

# Roughing It Smoothly<sup>®</sup>



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# Roughing It Smoothly®

July 2010 Volume 7, Number 3

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## Letters, We Get Letters... and Postcards and Emails

Thanks for your emails. We continue to enjoy publishing *Roughing It Smoothly* from Monroe, Georgia. In early June, Carolyn and I spent nine days in Louisiana building a story on the surviving sugarcane plantations which thrived in the nineteenth century. The ingenuity of the planters and the opulence of their homes was amazing. The heat and humidity of a Louisiana summer leads me to recommend that you plan your trip to this state in the spring or fall. You might also want to combine the tour of the sugarcane plantations with a visit to the World War II Museum in New Orleans.

### 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, Florida. Dr. and Mrs. Pilarczyk travel in a 2007 Phaeton. 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 at left, 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 at left (put "Serious Tech Talk" in the first line), or send an email to RIStechtalk@gmail.com

### Changes of Address

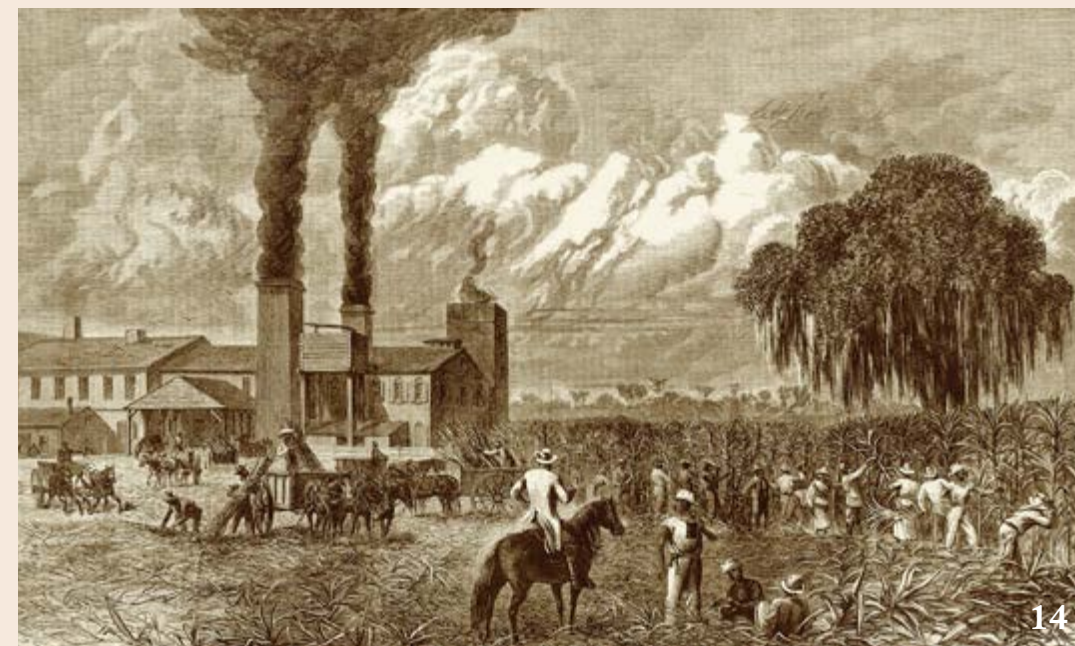
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Tiffin coach owners may receive a free subscription by **writing** to *Roughing It Smoothly*®, 1403 Cedar Point Way, Monroe, GA 30656 or **emailing** fredthompson1941@hotmail.com. Please include your phone number, the last six characters of your vehicle 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.

*Sugar Harvest in Louisiana*  
from *Harper's Weekly*  
1875



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## Coming Back... Carefully

by Bob Tiffin

I am sure all of you are fully aware of the difficult times the RV industry has been through in the last two years. Many RV manufacturers closed their doors permanently. Two or three were absorbed by larger corporations or investment firms. Those who survived had to take stringent steps to preserve their companies. Tiffin Motorhomes was prepared for such a downturn and we are implementing our comeback very carefully.

No one ever likes to slow production down. However, viable companies that are sales driven must cut back production when their customers quit purchasing their products. Companies are forced to lay off employees — which everyone hates to do. Everyone loses: the employees lose some of their income and the companies lose valuable talent and skills.

This was the case at Tiffin Motorhomes. Starting in March 2008, we had to cut production from 13 units a day to 11; then to eight; then to six; and finally to three. Each cut in production demanded a layoff of employees. The layoffs took place over six months. It really hurt me personally to see the effect it had on families as their breadwinners had to accept unemployment compensation or lower paying jobs. It hurt us as a company as we lost talented, skilled, well-trained people. But the fact is, for the sake of the stability and future welfare of the company, you must not produce more than you can sell.

Thankfully, we are now seeing an increased demand for our product. We started gaining a little momentum in Spring 2009. However, we were reluctant to increase production, unsure that the orders would keep coming. Credit was still tight and that significantly reduced the number of buyers that banks would approve. We waited for six months to assess the indicators before we started to increase production.

Before the recession, we had two production lines. By the second quarter of 2008 we had downsized our plant to the point that we only needed one production line. The same was true for the paint plant.

So the challenge was to get production back up to a “normal” level and still do a good job for our customers.

Ironically, the recession really gave us a unique opportunity. For the first time since I started the business in December 1972, we were able to “start over.” With only three units a day in production, and then four and five and up to six, we found time to try new ideas and methods in the production line that



would have been difficult to implement if we had been producing 13 units a day. The experimentation and changes helped us develop better control over our quality and production processes.

In the assembly plant's production line there are 22 workstations. Each unit in the production line stops for a specified amount of time at each workstation for the assigned installations and tasks to be performed. The specified time is referred to as the “roll time” — the amount of time a unit stays at a particular workstation before it is rolled to the next workstation.


While we were producing six or less units per day on one production line, we learned that the optimum roll time was approximately 90 minutes. When we reached six a day, we decided it was time to reopen the second production line. At present we are running six on one line and four on the other. With the quality numbering system that we use, we have found that not exceeding the 90-minute roll time produces the best results as far as quality and production are concerned.

We know that the key to keep quality up as we increase production is a well-trained work force and roll times that stay within 80 to 90 minutes. With our “start over” opportunity, we have really made the best out of a bad situation.

I am getting a lot of questions about when the Allegro Breeze will be ready. At the Louisville Show last November, we thought we might have the Breeze on dealers' lots by April. It's now July. We are extending the chassis development time for the Breeze because we are engineering the problems out of it before it goes to the assembly plant.

We are beginning to start slowly on the assembly line production of the Allegro Breeze. In the chassis shop the Breeze has a separate production line from the chassis being produced for the Bus and Phaeton. We are going to do the same in the assembly plant. The larger Class A coaches have a U-shaped assembly line, requiring two passes through the assembly plant. The Breeze will require only half of the number of workstations needed for the larger Class A's, and therefore will have an I-shaped assembly line with 12 to 14 workstations. Extra time spent now will produce a better motorhome and much happier Breeze owners.

In the very near future you will be seeing Tiffin's 2011 models. Keep in touch with your dealer to check on 2011 deliveries.

Until next time, keep on “Roughing It Smoothly” and drive safely. Please don't use your cell phone while driving. Let your passenger do the talking. 



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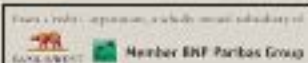
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# From a Zephyr to a Breeze

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

THE MANDATE WAS *downsize!* BUT DON'T take away my amenities. Experienced RVers offered many reasons for downsizing and there were questions, too.

We're ten years older now and not as comfortable driving a big 40-foot Bus anymore. • Can you build a nice, but smaller coach that gets 14 mph? • My wife won't drive the Phaeton, but I think she would drive a much smaller coach. • We would like to have a downsized version of the Allegro Bus so we can stay at state and national parks. • We love Fall football Saturdays with our friends; haven't missed a game in 20 years. Getting

QUALITY &  
LUXURY COME  
IN BOTH SIZES

there in our Bus is half the fun. Can three couples travel to a game in the Breeze? • We want a motorhome that's a little more sporty, got a little more zip on the gas pedal. • We just bought a house that has no stairs anywhere, but it takes six

steps to climb into our Phaeton. Can you build a coach lower to the ground?

We all have heard the famous maxim: *Less is more*. And it certainly can be – if “less” means efficient, serviceable product design whose operation is intuitive and very functional. *Less is more* is also a cooperative venture. The user must be willing to change his RVing *modus operandi*. Downsizing is not something that ingenious design and deft manufacturing make happen while we continue with our old habits of hauling everything from home to assure our ultimate comfort. Downsizing means reducing the amount

of cargo carrying capacity. The “downsizer” must begin to *think lean*. We can enjoy the freedom that having less stuff brings while enjoying a wonderful vacation or a long, long trip to see this great country.

With all of that said, let’s take a look inside and see if the Allegro Breeze 28BR provided what you downsizers wanted. Ah, yes — a four-step entrance, not six. Whoa! The new dash is a show-stopper!

### The Cockpit

The instrumentation and switch presentations are outstanding. The steering wheel does not obstruct one’s view of the instruments at all. The entire upper half of the wheel is an open arc. The gauges use bold white characters against a black background and are easily viewed at night and in any level of daylight. The speedometer takes center position and is flanked on the right by the two air pressure gauges. The left side presents the RPM and fuel gauges. Warning lights are positioned around the top circle of the speedometer. The instrument package is recessed into a black hood that is 19 inches wide and 8 inches high. The upper part of the dash slopes slightly away and provides the location for HVAC ducts on either side of the instruments. The left area also houses switches for the headlamps, windshield wiper/washer, and the parking brake. The upper dash is a handsome matte black.

The lower portion of the dash slopes down and slightly forward. Its light buff matte finish perfectly matches the Halo Leather used on the Flexsteel driver and passenger chairs. On the right side, black lighted toggle switches with an aluminum bezel control the driver and passenger fans, solar and night shades for the windshield, genset start/stop, map light, and radio. On the left side, the toggle switches control engine preheat, auxiliary start, and pedals in/out. The solar and opaque night shades are one-piece motorized units that extend across the entire 90-inch windshield. The pedals in/out control makes it possible for drivers with considerably different heights to comfortably reach the brake and fuel pedals

(a feature usually found on coaches in the \$300K and up price range).

The driver’s side panel positions the controls for the mirrors, gear selector, the HWH air leveling system, and a large cupholder. Another surprise: the Breeze does not have jacks; it is leveled by air bags. At ankle level, the side panel has a large map box and a third HVAC duct.

A center console approximately 16 inches wide presents the Triple Vision monitor for the side and rear cameras, a high-end radio, and large radial knobs for the automotive HVAC. An extended tray in the console provides the space for two large cupholders. All of the console instrumentation is framed by an aluminum-color bezel.

The side console for the passenger seat features a map light toggle switch, a large cupholder, a map box, and both 12- and 110-volt outlets. The dashboard offers the passenger two HVAC ducts. The forward vertical panel of the console faces the entry door and houses the switches for the ceiling lights, the 12-volt master control, porch and door outside lights, door and patio awnings, and entry steps.

Saving the best until last, the on-board dash computer has very practical programs. First, an operating checklist prompts the

driver to review 18 items before driving the coach. The mode selector allows checking of records on the chassis and house batteries, trip distance meter, engine trip fuel (which deducts the amount used by the generator), average vehicle speed, average fuel economy, genset hours, engine hours, and engine temperature.

The large 39×48-inch driver’s side window is protected by a full solar screen pulled down manually from the top. At night a privacy screen covers the same area. In the overall side window frame, the driver can open a 19×21-inch screened window. Protected by a full solar shade, half of the 18×27-inch passenger window can be opened while driving and is screened. Both the entry door and the passenger window have full, opaque privacy shades.

The driver and passenger chairs have two hatch storage boxes at ceiling level in the sidewalls. An optional 26-inch LCD television was centered over the dash. It is flanked on the passenger side with an entertainment control center for cable, plus inputs for roof and tripod satellite receivers, and antenna rotator control. The hatch on the driver’s side conceals the wind control panel for the door and patio awnings.

In short, the functionality and design of the cockpit is absolutely superb.







### The Living–Dining–Galley Area

This area has significant downsizing but still achieves the designer's goals for a comfortable and efficient living space. How did they do it? Natural light; multi-purpose, custom-designed seating; light cream enamel cabinetry; and storage in all of the right places.

Nothing makes a small area look larger than good lighting. This area has both natural lighting (two huge windows 19 × 54 inches and 19 × 46 inches on opposite sides) and ample electrical lighting. Tiffin

has become expert in designing and manufacturing recessed barrel lighting. Each light is positioned by engineering into the roof manufacturing process. This area has 21 ceiling lights with six control switches for creating the exact mood or functional lighting needed. Another nine barrel lights controlled by four switches are recessed into the overhead storage cabinets above the dinette, sofa, and galley.

The furniture design can be underscored by the word "versatility." The C-shaped dinette sofa is 80 inches wide. It

can seat four (seat belts for three). When the dinette table is lowered, the oval-shaped dinette folds and fills the cavity of the C. A cushion fills the inset and you have a bed that can sleep a 6-footer or two children comfortably. A large drawer under one side the dinette sofa measures 17 × 19 × 5.5 inches, perfect for table cloth, napkins, and other table service items. The 38-inch oval table can serve four for lunch. A switch at the back of the dinette sofa adds three barrel lights for reading.

On the driver's side, a 66-inch Flex-



steel jack knife sofa seats three (seat belts for two), and it can quickly knock down for another bed for children or one adult. Three lights are recessed into the overhead storage cabinet. The overhead cabinets in the living room area offer 13 cubic feet of storage. The driver's chair can make a 165-degree turn to put another seat into the conversation pit. The optional surround sound system can inject soft background music for your relaxation and pleasure, or bounce you out of your seat with the volume that makes an exciting DVD movie come to life.

Of course, downsizing means a smaller galley, too. But this one steps up to the job with all of the features you had in your Phaeton: a 2-burner cooktop with an outside vented exhaust, stainless steel sink, microwave-convection oven, four barrel lights above the solid surface countertop. Storage? Try 3.5 cubic feet directly over the countertop; three large stacked drawers (18.5 × 23 inches) on the forward side and three more smaller ones (17 × 7.6 × 5.5 inches) for a total of 4.4 cubic feet of storage. That's not all. Next to the refrigerator is a double-door pantry (see picture). The six cubic foot refrigerator-freezer can be ordered with an optional icemaker. Storage that is often overlooked is the space under the galley sink. The Breeze has 6.5

cubic feet, part of which will be used for the trash can, leaving you with at least four cubic feet that can be enhanced with stacked containers.

#### Entertainment

The surround sound system and Tiffin's HDMI television 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 optional in-motion satellite system which pulls programming from network satellites while you are traveling. 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. The surround sound system is optional on the Breeze.

There are three 26-inch Panasonic HDMI televisions in the reviewed Breeze. The mid-section TV is standard. The overhead dash and bedroom TVs are optional.

#### The Bath

Again, ingenuity created generous spaces. It's a walk-through bath with sectioned off privacy afforded by two translucent sliding glass doors with sturdy 1.5 × 4-inch frames with enamel paint to match the cabinets. To keep the floor lower, Tiffin engineers allowed the wheel wells to extend four inches up into the cabin area. In the forward area, the driver's and passenger's chairs are located above the front wheel wells. The shower and toilet-lavatory compartments are positioned over the fully concealed rear wheel wells. To provide extra headroom, large skylights were located over each compartment.

A vanity with solid surface countertop and lavatory, storage underneath for towels, three curved shelves for toiletries, a medicine cabinet and two mirrors, a Thetford foot-flush toilet, three towel racks, and a hand towel ring make this compartment perfect for the Breeze. The shower stall is 27 × 32 inches with a rainglass curved door. Hardware in both compartments compares favorably with that found in the Phaeton.

#### The Bedroom

Another piece of very functional design! The bed box over the rear engine is 60" long × 75" wide × 23.5" deep. It accom-



modates a queen-size width mattress with a 75-inch length. At the forward end of the box are four large drawers, each 22.5 inches wide with varying lengths and depths. In the middle of the bed box, the design engineers built 4.8 cubic feet of storage space. The mattress platform lifts easily with air struts.

Each side of the bed has cabinetry for a closet that is 19.5" deep × 12" wide × 44.5" high. Under each closet is a 13.5-inch wide bedside cabinet with 110-volt service. Each cabinet has a drawer 5.5" wide × 23" long × 7" deep, plus a storage area under the drawer that offers 2.65 cubic feet.

The bedroom's side walls have residential-style baseboards and chair rails. The wallpaper above the chair rail is a dark brown dappled patchwork pattern contrasted with a light cream and brown wallpaper with a rain-washed pattern under the rail. The bed comforter is light brown with philodendron leaf prints, accented with dark brown pillows with similar prints. The headboard, the focal point of the bedroom, was created with raised, fabric-covered, chocolate brown panels framed with cream enamel wood molding.

Above the headboard are three storage compartments with the raised panel doors that are used throughout the coach. One of the compartments is used for the optional DVD Home Theater Sys-

tem and satellite receiver. The other two provide 4.2 cubic feet of storage.

At night, eight barrel lights in the ceiling brighten the bedroom along with two reading lamps. During the day two large windows (26 × 44 inches) bring the outside in. Both windows serve as emergency exits.

### **The Chassis, Infrastructure, and Outside Storage**

Today most Class A motorhomes are built on common chassis manufactured by four companies. The Breeze is built on a custom-designed Powerglide chassis that was integrally designed for this coach. Every component in the chassis infrastructure is specifically located for a reason—usually overall balance or proximity to the supported item in the coach itself. As with the larger Powerglide chassis built for the Allegro Bus, the new technology of multiplexed cables is used for excellent reliability and a much smaller wiring harness. The chassis rails, the outriggers, and the basement framing are all assembled with huck bolts, each one individually installed at a measured PSI and individually torqued.

Even though the basement was downsized, pass-through storage was retained since that is one of the most popular features on Tiffin's large Class A coaches. Beginning at the entry door, let's do an outside tour. Accessing convenient storage



quickly, the first basement door opens up a cavity of 7.8 cubic feet. It is 64" deep × 20" wide × 10.5" high. The second door presents the pass-through storage area with 19.8 cubic feet of space. The third, fourth, and fifth doors give access to the wet tanks, cooling infrastructure, and the chassis batteries and electrical infrastructure. All are side-opening doors.

The large one-piece door in the rear cap is supported by air struts and lifts up completely out of the way to access the engine's service points, all easily viewed and reached. The rear cap and door are really a nice piece of design and engineering.

From the rear and moving up the driver's side, the first door offers a storage area of 3.7 cubic feet. The second door houses the 50-amp service cord. The utility service bay behind the third door is concisely engineered to include every component found in Tiffin's large coaches, even the



outside shower and the paper towel holder. It makes shore hookups really easy. The fourth door is the pass-through access that connects to the second door on the passenger side. The propane tank is located in the fifth compartment and the sixth compartment houses fuse blocks and electrical components, all neatly labeled. The 6.0 kw Quiet Diesel Onan generator is located under the front cap and accessed through a lift-up door.

### Driving the Allegro Breeze

In the last issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*, Bob Tiffin offered a very thorough driving report for the Breeze. His report follows:

I took an active role in personally testing the prototype by driving it approximately 500 miles. Its handling characteristics are very similar to our front engine

gas models. The steering is very responsive. If you have been driving a Phaeton or a Bus, it may take a little getting used to. In a high-wind situation, you may get moved around just a bit, but that can also happen with larger coaches. Overall I was well-satisfied with the way the Breeze handled. Keep in mind that the prototype I tested had leaf springs, but the production models will have independent air-ride suspension which will certainly make it handle better.

The Breeze stops better and quicker than anything we build today and without any nosediving. Its acceleration is very good—no problem with ramp acceleration to merge into interstate traffic or with moving into the passing lane to get around slower traffic. We towed a 4,000-pound Chevy Malibu for 70 miles and could

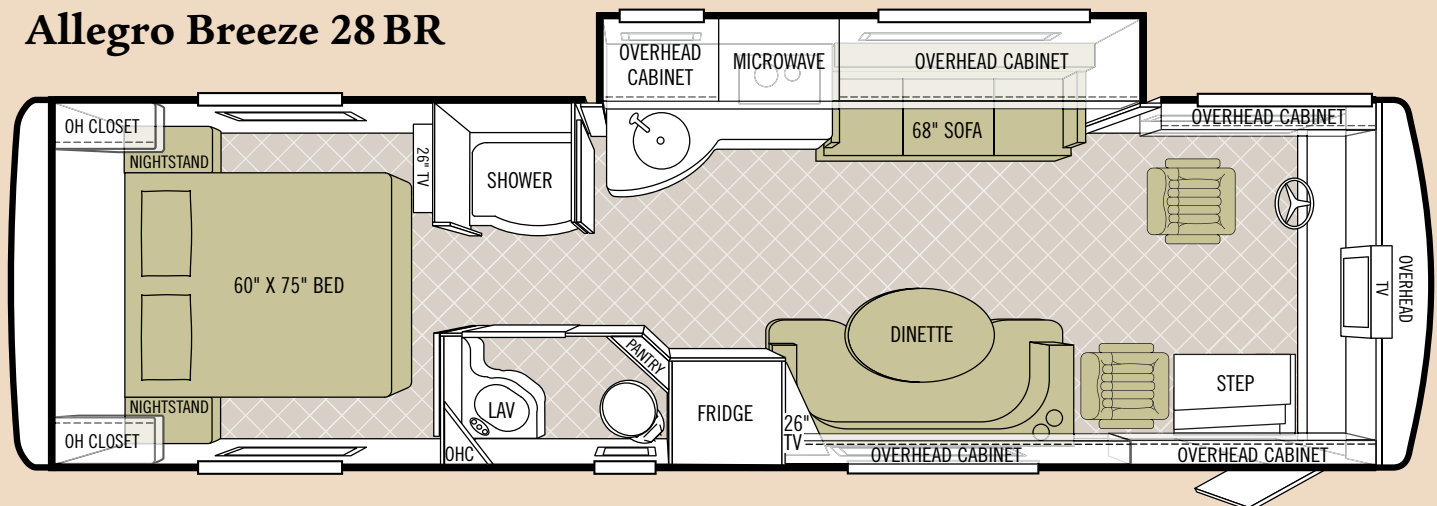
hardly tell the car was back there during acceleration, cruising, and braking.

In a separate test, I drove 101 miles to test fuel economy. For those of you who are familiar with the area, I left Red Bay, drove through Belmont, and got on the Natchez Trace to the Tennessee River bridge. Then I followed Gunniford Road into Florence, turned south on US 43 to Russellville where I went through the downtown area to catch all of the traffic lights, and finally back to Red Bay on SR 24. I was not towing and did not have any significant cargo. The result was 14.22 mpg. I drove the speed limit on every segment of the trip, but did not get over 65 anywhere. Not bad for a diesel engine that had less than 5,000 miles on it. I will speculate at this point that the Breeze will get between 13 and 16 mpg, depending on load and individual driving habits.

Just a few more features that may interest you: we chose a V-8 MaxForce International diesel engine built by Navistar. It has 215-hp with 560 lb.-ft. of torque at 1400 rpm. That in itself is a formula for good fuel economy. The size of this engine will exempt it from the urea additive requirement that affects our larger brands with the Cummins diesel engines. We used a 6-kw Onan Quiet Diesel generator that will provide power for everything in the coach.

I think the Breeze will satisfy a very significant market demand. What is really satisfying to me is — I think we may be in a class by ourselves! **RIS**

## Allegro Breeze 28 BR



# SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2011 Allegro Breeze 28 BR, One Slide

Pricing to be announced through our dealers in the near future.

## STANDARD FEATURES

### Structural

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

### Automotive

Allison 1000 MH 6-speed transmission  
Navistar Maxx Force 7 V8 engine  
560 lb-ft torque @ 1400 rpm  
Cruise control with steering wheel controls  
Fog lights  
Daytime running lights  
Emergency start switch

### Exterior

Fiberglass front & rear caps  
Tinted one-piece windshield  
6.0 Onan® diesel generator  
Two 13,500 BTU low profile roof Coleman AC (high efficiency)  
Quiet AC roof-ducted system  
Single electric step  
¼-inch thick single pane windows  
Horizontal mounted wipers  
Heated power mirrors  
Gel-coat fiberglass walls  
Full body paint  
Paint protective film  
Exterior patio lights  
Power patio awning  
Power door awning  
Slide-out awning  
Automatic Level Air system  
Convenient access doors with gas shocks  
Aluminum wheels  
Single handle lockable storage door latches  
Heated water and holding tank compartments  
Two 6v auxiliary batteries  
Park telephone ready  
Hi-def rotating TV antenna  
Cable ready TV  
50-amp service  
Battery Minder Plus  
Black holding tank flush system  
Exterior rinse hose/shower  
Rear and side view cameras with color dash monitor  
110v exterior receptacle  
110v / 12v converter  
Undercoating  
Roof ladder  
External tripod satellite hook-up

### Driver's Compartment

Step switch and 12v disconnect switch  
Non-powered cloth passenger & driver seats (Flexsteel®)  
Lighted instrument panel

Single CD player & stereo AM/FM radio  
Two 12v dash receptacle  
Tilt/telescope steering wheel with cruise  
Dual dash fans  
Power solar & privacy shades  
Roll-Ease® solar & privacy shades for driver & passenger side windows  
Fire extinguisher  
Snack / beverage tray

### Living Area / Dinette

Dinette sleeper lounge with Halo Leather  
Storage drawer in sleeper lounge  
66" Cloth jack knife sofa--DS  
Mid-section LCD TV

### Kitchen

Single lever satin nickel sink faucet  
Single bowl kitchen sink with flush glass cover  
Solid surface countertop  
Solid surface backsplashes  
Dual burner cooktop with microwave-convection oven  
Double door gas/electric refrigerator freezer  
Double door pantry

### Bath

Medicine cabinet  
Skylight in shower  
Satin nickel vanity faucet  
Toilet compartment with lavatory  
Solid surface countertop  
Fiberglass shower with curved rain-glass shower door

### Bedroom

Dual wardrobes with drawers & storage underneath  
Four drawers at foot of bed  
Wall-to-wall carpeting  
Bed comforter  
Innerspring mattress  
Carbon monoxide detector  
LPG leak detector  
Bed pillows  
Phone jack  
Large storage compartment under bed  
110v outlets in bedside tables

### General Interior

Raised panel cabinet doors  
Vinyl headliner  
Solid cabinet doors & drawer fronts  
Wall-to-wall vinyl tile flooring in living room, kitchen, & bath  
Ball bearing drawer slides  
Scotchgard® treated carpet & fabrics  
Roll-Ease® solar & privacy shades  
Two power roof vents  
Tank level monitor system

Smoke detector  
6-gallon DSI gas / electric water heater  
Compartment door with single point latch  
Single 30,000 BTU ducted furnace

## OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Power driver & passenger seats, Halo leather  
Bedroom tile  
Winegard automatic satellite  
Surround sound system with DVD player  
Vacuum cleaner system  
LCD front OH TV  
LCD bedroom TV  
66" Leather jack knife sofa--DS  
Solid wood refrigerator panel inserts

## OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Power driver & passenger seats, cloth  
Ice maker in refrigerator  
15,000 AC with heat pump (front only) IPO 13,500 AC  
Bedroom tile  
Medium alderwood solid wood cabinet doors, cabinet facings, & drawer fronts

## MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase - 152"  
Overall length - 28'11"  
Overall height with roof air - 11' 2"  
Interior height - 78"  
Overall width - 96"  
Interior width - 92"

## WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR - 21,500 lbs.  
Front GAWR - 8,000 lbs.  
Rear GAWR - 13,500 lbs.  
GCWR - 26,000 lbs.  
UVW - 17,300 lbs.  
CCC - 2,904 lbs.  
Trailer hitch capacity - 4,500 lbs.

## POWER TRAIN

Engine - V-8 Navistar Maxx Force 7  
Horsepower - 215 hp @ 2600 rpm  
Torque - 560 lb.ft. @ 1400 rpm  
Transmission - Allison 6-speed MH 1000  
Tire size - 265/70R 19.5, load range G  
Alternator - 160 amps

## CHASSIS

Frame - Full length ladder type design

Frame design - Low floor, one-piece construction  
Anti-locking braking system - Standard 4-wheel anti-lock brakes  
Suspension (front and rear) - Modified air rich  
Shock absorbers - Sachs custom tuned  
Axles - Heavy-duty Dana E-1007W Front; Dana S16-130 Rear  
Leveling - HWH Level Air system

## CONSTRUCTION

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

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps - Six adults  
Fuel tank - 75 gallons  
Fresh water - 72 gallons  
Black water - 33 gallons  
Grey water - 55 gallons  
LPG tank - 24 gallons (can be filled to 80% capacity)

## MSRP\*

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

## UVW

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

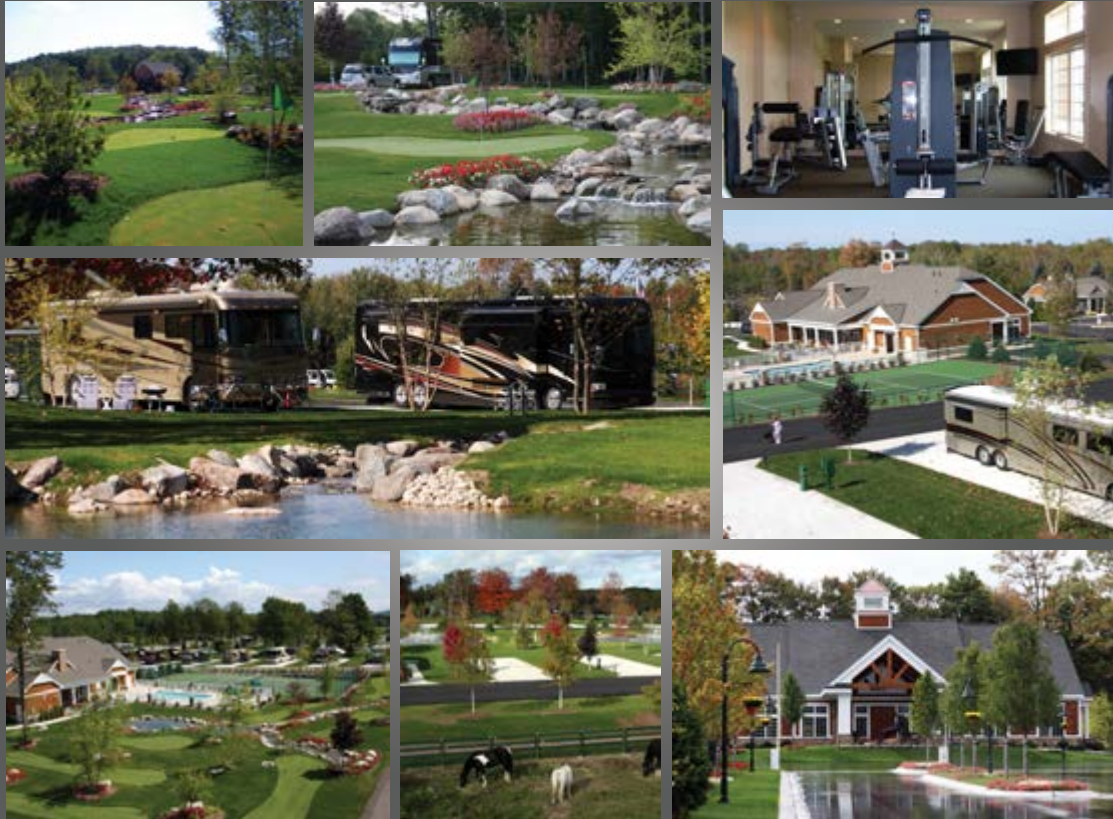
## DEALERS

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

## PLEASE NOTE

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

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# When Sugarcane Was King

by Carolyn and Fred Thompson

## A Brief History of the Land

Louisiana's River Road today is a narrow two-lane that follows the wide Mississippi on both sides, using several different county route numbers. With views constantly blocked by the protective levees, the road is no longer a scenic drive that *includes* the river. In fact, the opposite side of the river roads are not scenic either. The great houses on the plantations we came to visit, which each often occupied thousands of acres, have become oases in a mélange of refineries, storage tanks, small towns, and occasional restaurants. But these oases offer fascinating histories of a multi-cultural society whose planters with inventiveness, good agricultural practices, ingenious business management, and slave labor successfully produced sugar in a sub-tropic climate.

Louisiana was first explored and claimed for France in 1682 when the French explorer Sieur de La Salle descended the Mississippi from the Great Lakes. He named it "Louisiana" for the reigning monarch of France, Louis XIV. Remnants of Hernando de Soto's expedition had floated down the Mississippi to its mouth in 1542 in an effort to return to Mexico after the ex-

plorer's death near Memphis. But they had no interest in claiming the area for Spain.

In 1714 Louis Antoine Juchereau de St. Denis, a French-Canadian, founded Fort St. Jean Baptiste, the first permanent settlement in Louisiana, which is present-day Natchitoches. Three years later, the area saw a period of growth and development under the auspices of the Company of the West, an elaborate colonization scheme endorsed by the French government which ultimately created a significant drain on France's economy. New Orleans was built as a company town and by 1721 had a population of 370. In the 1720s French settlers acquired a Spanish land grant on the property now occupied by the Houmas House Plantation, and were living in the area with the Houmas Indians.

The French government decided its territories west of the Mississippi River were too remote and unprofitable, and in 1762 ceded the area to Spain. Twenty-three months went by before the colonists in Louisiana learned they were no longer French subjects. In 1769 the Spanish governor, Alejandro O'Reilly, established firm administrative and military control of Louisiana for Spain.

## Dedication

In the Fall 2009 issue of *Roughing It Smoothly*, Norm Spray and Billie Huggins followed the first 575 miles of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway, providing us with a cultural, geographical, and recreational story about the Mississippi's inauspicious origin in Minnesota's Northwest Woods to a point 680 miles later when it crossed into Iowa. Billie planned their next magazine story on the other end of the Mississippi, a fabled 70-mile stretch of the river road between Baton Rouge and

New Orleans, where the great sugarcane plantations began to flourish over 250 years ago. In late May, Norm called to say they couldn't make the trip because Billie had just had surgery during which an aggressive cancer was discovered. Carolyn and I made Billie's planned trip beginning on June 9.

We dedicate this story to Billie, a wonderful lady who loves Texas, German Oktoberfests, and traveling with her best friend and high school classmate, Norman Spray.

For nearly forty years Spain tried to make the colony profitable to the crown, but failed just as France had earlier. Worn financially thin by propping up a poor business venture, Spain arranged to return the Louisiana territory west of the Mississippi to France in 1800 by the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso. The Spanish were also concerned with U.S. expansionism and the likelihood of having to fight restless Americans to retain control of the territory. Louisiana was to remain under Spanish control until a transfer of power to France on November 30, 1803. Aware of the treaty through intelligence sources, President Jefferson sent Robert Livingston to France in 1801 to negotiate the sale of the port of New Orleans to relieve conflict between the two countries over their previous agreements to permit U.S. industrial and agricultural shipments coming down the Mississippi River to proceed to the Atlantic coast and international destinations. Napoleon refused to negotiate with Livingston although the U.S. was prepared to pay \$10 million. Jefferson decided to send James Monroe in March 1803. Just days before he arrived in Paris, France's foreign minister offered the entire territory for \$15 million. Surprised, but afraid they would lose the deal they needed to secure New Orleans, the two emissaries accepted on April 30 without taking the time to consult with President Jefferson which would have required two Transatlantic crossings. They signed the treaty on April 2, 1803. The purchase was announced to the American public on July 4, 1803. The Louisiana Territory of 828,800 square miles was ceded to the U.S. on December 20, 1803, just three weeks after France took possession of the territory from Spain.

### The French Cultural Influence

Most of the planters of Southern Louisiana deeply resented the sale of "their country" to the United States. They regarded the U.S. as their customer, but certainly not their government. They treasured their Creole<sup>1</sup> heritage and culture. Their language of choice was French and the wealthier families sent their children to France for secondary and advanced education. As more Americans came to Southern Louisiana to seek their fortunes, cultural compromise slowly evolved, producing irreversible social change. Norman Marmillion, president of the Laura Plantation Company and tour guide extraordinaire, noted that the change was readily seen in the architecture of the planters' homes. "The French Creole houses, San Francisco and Laura, for example, were ornate and painted with bright colors. As the Anglo planters built their houses from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, they painted their Greek Revival homes all white," he said.

### The Growth of the Sugarcane Industry

The Southern Louisiana climate was at best marginally suited for producing sugarcane. Successfully grown for over 200 years in the island countries of the Caribbean, the nineteenth century varieties required a frost-free growing season of at least 250 days. Sugar growers in Louisiana had to find new methods for

growing and processing cane to make it a dependable and profitable crop.

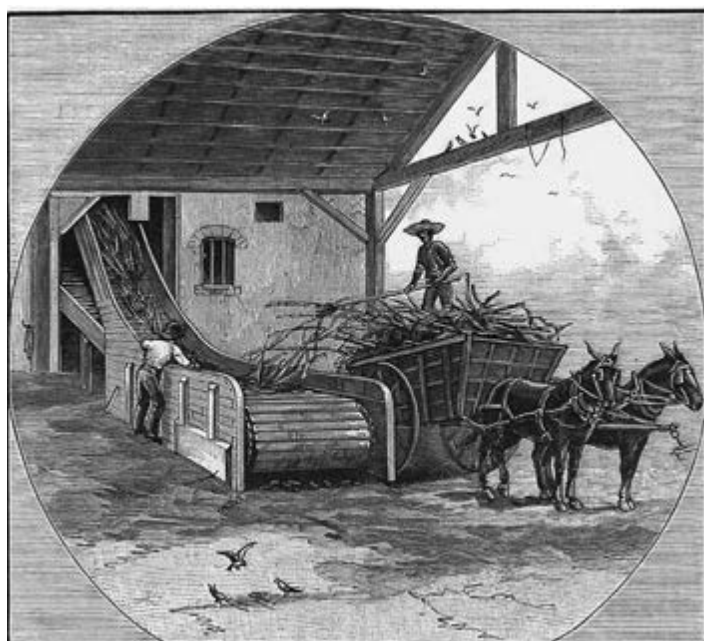
The Jesuits seem to have been the first growers who planted a significant quantity of sugarcane in 1742, most of which was converted into syrup. The first sugar mill was built in 1758, but this and other mills produced an inferior product.

There were setbacks. Weather and mistakes in processing the sugarcane often caused huge losses. By the late 1760s sugar production in the state had almost ceased. After the slave rebellion and revolution in French-controlled Haiti in the 1790s, many sugar growers and sugar masters from the plantations with experience in the granulation process escaped to New Orleans. Two of these refugees began to work with Étienne de Boré, a brother-in-law of Jean Noel Destrehan (see sidebar and Destrehan plantation stories). Étienne's success in 1795 led Jean Noel to convert the Destrehan Plantation from indigo to sugarcane. By 1803 he was shipping 200,000 pounds of sugar.

The industry revived itself following Boré's success. By 1812 when Louisiana entered the Union as a slave state, over 100 plantations were exporting their sugar to both American and European markets. By 1827 there were 308 sugar plantations which required 21,000 slaves. Just three years later there were 691 plantations and 36,000 slaves. The introduction of steam-powered grinding machines in 1822 boosted the potential for productivity and allowed planters to expand cultivation, confident their new technology could grind their cane before the first hard freeze.

Nevertheless, the process for converting cane juice to sugar during the first third of the century was tedious and time-consuming.<sup>2</sup> During harvest at Destrehan, the day was divided into four watches of six hours each, operating under the theory there would be fewer injuries and mistakes if no one was overly

Loading cane at the sugarmill, from *Harper's Weekly*.\*





tired. Other plantations worked twelve to eighteen hours straight during grinding. The plantation cooks provided the slaves with food and coffee. Destrehan used banks of four open kettles of graduated size, all arranged in line over a brick fire pit.

The fresh juice from the grinding mill began in the largest kettle called the “grande.” As it boiled down, it was transferred to the “flambeau” kettle where lime was added and foam and other debris was skimmed from the top. Next, the clarified juice went to the “syrop” kettle where it was thickened. The last stop was the smallest kettle, called the “batterie” because the surface of the liquid was beaten with paddles to keep it from foaming over the top of the kettle. As the sugar crystals appeared, the mixture was removed from the heat to cool. After the last of the liquid, called molasses, was drained away, the brown raw sugar was placed in hogsheads<sup>3</sup> for shipment to a New Orleans sugar factory.

It took two to four cords of wood to make a barrel of sugar. Amazingly, it took 200 gallons of sugarcane juice to make each gallon of saleable raw sugar extracted from the “batterie” kettle.

Sometime around Christmas, the fires were extinguished, the sugar house and grinding house were cleaned, and a two-week vacation was declared.

With careful management and a certain amount of luck and educated gambling on how long to wait before harvesting, planters could make big profits. The first territorial governor, William C. C. Claiborne, reported to President Jefferson that the “facility with which the sugar planters amass wealth is almost incredible.”<sup>4</sup> He went on to note that planters who made fairly modest investments could net \$14,000 annually. The *Louisiana Gazette* cited an 800-acre plantation with 60 hands that produced 250,000 pounds of sugar and 160 hogsheads of molasses annually, valued at more than \$22,000.<sup>5</sup>

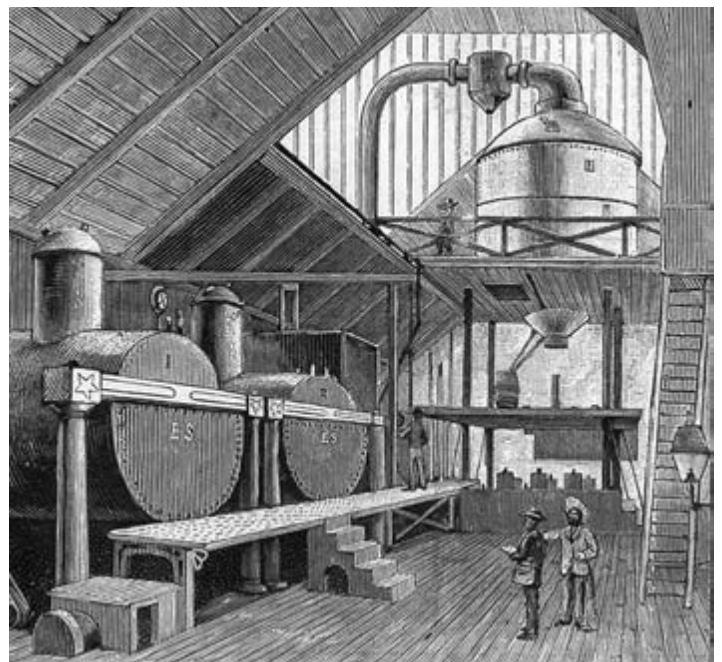
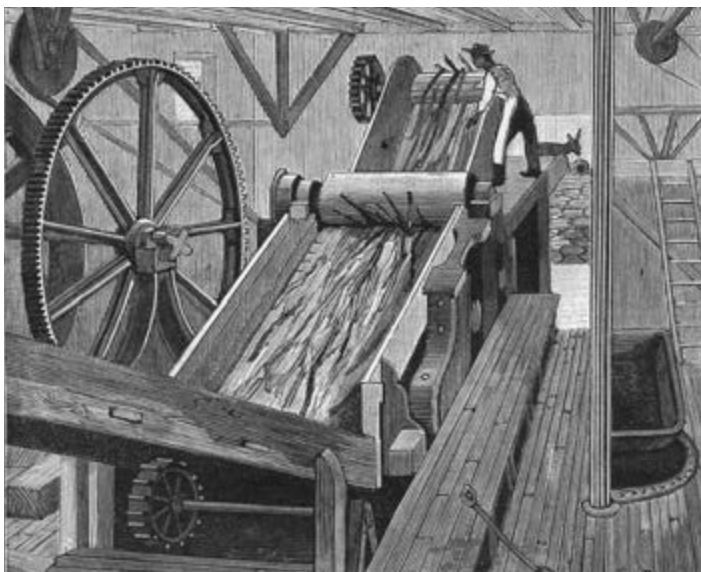
Thomas Nuttall, an English botanist who lived and worked in America for over thirty years beginning in 1808, commented in his

1819 treatise on the powerful fusion between slavery and wealth formation after his visit to Wade Hampton’s expansive estate. He concluded that slave labor was the bedrock of an immense fortune that equaled “that of almost any English nobleman.”<sup>6</sup>

In the next third of the nineteenth century, the new technology developed for the processing and refining of sugar required huge investments which excluded the smaller operations. The planters who wanted to serve the growing demand for white sugar invested in the evaporation technology and clarification equipment that produced large and brilliant sugar crystals. Norbert Rillieux developed an alternative method of processing that utilized the heat generated by the exhaust of a steam engine rather than the direct heat of a furnace. In 1843 he patented his multiple-effect vacuum pan. It minimized the risk of scorching the sugar and maintained a lower average temperature than open kettles. The quality and quantity surpassed all other methods. By 1860 the productive thrust of the Louisiana sugar industry lay in the lands of two wealthy planters and 500 elite sugar masters who controlled over two thirds of the slaves and available acreage in the state. The number of slaves in cane production had reached nearly 300,000 and crop value was \$30 million.<sup>7</sup>

The beginning of the Civil War ended an era for Louisiana sugar plantations. Prices fell, credit was scarce, and the Union Army destroyed everything that might have been of any use to the South. The number of sugar producing plantations decreased from twelve hundred in 1861 to seventy-five at the end of the war. It took a new beginning and two decades for the industry to recover. The efficient technology which had evolved by 1860 continued to improve. But its cost and capability to process large volumes of sugarcane led to commercially run plantations, each with thousands of acres. The days of the individual, independent plantations were numbered. Large factories, greater efficiency, and better sugar recovery methods were indicators

Crushing cane, from *Harper’s Weekly*, 1883.\*  
Inside a sugarmill, from *Harper’s Weekly*, 1883.\*





Sugar Harvest in Louisiana, from *Harper's Weekly*, 1875.\*

of progress, but a few small plantations continued to survive.<sup>8</sup>

The increased capacity fostered consolidation both in the number of plantations and factories. The ability to transport the cane by rail enabled many successful growers to increase their plantings from hundreds to thousands of acres. The “central factory” concept, popularized by Leon Godchaux, contributed to the expansion of the industry.

In 1901 the first oil well was drilled in Jennings. Today Louisiana ranks second in the nation in oil production. As the oil industry developed, some of the world’s most productive agricultural land was transferred to new uses as the region between the state’s capital and its primary port city became the largest petrochemical complex in the world. The land once used for sugarcane was sold for new uses that usually resulted in the demolition of the plantations’ great architecture and landscapes.<sup>9</sup>

In 1912 a decline began in the Louisiana sugar industry that lasted for more than a quarter of a century. A severe drought and a siege of the dreaded mosaic disease caused sugar production to fall from 290,000 tons in 1922 to 88,000 tons in 1927. Then, the great flood of 1927 struck a near knock-out blow to the individually owned plantations that were left. Struggling to come back, the industry developed new cane varieties resistant to the mosaic disease. Higher levees were built to contain the river. But fortunes plunged again as the country fell into the grip of the Great Depression and sugar became a luxury for the few.<sup>10</sup>

Since World War II the Louisiana sugar industry has risen again. But this time a few large corporations perform the bulk

of sugar cultivation as vertical integration has taken over. Today three landmarks of the industry remain: the expansive cane fields, occasional sugar houses, and a scattering of the great, proud mansions along the river that have survived to tell the story — a story of the hard, physical labor by the masses and the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by the few.

#### Notes

\* Harper’s Weekly etchings supplied through the courtesy of Norman Mar-million, president, Laura Plantation Company.

1. The word Creole is a derivative of the Spanish *Criollo*, which means “native born.” The term was used to denote children of European parentage who were born in America. French Creoles viewed their new American countrymen with disdain, claiming they had no refinement at all. Socially, French Creoles kept to themselves during the nine months on the plantation. When they went to New Orleans for the “Season,” they retreated to the Old Square where the French language and old ways prevailed. The word also was applied to other nationalities whose parents came from Germany, Spain, or Africa. Therefore, you had German Creoles, Spanish Creoles, and African Creoles. The term Mulatto applied to the first-generation offspring of a black person and a white person.

2. “Sugar and Destrehan Plantation.” 8-pages. \$1.50 at Destrehan Gift Shop.

3. A hogshead was a barrel. Sources show there were two sizes: 1,150 and 1,500 pounds.

4. William C. C. Claiborne to Thomas Jefferson, 10 July 1806, in *Official Letter Books of W. C. C. Claiborne, 1801–1816*, 6 vols., ed. Dunbar Rowland (Jackson, Miss. 1917), 3:363.

5. *Louisiana Gazette*, September 19, 1806.

6. Richard Follett. *The Sugar Masters* (LSU Press, Baton Rouge, 2005), 117.

7. *Ibid.*, 33–34.

8. [www.louisiana-trade-tokens.com/plantations.html](http://www.louisiana-trade-tokens.com/plantations.html)

9. Richard Sexton. *Vestiges of Grandeur* (Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1999), 23.

10. [www.louisiana-trade-tokens.com/plantations.html](http://www.louisiana-trade-tokens.com/plantations.html)



# Destrehan

When Jean Baptiste Destrehan came to Louisiana in the 1730s, he held strong ties to the French financial community in Paris. He soon was appointed treasurer of the Louisiana colony. He married in 1746 and had seven children as heirs to his considerable estate when he died in 1765. His youngest son, Jean Noel, purchased a plantation in St. Charles Parish with his inheritance, and later married Celeste de Logny whose family lived only two miles away from Jean Noel's indigo plantation. Celeste's father, Robin de Logny, was quite proud of the marriage of his daughter to Destrehan, and felt he needed to build a grand house that would reflect his newfound social standing in the Creole community. De Logny signed a contract

in 1787 to build a 60 x 35 foot home using cypress and brick in the West Indies style, completely encircled with a 12-foot balustraded gallery. The house was built on 10-foot brick piers. The original house had six rooms on the main floor and six upstairs, and was insulated with mud and Spanish moss. De Logny did not get to live in his grand house for long, as he died in 1792. When the home sold at auction, Jean Noel Destrehan submitted the winning bid and in 1793 moved into the house built by his father-in-law, along with Celeste and their three children. Their new home became known as the **Destrehan Plantation House**. The couple eventually had 14 children with the last being born in 1808. Jean Noel added

*garçonnières*, separate quarters to be occupied by the male children of the family as they neared adulthood.

Destrehan and his fellow indigo planters experienced a year of crop failure due to a blight that spread among the fields. Something new, the production of raw sugar from sugarcane, was being tried by other planters. Jean Noel was skeptical, but decided around 1800 to make the change. By 1803, he was considered to be the premier sugarcane grower in the parish, producing some 250,000 pounds of raw sugar.

When the United States bought Louisiana from Spain in 1803, Jean Noel was appointed as First Deputy of New Orleans by the French ambassador. This resulted in Destrehan becoming a strong voice for the Creole French population through the next few years until Louisiana became a state in 1812. Jean Noel was chosen by President Thomas Jefferson to serve on the Orleans Territorial Council, a group of respected landowners who helped ease the cultural transition of the Orleans Territory into an American democratic state. Known as the "Jefferson Document," the letter naming Destrehan and the other three men to the council, signed by Jefferson, is on display at the Destrehan Plantation House. His later forays into politics met with little success.

The Destrehan Plantation House continued to stay in the family after Jean Noel's death in 1824. His youngest daughter, Marie Eleonore "Zelia," married a Scottish immigrant, Stephen Henderson, who was a self-made millionaire. He and Zelia purchased Destrehan and owned it until Stephen's death in

NOTICE: For dates and time of operation for the six plantations featured in this story, see page 51. Plantations are not open for tours on major holidays including Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years Day, and Mardi Gras. Admission fees range from \$15 to \$20 per person.



1837. Henderson's somewhat controversial will left the estate unsettled for some time, but the property was again owned and occupied by the Destrehan family when Jean Noel's daughter, Louise, and her husband, Pierre Rost, purchased the home from Henderson's estate in 1840. Rost became Judge Rost when he was seated on the Louisiana Supreme Court in 1845. The family bought a home in New Orleans where they lived during the time that court was in session.

In 1853, New Orleans suffered the largest epidemic of yellow fever ever recorded in that town with over 12,000 deaths caused by the disease. The Rost family was not spared. Their middle child, Lydia, died at the age of 17, and her

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*Above left:* The original house was a 60 × 35 foot structure completely encircled by a 12-foot balustraded gallery to provide shading from the hot Louisiana summers. The side wings were added in 1812. The Creole building was altered in 1840 to conform to the classical style. *Below left:* Filled with Spanish moss, the mattresses became lumpy during the night and had to be smoothed daily for comfortable sleeping. The large, heavy rolling pin attached to the headboard was rolled over the mattress by servants and returned to its mount after use. Note the prayer chair at the foot of the bed used by the family members as they said their rosaries. • The mahogany gaming table in the center of the parlor belonged to the Pierre Rost family, fourth owners of Destrehan. The grand pocket doors unite the two parlors into one large room for entertaining. • Lydia Rost's bedroom remains as it appeared when she died from yellow fever in 1853. The painting above the mantle is a portrait of Lydia done in the 1840s. The mahogany bed, an American full-tester, dates from the 1830s.

younger brother, Henri, died just days later of the same illness.

With the onset of the Civil War, Judge Rost took his entire family to France. During the war, the Destrehan Plantation House was seized by the Union Army and taken over by the Bureau of Negro Labor, with freed men brought there to work on the plantation. Any profits went to the U.S. Treasury. In 1865, a Home Colony was established at Destrehan, providing housing and training for 700 freed slaves. The Colony disbanded in 1867, and the property was given back to Rost, who had returned from France. When Judge Pierre Rost died in 1868, his son Emile purchased the plantation from his father's estate.

Destrehan continued to be a profitable sugarcane business until 1910, when the sugar mill burned. Emile sold the property to a land speculator, Thomas Macon.

The plantation was sold to the Mexican Petroleum Company in 1914 and became the site of an oil refinery. Destrehan was later sold to Standard Oil of Indiana, which eventually merged into the American Oil Company. The oil refinery became obsolete and was dismantled, and the plantation home stood empty, subjected to the ravages of the elements and the thievery of those looking for treasure in the abandoned home.

Today, the Destrehan Plantation House and surrounding buildings have been restored due to the efforts of the River Road Historical Society and the support of the American Oil Company. Now furnished with authentic Louisiana 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century antiques, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Destrehan is the oldest documented plantation home in the lower Mississippi Valley. 

## Jean Étienne de Boré: Spawning an Industry

Jean Étienne de Boré played a major role in the birth of the granulated sugar business in Louisiana. Born in Kaskaskia, Illinois, on December 27, 1741, he was educated in France.

On November 5, 1771, he married Jeanne Marguerite Marie Destrehan des Tours, a member of the prominent and wealthy Louisiana family. After marriage, he and his bride returned to Louisiana in 1776 and settled in St. Charles Parish where he embarked upon an agricultural career planting indigo.

After a couple of years of drought and insects attacking the plants, Boré and other planters were on the verge of bankruptcy. Although he knew historically the production of granulated sugar had been a failure in Louisiana, Boré was determined to give it a chance. The Jesuits had first introduced sugarcane into Louisiana to make molasses, but it never developed into a commercial crop because attempts to crystallize the syrup into granules had failed.

Obtaining seed cane from two of the Spanish growers, he planted a crop. Boré and his slaves worked hard planting and harvesting the cane, digging irrigation ditches to bring water from the Mississippi River into the fields. It was a small operation compared to most of the plantations. He set up a sugar mill and used the Spanish method of making molasses, but Boré wanted to go a step further

and granulate the molasses into raw sugar.

After experimentation and hard work, Étienne de Boré was delighted as he stood in the drying room of the sugar house while his first crop of sugarcane was drying as granulated brown sugar. His methods had finally succeeded in crystallizing the syrup into sugar granules.

Louisiana planter Jean Étienne de Boré became the first to granulate sugar in the colony in 1795. After proving sugar could be granulated, Boré then granulated sugar on a commercial scale in Audubon Park. He sold his 1796 crop for \$12,000.

His success in granulating sugar on a substantial scale caused a rapid shift of planters from indigo to sugarcane and completely revolutionized sugarcane agriculture in Louisiana.

Étienne de Boré was appointed the first mayor of New Orleans by Governor William C. Claiborne in 1803. However, he resigned to look after his personal affairs the following year. When the United States took possession of Louisiana in 1803, there was already a small thriving sugar industry in Louisiana. Within a decade, production of granulated sugar would transform kitchens around the world. Jean Etienne De Boré died at 79 on February 1, 1820, leaving a "sweet legacy" of granulated sugar in his wake.





# San Francisco

With its gingerbread trim and ornate embellishments, the **San Francisco Plantation House** stands out as an exceptional example of a galleried home built in the old Creole style. Listed as a National Historic Landmark, it features an immense roof of ornate Victorian design. The house has a simple ground floor, with a double stairway leading to the second floor gallery and main living area. Fluted wood columns with Corinthian capitals support the overhanging deck. The house is flanked on both sides by tall cisterns, each holding 8500 gallons, that provided gravity-fed water to the home. Approximately 85 percent of the window glass is original and was poured and kilned on the property. The exterior style has been referred to as “Steamboat Gothic,” and actually does resemble a Mississippi riverboat.

Edmond Marmillion began building his mansion in the mid 1850s, planning to erect a structure that could be seen and admired from the adjacent Mississippi River. It is thought that the original home on the plantation was destroyed by a levee break that occurred in 1852. The new house was completed in 1856; unfortunately, Edmond died that same year. Edmond’s wife predeceased him in 1840, leaving him with three sons. The oldest son, Pierre, had died in 1852. The second son, Antoine


Valsin, who was married to Louise von Seybold, inherited the plantation and began to manage the sugarcane estate. It was Louise’s wish to redecorate the home to her own taste, which she set about doing in a lavish and opulent manner. The expense of her project caused Valsin to remark that he was “sans fruscins,” French slang meaning he was in reduced financial circumstances, or “without a penny in my pocket.” Some have surmised that this term later evolved into the name San Francisco.

Being of German descent, Louise’s decorating style had a definite Bavarian flair. The interior contains paintings decorating the ceilings and door panels of the house’s two drawing rooms or parlors. True to the custom of the day, the home has a gentlemen’s parlor and another across the way for the ladies. Women were not included when the men retired from the dining table to their parlor to smoke and talk politics. And there was plenty of political conversation and speculation about secession from the Union during the late 1850s.

With the onset of the Civil War in 1861, immediate change occurred for the Marmillions and the sugarcane industry. Charles, Valsin’s younger brother, served in the Confederate Army and, in addition to being wounded, was twice taken pris-

oner of war. He returned to the plantation when the war was over in ill health, and never fully recovered.

In the aftermath of the war, the Marmillions managed to retain ownership of their plantation home until Valsin's death in 1870, with Louise and Charles continuing to live there until Charles's death in 1875. Louise sold the house and plantation complete with furniture for \$50,000 in 1879, and moved to Munich, Germany, with her three daughters. She remained there until her death in 1904. Edmond Marmillion and his sons were able to enjoy the spectacular home for less than 20 years from the time it was built.

The property exchanged ownership twice in the ensuing years, with changes and additions being made by the residents. All the original furniture was taken from the house by one of the owners when the home was sold. In 1974, a major restoration was begun. It was determined that the home would be restored to its days of splendor, the period of prosperity just prior to the Civil War. Touring the home today, one will see furnishings true to that period of time, including the courting chair that would have been used by the Marmillion daughters as they received suitors in the family drawing room. 

*Clockwise from above left:* Built in the 1850s, a combination of Classic Revival and Gothic elements were integrated into a Creole floorplan. Novelist Frances Parkinson described the architecture as "Steamboat Gothic." Now almost blocked by a chainlink fence to separate the house from the encroaching levee and river road, the front of the house boasts grand double stairs. • Louise von Seybold Marmillion's Barvarian heritage can be seen in the hand-painted patterns on the folding wall which separated the foyer and men's parlor. All of the painted patterns in the ceilings, wall panels, and crown moldings are original, although they were cleaned during the mid-1970 restoration. • The ceiling is exquisitely detailed with hand-painted geometrical patterns and images that portray a hunting motif. The paneled wall separating the parlor from the large entry foyer could be folded away to create a much larger room for social activities. • During the restoration, records were found for the original carpet patterns and it was soon discovered that the manufacturer was still in business. Although the original carpets did not survive, the reproductions are identical. Furniture in the parlor and throughout house are period pieces that are not original to the home. The walls are a brilliant light purple, and the painted ceiling and borders to the friezes are light and delicate.





# Laura

A visit to the **Laura Plantation** on the Great River Road allows one to experience the culture and lifestyle of the Duparc and Locoul families that settled here and established a large plantation founded on the production of sugar. The tradition of Louisiana Creole life was that the family was operated as a business, and that the business was family. This mindset, intended to protect both the business and the family, sometimes created difficulties among family members as well as creating burdens on those who had greater responsibilities in the business.

Children and young members of the Creole families living along the Mississippi River usually found other means of occupying themselves while the adults managed the sugarcane business. Children might be involved in harvesting pecans to be sold in New Orleans, or helping with household chores such as churning butter. Music lessons and practice were alternated with horseback-riding lessons. A governess was employed to provide a basic education to the younger children, but young ladies and gentlemen of twelve or thirteen years of age were sent away to boarding school where they refined their musical abilities, and learned higher mathematics, English and French. Girls were also taught to knit and crochet, and do other fancy work.

At the Laura Plantation, young Laura Locoul became bored with life in the country, and engaged in childhood pranks of practicing “voodoo” and telling fortunes using the Bible and a key. These pranks were especially effective in raising alarm and fear among the plantation’s servants. Laura relates in her memoirs, *Memories of the Old Plantation Home*, how the slaves on the plantation were an integral part of the family’s life and affairs. They were encouraged to be baptized and married in the Catholic Church, and were cared for by the plantation family when they were ill. Frequent outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever occurred among them, with only one country doctor available,

so the lady of the plantation was also called on to administer home remedies and prayers. Less serious illnesses or wounds were treated by applying an adhesive cloth and a black paste which produced a large blister. It was thought the huge blister that was raised would relieve inflammation.

Not all time and effort was spent working. The Locoul family purchased a home on Bourbon Street in New Orleans where they spent the “Social Season” each year. During this time of great festivity, the family participated in galas, Carnival and Mardi Gras balls, attended the opera and entertained other families at long and extravagant meals. Families presented their eligible daughters to New Orleans society at balls, luncheons and dinners.

Known as the Duparc Habitation when originally settled in 1804 by Guillaume Duparc, the Laura Plantation was approximately 12,000 acres at it’s largest. Duparc had been sent into the French Marines by his father after shaming the family by



Counter clockwise from top left: Commissioned by Guillaume Duparc in 1804, the principal house was built by highly trained Senegalese craftsmen who were rented from their masters in New Orleans. Their knowledge of construction in tropical and sub-tropical environments in large measure accounts for the preservation of the 200+ year old home, which even survived an electrical fire a few years ago. The cypress superstructure inlaid with brick was plastered inside and stuccoed outside, and brightly painted with colors influenced by eighteenth-century West Indian, Mediterranean, and French architecture. The U-shaped structure had approximately 24,000 sq. ft. plus a 2,500 sq. ft. detached kitchen. • The detail and colors of the roof structure covering the stair ascending to the first-floor gallery is typical of the Creole influence seen at Laura Plantation. • The largest room in the house, the dining room is behind the main parlor and joined by a pair of French doors. The *maison principale*, or “big house,” served not only as office headquarters for business, but was also the site of a wide variety of social entertainment. • Laura Lacoul wore this white evening gown made by a French dressmaker in her social debut in New Orleans in 1882. • Laura described in her manuscript a garden outside her window. With careful excavation, Norman and Sand Marmillion discovered the perimeters of the garden which was restored in 1998. The French formal parterre garden is anchored by large Canary Island palms and divided into special planting areas with boxwood hedges. • Two slave cabins near the big house are on the tour. In the decade before the Civil War, there were 69 cabins plus a slave hospital. Each cabin served two families and had a chicken house and pig pen along with a vegetable garden nearby.

killing a family friend in a duel. He fought for the French during the American Revolutionary War, and was appointed as a commandant in Spanish Louisiana after the war. He won acclaim for suppressing a slave uprising on the Louisiana plantations in 1795.

The plantation property was initially a land grant awarded to Duparc by Thomas Jefferson in appreciation of his military and community service after the completion of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Duparc immediately set about buying surrounding land and establishing a sugarcane business. The Creole-styled manor house was begun in 1804, and completed in 11 months by highly skilled, trained slaves of Senegalese descent who were rented from their masters in New Orleans. Each of 72 brick columns supporting the first floor rises eight feet above ground level and rests on a submerged pyramid of bricks that prevents it from sinking in the loamy soil. The superstructure is built of cypress inlaid with brick. All materials were acquired locally. With a plaster interior and a stucco exterior, the house was brightly painted in hues of red, green, ochre, and gray. An adjacent formal garden, recently reproduced, was installed to enhance the enjoyment of the grounds surrounding the home. The plantation, with its surviving outbuildings and six slave quarters, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Duparc died at age 52, before his first sugar cane crop was harvested, and a long era of management by the women of



the Creole family began. His wife, Nannette Prud'Homme Duparc, inherited the property and managed the business for 21 years, successfully diversifying by adding other crops, lumber, and livestock to the family ventures. When she handed the plantation over to her children, their son, Flagy, managed the daily field operations, and their only daughter, Elisabeth, became the business manager. A third child, Louis, had little interest in the day-to-day affairs of the plantation after he and his wife lost their only child due to a medical mistreatment. Elisabeth married Raymond Locoul, a Frenchman from the Bordeaux area whom she met in the French Quarter of New Orleans. Elisabeth continued as manager of the

*Continued on page 51*








## Oak Alley

**Oak Alley Plantation**, listed as a National Historic Landmark, is renowned for its long arched lane of live oak trees leading to the front of the home. Oak Alley has been restored to the grandeur of the Old South's Golden Age during the height of the sugar industry in the Mississippi River region. The alley of live oaks with huge, gnarled trunks in two rows leading to the river was planted in the early 1700s, predating the plantation home by over 100 years.

Though the alley of trees is an imposing sight, the real story of Oak Alley lies in the sugarcane crop and the steam sugar mill and supporting buildings that ensured the owners a successful sugarcane business. Records indicate Valcour Aime, later known as "Sugar King of Louisiana," acquired the property in 1820, then sold the established sugar plantation with livestock and slaves to his brother-in-law, Jacques Telesphore Roman, in 1836. Jacques and his wife, Celina, hired master builder George Swainy to construct their opulent home, using materials found or manufactured on the property. The only exception was the use of imported marble for the floors and fireplaces, and slate for the roof. Designed to provide protection from the fierce summer heat, the house features a veranda supported by 28 classic columns. The columns are eight feet in circumference and are solid brick covered with stucco. Extending 13 feet from the walls, the veranda creates shade for the home during most of the day. Insulation is provided by the 16-inch thick walls, and ventilation was achieved by having the tall windows and doors facing each other under the 12-foot high ceilings. The alley of live oaks reaching from the home to the river pulled the cool

breezes from the Mississippi with a venturi effect directly to the wide front doors and main hallway of the residence.

Oak Alley stayed in the family until after the Civil War when the social and political turmoil forced the sale of the Roman plantation at public auction. During the years of Reconstruction that followed, a broke 21-year-old soldier, Antonio Marcelino Sobral, returning from the war began his career as an overseer and by 1881 had amassed a fortune large enough to buy Oak Alley. After raising a family of seven with his wife, Evelina, he sold the plantation to Jefferson Davis Hardin, Jr. His stewardship lasted until 1924 when he was forced to turn the plantation over to the Whitney Central Trust & Savings Bank. The tide was turning for the once-proud and powerful Creole plantation culture. The Hardins attempted a renovation of the home, but many obstacles arose, with the property even being abandoned for a period of time. Hardin is, however, credited with saving the great live oaks from the Corps of Engineers who on two occasions wanted to move the levee and take several of the trees.

In 1925, the home was acquired by Andrew and Josephine Armstrong Stewart who, with the assistance of Josephine's sister, Julia Armstrong Kaufman, determined to return the old Creole manor to its former glory and make it a comfortable home. Years were spent renovating, furnishing, and redecorating the home. The grounds were again landscaped, and under the daily supervision of Josephine, the lawns, shrubs, and trees flourished, with 500 rose bushes providing a profusion of color and fragrance. Even during the warmest summer days, the shaded gardens surrounding the home are cool and inviting. 

*Clockwise from top left:* The alley of 28 live oaks was approximately 100 years old when Jacques Roman chose this site to build a magnificent home for his new bride, Celina, in the late 1830s. Trees were commonly used by planters to create shady access to the river and its breezes. Landscape architects today believe the planters discovered a venturi effect, which means that air drawn into a narrow passage will move faster toward the opposite end—in this case, providing a natural cooling effect to the house from the river. • The dining room is painted a light gray. The punkah, or “shoo-fly” fan, used to keep guests cool while dining, and to shoo pesky insects away from the food, hangs directly over the dining room table and is original to the home. An 1835 Louis Phillipe mahogany dining room table, measuring 16 feet long, seats 22 guests. • In the living room, mahogany sofas and chairs upholstered in blue velvet are arranged on an 1830 hand-stitched French wool rug. All of the doors have been treated by a process called “faux-bois” to simulate mahogany wood grain. The fireplace and mantel and floorboards are “faux-marbre,” to simulate a marble-like design. Both treatments were popular during the 1830s. • The master bedroom with its hand-carved pineapple bed represents exactly how the room would have looked in the early morning of a typical day in 1837. • The trees at Oak Alley were planted by an unknown French settler in the early 1700s. Arborists believe the gnarled oaks have a life expectancy of 400 years. The great live oaks draped with Spanish moss have come to symbolize the graceful ambience of natural areas throughout the River Road plantations.





# Houmas House

Centuries old live oaks draped with Spanish moss have come to symbolize the mood of life in the Coastal South. Trees with this graceful aura are in abundance on the lush grounds of **Houmas House Plantation and Gardens**. Statuary adorns the ponds and fountains at every turn, accentuated by colorful tropical plantings.

The original part of Houmas House, named for the Houmas Indians who occupied the area when French settlers first arrived in Louisiana, was built in the 1770s by Alexander Latil. The Houmas sold the land to Latil in the mid-1700s. The two-story brick French Provincial structure now forms the rear wing of the mansion built in the late 1820s by sugar baron Wade Hampton. It was later used as living quarters for the staff that served the big house.

Revolutionary War hero General Wade Hampton purchased the property in 1810 and began construction on the mansion.

But the house waited for 15 years before Hampton's daughter took over and finished the interiors in 1828. Hampton continued to increase his land holdings until he had amassed several plantations which totaled 300,000 acres.

In 1857 an Irishman by the name of John Burnside bought the plantation for one million dollars. Burnside rotated crops to build up the soil, but always had nearly 100,000 acres in sugar production. He was easily the largest producer in the country. Burnside saved the mansion from destruction during the Civil War by declaring to the governments of both sides that he was a subject of the British Crown.

The eccentric Irishman was a racing enthusiast who bet heavily on the horses. He once secretly purchased a champion thoroughbred from a breeder in Virginia and kept the horse "stabled" in his billiards room to prevent the local racehorse owners from learning about him. Burnside sur-

prised his competitors at the starting line and collected from them at the finish line.

Burnside did quite well in the sugar business, but his successor, Colonel William Miles, pushed production in the late 1800s to 10 million pounds of sugar annually.

Dubbed "The Sugar Palace," Houmas House was originally designed in the Greek Revival style using Doric galleries and arched dormers. A cupola adorns the roof. Adjacent to the house are two *garçonnières*, or "boy's places." The living spaces were often included on Creole plantations as quarters for male children as they approached adulthood.

The interior of the home is three rooms deep, with living spaces arranged around a wide central hall featuring a free-standing, three-story helix staircase which took a craftsman over one year to build. Some of the furnishings are original to the home, and most are true antiques collected by the current owner, Kevin Kelly.




The mansion's faux marble exterior is painted in rich ochre which reflects the influence of the Mediterranean villas owned by the wealthy Europeans that the southern planters emulated. The walls of the central hallway of the home display a room-size mural of sugarcane

After the flood of 1927 and the ensuing Great Depression, Houmas Plantation's great successes disappeared. Miles closed the mansion and it fell into disrepair. In 1940 Dr. George B. Crozat bought the property with the intention of making it his summer home away from his New Orleans medical practice. He had the mansion redesigned in the Federal style. Crown molding and ceiling medallions were removed and both interior and exterior forms were simplified. Eventually, Dr. Crozat's heirs decided to open the home and gardens to the public.

Many items of historic and cultural value are on display at Houmas House.

An extensive art collection includes works by Louisiana artists. French Limoges china made specifically for the home in the 1830s can be seen, along with items of the family silver. A French mantle clock reputed to have been acquired by Napoleon from the estate of Marie Antoinette is among the collection of antique items of particular interest. Another item of historic value is an 1847 Louisiana Census map by LaTourette given to Col. John Preston, a previous owner of the home. The map was found in the attic in the 1980s, and may be seen during the tour of the house.

Unlike the tours of other mansions on the River Road, Kelly invites his guests to make themselves comfortable by sitting on the couches and chairs in the living room as the tour guide lectures about the home. Kelly lives at Houmas House much of the time, but, reminiscent of the Creole tradition, also maintains a residence in New Orleans. 

*Clockwise from above left:* One of the first great mansions on the river, sixteen acres of formal grounds now surround Houmas House, built in the 1820s by Revolutionary War hero, Wade Hampton. A two-story brick dwelling built in the 1770s by first owner Alexander Latil forms the rear wing of the mansion. • The original brick home built by Latil in 1770 is joined to the main house with a brick carriage way. Its detachment from the house made it practical to convert it into the kitchen for the manor. • Creoles and Americans often toured Europe in search of fine furniture and decorative art, desiring to build the public image of their estates. Some of the furnishings are original to the home, and most are true antiques collected by the current owner, Kevin Kelly. The half tester bed shown here is equipped with mosquito netting, a necessity in summer when occupants slept with their windows open. • The owner's collectibles in the front parlor include a mantle clock once owned by Napoleon and a Monet painting entitled "Julie." • The wide central hall features a free-standing, three-story helix staircase which took a craftsman over one year to build. The perspective from the first floor reminds one of a chambered nautilus.



# Nottoway

When completed in 1859, **Nottoway Plantation House** was immediately regarded by the Creole sugar planters living along the Mississippi River in the 1800s as being built by an American: “No Creole home would be painted white!” The plantation owners of Antebellum times looked to the wealthy of Europe to determine style, and copied the exterior finishes used on European villas as they built their palatial homes on the river.

John Hampden Randolph was the de-

scendant of a Virginia family who came to the area in the early 1800s. President Andrew Jackson appointed Peter Randolph, John’s father, as a federal judge in Mississippi in 1819. John met Emily Jane Liddell in 1837 and married the following year. Emily’s father provided the couple with a dowry of \$20,000 and 20 slaves. After four years of marriage, the couple moved with two children to Forest Home, Louisiana, where they had purchased a plantation.

Eight more children were born at Forest

Home, but only one was born after the couple moved to Nottoway.

Randolph purchased the land in 1841 with plans to build a magnificent home and borrowed \$15,000 to buy an additional tract of 7,000 acres. He asked several architects to submit plans, and chose the one drawn by Henry Howard of New Orleans. The home was named for the Nottoway River in the state of Virginia.

When constructed in 1858, Nottoway

*Continued on page 38*



*Clockwise from above left:* When Randolph was ready to build a home to reflect his standing and wealth, he asked several New Orleans’ architects to submit designs. He chose Henry Howard as his architect, whose design featured a mixture of Italianate and Greek Revival influences. With 53,000 sq. ft., it is the largest existing antebellum structure on the River Road between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. • Nottoway is the work of an Irish-born architect who was commissioned by a Virginian of English descent. The home and its furnishings are a complete departure from anything Creole. • Jeremiah Supple, a local craftsman noted for his incorporation of camellias into his designs, spent four years creating the ornate frieze work for the home, for which he was paid \$1,900. • Five of the seven Randolph daughters were married in the “white ballroom,” which was created by joining two parlors. It was the scene of many social affairs conducted by John and Emily Jane Randolph.

### WHERE TO CAMP

The *Poché Plantation RV Resort* is on La. Hwy. 44, a part of the River Road, in the town of Convent. It offers full hookups including 50-amp service for \$30/night plus taxes for two adults. Amenities include pool and hot tub, cable TV and WiFi, laundry, and game room. **DIRECTIONS:** From New Orleans west on I-10, take Exit 194 South toward Gramercy. Turn right on LA 44 (River Road). Located at 6554 LA 44, Convent. From Baton Rouge, take Exit 179 South on LA 44 South and proceed toward Convent.

## Slavery in Sugarcane Country

Slavery in the thirteen colonies and slavery in Louisiana was significantly different because of *Code Noir*, also known as the Black Code. The “Edict Concerning the Negro Slaves in Louisiana” was issued by Louis XV in March 1724, and because of several specific articles, it was strongly supported by the Catholic Church.

The Code Noir consisted of 54 articles that fixed the legal status of slaves and several specific obligations and prohibitions upon their masters. It prescribed in detail regulations concerning holidays, marriage, religious instruction, burial, clothing and subsistence, punishment, and manumission (buying your freedom).

The Catholic influence was obvious in Article 1: “The religion of Judaism should not be practiced in Louisiana.” • Article 3 stated the religion of slaves would be Catholicism. • Article 4 made sure that slaves would not be swayed away from the Catholic religion by forbidding non-Catholic overseers. • The Code stressed the spiritual equality of all human beings, and limited the power of slave owners over slaves. It demanded that slaves have free access to the sacraments of the Catholic church, including marriage, baptism, and burial. • Sexual relations between free whites and slaves were forbidden. No one could force a slave to marry against his or her will. • A slave striking an owner or his relatives in the face with a blow strong enough to draw blood could be punished with death. • Slave owners were to provide shelter, food, and clothing for their slaves. Slaves could obtain permission to carry a weapon for the purpose of hunting. • Slaves were allowed to use their free time on Saturday afternoons and Sundays to perform work for which they would be paid. Slaves could use such earnings to purchase their freedom. • As a result of the articles dealing with manumission, there were many free blacks in Louisiana.

The Destrehan Plantation had about 50 slaves. Each had his or her own garden and field to grow corn and raise poultry and pigs. Each had to provide most of his own food, receiving from Destrehan only corn meal, molasses, and salt pork. Slaves were paid in money for extra work such as cutting firewood, making barrel staves, and weaving and spinning cotton or wool. They could sell corn, garden produce, fish, and wild game. They purchased their own clothes and household articles but were often given such items as blankets, woven fabric, tin plates and spoons as Christmas gifts.

After the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, more white settlers from the colonies came into the territory. Those who had slaves in the colonies often had very different policies on the treatment of slaves.

Slavery was not always smooth sailing. In 1810 Charles Deslondes, a 31-year-old mulatto, creole slave, stirred up quite a rebellion. As the mob moved from plantation to plantation down the river, they burned property and sometimes killed. A militia stopped the uprising, but trials afterward resulted in 45 being executed and 157 being implicated as participating. Twenty-two slaves were killed in the fighting.

Under the Black Code, families were kept together and encouraged to develop skills. On the Oak Alley Plantation, Antoine won acclaim for the successful grafting of the first paper shell pecan. Many were skilled at farming and taking care of livestock. Some became overseers and foremen.

Slaves were considered “engines of wealth” by the large plantation owners, although those who had skills or were physically strong often commanded high prices in the New Orleans slave market. One owner reported in 1859 that he had just paid an average of \$1375 each for eight female slaves, and an average of \$1650 each for six men.

In less than 25 years coming up to 1850, the slave population grew by 500 percent to 125,000. In the next decade, the population quadrupled. But it was a socio-economic practice that was fast coming to an end.





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Models:  
1200LR  
1200LRIM  
1201LRIM

**2-DOOR**  
Models:  
N621  
N641  
N821  
N841  
1082

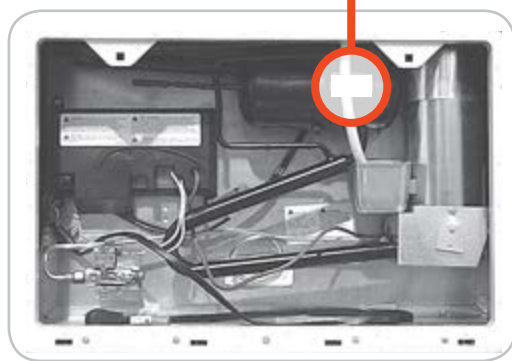


All Norcold refrigerators have an identification panel with model number on the inside, upper right.



Found in RVs  
Made in 1999 to 2000

## FIND THE COOLING UNIT SERIAL NUMBER



### 4-DOOR

Models: 1200LR, 1200LRIM, 1201LRIM  
Cooling Unit Serial Numbers: 700000 to 1536607

### 2-DOOR

Models: N621, N641, N821, N841, 1082  
Cooling Unit Serial Numbers: 1038000 to 1099000

Remove the refrigerator's intake vent cover on the exterior of the vehicle to find the cooling unit's serial number, in plain sight on the unit's lower right, as shown here.

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4-DOOR MODEL 1200LR, 1200LRIM, 1201LRIM,

WITH A COOLING UNIT SERIAL NUMBER BETWEEN 700000 TO 1536607

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# Summertime and the Cleaning is Easy

by Mary Findley

The title of my seminars at RV rallies used to be “Whistle While You Work” after the name of the cleaning booklet I wrote. A gentleman entered my seminar one day and said, “Are you out of your right mind? No one whistles while they clean their coach. It’s hard work.” I smiled and said “Sir, my right mind left me a long time ago and my left mind was never worth a hoot in the first place. Now, grab a chair and I’ll teach you a few cleaning tricks.”

Nothing beats a combination of short-cuts and preventive care to restore your right mind when it comes to cleaning the interior of a coach. Start with a bit of preventive care by kicking your shoes off at the top step. Why? Oil and grease from the pavement sticks to the bottom of your shoes. Grit and sand stick to the oil, then you walk across the carpet, which just turned into a costly welcome mat. As you walk on the carpet your feet grind the sand into the fibers, wearing them down and shortening the life of the carpet. If you need to wear shoes inside, store a pair near the top step and change shoes.

Carpet tolerates this abuse only so long until it begs to be cleaned. Only three weeks later the dirt returns with a vengeance. Carpet soils quickly after cleaning because the shampoo was not thoroughly rinsed out, leaving a sticky residue. That residue attracts more dirt, compounding the problem.

Let’s put a halt to this mayhem by tossing food grade distilled white vinegar into the scene of the grime. Rent a car-

pet shampooer and mix one-half cup of vinegar per gallon of hot water. Vinegar re-activates the shampoo already in your carpet and pulls out both the dirt and the shampoo. Finish with plain water. Your now soft carpet will stay clean far longer if you dock your shoes at the door.

It took 22 pages in my book “The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Green Cleaning” to cover all my stain removal tricks. Here is a short version. Remember: Give your product time to work. My CleanEz removes most carpet stains except red dye or red wine. Spray the stain with CleanEz or your organic cleaner and wait five to six minutes. Blot and rinse with a solution of one part vinegar to four parts water. Vinegar extracts the cleaner, which if left in the carpet, attracts dirt so the stain “reappears.”

Remove red wine, blood, and red dye stains from dog/cat food or punch by mixing a 50/50 solution of a fresh bottle of hydrogen peroxide to water. Test a small area first, allowing it to set no longer than five to six minutes. Rinse immediately with one part vinegar to three parts water. Vinegar neutralizes the effects of peroxide to prevent peroxide from discoloring the carpet. \*Note: Dogs and cats are color blind and can’t see colors in their food. Switch to a neutral colored pet food and no more red stains.

### Hard Floor Surfaces

First a few preventive tips. Keep microfiber mops off the floors. They are made from 80% polyester or plastic, which scratches. Microfiber mops and towels

eventually scratch the finish off floors, cabinets, furniture, vehicles etc. The handles of self wringing mops make great tomato stakes! Toss the mop in the trash. You don’t clean your face with a dirty washcloth so don’t expect your floor to come clean with a dirty mop.

Disposable towelette type mops are expensive, usually ruin your floors, and cause untold carbon footprints on Mother Earth. Steam cleaner mops seem to do a good job. Keep them away from the baseboards. Continuous exposure to heat warps the wood. Never use them on wood or laminated floors. Instead use 100% cotton towels. I developed my round cleaning head discussed in my first article from cleaning homes for 12 years. It’s an excellent mop. Dampen a towel and go.

Whew, if that is not enough, grab your disinfectants and haul them to the toxic waste dump. Feet harbor more germs than what you find on the floor. Why disinfect your floors when you walk on them? Disinfectants and most anti-bacterial products contain triclosan, a documented carcinogen. Keep reading for a safe way to disinfect floors.

**Stone Floors:** Only two things belong on tile, marble, granite, and slate floors; your feet and hot water. Any disinfectant, vinegar or cleaner will pit and ruin these floors. Marble and granite floors must be dried to prevent water spots. If you drop food or the dog or cat has an accident, then the floor must be disinfected in which case head to a pet store for Nature’s Miracle. The enzymes in Nature’s Miracle “eat” bacteria, killing it and the

odor without damaging the stone. It also works on linoleum and vinyl floors. Care must be used on wood or laminated floors as excess moisture warps the boards.

Mary Moppins Stain Eraser removes stains from the grout in stone floors and is safe for colored grout. It erases stains much like a pencil eraser. Always seal grout to retard stains. A syringe used to give babies medicine makes an easy applicator or ask a feed store for a syringe used to give cattle and horses shots. Remove the needle of course.

**Laminated and wood floors:** Mix one third cup food grade distilled white vinegar per gallon of water. Dampen your towel and wring out all the moisture so the excess water won’t warp the boards.

Mop **linoleum** floors with one part vinegar to four parts water and a drop of CleanEz. Bamboo, cork and other exotic floors require special care. Email Mary from her website for their proper care.

### Short, Sweet and Unconventional Tips

By now you have learned that my cleaning tips are anything but conventional. Those of you who wash your coach with baby shampoo have seen the results of my unconventional ways. With that in mind, let’s explore some easy solutions for a few troublesome areas. I’ll tackle the bathrooms, holding tanks and main kitchen area in another inside cleaning article.

**Day night shades:** Never use moisture on these blinds. Mary Moppins carries a dry sponge. Dry sponges are found in pet stores for removing pet hair from fabric furniture. Wipe the blinds with the sponge dry. It does a great job on window screens too. Sand it using a light grit sand paper to clean it.


Remove small spots on the blind by dampening a Q-Tip with a bit of hair shampoo and gently dab on the spot. Wait five minutes and blot with a barely dampened cloth. If the stain remains leave it alone as further treatment will damage the blind.

**Windshield curtain.** To prevent the bottom of these curtains from soiling, wipe the instrument panel with a cloth dampened with leather cleaner or Mary’s Leather/Vinyl Care. Mary’s Leather Care cleans and conditions vinyl, leather or ultra leather to prevent drying and cracking. Dilute it with water to clean the dash or to clean furniture weekly. Pull a clean white cotton tube sock over a lambswool duster, spray with diluted Leather Care and dust the instrument panel before closing the curtain.

Grab a can of foaming shaving cream (gel does not work) to remove small stains on curtains. Test a small spot first, wait ten minutes and rinse with vinegar and water. Then wait 24 hours. If the stain has lifted without causing water damage, test a larger spot — go slow to avoid water stains. Mix a 50/50 solution of hydrogen peroxide to water to remove mold or mil-

dew. Blot on, wait no longer than seven to eight minutes and blot with the vinegar and water solution. Remember: test a small area first.

**Handy tools:** Purchase a 1 ½ inch paint brush and several sponge paint brushes at the hardware store. The paint brush reaches between slats of ceiling fan vents to dust them; into window corners to flick away the grit, and along cornices and door hinges to zap cobwebs. Dip a sponge paint brush in CleanEz or your cleaner to clean the slats in your fans, around stove knobs and other hard to reach places.

Mary will be presenting both her inside and outside cleaning seminar at the FMCA National Rally in Redmond on Wednesday, August 11, the day before the rally opens. If you are headed to Redmond, her seminar starts at 1:30 in Seminar 7. Her booth will be in the Beef Barn. See you in August! 



Mary Findley is a veteran cleaning expert, author of *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Green Cleaning* and owner of Mary Moppins. Mary’s cleaning tips appear in magazines such as *This Old House*, *Real Simple*, *Woman’s World*, and *Woman’s Day*. Her dedication to all things green has led her to presenting sustainable living seminars to help organizations, businesses, and individuals rid their lives of toxic chemicals and engage sustainable living practices. Reach Mary through her website [www.goclean.com](http://www.goclean.com) or call 800-345-3934.

# Phyllis Williams

## LOOKING BACK ON 35 YEARS OF CHANGE

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

THE COMPANY WAS BARELY THREE YEARS OLD IN DECEMBER 1975 when Bob Tiffin called the business teacher at Red Bay High School and asked her to recommend a former student for a position in the TMH business office. Ms. Barbara Cashion immediately said, “Phyllis Shewbart was one of my best students.” Phyllis had just graduated seven months earlier in the Class of 1975.

Bob first called Phyllis’ father, Forbus Shewbart, to locate his daughter who had married recently, and then called Phyllis to ask if she might be interested. After a brief interview, the job was offered, Phyllis accepted, and she is now in her thirty-fifth year with Tiffin Motorhomes. Unusual? you ask. Not really. Not in Red Bay. Not in the Deep South.



There is a wonderful culture of mutual respect found in small towns for those who are dependable, honest, neighborly, hospitable, and God-fearing people. And you don’t have to look far to find them. Personal reputations are considered major assets – far more valuable than money in the bank. In small towns like Red Bay, a person’s word is his bond. Trustworthiness is a common virtue. Does that mean small southern towns are utopia? Of course not. But the percentages for the above qualities are pretty high. In a small town like Red Bay, everybody knows your mama and daddy, your uncles and aunts, your brothers and sisters, your grandparents . . . even your great grandparents. You have a big incentive to hold up your family’s honor.

The same culture becomes part of the businesses that spring up in small towns. People at work become lifelong friends. And that is how Phyllis Shewbart Williams began to tell me about her work at Tiffin Motorhomes.

“I grew up in a house right next door to my paternal grandparents,” she began. “It’s really quite common for a parent in this area to carve off a lot from his property for a child to build a house . . . and then help him build it. My sister, Pam, and I live just a mile apart, as do our parents, Forbus and Louise. My maternal grandmother, who is 91, lives next door and continues to be an exemplary figure in my life.” Family ties are strong and the knots that bind rarely break.

When Phyllis was a junior in high school, she and several other students were working on a float for the 1973 homecoming parade. A local boy, Gary Williams, stopped by to visit and eventually asked her for a date for homecoming night. The couple married shortly after her graduation on May 23, 1975. In business for himself, Gary drove a truck hauling agricultural products. A few years later he took a position in the warehouse with Tiffin Motorhomes. Jill, the couple’s oldest daughter, has been working in parts and service for seven years while attending high school and college.

“There were 35 employees when I came to work here,” Phyllis said. “I was hired to fill in for Sylvia when she left to spend more time with her family. Barbara did the payroll and insurance and I did the drivers’ reports, the accounts payable and receivable, and invoiced the motorhomes to the dealers. The invoices were processed on an electric typewriter. The accounts payable and receivable were written by hand and we used pegboard bookkeeping to keep track of the payables. Bob always stressed the importance of paying the bills on time. Through the years, this policy built his reputation and good name with our vendors because they could always count on receiving their payments on time,” she continued. “Our customers and dealers receiving warranty payments appreciated Tiffin Motorhomes’ prompt handling of their claims. Word of mouth became our best form of advertising and that continues today.”

“Back when invoices were paid by hand posting and hand written checks, we went through the invoices daily to check for discounts we could take and always paid the invoices on a daily basis, paying whatever was due on that date,” Phyllis explained.

“Another major task was balancing the bank statement monthly. It was all done by hand with an adding machine. We kept a running total so Bob could come to my desk every day and see how our bank account stood,” Phyllis said. “Mr. Alex (Bob’s father) stopped by each day to see how much we had paid out and signed the checks for us when Bob would be at the cotton gin or away from the office on business. At that time Jack Elliott was doing the purchasing and Horace Stepp did all of the drafting. We



had 10 people in administration including the plant manager.”

“It is unreal what it takes to run the plant in 2010,” Phyllis reflected. “I cannot imagine how much it would cost to launch a plant like this now. The Tiffins have done an amazing job of building the company up to what it is today—the equipment, materials, infrastructure, and machinery. In the beginning we simply bought colored aluminum for our sidewalls. Today the sidewalls are complicated laminations and the finished motorhomes get full body paint. We have come a LONG way!”

Phyllis’ job has changed exponentially, too. “Today’s accounts payable department consists of our controller-CPA Brian Thompson plus three of us who do data entry for vendors’ invoices. I continue to process the checks and send the payments, but thankfully I no longer have to balance those bank statements and keep those general ledgers,” she laughed.

Business technology 30 years ago would now be considered primitive. “There were no electronic phone systems to allow the caller to be automatically transferred to the right office,” she noted. “We handled every phone call that came in during those years, using the intercom button to contact the person called, and he or she picked up the right line on the lighted button. It is amazing the volume of calls we handled on a daily basis.”

When there were so few employees in the beginning, they would occasionally meet on a Saturday afternoon at the plant and have a fish fry with their families. “This was the beginning of lifetime friendships being formed which have continued throughout the years,” she said. “Some of our early camping days were shared with Jack Elliott and Kelly Hester (both co-



workers) and their families. We often went after work to Little Bear Creek Dam which had just been completed in the late seventies, where we would grill out and water ski until dark. Those were some great memory-makers.”

“There are also a lot of funny things that happened to our employee family,” Phyllis smiled with a mischievous grin. “When Candace and I began working here straight out of high school, Johnny Hargett, our former sales manager, was a very vocal and humorous man, who still lives here in Red Bay. One day several men were working on a generator outside the office. Just as Johnny bent over to see if he could help, the generator backfired and blew the seat out of his polyester pants—that was hilarious! Times have changed and as the plant has grown to be so large, we have lost some of the closeness we developed in the beginning years. But traveling the road with everyone has been fun!”

People in small towns are really down to earth. That metaphor really did apply to Bob Tiffin. “Bob had his garden next to the campground which was along the railroad tracks,” Phyllis remembered. “The motorhome owners in for service would see this man working in his garden and think he was just a local towns person or one of the employees. The next day they would come into the office to meet the president and find out that he was the gardener.”

The family-type camaraderie Phyllis came to enjoy at the plant began in her early life with her father and mother. “My family has always camped out,” she began. “My dad’s brother,

a former ag teacher, built his first travel trailer. This was the beginning of our camping experiences. Through the years we had several different camping trailers and dad finally worked up to a nice fifth wheel trailer.” The entire family continues to enjoy camping today, including her parents, an uncle and aunt, and the children and grandchildren from both families.

“Daddy always saw to it that we had a family vacation. Reynolds Metals employees received a 10-week vacation every 10 years,” Phyllis explained. “We traveled the western and northwestern states that summer on his 10-week ‘sabbatical’ and had an incredible time. Today dad is 76 and mom is 73 and they still love to camp in their fifth wheel.”

Gary and Phyllis were married 13 years before their children were born, which, she says, gave them plenty of time to travel and enjoy the great outdoor experiences offered by a moderate climate.

Gary and Phyllis have two girls: Jill is 22 and a senior at the University of North Alabama. Lauren is 18 and currently studying at Northwest Shoals Community College with plans to finish her education at Auburn University. Both girls are majoring in elementary education. They have continued to provide their girls with the same family experiences they enjoyed growing up.

“When our girls were in elementary school, we got them involved in Girl Scouts,” Phyllis said. She and Gary supported the scouting program by organizing and chaperoning trips throughout the school year.

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“When the scouts went on a trip to Savannah, my parents went with us. Daddy insisted he and another parent take the 15 girl scouts swimming in the Atlantic Ocean, once they completed their Marine Life merit badges,” Phyllis related. “With us living so far from the Gulf and the Atlantic, he thought some of the girls might never have that chance again.”

“The following year, I and two other mothers led 35 scouts and parents on a trip to Washington, DC. Our congressman, Rep. Aderholt, received the girls and had an evening tea for them in the Capitol. His aides then gave us a private tour of the Capitol,” Phyllis said. After girl scouting days were over, the same group toured New York City.

During the summers they continued to spend long afternoons and weekends on the beautiful lake formed by Little Bear Creek Dam. Their fifth wheel trailer in the campground near the dam provides their base for jug fishing and skiing, the girls’ favorite summer activities.

In May the couple celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, “the first trip by ourselves since the girls were born,” Phyllis noted.

Gary and Phyllis stay busy with their own activities. In addition to working at TMH, Gary manages the family’s farm eight miles east of Red Bay where he has 55 head of cattle. Phyllis, who learned to play the piano and organ as a child, enjoys her digital piano which has a headset. “I can entertain myself and no one else

can hear me if I miss a note,” she laughs.

Phyllis is an avid reader, concentrating on history and biography most of the time. Her outdoor hobby is her 1979 Volkswagon convertible, a dashing silver gray with black roof. The family is also very active in the Burnout Missionary Baptist Church, just a mile or two from their home, where Phyllis serves as secretary and Gary as treasurer.

When the leaves turn red and gold and the temperatures cool a bit, the South

knows it is time for football. “Most of my dad’s family attended Auburn,” she explained. “So I have been an Auburn Tiger fan almost since birth.” The family loves tailgating on the Plains with the entire family.

Some visitors to Red Bay may have wondered if living in this small rural town in northwest Alabama would be boring or limit a young person’s experiences growing up. Just ask Phyllis—never a dull moment! **RIS**

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## Tiffin Plant Tours

Daily Monday-Friday at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Meet Red Davis in the Allegro Welcome Center 15 minutes before departure. Tour headsets and protective glasses provided. You'll be right on the production lines seeing it all up close and personal.

**WHEN SUGARCANE WAS KING: NOTTOWAY** was one of the largest antebellum plantations in the south, and today is the largest surviving antebellum house on the River Road. Its 53,000 square feet contain 64 rooms, seven staircases, 22 massive columns, 16 hand-carved marble fireplaces, 165 doors and 200 windows. The ceilings are 15'6", and the doors are 11 feet. As a plantation in 1860, the mansion was the focal point on 6,200 acres of property. The double parlors with painted white floors are referred to as the ballroom, the setting for five weddings of the Randolph's seven daughters. The plaster frieze work features camellias and was done by a local craftsman, Jeremiah Supple. It took Supple four years to complete the friezes, for which he was paid \$1,901.91. The chandeliers and some of the furnishings are original to the house. A convex "courting mirror," so named because it enabled a suitor's behavior to be supervised from numerous vantage points around the room, hangs in the parlor. Nottoway was the first rural home in the U.S. to have gas lights. He designed and built a small plant to chemically produce the gas for the lighting system. The entire project cost \$80,000. Randolph also built 42 slave cabins for his 176 slaves.


The home had been completed for only three years when the Civil War broke out. To save his home and business, Randolph took the majority of his slaves and moved to Texas for the duration of the war to grow and sell cotton, leaving his wife in charge of the Louisiana sugarcane

*Continued from page 28*

plantation. Three sons joined the Confederate Army. One was killed at Vicksburg, one died from malaria, and one returned home at the end of the war.

Nottoway incurred some damage when a Union gunboat fired on the home from the Mississippi River. When the gunboat officer realized that he had once been a guest in the home, he decided to spare the house. John Randolph returned to Nottoway after the war, and managed to keep the plantation house and sugarcane business viable through the early Reconstruction years. Following his death in 1886, Mrs. Randolph sold the mansion in 1889 for \$50,000 to the New Orleans partnership of Landry and Dugas. After going through several hands, Dr. Whyte Owen bought Nottoway for \$54,000 at a tax sale.

Dr. Owen sold off most of the plantation, but kept the house in the Owens family through most of the twentieth century. In 1980 Odessa Owen, the doctor's daughter-in-law, sold the property for \$720,000 to Arlin Dease with the stipulation that she could live there until her death. Dease successfully turned the house into a bed & breakfast property, and in 1985 sold it to Sir Paul Ramsey of Australia for \$4.5 million.

The Mississippi River can be seen from the front gallery on the third floor of Nottoway. Although most of the plantation homes along the river offered views of the river when originally built, many no longer do so because of the height of the protective levee now built along the river's banks. 



## We lost everything and got a new Allegro Bay.

I got the newest copy today of *Roughing It Smoothly* and saw the "From the Road" postcard. I have been planning to send you an RV story for awhile. So today's the day.

On May 2, 2008, as we traveled down the road in Alabama, we heard a car honking and pointing to the back of our motorhome. Jon looked in the mirror with shock. "We're on fire!" He pulled off the road, grabbed the fire extinguisher as I picked up my pocketbook, camera, and Jon's wallet which was on the chair next to the door. I was barefoot as I ran out the door to help Jon unhook our van we were towing. I was so nervous it was going to blow up. The fire was growing so fast and high above the back of the coach that Jon had to give up trying to release the van. We were fearful that the whole burning back would come down on him. I ran away as Jon stood by waiting for the fire department. So did all the traffic around us. I stood with strangers on the highway. One nice lady gave me her sandals, saying, "You need these more than I do." She was right. I stood from a distance watching my home burn room by room. I started taking photos right away, hoping it would help explain our tragic fire to the insurance company.

It took the fire company over 15 minutes to arrive. By then our only home, our only vehicle, and all our business items inside the van had gone up in smoke. We were both numb. We had been on the road for over five hours and were almost to our destination. The firemen sifted through the smoldering remains, looking for anything that might have survived the fire. Believe it or not, they did help us find some things. Our floor safe up front was still there with very warm passports, birth certificates, some cash, and other important papers. Most of what was left was ruined by the water and toxic smoke.

The fire company, state trooper, and towing company were very nice and helpful. The trooper drove us to a car rental place; then we went to the storage lot to look through the coach and get what we could from the van.

After a tough night's sleep, we headed back to Florida to rebuild our lives. The insurance company, *Lazy Days*, and the car dealer were our first stops. Our winter campground was there for us, and we used our friend's RV to live in until we got our new home. Everyone was so kind to us. We lost so much. Living full time in our coach, we had already downsized to just the most important things. We spent a full month working to get back on the road again. My list was endless and I came home every day exhausted from shopping and sad because I saw so many things I once owned in the stores. Jon spent hours rebuilding our business, and we both waited anxiously for our new Allegro Bay to arrive. That's right . . . a Tiffin motorhome! After our last two motorhomes, we said frequently that our next one would be a Tiffin. But we thought that was way out in the future — until the fire.

On our way back to Florida in our rental truck with the few smelly belongings we owned, we had many hours to plan our new life after the fire. If all went well with the insurance company, we would look at acquiring a Tiffin as our next home. It went well. We just love our new coach. We only had a trash bag filled with our belongings that we brought into our new home. But it didn't take long to fill it up — I love to shop!

The question most asked is "Did they find out what caused the fire?" The investigator could not determine what happened because it was too far gone.

Jon & Joy Hanscom  
Seffner, Florida

## It was time to sell my Allegro.

I would love to be behind the wheel of my 1988 Allegro 27-ft. motorhome. I am now 84 years young. After 50 years of marriage, I lost my wife in 1996. I'll tell you, it is no fun driving down the road by yourself with 27 feet of motorhome behind you. After Uncle Sam got through with me this year, I decided I could not afford the license, insurance, and tax on my motorhome anymore. So I sold it for \$4,500. I love to get *Roughing It Smoothly* magazine and look at the new Allegros. Wow!

I have a 30-acre farm here in Minnesota. I raise rhubarb and harvest my black walnuts for sale. I plant, maintain, and enjoy two gardens. I read three books every week from my library. I served in the U.S. Navy for three years during WWII on the *USS Chester*, earning five medals, seven bars, and 14 stars. I still get around quite well in my pickup truck. Life is good here in Minnesota.

Gerald I. Nielsen  
Isanti, Minnesota

## Visiting Your National Parks

By Paul Brady, David LaHuta, Erin Richards, Erik Torkells, and Brad Tuttle

### July/August

There's no getting around the fact that summer is peak season at most parks—but "peak" is relative. At Lassen Volcanic, an overlooked park in the northeast corner of California, you can hike all day on one of the busier trails in July or August and maybe see a total of 10 people. Lassen marks the south end of the Cascades, a mountain range that extends through the Pacific Northwest into British Columbia. The 106,000-acre park is unique for its geothermal features: geysers, mud pools, and hot springs. There are also dozens of lakes, hundreds of plant species, wide-open meadows, and a 10,000-foot dormant volcano inhabited by bear and deer. Because the park isn't on the way to or from any major attraction, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends are typically the only times you have to worry about crowds.

People who make it there love driving the beautiful, 30-mile Lassen Park Road (Rte. 89) past lakes, forests, and black soil galore. Another favorite is the 1.5-mile walk on an elevated wooden path leading to the bubbling mud pots and steaming pools at

Bumpass Hell, the park's largest geothermal site. The Cinder Cone Trail, in the remote northeast corner, is especially nice if you're out early in the morning, before it gets too warm. You trudge through sandlike soil for a few miles to a lookout with views of Butte Lake, Lassen Peak, and dunes colored in trippy browns, reds, and whites.

Colorado also has a park that's under most tourists' radar, not only because it's miles from the nearest interstate but also because it became a national park just recently. After decades as a national monument, Great Sand Dunes earned the new designation last fall. If you're not excited by a big pile of sand, you've never seen the dunes—nearly 30 square miles of them, 750 feet high, braced up against the 14,000-foot peaks of the Sangre de Cristos. Locals know to come to the park in early summer to play in the water streaming over the base of the dunes. The creek often doesn't dry up until mid-July, around the time that the white and lavender Rocky Mountain columbine and other flowers are sprouting. "Basically

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Next time you are in Red Bay, Alabama, contact Ricky Johnson for a quote.

anywhere there's water, you'll find wildflowers," says Carol Sperling, the park's chief of interpretation and visitor services. "Just go for a short walk along the creek on the Mosca Pass Trail or hike to some of the subalpine lakes in the high country."

Temperatures in July and August hit the mid-80s in southern Colorado most days, dipping down to the 40s overnight, and there's little or no humidity. The sand can heat up to well over 100 degrees in the sun, however, so wear pants and boots if attempting to climb to the top of the dunes (at a good pace it takes about an hour). Miles and miles of more dunes come into view after cresting every ridge, and at the summit you can see across the valley to the San Juan Mountains 60 miles west. The sunsets are superb, casting yellows, oranges, and purples across the wide-open sky. Before nightfall there's generally a chance to witness why the peaks to the east were named the Sangre de Cristos. As the story goes, centuries ago a Spanish priest, dying from a wound in battle, cried out the phrase ("the blood of Christ") while looking up at the mountains as they turned a deep shade of red.

### **The Presidential Park**

It's hard to get further off the beaten path than North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The only time there's a real crowd is in August, when the Champions Ride rodeo saddles up nearby. Follow in Teddy's footsteps by hiking the Petrified Forest trail—with siliconized cypress trees everywhere, it's like walking in a forest of stone.

### **September**

After Labor Day, there's an absence of bugs as well as crowds at most parks, and the chill of winter hasn't set in yet. "September is an ideal month to visit the parks," says Rick Nolan, Chief of Interpretation at Redwoods National Park in northern California. "Once the kids are back in school there's plenty of elbow room." Temperatures are in 60s in early fall, and the average rainfall for September is less than two inches (compared to nearly a foot per month in the winter). Last year the park welcomed 61,000 visitors in July, but only 35,000 in September, making it the perfect time to soak in the primordial vibe created by the Pacific mist and the 350-foot-tall sequoias.

At Crater Lake in Oregon, the last of the season's boat tours runs sometime in September (541/594-3100, \$23.50). To board, you must hike down steep switchbacks for a mile. It's worth the trip: Nothing compares to gazing into the deep, electric-blue water up close. Head to the park's southeast corner to check out the jagged rocks known as the Pinnacles. "They're a cool geological formation that occurred when ash flowed during the eruption," says assistant chief of interpretation Martha Hess. "The mountain had frothy flows of rock coming down the sides into

valleys. Gas then superheated this ash to solidify it." The earth surrounding the Pinnacles eroded centuries ago, leaving behind spiny, gray rocks jutting up from the ground.

The year's best weather at Acadia in Maine and North Cascades in Washington comes in July, August, and September, and the latter is by far the least crowded. "In September at Acadia it gets into the 60s during the day, which is great hiking weather," says park ranger Wanda Moran. "Even with the foliage season, it's pretty quiet compared to summer." The first leaves to turn colors are in the upper elevations, so hike to Beech Mountain (overlooking two ponds), or take the lazy route and drive up to the park's highest peak, 1,530-foot Cadillac Mountain.

Sometimes at North Cascades it's not until late summer that all of the alpine trails are clear of snow. Hiking is the major draw, though you don't have to work hard for great scenery. "The views from the Cascade Pass Trail parking lot are just incredible," says Michael Liang, a seasonal interpreter. "You see glaciers and sheer cliffs as soon as you step out of the car." The vistas get even better on the trail, which brings opportunities to run into mountain goats and furry little creatures such as marmots (oversized squirrels) and pikas (undersized rabbits). After ascending 1,800 feet in 3.7 miles, you reach a dramatic lookout for both the east and west faces of the Cascades.

### **Proof You Were There**

More than 400 parks, monuments, and historic sites fall under the domain of the National Park Service. The pocket-size "Passport to Your National Parks" (\$8) serves as a checklist for all those great sights, from Appomattox Court House to Zion National Park. The 104-page book, available at most park gift shops and at [eparks.com](http://eparks.com), comes with thumbnail descriptions of what to see divided by region, plus a U.S. map highlighting federally protected spots. Blank pages are set aside after each region for collecting national-park stamps (a new set is issued every year) and ink seals of sites you visit. Get your passport stamped at the visitors center before leaving.

### **Hiking Without Borders Glacier**

Hiking Without Borders Glacier is just part of the larger Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, with protected land on both sides of the Canadian border. On Wednesdays and Saturdays from mid-June to early September, one American and one Canadian park expert jointly lead a free International Peace Park Hike. Walks start at 10 a.m. at the Bertha Trailhead in Canada, heading south along the west side of Upper Waterton Lake. There's a BYO lunch near the border, followed by a few more miles of hiking to the Goat Haunt Ranger Station in Glacier. From there, most folks hop the \$15 ferry that arrives back where the hike started in Waterton around 6 p.m. (406/732-7750).

## Interviews from Colorado



### Tim & Teresa Perkins

Hometown: Lake Quivira, Kansas  
Interviewed from Breckenridge, Colorado

- Tim & Teresa own a 2008 Allegro Bus.
- Tim & Teresa started camping in a pop-up trailer about 10 years ago. They bought a Class A, 30-ft. motorhome next. They have had a total of 12 Class A motorhomes. This includes five Tiffin coaches: an Allegro, three Phaetons (2006, 2007 and 2008), and finally their current 2008 Allegro Bus.
- They travel approximately five weeks out of the year and look forward to traveling more when their son gets older. They enjoy Florida during Spring Break and traveling west of the Mississippi.
- Tim retired from the automotive service business and Teresa retired from UPS last spring.
- They have been married 33 years.
- They have a fifteen year old son, Adam, who enjoys activities like wakeboarding, skateboarding, and snowboarding.
- Both Tim & Teresa enjoy taking their small boat on the lake in their community. Teresa is taking up golf. Tim, as he puts it, "is into cars" and has owned over 150 cars over the last 33 years. He currently has six cars, including a Dodge Viper, a Super Bird, and a 1962 ragtop VW.
- They have been to Red Bay and think that the factory is fabulous. Service and attention to the customer's needs is what keeps them loyal to the Tiffin product.



### Ron & Barbara Hatton

Hometown: Lakewood, Colorado  
Interviewed in Breckenridge, Colorado

- Ron & Barbara own a 2008 Allegro Bay that they purchased in March of 2009.
- They started camping in a tent 33 years ago with their family, got a small trailer, and worked up to their current coach. They heard fantastic things about Tiffin coaches and traded in their gas coach for the Allegro Bay.
- They travel in the summer to Breckenridge, CO, where they own a site at Tiger Run RV Resort. They take side trips to other destinations from Breckenridge and alternate weekends during other times of the year. February and March they travel to Tucson, AZ, and enjoy the Rockies Baseball team spring training. They attended the Allegro Rally in Washington last September.
- Ron is a retired Federal Government worker (Dept. of the Interior) and Barbara retired as a full-time homemaker and mother
- They have been married 40 years.
- They have one daughter and three sons, all of whom reside in Colorado. They have two grandsons and three granddaughters.
- They both share the driving responsibilities.
- Barbara enjoys gardening, sewing home interior items and cooking. Ron enjoys racquetball, woodworking and hunting. They both enjoy hiking.
- They have not been to Red Bay but are looking forward to their scheduled appointment in February.



### Richard & Sylvia White

Hometown: Mobile, Alabama  
Interviewed in Breckenridge, Colorado

- Richard & Sylvia own a 2006 Allegro Bus.
- They have been traveling since 1983 when they started out with a 16-ft. travel trailer, graduating every few years to bigger 5th wheels and then to their current Allegro Bus.
- They travel half of the year, looking for places that are big rig friendly. They are looking forward to attending the upcoming Allegro rally.
- Richard is a retired corporate pilot who flew Learjets. Sylvia retired as a CT/MRI Technologist.
- They have been married 26 years.
- They both thoroughly enjoy driving their Allegro Bus. Richard says he has to arm wrestle Sylvia every morning to see who gets to drive first.
- Both Richard & Sylvia enjoy antique cars, traveling to car shows across the country. Sylvia has a restored 1930 Model-A Ford that is a National Trophy winner. Richard has a 1969 Corvette convertible. They are also involved in writing small articles, as they travel, for the Antique Car Club and the Corvette Club in Mobile, Alabama.
- Richard & Sylvia enjoy spending a month in an area so they can explore it at their leisure, off-roading in their jeep.
- They popped by Red Bay to check out the factory and the campground and were impressed.

**Editor's Note:** Earl and Rita Warren retired five years ago from the Denver area and were full-timers for two years in their 2007 Phaeton. I first met Rita when she submitted an article for "From the Road." The Warrens traveled to 35 states in that brief time. "One of the best parts of exploring our beautiful country is meeting the people who make it great." In 2009 they found just the right place in the Southwest for their permanent home. Rita had done enough interviews for her "On the Road" column to take us through the Summer issue. In our Fall issue you will meet Elaine Austin.

# Billy Sims

## TRAILER TOWN

### Now In Its 40<sup>th</sup> Year

Text by Fred Thompson

Photography by Tyler Sims

“In 1965 Joan\* and I bought a travel trailer and started camping with our family,” Billy began. “We enjoyed the experience so much that six years later we decided to go into the RV business. Most of our trips were in Texas; but when the kids were little, we went to the Colorado mountains for two weeks. We were hooked.”

The birthday of the new business was July 7, 1971, in Lubbock, Texas. By the time you read this story about Billy and Joan, they will have begun their fortieth year, operating under the business name of Billy Sims Trailer Town.

Before they started their business, Billy worked as the used car sales manager for the local Chrysler dealer. He and Joan enjoyed the RV lifestyle so much they organized Hub City Wheels, an RV travel club that became a very essential building block in launching the business. Joan handled the planning and promotional work for the weekend camping trips while Billy did the foundational work to start Trailer Town. In addition to themselves, they hired one part-time serviceman.

“Then and now,” he explained, “if a person buys from us, we will take them into the club and help them learn everything about their RV so they can enjoy it to the fullest. The worst thing that can happen is for new owners to get frustrated because they don’t understand how to properly use or maintain their equipment. This way the whole club is there to help them. It’s kind of like on-the-job training.”

While his customers soon become “experts” at RVing, the side benefit for the company is Sims’s “customer for life” philosophy. “We want every buyer to be so satisfied with their RV that they will keep coming back to us through the years,” Billy continued. “You know, as your family grows and the kids get older, your RV needs change, too. And pretty soon your RV may become an ‘empty nest’ just like your house did. Then you may need an RV that suits just you and your wife. Or you may need one that accommodates you and your grandchildren. And before you know it, your children will be buying an RV that suits

\* Joan’s name is pronounced as if it were spelled Jo Ann.

their family. In our 40 years, we have served the third generation quite a few times.”

“That’s one of the fun things about this business,” Joan said. “You get to see families grow up and spend a lot of time together. No doubt about it, camping and enjoying the outdoors together builds strong family relationships.”

Joan and Billy still go on nearly every one of the monthly rally trips. Today different club members host the rallies and a Rally Committee plans and sets up the trips a year in advance. Each rally usually has at least 20 units participating in a weekend adventure. Some of the rallies have feature destinations while others are aimed at going to a nice RV park just to enjoy the camaraderie of camping.

“The club members are like salesmen for us,” Joan said. “While there is a lot of fun and benefits for the members, Hub City Wheels has been a big factor in our success.” The rally season runs from March through October. The company provides a large meeting room at its facility on Loop 289 where the club meets every first Tuesday to plan its activities. On each first Thursday, Billy and Joan invite club members to “Band Night” for an evening of square, line, and just plain old two-step dancing to live country music in an alcohol- and smoke-free environment.

Being in business for 40 years has given Billy and Joan an historical perspective about RV equipment. “Back in the seventies, we sold a lot of tent campers. From May through August, we had a standing order for a load a week (six campers), and you could buy one for \$1,500,” Billy reminisced. “Today, most of the tent campers the young families are buying have two double bed slide-outs, cooktops, refrigerators, sinks, ACs, and even toilets. And the prices start at \$12,000. If the young people can’t start off with one of these deluxe tent campers, they just won’t do it.”

The company first got into motorized RVs in 1980. Nearly two years ago, Sims signed on with Tiffin Motorhomes. “When the Tiffin dealer in Amarillo went out of business, it was the opportune time for us to come aboard,” Sims said recently. “We have been surprised at how hot the TMH brands are here in northwest Texas. It is amazing the brand loyalty Tiffin has. If a previous Tiffin owner comes to Trailer Town to look, there’s no point in showing him another brand.” This year he expects motorized to generate 35 percent of the company’s sales.

Of the 24 employees at Billy Sims Trailer Town, 42 percent work in service. “We have eight technicians, a service manager with 20 years of experience, and an assistant service manager,” Sims noted. The company has eight service bays plus a separate building for

From left: Lesa Zint, F&I manager, Joan and Billy Sims, Shirley Dunlap, office manager, and Keith Austin, sales manager, take a moment for a picture in front of a new Phaeton that had just been delivered from Tiffin Motorhomes.



“All a man has to sell is his integrity. If he gives up his integrity, he has nothing.”

handling body work and painting.

The company does a significant amount of warranty work. "The state requires warranty work for any given brand to be done by franchised dealers," he pointed out. Therefore, Trailer Town is licensed to perform warranty work for Tiffin, Winnebago, Airstream, and other towable manufacturers. "We provide warranty work regardless of who sold the unit. Some dealers are short-sighted on this issue and will not do warranty service

unless they sold the unit," he said.

Good service at Billy Sims Trailer Town means carrying a large inventory of parts for motorhomes and towables. "We offer complete sales and service on air conditioners. Ironically, it is nearly the same price to sell a new one as it is to replace the compressor." Sims is a dealer for Coleman and Duo-Therm. He also sells and services Onan generators.

"Our synergy here is based on a family atmosphere. Our employees take good

care of us, and we do our best to take good care of them," Sims said as he thought about the reasons for the company's success. "In good times, you have people looking for the product. In bad times, repeat buyers and word of mouth have kept us in business."

When Sims came home from military service, he began looking for a job. "I had carried a paper route for 10 years and 19 days. Getting new accounts and taking care of your customers is what that business—any business—is all about," he said, speaking from over 60 years of experience. "I started the paper route when I was nine years old. My mother was a single parent and a school teacher who taught for 44 years," he continued. "I had two older sisters and what I earned as a youngster helped support our family. One of my customers was a new car dealer. He hired me and I guess selling got in my blood."

"I met Joan when she was shopping for a car at the Buick dealership in 1959. We were married the following February and celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary this year," Sims said with a very satisfied smile. Since they both are so integrally involved in running the business and spend so many hours there each day, they decided that making the drive to and from their home every day was a waste of time — so they built a full-scale house under the same roof with the business.

Sims went to Texas Tech in Lubbock where he acquired some very practical ideas about promoting Trailer Town. "When the fish aren't biting, it doesn't make any difference how many hooks you put in the water. Keep your name before the public and do a little bit of advertising," he advised. "But when the economy gets better, that's when you start advertising. It takes more hooks in the water to get your share of the business."

Billy and Joan also attribute their success to finding the right people for key positions — and then letting them do their jobs.

"I had never been in an RV before I came to work here. This company ticks because Billy Sims is such a considerate person," said Shirley Dunlap, office man-

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ager for 28 years. “He is aware of his customer’s wants, financial ability, and needs — and then he tries to work it out so they can buy the RV they would like to have. Billy treats us all like family and we in return give it our best. We appreciate what he does for us and he knows now he can leave for several days without any concerns. There were nine employees here when I started and today we have 26.”

Brady Gass, service manager, has been with the company for 22 years. “As long as we treat people fairly, courteously, and keep them informed, it is easy to make them happy,” he began. “We will stop and help RVers who are traveling through. They are a priority for us because we know their trip plans and schedule have been interrupted. Over the years we have seen these folks come back and buy from us. It is the right thing to do whether or not they come back again.”

Gass manages a team of nine full-time service techs. “When an RV comes in for service, I perform ‘triage.’ That means

finding the most efficient way to handle a repair and selecting the best person to do the job that will meet the customer’s schedule and expectations.” Gass can choose from six full-time technicians, each with special skills. One of the techs serves as the full-time hitch, tow bar, and wiring specialist. A separate facility houses the company’s body shop staffed by two full-time techs who can address all exterior body work.

The service manager also attributes the company’s success to the easy going, generous nature of Billy Sims. “We have a very low turnover rate with our employees,” he said.

Lesla Zint, the company’s finance and insurance manager, has been with Trailer Town for nine years. She is very optimistic the RV industry will make a strong turnaround this year. “Eighteen months ago our customers had to have a Beacon score of 750 for the banks we use to even consider them,” she pointed out. “Today, qualifying for a loan is much easier.”

Asked about the company’s longevity and success, Zint replied, “We all know and understand our jobs and how we fit together as a team. We are laid back and comfortable with ourselves and with our customers. People feel that when they come here to buy an RV. When you come to work, it really doesn’t feel like work. It’s like coming to be with your family.”

Keith Austin, sales manager, offered another perspective. “Our reputation is the reason we have been here for 39 years,” he began. “We want reputable manufacturers to go with our reputation. We choose our brands; they don’t choose us. Tiffin and Winnebago compliment each other very well. Our reputation is the biggest reason buyers come here to shop. There are two other RV dealers in town, so we have to stay on our toes all the time.

“We believe we have one of the best service departments in West Texas,” he continued. “We get appreciative letters and compliments frequently from both

*Continued on page 51*

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# DENSO





## My Career Has Come Full Circle

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

The 2003 Phaeton pulling a silver 29-foot Wells Cargo trailer slipped easily into the Allegro Service Center campground and parked alongside the camp store building. A tall, large-framed man wearing a planter's straw hat, knit shirt, shorts, and deck shoes got out and walked back to the trailer and entered through a side door. Soon the rear wall of the trailer lowered as a ramp and the driver gingerly backed the Pontiac Solstice from its nesting place. Above the silver sports car two aluminum crossbars supported a vintage Grumman canoe. Besides this curious writer, two more had gathered to watch. With the car out of the way, I could see a workshop in the front of the trailer.

It did not take long to engage Gordon Dyer in conversation. "I sell and sharpen precision tools," he began. He invited me in to see the L-shaped workbench with several tools bolted to the bench, a pegboard full of wrenches, fluorescent ceiling lighting, and 50-amp service for the tools and his roof AC. He opened a box of precision shears displayed in a velvet backed case with prices beginning at \$25 and ranging to \$400. "I take care of barbers, groomers, florists, and anyone who has precision tools that must stay sharp," he said. We continued to talk and the

### Following a career in aerospace technology, Gordon Dyer is using skills learned as a teenager to build a new business.

story of a very interesting career began to unfold.

"My dad grew up during the depression and came from poor circumstances," Gordon said. "For a while his home was in his tent. But he loved camping and being in the outdoors, so that really didn't seem to bother him that much. After the war was over, he had several jobs but eventually landed a good position with Shell Oil."

Gordon's mother grew up in a family who also loved to camp. "We were introduced to the great outdoors at an early age," he continued. "Two of my siblings had serious health problems, so dad bought a 21-foot Airstream trailer in 1956 and pulled it with a 1954 Buick Super. We spent many a night on the parking lot at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Judy and Ralph died at 8 and 11 years of age. After that dad and mom used the Airstream to teach us about the outdoors and camping skills, as we learned about

our country. He added the Grumman canoe a year or two later with the square stern for a small motor. In the summers we went all over the U.S. and Canada. I was hooked. Camping became part of my lifestyle at an early age. We were living in Indianapolis at the time."

Wesley Dyer was intense about his many skills: Woodworking to the point of making most of the furniture in the family's home. Flying to the point of owning several airplanes during his career. Ham radio operator to the point of taking it to a high level of public service. Music to the point of owning two organs—one for each child who was learning to play. "He finally traded both organs for a Hammond theater organ with a full console that I learned to play," Gordon said.

"In his shop dad had the equipment to sharpen almost any type of tool," Gordon said. "He quickly realized it was a good sideline business and taught me to sharpen saw blades. I used to try to get out of the house as early as possible on Saturday morning before he would call me and say, 'Gordon, we've got some saw blades to sharpen this morning.' Little did I know how handy that skill would become."

Dyer bought an Air Coupe from an airline pilot who agreed to teach him how

to fly if he would buy the plane. "The Air Coupe was unique in that it had steering controls similar to a car's. The first one had metal wings and then dad found an earlier version that had fabric wings. He bought that one, too," Gordon related. "By the time I was in high school he sold the two Air Coupes and bought a Beech Bonanza. We had some good times in

that plane. I would get a date with a girl in high school and tell her we were going to dinner — in Chicago! Dad would dress up as a chauffeur and drive me to the young lady's home in his '63 Caddy. Then we would head for the airport and go in the Bonanza to the downtown Chicago airport. Dad would wait at the FBO while I took my date to dinner. And then we

would fly home. The girl never knew he was my dad, and I got quite a reputation at school."

Finally, it was time to go to college and young Gordon selected Indiana State University to study industrial arts, drafting, and air ground school. He had decided to study for an education degree just in case the flying career didn't pan out. In his

A Grumman canoe, a snazzy Solstice convertible, and a workshop full of precision sharpening tools fill the 24-ft. trailer. • Rigged for 50-amp service or genset power, Dyer can sharpen precision cutting tools in air-conditioned comfort.





Jan and Gordon recently celebrated an anniversary with a trip to Florida. Jan continues in her career as a junior high mathematics teacher in Slidell, Louisiana, just a few miles across the state line from their home in Picayune, Mississippi.

junior year he married Jan who was studying for a math education degree at Purdue.

“My wife’s father had flown with a barnstormer back in the thirties and absolutely would not let her fly with us,” he chuckled. “Jan told me it was either marriage or flying. I picked marriage.” Gordon graduated in 1974 and began a teaching career that lasted a short two and a half years. “I couldn’t make enough to survive although I loved teaching,” he said.

An English teacher who sympathized with his situation mentioned that she knew someone at the nearby Stewart-Warner plant and would submit his resume for him. Gordon had an interview two days later and got a job offer the day after. The English teacher’s husband was the plant manager.

In 1977, Gordon accidentally connected with a headhunter for Federal Mogul which resulted in another career advancement as a tool designer for race and ball bearing grinding equipment. But the economy weakened and the company began a series of layoffs. “By this time we had Chris who was five and Carolyn who was barely one. We had just bought a nice home and I sold it for fear of losing my job and then the house,” he explained. “We had six weeks to get out of the house.” Resumes went flying out and a call came in from Martin Marietta in New Orleans (later to become Lockheed Martin in 1995). With one week left to vacate the house, the company offered him a job the day after he returned home from the interview. Martin Marietta was building the space shuttle’s external fuel tank. Finally, it was the job on which Dyer built his career—28 years and 10 months. “I just loved working for that company!”

Gordon’s skills in teaching moved him quickly into Lockheed Martin’s marketing and public relations programs. On January 28, 1986, the Challenger shuttle exploded 73 seconds

after liftoff, taking the lives of all seven astronauts. The tragedy paralyzed the space industry and shut down the shuttle program for 32 months. Since Lockheed Martin had been building the external fuel tank, cutbacks and layoffs were expected. Gordon fell back on his early training in tool sharpening and ramped up a business. “On Thursdays we did restaurants and on Saturdays we visited barbershops and pet groomers. We supplemented our income successfully,” he said. “The idea worked and I kept the equipment but sold the trailer in 1988 when the aerospace industry started coming back. But Chris and I continued for years to do tool sharpening at night.”

“One of the great benefits to our country and the business economy is the technology spinoffs from the aerospace industry that find entirely different applications in medicine and business,” he said. Gordon soon became the director of Lockheed Martin’s Technology Transfer Program, traveling throughout the U.S. to find other applications for aerospace technology.

“One example of this is a very dense foam material we developed. For marketing purposes, I called it *MARCORE*,™” he explained. “When a leg is amputated, a prosthetist makes three dimensional measurements of the stub which are transferred to a CAD-CAM program. The data then drives a six head CNC router which carves the mold from which the prosthesis is made. Before *MARCORE* was invented, plaster of paris was used to make the molds which had three significant disadvantages: it quickly dulled the router blades; it was extremely heavy; and it cracked and broke easily. *MARCORE* significantly reduced the cost and time of making prostheses.”

Because of the product’s high R-factor as an insulator, it was also used to design hot-cold delivery carts for hospitals to transport food from their kitchens to the patients. The applications of this and other products are nearly endless, Dyer emphasized.

Gordon’s background in education spawned another project designed to encourage interest in engineering among students from 15 to 21 years old who were in Explorer Scouts (a Boy

Scouts of America program). NASA had started an engineering program for the Explorer Scout Post in Huntsville and primed the kids' interest with a project called the Great Moon Buggy Race. "The kids learned engineering theory and principles in class and then built the buggies in the shop," he said. "I started our program in New Orleans and a year later we went to compete with the Explorer Post in Huntsville. There were different competitions based on age. We only went through high school, but we beat the Huntsville kids who were in their first and second years of college." The key to learning anything, he insists, is *application*. "Theories don't stick unless you can put them to use and see how they work in the real world," he said.

Similarly, Gordon supported another technology development program called IRAD, or Independent Research and Development. "I taught and coached speech to our engineers as a *tool* to improve their presentation skills. They needed to learn how to sell their ideas to business leaders and entrepreneurs. We taught accounting as the *key function* to making a project or a business work," he advocates. "Again, it's application."

In the fall of 2006 Lockheed Martin asked Gordon to take the lead in another program which required communication with the company's various publics. It was called the Environmental Remediation Project. He first dealt with a very hostile situation in a Florida city. Harmful chemicals used by a company which Lockheed Martin acquired had over a period of several decades found

their way into the ground water. Some of the residents near this facility were still using wells which had been drilled long ago. "We reached a solution where we paid to connect the residents to the city water supply and then agreed to pay their water bills for the rest of their lives," he said. Gordon often used his motorhome to travel to the many places where remediation projects were needed.

On April 15, 2009, the Environmental Remediation Project was completed. "Before I returned to New Orleans, all employees received letters announcing severe reductions in the Lockheed Martin workforce. The current administration had decided to discontinue the shuttle program," Gordon said. "I was guaranteed a job but the new positions would have been in Maryland or California. I opted to retire. Now for real, I reactivated the sharpening business, only this time it was not a supplementary income—it was *the* income."

Jan and Gordon moved to Picayune, Mississippi, in March 1992 just before Chris and Carolyn were ready for college. "Chris earned a business degree from the University of New Orleans with heavy emphasis on accounting. Carolyn got bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting and then earned a J.D. degree from Ole Miss," Gordon related. "We have three grandchildren and one on the way." Jan teaches math at Slidell Junior High and Gordon travels a 70 mile radius around Picayune sharpening precision tools. His career has come full circle. "Dad would be proud of me." RIS



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## Those Dreaded Words: “Your Pet Has Cancer..”

When we hear the word cancer, we start to panic, but not all cancers are malignant and some can be cured. This article is meant to provide you with information on types of cancer normally seen in pets, and the treatments you may have to deal with once a diagnosis is made. If your pet has been diagnosed with a cancer, you may have to put off traveling for a while, as treatments require frequent visits to your veterinarian.

There are two types of cancer. Malignant means the cancer has the propensity to spread to other organs or to return to the same area again after it has been surgically removed. The other type of cancer is benign. This means that the cancer is confined and usually can be removed surgically without radiation follow-up.

Cancer can affect any organ. The different names given to cancers refer to the organ and the area involved or type of tumor that it is, such as melanoma, with which we are familiar in humans. Melanin in the skin can become a cancerous tumor. There are cancers of the bloodstream referred to as leukemia and bone tumors referred to as osteosarcoma.

It is advisable to examine your pet for any lumps or bumps that seem out of place. This can be done at bath time unless you have a cat! With cats, it may be best to examine when you are grooming or petting them.

Check your pet's lymph nodes which are located on the neck near the base of the ears, in the arm pits, and behind the knees. They usually feel small. If these nodes are easy to feel and large, they should be checked out by your veterinarian. Except for the obvious, a lot of cancers cannot be detected physically. If your pet is showing signs of listlessness, vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation, these can be signs of cancer. However, these symptoms can be signs of other diseases, too.

Most cancers can be detected by biopsy, x-ray or MRI, ultrasound, and/or blood workup. Benign tumors can be removed surgically and recovery is usually quick. Most benign tumors, such as the lipoma, can be taken care of with surgical removal. Lipoma is a common fatty tumor that can be felt under the skin. They do not grow fast and are soft. When they become large and unsightly, they can be removed. Some pets develop many of these lipomas and require extensive surgery. A convenient time for removal of these tumors is when your pet is having his dental exam and cleaning because he is already under anesthesia.

With malignant tumors, the prognosis is not that good. Most malignancies can be treated with surgical removal followed by chemotherapy. The chemotherapy can last for a few months. Treatment in animals is similar to that in humans, along with

the side effects also being similar.

In dealing with malignant tumors in your pet, you must make a decision on whether to put your pet through the recommended treatment and decide whether you think this will improve his or her quality of life. I have seen some pets with leukemia's regress and go into remission. I have also seen the treatments make the pet worse or not improve their quality of life. Cost is also a factor one has to consider. I have seen clients spend \$15,000 to \$20,000, with their pet living only an extra six months to a year. However, that is equivalent to six to seven years in dog or cat longevity.

Talk to your veterinarian oncologist or general practitioner and look at all the options. The prognosis on some tumors is not good at all and we should not get our hopes up too high.

Remember, a lump or bump will likely have a better outcome when treated early rather than waiting. Also, surgery is less extensive when tumors are found and treated early. Cancer therapy has come a long way in veterinary medicine. Consult with a veterinary oncologist to better understand your options, cost, and outcome.

Happy Travels,  
Dr. John P. Pilarczyk

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John and Kay Pilarczyk get ready to prepare a lobster feast during their June travels in Canada's maritime provinces.




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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.

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Dinner: 5 to 9 Tu–Sun

### WHEN SUGARCANE WAS KING: LAURA *Continued from page 23*

plantation while her husband handled affairs of his family's wine business in the United States and France.

The antebellum years of 1823-1860 saw great economic growth under Elisabeth's direction. She increased the acreage under cultivation in sugarcane, and added rice and cypress timber as additional sources of income. Louis Duparc and Raymond Locoul both died during epidemics of cholera, as did Flagy Duparc's wife, Mercelite Cortez Duparc.

Elisabeth and Raymond's two children, Aimée and Emile, were both eligible to inherit the plantation, but great jealousy and competitiveness existed between them as they grew older, married, and had families of their own. Aimée married Ivan de Lobel whom she met in France on a business trip with her mother. Emile married Désirée Archinard, his second cousin. The feuding family all fled the plantation for safety during the Civil War. Returning in 1865, they realized great profit as the cost of sugar had skyrocketed in the post-war years. Elisabeth reluctantly divided the plantation between the two children in 1872. Emile declared his half of the plantation to be named "Laura" after his oldest child.

Eventually the hard feelings between siblings subsided as circumstances changed, and history repeated itself with Laura being groomed to become the next president of the family business. Laura was 18 years old when Emile died. Laura and her mother, Désirée, continued to operate the plantation with help from Laura's brother, George. With responsibility for debts incurred by her father and the declining price of raw sugar, Laura decided it was best to sell the plantation. It was purchased by Aubert Florian Waguespack in 1891. The Waguespack family ran, resided on, and lived at the plantation until 1984.

Laura married in 1892 and moved to St. Louis, Missouri, but wrote in her memoirs, "To dear old Louisiana, the land of my birth, I love you and am true to you still."

Laura Plantation's association with the Br'er Rabbit tales drew preservationist Norman Marmillion's attention to the site. He created a for-profit company that attracted enough investors to embark on a ten-year plan of restoration. Some investors are descendants of former owners. **RIS**

### DEALER PROFILE *Continued from page 45*

local and transient RVers. That's because our people are the backbone of this company."

Austin echoed the feelings of his colleagues. "The reason this company is so successful is Billy and Joan Sims. They are very conservative and have built a great dealership over the years.

"When I first talked to Billy about the sales manager's position, he impressed upon me his philosophy for running this business: 'All a man has to sell is his integrity. If he gives up his integrity, he has nothing.' I knew then that this is where I wanted to spend the rest of my career. Today we have generations coming back to buy from us. I have current

customers whose grandfathers bought RVs from Billy Sims Trailer Town," Austin said.

Billy Sims knows that taking care of your customers is the core reason you are able to stay in business. His integrity and customer-oriented business philosophy was rewarded in 2007 when he was inducted into the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association's Hall of Fame. He is the only dealer in West Texas to receive the RVIA Hall of Fame award. Sims still works six days a week to help folks get started in camping because he believes it is one of the best ways to build strong families. **RIS**

### SERIOUS TECH TALK *Continued from page 59*

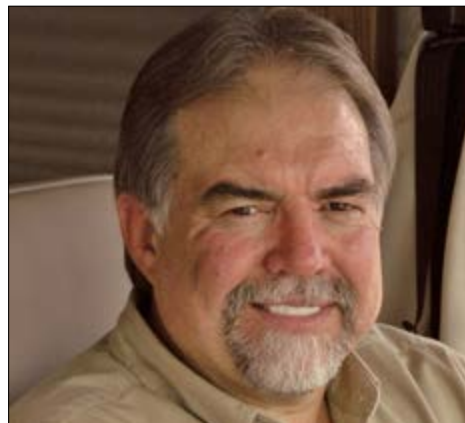
Dear Charlie & Elaine,

(1) With regard to the slide-out rollers, we have changed suppliers for these rollers a couple times without immediate success. We have someone working on this problem now and may have a "fix" for you soon.

(2) With the current malleability of rubber available, we cannot buy a gasket that will flex enough to perfectly seal the 1/16th inch thickness of the angle plate. Our rain simulator did not show water leaking into

the coach at this point. Of course, a "blowing rain" could make the difference. The gaskets have to be flexible enough to allow the slide-out box to move in and out freely. In your situation, the only fix I can offer at the moment is a strip of electrical tape over the gaps.

(3) Camping World carries "RV short sizes" for queen and king beds. For example, a standard residential queen bed is 60 × 80. The RV short size is 60 × 75. To order sheets from Camping World, call 888-626-7576.



**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  
 PO Box 1738  
 Monroe, GA 30656-1738

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 . . .**

We have a 2003 Phaeton which we purchased new from Kings Campers in Wausau, Wisconsin. We have lived in it full time since December 2006 and have 39,000 miles on it. We chose the Phaeton because of quality of workmanship, floor plan, abundant storage, and dealer service.

One continuing problem we have is drawers falling down due to rear mount-

ing brackets breaking. These are made of a plastic-like material that split after many miles on U.S. highways. When the brackets split, the drawers fall down. I have replaced most brackets in the motorhome at least once and some twice. It is very inconvenient to get parts when we are traveling. I suggest you change to a metal bracket which will not increase the cost of the motorhome more than \$100.00 and it would save everyone a lot of grief.

We have compared our motorhome with more expensive units and the Phaeton has it hands down over most of them. Most of the things we would change in our rig have already been changed in the newer Phaetons.

Richard Goff  
 Winter, Wisconsin

Dear Richard,  
 You're right, but that was a method that was commonly used throughout the industry. Several years ago we changed to a new construction method that was a little more expensive and labor intensive. We now encase each drawer on both sides with solid wood which is attached firmly to the sidewall of the cabinet

I have a 2006 Allegro Bay on a Freightliner chassis that we bought new. It has a ringing sound that develops from 35 mph to 65 mph. The best way to describe the sound is between a high pitched ring or bell. The noise increases with speed and fades out above 70 mph. I don't believe it to be the turbo because only air flow thru the grill seems to affect it. I have traced it to somewhere in the front left corner of the coach. While my wife drove down the freeway I crawled under the dash and tried to locate the noise. After some crawling and strange looks from truckers, it appears to be coming from under the brake pedal area. It has done it since it was new. I will try the cardboard behind the grill trick to see if it has any effect. If you have heard of anyone else with this model

having the same noise please let me know.

Dan Sloppy  
 Wilton, California

Dear Dan,  
 This is a problem we have had in the past. We have found that the noise is sometimes caused by the grill itself (see *RIS*, vol. 6, no. 4, pages 54-55). Using the cardboard to trace what the airflow is striking is the best way to find and stop the noise.

I purchased a 2005 Allegro Open Road a few months ago on a Workhorse chassis. Due to health problems, it is still sitting. Hopefully, next month we will begin using it. Stopped by the local dealer, and he gave me a current copy of *Roughing It Smoothly*. Very nice. I called in and registered my coach, and found out about the refrigerator recall and got it fixed immediately. Thank you very much.

I read the letter about the door stud. A friend ripped his skin open on mine. Look at the stud on a new Corvette. It has a guard over it with rounded edges. I don't think it is possible to cut yourself on this one. Another idea, make the end like a ball, and next to the door, machine a couple of flat places for a wrench to tighten the stud.

Norm La Joie  
 Reedley, California

Dear Norm,  
 This problem has been called to our attention several times recently. We have passed your idea along to engineering and we will try to make a modification soon.

This e-mail involves questions I have about the field representative system. I'm a pretty good Tiffin customer having owned three Allegro Buses since 2003. I was unaware of the field representative system until an Allegro Club Rally in Oregon in June 2009. Because my Bus was the last motorhome seen on the last day, the field rep was only able to repair

a window shade. At that time plans were made to have a number of items repaired, hopefully by September 2009.

As of this writing none of the repairs have been completed and the hope is that my local field rep will begin work on May 7. I was told there have been long delays due to scheduling conflicts and excessive work loads. If any of the items that needed work had disabled the coach, I would have been unable to use my motorhome for close to one year.

My questions are these. Should an owner rely on the field representatives or look elsewhere for service on their motorhomes? By starting the process with the reps I have delayed going to another facility and getting the work done. What is a reasonable expectation for how long it should take for a rep to get to a Tiffin motorhome?

I am now and have been happy with my choice of a Tiffin motorhome. But I believe that for the field representative system to be of any value to the owner, the system may need a re-evaluation and revision to improve its functionality.

William Alan Richardson  
 Discovery Bay, California

Dear William,  
 Field representatives were established because of the distance between the Tiffin Service Center in Red Bay and the western states. Our first purpose for the field reps is to train and assist our western service centers. It is in your best interests to first contact the Tiffin service center nearest your home and allow them to solve the problems. If they need assistance, they will involve the Tiffin field representative.

I have a 2009 Allegro Bus 40QSP, serial number 5VBBA67A59A1124444. I would like to be able to control the side view cameras without having to use the turn signal lever. I read in *RIS* the article about the Allegro 34 TGA having push button selection for the cameras.

Would the switch and a wiring dia-

gram be available for my motorhome?

Bill Welfare  
 Thornhill, ON Canada

Dear Bill,  
 The Triple Vision monitor used in the Allegro has this feature built into the monitor itself. It is not a matter of changing the wiring externally.

We have a 2008 Phaeton 40QTH with three TVs inside and one outside. Our satellite dish has two outputs. One goes to the forward TV receiver box and the other goes to the bedroom. We have a DirectTV receiver box in the forward compartment. It has two receivers allowing you to view one channel while recording another. To use this feature, both of the satellite outputs need to go to the forward box.

Question: How is the second satellite output cable routed to the bedroom? Can I get to it without ripping out the ceiling? I would like to reroute it to the forward box.

Suggestion: Since most owners will only purchase one satellite receiver, it would be very useful to have both satellite output cables available in the forward box. During construction, both cables could be routed to the forward box and made available for two channel receiver operation. A separate cable could be routed from the forward box to the bedroom if the owner chooses to have two receivers. The second output cable could be connected to this run using a female connector in the forward box sending the signal back to the bedroom.

Thank you in advance for any help you may be able to provide.

Doug Ray  
 San Diego, California

Dear Doug,  
 The cable going to the bedroom TV comes from the satellite dish and makes a connection in the top front passenger-side cabinet which can be accessed behind a false panel in the back of that cabinet. You will only have to run it from that

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corner to where you have your DVR. For the last two years, we have been providing a splitter in the rear of the cabinet that houses the entertainment center. There is a label on the cable for use with your DVR. You will then hook your bedroom TV into your primary receiver connected to TV1. This means that the bedroom and front TVs will view the same program.

There are two things I would like to see added to Tiffin motorhomes. First, clothes hangers made with a snap-close circle to fit on the clothes rod to prevent clothes from jumping off the rod. Second, I would like to see Tiffin install a safe in the rear of the closet. The safes I have seen are very heavy and it would be easier to reinforce the base for a safe and install it before the rear cap is put on. Some may be aftermarket, but I think

they are more secure if they are installed during the manufacturing of the motorhome. Does Tiffin have any plans to offer these options?

Leslie Trapp  
Palmetto, Florida

Dear Leslie,  
Please see Tech Talk, vol. 7, no. 1, page 54 for suggestions about how to keep your clothes from jumping off of the closet rack. For the 2011 models of the Zephyr and the Allegro Bus, Tiffin will offer a safe in the rear closet as an option.

I have a 2005 Allegro Open Road. Are the decals replaceable? How do I remove the ones that are peeling and install new ones?

J. R. Allen  
Punta Gorda, Florida

Dear J. R.,  
The decals are replaceable and the Tiffin

parts and service department has replacement decals available. The most difficult part is getting the old decals off the fiberglass. The decals come off in small pieces. We recommend that you take it to a professional shop for removal and replacement. Many owners opt to paint the fiberglass with the same pattern of the decals.

When I start my 2005 Allegro Bay, the electric window on the driver's door, the hydraulic jack buzzer, and the rear camera do not function. After a period of time, they start to work. I also note that the automotive AC does not work when this happens — then at other times it works fine. It seems as though I have an electrical problem, but it is not continuous. Any ideas how to solve this problem?

Ralph W. D'Agostini  
Lincoln, California

Dear Ralph,  
The problem is probably caused by a solenoid mounted under the hood that powers these items when the ignition switch is turned on. The solenoid is sticking intermittently which accounts for the components beginning to work after a short period of time.

On my 2007 Allegro Bus, the paint bubbled around both exterior furnace vents. I am wondering if this is a common problem. Would some kind of gasket prevent this from happening on my 2010 Bus?

In volume 7, number 2 of *Roughing It Smoothly* Mary Findley recommended using Merry Moppins Advantage Protectant rather than wax for new motorhomes and to wash the motorhome with vinegar and baby shampoo. Can these products be used on the Diamond Shield protective film on the front of the motorhome?

Jerry Brant  
Stoystown, Pennsylvania

Dear Jerry,  
The bubbling around the 2007 Bus fur-

nace vents has not been an issue we have had to deal with that often. We are not using a gasket, but we are mounting them differently on the 2010 which will hopefully prevent this problem in the future.

The products recommended by Mary Findley for the clearcoat finish can be used on the Diamond Shield protective film.

We have a 2005 Phaeton and we travel quite a bit in the winter months. The chassis heater does not put out sufficient heat to get the cabin area warm. Other than running the furnace, is there any way to increase the heater output? It seems like the temperature output at the vent outlets in the dash is very low. Is it possible that there is a heat loss from the engine to the heater core because of the distance between the two? Could these lines be insulated to reduce the heat loss?

Larry Bloomquist  
Lampe, Missouri

Dear Larry,  
The diesel engines in winter use run at a lower temperature than most vehicles with a gas engine. You do lose heat as the coolant circulates from the engine to the heater core. The line runs inside the chassis rail in the basement area of the motorhome, which gives it protection from the outside elements. It would be very difficult to insulate this line continuously from back to front. The output temperature of the dash heat, if it is operating properly, should be between 120 and 130 degrees. The dash heater should be producing approximately 9,500 BTUs whereas the furnace in the motorhome will produce 35,000 BTUs. Although the automotive heater will keep the cabin warm in *moderately* cold weather, you will have to run the furnace when you have *sub-freezing* weather.

I have a 2009 Phaeton 40QTH. The Xantrex operator's manual talks about equalizing the house batteries.

(1) Does Interstate Batteries recommend equalization? And, if so, how do you do it?

(2) How do you isolate the 12-volt system?

(3) How do you lubricate the hydraulic slides on the passenger side?

Donald Borey  
Gonzales, Louisiana

Dear Donald,  
(1) Interstate Batteries on their website recommends equalization. However, you must observe several precautionary steps which both Interstate and Xantrex recommend. Anything connected to 12-volt service could be damaged by the equalization procedure. If you decide to do this, read and carefully take all of the steps recommended by your inverter manufacturer.

(2) You can isolate your 12-volt system by using the 12-volt disconnect switch on the panel at the entry door.

(3) The rollers and gears in the HWH hydraulic slide system are made of high-density plastic and will never need lubricating. In fact, HWH tells us that lubrication will attract grit and dirt and *cause* the components to wear out.

I have a 2010 Phaeton with the built-in computer desk. With my laptop on the slide-out shelf, I could not close the slide-out because the latch that holds the door shut hits the laptop. I installed self-closing hinges and removed the latch. Now I can leave (or store) the laptop on the shelf when I close it. I suggest that Tiffin change to self-closing hinges on the computer door.

Ken Mercer  
Village Mills, Texas

Dear Ken,  
Thank you very much for your suggestion. We will pass it on to engineering.

We have a 2008 Allegro Bus purchased in October 2008. Two issues:

(1) We have the stacked washer and

dryer. The outside flap on the dryer vent makes enough noise at night when the wind is blowing to wake us. I have to get out of bed, get the ladder and tape, go outside and tape it shut. It would be nice if there was a cable or some device inside to secure the flap.

(2) The gray water drain is *very slow*. Is there any way to remedy this?

Sam & Deezy Williams  
Simsboro, Louisiana

Dear Sam & Deezy,  
(1) Most hardware stores sell adhesive backed cabinet door cushion buttons. The thinner felt type will probably work best and solve your problem.

(2) In the infrastructure of the coach under the floor, the black tank is in the lower position of the two waste tanks. The 3-inch ABS drain for the black tank is a straight drop down through the blade valve into the exterior waste line. Obviously, you need the widest drain possible to get semi-solid waste out without possible blockage. Notice that you do not have a lot of vertical space in the utility bay to accommodate a longer 3-inch ABS coming out of the black tank into which another 3-inch ABS drain for the grey waste could be joined. In order to design a joint valve system into the small vertical space, the plumbing design engineers found that a 1.5-inch ABS waste drain for the grey was the largest pipe that they could join in at that point. Sorry for your frustration. I'm sure standing there waiting for it to finish is about like watching grass grow.

The new 2010 Allegro Bus with the Powerglide chassis is the best motorhome we've had! The new system of *all* the TVs and direct satellite being wired together overwhelms us at times.

(1) When we use the remotes, *all* the TVs come *on* or *off*. The surround sound only functions when the mid-section TV is in use, correct?

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(2) Can we get some explanation on how to properly operate *all* or just *one* TV without them all going on or off from the same remote?

Thanks for all your help. Mr. Bob knows how pleased we are with this coach.

Steve & Cynthia Ecton  
Heber Springs, Arkansas

Dear Steve & Cynthia,

(1) Yes, that is correct. The surround sound will only accept one signal input which is from the mid-section TV only.

(2) The Panasonic DVD surround sound Viera link must be turned off. You may stop all the TVs from working as one by putting the Viera link in the OFF position. Also there is a re-

mote control operational instruction sheet available from your dealer or the Tiffin Motorhomes Parts Department.

We are full-timers, having bought a new 2010 Allegro Bus 43-ft. in January. We keep looking for problems to justify a trip to Red Bay, but the coach is perfect! But here are a couple of questions:

(1) What is the best way to protect clearcoat when washing the coach? Are the car wash solutions with wax in them okay? Is a "California duster" okay?

(2) Must the two satellite receivers be high definition? We are fine with standard TV reception. Thanks, Danny. We really enjoy your column every quarter.

Fred Salitore  
Weatherford, Texas

Dear Fred,

(1) With respect to protecting the clearcoat, please read the article by Mary Finley in vol. 7, no. 2, regarding proper methods for cleaning the exterior of your coach. Do not use a high pressure washer up close to get rid of heavy dirt accumulation. You can use it to do a clear water rinse if you are several feet away from the fiberglass. Yes, it is okay to use the California duster.

(2) Yes, the receivers must be high definition. All Tiffin coaches since 2008 have been wired for HDTV. They are also equipped with the HD off air antenna for all of your local channels. Directv.com is now offering FREE HD channel upgrade for life with your subscription.

I have a 2003 Phaeton with a 330 CAT diesel. My generator is an Onan Quiet Diesel 7500. The generator was working fine when suddenly it just shut down. I have not been able to start it again. My fuel tank is 3/4 full and the coolant and oil are at proper levels. I took it to an Onan dealer for service and it ran fine with an external fuel supply. It will not start or run with the coach's fuel line connected to it. I have enclosed a copy of the Onan technician's test results.

Jim Hapgood  
Turlock, California

Dear Jim,

There is a fuel filter inside the generator. There is also an inline filter between the generator and the fuel tank that may have never been changed. It is located behind the generator next to the chassis rail. This filter can either be discarded or replaced. This is an item which we have found not to be a necessity.

I have a 2006 Allegro Bay 37DB front engine diesel. When I use the furnace in the bedroom, the vent under the closet gets

so hot it burns if you touch it. What's the cure for this?

Mike Nelson  
Shreveport, Louisiana

Dear Mike,

The rear vent on this unit is the closest to the furnace compared to any of the other vents. You can take off the vent cover and add four or five feet of furnace duct to allow the air to cool down more before it comes out of the rear vent.

I have a 2003 Allegro Bay 35DB with 53,000 miles on it. Over the past three or four years some serious squeaks and rattles have developed. Recently, a lot of the foam between the chassis rails and the floor has worked out. I cannot say for certain this is the cause of the squeaks and rattles, but certainly the foam was put there for a purpose. Is there a feasible way to fix this?

Second, in the hallway between the refrigerator and bath something seems to be working its way up through the tile. It has broken the tile, but has not actually come through. It has been noticeable to our bare feet for several years, but it is now visible to the eye. What do you think is happening? The break is about the size of a penny and is raised up about an eighth of an inch.

Johnnie Dekle  
Louisville, Georgia

Dear Johnnie,

I am not sure exactly where the foam is coming from that you have noticed. Without being there to trace it, I can't be much help on this one. Squeaks and rattles are going to originate from the rough roads that we drive. They simply shake things loose and we have to track them down individually.

The second item is most likely a screw head that is working up underneath the vinyl tile. You will have to remove the tile and re-seat the screw. If you break the tile and it cannot be used again, hopefully you will be able to find a matching replacement tile.

In May 2008 my wife and I took delivery of our special-order 2008 Allegro Bus 43QRP. I have two questions for you:

As a part of the special order, we got 8 gel-type batteries instead of the standard batteries usually supplied. I notice that the battery charge monitor on the wall in the hallway consistently shows a voltage somewhere between a low of 13.6 and a high of 14.1, and the reading usually stays in the high end of that range. My question is: is that voltage within normal operating range and is the 14.1 reading too high?

Is it normal for the water pump to run continuously when the water hose is connected to shore supply? We do not leave the pump on, but once in a while hit the ON switch by mistake and immediately turn it back to the OFF position. Meanwhile,

we notice the sound of the pump running. I have deliberately checked by turning the switch in the utility bay on and find that the pump continues to run until the switch is turned off.

Thanks and keep up the good work. We read your column regularly and find it to be both interesting and helpful.

Don & Karen Little  
Tuscola, Texas

Dear Don & Karen,

The monitor in the hallway is the solar panel monitor. It should have two functions: it shows voltage in the motorhome and also the output of the solar panel. With full battery power when you are plugged in to shore power, running your generator, or running your engine, voltage should read between 13.5 and 14.2.



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This would be normal. When you disconnect from any of these power sources, the battery should go down to 12.6 to 12.8.

At the utility bay, if you turn the water inlet lever to "city water" position (instead of "tank fill"), and the water pump is in the ON position, the pump will run and circulate water through the "water tank" fill line. This will not hurt the system or damage the pump.

In February we purchased a 2010 Phaeton 40QTH at La Mesa RV in Yuma. So far we have enjoyed the coach and its features. However, we have encountered three problems for which we have suggestions:

(1) While traveling some areas with "not-so-smooth" roads, we heard some annoying rattling coming from the front area on the driver's side. While Charlie drove, I got down on my knees and lifted the forward edge of the slide cover where I saw two white plastic rollers which are free to rattle and spin when the slide-out is not deployed. The only things I could find in the coach that were long enough and thin enough to wedge under the rollers were two wire-handle fly swatters. After I pushed the wire handles under the rollers, NO MORE RATTLE! So now, while we are on the road, there has to be something under there

to keep them from jiggling. So I continue to use my fly swatters until there is a better solution. Any suggestions?

(2) After reading in RIS "Tech Talk" about the leak problem around the bed slide-out, we experienced the same problem. I happened to see sunlight shining through on the floor on the right side of the bed. I looked and you could see through to the outside. At the bottom of the slide-out box along the side edges, there is an exterior metal angle structural strip that is not flush with the floor of the slide-out box. It is just thick enough to prevent the rubber gasket from making a perfect seal along the bot-

tom of the box. The gap allows water to seep in during a blowing rain. Have you got a retro-fit suggestion to fix this problem?

(3) Our Phaeton came with a king-size "Memory Foam" mattress. We thought that was pretty cool until we tried to buy a mattress cover and sheets to fit it. "King-size" in the RV world is not the same as "King-size" in the residential world. Everything is way too big. Is there a special supplier where you can purchase mattress cover and sheets to fit RV king and queen sizes?

Charlie & Elaine Rose · Prosser, Washington

*Continued on page 51*

**Reader Response**

**Bob's Column on the New Breeze**

I just finished reading your recent "President's Corner" (Vol. 7, No. 2) and am eager to see the 28-ft. Breeze. It looks great. I've spoken with you at a couple of RV shows and complained about my noisy, powerless 28DA. I love the quality of my motorhome otherwise and would be happy to own a small, rear diesel-powered Allegro. A bedroom slide, even a closet slide-out, would be a great incentive to me to purchase a Breeze. For me, you are moving in the right direction with a smaller diesel rig. Keep up the good work.

Bob Costa · Concord, California

**Item to Check on 2000 Zephyrs**

I bought a 2000 Zephyr and began to have jack problems. Then they quit retracting at all. I called HWH and they said the problem was probably in the control box. After describing to me where it was in the coach, I found it at the electric panel outside of the coach. I had to remove the carpeted panel to uncover the control box. At that point I found where the wire loom from the inside came through a big hole that had not been foam filled from the factory; so as a result, moisture damaged the unit. HWH said it was corroded beyond repair and had to be replaced. They were very nice and sent a remanufactured one and saved us some money.

This would be good information for anyone with a 2000 Zephyr to check out before a problem comes up. It may have only been our unit where the insulating foam was missed.

Larry Henley · Grand Prairie, Texas

**Thanks for great service on window replacement.**

We just wanted to say "Thanks" for the second driver's side window. RV Corral did a wonderful job getting it right this time. Just wanted you to know how great their window job work was in making this repair. Thanks again.

Bruce & Norma Larsen · Scappoose, Oregon

**34TGA needs an 80-gallon fresh water tank.**

Loved the article on the Allegro 34TGA. This will be our next rig in 2011, replacing our 2008 32 BA if we can order it with the 80-gallon fresh water tank. The 53-gallon tank on the 34TGA is not enough water when you travel to the national parks and dry camp. The 35 QBA has the same wheelbase (242") as the 34TGA, and the QBA has an 80-gallon tank. Thanks.

Jim & Mary Charvat · Leesburg, Florida

**Solving the Azimuth Question**

Don't let "Stumpy" Thompson of Weatherford, Texas, waste his money on a new satellite dish unless he wants to upgrade to HD.

After working with Dish Network and the King Dome that came with our 2006 Phaeton, I found two pieces of information that have become invaluable in setting up the receiver on our roof.

First, the dish has to know where to start looking, and that has to do with the zip code where the RV is located. Most receiv-

ers have a setup mode and if you punch in the zip code, it will read out the correct azimuth (angle from the horizon).

The starting altitude can be set on the King Dome when it is first turned on and the LED light starts blinking orange & green. By quickly depressing the top of the left-hand button a set number of times, the dish will start looking at the approximately correct azimuth. You can't do anything about the direction, but at least it is looking at the correct angle.

For Dish 500, if your zip code yields an angle of 32 degrees, you depress the button 10 times. After that, it is 2½ degrees per press. So, 34.5 degrees = 11 pushes, 37 degrees = 12 pushes, etc.

If there is no readout, simply go online and find the satellite you want and punch in the zip code at the following website: <http://www.sadoun.com/Sat/Installation/Satellite-Heading-Calculator.htm>. It will read out the correct azimuth for any service and any piece of equipment.

Jim Lieber · Lantana, Texas

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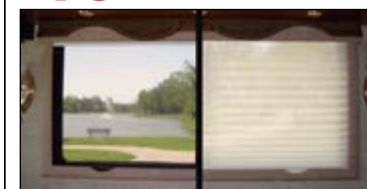
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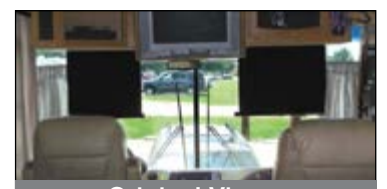


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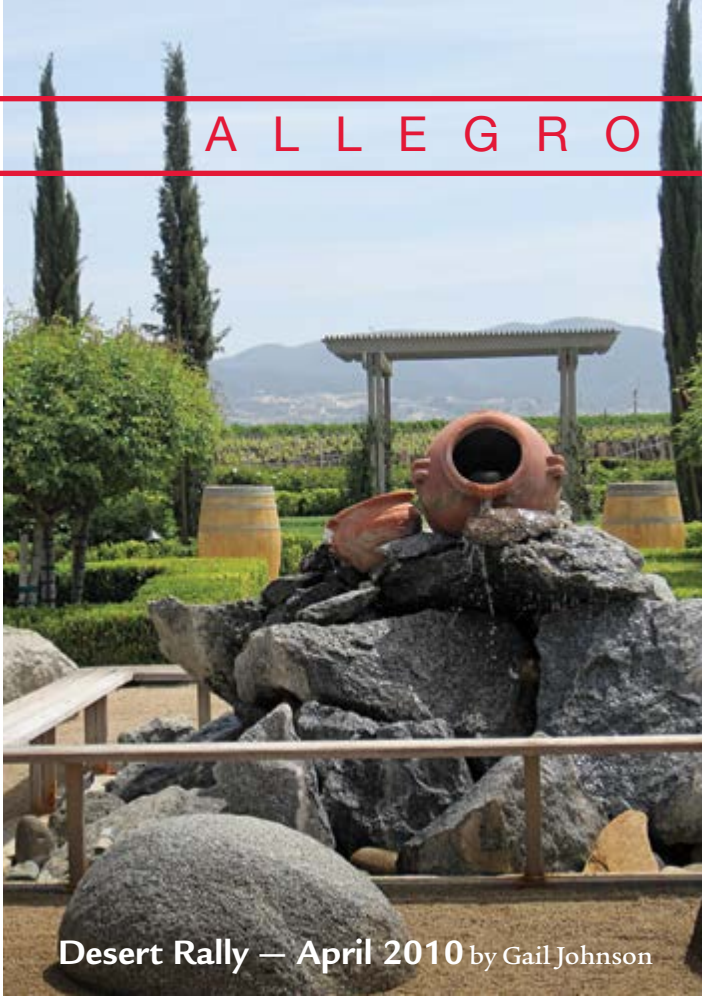


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**Desert Rally — April 2010** by Gail Johnson

Golden Village Palms RV Resort was the luxurious setting for a delightful three-day rally in April for Tiffin Motorhome owners. The resort is located in Hemet, which is very near the picturesque Temecula “Wine Country,” with Los Angeles about an hour’s drive away to the northwest.

While there are many interesting and beautiful places to see and things to do in the area, rally-goers found themselves busy enjoying the activities and the fellowship of other Tiffin owners right in the campground.

Most of Monday was dedicated to registration. Mike Thompson RV in the Los Angeles area sponsored a “Meet and Greet” Mixer in the afternoon, with a new motorhome display open for viewing the most recent models straight from the factory. The delicious evening meal was also sponsored by Mike Thompson

RV, with Orientation by Allegro Club President Jimmy Johnson being held before the meal was served.

After a robust breakfast on Tuesday morning, most of the day was given to seminars. Representatives from several different phases of the motor home industry (including Onan generators, Triple H Electronics, Sharp Convection Microwave Cooking) offered information packed presentations.

A Scavenger Hunt was organized and began on Tuesday morning. After lunch participants enjoyed refreshments while viewing a quilt trunk show in the clubhouse.

Tuesday night’s dinner was Western-themed, with participants being encouraged to dress in Cowboy/Cowgirl attire. The California Cowboys Band delighted the audience after dinner with country-western favorites.

Again breakfast was provided on Wednesday followed by games in the extraordinary facilities of the RV Resort. Rally attendees participated in a shuffleboard tournament and a pool tournament with both players and spectators having a great time!

After lunch on Wednesday the afternoon was filled with a ladderball tournament and a dessert social at the Mike Thompson RV Display. Following the farewell meal in the evening, The Delta Sonics from Denver, Colorado, were the featured entertainers.

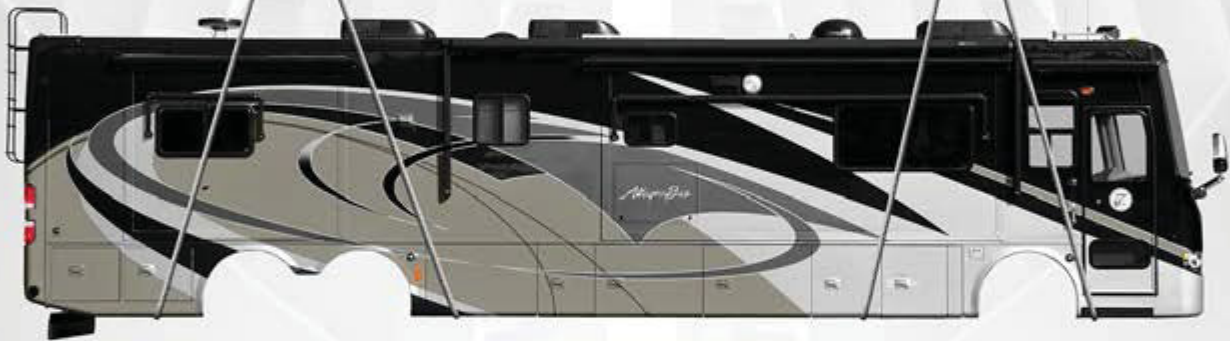
Thursday morning a “Grab ’n Go” breakfast was provided before the check-out deadline at 11:00 a.m.

Although this was a short rally, the consensus opinion was that it was a very successful one. The exceptional resort facilities, the warm hospitality of Allegro Club staff and Mike Thompson RV personnel along with the proximity to many exciting and interesting places set the tone for the rally. The delicious catered meals, fun games and information-packed seminars completed the package to make this rally one to remember fondly. Additionally, rally attendees seized the opportunity to meet and talk with Tiffin Motorhomes Founder and CEO Bob Tiffin and his wife, Judy, as they dropped in for a visit during the rally.

If you have not attended an Allegro Club or Tiffin Motorhome rally, please consider doing so in the future. Many new friendships are formed as we have fun roughing it smoothly! **RIS**



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