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FEBRUARY 2010

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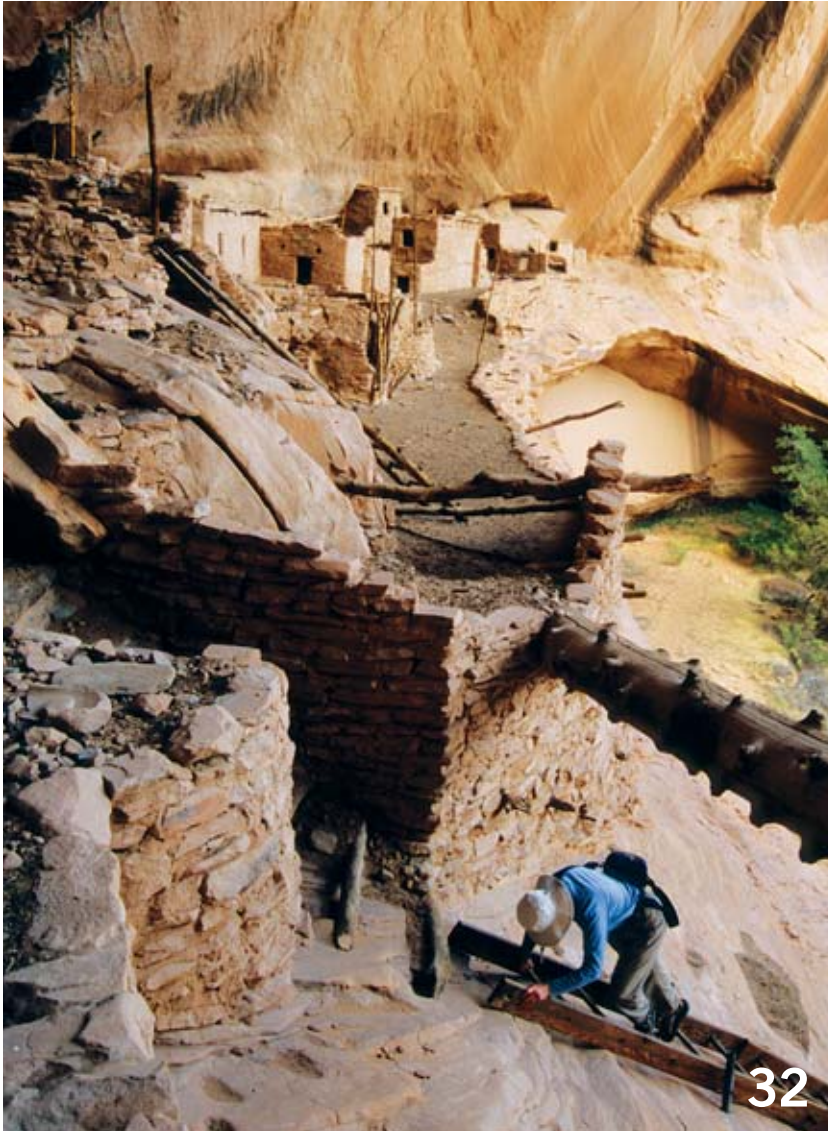


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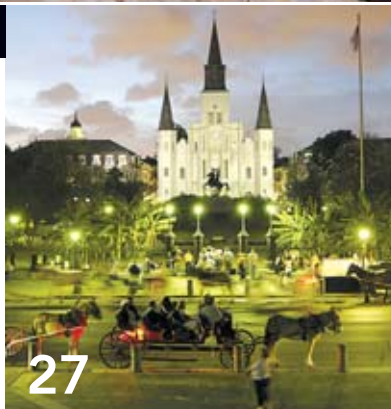
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On The Cover: The Phoenix Cruiser 2551S is a nimble, go-anywhere Class C coach with appealing décor (see test, page 40). Photo by Fred Pausch.



THE FREEDOM OF FULL TIME

Sometimes, I think we may have our priorities backward. The overwhelming majority of us can chronicle our lives using the same rubber stamp. We go through childhood, become teenagers, then young adults with a career path, get married, have kids, work for many years, buy a motorhome, retire and finally — finally — we get the chance to hit the road for extended periods of time. And for the more adventurous, maybe even go full time.

Those of us who are fortunate to have our health as we approach retirement years can look forward to the motorhoming lifestyle without ties to the workplace. But why wait until we get older to have the best time of our lives? That's the question Dorian Paskowitz asked himself after he graduated from Stanford Medical School in 1945, looking squarely at a bright career as a doctor along with the financial rewards that come with the profession.

Instead, he took a path that most people would consider eccentric, if not outright crazy. He became a full-time RVer and leaned on his passion for surfing as his ticket to good physical and mental health.

After watching the movie, "Surf-wise," a documentary on the Paskowitz family, I approached Eileen Hubbard, *MotorHome's* editor, and said, "We have to get a story on this crazy guy who raised nine kids in a motorhome." So the story of Paskowitz's life on the road comes to life starting on page 16.

No doubt chucking one's career to protest a materialistic society and to nurture one's soul is not for everyone. But I believe you can glean some wisdom from how Paskowitz, age 88, has chosen to live his life, and apply that thinking to pursuing a little more realistic full-time RV lifestyle.

While looking for a lifestyle that offers freedom from the pressures of a stationary life, Paskowitz noted, "Living

in a motorhome at the lowest end of the social and financial scale in America, one can have the same freedom as a millionaire living at the upper end of the social and financial scale." There's a lot of truth in that statement, even if today's motorhome enthusiast is not exactly at the lower end of the financial and social scale. Nevertheless, the full-time lifestyle is envied by almost anyone.

"Freedom" is a very powerful word. No other concept has been fought over more than the right to live freely and pursue one's own interests. Just ask any full-timer who has been approached by people unfamiliar with the lifestyle. The response from these visitors is typically, "I wish we could do that" — regardless of their financial means.

It all filters down to how we exercise our freedom — and there's no better way to get there than behind the wheel of a motorhome, looking to explore what's around the next bend.

My wife, Lynne, and I got a taste of the full-time lifestyle for more than a year. We loved the experience and will certainly revisit that way of life when "work" becomes a four-letter word — which is kind of silly coming from a person who goes RVing for a living.

I have to chuckle. Even though I relished Paskowitz's objection to normality, my thinking still parallels what passes for "normal." But that's OK. I'm not sure I would have the temperament to raise a family of 11 in a motorhome most of us would consider marginal for a couple. We must be spoiled.

This message can be summed up by a statement Paskowitz made during the interview for the article in this issue: "You wake up and you think, 'Where will I go today?'" That's not crazy — that's true freedom! ♦

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Subscription price United States and possessions: 1 year: \$19.97, 2 years: \$34.97, 3 years: \$47.97. All other countries, including

Canada and Mexico, add \$12 per year. *MotorHome* is a registered trademark of Affinity Group Inc. Copyright 2010 by Affinity Group Inc. All rights reserved. *MotorHome* (ISSN #0744-074X) is published monthly by TL Enterprises from editorial and business offices at 2575 Vista Del Mar, Ventura, CA 93001.

Printed in the United States. Periodical postage paid at Ventura, CA 93001 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to: *MotorHome*, P.O. Box 5860, Harlan, IA 51593-1360. Publication Sales Agreement No. 1488163; Canadian Post Sales Agreement No. 40012332. Canadian return address: Affinity Group, Inc., 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J3. Authorized Subscription Agent – AGA.

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“WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE SEASON FOR RVING?”

That’s the question we asked in our November 2009 issue, and here is one of the replies we received.

BEAUTY OF THE SEASONS

Regarding our favorite season for RVing: We think late summer and fall are the best times to travel because of the beauty of the seasons, the tremendous colors of the foliage and the declining daytime temperatures. People tend to get out more and enjoy these times, and the animals are out feverishly working to settle in before the winter season. Air conditioners and heaters aren’t needed, making the sounds of the season available for everyone to enjoy. Nothing beats the smell of cooking over a charcoal fire and sitting outside just enjoying it all. Younger children, as much as the older, more mature adults, seem to enjoy these seasons best.

**TERRY AND LINDA JESSUP
CLEVELAND, OKLA.**

BIGGER MAY BE BETTER

Compliments. I’m an avid camper who grew up with a Fleetwood Scorpion S3 pop-up. Now that retirement is knocking on the door, I find myself yearning to travel again. I’ve seen the Sprinter chassis B’s and C’s, now the Via, and then the Damon Avanti (all with great mileage). Today I read the review of the Four Winds Serrano 31Z (November 2009) and you mention it gets 13-plus MPG at 55 MPH. Thanks for mentioning that. We now know that there’s more out there and that maybe bigger really is better.

**JIM DUFFY
ELIZABETHTOWN, KY.**

FILTER MESS

Your article on winterizing a motorhome prior to winter (“Winter Sabbatical,” November 2009) was very well-written, and the photos were excellent. However, you missed an important item. A lot of coaches have another water faucet for filtered water. It is necessary to remove that filter and install the water diverter in place of the removed filter. Then proceed with blowing out the lines and refilling with RV antifreeze. I forgot to do this procedure some years back. The result? The cold weather froze the water in the filter, which distorted the filter. I was not able to remove the filter so I took it to a dealer, whose mechanics took it out in pieces. This resulted in the black filter material and water spilling all over the floor beneath the sink and down under the floor. What a mess!

**SCOTT W. HUTCHINSON
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or go to GoWinnebago.com. And prepare to be amazed.



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QUICK TIP ADDENDUM

I applaud Jeri Woods' Quick Tip ("Disappearing Ink," November 2009). The contributor provided an environmentally friendly alternative to an electric shredder for people whose needs are modest in terms of security and quantity.

Even more so, a wad or two of pulpy paper in the trash is less attractive to a snooper; it doesn't look interesting and is a more thorough defacement than the output of many shredders.

Another idea is to add something yucky to the trash that contains your defaced ID information or separate your defaced ID information into multiple trash loads.

KANDACE L. MYERS
CHARLES TOWN, W.VA.

POSITIVE VENTING

We are writing about a great company — Fan-Tastic Vent. We were so pleased with the way the company handled our problem, we want everyone to know that there are still good, caring companies around that deal with you fairly and honestly and honor their warranties. We highly recommend these folks to our fellow RVers.

DARLENE AND BENNETTE ANDERSON
RICHARDSON, TEXAS

QUESTIONS FROM A CLASS C OWNER

We took the usual path for most campers — starting with tents and finally, a few years ago, ending up with a new Class C. I have a few, somewhat rhetorical questions:

Why is it that you can spend tens of thousands of dollars on an RV and still have to install shelves in the kitchen cupboards yourself?

Knowing that most people like to sit on their couch to watch TV, why do the designers think it's OK to put the TV at a 90-degree angle to the direction you are sitting?

Finally, most RVers who have purchased a Class C with a Ford E-450 chassis can tell you what a handful it is to drive, particularly when it is windy. Why don't the manufacturers install steering stabilizers (like we did) when the coaches are built?

GRANT KLAVER
TRAVERSE CITY, MICH.

READER GIVES 'B-PLUS' AN F

I don't understand why some builders of

aerodynamic Class C coaches are trying to confuse the issue by calling their offerings a "B-plus." I always thought the classification was very clear and straightforward.

Class A's are full chassis-mounted coaches, Class B's are converted vans, and Class C's are coaches mounted on a cab and chassis.

While North American manufacturers of Class C's have long favored adding a bunk over the cab, European manufacturers have preferred to use a more energy-efficient, aerodynamic canopy over the cab. The presence or absence of a bunk is totally irrelevant to the classification criteria of being built on a cab and chassis platform.

So why would any manufacturer of a nice aerodynamic Class C want to call their offering a converted van (B-plus), especially since it doesn't even have any of the required van body? It would make a whole lot more sense to call it an E-class C (European-inspired Class C).

NORMAN DUST
ST. ALBERT, ALBERTA

PRAISE FOR PROGRESSIVE

Last September, a 45-foot-tall oak tree fell on our beloved Itasca Suncruiser motorhome while it was parked on its cement slab in our backyard. The tree caused catastrophic damage to the coach, which resulted in the need for the complete replacement of the roof, along with other paint and body damage.

Progressive Insurance and our multi-line claims adjuster, Andrea Jesse, stepped up and took charge of the situation. They promptly sent an adjuster out to assess the damage and cost of repair and then issued a check in what we consider record time.

Progressive really came through for us at a much needed time. We gratefully thank and also recommend Progressive to other RV owners.

CANDY AND RICHARD HARE
TITUSVILLE, FLA.

Question:

Are you happy with your RV insurance?

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

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escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | WHEELS & GEAR | NEWS BRIEFS | CROSSROADS

On the border of southeastern Utah and northern Arizona you'll find a movie star of grand proportions. Monument Valley — with its mesas, shrubs and towering, vivid red sandstone buttes amid a cornflower-blue sky — epitomizes the American West. It's little wonder that the region has played pivotal roles in such Westerns as "Stagecoach" and "How the West Was Won."

The main road through Monument Valley is Highway 163. Much of Monument Valley is within the Navajo Indian Reservation. The reservation operates Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, which charges fees for entry and camping.

From the park's recently redesigned visitor center, you can photograph what countless others before you have captured: the majestic East and West Mitten Buttes, and Merrick Butte. Guided tours by Navajo operators can be purchased and trail ride companies offer horseback rides ranging from one hour to all day. On the roadside near the center you'll find Native American vendors selling their arts and crafts and Navajo food.

Among the area's campgrounds are Goulding's Monument Valley Campground and Cottonwood RV Park.

The stagecoaches may be long gone, but motorcoaches are always welcome at Monument Valley.

For more information, call the tribal park at 435-727-5870 or visit www.navajonationparks.org/htm/monumentvalley.htm.

— Patricia Marroquin

MOVIE STAR GOOD LOOKS

MONUMENT VALLEY'S
WILD WEST LANDSCAPE
LURES TOURISTS —
AND FILMMAKERS

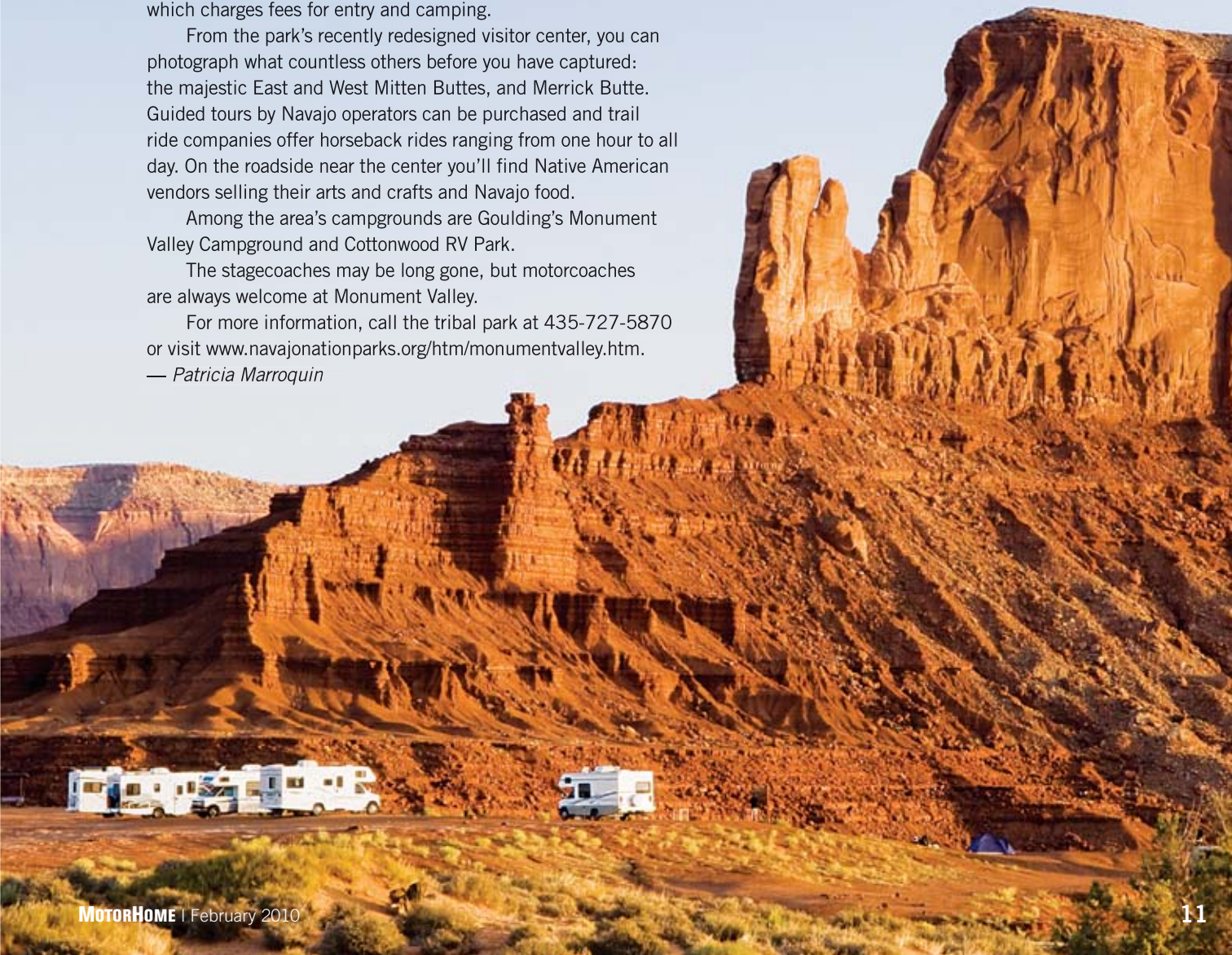




PHOTO: UTAH OFFICE OF TOURISM/STEVE GREENWOOD

FEB. 19-20

Celebrate one of the telltale seasonal signs of the arrival of spring at the **Snow Goose Festival** in Delta, Utah. Every February thousands of Lesser snow geese return to the region, as it is a resting point on their way north. There is nowhere else in Utah that offers the chance to see so many geese in one location. Activities include free waterfowl workshops, a "Wild Goose Chase" 10K race, craft vendors, quilt show, festival dinner and more; 435-864-4316, www.deltagoosefestival.info.

FEB. 4-6 | Relax and unwind to the soothing sounds of traditional jazz music at the 30th annual **North Carolina Jazz Festival** in Wilmington, N.C. Fourteen world-renowned musicians will take the stage, performing styles of jazz that include Dixieland, contemporary and New Orleans. This is one of the biggest traditional jazz festivals in the Southeast; 910-793-1111, www.ncjazzfestival.com.

FEB. 12-14 | Discover the many facets of American Indian culture at the **Indian Art Festival** in Tulsa, Okla. Highlights of the event include a fine art show, traditional dancing, storytelling, American Indian food, demonstrations, hands-on activities, and both musical and theatrical entertainment for the entire family. All of these activities are dedicated to accurately capturing

the spirit of American Indian culture; 918-838-3875, www.tulsaindianartfest.com.

FEB. 19-21 | If you're ready to brave the wild days of the old frontier, head over to **Frontier Days at the Five Trails Rendezvous** at Historic Washington State Park in Washington, Ark. Explore a frontier encampment complete with reenactors who will demonstrate

survival skills employed by early Arkansas settlers, as well as tomahawk throwing and the use of muzzle-loading rifles. Camping is available nearby; 870-983-2684, www.historicwashingtonstatepark.com.

FEB. 26-28 | Don't forget to bring your reading glasses to the 14th annual **South Carolina Book Festival** in Columbia, S.C. This free event will host about 60 nationally recognized authors for readings and signings, as well as book-sellers and more than 100 exhibitors. Find the perfect book to read while relaxing under the awning or just browse for a great literary find; 803-771-2477, www.scbookfestival.org.

FEB. 27-28 | You'll leave with more than just sticky fingers at the **Parke County Maple Syrup Fair** in Rockville, Ind. This annual event hosts arts and crafts vendors, maple-tree tapping demonstrations, and one-stop shopping for delicious maple syrup, candies, sugar and related products. Pick up a visitor's map and tour the area's maple sugar camps, and enjoy pancakes and sausage topped with golden maple syrup; 765-569-5226, www.parkecounty.com.

RV SHOWS

FEB. 5-7

Cincinnati RV Super Show
Mason, Ohio; 941-780-0538

FEB. 11-14

Edmonton RV Exposition and Sale
Edmonton, Alberta; 780-455-8562

FEB. 11-14

Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation and Camping Show
Minneapolis; 763-383-4400

FEB. 12-14

Arkansas RV Show
Little Rock, Ark.; 501-225-6177

FEB. 12-14

Richmond Camping RV Expo
Richmond, Va.; 804-425-6556

FEB. 12-15

Northeast RV Show
Suffern, N.Y.; 845-343-2772

FEB. 12-15

Red Deer RV Show
Red Deer, Alberta; 780-455-8562

FEB. 18-21

Kansas Sports, Boat and Travel Show
Wichita, Kan.; 816-931-4686

FEB. 19-21

Central Texas RV Super Show
Belton, Texas; 941-780-0538

FEB. 19-21

Las Vegas Sportsmen's RV and Travel Show
Las Vegas; 702-216-5857

FEB. 19-21

North Carolina RV and Camping Show
Charlotte, N.C.; 800-441-0013

FEB. 26-28

North Carolina RV and Camping Show
Raleigh, N.C.; 800-441-0013

FEB. 26-28

Rhode Island RV and Camping Show
Providence, R.I.; 800-441-0013



THE CHILL IS GONE

On those cold winter nights in

your motorhome when even those flannel PJ's and fuzzy socks aren't enough to keep you warm, you may want to turn to the Portable Buddy as a supplemental heat source.

Mr. Heater Corp., a Cleveland-based manufacturer of gas-fired portable heating products, has redesigned its infrared LP-gas heater, the Portable Buddy MH9BX, adding new features and a new look.

The MH9BX has a larger surface, directing radiant heat over a wider area. A fold-down handle makes storing it a snap, and at 8 pounds, it's easy to carry around.

Mr. Heater says the product delivers 4,000 or 9,000 BTU's of radiant heat for six hours on a single 1-pound disposable LP-gas cylinder. With a tip-over shut-off, it's safe for temporary indoor (with proper ventilation) and outdoor recreational use. The Portable Buddy MH9BX, with an MSRP of \$99.99, is available at outdoor, hardware and other retailers.

Mr. Heater Corp., 800-251-0001, www.mrheater.com.

— Patricia Marroquin



BRAKING WITH EASE

The UltraPower Grade

Brake is a device that connects to a transmission control module and moni-

tors vehicle speed, deceleration, engine torque and brake pedal usage. The module controls the shifting process to slow the coach utilizing the transmission and engine, activating after sensing brake use. This results in a downshift from overdrive to fourth gear.

Braking action is reduced on downhill grades, which extends the life of the rig's brakes, according to Brazel's RV Performance Center, the Centralia, Wash.-based manufacturer of the UltraPower Grade Brake.

Other benefits cited by the company include increased gas mileage and a more comfortable ride.

The Grade Brake system, now available for motorhomes built on a 2001-04 Workhorse chassis with an Allison 1000MH transmission, may be purchased and installed at Brazel's or any UltraPower dealer nationwide.

The system costs \$950 to \$1,195 installed, depending on time and difficulty of installation.

Brazel's RV Performance Center, 877-786-1576, www.brazelrv.com.

— Patricia Marroquin



News Briefs

High-end bus converter **Parliament Coach Corp.** of Clearwater, Fla., has purchased the intellectual property of bankrupt **Coachworks Holdings Inc.**, manufacturer of the Blue Bird Wanderlodge motorhome. The purchase includes technical data pertaining to all coaches produced by Blue Bird Wanderlodge dating from the 1960s to the present. "The importance of retaining this vital information for Blue Bird owners is critical," said Parliament President Steve Mitchell. "There are approximately 3,500 Blue Bird coaches operating through the United States and Canada." Coachworks, which shut down production early last year, was not affiliated with school bus manufacturer Blue Bird Corp.

Porteau Cove and **Cultus Lake Provincial Parks** will be open early for camping during the **2010 Winter Olympic Games** for the entire month of February to provide additional and affordable accommodation in Canada. Campers will have two options within provincial parks operated in the Lower Mainland area: Porteau Cove and Cultus Lake. Porteau Cove Provincial Park is located on the scenic waterfront of Highway 99 between Vancouver and Whistler. Cultus Lake, near Chilliwack, British Columbia, is about an hour and a half away from Vancouver. For reservations, call 604-986-9371 or e-mail info@seatoskyparks.com.

American Coach, the luxury motorhome division of **Fleetwood RV Inc.**, in late October announced it had completed its first VIP factory delivery — an optional service available to all American Coach customers — since American Industrial Partners Inc. (AIP) acquired the company in July 2009. VIP factory delivery is unique in that customers take delivery of their new American Coach model where it was built, and learn how to operate it with a factory representative.

In other Fleetwood news, the company has launched a limited edition, value-priced Class C diesel motorhome built on the fuel-efficient Dodge Sprinter chassis. Only 150 units of the new **2010 Quest** will be made available at select Fleetwood RV dealers nationwide. The Quest is available in two 24-foot single slideout models. Retail prices start at \$84,000.



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AUDUBON'S BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

A lot of today's interest in birds and bird-watching — a favorite hobby among RVers — can be attributed to John James Audubon. It was the colorful paintings Audubon created for his portfolio, *Birds of America*, that drew attention to the feathered wildlife in our developing land more than 150 years ago.

To fully appreciate the genius of Audubon, plan a visit to John James Audubon State Park in Henderson, Ky. The 700-acre park encompasses much more than a museum to honor Audubon's life. In addition to a wooded and grassy RV park — with full hookups, barbecues and picnic tables — there's a picturesque, nine-hole golf course within the park and two lakes, including one for boating and fishing.

Built as a Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration project during the early 1930s, the focal point of the park is the handsome Audubon Museum, constructed of local stone.

The museum and nature center in Henderson house the world's largest collection of Audubon's work and provide an area for observing birds through spacious windows. Feeders in the trees attract birds to the center.

For more information, call 270-826-2247, or visit www.parks.ky.gov. — *Beverly Edwards*

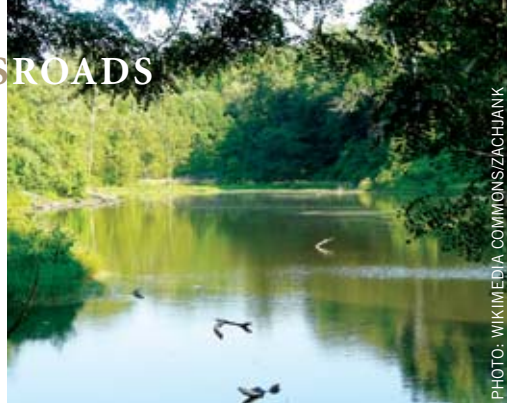


PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/ZACHANK



PHOTO: MARTIN STUDIO

ROADWAY WHIMSY



An open-air art gallery on the remote plains of southwest North Dakota? Preposterous! Or is it? Gary Greff didn't think so, and neither do thousands of road warriors every year.

A citizen crusader against the decline of rural America, Greff conceived of a unique way to attract attention and dollars to his region, and so

emerged the world's largest metal art collection. Subjects range from the common to the heroic to the humorous.

A family of tin, a galloping Teddy Roosevelt and a "gj-normous" grasshopper are just some of what you'll see. All tower stories above the blowing grasses. They emerged from scrap metal and well pipe, through the help of welding torches, sand-blasters, cranes, flatbed trucks, buckets of paint and a village of helping hands.

The 32-mile Enchanted Highway heads south from Interstate 94 at exit 72 (about 10 miles east of Dickinson), to Regent, unveiling each of seven metal sculptures, with 11 planned. Parking pads and picnic tables allow travelers to stop and truly admire the neck-cranning pieces. Regent has a small full-hookup RV park.

For more information, contact Enchanted Highway, 701-563-6400, or log on to www.enchantedhighway.net. — *Rhonda Ostertag* ♦



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FREE TO RV

FOR PIONEER DORIAN PASKOWITZ, 88, AND HIS FAMILY, LIFE ON THE OPEN ROAD YIELDS 'A HARVEST OF HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND PEACE'

by JEFF CRIDER



One of the greatest joys of RVing is being able to chart your own course, explore what you want to explore and stay where you want to stay.

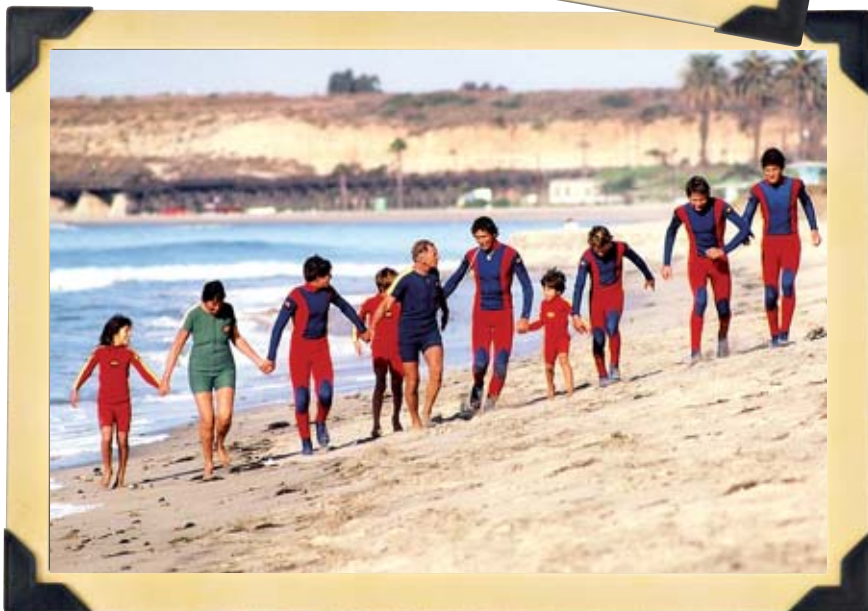
So long as you've got the basics — food, shelter and a place to sleep — there's nothing really stopping you from RVing full time. And many RVers do — for months or years at a time.

Of course, people usually become full-timers after they've retired and built up a nest egg to sustain themselves in their travels.

Most people would never dream of beginning their full-timing adventure at the front end of their adult lives — before settling down, perhaps getting married and having children — and continuing the full-timing lifestyle throughout most of their adult lives.

But that's exactly what Dorian Paskowitz, 88, and his wife, Juliette, have done. In fact, they raised nine children within the confines of various makeshift and brand-name RVs, the largest a 24-foot Open Road motorhome, while Paskowitz pursued his lifelong passion for surfing, a love he instilled in his children, with whom he co-founded a surfing school in 1972 that continues to provide income for the family to this day.

What's even more remarkable is that Paskowitz, who graduated cum laude from Stanford Medical School, never used





Dorian Paskowitz, who has been an RVer for more than 50 years, believes no other lifestyle offers as much freedom from life's pressures and monotony. He felt so strongly about full-time RVing that he and his wife raised their nine children in various RVs. "The person who is caught in the social, political, economic, academic or even spiritual milieu and wants to spread his wings and be free should just buy a motorhome," says Paskowitz, 88, whose other passion is surfing. He and his family founded a surfing school in 1972.

his knowledge to build a lucrative medical practice.

"I never wanted to enrich myself from people's sickness," he said during a recent interview with *MotorHome*, adding that he prefers to work like a doctor on a humanitarian mission, offering his skills for free or for little pay — basically only what he needed to survive.

"I was like a missionary doctor," he said. "I would just go someplace and take care of people. Sometimes I'd go to an Indian reservation. Sometimes they'd pay me with a chicken or a goat."

Perhaps not surprisingly, Paskowitz and his family have become the subjects of a documentary movie, "Surfwise," and he's written a book, "Surfing and Health," in which he shares his observations and advice on the interconnections among diet, life, surfing and health.

To cut to the chase, Paskowitz thinks we've got it backward. We spend far too much time trying to nurture our minds to be successful in our materialistic society, he said, and in the process we neglect our bodies. On the other hand, he said, "When the body becomes healthy, the mind follows suit."

For Paskowitz, no lifestyle offers more freedom from the pressures, constraints and

monotony of society than full-time RVing.

"Living in a motorhome at the lowest end of the social and financial scale in America," he said, "one can have the same freedom as a millionaire living at the upper end of the social and financial scale."

"The person who is caught in the social, political, economic, academic or even spiritual milieu and wants to spread his wings and be free should just buy a motorhome."

The second great experience that full-time RVing brings, he said, is a sense of anticipation. "You wake up and you think, 'Where will I go today?' It's a random harvest of health, happiness and peace."

The change of scenery can bring enormous psychological benefits. "Day after day, you see the same crows, the same garages, the same dogs, the same signs," he said. But with RVing, he said, the scenery changes and life is renewed.

Born and raised in Galveston, Texas, Paskowitz got his first taste of living out of his vehicle when he was a teenager in the 1930s. At that time, both Paskowitz and his mother were struggling with asthma — a chronic condition that would ultimately inspire Paskowitz to pursue a career in medicine. But after seeing a newspaper travel section story with a photo of the waves in San Onofre, Calif., Paskowitz, who was an

avid surfer, told his mother: "If you take me where that wave is, I'll get well tomorrow."

Within a month, Paskowitz's mother relocated the family, including his sister, brother and an uncle, from Galveston to Southern California. His father followed a short time later, after shutting down the family's clothing store, a casualty of the Depression.

"We had nothing to lose by leaving Texas," Paskowitz recalled, adding that his mother was always ready to try something new.

When Paskowitz arrived at San Onofre, he wasn't disappointed. "It gives you a wave of such classic beauty. It gives you a chance to really enjoy surfing."

In those days, people parked their cars on the beach.

"People would convert their vans or cars into a sleeping arrangement, so we would stay in our cars. In those days, it was the absolute ultimate. You could park on the beach and stay there for a week. Now, if they caught you there after sunset, they would probably shoot you."

By the time Paskowitz was old enough to have his own car, he quickly found that he was happiest when he had a vehicle he could convert into a camper. His first makeshift RV was an old truck. "It was just

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a cab with lights and an empty back," he said. "I covered that with a piece of wood, built cabinets on the side and put a tarp over it." Functional, at best, but it served its purpose.

It was the beginning of Paskowitz's nomadic lifestyle in cars, makeshift RVs and actual name-brand RVs.

While some may cringe at the thought of living most of their lives on the road, it never kept Paskowitz from doing what he wanted to do.

He managed to get into Stanford during World War II and the military paid for most of his education in exchange for a few years of service — a bargain by any stretch of the imagination. He interned in the Navy during the war and later spent two years at sea in 1946 and 1947. "I went to a special project where we exploded nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands," he said.

When he got out of the Navy, he decided to stay in Hawaii, where he lived in a house until 1955. But he found living in a house too confining. He also didn't like the island restrictions against RV and car camping on the beaches. He subsequently returned to the mainland and converted a 1948 Chevy woody station wagon into his new home. "The car looked like a mess, but it was in good mechanical order," he said, adding that he later picked up a teardrop trailer, which he towed behind the vehicle.

Soon after returning to the mainland, Paskowitz met the consul general of Israel and decided to spend a year there. "I am Jewish, and I was fascinated by the idea that Israel was a state," he said. "So I got my surfboard and went to Israel in 1956."

"Israel at that time was a very exciting place," Paskowitz recalled. "Not that many people. Not that built up. Part of Tel Aviv was still sand dunes."

He spent a year in Israel. "The New York Times" later credited him with introducing surfing there. But when Paskowitz returned to the states, he returned to life in his woody. He eventually found his way to Catalina Island, off the coast of Southern California, where he met his wife, Juliette, who was working as a telephone operator at the time.

"We lived in the woody for a while," he said. "Then we both decided to have this wonderful adventure."

With their woody equipped with a bed in the back, a Coleman stove, plus



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a cooler — with surfboards on top — they set out to explore life on the road.

They later lived in a 1949 Studebaker Champion for three years. “We traveled through 6,000 miles of Mexico,” he said, “from the big cities of Chihuahua and Durango to the fishing town of Topolobampo, and we only had a couple of blowouts.”

They started having children on the road, too, which eventually prompted them to move into larger, mobile accommodations.

“After our second son was born,” Paskowitz said, “we became lords of the manor and bought an old one-ton, 1949 Chevy truck, Israeli blue, with a McNamara Camp King slip-on cover. It had a beautiful bed and cooking facilities.”

In retrospect, Paskowitz said, “I would have had to have a home in the millions of dollars to make up for the way we felt living in the McNamara slip-on.”

They lived in the McNamara until 1968, when they moved into a house in Tarzana, Calif. They stayed there for one year, and then headed back out on the road, this time in an Open Road motorhome, which served as their home on wheels until a bank foreclosed on it.

That didn’t stop them, however. They later acquired other RVs, including an Establishment Class C, although hard economic times led to the loss of that vehicle, too.

Today, Paskowitz and his wife live in an apartment in Dana Point, Calif., which has been their home for three years. They live frugally, subsisting on small amounts of revenue from the surfing school in Mission Beach, Calif., which their children now manage, as well as proceeds from Paskowitz’s book.

And while life on the road hasn’t always been easy — in fact, several of the Paskowitz children talked about the difficulties they experienced growing up in cramped vehicles in the documentary, “Surfwise” — Paskowitz has no regrets. His children, he added, have grown up with intense feelings of love and togetherness as a result of living in RVs on the road.

Paskowitz, perhaps not surprisingly, can’t wait to get out on the road again. He had just gotten back from a surfing trip in Hawaii when *MotorHome* caught up with him recently. “My hope,” he said, “is to eventually own a half-ton Ford with a six-cylinder engine and a small short bed with a cabover slip-on.” ♦

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SANDY SOUTHERN SOJOURN

ALABAMA'S GULF COAST IS A HAVEN FOR SNOWBIRDS SEEKING A BEACH-SIDE GETAWAY THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK

by MARY ZALMANEK



Last winter the stock market experienced a plunge to rival even the cold-weather temperatures of Colorado, my home state. With a spring snowstorm approaching and our retirement account in deep freeze, it seemed like a good time to get away from it all — without *spending* it all. We wanted sandy beaches, interesting sights, lush gardens and superb golfing. Alabama's Gulf Coast offered all of that and more — at very reasonable prices.

Thirty-two miles of sugar-white sand beaches await on Alabama's Gulf Coast. There are plenty of waterfront campgrounds, mostly in the \$25 to \$30 range, including Gulf State Park and Meaher State Park. We chose Wales West RV Resort. While not on the beach, it was centrally located in Silverhill, near Fairhope.

Ken and Ann Zadnichek, owners of Wales West, turned their cow pasture into a unique RV resort and train park. The Wales West Light Railway is the most westerly outpost of authentic Welsh Victorian steam railroading in the world. Building the two was no easy task; Ken had two obstacles to overcome: the bank and his wife. The bank wouldn't give him a loan unless he included an RV park and Ann was skeptical about the train park. But after he named the Welsh Victorian steam-powered engine "Dame Ann" and painted it yellow, her favorite color, she couldn't refuse.

Not only did Ken satisfy the bank by building an RV park, he also satisfied leagues of RVers with more than 70 sites (45 of them are 50-by-70-foot pull-through sites), free Wi-Fi, cable TV, a heated indoor swimming pool, a spa,



PHOTOS: MARY ZALMANEK; ALABAMA GULF COAST CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU (BEACH)



Alabama's Gulf Coast, far left on opposite page, has 32 miles of white-sand beaches. The entrance to Fort Morgan, left, is through a tunnel. The fort was built after the War of 1812 to strengthen defenses on the southern coast. Top, USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park, hailed in the park's brochure as "America's most unique military attraction," sits on 175 acres at Mobile Bay. During World War II, the ship earned nine battle stars. Among the coast's many dining options is Lambert's Café in Foley, "The Home of Thrown Rolls," above. Waiters push carts of hot buns through the eatery and toss them to diners.



At Bellingrath Gardens, visitors will find 65 acres of flowers. The home of Walter and Bessie Bellingrath is among the country's most notable gardens. The Bellingraths' 10,500-square-foot home contains sterling silver collections and antique European porcelain. There are many waterfront campgrounds to choose from along Alabama's Gulf Coast, including those located at Meaher State Park, below.

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laundry facilities and the on-site, three-acre freshwater Lake Victoria for fishing and swimming. Any day of the week, Ken takes campers on a free one-mile train ride around the property.

Music lovers gather on Tuesday nights from October through April for "Bluegrass by the Tracks." For \$5, you get two hours of great music and refreshments. Even better is the two-day "Thank You Snowbirds Bluegrass Festival" on the first weekend in March. It's in a big tent. Bring \$10 for admission and your lawn chair.

Once we were settled at Wales West, we hopped into our dinghy to check out the area. Our first stop was the Eastern Shore Art Center in Fairhope. Not only did it have five galleries with exhibits that change monthly, it also had Jennifer Meriam, the hospitality director who answered all our questions about where to go and what to see.

Without Meriam's advice, we might have missed the Fairhope Pier, with its magnificent view of Mobile Bay; the New Orleans-style cobblestone courtyard in the French Quarter; and the Page and Palette, an independent bookstore. Any town that's proud of its bookstore is my kind of town. Fairhope attracts creative, free-thinking people. Many artists and writers call this city home. With local authors such as Winston Groom ("Forrest Gump") and Fannie Flagg ("Fried Green Tomatoes"), it's not surprising that book signings are popular at the Page and Palette.

Meriam's enthusiasm about the historical significance of the Grand Hotel Marriott Resort convinced us to check it out. The resort in Point Clear, five miles south of Fairhope, was used as a hospital during the Civil War and as a U.S. Army Air Force training school during World War II. The hotel remembers its history each day at 4PM with a procession around the grounds, concluding with a cannon-firing ceremony by the bay. You'll hear a loud bang, but don't bother looking for a splash — no live ammunition is fired.

Mike Hutchinson, the historian who fires the cannon at the Grand Hotel, offered his



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expert opinion on one of the outcomes of the Civil War. "After the Yankee army spent one winter in Alabama, they went home and told their friends and family how nice the weather was. They are still coming back, except now they are bringing Winnebagos and credit cards instead of cannons and muskets."

After Hutchinson told us about Mobile Bay's military history, we wanted to pay our respects to those brave souls who fought for our freedom. By making a loop around the bay, we could visit Fort Morgan, Fort Gaines and USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park. Forts Morgan and Gaines were built after the War of 1812 to strengthen defenses along the southern coastlines. During the Civil War, Mobile Bay was guarded by the cannons of Fort Morgan on the east and Fort Gaines on the west, and in the bay tethered naval mines, then known as torpedoes. On Aug. 5, 1864, Union Admiral David Farragut ordered his fleet of warships to enter the bay with the now-famous command, "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" Eighteen days after the Battle of Mobile Bay, Fort Morgan surrendered to Union forces.

Today's visitors enter the star-shaped Fort Morgan through a tunnel. Across the grassy courtyard stands a wall of casements, or arched rooms. I was tempted to imagine guns blazing under these graceful arches, but then learned that while they were designed to house the fort's cannons, they were primarily used as storage.

Crossing Mobile Bay is easy these days, with absolutely no threat of torpedoes. The Mobile Bay Ferry connects Fort Morgan visitors to Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island. If you want to take your motorhome, it's a good idea to make a reservation. One-way fares are \$16 for an automobile and \$35 for a motorhome. The fare includes one driver, and each additional passenger costs \$4.50. A bridge connects Dauphin Island to Mobile.

The last and most impressive stop on our tour of historical military sites was USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park, which is, according to the park's brochure, "America's most unique military attraction." We had to agree. The park sits on 175 acres on the north end of Mobile Bay. Three self-guided tours allowed us to imagine life on the USS

Alabama. The ship earned nine battle stars during World War II. We saw the navigation bridge, radio central and sick bay. Next door, the 36,000-square-foot Aircraft Pavilion is home to more than 20 rare historic aircraft, including an A-12 Blackbird spy plane and a B-52 bomber — in fact, 12 of the pavilion's 24 aircraft are located outside of the pavilion itself, including the B-52. The USS Drum Submarine, recipient of 12 battle stars for valor, is permanently displayed on dry land behind the Aircraft Pavilion. Imagining life inside the confined quarters of a submarine made me appreciate those World War II heroes who lived there even more.

Nobody had to tell us to visit Bellingrath Gardens. From the moment I Googled "Mobile Bay," I knew I wanted to go there. Every day of the year you'll find 65 acres of blossoms. Once a simple fishing camp, the home of Walter and Bessie Bellingrath is now one of our nation's preeminent gardens. Take the time to tour the 10,500-square-foot home with its antique European porcelain and sterling silver collections.

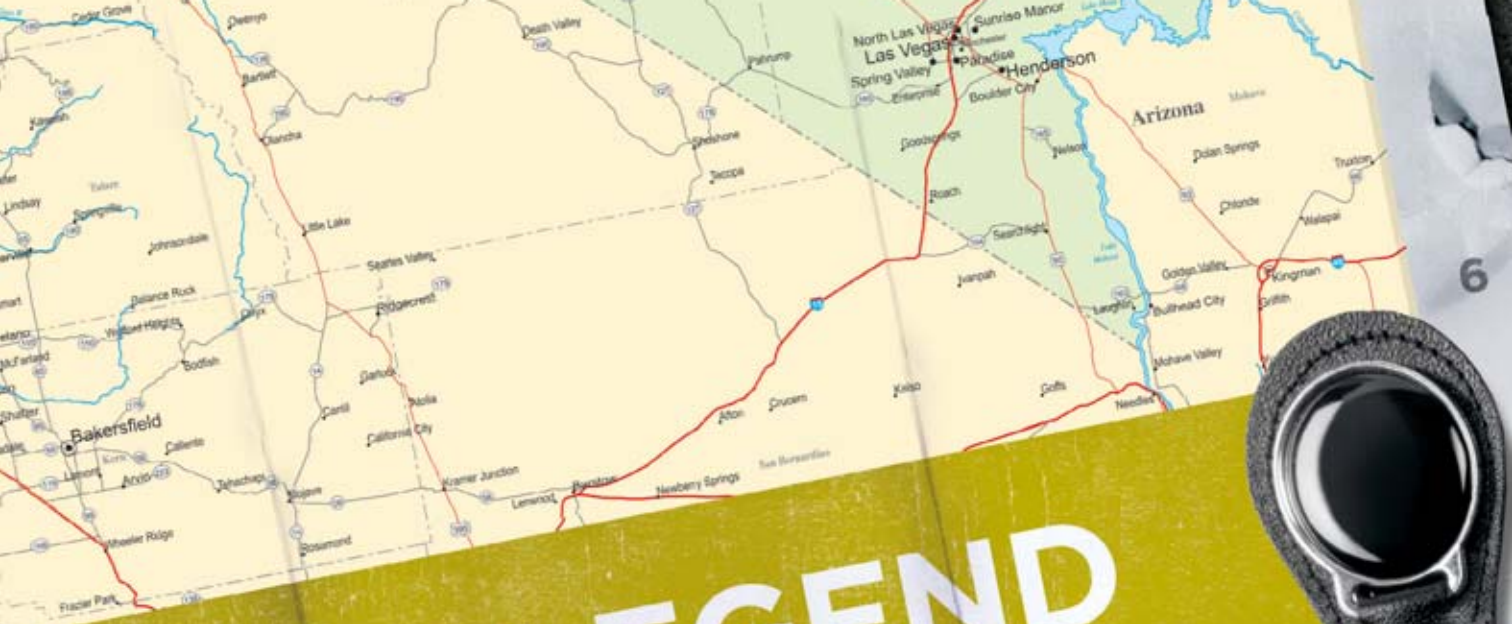
Even my husband, Jim, who was ini-

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tially more enthusiastic about the guns on the USS Alabama than dainty dishes, was fascinated by the realistic collection of porcelain birds. Between March and November, you can take a 45-minute river cruise aboard the Southern Belle. Adult admission ranges from \$11 for the gardens only to \$27 for the gardens, home and river cruise.

Any Alabamian will proudly tell you the first known American Mardi Gras celebration was in Mobile in 1703. Today Mobile is home to "America's Family Mardi Gras." From mid-January through Fat Tuesday (the day before Ash Wednesday), the calendar is filled with parades and balls.

Since we missed Mardi Gras season, we visited the Mobile Carnival Museum instead. Without all the crowds, we saw the costumes, imagined the pageantry and learned the history of Mardi Gras in the first American city to commemorate this French tradition. The museum is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Because the museum has very limited RV parking (on the western streetside only), you may want to drive your dinghy.

No matter where we travel, there are

certain things we always do: browse interesting shops, play golf and eat at restaurants featuring local fare. While browsers like me might be satisfied with the unique boutiques and galleries in Fairhope or Gulf Shores, power shoppers will want to head for the Tanger Outlet Mall in Foley. With more than 120 brand-name factory stores to choose from, there's something to please everyone. If you're traveling with kids, even they will be thrilled to go along if you let them ride the carousel or play in the interactive water fountain.

Golfers can play year-round at the numerous courses in the area. While courses on Alabama's famous Robert Trent Jones Trail can be pricey, there are less expensive courses in the area. I played at Quail Creek under near perfect conditions: bright blue skies, no wind and uncrowded fairways. My only disappointment was four-putting on a par three after landing my tee shot five feet from the hole. The regular price for 18 holes with a cart is \$27 at Quail Creek (near Fairhope) and \$40 at Gulf State Park. Both offer senior discounts.

Good restaurants are plentiful on the Gulf Coast. I would have driven right by Lambert's Café in Foley if its claim of being "The Home of Thrown Rolls" hadn't made me curious. Thrown rolls — is that how they make them, or how they serve them? As soon as I entered the restaurant I had the answer. A waiter pushed a cart of hot buns down the aisle, throwing rolls to eager diners.

Clearly, the owners have a sense of humor. They also have big hearts. According to the hostess, Michelle Mathis, people in wheelchairs are like VIPs at Lambert's: "Anyone who brings their own chair gets a free meal."

My husband and I are seafood lovers, and even the advertisements for the Original Oyster House made our mouths water. We weren't disappointed. A dozen delicious oysters on the half shell were just \$8. The view of the Mobile delta at sunset provided a perfect end to a perfect evening.

Maybe it was the Southern hospitality, or the gentle sea breezes. Something made this snowbird feel like I belonged there, right along with the pelicans and sea gulls. ♦

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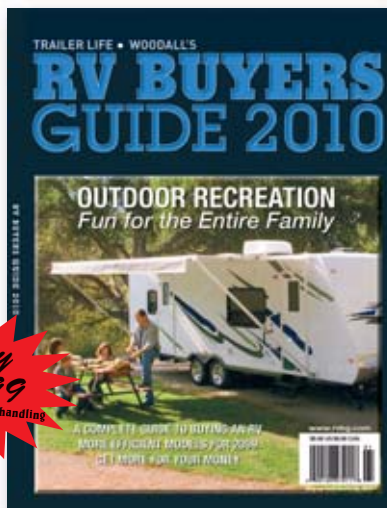
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Laissez les bons temps rouler. ... It's an expression you'll hear all across southern Louisiana, and it means "Let the good times roll." Of course, who would be more ready to roll into a good time than RVer?

It's Saturday morning in the tiny southern Louisiana community of Arnaudville. In the front room of an old house overlooking the sleepy bayou that runs through this budding artists' enclave, there's an acoustic jam session in progress. It's organized by Tom Pierce, who lives here now, first arriving seven years ago in his motorhome, drawn to southern Louisiana by its legendary music and food.

"We came down in our Winnebago Bravo, and stayed at Bayou Wilderness for a month. We wanted to come down for Festival International and the Crawfish Festival."

Bayou Wilderness is an RV resort tucked among the Spanish moss-laden cypress trees in the heart of Acadiana, Louisiana's epicenter for all things French and fun. The resort features 120 sites with full hookups and welcomes big rigs. Amenities include free cable, an on-site convenience store, a swimming pool, Jacuzzi spa, tennis courts and nearby golf.

Just outside the legendary French Quarter you'll find Jackson Square, top. Crawfish is a popular food in southern Louisiana; Breaux Bridge plays host to an annual Crawfish Festival. Another annual celebration is Festival International in Lafayette, left, which features music from Francophone countries around the world.

Conveniently for RV aficionados, Bayou Wilderness is just a few minutes' drive from Breaux Bridge — home of the annual Crawfish Festival — and Lafayette, which plays host to Festival International, a huge world-music event featuring music from Francophone countries across the globe.

It's also near Arnaudville, one in a string of cultural pearls strung out along the bayous crisscrossing this part of Louisiana. The tiny communities of Sunset, Grand Coteau and Washington all boast antique shops, great restaurants, art galleries and history. Nearby Eunice is home to Rendezvous des Cajuns — a celebration each Saturday night of Cajun music and dance in a historic theater — that's affectionately known as the Cajun Grand Old Opry.

Next door, the National Park Service runs an interpretive center, part of Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve, where visitors can immerse themselves in the culture of the prairie Acadians. This national park is not defined as much by geographical boundaries as it is by cultural ones, and has units all over southern



At Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve, visitors can immerse themselves in the culture of prairie Acadians, top. The national park also incorporates Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery in Chalmette outside New Orleans. Above, re-enactors commemorate the Battle of New Orleans at the battlefield. Below right, visitors take a swamp tour at Atchafalaya Basin. The basin is a refuge for such endangered species as the peregrine falcon. Below left, St. Michael's Church has one of the first grottoes built in the U.S.

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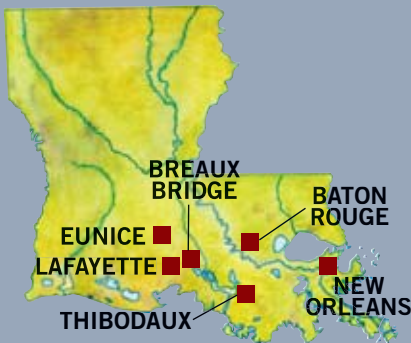
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Louisiana. The park also incorporates the Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux, La.; Barataria Preserve in the swamps outside New Orleans; Acadian Cultural Center in Lafayette; Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery in Chalmette outside New Orleans; and a visitor center in the French Quarter.

Perhaps the most acclaimed aspect of the culture in this part of the world is the cuisine. "Prejean's is fabulous," notes Bayou Wilderness guest Bridgette Anderson of the popular local restaurant four miles down the road. "I love their redfish with a shrimp remoulade."

Cajun-style seafood is at the heart of this restaurant's appeal, where, even for breakfast, they offer a crab cake crowned with a poached egg, drizzled in hollandaise sauce and laced with fresh shrimp and smothered tasso (a local smoked meat).

Another of the many local spots that fuse music and food is Café des Amis in Breaux Bridge (also home to the aforementioned Crawfish Festival in May). The café's Zydeco breakfast every Saturday is so popu-

lar, lines form early to wait for offerings that include omelets stuffed with boudin, the iconic local sausage, served up with a side of live Zydeco, the indigenous Creole music form dominated by an unusual combination of accordion and washboard instrumentation.

Head east from Acadiana on Interstate 10 and you cut through the heart of the Atchafalaya Basin, with sweeping vistas from the elevated highway of one of America's most beautiful wetlands. But rather than just getting a passing glance, stop for a bit at the Atchafalaya Basin Welcome Center.

Built in the style of an Acadian cottage (with lots of RV-friendly parking), the center is right in the middle of the nation's largest river swamp, with 885,000 acres of forested wetlands and 517,000 acres of marshland. Displays in the center tell the story of how the Atchafalaya Basin serves as one of the last refuges for endangered species, like the peregrine falcon, the Florida panther and the Bachman's warbler. It also shelters 100 species of fish, crawfish, shrimp and crabs as well as the endangered Louisiana

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Then, it's on through Baton Rouge, where you turn south to connect to the winding, plantation-lined River Road. One of the grandest of the historic plantation homes here is Houmas House, surrounded by 38 acres of stunning gardens, with indigenous plantings designed to ensure that something is in bloom year-round. Swans glide by on one of the plantation's several ponds, another of which is overlooked by a Japanese teahouse. In the property's oldest building, dating back to 1770, there's a renowned local restaurant — Lafitte's Landing. Duck beneath one of the giant branches spreading out from the plantation's huge oaks, and you'll find an intimate bar tucked inside a *garçonnière* — a small round building that once served as bachelor quarters on the plantation.

A few miles farther south, you'll discover that another of these historic homes puts out a warm welcome specifically for RVers.

After traveling the roads for five years in their Blue Bird Wanderlodge, Mark Anderson and his wife, Yvette, were visiting their hometown of Convent, La., and stopped by an auction just for the fun of it. When the auction was over they found themselves the proud and dazed new owners of the historic, but neglected, Poché Plantation.

Now, after a complete renovation, the home is in the *National Register of Historic Places* and is the centerpiece for their upscale RV resort. The Poché Plantation House was built in 1867, and a number of the 85 RV sites overlook the elegant structure shaded by ancient live oak trees. As RVers themselves, the Andersons not only devoted themselves to the complete renovation of their historic home, but also went about creating an RV resort with all the amenities they look for on the road.

Each site offers tower hookups with night-vision lighting, cable TV, phone, high-speed Wi-Fi, concrete patio, lawn and trash container. The manicured grounds include a pool, statuary, fountains and a hot tub area surrounded by columns and murals painted by a local artist. There's a guest services cottage that includes showers, a guest lounge, kitchen and laundry. The post office is next door. The resort even has its own small museum, featuring artifacts from several nearby plantations.

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Poché Plantation is surrounded by history. Inside beautiful St. Michael's Church next door is one of the first grottoes built in the U.S., modeled after the fabled one at Lourdes in Spain. This one, however, has a unique Louisiana twist, as it is made from bagasse, a byproduct of the sugar that is refined from cane fields that stretch for miles along the river.

Twice a year there are tours of the ancient cemetery at St. Michael's Church, where actors re-create the lives of those buried there — including a descendant of Christopher Columbus.

Thursday night often finds the resort full. It's fiddler's night at Hymel's Seafood Restaurant just down the road, where giant mugs of beer wash down platters of seafood accompanied by live music jams.

Head on down River Road past half a dozen more historic plantations and you arrive at The Big Easy: New Orleans. Here, too, you'll find a hearty welcome for RVers.

What the French Quarter RV Resort doesn't offer in the way of moss-draped oaks and quiet bayou surroundings, it makes up

for in location. The resort has 52 paved sites — all at least 30 feet wide and 60 feet deep, with 20/30/50-AMP electric, hardwire and wireless Internet access, a live telephone line, satellite TV, city water and sewer, fitness and laundry rooms, and a business office with computers, copier/fax/printer and an ATM. The clubhouse offers a saltwater pool and hot tub, gazebo with bar facilities, an ice machine and gas barbecue grill, around which guests often gather for weekend parties after Saints or Hornets games.

And while the resort is in the center of a more contemporary urban setting, it's just blocks away from the legendary French Quarter. In five minutes you can enjoy café au lait and beignets at Café du Monde overlooking New Orleans' beautiful Jackson Square. Or stroll down Bourbon Street, where live music pours from open French doors on nearly every corner.

Even closer is one of New Orleans' ancient "Cities of the Dead." These historic cemeteries are known for the often elaborate aboveground tombs that give them the appearance of a tiny city. Just a block

from the resort is St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, the city's oldest, dating to 1789, where you'll find the burial site for Voodoo Priestess Marie Laveau. Park rangers offer free tours and programs daily at the French Quarter visitor center, part of Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve.

Have a boat in tow? Then you may want to stay a bit farther from the Quarter at Pontchartrain Landing. Located on New Orleans' industrial canal, it's in the heart of an industrial area, but again, its location is perfect for boaters. Immediately adjacent to a marina, the park has its own boat ramp that will have you out on beautiful Lake Pontchartrain in three minutes. The resort features an attractive elevated clubhouse and pool area as well as regular shuttle service to the French Quarter. All of the resort's 105 sites offer 50-AMP power connections, cable TV and Wi-Fi. There's also an on-site laundry and convenience store.

From the serenity of quiet bayous to the raucous nightlife of the French Quarter, the good times in south Louisiana are just waiting for you to roll on in. ♦

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Excellent masonry skills are evident at Pueblo Bonito's ruins in Chaco Canyon.

ROCKS OF AGES

IN THE FOUR CORNERS AREA, STONE RUINS SPEAK OF A RICH HISTORY

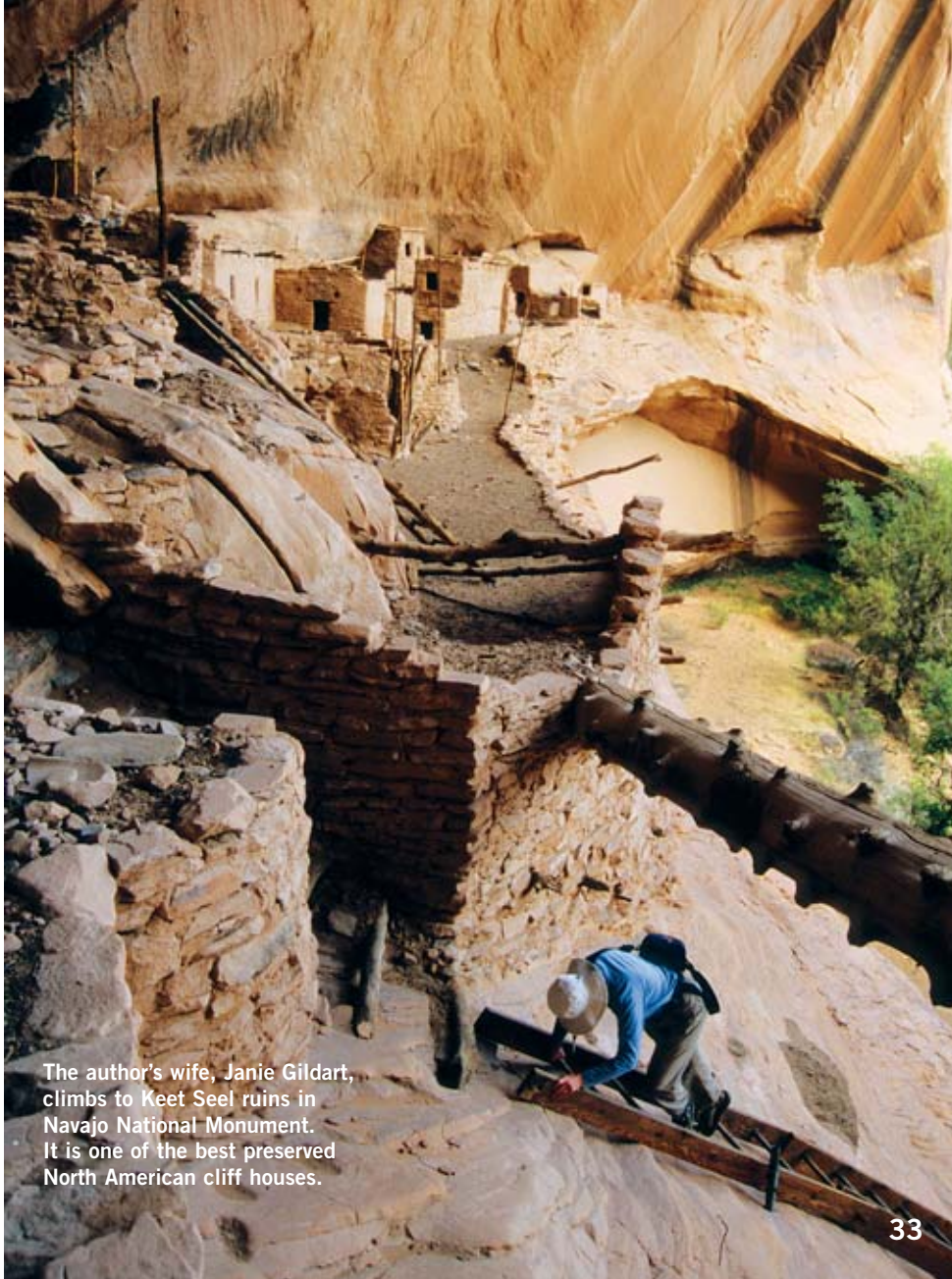
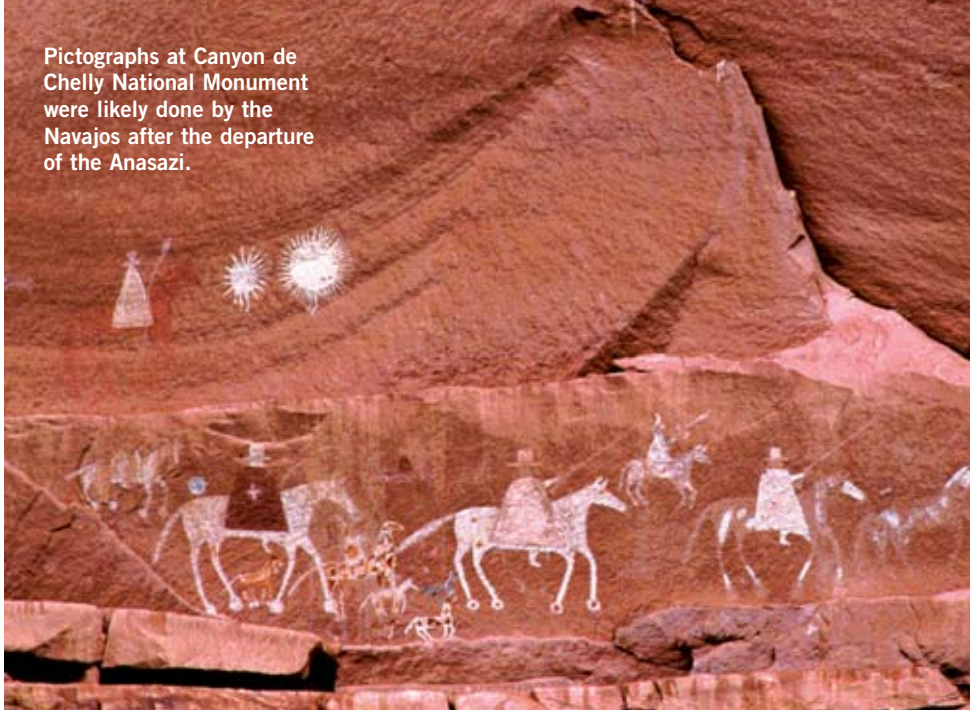
by BERT GILDART

Into a great but previously unoccupied land, one of North America's first groups of native peoples moved onto a sun-drenched region now known as the Four Corners. At first they lived in alcoves and survived as hunters and gatherers. About A.D. 800, they discovered they could derive a living by planting corn. Over time, they learned they could shape the abundant stone and rock to their needs.

Some called them the Ancestral Puebloans, or Pueblo, and if you study this vast landscape closely, you'll learn of their times through the exquisite tapestry of rocks they assembled — and that are now beginning to speak. The stories you'll hear tell of great accomplishments. They tell of great roadways that linked them as a people; of colossal stone structures that attest to profound spiritual beliefs.

The sites of the Ancestral Puebloans are many and include Chaco Culture National Historic Park in New Mexico, Hovenweep National Monument in Utah and Colorado, Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado, Canyon de Chelly National Monument in Arizona and Aztec Ruins Nation-

Pictographs at Canyon de Chelly National Monument were likely done by the Navajos after the departure of the Anasazi.



The author's wife, Janie Gildart, climbs to Keet Seel ruins in Navajo National Monument. It is one of the best preserved North American cliff houses.



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Hovenweep Tower, above, is part of Hovenweep National Monument, which includes Little Ruin Canyon Trail, a two-mile walk that leads to Ancestral Puebloan dwellings. Opposite page, visitors led by a guide hike to ruins at Navajo National Monument. Below, the reconstructed kiva at Aztec Ruins National Monument is one of the best examples of a spiritual edifice; Puebloans believed their ancestors would return in the form of wind and rain, and they would pray to them from the kivas. Left, at Keet Seel ruins, walls are graced by pottery and other items that look as if they had been abandoned recently.





al Monument in New Mexico. All combine to form “The Circle of the Ancients” — a theme some have spent a lifetime exploring. All you must do is summon a spirit of adventure and the patience to listen to the rocks as the lessons begin to unfold.

The sun is dipping and imparting an eerie sheen over nearby Fajada Butte in Chaco Canyon, once used as a solar calendar. All around there are ancient ruins. Because of its primordial nature, this setting at Chaco — where my wife, Janie, and I are now camped — is magical.

Today, we’ll hike several miles along one of the park’s most inspirational trails. Our adventure departs from the parking lot near Pueblo del Arroyo, and speeds us along to Kin Kletso. Quickly the trail ascends and then squeezes through a long, narrow passage in a vertical cliff face and then, just as quickly, opens onto a cliff shelf. About two miles later, the trail comes to a spot that peers over the Jackson Staircase, so named for the famous photographer who documented the steps in the late 1800s.

At one time the steps provided Chacoans with access from the valley floor to the bench land overhead and here a road once led to many outliers spaced about

a day’s walk apart. Incredibly, sections of this road still exist, and their edges remain lined with rocks that Chacoans piled here 800 years ago.

The trail takes us to an overlook that surveys Pueblo Bonito — one of the most spectacular of all ruins. About A.D. 1200 Pueblo Bonito was the largest and grandest of all the Chacoan structures. Rising four or five stories, it was honeycombed with more than 650 rooms and about 35 kivas. Each household consisted of an extended group that might have included children, parents and grandparents. Typical room features included a shallow fire pit, stone-lined hearths, pot rests, mealing bins and wall niches.

Still at the overlook, Janie and I peer down onto perhaps the most impressive feature of Pueblo Bonito — the great kiva. As the sun descended and oblique light intensified, it was impossible not to appreciate the ancestral Puebloans’ connection to nature.

According to “Hisotsinom — The Ancient Ones,” a video shown daily at the visitor center, these ancient people believed that “corn was the milk of human life, and that it was taken from the breast of the Earth Mother.” They believed that

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ROCKS OF AGES

their ancestors would return in the form of wind and rain, and they prayed to them from underground spiritual settings known as kivas. One such kiva was hundreds of feet beneath us — a part of Pueblo Bonito — and as impressive as it was in forming this “beautiful house,” an even better example is located at Aztec Ruins. Here you'll see a great spiritual sphere, and though not original, extraordinary pains have been taken to generate authenticity and provide ambience.

Aztec Ruins consists of a multistoried pueblo that faces inward and encloses an open plaza that is dominated by this great kiva, which spans nearly 50 feet across. You enter from the outside into a large antichamber. A short series of steps permit egress and if you descend you must anticipate some transformation. People of the time believed the world beneath the surface of the earth belonged to the spirits, and so the kiva — much of which is underground — evolved. Though a reconstruction, the kiva at Aztec Ruins is considered sacred.

Despite the grandeur of the kiva, Aztec Ruins is not the only structure that reveals a level of accomplishment. Another pueblo, set in Hovenweep National Monument, tells of a sophisticated knowledge of a sun-Earth relationship.

Located in Utah and Colorado, Hovenweep is a more intimate site. The monument has a superb visitor center and a popular two-mile-long walk called Little Ruin Canyon Trail. The trail is accessible directly from the visitor center and it introduces you to more Ancestral Puebloan innovations.

While Chaco's heyday had come and gone by the end of the 12th century, many other communities continued to thrive until the late 13th century, such as those found in the canyon walls of Navajo National Monument, Canyon de Chelly National Monument and Mesa Verde National Park. Such alcove dwellings have shared characteristics, as Janie and I discovered at Spruce Tree House in Mesa Verde. Some faced south, southwest or southeast, enabling them to serve as solar collectors, though that may not have been intentional, as others took advantage of whatever alcove was available. Since virtually all of the cliffs overlooked canyons, the bottom-

lands below and the talus slopes adjacent to the villages could be farmed.

Though we often think of Mesa Verde — a World Heritage Site — when we think of the ancient pueblo life, there are other sites equally well-preserved, such as Navajo National Monument in Arizona. Recently, we loaded our backpacks and made an eight-mile hike to Keet Seel, one of the best preserved of all the North American cliff houses. That night we camped in the shadow of a house that still can only be accessed by ladder — and slumbered as the ancients wandered through our dreams.

Next morning we joined a park guide and entered a cliff dwelling that looked as if it had just been abandoned. Walls were graced by pottery and rock bins contained corn that appeared ready to be ground in the indentations of nearby rock. We saw ancient kivas sunk into the ground. We saw compact rock homes that once housed large family groups.

One hundred miles away, other cliff houses are found at Canyon de Chelly, but here again you must either hike or hire a native guide to join you in your dinghy vehicle, for this park is managed in cooperation with the Navajo tribe. You can also join a commercial group lead by a Navajo guide for a reasonable fee.

Almost a month later we returned to Chaco and found ourselves again staring down from the overlook onto Pueblo Bonito. Our circular route was appropriate, as some of those who departed the cliff dwellings, particularly those at Mesa Verde, drifted to Chaco to take up occupancy. However, by the end of the 1200s, the Puebloans drifted on — most believed to have become today's Hopi, Zuni, Zia, Acoma and the Rio Grande Pueblo People.

Still, for hundreds of years they had their day. And so we returned to our RV, parked once again in the shadow of Fajada Butte. Here, throughout this great circle of the ancients, the rocks were speaking once again, telling us that there are still lessons to be learned and grand stories to be heard. ♦

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IN HOT WATER

CARE AND REPAIR OF RV WATER HEATERS ARE EASY IF YOU FOLLOW THESE TRICKS OF THE TRADE

by JOEL DONALDSON

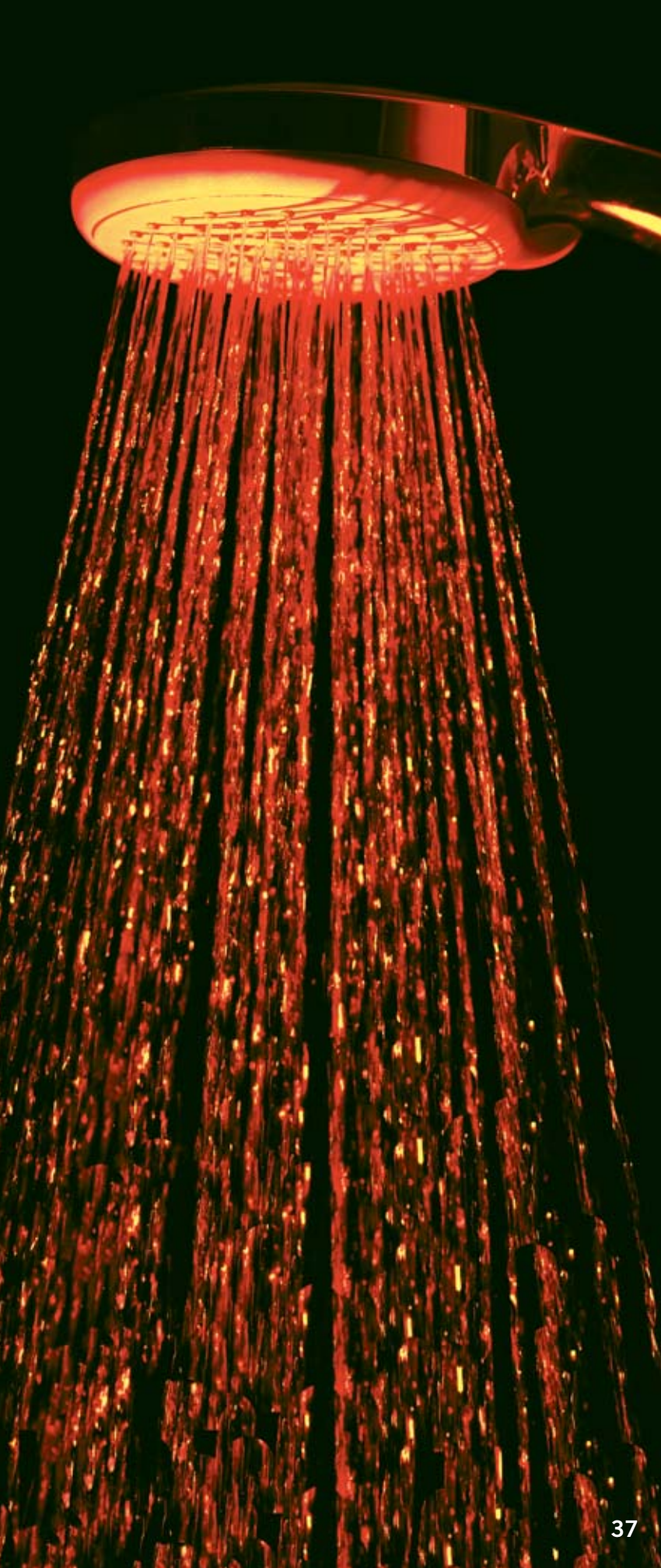
When it comes to essential motorhome creature comforts, hot water ranks right near the top of the list. Nobody enjoys ice-cold showers, and cold water just doesn't cut grease on dirty dishes. If your coach is equipped with a clothes washer, you probably rely on the hot water wash cycle to get your light-colored clothes their brightest.

Sadly, motorhome water heaters tend to be ignored and neglected, right up until the point where they stop operating — or worse yet, spill their rust-laden guts all over your carpet. Fortunately, avoiding unpleasant surprises isn't difficult or time-consuming. All it takes is occasional maintenance. Even if your water heater stops working entirely, you can take comfort in the fact that most repairs are quite easy and inexpensive — if you know a few tricks of the trade.

MAINTENANCE

Periodic flushing is important to eliminate minerals, sand and other debris inside the tank. It's an easy job.

After turning off the water heater, open a hot water faucet until the water runs cool. Turn off the shore water supply and demand pump, and use a socket wrench to remove the drain plug located on the outside of the water heater. Allow all the water to drain out of the tank before turning on the fresh water supply again, with the drain plug still removed. Continue to run the water for a while, using a screwdriver or old toothbrush to clear any debris that blocks the drain hole. Shut off the water supply and



allow the tank to drain fully. You can also make a small investment in a flushing tool that connects to the end of a water hose. These inexpensive devices do a good job cleaning debris out of the tank. Apply a small amount of thread sealant to the drain plug or anode rod before reinstalling it on the tank.

The Temperature/Pressure Release (or “TPR”) valve is designed to open whenever either the water temperature or pressure exceeds safe values. This safety feature prevents the tank from rupturing in the event that the thermostat should fail to shut the burner off. Essentially, a tank rupture is a small boiler explosion, capable of causing serious injuries and/or property damage. For this reason, a TPR valve must always be present and operating properly.

Since the TPR valve is prone to mineral build-up, one good maintenance procedure

is to “exercise” it occasionally. This is accomplished by pulling the pressure relief lever outward and releasing it several times, allowing water to escape out of the valve outlet each time. This helps to remove mineral deposits and grit from moving parts inside the valve, ensuring reliable operation. Take care to stand well away from the valve outlet while performing this procedure and only do this when the water is cool.

TPR valves are also prone to “weeping,” in which a small amount of water constantly leaks from the valve outlet. Although exercising the valve is sometimes effective in flushing away any debris that may be preventing the valve from closing entirely, the only way to fix a persistent leak is to replace the valve. Replacement TPR valves are sold in most camping supply stores. Usually, you’ll need a medium-size pipe wrench or set of locking pliers to remove the old valve,

and some pipe sealant compound or Teflon tape to apply to the threads of the new valve before installation.

Some motorhome water heaters are equipped with an anode. Typically constructed of magnesium, aluminum or zinc, this device is more prone to corrosion than other metal parts of the tank. Consequently, the anode “sacrifices” itself for the sake of the rest of the tank, ensuring that any corrosion is confined to the anode itself. Eventually, the entire anode corrodes away, at which point the other parts of the tank rust at a much faster rate. This makes occasional anode inspection essential, so that you can replace it before it is completely depleted (usually replaced when only 25 percent remains). Most RV supply stores sell replacement anodes in several configurations for less than \$20.

Finally, one other maintenance task is

Direct Spark Ignition (DSI) water heaters have an electric thermostat that constantly measures the temperature of the water, and sends a signal to the control board, right, when the temperature drops below the thermostat’s set-point.

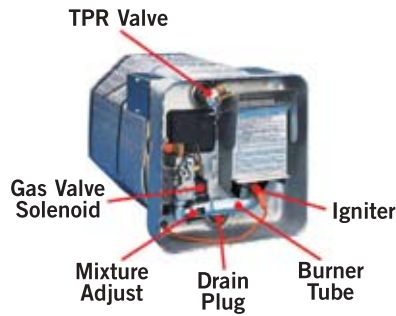


Rust on the burner tube can be removed with a wire brush or sandpaper before applying a coat of high-temperature spray paint. This water heater’s burner tube and igniter are beyond repair and need to be replaced.

A common problem is an improper LP-gas/air mixture in the burner. Most burner tubes have a mixture adjustment ring that should be set according to the color of the flame. An almost completely blue flame is the goal.



An old and new burner tube and igniter assembly.



The Temperature/Pressure Release, or “TPR,” valve will prevent the tank from rupturing if the thermostat should fail to shut the burner off.

to check the exterior water heater compartment for loose screws, rivets and corrosion, particularly on the burner tube and igniter support. Loose rivets can usually be drilled out and replaced with machine screws. Existing screws and rivets can often be replaced with corrosion-resistant stainless steel screws (available at most boating supply stores). Rust on the burner tube can be

removed with a wire brush or sandpaper before applying a coat of high-temperature spray paint (sold in hardware and department stores for painting barbecue grills).

TROUBLESHOOTING

One of the most common water heater problems is a pilot light (in models without Direct Spark Ignition) that fails to stay lit. Often the trouble can be traced to the thermocouple, which consists of a short length of thin copper tubing with a threaded fitting at one end and a metal probe at the other. This probe is positioned directly in the pilot flame and continuously checks for the presence of a strong flame, shutting off the supply of gas if the flame goes out. However, thermocouples tend to get “lazy” as they age. Initially, the burner is difficult to light; eventually the burner refuses to stay lit at all. Replacement thermocouples are inexpensive and readily

available at most RV supply houses.

Another common problem is an improper propane/air mixture in the burner, resulting in hard lighting, soot formation above the burner exhaust and slower water temperature recovery. Most burner tubes have a mixture adjustment ring that should be set according to the color of the flame. An almost completely blue flame is the goal, while a yellow or reddish flame indicates a problem. If adjusting the mixture ring fails to produce a blue flame, check the burner orifice (the small hole where LP-gas flows into the burner tube) for a partial obstruction.

Direct Spark Ignition (or “DSI”) water heaters operate quite differently from their pilot-flame counterparts. Before attempting to troubleshoot them, it is helpful to understand how they work:

1. An electric thermostat constantly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 53



An anode rod should be replaced when material loss is at 75 percent. The old rod, right, is totally dissolved and well beyond time for replacement.



The top anode rod is in obvious need of replacement. The rod is more prone to corrosion than other metal tank parts.



The Temperature/Pressure Release valve opens whenever water temperature or pressure exceeds safe values.



This convenient tool, which can be found at most RV stores, is used to flush the water heater. Periodic flushing is an important and easy maintenance procedure to eliminate minerals and other debris inside the tank.



A new thermal relay and ignition module.

PHOENIX CRUISER 2551S

THE NIMBLE,
GO-ANYWHERE COACH
IS COMPACT
IN SIZE BUT LONG
ON FEATURES

by FRED PAUSCH

2010 PHOENIX CRUISER 2551S

WHAT'S HOT

Unique retracting screen door, generous storage, compact galley, comfortable cockpit seating, 200-pound-capacity pullout compartment door drawer, intuitive dash controls.

WHAT'S NOT

Lack of reading lamps, uneven furnace heat, DVD player problems, no under-cabinet task light over bathroom sink, easy-to-get-dirty mirror on side splash of range.

Of the coaches we've reviewed over the years, those that most clearly stand out in our memory are the ones that were fun to drive and easy to use. The Phoenix Cruiser 2551S joins that list as a coach that's sure to please anyone who enjoys traveling in comfort and style.

THE TOUR

The Phoenix Cruiser returns for 2010 with the popular twin-bed, rear-bath floorplan. New this year is the addition of an enlarged slide, which creates an open, roomy feel in this 26-foot-long Class C motorhome. When entering, you immediately notice the aerodynamic, contoured side walls of the body and matching entry door and realize this is no ordinary motorhome as you close the unique retracting screen door.

Once inside, you're treated to the deep, rich tones of the optional (\$980) cherry cabinetry and trim that lines the cabin and slide in the Classic Umber décor selection. A light maple décor is also available along with three additional fabric choices. The optional (\$4,130) 7-foot-wide, 32-inch-deep slide holds the fold-out sofa air bed and a double-door fridge-freezer capable of easily handling a weekend getaway or holiday family feast.

Looking closely at the stain-hiding dark carpet selection surrounding the couch, you'll find four carpeted plugs hiding the sockets for the two-leg cherry-top pole table. In the travel mode, the table can be set up for a quick meal without having to extend the slide, and while



in camp, with the slide deployed, the table can be positioned again at the sofa or at right angles to it, creating a very useful snack island for the galley or at either end of the couch while watching the game on the 26-inch flat-screen TV housed in the forward overhead cabinets. Add the optional (\$504) surround sound DVD player and you've created an excellent home theater on wheels. The optional Premium Convenience Package (\$8,393) adds the 26-inch TV, convection/microwave oven, gas/electric water heater, outside shower, TV antenna with booster, roof air with heat strip, 5,000-pound hitch receiver, Fan-Tastic roof fan, wood accent dash trim and tray, electric step, outside mirrors with heat and 1,800-watt power inverter.

For those who need space to work at a computer, Phoenix provides a fold-up laptop-size table accessed from the co-pilot's seat after swiveling aft on its cockpit pedestal. Storage for AV media and general cargo abound throughout the cabin as well as in the oversize drawer under the sofa for bedding and pillows. Tight cabinet joints and beautiful, consistent wood finishes give this interior the sophisticated look of a much larger, high-end coach.

The galley blends seamlessly into the living area with the use of complementary solid surface countertop colors set on the full extension drawer and cabinet galley module. Fill-in covers for the dual burner range and a very deep single-basin solid surface sink create a useful food prep area augmented by a counter extension matching the cherry dining table. The sink and



When the slide is deployed, it creates a roomy, vinyl-floored space. The sofa folds out, revealing an air bed. From either end of the couch, a 26-inch flat-screen TV housed in the forward overhead cabinets is visible.



The twin-bed floorplan comes with 6-foot-1-inch bed and one 5-foot-8-inch bed (due to the slide clearance). They are anchored by his-and-hers half-height wardrobes.



PHOTOS: FRED PAUSCH



Dash controls are situated for intuitive use and the gauges, which monitor the health of the Triton V-10, are simple and easy to read. The Cruiser also has first-rate, comfortable cockpit seating.



The compact, easy-to-use galley features a residential-style single lever sink faucet and a microwave-convection oven combo.



A handy, unique retracting screen door enables campers to let the breeze in but keep the bugs out.



The two-leg cherry-top pole table can be set up for a quick meal at the sofa or at right angles to it.

range covers stow behind the range in a drop-in slot, offering useful protection from cooking splatters, while coordinated vinyl floor coverings at the entry and throughout the galley help ease cleanups from meal spills, pets or the intrepid family trekkers.

Mirrors are useful in creating the illusion of more space and are often used in smaller coaches, but it was unusual to find a mirror on the side splash of the range, a feature that will require extra effort to keep clean. The residential-style single lever sink faucet and handy pullout spray hose create a very clean look to the otherwise unbroken galley countertop. The micro/convection oven combo and powered range exhaust hood that houses the coach system's monitor panel complete a fully featured, compact and easy-to-use galley.

After a busy day, a soft bed is very appealing and with this twin-bed plan, you can take your pick of the comfortable 6-foot-1-inch or the 5-foot-8-inch beds (needed for slide clearance) that are anchored by his-and-hers half-height wardrobes and overhead cabinet storage. A full-length double door hanging wardrobe is provided along the curbside wall in the bath and can accommodate a significant amount of clothing and/or odd-size cargo. The cabin dining table and pole legs are also stowed here for travel.

The optional (\$1,078) 15-inch HD flat screen TV is mounted to the curbside bedroom wardrobe and hinged to allow a reasonable view from the other bed. However, the DVD player seemed to be an afterthought, using a simple, bare metal automotive-style hanger that the factory is now

installing in its own small enclosure. That same DVD player had fits running on inverter power supplied by the coach's Xantrex 1,800-watt modified sine wave inverter, causing an oscillating hum in the soundtrack and making the movie unwatchable despite numerous attempts to correct the problem. We turned to reading a book instead but after settling in discovered the lack of any reading lamps — there's only the excellent overhead fluorescent light fixtures that run the entire length of the coach. Phoenix prides itself on custom touches and by capitalizing on factory-direct sales, customers can generally order additional specialty items they require, within reason.

Cool evening weather prompted the use of the furnace and like most RV systems, plenty of heat is available but directing it to the proper outlet is often a problem. Vents closest to the source have the greatest output and such was the case in the Cruiser, but a switch from free-flow to adjustable-flow outlets would likely solve the problem of too much heat in the smallest room and not enough in the largest. The factory is also considering the addition of adjustable outlets on future models.

Bath accommodations are excellent and large enough for two when necessary with a domed skylight in the shower to accommodate taller campers as headroom decreases slightly near the side walls from the contoured one-piece fiberglass roof design. The bath layout maximizes the available space and provides proper storage for personal items as well as a dedicated linen closet for extended trip needs. Overhead

lighting is excellent but again, an under-cabinet task light over the sink would be an excellent addition for late-night use.

Exterior features include a unique 200-pound-capacity pullout compartment door drawer. The interior cover folds up to enlarge the space to handle tall, bulky items and is watertight. We'd like to see a small drawer drain and cap added to handle wet items or ice. The Cruiser is also equipped with a Sani-Con holding tank transfer system. Highly regarded as an easy and clean way to handle tank dumping chores, the system uses a macerator pump to discharge effluent into any legal discharge point up to 20 feet higher than the pump and in a pinch, can also discharge through any ordinary garden hose. Phoenix has also engineered a large, shallow trunk into the rear wall of the 2551S that is capable of holding a pair of lawn chairs, patio mat, freshwater hose and other camp setup items often needed and sometimes dirty from use.

THE DRIVE

Driving the Cruiser is a treat. Its length makes it very nimble when negotiating crowded campgrounds or parking lots and its aerodynamics minimally react to approaching or passing large commercial vehicles. Heading out for the first time you're treated to silence. No, not from your co-pilot but a refreshing lack of rattles, squeaks and odd harmonics that can irritate and detract from an otherwise fun trip.

Attention to detail in coach body, design and cabinetry construction allowed normal conversation levels and wireless



The bath layout maximizes available space and includes proper storage and a domed skylight in the shower.

Bluetooth phone calls without annoying distraction. The only rattle that we noted was from a loose convection oven rack still packaged inside the yet unused oven.

Ford provides excellent heated mirrors on the E-series chassis using nearly a third of the mirror head for a large, wide-angle mirror at the bottom, offering excellent side and rear visibility and large enough to clearly monitor rear tires or forgotten unlatched compartment doors. Rear visibility is further enhanced by the optional (\$1,008) rear camera and color monitor mounted next to the optional (\$304) compass/temperature interior rearview mirror that makes use of the centered rear bath window.

We traveled freeways and country blacktop and the Cruiser remained planted wherever we pointed it. Factory sway bars fore and aft minimized the little body lean we could wring out of it and the only improvement we'd suggest would be the addition of an improved steering damper when cruising over unevenly patched as-

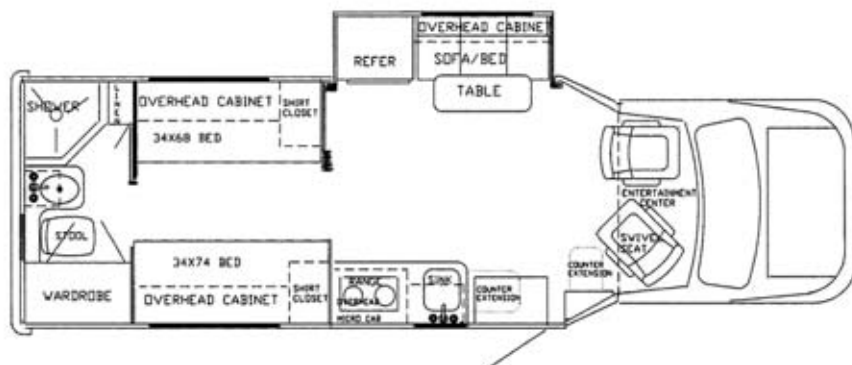
phalt roads.

Power from the V-10 engine was readily available to tame even the 6 percent and 7 percent grades encountered and we had no trouble maintaining 53 MPH in third gear at 3,000 RPM to the crest. A Power Stroke diesel engine option is also available. The brake actuated auto-downshifting Tow/Haul feature of the TorqShift transmission makes descents a controlled affair utilizing drivetrain electronics to assist with engine braking gear selection. Using the Tow/Haul feature on downgrades kept speeds at 55 MPH at 3,000 RPM in third gear, requiring only minimal service brake applications to maintain a safe and controlled speed.

Simple, complete and easy-to-read cockpit gauges monitor the health of the Triton V-10 engine and dash controls are laid out for intuitive use, avoiding repetitive eye contact. Seating is first rate and Phoenix nailed it on its choice of comfortable cockpit seating with the optional (\$686) leather covered captain's chairs with optional (\$504) six-way power adjustments on the driver's side, making them one of most comfortable sets we've used. Great support with infinite adjustments combined with the Cruiser's stance and minimal interior noise eliminated tiring stints behind the wheel.

Simply stated, we wish we had more time in the Phoenix Cruiser. It's a motorhome that contains all the ingredients for great trips near and far.

With convenient options such as the (\$924) push-button awning; the upscale interior appointments; appealing décor; and a very livable floorplan, you might think you've stepped into a much larger motorhome. You'll immediately appreciate the craftsmanship Phoenix builds into each coach and better understand why there is such a large and loyal owner following of this brand. ♦



SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 9.1 MPG

ACCELERATION:

0-60 MPH: 16.5 SEC

40-60 MPH: 10.8 SEC

CHASSIS

MANUFACTURER: FORD

MODEL: E-450

ENGINE: FORD TRITON 6.8-L V-10
(OPTIONAL POWER STROKE DIESEL AVAILABLE)

SAE HP: 305 @ 4,250 RPM

TORQUE: 420 LB-FT @ 3,250 RPM

TRANSMISSION: 5-SPEED AUTO

AXLE RATIO: 4.56:1

TIRES: LT225/75R16E

WHEELBASE: 194"

BRAKES, F/R: DISC WITH ABS

SUSPENSION, F/R: TWIN I-BEAM,
COIL SPRING WITH STABILIZER BAR/
LEAF SPRING WITH STABILIZER BAR

FUEL CAP: 55 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YRS/36,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 26' 5"

EXT WIDTH: 7' 9"

EXT HEIGHT: 10' 1"

INT WIDTH: 7' 5.5"

INT HEIGHT: 6' 4"

CONSTRUCTION: ALUMINUM FRAMING,
FIBERGLASS SKIN AND ROOF, POLYSTYRENE
SHEET INSULATION

FRESHWATER CAP: 45 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 35 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 23 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: 6 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 10 GAL

FURNACE (1): 30,000 BTU

AIR CONDITIONER (1): 13,500 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 12 CU-FT, (OPTIONAL 17 CU-FT)

CONVERTER: 50 AMPS

INVERTER: 1,800-WATT MODIFIED SINE WAVE

BATTERY: (1) 12-VOLT CHASSIS,

(2) 12-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 4KW

BASE MSRP: \$81,886

MSRP AS TESTED: \$102,021

WARRANTY: 1 YR

WET WEIGHT

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

FRONT AXLE: 4,120 LBS

REAR AXLE: 7,300 LBS

TOTAL: 11,420 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 4,600/9,500 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 14,500/20,450 LBS

OCCE: 3,080 LBS

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

OCCE: OCCUPANT AND CARGO CARRYING
CAPACITY RATING

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CHECKING YOUR COACH'S 'LIFE BLOODS'



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HERE'S HOW TO EXAMINE **THE HEALTH** OF YOUR DRIVETRAIN

by GARY WESCOTT

Most of us get some kind of physical once every year or so — even if we think we're healthy, it's nice to have a doctor confirm our condition. Usually there is a blood panel done to check on nasty stuff like cholesterol.

When was the last time you checked the "life bloods" of your motorhome? I'm talking about the oil and lubricants that keep your engine, transmission and differential alive, as well as your engine's coolant. If you live where temperatures never go below freezing, you might think the coolant or antifreeze in your engine aren't a concern. That is a major mistake.

Sure you look at the radiator's overflow tank and pull the dipsticks out now and then, but you have no way of knowing what you're looking at, or what's really going on inside, any more than checking your pulse and blood pressure can tell you the whole story. Is your drivetrain really healthy?

There is a way to find out, and it's sur-

prisingly easy and affordable without tearing things apart. We used our 1999 Ford F-550 motorhome as a guinea pig. We contacted Oil Analyzers Inc. and Polaris Laboratories, two companies we found to be the most helpful of those we contacted. They sent us nifty little sample jars (a jar in a jar for no leak worries) and special forms to identify the parameters. Source, type of lubricant or coolant, miles or time in use, etc., are all needed by the tribologists and lab technicians. (Tribology is "the science of the mechanisms of friction, lubrication and wear of interacting surfaces that are in relative motion.")

Taking a sample from the engine after it has been brought up to operating temperature can be tricky and messy. The dirty way is to sneak a little with a jar while you drain the oil. An easier way is to use the Femco No-Spill System, which uses an adapter in the oil pan and a drain tube that opens up a valve to allow all or just a little oil to flow out. No drips. No mess. No oil running down your arm.

Still cleaner, we used an Oil Analysis Pump Kit (Part #G-1206) from Amsoil; it's a long tube that is inserted down the dipstick tube (engine or transmission). Oil or ATF is pumped directly into the test jar. The same kit can be used for any gearbox that has a fill plug, like a differential, all without even getting your hands dirty. A test jar screws onto the pump's outlet. The kit comes with instructions for how to measure the correct length of tubing.

We took the opportunity in researching this article to test our Power Stroke engine, differentials, transmission and transfer case. While most motorhomes are not four-wheel drive, and most have automatic transmissions, the procedure is the same.

A typical spectrochemical analysis checks for iron, chromium, nickel, aluminum, copper, lead, tin, cadmium, silver, vanadium, sodium, potassium, titanium, molybdenum, antimony, manganese, lithium, boron, magnesium, calcium, barium, phosphorous and zinc, all measured in parts per million (ppm) by weight. Addi-

UNIT ID
SECOND ID
UNIT TYPE
MANUAL TRANSMISSION
APPLICATION
UNKNOWN

ACCOUNT NUMBER
DATE SAMPLED: 09/15/08
DATE RECEIVED: 10/30/08
DATE COMPLETED: 10/31/08

TRACKING #: 08185K01603
MANUFACTURER/MODEL: FORD ZF 6 SPEED
LUBE MFR: REDLINE
LUBE TYPE - GRADE: ATF
MICRON RATING: 0
FILTER TYPE:
SUMP CAPACITY: 0.00
HYD SYSTEM PRESSURE: 0
FLUID ADDED:

COMPANY INFORMATION
GARY WESCOTT

Oil Analyzers INC.

OVERALL SEVERITY OF REPORT
based on comments, not individual flags

ACTION SUGGESTED

0	1	2	3	4
NORMAL		ABNORMAL		CRITICAL

LAB #: 977744 **LOCATION**: I **ANALYST**: RNF

FLUID ANALYSIS REPORT - 877-458-3315

COMMENTS: Suggest inspecting this unit for EXCESSIVE WEAR; We suggest that an Analytical Ferrogram be performed to clarify the type of wear and/or contamination that is present; Aluminum is at a SEVERE LEVEL; ALUMINUM source in GEAR SYSTEMS may be BUSHING/THRUST metal, ALUMINA SILICA (Dirt), HOUSING metal or contamination from ALUMINUM COMPLEX GREASE; Abrasives (silicon/dirt) are at a MINOR LEVEL; Lubricant change acknowledged;

WEAR METALS - PPM										CONTAMINANT METALS - PPM					MULTI-SOURCE METALS - PPM					ADDITIVE METALS - PPM											
S	A	C	A	C	C	C	V	S	P	T	M	A	H	L	H	A	C	B	B	P	H	O	S	P	H	O	R	Z	I	N	C
#	141	0	0	166	27	3	0	0	0	0	25	1	0	0	3	0	3	0	123	0	39	1	246	11							
S	A	C	A	C	C	C	V	S	P	T	M	A	H	L	H	A	C	B	B	P	H	O	S	P	H	O	R	Z	I	N	C
#	1	141	0	0	166	27	3	0	0	0	0	25	1	0	0	3	0	3	0	123	0	39	1	246	11						

S	A	C	A	C	C	C	V	S	P	T	M	A	H	L	H	A	C	B <td>B</td> <td>P</td> <td>H</td> <td>O</td> <td>S</td> <td>P</td> <td>H</td> <td>O</td> <td>R</td> <td>Z</td> <td>I</td> <td>N</td> <td>C</td>	B	P	H	O	S	P	H	O	R	Z	I	N	C
#	1	09/15/08	10/30/08	115220	65380	Y	N																								
#	1	09/15/08	10/30/08	115220	65380	Y	N																								

Comments are advisory only and are based on the assumption that the sample and data submitted are valid. Missing tube or unit time limits the evaluation. No warranty is expressed or implied.

Reports from Oil Analyzers Inc. are easy to read and use a colored number code from 0 to 4. There are also written comments with each sample analyzed.

tionally, they check viscosity, and look for soot, water, fuel and acid.

Our 7.3-L Power Stroke came back with a clean bill of health, with 115,000 miles on it at the time the samples were taken. We liked the easy-to-read reports from Oil Analyzers, which uses a colored number code from 0 to 4 (red). Red (4) is "critical." There are also written comments with each sample analyzed.

The Ford ZF six-speed manual transmission and the factory transfer case were both red-tagged "4" critical, with high levels of aluminum, a possible indication of gear or bearing wear, bushing and thrust metal, alumina silica (dirt), housing metal, or contamination from aluminum complex grease. There was also an abnormal level of manganese, 114 PPM. Obviously we were concerned. We contacted Dave Tingey, field services engineer at Oil Analyzers, for his opinion.

He told us that the high levels of aluminum found in our transmission and transfer case might be coming from the

housings. They were flagged because the levels were significantly higher than what they would expect from a ZF-6 transmission. Manganese is usually a steel alloy found in gears. He recommended an analytical ferrograph to determine if these levels of aluminum were actually an indication of wear, or the possibility that they were just aluminum oxides, which are basically sub-micron and are not normally serious.

In performing an analytical ferrograph, the oil sample is run over a glass slide and there is a magnet that captures all the ferrous particles and lines them up on the slide. Since aluminum is non-ferrous you would think this would not show up on the slide, but there are usually enough ferrous particles generated in most equipment that the non-ferrous particles, including dirt, can be trapped and seen.

They then view the glass slide under a microscope and the analyst can see the type of material in question. When he knows the type of material and the unit type (transmission/engine), he can make the determination

of whether the aluminum in the sample is from actual wear, or if the lack of aluminum on the slide indicates it's just aluminum oxides, and probably not a problem.

To give us an idea of the size of the spectral-wear metals that are in the report, he said they are usually 10 microns. Anything smaller can normally only be seen with a microscope. For comparison, a human blood cell averages 3 to 6 microns.

Coolant is as critical to the proper function of any engine as oil, but especially diesels. The new engines introduced in the last few years are designed to lower fuel consumption and meet impending federal emission laws. As a result, the cooling systems for these new designs must operate at much higher temperatures. This makes careful cooling system maintenance necessary to avoid engine damage. Improper mixtures of antifreeze can cause corrosion, rust and overheating.

Specifically for diesel engines, there is a danger of cylinder cavitation or pitting. According to www.TheDieselStop.com, this

COOLANT



Fleetguard ES Compleat 50/50 Premix Antifreeze/Coolant uses environmentally friendly propylene glycol.



A turkey baster is an easy way to extract a sample of coolant from your radiator for lab analysis.



Polaris Laboratories offers an easy-to-use test kit for taking small samples of your coolant to use with its test strips.

is a localized low-pressure zone that forms adjacent to the outer wall of the cylinder. It is caused by the flexing of the cylinder wall due to the high cylinder pressures experienced in diesel engine ignition. This fast cylinder wall movement causes a low-pressure zone to be created in the coolant adjacent to the cylinder wall. When this pressure zone drops below the vapor pres-

sure point (temperature, coolant ratio and additive dependent), a vapor bubble is formed. When this low-pressure zone returns to a high-pressure zone, the vapor bubble collapses, causing an implosion or pitting phenomenon on the cylinder wall, (like hitting the surface with a microscopic ball peen hammer). If left unchecked, pits can turn into little pinholes, and that's

an engine's death sentence.

The proper mixture of water to antifreeze (50/50 is recommended as a starting point) not only protects the engine from freezing, it also raises the boiling point. That's very important in today's high-tech engines.

There are two types of antifreeze commonly available, propylene glycol and ethylene glycol. Ethylene glycol is consid-

LUBRICANTS



Looking, touching and smelling your used oil does not tell you exactly what's going on inside your engine or gearboxes.



The Oil Analysis Pump Kit (Part #G-1206) from Amsoil uses a long tube, which is inserted down the dipstick tube. Oil or lube is pumped directly into the test jar.



The Femco No-Spill System uses an adapter in the oil pan and a drain plug with a valve that allows all or just a little oil to flow out. No drips. No mess. No oil running down your arm.



Amsoil's Oil Analysis Pump Kit (Part #G-1206) is a simple and clean way to take samples out of the rear axle.



Oil Analyzers Inc. and Polaris Laboratories supply small sample jars, mailers and forms to identify the parameters.



The Polaris Quik-Chek can tell you the freeze point, pH, and concentration of molybdate and nitrite, which in turn will determine the number of supplemental coolant additive (SCA) units per gallon in the system.



A refractometer is a simple way to determine the freeze point protection for the mixture you have.

ered to be highly toxic — a poison. Its alternative, propylene glycol, is a colorless, odorless liquid, which is generally recognized as safe by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In addition to antifreeze, coolants and aircraft de-icing fluids, it is also used in foods, fragrances, cosmetics and personal care products.

Propylene glycol is slightly less effective at lowering the freeze point, so a little higher concentration must be used in extreme locations, like Alaska. However, for normal use, it has a higher heat transfer efficiency. That's an advantage when you're lugging up a long, hot pass, and signs warn, "Turn air conditioner off — next eight miles."

By now, you should be wondering how you can tell what's in your cooling system. There are three important ways to test. A refractometer can be used to determine the freeze point protection for ethylene glycol and propylene glycol. By placing a drop of your coolant on the refractometer's viewing plate, after first calibrating it with distilled water, and using the internal scale, you can calculate the freezing temperature. For example, a 52 percent concentration of propylene glycol will bring your protection point down to minus 50°F, colder than most of us will ever see.

To prevent cavitation, a diesel engine's coolant should be checked at regular intervals with a test kit such as the Fleetguard CC2607 Quik-Chek or the Polaris four-part test strips. By simply dipping one of these test strips into your coolant and reading the chart, it will tell you the freeze point and the concentration of molybdate and nitrite, which in turn will determine the number of supplemental coolant additive (SCA) units per gallon in the system. The Polaris strips also measure pH. With this knowledge, you can add the appropriate amount of additive, antifreeze or distilled water to bring the coolant back up to a safe level. Fleetguard's DCA4 additive protects against corrosion, scale formation, foam, liner pitting and solder bloom.

A third method of testing, and perhaps the best, is to have your coolant analyzed by a professional lab. A turkey baster works well for taking a sample. Polaris offers a small syringe kit specifically for this purpose. We sent a sample from our Power Stroke engine to Polaris Laboratories. The results were very informative.

Our coolant showed a high level of sulfates, 461 PPM, and an SCA level of 6.1. The recommended level is 3.2 units per gallon. Our antifreeze was only 44 percent, which would protect us down to minus

13°F, but reduced our boiling point to a relative low 222°F. Nitrites were high, at 4,123 ppm, which may cause a precipitant problem. In our case, the imbalance could be easily corrected by adding a little Fleetguard propylene glycol concentrate.

According to Polaris, if the proper level of SCA is not maintained on a regular basis, every 15°F to 17°F increase in cooling system operating temperature above 160°F can result in a potential doubling of deposits or acid pitting of metal for the same coolant problem, in the same amount of time, with the same rate of flow. (See examples below.)

Having the lubricants and coolant in your motorhome's drivetrain tested periodically can save you a lot of money in the long run. For example, you may find that your oil doesn't really need changing, and with the price of quality synthetic oils and lubricants, that's a money saver in itself. Given the importance of your engine's cooling system, keeping tabs on its concentration and level of SCA is equally important.

Dave Tingey advised us that "trending" analysis is best used for both lubricants and coolants. When a problem starts, it's usually small. If you trend the fluids and the levels of wear increase, you can often fix the problem before it reaches catastrophic proportions. Trending is sort of like getting a blood panel done when you're 50 for a base line, and checking it again in a year to see if anything has changed. High cholesterol? Just add a few units of Fleetguard's DCA4, or maybe Lipitor might work better. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.amsoil.com.

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FILTRATION-FLEETGUARD
800-223-4583,
www.cumminsfiltration.com.

FEMCO NO-SPILL SYSTEMS
888-466-7745,

www.nospillsystems.com.

OIL ANALYZERS INC.

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POLARIS LABORATORIES

877-808-3750,
www.polarislabs.com.

EXAMPLES:

160°F ENGINE OPERATING TEMPERATURE

Base point

190°F ENGINE OPERATING TEMPERATURE

Potential increase of pitting or deposit is 400 percent, but reduces ring and bearing wear by 40 percent.

205°F ENGINE OPERATING TEMPERATURE

Potential increase for pitting or deposit is 800 percent.

220°F ENGINE OPERATING TEMPERATURE

Potential increase for pitting or deposit is 1,600 percent.



GOING ON TOUR

When Winnebago reworked its premium coach line under the Tour banner for 2010, it introduced three new floorplans and made some changes to the fourth. Three of the four models are 40-footers and one is a tag-axle-equipped 42-footer. All the Tours exude high class and luxury; we took a close look at the 40BD, a tri-slide model loaded with all the bells and whistles.

As you enter the coach from the front door, a potpourri of interior components sends your senses into overdrive. Striking ceramic tile throughout the entire front section (and ending at the rear bedroom) contrasts beautifully with the high-quality cabinetry and light-colored ultraleather furniture.

Opposing slides up front create a living area and galley that will easily

appeal to all facets of the lifestyle. Once the slides are extended, a tremendous amount of square footage keeps the streetside galley and curbside lounging/dining area clearly separate. The galley has all the amenities, including an extension of the structure that houses the large LCD TV.

Potential owners have a number of options when configuring the living room. For dining, the choice is between a table that extends (can expand) from the adjacent cabinetry and free-standing chairs or the more traditional booth-type dinette. We spent our time on the Rest Easy sofa and Euro chair/ottoman, which are perfectly placed for viewing the TV. The sofa can be substituted by Rest Easy theater seating along with the Euro chair, or with an extendable sectional sofa that expands into the area where the

Euro chair would otherwise be planted. In all cases, the sofas are controlled by electronic mechanisms that recline the sections, and have pullout footrests. Once you turn the comfy cockpit seats toward the living area, the entire front section becomes party central for those who love to socialize with other campground residents.

A curbside side aisle leads to the bathroom and bedroom. As you move toward the back, the fully enclosed bathroom is accessed via a door directly across from large picture windows, which really brighten up the hallway. Inside the bathroom, a large corner shower and the ceramic floor tile steal the show. Curved, sliding glass doors lead to a very roomy shower area, graced with plenty of shelving and high-quality fixtures, including a Moen mixer





Winnebago's new flagship coach offers luxury appointments and upgraded systems for discriminating enthusiasts

valve. There's plenty of room to store bathroom essentials, even when the optional washer/dryer occupies the space. A porcelain toilet and nice size sink round out the bathroom amenities.

Out back, the 72-by-80-inch king bed is tucked into the third slideout. An electronic mechanism collapses the bed so it fits in the room while the slide is retracted. The bed is flanked by two narrow nightstands, and opposing windows in the slide neutralize any claustrophobia. At the foot of the bed is a chest of drawers with a nice countertop for stashing personal items. Above this structure is an LCD TV. The wardrobe with mirrored sliding doors occupies the rear wall.

Throughout the coach are plenty of cabinets, drawers and cubbyholes for storing items. Recessed lighting in the ceiling and switching flexibility keep the interior illuminated for entertaining, reading or mood. High-end day/night window coverings take the frustration out of handling pleated shades; there are no temperamental strings to deal with.

All the Tours are built on the Freightliner Maxum chassis powered by a 400-

HP Cummins engine that's tied to an Allison 3000MH, six-speed electronic transmission. Neway's front and rear air suspension civilizes the ride, and the chassis is rated to tow dinghies up to 10,000 pounds (depending on coach loading).

The chassis configuration provides for spacious pass-through storage compartments, utilizing doors that open to

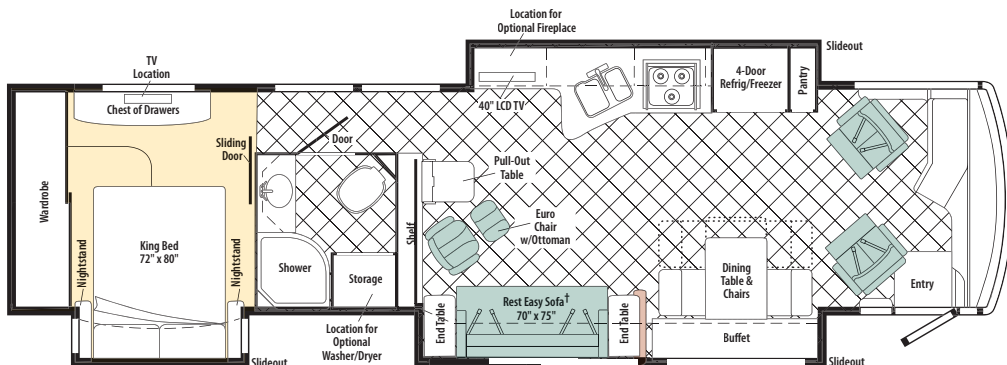
the sides and provide convenient access. The service center compartment has been upgraded with a monitor panel and soap dispenser. There are also reels for the water hose and power cord.

Winnebago's Tour is a seriously upgraded coach designed for folks with very discriminating tastes. The company has put a lot of thought into this coach and it shows right from the get-go. ♦

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FREIGHTLINER MAXUM	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 7'
ENGINE: CUMMINS ISL 400 HP	WHEELBASE: 276"
FUEL: 100 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 100 GAL
GVWR: 34,320 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 94 GAL
LENGTH: 40' 7"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 57 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 5"	LP-GAS CAP: 30 GAL
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 4"	BASE MSRP: \$276,473

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PHOTOS: BOB LIVINGSTON

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January 15-17 | Chantilly, VA

Mid America RV Show
January 15-17 & 22-24 | Kansas City, MO

**43rd Annual New Jersey
RV & Camping Show**
January 22-24 | Edison, NJ

**43rd Annual Minneapolis/St. Paul RV,
Vacation & Travel Show**
February 11-14 | Minneapolis, MN

25th Annual Richmond Camping RV Expo
February 12-14 | Richmond, VA

**17th Annual Rhode Island
RV & Camping Show**
February 26-28 | Providence, RI

**15th Annual Atlantic City
RV & Camping Show**
March 5-7 | Atlantic City, NJ

6th Annual Virginia RV Show
March 12-14 | Hampton, VA

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April 8-11 | Pomona, CA

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DIY: FULL-TIMER'S FOOTSTOOL

THIS INEXPENSIVE PROJECT SERVES TRIPLE DUTY: STORAGE, TABLETOP AND OTTOMAN

by PERRY SEXTON

When my wife, Sandy, and I picked up our new Phaeton motorhome to begin our life as full-time RVers, we noticed a vast space between the pilot and the co-pilot's seat. Vast space, you say? Well, at least from the perspective of passing things back and forth while traveling.

Our solution was a three-in-one footstool: the inside serves as a handy storage area; the recessed top holds items we need while driving; and the top (with a cushion added) makes a nice footstool when we're in camp. The materials cost less than \$50 and the ottoman works great. It easily slides on the coach's ceramic floor, yet it doesn't move while we're underway.

Here are the instructions, materials list and dimensions I used; you may need to alter them to suit your needs. Note: This project requires a table saw, jig or circular saw.

MATERIALS

- 1 4-by-8-foot sheet of ½-inch plywood (imperfections in the grain won't matter because they'll be covered)
- Wood glue
- About 50 1-inch wood screws
- Quilt batting or foam for padding
- Fabric or covering of your choice
- Upholstering tacks (if desired)
- Stain or paint

PREPARATION

You'll first need to decide the dimensions of your footstool (I made a mock-up out of cardboard). My outside measurements were: 17 inches tall by 14 inches wide by 20 inches long. Cutting across the width of the plywood (see illustration A), cut one 17-by-48-inch piece and then cut two 13-by-48-inch pieces. From the 17-inch piece, cut two sections 20 inches long for the two sides. From one of the 13-inch pieces, cut a piece 17 inches for one end and 19 inches for the bottom. From the other 13-inch piece, cut a section 17 inches for the other end and one 18½ inches for the top. (The top's width will have to be cut down more later in order to fit loosely enough to open and close.) At this point, stand up all four sides around the bottom to be certain of your fit and make any adjustments. From the remaining plywood, cut two 2-inch-by-48-inch strips and cut those into two 13-inch pieces and two 18-inch pieces.

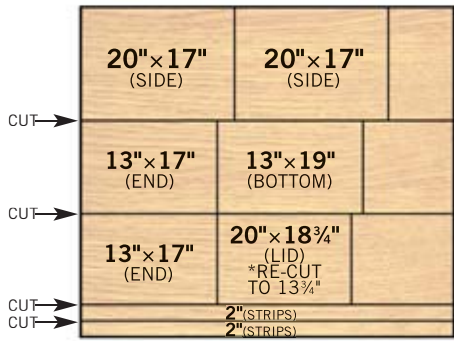
ASSEMBLING THE PARTS

Lay the bottom on a work table (protected from glue drippings).



With plywood, batting, paint or stain and your favorite fabric, you can create a versatile footstool for your coach. The ottoman can be used to store items as well as serve as a tabletop. The footstool can be moved easily on the motorhome's floor, yet stays put during travel. The cost of materials is less than \$50.

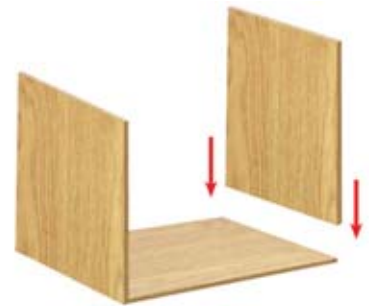
Turn the best side of the plywood toward the inside as it will be seen. Run an adequate bead of glue along one end of the bottom and screw one end piece to it using four screws spaced evenly (B). (All screws near the end should be inset about an inch.) Wipe off excess glue. Assemble the other end in the same manner (C). Now glue and assemble each side, fasten-



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I

ing them to the bottom and ends with screws (D). At this point, you should have a wooden box with an open top.

Two inches down on the inside of the box, make a line all the way around the box (E). The top of the 2-inch stripping is to be placed on this line. Check all stripping for proper fit, generously glue and install one piece at a time using four screws per strip (F). If screws protrude to the outside they can be ground down. This stripping provides support for the top (G).

With all the wood parts assembled, it's time to round and smooth the edges and corners. A router can be of help here, but I did it the hard way — with elbow grease and a wood rasp. All edges should be rounded somewhat, including those along the floor. The top edge needs to be done carefully, inside and out. The eight sharp corners need to be rounded so the upholstery won't wear so easily at these critical points.

UPHOLSTERING

Cover the box with the batting material using ¼-inch staples near the top and bottom edges and where needed. Allow the batting to only come as far as the top inside edge so it won't make it bulky and interfere with the top cover being lifted on and off. Lap the batting around onto the bottom about 2-plus inches, folding the corners as needed.

Measure around the box for the length of the material and add 4 inches. With the box laid on one side, start the material on the up side at a corner, paying close attention to allow just enough material to fold over the top edge and down to the stripping on the inside (H). The material can lap around onto the bottom 3 or more inches. Run the material across this side, keeping it even. Once the material is straight staple the fabric at its starting point all along the edge, which will be covered when the wrap is completed.

Wrap the material all the way around the box to the starting point. Keep each side straight as you go, using thumb tacks if needed to hold it in place temporarily. I ended about 4 inches beyond the starting corner. Cut off about 3 inches and fold under enough to make this seam 1 inch from the corner. I used five upholstery tacks evenly spaced up this seam. I also added tacks to all corners of the two sides in order to match, but not on the ends. (By doing this you can see how two or even four smaller pieces of cloth could be used

if desired.) Fold the top edge over and staple near the top of the inside stripping. Fold the material over at the bottom (cut to allow about 4 inches) and staple. Use a hammer to be certain the staples are “set” so as not to contact and scratch the floor. You may also use felt stick-on pads in each corner to protect the floor.

The lid (see I) can now be recut so that it will easily go on and off (about a 1/8-inch clearance all around). Round and smooth all edges on the lid with sandpaper so it won't snag the material as it is being

opened and closed. You can paint or stain the top or even cover it with the material (without padding). We stained ours and then added white nonslip shelf liner to hold things when we use it as a console. We fastened brass tacks at each corner to hold the liner in place when taking the lid off. To make the lid easier to lift off, drill a hole for a finger or add a small knob.

The cushions that came with our motorhome fit it very well for weary legs and feet at the end of a day of enjoying all that the RVing lifestyle has to offer. ♦

IN HOT WATER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

measures the water temperature, sending a signal to the control board as soon as the water temperature drops below the thermostat's set-point.

2. The control board responds to this signal by opening an electric valve that supplies LP-gas to the burner.

3. A fraction of a second later, the control board sends several thousand volts to an igniter plug located inside the burner, causing an electrical spark that ignites the propane/air mixture in the burner.

4. Finally, the control board applies a voltage to the igniter plug that varies depending on the presence or absence of a burner flame. If the flame is present, the control board continues to keep gas flowing to the burner. If not, the gas valve is briefly turned off to allow unburned gas to dissipate outdoors before starting the whole ignition process all over again. If several attempts to light the burner are unsuccessful, the control board abandons the process until the fault is corrected. Typically, the board also flashes a light on the control switch to draw attention to the problem.

To troubleshoot a balky DSI water heater, have an assistant turn on the power switch while you watch the burner ignition process as it starts up. Listen for a clicking sound as the gas valve opens, followed by a series of sharp snaps as a spark repeatedly jumps across the igniter plug, followed by a “whoosh” as the burner ignites.

If you don't hear the gas valve open, check for corroded electrical connections on the gas valve solenoid and on the control board, and for electrical continuity in

the valve solenoid coils.

If you don't hear the igniter plug sparking, check for (1) broken or poor connections to the igniter, (2) loose or rusted mounting screws, rivets or other poor ground connections between the igniter and the main body of the water heater, and (3) water or moisture on either the igniter or high-voltage wire that connects it to the control board.

If you don't hear a whoosh as the burner ignites, check your LP-gas tank and regulator for adequate supply and pressure, and then check for improperly adjusted air/fuel mixture setting ring or plugged gas orifice in the burner tube.

Another common DSI water heater problem is premature shutdown. Typically, this is caused by either the failure of the burner to sustain a proper flame (inspect the burner for a strong, almost completely blue flame), or by failure of the control board to sense the presence of a proper burner flame (check to see that the tips of the igniter are positioned in the strongest part of the flame).

UPGRADES AND ENHANCEMENTS

Many gas-only water heaters can be equipped with an electric heating element — a handy backup source of hot water if you run out of LP-gas. Typically, a small-wattage heating element is used, in the interest of minimizing the element's extra current consumption in campsites with limited electrical hookups. The small wattage makes for somewhat longer hot water recovery times than when using the gas burner, but eventually gets the job done.

If your water heater lacks a tempera-

ture adjustment, you're in luck: Adjustable thermostats are available as an upgrade for some models. Being able to adjust the water temperature has several benefits. A lower temperature setting reduces LP-gas consumption and helps prolong the heater tank's life. It can also be used as a water-saving measure while dry-camped. If you set the temperature just warm enough to shower with hot water only, you'll avoid using more water than the water heater tank holds.

Keeping your motorhome's water heater running doesn't have to be difficult or time-consuming. Just a few simple maintenance and repair tricks can go a long way toward ensuring that it lives a long, trouble-free life. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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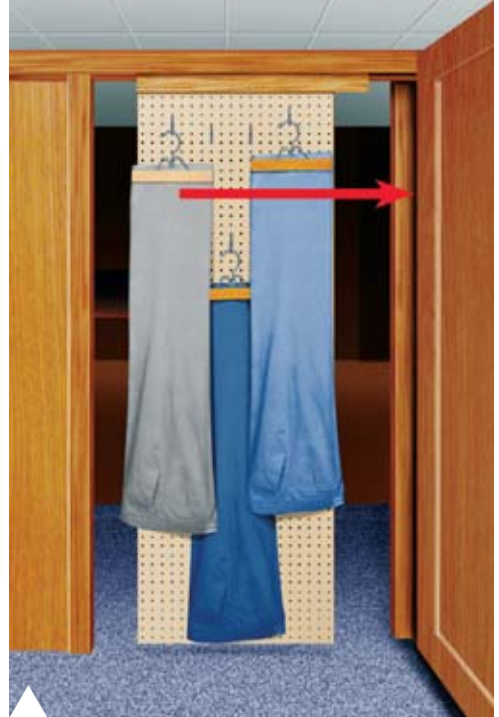
423-775-2131,
www.suburbanmanufacturing.com.



AN EASY SWITCH ▲

During my last RV trip I stayed in areas that had digital TV and other areas that still had the old analog signal (a few low-power stations are still broadcasting in analog). My motorhome doesn't have a digital TV so I use a digital converter box. The problem was that I had to disconnect the digital box to watch analog TV and then reattach the box to watch digital. A simple solution was to attach a splitter (Wal-Mart signal splitter #VH49, \$4.88) before the box, and an A-B switch (Wal-Mart A-B switch #VH74, \$9.88) after the box. Now I only have to flip the switch to watch digital or analog TV.

JOSEPH VOLK | PAHRUMP, NEV.



PEG AND POCKET SPACE SAVER

Our 2007 Holiday Rambler Scepter Class A came with pocket doors separating the bedroom from the sink/shower area. Since we have a separate room for the toilet, we never used these pocket doors. We also have limited space in the closet due to the electrical panel taking up a quarter of the closet width.

To solve this problem, I removed the two pocket doors and substituted them with a piece of heavy-duty pegboard. I built a locking system to keep it in the pocket when traveling, and now my wife can hang six to eight pairs of pants and shorts on the pegboard. They stay neater and free up quite a bit of closet space.

WAYNE DIGGS | LAKEPORT, CALIF.



STEP INTO THE LIGHT

This idea came from not being able to see my motorhome's entry step. My coach had a light underneath it that shined on the ground, which was not much help. I found enough space on the side below the door for an LED light that has a rubber casing designed to hold the light. I drilled an oval pattern and, with a circular rasp fitting in the drill, created an opening that accepts the LED light (which can be found at auto supply stores). I disconnected the light under the motorhome and reconnected it to the new LED.

PAUL SHIPLEY | CROSSVILLE, TENN. ♦

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techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & CHASSIS | POWERTRAIN



HANDS-ON | *by* DAVE RIGGS

SPOTLESS RINSING

CleaRinse Portable Washdown System conquers water spotting caused by hard water

Getting motivated to wash our motorhomes is only part of the battle. Fending off water spots caused by hard water can be maddening, especially if you have to wash your rig in the sun. Consequently, you'd find me frantically wiping down the side walls, that is, until I discovered the CleaRinse CR2 Portable Washdown System.

The CR2 is a fairly expensive (MSRP \$795) and less-than-beautiful spotless rinsing system that's machined and assembled to meet strict marine standards. While the CleaRinse unit was originally designed for the marine industry and capable of handling boats up to 65 feet, it's a very useful piece of equipment for washing motorhomes.

Essentially, the CR2 provides softened and filtered water anywhere you have a water spigot and hose. Hookup for use is simple: Just connect one end of the supplied 5-foot water hose to the water spigot and the other end to the fitting on the pre-filter housing. Then you simply attach your wash-down hose to the fitting on the large blue softening tank. I added brass quick connectors to make the hookup even easier.

The first time out, you'll need to turn on the water and allow the system to fill. The instructions state that the system has been checked for leaks before shipment, but the test unit immediately sprayed water out of the pre-filter. A call to the supplier netted a replacement part (with a correctly formed top) quickly.

You'll need to allow the water to run out of the hose for a couple of minutes, until the water runs clear of any brownish or yellow coloring. Once that's done, the system is ready to treat up to 2,000 gallons of water before recharging, depending on the hardness of the water. The harder the water, the fewer the gallons of treated water. The manufacturer claims that, on average, it takes about 150 gallons to wash a 50-foot boat, which is probably pretty close to a 40-foot motorhome.

The system comes with a clear canister that's filled with water-softening salt and connected to the large blue tank for recharging. It takes two canisters of salt to recharge the CR2. Other than that, the only other maintenance requirement is to change the element in the pre-filter housing and lubricate the O-ring in the filter and hose connections.

Once we got the system dialed in, the result was very satisfying: Unsightly water spots (created by allowing the sun to dry the surface) were tiny compared with the residual left by the untreated hard water — and much easier to wipe off with a drying towel.

Measuring 28 inches high by 16 inches wide by 9 inches deep and weighing 45 pounds, the CleaRinse is a bit bulky to move around, but the relief from frustration afforded while washing motorhomes using this system offsets any minor inconvenience.

For more information, call 561-596-2085, or go to www.clearinse.com. ♦



Warranty Warning Revisited

HOT LINE CONTINUES TO RECEIVE REQUESTS FROM READERS WHO ARE SEEKING REIMBURSEMENT FROM HERITAGE ADMINISTRATION SERVICES FOR PREAPPROVED EXTENDED WARRANTY WORK. ONE READER WROTE:

Referencing the *Hot Line* letter by M. Huegele in the December 2009 issue, I too have an extended warranty contract with Heritage Administration Services Inc. Just last week I had warranty work done after it was approved by Heritage, but when the dealer tried to collect the outstanding bill, they were told funds were frozen.

I called Heritage myself and was told to pay the bill and the company would reimburse me. The dealer would not release my RV without payment. I also was directed to an Internet site (www.heritagewarranty.com) that would explain everything. The news is not good. The question now is, how long will I have to wait to be reimbursed.

Evidently, there are quite a large number of subscribers in the same boat.
RAINER SOEHNEN
MERCED, CALIF.

Soehnen is correct, there are a lot of people waiting to be reimbursed by Heritage and it seems like some will have a very long wait.

Last October the company posted information on its Web site for customers who have questions regarding their claims. The site has a search field for Heritage claim numbers that is supposed to provide an estimated payment date. When we typed in a valid claim number from one of our pending

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WAITING TO BE REIMBURSED BY HERITAGE ADMINISTRATION SERVICES INC., AND IT SEEMS LIKE SOME WILL HAVE A VERY LONG WAIT.

Hot Line cases, it came up with an estimated payment date 13 months in the future. Of course, whether payment will actually be made remains to be seen.

The Web site also states that Heritage Warranty Insurance RRG Inc. (an affiliated company that provides insurance for Heritage's service contract obligations) is "in runoff and has not written or renewed any business since early 2008 in compliance with requests of the South Carolina Department of Insurance."

TOWING TROUBLE

Attempting to obtain a refund for expenses she believed were the responsibility of a towing company, a reader sought the intervention of Hot Line. She explained:

My husband and I own a 1990 Winnebago motorhome and we have been using Good Sam Emergency Road Service for the past three years. We have been very satisfied with the service until recently.

Last summer our motorhome lost power — the engine ran but it could not accelerate past 15 MPH. I called Good Sam ERS and told the operator that we needed to be towed. Good Sam dispatched someone from Lander's Service Inc., but he arrived in a regular service truck, not a tow truck.

He opened the hood, didn't check any fluids or belts and told us that it

needed to be towed. He then informed me that we would have to pay a service call fee of \$85 because he didn't bring the tow truck and would have to go back and get one. I asked why Good Sam ERS didn't cover this fee and he said I would have to work that out with Good Sam later.

When we got home I called Good Sam and the customer service rep was very sympathetic to our distress and said that they would take care of it. They agreed that this extra fee was unfair and would try to get our money refunded. Sometime later I received a notification from Good Sam that denied reimbursement because our policy does not cover a mechanic looking at our vehicle.

I didn't request a mechanic to look at our vehicle when I initially called for help. I was counting on the same good service we have received from ERS in the past. I would appreciate any assistance we receive from *Hot Line*.

JUDY PUPEK
SMITHFIELD, PA.

Hot Line sent a letter of inquiry to Good Sam ERS to see if it would reconsider reimbursement. Soon thereafter, Pupek sent the following update:

Thank you for *Hot Line's* assistance with my complaint. I received my reimbursement check for \$85 from Good Sam ERS.

J.P.

REPAIR RUNAROUND

Wrestling with their service contract provider over compensation for repair work, two readers turned to Hot Line for help. They wrote:

We never thought we would have to write to *Hot Line* for help until the satellite on our 2004 Dutch Star motorhome stopped working. We have an extended service coverage plan through Route 66 Classic Coverage, so we took the coach to an authorized shop for repair.

Route 66 was contacted ahead of time before any work was done and the service manager at the shop assured us that the repairs, which came to

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\$518.07, would be covered by Route 66. Several days after the satellite repairs were made I received a call from Route 66 customer service informing me that the company would not cover the cost of replacing the electrical wires.

We think that Route 66 should reimburse us for the rewiring of the satellite. We appreciate anything *Hot Line* can do for us.
**CARL AND RUTH ENGSTROM
CINCINNATI, OHIO**

Hot Line contacted *United Service Protection Corp.* (administrator of the Engstroms' Route 66 Classic Coverage Motor Home Service Agreement) with a request for re-evaluation of their case. Shortly after contacting the company, Hot Line received a copy of *United Service Protection's* correspondence to the Engstroms. It read:

United Service Protection Corp. (USPC) has thoroughly reviewed your claim as well as the documentation submitted. Our records indicate the satellite wiring was damaged as a result of a failure of the satellite limit stop, which caused the unit to rotate multiple times and damaged the wiring. The satellite wiring is specifically excluded from coverage as well as consequential damage.

However, in light of the situation, as a gesture of goodwill, and as a one-time courtesy, coverage will be afforded for the repair of the satellite wiring. The total reimbursement will be in the amount of \$510. The \$8.07 in shop supplies is not being addressed as shop supplies are specifically excluded from coverage.

We appreciate you bringing this matter to our attention and allowing us the opportunity to review and resolve your concern.

**BILL JAMES, DIRECTOR OF CLAIMS
UNITED SERVICE PROTECTION CORP.
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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

Unnecessary Service

I have a relatively new Ford F-250 pickup. It has approximately 10,000 miles on the odometer, and has never been driven off road. I recently took it to my dealer for routine service. While a technician was changing the oil and greasing the few fittings underneath, another technician was checking under the hood.

While I watched, he opened the air filter canister and pulled the filter out. He told me it needed changing, even though it looked OK to me. He was quite pushy about the need to change the filter, so I told him to change it.

IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATINGS TO ADD UP TO MORE THAN THE GVWR. ...

THIS GIVES THE COACH MANUFACTURER A LITTLE LATITUDE WITH WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION.



After paying the bill for the service, I discovered the air filter cost \$35, which is more than I think it should cost. When I got home, I read the Ford owner's manual, and found that Ford recommends changing the air filter at 30,000 miles, not 10,000 miles as the technician said.

Being sold unnecessary parts and service made me angry, so I called the dealer and spoke with the general manager. He apologized and said he'd issue a refund for the entire service. I was surprised to receive it a few days later, but I wonder how many people get taken this way.

JOHN DONAHUE | TULSA, OKLA.

I suspect a lot of new car and truck owners get taken with unnecessary and expensive service, John. Believe it or not, it almost happened to me at a local dealer that has a bad reputation.

Some time ago, one of my friends went to work for the dealer as a salesperson, even though she knew about his bad reputation, which he told her he was trying to improve. A few months later, I was shopping for a new vehicle to tow behind my motorhome. I called my friend, and she arranged a purchase.

When I went to pick it up, the paperwork stated it had 22 miles on the odometer. After I took delivery, I discovered it had 386 miles on the odometer, and the navigation system showed it had taken a number of trips to out-of-town addresses.

I complained to the dealer, and was told the paperwork was incorrect. The dealer agreed to correct the mileage disclosure, but would not tell me how or why the supposedly new vehicle had acquired 386 miles on the odometer. Instead, the dealer offered me a free first service. When I got my state title a month or so later, it said the automobile was delivered with 22 miles on the odometer. Obviously, the dealer never corrected it.

A few months later the electronic maintenance minder told me I was due for an oil change. The vehicle had approximately 11,000 miles on the odometer.

Reluctantly, I took it to the dealer's service department. I was greeted by a service writer who acknowledged I was entitled to a free oil change. He then

told me that I was also due to have the rear differential changed. He said dealers were supposed to change the differential fluid at 7,500 miles. I asked if the fluid change was included in my free service, and he told me it would cost \$88. That seemed excessive for 1.3 quarts of fluid that only cost \$8.92 per quart. When I questioned the need to change the rear differential fluid, he said it was stated in the owner's manual.

I went back to my office and reread the service section in my owner's manual. I found that the manufacturer has no mileage recommendation for changing the rear differential fluid. In short, I was being scammed.

I called customer service, and complained about my dealer's dishonest conduct. The contact person was equally shocked at my dealer's conduct, and confirmed that rear differential fluid did not need to be changed at 7,500 miles.

The lesson is, read your owner's manual before taking it in for service; then, only ask for the service recommended in the manual. Nothing else is necessary or required.

REFRIGERATOR OPERATION

I was told to keep the motorhome's electricity plugged in all the time when not using it, because that will help the battery last longer, and the refrigerator will last longer, too. I knew it would help the battery, but I didn't know about the refrigerator. Is this so?

BOB BOOTS | ALLIANCE, NEB.

No, it is not so, Bob. The refrigerator should be turned off, cleaned and the door cracked open when the motorhome is stored. The same may apply to your converter that probably just keeps a float head on your batteries.

You are better off storing your motorhome unplugged with the batteries fully charged. If the motorhome is plugged in, a float head will permanently derate the batteries in time.

Ideally, you should drive the motorhome once a month for about 100 miles, install a battery charger/converter that fully charges the batteries every three weeks and then turns off, or start the mo-

torhome and run the engine around 1,000 RPM for an hour or so every three weeks.

INVERTER POWER

I have 1997 Tiffin Bus with a small inverter. I'm sure it's a standard unit for that year motorhome. What would it take to have this inverter more like the inverters in newer coaches that can power various items simultaneously without the AC generator running? I have two 12-volt coach batteries, and two 12-volt chassis batteries. I'm sure this isn't enough information, but I'm curious.

DEAN TATE | DOTHAN, ALA.

There's an old saying that curiosity killed the cat, Dean. Be careful. Such an upgrade would be very expensive, and probably unnecessary.

First, your two chassis batteries don't count. You are starting out with two 12-volt coach batteries, and would have to go to at least four six-volt golf-cart batteries. Six would be even better.

Next, you would have to shop for a larger inverter, which would be expensive all by itself. Then, you would have to arrange your coach batteries to be used in pairs to supply 12 volts DC to the inverter. While they could be charged all at the same time, they should be used in pairs.

Keep in mind that conversion of 12 volts DC to 120 volts AC involves a factor of 10. One amp of 120-volt AC power takes at least 10 amps of 12-volt DC power. As the 120-volt AC amps add up, the demand on the batteries adds up 10 times faster.

I've always advised readers not to use inverters any more than necessary. In the long run, your 120-volt AC generator is a much more reliable source of 120-volts AC, assuming noise is not a factor.

RATINGS AND PRESSURE

I have a 1984 Holiday Rambler 24-foot Class C motorhome on a Ford chassis with dual rear wheels. I have a question about the information on the door frame. It states that the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) is 11,000 pounds and the gross axle weight rating (GAWR) front is 4,000 pounds and the GAWR rear is 7,400 pounds. Isn't that already more than the stated GVWR?

Also, it states that the recommended tire pressure for all the tires, front and rear,

is 50 PSI. Isn't that low for the stated weight?

I'm currently running 8.75R16.5 LRD Kumho Venture H/T tires at their recommended pressure of 65 PSI. The steel wheels are stamped at 80 PSI maximum.

I've weighed the front and rear axles, and they are barely within limits. Why would Holiday Rambler recommend such low tire pressures? Am I OK?

BOB JOHNSON | VIAN, OKLA.

It's not uncommon for gross axle weight ratings to add up to more than the GVWR, Bob. This is common with motorhome chassis, because it gives the motorhome manufacturer a little latitude with weight distribution. However, the GVWR should never be exceeded. If the coach manufacturer uses the full 4,000 pounds up front, only 7,000 pounds can be used in the rear, and vice versa.

The chassis manufacturer will always recommend tire inflation pressures that will provide adequate load-carrying capacity for its gross axle weight ratings. In your case, that is not 50 PSI. At that pressure 8.75R16.5LT LRD tires will only carry 3,880 pounds up front, and only 7,000 pounds in the rear, both of which are less than their axle ratings.

At the 65 PSI minimum pressure required to carry their maximum load, the 8.75R16.5LT LRD tires will carry 4,700 pounds up front and 8,280 pounds in the rear. That inflation pressure will give you some reserve tire load-carrying capacity, and shouldn't affect ride or handling quality.

Considering the age of your motorhome, there is a possibility that other tires were installed as original equipment. That could account for the 50 PSI tire inflation pressure recommendation.

For what it's worth, 8.75R16.5LT tires are obsolete, and you were lucky to find them. Unfortunately, they are probably not all-steel tires, which are the only tires we recommend for motorhomes, particularly those that are loaded to or more than their GVWR. To the best of my knowledge, Goodyear is the only tire company that is still making all-steel 8.75R16.5LT LRD tires. They are Goodyear G159 LT Commercial tires. ♦

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Ford Cruise Control Recall Expanded

Ford recently added several million more older-model vehicles to the list of those recalled because of defective cruise-control switches. The prior and latest recalls include the following models, which have been used for motorhomes: 1996–2002 Ford E-450, 1995–2002 Ford F53 motorhome chassis, 1992–2003 Econoline and 1994 Ford F53 chassis.

Investigators found that the switches, made by Texas Instruments through 2003, could overheat and potentially cause a fire in rare cases, even when the vehicle is parked. Ford advised owners of all vehicles covered by the recall to keep them outdoors until they get repairs. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration warned drivers to watch for certain warning signs, including cruise controls or brake lights that stop working, ABS or brake warning lights illuminating, or not being able to get the vehicle out of PARK.

ENGINE JUST DIES

I'm having a problem with my 1996 Ford F53 chassis motorhome. It will be cruising along just fine and then it seems like the engine turns off. It doesn't cut out, sputter or anything like that; it just stops. It's kind of scary without power steering and brakes.

I took the coach to a local Ford dealer and explained the problem to one of the service technicians. He said, "Does the check engine light come on?" I said no and he said he couldn't help me if the light wasn't on. I thought he should at least put it on the computer to check it.

The AC generator starts just fine, runs about 10 minutes and then dies every time. I had the original bad fuel pump replaced with another bad one. About two years ago I got an upgraded fuel pump and a new gas line in the tank for the generator. I don't know if that has anything to do with the engine and genset. I am concerned about getting

back on the highway — wondering if the engine will quit or break down totally.

RANDY STRICKLIN
LIVINGSTON, TEXAS

It is very likely a fuel supply problem and combined with the genset cutting out, that's where I'd look first. Make sure the fuel filter has been replaced recently. I suspect a fuel pump because that's a common problem on these chassis. Have them connect a fuel-pressure tester and drive it under full load up some hills. Also test fuel pressure to the genset. It's possible that a partial vacuum is forming in the tank due to faulty venting. Check that by removing the filler cap. The pickup screen in the tank could also be partially blocked by debris. If the fuel pressure doesn't falter when it cuts out, suspect an ignition problem. They should also put a scan tool on it that has a capture mode during the test drive. That way when it quits they can review the moments during cutout. It could be something like a faulty ignition module that quits when hot, or an intermittent connection.

FREEZING BATTERIES

I recently purchased a 2000 Allegro 28-

foot motorhome. My question regards the batteries: two for the coach, one for the engine. The motorhome will stay semi-exposed to weather in Bend, Ore., which is high desert and gets below freezing, sometimes to zero. Someone said to start the engine at least once a month, and the generator the same, and let them run for 15 minutes. Will exposing the batteries to these conditions over the winter cause any harm? We will, of course, winterize the water system.

FRANK SMODE | BEND, ORE.

Running the engines for short periods leaves moisture in the oil and exhaust systems and allows acids to form, so we don't recommend it. Batteries will only be damaged from freezing if they are partially or fully discharged. They won't freeze until way below zero when charged up. I would add a small solar battery charger panel to keep things charged up. If you have access to shore-power at your storage facility, use a Battery Tender or some other battery trickle charger/maintainer; they're inexpensive and do a good job. You can look up freeze points online at: www.jgdarden.com/batteryfaq/carfaq4.htm#freeze_points.

BRAKE BOOSTER BINGO

I have a 2007 Fleetwood Pace Arrow motorhome with 8,500 miles on it. The Ford V-10 engine powers it. My problem is with the brakes. At times when I apply the brakes I will hear what sounds like an air leak. When I let off the brakes the air leak sound stops. When this happens the stopping power is greatly reduced. I can let off the brakes and reapply and they may be OK or they might still be weak. My local Ford dealer said there is no vacuum or air to the brakes so it could not be an air leak. Other than that they are of no help. I need your help, please.

DON WILSON | HEBER SPRINGS, ARK.

The hydro-boost assembly has a pump motor that can and will operate under certain conditions, but I don't know that I'd compare this sound to an air noise. The second application of the service brakes and subsequent improvement in

RUNNING THE ENGINES FOR SHORT PERIODS LEAVES MOISTURE IN THE OIL AND EXHAUST SYSTEMS AND ALLOWS ACIDS TO FORM, SO WE DON'T RECOMMEND IT. ... BATTERIES WON'T FREEZE UNTIL WAY BELOW ZERO.



braking is consistent with air in the brake lines. I would first try bleeding the brakes to help identify the root cause. While a technician is under the coach, the sound may also be heard and located.

ORNERY ONAN

I have a 2002 Four Winds with a 4 kW Onan generator. After purchasing the coach used, I changed the oil and spark plug on the genset and cleaned the exhaust baffles. Everything worked great for about eight months. Now the genset will run for about 15 to 20 minutes with only the air conditioner on and then it sounds like it is running out of gas (erratic speeds) and stalls and will not start again for a while. I have noticed the motorhome's gas gauge shows slightly more than half a tank. The generator hour meter reads a little more than 300 hours.

RICHARD LYONS | TITUSVILLE, FLA.

This seems like a fuel supply problem. Is the gasoline old? Have you changed the fuel filter and checked the air filter? You may also have a porous or kinked fuel line. When the engine quits, I'd check to see if the fuel filter and float bowl have gas in them. It's also possible for a genset to quit because of overheating or low oil pressure shutdown controls. If it's getting plenty of gas, these should be checked, along with spark when it quits.

VEHICLE SPEED SENSOR SIGNAL

I have a 2009 Damon Challenger on a Ford F53 chassis with a speedometer and transmission problem. The speedometer is fine for a while, and then it begins to bounce up and down, with the transmission shifting up and down. It's really bad when going 60 MPH and the speedometer indicates 15, and the transmission downshifts to very low gear. When the speedometer went to "0," the transmission acted like it was in neutral. I had to stop, place it in PARK, turn the engine off and restart and limp to a dealer. Help!

PHIL TAYLOR | CONROE, TEXAS

The speedometer and transmission shifting rely on a good signal from the vehicle speed sensor (VSS), which is mounted on the transmission. The problem is probably a bad VSS, or the wiring or connector to it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 65

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OPTIONS

For your ad to appear in red type: Add \$50 for Commercial ad. Add \$25 for Private Party ad.

HOW TO PLACE AN AD

Use our form or your own stationery. Please include your name, address and phone number.

Send with payment (check; money order; VISA, MC, or Discover #, signature and expiration date) to:
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P.O. Box 8510
Ventura, CA 93002-9912

Credit card orders: Fax to (805) 667-4379, Email: classifieds@tl.com. Any questions, call Angela Pezzullo at (805) 667-4391.

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A dealer should have been able to figure that out right away.

RECALL REIMBURSEMENT

I have a 2007 Class A motorhome on a Workhorse W22 chassis. I received a letter from Workhorse that there was a brake problem and I went online and registered my information. I called the contact number and told them that the ABS warning light keeps coming on. I was told that I could have it looked at by an authorized repair facility, but it would be out of pocket because the actual recall letter was not coming out for a while, however it would be OK to drive the coach as the ABS light will not affect the braking. Something does not add up. Got any advice?

BOB DAVIS | ST. LOUIS

If the brakes feel normal and the ABS light is on, it indicates your base brakes are OK, but the ABS is disabled because the computer has detected a problem in that system. Therefore you have what you would have had on pre-ABS systems. If repairs are made out of warranty and a recall comes out later, you can request reimbursement for the items covered by a recall and should get it.

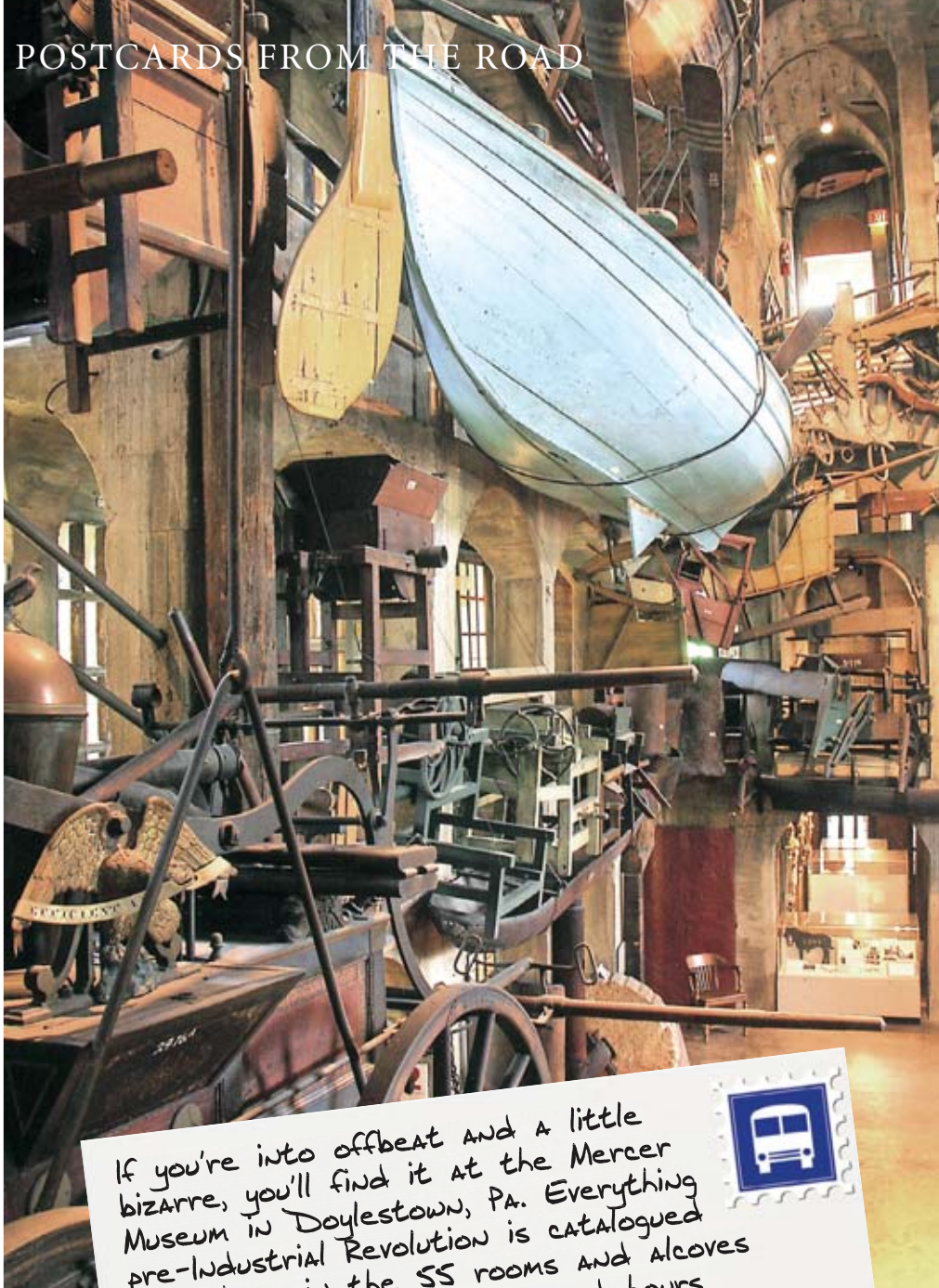
BATTERY SWAN SONG

We have a 2002 Rialta and are having trouble with the house batteries. They are hooked up black to black. The one on the left seems to use a lot more water. We just bought a Battery Tender and were told to just hook them up, but on the cover over the batteries it says to disconnect batteries if using an outside charger. Will it hurt anything if we leave the batteries connected? I would appreciate your help.

ANN JONES | DALLAS

I assume they are the stock 12-volt batteries. If one is using a lot more water than the other, it is going bad. Unfortunately, these need to be changed in pairs because a bad battery drains its mate. If it says to disconnect batteries if using an outside charger, you should do so. It's easy to install a disconnect switch on the batteries if it doesn't have one. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO POWERTRAIN, please refer to *Contact MotorHome*, on page 36.



If you're into offbeat and a little bizarre, you'll find it at the Mercer Museum in Doylestown, PA. Everything pre-Industrial Revolution is catalogued somewhere in the 55 rooms and alcoves of this museum. You can spend hours marveling over Henry Mercer's attempt to save the crafts and tools from professions he saw changed forever by automation. The museum has a large parking lot right in front for RVs.

Sue Penney
Surprise, Arizona



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: *MotorHome* accepts transparencies, prints and images on CD. We prefer uncorrected photos at the highest available resolution. We accept digital images saved as TIFF, JPEG or EPS files. All images must be unaltered and at least 300 dpi. For prints, we accept 4x5 or 5x7. Transparencies should be original 35mm or larger. *MotorHome* pays \$50 for each published photograph. Images, which preferably show a motorhome or motorhomes in the setting, must be your own work. Submissions cannot be returned. Send your image, name, address and phone number, as well as the story behind your image in 60 words or less (location, special trip or significance, etc.), to: *MotorHome* "Postcards From the Road," 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001.



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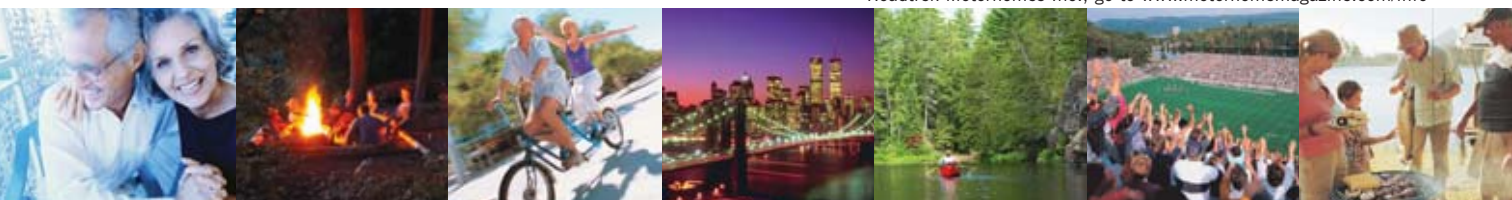


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