

Roughing It Smoothly®



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Roughing it Smoothly®

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Daddy

Recollections of a Life Well-Lived

by Bob Tiffin



Robert Alexander Tiffin, Sr.
1911–2004

Alex Tiffin was my father. But in the South, grown men still call their fathers “Daddy.” Daddy was a remarkable man. Born on Turner Bolton’s farm near Red Bay, Alabama, when we had an agriculturally based economy, he developed a business philosophy at an early age and implemented ideas that preceded the successful techniques of today’s retailing titans.

In 1911 Red Bay was a very small town — no paved streets, three or four churches, a school, and a few stores. Farmers came to town on Saturday in their horse- or mule-drawn wagons to get supplies.

His parents, William V. (Bud) Tiffin and Samantha Modenia (Modie) Patterson, lived in Red Bay until Alex was five when they bought a 360-acre farm north of Belmont, Mississippi. With seven children to raise, my grandparents, Bud and Modie Tiffin, lived on the farm until all of the children were grown. Daddy finished high school at Belmont in 1929 and worked for the next four years while he sorted out what he wanted to do with his life.

In 1933 in the midst of the Depression, he moved to Jackson, Tennessee, to enroll in a six-month business course

at Middle Tennessee Business College. Daddy came home in 1934 full of ideas to try. He first went to work for Uncle John McKinney who was in the grocery business.

Daddy lived across the street from Nancy and L.N. Sparks. He took notice of their pretty 19-year-old granddaughter, Katie, and they began dating in 1935. About a year later they were married on April 28, 1936. No big wedding ceremony. He just borrowed Uncle Johnny’s car and went to Russellville, the county seat, to get the probate judge to marry them. When they got there, the judge was at a school function and they had to sit outside his office and wait for him to return.

Daddy learned how to get along with Uncle Johnny and continued to work for him until 1941 when he went into business for himself. He rented a 25-foot wide building and began to sell a full line of groceries along with seed, feed, and fertilizer.

Daddy had a good personality and just genuinely enjoyed meeting people. He made people feel comfortable and welcome whenever they came to his store. When I began to work in his store many years later as a teenager, he would tell me, “You learn your customers’ names and call them by their names when they

come in the door.” We always referred to a customer as “Mister” and “Mrs.” and rarely took the liberty of calling someone by their first name unless we really knew them personally. “That shows respect,” he always said.

About a year after he started the business, I was born at home on March 5, 1942. Like so many rural towns in the South, there was no hospital in Red Bay. Doctors practiced medicine out of small clinics.

Customers put their confidence in Daddy. He taught me from the beginning to make your dealings honest with everyone and pay your bills. He went through his accounts payable file every week and paid his suppliers. He always took discounts on accounts payable and I still do that today. We pay our dealers every week for the warranty work they do.

Daddy had the philosophy of putting some money back on a regular basis, keeping it in reserve for a rainy day. That philosophy has gotten Tiffin Motorhomes through some critical slow periods over the years.

By 1947 Alex Tiffin General Merchandise had outgrown its rented quarters and Daddy built a new store. He expanded his business to include hardware and building supplies, and bought property along the railroad tracks to unload fertilizer, mortar mix, cement, roofing, and other commodities. The railroad siding gave him the flexibility to buy carload lots. His suppliers would sell the larger quantities at lower prices, making it possible for him to sell to his customers at more competitive prices. In a few short years he had become a very successful entrepreneur.

In 1950 Mother and Daddy began planning a new home. They bought five acres about a mile from town and started construction in March 1952 and completed it in August. Whenever he would get in items they had ordered for the new house, such as sheetrock, lumber, and plumbing supplies, his customers would want to buy the same good quality supplies for their houses. It didn’t take him long to realize there was a market demand for quality building supplies. He bought two more buildings and began to stock bath fixtures, appli-

ances, windows, doors, sheetrock, finished lumber, fencing, and water pumps. Tiffin Supply is the oldest Whirlpool dealer in the state of Alabama.

By 1955 the company had changed its name. That was the year I began working at the store. Tiffin Supply Company had everything for a man to build his house and run his farm. Daddy sold everything except ready-mix concrete. Red Bay was strategically located in the middle of a four-county area: Tishomingo and Itawamba, Mississippi, and Marion and Franklin, Alabama.

“Always stock what people want,” he would tell me. We kept expanding our product base. Local people would say, “If you can’t find it at Alex’s store, you can’t find it nowhere else.”

In the 1950s the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) began to offer a 100 percent loan program to build a house if you owned the land. Because so many families owned farms, they could give their children a piece of land to get started. Most children learned to build on the farm. So it was easy for them to use the FHA loan program, buy their supplies at Tiffin, and build their homes. A group of contractors sprang up to build houses for those who lived in the small towns in the quad-county area. The success of the program spread and we were soon getting business from Colbert and Lauderdale counties north of us because we stocked such a broad base of products for building and supply. Daddy’s business philosophy was working: “Buy in large quantities and sell everything at a fair price.”

Bob Tiffin with his Daddy during the winter of 1943–44 in Red Bay.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE TIFFIN FAMILY

Being able to service what we sold became a key part of Daddy’s business philosophy. I’ll never forget when chain saws first came out. A salesman came around and these chain saws caught my Daddy’s eye because he knew how long it took to cut down a tree with a crosscut saw. After the salesman demonstrated the saw on some trees out back, Daddy bought six. He sold three on a time payment plan and the other three for cash. Soon, every one of those chain saws came back to us all in pieces in tow sacks. We couldn’t fix them, so Daddy took back every chain saw and made good on them. Needless to say, we didn’t sell anymore chain saws. But he taught me a principle that we use today: you always stand behind what you sell and you provide repair service.

Working with a local contractor, Daddy built several houses to sell. He financed them himself. Marlin Saint, who now heads up our warranty recovery program at Tiffin Motorhomes, bought one of those houses many years ago and recently told me a funny story about the transaction. When Dad-

Alex and Katie Tiffin on their honeymoon at Rock City in 1936.



dy came to collect the first payment, Marlin paid him in cash. As Daddy walked back to his truck, Marlin said, “Mr. Alex, don’t I get a receipt?” Daddy reached across the front seat, tore off one side of a brown paper bag, scribbled out a receipt, and handed it to him. He noticed that Marlin looked a little surprised, and said, “That’s just as good as one of those receipts that’s printed on a pad!” Marlin accepted it and still enjoys telling the story.

In the late forties and early fifties, Daddy partnered with Purina to try a new marketing idea for chicken feed. In the spring he offered “free baby chick” days. The farmer would get a dozen baby chicks if he bought 25 pounds of chick starter. Anticipating the rush, Daddy ordered 10,000 baby chicks from the Cullman hatchery that were shipped by rail to Red Bay. I’ll never forget the depot agent, Mr. McDowell, calling the store. With the loud chirping of 10,000 baby chicks in the background, he hollered into the phone, “Tell Alex his baby chicks are here!!”

Daddy took his business out on the rural country roads in 1948 with a locally designed and built peddling truck. He bought a Ford school bus chassis and had Curt Griffus, the local blacksmith, and Robert Sparks (his father-in-law), build a floor frame using 4 × 6 oak run-

Alex Tiffin took great satisfaction in the success of Tiffin Motorhomes. Shown here with him in 1985 are Lex, Tim, and Bob.



ners. Mr. Griffus made tie bolts to attach it to the chassis and used oak 4 × 4 floor joists on 24-inch centers. They used ¾-inch tongue-and-groove oak flooring to complete the base and tied off the edges with 1½ × ¾-inch steel. They built the walls with 2 × 4s on 16-inch centers. The roof joists were beveled and topped with ¾-inch tongue-and-groove. The sides and roof were skinned with 18-gauge galvanized sheets. The back bumper was extended to strap on chicken coops. It was a sturdy craft. I watched my granddaddy build it and picked up ideas that I would use later in motorhome construction. When I asked him what he was going to do for a windshield, he just said, “I’ll make one.” It was a flat windshield that pushed out from the bottom edge for ventilation.

The Purina Feed Company thought so much of Daddy’s idea that they offered to paint it with their standard red and white checkerboard advertising if we would bring it to Birmingham.

Daddy drove the peddling truck to Birmingham and I rode along in a cane bottom, ladder-back chair. Every time he started off, I’d flip over in that chair. Daddy and I rode the Illinois Central Seminole back to Red Bay from Birmingham. Purina kept it two weeks and we went down on the train to pick it up.

During the summers of 1953 and ’54,

I rode the peddling truck just about every day and helped out. We had regular routes for every weekday. We would sell groceries, kerosene, and fertilizer, and we bought eggs, chickens, and butter from our customers. Many times we traded by bartering. The peddling truck drivers I remember were Marvin Umphres, Jim Harden, Junior Ledbetter, and Mr. Thrasher. Daddy’s peddling truck was a big convenience to people out in the country. Life seems to have been a lot simpler then.

When my children became old enough to learn about business, they started out at Tiffin Supply under Daddy’s watchful eye. Daddy gave Van an assignment and explained what the pay would be. As he concluded his instructions, Daddy warned Van, “Now don’t tell people how much I’m paying you.” Van quickly replied, “Don’t worry, Grandpa, I’d be ashamed for anyone to know.” Standing nearby, his older brother Tim was shocked. Nevertheless, he was always a good mentor to anyone who wanted to learn from him.

During the late sixties, there were three RV companies in nearby Mississippi: Commodore, Sunliner, and Safari. It was my job to collect from them. Commodore moved back north and the other two went out of business in late 1971. Having had the opportunity to visit their

plants, I was intrigued with the idea of starting a motorhome plant in Red Bay.

Daddy and I discussed the plan in September 1972 and he agreed to underwrite it as necessary. “Necessary” came much sooner than we expected when the country was socked with the oil embargo in September 1973. We laid off everyone but our management team.

Daddy stood by us and kept us going. “If we go down, we’ll all go down together,” he said staunchly. We recovered in early 1975 but had a similar experience again in 1979. He paid for the chassis and engine, the largest component we had to buy. He visited the plant every afternoon to see what we were using and determined if his large quantity purchasing could help us.

When we started the company, I wanted to use Onan gensets. Since I only wanted to buy a few at a time, we had to buy through Atchinson Equipment Company in Birmingham. Mr. Atchinson was not favorable. “I’m not selling anything to anybody in North Alabama. I’ve been burned by all the companies in North Alabama,” he complained.

I called Tom Bowen at Onan about our predicament. “Mr. Atchinson won’t sell to us—not even for cash!”

He called back a short time later. “Are you affiliated with Tiffin Supply?” he asked. I explained. “OK, no problem. We’ll bill Tiffin Supply.” We continued to use his credit on gensets until 1985.

Daddy retired in 1995 at the age of 84 and enjoyed several years of good health. His last three years were difficult.

Daddy believed in all three of his children: David, Beulah, and me. He taught us well the principles of dealing fairly with everyone—your employees, your customers, and your suppliers, making everyone feel welcome and comfortable, managing carefully your payables and receivables, understanding market demands, and purchasing in quantities that give you a selling advantage.

Daddy was not a Christian when Mother married him in 1936. But she was patient with him and always a good example. He resisted for many years but finally obeyed the Gospel after Judy and I married. He had always followed Christian principles in his business. After he was baptized into Christ, he followed those principles in his service to God throughout the rest of his life.

In 1948 Alex Tiffin put his store on the rural roads of Alabama and Mississippi to better serve his customers. The Peddling Truck was an immediate success.



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GPS Navigation for \$150

by Jonathan Thompson

THANKS TO THE internet and services such as MapQuest, it's easy to get point to point directions with a few clicks of a mouse and strokes on one's keyboard. Wouldn't it be great if you could take that mapping database with you? With DeLorme's Street Atlas 2005, you can.

From its humble beginnings as a paper atlas publisher, DeLorme has emerged as a technological innovator in GPS mapping software. DeLorme has helped define digital mapping as we know it today. Street Atlas USA was the first software product to put street-level detail for the entire country on a single CD. Over a dozen versions later, Street Atlas continues to provide an excellent value. In fact, DeLorme has bundled its Street Atlas 2005 software with their USB EarthMate global positioning satellite (GPS) receiver for the fantastic price of \$150.00.

GPS is a world-wide, space-based navigation system that is operated by the U.S. Air Force, and consists of a constellation of 24 satellites. It was first developed for use by the military but has been made available to civilians. Today, GPS provides the military and civilians with accurate information about their position, speed, and time anywhere in the world, and in any weather conditions. It is so accurate that an individual's position can be calculated to the meter, and with very advanced systems, to the centimeter.

The installation of the software can be somewhat tricky. If you allow the application to install only the required default components, the GPS components will not be in-

stalled properly. For some unknown reason, DeLorme chose to bundle the GPS functionality with the map printing functionality. Thus, for the GPS routing to function properly, the map printing component must be installed. DeLorme's installation program does not inform you of this fact, and the author was only able to resolve this problem by consulting DeLorme's online support pages. Fortunately, an internet connection was available during the author's evaluation trip, and the problem was easy to correct. You could also play it safe when installing, and choose to install all components.

Street Atlas 2005 includes encyclopedic road maps of the United States that can zoom in and out and easily handle directions for trips with multiple destinations and stops. It can also calculate such variables as estimated gas mileage, projected speed, fuel costs and hours driven per day to schedule travel time, rest stops, and overnight stays. Street Atlas 2005 also includes a wide listing of points of interest such as restaurants, lodging, and attractions. This becomes very useful when you need to know where the closest R.V. supply store is located. One drawback is that points of interest can not be updated automatically.

However, you can add your own points of interest to the database when you find something or somewhere that you want to remember. Another option is to upgrade to the next version of Street Atlas when it is released, which will install the latest points of interest database.

Using the GPS is easy as well. You simply connect the Earthmate GPS to your Windows computer and register it with the Street Atlas 2005 software, and your computer becomes a powerful trip planning and mapping system. With GPS enabled, Street Atlas 2005 can track your position and use the satellite-linked system to plot and recalculate routes instantly. This becomes very useful if you make a wrong turn. Upon making a wrong turn, the software will automatically calculate a route to get you back on track. You can also search for nearby points of interest, so you won't wander aimlessly looking for the next gas station or Wal-Mart. DeLorme's trip-planning screens are somewhat cluttered, with four panes and 11 tabs to click through. Entering a street address can take many steps, and it may be easier to click on a rough location with your mouse instead.

DeLorme has made Street Atlas easy to use in motion. You can set the program to display one trip segment at a time, using large, high-contrast type and graphics. It can also call out each turn in a synthesized voice and responds to basic spoken commands, such as "next turn" or "be quiet." However, don't try to operate this and drive at the same time. Let your co-pilot be the navigator, or set it up before you actually start driving.

Once you have mastered the user interface of Street Atlas, it becomes a powerful tool, especially when you are entering unfamiliar territory. Other great all-in-one GPS systems are out there. But if you already have a Windows operating system on your laptop, this is a very cost effective purchase. And, if you consider the price of this package, it becomes a very compelling gadget whose utility will pay off quickly.

(NEWS continued on next page)



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Four Paws Kingdom Campground: Going for the Dogs

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The Bartoscheks' park offers fenced in, off-leash areas for large and small dogs, with fresh water, pools, and toys. There is an agility yard with "work out" equipment. A spring-fed pond with grass and sand is great for cooling off and rolling around, and hiking trails are mapped out for you through a nice forest.

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If the dogs' owners would like to make day trips, a walking service is available along with planned activities for the dogs to enjoy. Theme week-ends with games, special entertainment, events, pot-lucks, etc. More information at www.4pawskingdom.com or call 828-287-7324.

TIFFIN MANAGEMENT TEAM

"Encouragement is the strongest management tool I have." Reflecting on 30 years at Tiffin Motorhomes, and starting his eighth year as plant manager, Horace Stepp oversees 16 supervisors and 630 production employees.

"When a new employee starts on the line, you explain, teach, and encourage. You may have to repeat the process several times. But encouragement is worth more than anything you can do for an employee," he continued. "I always try to put a new employee in a situation where I know he or she *can* succeed. It is a big mistake to over challenge an employee at first."

"When women first started on the production line a few years ago, I knew we could make it work because my mother worked at Blue Bell for 35 years to support five children." Stepp went on to explain that a lot of forethought and planning is invested before anything new is attempted at Tiffin Motorhomes.

"I'm in the job I have today because Bob Tiffin has been my role model. He is a Christian and that governs our management style. We have a good working environment in the office and in the plant," Stepp said appreciatively.

"The production supervisors make my job so much easier. We have good working relationships throughout the production arena, but also with the engineering department. In some plants, production and engineering always have a tug-of-war going on. If we have a problem, we go to each other, discuss it calmly, and get it solved," he explained.

"At all levels of supervision, I stress that our supervisors get to know the em-

Horace Stepp Plant Manager

ployees, know them by their first names, be friendly, and most of all, encourage and thank them for their contribution to making this company so successful. Individuals being successful and growing in their jobs will always translate into corporate success. And that means job security for the hundreds of people who work here and for their families," he said.

After graduating from Red Bay High School in 1967, Stepp studied drafting for two years at Northwest Alabama Technical Institute and accepted employment for a year in the drafting department at the Pascagoula Shipyard in Mississippi. During that time he married Janice Stacy and they moved to Belmont where Horace spent three years in the drafting departments of two mobile home plants. When Bob Tiffin needed a draftsman to create the plans for his first motorhomes, he recruited Horace in 1972 to moonlight for him. After a little more than two years, he went full-time with TMH in April 1975. This month Stepp will celebrate his 30th year with the company.

The production line at Tiffin starts at 6 a.m. But life in a country town has al-

Encouragement is worth more than anything you can do for an employee.

ways started before daylight, so no one regards that as unusual. However, the management team begins the day well before six. Stepp arrives at the Belmont plant at 5:15 and discusses the day's plans with supervisor Tim Lindley. Thirty minutes later he is on his way to the Red Bay plant for a 6 a.m. meeting with the engineers.

At seven, supervisors meet with production people to discuss and assess supply and shortage issues in the line from yesterday. At every workstation, both outsourced and constructed components join the evolving motorhome as it travels through the line toward completion. It is critical that every component arrive *on time* at its planned intersection in order to "make production," which means 10 completed units each day. Engineering is gradually changing the plant's infrastructure to run two production lines — one for gas models and one for diesels — by the end of the year.

At 8 a.m. another group fills the conference room. Supervisors, engineers, and purchasing agents gather to deal with run-time problems involving shortfalls. Stepp spends the next hour checking the production line throughout the plant before heading back to Belmont at 9:30. He knows every pothole, bump, and curve in the six-mile blacktop.

Meeting again on the run with the supervisors in the new paint plant, the sanding building, special floor assemblies, and the wiring harness room, Stepp constantly develops and refines his ideas to coordinate the complex assemblies of both plants as they merge seamlessly on the production line to create the final



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Janice and Horace Stepp have always made a great team. Working together at Tiffin has not been an exception.

product. Only after coach owners take the tour two or three times do they begin to appreciate the design, engineering, production craftsmanship, and quality management that it takes to build a fine motorhome. Even after 30 years in the plant, Horace Stepp still appreciates more every day the accomplishments of his fellow employees.

Over six hours after beginning his day, the plant manager makes his way back to Red Bay to have lunch with his wife, who happens to be his secretary. Janice had worked at Tiffin for several years before Horace became plant manager. After 29 years of marriage, he knew they would make a great team. Because husband-wife teams are traditionally frowned upon by management, he approached Bob Tiffin with some degree of apprehension to request the arrangement.

Bob thought about the request for a few moments and then put Horace at ease. “Well, I have enjoyed working with my wife even before we started this company. I don’t see why you shouldn’t have the opportunity to work with Janice.” It was a good decision.

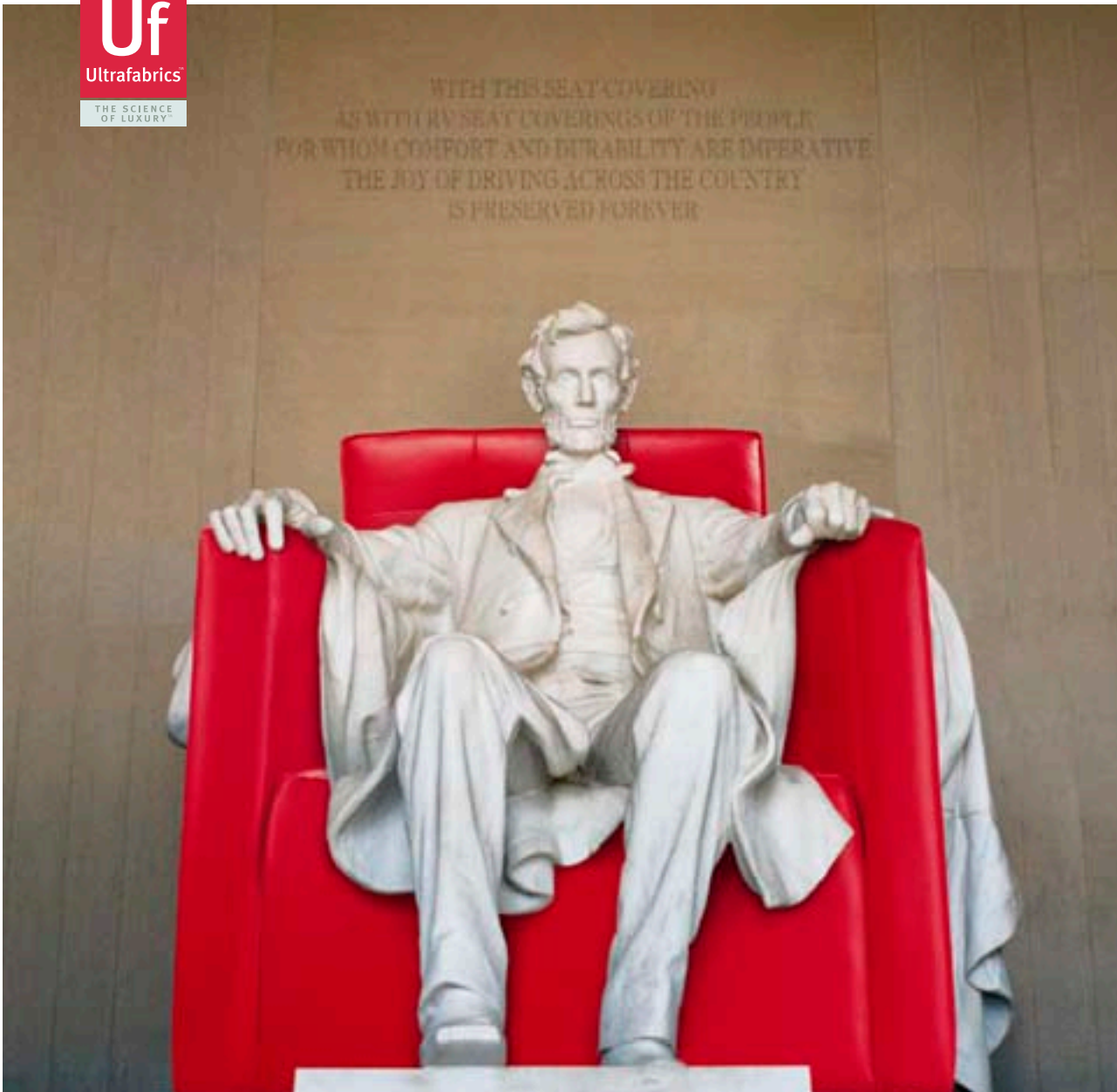
After a 30-minute lunch, Stepp spends the next two hours on the production floor monitoring potential problems, encouraging employees and supervisors, taking notes for the next day’s meetings, and enjoying the fruits of his labor.

“If production gets behind, we figure out why and get it back on schedule. If there are shortage problems, we check with purchasing. If there’s an engineering problem, the prints could be wrong or we could have read them wrong. We have a good engineering staff that constantly supports and backs us up on the floor. Working here is just a great experience,” he exudes.

When the production line shuts down at 2:30, Stepp quickly makes his way to his office to accept reports from his supervisors and evaluate to see if the projected 10 units were completed.

Stepp’s workday often runs 12 hours. But he doesn’t com-

Continued on page 23



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GETTING IT ALL IN 38

by Fred Thompson

Tiffin's beautifully designed Allegro Bay 38 TDB on the Workhorse W24 chassis with GM's Vortec 8100 V-8 power plant and Allison's 2100 MH electronically controlled transmission is a value package that will be hard to beat.

SELECTING THE RIGHT INTERIOR APPOINTMENTS as well as the engine and chassis for your intended long-range use of a coach demands careful planning and mapping of the process. In January Tiffin Motorhomes began building the 38-foot Allegro Bay that features two living-activity areas, bringing a new dimension to the brand which now has three floorplans.

The bedroom with two slideouts offers a generous walk-through area to twin upholstered chairs positioned on either side of a sturdy table that cantilevers from the back wall. The 18 × 26.5-inch solid wood table offers a convenient work area for a laptop with 12v and 110v connections underneath along with a telephone connection for a DSL or dial-up internet connection. Designed for multiuse, the area can function as a small business center, a game room, a quiet and cosy reading area, or a craft center where everything could be left out until finished. The table is strong enough to support a portable sewing machine for those quick clothing repairs, while the cabinet under the television offers a perfect place to store your machine. The interior designers added a recessed magazine-newspaper rack on one side and an FM-AM radio with CD player (optional) on the other. Both chairs are located for viewing the 20-inch flat screen color television in the diagonally opposite corner. With two opposing 54 × 22-inch windows behind each chair, the work area enjoys generous natural lighting which can be controlled with day-night shades. A wall sconce above the table along with ceiling lighting brightens the room during evening hours.



LEWIS COMMUNICATIONS

Now that you know about this unanticipated feature of the 38-ft. Allegro Bay, let's explore the other amenities of this coach that may help in your decision-making process. The Class A motorhome market offers such a wide variety of options that feature listing and careful evaluation are necessary to make a correct choice for your personal living style.

The Hardware

The 2005 Allegro Bay 38 TDB is riding on a Workhorse W24. Of course, that means 24,000 GVWR (gross vehicle weight rating). With 9,000 lb. front axle capacity and 15,000 lb. rear axle capacity, the W24 offers the highest gross axle weight rating in a gas motor home chassis, which translates into a higher payload for the Bay 38's three slide-outs, an extended living area, a washer-dryer, and solid surface countertops. The GCWR (gross combined weight rating) is 30,000 lbs. which means that you can safely tow up to 6,000 lbs. behind this coach.

The W24 uses GM's Vortec 8100 which packs 340 hp and 455 lb.-ft. of torque. GM claims the 8100 is the largest, most powerful gas RV engine ever built. We will discuss our own tests later in this article.

The Allison 2100 MH is an electronically controlled, fully automatic, five-speed transmission with overdrive. Its 32-bit micropro-

(Left) The carefully designed cockpit places controls in intuitive positions for safe use while traveling. The living area (below) is enhanced by using Ultraleather (optional) in all of the seating.

cessor communicates with the engine to determine the exact shift point for precise, smooth shifting and maximum performance.

The W24 is equipped with the four-piston Quadraulic brake system. Using the same brake technology found in high performance cars, it provides excellent braking to the coach. The brake pads make contact with both sides of the rotor — not just one side as with traditional disc brakes — providing more responsive braking with additional stopping power.

Workhorses's Stabil-Ride integrates several suspension components beginning with two-leaf parabolic springs to deliver excellent force deflection with very little inter-leaf friction. An auxiliary spring has a three-stage urethane unit that compresses to slow and control the deflection of the parabolic springs. To reduce roll on corners, Workhorse employs an integral 2.5-inch stabilizer bar. Completing the "ride package," Premium Bilstein® shock absorbers reduce body shake following road impacts and decrease chassis vibration.

Tiffin's UVW factor is 18,950 lbs. (unloaded vehicle weight). UVW is the weight of the motorhome at the factory with full fuel, engine oil, and coolants. The Cargo Carrying Capacity (CCC) of this coach computes as follows: 24,000 lbs. - (18,950 lbs. UVW + 1,200 lbs. for a full water tank, full LP tank, and two passengers) = 3,850 lbs. for *all your stuff!* Not bad, huh?

The Test Drive

Tiffin turned the Bay 38 over to us for a full week. Our test run totaled 880 miles. Even with a third passenger and considerable



STEVEN WIDOFF PHOTOGRAPHY

gear, we were still 2,500 lbs. under the GVWR. While we never traveled with more than a half tank of water, the black and grey water left the above numbers about the same. The towed vehicle added 3,500 lbs. to give us an approximate 25,000 lb. GCWR.

Compared to other gas models I have driven, the performance of this coach overall was superb. Our terrain included the foothills of the Appalachians, the Alabama piedmont, and coastal lowlands. The pavement included interstate, state, and county roads.

The coach's stability in lane changes and cornering was firm. Steering required conscious attention but was not bothersome. I feel sure that the Tru-Center Steering System (an option) would be money well-spent.

Including an urgent, unanticipated stop, braking was solid and even without the slightest hint of stress or burned pad odor.

The power plant in this coach was a show-off. Of course, we didn't keep any 0-60 records, but interstate ramp and merging power gave a very comfortable feeling every time, even when I had to slide in between a couple of 18-wheelers. The coach had the power when called upon to get past slower strings of traffic on the interstate.

Entering an estimated 4-5 percent grade with cruise control set at 70 mph (2,600 rpm), the coach's speed dropped to 60 mph (3,500 rpm after a computer-controlled downshift) during an 0.8 mile stretch. On level highway with cruise set at 66 mph, the engine maintained an even 2,500 rpm. Entering a 3 percent grade, the transmission shift pushed the rpm up to 3,600 but the coach maintained its set speed of 66 mph.

The W24 provides a very handy computer which offers a wide array of information including inside and outside temperatures. Using a 10-mile stretch in Alabama's piedmont for a test, the trip computer showed 8.6 mpg driving at 65 mph. I suspect we could have gotten 9 mpg if we had cruised at 60 mph.

For a worst case scenario, the pavement on I-65 from Cullman to Birmingham provides some very rough sections. The W24's four component Stabil-Ride system did a creditable job at smoothing out the roughness. On more even roads, the suspension system will give you a very comfortable ride.

At First Glance

The coach we used for the photo shoot had the standard oak interior. The Bay 38 we traveled in had the natural maple (optional). While it boils down to personal preferences, we liked the natural maple for the lighter interiors it offered. The magazine cover shows the Fire Red full body paint (optional). The three full body paint options are different only in their accent colors: Regal Blue, Silver Sand, and Fire Red. Either choice creates a handsome coach exterior!

The exterior construction shows great execution in the smooth blending of so many components: front and back caps connecting to the sides; windows and windshields into the exterior structures; main entrance door and storage bay compartments; exterior service openings to refrigerator and furnace — all done well and attributable to excellent engineering and production line attention.

With four large basement storage compartments on either side, the Bay 38 gives you ample room to take all of the amenities and equipment that provide the conveniences you enjoy most on

your longer trips. The three doors under the living room slide open into one continuous storage cavern which is accessible from a side entrance door when the slide is extended. This offers storage options for long items such as skis and fishing equipment.

Campsite set-up is expedited with all hook-ups in three adjacent compartments on the streetside. Sewer hook-up is located in front of the rear tire well. The fully appointed water cabinet is immediately aft of the tire well. It offers a hot-cold shower and hand washing area as well as a standard pressurized system to connect exterior water supply to clean the black tank. The rear-most compartment houses the 50-amp electrical service.

In the 2005 models, Tiffin gives the buyer a choice between two standard features at no additional cost: the HWH hydraulic leveling jacks or the Atwood electric jack system.

The Interior

Tiffin's Allegro Bay series offers many luxury features as *standard* items. As you enter the coach, you will notice the solid surface Gibraltar countertops; the double stainless steel sink with the chrome single lever faucet and pullout sprayer; the convection-microwave oven; the 24-inch flat screen television; the driver's side door; and more quality wood cabinets with raised panel doors than you will find in any other similarly priced coach.

With a front-to-back examination, we found the Bay 38 a very liveable coach. Both the driver's and passenger's seats had full 6-way power with luxuriously pleated leather banking cushions on both sides of the seat and back areas of the chair (optional). The swivel rocker located on the passenger side was also upholstered with Ultraleather (optional) and offered a manually extendable leg and foot rest. From the entry door to the right and surrounding the cockpit, nine cabinets at eye-level to ceiling provide generous storage for electronic gear as well as keeping maps and other travel materials handy.

The Ultraleather (optional) Hide-a-Bed sofa with coordinating pillows raised my personal comfort level about three notches. It just seems to swell around you when you park yourself there. It's the perfect spot for an afternoon nap! Two recessed overhead lights as well as a sconce lamp between the huge windows in the slide-out provide ample reading light for the sofa. The designer valances over the 45 × 20 and 46 × 26-inch windows are made with coordinating fabric and stainless steel accents. Two windows in both ends of the slide-out capture cross ventilation. All of the windows have day-night shades.

The dinette seats four at a solid hardwood table. Now standard, large storage drawers under each seat open into the galley area. With an electric outlet and phone connection just under the edge of the table, the dinette can double as an office area. Six cabinets line the top of the slide-out above the dinette and sofa.

Wood plank flooring (optional) covered the entry area and galley, and extended throughout the bath area. Impervious to water and tracked in dirt, this beautiful floor makes clean-ups easy.

The Bay 38's galley is efficiently designed for full meal preparation or for the nutritious one-dish meals that we all enjoy. The galley has two 110v outlets in the backsplash wall to service electric skillets, toasters, etc. An additional 110v outlet and the water pump switch is mounted in the front panel of the sink cabinet. A deluxe microwave-convection oven with exhaust fan and surface lights is mounted just under a cabinet and above the double burner gas

cooktop which features sparkless ignition. A powered vent above the galley can quickly remove cooking odors or bring in fresh air.

Directly under the cooktop is a drawer designed to store your pots and pans. Double door storage under the sink and a stack of three drawers along the left wall of the galley complete the under countertop storage areas. The double stainless steel sink with the chrome single lever faucet and extendable sprayer make the galley a pleasure to use. To the left of the sink, the cook can flip up a solid surface counter extension which extends over the entry well. Both the sink and the cooktop have solid surface covers to create a serving buffet area when you have company.

A 10 cu. ft. four-door stainless steel refrigerator with ice maker (optional) is positioned immediately to the right of the cooktop and offers the triple energy system — 12v, 110v, and gas. Immediately opposite the fridge on the streetside is a double pantry slideout positioned at eye-level above the washer-dryer cabinet. The pantry slides measure 21 × 24 × 7 inches, each with two shelves. Without the washer-dryer installed, the four-shelf cabinet offers welcomed multi-purpose storage.

In addition to the flat panel television, the entertainment center includes a four-speaker system to give you surround sound effects in the living area, plus a five disk CD changer, a video cassette player (all standard), and the wiring option for a CD video disk player. The King Dome semi-automatic satellite television receiver (optional) completes the package.

The Bay's cockpit was obviously designed by an experienced driver. Every control is intuitively functional and located just where you would expect it to be. The high-tech radio/CD player may have a 15-minute learning curve.

The Atwood Levelers system deploys automatically with manual intervention for irregular ground levels. Simple instructions on the face plate remind you of the procedures to follow and a warning light on the left side control panel will tell you that the jacks are down when you turn on the ignition.

This Bay 38 was equipped with optional power sun visors. Along with the optional dual pane insulated windows, buyers often select these features. Several times during the course of our trip,

(*Top*) Galley storage is enhanced by the double-slide pantry located over the washer/dryer cabinet. A free-standing dinette is optional. (*Center*) The drop-leaf counter extension provides additional prep space for a practically designed galley with convection/microwave oven and a 4-door 10 CF refrigerator with icemaker (optional). The bedroom offers an alternative living room/work area with full connections for a laptop.





STEVEN WIDOFF PHOTOGRAPHY

The lavatory/shower area is attractively partitioned from the bedroom with a French door. A second lavatory and toilet is located opposite in a private enclosure.

the sun blinded me as we changed our heading. A flip of the dash switch solved the problem for me and my passenger. The dual pane windows reduce travel noise and campground racket, and significantly improve your heating and cooling efficiencies.

Other cockpit features to please the captain include GM's cruise control, a back-up in-dash monitor with speaker, CD in-dash player, map lights for the driver and passenger, heated and remotely controlled mirrors, 3-speed wipers with variable intermittent timing, a very effective Denso HVAC in-dash system, switches for overdrive

and grade braking, fog lights, the emergency start and genset start-stop switches, L / R fans to reduce inside windshield moisture, and a trip computer — all standard features.

Not forgetting the real essentials, Tiffin designers placed two cup holders in a solid wood center console and one cup holder each on the driver's door and under the passenger's side window. Two 12v outlets are conveniently placed for both driver and passenger, plus 110v and phone outlets are installed in the firewall on the passenger side. Pleated curtains mounted on hidden rails emerge from their storage positions on either side to cover the huge windshield exposure.

The Bay 38 comes standard with two 13,500 BTU high profile roof AC units. Our unit had the optional 15,000 BTU units equipped with heat pumps. Two 30,000 BTU ducted LP furnaces located in the galley and bedroom provide ample heat. In mild winter climates, the heat pumps will very likely do the job. The electronic thermostat has dual controls to set separate temperatures for the bed-bath and the LR-galley areas.

On the curbside, the bath touts a separately enclosed ceramic toilet with sprayer plus a Gibraltar lavatory and solid surface countertop. Controls for the dual elec/gas water heater, the water pump, overhead powered vent, and lighting are mounted just under a mirrored medicine cabinet. The compartment sports brushed nickel faucet hardware and towel rack, sculptured wall coverings, and a smaller rack built into the door. On the street-side, the walk-through bathroom has a sky-lighted 32-inch shower enclosed with rainglass plus a second lavatory with controls for the water pump, lighting, and another powered vent designed to remove the heat and moisture from the shower.

A French door with attached day-night shades opens from the bath into the master bedroom. A queen size bed (60 × 80 inches) with innerspring mattress is mounted on a streetside slide-out opposite another slide-out housing a 20-inch flat panel television, a 54 × 40.5-inch cedar-lined wardrobe, a bank of clothes drawers, and a clothes hamper. Four additional cabinets in the slide-out above the bed complete the bedroom storage.

The Allegro Bay 38 TDB is a very comfortable coach offering new features for Tiffin's luxury gas-powered brand. Combined with the company's legendary service, you are certain to be pleased.

SPECIFICATIONS: Model as tested 2005 Allegro Bay 37 TDB, three slideouts

Base MSRP* \$131,880 MSRP as tested with options \$149,471

STANDARD FEATURES

Structural

Laminated floor, sidewall & roof
Steel/alum. reinforced structure

Exterior

Fiberglass front & rear caps
Large tinted windshield
Leveling jacks
7.0 Onan generator
Single motor intermittent wipers
Heated power mirrors with remote adjustment
Gel-coat fiberglass exterior
Painted exterior graphics
Entrance door with screen door & deadbolt
Triple electric step
¼-inch single pane windows
Exterior patio light
Slideout awning(s)
Wheel liners
Exterior storage doors with gas shocks
Single handle, lockable storage door latches
Ridged long-life storage boxes
Luggage compartment lights
Heated water and holding-tank compartments
Two 6-volt auxiliary batteries
50-amp service
Park ready telephone
Cable ready TV
Black holding tank flush
Exterior rinse hose/shower
110-volt exterior receptacle
110v/12v converter (55 amp)
Undercoating
Driver's door with power window
Domed fiberglass roof
TV antenna
CB antenna
Power Fantastic roof vent with 3-speed fan
Two 13,500 BTU high profile roof A/C
Roof ladder
Backup camera and monitor
Water filter
10-gallon gas/electric water heater

Driver's Compartment

Entry floor light
Snack/beverage tray
Single CD player AM-FM stereo
12-volt dash receptacle
110-volt receptacle
Tilt steering wheel
Dual dash fans
Windshield privacy curtain
Large flat-screen color TV (front)
VCR
Fire extinguisher

Phone/modern receptacle
Non-powered cloth driver & passenger seats (Flexsteel)

Living Area / Dinette

Cloth recliner (Flexsteel)
Cloth hide-a-bed (Flexsteel)
Booth dinette
Carbon monoxide detector

Kitchen
Solid surface countertops
Solid surface sink covers
Single lever sink faucet with pullout sprayer
Double bowl kitchen sink (stainless steel)
2-burner cook top
Convection microwave (stainless steel)
8-cu. ft. refrigerator (stainless steel)
Solid wood dinette table

Bath

Medicine cabinet
Skylight in shower
China toilet
Glass shower door
Solid surface countertops
Solid surface sink bowls
Single lever faucet
Water pump switch
Vanity light
32-inch corner fiberglass shower

Bedroom

Bed comforter with throw pillows
Innerspring queen mattress
Flat screen color television
LPG leak detector
Nightstands with 110-volt receptacles
Solid wood vanity with storage

General Interior

Soft touch vinyl ceiling
Raised panel, solid hardwood cabinet doors
Oak cabinetry
Vinyl tile flooring in kitchen, bath & entrance landing
Wall-to-wall carpeting in bedroom & driver's compartment
Scotchgard® treated carpet & fabrics
Day-night pleated shades
Tank level monitor system
Home theater surround system
Smoke detector
Two 30,000 BTU ducted furnaces

OPTIONAL FEATURES ON THIS COACH

Regal Blue full body paint
Two 15,000 BTU roof A/C with heat pump

Cellular phone antenna
Semi-automatic satellite dish
Dual pane insulated windows (not incl. entrance door)
One step automatic awning
Chrome mirrors
1000-watt inverter for front & rear TVs
Power sun visors
4-door, 10-cu.ft. refrigerator w/ice maker
Prep washer/dryer cabinet
Wood plank galley-bath floor
Powered Ultra Leather Passenger/Driver Seats (Flexsteel)
Ultra Leather Recliner (Flexsteel)
Ultra Leather Hide-a-Bed (Flexsteel)
Bedroom AM/FM/CD Stereo

OPTIONAL FEATURES AVAILABLE ON THE ALLEGRO BAY

TruCenter Steering System
Powered cloth driver seat (Flexsteel)
Cloth Versa-Flex automatic sofa
Cloth Magic Bed
Free standing dinette
3-burner cooktop with oven
12-cu.ft. 4-door refrigerator
Natural maple cabinetry (simulated)
Walnut cabinetry (simulated)
Washer/dryer
Central vacuum cleaner

MEASUREMENTS

Wheelbase – 254"
Overall Length (approx.) – 38'
Overall Height w/roof air – 12'4"
Interior Height – 80"
Overall Width – 101"
Interior Width – 96"

WEIGHTS & CAPACITIES

GVWR – 24,000 lb.
GAWR (front) – 9,000 lb.
GAWR (rear) – 15,500 lb.
GCWR – 30,000 lb.
UVW – 18,950 lb.
Trailer hitch capacity – 6,000 lb.

POWER TRAIN

Engine – 340 hp
Torque (Lbs.-Ft., max. net) – 455@3200
Transmission – Allison 1000 Series Automatic 5-speed w/elec control
Tire Size – 235/80R 22.5
Alternator (amps) – 130

CHASSIS

Frame – Workhorse 24,000
Brakes – Disk brakes front & rear
Suspension (front and rear) – Leaf springs with Bilstein shocks
Leveling jacks – HWH hydraulic or Atwood electric

CONSTRUCTION

Body – Laminated floor, sidewalls, and roof
Support – Steel-aluminum reinforced
Front-Rear caps – Fiberglass
Exterior side panels – Gel-coat fiberglass walls with painted graphics or full body paint

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Sleeps – Four adults
Fuel tank – 75 gal.
Fresh water – 84 gal.
Black water – 45 gal.
Grey water – 52 gal.
LPG tank (filled to 80% capacity) – 31.3 gal.

MSRP

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

UVW

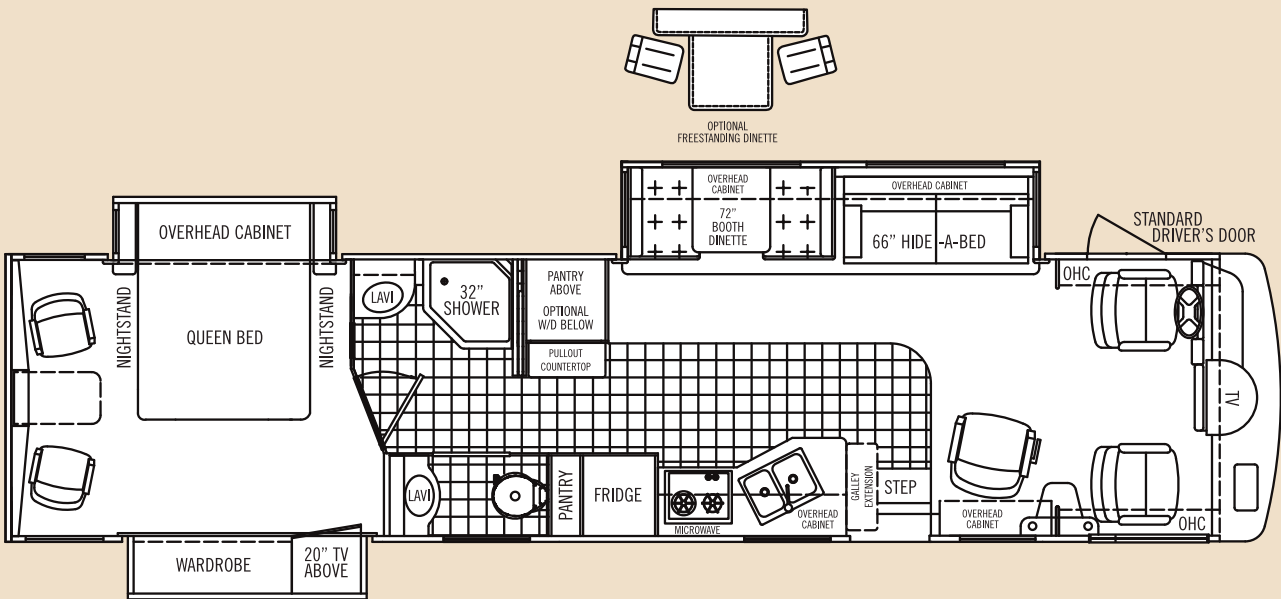
This is the approximate weight of the vehicle with a full fuel tank, engine oil, and coolants. The UVW does not include cargo, fresh water, LP gas, passengers, or dealer-installed accessories.

DEALERS

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

PLEASE NOTE

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





PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AUTHORS

It's not a hand out. It's a hand UP!

by Frank and Jan Woythal

Many RVers are traveling around the country with a dual mission. They have fun and also help those who are less fortunate. As a group of volunteers working with Habitat for Humanity International, the "RV Care-A-Vanners" (RV-CAVs) have been building homes since 1988. Mostly retirees, their goal is to eliminate poverty housing nationwide.

During that year Jack and Lois Wolters and some of their RV friends helped out in two locations in Florida. In the past 12 months, over 1,500 people traveling in nearly 1,000 RVs helped build affordable homes at well over 100 locations. Collectively, they logged over 225,000 work hours.

Originally called "RV Gypsies," these dedicated volunteers donate their time, talent, and personal resources building simple homes alongside local volunteers and often with the family members who will purchase the home.

In order to participate in a build, the RV-CAVs check quarterly bulletins mailed by Habitat for Humanity in Americus, Georgia, and sign up by phone. The only

prerequisite is ownership of a motorhome, 5th wheel, or camper. Chapter affiliates post their volunteer needs and the two week periods they wish to have RV-CAVs aboard. The CAV bulletin mailed last fall listed requests for 45 builds to be filled prior to late May 2005!

RV-CAVs have completed homes in 45 states including Alaska and in recent years have built in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta, and Newfoundland. An annual trip to New Zealand that utilizes rental motorhomes fills rapidly. If more volunteers apply than are needed, they are placed on a waiting list.

Mike and Mary Ellen Cotter from Port Huron, Michigan, often rent a motorhome for a couple of months so that they can be RV Care-A-Vanners for a build or two.

"The first build we wanted to do was filled early, but we later were placed on the build list due to a cancellation. We planned on working just the first week in case the experience didn't work well for us. By the end of the first morning we were hooked! 'Habititus' had infected both of us! There is no known cure," Mary Ellen explained.

"The chief reasons we do this is to help folks buy a simple house, to meet our old Care-A-Vanner friends, and to make new friends," she said. "We've only been vacationing-volunteering since 1999. We have met some great people, but wintering in southern states is an added bonus!"

RV-CAVs firmly believe that "THOSE WHO REST WILL RUST!"

The "dean" of the RV Care-A-Vanners might be Art and Mary Ann Mavis of Roanoke, Alabama. During a recent year, they logged 26 weeks of building and living in their Allegro Bus. Art is often called "The Tool Man" by his peers. He has every tool a veteran carpenter has plus duplicates! Al-

Clockwise from left: Front wall, interior walls, exterior walls and trusses are erected sequentially. Vinyl siding team: Mary, Darlene, and Mary Ellen on the platform and Marie assisting below. Art and Mary Ann Mavis sometimes log 26 weeks a year with HFH. Jan Woythal cuts molding while husband Frank tightens hurricane hardware in Florida.

though Mary Ann hasn't driven nails in a while, she keeps the safest, cleanest build site anywhere. Art will not sign up for a build unless there is a fitness center nearby with "cardiovascular" equipment. Art works out *after* work. The Mavises recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary!

RV-CAVs' ages run the gamut from late 40s to 70 plus. On a recent Jimmy Carter Build in the south, a couple pulled into the campground and literally jumped out of their Zephyr motorhome with, "Hi, we're Bob and Marie French from Texas and we're glad to be here. Heck, we're glad to be ANYWHERE!" Bob spent years in

the tele-com field but will tackle any assigned task from framing to roofing. Very few RV-CAVs had prior building experience. For most, it's on-the-job training. On-site safety is taught early in a build.

Some locations have a reputation for promoting 10-pound builds meaning that the volunteers are fed so well that they will undoubtedly gain 10 pounds in those two weeks. Generally, a local chapter will provide free camping near the build site plus coffee breaks and lunches. Some locations even provide dinners.

A typical RV-CAV build might progress in the following manner: Potential volun-



teers list their names for a build three to twelve months away. Two months before the build starts, the team leader for the group of six to twelve RVs sends a welcome letter to all participants with a description of the structure (re-hab or new construction), directions to the campsite, contact phone numbers, e-mail accessibility, locations of churches, shopping, tourist attractions, and medical facilities. After a team meeting on the Sunday preceding the first build day, the local Habitat for Humanity chapter hosts a welcome-orientation dinner attended by the RV-CAVs along with local volunteers and the family who will purchase the home.

The rate of progress on any build depends on the number and skill of the RV-CAVs, local participation, local customs, regulations, building codes, and the weather.

DAY 1 –A local site supervisor will oversee all work. All lumber for the entire job is graded and marked. Some houses are built on stem walls with floor joists and sub-flooring while others are built on a concrete slab. Door and window headers and wall intersections are fabricated. The future homeowner may be working

to meet the hundreds of hours of “sweat equity” required.

DAY 2– Chalk lines are snapped on the sub-floor for walls and the front wall is assembled complete with sheathing and housewrap. The wall goes up and is braced and nailed.

DAY 3– The remaining exterior walls are fabricated. RV-CAVs (and some locals) will prefabricate the interior walls as space on the sub-floor permits.

DAY 4– The remaining three exterior walls and the interior walls are erected and tied together. Part of the team may be installing the windows and exterior walls.

DAY 5– Roof trusses are set in place and braced. Sometimes a crane is used, depending on the length of trusses, their weight, and the distance from the ground to the top of the walls.

DAY 6– Exterior doors are installed. Part of the team installs the roof sheathing while others flash around doors and windows to prepare for siding installation which will be vinyl or Hardie cement board. Siding the average 3–4 bedroom house usually takes three to four days. After the roof is sheathed, the fascia and soffit can be installed.

DAY 7– After the wiring and plumbing are completed, insulation is installed. Some jurisdictions require licensed tradespeople to do these tasks. Usually we have one or two skilled members who can qualify to do the work.

DAY 8– Blocking for kitchen and bath cabinets and towel rods is installed. Ceiling drywall is installed with screws while wall sheetrock is nailed into place.

DAY 9– Joint, nail, and screw locations are mudded. Drywall finishing is subcontracted to professionals unless the team has several members with this expertise.

LAST DAY! After the drywall phase is completed, the painting begins and is often done by the future homeowner.

Load up your RV, hook up with a Habitat team or two, and work your way around North America building houses and friendships. Call 800-HABITAT, ext. 2446.

The authors have participated in 26 builds in nine states. Jan, a registered nurse, and Frank, a college professor, retired in 1993. Traveling and living in their 2003 Allegro Bay, the Woythals will be found at builds in Texas, Alabama, and New York State.

Tiffin Management Team: Horace Stepp, Plant Manager

Continued from page 12

plain. “My job is my hobby now. When we do take a vacation, we enjoy going to Gatlinburg or Pigeon Forge. I like to hunt for Indian artifacts and fish when I get the chance.”

With the help of friends and several people at the plant, the Stepps remodeled their home recently, and then helped their son remodel his home. Very dedicated to the work of their church, Stepp and several other men built the church building where they now worship. “I just really enjoy working with my tools,” he said.

“There’s not many places where a man’s wife, son, and daughter can work in the same plant. Our son Stacy did drafting, costing, billing materials, and electrical diagrams. He earned his B.S. in biology and later an M.S. in health education. He now works at Cooper Tire as an environmental coordinator. Our daughter Deanne helped me with drawing on the computer before she left to attend the University of North Alabama where she earned her degree in elementary education. She now teaches at Belmont. Janice ran CAD/CAM programs before she became my secretary,” he continued.

“I’ve been here 30 years and there has never been a day that I did not look forward to coming to work. However many working days I have left, I want to spend them here. I would love to put in 40 years at Tiffin Motorhomes and retire at 66. That will be a personal milestone for me if the good Lord gives me the health to do it.”

FROM THE ROAD The Life & Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

Continued from page 48

throughout Alaska. They were gone for nearly three months.

In the near future we are planning to launch a web site for the *Roughing It Smoothly* magazine readers to provide you with extended stories like this one. Until then, please enjoy the picture of the four Edvensons and look forward to learning about their trip in detail.

Fred Thompson, Editor



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50,000 Motorhomes

ON FEBRUARY 24, 2005, Tiffin Motorhomes rolled its 50,000th motorhome off the assembly line, an achievement that was accomplished in 32 years and 3 months. Alabama Governor Bob Riley declared **February 24** as Tiffin Motorhome Day throughout the state. Alabama's Senate and House of Representatives issued Proclamations that honored the company's tremendous impact on the state's economy, its high standards for quality and service, and its exemplary treatment of employees, customers, and dealers.

"I never knew I'd build motorhomes, but I knew I liked wheels — cars, trucks, anything that rolls," quipped founder and CEO Bob Tiffin. "Our family

and this company has been richly blessed. I just ask for your prayers, your continued support, and that you keep buying our motorhomes."

More than 300 suppliers, customers, and employees cheered as Bob and Judy Tiffin and their three sons, Tim, Van, and Lex, enjoyed the historic moment.

The 50,000th unit is a 40-foot Allegro Bus with a quad slide, which has become one of the company's most popular floorplans.

Typical of his commitment to the company, his dealers, and his customers, Bob Tiffin left immediately after the celebration to fly to Baltimore and support one of his dealers at a motorhome show in progress.

Clockwise from top: • "This motorhome doesn't have an engine!"
• L-to-R, Tim, Lex, Bob, and Van are a father and sons management team who have taken the Tiffin Motorhomes company to new heights.
• Although recently retired, Judy Tiffin's influence is still felt throughout TMH. • When Bob got up to speak, he threw away the script and spoke from his heart.



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5

DAYS STATE-BY-STATE

Itinerary Highlights

Tuscumbia

Ivy Green
Alabama Music Hall of
Fame
Spring Park
Cold Water Books
Pilot House Restaurant
Palace Ice Cream &
Sandwich Shop

Florence

The Rosenbaum House
designed by Frank
Lloyd Wright
W. C. Handy Birthplace &
Museum
Trowbridge's

Huntsville

U.S. Space and Rocket
Center
Monte Sano State Park

Birmingham

The McWane Center
Sherling Lake

Mobile

The Gulf Coast Exploreum
Science Center

Theodore

Bellingrath Gardens

Alabama Highlights

by Fred Thompson

THERE IS so much to see and do in Alabama that I decided to "hit some of the highlights" as we rejoin our regular travel feature "Five Days State-by-State." With the exception of our last stop, we will visit indoor attractions. All of us RVers are lifelong learners — so let's get going.

Coming into the state at its northwest corner, we made **Tuscumbia** our first stop. First incorporated as Ocochoposa in 1820 just one year after Alabama gained statehood, the town quickly changed its name to Big Spring. Citizens still weren't happy. In 1822 a referendum offered the name of Annisville after the first child born in the town or Tuscumbia in honor of Chief Tuscumbia, a Chickasaw Indian chief who still lived there. Tuscumbia won by one vote. A legend says that the old chief made a little pair of moccasins for baby Anne after his name was selected.

While Tuscumbia is a charming town fast approaching its bicentennial, we really started our journey here because it is **the birthplace**

of Helen Keller. Born on June 27, 1880, to Capt. Arthur H. and Kate Adams Keller, Helen was a perfectly normal child. Just 19 months later she suffered a devastating fever which left her deaf and blind. With no ability to communicate with their daughter over the next four years, Arthur and Kate saw her grow into a frustrated and undisciplined child who threw tantrums to satisfy her perceived needs.

Eventually Capt. Keller spoke with Alexander Graham Bell who recommended that he contact the Perkins Institute for the Blind. The institute sent Annie Sullivan to Ivy Green to assist the Kellers. Helen's new teacher quickly realized that she would have to separate Helen from her parents in order to bring discipline and order into her life and to create a teaching environment.

She asked the captain for permission to take Helen to the small cottage behind the Kellers' home. Helen would think that she was separated from those who responded favorably to her tantrums, giving Annie the opportunity

Ivy Green, the childhood home of Helen Keller, was originally part of a 640-acre estate and the second home built in Tuscumbia.



QUICK FACTS: From its northern border with Tennessee to its southernmost barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico, Alabama measures 331 miles. Its east–west boundaries are 207 miles apart at the widest point. Alabama is the 27th largest state in the union with 51,609 square miles. In 2003, Alabama’s population exceeded 4.5 million. Navigable rivers flow through nearly every section of the state and the U.S. Corp of Engineers (USCE) has created hundreds of square miles of lakes. With its Deep South location, state parks, USCE campgrounds, and private facilities are open year-round, although some might find January and February a little chilly in the northern half of the state.

The foothills of the Appalachian Mountains extend from its northeast corner all the way to Birmingham, with Cheaha Mountain being the highest point in the state at 2,407 feet. Of course, if you travel to the Gulf, you have reached sea level.

For a comprehensive planning guide for travel in Alabama, call 334-242-4169 and request a copy of the *Alabama Official 2005 Vacation Guide* and *Alabama 2005 Calendar of Events*. Two books by Gay N. Martin will help you add personal interest in planning your trip: *Alabama’s Historic Restaurants* and *Off the Beaten Path—Alabama*.

Ivy Green, Helen Keller’s Home

Ivy Green is located at 300 West North Commons in Tuscumbia, a few blocks northwest of the courthouse. For complete information, call 256-383-4066 or visit www.helenkellerbirthplace.org The Keller home and grounds are open for tours M-Sa 8:30–4; Su 1– 4; last tour starts at 3:45 daily. Adults \$6; ages 5–18, \$2; Seniors and AAA, \$5. *The Miracle Worker* runs this summer from June 10 – July 16. Gates open each evening at 6:30, play at 8. Reserved seating, \$10; gen. adm., \$6. Tickets include a self-guided tour of the home and grounds.

Alabama Music Hall of Fame

The Hall of Fame is located on U.S. 72W. M–Sa, 9–5; Su, 1–5. Adults \$8, Students (13–18), \$7; (6–12) \$5; under 5, free. Seniors (55+), \$7. Call 800-239-2643 for more information.

Where to camp tonight

As you leave Tuscumbia, take Cave Street north to the Helen Keller Hospital. Turn right going east on Avalon Avenue toward U.S. 43/72 where you will turn left. Follow 43/72 across the Tennessee River into Florence. After the bridge get in the right lane and exit on Hwy. 20 toward Savannah, Tenn. McFarland Park will be on your left. \$15/night for water, elec. \$11/night seniors (62+). Dump station available. Some pull-throughs. Asphalt pads. Boat ramps and water park nearby.

The Frank Lloyd Wright House

Leaving McFarland Park, turn left on Hwy 20 and take the first right up the hill on Beverly Drive. Take the first right on W. Alabama Street to Locust Street. Turn right and then immediately right again (it’s almost a U-turn) on to Riverview Drive. The house is one block on your

to structure the teaching opportunities. A day of triumph came soon after when Helen learned her first word: water.

After Helen learned that things had names and that those words allowed her to communicate with others, she pressed Annie to continue and learned 30 words by the end of that day. She learned 300 words by the end of the month. Many years later after she had graduated cum laude from Radcliffe, specialized testing showed Helen had an IQ of 160. There’s much more to learn about “America’s First Lady of Courage,” but you can enjoy that experience when you visit.

Don’t leave Tuscumbia yet. There’s more. The **Alabama Music Hall of Fame** is visited by thousands every year. It features memorabilia from the careers of Alabamians including Tammy Wynette, Lionel Richie, Emmylou Harris, Alabama, The Commodores, Nat King Cole, W.C. Handy, Hank Williams, and others.

Want to see how a dying downtown area has been rejuvenated? In 1995 Harvey Robbins sold his successful business, National Floor Products, for \$120 million and planned to retire to a life of fishing, golf, and travel. But he and his wife Joyce Ann realized a few years later that Tuscumbia was where they really wanted to be. But Tuscumbia was not the town it used to be when they were young. They especially missed the soda fountain where they and high school friends had courted.

Many other owners also had closed their stores, leaving darkened, empty caverns.

Harvey and Joyce Ann found a new mission: rebuild downtown Tuscumbia. First, Robbins revitalized **Spring Park** with a 48-foot waterfall, lights, and fountains plus a miniature railroad and other attractions. Then it was up the hill into town where a handsome, old two-story building became **Cold Water Books** and the **Pilot House Restaurant**. The bookstore is thoughtfully divided into alcoves to allow the browser to tuck himself away to peruse the contents of richly finished bookshelves. A large alcove and “cave” is devoted to children’s titles. They can crawl into their hideaway with Harry Potter and read with no distractions. After their parents have completed browsing the first floor, the balconies beckon, offering a perch to watch incoming patrons while they pretend to read. Before leaving, you must stop at the coffee and dessert bar just inside the large plate glass windows. Are the passersby on the sidewalk watching you, or is it vice versa? Either way, it was a fun hour and I managed to buy only one book!

Near the bookstore with a couple of shops in between is the Pilot House, serving good homemade soup and salad selections, sandwiches, and lunch-sized entrees for less than \$10. But save room for dessert just up the street at the **Palace Ice Cream and Sandwich Shop**, 100

South Main Street. Harvey and Joyce Ann restored their high school ice cream parlor for all to enjoy. How long has it been since you had a Coke Float or “made eyes” at your girl friend as you shared a Banana Split?

Robbins continued his development by renovating abandoned stores and enticing shop keepers to return. By adding some apartments above the renovated shops, Harvey drew new urbanites to the area who wanted to make the downtown their permanent home. The Robbinses have set an example of civic pride in the town where they grew up. After all, they could have gone to Sedona and played golf all winter!

Our next stop is the Rosenbaum Home, the only **Frank Lloyd Wright** structure in Alabama. In 1939 newlyweds Stanley and Mildred Rosenbaum asked a local architect to contact the famed Mr. Wright to see if he would accept the assignment to design their home. To their delight, he consented and designed a home in his Usonian style. Designed to meet the needs of middle-income American families, the house has open flowing spaces, natural lighting with carefully placed windows and skylights, and many built-in features including the dining table. Hot water pipes in the concrete floors provided heat along with three fireplaces.

Wright used his trademark cantilevered roof to create a carport with no supporting columns. Other flat roof overhangs

The lunar lander and lunar excursion module are on permanent display at the Rocket Center.



protect the windows from the midday sun, while admitting the early morning and late afternoon light. The exterior walls were fabricated using tongue-and-groove stained cypress on both sides mounted to a sandwich board in the middle. Unusual for north Alabama, the walls contain no insulation. The original house contained 1,540 square feet, offering very functional but not spacious rooms. Not counting its two-acre lot which was a gift from Stanley’s parents, the house cost \$7,500.

By 1948 the Rosenbaum family was tripled by four sons. They returned to Mr. Wright, requesting that he design an addition to accommodate their growth. Wright agreed and designed an addition of 1,084 square feet. A visit and tour will show you just how he did it.

Just a few blocks away from the Rosenbaum home at 620 W. College Street is the birthplace of the “Father of the Blues.” **William Christopher Handy** was born in Florence on November 16, 1873. His log cabin home now includes a research library for blues historians and a museum that offers the most complete collection of his personal papers plus his famous trumpet and the piano on which he composed the “Saint Louis Blues.” Those who are really immersed in blues history and culture will find an impressive collection of artifacts, photographs, music manuscripts, and personal possessions.

If you are an ice cream fan, you can’t leave Florence without visiting **Trowbridge’s**, famous for its Orange-Pineapple Ice Cream, still made from Paul Trowbridge’s original recipe first offered in 1918. Third generation owner, Don Trowbridge, keeps the menu simple with sandwiches, soups, chili, salads, and ice cream. And ohhh, that ice cream! A 90 cent cone had three dips piled on it. Malted milkshakes are still on the menu along with a 51-year-old recipe for chili introduced by Don’s mother, Martha, in 1944. Ice cream sodas are still made just like they were 80 years ago. 316 North Court Street. Hours: 9–5:30, M–Sa. Closed Sunday.

Leaving Florence, we traveled U.S. 72 East to Huntsville. If you would like to get situated in a park immediately, there are a couple of nice options — the Rocket Center Campground and Monte Sano State Park. See Huntsville campgrounds at right.

If you have lived in the United States for the last 45 years, you have witnessed the incredible progress of America’s space pro-

left. If you are coming from downtown Florence, turn west off of Court Street on to Dr. Hicks Blvd. Turn left on Locust and then right on Riverview. Hours: Tu–Sa, 10–4. Adults \$8, seniors \$5. For more information, see www.wrightinalabama.com, and www.arapahoe-acres.org/usonian_style.htm.

The W. C. Handy Birthplace

From Court Street (Florence’s north-south main street), take College Street west to 620 which will be on the north side of the street. Hours: Tu–Sa, 10–4. Adults \$2, students \$0.50.

Huntsville Campgrounds

Rocket Center Campground. As you get into the west side of Huntsville on U.S. 72 East, you will intersect SR 255, a north-south artery also known as Research Park Blvd. Take SR 255 south and exit onto I-565 East. Then immediately take Exit 15 and follow the signs into the Rocket Center. The RV Campground is located just east of the museum. It’s not the most scenic campground in Alabama, but it is very convenient to the Rocket Center and other Huntsville destinations. *Facilities:* 27 sites, 5 pull-throughs, full hook-ups, \$14/night; restrooms with showers, laundry, security, and pay phone. Reservations are not required but suggested in view of the limited number of sites available. For spring and summer travel, call at least two weeks in advance: 256-830-4987.

Monte Sano State Park. Not as convenient as the Rocket Center Campground, but much more scenic. After you get on I-565 (see above), exit on U.S. 431 East (Governors Drive) and travel approx. 5 miles to Monte Sano Blvd. Turn left and go 2.5 miles to Nolen Ave. and turn right. Park is one mile ahead. *Facilities:* 89 sites, 19 with sewer; restrooms with showers; laundry. *Rates:* \$16.80/night with elec. and water; \$2.10 add’l for sewer. Gravel pads. Scenic hiking trails. You’re still in the city but surrounded by a 2,100-acre state park. Call 256-534-6589 for availability or to make advance reservations.

U.S. Space and Rocket Center

For directions to the Center, see Rocket Center Campground above. *Current Attractions:* Space-dome IMAX Theater — “Space Station” and “Fighter Pilot.” Moving Displays — German V-2 Rocket and Mir: Labs in Space. *Admissions:* Combo Ticket (Museum, Rocket Park, One Movie): Adults, \$19.95; Ages 3–12, \$12.95. Museum Only: \$14 and \$9. IMAX Theater Only: \$8 and \$7. *Hours:* 9–5 daily. *More Information:* 256-837-3400 and www.spacecamp.com

Birmingham Campground South offers an attractive campground with a full array of amenities, approximately 20 minutes south of downtown Birmingham. Located just off of I-65 south of the I-459 perimeter bypass at exit 242. Go 400 yds west on Hwy 52, then 300 yds north on Hwy 33. *Facilities:* 119 sites incl. 56 pull throughs. Avg. site width 50-ft. Concrete pads. Rec areas. LP sales. Restrooms with showers, laundry. Heated pool. *Rates:* \$32/night for full hook-up + 14% tax. 10% discount with KOA or Good Sam cards.

The McWane Center
Leaving the Birmingham Campground South take I-65 North to exit 260-B. Follow 3rd Avenue North to 19th Street. Turn right. McWane Center is located on the corner of 2nd Avenue and 19th Street North. Parking is available for \$2 per vehicle in McWane Center’s parking deck, adjacent to the facility on 2nd Avenue North.
Admissions: Combination ticket includes King Tut exhibit, *Mysteries of Egypt* IMAX film, and Adventure Hall. Adults \$21 and Seniors (65+) \$19.
Hours: M – F, 9–5; Sa, 10–6; Su, noon – 6.

Sherling Lake
Exit 130 Interstate 65. Follow SR 185 and 263 four miles north. There’s fishing within the park and a Robert Trent Jones Golf course nearby. Owned and operated by the Parks and Recreation Department of Greenville, Sherling Lake offers full hook-ups (30- and 50-amp) on concrete pads. Some of the pull-throughs are too close together. You may want to request a site with a little more privacy. *Rates:* \$21.95/night. 10% Good Sam discount. Cash or personal checks only.

The Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center
The Center is located at 65 Government Street in downtown Mobile. Automobile parking is available in a nearby lot at no charge. *Admission:* DSS, Herod’s Temple and other exhibits—Adults, \$17; Youth (13–18) & Seniors (60+), \$15; Children, 2–12, \$12. Add the IMAX for \$2.50. Tickets may be purchased online at www.scrollsmobile.com/reservations1.html or by phone at 877-DSS-SHOW. Tickets can be purchased up to 72 hours in advance. An administrative fee is added to phone purchases. *Hours:* 9–6:30 daily. Hours have been extended on Tuesday and Saturday with the last ticket to see the DSS sold at 7 p.m. and the exhibit closing at 9 p.m. Best times are weekdays after 12 noon and weekends after 4 p.m. Tickets are very limited on Saturdays between 9 and 4.

Bellingrath Gardens and campground
On I-10 exit 15A west of Mobile, go south on US 90/SR 16 for approx. 3 miles into Theodore. Turn left on CR 59 (Bellingrath Road) and drive 9 miles to the Gardens. *Hours:* Open daily at 8 a.m. Home tours begin at 9. *Admission (1st price adult, 2nd price child):* Gardens only, \$9, \$5.25; Gardens and home, \$16.50, \$10.50; Gardens and cruise, \$16.50, \$10.50; Gardens, Home, and Cruise, \$25, \$15.75.
Paynes RV Park is located 1.5 miles south of the turn onto CR 59. Full hook-ups are \$21.20 plus tax. Most sites are on a large limestone graveled lot. Very little landscaping. Clean restrooms, showers, laundry. Propane available. 58 sites, 39 pull-throughs. Managers live in park.

Websites to Check Before You Leave
www.800alabama.com
www.alapark.com
www.helenkellerbirthplace.org
www.spacecamp.com
www.mcwane.org
www.exploreum.net
www.bellingrath.org

gram. A one-day visit to the **U.S. Space and Rocket Center** will bring that history into sharp focus. Who can forget our first man in space, Alan Shepard’s 15-minute sub-orbital flight on May 5, 1961, in the Mercury program? And just nine months later, John Glenn’s three-orbit flight on February 20, 1962? Then the Gemini program launched its first mission on March 23, 1965, flown by Virgil Grissom and John W. Young. Ten Gemini flights in just 20 months provided vital statistics and experience to transition the knowledge base into the Apollo program with its goal of reaching the moon. That goal was attained on July 20, 1969, when Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin landed on the moon. As Armstrong climbed out of the lunar module and set foot on the moon, he uttered the unforgettable words, “That’s one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind.”

Six Apollo missions landed 12 astronauts on the moon: Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin, Charles Conrad, Alan Bean, Alan Shepard, Edgar Mitchell, David Scott, James Irwin, John W. Young, Charles Duke, Gene Cernan, and Harrison Schmitt — the only humans to have set foot on another solar system body. Do you know which of the 12 who landed on the moon was one of the original seven Mercury astronauts? Who is the oldest astronaut to go into space?

The history of the U.S. space program really began long before our first astronaut was launched into space by a Redstone rocket in 1961. In the early 1930s, the Germans developed the V-2 rocket which was eventually used to bomb England. Dr. Wernher von Braun led 118 German scientists and rocket experts out of East Germany and surrendered to the Americans in September 1945. After four years in the Southwest, they arrived in Huntsville on June 1, 1949, and began to operate under Redstone Arsenal, a division of the U.S. Army.

You should allow a whole day for the Space and Rocket Center. The Museum is comprehensive to the point of being phenomenal. All of the hardware in the space program is creatively displayed and thoroughly documented. The history of rocketry is told through the lives of men whose work became the foundation for the accomplishments in the last half century: Tsiolkovsky, Oberth, Goddard, and, of course, Wernher von Braun.

While the Museum creates an appre-



The extraordinary value of the treasures of King Tutankhamun’s tomb is well represented by his funerary mask of gold.

ciation for what has been done, the IMAX theater presents a thrilling film of the International Space Station and what the future will bring as we continue to explore the limitless boundaries of space.

The Rocket Park, an outdoor exhibit, has been called “the finest rocket collection in the world” by former U.S. Senator and Astronaut John Glenn.

Remember, we are selecting “highlights of Alabama.” There is so much more to see and do in Huntsville. Please refer to the *Alabama 2005 Vacation Guide*, pages 45–48, if you would like to stay longer.

Our next stop is Birmingham to visit the **McWane Center**. The beautiful old Loveman’s Department Store has been repurposed as a science and learning center aimed primarily at children, but it carries excellent exhibits and IMAX films for their parents and grandparents. Scheduled through May 8, *Tutankhamun: Wonderful Things from the Pharaoh’s Tomb* overwhelms the visitor with the rich treasures that archaeologists discovered in King Tut’s many-chambered tomb.

In the 19th century, most of the great pharaohs’ tombs were found in the pyramids, somewhat obvious locations that were plundered. But King Tut’s tomb was exca-



This fragment from the Psalms at 34.75 inches wide is the largest intact fragment from the Dead Sea Scrolls to be exhibited outside of Israel.

vated in the hill country and its entrance totally disguised. The boy king was only nine years old when he ascended the throne and only 18 when he died in 1323 B.C.

Howard Carter, an English archaeologist, made the discovery on November 4, 1922, after a young native Egyptian member of his team inadvertently pushed pebbles into an opening which happened to be the roof of one of the outer chambers of the tomb. The McWane exhibit leads the visitor through well-planned learning centers prior to viewing the exquisitely crafted reproductions of artifacts on display.

Mysteries of Egypt, the first IMAX® film adventure from National Geographic, unlocks the myths and reveals the masterpieces of this fascinating empire that began some 5,000 years ago. Egypt is captured for the first time on the giant screen and brought to life by Egyptian native and narrator Omar Sharif (*Doctor Zhivago*, *Lawrence of Arabia*), the audience’s guide into the *Mysteries of Egypt*. Receiving exclusive access to the Valley of the Nile, National Geographic captured breathtaking aerial shots of the pyramids which give the audience intimate views of the pharaohs’ tombs and treasures. *Mysteries* runs through May 15.

King Tut’s treasures and Omar Sharif’s talent for storytelling make this a “can’t miss” opportunity.

As we said about Huntsville, there is so much more to see and do in this wonderful city. Please refer to the *Alabama 2005 Vacation Guide*, pages 62–67, to plan a longer stay. If you are ready to splurge on a grand dinner, choose one of Frank Stitt’s restaurants located in Birmingham’s his-

toric Southside: Highlands Bar and Grill, Chez Fonfon, Bottega, and Bottega Café. Consult the internet or yellow pages for addresses and phone numbers, and Yahoo Maps for directions.

Now we are off to Alabama’s coastal city—Mobile, home of the **Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center**. We decided to break up the trip with a stopover at Sherling Lake, just outside of Greenville. See sidebar at left.

In 1947 Muhammed el-Dhib, a Bedouin shepherd, threw a rock at a cliff wall in the Judean desert near the Dead Sea about 14 miles east of Jerusalem. The rock fell through an opening in the cliff and he heard the sound of shattering pottery. The shepherd investigated and recovered seven scrolls from their pottery containers. These scrolls were sold in Jerusalem within a few months for a mere pittance. Unrealized at the time, the greatest archaeological discovery of the 20th century had begun to unfold.

Between February 15 and March 5, 1947, the first excavation by trained archaeologists was focused on 11 caves near the settlement of Qumran on the northwestern tip of the Dead Sea, which has the distinction of being the lowest point on the earth’s surface (1,320 ft. below sea level). Qumran receives almost no rainfall.

Now referred to as the Dead Sea Scrolls, over 100,000 fragments have been pieced together into 930 separate documents. Only 20 of the documents are complete. Inscribed 2,000 years ago, these manuscripts represent the oldest surviving copies of the Hebrew Bible. Every book in the Old Testament is represented with the exception of Esther.

Prior to their discovery, the Aleppo Codex and the St. Petersburg Codex (A.D. 1000) were the earliest known surviving copies of the Old Testament. The Dead Sea Scrolls predate these manuscripts by 1,000 years. Although separated by 1,000 years, the 2 Codexes and the DSS are almost identical, attesting to the integrity of our current Old Testament. Other than spelling variations and other minor differences, the text of the Hebrew Bible remained unchanged for a millennium.

On display through May 8, the **Exploreum** presents sections of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Psalms. The Deuteronomy scroll contains a complete copy of the Ten Commandments. The exhibition demonstrates how the Bible was written and has been faithfully transmitted from generation to generation to today.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were stored in clay jars like these replicas in the exhibit.



The *Mysteries of Egypt* is also being screened in the Exploreum's IMAX theater. For those interested in the Biblical history of Jerusalem during the time of Jesus, the Exploreum's newest exhibit, Virtual Journeys, features a virtual reconstruction of King Herod's Temple Mount. A cross between a planetarium and a 40-seat theater, Virtual Journeys uses scientifically accurate digital data banks to move you back in time to experience the splendor and grandeur of the Temple as it stood in Jerusalem prior to its destruction by the Roman army in 70 A.D. The viewer can walk beneath the massive stone pillars and gaze into the breathtaking ceilings high above. The visual projections are historically and archaeologically accurate.

We concluded our Alabama Highlights tour with a visit to **Bellingrath Gardens and Home**. Walter Bellingrath was Mobile's first Coca-Cola bottler, obtaining a franchise in 1903. An inveterate workaholic, he at first walked the railroad tracks between the small towns within his franchise zone to promote his business because he lacked the train fare. His determination brought great success but also took its toll on his health. In 1917 his doctor advised him to buy the Fowl River fishing camp he had been admiring and



Influenced by Mediterranean architecture with its courtyards and use of wrought iron, the Bellingrath home opens daily at 9 for tours.

include regular rest in his busy schedule. He and Mrs. Bellingrath already were well-known in Mobile for the beautiful gardens surrounding their home on Ann Street. She began moving plants to their camp. Conditions were ideal and each Spring the collection became more spectacular. In 1927 the Bellingraths solicited the professional assistance of George Rogers, Mobile's most prominent architect. Under his supervision the gardens evolved into specialty areas connected by paths and lawns.

In the Spring of 1932 the Bellingraths opened their gardens to a Depression-weary public for a day of azalea gazing. The attendance was overwhelming and soon after they decided to open the gardens permanently while charging a small fee to assist in upkeep.

The decision to live in the gardens permanently resulted in Mr. Rogers designing a Mediterranean-style home for the Bellingraths. It was completed in 1935. A guest house was added in 1939. After Mrs. Bellingrath's death in 1943, Walter Bellingrath continued with their plans to develop their gardens until his death in 1955.

In 1949 Mr. Bellingrath created a non-profit foundation to assure the continued existence in perpetuity of his beloved gardens. Since his death, the couple's extensive Boehm Porcelain collection has been placed on exhibit in what was the garage of the guest house. The boat dock and the river cruise has also proved to be a popular addition for guests.

As you plan your tour of Alabama, be sure to check www.bellingrath.org for the monthly blooming schedules. If you are traveling in April, you will enjoy the award-winning rose garden and a host of spring annuals including hydrangeas, salvia, marigolds, alyssum, dahlias, and pansies.

The rich blending of colors throughout Bellingrath Gardens' 65-acres will thrill both the serious and casual gardener. Paved paths make the gardens fully accessible to the handicapped.



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Sample Motorhome Rates!			
Value	Annual Price	Value	Annual Price
40,000	\$ 599.00	300,000	\$ 1734.00
50,000	\$ 614.00	325,000	\$ 1841.00
60,000	\$ 680.00	350,000	\$ 1948.00
70,000	\$ 717.00	375,000	\$ 2235.00
80,000	\$ 755.00	400,000	\$ 2342.00
90,000	\$ 791.00	425,000	\$ 2448.00
100,000	\$ 827.00	450,000	\$ 2555.00
110,000	\$ 866.00	475,000	\$ 2662.00
125,000	\$ 926.00	500,000	\$ 2769.00
150,000	\$ 1026.00	575,000	\$ 3090.00
175,000	\$ 1219.00	600,000	\$ 3197.00
200,000	\$ 1318.00	650,000	\$ 3411.00
225,000	\$ 1418.00		
250,000	\$ 1517.00		

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The Architecture of a Slide-out

The slide-out was introduced into motorhome architecture about 10 years ago. No motorhome feature has enjoyed greater popularity. As so often happens in this industry, a new word was added to our vocabulary.

Every one of the 21 floorplans offered within Tiffin's five brands (Allegro, Allegro Bay, Phaeton, Allegro Bus, and Zephyr) have from two to four slide-outs. It is no mystery why they are so popular — slide-outs can increase total floor space by 13 to 26 percent!

The smallest motorhome built by TMH — the Allegro 28DA — has two slide-outs that add approximately 27 sq. ft. to the unit's 216 sq. ft. within the straight exterior walls. The additional space created by four slide-outs in the 45-ft. Zephyr is a whopping 93 sq. ft.

The demand for slide-outs has created the largest sub-assembly manufacturing operation in the Tiffin plant. Over 30 slide-outs are built every day. Since it is not practical to fabricate the slide-out box on the assembly line, the structures with their interior cabinetry, windows, lights, carpet, and wiring must be manufactured off-line and join their designated unit at Station No. 11.

The larger front slides are hoisted squarely into the motorhome's open cavities by small fork-lift trucks, and then bolt-

ed onto the extended, motor-driven arms that were attached to the frame in the welding shop. The smaller bedroom slides are deftly dropped into place with an overhead crane carrying them in a sling. The relative ease with which the slide-outs are attached to the motorhome is a testament to superior engineering and production line planning.

In the entry-level Allegro brand, the buyer can enjoy *three* slide-outs in the just-introduced 35 TSA floorplan that went into production in February. The other five Allegro floorplans have two slide-outs. The gas-powered Allegro Bay also offers three slide-outs in its 38 TBD floorplan which is featured in this issue on pages 14-19.

In the Phaeton, Tiffin's entry-level diesel, the buyer may choose between two, three, or four slide-outs. In this model, the bedroom slide-out offers a choice between queen- and king-size beds. In the three- and four-slide options, galley slide-outs add generous space to the living-dining area.

The Allegro Bus offers the buyer the largest number of slide-out options with six floorplans. Two floorplans (35- and 40-feet) with two slides; two floorplans (38- and 40-feet) with three slides; and two floorplans (40- and 42-feet) with four slides. All of the bedroom slides offer a choice between queen- and king-size beds. In the quad-slide versions, the unencumbered floor space in the bedroom becomes downright generous!

The Zephyr! Well, that's a whole new dimension. The bedroom slide-out accommodates a queen-size bed with a handsome desk, chair, and overhead cabinets. The king-size bed slide-out option includes a shirt closet with a bank of drawers underneath.

In all of the diesel brands, the living-dining area slide-outs offer a choice between the built-in dinette with large drawers underneath the seats or a free-standing dining table with a four-door hutch.

At Tiffin Motorhomes, superior design and engineering continue to offer the RVer the most choices at prices that confound our competitors. The following picture story offers a quick primer in slide-out construction.

Left: The outside wall of the slide-out box is fabricated with welded aluminum channel, insulated, and processed through the lamination equipment in the same way as the primary walls. Below: The smaller sidewalls of the box are also made with the welded aluminum frames and pressure glued.



From top to bottom: Cabinet frames and ceiling have been added to this dinette-sofa slide for an Allegro Bay. •Ceiling and cabinet frames along with hardware have been added to this Allegro bed slide. •A queen-size bed slide for one of the diesel models stands ready to be inserted into the motorhome on the production line. •Top right: This bedroom slide houses a lavatory, medicine cabinets, clothes hamper, and ample storage for clothing.

Continued on next page



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~ J.Ray, posted on the internet
11/18/04

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From top to bottom: •A technician installs the hardware for a free-standing dinette table. This slide-out will also contain a large sofa. •Galley slide-outs are utilized in the quad-slide floorplans. The cabinet frames and microwave/convection oven have already been installed. Solid surface counter tops and frames are in place awaiting drawer and door installations. Duct work lies ready to be connected to outlets under a sofa. •With the use of an overhead crane and sling, technicians quickly install a bedroom slide-out and attach it to the motor-driven slide-out arms.

For earlier stories about motorhome construction, see the issues for Summer and Fall 2004 and Winter 2005.

Story and photography by Fred Thompson.

Hank didn't use Green Label Parts™ in his Onan® generator.

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The One-Dish Meal Winner

Congratulations to Doris Stacy of El Monte, California, whose *Chili Relleno Casserole* won first place in *Roughing It Smoothly's* recipe contest. Readers were challenged in the Volume 2, Number 1 issue to submit their favorite recipe for a one-dish meal that could be easily prepared in a motorhome galley. Culinary Operations students at King High School, Tampa, Florida, under the supervision of Chef Kathleen Reddy, tested all entries received. Chef Reddy and the culinary students chose *Chili Relleno Casserole* as the winning recipe because of its great Tex-Mex flavor, short list of ingredients, and ease of preparation.

The recipe was actually submitted by Ron Stacy, Doris' husband, who says, "This is a family recipe, and an easy dish to prepare. This is one of her recipes that everyone always seems to ask for. It always receives raves when shared at campsite dinners." Thank you, Ron and Doris, for sharing your favorite dish with fellow RVers.

Here is Doris' \$100 prize-winning recipe:

Chili Relleno Casserole

Serves 8 to 10

Ingredients fit nicely into a 9×13-inch disposable foil pan.

- 1 large can whole green Ortega chilies
- ¾ to 1 lb. grated Cheddar cheese
- ¾ to 1 lb. grated Monterey Jack cheese
- 4 large eggs
- 1 12 oz. can evaporated milk
- 3 tablespoons flour
- Salt & pepper to taste

Start by cleaning the seeds from the green chilies. Lay flat and cover with cheese in layers. Beat egg whites until stiff. Stir flour, salt, and pepper into egg yolks and add milk. Mix well and blend into egg whites with a fork. Pour over the chilies and cheese. Cover loosely with foil and bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Serve hot. *Chef's Notes:* Chopped green chilies will serve as a satis-

factory substitute if whole chilies are not available when purchasing ingredients.

Doris suggests serving her *Chili Relleno Casserole* with corn tortilla chips and salsa. Other additions could include bean dip made from refried beans sprinkled with shredded Monterey Jack cheese heated in the oven and served with guacamole, sour cream and shredded lettuce.

Thanks to all who submitted a recipe for consideration. Chef Reddy and her students awarded the \$75 second place prize to Marieann Brooke of Deer Park, Michigan, who submitted a very interesting commentary along with her recipe for *U.P. (Upper Peninsula) Pasties*. (See the Mackinaw Island story on pages 46-47 for more information about this dish.) Jo Ann Hixon of Orange Beach, Alabama, was chosen to win the \$50 third prize with her healthful *Hot 'n Yummy Veggie Soup*. We will plan to share these recipes with *Roughing It Smoothly* readers in future issues.



Folks You're Likely to Meet When You Visit at Tiffin

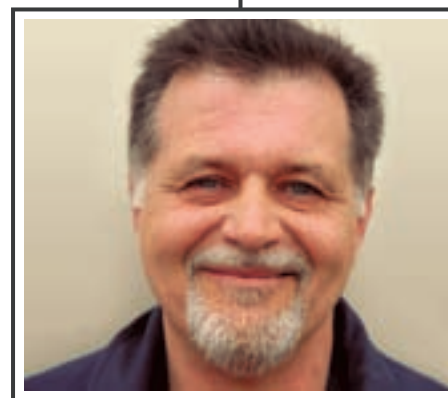
Della Emerson
Store manager, 6 yrs
"I really enjoy meeting my customers here at Campers Choice."

Richard Blanton
Tiffin Service Tech, 8 yrs
"Just give us all the information you can, and we'll do our best to solve your service problem."



Billy Nichols
Tiffin Service Tech, 28 yrs
"Solving service problems is what our department is all about."

Scotty Martin
Tiffin Service Tech, 17 yrs
"Please have your VIN number ready when calling so that we can better assist you."



Terry Elliott
Final finish, 20 yrs
"I probably drive more miles between Red Bay and Belmont in a month than most people drive in a whole year."

Tom Webber
Regional Sales, Florida
"Tiffin is a great company. I am really glad to be associated with TMH again."



Rita Pounds
Parts & Service Dept., 3½ yrs.
"I fulfill literature requests, and process drop shipments for furniture and windows. It's a pleasure to work with Tiffin Motorhomes' customers."

Norris Lewey
Campground/Service Dept. Liaison, 30 yrs
"After 13 months in Iraq, it's hard to explain how much it means to me to be back home. I look forward to seeing our customers again soon."



So, You're Going to Red Bay

by Phoebe Wienke

Everyone who buys a Tiffin motorhome hears about the wonderful service provided by the Tiffin company. If you drive to the factory in Red Bay, Alabama, you'll receive the ultimate attention. All who have made the trip will testify to the accuracy of the service reputation, but they don't always fully share the experience. The following information may help prepare you in advance for your first trip to Red Bay.

Appointments for service can be scheduled for Red Bay, but your first surprise may be to learn that the earliest available date is anywhere from four to eight months in the future. You'll be told though that you can come to Red Bay and stay in the Tiffin campground and wait in line if you prefer. Be advised that this wait could be as long as three weeks. However, if you have one to three weeks of flexibility in your schedule, it's well worth your while to pursue this approach.

First, of course, you have to get to Red Bay. Trust me, it's there. Just follow the main highway to the country roads to the far northwest corner of Alabama and sure enough you'll drive right into the town. Next, you need to find the campground. After making a few wrong turns, that's easy, too.

When you check in you'll be given some forms to fill out. One is for you to list all the items on your rig you want checked and/or repaired. You can list every little scratch, noise, or nut and bolt that bothers you and everything will be inspected and corrected. You leave this list with the folks in the front office and they as-

sure you that someone will come to your rig the next morning to review the list with you. Then you're sent to your campsite.

The campsites are simply parking spaces, one after another, in a huge gravel/paved area that looks like it once might have been a landing strip. When you're a first timer, you'll most likely be assigned a spot on the side near the neighbor's barking dogs and the roosters that wake up at 4:30 a.m. A little taste of country living! Return visitors know to ask for a different location. Your own dog(s) are welcome, but they will cause you to be assigned a camping spot far back from the office and the laundry. Walking is good exercise!

The campsites are full hook-ups and there is no charge as long as you are having warranty work done. It's only \$10 per night if you are past your warranty period.

The Campers Choice store is located near the office along with a nice laundry room and clean shower facilities.

You will be surrounded by Allegros, Phaetons, Bays, Buses, a few Zephyrs, and maybe even a couple of SOBs (Some Other Brands.) You'll think you've gone to Tiffin Heaven. Walking the driveways looking at all the many models of various ages is really fun and interesting. Suddenly it will occur to you, however, that all these rigs are here because they have a problem. That's a scary feeling, especially if you've just purchased your new rig. Console yourself with the fact that many are here because Tiffin will fix anything that concerns you. Other manufacturers will fix only the things they feel merit attention, and they will send non-warranty work back to their dealers.

You won't be parked long before your neighbors and other campers will be giving you a friendly greeting. You'll be sure they're joking the first time you hear you may have to wait three weeks for your turn in the shop. After about ten days, you'll realize this is no joke. The number you were given when you checked in determines your turn for service and very little is going to alter that sequence. Red Bay is a bit laid back and they don't hanker to being pressured into action. Brutality will not work. Mostly what works is patience and kindness!

During your wait and look period, a special camaraderie grows with your neighbors as everyone shares their stories and reasons for making the trip to Red Bay. Before you know it the list you first presented expands and may even double as you decide so and so's issues should be checked out on your rig, too.

The first morning after arrival you will anxiously await your visit from the Tiffin man. You may still be waiting in the late afternoon or he may have seen you first thing if you were lucky. He'll review your list and be very encouraging about how they

Dr. Phoebe Wienke is a retired school principal from Copper Harbor, Michigan, who was instrumental in implementing Title IX legislation. Active in college athletics, she served 12 years on the U.S. Olympic Track and Field committee.

Carly, Phoebe Wienke's Golden Retriever, takes advantage of her heritage for pointing birds to point the way when the two hit the road for several months each year.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



will fix the problems. He'll leave and you'll think swell, this is a piece of cake. Then you wait.

You are waiting for the little red station wagon to come to your rig and tell you it's your turn. You get up early to watch for the wagon, you see the wagon, you swear it's coming to your spot, you pray you will be next. You're not! You've only been there one

day or perhaps just one week. You will probably wait many more days. Slowly you accept that this is the way it works and nothing is going to rush the process. So you relax and start to enjoy your visit.

Once you settle in, knowing you have little chance of being called this day or even the next, you can take time to explore the Red Bay area, go on a factory tour, talk to Bob Tiffin, play a little golf, and check out the local barbeques. Red Bay is in a dry county. Enjoy the uniqueness of where you are!

To be fair you should know that Tiffin does reserve a few service bays for emergency service. Those are for problems that can be corrected within three hours. They determine whether it's an emergency, not you. However, you will have to wait your turn among the three-hour rigs. This can still mean more than one or two days.

Eventually, if you do not give up and leave, your day will come. You'll be told to report to a service bay either right now, in the afternoon, or maybe the next morning. Knowing you are this close is cause for celebration!

Once inside your service bay you meet the two mechanics assigned to you. These

men are great! They deserve many accolades (chocolate chip cookies are good, too) for being knowledgeable, polite, and concerned. They will take your list and fix item by item until you are totally satisfied. This is part of the reason your wait has been so long, because once it is your turn you can take as long as necessary to reach satisfaction. It may be one day or maybe two, three or more.

At the end of the day if your work is not complete, you may return to the campground or simply boon dock right there in the service building. Staying in place is a sure way of being ready to go when the next morning shift begins. All warranty work will be done without charge and without hassle. Everything else will also be well done and the fee will be reasonable.

Once your work is completed it's time to leave even though by now you feel like you belong there. You will sign final papers back at the campground office, say goodbye to your new friends, and pat yourself on the back for being wise enough to have purchased a Tiffin Motorhome product.

Bid adieu to Red Bay but don't forget to make an appointment for your next visit!

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Allegro Club Fall Getaway — COLORADO SPRINGS

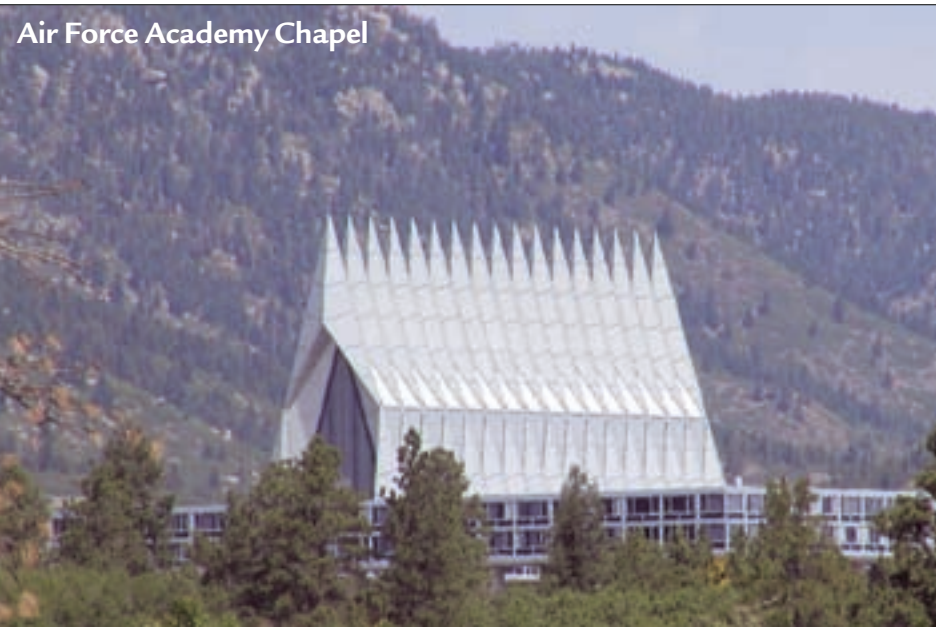


Pike's Peak



Garden of the Gods

Air Force Academy Chapel



MIKE BECHTOL

2005 RALLY SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

ALLEGRO CLUB SPRING PRE-RALLY

Sandy Beach Park
Macon, Georgia
March 17-19, 2005
(break camp 19th or 20th)

ALLEGRO CLUB BRANSON SPRING FLING

Compton Ridge Campground
Branson, Missouri
April 25-30, 2005 (break camp 30th)

ALLEGRO CLUB SUMMER LAKE ESCAPE

Mackinaw Mill Creek Camping
Mackinaw, Michigan
August 22-26, 2005 (break camp 27th)

ALLEGRO CLUB FALL GETAWAY

Garden of the Gods Campground
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Oct. 11-15, 2005 (break camp 16th)

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Join us in Mackinaw City at the Mackinaw Mill Creek Campground, August 22-26, 2005 for the Allegro Club Summer Lake Escape. We have been promised great weather and breathtaking scenery.

In addition to Tiffin techs and vendor seminars, the rally highlight will be a visit and tour of Mackinac Island with lunch at the famous Grand Hotel. As you know, there is always plenty of good food, fun and entertainment at Allegro Club rallies.

2006 RALLY SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

ALLEGRO CLUB FUN IN THE SUN

Rally Park
Seffner, Florida
February 27-March 3, 2006
(break camp 4th)

ALLEGRO CLUB MYRTLE BEACH SPRING FLING

Lakewood Camping Resort
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
May 15-19, 2006 (break camp 20th)

ALLEGRO CLUB PRE-RALLY

Site TBA
Charlotte, NC
August 10-13, 2006

ALLEGRO CLUB NORTHEAST GETAWAY

Site TBA
New England
Fall 2006

jimmy.johnson@tiffinmotorhomes.com
Allegro Club
P.O. Box 1429
Red Bay, AL 35582-1429

Northeast Rally in July — Details are now being finalized for a summer rally in the Northwest, July 25-28, 2005, Welches, Oregon. Call Tom Kirk, Northwest Tiffin sales office, for rally information: or email at captpt@comcast.net
Tom Kirk 541 485-6266 Business
2174 Wester St. 541 953-3151 Cell
Eugene, OR 97408 541 485-0660 Fax

Allegro Club to Celebrate Completion of Natchez Trace

When the last section of the Natchez Trace parkway is completed in May, Tiffin-built coaches will be there to help celebrate. Your coach could be among them. On May 21, Club President Jimmy Johnson will lead a 90-mile caravan of 5-10 Tiffin motor homes from Clinton, Miss., to Natchez.

If you would like to join the caravan, see Jimmy's contact information above.

Don't miss the Allegro Club Fall Mountain Fest, Oct. 11-15, 2005, Garden of the Gods Campground in Colorado Springs, Colo. Limited to 120 coaches. Dinner and entertainment at the Flying W Ranch, Thursday; tour of the Garden of the Gods and the Air Force Academy with lunch at the Officer's Club on Saturday. The schedule permits ample free time for you to pursue your own interests. We look forward to seeing you in Colorado Springs!

Allegro Club Summer Lake Escape — MACKINAW, MICHIGAN



The Grand Hotel



Mackinac Island

Fort Mackinac



Q&A

Question: My 1998 39-ft. Pusher has the poorest headlights of any vehicle I have ever driven. The plastic headlight covers are graying or discoloring badly. One of the covers has moisture behind it most of the time. How can I get this fixed?

Joe Barnett, Pinson, Ala

Answer: We feel like this will have to be replaced. However, here are a couple of ideas to try first. Drill holes in the bottom of the

headlight housing to get rid of the moisture. If this does not work, the housings will have to be replaced. Regarding the discoloring: if it isn't too bad, buffing will sometimes work to remove it.

J. C. Blackburn, Tiffin Service Tech

Question: Do you have a list you could offer that details non-engine scheduled maintenance on the Tiffin coaches built since 2000. Thanks.

Eugene Horvath, Oregon, Ohio

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Answer:

Non-Engine Scheduled Maintenance

- 1. Roof Care:** The sealer on the roof should be checked every three months for cracks. If you have a rubber roof, you should apply a rubber roof treatment every six months to prevent deterioration. This maintenance is the customer's responsibility.
- 2. Fiberglass Care:** To keep fiberglass from fading and becoming oxidized, you should wax or polish it every six months. This applies to the sidewalls, fiberglass roofs, and the front and rear fiberglass caps.
- 3. Slideout Care:** To prevent tearing and sticking of the seals on the slideout, spray them with rubber seal conditioner every two months to keep the slide moving freely and smoothly. Spray the assemblies and moving parts with a dry lubricant once a month if used frequently.
- 4. Fresh Water System Care:** To keep the water system fresh and deodorized, you should put a purifying solution in once a month. When you reactivate the coach after several weeks or months of storage, you should add the purifying solution to the fresh water system and tank to remove bad taste which may be caused by bacteria. We generally recommend *Tastepure Spring Fresh* which is available at Campers Choice.
- 5. Storage Compartment Care:** The sealer on the door hinges should be checked every three months for cracks. The seals on the compartments should be sprayed with rubber seal conditioner every three months. These steps will prevent moisture and water from getting into the compartments.

Question: Could you give me some 1-2-3 steps to correctly dump the grey and blackwater tanks?

Jim Windham, Wetumpka, Ala.

Answer:

1. Be sure to monitor the level of your tanks and do not overfill them. Overfilling may cause leaks.
2. Always use a well-known brand holding

tank treatment additive in the black and grey tanks. The additives will break down the waste/tissue in the black tank and the fat/greases in the grey tank. We recommend RV-TECH 100 which is available at Campers Choice. Four ounces will treat a 40-gal. tank effectively, plus it will clean and lubricate the probes.

3. When you are dumping the tanks, make sure you are on level ground, or that the dump valve is on the lower side of the unit. This will insure that you completely empty the tanks.
4. The most common question about the black tank is, "Why does the monitor show the tank is full when it is empty?" Problem-buildup or trash on the probes is usually caused by not using additives at all or in the right proportion to the size of your tank. An easy solution is to fill the tank 3/4 full with water, and then pour two 25-lb. bags of ice into the toilet. Drive around to slosh the ice against the tank. The ice will clean the probes.

Scotty Martin, Tiffin Service Tech

Question: I have tried many things including regular back flushing to keep my holding tank sensors clean so the Check Panel inside will give me correct readings. Can you suggest anything else to try?

Charles Holland Cincinnati, OH

Answer: We suggest using "Pine Power" to clean it out at least two to three times a month after dumping your tank. "Pine Power" can be purchased almost anywhere. When using "Pine Power," fill the tank about 1/4 full with fresh water and then empty the entire bottle into the tank. Drive the coach to allow the liquid to slosh around in the tank. That also helps to unclog the flusher. We have found that a clogged flusher is often the problem in tanks. Therefore, we recommend flushing out the flusher each time you dump the tank.

Kevin Wilson and Nathan Johnson
Tiffin Service Techs

Question: I would like to have more information on how and when to make the best use of the inverter on my coach.

Bob Warren, New London, NC

Answer: The inverter in your coach serves two purposes. It automatically goes into charge mode when 110v power is sent into the coach through the power cord or generator. The inverter also makes 110v power from your batteries for use by the 110v plugs in your coach when you cannot use your generator or shore power.

The invert button should be "ON" only when you cannot use the generator or shore power and need to use the microwave or watch the televisions. You can also leave the invert button on with engine running to use the TV or microwave while you are traveling. Once you kill the engine, turn off the generator, or unplug shore power, the inverter will maintain 110v power to these plugs. If the inverter is left "ON," it will eventually drain the batteries. Keep the invert button "OFF" until it is actually needed to prevent unnecessary battery drain.

Don Boyd, Tiffin Service Tech

THE STEPS TO TAKE WHEN HAVING TROUBLE ON THE ROAD

1. First, contact our Tiffin Service Department at 256-356-8661 to report your problem and seek advice on what course of action should be taken.
2. Have your Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) available so that we can quickly access information in our database about your coach.
3. If you are having chassis problems, please contact the chassis manufacturer and request that they direct you to an authorized service center.
4. If you are seeking to have repairs made at an authorized dealership or service center, please have the service manager call and get authorization from Tiffin Motorhomes before doing any work.

Scotty Martin, Tiffin Service Tech

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Michigan's Mackinac Island

by Harold & Lynne Breuninger

After almost a year and a half on the road, our Allegro Bus continues to function flawlessly and remains a pleasure to drive. Its quad slides provide ample living space. Since we chose not to have a washer/dryer installed, that space was converted to additional storage by adding shelves. When full-timing like we do, one can never have too much storage space. One problem Lynne does have, as we travel across the country, is finding a good hairdresser. Some are good and some are not. Unfortunately, you don't know which is which until after the fact.

We continue to move across the country at a leisurely pace, spending sufficient time in one place to allow visiting that area's attractions. The AAA Tour Books for individual states are a good resource for points of interest. We also keep clippings from magazines and newspapers (filed by

state) that list places and things to see when we visit that state.

One such stop was at the Straits of Mackinac which separate the Upper and Lower Peninsulas of Michigan and connects Lake Michigan with Lake Huron. This body of water is crossed by the Mackinac Bridge, a magnificent five-mile-long suspension bridge, called the "Mighty Mac" by residents. Built in 1957, the bridge is supported by two 550-foot towers and has over four million vehicles crossing it yearly. The locals categorize it as the 8th Wonder of the World! At its northern end lies America's third oldest city, St. Ignace, and at its southern end, Mackinaw City. Approximately five miles to the east lies Mackinac Island.

To simplify the confusion Mackinac, the island (French spelling) and Mackinaw, the city and bridge (English spelling) are both pronounced "Mack-in-awe."

This area was originally settled in 1634 by French Voyageurs who built a vibrant fur-trading empire along the Straits. In 1715 the French established a fortified village and military outpost called Fort Michilimackinac, meaning "place of the great turtle." The British took control of the village in 1761. In 1780-81, during the American Revolution, the British recognized that this mainland fort could not be easily defended so they dismantled it piece by piece and rebuilt it on Mackinac Island. Fort Mackinac was garrisoned by the British for the next 15 years even though it was located in territory belonging to the United States. By treaty in 1796 the Americans took control of the fort, but during the War of 1812 the British successfully re-occupied it by dragging their cannon up the steep limestone bluff overlooking the rear

of the fort (originally thought to be inaccessible) and with their cannon pointed directly into the fort, reclaimed it without firing a shot. Three years later, again by treaty, the Americans once more took possession of the fort and garrisoned a small contingent there until 1895 when the fort and island became Michigan's first state park.

Today Fort Michilimackinac on the mainland is a faithful reproduction of the original and hosts musket and cannon firing demonstrations and displays hundreds of artifacts uncovered at the original site. Present-day archaeologists can be observed excavating and sifting for artifacts.

Mackinac Island is easily reached from the mainland by one of three ferry services. In 1898 all automobiles were banned from the island (the horses were spooked by the one "horseless carriage" on the island)



Built in 1957, the Mighty Mac's twin towers at 550 feet pierce the sky and provide a brilliant nighttime spectacle.

and today only three vehicles are allowed — one police car, one ambulance, and one fire truck! The 500 permanent residents are permitted snowmobiles for crossing the "ice bridge" which spans the strait and connects island to the mainland after the ferries stop for the winter. For tourists, the primary means of getting around are walking, horseback, peddling a bike, private livery (\$40/hour) or using one of the many com-

munal horse drawn carriages. There are some 300 draft horses on the island during the tourist season with five veterinarians in attendance. The 500 residents on the island are attended by only three physicians. It is easy to see where their priorities lie! During the winter months, approximately 20 horses remain on the island to provide 24/7 taxi service.

We recommend that you take the Mackinac Island Carriage Tour

to familiarize yourself with the island and comfortably experience its unique, charming and historic ambiance. The tour takes approximately 90 minutes. You may disembark at any stopping point and rejoin a later tour group. The tour driver's narration is both interesting and informative. For those pedal biking or hiking, a paved eight-mile roadway circles the island, the only state highway in Michigan that does not allow motorized traffic.

The tour stops at the Grand Hotel, a magnificent structure built in 1887 where guests are still expected to "dress" for dinner. If you have lunch at the Grand Hotel, expect a \$40 *fixe prix* in addition to a \$10 "entrance fee." The fee serves to discourage sightseers from "trooping" through the hotel and disturbing the registered guests.

Fort Mackinac, a National Historic Landmark, is fully restored and appears as it did over 100 years ago. American soldiers and Victorian ladies in period costumes narrate the many exhibits. After witnessing a cannon firing over the harbor, plan to have lunch at Fort Mackinac's Tea Room. Catered and served by the

Grand Hotel, our lunch was excellent, reasonably priced with no tipping allowed and no "entrance fee."

The shops on both the island and in Mackinaw City are attractive and varied, but a bit "pricey." Our day on the island cost just under \$100 for both of us which included the roundtrip ferry (\$34), the narrated coach tour (\$40), and lunch at the fort (\$20).

A trip to northern Michigan would not be complete without eating some PASTIES (pronounced "past'-tees"). Pasties were created about 800 years ago as a meal for the miners of Cornwall, England. Meat and vegetables are baked in a crust and served warm. They can be eaten like a sandwich or served with gravy and sour cream. Pasties arrived in Michigan over 150 years ago when immigrants came here to mine the iron and copper indigenous to the Upper Peninsula's Iron Range. We enjoyed eating them several times and even bought some pre-cooked frozen pasties back to our coach to enjoy later in our travels.

As before, you are invited to email us at hfb123@earthlink.net with any questions or comments. Until next time . . . "Be Well, Drive Safe, and God Bless."

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The Life and Times of Tiffin Motorhome Owners

What a Coincidence — What a Small World!

My wife and I were parked at the Yuma Elks RV lot in Yuma, Arizona, when a couple stopped by from another Allegro Bay. Dave and Suzie Caldarelli introduced themselves and commented about having an Allegro Bay just like ours before trading for their 2002 Allegro Bay. I had saved some of the old records of the previous owner and it turned out we had their old motor home! Needless to say, we were both surprised, and new friends were made.

The Caldarellis were on their way to San Diego to join a caravan for a Baja California adventure. We purchased their 1994 Allegro Bay in Richmond, Virginia, in August 2002 after a six-year adventure on our sailboat from San Diego, California, to Annapolis, Maryland, via the Panama Canal. We have circled the USA traveling through 31 states and now have over 105,000 miles on the odometer.

Dennis D. Johnson
Yuma, Arizona



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DENNIS JOHNSON

Previous owners Dave and Suzie Caldarelli, Pass Christian, Mississippi, left, and current owners Arlyce and Dennis Johnson, Tucson, Arizona, in the Elks Lodge RV lot in Yuma.

Looking Forward to the Natchez Trace

I just finished reading your article in *Roughing it Smoothly*, Vol. 2, No. 1, "The Natchez Trace Parkway." I had just started looking for information on the Parkway and your article came along just at the right time. Your article is just what we have been looking for. You did an outstanding job and your view point for those of us that would be making the trip in our RV hit the target dead center. Thank you. Also, great job with the photographs that accompanied the article; you have a good eye for composition.

Pat and Leon Tietzen
Stratford, Wisconsin

Editor: Thanks for the kind words. I hope you were able to start your trip during the Spring Pilgrim-

age. For our readers, right now is a great time to make the Natchez Trace Parkway trip.

92,000 Miles and Counting

Mar. 4, 2005: We took our first long trip in our new Allegro to Quartzsite, Arizona, for six weeks. Now we are leaving for Eunice, Louisiana, for a month. We enjoy our Allegro so much with the two slides. My husband says it is so easy to maneuver even though we are towing a Honda Accord. We live in Danevang, Texas — "The Danish Capital of Texas." Come and visit our Danish Museum. We clocked 92,000 miles in our old Allegro in nine years.

Joyce & Tony Danna
Danevang, Texas

Reminiscing — Thanks for the Memories

Dear Mr. Tiffin:

Thank you for sending me the Allegro literature brochures about each of the Tiffin motorhomes. I am sitting here enjoying them very much. I am 85 years old and use a wheelchair and cane to get around. My husband has been gone for nine years. You have made an old woman happy. Now I can look, enjoy, and dream.

We owned three different Allegros that we bought from Marshal Smith at Stinnett RV in Clarksville, Indiana. We made lots of trips throughout the U.S., Old Mexico, Alaska three times, Newfoundland, Labrador, and all the provinces including the Yukon. We even went as far north as the Arctic Circle.

We got good gas mileage in our Allegros. When we went through the Yukon, we paid \$3.50 per gallon for gas. I put one foot out and pedaled part of the way!!

One time we went to Red Bay for repairs and were taken care of immediately. We had a broken windshield and a broken window. Mr. Tiffin wouldn't charge us after it was fixed.

We went to South Dakota several times. We panned for gold,

actually found some, and had it made into some jewelry. Then we got robbed and it was all stolen.

Please excuse my writing. This was supposed to be a thank you note for the folders. If you can't read this, have your secretary type it. I had a stroke and can't use my typewriter anymore.

I don't know how you could ever improve on these new motorhomes. All I would need with one of these is a good driver and a bottle of aspirin to keep going. I would like to call these new Allegros "Highway Mansions."

Mildred C. Frakes
P.O. Box 81
Corydon, IN 47112

Editor:

Dear Mildred, Bob Tiffin gave me a copy of your letter. You are a gem! As I typed your letter, I imagined the great pleasure you and your husband had traveling in your three Allegros. I am sending you all of our back copies of the *Roughing It Smoothly* magazine and adding you to our mailing list.

All the best to you,
Fred Thompson

Trip of a Lifetime

In the summer of 2003, driving two identical 1995 Allegro Bus motorhomes and two white Jeeps, Marvin and Karen Edven-

son & Roger and Gladys Edven-son traveled from Grand Rapids, Minnesota, across Canada and

Continued on page 23

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

We received only a few stories from our readers this time to run in the "From the Road" section. It is a fun part of the magazine to read, but we hope more of you will pick up your pens and write to us. Just send your stories to Fred Thompson, P.O. Box 292912, Tampa, FL 33687-2912 or fred@bookproduction.com. Tell us about the interesting places you've been, an unusual experience, a great destination, or just a good place to camp and hang out. Please share.

Tell us about the best Fall Color drive you've ever taken or a roadside stand where you bought apples or pumpkins.

Nearly everyone likes barbeque. Give us a tip on where to get the best BBQ in your state (name of restaurant, address, phone number, and describe the BBQ). And don't forget to take a few good pictures. Our readers are our eyes and ears.

—Fred Thompson, editor

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