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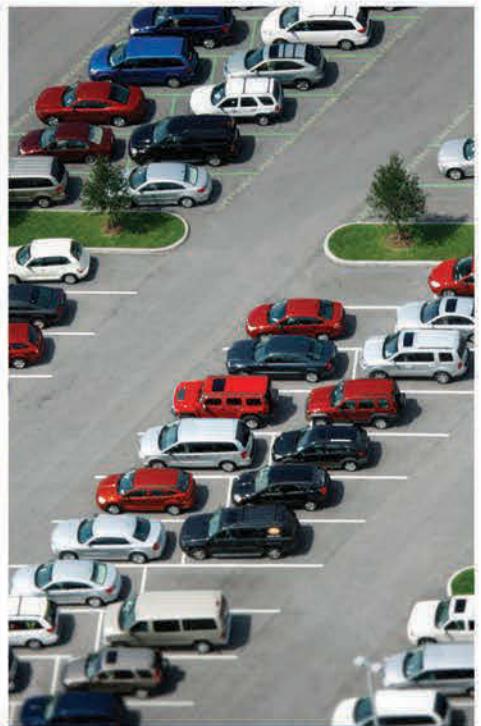
► *Inside Look at Newell*

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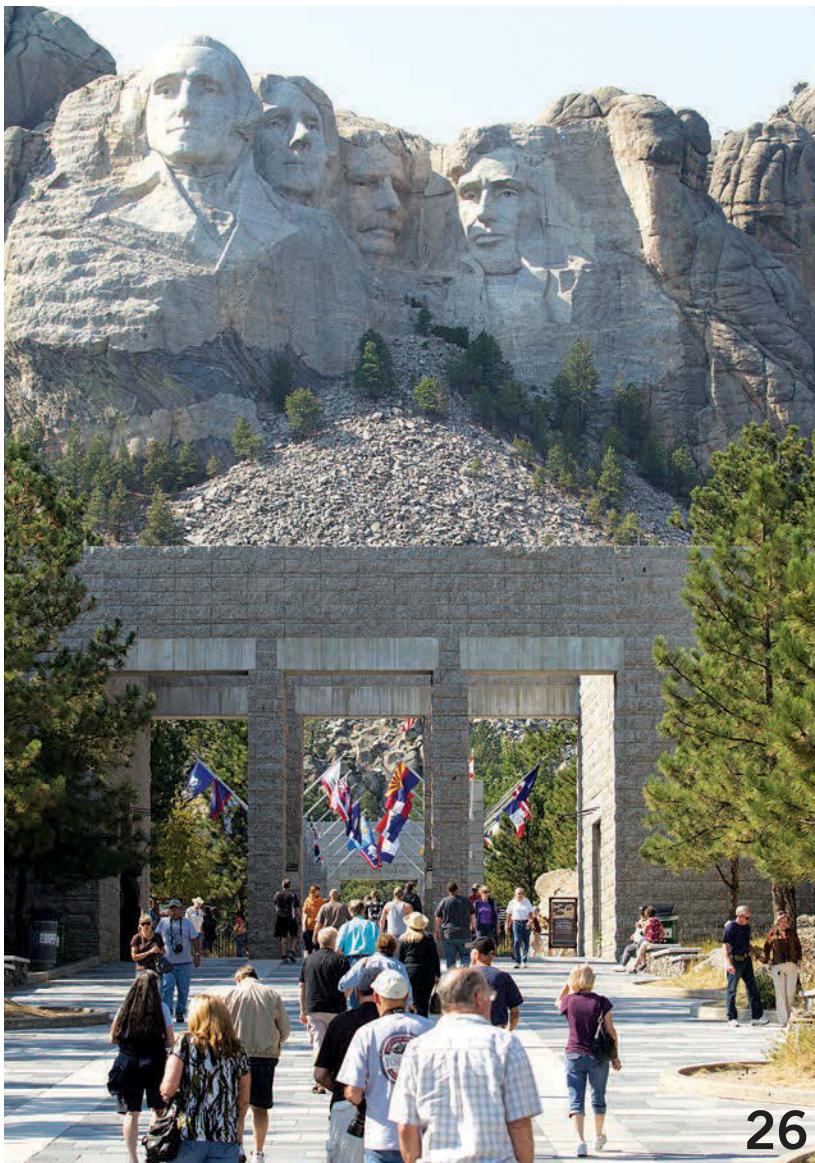
Eleven RV-approved smoke and CO detectors

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On The Cover: Custom built from the ground up, this 45-foot luxury motorcoach from Newell stands out in the Twin Bridges Area of Grand Lake State Park near Fairland, Okla. (See review on page 52.) Photo by Bob Livingston.

RAISING THE BAR

Reality dictates that very few people will ever own a high-line coach like the Newell featured on page 52. These coaches, magnificent as they are, command sticker prices that keep them out of reach for most RV enthusiasts, but they are always showstoppers. See one on display at an RV show and people form long lines waiting for a chance to stroll through a coach that demands a seven-digit sticker price.

Why look if you can't buy? It's no different than looking at super-expensive homes, knowing they are out of financial reach. Many people tour homes, whether mobile or stationary, looking for decorating ideas, unique floorplans and convenience items they can use in their own motorhome or house. When money is no object, creativity — albeit on the opulent side — really shines.

The Newell has been a trendsetter in the industry for many years, and the latest edition, evaluated in this issue, is the most advanced and beautiful coach the company has ever produced. Technology has taken the Newell to new levels of convenience and pleasure, and exotic materials from around the world enhance comfort and luxury like never before. Simply put, this coach is a masterpiece in design and function.

I got my first chance to test a Newell about 20 years ago. Needless to say, I was a bit queasy about being responsible for such an expensive and big coach. I had fewer qualms about living in it as most of the systems were similar to the other coaches on the market at the time, only more luxurious and complex. When I got behind the wheel, I quickly learned the Newell was easier to drive than any other coach I had tested at that time.

I remember going on my first test drive with Newell owner Karl Blade. After making a number of maneuvers, we headed for the toll road to check out handling and drivability on the open highway. As I tucked the Newell into the narrow tollbooth, Karl said, "Look at how



comfortable you are driving this coach; you may not realize it, but you drove into the toll lane using only one hand on the wheel." Indeed, I quickly acclimated to the big coach, enjoying the ride without trepidation. It was one of those drives that could have gone on forever.

The 2014 Newell I evaluated for this issue was even more fun to drive, and once I established the boundaries of piloting a 45-foot coach, I found the latest creation out of Miami, Okla., to be the sweetest coach I have ever driven.

Sophisticated, electronically enhanced steering and a suspension damping system team up with the semi-monocoque superstructure to take virtually all the bumps out of the road. As I related in the article, the ride is buttery smooth. If you want to know what it's like to be pampered in an RV, check out the review.

Every time I get a chance to spend time in a Newell I come home with a head full of ideas. Coaches like the Newell set the stage for designing and implementing the build-out of a number of coaches in the industry. For example, fancy window coverings like those used in the Newell for many years are becoming popular. Companies like Dave and LJ's in Woodland, Wash., specialize in retrofitting elaborate shades on the windows and windshield, clearly trending from the high-line market. On page 61, we show you how it's done. Multiplex switching systems, flush slide-out floors, outside entertainment components, hardwood/tile flooring and, of course, residential refrigerators, are good examples of features that have migrated from the high-line motorhome segment. And let's not forget full-body paint and electric awnings.

Enjoy your time with the Newell. It certainly sets the bar quite high for the RV industry. ♦

MOTORHOME

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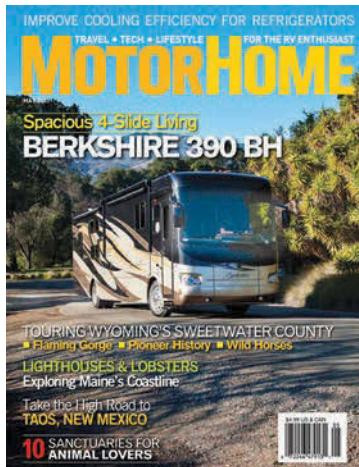


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WHAT MOTORHOME MATERIAL ADVANCEMENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE FROM MANUFACTURERS?

That's the question we asked in our May issue, and here are some of the replies we received.

MATERIAL WISH LIST

When it comes to material advancements, I would like to see the following: construct refrigerator chimneys out of stainless steel so they won't rust; use stainless steel screws in exterior construction; use Torx or other strip-resistant screw heads instead of Phillips or slot heads. (Whatever happened to clutch head screws?) Quit using cheap carpet that looks bad within a year and instead use ceramic, wood or vinyl. Use ball bearing drawer slides. Make all 12-volt DC fuses the same type. Make icemaker water supply lines out of good quality hose instead of nylon that fails in a few years.

BILL MARCUM
PADUCAH, KY.

BETTER INSULATION

RVs are not well insulated. There's too much heat loss and cold infringement. RVs could also be quieter. How about making the bodies out of the same material as boats, with the color in the body panels rather than painted on. The front cap could be made of Kevlar for strength. Heaters and A/C could be put on thermostats to keep temperatures constant.

RICHARD POOLE | HESPERIA, CALIF.

ADVICE TO NEWBIES

I would like to see better weather- and UV-resistant materials used for exterior fittings, fasteners, hardware and shrouds. For example, stainless steel fasteners, anodized aluminum or stainless steel hardware, shrouds of thick, UV-resistant fiberglass instead of thin plastic, and roofs coated with the same tough material used for pickup truck bed liners instead of no coating at all or thin rubber membranes.

To David Vavro of "Newbie Concerns" in May's P.O. Box, I can testify that after 12 years of traveling many

miles, first towing a travel trailer and more recently driving a motorhome with a dinghy, my travels have been worry-free and enjoyable. I've witnessed many other RVers have serious problems and most of them are self-inflicted, e.g., lack of preparation, haste, poor maintenance and poor communications.

There are solutions. Prepare by going over your coach in detail and make certain everything operates correctly. Follow the instructions provided in owners' manuals and test all systems. Have a detailed trip plan and be prepared for those unexpected situations that you will inevitably encounter. Avoid being in a rush — you will make mistakes and some can be very costly, if not deadly. Make checklists and follow them religiously. Maintain your motorhome according to manufacturer's guides. Know that hand signals and shouting are not effective; invest in a pair of walkie-talkies. Weather plays a critical role when traveling so always stay aware of forecast conditions and adapt accordingly. Last but not least, trees and motorhomes are enemies!

EDWARD PHILLIPS
REERS FERRY, ARK.

JUST ENJOY THE RIDE

To David Vavro: Don't be afraid to adventure in your new motorhome. My partner and I got our coach in 1998 and made three cross-country trips and numerous trips from Canada to Florida. We had our Class A motorhome for 11 years and towed a Saturn sedan behind it for more than 75,000 miles. We never had a mechanical breakdown or a flat tire. We did have a couple of problems with the A/C, but both times the campgrounds we were staying in had a local repairman who came right to our site and the problems were fixed.

The most important thing to do is give your RV proper maintenance and replace tires by time, not mileage.



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Two women in their late 60s traveling alone (except for our dogs) never had a worry. I did all the driving and Pat did all the hookups and cooking when we stopped for the night. We sold our RV in 2009 because we started having health issues that made it hard to travel. We miss it very much. Especially when we have to load up the car and find dog-friendly motels just to take a vacation. I still read *MotorHome* and remember all the wonderful years we spent on the road.

Enjoy yourself and leave the worrying to someone else.

**CAROLYN ROGERS
WARWICK, R.I.**

WORTH THE HICCUPS

In 2003 we purchased a new 36-foot Triple E Commander Class A on a Workhorse chassis and we tow a Honda Accord. We've traveled more than 75,000 miles and have never been left on the road. Yes, minor annoying items have cropped up

like window shades breaking, the fridge giving out, malfunctioning of a slide fuse and a shattered window, but nothing serious enough to leave us stranded.

Living in western Canada we've traveled many miles through the Rocky Mountains, much of it in fairly blustery weather over a myriad of passes like the Coquihalla in British Columbia or Interstate 15 from Utah to Montana. It's been a fantastic time on many levels. We've stayed in first-class RV resorts and boondocked with permission in some memorable places like distillery parking lots. We've even gunkholed our way along many scenic byways such as Branson, Mo., to Bentonville, Ark.

The experience has been priceless. After all, you haven't really lived until you've visited Toad Suck Park in Arkansas or Big Bone Lick in Kentucky. Go with gusto, RVing is the great life. Yes, there is a bit of a learning curve and it takes a positive attitude to adjust to this mode of travel, but it is so worth it.

**EARL AND LIZ ANDRUSIAK
EDMONTON, ALBERTA**

MISSED IN MAINE

I enjoyed reading "Rustic Ramblings on Maine's Lighthouse Coast" in the May issue. Christine Goodier mentions Camden Harbor and Penobscot Bay but neglected to mention one of the jewels in the harbor: the coastal schooner *Lewis R. French*. Launched in 1871, the schooner is a National Historic Landmark and is still sailing. It offers cruises in Penobscot Bay during the summer and guests may help sail the ship. We took a three-day cruise and it was one of the highlights of our trip north in 2010. There's even a huge warehouse (where the boats are stored in the winter) to house your motorhome while you're at sea.

**MYRON BIRD
EAST BERLIN, PA.**

RECOMMENDED SERVICE CENTER

In February, my wife and I were traveling from Tallahassee, Fla., to Waynesville, N.C., when we stopped north of Macon, Ga., around 7 p.m. and noticed the engine sounded different. We pulled over and heard a boom and saw smoke exiting the engine compartment. We were towed to Gilbert Truck Center in Macon. The

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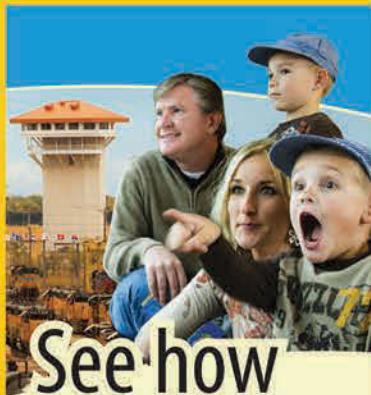
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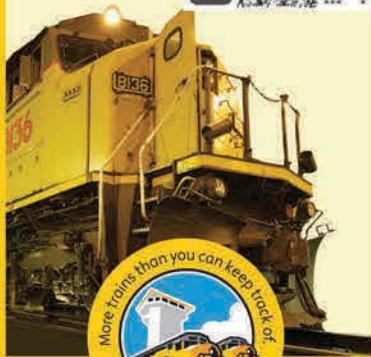
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P.O. BOX

next morning our motorhome was towed into a bay and Eric Ashley, the service manger, assigned a mechanic to diagnose the problem. Shortly after, we were told that metal was found in the oil pan. The No. 6 piston in the 400-HP Cummins ISL engine had disintegrated, resulting in a burst block.

Ashley called our extended warranty carrier and worked with the company until authorization was obtained on repairs. Rather than order another engine and wait for it to be shipped, he sent an employee to Atlanta to pick it up. In spite of being fully booked, repairs were immediately undertaken.

We cannot sufficiently express our appreciation to Tom Gilbert, owner, Eric Ashley and all the employees. We recommend that anyone needing diesel service or repairs in the Macon area should seek out Gilbert Truck Center.

**CHARLES AND ANN PORTERO
TALLAHASSEE, FLA.**

SWITCH TO AGM

I can't believe all the RVers who constantly have battery problems. Many years ago, after going through a fortune in acid-damaged clothing and corroded connections and cables, I switched to Lifeline AGM batteries. Now I don't even think about battery maintenance. Once installed you can forget about your batteries. They will always work and, aside from proper charging, require no attention. Plus, I've never had a spec of corrosion and they last about eight years on average.

I would never go back to the lousy boat anchors in my life. Besides being hazardous, they are a pain in the neck and the corrosion is terrible. There is a choice, and you can forget about the regular or deep cycle controversy. I would advise everyone to consider them. Although they are pricey, they are worth every penny.

**ABRAM HIEBERT
VIA EMAIL**

QUESTION:

What is your motorhome battery preference and why?

Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 3300 Fernbrook Lane N #200, Minneapolis, MN 55447; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. ♦

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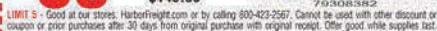
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Take refuge from the August heat in cool waters and admire the beauty of Lake Michigan's eastern coastline at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Stretching for 65 miles, Sleeping Bear Dunes encompasses hardwood forests, meadows, wetlands and, of course, the sand dunes which gave it its name. Perched atop the glacial moraines, the dune overlooks at Sleeping Bear, Empire and Pyramid Point bluffs tower about 400 feet above Lake Michigan.

Inland lakes are ideal for canoe outings, or walk the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail along the base of the dunes. Take a break from climbing the dunes and head to the U.S. Coast Guard Museum in nearby Glen Haven, Mich., for an up-close look at a steamer wheelhouse and panoramic views of the Manitou Passage shipping channel. RVers can reserve campsites at the park's Platte River or D.H. Day campgrounds.

For more information, call 231-326-5134 or visit www.nps.gov/slbe.



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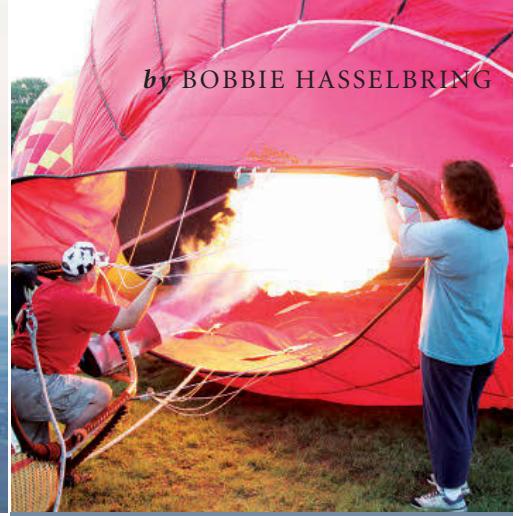
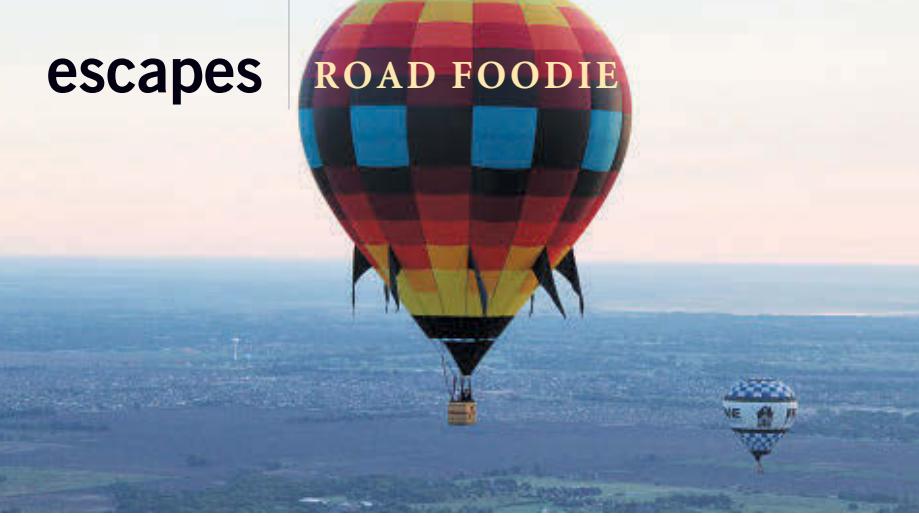
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FLYING HIGH IN PLANO, TEXAS

The sky is dawning pink when we arrive at the launch area

where dozens of balloons lay on their sides. As hot air fills them, they begin to rise until they tower over us. Welcome to the Plano Balloon Festival, one of the few celebrations of lighter-than-air flight where you can really get involved in this peaceful and spectacularly beautiful activity.

Plano, Texas, is a suburban town about 30 minutes outside of Dallas, and every third weekend in September the Balloon Festival hosts 50-100 of the nylon behemoths, 3,000 volunteers, and 90,000-plus visitors. (This year's festival is Sept. 20-22.) I've come to Plano as part of a "chase crew," balloon-crazy volunteers, many of them RVers, who get up at the crack of dawn to fill the balloons, track their twice-daily flights and come get them when they land.

After we unpack yards of special, rip-stop nylon, the wicker basket and a burner and fan to blow in hot air, it takes a surprisingly short time to fill our balloon, the "Fired Up Too." Soon the rainbow-colored giant is waving peacefully in the morning air and our pilot, Michael Marx, says, "Hop in."

We scramble into the basket (it's not graceful), Marx gives a blast from the burner, and suddenly we're rising silently, the Earth slipping away — 10, 30, 50 feet and higher. As we sail over the tops of trees, Marx punctuates the quiet every few minutes with a loud rush of flame.

All around us float towering orbs of color and light. Even though we're rapidly gaining altitude, there's no sense of rising. The only way I can tell we're climbing is by watching the balloons we quietly pass. It's an utterly gentle, peaceful way to see the world. We pass over homes and streets. When the Plano Balloon Festival began more than 30 years ago, farm fields dominated this area and it was easy to land. With the burgeoning suburb's population nearing 300,000, ballooning is more challenging, but, after 40 minutes of floating over neighborhoods, lakes and parks, Marx expertly puts our craft down in a small field just off a cul-de-sac of ranch-style homes.

The moment we land, people approach our balloon, asking questions, wanting to have their photo taken with it. Soon, the rest of our chase crew arrives and quickly packs the balloon onto the trailer and trundles us back to the fairgrounds.

Maybe it's all the fresh air, but I'm really hungry. The good news? No one who visits the Plano Balloon Festival has to settle for just curly fries and hot dogs. Here are some of my favorite Plano places to grab a bite:

To contact Bobbie, send an email to hasselbring@bctonline.com with "Road Foodie" in the subject line.



Main Street Bistro and Bakery, a small chain with locations in Grapevine and Richardson, is a great place for breakfast. Try the beignets (French donuts) and the signature almond croissant, an 8-inch wedge of flaky, buttery dough topped with slivered almonds

and powdered sugar. The restaurant's crepes and French toast are also not-to-be-missed.



Mi Cocina is another delightful chain eatery that offers giant, reasonably priced Tex-Mex lunches and dinners. (Stash the leftovers in your coach's fridge for later.) Standouts include enchiladas stuffed with meat and cheese, quesadillas with

Mexican cheese, a variety of tacos, including Tacos de Brisket (you can't get enough Tex-Mex), and smoky, grilled tilapia, Veracruz style. The margaritas, which come in big water glasses, have a limey tang.



Urban Crust is a pizza place located in an 1880s building in historic downtown Plano. It offers a variety of thin-crust pizzas, including the Buffalina with buffalo mozzarella, fresh Italian tomatoes and basil, olive oil and shaved grana cheese. Magnifico!



Henry's Ice Cream is the place to go for dessert. This iconic ice cream parlor has a revolving list of fresh ice cream made on-site.

Other manufacturers provide owners with a helpful list of numbers to call for support.



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CLASS A ADDITION

Jayco is entering the gasoline-powered Class A motorhome market with the launch of its new Precept product line. The Precept will initially be available in 29-foot and 31-foot models and will be sold through Jayco dealers.

The Precept is well equipped for extended travel with six-way powered driver and copilot seats, an ergonomically designed cockpit dash with burl wood accents and passenger computer workstation, large pass-through exterior storage compartments, hydraulic leveling jacks, a 4,000-watt Onan MicroQuiet

generator and an exterior entertainment center with built-in 40-inch LED TV. In addition, the Precept has Jayco's exclusive JRide system with state-of-the-art shocks and suspension system for better handling and a smoother ride.

Standard features include LED lighting throughout, spacious bathrooms with extra-large showers, day/night solar screens in the living room, bathroom and bedroom, solid-surface countertops and Washington Glazed Maple residential cabinetry. Built on the Ford F53 chassis with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 18,000 pounds, the Precept has a 6.8-liter Triton V-10 engine with five-speed TorqShift automatic overdrive transmission. The first available model, the Precept 31UL, has an MSRP of \$112,500.

Jayco Inc., 574-825-5861, www.jayco.com

PORTABLE POWER

Motorhome owners looking for auxiliary power have another option from **Powerhouse Products**. The new 1000Wi inverter generator is loaded with features, including a recoil start, circuitry that is safe for use with sensitive electronic equipment, 12-volt DC external charging system, carry handle and variable speed settings for fuel economy. It's also quiet enough to meet National Park Service guidelines for campground use.

A single cylinder, 4-stroke OHV, 53-cc, 1.63-hp air-cooled gasoline engine produces a maximum 1,000 watts and continuous 900 watts of clean power. A high-efficiency combustion system keeps emissions low. At just less than 33 pounds, the 1000Wi is lightweight and portable. Accessories include oil jug, 12-volt DC charge cable, spare spark plug, spark plug wrench and oil drain extension. MSRP is \$439.95; the Powerhouse 1000Wi is available at Camping World and other RV supply stores nationwide.

Powerhouse Generators, 800-495-5858, www.powerhouse-products.com



3-IN-1 CLEANER

Walex Products has added another product to its RV lineup with Green Hornet, an industrial strength cleaner and degreaser that combines rubber roof cleaner, awning cleaner and black streak remover in one bottle. The powerful ingredients of Green Hornet allow for the product to be diluted for numerous RV, marine or home uses. The non-abrasive, non-flammable and biodegradable ingredients are said to be environmentally safe. Green Hornet is packaged

in a 64-oz bottle, with a new 32-oz, ready-to-use trigger sprayer also available.

MSRP is \$10.99; Green Hornet is available at RV supply stores and service centers nationwide.

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GEORGIA, OREGON GAIN NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARKS



Wade Tract Preserve and Zumwalt

Prairie are the newest national natural landmarks, the National Park Service (NPS) announced, calling them “outstanding examples of two ecosystems that have nearly vanished in the U.S.”

Located in southern Georgia, Wade Tract Preserve is one of the last old-growth stands of longleaf pine left in the world. Scientists believe the site

illustrates what this region looked like at the time of European settlement. Trees within the privately owned landmark range from saplings to those well in excess of 300 years old. Zumwalt Prairie in Wallowa County, Oregon, meanwhile, is the best example of bunchgrass prairie remaining in North America. This large, high-quality natural area also contains aspen groves, riparian woodlands, sagebrush shrublands and bottomland wet grasslands. The size and diversity of the site allow it to support large populations of raptors and mammals. The new landmark is owned by The Nature Conservancy and is located within a 100,000-acre preserve.

THETFORD CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

On May 1, Thetford Corp. marked its 50th year as one of the world’s leading suppliers of sanitation products for the RV market. In 1963, Frank Sargent and his two sons founded the company. Over the years, Thetford’s achievements have included low-profile and low-water-use plastic RV toilets, the first two-piece portable toilet (Porta-Potti), and the first holding tank slide-action valve. Headquartered in Ann Arbor, Mich., Thetford is a privately held company with manufacturing facilities worldwide. Subsidiaries include Norcold, Tecma and Thetford Europe.



TOP NATIONAL PARKS FOR 2012

Last year, more than 282 million people visited America’s national parks, an increase of more than 3 million over 2011, and the sixth highest annual visitation in the history of the NPS. The 10 most-visited parks for 2012 are:

1. Great Smoky Mountains, 9,685,829
2. Grand Canyon, 4,421,352
3. Yosemite, 3,853,404
4. Yellowstone, 3,447,729
5. Rocky Mountain, 3,229,617
6. Zion, 2,973,607
7. Olympic, 2,824,908
8. Grand Teton, 2,705,256
9. Acadia, 2,431,052
10. Cuyahoga Valley, 2,299,722

RV SHOWS

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 Progressive Insurance Colorado RV Liquidation Super Sale
 Denver, Colo., 800-848-6247

AUG. 16-18
 Progressive Insurance Summer Boat & RV Super Sale
 Richmond, Va., 804-425-6556

News Briefs

Good Sam has plans for a new auto buying program to provide its more than 1 million members with prearranged savings on the purchase of cars, as well as boats, ATVs and other powersports vehicles. Building on relationships with more than 2,000 dealerships representing brands from Ford to Jeep, Toyota to Mercedes-Benz and many more, the Good Sam Auto Buying Service will offer members the ability to configure the exact vehicle they are interested in and to enjoy prearranged, discounted prices with no negotiations needed. All prices are guaranteed and club members will work directly with specially trained dealer staff to complete their vehicle purchases. At press time, a July 1 launch was expected.

RVC Outdoor Destinations announced it has completed the renovation of Garden of the Gods Campground in Colorado Springs, Colo. Now operating as Garden of the Gods RV Resort, the facility offers 173 RV sites, including six new executive pull-through sites. In addition to renovating buildings, improvements include a bark park and the Midland Trail gateway. Other upgrades are a new pool deck, new fencing, road and landscape upgrades, upgraded Wi-Fi, a new business center and new picnic tables.

Pilot Flying J has launched a new fast, casual dining concept at select travel centers and travel plazas. The first facility opened in March at the new Pilot Travel Center in St. Marys, Ga. The menu features hot soups, home-style platters, fresh-made salads and cold sandwiches, a frozen yogurt bar, pizza and hot dogs. Pilot Flying J has plans to open more of the fast, casual dining concepts at locations across the country.



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SOOTHING WATERS IN PAGOSA SPRINGS

Native Americans who first discovered the healing waters in Pagosa Springs were soon followed by white settlers, the U.S. Army, movie stars and tourists.

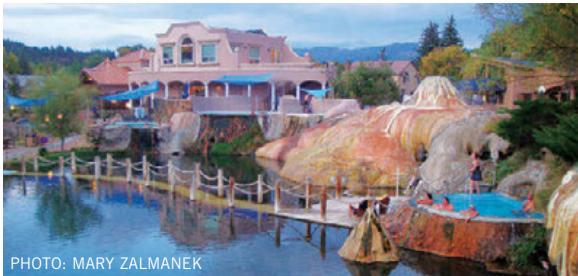


PHOTO: MARY ZALMANEK

It's no wonder since a soak in these mineral-rich waters is said to relieve symptoms of arthritis, reduce high blood pressure and boost the immune system, among other benefits. Set above the San Juan River in southwest Colorado, the Springs Resort and Spa offers 23 soaking pools and a lap pool. Water temperatures range from 83 degrees to 114 degrees, and the pools are fed by the Great Pagosa Aquifer. At a depth of 1,002 feet, this aquifer is the deepest geothermal hot springs in the world according to Guinness World Records. After our soothing soak, we drove to our RV site on the river at Pagosa Riverside Campground (888-785-3234).

The aquifer also feeds two other nearby spas: Overlook Mineral Springs Spa has rooftop pools and indoor tubs, and Healing Water Resort and Spa has a swimming pool, soaking tubs and an on-site RV park with full hookups. In addition to the hot springs, the area offers outdoor recreation, Native American ruins and scenic narrow-gauge train rides.

For more information, call 800-252-2204 or go to www.visitpagosasprings.com.

— Mary Zalmanek

A DAY ON THE FARM



PHOTO: GRAH MOORE

Learn about sustainability and the human connection to the agricultural world with a visit to Shelburne Farms in northwestern Vermont. Here, on a 1,400-acre working farm, you can hop aboard an open-air wagon for a tour of the historic buildings and stunning landscape set on Lake Champlain. Explore 10 miles of walking trails, visit the 7-acre vegetable garden and take in idyllic views from Lone Tree Hill.

Shelburne Farms began as a model agriculture estate in 1886 when Dr. William Seward and Lila Vanderbilt Webb bought farmland on the shores of Lake Champlain. The

Webb's farm eventually grew to 3,800 acres and included a renowned Hackney horse breeding enterprise and the five-story Queen-Anne-style Farm Barn, which housed farm machinery and crop storage rooms. It has since become an education center and also houses the farm's cheese-making facility, where raw milk from the farm's purebred brown Swiss cows becomes artisanal farmhouse cheddar.

Shelburne Farms was named a National Historic Landmark in 2001.

For more information, call 802-985-8686 or visit online at www.shelburnefarms.org. ♦

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THE DREAM IS ALIVE

Twenty years ago, I joined Monaco. Our dream then was to make the most beautiful, innovative and high-quality RVs in the industry. And we did. Through the years, Monaco, Holiday Rambler, Bteaver and Safari weathered storms and enjoyed good times as well. It was a dream come true.

The last four years have been a test for the industry and quite honestly challenging for all involved with Monaco. Many of the world's greatest brands have reached a tipping point where they either disappeared or they were reborn. We reached that moment on May 16, 2013, when Allied Specialty Vehicles (ASV) gave us the opportunity to begin a new era.

Twenty years with one company is a long time, but for me, this is just the beginning. Look to Monaco and Holiday Rambler to not only survive, but to be better for it. Yes, we're here to stay. The Dream is Alive.

Mike Snell

President
Monaco, Holiday Rambler



M O N A C O



HOLIDAY RAMBLER



RINCON COUNTRY PLAYS TO INTERESTS OF RVERS

FIND A FULL SLATE OF ACTIVITIES AND AMENITIES
AT THIS ARIZONA RV RESORT

by JEFF CRIDER



Domingo Alfaro and his wife, Marie, have spent at least 15 winters at Rincon Country East RV Resort in Tucson, Ariz. And while there are many parks that pride themselves on clean, inviting facilities, it was Rincon Country's wood shop that drew Alfaro to the 460-site resort. Here he not only found an assortment of tools and equipment not typically available in RV parks, but also other Rvers with an interest in woodworking.

Over time, Alfaro said, Rincon Country East's Rvers added to the wood shop's offerings by holding fundraisers and recycling aluminum cans to purchase tools and other equipment they can share.

"The park had some equipment to start with," the 78-year-old Alfaro said. "But little by little, we bought more saws and drum sanders. We will get a band saw in a couple of days."

Earlier this year, Alfaro and other Rvers at the 55-and-older resort were busy making rocking chairs, bowls, baby cradles and rocking hors-

es. And while they often make these for children and grandchildren, they also donate handmade items to charity. Rincon Country East and its sister property, Rincon Country West, also have several quilting groups that get together throughout the week to make quilts for themselves and also to give to local charities and other organizations, including the local veterans hospital, the Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse and the Ronald McDonald House.

"I just stopped by the sewing room last week to see what they were up to and they said they had finished 13 quilts that day," said Jordan Kelley of Rincon Country's marketing department.

"People complain that there is so much to do here [they] can't do it all," said Judy Fried, a Tucson resident who volunteers her time and talents teaching pottery, ceramics and lapidary classes to guests who stay at Rincon Country West.

"We have equipment and people who are

Clockwise, top left: RV sites and park models are side-by-side at Rincon Country West RV Resort. Quilting groups gather at Rincon Country West to make quilts for themselves and to donate to local charities. Rincon Country Rvers have fun in the wood shop. Rincon Country East offers large, paved sites surrounded by palm trees.



Rincon Country RV Resorts Updates

- 26 New upgraded RV sites.
- 30 Fully furnished, upgraded cottages for monthly rent.
- Park models available for sale.
- Refinished tennis courts.
- Full-service massage therapist on-site.
- Exercise rooms at both parks.
- Accommodations and catering for RV rallies.
- Model garden railroad — rated in the Top 10 in Arizona.
- Gift shop.



willing to volunteer to teach,” said Fried, adding that Rincon Country is better equipped than most parks when it comes to having facilities and equipment for drying and firing pottery and ceramics.

But while many Rincon Country guests enjoy the resorts’ wood shop, pottery and ceramics classes, others are drawn to the resorts’ busy activity schedule, which includes more than 100 activities a week during snowbird season (between October 15 and April 15).

Activities this past winter at Rincon Country West, with its 1,140 sites, included an old fashioned ice cream soda night, which was paired with the showing of movie classics, line dancing, wine tastings, and live entertainment, including a performance by the University of Arizona’s Steel Drum Band. The resort also provided several educational seminars covering financial and health care topics from annuities to Medicare.

Activities at Rincon Country East included arts and crafts classes, line dancing, bocce ball, horseshoes, billiards, bingo and shuffleboard, while live entertainment included concerts featuring the music of the Big Bands, country western, blues and swing.



Clockwise, top left: A heated swimming pool is one of many amenities found at Rincon Country East RV Resort. RVers can also enjoy games of shuffleboard and take advantage of the wood shop, which offers an array of tools and equipment. These pieces were created by RVers in the wood shop at Rincon Country East.

Improvements have also been underway at both Rincon Country resorts.

“We are continuously improving the appearance and modernizing our two resorts,” said Rincon Country owner George O’Leary, who spent more than \$1 million installing new electrical lines, resurfacing park roads, erecting new perimeter walls and making other improvements during the past two years.

These improvements, while upping the aesthetic appeal, are also enticing for snowbirds who want a clean, well-kept, safe and secure place to spend the winter.

O’Leary himself comes from the northern climes. While he originally came to the U.S. from Ireland in 1956, he lived in Minnesota for 16 years before finding his way to Tucson. He built his first park, Rincon Country Mobile Home Park, in 1970, which he later sold. He then built Rincon Country East RV Resort in 1979 and began building Rincon Country West RV Resort in 1983.

With 43 years spent in the RV park

business, O’Leary recognizes that he’s getting closer to retirement and now shares the management responsibilities of his two parks with his wife, Sandra, with future generations to follow.

He said, “People used to ask, ‘What’s going to happen when George retires?’ Now they have Sandra and the O’Leary family,” adding that he is setting up his park to remain in the family for at least the next 50 years. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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800-782-7275,
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Jeff Crider is a Palm Desert, Calif.-based freelance writer, photographer and camping enthusiast who previously covered the RV industry and tourism for newspapers in Southern California.

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Monuments and Mining Towns **OF THE BLACK HILLS**

HISTORY, HUBRIS AND HEART
COMBINE IN **SOUTH DAKOTA**

by BOBBIE HASSELBRING





For millions of years, natural forces like snow, rain and wind shaped western South Dakota's Black Hills into a spectacular place prized by RVers interested in everything from dinosaurs and rockhounding to hiking, fishing, and wildlife viewing. In a far shorter period of time, Native Americans, trappers, miners, homesteaders and modern day entrepreneurs have dramatically impacted this region. On a recent trip, we explored this human influence on the Black Hills.

Native Americans lived in the Black Hills for thousands of years before white settlers arrived. When gold was discovered in 1874, miners swarmed the area, establishing dozens of mining camps, many now towns strung like pearls north and south along Highway 385. Heading to Deadwood, one of the most famous of these mining towns, we turn south off Highway 90 onto Highway 14A, Spearfish Canyon Scenic Byway. While this is a winding, two-lane route, it's plenty wide for our Class C Greyhawk and we spot several RVs, including larger Class A's, negotiating the 20-mile canyon. The speed limit is 35 MPH, but many drivers gawking at Spearfish Creek, lush forests of aspen, pine and birch, and the canyon's thousand-foot peach and black walls go even slower. It's no wonder Kevin Costner's movie, "Dances with Wolves," was filmed here. Several turnouts at places like Bridal Veil Falls and Roughlock Falls allow us to take photos and let impatient drivers pass.

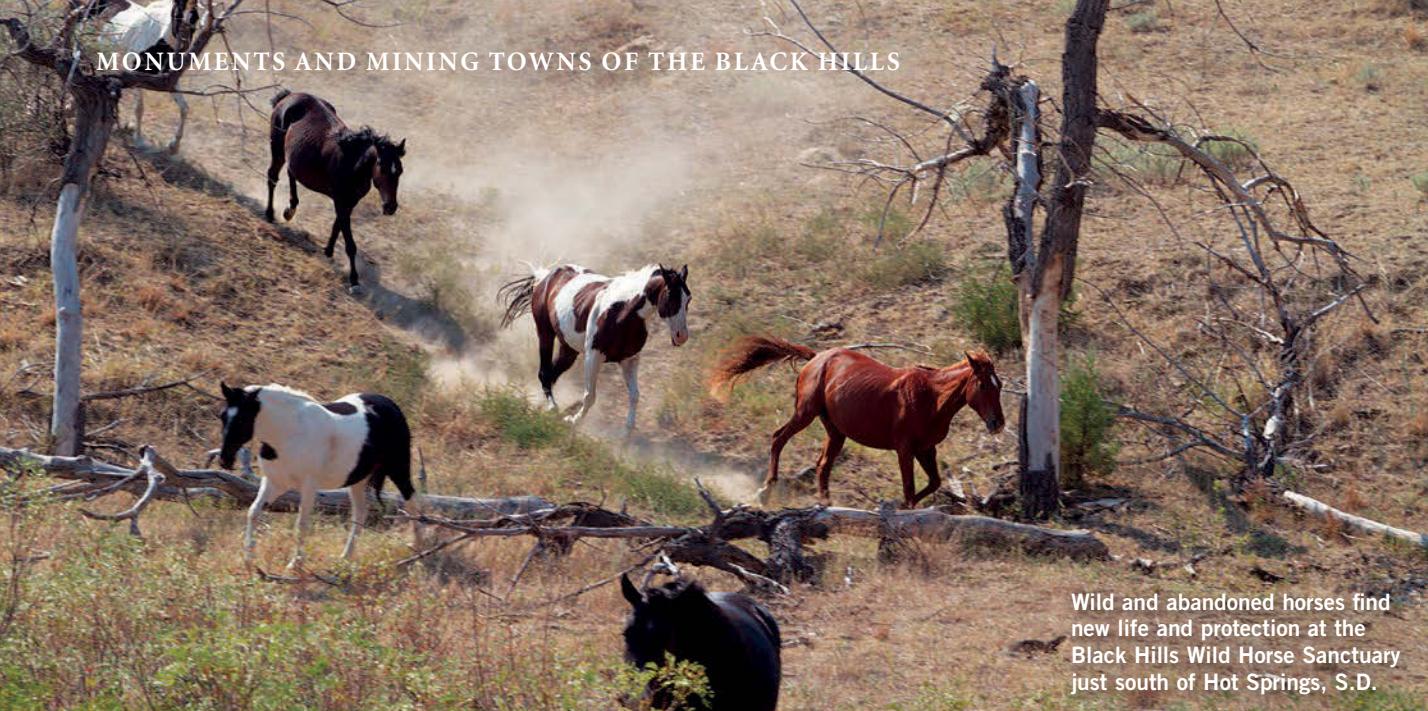
We climb steeply out of the canyon and cruise into Lead (pronounced "Leed"), a mining town still dominated by Homestake Mine, the largest, deepest (8,240 feet) and most productive open-pit gold mine in the Western Hemisphere. The mine closed in 2002, but visitors can tour the Black Hills Mining Museum's underground mine simulation and get a glimpse of how gold mining shaped the area.

A few miles farther, we pull into Deadwood, a National Historic Landmark made famous by Western characters like Calamity Jane and William "Wild Bill" Hickok. Originally a mining camp, Deadwood's gold rush quickly pushed the population to 5,000 and the town became notorious for gambling, prostitution and lawlessness. Today, old brick buildings line the streets and museums like the Historic Adams House give visitors a look at life here at the turn of the century.

Since Deadwood's streets are narrow, we park the coach at Whistler Gulch



Visitors are treated to steep canyon walls on Spearfish Canyon's scenic drive. Above: Tourists walk the Avenue of Flags on their way to view Mount Rushmore National Monument. Left: The discovery of gold in Deadwood Gulch drew thousands of miners to the Black Hills, land sacred to the Lakota Sioux.



Wild and abandoned horses find new life and protection at the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary just south of Hot Springs, S.D.

RV Park, a comfortable 131-site park that features water and electric, a dump site, showers and restrooms, laundry, and an outdoor pool. It's also one of the convenient stops for the Deadwood Trolley, an inexpensive way to get around town (\$1 per person). We walk along wooden sidewalks past the old railroad depot, down a brick street dating from 1890 and past Saloon No. 10, a replica of where Wild Bill was killed. However, much of the town's history is only skin deep. Since legalizing gambling in 1989, nearly all of the historic structures house casinos booming with business. For Hickok and Calamity Jane, both legendary gamblers, today's Deadwood would feel familiar.

The next day we head south on Highway 385 to Hill City, home to railroading history, another significant human influence on the Black Hills. The city was crossroads for the Burlington Northern

and Black Hills Central rail lines. The Northern line is now the George S. Mickelson Trail, a 109-mile hiking and biking path between Deadwood and Edgemont. The Black Hills Central Railroad, aka the 1880 Train, operates tourist rail service between Hill City and Keystone. As the old steam locomotive churns into the depot, pushing steam and breathing fire like an iron dragon, people line up for the two-hour ride and we happily snap pictures.

Next door, we explore the South Dakota State Railroad Museum's old rail signs, lights, furniture, dinnerware, clothing and a timeline of Black Hills trains.

Tonight we spend a quiet evening at one of our favorites, Rafter J Bar Ranch, a former stage stop on the Deadwood Stage line. Rafter J Bar's RV park offers showers, picnic tables, fire pits and generously sized sites nestled under the pines. It also has a store, small café, laundry, and, in

summer, an outdoor pool. As the sun sets, we walk the dogs along the park's meandering roads, taking in views of the meadows.

MOUNTAINOUS MONUMENTS

The next morning we drive south on 385 to the Crazy Horse Memorial, a monumental work in progress begun in 1948 by sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski to honor Crazy Horse, a Lakota leader who refused to force his people onto reservations. Many people take photos from the highway, but getting up close to this impressive undertaking is worth the admission (\$10) and we park in the wide RV parking lot.

The sculptor died in 1982, but his family carries on his mission. The 1,000-acre campus is now home to Native American arts and crafts galleries, the Indian Museum of North America, a theater, library, classrooms and meeting halls, and,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

Whistler's Gulch Campground and RV Park in Deadwood, S.D., is on a trolley stop that allows visitors to leave their rigs in place.



The 1880 Train steam locomotive draws tourists as staff prepare for the trip between Hill City and Keystone, S.D.





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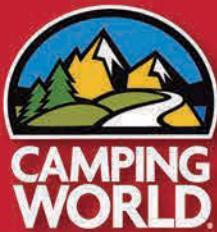
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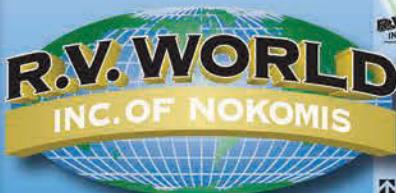
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this summer, a Native American university.

Visitors get good views of the monument from the welcome center or, for \$4 more, take a bus to the base of the mountain. After watching a fascinating video on the project, we're fortunate to join two donors who are treated to a rare visit onto the statue. We rumble up a dirt road and climb a gentle path littered with drills, lifts and other sculpting equipment. We walk out on the arm of the sculpture and turn to face the incredibly huge Crazy Horse head. Even partially completed the monument is extraordinary. Eight million tons of granite has been blasted off this mountain to create this sculpture. When finished, at 563 feet high, the monument will be the largest in the world.

We head east to another iconic mon-



An up-close and personal experience at Crazy Horse Memorial is provided for donors who contribute at certain levels.

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BLACK HILLS

ument, Mount Rushmore. After Crazy Horse, I'm not sure what to expect, but the huge sculpture of presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln is truly impressive. The Washington sculpture alone is 60 feet tall, with a 20-foot nose and 18-foot-wide mouth. As we walk to the viewing area beneath flags from all 50 states, I feel proud and patriotic. Then we buy ice cream cones to honor Thomas Jefferson, who created the first ice cream recipe in America.

We spend the night in Custer State Park, a verdant 71,000-acre refuge filled with wildlife and rolling pine- and oak-covered hills. Our site at Game Lodge Campground offers electricity, flat, paved sites, grass and trees, an excellent shower house, and, best of all, deep quiet.

HOT SPRINGS AND HORSES

The following morning, we proceed south to Hot Springs, a town founded in the 1880s as a health resort. The village of 3,700 is filled with more than 35 pink sandstone buildings, many resembling European castles. The town founder hired European and local craftsmen to construct the impressive buildings and the town became a hit with tourists seeking the healing properties of the area's 170 hot springs. In 1907, the Department of Veterans Affairs established Battle Mountain Sanitarium to treat injured soldiers. Today, visitors can drive or walk through the historic health campus, and visit its small museum and cemetery.

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By the 1920s, Hot Springs' popularity faded and, today, the town is working to preserve its historic structures. We stop at the old Union Railway Depot, the "smallest Union Depot in the world," that houses the visitor center. The historian tells us the place to experience the warm mineral springs is Evans Plunge, a water park where 87-degree water is naturally exchanged seven times a day. She also suggests we stop along Fall River at Kidney Springs Gazebo, a Victorian trellis where visitors can fill jugs with mineral water. We find the water, which is warm, tastes amazingly clean and delicious.

Twelve miles southwest of Hot Springs, we stop at Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, a place dedicated to healing some of man's impact on the Black Hills. For thousands of years, horses roamed the Black Hills and bones discovered here indicate the area was home to the world's original horse, *eohippus* (dawn horse), a small, dog-sized creature. Later, Spaniards and other explorers brought the modern day horse that became today's wild mustang.

Horses not only changed how Native Americans traveled, hunted and fought, they also enabled white settlers to expand into the Black Hills. Many horses that escaped from captivity became bands of wild horses that thrive in this rugged land. Today the Bureau of Land Management controls the population, making places like the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary necessary.

We are met by staffer Karla LaRive who tells us former cattle rancher Dayton O. Hyde established this horse haven in 1988 after seeing captured wild horses herded into government holding areas. Today, the 11,000-acre sanctuary is home to about 650 horses, many of them rare stock such as Kigers, Sulphurs and Sorraias from the original Spanish horses, in spectacular canyons, forests and grasslands.

Visitors can take tours ranging from three hours to three days. As we bump along a dirt track in LaRive's ranch truck, she tells us the land is preserved for all wildlife. Wild turkeys the size of VW Bugs rumble across the land. Bear, deer, coy-

otes and even mountain lions are often spotted here. Once a horse arrives at the sanctuary, it's here for life.

Horses come to the sanctuary not just from the wild, but also from private owners. Many have been neglected or abused. As we come around a corner, we spot our first mustangs. They seem unconcerned when we stop the truck and get out. They don't seem wild, but Karla assures us they are.

"If horses have nothing to fear, they're not afraid," she says. She then calls out, "Come on babies, come on."

The horses begin running toward us. We stand stock still as wild mustangs surround us. They creep closer and closer, blowing and smelling us with their soft nostrils. Then a red mare stretches out her neck and nibbles at my shirt.

It's a magical moment, one of history, hubris and, most definitely, of heart. ♦



Bobbie Hasselbring is an award-winning travel and food writer and editor of www.realfoodtraveler.com, which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a Class C 2003 Jayco Greyhawk SS.

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RV trips often provide us the opportunity to learn about people and places we vaguely remember from school days long past. While traveling the coast of Cape Breton Island for a week, my husband, Bob, and I found ourselves

following in the footsteps of explorers drawn to these shores for five centuries.

Mid-summer adventures in our 22-foot Leisure Travel Vans Sprinter motorhome led us to the Canso Causeway that links Nova Scotia's mainland to the island. Once on "Île Royale," as

17th-century French settlers named it, we headed northwest to find lunch.

At the town of Judique, the earliest permanent Scottish settlement on the island, we pulled off the road to investigate a handsome building housing the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre. Not only was



RV ADVENTURES

WITH EXPLORERS
AND INVENTORS
ON NOVA SCOTIA'S CAPE BRETON ISLAND

by CHRISTINE GOODIER

lunch being served to the assembled crowd, but also three celebrated Cape Breton musicians were about to perform.

We downed bowls of creamy chowder filled with chunks of lobster and wscallops, and settled in to enjoy the music. After a round of toe-tapping

fiddling by Kinnon Beaton and Shelly Campbell, accompanied by pianist Allan Dewar, Campbell demonstrated Scottish-style step dancing. She invited the audience to learn more through exhibits of vintage musical instruments, photos and recordings.

Gaelic is still spoken in Western Cape Breton and it's a region renowned for music that blends its Scottish and French Acadian heritages. Highway 19 is known as Ceilidh (*kay-lee*) Trail from the Gaelic word meaning party or happening. Ceilidhs and square dances are held



Visitors can take a guided tour or simply stroll on their own through the Fortress of Louisbourg.

all summer at fire stations, community centers and parish halls along this coast.

We continued north on the Ceilidh Trail, pausing to explore the Scottish fishing village and lighthouse at Mabou Harbour before stopping for the night at Inverness. After a walk on a wide beach of silky soft sand, we watched the sun sink into the western sea, a hallmark feature of the "sunset side" of Cape Breton.

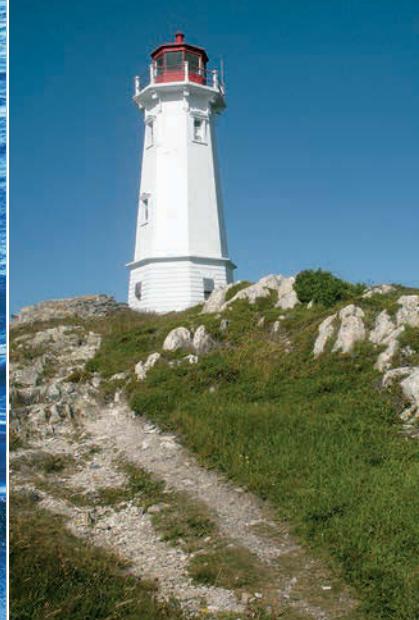
Bright sunshine the next morning promised ideal weather for our introduction to a world-famous drive. Looping 185 miles around the northern peninsula of Cape Breton Island, the Cabot Trail is known for its cliffs, mountains and switchbacks, all well worth navigating for the majestic coastal scenery.

We joined the trail at the town of Margaree Harbour and within 20 minutes reached the French Acadian enclave of Chéticamp. Just above, the trail entered Cape Breton Highlands National Park, where rangers gave us a handy guide map with symbols for scenic overlooks.

Pulling over often to drink in the views, we came upon the park's 20-site

Top from left: The Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site includes a replica of Bell's office. A boardwalk leads to orchids and wildflowers in the French Mountain Bog along the Cabot Trail. On the road to Meat Cove, the remote settlement of Capstick faces St. Lawrence Bay at the top of Cape Breton Island peninsula. A lighthouse has guarded the entrance to Mabou Harbour since 1884.

PHOTOS: ROBERT GOODIER



Pods of pilot whales are spotted during whale watching expeditions from Bay St. Lawrence at the top of Cape Breton Island. Canada's first lighthouse was originally built on this spot to stand guard by the harbor entrance to the Fortress of Louisbourg.

Corney Brook Campground perched above the sea and noted it for our “next time” list. At another overlook with a lovely view of the trail, we read a marble monument’s inscription memorializing Canadians who died overseas serving their country. “They will never know the beauty of this place, see the seasons change, enjoy nature’s chorus,” it read.

The trail led inland and we stretched our legs with a short hike through the

French Mountain Bog where tiny white orchids were in full summer bloom. Back in the motorhome, we followed the forested mountain road into the highlands, and our wilderness views swept down to coves, bays and river valleys.

Although it’s possible to drive the Cabot Trail in a full day, we decided to pause overnight and explore the top of the peninsula. We checked into a campsite overlooking Aspy Bay at the Hideaway

Campground & Oyster Market and phoned to arrange a late afternoon whale watching excursion nearby.

On the way, we stopped at the oceanfront Cabots Landing Provincial Park where a grassy field with picnic tables borders a red sand beach. We came upon a bust of John Cabot perched atop a rock cairn erected by the Cape Breton Historical Society. The bronze marker states that on June 24, 1497, the explorer discovered the

Driving the Cabot Trail

Drivers encounter steep grades,

particularly at Cape Smokey Mountain on the Atlantic side. RV travelers can approach the trail clockwise from the west side to drive in the inland lane (or counterclockwise from the east to drive along the guard rail). Some drivers leave their motorhomes parked at campgrounds and drive a dinghy vehicle. The town of Baddeck, with several full-service RV parks, grocery stores, fuel stations and other amenities, is a popular base camp.

At Cape Breton Highlands National Park, two campgrounds offer full hookup sites: Chéticamp on the west side and Broad Cove on the east. Call 902-224-2306 or visit www.pc.gc.ca. A Parks Canada Discovery Pass provides one year’s unlimited entry to 100-plus national parks and historic sites. Prices are \$67.70 for adults and \$57.90 for seniors.



The Cabot Trail winds, climbs and descends along a 185-mile loop around the northern peninsula of Cape Breton Island.



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continent of North America in this vicinity.

Or did he? A government plaque on the ground nearby equivocated: "He made land somewhere on the east coast of Canada." (Some historians say it was in Newfoundland.) The explorer actually was a Venetian citizen named Giovanni Caboto who bore letters of patent from King Henry VII. Whichever landfall visitors choose to believe in, there's no disputing that Cabot's expedition in his small ship, the *Matthew*, launched Britain's mighty overseas empire.

Like Cabot, we wanted to explore these waters by boat, and drove to Bay St. Lawrence to board the 42-foot *Oshan* with 10 other passengers. Captain Cyril Fraser, whose family has lived in northern Cape Breton for five generations, steered us along the north coast of the peninsula and pointed out eagles perched on jagged

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cliffs that plunged to the water. We passed Meat Cove high above us, where two RVs had ventured up dirt roads to camp at land's end.

From the Cape St. Lawrence beacon, Fraser turned north into deeper water where he knew whales might be found. Soon we found ourselves in "whale soup," pointing and laughing as shiny black pilot whales and their calves spouted, surfaced and dove around the boat. As the sun sank in the sky, Fraser put out lines to trawl for mackerel while his first mate, daughter Cheryl, took the helm into port.

What goes up must come down when it comes to the Cabot Trail since no roads bisect the loop mid-peninsula. We continued our clockwise route the next morning after stopping to marvel at the crystalline water of White Point, typical of Aspy Bay villages where fishermen earn a living from the sea.

Lobster season ended on July 15, and rectangular traps were piled high on wharves at towns like Neil's Harbour where we parked to see the Canadian Coast Guard's 1899 lighthouse. Traps shaped like conical lampshades were now deployed for the summer's catch of snow crabs.

We continued through coastal forests along the rocky bluffs and shallow coves down to the Ingonishes, a series of bay towns offering a beach, resort, golf course and other attractions. We crossed steep Cape Smokey Mountain, still enjoying the rocky shoreline, and passed galleries filled with pottery, woodcarvings, rugs and other handicrafts. At Bras d'Or Lake Campground in Baddeck we stopped for the night.

The Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site was a five-minute drive the next morning from our campground and offered RV parking near the entrance. Exhibits inside brought to life the scientist we knew only as the inventor of the telephone. Born in Scotland, Bell became a U.S. citizen and in his later years lived in this Cape Breton town.

Through oral history videos, photos and artifacts, we discovered the vast scope of Bell's achievements in medicine, aeronautics, marine engineering and communication for the deaf. Exhibits humanized the great inventor, who in boyhood taught

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his dog to talk and in old age smoked his cigar while floating in a life ring.

Leaving the Cabot Trail behind, we turned east toward Glace Bay to trace the path of Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi. All that remains at Table Head where Marconi established his transatlantic wireless station are concrete foundations of a huge transmitting tower. A transmission from the tower in December 1902 was the first radio message from North America to cross the Atlantic. Inside the small National Historic Site museum, we studied a replica and other exhibits about this Nobel Prize winner.

We followed the Marconi Trail's rugged coastal road south for an hour, crossing a one-lane, wooden plank bridge, to the modern town of Louisbourg for two nights in a fine waterfront campground, Point of View Suites & RV Park. Driving around the harbor the next day, we came upon the modern-day red and white version of Canada's first lighthouse, originally erected on this site in 1734.

The Fortress of Louisbourg National

Historic Site would be our final stop, a living history re-creation much like America's Colonial Williamsburg. A Parks Canada employee at the visitors center noticed our annual Discovery Passes, handed us the day's schedule and waved us past dozens of people lined up to buy tickets. We boarded a bus for the 15-minute ride to the fortress and walked to a gate where a costumed sentry granted us entry into the French-speaking world of 1744.

Tour guide Hilda Bagnell explained that codfish were all-important to France and England in the early 1700s. France built the lighthouse and an oceanfront fort on this harbor, named after Louis XIV, to protect its interests in the rich Grand Banks nearby. The fortress and town were of great international significance from 1713 to 1768. But after two major sieges, the French eventually surrendered to the British, who destroyed the fortress.

In 1961 on the abandoned site, the government of Canada rebuilt one-fourth of the original town using original plans, stones and masonry techniques, and

opened it to visitors.

We walked cobblestone streets, visited the King's Bastion Barracks and watched a blacksmith, lace maker and other costumed interpreters at work. After enjoying a children's dance, we stepped into a small tavern and ordered pea soup and bread served in a pewter dish. Strolling past roaming turkeys and farmers tending their sheep, we visited the richly furnished governor's quarters and admired his ornate chapel before leaving.

It had been a satisfying day and a fitting end to our week on Cape Breton Island. We had seen Cabot's coast, walked in the footsteps of Bell and Marconi, and followed the paths of Scottish and French adventurers. Our RV discoveries, more satisfying than any classroom experiences, had made the pages of history come to life. ♦



Christine Goodier is a freelance writer and editor who lives on the North Carolina coast and travels with her husband, photographer Bob Goodier, in a Class B Sprinter motorhome.

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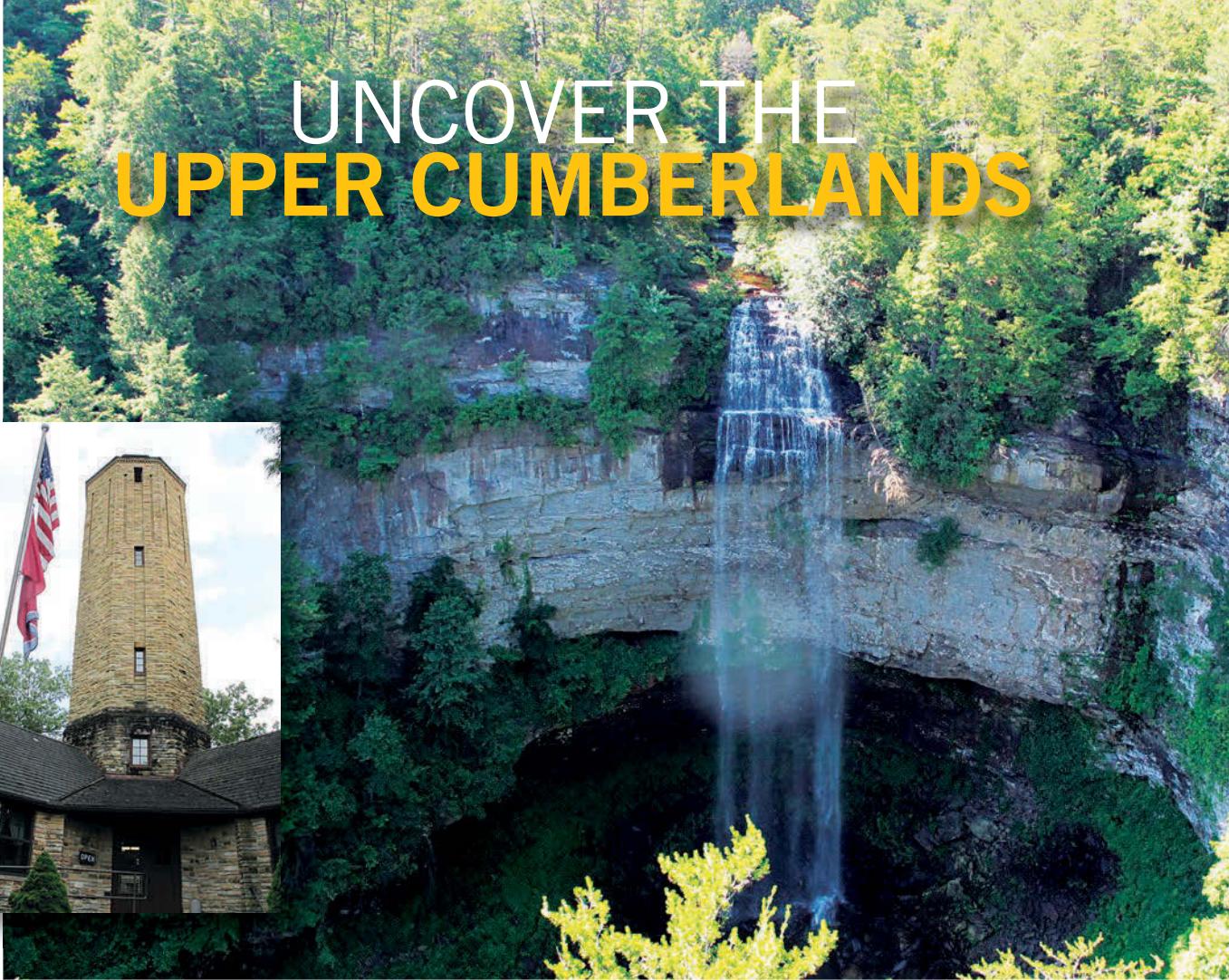
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Clouds become puppeteers over the vast gorges and valleys, shifting with the breeze as if pulling strings to make shadows dance and play across the treetops. Across the expanse, water rushes over a cliff, racing to the rock amphitheater below.

This is Fall Creek Falls State Park, an eastern Tennessee nature extravaganza named for the 256-foot waterfall that's the highest east of the Rockies. From my perch at the main overlook, I gaze at the forest of blackjack oak and hemlock, fringed in Virginia pine, with trees between 300 and 400 years old. A pair of eagles glides and dip overhead to a soundtrack of local songbirds.

Just as the sight and sound of water crashing against rock began to hypnotize me, Stuart Carroll, the head of the park's resource management and programming, interjected with some valuable information about the park he called "emblematic of the beauty throughout the Cumberlands."

Sprawled across the western tip of the Cumberland Plateau, the 26,000 acres of Fall Creek Falls State Park, located near Pikeville, are a gold mine for outdoor enthusiasts. Mountain bike trails traverse the park, and those on foot can discover the tranquil beauty of numerous waterfalls, streams and verdant stands of hardwood timber with a trek on 34-plus miles of hiking trails. (Some, including Fall Creek Falls Overlook Trail, are wheelchair

Main: This majestic 256-foot waterfall is the namesake of Tennessee's Fall Creek Falls State Park. **Insets:** A visit to the Homesteads Tower Museum in Crossville provides a look at the largest post-Great Depression resettlement community in the country. The view from behind Ozone Falls.

NATURE AND HISTORY MAKE THEIR MARK IN THIS MUST-VISIT TENNESSEE REGION

by LAURA MICHAELS

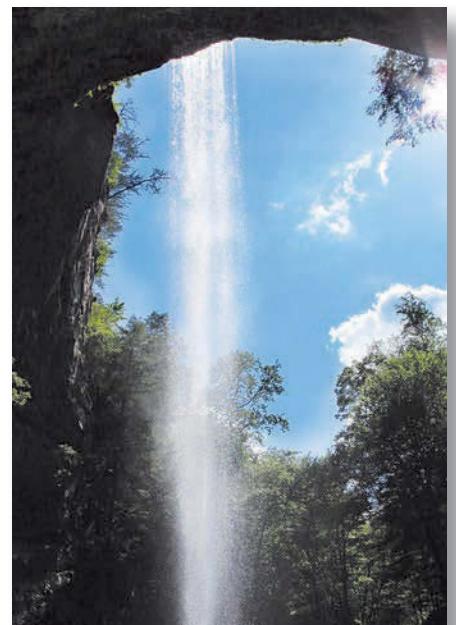
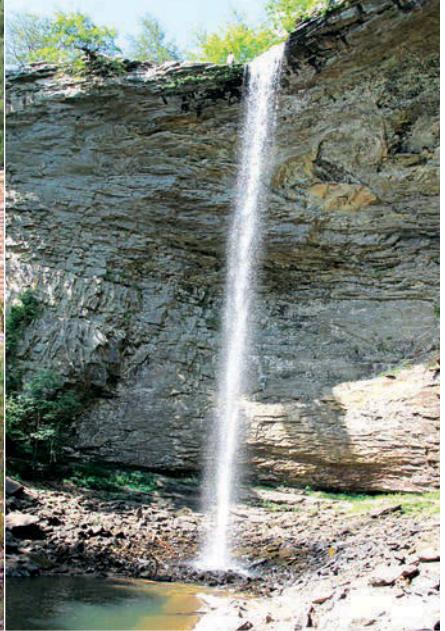
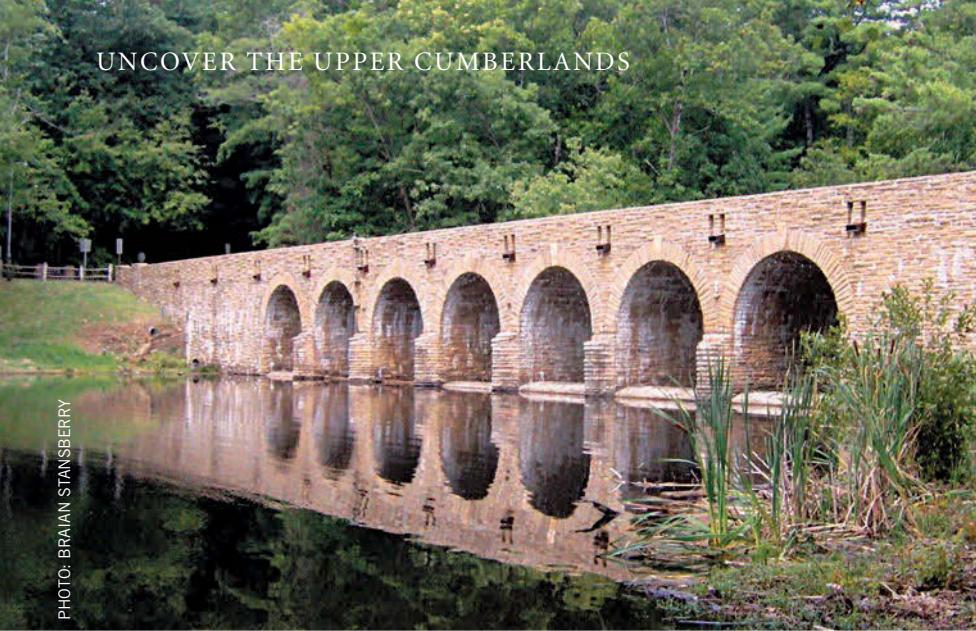
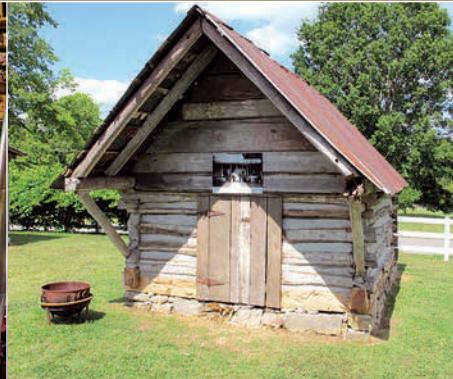


PHOTO: BRAIAN STANSBERRY



Built of local rock called Crab Orchard sandstone, the 28-foot-high stone dam and arch bridge is a prominent feature in Cumberland Mountain State Park. An impressive rock house amphitheater surrounds Ozone Falls and was created over time by wind, water and erosion. Peruse memorabilia and unique gifts inside Granville's T.B. Sutton General Store. This reconstructed log smoke house is part of the Sutton Homestead in Granville. The view from Buzzard's Roost showcases the forests of Fall Creek Falls State Park, with trees more than 300 years old.



accessible.) Snag a channel catfish from Fall Creek Falls Lake, experience the park on horseback or head over to the 18-hole golf course that got this resort-style park included in *Golf Digest* magazine.

I opted for a visit to the Betty Dunn Nature Center to familiarize myself with the area before clamoring over a few rocks to get my feet wet at Cane Creek Cascades. Inside the small interpretive center is a wealth of information on the Cumberland region's cultural and geologic history, vegetation, ecology and wildlife.

Just a few wooden steps away is Cane Creek. With a slight shiver I wiggled my toes in the cool, clear stream and watched as the water skipped and trickled over the layered, copper-colored rock face before tumbling 45 feet down to the pool below.

A suspension bridge, featured in Disney's live-action version of "The Jungle Book," crosses the creek and leads to the Woodland and Gorge trails, but my next

goal was making it to the base of Cane Creek Falls via a trail that might deter more people than it welcomes.

More akin to rock climbing than hiking, the Cable Trail is just that — a nearly vertical quarter-mile trail with a thick cable strung from top to bottom to assist those brave and surefooted enough to venture down. Looking over my shoulder with each step, I made my way down, switching sides under the cable as my feet worked their way into the rocky crevices. Once at the base, I was rewarded with an up-close view of Cane Creek Falls, which drops 85 feet into the pool below and is flanked by the walls of its limestone gorge.

After nearly an hour of rock hopping and taking in the scenery downstream, I readied myself for the return hike. While already an unforgettable experience, you'll want to snap a picture from the base of the cable to preserve the memory — and show off your accomplishment.

Forty miles northeast of Fall Creek Falls, another Tennessee state park boasts the largest masonry structure ever built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The 1,720 acres of Cumberland Mountain State Park in Crossville were acquired in 1938 as a project of the Farm Security Administration. The goal was to establish a recreation area for the 250 families selected to live and work in Cumberland County through the Roosevelt Administration's Homestead Act.

As part of the world's longest hardwood-forested plateau, the Tennessee portion of the Cumberland Plateau stretches 450 miles and rises more than 1,000 feet above the Tennessee River valley. Local rock called Crab Orchard sandstone is prominent and was used by the CCC to build the park's landmark 28-foot-high stone dam and arch bridge. The stone's tan, blue-gray and even soft pink colors are seen throughout the park's archi-

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Fall Creek Falls and Cumberland Mountain state parks boast sizeable campgrounds, with Fall Creek Falls requiring reservations and Cumberland Mountain working on a first-come, first-served basis. At Fall Creek Falls, 238 campsites — some paved — are spread across three different areas; all have water and electric hookups and 50 sites have sewer connections. Mostly shaded, all of Cumberland Mountain's 145 campsites are suitable for motorhomes, though only 14 have full hookups. The park aims to upgrade its electrical system from 30 to 50-amp service over the next year.

The Granville area, with its close proximity to the Cumberland River, offers three campgrounds: Granville Marina and Resort, Made in the Shade RV Park and Indian Creek Campground.

texture and in the Homesteads Tower Museum, just 1 mile from the park.

Upon arrival, I perused the various canoes, rowboats and paddleboats available for rent before deciding on a canoe the same color as the vivid orange daylilies flourishing along Tennessee's roadsides. With park naturalist Corbin Maddox as my guide, we cruised around Byrd Lake, Cumberland Mountain's 50-acre water attraction formed when the dam impounded Byrd Creek. As we rowed, Maddox pointed out the Louisiana Waterthrush and tiny Acadian Flycatchers flitting from tree to tree.

Up the road and inside the Homesteads Tower Museum I took a closer look at the initiative that created the largest post-Great Depression resettlement community in the nation. The octagonal stone tower, itself a marvel of design and execution, houses a collection of photos, documents and artifacts from the 1930s and '40s when homesteaders built their community. The structure's hand-laid stone exterior surrounds the original homestead

water tank, and a 97-step winding staircase leads to a lookout platform. Visitors are welcome daily from March through mid-December (\$4 admission).

Travel 15 miles east on U.S. Highway 70 and 110 feet below a sandstone cap rock to find yourself at the base of Ozone Falls, yet another spectacular display of nature at work. With my back against the rocky amphitheater wall, I watched as water from a different Fall Creek plunged from high above into the rock-bottomed pool just a few feet away. Ozone Falls also appears in "The Jungle Book," and I could just imagine Mowgli leaping over the edge to escape a battle.

After taking dozens of photos from my gorge vantage point, I hiked back up the rugged 3/4-mile trail, moving along the bluff to the parking area that's just large enough for a motorhome or two. Keep in mind that Ozone Falls is within a 43-acre natural area so there are no railings or groomed trails. Those not wanting to tackle the somewhat strenuous hike to the base can enjoy an equally enchanting view from the top of the falls.

The next leg of our journey took us about 70 miles northwest on Interstate 40 and Highway 96 and more than 100 years

back in time.

Just off the shores of the Cumberland River, the hamlet of Granville has been many things: a pioneer village, a riverboat town, a rich farming community and today a historic tourism destination. We were greeted at the Sutton Homestead by Granville native and local preservationist Randall Clemons, who described how volunteers raised more than \$180,000 in 30 days to buy the property. Built in 1880, the restored Sutton home is among the oldest in Granville. Now open for tours, the one-story, white clapboard home showcases many items belonging to Ben and Ethel Sutton, including a set of fine crystal. Other rooms display period pieces such as a 1800s rope bed and 1900s furniture, donated by longtime Granville residents.

Outside, the homestead property has been transformed into Granville's Pioneer Village where, from noon to 3 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, visitors can enjoy demonstrations at the Eller Grist Mill, Granville Weave Shop and Sutton Blacksmith Shop. A 1950s Gulf Service Station displays antique cars, including a 1939 Bantam Roadster and 1947 Hudson Pick-up. The \$5 admission includes a guided tour of the Sutton home, the service station, Pioneer Village shops and the Granville Museum.

An entire day could easily be passed in this picturesque town; at least an hour or two in the original T.B. Sutton General Store. Adorned outside with red and white antique Coca Cola signs, the two-story 1880 building served the town for 90 years and retains many of the same interior fixtures. A wraparound indoor balcony overlooks the main floor and both areas display furnishing and memorabilia, along with unique gifts and merchandise. Each Saturday the adjoining restaurant offers a family-style Tennessee dinner and bluegrass music performance.

There is much to discover tucked away in the lush hills of Tennessee's Upper Cumberland region, where scenic beauty mixes with historical significance to create an ideal destination for RVers. ♦

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UPPER CUMBERLANDS



Laura Michaels is the managing editor of *MotorHome*. She loves spending time outdoors — particularly at Iowa Hawkeye football games — and exploring her new home state of Minnesota.

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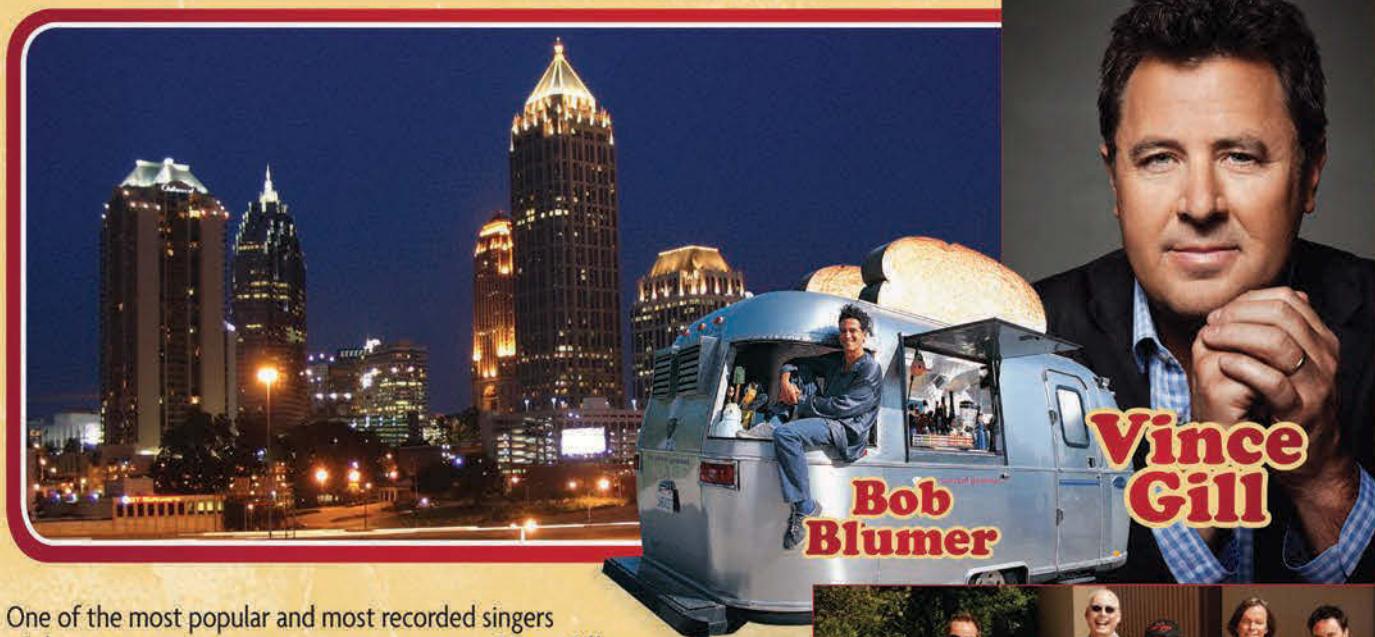


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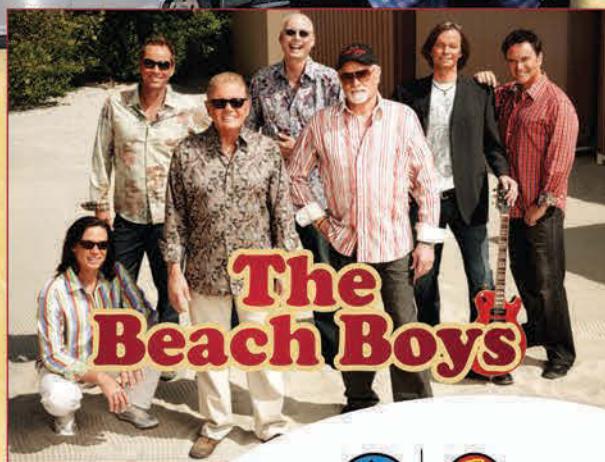
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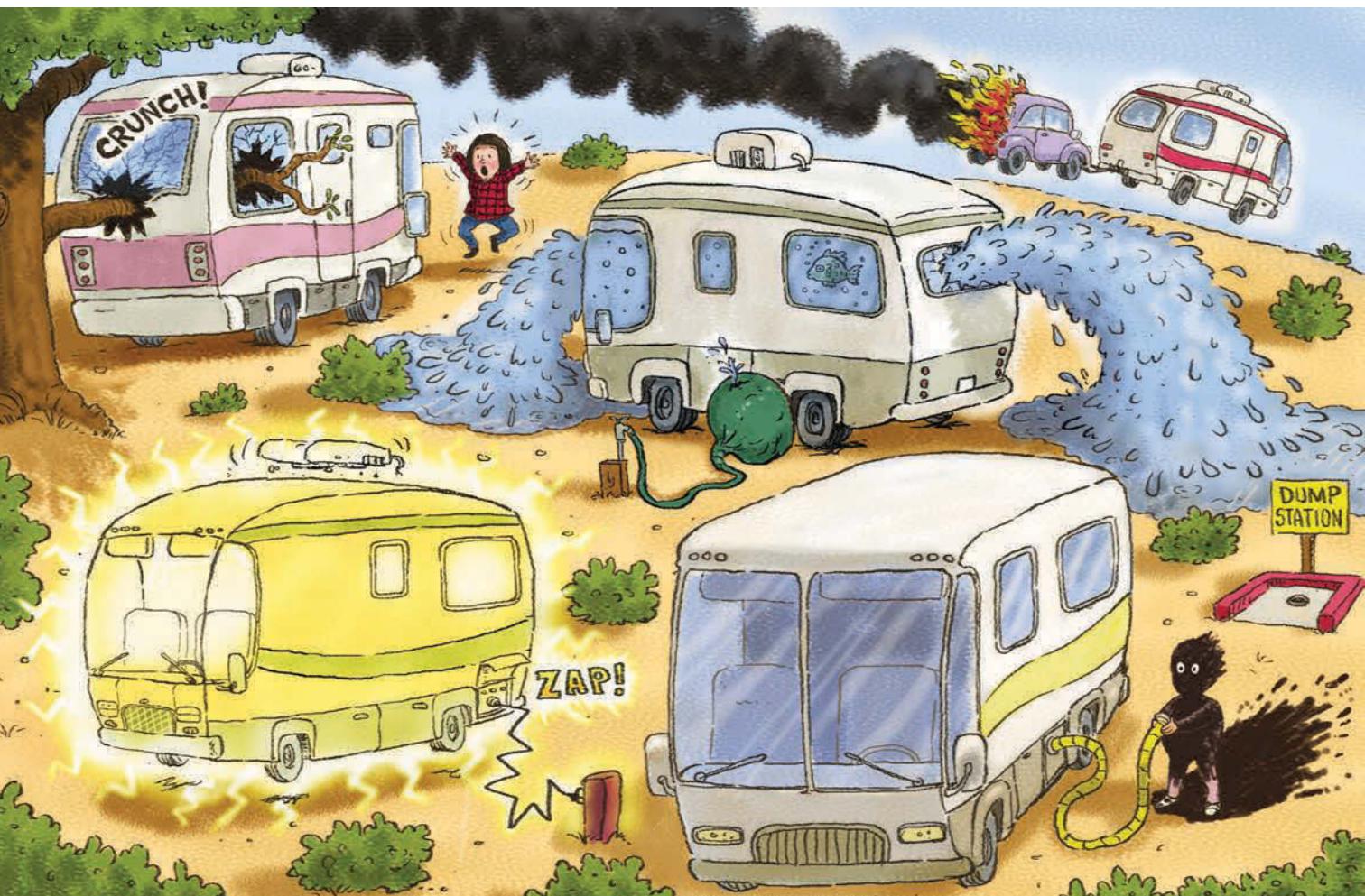
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2013 RV OOPS AWARDS

ELECTRICAL ERRORS AND FUEL-PUMP FIASCOES ARE AMONG THIS YEAR'S **TOP 10 MOTORHOME MISHAPS**

by LARRY MACDONALD



“What’s the dumbest thing you’ve ever done while RVing?”

Most RVers have experienced a major or minor mishap that spoiled an otherwise delightful camping trip. I’ve selected 10 such misfortunes that were reported to me and ranked them from Dumb (No. 10 to 6), to Dumber (No. 5 to 2), to Dumbest (No. 1). It’s no coincidence that dumber mishaps are usually more traumatic and costly. For example, last year’s winner tore the roof off his motorhome by speeding up when approaching a low-clearance bridge so as not to get stuck and hold up traffic. This year’s winning entry was slightly less dramatic, but equally traumatic and costly for the individuals involved.

Two things are certain about RVing blunders: First, the person responsible is not likely to make the same mistake

again. Second, somebody else will. By reading about the following blunders, we hope that “somebody” won’t be you.

THE DUMB

No. 10: Lights Out

Bert had just arrived at a campground and hooked up his hoses and cables as he had done many, many times before. After dinner, he and his wife sat down to watch TV. About an hour into their favorite program, the lights and TV flickered on and off for several minutes, then turned off completely. Assuming the power went out in the campground, they went to bed early. The next morning, after reporting their power outage to the office, a maintenance worker came by to check

ILLUSTRATION: BOB MCMAHON

it out. OOPS! Bert's 50-amp shorepower plug was only pushed in halfway, causing arcing within the receptacle. The plastic receptacle was partially melted and one of the three prongs had completely burned off, requiring the purchase of a new cord. Bert said, "From now on, I will always push in my power cord completely." After reading this, I suspect you will, too.

No. 9: A Plumber's Delight

Jay, a long-time tent camper, made the big decision to buy a small motorhome and take his family camping in style. Shortly after hooking up his fresh-water line, water started running from underneath onto the ground. A line had burst



under the kitchen sink. After shutting off the water, he used tape to repair the line. Within a few minutes after turning on the water, he saw another leak under the bathroom sink, which only required a crimp, and another leak behind the toilet. More tape. He immediately called the RV dealer, who told him to check his pressure regulator. "My what?" Jay asked. Following the dealer's explanation, he picked up and installed a pressure regulator and has had no further problems with leaks.

Helpful hint: To prevent bursting water lines, always use a pressure regulator at the outlet of the campground's water tap. An RV's plumbing and filters are not designed for the high-pressure lines found at most campgrounds.

No. 8: Haste Makes Waste

Dave's first priority, after maneuvering his large Class A into a smallish campsite, was to dump his full black-water tank. His sewer hose was just a couple of inches too short. Since it was raining, Dave decided not to attach his extension hose. Instead, he gained the required length by positioning the 45-degree connector parallel to the ground and stretching his hose to the maximum. Immediately after pulling the tank-valve handle, the weight of liquid



pulled down on the hose, unscrewing the connector from the discharge pipe. OOPS! Five days of excrement began pouring out onto the ground. In his haste to shut off the flow, Dave broke the valve handle. Rather than fill his campsite with raw sewage, he chose to reattach the hose, an unpleasant task considering what was spewing into his lap at 10 gallons per minute. Dave eventually succeeded and held on to the connector until his tank was empty. He then visited the campground's washroom for an extra long shower, clothes and all. In retrospect, I'm guessing Dave would have preferred getting wet from rainwater rather than black water.

Helpful hint: Remember the rule: "Right is tight, left is loose." Screws, nuts, light bulbs and sewer-hose connectors all tighten to the right (clockwise) and loosen to the left (counter-clockwise). Thus, if your 45-degree hose connector is pointed right, a downward force will tighten it. Dave's connector was likely pointing left, primed to loosen by the weight of the discharge liquid.

No. 7: Hearing Versus Listening

Since the water was turned off at campground sites because of near-freezing temperatures, Joe needed to fill his freshwater tanks. While his wife, Liz, watched from the rear of their motorhome,



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he slowly backed into position to access a functioning faucet. Noticing that the stub of a hefty branch was getting closer, Liz started waving and screaming, “Stop! Stop! Stop!” Joe kept on backing, implanting the branch through the back of the coach. OOPS! When Liz asked why he didn’t stop when she was yelling, he replied, “I didn’t know you meant it.” Joe covered the hole with duct tape until a body shop could make a proper repair.

Helpful hint: Having a spotter is very important when backing up. Listening to your spotter is even more important. If in doubt, stop, get out and have a look.

No. 6: The In’s and Out’s of Slides

John and Trish were getting ready to depart a campground in their Class A. John had opened a panel to unhook the water hose and left it open. Awhile later, he went inside to close a slide, checking carefully to ensure there wasn’t anything in the way. Trish was busy putting dishes away and securing drawers, so no one was outside to watch the slide come in. It was nearly in when a loud CRUNCH was followed by the slide abruptly stopping. A quick look outside showed the open panel door was badly bent by the slide and the slide itself was skewed at an angle. By opening and closing the slide several times, the angle lessened until the slide again came in straight. The panel door didn’t fare as well and had to be replaced.

Helpful hint: Always have someone inside and outside when operating slides. As many things get crunched outside as inside when opening and closing these huge compartments.

THE DUMBER

No. 5: Hot Day in Death Valley

Kevin and Mary were headed toward Death Valley National Park towing a Volkswagen Baja Bug behind their motorhome. Their route included a curvy road that precluded towing, so they disconnected. Kevin drove the motorhome; Mary followed in the car. At the end of the curvy section, they hooked up. Mary said, “It’s in NEUTRAL and the brake is off.” In the interest of marriage harmony, Kevin chose not to check.

Off they went at 50 MPH. Nearing the top of a hill, Kevin throttled back and felt an immediate resistance. Looking in the



mirror, he saw flames and smoke billowing from the dinghy vehicle. After pulling over and extinguishing the flames, he discovered that the car was in gear. The mechanical fuel pump, combined with the overheated engine, started a fire, which consumed the entire rear end of the car. They continued their somewhat subdued excursion into Death Valley, with the gearshift of their non-functional dinghy automobile in NEUTRAL.

Kevin and Mary have since bought another dinghy vehicle, and in the interest of marriage harmony, have agreed to check on each other as to whether it’s in NEUTRAL with the brake off.

No. 4: It’s the Real Thing

Ian had owned a Class A for years without problems. This year, however, he began hearing a clunking sound when accelerating or braking. He took the motorhome to an RV dealer who suggested it might be the brakes or driveshaft, maybe the transmission. They did some work on the brakes, which didn’t fix the problem, so he took it to another shop and another. After several thousand dollars of repair bills, Ian figured it was time to sell before whatever it was got worse. While sprucing it up by vacuuming under the front seat, he found a full can of Coke had been clunking back and forth against the seat frame. Problem solved. Ian sheepishly admitted, “After all those repairs, I decided not to sell.”

No. 3: The Wheel Goes ‘Round — Hopefully

Tony was driving in their elderly (1987) motorhome when his wife said, “I think I smell something.” Within minutes after slowing down, a loud CLUNK and scraping sound came from the rear of their coach, which jarred to a stop as if someone had thrown out an anchor. The passenger-side rear wheels had come off the axle, which was now sitting on the ground. A truck service center later diag-

nosed the problem: the wheel bearings seized to the axle after overheating, likely a result of inadequate lubrication. The total bill, including a rebuilt axle, came to \$5,000. Tony said, "Fortunately the differential wasn't damaged since it's nearly impossible to get major parts for a 25-year-old motorhome." Even more fortunately, the wheels didn't fall off at high speed, which may have damaged a lot more than the differential.

Helpful hint: Since regular maintenance is almost always less costly than occasional repairs, consider servicing at intervals recommended in your owner's manual.

No 2: Fill 'er Up

Last summer, Neil learned a very important lesson about using fuel stations. He pulled his 35-foot motorhome alongside the inside pumps and filled up. He then began his exit by turning to the right. Hearing a "funny sound," he immediately stopped and got out to investigate. Lo and behold, a car had pulled up along his passenger side for gas. According to Neil, it was not a pretty sight: The car was scraped from the driver's door to the front bumper (\$1,400) and his side compartments were badly scraped and dented (\$4,000). To quote Neil, he will "never, never, never again get fuel at an inside pump and will wait as long as it takes to access an outside pump, which provides more room to maneuver." That's good advice for all drivers of large motorhomes who tend to use fuel stations on a regular basis.

THE DUMBEST

No. 1: Almost Clearing Customs

Gerry and Judie were crossing the border from Canada into the United States in their new 42-foot Class A motorhome. Although six lanes were normally available, congested traffic prompted Gerry to enter Lane 6. When he got to the booth, the customs officer asked if they had any fruits or vegetables. Judie said they had a tomato, to which the officer replied: "Pull over to the right, park, and get out of your vehicle during our search." Gerry pulled forward as far as he could until a low concrete barrier required him to turn sharply right. Partway through the turn, he heard a loud BANG, followed by some serious crunching sounds.

An iron pole holding up the roof of the customs booth had ripped off the awning and slide topper, bent a slide, and made numerous holes and dents in the side of their motorhome. Several customs officers helped them pick up the pieces, apologizing profusely. Subsequent to searching their coach and confiscating the offending tomato, the officer mentioned, "That happens almost every day."

After spending the next six weeks in a dealer's lot, Gerry and Judie's "beautiful baby" was repaired like new, to the tune of \$15,000. In hindsight, Gerry admitted it was "driver error." He said he should have asked Judie to watch from the outside so he could have used every inch up front before turning, and then watch the side so he didn't hit anything. But, he didn't want to upset the customs officer by taking longer than necessary to get to the inspection area.

The saddest part of this story is the officer's comment that these accidents happen almost every day (in Lane 6, apparently, since other lanes have more turning room). How difficult would it be to put a sign reading "No RVs" above Lane 6? Incidentally, most border crossings have very narrow lanes so drivers of motorhomes should use extreme caution, especially with side mirrors extended. And don't even think of taking a tomato across the border.

So there you have it, this year's top 10 bad things that happened while otherwise good people were RVing. Thanks to those who took time to share their mishaps with me, either in person or by email, so that others can benefit from their experience. If you've had the occasion to do something equally dumb, please email me at CaptMac@shaw.ca, describing the mishap and how it might have been prevented. You needn't worry about being identified; fictitious names are used to protect the responsible parties. If you're lucky (or unlucky depending on how you view it), you just might qualify for an RV Oops Award next year. ♦



Larry MacDonald is a Canadian freelancer who sold his "sticks and bricks" home several years ago and now travels full time with his wife, dog and cat. He enjoys writing about life on the road.



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THE FINE LIFE

OWNING AND LIVING IN A NEWELL LUXURY MOTORCOACH REDEFINES ROAD TRIPS FOR THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD TO BE PAMPERED

by BOB LIVINGSTON



Cruising the highway in an ultra-luxurious 45-foot motorcoach is an experience unmatched in the motorhome world. Those who haven't piloted one of these behemoths of the road can only surmise that they must be special since most celebrities opt for this mode of ground travel. After all, performers on road trips typically roll up thousands of miles in a short amount of time and comfort is paramount. While most of these luxury coaches are built into bus shells, there's one company, Newell Coach Corporation, that takes this art form in a different direction and the result is a coach that possesses the highest level of luxury and drivability.

The Newell is not a bus conversion; it's a coach that's built from the ground up in Miami, Okla. Simply put, the Newell people believe bus shells have too many limitations, since they are built to accommodate multi-seat transportation, not motorhomes. After spending time in a 2014 Newell 45-foot coach, it's apparent its engineers have produced a machine with spectacular road manners and luxurious living that will satisfy the whims of the most discriminating buyers.

Standing next to a Newell is like a pilot standing next to a jet. It may look like a lot to handle, but in reality, the Newell is incredibly easy to drive. Much of the credit goes to the electronic, ZF active suspension that provides continuous damping control, responding instantaneously to road conditions. The air bags, which isolate the body from the chassis, and the shock absorbers adjust at each wheel every 10 milliseconds.

The result is a butter-smooth ride that hugs the road with virtually no body roll.

A second element that contributes to the drivability is the EasiSteer computer-controlled steering. This steering system also adjusts to road conditions, especially when driving in strong side winds. This allows for feather-light steering when conditions are normal while providing precision steering calibrations to help the driver keep the coach moving in a straight line when conditions change. Steering effort can be adjusted manually via controls on the dash. ZF, the German company known for its engineering prowess, builds the front independent axle, the drive axle and the tag axle with an active steering component. Combine the suspension features with the steering tag axle, and this coach exhibits an extremely tight turning radius and exceptional maneuverability, even though it's 45 feet stem to stern.

Cockpit instrumentation and ergonomics will make any driving aficionado happy. Beyond the array of switches and controls surrounding the driver is a digital instrument cluster that illuminates virtual gauges on a flat, black screen. The cluster can be adjusted electronically to move the gauges as needed to provide

the driver a clear line of sight through the steering wheel. A collision avoidance system and adaptive cruise control team up with multiple view cameras to keep the driver apprised of all road conditions. It takes a while to acclimate to all the controls, but once the driver is dialed in, the on-the-road experience is heavenly.





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: PROPRIETARY	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 7' 5"
ENGINE: CUMMINS ISX 600 HP	WHEELBASE: 308"
FUEL: 195 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 180 GAL
GVWR: 63,600 LBS	HOLDING TANK CAP: 180 GAL
LENGTH: 45'	LP-GAS CAP: N/A
WIDTH: 8' 6"	BASE MSRP: \$1,700,000
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 13' 3"	MSRP AS REVIEWED: \$1,700,000

NEWELL COACH

888-363-9355, WWW.NEWELLCOACH.COM

Piloting this coach is so much fun, the driver literally has to force himself/herself to take a break. Of course, the 600-HP Cummins engine adds a level of excitement in that department. Once the driver finally leaves the Knoedler Air Chief seat, which has numerous controls to further enhance comfort, the coach interior awaits. The floorplan is custom, as it should be when future owners plunk down \$1.7 million to get in the game. Newell works closely with the buyers, who can use other coaches as a pattern for ideas or start with a clean slate. Building the chassis from scratch — starting with the first piece of metal and continuing until the aircraft style aluminum body is completed — is the core of the coach's strength and build-out versatility. Newell refers to this type of building technique as "bridge-construction," which is semi-monocoque in style. From here the coach is assembled to customer specs. Most owners opt for the 45-foot floorplans with a rear master bath and guest bathroom somewhere in

Above: Opposing salon slideouts expand the Newell's living and galley areas to enormous proportions. **Below:** Drivers will enjoy a clear view of digital gauges and perfectly placed cockpit instrumentation. System controls are loaded into iPads for easy use. The Newell galley boasts Italian dark cherry wood cabinets, a GE Advantium microwave/halogen oven and a DishDrawer dishwasher





Clockwise: The Newell's master bedroom features a 42-inch TV and adjustable king bed. The rear bath uses glass and tile, along with diffused lighting, to create a luxurious atmosphere that is enhanced by the ornate vessel sink. Outside, the diamond plate utility center offers everything necessary for hooking up and cleaning.

the center. The coach we tested was configured with a front salon, the galley opposing a center half bath, and the bedroom between the galley and rear bath.

Four strategically placed slides expand the interior to enormous proportions, with each section of the coach having a distinctive feel. Gorgeous Italian dark cherry wood graces all the cabinets and walls. Exotic woods are used in many of the coaches and in this case, the light colored tile flooring (with radiant heat) contrasts beautifully with the darker tone wood. High-pressure laminate cabinet finishes are also popular, as are finely crafted sculpted ceilings. All the cabinet hinges are concealed and the doors are flush mounted for a seamless look. Even the Sub-Zero refrigerator is integrated into the cabinetry.

Up front, the salon has opposing couches upholstered in leather; one converts to a bed with an air mattress and the other has a scissor-type mechanism. The opposing slides really open up the living area and the way the slide floor meets the main floor looks like an engineering marvel. The system is actually relatively simple, but the materials are top notch using precision ball bearings and an electric motor. Retractable bearing covers allow the use of deep, 30-inch slides in the salon, which took some doing from an engineering standpoint.

Dinette configurations are always subjective. In this case, a booth is built into the space between the curbside

couch and structure for the refrigerator. At first glance, it looks compact (for two people) but a clever design allows expansion of the cushions and table to make it perfect for four adults. The concept works so well, we'd have to forgo the idea of using a freestanding dinette.

Like most galleys in highline coaches, this one is on the smaller side, but well equipped. The glass top for the two-burner electric cook top and sink cover are needed if the chef wants to spread out. A large GE Advantium microwave/halogen oven handles baking and heating; for cleanup, the scraps can go in the garbage disposal and the DishDrawer dishwasher takes care of the rest. A coffee pot is almost flush mounted in the wall and water is plumbed into the unit, making brewing a pot of java a simple process.

By now, you probably realize this coach has no LP-gas. All systems are electric, with the exception of the Aqua-Hot hydronic heating system that has diesel fuel and electric modes. A massive house battery bank consisting of six 8D AGM batteries and two 8Ds for starting the engine are tied to dual 2,800-watt pure sine wave inverters and sophisticated charging/conditioning systems. The coach is wired for 120 and 240 volts AC, which can be furnished by the 20 kW turbo-charged diesel generator when hookups are not available. In a nutshell, this coach is packed with so many support systems (like four roof air conditioners), that the need for hookups is purely incidental,



though hanging around in nice RV resorts is a common practice for Newell owners.

Think big when contemplating the extensive list of standard equipment and features. Holding tanks are large, the fuel tank is large, TVs are large, the hitch receiver is capable of handling up to 25,000 pounds and the coach has a 63,600-pound gross vehicle weight rating (gvwr), and system redundancies assure residents are always pampered.

While we're on the subject, the master bedroom and connected rear bath are sights to behold. Opposing slides allow the room to dwarf the king bed —

and not just any old bed, but one that has lots of controls. The mattress platform (revealing storage for the extra dinette cushions and a sturdy safe) is power operated, as is the mattress itself, which can be compressed to provide walk-through room when the slides are retracted. A 47-inch LED TV lifts from the cabinetry below the expansive window in the bedroom, allowing perfect in-bed viewing. Surround sound components are connected to the 47-inch LED TV in the front (above cockpit) and can be ordered for the bedroom, if desired.

There's no shortage of closet space, both in the bedroom area and in the bathroom. Closets are cedar lined and capable of handling big wardrobes. One closet is reserved for the stacked washer and drier.

The bathroom is a work of art. Décor-wise, nothing is spared. An ornate vessel sink has center stage on the multi-level lavatory structure. Diffused lighting under the cabinets adds a tasteful element that doubles as a night-light. Fixtures are first class and nestled perfectly in the designer backsplash. Glass and tile are the two main elements that work in harmony to create the shower stall. Patterns are continued throughout the bathroom suite, and, of course, the fixtures are high end. Luxuriating in this shower is made possible by the previously mentioned onboard support systems. We're not typically lulled into spending a lot of time in a motorhome bathroom, but this one is a game changer.

Just for the record, the half bath is smaller and sans a shower, but it is just as nice. Vacuum-operated porcelain toilets are used in both bathrooms.

Windows play a vital role in the floorplan development process. Sizes and locations are matched to the individual

floorplan, and they are usually huge. That makes the ambient lighting effective during the day and allows the use of designer-grade window coverings that complement the interior décor schemes. In the test coach, Hunter Douglas power Silhouette Duet shades are used throughout. These shades can be adjusted to regulate sunlight and in the bedroom deliver a pitch-black environment. MCD shades are used in the cockpit. The double-paned, insulated windows are deep tinted and flush mounted to the exterior of the coach.

A coach of this caliber leaves nothing to manual operation. Many of the functions are loaded into iPads using specialized software that allow fingertip control of windows, lighting, entertainment systems and the patio and window awnings. One iPad is mounted next to the master bed and the other next to the dinette. The iPads are mounted on magnetic plates that also provide charging.

Using iPads for operating accessories and systems is just part of owning a coach that has such a high level of technical sophistication made possible by an extensive use of electronics.

If you like to push buttons to make things happen, you'll love the Newell. For example, all the lighting is part of a multiplexing system that allows operation from multiple locations — beyond the iPads. The air-powered entry door with keyless locking opens with alacrity after pushing the button, making it clear that entering this coach will reveal something special. Wherever there's a chance for automation, the Newell engineers grab the opportunity. The list is way too long to elaborate here.

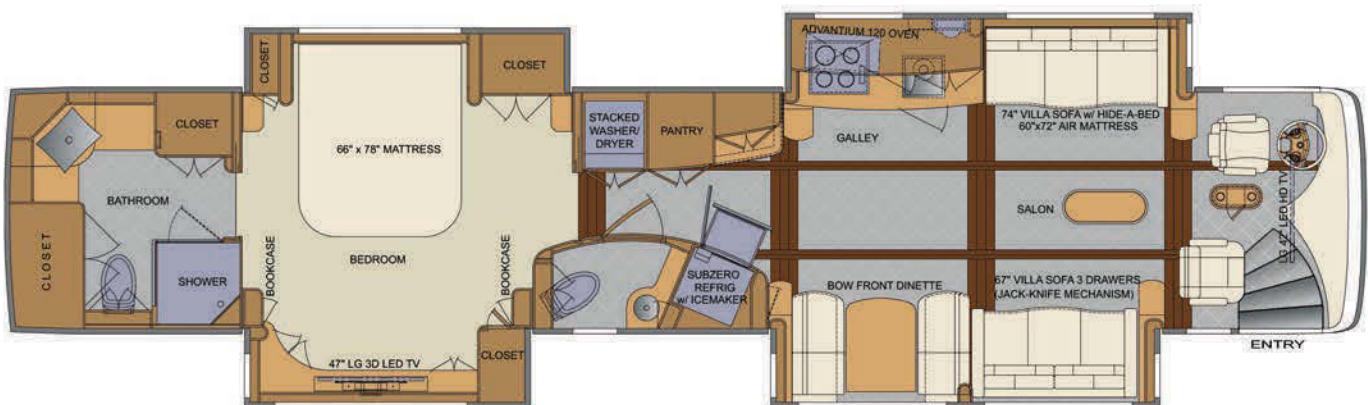
The Newell exterior is dramatic and free-flowing, partially because of the complex paint schemes and brilliant finish

made possible by using super premium paint and flawless applications of clear-coat. That ZF Friedrichshafen and Porsche Design were called upon to enhance the styling plays to the company's pursuit of perfection. These are world-renowned design houses with a flair for modern styling. That's evident by the front end of the coach, where flowing lines and multiple LED lights make for a striking look.

Outside, the aforementioned windows and slideouts are flush mounted with the sidewalls — so well concealed that it's difficult to find the outline of the slideouts. Newell will suggest color schemes, but ultimately, the owner has the last say. Awnings are nicely integrated into the bodylines and a generous use of chrome panels and accents bring out the overall luster of the exterior.

Storage compartments have a unique bi-fold configuration and are solid as a rock. Power operated (of course) drawers, garnished with shiny diamond plate panels, pop out for easy loading; you'd have to work pretty hard to fill them all up. The utility center, again finished in diamond plate, offers everything necessary for hooking up and cleaning; even the built-in sewer hose is high end.

There's not much to want after planning, designing and executing the manufacture of a Newell. But it's a complicated coach that takes acclimation, unless you're a repeat customer. A walk-through for a typical motorhome may take a few hours; it takes two or three days to become oriented with the systems and function of the Newell. Obviously, this coach is not for everyone, but enthusiasts who have the financial wherewithal can live the fine life on the road in one of America's premier luxury motorcoaches. ♦





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PLAYING IT SAFE

PROPER SELECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS IS CRITICAL FOR SAFE MOTORHOME LIVING

by KRISTOPHER BUNKER

Apart from on-the-road hazards and in-camp mishaps, motorhome owners need to be especially vigilant when dealing with two potential dangers: fire and carbon monoxide (CO). These dangers can be avoided with smoke and CO detectors. The units are relatively inexpensive and very easy to maintain.

In order to select the detectors that are best suited for your needs and those of your motorhome, it's important to understand the risks of fire and carbon monoxide. To that end, we spoke with George "Mac" McCoy, an avid RVer who not only served in the fire service for 33-plus years, but also holds a bachelor's degree in fire science and a master's degree in fire administration. For more than 13 years, Mac has taught fire and CO safety and education at RV rallies across the country, and is known within the community as "The Fire Guy" (www.macthefireguy.com).

PLAYING WITH FIRE

Chances are great that you will never experience a fire in your motorhome. But it's important to understand the factors that could potentially lead to a hazardous situation, much like the precautions you take in your garage, at your workplace or even in the kitchen at home. The more you know about the absolute worst-case scenario, the more you can enjoy the good times.

When it comes to motorhomes, "Each type has its own Achilles' heel," McCoy said. "Class B motorhomes seem to be relatively safe, though accidents due to low tire pressure are still a possibility. In Class C motorhomes, the main culprit is the box [coach] wiring. But the biggest repeat offender is the Class A diesel-pusher. The majority of fires are in the engine bay."

The best way to combat fires in a motorhome is through awareness. And the simplest way to cut your risks is to install a smoke detector. But not just any detector, McCoy cautioned.

"RVers need a dual-sensor detector, which means it

PRODUCT ROUNDUP

There are many products available for carbon monoxide and/or smoke detection. To help with your shopping, we've rounded up just a few from the major players.



Atwood Mobile

The Atwood carbon monoxide alarm features an easy-to-read digital display that clearly indicates CO levels at a glance. The alarm uses an electrochemical sensor designed by Atwood that contains a proton conducting membrane to generate a current when CO is present in the air. MSRP: \$83.10.

A non-digital CO detector is also available; MSRP: \$65.25.

The company also has a combination CO/LP-gas detector, offering maximum protection from both hazards, according to Atwood Mobile. MSRP: \$121.58

Atwood Mobile, 800-546-8759, www.atwoodmobile.com



First Alert

The CO400MRVA (left) from First Alert features an electrochemical carbon monoxide sensor, as well as two silence features and an end-of-life signal. The SCO5MRVA (bottom left) is a dual alarm that detects smoke and carbon monoxide.

Two locking features make it difficult for little ones to pry open the battery compartment. The smoke alarm features a photoelectric sensing chamber, while CO is detected using the electrochemical CO sensor. First Alert products are primarily distributed by NTP Distribution. Contact your local retailer for pricing.

First Alert, 800-275-2576, www.firstalert.com



BRK Electronics

BRK Electronics offers a pair of alarms for motorhome use. BRK model FG250RV (above left) is a single-station smoke alarm that operates on a 9-volt battery. The alarm features an 85 dB horn and push-button hush feature. The unit utilizes dual ionization chambers to increase effectiveness in sensing fires. For carbon monoxide, BRK offers the CO250RVA (above right), a detector utilizing photoelectric sensor technology that features a test/silence button, and is approved for use in the United States and Canada. BRK products are primarily distributed by NTP Distribution. Contact your local retailer for pricing.

BRK Electronics, 800-275-2576, www.brkelectronics.com

Kidde

The Kidde9CO5 Carbon Monoxide Sensor is battery-operated and uses an electrochemical CO sensor for continuous protection. Other features include a test/reset button, dual LEDs, a low battery signal and a front-snap open cover for easy battery replacement. MSRP: \$30.



The battery-operated Fire Sentry i9040 (left) smoke alarm utilizes ionization-sensing technology and a compact 4-inch design. A test button and low-battery power alarm round out the features. MSRP: \$15. Kidde, 800-880-6788, www.kidde.com



MTI Industries/Safe-T-Alert

Safe-T-Alert offers the 35-742 CO/LP detector designed specifically for RVs. The detector is hard-wired to 12-volt DC power so there is no need for battery replacement. The test button allows users to easily check the unit's operation, and both alarms remain fully functional during an event. (For example, if LP-gas is detected, the CO sensor will still check CO levels.) MSRP: \$123.20 (Visit www.campingworld.com for Internet specials.)

Safe-T-Alert also offers a standard, battery-operated smoke alarm. The alarm uses ionization technology and features a test/mute button.

MSRP: \$ 15

MTI Industries, 800-383-0269, www.safe-t-alert.com

uses ionization and photoelectric technologies,” he said. “Ionization is just particles of combustion, which is what we get out of a toaster or a frying pan. The other part is photoelectric; if there is an electrical short, the ionization sensor won’t pick it up. For instance, if you have a smoldering refrigerator fire, the ionization won’t pick it up because it’s the wrong type of smoke.”

McCoy also stressed the need for an escape plan, and for RV owners to not only know the location of their escape hatch, but also to practice using it. He explained: “Unfortunately, RV salespeople often don’t show you how to operate the hatch. What I find interesting having spent 35 years in the fire department is that the safety standards only require the escape hatch to be 17 inches tall by 24 inches wide.”

It’s because of these confined dimensions that McCoy is vigilant about owners actually testing their escape hatch, which also requires a bit of dexterity. He called testing the escape hatch the “single most important thing that they could learn to save their life — even far above using a fire extinguisher.”

Of course, you should always have a fire extinguisher on hand in the event of a fire. But just having one is not going to do any good if you don’t know how to use it, or if it is out of date.

“Service your fire extinguisher,” McCoy said. “Look at the gauge, make sure the needle is in the green. Take it out of the bracket and tap it to make sure the powder is loose. This should be done every 30 days.”

THE SILENT KILLER

Carbon monoxide is the byproduct of incomplete combustion resulting from malfunctioning appliances such as furnaces, stoves, ovens and water heaters that operate on LP-gas and auxiliary 120-volt AC generators. When these appliances are not properly ventilated, the amount of CO in the air could ultimately rise to a potentially deadly level. CO is especially dangerous because you cannot see, taste or smell the gas, leading to its “silent killer” moniker. Other CO sources include vehicle exhaust, fuel-burning cooking appliances used for heating purposes (*never* use the oven in your motorhome for heat) and charcoal grills used in a tent,

RV or other unventilated area.

Underwriters Laboratories (UL), the global safety science experts, estimates CO poisoning is responsible for approximately 500 deaths in the United States each year. When a victim inhales excessive amounts of CO, the gas enters the bloodstream and replaces the oxygen molecules found on hemoglobin, which deprives the heart and brain of the oxygen necessary to function. CO poisoning victims may initially suffer flu-like symptoms such as nausea, fatigue, headaches, dizziness, confusion and difficulty breathing. CO poisoning can also cause blood pressure to rise, which causes the victim’s skin to become pink or red. Young children and pets are generally the first affected.

CO alarms are intended to trigger at carbon monoxide levels below those that cause a loss of ability to react to the danger of CO exposures. And, like smoke detectors, the location of these alarms is critical. McCoy said CO and LP-gas detectors are often bundled together by the device manufacturer. In addition, they’re usually installed just above the floor. LP-gas is heavier than air, while CO is lighter than air, so, McCoy said, it’s pretty obvious that CO detectors should be separate from LP-gas detectors and should be mounted up on the ceiling or up on the wall where the ceiling meets it.

Despite McCoy’s concerns, it should be noted that combining an LP-gas and CO detector and mounting it at a lower level is perfectly acceptable under the National Fire Protection Association Standard 720-2009, which states, “The location for effective performance is not generally dependent on mounting height. The density of carbon monoxide is similar to that of air at room temperature, and carbon monoxide generally mixes readily with air.” In addition, UL 2034, the Standard for Single and Multiple Station Carbon Monoxide Alarms, does not include any requirements or tests for CO alarms installed at specific heights. Because of this, these dual sensors — such as the Safe-T-Alert alarms available from MTI Industries — have undergone scientific testing and have proven effective.

Wherever you decide to mount your CO detector, regular maintenance is necessary, and that goes well beyond pushing

WHAT MAKES A DETECTOR RV-APPROVED?

Many people think they can go to any home improvement store, pick out the cheapest detectors and install them in their motorhome. While any detector is indeed better than no detector, installing the wrong type of unit in your coach can lead to a false sense of security. To be approved for RV use, detectors must meet the UL 2034 standard, which requires more rigorous extreme temperature and humidity testing, in addition to vibration and salt-spray tests, plus a test that includes direct exposure to cooking fat fumes. One key difference for smoke alarms is that RV alarms require alkaline or better batteries instead of the basic carbon zinc that’s required in residential applications. Thank you to David Buddingh of MTI Industries for the information.

the test button and waiting for the chirp.

“The push-button test only checks the electronics,” McCoy said. “Is it still detecting at the degree it needs to? Usually the answer is no because it gets dirty. If you dust your rig, dust your detector.”

McCoy also recommends using canned air used for cleaning keyboards to keep the sensors clean. And remember that every detector — smoke, CO or even LP-gas — has a shelf life; consult the owner’s manual to see how often it should be replaced.

Living the motorhome lifestyle is carefree by nature, but we should always take the proper precautions for fires and CO poisoning. “Probably the best thing you can do is attend a rally that provides some safety training,” McCoy said. “Fire safety, tire and weight safety, and driver safety. Those three things are what you really need to know. Even if you just get the basic information, you owe it to yourself to go to school.” ♦



Kristopher Bunker, the former editor of *Trailer Life* magazine, has been RVing for more than a decade and is currently a freelance writer and stay-at-home dad.

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WINDOW COVERING UPGRADE

Once the project was finished, all the windows, including the windshield, had been retrofitted with Auto-Motion shades.

Remodeling a motorhome can be as simple as replacing the carpet with new wood flooring or as complicated as gutting the interior and starting from scratch. A nice modification that will work wonders for the overall aesthetics of any interior, while relieving some frustration, is to replace the existing day/night-type window treatment with Auto-Motion's dual roller shades.

The Auto-Motion shades are available in manual or power versions for the coach's windows and only in a power configuration when used to cover the windshield, for obvious reasons. For this project, we replaced all of the day/night shades in the coach, and added a windshield visor/cover. Since the project included new shades for the side windows in the cockpit, the entire coach can be closed off for privacy, without the use of the wraparound curtains up front, which were removed.

Early on, the windows were measured so the right size Auto-Motion shades could be manufactured. The company, based in Ontario, Canada, has been supplying high-quality shading systems for more than 30 years and claims to be North America's largest manufacturer of manual and motorized roll-up

**AUTO-MOTION
DUAL ROLLER
SHADES,
INSTALLED BY
DAVE AND LJ'S,
CHANGE THE
LOOK AND
FEEL OF ANY
MOTORHOME**

by BOB LIVINGSTON



The owner of the motorhome grew tired of the dysfunction of the original day/night shades.



Strings that regulate the day/night shades were removed before the valances could be unscrewed from the walls. Measurements for the new shades were taken before the valances were removed.



Above left: Old day/night shades are removed before the valance (right) can be unscrewed and pulled from the wall. It may take two people to remove the day/night shades and valances from large windows.



Assembly and adjusting is done on the bench where the technician has good access and control.



Auto-Motion shade is first installed in the valance on the bench and then attached to the wall as a package.

sun visors and sun protection shades for RVs as well as a host of other industries.

The retrofit was done at Dave and LJ's RV Interior Design in Woodland, Wash., which specializes in coach remodeling. Dave and LJ's is also one of only a few U.S. companies where the Auto-Motion shades

can be ordered. Since brothers Dave and LJ Ast, who run the company, have been immersed in window treatment transformations for quite some time, we let them take the measurements to ensure a good fit. There are a number of considerations when taking measurements. Most motorhome windows are fitted with valances that surround the day/night shades. In some cases, there may not be enough clearance to accommodate the two-shade system used by Auto-Motion, and unless the installer is experienced, mistakes can be easily made.

Once the shades were ready to go, the window treatments (old shades and valances) were removed, including the existing mounting clips. The new shades were then hung on an installation jig to set the stop limits and speed control. New clips were then installed onto the valances and the Auto-Motion shades snapped into place.

All the adjusting and assembly is best done on a bench because the installer might have to assume contorted positions when trying to piece the parts together onto the wall, around the window. Once the assembly was complete, the valance with the new shade in place was installed as a package. Any visible holes from the old shades were filled to complete the installation.

The dual roller shades are designed to provide the ultimate versatility in controlling sunlight and adding privacy. The day portion of the shade is a solar sun-screen that diffuses the sunlight while allowing visibility to the outside — and a much more limited view into the inside of the coach (except at night when the lights are on). This feature works wonders

in controlling unwanted heat created by direct sunlight.

At night, the second layer of material can be lowered, which blocks out all the light and provides privacy. The night shade material is available in vinyl or fabric, in a wide variety of colors and patterns.

Using the Auto-Motion shades could not be easier. Pull down and the shade stays put at the point where the user releases the material. To open, simply tug on the bottom of the shade, and with a little prodding from your hand, it smoothly retracts into the roller that's concealed by the valance. There are no strings to deal with and the material stays flat, unlike day/night shades that tend to buckle and wrinkle and project a level of untidiness that's difficult to control. These shades have been tested for more cycles than any typical user will complete, ensuring good durability.

It's hard to state an exact price for the shades because that's dependent on window size, condition of the valances and the type of material used for the privacy shade. According to Dave and LJ's, the average per-window price for the Auto-Motion shades runs around \$275.

Installing the windshield shade was more difficult. After removing the cockpit curtains and power visors, the old tube TV was swapped for a flat screen and the upholstered front end was completely rebuilt to accommodate the shades. The valances were custom built to hide the cockpit shade rollers.

The center TV cabinet was rebuilt to accept the new 32-inch LED TV. This is the type of work Dave and LJ's specializes in, and installing the new shades was just part of a multiple stage remodel



Completed assembly results in a handsome looking shade that operates smoothly, offering versatile ambient light control.

of the entire coach.

For the test coach, the installation ran \$2,300 for the shades that covered the side windows in the cockpit and windshield. Again, that will vary, but keep in mind that the price is regulated by the labor cost of remodeling existing components and for wiring the electric motor in the windshield shade. The above cost does not cover the cabinet remodeling and the installation of the LED TV.

Owners who opt for the power shades (exclusive of the windshield) will use Auto-Motion's Multiplex Control System. This component is battery operated and provides fully automated control of up to seven shades through 16 channels. It allows individual operation of two shades on each window, plus all-up and all-down commands. The cost of the remote is \$165, but plan on an additional \$260 for each shade and extra labor expense for wiring. The remote can be installed on a wall or used hand held; Dave and LJ's usually loose-hangs the remote so it can be easily removed from the wall.

The transformation — visually and operationally — made an enormous difference inside the coach used for this project. Once you live with Auto-Motion shades, you'll never look back. ♦

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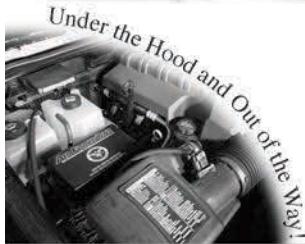
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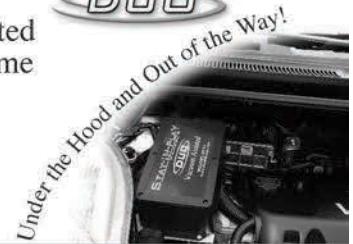
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ANOTHER SET OF EYES

SENSESTAT OBSTACLE DETECTION SENSOR SYSTEM ALERTS THE DRIVER OF PENDING BACKUP COLLISIONS

by BILL AND JENN GEHR

Backing a motorhome can be a precarious maneuver. While backup cameras immensely improve rearview vision, distracted drivers — or even ones paying attention — can miss obstacles, especially those on the smaller side.

Technology has made it possible to alert drivers when unexpected obstacles are in their path, and many cars and trucks are equipped right from the factory. For motorhome owners, Mobile Awareness offers an obstacle detection sensor system, SenseStat, which can be installed as an aftermarket project to give drivers extra security when backing up.

SenseStat is an alarm system that identifies obstacles outside of the driver's field of view — or when something or someone unexpectedly enters the backing zone — and communicates this information to the driver using a dash-mounted warning display unit that provides visual and audible alerts.

The SenseStat system, using wireless technology, requires only a 12-volt DC and ground connection and is relatively easy to install. Four-zone ultrasonic sensors are used to detect objects up to 8 feet away from the rear of the motorhome or any vehicle on which they're installed. The unique sensor-scanning algorithm reads each of the four sensors simultaneously, and displays the sensor that's closest to the obstruction on the LED dash-mounted readout, which results in a greater degree of blind spot coverage. The LED display indicates the actual distance to the closest of the four distinct field zones within 1 inch. The SenseStat display monitors in real time and offers three adjustable levels of audible alarms.

Before starting the installation, we took the time to find the most



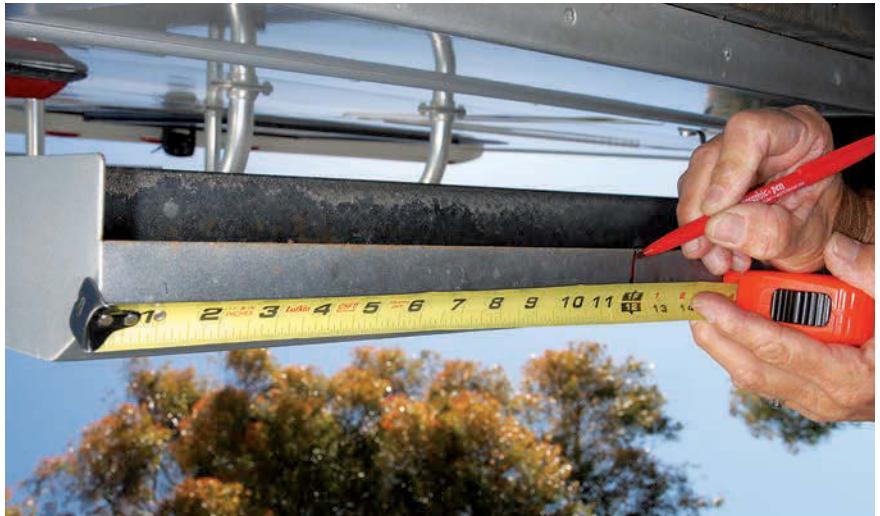
The dash-mounted monitor for the Mobile Awareness SenseStat system offers users a clear readout of specific distances as well as several different audible alert tones.



The SenseStat Wireless Obstacle Detection Sensor System comes complete with all the necessary brackets, screws, wires and bolts for a straightforward installation.



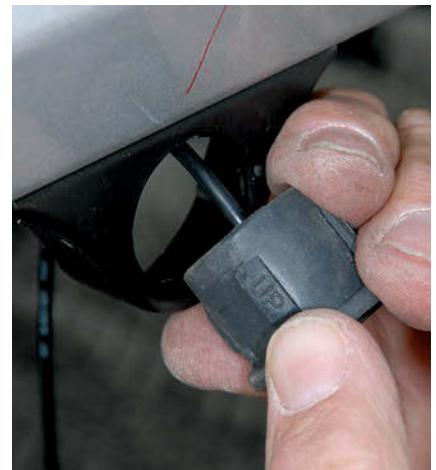
Each of the four SenseStat sensors are compact, lightweight and waterproof.



Measure carefully and mark the location for mounting each sensor bracket for proper operation of the SenseStat system.



Using the sensor bracket as a template, drill the appropriate holes in the rear bumper. The individual mounting brackets are bolted to the bumper using the provided fasteners.



Prior to installing each sensor, be sure that the arrow is facing in the upward position for proper function of the SenseStat.

logical places to install the four rear sensors, the dash-mounted LED monitor and the electronic control unit (ECU). The placement of the ECU is very important, as its antenna must face downward in order to transmit the signal to the monitor.

The unit was installed on a Class C motorhome, which provided a challenge to find an adequate location for the ECU since the rear of the motorhome sat so low to the ground. Thanks to the clever design of the SenseStat ECU antenna, and its ability to pivot in one direction, we were able to mount it to the bottom of the rear storage compartment using the two supplied bolts. Most installations will likely require mounting on a steel frame cross member. The ECU must be positioned to

allow the antenna to pivot front-to-rear, so it can collapse if struck by an object.

Installation of the four rear sensors to the bottom of the rear bumper is fairly straightforward using the supplied brackets and eight bolts. Specific instructions for spacing the four sensors are provided. All four sensors are tagged (1, 2, 3 and 4); the No. 1 sensor is mounted on the driver's side, No. 2 and No. 3 in sequential order in the middle, and No. 4 ends up on the passenger side. With the sensors securely mounted, each one is simply plugged into the corresponding pigtails that terminate at the ECU. The exposed wires are secured using cable ties.

For the next step, the ignition is turned on and the transmission placed in REVERSE.

Be sure the emergency brake is engaged and that the wheels are chocked. Using a 12-volt DC test light, the motorhome's backup light wire is located and the wire from the ECU is spliced in using a butt connector, though the kit supplies a Scotchlok connector. The ground wire is attached to the frame.

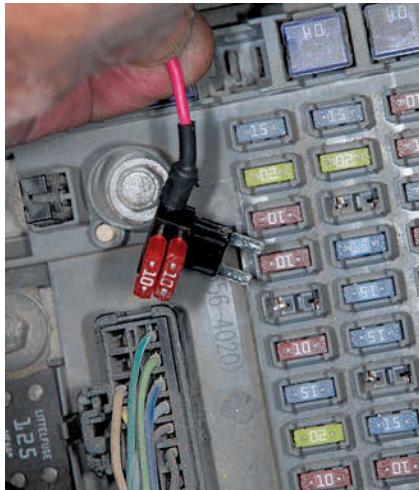
Once the sensors in the rear have been installed, the LED monitor is mounted at a desired location on the dash. Our location of choice was on the far left of the dash, just to be certain the power wires would reach the fuse box in the engine compartment. A hole was punched through the existing boot in the firewall so positive and negative wires could be routed to the fuse block. After removing



Make sure each sensor is installed in numerical order, beginning at the driver's side.



With the ECU bolted in place, install the flexible sleeve over the antenna to prevent it from folding up while driving.



You will encounter many different fuse blocks and fuse types during installation. We found this handy fuse tap at an auto parts store that made installation of the power wire much simpler.

the fuse box cover, we inspected the fuse numbers on the cover to determine the reverse fuse and installed a fuse tap that was purchased at a local auto parts store. We then connected the positive wire to the tap and grounded the negative wire nearby on a metal fender well.

The next step is setting up the zero point adjustment on the SenseStat monitor. To begin, a measurement is taken of all equipment (ladder, etc.) that is attached to the rear of the coach. The SenseStat also offers a stop-line adjustment that easily adjusts the zero point for detection of overhanging objects such as a spare tire or a bicycle rack. The moni-



When tapping into the reverse wire of the coach, we chose to use a butt connector, rather than the supplied Scotchlok, as the butt connector offers a longer-lasting connection. A steel cross member made a convenient spot for the ECU ground wire.

tor is then programmed to offer visual and audible alarms of all potential hazards.

Once the zero point on the motor-home is set, the specific zones are tested. With a person in the driver's seat, put the motorhome in reverse and depress the brake. While in reverse, have someone slowly walk past each sensor, starting at No. 1 and continue to pass the other three sensors. This allows the driver to confirm the distance from each sensor to set the audible tone to a desired level.

The next test involved backing up to a building to confirm that the zero point distance setting and the audible tone were in the correct sequence to properly alert the driver of nearing obstacles. Subsequent testing revealed that a fast-moving object, such as a bicycle, did not register the alert tones; it seems like the sensors need more time to work since they are wireless. There were no issues with solid objects. Backing a little slower will help ensure proper activation of the SenseStat sensors. SenseStat can also be installed at the top of any motorhome, split between the top and bottom, or even in both the front and rear for additional protection. The waterproof system operates in temperatures ranging from minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit to 176 degrees Fahrenheit.

The SenseStat includes informative instructions for a one- to two-hour installation and is backed by a two-year limited warranty. The MSRP is listed at \$303 for the Wireless Obstacle Detection Sensor System and \$271 for the SenseStat Wired Obstacle Detection Sensor System.

Even if a motorhome is equipped with a backup camera, the SenseStat is a valuable tool for assisting the driver in safe backing. For less than the cost of an insurance deductible, SenseStat offers detection technology that could save your motorhome from external damages and help protect private property — as well as your pride.

**Mobile Awareness, 866-653-5036,
www.MobileAwareness.com** ♦



Bill and Jenn Gehr, along with their two Boston bulldogs, are full-time RV adventurers who enjoy sharing their technical knowledge with fellow enthusiasts wherever they travel.



▲ INCREASE AWNING SIZE

The tough part about extending a motorhome awning is how to attach the extra shade to the awning or awning tube. I attached a lightweight nylon shade using several medium-size binder clips. They are available at Wal-Mart, Staples, Office Depot, etc., and a box of 12 costs less than \$2.

I added brass grommets about every 14 inches along the side of the shade extension. Through each grommet I ran one side of the binder clip's handle. I attached the opposite side of the binder clip into the awning roller channel. It holds very securely.

The shade extension can hang freely or be staked out at an angle using adjustable height tent poles, stakes and a couple of bungee cords.
CHARLEY TOZIER | BOX ELDER, S.D.



▶ WATER TANK WARMING OPTION

I noticed that some motorhome owners use light bulbs to keep the water tank, pump and lines from freezing when using electric heat at a campground. I use reptile heat lights. They will not break if water is splashed on them, they give off no light and they do not get very hot. I also have a temp gauge in the area so I know when to turn them on.

RON MCNEVIN | CENTERVILLE, UTAH

▼ ORGANIZE IT



I glued corkboard to the inside of the pantry door in my motorhome. It was an easy way to store important papers like the phone number of where we were staying. Most importantly it cuts down on clutter.
KELLI SHEPPARD | CONWAY, ARK.

ADD A TOWEL BAR

Having owned eight RVs in 40 years of travel, there has been one obvious omission of a simple convenience in each: hand-hold towel bars. These have probably been omitted because of cost (miniscule when compared to a \$300,000 motorhome), or simply the lack of a convenient location within the vehicle to install them without conflicting with an additional feature.

I have solved this problem in a simple fashion by modifying a sturdy yet simple household towel bar by inserting a hardwood dowel of appropriate size in the existing bar before mounting. Strengthening this component also provides a stable hand-hold while walking through a possibly off-level vehicle.

Further stability and security can be achieved by drilling holes in the exterior mounting plates to include additional screws on the surface. Aesthetics can be enhanced with matching colored screw heads with the bar.

Should the mounting wall not be sturdy or secure enough for supplied mounting screws to provide a sufficient mounting base, a wooden base applied with construction adhesive and/or recessed screws can be used, and where permissible, umbrella bolts can be used.

C. LINDY HOFFMAN | THIBODAUX, LA.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BILL TIPTON

STOP LOSING SCREWS

There are times when you have to remove a screw from an overhead tight spot where you can't fit two hands — one for holding the screwdriver and one for catching the loosening screw. Try this. Grab a small bathroom paper cup. Cut a small X in the center of the bottom of the cup with a hobby knife or razor blade. Gently insert the screwdriver, from the cup's bottom, up into the cup until the screwdriver's tip is about a half inch above the cup's edge. Now, as you loosen the screw, it will drop into the cup rather than falling into that never-never land of lost screws.

**DERRELL IRETON
NOVATO, CALIF.**

PANTRY ▶ SHELF HELP

I own a 2008 Winnebago View H model that has a long, narrow and cavernous three-shelf pantry beside the refrigerator. Pulling a can of chili was like sticking my hand into a rattlesnake hole! But I solved this problem by building 7-by-20-inch slide-out shelves and attaching them to the existing shelves. The pull out shelves let me see what food stock I have without a flashlight and lets me easily grasp the item for use. Be sure to attach the back of the self assembly to the pantry rear so when the shelf slides are extended, the shelf stays level.

JOE WORTSMITH | LITTLE ROCK, ARK. ♦



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HANDS-ON | *by* OWEN MITCHELL

PREVENTING BATTERY DRAIN

With the flip of a switch, Roadmaster's FuseMaster cuts off power while towing a dinghy vehicle

Prepping a dinghy vehicle for

towing behind a motorhome involves more than just installing a tow bar.

In vehicles where the ignition key must be left in the acc position for towing to unlock the steering wheel, the sound system (and the navigation system, if so equipped) will remain powered up. In that situation, the vehicle battery will be dead on arrival. The Honda CR-V is one such vehicle.

To prevent this, a 7.5-amp mini-fuse must be removed from the Honda fuse panel (No. 34) buried under the dash. Have fun reaching this fuse every time you hitch or unhitch. Roadmaster, which builds tow bars and related equipment, has an answer: FuseMaster.

The FuseMaster wiring harness is plugged into the fuse panel in place of the 7.5-amp fuse. At the end of the harness is an on/off switch. Midway in the harness is the original 7.5-amp fuse. Turn the switch on for driving, off for towing. No battery drain.

It's possible to build a harness such as this at a lower cost, with parts from auto supply stores including a fuse tap circuit, but FuseMaster eliminates the need for parts chasing and assembly.

Installation is do-it-yourself-friendly and requires only a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch Forstner or paddle-style wood-boring drill bit (the Forstner bit produces a far cleaner hole), a fuse puller or a pair of needle-nose pliers, and, preferably, small hands to reach the fuse panel.



The Honda CR-V fuse No. 34 is the target for the FuseMaster.



Position the harness in the lower dash panel.

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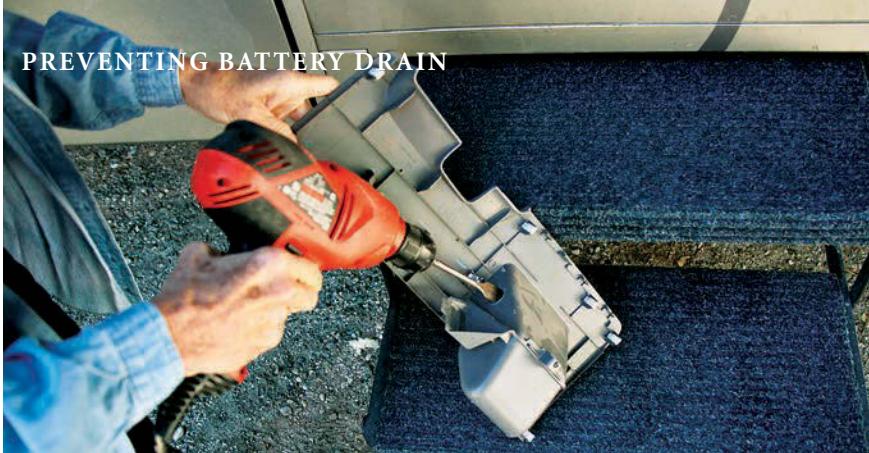
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The first step is to remove the dash panel under the steering wheel. Give it a yank from a point under the steering column, and one of the attachment devices will pop free. Then pull on the panel at various points until others are free as well and the panel can be removed, providing better access to the fuse panel on the left. The targeted fuse is identified as No. 34.

But first, it's necessary to find a place for the on/off switch. A handy coin pocket in the lower dash panel works perfectly.

After taking care to ensure clearance behind the panel for the wires that will be connected to the switch, drill a hole in one side of the pocket with the 3/4-inch bit. Remove the nut from the switch, insert the harness through the hole and reinstall the nut.

Allow the panel to rest on the floor and loop-tie the harness to adjacent wiring to hold it in position while you insert the two harness connector pins into the vacated fuse panel slots. Small hands and flexibility are an advantage at this point. Insert the fuse into the harness.

Reattach the lower dash panel and you're ready for the road. Don't forget to turn the switch to the TOW position when you're ready to go, or you know what you'll find: a dead battery.

The installation may take about 30 minutes for a technician who has done the job before, or an hour for the owner who's taking his or her time.

The FuseMaster for the Honda CR-V is priced at \$74.99 at Camping World. Similar harnesses are available for a number of other vehicles at varying prices.

Roadmaster, 800-669-9690, www.roadmasterinc.com ♦



Towing Trouble

UNABLE TO OBTAIN COMPENSATION FOR INADVERTENT DAMAGE DONE TO THEIR MOTORHOME WHILE IT WAS BEING TOWED, TWO READERS TURNED TO HOT LINE FOR HELP. THEY WROTE:

Last December, we had mechanical problems with our 2001 Class A motorhome while we were traveling in Collins, Miss. We called Coach-Net, which we are members of, to be towed to a Freightliner dealer in Hattiesburg, Miss. We had never had our motorhome towed before, so we had some questions about any damage that might occur during the process of being towed. The Coach-Net representative we spoke with assured us that if any damage occurred by the wrecker they sent, it would be covered.

Coach-Net sent Watts Wrecker Services out of Hattiesburg. As the wrecker driver was hooking up the motorhome, I told him we should probably slide the hitch ball assembly out of the receiver so there would be no possibility of hitting the rear gravel guard and damaging it. He advised that it would be OK, that he tows all the time and he knew what he was doing.

When he started off, he only went 100 yards before he hit a dip in the pavement and tore an 8-inch-long, 3-inch-wide gash in our rear gravel deflector. The deflector, at that time, had a very small hole (no larger than a quarter) in it where the end of the ball punched through it. The repair cost was \$718.

We have made repeated attempts to get this resolved with Coach-Net. During the past three months, we called more than a dozen times and each time were told that they will get right back with us, but so far no one has.

We believe we have been more than patient with Coach-Net. Any help

in this matter would be appreciated.

**SHIRLEY AND LEO BRADLEY
YUKON, OKLA.**

Hot Line contacted Coach-Net on the Bradleys' behalf. Soon afterward, we received the following response from the company:

We appreciate receiving a copy of the letter Hot Line received from Mrs. Bradley so we have the chance to resolve the situation to our member's satisfaction.

Upon review, because the damage to the rear gravel deflector was obviously not pre-existing, Coach-Net has reimbursed the Bradleys for the full amount of their claim. We have spoken to Mrs. Bradley, apologized for the delay and let her know her check was in the mail. She indicated that she is pleased with the reimbursement for the damages.

We are happy we were able to reach a favorable outcome and look forward to serving the Bradleys in the future.

**LISA DAVIS
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
COACH-NET | IRVING, TEXAS**

ABS BREAKDOWN

Disagreeing with the manufacturer of his motorhome's chassis over brake issues, a reader requested Hot Line's intervention. He wrote:

I've been trying to get a problem resolved involving ABS sensors that were damaged when the rear brake caliper assemblies locked up as I drove my 2003 Class A into a campground in Naples, Fla. I was flagged down by a passing motorist who hollered that my rear brakes were smoking. After the brakes cooled down, I drove to Wallace Idealease, an authorized Workhorse facility 15 miles away.

After the work was completed, I drove to the campground and noticed the ABS activated at slow speeds. I called Wallace Idealease and was told this was normal and would stop once the brake dust dissipated as I drove.

I left Naples the next day and headed home. As I reached Jacksonville, Fla., the front brakes started to smoke. I called Wallace Idealease again and was

told to drive to Maudlin International Trucks, which was nearby. I told Maudlin about the ABS activation and they said they would correct the problem. Unfortunately, the ABS continued to activate during the drive home to Delaware.

I took the coach back to the dealer, Parkview RV Center in Smyrna, Del., and asked them to try to get the rear ABS sensors replaced by Workhorse under recall. Parkview said they contacted Workhorse, but were turned down. I went ahead and paid for the replacement of the rear sensors, which corrected the problem. I submitted a claim to Workhorse for \$334.14, but was turned down.

JOHN NOVOSEL | LEWES, DEL.

Novosel sent Hot Line a copy of the service invoices along with his complaint. Upon review of the documents we noticed that some relevant details were left out. According to the work order invoices from the three repair centers, Workhorse took care of much of the repairs under the recall and beyond-warranty coverage, but refused to pay for the rear ABS sensors as noted in the following letter:

Workhorse has again reviewed the request from John Novosel for reimbursement. Based on the documentation provided, and the Bosch Brake Recall 51101-C completed at Parkview RV Center, Workhorse has concluded that the replacement of three ABS sensors was not due to a caliper malfunction. Therefore, our position remains the same. The sensors had three codes that were not related to Workhorse Caliper Recall 51101-C, and they were due to signals missing and being erratic, which is not warrantable under the recall. This is considered to be maintenance by the customer and is not a Workhorse responsibility. Thank you for the final opportunity to review this matter.

**DEBRA ANDERSON
REIMBURSEMENT COORDINATOR
WORKHORSE CUSTOM CHASSIS
TROY, MICH. ♦**

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 10.

Brake Lockup After Repairs

I have a 1993 Winnebago Vectra with a 454 engine in a Chevrolet P-chassis. I recently took my motorhome to Complete Automotive Care in Brooksville, Fla., after hearing a power-steering pump noise. The pump was replaced (it runs both power steering and power brakes), as was the Hydroboost brake booster, and an oil cooler hose was repaired. I drove about a mile before all four brakes locked up. After waiting for the brakes to cool I was able to drive back to the garage, with the brakes locking up again as I arrived. It was determined that I needed new rear brakes (calipers, brake hose and hardware were replaced). I then drove 12 miles home.

The next morning I took the motorhome to get the oil changed and the brakes locked up again. A mechanic was called and he removed the parking brake cable. I then drove about a mile and the brakes locked up again. A wrecker was called, the mechanic removed the driveshaft and bled all four brakes and the motorhome was towed back to the garage. So far, Complete Automotive Care, which does great work, can't diagnose the problem. Do you have any ideas?

**WADE BUFFINGTON
SPRING HILL, FLA.**

Assuming no other changes or adjustments were made other than what you mentioned, it's likely that the replacement brake booster is slightly different than the original unit, and as a result the pushrod length between the brake pedal assembly and the booster is now too long. Pushrod length is critical, and this will prevent the return ports in the master cylinder from being

uncovered when the pedal is released, and will allow pressure to remain in the brake lines. This causes brake drag and subsequent lockup. An easy way to verify this is to open a brake bleeder when the brakes are locked up (but the brake pedal is released) and if there is residual pressure, the return ports are blocked. Of course, for safety the wheels must be chocked, because when the bleeder is opened the brakes will release.

INTERMITTENT AIR BRAKE ALARMS

We've had our 2008 Tourmaster 43C by Gulf Stream for two years, and since the purchase have experienced issues with the air brake alarm system.

WITH A PAIR OF 6-VOLT BATTERIES IN SERIES, THE WEAKER BATTERY CAN'T CANNIBALIZE THE STRONGER ONE. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WITH A PAIR OF 12-VOLT BATTERIES IN PARALLEL.

SIX-VOLT DEEP CYCLE BATTERIES ALSO TEND TO LAST LONGER. A 6-VOLT BATTERY WILL HAVE LARGER, MORE ROBUST PLATES.



I had the air brakes inspected and they are sound and in good shape. However, I've spent more than \$1,000 trying to get the air brake alarm problem fixed. Every time, about 100 miles or so after the repair, I hit a pothole or a bump in the road and the alarm goes off again and keeps going until I take off the sideboard, wiggle the wires and put the sideboard back.

Last month, at the advice of a friend, I glued the electrical connections together on each of the air gauges and the noise stopped for a while. Then the oil pressure gauge started dipping to zero and then recovered and the alarm indicator went off. So, I glued that connection. That worked for a while but then the alarm started again.

I've been to Freightliner and to an RV dealer, who claim to have fixed it. Is there anything I'm missing?

JEFF ROCHE | MIDDLEVILLE, N.Y.

You should never use glue on electrical connections. It can serve to insulate the connections instead of making good contact, which is what you want. If the intermittent problem is simply loose or corroded connections, I suggest you take the coach to a competent automotive electrical shop where they can inspect the connections. They may need to install new connectors or solder existing ones, for example.

6-VOLT VERSUS 12-VOLT BATTERIES

In the May installment of Coach & Powertrain, when addressing the deep cycle battery issue ("Deep-Cycle Batteries Needed?"), you recommended using "dual 6-volt batteries in series, rather than a pair of 12-volt batteries in parallel." May I ask your reasoning on this? Seems to me, with two 6-volt batteries, you would get the full 12 volts, however for not as long as with the two 12-volt batteries.

DAVID DOW | TIFFIN, OHIO

The main reason is that with a pair of 6-volt batteries in series, the weaker battery can't cannibalize or draw power from the stronger one. This is what happens with a pair of 12-

It doesn't take much of a mechanical problem to wreak havoc on a travel itinerary, which encourages us to pay close attention to motorhome maintenance schedules.

Such schedules, provided by the manufacturers of coaches, chassis and appliances, can help you avoid problems that may cause considerable inconvenience — especially during summer, when getting a service appointment can be difficult.



At the top of the list of maintenance items should be those related to safety, including frequent checking of carbon monoxide and LP-gas detectors (see page 57, "Playing It Safe").

We also must be on alert for recalls, notices of which may come in the mail. They also may appear on manufacturer websites, and can be found on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website (www.nhtsa.gov) or via a Google search for "RV recall notices."

Among scheduled maintenance procedures for chassis, tire inflation requires regular attention, pressure-checking at least once a week while traveling, if not every day as you prepare for the road.



Chassis manufacturers supply specific scheduled maintenance lists that cover change intervals for engine oil, belts, coolant, transmission oil/filter, brake fluid, air compressor dryer, power steering unit and many others. If you don't have such a schedule for your chassis, check the manufacturer's website for a downloadable list.

Scheduled maintenance for AC generators includes intervals for engine oil and filter, coolant (if liquid cooled), spark plugs (if equipped) and air cleaner. Monthly exercise is needed, i.e., operating the unit for an hour per month under one-half load to circulate fuel through the delivery system; lubricate engine seals



and remove moisture and corrosion from generator components.

Absorption refrigerators can be finicky, requiring periodic removal of frost buildup in the freezer as well as ice buildup on the fins inside the lower box. Frost and ice can noticeably affect performance, especially in hot weather, as can packing the box too tightly, which restricts airflow.

Another routine maintenance item that can affect refrigerator performance is LP-gas pressure, which should be checked once a year — or more often if refrigerator, furnace, water heater or gas-range problems occur. A pressure-drop test to check for leaks should be done once a year by your dealer. The test must also be done when lines are disconnected for maintenance.



All coach appliances can be affected by improper voltage, whether AC or DC, especially air conditioners. AC voltage below 105 (under load) can adversely affect performance, as can DC voltage below 12 (no load). Both should be monitored on an ongoing basis. AC polarity (proper wiring to the receptacle) should

be checked before connecting to any outside power source.

Batteries require regular maintenance if they're of the open-cell (flooded) design. Check electrolyte level and inspect for corrosion. Check periodically for loose connections, even with sealed batteries.

Freshwater systems usually are OK while in continual use, but an ounce or two of chlorine should be added prior to periods when the tank will be idle, to prevent growth of bacteria and slime in the water tank and system. Add 1/4-cup per 15 gallons if you need to disinfect a system that has been out of use for several months. Flush chlorine out of the tank and system by filling and draining as needed. Baking soda can be used to neutralize odor and any chlorine taste.

Holding tanks require regular preventive maintenance, especially in hot weather. Use an effective treatment in the black tank, along with thorough flushing during the dumping process. Gray-water tanks also need treatment. A product designed for waste tanks, or one designed specifically for gray tanks, can be used. The goal is odor control and reduction of soap and food residue. A good time to add treatment is prior to a long day of driving; dump the tank upon arrival.

Scheduled maintenance should also cover your coach leveling system, ride height (if applicable), annual inspection of roof seams, exterior fiberglass and, last but not least, your fire extinguisher. ♦



volt batteries in parallel. As the batteries get older it becomes more of a problem. Six-volt deep cycle batteries also tend to last longer. For a given case size, a 6-volt battery (which only has three cells) will have larger, more robust plates, compared to a 12-volt battery, which must fit six cells into the same space. Storage capacity is mainly a function of the combined amp-hour ratings; it is not determined simply by whether the battery is a 6- or 12-volt unit.

REFRIGERATOR DOOR SEALS

As full-timers, in the eighth year of living in our motorhome, we find that our Norcold refrigerator door seals are starting to compress and lose their sealing ability. Conventional residential refrigerators have new door seal options, but I can't find any source, including Norcold, that has a replacement door seal kit for the fridge and the freezers. We have a four-door unit and while it works well, we do find there is leakage and loss of effectiveness with a loose seal. Do you know of any source for new seals, or what can be done to recondition the existing ones?

**RON WINDEMULLER
GRAND HAVEN, MICH.**

I have seen them listed on www.eBay and at www.pplmotorhomes.com. Norcold does sell them through its service centers. Visit www.thetford.com for locations.

INTERMITTENT HEADLIGHTS

I have a 2007 Four Winds Hurricane Class A motorhome. While driving, or sometimes just when turning on the ignition, the headlights go out and the high beam light comes on, yet no headlights. Sometimes if I hit the steering wheel the lights will come on. If the coach hits a heavy bump in the road, they go out again. Do you have a suggestion of where to start looking for the problem?

**JOHN C. GREEN
VIA EMAIL**

The switch that controls high and low beam operation is in the steering column. It's likely that you have either a faulty switch or loose wiring connections at the switch. I would start by following the wires where they go to the switch



JETSTREME II DUAL 12-INCH FAN LINE

The Jetstreme II product line from Maradyne High Performance fans features the company's quiet S-blade design and a rubber seal to eliminate vibration contact and increase airflow. Fitting 26-inch to 29-inch radiator cores, this low-profile fan has dual sealed motors that are IP68 certified dustproof and waterproof. There are three options in the Jetstreme II product line with different wattage, airflow ratings, amp draw and depth measurements. The Jetstreme II model MJS23KC has a dual 130-watt motor, measures 26-by-15-by-3.23 inches and delivers a maximum airflow of 2,310 cubic feet per minute (CFM).

With dual 160-watt motors, the Jetstreme II model MJS26K is 26-by-15-by-3.62 inches and distributes a maximum airflow of 2,600 CFM. The 26-by-15-by-3.94-inch Jetstreme Platinum has dual 225-watt motors and a maximum airflow of 3,100 CFM. Maradyne offers a recommended wire harness to operate an electric radiator fan according to engine water temperature. The kits include an adjustable temperature switch, a 185-degree temperature switch or a 195-degree temperature switch. Prices range from \$281.95 to \$351.95.

Maradyne High Performance Fans, 800-403-7953, www.maradynehp.com

and try wiggling them while the headlights are on. This should help you find the problem.

'VOLTAGE METER PROBLEM' TIP

I have an additional suggestion regarding the "Voltage Meter Problem" letter in the May issue. A few years ago I encountered the same problem as described by Don Sisson: When the RPM increased the indicated voltage would decrease. The owner of the vehicle had it into several shops for diagnosis but stopped short of throwing parts at it. This coach had double V-belts driving the alternator. The short story is the belts would slip as soon as the RPM got to a certain point just above idle because of the resistance from the alternator trying to charge the batteries. There was no squealing noise usually associated with a slipping belt, so it was missed by several mechanics.

A belt replacement cured this mys-

tery. Newer serpentine belts provide a much better grip over the old V-belts, but I have seen these split in half because of rocks or some debris thrown into the belt and still be able to turn all the pulleys. Since diesel accessory belts are not easily visible in some motorhomes, it may be worth a close inspection. Checking the belt tensioner is also in order.

**DANNY LINDSTROM
VIA EMAIL**

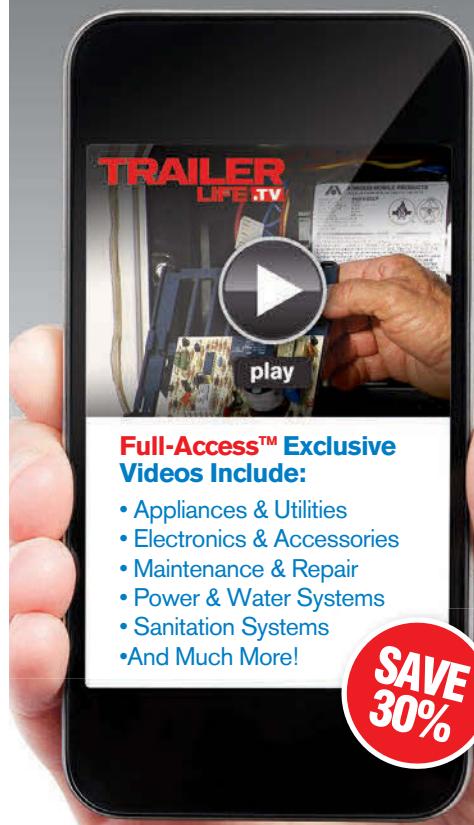
Thanks for writing, Danny. Your experiences may help other coach owners with similar problems.

SWITCHING TO AGM BATTERIES

We have a 2008 Itasca Ellipse Class A and it's time to replace the coach batteries. The motorhome has a Dimensions model WIN12X20B3R1T inverter/charger standby power system. The charger has a switch to select battery size and type, e.g., sealed

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lead acid and wet lead acid. I confirmed the charger does its job within the limits of the Optima BLUETOP Group 31 battery charging limits as directed by Dimensions tech support. They think that would be the only restriction. The Winnebago rep I talked to wasn't sure if the absorbed glass mat (AGM) batteries could be used, and recommended I stick with what was originally in the motorhome. Can you advise me on this issue? Have other RVers switched their coach over to AGM batteries? Any help would be appreciated.

JIM BARNETT
VIA EMAIL

The charging regimen is slightly different with AGM batteries. If Dimensions tech support told you the use of an Optima BLUETOP battery (which is an AGM type) is OK, then you should be fine. Plenty of motorhome owners like the convenience of sealed batteries. They do cost more, which has held back their acceptance somewhat.

HOT POWER PLUG

We have a 2002 Class A Winnebago Sightseer 30QB. For some time now the power cord end has been heating up when plugged into the generator or shorepower. Everything seems to work well and I have not had any electrical problems, but when running the air conditioner and other equipment the plug gets anywhere from warm to hot.

Once, while traveling in the summer, the outlet and the plug were too hot to handle and the prongs started to show signs (color) of overheating. I have replaced both the receptacle and plug twice. They seem to work fine for a while, and then they start to get warm. Any assistance would be much appreciated.

LEON JANEK
COTULLA, TEXAS

It's not unusual for a plug to get warm when everything is running, particularly the air conditioner, but if it's too hot to touch or shows signs of melting, there's a problem. Plug or outlet corrosion, or twisted prongs that don't make good contact, can cause overheating and discoloration. That seems unlikely, as you've replaced the plug and the chances that

both plugs were defective seems rare.

It's also possible, although again rare, that your motorhome was manufactured with an undersized power cord, and drawing excess current through it would result in overheating.

If you continue to have problems, I suggest you measure the available voltage inside the coach when everything is on, and consider having an electrician check for current draw. You might want to upgrade to 50-amp service.

TOWING A VEHICLE BACKWARD

We have two vehicles that we want to tow behind our 2011 Winnebago Adventurer 32H motorhome, depending upon where we go and how many go with us. We have a 2006 Mazda MX-5 Miata and a 2012 Chevy Colorado. Both are 2WD and automatic transmission. We plan to use a tow dolly and not modify either vehicle for flat towing. The owner's manuals of both automobiles states they must be towed with the rear wheels off the ground or damage will be done to the transmission.

Are there legal or technical problems with towing either vehicle backward using a tow dolly, rear wheels up, front wheels down? Or do I need to install expensive lube pumps on each vehicle?

BRENT AND CONNIE HOLTZEN
TUCSON, ARIZ.

Tow dolly manufacturers do not approve of this method. I see it being done occasionally, and don't know of any state laws that would prevent you from doing this.

One problem is positioning the front wheels exactly straight and holding them that way. The stock steering locks are not designed to do this and could fail, allowing the towed vehicle to swing sideways. If the front wheels are not straight the tires will wear rapidly and the vehicle will not track straight. There are devices designed for tow truck operators that can lock the steering wheel. However, the front-end geometry is not designed for reverse towing at high speeds and may result in dangerous instability. We don't recommend it. ♦

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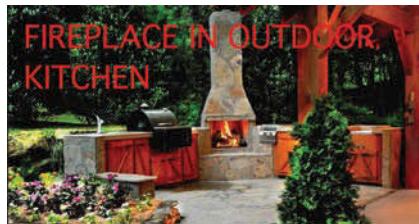
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The SPAM Museum in Austin, Minn., is well worth a trip off Interstate 90. The exhibits run from humorous (A Monty Python tribute) to informative (the World War II exhibit). Admission is free, but it's hard to resist the gift shop. Our kids had never tried canned meat, so we fried some up with hash browns right in the parking lot. Ah, the joys of an RV!

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