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FOR THE RV ENTHUSIAST

MOTORHOME

JUNE 2010

BORN FREE 22'

*UPSCALE CLASS C
WITH REAR GALLEY*



**GEOCACHING:
HOW TO FIND HIDDEN TREASURE**
PAGE 37

**DYNSPORT ULTIMATE
TOURING VEHICLE**
SEATING FOR 10
IN A 24-FOOT COACH

**DIESEL ENGINE
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FEATURES

21 | Lonely Sands

California's Mojave National Preserve is a relatively primitive national park-administered area that hasn't been "loved to death." And for some campers, that's the attraction

25 | From Canyons to Custer

Despite stormy weather, the remarkable landscape shines through during a scenic drive that starts near Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming and ends at Crazy Horse Memorial in South Dakota

30 | Hanging Their Caps at Mexican Hat

A sleepy town in the southeast corner of Utah serves as home base for an exploration of ancient lands

37 | Caching In on a Craze

RVers and other recreational enthusiasts are joining in on the fun pastime of geocaching — a worldwide high-tech treasure hunt

40 | Born Free 22'

This new 22-foot rear-side kitchen Class C motorhome offers excellent opportunities for shorter-range jaunts and carefree touring

45 | What You Need to Know About Diesel Antifreeze and Coolants

When it comes to the fluids in your diesel coach's engine, care can differ from that of your automobile

48 | DynaSport UTV

Dynamax's Ultimate Touring Vehicle is billed as a mobile hospitality suite that comfortably seats 10

25

DEPARTMENTS

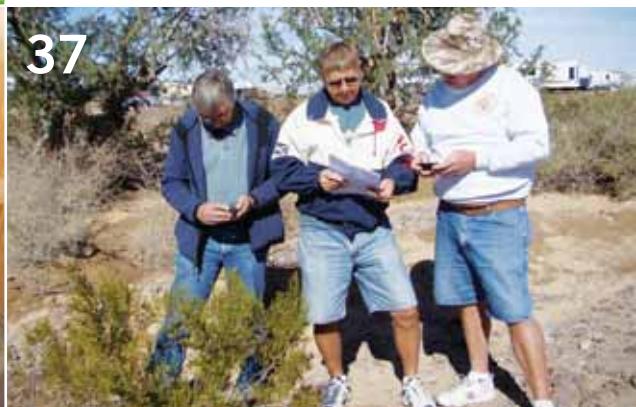
- 4 | On Ramp
- 6 | P.O. Box
- 11 | Contact MotorHome
- 13 | Escapes
- 14 | Events
- 16 | Wheels & Gear
- 18 | Noteworthy
- 20 | Crossroads
- 49 | Quick Tips
- 51 | Hands-On
- 52 | Hot Line
- 54 | Coach & Chassis
- 57 | Powertrain
- 61 | Advertisers Index
- 66 | Off Ramp



40



45



37

On The Cover: Born Free's new Class C features a rear kitchen and is an excellent choice for carefree touring, such as at Jalama Beach in California (see test on page 40). Photo by Chuck Campbell.

A COLUMN IN TRANSITION

Twenty-six years ago, then-associate publisher Bill Estes turned over the reins of this magazine's Coach & Chassis column to Wes Caughlan. To the motorhome world, Caughlan was a new face — but it didn't take long for him to carve out a place in the RV industry as an expert and consumer crusader. Last month, Caughlan told his readers that he was hanging up his keyboard after writing some 300 columns and numerous tech features. Fortunately, his impact on this magazine's technical program will continue to be felt as he retreats to the sidelines as a consulting contributor.

Caughlan started his RV career after buying a new GMC motorhome in 1975. As a professional engineer, he loved his coach, but found a number of ways to make it better. Not surprisingly, he combined his engineering talent and passion for the GMC and, over the years, became the No. 1 authority on the relatively short-lived (1973-1978) motorhome, building a business dedicated to this unique — and sleek — coach. Today, technicians at his shop in Sandusky, Mich., continue to remanufacture from the ground up the classic GMC motorhome — the only motorhome from that era with a timeless design — as part of a comprehensive facility specializing in RV repairs and service.

As a technical writer, Caughlan tackled tough issues — topics often not popular with chassis and motorhome builders. He championed subjects like overloading and weight distribution, spending countless hours grilling industry players for answers and affecting changes that benefited owners. Caughlan also zeroed in on tires and tire loading, building codes and campaigning for service centers where the technicians were RVIA-certified. When it came to safety issues, no one was a stronger advocate for the readers.

So where do we go from here? I will be taking over Coach & Chassis — at least for a while. As many of you know, I've been writing the Tech Topics column in High-

ways, the official publication of the Good Sam Club, for more than 18 years.

Strategically, we plan on changing things up a bit as we become more immersed in the digital age. Our plan is to provide more avenues for reader input; we want to hear from you. Beyond answering your questions in Coach & Chassis and Powertrain, we're eager to hear what's on your mind. Let us know what topics you'd like covered and issues that need addressing. Our goal is to strengthen the technical content of this magazine so that your motorhoming experience will be fulfilling.

To get there we are in the process of revitalizing our Web site (www.motorhomemagazine.com). When completed, the new site will be easier to navigate and provide much more compelling information — some of which will only be available to subscribers of this magazine. And we hope you'll use the site to keep in touch with us.

In addition, we now offer a MotorHome application for the iPhone, where you can download the latest issue while on the go. Though reading the magazine on a small phone's screen may be somewhat challenging, new technology that will enhance the wireless experience is just around the corner. Apple's iPad seems to be the first step in that direction. And for more than two years we have offered MotorHome as a digital file that can be downloaded to your computer, for those subscribers who prefer not to receive the printed version.

Rest assured, I still open snail mail every day, so don't be afraid to communicate the "old-fashioned" way.

Wes Caughlan has been a good friend for many years, and, although I'll miss his monthly column, his contributions have laid the foundation as we move on to the next bend in the road. ♦



MOTORHOME

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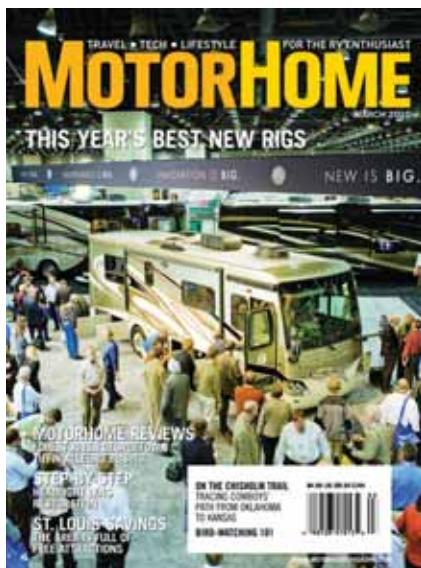


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“WHAT AUTOMOBILE DO YOU USE AS YOUR DINGHY VEHICLE AND WHY?”

That’s the question we asked in our March issue. The response was overwhelming, so we are devoting the entire P.O. Box column this month to some of the replies.

WRANGLER’S A WINNER

I have a 2004 Jeep Wrangler with 4WD and tow it four wheels down. The Wrangler is one of the lightest dinghies available and it goes almost anywhere. It’s easy to hook and unhook, and the baseplate was simple to install. Wiring the taillights to the motorhome was easy — a \$20 wiring kit did the job. The Jeep’s battery never runs down because of towing. I’ve towed it more than 65,000 miles and driven it more than 30,000.

J.W. HYDE | BRISTOL, FLA.

LIGHT AND JUST RIGHT

We purchased a Honda CR-V in 2001 to tow behind our 28-foot Pace Arrow motorhome because it is light and flat towable. Plus, it seats four adults comfortably.

PAUL AND SUE THORPE | GIG HARBOR, WASH.

A SMART CHOICE

We own a Roadtrek Class B and bought a Smart fortwo Passion as our dinghy vehicle because of its size and weight. It’s comfortable to drive, easy to park, a breeze to tow and gets great mileage.

LARRY AND BRENDA GREENE | CLARKS HILL, S.C.

EASY IN, EASY OUT WITH HHR

Our dinghy vehicle choice was the Chevrolet HHR because it weighs 3,155 pounds and the only requirement — pulling a fuse — is easy, though we installed a switch and an inline fuse to make it even easier. The fuel mileage is acceptable, and the price was right.

DON AND CATHYE SOMMERVILLE | WEST JORDAN, UTAH

GRAND VITARA MEETS ALL CRITERIA

We flat tow a 2008 Suzuki Grand Vitara with 4WD. When we were looking for a dinghy we wanted a 4WD vehicle with a comfortable interior and a curb weight less than 4,000 pounds. The Grand Vitara was the only one that met all of our needs. The only question was what color did we want; my wife said “white” and there you have it.

JOE AND WANDA DICKHERBER | DALLAS

FOCUS ON FUN

We tow a 2008 Ford Focus with manual transmission. It’s a blast to drive, economical, and easy to hook up and tow (no fuses to pull). Most of all, it’s an American car built by a reliable U.S. firm.

ROBERT AND SANDRA SWANSON | RAPID CITY, S.D.



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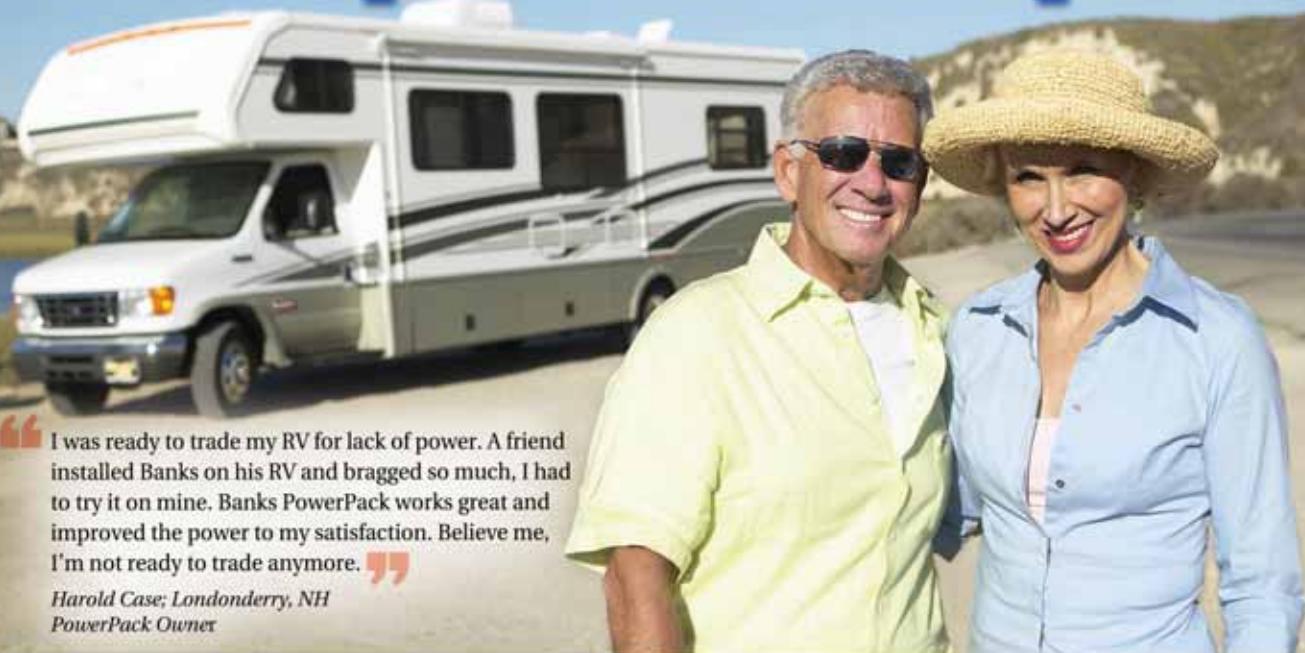
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*Harold Case; Londonderry, NH
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P.O. BOX

THE RIGHT FIT FOR THIS COUPLE

We have a Honda Fit with manual transmission and tow it behind our Class A Itasca Horizon. We just put the key in the ignition and turn to the first "bar," which unlocks the steering wheel. The gearshift is in the NEUTRAL position and we make sure the emergency brake is not on. That's all we do and it's ready to go.

JOHN AND ANITA WARD
OKLAHOMA CITY

A PERFECT PICKUP

My wife and I are avid RVers and off-road-ers. We tow a Nissan Frontier extended-cab pickup with a 4WD manual transmission behind our Winnebago Adventurer. We chose the Frontier because it's lighter than many sedans or SUVs, and comfortable as well. We can still venture off-road and it economically provides the hauling and second-car usage we need.

DAVID MULCAHY | SAN DIEGO

THE VERSATILE X

My 2008 Jeep Wrangler X is the perfect dinghy. To flat tow, just kick the transfer case to NEUTRAL, put the transmission in PARK and disconnect the battery (via a quick connect). The hard top keeps the inside quiet and dry, but in minutes you can remove the T-tops for a cruise on the beach or lock in the 4WD for a little trail riding. It's the perfect versatile vehicle.

GARY YEOMANS | LAKELAND, GA.

A COOL CAB

I tow a single cab Ford Ranger pickup with a camper shell and four-speed stick shift. It's lightweight and has plenty of room to carry my pets and a spare tire for the RV. It has a sliding rear window, and when open in the summer, allows air from the A/C to enter the camper shell, which helps to keep my dogs cool.

GARY TATE | ELEPHANT BUTTE, N.M.

MATRIX ECONOMICAL, TOWS WELL

I tow a 2007 Toyota Matrix with manual transmission behind my Tiffin Allegro Bay. The Matrix is lightweight, economical and tows easily. It tracks well and introduces very little sway during lane changes or gusting winds. My only complaint is the inability to lock the car doors while towing. The ignition key must be in

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and on ACCESSORY to keep the steering lock from engaging. This also disables the door locks (stops accidental lockouts).

ROD MEES | KENT ISLAND, MD.

LOTS TO LIKE WITH CHEROKEE

I tow a Jeep Grand Cherokee. My reasons are easy to relate. The front of the car is high off the ground (even when I leave the tow bar on), it doesn't drag going in or out of a fuel station, it's quite luxurious, has a GPS and many safety features. It's very easy to set up for towing — just put the transfer box in NEUTRAL and I'm ready. No fuses to pull, I can remove the key, no mileage recorded. What's not to like?

TOM PETERS | GRAPELAND, TEXAS

READY IN 10

I tow a 2004 Chevy Silverado 1500 4WD with extended cab and electronic transfer case. It's quick to set up — I'm ready in 10 minutes or less. Since the odometer doesn't record towed miles, I keep a log in order to perform required maintenance on my truck at the correct intervals. I do

recommend a tire pressure monitoring system in order to maintain tire safety in my motorhome and dinghy.

RICHARD KNIGHT | MICKLETON, N.J.

YEA FOR YARIS

I decided I wanted to tow a dinghy after having a bike rack on the back of my Dolphin motorhome for four years. I chose a Toyota Yaris three-door hatchback with manual transmission — its only requirement is to run the engine three minutes before driving after towing. With the bike rack replaced by the tow bar I needed a new bike. I found a Dahon folding bike that fits nicely in the back of the Yaris.

STEVE COONS | SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

Question:

What's your favorite way to exercise when you travel?

Send your comments to MotorHome, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or e-mail letters@motorhomemagazine.com. ♦

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escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

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There's something compelling about dinosaurs.

They hold our imaginations hostage. Just envision their roar and the ground trembling with their footsteps as they lumber at 5 MPH.

Dinosaurs are the focus at a museum — part real exhibit and part model — located just west of Glen Rose, Texas, in Dinosaur Valley State Park.

The real part is in the tracks left by those long-ago creatures in the bed of the Paluxy River. Three kinds of tracks are found here. These prints, along with exhibits of a model trackway, foot bones and

life-like models, make these prehistoric creatures come to life.

Sometimes, in the middle of the night in the park's campground (a nice, tranquil one in the horseshoe of the Paluxy River), the chirps, growls and grunts of the night critters can get to playing on your mind. Maybe those big critters are still there? Of course they're not, but that's the magical part of it. All the ingredients are here to make you imagine they are. For more information, call 254-897-4588, or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/dinosaur_valley. — *Elwin Trump*



JUN. 4-5 | Masters in the art of clay will gather at the **Smoky Mountain Pottery Festival** in Townsend, Tenn., to demonstrate, exhibit and sell the best that pottery has to offer in the Smoky Mountain region of east Tennessee. Some of the skills that will be demonstrated include wheel throwing, Raku firing and hand building. Family fun includes a children's tent and educational programs, as well as food and music; 800-525-6834, www.smoky-mountain-festivals.org.

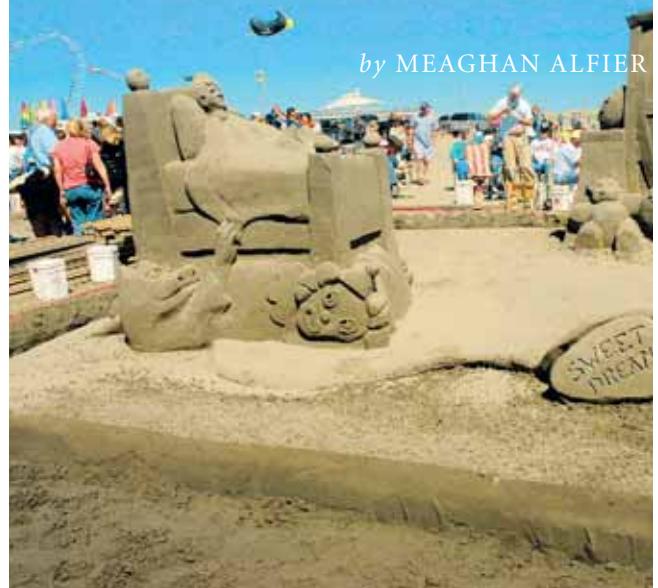
JUN. 4-6 | The kids will never get bored with all of the family-friendly camping activities at the **Becoming an Outdoor Family** weekend at the Oahe Downstream Recreation Area in Fort Pierre, S.D. Participants receive a campsite with electrical hookup for two nights, use of equipment and the ability to participate in several outdoor skills classes such as fishing, archery and canoeing/kayaking. Also featured is a campground potluck; 605-223-7722, www.sdgrp.info/parks/learning/outdoorfamily.htm.

JUN. 5 | Kick back and start the summer off with a relaxed beach concert at the 25th annual **Pleasure Island Beach Music Festival** in Carolina Beach, N.C. Lie on the sand or take a dip in the surf as you listen to a mix of fun, laid-back music at the largest beach music festival in North Carolina. Beverages will be available, and there are a number of RV parks and campgrounds in the area to choose from; 910-458-8434, www.pleasureislandnc.org.

JUN. 5-6 | Find out if the old Latin saying *in vino veritas* is true at the **Chesapeake Bay**

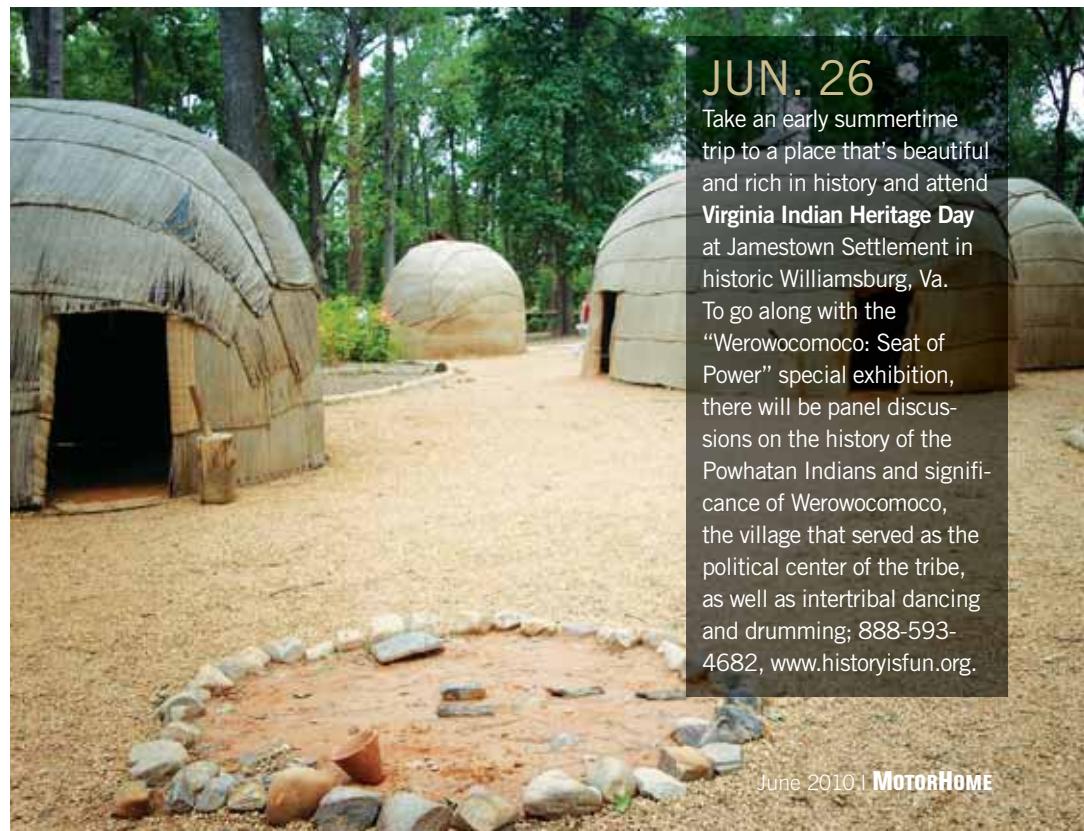
Wine Festival at Terrapin Park in Stevensville, Md. The event features wines from many Maryland wineries, as well as food, arts and crafts, and entertainment, all set against the stunning backdrop of Chesapeake Bay; 410-739-6943, www.chesapeake-bay-wine-festival.org.

JUN. 10-13 | Pick up some yarn for knitting on the road and learn about how it gets to the craft store shelf at one of the largest all-natural fiber markets in North America, the **Estes Park Wool Market** in Estes Park, Colo. Anyone may try rope weaving, spinning and loom weaving, or even pack a llama for hiking or hunting. More than 50 vendors will be displaying their wares; sheepherding techniques will be demonstrated; and competitions will be held at this popular annual market that draws more than 10,000 spectators; 970-586-6104, www.estesparkcvb.com.



JUN. 19-20 | Locomotive lovers won't want to miss **Railroad Crossing Days** at the Union Depot Railroad Museum in Mendota, Ill. There will be a little bit of everything related to trains: models, antiques, books and tours of some classic trains such as a 1949 Southern Pacific dining car and 1938 Milwaukee Road passenger and freight cars. Morse code demonstrations and a bluegrass concert round out this two-day, free-admission event; 815-538-3800, www.mendotamuseums.org.

JUN. 25-27 | Watch teams compete to create the most eye-catching sculptures in both sand and wood at the Five Star Dealerships **Sand and Sawdust Festival** in Ocean Shores, Wash. Get a free sand sculpting lesson or purchase an original work of art, as some of the creations of the chainsaw carvers will be auctioned off at the close of the event. Food, craft vendors and raffles are some other highlights; 360-289-9586; www.oceanshoresact.com.



JUN. 26
Take an early summertime trip to a place that's beautiful and rich in history and attend **Virginia Indian Heritage Day** at Jamestown Settlement in historic Williamsburg, Va. To go along with the "Werowocomoco: Seat of Power" special exhibition, there will be panel discussions on the history of the Powhatan Indians and significance of Werowocomoco, the village that served as the political center of the tribe, as well as intertribal dancing and drumming; 888-593-4682, www.historyisfun.org.



NEWELL'S FRESH APPROACH

Oklahoma-based Newell Coach Corp. is freshening the look of its 2011 ultra-high-end, custom-made motorcoach for the first time since the 2006 model year with upgrades to the Newell's front caps, rear-body trim, taillights and interior décor.

"It's a refinement, an update," said President Karl Blade. "We wanted to bring a fresh product to the marketplace for those people who follow big coaches. The changes are distinctive, but not radical."

The 2011 modifications include bright-white LED running lights that outline the outer edges of the headlights and redesigned side moldings. Interiors feature wood windowsill trim bordered with seamed-leather, carbon-fiber instrument panels and automated air conditioning and heating.

Newell builds motorcoaches in 38- to 45-foot lengths on its own custom-built diesel-pusher semi-monocoque chassis with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 63,300 pounds and powered by a 650-hp Cummins ISX engine. All coaches are custom-designed and can take up to nine months to build. — *Bob Ashley*



HANDS FREE

Life is full of distractions. For a driver on the road, one of those distractions is using a hand-held cell phone. As of press time, six states and the District of Columbia have laws that prohibit all drivers from using a hand-held phone.

It's not always possible to keep from making or taking a call while driving your motorcoach. To do so safely, efficiently — and legally — manufacturers have introduced a range of products, from visor speakerphones to cell phone car mounts. One solution by Cobra Electronics is the Cobra Bluetooth Over the Head Headset CBTH1.

The Cobra headset uses "noise cancellation technology," which enables users to be heard clearly while in extremely noisy environments, according to the company.

The CBTH1, which can be worn on either ear, easily pairs to Bluetooth-enabled phones. The headset with an extra soft ear rest is adjustable. At the touch of one button on the headset, calls can be answered and ended.

The flexible microphone boom can be positioned close to the mouth so that it picks up the user's voice but not all the background noise.

The Cobra headset comes with three charging accessories: a home charger, a vehicle charger and a USB charging cable. The CBTH1 is capable of eight hours of talk time or 250 hours of stand-by time on a single charge.

The Cobra Bluetooth headset has a retail price starting at \$99.95. **Cobra Electronics Corp., 866-610-9322, www.cobrahandsfree.com.**

— *Patricia Marroquin*



THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOUR GALLEY

You need different pots and pans to cook different things: a saucepan to boil water for pasta, a frying pan to make eggs for breakfast and a sauté pan to brown meat to perfection. With Magma Products' nesting cookware, you don't have to choose which items stay in the coach and which ones don't, because together they take up the same amount of space that one pot normally would — less than one cubic foot.

Magma Products, well-known in the marine industry, is reaching out to the RV industry with its space-saving products. The 10-piece 18/10 stainless steel nesting cookware set is available in a Dupont Teflon Select nonstick finish or plain stainless steel. The set includes 3-, 2- and 1½-quart saucepans, a lid that fits all three, a 5-quart stockpot, a 9½-inch sauté pan and a lid that fits the latter two. The way they all fit one inside the other is ingenious — you start with the 5-quart stockpot, then add the smaller pans and lids, and the sauté pan gets turned upside-down on top. A bungee cord ensures they all stay together and won't rattle around. Magma Nesting Cookware sets start at \$179.99. **Magma Products, 562-627-0500, www.magmaproducts.com.**

— *Meaghan Alfier*



Maybe it should be called Class “Hey!”

Introducing the Itasca Reyo – and yes, it’s Class A all the way.

As the first Class A motor home on the Dodge/Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, the new Itasca Reyo™ is something to shout about. The 25-foot Reyo is fully equipped, surprisingly spacious and delivers best-in-class fuel economy – yet it has ample power to tow up to 5,000 lbs.*

Of course, you’ll find many other innovative new models at your nearby Itasca dealer, including the Ellipse® 40BD,

an exclusive new floorplan featuring our new RestEasy® Extendable Sectional Sofa. Not to mention the “bath-and-a-half” Ellipse 40CD ... the new full-wall-slide Suncruiser® 37F ... the all-new Meridian® V-Class ... just a few more examples of how we’re leading with innovation – and a few more reasons why we continue to outsell most other brands in the industry.

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Itasca, go to www.motorhomemagazine.com/info

*Actual towing capacity is dependent on loading and towing circumstances, which include GWR, GAWR and GCWR, as well as adequate trailer brakes. Refer to Operator’s Manual for further towing information.

REV UP FOR THE RALLY 2010

The biggest event of the year for RV enthusiasts is coming to Louisville, Ky., July 22-25, when MotorHome and its parent company Affinity Group host the 11th annual Rally.

Located between St. Louis and Cincinnati, Louisville is within a day's drive of half of the nation's population.

As in previous years, attendees will find hundreds of RVs, thousands of new RV-related products, the popular Rally Dog Show, local tours and top-shelf entertainment — including Tanya Tucker and actor-comedian Bob Newhart.

The first day, July 22, is RV Publications Day, featuring raffles with great prizes.

For more information, call 877-749-7122, or visit www.therally.com.



News Briefs

A report by Statistical Surveys recognizes **Winnebago Industries Inc.** and **Fleetwood RV Inc.** as last year's top-selling motorhome manufacturer and the No. 1 manufacturer of Class A motorhomes, respectively. Statistical Surveys, which has been tracking the RV industry since 1987, said Winnebago's dealers retailed more Class A and Class C motorhomes combined than any other manufacturer's dealer group in calendar 2009, achieving 19.2 percent market share versus 18.3 percent market share for calendar 2008. It's the ninth consecutive year Winnebago has earned the distinction. Fleetwood has been recognized as the No. 1-selling Class A motorhome brand for 22 of the past 23 years.

Several new amenities have been added at the **San Francisco North/Petaluma KOA Camping Resort** in Northern California, including a 4,000-square-foot dog park with agility equipment and shaded benches. The registration area and camping store have been renovated, with a wine country theme. For campers who want the comforts of home, there are new Wine Country Lodges. Plans call for added accommodation units in the winter of this year and a complete renovation of the pool area.

Ten million more Americans and foreign tourists visited the nation's national parks last year than in 2008, a 3.9 percent increase that marked the fifth busiest year ever for the **National Park System**, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar said. "People both here and abroad know that our national parks are America's best idea, even during an economic downturn," Salazar said. "Our national parks are treasures that tell the story of our country and celebrate its beauty and culture, and they provide vacation bargains for families living on a tight budget."

More than 285 million people visited national parks and other units of the Park System during 2009, up from just under 275 million in 2008. This fell short of the all-time visitation record of 287.2 million in 1987.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park continued its reign as the most-visited national park in 2009, attracting 9.4 million visitors, while the **Blue Ridge Parkway**, below, was the most visited unit of the system with nearly 16 million visitors.



PHOTO: NPS

HOOSIER HAPPENING

GET A HEAD START ON THE RALLY WITH THIS VERY SPECIAL TOUR

Before heading to The Rally, the largest organized gathering of RVers in America, why not participate in a more intimate, behind-the-scenes tour in the heart of the RV industry?

This year, The Rally has planned a pre-rally program aimed at RV enthusiasts who want to get an in-depth look at the RV lifestyle and

industry. Bob Livingston, publisher of MotorHome magazine, and his wife, Lynne, are the hosts of this adventure, which begins in Elkhart, Ind. Here's the plan: Meet on Friday, July 16, in Elkhart. Once settled in at the RV park, the four-day event commences with a private, guided tour of the Newmar RV factory. From there, participants will mingle with members of the Amish community and finish off the day with a fabulous meal.

The next morning, guests will tour the RV/MH Hall of Fame Museum, which traces the 100-year evolution of RVs. In the afternoon, an interactive tech and lifestyle seminar will be presented by Bill Gehr, of Bill's RV in Ventura, Calif., and Livingston. On Sunday, it's off to Studebaker National Museum in nearby South Bend. On Monday, the group breaks camp and heads for Louisville. It's about a six-hour drive to The Rally site. Participants in this special program will be assigned a premium site close to all the Rally action.

The cost for this tour, which includes an extra "early bird" day, is \$1,169 per rig (two people), if registered for The Rally; for those not registered and departing on Tuesday morning, cost is \$1,299.

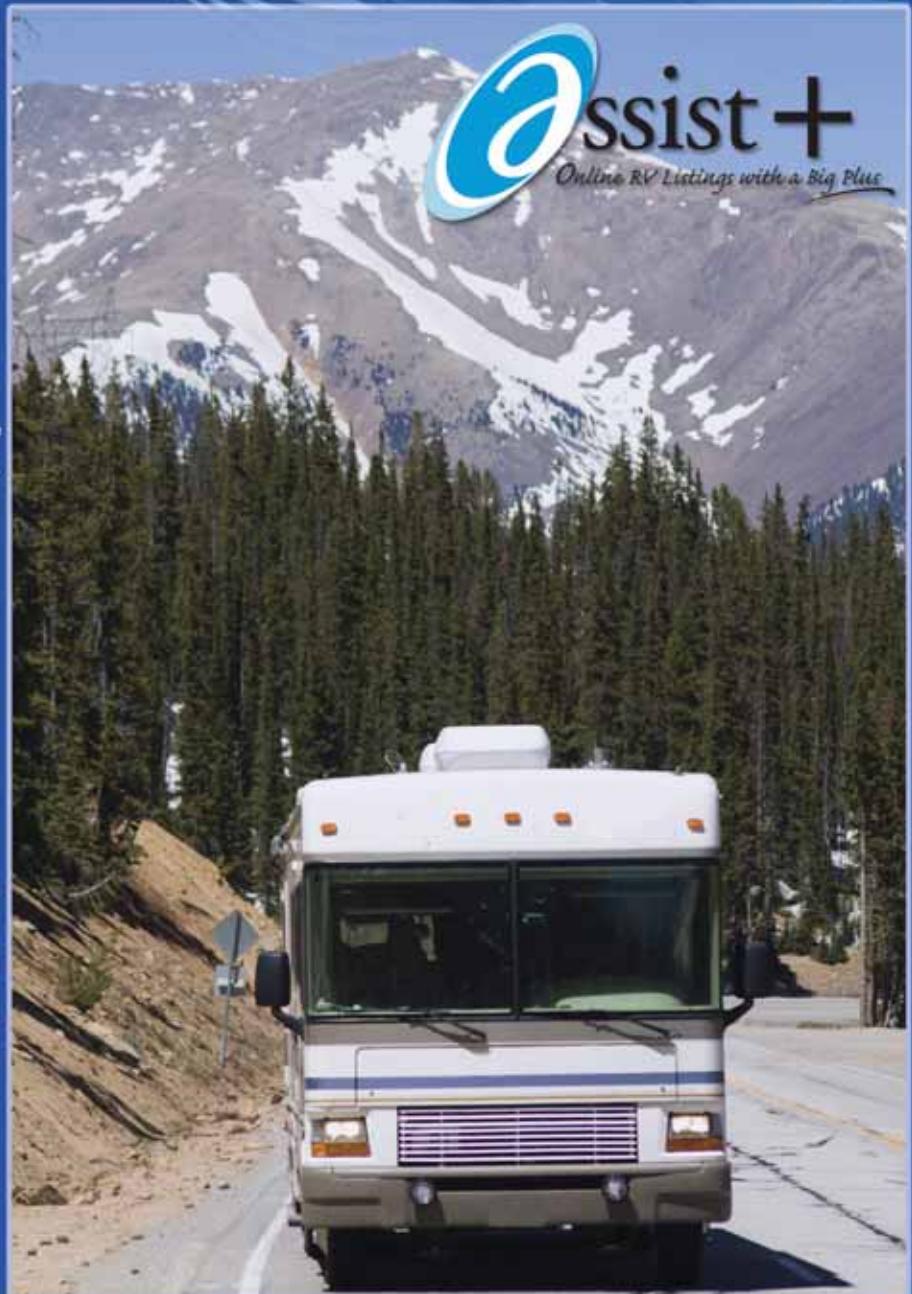
For more information, call 800-829-5140. — *Patricia Marroquin*



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escapes | CROSSROADS

A SENSE OF EDMONTON'S PAST

Fort Edmonton Park, Canada's

largest historical park, re-creates the fort built in Edmonton, Alberta, by the Hudson Bay Company in 1846 as a base of operation for fur trading. Within the stockade of the old fort, an impressive three-story house built by the company's factor, John Rowand, overlooks a courtyard and rows of low buildings to house fur traders and shops that supported daily life. Costumed interpreters mingle with guests to converse about blacksmithing, boat building, hide tanning and cooking on an open hearth.



The park, reproduced on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River below Quesnell Bridge in west Edmonton, represents four distinct time periods of the city's development from a fur trading post to a bustling metropolitan center. Featuring more than 75 structures, many originals to the city, guests meander on streets depicting life in 1885, 1905 and 1920. Interpreters in period attire portray townspeople. A steam train and a trolley provide unlimited rides around the park.

Because of its natural wooded terrain, well-preserved streets and detailed buildings, Fort Edmonton often becomes a movie set. Released in 2006, "The Assassination of Jesse James," starring Brad Pitt, filmed scenes on the vintage train's parlor car.

In a few hours, Fort Edmonton Park offers its visitors a sense of the past. Food is available in restaurants on the premises and the parking lot accommodates motorhomes. Fort Edmonton Park is open daily from Canada's Victoria Day in May to Labor Day. **For more information**, call 780-442-5311, or visit www.fortedmontonpark.ca.

— Arline Chandler

GRIN AND BEAR IT



PHOTO: PATRICIA MARROQUIN

Their dozens of "children" have such names as Tyson, Josey, Suzie, Patton and Dakota Joe. Dean Oswald and his wife, Jewel, have raised quite a bear brood for more than a quarter century.

The Oswalds began taking in rescued black bears in 1984, making a home for them on their 80-acre ranch in Michigan's Eastern Upper Peninsula. In 1997, they opened their ranch to the public and now host about 50,000

visitors a year. The ranch is the largest bear-only compound in the U.S.

Michigan law prohibits the breeding or buying of black bears. All of the nearly 30 bears in residence are rescue bears, including orphaned cubs as well as adult bears. They live in several natural habitats, including Black Bear Falls, where visitors can watch the bears play and swim in fresh lake water.

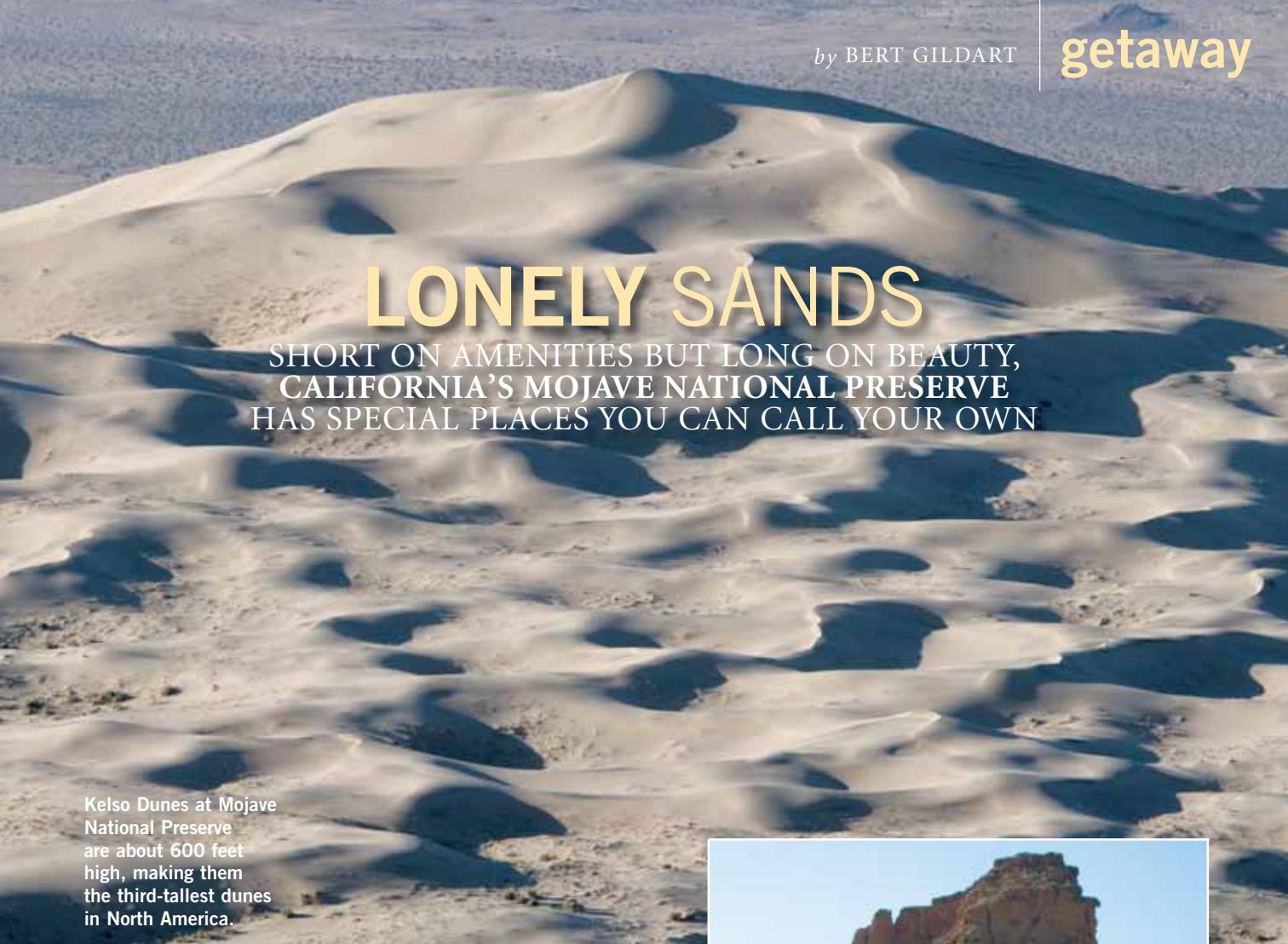
The ranch is not a drive-through; it's a healthy walk around the fenced perimeter of the habitats. A trolley is available for the elderly and large groups.

Visitors can get their pictures taken holding the cubs, and there are large viewing platforms. Admission is \$15 per vehicle and the ranch has parking for RVs. Oswalds Bear Ranch is located south of Tahquamenon Falls near Newberry.

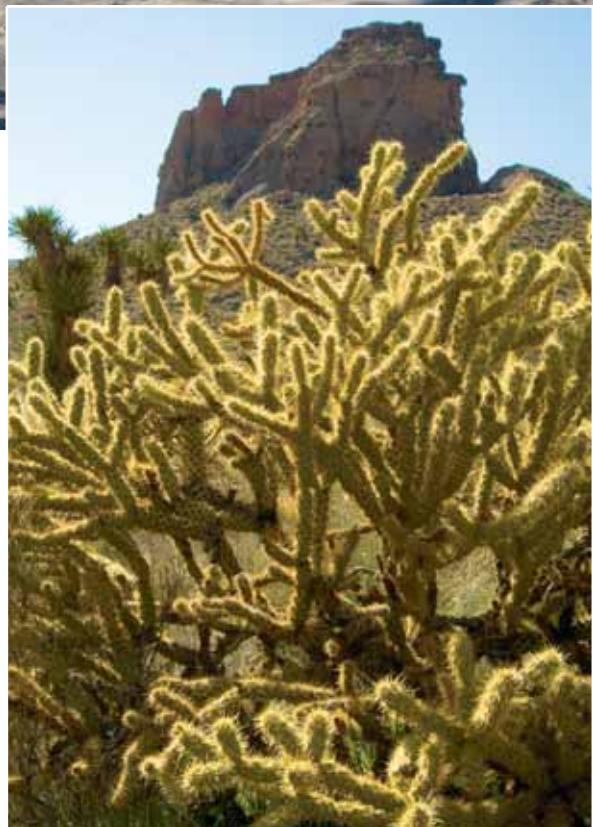
For more information, call 906-293-3147, or go online to www.oswaldsbear-ranch.com. — Patricia Marroquin ♦

LONELY SANDS

SHORT ON AMENITIES BUT LONG ON BEAUTY, CALIFORNIA'S MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE HAS SPECIAL PLACES YOU CAN CALL YOUR OWN



Kelso Dunes at Mojave National Preserve are about 600 feet high, making them the third-tallest dunes in North America.



The pencil cholla are beautiful to behold when hiking the trails at the preserve. But beware the spines of the prickly, shrub-like cactus. The plant typically blooms in May and June.

“H

old on,” roared Dick Peiffer above the rattle of the washboard road and the chatter now occurring inside the 4WD Jeep. “We’re about to board a roller coaster.”

He was referring to a ribbon of sand and rock that thread its way through Caruthers Canyon and into the New York Mountains, where we hoped to learn more about one of America’s most diverse but least visited desert parks. “If you like cowboys and Indians, desert ecology and world-class geology,” said Dick, “this is the place to be.”

At the time, my wife, Janie, and I were exploring California’s Mojave National Preserve — a national park-administered area we had been attracted to because it is relatively primitive. Midway through our stay we had encountered the Peiffers, a delightful couple we met at Hole in the Wall Campground who are Volunteers-In-Parks (VIPs).

The Mojave can challenge visitors because amenities are lacking. But that’s what makes the preserve so appealing, for at times, it can almost be all yours. Howev-



MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE



Rick Williams, a member of the VIP (Volunteers-In-Parks) program, directs Janie Gildart to Kelso Dunes.

the park on dusty, gravel roads, but we opted to return to the main highway and access the campground from paved roads entering from the south. Though we doubled the distance of our move, we avoided a massive "dusting" to our RV. When we pulled in the campground it was about half-full.

Hole in the Wall is a delightful campground, providing an easy drive to the state-operated Mitchell Caverns, and certainly

that is a compelling attraction. But the campground is famous for the formations that peer back at you from outside one of the picture windows in your motorhome.

Eighteen million years ago, geological forces generated so much pressure that underlying rock and water were superheated to phenomenal ranges, perhaps 1,800 degrees. As pressures inside this gigantic pressure cooker of hard granitic rock built,

they finally reached a point where they exploded, and when they did, water and rock were thrust into a much cooler surrounding. "Within seconds," said the naturalist, "the molten rock solidified, creating the pocked cliffs we see today."

And, so we have Hole in the Wall Campground and an adjacent canyon known as Banshee Canyon; and through it threads the Rings Trail, which we hiked one morning. Though only one mile long, it packs much into a short distance. First we saw petroglyphs, created by the Chemehuevi Indians, and that held our attention. Then, about 30 minutes later, we hiked into a narrow gap in the wall that appeared challenging, but proved otherwise when we discovered a series of huge rings provided courtesy of Mojave National Preserve. Because the area was unique, we hiked the trail several times during our weeklong stay at Hole in the Wall.

One reason we hiked the trail so many times was that it is now part of the six-mile-long loop trail Dick and Linda laid out in the spring of 2008. They described the trail as unique and beautiful but in an austere way.



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We had reported back, saying we agreed, paving the way for further explorations with them throughout the park, including our roller coaster tour through some of the park's backcountry roads in their Jeep.

When the four of us arrived at Death Valley Mines, just off the Cedar Canyon Road, we noticed the remains of outbuildings where a family once lived. Here, Janie and Linda discovered jars of pickled vegetables that included potatoes and cucumbers.

"Don't think we'll eat these," joked the women, looking at the corroded bottles.

Departing the mine, we returned to Cedar Canyon Road, then traveled east. As we traveled we paralleled the old Mojave Road once used by explorers, trappers and army scouts. Among the long list of notables were Jedediah Smith, John Fremont and Kit Carson, something we learned from one of the few books now available on the park.

Dick and Linda say that one day they might explore Mojave Road from their Jeep. The road is partially maintained, and driving it is one of the park's more exciting backcountry challenges. Just to say we'd

actually traveled the road, we drove about a mile of its 133-mile-long length.

The last excursion of the day took us into the New York Mountains — home, too, for many former ranchers, most of whom have allowed the government to buy out their holdings. The road was bumpy, and Dick kept asking how we liked the carnival ride. "We like it," said Janie, between her "umphs."

"Glad to hear that," said Dick, laughing a bit as Linda joined Janie in creating a chorus of "Umphs!" Soon we reached a canyon in the New York Mountains that prevented further passage.

Disembarking, we discovered that pinyon pine trees were well-established along the flanks. Dick and I struck out on a mile-long hike along a trail, hoping to find an old gold mine, one that would provide instant riches. The mine was called Giant Ledge Mine, and because we did find a huge ledge and the remnants of old mine diggings, we thought we were near. But search as we might, we never found the mine, and that was alright.

Surrounding us were mountains all dusted with snow, and in turn, they were capped by a sky that until a few moments earlier had been a faultless blue. Now that sky was being tinged with red from the sun dipping toward the horizon, and the scene was providing us with the richness we too often take for granted.

But what made it particularly special was that once again we had the area virtually to ourselves. That intrigued us, and we realized that after leaving the campground we'd seen no more than a dozen other people, and we had to conclude that it was essentially this park's lack of amenities that have kept it from being loved to death.

One day, that may change, but until then you can say this lonely park is your very own. All that's required to enjoy it is just a little preparation. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.nps.gov/moja.

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The geologic history of the area is evident here. The fine yellow sandstone of the Hulett Formation provides the waterproof cap for the softer and heavily eroded Spearfish Formation beneath. The layers of white gypsum over the “red beds” of mudstone that stained red with iron are clearly visible.



My husband, Guy, and I began our driving tour of the area just east of Devils Tower National Monument, Wyoming, on State Highway 24. Winding north, the road follows the “Spearfish Formation,” bluffs so infused with iron they are the color of oxygen-hungry blood and sculpted by nature into a host of odd shapes like processions of gnomes. Atop these is a much harder layer, fine-grained yellow sandstone called Hulett, which is also the name of the distinctly Western town nine miles ahead.

Hulett, population 408 — bisected by the frothy Belle Fourche River — features

false-front buildings that hold such inviting shops as Rogues Gallery Fine Art and Antiques, Out West Country Store, and Corner Market, here since 1903.

This is high-plains ranch country; wine-bottle green hills and meadows dotted with grazing cattle that stretch to the horizon in all directions. Many of these ranches, such as Wood Ranch, have been in the same families for more than a century. A large sign over the entrance says it was founded in 1893 by Harvey Wood and is now owned by his great-grandchildren.

At the sign for Black Hills National

Forest, we turned onto a winding road, pressed on both sides by ranks of towering ponderosas, into the 1.2-million-acre forest. Lakota Sioux call their sacred hills (which are sometimes called “paha sapa”) “he sapa,” or “hills of black,” as from a distance they look more black than green. Thinking we might glimpse elk, bighorn sheep or other woodland critters, we intended to hike a couple of hours on some of the forest’s 450 miles of trails. But soon the sky was in rain mode, and fat drops of water became slushy ice crystals, then a fierce barrage of hail — so we retreated

Aladdin General Store in Aladdin, Wyo., built in 1896, serves as the mercantile, post office and social center for the area. The store began as a saloon and commissary for coal miners.



Crazy Horse Memorial, in the Black Hills of South Dakota, has been slowly taking shape. The sculpting, using dynamite and air hammers, was begun 62 years ago by Korczak Ziolkowski.



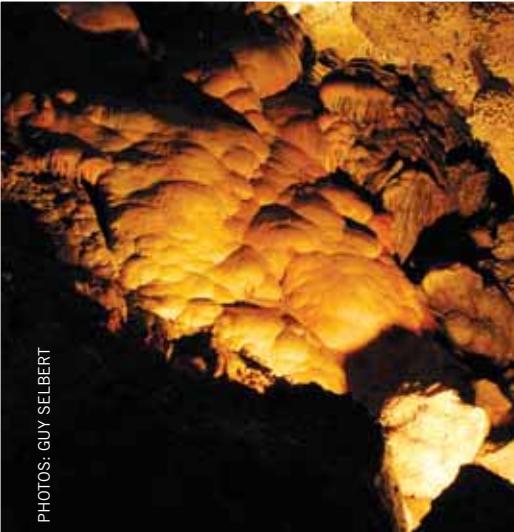


MAP: SUE CARLSON

to the highway.

Along the road a historical marker points out the site where in July 1874 Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer, leading the first official government exploring expedition in the Black Hills, crossed to investigate rumors of gold in “paying quantities.” Word of the Custer expedition finding gold spurred minors and settlers into the area despite the Treaty of 1868, which had guaranteed the region to the Indians (and proved to be Custer’s undoing). The Indians refused the government’s offer to buy the land, but this didn’t stop miners and settlers from

In 1900, prospectors discovered what is now Jewel Cave National Monument, containing calcite stone and crystals.



PHOTOS: GUY SELBERT

pouring in during the gold rush of 1875-77.

Former coal mining community Aladdin is next and so small (population 15) that signs for the east and west end of town hang back-to-back on a gas pump at antique Aladdin General Store. The weathered store, open daily, has had just five owners since it was built in 1896. Cavernous and little changed over the decades, the store began as a saloon and commissary for coal miners.

You can buy just about anything here: jewelry, stuffed animals, books and candles, sweatshirts, sandwiches, boots. The second story is occupied by Aladdin’s Antique Attic, a haphazard museum with hundreds of historical artifacts on display.

At the state line, Wyoming Highway 24 becomes South Dakota Highway 34. Belle Fourche (pronounced “bell foosh”), which 50 years ago claimed geographic “center of the nation” status, is 10 miles east then two miles north on U.S. Highway 85. The first-rate visitor center holds the Tri-State Museum, with impressive collections of giant fossils, tack, antique beaded Indian moccasins and pouches, historic photos and other items, and an exhibit explaining the local sugar industry (sugar beets were important here from 1927 until 1965).

Sheila Frost, a museum volunteer, says the five-day Black Hills Roundup festivities, held annually over the Fourth of July holiday since 1918, is the town’s main attraction, drawing more than 20,000

visitors. One was President Calvin Coolidge, who came for the festivities in 1927.

Officially, the nation’s center (moved from Smith County, Kan., after Alaska and Hawaii became states) is 20 miles north of town, marked by a small flagpole. Because it’s on private property, a far grander monument is now on the museum grounds. The 21-foot-diameter marker includes a U.S. map etched into South Dakota granite with a big steel dot at Belle Fourche.

We headed south on U.S. Highway 85 to Spearfish, which provided superb views of the snow-furrowed Black Hills. Spearfish offers a variety of attractions (High Plains Western Heritage Center and D.C. Booth Historic Fish Hatchery, among others) and recreational activities.

Four miles south, on U.S. Highway 14A, the Spearfish Canyon State Scenic Byway begins. It’s one of the most spectacular drives anywhere. Some 62 million years ago Spearfish Creek began carving the limestone canyon, creating 22 miles of magnificent cave-pocked palisades. In an array of hues (gray, yellow, rose, peach and black), they tower more than 1,200 feet over the road that winds (at a friendly 3-percent grade) through the gorge along the turbulent creek to Cheyenne Crossing.

Along the way are exquisite Bridal Veil Falls (visible from the road) and Spearfish Falls (a short walk at Latchstring Restaurant), and if you drive a mile up the side canyon at Spearfish Canyon Lodge, follow-

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ing USFS Road 222, you'll reach Roughlock Falls (also a short walk from the road).

Here, placards tell the story of Homestake Mining Company, founded in 1877 by George Hearst of Lead/Deadwood. The mine, the oldest, largest and deepest gold mine in North America with shafts 8,000 feet deep, yielded more than 40 million ounces of gold before it closed in 2002.

A sign at the entrance to the side canyon notes that the final winter scene from "Dances With Wolves" was shot here. We drove four miles past Roughlock — stopping where the road disappeared under half a foot of snow (in late May). No sign marks the exact location of the filming, but having watched the movie many times we easily identified it.

From Cheyenne Crossing, we drove east 20 miles on U.S. Highway 85 to Deadwood. This lively town began in the late 1870s as a lawless camp of get-rich-quick prospectors and a business district of mostly saloons, dance halls and bordellos — and looks today much as it must have when Wild Bill Hickok walked its streets.

The entire town has been preserved — thanks to revenues from the gaming industry — and designated a National Historic District. There are numerous tourist attractions, most recalling Deadwood's Wild West days. Gaming is king, with nearly 80 establishments.

From Deadwood, almost any route you take is scenic. We chose Highway 85 west, which winds through Lead, Dead Horse Gulch, the canyon walls thick with ponderosas, Dead Ox Gulch, and over dramatic O'Neil Pass, elevation 6,700 feet, where winter hangs on in thick patches of new snow. The drive leaves Black Hills National Forest and returns to Wyoming.

At Four Corners, we turned north on Wyoming Highway 585 — back into a world of wide fields, green as pool-table baize with a scattering of cattle, elaborate snow fences and occasional clusters of ranch buildings.

A historical marker points out another Custer crossing, in July 1874. "Officially," he and more than 1,000 soldiers were out to locate a site for an army post; "unofficially," they were looking for verification of gold.

The government pressured the Sioux to move from land promised them onto a reservation — and in 1876 the "Great Sioux War" broke out. Custer, who "blazed

the road that sparked the war in the Black Hills," became its most famous casualty.

A turn on U.S. Highway 14 took us to historic Sundance, where Crook County Museum displays an impressive collection of Old West memorabilia. We stopped for the night at Devils Tower KOA, which we recommend, though many other campgrounds are available along the drive.

In the morning, we returned to Four Corners, headed south on U.S. Highway 85 then east on U.S. Highway 16, crossing into South Dakota to reach Jewel Cave National Monument. Bradley Block, chief of interpretations, explains that brothers Frank and Albert Michaud, while prospecting in the area in 1900, heard wind rushing from a small hole in the rocks. Widening it, they discovered a magnificent underground realm of shimmering calcite crystals.

Established as a National Monument in 1908, the cave was originally thought to be only about a mile long, said Block. Subsequent exploration revealed it to be one of the world's longest, a labyrinth, created over millions of years, that twists and turns for more than 150 miles.

Calcite crystals, which may be colored red or yellow, translucent or opaque white, line the many chambers and can glitter like gemstones when illuminated. A variety of tours are available: We chose the half-mile, 1½-hour guided "Scenic Tour," which begins at the visitor center with an elevator ride down, then follows a paved, lighted path and more than 700 stairs.

Continuing along Highway 16 — a tortuous route through rock bluffs and hills thick with ponderosas — we came to Custer, the oldest town in the Black Hills, which is set, interestingly, among massive upended granite boulders.

Four miles east on Highway 16A is Custer State Park, established in 1913 first as a game reserve, and later as South Dakota's largest state park in 1919. Over the years, once-indigenous creatures were gradually reintroduced into the 71,000-acre reserve of rolling prairie, ponderosa pine-covered mountains and granite peaks. You'll often see bison, pronghorn, elk, bighorn sheep and mountain goats while hiking the trails or driving the Wildlife Loop Road, which skirts a bustling prairie dog town.

Popular activities here include fishing, boating and horseback riding. There

are eight campgrounds and 350 sites, many of them for large coaches, and a variety of amenities, including electric hookups at most sites.

Custer, a destination unto itself, is worthy of at least two days, instead of the two hours we had for tackling its possibilities. We regretted so shortchanging this magnificent park, but evening was coming on and Crazy Horse Memorial, the important last stop on this scenic drive, was several miles ahead.

You may think, at first, that little progress has been made since the sculpting-by-dynamite began 62 years ago. But before and after photos and the 20-minute video at the visitor complex theater tell a different story.

The project began with an invitation from Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear to sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski to carve a mountain-size tribute to the famous warrior, strategist of the Battle of the Little Big Horn in Montana, where Custer died in 1876. Ziolkowski accepted the invitation and arrived in the Black Hills in 1947 to begin work, dedicating the project with Standing Bear on June 3, 1948.

Ultimately the memorial will depict Crazy Horse to the waist, long hair flying, arm outstretched, astride a magnificent steed. Visitors can observe the daily work, which is now concentrated on the rough shaping of the horse's head that will be 219 feet high when finished.

Although Ziolkowski died in 1982, his wife, Ruth, and seven of their 10 children have continued the privately funded project. Should the project outlast the family, Ziolkowski and his wife prepared detailed books of plans in order for it to continue.

When we left the monument the storm clouds had dispersed and the sun had set, though for a long time volleys of pink and orange streaked the west from below the horizon. We drove back toward Wyoming under sky as iridescent as an opal. ♦

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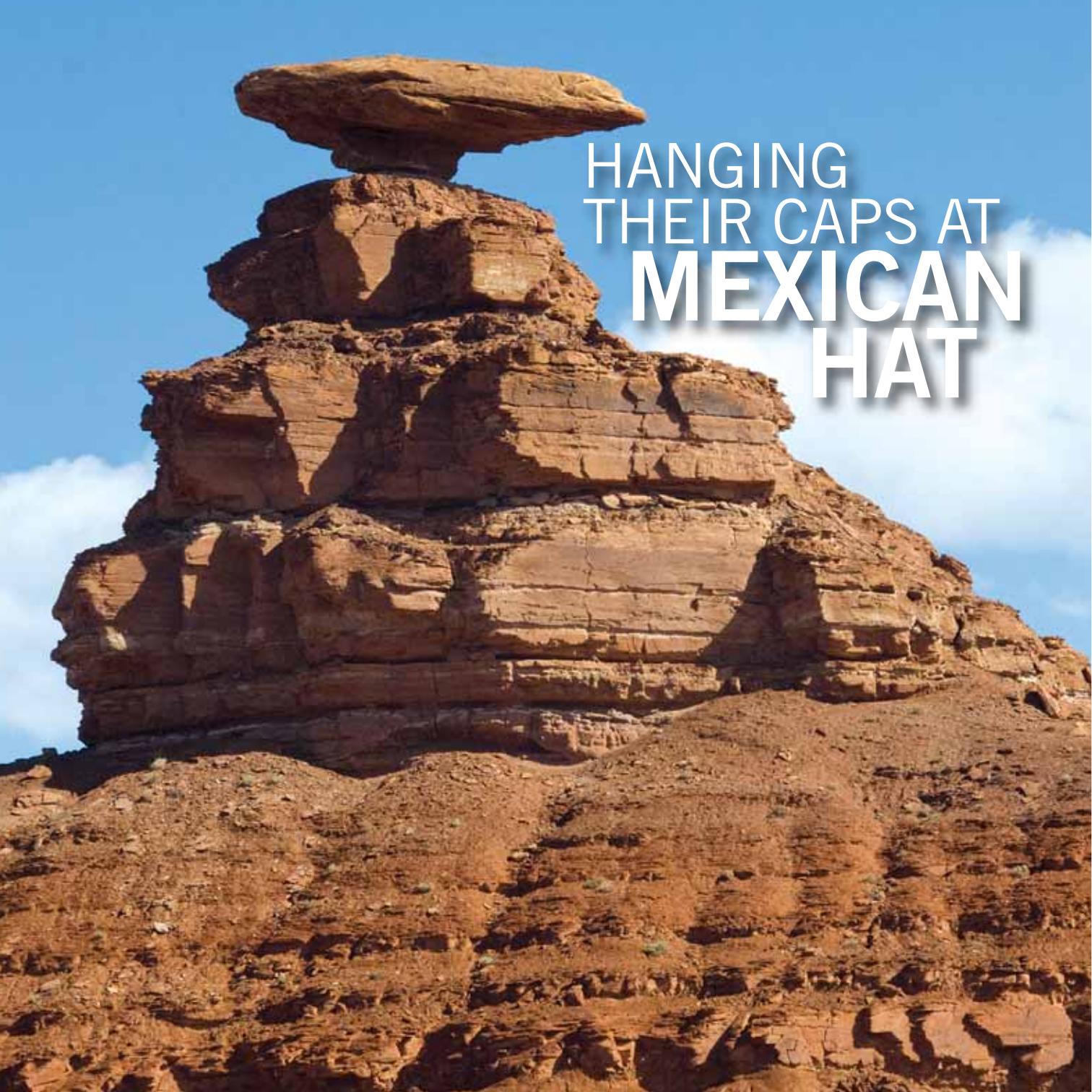
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HANGING THEIR CAPS AT MEXICAN HAT

WITH THE SLEEPY
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THEIR BASE, A
COUPLE EXPLORE
ANCIENT LAND

by RICHARD AND
ELLEN THANE

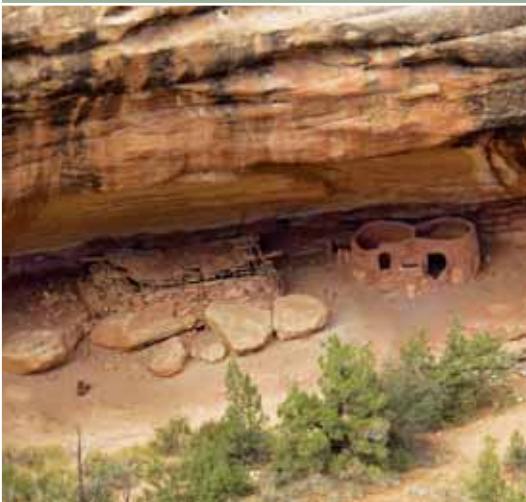
Way down in the southeast corner of Utah sits a little town called Mexican Hat. When we saw it on the map we were intrigued. Our minds conjured up images of handsome vaqueros on horseback, beautiful folklorico dancers in swirling skirts and quiet Spanish courtyards dripping with bougainvillea.

So after a trip to Monument Valley, on a whim, we pointed our motorhome to the

north along U.S. Highway 163. As we traveled the 21 miles between Monument Valley and Mexican Hat we descended a thousand feet or so to the San Juan River. Before we could blink, we were through the tiny cluster of old buildings huddled along the river that makes up Mexican Hat. Founded in the early part of the 20th century during an oil boom, Mexican Hat now has a population of less than 100 and functions mostly as a stopover point for vis-



Mexican Hat, a gigantic red sandstone formation, looms tall above the landscape. Its brim is 60 feet in diameter. A family hikes a trail at Natural Bridges National Monument. A nine-mile paved road winds through this park, offering stunning views of pinyon-filled canyons containing ancient cliff dwellings, such as Horsecollar Ruin, below left. It's one of the best-preserved ancestral Puebloan sites in the area. Valle's RV Park in Mexican Hat served as the base for the couple's scenic tour of the area.



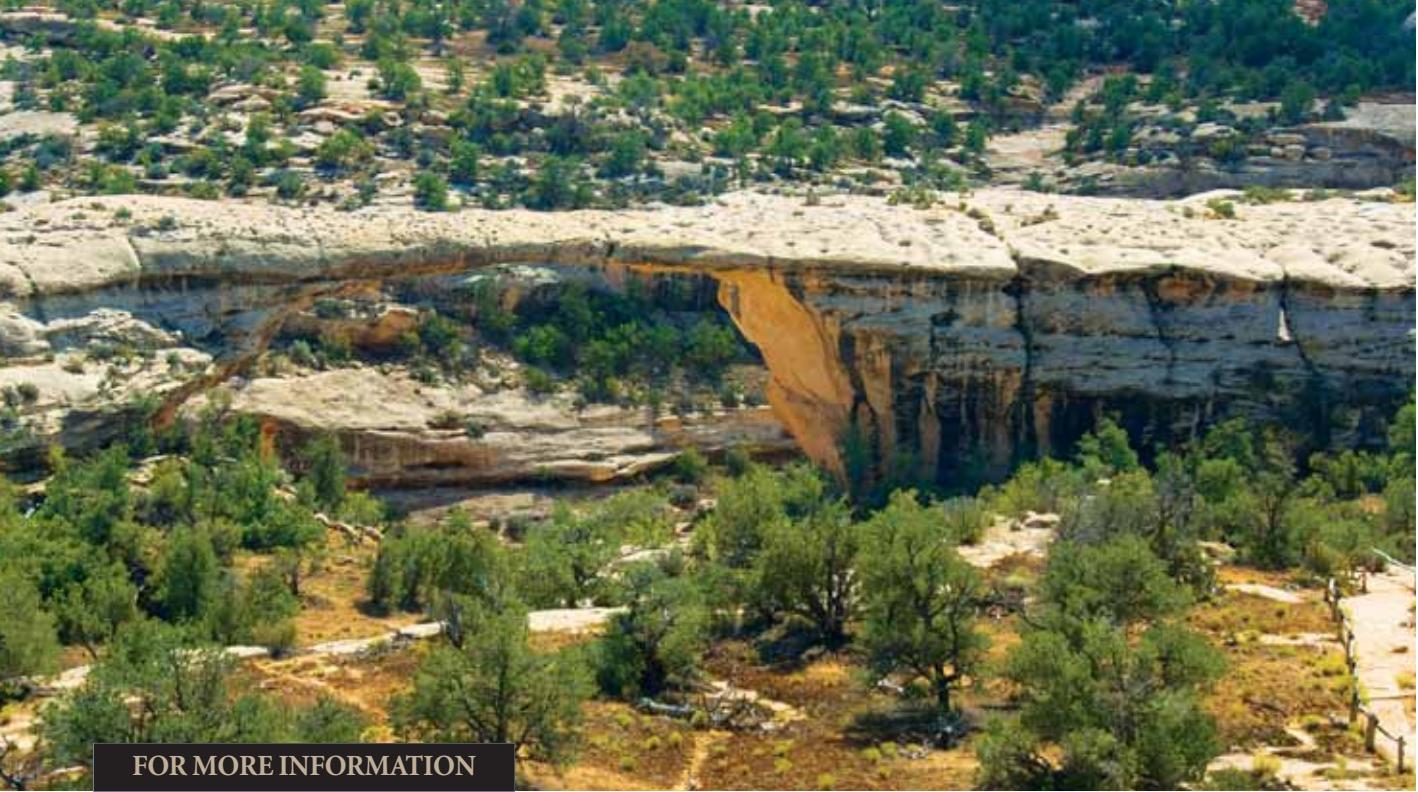
itors on their way to Monument Valley or as a base for river expeditions.

As we checked in at Valle's RV Park, on the north edge of what could hardly be called a town, we saw a number of RVs rushing past on their way to the well-known national parks up the road. Was this a waste of time, we asked ourselves? Was there anything worth seeing here? As we set up camp, the sun was sinking low on the horizon and the skies were filling with storm clouds

promising rain but also a splendid sunset.

The happy sound of laughter and country music emanated from a funky old motel next to the RV park and the tantalizing aroma of beef cooking on a barbecue sent our appetites soaring. Walking over to check it out, we found a little outdoor restaurant called Swinging Steak. Business at the bar was brisk and we watched as a couple of people arrived on horseback and tied their mounts right next to shiny Harleys. No, they

weren't our conjured vaqueros, just a couple of thirsty guys in dusty jeans looking for Coronas. A young man dressed in cowboy garb was cooking steaks on a swinging grill and stirring up a pot of ranch-style beans. We seated ourselves and chatted with the young cook. His grandmother had built this swinging grill years before, he told us, as she found it to be the best way to cook a perfect steak. Guess she was right, as we have had few tastier than these.



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800-538-6195,
www.cadillacranchrv.com.

NATURAL BRIDGES NATIONAL MONUMENT

435-692-1234,
www.nps.gov/nabr.

UTAH TRAVEL GUIDE

800-200-1160,
www.go-utah.com.

VALLE'S RV PARK

435-683-2226.

Kachina Bridge is among the many distinctive formations in Natural Bridges National Monument. Near Bluff, Utah, a small town on the edge of the Navajo Nation, visitors will find the Sand Island petroglyphs. The amazing wall of pictographs that tells the story of the ancient Puebloan people is located on BLM land beside the San Juan River.



MEXICAN HAT

The next morning we decided to explore part of the Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway, a loop drive northeast on Highway 163 to the town of Bluff, then head up U.S. Highway 191 to Blanding and, from there, west over Bicentennial Highway 95 to Natural Bridges National Monument. Then we intended to travel south on State Highway 261 back to Mexican Hat.

And thus began our adventure into an ancient land far older than the Spanish culture we'd fantasized about. It's a land filled with 250-million-year-old rock formations, mysterious Anasazi ruins and remnants of

long-ago Mormon pioneer families, all but undiscovered by crowds of tourists.

Thank goodness we discussed our travel plans with our campground host as there was nothing on the map to warn us that the southern part of Highway 261, called the Moki Dugway, was not recommended for a large motorhome. As we discovered later, even road signs do not adequately warn of the danger of such an attempt. Revising our plans, we decided to explore the southern portion of our planned loop while continuing to camp in Mexican Hat.

Rain played soft staccato notes on the

roof of our coach as we slept, but morning dawned clear and sunny. Setting out in our 4WD dinghy, we stopped just north of the campground at the enormous red sandstone formation for which Mexican Hat is named. Looming tall above the landscape with its brim of 60 feet in diameter, it certainly takes no imagination to see the gigantic hat.

Continuing north about 10 miles on Highway 163, we turned west on the 17-mile (County Road 242) dirt road leading through the little-known Valley of the Gods. Though the drive time through the valley is estimated at two hours, it took us most of the day as we stopped to take pictures and short hikes around the massive rock formations. Like a smaller version of Monument Valley, amazing sandstone gleams in brilliant shades of red and purple.

In spite of the rain the night before, the road was easily traveled by passenger car, though in wetter times it can be difficult for even a 4WD vehicle. While we had the road all to ourselves, we caught glimpses of a couple of small campers set up in sheltered spots below scenic monoliths.

Camping is allowed in the area, administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), although this is not a road to be traversed in anything more than a camper van. You won't find any services as you travel through the Valley of the Gods so be sure you have plenty of gas, water and food.

Finally exiting at the west entrance off Highway 261, we traveled north a few miles to check out the infamous portion of the gravel road known as the Moki Dugway. Built in 1958 for the transportation of uranium ore to the processing mill in Mexican Hat, it was never planned for regular public use. Now Richard is no wimp when it comes to driving difficult roads, but by the time we traversed the sharp hairpin turns with a 10-percent grade ascending 1,000 feet in less than three miles, we knew there was no way a motorhome of any size could navigate this road. And even though we have read reports of short camping vehicles making the trip, we would definitely discourage any attempt.

Upon reaching the top we took the remote five-mile dirt road traveling west to Muley Point, which we'd heard had been listed by National Geographic as one of the most outstanding views in America. We were not disappointed as its magnificent overlook peered deep into the San Juan River Canyon

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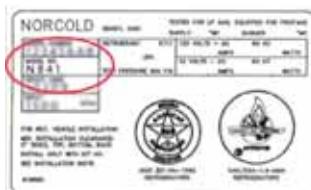
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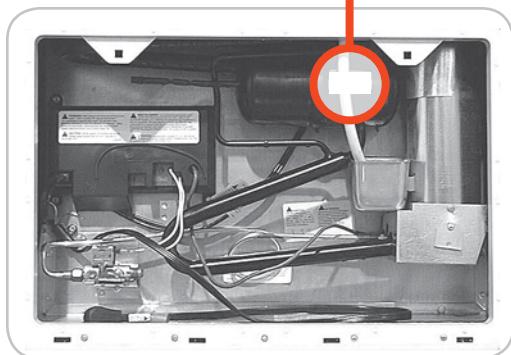


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and on to Monument Valley 25 miles or so in the distance. Several small RVs were dry camping in the surrounding desert and from the look of the bicycles they had with them this must be a popular place to ride.

Retracing our route down the Dugway as we returned to our campsite in Mexican Hat, we stopped at Goosenecks State Park and the overlook of the Goosenecks of the San Juan River. With an elevation of 5,000 feet, a high viewpoint located there provides a spectacular look at the serpentine ridges formed by the San Juan River 1,000 feet below in what is known as the deepest entrenched river meanders in North America. Like a snake it coils back on itself for a distance of six and a half miles while only advancing one linear mile. Located at the end of Highway 316, Goosenecks is a wilderness park encompassing 10 acres. Only primitive camping is available and sites are first come, first served.

Back at the motorhome we pulled our dinners out of the freezer but once again the smell of those steaks was too enticing. A person could get fat camping here very long.

The next day we moved camp a few miles up Highway 163 to Cadillac Ranch RV Park in Bluff, a small town on the edge of the Navajo Nation. At first glance it doesn't look like much, but look again. Settled by the famous "Hole in the Rock" expedition of Mormon pioneers in the 1880s, its history goes back to ancient Puebloan people who made their homes first in pit houses and then in cliff dwellings.

Two miles west of Bluff, at Sand Island Campground, located on BLM land beside the San Juan River, an amazing wall of pictographs tells the story of their lives. To see more of the ancient Puebloan culture of this region, a side trip to the east will take you to the hauntingly mysterious ruins of Hovenweep National Monument. You can either make that a day trip or spend a night or so at the campground located there.

A drive through Bluff's historic district reveals an interesting story of pioneer life and the endurance needed to thrive in this faraway outpost. While in town be sure to eat at Twin Rocks Trading Post, where you'll find not only a feast for the tummy but for the eyes as well with the beautiful museum-quality art, jewelry and rugs made by Navajo, Hopi and Zuni tribes.

Moving farther north to Blanding, the

hub of the great Southwestern Indian tribes with Navajos to the south, Paiutes to the west and southwest, and Utes to the east and northeast, we found an area rich in the history of the earth and the changing cultures of the humans who lived here.

A good place to start is at the visitor center (which doubles as a Pioneer Museum), and then the Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum, built next to an Ancestral Puebloan Indian ruin. With its fine collection of Anasazi pottery and other artifacts, the museum tells a fascinating story of ancient settlements in the Four Corners region. A stop at the nearby Dinosaur Museum takes you even further back with its wonderfully re-created dinosaurs telling their own stories of that time period. In 1879 Mormon settlers arrived, adding another dimension to the rich historical character of the area. Lunch at Old Tymer Restaurant, with its displays of antique farming implements, introduced us to a new treat — "ribbon fries."

Moving west along Bicentennial Highway 95, the northern part of our loop, we stopped at two interesting ancient ruins. Butler Wash Indian Ruins, about 10.5 miles west of Blanding on Highway 95, has cliff-type dwellings located under rocky overhangs in a lush green valley along the river. An easy half-mile hike allows closer views. Eight miles farther west along Highway 95 brings you to the Mule Canyon Indian Ruins at milepost 101. Just a quick roadside stop, the site includes the walls of a square lodge and a round tower — all made of stone.

Just a few more miles and you're at Natural Bridges National Monument, about 35 miles west of Blanding and the end of our route. Located atop a 5,500- to 6,500-foot mesa, a nine-mile paved road winds through the park, revealing spectacular views of deep pinyon-filled canyons full of ancient cliff dwellings. Trailheads for short hikes lead to archaeological sites or to the base of three giant natural stone bridges. A small campground is limited to RVs less than 26 feet, but an overflow area just outside the park has plenty of room. Park rangers will point you in the right direction.

As you can see, we didn't find any Mexican vaqueros, no colorful dancing girls and definitely no Spanish courtyards during our trip to Mexican Hat, but what we did discover was even more fascinating — an ancient land of incredible beauty. ♦

GEOCACHING ALLOWS RVERS TO EXERCISE THEIR BODIES AND THEIR BRAINS IN SEARCH OF HIDDEN TREASURES

by MARY ZALMANEK

CACHING IN ON A CRAZE

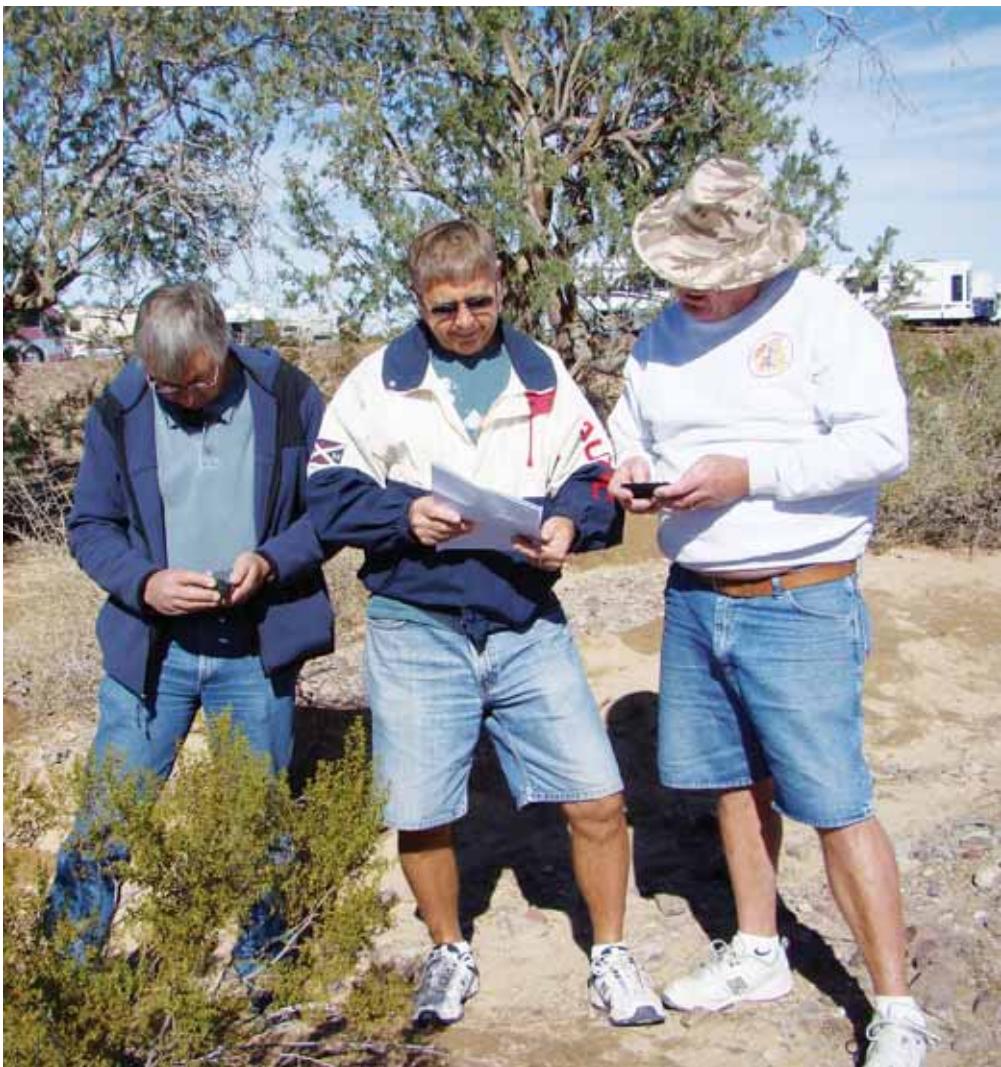
If you thought the thrill of finding hidden treasures belonged only to archaeologists and Boy Scouts, think again. Welcome to the exciting world of high-tech GPS treasure hunts. It's like Indiana Jones without the sword fights and snake pits.

Global Positioning System (GPS) is a navigational system that uses satellites and computers to determine the latitude and longitude of a receiver on Earth. In addition to military, commercial and scientific uses, it's a great high-tech toy.

In 1996, I bought my husband, Jim, a GPS for our anniversary. His mission — and he chose to accept it — was to use the GPS to kick off a romantic getaway. Because of a scrambling technique called selective availability, GPS technology for civilian use was inaccurate up to 300 feet. That was close enough for Jim to find me waiting for him at a bed-and-breakfast that stood alone on a country road.

When the Clinton administration removed the degraded accuracy of selective availability in May 2000, GPS enthusiasts were abuzz with ideas for new uses for the technology. Computer consultant Dave Ulmer tested the new accuracy by hiding a treasure in the woods near Beaver Creek, Ore., and posting the GPS coordinates on the Internet. Within three days, two separate people read about it and used GPS receivers to find the hidden stash. The concept spread quickly. Within four months of the initial cache, Jeremy Irish and Mike Teague, two of the early participants, launched a Web site, www.geocaching.com, with 75 geocaches.

Today, there are nearly 1 million active caches and 3 million to 4 million geocachers. Geocaches can be found in all 50 states, in more than 100 countries and all seven continents.



Geocachers enter coordinates into a GPS system. The high-tech treasure hunt will lead to a geocache such as the one at left in Rockhound State Park in Deming, N.M.

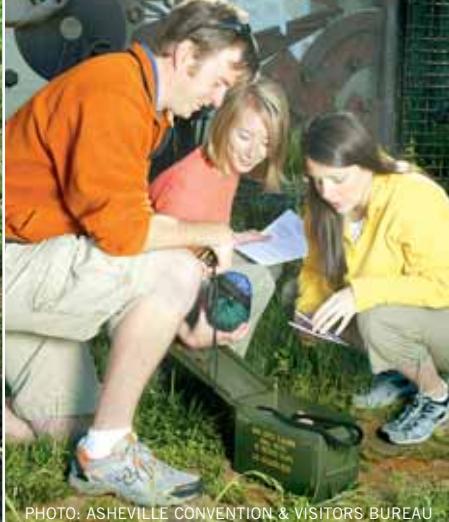


PHOTO: ASHEVILLE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



Geocaching has become one of the fastest-growing recreational activities in the world.

WHAT IS GEOCACHING?

Simply put, geocaching is a worldwide high-tech treasure hunt. Adventure-seeking geocachers use GPS receivers to locate hidden containers. At a minimum, geocaches have a container and a logbook. Some hold treasures, such as toys, stickers, tools, batteries and coins. Ammo boxes are popular containers since they are waterproof when sealed and their olive-drab color helps them blend into the environment.

FINDING THE RIGHT GPS

Compared with the billions of dollars the U.S. Department of Defense spent developing GPS technology, the cost for you to get started is a mere pittance. Prices range from less than \$100 for an entry-level hand-held GPS receiver to \$600 for a top-of-the-line unit with preloaded maps, camera and touch screen. Cell phones, such as the Apple iPhone and Android models, also have GPS technology.

If you're new to geocaching and you use a vehicle-based receiver in your motorhome, you may be able to use it to try your hand at geocaching. Our Garmin nuvi worked fine for finding caches hidden in relatively flat, open fields. It was enough to show me how much fun geocaching can be. When I tried using the same equipment on steep, mountainous terrain, I quickly realized I faced a technological disadvantage.

Generally, hand-held GPS receivers are better suited to geocaching because of their small size, lightweight, rugged construction, waterproof housing and longer battery life. The Complete Idiot's Guide to Geocaching, Second Edition, by the Editors and Staff of Geocaching.com,

RVers who wish to participate in the geocaching fun can get a free basic account at Geocaching.com. The geocaching adventure is a great family activity. Top right, 9-year-old Shannon Scofield shows off her stash. She has been geocaching with her parents since she was 3 years old and enjoys getting the prize at the end. A Travel Bug, right, is a trackable item that hitchhikes from cache to cache.



contains excellent advice about choosing the right GPS. Outdoor stores such as REI offer free introductory GPS and geocaching classes to help determine what type of receiver you need.

THE GEOCACHING WEB SITE

The next step is to get an account on www.geocaching.com. With a valid e-mail address and name, a basic account is free. A premium account costs \$30 a year. Try the basic account until you know whether geocaching is for you.

Geocaching.com can locate geocaches by address, ZIP code, longitude and latitude, state or country. The difficulty and terrain for each cache is rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 the easiest. While a cache with a 1/1 difficulty/terrain rating can be found in a few minutes of searching after a short, flat walk, a 5/5 rating requires specialized knowledge and equipment. One notable 5/5 cache is hidden in Antarctica at the crater rim of a 12,000-foot active volcano — definitely not RV friendly.

Once you've selected a geocache, enter the coordinates into your GPS. This can be done manually or by downloading the data directly from your computer. Consult the manual for your GPS model and Geocaching.com for details on how to do this. In addition to the coordinates, you'll want to print the description and logs.

After searching for geocaches with your GPS in one hand and paper in the other, you may long for the simplicity of downloading descriptive information directly to your GPS unit. That's when you know you're hooked.

FINDING A GEOCACHE

Sometimes the cache owner will include clues or an encrypted message, which could be helpful in finding the cache. The cache will most likely be hidden off the trail so that casual passers-by won't notice it. With your detective skills and perhaps a bit of luck, you'll find the cache.

According to Geocaching.com, the rules of geocaching are simple.

1. If you take something from the cache, leave something of equal or greater value.
2. Write about your find in the cache logbook.
3. Log your experience at www.geocaching.com.

Often the items found in a geocache are things that might excite your children or grandchildren, such as toys or stickers. Occasionally the cache will contain trackable items that thrill avid geocachers of any age.

A Travel Bug is a trackable item that hitchhikes from cache to cache to achieve its travel goals. Its progress is tracked on

Geocaching.com by a serial number stamped on a dog tag. The dog tag can be attached to some small trinket, such as a key chain, or it can be used by itself. Geocachers who take Travel Bugs from a cache log the find on Geocaching.com, and then move it to a new geocache. The Travel Bug owner and everyone else who adds their names to the Travel Bug's watch list gets an e-mail notice every time the item is moved.

Finding geocaches is exciting, and soon you'll want to hide them, too. Anyone who is willing to set and maintain a geocache can hide one. Geocaching.com has some common-sense guidelines for locations, containers, contents and maintenance of your geocache.

You won't need a Boy Scout Merit Badge in orienteering to find easier caches, but understanding how to read maps may be helpful in finding more difficult geocaches. If you plan to geocache in backcountry, use a U.S. Geological Survey topographic map and compass as your primary navigation devices, and the GPS as secondary. A topo map, compass

and orienteering skills can lead you out of the wilderness if your equipment fails.

BENEFITS OF GEOCACHING

The benefits of geocaching are many. It's fun. You'll get some exercise, use your brain, visit new places and make new friends.

It's also a great family activity. Mary and Tim Scofield have been geocaching since their 9-year-old daughter was a toddler. At 3 years old, Shannon would do a five-mile hike — make that a toddler with lots of stops — if a geocache was involved. We met the Scofield family while camping in City of Rocks State Park in New Mexico. Now an avid geocacher, Shannon led our group to the site and was the first to spot the hidden treasure. She said, "Geocaching's funner than just hiking 'cause you get a prize at the end."

GPS AND RVING — A PERFECT MATCH

Traveling is safer, easier and more interesting with a GPS. It guides us to our destinations and helps find places of interest. Many GPS receivers can provide instant

directions to the nearest hospital, police station or gas station.

Geocaching is a natural activity for RVers. It allows us to visit out-of-the-way places locals thought worthy of hiding caches. With a premium Geocaching membership, you can search for geocaches along a route.

Be sure to bring your GPS to The Rally (<http://therally.com>) July 22-25, hosted by MotorHome and its parent company Affinity Group. Just as in past years, you can use it to find caches hidden at The Rally site in Louisville, Ky. Like young Shannon said, "You get a prize at the end," and there are sure to be some valuable prizes.

For the first time this year, a few Travel Bugs will be released at The Rally. They will have the goal of logging as many miles as possible before The Rally 2011. Put these Travel Bugs on your watch list. If one is reported to be in a geocache in your neck of the woods, move it to a new destination.

Leave those nasty spiders and snakes to Indiana Jones. Travel Bugs are a lot more fun. ♦



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VETERAN COACHMAKER ROLLS OUT NEW, UPSCALE REAR-KITCHEN MODEL WITH AN INNOVATIVE, COMPACT FLOORPLAN

by CHUCK AND TERESA CAMPBELL

As owners of a Class A motorhome, we enjoy our full-size coach; however, as the years go by, we look ahead to a time when a larger RV may no longer meet our travel needs. When thinking about coaches that might be more suitable, we've come to the conclusion that a smaller Class C might eventually be a better fit.

Born Free Motorcoach of Humboldt, Iowa, manufactures an extensive line of such motorhomes, which contain many of the same upscale amenities and architectural elements found on larger units. Built to order by the 41-year-old, privately held company and sold directly to customers, Class C motorhomes such as its new 22-foot, rear-side kitchen model are excellent possibilities for shorter-range trips and carefree touring. With a compact, non-slideout floorplan built on a robust Ford E-350 van cutaway chassis, this coach allows easy access to a wide range of locations without leaving residential necessities behind.

Born Free coaches are noted for their sturdy construction, and our test unit bore this out. Key structural features include improved aerodynamics; a strengthened outer shell of molded, gel-coat fiberglass; wood-framed walls; 2-inch tubular steel roll bars; and an insulated marine-grade plywood floorboard. Fiberglass bodies have been further fortified with leading edge adhesives, added steel segments at critical junctures, and the use of "low emissivity foam and foil" insulation that is reported to deliver higher R-ratings.

The 22-foot Born Free rear-kitchen model has a base price of \$87,995, and is equipped with many standard, contemporary features such as a microwave/convection oven, three-burner stovetop with smoked-glass cover, solid surface countertops and brushed nickel fixtures. The test rig also sported a few options that provided a more complete residential package, boosting its suggested retail price to \$98,785.

These "must-have" items, in our opinion, include a 13,500 Btu roof air conditioner (\$3,200), manual patio awning (\$985) and solid oak wood cabinetry (\$1,050).

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

If you don't happen to own a woody car or a truck to carry you and a few friends to the beach, an even better alternative might be a Class C motorhome like Born Free's 22-footer. With this scenario in mind, we took a trip to Santa Barbara County's Jalama Beach near Point Conception, where we spent several relaxing days really getting to know the new motorhome.

We began our field test in the flatlands of southern Ventura County, where the rig's strong performance capabilities soon came to the fore. With 305 HP and 420 LB-FT of torque

BORN FREE 22'



2010 BORN FREE 22'

WHAT'S HOT

Performs like a car or pickup. Exterior compartment doors use cam locks that require a round, burglar alarm type key to lock and unlock. Rear kitchen floorplan dishes up most features of a full-size coach in a pint-size package. Great unit for short hops and even longer trips.

WHAT'S NOT

Two adults sleeping side-by-side in either bed area might be difficult. Exterior compartments must always be locked when not in use, or they sometimes hang open. Vinyl shower curtain can be a little clingy.





The Born Free 22-footer features an L-shaped galley in the curbside rear corner. Engineers made good use of every nook and cranny for storage. The compact living/dining area is furnished with a convertible sofa, lounge chair, pullout table and an optional cabover mattress. The cockpit is standard fare with driver and passenger air bags, AM/FM dash stereo with CD player, cruise control and tilt steering wheel.



PHOTOS: CHUCK CAMPBELL

SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 8.8 MPG

ACCELERATION

0-60 MPH: 7.7 SEC

40-60 MPH: 14.6 SEC

CHASSIS

MODEL: FORD E-350

ENGINE: 6.8-L FORD V-10

SAE HP: 305 HP @ 4,250 RPM

TORQUE: 420 LB-FT @ 3,250 RPM

TRANSMISSION: 5-SPD AUTOMATIC

AXLE RATIO: 4.10:1

TIRES: LT225/75R16E

WHEELBASE: 158"

BRAKES, F/R: DISC/DISC W/ABS

SUSPENSION, F/R: COIL SPRING/LEAF SPRING

FUEL CAP: 40 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YRS/36,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 22' 10"

EXT WIDTH: 7' 11"

EXT HEIGHT W/AC: 9' 10"

INT WIDTH: 7' 5"

INT HEIGHT: 6' 4"

CONSTRUCTION: WOOD/TUBE STEEL FRAMING; FIBERGLASS SKIN AND ROOF; FIBERGLASS, FOAM AND FOIL INSULATION

FRESHWATER CAP: 24.5 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 21 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 29 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: 6 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 19.5 GAL

AIR CONDITIONER: 13,500 BTU W/5,600 BTU HEAT STRIP

FURNACE: 30,000 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 7 CU-FT

CONVERTER: 45 AMP

BATTERY (3): 1 12-VOLT CHASSIS, 2 12-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 3.6 KW

MSRP: \$87,995

MSRP AS TESTED: \$98,785

WARRANTY: 3 YRS/36,000 MILES LIMITED (LIFETIME LIMITED FIBERGLASS BODY)

WET WEIGHT

(WATER AND HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS FULL; NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)

FRONT AXLE: 3,580 LBS

REAR AXLE: 7,000 LBS

TOTAL: 10,580 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 5,000/8,500 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 12,500/18,500 LBS

ROCC: 1,920 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS FOR NET CARGO CAPACITY)

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

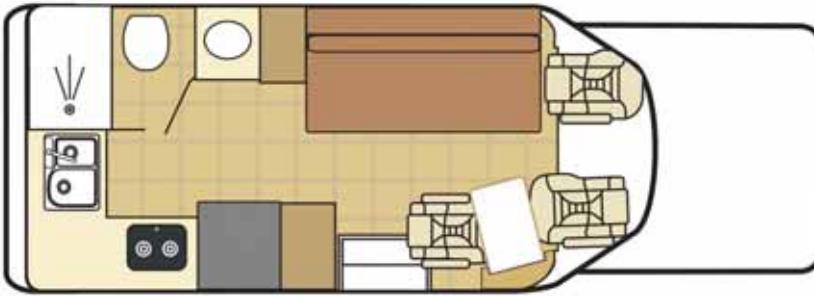
GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

ROCC: REALISTIC OCCUPANT AND CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY (FULL WATER, NO PASSENGERS)

BORN FREE MOTORCOACH

800-247-1835,

WWW.BORNFREEEMOTORCOACH.COM.



Bathroom facilities are out of the main traffic pattern and include a shower and toilet.

on tap, the unit exhibits loads of get-up-and-go that can be felt in the seat of the pants.

With a modest amount of pedal as we entered northbound U.S. Highway 101, we seamlessly accelerated into the fast-moving stream of traffic without any noticeable dip in the engine's power curve. In fact, the unit exhibited plenty of oomph throughout the trip, and had no trouble maintaining speeds of 65 MPH on level as well as hilly terrain.

We came upon several steep grades throughout the test, and the coach pushed on up without hesitation. In fact, the unit handles more like a pickup or van than a motorhome, which makes it a lot of fun to drive.

On one 7-percent incline, in particular, the coach maintained 65 MPH at 3,500 RPM in third gear (driver only, full water and gas tank, no camping gear). Later, when loaded with an additional passenger and all of our gear, the unit was still able to pull the same grade at 60 MPH at 3,000 RPM in third gear.

The only thing we noticed regarding highway handling was that the driver really had to pay close attention to the driving or the coach tended to drift a little. In our

opinion, this inclination is mainly attributable to the rig's shorter wheelbase and driver attentiveness, rather than anything else.

Getting to Jalama Beach is an odyssey unto itself, and requires a capable vehicle with enough power and agility to handle the area's narrow, winding roadways. The 22-footer's shorter 158-inch wheelbase, Ford chassis with 6.8-L V-10 engine and wet weight of only 10,580 pounds all gave us a tangible performance edge in traveling through the remote area. The chassis was also capable of hauling a generous 1,920 pounds of added passengers, cargo and provisions before exceeding its gross vehicle weight rating (gvwr) of 12,500 pounds.

The last leg of the trip consisted of two-lane country roads, an arduous trek to say the least. In some spots, the highway is limited to one-lane detours. Despite the hilly topography, we easily picked our way through obstacles such as minor rock slides, puddles left from a previous rainstorm and sharp curves with steep approaches. In all instances, the rig was surefooted, with positive steering feedback to the driver at all times.

On several occasions during the test, we encountered downgrades that were much easier and safer to descend because of the motorhome's substantial engine compression hold back. It also saved on using the brakes. On one 6- to 7-percent stretch, the vehicle was easily held to 60 MPH at 2,900 RPM in third gear.

The morning of our return home, we were awakened by the sound of rain on the roof of the coach. We quickly tossed our folding chairs into the cargo hold and headed out. During the 15 miles back to California Highway 1, we encountered torrential rains. The rig handled marvelously despite impaired visibility, streams of water coursing across the road and small mudflows.

Once back to a drier and flatter area before the test ended, we ran a few acceleration tests to get a better idea of just what the Born Free was truly capable of. To our surprise, the laden coach averaged

0 to 60 MPH in 14.6 seconds, with 40 to 60 MPH intervals of 7.7 seconds.

OCEANFRONT HANGOUT

Our Born Free test coach had an inviting, L-shaped galley located in the curbside/rear corner of the floorplan, with an enclosed toilet/shower room in the opposing streetside corner. A compact living/dining area is found mid-coach, and is furnished with a street-side convertible sofa and curbside nook with a pull-up tabletop. This layout proved quite convenient during our trip, as it placed the kitchen and bathroom facilities more or less out of the main traffic pattern when entering the unit's mid-coach, curbside door.

Interior décor treatments are done in cozy earth tones, and are stylish as well as functional. These include easily cleanable, patterned beige vinyl floor covering throughout; Ozite-style, sound-absorbing fabric on walls and ceiling; darkly flecked, solid surface countertops; and warmly hued, solid oak cabinetry. Other fine touches are represented by fully adjustable, Flexsteel Ultra-leather driver/co-pilot captain's chairs, a third lounging seat curbside for an extra passenger and the 48-inch-wide sofa bed.

Backing into our campsite and setting up the exceptionally maneuverable 22-footer was effortless. We then whisked out folding chairs from the modestly proportioned streetside storage compartment and kicked back for several days of surf and sun.

The sea air whet our appetites, so we retreated to the coach's rear kitchen to begin dinner. Besides everything at our fingertips in the tidy L-shaped space, the kitchen window afforded an excellent view of the beach area below. With more than 14 square feet of usable counter surface, a three-burner gas stovetop and a microwave/convection oven to heat up our meals, we had the cooking end of things wrapped up in no time at all.

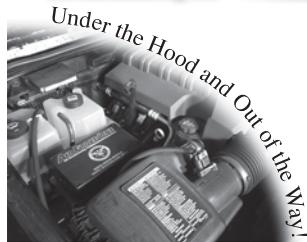
Once dinner was ready, we positioned two adjacent captain's chairs near the curbside 29-inch-by-20-inch, pull-up table, and ate in relative comfort. The table also provided a useful platform later on for using our laptop and drawing up test notes.

We knew there wouldn't be any cable TV service at our remote campsite so we packed a few DVDs for our evening entertainment. Using the optional DVD player and 19-inch LCD flat-screen TV with adjustable swing-out arm (\$725), we were able to easily view and enjoy movies while reclining on

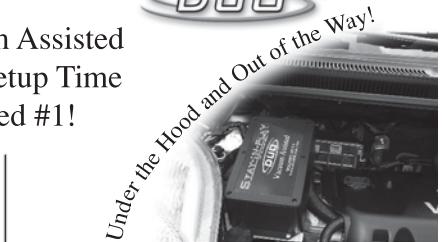
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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DIESEL ANTIFREEZE AND COOLANTS

CARE DIFFERS FROM AUTOS

by E. DON SMITH



If you own a diesel motorhome, there are a few things you need to know about the coolant/antifreeze circulating in your engine block.

During the past few years, taking care of your automobile's radiator and coolant has become a lot easier thanks to the new long-life coolants on the market. Many of these products last up to five years or 150,000 miles in an automobile. A diesel motorhome is a different situation, so the coolant system care practices for your car are not transferable to your coach. Depending on which engine is in your motorhome and the specific type of coolant it uses, your maintenance requirements may be greater, or even fewer, than those for your automobile.

The main purpose of coolant/antifreeze in a typical automobile engine is generally well-known. In the summer it raises the boiling point compared to plain water and in the winter it prevents the engine from freezing. It also carries heat away from critical engine components and dissipates it through the cooling system into the surrounding air. In a diesel engine it also serves as a carrier for other additives such as corrosion inhibitors and anti-foaming agents, and provides protection against cavitation and cylinder pitting.

Diesel motorhome engines fall into one of two categories when it comes to the engine block and the resulting type of coolant it requires. Smaller diesel engines such as the Cummins ISB and the Cat C7 are examples of dry-sleeve engines, which are more like typical automobile engines. Due to their design, these engines are not typically susceptible to cylinder wall cavitation, so they are not addressed in this article.

The larger diesel engines such as the Cummins ISC, ISM, ISL and ISX as well as the Cat C9, C11 and C13 all use wet-sleeve designs. These wet-cylinder engines allow the sleeve (that contains the piston) to come in direct contact with the coolant. Wet sleeves allow the engine to transfer more heat than dry systems, but because the iron sleeve is in direct contact with the coolant, they have some special requirements for their coolant/antifreeze.

Wet-cylinder diesel engines transfer a lot of vibration and movement from the pistons to the cylinder walls that can create coolant cavitation (tiny bubbles) behind the cylinder walls. Cavitation can ultimately lead to pitting of the cylinder walls from the outside in. Heavy-duty coolants formulated for diesel engines contain additives

that deal with these tiny bubbles. Without getting too technical, it's pretty clear that the coolant is important in these expensive diesel engines.

Your diesel engine can be filled with a variety of coolants, depending on the choice of the chassis manufacturer. For our purposes we can divide coolants into two major categories. The first type is heavy-duty, fully formulated products that require regular testing and adjustments. The other common type is known as long life/extended life coolants (LLC/ELC). If you are unsure what you have or you don't find it in your owner's manual, contact your chassis manufacturer for more information.

In order to find out what coolants are commonly used today in new motorhomes we spoke to three major chassis manufacturers. When a chassis manufacturer purchases an engine from companies such as Cummins, Caterpillar or Navistar, the engines are delivered without coolant and the chassis manufacturer chooses and installs the coolant. Each engine manufacturer does, however, publish its own specifications, such as Cat's EC-1, Navistar B1 or Cummins 14603. The owner's manual for your engine will give you more details on the exact specifications required for your diesel engine.

Currently, Freightliner delivers its chassis to the various motorhome manufacturers with a product known as Fleet Charge (also sold under the Alliance brand name), which is a fully formulated coolant that requires testing every six months. Spartan, on the other hand, uses Final Charge, an ELC coolant that does not require testing. A spokesman for Spartan said that it has used this product for several years because of the reduced maintenance requirements to owners. We also talked to Roadmaster, manufacturer of chassis for Monaco and Holiday Rambler, and it indicated that it also plans to use ELC coolants as it transitions to its new Navistar MaxxForce line of diesel engines, which will also include the Workhorse line of chassis.

The main advantage of these LLC/ELC coolants is that they have a service life of many years (some manufacturers claim up to 600,000 miles), and they don't require testing. Examples of LLC/ELC coolants are Old World's Final Charge, Cat ELC, Fleetguard ES Compleat OAT, Zerex Extreme Extended Life and Shell Rotella Ultra ELC. If your coach uses these coolants, the main requirement is to ensure that the system is properly filled, and at approximately three-year intervals, most of them require an extender to be added to restore the additive package.

If you ever need to add makeup coolant, it is important to not only add the right type but also to add it at the proper dilution. Some products are sold pre-diluted while others need to be mixed 50 percent/50 percent with distilled water in order to ensure the proper antifreeze properties are maintained.

If your motorhome uses a conventional coolant (also known as a heavy-duty or fully formulated coolant), one of the drawbacks is it requires testing and additive supplementing. Freightliner suggests testing every six months. Additives need to be tested because they are sacrificial in nature and are being used up during the operation of the engine.

Testing is one of those tasks that's easy to overlook and often difficult to accurately conduct. Typically it involves a trip to the local service center, but you can also buy test strips, and assuming



This 2008 Freightliner chassis has a label that indicates exactly which type of coolant was initially installed. Alliance is a fully formulated coolant that uses nitrates for cylinder wall pitting protection; therefore it should be tested with two-way test strips.

Here's an example of a three-way test strip kit and the Fleetguard DCA4 additive. In addition to nitrates, DCA4 also includes molybdates for superior protection against pitting. Chevron Heavy Duty Coolant is one diesel coolant that uses both nitrates and molybdates.



Testing your coolant involves collecting a sample from the radiator of your coach and then dipping the test strip in the coolant for one second. Next, compare the colors of the test strip to the chart to determine the coolant's condition.



Rotella and Final Charge are two examples of an ELC type of coolant. The Rotella shown is pre-diluted in the suggested 50-percent mix with distilled water while the Final Charge product is concentrated and should be mixed properly with distilled water before use. Both brands offer pre-diluted and concentrated versions of their products.



The Final Charge ELC product is clearly labeled on the front to show it meets Cat EC-1 requirements. The back label indicates that it also meets Cummins 14603, Mercedes DBL 7700 as well as many other OEM specs. If you are converting to an ELC from a traditional heavy-duty coolant, you should first drain and flush completely to avoid any incompatibility.

Fleet Charge is a fully formulated heavy-duty coolant that meets many OEM specifications, but it does require regular testing and dosing with Pencool 2000 or Pencool 3000 to ensure additive levels are maintained.



In order to test the percent glycol of antifreeze, dealers use a refractometer for accurate results. Also shown is a coolant test strip that can be used to test additive levels and concentration.



As you can see on this test strip, there are three colored pads that are compared with the color chart on the package to determine nitrate levels as well as percent glycol. The center pad is used to detect molybdates, which is only used in some coolants.

you use them properly and don't let them expire (yes, they have a shelf life), you can check your coolant's condition.

There are two types of test strips and additives, so you have to use the correct test strip depending on which additives your coach is using. Alliance/Fleet Charge and Detroit Diesel Powercool use nitrates. A two-way test strip should be used when testing these coolants. There are three-way test strips that measure freeze point, molybdates and nitrates. If you use the wrong test strip it could result in incorrect results and improper dosing.

If you test your coach's additive levels and find them to be out of spec, you will need to restore them with the addition of a product such as Fleetguard DCA2 (DCA4 includes molybdates), Penray Pencool or others. Again, it is important to determine what products meet your engine and coolant manufacturer's specifications. Additives can be purchased at most large chassis service centers as well as truck stops.

If you have been enjoying your motorhome for years and have not given a second thought to your engine's coolant, you may want to check with your chassis or engine manufacturer and find out what type of coolant your engine came with from the factory. If you have been getting your chassis serviced at regular intervals there is a good chance the coolant has been checked and supplemented as needed.

If you have an engine that is pre-filled with a coolant that requires monitoring and you want to eliminate one more complication in your life, one solution is to convert it over to an ELC coolant. Depending on your situation this may involve a complete coolant system drain and flush, which can be expensive, but it eliminates the need for future testing. There are also conversion chemicals available such as Final Charge Converter that you may be able to use. This is a very important procedure and one that's best left to the experts at your local chassis service center.

Our intention in this article is not to cover every aspect of coolants and turn this into a chemistry lesson, but rather to make you aware of testing and the fact that there are options available, if you don't want to be bothered with monitoring and testing additives.

Not only do they require less maintenance, but many ELCs also offer better heat transfer when compared with typical coolants. ELC coolants also offer the benefit of longer water pump and seal life because they don't contain abrasive silicates. Some older engines, however, may not be compatible with ELC coolants because of gasket or seal incompatibility. It is critical that you check with your engine manufacturer to ensure you are making the right choice.

Although testing and maintaining additive levels is not the worst thing in the life of a motorhome owner, why bother with it if you don't have to? After doing research for this article, I have decided to convert to an ELC coolant for my personal coach.

Final Charge meets all the specifications of my Cummins ISC engine, and should last many years with little to no service requirements. I'll also use the same product in the diesel generator to prevent having to carry two products. If you don't mind twice-a-year testing and additive supplementing, fully formulated/heavy-duty coolants will also serve your engine well as they do many long-haul trucks on the road today. ♦



DYNASPORT UTV

Take the party on the road with this small luxury Class C that seats 10

For many people, RVing is as much about the journey as the destination. The ability to travel in total comfort, prepare your own meals and have a clean bathroom and shower at your disposal 24/7 makes it a lot easier to gobble up the miles — especially when you’re ensconced in Ultraleather cockpit seating. Indeed, in these days of expensive airfares, flight delays and routine threats to our safety, the idea of touring by motorhome looks more attractive every year.

If you see yourself traveling this way, then the DynaSport UTV (Ultimate Touring Vehicle) by Dynamax Corp. might be just what you’ve been looking for. Based on the Ford E-450 chassis with a 6.8-L V-10 gas engine, the DynaSport UTV is billed as a mobile hospitality suite — just the thing for kids’ soccer matches, tailgating or entertaining friends at motorsports events. To that end, DynaSport’s single floorplan can seat up to 10 guests with either booth or sofa-style Lexington Ultraleather seating on the curbside, a fixed dinette with wood table on the streetside, and two swiveling captain’s chairs behind the cockpit (two sofas are optional). All 10 positions are belted for travel, but when it comes time to turn in for the night, you’ll have to send your guests home because the DynaSport is only designed to sleep two in the converted dinette.

Instead of an overhead bunk common in many Class C motorhomes, in the DynaSport you’ll find plenty of headroom and components for the standard Sony DVD surround sound system. A 23-inch LCD TV resides just aft of the front passenger seat, and



is at a perfect angle for viewing from just about anywhere in the rig. The system is available with automatic or in-motion satellite and Bose Lifestyle 18 DVD surround sound as well. Comfort in any weather is provided by a 30,000 Btu furnace and 13,500 Btu air conditioner (15,000 Btu with heat strip optional) powered by a standard Onan 4.0 kW AC generator.

The DynaSport is positioned for the premium market, and it shows. Inside, there’s solid hardwood cabinetry in natural cherry, stained cherry or natural maple; sculpted carpeting and day/night pleated window coverings. The galley is small, but well-equipped, with a Corian single-bowl sink, microwave oven and a 4-cubic-foot refrigerator. There’s no stove, because according to the manufacturer, the DynaSport’s typical buyer is more likely to nuke something in the microwave than cook for his/her guests. However, an exterior gas grill is available. The aft wet bath features a Thetford china toilet and Fan-Tastic vent fan.

In keeping with the road trip theme, the DynaSport has something you won’t often find in a motorhome — a trunk. Measuring 33 cubic feet, it has plenty of room for luggage, coolers, chairs and the like, plus there are traditional exterior storage compartments as well.

Three full-body paint schemes are offered: Tan, Stoney Ridge and Mink. Options include hardwood flooring, a GPS navigation unit and a CB radio. ♦

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD E-450	WHEELBASE: 171"
ENGINE: FORD V-10, GAS	FRESHWATER CAP: 34 GAL
FUEL: 55 GAL	GRAY-WATER CAP: 13 GAL
GVWR: 14,500 LBS	BLACK-WATER CAP: 26 GAL
LENGTH: 24' 5"	LP-GAS CAP: 20.3 GAL
WIDTH: 8'	BASE MSRP: \$125,689
HEIGHT: 10' 1"	

DYNAMAX, 888-295-7859, WWW.DYNAMAXCORP.COM.



LOCKED AND TETHERED

I once took a course in auto mechanics and I remember the instructor admonishing us to always have a locking gas cap on our vehicles in order to prevent theft of fuel and vandalism. All of the cars and motorhomes I've purchased had a lock, but my new 2010 motorhome is an exception. Remembering the advice, I purchased a locking gas cap at a local store, but the cap didn't have a tether to attach it to the coach.

To make one, I first called the manufacturer (Stant, in this case) to find out if I could safely drill a hole through the cap. After getting the OK, I drilled a small hole away from the lock and looped a piece of monofilament through it, then crimped on an electrical butt connector to hold the loop. I crimped an eye connector at the other end and attached the tether to an existing hole near the gas tank with a plastic push-rivet through the eye. It works!

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MANALAPAN, N.J.**



COOL COATING

Even when the temperature was moderate outside, our motorhome's large shower/tub skylight used to let in too much heat, causing the air conditioner to kick on when it wasn't really necessary. Plus, there was simply too much sunlight coming in through the skylight into the bathroom.

My solution was to paint the skylight on the exterior with white liquid rubber roof coating. Using blue painter's tape I first masked off a small band at the base of the raised skylight. I then applied two coats of Conklin's Rapid Roof III Top Coat. It's a fairly thick product and is fast drying, so I applied the second coat almost immediately after the first. As soon as I was done with the second coat, I stripped off the masking tape for a clean, crisp edge.

The skylight is now about 70-percent translucent, allowing some light to pass through while truly blocking most of the heat from the sun. The coating has been on for four years now and has shown no signs of fading or deterioration.

THOMAS MOSHER | SPOKANE, WASH.



UNDERCOVER DRINKS

The space under a motorhome's sofa bed is an ideal spot to store extra soft drink cans. I made my own storage system by using the bottom 3 inches of a large cardboard box and making dividers out of some of the discarded cardboard. I used other scraps of the cardboard to build a wedge under the box so the drinks don't roll toward the front.

ROBERT FALK | SEQUIM, WASH. ♦

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Quick Tips, MotorHome's monthly column of useful, handy and simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: MotorHome Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001. Be sure to include any photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you'll receive \$35.

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HANDS-ON | *by* FRED PAUSCH

HIT THE ROAD, JACK

King Controls introduces an HD over-the-air TV antenna

King Controls, a manufacturer of RV satellite TV antennas, recently released an amplified HD over-the-air TV antenna head called JACK that is designed to mount on a Winegard Sensor lift mechanism. JACK covers UHF and VHF digital broadcast bands and, according to the company, offers improved UHF reception where 80 percent of the new local digital broadcasts are assigned. Though still considered a directional antenna, JACK offers a wide reception range, which makes it easy to locate and fine-tune a digital signal using the TV's channel scan feature.

Installing the 1½-pound JACK on the Sensor lift mechanism is a simple, five-minute project for anyone with minimal mechanical aptitude. All that's required are needle-nose pliers and a screwdriver. The zinc-plated hardware is included for either a pole mast installation or, as we used it, a total replacement head for the Winegard Sensor batwing-style antenna used on many RVs.

After shutting off power to any existing amplifier power supply, screw the included aluminum Sensor bracket to the antenna and make your way to the roof. Carefully unscrew the coaxial cable from the existing antenna. The existing dust boot protecting this connection may be weathered, brittle or even missing, but a replacement is provided. Using pliers, remove the pair of retaining clips on the existing antenna mount pins. Don't worry if they're rusted or broken as new ones are supplied. Removing the two pins will free the antenna body from the lift mechanism arms. We found it more convenient to install the JACK after raising the lift mechanism

slightly for better access to reinstall those same mounting pins through the arms and new Sensor bracket holes.

With the pins and clips reinstalled, fill the coax connector with the supplied di-electric protective grease, then fit the new dust boot over the coax connector and reconnect to the antenna, fitting the dust boot into the recessed slot around the connector. A dab of silicone will help keep the dust boot seated and another dab will seal the cable end. Test the lift mechanism for any binding and ensure the antenna head remains horizontal throughout its arc of movement. If it doesn't, you have one of the retaining pins in the wrong set of bracket holes.

Back inside, power up your existing 12-volt DC amplifier (booster) and you're ready to go. If your coach doesn't have a boosted signal, you'll need to install the supplied power injector between the end of the cable and TV (or digital converter box). A 120-volt AC to 12-volt DC power converter is then plugged in to the nearest receptacle and connected to the power injector.

We found that the UV-protected aerodynamic JACK doubled the number of digital channels that the old non-HD amplified analog antenna was able to pull in from 40 miles, and without any "low signal" warnings.

Directional fine tuning corrected any occasional pixelated display, providing a clean and clear HD picture for our \$49.95 investment and five minutes of labor.

For more information, call 800-982-9920 or go to www.kingcontrols.com. ♦





Preapproval Problem

UNABLE TO WORK OUT A RESOLUTION TO A REPAIR THAT HE THOUGHT SHOULD HAVE BEEN COVERED UNDER HIS EXTENDED WARRANTY, A READER TURNED TO HOT LINE FOR HELP. HE EXPLAINED:

Last October my 2008 Class A coach on a Freightliner chassis had an ignition problem — it wouldn't start unless the generator was running. I took it to Campbell Freightliner in Edison, N.J., for repair. I explained the problem to the service writer and told him that if the repair was not covered by Freightliner I had an extended warranty. I said there was a copy of the warranty in the coach and he would need to call the extended warranty company for authorization.

Campbell Freightliner diagnosed the problem as a failed battery disconnect switch and installed a new one. When I picked up the coach I asked if my extended warranty provider (United Service Protection Corp.) had paid for the work. I was told there was a call out to the warranty company, but I would have to pay the bill in order for Campbell Freightliner to release the vehicle. I paid it and asked them to forward payment to me if they received it from my provider.

The next day I called United Service Protection to have the check sent my way. I was told that it was never contacted. I sent a letter of appeal to the warranty company outlining the situation and included all of the repair paperwork, but the claim was returned to me denied because there was no prior authorization.

I hope Hot Line can recover the

IT'S ALWAYS BETTER FOR THE CONSUMER TO BE DIRECTLY INVOLVED WHEN CONTACTING THE WARRANTY PROVIDER FOR APPROVALS.

ALLOWING THIRD-PARTY AGENTS (SUCH AS THE SERVICE STAFF AT A REPAIR SHOP) TO DO THIS FOR YOU CAN PRESENT PROBLEMS.

money I put out for a claim that should have been covered under the warranty.

KENNY HABRACK | TOMS RIVER, N.J.

Habrack's situation with his extended warranty provider is all too common. From our experience with these types of agreements, we've found that there are very few insurers, if any, that do not require some sort of preapproval or authorization before they will cover expenses. This just seems to go with the territory on such policies.

It's always better for the consumer to be directly involved when contacting the insurer for approvals. Allowing third-party agents (such as the service staff at a repair shop) to do this for you can present problems such as Habrack experienced. Also, before leaving your motorhome for service, always read the written work order and check it over thoroughly. (A review of the paperwork Habrack sent to Hot Line showed that the only warranty information written on the work order was "Has base warranty.")

Hot Line sent a letter of inquiry to Campbell Freightliner LLC for its side of the story and received the following reply. Although we could not obtain any help for Habrack, we are sharing this case with other readers to help prevent them from running into the same problem.

I am in receipt of Hot Line's corre-

spondence regarding Mr. Habrack. Unfortunately, Habrack is not being totally forthright in his description of what happened. It was not made clear to our service writer that there was a third-party warranty company involved in this repair. Once we were made aware, we attempted to file with United Service Protection Corp. but were unable to due to the fact we did not obtain the preauthorization.

Although I can understand Habrack's concern and frustration, the fact of the matter is that it's Habrack's responsibility to coordinate and notify the warranty company prior to any work being done.

Campbell Freightliner has many motorhome customers that we do a very good job at servicing and keeping satisfied.

**SCOTT CAMPBELL
PRESIDENT
CAMPBELL FREIGHTLINER LLC
EDISON, N.J.**

EXTENDED FRUSTRATION

Here's another classic example of the type of complaints Hot Line receives on extended warranties and service contracts. This reader was at the end of his appeal process in trying to settle an extended-warranty claim and sought our help. He wrote:

When I bought my RV I also purchased a seven-year extended-service warranty from StarRV (Interstate National Dealer Services) for \$1,595, with the assumption it would cover most major equipment failures.

Last September during a stay at a campground, I smelled smoke and, after investigating, opened the compartment containing the Suburban water heater. I saw flames, so I used an extinguisher and put out the fire.

Two days later, I contacted StarRV to get authorization for a replacement under the warranty. My claim was denied due to a clause stating the policy does not cover items damaged by fire. The company even refused to pay for a service call. I then contacted Suburban Manufacturing,

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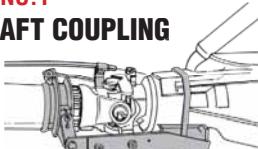


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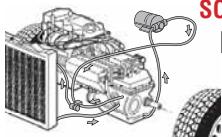
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HOT LINE

and was told I should return the damaged unit to them so it could be determined if it was responsible. If so, Suburban Manufacturing would send me a dented or scratched unit as a replacement. I refused this, and was denied further assistance due to the unit being out of warranty.

When I contacted my insurance company, Geico, it agreed to replace the water heater less the cost of my deductible (\$250). I'd like to thank Geico, and see if Hot Line can help get some of my money back.

GIL SCHAEFER | PASADENA, MD.

To receive full benefit from service contracts, readers must choose those that have the most comprehensive coverage. This requires reading the fine print to understand which circumstances and parts are excluded. Only in this way will customers avoid surprises due to a lack of coverage.

We contacted Interstate National Dealer Services and Suburban to see if any further consideration could be made for Schaefer.

Suburban replied by reiterating its case that a replacement unit was offered — and refused — and that Suburban's policy is to not work with aftermarket warranty companies.

Interstate National Dealer Services also responded, and made the following goodwill offer:

As the administrator of the Vehicle Service Contract, we have reviewed Mr. Schaefer's concern and the action taken by our claims advisers. We have determined the advisers acted accordingly, based on Exclusion D of the contract. However, to preserve our relationship with the contract holder and customer service, we are prepared to cover the \$250 deductible the contract holder paid to his insurance company.

LARRY CASSANI
NATIONAL CLAIMS DIRECTOR
INTERSTATE NATIONAL
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TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 11.

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Vacuum Flush

I have a 2009 Bounder 35H with two bathrooms. One toilet is gravity flush, and works fine, the other is a SeaLand VacuFlush and it already doesn't work. I can't find much information on the unit. It seems like there are a lot of components on the toilet that can go wrong. I'd like to replace it with a gravity flush if possible.

MARY MEDEMA | ELMHURST, ILL.

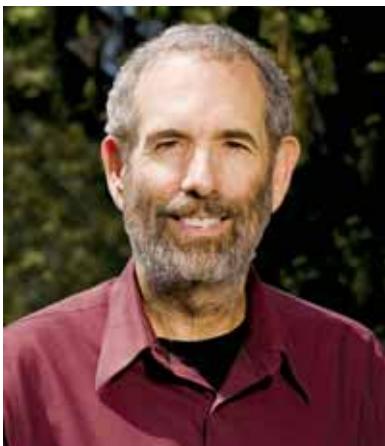
The introduction of toilets that use vacuum to propel the wastes into the holding tanks has given manufacturers great flexibility in designing floorplans, especially those with two bathrooms. While toilets like SeaLand VacuFlush are more complicated than a gravity model, they allow the toilet to be mounted without being positioned over the holding tank. This comes in handy with centrally located holding tanks, where only one gravity toilet can be strategically mounted. The SeaLand can move wastes up to 50 feet while climbing a 6-foot incline, which is much more than coach builders need.

Work with your dealer to correct any maladies with your VacuFlush. It's not practical to retrofit a gravity toilet for the VacuFlush in your motorhome.

BUGGED ABOUT BUG SCREENS

In the April article "Getting Ready to

IF YOU DO NOT CLEAN OR REMOVE FURNACE SCREENS THAT HAVE BECOME CLOGGED THE FURNACE WILL CHOKE ITSELF OUT AND FAIL TO OPERATE.



Roll," a photo of a water heater has a caption that states, "never ... use a screen cover on the furnace exhaust and intake vents." During the past years, I've read numerous articles about furnace care and preventive maintenance that suggested using such screens to prevent spiders and mud dabbers from nesting there.

Most RV techs will say a \$15 investment in a screen is a lot cheaper than a service call to clean out a vent. The furnace manufacturers may also warn against using such screens, but I have no clue as to their reasoning.

BILL BAKER | LIVINGSTON, TEXAS

No one will argue that spending \$15 on a screen is cheaper than a service call to clean out the critters and debris that can clog the vents. The issue here is making sure the screens are completely free of debris before the furnace is used for the first time after taking the motorhome out of storage. If you fail to clean or remove screens that have become clogged — and it's possible that this simple maintenance procedure can be inadvertently overlooked — the furnace will choke itself out and fail to operate.

It's also possible the furnace can overheat and shut down after being signaled by the limit switch, if the screens are partially plugged. Manufacturers will not recommend these screens because their furnaces are not certified for such devices.

NEEDS A NEW ROOF

I recently had wind damage to a fiberglass roof. One service center said it doesn't do fiberglass but can replace the roof with rubber. What are the maintenance differences and costs between fiberglass roofs and rubber roofs? Would I be better off finding a service facility that will fix or replace the fiberglass roof? My RV is a 2000 Winnebago Adventurer.

ART HARRIS | MARICOPA, ARIZ.

Unless the entire roof was ripped off, you should be able to make patch repairs. Most repair shops can section in a piece of fiberglass and finish it off so that it blends in well with the rest of

the roof. Replacing the entire roof with fiberglass is very expensive and labor-intensive. But that's what I would do if patching wasn't possible and I intended on keeping the rig for a long time.

Typical options include EPDM or TPO roofing materials. EPDM rubber has been used in the industry for many years and will be the least expensive fix. TPO is similar to rubber, but thicker and more durable. The latest iteration to hit the RV scene is PVC roofing material from IB Roof Systems (www.ibroof.com). This material is handled in a similar fashion as EPDM, but is not rubber. It's glued to the roof's substrate and the seams are heat-welded together. Chalking, according to the company, is not an issue, and durability has been tested in the commercial building arena for many years. The material is said to have a 30-year service life.

EPDM and TPO roofs require more maintenance, with TPO being more resistant to chalking. The secret to keeping a rubber or TPO roof looking new is semiannual deep cleaning and treating with a protectant designed for such applications. Fiberglass is more forgiving, but should still be waxed at least once a year, and more often if the motorhome is parked in areas exposed to intense sun — unless painted with a polyurethane paint.

STRANGE MOLD AND RUST

I own a 2008 Class C that has a lot of interior condensation on the driver's side, which is causing mold and rust. I only sleep in the motorhome overnight and run a small space heater with an average temperature of 55 to 65 degrees. I'm not using any of the appliances.

I contacted the dealer and manufacturer, but no one can help. They say it's caused by me staying in the rig (my breath). Someone even said the coach was only meant to be used several weeks a year. My friend also has a motorhome and we did a test by placing my space heater in his unit and setting it at the same temperature overnight. His coach had no condensation. I used my rig recently and mine was the only coach with

condensation in the RV park. Please help.
ANTHONY WEGNER | VIA E-MAIL

It's difficult to pinpoint why condensation is more of a problem in your coach than others, but rest assured, condensation is not uncommon. How much condensation is dependent on the temperature differential between the outside and inside of the motorhome. Non-vented heat sources, like electric space heaters and catalytic heaters, contribute to moisture inside the motorhome. Your sealed-combustion furnace does not produce water; as a matter of fact, it actually helps dry out condensation caused by using the stove and oven, and breathing by the occupants.

To help limit condensation, I suggest you invest in a good-quality dehumidifier and run it while the electric heater and/or furnace is operating. Since you're using a space heater, you'll have 120-volt AC power, so opting for an electric dehumidifier is the most efficient way to go.

Another way to help condensation —

and retain more warmth if you use the coach in very cold areas — is to consider installing temporary vinyl storm windows, which are available in kit form at most home improvement stores. They stick to the window frames and are stretched tight using a hair dryer. You can improve the comfort zone further by covering the roof vents. Camping World and RV supply stores have pre-fitted covers for standard size roof vents.

With all that noted, I'm concerned because your condensation problem goes well beyond what's considered normal in a rig. In fact, the only time I've heard of mold and rust like you describe is when a coach has been flooded (from rain intrusion through unsealed areas, a breached water system, a flood where the motorhome was stored or even overflowing holding tanks) and not dried adequately.

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The idea that you can only live in your motorhome for a limited time is ludicrous. Motorhomes are made to live in, and that includes sleeping and breathing.

SCOOPING RAINWATER

When driving in the rain, the air filter in our 1999 Fleetwood Bouncer fills up with water and makes the engine run poorly. We have to stop and drain the filter and let it dry out before we can continue on the road. Any ideas?
G.E. CROFT | SPRING BRANCH, TEXAS

The fix is covered in Ford's Technical Service Bulletin (TSB) 04-24-22. The procedure calls for replacing the air cleaner inlet tube and strap with a revised counterpart. The air intake is part number XC3Z-9F843-AA and the strap is XC3Z-9E618-AA; the retail price for both is around \$100. Replacing these parts is not difficult and the result will prevent rainwater from being ingested into the air filter. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & CHASSIS, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 11.

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Safe RPM for GM Gas Engines

I own a 37-foot Sea Breeze motorhome on the Workhorse chassis with the Allison five-speed transmission. I occasionally encounter steep hills and the Allison transmission downshifts nicely, but how high can I let the engine rev? I pull these hills at 40 MPH and do not exceed 4,000 RPM. Is this even safe? I haven't found the answer in my owner's manual or by word of mouth. Your advice would be greatly appreciated because I don't want to damage the engine or transmission.

LES FORD | PARADISE, CALIF.

The maximum engine speed considered safe by the manufacturer is 5,200 RPM, based on testing for the 8.1-L V-8 engine. Brief high-RPM operation may sound scary, but shouldn't hurt the engine as long as it's not overheated or low on oil pressure. I prefer to keep revs below redline and would probably run at 4,000 to 4,500 RPM on steep climbs.

If you are descending a steep grade and are using the brakes, and/or have manually downshifted the transmission, when the RPM rises to 5,200 the computer will automatically command the transmission to upshift to the next gear. When descending grades, my suggestion is to use the brakes intermittently, and allow the transmission to assist in slowing the coach. This will help keep the brakes from overheating and fading.

ENGINE MISFIRE AND STALLING

I have a 2004 Fleetwood Bouncer motorhome with a GM 8.1-L engine and 14,000 miles. On my last trip I noticed that the engine started missing several times. One time it quit altogether, but

started right away. When I was having this trouble I didn't seem to have much power. When the missing stopped, everything seemed normal. Please let me know what you think it is. Thanks.

ALLEN E. LANDRY | HENDERSON, NEV.

Sometimes a misfire can be caused by an electronic component, such as an ignition component, which becomes hot and causes the engine to cut out. Then when it cools down, it starts working normally. However, since your engine started right up after stalling, which wouldn't allow time for cooling, I'd suspect a fuel delivery problem. First, I'd change the fuel filter, which likely hasn't been changed since the rig was new. Then I would test the fuel pressure while the coach is being driven under full load on a long grade. If the pressure is dropping off, you'll likely need a new in-tank electric fuel pump.

RAIN AND LOUD WHISTLE

I have a 2007 Four Winds Hurricane

34-footer with a Ford V-10 engine. When the roads are wet from rain and I'm driving 53 to 65 MPH, there's a loud, high-pitched whistle coming from the left front corner or tire area. It only whistles when driving on wet roads. If I slow below 53 MPH or about 65 MPH the noise stops. Any suggestions? Thank you.

JEFF DUTCHER | CHARLOTTE, MICH.

Ford chassis have had problems with water soaking the air filter element, which could cause blockage and a whistling noise, so check this first. You might also try driving with the doghouse (engine cover) temporarily removed and have a passenger listen for the noise. If the problem still isn't found, try putting 2-inch-wide masking tape over the gaps in any bodywork in the area and test driving. This may locate a gap or shape that whistles.

SLOW GAS TANK FILL FEEDBACK

This is regarding the March Powertrain letter "Slow Gas Tank Fill." I own a 2007 Winnebago Sunova built on a 2006 Workhorse chassis. Generally I don't have a problem with filling the gas tank. However, certain regions of the West have unique EPA restrictions. In the greater Phoenix area and in California, I have difficulty pumping a full tank of gas. Some have a nozzle with a series of holes drilled around the lower end of it; above that is a rubber boot (I am told it must be compressed to activate a switch). Above that is a rubber shield around the nozzle. It's impossible to insert the nozzle into the filler neck far enough for the rubber boot to be compressed.

When fuel is pumped at such stations the pump shuts off frequently. I've tried to force the nozzle in farther, but to no avail. Unfortunately, it's become difficult to extract certain nozzles that have gotten hung up in the "threads" where the gas cap locks. The only solution seems to be to go to another town or another gas station. I went to an RV show recently, and the gas delivery system doesn't appear to have been changed since this Class A was built.

RONALD L. SECORD | SUN CITY, ARIZ.

CALIFORNIA AND A NUMBER OF OTHER STATES HAVE MADE CHANGES TO GASOLINE PUMPS AND FILLERS.

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27KD Good Sam Emergency Road Service, go to www.motorhomemagazine.com/info

This has become a problem as the new fuel nozzles become more common. California and a number of other states have made changes to gasoline pumps, hoses and fuel fillers, specifically to the shape of the fuel nozzle assembly. There's a big vapor recovery assembly on the nozzles that interferes with the angle the nozzle can enter the coach gas filler. As a result, sometimes the length of tube on the gas nozzle isn't long enough to insert sufficiently.

My contact at Winnebago suggests you get in touch with an authorized Winnebago dealership and let the dealership contact the factory for review. There is also a product originally designed for motorcycles that some folks have found to be helpful with this problem. It is called McCuff (www.mccuff.com, 888-762-2833), and it is designed to hold back the vapor recovery bellows. Some folks slide a short section of thin-wall, fuel-resistant hose over the nozzle tip during refueling and hold back the fuel vapor recovery boot either by hand or with a device such as the McCuff.

FRONT-END ADVICE

We have a 2006 38-foot Winnebago Adventurer with a gasoline engine that I bought new. At that time I was advised by the dealer to do a front-wheel alignment. The explanation I was given was that the wheels were aligned by Workhorse, and after they mounted the coach, the wheels needed to be realigned. Two years later, I went to a seminar, and they mentioned the need to check the wheel alignment if the motorhome is driven on a rough road with potholes. I never did.

I took the coach to a frame and alignment shop in Garden Grove, Calif., and was told that they couldn't do the alignment because the kingpin in the front right wheel had excessive play and they recommended I take it to a Workhorse dealer. From there I drove to Guaranty Chevrolet in Santa Ana, and was told that was not the case; the play was within the limit, and the coach did not need an alignment. Also, they said what I was told by the dealer was not right; the wheels are correctly aligned when they are shipped to the dealers.

Does the motorhome need to be realigned when purchased new? Should the

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POWERTRAIN

kingpin have some play, or no play at all, as I was told by the frame and alignment shop? Why is Workhorse still using kingpin technology when there are now better systems?
GEORGE RAMOS
LAGUNA WOODS, CALIF.

Technicians and service writers often say things to customers "off the cuff" without having full information. The king pin design may not be high-tech, but it has been proven tough and reliable with heavy vehicles over literally trillions of miles.

A small amount of free play is allowable and the key point is whether the tires are wearing properly. The front ends are aligned before they leave the factory, but it certainly is possible that at some point a curb or other obstacle was bumped, which could knock it out of alignment.

Run your hand across the front tires to feel for any raised edges that indicate uneven wear across the tread. If the coach is handling correctly and there's no abnormal wear on the tires, it's very likely that the alignment is within specs. Inspect the

tires for damage and measure the pressure even if the tires look properly inflated. Load the coach for a trip, weigh each axle and corner and set tire inflation according to load-inflation tables.

TWO-SPEED AXLES

I'm a truck driver and I plan to buy a motorhome. I wonder if having a two-speed rear end in a motorhome would improve the gas mileage. And is it possible with an automatic transmission?

GEORGE MILOCHIK | MONACA, PA.

Two-speed axles are designed to be used in conjunction with a manual transmission, not an automatic. When you shift them there can be no power applied to the gears. Overdrives that are designed to fit behind automatic transmissions, such as Gear Vendors and U.S. Gear, will operate better and are easier to install. However, current motorhomes have overdrives and won't benefit as much from taller overall gearing as the older units that only have three-speed automatics.

QUITS ALL THE TIME: TIP

Regarding "Quits All the Time" in the March Powertrain column: I suspect a faulty ground condition between the cab or dashboard, which could kill the engine, because the only ground is through the electrical wiring. A voltmeter to the hot ignition wire to ground probably will only be around 7 to 9 volts, which will let the engine start, but if anything extra is turned on it may reduce the voltage and it dies. The gauges probably act up too. You can take off the engine cover and run a ground wire from the engine to the dashboard ground and check this out.

JAMES TODD | WALDEN, COLO.

Thanks for writing. I mentioned to make sure the chassis and engine are grounded, but did not mention dash/cab grounding. It's always important to check grounds, as they often deteriorate, especially on older vehicles. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO POWERTRAIN, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 11.

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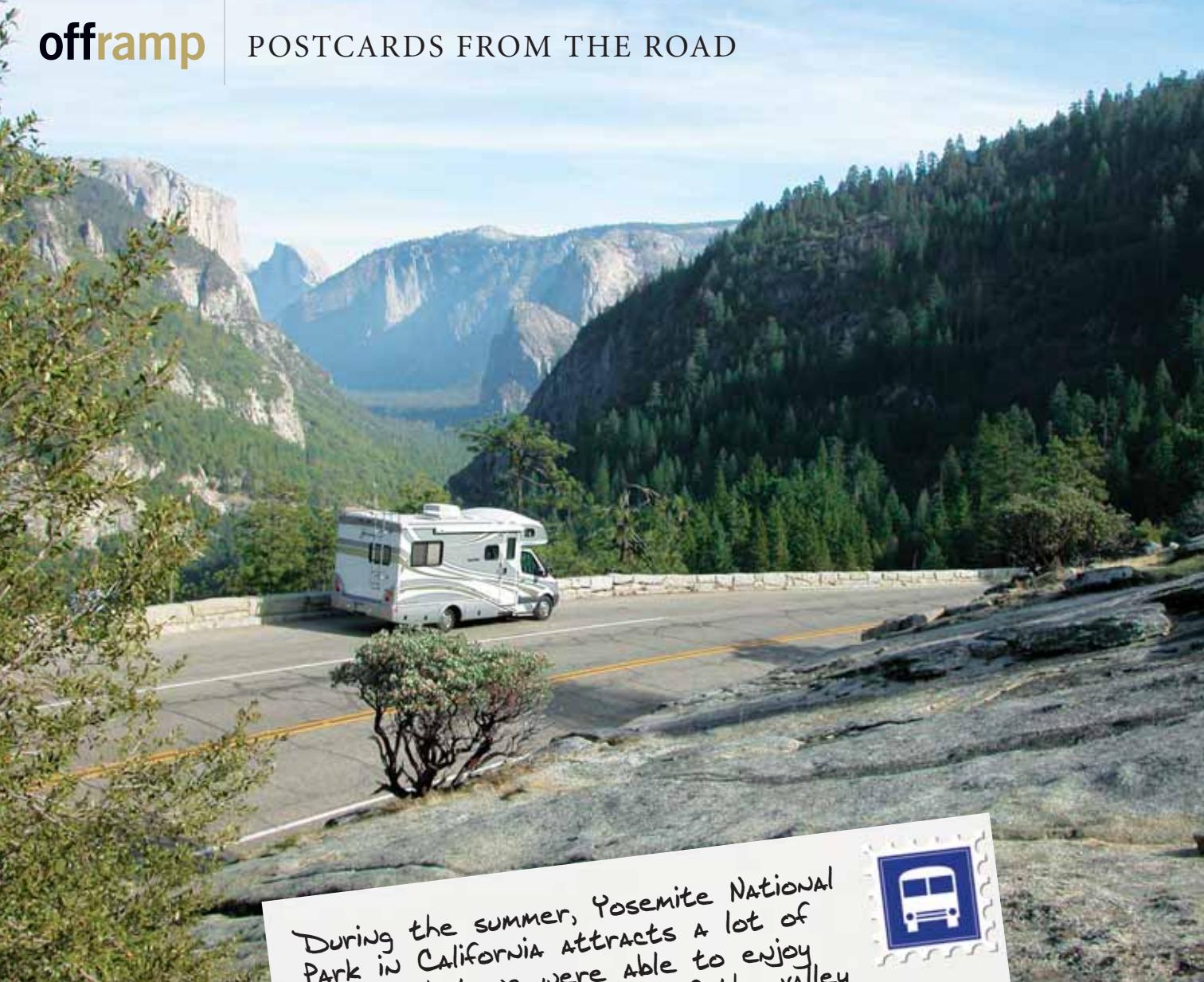


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Preston and Louise Gratiot
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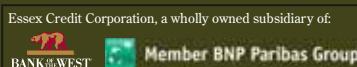
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