

♦ FOUR-DOWN TOWING ♦ MISSOURI'S "LITTLE GERMANY" ♦ RV ROOF MAINTENANCE

familyRVing

ENHANCING THE RV LIFESTYLE

APRIL 2023

Iowa Sunset

RV Journey Of A Lifetime

page 48

FMCA
Your RVing Family

VOL. 60 NO. 4 \$3.99 US
FamilyRVingmag.com

Value of
FMCA
Membership
Page 4



LOOK UP! RV ROOF MAINTENANCE 101

Keep your RV roof in tiptop shape with regular cleaning and inspections to retain your warranty and prevent damage from water intrusion and other factors.

BY BRUCE W. SMITH

38

FEATURES

- 30 TOWING "FOUR DOWN"**
If you choose to flat tow a vehicle behind your motorhome, learn how to select a compatible vehicle and determine the equipment you'll need.
BY MARK QUASIUS, F333630

- 42 2023 WINNEBAGO NAVION**
The Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500 diesel chassis forms the foundation for this popular Type C motorhome filled with creature comforts.
BY BRUCE W. SMITH

- 48 A LIFE-CHANGING RV JOURNEY . . . AND WE'RE NOT DONE YET**
If you're intrigued by the idea of full-time RVing, reading one couple's story of how they made it happen may inspire you to do likewise.
BY ERIK ANDERSON, F464919

- 57 QUILTING AND CRAFTING ON THE ROAD: OOPS!**
A veteran quilter and fabric artist offers suggestions for what to do if a vital craft component breaks or turns up missing during your RV travels.
BY DIANE L. MURTHA, F465708

- 60 2023 KZ ESCAPE E20 HATCH**
This ultra-lightweight travel trailer from KZ RV makes it easy to enjoy the outdoors via a large rear access door and a versatile room adjacent to it.
BY MARK QUASIUS, F333630

- 66 BUC-EE'S: A CULTURAL PHENOMENON**
This chain of quirky fuel stations/convenience stores, established in Texas, now delights road travelers in other states as well.
BY ARIEL SLICK

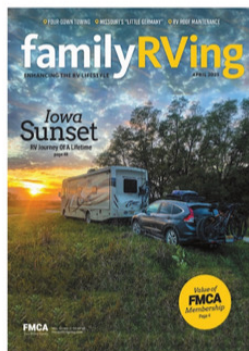
- 70 WILLKOMMEN ZU HERMANN**
Picturesque Hermann, Missouri, celebrates its German heritage and old-world charm with wineries, breweries, festivals, and more.
BY GEORGE MOORE, F460576

- 74 ALASKA'S ROADHOUSES: THEN AND NOW**
For decades, the lodges and inns situated along roads in the Last Frontier State have accommodated travelers.
BY MARY TAYLOR



COLUMNS

- 6 FMCA UPDATE
- 14 READERS WRITE
- 18 TECH TALK
- 22 RV PRODUCTS
- 27 NEWS & NOTES
- 80 LIVIN' THE LIFE
- 82 FAMILY MATTERS
- 86 FMCA EVENTS
- 99 CLASSIFIEDS
- 107 ADVERTISING INDEX
- 108 REAR VIEW



ON THE COVER

Erik and Jeanne Anderson encountered this beautiful sunset while boondocking near Ottumwa, Iowa, adjacent to the Eldon Wildlife Management Area. To read about their full-time RV adventures, turn to page 48.
(Photo by Erik Anderson, F464919.)

FMCA
Your RVing Family

Enhancing The RV Lifestyle!
SEE PAGE 25 FOR FMCA MEMBER BENEFITS

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR
Pamela Kay

EDITOR
Robbin Gould

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Linneah Deighton

GRAPHIC DESIGN MANAGER
Ayanna Luney

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS
Shareese Lee • Lindsay Prince

SALES COORDINATOR
Allison Perry

NATIONAL ADVERTISING OFFICE

8291 Clough Pike • Cincinnati, OH 45244
(513) 474-3622 • (800) 543-3622 • Fax: (513) 474-2332

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

EAST/SOUTHEAST

Tom Buttrick — (917) 421-9051 • t.buttrick@jgenco.com
Ilyssa Somer — (917) 421-9055 • i.somer@jgenco.com

MIDWEST/TEXAS

Kristene Richardson
(312) 348-1206 • k.richardson@jgenco.com

WEST

Kim McGraw
(213) 596-7215 • k.mcgraw@jgenco.com

MAGAZINE PANEL

George Giroux • Steven Thomas • Tony Wiese

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Monte Beck • Bruce Chong
John Clarke • Steve Froese • Wilt Greenwood
Roger Marble • Ed Smith • Chip Wright

FMCA NATIONAL CHAPLAINS

(833) 458-0778, chaplains@fmca.com

HOW TO CONTACT US

MAIL Family RVing (800) 543-4717
8291 Clough Pike (513) 474-2332
Cincinnati, OH 45244

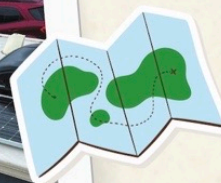
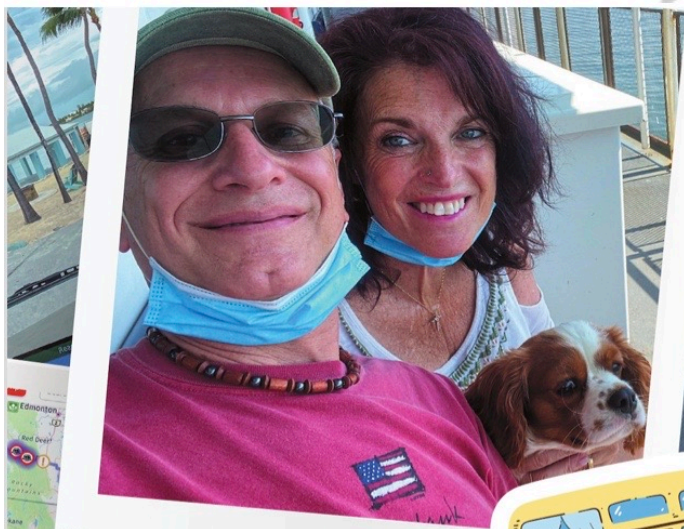
PHONE
(800) 543-3622
(513) 474-3622

WEBSITES
FamilyRVingmag.com
FMCA.com

FMCA CAMPGROUND ADDRESS

3590 Round Bottom Road
Cincinnati, OH 45244-3026
Space reservations: www.fmca.com/stay-fmca

Family RVing (ISSN 0360-3024) is published monthly, which includes the membership issue, for \$30 per year by Family Motor Coaching Inc., 8291 Clough Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45244; 513-474-3622 or 800-543-3622; fax 513-474-2332; website: www.familyRVingmag.com, www.fmca.com. Printed in the United States. Periodicals postage paid at Cincinnati, Ohio, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **Family RVing**, 8291 Clough Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45244-2796. Canada Publications Mail Agreement No. 40031448; return undeliverable Canadian addresses to **Family RVing**, 6045 Progress Street, Niagara Falls, ON, L2G 7X1.



Photos: Erik Anderson



ROAD TRIP



By Erik Anderson, F464919

Did we ever imagine that in a 2½-year span we would live, work, and travel full-time in an RV while visiting all the lower 48 United States; six

Canadian provinces; and 38 national parks, monuments, lakeshores, and seashores? Heck, no!

In the midst of the global pandemic, my wife, Jeanne, and I sold the sticks-and-bricks home we loved, purged most of our belongings, and quit lucrative careers. We packed ourselves and our 1-year-old Cavalier King Charles spaniel, Hershey Pup, into a 30-foot motorhome and set off for the adventure of our lives.

TIME FOR SOMETHING NEW

Jeanne and I had always lived in the Northeast, rarely traveling outside the region. When we did, it was for the typical East Coast vacation or a rare flight to visit far-flung family members.

← After years of planning, the Andersons purchased their first-ever RV and set sail for new adventures. They enjoyed boondocking at Nomad View/"The Wall," near Badlands National Park. In 2022, their meandering cross-country route to Florida encompassed thousands of miles.

A Life-Changing RV Journey... And We're Not Done Yet

Having built a 32-year career as a vice president of human resources in healthcare, and Jeanne a 20-plus-year career as a registered nurse, we were experiencing burnout. Maryellen, my boss, jokingly said one day, "We should dump all this stress, buy a motorhome, and just drive around the country!" Later, when I told Jeanne what she had said, we laughed at the thought.

One evening in 2016, Jeanne and I stopped laughing. Instead, we made a life-changing decision: In four years, we would venture way outside our comfort zones and become full-time RVers.

We were excited and scared. We had never even set foot in an RV. Were we crazy? Maybe. But we were hooked on the idea. Come heck or high water, or even a then-unimaginable global pandemic, we'd do it.

WORKING THE PLAN

We began learning everything we could about full-time RV travel. We absorbed every magazine article, blog post, book, and YouTube video possible. We also received valuable knowledge from veteran RVers. We started to believe that we could indeed make this dream a reality.

Eventually, we signed a purchase order for our first-ever motorhome at America's Largest RV Show in Hershey, Pennsylvania. So much for

going just to look! We set up the motorhome to flat tow our Honda CR-V and spent the next three years outfitting it for safety, comfort, and off-grid self-sufficiency. We joined FMCA and other organizations, utilizing their educational resources. And we "practiced" locally with our new RV to see whether we really could live harmoniously in 240 square feet.

Fast-forward to the spring/summer of 2020, when the entire world was turning upside down. Despite the ravaging epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic on Long Island, New York, we miraculously sold our house, closed out our careers, and bid farewell to family and friends. On July 6, 2020 — the date we had established four years earlier — we loaded our motorhome and towed vehicle onto the Cross Sound Ferry from Long Island to Connecticut.

On that beautiful, sunny day, our former stress-filled lives drifted away in the ferry's glistening wake.

ADJUSTING TO A NEW LIFESTYLE

Over the next few months, we traveled throughout picturesque New England, moving just ahead of the burgeoning pandemic. It made getting used to our new full-time RVing life more challenging. Regulations were everywhere. Many businesses, national and state parks, and public services operated with restrictions or shut down.

If you dream of becoming a full-time RVer, this couple's experiences may inspire you to take that leap.

Campgrounds had stopped activities and closed public spaces such as pools and park stores, and RV parks were implementing contactless check-ins. Our Niagara Falls camping reservations on the Canadian side were canceled because of the border closure. We sure picked a great time to begin traveling!

Soon, however, we realized that RV travel was a good way to keep away from crowds. We had all we needed on board and could quarantine easily. Having worked in the healthcare space for decades, we knew how to practice effective infection control.

GETTING INTO THE GROOVE

Gradually, we began a routine of moving every few days to a week. We developed personal routines and mutual team responsibilities. I handled most of the driving and

familyRVing

A Life-Changing RV JOURNEY... And We're Not Done Yet



the outside tasks, including setting up/packing up and dumping the tanks. Jeanne handled setup, cleaning, and travel-day breakdown inside. She also drove occasionally. At each new destination, Hershey Pup enjoyed the sights, sounds, smells, and new doggie friends.

We developed a comfortable travel-day pace. We found that

we liked driving 200 miles maximum, or no more than four to five hours, between destinations. We could check out and hit the road by mid-morning, make a rest stop en route, and check in at the next park by mid-afternoon. We could relax at the new park, explore a little, and have a nice dinner. This afforded us time to make detours and stop spontaneously at interesting places we found along the way.

I ended up continuing to work for the same company, now serving in a part-time marketing role; Jeanne later took the same remote job. We spent our days and early evenings exploring, biking, hiking, or kayaking. As a night owl, I worked after Jeanne went to bed. Hershey Pup slept at my feet until we took a mid-night walk around the campground.

HEY, WE'RE GETTING GOOD AT THIS!

In our first several months on the road, we also became adept at many of the necessities of full-time RV travel:

- Learning to adjust our food shopping to accommodate a *much* smaller RV refrigerator.
- Taking "Navy showers" (wet, lather, rinse, repeat, done), turning off the water to conserve it and holding tank capacity while dry camping.
- Locating services at each new destination, like food stores, hair salons, auto repair shops, post offices, urgent care clinics, veterinarians, etc.
- Mastering reservation techniques for snagging the best campsites at the most beautiful and popular parks, even in peak seasons.
- Learning how to find great free boondocking locations and having success with first-come, first-served campgrounds.



↑ Erik and Jeanne took on new remote jobs, which allowed them the freedom to travel anywhere, anytime to bucket-list destinations, including the Albuquerque Balloon Festival in New Mexico. They became pros at solar camping in the desert near Quartzsite, Arizona.

familyRVing

- Becoming adept at online trip planning.
- Working as a team, using two-way radios when parking the motorhome.
- Having Jeanne become comfortable driving the RV with our car in tow.
- Learning to use a mail-forwarding service.
- Getting prescriptions filled nationwide.
- Giving each other personal time and space.
- Being resourceful and self-sufficient with periodic RV maintenance and repairs on the road.

BOONDOCKING

Back on Long Island, we had frequented state and county parks that offered nice campsites without utilities. That gave us good practice for fresh-water, holding-tank, and house-battery conservation.

Our first true boondocking stay occurred near Ottumwa, Iowa. After driving several miles through rolling farmland on increasingly narrow dirt roads, we reached the camping spot on the edge of the Eldon Wildlife Management Area in Floris. It was a dirt loop in a small clearing with no defined parking spots, not far from the main road.

We pulled off to one side, set our leveling jacks, and extended the slideout. We enjoyed a beautiful sunset over the farm fields. And then it rained. And rained. And rained . . . for the next two nights! But our 300 amp-hours of lithium house batteries carried us through until we pulled up the jacks and continued our journey. Our first boondocking experience was great, although wet, and we were ready for more!

↑ One valuable lesson learned: There's still time for family, including a fun rendezvous at Jellystone Park in Larkspur, Colorado. And Hershey Pup has discovered that home is where you park it.



And more we did. We spent an amazing seven nights at Nomad View/"The Wall" (Nomad View Dispersed Camping) in the Buffalo Gap National Grassland, near Badlands National Park in South Dakota. We were blessed with incredible views — and ferocious storms. The following winter, we boondocked for 65 straight nights in the desert near Quartzsite, Arizona. Thanks to our rooftop solar system and lithium house battery bank, we didn't use our generator at all, and Jeanne loved using the Arizona sun to make her morning coffee.

Our boondocking capabilities made us much more confident in our self-sufficiency and have provided us many low-cost or no-cost camping options.

WHY TRAVEL IN A STRAIGHT LINE?

Although a direct route between destinations saves time, we had more fun rambling across the country.

During our first six months on the road, we wound our way counterclockwise from New England up and through the Great Lakes states, eventually arriving in the Florida panhandle to spend the winter at an RV resort in Miramar Beach/Destin. We also traveled south to Key Largo

and Key West to experience the warmth and beautiful sights along the iconic Overseas Highway.

During 2021, we zigzagged our way up, down, and around the middle of the United States until we landed in Arizona for the next winter. We covered over 16,000 miles that year and experienced some of our top bucket-list national and state parks, among them Glacier, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Grand Canyon, and Utah's "Mighty Five," as well as the spectacular Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in New Mexico.

In 2022, we made a clockwise circular route from Arizona to Florida . . . the long way. We traveled up the rugged, beautiful West Coast into the magnificent Pacific Northwest and made our first of six border crossings into Canada. Another highlight was our journey from Vancouver, British Columbia, across the Canadian Rockies (which wowed us to no end) to Montreal, Québec. We meandered through New England and down the East Coast, ending up in Florida again. We logged another 12,500 miles on that route. Sure, we could have traveled from Arizona to Florida in a little over 1,800 miles and saved gas money, but our northern "circle route" was way more fun!

A Life-Changing RV JOURNEY... And We're Not Done Yet

THE ISOLATION QUESTION

Would we be lonely? That was a big worry when we started out. What about our adult kids, grandkids, other family members, friends, and coworkers we'd miss terribly? We felt we were setting out into the world alone. If we were always on the move, how would we make lasting connections and forge a new sense of community?

As it turns out, in our time on the road, Jeanne and I have connected or reconnected with more family members and friends — while making new friends — than we would have in 15 years back home in our stationary community.

We learned to make good use of social media and video chatting to keep personally connected with family, especially the grandkids. We also have flown them out to meet us in fun places, and Jeanne has flown back East a couple times for extra “grandkid fixes.”

It also has been an unexpected delight to meet over 50 Facebook RV group friends in person throughout the United States and Canada. And we have arranged to meet up with newfound RV friends when our paths have crossed again later. In addition, groups such as FMCA have helped us feel part of a great big nationwide community.

OUR RV ADVENTURE PUP

Guess who also enjoys a whole new community of RVing friends? Hershey Pup has met scores of fellow Cavalier King Charles spaniels through a Facebook group called Camping Cavaliers. He's had follow-up play dates months down the road when we met back up with group members. Of course, Jeanne and I

have loved meeting and keeping in touch with his friends' humans.

Early on, Hershey Pup became an official National Park Service B.A.R.K. Ranger and has visited 38 national parks to date. With our help, Hershey follows the rules and regulations, and has made the most of our park visits.

OUR TOP 10: WHAT WE'VE LEARNED . . . SO FAR

Jeanne and I have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge while living, working, and traveling 24/7/365 in our RV. While we continue to learn more each day, some of our early lessons stand out:

- 1 Frequent and open communication with your partner is critical.
- 2 Having two cellular carriers is a lifesaver.
- 3 Don't wear sandals while dumping the black-water tank!
- 4 Know the height of your rig and watch your tail swing.
- 5 Use an RV-specific GPS device programmed for your vehicle's height, length, and weight.
- 6 Work as a team when backing into campsites; use a spotter.
- 7 Always use a surge protector and a water pressure regulator.
- 8 Check your tire pressures before each travel day, and use a tire pressure monitoring system (TPMS) while underway.
- 9 Weigh your RV and keep it below its gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR).



↑ Hershey Pup seems to enjoy the journey as much as his parents do. As an official National Park Service B.A.R.K. Ranger, he also stands ready to help them camp host this summer.

10 If it's windy, or you're going to be away from the RV, retract your awning.

Bonus lesson: Being required to drive 4.5 to 10 mph through RV campgrounds hundreds of times helps you to slow down in general and take life at a more leisurely pace.

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

We decided to slow things down in 2023 and give camp hosting a try. Jeanne and I were excited to receive an offer from Delaware State Parks to be volunteer campground hosts at Killens Pond State Park in Felton. If anyone will be traveling through there this summer, we'd love to be your hosts.

Following that seasonal assignment, we'll be RVing across the southern-tier states, exploring more bucket-list destinations, and we'll winter in Yuma, Arizona. We then hope to grant Hershey Pup's wish to set his paws down in Alaska, and place our 50th state sticker on the map in 2024. (We already have visited Hawaii.)

Jeanne and I feel so blessed and grateful for having taken our leap of faith into living, working, and traveling full-time in an RV. We had a crazy dream, and we made it happen. Do you have a dream you want to realize? Be bold and begin! ●