



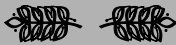
Discovery *EXPRESS*

Vol. 6, No. 4

Fall 2004

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Coming in Winter 2004-2005

Issue: Photo album from our "family" gathering – the 2004 National Rally in Sedalia, Missouri. Also, more helpful safety articles from RV Alliance, more modifications to Discoverys by our members, plus region and chapter news.

ORANGE BLOSSOM ROMP **Lazydays RallyPark, Seffner, Florida** **January 28-February 1, 2005**

**Five days' and four nights' camping in a premier
RV park, with full hookups, including cable TV
Paved platforms and grassy sites
Free newspaper each morning**

**Complimentary breakfast and lunch at Lazydays (Mon.-Sat.)
Vendor displays – On-the-road Driving Instruction
Flea Market – Red Hat Society – Craft Classes
Top-notch Entertainment! Great food!
Free computer hookup – New casino nearby
Plant City very close (the best strawberry shortcake ever)**

Don't miss this humdinger of a region rally!
Winter is snowy and cold up north and east
and west...winter in Florida is sunny, warm,
and welcoming!



Camping prices are the same as last year – \$104.74 – and the rally
fee of \$35.00 is a bargain.

We will be entertained by a plethora of BIG names, all embodied in
Ruby Tuesday and Keith Colman who will present the Las Vegas
Revue. We will also be entertained with a "feel good" musical
experience with the Hot Lips Variety Show. Charly Raymond and
Michele James will have us a-clappin' and a-stompin'.

Sun and games, friendship and food, and just a whole lot of fun
await all of us in Florida this winter. Don't miss out – **register early**
– and then c'mon down to the Sunshine State!

See Rally Registration form on page 23.

About This Newsletter

Discovery EXPRESS is published four times annually. The deadline for copy is the 20th of the last month in each quarter: March 20, June 20, September 20 and December 20. The editor can occasionally accommodate later submissions if notice is given ahead of time.

Member addresses and telephone numbers published in this newsletter are for members' personal use only. They are not to be used by or for other organizations, nor for special interest, business, commercial, educational, philanthropic, or political purposes.

Toll-free numbers for officers and chairmen are to be used only for DOAI business, and then wisely, since it is costly for DOAI to provide the numbers.

Every member is considered a reporter and as such, is encouraged to send in articles, hints and tips, and even questions and/or comments in the form of *Letters to the Editor* (we'll make every effort to get the answers).

Material for the newsletter may be sent via e-mail or via U.S. Post Office. Photos are welcome, and if sent via e-mail should be in either .jpg or .bmp format. "Regular" photos sent by snail-mail will be scanned and returned to contributors.

Discovery Express Editor

Nina Lee Soltwedel
4736 Harwich St.
Boulder, CO 80301-4217
888.786.2962
soltwedel45@hotmail.com

Please notify us when your address changes! Address changes should be sent to DOAI Membership Director. Newsletters cost 75¢ to mail; every returned newsletter costs us 83¢, and another 83¢ to mail it to the new address = \$2.41.

Membership Director

MaryAnn Crowell
207 County Road 3000
Lott, TX 76656-3828
888.594.6818
relxn1@aol.com

DOAI Website

www.discoveryowners.com

DOAI eGroup

www.groups.yahoo.com

More Orange Blossom Romp Information

by Pete Pizzano

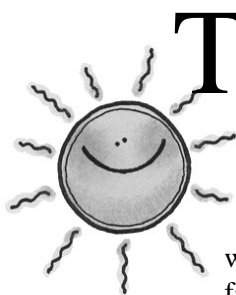
As some of us Florida Rolling Gators recover from our misfortunes of three hurricanes, we still consider our Sunshine State as the fun state for our winter rally. Several Gators have suffered home destruction or damage. Motor coaches and boats were picked up and moved eight feet, resting against solid foundations. Charley and Frances ravaged across our state, and now (at this writing) we are bracing for another Category Five storm heading toward the west coast of Florida (Ivan...the Terrible!).

We Florida Discovery owners are resilient, capable of performing the rally tasks to again offer our club another outstanding rally. Major preparations were in order prior to the series of adverse weather conditions.

Chapter President Ron Shane and his Gator members are again preparing for the winter Lazydays rally. Entertainment, dinners, and several vendors have committed to the rally.

It is recommended that members register early; there is a limited number of sites. Last year, Registrar Edna Pendergrass had to inform members that the rally was sold out.

Region Vice President Jim Devine contracted Lazydays RallyPark to hold the five-day, four-night Orange Blossom Romp, January 28 through February 1, 2005. Great consideration was given for DOAI members wishing to attend the FMCA Brooksville, Florida, rally would have adequate time to do so. ❖

Sunshine Corner

The hurricanes attacking Florida and the southeast U.S. have been unkind to many of our members. We send good wishes and many prayers out to all the residents of Florida and the southeast. We hope to see you well, motor coaches and homes repaired, and ready to have fun...soon!

Sympathy and prayers go out to Laraine Hobbie, whose husband, John, passed away several months ago. Get well wishes go out to those who are ill, who have had or are facing surgery, and those whose family members are facing severe illnesses. We include these good people in our prayers: John Baker, Ed Koch, Jerry Heimbrock, Axel Swanson, Gene Kidd, Bob Cook, Alice Peery, and Tom Fields. ❖

Who to Contact**ACTION ITEMS OR GENERAL INTEREST**

Phil Yovino, DOAI President
6307 Francis Marion Dr
Houston, TX 77091-2703
pdyo@pdq.net - 877.246.4271

FLEETWOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

800.322.8216

FREIGHTLINER CUSTOMER SERVICE

800.385.4357

DOAI NAME BADGES

Mr. Ken Badges 'n Signs
2505 Clintonville Rd
Harrisville, PA 16038-4109
mrkenbadges@aol.com
800.398.8308; Fax 814.786.0106
Badges \$5.50, hangers \$3, s/h
\$1/badge.



Report of the President

by Phil Yovino

With summer almost gone, we're entering the last half of the year...and what a year! We have many things to be thankful for, and many DOAI members to thank.

Already we have held 21 chapter rallies, two region rallies, and are on the threshold of our national rally in Sedalia. We had a wonderful region rally at Lazydays, and again the Florida Rolling Gators put on a great show. I wonder what's next?

The South Central Region's three chapters – Texas Disco Road Runners, Louisiana Mudbugs, and Discovery Texans – joined forces and presented the Bluebonnet Bash at Havens Landing in Montgomery, Texas.

That means DOAI members have had, to date, 23 rallies to attend in 23 different parts of our country. Isn't it great for us to have such wonderful choices, as we make our traveling plans, to know when and where we might attend a DOAI rally and enjoy the fellowship of other D owners. And you don't have to be a chapter member to attend...just call or send the registration form in and be a part of the fun time. Who knows...you might even want to join a chapter. We now have 14 chapters in our six regions.

Our *Discovery Express* editor, Nina Soltwedel, will keep us informed on all events and important and interesting RV subjects.

This year we have already added some new and wonderful equipment for Bob Cook's coach; now all members will have the luxury of receiving and sending

mail from their coaches, or from Bob's patio, without having to pay for the service. This will be available at the national rally in Sedalia. This was made available by your dues.

Just recently the board approved the purchase of a \$2,000 AED defibrillator. Let's hope we never have to use it, but just think of the peace of mind we'll have, knowing it is there with us at our rallies, and that there are members certified to operate it. Classes will be held at the national rally.

Tom Fields, our executive vice president, holds a chapter presidents' meeting at all national and region rallies. At those meetings the chapter presidents and Tom work on new ideas, places to rally, chapter business, and get a report on what the board meeting discussed. The chapter presidents then have the opportunity to express their thoughts. This meeting is working out well and keeps the chapter members informed.

I give special thanks to all those members who have taken time from their busy lives to help put on these rallies, whether it be a chapter event or a national rally. If you have not had the pleasure of participating in a rally function, you are missing out on the real fun and feeling the satisfaction that you were part of the rally's success. Your board of directors has done an outstanding job this year, and that includes our membership chairman, MaryAnn Crowell, and our editor, Nina Soltwedel.

Dot and I are looking forward to seeing our Discovery friends at Sedalia. ❖

Report of the Treasurer

by Mac McIlvaine

You may wonder how a widely disbursed organization like DOAI manages its finances.

Keep in mind, DOAI has members across the United States and Canada (all the states!). Rest assured, we do keep close track of all expenditures.

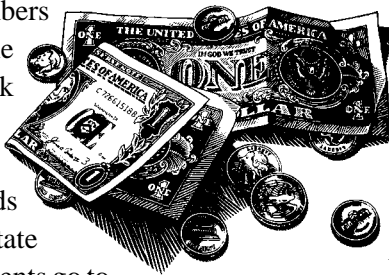
DOAI has no paid employees; everything is done by volunteers. All funds are maintained in an account at the First State Bank of Livingston, Texas. Monthly statements go to the treasurer, who reconciles them with the DOAI financial records. DOAI's president and the treasurer are authorized to sign checks. Most expenditures are approved by the president before payment, and then sent to the treasurer for payment. Exceptions are regular recurring bills such as telephone and insurance.

To adequately support national and region rallies, we advance funds to the treasurer of the sponsoring chapter,

so timely payments can be made as needed to support rally activities. Upon conclusion of the rally, the chapter treasurer returns any unused funds along with a record of payments and supporting documentation to the DOAI treasurer, to be recorded in the organization's financial records.

Other financial controls are the annual budget which is approved and reviewed periodically by the DOAI board. In addition, at the conclusion of each calendar year, the president appoints three DOAI members to conduct an audit of the that year's records. Both the budget and the audit results are reported in the DOAI newsletter.

I think you will agree that DOAI has an excellent system of checks and balances to properly report and protect DOAI funds. If you have questions on this or any financial subject, please contact me. ❖





Load up the rig,
hitch up the horse,
and c'mon to "Dutch Treat"
2005 National DOAI Rally
York, PA – August 9-13, 2005

The folks in the Northeast Region are busy making preparations for the 2005 *Dutch Treat* national rally in York, Pennsylvania.

They are planning to steep you in Pennsylvania Dutch culture from the food you'll be served, the beer you'll drink, to the music you'll hear, the clothing you'll see worn, and the entertainment provided.

Linda and Clark Baumer, Dick and Joan Hopper, and Dorie and John Baker have offered themselves as guinea pigs for this cause by getting together to sample Pennsylvania Dutch food, beer, and entertainment. It's a big sacrifice, but someone has to do it! So, be prepared to soak up the culture when you come, as we're selecting the most tempting treats for our rally. YOU are in for a real "Dutch treat."

Dave and Diane Drinkwater have been hard at work, making Pennsylvania Dutch centerpieces for the tables. Harriet Harrold has been sewing away for months on the costuming for the *Pennsylvania Dutch Derby* at Yorktowne Downs, while Dorie has been putting reins and manes on the horses. York is called the White Rose City, named after its counterpart in England. If you're a history buff, you're sure to remember the War of the Roses, so the final race will be a real "Run for the Roses," according to Harriet.

We've lined up a 55-*Alive* driving course for the first 35 people who sign up for it. Completion of the course will, in most states (check yours!), give you a five percent discount on your automobile insurance. The course costs \$10 per person and requires two four-hour sessions. If you want to lower your insurance rates, plus learn some valuable safe driving techniques, be sure to sign up early! ❖

Founders' Forum by Jim and Dorothy Devine



Our lives changed ten years ago...changed for the better, but at the time we did not realize it. Early retirement is a phrase a lot of us are unfamiliar with, to some it means uncertainty, to us it began a chain of events that, little did we know,

would change our lives dramatically.

After much discussion about retirement, we decided to lease out our house for two years, buy a used motor home and see the country, and find a good spot to retire to. Remember, I said "dramatically change our lives." Moving out of a 3,000+ square-foot house into a 29-foot Class A motor home **full time** ...well, let's just say it was different!

We experienced "different" in many ways and many shades: simple things such as waking up, but not by an alarm clock, but by the sun on our faces...waking up and

for a few seconds not remembering where we were, realizing routine is no longer routine for us.

The word "freedom" has taken on new meaning; freedom to sing out loud ("On the road again..."), the freedom to totally relax and enjoy the moment, and the freedom to roam wherever and whenever we want.

RV'ing turned our lives into an adventure! We found other people doing the same thing we were doing; they were excited, happy, and fun to be around. We cherish all our experiences, but we found the most important thing we gained as we traveled far and wide was *friendship*. Our friends were eager to hear about our experiences and we were eager to hear theirs. We had a lot in common and enjoyed each other's company. The thing we value most is the lasting friendships we forged with our friends in the motor home world.

We know of no better way to change your life than to join a chapter and expand your extended family! Alaska is awesome, Mount Rushmore is great, but friends are for a lifetime! ❖

Why Join DOAI? Sharing mutual interest problems encountered and solutions found, sharing ideas and plans for coach enhancements and improvements, and sharing fun and good times with true, lasting friends. – Tom & Sandy Fields

Meet the Board

President

Phil Yovino
6307 Francis Marion Dr
Houston TX 77091-2703
877.246.4271
pdyo@pdq.net



Vice President/Development

Don Fuller
102 Rainbow Dr, #127
Livingston, TX
77399-1002
877.246.4516
wdfuller@aol.com



Northwest Region

Jerry Woods
PO Box 1284
Maple Valley WA
98038-1284
877.238.7095
jerry@woodsfamily.ws



Executive Vice President

Tom Fields
c/o General Delivery
New Braunfels, TX 78130-9999
877.238.6955
thomfiel@earthlink.net



Past President

Bob Baugh
123 Applecreek Ln
Richmond KY 40475-9154
877.238.6952
rcbaugh@zeus.chapell.com



South Central Region

Garry Shirey
2450 Williams Lakeshore
Kingsland TX 78639-4077
877.245.9654
garryts2@moment.net



Secretary

Joyce Bednarczyk
137 Rainbow Dr, PMB 3769
Livingston TX 77399-1037
877.851.9874
j.bdczk@juno.com



Region Vice Presidents:

North Central Region

Dick Snyder
411 Alexander Dr
Seymour IN 47274-8633
877.282.0779
rdsnyder@insightbb.com



Southeast Region

Jim Devine
25911 CR 49
Loxley AL 36551-6413
888.594.6819
jimdev@one800.net



Treasurer

Mac McIlvaine
1370 Parkside Dr
Zwolle LA 71486-4315
877.245.9661
macsworld@juno.com



Southwest Region

Gerald Embry
14572 Mesa St
Hesperia, CA 92345-2242
877.238.6954
jmembry36@uia.net



Rally Master

Pete Pizzano
4712 Coachmen Rd
New Port Richey FL
34655-1501
877.238.6953
alice.pizzano@verizon.net



Northeast Region

John Baker
399 Tri Hill Rd
York PA 17403-3854
877.282.0776
jpdscvry@yahoo.com



Chapter Presidents Photo Gallery



Barb Klusman, Arizona
Discovery Owners



Joyce Wiechman,
Discovery Pioneers



Tom Fields, Discovery
Texans



Bobby Williams, Dixie
Travelers



Ron Shane, Florida
Rolling Gators



Elfers Marzahl,
Heartland Discoverys



Carolyn Barnes, Louisi-
ana Mudbugs



Dick Smith, Mason-Dixon
Discoverys



Ray Easter, Mid-South
Roadrunners



John Wimer, Midwest
Discoverers



Bob Giordano,
Nor'easters



Jerry Woods, Northwest
Adventurers



Garry Shirey, Texas
Disco Road Runners

Missing:
California
Good Timers

Report of the Rally Master

by Pete Pizzano

I've finally done it! I traveled to Alaska and completed visiting all 49 mainland states and much of Canada. In my six months of travel in my 1999 36T Discovery, I have had an exciting experience searching for fairgrounds and campgrounds that could adequately accommodate a DOAI national rally. National rallies are scheduled years in advance. York, Pennsylvania, and Rayne, Louisiana, are already scheduled; two excellent sites offering a great number of attractions, filling in any lapse time between seminars, meals, entertainment, cocktail parties, and chapter meetings.

To this date the board of directors has scheduled or held rallies in five of the six DOAI regions. At the national

rally in Sedalia, the board will consider a national rally in the final region.

For clarity purposes, I would like to briefly define several terms used: campouts, region rallies, and national rallies.

A **campout** is a chapter activity. A chapter can hold as many campouts as they choose, providing these campouts do not conflict with a region or national rally. At a campout, the chapter may permit the attendance of some other brand (SOB), a potential Discovery owner, a DOAI member of another region, as well as a DOAI member who is considering joining the chapter.

Region rallies are held in that region under the responsibility of the region vice president. Usually the region rally is held once a year, approved by the DOAI board of directors. Region rallies are for DOAI members or for Discovery

Discovery owners who give a firm commitment to join the DOAI at the rally. Region rallies put aside all business and emphasize the club motto: Spirit of Friendship.

National rallies adhere to the same policies established for region rallies. One of the two major differences between a region and national rally is Fleetwood. In previous years, Fleetwood has generously assigned technicians to provide free service on the Discovery motor coach of rally attendees. Appointment for this service must be made during the rally. Second and most important is the open annual meeting where DOAI members have an opportunity to voice their opinions, make suggestions, and ask questions. ❖

Region News

Northwest Region by Jerry Woods

I invite everyone from the Southwest and Northwest regions to the rally in Blythe, California, January 10-16, 2005. It would be great to see all the D owners there who would like to camp. There are no hookups, but the Bluegrass Festival is worth it! It was a huge success last year. Simply contact the Blythe Chamber of Commerce (760.922.8166) for reservations.

You can also visit their website, www.blytheareachamberofcommerce.com/bluegrass/ for lots of information. The bands start on January 14, but you can wander around and listen to jam sessions almost any time, especially at night. If you have an instrument, bring it along! Let me know so we can get a response from the Chamber. E-mail me (see Directory on page 5).

It looks like our sponsor for the national rally in Kennewick last year is still trying to keep us happy. He sold a couple of Discoverys to the Texans after the rally, and just sold a 2005 39L to us. If we are looking for a sponsor in the Northwest Region, John seems more than willing to step up to the plate again. I know he sure saved us when a couple of locals failed. Thanks again for a job well done for all our friends across the U.S. It's great when everyone helps. ❖

North Central Region by Dick Snyder

Since the beginning of the new Heartland Discoverys chapter, I have had several people express interest in joining the chapter, and we have already gained one couple. Brenda and I look forward to the rally in Sedalia, where I believe this first chapter in the North Central Region will gain many new members.

The Heartland Discoverys have a new logo that depicts what the name says, with a barn and silo, a road crossing the region, and of course a Discovery in the middle of it all. See Elfers Marzahl's chapter news to get a good look-see at the logo.

The eleven couples of the Heartland Discoverys are some of the greatest people in DOAI, and I believe this chapter will grow to be one of the best.

There is no reason why the eleven states in the North Central Region could not have two chapters. My hope is to start a chapter in the western half of the region. ❖

Southeast Region by Jim Devine

Southeast chapters were very active during the past eight months. From the Florida Keys to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, our members were on the move! Of the four rallies put on by the Florida Rolling Gators, we attended the Kissimmee, Florida, and Boone, North Carolina, events. The Gators play hard and work hard, as was evident in the

great job they did with the Lazydays rally earlier this year. With 45 members, the Florida Rolling Gators is one of our largest chapters.

The Dixie Travelers held their rally in May in Foley, Alabama, not 20 miles from our home in Loxley. Not only did everyone have a good time, they formed a nominating committee for next year. With 30 members, this is a strong club whose members are very involved.

The Mason-Dixon Discoverys, our newest chapter, are excited about their chapter and it shows, holding a rally in just over two months after forming. How excited? Only one member missed the rally!

In all this year, we've attended five of the seven rallies. When it comes to chapter rallies, I say the more, the merrier!

With 474 DOAI members and 159 chapter members in four chapters, we have room for more in this region. Let me know if you would like a chapter near you. ❖

Northeast Region by John Baker

The Nor'easters have a rally planned at Strawberry RV Resort in Connecticut the third week in September. The Midwest Discoverers are planning a get-together following the national rally, at the Little Park by the River in Indiana. Check the rally calendar for details. ❖

Chapter News

Northwest Adventurers

by Jerry Woods

This being our time of the year to travel, it has been impossible to get more than a couple of Big Ds together. The weather has been the hottest in years, and everyone seems to be in all directions.

We will be at the Blythe Bluegrass Festival from January 14-16, 2005, and invite all Northwest Adventurers and friends. The Blythe Chamber of Commerce (760.922.8166) will be happy to take all reservations. If you want further information, please contact me (see Directory on page 5). Most of us who are traveling will be there around noon on January 10 to get a good spot, and also to be able to visit and have more fun together. For any members going south for the winter, if we have your itinerary, perhaps some of our members can get together. Send me an e-mail! ❖

Mason-Dixon Discoverys

by Becky Godwin

The chapter is growing with the addition of four families since June. We welcome John and Dorie Baker, Tony and Heide Bohn, Bob and Debbie Fowlkes, and Jeff and Katie VanGilder.

We are pleased to have two region vice presidents as chapter members: John Baker, Northeast, and Jim Devine, Southeast.

Our second rally was held August 20-22 at Round Top Campground, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Like the first rally, we had our share of rain, prompting one wag to suggest we change our name to Rainy Day Discoverys!

The rally included a chili cook-off Friday, continental breakfast Saturday morning, followed by our business meeting, and then Marshall Mauck led an informative discussion on common electrical problems.

Tea and cookies were consumed in the afternoon, with everyone enjoying a buffet dinner that night. At the close of the day, around the campfire, 11-year-old Ben Godwin played taps on his trumpet.

Sunday was clear and mild, and we enjoyed a bring-your-own picnic lunch at Dick and Sue Smith's site.

The next official rally is tentatively scheduled for Williamsburg, Virginia area, April 29-May 1, 2005. In the meantime, we may have some less formal camping opportunities for those not heading south for the winter.

Please consider joining the Mason-Dixon Discoverys chapter. You may get an application from the chapter section of the DOAI website, or contact the chapter secretary, Becky Godwin, at bgodwin@3n.net, or 804.224.4206. Look for our promotion material on the chapter table at the national rally in Sedalia. ❖

Heartland Discoverys

by Elfers Marzahl

Things are coming together nicely for this new chapter. Plans are for a great rally in Ludington, Michigan, at the Western Michigan Mason County Fairgrounds, June 23-26, 2005. Ludington is a summer resort town on the shores of Lake Michigan...miles of sandy beaches and dunes, historic lighthouses, Lake Michigan CarFerry, farm markets and fruit stands, a winery, boating, fishing golfing...and the list goes on.

The rally will include four nights' camping with electric and city water (dump available on grounds). Registration forms

and details will be posted on the Chapter section of the DOAI website in the coming months. Assorted websites will give you a good view of the area: www.ludingtoncvb.com is the area chamber of commerce; the visitors guide is available at www.visitludington.com; the fairgrounds can be seen at www.masoncountyfairgrounds.com; and more info on travel in Michigan can be found at www.michigan.org. For those of you living west of Lake Michigan, check out the Lake Michigan CarFerry (at www.ssbadger.com) – it carries RVs, too!

For questions about the rally, contact Debbie Finger and John Myette at jjmyette@juno.com.

New members are always welcome! Heartland Discoverys is a chapter in the North Central Region. We are looking to grow and would welcome members interested in the heartland of our nation.

Our new logo says it all! ❖



Discovery Pioneers

by Nina Soltwedel

Nine couples gathered at the Heron Lake RV Park in Fort Collins in July, joined by DOAI members Doug and Marty Marion, and Gary Marlene Elkins, secretary; Jerry Wiechman, nominating committee; Joyce Wiechman, president; Bob Hixson, past president; Carl Ropp, nominating committee; Bob Soltwedel, treasurer. Missing: Bob Greenwell, vice president; Don and Nancy Gillam, rally masters. Fat Tire beer,



among others). Dinner at a Mongolian restaurant Saturday night was an adventure.



Tasting beer at New Belgium Brewery: Wiechman, expressed thanks to the outgoing board.

Plans were made to journey to Moab, Utah, next May for several days in the National Parks and Monuments in the area.

In September 2004 members will travel to a pre-rally gathering in Branson, Missouri, before heading north to Sedalia.

Watch for chapter information at the national rally; we invite any DOAI member to join with us! ❖

Chapter News, continued**Florida Rolling Gators**

by Bill Brewer

When the Rolling Gators began arriving at the Grandfather Mountain Campground near Boone, North Carolina, the worst weather they expected was possible afternoon rain showers. And that's the way it was from Friday through Tuesday. Further travel plans changed when twin tropical depressions began to threaten Florida.

Bonnie meandered around the middle of the Gulf of Mexico and then headed toward Nova Scotia; Charley was another matter. It developed into a hurricane and we all became hurricane hunters. As it became more likely that Charley would make landfall, our attention became fixed on the Weather Channel.

Knowing that homes and property on the west side of the state were highly vulnerable, and then the prediction that the storm would work up the peninsula and depart through the Jacksonville/Daytona area, those with homes and relatives in the path were understandably concerned.

The amazing part of all this was that the mood never became dark and gloomy. All week long everyone had a lot of fun seeing the local sights. Gene and Lois Patterson had put together a schedule that allowed for plenty of socializing opportunities, yet lots of time for everyone to take off on their own expeditions of discovery.

And there was plenty of time to eat. As usual, everyone complained about the food. "Too many carbs," they said. "Look at all these sweets," they complained. "All we do is play and eat," they opined, as though there is something wrong with that plan. "Travel sure is broadening," was another comment heard.

And they were all correct! Rallies are not likely to provide the atmosphere for successful dieting.

Mary Stump had almost all the women beading pretty things, which left the men with nothing to do except play golf, hike through the mountains, read, and swap stories...and take a nap or two.

It was a wonderful experience; friendships were made, others were deepened; and promises made to return next year to the lovely mountains.

We were pleased to have Jim and Dorothy Devine join us. We owe them a great deal for helping provide us the opportunity to travel together as we do.

The Rogowskys and the Brewers have agreed to host next year's mountain rally if the Pattersons will be mentors. The dates are not exact, but plan on the middle or end of August 2005. We were limited to 15 coaches this year; if you want to go next year, you probably should speak up. ❖

Welcome, New Members!

These good people have recently joined DOAI, or in some cases, renewed their lapsed membership. Whatever the circumstances, we are just real tickled to have you as members. With the membership of Gunnard & Naomi Halvorson, we can boast of having members in all 50 states! Now, if that bridge would just get built . . .

Steven Adams, Houston TX
 George & Gail Alford, Belleview FL
 Robert & Sharleen Biever, Lake Quivira KS
 James & Marjorie Bothwell, Apollo Beach FL
 George & Margaret Brewster, Fruitport MI
 Covert Brock, Breezy Point MN
 Anthony Cantelmo, Wesley Chapel FL
 Robert & Debra Carneal, Chuluota FL
 Truman & Lynda Carr, Lake City FL
 Richard & Carol Cothern, Jackson MS
 Jack & Laura Counts, Willis TX
 James & Annette Dashiell, Delmar MD
 Walter & Joan Dawson, Colebrook NH
 Roger Despain, San Antonio TX
 Wayne & Linda Drumm, Eagle River, AK
 Martin Dukes, Frankford DE
 Louis Ebrecht, Wetumpka AL
 Dave & Linda Ellisor, Cleveland TX
 Gerald & Julie Embry, Hesperia CA
 Leo & Jackie Everitt, Park City UT
 Stanley & Sharon Evingham, Bolivar NY
 Tony & Paula Faverio, Shenandoah VA
 Robert & Debra Fowlkes, Yorktown VA
 Ronald & Christ Gill, Sarasota FL
 Wray & Ellen Goza, Trinity TX
 Gunnard & Naomi Halvorson, **Kapolei HI**

Ron & Gerri Hanson, Huntington Beach CA
 Clarence & Jane Heinzl, Rio Verde AZ
 Gordon Henderson, Anderson SC
 Charles & Mary Holcomb, Guntown MS
 Joseph & Cynthia Hunt, Orlando FL
 Alden & Caryl Johnson, Clermont FL
 Alan & Pat Jones, Waynesville NC
 Richard & Natasha Kenyon, Beaverton OR
 Laura Krause, Havelock NC
 Robert LaFleur, Dover FL
 Jamie Lenhart, Land O' Lakes FL
 George Lenze, Lutz FL
 Vivian Liebler, Mastic Beach NY
 Doug & Marty Marion, Loveland CO
 Mayes Massey, Wedowee AL
 John McConnaughay, Havana FL
 Jim & Barb McCormack, Shenandoah Jct WV
 Reaves & Brenda Murphy, Limestone TN
 Andrew Noyes, Chepachet RI
 Kenneth & Katie Parker, Mansfield OH
 Linda Pearsall, Jupiter FL
 Larry Poe, Thonotosassa FL
 Kenneth & Mary Potter, Janesville WI
 Stan & Bobbie Recob, Winter Park FL
 Gene & Sylvia Ritter, Corpus Christi TX
 Robert Robertson, Merritt Island FL
 Luis Rodriguez, Palmetto Bay FL
 James Rowe, Danielsville GA
 Jim & Jan Roy, Sioux Falls SD
 Andre Saxby, Milton NH
 Kevin & Jacqui Scott, Bakersfield CA
 Thomas Scramuzzo, Highlands Ranch CO
 Roger & Leslie Sharp, Omaha NE
 Hank & Shirleen Smith, San Antonio TX
 Doyle & Katie Snodgrass, Homosassa FL
 Carl & Barbara Springston, Fayetteville AR
 Freelon & Elloyse Stanberry, Houston AK
 Don & Lynda Stockton, Village Mills TX
 James & Gwen Tonar, Dayton OH
 Gary & Sue Trapp, Winston-Salem NC

David & Barb Wallace, Mukilteo WA
 Tom & Connie Williams, Sioux Falls SD
 Meekins Woodley, Jacksonville FL
 Bill & Debbie Zucker, San Diego, CA ❖

Discovery Is a Lifeboat

John and Libbie Veach posted this note on the eGroup September 13: "Since Libby and I decided to buy a house and abandon our full-time lifestyle in the D, we thought we might as well sell it. After 11-days-and-counting without power due to a direct hit by Frances, our Discovery is once more a trusted member of the family. It has become our lifeboat and we are again full-timing in it, albeit in our driveway.

"No real damage to the house – a few lost shingles and downed limbs – but without the Discovery, we would have been in trouble since the power, water, and phones went down on September 3. Since then, phone service and water have been restored, but no sign of electricity. Florida in the summer is no fun without air conditioning, so the D has been able to provide that for us. Just for information, the first five days after the storm I ran the genset 24-hours-a-day and used 23 gallons of diesel fuel." ❖

Report of the Secretary

by Joyce Bednarczyk

Following is a summary of the Board of Directors meeting, held at the South Central Region Rally, Montgomery, Texas, April 24, 2004:

Meeting called to order at 1:09 p.m. by President Phil Yovino. In attendance were Phil Yovino, Tom Fields, Mac McIlvaine, Jim Devine, Garry Shirey, and Joyce Bednarczyk. Minutes of previous meetings read and approved.

- ☞ Fleetwood grant and service to DOAI rallies requested. Budget not final, looks favorable.
- ☞ Request to announce meeting of the Yellowing Discovery group at the rally, approved.
- ☞ Rally fee for 2005 national rally in York, Pennsylvania, \$172.00
- ☞ Election procedures: the board and region vice presidents to poll each region for interested and qualified parties to run for office of DOAI, and present names to the nominating committee.

- ☞ Host chapter earnings based on profit from rallies to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- ☞ Membership action group (board members) to call "lost" members to determine their reason for leaving and how we can encourage and retain new interest and members.
- ☞ Chapter presidents met with Tom Fields. Five chapters represented. Chapters to keep MaryAnn Crowell, membership director, informed of new members' names and addresses.
- ☞ DOAI to purchase defibrillator (with rally profits) to be available at all DOAI rallies. The Red Cross is to teach CPR class at the Sedalia, Missouri, rally in October 2004.
- ☞ Board is seeking recommendations to fill the Southwest Region vice president position.
- ☞ Jim Devine requests help in planning the October 2004 rally in Sedalia, Missouri.

Meeting adjourned.

**Chapter Presidents and Area****Arizona Discovery Owners****Barbara Klusman, President**

480.585.5599/Cell 602.549.5590 - klusman@msn.com Arizona residents and snowbirds are welcome.

California Good Timers

Southern California residents are the primary chapter members, and any DOAI member is welcome to join.

Discovery Pioneers**Joyce Wiechman, President**

620.872.3238 - joycew30@aol.com Members come from Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. DOAI members from other states are welcome as associate members.

Discovery Texans**Tom Fields, President**

877.238.6955; Cell 210.659.3886 - thomfiel@earthlink.net DOAI members with Texas addresses make up the membership of Discovery Texans.

Dixie Travelers**Bobby Williams, President**

662.869.5483; Cell 662.678.6138 - bfw2@hotmail.com DOAI members living in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida comprise this chapter.

Florida Discovery Rolling Gators**Ron Shane, President**

386.467.3017/Cell 321.258.5196 - E-mail to pgene464@aol.com Florida residents and snowbirds are members of this chapter.

Heartland Discoverys**Elfers Marzahl, President**

262.763.6741 - elfers@pngusa.net Members come from Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri and Nebraska...the entire North Central Region!

Louisiana Mudbugs**Carolyn Barnes, President**

318.251.2568 - crb39@cox-internet.com Louisiana D owners belong to this chapter, and they welcome other DOAI members as well.

Mason-Dixon Discoverys**Dick Smith, President**

410.612.9732/Cell 410.937.2759 - poppop4171@msn.com Chapter members come from Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina...the states that straddle the historic Mason-Dixon Line.

Mid-South Roadrunners**Ray Easter, President**

423.288.5274 - rayeaster@charter.net Membership open to any DOAI member. Current states represented include North Carolina, South Carolina, Illinois, Florida, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Missouri and Indiana.

Midwest Discoverers**John Wimer, President**

330.532.3031 - john.wimer@att.net Open to any DOAI member, members are primarily from Ohio and surrounding states.

Nor'easters**Bob Giordano, President**

570.775.1595 Penn./970.468.2515 Colo. - pa1co2rv3@yahoo.com Members from the New England states, plus New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

Northwest Adventurers**Jerry Woods, President**

425.432.6052 - jerry@woodsfamily.ws Serving the northwest states of Alaska, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, all DOAI members are welcome.

Texas Disco Road Runners**Garry Shirey, President**

325.388.4746 - garryts2@moment.net DOAI members living within a 125-mile radius of Austin make up this chapter, but any DOAI member is welcome to join. ❖

Yellowing Discovery Update

Owners of 2000-2002 Discoverys who would like an update on the group's work can get full details at groups.yahoo.com/group/YellowDiscovery. You may also contact Ray Easter (rayeaster@charter.net) or Gary Stratford (gastratford@yahoo.com). ❖

Report of the Editor

by Nina Lee Soltwedel

This edition of *Discovery Express* is coming to you a bit sooner than usual; as you read this we're either on the road, or in Branson, Missouri for a pre-rally gathering, or at the 2004 national rally in Sedalia. And that's why it's early; it had to get to the printer before we left Boulder.

In the last issue, on page 15, I included a photo of some of the Red Hat gals at the South Central Region, and couldn't identify all of them. The mystery woman (standing between Gayle Shirey and Teri Dykman) is Vicky Hogue, described (by her proud hubby, Bob) "my beautiful bride of 47 years."

MAKING IT BETTER

I received a note from a member a while back in which he related that because he and his co-pilot are on the road often, it usually takes quite some time for each issue of the DOAI newsletter to catch up with them. They use a mail forwarding service, and have to pay extra for mail to be forwarded to them.

Then he made a suggestion: offer all DOAI members who use a mail forwarding service, or who are on the road often, the option of not having the newsletter mailed to them, since they can download it from the DOAI website directly into their computers, and then print it out.

For your information, the day I take the newsletter to the printer, I e-mail the same thing to Bob Cook, the DOAI webmaster. He, in turn, posts it on the website immediately. Ergo, if you have Internet access, you can download and read the newsletter before it's even printed!

If this is something you'd like to do, here's our offer to you: We will continue to mail your issue to you **unless** you specifically ask us to cease doing so. If you use a mail forwarding service, and you're paying extra in order to receive the "hard copy," you may wish to take advantage of this offer.

This is **not** a cost-saving measure for DOAI. We will continue to print the same quantity of newsletters, and the difference between what we spend now on postage and the impact of not sending some of them will not make much difference.

This suggestion is just for **your benefit** – you, the members of DOAI. If you choose to keep receiving it via the U. S. Post Office, that's OK. If you wish to download the newsletter as soon as it's posted and then get the hard copy later, that's OK. If you decide you can get it via the Internet and don't need a hard copy mailed, that's OK. It's up to you.

So....how about letting me have feedback from you about this? What's your take on this offer?

SPEAKING OF THE WEBSITE

Most DOAI members are probably not aware that our website is sponsored and provided for *entirely* by Fleetwood. Fleetwood's generous support, providing the bandwidth, data storage, and hosting, has allowed our website to be the premiere Internet information source for the Discovery owner.

Thank you, Fleetwood!

Have a wonderful Fall. I look forward to seeing you at the rally in Sedalia. **Don't forget the next deadline: December 20.** The Winter 2004-2005 issue will be in the mail around January 15, 2005. ❖

Letter from Fleetwood

Recently, on the DOAI eGroup, there were exchanges of e-mails expressing concern about the ability of Fleetwood dealers to perform repairs on our Discovery motor homes. George Weart, Fleetwood's national owner relations manager, wrote the following to one of the concerned individuals. The DOAI board has requested the letter be published here.

Thank you for sharing your concern about the capability of Fleetwood dealers to perform major repairs. In fact, Tom Johnson's RV is one of our best and more capable dealers. We respectfully disagree with the statement made by the dealer associate and would have no concern asking Tom Johnson's RV to address any issue on a coach. If the repair was one they were not familiar with, we have a multitude of resources available to assist them, including web-based information, telephone and on-site technical assistance when needed.

Fleetwood continually looks for ways to improve the level of service we provide our owners nationwide. One of the most important service goals is to increase the level of service available at Fleetwood RV dealers across the country.

In the past, when a customer experienced a major repair concern, they may have been inconvenienced by the repair being performed at one of our Factory Service Centers with locations in Riverside, California; Decatur, Indiana; or Paxinos, Pennsylvania. With the significant improvement in our product quality over the past several years, these major repairs needed by our customers have diminished substantially. In addition, many of our dealers, like Tom Johnson's RV, have requested an opportunity to do more service work for their customers themselves.

Our dealers and we are committed to provide full warranty support and exceptional customer service to you and all of our RV customers. We are currently transitioning customer repairs from the Factory Service Center in Riverside to Fleetwood dealers throughout the west. All major Fleetwood dealers in the southwest have joined us in this effort and are eager to assist customers in the western portion of the country. These Fleetwood dealers are capable, qualified, and eager to complete all repairs needed to support Fleetwood RV products. Of course, Fleetwood technical experts are available to our dealers any time they need a little assistance to correct a particularly challenging issue.

If you or any Fleetwood customer needs assistance with their RV product, they should contact their dealer first; then, if additional assistance is needed, Fleetwood customer support is available seven days a week at 800.322.8216. ❖

Why Belong to DOAI? You are given the opportunity to join local chapters, where you can be involved in planning and participating in frequent travel and camping activities within your local area. It will open up opportunities for you to participate in extraordinary travels to major events and locations that you might not otherwise undertake on your own. You will be a member of a group of interesting and friendly people with a major common interest; you'll feel comfortable! – Ray Easter

Rallies Schedule – Chapter, Region, National**OCTOBER 2004 –**

5-9 National Rally, *Show Me the Ozarks*, Missouri State Fairgrounds, Sedalia, MO

11-15 Midwest Discoverers, Little Farm on the River, Rising Sun, IN

28-31 Texas Disco Road Runners, Canton First Monday Trade Days, Canton, TX

28-31 Dixie Travelers, River Country, Gadsden, AL

NOVEMBER 2004 –

5-7 Louisiana Mudbugs, Nakatosh RV Park, Natichitoches, LA

5-8 Arizona Discovery Owners, Las Vegas, NV

11-14 Florida Rolling Gators, Riverside RV Resort, Port Charlotte, FL

18-20 Discovery Texans, Skyline Ranch, Bandera, TX

DECEMBER 2004 –

2-4 Texas Disco Road Runners, Brenham, TX

30-Jan. ? Florida Rolling Gators, The Great Outdoors, Titusville, FL

JANUARY 2005 –

10-16 Northwest Adventurers, Bluegrass Festival, Blythe, CA

28-Feb. 1 Southeast Region Rally, Lazydays RallyPark, Seffner, FL

MARCH 2005 –

11-14 Florida Rolling Gators, Tropical Palms, Kissimmee, FL

APRIL 2005 –

29-May 1 Mason-Dixon Discoverys, Williamsburg, VA area

MAY 2005 –

2-8 Florida Rolling Gators, Jolly Roger RV Park, Grassy Key, FL

13-15 Discovery Pioneers, Moab, UT

JUNE 2005 –

23-26 Heartland Discoverys, Mason County Fairgrounds, Ludington, MI

AUGUST 2005 –

9-13 National Rally, *Dutch Treat*, Fairgrounds, York, PA

T/B/A Florida Rolling Gators, Grandfather Mountain, Boone, NC

E-mail the editor with your rally schedule so we can include the information in this newsletter. Thanks! ❖

Darrell Knows Jack(s)! by Darrell Godfredson

If you've had problems with the operation of the jacks on your motor home, the following happened to my 1999 37V, but the solution will apply to any unit using the Power Gear jack system.

One winter day in Iowa, we awakened to a -9° weather at a dry camp. In this kind of weather we never allow our propane to get below half-tank level. It was time to move on to get more propane and to go to warmer weather. We were all showered, shaved, fed and secured. The last thing to do was retract the jacks and move on. The right rear jack refused to retract. Naturally I blamed the cold weather and less viscous hydraulic fluid. No amount of wiggling, prying, or cussing helped. I was stuck and getting very concerned.

Now for the diagnosis and emergency operation. If all three jacks fail, look for electrical power failure. I have had this happen, but it corrected itself by simply turning the ignition off and restarting the engine. If one jack fails, go to the hydraulic power pack and find three solenoids. One solenoid is for the front pair of jacks and the other two are one for each rear jack. At this point, memorize or tag each solenoid wire as to which solenoid the wire is originally hooked to. Now unhook two of the wires. With one wire still connected, operate the jack switches to determine which jack the currently connected wire operates. Do this with each wire individually with only that wire connected and the other two disconnected. Record which solenoid operates which jack position. You will now have also determined which solenoid and wiring is functioning properly. Next hook one of the properly functioning wires to the non-functioning solenoid. Go to the control pad and try to retract the failed jack using the pad position of the wire you now have

hooked to the failed jack. If the jack retracts you have determined the solenoid is good and the problem is in the power supply for that particular jack, but at least you can now go on down the road.

If the jack does not retract, you are still stuck and there is one more step to do. This will require you to use a 9/16" wrench to remove the retainer nuts from the tops of one functioning solenoid and the non-functioning solenoid. Swap the two solenoid coils. Hook the wires up, not to their original coils, but in their original positions. If the problem was a failed coil, the jack will now retract.

And that is how I trouble-shot and got myself out of a very uncomfortable situation. The thrill of seeing that jack retract was inversely proportional to the discomfort of working outside in -9° temperature. ❖

A New Discovery?

Thankfully....no!



Sale Page for Members

This feature is available to any DOAI member, free of charge. Simply send the information to the editor, preferably via e-mail. Include full information, and send a photo, too!

For Sale: 1999 Discovery 36T

Well maintained with all the options; 27,000 miles; one owner; no smoke/no pets. Includes generator, convection/microwave oven, washer/dryer, side-by-side refrigerator w/ice maker, two AC units, back-up camera, awning, new spare tire, car towing unit, cloth and leather couches, plum and beige interior. \$88,000 or best offer. For more information, contact Geraldine Miller at 586.264.7440 or ronaldwmiller51@aol.com.



For Sale: 2000 Discovery, 275 hp

Cummins diesel, 18,000 miles, 7.5 Onan diesel generator, two TVs, CD, cassette, Corian countertops, leather upholstery, washer/dryer combo, kitchen slide-out. Nice! Contact Don Winstead, PO Box 1022, West Bank Access Rd., Columbus, MS 39701-1022, or call 662.312.0178.



For Sale: 2000

Discovery, 36T, with all options, 28,000 miles, very clean, non-smoker. Includes diesel generator, washer/dryer,



icemaker, back-up camera, awnings all around. Sage green interior. \$98,000 or best offer. Contact Jane Sherwood at 315.672.3177 or j.l.sherwood@att.net.

For Sale: Michelin 235/80R/22.5 tire mounted on steel wheel.

Tire unused with date code 019. Has been stored covered. Steel wheel is eight lug. \$125. Contact Steve Clarke at 219.690.1488 or stevec8400@aol.com.

For Sale: Used Michelin 235 XRV tire (5,000 miles), asking

\$50. Contact Maurice Fairweather at 905.852.6179 or ibiffo@aol.com.

For Sale: Two Michelin 235/80R/22.5 tires, used, \$35 each.

Two Coleman A/C Covers with Hail Guards, \$25 each. Contact Bob Cross at 936.856.9743 home, or 936.689.3356 cell.

For Sale: Stowmaster Tow Bar, 5,000 lb. weight capacity,

good condition. New was \$429; selling for \$150 plus shipping. Contact Phil Yovino at 713.682.4674 or 713.203.3114 or pdyo@pdq.net.

Helpful Hints

RV Alliance shared these tips with rally attendees at the South Central Rally in Texas several months ago. Here are some of them:

- ☞ Get a medical book that is comprehensive and current. Keep it with you in your coach. One of the better titles is Time-Life "The Medical Advisor."
- ☞ **Take a CPR class!**
- ☞ As you enter each state, note the emergency number posted on highway signs.
- ☞ Before you roll down the road, turn off the propane. The refrigerator contents will stay cold for at least six hours, and you may prevent a fire.
- ☞ Get an extra extinguisher and keep it in the bedroom.
- ☞ Keep campground information by telephone, including area code, Zip code and site number.
- ☞ Post a note on the door telling where emergency information is kept, i.e., prescription lists, allergies, etc. One of the best places to keep the information is in the freezer section of the refrigerator.
- ☞ If you have severe allergies or some condition that requires EMTs to know, wear an alert bracelet with the code number, instead of keeping the information in your wallet or purse. EMTs **will not** look in your purse or wallet.

☞ Carry your Will decisions in your coach; i.e., do not resuscitate instructions, etc.

☞ On cell phone put "daughter" or "son" instead of her or his name, etc. This will aid paramedics and hospitals to know whom they can call if using your cell phone.

Here's a hint from "Motorhomes Made Easy": Make ice at night. The freezer works better. Besides, unfrozen water will splash out of the trays if you are traveling. **[Editor's Comment:** This tip assumes you don't have a working ice maker.]

The following tip is from Mark Polk, host of the "RV Education 101" series of RV how-to videos: Before you leave on a trip or leave the campground, walk around your entire unit not once but twice, and check everything out. You will be amazed how many times you notice something wrong the second time around.

Peggy Gwillam shares this hint: Warranty expired? Contact Warranty Experts, 9355 Bandera Rd., Ste. 140, San Antonio, TX 78250 – ask for Carlos – or contact Star RV Platinum Plus. You can check these out on the Internet.

Harvey Becker says, if you're having a hard time putting on those rubber gloves for chores, blow into them first...they slip on real easy. ❖

Travel to/in Mexico

by Herb Peterson

We've all heard of the stories of bandits and such in Mexico. I would say that about 99 percent of that is urban legend. With the exception of parts of Mexico City, I wouldn't hesitate to travel in Mexico. There are also parts of many major cities in the U.S. that I would avoid.



When we first got our D, we contemplated going to Mexico, but thought it may be too dangerous. As we sat in a restaurant in Lukesville (locally known as "Gringo Pass"), AZ, however, located just feet from the U.S./Mexico border and very close to the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, we observed RV after RV going into Mexico. We also saw RV after RV returning from Mexico. We therefore determined that they weren't all getting killed or robbed, and decided to chance it and drive down to Puerto Penasco (also known as "Rocky Point"), a popular tourist spot for Arizonians, located about 60 miles "South of the Border."

Our Adventure Began

We found that the roads in Mexico were as good or better than their counterparts in Arizona. The drive was easy and we made it without incident. We found a very nice campground (one of many), located on the Sea of Cortez, where the rates were very reasonable and the accommodations were quite nice. There was plenty of touristy things to do including markets, fishing, restaurants, and nightlife. As an example, charter fishing for the day cost \$50 each (with five other people) and upon our return, I had my 20 or so fish filleted for a \$1. In all, it was an enjoyable experience. We have returned there a few times, but now we head to El Golfo, a small fishing village located about 50 miles up the coast from Puerto Penasco, which is part of the CRA park system, of which we are members. In all our travels in Mexico, we have found, for the most part, the people friendly and easy to get along with.

Not knowing much (or any) Spanish isn't a problem, nor is having only U.S. currency, as it is

readily acceptable anywhere. We also have crossed on foot into many border towns including Algodones, which has more dentists per square block than any other city in the world.

Algodones, by the way, is not located on most maps but the business they do with Americans is phenomenal. It is located just south of California, about 20 miles from Yuma. They have markets galore, but their main claim to fame is dentists, eye glasses, and pharmacies. As an example, at one of the better dentists, I have had porcelain crowns for \$220 and root canals for \$200; there are many cheaper. Two pairs of no-line bifocals with plastic lenses were \$130 including the eye exam and the frames. More expensive frames can be had, if desired, up to \$40 more for the pair with designer frames. The medical equipment is state of the art and they have labs right in town. Glasses can be had in as little as an hour. Mexican generic pharmaceuticals can cost up to 90 percent less than in the States. U.S. pharmacies say Mexican medicine isn't as good, but we know literally hundreds of people who buy all their medications there and have had no ill effects over the years. I have personally gotten prescription items there that were cheaper than our co-pay and work just as well. You decide. Not all border towns have as low prices

as Algodones, however; we were in Mexicali and went to a pharmacy there and they just said they couldn't touch the prices offered in Algodones.

There was an article in the Phoenix paper about Algodones: the average age of the tourist there is 70 (up from 60 in the 1980s) and during the busy season, the average money spent per day is \$2,000,000 or about \$141 million a year.

If your only experience in Mexico is walking over to a border town, you may think that all Mexican towns are dirty and run down. With the exception of Tijuana and Algodones and maybe a few others, you are for the most part correct. Once you get past the border, though, you will be pleasantly surprised. Although the standards of Mexico aren't the same as here in the U.S., I would say that most places there are just like American cities were in the 1950s and 1960s. Places like

Continued on page 14...



Travel to/in Mexico, cont.

Cancun, though, are very modern. Judging Mexico by its border towns is like judging a book by its cover.

The Basics

First of all, make sure you have a passport or certified copy of your birth certificate and a legal ID such as a state-issued driver's license or ID or military ID, etc. You also need the title to your motor home and toad. If you haven't received the title yet, you need a letter from a Mexican Notary Public stating that you own the vehicle. A bill of sale is all you need plus about \$10 for their services, of course. In addition, if your motor home or vehicle is financed, you should have a letter from your financing institution stating that you have their permission to travel into Mexico. You may need a visa, and you will need liability insurance.

Mexico requires that you have liability insurance issued by a Mexican insurance company. Check with your insurance carrier; you may be covered in Mexico for everything but the Mexican liability. If this is the case, you will save a great deal in insurance as Mexican short-term full coverage insurance for a \$100,000 coach and \$20,000 toad can be quite expensive. Some people only get a policy for the day they drive down and the day they drive back. This is fine if you don't drive your toad in Mexico and your return day isn't delayed or your trip isn't cut short due to unexpected reasons. As an

aside, make sure your insurance is from a reputable source. I am told that there are only a few insurance companies in Mexico that actually have the assets to pay a large claim. Don't buy insurance from some "hole in the wall" office just over the border in Mexico, with only a card table and a folding chair. Any of the main places in the U.S. should be fine. You can also find Mexican



insurance easily on the Internet. Most policies can include the services of a Mexican attorney who will assist you if you are involved in an accident, along with a contact phone number where someone on the other end will speak English. I would recommend this.

If you are going to be in Mexico for more than eight days, you may need a visa. The visa issued by the government is good for 180 days and costs, at this time, about \$20 U.S. each. To obtain one, you need to walk (or drive) into Mexico and go to a government tourist office. These are usually located within a close proximity to the border. The form you need is a "Turista O Transmigrante" form (Migratory Form for Foreign Tourist). You

fill out the form; they will assist if you have questions. You need your name, place of birth, gender, marital status (listed as Civil Status), permanent address, destination (if you plan to travel, list the furthest destination), passport number (a birth certificate and a driver's license are also acceptable), occupation and finally, mode of transportation, which for most of us is "motor home." Once the form is filled out, you need to go to the nearest bank where you will pay the required fee, and your form is stamped that the fee has been paid. You then return to the tourist office where they will put the official stamp on it and it is valid. Why is that the procedure? One can only guess.

You won't need a visa if you are traveling along a "tourist corridor." You are exempt, although if you plan to stay more than 30 days, get a visa anyway. Two designated tourist corridors in Mexico I know of are from Lukesville to Puerto Penasco and from San Diego to Tijuana. Available at the same office may be a brochure in English (they may be out), giving the tourist corridors and other requirements of visiting Mexico.

In all the times we have been to Mexico, we have never been stopped by the Mexican border police, the Mexican army, or the *federales*. The Mexican Border Police, who wear regular police uniforms, may stop you when you enter into Mexico; you probably will never encounter the Mexican

Continued on page 15...

Travel to/in Mexico, cont.

army, which wear uniforms just like the U.S. army, or the *federales*, who wear black uniforms, but you may.

If you are inspected, it will usually be at the border going into Mexico, or going through a checkpoint. Unless you are very fluent in Spanish, speak English. You don't want to say the wrong thing. I know enough Spanish to get myself into trouble, but not enough to get myself out of trouble. Be polite and honest, answer all their questions, let them look wherever they want. You can accompany them, if you wish, and I would recommend it, unless you are told otherwise. Don't get smart, look down at them, or talk down to them; their jobs are very respectable in Mexico and they deserve the respect. You are in their country and they hold all the cards. On the other hand, tourism is a very big part of their economy and they will generally treat you with respect as well.

You may run into an officious person who is having a bad day and may treat you in a manner you would not like to be treated. Grin and bear it. I know none of us have ever run into people like this here in the U.S., say at the Post Office or the Dept. of Motor Vehicles, but it could happen. If you get nasty back at them, well, you can predict the outcome.

We have occasionally heard of people who, while stopped at the border, were told they have some trivial violation but a payment of a small fine (in cash and instantly) would settle the issue. The amount is usually negotiable, and if so, is usually bogus. How do you deal with it? It's up to you. You may just want to pay and get on with your life.

Personally, I would apologize, very politely, for breaking the rules and ask to be given a ticket or citation, something that I can keep for my records, that I could pay at the office/station and/or ask to see his supervisor to discuss the matter with him. I think this approach will most likely end the situation. I guarantee you, getting mad or shouting will probably worsen the situation. Again this should be a rare occurrence, as I have actually only met one person who said he was asked to pay a \$20 fine, because he had too many gas cans on his trailer. He ended up not paying the fine.

If you carry a firearm, forget about going into Mexico, period. If you are caught in Mexico with a firearm or even ammunition, you **will be jailed**. Although I have never even seen the inside of a Mexican jail or prison, I guarantee you, you won't like it; it can take over two years just to get a trial. Leave your weapon at home or make arrangements to have it stored while you are in Mexico. I wouldn't even carry a cleaning kit or a BB gun into Mexico.

Fuel in Mexico runs a little higher than here in the U.S. but their gasoline is 87 octane and will be fine for most vehicles. I understand that the diesel fuel there has a higher sulphur content, so it won't burn as cleanly. We generally fill the coach before we go down and never need diesel fuel.

Ever hear the expression, "Don't drink the water"? It's true. Although sanitation is much better than it used to be in Mexico, I still wouldn't use tap water. Bottled water and R.O. water (water that has been filtered and purified by reverse osmosis)

is available most places and R.O. water is very cheap. Even fruits and vegetables that are washed in tap water can give you "Montezuma's Revenge." I suggest you carry Imodium AD™ with you, just in case. We haven't had any problems in over ten years, but we are careful. Washing and cleaning with tap water has never given us a problem, but we drink, wash food, and brush our teeth with R.O. water. Ice also should be made from purified water; it never hurts to ask.

Last but not least, make sure you get the brochure "Mexican Border: U.S. Agricultural Quarantine Information" and read it before you go down and again before you come back, just to be sure. For example, chicken, eggs, and potatoes, including Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes and yams, are **not** allowed into the U.S. unless they have been cooked first. Pork in any form is not allowed, including sausage or cold cuts. All fruits *except* bananas, blackberries, cactus fruits, dates, dewberries, grapes, lemons, limes (sour), lychees, melons, papayas, pineapples, and strawberries are prohibited. This is just a small and definitely not all-inclusive list. The U.S. state you enter into may have stricter regulations, such as California. Other brochures you might want to get are, "Know Before You Go" and "Pets and Wildlife," if you have pets or plan on bringing back wild game. All this information can be obtained, I believe, on the web at www.customs.gov. ❖

Herb and Avis Peterson live in Wisconsin and are active DOAI members. They have often traveled to Mexico. Thanks, Herb!

Discovery Modifications

This is the third installment of modifications DOAI members have made to their rigs. This time we feature hard-working Art Schmitt, who redid the flooring in his 1997 36T, and shared his experiences with DOAI members via the website. However, since not everyone has an Internet access, we present Art's tale of floor replacement in his own words. If you have questions, contact Art at artschmitt@earthlink.net.

When my wife, Beth, and I toured the new D models at the Lazydays rally in February 2001, she decided we'd keep our "old" 1997 36T (which we bought used from friends), but she wanted new carpet and tile in the kitchen, shower, and toilet areas. I installed top-of-the-line high-traffic carpet (don't need much) and a laminated tile floating floor. The former owners used it full time for 18 months, and we had been full-timing for over a year. Even though all of us have had a "no shoes" rule, the carpet was still well worn in the traffic areas. The project turned out well – we are still married and I don't have to worry about buying a new D.

It took a couple of weeks to do the refurb project. After looking at the sheet floor covering, vinyl and even ceramic tile, I decided on the new laminated, floating floor tile. (It's called "floating floor" because it is not attached to the floor at all. The flooring [tiles or planks] lay on a thin foam sheet and are glued together on tongue-and-groove edges. There is a 5/16" clearance all around.) This laminated stuff is really a wood product with the finish bonded to it. Most of the products are made to look like wood plank flooring, but I found some in 15" x 15" tiles. There are many styles that look like ceramic, marble, wood parquet, etc. I've seen Pergo brand at Home Depot; however, Beth picked a product by Wilsonart. They are all about the same.

As a full-timer, the biggest issue to face when we took this on was having another place to stay. It would have been a big hassle to try to live in the project mess and to clean up every day when we finished. Aside from that, it didn't require any skill...just patience with myself. Wilsonart puts out an installation video which was very helpful.

The Slide

My D has the Fleetwood E-Z Glide slide. I found that the original carpet goes under the slide all the way to the side wall. The slide does not actually touch the floor as it goes in and out; it rides on the blocks by the wall at fore and aft of the slide. As I planned the project, I wanted to be sure the new materials didn't exceed the height of the original carpet and pad, or wood planking. I cut the original carpet about an inch (as far as I could reach) under the slide by dinette then ran the tile under the slide up to the edge of the remaining carpet. I followed the same approach for carpet under slide sofa. I did not replace the original carpet under the sofa on the slide platform since it doesn't show.

Tile Installation

The toughest part of the entire job was removing the wood plank flooring that Fleetwood installed in the area by kitchen sink and frig (see "before" photo). It was not floating floor and

was glued solidly to the subfloor. I had to pry up the planks and scrape off the glue. The glue they used on mine is a permanent type, like Liquid Nails, and very difficult to get off. By the time I finished, I had put many gouges in the subfloor. I used a floor leveling compound to fill the holes, then put down a thin luan plywood underlay (this can be glued or nailed to the underlay). Then I laid the foam sheet and taped it several places to hold in place.

As I laid the tile, I made sure the lines were square/parallel with walls, etc., and were pressed together tightly. To do this, I measured the distances, divided by tile width, and laid out the tiles "dry" to make sure everything would work out. Then I marked a center line (front to rear) and nailed straight board along the line all the way into the bathroom. Then I laid the first row of tile along the center board. The next row was then pushed against the first row of tile and held in place by the center board. I worked from the center board to the sink cabinet. When I had laid all the full tiles in that direction, I took up the board and laid tiles toward the slide side. To be sure the first rows wouldn't slip, I put shim strips between the sink/frig cabinet and the first rows laid. The rest was just following the installation instructions for the tile. I cut the tiles with a saber saw, using a fine cutting blade (I needed a good supply of them as the laminated wood is very hard). I didn't have to worry too much about the straightness of the cuts, since they were around the wall (or under slide) and I covered the edges with a quarter-round molding. I used the cheap wood-look quarter-round from Home Depot by the kitchen, but bought molding to match the tile in the bathroom area.

Carpet Installation

I completed the tile work before I did the carpet. I simply cut out the carpet in those areas where tile replaced the carpet. When the tile work was complete, I removed the original carpet in as complete pieces as possible to create a pattern for cutting the new carpet. I also removed and replaced the pad with a better one, but if you do take on this project, you don't need to do that. In fact, the biggest problem with the carpet job was removing all the staples from the floor after the pad was removed.

I used a driveway to lay out the new carpet and old carpet pieces (pattern). Since I wanted to cut the carpet from the underside, I placed the old pieces bottom side up. I cut the new carpet two inches to three inches larger than the old so I could trim to fit. The carpet work is a snap compared to tile.

Tools for Tile

I needed these items: Saber saw to cut tile and underlayment; scissors to cut foam pad; stiff metal putty knife/scrapper to remove old glue; plastic putty knife to spread new glue; blue masking tape; and other odds and ends per tile installation instructions.

Tools for Carpet

Like most jobs this is easier with the right tools. I rented carpet installation tools (electric stapler, knee-kick stretcher, and edge trimmer). I bought a carpet cutting tool (a large handle that holds a special blade – much better than standard utility knife).

See photos on facing page...



Top Photo: Before the refurbishing project. **Bottom Photo:** After the project. You can see the results in color on the DOAI website.



Supplemental Braking Systems for Towed Vehicles

Supplemental Braking Systems (SBS) have become an RV industry hot topic when you are towing a vehicle behind your RV. Chassis manufacturers provide the total weight that can be driven and pulled for a vehicle. Referred to as the Gross Combined Weight Rating, this term advises the amount of weight your coach's braking system can handle, but doesn't include the weight of what's being pulled. By contrast, travel trailers typically include backing systems. Thus the concern: Does your RV have adequate braking for the weight being towed?

According to the late C. Jay Haynor, former technical editor for Family Motor Coaching magazine, SBSs are marketed by many companies. Mr. Haynor was quoted as saying, "In the thousands of letters I've received, I've never read about a problem that involved too much braking; however, I have received letters discussing inadequate braking. It's an important safety issue that's worth discussing with a reputable dealer to see if additional braking is needed."

Most coaches have a Gross Combined Weight Rating that allows them to tow between 2,000 and 10,000 pounds. But the structural integrity and power of a motorcoach to tow such a weight are only parts of the equation. It just makes sense that if a coach is pulling from one to five tons behind it, the time and distance required to brake will increase significantly.

Several manufacturers have designed systems intended to mitigate problems associated with braking while towing a vehicle. Before choosing one of them, we suggest that you contact the manufacturer of the towed vehicle to make sure the augmenting brake system doesn't compromise the warranty of the toad or your motor home. Also, check with your insurance agent and the department of motor vehicles in the state your coach and toad vehicle are registered, and in any Canadian province you intend to visit, regarding towing requirements. Following, RV technical writer, Lazelle Jones, highlights some toad vehicle braking products offered.

BRAKEBUDDY

800.470.2287

www.brakebuddy.com

A self-contained system in a 9-by-9.5-by-10-inch box that sits on the towed car floor in front of the driver's seat, the Brakebuddy plugs into the cigarette lighter. A metal arm projects forward from the box and attaches to the brake pedal. The 12-volt power supply operates an air compressor that keeps a 50-cubic-inch air-reservoir tank filled with compressed air. Inside the box is a pendulum that senses braking, moving forward to activate a switch, which in turn activates the air cylinder, causing it to receive compressed air from the air tank, which pushes the air cylinder and the arm that's attached to the brake pedal forward. The Brakebuddy features a sensitivity knob that adjusts braking force to suit individual driver needs. Brakebuddy also offers an optional system that includes a remote frequency transmitter. It sends a radio signal to a receiver in your motor home, illuminating a red light to let you know the Brakebuddy is operating. A Brakebuddy breakaway safety system is also offered.

TOAD STOP VAC BRAKE

800.478.7883

www.rvstuf.com

Toad Stop's auxiliary Vac Brake works in concert with the toad's original equipment, using vacuum-assisted braking from the motor home or an optional vacuum pump. The Toad Stop Vac Brake provides controlled power-assisted antilock braking and vehicle breakaway protection that will stop the toad in a matter of seconds. Toad Stop claims the breakaway device will stop the vehicle in 15 seconds, at 70 MPH. For emergency backup, the Vac Brake can be disabled from the cockpit in the motor home by flipping a toggle switch. A manual override button allows the driver to actuate the toad's brakes without touching the brakes on the motor home.

BRAKE SAFE

509.787.4904

www.brakesafesystems.com

Brake Safe products include the BS-I and II Pro Series, and the BS-IV. The BS-I Pro is a push-air actuator that

features a quick-release connection for easy removal. The BS-II is a pull-band air actuator that permanently mounts to the brake-pedal arm and remains in place when the toad is being driven. In both models, an accelerometer detects the amount of braking in the motor home and sends a proportional amount of air pressure to the brake-pedal actuator. Both models include a self-contained power pack that contains an accelerometer, an air compressor, the air reservoir and the controls. The cigarette lighter provides 12-volt power. Both the BS-I and the BS-II Pro Series offer an optional breakaway kit.

The BS-IV is designed for motor homes with air brakes. It also offers proportional braking. A pull-band air actuator permanently mounts to the brake-pedal arm, allowing the towed vehicle to be driven without the actuator being removed. Air pressure for the air actuator comes via a self-coiling hose outfitted with quick-disconnects. Also available is an optional breakaway system that's self-contained and installed under the hood of the towed vehicle.

VIP TOW BRAKE

800.927.6878

www.towbrake.com

The VIP Tow Brake is an electrically-operated system that uses a high-speed electric actuator mounted in the toad between the floorboard and the brake pedal. The 6,000-RPM electric motor that drives the actuator is powered by the toad's own battery. The coach's electrical system provides a continuous trickle charge to the toad battery, ensuring that it remains fully charged and ready to power the electric actuator. A control module in the motor home includes a mercury switch that senses braking action, sending a signal to the toad.

The VIP Tow Brake operates automatically, or via manual operation that allows the driver to apply the toad brakes without applying the motor home brakes. It also features breakaway protection that automatically actuates should the toad become detached. A green light on the unit indicates correct system operation, a red light lets the driver know when the toad's brakes are on, and a flashing red light and buzzer

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Supplemental Braking Systems, cont.

indicate a breakaway situation or disconnection in progress. To use the toad for transportation once a destination is reached, simply pull two pins and put the cylinder-shaped electric actuator unit somewhere else, such as the back seat.

TOW-V-AIRE

888.464.1105

www.tow-v-aire.com

The Tow-V-Aire kit works with either gasoline- or diesel-powered coaches, because the system is contained on the toad and derives its electrical power from the coach's brake-light circuit and battery. The Tow-V-Aire kit consists of an air cylinder that's attached to the toad's brake pedal with U-bolts and wing nuts. A portable power unit that can be set just about anywhere in the toad contains a 12-volt air compressor by Schrader/Bellows, two solenoids, and an air tank or receiver that holds and supplies 120 psi of air pressure. There are two solenoids, one for regular braking and a second one to support a breakaway situation. An air line with a quick-connect fitting snaps to the air

cylinder that's attached to the brake pedal of the toad. This air cylinder is held in place by a removable pin, facilitating removal when you're ready to drive the toad.

When the solenoid for regular braking receives a brake-pedal signal from the motor home, it releases compressed air to the stainless-steel air cylinder that's mounted on the toad's brake pedal. As soon as the signal goes away, the solenoid stops the flow of compressed air to the air cylinder in the toad, and the toad brakes are released. A breakaway switch is mounted on the front of the toad with a small steel cable attached to the motor home. Should the toad break away, the cable pulls a switch, and compressed air pressure is applied to the toad brakes.

AUTOSTOP BRAKING SYSTEMS

402.385.3051

www.aemfg.com

Designed and built by Automatic Towing Products' Blue Ox Division, AutoStop Gold is unique in that it's designed to utilize an adjustable spring mechanism that activates a toad's brakes. The design allows you to adjust the spring for

various activating pressures, thus accommodating different toad weights (up to 5,000 pounds) and different driver braking habits. A cable runs from the adjustable spring mechanism, enters the towed vehicle through a small hole in the floorboard, and wraps around the brake pedal, activating the towed vehicle's brakes as the cable tightens when the motor home's brakes are applied. AutoStop models currently available work in conjunction with the Aladdin, Demco's KarBar, Aventa and Aventa II, plus all ball-mounted tow bars. ❖

With nearly four decades of experience insuring RVs, no one understands your vehicle like RV Alliance America, the RV insurance specialist. RVAA has multiple carrier options and can provide you with a policy custom-designed for the special nature of your coach. We also offer the added benefit of umbrella coverage, which provides liability coverage that extends beyond your RV, home and auto insurance policies to protect you from a costly lawsuit. To get a quote, call RVAA at 800.521.2942, or visit www.rvaa.com for more information.

Cool Tips by Rich Johnson
Common-sense techniques can increase efficiency and extend the life of RV refrigerators.

Maybe you're the kind of person who likes ice cream solid and Jello firm instead of sloshy. These don't seem like unreasonable desires, but the refrigerator has to cooperate in order for it to happen. And on a hot day, an RV refrigerator needs all the help it can get.

RV refrigerators are completely different from household units, and they live a relatively rugged life. They are asked to work on a variety of energy sources, and withstand all the jostling of highway travel. Unless a little special care is extended their way, it is understandable that they might someday complain or go on strike altogether.

The most common strike is when the refrigerator simply doesn't perform very well; temperature inside the food compartment during hot weather approaches or exceeds 50 degrees. To

understand why this happens requires knowledge of how the absorption refrigerator works, which we'll explain later. But even without the technical details, there are many simple tricks that will make an RV refrigerator work better, as we learned during discussions with the experts at Dometic, Norcold, and Sibir. Some of the procedures described here require a periodic visit to a service center where technicians can test components with instrumentation if erratic refrigerator performance is noticed. But most of them are just everyday common-sense techniques that will make living the RV lifestyle more enjoyable. After all, jiggly Jello is a whole lot more fun than the sloshy kind.

Here are a few tips:

- * Pre-cool the refrigerator by starting it the night before the camping trip. This should be done with no food in the refrigerator. Wait until the unit is thoroughly cold before placing food inside.
- * Pre-cool food in your home refrigerator before putting it in the RV refrigerator. Pre-freeze foods to

be kept in the freezer. This gives the unit a break, by adding cold to it rather than adding heat and demanding more work to cool down.

- * When buying food on the road that is intended for storage in the refrigerator, buy the coldest packages possible, and get them in the RV refrigerator as quickly as possible. This keeps the refrigerator from having to work extra hard to cool down warm packages.
- * Always wipe moisture off the outside of containers before putting them in the refrigerator. If cold items are taken from the unit, they will have a tendency to sweat as they warm. Dry them off before putting them back into the refrigerator. This will help prevent a frost buildup, which consumes cooling power and insulates against efficient heat transfer.
- * Make sure the unit is as level as possible. Some refrigerators have a built-in safety mechanism that prevents damage to the refrigeration

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Cool Tips, continued

system when the refrigerator is off level. The more nearly level the unit, the more efficiently it will work. Continual off-level work eventually blocks circulation of refrigerant.

- * Periodically clean out the burner unit. LP gas has a garlic scent that is especially strong as the tanks run low. This scent attracts spiders, which will build nests in the burner.
- Special care must be taken when cleaning burner orifices; these parts are delicate. Some, like Dometic's, cannot be cleaned by simply inserting a pin or thin wire. They must be removed, cleaned in alcohol, and then blown dry with compressed air. When reinstalling, ensure that the burner flame is centered directly below the flue.
- * Clean out the refrigerator's roof exhaust vent. Bird nests, leaves, twigs or other debris can lodge there, choking the unit's efficiency. In extreme cases, it can even cause a fire.
- * Don't overfill the LP bottles. This can damage the regulator diaphragm, causing irregular delivery of the propane, resulting in erratic operation of the refrigerator.
- * In the gas mode, the burners are designed for a specific BTU rating. The LP-gas pressure must remain constant or else the refrigerator will operate erratically.

If you have noticed erratic cooling when operating on gas, check for kinks or clogging in the gas line. It is important to check LP-gas pressure at the refrigerator when other appliances are turned on. This will reveal whether the refrigerator gets sufficient pressure when other appliances are operating. Using a test manometer, pressure should read 11 inches of water column pressure. Most RV'ers have a shop perform this test because of the equipment involved.

- * Periodically have the regulator diaphragm replaced to ensure maximum efficiency. The diaphragm can load up with a waxy substance after much use, and that changes the way the pressure is controlled. If the pressure vacillates, the refrigerator will suffer irregular operation.

- * Don't put any filters, covers, or plastic bags over the vents to the refrigerator unit. They are designed to be operated as they come from the factory, with no filters, plastic bags, or anything else covering the vents. If the ventilation is restricted, a build-up of excess heat results, and the refrigerator cannot function properly.
- * Don't open the refrigerator or freezer doors more often than necessary. Dometic's Bill Hendricks put it this way: "Cold air in the refrigerator is just like a pile of sand. It falls to the bottom, and when you open the door it runs out on the floor. Every time the door is opened, the refrigerator gains a few degrees of heat." In other words, if it is opened six or eight times on a hot day, it may totally lose its cool.
- * In extremely hot weather, a small battery-powered fan in the refrigerator will help circulate the air faster than occurs by natural convection. This can help efficiency in unusually hot weather.
- * Make sure an adequate electric cord is used when operating in 110-volt mode. An extension cord of too small a gauge will cause inefficiency of the refrigerator heating element and will result in a loss of cooling capacity.
- * The flue, which is directly above the burner flame, should be cleaned periodically to remove rust, scale, and soot. How often this is done is determined by frequency of use, propane quality, and region of the country. If the refrigerator is operated in areas of great humidity or salt air, it will require more frequent cleaning.

After removal of the flue tube, the spiral baffle inside the tube must be carefully removed. Then a shotgun bore brush or a special brush available from the refrigerator manufacturer is used to clean the tube. When everything is clean, the baffle must be replaced exactly as it was removed. In order to perform, this operation, you may have to remove the refrigerator from its recess. This cleaning is critical to get the final few percentage points of efficiency. Generally, however, its

benefits will only be noticed in extremely hot weather when maximum refrigerator cooling is needed.

- * If possible, park so the refrigerator side of the coach is shaded.
- * Clean the absorber coils and condenser fins to remove any buildup that can act as heat transfer insulator.
- * Periodically, the electric heating element should be checked for proper resistance. It will deteriorate with age, leaving the refrigerator with a slowly diminishing capacity for cooling when used in the electric mode. Generally, owners have this test performed by a shop because of the instruments required.
- * Defrost the unit regularly. A frost buildup insulates against thermal exchange, preventing the refrigerator from absorbing the heat from its contents. But don't use a hair dryer or high-heat source to speed defrosting. This can warp the cooling fins. Use a pan of warm water and patience.
- * Inspect the door gasket for proper sealing ability. Use the dollar bill trick. (Shut the refrigerator door with a dollar bill halfway inside, then tug on the other half to see how difficult it is to remove. It should offer some resistance.) Or you can place a lighted flashlight inside the refrigerator at night and shut the door to see if light escapes.
- * Since the stationary refrigerator light produces some heat, check to see that it goes out when the door is closed. To do this, use a thin butter knife blade to spread the door gasket back a bit when the door is closed. This will allow you to look inside at night when the door is closed to see if the light is on.
- * If your refrigerator can be operated in the 12-volt mode, make sure the connection uses an adequate gauge of wire and that there is no corrosion or damage to the wire.

If you'd like to know more about the reasons behind the problems discussed earlier, it's necessary to understand the very ingenious theory

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Cool Tips, continued

behind the absorption refrigerator. Rather than applying cold directly, heat is drawn out (absorbed) from the refrigerator. When there is an absence of heat, there is cold.

In absorption refrigeration there are no moving parts. The whole process is based on laws of chemistry and physics rather than mechanics. Here's how it works:

Water, ammonia, hydrogen gas, and sodium chromate are combined under pressure in a containment vessel, sometimes known as a generator or boiler. Each of these elements plays an important role in the process of cooling or in the preservation of the equipment. The water, ammonia, and hydrogen gas are directly involved in the cooling process, but the sodium chromate's job is to prevent the heat from corroding the pipes.

As an electrical heating element or gas burner brings the solution to a boil, the liquid percolates up the pump tube, and the ammonia is distilled out of the solution and continues to rise up the tube as a gas. A little way up the tube, the water and ammonia gas part company, and the water returns to the reservoir via a circuitous race track of winding pipes. During the water's return, it is recombining with the ammonia at the far end of its voyage.

Meanwhile, the ammonia gas continues upward until it reaches the condenser, where it gives off its heat and returns to a liquid form. As the drops of pure liquid ammonia fall, they trickle into the evaporator (freezing unit) where they combine with hydrogen gas. This chemical marriage causes very vigorous evaporation, and as every student of physics knows, evaporation results in cooling. Since this rapid evaporation process takes place in the freezer unit, that's exactly where most of the cold goes, as the heat is literally sucked out.

Because of the evaporation, the liquid ammonia is now a gas again, and it travels to a secondary evaporator in the refrigerator unit (the shiny fins inside) where it absorbs more heat. Then the gas enters a return pipe on its way back to rejoin the water and start the process again.

It's a real simple system, but problems can occur if the unit is operated off level. This is because the heating element or flame will be heating

up the boiler and there may not be enough liquid in the right place to prevent the heat from cooking the sodium chromate. If that happens, the sodium chromate gets hard and can clog up the tiny passages in the pump tube, or it can flake and float around until it finds a place to get into trouble. Eventually, it causes the failure of the refrigerator.

In recent years, some RV refrigerator manufacturers have redesigned certain components of their units to prevent accidental damage due to off-level operation. The new refrigerators quit before they can harm themselves. If you want to know whether or not your unit is a self-protecting design, check with the manufacturer. Otherwise, make sure your RV is level when the refrigerator is in operation.

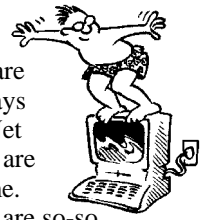
Stories abound about mystical methods of rejuvenating a refrigerator that has ceased to function. Often, the unit will fail because a flake of sodium chromate has finally found a way to clog the small passages in the system. People have been known to remove the refrigerator from its recess, turn the unit upside down to dislodge the sodium chromate particles, and then reinstall the unit. When we discussed this practice with a refrigerator engineer, he commented that sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. It's a gamble, because frequently particles will find their way back into the passages, and the refrigerator will fail again. Another source said that simply driving down a bumpy road can do the same thing, dislodging particles. One thing is certain: When the unit gets into such a condition that you start thinking about this type of maneuver, the refrigerator is living on borrowed time. A major overhaul or unit replacement is probably not far down the road.

Although refrigerators operating on the absorption principle typically are affected more severely by hot weather than are compressor-type units, they can do a good job, if they are given all the breaks. Using the previously listed tips will help ensure the best possible refrigerator performance. ❖

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Surfing the Net

Surf's up! There are so many new ways of surfing the 'Net these days...new sites are popping up all the time. Some are good, some are so-so, and some are just plain bad. However, for the most part, those dedicated to our favorite pastime – RV'ing – are fairly good. Here's one I found recently, with a brief description of what you will find:



www.rvbookstore.com

Naturally, this site sells books covering many aspects of the RV lifestyle. One of the latest is "Selecting an RV Home Base, 2004." Here's the online review:

"For anyone considering the full time RV lifestyle, a state to establish a home base can be vitally important. For these RV'ers, this book from the editors of *Trailer Life* and *Motorhome* magazines is a "must have" planning tool for selecting a state to call home. Among the most important issues for RV'ers are taxes and RV fees. Which states have the best income tax advantages? Which states offer the best rates on RV registration? The fact is, picking the wrong state to establish an official residence could result in spending thousands of dollars a year that could be saved by establishing a home base elsewhere. And just how does a full-time RV'er establish an official residency? Is it enough to simply rent a post office box? Probably not. In "RV Home Base," you will learn:

- Financial liability by state
- Federal taxes for full-time RV'ers
- State retirement exemptions
- Tax advantages of each state
- Vehicle licensing registration specifics
- Voting rules and requirements

And there is more to learn. Learn about selling or renting your house, earning a living as you travel, and how to file your taxes. This is a little book, just 48 pages, but the information is valuable and almost impossible to find elsewhere without countless hours of research. The product number is B0067, and costs \$12.71."

Other titles in this site's inventory include RV'ing on a shoestring, boondocking basics, where to find dump stations, best places for big rigs, and more. Take a look; you might find something you need. ❖

Windshield Damage – Has It Hit You?

Why you should get your windshield repaired

Having your windshield repaired instead of replaced can save you both time and money. Windshield repair costs significantly less than replacement, and in many cases, insurance companies are happy to foot the repair bill to avoid a more costly replacement. Having your windshield repaired can also save time. If the chip occurs while you're traveling, it may be difficult to find glass shops that stock RV glass. It often takes several days for new glass to come in, and another day or two for the installation and curing before you can be underway again. In addition to saving time and money, you're also saving valuable space in America's landfills. Laminated glass cannot yet be recycled.

Windshields in automobiles are designed to provide support to the roof in the event of a rollover accident. Windshields with stone chip damage have lost as much as 50 percent of their structural integrity. Repairing the damage restores that integrity – yet another good reason to get your windshield replaced.

What you can do to prevent further damage

If you get a windshield chip, immediately cover the chipped area with clear tape. While this won't keep the chip from spreading, it will keep moisture and contaminants out of the chip, allowing for a cleaner and clearer repair. Be careful not to touch the chip, and don't attempt to repair it yourself. That could cause contamination of the area as well, and may make it impossible to repair. Get the damage repaired as soon as possible. Extreme temperatures – either hot or cold – can cause that small chip to spread. Avoid washing your RV, as soap and water can contaminate the affected area. The jarring effect of slamming your door can cause the chip to spread. The heat from your defroster, vibrations from traveling, and the freezing of moisture trapped in the break can also cause that small chip to become a large break that cannot be repaired.

What you should expect from your repair

Windshield repairs will be somewhat visible. Visibility depends on the type of break, severity of damage, and if contamination has occurred.

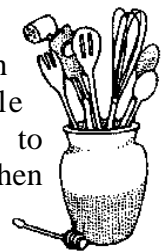
You should expect to receive a money-back

guarantee with your repair. Saving the windshield is the primary goal, since saving the original seal can prevent possible leakage. Occasionally, however, a repair will fail, since glass is fragile when a windshield is damaged. Should a repair fail, notify your insurance company if they are responsible for the repair costs. They, in turn, will contact the windshield repair company. If you personally covered the costs of the repair, you should contact the repair company directly. ❖

With nearly four decades of experience insuring RVs, no one understands your vehicle like RV Alliance America, the RV insurance specialist. RVAA has multiple carrier options and can provide you with a policy custom-designed for the special nature of your coach. We also offer the added benefit of umbrella coverage, which provides liability coverage that extends beyond your RV, home and auto insurance policies to protect you from a costly lawsuit. To get a quote, call RVAA at 800.521.2942, or visit www.rvaa.com for more information.

Feeding the RV'er

Appetizers are popular with RV'ers: having a little something for the palette to accompany that glass of wine when friends drop in at the campground is a nice touch. Here are several recipes from your editor's



recipe box, gathered over the years from forgotten sources:

Deviled Ham Spread

Bring to room temperature one 2½ oz. can Underwood's Deviled Ham, one 3 oz. wedge cream cheese, ½ teaspoon lemon juice, and ½ teaspoon horseradish. Mix well and serve with small crackers.

Bacon/Cheese Spread

Mix well one 8 oz. wedge softened cream cheese, 1 small wedge softened bleu cheese, 4 oz. crisp crumbled bacon, and garlic salt to taste. Serve with small crackers or pumpernickel bread rounds.

Pineapple/Pecan/Cheese Spread

Mix well two 8 oz. wedges softened cream cheese, 2 cups chopped pecans, 1 small can drained crushed pineapple, ½ cup chopped green pepper, 1 small chopped onion, and 1 teaspoon salt. ❖

2005 Southeast Region Rally – Orange Blossom Romp

Lazydays RallyPark, Seffner, Florida – January 28-February 1, 2005

Paved platforms and grassy sites – full hook-ups including cable TV

Sites not pre-assigned – to park together, you must arrive together



- * Vendor displays and seminars
* On-the-road driving instruction
* New coaches
* Games – bingo, Mexican train, card games
* Hot tub, tennis, swimming, shuffleboard
* Entertainment!
* Free computer hook-ups
* Camping World, Flying J, Cracker Barrel on site
* Theme parks and historical sites nearby

- * Two dinners and welcome party
* Breakfast and lunch compliments of Lazydays (Monday through Saturday)
* January 30 will be set aside as Fun Day, with: Red Hat Society Flea Market – Bring your white elephants, books, arts and crafts and baked goods
* Craft classes

Cut on dotted line, save this portion for your records.

Send rally fees (and form) to Registrar; send parking fees (and form) to Lazydays RallyPark.

Rally Fees: \$35.00 per coach (two people in coach)
\$24.00 per single (one person in coach)
\$24.00 per guest in your coach

Mail to: Edna Pendergrass, Registrar
3261 Maple Hammock Dr.
Sarasota FL 34235-6636
941.355.8720 or 888.793.4793 tollfree
epender2@aol.com

Make check payable to: Discovery Owners Assn., Inc. (or just D.O.A.I.)

No refunds after January 10, 2005

Registration form fields: Last Name, First Name, Co-Pilot, Street, City, State, ZIP+4 Code, DOAI #, Home Telephone, Cell Phone, Discovery Year/Model/Length, E-mail Address, Guest(s) Name, City, State, Emergency Contact Name, Emergency Telephone, Need handicap parking?, Is this your first region rally?

Parking Site fees for DOAI rally:
\$104.74 (Jan. 28-Feb. 1, 2005 – 4 nights)
\$30.23 per day, extra days

Mail to: Lazydays RallyPark
6120 County Rd 579
Seffner FL 33584-2968
800.905.6627

Make check payable to: Lazydays RallyPark

Mail to Lazydays as soon as possible

Registration form fields: Last Name, First Name, Co-Pilot, Street, City, State, ZIP+4 Code, DOAI #, Home Telephone, Cell Phone, Discovery Year/Model/Length, E-mail Address, Arrival Date, Departure Date, Number of Days, Check Enclosed: Check Number, Bank, Charge: MasterCard, Visa, Card #, Expiration Date

Check in at 1:00 p.m. Check out at 11:00 a.m. NO assigned sites.

DISCOVERY OWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Welcome to an organization open to all owners of Discovery motor homes by Fleetwood RV. DOAI is an organization intended to foster social opportunities and information exchange among members.

Dues are \$20.00 for the first year*; \$16.00 for one year renewal; \$45.00 for three years, or \$75.00 for five years. *New members pay an additional \$4.00 one-time administrative fee.

PLEASE...PAYABLE IN U.S. FUNDS ONLY!
Questions? Call 888.594.6818

Mail the form below with your check payable to *Discovery Owners Association, Inc.* to:
MaryAnn Crowell, Membership Director
207 County Road 3000
Lott, TX 76656-3828

Pilot Last Name _____ First _____ Co-Pilot _____

Address _____

City, State, ZIP+4 Code _____

Home Telephone _____ Cell Telephone _____

Discovery Year _____ Length and Model _____ E-Mail Address _____

Is this your first RV? ____ Yes ____ No Are you a full-time or part-time RV'er? _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____ representing (*check one*): One year Three years Five years

Discovery Owners Association, Inc.

MaryAnn Crowell, Membership Director
207 County Road 3000
Lott, TX 76656-3828

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