

Dear Friends,

Greetings from **Catalina Spa and RV Resort** in **Desert Hot Springs, California**.

Wow, two months! It doesn't seem possible, but it has been two months since we wrote a new travelogue. How time flies. Well, as you can see, we are now in the beautiful Coachella Valley of California. Desert Hot Springs is right next to the better known Palm Springs. Yep, we are in the desert again, but at the moment it doesn't feel much like desert. In the middle of the day, the temperature is only about 60 degrees and there is lots of snow on the mountains around us. Well, we can't complain. We have friends all over the U.S. who would think bright sunshine and 60 degrees is a darn good deal.

We have been very busy, but not having as much fun as usual. Chuck had a cataract removed from his right eye and didn't really see well for about a month. We are back giving retirement seminars here in the Catalina park every Tuesday morning at 10 am. Donna is well into tax season and is preparing income taxes for clients all over the United States.

We had Christmas dinner with our friends, **Alan and Debbie**, who just got a new Wii game console. We hooked it to their TV and started playing a bowling game. Wow, Wii is really fun. It's amazing technology with incredible graphics and something for everybody. Exercise programs, sports programs, shooting programs, dance programs, and all the usual arcade stuff--it's amazing. After an hour of bowling, we were hooked. The only problem was our front room TV in the motorhome. It was a 24" analog, cathode ray tube set. Oh darn, this was going to be expensive. Anybody want a good running TV for \$50?



Old 24" TV.

We decided that we could, with a lot of effort, get a 32" flat panel, high definition set into the same area. After a lot of research, we narrowed it down to the top end Sony, Samsung, and Vizio. We felt that the Vizio had the best picture, but unfortunately it had the largest frame. Those of you who know Chuck, know that compromise is not in his nature. So we bought a Vizio and crossed our fingers.

The first task was to get the old TV out. Not easy as it was heavy.



Old TV cabinet without the old TV.

Well, lo and behold, the heavy TV was supported by a large sheet metal enclosure which in turn was supported by an overhead steel beam. Well okay, it's probably good that we don't have to rely on the wooden cabinet as we bounce down the highway. It was also clear that there was going to have to be some extensive wood working. As luck would have it, we have friends in **Las Vegas, Robair and Monique**, and Robair has a small, but extensive woodworking shop in their home. We phoned Robair who agreed to help us and so we hopped in the rig and headed for Vegas. Happily, there was room in Robair and Monique's front yard and that's where we parked.



Motorhome in Robair and Monique's yard.

Robair took one look at what we wanted to do and said, "remove the sheet metal. I'm a woodworker, I don't do metal." With great trepidation, Donna and I began unwiring everything. There were dozens of cables going through the sheet metal. This was scary. Could we rewire it? Could Robair reinforce the old cabinet enough to hold it together? Not only was a new high definition TV set going in, but we also had to put in a new Blu-Ray player, a new DirecTV satellite receiver/DVR, and the new Wii

console. Plus, we needed to remove the old receiver/DVR and the old VHS/DVD player that drove the old surround sound. We were abandoning the old sound system and installing a new Bose system. Oh Lordy, were we way over our heads? Donna volunteered to take on the wiring job. She really thought she could make it work. We turned her loose and components and wires were coming out right and left. In about a day, Donna had the TV cabinet gutted and the extra components removed from the overhead cabinet on the left side of the TV cabinet.

Chuck was determined to put the large Bose woofer in behind the flat panel TV. If everything went right, it should fit and we could eliminate our old woofer which Monaco had carefully installed underneath the kitchen sink. Hi fi under the sink never made any sense to us.



Gutted cabinet with Bose woofer.

The first cabinet task was to build a new strong floor to replace the metal floor. Then this floor needed to be tied to the sides of the cabinet, which in turn needed to be tied to the steel beam overhead. The next task was to find a way to support the big black Bose woofer in the back half of the TV cabinet. We had to stop it from moving back and forth, sideways, and up and down. We built constraints around the legs, put foam padding from the unit to the back wall and then built a padded wall in front of this big low frequency speaker.



New bulkhead in front of woofer with adjustable TV mount.

So in the picture above, the woofer has been installed behind a wooden panel. On the front of the wooden panel is a TV mount that allows us to pull the TV out, move it from side to side, and move it and tilt it up and down. This is really necessary because the Vizio has no controls on the front and all of the cables go into the side or back of the unit. So it becomes impossible to wire without the ability to pull it out. So now all of the weight of the TV is completely supported by the TV bracket, which in turn, is supported by our wooden bulkhead. So now the problem is to tie the bulkhead and the somewhat flimsy cabinet to the overhead steel beam.



Flat panel TV pulled out from cabinet.

The above picture is what you see if you pull the TV all the way out. All in all, quite nice to work with.



Finished system.

It's not a very good photo, but the TV fits the cabinet like a glove. Actually, the TV was about a quarter of an inch too wide and so we had to route an eighth of an inch out of each side of the cabinet, but fortunately only about a quarter of an inch deep. Notice that there are now two small Bose speakers on each side of the cabinet supported off to the side by black rods. The bottom of the cabinet has been filled in with new trim as has the top. On the left side bottom of the cabinet is a small black sensor that controls the Bose speaker system. On the center bottom of the cabinet, you can just barely see the sensor that controls the Wii game console. It all looks like factory work!



Finished system ready to roll down the road.

Now there is just one more problem. How do you stop the TV from coming out of the cabinet while you are driving down the road? Note the two little wooden restraints near the speakers. These restraints normally hang down beside the TV, but twist into place while driving.

Does it all work? You better believe it. There was a moment of panic when Donna discovered that the Bose manual said not to put the woofer any closer than 3 feet to the TV. We have it mounted less than a foot. Chuck speculated that the heavy magnetic field from the woofer might screw up an ordinary cathode ray tube unit, but that it might not bother the LCD flat panel. In fact, it seems to be fine. Chuck's old engineering buddy, **Paul**, speculated that the powerful pressure waves from the woofer might rattle the TV apart. Only time will tell. At the moment, it's great.

Are we nuts? Maybe. This project cost thousands and took 10 days of work in Las Vegas. We have ended up with a superb high definition TV picture and excellent sound. All of these modifications in a rebuilt wooden cabinet that looks like it came from the factory.

We have to give a huge thank you to Robair for all of his woodworking efforts and huge thank you to Monique who cooked way too many meals for us while we were camped out in their

yard. Friends of this generosity are rare indeed and we are very grateful.

But remember what started it all? That's right, the desire to use the Wii game console with a high definition television. Well, here it is. Wii is in the motorhome.



Donna's Mii ready to bowl. Kind of looks like her, doesn't it?



Will it be a strike?



Nope, it was a spare.

We accomplished our goal and the results are spectacular. Are we nuts? Probably, but once we start something, it will get finished.

Until next time, home is where we park it.

Chuck & Donna Cole

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