

Roughing It Smoothly[®]



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- **Talimena: Byway in the Sky**
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Roughing It Smoothly®

July 2011 Volume 8, Number 3

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On our cover: Cades Cove after a morning shower. Photo by Deb Campbell



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

Norman Spray's story on the Talimena Byway in Oklahoma and Arkansas was originally planned for one of our fall editions. But I decided that the mid-October publication date might cause you to miss the peak color on the byway by the time you actually read the story. So instead we included it in this issue to allow you time to make plans for the trip.

We are planning upcoming travel stories to visit Amish farms in Ohio and Iowa; Mt. Rushmore, the Badlands, and historical sites in South Dakota; and the Glacier National Park in Montana along with other interesting points in that state.

During July, August, and September, we will be traveling in the Allegro Bus 40QBP which was featured in this issue. We can already tell you it

is a pleasure to drive and live in with all of its great features and amenities.

Traveling With Your Pets

In this issue, Dr. Pilarczyk discusses the many sources of poison to which your pets may have access. If you have any questions for Dr. Pilarczyk, please address them to:

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

You can also send your questions via email to parkwayvet@yahoo.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 to fredthompson1941@hotmail.com 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. If you need an immediate answer to a service problem, you should call 256-356-0261.

Changes of Address

Please do not call to make a change of address. We are often traveling when

your calls come in and it is very difficult to handle the call on a cell phone. Please use a standard change of address card from USPS or send the change by email. In the subject line, put "RIS Address Change."

First Time Subscribers

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



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Red Bay in the Sixties

by Bob and David Tiffin*

When our coach owners visit Red Bay, many of them wonder and often ask, “What was Red Bay like back when you started the company?” Tiffin Motorhomes is coming up on its 40th Anniversary next year so that is a very good question.

Red Bay forty or fifty years ago was a bustling farming town. Weekdays were pretty calm but Saturday was the big day when farm families came to town to buy staple groceries and farm supplies. All of them, as well as most Red Bay families, had nice gardens, so they usually didn't come to buy fresh vegetables.

There were thriving stores on main street as well as both of the parallel side streets and the cross streets. Dr. Weatherford had a clinic where Back Street BBQ is located now. Later on, Dr. Dempsey joined the practice soon after he completed his medical degree at Columbia University.

There were 10 grocery stores owned by local citizens. They all made in-town deliveries to your home and most folks had credit accounts that they paid at the end of the month – no large chain supermarkets like the two we have today. Earl Bostick operated a dairy just over in Mississippi that delivered fresh milk daily to residents in Red Bay. We also had a Yellow Front store that sold a wide variety of groceries, dry goods, and home supplies.

In the fifties and sixties, Red Bay had three barber shops operated by Olen Thrasher, Hardy Alverson, and Junior Harris. Those good men have passed on and Red Bay is down to one shop operated by Doug Ray where we get our haircuts and have for many years.

We had several clothing stores and a dry cleaning establishment. Sherman's, King's, and Feldman's were department stores that sold clothes for the whole family, and the Style Shop sold ladies' ready-to-wear. We had a nice men's store, too. Twice a year a tailor would visit McKinney's and measure you for a custom-made suit. There were three fine drug stores where the teenagers liked to hang out on Friday and Saturday nights at the soda fountains.

*David is three years younger than Bob. With his sister Beulah and several other family members, he operates Tiffin Supply, a company started by their father, Alex, in 1941. Their collective memories about Red Bay tell an interesting story about a rural southern town 50 years ago. Since Bob and David are both first person speakers in this story, you should note that Bob is married to Judy.



Beulah, Bob, and David share a light-hearted moment last year at Bob's birthday party.

Judy and I dated for two years in high school before graduating in 1960. On a date we would go to the Red Bay Theater for 25 cents each and buy two bags of popcorn for 20 cents. Can you believe that? A date cost 70 cents and maybe another quarter for a gallon of gas.

Nabers and Company had a very successful farm and home building supply business. The Nabers had three sons who were about the same age as Bob and me. Both Nabers and Tiffin Supply sold building supplies, groceries, work clothes, and shoes in the sixties. Back then most everything was done on credit and you paid your account at the end of the month. Like the small grocery stores, we delivered small orders that were called in. Tiffin Supply expanded its delivery service to reach farms, running three to five routes a week. We called it the Peddlin' Truck. We even did bartering. A farm wife might trade us two dozen eggs or three chickens for staple items we carried on the truck. We had a coop attached to the back of the truck to take chickens in trade.

Red Bay had two jewelry stores. In the sixties Billy Mitchell put in a jewelry store across the street from where Bank Independent is now located. In the late fifties Shorty Nixon had a jewelry store in the same building with the Red Bay Hotel. Mrs. Giles operated a very nice dining room in the hotel where we often went right after church services for Sunday dinner. She had a good chef and the china, tableware, white table cloths, and napkins were an elegant venue for our little town. Dr. Dempsey's

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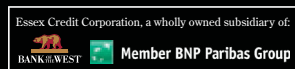
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son, Mark, is remodeling the hotel and has plans to offer a nice restaurant. He expects to open later this year.

Like many small towns 50 years ago, Red Bay had an ice plant. You could buy 25- and 50-pound blocks for your ice box (refrigerator) or have them crush it and put it in heavy paper bags — perfect for when you were expecting a lot of company or were planning to make a freezer of ice cream. Lee Gober was the owner of the Red Bay Gin and Ice Company which was located on property just west of our present-day Arts & Entertainment Center. His brother, Jim Gober, helped with the operation. Mr. Jim had two sons about the same age as David and me and we played with them growing up. The operation of the ice plant required a big water vat and the water was always cold throughout the summer. Mr. Jim would let the four of us use the vat as our own little private swimming pool.

In the early fifties Daddy and I (Bob) saw our first television at Gooseneck Sims' filling station. He had this little round-tube TV sitting on top of the drink box. The signal was so poor that the reception was mostly "snow." Gooseneck would tease customers and tell them, "You keep watching it for a few minutes and you'll see that snowman come across the screen."

Every Saturday during the summer months the merchants contributed money for a drawing in the mid-afternoon. As people purchased items in the stores, they would get drawing tickets for every dollar spent. The drawing pot would run from \$500 to \$1,000, and that was big money back then. That could buy the fertilizer and seed for next year's planting. Or if they spent the winnings at Tiffin Supply, a farmer could add a small bathroom to the side of his house for that much money.

Red Bay was a thriving town for people who wanted to have daytime jobs and still operate their farms in the afternoons and weekends. We had two textile plants: Blue Bell and Lance Garment Company which employed hundreds of ladies. Just six miles away, Belmont also had two garment plants: Wrangler Jeans and Golden Manufacturing, which made garments for the military.

Keeton Lumber Company operated a sawmill and produced finished lumber for construction—barns, homes, and commercial. It was located where the Dollar Store, Jacks, CVS, and Fred's are today. Keeton Lumber was a big employer. They had a sawmill for cutting the logs into all sizes of lumber. You can still see plenty of logging trucks driving down Red Bay's main street today.

Our bank was called the Bank of Red Bay. It later became Community Spirit Bank. City National Bank opened here in 1966 and was bought out four years later by the First National Bank in Russellville. In recent years, we have had as many as four banks in Red Bay.

When the FHA made it much easier for farmers to get loans, Tiffin Supply's business increased as we sold to contractors and farmers who built homes. I started working at Tiffin Supply in the late fifties where Daddy taught me how to serve our customers. I learned about all of the materials it took to build houses—which at a basic level are the same materials we use to build motorhomes. Judy and I married in 1961 and I decided to

work at Tiffin Supply instead of going on to college. Then Tim, our first of three sons, was born in 1962.

In 1963 Homer Vinson got the franchise for the Piggly-Wiggly grocery store and built a big new store right across from the Post Office. Businessmen here in town predicted the Piggly-Wiggly would soon fail because it was a cash-only store and residents had been accustomed for decades to buying groceries on their credit accounts. But Piggly-Wiggly offered a wider variety of groceries, fresh meat, fruit, and vegetables for which residents were willing to pay cash. Unfortunately, the Piggly-Wiggly meant the demise of the ten little mom-and-pop grocery stores.

In 1962 or '63, Omer J. Bullen started the Red Bay Wholesale Company, a food distributor that operated in Alabama, northern Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, and northern Florida. He had a large warehouse and a railroad spur that brought in canned goods, vegetables, and staples in box car quantities.

Sunshine Mills, owned by the Bostick family, supplied Mr. Bullen with meal and flour for his wholesale business. Formed in 1960, Sunshine Mills has two other plants in Tupelo, Mississippi, and Halifax, Virginia. The company manufactures a million pounds of dry pet food daily. The Bostick family also started Sunshine Mobile Homes in the early sixties. This area also has two other mobile home plants, one in Isbell and one in Hackleburg.

In 1964 Commodore built a plant in Red Bay to manufacture motorhomes and travel trailers. Tiffin Supply sold them supplies. When I went to collect our accounts, I often visited the assembly line to watch the RVs being built.

Red Bay had a Chevrolet dealership which supplied chassis to the Commodore motorhome plant. Belmont had a Ford dealership and Dayton Akins and Charles "Spot" Cashion operated the International Harvester dealership which sold farm equipment here in Red Bay.

In 1965 several investors built and operated the Farmers Gin and Warehouse, which was a very modern gin at that time with all the current technology. From September through November, I (Bob) operated the gin during the cotton harvest and then went back to Tiffin Supply when the season was over. Also in 1965 two companies, Sunliner and Safari, opened plants in Tremont and Iuka, Mississippi, to build motorhomes. We sold supplies to both operations. Since they were my accounts, I called on the management people to take orders and handle collections. Since I was not competition, they allowed me to watch the units being built. I began to see inefficiencies and problems with their construction and assembly line methods. In January and February 1972 both companies went broke and closed. I told Daddy that I thought we could do a better job and we needed to start building motorhomes.

We had just built a new cotton warehouse behind the gin and next to Page Chevrolet. The cotton crop failed that year and left us with a big, unused building, which gave us another reason to go ahead with my plan to start Tiffin Motorhomes. We incorporated Tiffin Motorhomes in September 1972.

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Watermelon at the Lake in Your New 2011 Allegro Bus 40QBP

Of course, it was inevitable that a new 40-foot floorplan for the Allegro Bus with a rear bath plus a midship half bath would emerge this year from the TMH assembly plant. In real estate, they say a property's sale is based on three things: location, location, location. In motorhome design and production, a new floorplan also is based on three things: demand, demand, demand. And you can bet that Tiffin Motorhomes listens to its customers.

When I first stepped into the 40QBP with the slides deployed, the interior pleasantly cool (despite Red Bay's summer temps in the high 90s), all of the recessed lighting turned on, the ceramic tile floors with insets beautifully polished, I called Carolyn and said, "Give the keys to the house to our realtor — we're going to be full-timers."

This review coach features the Creme Brulee interior, optional Glazed Honey Natural Cherry cabinets, crown molding and suede insets in each valance, polished chrome sconce lighting by each sofa which absorbs you in the optional Ultraleather™, handmade ceramic tile backsplashes (yes, assembled piece by piece), and reading lamps recessed into the ceiling or cabinet

just above each sofa. If you have reached a point in your lifestyle where you have raised the bar to reach your comfort zone, your bar in a Class A coach should be the 2011 Allegro Bus 40QBP.

Comfort Zone No. 1

I am taking an inaugural trip with Mike and Elaine in their new coach. They invited me along to get the full value out of this beautiful motorhome on its first voyage. From the entry step well to the midship television,* your Comfort Zone No. 1 measures 22'3" × 12'9". The zone includes the living room, the dinette/business center, and the galley. Each integrates and flows nicely into the other as the segments of your day move along.

Since we all begin our day with breakfast, I want you to see a great galley in operation. We are going to push it to the max and have fun whipping out a great breakfast. Cracker Barrel, eat your heart out.

OK, guys, let's do it. I'll place the Cuisinart coffeemaker in the forward corner of the solid surface countertop (89 inches across and 30 to 43 inches deep) and get the java going while

*In this story, directions in the motorhome will be expressed as N-S and E-W. North represents the rear of the motorhome, South the front. West is the passenger side, East the driver side

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

you make breakfast. Elaine, right behind you is your standard KitchenAid all-electric, double-door residential refrigerator. The huge bottom drawer is your freezer section with a very productive icemaker. You'll need six eggs and the ingredients for your favorite omelet. Remember, you're cooking for three this morning. Elaine, tell Mike he has to help, too. Put six strips of that thick-sliced Lewey bacon on the drip tray and put it in the microwave-convection oven. But don't start it yet. Remember, Elaine, under the optional dishwasher is that big pots and pans drawer. Get two omelet pans and the cutting board for the ingredients. You will love the double burner Gourmet gas cooktop. Mike, the pancake griddle is stored in that cavern under the sink. Get it plugged in and I'll mix up the Jiffy corn pancakes while you cut up a cantaloupe on the island slide-out. I'll need another egg and a cup of milk. For our inaugural trip, I put a pint of Vermont maple syrup in the shelf that slides out of the cabinet above the coffeemaker. Mike, take that Land O' Lakes butter out of the fridge and put it on the sideboard so it will soften up a bit. There is some fresh-squeezed Florida OJ in there, too. The juice glasses are in the cabinet above the mid-ship TV. I'll tune in the "Today" show. It's on the NBC station. Mike, could you set the table? The dishes are in the cabinet over the sideboard. Six slices of bacon – Elaine, that'll take five minutes in the microwave-convection oven. You will like this unit – it's vented to the outside. I've got the griddle cakes going. Wow, your omelets are really looking good. Hey, this is coming together great! Man, that coffee smells good – I am so hungry. Would you have believed that three people could work in this galley at the same time? This is one spacious coach, isn't it?

As you can see, the dining table is really large, 25 × 40 inches to be exact. Elaine, you and I can sit across from each other and we'll put Mike on the end. Now we all have plenty of elbow room. What is not obvious about your dinette is that it also doubles as a business center. When we clear the breakfast table, I'll show you how that works.

By the way, Mike, you will be relieved to know there is no dishwashing to do in this Allegro Bus. Everything goes in this deep drawer-style Fisher & Paykel dishwasher. It's optional, but it's worth it. Fine glasses to pots and pans.

Mike and Elaine, while we are admiring the roominess of the galley and dinette area, let me also point out the residential style stainless steel double sink: 18.5 × 15.5 × 9.5 inches deep. The adjacent sink is slightly smaller and 8.5 inches deep. Note the single lever faucet with extendable spray handle. The backsplash is a work of art – grouted ceramic tile with every piece put in place by hand. The two large overhead cabinets on either side of the microwave-convection oven have slide-out box shelves providing easy access. Including the second shelf in each cabinet, the two cabinets together offer 10 cubic feet of storage. The drawers in the island slide-out are 26 inches long by eight inches wide. Plus you have a stack of three drawers on the north end of the galley.

Mike, one thing I don't want you to miss is the built-in vacuum cleaner system and the power baseboard vacuum to whisk



From top: The 25 × 40 inch dining table slides from under the business center/credenza to comfortably seat 4. You'll think you never left home when you see the residential 22 cu.ft. refrigerator/freezer. • The solid-surface countertops and backsplashes, the Gourmet gas-on-glass cooktop, dishwasher, and the huge, residential, stainless steel double sink rivals the kitchen you left behind. • Seating for 8 on luxurious Ultra-leather will inspire you to send invitations for your next party.



away the crumbs you drop around the galley when you are making dinner. Instead of a dustpan, just sweep everything toward the “VAC-PAN” and it’s gone!

With your engineering background, Mike, you are going to love the HVAC in this coach. Heating and cooling the 40QBP is taken care of with two separate systems. The optional AquaHot hydronic heating system uses diesel sparingly from your 150-gallon fuel tank as it heats your water in a coil positioned over a diesel burner. There is no hot water tank since water is heated on demand when you open a faucet. The AquaHot system heats an antifreeze-water solution and circulates it to five heat exchangers located throughout the coach which in turn blow warm air through vents at floor level. The quiet operation, even heat distribution, and efficiency of the system is impressive. It is so much nicer than propane.

Two low profile 15,000 BTU roof air conditioners with heat pumps are standard equipment on the Allegro Bus 40QBP. Distribution and return air ducts designed into the roof create a pleasant cooling system with a very low decibel level. If you plan to be in hot weather often, Tiffin recommends a third 15,000 BTU unit with the heat pump and the upgrade from an 8,000KW to a 10,000KW generator.

Your unit has the upgrade at \$2,590 MSRP.

• • •

Elaine, let’s put your laptop on the optional solid surface countertop above the computer work station. Your keyboard goes on the slide-out tray and your printer goes on the sliding shelf behind the double doors. The double doors underneath the table conceal two shelves and seven cubic feet of storage. On the opposite side, you have two 12 × 14 inch drawers for office materials plus a filing cabinet with rails for hanging folders. Fred, that is such a good arrangement. I can ask the couple I am interviewing to sit on the opposite side while I sit over here and type their responses to my questions.

Elaine, the top of the business center is a 17.5 × 72 inch solid surface countertop which is perfect for serving buffet-style meals. With both of you cooking like you did at breakfast, I bet you could serve at least 12 for dinner tonight. The dining table is 25 × 40 inches extended, but retracts 15 inches to conserve space when not in use.

• • •

One of the most pleasant features about a Tiffin coach is the size of the windows in the forward section. You will be surprised to know that the living and dining area has over 85 square feet of glass to bring an

airiness to your coach that’s almost like sitting outside. When the mid-day sun is a little too bright, you can lower all of the solar shades in the living area and cockpit with the touch of a button, or just one at a time. In the evening hours, you can also lower the privacy shades with the touch of two buttons. The control system for the shades in the forward section is standard equipment.

Whenever you wish to invite your guests to stay overnight, you will not be the least bit embarrassed at offering them your sofabed. The optional Ultraleather Air Coil Hide-A-Bed sofa is terrific. With the electric air pump, you can make it as soft or as firm as you wish. I have slept on the one in my coach and it is very comfortable. It takes only three minutes to get it ready for use. The overhead cabinets conceal 13.5 cubic feet of storage — more than enough for the bedding and the blanket throws that make lounging so comfortable. The standard Ultraleather DE Sofa/Sleeper measures 48 × 65 inches and is very comfortable. It’s just right for two children. It is ready to use with the flick of a lever. The overhead cabinets offer over six cubic feet of storage.

When it’s Show Time, your 37 inch dash overhead flat panel LCD-TV gives you the “big screen” sensation in the



privacy of your home. Stretch out on the couch and let surround sound bring you the subtle noises of the forest or the bone-jarring 100-decibels of a NASCAR race. Actually, you have four televisions in the Allegro Bus which are standard equipment. When the evening temps are just right, you can sit outside and watch “Dancing with the Stars” under the stars. Your exterior TV is mounted in the west slide-out wall.

Comfort Zone No. 2

What could be more relaxing than propping up in bed and watching a good movie? The wall-mounted television is pre-wired for a separate DVD player and satellite receiver which are located out-of-sight in the cabinet just under the television. Elaine, you will love the Sleep Number 72 × 80 inch king-size bed. Using the same wireless control, you can each select your own firmness/softness number for the most restful sleep ever.

If you like to read in bed, you will notice that the interior designer put a reading light and a sconce light on both sides. I bet you can’t find a position where the lighting isn’t perfect. You have small end tables with solid surface countertops and a convenient shelf underneath for your glasses and cell phone. On the front face

of the south end table, you will find the controls for the overhead fan and ceiling lights, the sconce and reading lights, and the generator start. Neat, huh? You don’t have to get out of bed to turn off the overhead fan or ceiling lights. I wish my house was wired like that!

The west slide-out houses a chest with four drawers just below the window. The solid surface countertop is perfect for plants or photographs. The cabinet above the window offers nearly three cubic feet of storage space. The taller chest to the left under the wall-mounted television contains the clothes hamper, a large drawer, and the cabinet for the additional DVD player and satellite receiver. It is also capped with a solid surface top. The ladies will appreciate a 31.5 × 20 inch mirror mounted on the south wall.

The 1.25 inch thick sliding doors with translucent glass are a really handsome feature separating the bedroom from the rear bath and front living area. The low light coming through the translucent glass works well for watching a movie or just relaxing.

Comfort Zone No. 3

Why is the rear bath such a hot item in Class A coach floorplans? One word will answer the question: privacy. Mike, with

two heavy sliding doors and eight feet of bedroom space in between, you can sing in the shower. Your speaking voice sounds like it will produce a rich baritone. With the bath located at the end of the coach, it becomes completely dedicated to the master bedroom. When guests are traveling with you, the half bath belongs to them. When it’s just the two of you, the half bath is yours and the full bath is Elaine’s.

Mike, let’s put a tape on this rear bath. It is amazingly large. As my cousin who worked for NASA said, “The Tiffin architects could have shown the Apollo engineers a thing or two on the efficient use of confined space.” The bathroom footprint measures 6’6" × 7’11". The elliptical shower is in the southwest corner and measures 31 × 42 inches. The skylight above illuminates your shower or you can opt to close the insulated sliding panel and conserve warmth in cooler months. Chrome bars are attached to each wall of the shower to take care of your damp towels. The shower head on flexible tubing delivers an adjustable spray of unending hot water from the optional AquaHot system. Curving sliding doors of translucent glass enclose you in your personal zone of comfort.

A Dometic electric maserator pump toilet is located on the west wall between



the shower and the master closet. Since the black tank is amidship, the maserator pump allows the use of a flexible two-inch line. A vertical 21 inch window is positioned just above the toilet and under a double-door cabinet with nearly one cubic foot of storage.

Facing the rear wall of the coach, the MBR closet is 57 inches across, 67 inches high, and 21 inches deep. An optional safe is positioned in the north wall.

Elaine, the vanity is a lady-pleaser: solid surface countertop, four dimensional mirrors for you to see every angle as you style your hair, and six recessed theater-style lights to brightly illuminate the area. The three cabinets provide a nearly inexhaustible storage area. Under the vanity notice that you have a personal clothes hamper, plus two sets of drawers, six in all. The space under the lavatory is huge – you'll probably never fill it up. Right here along the east wall is your matched Splendide washer and dryer. And don't miss the Fan-Tastic Vent overhead.

Now Mike, we haven't forgotten your library – otherwise known as the half-bath. Three wall cabinets for the small items and all of your toiletries, plus the one big corner cabinet with mirror over the solid surface countertop and lavatory. The electric Dometic toilet is equipped with a hol-

stered spray. If you're into a really good book, you've got a 21 inch window plus the Fan-Tastic Vent in the ceiling.

Comfort Zone No. 4

Mike, I understand the cockpit is your territory while Elaine over the last two years has developed her skills as navigator. Owners have given the new cockpit design rave reviews.

Tiffin's PowerGlide chassis comes with an 18-inch steering wheel. Two small control panels shaped like inverted teardrops are inset into either side of the wheel. The top touch control on either side operates the headlights. The left inset has the touch buttons for the cruise control while the right inset has touch buttons for the windshield wiper system.

The left console under your window, Mike, begins with the HWH leveling system. Then you have the Allison electronic gear shift panel, a battery of toggle switches (window, solar & night shades, suspension, air horn, and engine brake), the mirror controls, and a large mug holder.

The dash is clearly arranged beginning with a small panel of toggles at the left of the steering column: engine preheat, auxiliary start, pedals IN/OUT, parking brake, and the AC duct-vent. When the standard 8-way power seats are coupled

with the gas and brake pedals moving in and out with a toggle switch, a person of nearly any height can be accommodated in the driver's chair.

To the right of the steering column and just above two center console drawers with drink holders, you will see two 12-volt receptacles to serve cell phones, independent GPS equipment, or other appliances. You have one dash HVAC vent and two at floor level. The JVC receiver with the optional XM-Sirius programming (subscription required) offers superior sound performance from your in-dash radio and CD player. The receiver also services the speakers in the bedroom. The optional navigation system gives the driver both visual and verbal instructions. However, Elaine, if you want to continue using the system to which you are accustomed, the slide-out table just above the stepwell is perfect for your unit.

Mike, you will really like the dash controls for the automotive heating and AC. The three big dials are easy to see and both of you can reach them. The TripleVision monitor for the outside cameras allows you to check the rear and both sides without turning on your directional signal. In the evening when you are parked, you can use the monitor as a security camera. Below the monitor you will find

nine easy-to-reach toggle switches for the step cover, two windshield fans, solar and night shades, gen start-stop, map light, docking lights, and radio. And just under the toggle switches you will see the control for the roof-mounted spotlight, which is standard equipment for the Allegro Bus.

Elaine, since you are riding shotgun about 95 percent of the time, you will really like the passenger's console: map light, solar and night shade toggles for your passenger window and the door, and the 12-volt disconnect. A large cupholder, a magazine rack, an electric foot rest, and adjustable arm rests make this the best seat in the house.

Mike, at just about your eye-level above the driver's chair, you will see the control center for the 40QBP: the in-motion satellite; the power control system to manage your 50-amp service; AquaHot toggles for the diesel burner, electric element, and engine preheat; the SeeLevel tank monitor which gives you volume measurements in exact percentages for the grey and black water tanks, fresh water tank, and the LPG tank, plus a read-out for the battery; the inverter control and programming panel; and the slide-out controls.

An adjacent compartment houses the GoPower 25-amp solar roof regulator. To the right of the 37-inch Panasonic television, you will find two more compartments which house the antenna tuner and the Dometic awning and wind control. Directly over the passenger chair, you will find the storage compartment for the DVD player and the satellite receiver. Surround sound technology works through this equipment to give you theater-quality sound. Be sure to spend a lot of time with your manual and your dealer to get the most from your system.

Mike, don't forget that your entertainment can go outside with you. The standard 32 inch exterior television mounted in the slide-out wall will give you the evening news while you are grilling the steaks. The optional extended drop-down awning is a great feature. Block off the solar and enjoy your afternoons outside.

Comfort Zone No. 5

The basement is a comfort zone? You bet, Mike. It's your infrastructure. Tiffin's engineers have done a great job placing the large components where they will be most effective in balancing the coach. That's why your big propane tank is in the first compartment as you walk north from the entry door. Although you can't see it, your fuel tank is also close to the front of the coach.

The next two doors conceal your primary storage area: over 100 cubic feet of storage capacity measured from the ceiling to the floor (the chassis rails extend about 12 inches down into this compartment). Your coach has one optional slide-out tray making it easy to get to items in the middle. On the north side of the compartment, you will notice a service point for the AquaHot system as well as a fuse panel. The fourth door gives you full access to the AquaHot module.

Just behind the AquaHot is a closed section that houses the fresh, grey, and black tanks. The panel is removable for servicing this area. Now move back beyond the rear tire to the fifth compartment which houses the HWH control center for the jacks and the DEF tank, the additive that makes the emissions from the Cummins engine safe for our environment. The last compartment at the northwest corner is a control center that also houses the chassis batteries.

Now, Mike, lift the engine door in the rear cap and let your aeronautical engineering training critique the location of the service points. They are all right in

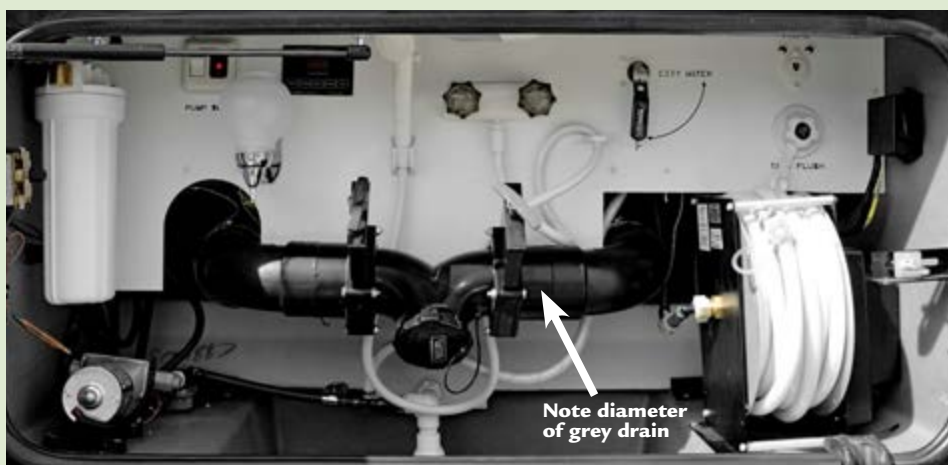
front of you—no reaching way into the cavity to take care of checking every item. Turn the corner and there is the great big side radiator. Plus easy access to the air filter, too. Just above it is the small door for your 50-amp power cord on an electric spindle.

Moving along, the first compartment hides the dual motor synchronous velocity slide controller. It takes two motors to push those big slides in and out, and this controller keeps them running perfectly together.

Next is that all-important utility cabinet. Everything is arranged for efficient and quick hook-ups. The water service is on an electric spindle for quick and easy deployment and retraction. Both the grey and black water valves and drains are the same size for quick dumping. The cabinet has an outside shower with soap dispenser and paper towels, water filter, valves to drain your water system, tank flush, a second SeeLevel monitor for outside check, and hook-ups for cable and a tripod satellite receiver. And the compartment is well-lighted for night hook-ups when you arrive late.

Your third compartment houses the SurgeGuard Power Protection Transfer Switch, the central vacuum cleaner, the AquaHot control panel and heating fluid reservoir, and the fuel oil filter. All are carefully positioned for easy servicing. The fourth and fifth doors give you access from the driver's side to the primary storage area. The optional slide-out tray deploys in both directions.

Mike, you like high-tech equipment. This next compartment contains the six-





battery electrical storage that was designed to supply the residential refrigerator when you are in-transit or dry camping. As the batteries are depleted, the inverter will automatically crank the generator and recharge them.

The compartment just forward of the front tire is a control center: lots of fuses and relays, all clearly labeled for the time when you need to troubleshoot a problem. The washer fluid reservoir and the driver's compressed air service is also located here. No need to go to the service station for air. You can do it right here and keep your tires at the proper pressure. Very important for long tire life.

Well, you know where the generator is located. Pull this release and out it comes for you to check the oil, just like you would do on your engine. The PowerGlide chassis is all about good design, planning, practical technology, easy service points.

Comfort Zone No. 6

Tiffin married their PowerGlide chassis to the Cummins ISL 450-hp power plant and the Allison 3000 MH 6-speed auto-

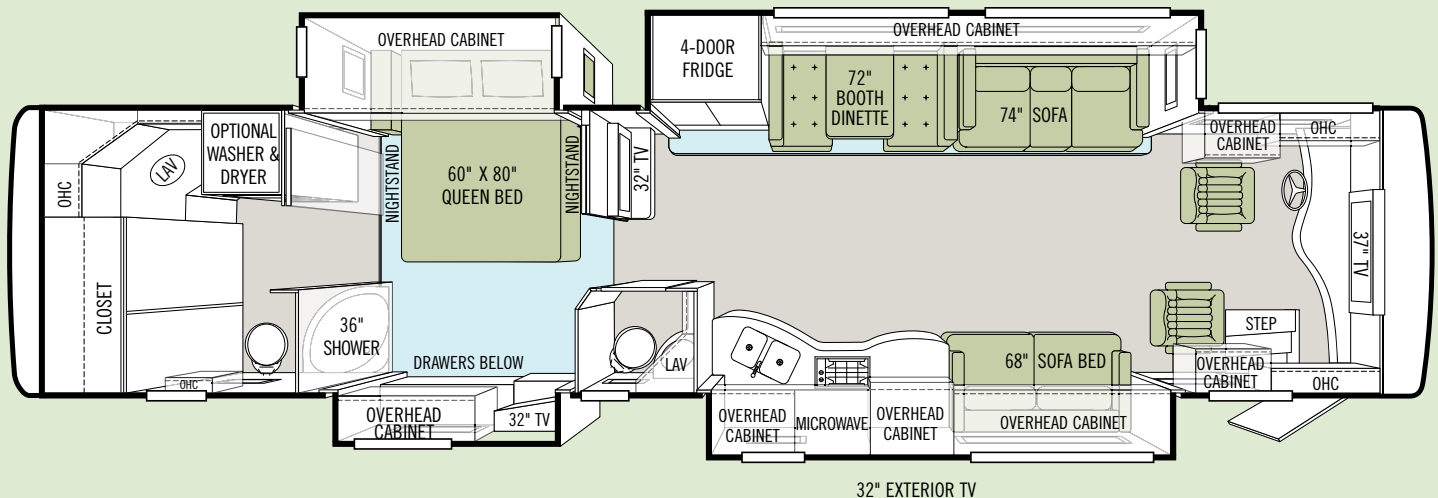
The business end of the Cummins 450-hp engine is easily checked and serviced. From left to right, the white canister is the primary fuel filter and the diesel/water separator followed by the secondary fuel filter. Next you will note the Filter Minder—Air Filter gauge, coolant with gauge, power steering reservoir, and engine & transmission dipsticks.

matic transmission with lock-up (torque converter). You both are going to love the ride. Four air bags and independent front suspension—it is nothing short of superb.

It was called PowerGlide for a reason. You will know what “glide” really means when you drive some of our rough and uneven interstate highways that have taken a beating from heavy 18-wheelers. You will appreciate the surge of power on an interstate ramp when you floor the accelerator to gain merging speed. You will wonder what happened to centrifugal force when you go into curves at 65 mph as the leveling system takes effect. The Flexsteel driver's chair with 8-way power adjustments supports you comfortably at every point. Mike, you are going to be surprised when you drive 500 miles in a day and wonder why you are not worn out. Now, it's up to you. **RIS**

Allegro Bus 40 QBP

WITH STANDARD FEATURES



SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2011 Allegro Bus 40 QBP, Quad Slide, Base MSRP* – \$323,260. MSRP as tested with options – \$350,336.

STANDARD FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Structural

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

Automotive

The Tiffin Powerglide™ chassis
Allison 3000 MH electronic 6-speed automatic transmission with two overdrives and lock-up (torque converter)
Cummins ISL 450-hp electronic/turbocharged diesel
1,250 lbs.-ft. torque @ 1,300 rpm
Side-mounted radiator
Two-stage compression engine brake
Cast aluminum wheels
Four air bags
Emergency start switch
Cruise control
Fully automatic electric leveling jacks
Adjustable gas & brake pedals
Air brakes with automatic slack adjusters and ABS
18-inch VIP smart wheel
Tilt steering column
Independent front suspension

Exterior

Fiberglass front and rear caps
Dual fuel fills
BASF full body paint with front cap protective film
Large one-piece tinted windshield
17.5-inch heated chrome power mirrors with remote adjustment
Single motor intermittent wiper
Undercoating
Fog lights
Daytime running lights
30-inch wide entry door with deadbolt
Lighted keyless entry door system
Double electric step
Auto generator start
Dual pane tinted windows
Amber patio light on driver's side
Exterior patio light on passenger's side
32" exterior television, mounted in slide-out wall
Automatic door awning
Automatic patio awning
Window awning package
Slide-out awnings with metal-wrapped covers
Pass-through basement storage
Lockable swing-out exterior storage doors
Single handle auto-lockable storage door latches
Heated water and holding tank compartments
Docking lights
Six house batteries
Two low profile roof air conditioners with heat pumps
2000 watt inverter
Custom full-width mud flap
50-amp service
Power cord reel, 50-amp
Park telephone ready
Cable ready TV
Black holding tank flush system
SeeLevel tank monitor located at dump station
110v exterior receptacle
Water filter
Exterior rinse hose with soap dispenser & paper towel holder
Spotlight with remote
Concealed air horn
Low profile in-motion satellite dish
Digital TV antenna
CB radio antenna
Magnum sine wave inverter
Power Fantastic® roof vent with 3-speed fan in galley
Two Fantastic® roof vents with 3-speed fans in bath area
Roof ladder
Color back-up camera
Two side cameras activated with turn signal
Quiet A/C roof-ducted system
Luggage compartment lights

Driver's Compartment

37" front overhead TV
ITC courtesy light in stepwell
12v disconnect switch
Lighted instrument panel
Adjustable fuel/brake pedals
Flexsteel® 8-way power driver's seat with Ultra-leather™
Flexsteel® 8-way power passenger's seat with Ultraleather™ and footrest
Passenger seat console box with built-in magazine rack
Color rear vision monitor system
Sideview cameras activated by turn signals
Contemporary wrap-around dash with glare reduction
Lighted switches
Power solar/privacy full-width windshield shades
Solar/privacy shades for driver & passenger side windows
Single CD player & AM-FM stereo
Fire extinguisher
Dual dash fans
Computer slide-out tray in dash with lock-out rails
12v/110v/phone jack receptacle
Beverage tray

Living area/dinette

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

Kitchen

Polished solid surface countertops
Expand-an-island
2½-inch deep lighted toe kick
4-door raised panel refrigerator with ice maker
Single lever sink faucet with built-in sprayer
Residential double bowl stainless steel sink
Residential stainless steel refrigerator with ice-maker (6 batteries)
Stainless steel convection microwave oven with exterior vent
2-burner gas-on-glass cooktop
One 3-speed Fantastic® fan
Galley soap dispenser
Solid surface covers for sink and cooktop
Storage racks for covers in cabinet under sink
Cherry cabinetry

Rear Bath

Three medicine cabinets with vanity lights
Skylight in shower
Solid surface vanity top and bowl
Curved shower enclosure with doors on track
Molded fiberglass shower with two chrome towel racks
Electric maserator toilet with OH cabinet
One 3-speed Fan-Tastic® fan
Storage cabinet plumbed & wired for stacked washer/dryer or combo washer/dryer with OH storage
Lighted double wardrobe with mirrored doors

Half Bath

Three medicine cabinets with vanity lights
Electric toilet with spray
Solid surface vanity top and bowl
One 3-speed Fan-Tastic® fan

Bedroom

Innerspring pillow-top queen mattress (60" x 80")
Bed comforter with throw pillows
Solid wood and fabric headboard
Wall-to-wall carpeting
Solid surface nightstand tops
Solar/privacy shades
Pre-wired for DVD-CD player & satellite receiver
Laundry hamper
32-inch flat panel color television
Ceiling fan

General Interior

7-foot ceilings
Soft touch vinyl ceiling
Raised panel cabinet doors
Recessed ceiling lighting
12v fluorescent lights
Adjustable shelving in some cabinets
Enclosed surround sound speakers
SeeLevel tank monitor
Smoke detector
Carbon monoxide detector
LPG leak detector
Central vacuum system with Vac-Pan
Multiplex lighting system
Air-driven step well cover
Wall-to-wall carpeting in bedroom
Energy management system
Power solar and privacy shades on all windows in forward section
Manual privacy shade at galley window
Manual solar and privacy shades in bedroom
Manual privacy shade only in bath and half bath
Ceramic tile flooring in kitchen, bath, entrance landing, and living room
Complete cable wiring interfacing with surround sound and satellite receiver
Enclosed surround sound speakers

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Glazed honey natural cherry wood cabinets
Hydronic heating system
Solar panel (125 watt)
One slide-out storage tray
Safe located in rear bath wardrobe
Satellite radio (requires subscription)
Rear view mirror with compass and outside temp
Extended drop down awning
In-dash navigational system
Dishwasher, drawer type
Onan 10,000kw generator with 3 low profile ACs
Stacked washer and dryer
Dinette/computer workstation
68" Ultraleather™ air coil hide-a-bed sofa/sleeper (PS)
74" Ultraleather™ DE sofa/bed (DS)
Sleep Number mattress, king

OTHER OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

Second storage compartment slide-out tray
PASSENGER'S SIDE
68" Cloth air coil hide-a-bed sofa/sleeper
68" Cloth DE sofa/sleeper

DRIVER'S SIDE

74" Cloth DE sofa/sleeper
One leather Euro recliner with computer end table
74" Cloth magic bed
74" Ultraleather™ magic bed
Sofa/booth dinette combination, cloth
Sofa/booth dinette combination, Ultraleather
Two Ultraleather recliners
Sleep Number mattress, queen
Memory foam mattress, queen
Memory foam mattress, king
Combo washer/dryer
Cherry wood interior cabinets
Natural cherry wood interior cabinets
Glazed cordovan wood interior cabinets
Glazed cherry wood interior cabinets
Glazed water closet cabinet with white chocolate
Prewire for Winegard Traveler Satellite
Basement freezer
Tankless gas water heater
Gas/electric refrigerator (with 4 batteries)
All electric coach
Oven with convection microwave
Combo washer/dryer with OH storage
Free standing dinette with built-in cabinets

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 276"
Overall length – 40' 4"
Overall height with roof air – 12' 7"
Interior height – 84"
Overall width – 101"
Interior width – 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 34,600 lb.
Front GAWR – 14,600 lb.
Rear GAWR – 22,000 lb.
GCWR – 46,600 lb.
UVW – 31,300 lb.
CCC – 3,300 lb.
Trailer hitch capacity – 10,000 lb.

POWER TRAIN

Engine – Cummins ISL 8.9-liter 450-hp electronic diesel
Torque – 1,250 lb.-ft. @ 1,300 rpm
Transmission – Allison electronic 3000 MH 6-speed automatic with 2 overdrives
Tire Size – 295/80R 22.5 XZA2 LRH
Alternator – Leece-Neville 170 amps

CHASSIS

Frame – Powerglide™ chassis
Frame design – Raised rail
Anti-locking braking system – (front)
Bendix ADB225 17" vented air disc (rear)
Bendix/Spicer 16.5" x 7" drum
Suspension (front) – ZF ISF RL77EM custom tuned (air)
Suspension (rear) – Reyco-Granning RD 2300 custom tuned (air)
Shock absorbers – Sachs (front), Bilstein (rear)
Leveling jacks – HWH hydraulic

CONSTRUCTION

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

ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – Four adults
Fuel tank – 150 gallons
Freshwater – 90 gallons
Black water – 50 gallons
Grey water – 70 gallons
LPG tank – (35 gallons; can be filled to 80% capacity)

MSRP

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

UVW

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

DEALERS

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

PLEASE NOTE

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

Interviews from New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania



John & Marie Hickey

Hometown: Shelbyville, Tennessee

Interviewed in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire

- John & Marie own a 2009 Phaeton 40QTH with a Freightliner chassis and Cummins 360.
- They have been married 47 years.
- Their daughter Charmaine lives in Dracut, MA.
- John & Marie began RVing in 1972, have had 4 RVs and 2 have been Phaetons.
- After many years of consideration they made the decision to begin full-timing in 2003.
- They've driven over 40,000 miles & traveled through 20 states and Canada.
- John drives approximately 275 miles a day and does 100% of the driving.
- John & Marie are 'best friends' and prefer extended seasonal stays with enough time to relax and grow tomatoes.
- Their summers are spent visiting family and friends in New England.
- They prefer the southwest in winter and look forward to time in Livingston, Texas.
- John is a Navy veteran, was a field representative for a copier company, and retired in 2003.
- He has a serious case of 'tinkeritis' & trouble shooting is right up his alley!
- Marie worked in customer service for a computer company and retired in 1998.
- Her hobbies are knitting and hand crafts.
- John & Marie love their Phaeton and feel that Tiffin takes care of everything and does a fine job with their service.



Peter & Linda Gorman

Hometown: Sun Lakes, Arizona

Interviewed in Old Bethpage, New York

- Peter & Linda own a 2006 Phaeton 40QDH with a Freightliner chassis and Caterpillar 350.
- They have been married 34 years.
- Their daughter and 2 granddaughters live in Littleton, Colorado.
- Their son lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- Pets Kayly and Jenny travel with them.
- Peter & Linda have owned 2 RVs since 1998 and recently purchased this Phaeton.
- They've traveled 3,500+ miles in 10 states & plan to travel 3 to 4 months annually.
- Peter drives 100% of the time and prefers driving approximately 400 miles each day.
- Summers are spent on Long Island, New York.
- They love seeing the United States without having to pack or unpack!
- Peter's favorite states are Oregon & Washington.
- Linda's favorite state is Colorado.
- The next destination they are looking forward to visiting is British Columbia.
- Peter retired in 2000 after teaching middle and elementary physical education & health and coaching for 34 years.
- His hobbies: tennis, golf, and photography.
- Linda retired in 2000 after teaching languages for 33 years.
- Her hobbies: tennis, golf, yoga and jazzercise.
- They purchased this Phaeton because of Tiffin's reputation for quality and service.



George & Colleen LeVasseur

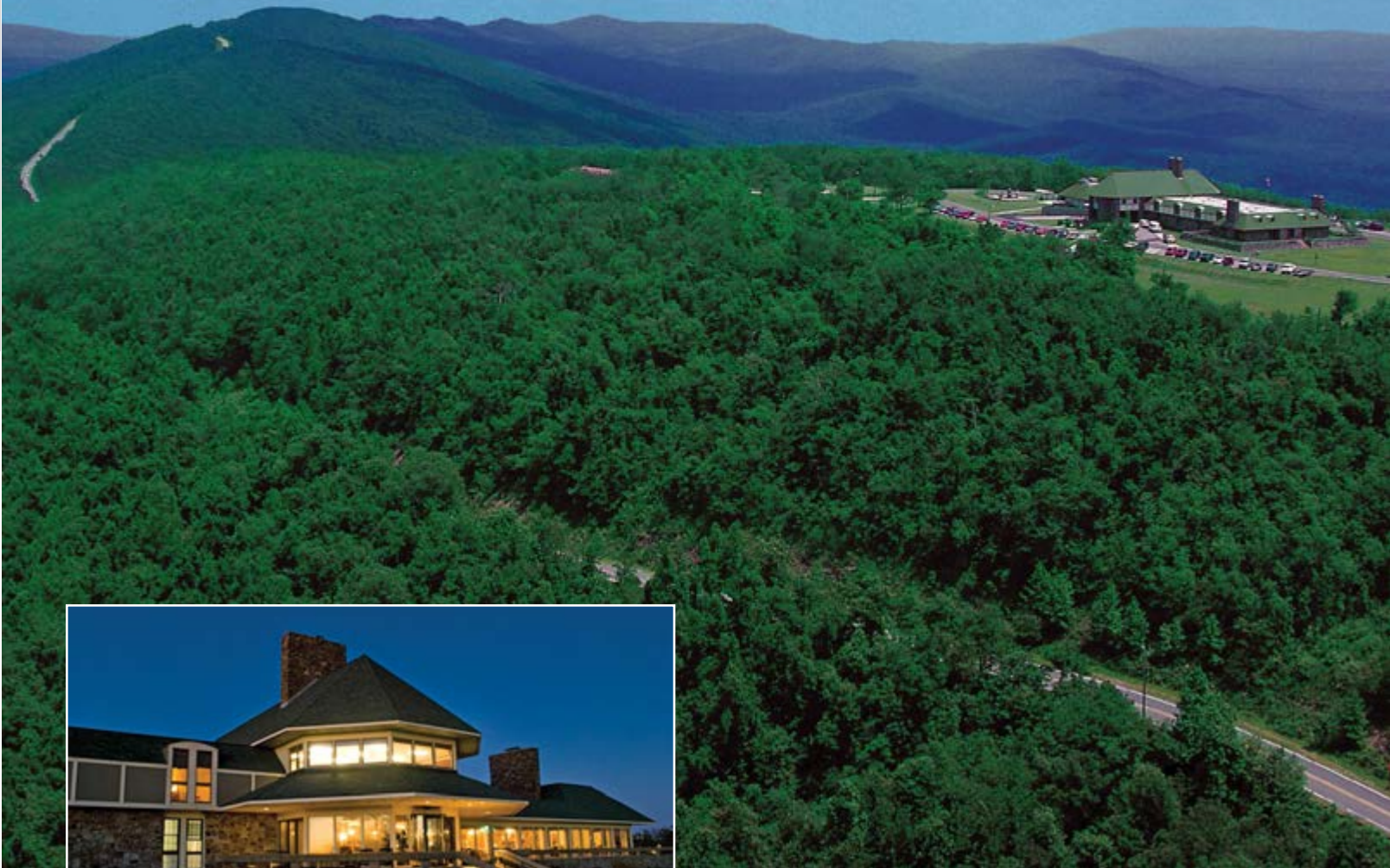
Hometown: Cocoa Beach, Florida

Interviewed in Woodland, Pennsylvania

- George & Colleen own a 2009 Phaeton 40QTH with a Freightliner chassis and Cummins 360.
- They have been married 16 years.
- They have 5 children & 5 grandchildren.
- Three sons live in Jacksonville, Florida; another son lives in Santa Barbara, California; and their daughter lives in Omaha, Nebraska.
- Dakota is their traveling companion.
- They began RVing in 2003, have owned 3 RVs, and travel 5 to 6 months annually.
- George does 80% of the driving & they prefer driving approximately 250 miles each day.
- They have traveled in 46 of the lower 48 states - with the exception of Oregon and Washington.
- He enjoys Rhode Island and New England.
- Her favorite is Ventura, California - where she grew up camping and later motorhoming.
- They enjoy south Lake Tahoe, NV & digging for gold in the American River in California.
- Future destinations include Nova Scotia, Canada and the Catskills.
- George was a Navy pilot - retired in 1984 after 21 years & later was a commercial pilot - from which he retired in 2000.
- His hobbies: racquetball, pool and cooking.
- Colleen was a flight attendant with Delta for 21 years and retired in 2010.
- Her hobbies include racquetball, reading, and washing & waxing their Phaeton.

Editor's Note: Elaine and Mike Austin retired in 2007 at the urging of their children who wanted them to realize their dream: buy a luxury motorhome, go full time, and spend several years just enjoying themselves and seeing the country. After a career turning around failing steel companies, Mike connected with the University of South Alabama as a guest lecturer in their Business Institute. Elaine discovered a whole new career in real estate, selling 105 houses in her best year. They bailed out, bought a new Allegro Bus in March 2008, and "hit the road."

TALIMENA: *Byway in the Sky*



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ARKANSAS STATE PARKS



Mountain Top Views and an Historic “Castle in the Sky”

One thing about motorhome travel you can bet on: Some trips won't unfold exactly as planned. Sometimes that's not all bad. That happened when we drove the Talimena National Scenic Byway in the first week of November. Our objective was to view dazzling fall foliage along this 54-mile ribbon of asphalt atop the Winding Stair and Rich Mountains in Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Foliage colors should “peak” then, according to the best information we could gather. It just happened that there was no real peak this year. Or maybe we came too soon. Or too late. Some slopes were colorful and some individual trees glorious but it

“just wasn't one of those years when every mountain becomes a flaming patchwork of gold, yellow, orange, red, and even purple,” said Randy Sander, U.S. Forest Service resource assistant forester.

Turned out that didn't matter much. Had colors been as expected, we might have zipped along and left oohing and aahing. We might never have explored the surprising, amazing camping, scenic wonders, and outdoor opportunities available along this route. The 38-mile Oklahoma section of the scenic byway is the prime attraction (but only one of many) in the Winding Stair

Text by Norman Spray



RANDY SANDER

Byway vistas like these open continually around each curve. In fact, the curves will cause you to reduce your speed and enjoy the scenery even more. Many times, the byway follows the ridgelines.

Mountain National Recreation Area (NRA) which borders the road on both sides. Perhaps the most popular Talimena stop is on the Arkansas (eastern) end of the Byway. It's the Queen Wilhelmina State Park, "castle in the sky" lodge, restaurant, and RV park.

About the Talimena Byway. The Talimena is one of some 150 U.S. roads designated national scenic byways by the Federal Highway Administration. The title is granted only after long and sometimes exhaustive evaluation assures that truly exceptional experiences await those who tour the scenic byway routes.

Talimena, a national scenic byway since 2005, lies atop a ridge linking Talihina, Oklahoma and Mena, Arkansas, cresting at the highest points between the Appalachians and the Rockies in the Ouachita Mountains, one of only two U.S. mountain chains that run east and west. The road cuts through a part of the 1.8 million-acre Ouachita National Forest, the South's oldest and largest, first explored by Spaniard Hernando De Soto.

Views from both north and south sides of the Talimena ridge are breath-taking any time of the year. Vistas appear on the left and right, letting you gaze down into deep valleys and across to mountains that often crop up in a blue haze. Twenty six easily and safely-reached pull-outs along the route display placards explaining features ranging from topographic to historical. Detail about these stops, trails and other information is available at Forest Service visitor centers on both ends, the east (Mena, Arkansas) and west (junction of U.S. 271 and Oklahoma 1 eight miles north and east of Talihina).

You can drive Talimena in two enjoyable hours -- even in a large motorhome -- though some curves are sharp and some slopes are steep enough to force a shift to lower gears. Much better, though, to take your time, stop at the vista pullouts,



NORMAN SPRAY

and maybe take a short or longer walk or two in the unpolluted clean, mountain-top air.

Sweet gum, maple, red maple, hickory, and sumac usually turn slopes into dazzling flashy color displays in fall (our trip being an exception), making this Oklahoma's most favored fall foliage destination. Spring awakens cascading tree blossoms and wild flowers. Summers are green and a little cooler up on the ridge. Winters can be cold. Snow sometimes (rarely) makes every slope a candidate for a Christmas card

Trails, Points of Interest. All along the byway are trailheads for both developed and undeveloped trails, many leading into the 226,445-acre Winding Stair Mountain Recreation Area in Oklahoma. One pamphlet available at the Oklahoma visitor center lists "Short Walks and Easy Hikes." Among these are three interpretative trails starting at the lovely, well-designed Robert S. Kerr Arboretum and Nature Center. One trail features a variety of plants which signs identify. Others focus on trees and soils.

For serious hikers and backpackers, the 223-mile Ouachita National Recreation Trail passes through the NRA and into Arkansas. Also accessible from the Byway: the rugged and pristine Upper Kiamichi River Wilderness Area to the south and the Black Mountain Wilderness Area to the north.

You can camp, hike, fish, hunt, ride horseback, even hang glide at places along the Talimena route. Within the NRA just off or near the Byway are more than 150 camp sites, a 90-acre lake, and an equestrian camp. Popular trails near the Wilhelmina Lodge and Mena in Arkansas include Caney Creek, Athens-Big Fork, Big Brushy, Billy Creek, Wolf Pen Gap, and the Arkansas portion of the Ouachita National Recreation Trail. Wolf Pen Gap offers 41 miles of loop trails for ATVs and mountain biking. These wind over high mountain vistas. Some are challenging, others easy. Guides and rentals are available for Wolf Pen trips.

Queen Wilhelmina State Park and Mena. No Talimena drive is complete without a stop and perhaps overnight stays at

the Queen Wilhelmina State Park and its historic lodge, situated at 2,681 feet atop Rich Mountain, second highest in Arkansas. There's a 40-pad RV campground; a playground; an amphitheater where rangers present interpretative programs, slide shows and movies; tree-shaded picnic areas; a nine-level "wonder house"; a native plant and wildlife center that houses rehabilitating animals; and, in summer, a miniature train ride that circles the mesa.

Ranger-guided hikes take guests (free of charge) along trails including "Lover's Leap," the longer "Reservoir Trail" to an old stone water tank dating back to the 1800s, and the "Spring Trail" to Crystal Spring.

All of this often takes a back seat, however, to the lodge itself. A user-friendly, picturesque lobby's wood-burning fireplace welcomes you. A highly-rated restaurant serves tasty Southern dishes.

The Lodge's popularity is rooted in history, first built in 1898 and promoted as a grandiose mountain-top "Castle in the Sky" resort for the affluent. It was the brainchild of managers of a railroad that crossed the mountain on its route from Pittsburg to the Texas Gulf Coast. Many of the line's investors were Dutch, which explains the inn being named for Queen Wilhelmina who was crowned later that year. A suite of rooms was named for the queen in the forlorn hope she'd be enticed to visit Arkansas.

The idea was to increase passenger travel on the rail line. The Lodge worked, but the railroad failed a short three years later. The line was sold to new owners who did not share the same vision for the lodge. The majestic three-story building fell into disrepair and the Lodge closed in 1910. It was resurrected when tourist industry growth after World War II prompted Arkansas to create a state park on the Queen Wilhelmina grounds. Less-elegant than its predecessor, the new lodge nevertheless grew in popularity until a disastrous kitchen fire forced guests into the cold (with no loss of life) and gutted the building in November, 1973. A new fire-resistant lodge that opened in 1975 remains the park's featured attraction.

Down in Mena. Most Talimena By-

way tourists visit the friendly and in some ways quaint town of Mena which sits at the base of Rich Mountain some 13 miles downhill from Queen Wilhelmina Park. Trains still rumble beside a restored *Old Depot* in Mena that's reminiscent of rail passenger days long gone. Now a museum, the depot houses also the Chamber of Commerce and a travel agency. One museum room showcases Lum 'n Abner radio show memorabilia. A restored 1939 Dodge police car stands

proudly under roof at one end of the depot.

Mena's mid-town 10-acre *Janssen Park*, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, displays an 1851 log cabin reputed to have once hidden train robber Jesse James; two World War II vintage mountain Howitzer cannons; and a boy and girl fountain. Two spring-fed ponds are part of the park's natural beauty.

A ways outside Mena on U.S. 88 two buildings originally built in 1904 and 1909 are identified by sign as the "Lum

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‘n Abner General Store.” In fact, they house a museum and gift shop honoring the memory of the late native sons Chet Lauck (Lum) and Norris Goff (Abner), whose “Lum ‘n Abner” wildly-popular pre-TV network radio show first aired in 1931 and ran for 25 years. Lauck and Goff broadcast over 5,000 live radio shows, made seven movies, and some guest TV appearances.

Outdoors in the Ouachitas. Driving over scenic routes is the most popular recreational activity in the Ouachitas with fishing, hunting, and hiking probably in line in that order, says Forest Service Landscape Architect Ron Krupa. Wildlife is varied and plentiful. Just driving the Talimena Byway, you may see white tailed deer, raccoons, rabbits, and sometimes even a bear.

Hunting is permitted throughout the Ouachita National Forest excepting developed recreation sites and some posted areas. In

the over 200,000-acre section of the forest in LeFlore County, wildlife is managed by the Forest Service and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation which sets seasons and regulations.

Fishing waters. Crooked Branch Lake and Bony Ridge Pond are popular fishing holes but Cedar Lake is Winding Stair Mountain NRA’s 90-acre “crown jewel” for water sports. Sailboats, kayaks, canoes, and motorboats limited to 7.5 hp may be on the lake any given day. The NRA’s biggest and best RV park/campground and an equestrian camp that can park up to 100 horse/camping trailers are located on Cedar Lake shores. Horse riders camped here have access to more than 70 miles of trails.

Two big lakes, Sardis and Wister, are nearby though outside the Winding Stair NRA. Catfish, bass, crappie, and sunfish abound in all these as well as in crystal clear lakes and streams within



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY NORMAN SPRAY



NORMAN SPRAY

an hour's drive of the Wilhelmina Lodge near the Arkansas end of the Talimena. These include Wilhelmina, Shady, Gillham, De-Queen, Wister, Broken Bow, and many smaller lakes. Moreover, the Ouachita, Cossatot, Caddo, Little Missouri, and Mountain Fork rivers all flow through the area surrounding Mena. In cool seasons, rainbow trout can be caught on the Little Missouri.

The Cossatot, an Indian word meaning "skull crusher," challenges white water floaters with some of the wildest rapids in Arkansas when water levels are high, usually in fall, winter and spring months. Then Cossatot rapids are rated Class IV and even Class V. The Little Missouri is tamer though some of its rapids rate Class IV. Water stage information is available at 870-387-3141.

Hunting grounds. White tailed deer and Eastern wild turkey are the most hunted species in both Oklahoma and Arkansas areas accessible from the Talimena Byway. Squirrel, rabbits, and varmints also are hunted. There are seasons for archery, crossbow, muzzleloaders and modern firearms. State licenses, permits, and regulations apply.

Though our expectations for super fall color fell short, we

Clockwise from top left: One attraction at Wilhelmina State Park on the Arkansas section of the Talimena Scenic Drive is this nine-level "wonder house," originally built as a vacation home in 1931. One of it's "wonders" which visitors see when they join guided tours is a 24-foot bed. • Interpreter Brad Holleman stands on stairway reaching one level of the nine-level "wonder house," one attraction in the Queen Wilhelmina State Park which lies beside the Talimena Byway road. • Guests enjoy watersports on Cedar Lake in Oklahoma's Winding Stair Mountain Recreation Area. • Hang gliding enthusiasts launch from a bluff just off the Talimena Byway route in Arkansas. • This old steam engine, parked on the grounds of the Queen Wilhelmina State Park just off the Talimena Byway in Arkansas once was part of the rail line that still crosses the park and Rich Mountain. • Trains still rumble by the Old Depot in Mena, but gone are the heydays of passenger rail travel. Depot now serves as a museum and houses the Chamber of Commerce.



PANORAMA VISTA PHOTOGRAPHY

came away enthralled. Talimena National Scenic Byway is a drive to remember anytime. The views are spectacular as advertised and there's plenty to see and do in the surrounding national forest area. Maybe we'll go back next fall. As football fans say, next year could be the year! **RIS**

To Plan a Visit . . .

Contacts that can help you plan a tour on the Talimena National Scenic Byway, in Winding Stair Mountain National Recreation Area, and for surrounding attractions:

U.S. Forest Service

(Choctaw Ranger Office): 918-653-2991

<http://www.fs.fed.us/oonf/>

To **reserve Forest Service campground space** (at Cedar Lake or Winding Stair Camp Ground just off the Talimena Byway): 877-444-6777

Queen Wilhelmina Park: 479-394-2863 or 479-394-2864 (800-264-2477 for reservations only)

www.queenwilhelmina.com

or E-Mail: www.queenwilhelmina@arkansas.com

Talimena Drive Association: 918-567-3434

<http://www.talimenascenicdrive.com>

Mena, Ark. Chamber of Commerce: 479-394-2912

<http://www.gomenaarkansas.com>

Talihini, OK Chamber of Commerce: 918-567-3434

E-Mail: talihini@leflorecounty.com

<http://www.arkansasstateparks.com/cossatotriver>

The Skinny on Storage

by Mary Findley

Anyone who stumbles into the dining section off my kitchen would shake their head and wonder how I qualify to write an article about organization. It is mid-May as my fingers clamber around this keyboard and time to plant the remaining beds of my garden, weather permitting. Seed packets, catalogs and various planting paraphernalia cover the counter as the cleaning heads I sell wait patiently on the table to be assembled. I'm writing this article more as a reminder to myself to tackle my projects and clear my work space. Let's dig in and figure out a few tricks.

Three ring binders: Rather than store entire magazines, pick up two three-ring binders, a three-hole punch, and divider sheets the next time you're near an office supply store. Mark one binder "Outside Articles" and the other "Inside Articles." Remove articles you wish to save by cutting them out with a small size utility knife. Label the divider sheets into general interest categories and file the articles. Next add a columnar pad sheet at the front of each binder. Across the top, list oil changes, tire pressure, or other vital information necessary for your coach's general maintenance. Alternately, scan articles into a computer under appropriate file names.

Beginning and end. Every project has a beginning and an ending. Start this project by measuring the width, length and height of drawers, cabinets and closets. When taking the measurements, look at those spaces with the eyes of a stranger. Where can storage be added? What needs improvement? Either draw a picture of the storage area or take a picture with your cell phone so you remember the layout when shopping for organizational tools. Kick around hardware stores or kitchen and bath stores with the inquisitive eye of a young child. Children have no idea that a mesh bag is for laundry. To them, it's a storage haven for toys or a tote for beach items.

Clear the clutter: Clearing clutter always lands on the "I'll do it later" list. Right ... and one legged ducks swim in circles. Let's meander through the inside of your coach. Since the binders are ready, tackle any space that contains papers. Sort, file or shred.


I'm not sure how things manage to multiply inside dark areas

but open any kitchen drawer and you'll find the evidence. As you go through the drawers, remove anything you haven't used in the past two years. Empty the drawer, then clean it with a bees wax-based wood cleaner that does not contain petroleum distillates. Tuck in drawer organizers if needed and enjoy the new found storage space.

Next hit the spice cabinet and replace any spice a year or more past its expiration date. Rather than buy new bottles, empty the bottles and refill them with bulk herbs. Our country would be relieved of millions of herb bottles if each household across America followed this easy idea.

Open cabinets and haul everything out. Sort, toss, or donate any item that has gathered dust for the past two years. An item called the Fridge Binz comes in various size containers to hold different size food containers. Stack them for additional refrigerator or cabinet storage. Or try the Gravity Feed Can rack to store three layers of canned goods. Double decker pull-out drawers tuck inside bathroom cabinets. The smaller size is great for personal care products. Take a look online at www.containerstore.com for more ideas. Dimensions are stated.

Closets: The routine remains the same. Remove everything from the closet. Toss, sort, then clean the shelves. Don't forget the wonders of Velcro. The sticky backed strips of Velcro secure pull out drawers to shelf bracing along the upper back wall. Check the blueprints for wiring or pipes before drilling holes for the braces. Use additional Velcro to hold the drawer shut during travel. Plastic craft boxes or fishing tackle boxes double as storage units for sewing items and first aid kits. The tops are flat so stack them. Secure them to prevent shifting during travel.

Closet Maid, found at hardware stores, has a great wire storage basket that can be mounted on the upper wall of the closet for additional storage space. The front of the basket is open for easy access with a lip to prevent items from tumbling out although an additional holding cord is advisable. Grab your imagination, your cell phone with pictures of your cabinet space, and the measurements, and explore the endless storage possibilities. 



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 or call 800-345-3934.


RVIA Taps Bob Tiffin for Its Annual Distinguished Service Award

During the Annual Membership Meeting in Washington, D.C., on June 7, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) honored industry leaders who exhibited outstanding contributions to the association and the RV industry.

"RVIA's awards program was established to recognize individuals in a variety of areas who have gone far beyond the call of duty to work for the betterment of the RV industry," said RVIA Chairman Gregg Fore. "As chairman, it is so rewarding to acknowledge the personal successes and tremendous contributions of talented people who we are fortunate to have working in our industry."

"The Distinguished Service to the RV Industry Award is recognized as the industry's highest honor. This award recognizes an individual within the RV industry who sets himself apart through outstanding service. This year's recipient is Bob Tiffin of Tiffin Motorhomes."

"Without any doubt, Bob has set himself apart through outstanding service to the association, the industry, his company, and the legions of loyal Tiffin customers," said Fore. "He served on the RVIA board from 2006-2009 and has worked diligently on the association's behalf as a political advocate, meeting with legislators to represent the RV industry on important legislative and regulatory issues at the federal and state level."

"Bob is one of the most respected and beloved men in the RV industry," Fore said. "Over the course of nearly four decades, he has built Tiffin Motorhomes into an industry leader, renowned for innovative products, impressive product quality, and a total commitment to the people who buy Tiffin products." 

RVIA president Richard Coon congratulates Bob Tiffin, president and CEO of Tiffin Motorhomes, after Gregg Fore, RVIA board chairman, presented him with the organization's highest award.



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The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

She's Happy – He's Lucky PART 3

by Dave McClellan

The next leg of our journey was from the North Carolina border to the Willow Tree RV Resort in Longs, South Carolina, which is a few miles west of Myrtle Beach. We were scheduled to meet up with longtime friends John and Ellen Cutler from Cobleskill, New York, who recently purchased a 42' Phaeton at the Tampa RV show. We had another trouble-free day's ride so the time we took to plan our route and go over our check list before we left was the right thing to do. Now we double-checked to make sure everything was in its proper place before pulling out of the site: the crank-up antenna, sewer and water hoses, cable TV wire, secured the dingy tow bar, put the shift lever in neutral, switched off the Chevy Equinox battery disconnect and of most importance, the electric cord was disconnected and put away. Each time we pack up I have to promise Terri I will never pull over another 50 amp pedestal when we leave a campground.

Arriving at the Willow Tree RV Resort campground was something I could never have imagined. Every road and almost every site is a pull thru with an asphalt surface. There are some sites on the shore line of the lake. It was so clean and well groomed I couldn't believe my eyes. The office attendant asked if we cared to have a site with a hot tub. "Are you kidding me? How much does this place charge?" We never did ask before we arrived, and I guess we just learned another lesson. Although it was more than our budget should have allowed, the weekly rate wasn't that bad, and it did include sewer, water, and 50 amp electric. It's an amazing place.



The weather was very cold in December with freezing temperatures at night, sometimes in the 20's. We should have purchased a heating tape to wrap around the water hose, but we took it in each night for ten days. We also used two small 1500-watt heaters for warmth inside the coach and the electricity for the hot water heater, which saved our LP gas. We put a smaller electric heater in the wet bay compartment to keep the basement water pipes and tanks from freezing. I've heard that some folks use a light bulb for the wet bay area but either device must be positioned properly to prevent a fire. We also used the heat pumps for warmth inside the coach when the outside temp went above 40 degrees.

The cold weather didn't stop us from spending time in Myrtle Beach, taking in the main shows and other tourist attractions. Again not on our budget but we couldn't pass up the opportunity to treat ourselves while we were there. Our credit cards took a big hit, but using cards is almost a must to avoid carrying too much cash around. We have two different credit cards, just in case one gets lost (or maxed out), and we each have a debit card for ATM cash withdrawal. We use a bank that is very cautious and calls us every now and then to verify that we are the owners of either our credit or debit cards when we make unusual purchases, or use the cards too frequently. Just the other day they called us five minutes after we pumped and charged \$175 worth of diesel fuel. It's great and it's free protection. To pay bills such as auto, motor home and health insurance we use checks or electronic payments. If we send something by mail we always use Priority Mail envelopes with delivery confirmation. We can also transfer funds from savings to checking accounts via the Internet, however, while full timing, we haven't had the opportunity to transfer checking to savings, which means...so far there haven't been any leftover funds.

Before leaving on our full-timing journey, I changed some of my magazine subscription addresses to my son and others like "Roughing It Smoothly" are archived and can be viewed at: www.tiffinmotorhomes.com/tiffinOwners/roughingItSmoothly.php.

Planning our next destination was an easy task now that we know to avoid secondary roads as much as possible with the

These three couples met at Silver Springs RV Park Estates when the park manager assigned them to adjacent sites. Each couple owns a Tiffin Phaeton and they jokingly named their corner "Phaeton Place." From left to right they are Mary Beth & Rich Koch (Wisconsin), Fran & Barb Higgins (Pennsylvania), and Ron & Lily Bogner (Illinois).

motorhome, although some are necessary when traveling to a specific campground. We also have learned the hard way to not go through very large cities unless it's a larger interstate, state, or bypass highway. Our process is to get to each campground as safely and economically as possible and then travel to other places of interest by car during our stay. One great source of information for a variety of questions and answers, including directions, campgrounds, and anything you need to know about your Tiffin motorhome is at www.tiffinrvnetwork.com/forum/.

We reviewed our route the night before we left the Willow Tree Resort on our Microsoft Streets and Trips. Once again our journey was approximately 250 miles, to Hardeesville, South Carolina, traveling from 9 am to 3 pm to avoid rush hour traffic. It has proven to work really well for us. We stayed overnight at a campground just off I-95 and hit the road mid-morning for Wilderness RV Park Estates in Silver Springs, Florida. The Phaeton gave us another great ride, and just before we arrived we filled up with diesel to help avoid fuel tank condensation. Our fuel mileage was 8.2 mpg.

We had rented a site through a friend of a former classmate of mine, who had a back-in site for rent. Each site has a concrete pad for the motorhome and parking for two cars. It's a great place with a lot of activities. We planned on staying there for five weeks but after settling in and making a lot of friends, we decided to become part-time snow birds and added another month. It's very clean and there are lots of activities: a nice club house, fitness center, pool, hot tub, restaurant, small store, super friendly people, and dozens of other Tiffin motorhomes. One day I counted thirteen Phaetons, three Allegro buses and one Zephyr, and I had nice conversations with all of them. Included were three couples who had purchased lots adjacent to each other. They had not known one another, but coincidentally each was a Phaeton owner. Jokingly they named their corner of the resort "Phaeton Place." (see photo)

One of the most memorable ventures we took from Silver Springs was to Titusville, Florida, a 100-mile car trip, to see the Discovery space shuttle launch its 39th and final journey. This fulfilled our first "bucket list" adventure. Although we got stuck

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for three hours in traffic, it was all well worth it. We will forever remember the yelling and joy from tens of thousands of people while watching the shuttle go up and beyond the clouds. All I can say is, "it was magnificent."

We expected a big repair when we noticed that the water in the toilet would not remain in the bowl. I thought I would have to replace the seal around the opening, which I was not looking forward to. Then I discovered that the surface on the plastic valve that slides over the opening had become rough and would not completely close. To fix it, I applied white grease under the rubber seal and around the edges of the valve with a Q-tip. It worked great and the slide goes all the way over the opening now.

Another quick fix was a place for Terri to hang up clothes that will not fully dry in the combo washer/dryer. I put an adjustable (twist to expand or close) rod diagonally over the shower area. They can be purchased at a Walmart. The rod is spring-loaded and fits just above the shower walls in our 40 QSH against a wall corner and the cabinet/wall corner above the sink. It stays firmly in place even while traveling. She is now a happy camper.

Well, full-timing is supposed to be fun, but leaving Silver Springs and all the friends we had made there was sad. However, we are doing this to see the country... to meet more old and new friends. So onward we traveled to Winter Haven, Florida, for a week's stay to see Disney, the Strawberry Festival in Plant City, and other attractions. Then we were off to Ft. Myers to join our daughter and her husband who flew down from Massachusetts for a week.

Our original long term plans were to stay in one area for at least a month and travel by car to see all the attractions and the countryside within a 100-mile radius. However, in two weeks time we were in two different areas of Florida and two different RV parks. Another lesson learned because staying in an area for one month to save on campground fees is only reasonable if you have places to see and things to do for 30 days. Paying for the toad gasoline for long side trips takes away money that could be used for campgrounds, so at times our original one month plan did not work out. During these two weeks we had a nice visit with friends in Lakeland and Marco Island, and also went to see three Red Sox baseball games with our daughter Lisa and her husband Ken. Seeing the Red Sox spring training games fulfilled our second "bucket list" adventure.

From Fort Myers we headed for Alabama and the Tiffin factory for some minor warranty work and to visit with Bob Tiffin. The three-day trip (approximately 250 miles each day) went very smoothly and once again we were very pleased with the Cummins engine, Alison transmission, Freightliner chassis, the overall Phaeton performance and my co-pilot's great navigation skills. I've taught her well, and I have to give Terri a lot of credit for putting up with the likes of me. Truthfully, I don't know

anything about our 6 GPS widgets and I don't want or need to!

On several occasions I've emailed and spoken to Bob Tiffin on the phone and finally had the opportunity to meet him in person at the Tampa RV Show. Hopefully, we will get the opportunity to see him again in Red Bay. He is a true gentleman, very patient, caring, and extremely cordial to everyone. I hope you all get the opportunity to meet him some day. Stay tuned for our third "bucket list" experience in Red Bay, Alabama: the Tiffin factory tour, the service area, and the runway. To be continued... **RIS**

Special People

Most everyone who comes to Red Bay, Alabama, never expects to meet and leave with friendships. In February, 2009, Tom and Terry from Texas and Frank and Kay from Mississippi met.

The meeting was just like all those who come to Red Bay. The talk is about motorhome problems and comparing our coaches. We began to sit around and get to know each other at the Tiffin Service Center campground. Frank and Tom had purchased their Allegro Buses a day a part but in different states. The wives enjoyed talking about family and how much fun the traveling had been in their motorhomes.

Before leaving Red Bay, name cards were exchanged which resulted in weekend camping trips, telephone calls, and a trip to the state of Colorado. The Tiffin product brought us together, but a friendship has developed from that visit to Red Bay. We

Frank & Kay McKeown (right), of Stringer, Mississippi, met Tom & Terry Tremell at the Tiffin Service Center last year. Finding much in common, they stayed in touch and eventually met again at a resort property that Tom and Terry purchased in Colorado.



can all say that we have met many nice people on the road. Some pass with a smile and a wave and nothing more, but others become special people in your life. **RIS**

Wild Hogettes Part Deux

The fun continues for "Five Old Ladies and a Dog on a Bus" that made a Colorado trip. This time we trekked to Canton, Texas, for the world's largest flea market, First Monday Trades Day. Since we've got 3 trekkers with new knees, we decided to peruse the flea market on four-wheel carts. We got cat calls galore, but I'm not sure what "cute" means at my age. "Aren't they cute!" One man stopped us and whispered that the police were looking for us in another building. Ha, ha, funny.

Since the RV was parked nearby we rented the carts for overnight and rode back to the Rolling Teepee on the grassy side of the road. Again, cat calls galore and they wanted us to honk our horns like the truckers or trains do. Ha, ha, funny. We hollered back that we used to ride Harleys, so there!

Once again we had a multitude of good food for the trip, but the dog's snacks were mistaken for homemade fudge. She'll be

all right since she really only tasted a bite of it. Rotten fudge!

I had cleaned out the roll-out tray underneath the Rolling Teepee for our purchases, mainly floral hanging baskets. But the funniest part was seeing the hanging baskets hanging off the

Judy Hobart (far right) and friends rented four-wheelers to move quickly through the world's largest flea market in Canton, Texas.



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four-wheel carts coming back down the highway. We didn't get any cat calls that time – just open mouths!

This was a small trip, but stay tuned for a big trip to Lake Catherine in Arkansas with 7 on board! Just how many can a Phaeton sleep? Lots of bridge and good food scheduled.

– Judy Hobart
Bedford, Texas

Reflections On A Trip Out West

After 27 days and almost 3,100 miles on the road I have made a few observations.

We have previously been to all the states we were traveling through but this time I was able to see with the aid of my three granddaughters. I was amazed to again see our country in its grandeur. My Father in heaven painted His creation with colors and textures I could never find in an art store. As I stood on top of Pike's Peak and read the words that were inspired there: "Oh, beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountains majesty," I could see those and so many other colors.

We left Georgia the last week of May in our trusty 2005 Tiffin Allegro Open Road (our girls call the RV "Alice") heading west toward Colorado Springs. Our route was not preplanned and we had a very loose time schedule. We found some wonderful people along the way and the girls seemed to make friends each time we stopped.

Heat – I've always heard that out west summer is better because it has "dry heat." I found out that dry heat or humid heat is still HOT. It's the difference between being cooked in a convection oven or being steamed. Either way hot summer days are miserable.

Cows – We saw thousands of cows during our travels. My dis-

covery was that the cows out west, where there is more open space, were crowded into smelly feed lots or searching for food among the scrub brush. Cows where I live have luscious green grass, water running through the pastures, and trees to find shade.

Trees – Some of the trees out west grow sideways because of the relentless wind. Trees are scattered among the rocks and dust. Where I live trees are diverse, tall and straight. They give shade and shelter for animals and people. They cover the landscape from horizon to horizon coating the mountains with a range of shades of green that would make Sherwin-Williams jealous.

Mountains – the Rockies are just as magnificent as everyone that sees them says. They are rugged and high! But my mountains deserve their own praise. It's like the difference between haute cuisine and home cooking. You enjoy the opportunity to have an extravagant dinner occasionally but you would not want it every day. My mountains are nourishing to my soul, comfort for my heart, and art for my eyes. I go to my mountains when I need relief from the "rat race." They never fail to lift my mood and bring a deep sigh from my innermost being. It's like the memory of Sunday dinner at my grandmother's house.

Restaurants – We had meals in fast food, chains, fun places and hole-in-the-wall restaurants and found that the atmosphere can make up for food that is lacking. A cowboy dinner of beef and baked potato is so much better when a 4-year-old is dancing on the bench next to me. A tiny family-run, authentic Mexican restaurant in the middle of lunch hour serves as many smiles as they do tacos.

Home – When we headed east, the closer we got to Georgia the more I wanted to be there. Georgia is my home because that is where I was born, raised, and chose to live now. If I had the choice to live somewhere else I probably would be right here or someplace just like it.

Alice (the Allegro) – We have traveled to some wonderful places in Alice but it doesn't matter where we go as long as we're traveling with "her." Alice has been a very faithful and dependable friend. On the few times when Alice has needed care, all we have to do is call Red Bay, Alabama, and someone who understands her tells us what to do. On one occasion there was a leak in the skylight over the shower. All it took was one phone call to Bob Tiffin and we took Alice in for a thorough check up. The skylight and all the surrounding ceiling and padding was replaced and the list of little items that our dealer never took care of when we bought the coach new was taken care of too. We had heard for years about Tiffin service and we found out for ourselves that all we heard and more was true. We were treated kindly and with total respect in all of our dealings with Tiffin. If we have the opportunity to own 10 more RVs, they will all be Tiffins.

–Donna Ogles
Adairsville, Georgia

She Was An Icon Among Full-Timers


Leone J. (Lee) Snow retired from the Air Force in 1966 and began a lifestyle, which for a woman at that time, was a bit unusual. Both Lee and her husband were career Air Force officers, but he suffered a heart attack and died after they had been married for only 13 years. During her career, Lee played for the Air Force Women's Golf Team and competed at courses throughout the U.S. and Europe.

At first she decided on a small travel trailer, but later purchased a Travco motorhome and a VW beetle to tow. In 1969 Lee was camping with a group in Death Valley when she got the idea for a new organization that she named "Loners on Wheels."

As you might expect, Lee visited every state in the Union except Hawaii, and most of them two or three times. She loved the desert and returned there

almost every winter to enjoy the warmer temperatures. She toured in the spring and fall, but spent her summers with her sister at her home near Lake Michigan. Her passion for birding was evident in her record book which showed sightings of 560 species. When at beach and desert locations, Lee enjoyed entertaining onlookers with her talent for stunt kite flying.

In November 1996 Lee met Lenora (L.A.) Abston on Pensacola Beach who had just retired from a high school teaching career. When she learned that Lee was a full-timer, she listened to her advice. Five months later in April, L.A. staged an auction, sold her home, and ordered a 32-ft. 1997 Allegro. On the advice of Danny Inman, she had Tiffin wire it for 50 amps and add a second AC. The two full-timers often found occasions to travel together.

Two years ago at 92, Lee decided it was time to find a permanent foundation. She sold the Travco and the VW beetle together. L.A. bought a home in Omaha, Texas, and Lee lived in L.A.'s motorhome for a year. As Lee's health began to fail, L.A. insisted she move into her house where she and another friend became caregivers. Lee passed away on May 11, 2011. 



Need Your Motorhome Cleaned?

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Outside: Thorough wash job including roof, tires, and rims; showroom-quality wax job.

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

What is Invisibrake?

Completely out of sight

InvisiBrake is so small it can usually be mounted under a seat.

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When you continue braking, so does InvisiBrake. The longer you apply the brakes in the motorhome, the harder your towed vehicle will brake. InvisiBrake will NOT skid your tires.

Trickle charge the battery

InvisiBrake connects directly to the towed vehicle's battery, and constantly charges the battery during towing – InvisiBrake will never drain the battery.

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InvisiBrake includes an LED monitor for a visual reference of braking activity; an audible alert at the motorhome indicates extended braking to warn you if the brakes have been activated for too long.



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East Texas Spring Rally CANTON, TEXAS – MAY 2011

The necessity of a last minute change in location for the Texas rally turned out to be a true blessing in disguise! With less than a month before we were to be in Lake Texoma for our spring rally, it became necessary due to circumstances at the campground to find a new venue. Fortunately, we were able to book Mill Creek Ranch RV Resort in Canton, Texas, to handle our nearly 100 Tiffin RVs. Canton is a small town of about 5000 whose claim to fame is their First Monday Weekend. This is a flea market, yard sale, antique show, and carnival all rolled into a huge event that draws many hundreds of thousands of visitors to the area. This event took place the weekend before the rally started on Monday, so many of our attendees enjoyed this attraction!

Mill Creek turned out to be the perfect spot for our rally. The spacious full hook-up sites were located with grassy areas and sparkling lakes all around, and the entire resort was beautifully landscaped. We enjoyed a covered deck overlooking a gurgling stream for our dining and entertainment pleasure....happily, the weather cooperated with warm sunny days and mild evenings!



As is the usual custom, Monday was spent getting everyone checked in and settled. Vogt RV from the Dallas/Fort Worth area was our dealer on site, and they provided an impressive display of new Tiffin products. The busy day culminated with a delicious dinner and orientation for the fun-filled week to come.

On Tuesday, following a hearty breakfast, the day was reserved for seminars devoted to many of the aspects of RV-ing. Some of the presenters included Harold Kimbrough from Onan Generators (who not only offered minor service repairs, but gave away a number of oil changes), David Humphries and Marty Vanderford of Triple H Electronics, (the company which supplies all things electronic in the Tiffin coaches), Tom Webber, our Dealer Support person at Tiffin, who gave a very informative walk-through session regarding new Tiffin products, and Pat Webber, Tom's wife, who presented a very timely "green-focused" seminar on ways we can all be more earth-friendly. Tiffin factory technicians Robert Gober and David Sparks were on hand to make service calls and minor repairs. Gail Johnson

Rally Story by Gail Johnson

gave her hands-on Sharp Convection Microwave cooking class, and she also hosted what is becoming our traditional tea in the afternoon for any interested in a little social activity.

The tea parties have become quite popular. Advance notice is sent out and attendees are invited to bring a favorite tea cup, and, if desired, dress up in tea-party attire. However, all are encouraged to attend, with or without a favored teacup! Refreshments are provided (tea, of course!), and each one is encouraged to stand up and introduce themselves, after which they relate the story behind their teacup. Sometimes, we hear about favorite tea traditions, or special people and places connected to those traditions. The end result of these get-togethers is that we

all leave feeling that we know each other a little better, and the stories are so often amusing, and sometimes very touching, as well.

After a full day of seminars, we were treated to a performance by a Dallas High School show choir group, Popular

Gravity, as we once again enjoyed a delightful meal on the deck.

Wednesday was devoted to games and dining! We were served brunch and dinner, with lots of fun and fellowship in between. Outdoor contests included beanbag baseball, back-your-wagon, and ladder ball—all lively competitions with good participation by rally attendees. After dinner, Vogt RV treated us to Casino Night.... a simulated casino experience in which participants were given tokens to use at the games, which were then converted into raffle tickets after an allotted time. These tickets were all entered into a drawing, in which about 20 nice gifts were given to the winners. It was a fun event of game-playing, with not a single penny lost by anyone!


On Thursday, the last day of activities, we celebrated Cinco de Mayo. Lunch was provided, and afterward a great country western band, The McKay Brothers, played into the afternoon. This gave some of our line-dancers an opportunity to show skills recently learned at the line dance class held the previous day by our favorite Canadian line dance instructor, Tammy Wyatt! That girl does a great job of keeping us moving!

The farewell dinner on Thursday was a time of recognizing game winners, awarding chapters a monetary incentive for traveling together (chapters with 4 or more rigs at the rally receive a



check for their treasury), and just recapping the week and saying goodbyes. On a serious, yet very heart-warming note, we would like to mention the wonderful generosity of our rally attendees. While we were in Texas, over 100 tornadoes ravaged 8 southern states, including Alabama. Towns all over north Alabama sustained damage, and over 200 people died in the storms in Alabama alone. Near Red Bay, (home of Tiffin Motorhomes) the little communities of Phil Campbell, Vina, Hackleburg, and Smithville, Mississippi, were almost wiped out. Many were killed, and many others were profoundly affected. A number of Tiffin employees lost their homes in these storms, though, thankfully, no one was killed. A fund had been established for those employees, and we took over \$2000.00 back to Red Bay

from collections given over those four days of the rally. We had many individual donations, and some of the chapters who received checks and the grand prize cash winner on Casino Night donated back their awards. And to cap it off, we had a mariachi band scheduled to play after dinner on Thursday. When they didn't show up on time, Club President Jimmy Johnson decided that the fee they would have received would go instead into the Relief Fund. So, many thanks to all who gave, and to all who are mindful and prayerful for these families who have suffered loss!

Our wish for all of you is that you have a wonderful summer and fall; we urge you to check the rally schedule on the Tiffin website, and if you see one that you like, sign up! We hope to see you somewhere down the road, "Roughing It Smoothly!" 

COME JOIN THE FUN AND EXPERIENCE THE BEAUTY OF AUTUMN IN NEW ENGLAND!

Don't be left out! Make plans to come to the Allegro Club Fall Rally at Normandy Farms Family Camping Resort in Foxboro, Massachusetts. Rally check-in will be Monday, September 26, 2011, with check-out on Friday, September 30, 2011.

Normandy Farms Family Camping Resort is located in the heart of historic New England. The rally activities will include seminars, games, meals, line dance instruction, tea party, entertainment, and a tour of Providence, Rhode Island, and lighthouses in Narragansett Bay. Campers Inn RV Center will display the newest Tiffin motorhomes. Tiffin factory technicians will be on site to address minor repair issues.

Space is limited. If you plan to attend, please apply quickly. You can register by fax, email, mail, or phone. Contact information is listed below:

PO Box 1429, 902-A Gates Street
Red Bay, Alabama 35582
Phone: 256-356-8522
Fax: 256-356-9746
Email: allegroclub@tiffinmotorhomes.com

We look forward to seeing you at this and future Allegro Club rallies.



PLEASE TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

Notice of New Refrigerator Recall

Attention: All customers with Norcold Refrigerators

**There is a recall involving Norcold Refrigerators
that are in Tiffin units
built from December 1996 to December 2010.**

**If you have a unit produced during that time
period that has a Norcold refrigerator, please
immediately call **800-767-9101**
and speak to a Norcold representative
for the most up-to-date information.**

They will advise what you need to do.

**This is a very serious recall
that could involve a refrigerator catching fire.**

Do not delay.

Norcold Recall #10E-049

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT 1.800.767.9101 OR WWW.NORCOLD.COM/RECALL

OFFICIAL REFRIGERATOR RECALL

**If your refrigerator is on Recall,
DO NOT operate it until it can be professionally retrofitted
with its proper remedy.**

**The installation of this safety device
will be at NO CHARGE to you.**

Action Steps – If you have one of the recalled refrigerators and you...

***Currently reside in the RV,
you should immediately:***

1. Set the refrigerator to “OFF.”
2. Unplug the refrigerator through the Service Vent on the outside of the vehicle.
3. Contact your Dealer, a Norcold Authorized Service Center or call 1-800-767-9101 as soon as possible to get assistance.

***Do not currently reside in the RV,
you should immediately:***

1. Set the refrigerator to “OFF.”
2. Unplug the refrigerator through the Service Vent on the outside of the vehicle.
3. Disconnect from shore power.
4. Contact your Dealer, a Norcold Authorized Service Center or call 1-800-767-9101 as soon as possible to get assistance.

**Failure to follow these instructions can result
in fire causing injury or death.**

**To check your refrigerator’s status regarding this Recall,
or for more information about
other Norcold recalls involving older models,
go to www.norcold.com/recall**



Artistic Expressions

Tiffany Wallace has been at Tiffin a little over a year. She first worked at the Belmont paint plant tearing down masking and later prepping for basecoat. Earlier this year, she transferred to Red Bay to become an Environmental Health and Safety technician at the Red Bay, Vina, and the Tiffin Service Center.

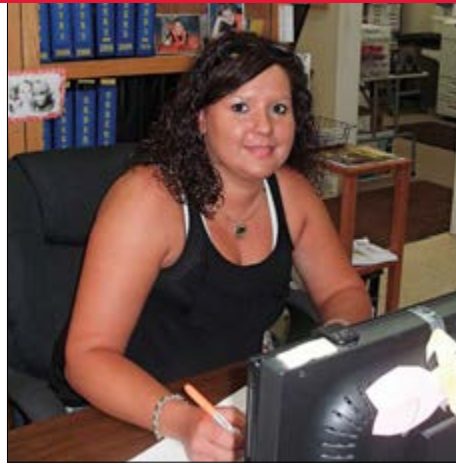
"I have loved to draw for as long as I can remember," Tiffany shared. "I remember wanting to be an artist from the time I was very young. My high school art teacher was an awesome lady--she was the reason I wanted to become a teacher."

"I went to Northeast Community College first where I majored in art education," Tiffany continued. "Then I transferred to the University of North Alabama where I earned a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in art and K-12 education. I was exposed to a wider world of art and culture. I fell completely in love with it," she said.

"The artwork I enjoy doing the most is pencil drawings. I think that is my best work," Tiffany offered. "I enjoy all media, but some require more time and supplies than I have available. No matter where I am I can usually find a pencil. It's a great stress reliever; it's kind of like fishing."

"I have a lot of my artwork that I have done for myself, just because I thought it up or thought that it would look neat," she said. "But I also do work for other people. I have done portraits or any other drawings they might want. Mostly pencil, but I will do any medium they ask for. Most of my works are for sale."

Tiffany is very appreciative of the support she has been shown by her family throughout her artistic career. "I recently got married and think my husband Daniel and daughter Gracie are the best part of me. You can see them reflected in a lot of my work."



Busy, Busy Mom

Jamie Green has been employed with Tiffin Motorhomes for eight and one half years. "When I first came to work at Tiffin, I worked in the engineering office as a drafter," Jamie said. "Currently I'm a clerk in the engineering office. I help prepare the production schedule, create various reports and labels, file engineering prints, distribute paperwork such as sales change papers and engineering change notifications, and package the traveler which stays with the unit throughout production. The traveler includes check sheets for quality control, winterization, and shortages."

With such a busy work schedule, Jamie looks forward to her after-hours hobbies and spending time with her family. "I was born and raised in Red Bay. Both my mom and sister are employed with Tiffin," Jamie said. "I attended Red Bay High School, grades K-12. After high school, I took drafting at Bevill State Community College in Hamilton, Alabama." I'm married to Shannon Green who also works at Tiffin. "We have two children, Peyton who is ten, and Hanna-Grace who is eight. I also have a stepson Austin who is 15. We live in Halltown, just outside of Red Bay," she said.

Being parents to two young, active children provides Jamie and husband Shannon with a full plate during the school year. "Our kids keep us busy with their activities," Jamie shared. "Peyton plays baseball each spring. He and Hanna-Grace each play basketball in the fall and winter so during each of those seasons, I spend most of my time either at the baseball fields or at the gym and I enjoy every minute of it. I was always active in sports and I enjoy watching the children play now," she said.

When Jamie has any free time not devoted to her children she enjoys sewing, scrapbooking, gardening, and photography.



Photography Enthusiast

Jeff Shook will mark 12 years with Tiffin this June. "I do all of the design, bill of materials, and blueprint maintenance for all parts and assemblies that go onto the coach starting in the mechanic shop and ending before station one in the main plant, with the exception of a few items and electrical parts," he explained.

In his spare time, Jeff has been nurturing a long held passion for photography. "I've been interested in photography for as long as I can remember, but I became serious about the technical and creative aspects three years ago," he said.

Unlike many people who take photography classes to hone their craft, Jeff is just the opposite. "I'm self-taught," he noted. "Most of what I've learned about photography I've found on the web. I've also read several books on the subject. Most of the time, I just find a particular type of photo I like and try to replicate it. When I can't figure out how to do something, I find additional information and try again. With access to the internet, there is very little that one can't learn how to do on their own," he shared.

"One of the most interesting aspects of photography I've come to understand is the importance of lighting. Lighting can really make or break a photo, and it varies so much," Jeff continued. "I'm currently working on getting better at posing people, which sounds like a very simple thing, but surprisingly isn't," he said.

Jeff has this advice for those looking to get into photography. "The best thing I can recommend is to get a good camera and experiment," he stated. "Learn what works and what doesn't."

Jeff and his wife Sherry live in Belmont. They have two children, Luke and Abby. His photography can be found on the web at www.jeffshookstudios.com.

Editor's Note: After earning a B.S. degree in professional writing from the University of North Alabama, Stephanie Umfress began working in the sales department at TMH in May 2005. She writes and edits the owner manuals for all six brands, answers emails coming in over the website, and assists in sales administration. Born in the Philippines, she has lived most of her life in Red Bay.

Cashion Thermoplastics

MAKES KEY COMPONENTS USED THROUGHOUT YOUR COACH

When you walk through your coach, you cannot see many of the key components that are absolutely necessary to its functionality. If you are dry camping and turn on the water faucet, you will get fresh water. Drain the sink in the galley and the grey water goes somewhere. Flush the toilet and the waste disappears. The fresh, grey, and black tanks are made by Cashion Thermoplastics, located at the southwest end of the “runway,” an asphalt strip which several years ago was the Red Bay airport. The northeast part of the runway, of course, is the Tiffin Service Center.

Most companies come into existence because there is a direct need for their service or product. In the 1960s, C.S. “Spot” Cashion and Bob Hardin started a hardware business that also sold GE appliances. With Bob’s experience in air conditioning, they added central AC to their product-service line and found immediate success. Initially, they had to subcontract duct work to a sheet metal shop 45 miles away. To have a more efficient and profitable operation, they opened their own sheet metal shop in Red Bay.

When Tiffin Motorhomes launched in the fall of 1972, Bob Tiffin asked the partners to make several components which TMH needed to build coaches. For the first units, Cashion and Hardin built the generator box, two rear wheel wells, the battery box, and a 26-gauge stepwell. Their subcontracting business for Tiffin continued to expand with their versatility to meet the needs for new components.

After they started making storage boxes for the 1973 models, “Spot” and Bob decided to reduce the HVAC, hardware, and appliance business and expand their ability to serve Tiffin Motorhomes. “Spot” eventually bought out Bob Hardin’s interest in the business and with the help of his wife, Barbara, focused completely on supplying components to Tiffin Motorhomes. Barbara taught business courses at Red Bay High School and was just the right complement to “Spot’s” technical and production skills. In the eighties the Cashions built a new facility on Hwy. 19 just south of Hwy. 24 in Red Bay. “Spot” passed away in 1994 and Barbara persuaded their son, Chuck, to come home to Red Bay to run what had become a very thriving business.

After growing up working in the family’s enterprise, Chuck earned a degree in business from the University of North Alabama in Florence and the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

After graduation he accepted a position with Spry Funeral Homes and managed that company’s services in Florence, Sheffield, and Russellville, Alabama.

Chuck is married to Cris Mayfield. “We grew up together as next door neighbors. Her dad was Red Bay’s head football coach,” he said. Today Cris works in the business with Chuck and his mother is still serving the company as bookkeeper.

“Bob Tiffin pushed us into plastics manufacturing in the late nineties,” Chuck noted. “I can’t give him enough credit for our success. His foresight in the RV industry and his confidence in our company to continue to supply so many components has made us a key player.”

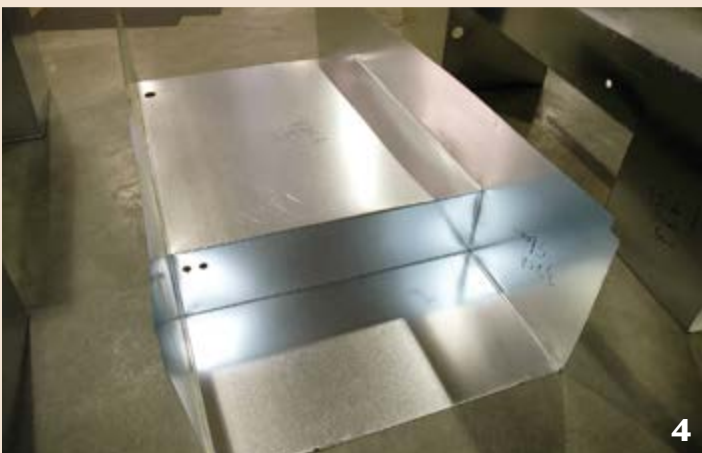
In 2000 the Cashions built the 45,000 sq. ft. building that they occupy today. Their proximity to the plant just a mile away makes it easy for the company to be a line supplier for “just-in-time” deliveries. As orders for new motorhomes are entered into the system, Chuck Cashion receives the daily schedule sheets from Tiffin’s SAP software and plans his production accordingly.

For the Allegro Open Road gas motorhomes, Cashion Thermoplastics builds 22-gauge galvanized boxes that straddle the drive shaft and provide pass-through storage, a feature that has been extremely popular since its introduction two years ago. The mid-section of the basement in Tiffin motorhomes houses the three wet tanks: black and grey waste, and fresh water. Using a rock and roll rotational molding machine, the company creates a one-piece 52-inch wide thermoplastic box with ribbed floor and sides that fits under the wet tanks and extends into the utility cabinet. If a tank should ever leak, it would drain into the utility bowl where the spillage could be easily removed without causing collateral damage.

The company’s ability to create molds for any type of thermoplastic component has increased Tiffin’s flexibility to implement new designs throughout their motorhomes. Cashion’s willingness to research and create new products has made their company an invaluable supplier. Now approaching its fortieth year, the Tiffin-Cashion relationship has been a beneficial, symbiotic experience for both companies.

Following is a picture story illustrating how Cashion’s custom-designed components are manufactured.

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



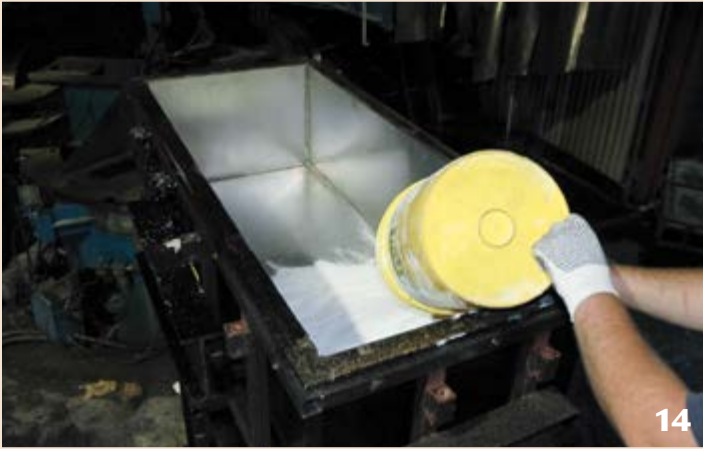
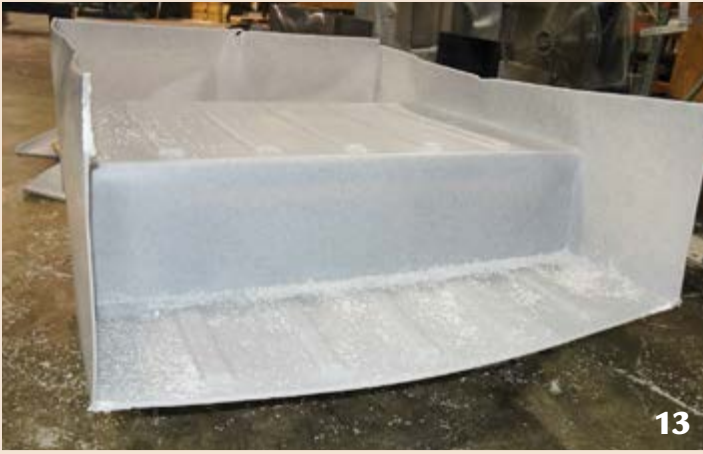
- 1 Mark Barksdale sets up the plasma CNC router to cut out a metal box for one of Tiffin's coaches.
- 2 The plasma CNC router directed by a computer program precisely cuts the parts for a storage compartment.
- 3 Mark Barksdale uses an air hammer to seal the seam for a compartment box.
- 4 A finished No. 5 storage box for an Allegro 32CA ready to be shipped to the assembly line. Note the pre-drilled holes for conduit wiring.
- 5 Shown here is a thermoforming machine for making a skylight. The form is first heated to 800 degrees before the overhead carriage drops the 1/4-inch plastic sheet onto the mold which holds it in place by vacuum during the cooling process.
- 6 Quince Wright uses a bandsaw to trim the skylight.
- 7 The mold for a double-door, pass-through storage compartment for the Allegro 34TGA and 35QBA cost




\$12,000. The ribs were milled by an outside supplier.

- 8 Approximately 225 pounds of polyethylene powder are required to create one of Cashion's largest thermoplastic compartments.
- 9 After bolting a seal to the top of the 3,000-pound mold, the unit is lowered into a rock and roll rotational molding machine. The mold is heated to 700 degrees for 41 minutes which causes the powder to liquify and adhere to the side and floor of the mold.
- 10 While the molding machine rocks back and forth, an internal axis spins the mold to get uniform distribution of the slurry as it begins to adhere to the floor and sides and then cools as the heat is removed.
- 11 The thermoplastic storage box shrinks three percent as it cools, facilitating the easy removal of the box from the mold by crane.
- 12 Chuck Cashion uses an air router to cut away the waste left at the top of the box.





- 13 The ends of the box facing the outside doors will be removed in the same operation.
- 14 Bradley Tucker dumps 30 pounds of polyethylene powder into the mold which will be used to form the fresh water tank. He then seals the top to the mold with bolts.
- 15 A turret rotational molding machine heats the mold to 700 degrees, liquifying the powder to create waste tanks for Tiffin motorhomes. The three-directional rotation process assures an even distribution of the slurry and thickness of the walls of the tank.
- 16 After 15 minutes in the heating chamber, the double mold passes through the spray chamber to assist in the cooling.
- 17 Bradley lifts the top of the mold to remove a black tank for a Phaeton.
- 18 Chris Porter uses a specially equipped router to install a spin fitting in a waste tank. The friction creates heat by the high-speed spinning which melts and seals the fitting into the tank, shown in 18a.
- 19 A grinder pulverizes scrap pieces into powder form, allowing the company to recover the polyethylene and prevent it from going into landfills.
- 20 A water test assures there are no leaks. Under 15 pounds of air pressure, the tank is submerged while a technician looks for leaks.
- 21 On the assembly line at Tiffin Motorhomes, the thermoplastic pass-through storage box is installed in the basement of an Allegro 35 QBA.
- 22 After installation, the pass-through feature of the storage box is easy to see.
- 23 Tiffin assembly line technicians press the galvanized steel storage box into position, straddling the drive-shaft.
- 24 Two pass-through storage boxes are shown in this image.

Cashion Thermoplastics ships approximately 36 tanks per day to the Tiffin assembly line, plus 40-50 metal and plastic storage compartments. The company has 22 employees. Although Chuck does not conduct formal tours, he welcomes visitors to come by to see how these unseen components are made. 



My Dog/Cat has been Poisoned!

Many common pet toxicants are readily available around the home, garage, garden, RV, or campground. A lot of these poisons can be found in our own medicine chest and are *medications* we are taking on a daily basis.

All of us have taken an NSAID at one time or another. NSAIDS include products such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and acetaminophen. These medications are often carried in our purse or are readily found on our counter tops and in our medicine chests. They are very toxic to pets even if ingested in small quantities. NSAIDS can cause severe stomach ulceration and/or kidney failure.

Sometimes owners give their dogs ibuprofen as medication for pain. They see them limping from arthritis and think drugs used by humans are safe for pets. Ibuprofen can cause liver toxicity and jaundice in your pet.

John and Kay Pilarczyk at the Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island, earlier this year.



If you are using antidepressants or amphetamines, your pet may develop signs of sedation, agitation, racing heart, tremors, seizures or hyperthermia should they get into your medications.

Rat poison is blamed for a lot of poisonings, especially of cats that hunt mice or rats. Most rat poisons act as an anticoagulant which causes death from bleeding internally. Your pet could be similarly affected if it eats a rat or mouse that has been killed in this manner.

Warfarin is the primary ingredient in rat poisons. The treatment of choice is Vitamin K1. However, there are rat poisons using other ingredients which work in a totally different way. Some types of rat poison use Bromethalin which causes the brain to swell, and others use Cholecalciferols which cause kidney failure. It is necessary to know the brand name or type of rat bait used prior to treatment of your pet.

A lot of dogs are poisoned by *chocolate*. I personally saw a dog (a Labrador, of course,) that got into seven pounds of baking chocolate. The main ingredient in chocolate is Methylxanthine which is a stimulant. It causes diarrhea and agitation and can cause the dog to have a severe heart attack. A couple of pieces of chocolate probably would not be harmful, but why give your dog something that is potentially dangerous. This Labrador never made it to the clinic. He died in transit. Dark chocolate is worse than white because it has a higher concentration of Methylxanthine.

As you travel through many states, you will come across a variety of local *plants*, many of which are poisonous. It is best to keep your companion on a leash at all times so they do not eat something they shouldn't. Traveling in the South, be aware that Oleander is toxic and can cause intestinal and/or cardiac symptoms. This bush should never be burned as the smoke is toxic to humans. The Sago Palm is the most deadly of all plants. I had a client whose Terrier started digging at a

Sago Palm, and chewed on the heart or base of the palm. This plant causes liver failure, progressing to a complete shut-down of all systems. Even with aggressive, supportive treatment, the long-term prognosis is grave as all will die. Dieffenbachia and Philodendron are found indoors and will cause profuse swelling and pain to the mouth if eaten. Also, certain spring bulbs such as daffodils and tulips can cause neurotoxicity and cardiotoxicity. Easter Lilies can cause renal failure in cats. Slug and snail bait is used in warm weather locations and will cause tremors and seizures if consumed by pets.

Many *household cleaners* are carried in our RVs like bleach and toilet bowl cleaner. All of these products need to be secured so that our pets do not have access to them. Many of us carry insecticides to keep ants and roaches out of the coach. These are organophosphates that cause GI tract symptoms, salivation, urination and defecation.

Those of us who work on our motorhomes must be very careful with *antifreeze* spillage or leaving this product uncovered. It is sweet and will attract both dogs and cats. Ingestion of a small amount (one tablespoon) can cause kidney failure. Treatment must begin within the first 3-12 hours of ingestion.

Sugarless gum contains xylitol, which can cause an insulin spike resulting in severe low blood sugar.

The amount and type of poison ingested will determine the symptoms and outcome. If you are suspicious of poisoning, call the Pet Poison Helpline: 1-800-213-6680. Keep the address and phone number of the nearest veterinarian or emergency clinic on hand.

Store all medication containers out of reach of your pets. Do not leave medications on nightstands. Keep the Pet Poison Helpline number handy. It could save your dog or cat's life. **RIS**

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.

Mark Lane

MY JOB IS ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

During his 27-year career, Mark Lane has learned that business and personal successes are built on solid relationships. As Tiffin Motorhomes' representative to 13 recreational vehicle dealers in seven states centered by Texas, Mark works with each dealer to identify their strengths and weaknesses in Tiffin sales and service and helps them take the lead in their regional competition.

"I tell the sales people in each dealership that my job is to help you make a good income," he explains. He emphasizes the important maxim that *all you have is your integrity*. "Once a customer loses his confidence in your integrity, you are done," he mentors.

"I have the advantage of seeing how all of my dealers prepare their sales staff. Eighty percent of sales training should focus on product knowledge. You can't spend too much time learning about your product," Mark said. "The other 20 percent should emphasize the sales training process that a dealer must have in order to be successful – a step-by-step education program to train salespeople that should be on-going. Similarly, there is an event process that evolves as a sales person assists a customer with selecting the right motorhome. The sales person must be alert to furnish additional product information as the customer indicates his need for it.

"I call it 'situation selling' and it is all based on listening," he began. "You must listen carefully to understand your customer's needs. How will he use his RV? How far from home does he plan to travel? How many family members or friends will travel with him? What types of campgrounds does he want to visit? What are his recreational passions – fishing, hiking, kayaking, skeet shooting?

"Then, when you begin to show a particular recreational vehicle to him," he smiled, "make everything you tell him a response to what he told you. He is giving you clues and you are taking the clues and showing him the right product to satisfy his needs. It's really a fun business because you are helping a person fulfill his dreams. That's why product knowledge and making the right applications are so important.

"I tell Tiffin sales people to stop trying to see what you can sell to the customer and start trying to make sure you help them buy the right thing to satisfy their needs."

From his office in his home, Mark communicates with his 13 dealerships on a daily basis. "Every management and sales person can call me for help at any time," he confirmed. "This thing [holding up his cell phone] is an office in my pocket. I am open for business seven days a week. I ask the sales staff at the dealerships to give my number to their customers. I may be able to provide more current information from the plant or help the customer make a decision.

"People often ask me, 'What drives you?'" Mark continued. "This is really a very gratifying job because I am helping people realize life-long dreams. I also may be helping a young salesperson become successful.

"But what really drives me is that I know there are 1,200 people in the TMH plants who depend on the other reps and me to keep the orders coming in that assure their jobs," he said. "When I am in Red Bay, they always ask me, 'How's business, or how are sales going this month?'"

"This is a *fun* job, too, because of all the people I get to work with at our dealers and at the plant, but especially with our customers. When I worked at Fleetwood, I might have talked with

Mark is in his home-office each morning by 6:30 to answer a deluge of email from his 13 dealers and many of their customers. He keeps frequent tabs on sales in each dealer's territory to help them with forecasting and inventory.



Text and photography by Fred Thompson



Jane, Mark, and Jackson find time nearly every day to enjoy the patio and garden areas that Jane cultivates around their home.

one or two retail customers a month,” he said. “With Tiffin I talk to retail customers every day.

“I love to work RV shows, whether it is a dealer sales event or a major show. I worked my first TMH show in Dallas just a short time after I was hired and I had not had time to bone up on product knowledge,” Mark related. “This man walked up to visit and I was afraid he was going to ask a question I could not answer. He strained to look at the badge hanging around my neck and when he saw ‘Tiffin,’ he said, ‘Young man, let me tell you something. You work for the best manufacturer in the motorhome industry.’”

Tiffin Motorhomes subscribes to Statistical Surveys (SSI), a company with hundreds of data gatherers who record the tag registrations of every recreational vehicle sold in the U.S. by brand and manufacturer. The reports are used by each of TMH’s dealer representatives to track Class A sales by city, county, state, and any other definable area.

By tracking sales monthly over a three-year span, Mark identifies sales trends that help dealers decide when to increase their inventories. The same statistics help TMH with quarterly and annual sales forecasting.

“SSI gives me the data to prepare

third-party testimonials,” Mark said. “Since the information comes from tag registrations, our customers know we are offering hard facts, not propaganda. This is very convincing. These stats show nationwide market share for Class A motorhomes at the end of April 2011:

Tiffin	22.0%
Winnebago	19.7
Thor	16.7
Fleetwood	12.8
Monaco	5.9

“And here is brand leadership within the Class A diesel market:

1st place	Phaeton
2nd place	Allegro Bus
3rd place	Allegro Red
4th place	Allegro Breeze

“That data alone is driving customers to our dealerships. It is just all too obvious that our quality-price point is outstanding and, of course, Tiffin’s reputation for service is legendary,” Mark exulted.

Unlike most Americans, Mark Lane is living today in the same county where he grew up: Gregg County, near the city of Longview. He graduated from high school in 1970 and attended Kilgore Junior College for two years as he worked several different jobs. After college he worked for six years with a swimming pool contractor and then sold pools for

four years. Looking for a step up in his career path, he decided to sell life insurance. “I nearly starved to death,” he laughed. But life insurance was the connecting link to a more solid career.

“In 1984 it was my good luck to sell a policy to Johnny Hernandez, a long-time friend who worked at the Fleetwood plant in Longview,” Mark said. “He was the assistant product manager for Prowler travel trailers. When I delivered the policy to him, Johnny said Fleetwood was looking for a sales coordinator and asked me to apply. I got the job and went to work immediately.”

Hernandez later moved to California to accept a promotion as product manager in Fleetwood’s motorized division. Mark continued in his new position at Longview.

In 1987 Mark met a school teacher who stole his heart. Jane Ott grew up in Kilgore, a neighboring town, but their paths had not previously crossed. They married in August 1987 and went to Las Vegas for a brief Sunday through Thursday honeymoon. “I went to the office to pick up my paycheck when we returned and learned that they wanted me to come to Waco immediately to interview for an assistant product manager’s position,” Mark explained. “I got the job but Jane had already signed a contract to teach in Kilgore.” The newlyweds kept the road hot between Kilgore and Waco on the weekends until Jane was able to make the move to Waco the following January. Mark’s tenure in Waco continued until January 1989 when he was transferred back to Longview with a promotion to assistant product manager of the Prowler travel trailer line.

Jane renewed her teaching career in Kilgore where she was highly regarded and sought after by parents whose children were entering the fifth grade. After Jackson was born in 1991, Mark and Jane started making plans for a new home which they completed in 1993.

The next year Mark met Jerry Williamson when Jerry came to work for

Fleetwood in Longview. After becoming acquainted, Jerry and Kelly and Mark and Jane quickly developed a “friends-for-life” relationship. Their boys, Jackson and Jacob, were just a year or so apart in age.

“I like to tease Jerry occasionally and remind him that I was his mentor when he came on board at Longview,” Mark laughed. “Now, as general sales manager at Tiffin, he’s my boss. But our friendship has never been a problem. It only enhances our relationship.”

Jerry left Fleetwood a few years later when Tiffin created a Texas position for manufacturer’s rep and offered it to him. In March 2000 Jerry achieved a career goal and became the general sales manager at Tiffin. One of his first phone calls was to invite Mark to come to Red Bay for an interview to take his former position. “It was a good time for me to be leaving Fleetwood,” Mark said.

Mark went to Red Bay to interview for the job. He had been working in that territory for 16 years and knew the dealers well. “I had stats and info on all the dealers. I was loaded for bear and ready to an-

swer everyone’s questions,” he joked.

“When I got close to Red Bay, I called the office for directions to the administrative offices. Jack Elliott answered the phone,” Mark remembered.

“Turn at the second light and cross the tracks,” Jack said.

“Wait a minute,” I answered. “You don’t know which direction I’m coming from.”

“Doesn’t make any difference,” Jack replied. “It’s the second red light either way you’re coming in.”

Jerry gave Mark the obligatory tour of the plant and introduced people as they went through. “I was introduced to Tim and Van and we exchanged the usual pleasantries,” Mark recalled. “And then it was time to meet Bob Tiffin. I was pretty nervous. His opener immediately put me at ease: ‘Tell me about your family, Mark.’

“We talked for an hour and 45 minutes. I told him about where I grew up and went to school, how I met Jane and her teaching position, talked about Jackson, and also about how much I enjoyed my job, and how things were changing at Fleetwood. He never asked me about the dealers or my credentials. Then he stood up and said, ‘Welcome aboard, Mark.’”

Jerry and Mark went to Jerry’s office to talk about the transition and the job itself. A little later as Bob was heading out to go home, he stopped by Jerry’s office and said, “Mark, I just want you to know

I will not let you get hurt.”

“That’s good enough for me,” I answered quickly. “And that’s the way it has been for 11 years.”

“The territory is larger than the area I served for Fleetwood. But I could not have wished for a better set of dealers,” Mark said.

Several days later while Mark was spending time in all of the departments to become acclimated to Tiffin Motorhomes’ methods of operation, Van Tiffin, director of product design and development, invited Mark to visit R&D and observe a prototype under construction. “Van showed me many of the features that were being designed into the prototype. He asked for my input on a couple of items and accepted it graciously.”

One morning two weeks later Van phoned Mark’s office at 7:15. “We are just about to put the prototype on the assembly line. We made a few changes and I would like to know what you think about them,” Van said to a surprised Mark Lane. “I never got such a call in all the years I worked at Fleetwood,” Mark noted.

“Several years later I was driving from my home to Red Bay for a sales meeting,” Mark continued. “It had been pouring rain for most of the way. I was too tired to complete the drive in one day and stopped at Tupelo for the night. The next morning between Tupelo and Red Bay I

Using three fish feeders on automatic timers at his lake, Mark increases the bream population that becomes part of the food chain for the big bass which he enjoys outsmarting. He claims to have caught a nine pounder last month but was unable to document the catch—the scales were broken!



received three successive phone calls from my dealers who each had just taken delivery of our new 32 foot Allegro Bus. All three were leaking badly in the basement storage compartments. As soon as I got to Red Bay, I told Lex Tiffin, head of quality assurance, about the problem. He said, 'I'll take care of it.'

"It was still raining hard when I went into the sales meeting," Mark said. "Around noon we took a break and I saw Lex in the hall of the admin building. He was drenched. 'I found your leak,' he began. 'We got another Bus and a driver. I got inside the basement and had him drive around in the rain. We were leaving out some seals where some wires passed through the side of the compartment and that's where the water was getting in.' I thanked him and thought to myself, 'Where else would a top management person immediately deal with and solve a problem like that in the middle of a rainstorm?'"

"I get into my office early," Mark continued. "It is not unusual for Bob to call me four or five times every month just to say, 'How are things going, Mark?' or 'I've got a customer I would like for you to call. He's in your territory.' or 'We appreciate what you are doing for the company in your area. Is there anything I can help you with?'"

"I can't tell you how much it means to me to have that kind of support from the president and CEO of this company," he said.

"It is so nice when you have a product that is held in high regard and is in demand," he said with reference to both customers and dealers. "Today when we are considering a new dealer for an area where we have the need, we can say, 'Who's the best fit?' versus 'Who can I get?' Really, when it comes to selecting a new dealer, we choose each other. But I have noticed that in every market the best manufacturer and the best dealer always seem to end up with each other."

Mark pointed out what a great decade the company has completed. In 2000 Tiffin claimed about four percent of the Class A market. Today they are in the driver's seat with 22 percent. "When you show those numbers to customers, they

realize that Tiffin Motorhomes is doing something right," he smiled. "The market is going to slow down a little right now before the 2012 models come out. But I think by early Fall we will be back into full production. We have a great dealer body, and without them we are nothing."

"You asked me earlier, 'What drives you?' Well, I have two inspirational people in my life: Jane and Jackson," Mark said quietly. "In 1987 when we married, Jane really didn't know what she had bargained for. She is such a good person and she has inspired me to be a better person. Jane is one of those teachers you pray your kid gets. She is firm and the children know that she expects them to do their best. But they know she loves them and her encouragement brings out the best in them as students. She goes to their games and cheers for them. It's amazing. I love to visit in her classroom and talk with some of the kids, and I participate in a mentoring project that is a lot of fun. I enjoy being a father figure to some of them. She keeps up with all of the high school athletes and where they go to college. She is a loyal Aggie fan and can name all of the players and their positions. She and Jackson are just huge sports fans in general. For me going to a game is a social event."

"Jackson has taught me so much! As a little guy, he was so inquisitive and that meant that I had to struggle to stay a step or two ahead of him. Before he could read, watching Jane mix up a recipe fascinated him. Then he wanted to mix a little flour and water and other stuff and glob it around with his hands. We would play like it was cookie dough and taste it, saying how good it was. When he could read recipes, cooking became a whole new world for him. By the time he was a teenager, he was making cookies every night and selling them at school for a buck each. He would come home with \$20 profit every night. Then the principal had to shut him down. At Christmas, he sold cheesecakes to the teachers at Jane's school and pocketed nearly \$200. He is majoring in finance at Texas A&M and will graduate in 18 months. He makes top grades and his self-discipline inspires

me. Jackson's lifestyle and the good food he was cooking caused him to gain much more than he should have. One day in late 2007 he told me, 'Dad, I hate the way I look.' I told him to do something about it. He went to work on a diet and exercise plan and lost 100 pounds. Before the end of this year, he is planning to run a full marathon (26.2 miles).

"There is no way that I can stay ahead of him now. I just have to be humble and learn. If I suggest a research project to help me with my job or personal business, Jackson will hop on it and give me all the information I need in a couple of days," Mark said with justifiable fatherly pride.

A few years ago the Lanes began looking for some acreage to give them some elbow room. After all, a residential lot in a subdivision is just not enough room for two native Texans. They looked at several properties that didn't quite meet their expectations. One week while Mark was away on a trip to visit and work with his dealers, Jane happened upon 48 acres of gently rolling land with a 'For Sale' sign on the fence. It had a perfect place for a lake that was one of Mark's prerequisites. When he returned from his trip, Jane couldn't wait to show him the property. Within an hour of walking the acreage, they agreed to buy it.

Building a dam in just the right place was a top priority because Mark is a passionate fisherman—five fishing rods always in the back of his pickup. After a spring and natural runoff filled the area behind the dam, Mark strategically placed three fish feeders on timers to build the stocked bream population. The bream, of course, are the food supply for the big bass. He is already claiming eight and nine pounders. Plans for a lake house were delayed by the recession, but a couple of good years in the RV industry will likely put those plans back on track.

While we were bumping around the lake in his pickup, the cell phone rang twice and Mark promptly answered to help a salesman with a question and assist a dealer with a delivery date. "Even when we go on vacation, the cell phone comes

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An RVing Epiphany

I SUDDENLY KNEW MOTORHOMING WAS THE WAY TO SEE THIS INCREDIBLE COUNTRY

In March 2007 René and Simone Vielgrader landed in San Diego, rented a car, and began driving east on I-8 with a loose schedule to see the Southwest and visit with Simone's brother in Phoenix. Experienced world travelers with fluencies in three languages (English, German, and French) and the ability to "get by" in several others, René grew up and was educated in Austria while Simone was born in Rhodesia — cultures and worlds apart. They have lived in London, where they met, since the mid-nineties.

With a great love for the outdoors which led to travel throughout western Europe and a backpacking trip in Brazil, René quickly found himself in awe of the expansive Southwestern landscapes, the warm March days, and cool nights. René's enthusiasm was contagious and Simone was caught up in his euphoria.

Then it happened. "I saw a large group of motorhomes not far from the motorway," he exulted, as a broad smile attached itself to the retelling of his story. "I knew that motorhoming was the way I wanted to see this incredible country."

"That was literally his 'WOW' moment," Simone confirmed. "We have talked about this many times since. For the next two years, it was RV this and RV that, again and again. I had no doubt there would be a motorhome in my future," she laughed.

After earning a degree in 1980 in electronics engineering from an Austrian university, René accepted a position with Sperry, which included his first introduction to the U.S. during a training course at their World Wide Training Center in New Jersey, but he soon encountered a dormant market for his skills. Much to his liking, he went outside of his field to become a travel courier, which provided a paid opportunity to see other countries. His job was to meet arriving groups who had purchased travel packages and explain the options for transportation, museums, restaurants, and entertainment in the host city. He worked with German groups traveling in Cyprus, Yugoslavia, and Spain.

Concurrently, a young woman in Rhodesia was weighing her career options. As civil unrest drove most of the Rhodesians with European heritage out of what eventually became Zimbabwe, many headed for western Europe and the UK. After the Schengen Agreement was signed in 1985, countries in the Euro-



René and Simone enjoy the warmth of their campfire at dusk in Joshua Tree National Park, California, in January 2009. Their three-month tour in the Southwest was a "do-we-really-want-to-do-this-on-a-full-time-basis" experiment.

pean Union reciprocally allowed their citizens to live, work, and own property anywhere within the EU. This made it possible for Simone Michaan to move to London and establish herself as an executive assistant in the banking industry.

René also saw opportunities in London and began working as a contractor in the computer industry and eventually for a company that designed and installed custom home theaters; home and commercial security systems; and multi-room music systems. They also designed and built monitoring systems with cameras to secure all phases of a home's infrastructure. He later launched his own company, providing similar services.

René and Simone met at the Central Club Hotel off Tottenham Court Road in London, the venue for a ceroc dancing club. Ceroc is an abbreviation of the French phrase *c'est le roc* which means "it's rock." Introduced in England in 1982, ceroc is a fusion of salsa, ballroom, hip hop, tango, and jive. Ceroc clubs invite singles or couples to learn to dance for fun and to keep

Text by Fred Thompson

Photography by René Vielgrader



Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC and TN



Quail Creek State Park, Utah



Zion National Park, Utah



Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado



Painted Desert, Arizona



Monument Valley, Utah

athletically fit. René and Simone said with emphasis, “Very fit!”
“At a certain age in Austria where I grew up, you go to dancing school as a part of your social education,” René said. “Simone and I lived in the same London suburb, usually visited the club on the same night each week, and danced together as we learned the new style.”

“It is a more traditional place to meet,” Simone said, “for the older set, not teens.” They married in May 2002.

Simone describes her husband as “a good photographer and cook, an architectural historian, and a perfectionist.” René’s interest in architecture led him to purchase a run-down, Edwardian-style house soon after they married. He launched a full-scale restoration, turning the house into a very valuable property. It was actually the third restoration project he had undertaken, making a profit with each step up the property ladder. The main aspect, when trying to turn your home into additional income,” he explained, “is to add value. It’s no good just to ‘flip’ your house on the rising market. You need to understand the fabric of the building, what the house needs, and what potential buyers want. If you also have good taste, practical skills and, most importantly, you are prepared to put in a lot of work, then it can be a very rewarding and lucrative undertaking.”

His primary business also continued to do well prior to 2007, as Londoners enjoyed a housing boom. “Many would spend 30 to 70 thousand on home theaters, security, and infrastructure monitoring,” he said. “Celebrities would spend much more.”

After the March 2007 visit to the Southwest, the Vielgraders returned to England. Simone went back to her banking position and René spent days on the internet studying motorhomes. He discovered www.tiffinrvnetwork.com and was pleased at how ready and willing Americans are to share their knowledge about equipment and RVing in general. “Mark Quasius on the tiffinrvnetwork was especially helpful in answering my questions,” he recalled.

His brief taste of the Southwest and the National Park Service website on the internet engendered an idea: see America by using the motorhome to visit all of America’s national parks.

“We have seen Europe,” René continued. “But you can’t

compare Europe—its architecture and its culture—with the United States. For me, North America is about nature. The way the National Park Service preserves the parks and yet makes them accessible. The national parks are America’s best idea (to quote from the brilliant documentary by Ken Burns).” His plan was beginning to take shape.

When the housing economy in England slowed in 2008, René and Simone decided the time was right to put their plan into action. They flew back to Los Angeles on January 1, 2009, and rented a 32-foot Winnebago Class A with one slide-out. For three months they toured in Arizona, New Mexico, and south Texas. “We stopped in Quartzsite to talk with Class A dealers,” René said. “We both fell in love with motorhome travel and Simone was really getting on board with the whole idea, too.” The *whole idea* meant selling their home.

Even as they traveled, René spent hours on the internet. “There is a mine of information that you have to process and interpret for your own needs. Several forums provide valuable feedback from people who own different brands and are out there using them,” he said.

The die was cast. They arrived home on a Thursday, put their beautiful Edwardian home on the market on the following Monday, and sold it in eight weeks. “Our home had five bedrooms, six fireplaces, and exquisite mosaic floors,” he smiled. “I had painstakingly restored it and furnished it with period furniture.

Our friends asked, ‘How could you do that?’ It wasn’t that difficult after we decided what we really wanted to do.”

“Even then we realized this was okay for us, but this is not for everybody,” Simone said. “It was difficult to convey our reasons to our friends in the UK.”

“They could not imagine how accommodating a Class A motorhome really is,” René continued. “In the UK you have small Class C campers and trailers which we call caravans. There are no pickups, no fifth wheels, no Class A motorhomes, and no full hook-ups.”


After negotiating with several dealers, the Vielgraders flew to Chicago in late October 2009, rented a car and headed North where they purchased a 2010 Allegro Red 38QBA from King’s Campers in Wausau, Wisconsin. The company removed the bunk beds and converted the area into a computer room and study while René provided the design and drawings for the computer wiring and cabling and offered his professional experience for the installation. “We wanted an RV that could go into the national parks, so 38 feet (11.5 m) is probably the maximum. It offers all the systems to be completely self contained and all the comforts to spend a long time on the road,” he said.

“We began our shakedown trip on November 21, 2009, with a trip to Tampa,” René explained. “We enter the U.S. on a B-2 visa and can stay six months at a time.” They stored their coach for the winter at Big Toy Storage in Tampa and returned to England to wait for their next six-month interval in the U.S.


The six-month tour began in Tampa on March 8, 2010. They decided not to buy a car and opted for rentals as the need arose. Bicycles also were perfect for many occasions. “Our favorite national park on the 2010 tour was the Great Smoky Mountains,” Simone said. “We could not get enough of springtime in Cades Cove. On Wednesdays and Saturdays they close several roads and make them available only to those on bicycles. The wildlife encounters were enchanting. The bears were coming out and we saw seven families

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Simone and René at a stopover in Santa Fe, New Mexico, for the *Roughing It Smoothly* interview.

with cubs. The early American cabins, the churches, the green pastures with the split rail fences. . . riding through the quiet landscapes on bicycles was like being in a wonderland.”

Other highlights during the 2010 journey included the Everglades and Dry Tortugas as well as Congaree and Hot Springs national parks. The Rocky Mountains reminded René very much of his native Austria, providing a complete contrast to the striking formations of Zion and Bryce Canyon national parks.

It was my good fortune to meet René and Simone briefly in June 2010 when we were parked next to each other in the Red Bay Service Center campground. It was there I learned about their plan to visit all of the national parks in the U.S. After exchanging emails, I promised to get back in touch for an interview during their 2011 tour. I also visited René’s blogging site, www.highdefuk.com/wordpress, which helps them stay in touch with family, friends, and fellow travelers. The blog chronicles the entire journey, illustrated by many photographs and maps that provide helpful tips and insights into the best spots to visit.

They completed their six months’ excursion in Las Vegas, put

the Red in storage, and caught a flight home on September 3. With no permanent residence to which they could return, René and Simone rented a furnished apartment on London’s north-side. Simone visited with friends and found temporary work in banking. René spent much of his time making thorough plans for the next tour. Several of his old accounts contacted him for revisions and updates to their home systems.

. . .

As planned, they returned on March 7, 2011, to resume following their dream to see all of America’s national parks. We connected by email two days before they boarded their flight to Las Vegas. René found a point in his itinerary to pull away in May for a week in Santa Fe. I flew to Albuquerque on May 8 and we met at their campground on the 9th. They had already been touring for two months and were just as excited about their adventures as when they left last September. After a two-hour interview, we went to The Shed for lunch—perhaps the best all-natural ingredients Mexican restaurant in the Southwest. They had been there for several days scouting for the best shops and restaurants.

The first park for the 2011 trip was Death Valley, René explained. “It is the largest national park in the lower 48 states, which makes it a little more difficult to visit if you don’t have a car!

“Nevertheless, we saw Zabriskie Point (best views in Death Valley) on the way in, rode on our bikes to the Harmony Borax Works and through Mustard Canyon. The next day we drove the RV to the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes and stopped at Salt Creek Trail on the way back to the campground, where we took the bikes to see the Pup Fish. We also hired a 4×4 Jeep for 24 hours and took the Artist’s Drive at sunset. The next day we visited Rhyolite ghost town and carried on to Titus Canyon (a slot canyon you can drive through!) and finished the day at Mosaic Canyon. On the way out we stopped at Badwater Basin (lowest elevation in the U.S. at 282 feet [86m] below sea level) and drove out to the south with spectacular views of the valley, colored with desert plants in spring bloom.”

Analyzing his decision to travel without towing a car, René noted that their Death Valley itinerary shows that it can be done quite successfully. “Many, perhaps most, RVers would find our MO a little too restrictive,” he admitted. “It does takes planning, muscle power, money, and, most of all, dedication!”

Continuing their journey toward the Four Corners area, they visited many national monuments, learning a lot about the Ancestral Puebloans, with Mesa Verde National Park being the most impressive. In Great Sand Dunes National Park they climbed the 750-ft. high Star Dune (not easy during the windy season) and enjoyed a ride on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. “That was certainly the experience of a lifetime,” Simone said. “Rafting the Colorado in Moab was a bit more physical – very wet but a lot of fun!”

“We would love to become U.S. citizens,” René said. “There is a green card lottery each year in which 50,000 are selected at random from different countries. It is called a cultural diversification

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Bretz Is Bullish On RVing In The Great Northwest

With five stores in three states, Mark and David Bretz are bullish on the strong recovery of RVing in the Northwest. While the recession placed a great financial strain on Bretz RV, a 44-year-old company, just as it did on the entire industry, it presented an opportunity for Mark and David to acquire a second dealership in Billings, Montana, in 2008. Two years later, and separate from his holdings with Dave, Mark formed a partnership with Bruce Young in Portland, Oregon, to revitalize an existing dealership. He is also in the process of

Three generations are involved in the management of Bretz RV: Mark Bretz, president & CFO; Frank Bretz, Jr., president emeritus; Dave Bretz, vice president & general sales manager; and Brandon Bretz, parts manager at Bretz, Missoula.



developing two locations in the Boise, Idaho, area this year. The Bretz brands are fast becoming leading players in a market area with a 450-mile radius.

“The commonality for all of our stores is Tiffin’s brands,” Mark Bretz, president and CFO, said. “The timing for Bretz RV to become a Tiffin dealer early last year could not have been better. From the 28-ft. Allegro Breeze to the 45-ft. Zephyr, their products address at least 90 percent of client interest in the Class A arena.”

Dave Bretz, vice president and general sales manager, agreed. “Of the three Class A brands we are currently handling, Tiffin is by far the best seller. We very likely will drop one of the other two this year,” he said. “As of today (which was May 10), we have 52 Tiffin motorhomes on order for all five of our stores. We have been very successful with the Phaeton here in Missoula. Our other stores are seeing a strong demand for the Breeze, especially Portland.”

“In talking with other Tiffin dealers, many of us believe there is the Tiffin market and there is the other Class A market. If we just stocked Newmar and Winnebago,” Mark noted, “we would think the Class A motorized market had not recovered very much at all. But the Tiffin market has definitely recovered.”

The Bretz family has deep roots in Montana, beginning only a decade after Montana was still being called the “wild west.” It is an interesting story of a university professor a long way from home.

Text and photography by Fred Thompson



“My great uncle, J. Harlen Bretz, was a geologist at the University of Illinois, although his wife and children continued to live in Michigan. He came west in 1922 with a study group of students in tow,” Mark said. Born in 1882, Bretz earned a Ph.D. in geology from the University of Chicago in 1913. He wanted to find an explanation for the ancient glacial landforms (150 to 330 feet across), which he called Channeled Scablands; huge 200-ton boulders in the Missoula Valley, totally different from any nearby mineralogy; and gigantic gravel bars a thousand feet long and fifty feet high, all of which were clearly evident in eastern Washington.

Contrary to then-current theories about the formation of the earth’s geologic features requiring millions of years, Bretz proposed that a catastrophic flood gouged the Scablands, moved the boulders, and deposited the gigantic gravel bars. He coined the term Spokane Floods in a 1925 publication, but at that time could not explain their origin. His theories were denounced as an “outrageous hypothesis” by the Ivy League-based geology establishment which subscribed to Uniformitarianism.

Another geologist, Joseph Pardee, developed evidence of an ancient glacial lake that gave credence to Bretz’s theories. Pardee and Bretz continued their research, collecting and analyzing evidence over the next 30 years that identified Lake Missoula in western Montana as the source of the “Spokane Floods.” The lake was formed when a glacier dammed the Clark Fork River. Ancient beaches perched on mountains 2,000 feet above the valley floor indicate the lake’s enormous size.

When temperatures warmed 10,000 years ago, the dam failed suddenly and Lake Missoula’s waters poured forth at the unprecedented rate of 9.5 cubic miles *per hour* (200 times the rate of the Mississippi River at flood stage). Bretz’s catastrophic theory was vindicated. In 1979 the Geological Society of America honored J. Harlen Bretz at the age of 96 with its highest award, the Penrose Medal.

Harlen Bretz continued his 1922 research trip in Seattle where he met a 19-year-old woman with whom he was favorably impressed. The young woman, whose name was Hazel, made

Left: Jack Shoupe, service advisor, checks a parts order while Shane Lalonde, service manager, writes a service order for RV owners. Shoupe and Lalonde have over 24 years of experience in service advisement. • Bretz RV carries a wide variety of accessories and parts for both towables and motorized RVs. The company’s 6,000 sq. ft. showroom is immediately adjacent to the service department

the trip with Bretz back to his home in Michigan. “She may have been planning to study at the university under my uncle’s mentoring,” Mark said.

Harlen’s brother, Frank, was married to his second wife (his first had died) and he had three children. Feeling sorry for the young woman far from home, he and his wife hired her as a nanny. “Frank was so smitten by Hazel that he divorced his wife and married her!” Mark continued. “The couple had a son in 1926 whom they named Frank, Jr.”

Soon after the birth of his son, Frank, Sr. had an “Oh-my-gosh-what-have-I-done” moment, divorced Hazel, and put her and Frank, Jr. on a train back to Montana. He then remarried his second wife.

“With no child support laws in those days, Hazel struggled to make her way as a cook in logging camps with her young son,” Mark related. “They were so poor that they had to live in a tent, or sometimes in a cabin.”

Her will to survive through the Great Depression and rear her son to become a fine man and a successful entrepreneur paid off, a testament to her own heritage as a twentieth-century frontier woman. Frank, Jr. is Mark and Dave’s father.

“Encouraged by my mother, when Dad was 40 he decided to try and reconnect with his father. In 1966 the four of us headed to Michigan in the family car to meet our grandfather,” Mark recalled. “Dave and I were about 5 and 9. At some point along the way, Dad called, spoke to his father, and learned that they were having a family reunion the next weekend. Our grandfather called a family meeting, told them about his Montana family, and invited us to come. We were welcomed. It was an amazing if somewhat awkward experience.”

The following year Frank and Viola Bretz leased a Conoco gas station in Missoula. A manufacturer's representative suggested they rent travel trailers during the summer season and then sell them in the early fall. Frank's efficient record keeping showed him that he made more profit selling the trailers than he did renting them, although they continued the plan for two more years.

In 1970 the Bretzes moved to a new location where they could be full owners of the business. They sold gas under the Thunderbird Oil brand, which later became Flying J. On just two-thirds of an acre they rented and sold Alladin, Aloha, and Ideal travel trailers for 14 years. "We had one 40-ft. service bay that could take care of a car and trailer," Mark remembered.

Mark completed a B.S. degree in business and finance at the University of Montana and returned to help his parents with their business in 1984. "We stopped selling fuel and renting trailers and began to focus on a full-service recreational vehicle dealership," he explained.

In 1984 Mark hired Bill Gorman, a well-known RV industry consultant, who urged him to work at another dealership and decide if he really wanted to stay in the recreational vehicle industry. Taking the advice, Mark worked in Arizona for several months, came back at Christmas, and realized "we needed to turn things around."

"My parents and my wife and I emptied all of our bank accounts to make the payroll (four employees)," Mark explained, "and I have been here ever since. We had \$1 million in sales in 1984 and Gorman convinced me we should be doing \$3 million from that location."

By 1988 the company had grown as Gorman predicted and they moved into a new location with 3.5 acres. "Gorman's success formula consisted of 14 'equations,'" Mark noted, "and the first one was location. The second was 'the product equation,' which demanded a highly recognizable brand. We fulfilled that equation when we got the Boulder dealership." Mark added another 2.5 acres in the early nineties.

Frank and Vi Bretz retired in 1990, turning the company over to Mark and David. Their sons had "grown up in the business" and they felt confident about continued success. During those early years, Frank used the rental trailers to take his family camping. On his eighth birthday, Frank asked Mark what he wanted for his present and he answered, "a camping trip."

"There is a little recreation area in the hills near the Bitterroot River where we used to camp," Dave added. "I vividly remember catching my first fish. We would get up early, catch the limit, and cook them for breakfast. I ride my motorcycle up there two or three times a year and just sit there in the campground reminiscing. Close to the campground there is a country store, a post office, and a gas station. It was like that 50 years ago."

As soon as his parents allowed him to ride his bicycle around town, Dave sold Grit newspapers. "In my pre-teen years, I earned every sales prize they offered. Then I sold greeting cards from door-to-door and was usually the top salesperson when our high school band sold fruit and Christmas wrapping paper to

raise money," he recalled, with some pride showing in his smile.

Dave took a different course when he graduated from high school in 1979, attending a law enforcement academy in Spokane, and later working for three years in a food distribution company. His affinity for the outdoors, RVing in general, and working with his family brought him back to the dealership in 1990 when he joined the sales team. Today Dave serves as vice president and general sales manager for all of their locations.

Gorman strongly advocated dealership locations at freeway intersections. "During one of his consulting visits in 1997, we had lunch at a restaurant at exit 101 on Interstate 90 here in Missoula. The only other business at the exit was a gas station," Mark said. "Looking out the window by our table, Bill pointed to an old 30-acre gravel pit across Reserve Street (US 93) and encouraged me to buy it. I protested that 'there's nothing out here.'

Gorman was right on target. Mark and Dave purchased the

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land and started construction the next year. Today it is a thriving intersection with a Chevrolet dealer, Lowe's, Home Depot, hotels, and several restaurants. Gorman's "Location Equation" had been met.

Bretz RV & Marine opened on Grant Creek Road at exit 101 in 1999 with 12 service bays, a parts department, a large RV accessories store, and a well-designed array of office space on two floors for sales and management employees. The company's strong emphasis on providing excellent service generated the need for 14 new service bays in 2003, one of which is a down-draft paint booth for any length motorhome.

Mark diversified his business interests in 2007 when he and a business associate started a new bank in Missoula. Soon after he acquired two motels in the area which was showing great potential as a winter skiing venue. "A year later when the economy tanked, I looked like a complete idiot owning RV dealerships, a bank, and motels," he laughed.

He was most concerned about taking Bretz RV & Marine successfully through the recession. "We knew we had to make some drastic changes. With several management meetings and careful analysis of our financial data and cost accounting records, we identified problem areas and starting dealing with it," Mark said. "I cut my personal salary in half before I asked others to take cuts in pay. We reduced the inventory and examined every expense category to find ways to make cuts. Unfortunately,

The Bretz RV sales staff in Missoula shown here are (left to right): Myron West, David Bretz, Aaron Langford, Anthony Shoupe, Matt Madsen, Collin Griffiths, Scott Tipps, Todd Green, Chuck Arnold, Wayde Whitmire, and Greg Sherrow.

we had to lay off quite a few employees. Every time I watch the evening news, I am amazed that politicians are looking for *only five percent* savings. Cuts in government spending will have to be much greater or we will not survive."

Bretz was holding a significant Class A inventory from Fleetwood and Monaco. "We had to sell a lot of units below our cost, and even then we had to pay for third party service and warranty contracts," Mark remembered. "Alfa was pretty painful, too."

"For the motorized manufacturers who were financially sound and for those who were smart enough to avoid bankruptcy, I have a great appreciation," Mark said. "The two large companies who went into bankruptcy and caused financial havoc for so many dealers do not deserve to be a part of and are not good for our industry today. Bankruptcy should not be a strategic business move. In the past it was a black mark for bad business practices and poor management. We should not receive them back into our dealerships with open arms. Every other time we have had a recession, the RV manufacturers who survived picked up market share and came back stronger. Two opportunistic investors picked up the assets and put them back in business."

Mark mentioned earlier in the interview that Tiffin products

were coming back strong this year. “What features are driving Tiffin products to sell so well?” I asked. The answer came quickly: “Bob Tiffin!”

“During the recession I learned about the Tiffin Motorhomes’ financial strength — a privately owned company, yet it was much stronger financially than RV manufacturers twice its size,” Mark emphasized.

“The price-value relationship in all of Tiffin’s brands is impressive. And the consumer can figure that out,” he said. “The one-piece fiberglass roof is an example. Their top-quality cabinetry is like fine furniture. The porcelain floors in the Phaeton, Allegro Bus, and Zephyr look as good as or better than what you see in million dollar homes.

“Part of the magic of Tiffin’s product for dealers and consumers is that they provide in their motorhomes about 90 to 95 percent of what the market wants. Occasionally, there is something a Tiffin coach cannot offer which could kill the deal,” Mark explained. “In contrast, Monaco provides about 120 to 125 percent of what the market wants — which means they are over-saturating their coaches with features that a significant part of the market is not interested in. That makes their coaches more expensive.”

“Tiffin is also careful not to oversupply the market. After a buyer spends several weeks doing his research and looking, he will realize that Tiffin inventories turn over quickly and the unit he saw last week may not be there today,” Dave said. “Our Tiffin inventory turns faster than any of our other motorized products. Of course, a buyer can order a coach with exactly the interior decor, exterior paint scheme, and the options he wants. Many do just that.”

“We have a speciality because we are a Montana dealership,” Mark explained. “As many RVers know, Montana has statutes which permit an out-of-state resident to establish a Montana limited liability corporation (LLC) without actually living here. We partnered with a local attorney who does the LLC for our customers. The advantage of buying from our Montana dealership is that we know how to establish the LLC and make it unnecessary to disclose the principals of the corporation.”

• • •

Bretz RV & Marine invests thousands of dollars each year in training their technicians. “Training is definitely an investment, not an expense, at least philosophically,” Mark averred. He is chairman of RVIA-RVDA’s technical certification board. “Throughout our five locations, the difference between us and our competitors is the quality people we employ and the training they receive. We use online training programs and we send our technicians to training schools provided by parts manufacturers and motorhome manufacturers. Tiffin does a good job for us.

“When we bring new employees on board, we set up mentor relationships. Our technicians are paid on a flat rate system. This system produces better quality repairs the first time because each technician knows he does not get paid to do the job over. They do it right the first time,” Mark elaborated. “Most of

our techs have over \$50,000 worth of tools acquired over many years. In Montana we have the most RVDA certified technicians under one roof.”

At the Missoula store, the company has 16 technicians in service. Boise has four, Portland six, and Billings six. All of the Bretz locations have parts and accessories stores.

The Bretz service center is strong in several areas: an excellent paint and body shop; specialists in troubleshooting and making electrical repairs; certified technicians to provide overall good service; interior ceiling repairs caused by leaks; and slide-out repairs. “We have people with the knowledge base to service and repair both gas and diesel, but we are not a certified warranty repair center,” Mark noted. “Our technicians can do certified chassis warranty repairs on Workhorse and PowerGlide. They can also service other chassis for out-of-warranty work.”

• • •

When Dave Bretz at 30 years old joined the company’s sales



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With 26 service bays including a downdraft paint booth in a 24,000 sq. ft. building in their Missoula location, Bretz RV is able to schedule a wide variety of service and repair orders daily.

force in 1990, he was the youngest on the staff. “All of the salesmen were 10 to 30 years older than I,” he smiled. “When I moved into sales management in 1995, we began to hire younger people. Our success in sales took a major step forward about ten years ago when we stopped hiring ‘RV sales people,’ and started hiring energetic, smart, likeable people with good personalities and lots of drive. Nearly all of those whom we hire in sales are referred to us by current employees.

“Our top sales person last year had been a garbage collector,” Dave related, expecting my astonished look. “He played on a softball team with one of our sales managers who noticed his likeable, energetic personality. He invited him to come for an interview and ‘the rest is history,’ as they say.” Other sales people have been building contractors, property and casualty insurance salespeople, a hunting guide, and a business school graduate.

Dave attributes their success in developing effective sales teams to first hiring talented people and then following up immediately with a good sales training system. “We send them to ‘boot camp’ for a week in Seattle to a sales training company,” he explained. “Then we put each trainee with a mentor for six months.” Since all sales people are paid by commission only, each mentor receives a percentage of the trainee’s commission. Every day the entire sales staff spends an hour in training.

“Our sales people make more than some bank presidents,” Dave continued. “The company has a total of 36 sales people in all five stores.

“Last year was a very good year for Bretz RV & Marine. Actually, it was our second best year ever. Weather has been a big factor this year. We have a winter advisory today (May 10) for 8–12 inches of snow. So this is going to be a late start for us.”

In physical units sold, Bretz sells 90% towables and 10% motorized. “We are seeing a trend that may result in 40% motorized,” Dave noted, “which, of course, means our annual sales in dollars will go up.”

Bretz does not stock Class B motorhomes. Motorized sales break down to 20% Class C’s and 80% Class A’s. In the Class C category, Bretz stocks Coachman and Winnebago.

“The sales support that we receive from Tiffin Motorhomes is terrific,” Dave said. “There is just a personal touch at TMH that you don’t see elsewhere. All of our sales staff have been to Red Bay, met Bob, and know his commitment to the end user.”

On April 30, the company celebrated its 44th Annual Customer Appreciation Day with free steak and chicken dinners, an RV Lifestyle Expo, and 24 vendors with booths to offer information and training. Chuck and Shirley Dean, retired employees who

still love the action, arrived at 4 a.m. to help organize the event. Over 2,000 RVers attended the invitation-only celebration, one of whom was Bob Tiffin. The sales team sold five Tiffin motorhomes during the event, including a Zephyr. Bretz is one of only four Zephyr dealers west of the Mississippi.

At the Missoula location, Ashley Jammaron and Jamie Tipton provide the design and technical expertise to create print ads and do daily updates on the company’s websites. Each motorhome gets a 360-degree “tour” display of its interior plus four exterior images. With each motorhome’s options shown online, a client with the help of a salesperson can “build” his coach and receive a quotation.

• • •

Where do you see your company and motorhome sales from now to five years out? I asked.

MARK: Each year a group of people reaches a turning point in their lives where they realize they have x-amount of years left and they want to do it now, regardless of the economy. They will continue to be our core business in Class A coaches as we continue to grow. With our five locations, we are reaching a larger percentage of that core here in the Northwest.

DAVE: Credit needs to continue to loosen up. Most motorhome customers need to borrow over \$50,000. Lenders are still making the hoop too difficult to jump through. For higher dollar RVs, sales are still being limited by financing. We probably should not go back to the loose credit rules of 2007. But we have not hit an appropriate balance yet.

MARK: We lose probably 20 sales each year on Class A coaches with people who have good credit, but who do not choose to meet all of the stringent requirements the lenders demand.

We are seeing fewer full-timers who sell their homes to facilitate the purchase of a high end Class A coach.

MARK: The industry has thrived under the entrepreneurial leadership of Winnebago, Tiffin, and Forest River. It appears that TMH has the potential for family succession in leadership and management as the younger family members are taking over. That’s good for companies like Bretz RV.

As you understand this market, what will stimulate Class A sales?

MARK: Consumer confidence. Most of our buyers have lived prudently through their lives and can afford to buy a motorhome. But they are concerned about a government that doesn't have the same philosophy.

DAVE: Fuel prices are definitely having some effect. If diesel drops below \$3.00/gallon, we will see more first-time buyers coming around.

• • •

Mark and his wife Barbara have four children, two sons and two daughters who are actively pursuing their own careers. Karl, 25, is an electrical engineer who works for a company in Seattle that tests the functionality of all types of wireless devices inside the interiors of office buildings to ascertain that they communicate with all emergency responders. In some cases building materials have blocked communication and the problem has to be corrected.

Karin, 22, is teaching English in Korea. "Most schools in Korea are private and they like to have a native English speaker on staff. It's a bragging point," Mark said.

Kate, 19, is studying in Ghana this year as an exchange student. She attends Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas.

John, 16, will be a high school junior this fall. At 6'6" in height, he is weighing his options.

Barbara, an accounting major with a CPA shingle, manages an anesthesiology practice with 26 doctors. With a support staff of 10, she schedules their surgical assignments and handles all of the billing. She operates another business with office space at Bretz RV that does the billing for pathologists and radiologists.

Following in his father's footsteps in aviation, Mark got his pilot's license in 2002. Beginning with a Cessna 172, he soon moved on to multi-engine aircraft with a Piper Aztec and Seneca, and then a Cessna 414. Last year he traded for a Cessna Citation Mustang, a six-seater which is Cessna's smallest jet. "I can schedule meetings with our management and visit all of our stores in one day," he said. "It takes 12 hours to drive from Missoula to Boise and I can fly there in 45 minutes." Mark is an avid skier (snow and water) and enjoys mountain biking. To get away from it all, Barbara and Mark have a second home at Flathead Lake, north of Missoula. It is the largest natural lake west of the Mississippi.

Dave and Stacy Bretz also have four children, each of whom have been given the opportunity to work at the dealership. They emphasize that the choice is theirs.

Brandon, 27, currently works in parts at the Missoula store. He plans to eventually move into long range planning and supervision of parts and service in all five locations.

Dustin, 26, worked for a time as the sales manager in the Billings store and helped set up that location with the Bretz protocols. "He has a business degree from the University of Montana and wanted to try his wings in other business environments," Dave said. "He first took a position with Prudential and is now with Western State Insurance. I'd love to have him come back—when he is ready, of course."

Ashley, 24, worked at Bretz as a receptionist during high school and later as a part-timer in parts. She currently works as a radiology technician and will graduate next year from Montana State University with a degree in health and human performance.

Chelsea, 23, is working as a cosmetologist while she studies for a degree in business at the University of Montana.

Stacy has created a special niche for herself in the Bretz organization, serving for the last 10 years as the interior decorator for both the motorhomes and towables. "If a buyer can see an RV with some of the appointments that you would expect to find in your home, I believe it encourages them to think about how they would decorate with their own things," she said. She uses colorful plates, glasses, and decor items in the towables and entry-level motorhomes and more expensive pieces of glass, china, and fabrics for the higher-end coaches. "It's a fun business and I enjoy working to help the sales department." **RS**

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Frank Bretz Looks Forward to Flying the RV-9A This Summer

Retired for 21 years, Frank Bretz, Jr. celebrated his 85th birthday in May. He has been a pilot for over 40 years and still keeps his license current. In the early nineties he purchased a kit from Van's Aircraft to build an RV-9A, a single engine, two seater. When his wife, Vi, became ill, he put his passion for flying on the back burner to be a full-time caregiver. Af-

ter her death in May 2000, Frank renewed his interest in flying and building the RV-9A with the encouragement of Carolyn Steenson, a lady whom he married in September 2001.

"Dad is a perfectionist in everything he does," Mark said. "I have no concerns about his building and flying the RV-9A." The plane was painted in the Bretz downdraft paint booth recently and will be flown and certified by a test pilot this summer. Sadly, Frank's advocate and second wife, Carolyn, died last year after battling cancer. Undeterred and with the energy of a man 20 years his junior, Frank plans to fly his plane later this summer. During the interview with Mark, Frank pulled into the Bretz parking area with a pre-owned Class A coach for the

company's inventory which he had driven from Las Vegas in less than two days—just a 900-mile jaunt! Jumping out of the cockpit wearing jeans and a plaid shirt, he unhitched his tow car and moved the coach to the service center to prepare it for sale. The next morning he showed me his Van's RV-9A with the detached wings resting on a dolly awaiting transfer to the airport. What a guy!

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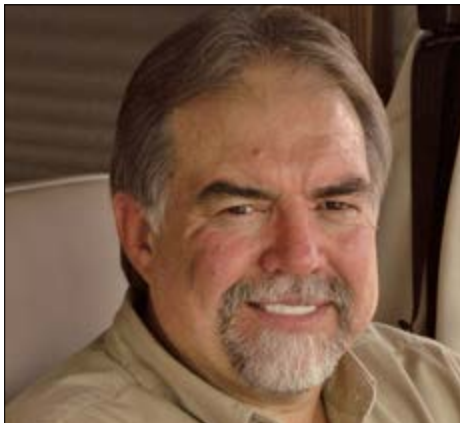
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Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, 38-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:

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

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

Dear Danny . . .

I have an Allegro 2002, straight side, 31-ft. with a headlight problem that could be a design fault. The daytime running lights and the low beam head lights are the same. The lenses in these lights have a rough surface created by cast, square projections that diffuse the light beam. I assume they work fine for daytime where the goal is to be noticed and not inconvenience oncoming drivers.

At night the low beam, rough lens project very little light. In city driving with streetlights on it is impossible to tell if the RV headlights are on without going out and observing the lamps themselves. They do not project enough light to illuminate the signs along the road. From the beginning I aimed the high beam lights downward enough to satisfy almost all the oncoming drivers. This illuminates the signs and is comfortable while driving on the interstate at night or in cities.

I expect to be driving at night on state roads extensively later this year and would like to get normal high/low beam headlights. I suspect the Tiffin experts could give the best solution to my problem. There are only two wires going to each bulb and there are two lamps on each side: one with clear, smooth lens and one with the cobbled lens. Each lamp has but one two wire bulb.

I don't have the VIN on hand but it was built in June 2002. I think the model was 30 IA, but it is 32 feet long and listed as so in the brochure.

Jim Chapman
 Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Jim,
 Headlights through the years have been an issue with many motorhome manufacturers since we all use standard production headlight assemblies from U.S. trucks and cars. Your assembly came from a 2000 GMC Sierra truck. Other than replacing the entire assembly, clean and polish the exterior plastic lens and make sure the height adjustment is accurate. Remove the bulbs and take them to a parts house and match up the receptacle with a current version that has higher output. There are several kinds of aftermarket bulbs with regard to the "color" of the light. You can select the one that you like best.

I have a 2002 Allegro 31 DA on a Workhorse chassis. The motorhome has ap-

proximately 30,000 miles on it. During my last road trip, the windshield wipers were working fine until I turned the wipers to the "off" position. The wipers stopped in the reverse position, that is to each side of the windshield rather than to the center of the two-piece windshield. What do I need to check or reset to get the wipers to stop in the correct position?

Frank Ward
 Chatsworth, Georgia

Dear Frank,
 On the wiper motor under the hood, loosen the nut where the arms are attached to the motor and then set the arms in the parked position for the blades. Then tighten the nut securely. This should solve your problem.

I have a 2007 Allegro Bus and the forward overhead TV needs to be replaced. Do you know of a replacement TV that will fit right in place or do I need to custom fit one?

Bruce Wallace
 Palestine, Texas

Dear Bruce,
 The newer LCD televisions are more rectangular in shape than the units that were being made five years ago. This will make it necessary to modify the depth of the box and design a new face to which the flat panel TV can be attached. Several companies have specialized in this update and you can also get the work done at the TMH Service Center in Red Bay.

We have a 2005 Allegro Bay 34XB on a Workhorse chassis. We have intermittent results when we try to deploy the slides with the in-out toggle switch. After each failure, I checked the fuses and found them to be good.

Benjamin C. Staff
 Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Dear Benjamin,
 There could be several solutions to this

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problem. One of the main components to check is a solenoid in the outside storage compartment in front of the entrance door. This solenoid allows power to go to the slide-out control after you have engaged the parking brake. It should be marked "slide-out solenoid." If you can catch it when it fails to operate, tap it lightly with a tool. If the slide-out begins to operate, then the solenoid needs to be replaced.

I responded to the refrigerator recall on my 2003 Phaeton. The work was completed by La Mesa RV in Tucson. Since the recall I had to remove the bulb in the fridge as it would not cool below 50 degrees. Then the icemaker started leaking due to a cracked line in the back of the fridge. I took it back to La Mesa who said the recall repair could not have caused the new problem. I took it to another authorized Dometic dealer who said the recall caused too much heat when operating on gas which melted the plastic lines and wiring insulation. The second Dometic dealer said the entire refrigerator may need to be replaced. Is this a problem you have encountered before?

Dear Terry,
We are not aware of this being a recurring problem on the Dometic refrigerator. I suggest you call the Dometic service number and provide them with the serial number to the refrigerator and the recall number to which you responded to see if this is a problem that could have been caused by the repair made during the recall campaign. The number is 800-544-4881.

I recently purchased a 2011 Allegro Bus 40 QXP. When I took delivery, the air conditioners would not work because the fuse had blown on the wall thermostat (RV Comfort brand). We replaced the fuse and the ACs worked fine for awhile. In three

weeks I have replaced 11 fuses. No one at the dealership where I purchased the Bus has been able to correct the problem.

Billy Winters
Powderly, Texas

Dear Billy,
You have a short somewhere between the thermostat and the air conditioner or possibly between the three air conditioners. The wiring sequentially runs from the thermostat to each of the air conditioners. It will be a process of elimination to determine where the short is located. I advise that you go to an RV service center for best results. You have a single thermostat with a zone selector that controls all of the air conditioners. I wish I had a better answer for you, but there are too many possibilities.

I have a 2000 Allegro Bus on a Freightliner chassis. All too often my dash instruments freeze and cease to operate. Sometimes turning the ignition off will reset them. The situation is getting gradually worse. Can you suggest what we need to check?

Ray Schwengler
Saginaw, Texas

Dear Ray,
Your problem is likely due to a loose main ground that comes from the battery compartment to the front of the motorhome. When you pull the generator out, you will see two large cables going to two lugs that transfer power through the firewall to the instrument package. If either of the lugs are loose enough to be moved with your hand, they need to be tightened. If they seem secure, go to the back of the motorhome and check the ground from the engine block to the chassis rail. The ground cable will go from the engine block on the passenger side to the inside of the rail close to the transmission. Make sure it is tight.

How do I keep mice out of my 2010 Phaeton 36 QSH? They are coming in

through the engine compartment. I trap them most often under the bathroom sink and some of the drawers. The basement cargo area seems to be secure with no areas where they can get in. Please make suggestions.

Mary Tichenor
Altoona, Wisconsin

Dear Mary,
With the many openings into the motorhome created by the slide-outs, electrical, and plumbing, it is difficult to prevent mice from entering the coach. You should treat the problem the same as if you found a mouse in your home. Make sure food products are sealed tightly and set traps.

Having seen recommendations recently for the Surge Guard Protector, we are wondering which is best for our motorhome. We have a 2001 Allegro 26-ft. We have looked at the 30-amp Surge Guard and the hard-wired Surge Guard. Which would you recommend?

Albert Linder
Concord, California

Dear Albert,
The hard-wired Surge Guard is probably the most convenient and the least vulnerable to theft. A mid-range (\$300-350) unit should give you adequate protection.

I have a 2002 Allegro Bus 35-ft. The insulation has curled up inside the double pane windows and it looks awful. Is there anything I could do other than replacing the complete window?

Socorro Solis
Rio Vista, California

Dear Socorro,
There are service centers that specialize in repairing double pane windows. If you have a multi-pane window in the same frame that is defective, you would probably be best advised to replace the unit with a new one. At the Tiffin Service Cen-

ter in Red Bay, we only replace the units.

We recently took two trips and experienced the same problem both times. On each trip, it began to rain and, of course, we turned on the windshield wipers. Once it stopped raining, the wipers did not cease operating when we tried to turn them off. About 30 minutes later, after it quit raining, the wipers ceased operating. We have a 2005 Allegro Bay on a Workhorse chassis. Can you suggest how we can correct the problem? Thanks.

Robert & DeVon McDaniel
Hueytown, Alabama

Dear Robert & DeVon,
There are two possible answers to your problem. Most likely it is the electrical plug where the wiper motor and wiring harness are connected underneath the

hood. The problem is moisture inside the plug. Separate the plug and fill the inside of the receptacle with electrical grease and then wrap the connection with electrical tape. With wire ties, secure it up high where water will not settle on it. If this does not solve your problem, then you should replace the wiper relay which is underneath the dash on the inside near the steering column.

You can add my 2002 Allegro (with 37,000 miles) to the list of units with ignition switch problems. The first time was in 2006 in Amarillo, Texas. Cost: \$600+. I called Workhorse—tough luck, they said. Out of warranty. Then it happened in Patterson, Louisiana. Same thing, fried. \$700+. Tough luck, Workhorse said. The mechanic in Patterson told me he had

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changed at least 10 ignition switches this year and cannot understand why Workhorse has not issued a recall before a motorhome burns down. It creates a dangerous situation. It is expensive to fix. Something needs to be done.

Robert A. Griffin
Houma, Louisiana

Dear Robert,
The problem that we are aware of with the ignition switch is a short in the wiring harness at the knuckle of the tilt steering column. The wire was being pinched in the tilt wheel causing the ignition switch to short out. Once this problem was corrected by the service center, it should not have occurred the second time. Your situation could be a different problem caused by circumstances of which we are not aware. If you have more information about the cause of the failure, please let us know.

I own a 2007 Phaeton 40 QDH. In the last several months when turning off the chassis and coach batteries, the inverter stays on. I have to turn it off using the switch on the face panel of the inverter. Does this indicate there may be a problem with the inverter?

Frank M. Crane, Jr.
South Daytona, Florida

Dear Frank,
The inverter is not wired through the battery disconnect. Power runs directly from the battery to the inverter. Therefore, in order to turn off the inverter, you must do it at the inverter panel. You should not have an inverter problem.

We own a 2003 Allegro 35 DA. Recently without any warning, the bedroom ceiling lights ceased working. Not knowing which circuit was dedicated to these lights, I checked all fuses and all showed continuity. Any suggestions or remedy will be greatly appreciated. Thanks for all the wonderful service your technicians

give on each and every visit.

Charlie Brandon
Arlington, Tennessee

Dear Charlie,
The best way to solve this problem is the process of elimination. Turn on all of your lights in the motorhome. Pull the fuses one at a time to determine which fuse services the circuit in the bedroom. Most of the lights in your motorhome are wired in series. There are more lights on the circuit than the ones that went out. Once you determine which lights are on the non-functioning circuit, go to the next light that is burning, pull it down and see if power is leaving it and going to the next light that is not burning. If power is going out, then go to the first one that is not burning, pull it down, and test to see if power is getting to it. Sometimes it is difficult to determine where the wire is going past the light fixture that is burning. But you are going to find a loose connection in one of the wire nuts.

When we were looking at the Breeze, we could not find the button for the exhaust brake which your brochure mentions. The salesman said that the Breeze really does not come with an exhaust brake, but that the Allison transmission has plenty of braking power built in.

The shifting control panel looks just like the one in our previous coach which had a larger transmission. After taking possession of our new Breeze and driving it, we thought the transmission was not working right and starting calling Tiffin tech service and Allison. We learned that the control panel is the one used for larger transmissions, the mode button is not hooked up to anything, and the shifter is completely programmed differently. When descending steep grades, the transmission does not slow you down at all. You can down shift manually only one time and it goes from drive to fourth gear which is much too high. The coach speed

will go way above 60 mph, causing you to apply the brakes too much.

After talking to the technicians in Red Bay, I was informed that Maxxforce would not allow Tiffin to install an exhaust brake. When I talked with the people at Maxxforce, I was surprised to learn they do not even have one designed for this engine yet.

We like the concept of downsizing and we like the looks of the Breeze. But we are concerned about giving up a margin of safety in driving the Breeze. One of the reasons for downsizing was that my wife would be willing to do more of the driving. Now she is too intimidated to drive it in hilly situations because of controlling the speed. Will there be a "fix" for this problem in the near future? Thank you and we look forward to your reply.

Randy & Maxine Carson
Apple Valley, California

Dear Randy & Maxine,
We are sorry for any inconvenience that was caused by the error in the Breeze brochure about the exhaust brake. The program in the computer will allow you to downshift to 4th gear. If you wish to downshift all the way to first gear, the transmission will have to be reprogrammed.

Both the radio and the King Dome unit in my 2002 Allegro Bus are wired into the ignition side of the ignition switch. Can you provide me with a wiring diagram showing which wires need to be changed to wire these items into the accessory side of the ignition switch?

I would like to be able to listen to the radio and the CD player when I am not traveling. It is also very annoying to have to listen to the "jack down" alarm when locating a satellite.

David Crow
Madison, South Dakota

Dear David,
Changing the radio over to the accessory side is not a problem. We will furnish you

with a diagram. Your King Dome, if it was installed by TMH, should be wired directly to the house batteries and not through any of the engine accessories. If it was wired incorrectly through the ignition side of the switch, it should be moved to the house batteries.

We have a 2004 Allegro 32-ft. The carpeting is starting to look very worn and tacky. We have talked about how nice it would be to have tile instead of carpet. We would leave the carpet on the slide under the sofa and dinette. Same for the bedroom. When the slide comes in, it would cover the tile. Is this possible?

Louise Thompson
Las Vegas, Nevada

Dear Louise,
This can be done, but TMH does not offer this upgrade in the Red Bay Service Center. Aftermarket suppliers and some of our dealerships can help you with this change. Keep in mind that the rollers on

the slide-out box have to be changed to prevent damage to your tile.

We have a 2011 Allegro 32BA with the V-10 Ford engine on a Ford chassis. It seems the shift points are high as the engine sounds like it is over-revving prior to shifting to the next gear. This is really noticeable when accelerating on an interstate entrance ramp.

I have checked with other owners on the [tiffinrvnetwork](http://tiffinrvnetwork.com) and it seems to be a common occurrence. We have not had it checked at a Ford dealer at this writing. So my question is – Are the shifting points set correctly?

Roger Massie
Avon Park, Illinois

Dear Roger,
This is not a problem we have seen with the shift points in the transmission. We have identified a similar noise which sometimes could be mistaken for the transmission, but is actually the electric

cooling fan that comes on automatically with engine acceleration.

We are loving our new Phaeton 36 QSH which we had the pleasure of watching while it was being built. We have a problem with the engine info panel (LCBV). It is impossible to monitor when driving. And forget trying to use the "mouse button" safely if you are moving.

Is there any chance that a retrofit gauge display may be made available (even for a fee) so that the panel/dash can be reconfigured for easy reading?

Larry Marola
Titusville, Florida

Dear Larry,
We agree with you that it is in a bad location. Yes, we can move it to another location. But with the current design of the dash, there is not a better location for it.

I read your "Serious Tech Talk" column

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Customer Response

I just read RIS, 8:2, and have a few suggestions for two owners who had questions.

For Sandra Thompson of Prattville, Alabama (restringing shades): use Spectra fishing line, the heaviest you can find. It is extremely strong, but is also very slick and much better than Dacron. Knots are difficult to tie in Spectra but a dab of epoxy on each knot will keep it from coming untied. Be careful if you pull it tight by hand. It cuts flesh easily.

For Hershel Anservitz of Winchester, Kentucky (CB antenna): I would suggest a 5/8 wave side mount similar to the Firestick LG4-M2. I lead motorhome tours and have mounted several of this type of antenna for guests. They install quickly and easily in less than an hour and work exceedingly well. Simply remove the pillar post cover on the driver's side of the windshield and install the mount as high as the post configuration allows. Drill the top mount hole first from the inside out (to be sure you get it positioned where you want it) and then drill the bottom hole from the outside in so the antenna is vertical. The mount goes on with two washers and nuts and the antenna wire connects to the lower mounting lug. The antenna wire runs down the pillar post and under the dash to the radio. This antenna does not need a ground plane.

Jerry Barber
Encinitas, California

With reference to Dave Schilke's letter in volume 8, number 1, we had a very similar experience. We bought a 2010 Allegro Red 36QSA in July 2010. On our way home from Lazydays in Florida to Michigan, we noticed the shifter mode light would not come on or shift into sixth gear. We called Tiffin service and were told to contact Freightliner. After three stops at different service

centers, Freightliner figured out we had a faulty mode switch. Two weeks later Freightliner sent a new shifter-mode switch. We had it installed and the coach has shifted perfectly since.

Donn & Rhoda Westfall
Edwardsburg, Michigan

We recently had custom work done on our 2003 Phaeton 40TGH at Cape Fear Custom RV in Wilmington, North Carolina. We would like to share our story with other Tiffin motorhome owners.

Dennis Harp runs a very busy shop. He is very knowledgeable about all RVs and thoroughly answers your questions. We had the original televisions (one built in over the dash and one in the bedroom) replaced with flat screen HD TVs. The two technicians who executed our upgrades were Saul Guevara and Ronald Gschwandtner. They built a custom frame for each TV using the same wood used in the coach. They replaced the receiver with current equipment and installed a Blue Ray DVD player with the TV in the bedroom. After carefully wiring and testing the new equipment, they trained us to use it until we were confident we could handle it. The finished job looks like it came from the Tiffin factory. Working with patient, courteous professionals like Dennis, Saul, and Ron made our experience at Cape Fear Custom RV a pleasure that we will be sharing with our RV friends. We highly recommend the company for custom work and service.

Charles & Cheryl Erwin
Currie, North Carolina

We have a 2010 Allegro Bus with a king size bed. The lift assist is a SUSPA C16-08055, 120 lbs. One assist jammed in the UP position and we had to remove it to lower the bed. The SUSPA tech de-

partment informed me that the assist should be installed with the rod in the DOWN position. This allows lubricant in the cylinder to keep it from jamming. Both assists on my unit were installed in the up position which tends to cause them to jam for lack of internal lubricant.

David & Montez Schnebelen
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Serious Tech Talk in a Binder

Would it be possible to print your technical tips on perforated pages at the end of the magazine so they can be easily removed and placed in a binder? Thanks.

Ron Sliger
Melbourne, Florida

Dear Ron,
We can perforate on press. However, to do so we would have to move away from the two high-speed web press runs creating two 32s and do an odd 8- or 16-page signature which would permit perforating on press. In short, it would increase the cost of printing significantly. I recommend going to an art store and buying a hobby knife and razoring the pages out with a straight edge and then 3-hole punch them.

Fred Thompson, editor

Kudos for Tiffin Design

We have just purchased a 32CA Allegro which is our third Tiffin. We love the floorplan and the midship 37-inch television. We have the Rocky Mountain Brown exterior and the English Chestnut cabinets. The pass-through storage is great and the ride is smooth. Tell your guys in design and production that they are doing a great job!

Peter & Cathy Soucey
Clarksville, Tennessee

in great detail with every issue of *Roughing It Smoothly* and find it very helpful in understanding more about my coach's operation. However, I have not seen the following problem discussed.

I purchased a 2009 Phaeton 42QBH from La Mesa RV in Florida: Spartan chassis, Allison transmission, Cummins 360 engine. We love everything about the Phaeton and have nothing but praise for the technical staff in Red Bay, and for their telephone and on-site expertise. We also had the opportunity to meet with Bob Tiffin while in Red Bay and came away very impressed. The entire Tiffin Motorhomes operation is a class act.

But we do have a problem. Within 24 hours after parking the coach, we lose pressure in the rear air system to the point the air-driven step cover will not operate without starting the engine and building the pressure back up. Then the pressure soon drops again. There is not pressure drop with the front air system.

La Mesa RV in Tucson was authorized by Spartan to do a leak detection test on the entire rear air system with the result of "no leaks." The technician at Tucson said the step cover is not part of the Spartan system, but is an add-on by Tiffin, which is why the Spartan leak detection test came up negative. He had no solution for the problem. He mentioned he had an Allegro Bus in the shop that week with the same problem.

As an interim solution, I have reinforced the front of the step cover with two angle brackets and then attached a drawer pull to the front edge of the step cover that allows me to pull the step out when the pressure is down. The step easily pushes back in when the pressure is down.

Any suggestions for a "real" fix would be appreciated.

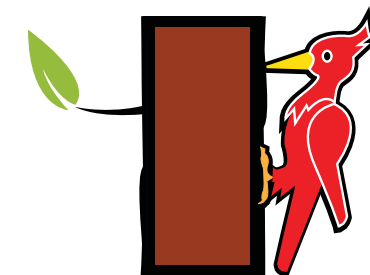
Bob Vineyard
Canon City, Colorado

Dear Bob,
The tech is correct. The step cover is a TMH component and we install it dur-

ing assembly. If the tech did the complete chassis air system test and found nothing, the only point left would be a control valve at a T-connection in the air line which is located in the compartment just in front of the tire on the driver's side. This line goes to the air cylinder that controls the

step cover. The problem is not related to the "rear air system" which you mentioned in your letter because all of the air system related to the step is in the front area of the coach. On a system this small, tracing a leak in an air system which depletes over 24 hours will be difficult.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Continued from page 6

Page Chevrolet had 12 chassis in their inventory which had been ordered for Commodore. We bought those chassis and began hiring some of the people who had been laid off from Commodore, Sunliner, and Safari.

We employed Sylvia Massey, office; Bill Emerson, purchasing agent; Theron McKinney, plant manager; Grady Baggett, cabinet shop; Horace Stepp, drafting; Monroe Thorn, welding; Howard Johnson, supervisor; Donald Holland, electrical & wiring; Jesse Vess, plumbing; and Larry Joe Hill, assembly line. We started up in late September 1972 and built five motorhomes by the end of the year. In December, we took two units to the national show in Louisville to announce to the RV world the existence of a little company in Red Bay, Alabama.

As we began 1973, we were building one motorhome per day and had 30 people employed. Then we got shocked with our first energy crisis. But I will save that story and more for the next issue. **RIS**

TIFFIN MANAGEMENT TEAM

Continued from page 44

with me," Mark said. "It is just part of this business. You wouldn't refuse to answer the phone just because you were on vacation if your child was calling," he joked.

"You must be a self-starter to be a manufacturer's representative," he said, looking me straight in the eye. "It's like this. TMH says, Here are the rules. Here is what we expect. Call me if you need me. It's very empowering. They give me the tools to get the job done, the people and resources to back me up. No micro-management. I love this job." **RIS**

OWNER PROFILE

Continued from page 48

program. We have entered the lottery each year, but the odds of being selected are very small."

"Our goal is to see all 46 of the national parks in the lower 48 states," René said over lunch. "So far we have visited and enjoyed 22 (as of June 2011)." They were looking forward to meeting many more

Tiffin owners at the Tiffin Motorhomes & B. Young RV Rally at the Mt. Hood Village RV Resort in Welches, Oregon, June 7-9. They are also planning to attend the Good Sam Club Rally in Redmond, Oregon, on July 14-17.

After a third try, René was able to book a one-week reservation at the Upper Pines Campground in Yosemite National Park in late August. When he showed me his photography equipment, I knew why he was so looking forward to their visit in Yosemite—a photographer's paradise ever since Ansel Adams sold his first black and white prints of the valley in 1922.

A future goal surfaced as we talked about Yosemite. "We would love to do work-camping in Yosemite or the Arches National Park. Our language skills in French and German would be an asset in interpreting the park to European visitors. But unfortunately we are stymied by the green card," he said.

One thing is for sure. It is unlikely our national parks will find more enthusiastic advocates than René and Simone. Bon voyage Vielgraders! We look forward to seeing you again next year. **RIS**

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Turn the clock forward . . . a great metropolitan city 40 miles due west with the world's largest aquarium, major league sports, art museums, Broadway plays, big name entertainment. A major college campus 25 miles due east offering lifelong learning to seniors, national championship teams, cultural arts season. The southern Appalachians due north for great hiking, waterfalls, state parks, festivals, craft centers. A new YMCA (under construction) with heated pool, hi-tech gym, exercise programs.

Come home to Highland Creek in Monroe, Georgia . . . and enjoy a planned community with a 6,000 sq.ft clubhouse that residents reserve for exclusive events (large social area with double fireplaces and entertainment kitchen), featuring a junior Olympic pool with locker rooms, competition quality tennis courts, and recreation fields. Custom-designed homes with top-of-the-line features: maple hardwood cabinets, granite countertops, designer stainless steel sinks, custom door packages, high ceilings, hardwood floors, an 80-gallon water heater with circulating pumps, and much, much more.



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confidence to travel from coast to coast. Custom-built and designed at the Tiffin plant in Red Bay, Alabama, this chassis is American ingenuity at its finest, delivering superior performance and reliability.



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