
- They have two grandsons.
- Gailen does all of the driving.
- They spend the summer in Oregon and the winter in Arizona.
- They live on the ocean in Oregon and are great anglers, fishing frequently for salmon and lingcod.
- Charlene is quite proud of landing a 38 lb. king salmon (Gailen helped her get it in the boat) and a 21 lb. lingcod.
- Gailen is the president of Sun Village RV Club (62 members strong) in Surprise, Arizona. They take a road trip every month.
- They have not been to Red Bay but are anticipating visiting next summer on the way back from their grandson’s wedding.
- Gailen is also active in the golf club and is on the board of the computer club. They both enjoy bingo.



Mike and Margie Burnett

Home: Cape Coral, Florida
 Interviewed at Sam's Town RV Park
 Las Vegas, Nevada

- The Burnetts own a 2008 Phaeton.
- They have been motorhoming one year. Mike says they have gone from “water yachting to land yachting.”
- They travel with a cat named DC, short for Darling Cat or Devil Cat.
- Mike is retired from the Navy and Margie is retired from being a “Jill of All Trades”.
- They have been married 47 years.
- They have three children—two daughters, Jeannine and Holly and a son, John.
- They have five grandchildren—1 girl and 4 boys.
- Mike does all of the driving.
- They take their time when on the road, traveling 150 to 200 miles a day.
- Their favorite thing to do is to dry camp away from the hustle and bustle.
- Their favorite places to visit, so far, are Valdez, Alaska, Rapid City, South Dakota, the Ice Highway in Canada and the Redwood Forest in Crescent City, California.
- Mike says that he believes “there is not an ugly place in the US. Everyone should be adventurous by getting out and doing something; try dry camping,” see our great country and enjoy it’s beauty.
- They have been to Red Bay twice and were impressed with everyone’s fantastic attitude.

Editor’s Note: Earl and Rita Warren retired four years ago from the Denver area and are full-timers in their 2007 Tiffin Phaeton. I first met Rita when she submitted an article for “From the Road.” They’ve traveled to 32 states so far. Rita says, “One of the best parts of exploring our beautiful country is meeting the people who make it great.” They take time to visit their four sons and families (three grandsons and two granddaughters with one more on the way) who live in North Carolina, Kansas, California, and British Columbia. “An American Flag flies in front of our coach with a 101st Airborne plaque. We have South Dakota Purple Heart license plates. If you see us along the way, please stop to visit. We’d love to get to know you!”



New Hampshire Rally – October 2008 by Gail Johnson

Red barns, orange pumpkins, yellow chrysanthemums, blue skies, and brilliant multi-colored foliage—these are some of the images envisioned when autumn in New Hampshire is mentioned! For a fortunate group of Tiffin RV owners, those images became reality as we gathered at the Cold Springs RV Resort near Wear, New Hampshire for the 2008 Fall Allegro Club Rally in New England. Had we been able to order up the weather conditions, they could not have been any better than what we enjoyed during this four-day stay; mornings and evenings cool and crisp enough for a roaring fire in the pavilion where our meals were served, but sunshine and warmth during the day for the varied activities we enjoyed.

Monday was spent with registration and getting settled into the campground. Cold Springs RV, our dealer and host, has developed a beautiful camping and RV resort in the New Hampshire countryside; large trees, both evergreen and deciduous, shade the spacious campsites, and a clear, babbling creek feeds into a lovely little lake on site. Monday evening's dinner was a delicious affair sponsored by Cold Springs.


Tuesday's activities were kicked off with breakfast, followed by vendor seminars throughout the day. While the various issues of care and maintenance of our Tiffin motorhomes were discussed by different vendor representatives, some of the ladies attended a microwave-convection cooking seminar where recipes were sampled and information was shared. Later in the afternoon, a Ladies' Tea was held, with each attendee given an opportunity to show her favorite teacup or mug and share a story about her treasured item. This is a great activity for helping us to get to know each other better—I always come away from a tea feeling closer to the ladies who attended. Tuesday evening's after-dinner entertainment was a fantastic one-man show that performed an "oldies" show—he had us clapping and tapping to the beat!

Wednesday's schedule included several games—Back Your Wagon, horseshoes, beanbag baseball, and the deadline for the scavenger hunt. The afternoon events included a Chapter Forum and a very popular Line Dance class taught by rally attendee Tammy Wyatt. The evening's dinner theme was "the Wild West," and a country western band provided entertainment after dinner.

Our final day's activities on Thursday began early with bus boarding at 8:00 for an hour's ride north to the White Mountains and beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee. There, we took a sight-seeing luncheon cruise of the lake, enjoying views of quaint lakeside villages, woodland cabins, and of course, stunning fall foliage. The bus ride also provided viewing opportunities of breathtaking views of the picturesque New England countryside. Our farewell dinner Thursday evening was delicious, and afterward we lingered over bingo and visiting—reluctant to part company with old and new friends we met at this fun rally!

While the rally was packed with activities, some of our attendees found time to explore the area nearby. Our campground was within an hour or two drive to the coast, as well as the White Mountains, the resort town of Conway, the coastal area of Portsmouth, Maine, two large outlet centers, the historic Shaker Village, and the capital city of Manchester, just to name a few of the many area destinations.

In addition to the many enjoyable activities of this rally, we were able to benefit from the dependability of the Tiffin service technicians who were, as always, working tirelessly to provide repairs and service for those in need during the rally. A big "thank you" to David Sparks and Sammy Odom for their hard work!

If you have not experienced one of our Allegro Rallies, I hope you can get just a glimpse of how much fun we have by reading our summaries. Check the rally schedule—it is filling up fast! And join us for "Roughing It Smoothly" at the next rally! 

BRANSON RALLY – SEPTEMBER 2008

by Gail Johnson

Can you name a vacation destination that is a comfortable day's drive from most dense population centers in the South and East, and has mountains, lakes, streams, great shopping, a variety of good restaurants, outdoor recreation, and music, music, music—of all types being performed by some of the greatest legends in the music industry? Well, that would be Branson, Missouri, of course! Over 100 Tiffin motorhome owners convened at America's Best Campground (ABC) in September to experience Branson. We were certainly not disappointed!

ABC proved to be the perfect venue for our rally, and the entire staff was efficient, helpful, and hospitable to our group of rally attendees. They not only served as our hosts, but provided the catering services as well. We enjoyed delicious meals for the duration of the rally!

After a hectic day of checking in and getting set up on Monday, our rally started with a bang Monday night as everyone enjoyed a boisterous Hill Billy Party. We were served a delicious barbeque dinner, followed by entertainment by a great local bluegrass band. Throw in a hillbilly costume contest and an impromptu jug band concert by some of the contestants, and you get the idea how the evening went! We all went to sleep laughing after that evening's activities!


Tuesday was our travel day. We loaded buses in the campground and were delivered to the door of the Clay Cooper Theatre, where we enjoyed a morning performance of the Clay Cooper family. After that show, we boarded buses again for a short ride over to the docking area of the Branson Belle, a lovely traditional paddle wheel steamboat that was built especially for cruises on Tabletop Lake. We cruised the lake on a beautiful early autumn day, and also enjoyed an excellent variety show and delicious meal in the boat's dinner theatre.

Wednesday was reserved for seminars and other on-site activities. Many Tiffin vendors were on hand to impart information designed to help coach owners learn more about the many aspects of RV maintenance and care. Also on hand for the duration of the rally were Tiffin technicians who stayed busy providing minor service and repairs for all who had a need. The Sharp Microwave Convection Cooking Seminar was well attended, as was the Ladies' Tea and the Arts and Crafts Show and Tell session. Wednesday night's meal theme was "the Wild West," with entertainment by a great country western band.

Thursday was left as a free day for those who wished to explore the many options for entertainment in Branson. Shows are available morning, noon, and night. One can hear country, western, folk, oldies, Broadway, patriotic, gospel, bluegrass, instrumentals, and comedy within blocks of each other. There are many big-name entertainers, and many up-and-coming acts, as well. If you want a break from the shows, there are many other options available. Silver Dollar City is nearby, with rides, crafts, seasonal displays, and, of course, music. A train excursion is offered on weekends from the Branson Depot in old downtown, where one might also enjoy an afternoon of poking around the many antique stores and specialty shops in the downtown area. A new waterfront area has been developed downtown, as

well. This complex, anchored by a Bass Pro Shop on one end and a new outdoor shopping mall on the other, offers great opportunities to shop or dine in a beautiful setting. We happened upon a free concert in this area which featured Andy Williams!

Friday's activities included on site games such as Bingo, Bean Bag Baseball, Hillbilly Horseshoes, and Back Your Wagon for those competitive spirits. A scavenger hunt was also judged, and prizes were awarded during the evening's dinner activities. After an especially delicious farewell dinner, we enjoyed entertainment by country recording star Barbara Fairchild.

As goodbyes were said and evaluations of the week's activities were being made, it was enthusiastically agreed on by everyone that Branson is a fantastic rally destination! If all goes as planned, we will go "Back to Branson" in May! 

ALLEGRO CLUB 2009 RALLY SCHEDULE

ALLEGRO CLUB KEY LIME RALLY

Boyd's Key West Campground, Key West, FL
April 6-9, 2009 (Check-out April 10)

TIFFIN MH / JOHNNIE WALKER RV VIVA LAS VEGAS RALLY

Oasis Las Vegas RV Resort, Las Vegas, NV
April 21-23, 2009 (Check out April 24)

ALLEGRO CLUB BRANSON RETURN RALLY

America's Best Campground, Branson, MO
May 12-16, 2009 (Check out May 17)

TIFFIN MH / THE RV CORRAL SEVEN FEATHERS SHEBANG

Seven Feathers RV Resort, Canyonville, OR
June 22-24, 2009 (Check out June 25)

ALLEGRO CLUB FREEDOM TRAIL RALLY

Normandy Farms Family Camping Resort, Foxboro, MA
September 21-24, 2009 (Check out September 25)

ALLEGRO CLUB ALBUQUERQUE BALLOON BASH

American RV Park, Albuquerque, NM
October 12-16, 2009 (Check out October 17)

ALLEGRO CLUB SMOKY MOUNTAIN GETAWAY

River Plantation RV Park, Sevierville, Tennessee
November 2-6, 2009 (Check out November 7)

Begin Planning Now for 2009

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ALL EVENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE OR CANCELLATION



Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, 35-year veteran with Tiffin Motorhomes, invites your questions.

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

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

Danny would also like to hear your ideas, suggestions, and innovations that would make our motorhomes more useful and functional. If you have a photograph, please include it with your letter. Please send a SASE if you would like for us to return your photographs, disk files, and manuscript.

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

Dear Danny . . .

If the motorhome is plugged into 110-volt power, the Sharp microwave must have the clock set when in storage or it will burn the numbers so you can no longer see how to set the displays. Sharp should warn owners of this problem or you will get to buy a new microwave.

Could Tiffin engineers devise a way to move the couch to face the television so everyone does not have to sit sideways to watch? I put spring-loaded wheels on our couch. When it is unhooked, I can roll it to face the television. I lock

it in place for travel. If it had a track, it could be designed to lock automatically.

William H. Sherwood
Trail, Oregon

Dear William,
It is a great idea. However, the engineering required to move the couch out and back in one fixed path places it in the middle of the living space with little room to walk around the couch on either side. I would like to see a scale diagram of what you are proposing.

I now understand that each television in our motorhome will need a separate converter box. How do we hook up the converter boxes? Do we install the converter boxes between the Winegard control box outlets to the main television and bedroom TV? To save confusion and questions later, please ask someone to write an article with diagrams of the correct way to hook up the two converter boxes in your next issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*.

Dwight Caler
Capshaw, Alabama

Dear Dwight,
There are several different ways the converter box can be hooked up depending on the year and model of your motorhome. For the newer Tiffin motorhomes (2003 and newer), it is better to use a converter box for each television in the motorhome. On the front television, you will need to use a splitter plus RCA connectors from the converter box to the television. This will allow the continued use of satellites, VCRs, and surround sound systems.

I have been reading in *Motor Home* magazine that you need a box for each television in order to receive a digital signal. I had my receiver box installed at the Tiffin Service Center and both of my televisions work fine with one receiver.

Joe Shearon
Bells, Tennessee

Dear Joe,
You took the right approach. Because of the variations in manufacturers' equipment which we have used over the last ten years, there are too many options to deal with for the average owner. Our technicians at the Tiffin Service Center are having to deal with each coach on a case by case basis.

I believe you will find your response to Tom Cambron about using a single converter box for two televisions is not correct.

You cannot hook up a converter box between the antenna and the switch box because the an-

tenna lead coming from the switch box to the antenna has 12v to power the antenna booster mounted on the antenna.

You could use one converter box if you hooked the front TV switch box output to the converter box and put both front and back TVs through a splitter on the output of the converter box.

Paul Holko
Acworth, Georgia

Dear Paul,
You are correct in your second paragraph. The hookup has to be made between the television and the selector box. Even with this, you have to use the splitter to allow other components to work with your digital control box.

I have a 1994 Allegro Bay 34-ft. With regard to the dash controls for the heating and air conditioning, the vents in my coach will not switch properly when the buttons on the control panel are pressed. When accelerating, the vents will switch, but they rarely direct the air correctly based on the buttons depressed. How can I gain access to the vents and selection buttons and switches — and where are they? I cannot figure out how to remove the dash panels or get behind them. There does not appear to be any access under the hood to the controlling cables or vacuum tubing. Thanks for your response.

Dan Kent
Gahanna, Ohio

Dear Dan,
This sounds like a vacuum leak problem. First, check to see if the vacuum line is still connected to the back of the dash control. Time could have deteriorated the line and caused a problem with the vacuum hose. If everything looks good in the dash control, then you need to check the vacuum pod. This can best be accessed by removing the television. Make sure the lines are in good condition and are connected to the pod. Check to see if the pod operates the air diverters properly. You should be able to solve the problem with going internally into the blower box. The problem will most likely be a leaking or deteriorated vacuum line, or possibly the pod itself. Any parts you need should be readily available at the Tiffin Service Center parts department at 256-356-0261.

I have recently purchased a 2008 Allegro Bus which we are really enjoying. I have a question that no one has been able to answer. Why on this coach do the slide-outs use two different systems — one electric and the other hydraulic?

Shawn Roe
Calgary, Alberta

Dear Shawn,
The hydraulic systems do not require any space for a slide mechanism underneath, giving you more vertical storage space in the pass-through storage area. On the down side, the hydraulic mechanisms are much wider on either end of the slide-out box and reduce the slide's interior width, which can reduce the width of a couch or dinette by eight inches.

The rack and pinion slide takes more space underneath for its gear system, but the sides of the box are the same width as the two-inch back-wall of the slideout box. Therefore, the slide operated with the rack and pinion system gives you more interior width in the slide-out itself.

I have a wonderful 2009 Allegro Bay 34XB. How do I disconnect the house batteries while my RV is plugged into 50-amp service? When plugging in at home or in a campground, what is the safest way to plug in to prevent surging that might damage the RV's electrical systems?

Butch Garcia
Altamonte Springs, Florida

Dear Butch,
The 12-volt disconnect switch on the panel at the door must be in the "on" position for the appliances and other items powered by the 12-volt system to operate. We do not recommend disconnecting the batteries while you are plugged into 110-volt power or running your generator because it would put all of the load on the charging converter.

The safest way to plug in at the campground is to flip the "on-off" breaker switch to the "off" position while you make the connection. Then move the breaker switch back to the "on" position.

We have a 2007 Allegro Bus. We experience serious formaldehyde odor from the bedroom cabin and under the bed. You seem to minimize this problem in your recent comment, saying "Ventilating is the key!" Even if the odor is not harmful to our health, it burns my eyes and the odor is very annoying. What if I don't want to or can't keep my vents or windows open? The customer should not be expected to accept this situation. I suggest Tiffin Motorhomes use another type of glue or adhesive. After two years of use, I still have this problem. I have owned RVs for 20 years and do not remember such a prolonged problem.

Doug Kasten
Titusville, Florida

Dear Doug,
It is very unusual for the formaldehyde odor to linger this long. If you are certain that it is formal-

dehyde, we have tried the following treatment and found it to be effective. Put a pint of household ammonia in each of three bowls and place them on the floor in the front, mid-section, and rear of your coach. Close up the coach for three days. Then remove the ammonia, open all the windows and the ceiling vents, and run both furnaces for 12 hours. If this does not help, there is a company which makes a filtration system that goes in the air conditioning return air vents or also in the furnace return (if you do this in the winter). We are doing research on other alternatives.

We have a 2008 Phaeton and just love it! The only problem we have are the openings under the bed. We have small pets (one cat and one dog). They get under the bed through these openings. What are the openings for? Has anyone else mentioned this problem? We tried plugging the holes with pillows, but the cat pulls them out. Do you have any suggestions?

Betty True
Boise, Idaho

Dear Betty,
The hole is there to provide access to the slide-out mechanism. Putting something solid to block the hole would cause damage to the slide-out sidewall. If you decide to block the holes while the slide-outs are in, be sure to remove the blocks before you put the slide out again. Failing to do so will damage your sidewall. Others have mentioned this problem and we do not have a simple solution.

I have a 2006 Allegro. In very cold weather with my foot on the gas pedal, I feel a very cold flow of air. I have looked under the dash and opened the engine access door. But I cannot find the source of the cold air. Any suggestions?

Roy Crabb
Show Low, Arizona

Dear Roy,
More than likely the cold air is coming from where the engine access cover meets the front firewall of the motorhome. Check this area and see if you can press foam window insulation into any possible openings.

On our last trip, the engine would not charge the house batteries. I think it needs a new isolator. What type and make was used on our 1992 Allegro Bay? VIN #1GB7P37N3M3312924. We are proud original owners and have logged 112,000 miles.

Everett Vanderwende
Coupeville, Washington

Dear Everett,
You need either a three post 12v solenoid (P/N 7860) or a four post 12v solenoid (P/N 3650). Please determine if you need a three- or four-post solenoid and call us.

I am confused by your response to Wayne Hempel regarding the "mis-information" he received from DirecTV (vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 66). According to the printed information supplied by Tiffin, the King Dome cannot access HDTV from DirecTV and can access only standard broadcasts. Tiffin advised using Dish Network to access high definition. Please clarify.

Michael Taurisano
New Hartford, New York

Dear Michael,
I am sitting with Craig Bartyzal from King Dome as I write this. In regard to DirecTV, your King Dome can receive only limited HD channels broadcast by DirecTV, those available on Ku band satellites. The new HD channels broadcast from DirecTV in the Ka band cannot be received with the King Dome dish. With the exception of the Allegro brand, all Tiffin motorhomes in 2008 were wired for HD satellite receivers and HDMI reception within the motorhome (see vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 36-37). HDMI was made standard on the Allegro for 2009. We recommend Dish Network HDTV service for your RV because you can receive all of their channels, HD or SD broadcasts.

If you already have a contract with DirecTV, you can still receive their HDTV programming provided you use their HD receiver. However, your HD channels will be limited as previously noted. The only way to receive DirecTV's Ka band is with a pop-up 3-ft. dish like the one that is used for stationary reception at your home.

I am writing in response to a letter in the Fall 2008 issue (vol. 5, no. 4) of *Roughing It Smoothly*. Last November we purchased a 2008 Allegro Bus with the King Dome high definition roaming satellite dish. The owner's manual says that the dish works with DirecTV high definition satellites, but that is not true. Your cavalier answer to Wayne Hempel about him having dealt with a "totally misinformed" DirecTV technician needs to be corrected in a future issue. We have worked with four DirecTV technicians and have discovered that Mr. Hempel's information is accurate. The King Dome is not directed toward the correct satellites for all of the high def channels. We only receive three high def channels because of the King Dome's limitations.

So, we have now invested in the more expensive

DirecTV High Definition Receiver (that we cannot exchange for another model) that does NOT receive more than a few high definition channels. You need to get your facts straight and stop selling a product that misleads the consumer. I would also love to discuss our challenges with the Xantrex system's auto gen start, but that's another letter.

Ann Zientara
Wausau, Wisconsin

Dear Ann,
Actually most of what the DirecTV service tech told Mr. Hempel was not correct. Specifically, he said "the King Dome could not be used for high definition service because it could only receive three satellites and that high def reception requires five satellites." The above answer to Mr. Taurisano should clarify that error. The DirecTV service tech also said, "High def service should not be used on a motorhome because the dish set-up would be too critical." That is obviously wrong because you are receiving a few of DirecTV's HD channels in the Ku band, and you could receive all of Dish Network's HD channels.

We are very pleased with our 2008 Phaeton which we purchased at Lazydays in April 2008. However, we have one annoying problem that has not been resolved satisfactorily. The central vacuum has not performed well since we got the coach. The dealer determined there was a split in the hose between the wall outlet and the vacuum unit under the floor, which they repaired but with no improvement in the suction. The hose is duct taped together and is almost 10 feet long. The lack of suction appears to be a design flaw with the location of the vacuum unit. The location of the wall outlet prevents the "long hose" from reaching the front of the coach, where it is needed most. I relocated the vacuum unit under the sink vanity, using the same wall outlet, and it now has plenty of suction. But it still won't reach the front of my motorhome.

Carl Clifford
Orange City, Florida

Dear Carl,
If your vacuum cleaner was built by Hide-Away, they have a longer hose available, which at 38-feet in length should solve your problem. Please call Tiffin Parts Department to order the longer hose. 256-356-0261.

We own a 2001 Allegro 28-ft. motorhome I purchased new. On two occasions last year (2007) when I activated the HWH leveling jacks, the fuse blew out. The engine was running, brake on, and in Park. I tried two more times and it blew two more

fuses. I moved the next day on our trip and it worked fine. The next stop it blew two fuses again.

If a fuse blows when the jacks are down, I don't know what to do. We have a HWH System 200 (serial #AP0525-US). I was injured in an accident in Fall 2007 and have had the rig in storage since October 2007. We hope to get back on the road next Spring.

Robert Tomaselli
Spruce Pine, North Carolina

Dear Robert,
The fact that you are blowing fuses indicates that you have an overload on the circuit. It could be a shorted wire, an electric motor that has a defect, or several other possibilities that could cause the overload. You or a service technician will have to put a meter on the circuit and check the amp draw to find out where the overload is. When the defect is repaired, you will stop blowing fuses.

My 2001 Allegro has a cloth ceiling. There is a dark film, quite slight, on this material over the gas range. What is the best product and method to clean the ceiling? I have been to Red Bay many times since I purchased my first Allegro in 1989 — now 19 years an Allegro owner.

Duane Chapman
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

Dear Duane,
I would try a good automotive foam-type upholstery cleaner. If that does not work, try a solution of half ammonia, half water, and test it on the closet ceiling first. Spray the ceiling with the ammonia-water solution and let it dry. After the second application, use a clean cloth and wipe the area clean.

I have a new 2009 Phaeton with a couple of problems. *First*, my driver's seat will not go far enough back for me to stretch my legs. In fact, with it all the way back, my knees hit the steering column. There is still lots of room between the slide-out side wall and the back of the seat when it is all the way back. Can the seat anchor be moved back or can the seat's slide mechanism be modified to extend farther back?

Second, I am 5' 11" tall and the steering wheel will not come down far enough for me to see the bottom gauges on the instrument panel. Also the steering wheel splits the rearview monitor and makes it useless.

Herbert Phillips
Kokomo, Indiana

Dear Herbert,
Due to liability issues, we cannot move or modify the driver's seat from its original position once

the bracket has been welded into place. Check with Flexsteel to see if a longer slide mechanism is available that could be installed aftermarket.

Yes, you will have to tilt your head to the right a bit to see the monitor. However, you could have an aftermarket monitor post-mounted above the dashboard.

We recently purchased a 2005 Allegro 32BA in excellent condition with only 9,000 miles on it. We really like and enjoy our coach but have the following problem that has not been resolved.

The power steering makes a growling noise that is very evident when idling and turning corners while driving slowly in town and in parking. Thus far, the power steering pump and the filter have been replaced. The factory suggested that we check the steering gear box to insure it had a proper level of grease. This particular unit is lubricated with power steering fluid.

We have been assured that while it is noisy, it does not pose any kind of a problem during our travels. Is there anything else you might suggest to eliminate this problem? Is this a problem common on the gas-powered Allegros?

Hank & Ann Frohlich
Sparks, Nevada

Dear Hank & Ann,
The power steering reservoir and the brake reservoir are one and the same. The growling occurs when turning with your foot on the brake. The brake is taking priority on the fluid draw and causing the power steering to whine during the turn. As far as we know, this has not been a safety issue, just a nuisance.

We recently purchased a 37-ft. Allegro Bay and we love it (so far). I have noticed that most Class A manufacturers use light colored carpet. Traveling with our two cocker spaniels and at times with our grandchildren, I find myself sweeping a lot. Has Tiffin considered using darker earth tones for carpet? Can you order a coach with darker carpet?

Sandra Ames
Mendon, Michigan

Dear Sandra,
There are several reasons we use a light colored beige carpet.
• Beige is universal and works with all the decors.
• Beige carpet is usually liked by most of our customers and we don't get a love/hate situation.

We can certainly look at darkening the color by a few shades; but the darker we go, the color will work with fewer decors adding the need to order more colors of carpet. We try to

keep things as easy and simple as possible at the plant to avoid confusion and error. I can understand the customer's concern on soiling. On all of the 2009 brands, buyers can order the coach with tile from the front entrance to the bedroom. That has made a lot of coach owners happy with reduced maintenance.

Thank you for your response in the last issue of

For James & Adele Hoelscher's problem with extreme vibration:

I also experienced the same thing with a 2000 Allegro Bay on our trip to Alaska. The problem turned out to be the steering stabilizer shock. I replaced it with an H.D. shock and from that point on we had no more problems. The Allegro Bay had a Ford chassis.

Larry Miller
Page, Arizona

We had a similar problem to the one experienced by Mr. & Mrs. Hoelscher. Our 2004 Allegro 30-ft. on a Workhorse chassis shimmied and shook like the front end was coming out from under the coach. As we slowed down and pulled off the road, the condition increased. I crawled under the coach and could find nothing wrong. I continued to drive very cautiously as we increased our speed and anticipated the return of the problem, which never happened. On subsequent trips, the same problem occurred several times. It finally occurred in a construction area where barriers kept me from pulling over for several miles. When we finally could get off the road, the coach shook, shuttered, and hopped as we slowed and came to a stop in a parking lot. I smelled something hot. It was the left rear dual wheels. We waited for the wheels and brakes to cool down. An inspection showed the left rear brake hung in the "on" position due to rust build-up on the brake.

After brainstorming, we determined that the common denominator between all of the incidents was a hard semi-panic stop. I cleaned off the rust and lubed the area the brake pads ride on. We have not had any problems since. I surmised that in the previous cases the brakes cooled down enough to release the binding brake while I was searching for the cause of the problem.

We enjoy the magazine and being an RV technician I can really relate to your answers in Serious Tech Talk. Keep up the good work.

Robert & Christine Baker
Panama City, Florida

RIS concerning my 2004 Allegro Bay 37DB with the intermittent ABS warning light problem. I corrected the problem by simply cleaning the heavy dirty grease off the brake sensors located on the backside of each wheel.

Another problem that has recently developed is the grey water holding tank indicator light. When the tank is empty, the 1/3-full indicator light comes on when I check the levels. After flushing the tank several times, I still get the 1/3-

For W. A. MacMillan's comment (vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 66)

Dear Mr. MacMillan,
I was intrigued by your question regarding your batteries being charged. We have a 1999 Allegro Bay. For us, the battery set-up has always been "less than ideal." I seemed to have intermittent problems with the starter and house batteries. I would check connections, put a charger on them and for a while have no problems. The difficulty never seemed to be consistent enough to bring the coach in for help.

When we evacuated to Shreveport to our son's home to avoid Hurricane Gustav, I plugged into his house current to keep our refrigerator running. My voltmeter never registered as high as it should have and he checked his house circuits which were okay. While returning home, everything running off the 12v system started beeping.

This time I took it to Country Club Auto. The shop manager, Mr. Goudeau, immediately found a loose connection on one of the house batteries. He said the house batteries never charged while the coach was on land power in Shreveport and eventually ran down. Checking the Tiffin Electrical Schematics book, page BCS-2, he concluded there was only one positive cable coming off the starter battery. For who knows how long, the cable from the starter battery to the 12v solenoid box was coming off a house battery. So the house batteries were never charged while running, and it just so happened they were being discharged and not re-charged while the coach was at our son's home. So simple a solution and such a mind-easer. I "thank Mr. Goudeau" every time I get in now and turn the key.

Cliffe Laborde
Lake Charles, Louisiana

Pre-Filters Needed for Cummins 350 Engines on Allegro Buses

I own a 2002 Allegro Bus on a Freightliner chassis with a 350 Cummins engine. It has approximately 74,000 miles on it. In September it

developed an intermittent miss on steep grades. I was a mechanic all of my working life and came to the conclusion it was a fuel problem. I put on a new fuel filter/water separator. The one I took off was clean and moisture free. I checked the air filter and it was clean.

I called Cummins Atlantic in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and was told they did not clean or rebuild lift pumps. They recommended replacing the lift pump and installing a pre-filter at a cost of \$1600 to \$1800. The service writer informed me they had done three the previous week. They inspected the fuel lines and found the inlets to the lift pumps full of debris.

I asked Travis Zilch at Cummins why no pre-filter had been installed initially and they said Freightliner had not ordered pre-filters before the lift pumps. Then I called Dennis Rostenbach at Freightliner who said Cummins had been having problems with their lift pumps and a pre-filter would not have helped. I told Dennis the lift pump on my engine was still working, and if Cummins would have agreed to clean it the problem would have been solved. I also told him that if I had known there was no pre-filter I would have installed one long before now and saved myself \$1800, and not risked breaking down on the side of some lonely road.

Since Freightliner built the chassis, and installed the fuel tank and engine, I believe they dropped the ball when they did not send out a service bulletin recommending these engines be retrofitted with a pre-filter. I had no idea the fuel filter/water strainer was between the lift pump and the injector pump or I would have installed a pre-filter myself.

It is very important for all RV owners with this equipment (especially Allegro Buses 2001, 2002, and 2003) to have a pre-filter installed immediately to prevent a breakdown and an unnecessary \$1800 service call.

Harry C. Thorn
Tamassee, South Carolina



F R O M T H E R O A D

The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

“We weren’t prepared!!”

We have always wanted to spend time at the Grand Canyon so I booked us into the Grand Canyon Railway RV Resort in Williams, Arizona. We choose this resort because they have a package which includes the site and round trip tickets on the Grand Canyon Railway. We were prepared to have a good time but we weren’t prepared to have a blast!! Checking into the resort was a pleasure (quite the change from the norm) as the staff was upbeat, positive and very helpful. The resort and it’s amenities were squeaky clean. The sites were all big pull thru’s, fitting our 2007 40-ft. Phaeton and tow car easily.

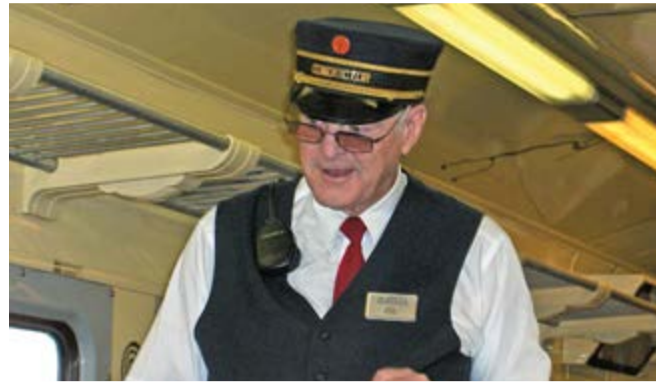
Williams, Arizona, is a quaint little town with a lot of history and the Pine Country Cafe that has the best homemade pie you have ever tasted! We were told to arrive early on the morning of our train ride in order to see the “gunfight in the old corral”. We thought it would be the same old gunfight scenario. This is where the surprises started to occur. The cowboys were absolutely hilarious and the gunfight was not just the same old gunfight. I will leave it at that because I don’t want to spoil the surprise should you decide to visit. Even boarding the train was fun! When you stepped into the car, you were transported back in time with the furnishings and staff dressing of that era. The attendant for our car was great, as well as the cast of characters who would “mosey on through the cars” stopping to talk to people and pose for pictures or entertain. There were singing cowboys, fiddle players and jokesters. On top of that, the scenery was beautiful. We spent about 3.5 hours at the Grand Canyon, mesmerized by the 7th wonder of the world. Back on the train for the ride back to Williams and what happens but train robbers on horse back stop the train and “rob” it! It was hilarious and a great ending to a wonderful day.

- The Grand Canyon Railway Resort = Fantastic
- The Grand Canyon Railway Train Trip = Fantastic
- The Grand Canyon = Breathtaking and Magnificent
- Topping the day off with a homemade piece of pie = Fantastic
- Enjoying all of this in our home, the Tiffin Phaeton = Priceless

The link is <http://www.thetrain.com/> if you are interested in checking this great resort out.

Rita & Earl Warren ‘07 Phaeton QDH

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





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