

9 THINGS NOBODY TELLS YOU ABOUT RV LIFE

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The *History* of *Teardrops*

TRAILER for TWO

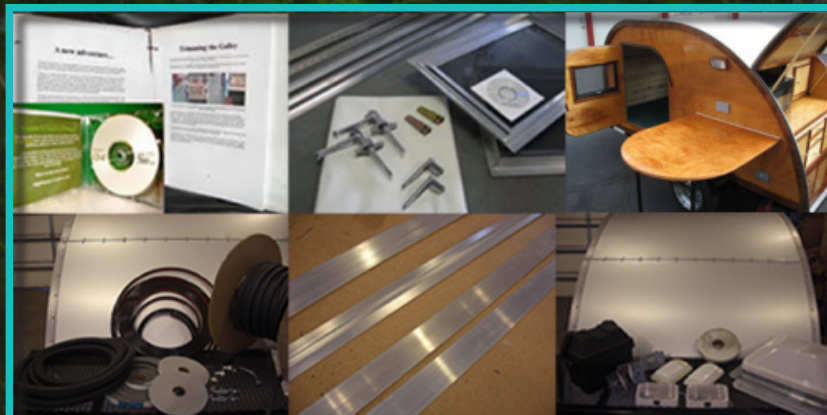
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Magazine

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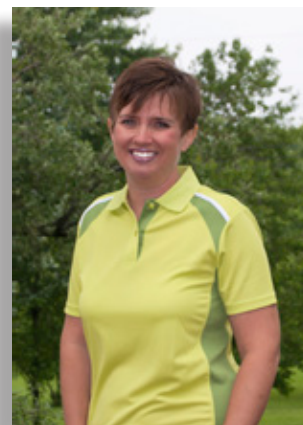
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Letter from the Editor:

The beauty of a sunset

I sat down to pen this editorial on the eve of the end of 2018. Moments ago, the sun went down in the most spectacular Midwestern sunset I think I have ever witnessed. That sunset led to me to start pondering sunsets and the wonder of them.



A glorious sunset is the epitome of fleeting beauty. For a few minutes, the sky is a spectacle of color — and then it's over. Yet the psychological effects of admiring the sunset may persist long after the color has faded.

Studies show that appreciating natural beauty may boost well-being, increase generosity and enhance life satisfaction. The key is to actively engage with the experience. To reap the rewards of that sunset, you need to stop whatever else you're doing and really notice and appreciate the show in the sky.

Some people find it easy to lose themselves in an awe-inspiring sunset. For others, slowing down to appreciate such a quiet experience doesn't come as readily. The instinct to stop and stare may have been overridden long ago by the learned imperative to hurry up and get things done.

Yet when you slow down to enjoy a sunset, you are accomplishing some very important things. And so, as you plan your next teardrop camping trip, remember to take the time to find and enjoy a glorious sunset!

Until next time...enjoy every sunset!

SARAH TUCKER

Editor

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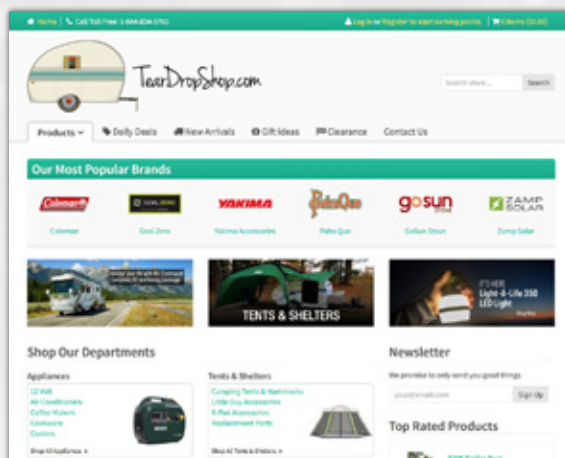
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ON THE TEARDROP TRAIL WITH MARILYN

Marilyn McCray is a published author of a cookbook titled *Canning, Pickling and Freezing* with Irma Harding, the International Harvester's fictional spokesperson. Marilyn and her partner, Jim Kerkhoff, travel in a beautiful teardrop to promote the book and she has graciously agreed to share some recipes with us in a regular column. Be sure to check out her book at teardroptrail.com/equipment-and-supplies/

TEARDROP BEEF STEW

If you are traveling in your teardrop during cold weather, a hearty, stick-to-your-ribs beef stew will provide a warm glow around the campfire.

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 2 pounds chuck roast or beef stew meat
- 2 tablespoons flour
- Olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 – 4 carrots, sliced or cut into chunks
- 4 – 5 red or white potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- Fresh beef stock or 2 – (10 once cans) beef stock or condensed broth
- Salt and pepper to taste

Variations:

- Bay leaves
- Celery, sliced or chopped
- Chopped bacon
- Sliced mushrooms
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste or canned tomatoes

Prepare before leaving

- Cooking time can vary depending in slow cooker – check early to verify cooking time
- Measure dry ingredients, flour and seasonings, place in plastic bag – label
- Cut meat in to cubes, freeze and place in plastic bags – label. Defrost on site
- Chop onions, garlic, slice carrots and celery – place in plastic bags – label
- Refrigerate in ice chest or cooler



In Camp

- Defrost meat, drop the meat into the flour and seasonings, close the bag and shake to coat the meat cubes.

Cooking Methods-

On the campfire – Dutch Oven
Prepare the campfire. Add olive oil to a 10-inch Dutch Oven. Use a tripod to hang the Dutch Oven over the camp fire to warm the olive oil and control the heat. Drop the meat into the oil to brown, stirring. Add stock,

vegetables, seasonings, salt and pepper. Stir and cover with the lid. Simmer but do not boil. Move closer to fire, if more heat is needed. Stir in tomatoes, sauce and beer. Adjust seasonings to taste. Cook for 1 hour 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Adjust cooking time for larger Dutch Ovens.

On a camp stove

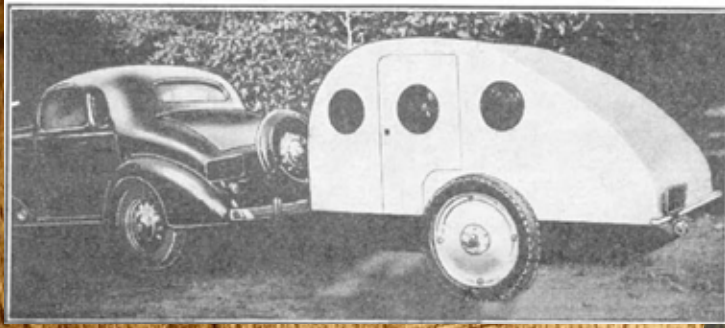
Use large heavy-bottomed stock pot on the camp stove. Follow the campfire instructions, adjusting temperature to simmer and not boil. Stirring occasionally.

In a slow cooker

Beef stew cooks in a crock pot in 6 to 8 hours on low or 3 to 5 hours on high. The time can vary depending upon your slow cooker. Adjust cooking time.

To Serve

Ladle into bowls. Serve with biscuits, sourdough bread or cornbread muffins.



The *History* of *Teardraps*



Note tiny proportions compared to modern car. The exterior is varnished.

By Sarah Tucker

Teardrop trailers first became popular in the 1930s, when magazines such as *Mechanix Illustrated* published plans. The first teardrop designs incorporated standard 4 by 8-foot sheets of plywood with hardwood spars. Teardrop trailers remained popular until the mid-1960s, after which they disappeared from mainstream camping. However, in the late 1990s, plans became available on the Internet and in recent years teardrop trailers have made a resurgence and are again growing in popularity. While not all-encompassing, this is just a small part of the history that was the beginning of teardrop trailer.

In the December 1936 issue of *Mechanics and Handicrafts*, this article ran and seems to be the oldest known written artifact about teardrop trailers. It includes very little on the background of the units but does have step by step instructions for building one. I personally loved the first photo of the movie star entering her trailer. The author posted a material list and cost analysis at the end of the article that will make anyone building in today's society smile...or maybe grimace. And thus...the birth of the DIY teardrop trailer plans.

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MECHANICS and HANDICRAFT

Building a Teardrop Sleeper Trailer

for \$50.00



Even the movie colony has become "trailer conscious"—photo shows Ida Lupino, famous movie star, entering a streamline trailer.

For the summer vacationist or motoring enthusiast who enjoys frequent outings, but who cannot afford frequent hotel bills or expensive camping equipment, a "teardrop" trailer, which comfortably accommodates two persons, will prove just the thing for many pleasant week-end trips. This can be built for approximately \$50 by anyone who has ordinary carpenters' tools.

By C. M. GEORGE

THE cost of the trailer described here is figured with sides, windows and door cut at a mill. If one has access to a jig-saw and band-saw large enough to

angles and drilled for $\frac{1}{2}$ " hole as shown. Cross bracing of $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 1" strap iron adds rigidity while assembling, as well as reduces twisting motion when on the

Editors Note: Marty Boehme has been generous in offering some of his knowledge on the background of teardrops and the men who have built this wonderful pastime of tiny camping.



BILL WORMAN **Founder of Kit Teardrop Trailers**

Bill's high school yearbook says he was the most "studious boy". After graduation, he wanted to get out of Spokane, since there were no opportunities there during the depression years. His dad dropped him off on a hill, where he would most likely be picked up by a slow moving truck driver on the steep upgrade. He ended up in Southern California.

He was a self-learned man, putting together a ham radio as a teen. At the age of 19, he was given an electrician journeyman's book and passed the tests to be a radio technician. He



used this talent to work in the movie industry shortly before the beginning of WWII. Always being fascinated with airplanes, he quickly moved to management where he oversaw the building of a basic trainer aircraft for the WWII war effort.

Just after the end of the war, Bill developed the most enduring of all teardrop brands, the KIT Kamper. The company name was KIT Manufacturing Company and was headquartered in the shell of an abandoned fruit stand in Norwalk, California. Bill planned to offer the trailer as a kit (hence that name) but received very few orders in the beginning.

And so with partner, Dan Pocapolia, they began to offer 4 x 8 foot trailers fully assembled at dealer trade shows in February of 1946 for \$500. They booked 500 dealer orders and were in business! Over the next year, the men took their initial model and made



several revisions both to allow for quicker production and to be able to offer options. By mid-year they had orders for over 1,000 units and were operating two shifts that were producing 40 teardrops a day. By January of 1948, they had designed a larger trailer and the Kit Kamper line was shut down.

Eventually, the company became one of the biggest names in high-end RV manufacturing. Today the Kit teardrop is honored in the RV Hall of Fame museum as one of the founding manufactures of this industry. After living in the San Francisco Bay Area for a number of years, Bill permanently retired on Orcas Island, Washington and lived there for 40 years. Bill Worman, the founder of KIT Teardrop Trailers, died July 15th of natural causes. Staying at the home of his son, Jack, in Sequim, Washington Bill's health rapidly declined the last few months of his life. Bill

was 93. Bill lost his wonderful wife, Ione about 18 years ago and is survived by three daughters, two sons and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



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IN THE MAGAZINES

In the March/April 1939 issue of Popular HomeCraft magazine, a story by Hi Sibley ran entitled

"Honeymoon House Trailer"

This article features a teardrop designed and built by Louis Rogers of Pasadena, CA for his wedding trip. The article's subhead "Built with Dimes, Total Cost \$60" was no play-on words. Rogers literally saved every dime he received when purchasing something and eventually used those dimes to build his unit.

The story also ran with detailed sketches and instructions on how to create a teardrop just like Rogers'.

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Note tiny proportions compared to modern cars. The exterior is varnished.

"HONEYMOON HOUSE TRAILER"

BY HI SIBLEY

Built With Dimes; Total Cost \$60

THIS trim little trailer, designed and built by Louis Rogers of Pasadena for his wedding trip, has proved its practicability in long service on the road. Mr. Rogers pursued a unique method of saving the money for the material. Each time he changed a dollar bill he put any dimes received into a small bank, so that the trailer literally was built with dimes. Total cost for material was slightly over sixty dollars, and this modest investment was the result of many trips to various junk and wrecking yards. Odd pieces were picked up here and there, and the prospective builder of one like it should bear in mind that he need not use identical material if something different serves the purpose just as well. For instance, a ten-beam is used for the tow bar on the original, but an I-beam, or even a heavy timber can be used instead. A Chevrolet front axle with 28 in. wheels was used in the Rogers trailer, the tie-rod being cut and bolted to the axle, as in Fig. 1. It is important that the wheels be properly aligned before drilling holes for the bolts. If you are equipped for the job, the ends of the tie-rod may be welded in place. Chassis frame is of pine two-by-fours with angle plates in the corners, secured with bolts. A cross member 18 in. back of the

front end carries one end of the tow bar, and a "wishbone" of 1" tubing reinforces the former in the manner illustrated. Sturdy strap iron ax-braces give rigidity to the frame. A center-wheel bracket for supporting the tow bar when not attached to the car is made of flat bar iron as illustrated in Fig. 2. A 6" iron farm implement wheel is used in this case; any other wheel of about this size will be satisfactory. Note that two wing nuts are unscrewed to remove the center from

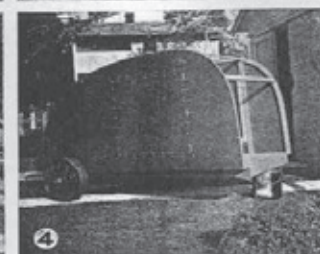
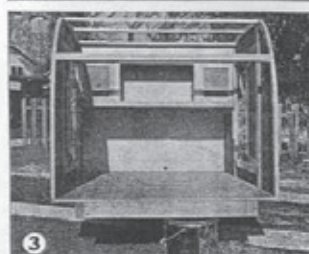
the tow bar. Any standard trailer hitch is satisfactory for this job, and the chain required by some states can be secured to one of the bolts through the tow bar and two-by-four. Note that the wheels are set pretty well aft, making for smooth towing. Chevrolet 1926 fenders are installed, as this type does not require cutting into the body. The floor plan is just four by eight feet, and tongue-and-groove flooring is laid over the chassis frame. Screws instead of nails should be used



Trailer handles easily and turns in small spaces.

MARCH-APRIL, 1939

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ceiling beams are notched into the side members as shown. Sides are each cut from a single panel 4 ft. by 8 ft., and are identical. A panel of the same size forms front end and roof, in one piece, and the lid over the kitchenette takes a panel 4 ft. by approximately 4 ft. 3 in. Below this is a removable panel of the same material. Space for the mattress and springs is 6 ft. 4 in. long, and the bed must be installed before the rear partitions are put in. The partition above the ice box and water tank, however, is so constructed that it can be removed by taking out the screws, in case there is occasion to take out the bed. The joint at corner of roof and side wall is covered with aluminum or other metal moulding, secured with screws, as shown in the sectional drawing.

1 Incredible as it seems, this tiny trailer has 78" space in sleeping compartment, which extends from front end to upright frame member just behind the wheel. Framing is of 1/2" x 1 1/2" pine. Glue is used as original, but glue is not essential.

2 Frame work of lid over kitchenette. Note 1/2" plywood partitions under low shelf, water tank is installed on left, ice box on right. Louis Rogers, builder, demonstrating.

3 View looking aft, before roof is installed. Showing dresser with two side compartments. A mirror is to be set against the middle panel in back.

4 Sides and top are sheathed with hard pressed board 1/2" tempered plywood. Nails and head screws, 1/2", with washers are spaced 5 1/2" apart.

The hinged lid over the kitchenette is shown in detail, Fig. 5. It is hinged at the top with standard bolts, and a curved metal strip placed over the joint to keep out the rain. Two iron rods hold the lid up when open, and swing back under when closed. A rack is provided for the table. When in use the latter is supported on two paper-hanger's hangers which have been cut down to 28 in. These fold up neatly and are stored in the bin or compartment above the kitchenette. An automobile door handle with lock is used for the locking device fitted with two bars, as illustrated. There is a light under the lid, and on top, the tail light mounted on a strap-iron bracket which also supports the license plate. Below the lid is a removable panel made as shown in Fig. 6. Three dowels in the bottom,

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set in holes in the floor, and the upper end is kept in place by the overlapping mousing of the lid.

Just at the rear end of the door a dresser is built in, Fig. 7, with two compartments with doors, and a mirror in back. A light is installed above. Note that the bed slides under this dresser, with angle body room between it and the bottom of the dresser to move about.

Dimensions of the kitchenette

full width of the trailer, suitable for curtains, table horses, etc.

The ice box is of galvanized iron insulated with two thicknesses of half-inch insulating board, and built into the trailer. Details are down in Fig. 9. The lid is also insulated, and when closed serves as a workbench for the cook. A 1½" copper tube

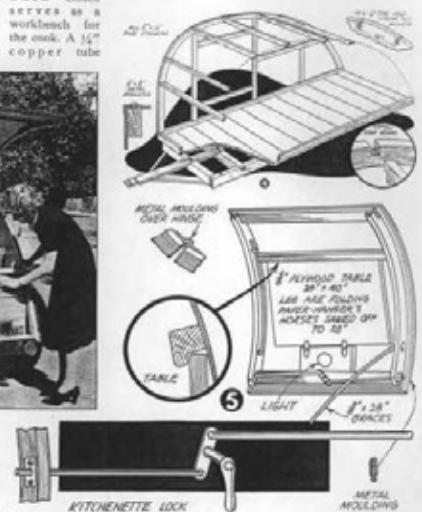
drains direct to the ground, and a low partition prevents ice from sliding over onto the food adjoining. It goes without saying that the cover must fit neatly and snugly. As stated before, both doors are

(Continued on page 428)

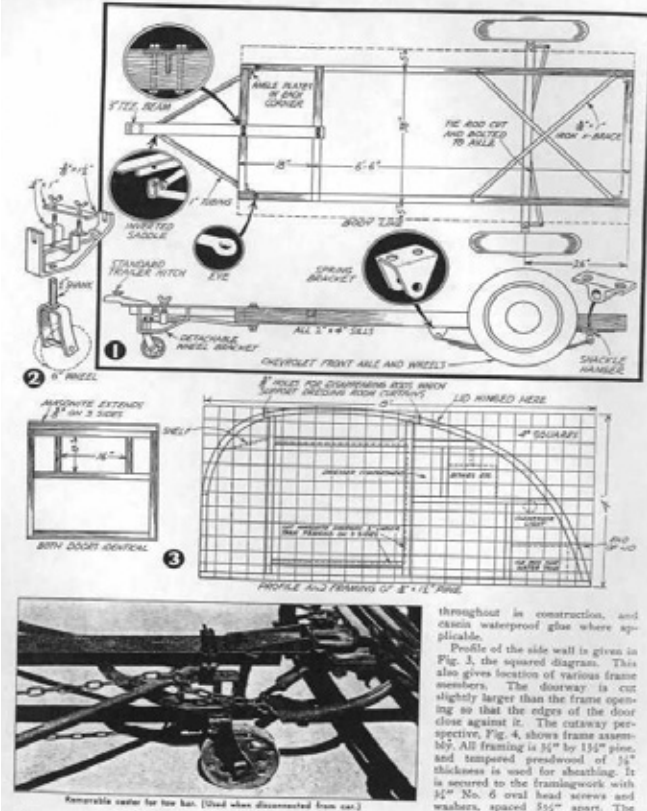
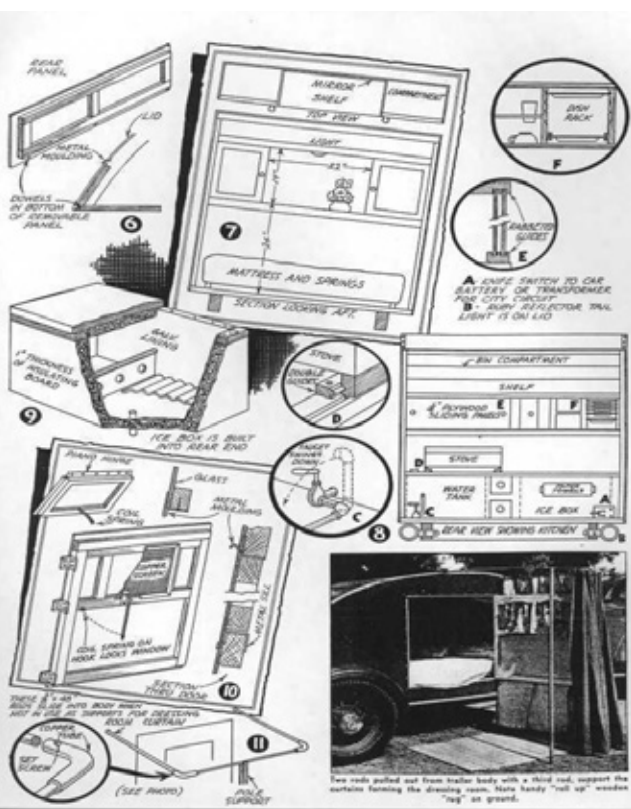


Mrs. (Lola) Rogers gets a jar from the box. An lever lift table under faucet made from old gas light fixture parts.

compartments can be taken from the squared diagram, Fig. 3, and construction details are shown in Fig. 8. At the bottom left is a built-in water tank, having a faucet that swings up out of the way of the lid when the latter is closed. Two drawers are provided, just to the left of center, and an ice box is built in on the right side. The stove slides out on wooden rails with grooves at right angles, preventing its shaking off when in motion. Above it are two panels sliding in rabbeted guides, and a dish compartment built to accommodate the dishes. The panels have brass finger-sockets to set in, and the guides should be sufficiently wide to prevent binding in damp weather. Give both the guides and edges of the plywood panels a thorough application of wax. In the dish rack, glasses set in holes in a shelf, and rabbeted grooves take care of the plates. Above this is a bin



Louis Rogers of Pasadena, designer and builder, demonstrates the novel window bracket. Normally, it is worked from the inside.



Removable center for tow bar. (Used when disconnected from car.)

throughout in construction, and waterproof glass where applicable.

Profile of the side wall is given in Fig. 3, the squared diagram. This also gives location of various frame members. The doorway is cut slightly larger than the frame opening so that the edges of the door close against it. The cutaway perspective, Fig. 4, shows frame assembly. All framing is 1½" by 1½" pine, and tempered preswood of 3/4" thickness is used for sheathing. It is secured to the framewerk with 1/4" No. 6 oval head screws and washers, spaced 5½" apart. The

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"HONEYMOON HOUSE TRAILER"

(Continued from page 421)

identical, but one is fitted with a Yale lock, and the other fastened from the inside with an interior handle taken from an old refrigerator. Construction of the door is shown in Fig. 10 and 11. Rogers has devised a very ingenious window faster and bracket combined. This consists simply of a coiled spring-door spring passing through two eyes set at right angles, as in Fig. 10. By pushing the spring out through the eyes it opens the window from the inside and holds it in any position. When closed, the end of the spring is put on a hook at one side, making an effective lock. The spring passes through a hole in the copper screen. The window is hinged at the top with a piano hinge, and the glass is held by a frame made of galvanized sheet iron bent as shown in the sectional drawing, and nailed and soldered at the corners. Painted over brown of the same shade as the sheathing of the trailer, it makes a neat appearance.

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Aluminum mousing is placed over the door still, with a small overhang of the same material above the door, as shown in the sectional drawing. In forming these pieces as well as all other sheet metal work it will be necessary, for a neat job, to have your local tinmith do the work with his shop equipment. It shouldn't cost much.

With a trailer of these compact dimensions, drawing is best done outside, and Mr. Rogers has rigged up a very satisfactory dressing room at the door with a curtain. This is supported on two rods which slide out from the top of the body on either side of the door, Fig. 11, and are just 6' long, the width of the trailer. A third rod, fixed with sockets at each end made of copper tubing, joins the other two and is held up by a wooden pole. Curtains strong enough to make a very satisfactory dressing room, especially when a wood floor is provided. This last (see photo) is made of slate something on the order of Victorian blinds and can be rolled up and stowed in small space.

Lighting on Mr. Rogers' trailer is from the car battery, but one could be put in the trailer itself independent of the car. There are six bulbs installed, one under the shell at the forward end of the sleeping compartment, one over the dresser, one under the kitchenette lid, one tall light and two blue clearance lights. A knife switch is provided to throw on current from car battery, or switch over to city 110-v circuit through a transformer.

POPULAR HOMEWORK



TRAILER for TWO

A streamlined home on wheels that's light and easily towed; has a double-berth and complete kitchenette.

"GETTING away from it all" doesn't mean giving up the comforts of home, for with this compact camp trailer you bring them right along with you. As it's only a fraction of the size and weight of a full-grown trailer, you can take this 10-ft. tourer wherever a car will go. And when you reach some ideal spot beside a lake or stream, up goes the hood over the kitchenette and in a matter of minutes there's an appetizing meal cooking away on the pull-out stove. Under the same hood, there's an icebox (for the big ones that didn't get away), a water tank, folding table, and cupboard space for a raft of food. After you've finished tucking away your share of it for dinner, you can open one of the doors and there's

a full-length mattress waiting for you when you turn in. And if you like fresh air when you sleep, just open the screened-in panels on the doors.

Original trailer designed by Howard Warren of Riverside, Calif. has traveled thousands of miles



BY HI SIBLEY

Trailer for Two

In 1947, Hi Sibley was at it again with what has become the single most popular vintage story on teardrop trailers in *Mechanix Illustrated*.

This article features a teardrop designed and built by Louis Rogers of Pasadena, CA for his wedding trip. The article's subhead "Built with Dimes, Total Cost \$60" was no play-on words. Rogers literally saved every dime he received when purchasing something and eventually used those dimes to build his unit.

The story also ran with detailed sketches and instructions on how to create a teardrop just like Rogers'.

The interior of the trailer has good sitting headroom and a bureau with plenty of storage space for clothes. There's even an electric light for reading in bed.

Now let's take a look at the drawings on these pages and then get on with the actual construction. The trailer has a welded angle-iron chassis that's illustrated in Fig. 2. This doesn't extend the full length of the body so that you can remove the camp body and substitute an open box type. If this might give your wife ideas about building a rock garden, then make the chassis the full length of the body and play safe.

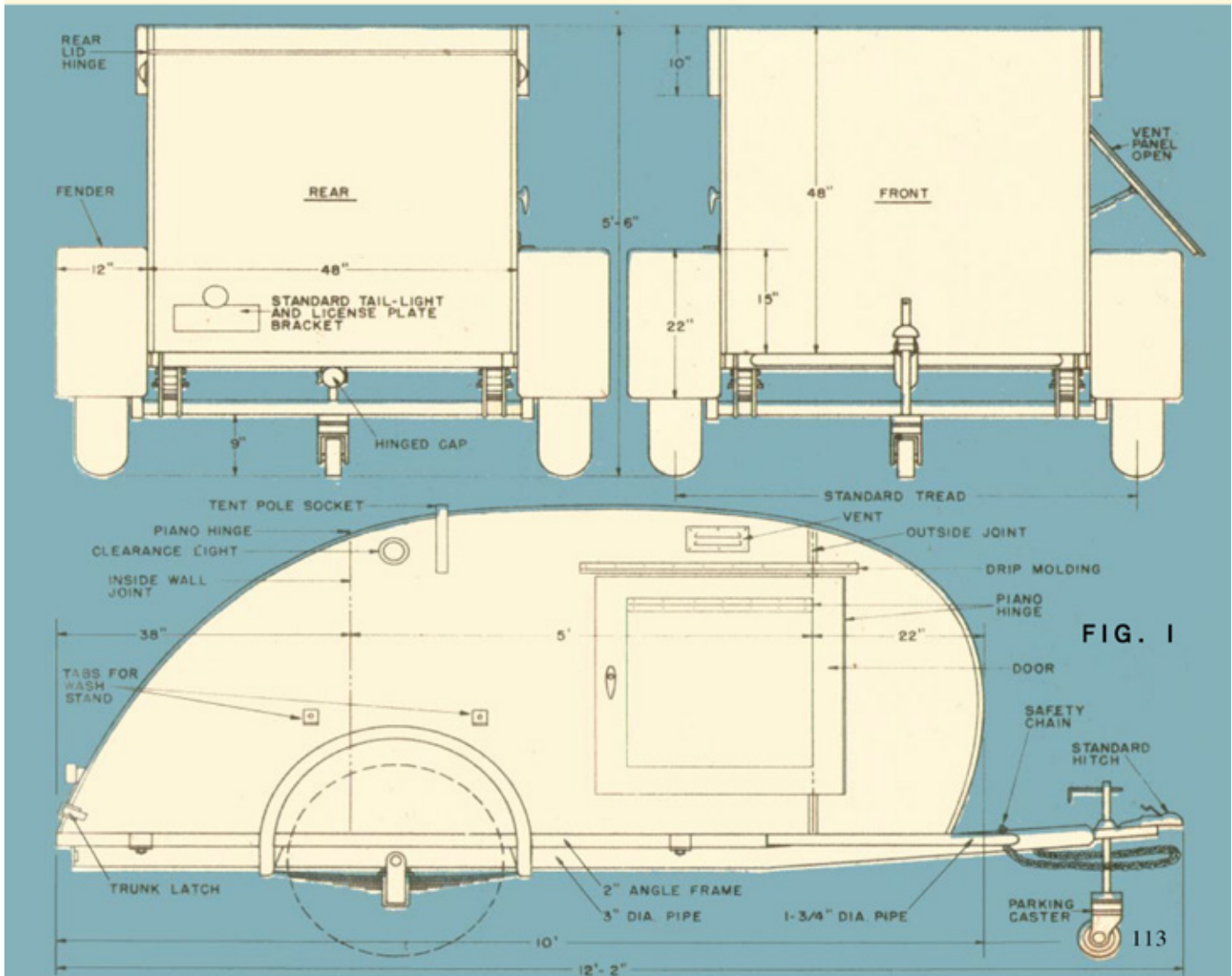
The chassis should be built up of 1/4 by 2 by 2 in. angle iron, mitered and welded at

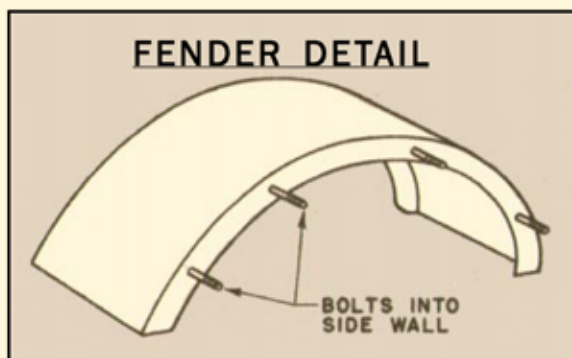
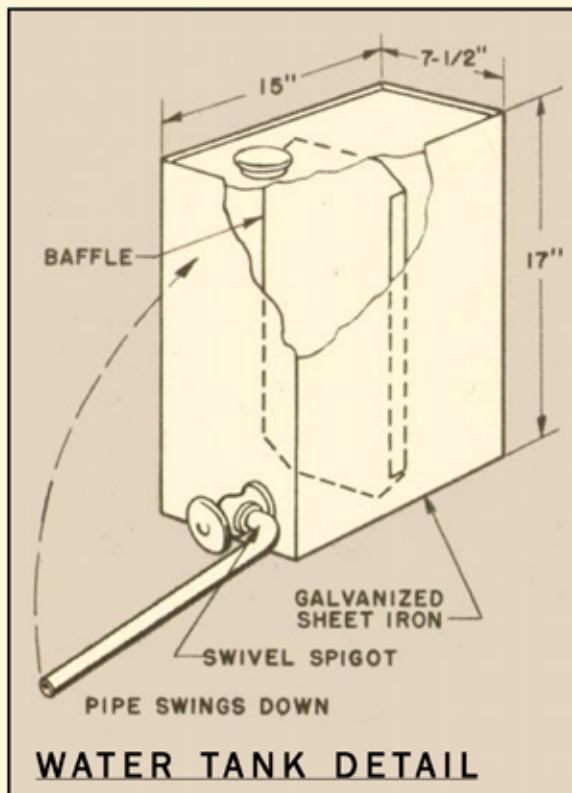
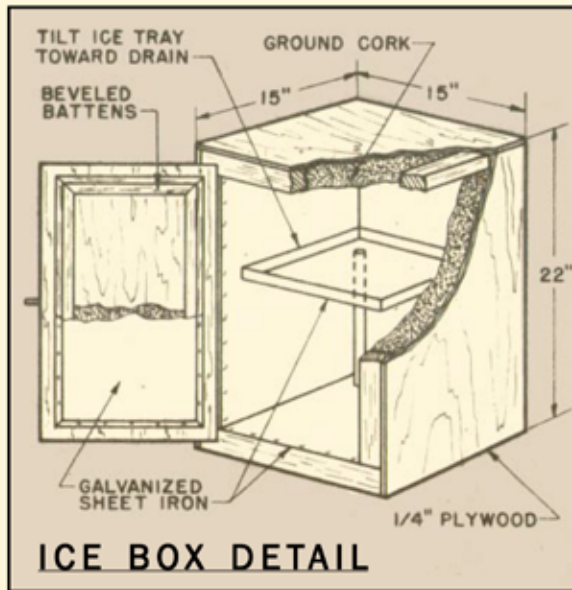


BUILD WITH BLUEPRINTS

Mechanix Illustrated conducts a blueprint and plan service for its readers. You will find a partial list of available blueprints and plans on page 162.

Above: Standard hitch connects trailer and car. Threaded caster levels body floor when parked.





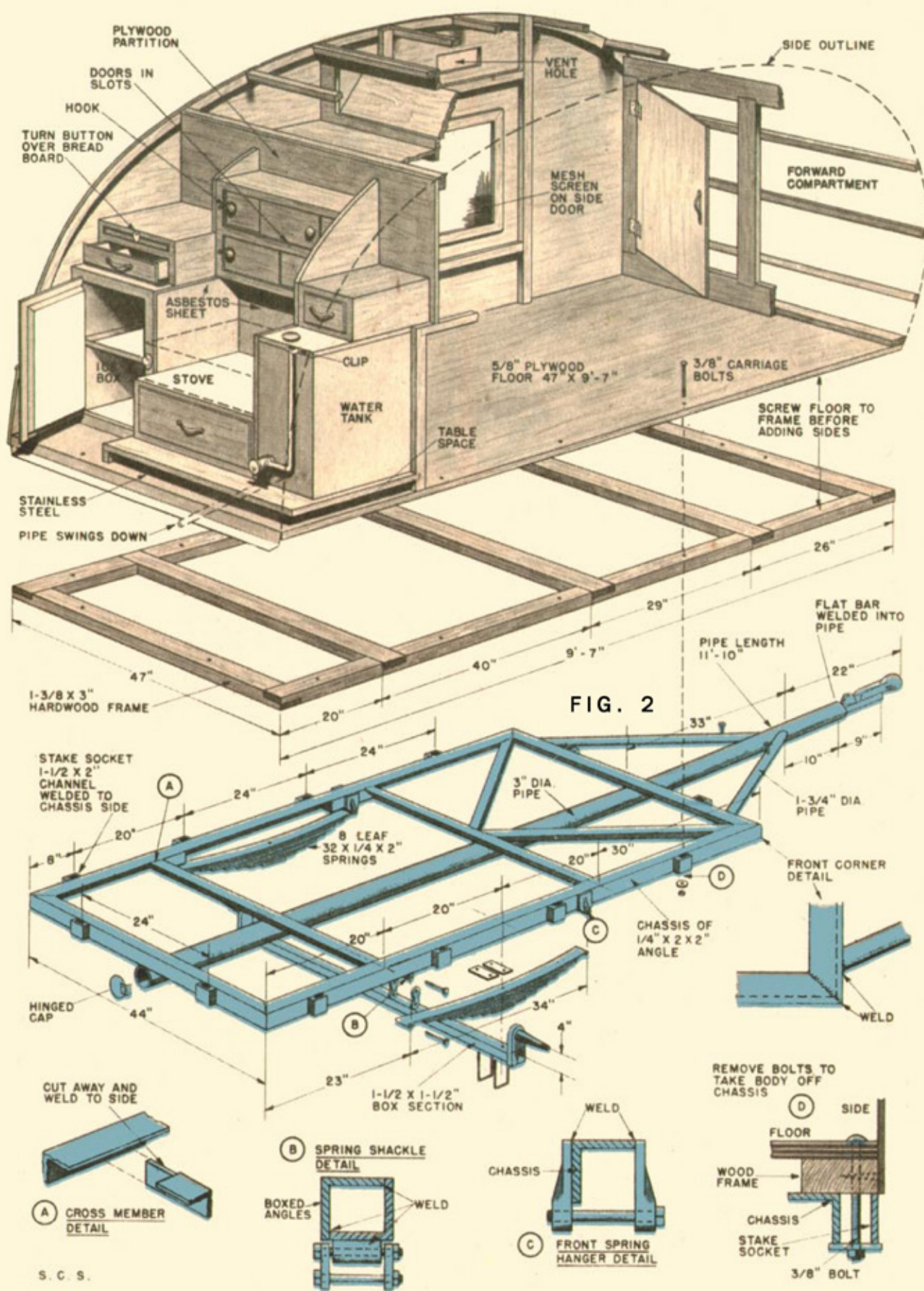
the corners and with cross members welded to the side frames. Be sure and grind off all the rough spots. If you're going to use it for pleasure alone, you can use a little lighter stock and save on the weight. At the locations indicated, weld the forward spring hangers to the side frames and the rear spring shackle brackets to boxed sections of the frame. The tow bar extends the full length of the frame and should be welded to the cross members, with the forward end canted up slightly by bending the pipe as shown in Fig. 1. A standard hitch should also be welded at the front end. Incidentally, that hinged cap at the back end of the pipe is a stunt of Mr. Warren's for stowing his fishing rods inside it.

The stake sockets indicated on Fig. 2 can be omitted if you're not going to use the chassis for hauling. Two standard 34 in springs with a welded box-section axle fastened to them with U-bolts, support the chassis and absorb road shocks. All in all, the construction is a bit heavier than you'd normally require for a camp trailer alone but it will really take the gaff.

The next operation on the program is to make the simple hardwood frame which is bolted to the side and end members (also the stake sockets, if you're using them) of the chassis. The front end of the frame is bolted to the diagonal pipe braces. Next, cut the floor from 5/8 in. plywood, and glue and screw it to the frame. Drill holes through the assembly and bolt it down to the chassis as shown in Fig. 2.

Your next chore is to make the sides of the body, using 1/4 in. plywood panels covered with the same thickness of Masonite. Lay the latter face down on a level floor, spread the glue and drop the plywood on top. Then spread a dropcloth or tarpaulin over the "sandwich" and cover it with dry sand to press the layers together. If you can't get 12 ft. panels, you'll have to make a joint near the front edge of the door (see Fig. 1). When the glue is dry, cut the sides to shape, following the dimensions in Fig 1. and the pattern in Fig. 3. and then cut the openings for the doors and vents. Use the same grid to bandsaw the 1/4 in. by 2 in. plywood braces to shape. After these are glued and screwed to the sides (from the inside), cut notches through the braces and the plywood (but not through the Masonite covering) for the 1 by 1 1/4 in. beams which support the top.

You're now ready to assemble the sides to the floor, fastening them along the bottom with screws into the frame. Then cut the beams to the correct length and glue them in place, using a wood screw at each notch. Cut the framing for the forward and rear partitions from 5/8 in. plywood, with





Rear view of the interior showing full-length mattress and storage space in bureau above it.

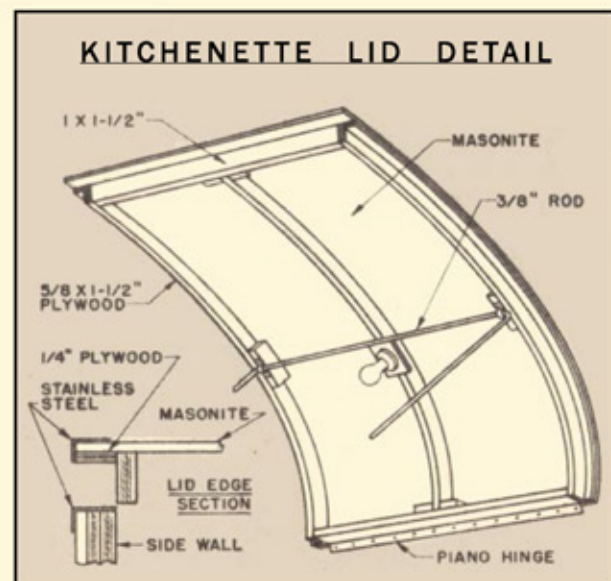
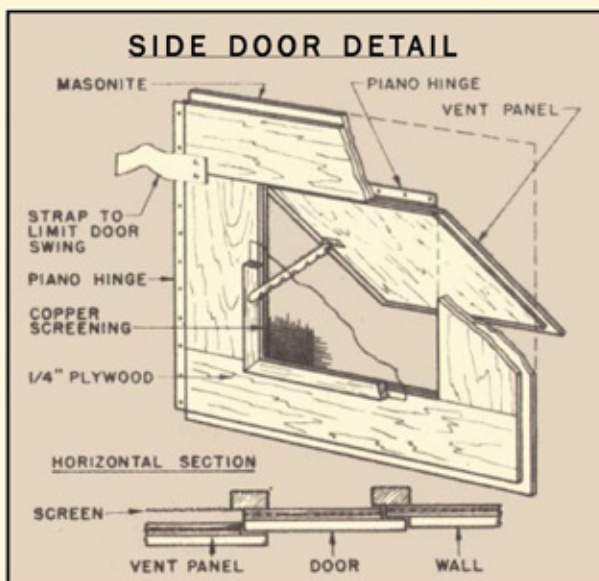


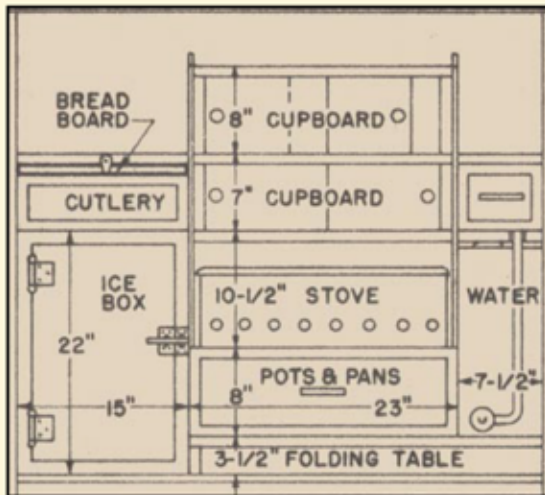
Forward end view of interior. Storage compartment doors must be high enough to clear bedding.

openings in the forward one for the doors leading to the front compartment, and install the partitions. Figs. 2 and 3 will give you the location and details of these. Next, add the framing for the compartment and drawers, including slides, of the bureau.

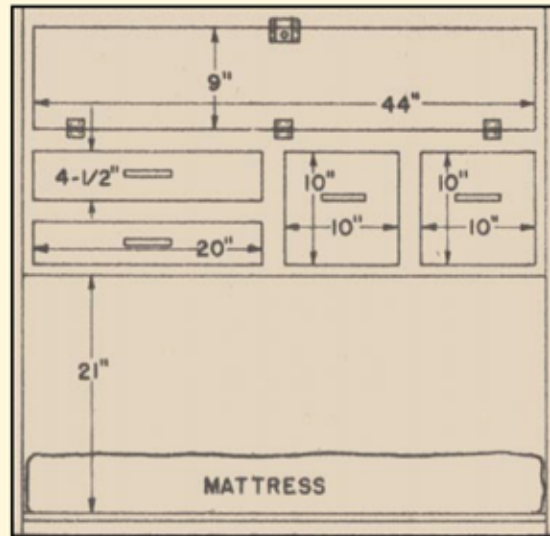
The kitchenette comes next, and here the arrangement will depend on the equipment that you plan to use. If you're using the usual two-burner camp stove, you can follow most of the dimensions and details in Fig. 2 and the detailed drawing of the kitchenette on page 117. Make the ice box and water tank first, following the detailed drawings for these, and install them in place. The tank rests on a shelf with space beneath it for a regular-sized bridge table for chow time. When these units are in

place, add the framing for the utensil compartment, the top of which forms a base for the stove. Don't forget to line this space (and under the cupboards too) with sheet asbestos to reflect the heat. The framing for the cupboards, bread slide and cutlery drawers should then be fitted in place. Make all the cupboard and compartment doors, bread slide, bureau and kitchenette drawers, etc. at one time and don't forget to notch the latter so they won't tumble out and strew your wife's underwear or the knives and forks all over the place. The cupboard doors, made of 1/4 in. Masonite, sliding in rabbets, should have small hooks to keep them closed. When you're finished with all the cabinet work, the body should look like the drawing in Fig. 2. Then, while





KITCHENETTE



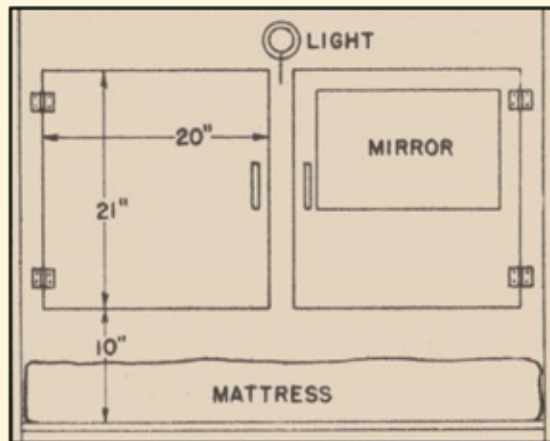
BUREAU, LOOKING AFT

Arrangement of storage spaces for cooking equipment and clothing may be altered to suit individual requirements. Double doors at forward end should be hung on offset hinges and have latches.

you still have room to work inside, add the wiring for the clearance lights which will connect to the regular car lighting circuit. The interior lights, one over the front compartment doors and the other on the rear lid, are wired later and connected to a separate battery.

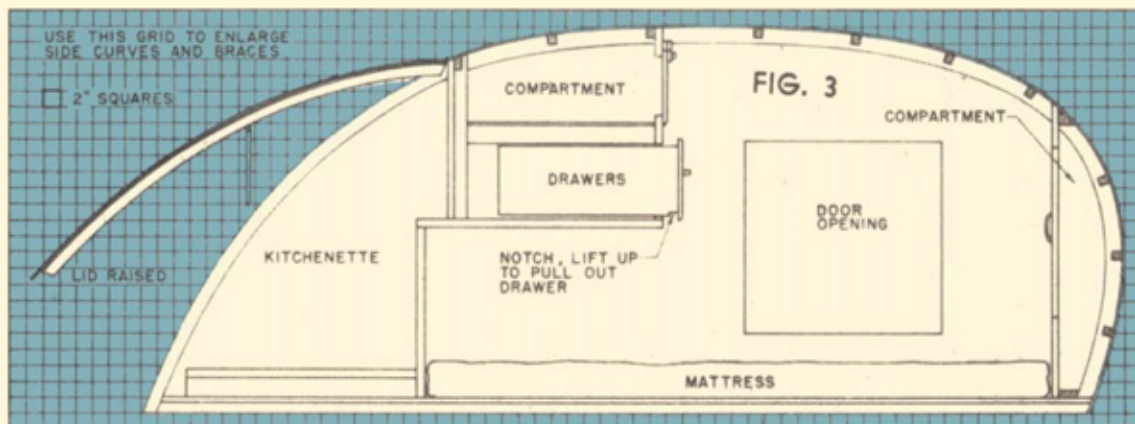
The 1/4 in. Masonite top can now be glued and screwed to the side braces and beams, using a stainless steel angle moulding to cover the seams at the sides. The kitchenette lid is then made, following the details in the small drawings and the pattern in Fig. 3. The lid is hung from the top with a long piano hinge and a 3/8 in. rod installed as shown in the drawing to hold it up.

You're on the home stretch now and the next job is to make the side doors. These are hung from the sides so that when closed they'll be flush with the outside walls. A regular car door handle and a simple bar



FORWARD COMPARTMENT

lock inside, complete the hardware on them. You can now paint the outside of the trailer and varnish the interior. Make the fenders from heavy sheet metal and bolt them to the side walls.



AFTER YOU BUY

9 THINGS NOBODY TELLS YOU ABOUT RV LIFE



By Valerie + Jessi Smith

We often talk about all the many joys of living on the road. From the beautiful scenery, to the feeling of freedom, but there are still many ups and downs living on the road. We focus mostly on the positive because 90% of the time it's been wonderful. However, there are bad things about this lifestyle too. Today, we'll keep it real and share with you the 9 things nobody tells you about RV life.



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1. BOON-DOCKING CAN BE SCARY

A free nights stay seems like a really great deal, right? Well, it is, mostly. But one night we had a terrible time in New Jersey. After a long day's drive, we finally arrived at our selected Walmart. As we walked back to the car after grabbing

supplies in the store, we see three cars: lined up next to each other near the back of the parking lot with their lights on, blaring the creepy whistle song from American Horror Story. So we pile into our camper, and shut the doors and windows, a

little creeped out. Then a man outside starts screaming, top of his lungs, as if he's being kidnapped or tortured. Suddenly we realize we are in middle of no where, trapped in a camper, with no ability to see what is going on. Naturally we ran out, jumped in the car, and sped away as fast as we could while also calling the police.

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It could have been a "prank," but holy hell it was one of the scariest nights of our lives.

2. LIFE AND DEATH STILL HAPPENS

In the last 6 months, we've lost three grandparents. Friends have also had babies, bought houses, and moved cities. If you're planning to hit the road and expecting the rest of the world to stop, you will be greatly disappointed. This is life and life can be messy, disorganized, chaotic, and you can loose the ones you love. But the good thing about being mobile, is we were able to change a few plans around and spend extra weeks with family.

So much better than a few days that our previous lives would have allowed for. Sometimes sad things happen. While traveling may mean missing important events, it also means living with no regrets.

3. YOU WILL STAY IN WEIRD PLACES

Even with tons of planning, when you're traveling to a place you've never been before, you have to take the good with the bad...and sometimes there's a lot of bad! From staying in creepy Walmart parking lots, to that one time we accidentally stayed in a brothel, you will have weird experiences. Not every town is equally awesome and not every campground is as good as the reviews state.



4. THINGS BREAK

For example, your camper window may break on a long road trip while it's raining, and you still have 10 states to pass through until your next destination. Or one time our refrigerator went out for two days while staying in the hot Florida Keys. Or there was another time that our bathroom smelled so bad for two weeks only to find out it wasn't the toilet, it was because we weren't using the shower. Turns out all we needed to do was run water through the drain every so often (the more you know!) All to say, things break when you are living on the road. Key to success is to be flexible, try to maintain things the best you can, and accept the good with the bad along the way.

5. STORMS CAN BE DANGEROUS

Everyone knows tornados and trailers don't mix well.

So every thunderstorm can be a bit nerve racking. One night while camping in Texas, a violently windy thunderstorm blew in, which lasted for hours. We checked the weather to learn that there was a tornado watch over the entire stretch between Austin and San Antonio and here we were in the middle of it all. Once you're in it, it's hard to leave with 60mph gusting through, so now a days we check the weather more often. But even then, tornados can pop up unexpectedly.

6. CREEPY CRAWLIES LIVE IN NATURE

Ok, so this is by far the worst thing we've experienced (in Valerie's opinion) so far. We were in South Carolina



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nightmare style...the first one we saw came from the pillows. Then, after it got away from our murderous attempts, we saw the daddy of all yellow spiders, possibly the size of a quarter, more realistically the size of a small cow. One after another, for three nights, spiders kept crawling up the walls from under our bed. We eventually got a bug bomb only to come home to...a yellow spider crawling on the wall. Haha, well, we tried.

James Island State Park in Charleston South Carolina has the most beautiful campground and park we've ever seen, with fishing ponds, a doggy park island, and bike trails galore. Our campsite was next to a pond and was simply gorgeous but one morning we spotted 9 water snakes slithering across the

pond. Gross. And so many bugs. From stink bugs, to stick bugs, to bugs we are convinced are from Space Odyssey. You will encounter bugs, snakes and spiders when you camp. This is new news, we know.

7. CAMPING IS MESSY



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We're not going to lie to you—we weren't exactly the poster children for a super clean house in our "old lives." Sometimes dishes went unwashed for a few days, dog hair collected under the couch for a while, and we sometimes ate nachos and ice cream in bed while binge watching Game Of Thrones.

YOUR CLEAN STANDARDS WILL CHANGE

On the other hand, part of camping full time means accepting a bit more dirt...like actual dirt...in our lives. When we camp on beaches, sand will be flowing through our house. In our old life, Jessi was adamant about not allowing the dogs on the bed. Now, our entire house is basically just a bed and a kitchenette, so every time the dogs jump on the bed, they bring the garden on their paws.

Showering is also less frequent nowadays. Depending on the campground, sometimes the showers are lukewarm or muddy, which makes you feel less clean after you leave. Plus, we don't have a mirror inside our camper. This can be incredibly freeing, but it also means we often invest a little less time in our appearance than we used to.

All in all, our standard of mess has changed a lot. Acceptance is key. It doesn't bother us that much, but for the ultra-clean folk, camping may not be for you.



8. THERE WILL BE BUMPS AND BRUISES.

Living in a small space also means bumping your head a lot...on the ceiling, on the cupboards, on the air conditioner...every corner of the camper is a liability. Camping and hiking means there are just more chance to trip, or get hurt in various ways. Being outside a lot just means you'll have a few extra scratches to show you're badass.

9. SOME DAYS WILL SUCK

Are we happier? Yes. Is every day some sort of fairy tale? Well, no, of course not. There are days we fight, a lot. There are days when we have arrived in a new cool town, eager to explore, but instead spent the entire day inside because we were too tired. Not every day is equal and this is just the case in life. As humans, we often want a perfect life but what we really should be seeking is if the good is outweighing the bad. Once that scale tips towards bad, it's time for a change. So far, our scale of suck has barely scratched the surface compared to the amazing experiences we've had.

With that said, we've had some down right awful days. For example, when we were driving from Los Vegas to California, it was suppose to be a simple 6 hour drive. That day we ended up hitting hours of traffic in addition to a head wind. Never making it over 45mph, with our pedal fully to the ground, we barely made it to the halfway mark 10 hours later. The next day was Thanksgiving so we woke up early to finish the drive to make it to our families house. We arrived for only a few moments when Maxwell went running around the yard and broke his knee. These few days simply sucked. But that's ok.

IT'S ALL WORTH IT

Let's end on a positive note shall we? Yes, some days suck. Yes, life still happens. And yes, spiders are still nasty critters, but we STILL say daily how grateful we are for this life. We couldn't be happier with our decision to live on the road and we can't wait to share with you the many things we learn along the way! Happy and safe travels everyone!

Read more from Valerie & Jessi on their blog:



www.happycamperwives.com/

TEARDROP TIPS



GENERAL TRAVEL TIPS

Never let your gas tank get below 1/4 tank unless you are on a route you are familiar with. That dot on the map that looks like a town may only have a church, a bar, and six houses. If in doubt, go back to the last gas you saw and fill up.'

When planning a trip use 50 mph as an average travel speed. (2 hours per 100 miles) This allows time for rest stops, curvy roads, going up and down hills, and just taking your time. Why feel rushed when you are trying to relax. If you get there early... that is OK too.

Parking with trucks at rest stops. Align the rear of your camper with the rear of their trailers. This prevents your spot from looking empty.

Bring quarters when you go to shower. Some campgrounds charge for showers and it will save you a hike back to the camper. You can get small clear plastic tubes that fit a stack of quarters. The tube keeps the quarters neat and it is easy to tell when you are getting low.

Check with the Chamber of Commerce in towns that you visit. They may have maps or know of points of interest that aren't well publicized. If you have a unique hobby or interest they may be able to put you in touch with a local club or individual who can give

you the inside scoop for the area.

Don't open your trailer to show it off to someone at a gas station or scenic overlook, unless you are willing to show it to several other people. As you are showing it, more people will drive up and if they see you are giving tours, they will join in. About the time you are done, more people may drive up.

Don't over book your activities. Leave time to relax or do something spontaneous.

If weather is forecasting hail – try going to a car wash – they are usually empty during bad weather.

If you like quirky roadside attractions and tacky tourist stops, check out the roadsideamerica.com web site. You can plan your trip around Paul Bunyan statues or the largest ball of twine or find where to visit the National Mustard Museum or the International Vinegar Museum. Be careful or you may find yourself on a quest to find every Muffler Man in the lower 48.

If you need Wi-Fi access there are plenty of places to get connected for free. Libraries, travel plazas, McDonalds, and Starbucks are a few spots you can get online. Many private campgrounds will have Wi-Fi too.

If you run into a problem you can't solve while camping try asking the people in the site next to you. Campers are usually happy to lend a hand if they are able.

In cooler weather, you will get condensation on the windows. Roll up a small towel and place it between the curtains and the windows. This will absorb excess condensation that might otherwise drip onto you at night. Remove the towels in the morning. Opening side windows, or roof vents slightly at night will help reduce condensation.

Know how to read a map. GPS is great, but if your battery dies, or your phone loses its signal an old fashioned map can save the day.

Need to hit the road but your towels are still wet? Make a clothesline to fit between the cabin coat hooks. Pin your damp towels, clothes, etc. Open the side windows and roof vent a crack. After about 20 minutes of driving all will be dry. Use 1/8" Nylon rope and tie a loop at each end or make one large loop that will make it two strands. Make it taut but easily removable without untying.

On your way in to camp look for local farmer's markets or roadside stands to pick up fresh fruits and vegetables.

Plan your trip through major cities so you miss rush-hour times. Or plan your trip to bypass around the city if possible.

Travel and Camping clubs like Good Sams and AAA will give you discounts and emergency assistance. They can also help with trip planning.

Try to keep bed in camper somewhat free from gear when traveling. That way you can

stop for a quick nap or "stretch out" after sitting for too long.

When not driving in the rain or on dusty dirt roads, open your cabin windows slightly to get ventilation. This will air out the bedding nicely and help remove the condensation that may collect in low areas in a teardrop.

When traveling long distances, you should stop at least every 2 hours and do a walk around inspection of the trailer. You probably needed a bathroom break or gas anyway.

You can hang several shirts on one coat hanger. Hang them in the camper when traveling. Move them to the tow vehicle when you are at the campsite. That way your shirts are wrinkle-free and you don't look like you crawled out of a duffle bag (unless that is the look you are going for).

A GPS Asset tracker on your trailer can be used for you to keep a record of your travels or you can give internet access to loved ones so they can keep track of your location. This is very helpful if you are going into back country. You can let family know how long you will be in an area. If you stay too long or stop moving every couple days they can have the Rangers check to make sure everything is OK.

A French Press is great for coffee snobs who like to camp. It is compact and makes the best coffee for miles around.

A special thank you to Craig Edevold with Camp Inn Trailers for these tips.

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