

Roughing It Smoothly®



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- New for 2010

SPECIAL

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Roughing it Smoothly®

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On our cover: A Fall Scene in Itasca State Park, Minnesota. Peter Hawkins Photography.
www.phawkinsphoto.com

Letters, We Get Letters. . . .

Thanks for your emails. With a new office just a few steps from my side door, producing *Roughing It Smoothly* promises to be more fun than ever. On September 16, we plan to leave for the Hudson River Valley to write and produce a fall story that you will see in September 2010. In October, we will be traveling in Florida to write a feature on the springs of Florida.

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 RIStechtalk@gmail.com

Changes of Address

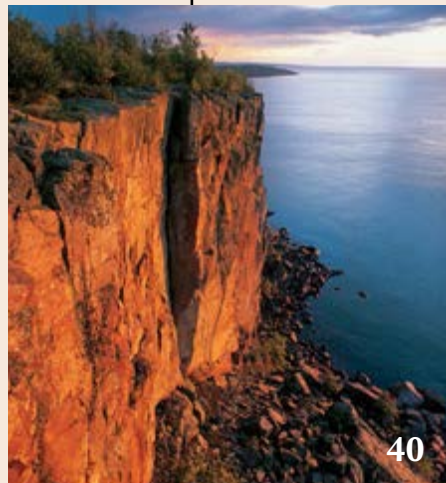
Please do not call to make a change of address. It is too easy to make a mistake while taking the information over the phone. We are often traveling when your calls come in and it is very difficult to handle the call on a cell

phone. Please use a standard change of address card from USPS or send the change by email. In the subject line, put "RIS Address Change."

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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Features

- The 2010 Allegro Bus 43 QGP — This rear-bath floorplan is competing for the number one spot on the TMH best-seller list.
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- The Assembly Line . . . Building the Allegro Bus 43 QGP, step by step.
See page 19.
- New for 2010 — Tiffin gives the Allegro Bus star billing and showers upgrades on the Allegro, Allegro RED, Phaeton, and Zephyr.
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- Riding the Great River Road Through Minnesota, a 575-mile trip from the Mississippi's headwaters to the Iowa border.
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Tiffin Motorhomes introduces “Rocky Mountain Brown” for 2010, its new full-body paint scheme that is already a best seller.



The Northern California Coast and the Napa Valley

by Bob Tiffin

Judy and I really enjoy attending one or two of the Allegro Club Rallies each year. It is a pleasure to get to camp and visit with friends we have made over our many years in the RV business. This year we went to Canyonville, Oregon, in late June to the rally held at Seven Feathers RV Resort. It fit well into my schedule and allowed us to add another week of vacation driving the Pacific Coast Highway in northern California and relax for several days in the Napa Valley area, one of our favorite places in the western states.

I didn't have the time to drive across the U.S. to reach a western destination. One of our drivers delivered our coach directly to the rally location and we flew to Portland where the driver had parked our tow car.

After the rally closed, we went into Canyonville for lunch about 11 on Thursday morning. Judy found a health food store where we bought a little box of cherries that still had the stems on them. By noon we were headed south on I-5 in our 2008 Allegro Bus 36QSH with a Powerglide chassis. This trip gave me another chance to really put the Powerglide through its paces. I particularly wanted to see how it handled on the twisting coastal highway.

After going through Grants Pass, we took Hwy 199 to Crescent City. When we reached the California state line, the California Department of Agriculture had a checking station for any kind of agricultural product that people might be taking into the state. The agent rattled off a list of items that included cherries. So we told her we had a box of cherries on board. Her reply was, "Well you'll have to give them to me or you can pull over here and eat them and give me the pits." Her request seemed really humorous to us, but we weren't about to give up our fresh cherries, so we pulled over and ate them all and "gave her the pits." Every time we think of this trip I'm sure we will laugh about that experience.

When we got to Crescent City, we stayed for a night at Village Campers Inn. I talked to two fishermen who were camping in fifth wheels. One had been coming to that campground for over 20 years for the salmon season. There was no catch limit many years ago and the campground would be running over, he said. This year salmon fishing on inland streams was banned altogether, and the California Fish and Game Commission has prohibited recreational salmon fishing in state waters which extend three miles off the coast. Since it is their livelihood, the Indians are allowed to use gill nets with no limits. Unfortunately, the inland fishing ban has reduced the number of campers at the campground. It is a fine location but the facility is in need of some maintenance.

The Redwood National Park was only a few minutes away from the campground. We "discovered" the Howland Road at



The Twisting Howland Road in the Jedediah Smith Grove of the Redwood National Park provides a drive in quiet solitude.

the park which turned out to be a seldom-used unpaved road through the redwoods. It was awe inspiring to drive through groves of redwood trees with diameters wider than our car.

The weather was great. During the morning newscast, the weatherman would mention the temperature of the Pacific which was around 50 degrees. The low temps in the evening were about the same. The cool breezes from the ocean made great sleeping weather. We opened the windows — no air conditioning was necessary during our trip. During the day the temperatures ranged in the high 60s and low 70s.

We drove over to Ft. Bragg and checked into the Pomo RV Park and Campground for Friday and Saturday nights. We thought Pomo was a rather unusual name but learned that the area now known as Ft. Bragg was once the home of Native Americans who belonged to the Pomo tribe.

Ft. Bragg was founded as a military post in the 1850s and named for Captain Braxton Bragg, who later became a general in the Confederate Army. By the 1870s it had become a lumber town after C. R. Johnson located his sawmill operation there to take advantage of the harbor for shipping.

And that little bit of history brings me to the "Skunk" Railroad. Johnson built a rail line east toward Willits to get the timber out of the hills.

The coal-fired steam engines were discontinued in 1925 and replaced by self-powered, yellow "skunk" rail cars. The little trains were named for their original gas engines which prompt-

ed locals to say, “You can smell ’em before you can see ’em.”

California Western brought in more “modern” equipment in later years which you can still ride. The vintage 1925 M-100 motorcar and the 1935 M-300 motorcar still run year-round. During the summer months they are joined by three diesel-powered engines from the 1950s and the famous Old No. 45, a majestic 1924 Baldwin steam engine, the kind most railroad fans think of when they say “steam engine.”

Moving along at a maximum speed of 29 mph, the trains pull covered and open observation cars. It’s a great place to get scenic shots. Crossing 30 bridges and trestles and passing through two deep mountain tunnels, the Skunk Line covers about 40 miles from Ft. Bragg to Willits.

The train company offers regular observation car tickets and for a few dollars more you can get a ticket to ride in the cab with the engineer. Being a train enthusiast myself, I bought the cab ticket. When I tried to board, the engineer told me, “Sir, those nice clothes you’re wearing are going to get black as tar if you ride up here. Why don’t you come back later wearing some old overalls.” I took his advice, and I hope to go back next May.

It seemed odd to me that the redwoods were cut six to ten feet above the ground, leaving a huge stump. Asking about that, I learned that the redwood tree retains most of the water in the first ten feet of its trunk. If it had been cut at ground level, the huge amount of weight caused by water retention would have made the lower end of the tree sink in the sluice pond while it was waiting to be moved downstream to the sawmill. Because of the water retained in the stump, five or six new trees usually grow out of the stump.

There are 13 redwood parks there in Mendocino County plus the Point Cabrillo Lighthouse. On a walking tour of Ft. Bragg on Saturday we found several beautiful Victorian houses which were built during my favorite period of architecture. Ft. Bragg has a lot of good restaurants on Main Street, but be sure to visit the Mendocino Chocolate Company and the Mendocino Cookie Company to take care of your sweet tooth.

Early Sunday morning we hooked up the car, drove to Willits in the motorhome, and parked at the train station while we attended church services. On the way to the station, I saw this restaurant named Ardella’s Downtown Diner with people standing in line outside. I told Judy, “That’s where we should eat lunch – where all the local people go.” When we got there after services the crowd had thinned and it turned out that all they served on Sunday was breakfast from eight until two. I had blueberry pancakes and they were the best I have ever eaten!

We headed over to Petaluma, one of California’s oldest cities which has a well-preserved downtown Victorian historic district. It was one of the few cities in northern California that suffered little damage in the 1906 earthquake, so today it is a rare example of how people lived a hundred years ago. Every year they have the Great Petaluma Quilt Show, and Judy wanted to visit the quilting shops.

That evening we got to our campsite in the Napa Valley Expo-

sition RV Park, which covers 50 acres in the middle of Napa where they have had the annual county fair for many years. The park has concrete pads, 50-amp service, and nice landscaping. It is in walking distance of town and a block or two from the Napa River. Twenty-four spaces have been newly remodeled. Counting our coach, there were five Tiffin motorhomes in the park: two Buses, two Phaetons, and one Allegro. So we were well represented.

We decided to stay in Napa all week and take side trips to surrounding areas. Monday we went over to see Jerry and Linda Wuichet. Jerry restored an old 1940 Packard 160 black convertible sedan that I bought several years ago and named “Maggie.” It fits in pretty good with the old historic towns around Napa that we were visiting. This Saturday (Aug. 22) I am taking it to an old car show in Killen, Alabama.

If you decide to visit here, there are many interesting towns you can see within a 30-mile half circle from Napa. We went to Yountville where several restaurants have patios that overlook

Continued on page 33

Judy and I live in a restored Victorian in Florence, Alabama, and I always enjoy seeing Victorian architecture elsewhere in the country. This well-preserved Victorian and other homes in the area have served as backdrops for many Hollywood features filmed in Petaluma.



COURTESY OF PETALUMA VISITOR CENTER

A motorcoach is driving across a large, white concrete arch bridge that spans a deep, forested valley. The bridge has several tall, white, tapered support pillars. The surrounding landscape is lush with green trees and rolling hills under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The motorcoach is positioned in the middle of the bridge, moving away from the viewer.

The Allegro Bus 43 QGP

Elegance and Refinement in a Rear Bath Floorplan

The success of a motorcoach begins with excellence in design. The coach should offer a stimulating visual experience—sleek, beautiful lines outside leading you to an interior that is refined and elegant without being overstated. Its infrastructure should be flawless. Execution at every stage of the assembly process should be focused, perfect. Materials and components should be the highest quality, thoroughly tested. When those standards have been attained, the coach's functionality at every level will be its ultimate judge.

In spite of the treacherous economy this country has faced for nearly two years, Tiffin Motorhomes has pressed on to achieve even higher standards in design and quality. The 2010 Allegro Bus 43 QGP demonstrates the leadership and focus of TMH all the way from top management to the team who cleans the coach the day before it ships to a dealer. As I write these stories each quarter about Tiffin motorhomes, it is inspiring to watch and talk with the talented and dedicated employees who take ownership of the product and show great pride in their work.

When I approached the 43 QGP for the first time, the clean lines of the new front cap immediately caught my eye. Tucked under a horizontal ledge extending across the front cap, the automotive-styled headlights capture a certain aura for this coach—not jaunty or arrogant, but distinctive.

This 43 QGP, the first 2010 Allegro Bus to be produced, demonstrates the brand's new paint colors: Rocky Mountain Brown full body paint. Two pleasing shades of brown—perhaps best described as chocolate ice cream with dark chocolate syrup on top—are highlighted with dashing patterns and swirls of white chocolate.

Let's Get Inside This Beautiful Coach!

The 2010 Bus offers a new finish to its fine cherry furniture called Glazed Honey. It may quickly become the leading choice for the coach's fascias, valances, cabinets, and drawers. I couldn't stop rubbing my finger tips over the finish. It was flawless. The new molding designs are nothing short of elegant. George Vanderbilt would have been pleased to have had them at Biltmore a hundred years ago!

text by Fred Thompson photography by Jeff Williams



The new ceramic tile floors—cockpit to rear bath—will undoubtedly be a major selling point for 2010. The larger tiles, 17.75 inches square, are accented by ceramic shields 3.25 inches square placed at each juncture. The tiles have a matte finish that softens the entire interior. Ceramic tile in the bedroom is an option this year only on the 43QGP and the 43QBP rear bath floorplans.

The valances have opposing vertical columns with padded velour insets capped with carved recessed rosettes. The columns join a capital supported by handsome crown molding. A cross member just below the crown is padded with the same brocaded fabric used in the dining chairs. Tiffin's interior designer, Margaret Miya, named this new decor French Vanilla.

The coach is almost evenly divided into living-activity space and bedroom-bath areas. From the entrance steps to the wall behind the entertainment center, you will be surprised to find an almost unbelievable 22 feet of comfortable, well-planned

areas for lounging, dining, meal preparation, office work, and entertainment. With the forward slides extended, the room is 12 feet 6 inches wide.

The Living Room

While many seating options are available, the 43 QGP prototype was appointed with two 74-inch sofas: a cloth upholstered DE sofa/sleeper on the driver side and an optional Ultraleather Air Coil Hide-A-Bed Sofa on the passenger side. With the driver and passenger chairs rotated, the living room offers comfortable seating for eight. If you choose to add your own personal touch with an area rug and even a coffee table, the living room will assume its own identity.

The living room's personality has already been enhanced with lighting. On the passenger side, two directional lamps are recessed into the overhead cabinets and are perfectly positioned



for bedtime reading. Sconces on either side of the valance provide attractive accent lighting. On the driver side, three recessed barrel lights above the sofa offer all-purpose lighting.

The living room is the 43 QGP's primary entertainment area. With the optional 32-inch overhead dash HDMI television and the standard 37-inch HDMI television in the mid-coach entertainment center, you are certain to find a comfortable seat for enjoying a movie, catching the evening news, or keeping up with your favorite soap. Although it might discourage dinner conversation, you can sit across from one another and both be able to see the same program.

The sound system and the HDMI technology were designed two years ago exclusively for Tiffin coaches 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). The box receives high definition broadcast *input* from the King Dome satellite system which pulls programming from network satellites. Additional *input* comes from (1) an enclosed rotating digital TV antenna receiving local programming, (2) HD programming via cable service, and (3) a 5-disc DVD-CD player with high quality picture and digital sound technology. The system transmits *output* to the coach's HD-ready Panasonic televisions and sound equipment. All of the described system is standard on the 2010 Allegro Bus.

When any of the four televisions in the coach is turned on, one click on the remote activates a selection screen which offers "TV, DBS, and DVD." Your selection will source *input* for (1) standard television reception from the digital antenna or cable, (2) satellite reception (DIRECTV or DISH which you purchase separately), or (3) DVD-CD (movies or music) from the standard Panasonic 5-disc player. The Panasonic DVD unit converts standard disks to high-def. The system is also equipped with a cradle for I-pod devices, allowing you to play your own music collection through the coach's surround sound.

You can carry your entertainment outside, too. An optional 32-inch HD television is mounted in the outside wall of the forward passenger-side slide-out. After your awning is extended, an optional vertical sun screen drops down to block the late afternoon sun.

The Dining Area (and It's An Office, Too!)

While the dinette booth is still standard equipment in the Allegro Bus, a modest optional upgrade will provide a free standing dinette with office/computer workstation. A handsome 66-inch valance frames a huge picture window, so be careful to select your view when you choose your parking spot. Nothing improves the enjoyment of a good meal more than overlooking a pristine lake or a snow-capped mountain. Tiffin provides the window, you provide the scenery.

The top of the 73 × 18½-inch hutch is a light beige, randomly patterned solid surface countertop. Nearly half of the 25 × 40-inch solid surface dining table slides neatly into the hutch for





storage while traveling. The name for the interior design of this coach, “French Vanilla,” is obviously a good choice considering the paisley-brocaded upholstery covering the two Empire-back dining chairs.

On the north side of the dining table, a drawer front on the hutch conceals a sliding shelf for a computer keyboard. Two doors underneath conceal another sliding shelf for your printer. Your laptop or desktop computer can tuck away in a double compartment under the table, while a freestanding monitor will fit perfectly on top of the hutch. On the south side of the hutch, TMH designers installed two 12 × 14 × 3.5-inch drawers to stash office supplies, plus a standard filing drawer with rails for hanging folders. In short, it is just a fine piece of good design for those of us who take our offices with us. If you are a full-timer, you will find it perfect for tracking your expenses, your correspondence with friends and family, or your computer-based hobbies.

The Galley – and Other Necessary Amenities

The 2010 Allegro Bus for the first time offers an “All Electric Coach.” That’s right—there is no propane tank or hot water heater on the 43 QGP. The Aqua-Hot provides an endless supply of hot water (provided you are connected to shore services) as well as hydronic heat. The Aqua-Hot generates heat with electric elements or with a diesel burner, with the latter providing hot water and cabin heat more quickly. When outside temperatures are above 40 degrees, the three 13,500 BTU AC roof units with heat pumps will adequately warm the coach.

The most obvious clue the coach is “all electric” is its cooktop. With a thickness less than a quarter-inch, a two-unit JennAir cooktop is mounted flush against the solid surface countertop, replacing the propane burners. “Some owners prefer to cook on gas,” national sales manager Jerry Williamson observed, “so we made it an option.”

An all-electric coach demanded a Power Control System (PCS), a computer device which prioritizes which component

will receive power when collectively they attempt to draw more than the 50 amps available. The primary purpose of the PCS is to minimize tripping the circuit breaker. With a clothes dryer, a refrigerator-freezer, an electric cooktop, three AC units (or heat pumps), and an Aqua-Hot water heating system drawing power, the PCS assumes the last item you added to the mix is the one you want the most, such as your cooktop for preparing a meal. It then alternately sheds one or two components until power demand falls under 50 amps. Because the PCS makes power management so easy, TMH has made it standard on all 2010 Allegro Bus models.

A 50-amp shore power source or your 10,000-watt generator (standard only on 43-ft. floorplans) has two 50-amp hots and a ground. The PCS recognizes the two incoming hots as L1 and L2. Theoretically, both lines can support a total power draw of 100 amps. Additional power can be supplied by the Magnum inverter when needed.

If the batteries are fully charged, the PCS may issue a shed order to the Magnum Battery Charger, and subsequently to the Engine Heat, the Aqua-Hot, or one of the ACs. Or, it may even ask the inverter to supply power from the batteries to supplement the present demand. At the point each appliance is shed, the PCS learns the current for that specific appliance to ensure there will be sufficient headroom under the 50-amp limit to turn the appliance back on after demand (such as the cooktop) is reduced. The PCS is standard on all 2010 Bus models.

Two other options which complete the residential amenities are the Fisher & Paykel drawer-type dishwasher and the Maytag double-door refrigerator with bottom freezer drawer. If having a residential-style kitchen is your top priority, this coach is for you. The Maytag features ice, cold water, and system settings for state-of-the-art refrigeration.

The galley’s cabinetry is an example of seasoned design upon which TMH continues to make fine-tuned improvements. The much-copied Expand-An-Island now has three drawers 13 × 26



inches, one 7 inches deep and two 3¼ inches deep. With a solid surface countertop nearly eight feet wide, the chef has 24 sq. ft. on which to prepare dinner including the island. The beautifully patterned solid surface vanilla backsplash with chocolate accents covers the entire back wall from the countertop to the bottom of the overhead cabinets.

It's hard to beat Tiffin's affinity for providing maximum storage in the galley area. The pots and pans drawer under the dishwasher kicks in 1.5 cubic feet. The compartment under the double stainless steel sink offers 5 cubic feet of lighted storage space with custom-designed racks to store the sink covers.

The overhead cabinets on either side of the microwave offer a combined storage of 11.4 cubic feet, and both have sliding shelves to allow items in the back of the cabinet to be reached easily.

You will find the sectioned utensils drawer and two more under it for hot pads and hand towels thoughtfully positioned by the sink. You may decide to use the two cabinets in the entertainment center (above and below the TV) as your pantry—another 5 cubic feet of storage.

Before we leave the living area, note that the cabinets above the two sofas provide more than 20 cubic feet of storage. The three cabinets above the dining table are perfect for storing frequently used dishes.

A Bath and a Half

Call it whatever you wish! When it gets to bathrooms, we like our creature comforts. It's obvious that TMH has tuned in to the preferences of its customers. Some may say the half bath is for guests, but most owners admit it is the man's domain. With a heavy door made of solid cherry, a dark patterned wainscot with chair rail, plus well-crafted cherry paneling, valance, vanity, two cabinets, and a magazine/book rack, this little room belongs to "Bill." The rear bath belongs to "Mary," but surely she will admit him occasionally for showers.

Women seem to like drawers instead of "medicine" cabinets,

and the designers have provided four drawers measuring 17 inches deep, 7½ inches wide, and 3¼ inches deep. A beveled vanity mirror 47 × 33 inches is perfectly illuminated with four recessed barrel lights just above the mirror and four additional lights in the ceiling. The bath has three sources of natural light: a window, an exhaust fan, and a skylight above the shower. The solid surface countertop measures 23 inches deep by 59 inches wide. The two sinks each have vanity storage of 4 cubic feet, just the right place for stacking those nice, thick Egyptian cotton towels. Opposite walls have four hand towel rings.

The lighted master closet spans the width of the coach, measuring 96 wide × 23½ deep × 67 inches high. The double sliding doors are frames for two mirrors that are 58 inches square.

The shower, in the forward corner on the driver side, is elliptical in shape, 42 inches wide by 30 inches deep. Its double curved doors of fluted, translucent glass come together on tracks. The skylight above can be closed off with an insulated sliding panel when you are in colder climates.

Since the toilet does not flush directly into the black holding tank, the engineers selected a maserator design which assures waste moving through the narrow diameter pipe will not cause a problem.

The Master Bedroom

The bedroom measures 8'4½" north to south and 11'8" east to west with the slides extended. Yet it accommodates a king size bed with two end tables, over 18 cubic feet of bulk storage space, a 5-drawer chest with clothes hamper, a 26-inch HDMI color television with shelf space for a satellite receiver, a large mirror, a ceiling fan, and three windows. Designing functionality into small spaces is an architectural science which has been mastered at Tiffin Motorhomes.

The bedside tables are thoughtfully designed with switches built into the front of the table for the overhead lights, the generator, and the overhead fan, plus a 110-volt outlet for appliances.



Functional proximities are important, too. The clothes hamper is only two steps away from the stacked washer and dryer which opens into the short hallway between the galley and the bedroom.

Now that we have completed our exploration of the first floor, let's take a look at the basement.

Infrastructure and Storage

Starting at the entry door and walking toward the rear on the passenger side, the first four doors offer 137 cubic feet of storage, including an optional slide-out tray which is 7'4.5" × 3'2.5". The tray slides from either side of the coach.

Compartment doors two and three open to an unimpeded pass-through storage area that is 92 inches wide and 95 inches across. The two chassis rails are 18 inches above the floor of the compartment, but the actual ceiling of the compartment adds another 8 inches which was not computed into the 137 cubic feet.

The Aqua-Hot heating system sits midship and may be accessed for service from either side of the coach. The Aqua-Hot is standard on the 43-ft. floorplans and optional on the 36- and 40-ft. models.

The fifth compartment on the rear side of the tag axle houses four tank drains and the owner's compressed air supply. This clean design and easy-to-use service area is typical of all of the infrastructure found on the Powerglide chassis. The sixth compartment, primarily an electrical service area, is equally impressive in its design and accessibility. It houses the chassis power breaker, the front and rear power breakers, starter solenoids, and other important electrical equipment. The Powerglide's design by Gary Jones and its implementation by Tiffin's engineers make this chassis the hands-down choice for the Allegro Bus.

Rounding the corner to the rear cap, a large flip-up door conceals the Cummins power plant, the ISL 8.9 liter 425-hp elec-

tronic-turbocharged diesel engine. Every service point is within easy reach. From right to left: engine and transmission oil sticks, power steering reservoir, chassis battery cut-off switch, coolant-antifreeze gauge, fuel filter, fuel-water separator, filter minder, and two maintenance free batteries.

From back to front on the driver side, TMH placed the 50-amp service at the corner for a quick and convenient connection, especially when you are on a fast-paced trip, stopped in a pull-thru for eight hours and full hook-ups aren't necessary. Just below the 50-amp connection is the side radiator, a must for this size engine.

In front of the tandem axle, the utility compartment is well organized. Water input (city water and tank fill), the tank flush connection, and the outside shower are positioned at the top of the compartment to separate them from the dump valves for the black and grey tanks located at the bottom. The fresh water hose is mounted on a motorized retractable device. The water pump switch, a digital tank monitor, and the cable, tripod, and phone connections are located in the mid-section of the utility panel.

Moving forward, the next compartment provides the opposite side service access to the Aqua-Hot system. It also holds the automatic transfer switch and the central vacuum. The third and fourth doors are the access points for the pass-thru storage.

The fifth compartment conceals a tray for the six house storage batteries which are necessary for an all-electric coach. Small in width, the sixth compartment provides the space for the HWH control panel which handles the hydraulics for the leveling jacks and two of the slide-outs. Just forward of the left front tire, the seventh compartment houses the nerve center for the coach's 12-volt systems. Wire connections to the monitoring panels are electronically welded using state-of-the-art technology which was reviewed in the Spring 2008 *RIS*. A second compressed air supply and the reservoir for windshield washer fluid are located here.

Of course, the front cap conceals the 10,000 kw Onan generator. Capable of providing the electrical power for all three roof air conditioners simultaneously and then some, the generator is mounted on slide-out rails for easy servicing.

The Cockpit

The instrument panel for the Powerglide chassis may offer the easiest to read dials in the industry. Using a bright white background with black figures and scales, it is not necessary to squint to see them. You can soften the brightness with a rheostat, plus green lights make night-time viewing very easy.

Two displays present the MPH and RPM in two large dials four inches in diameter. The left display also shows a digital odometer and an instantaneous miles per gallon report. The right display also shows the fuel and battery gauges.

Another four-inch dial centered under the MPH and RPM is divided into quadrants for the oil pressure, engine heat, PSI front, and PSI rear.

The panel to the right of the steering column houses a large color monitor for the left, right, and center cameras, a must for safe navigation on today's multi-lane interstates. The panel also presents large, easy-to-use dials for the automotive heating and air. A multi-functional device provides GPS navigation, XM and standard radio, and CD-player.

The panel to the left of the steering column is equally easy to use: genset, lights, mirror controls, and spotlight.

Last year TMH engineering redesigned the left console to make it more user friendly. The Allison gear selector is in the forward position right at the driver's fingertips. All of the switch-operated controls have been turned at a 45-degree angle to meet the operator's visual alignment when he or she turns to select an option.

The switches are positioned three to a row:

- docking lights, engine pre-heat, auxilliary generator start;
- horn, pedals adjustment, courtesy flasher;
- solar visor, opaque visor, engine brake;
- left fan, right fan, master radio switch; and
- step cover, suspension up/down, tag dump.

A single press/pull device handles the parking brake. The HWH leveling jacks are positioned at the rear of the console since the operator will be stopped when using them.

Tiffin placed two control sets on the steering wheel for non-visual thumb operation. Once you have used the cruise control and high/low beam or the window wash control a couple of times, you will master the locations for safe operation.

Driving the 43 QGP

First, let's check some baselines. Driving at 50 MPH, the engine was turning 1450 RPM. At 60 MPH, 1525 RPM. At 70 MPH, 2000 RPM. It is not difficult to understand why the 43QGP will get more miles per gallon when you drive slower.

With the air bags set at 120 PSI, the Powerglide chassis provided a very smooth ride over somewhat uneven pavement.

Encountering unexpected traffic from a side road, I had to brake hard, dropping from 60 to 40 almost instantly. The coach was easy to handle and exhibited no nose-diving.

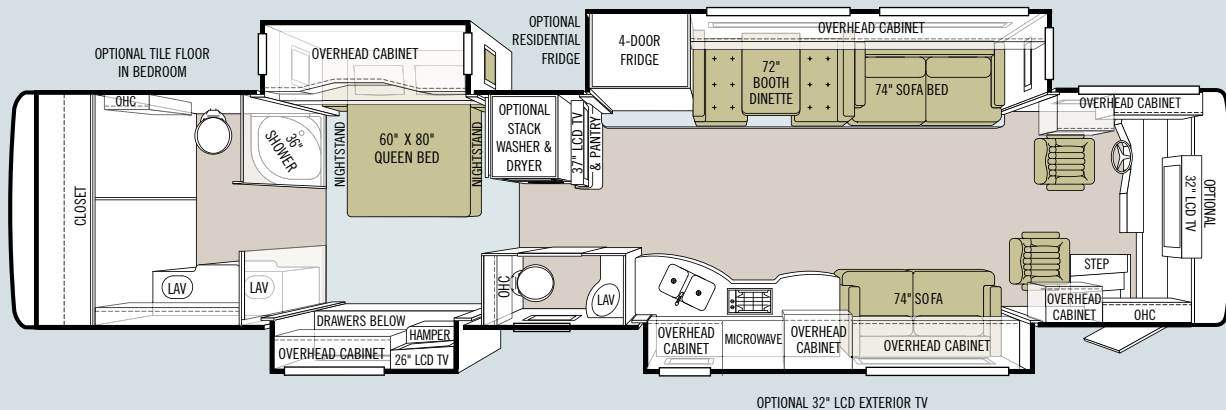
The Cummins 425-hp engine did a good job of maintaining the coach's speed in the northwest Alabama hill country. On several half-mile grades estimated to be four to five percent inclines, the coach lost less than ten percent of its entry speed.

The Powerglide's excellent ride created by six airbags and a patented leveling system produced a buoyant sensation much like floating on water. The coach's quiet operation made it very easy to have a driver-passenger conversation at normal voice levels.

Interstate highway performance was excellent. Cruising at 70 MPH was effortless, leaving plenty of power to pass and move around the 18-wheeler traffic. In city traffic, the side cameras and 55-degree wheel cut made it easy to negotiate the right-angle corners. Although its sheer size and length may be intimidating to some drivers, this coach is as easy to handle as a large SUV.

The 43 QGP may be the perfect coach for full-timing. It also will be hard to beat this Fall as the country's best motorhome for tailgating as RVers make their weekly pilgrimages to college gridirons across America. With four HD televisions aboard to track the pre-game and post-game shows, you might make the 43 QGP into a real party animal. **RIS**

Allegro Bus 43 QGP



SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2009 Allegro Bus 43 QGP, Quad Slide, Base MSRP* – \$334,180 MSRP as tested with options – \$355,040

STANDARD FEATURES

Structural

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

Automotive

The Tiffin Powerglide™ Chassis
Allison GEN 4 – 3000 MH electronic 6-speed automatic transmission with two over-drives and lock-up (torque converter), new push button shift pad
Cummins ISL 8.9 liter 425 hp electronic/turbocharged diesel
1,200 lbs.-ft. torque @ 1,300 rpm
Side-mounted radiator
Two-stage compression engine brake
Six cast aluminum wheels and two steel wheels
Emergency start switch
Cruise control
HWH fully automatic hydraulic leveling jacks
Air ride (6 air bags)
Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters and ABS
55° wheel cut
Adjustable fuel and brake pedals
18-inch leather wrapped Smart Wheel with cruise, lights, and wiper controls
Tilt steering column
Independent front air suspension

Exterior

Fiberglass front and rear caps
One-piece molded fiberglass roof cap
Dual fuel fills
Full body paint
Large one-piece tinted windshield
17.5-inch heated chrome power mirrors with remote adjustment
Single motor intermittent wiper
Undercoating
Fog lights
Daytime running lights
Deadbolt entrance door
30-inch wide entry door
Keyless entry door system
Double electric step
Dual pane tinted windows
Exterior patio light on driver's side
Exterior patio light on passenger's side
Electric door awning
Electric patio awning
Window awning package
Slide-out awnings with metal-wrapped covers
Pass-through basement storage
Swing-out exterior storage doors
Single handle auto-lockable storage door latches
Heated water and holding tank compartments
Docking lights
Luggage compartment lights
Onan® 10,000 Kw generator
Auto generator start
Three 13,500 BTU low profile roof air conditioners with heat pumps
Six house batteries with residential refrigerator
2800 watt sine wave inverter
Custom full-width mud flap
50-amp service
Power cord reel, 50-amp
Park telephone ready
Cable ready TV
Connection for tripod satellite receiver
Black holding tank flush system
110v exterior receptacle
Water filter
Exterior rinse hose with soap dispenser & paper towel holder
Spotlight with remote
Hadley air horns (placed behind grill to give a cleaner roof appearance)
Automatic satellite dish
HDTV digital antenna
CB radio antenna
Power Fantastic® roof vent with 3-speed fan in galley
Two power Fantastic® roof vent with 3-speed fans bath/water closet areas
Luggage compartment lights

Roof ladder
Water filter
Quiet A/C roof-ducted system
Paint protective film (front cap)
Hydronic heating system (optional on 36- and 40-ft. Allegro Bus models)
Energy Management System (new for 2010)

Driver's Compartment

Color back-up camera
Two side cameras activated with turn signal
Flexsteel® 8-way power driver's seat with Ultraleather™
Flexsteel® 8-way power passenger's seat with Ultraleather™ and footrest
Power window on driver's side
Entry floor light
12v disconnect switch
Padded dash
Lighted instrument panel
Passenger seat console box with built-in magazine rack
Full width power MCD opaque windshield shade
Full width power solar windshield shade
Fire extinguisher
Dual dash fans
Slide-out drawer and writing desk in dash
12v / 110v / phone jack receptacle
Driver / passenger side windows solar / privacy shades
Beverage tray

Living area / dinette

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

Kitchen

Polished solid surface countertops
Solid surface covers for sink and cooktop with storage racks under sink
Expand-an-Island
2½-inch deep lighted toe kick
2-door stainless steel refrigerator and bottom slide-out freezer drawer with ice maker
Single lever sink faucet with built-in sprayer
Residential double bowl stainless steel sink
Recessed barrel lights over galley work surface
Stainless steel convection-microwave oven with exterior vent
2-burner gas-on-glass cooktop
Galley soap dispenser
Above floor galley slide-out
Solid hardwood cabinetry

Full Rear Bath

Full tile floor
Skylight in shower
Solid surface counter tops, two solid surface lavatories; vanity with 4 drawers and 2 under-counter cabinets
Curved shower enclosure and door
3-speed Fantastic® vent
Fiberglass molded shower

Half Bath

Two medicine cabinets with vanity lights
Custom raised-panel, residential-style bath door
Solid surface counter top, vanity with under-counter cabinet and 3 drawers
Magazine rack
Chair rail with wainscot

Bedroom

Full width (96-inch) wardrobe with shelf above clothes bar, automatic lights
Six OH storage cabinets
Chests with five drawers
3.5 cu. ft. laundry hamper
Bed comforter with throw pillows
King-size bed

Innerspring pillow top mattress
Solid wood and fabric headboard
Nightstands with solid surface countertops
26-inch flat panel HDMI color television
DVD-satellite receiver cabinet and wiring
Ceiling fan with bedside switch
MCD solar/privacy shades
Wall-to-wall carpeting
Carbon monoxide detector
LPG leak detector

General Interior

7-foot ceiling
Soft touch vinyl ceiling
Raised panel cabinet doors
Soft cloth covered cabinet shelves
Adjustable shelving in some cabinets
Recessed ceiling barrel lighting
Enclosed surround sound speakers
Plumbed and wired for stacked washer / dryer
Fantastic® 3-speed fan
SeeLevel® digital tank level monitor system
Smoke detector
Central vacuum system
Air-driven step well cover
Solar and privacy shades on all windows except galley, half bath and full bath
Ceramic tile flooring in kitchen, bath, entrance landing, and living room
Hydronic diesel/electric heating system and water heater
Complete HDMI television system (receivers required)
Surround sound speakers enclosed with louvers
Complete cable wiring interfacing with surround sound and satellite receiver

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

In motion low profile satellite dish
All electric coach
Bedroom tile
Residential refrigerator with 2800 watt sine wave inverter
One slide-out storage tray
74-inch Ultraleather™ Air Coil Hide-A-Bed Sofa (PS)
32-inch exterior television mounted in slide-out wall
32-inch dash overhead HD television
In-dash navigation system
Power solar-privacy shaded (LR & cockpit only)
Rear view mirror with compass and outside temperature
Dishwasher, drawer type
Stacked washer and dryer
Glazed honey, natural cherry wood cabinets
Extended drop down awning
Dinette/computer work station
Memory Foam mattress, king

OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Handheld CB radio
XM satellite radio (subscription required)
Sofa-booth dinette combination
Select Comfort mattress, king or queen
Memory Foam mattress, queen
Second storage compartment slide-out tray
Free standing dinette with solid surface table top and built-in hutch
74-inch Cloth Air Coil Hide-A-Bed Sofa (PS)
DRIVER'S SIDE
Two Ultraleather™ recliners
74-inch Cloth magic bed
74-inch Ultraleather™ magic bed
Ultraleather™ recliner with computer/end table
Sofa-Booth Dinette Combo
3-burner cooktop with gas oven
Combo washer/dryer with OH storage
Natural cherry cabinetry
Cherry bark cabinetry
Cherry wood cabinetry
Glazed cherry cabinetry

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 318"
Overall length – 43' 6"
Overall height with roof air – 12' 7"
Interior height – 84"
Overall width – 101"
Interior width – 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 49,900 lb.
Front GAWR – 14,600 lb.
Rear GAWR – 22,000 lb.
Tag GAWR – 13,300 lb.
GCWR – 59,600 lb.
UVW – 33,580 lb.
CCC – 9,320 lb.
Trailer hitch capacity – 10,000 lb.

POWER TRAIN

Engine – Cummins ISL 8.9 liter 425 hp electronic diesel
Torque – 1,200 lb.-ft. @ 1,300 rpm
Transmission – Allison GEN 4 3000 MH 6-speed with 2 overdrives
Tire Size – 295/80R 22.5 XZA2
Alternator – Leece-Neville 170 amps

CHASSIS

Frame – Powerglide™ chassis
Frame design – Raised rail
Anti-locking braking system – WABCO 4M/4S ABS System
Suspension (front) – Tuthill IFS 1460
Suspension (rear) – Tuthill RD 2300
Suspension (tag) – Tuthill RT 1330
Shock absorbers – Bilstein Front/Rear custom tuned
Leveling jacks – HWH Hydraulic

CONSTRUCTION

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

ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – Four adults
Fuel tank – 150 gallons
Freshwater – 90 gallons
Black water – 50 gallons
Grey water – 66 gallons
LPG tank – (35 gallons; can be filled to 80% capacity) – 28 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.



5th Grade School Teacher Buys a 1977 Allegro

Tim Spooner had been searching RVTrader's website frequently the summer of 2005 hoping to discover an older Tiffin motorhome for less than \$5,000. Tim and Melanie, both elementary school teachers in Dawsonville, located in the foothills of North Georgia's Appalachian mountains, were still hopeful they would find something. Even the 15-year-old motorhomes on the website were more than they could afford.

Then suddenly, there it was. A 20-foot 1977 Allegro for sale in Blairsville, Georgia — just 50 miles north of where they lived. Tim was excited. Melanie was worried that a 28-year-old motorhome just might be beyond redemption. And their one-year-old daughter, Anna Belle, seemed to know something was up.

When they found it under an oak tree in the owner's yard, grass was growing around the tires where the lawnmower had come as close as possible. The man confessed to Tim that he and his wife had bought it two years earlier, taken a trip to Florida, come home and parked it in the yard. It hadn't been cranked since.

Melanie opened the door and climbed in. She could see the possibilities immediately. The rear of the camper had U-shaped seating around a dining table that dropped down to make a double bed. There was a concealed overhead bunk above the bed that could be used for storage. Then another double bunk dropped from the ceiling above the dash. She noticed the air conditioner in the ceiling with two of the air vanes bent out of place and wondered if it would work. The galley was in the middle along with a closet and a combination lavatory-head-shower compartment. The galley had everything she needed: a cooktop, oven, double sink, and a fridge. There was even some

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

extra counter space for a microwave. Now *she* was getting excited. Melanie knew the family could have some great summers camping in this little unit.

Tim put on his trading hat. He had discovered the 4000-watt Onan generator was missing. There was no propane in the tank to test the furnace, the water heater, the stove or the fridge. He began to verbalize his skepticism to the owner who admitted no other prospective buyers had come to look. To make matters worse, the poor fellow said his wife had begged him to “get it out of our yard” before she returned home from visiting relatives.

Tim began to argue a worst case scenario: he would have to replace nearly every component in the motorhome. The man seemed to feel his only prospect was slipping away. Tim offered him \$1200. The owner shook his head and just stared at the ground.

Melanie whispered, “Don’t insult the man, Tim. At least offer him half of what he is asking.” Tim nodded. “\$1500. That’s my final offer!”

“Done!” No hesitation this time.

It was Tim’s birthday—Sept. 21, 2005. He couldn’t have been happier.

Tim grew up on a 1500-acre farm in South Georgia near Colquitt where his dad raised peanuts, cotton, soybeans, corn, cows and pigs. He and his two brothers had helped their dad work on farm equipment and engines since they were old enough to turn a wrench. When they got their drivers’ licenses, they bought old cars to get around. “If you wanted to go to town on Saturday night, you had to be able to fix whatever you were driving,” Tim laughed. “I learned to work on just about anything we had on the farm.”

By 1990 Tim’s father had gone into agricultural consulting and moved his family to Cottonwood, Alabama, less than an hour’s drive from Colquitt. It was where Tim would soon meet Melanie Jackson.

“I bought it for \$1500. I was pretty sure it was a good fixer-upper.”

“Tim was my first boyfriend,” Melanie said in a sweet, southeast Alabama drawl that was almost liquid, “starting in the ninth grade.” Tim was smiling. “When he was old enough to drive, we had our first few dates in his ’55 Ford. I had a ’78 Mercedes diesel. My daddy was the head mechanic at the Mercedes dealership in Dothan,” she continued, shifting Mattie Claire, 9 months, on her lap. Anna Belle, now 5, was playing nearby, showing her dolls and toys to my wife.

Tim worked for a peanut sheller during the summers of his high school years. “It was school Monday through Friday, football practice every afternoon, and games on Friday night. On Saturday mornings before daylight I started running the rain gauges in the peanut fields. We would put the data in the computer to check the crop for stress and then determine the amount of water and fertilizer needed. This information predicted yields for the big national buyers,” he explained. In his



senior year, Tim was named Mr. Alabama 4-H.

The owner of the peanut shelling plant was an avid car collector who had built a huge climate-controlled building to preserve his cars. “He really seemed to appreciate my work ethic. One day he took me out to the metal building where he kept the cars stored and asked me which one I liked the best,” Tim related. “I immediately said, ‘Oh, it would have to be the ’55 Ford.’ To my total surprise, he said, ‘Well, the car is yours.’”

Tim was in shock. “But there are three conditions,” his mentor continued. “First, you have to find a good shelter for the car. Second, leave it original, no hot rod stuff or modifications. Third, stay out of trouble.” Tim was very grateful and met all of the conditions. “Daddy and I built a shelter on the side of the house. Several years later I sold the car to pay for college tuition.”

After high school, Melanie studied for two years at Wallace Community College and then transferred to Troy State University to earn a degree in elementary education. Tim also went to WCC and got an associate’s degree in electrical technology.

His drive and ingenuity soon led him into a good position with a metal building contractor. After the metal buildings were completed, usually for light industrial use, Tim and the owner’s son built the interior office space needed for business administration. Soon he was doing sales and estimating for the metal buildings, but the job took him away from home most of the time.

Tim and Melanie were engaged by now and she put all of her

cards on the table one day. “Tim,” I said, “it’s either me or your business. I don’t want an absentee husband and I don’t want to be a single mom.”

“I decided right then that teaching was a pretty good career,” Tim responded. “I took a heavy load, six courses per semester sometimes, and earned a degree in history in two years. Then I got the education certification to teach at the elementary level.” They were married on March 10, 2001. Tim later earned a master’s degree in educational leadership.

As Tim completed his degrees, educational funding in Alabama was suffering a severe setback. Melanie and other non-tenured teachers got pink slips and they both found themselves looking for a job in the summer of 2003.

“Keeping it as original as possible is really important to me.”

“By searching on the internet, we found the Forsyth County Job Fair in North Georgia,” Melanie said. “Tim got a job, but I didn’t. Everything was happening fast. The lady in HR offered to help us find a place to live and drove us around the area.”

Tim picked up the dialogue. “We saw a farm house on 60 acres but she told us bluntly, ‘You can’t afford that.’ We went to a reception that night and I met one of the board members who

inquired about our search for housing. He said, “The school board just bought some property that has a nice house on it. You could rent that until we have to start construction.”

I started smiling. “You guessed it!” Tim said. “It was the house and 60 acres that we had seen earlier. Everything was falling in place.”

Anna Belle was born later that year. The Spooners had landed in Dawsonville, Georgia. The school board started construction nine months later just as Tim and Melanie found a nice home that is now only six minutes from the school where they both teach, Melanie in first grade and Tim in fifth.

And what happened to that 1977 Allegro in Blairsville? Tim put some higher octane gas in the tank that day and got it cranked. His father-in-law advised him to put some lead additive into the tank, which lubricated the valves and lifters, and he drove it down the 50 miles of twisting mountain roads back to Dawsonville. The engine noise soon revealed that both manifolds were cracked, which turned out to be his only major mechanical repair along with the mufflers and carburetor.

With the Allegro in his driveway and propane in the tank, Tim began checking out all the components. To his amazement everything began working. The refrigerator-freezer and the roof AC were doing a great job after he cleaned them. The water heater, the furnace, the cooktop and the oven checked out— they all worked. The copper pipes had begun to deteriorate and Tim replaced them with PVC.

Melanie and her mom reupholstered the seating and cushions around the dining table. Tim removed the passenger chair, got a friend to weld additional steel plates under the floor, and then installed a bench seat from an Econoline van that allows Melanie, Anna Belle, and Mattie Claire to all sit up front under seat belts.

Anna Belle has become very possessive of this little Allegro. It’s almost like her playhouse. She can hang on the side of the bunk bed over the dash and pull it down by herself. With one foot on the back of the newly upholstered bench seat, she jumps into it like a grasshopper. Melanie decided their new family member should be named “Thelma.”

“After a couple of shakedown campouts in nearby parks, we knew we had made a great buy,” Tim said. They spread their wings and went to Cloudland Canyon and Rock City in northwest Georgia, then to the North Georgia and Western North Carolina mountains several times. A 250-mile trip to Dothan to see Melanie’s family and camp at the Hardridge campground where she and her parents had camped many times when she was growing up was pretty nostalgic.

Always on the lookout for a good deal, Tim found a 1973 Dodge Banner built on the same chassis as Thelma’s. The owner gave it to Tim just to get it moved off his property. Tim got it cranked and drove it to a storage lot two miles from their home. The old Banner had the 4-kw Onan generator he needed. Tim found a manual and rebuilt the generator last month. Underneath Tim found the outriggers and steel framing for Thelma’s floor as solid as the day she came off the assembly line.

Thelma apparently had been in a little scrape on the driver's side, damaging most of the aluminum siding. Identical replacement siding was not available in Georgia. So Tim, Melanie, and the girls set out for Red Bay in search of the exact siding. "We really want to make Thelma as original as possible," he emphasized.

Tim was in luck. Theron McKinney, who served as plant manager and helped Bob Tiffin launch the company in December 1972, now operates McKinney

RV just across the street from the Allegro Campground in Red Bay. Not only did McKinney have the right aluminum siding, the same craftsman who installed the siding on Thelma in 1977 is still working at McKinney RV today. Tim was thrilled.

Parked in the Allegro Campground, Thelma was generating a lot of interest. "If I had charged a dollar for everyone who came by to see Thelma, I could have paid for the trip and the repair," he joked.


With Thelma all washed and waxed,

Tim, Melanie and the girls drove their 1977 Allegro over to the administration building to show it off a bit. Bob Tiffin gave the Spooners a personal welcome and the administrative staff poured out of their offices to see what their product really looked like 32 years ago. Bob noticed that the orange aluminum Allegro logo plates had faded completely. To Tim's amazement he received two of the vintage plates—brand new—in the mail a couple of weeks later with color copies of the 1977 Allegro advertising brochure.

"I was just as pleased to see that 1977 Allegro as Tim and Melanie are to own it," Tiffin said later. "I am so glad a young family can buy one of the old Allegros, do a little fixing up, and still get many years of enjoyment out of it as their children grow up. If people will take good care of their Tiffin motorhomes, there is no reason they can't last a lifetime."

"A 1977 Allegro! My family is enjoying a motorhome as solid as the day it came off the assembly line 32 years ago."

After we finished a delicious lasagne Melanie served for supper, there was still a little daylight left. Tim suggested we take Thelma for a spin. He drove the first few miles, demonstrating the Dodge's 360-hp, 5.9 liter engine, and then stopped and asked me to take the driver's seat. He was right. It had the power and pickup, even as we climbed a steep hill returning to their home. "And we can park it in a regular parking space when we stop to visit attractions or shopping areas," he pointed out. "And the new ones don't have anything on Thelma with their 60-degree wheel cut," he grinned.

For the long Labor Day weekend, the Spooners are heading for the FDR State Park and Callaway Gardens where the Hot Air Balloon Race will be staged. School will keep Thelma's engine quiet most of the time until next summer when the Spooners hope to take a two-month trip to West Virginia, Washington, D.C., and New England. 

The two-minute shower just went down the drain.

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The Assembly Line . . .

In the Summer 2009 issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*, we watched the “birth” of a 2010 Powerglide® chassis and then followed it through the Welding Shop to watch the construction of the best infrastructure in the Class A market. In the following pages, we will follow a 2010 Powerglide tandem-axle chassis as it enters Station 1 on the TMH assembly line to become a 2010 Allegro Bus 43QGP. It will take two issues to complete this story which is an attempt to explain in some detail the symphony of planning and coordination that makes an assembly line a successful process. The completed coach is featured on pages 6–14.

The assembly line is a static and, at the same time, a constantly evolving process. It is static in that it depends on repetitive construction methods necessary for the successful functionality of an assembly line. It is evolving because new ideas for improving its efficiency are frequently introduced, tested, and incorporated into the process.

The assembly line at Tiffin Motorhomes has 22 stations where highly trained teams perform successive operations to complete the assembly of a motorhome. The line can accommodate the assembly of an Allegro 32BA, certainly the least complicated of the Class A motorhomes built by TMH, as well as the assembly of the Zephyr 45QBZ with a rear bath.

While the assembly line itself is a fascinating process, its functionality depends on the purchased components and those built off-line and off-site arriving at particular stations at precisely the right times to meet the coaches for which they were ordered. Any late arrivals or miscues can stop the assembly line. For example, at Station 1 the water panel is built off-line just a few

feet away from the assembly line. The holding tanks are built off-site in Red Bay by Cashion Thermoplastics, and the slide-out trays in the pass-through storage compartment are received by motor freight from an out-of-state supplier for “just in time” delivery.

Based on the number of units scheduled for daily production, the “roll time” and the number of technicians working at each station will vary. “Roll time” is jargon for the number of minutes the unit remains at each station. As the daily production increases, the number of technicians at each station will increase to reduce the “roll time.” The second assembly line will be reopened when production reaches ___ units per day.

As you read the story, you will notice the components built off-line and off-site, as well as the purchased components, being installed at each station. The assembly line is very much an orchestrated symphony of players and parts coming together at just the right time.

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



1



2



3



4



5



6



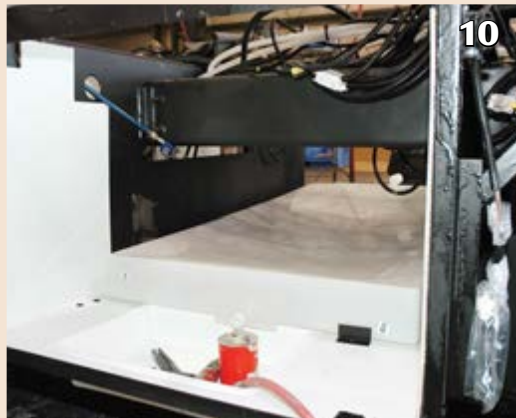
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8



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• 1 It is 6 a.m. At Station 1 the Powerglide™ chassis with its steel floor frame, Cummins 425 hp diesel power plant, and complex wiring harness has just been driven under its own power into the main assembly plant. This complex infrastructure in a few days will become an Allegro Bus 43QGP. The protective looms carrying hundreds of feet of wire branch off the main wiring harness in every direction. Chris Underwood separates and lays the looms in the right places to insure they will be accessible when needed to bring either 12-volt or 110-volt service to fuse panels, inverters, relays, solenoids, lights, switches, and appliances. Oneal Hammock (kneeling) begins to work on the wet lines that will eventually attach to the main utility panel, the bath and a half, galley, and holding tanks. • 2 Lisa McGee wires the HDMI system and the component cables that will feed four televisions with input from satellite, cable, or antenna. The surround sound also feeds through this control box. • 3 Marcus Smith installs the air line panel. On the Tiffin Powerglide chassis, this panel with four valves allows the owner to drain the collected moisture from the tanks that provide air for the suspension and braking systems. The panel also provides a quick connect for a hose to maintain tire pressure. These tanks should be drained before *every* trip to remove moisture that can corrode the tanks and the valves. • 4 Using an air-driven caulking gun, Dale Embrey applies methane adhesive on the rails that will support the one-inch plywood floors in the pass-through storage compartments. • 5 Oneal Hammock applies a sealer in the corners of the compartment that will soon house the utility cabinet. • 6 Lisa McGee attaches the main battery post to an inline 300-amp house battery fuse, a protection against electrical fires. • 7 Marcus Smith and Jay Tate position two one-inch plywood sheets over the support rails in the pass-through storage compartment. • 8 Smith and Dale Embrey use drills to drive self-tapping screws through the plywood floors into the steel rails supporting the storage compartment. • 9 Chris Hammock uses a template to mark the hole positions for the installation of the electrically driven water hose reel. • 10 The 90-gallon fresh water tank is installed first in the wet utility cabinet. With its low-point drain valve, the tank can easily be sanitized and drained through the pan in front of the utility cabinet. Note the two stops—one molded to the tank and the other a black L-bracket—which hold the tank in place. • 11 Very accessible for service after the coach is completed, the HDMI splitter and signal amplifier assure that equally strong signals from the satellite receiver will be sent to each of the four televisions in the coach. • 12 The SeeLevel II tank monitoring system

uses electronic gauges attached to the outside wall of each tank to accurately measure the volume in the fresh water tank (seen here) as well as the grey and black tanks. SeeLevel monitoring displays are mounted in the outside utility cabinet and in the monitoring compartment above the driver's chair.

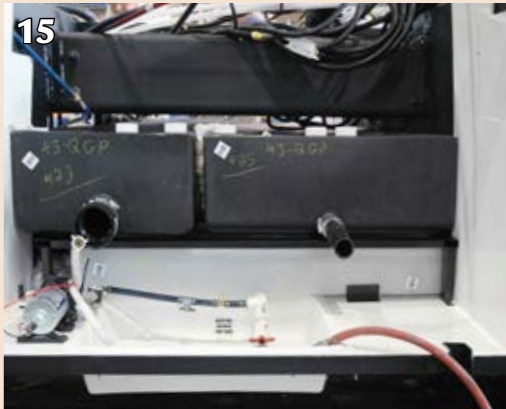
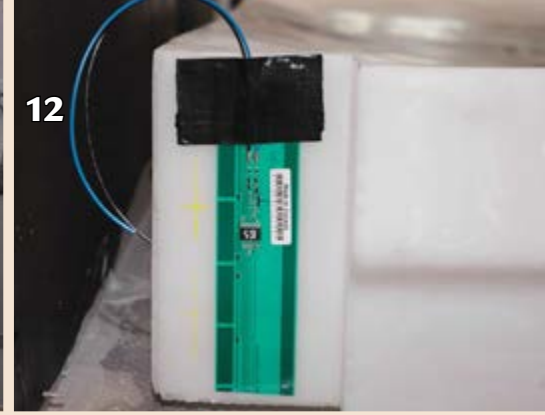
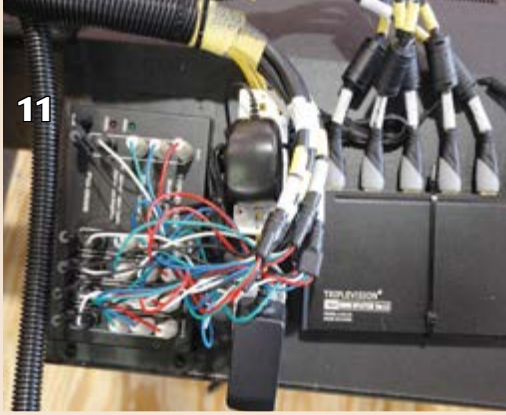
• 13 After the fresh water tank is in position, a steel frame is placed over it to support the grey and black water tanks. • 14 Oneal Hammock slides the grey water tank into position. • 15 The 45-gallon black tank and the 70-gallon grey tank are seated over the fresh water tank and immediately under the chassis rails. Bracing is added on either side and above. The black and grey tanks have 3-inch and 1½-inch drains respectively. Note the white PVC input connections on top of both tanks.

• 16 Mike Stephens installs the Aqua-Hot monitor board for the on-demand hot water and coach heating system, which is standard in the 43QGP. • 17 Oneal Hammock completes the installation of the black-grey dumping valves. • 18 As it is used to test the water pipes throughout the coach, an air pressure gauge registers 100 psi. If the gauge needle begins to fall, the technicians know there is a leak which will be located by coating all joints and connections with a detergent solution. Air and water pressure tests are run five times during assembly line production.

• 19 Marcus Smith takes measurements to begin installation of a slide-out tray in the pass-through storage compartment of the 43QGP. Note the felt floor covering which is used throughout the coach's storage compartments. • 20 Brian Seahorn uses an air-driven caulking gun to spread urethane sealant on the top edges of the walls that form the wheel wells. The sealant will prevent water and moisture from entering the storage compartments.

Station 2

• 21 L-to-R, Brian Seahorn, Terry Lindsey, and Terry Petree prepare to install the steel-framed OSB subfloor, as Brian lowers the system into place with an overhead crane. • 22 As the crane is raised out of the way, the subfloor is bolted and screwed to the steel framework immediately underneath, which in turn is welded to the steel chassis. Note the wiring harnesses and water lines (see arrows) that are lifted from below through the opening in the subfloor to service the equipment to be installed at Stations 3 and 4. • 23-24 Terry Lindsey drills holes for the perimeter bolts that will attach the steel-rimmed subfloor to the chassis and its steel framing. After drilling the holes, he attaches the nuts from the underside with an air-driven gun. • 25 Brian Seahorn uses self-tapping screws to attach the subfloor to the steel framing underneath. • 26 Terry Petree installs the slide-out ramp.





When the rollers carrying the slide-out box drop into the ramp's receptacle, the slide-out floor levels with the coach's primary floor.

- 27 Terry Lindsey installs the air step slideout which covers the entry well while the coach is in motion. It is a one-piece component which was designed, engineered, and built at Sun Air in nearby Belmont, Mississippi. The company makes several components and parts for TMH.
- 28 The floor system for the rear bath is built offline at Magnolia Bay Fabricators, a privately owned shop, and delivered ready to install, pre-wired and pre-plumbed. The shower base was made on a CNC-router to receive the one-piece shower unit at Station 3. It also contains the engine access panel and the compartment for the 50-amp service cord reel. The entire unit requires approximately 15 minutes to install.

Station 3

- 29 Terry Petree spreads Kerabond with Keralastic activator, an adhesive product that provides flexibility to prevent the tile floor from cracking or separating at grout joints with the movement of the motorhome.
- 30 The ceramic tile floor with the optional bedroom extension is lowered into place with an overhead crane. The unitized floor was assembled on a luan base in the Belmont plant and transported to the assembly plant on a flatbed trailer. The perimeters of the tile floor were perfectly cut and finished on the 50,000-psi water jet before being delivered to the assembly line (see *RIS*, vol. 6, no. 2).
- 31 As the crane holds the tile floor an inch or two above the subfloor, Terry Lindsey (front) and Brian Seahorn use two key points to position the unit before it comes into final contact with the adhesive.
- 32 Brian Seahorn (left) and Terry Petree position the tile floor for the rear bath, while Terry Lindsey assists by guiding the alignment from the driver's side.
- 33 Terry Petree puts screws with rubber coated washers into the grout lines to hold the tile floor tightly against the subfloor while the adhesive dries. The screws will be removed later and the holes filled with grout at the Tile Shop.
- 34 Petree installs slide-out rollers in the recesses on the perimeter of the tile floor that were pre-cut and finished by the water jet.



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Station 4

• 35 Terry Hester uses a T-square to draw a marking line for the installation of a decorative partition wall, which is also the opposite side of the wall for the half bath. Note the Aqua-Hot heat duct (arrow). The heat exchanger is under the floor at this location. To Hester's right, note the 110- and 12-volt lines for the galley slide-out and the PEX water lines (arrow). PEX is cross-linked polyethylene that is very durable under temperature extremes, making it an excellent material for hot and cold water plumbing systems and hydronic radiant heating systems.

• 36 Jeff Hargett and Brad Davis route wiring for the dash and cockpit controls, as well as other wiring that will go up the A-pillar to service overhead shades, fans, spotlight, and other items.

• 37 Jon Scott sets the maserator toilet for the rear bath, which uses a 1½-inch line to connect it to the black tank.

• 38 Buggy transports are used throughout the TMH manufacturing facility to bring components to the assembly line. The floor of the buggy can be lifted or lowered with a forklift truck to align it with the floor of the motorhome.

• 39 L-to-R: From the buggy, Matthew Hargett, Terry Hester, and Keith Burleson move furniture components for the washer-dryer cabinet, the television hutch, and the bath onto the motorhome floor.

• 40 Keith Burleson will install temporary metal frames (arrow) to hold the partitions in their correct positions until other components are added.

• 41 Brad Davis uses the steering wheel to suspend himself while leaning over to prep the wiring for the dash gauges and components.

• 42 Jay Tate installs the power cord reel at the rear corner of the 43QGP.

• 43 New for 2010, a plumbing manifold is located under the lavatory in the half bath. Labeled cut-off valves allow the owner to drain every water fixture above the main floor. All lines below the floor are one-piece PEX. All lines are tested again at Station 4 with air pressure at 100 psi.

• 44 A forklift is used to lift the washer into place from the back of the washer-dryer cabinet. All major appliances are installed and connected before the walls are added at Station 5. The front slide-outs also contain large pre-installed appliances.

• 45 Keith Burleson installs the shower in the



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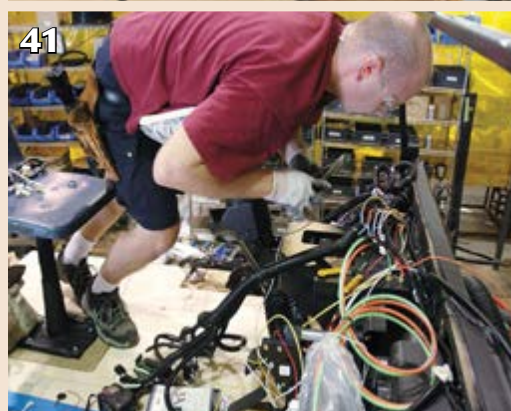
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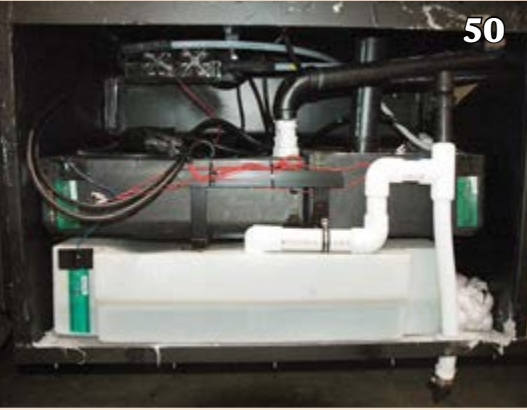
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rear bath of the 43QGP. • 46 The completed shower installation fits perfectly into the recess of the pre-built floor system. Note the solid surface base of the shower. • 47 Terry Hester checks the alignment of the delivery buggy floor before sliding the double-bowl lavatory unit into the rear bath area of the 43QGP. • 48 Jon Scott makes the electrical and water connections to the infrastructure of the 43QGP. • 49 At the rear of the coach on the passenger side, the new owner will need to spend time becoming acquainted with important electrical components and connections, especially the front and rear chassis power breakers and the charging solenoid that ties the house and chassis batteries together to allow battery charging from the alternator. It also permits drawing power from the house batteries in the event the chassis batteries are dead. Here you will also find the 12-volt disconnect solenoid and the slide-out solenoid (which prevents the slides from deploying if the ignition is on but the brake is not set). • 50 Viewed from the passenger side, the final assembly of the fresh water tank shows the vent and overflow pipes. The grey water tank shows the drain from the galley, and the black tank shows the drain from the toilet above in the half bath as well as the vent.



Station 5

• 51 Frankie Smith adds a window unit to the side wall awaiting installation at Station 5. • 52 Tony Faulkner (left) and Joe Medina lift the end wall into place. The end wall is first attached at its base with 4-inch self-tapping screws that connect it to the steel frame above the engine compartment. Then the side wall is attached to the end walls on either side with 5-inch self-tapping screws. • 53 L-to-R: Suspended in mid-air by the crane, Joe Medina, Tim Sauls, and Tony Faulkner guide the passenger side wall into position. • 54 Tim Sauls uses a leveraging tool to align the bottom edge of the outside wall with the outside edge of the floor system while Joe Medina uses an air-driven drill to drive a 4½-inch self-tapping screw to attach the two components. Screws are used every 15- to 18-inches to securely join the two major systems together. • 55 After the wall is secured, Tim



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Sauls uses a reciprocating saw to remove 30-inches of the bottom edge of the wall to open the stairwell. • 56 The same process is repeated to install the wall on the driver's side. Note the aluminum braces (arrow) temporarily in place to support the corners of the slide-out opening until the roof structure is added.

Station 6

• 57 Originally put in place at Station 4, the driver's console is attached to the wall and the wiring installation is completed. • 58 Using the overhead crane to guide the cabinets in the forward position over the dash, Tony Faulkner begins the major work that will transform the cockpit before the roof goes on at the next station. • 59 With the help of Tim Sauls, the cabinets over the entry door and the passenger chair are attached to the sidewall. A significant amount of wiring is yet to be completed. • 60 This close-up picture of the control cabinet above the driver's chair shows the substantial structure of the cabinets. Faulkner attaches the cabinet to the wall with 3-inch screws. • 61 Looking back over the top of the motorhome from the catwalk in Station 7, you can see how the walls were formed with the multiple components produced by the TMH cabinet shop. • 62 Amanda Tyler begins the complex wiring process to connect all of the monitoring panels in the control cabinet over the driver's chair. • 63 The indispensable overhead crane lifts the roof as a technician (not in the picture) maneuvers it into place. The roof system is a complex piece of engineering that begins with a welded aluminum frame insulated with dense styrofoam. The soft ceiling conceals wiring harnesses, AC ductwork, AC drains, recessed barrel lighting, exhaust fans, and more. • 64 Donald Robbins attaches the roof system to the sidewalls, first going through the curved styrofoam insulating corners to reach the aluminum frame. Four-inch self-tapping screws are inserted every 12 inches, completing the motorhome's primary box, which by design reinforces itself at every corner.

In the Winter 2010 issue, we will continue the assembly line story, beginning with the installation of the one-piece fiberglass roof system. **RIS**

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How to Stop Tire Failures

by Marlin Saint

If someone asks you, “What is the greatest fear you have as a motorhome owner?” Your answer probably would be, “Stranded on the side of the road, broke down.”

There are three types of breakdowns: fuel; mechanical; and tire failure. There is nothing more frightening than sitting on the side of some Interstate waiting for a tow truck or repair man. Let’s take a look at one of these breakdowns and see how it might have been prevented.

Tire failures are not that common, but when they do occur, can be devastating. Consider the RV tire. Exactly what is a tire? It is a container that holds air. It is the combination of air and rubber that supports your RV and its contents. It must provide traction for moving the RV, for stopping and steering, and also cushion the motorhome.

The most important factor in the life of a tire is proper maintenance. Its useful life is about five to seven years. Five years can pass quickly and your tires may still look new. Although you may not want to replace what looks like a perfectly good tire, riding on tires that are more than five years old greatly increases the chance of having a blowout.

The most important factors in RV tire care are as follows:

- A. maintain proper inflation pressures;
- B. avoid excessive loading of the RV; and
- C. inspect tires regularly for defects.

The **proper inflation pressure** for your RV tires should be determined by the actual load on the tires. To determine the actual load, weigh the RV at a certified set of scales. Once the RV has been weighed, consult your tire manufacturers pressure chart to determine the pressure that should be in the tires. A pressure chart can be obtained from your local dealer or online. Most tires will show the maximum tire pressure on the sidewall of the tire.

Over-inflation or under-inflation can contribute to the failure of tires. One is just as important as the other. To make sure you maintain the correct pressure in your tires, check the air pressure at least once a month. Check the RV tire pressure COLD. A cold tire is one that has not been driven for several hours. A tire that has been driven for as little as one mile is no longer considered a cold tire. A heated tire will not give you an accurate reading because heated air expands, increasing the air pressure in the tire above the cold inflation pressure. An increased air pressure reading is normal for heated tires. Never, never bleed air from a heated tire as this could result in the tire being seriously under-inflated.

Besides maximum tire pressure, other vital information can be found on the sidewall on all tires. The information code always starts with the letters DOT. It shows the tire size, where it was made, and the manufacturer. It ends with a four digit number code showing when it was made.

The **load range** for a tire is printed on the sidewall along with the DOT date. The load range is indicated by a letter, with most RV tires today using either load range G or H, but J and L rated tires can be put on a coach. Tire charts available from any tire dealer have these letters in parentheses after the tire load limits. The letters are placed next to the maximum weight for that load range. Be sure to check the load range chart to learn the exact load carrying capacity of your RV. Serious injury and even death could result from overloading an RV.

To select the proper load and inflation, locate your tire size on a tire chart obtained from your local tire dealer, or online from the tire manufacturer. Match your tire sidewall marking to the same sidewall markings in the table. For example, you might have tires on your RV marked with the following code: 275/80R22.5 LRH, XZA3, or XZE. You would then go to the chart and find the proper load per tire for your RV, and the amount of air that should be in your tires. Don’t forget carrying weight and axle weight are different. If the tire chart does not list your tires, your tire dealer should be able to obtain the latest information on proper load and inflation.

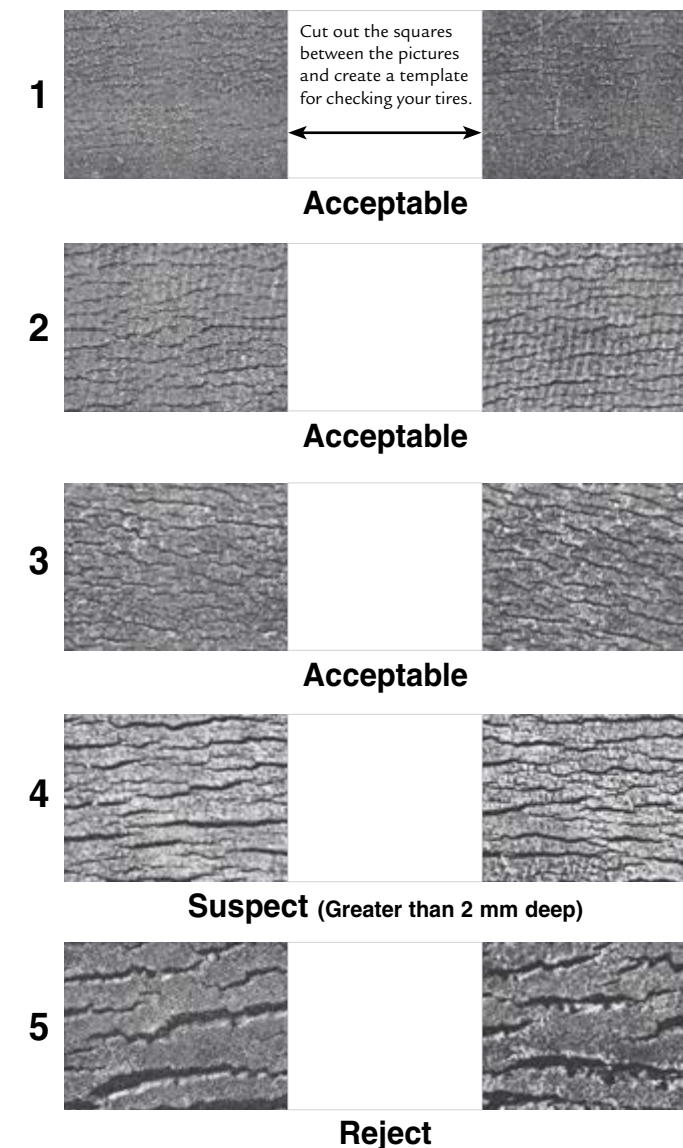
Remember to check the air pressure of the inside tires in dual fitments (two tires on the same side of the axle) and make sure the caps and valves are free of dirt and moisture. It may be difficult to check the air pressure of inside tires in dual fitments. However, it is important that these air pressures be correctly maintained because the inside dual wheels are subject to high heat exposure from brakes, low air movement, and crowned road surfaces, which can cause inside dual tires to support more of the load than the outside dual tires. It may be necessary to take your RV to a truck stop or truck service center to find adequate air pressure to inflate your tires.

I have saved the worst for last: tire failures due to aging. What is tire aging? The integrity of a tire can degrade over an extended period of time. What happens when a tire begins to show age? Degradation is a chemical reaction within the rubber components. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) research suggests that tires age much faster in warmer than in colder climates. Tires being exposed to high ambient daytime temperatures can accelerate the aging process and cause tire failure. High ambient temperatures can contribute to tread separation. Environmental conditions like exposure to sunlight and coastal climates, as well as poor storage and infrequent use, can also hasten the aging process. Most tires will wear out before aging becomes a safety issue. But because an RV

is not driven as much as other vehicles, its tires are more susceptible to aging. The effects of aging may not be visible, but if your tires are four to five years old, they should be checked by your tire dealer.

During your **pre-trip inspection**, tires should be checked for signs of aging due to weather, or ozone cracking. Look at the sidewall. If you see tiny cracks beginning, this may indicate an aging problem. The cracks will appear on the entire circumference of the sidewall. Check the cracks. If they are 1/32 of an inch or less, the tire is okay. But if the cracks are 1/16 of an inch, the tire should be replaced immediately. Remember most tire failures are caused because of poor tire maintenance.

Check the following chart to see if your RV tires have signs of weather or ozone cracking.



TRAVELING WITH PETS *Continued from page 50*

on it. This may make the dog more comfortable. You could put treats in a treat ball for them to work on. This will make your departure seem more positive.

There are also drugs on the market from your veterinarian that can help with the treatment. These drugs do not work solely by themselves. One must still use behavior modification techniques along with the drugs. Drugs such as Prozac, Clomicalm and Reconcile will help ease the anxiety and help with the training. These drugs help in increasing serotonin levels in the brain that decrease anxiety, aggression and obsessive behavior. Well, back to my chair and the beautiful Banff National Park.

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TIFFIN MANAGEMENT TEAM

Greg Thorn

MEETING NEW CHALLENGES

At the time of this interview, Greg Thorn was head of purchasing for Tiffin Motorhomes. By the time you read this story, he will be the assistant plant manager in the main assembly plant. Actually, one foot may be in the purchasing office and the other in the assembly plant. But he likes a challenge and he's got it.

"The number of parts in a motorhome is overwhelming," Greg said as he began to explain his job. "A purchasing manager looks at parts on the basis of *how many* and *how often*. In the 12 years that I have been in purchasing, the number of parts in a motorhome has grown exponentially."

A native of Red Bay, Greg graduated from high school in 1990. He continued his education at the University of North Alabama in Florence, about a one-hour drive from home. In an accelerated three-and-a-half year program, he completed a bachelor's degree in biology with a minor in business. "I had hoped to go into environmental work which had always been an interest of mine, but hiring freezes at TVA, Champion Paper, and International Paper put a damper on my career plans," he explained. He and Kristie married one semester before graduation, so as a practical matter he applied for work at Tiffin Motorhomes.

Greg began his career at TMH working on the production line in the final stages of assembly, installing window treatments and furniture. "Thinking that my Tiffin job might be temporary, I kept circulating my resumes. Three years later I was offered a position in warehouse management. Almost at the same time Tim Tiffin, who at the time was director of purchasing, offered me a position in the purchasing department and I accepted," he said.

The job was challenging. "Every sector has its own language. The freight business has its own terminology. Lumber quality and grading has a learning curve. For every classification of materials you have to learn what questions to ask in purchasing negotiations."

TMH brings in consultants periodically to work with the company's purchasing agents in vendor relations. The consultants teach the product knowledge necessary to negotiate and buy effectively.

"Purchasing has to work closely with our R&D and product testing departments. Understanding how each component is

made and how well it will hold up in our motorhomes is critical to selecting the right vendor," he explained. "Many of the purchases we make are used across two or more brands. We know a failure in a component could cause serious problems, so we are very careful in product testing and selection."

Another major factor in purchasing is being fully aware of the size of the supplier base. "In some cases there may be only two suppliers. In other situations the supplier base could be huge; you may have a hundred," Greg said. "The size of the base may indicate how flexible or negotiable the prices will be for a given item."

Tiffin Motorhomes is very proactive at building strong relationships with its suppliers. Most of the relationships are a "partner-up" approach which Greg explained as "We are going to work with you, but we want you to put us in the forefront of introducing new technology."

"Being over 600 miles from Elkhart, Indiana, where most of the Class A coaches are built, Bob Tiffin realized many years ago when he was doing the purchasing that we had to *put ourselves* in the loop. At that time, developing partnerships with vendors was very important—and it still is. But now they often come to Red Bay first because of our reputation," he continued.

"During this recession, Tiffin Motorhomes is one of the few Class A manufacturers that continues to buy regularly from its vendors," Greg said. "When a new product is introduced today, and Tiffin elects to use it early on, that vendor will very likely use the TMH name to help sell the product elsewhere."

Not only has the marketing environment changed significantly in the last 12 years, the way in which purchasing is done today has changed radically, Greg pointed out. "Purchasing was done 'on the average.' We inventoried products and parts used in manufacturing by doing cycle counts that were factored by reorder points. We had many products that were used across brands which often created a 'surge of use,' making it difficult to maintain our inventories at a use level," he explained.

"Then we went to a spread sheet software and later to ESP Interactive Solutions which was really not designed for assembly line production," he said. "Three years ago Tim Tiffin led the company in adopting SAP software — by far the most innovative, comprehensive, and effective software for running a manufacturing business based on assembly line production. The software also has to deal with TMH-associated off-site component manufacturing as well as parts and component suppliers located throughout the U.S. and the world."

Obviously very enthusiastic about the implementation of SAP, Greg continued to explain some of its benefits to the purchasing department and the manufacturing process as a whole. "With SAP, after a week of production, the software will give us a report of what we have used, what we have in inventory, and what we need to buy for 'just-in-time' deliveries to meet manufacturing orders in the coming days and weeks," he said. "It takes away the guesswork and gives the buyer the information to make profit-based decisions, such as 'what is the best level of inventory to maintain in a selected time frame?' On any given

product we order, the software provides data on freight, material handling, base product cost, and cost for the time it remains in inventory. It allows the buyer to choose between options that meet the needs of the customer, the dealer, and the company. It is really exciting and profitable for us to be working with this software,” Greg said.

Buyers have to be conscious of delivery times for a rural location. By recording historical data on delivery times from suppliers throughout the country, SAP can predict “on the average” delivery times for future shipments. As the outlying TMH plants begin to use SAP, they are realizing new efficiencies while still maintaining “just-in-time” deliveries.

“When TMH’s partnering suppliers receive the week’s build list, they know exactly what to ship to Tiffin without any purchase orders being issued,” Greg pointed out.

“We haven’t implemented this feature yet, but SAP has the capability to allow vendors to log in, view the build list, and generate purchase orders automatically for shipping the components and parts that each supplies,” Greg said. “The TMH purchasing department is reaching an efficiency level that usually is found only in much larger companies.”

Looking back 12 years, Greg reflected for a few moments. “My first challenge was inventory control. It was completely manual – literally an inventory count by using a card tag system. By counting the cards, we knew how much we had used and then we would buy to replace the used inventory. Primitive!” he smiled. “There was a lot of maintenance to the card system. Production had to be captured and then added to the buy list. Then we moved to Excel to improve the system, at least a little bit.”

“My first buying job was furniture and we had just begun to use Flexsteel. Two more buyers transitioned into the department. After Tim became the general manager for the company, I began managing the purchasing staff which soon grew to nine,” he said, “which is still the current number today, even with our continued growth.”

In August Greg began his transition from director of purchasing to production coordinator and assistant production manager. “It really will be a dual role for a while. But that is intended because I will analyze materials flow from our vendors to our warehouse and from our warehouse to the production line,” he explained. “With regard to our own outlying manufacturing facilities and three nearby suppliers, we will evaluate ‘just-in-time’ deliveries directly to the production line.”

In the last eight years the TMH wood-working division, cabinet shop, the Vina door shop, and solid surface countertop shop have made impressive advancements in equipment, manufacturing process, and scheduling. “Our collective knowledge of purchasing, materials flow, and the manufacturing process will help us keep the production line moving efficiently and evenly through each work station,” Greg said. “Efficiency = knowledge base + process.”

As the interview revealed the scope of Greg’s new job, he acknowledged the huge responsibility he had accepted. “I know my hours here at the plant will increase, at least for the foreseeable future. But I think that will settle down after we

address our major concerns,” he said.

“I really enjoy dealing with people, both here at the plant as well as the sales people who call on us from throughout the U.S. Just getting to know so many people is really interesting – how different they are and yet how similar they are,” Greg said, when asked why he seemed to like his job so much. “Our industry is a very unique business. It *is* a business, but we kind of turn it into recreation.”

“I really thought in February 1994 that Tiffin Motorhomes would be a temporary job while I continued to look for a position in the environmental field,” he noted. “But that changed when I began working in purchasing with Tim. The company really has the atmosphere of a big family. Bob has set a tone and philosophy for this company that is a value system both for personal conduct and ethical business. TMH has given me a lot of opportunities and I really appreciate that.”

Greg and his wife Kristie have two boys: Austin, 14, who is in ninth grade this fall, and Nicholas, 11, who is in sixth grade. They both feel now that being able to stay in Red Bay was very important because most of their extended family live

Continued on page 33

Greg visits with Jerry Williamson, TMH general sales manager, to discuss how dealers’ current orders will affect purchasing over the coming weeks.





Tiffin's Full-Line Dealer in Minnesota

ON OCTOBER 19, 1999, my life ended. I'm coming up on ten years and it's time to restart the clock," Bonnie Santarsiero said with a glint in her eyes.

"We were on our way to Lake Powell to rent a houseboat when the papers came through for buying Shorewood RV," she continued. "Two weeks later Dan was sorting payables late at night at Shorewood and I was wondering why he wasn't home. I called and said, 'What are you doing?' He explained and I urged him to come home right then."

"Dan came home. I became totally involved in Shorewood RV. And we don't allow Dan in here now," she laughed. But a strong element of truth was surfacing in her story which began 39 years ago when Bonnie Napper graduated from high school in International Falls, Minnesota, and entered business school to become an executive secretary. Just how did a 47-year-old mother of two teenage boys become president of one of the largest RV dealerships in Minnesota?

Diligent and energetic, Bonnie moved through several jobs, each time advancing to a higher level of responsibility and management. She first met her future father-in-law, Dan Santarsiero Sr., when he bought the pump company where she was working as office manager.

Many years before that transaction, Santarsiero Sr.'s father

sold his trucking company with the intention of retiring. Finding himself too restless to really retire, he bought a 50 percent interest in a Thermo-King dealership. He died in 1968 owning half of a dealership that had proved to be a challenge. His son, Dan Sr., had become a successful pharmacist. Believing that he had a buyer for the company, Dan Sr. bought the other half of the Thermo-King franchise only to find that the supposed buyer had evaporated.

Persistent and determined, he decided to run the company and turn it around. His good business skills prevailed and he sold his drugstore in 1971, never looking back.

After a four-year tour with the Air Force, his son, Dan Jr., returned home in 1976 to join his father's company that now owned three Thermo-King franchises. As a result of Dan Sr.'s penchant for diversification, the acquired company where Bonnie was employed was only a block away from where Dan Jr. was working at Thermo-King. The two began dating and married in 1982.

Dan's aviation skills, and perhaps an inherited interest in corporate diversification, led the young couple to launch an air charter company, appealing to corporate executives and operating out of Minneapolis's downtown airport. Eventually owning four planes and employing five pilots, Dan realized the competition was too stiff from charter companies that had multi-city operations. However, his personal aviation skills proved to be very valuable in growing the Thermo-King business.

The Santarsiero family soon became four with the addition of

Anthony in 1983 and Brian in 1985. "Dan and I started renting motorhomes when Brian was five. We enjoyed our trips so much that we bought a Southwind diesel. Dan traded his Porsche on it," Bonnie related. "Then we bought an American Eagle."

"Our kids have been fishing since they were old enough to hold a rod. Dan taught me and the boys how to fly fish. We all loved it when Dan planned a fishing vacation," Bonnie said. "My dad joined us for a spring fishing trip to Wyoming. At that time of year the water is still extremely cold. I didn't realize it, but my waders had a small hole that was letting the icy water in gradually. I complained to Dan about being painfully cold and he started calling me a wimp. When I finally realized what had happened, I was so waterlogged that I couldn't get out of the stream. Dan had to drag me out and we both nearly went down!"

Dan Santarsiero saw the importance of knitting a family together with shared recreation, and he started by teaching Bonnie. "Dan also taught me golfing and skiing. I actually learned to ski when I was six weeks pregnant," she laughed.

By the mid-1980s Dan Sr. was ready to pull back and let Dan Jr. run the companies. After taking a trip in his son's diesel pusher, he decided to take the coach to Arizona for the winter. Bonnie and Dan occasionally flew to Arizona to escape the harsh Minnesota winters and enjoy brief trips in their motorhome.

While Dan Sr. and grandson Anthony were in the process of ordering a Country Coach Magna, they became acquainted with a business broker who had listed Shorewood RV, located in one of the Minneapolis suburbs. "Dad and Anthony (16 years old at the time) really liked the idea of owning a motorhome

dealership and suggested that we consider buying it," Dan Jr. explained. After the father-son team discovered the company was really suffering from management problems, they felt certain they could turn it around. Negotiations ensued and the Santarsieros bought Shorewood in 1999.

The meaning of Bonnie's earlier proclamation about October 19, 1999, was beginning to make sense.

"It really took five years before I began to have a good handle on this business," Bonnie said. "I started out in accounts payable, then payroll, service writing, and parts. Dan coached from home to avoid undermining my leadership. He taught me to be patient, sit back and analyze."

Bonnie Santarsiero is definitely a "hands-on" leader-president. Not long ago a 1992 Tiffin Allegro Bay came in as a trade that needed to have the flooring replaced. Because the techs were scheduled for several days, Bonnie jumped in, removed the old flooring, and put down new linoleum in one day. "I consider everyone working here my friend. They know I don't mind getting my hands dirty because they have seen me doing anything from shoveling snow to cleaning motorhomes. We work as a team.

In 2006 three key employees—the controller, plus the sales and finance and insurance managers—left at the same time to start a new business. Bonnie again rose to the challenge. "The accounting software was overwhelming. I had to learn it all. One night I

Dan, Brian, Allie, and Bonnie Santarsiero take a moment for the camera after inspecting the new 2010 Allegro RED 38 QBA which had arrived in their showroom the previous day.



Text and photography by Fred Thompson



In white shirts, standing at left: Jeff Nobbe (front) and Paul Recksiedler; standing at right: Darrell Noon (front) and Kevin Werp. Seated, L-to-R: George Decker, Sam Sheets, Brian Santarsiero, Billy Bates, Angel Beck, and Lori Severson. Second row standing: Heather Sailor, Bonnie Santarsiero, Jane Nelson, Allie Santarsiero, and Marion Piche. Third row standing: Mike Overfield, Dave Backes, Mark Pederson, Chad Donner, Greg Johnson, Ed Thacker, and Harry Stevenson.

had to process the payroll three times before I got it right!"

It was time for more family participation. Brian at 21 began working in parts and service. Bonnie's sister, Lynn Sheets, also works at Shorewood RV part-time in accounts payable and production of promotional sales materials. Anthony started working at Shorewood RV even before the family purchased it. He developed the original web site and gave Bonnie a lot of her insight into the RV industry. He has recently moved to Key West, Florida.

Lori Severson came on board as controller in May 2007. She has enhanced the processes for handling accounting and human resources in addition to freeing Bonnie's time to oversee more day-to-day operations.

"We had already been talking to Jeff Nobbe who had been very successful in the automobile industry for over 20 years. We were confident Jeff could apply his automotive management skills and organizational talent to this RV dealership," Dan said.

"While Jeff was mastering a learning curve for RV knowledge, I learned the details for floor planning and curtailments," Bonnie continued. "But learning the financial end of the business was not that difficult for me because I previously had the good fortune of working for the heads of several companies."

"I got out of the way," Dan injected. "Bonnie is very motivated. We occasionally discuss general business problems when she gets home, but she knows the RV business better than I do."

With a Thermo-King sales and service operation already in

Des Moines, Iowa, the corporation decided in May 2005 to open a second Shorewood RV dealership in that location. Jeff Nobbe's experience in managing multiple locations was invaluable. Bonnie usually spends time at both dealerships each week.

Ten years of refining Shorewood RV—internal management, sales, service, and marketing—have built a very complete organization. "We know the only way to build this business is to focus on building relationships with our customers. It is all about service and customer satisfaction," Bonnie said. "Sales come because you have built good relationships and because of your reputation locally and nationally."

The Santarsieros have made a point of bringing people into the company who understand the importance of excellent service and customer relations. Joining the company in 2002, George Decker, Shorewood's service manager, brings over 30 years of experience in the heavy truck industry plus 15 years in the RV business. "George delights in helping any motorhome owner with any brand," Bonnie said. "He handles all service calls from our regular customers when they have questions or develop problems on the road. Knowing that George is there to take care of them gives them a confidence to go wherever they wish. His cell phone is on 24/7 for new sales. He understands how frustrating it can be for a new owner who has forgotten something from his walk-through training and can't figure out why he's having a problem."

Shorewood has seven work bays, two with pits, plus a wash bay and a body shop bay for light repairs and painting. In addition to Decker, the company employs five certified technicians, all of whom have a wide variety of RVDA online training and certifications. Training is updated frequently by manufacturers such as Aqua-Hot, Dometic, Spartan, KVH, King Dome, and Winegard. The techs maintain certifications for

most automotive and roof air conditioning equipment.

The company's good service begins with their two service writers, Angel Beck and Brian Santarsiero. Billy Bates brings nine years of experience to the company's parts department. A two-time world champion in racing Sea-Doo personal water craft, Bates manages an RV supply store with over \$100,000 in inventory. To reduce inventory overhead and costs to the customer, Shorewood plans "just-in-time" parts deliveries for large repair jobs.

The company's business philosophy on product lines preceded the current recession. "Instead of carrying twenty manufacturers in our floorplan, we decided to focus on a fewer number of manufacturers whom we believe produce the best quality RVs, while still providing us with a broad variety of product lines," Bonnie said. She conceded that the recession has dictated that Shorewood significantly reduce its inventory, both in volume and manufacturers represented.

"Tiffin was our choice for Class A motorhomes. For trailers and fifth wheels, we selected three manufacturers: Forest River, Airstream, and Keystone," Nobbe explained.

He has found that the internet is quickly becoming their most cost-effective media for advertising. "We have added three pages to our website in the last three months. We have had customers drive in from as far away as Kansas City to buy a Tiffin motorhome. Obviously, we are very competitive in our pricing," he smiled.

As we concluded the interview at Shorewood, Dan offered some very interesting insights for running an RV dealership in a severe recession. Just as others dealers have done, Shorewood reduced employment. "We have been multi-tasking for the last 18 months. Everyone pitches in wherever needed. Cross-training has been successful and very important to our survival," he said.

"I don't see the market changing much. The next twelve months will be a test of survival. There will be more fallout in the number of dealers and manufacturers remaining in business. Our goal is to be here as one of the survivors.

"I sat down with Bob Tiffin at the dealers meeting in Branson last year for a discussion about where the market was headed for the next year or two. It is probably worse now than we both figured it would be. If Tiffin Motorhomes was not viable, I don't think Shorewood would be here right now. They will be a survivor—and that's what we are depending on.

"Bob has mentioned several times that the Tiffin Service Center in Red Bay has stayed busy throughout the recession. That is a good indicator for all of the dealers. There has been a lot of growth in Shorewood's service department which is really what has kept us going. I think service will get bigger since owners are holding on to their coaches until their investments recoup in a bull market.

"In our Thermo-King franchises, we have a strong business model for our RV dealership because that business has always been based on service. Until this recession we seldom saw RV dealerships using a service-based model. We are seeing sales in the service department today with five techs performing work equal to the work of eight techs five years ago. We attribute the increase in efficiency to better management and training.

"We focus on service through our website. Customers can schedule a service appointment online. We check our website twice a day to log future appointments. Our long-range plans include building a pull-through wash bay and additional bays. Because of the long winters here in Minnesota, we will do all of our deliveries inside."

But what about Bonnie "restarting the clock?" I asked. "I don't think you could run her off with a stick," Dan smiled. "We are planning for the next generation to take over Shorewood RV. Brian and Allie have shown a great interest in the business, and I hope Anthony's interest in the dealership will be rekindled. But the winters here are rather intimidating." **RIS**

PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Continued from page 5*

the vineyards—beautiful scenery for lunch. Then we went on to St. Helena where Judy visited fabric shops for her quilting hobby and also some dress shops. I found a "loafers bench" on the sidewalk and really enjoyed watching the people and traffic go by. Liz Jones, my assistant here at the plant, said, "I can't imagine Bob Tiffin on a loafers bench!" But I enjoyed it.

We made two side trips to Healdsburg. They built Healdsburg around a town square, which makes the four blocks facing the square an open-air shopping mall. Every store has its own character and many put their wares out on the sidewalk. Unfortunately I did not find any good loafers benches in Healdsburg.

We spent our final day in Napa and left the Allegro Bus there in the RV park for our driver to pick up and deliver to Bucars RV Centre in Balzac, Alberta, Canada. One of our Canadian friends is sure going to get a nice motorhome. The Powerglide chassis with its auto-leveling system really handled well on the sharp curves of the Pacific Coast Highway. Of course, I had to watch the road and Judy watched me, but we both got to see one of the most beautiful scenic drives in America.

Until next time, be safe and keep on "roughing it smoothly." **RIS**

TIFFIN MANAGEMENT TEAM *Continued from page 29*

close by, including both sets of grandparents.

Kristie also graduated from UNA and now works as a special education teacher in the town's elementary school. "Our school system has great community involvement. Local businesses support the school and sports. The community really enjoys coming out and supporting the interschool football and girls' basketball teams," Greg said. "Our two boys participate in league football and baseball, which means Kristie and I are involved in attending games most Saturdays."

The Thorns are very involved with their church in the Shiloh community where Greg serves as a lay pastor. Jobs, sports, and church keep this family very busy, but they somehow manage to squeeze in a week at the beach every summer and Greg and the boys enjoy deer hunting with other family members in the fall. **RIS**

NEW FOR 2010

Allegro

Three New Interiors

Estate, Key Largo, Platinum

Interior

- Solid wood cabinet faces
- Stacked drawers underneath cooktop
- Galley border that simulates tile backsplash
- Darker color interior wall board inside bed room slide out box
- Hutch & galley overhead door inserts have rattan design- Estate and Key Largo

- Hutch & galley overhead door inserts have rain glass design- Platinum
- Optional Halo leather driver/ passenger seats
- Optional Halo leather Flex-O-Bed sofa (see opposite page)
- White privacy shade with chain in place of mini blind in water closet and galley
- Roll Eze solar/ privacy shades
- Power solar/ privacy shades for windshield

- Off white acrylic galley sink
- New window treatment design
- New center block design in living room slide-out molding
- Microwave vented to outside
- Delete natural maple
- Added bunk ladder to 35 QBA

Exterior

- 2 A/Cs standard on all units
- Lighter color exterior package— Rocky Mountain Brown

New Standard features

- Additional Fan-Tastic Fan (water closet only)
- Paint protective film
- Side view cameras
- HWH automatic jacks

The 32 LA floor plan has been dropped for 2010.

Highlighted items are illustrated below:



NEW FOR 2010

Allegro

Three New Interiors

Estate, Key Largo, Platinum

Interior

- Panasonic radio standard
- Taller solid surface backsplash
- Dark accent wallboard on bed slide-out
- Optional Halo leather driver/passenger seats
- Optional Halo leather Flex-O-Bed sofa

- In water closet and galley: white roller shade with circular chain control, in place of mini-blinds
- New decorative center block in living room slide-out fascia
- Non-backlit dash panels
- New valance design with center in rattan or glass
- Solid wood cabinet faces
- New molding design in storage doors

- Rattan or rain glass inserts in hutch and galley doors above sink
- Move monitor cabinet and all controls to cabinet above driver's seat (same as Allegro Bus)
- Flex-O-Bed optional in cloth or Halo leather

- Lighter color exterior package—Rocky Mountain Brown

New Standard Features

- HWH automatic jacks
- Side view cameras
- Paint protective film
- Additional Fan-Tastic Fan (water closet only)

Exterior

The 2010 *Allegro Bay* will continue to carry the same fine appointments that appeared in 2009 models.

Highlighted items are illustrated below:



NEW FOR 2010

Phaeton

Three New Interiors

Montecito (carry over),
Phantom, Jasmine

Interior

- Drink holders on slide-out fascias in living room
- Slide-out waste can and stacked drawers in compartment under cooktop
- Trey ceiling lined with crown molding (living room only)
- New art on refrigerator wall coordinates with center block design in fascia
- New wood headboard
- Move air horns to firewall

- Sprayer on toilet
- White privacy shade with chain in place of mini blind in galley and water closet
- Interior decorative lighting
- New grout color for floor tile
- New center block design for valance
- Optional tile in bedroom on bath & a half floor plan only (42 QBH only)
- 28½" deep bed slide on all floor plans
- Solid wood cabinet faces
- Concealed hinges
- Optional U-shaped booth next to DE Bed or Hide-A-Bed

- Lock out drawer rails on dash computer drawer
- Delete natural maple
- Barrel lights in ceiling in place of fluorescent lights
- Move monitor panel cabinet and controls above driver's seat same as Bus

New Standard features

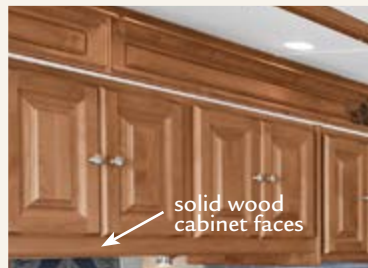
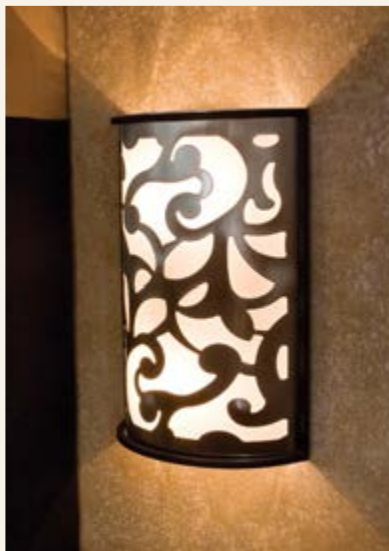
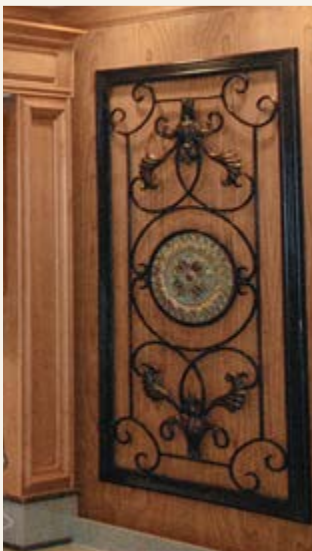
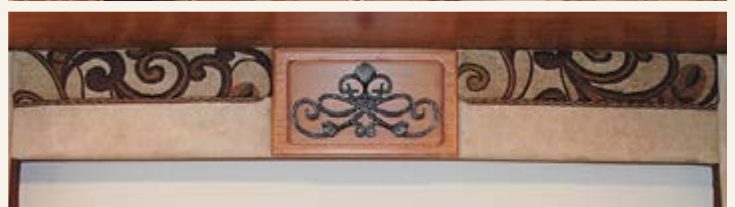
- Paint protective film
- Side view cameras
- HWH automatic jacks

The 40 QDH and 40 QSH floor plans have been dropped for 2010.

Exterior

- Lighter color exterior package—Rocky Mountain Brown (no black)
- Step well cover with solid surface front and carpet on top
- Black plastic step risers

Highlighted items are illustrated below:



NEW FOR 2010

Allegro Bus

Three New Interiors

French Vanilla ('09 carry over),
Kona, Bellagio

Interior

- Automatic lights in galley base cabinets
- New valance design (wood with fabric inserts)
- Dark wall board in bed slide box
- New higher back freestanding dinette chairs
- Move air horns to firewall
- Dripless solid surface counter tops with new edge detail (arrow)
- Speaker locations in front same as Phaeton except louvers instead of black fabric
- White privacy shade with chain

- in place of mini-blind in galley and water closet
- New floor tile and deco inserts
- Louvers on washer/dryer doors
- Appliance pulls on sliding closet doors.
- New wooden headboard
- Molding on front of dishwasher and Expand-an-Island drawer fronts
- New drawer pulls on dishwasher and sliding doors
- Honey Glaze cabinets option
- Optional tile in bedroom on bath-and-a-half models only
- 28½" deep bed slide on all floorplans
- Magnum sine wave inverter standard

- New fiberglass shower
- Energy management system standard
- All-Electric coach option (electric Jenn Air cook top); eliminates propane tank and creates more storage
- New carpet design
- New pocket door design
- Hydro Hot standard only on tag axle units
- Semi-luster lacquer on glazed cabinets

Exterior

- New exterior graphics
- Lighter color exterior package—Rocky Mountain Brown
- Front & rear caps

- Add one inch vertical height to basement
- SeeLevel tank monitor
- Solid surface front on step cover.

New Standard features

- Paint Protective Film
- Energy Management System
- HWH Automatic Jacks
- Hydronic Heating System (ONLY on tag axle units)

The 40 QDP, 40 QSP, and 42 QRP floor plans have been dropped for 2010.

For a full list of Allegro Bus product changes, see your local dealer.

Highlighted items are illustrated below:



NEW FOR 2010

Zephyr

Two Interiors Belair, Graphite

Interior

- Recliner with built in footrest
- Automatic light in galley base
- New wall art on refrigerator wall (replaces black & white picture)
- Large handle for dishwasher drawer
- New design for pocket door
- Dark accent wallboard on bed slide-out
- New hutch door design

- Manual chain-driven solar/privacy shades in bedroom
- White privacy shade in place of mini blind in bath areas
- New floor tile and deco inserts
- **Three-door refrigerator with water & ice in door. Stainless steel doors.**
- Honey Glaze cabinets option
- New backsplashes
- New countertop colors
- **New tile and accents in shower**
- Tile in place of mirror on partition wall next to galley
- Dripless solid surface counter tops with new edge detail
- Optional tile in bedroom on bath & a half model only
- 28½" deep bed slide on all floor plans
- **New headboard design with raised panels and corbels**
- **New ceiling ring design**
- Magnum sine wave inverter standard
- Energy management system standard
- Lock out drawer rails on dash computer drawer
- **All-Electric coach option**
- Raised panel bedroom partition wall with chair rail and

- mirror in frame
- Molding on front of expand a island drawer fronts
- Semi-luster lacquer on glazed cabinets
- Delete glazed hutch option
- Delete natural maple

Exterior

- SeeLevel tank monitor
- New step well courtesy light
- Delete generator hour meter
- Lighter color exterior package—Rocky Mountain Brown

Highlighted items are illustrated below:



Interviews from Florida, Kansas, and New Mexico



Don & Judy Clucas

Hometown: Paducah, Kentucky
Interviewed in Ft. Meyers, Florida

- Don and Judy own a new 2009 Allegro Bus.
- They were bitten by the “motorhome bug” after going on a trip with their friends in their 2004 Allegro Bus. After that they bought a new 2005 Allegro Bus, traded it in for a new 2007 Allegro Bus and then their current Bus.
- They travel three months in the winter to Cypress Woods RV Resort in Ft. Meyers, FL and three months in the summer to Tiger Run RV Resort in Breckenridge, CO. Don says that they are “destination” people.
- Don retired from the lumber and building material industry and Judy is a retired nurse.
- They have been married 31 years.
- They have two sons and four grandchildren (1 boy and 3 girls) who are, according to Judy, her main hobby.
- Judy thinks the best thing about motorhom-ing are the nice people you meet.
- Both Don and Judy enjoy bicycling and snow skiing. Judy is an avid gardener and loves quilting in her basement room in Kentucky, which Don calls “Judy’s Hobby Lobby.”
- They are involved in their church, traveling on mission trips to Russia and the Ukraine. In July they are anticipating another rewarding mission trip, this time to Chama, NM.
- They have been to Red Bay and say that the staff always takes care of you.



Dean & Janet Shaw

Hometown: Gardner, Kansas
Interviewed in central Kansas

- Dean and Janet own a 2004 Allegro Bay.
- They have been motorhoming since 1976 but could not go out for long periods of time due to their responsibilities at the restaurant they owned.
- Since they sold their restaurant fourteen months ago, they travel six months out of the year. They own property in Montana, Hawaii, Kansas, Missouri, and Arizona.
- They have both retired from 40 years in the restaurant business. They owned Blazers Restaurant in the same location in Gardner, Kansas for 32 years.
- They have been married 47 years.
- They have one daughter who lives in Scottsdale, AZ and two sons who live in Pittsburg, KS and Charlotte, NC. They have four grandsons and one granddaughter.
- Dean does all of the driving.
- Both Dean and Janet like to read, watch movies, and spend time with family. They love discovering new places to dine as they travel.
- They have been to Red Bay and think that everyone is extremely friendly. They were impressed with the skill of the technicians. They had a beautiful mountain scene made out of Corian and installed behind their kitchen counter, replacing the mirrors in their Allegro Bay.



David & Denise Snipes

Hometown: Keller, Texas
Interviewed in Red River, New Mexico

- David and Denise own a 2007 Allegro Bus.
- They started motorhoming in 2002 in a Winnebago, going to the University of Texas games. After their second Winnebago they decided to purchase another motorhome. David put in many hours of research to find the best motorhome on the market and, as a result, purchased their Allegro Bus.
- They travel approximately half of the year. They’ve especially enjoyed Red River area in Northern New Mexico, Tiger Run in Colorado, and Zion and Bryce Canyons.
- They travel with their 3½ year old Havanese, Chloe.
- David retired from laboratory medical supply sales and Denise as a hospital lab director.
- They have been married 29 years.
- David does all of the driving.
- They are huge University of Texas fans and go to all of the home and away games. They’ve met some wonderful people doing this and have become close friends, traveling as a caravan to the away games. The group has personalized license plates, Bevos 1, Bevos 2, and Bevos 3. This is also the order they use when they drive to the games.
- They have been to Red Bay and think that everyone is professional. They were very impressed with the clean facilities and the knowledgeable staff.

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 three granddaughters) 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!”

Riding the Great River Road Through Minnesota

by Norman Spray

This 575-mile trip has it all: magnificent views, quaint historic towns, even shopping—from Itasca State Park to the Iowa border.



This is it? The Mighty Mississippi? Incredible! The Mississippi River I knew in my college days was 200 feet deep and over a half-mile wide rushing four million gallons of water every second by New Orleans and Tulane University, my alma mater. Now, far too many years later, Billie and I stand at the other end, at the birth place headwaters of this storied and vital water route. The Mighty Mississippi starts here?

Some 300 yards from the place the Mississippi River begins, children play on their plastic floats in its shallow, narrow waters. Near its beginning, the river receives water from Lake Itasca (below) and flows at this point at

Here at the north end of relatively small Lake Itasca in Minnesota's Northwoods, Old Man River is only 12 inches deep and 25 feet wide. Only 45 gallons per second stream over 15 stepping stones to begin the river's 2,552-mile route to Pilottown, Louisiana, and the Gulf of Mexico. You literally can walk across the Mississippi on these stones. As we stand here now, in fact, children are wading knee-deep in the river's first shallow pool.

Many farmstead creeks are larger. But, oh, how this little stream grows in every way as it flows through a number of Minnesota's 12,000 lakes (updated from a time when this state was conservatively promoted as "the land of 10,000 lakes") and is fed by at least 21 other rivers draining 1,245,000 square miles—33 percent of the continental U.S.

45 gallons per second. By the time the river reaches New Orleans, nearly 2,500 miles downstream, it is flowing at over four million gallons per second and it is not unusual for it to be two miles wide in places.

We are here among some of Minnesota's biggest and oldest remaining pine trees to begin a 575-mile motorhome trip following the river through the state. We'll drive a series of river-bank roads that make up Minnesota's section of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Not surprisingly, this is the longest and perhaps grandest of the state's 22 scenic byways.

Green and white logo signs picturing a "captain's wheel" with a steamboat in the center mark the route for an adventure that, it turns out, takes us back in history, showcases modern industry and agriculture, and treats us to forest, lakeshore, lush farmland, great bluffs and even metropolitan scenery (some of it spectacular) along river's edge. Along the way, we find good restaurants and behold a wonderland for outdoor activity: especially all water sports, particularly creel-filling fishing; hiking; biking; backpacking; and golf (some 500 courses in the state). Spectacular fall foliage color begins mid-to late September in the north and glows ever-brighter later on among the hardwoods in the bluffs region of southeastern Minnesota. Remember sweaters: expect 65-degree highs and 42-degree lows in September.

On the river road, we enter or pass near 11 of Minnesota's 72 state parks that provide over 5000 camp sites, many with water and electricity. At nearly every big lake and many river towns, we can go out on fishing boats, ride tour boats or rent motorboats, kayaks, and canoes – and get free guidance from the outfitters. We find more to explore and experience than one could in a full year.

Even so, since we're determined to spend most of our time on the Great River Road, we'll not see some of Min-

nesota's greatest attractions, among them the rugged 154-mile Lake Superior shoreline in the northeast corner, the great Minnesota River Valley, the Red River, and the unique Boundary Waters Canoe Area. (See Page 47)

The Mississippi runs 680 miles in Minnesota, far more than in any of the other nine states the river passes through or borders. Someone (perhaps tourism promoters) divided the Great River Road route into six different regions starting with the Mississippi Headwaters at Itasca State Park and continuing to the southeastern corner of the state through the Northwoods; Mississippi Crossings; Scenic Mississippi; Metro Mississippi; and Mississippi Bluffs. Our plan is to visit these five regions in five days, but that schedule proves optimistic. Too much to see and do. Here's why:

Headwaters to Northwoods (30 miles)

We begin at the Mary Gibbs Mississippi Headwaters Center, one of eight Great River Roads Interpretive Centers in the state that have artifacts, exhibits, movies, placards and sometimes actors to describe things as they were and are. These are part of a network of 62 centers scattered along the river from its headwaters to the Gulf.

An 11-mile Wilderness Drive to the west takes us (and bikers) through virgin stands of white and red pine into a 2,000-mile wilderness sanctuary within the park. Park Drive along the east shore of the lake reveals historic Indian sites, including a cemetery, and passes by some of the park's 100 smaller lakes. There are 50 miles of hiking trails and 16 miles of surfaced bike paths here. Excursion boat rides and bike, boat, kayak, and canoe



The Mississippi in Minnesota



Lake Itasca State Park to Iowa Border — 575 Miles

rentals are available in the park as are RV sites with water and electricity.

We don't see much of the Mississippi on the 30-mile drive to Bemidji where the Headwaters region ends and the Northwoods begins. Canoe paddlers, however, enjoy this usually-tame creek-like section which heads out north, then curves to the northeast and east to Lake Bemidji, but they deal with snags, sandbars, rocks, beaver dams, and even Class I rapids when water levels are high. Sometimes the channel is hard to locate passing through lakes, wetlands and bogs.

An 18-foot tall statue of the mythical giant lumberjack, Paul Bunyan and his blue ox greet us on arrival at the Visitor Center in Bemidji, first town on the Mississippi, one known for culture and art. A Bemidji "artwalk" beginning in Paul Bunyan's shadow passes by more than two dozen public sculptures and murals, art galleries, and antique and gift shops. The Bemidji Woolen Mills factory outlet store is a popular stop. Bemidji State Park, north of town, has a boardwalk through a bog and numerous hiking and biking trails.

Northwoods to Mississippi Crossings (95 Miles).

Leaving Bemidji, we stop for the night

MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION OF MN



at Stony Point Resort Campground and RV Park on the eastern shore of Cass Lake. It's a lovely, well-run facility with an excellent restaurant. From the campground, we have good views of this lake which has 26.9 miles of forested shoreline, is 120 feet deep in places, and gets excellent reviews for fishing. The Mississippi runs through it to connect downstream with Lake Winnibigoshish, fourth largest lake in the state with 141 miles of scenic unspoiled shoreline.

From Cass, the marked river road takes us through miles of the Chippewa National Forest on the Road to Grand Rapids. We pass by Lake Winnibigoshish, noting that there are many guides and resorts ready to help us with successful fishing or hunting in an area where the forest turns gold, red, yellow, orange and rust in the fall. This national forest is open to hunting starting with grouse in the fall and including deer and bear in season.

At Grand Rapids, where the Northwoods region ends and Mississippi Crossing begins, we stop at the Forest History Center, also a Great River Road Interpretive Center. There are many exhibits in the Visitor Center museum but nothing more impressive than a short movie that takes us through a dangerous log drive over freezing waters (actual

footage of a big downriver drive) and a historical account of an early 1900s forest fire that killed over 200 people. Afterwards we walk down a trail into a re-created logging camp where "lumberjacks" dress as they would have in a real camp in 1900. They tell (and show) us how life was in one of the camps that eliminated many of the vast northwoods forests. Consider this one a "must stop" if you visit Grand Rapids.

There are others. One is the childhood home of Judy Garland. A children's museum and "Wizard of Oz" memorabilia are part of the complex.

Mississippi Crossings to Scenic Mississippi (145 Miles)

Going first southeast out of Grand Rapids, then turning southwest to stay with the river, we pass Aitkin, Brainerd and finish this leg with arrival in Little Falls. Between Grand Rapids and Aitkin, river access and camp sites exist where steamboats once docked at 25 landings. Scenic biking and hiking trails and crystal clear lakes draw droves of vacationers to this area of wooded hills, prairie, streams and—always—lakes. Savanna Portage State Park, a short drive off our river road, lies on the Continental Divide. Water to the west goes into the Mississippi while that

on the east side flows into Lake Superior.

Near Crosby an iron ore mine that was active from 1916 to 1934 has been turned into a 17-acre park. A simulated underground mining tour shows visitors how it was when miners worked in a 630-foot deep shaft. Brainerd, a little further south, anchors the popular Brainerd Lakes resort area where golfers have a choice of over 30 world-class courses. And this is another town claiming Paul Bunyan. In fact, a 26-foot giant Paul Bunyan statue calls kids by name and presides over a Paul Bunyan amusement park east of town.

The Mississippi runs through Little Falls, where the Crossings region ends and Scenic Mississippi begins. Perhaps the biggest attraction is the mid-town dam where hydroelectric power is generated. There's no longer a natural waterfall here but the Mississippi tumbles through man-made chutes splashing and spraying as it falls onto a slate-bottomed river bed. The history of power generation here is told on placards in the river-bank James Green Park, named for one of the original developers of power at Little Falls.

Just a block or so downriver, the beautifully landscaped Maple Island Park welcomes visitors with flowers, foot bridges over a creek and, of course,

The Great River Road in Minnesota is divided into six different regions beginning with the Mississippi Headwaters in Itasca State Park, followed by the Northwoods, Mississippi Crossings, Scenic Mississippi, Metro Mississippi, and Mississippi Bluffs—each section with its own distinct personality.

- Youngsters enamoured with a visit to a 1900-era lumber camp try their hand at a cross-cut at the Forestry History Center under the watchful eyes of a lumberjack.
- A father and daughter fish from a rock below the Mississippi River dam at Little Falls, Minnesota. Adjoining riverfront James Green Park is named after a Pennsylvanian who saw a potential power source in the water. With others, he built a dam in 1849 to provide power to a lumber mill. Now it's one of Minnesota Power and Light's 11 hydro-electric generating plants.
- Anyone following the Mississippi River through Minnesota would miss a highlight of the trip should they decide to pass up a walk through the adjoining Munsinger and Clemens Gardens in St. Cloud.





EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM PHOTO



EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM PHOTO



the Mississippi. Other sites of interest here: the Charles A. Lindbergh House and Visitor Center featuring the house where the first man to fly across the Atlantic spent most of his boyhood summers and a museum that exhibits a replica of his plane; the Charles A. Lindbergh State Park across the road; the Minnesota Fishing Museum and Education Center featuring over 8,000 fresh water fishing artifacts; the Minnesota Military Museum at Camp Ripley seven miles north of town which has over 9,000 square ft. of indoor exhibits plus outdoor displays of tanks, vehicles, aircraft and other large equipment.

Scenic Mississippi to Metro Mississippi (90 miles)

This next stretch takes us through St. Cloud, for years and still a leading producer of granite, and on to Elk River, a stone's throw northwest of Minneapolis. Beside the river in St. Cloud, we find unexpected treasure and pleasure visiting the side-by-side Munsinger Gardens and Clemens Gardens. An incredible variety of flowers color the landscape in Munsinger's separate White, Perennial and Four-Color Gardens. More than 1100 plants brighten the Virginia Clemens Rose Garden where an added feature is the eye-popping 24-foot high "Renaissance Fountain with Cranes." A gift of Bill and Virginia Clemens, it features Hebe, "cup bearer to the gods" in Greek mythology; cranes from an old Victorian pattern on a lower tier; and bathing boys patterned after those by Scottish sculptor Fredrick MacMonnies on the bottom tier. And it works perfectly, dripping a fine shower around its full circumference.

At St. Cloud's Stearns History Museum, we find two floors featuring the natural and cultural history of Central Minnesota. There's a 1919 Pan motor car and a 1930's granite quarry.

To our disappointment, we reach Elk River too late to tour the Oliver Kelley Farm, 2.5 miles southeast of downtown. This is a working 1860's farm where you can pick heirloom vegetables in season. You can visit with farmhands in period dress as they work the fields, sometimes with oxen and horses. Gardens and fields are filled with many of the same plants Oliver H. Kelley grew 130 years ago. Kelley faced many hardships, left farming, and founded the National Grange in 1867. The Grange acquired the farm in 1935, then donated it to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1961. Today Kelley farm tours are a popular tourist attraction.

The Minnesota History Center in St. Paul houses the widely-acclaimed interactive museum telling the story of the state's past. Costumed characters from bygone eras help bring history alive. • The 160-mile Mississippi Bluffs leg of the Great River Road in southeastern Minnesota is one of the route's most scenic, following a landscape of towering bluffs and cool valleys dotted with quaint, friendly small towns. The hardwoods of this area present splendid fall colors, as in this view from Great Bluffs State Park. Both the King's and Queen's Bluff viewing points are 400 feet above the river. • A campground and picnic site in Frontenac State Park is on a 200-ft. high bluff overlooking Lake Pepin, where the Mississippi is more than two miles wide.

Metro Mississippi to Mississippi Bluffs (75 miles)

The Mississippi runs through a wooded gorge between Minneapolis and St. Paul and following it puts us in reach (sometimes walking distance) of attractions far too numerous to list. These are cosmopolitan cities with theater, major sports venues, museums, concerts, fine dining and shopping. Get a local tourist guide and take your pick.

A 72-mile stretch beginning at Dayton, just north of Minneapolis and ending below St. Paul just south of Hastings, is designated the National Park Service Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. Within this corridor are many parks, historical sites, viewing points, and museums on and on, each one enticing. We couldn't begin to make them all in two days. Some ideas:

River cruises on excursion boats board near downtown in both cities. Narration describes what you are seeing and adds interesting historical background.

The Minnesota Historical Society offers 90-minute walking tours in Minneapolis starting at the Mill City Museum, created in the ruins of a flour mill that was the world's largest in 1880. On the riverfront tour, visitors cross the Stone Arch Bridge built in 1883 for a railroad. From it, they get a clear view of the St. Anthony Falls spillway, the dam that provided waterpower for the mills which once were the lifeblood of the city's economy, and also see how many of the old mills have been converted into trendy condos. Several other tours are offered, even one five-mile tour where each participant rides a Segway electric self-balancing scooter after a training session that's included in the \$80 fee. There's also a Segway tour in St. Paul.

In St. Paul, the Science Museum of Minnesota sits on a bluff overlooking the river and has some exhibits on the river. The building also houses the visitor center for the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area. For a great stroll in St. Paul, take Summit Avenue, selected by the American Planning Association as one of the "10 Great Streets for 2008." Summit runs four miles from near downtown to the Mississippi River, making it the longest street of Victorian mansions in America. The street leads to the city's cultural corridor. On or near it are the governor's house and the house where author F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1896.

When one thinks of shopping in the Twin Cities, the place that automatically comes to mind is the fabulous Mall of

View inside Mall of America. This mall, in Bloomington, Minnesota, is said to attract more people each year than Disney World, Graceland, and the Grand Canyon combined. Here are found more than 500 stores and a seven-acre amusement park offering more than 25 thrilling rides, a roller coaster among them. • Traveling along the Great River Road in Minnesota in autumn treats tourists to scenery ranging from farmland, river views, prairies, woods, and cities. Here, maple foliage shadows a fence near Crosby, one of the riverbank towns on the River Road. • The autumn "color show" starts near the Canadian border in late September and moves Southeastward along the Great River Road, lasting through most of October.



EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM PHOTO



EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM PHOTO



EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM PHOTO

America, located in Bloomington, just about 15 minutes south of either Minneapolis or St. Paul or the Great River Road we're on. More than 500 stores, including Bloomingdale's, Macy's and Nordstrom, are under roof. Inside also is a seven-acre amusement park offering more than 25 thrilling rides, a roller coaster among them. This is the largest enclosed shopping mall/entertainment center in the U.S. It also features night clubs, more than 50 eating places, an UnderWater World, Lego Showplace, Golf Mountain, and 14 cinemas. You are not sure you can believe your eyes when you see it—but you are sure one could spend days here.

Mississippi Bluffs to Iowa Border (140 miles)


This impresses us as the most scenic section of the Great River Road in Minnesota. From the city of Red Wing to the Iowa border, the road hugs the river bank so there's mostly unobstructed views of the river cutting its way under towering bluffs. The river towns we pass are charming with historic main streets, museums and some with paddlewheel excursion boats.

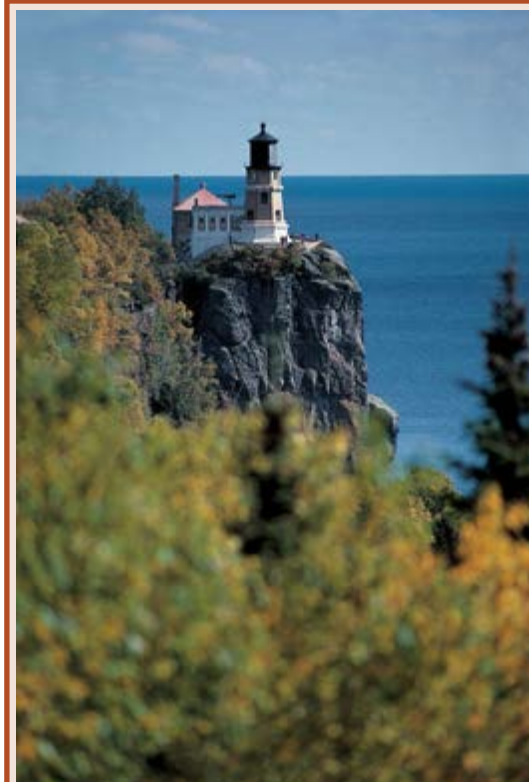
Ten miles south of Red Wing, we pull into Frontenac State Park, climbing in a short drive to a campground and picnic site on a 200-foot high bluff overlooking Lake Pepin, a two-mile wide section of the Mississippi. The view is awesome. Thanks to constant ever-changing wind patterns in the valley, this lake has become known as one of the world's top five sailing areas. Anglers find walleye, saugers, small mouth bass, catfish, white bass, and muskie plentiful.

Water skiing was invented on Lake Pepin by Ralph Samuelson of Lake City, a lakeside town a few miles south of Frontenac. He refined his skiing technique in June and July 1922 then made the first water ski jump in 1925. Later that same year he skied at 80 mph behind a Curtiss flying boat.

After Frontenac, we come to Lake City and stop for awhile watching sail boats and skiers on the lake. Here, we learn, you can ride the "Pearl of the Lake" paddlewheeler or rent any kind of watercraft. Next continuing south is the town of Wabasha, home of the National Eagle Center. When the weather turns frigid, wintering bald eagles can often be seen from the center's Eagle Watch Deck.

At Winona, largest town on the river south of St. Paul, we find a perfect pad for our motorhome in the city-owned Prairie Island Campground. Through our windshield, we have a great view of the Mississippi River flowing only 40 or 50 yards ahead of us.

Here we unhook our Tracker tow car and drive another 30 miles to the Mississippi Bluffs State Park. We find the 400-foot high bluff observation points are reachable only after a fairly easy hike. The view of the river from both the King and Queen observation points is, unfortunately, partly blocked by foliage of tall trees here. Even so, it's thrilling to take in miles of Old Man River from this vantage. All in all, it is a fitting end for a journey that has let us watch the Mighty Mississippi grow from a figurative trickle at Lake Itaska into the river we knew it to be. It has become a trip to remember and one we'd recommend. 



Split Rock Lighthouse on Lake Superior's rugged shore once helped iron ore ships safely carry their loads to steel mills across the lake.

- In Voyageurs National Park, canoeists can enjoy hundreds of miles of shoreline beauty during Minnesota's fall season.



Minnesota: You Gotta Love It

The Mississippi River, focus of the accompanying story, is just one of many attractions the state of Minnesota has for motorhome travelers. With 12,000 lakes, a border on the world's largest lake, 69,200 miles of rivers and streams, land area of 183,574 square miles, and 7,326 square miles of water, it is the nation's twelfth largest state.

Facilities for campers would be hard for any state to match. There are 22 scenic byways, 72 state parks with 5,000 RV sites, 500 privately owned RV parks plus many state and national forest campgrounds. Wherever you go in Minnesota, finding a camp site is not likely to be a problem. And the places to go are endless. Here's a thumbnail sketch of a few:

The **154-mile North Shore Scenic Drive** along the rugged shore of Lake Superior, largest of the Great Lakes, gives motorists views from high bluffs and puts them in the vicinity of many attractions including 60-foot waterfalls in Tettegouche State Park and the Split Rock Lighthouse. Duluth at the southern tip of this drive is a harbor city jewel.

Voyageurs National Park along the Canadian border is best enjoyed by boat. If you bring your own, there are free boat launches at each of three visitor centers. Other options to get on the water in this park include a ranger-guided trip or renting a canoe, kayak, or houseboat. The park has 655 miles of shoreline, 500 islands, and numerous historical sites including the Kettle Falls Hotel which can be reached only by boat.

The Boundary Waters Canoe Area stretches 100 miles along Minnesota's border with Canada and it, too, can only be fully enjoyed only if you are on the water. The difference is that only paddlers are welcome in these pristine waters. There are no roads, no stores, only a few signs. No motorboats are allowed, but there are 1,200 miles of canoe routes and more than 1,000 lakes in BWCA, which covers about a third of the Superior National Forest.

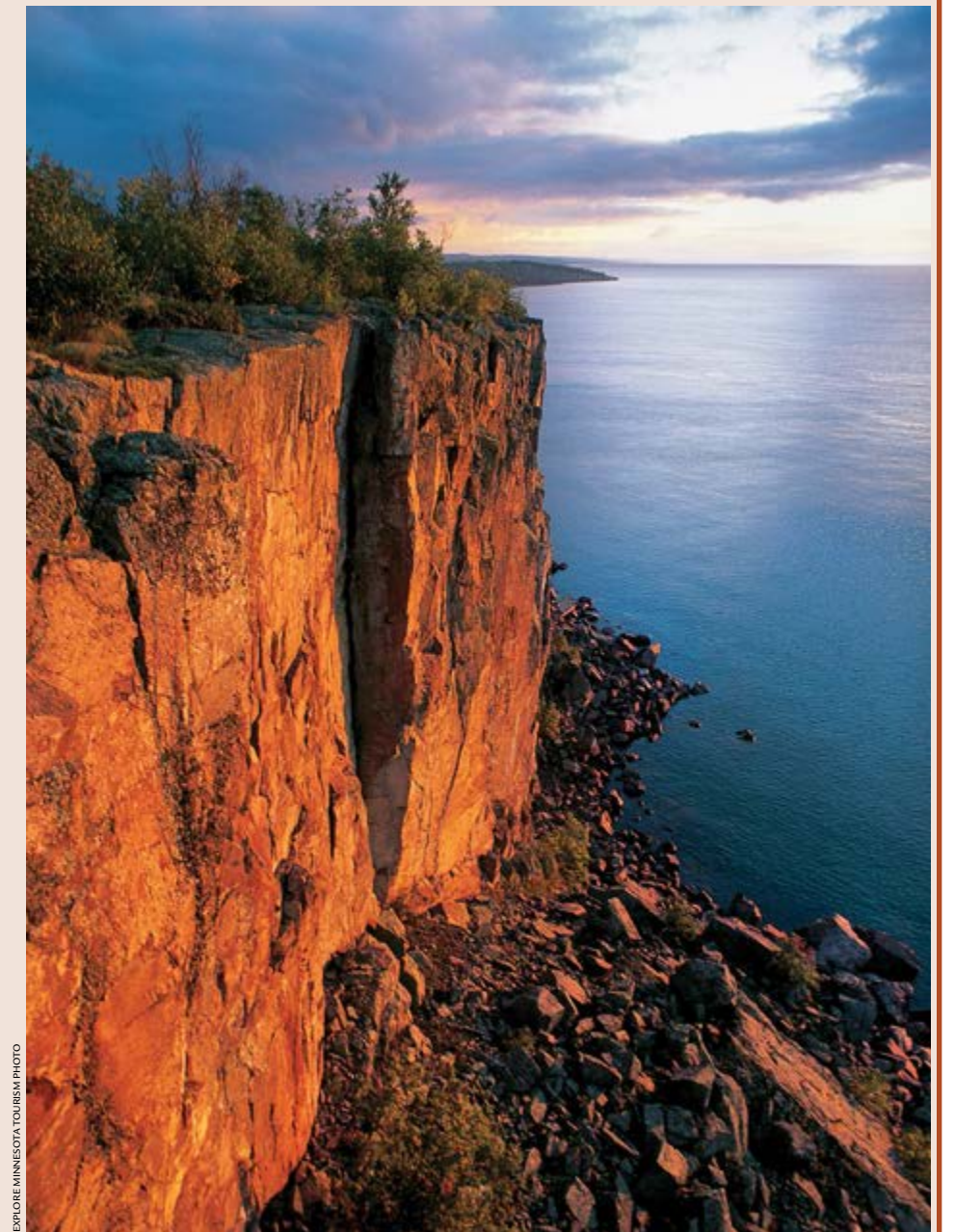
Best fall foliage color usually can be seen in early October in the Mississippi Bluffs area in southeastern Minnesota, but it would be hard to find any place more blessed with colorful foliage than **Maplewood State Park** in the western part of the state. Though located on the eastern edge of the level Red

River Valley, this park sits on high tree-covered hills that overlook 9,250 acres of small, clear lakes in deep valleys. Sugar maple, basswood, and oak provide the color.

Both the **Red River and Missouri River Valleys** could keep you exploring for days. Wherever you go in Minnesota, you'll find friendly, helpful natives, particularly in the many endearing small towns. Lakes and water are what much of the state is all about but whether it's golf, fish, antiquing, or

something else that interests you, there's a good chance you can find it in the state also known as Land of 10,000 Lakes, North Star State, and the Gopher State.

This is sunrise at Palisade Head on Lake Superior's shore near Tettegouche State Park roughly half-way between the Canadian border and Duluth, Minnesota. The lookout point is 200 feet above Superior, largest of the Great Lakes.



Who You Gonna Call To Arrange a Trip in Minnesota?

Explore Minnesota Tourism
888-868-7476
www.exploreminnesota.com
www.byways.org

Great River Road in Minnesota
888-868-7476
www.mnmississippiriver.com

Voyageurs National Park
218-283-6600
www.nps.gov/voya

State parks, campgrounds, and fishing info
Department of Natural Resources
888-646-6367 www.mnstateparks
651-296-6157 www.mndr.gov

Mall of America
800-879-3555
972-883-8800
www.mallofamerica.com

Chippewa National Forest
www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/chippewa



The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

Great Adventures on the Lewis & Clark Trail

After picking up our new 2009 Phaeton last November at Sherman RV in Tupelo, Mississippi, we took it for a shakedown cruise to Asheville, North Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia, before heading back home to Amboy, Illinois. We stopped at the TMH Service Center and Campground in Red Bay to correct a few minor problems. We spent the winter in Texas and Arizona before heading back home in early May for doctors' appointments. Then we went to Washington, D.C., for the Cherry Blossom Festival and on to St. Charles, Missouri, where we met a caravan to follow the trail of the Lewis & Clark Expedition for over six weeks.

We left on May 15th for what turned out to be the best caravan



Captain Clark (actual great-great-grandson of Clark), Seaman (the dog), Droulliard (hunter and frontiersman), and a woman in camp but not on the trip. • Depiction of portage of pirogue around the falls.

Grandchildren, One at a Time

We love our Allegro and would not change anything, other than having a dishwasher and gas logs fireplace. We take all of our grandchildren for a week at the beach one at a time to be close to each one. They look forward to every trip. We have kites on board, frisbees, balls, velcro ball, and a little John Deere wagon for rides. God bless the storage compartment under our queen bed!

trip we have taken so far. Our group of 39 travelers was transported back to 1804 when we visited the Lewis and Clark encampment as they prepared for their voyage to the Pacific. We saw the replica boats used in the bicentennial voyage as well as the costumed men who participated in that voyage. We met Captain Clark, re-enacted by Clark's great-great-grandson, and Lewis' dog, Seaman.

We got to know the Indian tribes who were instrumental in the first caravan; had it not been for their assistance, the travelers would never have survived the first winter. We visited Fort Mandan, the winter headquarters, and again re-enactors helped us understand what it was like to winter there.

Along our way we visited many interpretive centers that presented movies and exhibits from that time. By road we followed the route of the original caravan. In many places the scenery was much as they must have seen as they traveled and we were constantly amazed by what they had to do to accomplish the trip. They pulled their boats most of the way against the current, and when they no longer could use a water route, they portaged. Such was the case at the Great Falls, not just one but a series of falls.

The most amazing fact of the trip is that they only lost one man and that was to appendicitis which at that time was untreatable even under the best conditions. They met many obstacles but were either prepared or were savvy enough to figure out how to deal with the problem, including the birth of a baby to Sacagawea.

Upon reaching the end of their journey at the Pacific, they had to prepare for winter and for the return trip. They built a salt works and made enough salt by boiling down seawater to see them back home. Again we were amazed to realize that even with what we would consider primitive methods, the maps drawn by Capt. Clark were only off, I believe, by 40 miles by today's measurements. The records kept by Capt. Lewis of the flora and fauna discovered filled volumes that arrived back undamaged.

As if the history wasn't enough on this trip, many side excursions such as boat rides and city tours were included. There was never a dull moment and, of course, there were the people on the caravan. The people you meet become friends forever and that's the best part. With over 17,000 miles on the coach, it has been a great adventure!

Harvey & Laura Turner
Amboy, Illinois

We go all up and down the Oregon coast to see and enjoy God's creation. We also enjoy the Oregon Coast Aquarium and Newport. We love RVing and I would go forever. We have even taken my 92-year-old mother-in-law on trips! I have RSD after an unsuccessful knee operation, and getting away saves my life. We love, love, love our Allegro!

Georgia Lockhart-Brown
Salem, Oregon

Durango – Four Corners Story

We loved the Durango-Four Corners story in the last issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*. We have friends who live on Valiecito Lake, Colorado, and have visited all of the places mentioned in the article. FYI: the old courthouse in Ouray is where the court scenes for John Wayne's "True Grit" were filmed. We have been to the national parks at Yellowstone, Glacier, and the Grand Tetons, and literally all over the West. For those who may be planning trips, we will be glad to share information and pictures.

Louise Thompson
Las Vegas, Nevada
Cowg9@cs.com

A Gentle Breeze Out of the West

I am the owner of a 2000 Allegro Bus which I bought new. I was reading Danny Inman's response to a letter from John Guenther where he defines the word "Zephyr." It brought back a memory from my high school freshman English vocabulary test in which my teacher, Miss McRea, defined the word and I will never forget it.

A zephyr is a *gentle* breeze out of the west, not a *strong* west wind. I think the "gentle breeze" is a more appropriate definition of what your top-of-the-line coach should be.

Howard Bechsted
Rapid City, South Dakota

My Allegro Bus Cribbage Board

Like lots of RVers I have a hobby: making cribbage boards when home and on the road.

When my wife and I were at the Tiffin facility in Red Bay this spring, I approached the cabinet department and asked if they had a place where they discarded scrap wood. Like everyone else at the repair facility, they were very helpful and courteous and directed me to a big dumpster inside the shop that was half full of short and unusable pieces of wood. I picked out 5 or 6 pieces and carried them home to Michigan.



I then prepared the salvaged wood into four pieces to construct the 17 x 17 inch board. I am always amazed when other cribbage players I meet on the road are surprised to see a cribbage board bigger than the small boards you usually see. Here in West Branch big cribbage boards have been common for years. There is even a fellow here who makes 6-foot by 3-foot cribbage tables for six-handed play.

I plan on carrying the "Tiffin wood" cribbage board with us on our RV travels and look forward to using it often. Cribbage is a great card game that seems to be known by most RVers and provides a common area of interest for socialization on the road.

Ed Crawford
West Branch, Michigan

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Separation Anxiety

As I was sitting in my chair enjoying the beauty, sights and sounds of Banff National Park, the tranquility was interrupted by the constant barking of a dog. This barking went on for hours. Has this ever happened to you?

I tried to find the source of the barking to talk to the owner but to no avail. They had left the dog inside their camper and were gone for the day.

Unfortunately this is happening too often and it is not the dog's fault. These dogs are suffering from a behavioral condition called Separation Anxiety.

One must understand this problem before it can be treated properly. In canines this is a trait used to keep the pup close to the mother. When the pup wanders off and then starts whining, the mother hears this and brings the pup back in the fold.

With dominant dogs, the pups are weaned at an early age and are placed in a new home. This pup then bonds with its new family.

In the early stages the pup spends time in crates and spends a lot of time by itself. The owners are at work and usually separated at night. This isolation can stimulate anxiety and the pup starts to whine a lot.

Yelling at the pup or punishment does not work and may actually reinforce the problem as negative attention is still attention in the dog's eyes. Dogs are pack animals. If they do not belong to a pack, then they will bond with the family. The family becomes the pack. It is not natural for dogs to be left alone.

Lack of leadership by the owner can contribute to separation anxiety. We must become the alpha dog. Lack of exercise can contribute to the problem. A tired dog is a well-behaved dog. Make sure your dog walks beside you, not out in front and pulling, which makes him think he is the alpha dog by leading you.

Treating separation anxiety takes time. When you are departing the RV or house, you must ignore the dog. Your dog is picking up on certain things you do before you leave which starts the anxiety. All departures and arrivals should be low key.

Some people think about getting another dog to solve the problem. Most dogs with separation anxiety have developed their attachment to humans so adding another dog probably won't solve the problem.

When arriving and seeing destruction in the RV or house, one must first ignore the bad behavior and the dog for at least 20 minutes. If one starts to pet and console the dog, they will think that this was good behavior. Punishment at the time may actually reinforce the problem.

One must start to desensitize the dog to this separation anxiety problem. Start by leaving your pet for short times, then return, working your way up to two hours. Remember only reward good behavior and not bad.

Some pre-departure routines that dogs key on could be the rattling of keys and turning off the lights in the house. Best to identify some of these routines and then desensitize your dog by doing these things and not leaving or leaving for short periods of time.

It may also help to leave a tee shirt or toy with your smell

Continued on page 27

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.

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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Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, 36-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
 Monroe, GA 30656

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 have a 2006 Phaeton with a C-7 350-hp CAT engine and a 3000 MD Allison transmission. I really like the motorhome but it does not perform as well as my previous motorhome which had a 3126 CAT 300-hp with a 3060 MD Allison transmission. When I travel in the mountains, it does not downshift like the earlier engine-transmission combination. Lately I have been using cruise control and it seems to work

better. Why does it downshift in cruise control but not off of cruise? Is there a problem that needs to be corrected?

Otto Larsen
 Anaheim, California

Dear Otto,
 When you are in cruise control, the computer anticipates the load when you are going up an incline and does the downshifting. If you are in "economy" mode, the computer will postpone the downshifting and your speed will drop significantly because the program is telling the system "don't use more fuel; take more time to top this hill." If you are running without cruise, it is up to you to do the downshifting either by pressing harder on the fuel pedal or changing the gear with the down arrow.

We are enjoying our 2008 Allegro 32BA which we purchased at La Mesa RV in Tucson, Arizona. When we drove back to Washington State in March, we noticed that seven of the eleven outside bins were soaked with snow melt and water from the road. We had an RV dealer attempt to repair the bins, but that did not solve the water problem. Three bins still leak. What can we do?

John E. Smith
 Camano Island, Washington

Dear John,
 Storage door water leaks are something we deal with periodically. There are several different points water can get in. Traveling in a rainstorm or snow is like putting them under a high pressure hose. Leak points are sometimes hard to identify and it becomes a trial and error effort to fix them. I suggest you take your coach back to your service center and ask them to make a second effort.

I have a 1998 Allegro Bus with one slide-out in the living room section. When approximately two-thirds extended, the slide-out suddenly stops and, with the motor still running, pops a couple of times as if it has hit something or jammed. Then it continues until fully ex-

tended. It follows the same pattern when retracting.

I have lubricated all the tracks and rollers with no apparent effect. Is there a gearbox somewhere that has a problem? There is nothing in the way inside the storage compartment.

Jim Brunette
 Paris, Texas

Dear Jim,
 There are three gear boxes on the slide-out device. One of the boxes could have a bad gear that is making the noise. There are rollers underneath the slide-out that might be catching on something and making the noise and delayed movement. To repair it correctly, you should take it to a service center.

In our 2002 Allegro, the toilet bowl will not hold water. It slowly leaks out. Is this something that can be repaired or does the toilet need to be replaced? The bowl will hold water for a couple of minutes (long enough to do your business), but that's it.

Mike & Terry Losado
 Vallejo, California

Dear Mike & Terry,
 Dometic makes a product called Sea-Land Toilet Bowl Cleaner. Use it with a small brush (a toothbrush will work fine) and clean the gasket thoroughly around the knife-shaped or ball-shaped closure device. After each use, let the flush lever return with a hard snap shut to make a good seal.

We bought a Tiffin motorhome over 11 years ago and it is going strong. However, we do have a problem with the straps that hold the bed in place over the driver's chair. We can't find these bunk supports anywhere. Do you have them in your parts department?

Richard Brown
 Salem, Oregon

Dear Richard,
 The bunk support straps originally came from the bunk manufacturer. Since that product is no longer offered, we will

custom make the straps for you. Contact Tiffin's Parts and Service at 256-356-0261 and give them the length and width of the strap. The charge is very nominal.

When we travel on rough roads all of our clothes bounce off the rods in the closets. Is there something we can do to stop that from happening? We have a 2008 Allegro Bay 37 QDB .

Dianne Orlando
Katy, Texas

We have a new 2008 Allegro Bay. When we arrive at our destination at the end of each day's drive, all of our hanging clothes in the closet are on the floor. We hope you have a suggestion as to how to correct this problem.

James Baylor
Norfolk, Virginia

Dear Dianne and James,
The question has been asked at the Tiffin Service Center several times. The most common solution is to take the hook on metal coat hangers and bend them more into a circle with pliers and put a curl on the end of the wire. When the coach hits a bump, the curled end will hit the bottom of the rod and hopefully stay on the rod.

We have a 34-ft. 2006 Allegro built on a Workhorse chassis. Occasionally we take it to a truck wash for a good cleaning. When we turn the engine on to drive the motorhome out of the wash facility, the windshield wipers start working all by themselves. They will not turn off unless we open the hood and unplug the wiper motor. After everything dries out, they will work normally. We have taken the coach to Johnnie Walker RV three times but they have not been able to solve the problem.

Alan Shields
Las Vegas, Nevada

Dear Alan,
The Workhorse wiper modular control which is very sensitive to moisture is probably the source of the problem you have experienced. Some of the modular controls were mounted in front of the firewall where it was possible for water to get to it through the grill. In later years the modu-

lar control was mounted under the dash to keep it completely dry. You can try to shield it from the water where it is now, or you may want to have a technician move it to a location inside the firewall.

We own a 2008 Phaeton 40QSH with Atwood leveling jacks. We have experienced problems with the doors to the storage compartments "binding" after the coach is leveled. This was particularly evident at the Hoover RV Park at the SEC baseball tournament. Are there any modifications that can correct this problem? Is this a common problem?

Ken Sandberg
LaPlace, Louisiana

Dear Ken,
It is not a common problem, but it does occur more often than we would like. The more uneven your parking place is, the more flexing your under-carriage framing will do during the leveling process. Fine tuning the latch adjustments on the doors will take care of the problem most of the time.

My 2008 Phaeton was consistently getting 8.7 mpg a year ago, but that has fallen off to 8.1 mpg. I have changed the oil before the recommended number of miles and time, which had no effect. What do you recommend? What could be the reasons for the decrease in mpg?

Cari Bausone
Fernville, Michigan

Dear Cari,
The amount of decrease in your mileage could be caused by many things. It will take a lot of alternative testing to discover the reason. It could be tire pressure, weather conditions, clogged air filter, or an engine problem such as fuel injection. If you continue to see a decrease, you should take it to a Cummins service center and ask them to put it on their computer.

We have a 2008 Phaeton 40 QTH, our first coach and we are really enjoying it. Recently a noise has developed that we hear when we are on a rough road. The window next to the driver's seat makes

a loud popping noise as if it is loose in the frame. At first it was occasional, but it is getting worse and the window next to the passenger's seat has started doing it. There is nothing visibly loose and neither window leaks. Any ideas? Is there something I can do, take it to a service center, or does it need to come "home"?

Marty & Susan Cater
Texarkana, Arkansas

Dear Marty & Susan,
If the window is excessively loose, new rubber gaskets can be installed around the glass. Most of the time a dealer can check and replace the rubber. Keep in mind that if the window does not leak and is not excessively loose, replacing the rubber gasket may make the window more difficult to open and close.

Many "experts" recommend checking the air pressure of a vehicle's tires in their cold state. My tires call for 110 psi cold. If the morning temp was 50 and while traveling the temps rise to 80 or higher, does that mean I need to stop and adjust the tire pressure during the hot afternoon, or is there a safe range that the tire can support? If so, what is that range?

Dave McClellan
Montgomery, Massachusetts

Dear Dave,
Check your tire pressure in the morning and inflate to the psi you wish to run in your tires. As the outside air temperature increases, your psi will increase slightly but the tire's flexibility will take care of this expansion. Check it again in the evening after the tires have cooled for a couple of hours. I think you will find very little variance.

We have a 1998 Allegro Bus on a 1999 Ford chassis with approximately 73,000 miles on the odometer. We are full-timers. My 12-volt lights will get significantly brighter for a second or two, more noticeable with the incandescent than the fluorescent bulbs. Nothing else seems to be affected. It happens when we are on shore power at our Florida site or at our daughter's home in Ohio. There is no pattern to the event. I did replace the transfer switch

last summer after the old one burned up. I tagged all the wires as I took it out and the new one works just fine (I did service for Honeywell for 30 years in commercial HVAC). Any suggestions?

Bernie Taylor
Cocoa, Florida

Dear Bernie,
I think the problem will be with the converter that charges the house batteries. The regulator kicking on and off as it controls the amount of charge going to the battery is most likely the reason why the 12-volt lights brighten. I don't think this is a cause for concern. However, if it starts happening frequently, then you may need to get a meter on the regulator and possibly replace it.

We took delivery on a 2009 Phaeton 36QSH in November 2008. The coach now has approximately 17,000 miles on the odometer. The coach pulls to the right constantly which is very tiring to the driver. Has TMH considered using steering controls such as those offered by Blue Ox and others? I had the alignment checked at a Freightliner Service Center. Any suggestions will be appreciated.

Harvey Turner
Amboy, Illinois

Dear Harvey,
The chassis manufacturers recommend against using an aftermarket steering stabilizer. A properly done alignment should remove any pulling to the right or the left.

We are new to the RV lifestyle, having just bought a barely used 43-ft. Allegro Bus. What is the best club to join? What is the best guide to U.S. campgrounds? We have

many questions. We live near Phoenix in Gold Canyon, Arizona.

Harvey and Anne Cook
Gold Canyon, Arizona

Dear Harvey and Anne,
Please call our national organization of the Allegro Club here in Red Bay (256-356-8522). After you join the national club for a very nominal annual membership, they will put you in contact with two chapters of the Allegro Club in Arizona. These clubs have regular rallies and you will meet members who will be happy to spend hours with you sharing their RVing knowledge and experience. We will make sure that you start enjoying "roughing it smoothly" immediately!

My wife and I are on our second Allegro motorhome, our latest being a 2008 Allegro 32LA. On both coaches we would have liked to turn off the rear speakers in the bedroom but have been unable to find a way to do that. Can you tell me how to do this?

Jim Queen
Indian Trail, North Carolina

Dear Jim,
On your Panasonic radio, press the round volume button and it will begin to show you several options you can modify including TREBLE, BASE, FADE, and LEFT-RIGHT. When you get to FADE, the display will show how to move the sound from *back* to *front*. This will remove the sound from the back speakers in the bedroom.

I have a problem with all the side windows on my 2000 Allegro Bay. The sealant around the windows is dissolving and collecting along the bottom of each window. I occasionally have to scrape it off

with a plastic putty knife. The windows are single pane without tint. I am concerned that the sealant flowing from the top and sides of the windows will allow outside moisture to enter the coach and begin causing a wetness or mold problem. How can I correct this?

George Godson
Mabank, Texas

Dear George,
This a fairly common event, normally not something to be concerned about. If it gets excessive, there is a rubber seal that can be removed, the window recaulked, and the rubber seal replaced.

I have a 2005 Allegro. The fuse panel seems to always be humming. Is this normal?

Keith Marden
Albertville, Alabama

Dear Keith,
It is normal for the panel to hum because the converter is built into the same housing.

I have a 2007 Allegro Bay. When it rains or even with a heavy dew, I get white streaks on the sides of my coach from the top. I can wash the top and after it dries I get a white, chalky residue when I rub my hand across it. Is it bad gelcoat on the roof or what?

Claude Howie
Dothan, Alabama

Dear Claude,
I doubt there is anything wrong with the fiberglass roof and the gelcoat. Most likely it is the sealant used around the roof components. Since the coach is two years old, it is time to clean and reseal any areas that are breaking down. If your coach is not covered when stored, the sun will break down the sealants sooner.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

"Serious Tech Talk" is a very important section of *Roughing It Smoothly* in which information sharing flows in both directions. Please continue to send your questions to Danny Inman on the enclosed postcard. A separate postcard is enclosed for "From the Road," a fun part of the magazine for readers to share their motorhoming experiences. If you choose to email us at: fredthompson1941@hotmail.com, be sure to put "Roughing It Smoothly" in the subject line of your email. If your communication requires an entire letter, mail it to us at: PO Box 1738, Monroe, GA 30656-1738. Tell us about the interesting places you've been, an unusual experience, a great destination, or just a good place to camp and hang out. Please share. "From the Road" contributors will receive a free tee shirt while supplies last.

—Fred Thompson, editor

Reader Response

Customer Responses to MPG Records for the Front End Diesel

- (1) Gerry Curzon, 2007 32BA Allegro. • May-June '08. Ontario, Canada, to Grand Canyon, returning via Southern Colorado and Kansas. 4,264 miles, 390.6 gal., 10.92 mpg. No vehicle in tow. • Dec-Apr '09. RT from Ontario to Weslaco, TX. 3,996 miles, 393.8 gal., 10.15 mpg. Car in tow. Mileage figures have been adjusted for generator use per Onan load tables.
- (2) Dean Hopkins, 2008 35TSB Allegro Bay. Recent trip from Salt Lake City to eastern Canadian provinces. Average for trip was 7.8 mpg. Best test on one tank with driving speeds of 60-70 mph was 9.2 mpg.
- (3) Ron Hatton, 2008 37QDB Allegro Bay. During a recent trip of 900 miles pulling a 4,000 lb. Jeep, I recorded 8.7 mpg with an average speed of 60 mph. Total mileage approximately 4,000.
- (4) Jessie Gregg, 2009 34 TSA Allegro. We seldom get more than 8.5 mpg even though we drive at 55-60 mph. Please tell us what to do to improve on that record. We would like to see 11-13 mpg that our salesman promised.
- (5) George Wiencek, 2008 Allegro Bay. With or without cruise control, I have consistently logged 8.4 to 9.7 mpg. I never drive over 60 mph and I tow a Jeep Wrangler.
- (6) John Horstdaniel, 2007 Allegro Bay 37 QDB. The best ever was 9.1 mpg for 180 miles during which the elevation dropped 3400 feet. I had no tow vehicle, no generator running, and cruised at 65 mph. The 2007 FREDs using the 300-hp engine are underpowered which is why Cummins and Freightliner went to a 340-hp engine later on.
- (7) David Patterson, 2007 Allegro Bay 35 TSB. I averaged 9.8 on a 5,000 mile trip, 90 percent of which was interstate with average speed of 60-65 mph and all tires at 110 psi.
- (8) Hans & Susan Limper, 2006 Allegro Bay FRED. We usually pull a trailer with two motorcycles on it. We aver-

age between 10.2 and 10.7 mpg. Without the trailer, Susan gets 11.3 to 11.6 mpg consistently. We travel mostly in Illinois which is a flat state with few hills. We love our Allegro Bay!

Customer Responses Regarding Additives for Diesel Engines

(1) We are driving a 2008 35TSB Allegro Bay with 16,000 miles on the odometer. As you know Cummins recommends no additives. However, an independent diesel shop I am familiar with has seven diesel mechanics who all drive diesel trucks. They all use additives, but I don't have the specifics yet.

Dean Hopkins
Sandy, Utah

(2) This is my first diesel. I am very interested in any future articles you may write about fuel additives. I do not know how long my Allegro Bay sat on the dealers lot with half a tank of fuel before I bought it, or how much the coach may have been driven while the dealer had it. As noted above, I only got 8.7 mpg on my first trip. Could sludge have clogged the fuel filter? The odometer at the time I bought it was 3200 and it is now 4400. The recommended fuel filter change is 15,000 miles. If sludge build-up could have caused the low mpg, could someone at Tiffin please recommend an additive to remove the sludge?

I plan to attend the Freedom Trail Rally in Foxboro. My round-trip mileage should be approximately 4000 miles. My questions now are:

- (a) Should I add a sludge removal additive, drive for some x-number of miles and change the filters?
- (b) Should I change the filter(s), add a sludge removal additive, drive x-number of miles and see what happens?
- (c) Should I change the filter(s), add a sludge removal additive, drive x-number of miles, change the filters, and see what happens?

Ron Hatton
Lakewood, Colorado

Dear Ron,
Don't do anything now because 4,400 miles is not a significant break-in for your engine. Diesel fuels today are much cleaner than they used to be, so it is unlikely that you have sludge build-up that is creating a problem. Check your water separator daily while you are traveling to see if it is pulling out any material. After you return from Foxboro, replace your fuel filter. Cut it apart and check what is inside. If it shows sludge build-up, then consider an additive. Don't be too concerned about the mpg at this time. After you have driven it a few thousand more miles, your engine should be well broken in and the mpg should improve.

Customer Responses About Harmonic Sound in the Allegro Bay Grill

(1) I recently wrote Serious Tech Talk about an "annoying harmonic sound" coming from the front end of my 2008 Allegro Bay. I read with interest a letter to STT from Mr. Malling in Wisconsin who has the same problem. He removed the grill and the sound stopped. I saw that as a clue. When I checked my grill I discovered that of the six fasteners holding it in place, the two middle ones were loose. The fasteners used were self-tapping screws which had pulled loose from the fiberglass body. I believe these loose fasteners allowed the grill to vibrate creating the hum. I replaced all six self-tapping screws with machine screws, a flat washer, and a lock nut with a nylon insert. I also placed a neoprene washer between the grill and the fiberglass body to further dampen any vibration. My wife and I just returned from a 1000-mile round trip to Florida and had no "annoying harmonic sound." My problem has been solved.

Doug McSwain
Waynesville, North Carolina

(2) Concerning the harmonic sound or humming heard by your customers that you have not been able to correct for two years, I believe if you would show them how to turn off the sound on their back-

up cameras, it might solve the problem. I took care of my problem!

Dick Baxter
Temperance, Michigan

(3) We have had the same problem with the harmonic sound or humming with our Allegro Bay. After exchanging the grill with little or no difference, my husband took black electrical tape (1-inch wide) and taped the grill. We have made several long trips and the noise has not returned. We are satisfied with it, but would like to have one made that we did not have to tape!

Michael & Sandy McManaway
Bedford, Virginia

(4) We have one of the first 2007 Allegro Bays. On our first trip, it howled and sang to us all of the way. TMH gave us a new grill with extra bars in it. That helped a little. Then I purchased a quarter-inch metal screen and cut it to fit the grill opening. I fastened it to the inside with the screws that hold the grill in place. This helped but it still howled if the wind was just right. So I drilled little holes in the fins and wired each fin in several places to the screen. Now, finally, no more noise. It also keeps the bees out.

Russ Anderson
Spokane, Washington

Water Filter

We have a 2004 Allegro Bus which was purchased new. When I decided to change the water filter using the replacement filter that came with the coach, to my surprise I found no filter in the system. All this time I thought I was drinking filtered water. I advise all owners to check the receptacle that holds the filter when you take delivery of your coach.

Rick Escobedo
Covina, California

Dear Rick,
We do not install the filters at the time of shipment because over half of the year we are shipping winterized motorhomes.

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rvcleaningservice@gmail.com

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Great Northwest Rally

June 2009

Blue skies, cool breezes, warm days, beautiful scenery, wonderful facilities, and good company—these were the components that came together the fourth week in June for the Tiffin Allegro Great Northwest Rally in Canyonville, Oregon to make a memorable week of fun and fellowship!

The rally site was Seven Feathers Campground, Convention Center, and Casino, located just off Interstate 5 in the lush green mountains of southern Oregon. Our location was convenient for many interesting side trips—Crater Lake, the Redwood forests, the Pacific coast, wine country, the historic Oregon Trail, the city of Portland, and many other exciting places. However, we had so much going on at the rally that it was difficult to find time for side trips!

As is the usual custom, Monday was devoted to registration and getting settled. Monday evening we enjoyed a delicious catered meal at the spacious convention center, where introductions were made and plans were laid out for the week’s activities.

Tuesday was Seminar Day. After a catered breakfast, several vendors were available to present informative mini-classes on a wide range of Tiffin coach-related topics. Presenters included Harold Kimbrough representing Onan generators, David Humphries and Marty Vanderford from Triple H Electronics, and Gail Johnson with Convection Cooking.

Also on Tuesday afternoon, a Tea Party was held for those who wished to participate. Attendees had received instructions to bring their favorite teacup or mug and, if they wished, share a story connected with it. They were also encouraged to dress in “party attire”—hats, pearls, dresses—again, if they wished to do so. Small prizes were given for the best story and the oldest teacup; at least two of the cups shown were over 100 years old, and we heard many wonderful, touching, and funny stories. What a delightful way to get to know each other better!

Tuesday night was Theme Night at dinner; the dress theme


was “Roaring 20s,” and participation was perhaps the best we have ever had for a themed dinner! Everywhere you turned, there were flappers, gangsters, and “zoot suits”! Enjoyable entertainment was provided by keyboardist/vocalist Charles Suniga and his group.

On Wednesday, a full schedule of games was on the docket. Rally-goers were asked to sign up at registration for the games planned. We had a full day of ladder ball, horseshoes, and bingo, with prizes awarded to winners at dinner Wednesday night.

Attendees received an exciting bonus on Wednesday—a visit from Tiffin founder and CEO Bob Tiffin and his wife, Judy! They arrived in the campground in an Allegro Bus and stayed through Thursday before continuing into California on a brief western vacation. It was a real treat for everyone to have a chance to talk to them—as always, they made themselves available during their visit to hear from everyone who wanted to voice a concern, pass along a comment, or just shake hands.

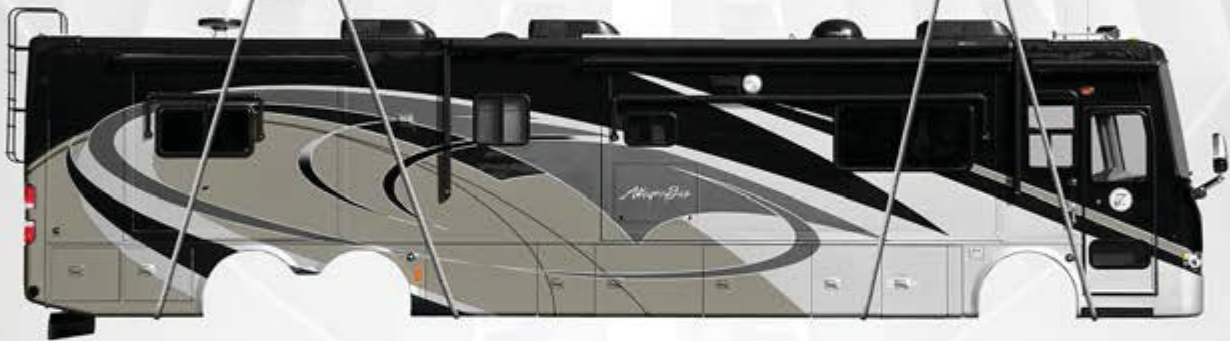
The rally ended on Thursday morning with a boxed breakfast handed out at the pavilion. However, it seemed that no one really wanted to leave. Bob and Judy stood nearby and greeted folks, groups lingered and visited, waving goodbyes as, one by one, friends pulled out in their rigs.

Many people worked hard to make this rally a success. It would be a long list to try to name all who should be thanked! However, special mention should be made of Phillip and Sorena Hollingsworth, Lead Tiffin Field Technician and his wife, who worked tirelessly to provide service to all rally attendees who needed his help.

How encouraging and gratifying it is to see so many Tiffin owners who are, in these uncertain economic times, still coming to rallies, still enjoying the wonderful benefits of owning a Tiffin product, still “Roughing It Smoothly!” 

by Gail Johnson

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