

Subject:

FW: January 2015 Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches



## The 7% -Written by a 90 year old

This is something we should all read at least once a week!!!! Make sure you read to the end!!!!

Written by Regina Brett, 90 years old, of the Plain Dealer, Cleveland, Ohio

"To celebrate growing older, I once wrote the 45 lessons life taught me. It is the most requested column I've ever written.

My odometer rolled over to 90 in August, so here is the column once more:

1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.
3. Life is too short so enjoy it.
4. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and family will.
5. Don't buy stuff you don't need.
6. You don't have to win every argument. Stay true to yourself.
7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
8. It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it.
9. Save for things that matter.
10. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.
11. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.
12. It's OK to let your children see you cry.
13. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey

is all about.

14. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.

15. Everything can change in the blink of an eye But don't worry; God never blinks.

16. Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.

17. Get rid of anything that isn't useful. Clutter weighs you down in many ways.

18. Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.

19. It's never too late to be happy. But it's all up to you and no one else.

20. When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.

21. Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.

22. Over prepare, then go with the flow.

23. Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.

24. The most important sex organ is the brain.

25. No one is in charge of your happiness but you.

26. Frame every so-called disaster with these words 'In five years, will this matter?'

27. Always choose life.

28. Forgive but don't forget.

29. What other people think of you is none of your business.

30. Time heals almost everything. Give time time.

31. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.

32. Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.

33. Believe in miracles.

34. God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.

35. Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.

36. Growing old beats the alternative -- dying young.

37. Your children get only one childhood.
38. All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.
39. Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere.
40. If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.
41. Envy is a waste of time. Accept what you already have not what you need.
42. The best is yet to come...
43. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
44. Yield.
45. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift."

Its estimated 93% won't forward this. If you are one of the 7% who will, forward this with the title '7%'. I'm in the 7% Friends are the family that we choose.

## 12 Things You Didn't Know About Airstream Trailers (They Weren't Always Silver!)

*Credit: Kate's Lazy Desert/Facebook*  
By Jordi Lippe

They've popped up in movies and on TV. You may have even caught a passing glimpse of one on the open road. But long before Matthew McConaughey stepped out of his retooled Airstream onto the beach and (probably) said "alright, alright, alright," there's been a fascination — some might say obsession — with America's iconic silver campers.

Which is why we thought it'd be fun to dig up 12 little-known facts about them.

### 1. They didn't always boast the iconic design

The original Airstreams were teardrop shaped and two-toned. Their creator, Wallace (Wally) Merle Byam, thought making colored Airstreams to match the popular pastel cars of the '50s would be a good idea. He later reconsidered and opted instead for the now famous silver.

### 2. The Airstream is like a second White House

A number of U.S. Presidents and their families have spent time in them. Not only did JFK use an Airstream as a mobile office while previewing new army weaponry in White Sands, New Mexico, but First Lady Laura Bush

rocked her own private trailer while visiting troops in Afghanistan in 2008. Vice Presidents Dick Cheney and Joe Biden have also toured around in the classic camper.

### **3. Early Airstream models were DIY, and made out of wood**

Original models of the Airstream were built of Masonite, a type of hardboard made of pressed-wood fibers. Not only that, but they were sold as wood-and-canvas kits, with model names like Model 2 and Silver Cloud, in the back of magazines. It wasn't until the arrival of the Airstream Clipper in 1936 that we got the first bullet-shaped trailer made out of aluminum.

### **4. And there were no bathrooms inside**

Despite coming up with the design to appease his wife's complaints about camping without a kitchen or bed, original owners still had to rough it with a "thunder mug" — aka, a bedpan. Today, trailers come with all the comforts of home, including a wet bath.

### **5. There was a square Airstream**

The famous cruiser has a lot of nicknames, including Silver Bullet and Toaster-on-Wheels, most of which tip their hats to its seminal shape. Wanting to mix things up a bit in the mid-'80s (and who didn't really?), the company added a new design to its line: a square-shaped trailer. From 1986 to 1991 the "Squarestream" hit the roads, drawing the ire of many fans/enthusiasts who went so far as to ban the new model from the Wally Byam Caravan Club.

### **6. They have a huge celebrity following**

Matthew McConaughey may be the most outspoken about his love for the Airstream (living in one for years before buying a house), but other celebrities have enjoyed a good ride or two as well. Johnny Depp, Adrien Brody, Brad Pitt, Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, Lenny Kravitz, and Sean Penn are all, reportedly, fans. And even Hugh Hefner gifted an all-white one to Pamela Anderson (dubbed the "Lovestream") that came equipped with mirrored ceilings, white shag carpeting, a circular vibrating bed, and stripper pole. Naturally.

### **7. Wally wasn't the first to come up with the design**

Airstream may have become the most popular trailer company of its time, but it didn't create the unique design. William Hawley Bowlus, a veteran designer who had previously worked on Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis airplane, was the first to use that streamlined shape on an RV. Applying his background in airplane design, he created a silver trailer called the Bowlus Road Chief. His company went under in 1935, however, just as the Airstream was gaining in popularity.

### **8. Although the Airstream's original competitor is making a comeback**

Wally may have bested William Hawley Bowlus in the 1930s, but fans of the Road Chief are attempting to bring it back. Only 80 were built before the company went under, but a Canadian couple has recently revived the Bowlus, adding modern amenities like Wi-Fi and solar paneling.

### **9. There are eight Airstreams buried nose down in the ground**

After years of legal battles citing it as a visual nuisance, the Airstream Ranch still stands strong on I-4 about 15 miles outside Tampa, Florida; 10,000 people signed a petition to save it in 2012. Frank and Dorothy Bates originally installed the shiny row of silver RVs in 2007 as an art exhibit to draw in tourists from all over the world.

### **10. They're actually pretty light**

Towing an Airstream trailer is not nearly as difficult as many people think. In fact, one of Wally's primary design goals was for it to be lightweight. To prove the point, the company staged a publicity photo in the 1940's in which a cyclist pulled the trailer with his bike.

### **11. There are Airstream hotels**

With such a loyal following, it was only natural that hotels would pop up around the world featuring Airstreams. The Granddaddy Hotel in South

Africa used a crane to create a rooftop trailer park, while the BelRepayre Airstream and Retro Trailer Park in France rocks an Airstream bar dubbed the Apollo Lounge. Of course, there are plenty of Airstream-themed hotels scattered across the US as well ([Kate's Lazy Desert](#), [Santa Barbara Autocamp](#), etc.), not to mention trailer parks, campsites, and B&Bs.

## 12. NASA nicknamed them the Astrovan

Sure they look futuristic, but who knew that actual astronauts made use of the spacey motor home. When Neil, Buzz, and Michael first returned from the moon, they headed straight to a modified Airstream. Nicknamed the Astrovan, Airstreams were also used by NASA to bring astronauts to the launchpad. Richard Nixon even interviewed the crew of Apollo 11 in one, as they were quarantined inside until being cleared of potentially hazardous moon particles.

# Discoveries For New RVers

by Joe and Vicki Kieva

Every new RVer eventually discovers ...

**Your first RV is a training rig.** It teaches you how you will really use an RV; whether you will spend more time traveling or sitting in a campground.

This is the vehicle that lets you discover where you can go and what you can do. You learn how many days per year you will use your RV and the number of miles you will travel in a year's time.

It teaches you about driving, backing and leveling; how the size and weight of your rig affects road handling, and how it determines what roads you can travel and where you can camp.

Your training rig teaches you how the electric, plumbing and propane systems work; how to hook up the utilities at a campground and how to dump your holding tanks. You learn how to use the self-containment features and the self-containment capacities you really need.

It helps you discover whether you prefer the convenience of full-service RV parks or dry camping in primitive campgrounds.

Your training rig teaches you how to equip, furnish and pack an RV. You learn just how much interior storage space (closets, cabinets, drawers) you really need (is there ever enough?). It reveals how critical the size and accessibility of the outside storage bays can be and the importance of cargo-carrying capacity and towing capabilities.

It helps you determine what floorplan, features and accessories would best suit your RVing lifestyle and needs. Your first RV becomes your basis of comparison when you look for your next RV.

And if you come to the conclusion that you enjoy RVing, there will most certainly be a next RV.

**Bigger is not necessarily better.** Everyone would love to have the space, storage and comfort of the larger rigs. At the same time we want the agility and economy of the smaller ones.

If you are going to spend weeks or months at a time parked in an RV park, the larger, more spacious rig is your vehicle of choice. On the other hand, if you are going to spend the majority of your time in remote or primitive campgrounds, the smaller, more agile RV will probably be more appropriate.

There are a few other factors to consider when selecting the size of your RV.

Depending upon the type, size and weight of your rig, your state of residence might require you to pass a test and/or have a special endorsement on your driver's license.

Many states have laws that limit the length of motorhomes on their highways to a maximum of 40 feet. Some states limit the length of two combined vehicles (truck and trailer, motorhome and car) to a maximum of 55 feet.

Wide-body vehicles (those over 96 inches wide) are restricted to designated highways in some states. A trucker's atlas, available in most truck stops, will highlight those roads where it is permissible to drive a wide-body vehicle.

The legal weight limit on most interstates is 20,000 pounds on a single axle. Which explains the need for tandem axles on some of the larger motorhomes.

The ferry to Alaska charges by the linear foot and adds a 25% surcharge on those vehicles over 96 inches wide.

Older bridges, particularly covered bridges, frequently have weight limitations.

There are campgrounds and campsites that simply cannot accommodate the longer, higher and wider RVs.

So, while bigger RVs and their amenities can be more spacious and comfortable, smaller RVs are more versatile and less expensive.

**You can always add expensive accessories later.** A patio awning shades the RV's curb-side wall and creates an outside living area. Window awnings do a dynamite job of preventing the heat of the sun from radiating through the glass. But look around, while most RVs are equipped with a patio awning, many RVers seem to survive just fine without the window awnings. If you come to the conclusion that window awnings would be worth the expense, you can always add them later.

A clothes washer/dryer is an expensive convenience. It will also take up storage space and add to the weight of your rig. Most campgrounds have a laundry room with coin-operated machines. If the RV has a cabinet plumbed to accept a washer, you can always add one later.

Solar panels use the power of the sun to charge your RV's batteries. That's great if you intend to spend a great deal of your time without an electric hookup. But many RVers spend only two or three days at a time camping self-contained. Their coach batteries are usually quite adequate for their needs. And it would not cost very much to install an additional battery or two if desired. You might consider buying an RV that is prewired for solar panels. That way you can always add the panels if you think you need them.

A generator consumes about a gallon of fuel an hour, is noisy and emits a smelly exhaust. But it will charge your batteries and, unlike solar panels, can create a sufficient amount of electricity to operate your air conditioner(s). This is a close judgment call. Many trailer owners seem to do without a generator, but most motorhome owner prefer not to.

Leveling jacks are a wonderful convenience. Press a button and the RV is leveled and stabilized. But RVers have been leveling their rigs with lengths of lumber for decades. Besides, even with automatic jacks, it is occasionally necessary to use a board or two to bring your rig to an even plane. Go for it if you can, but these wonderful devices, which can be installed later, are not necessarily a necessity.

**Before purchasing a trailer, you should determine what type and size truck will be needed to tow it.** Realize that every vehicle has a limit to the

amount of weight it can carry and tow. Identify the trailer you think you want to buy. Ascertain its gross vehicle weight rating and its tongue (or pin) weight. Then find a tow vehicle that, according to its manufacturer, is more than capable of carrying, pulling and stopping the weight of that fully loaded trailer.

**Where a new RVer can get additional information about RVs and RVing.** A variety of information sources are available for avid RVers. Here are a few to get you started.

**Campground and/or RV Park Directory** - A campground directory is a basic RVing tool. It provides an easy-to-follow system of maps and alphabetical listings which enable you to locate the RV parks and campgrounds in the area you wish to stay.

Some campground directories provide additional information such as state highway laws regulating RVs, bridge, tunnel and ferry restrictions and the location of disposal stations along major highways.

**RV Magazines** - You'll be able to read about interesting places to go and things to see and do. How-to articles provide good information on improving, maintaining and repairing your rig. Technical and lifestyle experts respond to reader inquiries.

**RV Clubs** - The Good Sam RV Owners Club (800-234-3456) is the largest. RV clubs offer insurance programs, emergency roadside services and discounts at campgrounds. Membership usually includes a periodic magazine with informative articles and columns. Local RV clubs schedule weekend trips throughout the year. What better way to discover the campgrounds in your area.

**RV Accessory Store or Catalog** - Most RV accessory stores will have a magazine and book rack. RV accessory catalogs also offer RVing books and will keep you abreast of the latest in accessories and gadgets.

**Libraries and Book Stores** - Look under Camping, Motorhomes, Recreation, Recreation Vehicles and Travel Trailers.

**Computer Internet Websites** - A little "surfing" will produce a number of websites with information from manufacturers, dealers, campgrounds, clubs and more. A good place to start is [www.woodalls.com](http://www.woodalls.com)

**Visitor Welcome Centers** - Most states provide a visitor welcome center near their borders. Look for them in rest areas as enter each state. Go inside to the counter and ask for a state road map and a state parks & campgrounds directory.

**Other RVers** - They are the friendliest, most helpful people you can meet.

**Enjoy The Journey!**

## Overnight Stopping Places

by Dave Galey

When in route from one place to the next, often it requires several days to complete the journey. Thus we are compelled to find a place to park our rig and spend the night on the road.

Obviously the common choice is the profusion of RV, or trailer parks dotting all the major routes through-out the country. But, what if you do not want to hook-up or even need to hook up while en- route, or are just plain cheap and don't see the need to waste the money on an overnight parking place? Still, there is that breed of camper that doesn't feel secure parked outside of a KOA. But, if you are the adventuresome type, and would like to

keep a few bucks in your hip pocket, read on!

One of the slickest ways to find free parking en-route is to cultivate a host of friends all over the country and park in the street in front of their house, or their driveway or backyard. If you do this it is important to insist they throw you a land line so you can hook-up to electricity. Also, if they have a sewer clean out handy, be sure to demand your right to use this as a dump station. This approach may take a couple of years to develop, but I know of a few people who have achieved this remarkable feat.

The simplest place to locate for an overnight stay is a regional shopping center. They are almost always just off the super slab and easy to spot. Many major malls, however, do not allow overnight parking and a notice of this fact will be posted. One morning in Ventura, California, we were roused out at 3:00 a.m. and ordered off the premises by a Rent-A-Cop who informed us of a city ordinance against sleeping in a vehicle. Although this was a blatant self-serving lie, it turned out to be a good thing since we got a jump start toward our home, which was another 100 miles on the other side of L.A. The Ventura Freeway into Los Angeles at that time was under construction and we breezed through between three and four in the morning, whereas the morning rush hour lasted nearly three hours. When we got home we just parked in the backyard and crawled back into bed. Since then, when we wish to spend the night in Ventura, we use the J.C.Penney back parking lot.

There are several type of shopping centers that actually welcome RV over-nighters. Foremost among these are the K- Mart stores. It does two significant things for these stores. It increases their parking lot security to have an over-nighter and the next morning they have a potential and grateful customer. It also improves their public image.

Once we entered a regional shopping mall in a large city and noticed a No Overnight Parking sign as we came in. So, looking around, we noticed a Sam's Club across the street. We proceeded there and inquired of the manager and learned that almost every night they had two or three RV rigs in their lot. No doubt, a reaction to the snobby mall across the street. He assured us we were welcome. I won't identify the city, but it is located in the southeast corner of South Dakota.

One of the most common overnight parking spots is the ordinary rest stop. This is also one of the most disagreeable locations to try to get any sleep. Many rest stops are posted for no overnight parking; possibly due to the penchant of some natives for murdering tourists. The only place worse than a rest stop for overnight parking is a truck stop. The rest stops are unpleasant because of their proximity to the highway and the all night-long-traffic noise. The truck stops are worst because of the large number of trucks with their motors running and their refrigeration generators going, and the incessant din of trucks coming and going all night long. Sometimes, however, you have no choice. I recall one time in a West Texas truck stop. We had looked for a suitable stopping place without success and it was getting late so we couldn't be choosy and had to park in a truck stop. After all, there is safety in numbers. That night the trucks were but a minor irritation compared to the blue northern, a wind that pounded the coach all night to the degree I felt we may capsize. Little sleep was had that night.

One guaranteed overnight parking place is in front of your kid's house. Of course it is seldom they live in a location which is a convenient stopping place while en-route to further destination. But, they are family, and cannot refuse you. Be prepared, however, to have your electrical hook-ups from the garage to the coach disconnected at any time. This is guaranteed to happen with all the grand- kids, neighbors' kids and dogs running around. One time we were in Utah in sub- freezing weather comfortably ensconced in front of one of our children's place. Our electric toe-kick heaters were functioning beautifully along with our propane units. We awoke one morning to discover our pipes in the baggage compartment had frozen,

despite a 100 watt bulb burning near our water pump. So the next day we decided to improve our chances by picking up a 1500 watt cube heater from Wal-Mart to keep the baggage compartment nice and cozy. Alas, a kid or a dog kicked our electrical connection loose in the night. This time our pipes froze solid and did not thaw, even by that afternoon. So, we broke camp and headed south. That night we parked in a casino parking lot in Mesquite, Nevada and were awoken the next morning by our water pump continuously evacuating our fresh water through the breaks caused by the freeze.

I could discuss the private camping membership parks but they are kind of like your kids place, i.e., normally off the beaten path seldom on the way to your destination and simply do not lend themselves en route overnight parking. And they are designed more for a resort style vacations. One of the neatest membership organization is the Elks Club more properly known as the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (BPOE). Almost all of the lodges have internal camping clubs and many of the lodges have mini-camp grounds with full or partial hook ups. We have stayed in Elks Lodges parking lots as humble as a strip shopping center with three business tenants (The Elks being one of them) to several lodges sporting eighteen hole golf courses with 50 amp electrical service. As a visiting Elk, we have always been made to feel welcome and many locations without camping facilities have run an electrical cord out a window to give us all the service we could use. One time, we could not locate an Elks Lodge in a certain city. We spotted an Eagle's lodge, inquired and learned that the town no longer had an Elk's club. We were, however welcomed to spend the night in their parking lot if we wished. How's that for hospitality?

Another really neat place to park is a marina parking lot. This is especially great if you are a boat lover and aren't most of us? One fabulous location which should be mentioned is Winchester Bay just south of Reedsport on the Oregon coast. There is a fee for parking over-night but this spot not only has the greatest atmosphere but fresh water for your holding tanks and a dump station. One time, by accident, we stumbled upon one of those idyllic locations you dream about. We had pulled off I-90 near Snowquamish in Washington and got lost looking for the small town. (You've heard the old story, "I come from a really small town." "How small was it?"). Turning down a dirt road we ended up in an isolated area parking next to a running stream with a pair of bald eagles soaring overhead and total privacy. We have been back a couple times since and it hasn't yet been spoiled by a developer.

Another safe way to find a place to spend the night when you are in a remote location is to track down the local police station or hail a passing cruiser and ask for their advice. One time in Mexico (where we always stay in campgrounds) we came to the small town of Caborca and discovered both campgrounds listed in our Woodall's camping guide were closed and out of business. We contacted the local Federals and were directed to a park next to a church across the street from the army barracks. We felt very secure. Another time in Lovelock, Nevada the local cops had us park in a vacant lot across from the police station. This is not to accuse Lovelock as being a remote location and they may have a campground by now. How's that for defusing some angry letters?

Finding an overnight spot while en-route is always a challenge and is limited only by your imagination and your daring. Of course you may always play it safe and use the Woodall's camping guide or a KOA handbook but we enjoy the excitement connected with discovery. I hope the ideas contained herein will stimulate your adventuresome spirit.

## **Inverter Do's and Don'ts**

**DO** --yourself a favor and gather some information. Flea markets are littered with useless, old-fashioned inverters that people thought were bargains. Read surplus catalogs carefully -- bargain inverters from military aircraft are grossly inefficient (because an engine is always running) and many operate at 400Hz, or cycles per second, instead of the standard 60Hz. Plug into one of these and fry lots of things (clocks are amusing to watch).

**DO**--read the instructions very carefully, more than once, and highlight the critical steps before attempting to connect an inverter. Some have elaborate instructions (good), but critical safety precautions are buried in the text and easily overlooked.

**DO** --locate an inverter as close to the batteries as possible, with as heavy a cable as possible (read the instructions). But DON'T put the inverter in the same compartment with the batteries unless you enclose it in its own, vented to the outside, "mini" compartment. Even if you're fortunate enough not to have a spark cause a battery explosion in a poorly located inverter, battery gases in the air will literally "eat" the insides of the inverter.

**DO**--ventilate an inverter well. They get warm. They need fresh air, just like a stereo or computer. Inverters do well in outside RV compartments as long as they are protected from the elements.

**DO** --consider small, palm-in-your-hand inverters if that's what you need. Unless your wiring is very skimpy or has puny connections, you can plug these into standard 12VDC receptacles, avoid installation problems and save money. Again, for medical machinery like breathing machines, you can easily move the hand held from living place to car, etc.

**DON'T**--ever-attempt to connect the 120VAC output of an inverter to your electrical system with a simple jumper cord using a male connector (plug) at each end. The electrical shock hazard might/might not be a big deal, BUT, you WILL, someday, forget to unplug the inverter before connecting to commercial power or starting a generator. You will then lose an inverter. Guaranteed! (And they won't honor the warranty.)

**DO** --consider load transfer switches even though they may cost more. (Read the above again and see more details later.)

**DO**--make sure the transfer switch, if you use one (you might need two in tandem), will handle three sources of power if you also have a generator. (Many remote homeowners, without access to commercial power, can use simple, cheaper switching devices just to go from generator to inverter. RVs might come on commercial power anywhere.)

**DO**--make sure you know what you're doing when wiring or get help from someone who does. But **DON'T** get help from someone who doesn't know what he's doing. Guaranteed he will short the whole business out. Even if you use a "professional" electrician, DO make sure he understands that neutral and ground wires in an RV are NOT bonded together.

**DO** --consider an inverter as a priority item if medical appliances keep you tied to commercial power. (You can even plug the small ones into wheel chair batteries in many cases.)

**DO**--buy an inverter from someone who will let you return it for full (or nearly full) credit if it's in like new condition, original box, etc. Some inverters will cause radio/TV interference. Some will cause interference only on certain brands or models within brands. Ask first. Good dealers will know most of the static or interference-prone items and can advise you in advance. Good dealers will also allow you to bring your RV to their place of business so inverters can be temporarily connected to test interference.

**DO** --notice that I haven't mentioned solar panels except casually. An inverter runs from a battery. The battery doesn't know or care where its charge came from. Also note that an adequate solar system can eliminate

the need for a generator or commercial power except as a backup.

**DON'T**--let the above scare you away from inverters. They're perfectly safe if used properly. They're not difficult to install if you follow the instructions. They can just about pay for themselves depending on what you use them for. Some of us used to modify all sorts of things to operate on 12 volts. It can be clumsy, things can get damaged and such modifications void warranties. I encourage people to make a hobby out of electronics so they can do this, but it's really not necessary with the efficiency of today's inverters.

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## RVers Love To Help Each Other...

by Peggi McDonald

John and I were so naive in the beginning. The only fact we knew for sure was "we wanted a motorhome". Since we had no idea of what an RV was or how many models were out there we found it easy to limit our search to a motorhome. We decided to go fulltime even though we didn't know much about that either. After much discussion and a three year search we purchased our first dream machine one year before retirement. Although the extensive introduction from our dealer was most appreciated, as we pulled out of his lot we forgot most of what they told us. Thanks to the assistance of other RVers and our own ingenuity we began to understand the RV life. Even the manuals for our new RV didn't follow till later. To help us remember basic info during the briefing, John made a location diagram of all operating togs, valves, switches and handles.

Our maiden voyage was a major fiasco. Although we did everything wrong, we had a wonderful time. That first weekend was a definite learning exercise. Our site only had water and electric hookups, no sewer. Imagine, in two morning showers we overfilled the gray water tank...we knew nothing about any water saver on the shower handle. We were aware it was not good for the environment to release gray (shower) water, but since it was almost fresh tap water I felt there was no harm. With John's diagram in hand, I ventured outside to open the valve. You guessed it, the sketch was upside down and I pulled the black (toilet) handle in error. Thankfully the black tank was almost empty.

Quickly I cleaned my mess with the water hose but the manager was most

unhappy with me. Lesson number one, don't drain gray water on the ground, especially without a parks approval...also make sure all notes and diagrams are right side up. There's a good part to this story, the next day European RVers in a rental unit asked us to show them how to dump their tanks. We felt important, now as "experts" we were sharing our new-found info with others.

As our weekend experiences continued, we slowly understood a fraction of the art of living and travelling in an RV. We were hooked, every trip became a more memorable adventure than the last--even with our numerous mistakes. Finally we discovered a park 20 minutes from work...a wonderful place to spend the summer. The key to our transformation from inexperience, to writing about the RV lifestyle, was mainly because of the kind assistance of seasoned RVing neighbors at that park. They took us under their wing and explained every intricate detail of the RV lifestyle. Now we share the same information with anyone who'll listen because we want all RVers to be as contented with this fascinating way of life as we are. Recently we traded to our third motorhome, this time to a diesel pusher. As long as we have been on the road, we felt like we returned to newbies when it came to understanding the idiosyncrasies of this unit. Every type and model of an RV is unique and it is somewhat frustrating to learn the ins and outs, but with the help of your dealer, neighbors and RV friends most problems are easily overcome.

When you first check into a campground, don't be afraid to ask your next door neighbors to help you park your unit. They can also assist you to set up hand signals so parking becomes easier. For instance the co-pilot must be able to see the mirror--or the driver can't see you. Directing John into the site is my job when we pull into a campground and if that is your task you have the perfect opportunity to "tell your mate exactly where to go and they can't argue". I don't worry about explaining which way to turn the steering wheel, I only signal where I want John to put the rear of the unit. The exact signals you use are unimportant so long as you both understand what they mean.

Design a signal for 'come back, there is lots of room'.  
Another to 'move the rear end left or right',  
--'come straight back',  
--'go forward',  
--'lots of space',

--'STOP for a minute' while you check 'hidden' objects like patios or picnic tables. Use your hands to 'indicate the distance between the fence or electric post and your unit' And last 'cross your hands, fingers straight or in a fist to indicate STOP' (immediately). Some RVers find it easier to use a walkie-talkie to communicate with the driver on the CB, others prefer a headset/mike attachment to talk to each other. There is no right or wrong way, only what works for you. But remember the driver can only follow the advice of one person at a time. If your neighbor wants to help when you have advanced beyond novice simply say 'Thanks', explain that the driver "only has eyes for you".

We learned so many basics from our next-door-neighbors during those early years. They explained how to level a unit using 18" x 2" x 8" boards cut with a beveled edge. Our newest friends were insistent that if we put a board(s) under one dual tire we also added one to the inside dual at the same time to equalize the pressure on the axle/tire assembly.

They also insisted while setting up it was important to test our electric hook-up with a three way ground monitor--(tester with lights) before connecting to electricity to test for reverse polarity or open ground. These testers are available from RV supply and hardware stores. They explained the importance of using a water regulator at the tap end of your water hose to control campground water pressure. As well as they informed us of the importance of 30 amp 10 gauge (fat cords) electric extension cords and why we should use special water treated hoses(usually white)--25 foot extensions of each are required as well as a 20' sewer hose. Our good

neighbors shared other hints such as using quick disconnects(used to connect water hoses at home)to the RV city water outlet...a quick 'snap' and your connected.

RVers love to share invaluable hints. This list could continue ad-infinitum, however it's easier to digest in small doses. One tip I hope you take to heart, "don't be shy accepting or asking an RVer for help". Taking heed of their experience will save you money and aggravation. Till next time. See you down the road.

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