

# Roughing it Smoothly<sup>®</sup>

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- The Kennedy Space Center

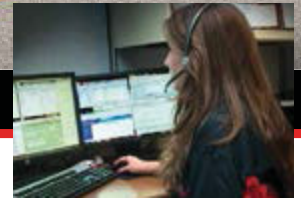




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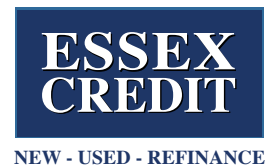
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# Roughing It Smoothly®

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Cover: Photographer—Suzanne Clemenz

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## Roughing It Smoothly announces new digital magazine: [rismag.org](http://rismag.org)

In January 2018, Tiffin's owner-acclaimed quarterly magazine begins its 15th year of publication. In November 2017, we launched and tested the digital magazine our readers can enjoy online the same day we upload the typesetting files to the printer.

You can read all back issues (14 years) of *Roughing It Smoothly* online at [rismag.org](http://rismag.org)

Go to the Contents on pages 2-3. Click on the page number for the story you want to read and it will jump directly to that double-page spread. To go back to the Contents page, put "3" in the page selection box at top center of screen. You can enlarge/reduce the type with the +/- symbols at top center of the screen.

The big feature now implemented is the "Search" function. In the upper right corner, clicking on SEARCH will open a column of options on the left side of your screen. Put in a word (such as "Utah" or "trains") or multiple words to find a story. Then click on "Search" at

the bottom of the column. You can search for a particular motorhome floor plan, such as Phaeton 40QTH or 33AA for a featured review or a Q&A in Tech Talk. Search for a travel story to use in planning your next trip to a state or national park, and much more.

The web address (URL) for each advertiser is "hot," meaning that you can click on it and go directly to the website.

This software was originally developed for daily newspapers and we have not succeeded in getting the software to print the pages of the story in the magazine format in which it originally appeared. However, you can double-left-click anywhere on the story to open a reformatted story in manuscript form (it fills an 8.5 x 11 page). This will allow you to print the pictures and the text in an easy-to-read digest. The programmers are working to create a software update to print the pages exactly as they appear in the printed edition of the magazine.

Online readers will receive the magazine three weeks ahead of the approximate date *RIS* appears in mailboxes. Tiffin owners who use mail forwarding services will view the magazine about six weeks before it would normally be delivered.

The digital magazine is presented online in facing pages; it is formatted for laptops, iPads, iPhones, Android OS, and most tablets that are WiFi capable. Some of the digital newspaper features (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc.) are applications that we are still developing for *RIS*.

We designed the expanded digital magazine to better serve both our readers and advertisers. We hope you will enjoy the digital *Roughing It Smoothly*. Please send your suggestions to [fred1902@gmail.com](mailto:fred1902@gmail.com).

### Magazine Continues to Grow

Over 31,000 Tiffin owners are now receiving *Roughing It Smoothly* through the U.S. and Canadian postal service. Over 42,000 have chosen

to read *RIS* online at [rismag.org](http://rismag.org). Our dealers are distributing 14,000 copies in their showrooms. *Roughing It Smoothly* is in its 15th year and is the largest magazine published by an RV manufacturer in number of pages and total distribution.

In each issue you will still find three cards for sending information to the editorial office in Monroe, Georgia. Using the "From the Road" card, we invite you to tell fellow Tiffin coach owners about your experiences and the special places you have discovered in your travels. If the card is not large enough, please type a whole page double-spaced, and mail it to Fred Thompson, Book Production Resources, P.O. Box 1150, Monroe, GA 30655-1150. Be sure to include your name and address, phone number, and email address in case we need to edit or ask for more information. Color prints are welcome and we will use them if we have the space. We do not return color prints or manuscript. You can also send your "From the Road" contribution by email to [fred-thompson1941@hotmail.com](mailto:fred-thompson1941@hotmail.com). You may attach your images to your email. Images should be at least one megabyte in size. On the subject line of the email, please write FROM THE ROAD.

### Advertisers

To advertise in *RIS*, contact Dale Cathey at 817-247-5147. [dalecathey1942@gmail.com](mailto:dalecathey1942@gmail.com). An advertisement in *Roughing It Smoothly* does not constitute an endorsement of the product by Tiffin Motorhomes, Inc.

### Change of Address

Please use the enclosed change of address card in this magazine which is pre-addressed to the publishing office in Monroe, Georgia. Tape the label from the front cover to the change of address card and carefully print your new address below it. Or, you can do it online. See instructions at right.

### Serious Tech Talk

To address your technical questions to Danny Inman, use the postcard bound in this issue, send a longer letter to the address on the postcard, or send an email to [RIS techtalk@gmail.com](mailto:RIS techtalk@gmail.com) **If you need an immediate answer to a service problem, you should call 256-356-0261.**

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If you have just purchased a new Tiffin motorhome, your name will be added to our mailing list automatically. If you purchased a pre-owned Tiffin motorhome, see instructions below to add your name and your motorhome's data to the mailing list.

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## Our First Dealership: Bankston Motorhomes

by Bob Tiffin

When I first began thinking about starting the motorhome company in 1972, I knew my competition would be Winnebago, Open Road, and Champion. So I looked around North Alabama and nearby states to see who was selling what brands. A Nashville dealer was selling Winnebago. Another Nashville dealer had Champion and a Memphis dealer was selling Open Road.

On my search, I stopped to see Harrison Bankston in Huntsville, Alabama. His main line was Champion. I spent time with him and asked pointed questions about how motorhomes should be built. The first thing out of his mouth was, "It needs to have an aluminum frame."

Harrison's main Class A motorhome was Champion and they had steel frames. "Weight has always been an issue with the Champion motorhome," he assured me. "I like the aluminum frame much better. If you will build an aluminum-framed motorhome at an attractive price, I can sell all that you build." That got my attention. We had that conversation in July 1972.

We incorporated in September and started production soon after. I visited Harrison several times to discuss how we should design the motorhomes to get the best price points and floorplans.

Harrison has been a friend and busi-



ness adviser for all these years. We have had a great relationship and he has been one of our top 10 dealers for 45 years.

Bankston's dealership in the early days was like most dealerships. They had one service manager, a couple of good service techs, and four or five on their sales staff. But Harrison did it all as far as general management, F&I, and closing every deal.

I soon discovered if I wanted to meet with him, I had to get there early on a Saturday morning. As time went on, we did most of our communicating by phone. Conversations rarely lasted more than two to three minutes. We know each

other so well we can anticipate how to get things accomplished on either end—manufacturing or dealership.

As his company grew in sales, his service organization grew as well. That does not always happen. He has one of the finest service facilities in our dealer network. In recent years, he acquired a manufactured housing plant that had closed in Ardmore, Alabama.

The facility has three buildings that gave him about 125,000 square feet to work with. He uses the buildings for the PDIs on the motorhomes we build for him, for new service bays, and for a collision center with full body paint capability. Most RV dealerships have dif-

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Bankston Motorhomes first address on Jordan Lane in Huntsville will soon be their smallest location. ♦ Bankston has been in Tiffin's Top 10 Dealers almost every year. Here, C.H. Bankston, Harrison's father, who worked with his company for several years, accepts the 2003 Top 10 award. ♦ With an eye for a good advertising opportunity, Bankston positioned an Allegro Bay Diesel Pusher near the Pathfinder, a mock-up of the space shuttle on display in Huntsville. ♦ Harrison is blessed with a ready supply of grandchildren who may eventually work at Bankston Motorhomes. His two oldest grandsons, Colin, IT manager, and Chase, general manager, already fill two important positions.





faculty disposing of older units taken in on trades. Bankston is using some of the newly acquired space as a rehab center to put older RVs back in good shape, allowing young families to start RVing for a modest price.

Harrison has also expanded his sales operation to include the Nashville, Tennessee territory by leasing several acres on Music Valley Drive, in order to expand their presence in the Nashville area. His company is in the process of opening a brand new location in Attalla, Alabama, on the northwest side of Gadsden. Harrison has another big asset. His two daughters gave him 17 grandchildren—11 boys and six girls. Two fine grandsons are already working with him in his business.

Harrison also has a vivid recollection of their solid relationship. Following is his part of the story in his own words.

“In the late seventies, maybe early eighties, I found a 27-foot split bath floor plan that I really liked and I knew it would sell,” Harrison related. “Bob promised to build just one unit for me. When it was finished, he liked it too, and wanted to take it to a dealer show before he sent it to me. We agreed and he returned it after the show where he got dozens of orders for it. I sold the prototype to my customer and Bob manufactured hundreds more of that floor plan. I continued to send him ideas, many of which he implemented.

“As the years went by, we both got very busy. But I always knew if I needed Bob Tiffin, he was just a phone call away,” Harrison continued. “He is a problem solver who can cut through red tape and get things accomplished faster than any

executive I have ever known. He gives us a comfort zone that no other manufacturer has ever offered.

“When selling motorhomes that range in price from \$200,000 to a half million, problems that become major issues with other manufacturers are reduced to minor situations at Tiffin Motorhomes. Bob really does put the dealer and the owner first with any issue,” Harrison said. “Other manufacturers are still trying to come up to the service benchmarks that Tiffin established years ago.”

Bankston related that the dealership had a very difficult time during the severe recession that began in 2008. He and the family also suffered the loss of Carol, his wife, to cancer. Two years later Harrison married Kim Dobbs, a woman who had worshiped in the congregation where he had served as an elder. An astute businesswoman, she has taken an active role in the company. His two oldest grandsons, Chase Baerlin, 27, and Colin Baerlin, 23, joined the company in recent years. Chase serves as general manager of the five (soon to be six) locations, and Colin manages the IT operations for all locations. Several of the younger grandsons work during the summer washing and cleaning RVs and two of the granddaughters have worked in various capacities over the years.

“We have dealerships currently in five locations offering service and RV sales in motorized and towables. All of the locations sell Class A, B, and C motorhomes as well as trailers and fifth wheels,” Harrison said.

*Continued on page 84*

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# Fresh Thinking in the 2018 Allegro Bus

## THE 45MP STEALS THE SHOW IN LOUISVILLE



TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY FRED THOMPSON

**T**HE INNOVATIVE CHANGES IN JUST ONE YEAR —it's almost too much to comprehend! Imaginative lighting throughout the coach, beginning with the contemporary ceiling, is incrementally controlled to suit your activities or mood. Three major changes in the galley. A whole new paradigm for a luxurious mid-coach bath. Big surprises in the master bedroom plus designer storage space that doubles the storage found in earlier Allegro Bus floor plans.

From the elegantly lighted stairwell entrance in front of the dash to the wall forming the north side of the slide-out pantry, the daytime living space in the 45MP measures 22 x 12.75 feet, creating three spacious areas for the living room and entertainment center, the dining/office area, and a handsome, very functional galley.

The 45MP's contemporary ceiling offers a new Tiffin experience with lighting that makes every area special. Running

the length of both forward slide-outs, the architects designed a 15-inch-wide soffit into which they embedded unseen light strings to reflect soft illumination off the ceiling.

The optional ceiling (MSRP \$840) focuses on two long tray insets that follow the path of the ducts hidden above them in the insulated ceiling. Warm or cool air from the AC/heat pump is forced through the PS ducts. Return air flows through the DS ducts. Taking advantage of the Bernoulli principle, the engineers used smaller vents serving the PS ducts to deliver the cooled or warmed air at higher velocity, thus cooling or warming the room faster and more efficiently, depending of course, on the thermostat's temperature setting. Note the larger DS ducts for returning the air to the AC/heat pump. The large duct in the left center of the image (above) is the three-speed exhaust fan servicing the galley area. The top of the slide-out fascias contribute to the effect of the contemporary ceiling with a four-inch cove finished



with Glazed Canyon Cherry, reflecting a second light string hidden in the lower one-inch frame of the fascia.

The lighting in the galley is exciting. The three-inch outer perimeter of the backsplash frames a recessed basket weave panel of carved solid surface material, creating the space for hiding the lighting string that illuminates the backsplash and brightens the countertop. The underside of the countertop molding conceals another lighting string. Mounted in the bottom of the overhead cabinets, four LEDs focus light directly into the farmhouse sink,

the vessels on the induction cooktop, and the work surface to the right. The toe kick has “courtesy lights” that are handy when the rest of the coach is darkened for R&R or watching TV.

The shape of the LED lights in the 45MP’s ceiling were changed in this coach from round to square and there are plenty of them (I counted 38 in the living area), often controlled by separate switches for designated areas – lights for the entry, map reading, DS and PS center ceilings, DS and PS soffits, ceilings in the slide-outs, and two swivel lights above the DS sofa/bed.

## A 300-DEGREE VIEW OF THE DAYTIME LIVING AREA

As you study the floor plan of the 45MP, place the dashboard at 12 noon. The galley will be at 7 and the fridge will be at 5. Now let’s take a tour starting with the galley. You can also find a 360° video tour on our digital magazine at [rismag.org](http://rismag.org).

We will begin our tour at the galley. When I reviewed the 2018 Phaeton 40IH-XSH, we established with the help of several owners the criteria for a well-designed, functional galley. Here again is that 8-point list to size up this galley.

- Plenty of countertop space for food preparation.
- Solid surface countertops that are impervious and can be thoroughly cleaned.
- A large stainless steel sink with a sprayer to clean and prepare your food for cooking.
- A residential, full size microwave/convection oven.
- A cooktop with the technology to provide variable heating from simmer to full 400°.
- A fridge offering 0° freezing and 38° standard refrigeration.
- Two or more 110v outlets for other cooking appliances and tools.
- Plenty of storage (frozen and shelf space) to allow purchasing in bulk.

Nearly seven feet wide, the galley offers over 21 square feet of countertop space when the island slide-out is deployed. Even with the sink and the cooktop in use, the countertop still has 15 square feet of prep surface available.

As anyone who has operated a commercial kitchen will tell you, stainless steel countertops are the safest surfaces for use in food preparation. After polishing and finishing, granite and several man-made products meet the high standards imposed on commercial kitchens, such as Dupont’s Corian® and Wilson Art’s Gibraltar®.

TMH began searching a few years ago to find a more diverse supply for the solid surface countertops now used in all of its motorhomes. Corian

and Gibraltar often did not have the complementary colors needed for a new décor or the just-in-time supply line required for assembly line manufacturing. To develop better control over supply and the variety of colors it could offer, Tiffin found that LG’s Hanek® also has the required density similar to granite and an impervious work surface that can be polished. To avoid having to say “solid surface countertops” in their literature and this magazine, Tiffin selected Broadway® for the name of its solid surface countertop product which may be supplied by Corian, Gibraltar, or Hanek. In either case, Tiffin owners will receive beautiful décors at the best price point.

A stainless steel farmhouse sink is the new feature in demand by buyers, especially when they decide to live full time in their coaches. The sink’s inside measurements are: across the front 27 inches, front to back nearly 16 inches, and depth 9.5 inches. With selected dish pans and drain racks, you will find many ways to put this versatile sink to use. It is really handy when you wash and store fresh produce. The single-lever, high-arc polished chrome faucet has a 12-inch extendable sprayer. Press the dispenser for liquid soap—one less bottle to clutter your countertop. When you need more countertop workspace, you







will find the matching covers stored in a rack under the sink.

The galley has three major appliances. The Sharp Carousel microwave/convection oven is a residential size unit with full controls for convection baking. If you haven't tried a convection oven for baking a chicken or a casserole, you can find instructions on the internet and especially YouTube. Baking biscuits, cookies, or a cake usually requires a 25-degree

lower temp setting than a conventional oven and a few minutes less baking time.

Almost every Allegro Bus is ordered with the optional Fisher & Paykel Dishdrawer (MSRP \$1,330). Many owners will store their soiled dishes, pots, and pans in the dishdrawer throughout the day and run it at night after dinner. "Works for me," one lady said. "And Jim rarely has to wash dishes. Works for him, too!" However, if you have a Jim who likes to

wash dishes, go to [rismag.org](http://rismag.org) and click on the cover for April 2014. Move over to page 16 and check out the design for the optional storage space under the cooktop (in place of the dishdrawer).

Tiffin has selected the True Induction® (that's the actual brand name) cooktop for its all-electric motorhomes. I could spend several pages *trying* to explain the physics of induction cooking and would not do as good a job as the Wikipedia article on the subject. It is efficient, cooks food faster, does not heat up your galley on summer days (like gas does), and uses the electricity supplied by the campground. The cooktop's temperature can be changed instantly from simmer to 400° and vice versa. Since induction cooktops require cooking vessels with ferro-magnetic bottoms, TMH supplies a starter set with each all-electric motorhome. However, we discovered that several of our favorite pots and skillets in our home kitchen had ferro-magnetic bases. The True Induction cooktop is standard equipment. If you are already into induction cooking, you may want to opt for the Wolf cooktop upgrade (MSRP \$2,100).

If I stick to my narrative describing the 45MP in a 300-degree swing around the clock beginning at 7 and moving to 5, I would have to place the refrigerator at







the end of the story. So let's jump across to the other side for a moment. TMH has selected a top-of-the-line Maytag fridge-freezer that we really like. Occupying the bottom third, the roll-out freezer extends completely while two open-box containers at the top slide to the rear, making it easy to see what is below without having to move items around. In the 21 cubic foot unit, Maytag allots 4.5 cubic feet to the 0° freezer and 16.5 cubic feet to the 38° fridge. A through-the-door dispenser offers cold water and temp monitors for both the freezer and the fridge, plus an alarm if a door does not close completely. In the refrigerator, a 4-inch deep drawer for meats and cheese extends all the way across at the bottom of the unit. Two humidity-controlled deep drawers are positioned above the bottom drawer. The remaining shelves can be moved to accommodate your contents.

The slide-out pantry next to the fridge is a great piece of engineering. The six shelves are each 27 inches long and 11 inches wide. Four of the shelves and their retaining rods are vertically adjustable. The movement is firm and solid, no wobble at all. An electro-magnetic lock activated by a pushbutton in the facing above the pantry door prevents the pantry slide-out from opening when the igni-

tion switch is in the ON position.

Now that we are into storage, let's go back to the galley. Above the farmhouse sink in earlier Tiffin coaches, you would have expected a double door with two very deep shelves, with the lower shelf constructed as a slide-out drawer. Scratch the old school technology for overhead shelves. Pull the handles and discover two slide-out cabinets with open sides and retaining rods to keep contents from tumbling out. The cabinet's depth is 19 inches, 10.5 inches wide, and 12 inches high. To the right of the microwave oven, an identical cabinet slides out with equal storage space.

The storage compartment under the farmhouse sink is an outstanding cabinet design. Upon lifting the center release, the compartment slides out. The top storage box slides to the rear exposing the storage area under it. The front part of the larger box usually contains the trash can. All the compartments add up to 2.5 cubic feet. The side of the compartment houses a rack for the sink covers.

The large drawer under the dishwasher was designed for cooking vessels and skillets. The island slide-out not only provides more countertop for food prep and perhaps a serving buffet, it also contains three 25-inch deep drawers for all things

culinary. The top drawer with a removable cutting board has slots for table service.

Moving clockwise around the room, Villa's 92-inch sofa/bed covered with UltraLeather's Bambi invites you to sink into its ultra-comfort seating. Unless you are engaged in a very interesting broadcast on the Lift TV across the room, you very likely will not be able to stay awake. Using an electric air pump concealed in the mattress cover, the sofa/bed makes







into a queen bed for your overnight guests. Overhead you will notice four double-doors opening into two compartments, each with 8 cubic feet of storage. With seat belts bolted into the floor of the slide-out, three adults can be seated on the sofa when the coach is in motion.

The 92-inch DS sofa/bed can be exchanged for two recliners positioned on either side of a fireplace. An UltraLeather L-shaped sofa/bed is optional (MSRP \$2,520) as is theater seating (MSRP \$1,400). See October 2016, page 8, for a picture of theater seating at [rismag.org](http://rismag.org).

Both the driver and passenger chairs rotate 180 degrees to become part of the living room, providing luxurious seating. Both chairs are fully motorized in all directions and the passenger chair includes a leg lift. The ottoman is especially handy for the obvious—propping up your feet while you read or watch television. It's also perfect for anything from snacks to dinner. The top conceals two cubic feet of storage.

Continuing our tour of the 45MP's living area, we find a handsome UltraLeather DE sofa on the south end of the PS slide-out. A DE sofa is sometimes called a "jack-knife" sofa; with a quick jerk below the front cushion, the seat slides forward and the back comes down level with the seat. It is a very comfortable bed for two children or one adult. A 51 x 16 x 4.5-inch drawer is concealed underneath the DE sofa. All of the options are packaged with the 55-inch Lift TV. Activated with a remote, it rises and recedes from an encasement just behind the sofa and below a 24 x 54-inch sliding window. When elevated, the TV completely conceals the large window and is framed by the window's valance. There are two upgrades (both MSRP \$700): an UltraLeather sofa/bed with an Air Coil queen mattress and a recliner with leg lift next to a handsome cabinet housing a fireplace.

On our clockwise tour, we are now at 3 o'clock and standing in front of the dinette/computer workstation that has for over a decade been a popular choice with owners. Although it is an option on the Phaeton, it is standard on the Allegro Bus.

The foundation for the workstation is based in the 18 x 73-inch credenza, capped with a Broadway countertop. It conceals the steel frame bolted to the wall that supports the retractable 25.5 x 40-inch dining table. On the south side of the table, a tray slide-out in the credenza supports a laptop or a keyboard. Just below is a second slide-out for a small printer. Since we often work on the magazine in a Tiffin coach, we usually place our "travel" printer on top of the credenza next to the convenient 110v/USB pop-up service. On the north side of the table, there are two drawers for office paraphernalia and a deep filing cabinet drawer with rails for hanging folders. Shelves directly under the table are concealed by two of Tiffin's matching raised panel doors. Part of that space is occupied by the stereo system's woofer.

When you have guests for dinner, the credenza with its Broadway countertop becomes a buffet for the serving bowls or warming trays (remember the 110v pop-up), preventing the table from becoming crowded. Jim can retrieve the two folding chairs with matching upholstery, usually stored in the basement. The two chairs for daily use are much heavier and very comfortable.

Many owners do not need the computer workstation and opt for the UltraLeather U-shaped dinette (MSRP \$980, not shown).

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Our lingo: To conserve space, we use acronyms for frequently used words. SSCT = solid surface countertop (Broadway is the TMH name for SSCT supplied by Corian, Gibraltar, or Hanek.) PS = passenger side. DS = driver side. We describe places in the coach using a north-south (N-S) orientation. South is the dash, north is the rear cap. A bed slide-out has an east-west (E-W) orientation.





## ENTERTAINMENT AND THE 45MP

Motorhomes are designed to *take you to* entertaining places or to *provide you with* entertainment. While its primary purpose is usually the former, the 45MP does a superb job in accomplishing the latter.

For the 2018 Allegro Bus and Zephyr brands, Tiffin brought in JBL to create a balanced sound system for owners' enjoyment while they are traveling. Harman sound technicians measured with delicate instruments and balanced the sound for each of the two cockpit's environments. The JBL sound system is optional (MSRP \$1,540). The advanced XCITE monitor system that usually goes with the JBL sound system is optional (MSRP \$2,800). See page 17 for additional features and more detail.

Unobtrusively concealed in a Broadway-topped cabinet, the 55-inch LG Smart TV is the center of the surround sound entertainment system. Four speakers hidden in the ceiling and a woofer in the cabinet under the dining table bring regular programming, music, and movies to life with vibrant sound: a NASCAR race, Dvorak's New World Symphony, the Eagles, or George Strait. Activated by a small handheld fob, the television rises quietly in front of the coach's largest window. You can choose between a 24 x 54-inch picture of the out-of-doors or a 55-inch television with programming to take you around the world, both framed with a beautifully designed valance made with cherry, elegant fabrics, and laser-cut motifs.

Except when they are ready for major entertainment, some owners will prefer the 42-inch television mounted above the dash. It is in just the right location for the chef to watch a cooking program and follow directions for creating the evening entrée. The football enthusiast will appreciate having an alternative screen to follow a second game in the conference while he

watches his alma mater play on the big screen. Both are high definition TVs.

If watching TV in bed is your favorite gig, you will love the 42-inch HDTV with sound bar located in the PS slide-out. Yes, there is one more venue—the 48-inch HDTV with sound bar mounted in the outside wall of the forward PS slide-out. Of course, it is protected from sun or rain by the Girard patio awning. The second optional awning (MSRP \$7,000) makes a patio of the entire passenger side of the coach. The lower edges of both awnings feature subtle string lighting controlled by a separate switch. The double awning is a must for tailgating parties.



## THE SPACIOUS BATH

While baths in the Allegro Bus brand are always luxurious and somewhat predictable, this one broke the mold. Without argument, the 43 x 34-inch shower is the focal point. Broadway covers the floor and the walls from floor to ceiling. Five vertical columns of Broadway basket weave tile are interspersed with smooth panels of the Broadway in the Silk Wood décor. A large seat and shelves for bathing items were also created from the granite-like material. A single lever control operates the rain-head shower while the mount for the handheld wand slides up/down on a vertical polished chrome pole. It has a convenient thumb control for intermittent use. A skylight with a sliding closure completes a beautiful shower.

A study of the floor plan immediately calls attention to the fact that access to the bedroom makes this a walk-through master bath. But with ingenuity, the water closet was turned into a half bath facing north with the sliding door opening to the living area and a hinged door opening into the bathroom. With the rear DS slide-out deployed, the footprint of the bath is 5' x 9'4", creating a spacious and comfortable area for bathing and getting ready for the day's activities.

The double lavatory and vanity measures 54 inches wide by 21.5 inches deep with a full Broadway basket weave backsplash. The half-shell lavatories are appointed with single lever polished

chrome controls, individual soft soap dispensers, and two hand towel rings. The two medicine cabinets with full beveled mirror doors (18.5 x 27-inches) are separated by a console cherry cabinet with drawer. The cabinetry for the vanity offers two compartments, each with over two cubic feet of storage, separated by a center stack of three drawers. Each lavatory has a vanity LED light directly above, plus three ceiling lights. Accent lights in the toe kick complete the illumination for the bathroom.

The half bath boasts a 3-shelf medicine cabinet (19.5h x 30w x 4.5d). The ceramic sink is surrounded by a Broadway countertop that covers the vanity cabinet and extends to the back wall, where it covers shelf space and a magazine rack. A second cabinet over the window adds to Tiffin's commitment to maximum storage space, even in the half bath. A double rack for bath towels occupies the wall space above the ceramic toilet.

A large cabinet for towels and linens separates the shower from the daytime living space, providing 15 cubic feet of storage. The cabinet is enclosed with two raised panel doors with three shelves in the upper section and two in the lower. This large a cabinet provides the space for a nice selection of towels for both the owners and guests. We would use the lower cabinet for the linens for the master bedroom and the two sofa beds—a planned space for these items in the right location.





## THE BEDROOM AND WALK-IN CLOSET

Tiffin's architects can take a bedroom with a footprint of 8'6" x 11'9" and make it look like a suite at the Hilton. The king-size bed is still a king-size bed regardless of the floor space. But spatial perception and lighting changes everything.

The lighted soffits, the four-inch reflecting cove in the slide-out fascia, and the contemporary ceiling create an ambience that is complemented by the rich fabrics chosen by Margaret Mia for the comforter and pillows.

Tiffin's attention grabber for this year in the bedroom PS slide-out, a fireplace and a Lift TV, pushes it ahead of the competition. Architecturally, it's a home run.

Following the design of the front Lift TV, Tiffin concealed a 42-inch Smart TV with sound bar that lifts quietly out of the Broadway cabinet into the frame of the valance surrounding the 24 x 37-inch window. The warmth generated by the fireplace will eliminate any call for heating from the Aqua-Hot system or the heat pump (MSRP \$1,400, Lift TV with fireplace).

Framed in a beautiful cabinet built with Broadway, a rock-hard material that looks for all the world like granite, the 33-inch fireplace is centered between two closet/cabinets, each with eight cubic feet of storage space, plus two drawers under each one (see page 11). Each cabinet is designed with four to five adjustable shelves. The two lower shelves in the north cabinet house the LG

entertainment system and the DirecTV receiver. The ladies will be pleased with the full-length mirror (18 x 60 inches) on the wall separating the bedroom from the walk-in closet.

The optional Power Smart Mattress-King (MSRP \$1,680) has two features that really sell this coach. Built on a track, the motorized bed extends 22 inches into the room, making it much easier to make up the bed. In the reverse direction, the head of the bed rises 19 inches up the headboard to make reading or television viewing more comfortable. LED reading lights are mounted in the ceiling above the pillows.

As dependable as the sun coming up, Tiffin always builds cabinets over the bed with at least 11.5 cubic feet of storage space. In the retractable bed design, the architects found room for two more large drawers at the end of the bed frame (24w x 19d x 8h). We also like the small bedside compartments. Each cabinet or the vertical fascia above the cabinet has a 110v service, two USB ports, and a Spyder panel for taking care of the lights throughout the coach without having to get up to turn out the light in the living area that was left on.

The footprint of the closet is 4'1" x 8'. The clothes rod extends eight feet across the entire width of the room. A small electrical cabinet for 110v and 12v breakers is conveniently located in the northwest corner of the closet facing another small cabinet for a







safe in the northeast corner. The optional Splendide stacked washer/dryer (MSRP \$1,960) is located on the right as you enter. On the left, a floor-to-ceiling, creatively designed storage unit has drawn wide approval from owners. The lower half of the unit offers four drawers (each one is 20.375 x 14 x 5 inches). The upper section is enclosed with raised panel doors that conceal two drawers and four large cubbies with cloth-lined baskets.

## THE COCKPIT

In 2013 Tiffin introduced an ergonomically designed dash for the Allegro Bus. Over the next five years as new electronics became available, TMH designers tweaked their dash as needed to incorporate the new features while retaining and improving the ergonomics.

The video and sound options in the 2018 Allegro Bus are amazing. The standard Kenwood radio with single CD and USB input has stereo speakers mounted in the upper left and right corners of the cockpit. A subwoofer in the dash is optional (MSRP \$350). It comes with a 7-inch monitor that serves the three exterior cameras mounted on the mirrors and rear cap. Rand-McNally navigation software is also standard. If the navigation software is in operation, a left or right turn signal will momentarily cancel the video to allow the driver to have a full view of side traffic in that direction.

A second upgrade to the Kenwood equipment includes an 8-channel JBL sound system with a subwoofer (MSRP \$1,540). The sound system was tuned specifically for the cockpit of the Allegro Bus by Kardon sound technicians. The third upgrade is the XITE Advanced Monitor (MSRP \$2,800). The multi-functional system adds a 4.5 x 8-inch monitor that provides ten options, including RADIO, MEDIA CENTER, SIRIUS-XM, BLUETOOTH, HDMI, AUX, CAMERA, IPOD, NAVI, and SETUP. The Kenwood 7-inch monitor now serves solely as a monitor for the three cameras. It mounts side-by-side with the XITE monitor. As one of its functional options, the color XITE monitor provides a larger view of lane traffic on both sides of the coach by touching LEFT, CENTER, or RIGHT icons across the top of the monitor. A third 7-inch monitor on a flexible arm is mounted on the wall by the passenger chair (see photo, facing page). The passenger can take full control of radio and navigation operations.

Eight of the 10 options are currently activated in the XITE software: The graphics for the Radio are very large, making it relatively safe for the driver to

choose six pre-selected favorites or touch SEEK to allow the radio to search for the strongest station. The Media Center can store a playlist which the driver can preselect for playing while underway.

Owners can subscribe to SiriusXM immediately although a free six-month trial is offered. You can Bluetooth your cellphones to the XITE system which plays through the JBL speakers and create a calling list to achieve hands-free operation. Selecting the Camera option will make the XITE monitor serve the three exterior cameras. If you are using the Radio or navigation displays, the XITE screen will instantly become a traffic monitor when you use the turn signal.

The navigation software by Rand McNally is standard in the Allegro Bus and is especially designed to select accommodative travel routes for large motorhomes. The software will locate campgrounds, fueling stations, attractions, state and national parks, and more. It will reroute you around construction, weather conditions, and accidents.

The iPod option *will connect* to your recorded music on an iPod or an MP3 player in the near future. The option is still under development. The Setup option allows the owner to set the parameters for audio, video, and system operation.

You will notice the recent addition of Denso's three large dials to control the automotive heating and air conditioning. Switch from heat to AC with one dial, a continuous dial to select any fan speed, and one dial to control vent selection and close the outside air intake. Two USB ports and a 12v socket are located just above the Denso controls and below the 7-inch camera monitor.

By moving a few of the cockpit switches to the side consoles of the driver and passenger chairs, there are now only eight that are within the driver's fingertip reach under the JBL monitor. Only the solar and night shade toggles are important to driving as a shield to bright sunlight. The driver's side console has a toggle for the engine brake and two toggles to control the





night and solar shades for the DS window. The air horn toggle changes the automotive horn to a booming truck horn when you hit the center of the steering wheel. The DS window, which has a screen, is activated by a switch in the console.

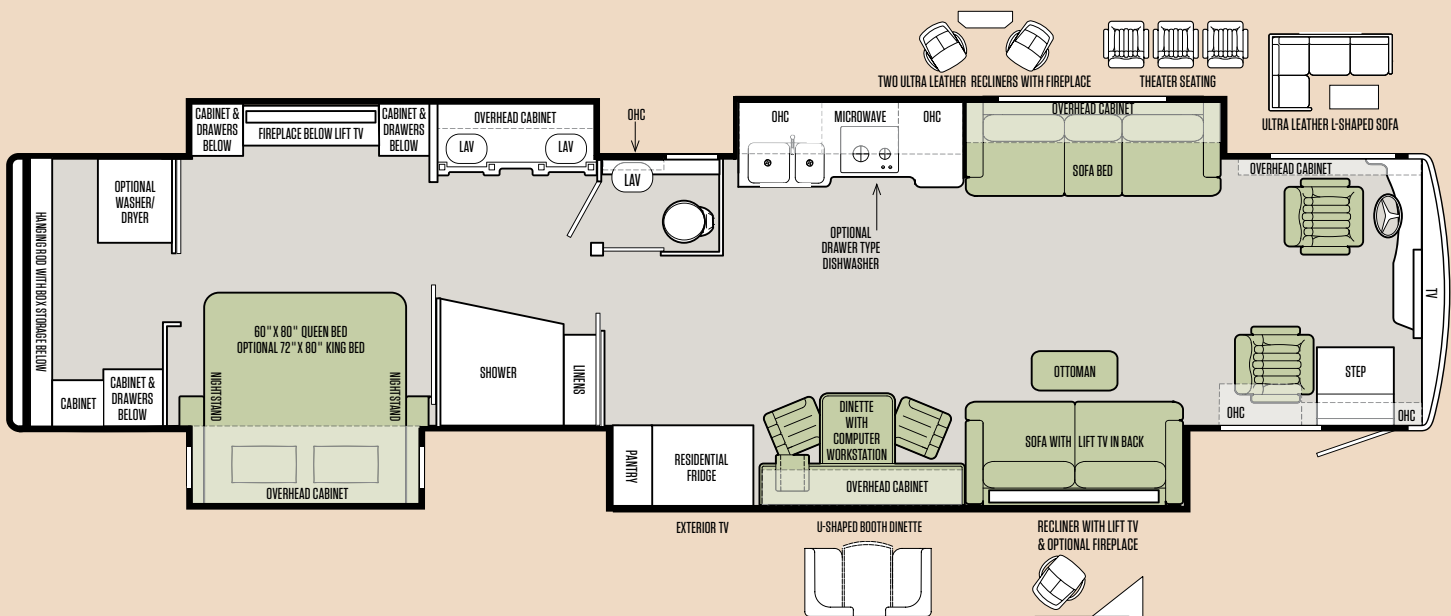
The coach's leveling system is located on the north end of the console. Valid Manufacturing provides the air leveling system while HWH supplies its hydraulic jacks. The cup holder, mirror controls, and the 6-speed Allison Transmission gear selector occupy the south end. Two pockets are recessed in the lower console.

The dash to the left of the steering column has several operational controls: the parking brake (bright yellow), parking

and head lights, dimmer for dash lights, two USB ports, display for the Mobileye, and toggles for the engine preheat, auxiliary start, and pedals in/out.

The Mobileye Collision Avoidance System provides warnings for accident prevention (optional MSRP \$1,540). A researcher at Hebrew University in Jerusalem evolved his academic research into a technical device in which a vision system can detect vehicles using only a camera and software algorithms running on a microprocessor. When the motorhome strays across a white line near the shoulder or a line in the center of the road, an alarm warns the driver to make a correction. With regard to the distance between

the motorhome and the vehicle in front of it, the Mobileye measures that space in seconds. If your speed is 60 mph, you are moving at 88 ft/sec; at 70 mph, then 103.67 ft/sec. The Mobileye goes into a red warning mode when the coach is less than one second behind the vehicle in front. It settles down when you are a full two seconds behind the next vehicle. The warning is relieved when you are 2.5 or more seconds behind. Although occasionally mistaken, the Mobileye knows the speed limit and issues a verbal warning in an authoritative voice when you exceed the limit. All things considered, it is a good safety device that will make you a better driver.





## CONTROLLING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Tiffin Motorhomes partnered with Spider Controls Corporation of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, two years ago to begin a collaborative development of software that focuses on the entire coach as an *environment*. The motorhome can be programmed with owner preferences through choices made in six major folders and many sub-folders. The most outstanding feature is user-friendliness. Using the software is an intuitive discovery process and is not intimidating.

Six white icons on a black field are located just below the 6 x 3.375-inch interactive display. Each icon represents a primary folder containing several sub-folders. The six primary folders contain set-up information and owner preferences: Home, Lighting, Power, Climate, Slides, and Settings/Diagnostics. Using my finger as the stylus, I selected the Home Folder. It provides an initial entry point to the remaining five primary folders.



By touching LIGHTING, the screen opens with options to control the exterior lights (door, porch, road, awning, under coach, window accent, and slide box) plus 10 light sequences in the main living-galley-dining area. A third sub-folder BED / BATH LIGHTS opens all of the lighting options



in the half bath, full bath, and bedroom. The LIGHT MASTER provides a one touch switch to turn OFF all of the lights currently ON in the coach. And reciprocally, to turn the selected lights back ON.



The controls for heating and air conditioning are located in the lower left quadrant of the HOME folder. Touching either of the three interior zones will bring up a full screen CLIMATE sub-folder that presents the controls for each zone. There are three zones for AC: front, mid, and rear. For each zone, touch AC, AUTO, and set the temperature using the red and blue triangles to raise and lower the temp settings. If you wish to only circulate air in the coach, touch the fan icon and then the HIGH or LOW speed choices. When the outside temps are above 36 degrees, you can use the heat pump to warm the coach. Touch HEAT PUMP, AUTO, and set the temperature.

The FURN (furnace) setting is the Aqua-Hot heating system that warms the coach as well as heating its unlimited supply of hot water. The heating sensors for warming the coach are located in the front and rear. Consequently, there is no temp setting for the Aqua-Hot in the display's MID section. Touch FURN, AUTO, and set the temperature.

Across the bottom of the CLIMATE folder, you will see Aqua-Hot's power source: diesel or electricity. In either case, the Aqua-Hot unit heats on demand a transfer fluid that is pumped to six heat exchangers similar to small radiators. Air is quietly blown over the radiators to warm the air evenly throughout the coach. You can choose different tempera-

tures for the bedroom-bath area and the living room-galley area. The Aqua-Hot system also heats the water. Diesel will produce hotter water as well as a continuous, unending flow of hot water when you are in the shower.

If you purchased the optional heated tile floors (MSRP \$4,900), you may select one of five heat levels in the lower left or right of the sub-folder's screen. The bedroom and bath control is on the left and the living room/galley area is on the right. It is not a temp setting, but more simply one of five levels which you find most comfortable. From experience, we can tell you that stepping out on a warm floor on a cold morning is very comforting. The warmth from the floor heat rises, reducing the amount of heat needed from other sources (Aqua-Hot diesel or electric, the heat pump, and the fireplace). Since the floor is electrically heated, you are using the 50-amp source in your campsite.



When you touch the BATTERY folder to the right of the HOME folder, it will take you to the POWER screen that allows you to trace and analyze the source for incoming power and how it is being used. Formerly located in a cabinet over the driver's chair, the touch panel for the inverter is





now located in the lower right corner of the POWER folder. Touching it will lead to a screen with a series of owner-preferred set-ups for the inverter (not shown).

The first level of the SLIDES folder (icon: two gears) alerts you to the status of the ignition switch and the park brake. There are six sub-folders across the bottom of the screen:

BED LIFT, SHADES, FANS, SLIDES, LOCKS, TV LIFTS.

The BED LIFT props you up in bed for reading or watching TV. You can also operate the lift from a bedside control. The bed must be in the lift position when you bring in the slide-out.


The SHADES sub-folder has icons to individually control every shade in the living area—solar or night. You can also lower or raise all of them in unison.

The FANS sub-folder controls all three exhaust fans and the bedroom ceiling fan.

The SLIDES sub-folder controls the two rear slide-outs. The two front slides are controlled by toggle switches mounted at shoulder level in the sides of the passenger and driver chairs. This location prevents an accidental collision of the incoming slide with the back of the chair.

The LOCKS sub-folder controls the locks on the basement doors and entry door.

The TV LIFTS sub-folder controls the lift for the 55-inch TV in the living area and the 42-inch TV in the bedroom.

The SETTINGS folder offers choices for Celsius and Fahrenheit, screen brightness, resetting the time, and color choices for the screen itself. A major option on the screen is DIAGNOSTICS. If you are having computer, technical, or mechanical problems, a diagnostics report from this folder will give a certified technician a big head start in determining the nature of and isolating any problem in the coach. 

## Plant Tours

Monday–Friday at 9:30. Meet in the Allegro Welcome Center 15 minutes before departure. Tour headsets and protective glasses provided. You'll be on the production lines seeing it up close and personal. Questions are encouraged.

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# SPECIFICATIONS: Model tested 2018 Allegro Bus 45MP, Quad Slide Base MSRP\* – \$431,900 MSRP as tested with options – \$470,750

## STANDARD FEATURES

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

**Automotive**  
PowerGlide chassis  
Allison 3000 MH six-speed automatic transmission with lock-up (torque converter)  
Cummins 450-hp, ISL 8.9L, electronic/turbo-charged diesel with 1,250 lbs.-ft. torque  
Air ride (6 air bags)  
Aluminum wheels  
Independent front suspension  
ABS brakes & two-stage compression engine brake  
Adjustable fuel and brake pedals  
VIP Smart Wheel  
Side-mounted radiator  
Cruise control  
Fog lights  
Daytime running lights  
Emergency start switch

**General Exterior**  
Fiberglass front & rear caps  
Dual fuel fills  
Large tinted one-piece windshield  
10Kw Onan® generator, manual slide-out  
Auto generator start  
50-amp service  
50-amp power cord reel  
Three low-profile roof 15,000 BTU ACs with heat pumps  
A/C condensation drains to rear of coach  
Heated chrome mirrors with integrated cameras, remote mirror adjustments  
Back-up camera in rear cap  
Three power roof vents with 3-speed fans  
Single motor intermittent wipers  
Exterior TV with sound bar  
Gel-coat fiberglass walls  
Full-body paint with protective film on front cap  
Double electric step  
Dual pane tinted windows  
Exterior patio and door LED lights  
Exterior LED light on driver side  
Powered door awning  
Single Girard™ powered patio awning  
Girard™ window awning package (3 windows)  
Slide-out covers  
Custom mud flap  
Swing-out basement storage doors with gas shocks, remote locks  
Pass-through basement storage  
Basement cargo lights  
Motion sensor lighting for basement storage  
Remote locking system for entry door  
Deadbolt front entrance door  
Chrome handles on compartment doors  
Flush mounted dual pane windows  
Docking lights  
Heated water and holding tank compartments  
SeeLevel™ monitor pad in utility bay  
Exterior rinse hose with soap dispenser & paper towel holder  
Six house batteries  
Pure sine wave inverter with 120-amp converter & transfer switching  
Black holding tank flush system  
Water filter  
Gravity water fill  
Undercoating  
110v exterior receptacle  
110v / 12v converter  
Digital TV antenna  
Concealed air horns  
Exterior ground effect lights  
Low profile in-motion satellite dish  
Cable TV ready hookup

**Driver's Compartment**  
Power UltraLeather™ driver and passenger seats with passenger footrest  
Contemporary wraparound dash  
Drawer in step well  
Power step well cover  
Driver side power window  
Courtesy lights in step well  
Lighted switches  
Dual dash fans  
One drawer in dash with compartment and sliding cup holder  
Cup holders on driver & passenger side  
12v disconnect switch

Kenwood AM/FM stereo with 7-inch monitor  
XM satellite-ready radio includes receiver and antenna (requires subscription)  
In-dash navigation system  
Front overhead TV  
Two USB dash receptacles  
Passenger console with 9 toggle switches & USB receptacles  
Driver console houses gear shift, mirror controls, engine brake, leveling system, shades  
Slide-out tray in PS dash  
Power solar & privacy windshield shades  
Solar & privacy shades for DS & PS side windows  
Solid non-opening PS window  
Custom infrared repeater system on all TVs  
Color rear vision monitor system with side-view cameras activated by turn signals  
Seatbelts integrated into driver & passenger chairs  
Fire extinguisher

**Living Area / Dinette**  
Package A (standard):  
UltraLeather™ DE Sofa Bed with Lift TV (PS)  
UltraLeather Air Coil hide-a-bed sofa (DS)  
Mid-section 55" LG Smart+ color TV, surround sound  
Dinette with computer workstation

**Galley**  
Polished solid surface countertops with sink covers  
Farmhouse stainless steel sink  
Built-in soap dispenser  
Expand-an-Island  
Induction cooktop  
Permanently mounted folding solid surface cooktop cover  
Single lever sink faucet with sprayer  
Built-in soap dispenser  
Stainless steel convection/microwave oven with exterior vent  
LED task lights above countertop  
2.5" deep lighted toe kick  
Galley backsplash  
Stainless steel residential refrigerator with ice & water dispenser in door  
Slide-out cabinet under double sink with compartments for sink covers & trash can  
Power roof vent with 3-speed fan

**Full Bath**  
Two medicine cabinets with large mirrors over vanity  
Solid surface vanity top with sculpted double lavatory  
Four LED recessed lights over vanity  
Full backsplash with rope lighting  
2.5" toe kick with recessed lighting  
One cabinet over toilet  
Macerator toilet  
Solid surface shower walls with basket weave insets  
Rainmaker shower head  
Shower wand with flex hose mounted on adjustable vertical slide  
Built-in solid surface seat in shower  
Skylight over shower with LED light in sliding solar cover  
Aqua-Hot continuous hot water  
Power roof vent with 3-speed fan in full bath

**Half Bath**  
One medicine cabinet over lavatory with one side cabinet  
Four vanity lights  
Solid surface vanity top with ceramic farmhouse-style sink  
Broadway basket weave solid surface backsplash  
Toilet with sprayer  
Power roof vent with 3-speed fan

**Bedroom**  
Ceiling fan  
Four OH storage cabinets in bed slide-out  
Bed comforter with designer pillows  
Sleeping pillows with shams  
King-size bed with memory foam mattress  
Under bed storage  
Night stands with 110v and USB outlets & solid surface countertops  
UltraLeather upholstered headboard framed with curved wood molding  
Two floor-to-ceiling cabinets with double-door enclosed shelves and two drawers  
Side windows in bed slide-out with solar & privacy shades  
Exit window with solar & privacy shades in DS slide-out

Carbon monoxide and LPG leak detectors  
Entertainment system concealed in double-door cabinet  
Pre-wired for second satellite receiver  
42" LG Smart+ television  
DirecTV® receiver (subscription required)  
DVD player with surround sound for living room

**Walk-in Closet**  
Storage cabinet wired & plumbed for washer/dryer  
Floor-to-ceiling chest with six drawers, four open compartments with baskets  
96" clothes hanging rod across rear of coach  
Corner safe

**General Interior**  
7-ft. ceilings  
Soft touch vinyl ceilings with lighted soffit ceiling in living area and bedroom  
Porcelain tile flooring throughout the coach (excluding slide-outs)  
High gloss raised-panel hardwood cabinet doors and drawers  
Aqua-Hot hydronic heating system  
Extraordinaire™ AC system  
5 x 7-inch Spyder touch monitor for complete environmental control  
Solid cherry cabinets, fascias, & doors with concealed hinges  
LED lighting throughout coach  
Complete cable wiring (interfacing with surround sound & satellite receiver)  
Home theater with concealed surround sound speakers  
Powered solar & privacy shades in living area  
SeeLevel™ tank monitor in Spyder control panel  
Carbon monoxide and smoke detectors  
Vacuum cleaner with VacPan

## OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

White mahogany full body paint (NC)  
Silk Wood interior décor (NC)  
Glazed Canyon Cherry Wood cabinets  
JBL sound system  
Advanced monitor system  
Winegard Connect  
Mobileye Collision Avoidance System  
Second Paramount Awning  
Bedroom LiftTV w/fireplace  
Contemporary ceiling  
Dishwasher  
Two powered slide-out storage trays  
External under slide-out lights  
Heated tile floor  
Exterior roof ladder  
Extended cycle batteries  
Solar panel prep  
Stacked washer/dryer  
Basement refrigerator-freezer  
Power Smart Mattress with Memory Foam – King

## OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE

One or two storage compartment slide-out trays (not powered)  
Vertical slide opening window – PS  
Glazed Cherry Wood solid cabinet doors & door fronts  
Glazed Natural Cherry Wood solid cabinet doors & door fronts  
Luster Sheen cabinet finish (only with glazed cabinets)  
UltraLeather U-shaped dinette-PS  
Sub-woofer in dash  
Solar panel  
Wolf cooktop upgrade  
UltraLeather L-shaped sofa/bed – DS  
Theater seating – DS  
Two recliners w/fireplace – DS  
UltraLeather air coil sofa/bed w/Lift TV – PS  
One recliner w/Lift TV & fireplace – PS  
Memory Foam mattress – Queen (60" x 80")  
Memory Foam mattress – King (72" x 80")  
Dual Control Air Comfort mattress – Queen (60" x 80")  
Dual Control Air Comfort mattress – King (72" x 80")  
Power Smart bed with Memory Foam – Queen (60" x 80")

Other Choices for Paint, Décor, and Cabinet  
Finishes at no additional charge  
Any of the six other paint colors

Either of the other two décors: Bukhara or Mahogany  
Any of these three cabinet finishes: Cherry Wood, Natural Cherry, and White Chocolate (bath only)

## MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 326"  
Overall length – 45'  
Overall height w/roof air – 12' 11"  
Interior height – 83"  
Overall width – 101"  
Interior width – 96"

## WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 51,000 lb.  
Front GAWR – 17,000 lb.  
Rear GAWR – 23,000 lb.  
Tag GAWR – 13,300 lb.  
GCWR – 66,000 lb.  
UVW – 39,680 lb. as tested  
CCC – 11,320 lb.  
Trailer hitch capacity – 15,000 lb.

## POWER TRAIN

Engine – Cummins 450-hp, ISL 8.9 liter, electronic, turbocharged diesel  
Torque – 1,250 lb.-ft. at 1,400 rpm  
Transmission – Allison 3000MH electronic six speed with two overdrives  
Tire Size – 315/80R22.5 Michelin  
Alternator – 210 amps

## CHASSIS

Frame – PowerGlide chassis  
Frame Design – Raised rail  
Anti-locking Braking System – Full air brakes with Anti-locking Braking System (ABS)  
Air Suspension (front) – ZF independent front suspension  
Air Suspension (rear) – Dana axle with Reyco suspension  
Air Suspension (tag) – Reyco axle and air suspension  
Shock Absorbers (front) – Sachs tuned  
Shock Absorbers (rear) – Bilstein tuned  
Leveling: Valid Air Leveling System in combination with HWH hydraulic automatic jacks

## CONSTRUCTION

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

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Sleeps – 4 adults  
Fuel tank – 150 gallons  
Freshwater – 90 gallons  
Black water – 50 gallons  
Grey water – 70 gallons

## MSRP

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

## UVW

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

## DEALERS

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

## PLEASE NOTE

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



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Recalls for 2016–2018

**NHTSA # 15V-880, Transport Canada #2016-035 Coach Step Double & Triple Electric Entry Steps**

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, could exist on the following models of motorhomes: **2007-2010 Allegro Bays, 2008-2015 Allegro Open Roads and REDs, 2008-2015 Allegro Buses, 2008-2015 Phaetons.** The specific motorhomes contain Coach Step Electric Double or Triple entry steps that were manufactured between May 25, 2007 and December 18, 2014 by Lippert Components, Inc. On certain motorhomes equipped with these Coach Step electric entry steps, an internal bolt on the steps that attaches the fan gear assembly to the steps could fracture. This results in the fan gear disengaging from the steps, which could cause the steps to stop in an unexpected position and appear to be loose or unstable. If the steps become unstable, it could cause a person to fall, resulting in injury.

Please contact Lippert Components, Inc (LCI) at 574-537-8900 or customerservice@lci1.com to arrange for repair.

**NHTSA # 16V-397, Transport Canada # 2016-305 ZF/Bosch Steering Gear Recall**

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, could exist on the following models of motorhomes: **2015-2016 Allegro Buses, and 2014-2016 Phaetons.** The specific units affected were built on Tiffin Motorhome’s PowerGlide Chassis. Tiffin Motorhomes was notified by ZF North America of the possibility that some steering gear boxes mounted on the front axle were built using the wrong spacer. If the wrong spacer was installed in a steering gear box, the insufficient height can result in too much play. This could lead to the connection wearing out, which could lead to a loss of connection between the steering wheel and front axle wheels. A loss of connection while driving may cause a sudden loss of steering control, increasing the risk of a vehicle crash.

**NHTSA # 16V-532, Transport Canada # 2016-389, Tiffin Recall # TIF-100 Breaking of Windshield Wiper Arms**

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, could exist on the following models of motorhomes:

**2007-2011 Allegro Open Roads & REDs, 2007-2010 Allegro Bays, 2010-2011 Allegro Breezes, 2007-2011 Allegro Buses, 2007-2011 Phaetons and 2007-2011 Zephyrs.** These motorhomes are equipped with windshield wiper arms that could break causing the wiper arms and blades to fall off. If the wiper arms were to break, this would reduce the driver’s visibility in rainy conditions and could increase the possibility of a crash. Tiffin Motorhomes will be supplying owners with a new set of wiper arms to replace the defective ones.

**NHTSA # 16V-692, Tiffin #TIF-104 Incorrect Weight Capacity Sticker on Allegro Open Road Hitch**

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes: **2015 – 2017 Allegro Open Roads.** These motorhomes have a sticker attached to the tow hitch that lists an incorrect weight capacity for the hitch. The incorrect label states a gross trailer capacity of 10,000 LB with a max tongue weight of 1,000 LB. The correct label should state a gross trailer capacity of 5,000 LB with a max tongue weight of 500 LB. If the hitch is loaded to the capacity on the original sticker, this could lead to a failure of the hitch. Failure of the hitch could result in the loss of the tow vehicle which could result in a crash. Tiffin Motorhomes is sending out a correct weight capacity sticker to be attached to the hitch of your motorhome.

**NHTSA # 17V-113, Tiffin #TIF-105 Incorrect Weight Capacity Sticker on Allegro Open Road Hitch**

NOTE: This is an expansion of 16V-692, TIF-104, issued to include additional **2017 Allegro Open Road** Motorhomes.

**NHTSA # 17V-163, Tiffin # TIF-106, Phaeton Exhaust Modification 2010-2012 on PowerGlide Chassis ONLY**

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes: 2010 - 2012 Phaeton’s that are built with 2010 EPA-Certified engines on a PowerGlide Chassis. It has been found that the exhaust pipe

is mounted too close to the underside of the floor. A heat shield and insulation that was previously installed on these coaches may fail and allow excessive heat to contact the floor of the coach which can result in a fire. Tiffin Motorhomes will remove the existing *side inlet* DPF exhaust configuration, and install a new *end inlet* DPF exhaust configuration on these coaches to provide greater clearance between the exhaust tube and the floor. This repair will be made at no cost to you. This repair will take approximately 12 hours to complete. NOTE: This is an expansion of 15V-612.

**NHTSA Recall # 17V-200, Tiffin Recall # TIF-107 2011-2016 Allegro Open Road Rail Attachment for Tow Hitch**

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes: **2011-2016 Allegro Open Roads.** These motorhomes have incorrectly sized holes at the attachment point in the frame rail for the tow hitch. Under certain loading conditions the hitch and/or the tow vehicle could become detached from the motorhome. Failure of the hitch could result in the loss of the tow vehicle, which could result in a crash causing injury or damage to property. Tiffin Motorhomes will provide frame rail extension liner brackets that will correct the size of the bolt holes.

**NHTSA Recall # 17V-232, Tiffin Recall # TIF-108 2017 Allegro Breeze Central Steering Ball Joints**

Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes: 2017 Allegro Breeze Motorhomes. Tiffin Motorhomes has been notified that some Independent Front Suspension (IFS) modules manufactured by Reyco Granning and installed on these models of motorhomes could contain loose ball joints. If loose ball joints are not detected, they may eventually separate from their mating part, which could result in a loss of steering control. This increases the possibility of a motor vehicle crash. Specific involved motorhomes will need to be inspected to determine if the IFS modules contain loose ball joints. If loose ball joints are found they will be repaired.

**Kidde Fire Extinguisher  
RECALL**

**Kidde NHTSA Recall #17E-062  
Tiffin NHTSA Recall #17V-841**

Customers with Tiffin units from models 2003 to early models of 2018 should immediately contact Kidde to see if your fire extinguisher is involved. If so, you can request a free replacement fire extinguisher and instructions on returning the recalled unit, as it may not work properly in a fire emergency.

Contact Kidde toll-free at 855-262-3540  
Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Time,  
Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Eastern Time, or online:  
**www.kidde.com** and **click on “Product Safety Recall”**  
for more information.



# The Far North of the Far Northwest



*There's an emerald land in the Pacific Northwest where, in spring, a thousand rainbow-hued acres of tulips and daffodils line-dance in the breezes. Close by, the glacier-crowned Cascade Mountains reign in splendor, spawning boisterous rivers that plunge over misty waterfalls and drain into the Skagit and Nooksack Valleys. Spring is an inviting time to meander Skagit and Whatcom counties in the far northwest of The Evergreen State, Washington.*

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A travel story and photography by Suzanne Clemenz



☘ This is a land of world-class beauty, and rain is absent for days on end mid-May to mid-October. Annually 159 days are sunny. Carry a compact umbrella, wear water-resistant shoes, and head for the towns, the trails, the mountains, and the beaches. Check satellite cloud images online before hiking the mountains. Common sense helps keep you dry and safe.

### Hubs and Spokes Strategy

Save yourself lots of time running up and down Interstate 5 by exploring Skagit and Whatcom Counties separately. The Mount Vernon/Burlington area is the hub for Skagit County. There's a KOA just north of Burlington that's farther than most parks from train noise. It has good access to the Tulip Festival, unforgettable Chuckanut Drive (SR 11), and Highway 20 east into the Cascades.

To visit Whatcom County move 25 miles north to Bellingham and choose an RV park. Explore Bellingham, then east to Mount Baker and Mt. Shuksan, and north to Blaine and Vancouver, B.C. You have a wealth of discoveries at hand.

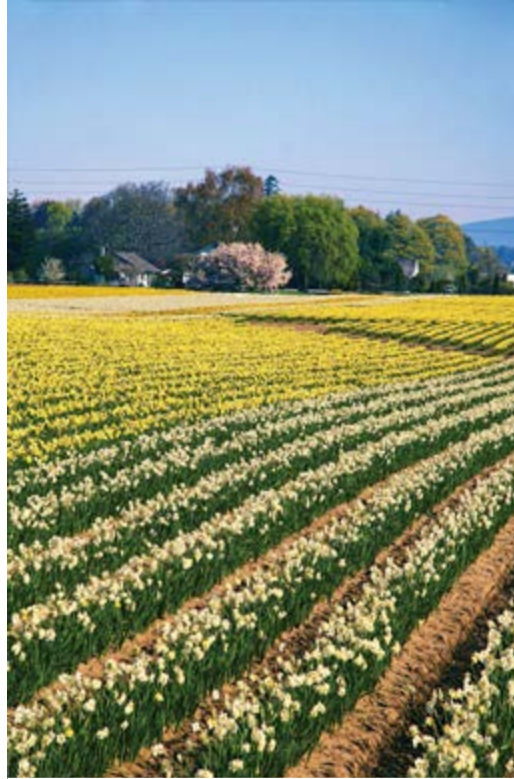
### Skagit River Delta—A Floral Spectacular

The Skagit River (Skad'-jit) 158.5 miles long, starts in a Canadian mountain pass and is fed by six tributaries before reaching its delta just west of Mount Vernon. Then it drains into coastal waterways. Within that delta are several thousand acres of rich farmland, including over 1,000 acres producing flower bulbs and 16 acres of floral bulb greenhouses. The Roozen family's Washington Bulb Company (WBC) is a major Skagit Valley employer and the largest tulip bulb grower in the U.S.

The Roozen family were Holland tulip growers in the late 1600s. In 1947, descendant and immigrant William Roozen planted tulips and daffodils in the Skagit Valley. By 1955 William's hard work enabled him to purchase the five acre Washington Bulb Company from pioneer bulb farmers. In 1985 William Roozen turned over the greatly expanded company to his six grown children. He died in 2002, knowing that with 35 grandchildren the company had a blossoming future. Daffodils and tulips are visible in the fields and greenhouses contain additional bulb species. WBC ships tens of millions of bulbs annually and over 70 million cut flowers.

### The Mount Vernon Tulip Festival

Approximately 300,000 tourists visit Mount Vernon's spring Tulip Festival and public flower art is visible year-round. The downtown Riverwalk along Skagit River has a 40-foot high stack entwined with painted tulips and a 12-foot tall Tulip Dance sculpture as well. The I-5 Kincaid Street exit has retaining walls featuring 20-foot metal irises. Around the corner is a lengthy mural of Skagit



*Opposite page:* A rainbow of tulips in Mount Vernon's rich farmlands is celebrated annually with April's month-long Tulip Festival.

*Left:* LaConnor is on a narrow saltwater channel that separates the mainland from Fidalgo Island. The annual Daffodil Festival in LaConnor takes place the last two weekends of March.

*Left, below:* A windmill in the Roozengaarde Display Garden pays homage to the Dutch ancestry of the Roozen family's patriarch, who came to the Skagit Valley in the 1940s.







Each year Roozengaarde's 5-acre Display Garden is replanted in a different layout so visitors can see something different from the previous years. Small signs tell the name of each flower variety. The Garden is open daily throughout the festival.

Valley with Mount Baker on the horizon and bright tulips across the foreground.

During the last two weekends in March, the LaConnor's Daffodil Festival leads up to the April Tulip Festival. Charming LaConnor has galleries, museums, boutiques, and excellent waterside restaurants and pubs. Daffodil Festival events include home and garden tours, Kiwanis salmon barbecue, a farm-to-pint festival, and more. Weekdays you can photograph nearby flowering fields.

Mount Vernon's Tulip Festival has 11 to 17 events daily including a salmon barbecue, the Skagit farm to pint festival, a photo contest, photography tours, original art at Tulip Town, and Tulip Country Bike Tours. Some events, like the Eagle Haven Winery-Woodfest Weekend and the 2.5K and 5K Family Fun Run, happen just once or twice. Repetitive events let you enjoy the festival at leisure. [tulipfestival.org/events](http://tulipfestival.org/events).

Washington Bulb Company's five-acre Roosengaarde Display Garden is open daily during the Festival. Each year 300,000 individual bulbs are planted in a new layout. A Dutch windmill makes an ideal photo backdrop. Each flower's name is posted, so you can list favorites for correctly-timed shipments. The garden is truly memorable.

Tulip Town is a 30-acre farm owned by Tom and Jeanette DeGoede. During the Tulip Festival you can enjoy their outdoor display gardens, windmill, and blossoming fields. There are tractor-drawn trolley rides, an indoor showroom, a bulb and gift store, and special events.

An online map has flower symbols that turn yellow or red when a field is blossoming, plus driving directions to Roosengaarde and Tulip Town. [tulips.com/bloommap](http://tulips.com/bloommap)



Between LaConnor, Washington, and Mt. Baker on the horizon, the Skagit Valley's fertile fields produce flower bulbs and many types of fruits and vegetables. There are many towns, as well.

### An Agricultural Cornucopia

Whatcom County, just 25 miles north, has no bulb farms. Yet Whatcom County originated the flower bulb industry in Washington and held the first Tulip Festival in 1920. But 1929 brought a Nor'easter that swept down from Canada with violent winds and hard freezes. The Whatcom bulb crop was killed. Surprisingly, the silt-rich Skagit Valley delta protects the bulbs from such weather anomalies.

Skagit County produces \$300 million worth of crops, livestock, and dairy products on 90,000 acres. It grows berries, pickling cucumbers, cauliflower, broccoli, six types of potatoes, winery grapes, organic produce, and vegetable seed crops, according to the Washington State University Extension Service. Apples are grown east of the Cascades.

October's Festival of Family Farms includes Skagit Valley farm tours, animal exhibits, kids fun, crop mazes, pumpkin patches, and something never found in Iowa—oyster shucking demonstrations and shellfish farming.



Skagitonians to Preserve Farmlands has popular in-person, behind-the-scenes farm tours. [festivaloffamilyfarms.com/](http://festivaloffamilyfarms.com/) Or take a Talking Fields self-driving tour accessed from your cell phone or laptop as part of their InFARmation Programs. [skagitonians.org/community-programs/](http://skagitonians.org/community-programs/) Produce on area grocery shelves and many area farmers' markets is visibly plump and *fresh!* Enjoy some in your Tiffin galley.

### Beyond the Tulip Festival

Skagit County isn't a one-trick pony. Mount Vernon's lively downtown is adjacent to Riverwalk's many activities. Visit the huge C. L. Easton used book store, antique stores, clothing shops, and galleries. Skagit Valley Co-op Grocery has fresh deli meals with indoor and outdoor seating. Its nearby C-Square & Third Street Cafe is great, there's a good Thai restaurant, and Calico Cupboard has organic breakfasts and lunches. Valley Shine Distillery has locally distilled spirits and excellent bistro food. There are coffee shops, a wine bar and brew pubs, all in a very walkable area. Just south of downtown there's Poulsbo RV, a Tiffin dealer and repair service.

Washington State University's Discovery Garden on Memorial Highway has 27 beautiful themed gardens including Hot Color Border, Japanese, Fall and Winter, Heather, Composting, Four Seasons, Fuchsia, Nature-scape, and others. Some fields have grape vines and espaliered apples and pears in abundance. Ask a docent about programs and classes. Open 6 a.m.-6 p.m.

Burlington honors local berry and dairy farms with Berry Dairy Days in June. It has an old car show, parade, salmon BBQ, free outdoor movie, and fireworks. Burlington has shopping and outlet malls, Costco, and other big box stores.

Seven miles west of Burlington on Hwy 20, then north on Bayview-Edison Road, is Bay View State Park. Enjoy beachcombing and kayaking the park's 1,280 feet of shoreline. The woodsy, level Burlington/Anacortes KOA on I-5 north of town is farther from train noise, or stay at the clean, sunny RV park on Padilla Bay's shore behind the Swinomish Casino on Hwy 20.

The tides in northwest Washington are large and strong. Use a tide table to avoid beaching your kayak on acres of mud flats. Padilla Bay National Estuarian Research Reserve and its Breazeale Interpretive Center are just north up Bayview-Edison Road. The Reserve protects 8,000 acres of eelgrass essential to young salmon, crabs, herring, and birds. Bring your binoculars. View aquarium and marine exhibits at the Interpretive Center, hike the short trails to the woods or beach, attend a class or a talk. Great for kids of all ages, even on rainy days.

Golf, anyone? Overlook's executive course is by Big Lake. Swinomish Golf Links is an 18-hole course at the



Produce, fruits and berries, meats, poultry and eggs, lotions, crafts, and hot Swedish pancakes are for sale at Mount Vernon's Riverwalk Farmer's Market Saturdays May through mid-October.



Espaliered pears, apples, crabapples and grapes as well other fruits are grown in Washington State University's Discovery Garden. Classes and workshops are also given, and weddings are performed in the many lovely settings.



Lynden in the Nooksack River valley is the red raspberry capital of Washington. It cultivates many other berries as well. It has a Northwest Raspberry Festival and a Northwest Washington fair.





Ross Lake Resort in North Cascades National Park is accessed by trail or by a truck ride to a ferry. Cabins have hot water, kitchen, pots and pans, but bring your own food. Rent boats and fishing gear. There are hikers' campgrounds. Boats may be portaged in via Diablo Lake, or in Canada.



Washington's Highway 20 heads east from Burlington and is subject to weather-related closures. It can be icy even if not closed and great when roads are clear and dry. It is a beautiful drive and recreation areas are plentiful.

Hwy 20/Christianson Road traffic light. Lovely Eaglemont Golf Course in eastern Mount Vernon is 4-star rated. Avalon Golf Links just north of Burlington has hosted U.S. Open Qualifiers and the PNW PGA Championship. Inspiring views are a given.

### Ross Lake Recreation Area and North Cascades National Park

Head east up scenic Hwy 20 from Burlington to Ross Lake Recreation area and North Cascades National Park. Stop first at the U.S. Forest Service Station at 810 Hwy 20 for maps, recreational input, permits, or passes. There are great outdoor opportunities up the road.

Places worth noting on Hwy. 20 are Sedro Woolley's Museum with exhibits of local life 100 years ago, including a home kitchen, schoolroom, dentist's office, even old City Hall and its jail. Hamilton is tiny but has a large, high-tech, high-security company, Janicki Industries. They engineer and manufacture parts, tools, and prototypes from advanced composite materials and metals, often very large scale, for NASA, aerospace and other clients.

Concrete, population 725, boasts high school alum author Tobias Wolff. His memoir, *This Boy's Life* (1989) is a movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert DeNiro, and Ellen Barkin. Two campgrounds near the Concrete area have roomy sites, hookups, and dump stations. The well-kept Concrete/Grandy Creek KOA on Grandy Creek opens mid-March to November. Howard Miller Steelhead (HMS) County Park is on the Skagit River, where pink salmon runs occur every other year. Campers with kayaks, canoes, or rafts drive 16 miles east to Marblemount, launch into the Skagit River, and float two hours back down to HMS. HMS is headquarters for the annual Skagit Eagle Festival every full weekend in January. Enjoy natural history hayrides, a 5K run, Native American storytelling, bird photography, and 150 to 200 wintering Bald Eagles.

Hiking trails abound along Hwy 20's nearby lakes and streams. Side roads lead to Lake Shannon and Baker Lake north of Concrete, and to Diablo Lake in and just east of Diablo. Boat and dam tours at Diablo Lake are available July to mid-September in Marblemount. Ross Lake, a few miles east in North Cascades National Recreation Area, is accessible only by trails from Washington state. Access to a boat launch is in Canada. You can hike to Ross Lake Resort via a trail from Ross Dam trailhead on Hwy 20, or take a ferry and truck from Diablo Lake. [rosslakeresort.com/mapdirections.html](http://rosslakeresort.com/mapdirections.html)

### The Scenic Route to Whatcom County

Yes, you can drive I-5 from Mount Vernon to Bellingham in 25 minutes, but the famed 21-mile state Scenic Byway, Chuckanut Drive (SR 11), is a must-see. Choose a sunny



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Chuckanut Drive Scenic Byway offers parks, trails, beachcombing, fishing, crabbing, boating, and photo ops at every turn. View the San Juans and other islands and wait for great sunsets.



The Oyster Bar restaurant on Chuckanut Drive at Mile 10 has top-rated cuisine, a huge wine list, tables with a view, and indoor dining or a deck, depending on the weather and your preference.



The tide is in and a couple (at right) are fishing at Clayton Beach in Larrabee State Park on Chuckanut Drive. Launch canoes and kayaks, explore tide pools, and bring a picnic lunch.

day when a glowing green canopy of leaves frames views of sparkling indigo waters in Samish Bay and Chuckanut Bay. Gross vehicle weight restrictions allow only Tiffin's new Wayfarer or your towed vehicle. The road is narrow and winding. Watch ahead for scenic pullouts.

Guides to Chuckanut Drive list attractions from south to north, as does this article. From Burlington take I-5 Exit 231 west. The first nine miles traverse rolling farmlands. At Mile Seven journalist Edward R. Murrow attended Edison High School. Nearby Bow's famous Rhododendron Cafe serves cuisines from a different global region monthly. At Mile Nine enjoy Chuckanut Manor Seafood & Grill's excellent food and Sunday brunch. Mile 10 has the Oyster Bar at Chuckanut Drive with superb food, a huge wine list, and great views. Also at Mile 10 is the strenuous 2,075-foot Oyster Dome trail. In the hairpin curve north of the Oyster Bar is a road down to Taylor Shellfish Farms. They'll show you how to shuck and eat their oysters.

At Mile 14 enjoy Larrabee State Park's 2700 acres and 1.5 miles of shoreline. Clayton Beach, with great tide pools, has parking on the *east* side of the road. Cross Chuckanut carefully! The Washington Trails Association website has Larrabee's trail lengths, elevation gains, and photos. Popular Fragrance Lake trail climbs 950 feet in 2.25 wooded miles. For waterfalls, take Chuckanut Falls trail, with a 640-foot gain in 1.3 miles, or South Lost Lake trail, which has a 1,950-foot gain in 4.5 miles. Other Larrabee activities include boating, clamming, crabbing, salt and freshwater fishing, birding, wildlife viewing, campfire rings, and memory-making. Noisy trains run close to the shore.

Mile 18 has parking for the Interurban trail, Arroyo Park, Teddy Bear Cove, and trailheads to Chuckanut Mountain. Sunset kayak tours to Teddy Bear Cove are scheduled when marine organisms glow in a phenomenon called bioluminescence.

[discoveryseakayak.com/kayak-trips/bioluminescence-tour/Chuckanutguide:bellingham.org/download/publications/2015-Chuckanut-Brochure.pdf](http://discoveryseakayak.com/kayak-trips/bioluminescence-tour/Chuckanutguide:bellingham.org/download/publications/2015-Chuckanut-Brochure.pdf).

### How What-Coom Became Whatcom County

Let's delve into Bellingham's past before perusing its bustling present. Whatcom County's northern neighbor is Canada. Bellingham, population 80,000, is home to Western Washington State University as well as technical and community colleges. The city's gentle green hills curve around Bellingham Bay. It is 21 miles south of Canada and 80 miles north of Seattle.

Spain, Russia, and England successively claimed what is now Whatcom County. In 1792 explorer George Vancouver named the bay after Sir William Bellingham, a British Royal Navy controller. The area was inhabited by



the Salish-speaking Lummi, Samish, Semiahmoo, and Nooksack tribes. They knew local botany and zoology well. From their seasonal circuit of settlements they harvested fish, shellfish, birds, mammals, berries, fruits, and wild produce. Timber was felled for planks and dugout canoes. They lived, gathered communally, and worked in wooden structures. They made equipment, tools, and clothing from natural resources.

In 1852 Californians Henry Roeder and Russell Peabody arrived and engaged Lummi Indians near “What-Coom” (rumbling water) waterfall to help build a lumber mill. Other Anglo logging and lumber mills and a coal mine followed. Thus Whatcom began. Three years later, after a controversial treaty, the Lummi moved to the northwest coast of Bellingham Bay.

The 1858 Fraser Canyon Gold Rush in Canada jump-started Bellingham. Miners from California’s shrinking Gold Rush sailed to the new port, seeking the Whatcom Trail to Fraser, Canada. Fraser’s gold rush was short-lived. Bellingham’s fortunes waxed and waned quickly.

In 1903 the settlements of Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham, and Fairhaven combined to become Bellingham. Eastern companies invested in the area’s natural resources in hopes of a major seaport. Three railroad lines arrived in the 1890s—a boon to logging and coal operations. Trees from Bellingham provided lumber for San Francisco’s rebuilding after the 1906 earthquake.

The salmon canning industry took hold in 1900. It grew larger than coal and lumber combined, but over-fished waters led to gradually decreasing harvests. The industry slowly moved to Alaska. Whatcom Normal School, completed in 1899, was yet another economic engine. Today industries with over 500 employees range from medical and educational to retailers like Fred Meyer; an oil refinery; an aluminum smelter; a manufacturer of business airplane interiors; and Smith Gardens’ 10 acres of greenhouses growing flowers and baskets that ship to Northwest nurseries. Whatcom County is the state’s top producer of red raspberries, and markets other berries, fruit, tree nuts, livestock, poultry and eggs, and milk.

Using Bellingham as a hub to Whatcom County, Bellingham RV Park on Bennett Drive is convenient, clean, well-rated, and provides free coffee and baked goods. [bellinghamrvpark.com](http://bellinghamrvpark.com)

### Fairhaven: Bellingham’s Southern Charms

Chuckanut Drive becomes 12th Street in the popular Fairhaven district of south Bellingham. Follow Chuckanut about three blocks to Harris Avenue and turn left to the Bellingham Cruise Terminal. It has a wealth of visitor information on places, events, charters, and tours. You’ll also find Alaska Ferries, ferries to the San Juan Islands, kayak rentals and tours, a 160-foot schooner tour-



The Village Green in Bellingham’s Fairhaven district features a sculpture of Fairhaven’s founder, Dirty Dan Harris, who disliked bathing. Though a rascal, the original pioneers were fond of him.



Bellingham Cruise Terminal near the north end of Chuckanut Drive has info on almost all that visitors can do in the Bellingham area. There’s also a cafe, and counters for Alaska and San Juan Island ferries, charter boat rentals, tours, and views of Fairhaven and Bellingham Bay.





Downtown Bellingham always has something going on--movies, entertainment, farmer's market, unusual museums, nice shops, great restaurants and pubs. And Trip Advisor rated it #2 for Best Outdoor Towns in America.



Whatcom Museum--City Hall served the municipality from 1892 to 1941, when it became a museum. The Museum now also has The Lightcatcher Building with a 37' x 180' curved glass wall to catch sunlight and 42,000 square feet of climate controlled space.

ing ship, and charter whale-watching and fishing boats. Amtrak and Greyhound stop here. You can park at the Cruise Terminal for hours or days while you're exploring. [portofbellingham.com/201/Alaska-Marine-Highway-System](http://portofbellingham.com/201/Alaska-Marine-Highway-System)

Fairhaven near the Bellingham Cruise Terminal is a happening place. There are restaurants, brew houses, galleries, a three-story bookstore, clothing, decor, crafts, gift shops, entertainment—you can spend a day or longer here. And events! Enjoy the Dirty Dan Harris Festival on April 22nd, with entertainment at Fairhaven Village Green park. There's an uphill piano race, games, costumes, and food and drink in honor of Fairhaven's famously unscrubbed, rascally founder, who in 1883 was granted the plat of land he named Fairhaven. Then there's the Fairhaven Festival on May 27, the three-day Summer Solstice Art Festival starting Friday, June 22, and the whimsically named Fairhaven Steampunk Festival & The Fantastical Mr. Flip's Carnival of Wonders & Curiosities which commences July 28. You can't resist. Pick up a colorful Fairhaven walking map at the Cruise Terminal or at Bay to Baker Trading Company.

[fairhaven.com/event-category/major/](http://fairhaven.com/event-category/major/)

Before leaving Bellingham's southern amenities, cross I-5 east from Fairhaven to Lake Padden Park and Lake Padden Golf Course. The park has picnic tables, sports courts and fields, a boat launch, and trails. The 18-hole golf course winds through an old growth forest with 150-foot tall trees. East of Lake Padden is Whatcom Falls Park and the 10-mile long Whatcom Lake, the city's water supply and a favorite for boating, fishing, swimming, and hiking.

### Into the Heart of Bellingham

Go north by foot or by wheels from Fairhaven to visit downtown Bellingham. If walking from Fairhaven's north side, take the scenic 2.5 mile South Bay Trail from Mill Avenue & 10th Street. Walk down 10th Street to South State Street. Enjoy views of the harbor, the San Juan Islands, and wildlife. At Taylor Avenue take the raised boardwalk over the shoreline for about four blocks before ending at Woods Coffee in Boulevard Park. At the north end of Boulevard Park, the South Bay Trail continues about a mile and ends at East Laurel Street in Bellingham's central business district. Railroad Avenue is across Laurel. Or drive a parallel route by exiting Fairhaven's north end on 11th Street/South State Street. Continue north to East Laurel Street and Railroad Avenue. However you arrive on Railroad Avenue, dine at nearby bistros and cafes, or continue to the Railroad Museum, the Spark Museum of Electrical Inventions, and other downtown features.

An alternate route from Fairhaven to central Bellingham is via Western Washington University and/or Sehome



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- Stacey and Gary Quimby

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The Fairhaven district on Bellingham's south side uses the Village Green park for outdoor movies, music and entertainers, festival events, and a place to rest your feet while shopping.



Homes near Bellingham's downtown have views of Squalicum Harbor and Bellingham Bay. Older neighborhoods are full of Craftsman-style homes, many of them restored.

Arboretum. From 12th Street turn east on Mill Avenue, then north 21st Street, then to Bill MacDonald Parkway. Enjoy the campus or hike the Sehome Arboretum trails clear up to View Tower's 360-degree panorama of the city, the bay, the San Juan Islands and the Cascade Range.

### **Bellingham Rocks!**

You won't find an event like Whatcom County's Ski-to-Sea Race anywhere else. The 42-mile race involves relay teams from different sports handing off batons from the slopes of Mt. Baker to the finish line at Fairhaven's salt-water shores. Cross-country skiers start, handing off to downhill/snowboard skiers, then to runners, road bikers, two-person canoers, cyclocross bikers, and sea kayakers. Individuals may participate in three of the sports. The finish line is at Marine Park in Fairhaven. The course passes through nine towns on Hwy 542, and Bellingham. Another huge event, the Historic Fairhaven Festival takes place the same day, so you'll have plenty to do before and after kayaks cross the finish line.

Other regular Bellingham events are Downtown Sounds, a family-friendly happening with live music, food, and a beer garden on Wednesday evenings in July and August. The Festival of Music creates the Bellingham Festival Orchestra from musicians in major city symphonies. Performances are mostly at Western Washington University, May–September. Commercial Street Night Market comes alive on third Fridays May–September with entertainers, craftsfolks, food vendors, artists, and musicians. And the last Sunday in September is the Bellingham Bay Marathon. See more at [bellingham.org/activities/annual-events](http://bellingham.org/activities/annual-events) including the Lummi Indian Som-mish Water Festival with traditional war canoe races.

Tree-lined streets and handsome brick buildings make downtown Bellingham inviting. There are shops, good restaurants, museums, galleries, and six theaters. Favorites include Cafe Akroteri (Greek), and Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro (great beers and locally-sourced, reasonable, creative dishes). For breakfast, enjoy Mount Bakery Cafe's amazing menu in downtown or in Fairhaven. Try Kiernan's At the Pier near Fairhaven for breakfast, dinner, and brunch. Great seafood and locally-sourced menus abound.

Six theaters feature current films to indies to oldies to live entertainment. The museums include the emblematic Whatcom Museum's 1892 City Hall venue, with Northwest artists and historical exhibits. One of Whatcom Lightcatcher Building exhibits is ongoing—*People of the Sea & Cedar*—about Northwest Coastal tribes. The SPARK Museum of Electrical Invention is mind-boggling. [sparkmuseum.org/visit](http://sparkmuseum.org/visit) It is hands-on and has collections called Dawn of the Electrical Age (1400–1600), Electricity Sparks Invention (1800–1900), plus radio and wireless



(1850–1950), to name a few. Tours and presentations are Tuesday–Friday, or see the Wednesday–Friday demonstrations of inventions like the Tesla Megazapper and early, rare electrical devices. The Railroad Museum has collections such as dining car items, railroad lanterns, photographs, communications devices, Lionel trains, and hand-built scale models of logging trains. Another hands-on gallery/museum is Mindport, a blend of art and interactive, mind-expanding displays. [mindport.org/education](http://mindport.org/education)

### Into the Cascades

The Mount Baker Scenic Byway, Hwy 542 east from Bellingham, is 57 miles long. Its mountainous reaches are open only mid-July to about late September. Why? Because the road's end has an average annual snowfall of 633 inches and a record snowfall of 1140 inches in 1998–99. Having been to Artist's Point in a 26-foot motorhome, both mid-July and early October, with clear roads and just a few inches of snow, you, too, could get lucky. In mid-July Mt. Shuksan was snow-covered and ethereal. On Oct. 5 flame-colored huckleberry bushes framed the volcano's reflection in Picture Lake.

The last 30 miles of highway are narrow and winding with token shoulders. However, driven patiently, there are excellent reasons why this Scenic Byway earned its designation.

### Stops Along Mount Baker Highway

Twenty-five miles east of I-5 turn east at Kendall toward Maple Falls and continue to Glacier. Stop at Glacier's U.S. Forest Ranger Station for information about trail maps, weather, road conditions, wildlife, permits, etc. Two Maple Falls' restaurants are noteworthy. Wake 'n Bakery is original for breakfast and lunch, and Milano's Restaurant & Bar gets raves for fine lunch and dinner offerings.

After Glacier, near milepost 40.5, watch at right for Forest Road 33 to Nooksack Falls. It's about  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile on gravel to parking and the viewing deck. You'll see only half of the falls' 88-foot height, but it is truly lovely, splitting around a cliff of stacked boulders and tumbling gracefully out of sight. Mile 55 is beautiful Heather Meadows and its Visitor Center, with breathtaking Mt. Shuksan, 9,131 feet high, commanding your camera's focus. Mt. Baker's 10,781-foot summit is next. Fasten your seatbelts, as the final 1.5 miles are paved switchbacks climbing to Artist's Point at 5,140 feet, and its trails. At the top, revel in 360-degree views that include both Mt. Baker's summit behind Ptarmigan Ridge and Mt. Shuksan.

Highway 542 should be named Mt. Shuksan Scenic Byway, but Mt. Baker's taller, sparkling peak dominates the eastern horizon from every coastal town, and it's what people know. Even the ski runs at Mt. Baker Ski Area are actually from ridges of Mt. Shuksan. But Mt.



Mount Baker at 10,781 feet is the fifth highest peak in the Cascade Range. It has ten main glaciers. In 1998 into 1999 it received over 1100 inches of snow. It is an active volcano and well-studied.



Nooksack Falls is .6 mile off Mount Baker Highway, with a total drop of 88 feet. The upper falls are seen here. The river flows through the Nooksack Valley and ends at the Lummi Nation where it flows into Bellingham Bay. The annual Ski to Sea race roughly follows its course.





Mount Shuksan is 9,131 feet of glaciated beauty. It is one of the most photographed peaks in the Cascade Range. Its first ascent was in 1897. The Mt. Baker ski slopes are on a Mt. Shuksan ridge, and many people think they're skiing Baker, which is actually a southeast neighbor of Shuksan.



Lynden's Dutch influence is obvious the minute you spot this windmill-turned-inn on Front Street. Dutch bakeries and local restaurants feature delectable dishes made with local berries.

Shuksan will thrill you. It's so close that glacial details seem touchable. From Artist's Point or its trails you'll exult in both magnificent peaks.

### Blaine and Birch Bay: Boating, Beachcombing and Birds


The long beaches of Blaine on Semiahoo Bay and just south at Birch Bay are magnets for Americans and Canadians. Start your visit at Peace Arch State Park at the I-5 Canadian border. Have a picnic and admire the flowers. There's plenty to discover in Blaine, including many restaurants on the bay's north side, plus boat charters, and area golf course tours. Blaine's Semiahmoo Park is a 1.25 mile long narrow spit dividing the bay from the sea. The Historic MV Plover Ferry, a restored 1944 boat, originally taxied cannery workers from Blaine to Semiahoo Spit. Pedestrians and bicycles now take 25 minute ferry rides on summer weekends. [draytonharbormaritime.com/plover](http://draytonharbormaritime.com/plover)

Six miles down I-5, Birch Bay is a small unincorporated area where you can rent kayaks, bikes, paddleboards, and other ways to enjoy the water. It has three RV parks. Besides its beaches, you can visit the 1500-acre Lake Terrell State Wildlife Refuge for birding, fishing, hunting and boating. In mid-March there's a Wings Over Water birding festival hosting field trips, wildlife cruises, and bird photography workshops. Birch Bay State Park has RV camping, two miles of beaches, and Terrell Creek.

### A Touch of Holland

Take I-5 Exit 270 east on Birch Bay-Lynden Road, then north on Hwy 539 to Front Street in Lynden. You'll spot a Dutch windmill, home of The Mill Inn. Dutch influence is strong in Lynden's architecture, bakeries, dairy farms, and friendliness. Lamp posts dangle clouds of flower baskets, and if you find fresh berries on many menus, it's because Lynden is Washington's red raspberry capital. Nooksack Valley also grows raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, and blueberries. The Northwest Raspberry Festival is July 20 & 21, 2018, with raspberry pies, sundaes, baked goods, Rasp-beery Beer Garden, old car show, and live music. [wherevent.com/detail/Lynden-Chamber-of-Northwest-Raspberry-Festival-2018](http://wherevent.com/detail/Lynden-Chamber-of-Northwest-Raspberry-Festival-2018)

Stay at the KOA on the east end of town that has three big ponds for fishing. The Northwest Washington Fair is at the fairgrounds west of town Aug. 13-18, 2018.

Now you've learned the high points of Skagit and Whatcom counties. There's more than *RIS* has space to tell. The summer issue will introduce the adjacent, enchanting San Juan Islands. You may just have to spend a couple of months in the paradise that is the Far North of the Far Northwest. 



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## Spring 2018 Rally: Tucson, Arizona

by Sally Moore

Our dreams of a warm, sunny February in Tucson were not immediately realized, but after a rainy start to our Spring 2018 rally the skies turned a beautiful blue and the winds calmed after the rain showers passed through! Temperatures never reached the expected 70's, but the glorious blue skies with the mountains in the background made for a wonderful rally. We hosted 315 Tiffin coaches from across the USA and Canada for a time of fellowship, education, and comradery.

A special thanks to LaMesa RV for hosting a pre-rally hot dog luncheon with mouthwatering homemade ice cream! LaMesa also brought a complete staff and several 2018 Tiffin coaches featuring the newest and latest designs. Our volunteers arrived early to assist the Tiffin staff in preparing the Pima County Fairgrounds and to begin parking early arrivals. WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS! Our volunteers are the greatest in the world! They pay to attend the rally and then spend the entire time working and helping everyone else have a great experience. Have I said, we love our volunteers? And, we think they are fantastic!

As soon as rally folks were parked and camp set up, they made their way to the registration desk to receive their welcome bag of goodies (packed by our volunteers). The second most popular destination was the Tiffin Allegro Store along with the other vendor booths. Thanks to our wonderful customers, the store set all-time record high sales on opening day! Thank you for supporting the Tiffin brand and wearing it proudly!

Monday evening saw everyone gathered in the Old Pueblo

Building for a delicious meal followed by welcoming remarks by Bob Tiffin, Jason Kimbrell of LaMesa, and Kelly Moore. We appreciate Bob Tiffin, Tim Tiffin, and the management from Tiffin Motorhomes for supporting our rallies with their presence. Door prizes were awarded and everyone enjoyed a few games of Tiffin Allegro Bingo. Prizes were awarded with much fun and laughter. All veterans and first responders were recognized and saluted during the evening. Thank you for your service to our country! We were honored to have you at the rally.

Even on a frosty morning, we saw several energetic souls out on an early morning power walk around the fairgrounds to get the blood flowing before our big buffet breakfast. Immediately after breakfast, seminars on RV related topics were held. Great topics that interested all RV owners were covered, such as convection microwave cooking, updating and understanding your navigation system, and deciphering the coach electrical system. Onan generators and Freightliner chassis always have great participation at their seminars. Owners participated in a craft & hobby show Tuesday afternoon. It is always interesting to see the crafts that RVers make while touring the country in their Tiffin coaches.

Even with the chilly weather, everyone enjoyed ice cream treats during the afternoon. This was a great opportunity to visit with one another and share travel experiences. Tuesday night we were happy to introduce Tim and Lynne Tiffin. Tim is the general manager of Tiffin Motorhomes and he addressed the group, giving an update on operations at the Red Bay, Belmont, and Winfield plants. Tim reminded everyone that he had worked within 15 feet of his dad, Bob Tiffin, for over 30 years and that he had been well trained in Bob's philosophy during

that time. "After all these years, I know what Dad's going to say—I know his tone of voice—I know what his decision will be," Tim remarked. With the experience and expertise of Bob Tiffin's three sons and now the addition of three of his grandsons, Tiffin Motorhomes is already well poised for the future.

After more door prizes and another delicious meal by Golden Choice Catering, we welcomed a talented group, "Piano Man-Generations." Father and son duo, Terry and Nick Davies, entertained the group with dueling pianos and vocals of the great Elton John and Billy Joel. Everyone enjoyed this extremely talented family along with their backup band.

Wednesday morning saw our dedicated walkers out and about very early enjoying the beautiful sunrise again. Interesting seminars were again held in the Old Pueblo Building. Everyone gathered at noon for a Tailgate Bar-B-Que featuring beef brisket and pulled pork with all the trimmings. Homemade banana pudding was a delicious treat to end a great meal.

Owners were invited to participate in our "Old Wild West" site decoration contest. Lots of originality and thought went into this. We were treated to everything from a real, live sheriff to saloons featuring 'rot gut' aka iced tea and an old west town

with the watering hole poisoned with lye! Tiffin Allegro gift certificates were awarded to the winners. Thanks to everyone who participated!

Door prizes were again awarded after the evening meal. Sarah Getto from Norman, Oklahoma entertained the group with her vocals and instrumentals. Sarah is a much-loved entertainer at Tiffin rallies across the nation. Her renditions of great female vocalists such as Karen Carpenter, Reba McEntire, and Holly Dunn are always a delight.

On Thursday morning, everyone gathered in the Old Pueblo Building for another delicious buffet breakfast followed by a morning of educational seminars.

Ice cream was enjoyed again Thursday afternoon while touring the beautiful Tiffin coaches one last time. LaMesa was able to make several people's dreams come true! Folks gathered after lunch for a "Swap Meet." Owners were invited to bring any of their unwanted junk—I mean treasures! Others made their best deal to take the junk/treasures home with them!! This was one of the largest events we have experienced at our rallies in recent years.

Thursday evening ended our festivities. After another deli-

*Continued on page 84*



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## Lyme Disease

by Dr. John Pilarczyk

As we get ready to travel this summer with our pets, we need to prepare for possible exposure to ticks. Ticks are blood-sucking parasites that attach to the skin of dogs and humans. When a tick attaches to a host, it begins to secrete an enzyme that prevents blood from clotting. The tick regurgitates this enzyme and in the process passes the spirochete into the host's blood stream. The spirochete, called *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is a bacteria that contains a double membrane wall and helically-coiled cells which give it its name.

It takes about 48 hours for the bacteria to pass from the tick into the host's blood stream. This is why it is so important to remove or kill the tick as soon as possible.

Exposure to ticks that spread Lyme disease is more likely in certain areas of the United States. The Northeastern states, especially New Jersey, New York, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, have a higher rate of Lyme disease. The disease is also increasing in Wisconsin and some areas of the Midwest such as Michigan and Iowa. Lyme disease is spread by the bite of the infected Deer Tick. This tick is very small and hard to see. Many times they can appear as a freckle or small dot.

Ticks are usually found lying in wait in tall grass, woods, bushes, and in areas where deer and small rodents like to hang out. After any hike into parks or wooded areas, check your pet and yourself thoroughly and remove any ticks. Use tweezers to remove an attached tick, taking care to get all of the tick's head and body. If the head remains attached, a local reaction may occur around the area of the tick bite, creating an infection.

Lyme disease can have vague symptoms, causing it to be overlooked rather easily, and animals can be affected for over a year before symptoms become evident. Symptoms of Lyme disease in dogs are characterized by fever (102–105°). Arthritic joints may become hot and swollen, causing a painful lameness. Lymph nodes may be swollen. Symptoms may come and go. In humans, symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a possible tell-tale rash.

Early diagnosis is important. Once diagnosed, treatment with antibiotics in both humans and dogs may be required for a long period of time. Treatment with Doxycycline is the drug of choice. Manual treatment takes 4–6 weeks. Dogs may relapse but can be put on antibiotics again.

Prevention is the best recourse. There

is a vaccine to prevent Lyme disease in dogs. Vaccination with Lyme vaccine makes the dog produce antibodies that are taken into the tick as it has its blood meal. That antibody attacks the *Borrelia* organism and prevents migration of the bacteria from the tick to the animal. Vaccinating requires your dog to have two doses of vaccine at three week intervals, plus two boosters given at six month intervals. The vaccination sequence should be followed by annual boosters.

Your pets cannot transmit Lyme disease to you, but the ticks they host can get on their owners. Humans and pets must be bitten by the tick to get the disease.

Keeping ticks off your pet can be done by using a flea and tick preventative. Some of the more common products are Trifexis, Nexguard, Advantage II, and Frontline Plus, just to name a few. Some are applied topically and some are given orally. Topically, the medication enters the sebaceous glands in the dog's skin and is slowly excreted to kill the flea or tick. These products act by repelling or killing fleas and ticks with or without the pet being bitten.

Lyme disease can appear in cats also if they are exposed to ticks, even if they are kept inside. You can bring the ticks into your coach on your clothing or equipment after a hike in the woods. That is why it is best to check yourself *before* going inside.

If infected, the feline can show signs of lameness, fever, loss of appetite, fatigue, and breathing problems. Many cats may not show noticeable signs at all. Antibiotics are used for treatment.

Remember to protect yourself and your pet and enjoy your RV and the great outdoors this summer.

Happy Travels, John and Kay



Enlarged 5x



## A Park for Everyone

Discovery Park of America in Union City, Tennessee, is a very educational museum for young and older RV'ers. It is clean and well-staffed, and features exhibits and activities on art and science, nature, and local and military history.

Could I please have a subscription to *Roughing It Smoothly*?

David Booth  
Eads, Tennessee

## An Incredible Month in Newfoundland

Being full-timers for four years now, it is difficult to narrow our favorite places down to one or two. Every day is a new adventure, new sights, new friends.

At the top of our list is probably our trip across Canada to Nova Scotia and then ferrying over to Newfoundland for an incredible month of beautiful sights, wonderful culture and people. And our

second place trip would be the four months we spent in Alaska.

We enjoyed the educational experiences of Gros Morne in Newfoundland, saw icebergs in the bay at St. Anthony, and took a ferry ride to Labrador for the day. We saw beautiful lush fields of purple, pink, and white flowers. We learned what it meant to be officially "screeched" into Newfoundland, and enjoyed a Viking dinner and ceremonies. The marine life boat trips near Twillingate were great, and the theater shows and tours of St. John and the surrounding historical areas were fun.

The fabulously hospitable "Newfies" made our travel rich with memories. We even tried moose sandwiches and stew. Delicious! We made a boat trip up the fjord in Gros Morne and learned about the original plate tectonics theory coming from this region. And the first Trans-

Atlantic cable is located in the town of Hearts Content. We love Newfoundland!

Bob and Sandy Thorn  
Modesto, California

## Exploring Tonto National Forest

We enjoyed our trip to Arizona in our 2011 Phaeton. We spent many days exploring Tonto National Forest aboard our Polaris 4x4. Finding a shady spot to enjoy our picnic lunch always made the day complete.

Tom and Bev Milligan  
Hooper, Nebraska

## Full-timing for 21 Years

Dorothy and I have been living full-time in an RV for 21 years this spring. No end in sight! That's gotta be a record. Do you know of anyone that can top that?

Charlie and Dorothy Deal  
Mims, Florida

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# Charlie and Kelly Schobel

A LOVE OF THE OUTDOORS BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER SEVEN YEARS AGO

Text by Fred Thompson  
Photography by Kelly Schobel



“After leaving Chrysler I completed my business studies, receiving an MBA. I then acquired Six Sigma Black Belt training and became certified in Project Management. With these new skills I was able to land a senior project manager position with GE in Atlanta. My eldest daughter, Sarah, moved to Atlanta with me.” Kelly explained.

Charlie grew up in Atlanta and attended Georgia State University, where he earned a BBA and MBA. Not long after graduation, he accepted a position with BioLab, Inc., an Atlanta company headquartered in Decatur, Georgia, with manufacturing facilities in Conyers, 20 miles due east of the city. It turned out to be a very good fit and the only company for whom he would work throughout his career.

BioLab began in 1955 as a small family business producing cleaning agents and disinfectants for the poultry industry that focused on healthy environments in the hatcheries, processing plants, and poultry farms in the southeastern U.S. Looking for avenues to expand the use of its chemical plant, the company realized the equipment could also be used to manufacture the chemical products to maintain swimming pools and spas. BioGuard went on the market in 1962.

By 1980 the one-time family business had evolved into the leading producer and seller of pool and spa care products, not only in the U.S. but throughout the world. Charlie continued to climb the corporate ladder throughout his career, serving in several vice-presidential positions before becoming president in 1999.

While developing the sales force throughout the world and assisting in the establishment of six manufacturing facilities, Charlie visited and worked in 55 countries. “When I retired in 2012, BioLab had 10 different brands in different markets throughout the world,” he explained. “We also supplied the pool chemicals to Home Depot and Wal-Mart.”

As Charlie began closing out the last year of his career with BioLab, he and Kelly continued their relationship, realizing how much they had in common. After dating for nearly two years, they set their wedding date for May 5, 2013. “We knew we wanted to travel,” he said. “International travel was in the big picture, but we both preferred to do the U.S. first.”

After a trip to Italy, Paris, Prague, and Budapest, they returned home to think about how to fulfill their dream to see the

U.S. and Canada. “There is so much beauty in our country,” Kelly said. “We wanted our travel to be casual, to make unplanned stops for longer visits when we felt like it, to find the best hikes, and just sightsee. Charlie was so pleased to see me jumping into outdoor photography. It had not occurred to us how we were going to conveniently transport my collection of camera equipment which was continuing to grow.”

“I was driving to the airport one day when I noticed an RV rental company,” Charlie said. “Most of their units were smaller RVs that appeared to be built on a van chassis. I located an RV sales company that turned out to be a Tiffin dealership and asked about an RV similar to the one I had seen at the rental facility. The sales person asked me how we planned to use our RV, what kind of camping we wanted to do, and where we wanted to travel. When I answered the questions, he said, ‘I don’t think you would be happy with a Class C gas model.’

“The salesperson explained the differences usually found on gas and diesel coaches and gave me a tour of both a Phaeton and an Allegro Bus,” Charlie continued. “After getting Phaeton and Allegro Bus literature, I picked up a couple of *Roughing It Smoothly* magazines and discovered a Tiffin Allegro Club Rally in late September 2015 in Sevierville, Tennessee, not far from our home in Norcross,” Charlie began. “I knew the best way to get the information I wanted was to talk to Tiffin owners.”

The Schobels are not shy people! “We decided to crash the rally, meet Bob Tiffin, look at every Tiffin they had in the rally show, and talk to as many owners as we could,” he continued. “Of course, we didn’t need to go to their planned events—just gather information. Everyone was very gracious and we accomplished our mission. Within the next month, we decided on a 2016 Allegro Bus 40AP. Now over two years into our acquisition, we know we made the right decision.”

“When I saw all of the storage space for my photographic equipment, golf clubs and cookware both in the basement and the living area, I was really excited about traveling in a motorhome,” Kelly said. “I am not a fan of hotels and I love to cook. The Allegro Bus was the logical way for us to travel. At the end of a busy day hiking, shooting, or sightseeing, it is important to be able to ‘come home’ and know what you are going to find. A hotel can never really be ‘home’ like our motorhome is. Even if we did carry all of our stuff around in a big van, just unloading and loading every two or three days would be exhausting in itself. On our first trip, we saw how quickly everything worked into the lifestyle we wanted to establish.”

“Kelly found she could do gourmet meals in the galley,” Charlie noted. “The 40AP has a big slide-out pantry, several overhead cabinets, a lot of countertop space, plus drawers and storage under the countertop. It is a great kitchen with a full-size, residential refrigerator.”



Charlie became a licensed pilot while in high school, beginning a lifelong hobby that proved useful both in business and recreation. He has both instrument and instructor ratings.

“In 1979 I saw a hot air balloon gliding over my home. It dawned on me that balloons had to have pilots, too,” he joked. His fascination with balloons led to a second mode of air travel that allows him to see the world spread out below, controlled only by the wind lightly pushing the basket to and fro. “Hot air ballooning provides a tremendously different perspective from powered flight.”



“Kelly and I both love experiencing the outdoors,” Charlie began. “We met in the Spring of 2011 when we both signed up for guided hikes to waterfalls in the North Georgia mountains. Over the next 18 months, we enjoyed more outdoor experiences together, plus lunches and dinners when we could find the time in our busy schedules.”

Kelly is a Michigander who earned a BS degree in electrical engineering at the University of Michigan, and a MSEE from Oakland University. She started her engineering career at Chrysler Automotive. When Chrysler offered buyouts to reduce the size of the corporate structure she decided to jump at the opportunity to make a change.





Grand Teton National Park, Fall 2017



Spearfish Falls, Spearfish, South Dakota, Fall 2017

Charlie had never driven anything close to the size of the 40AP. So, my leading question was, “Did it take you long to become comfortable driving the Allegro Bus?” His answer was candid.

“Learning to drive the Bus was like learning to drive on the left in Australia and England. You have to really think about your driving again. In three dimensions,” he laughed. “Learning to judge the radius needed to turn around was an experience.”

In addition to the new Allegro Bus, Charlie Schobel got a new family when he married Kelly: daughters Sarah and Stephanie. Sarah is married to Mike Schimmel and lives in Norcross, Georgia. Stephanie is married to Fred Kuhar and still lives in Michigan where she works

as a physician’s assistant. Shortly after Charlie and Kelly married, Sarah presented them with their first grandchild, Kensie, who is nearly five. And last year, Harley Jo, now ten months, was born.

“Our grandchildren tug on our heartstrings when we leave for several months on a trip,” Kelly said. “Kensie told us recently, ‘I want to go in the coach so I can hang with y’all,’” Charlie added.

While attending the build of their new RV in Red Bay, Alabama, Kelly and Charlie met Molli and Jeff Wills, who were also from Atlanta. The Schobels suggested to the Wills that they join them on a visit to Mountain Falls Luxury RV Resort in Lake Toxaway, North Carolina. The Wills arrived at Mountain Falls a couple days prior to the Schobels. In that short time, they

fell in love with the resort and purchased a lot up on the mountain ridge. The Schobels thought they were crazy but within a few days of their visit they also decided to purchase a lot. The Ridge at Mountain Falls Luxury Motorcoach Resort was developed over the last three years, and currently only has six undeveloped sites left.

“When we got there, we never left the resort,” Kelly said. “We got to know four couples and each of them was buying a coach site on the Ridge. The sites have amazing views looking south across the mountains. From several points along the Ridge, you can see sunrises and sunsets. The owners work with two or three contractors to build coach houses with beautiful patios and landscaping, plus large indoor living areas with kitchens, fireplaces, and seating for entertaining. The indoor living areas in most of the coach houses have sliding doors that open to the patios.”

“We knew within a day that Mountain Falls was a place we would enjoy long into the future,” Charlie said. “But I did not feel we wanted to spend several months designing, contracting, and overseeing the construction of a new coach house on an undeveloped site—and then following through with an attractive landscaping project. Everything here is done first class. Fortunately for us, a current owner decided to place his coach house on the market. We liked it very much and made an offer that the owner accepted. There will be very few changes to make.”

“Mountain Falls is a very social community,” Charlie continued. “This is our playground. Our house on Lake Chatuge near Hiawassee is where we invite our friends to come for a weekend visit, but we never got to know our neighbors. We are meeting like-minded couples at Mountain Falls who enjoy sharing accounts of their past motorhome trips and planning new ones with us.”

After acquiring their Allegro Bus in April 2016, the Schobels did shakedown cruises to D.C. and then on to Michigan to visit family. Their first extended trip in 2016 was a Canadian excursion, first through Quebec and then several weeks in the Maritime Provinces. Subsequent

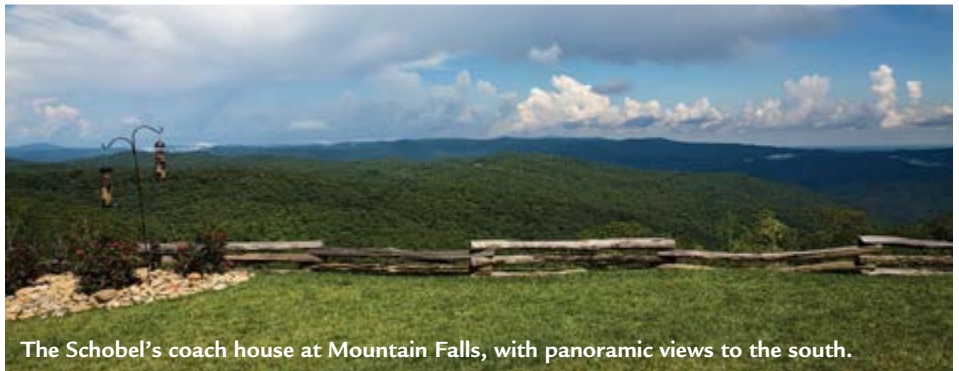


trips included three months with extended stops for photography and sightseeing in New Orleans, Houston, a run across Texas, and then several weeks in Arizona.

“After Labor Day last year, we headed for Colorado with stops in Aspen and then a week on the river in Ouray,” Kelly related. “We joined up with a couple from Mountain Falls in Moab and did tours of the Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. The photography opportunities in our national parks are incredible.”

“A two-day drive put us in the north-west corner of Wyoming where we visited Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks,” she continued. “Since our closing on the coach house was scheduled for mid-October, Charlie planned our trip back east through Cody, Mount Rushmore, and the Badlands National Park.”

At this writing Charlie and Kelly are in Florida planning to return to Mountain Falls when it opens next month for the season. In September they will fly to Iceland for a three-week tour of the island republic.



The Schobel's coach house at Mountain Falls, with panoramic views to the south.



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See page 43A for additional product information from Flexsteel.



## Flexsteel's New Lift-and-Lock® Sofa Bunk

A long-time leader in the recreation vehicle seating industry, Flexsteel has undoubtedly left its mark of comfort all along the interstates, highways, and backroads of America. Since beginning their RV seating division in 1965, Flexsteel has been able to do something no one else could—leverage their experience in quality, comfortable home furnishings and then apply it to the open road.

Flexsteel offers a full line of products specifically designed and engineered for the open road including driver and passenger seating, sleepers, recliners, and dinettes, as well as theatre applications. As the company celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, it's evident if you look

through their entire portfolio of products across all their businesses that three pillars stand out: comfort, durability, and innovation. These three pillars are at the core of every Flexsteel product, and their vehicle seating business is no exception.

“These pillars work together, and that balance is what makes us who we are,” says Spencer Hill, Product Manager for Flexsteel Vehicle Seating. “They are at the core of what we do and allow us to provide the best possible product to our customers.” Over the years customers have come to associate Flexsteel with game-changing designs that enhance the open road experience, and their newest development is no exception.

Earlier this year, Flexsteel introduced its patent-pending Lift-and-Lock® Sofa Bunk to the market. This innovative sofa effortlessly converts into a bunk bed by simply lifting the top section and locking it into place. The space-saving design sits flush to the wall and turns unused vertical space into a bed with another sleeping area below, meaning no additional floor space is needed. This sofa bunk features a sleek design and premium comfort.

Flexsteel's continued commitment to providing a home-like level of comfort on the open road won't stop here. If the company has proved anything, it's that innovation and recreation go hand in hand. Committed to providing contemporary solutions to their customer's needs and rooted in the authentic craftsmanship they've established over the last century, the road appears to be wide open for Flexsteel. With construction underway on a new manufacturing facility in Dubuque Iowa, scheduled to be complete in late 2018, it appears the future is bright as well.

For more information on Flexsteel, or to view their products online, please visit [www.flexsteel.com/for-recreation](http://www.flexsteel.com/for-recreation).











Old Faithful, Yellowstone National Park



Travertine Terraces, Yellowstone National Park

lic. Travel for next year is still in the planning stage, but Glacier National Park and the state of Washington are strong favorites. In Washington they surely will include the spectacular tulip festivals in the Skagit and Nooksack valleys (see story, page 22).

While their ground travels focus on trips in the Allegro Bus, Charlie introduced Kelly to his two passions soon after they met: his hot air balloon and a sleek Diamond DA40 airplane.

Charlie became a licensed pilot while in high school, beginning a lifelong hobby that proved useful both in business and recreation. He has both instrument and instructor ratings. He and Kelly enjoy flying in the Diamond DA40 Star when time is short and destinations are a bit too far away for the motorhome. The DA40 is an Austrian four-seater, single engine, light aircraft constructed from composite materials. Now built in Canada with a 180-hp Lycoming engine, the low-wing, T-tail monoplane can cruise at 147 knots (169 mph). In January they did a multi-day trip along Florida's east coast with several stops to visit friends.

In 1979 Charlie saw a hot air balloon gliding over his home. "It dawned on me that balloons had to have pilots, too," he joked. His fascination with balloons led to a second mode of air travel that allows him to see the world spread out below, controlled only by the wind lightly pushing the basket to and fro. "Hot air ballooning provides a tremendously different perspective from powered flight," he said. "There is actually some

control over speed and direction by accessing the winds at different elevations." The balloon and basket are hauled behind his Jeep on a 5 x 8-ft. trailer, which also serves as a chase vehicle to retrieve the balloon and basket when they descend.


"We do the Helen-to-the-Atlantic Race every year," Charlie said. "It is scheduled for May 31, June 1–2. The finish line is actually I-95. It's important to have a place to land before we get to the Atlantic!"

Charlie is entered in the 39th Carolina Balloon Festival in Statesville, North Carolina, this year to be held October 19–21. The three-day event will offer balloon rides to the public, both tethered and untethered. Pilot competitions involve dropping a small sand bag from a designated altitude onto a target in a large field. To remain in the competition, the pilot must score close to the target in all tasks during the event. The pilot who places his bag closest to the center of the circle wins.

The most notable ballooning event in the nation will take place October 6–14 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Now in its 47th year, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is expected to reach a worldwide audience of over 1.7 billion viewers.

"Several years ago," Kelly recalled with some laughter, "Charlie dreamed he had won the lottery and bought a helicopter. Of course, we did not win the lottery." However, Charlie was so fascinated by his dream that he laid out a plan to make it a reality. He worked out a three-way lease between himself, another partner, and WSB-TV News. The arrangement made it financially feasible, allowing him the opportunity to learn to fly yet another craft.

Wherever the Schobels travel, Charlie has the luxury of an onboard photographer to document their trips. Kelly took up photography a few years ago, apparently with the same passion and dedication she applied to studying electrical engineering.

"Kelly selected Canon as her primary equipment supplier. Amazon makes regular stops at our house and the Canon name is on most of the boxes. I really like the results she is creating," Charlie said. "We have a photo history of our travels that we share with friends and through her blog." [rollingwithkc.com](http://rollingwithkc.com) 





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## *Tiffin Owners from Arkansas, New York, and Texas*



**Rich & Janet Czerwinski**  
Hometown: Mountain Home, Arkansas  
Interviewed: Silver Springs, Florida

- Rick and Janet own a 2010 Phaeton with a 360 Cummins and Freightliner chassis purchased new from Lazydays in Florida. They love their Phaeton and don't plan to buy another motorhome in the future.
- Previously they owned a fifth wheel and a 25' pull-behind trailer.
- They have been married 37 years and have 4 children, 8 grandchildren (ages 1-32) and 4 great grandchildren (ages 1, 2, 3 & 10).
- They are occasional campers who own a home in Mountain Home AR.
- Rick and Janet have been RVing 11 years. They have traveled to the Grand Canyon, Glacier National Park, Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, Petoskey State Park in Michigan and the Great Smoky Mountains in TN. Also, Sedona and Mesa AZ, Texas, Branson, and winter months in Florida.
- The latest addition to their family is a 1 year old Yorkie named Elle.
- Rick retired from Publix grocers as a buyer. Janet worked for a nursing agency.
- Besides RVing they like golf and fishing. They also enjoy watching football.
- Future travel includes trips to Alaska, Washington, Canada, Oregon, and Idaho.



**Michael and Cynthia Martin**  
Hometown: Webster, New York  
Interviewed: Gaffney, South Carolina

- Michael and Cynthia own a 2012 Tiffin Phaeton QKH with a Cummins 380hp engine that they purchased new from Lazydays in Tampa FL. Avid motorhome fans, 'Phaeton' is written on their car.
- They have been married 38 years.
- They call themselves "half-times," and have been RVing since 1983. They spend some time at a summer home.
- Mike and Cindy grew up camping—first pop-ups, a class B, and a travel trailer prior to the motorhome.
- They enjoy opportunities to explore the United States together with their dogs, 3 beautiful whippets (Rhyan, Remy, and Sofie). Their motorhome has 'Whippetz' on the license plate.
- They belong to Good Sam, Allegro Club, FMCA, and FCOC.
- Mike retired as a Deputy Sheriff/Sgt in 2007, and worked as a contractor. Cindy taught in an elementary school.
- Their hobbies include scuba diving, reading, hiking, and watching collegiate sports.
- They love the 1000 Islands in NY in the Summer, Eastern Tennessee in the Fall, Florida panhandle/Alabama Gulf Coast in Nov/Dec, and Arizona in the Winter.



**Dale and Terry Roberts**  
Hometown: Houston, Texas  
Interviewed: Gaffney, South Carolina

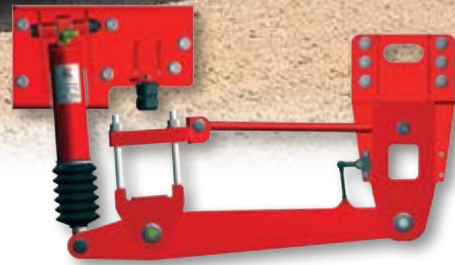
- Dale and Terry purchased a new 2011 Allegro Bus with a Cummins engine and Spartan chassis from Lazydays in Florida..
- They have been married 45 years and have a grandson.
- They travel about 6 months of the year in their motorhome. One year they go up the East Coast. The next year they travel up the West Coast.
- Traveling for 12 years, Dale and Terry have put over one hundred thousand miles on their 3 motorhomes. They have traveled to all but 2 states.
- Their favorite trips were to Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills, followed by the Redwoods in California. They also like visiting Washington and Oregon.
- They belong to Good Sam and FMCA.
- Dale retired in 2007 as CEO of a Houston credit union. Terry worked as a merchandiser.
- Interesting hobbies include collecting old soda signs and Popeye characters (old tin toys).
- Their bucket list is complete, but they say they always find new places to visit.
- Dale and Terry say, "RVing is the best way to see this great land!"



**Editor's Note:** Dave has been camping for 54 years in tents to motorhomes. He and Terri purchased a new 2008 Phaeton 40QSH. In 2010, they sold their home and purchased a 2.8-acre lot in the Berkshire Mountains (Peru, MA) for summer use. They named their mini-campground "Beech-Wood Acres." In 2012 they purchased an RV lot at Wilderness RV Park Estates in Silver Springs, FL for use in the winter months. Dave and Terri are now full-timers, currently living their dream.



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# Dixie RV

## A CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED EXPANSION IN Calera, Alabama

**R**AMPING UP TO FULL SPEED FOR the past year, Dixie RV's fourth store located in Calera, Alabama represents a carefully planned expansion, making the privately owned company a major contender among the growing number of multi-dealership organizations in the U.S. In addition to the first store in Hammond, Louisiana, the company opened its second and third stores in Defuniak Springs, Florida, and Breaux Bridge, Louisiana.

The company's rise to visibility in the recreational vehicle industry is an interesting story. After an inconspicuous beginning as an adjunct business to an automobile dealership in Hammond, Louisiana, the 35-year-old company, now helmed by Greg Lala, CEO, and Stephen Guidry, president, first tested its ability to expand with the acquisition in 1996 of a small Baton Rouge dealership.

A fortuitous introduction to Stephen Guidry in 2000 resulted in a 19-year business relationship that produced the partner that Greg needed to run multiple dealerships. "I learned about Stephen through one of our managers here at Dixie. After getting to know him, I offered him the job as general manager of the facility we had acquired in Baton



Rouge," Greg explained. "Just out of high school in 1996, Stephen began his career in the RV business working as a porter for a company in New Orleans. His ambition and ability moved him quickly through service and sales and into management, serving as general manager at the Baton Rouge store and then as finance manager of both stores."

Dixie RV actually began in 1983. Dixie Motors, Dan Durham's Lincoln-Mercury dealership in Hammond, Louisiana, did not have a truck franchise and RVs seemed to fill that gap. He brought Greg Lala into the RV dealership as general manager in 1992.

"I had been working in another Louisiana RV dealership before Dan offered me the position," Greg explained. "He was a

master educator in the car business. Dan gave me the tools and education to run a large business."

In 1996 after making Greg a partner in Dixie RV, Durham moved the RV dealership to a new location in Hammond to give the company a separate identity and room to grow. The partners then purchased a dealership in Baton Rouge, only an hour's drive away. Greg began to apply the same principles that Dan used in bringing him to Hammond—recruit young, energetic, talented self-starters. Stephen met all of those criteria.

Dan Durham passed away in 2002, leaving Greg to forge ahead without his mentor. "Stephen and I wanted to be big

Text and photography by Fred Thompson

enough to offer the level of service our customers rightfully expected," Greg explained. As a member of a "Twenty Group" (management executives from RV dealerships throughout the nation), Greg and Stephen began visiting large RV dealerships in California, New York, Texas, Florida, Washington, and Indiana. "We wanted to invest in our business to provide the large inventory and quality service level that would cause RVers to want to do business with us," he said.

Subsequent planning led to the purchase of 68+ acres on I-12 in Hammond. The facility opened in December 2004 with 80,000 sq. ft. under roof, offering an indoor showroom, administrative offices, and 24 service bays. In January 2006 the company added 12 more bays. Sticking to their commitment of providing excellent service, a second expansion added 14 additional bays for a total of 50.

Greg purchased the remaining shares from the Durham family the following year and became sole owner of Dixie RV Superstore. Stephen became a partner and vice president in 2010. "We closed the store in Baton Rouge in 2006 after the Hammond store overshadowed it," Greg said. "It was only 40 minutes away and customers preferred Hammond's larger service facility as well as the much larger inventory."

"We established a three-point criteria for opening a new store," Greg explained. "We look for a decidedly underserved market. We get a prior commitment from the companies we want as our manufacturing partners. We identify the area or location that RV manufacturers asked us to serve."

In 2009 the partners found a closed truck stop on I-10 in DeFuniak Springs, Florida. "The location met our three-point criteria for opening a new store," Greg said. "We literally scraped off the truck stop and started over with a new physical plant. Along with Dixie's management team, the new store opened in



To emphasize the importance of a cohesive corporate culture, Greg Lala and Stephen Guidry developed the 10 Commitments. The statements, signed by all employees, stress the family concepts valued by the company.

mid-July 2010 and held a Grand Opening event in August after the main building was finished. The store's design and functionality was based on the Hammond store which became our prototype for expansion."

The Defuniak Springs store's location at exit 70 off of I-10 places it on an interstate thoroughfare that is heavily used by RVers. The 21-acre facility boasts an 18-bay service facility, a large parts and accessories department, and a convenience store with RV-friendly pumps.

In April 2015 Dixie RV opened its third store in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana, 40 miles west of Baton Rouge on I-10 at exit 109. The store is 87 miles from the Hammond dealership. The new location on 14.5 acres has a 20,500 sq. ft. two-story sales building and a service facility with 14 service bays.

There had not been a Tiffin dealership in the greater Birmingham area for over a decade, making it a very underserved

market. TMH approached Greg to see if Dixie RV was ready for a new challenge. Three other major manufacturers indicated their interest and the search began for a property. A Buick-GMC dealership that had closed two years earlier offered an architecturally attractive building with a small showroom (at least by RV standards), offices, and service area. Partners Greg Lala and Stephen Guidry closed the deal to purchase the facility in October 2016.

Located on 16 acres on I-65 at exit 234, the Calera store is 16 miles south of I-459, Birmingham's heavily traveled southern perimeter interstate.

The service area, obviously designed to accommodate cars and pickups, had to be redesigned to park motorhomes at 30-degree angles to the side walls. Space had to be appropriated for a much larger parts department than was needed by the automotive dealership as well as find space for a parts and accessories store, 10 sales offices, and administrative offices.

The major project to complete the transformation from an automotive dealership to an RV dealership was the construction of a new 12-bay service center. With 13 service bays already existing, the Calera store now has 25 service bays total to better serve its customers. Greg and Stephen spared no expense to make the new building a state-of-the-art service center. There are six bays on either side of the 200-foot long building, with the bays meeting head-to-head in the center, but separated by an access walkway to move tools and equipment in and out of the area. Each bay is 60 feet long to accommodate 45-foot coaches and leave 15 feet for technicians' tool cabinets and work tables. The east end of the building has two open ports for washing and detailing coaches. Cat5 cable runs under the floor to each bay, connecting the tech's workstation to the dealership's central computer. Techs report the completion of each part of the work order for real time





#### Dixie RV's Parts and Service Crew

Standing, left to right: Earl Bryant (parts), Darla Herron (parts manager), Savannah Abrams (parts), Tammy Ellison (warranty), Doree Dailey (warranty), Will Bouchard (technician), David Ackerman (technician),

Mark Mckee (technician). Kneeling, left to right: Matt Mims (technician), Tyler Murray (service coordinator), Michael Odem (ASM), JR Rodriguez (service manager), Robert Gardner (technician), Kevin Sholler (technician).



#### RV Outfitters, Finance, and Detail Crew

Standing, left to right: Blaine Douglass (RV outfitter), Jarred Pennick (detail manager), Carlton Laney (RV outfitter), Jody Glass (RV outfitter), Amy Jackey (RV outfitter), Monica Jones (RV outfitter), Scott Blair (general sales manager), Layne Schumann (RV outfitter),

Joey Page (detail). Kneeling, left to right: Trey Miller (sales manager), Andy Beard (golf cart attendant), Tony Grillo (finance director), Mason Ward (RV outfitter), Ed Bergman (RV outfitter), Paul Nunnally (RV outfitter), Tito Ramos (technician), Aaron Laird (detail).

updating on the progress of the repairs. Service advisors can monitor the progress at any time to advise owners.

Based on the HR protocols and pro-

cedures in the Hammond store that has been in place for several years, staffing in the new operation went smoothly. "We do an orientation process that we call 'On

Boarding,'" Stephen said. "The process can take two days. The new hire watches and studies from a digital company handbook. The employee can go back and review the handbook at any time prior to completing the online training and subsequent testing. A finance guy sees a different video than a tech applicant sees. They will go back and review the video manual every six months until they have been employed for two years."

#### The Philosophy of Service and Sales at Dixie RV

"This business is not about sales," Greg Lala emphasizes. "Its focus is on the retention of our employees by making Dixie RV a great place to work. When we do that successfully, our employees will do whatever is necessary to make *happy, satisfied customers*. With that accomplished, our sales volume will take care of itself. We realized many years ago that *happy, satisfied customers* depended on our ability to provide premium service.

"We studied the service systems in other industries including aviation, premium automobiles, and yachts in order to better serve our customers. We adopted many of their methods and processes for handling service efficiently, both to perform the actual service and to meet the owners' expectations," Stephen said.

To match the company's phenomenal sales growth, management planned and developed new and effective strategies in the service departments at each location. "When we were smaller, we had one service department team that addressed everything. Today, in the Hammond location, we have six teams," Stephen continued. "Sales is linked to service from the moment a motorhome or a towable is received from the manufacturer."

When an RV arrives from the factory, it is assigned to a service team—five to six members headed by an assistant service manager (ASM). Junior Rodriguez, the service manager, oversees the assignments, keeping the workloads in balance. Each team will have one or more master techs, an intermediate tech, and a trainee. A dedicated warranty administrator com-



pletes the team. “We have used this system for 10 years and it is a major reason for our success in service,” Stephen said. “We use the same system for processing trade-ins and getting them ready for resale.

“After a unit is assigned to a team, the pre-delivery inspection (PDI) identifies everything that needs to be done to get the unit ready for our sales inventory. Every feature and system in the motorhome is checked,” Stephen noted. “The team member who did the PDI will also make the delivery and provide the training to the new owner. As long as the owner and unit remain associated with Dixie RV, the original team will take care of the service, providing the owner with the opportunity to really get to know his team members. Of course, the team becomes completely familiar with the coach, its service records, and the owner’s approach to using and maintaining the unit.”

“We do our best to involve the owners in the service process,” Greg said. “We want them to remain on-site, or nearby, if possible to see and approve the repair work while it is in progress. Our assistant service managers work to build solid relationships with our owners.”

The company subscribes to two programs that provide significant benefits to those who purchase RVs from Dixie. RV Priority Network is a group of 180 dealerships who give all RV owners within the network a favored service status when they experience a motorhome problem that causes a trip interruption when they are over 100 miles from home. The network members guarantee service for the owner of the disabled RV within 48 hours after arrival at the participating dealership.

The second program, RV Warranty Forever, provides lifetime coverage for your motorized or towable RV at no charge when you purchase your recreational vehicle from Dixie RV. The owner must have an annual rigorous safety inspection and required annual maintenance. The items covered include components for suspension, brakes, water system, air conditioning, kitchen center, heating system, LP gas system, deluxe appliances, some interior and exterior components, and

manual leveling jacks. Dixie charges \$299 for the required annual maintenance for a motorhome.

“Profit is not a four-letter word as long as you give back to your customers,” Greg continued. “*Cheap* and *good* never go together. It costs to provide good service and we want to still be here when the customer needs us. It is our intention to give everyone world class service. We do give priority scheduling in service to those who purchased their units here at Dixie

RV. That’s only fair. But everyone who comes here for service will receive our careful attention and excellent service.

“Informed and effective communication with our customers is a must,” Greg said. “We pride ourselves on seeing that our managers and sales people check out RVs and use them so they can discuss RVing with their clients based on their actual experience. It is important for them to *walk the walk* and *talk the talk*. It speaks to our professional approach to this busi-



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Darla Herron fires up the Friday morning Kick Off Meeting with shouted questions and responsive answers from the team.



Todd Colley, Dixie RV's corporate training director, makes regular visits to all of the company stores.



Keslie Smith, Dixie RV's corporate HR director, takes a few minutes during the Kick Off Meeting to talk about the 10 Commitments.

ness. We camp with our families. We live the lifestyle.”

“If you don’t really live the RV lifestyle, then you are not fully in touch with your customers or the business,” Stephen said. “Greg and I both have demo motorhomes and are active campers. We know what our customers want and like because we use these units ourselves. We tailgate at the LSU games and enjoy sponsoring the Dixie RV Touchdown Village. It gives us the opportunity to be *with* our customers during a time when there is no *intention to sell* to them. We both got into this business because our families love camping.”

“My daughter Brandi is 30 and she loves to go camping,” Greg continued. “We practically raised Brandi in a campground. We lived in a Tiffin coach for eight months while we were remodeling our home.”

Stephen and his wife, Ashley, have two daughters, ages 5 and 7. “All we have to do is tell them we are going camping and we have two happy kids,” Stephen said.

### Corporate Organization

Dixie RV designed and implemented a corporate structure for present and future

growth. To a great extent, the Hammond store has become the “mother ship” and the Breaux Bridge, Defuniak Springs, and Calera stores are satellites. Corporate positions have been created for controller, sales director, service director, finance director, recruiter safety manager, facilities director, general counsel, human re-

sources, and chief financial officer (CFO). For example, the Corporate Sales Director directs the general sales managers at all four stores. The Corporate Service Director oversees the service managers in each store. Each corporate officer will meet periodically with the managers he supervises to insure consistent administration of policies and operations in all stores.

“We have a lot of hierarchy,” Stephen acknowledged. “We are top heavy, but because of this we can add new stores with very little growing pains and no additional top management. We are truly ready for new opportunities.”



First Impression Representatives  
Lisa Pike and Enid Taylor

### Service at Dixie RV

“Service in all four of Dixie RV’s locations includes everything except the chassis. We do warranty work for every manufacturer we represent,” Junior Rodriguez, service manager, explains. “We repair or replace everything that is in the house. We service the generator, and CAT and Cummins engines with oil and filter changes. We also take care of collision repair and painting in our body shop. We are especially proud of our new service center with 12 bays. Each bay has 50-amp



service, water, and dump station. We can service the wet tanks in all 12 bays and check for problems.”

After a 20-year career as a journeyman electrician, Junior took a position with a small RV dealership in Florida where he and his family had always lived. “I also got to do sales, F&I, and sales management,” Junior said, as he smiled at my surprise. Discovering he really liked the career change, he accepted a position with a larger dealership that a short time later was sold to Camping World (CW). “I worked in the collision center, learning a whole new side of the RV business,” he continued. “The company asked me to move to Colorado to supervise a collision center. Although CW promoted me to director of fixed operations, my family and I really missed Florida and came home in less than a year.”

Last year Junior learned that Dixie RV would be opening the Calera store soon and filled out an application for service advisor. It was not Florida, but it was a lot closer to Florida than Colorado, he joked. After Dixie’s HR department reviewed his résumé, he was offered the service manager position, an unexpected opportunity that made leaving Florida a lot easier.

“I was to be the first to have this position in the new store. It was like being given a blank sheet of paper and I would be the first to write on it,” he exuded. “I found where I wanted to work and got a management job. The possibilities here are endless. The enthusiasm here is terrific and I am so lucky to be a part of it. I got to handpick my staff, all of them.”

Concurrent with building his service staff, Junior began interviewing applicants for service advisor. “While shopping at Lowe’s, I was really impressed with the great service I was receiving from one of their floor associates,” he related. “I invited him to submit an application for service advisor. He did, and I hired him! My lead service advisor has five years of experience. All of our managers are on the lookout for enthusiastic employees who find satisfaction in helping customers get what they need. Across all of our departments, we have not lost any new hires in the year we have been here.”

When an owner arrives for a service appointment, the service advisor (SA) records the problems and marks them with blue tape. The SA opens a work order that shows the date he expects to make his first contact with the customer and asks for permission to call the owner on that date. Inventory is checked for the required parts or ones that need to be ordered. Items that may be covered by warranties are checked by the warranty administrator, Doree Dailey. Work orders go to Ty-

ler Murray, shop coordinator, who selects the technicians with the right skills to address the repairs. Michael Odem and Ronnie Lucas joined the company a few months ago as the service advisors.

The technician makes digital images and identifies the parts required with descriptions and part numbers. The SA sends requests to the Dixie RV Parts Department for the required parts to be ordered. When the parts are received, the work order status is changed from “wait-

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### Scheduling the Day

From left: Tyler Murray, service coordinator; Kevin Sholler, service technician; Michael Odem, assistant service manager; and JR Ro-

driguez, service manager, review the progress of RVs in the service center and address any problems presented.

ing on parts” to “parts received.” Tyler distributes the part to the technician and the job continues to be repaired.

As repairs on the work order are completed, the SA tracks the predicted timeline for the completion date.

Doree Dailey identifies the parts and repairs covered by warranties. Codes, part numbers, and in-depth descriptions with images are added to the warranty orders. “We take care of establishing the purchase date of the vehicle along with the VIN number to get the work approved by the manufacturer. At Tiffin, we work with Josh Palmer in the parts department and Luke Thomas in dealer services. Luke takes care of our pre-authorizations,” Doree explained. “Sometimes we discover a deeper problem as we get into a repair issue. They are always very willing to help us resolve issues that come up unexpectedly.

“I also do the dealer acceptance check-ins when a new coach arrives from the manufacturer. Each check-in usually takes 30 to 45 minutes,” Doree said. “I can really see the Tiffin quality. It is so apparent compared to our other coach manufacturers. I look for the obvious defects on the exterior and interior: slide-outs, genset, radio and TVs, and then

make sure the options on the invoice are actually on the motorhome. Then I do a short trip. Tiffin motorhomes handle like a dream on the road.”

Darla Herron, parts manager, places the orders to RV manufacturers and component suppliers requested by the service advisors. “Tiffin does a wonderful job in getting parts to us,” Darla said. “Since we are less than three hours from the plant, UPS can give us overnight service at ground rates. Savannah Abrams tracks our orders and handles all of our shipping and receiving.”

Earl Bryant, retail sales manager, noted that the store carries “the necessities for campers, everything they need to get started in their new RV. If we don’t have an item in stock, we will order anything and provide ‘stand-behind-the-product’ service. Our commitment is to make sure the customer is satisfied. We will show the item online to our customer and pay the shipping both ways if he is not satisfied. We will order and handle the installation of large items for a motorhome. Dixie will order and replace furniture and appliances including the conversion of a gas-electric fridge to a residential refrigerator. We do carpet replacement and restring

day-night blinds. But we usually replace day-night blinds with the double pull shades if the valance is large enough.”

“Eric Thomas is our regional service director,” Junior explains. “He does a service audit on any RV that has been here over 21 days. He determines what has caused the delay and how to remedy the situation immediately. Is it a parts issue, insurance company approval, or a shortage of technicians? As service manager, I am the problem solver who keeps the service department running smoothly.”

Dixie RV does a mandatory check on every recreational vehicle that comes in for service. “It’s a safety concern and our approach to good service,” Junior said. “We check the systems for water, 12-volt and 120-volt service, and LP.”

When a new unit arrives from the manufacturer, a PDI is done on the coach and any issues are taken to the warranty administrator. When a trade-in arrives in the service department, the RV is thoroughly inspected and checked out. Any issues are reported to the sales department for evaluating the unit as a trade-in. “Many owners are not aware of minor damage or problems and what it will cost to repair their coach,” Junior noted. “The general sales manager will inspect the trade-in with our technician to determine the cost of repairs.”

The former automotive service area has been converted to eight bays where PDIs are done on incoming units from the manufacturers as well as customer trade-ins.

### The Culture at Dixie RV

Dixie RV-Calera opened its doors for business in late March 2017. During the following nine months, Dixie sold more motorhomes than its back fence neighbor sold in the entire 12 months of 2017. Those numbers come from Statistical Surveys. Counting motorized and towable, the Calera location sold 573 units of which 188 were motorized.

“There is a good reason for our success during 2017,” Scott Blair, general sales manager, noted. “Our customers feel like they are being taken care of and appreciated. They know we will be here for

them after the sale. Most of us are natives of mid-state Alabama. We grew up here. When visitors come into the showroom, we think about our brothers and sisters, parents, or even our grandparents. We spend considerable time just discussing RVing with them as you would your next door neighbor to determine how they expect to use their recreational vehicle, where they like to camp, how many campers will be using the RV on each trip, and what price point fits their budget. We can accommodate a client from one end of our product spectrum to the other, from a \$10,000 single axle camper to a \$600,000 motorhome. Our two owners, Greg Lala and Stephen Guidry, encourage all of the sales associates and managers to check out one of our employee RVs often and go camping. To be competent as an RV sales person, you really have to be familiar with using an RV at a personal level.”

The culture that encourages the willingness of every employee to spend a lot of time talking with a customer really goes back to two main factors of the

corporate culture. During the interviews with Greg Lala and Stephen Guidry, they emphasized two main blocks in the foundation of Dixie RV’s corporate culture.

#1. “Cleanliness and friendliness are not negotiable. Everyone participates,” Greg said with vocal emphasis. “Each store and its outdoor property will be clean and inviting,” Stephen added. “When the service is completed on a motorhome and it leaves the service bay, that bay will be swept and mopped. If NASCAR can do it, we can, too!”

“The second part is that we all stick to the 20-foot rule,” Greg continued. “If you are within 20 feet of someone you do not know, and it will likely be a customer, you will greet them in a welcoming, sincere, and friendly voice.”

#2. The 10 Commitments. “This is a key part of our company culture,” Stephen noted. “When everyone signs the 10 commitments, it makes them aware of who we are and how we present our company. It adds to the family concepts that we value so much.

“Another reason for our success both here and at Dixie’s other stores is our customer training,” Trey pointed out. “Every motorhome is assigned to a team that oversees its service as long as the owner prefers. The team member who did the PDI when the coach arrived from the factory will do the customer’s training when the coach is sold. The tech who does the training may take an entire day if the new owner needs that much time. When they leave Dixie RV, they leave with the cell phone numbers for the sales associate, the sales manager, and the service tech’s number.”

In addition to serving as the general sales manager, Scott Blair oversees all of the Calera operation except the service department. As the sales manager, Trey Miller approves the sales negotiated by the associates and often does sales training on the fly as he works with them on each deal. “Trey does our in-house sales training to help our associates learn how to identify the needs and wants of a customer,” Scott explained.

Tony Grillo joined the Calera store as

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### Dixie RV's New 12-Bay Service Center

Opening in late April, Dixie's new service center accommodates 45 ft. coaches in all bays. Each bay is equipped with air, water, and dump station and online reporting of each part of a work order as it is completed.

finance manager in January 2017. "I worked in college sports after graduating from Troy University's journalism school and then migrated into the world of RVing," Tony began.

"We have lenders to address all levels of financial ability, including Bank of the West, M&T Bank (Baltimore), and Bank of America. Interest rates on RV loans are generally higher than the rates for cars and pickups. Most of the loans we negotiate for our buyers involve 10 percent down and financing for 20 years," he continued.

Tony revealed that approximately 75 percent of RV sales at Dixie are financed. "The average age of Class A buyers has dropped and we are now seeing families with children buying Class A's as well as couples still employed who can use them only on weekends and the limited vacation time they have while still employed. Many have realized they can buy a Class A gas motorhome for about the same price as a nice truck and a fifth wheel," he elaborated.

Sobel University of Tacoma, Washington, provides profes-

### Parts and Accessories Store

Dixie RV carries a combined \$2 million parts and accessories inventory in all four stores. If you order parts or accessories through the Calera store for an item not in stock, Dixie will pay the freight. If you do not accept the item when it arrives, they will return it at no charge.



sional sales training to Dixie RV's new sales associates, teaching a style of non-confrontational selling. "Our clients expect a sales associate to teach them more about our RVs than they can learn from our website," Scott said. "Sobel teaches a concept called Principle Centered Selling that focuses on helping people buy through a value-based approach. Customers *buy from us*. We *don't sell something* to them. We work to present what we have and what we can do to meet their needs. But they must make the decision to buy. We currently have nine sales people and three managers.

"Most of the sales people working for our competitors will not take you on a tour of the company's facility," Scott continued. "We want customers to see our new 12-bay, state-of-the-art service facility and our parts and accessories store. Very knowledgeable staff can help you outfit your RV with the items you will need to get started."

Sales training is an ongoing process at Dixie RV. "We train four days each week on product knowledge," Trey said. "We also go over meet and greet routines and how to build rapport with a new visitor to our campus. It is very important to understand the customer and find something you have in common.

"The first thing in the morning, we spend an hour addressing new products," Trey explained. "Two days a week we work on sales techniques, role playing, and round robins in which a sales person will try to explain and sell the features of a coach to fellow associates who ask questions. Our training opportunities are really expanded when manufacturers' reps visit to work with

us. Tiffin does a great job here, with their reps providing training both in sales and service.”

“Every Friday at 8 a.m. we do a company-wide meeting in the showroom,” Scott said. “Darla Herron, our parts director and a former high school cheerleader, knows how to get us fired up for the weekend. If we have a new employee, Junior Rodriguez introduces them and teaches them the Dixie Strut to the delight of everyone. If some of our corporate employees are here, we give them a chance to talk about what the company is doing in their area. Sometimes Trey or I will take one of the 10 Commitments and talk about how we can all make it real. We preach it and try very hard to live it.

“The first week of the year each employee makes a resolution that can be personal, professional, or both, places the resolution in an envelope, and deposits it in a box,” Scott explains. “The box is opened at the end of June and each person self-evaluates if he or she is meeting the goal or resolution. At the end of the third quarter in September, we do it again.”

I decided to test the owners assurances that managers and the sales team were really avid campers, that they could *talk the talk* and *walk the walk*. Jody Glass will mark her first anniversary on the sales team in July.

“I started pulling travel trailers at 16 when I got my driver’s license,” she began. Her dad was in RV service and the family has always camped. Jody learned about Dixie’s Calera location after a friend applied for a technician’s position. “I applied for a sales position. I was offered the job after my interview with Scott,” she said.

“Here in Alabama we camp a lot at Smith Lake. Two years ago our whole family, 21 of us, went to Imperial Sand Dunes Recreational Areas, actually 167,000 acres in land area. Buttercup Campground is one of a handful of campgrounds located on the sand dunes just off of Interstate 8 in Southern California. It’s close to Yuma. We camped for two weeks and had a wonderful time driving our four-wheelers over the dunes.”

Blaine Douglas was in pharmaceuticals calling on doctors before taking a position on the sales staff in October. “We live here in Calera. My mom still lives in the house where I grew up. When I finished high school, I got a baseball scholarship at Jax State where I was a pitcher,” Blaine said. “My wife and I have two girls, 9 and 15, who are into athletics—softball, basketball, and gymnastics.

“We have a travel trailer and really enjoy camping. I have always enjoyed the outdoors. My first sale here was a Tiffin Allegro RED. I am really excited about Dixie RV and the innovative ways that we communicate with our customers.”

Each sales person generates and develops his own client base, realizing it is his job to determine how each potential buyer wishes to use a recreational vehicle and how he can fill that need. “Take care of clients and you will get referrals,” Trey emphasizes.

“What sells a Tiffin or a Class A coach compared to a truck pulling an RV?” I asked. “There are at least two answers to that question,” one of the associates responded. “Traveling is so much easier in a motorhome, especially when you have children.

You can stop anywhere there’s a big parking lot and you have a bathroom at the ready. And second, set-up and breakdown is so much faster in a motorhome as compared to a trailer.”

“Today motorhomes and towables are very accommodating equipment, but they will always require service,” Greg Lala observed. “We build lasting relationships with premium service, keeping our owners pleased they decided to buy a recreational vehicle at Dixie RV. When you visit a Dixie RV store to *talk the talk* with us, you will quickly realize that we have been *walking the walk* for many years.” RIS

If you overlooked the recalls on pages 20 and 21, please be sure to go over them carefully. Note especially the recall for the **Kidde fire extinguisher.**

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PHOTO BY MARK RICHARDSON

In October of last year, Bob and Tim Tiffin, president and general manager, honored seven employees who were celebrating their 40th anniversary with the company in a catered luncheon at the Weatherford Centre.

From Left: Tim Tiffin, Brent Bullard, Don Boyd, Billy Nichols, Ricky Coats, William "Rocky" Warren, Phillip Cavness, Bob Tiffin. Not pictured, Jesse Vess.

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# The Kennedy Space Center

RECORDING AMERICA'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN SPACE



by Fred Thompson

**D**URING THE YEARS we lived in Tampa from 1998 to 2009, we missed several opportunities to travel only two hours to watch one of the many shuttle launches at the Kennedy Space Center near Titusville, something I came to regret after the shuttle program was shut down in 2011.

That regret was mitigated to some extent when I learned on January 30 that SpaceX had scheduled the liftoff of the Falcon Heavy February 6 on Launch Pad 39A at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC). The Falcon Heavy is currently the most powerful rocket on the planet. I quickly located the website for the KSC and purchased two tickets. The best viewing locations had sold out within 24 hours after they were offered online. By the way, that viewing area was called “Feel the Heat!”

If you are following the current news about Tesla, you are aware that a brilliant South African-born Canadian American

by the name of Elon Musk is the CEO of both Tesla and SpaceX. Forbes estimates the 47-year-old engineer-entrepreneur is worth \$19+ billion. Since this launch was a signature test of the well-publicized rocket and would not be carrying an astronaut, Musk demonstrated his expensive sense of humor by making the payload his personal Tesla sports car with a dummy astronaut, Starman, in the driver’s seat decked out in a space suit.

With a B.S degree in physics from the University of Pennsylvania and a second B.S. in economics from UP’s highly recognized Wharton School of Business, Musk enrolled at Stanford in 1995 to work on a PhD in applied physics and materials sciences. He remained in the program less than a week, resigning to try his entrepreneurial ideas for developing companies to address the future in the internet, renewable energy, and outer space. He built and sold companies with each success adding to

his personal wealth. By the time he sold PayPal to eBay in 2002, he had \$165 million in his pocket.

Thinking far into the future about the welfare of humanity, Musk in 2001 planned “Mars Oasis,” a miniature experimental greenhouse containing food crops that would be tested in the Martian soil. In October Musk and two associates traveled to Russia to buy refurbished ICBMs he thought could possibly place his greenhouse experiment on Mars. The companies they visited regarded the 30-year-old Musk as a dreamer and ignored him.

Accompanied by a former employee of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the team returned in February 2002 to buy three ICBMs. When they were offered only one ICBM for \$8 million, Musk abruptly terminated the meeting and flew home. His calculations indicated raw materials were only three percent of the price the Russians were asking for a refurbished rocket.

When he realized his company could build rockets for a tenth of the asking price, he founded Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) in May 2002 with the goal of creating a “spacefaring civilization” within his lifetime.

Over the next seven years, SpaceX designed and manufactured the family of Falcon launch vehicles and the *Dragon* multipurpose spacecraft. In September 2008, the Falcon 1 rocket put a satellite into Earth orbit, a first for a privately funded company. In May 2012, the *Dragon* docked with the International Space Station.

Other successes followed quickly. NASA awarded a contract for the continued development and testing of the Falcon 9 launch vehicle and the *Dragon* spacecraft to transport cargo to the International Space Station. In December 2008, SpaceX received a \$1.6 billion contract for resupplying the ISS, anticipating the space shuttle’s retirement in 2011. Since that retirement, the Russian Soyuz program has ferried U.S. astronauts to and from the ISS at premium prices.

On December 22, 2015, after launching the Falcon 9 with its triple rocket first stage, SpaceX jettisoned the outer two booster rockets, restarted three of the Merlin engines in each rocket, and landed them back at the launch pad, the first time such a feat had been accomplished by an orbital rocket. Over the last three years, over 75 percent of the two outer booster rockets have been recovered. After throttling back to drop the spent boosters, the center rocket returns to full power for the final thrust to push the spacecraft onto an orbital trajectory, after which it does not have enough fuel to return to the launch pad. As of February 6, 2017, 18 Falcon 9 flights have attempted to land the center position rocket on a drone ship far out in the Atlantic and closer to its point of separation from the second stage. Twelve of those attempts have been successful.

Our viewing position for the February 6 launch was located in temporary seating stands in the green space surrounded by KSC’s 25 attractions. The launch was slated for a 1:30 p.m. EST liftoff. However, Delaware North, the company that manages KSC and its special events, scheduled the viewers to arrive in waves beginning at 9 a.m. The cars crawled across the causeway from Titusville to KSC.

After negotiating the entrance through security and establishing our seating, we began visiting the surrounding attractions that do a marvelous job of telling the stories of our astronauts—the victories, tragedies, courage, heroism, and accomplishments. More about the attractions later. Our first day at KSC was focused on the Falcon Heavy launch.

The viewing of the actual liftoff was limited to a large screen erected in the green space. As we waited patiently for the liftoff, we learned that upper level wind shear would likely delay the launch. The launch window was 1:30 – 4:00 p.m. The delay announcements were made on the PA system: 2:20 p.m., 2:50, 3:05, 3:15, and finally 3:45 p.m. We had begun to think it was not going to happen on February 6. The window had nearly closed. Then the distant roar became louder, the big screen displayed





The Falcon Heavy launched at 3:50 p.m. on February 6, 2018.



The Falcon Heavy with all 27 rockets firing in the first phase.



Two booster rockets return to base in perfect landings.

the white cloud at the base of the rocket as it slowly began its ascent. In a moment each of the three rockets were producing a mass of yellow-white flames—27 Merlin 1D engines, nine in each booster, producing over five million pounds of thrust and passing through Mach 1 in 67 seconds from liftoff.

Once the Falcon Heavy rose several thousand feet above the distant horizon, we could see its white shaft and fireball tail as it angled out over the Atlantic. When the side boosters shut down at two minutes and 27 seconds into the flight and separated for their return to the launch pad, they looked like tiny straight pins reflecting the light of the late afternoon sun. Their rockets restarted and sent them scampering back to the launch

pad area for two perfect landings at Canaveral's Landing Zones 1 and 2, approximately eight minutes after liftoff.

After the separation, the Stage 1 center booster burned for another 35 seconds and began its controlled reentry toward SpaceX's drone ship, a large square floating platform towed into an exact latitude-longitude position. The recovery failed when two of the three Merlin engines did not ignite, causing it to crash into the ocean at 300 mph.

After the center core jettisoned, the single vacuum-rated Merlin engine on the upper stage burned for eight minutes and 30 seconds. After a 20-minute coasting phase followed by a 30-second upper-stage burn, the vehicle pushed the apogee of the payload's orbit to approximately

4,350 miles. A third burn six hours after liftoff placed Starman and his Tesla sports car on a Sun-centric orbit that should cycle between the orbits of Mars and Earth.

The Falcon Heavy is the most powerful launch vehicle in use today. With a liftoff thrust of 5 million pounds, its payload is 140,660 pounds. Only the Saturn V used in the Apollo program had a greater payload capacity. With a liftoff thrust of 7.6 million pounds, the Saturn V could deliver 260,000 pounds into orbit.

Congratulatory statements began to appear on the internet immediately. Robert Zubrin, president of the Mars Society, said: *Today SpaceX achieved a spectacular and historic success. Seven years ago, the Augustine Commission said that NASA's Moon program*



had to be cancelled because the development of the necessary heavy lift booster would take 12 years and 36 billion dollars. SpaceX has now done that, on its own dime, in half the time and a twentieth of the [projected] cost. And not only that, but the launch vehicle is three quarters reusable. This is a revolution. The naysayers have been completely refuted. The Moon is now within reach [again]. Mars is now within reach. The moment is at hand to open the space frontier. America should seize the time.”

After its sensational success, does SpaceX have any customers for its Falcon Heavy launch system? The answer is “yes,” including Arabsat 6A and Inmarsat, satellites manufactured by Lockheed Martin for the UAR, the U.S. Air Force’s STP-2, and Viasat, Inc., a global communications provider. With NASA’s Space Launch System (SLS) still two and a half years out, it is very likely the Department of Defense will also be knocking on SpaceX’s door.

As a high school student in the 11th grade, I was surprised on October 4, 1957 when the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik 1*, the first artificial satellite to successfully achieve earth orbit. Only 23 inches in diameter, it began sending signals that even amateur radio operators could monitor when it passed over the United States. My oldest brother, an avid amateur radio operator for many years, reported monitoring *Sputnik*’s signals. Less than a month later, the Soviets launched *Sputnik 2* with a dog on board, the first living animal to go into earth orbit, a mission that lasted for 2,500 orbits.

President Eisenhower had mandated earlier the U.S. would not use any military rockets in the infant space program to preserve a foundation for arguing that all nations must keep space free of military weapons. On December 6, 1957, a Vanguard rocket launch failure at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station ruined America’s first effort to put a satellite in orbit.

The International Geophysical Year (July 1, 1957–December 31, 1958) was conceived as a new era of collaboration in which 67 countries participated in IGY projects. With no scientific contribution to the IGY to match Russia’s

two satellites already in orbit, Wernher von Braun, director of the Development Operations Division of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, secured approval to modify the military’s Jupiter-C to accommodate a satellite payload, with the resulting rocket identified as the Juno I. The modifications and the construction of the Explorer 1 satellite were completed in 84 days. They successfully launched Explorer 1 on January 31, 1958, marking the birth of America’s space program. It was the first spacecraft to detect the Van Allen radiation belt. During the next 18 months, six more attempts were made to launch Explorer satellites with two ending in failures at the launch pad.

On April 2, 1958, President Eisenhower reacted to the Soviet lead in the space race by recommending a civilian agency be established to direct non-military research into the peaceful use of space. Led by Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, Congress passed the National Aeronautics and Space Act that was signed by the President on July 29, 1958, creating the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Just before the end of the International Geophysical Year, the United States announced plans for Project Mercury on December 17, 1958, with the goal of putting a man into Earth orbit and returning him safely. Within a year, seven astronauts were selected from a large pool and were often referred to as the NASA Mercury 7 astronauts. They were M. Scott Carpenter, L. Gordon Cooper, Jr., John H. Glenn, Jr., Virgil I. (Gus) Grissom, Walter M. (Wally) Schirra, Jr., Alan B. Shepard, Jr., and Donald K. (Deke) Slayton.

All of the Mercury 7 astronauts were born in the 1920s and served in either the Marines, Navy, or Air Force. Most of them saw air combat in World War II or the Korean War. Probably because my brother, William Hatch Thompson, born in 1925, was trained as a Navy Frogman and served in World War II, I felt a connection to and great admiration for these men and followed their careers and achievements.

On October 21, 1959, President Eisen-



Rear Admiral Alan B. Shepard, Jr. was America’s first man in space on May 5, 1961. He was the only Mercury astronaut to walk on the moon.

hower approved the transfer of the U.S. Army’s remaining space-related projects and equipment to NASA. On July 1, 1960, Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, became NASA’s George C. Marshall Space Flight Center with Wernher von Braun named as its first director. It was here the famed Saturn V rocket would be developed under von Braun’s guidance.

The Soviets jumped ahead again on April 12, 1961, when Yuri Gagarin became the first human to journey into outer space aboard a *Vostok* spacecraft, completing one orbit before returning to Earth.

Three weeks later on May 5, 1961, Alan B. Shepard, Jr. became the first American in space with a non-orbital, down range space shot. Since the seven astronauts selected for Project Mercury were often referred to as the Mercury 7, NASA asked each of them to select a name for their spacecraft ending with the number “7”. Shepard selected *Freedom 7*. His spacecraft-rocket combination was referred to as the Mercury-Atlas 10. He also flew on



Clockwise from top: Mercury 7 astronaut could be no taller than 5'10." Not surprising when you see how cramped the space is inside this Mercury capsule. We watched with amusement as one visitor tried to collapse himself and crawl inside. ♦ The Mercury 7 astronauts in the Astronaut Hall of Fame. ♦ The Gemini capsule that flew on mission 9A.

the *Apollo 14* at age 47. He was the fifth astronaut to walk on the moon and the only one of the Mercury 7 to do so. He completed his military career as a rear admiral.

Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom followed Shepard on July 21 and repeated his sub-orbital flight as NASA continued to test the Atlas rocket and the Mercury spacecraft. He named his spacecraft *Liberty Bell 7*. He later flew with John Young on *Gemini 3*. He was a lieutenant colonel at the time of his tragic death in the *Apollo 1* fire.

The race heated up again when Gherman Titov aboard *Vostok 2* became the second human to orbit the earth. In 17 orbits, he spent over 25 hours in space on August 6–7, 1961.

Col. John H. Glenn, Jr. was the third of the Mercury 7 to go into space in his Mercury-Atlas 6 and the first American to orbit the earth. Piloting *Friendship 7* on February 20, 1962, he orbited the Earth three times. During his career in Congress, Senator Glenn (D-Ohio), then 77, flew on the space shuttle as loadmaster in 1998, setting the record as the oldest man to orbit the earth.

On May 24, 1962, Scott Carpenter was launched into space aboard a Mercury-Atlas 7. The three-orbit science mission lasted five hours. He chose *Aurora 7* as the name for his spacecraft. He retired as a commander in the Navy.

Walter M. (Wally) Schirra, Jr. on October 3, 1962, piloted a six orbit, nine hour flight on a Mercury-Atlas 8 spacecraft named *Sigma 7*. He also flew on *Gemini 6A* and *Apollo 7*, the only astronaut to fly in all three programs. He completed his Navy career as a captain.

L. Gordon Cooper, Jr. piloted the longest and final Mercury

spaceflight on May 15–16, 1963. He was the last American to fly solo and the first American to sleep in space during his 34-hour mission in a Mercury-Atlas 9. He named his craft *Faith 7*. He retired as a colonel in the U. S. Air Force.

After being selected to pilot the second orbital Mercury spaceflight in 1962, Donald (Deke) Slayton was grounded by atrial fibrillation, a condition that lasted for 10 years. In March 1972, he was granted medical clearance to fly again and was assigned as docking module pilot of the 1975 Apollo-Soyuz Test Project. At age 51, he was the oldest astronaut to fly in space at that time. That record was later broken by four other astronauts. He retired as a major in the U. S. Air Force.

The Mercury 7 astronauts are given a place of special honor in the United States Astronaut Hall of Fame in the Heroes & Legends building near the entrance to the park along with a







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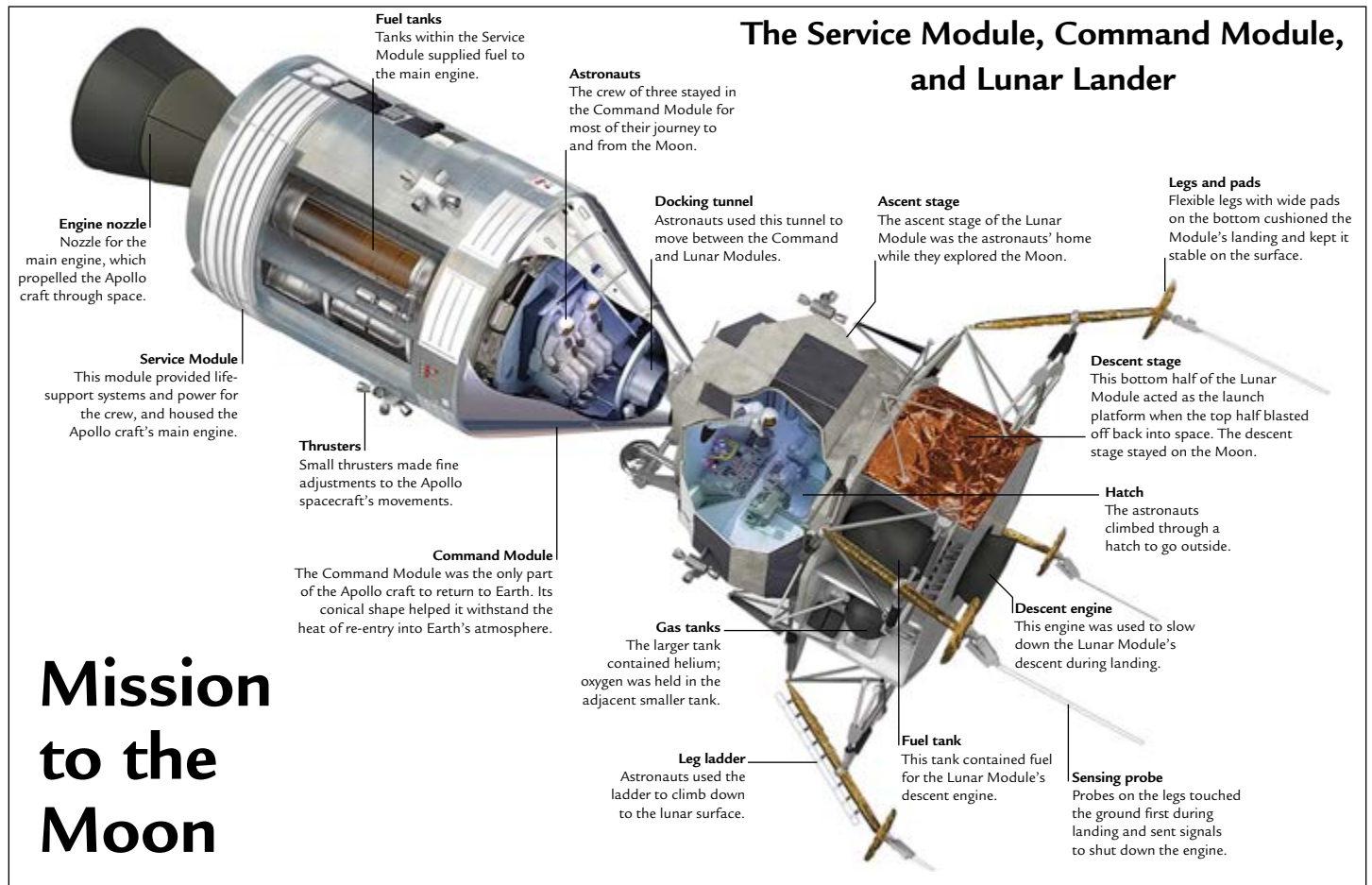
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statue of Rear Admiral Alan B. Shepard, Jr. who was our first astronaut in space.

Before the Mercury program was retired, NASA began to test new rockets. The Gemini-Titan II launch vehicle was adapted by NASA from the U.S. Air Force Titan II ICBM. The Gemini spacecraft carried a two-astronaut crew. The 10 Gemini missions flew low Earth orbit (LEO) during 1965 and 1966, putting the United States in the lead during the Cold War Space Race against the Soviet Union.

Gemini's objective was the development of space travel techniques to support the Apollo mission to land astronauts on the Moon. It performed missions long enough for a trip to the Moon and back, perfected extra-vehicular activity (EVA), and performed orbital maneuvering to achieve space rendezvous and docking. With the new techniques developed by Gemini, Apollo pursued its prime mission to reach the Moon without relearning fundamental exploratory operations.

The Apollo program began with an uncrewed mission in 1966 and followed with 12 crewed missions. *Apollo 1* never launched. On January 27, 1967, a fire in the command module during a launch pad test killed the crew and destroyed the module. The program lost three experienced and courageous astronauts: Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee. It was nearly 21 months before the Apollo program recovered and *Apollo 7* was launched on October 11, 1968.

*Apollo 8* made the first flight to the moon and completed 10 lunar orbits. *Apollo 9* completed the first manned test of the Lunar Module. *Apollo 10* was the "dress rehearsal" leading up to the lunar landing. The Lunar Module descended to 8.4 nautical miles above the lunar surface on May 22, 1969.

*Apollo 11* launched on July 16, 1969 with the world watching and waiting for the lunar landing. Neil Armstrong was the first human being to set foot on another heavenly body on July 20,

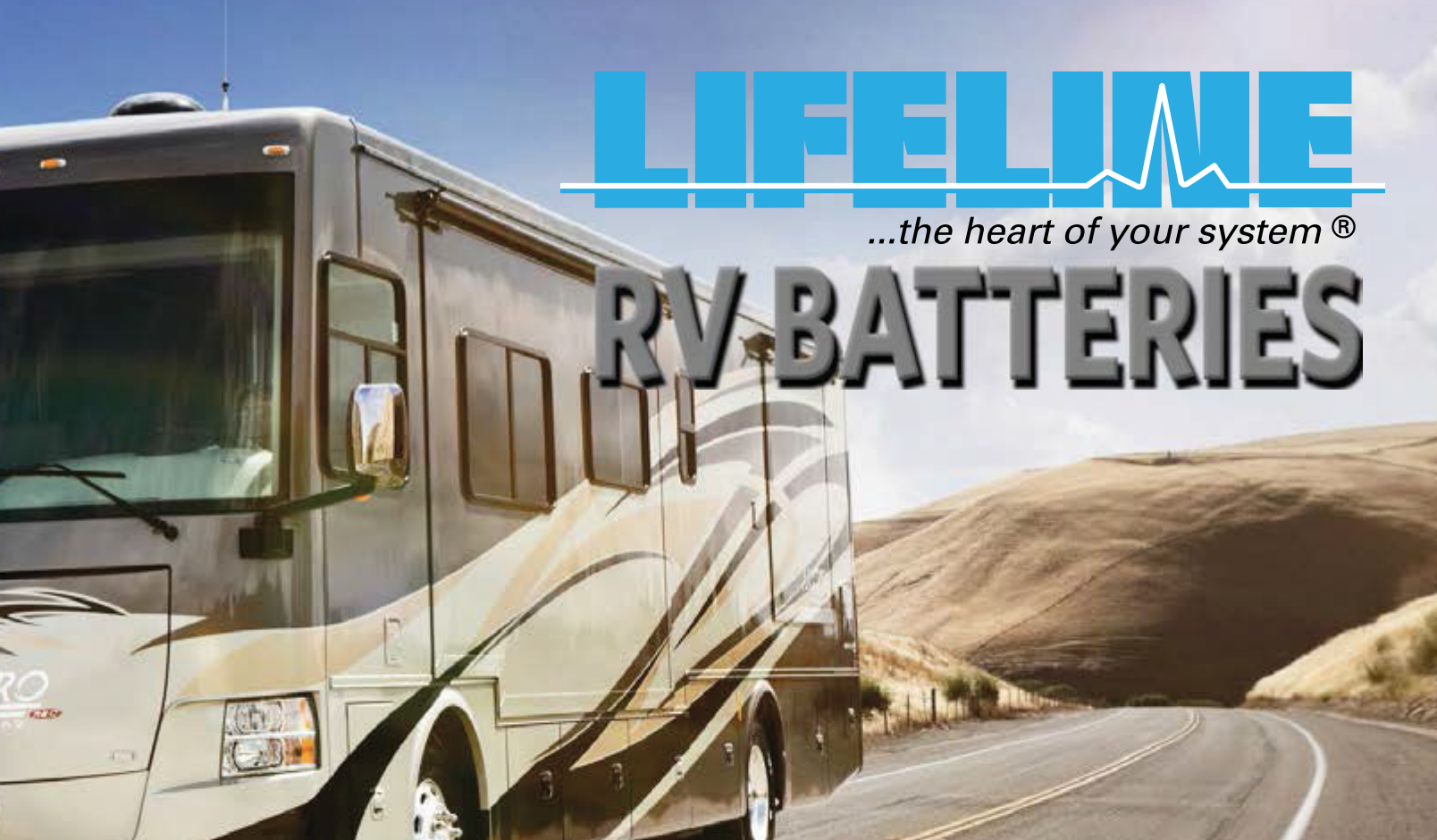




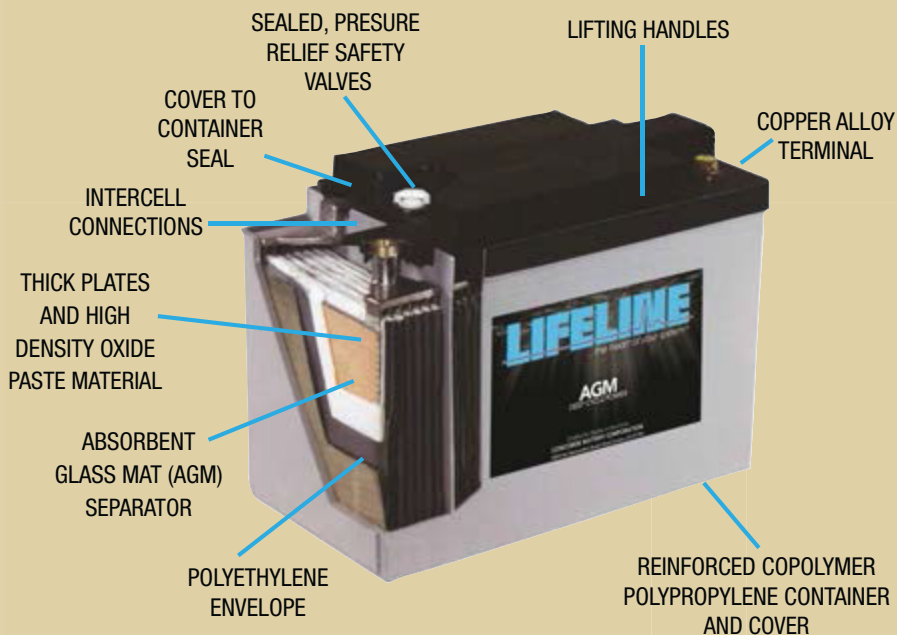
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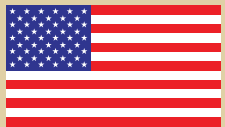


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1969, followed a few minutes later by Buzz Aldrin. Armstrong's statement as he first stepped onto the Moon — "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." — became the most quoted sentence uttered in the 20th century. Five more Apollo missions continued to land American astronauts on the moon. On December 7, 1972, *Apollo 17* became the last lunar mission. After Harrison Schmitt and Eugene Cernan spent three days on the surface of the moon, Cernan followed Schmitt into the Lunar Lander and earned the distinction of being the last astronaut to have walked on the moon.

With a crew of two, the space shuttle program began on April 12, 1981 with the launching of the *Columbia*, the first reusable orbital spacecraft. Five shuttles were built for the program: *Columbia*, *Challenger*, *Atlantis*, *Discovery*, and *Endeavor*.

The five space shuttles flew 135 missions between 1981 and 2011. The accomplishments in these missions are too numerous to list. The Hubble Telescope, placed in orbit by the *Discovery* on April 24, 1990, has probably contributed the most to our knowledge of outer space. The Hubble was serviced on five subsequent shuttle missions in 1993, 1997, 1999, 2002, and 2009.

Astronaut Jerry Ross was the most frequent flyer with seven missions. John Young had four missions to his credit before the space shuttle program began. He commanded the *Columbia*, the first space shuttle launched on April 12, 1981. On November 28, 1983, Young again commanded the *Columbia* with a crew of five.

Over the next 30 years, the space shuttle became the workhorse of America's space program with 135 missions, many of which were dedicated to the construction of the International Space Station, whose first component was put in orbit in 1998.

On January 28, 1986, the *Challenger* on its tenth flight broke apart 73 seconds into its flight, killing all seven crew members — five NASA astronauts and two payload specialists. The disintegration of the spacecraft began over the Atlantic Ocean at 11:39 EST after a joint in its right solid rocket booster failed at liftoff. The shuttle program came to a halt for 32 months while the failure was thoroughly investigated.

Seventeen years later, on February 1, 2003, the *Columbia* disintegrated upon reentering the Earth's atmosphere, killing all seven crew members. It was the *Columbia's* 28th mission and the 107th mission of the program. After a piece of foam insulation broke off from the external fuel tank, it struck the left wing of the orbiter, creating a hole that allowed hot atmospheric gases to penetrate and destroy the internal wing structure when *Columbia* re-entered the Earth's atmosphere. The spacecraft became unstable and broke apart. A two-year hiatus ensued while engineers worked to make sure the problem did not occur in the future.

After the program was ended in 2011, Russia's Soyuz rockets became the only provider of transportation to the ISS for our astronauts, equipment, and supplies.

SpaceX's Falcon 9 and *Dragon* spacecraft first delivered a payload to the ISS on May 12, 2012. SpaceX anticipates delivering U.S. astronauts to the ISS in 2019, the first time in eight years that U.S. astronauts will be launched from the Kennedy Space Center.

## THE KENNEDY SPACE CENTER VISITOR COMPLEX



The Visitor Complex at the KSC is one of the top tourist draws in the State of Florida with over one million visitors each year. Guests will see a 60-year history of the greatest effort man has every created to learn more about his planet and the world beyond. One day will barely allow you to scratch the surface, two days are a minimum, and three will whip up your enthusiast enough to return for another visit. That's why the KSC offers season tickets.

As you negotiate through the entrance gates and security, the first building on your left will be a planning center for seeing the complex. Allow at least 30 minutes in the **Planning Center** to learn the geography of the Visitor Complex and decide what you want to see on the first, second, and third days.

Our first stop was **Heroes & Legends** and the U.S. **Astronaut Hall of Fame**.<sup>®</sup> The subdued light and the etched images of each astronaut casts an aura that invokes admiration, solemnity, and reflection on their individual accomplishments and the collective achievements of the U.S. space program. Their courage inspired a national pride in the 1960s that was fueled in part by John F. Kennedy's speech on September 12, 1962.

We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. For space science, like nuclear science and all technology, has no conscience of its own. Whether it will become a force for good or ill depends on man, and only if the United States occupies a position of pre-eminence can we help decide whether this new ocean will be a sea of peace or a new terrifying theater of war. . . . We choose to go to the Moon! We choose to go to the Moon in this de-

cade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win. . . .

And win we did. Our Mercury program went head to head with the Soviet Union's Vostok rockets and spacecraft. By the time the U.S. began its Gemini program, the Russians were way behind and they never caught up. In less than seven years after President Kennedy made his speech at Rice University, Neil Armstrong walked on the surface of the Moon. Of the 12 astronauts who walked on the Moon, five are still with us today. Our most recent loss was John Young who died on January 5, 2018. He was a veteran of six missions, having flown in Gemini, Apollo, and the Space Shuttle.

We walked in the **Rocket Garden** for an hour, marveling at the early rockets that launched Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom, John Glenn and three other astronauts in the tiny, cramped Mercury capsule (it could barely be called a "spacecraft"). We watched a couple take turns trying to squeeze into it. The incredible courage it took for those men in spacesuits to compress themselves into that black thimble while an Atlas rocket hurled them beyond Earth's gravity—NASA's first steps to compiling the data from the learning experiences that would later make Alan Shepard the fifth and the oldest man (at 47) to walk on the Moon.

Our next event for the day was the **KSC Bus Tour**, which is included with the general admission price. Since we had just seen the launch the day before of the Falcon Heavy, it was fasci-



The Vehicle Assembly Building

The Missile Crawler Transporter moves the Mobile Launcher Platform carrying the Saturn V rocket and the Apollo capsule to Launch Pad 39A.





nating to see Launch Pad 39A where the liftoff occurred only 18 hours earlier.

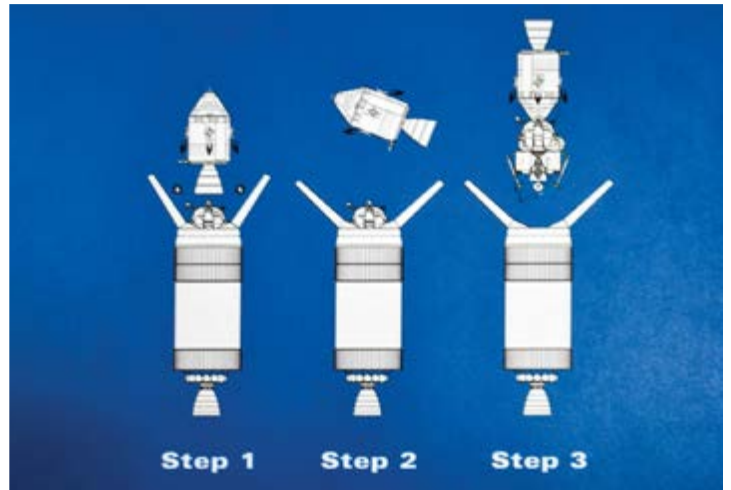
Not far away, the Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB) towers 526 feet into Florida's skyline and is viewable from miles inland. After rockets are assembled on a Mobile Launcher Platform, the sectional door (see picture, page 69) slides to the top of the one-story enclosure to allow a completed rocket to be moved out of the building. The Missile Crawler Transporter moves the Mobile Launcher Platform with its rocket assembly along the Crawlerway to the launch pad. After each launch, the crawler takes the platform back to the VAB.

The Bus Tour's only stop is the building housing the **Saturn V Rocket**. This is the rocket that sent our astronauts to the Moon. Plan at least two hours to absorb this amazing up-close exhibit of the most powerful rocket ever built. It is supported in a horizontal position just a few feet above visitors' heads. Weighing in at 6.54 million pounds, it measures 363 feet vertically. The time frame from sketches on paper to its first flight on November 9, 1967 was only six years. The project cost was approximately \$6.5 billion. During the first two minutes of its firing, it consumed 40,000 pounds of fuel per second.

The Saturn V was launched 13 times

from the KSC with no failures, no loss of crew, and no loss of payload. Today it still remains the tallest, heaviest, and most powerful rocket ever launched anywhere. Designed under the leadership of Wernher von Braun and Arthur Rudolph at the Marshall Space Flight Center, and built by Boeing, North American Aviation, Douglas Aircraft, and IBM, it remains the only launch vehicle that carried astronauts beyond low Earth orbit. A total of 24 astronauts were launched to the Moon, 12 of whom walked on the Moon, between December 1968 and December 1972.

In the **Apollo Treasures Gallery**, you



*Clockwise from top left:* The building housing the Saturn V rocket and the Apollo Command Module, Service Module, and Lunar Lander can be seen above in radical perspective. The Command Module (gray cone) is the only part of the Saturn-Apollo moon shot that returned to Earth. The Service Module orbited the Moon piloted by one of the three astronauts while the other two entered the Lunar Lander for their transit to the surface of the Moon (see illustration, page 66). The Lander has two parts: the Descent Stage and the Ascent Stage. The Descent Stage was left on the Moon when the astronauts returned to the Service Module

in orbit. ♦ In the Mockup of the Lunar Module, you can see the Command Module on the right with its conical-shaped engine and the Lunar Lander on the left. ♦ When the Lunar Module went into orbit around the Moon, the fairing dropped away to allow the astronauts to flip the Service Module 180 degrees and dock with the Lunar Lander. The astronauts descending to the Moon's surface entered the Lunar Lander through the docking tunnel, fired up its rocket, and proceeded to the surface. ♦ The Apollo Command Module was the only equipment of the Saturn Apollo 14 mission to return to earth.



can actually see the moon dust on Alan Shepard's spacesuit and stand within five feet of his *Apollo 14* capsule. It was the eighth manned mission to the Moon and the third to land astronauts on our satellite. *Apollo 14* was crewed by Commander Shepard, Command Module Pilot Stuart Roosa, and Lunar Module Pilot Edgar Mitchell. The outer shell of the capsule shows that it withstood the 3,500-degree reentry heat and protected its occupants.

Back at the Visitor Complex, our next stop was the **Space Shuttle Atlantis**, one of the three surviving space shuttles still in existence. With its huge bay doors open, I easily imagined astronauts in spacesuits floating around and performing tasks like servicing the Hubble Telescope. The displays offer 60 interactive exhibits describing the technology and impact of NASA's Space Shuttle Program in its quest to explore our universe.

The *Atlantis* was the fourth space shuttle to go into operation. Its maiden flight was STS-51-J launched on October 3, 1985. After 33 missions, it landed for the



final time at the Kennedy Space Center on July 21, 2011. In those missions, *Atlantis* orbited the Earth 4,848 times, traveling 126 million miles. Its high visibility missions included the launch (STS-34, Oct. 1989) of the Galileo interplanetary probe to Jupiter and the launch of the gamma

ray observatory (STS-37, April 1991). Beginning with STS-71, *Atlantis* flew the first of seven missions to Mir, the Russian space station.

An attraction you must not miss is the **Imax Theater** with two 3D movies included in the daily admission. *Journey*

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Above: The Hubble Space Telescope, now in orbit for 28 years, has provided immeasurable data and images from the depths of our universe. ♦ Scientists have found images like the one above that continue to challenge and defy explanation.

to Space provides an overview of NASA's past accomplishments, current activities, and future plans. The 3D video virtually

meets you in your seat. *A Beautiful Planet* features nearly 30 minutes of video of Earth taken from the International Space Station demonstrating the effects humanity has had on it over time.

The depths of our universe come to life through the eyes of the Hubble Space Telescope during *Hubble 3D*, an IMAX 3D film narrated by Leonardo DiCaprio. The

story of launching the telescope aboard the Space Shuttle *Discovery* in 1990 is almost as amazing as the telescope itself. Of all the individual satellites placed in orbit, the Hubble Space Telescope is the most important scientific instrument since Galileo's original telescope.

The film takes viewers to distant galaxies to explore the inscrutable mysteries of the creation. The audience follows space-walking astronauts as they attempt the repairs required to recover the instrument's functionality. The job constituted the most difficult, intricate, and important assignment in NASA's history. It took five space shuttle visits to complete.

Using the IMAX 3D camera, the footage was shot by the STS-125 astronauts who flew Space Shuttle *Atlantis* in May 2009, the last of the five missions in which spacewalks were required to service the telescope. The footage also includes awe-inspiring Hubble images recorded from the depths of our universe.

Located just outside the IMAX Theater, visitors can experience powerful Hubble imagery first-hand at the *Eye on the Universe: The Hubble Space Telescope* exhibit. The exhibit presents the stunning discoveries of the Hubble Space Telescope, allowing visitors to step into the universe and walk the pathway to ancient stars, nebulae, and galaxies. Both the IMAX 3D film and the exhibit are included with the standard admission to the KSC Visitor Complex.

There are many other attractions that are included with your admission. Seeing them all would require at least a three day visit for a very motivated guest. Those that we did not have time to visit include:

- Astronaut Encounter
- Apollo 8 and the Firing Room
- Exploring the Moon
- Lunar Theater
- Astronaut Training Simulators
- Forever Remembered
- ISS Triumph of Technology
- Shuttle Launch Experience®
- Journey to Mars
- Mars Rover Vehicle Navigator®
- Mission Status Briefing
- Science on a Sphere®

There are many more attractions not included with admission:

**Launch Director Tour** (\$149/\$139)

First price is adult, second is child.

**Fly with an Astronaut** (\$199/174;

9:15–1:30 p.m.)

**Astronaut Training Experience** (\$175;

5-hr program; sessions 8:30 a.m. &

4:30 p.m. Ages 10+)

**Mars Base 1** (\$150; 9:30 a.m., 7 hrs.;

ages 10–17 w/paying adult)

**KSC Explore Tour** (\$25/\$19)

**KSC Launch Control Center Tour**

(\$25/\$19)

**Cape Canaveral Early Space Tour**

(\$25/\$19)

**Lunch with an Astronaut** (\$30/\$16)

**Cosmic Quest** (\$20/add \$5 for annual activation)

## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**Directions:** The Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex is located east of Orlando on State Road 405. From Orlando, take State Road 528 east and follow the signs to the KSC. From Interstate 95, take exit 212 northbound or exit 215 southbound. From Merritt Island or Cocoa Beach, take State Road 3.

**Information:** 877-313-2610 or visit [KennedySpaceCenter.com](http://KennedySpaceCenter.com)

**Hours:** The visitor complex opens daily at 9 a.m. Closing times vary by the season.

**Admission:** Adults, \$50 + tax; children 3–11, \$40 + tax; seniors and military, \$45 + tax. Since it is impossible to “see it all” in one day, we recommend the annual pass at \$89 and \$71. Annual Pass holders receive free parking, otherwise \$10/day.

**Services:** Wheelchairs and strollers are available for rental inside the main entrance. All exhibits and tours are wheelchair accessible. Pet kennels are available.

**RV Resorts:** We camped for three nights at Great Outdoor RV Resort, 125 Plantation Drive, Titusville, Florida. 321-269-5004 and 800-621-2267. [tgoresort.com](http://tgoresort.com) Good Sam Park. All sites have concrete pads, 50/30 amp, water, and sewer. Rates: Nov–Apr, \$70/night; May–Oct, \$60/night. From I-95, take exit 215 and go west a half mile on State Road 50.

*Continued on page 84*

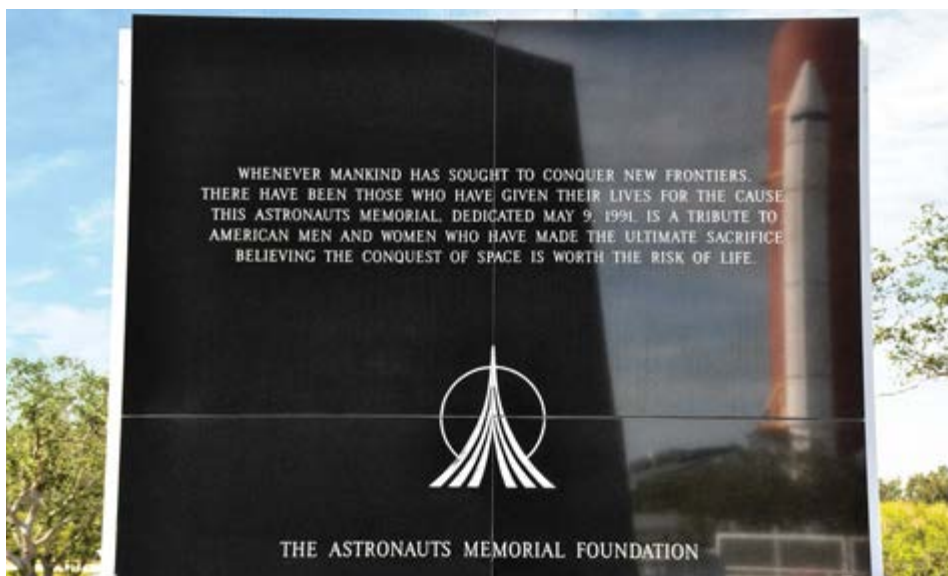


## THE SPACE MIRROR MEMORIAL

The Space Mirror Memorial is a National Memorial in the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex designed in 1987 by Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones and dedicated on May 9, 1991 to immortalize the lives of men and women who died in NASA's several space programs. In addition to the 20 NASA career astronauts, the memorial includes the names of a U.S. Air Force X-15 test pilot, a U.S. Air Force officer

who died while training for a classified military space program, a civilian space-flight participant who died in the *Challenger* disaster, and an Israeli astronaut who was killed in the *Columbia* disaster.

The primary feature of the memorial is a flat expanse of polished black granite, measuring 42.5 feet high and 50 feet wide, divided into 90 smaller panels. The names of astronauts who died in the same accident are grouped on the same panel.



## THE ASTRONAUTS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

In a selected Day of Remembrance at the Space Mirror Memorial, the Astronauts Memorial Foundation honors annually 20 NASA astronauts, two civilians, an X-15 pilot, and an Israeli astronaut who lost their lives in disasters and

accidents. Our astronauts are national treasures. The Day of Remembrance activities pay tribute to the bravery of those astronauts who acknowledged that space is an unforgiving environment, but believed exploration was worth the risk.



# Dwain Emerson

31 YEARS OF BUILDING 'EM RIGHT AT TIFFIN MOTORHOMES

by Fred Thompson

Dwain Emerson was born nearly a half century ago and grew up on a farm a few miles out in the country from Hamilton, Alabama, where he still lives today. His parents operated a 100-acre cattle farm, producing feeder calves. Jesse and Barbara were equal op-

portunity employers, providing their children, two girls and two boys, with plenty of opportunities to work. "We were all in 4-H and raised calves that we showed in the county fair competitions," Dwain said.

Jesse opened a feed and seed store 30

miles to the west of Hamilton in Fulton, Mississippi. "I started waiting on customers as a teenager and heard my dad say many times, 'You have to treat your customers right, Dwain, or they won't come back,'" Dwain noted. "Just a few years later, I was learning the same lesson from Mr. Bob. So I have been practicing good customer service for most of my life."

Dwain graduated from high school in 1987 and took a position that summer with Tiffin Motorhomes in the Red Bay assembly plant. "I installed TVs, VCRs, and DVDs in the motorhomes. Back then all of that equipment was an option, but people were beginning to want TVs. We were still building the aluminum-sided campers then and most of them were under 30 feet long," he recalled. "My supervisor moved me to another station in the assembly line where I installed cabinet doors and drawers. Having used many different tools working on our farm, I found it easy to move to almost any place in the line where I was needed."

"I worked with B.D. Stacy who took me under his wing and taught me a lot," Dwain continued. "When I was working with B.D. in Final Finish, we traced repetitive flaws back to the point in the assembly line where they occurred. We

Dwain Emerson, assistant production manager, values highly his good relationship with the Tiffin family. Shown here with Tim Tiffin, general manager of TMH, Dwain has worked with Tim since both men were in their twenties. ♦ Dwain confers with Keith Burleson who manages two of the cleaning teams in Final Check.



identified the problem, retrained, and corrected it. I guess we were practicing 'quality control' but I doubt if we called it that in 1995."

In 2000, Dwain became the utility man for the interior department that included five workstations on the assembly line. In that section, the assembly line workers add many features that make the skeleton begin to look like a motorhome.

"I had to learn a lot of different jobs, not only how we make a given component, but also how we install it in the motorhome," Dwain explained. "For me, it was the beginning of a broader knowledge of how we build motorhomes, not just what was done in each of the workstations."

Dwain became the supervisor of the interior department in 2007. Then, the shock wave that affected the country's entire economy reached deep into the recreational vehicle industry. "In April 2008 we began successive monthly layoffs," he noted. "By the end of the year, TMH was forced to cut production from 13 units a day to three units a day."

In October 2009, Dwain was promoted to assistant production manager for the assembly plant. "My new job involved helping the supervisor of the assembly plant, Tim Massey, increase the productivity from each department and workstation while maintaining the highest safety standards," Dwain said. "I began to analyze the methodology of each job and look for ways to improve how that job was performed. If a departmental supervisor asked for help with a production problem, we tried to get it solved immediately. In many ways, I was a roving problem solver. It really made my job interesting, but sometimes stressful. Amy occasionally noticed the stress and I told her if I ever had three stressful days in a row I would quit. Obviously, that has never happened."

Both the Belmont paint plant and the Red Bay assembly plant have de-

partments designated Final Finish. If a given part or component was not available when it should have been installed on the assembly line, it catches up with the coach in Final Finish. Quality control inspectors work in each department checking for flaws while the coach is being built. If possible, those flaws are corrected at the time they are discovered. If not, corrections and repairs are made in Final Finish.

In July 2013, Bob Tiffin created another department to add a second level of quality assurance. The department is called Final Check. In addition to his responsibilities as assistant production manager, TMH asked Dwain to directly supervise Final Check. "We paved almost an acre next to the welding shop and built 19 sites with water and electric hookups," Dwain began. "We check all of the service points for water and electricity. We run the clothes washer and dish drawer through several cycles. We fill the

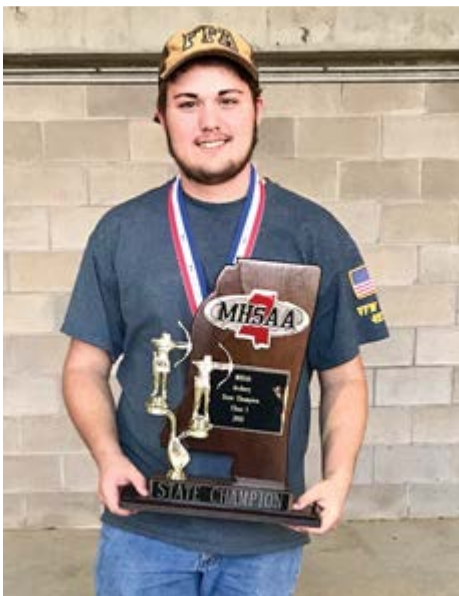
sinks, lavatories, and showers and then drain them all at once to look for possible leaks. Then we run the water in the sinks and showers for 12 minutes.

"We check all of the electronics, turn on and program each television, the entertainment system, and try all of the LED lights several times," he continued. "These checklists seem tedious, but this is what we do. The electronic operation of Sleep Number beds is checked along with the inflatable mattresses in the sofas. We test the ACs and heat pumps, the Aqua-Hot system, floor heat, the gas-electric water heater, and the residential refrigerator or the gas-electric refrigerator. The entry door, all windows, and the basement doors are checked for smooth operation and locking mechanisms. The leveling jacks and the slide-outs are deployed and retracted twice."

Dwain, Dallas, and Keith keep records to identify repetitive problems and then go to the assembly line to find the cause







*Clockwise this page:* Pictures being taken for their church directory produced this recent family portrait of Amy, Dwain, and Drew. ♦ Dwain and his best friend/father-in-law, Gayre Pounders, often go crappie fishing at Bay Springs Lake off of the Tenn-Tom Waterway. It looks like they were having a particularly good day. ♦ Drew Emerson displays the fifth state championship archery trophy won by his team. *Opposite page:* Amy and Dwain are enthusiastic supporters of Alabama football and try to attend at least three games every season.

and take corrective action in the production process.

“We have eight people working on four teams to thoroughly clean the coach inside and out,” Dwain continued. “The floors are cleaned by hand. As they clean, they inspect for chipped or scarred wood or porcelain. They search for and correct scratches in the Broadway countertops.

“I have two assistants in Final Check: Dallas Bragwell and Keith Burleson, who each manage three brands,” he said. “A driver road tests every unit, both in-town driving at low speeds and at high speeds on the 4-lane by-pass around Red Bay. She checks for wind noise and other noises that might expose a problem. The driver checks the functionality of every item on the dashboard plus lights, turn signals, in-dash camera monitor, and mirror operation.”

While serving as the supervisor of Final Check, Dwain continues with his duties as assistant production manager. “I still make several daily rounds in the assembly plant to help department supervisors solve problems,” he said.

“Here is our goal,” Dwain summed up. “When a coach leaves our Final Check, the new owner should be able to take it camping immediately. The Allegro Open Road, Allegro Breeze, and Allegro RED each take approximately eight hours to go through Final Check. The Phaeton, Allegro Bus, and Zephyr require more time. After owners see their coaches built on the assembly line, we take the time to do a final inspection with them and provide a lot more information. We did not set out to do this when Final Check began its operation, but today we do a lot of PR and that’s a good thing.”

It is obvious that Dwain Emerson enjoys his work. Why? “I really feel appreciated – by the owners whom I help and serve and by the Tiffin family who treat me with the utmost respect. Our customers become friends. Sometimes I call them to be sure everything is going well with them and their new coaches. Sometimes they call me just to say ‘hello,’ refresh an earlier explanation, or ask a new question. Good relationships really matter in our business.”



Not long ago Dwain was reminiscing with Tim Tiffin about when the company expanded to the new assembly building in 1992 from its old location where the cabinet shops are now. It has been the practice to close the plant for a week around July 4 for a company-wide vacation. The plant engineers planned the last day in the old location to be the Friday before the regular week's vacation. "That last day in the old assembly plant was June 26," I said to Tim. "He was surprised that I remembered the exact day of the month."


"'How did you remember that?' he asked.' Because I got married on Saturday, the next day, I answered," Dwain related. They both had a good laugh.

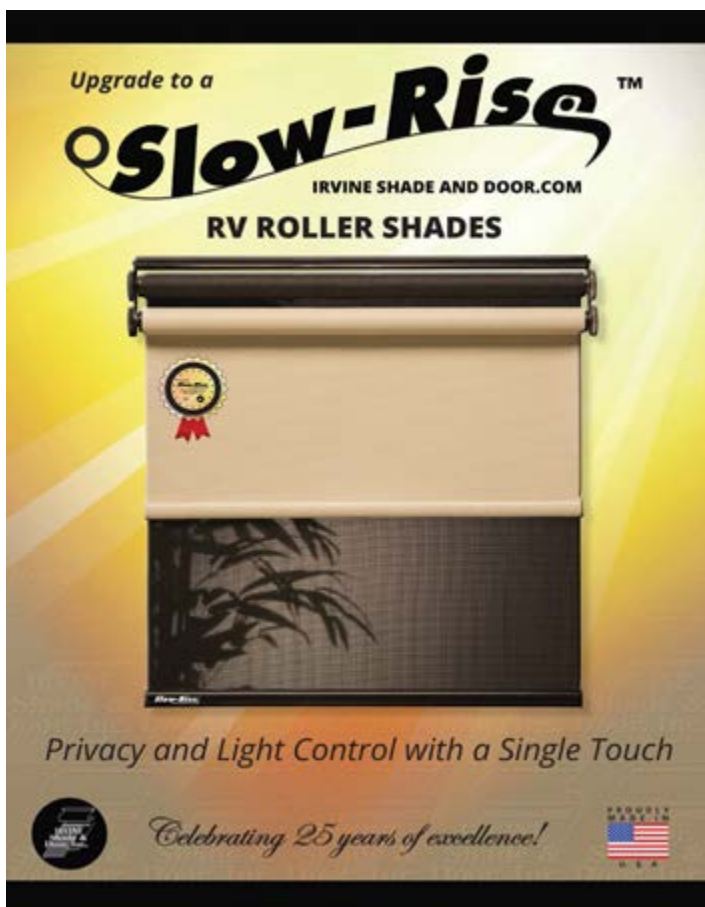
A mutual friend introduced Dwain to Amy Pounders from Tremont, Mississippi, at a horse show in which he was competing. They began dating and married a year later on that sunny June Saturday. The couple spent their honeymoon at the beach, which turned out to be Amy's favorite place for future vacations. Amy completed her studies for a degree in secondary education at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. She now teaches computer labs for grades 8 through 11 in the same school in Tremont where she grew up. She credits her grandmother, Marjorie Sue Pounders, who taught for many years in Red Bay, as the example and influence for her becoming a teacher. Mrs. Pounders taught many of the older employees who are still working at Tiffin Motorhomes today.

Amy and Dwain built their house on one section of the Emerson farm. Dwain has a 28-minute morning drive to arrive at Tiffin by 5:30 and it takes Amy about 15 minutes to reach her job in Tremont.

The couple welcomed their son, Drew, in 2000. Since schools in Alabama and Mississippi permit children to attend school where a parent teaches, Drew attends Tremont High School which has a very successful archery team, competing in 15 scheduled matches throughout the season. Entering his senior year in August, Drew has been on the archery team for three years.

"The matches during the regular season usually involve three teams," Dwain explained. "The audience is usually family and extended family. But interest is really growing because Tremont has won the Mississippi High School Archery Championship for the last five years in a row. It has really put Tremont on the map. When we first went to the championship matches, most people did not know where Tremont was located. Now they know! This has been really big for the town. Although he has not bowhunted before, Drew is looking forward to bow season this fall."

So how do Amy and Dwain find R&R in their busy lives? "We love Alabama football and try to attend two or three games each season. Amy loves to go to the beach at Gulf Shores, Alabama, and I love to fish. We enjoy spending time with our parents. Amy's dad, Gayre Pounders, is like a best friend to me. We love to go crappie fishing at Bay Springs Lake off of the Tenn-Tom Waterway. We are looking forward to watching Drew in archery competitions during his senior year and seeing where he will attend college." Life is good at the farm and in Red Bay and Tremont. 





### Inman's Answers

As the editor of "Serious Tech Talk," Danny Inman, a 43-year veteran with Tiffin Motorhomes, invites your questions.

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

Danny Inman  
Roughing It Smoothly  
PO Box 1150  
Monroe, GA 30656-1150

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.

For answers to urgent questions and problems, call the Parts and Service number at 256-356-0261.

In the Q&A text, we abbreviate "passenger side" as PS, and "driver side" as DS.

Dear Danny . . .

#### Door Closure Difficult to Operate on Phaeton

We have a 2013 Phaeton. For two years I have had difficulty getting the entry door to open. Last summer we broke the handle trying to open the door. At that time we replaced the handle and the dealer told us that Tiffin had not made an update mecha-

nism to replace it. We are still having difficulty getting the door open and getting into our motorhome. Is there another door or mechanism now available to replace what we have?

Cris Westrate, Galesburg, Michigan

Dear Cris,

The 2013 Phaeton was equipped with an entrance door manufactured by PTL Corporation, who provides doors for most of the industry's high line coaches. In most cases when the door is difficult to open or close, the problem is caused by the striker plate on the door frame being adjusted incorrectly. The striker could even be slightly bent which could cause the problem. A replacement mechanism will be identical to the one you have. A careful adjustment is the best solution.

#### Procedures for Winterizing

Last year I purchased a 2012 Allegro Open Road 34TGA. When I winterized it in the fall, I filled the water heater with antifreeze even though I had turned the bypass valve. An RV technician told me it is probably due to a bad check valve. Do you agree, and if so, where is the valve and how do I access it? The water heater gave me no problems otherwise.

Jerry Katt, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

Dear Jerry,

There is a check valve in the hot water system. However, it should not have allowed the water heater to fill up even if it was a bad valve. It is to prevent the hot water from back feeding into the cold water line. I believe the problem will have something to do with the bypass valve not closing properly.

#### Black Tank Odor in an Allegro Bus

We own a 2015 Allegro Bus 37AP. Every time we go up a hill we smell from the cockpit the awful odor coming from the black tank. Our Tiffin dealer has not been able to fix it. What do you suggest?

Randy Weatherhead, Beaver Creek, Oregon

Dear Randy,

First of all, we need to be sure the odor is coming from the black tank and not the grey tank. When you dump the black tank, flush it with water and then clean it thoroughly with a deodorizer. Drive it and see if you still have the odor. If you still have the odor, it probably will be coming from the grey tank which can be just as bad as the black tank when left untreated.

To clean the grey tank, dump the tank and add 15 gallons of fresh water along with a 16-oz. bottle of Pine Power. Drive the motorhome several blocks to slosh the solution around in the tank.

After the tanks have been cleaned, leave the drain valves open while you use a garden hose to run water down both tank vents (on top of the roof) to be sure they are open. Check the water draining from both tanks to determine that the tanks are clean.

If you still notice any odor on your next trip, cover the short vents under the galley and lavatory sinks and seal them off tightly using a ziploc bag and duct tape. If the next trip has no odor, then you can know that this is the source of the problem. You will have to uncover each one individually to determine which one needs to be replaced. The short vent can be screwed off and replaced with a new one. It is a process of elimination.

#### Retrofitting a 2009 Phaeton 36QSH with a Lift TV?

In the last issue of *RIS*, I read with great interest the description of the 2018 Phaeton 37BH with the PS Lift TV that deploys in front of the 24 x 54-inch window. The layout of the 36QSH is very similar in this area to the 37BH. Would it be possible to retrofit the Lift TV into my coach?

Donald R. Green, Coal Township, Pennsylvania

Dear Donald,

Anything is possible, but it will take a lot of design work, labor, and parts. Because of the time it takes, we cannot take on this type of project in our service center.

#### Dash Rubbing Against Windshield in RED 33AA

We have a 2016 Allegro RED 33AA and love it. However, we need help with an ongoing issue. The dash periodically comes loose and creates an "air balloon squealing," a terrible sound, as the dash rubs against the windshield. The bolts break that should be holding the dash to the frame. I have replaced them with nuts and bolts, but those also break. I added five more screws and it helped, so far at least. There must be a permanent solution to this annoying problem.

Roy Martin, Fincastle, Virginia

Dear Roy,

The action that you took is the only way to tighten the dash down to the sidewall. We would have done the same thing here at the plant.

#### Tall Man in the Driver's Seat of an Allegro 32SA

The subject coach might be *the* best floorplan for anyone looking to jump from a travel trailer to a motorhome, given its standard king bed, drop-down bunk, and dinette/computer workstation options, along with an excellent main cabin TV position, and Tiffin quality.

My only complaint I hope you will share with your 32SA design team is the limited driver seat travel. I am 6' 4." Due to the close proximity of the slide-out's sidewall directly behind the driver's chair, I cannot move the seat far enough back to put myself in a comfortable driving position. Somewhere along the entire DS wall, there has to be another four inches that could be appropriated to accommodate all driver shapes and sizes. My

suggestion is to shorten the slide-out just enough to provide another four plus inches of rear movement.

Thanks for your time to consider this suggestion.

Steve Durant, Carmichael, California

Dear Steve,

It would be possible to shorten the sofa by four inches, but that would involve a major model year change. We certainly try to listen to our owners and your suggestion is under consideration.

#### Heat Pump or Gas Furnace on a Cool Morning

I have a 2012 Phaeton that I purchased new. When it is cold inside, I turn on the heat pumps when a little heat would warm up



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the coach. When I set the thermostat 10 degrees above the room temperature, the gas furnace always kicks on. Why does this happen and is there a way to prevent it?

Doug Miller  
San Antonio, Texas

Dear Doug,  
The heat pump and the gas furnace are working as they are designed. It would take the heat pump far too long to reach your desired 10-degree increase by itself. The only way to keep the furnace from coming on is to set the temperature four degrees above the room temperature. You can keep doing this in four degree intervals until you get to the desired room temperature. When you get to the temp you want, the heat pump will keep it there.

**Anti-Freeze or Anti-Burst**

Quite a few weeks ago we winterized our

2006 Allegro Bay motorhome. I had purchased some RV anti-freeze previously and used what I had at that time. Last month, in preparing to go on a short winter vacation, I purchased two additional gallons of RV anti-freeze in case we might have to re-winterize quickly before getting home to Pennsylvania. I was stunned when I placed the two new bottles in the outside compartment of the Allegro Bay and noticed that one of the two bottles (same brand) that had been there was frozen solid.

My husband and the local camping store owner said it was probably just slushy, not frozen solid. So I set it outside and it froze solid. By this time, we had decided not to de-winterize until getting to Florida as it was cold all the way there. I wrote a letter to the manufacturer and saved the bottle. While we were gone, I received a

response and learned that RV anti-freeze actually is not anti-freeze at all. It is anti-burst. I think other RV'ers will be interested in this experience. We were very happy to learn upon de-winterizing the Allegro Bay had no issues, so I am thinking the other two or three bottles used were fine.

Debbie Wellington  
Telford, Pennsylvania

Dear Debbie,  
Being that temps here in Alabama never reach the lows that you have in Pennsylvania, we plan to test the anti-freeze (burst) in our lab here at the plant. Thanks for including us with information about your experience.

**Fuel Sending Unit Faulty in Allegro Bus?**

When the diesel fuel sloshes around in the tank, I get a short beep and the fuel icon flashes on the information console. The fuel gauge moves erratically. When the fuel settles down on the interstate, all returns to normal. I think the sending unit in the tank is defective. Would you agree? Does this happen often? The sensor P/N is 0812. Does Tiffin stock this part?

Charles Deal  
Mims, Florida

Dear Charles,  
I think the sending in the tank is the problem. However, check for loose connections of the sending unit on the tank. You may want to have someone move the wires on the tank while you watch the gauge to see if it is affected. You can order the gauge at [store.tiffinmotorhomes.com](http://store.tiffinmotorhomes.com).

**A "Bi-Annual Flight" Review for My 2011 Allegro Bus**

I have a 2011 Allegro Bus with 67,000 miles that is running great. As a former pilot, I had a bi-annual flight review aircraft check-out. How can I get together with a Tiffin local field rep to work me through all of the systems in my RV to improve my knowledge? Most dealers and repair facilities cannot give me solid answers. When I attend a rally, the Q&A sessions are too

general. This is a service I will gladly pay for as I am sure many other RV owners as well would do. My coach is in great shape because I treat it like I did my airplane.

Ken Oberholz  
Richmond, Texas

Dear Ken,  
We agree a school with classes for our owners would be an excellent solution. At present we do not have the personnel we can dedicate to create such a training facility for owners who want to get deeper into understanding motorhome maintenance. The services of employees who have the background and talent to operate such a facility are in too great a demand here in the plant. Hopefully, we will be able to move in that direction in the future.

**Manufacturing a Basement Door for a 1996 Allegro Bus**

I am the proud original owner of a 1996 Allegro Bus, one of the first built. The coach is old but has low mileage. It has lived through two wives that were each taken by cancer. As a result, it has spent many years parked.

I hope you can help me with a little problem. I had a close encounter with a Pilot guard rail. The storage compartment just forward of the sewage compartment took a pretty good blow before I realized I had not turned wide enough. What I need is a replacement door and instructions on how to remove the damaged door. If you can work this out, I will supply a credit card number. I can replace the door, and a parts store says they can scan and match the paint. Please try to help me with this, as I live 500 miles away from Red Bay, and the Tiffin parts department could not give me a paint code.

Another problem I have is that the little black pieces that latch the compartments need to be replaced. Hopefully they can be removed from the locking mechanism. I need 12 of these as some compartments cannot be locked. I really

need help as I have a planned trip coming up in a month or so. I am 79 years old, and my bus has a lot of good miles in her. Please respond and rebuild my confidence in Tiffin.

Frank Fenney  
Ravenswood, West Virginia

Dear Frank,  
The storage doors are still available, but we will have to have an exact measurement of each one to match it up to your door frame. I will call you to discuss how to take the measurements.

**Special Tool to Remove Flat Glass Covers over Ceiling Lights**

We own a 2010 Phaeton that has the flat glass ceiling lights. I had a lot of difficulty removing the flat glass cover to replace a light bulb. I found a tool at Harbor Freight Tools that is a Universal

3 Jaw Adjustable Oil Filter Wrench (part #63690 made by Pittsburgh Automotive). It works really well with these lights.

I have a question: why is there a return in the bathroom? I did heating and air conditioning for over 40 years and we never put a return in the bathroom.

William G. Sullivan  
Palm Bay, Florida

Dear William,  
Thanks for relating your experience and success at removing the flat glass cover over the ceiling lights in the 2010 Phaeton. We also found the same item by Husky at Home Depot.

Motorhome heating and cooling is much different than residential. Air circulation and moisture prevention is critical and is facilitated by having more returns. In a motorhome, the bathrooms are not sealed units.

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**Designing and Installing LED Lighting in an Older Allegro**

I enjoy your Tech Talk answers to so many different questions—so much that I wanted to share with you and your readers a major lighting change I made in our 2009 Allegro Bay 35TSB that we purchased two years ago and really enjoy.

The motorhome is much easier on this old guy than the fifth wheel we had. We made a trip to Red Bay during the first year (2016) and found to be true what other owners had been telling us: that the Tiffin company really cares about its owners and their RVs.

We took the plant tour where we noticed the LED light fixtures being used on the production line. We found the same items in the parts store, some 20W-LED pucks that I felt sure I could use to replace our 14" and 20" fluorescent fixtures throughout the coach. The fluorescents put out terrible light and the bulbs failed frequently.

When I got home, out came the table saw and router as I designed and made assemblies in which I could mount the LEDs. I made three light fixtures for the cabin and two for the baths. The footprint for each assembly slightly overlapped where the fluorescent figure had been mounted. The result was a first class



cabin appearance which someone in my family insisted on. Now we can really see in the cabin to read and cook.

Keep up your great column. We really enjoy it.

Rollie Cornelson  
Grove, Oklahoma

Dear Rollie,  
Your talent in carpentry and lighting received many compliments here at the plant. You could probably hang out your shingle and have a new business in no time.

**Defective Gas Alarm Replaced Twice**

I purchased a new Allegro 34TGA in January 2016. In June 2017 while on a trip, the propane/CO alarm (70-742-P-13L) sounded in the middle of the night. I found no reason for the alarm and reset the unit. It happened a second and third time, and then would only stay reset for an hour at a time. The propane/CO systems checked out with no leakage and gave us no reason for the alarm to go off. I replaced the unit in Elkhart, Indiana (6-23-17) for \$124.02. The replacement unit sounded an alarm on Feb. 22, 2018. It continues to go off just as the original

unit did. I called Tri-Am RV Center in Ocala where I have often purchased RV items. Their parts manager said he had this unit and other items from Safe-T-Alert on back order. He indicated Safe-T-Alert was having problems with these alarm units.

My question to Tiffin is: Is there a recall on these units from Safe-T-Alert? What brand is Tiffin currently using in new coaches? Do you stock that brand in your parts store? I had to disconnect the alarm because it will not stay reset. We hate to have a non-functional safety device in our motorhome.

This is the first new motorhome I have purchased that does not have a spare wheel. Roadmaster has a wheel mount combined with its tow assembly. Your idea on hauling a spare tire?

My previous motorhome on an F53 chassis had Firestone Air Cushions between the axles and the springs, controlled by an air compressor. It was quite effective.

My 34TGA came without Sumo Springs, but the dealer had technicians come from Red Bay and install them. When I was in Red Bay for warranty work, I had Red Bay Diesel install Koni shocks, a rear stabilizer bar, steering stabilizer, and then do a 4-wheel alignment. At that time they repaired the right rear Sumo Spring that had been put on crooked. The rear ride is terrible and the right front always dips when making a right turn across any obstacle, like out of a parking lot at a shopping center.

Which would be better, the equipment that Henderson's Line-Up installs on the F53 chassis (RIS, Apr 2017, p. 16) or the Liquid Spring (RIS, Jan 2018, p. 22)?

Can the Sumo Springs be removed from my coach and replaced with the Firestone system? All known recalls have been done on this coach, including the one on the Kidde fire extinguisher.

Leonard Bockheim  
Silver Springs, Florida

Dear Leonard,  
We cannot find a recall or service bulletin on the LP/CO detector that we use. This safety alert system is made by MTI. We do occasionally have a unit go bad. This unit can be ordered from our online store. Go to [store.tiffinmotorhomes.com](http://store.tiffinmotorhomes.com) to place your order. We strongly recommend that you do not use your motorhome until the defective LP/CO detector is replaced.

We do not recommend our owners try to handle a 22.5 tire because it is very heavy and hard to handle. It is far safer to have a roadside assistance policy and call for help.

The Sumo Springs product is the only one we install at the factory to hopefully improve the ride and handling. Henderson Line-up installs both of the systems you mentioned. I suggest you contact Robert and John Henderson for their recommendation. I am not familiar enough with the two systems to offer a recommendation.

There should be no problem with removing the Sumo Springs since it did not replace anything. If you have used the Firestone system in the past and decide to install it, please let us know your experience with it on the F53 chassis.

**Several Concerns with 2017**

**Allegro Breeze**

I bought my 2017 Allegro Breeze from Lazydays RV (LRV) in Loveland, Colorado. I have called LRV on several issues but have received no assistance. Then I called the Tiffin Service Center and received a good response.

Since I took delivery on September 25, 2017, I have dealt with several problems that were resolved over several months, including the check engine light, inoperative tail lights, and a non-functioning rear slide-out that Bankston Motorhomes in Ardmore, Tennessee repaired. I am very concerned about unprotected wiring under the coach which will not withstand an Alaskan winter.

The motorhome is currently stored in Tennessee and I will be picking it up in March for a trip to Florida. If I were to stop in Red Bay, would the factory do a complete inspection at no charge?

Billy Andrews  
Wasilla, Alaska

Dear Billy,  
I am sorry to learn that you have had several problems. Your coach is under warranty and we will be glad to put it in our Express Bay and give it a thorough inspection before your return to Alaska. One of our service center managers will evaluate your previous repairs.



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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER *Continued from page 5*

Chase noted that Bankston carries 75 different brands produced by 15 manufacturers. "We also service everything that we sell," he added. "When owners arrive with units we did not sell, we are always pleased to service them. Recently, an owner with a truck camper came to our Florence location with an electrical problem. Our service manager located parts and diagrams to help him make the repair and did not charge him."

"We are very blessed," Harrison continued. "Our combined sales in all stores have actually doubled over the last year. We are now operating in Huntsville, Florence, and Albertville, Alabama; plus Nashville and Ardmore, Tennessee."

"We want our customers to know we are a family-owned business," Kim said. "RVing promotes strong families through the togetherness of the camping experience. We are seeing younger couples buying campers and trailers to create the experiences for their families that their parents afforded them when they were children. It is really an experience that families pass on from generation to generation. Our sales people are campers who build relationships with their customers by helping them select the right equipment for the type of camping they want to do."

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## ALLEGRO CLUB NEWS *Continued from page 37*

cious meal, more fantastic Tiffin door prizes and Red Bay stories by Kelly Moore, everyone enjoyed entertainment by December '63, Frankie Valli, and Four Seasons tribute artists. This group brought the house down! Everyone enjoyed singing along to his or her favorites such as "Sherry," "Let's Hang On," "Rag Doll," "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You," and "My Eyes Adored You." After a great week, it was sad to say "Happy Trails" to so many new friends!

A special round of heartfelt thanks goes out to the hard

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## KENNEDY SPACE CENTER *Continued from page 73*

### CANAVERAL NATIONAL SEASHORE


Another attraction on Florida's Space Coast and a popular spot for viewing Kennedy Space Center launches is the adjacent Canaveral National Seashore. The park, a barrier island, stretches for 25 miles between Titusville and New Smyrna Beach. It is the longest area of undeveloped beach along the East coast of Florida. As you can imagine, a great diversity of shore birds, creatures of the sea, and land-dwelling wildlife can be found here. Often you may find yourself the only human in sight. Activities include hiking, kayaking and canoeing, and fishing. Turtle Mound, a prehistoric Indian shell midden, and the museum at the now abandoned agricultural town of Eldora, provide interesting insights into the area's history. The Apollo Visitor Center, 7611 S. Atlantic Avenue, New Smyrna Beach, offers information regarding the park, including any changes in operating hours at the National Seashore due to NASA activities. (386) 428-3384, ext 0.


"The big news next Spring for the Bankston organization will be the opening of our new location in Attalla," Harrison added. "With 1600 feet of frontage on I-59, the 26-acre property will give us all the room we need for a large inventory of both motorized and towable. The two-story building with an elevator will house an indoor showroom, administrative and sales offices, conference rooms, and meeting rooms for customer organizations like Allegro Club and FMCA."

"We are working closely with Attalla's mayor and the industrial development board to assure our success and bring jobs and secondary spending to promote the local economy," Kim said. "Based on the attendance at an RV show we did in this area as well as the service work originating in a 50-mile radius from the Albertville store, we decided that Attalla was a good location for a new Bankston store. When the opportunity came up to acquire the property, we felt it would be a win-win situation."

"By building a viable service facility in every store, we are extending our service area from the western side of mid-Georgia to the Mississippi line and from Nashville to Birmingham. Of course, sales follow excellent service which has been the company's business philosophy for nearly 50 years," Harrison said. 

working service technicians from Tiffin & LaMesa RV. They are our unsung heroes and do a remarkable job of visiting each coach during the rally to perform minor repairs/adjustments to the coach. Hats off to them!

Friday morning Tiffin friends hooked up the tow and headed on to their next destination. Whatever your plans, travel safely and we hope to see you at a Tiffin rally somewhere in the near future! Watch our Facebook page, Tiffin Sideroads blogspot, and Tiffin Motorhomes website for the latest information on upcoming events. *Happy trails to you – until we meet again!* 

The seashore is divided into three areas: the northern section accessed from New Smyrna Beach is known as Apollo Beach; the middle is Klondike Beach; and the southern part accessed from Titusville is known as Playalinda Beach. Parking lots to use the park and the beach are available from Apollo Beach and from Playalinda Beach. Since the space shuttle launch facility is located at the southern end of the barrier island occupied by the park, launches are easily visible from Playalinda. Enter Playalinda via the Titusville Causeway, follow signs through the Merritt Island National Refuge to the park. A per-car fee of \$10 is charged to enter the national seashore area. There are 13 parking lots at Playalinda Beach accommodating over 1,000 vehicles, some lots have room for RVs. Incoming traffic may close due to park safety or capacity. Since a short walk down the beach puts you within five miles of Launch Pad 39A, this beach may be off-limits when a launch takes place from that location. 

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