

Roughing It Smoothly®

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- Durango and Four Corners
- Mesa Verde National Park



SPECIAL

- The 2009 Allegro RED 38 QBA
- The Powerglide® Chassis

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Roughing it Smoothly®

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PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT INDEN / COURTESY OF COLORADO TOURISM OFFICE

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- Foundations . . . Two years and 350 chassis later, the Powerglide® has hit its stride. See page 21.
- There's the Train! And 40 Other Things Worth Doing in Four Corners. See page 30.
- Mesa Verde National Park . . . Amazing and Mysterious. See page 35.

Letters, We Get Letters. . . .

Thanks for your emails. Yes, we made the move from Temple Terrace, Florida, to Monroe, Georgia, pretty much without incident with thanks to United Van Lines. And, would you believe, Carolyn has already scheduled an eight-family reunion in mid-June. With six toddlers under two years old, it promises to be an exciting experience.

Don't stop writing! Your participation is the key to this magazine's great success. Here are some guidelines to help.

Traveling With Your Pets

Surveys show that over half of you travel with your pets. So be sure to read "Traveling With Your Pets," by Dr. John P. Pilarczyk, a veterinarian specializing in small animals who

practiced for 38 years in Temple Terrace. Dr. and Mrs. Pilarczyk, who own a 2007 Phaeton, made an ambitious trip to Alaska last year and are currently wintering in Arizona. If you prefer to use the U.S. Mail, please address your questions to:

"Traveling With Your Pets"
Roughing It Smoothly
1403 Cedar Point Way
Monroe, GA 30656

You can also send your questions via email to fredthompson1941@hotmail.com. Please enter "Traveling With Pets" in the subject line.

From the Road

To tell us about your experiences on the road, you may use the postcard bound in this issue, send a longer

letter to the address above, but using "From the Road" in the first line, or send an email with "From the Road" in the subject line.

Serious Tech Talk

To address your technical questions to Danny Inman, you may use the postcard bound in this issue, send a longer letter to the address above (put "Serious Tech Talk" in the first line), or send an email to RISrechttalk@gmail.com

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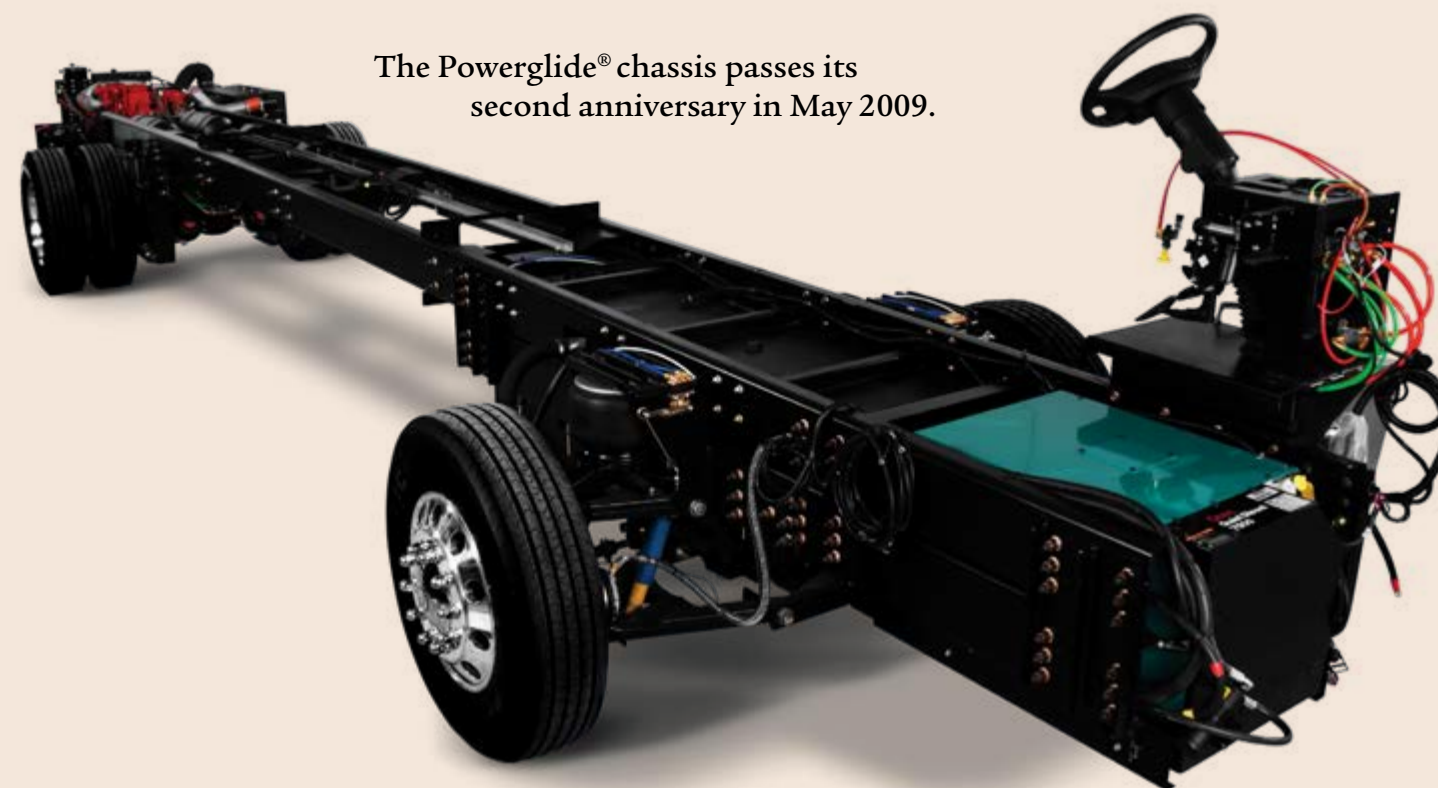
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First Time Subscribers

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

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The Powerglide® chassis passes its second anniversary in May 2009.

Spending Our Time

by Bob Tiffin

Time is our most precious asset. As far as your life span is concerned, you cannot buy or sell it. Have you ever heard a person near the end of his or her life wish that they could buy another year of time? I have. At the beginning of each day, you have the same number of hours as your neighbor to accomplish your goals. Procrastination is certainly one of humanity's greatest problems. You can squander and waste your time, and I think we are all guilty of that at one time or another. Or you can use it wisely and accomplish your goals. We can use our time to make lifelong friends — again, another opportunity to use this precious asset and invest it wisely.

My father was my teacher and example on how to use time wisely. Daddy got to the store at 5:30 to do purchasing and other bookkeeping before customers started coming in at seven. During the summer when I was out of school, I would come in with him at 5:30 to get the store unlocked and ready for business.

On Sunday night after church, Daddy would check his receivables and make up statements. Then on Monday morning at six he would start calling his overdue accounts because he knew they would most likely still be at home at that time of day. When he got 'em on the phone, he would say, "What about that bill you owe down here at Tiffin Supply?" He was the world's best at collecting. He knew when to do it and used his time wisely.

Tiffin Supply sold (and still sells today) everything to build a house and run a farm except redi-mix concrete. Lumber, building materials, seed, feed, and fertilizer. He was the best I have ever seen on planning the loading of our trucks for delivering. We loaded the jobs to be delivered in the sequence that they would come off the truck as they ran their routes. We would drop materials off at Belgreen, Russellville, and Muscle Shoals. Then we would back-haul fertilizer and concrete blocks from Florence to Red Bay. Every now and then he would tell me, "Bob, you can't have those trucks running around empty!"

Over the years I watched Daddy schedule the appliance deliveries and repair work. We had two trucks with two men on each truck. I learned how to think ahead for the whole day and plan the amount of time for each repair and delivery. In the motorhome plant today we are still using the same planning techniques to deliver components from our outlying manufacturing plants to the Red Bay assembly line just in time to keep the line moving.



In every case, time was our most important asset. Making a profit always depends on the best use of time.

It is just as important to plan and spend our time wisely with our families — our spouses, our children and grandchildren — especially when you put in ten to twelve hours a day at your job.

I don't have the statistics that show the ages of our coach owners. But from visiting with so many of you over the years, I would guess 70 percent of you are in the "grandchildren stage" and perhaps 30 percent have children who are not yet grown. I was excited to read about Paul and Carole Meitler in the Spring 2009

issue. They took their four daughters, Katelyn, 14, Rebecca, 12, Christina, 10, and Rachel, 6, on an eight-month tour of the U.S. in an Allegro 32BA. Paul, Carole and their girls will cherish that time together for the rest of their lives.

Most of you with children still in school can't take eight months away from your jobs and make a wonderful trip like that. But it doesn't have to be eight months to make it a valuable trip and time well spent. It can be eight weeks or even eight days. The *time together* is what is so important to young families, and for grandparents spending time with their grandchildren. Undivided attention is so important. No distractions — just you and the kids.

I saw a survey recently about ten ways to spend quality time with our families. And guess what? All but one could be done in a motorhome — and I would venture to say that nine items on that list could be done *better* in a motorhome.

Of course, the item on the list that I liked the best was **take a trip together**. The Meitler family learned that living closely together requires give and take, learning about each other, tolerance, patience, and sharing. And I am sure that during the eight-month tour the girls developed a greater love and appreciation for each other that will last for the rest of their lives.

If you are in the "grand-parenting stage," you will find that traveling with your grandchildren will be a rewarding experience. Last Fall we ran a story about Roy and Bertha Miller of Ontario, California, taking their three grandsons, Kody, 9, Parker, 5, and Christian, 4, to the High Sierras in their Zephyr for a fishing trip. Those three little boys will never forget their Papa teaching them how to fish. Talk about spending quality time!

In that same issue was a story written by Stephanie Chris-

rel, granddaughter of Marilyn Christel. Stephanie wrote an essay about a “learning experience in my life” which she submitted as part of her application to college. “When I was nine, my parents and ‘Meemo’ (Marilyn) took a cross-country trip in *Allegro*. I cherish the memories I have from each and every adventure we took in it. . . . Some kids had summer homes . . . down in North Carolina and I had a 15-year-old motorhome . . . , but I loved every moment in it.”

Marilyn sold the *Allegro* after her husband died. “I did not realize how much my *Allegro* meant to my grandchildren . . . but I plan to replace it as soon as I can — for my other 13 grandchildren,” she said.

Judy and I have similar stories about traveling with Tim, Van, and Lex in the motorhomes that we built over the years. We still reminisce about those trips.

When the economy slowed down in 1980–81, we closed the plant for three weeks at the end of December and headed for Red River, New Mexico, for a skiing vacation in our 33-foot motorhome with a tag axle. There were five of us: Judy, me, Tim, Van, and Lex. We were pulling our ’78 Chevy Blazer. It was shirt-sleeve weather when we left Red Bay at 4 a.m. We went to Memphis and got on I-40 for the long haul to Amarillo. We turned north on 287 and stopped at a little campground in Dumas. About 3 a.m. I heard the snow pelting the side of the motorhome. We were in a pull-thru site and, of course, didn’t have slide-outs. The Blazer was still hooked up so I just decided to leave everybody asleep and start driving.

Just north of Dumas I meant to turn west on 87 but missed my turn and went east on 152 in the snowstorm. I had to drive a long way east before I could find a place to turn around. Around daylight we stopped and Judy fixed us a nice breakfast before we made a beeline for Red River to meet our brother-in-law and his family for the skiing vacation.

Then I got one more surprise. I had never driven one of our motorhomes in the mountains before. The Chevy 454 engine was working hard and could barely keep going up the steep grades. It was before

the advent of the self-adjusting carburetor and it really needed an adjustment! We unhooked the Blazer and Judy followed me the rest of the way to Red River. We had reservations at the campground and our relatives were waiting for us when we arrived.

Tim and Van had the natural body movements to learn how to ski right away, Lex was too young to ski on that trip, and for fear of breaking a limb, Judy and I didn’t try. We stayed a week with Judy’s sister and her husband, and the cousins

had a great time skiing. We all enjoyed the mountains and the snow. Tim and his family went back to Red River this past summer. It was cool in the high elevations and they really had a good time.

As you may know, our family loves Alabama Crimson Tide football. Van and Michelle’s son, Leigh, is the place kicker for the team. As our boys grew up and got married, they began taking their families on motorhome trips, especially on the

Continued on page 19



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Yet Another Allegro RED!



The 38 QBA Adds Two More Feet & Wow! Look at the Versatility.

by Fred Thompson

As soon as Tiffin owners and first-time buyers saw the Allegro RED 36 QSA, the marketing and sales teams knew they had a winner. The branding was perfect. It was an “idea coach” that put practical design first.

The immediate synergy led to new ideas from current owners as well as the TMH design team. Almost before the paint was dry on the first 36 QSA, the company’s R&D department was putting together the final plans for the 38 QBA.

Fresh ideas and ingenuity = versatility in this coach that was designed for accommodative family living or a friendly crowd on a football weekend outing. Just in case you missed the Spring 2009 issue of *Roughing It Smoothly* in which we reviewed the first Allegro RED, allow me to recap briefly Tiffin’s new “sub-brand.”

The Allegro has been Tiffin’s entry-level coach for three decades. The solid, dependable Allegros have provided millions of hours of enjoyment to RVers across North America. In recent years buyers were offered a choice between a Chevy or a Ford front-engine powerplant. Two years ago Freightliner and Cummins designed a chassis with a 300-hp front-engine diesel (FRED) and Tiffin offered it on all Allegros 32 feet and longer. The market responded with increased sales in the company’s new product.

Market research, however, uncovered a demand for an entry-level coach with a rear-engine diesel. Buyers wanted basement pass-through storage, a rear-engine diesel powerplant, air-bag suspension, and a lower price. They were willing to accept a lower trim level, but still wanted to have several “big-coach” options. The research identified interest groups on opposite ends of the age spectrum: full-timers who were reaching retirement age and young families with two or more children. TMH first responded with the Allegro 36 QSA which rolled off the assembly line in October 2008. With a spiffy new logo, it was “sub-branded” the Allegro RED (rear-engine diesel). Sporting a 340-hp Cummins powerplant and air-bag suspension, it moves down the highway with the same confidence as its more expensive siblings, the Phaeton 36 QSH and the Allegro Bus 36 QSP. With the developing recession, the RED over the last six months has often represented fifty percent of buyers’ weekly orders. The company realized it had tapped into a serious demand reservoir.

Addressing the needs of the younger generation, TMH moved quickly to incorporate the successful features of the





Allegro 35 QBA, often called the “Allegro Bunkhouse,” and incorporate them into the 38 QBA Allegro RED. The extra three feet provide the space for the rear engine mount and a large accommodating double sliding-door closet which spans the rear of the coach along with a tall vertical cabinet. The cabinet offers 33 cubic feet of readily accessible storage or the location of your optional stacked washer-dryer.

You’ve got the overview. But you may be surprised at what comes standard on the 38 QBA. Here’s the punchlist: solid surface countertops in the galley and lavatory; separate solar and opaque privacy shades at all windows including the windshield; full-body paint (eight choices); microwave and gas oven; a 42-inch mid-section HDMI television (quite a WOW factor for an entry-level coach); high-def television antenna; HDMI technology with very user-friendly, on-screen programming for sourcing cable, antenna, satellite, or DVD input; power patio awning with auto wind retract software; paint protective film; LCD bedroom television; and side-view cameras.

As noted on the review of the Allegro 36 QSA, the facing sofas in the two forward slide-outs are the most obvious interior feature that this coach has in common with its larger siblings. With both slide-outs deployed, you have six feet of space between the sofas, which is very residential in terms of arranging furniture. With the coach’s easily maintained tile from the cockpit to the bedroom, you can add personal touches such as an area rug and a coffee table, both of which can be quickly stored in the pass-through basement compartment when you are ready to travel.

Attuned to customers’ suggestions, TMH offers many “big coach” options on the Allegro RED, giving you the option to hold down your cost or to customize as you wish. The base price of the reviewed coach is \$179,900 MSRP. Following are the options added to the base design:

(1) Upgrade from two standard 13,500 BTU air conditioners to two 15,000 BTU A/C with heat pumps. The A/C upgrade also requires an upgrade from the standard 6.0 Quiet Diesel generator to the 8.0

genset: \$2,240. (2) Automatic satellite: \$1,400. (3) Automatic entry door awning: \$840. (4) 2,000 watt inverter: \$1,680. (5) Surround sound system with DVD player: \$560. (6) Power driver and passenger seats, cloth: \$980. (7) Cooktop with convection microwave oven: \$560. (8) Vacuum cleaner system: \$350. (9) 4-door refrigerator with icemaker: \$1400. (10) Drop-down monitors (no TV Tuner) over the two bunkbeds: \$1,260. (11) LCD front overhead television: \$1,120. (12) Additional Fan-Tastic fan in water closet: \$210. (12) Dinette-computer workstation: \$1,120. (13) 62-inch Ultra-Leather™ DE sofa bed: \$840. (14) 74-inch cloth Flexsteel Air Coil hide-a-bed sofa: \$1,260. Total options: \$15,820 MSRP.

Enjoying the Living Area

So many motorhome floorplans available in today's market attempt to put too much into the available space. By contrast TMH designers open up the living area floorplan, providing a surprising spaciousness. Rich and tastefully selected fabrics, wallpaper, wood finishes and molding, plus attractive accents create a warmth you feel the first time you enter a Tiffin motorhome, with thanks to Margaret Miya, the company's nationally acclaimed interior designer.

The living area in the 38QBA, which is 19 × 12½ feet, is very multi-functional. Ready for a good movie or the evening news on your 42-inch HDMI Panasonic? Kick back in your recliner (the captain's chair) or stretch out on either sofa and cool your heels. Tune in the surround sound and feel the vibrations as the helicopter tour nears the edge of Victoria Falls.

If you are in the mood for a concert—whether it's Mozart, the Eagles, Winton Marsalis, or George Strait—close all the windows, turn on the air, and put the CD in your 5-disc player. Sometimes there's nothing more relaxing than the sounds of your favorite music. But if you're cooking, reading, or whatever, turn down the volume and enjoy great background music. This coach is designed for relaxation and gracious living.

The entertainment centers in this

coach are first class. Using the HDMI-LCD Panasonic brand, the designers wall-mounted a standard 42-inch mid-section television just above a handsome hutch. The optional 26-inch front television gives occupants a choice for the best angle to view a program. The center is enhanced with the optional Tiffin surround sound technology, a system recognized by owners as one of the best in the Class A market.

Custom designed by Triple H Electronics in Red Bay, the system uses component audio-video cables and HDMI to distribute input/output data from a central, easily serviced black box (mounted under the floor) that receives HD broadcast *input* from the King Dome satellite which pulls programming from network satellites. Additional *input* comes from a high-definition, enclosed rotating TV antenna (another Triple H invention) receiving local programming broadcast in high definition, HD programming via cable service, and an optional 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.

When any of the three televisions in the coach are turned on, you activate a selection screen which offers TV, DBS, and DVD. Clicking on your choice will activate the *input* source for (1) television reception from the hi-def antenna, (2) satellite reception (DIRECTV or DISH, which you purchase separately), or (3) DVD-CD (movies or music) from the Panasonic 5-disc player which is included in the optional surround sound system price.

You're at the beach. It's a pleasant day outside but you'd rather stay in and read a good book for a couple of hours. Open all eight windows, lower the solar shades, turn on the attic fan, and enjoy a cool breeze with the smell of the seashore. Or you could put on your shades, extend the patio awning, put out the lawn chairs, and get up close and personal with the great outdoors.

So you brought work from the office. Well, sometimes you have to mix business with pleasure. No problem. The computer workstation is conveniently hidden

away in the free standing dinette. You have a counter for your laptop, a slide-out tray for the keyboard, and yet another slide-out tray underneath for your portable printer. On the opposite side of the hutch, TMH provides two drawers for office materials and a filing drawer ready to receive hanging file folders.

Not to be missed, the cabinets above the sofas offer more than 15 cubic feet of storage, a hallmark of TMH design. The smaller cabinets above the driver-passenger compartment have been reserved primarily for the control and monitoring equipment for the coach's systems. One notable system on this coach not found on the standard Allegro brand is the 2000 watt Xantrex inverter. Requiring four coach batteries for its operation, the system can supply electrical power to several items owners like to use when dry camping or making dinner at rest stops: coffeemakers, electric razors, blow dryers, televisions, and computers.

It's Time for Dinner

Or maybe it's breakfast or lunch. Whatever *your* favorite meal of the day, the 38QBA galley will fulfill your expectations as you prepare your meal with a three-burner cooktop centered in 19 square feet of solid surface countertop. An optional top-of-the-line microwave-convection oven is vented through the outside wall. With space designed for both gallon and half-gallon jugs, the optional 14-cubic foot, four-door refrigerator-freezer with icemaker easily stores enough food for a week. The amount of drawer and storage space under the countertop is enormous. On the left side you will see three drawers, 4 inches deep × 10.5 inches wide × 27 inches long. A second bank of three drawers on the right side is perfect for tableware, dish towels, hot pads, and other small miscellany. Directly under the cooktop are two enormous drawers. The buyer may choose a conventional gas oven or a 2.3 cubic foot drawer (8 × 18.5 × 27 inches) to store all his favorite pots and pans. Immediately above is a second drawer (4 × 18.5 × 27 inches), perfect for



large baking dishes and pans. The cavern under the sink offers six cubic feet of storage space while the two cabinets on either side of the microwave-convection oven provide over 8 cubic feet of storage. Just above the hutch and free standing dinette/computer workstation, you will find the perfect place to store your dishes and table serving pieces—three cabinets with 5 cubic feet of space.

A Fan-Tastic vent with thermostat and counter controls is positioned in the ceiling between the countertop and the dinette. In addition to being perfectly located for removing the odors and heat from cooking, it can also serve as an “attic fan” — a perfect way to cool the coach in the evening hours.

The Bath and Bedrooms

In earlier versions, the floorplan was sometimes called “the bunkhouse” because of the two bunks located in the passenger-side rear slide-out. The lower bunk had two drawers underneath for the occupants clothing. Each bunk had its own sliding window and was open to the center aisle. The redesigned bunks have four-panel folding doors for privacy. The top bunk may be folded into a stored position against the outside wall, allowing the entire compartment to become a six-foot wide closet when younger members are not traveling with the family. Optional drop-down monitors with computers, CD disk players, and headsets offer two entertain-

ment centers that will keep children occupied for hours while traveling. The second half of the slide-out contains the bedroom television, overhead storage cabinets, three large drawers for folded clothing, a soiled clothes hamper, and a cabinet for a second DVD player. It’s incredible, but you could have four different movies and a TV program going at the same time.

The sub-head says “bedrooms” and that is truly the case. Back to the living room for a moment, this coach was optioned with the very comfortable Flexsteel Air-Coil Hide-a-Bed sofa in the driver-side slide-out. This sofa brings a comfort level to sofa beds never before achieved in this industry. The five-inch air coil base gives you the firmness found in a traditional sleep system with mattress and box springs. It is topped with an integrated three-inch inflatable bladder which gives the bed a variable softness based on how much air you opt to pump in it. A small electric pump does the job in about 60 seconds. The entire sleep system is covered with the thick bedding material that you will find on any quality mattress. In the passenger-side slide-out, the optional Ultra-leather™ DE Sofa is perfect for two small children.

Now let’s go to the master bedroom. A full-size queen is standard with a handsome headboard and opposing windows on either side of the slide-out for good cross-ventilation. The room is visually much larger with the mirrored double sliding doors that

open to the 65-inch wide closet. Next to the closet in the rear corner, the floorplan has the aforementioned 33-cubic-foot storage space that is plumbed and wired for the optional stacked washer-dryer. The four-door cabinet above the headboard offers 12 cubic feet of storage space that is 24 inches deep. It is the perfect place for off-season bedding or for plastic bins to hold clothing not worn frequently. The bed itself raises easily on a hinge to reveal another 8 cubic feet of felt-lined storage.

The side bath in the 38QBA was purposely designed as a self-contained room in contrast to a center-aisle bath that uses sliding doors to afford privacy. As a side bath, it is actually quite spacious. The shower is the same unit that TMH uses in the Allegro Bay, 46 inches across and 29 inches deep. The bath has a dedicated Fan-Tastic 3-speed exhaust fan with controls mounted on the face of the vanity just below the edge of the solid surface countertop. There are four towel racks plus a hand-towel ring. A 24 × 31-inch mirror with handsome molding and crown provides the much-requested mirror for vertically challenged owners. It also adds depth to the room. A single lavatory with vanity has a 44-inch wide solid surface countertop which also covers three nicely sized drawers which could be used for clothing or toiletries. The medicine cabinet with mirrored door (18 × 21 inches) is unusually large. And there is yet another

small cabinet above the window which is framed with an attractive alderwood valance. Just outside the bathroom door facing into the aisle are two more thoughtfully placed cabinets for the occupants of the bunks. Everybody needs personal storage space and they've got it, with thanks to the coach's designers.

While the 38QBA is being marketed as an entry-level diesel pusher, it should be said there is nothing "entry-level" about the handsome cabinetry and molding. Quality and pride in workmanship is evident throughout the coach.

The Cockpit

Tiffin and Freightliner have done a great job designing the RED's instrumentation. In bright colors, the electrical display bar just above the instruments makes it easy for you to check system lights and warnings. A computer display provides a safety checklist before you begin your trip.

Below the computer and warning lights, Freightliner positioned two large gauges for MPH and RPM and surrounded them with six smaller gauges for fuel, PSI ① & ②, amps, oil pressure, and engine temp. The steering column position can be moved to accommodate your view of the dash or to add to your driving comfort.

The left dash panel presents controls for the horizontal and vertical movement and heat of the two outside mirrors. The wiper/washer switch is within easy reach and the light panel controls the headlights, interior instruments, and the master switch for the cargo lights.

The right dash panel displays Tiffin's exclusive Triplevision monitor for the three exterior cameras. While most side camera displays are activated by the turn signal, you can touch a button to monitor traffic on either side and the rear before you signal your move to change lanes. The monitor can also be used to view the exterior of the coach at night to check security concerns. The cameras can be adjusted for day-night vision, contrast, and sound.

The right dash panel also presents the generator start switch, two 12-volt outlets, and a Sirius radio (subscription required). The automotive heating and air is controlled with three large, easy-to-read dials controlling fan speed, temperature, and vent selection. Seven well-positioned heating and air vents near the floor and in the dash put the air circulation and volume just where you want it.

The center console features two large cup holders with insets to stabilize the container. The console also has two full-extension drawers large enough to store your maps and even a Garmin.

Both the driver and passenger seats on the tested coach were equipped with 6-way power seats, a \$980 MSRP option that is well worth the cost. As noted earlier, they both can be rotated to face into the living area.

Attached to the sidewall under the window, the driver's console places the electronic gear shift pad right at your fingertips to access the six-speed Allison 2500 MH transmission. The adjacent air brake can be applied when the transmission is in neutral.

Just behind the gear shift pad you will find ten toggle switches



clearly labeled and lighted. The next two switches are the genset auxiliary start and the ICC flash. This switch flashes your running lights to thank other drivers for helping you pass or change lanes. The next row has two switches for activating the privacy (opaque) shade, which doubles as your sun visor, and the solar shade. Each shade covers the entire windshield. The third switch is the exhaust brake. The final row has four switches for the left and right fans (tucked into the upper left and right corners of the windshield), the radio master switch, and the map light. The HWH auto-leveling jack control pad is located at the rear of the console.

The cockpit is nicely equipped with privacy and solar shades for the driver's and passenger's side windows, as well as the door. You will never have to suffer again from that blinding sun sneaking through the cracks between the sun visors.

An Outside Tour of the 38QBA

Without the obvious front generator slide-out usually found on a diesel pusher, you will be surprised to find the Onan 8.0 Quiet Diesel concealed behind the front cap. It is accessible through a flip-top door for checking fluid levels. The concept is a good piece of engineering.



Moving down the passenger side, the next storage compartment houses the propane tank, which, like other Tiffin coaches, has been moved to a forward position along with the fuel tank to achieve better weight distribution and balance.

The next two side-opening doors conceal the pass-through storage. With a width of 106 inches, by 95 inches across, and 29.5 inches high, you get nearly 172 cu. ft. of storage and carrying capacity. The two raised rails drop down 12.5 inches into the compartment. The cargo area is illuminated with four lights. A service panel on the front corner on the passenger side provides all connections for outside entertainment: 110-volt, 12-volt, house phone, and TV cable.

Two more storage bays on the passenger side contain 14 cu.ft. of storage space, in addition to housing the chassis batteries.

On the driver's side beginning at the rear, a shallow compartment has a removable back wall to allow access to the engine's large air filter. Nevertheless, it still provides 3.2 cu.ft. of storage. The next compartment houses the coach's 50-amp cable, but still has about 5 cu.ft. of storage space. TMH never passes a chance to give its owners a little more storage space. You can't have too much.

The well-designed utility hookup compartment comes next. With every pipe and valve labeled for the owner's convenience, the hookups are very easy to use. The next two doors open into the pass-through storage compartment. The last compartment on the front corner contains the coach's 12-volt nerve center as well as the connection for compressed air. All of the fuses are clearly labeled.

The compressed air supply leaves you without excuse to check and correct your tire pressure each morning before you travel.

On the Road in the Allegro RED

Balancing economy with adequate power for the 38 QBA, Tiffin engineers selected the 340 hp Cummins ISB turbocharged, aftercooled 6.7 liter electronic diesel, mated with an Allison 2500 MH six-speed automatic, with lock-up. It develops 660 lb-ft peak torque at 1,600 rpm, and 340 hp at 2,600 rpm.

The coach's take-off is smooth with an assured feeling of power. There was no nose diving, even with the hard braking you would experience in unplanned stops. Keep in mind we are riding in a coach showing 35 miles on the odometer that rolled out of "final finish" one week ago. Some knowledgeable owners will argue it takes approximately 20,000 miles to really break in a diesel engine.

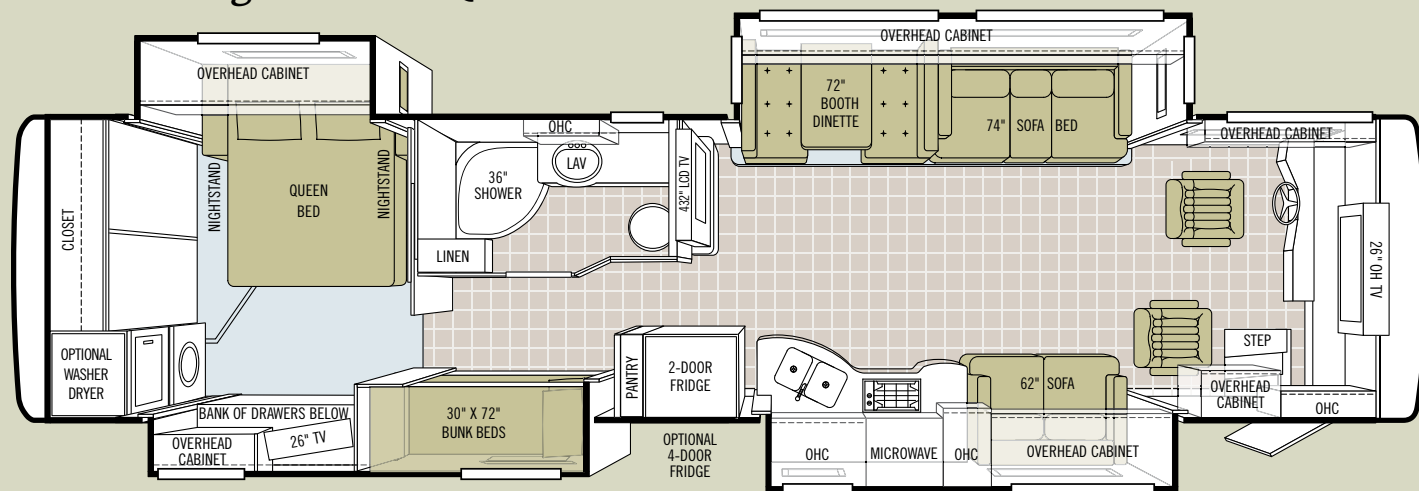
With a full tank of fuel, two-thirds tank of water, a tow car weighing 3,500 pounds, and two adults on board, the RED handled four and five percent grades east of Red Bay with only a five percent loss of speed. From a standing stop, the coach reached 60 mph in 42 seconds. From a 20 mph rolling start (as on an interstate ramp), the coach reached 60 mph in 38 seconds. In the rolling hill country of Franklin County, Alabama, I put the coach on cruise control and the transmission in "economy" mode. Entering uphill grades at 65 mph (1800 rpm), the RED would consistently top the hills at 55 (2300 to 2400 rpm), and generally dropped to 4th gear in the process.

As with the Freightliner chassis on the Phaeton, the coach's 55-degree wheel cut and 38'5" length make it very easy to handle in tight situations or in city driving.

The four Newey air bags combined with the tuned shocks gave us a nice, firm ride. The cockpit's interior quietness is just as good as the Phaeton's. You will be able to enjoy your surround sound while traveling just as much as when you are parked.

Counting the driver, there are seven seatbelts in the 38 QBA Allegro RED. It really *was* designed for family travel and a lot of fun they will never forget. **RIS**

Allegro RED 38 QBA



SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2009 Allegro RED 38 QBA, Quad Slide, Base MSRP* – \$179,900 MSRP as tested with options – \$195,720

STANDARD FEATURES

Structural

Laminated floor, sidewall, and roof
Steel / aluminum reinforced structure
One-piece moisture resistant molded fiberglass roof cap

Automotive

Allison 2500 MH six-speed automatic transmission with lock-up (torque converter)
Cummins ISB turbocharged, after-cooled 6.7 liter electronic diesel
Peak horsepower: 340 @ 2,600 rpm
Peak torque: 660 @ 1,600 rpm
Raised rail chassis frame
Air suspension (4 air bags)
55° wheel cut
Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters and ABS
Exhaust brake
18-inch steering wheel
Cruise control
Fog lights
Daytime running lights
Emergency start switch

Exterior

Fiberglass front & rear caps
Dual fuel fills
Large tinted one-piece windshield
6.0 Kw Onan Quiet Diesel generator
HWH hydraulic leveling jacks
Heated power mirrors with remote adjustment
Horizontal mounted, single motor intermittent wipers
Gel-coat fiberglass walls
Full body paint
Deadbolt front entrance door
Double electric step
Exterior patio light
Power patio awning
Slideout awnings
Chrome wheel liners
Exterior swing-out storage doors with gas shocks
Single handle lockable storage door latches
Ridged long-life storage boxes
Exterior storage compartment lights
Roof ladder
¼" thick single pane windows
Electric step
Heated water and holding tank compartments
Four 6v auxiliary batteries
50-amp service
Park ready telephone
External tripod satellite hookup
Black holding tank flush system
Exterior rinse hose / shower
Water filter
110v exterior receptable
110v / 12v converter
Undercoating
Digital / analog high-def TV antenna
Cable ready TV
Two 13,500 BTU low profile roof A/C systems
Quiet A/C roof ducted system
A/C condensation drains
Roof ladder
Triplevision back-up camera
Side view cameras
Paint protective film

Driver's Compartment

Non-powered cloth driver and passenger seats by Flexsteel®
Entry floor light
Step switch and 12v disconnect switch
Lighted instrument panel
Single CD player & AM/FM stereo
ICC courtesy lights
Dual 12v dash receptacles
Padded dash
Dual dash fans
Tilt steering wheel
Full width power MCD solar / privacy windshield shades
Manual solar and MCD privacy side shades, driver & passenger
Fire extinguisher
Snack-beverage tray with drawers

Living Area / Dinette

Booth dinette with large pull-out storage drawers
12v, 110v, & phone jack receptacles at dinette
42-inch flat screen HDMI-LCD color television wall-mounted in entertainment center
Custom infrared repeater
62-inch Flexsteel® cloth DE sofa bed (passenger side)
74-inch Flexsteel® cloth DE sofa bed (driver side)

Kitchen

Solid surface countertop
Solid surface backsplashes
Double bowl kitchen sink with single lever satin nickel pullout faucet
Solid surface sink covers
Under counter storage receptacles for sink covers
Single lever brushed nickel sink faucet and sprayer
Microwave oven
10 cu.ft. refrigerator
3-burner cooktop with gas oven
One Fan-Tastic® power roof vent with 3-speed fan

Bath

Medicine cabinet
Skylight in shower
Fiberglass molded shower
Solid surface vanity top and bowl
Satin nickel vanity faucet

Bedroom

Wardrobe with automatic light
Four OH storage cabinets in bed slide-out
Stackable washer/dryer-ready closet
Bed comforter with throw pillows
Sleeping pillows
Wall-to-wall carpeting
Queen-size bed
Solar / privacy shades
Innerspring mattress
Under bed storage
Night stands with 110v outlets
Built-in dresser with 4 drawers
Laundry hamper
26-inch color HDMI-LCD color television
Carbon monoxide detector
LPG leak detector

General Interior

7-ft. ceilings
Soft touch vinyl ceilings
Medium Alderwood raised panel cabinet doors and drawer fronts
Ball bearing drawer slides
Wall-to-wall vinyl tile flooring in kitchen, living area, bath & entry landing
Scotchgard® treated carpet and fabrics
Solar / privacy shades in living room
Complete HD-ready system (HD satellite receivers required)
Power roof vents
12v disconnect switch
Tank level monitoring system
Smoke detector
10-gal. DSI gas/electric water heater
Folding step well cover
Two ducted furnaces (one 30,000 BTU & one 35,000 BTU)

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

2000 watt inverter
4-door refrigerator with ice maker
Air Coil Cloth Hide-a-Bed Sofa-Sleeper-DS
Ultraleather™ DE Sofa-PS
Automatic entry door awning
Dinette computer work station
Surround sound system with DVD player
Microwave-convection oven
26-inch front television
Drop down monitors (no TV tuner)
(2) 15,000 A/C with heat pump
8.0 Onan generator (required w/ above)
6-way power driver-passenger seats
Automatic satellite (subscription required)
Vacuum cleaner
Additional Fan-Tastic fan in water closet

OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Natural maple cabinetry (simulated)
Cherry bark cabinetry (simulated)
Hadley air horn
Refrigerator wood panel inserts
CB antenna
Convection/microwave with 3-burner cooktop
Washer-dryer combo
Stacked washer-dryer
Freestanding dinette
Ice maker with 10 cu.ft. refrigerator

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 252"
Overall length – 38'5"
Overall height w/roof air – 12'7"
Interior height – 84"
Overall width – 101"
Interior width – 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 29,500 lb.
Front GAWR – 12,000 lb.
Rear GAWR – 17,500 lb.
GCWR – 33,000 lb.
UVW – 25,200 lb.
CCC – 4,300 lb.
Trailer hitch capacity – 5,000 lb.

POWER TRAIN

Engine – 340 hp Cummins ISB turbo-charged, aftercooled 6.7 liter electronic diesel
Torque – 660 lb.-ft. at 1,600 rpm
Transmission – Allison 2500MH electronic six speed with lock-up
Tire Size – Michelin XZE 275/80R 22.5 LRG
Alternator – Delco Remy 160 amps

CHASSIS

Frame – Freightliner XCR Series
Frame Design – Raised rail
Anti-locking Braking System – WABCO 4M/4S ABS System
Suspension (front) – Neway Air
Suspension (rear) – Neway Air
Shock Absorbers – Sachs tuned
Automatic Leveling Jacks

CONSTRUCTION

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

ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – 7 adults (bedroom, 2; sofa sleeper, 2; slide-out bunks, 2; PS sofa, 1-2)
Fuel tank – 100 gallons
Freshwater – 90 gallons
Black water – 45 gallons
Grey water – 70 gallons
LPG tank – (30 gallons; can be filled to 80% capacity) – 24 gallons

MSRP*

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

UVW

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

DEALERS

To locate 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.



JOHNNIE WALKER RV'S

SINCE
1963

At Johnnie Walker RV's, "You're Family!"

by Fred Thompson

The temperature was 102 when we arrived at the sales and administrative offices at 3700 Boulder Highway in Las Vegas. The dry desert air was comparable to about 90 back home in Georgia. But the warmth of the reception from West, Shelly, and Darcy—Johnnie Walker's three "kids" — easily matched the outside temp. This business is about people, and family, and showing friends how to have fun in an RV. In every department I quickly learned how valued family relationships have built a strong, viable company by making every employee and customer feel like a part of their family.

The business was founded by John H. Walker in 1963, and his grandchildren, West, Shelly, and Darcy, literally grew up on this property. "I picked up cigarette butts for a penny a piece as a kid," Darcy laughed, as we walked down the hall to her office. "Dad was taking taxes out of my paycheck by the time I was twelve."

Darcy's father, Johnnie L. Walker and his wife, Karan, were spending time at their second home in Utah. We tuned Johnnie into the interview by telephone. "My father moved us to Las Vegas in 1950," he began. "He was quite an entrepreneur — started a bread route for a bakery, then became a partner in a family grocery market, and finally, opened a lot here on Boulder Highway to sell mobile homes and travel trailers. We had eight mobile homes and four travel trailers, and thought we had a huge inventory!"

"We were a dealer for Shasta, and later Santa Fe. In the mid-sixties we got a little Santa Fe trailer on the lot with a toilet in it, and we thought we really had a 'high end' product," he joked.

In 1968 the company dropped mobile homes from their product line and focused solely on recreational vehicles. John, known to everyone as "Johnnie," added the Road Runner, Terry, Nomad, and Aristocrat brands as the business began to take off.

"In 1965 I started buying the business from my mother and father. He developed diabetes and lost his eyesight. He continued to work in the dealership answering the phone and talking with customers until his death in January 1986," Johnnie related.

"Towables continued to be our bread and butter in the seventies, although in 1973 we tried our first motorized RV, the Shasta Mini-Motorhome. Then the oil embargo really slowed us down in the late seventies" Johnnie continued, recalling the highs and lows of the company's history. "We had expanded into our second location in the early seventies and we had to shut it down for a year in 1979."

"By 1970 I had completely taken over the company from my father. There were always new challenges," Johnnie reflected. "In the next 20 years the town exploded in size. At first the winter residents made a pretty big impact on our sales, but then Nevada began enforcing an obscure law that said you couldn't stay in a park more than 60 consecutive days. As a result, Arizona quickly siphoned off the RV population and it probably hurt our sales."

The company got into the Class A market early in the nineties. Dan Blanke, TMH's western regional sales representative, brought Johnnie into the Tiffin fold in 2003. "By 2006 our motorized sales peaked, led by Tiffin's brands."

West, Shelly, and Darcy all credit the company's success to their Dad's conservative management policies. "I'm sure we could have built a huge indoor showroom with spacious offices for all of us," Darcy said. "But by staying in this smaller facility, we have kept our overhead low and we don't have to floorplan with the bank. That means we can make better deals for our customers."

Almost five years ago the company acquired its third sales and service lot at 4784 Boulder Highway and with it 11 service bays. "Acquiring that facility was probably the best move we

have ever made," Johnnie said. "It helped make us the largest RV dealer in Nevada, but more importantly it gave us the ability to provide the best service."

While the company's financial stability is credited to Johnnie's conservative business philosophy, his personnel management skills could be described as practical. "I hired good people, people that I could think of as members of my family. I took the time to train and impress on each person exactly how I wanted our customers to be treated. Then I gave them the authority to make decisions. I never micro-managed," Johnnie explained. "I trained my own children that way and I regard everybody who works here as part of our family. I want everyone to think of their job as a lifelong relationship."

Johnnie's wish has become a reality time and again. "I stole Doug Arnold from Sears just after he married. He is our service manager, been here for over 30 years. Now his son Ben is one of our service technicians. His daughter worked here as a receptionist," he related. "The list goes on—Jeannette Rhea (sales), her sister, Leeann Thomas (F&I), and their mother and father, Joe and LaJan Wortham (sales & receptionist); David Stevens (shop foreman) and his son Bradley (lot detailer); Rod Roland (parts manager) and his wife Kathy. I could name a bunch more of the family members who have worked here or still do, but the list would be too long for you to print," he laughed.

Johnnie pointed out that it's not only the family-type relationships that make the great team at JWRV— it is the long career tenures of many employees. "Bob Hayes will be celebrating his 38th year with us in September. In many dealerships the sales department has a huge turnover; we pride ourselves in hiring and keeping the best sales team. The average tenure in the sales department is about 15 years," he noted.

Johnnie bade us good-bye and Darcy picked up the story again. "By the time I was 12, I was riding my bike to the store to wash and clean travel trailers for three dollars an hour. Each year he would give me a little more responsibility," she said. "As soon as I got my driver's license at 16, I drove to the office after school and did warranty billing, accounts payable and receivable, typed up contracts, and did title work. As we look back, it amazes us now that Dad gave us so much responsibility at an early age," she reflected.

Darcy loved the job and somewhat reluctantly started to college in the fall of 1983. "At the Christmas break in 1984, I tried sales and loved it," she recalled enthusiastically as if it happened yesterday. "I persuaded Dad to let me take six months off from school," she continued. "I specialized in towables and framed my first sales commission check for \$272."

Six months went by and Darcy realized that she had found her niche. She decided not to return to college. Unexpectedly, in 1985 the company's sales manager became ill and passed away. Impressed with his daughter's success in sales, Johnnie tapped her to become the company's sales manager at 20 years of age at the pre-owned towables dealership at 5800 Boulder Hwy. Today Darcy is vice president and sales manager. The company has three dealerships on Boulder Hwy., with each being somewhat unique in the product and services offered.

Johnnie Walker RV's at 3700 Boulder Hwy., the company's older facility where the administrative offices, new motorized inventory, a variety of towables, parts store, deliveries, and customer training area are located.

Having grown up together in the same neighborhood, West Walker, Dave Stevens, shop foreman, and Ken Allen, service manager, continue to enjoy their 40-year relationship while working together at Johnnie Walker RV's.





Johnnie Walker RV Center at 4784 Boulder Hwy., a property purchased in 2004 and completely remodeled, featuring a very attractive indoor showroom with sales offices, a camping and parts store, and an 11-bay service center.

Johnnie Walker Travel Homes at 5800 Boulder Hwy. This location inventories and markets all of the company's pre-owned units, both towables and motorized.

As vice president for sales, Darcy develops the company's sales, advertising, and marketing plans. "We do a considerable amount of television advertising, very selective newspaper advertising, and ads in campground literature. But the largest segment of our advertising budget is spent on the internet," she explained. "We use keywords for driving searches to Johnnie Walker RV's. We are still getting 3,000 to 4,000 new residents a month moving to Las Vegas and the internet is by far the best way to reach them."

Darcy's goal was to emulate her brother, West, now president and general manager of the company. West, just two years older than Darcy, claims he got two cents each for picking up cigarette butts and keeping the sales lot clean. "My Dad was a good example," he began, "and we all three learned great work ethics from him. But that didn't stop with the three of us. The friends we played with in our neighborhood often came here after school and Dad would give them jobs, too." Two of those childhood buddies now have key positions with Johnnie Walker RV's. Ken Allen is the service manager and Dave Stevens is the shop foreman.

"I think I just always assumed I would come to work here. Working here as a teenager was a great way to earn money and

Johnnie, Darcy, West, and Shelly found a rare moment to gather for a picture in front of their favorite Class A motorhome.

it was always a fun place to be," West explained. "There was no pushing from Dad. I went off to college in 1981 and decided after six months that I really wanted to be working at Johnnie Walker RV's. I come to work every day because this is a fun business. We have great customers, great people to work with here at JWRV. We are selling 'fun.' What better business can you have?"

West spent time in most of the company's departments, including four years as a service tech, followed by several years as parts manager and in sales.

In 1991 West, then 28, was promoted to general manager and Johnnie stepped back to be the resource person and coach whenever needed. "I took the helm 18 years ago. Dad let me make the decisions and then put in his two cents worth."

"When he is in town, Dad comes in a couple of hours a day to stir the pot. Actually, he still enjoys doing marketing and making up those great information books on all of the high-end coaches. He puts together incentive packages to help sell the units that have been in inventory too long," West said.

Johnnie and West both agreed the biggest problem in today's market is financing. "We have customers who want to buy and have good credit who still can't get financing. The banks have been a bit tough these past few months," West said. "However, we have seen some loosening in the last 45 days. Our 40- and 43-foot Tiffin coaches are moving. We are seeing more people buying Allegro Buses than Allegros." They both expect to

see a turnaround in the economy by the middle of next year.

During the 1980s, Shelly, a year younger than West, had struck out on her own. "I policed the lot and cleaned trailers like West and Darcy did," Shelly remembered, "but I didn't have their enthusiasm at that time for the RV business. After high school I went to work for KFC and spent 11 years there, working my way up to trainer and then manager." During that time Shelly earned a college degree in business administration at UNLV. After graduation, her career in retail went quite well with Office Max and Target, as she helped open stores in California, Arizona, and Texas.

In 1994 West called Shelly to tell her the person running the office was retiring. "He knew my background and skills, and I was glad he wanted me to come back to Vegas. We have always been a close-knit family," she said. "But it was a completely different career path and I wasn't sure I would be a good fit. At first I said I wasn't interested. But then it dawned on me I was working 100 hours a week for a start-up store in Texas."

Shelly called West back and accepted his offer. "When I resigned my job in Texas, my boss told me, 'You don't know what it's like to work for a family business.' And I replied, 'You don't know my family,'" Shelly smiled.

"There is a wonderful synergy between us, but no rivalry," Darcy added. "Maybe it is unique, but we just don't have arguments, whether it's here in the business or when our families visit and play together."

Shelly continued. "What makes it work is that each of us brings something different to the table — and we each respect the other's ability and skills. West has a real ability to select and move inventory. Darcy does a great job in sales, training, and finance. My job is administration. I do HR and insurance. I handle all the funds, do the payroll, and manage AR and AP," she explained. "I really love working with my family."

They each married and had children, but their spouses did not take positions at the company. West married Debbie and they have one son, Michael John, 20, who is working on a business degree at the University of San Diego. An avid golfer, Shelly met her husband, Paul, on the golf course. Their son, Andrew, 11, plays on his school's golf team. Paul is an engineer for the gas company. Darcy married Tony Fitch and they had two boys, Walker, 13, and Chasen, 11. Tragically, Tony was killed in an accident during a camping trip in November 2007.

"It would not have been possible for the four of us to make this company what it is today," Darcy affirmed, "without our employees. My Dad genuinely loves people and helping them become successful."

After purchasing a few boats from Pat Maloney at the SeaRay dealership, the Walkers decided they wanted him on the JWRV sales team and successfully recruited him. "What a great decision that was, almost 19 years ago!" Darcy said. "Pat has been the sales manager at our main dealership and has done a great job in building the sales department and customer relations."

"Art Vieluf, the comedian of the dealership, and sales man-

ager at the 4784 location, started in sales and was promoted to sales manager in late 2004. He helped us open the new dealership in 2005," she continued.

LeeAnn Thomas, the company's finance manager and on-site insurance agent for Foremost, started with JWRV's over 20 years ago. "I came here from First Interstate Bank where I had been doing floorplanning for Walker for 10 years. My sister Jeannette actually joined the company first in sales," LeeAnn said, "and convinced me it was a nice family to work for. I love the family atmosphere. You can really be your own boss here."

West was ready to introduce us to the people in parts and service. David Stevens grew up in the same neighborhood with West. "I started here in 1981 right out of high school," he began. "West and I had shop classes together. My Dad and Johnnie are friends. Ken Allen, now our service manager, was another one of our school buddies. We just left high school and came over to JWRV."

"Counting the time we worked here during high school, it

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has been 30 years. It's hard to realize that we've been working together that long," West said.

"I really enjoy learning the new tech and then teaching it to the other guys in service," Dave explained. "Then we learn together. Cross training is very important for providing excellence and continuity to our RV owners," he said. "I keep service notes on every job we do in service and repair."

Breaking away from common practice among RV dealers, JWRV does not work on flat rate or piece rate with their techs. "We feel by paying hourly wages, we can get more customer service. So if someone needs help dumping their tanks or airing up their tires, our service techs are ready to help," West said.

Ken Allen, service manager at the 4784 location, begins by passing out genuine kudos. "We have two body shop guys who are fantastic. They can repair extensive damage from a major collision and put it back like new. If it's not a total loss, we can fix it."

"I have always felt like we are in a partnership with Tiffin Motorhomes," Ken said. "At the factory level, some manufacturers offer very little support for their dealers, and much less for non-dealers who are repairing their coaches. Tiffin does a great job for us. They are still a partner after the sale."

Johnnie Walker RV Center offers two bays for body shop work, one bay for fabrication, and eight bays for RV tech work. The service department is Onan certified with a master certified tech to make genset repairs. Techs are trained for inverter and electrical repairs, television and entertainment centers, and cabinetry and upholstery work. The service center at the 4784 location has four certified technicians and one master certified technician.

Ken Allen is definitely a part of the family. "I started here at 17 washing trailers. Johnnie had me moving railroad ties to build planters. Then I got a chance to learn tech. After that it was the parts and warranty departments. He wanted me to try sales. I took sales courses and was making good money for a 21-year-old. But for me, it was the tech that I loved. When I was a kid, I would take everything I owned apart and try to put it back together. It wasn't long before I became shop foreman."

When the company bought the 4784 location, it was run-down and needed a lot of work to put it back into operation. West asked Ken to take on the job and in two months his team overhauled and remodeled the facility. He carefully selected and put together the parts and service staff. "I tried to hire people based on a matrix of four qualifications: good work ethic, good personality, good attitude, and knowledge of basic tools. If a person has those four qualifications, we can train them to work on RV's. It's all about the person. I learned that from Johnnie. He is a people person."

"We don't like to hear that the service center is here to support sales. Our customers need a little loving when they are frustrated and have problems," Allen said. "The Walkers treat us like family and that's how we treat our customers."

Ken went on to point out that dealerships owned by corporations are forced constantly to look at the bottom line. "West and Johnnie will do whatever it takes to make a customer happy.

They are lenient about bending for a customer who owns a unit a little out of warranty. We don't have to answer to bean counters half way across the country telling us what we can do."


Like most of the family at JWRV's, Ken and his wife Lisa love to camp, especially at the Sand Dunes in Death Valley. Their daughters, Mariah, 15, and Megan, 17, have been camping since they were little.

Rick Rowland, parts manager at the 4784 location, offered some pretty impressive numbers as we began to visit. "We keep approximately \$600,000 worth of parts in inventory for repairs," he began. "We keep common parts for all appliances such as circuit boards, as well as valves, controllers, and filters. We like to keep TMH parts on hand that we sell a lot of, and their parts department supports us really well on stocking. Some manufacturers want you to order as needed, but that doesn't help an owner who stops by with a problem. TMH is also good in response time for shipping parts."

Doug Arnold, service manager at the 3700 location, has logged over 30 years with Johnnie Walker RV's. His son Ben, a certified technician, is following in his footsteps. "Johnnie hired me as a parts manager in August 1978. For the last 29 years I have been the service manager. We have certified techs who specialize in prepping, owner training, pre-delivery inspections, and working with the new owners who are spending a couple of nights in their new coaches with full hook-ups in JWRV's overnight camping spaces. All of our buyers are given the cell phone number of our assistant service manager, Danny Gallion, so they do not have to wait until the next day if they encounter a problem after hours, or if they have forgotten something they learned in the walk-through/training session.

Doug pointed out that cross training allowed the company to downsize during the recession without losing the quality and level of service they have always provided to JWRV customers. "Today everybody covers for everybody. We all have become accustomed to wearing different hats. I enjoy working for Johnnie and feel really fortunate to be in this job. We all jump in and help out wherever we are needed. West is the same way; he is a hands-on person."

At the end of the day, the family at Johnnie Walker RV's will agree that Johnnie is an unselfish entrepreneur who wants to see everyone in his organization succeed. "I am proud of the way we do business," he said. "We have built a good service department. Repeat sales are usually based on good service and fair treatment. But the biggest thrill to me is having all three of my children in the company and watching them do a great job. That's called family management succession and it has really worked well here."

Johnnie and Karan keep their 42-foot Phaeton loaded and ready to go. "We will order a 2010 Allegro Bus as soon as they are available. Karan loves to golf, fish, and travel in our Phaeton." Johnnie and Karan both lost their spouses to cancer. Shelly met Karan at a golf outing and decided that she wanted her Dad to meet her. "How much better can it get when your daughter picks out your wife?" Johnnie asked. 

PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Continued from page 5*
beautiful Fall weekends that we have here in the South. It is a wonderful experience for Judy and me to see our children and grandchildren enjoying the RV lifestyle.

The survey I read mentioned another key item in spending time with your family: **Tell them stories.** Campfires have an amazing effect on drawing family members together. Staring into the burning embers can almost mesmerize a person. It is the perfect time to tell your children or your grandchildren stories about your family—how you grew up, how your family had to struggle to make it through hard times, what you did for fun way back when. Don't think for a minute that the kids will be bored. They will soak it up and ask you questions. The bonding that takes place around campfires is wonderful.

Get your children or your grandchildren involved in planning what you are going to do each day on the trip. If it's their idea, and you help bring it off, you will be held in high esteem. Then it's *their story*. Can you imagine the stories Kody, Parker, and Christian told their friends about catching trout in the High Sierras? And their Papa teaching them how to fish?

We have been building motorhomes now for 37 years. I wish I could have made a recording of every family story I have heard across this desk. That's one reason why I have an open door to my office and why I welcome everyone of you who come by to talk. You, our owners, "make my day" with your stories and we at Tiffin Motorhomes are grateful to have a small part in helping you spend quality time with your families. The featured motorhome in this issue is the best "family motorhome" we have ever built: the Allegro RED 38 QBA. You can sleep eight in it. For children and grandchildren, it is a winner.

If you haven't "pulled the trigger" yet to get a new Tiffin motorhome, you will never find a better time to buy. Interest rates are low, fuel prices are low again, and inventories are high. The perfect combination! Until next time, keep on "roughing it smoothly." And remember, "where you go, we go." **RIS**

OWNER PROFILE *Continued from page 29*

"Well, the Bluebird belonged to Mack. He only got to put 12,000 miles on it. Maudie wanted to sell it, so I advertised it. Terry Kilpatrick, owner of Billy Barnes Enterprises, who does our truck hauling, wanted to see it," he said. "I showed him the Bluebird and he didn't say much."

"Then he said, 'I'd like to see your Zephyr.' I told him it was not for sale. He answered, 'I know, but I'd just like to see how it looks inside.' So I showed it to him and he really liked it. 'How much you want for it?' he asked. I answered again that it was not for sale. 'Yes, it is,' he laughed, 'How much you want for it?' he insisted. So I put a price on it, and he wrote me a check."

"Needless to say, Maudie was not too happy about me selling her Zephyr instead of her Daddy's Bluebird, so that's why we have a new 2009," Ridgeway said.

Having been RVers for quite a few years, the couple bought their first Zephyr in 2002. After the Zephyr's design was changed considerably, they opted for the 2005. And now they can hardly wait for the Crimson Tide's football season to start. "We've got season tickets and go to every game. It is a wonderful way to spend the Fall weekends," Maudie said, having just joined us for a picture taking session.

"When the games are in Tuscaloosa, we usually leave around noon on Friday and get there in time for the late afternoon and early evening tailgating," Billie said. "We have met so many people over the years that we enjoy being with at the games."

"Do you take other trips in the Zephyr?" I asked. "Oh, yes, we are planning to take Kellie and Amy on a nice trip this Summer. They aren't married yet, so it will be a great time for us to be together again as a family," Maudie said.

Before I left Red Bay to drive 300 miles to Huxford, Alabama, to interview Billie Ridgeway, I stopped a few minutes to talk with Bob Tiffin to learn a little more about this owner. "Bob, what do I say to a man who has bought three Zephyrs in seven years?" With a slight grin, Bob quickly answered, "Thank you!" **RIS**

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Strong As An Ox™

Interviews from Arizona



Al and Melinda Chapman

Former Hometown: Huntsville, Alabama
 Interviewed at The Ranches at Val Vista RV Resort
 Mesa, Arizona

- The Chapmans own a 2008 Allegro Bus.
- They have been camping 12 years, starting out with a pop-up camper & progressing to their current rig.
- They became full-timers 5 years ago.
- They travel with a 14-year-old miniature pincher, Bambi, and their daughter's miniature poodle, Amy. Their 6-year-old chocolate Labrador, Yuma, is staying with their daughter this trip.
- Al is retired from the Army. However, he is still working flying Apache helicopters as a civilian experimental test pilot. He is looking forward to full retirement this November. Melinda retired from working various jobs including being a legal secretary.
- They have been married 24 years.
- They have one daughter who resides in Birmingham, Alabama.
- Al does all of the driving.
- Melinda is a serious seamstress and has a state-of-the-art sewing machine. She is an avid reader. Al is looking forward to retirement when he will have time to use his 4 computers, travel with friends, and dry camp. They are both involved in pistol shooting. Melinda particularly enjoys the shooting matches.
- They have been to Red Bay and have been very impressed with the entire operation.



Curtis and Dianne Davidson

Former Hometown: Stockton, California
 Interviewed at Valle Del Oro RV Resort
 Mesa, Arizona

- The Davidsons own an immaculate 2006 Allegro Bus.
- They started camping with a tent when their children were young and progressed to their present rig.
- They became full-timers in 2001.
- Curtis retired from the heating and air conditioning business and Dianne retired from being a "Domestic Goddess."
- They have been married 44 years.
- They have two daughters and four grandchildren (1 girl and 3 boys).
- Curtis does all of the driving.
- They became fast friends with Ray & Linda Davis when they went to Alaska in 2004. After that trip they became traveling companions, taking two more major trips and spending the winters together in Arizona.
- Curtis is a real handyman and very skilled in many things. He has taken up Intarsia and is currently making a beautiful raccoon. He also enjoys silversmithing, lapidary and fishing for trout. Dianne reads a lot & works with ceramics. They both like to make lost wax jewelry and love to sightsee, especially going to museums in out-of-the-way places.
- They have been to Red Bay, where they have been treated very well. They think the service department is wonderful.



Ernie and Donna Oberhelman

Hometown: Woodstock, Illinois
 Interviewed at Val Vista Village RV Resort
 Mesa, Arizona

- The Oberhelms own a 2007 Phaeton, which was a gift from their son.
- Both Ernie and Donna retired twice: Ernie from John Deere and then as a school bus driver; Donna from the banking industry and then from State Farm Insurance.
- They have been married 58 years.
- They have one son & one daughter. They have 2 granddaughters & 1 great-grandson.
- They travel 6 months per year and have spent the last seven winters in Mesa, Arizona
- Ernie and Donna describe themselves as "adventurous souls who love to explore off the beaten path." They love to laugh!
- Their most memorable occasion was when they booked a tour of the World Trade Center the morning of 9/11. Their tour guide was late and once he finally picked them up, he had to stop to use the facilities at a McDonalds. After their second delay, they were stopped at the Lincoln Tunnel where they watched in horror as the towers collapsed. Thankfully, the delays they experienced that day saved their lives!
- Ernie works with wood & has built an award winning working replica of his parent's farm in Kansas. Donna marches with the Drilletts and models in fashion shows.
- They have been to Red Bay & think it's a fun place, friendly and 120% efficient.

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!"

Foundations . . .

TWO YEARS AND 350 CHASSIS LATER, THE POWERGLIDE HAS HIT ITS STRIDE. COMBINED WITH A WELDING SHOP THAT BUILDS THE BEST FRAME, BASEMENT, AND SUB-FLOOR IN THE INDUSTRY, YOU CAN'T BUY A BETTER FOUNDATION.

The first Powerglide chassis rolled off the assembly line in May 2007. Shown for the first time at the Tiffin Dealers Meeting two months later, TMH knew for sure the investment was worth the results. Planned and dedicated for the first two years to be offered only on the Allegro Bus, owners lined up to get a Bus on a Powerglide. Owner reviews were favorable and fine tuning made it even better. At this writing, the chassis plant is producing one Powerglide a day, with plans underway to increase production later this year.

With the Powerglide offering the best chassis technology in the industry, the TMH welding shop fabricates the strongest steel sub-floor and reinforced frame offered by any Class A manufacturer. A motorhome can only be as structurally sound as the steel foundation on which it is built. As you examine the foundation, you will see 14-gauge 1½-inch square steel tubing forming the perimeters of the frame. In places where extra stress is anticipated, two and even three tubes will be welded together. After touring the welding shops of competitors on an exchange program, shop foreman Macky Massey estimated that Tiffin puts at least 400 pounds

more steel in its framing and sub-floor. The small extra cost can pay big dividends.

In a letter received last month, Jack Camp from Beaufort, South Carolina, wrote TMH to thank Bob Tiffin for the fact that he and his wife survived a terrible wreck in their Allegro.

“My wife was driving,” he wrote, “as we were returning home from a vacation. She dozed off and the coach spun out of control. From the evidence, it flipped several times, including once from end to end and landed upright. She was not injured at all and I only had seat belt burns. The frame stayed together which was very impressive.”

Following the old maxim that a picture is worth a thousand words, we assembled a photo essay for you to see how the chassis, the sub-floor, and frame are made here at Tiffin Motorhomes. The chassis plant and welding shop are not open for general tours, so we hope the photographs and captions will give you a new insight as to why you can't buy a better motorhome than a Tiffin.

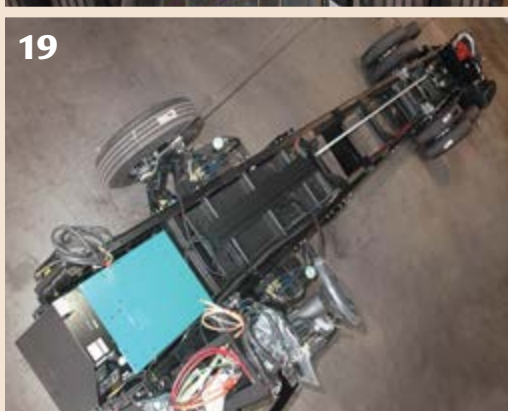
Text and photography by Fred Thompson



• 1 The Powerglide assembly begins as individual powder-coated steel rails. Each of the quarter-inch steel rails has been pre-bored by Inmagusa Steel with the holes necessary to assemble the initial frame as well as the component parts that will be added as the frame moves down the assembly line. Huck bolts are used (see 4:4, p. 53) to build the frame and attach the components. The frame assembly begins on a level steel table (rear of picture) and is moved to a carriage until the axles and wheels are added at the next station. • 2 Dana 22,000 pound rear axles with anti-lock air brakes rest on an assembly rack awaiting assembly. • 3 Steve Price, an engineering intern from the University of Alabama, positions the frame over two components which have been put in place for attachment by huck bolts. This particular frame will be used on a 43 tag axle Allegro Bus. From the rear, you will note the Tuthill RT-1330 tag axle rated at 13,300 pounds. In the upper right corner is the independent front suspension assembly (IFS), which has a 14,600 pound rating. • 4 Allen Gray and Steve Price position the tag and rear axles for bolting to the frame. To the right, and already attached, is the Tuthill RD-2300 Rear Suspension, which has a 22,000 pound rating. Price uses the overhead crane to maneuver the Tuthill RT-1330 tag axle into position for huck bolting. • 5 At the front end of the chassis frame, Gray and Price maneuver the independent front suspension into position. All of the holes on both the IFS and the frame are pre-bored and perfectly positioned for quick attachment with the huck bolts. Note the portable carriage is still supporting the frame until the tires are mounted. • 6 In this picture at Station 3, the tires have been attached and the steering column assembly has been mounted. Kyle Champion attaches anti-camber rails which prevent the weight of the engine from bowing the frame. • 7 Steve Price installs a tower assembly to connect the two frames and the anti-camber rails with the huck bolt gun which is engineered to apply 25,000 pounds per square inch. • 8 In the Allegro Bus, TMH uses the Cummins ISL 425-hp turbocharged 8.9 liter engine. The block requires the manufacturer to add several assemblies including the starter, power steering pump, AC compressor, alternator, and air governor. Mark Chapman is installing the power steering pump in this picture. • 9 The largest assembly which Chapman installs is the

Allison transmission. Because of the overhead crane and hoist, one craftsman can perform installations that weigh several hundred pounds to several tons. The crane allows Chapman to move the transmission in tiny increments until he has it in perfect alignment. He then syncs the engine and the transmission with two alignment operations before bolting the transmission to the engine with ten bolts. • 10 The completed assembly of the Cummins engine and Allison rests on the work stand, ready for installation on the chassis. • 11 Using an overhead hoist, Mark Chapman sets the cooling package which consists of the radiator, air conditioner condenser, and charge air cooler. • 12 Weighing well over 2,000 pounds, the engine-transmission assembly is carefully nudged into place with the overhead crane. Four brass bolts one-inch in diameter are used to attach the engine to the chassis. • 13 Paula Crowe attaches the charge air cooler which moves hot air from the engine back into the cooling package. • 14 From left, you see the air intake system with the cold air intake attached at the bottom. Across the top, the bright steel pipe is the cold side of the charge air cooler. At the top right is the power steering reservoir. The rear bridge assembly supports the radiator surge tank (not shown) and water separator and fuel filter (center). • 15 Three different lines connect the park brake air (red), service brake air (orange), and air return lines (green) to the cockpit. • 16 In this frame you can see the dual fuel fill lines and the 150-gallon fuel tank which was installed at Station 2. Gary Jones, the chassis designer, placed the tank in a forward location to better balance the coach. • 17 At Station 6, with most of the chassis now completed, the dual air tanks have been installed. If this were a tag-axle chassis, there would be a third air tank installed laterally in front of the two horizontally positioned tanks. • 18 Nearly completed, this chassis awaits the installation of the Onan 10,000 Quiet Diesel generator. • 19 With the generator installed, the Powerglide chassis is ready to go to the welding shop to get its infrastructure and steel floor framing. • 20 Macky Massey, foreman of the welding shop, drives the naked chassis into the welding shop. Within two days, a massive transformation will take place to make the Powerglide the best foundation in the country for a Class A motorcoach.

CHASSIS PLANT CAPTIONS BY BOBBY LUTHER





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• 21 Tim Umfress modifies an outrigger truss for attaching an access box through which a wiring harness will be brought up from the basement into the coach. He assembles the entire sub-floor using 11- and 14-gauge steel tubing on an 8.5 x 48 foot table. Umfress assembles and welds the entire sub-floor in an hour. • 22 The truss with the attached access box will be ready to receive the harness through the floor of the motorhome. • 23 Multiple lengths of boxed steel are welded together at critical points. Here Umfress reinforces the floor where the driver's chair will attach. • 24 The rack-and-pinion slide-out mechanism is framed with 11-gauge steel and welded into place. This slide-out is powered with a 12-volt heavy-duty motor. The weld is still hot and glowing. • 25 The completed sub-floor frame is attached to an overhead crane and transported to the assembly line. • 26 The Powerglide chassis begins its journey through the welding shop at Station 1, shown here before any of the work begins. The assembly and welding of the basement, frame, and sub-floor will be completed in approximately two hours. • 27 The wiring harnesses consisting of the 12-volt, 110-volt, and the Hydra-Hot lines are installed by Donnie George (blue shirt), Greg Harnage (white), and Ricky Hopkins (red). • 28 Donnie George and Ricky Hopkins put protective bags over the connective ends of the harnesses before the chassis goes to the frame painting shop. • 29 At Station 2, Ricky Hopkins, Donnie George, Jamie Eaton (upper center), and Greg Harnage guide the sub-floor frame into position for welding directly to the chassis rails. • 30 Jamie and Greg measure and level the sub-floor before welding it to the chassis frame. • 31 Jamie and Greg weld the trusses directly to the



frame. Cross member tubing is attached by welding with flat steel stock connecting the tubing with the chassis rails. • 32 The seat pedestal bracket has been welded into place and reinforced with double tubular steel on both sides. The insulated firewall is framed with aluminum tubing and bolted into place. • 33 Jamie Eaton levels and welds the rear header above the engine. • 34 The basement floor is fabricated with 1.5-inch steel angle and hat channel. The assembly will be welded to the anti-camber rails and reinforced with vertical tubing for each compartment.



• 35 At Station 3, Michael Lambert uses a floor jack to square up the basement floor with the top sub-floor before welding it to the anti-camber rails. • 36 With vertical tubing, Stuart Pearson welds the chassis rails to the anti-camber bracket.



• 37 The step well is made with 14-gauge sheet metal and welded into a tubular steel frame. • 38 Anthony Emerson installs 16-gauge sheet metal to enclose the basement pass-through storage compartment.



• 39 A floor jack is used to lift the propane tank into place. Steel brackets have been bolted to the tank and will be used to weld it to the chassis rail and outside tubing. For servicing or repair, the bolts can be removed to drop the tank. • 40 Stuart Pearson welds the tank brackets and completes the framing to support the door to the compartment.



• 41 Joey Taylor installs the Denso automotive air conditioning system in the firewall. • 42 At Station 4, Joey Taylor welds sheet metal into place as he closes up the outside frame. The electric slideout mechanism on the driver's side is framed between tubular steel members and the motor to move the slide-out is shown at right center.



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• 43 Sheet metal is welded into place to enclose the exterior framing around the slide-out openings. • 44 Nicky Hanson installs the HWH hydraulic slide-out pump which is located on the front right corner in front of the firewall. • 45 Ty Odom installs the HWH hydraulic pump into its basement compartment. • 46 Nicky Hanson caulks every seam in the chassis and sub-floor to

prevent any leakage after the coach is completed. • 47 Ty Odom protects all the non-painted areas with plastic before the unit goes to the frame painting shop. • 48 Nicky Hanson drives the Powerglide chassis out of the welding shop to await its turn in the frame painting shop.

WELDING PLANT CAPTIONS BY RANDY PATTERSON AND DANNY INMAN

Powerglide® Chassis Features

- Fleetguard ES Complete Extended Life Engine Coolant
- Allison TranSynd Transmission Fluid
- Orscheln Color Coded Dip Sticks
- WABCO 18.7 CFM Air Compressor
- Fleetguard Fuel/Water Separator w/WIF Sensor
- Remote Mounted Fuel Filters For Serviceability
- Air Filter Restriction Indicator
- 1000 Watt In-Block Heater
- Compression Brake by Jacobs (3,6)
- Seltec 10 Cubic Inch R-134A - A/C Compressor
- Electronic Cruise Control With High Idle
- Douglas Tilt/Telescoping Adjustable Steering Column
- VIP Leather Wrapped 18" Smart Wheel
w/Wiper Controls, ICC, Cruise & High Beam
- Teleflex Adjustable Gen II Suspended Pedals
- Air Suspension Featuring Tuthill
 - Bilstein Custom Tuned Shocks
 - 4 Haldex Pneumatic Ride Height Valves
- Michelin XZA H Rated Tires
- Polished Aluminum Wheels w/Trim Kit
- Haldex PURest Air Dryer W/Auto Moisture Ejector
- Day Time Running Lights
- Two Interstate 950CCA Maintenance-Free Batteries
- R-134A Air Conditioning Condenser
- Push Button Shift Control
- Powder-Coated Bracketry
- Air and Electric Horn Ready
- Auxillary Air Supply Front and Rear
- Audible Turn Signals
- Actia Electronic Gauges w/LCD Msg Center
- Vansco Multiplexed Electrical System
- Cruise Control & Low Coolant Level on Light Bar
- Electronic Air Suspension Deflation System
- Parker-Eco Air Cleaner
- Dual Fill 150 Gallon Fuel Tank
- Tow Power w/7-Way Trailer Plug
- A/C Condenser Integrated into Radiator Package
- Hobbs Remote Rear Service Lamp

Three Zephyrs and Counting

Huxford, Alabama, is 15 miles north of the western tip of the Florida panhandle. It's about 300 miles from Red Bay in the northwestern corner of the state where we had spent several weeks preparing the summer issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*. Jerry Williamson, Tiffin's national sales manager, suggested a visit to Huxford to meet Billie Ridgeway, a man who had just purchased his third Zephyr. The fastest way to get there by land is by the long semi-circular four-lane highway formed by U.S. 78 and I-65.

We first traveled across Alabama's beautiful Cumberland Plateau into Birmingham, which lies in the southern tip of an area that physiographers call the Alabama Valley and Ridge corridor. Leaving Birmingham, we traveled briefly on the western edge of the Piedmont Upland until we slipped into the East Gulf Coastal Plain north of Montgomery, the state's capital city.

The Coastal Plain covers over half of the state, and its comparatively level terrain has made it very suitable for growing cotton and timber. For decades cotton was king. After synthetic textiles put cotton on the sidelines, Alabama land owners started planting pines.

Leaving I-65 at exit 57, approximately 50 miles northeast of Mobile, I headed north on Alabama 21 for eight miles to meet Billie Ridgeway at the Huxford Pole & Timber Company. I had called for directions two days earlier.

"You'll see us on the right just after you cross the railroad tracks in Huxford. We're in a little two-story building," he directed. His friendly voice had a welcoming tone. "I'll be there at eight," I said. Punctuality is considered a virtue in the South. I arrived at 7:58 and Billie was sitting in his office waiting for me.

"My father-in-law, Mack Beech, started this business in 1959," he began. "He just passed away in February. He was 79.

Died from Lou Gehrig's disease. He was healthy in every other way. After he was diagnosed, he died two months later."

Mr. Beech was a "white pole" supplier. In the utility pole business that means he harvested the pole timber, debarked, and sold the untreated poles to a processing operation for preservative treatments, sizing, grading, and marketing. "Republic Creosoting

Company went out of business in 1970 after EPA placed more stringent regulations on the use of creosote and waste disposal," Ridgeway explained. "In 1972 we decided to get into the treating business. We met all of the regulations and continued to use creosote until the late eighties."

Opportunity seemed to knock on Mr. Beech's door fairly often. D. L. Williams, a west Texas trucking operator, was hauling cotton bales in the early seventies to the textile industry in North Carolina, but his trucks were returning empty to west Texas. After a little research, he learned about the utility pole business in south Alabama and paid Huxford Pole & Timber a visit. "You can't grow tall pines in west Texas," Ridgeway laughed, "so he knew we had a product he could sell there."

Williams began to haul a few loads and had no trouble selling them to the electric co-ops in the big west Texas counties. The entrepreneur had struck gold. He became a buyer, hauler, and reseller all in one fell swoop. No middleman! It was a successful venture from the beginning.

"Back then business was still done on a handshake. No purchase orders, no bank financing, just a phone call order and we'd get it ready for him to pick up," Ridgeway related. "It wasn't unusual for one of his driver's to hand me a check for a \$100,000. Now 80 years old, every once in a while D.L. will pull in here



After taking delivery on their 2009 Zephyr in May, Billie and Maudie Ridgeway are looking forward to traveling to all of the Alabama Crimson Tide football games this fall.

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



driving one of his rigs. He just loves to drive and do business. When we would be striking a deal, he would say, 'If it ain't good for both of us, it ain't good for either of us.'"

In 1975 Huxford Pole and Timber began a growth spurt that is still on an upward swing. "Customer demand for the Penta preservative was strong and we added that process in 1975," Ridgeway said. Penta uses #2 diesel fuel as the carrier of the chemical (pentachlorophenol) that preserves the wood. When finished, the poles have a light brown color.

The company dropped creosote in the late eighties and added CCA, which uses water to carry the oxides of copper, chromium, and arsenic to preserve the wood. The arsenic and copper are toxic to insects and the chromium is used to bond the two chemicals to the wood cellular structure. When the poles dry, the wood becomes very hard and difficult for linemen to climb.

The processing plant lies on a 42-acre tract, with the larger amount of the land being used for warehousing. As we began the tour in his pickup, he continued with his personal story. "I started here in 1963 right out of high school. I had been farming with my father. In May he attended my graduation on a Monday night, and then died of a massive heart attack the next day," he recalled. "I finished out the crops I had started with him and then came to work for Mr. Beech."

"He and his wife had three children: Mike, Maudie, and Martha. And I married Maudie in 1974," he said with a grin. The couple have two daughters: Kellie is a branch manager for a bank, and Amy teaches school in Tuscaloosa. Billie is vice president and general manager of the operation. Mr. Beech was serving as president at the time of his death. Mike is in line to become president later this year.

Mike serves as the buyer of timber tracts. "He cruises (evaluates) timber tracts that are for sale to see if we can get enough poles to make the purchase profitable," he explained. "There are usually four classes of timber on a tract: the poles, saw timber, big logs that go to plywood plants, and scrap that goes to the paper mills."

"If we buy a tract, then we have to sell off the other three classes of timber. A tract that produces 5,000 poles is a good buy. After we agree to buy the timber off a tract, we hire contractors to cut the timber. We have bought as much as a section (640 acres) at a time, yielding over 20,000 poles," he said. "Sometimes sawmills will contract to buy the timber, and we will buy the poles from them. We pay by the ton and get about 60 percent of our poles this way."

The company buys Southern Yellow Pine from tracts across

From top left: Trucks weigh in at the scales as they arrive throughout the day delivering raw timber. • Poles are debarked, smoothed, and tapered. Bark is recovered to fuel the steam boilers. • White poles are sorted in a holding lot, and then loaded into steel frames for drying. Heat at 230 degrees is created by large fans blowing air over the steam pipes shown in the right half of the picture. • Batches of poles are moved on a trolley into this steel pressurization cylinder (7 feet in diameter by 90 feet long) which impregnates the poles with CCA preservative at 200 psi for 2½ hours.

southern Alabama, from the Mississippi line, south to the panhandle, and east to Dothan. "There are four or five pole treatment plants within a 50-mile radius, so the competition is pretty strong in the bidding process," he said. The company produces approximately 100,000 poles per year. The recession has reduced sales about fifteen percent this year, Ridgeway noted.

Huxford Pole and Timber ships to 12 states and is beginning to export to Central and South America. "We have 80 to 90 companies buying finished utility poles from us," he said. The company produces lengths from 25 to 90 feet. Demonstrating an amazing memory, Ridgeway showed me several lengths of poles and quoted the specs: the class of the pole is based on the number of inches in circumference at the butt end and at the top. Industry regulations require the pounds per cubic foot of impregnated chemical: penta poles have .45/lb per cubic foot while CCA poles have .60/lb per cubic foot.

"Our most popular pole is a 40-ft. Class 4 Penta pole. It is 21" minimum circumference at the top and 33½" at the 6-foot point when it goes into the ground," he noted. "The Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona buys from us. Ninety percent of their poles are this size."

Each pole is branded with information that shows its destination, class, length, chemical impregnation, and manufacturer.

It takes seven business days to produce a batch of utility poles. When the poles come in from a tract, they are debarked, measured, and cut to specific lengths. The bark is recovered to fuel the furnaces that produce the steam heat to dry the poles in kilns. Huge fans force air over horizontal rows of steam pipes to raise the temperature in the kiln to 230 degrees. The drying time for a 55-foot batch of poles is 72 hours. The water is carefully treated to keep the pipes in the boilers and the kiln from corroding.

The kiln-dried poles are then transported to massive steel tubes where they will be impregnated with either CCA or Penta chemicals. Under 200 psi, it takes 2½ hours to impregnate sixty 45-foot poles with CCA in a tube seven feet in diameter by 90 feet long. At the Penta treating plant, the tubes are ten feet in diameter by 85 feet long. Four hours at 175 psi are required to charge 130 40-ft. poles.

Ironically, hurricanes have damaged the pole plant in the past, shutting the operation down for as long as three weeks for repairs, while both hurricanes and tornadoes nearly always cause new pole orders. "In January of this year," Ridgeway recalled, "we sent 70 truckloads to northeastern Arkansas which had been hit by ice storms. Ice storms are a major reason our sales increase in the winter." The company was processing an order for 750 Class 1 Penta poles 55 feet in length. "We can haul 18 to 19 poles per truck," he noted. "This order is going to western Kansas where they were hit by both ice and tornadoes this Spring."

Ridgeway offered an interesting case of how inflation over 36 years had affected the price of his product. "In 1973 we sold a 75-foot Class 1 Penta pole for \$400 to \$500 each. Today we sell that pole for \$1500. We pay \$85 to \$130 per ton for the raw timber out of a tract, or about \$200 per raw 75-foot pole before processing."

We got back in the pickup for a short trip to a far corner of the 42-acre facility. On a siding sat a rail car with 144,000 pounds of neatly stacked Penta poles bound for Garden City, Kansas. "We have 16 rail cars assigned to us in a pool we use," he explained. "And 40 percent of the tonnage we sell goes out by rail. It is significantly less expensive to deliver by rail."

Nearby was a large metal garage with two bays. He stopped at the corner where a hose was conveniently placed to rinse the soles of his work boots. Then the doors opened revealing a 2009 Zephyr and a 2006 Bluebird. "I guess Jerry told you the story about this Bluebird?" he asked with a smile. "Yes, he did," I answered, "but it's worth telling again."

Continued on page 19

King-Dome Upgrade for Tiffin owners

Do you have a 2007 or earlier model Tiffin Motorhome with a King-Dome stationary satellite TV antenna? King Controls now offers an upgrade program to bring you the latest satellite technology available, including:

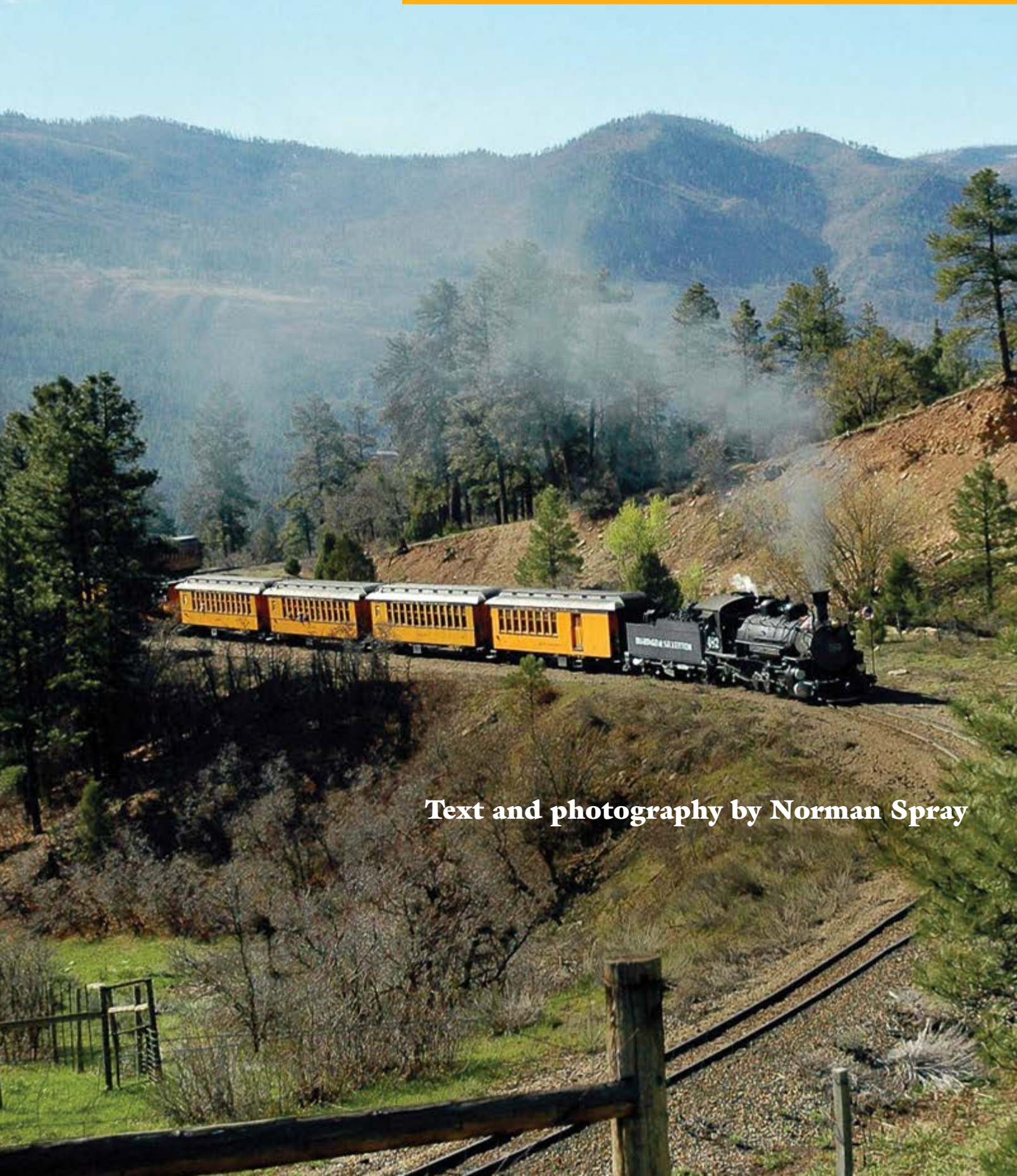
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There's the Train! And 40 Other Things Worth Doing in Four Corners



Text and photography by Norman Spray

Our steam train clings to rails laid only three feet apart on a narrow rock ledge, wheels squeaking and coal smoke boiling up as we negotiate a tight 28-degree turn 240 feet above the roiling and lovely Animas River. High as it is, the cliff we are hugging goes up for another 100 to 150 feet. The outside rail is maybe all of two feet from the edge of the straight-down bluff. It's a bit disconcerting for two or three passengers who have a fear of heights. Even they are captivated, though, by the magnificent Rocky Mountain panorama unfolding beyond our open windows. Snow-capped mountain peaks, some 14,000 feet tall, overshadow the valley where you can hear the river's whitewater rapids roar, fed now in May by melting snow.

We are riding the world-famous 127-year-old Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, first built in 1882 to haul supplies to mining camps in and around Silverton, Colorado and bring bounty from the mines back to the railhead in Durango. Now a much-loved 45-mile-long scenic railroad line, it carries over 200,000 passengers a year from Durango to Silverton, a mining town first laid out in 1874 after prospectors found gold and silver along the Animas and in the surrounding San Juan mountains. Both Silverton, the town, and the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad are registered National Historic Landmarks. Train

runs to Silverton begin May 1 and continue through October. Then shorter winter trips are scheduled.

Anyone who has done it will tell you that riding this train is **the one thing you absolutely must do** if you visit Durango and the Four Corners area. They are right. The ride, the nostalgic sights and sounds of yesteryear, unbelievable views, the helpful, cheerful attitude of your railroad hosts, and the visit to Silverton create an unforgettable experience, one that ranks up there with the cliff dwellings of nearby Mesa Verde National Park (see accompanying story). Take this ride and you'll know why the Society of American Travel Writers classed it among the world's top 10 most exciting train journeys. You'll likely be so energized by the scenery, the history, the clean air, black night skies, and the agreeable weather and people that you'll want to stay longer than planned to sample

a "mother lode" of activities ranging from western trail riding to glider soaring. This Four Corners country is a world-class outdoor playground. This is the Old West, after all. Here cowboy and Old West attractions seem real and often are.

For the train trip, it's best to make advance reservations (888-872-4607, www.durangotrain.com). Price depends on the class of service you choose, varying by appointments and service available in different cars. Lowest is \$79 per seat for standard class in an open car. This graduates up to the highest "presidential class" where roundtrip fare is \$159 per seat. The railroad also operates bus service, making it possible to ride the train up and bus back or vice versa. This costs \$17 extra per person but lets you complete the roundtrip by 3:30 p.m., including two hours in Silverton, whereas the train does not arrive back in Durango until about 5:30.





Preceding pages: Coal smoke drifts behind as the D&SNG climbs toward Rockwood. Here the train is approaching a U.S. Hwy 550 overpass built in the late 1970s. • One of most exciting moments on the D&SNG train ride to Silverton comes as it rounds the “High Line” curve, resting on a rock ledge some 240 feet above the Animas River. The ledge was created by miners who were hired to blast away the canyon’s rock wall with black powder in 1882. Incredibly, workers were lowered over the granite cliffs in harnesses to drill into the rock and set blasting charges. “As far as we know, no workers died while working on the High Line,” writes Robert T. Royem in the railroad’s official guide book.

L-R above: On the outskirts of Durango, United Campground overlooks the tracks and the Animas River. The 2001 Allegro in the foreground belongs to the author. • The Big Corral unit of Villicito Lake Outfitters offers horseback rides lasting from one hour to overnight stays and longer for fishermen and hunters. Here, happy hunters arrive at The Big Corral headquarters on Villicito Lake packing an elk, evidence of their successful hunt. • Kayaking and rafting reach a peak in late May when the Animas River becomes swift with snow melt runoff. Here rafters have a go on the rapids near downtown Durango. • The Big Corral riders dismount to enjoy the splendor of the Rockies in a pristine meadow overlooking Vallecito Lake, where the Big Corral outfitters provide horseback rides, guided horseback trips, including those to overnight fishing and hunting camps. The Big Corral is noted for its “Breakfast on the Mountain” ride where riders are treated to a campfire breakfast after a climbing two-hour ride to this meadow.

Train buffs shouldn’t miss the 12,000 sq. ft. D&SNG Museum occupying part of an engine storage facility near the depot at the foot of Main Street, Durango. Here kids and grownups alike climb inside the cabs of two steam locomotives and lay hands on control levers and valves. An 800 sq. ft. scale model depicts the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (which originally built and owned the D&SNG) as it existed in the ’50s. There’s an extensive library of railroad history books, exhibits of rail tools, photos, paintings, lanterns, locks and keys. Also displayed is a 1916 La France fire truck which came to Durango by rail.

You’re only beginning, once you’ve ridden the train, if you want to visit other towns and explore the highest mountains in the Rockies. Driving the 232-mile San Juan Skyway loop (www.byways.org) is a popular way to do that. On this loop, you run north out of Durango on U.S. 550 past the towns of Hermosa, Silverton, and Ouray. Then near Ridgway, north of Ouray, you

turn left (southwest) on Hwy 62 to Placerville. There take Hwy 145 until it junctions with U.S. 160 near Cortez. Turn left (east) and follow 160 back to Durango. Along this route elevations range from about 6,200 feet outside Durango to 11,008 feet at Red Mountain Pass. You’ll find alpine forests, historic mining towns, and cattle ranges. You’ll come to the entrance to Mesa Verde and pass other Ancient Ancestral Puebloan ruins. In the mountains, you’ll enjoy some of the world’s most lovely views. You can do the San Juan Skyway in about seven hours steady driving but it’d be better to allow at least two days, perhaps three if you plan to explore Mesa Verde as a part of the trip. Motorhomes will have little trouble making this loop, albeit with quite a few challenging climbs and turns that do not make for speedy travel. RV parks are available in most towns and some points in between.

Durango, (Durango Tourism Office, 970-247-0313, www.durango.org), where you start this tour, is itself historic and fun-loving. Downtown is a national registered historic district with old hotels, restaurants (over a hundred of them, not counting the fast food chains), art galleries, museums, shopping, Victorian homes, live music, dancing and live-performance theaters. In 2007, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Durango one of 12 distinctive unique and lovingly-preserved communities, selected from 63 destinations in 27 states. Animas River rapids in the heart of town attract hundreds of kayakers, rafters, and canoe enthusiasts when the river is high. Outfitters rent equipment, furnish guides, and provide information for almost any outdoor activity. Or they can arrange any kind of tour you want. A stop at the Visitor Center will load you up with more offerings than you can handle in months.

En route to Silverton on the San Juan Skyway, you pass **Purgatory** (800-979-9742, www.durangomountainresort.com), one of Colorado’s better ski resorts that offers 85 ski trails over the 250 to 300 inches of snow it gets each year. In summer, you can ride the ski lift for unparalleled views, ride an Alpine slide, and play mini golf.

Unless you’ve ridden the train and seen enough of **Silverton** (800-752-4494, www.silvertoncolorado.com), you’ll certainly want to stop in this true Old West town. Altitude here is 9318



feet. Mountains shadowing the valley top 14,000 feet. San Juan County in fact has the highest mean elevation (over 10,000 feet), of any county in the U.S. Over 500 miles of four-wheel drive, ATV and dirt bike roads are available for exploration out of Silverton. You can ride or drive your own, rent in town, or arrange for guided tours of all kinds, including fishing trips. The nearby Silverton Mountain chair lift, highest summertime lift in the U.S., cables you up Storm Peak to an altitude of 12,300 feet. Dirt bikers sometimes carry their bikes up on the lift, then “fly” down on their bikes, putting on a breath-taking show.

Silverton grew rapidly after the first train arrived in 1882. By 1883 it had 2,000 people and 400 buildings: two banks, five laundries, 32 saloons, several hotels and the infamous Blair Street bawdy red-light district. In that year a grand jury indicted 117 “lewd women.” Prostitutes were fined \$5.00 each and went right back into business. Town fathers used the fines to develop the town—and looked the other way. Now the “ladies” are gone but some of the buildings where they “entertained” remain. There’s still an ordinance on the books (not always strictly adhered to) prohibiting curtains on saloon windows that block the view of officers monitoring activity inside the dens of iniquity.

Ouray (800-228-1876, www.ouraycolorado.com), often called “Little Switzerland of America,” is famed for its big public pool fed by springs bubbling up 96 to 106-degree waters. As in Silverton, summer recreation choices are endless: rock climbing, hiking, four-wheel drive trails, Uncompaghre River rafting, Jeep tours, huge water falls, a historical museum, nearby mining ghost towns, mine tours, artists, galleries, craftsmen and shopping.

After taking Hwy. 62 north of Ouray, you’ll come to a road leading to **Telluride** (800-801-4832, www.tellurideskiresort.com), another old mining town turned popular ski area. Nestled in a box canyon shadowed by 14,000’ mountain peaks, Telluride—one of four Colorado communities designated a National Historic Landmark—is one of the country’s most scenic places. Mining for silver, gold, zinc, lead and copper left 350 miles of tunnels here. Telluride’s wealth even once attracted Butch Cassidy and his “Wild Bunch” who made a brazen bank withdrawal, somewhat unauthorized. Now there’s sophisticated culture, outdoor adventure, colorful Victorian-era homes,

boutiques, art galleries and gourmet restaurants.

Though not on the Skyway trip, **Vallecito Lake** (970-247-1573, www.vallecitolakechamber.com) 22 miles northeast of Durango is a delightful destination. In a mountain valley 8000 feet above sea level, Vallecito is one of the largest and most beautiful lakes in Colorado. Surrounded by millions of acres of the San Juan National Forest, the lake is popular for fishing, camping, horseback riding, hiking, and boating. Along its 12 miles of shoreline are numerous guest ranches, RV parks, trail ride specialists, and outfitters to guide, advise or rent.

Vallecito Lake Outfitters’ The Big Corral (970-884-9235, web: www.vallecitolakeoutfitter.com, E-mail: info@bigcorral.net) has enthralled horseback riders for years with its early morning “Breakfast on the Mountain” ride, offered from June 1 to Sept. 1. If you go, you mount your horse at 8 a.m. A wrangler leads you up a twisting trail through spruce, pine and aspen groves, then into a pristine meadow bordering on wilderness at 9,000 feet. There, in an authentic cowboy camp, there’s an open fire and breakfast that includes bacon, sausage, eggs, pancakes, orange juice, cowboy coffee and hot chocolate. This experience was not offered when we visited in May but a friend reports: “They served the best, most memorable breakfast I ever ate!” Like their numerous competitors, Big Corral also offers one and two hour rides, half-day, full-day outings, and full-service overnight camps and fishing camps where equipment is furnished. In season, they’ll pack hunters into camps.

A chuck wagon dinner under red cliffs in the Animas valley a few miles north of Durango is a different, extremely popular dining experience that tourists have enjoyed every summer (beginning Memorial Day each year) for 40 years. The Bar D Chuckwagon (970-247-5753 or 888-800-5753, www.bardchuckwagon.com) offers roast beef, chicken breast or rib-eye steak and trimmings served outdoors under usually crystal-clear star-studded skies. When it rains, the eating area is covered.

After dinner, the Bar D Wranglers sing Old West songs in the style of classic cowboy movies. Widely acclaimed locally, the Wranglers have performed on country music’s Grand Ole Opry.

Art galleries, art shows, and cultural activities are plentiful here. One, popular for 21 years, is a “Music in the Mountains”

Four Corners



And here it is, the Four Corners monument. This visitor has his right toe in Arizona, his right heel in Utah, his left toe in New Mexico and his left heel in Colorado. The monument consists of a granite disk about six feet in diameter in the center of marble or marble-appearing slab. A smaller bronze disk perhaps a foot in diameter marks the actual spot where four states come together. Circling 'THE POINT', words (two in each state) read: "Four states meet in freedom here under God." In April 2009, several news stories claimed recent surveys showed that original surveyors had mis-measured and were "off" by maybe two to three miles. The stories were later deemed wrong, though the U.S. National Geodetic Survey later admitted that the monument is placed 1807 feet further east than modern surveys would mark the point. All this really is beside the point. Fact is, the monument has been legally established as the corner of the four states.

(970-385-6820, www.musicinthemountains.com) program that runs from July 11 through Aug. 3 this summer. Orchestra, chamber music and special concerts featuring over 350 musicians will be performed at different times and different locations though most are scheduled for the Durango Mountain Resort, Purgatory.

In the towns named here and many others, opportunities for outdoor adventure are endless. You are in the west, so horseback riding is popular. In Durango alone, 20 outfitters are ready to rent you a horse and lead you out on scenic trails. Numerous outfitters are available to help you with kayaking, rafting, and fishing. They provide rental equipment and guides, or will be happy simply to share information if you have your own gear. If you want to take to the air, pick up brochures at the Visitor Center. You can soar silently in a glider or a balloon or sight-see from a piloted helicopter or light airplane.

Trails for hiking, rock climbing, biking and four-wheeling are innumerable. The San Juan Mountain Association (970-385-1210, www.sjma.org) and the U. S. Forest Service (970-247-4874, www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan) can provide maps and a list of 50 Forest Service campgrounds.

One of the newest, most unusual and certainly most exciting attractions is a "Soaring Tree Top Adventure" (970-769-2357, www.soaringcolorado.com) at the Tall Timber Resort, located in a remote valley accessible only by the D&SNG train or helicopter. Long a high-end five-star resort catering to celebrities and guests willing to pay the price, Tall Tree has now made its tree tops available to day guests who are delivered to the resort in a special D&SNG car. You can ride the rail up in the morning and be picked up for return to Durango in the afternoon.

The "Soaring Tree Top" ride, said to be one of a kind in the U.S., is billed as the largest, highest, safest zipline canopy tour course available. You start high in a tree, get seated safely in a harness with guidance by a watchful "Sky Wrangler," then soar like birds from tree to tree on a network of lacy stainless steel platforms high in the Ponderosa canopy. You "fly" over 24 spans ranging from 56 to 1400 feet long, sailing a mile and a quarter over aspen forests, mountain cliffs, and the swift Animas River.

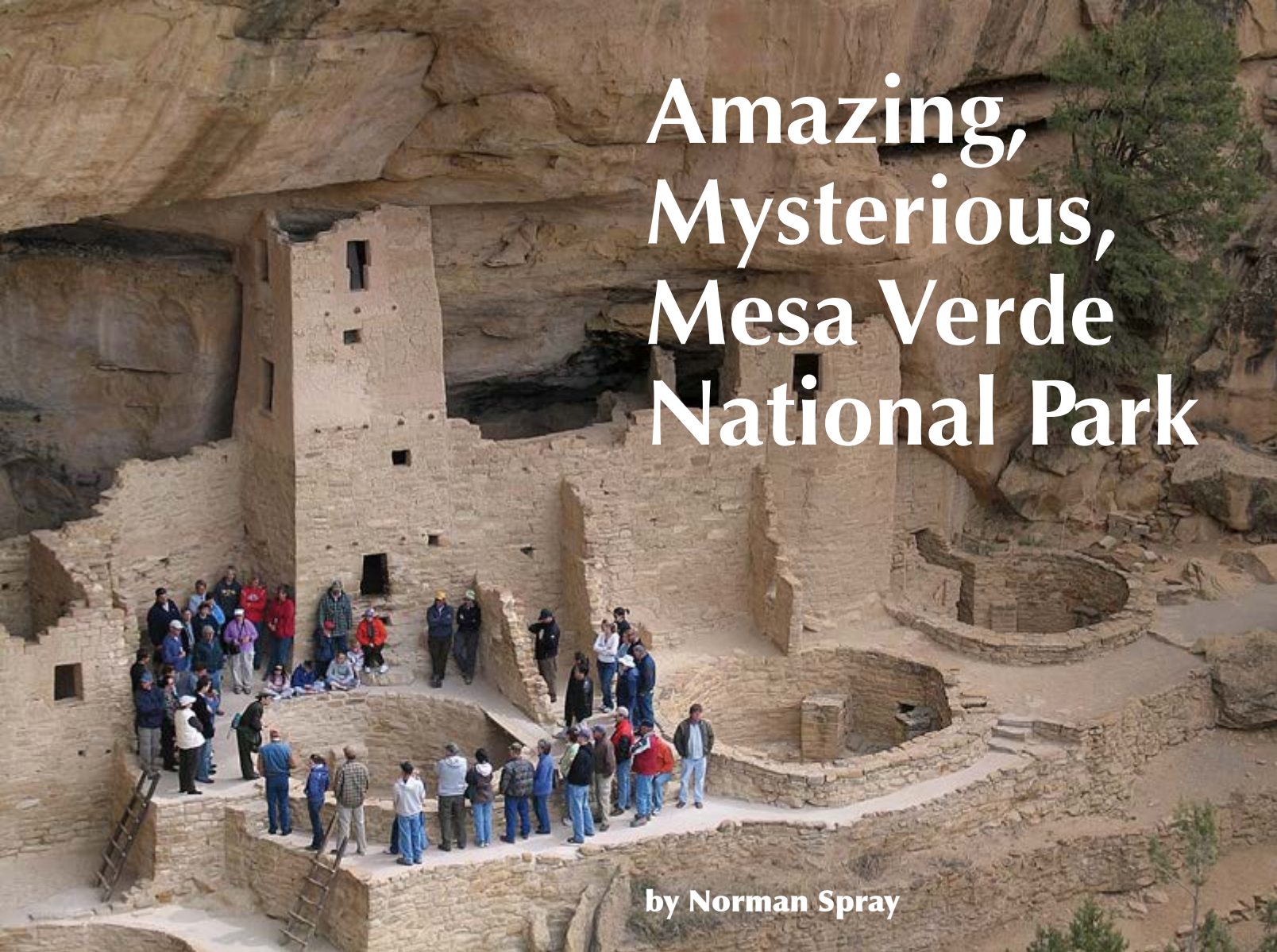
All this excitement does not come cheap, however. The train ride up is ticketless, the trip being covered in the \$399 fee

per person that is required to get you in the tree tops. Whether or not it happens in the tree tops, your spirit is sure to soar when you explore the Four Corners, historical, sometimes mystical, beautiful and altogether amazing mountain/desert playground. **RIS**

Soaring Colorado takes aerial neophytes and makes bravehearts out of them.



Amazing, Mysterious, Mesa Verde National Park



by Norman Spray

A ghost-like wispy breeze ripples

my shirt sleeves, icing the eerie chill I feel as I stand at the edge of a precipice, my eyes moving across a canyon nearly a thousand feet deep to a stone and mud “palace” inside an alcove in the facing cliff. Preposterous that 100 people lived here 800 years ago, left it intact, and – so far as anyone knows for sure – vanished from the face of the earth.

My mind seeks to imagine the time an ancient people built these 150 rooms and 23 kivas high up the face of this cliff. This chill I feel: am I getting some kind of message from a spirit world? Do I really hear chanting, or is it the wind? Or my own imagination? Why build half-way up a canyon wall, I wonder. Surely the climb either up or down to this beautifully constructed “apartment” was physically taxing. And this is just one structure among many that once housed up to 40,000 people on this high Colorado mesa. Who were these people? Where did they come from? Why did they and their ancestors live on this mesa for 700 years, then disappear? Where exactly did they go?

These ever-lingering questions define much of the wonder,

mystery and lure of Mesa Verde National Park, established in 1906 as the first and only national park that preserves works of humankind. Atop this mesa are some 5,000 archaeological sites, 600 of them cliff dwellings.

Even more than 120 years after cowboys discovered these cliff-sheltered dwellings, science has no sure answer to this puzzle. There being no record of what these people called themselves, there’s even confusion about that. For years, they were identified in the literature by the Navajo word *Anasazi*, ancient ones. Now the preferred term is “Ancestral Puebloans” since most scholars today believe current-day Pueblo tribes in New Mexico and Arizona are descendents of these ancient people.

The darkest Mesa Verde mysteries may never be solved but the dwellings left remain scattered over miles of this 52,000-acre park, a UNESCO World Heritage site. You can drive, walk, ride a tour bus, or bike to many of these architectural wonders.

Guided tours into Cliff Palace are the best way to get quality interpretations of the cliff dwellers lives from 800 years ago.

If you are willing to tackle a strenuous walk that sometimes includes steep climbs, even scaling ladders, you can go inside these rooms, see walls stained by hundreds of open fires and even smell charred residue and hear voices in the wind, given a good imagination.

Mesa Verde park's entrance is just off Hwy 160 some 35 miles west of Durango. Elevation at the entrance is about 6,900 feet but the 15-mile, 45-minute drive to the Far View Visitor center takes you up almost 2,000 feet on a climbing twisting road before descending and leveling off on the mesa plateau at about 7,000 feet. No tow vehicle is allowed to make this climb. If you are pulling, one of your two vehicles must be left at a trailer park just inside the entrance or at the 450-site Morefield Campground, 4.5 miles inside the park. (There are also full-service RV parks just outside the Mesa Verde entrance.) The camping sites at Morefield are on loop roads in a high canyon. Only 15 have RV hookups but generator use is allowed. All sites are on a first come, first served basis.

Campsites have tables and fireplaces with grills. Campground services include groceries, carry-out food, firewood, showers and Laundromat. A dump station is available.

Any tour of the mesa's ruins is best started at the Far View visitor center and Chapin Mesa Museum, where there are maps, educational exhibits, a book store, and a free introductory movie that provides valuable background to provide some insight into the cliff-side sites you'll see.

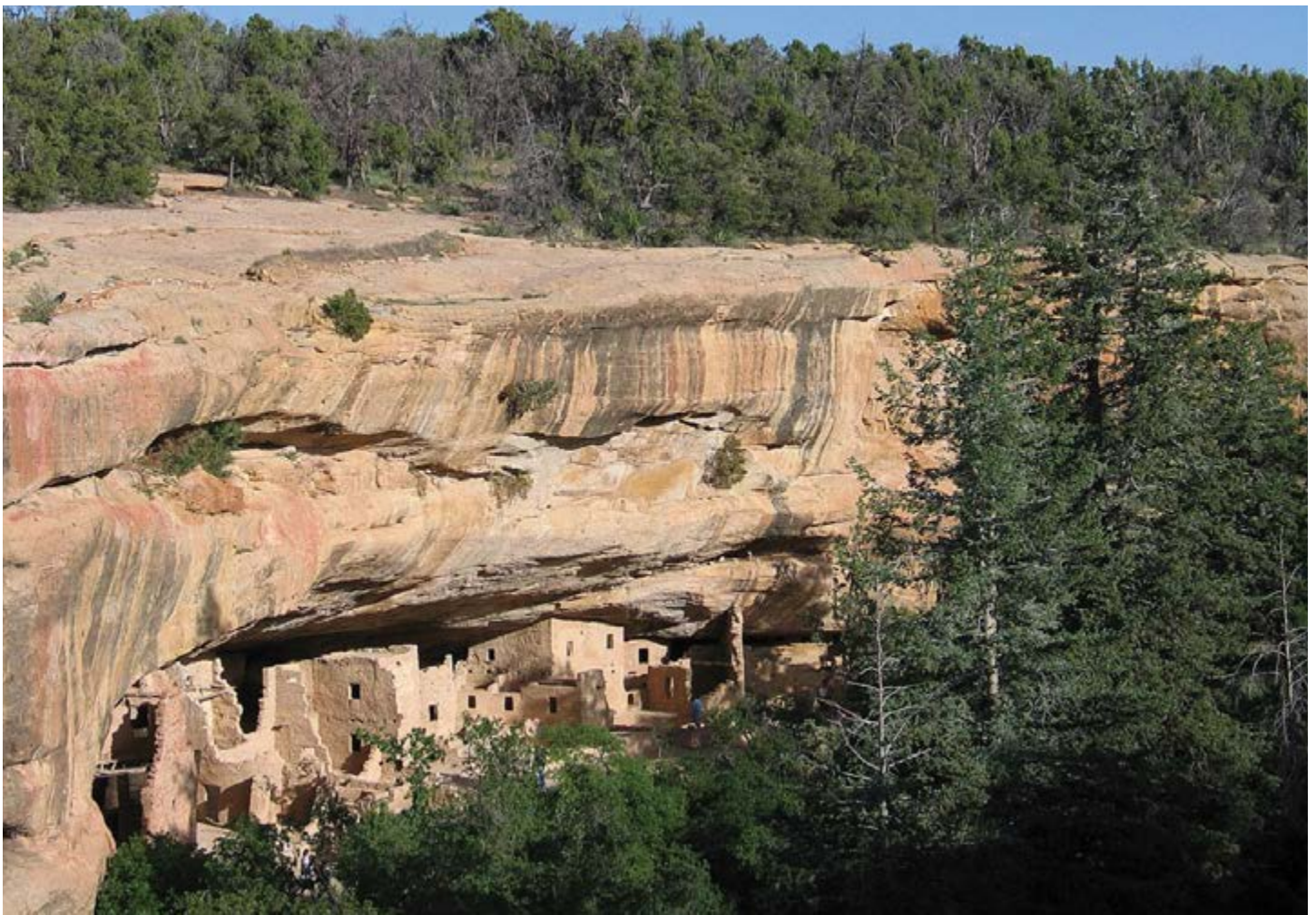
At Far View, you can arrange for bus tours or ranger-guided walking tours which are offered for three of the most-acclaimed

dwelling: Cliff Palace, Balcony House, and Long House. Ranger commentary helps you understand how these people lived and constructed these places. That much has been figured out. Those who have spent years studying the signs believe people first came to Mesa Verde about 10,000 years ago. These first were nomadic, existing on wild game and native plant foods, moving on and off the mesa.

Thousands of years later, around 550 A.D., these people learned to cultivate gardens, gave up their nomadic ways, and began building homes both on the mesa top and in cliff-side caves or alcoves. These were not the cliff houses most associated with Mesa Verde today but were dugout-like dwellings called pithouses. The residents grew corn, beans and squash, apparently quite successfully.

Around 750 A.D., archaeologists believe, the Ancestral Puebloans began replacing pithouses with surface structures at the beginning of what they call The Developmental Pueblo Period. These edifices usually were rows of rooms with vertical walls and roofs connected in L- or U-shape.

For some reason, open to speculation, the Ancestral Puebloans began leaving mesa-top pueblos and moving into dwellings they built in caves and alcoves in canyon walls in the years 1100 to 1300 A.D. These years marked the Great Pueblo Period or the "golden age" of these people at Mesa Verde. Larger, more compact communities occupied multi-storied structures as many as four stories high. Some researchers believe the exodus from mesa top to cliffs was for protection from the elements. Others think the idea was to make themselves more secure from invaders. In



any event, the owners left their cliff houses, some of them massive, after occupying them for less than 100 years. Why?

Researchers have found evidence of a serious drought in the late 1200s, giving credence to a theory this caused crop failures that forced the Ancestral Puebloans off the mesa. But they had weathered drought before. Why leave now? Nobody knows for sure why but all signs say they left over a 25 to 50 year period. Could they have used the holes they bored in floors of their Kivas to return, at least in spirit, to the world beneath the surface, the subterranean world from which they believed they emerged to earth in pre-historic times? Certain tribes still believe this is how their earliest ancestors got here.

Scientists, being unable to embrace any such far-fetched theories, believe instead that when these people left, they moved south into New Mexico and Arizona, settling in the Rio Grande pueblos, Acoma, Zuni, and Hopi mesas. They substantiate this theory noting that cultural and religious practices observed today are similar to those known to have been important to the Mesa Verde people.

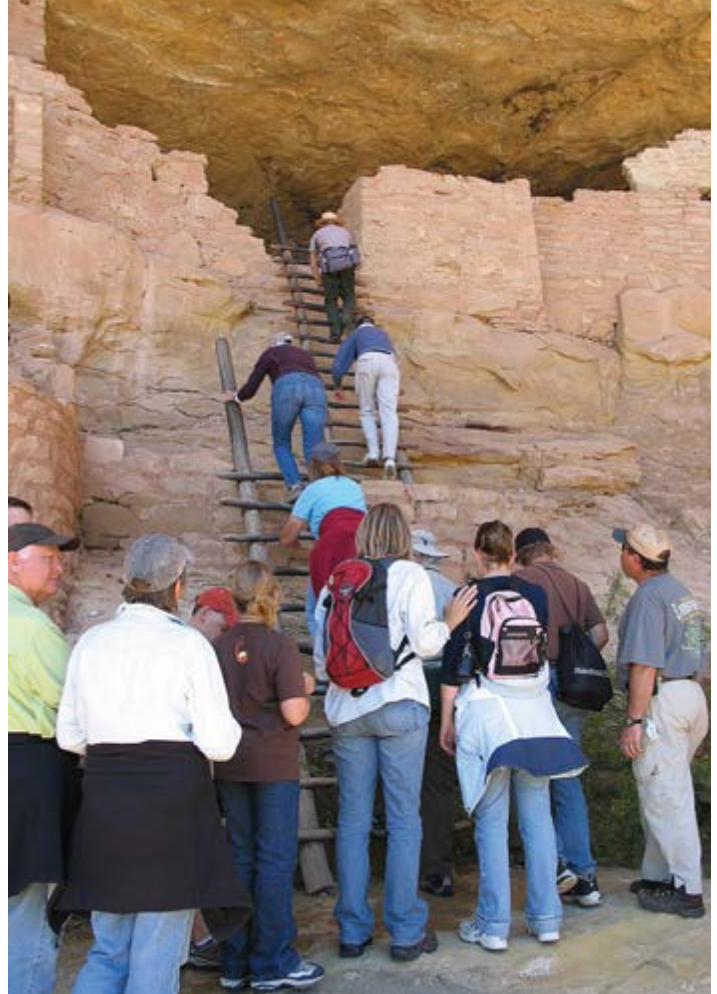
Mesa Verde is one of the two major attractions in the Four Corners area (the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad being the other) but is far from the only site where one can see and bone up on ancient Indian ruins, lore and history. Others include:

* **Hovenweep National Monument** (970-562-4282, www.nps.gov/hove) is located 42 miles west and north of Cortez, Colorado via a paved road. Remote and beautiful, Hovenweep is famous for square, oval, circular and D-shaped towers. The monument preserves a brief chapter of Ancestral Puebloan history. Take a back road home and visit Lowry Pueblo, site of a Great Kiva. Ask for directions at Hovenweep Visitor Center.

* **Ute Mountain Tribal Park** (800-847-5485, www.ute-mountainute.com) is an area set aside by the Utes to preserve Ancestral Puebloan architecture. Centuries old rock art decorates canyon walls. Thousands of pottery shards and beads still cover the ground. Visitors must be accompanied by a Ute Guide, arranged at the Visitor Center 20 miles south of Cortez. Sites are 42 miles off the main road on dirt and gravel roads. Half-day and full-day tours are offered. Visitors may arrange to ride with the guide in a tribal van.

* **Anasazi Heritage Center** (970-882-5600, www.co.blm.gov/ahc), three miles west of Dolores, Colorado explores the time of the Ancestral Puebloans in detail. Known for rotating exhibits, it also serves as headquarters for Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. Two twelfth century sites, Dominguez and Escalante Pueblos are on the grounds.

Left: Spruce Tree House, across a canyon from the Mesa Verde Chapin Museum is one of Mesa Verde's smaller but well-preserved cliff dwellings. *Above:* Visitors in Long House, the second-largest cliff dwelling in Mesa Verde, climb the way Ancient Puebloans did hundreds of years ago to reach various multi-level "apartments." It is believed 150 to 175 people lived here in around 150 rooms and 21 kivas in this alcove. This dwelling contains one of the most active springs in the park. Hollowed out potholes used for water collection remain visible today.



* **Canyons of the Ancients National Monument** (970-882-5600, www.co.blm.gov/canm), a new national monument, is a checkerboard of ancient sites scattered over 164,000 acres. Though enormous, only three principal sites are now open to the public: Lowry Pueblo with 40 rooms, eight kivas, and one Great Kiva; Painted Hand Pueblo, a standing tower perched on a boulder and pictographs of hands; Sand Canyon Trail, 6.5 miles of great hiking and challenge for mountain biking.

* **Aztec Ruins National Monument** (505-334-6174, <http://www.nps.gov/azru>), Aztec, New Mexico, surprises visitors by its sheer size. Its West Ruin alone housed 450 rooms and still stands three stories tall. Roof timbers 900 years old cover rooms with intact plaster. It is said to have been built by Ancestral Pueblo people and mistakenly called "Aztec.")

* **Chaco Canyon National Monument**, some 64 miles south of Aztec, is believed to have been one of the great Ancestral Puebloans' cultural centers. This 21,500-acre park preserves 12 large ruins and more than 400 smaller ones in an area about eight miles long and two miles wide. Chaco's population reached about 5,000 during the 11th and early 12th centuries. By then the largest pueblo, Pueblo Bonito, had been built to a height of four to five stories on a floor plan exceeding three acres. Park personnel think as many as 1,000 people lived in its 800 rooms.

If you care about Indian history and culture, you'll find all you can explore and more in the Four Corners area. Even if you don't, some of these ruins are sure to astound. **RIS**

The Beauty of Small Towns

by Bill Woodward, Bogalusa, Louisiana

As you travel around this great country, you can see a lot of different places, different people, and many different opportunities. The big cities are exciting, offer a lot of pleasurable sights, things to see and do, and a multitude of places to shop and eat. Everyone likes to visit bigger cities, but we all also like to come back to the home-like atmosphere of the small towns. However, as places grow and the population increases, personal friendships and fellowships shrink. When this happens, a lack of interaction among the citizens becomes very noticeable to visitors.

Conversely, the first thing noticeable in the small towns and settlements is the slower lifestyle and the true friendships among the inhabitants. Everyone has time to stop and talk, ask about the children and the rest of the family. Everyone knows everyone, where they live, work, and go to church.

One small town in Michigan likes to show off the newest house in town, a house that is over ninety years old and built for a minister of their newest church. They are proud of their town and the stability they all have there. Another small town to remember is Sikeston, Missouri, home of the original "Thrown Roll Restaurant." Here you are treated to samples of different foods while waiting for your order, all the while a manager will walk around tossing hot rolls to the patrons. If you are there an hour or two before closing, they will insist you have a slice of pie or cake, per gratis. Doesn't happen in larger places.

Some of the residents in small towns in Colorado are snowed in for a month or two at a time, unable to leave. They still open their shops and eating places and see each other every day. One little Colorado town has the world's only fire station dug out of the side of a mountain. Heat is only used about two hours a day to control the humidity, saving several thousand dollars a year of heating oil. Behind the fire station is a museum, also dug about three hundred feet into the base of the mountain. Stories of many famous gunfighters who frequented the area are still popular and are kept alive for visitors. The notorious miner turned cannibal is buried there, and there is a yearly Al Packer Day: parades, music, dancing, food of all sorts, even a great-grandson with the same name and a striking resemblance to the original leading the parade.

Pennsylvania has many things to see, including chocolate factories and historical displays, but the main attraction for many are the Amish villages with large farms and horse drawn buggies that have the right-of-way over automobiles. Theirs is a lifestyle of peace, live and let live. Here you see an interesting way of farming that has remained the same for decades.

Going through South Dakota you will see signs advertising the Wall Drug Store for a hundred miles or more. When you get there, you find it is many kinds of stores: hardware, café,


drug, general merchandise, and even a donkey the kids can ride. A little farther up the road are the Black Hills and Crazy Horse Mountain, with a carving underway of Crazy Horse himself. Then you will come to Mt. Rushmore with carvings of four presidents.

Of all the small towns and villages, the one that would receive my top prize would be Red Bay, Alabama. In the late nineteenth century it was a hunting and fishing retreat for two Indian tribes that lived in the vicinity. The mountainous hills and valleys were, and still are, home to fishing lakes and many game animals, especially the white-tailed deer. The chief would bring a team of hunters and fishermen a couple of times a year to stock up on the fish and deer. They sometimes stayed a month or two at a time, depending on the success of their expedition.

There are two versions of how the name Red Bay came to be. One says the Indians gave it the name for the bay trees with their red seed pods. Another says those living in Red Bay called it by that name for the red clay banks along the streams and roadways.

What makes Red Bay remarkable is the people that live there, about 3,500 strong. The local families date back to the days when the main source of excitement was to meet the train to get their mail, before they had a Post Office. Many descendants of those families still work here in the mobile home plant or the motorhome factory. The surprise first-time visitors get is the daily tour of the plant. If anyone wants to see the owner, they are welcomed into his office. He will welcome anyone, and if they come back later, he will more than likely remember their names and original visit. The employees are Christian people who do their work in a happy, do-it-right attitude.

Another thing newcomers see is the feeling everyone has for one another. If a young couple comes into one of the restaurants with a baby, all the patrons will go up to visit and take turns showing the baby around, with even the waitresses taking part. All will be in church on Sunday, visiting around until time for the service to start and they take their regular places. No one seems to be in a hurry, and they all cooperate to make this a family-oriented place to live and raise their children.

Life is what we each make of it. Watching people in small towns all over this country behooves us to want to adopt some of their priorities. God bless them all. 

My wife Jean and I have been Allegro people since 1979 and have our sixth Allegro now. We toured the country in the 1980s and started a number of Allegro Chapters, meeting many of the Allegro family. In 2000, Mister Bob asked us to come start the campground, which we did, working until 2004 when I had to retire for back surgery. Allegro has been part of our lives for all these years and we've loved it.

Above is an article based on some of our travels and visits in different parts of the country. We enjoy the magazine and look forward to the next copy. Keep up the good work and the great information you distribute.

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Gary Harris: *Chassis Plant Manager*

Bob Tiffin had the Powerglide chassis plant on his mental drawing board for several years before it became a reality. In addition to finding the right designer for the new Tiffin chassis, he knew the plant manager had to be a person with multiple skill sets and very good at all of them.

Gary Harris grew up in Decatur, Mississippi, a small, rural town with a population of 1,450 in the state's mid-section. After graduating from high school in 1977, he enrolled at a community college to study diesel mechanics. With recommendations from his instructors in hand, Harris found a position 70 miles from home with Taylor and Jeanes Detroit Diesel in Jackson, the state's capital. For the next 25 years, his career path took a circuitous route that eventually led him to another small, rural town – Red Bay, Alabama, as the crow flies about 150 miles from his roots.

Tapping his knowledge of diesel engines, automatic transmissions, and standby gensets, Taylor and Jeanes sent Harris to the south Mississippi oil fields to perform and oversee critical service work

on work-over rigs. “Once a well is drilled and pumped for a while,” he explained, “it clogs up. Work-over rigs redrill the holes and extract the well's remaining oil.” Harris worked on the rigs for nine years.

In the mid-eighties, Gary's career encountered two significant changes. Taylor and Jeanes offered him a management position in Jackson with their GM franchise Reliabilt. At that time Detroit Diesel was owned by General Motors which franchised several of their dealers to process and remanufacture Detroit Diesel parts under the Reliabilt label. Harris managed the facility and supervised six employees. The position was short-lived after Roger Penske bought Detroit Diesel from GM and consolidated the Reliabilt franchises into two large remanufacturing centers. By this time, however, Gary's management skills had been noted by Taylor and Jeanes and he was offered the service manager's position for Detroit Diesel's main facility in Jackson.

Concurrently, another offer was in the making. In 1985 Gary met Natalie Delk, who was employed with Vickers Aero-

space Marine and Defense in Jackson. The young Nashville native had earned her engineering degree from Mississippi State. Her ability to understand diesel technology and Gary's job at Detroit Diesel certainly impressed him. Natalie had taken a position in quality control at Vickers Aerospace, but her job took a major leap forward when the U.S. Department of Defense required their contractors to implement statistical process control (SPC). A training and experience inventory quickly showed she was the only person in the company with SPC training. She designed the program and trained staff, making it possible for the company to meet the USDD requirements. Equally impressed with one another, the couple began dating and were married in April of the following year.

In September 1991 Taylor and Jeanes was sold and became Delta Detroit Diesel. In late 1992, Harris was put in charge of service in both the Jackson and Memphis facilities. Since diesel technology is somewhat complicated, diesel engine manufacturers often recruit sales people from the service division. Two years later he moved into sales.

“You can't sell it unless you know the product inside out,” Harris said. “My group was in charge of indirect sales for a wide variety of applications,” he continued. “We made our sales pitch to the customer because he had a choice of engines that go into the truck or other piece of machinery he might be planning to buy. Freightliner and other truck manufacturers would put whatever engine the buyer requested on the chassis. Buyers would usually choose between Detroit, Cummins, or Caterpillar. If we populated our area with Detroit engines, then our parts and service would keep us in business.” Harris's territory included East Arkansas, West Tennessee, and nearly all of Mississippi.

Brad Warner, chassis engineer, watches as Gary Harris experiments with a simple method to remove the fan belt on a Cummins 425-hp engine.



Harris left in May 1996 to become service manager at Barton Freightliner in Tupelo, Mississippi, previously one of his regular customers. Now, with nearly 20 years of experience, Harris's career advanced quickly. The company had five locations in three states. He served as service manager through 2001, operations manager for two years, and finally manager of the entire facility through 2006. He supervised 35 employees on two shifts.

The ten-year employment with Barton proved to be consequential. In 1996 Freightliner bought Oshkosh Chassis, which Tiffin Motorhomes had been using for several years. "The acquisition put us in the position to service quite a few of Tiffin's customers," Harris said. "I came to Red Bay often to do repairs and troubleshooting, and for several months we kept an employee here at TMH to handle service and repairs."

When the time was right for the chassis plant to become a reality, Bob Tiffin called Gary Harris. "He contacted me in August 2006. We had known each other for 10 years and I guess Bob liked the way we had taken care of his customers," Harris continued. "It was a Thursday afternoon. He just said, 'I've been thinking about building our own chassis plant and we would like for you to consider being the plant manager.' I told him I would call him back the following week. It was just that simple."

A week later Harris had lunch with Bob and later spent two hours talking with Tim, who serves as TMH's general manager. In November Harris accepted what was to become the most challenging job in his career.

"TMH had already expanded the chassis plant building from 200 feet in length to 350 feet. During the first few months we built offices, set up the production line and the parts department, and installed the overhead cranes," Harris related. "There was a lot of coordinating to be done with the company that designed the chassis, Jones and Son, on the west coast."

In just five months after Harris joined the company, the chassis department produced the first Powerglide chassis.

"Our major challenges were not in training or technology, as you might expect," Harris said. "The challenge was logistics — finding, procuring, checking, and testing the right components to use in building this chassis."

It was decided initially to make the Powerglide available exclusively on the Allegro Bus. In the next 24 months, the chassis plant built 350 Powerglides.


The plant's administrative staff consists of two engineers, one purchasing agent, one office manager, and Harris himself. "We have 10 people on the assembly floor producing one chassis per day," he said. "We have developed an efficient production model that works. We know how to expand the model as demand for the Powerglide increases." Harris and TMH plant engineers are now making plans for two more assembly lines.

Harris noted the testing for new vehicles on truck-type chassis includes the FMVSS-121 brake performance and stability testing, and the drive-by emissions noise test. Other required tests include battery and cooling, engine and transmission, and steering compliance.

At this writing, the plant is building three chassis for the Allegro Bus, including lengths of 36, 40, and 43 feet, using wheelbases of 238, 276, and 318 inches respectively.

"With feedback coming from our owners, our employees, our engineers, and the chassis' designer, Gary Jones, we are constantly considering ways to improve the production design and quality of the Powerglide chassis," Harris said.

TMH is continuing to build its service network for the Powerglide chassis, providing in-plant training, testing software, and telephone support. "After building 350 chassis, the problems have been surprisingly few," he said.

Although Harris on an average day puts in more than 10 hours, plus two hours of commuting time, he is still very involved with the daily routines of his family and their church. He and Natalie have two children, Paul, 17, and Michaela, 15. Both run in cross country competitions. "We enjoy hiking and skiing out west," Harris said. In March the family went skiing at Breckenridge, Colorado. "In 2006 Paul and I backpacked in the Rocky Mountain National Park and in 2007 the family visited and hiked in Glacier National Park. We also hiked to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and camped out for two nights. We hope to go back and do a rim to rim hike. Our national parks are incredible," he continued. He and Paul are planning a trip to Alaska to hike and backpack. "I don't think the girls are going to make that trip," he smiled. 

Bob Tiffin chats with Harris in the chassis plant about the best way to solve a problem brought to his attention by a Powerglide owner.





Key West Rally—April 2009

by Gail Johnson

Key West—the name conjures up visions of palm trees, brilliant blue ocean, lush tropical flowers, narrow streets full of quaint, colorful houses. The 200+ Allegro Club members who attended the recent rally in Key West experienced all of this and more as we gathered at Boyd’s RV Resort for the Spring Key Lime Rally in April. We could not have ordered more perfect weather, as we enjoyed five days of sunny skies, balmy breezes, and temperatures hovering in the mid-to-high 70’s during the daytime. Boyd’s Campground is located on a bay, and our meeting area for meals and seminars was situated with a lovely view of the water.

As is our custom, Monday was devoted to registration, with time available for individual exploration of the island, or perhaps just resting and enjoying some of the amenities in the campground. The Tiffin dealer on site, Lazy Days RV, was recognized and thanked for their sponsorship of the rally. After Monday evening’s tasty meal, we were given the option of remaining at the tent for a movie on the big screen, complete with popcorn and sodas. The movie we enjoyed was, of course, Tom Hanks in *Castaway*.


Tuesday was seminar day, with a full slate of vendors presenting information on all things pertaining to our Tiffin coaches, from Harold Kimbrough’s Onan generator tutorial to Gail Johnson’s tasting seminar on Sharp Convection Microwave cooking. Also included in our Tuesday activities was a seaside tea. Ladies, some outfitted in lovely teatime hats and pearls, brought their favorite cups and mugs and we shared stories about our treasured items.

Wednesday was devoted to touring the island—open-air trolleys arrived early at the campground and proceeded to carry us on a guided tour of the island of Key West. Our guides, while giving us an interesting historical account of early settlement of

the island, interjected many fascinating anecdotes about colorful characters who have made Key West home. Ernest Hemingway, Jimmy Buffett, Tennessee Williams, John James Audubon, and President Harry S. Truman are a few of the diverse group who had a notable impact on the tiny island. After our tour, we were given the option of stepping off the trolley in the bustling downtown area known as Mallory Square. Many shops, restaurants, bars, and other tourist attractions are concentrated in this area; the harbor area becomes carnival-like near sundown every day, as people gather to watch the sunset from Mallory Square.

Thursday’s activities included games in the campground. Spirited but good-natured competition prevailed as lively games of Bean-bag Baseball, Back-Your-Wagon, and Bingo were played. An added feature at this rally was a line-dancing class. Several gathered to learn new steps or refresh their skills as Tammy Wyatt taught us, making it look so easy!! Later that evening, we were able to display our abilities on the dance floor as we enjoyed a very talented band after dinner.

Throughout the rally, many meals were catered and served under the tent by the sea. In the Island spirit, two nights were designated “theme nights.” Rally attendees were encouraged to dress “in theme,” with Monday evening being “Beach Bum Night,” and Thursday evening being “Hemingway Night.” At the farewell dinner on Thursday, prizes were awarded for the game winners, and Chapters were recognized who had four or more rigs in attendance.

As we broke camp on Friday and said our goodbyes, I think that all agreed that Key West is, indeed, a “Tropical Paradise!” What a delightful place to spend a few days with fellow travelers and friends—“Roughing It Smoothly!” 

Branson One More Time — May 2009

by Gail Johnson

“Back to Branson!” was the theme of our Spring rally. Our host, America’s Best Campground, did an extraordinary job. From their competent help with registering over 100 rigs, to their catering crew and staff who went “all-out” to make our visit memorable, we could not have felt more welcome!

Branson is well known for its excellent theater shows, featuring a variety of well-known entertainers. The area offers many other choices including Silver Dollar City, two large Outlet Malls, shops and restaurants of all types, College of the Ozarks, old downtown, the Landing (a new development on the river), historical sites, Table Rock Lake, and the White River.

Most of Tuesday was spent with registration and getting everyone settled in. After a “get acquainted” social hour with cookies and sodas, the opening dinner was served. The theme was “Hillbilly Night” and many dressed accordingly. The campground staff arranged a Hillbilly Party complete with an excellent Bluegrass band and costume judging.

Wednesday was devoted to seminars. Several vendors improved our knowledge base for operating and maintaining different components. The Sharp microwave cooking class included many men. The afternoon was reserved for the Ladies’ Tea, to which ladies brought their favorite teacups or mugs and enjoyed a cup of tea while sharing stories about their treasured items. The ladies had fun by entering a favorite hat in a contest.


On Thursday morning, we enjoyed a 10 A.M. show at the Clay Cooper Theater. Clay is a country western singer known for his personable, down-home style. He involves his wife and children in the show as well his crew of great entertainers. After the show, he stepped on each bus and thanked us for coming, and allowed time for pictures and autographs. After a quick lunch at the campground, we loaded the buses for Table Rock Lake to take a cruise on the Branson Belle, a replica of the old-time paddlewheel showboats that once traveled the rivers of America. While cruising, we enjoyed a delicious gourmet dinner as we were entertained by a wonderful variety show of Broadway/popular music, Dixieland jazz, and a hilarious comedian/ventriloquist and his “talking” dogs.

Friday morning after breakfast Tom Webber, Tiffin Dealer Support, called a lively game of “BINGO,” or “ALLEGRO!” as Tom designated it. After that, a craft class was provided for those interested in scrapbooking and preserving photo memories. Debra Scott, a local scrapbooking company consultant, gave a very informative class and later helped everyone with a Make-and-Take session.

Friday night was “Wild West Night” with many dressing in keeping with the theme. After a delicious dinner, we enjoyed entertainment by a local country western band.

In spite of rain showers, we got in a rousing game of Bean Bag Baseball. Also on the docket was a Ladder Ball tournament. Saturday evening’s farewell dinner—mouth-watering prime rib—was

followed by announcements and recognitions. The Tiffin dealer on site, Mid-America RV, was recognized for their sponsorship of one of our meals. Many others were thanked for their contributions to the success of the rally. We must offer our special thanks to Tiffin tech guys Robert Gober and David Sparks for their tireless assistance with minor repairs and problems during the rally. Prizes were awarded for the winners of the day games, and chapters with four or more rigs in attendance were recognized with cash awards.

This rally was one of the very best the Allegro Club has sponsored. As always, keep on “Roughing It Smoothly!” 

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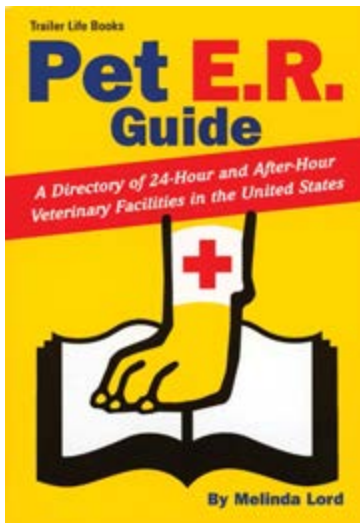


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I hope everyone is enjoying his or her travels as summer approaches. Last quarter we answered some questions concerning emergencies with your pets while on the road. A question was presented regarding whether there is a nationwide hotline for pet emergencies. I am not aware of any hotline except the one for poisonings. The American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) has an Animal Poison Control Center. Their phone

number is (888) 426-4435.

I recently had the opportunity to review a book called *Pet E.R. Guide* by Melinda Lord. It is published by Trailer Life Books. This book has a directory of emergency hospitals in most states and cities, including phone numbers.

The book has a section on poisonous plants and an excellent chapter on evacuation during a hurricane and what supplies to bring. I highly recommend this book for your RV reference library. It is an excellent source of information in case of pet emergencies.

Another question was brought to my attention about pet health insurance. Most companies rule out pre-existing and hereditary conditions. Premiums are thought to be cost prohibitive unless you sign up with a new puppy.

Most insurance companies do have these limitations but many will waive pre-existing conditions after a certain time period.

You can obtain pet health insurance for middle-age dogs and older, but premiums are based on age and location of your residence. Higher deductibles can make premiums more affordable.

Pet health insurance will not cover all your costs like some human policies. It takes the bite out of an expensive, unexpected emergency. Most people can handle a \$500 to \$1,000 bill but beyond that an emergency may present a hardship to the pet owner.

Some of the companies to consider are: Purina Health Insurance, Trupanion, Petsecure, and VPI. Check out www.healthypet.com, the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) website that rates companies offering pet health insurance.

In addition to health insurance, you might want to think about having a pet Wellness Program added to the policy.

Question: Dealing with grass and weed allergies in pets can be a problem while on the road. What precautions can be taken to allow dogs to enjoy a woody walk without consequences?

• Unfortunately most grass and weed allergies are due to pollen in the air and are almost impossible to avoid. Most dogs develop allergies due to chronic exposure to a specific pollen. These allergens will vary depending on the area of the country you are in and the time of year. Some dogs may be helped by the use of an antihistamine such as benadryl but drowsiness may be a side effect. Dogs with grass and weed allergies have a delayed type hypersensitivity, causing them to scratch and itch from allergens they were exposed to the day before. This is why most dogs are not helped by the use of antihistamines. If your dog has a seasonal allergy, usually an injection of long-acting cortisone will help. Side effects of cortisone are wanting to drink a lot of water and urinating a lot which can be a bit of a problem when in an RV. If your dog has year round symptoms, then it would be best to have your dog allergy tested and desensitized.

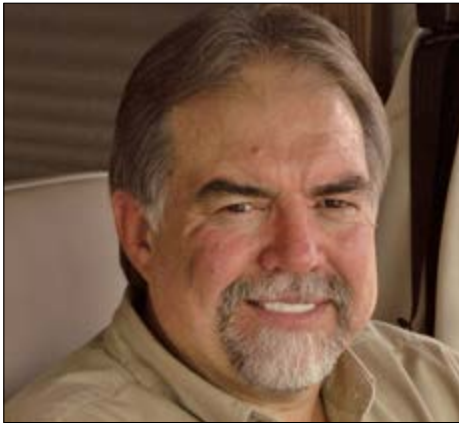
Desensitizing a pet is similar to desensitizing humans. Once you identify the specific allergens, your dog will be given injections of these in different strengths. This process may take from 6 months to a year, with monthly injections once you reach a maintenance dose. As you can see, this will take some commitment and is not always totally successful. Enjoy your walks in the woods, but try not to go when allergens are very high. Check the allergen reports for humans in the areas where you will be traveling since these are the same for your dogs. If it is windy and pollen counts are way high, you may have to stay indoors. It is a good idea to have your pet tested because most likely you will find they are allergic to more than grass and weeds, especially if their allergy is year round. Most allergy testing can be done by skin testing or RAST testing (blood test). If desensitization works, you will have many walks in the woods without consequences. Remember success is based on how much symptoms are relieved, not necessarily a total cure.

Question: It is nearly impossible to avoid diesel spills at the fuel island when we take our dogs out for their pit stop. We wipe their paws but are concerned about the residue when they lick their paws. What is the best way to clean their paws after a fuel stop?

• The best soap to clean diesel fuel from paws is Dawn dish detergent. This is what is used on wildlife after an oil spill in the ocean. I would suggest taking your pets to the grassy area after you fill up. I have personally seen a dog get loose from the owners leash. A dog running loose around an 80,000 pound semi-truck is a recipe for disaster. Fortunately, the dog was caught by another trucker and all ended well.

Keep the questions coming, until next time, Happy Traveling!

Dr. Pilarczyk practiced veterinary medicine for 38 years in Tampa, Florida. He and his wife, Kay, travel most of the year in their 2007 Phaeton and are wintering in Tucson.



Inman's Answers

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

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

Danny Inman
 Roughing It Smoothly
 1403 Cedar Point Way
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Danny would also like to hear your ideas, suggestions, and innovations that would make our motorhomes more useful and functional. If you have a photograph to send, please put the postcard and photo in an envelope and send it to the same address. Please send a SASE if you would like for us to return your photographs, disk files, and manuscript.

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

Dear Danny . . .

I purchased new a 2006 Allegro Bay FRED. At the time Freightliner and Tiffin claimed the coach would get between 10 and 13 mpg depending on driving conditions and driving habits. These claims are still being advertised and written in articles. My Allegro Bay has over 16,000 miles on it and in the two plus years of ownership I have never gotten over 10 mpg on any tank of fuel. On a 3500 mile

trip in 2007, I averaged 8.47 mpg. On a recent 1900 mile trip, I averaged 9.4 mpg. I carry 95 psi in the front tires and 100 psi in the rear. I also use cruise control whenever I can and set it at 60 to 63 mph. I tow a Honda CRV (3500 lbs). Have you received input from other FRED owners?

Rudy Dzubnar
 Atascadero, California

Dear Rudy,
 We would like to use your letter to invite more feedback from all of our owners who are driving the Allegro Bay FRED. We have heard reports from owners who are getting between 10 and 12 mpg. Our magazine editor has a 2008 Allegro Bay 35TSB and has recorded as high as 11.8 mpg in his coach. The only sources we have are the reports from the chassis builder and the current owners. OK, owners, let us hear from you.

We have a 2006 Allegro 32BA on a Workhorse chassis. Whenever the pump kicks on and a light is on in the motorhome, the light dims. I was told that something is wrong with the electrical system. We have had this problem since the coach was new. Can you tell us what may be causing this?

John Kolacz
 Walkerton, Indiana

Dear John,
 There could be several causes such as a weak battery or a bad pump motor, but usually the most common cause of your problem is a weak ground. The easiest way to check this is to go to the pump and take the white ground wire lead off the pump. Then use another wire and ground the pump directly to the chassis of the motorhome. If this corrects the problem, go to the 12-volt fuse panel on the inside of your coach and check all of the ground wires that are connected to the ground bar at the bottom of the panel.

I have a 2008 Allegro Bay 35TSB with 14,000 miles on the odometer. About 3,000 miles ago I noticed a harmonic sound or hum coming from the right front. My wife thinks it is more centered.

It is heard only when the speed is approximately 55 mph and above. The sound does not vary with the speed of the tires, but I had the tires rotated anyway. If a truck or car moves into the lane in front of me, the sound stops until the distance between us exceeds about fifty yards. I wonder if the airflow through the engine compartment is creating the sound somewhat like blowing across the top of an open soda bottle. The noise is very annoying. I hope you can offer some insight into what causes it and how to eliminate it.

Doug McSwain
 Waynesville, North Carolina

Dear Doug,
 See answer to Mr. Malling below.

My 2008 Allegro Bay FRED has an annoying howling sound. At 55 mph or higher, it makes a whistling noise like a bad wheel bearing. The noise disappears when another vehicle passes or I am following another vehicle. My Tiffin dealer in Wausau and your service department are aware of the problem. The service department sent me a new grill that was supposedly re-engineered, but the howling noise continued. I removed the grill for peace and quiet, but aesthetically it looks terrible. I am wondering if a roll bar type of design in lieu of the fin design would resolve the issue.

V. K. Malling
 Stoughton, Wisconsin

Dear V. K.,
 This is an ongoing problem we have been working on for two years. There seems to be no simple fix. Some units have not experienced the howling noise at all, while other units have developed the noise soon after the coaches went into regular service. If any 2007 through 2009 Allegro Bay owners have devised a "fix" for this problem, please share it with us.

I have a 40-foot 2008 Allegro Bus with approximately 6,000 miles. I get a red light showing the engine is hot. Also another gauge shows in the hot range. I took it to Cummins and they tested the engine but could not make the red light come on.

When I left the Cummins Service Center, the hot engine light continued to come on. I also took the coach to Allison and the technicians tested the transmission. They said nothing shows up in the test, but the transmission continues to shift at low speeds.

Nancy Massingale
Prosser, Washington

Dear Nancy,

In a case like yours, Cummins would pull a history of the overheating from the coach's computer, and should be able to tell if the engine has a history of overheating. However, I think it is necessary to involve the chassis manufacturer since it could be a problem not related to the engine. You will need to contact a Freightliner, Spartan, or Powerglide service center.

I have a 2004 Allegro Bus on a Spartan chassis. On our last trip whenever I used the service brakes the exhaust brake came on. I had the coach checked and they could not find the problem. I called Spartan and they were not able to help. Any suggestions? Will it hurt anything to drive it like it is?

J. R. Johnson
Amarillo, Texas

Dear J. R.,

This problem could be caused by several things. The first item to check is the switch which toggles the brake on and off. If the switch has gone bad, or if the wiring has come loose and is touching, the exhaust brake could be activated every time you let off the accelerator. It should not hurt to drive the unit, except for the excessive slowing everytime you let off the accelerator.

We have a 2009 Phaeton 40QTH that we purchased in February. We recently received our first *Roughing It Smoothly* magazine, vol. 6, no. 2, and read with great interest Marlin Saint's article, "Diesel Fuel—Essential Maintenance Prevents Engine Damage."

I found the article to be well written, quite informative, and addressing several important points I did not have any clue

or knowledge about. However, I was left "hanging on the end of the limb" wanting more information on recommended products that would satisfy Marlin's list of additives designed to improve and enhance diesel engine performance and longevity.

In his article, he lists four important points and describes what a person should look for when shopping for the right additive(s). I understand that Tiffin Motorhomes may not want to provide sales pitches for any products other than their own. However, Marlin's article leads one up to that point and leaves the reader hanging for answers and suggestions to satisfy one's concerns for diesel engine maintenance.

Could you publish a list of recommended diesel engine additives in an upcoming issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*? Thanks.

John R. Guenther
Borden, Indiana

Dear John,

Because of the new emission standards, some of the additives used in the past cannot be used in the new engines because they may decrease the life of the regeneration unit. I suggest you (as well as all our readers) contact the manufacturer of your engine, provide year and serial number, and ask for recommendations. In the meantime, we will do some research and try to provide names of additives for specific engines in a later issue.

In November 2007 we traded in a Monaco Cayman and purchased a 2008 Phaeton motorhome (the best thing we ever did). The Monaco was our very first motorhome and is the only reference point we have. So when I tell you we are having a bad experience with holding tank odor it is based on that comparison.

After two weeks in the Phaeton we noticed the holding tank odor, when flushing the toilet, was very bad. We did not do anything differently from the way we managed the sewer system in our first motorhome. We spend the winter in one place. Initially I leave the black tank dump valve closed until the holding tank is about two-thirds full. Then I drain and flush the holding tank into the campground sewer. I start over with

some water in the tank so that it is not empty. I add an odorless granular product to dissolve all solid waste and tissue plus a liquid product to control odor. I flush, rinse, and clean the tank each time I dump, but that has never helped and the problem has continued to occur throughout the winter.

When we came home, we completely flushed the holding tank system by filling it *many* times with water and then rinsing and dumping. We finally got rid of the tank odor.

Now we are completing our second winter in the south and we have had the same problem. I am certain that I am putting sufficient granular and liquid products in the tank, but the the tank odor continues to be a serious problem.

Since this problem did not happen in our first motorhome, and we used the same products, I am wondering if there is a difference in the tank design that would require me to do something differently in maintaining it. Or is there a problem with the venting of the tank? We are stumped. Can you help us? Thanks.

Toni and Charles Diamond
Mount Holly, New Jersey

Dear Toni and Charles,

Proper venting is always a possibility. However, let me suggest a simple solution first. Clean out the tank. Stop using the granular product and use Thetford's Aqua-Kem. If you are in cool weather, use one 8 oz. bottle. In warm weather, use two bottles. Each time you flush solid waste, hold the pedal down for at least five seconds to add plenty of water to the tank. Install a clear plastic connector under the dump valve so you can see when the tank finishes draining. When you empty the black tank, let it drain normally until you can see no flow. Then run your tank flush for five minutes to send a forceful flow of water through the tank. This should clean out the tank and give you a fresh start. If this does not solve your problem, then we need to address some type of venting issue.

We have just started as full-timers in a 1997 32-foot Allegro Bus with one slide-

out. In vol. 6, no. 2, of *Roughing It Smoothly*, the article on the 2009 Allegro RED 36QSA shows a HD television mounted on the wall above a hutch.

Using this same configuration, I wish to mount a 40-inch Sony Bravia television on the wall dividing the living room from the bathroom. Can you provide information on the construction of that wall and if the wall is strong enough to support the weight of the television? If it is not strong enough, can you tell me how to reinforce it and make it suitable for mounting the television?

I also have the option of using an office table counter under the TV to support its weight and also tie the TV to the wall with a wall hanging bracket supplied by Sony for that purpose.

Larry Campbell
Tyler, Texas

Dear Larry,

The first thing you will have to measure is whether there is enough clearance between the wall and the slide-out fascia to allow you to mount the TV and brackets. Then you will have to remove the paneling from the wall and build a solid wall to replace the existing framework that held up the paneling. Keep in mind that some of the walls have plumbing or electrical components. Use “liquid nails” to re-attach the paneling to your new structure. This should give you enough support for the weight of the television.

We have a 2000 Allegro Bus. The furnace will not blow hot air when it is set to use propane. It works fine for heating when the thermostat is set on “electric heat,” using either shore power or the generator. When it is set on “gas heat,” cold air blows out. We have plenty of propane in the tank and have used it for hot water and cooking. Could you tell me what our problem may be? Thanks.

Bonnie Harrison
Wewahitchka, Florida

Dear Bonnie,

Since I do not know all the history of your problem, let’s try the following. If your furnace is running and blowing air but

not heating, then the problem is internal in the furnace itself, which will have to be serviced. If the furnace does not blow air at all, the problem is going to be in the thermostat or a loose connection between the thermostat and the furnace.

I have a 1999 Allegro Bus. The dinette table is a faux white granite and is cracking around the edges. Is there a product you can recommend to seal the cracks? One crack across a corner is a concern because the corner of the table may break off completely. Any suggestions?

Monte Young
Baytown, Texas

Dear Monte,

At that time TMH was using a WilsonArt solid surface countertop product called Gibraltar. Lowe’s and Home Depot carry a WilsonArt repair kit which is a two-part epoxy system that you mix and use to seal the crack.

We have a 2007 Phaeton, which is our second Phaeton, and our fifth motorhome. We are full-timers, but we both continue to work at daily jobs. We have two pets and live in Florida. Occasionally the shore power goes off and the coach gets much too hot for the pets. I believe I can set my generator to run if shore power goes off. If the generator does kick on, will it hurt anything since the electrical system is still plugged into shore power? Will it hurt anything when shore power comes back on and the generator is running?

Duane Schrecongost
Largo, Florida

Dear Duane,

You will not create an electrical problem if the generator kicks on to keep the coach cool, and then regular shore power returns after the shore power failure. There is an automatic switch-over box that prevents any electrical damage when both are activated at the same time.

I have a 1980 Allegro 28-foot motorhome with a Dodge chassis and a 440 engine. I am looking for the filter on the fuel

pump in the 75-gallon plastic gas tank. It appears to be plastic with nylon mesh, and goes on a ¼-inch copper line. Can you help me locate the part? Thanks.

Gene Bigham
Brandon, Mississippi

Dear Gene,

When your engine was built, it had a standard inline filter. I suggest you remove that filter and take it to a parts dealer and ask them to match it with a current or similar filter that can be installed inline. Most likely you will not find the identical filter unless the parts dealer just happened to have kept some very old inventory.

In *Roughing It Smoothly*, vol. 6, no. 2, you commented on aftermarket driving lights. We have a 2000 Allegro Bus and would like to add the driving lights to our rig. Where can they be obtained and where should they be mounted? Is the front cap cut to accommodate them?

Jim Arbuckle
Alpena, Michigan

Dear Jim,

Unfortunately, the 2000 Allegro Bus and older models were not designed with driving lights. You can add these lights by doing fiberglass work or building some type of bracket on which to mount them. The cost may be more than the benefit gained.

Reader Response

In the Spring 2009 issue, Ralph Baker had a question about the thermostat having a wide range. We had the same problem with our 32BA until I fixed it with a throw rug. In our motorhome, the thermostat is located above the stairwell, which is probably very drafty due to the battery cover under the step. Once I covered the stairwell with a throw rug to insulate it, the problem went away. Maybe Mr. Baker’s motorhome is similar. I wonder how many thermostats have been needlessly replaced due to a bad choice of location.

David Quick
Watertown, Wisconsin



F R O M T H E R O A D

The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

We Survived Thanks to Tiffin Motorhomes

This is a testimony to the strength of your motorhomes. We owned a 1998 Allegro with a Chevy chassis and engine. Coming back from Canada to Geneva, New York, my wife was driving while I took a nap. Unfortunately, she dozed off and the coach spun out of control. From the evidence, it flipped several times, including once from end to end and landed upright. She was not injured at all and I only had seat belt burns. The frame stayed together which was very impressive. I have seen other motorhomes made of wood that just exploded in an accident. I am now 82 and I will never forget that experience.

Jack Camp
Beaufort, North Carolina

The Incredible Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge

In March 2009 my wife and I spent several days in the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Georgia. Inside the refuge is the rather unique Stephen C. Foster State Park. It is the only Georgia state park located within a national wildlife refuge area. Several other points set this park apart.

It is extremely remote – only one way in or out and 50 miles to the nearest grocery store. Located deep in the swamp on Jones island, it is bordered by Billy's Lake. Here the famous Suwannee River has its beginnings before it travels some 300 miles to the Gulf of Mexico.

Once in the park, you can take a guided boat tour, offered three times a day. Or, if you are feeling adventurous, rent a canoe, kayak, or motorboat and go out on your own. You'll find yourself in a pristine wilderness inhabited by alligators, otters, black bear, fox, white-tail deer, and numerous birds. You can explore Billy's Island, take a canoe trail, fish, or just relax and enjoy the wildlife, solitude, and beauty.

After a day of "swamp adventure," it was our pleasure to relax in our 2007 Allegro Bus which drew as much attention from other campers as did the wildlife. What better way to tame the swamp than in an Allegro Bus!

Tom Thoburn
Saint Johns, Florida

Rio Chama RV Park, Chama, New Mexico, Offers Cool Mountain Camping

This park in northern New Mexico has 100-foot trees, sites along the Rio Chama River, and grassy sites with the scent of herbs in the air. At nearly 8,000 feet elevation, we enjoyed pleasant days and cool evenings. All sites have campfire rings, many pull-throughs for big rigs, 51 sites with water, electric, and sewer. The park is adjacent to the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad which runs on tracks originally built by the Denver & Rio Grande. The line reached Chama in 1880 and later Durango and Silverton, Colorado, in 1882. The most scenic section is now preserved as the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, which uses vintage, narrow gauge equipment. There is good trout and salmon fishing in nearby Heron Lake and El Vado Lake State Parks. Within 30 minutes drive you can do whitewater rafting, canoeing or kayaking, ATV and dirt bike trails, Jeep trails, and guided horseback trail rides. The park opens May 1 and closes October 15. It is located seven miles south of Colorado on Scenic Highway 17. Rates \$22–36/night for two. \$132–216/weekly. This has to be *the place* to stay in the northern New Mexico mountains. 575-756-2303.

John & Darla Pereira
Lawton, Oklahoma

No Other Brand for Me Except a Tiffin

I am the owner of a 1995 34-ft. Allegro Bus (diesel pusher) which I purchased from the original owner in May 2000. It now has 99,740 miles on the odometer and is in pristine condition.

My driver's side windshield wiper bracket broke in half. I phoned Jerry Thorne at the Tiffin Service Center and he went to considerable trouble to find an adaptable part for me to make the repair. I have always been an advocate of Tiffin Motorhomes and the people like Jerry Thorne who are the backbone of a good company. I sincerely appreciate the service. I would not consider owning any motorhome not made by Tiffin.

Richard L. Laiben
Crystal City, Missouri



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