

# Tiny Camper Manufacture Feature

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December  
2016

# COOL Tears™

*and tiny campers*

## ROCKIN' RAISIN



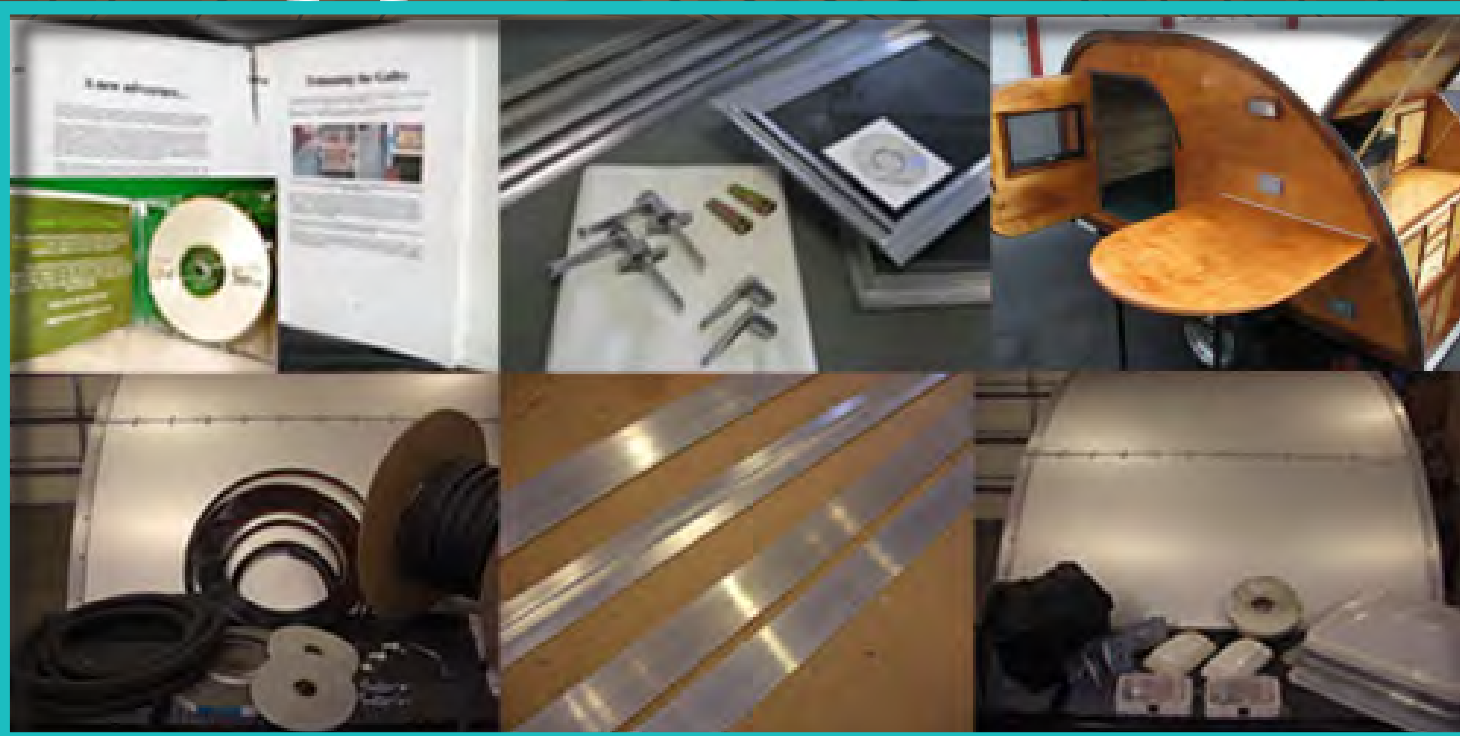
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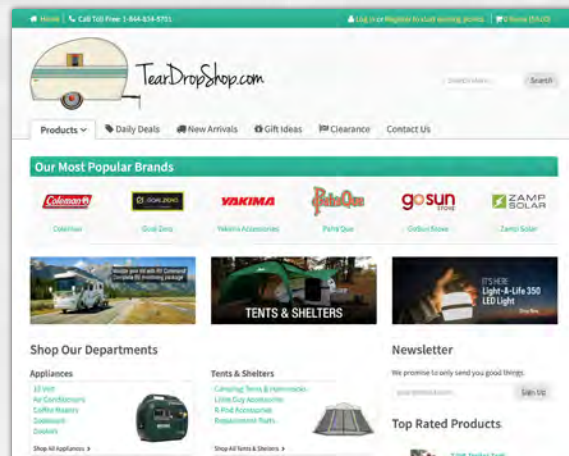
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M A G A Z I N E

Vol. 4 No. 7

December 2016

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## 16 COVER STORY

### Rockin' Raisin

By Casie Bazay

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**5** Letter from the Editor - What's in a letter?  
By Sarah Tucker

**6** Wolverine Den  
By Sarah Tucker

**8** Made in the UK  
By Paul Presslee

**22** Tiny Camper  
Manufacture Feature



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# What's in a letter?

When I took the plunge and agreed to take over Cool Tears my brain would only focus on the work. The time spent conversing with advertisers, keeping up the website, finding quality stories for each issue and etc. What I could not see in the beginning would be how this magazine reaches out all across the globe and touches people. You see, I have the unique privilege of reading emails from subscribers all over with stories that never fail to touch my heart.

A veteran soldier in the UK wrote about how the Dave Moulton steampunk issue spurred him into building his own teardrop and in the process he found ways to cope with PTSD. A retired gentleman sent an encouraging note letting me know he eagerly looks forward to each issue because although he cannot physically camp any longer our stories allow his mind the freedom of enjoying the great outdoors. A wonderful lady from the south emailed that she grew up camping in a teardrop back in the '60's and now is able to go camping with her grandkids in a new teardrop.

People from all walks of life are brought together by the wonderful industry we call teardropping. And these letters keep me moving forward to create a better product that all can reap the benefits from.

So if you have a story, please send it my way and know I read each one and they all have a special place in my heart!

As we near the end of 2016, my prayer for you all is a time of sweet reflection of the past 12 months and the hope of a blessed new year. And may we all remember the Joyous Occasion from which we now celebrate on Christmas Day.

Until next time...enjoy every sunrise!

**SARAH TUCKER**

Editor  
Cool Tears  
and Tiny Campers Magazine™  
[sarah@cooltears.com](mailto:sarah@cooltears.com)





# WOLVERINE DEN

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by **Sarah Tucker**

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**I**n the winter of 2014, Brandon Karnes took a 2009 Little Guy teardrop and stripped down the original decals both inside and out. He had a local business create new decals in his favorite colors of maze and blue. The Karnes' live in Holland on Lake Michigan and it is only reasonable that they are exuberant fans of the University of Michigan.



# MICHIGAN Wolverines



The trailer is loaded with flat-strip led lights that flash maze and blue and a 23" tv mounted to the cargo rack that is removable on the fly. Of course, they have two powered subwoofers and a sound bar for pregame tailgates and gatherings. They also have a complete portable station that makes for a great kitchen and bar. The Wolverine Den, as it has lovingly been named, is pulled with a 2014 Mustang convertible that of course is the color blue.

Their teardrop is used all year around throughout Michigan camping. They travel nation-wide with it as well. Of course, the Wolverine Den makes it to all of the home Michigan Wolverine games at The Big House in Ann Arbor. This teardrop has been seen by thousands of fans weekly and is one

of many Michigan football tailgating attractions. The Den is a huge hit at campsites as well as the games. At times they spend more time talking to campers that want to look and know more about it than do relaxing.

Winter has already arrived in northern Michigan and the Karnes' are looking forward to taking the Wolverine Den out in the snow and woods.



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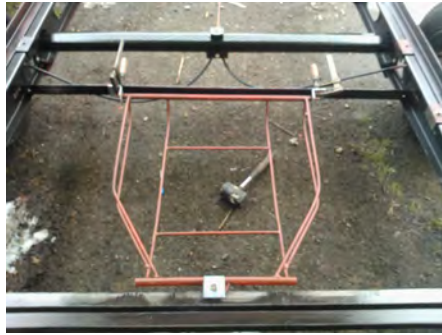


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by **Paul Presslee**

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**A**lthough I have seen a few teardrop style trailers over the years, my first real inspiration to build my own came from a hot rod forum. I read an interesting thread by a guy that had built his own trailer called “Grizpod” and at that point the seed was sown. My idea was to build a trailer for my wife and I to getaway to the beach or countryside once in a while.



Having never built a trailer before, I decided to build a simple trailer quickly, easily and cheaply. The more research I did, I realized I wanted to do the best job possible which meant the project began to grow. I have a passion for curvy retro styling, so I wanted the build to look as vintage as I could manage. I also wanted to avoid hard straight lines so there were to be radiuses or curves on as many parts as possible. I came across the Tearjerkers and the Teardrops and Tiny Trailers websites and found them to be a goldmine of information. The wealth of knowledge available between them is invaluable when building a trailer. Looking at the different designs, I found many pleasing styles of trailers, but I particularly liked the Grumman style, so I decided to loosely base my design on this style.



I started with a galvanized ex-caravan chassis with brakes that I bought for £120.00 (\$149.85.) By removing 18 inches from the rear of the trailer, it put the wheels in the correct place. Next, I cleaned and painted it, at this point I also built an under-floor spare wheel carrier.

The next stage was to build an angle iron frame. I bolted this to the chassis with s/s bolts, washers and lock nuts. The floor is made from 2x2 timber with 1/2 inch 8x4 ply on top. I chose to join the floor sections with biscuits and glue because the overall floor is nearly 10 feet long and 5 feet wide and 5x10 plywood sheets are a bit too expensive. The floor is set into the angle iron framework and bolted down. At this stage, I also added a large under floor storage area.

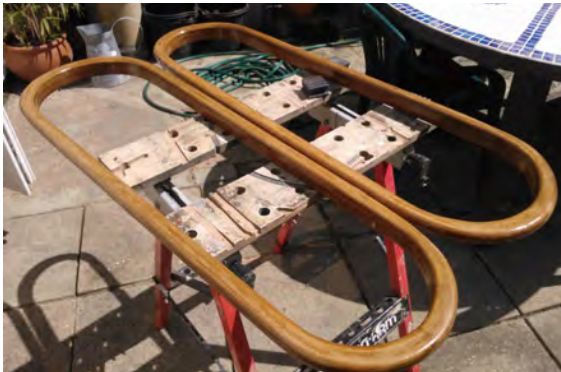




When it came to deciding the profile shape, I knew that I wanted a little more headroom than a Grumman provides. I decided to raise the roofline slightly and make it slightly less curved front and back. I drew the shape on a large sheet of corrugated template material using the string method to achieve a smooth sweep. When I was happy with it, I cut it out and transferred the shape to the plywood sheet. One side was cut out with a jigsaw and the other copied with a router and flush cut bit.

The walls were constructed using 3.6 mm inner skin and 12 mm outer skin with a stick and insulation core. These were fitted to the floor along with some temporary roof spars. Progress became a little slow at this point due to building outside in winter / spring.





I would say that the British weather was possibly the biggest challenge of the entire build. Disaster, or I should say near disaster, did strike once. While we were away on holiday, there was a storm at home and the tarp blew off the teardrop. When we returned home we found the trailer soaked. Fortunately, I had sealed most parts with varnish or preservative as I built each section so the damage was minor and quickly rectified.



Whilst I was delayed building the teardrop, I began searching for old/vintage/unusual parts. Things that might be described as sympathetic to a bygone era that I might be able to use in the build. EBay and car/boat/caravan breakers were the source of most of the second-hand things I managed to find. Windows from a cabin cruiser; a skylight that is a boat deck hatch; hubcaps from an old British car; number plate light and galley lid handle from a Austin; rear lights from a London taxi and a pair of fiberglass rear wings from a Morris minor were among some of my finds. The rear wings proved to be a challenge as they had to be heavily modified to fit. I had never done this job before but I am pleased with the overall result. I also bought a stainless steel sink, grill, hob combo and a damaged Ali door that had been salvaged from an old caravan. I restored these items when the bad weather prevented work on the teardrop.



The caravan door was stripped and the internals discarded. I cleaned and shortened the door frames, polished them and made a new internal section with an aluminum outer skin, a thin ply inner skin and modern foam (Celotex) centre. This was finished off with a repro vintage style handle.

As the weather improved, I fitted the roof spars along with 2" insulation and the wiring, all 12v. I then began to build the interior units. In the cabin, there are double overhead lockers, double desk lockers and a double front locker and wooden door/window surrounds.

The galley has a lower and an upper unit. These were all made on the bench in my shed and fitted in the trailer as finished units. I added some old-style latches and some black and white vinyl

floor tiles that I picked up in a DIY store. I wouldn't bother with the floor tiles again as they are covered by the mattress. I think it is better to sand and varnish the floor and that's what I have done on my current unfinished build.



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I completely fitted up the trailer without the skin to check the fit and test everything. Once I was happy with everything, I removed the lights, windows, doors and fitted the 1.5 mm aluminum skin. Fitting the skin was straightforward. I set about fitting the side skins first, I fixed around the perimeter with Sika adhesive and the windows /door secure the centre part. I trimmed the excess aluminum and cut out the door and windows with a flush bit in a router to get a really clean edge. The roof went straight on with no trimming required. It is only fixed with adhesive at the edges and around the roof window the rest is loose to allow for movement and I haven't had any problems with "oil canning." I finished it off with a nice aluminum cope moulding at

the edges, fixed with s/s screws. The galley hatch has an old style weathered hinge, a stainless steel piano hinge with a strip of rubber roofing material over it. The aluminum scraps have all been put to good use as liner for the grill, hand beaten rain guard, backing plates for switchgear and many other bits and pieces.

Looking back over the build, I did over engineer this trailer a bit as a lot of novice builders do, and as a consequence, it is a bit on the heavy side. On the positive, it is very strong. All in all, it was an enjoyable build (despite the occasional low point) and the only thing that I would change is to add a second door. The final job was to polish the aluminum. I invested in an s/h commercial polisher that I bought for £20.00 and some polishing mops and after many hours the teardrop began to shine.

For our first trip we went to “Vintage Nostalgia show” in Wiltshire, England. The trailer towed very nicely on the 300 mile round trip. At the V.N show we met up with quite a few teardrop owners and builders from the Teardrop Club of Great Britain. We had a great weekend as we made a few new friends. We also gained lots of useful advice and tips, not just about trailers, but also about camping in general. This trip also rekindled my interest in cars so earlier this year I bought a 63 Ford Galaxie for a tow car.

We use the trailer as much as we can and my favorite trip so far was to the South Coast where we spent a week camping. We had a great time and the weather was fantastic. Finally, a big shout out to my ever-loving wife, Ann, for making the curtains and sun shade but more importantly for her moral support when things didn't go to plan and for her never-ending patience with me and my projects.



# ROCKIN' RAISIN



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by **Casie Bazay**

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Camping has often been our vacationing style of choice due to the affordability and ease of being able to take off and go where we please. We owned a fifth wheel for several years, and have also camped in the 'living quarters' area of our horse trailer, but for the last few years, we've vacationed the more traditional (and expensive!) way and stayed in hotels.

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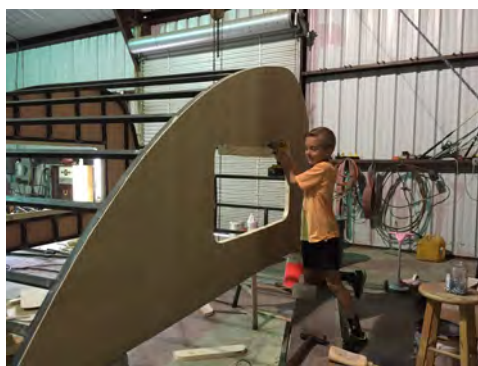
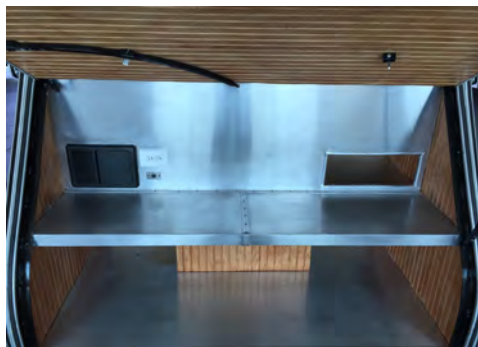


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In December of 2015, however, when my parents were discussing a possible family trip to Yellowstone National Park the following summer, my husband, Mike, got the brilliant idea to build a camper to take. His father had built a teardrop several years previously, and Mike wanted to do the same. In his mind, six months was plenty of time to do this. I, on the other hand, tried to talk him out of it.

Now, Mike has never been afraid to build anything and he often chooses projects on a whim. Houses, barns, chicken coops, a giant pirate ship playhouse. You name it, he's probably built it.



But considering he works two full-time jobs, I was convinced that this project was just a bit too much to take on.

He, however, was undeterred. In January of last year, Mike proceeded to make reservations at Yellowstone in July for our yet-to-be-built teardrop. He said this way, he'd have to get the project finished.

For the first part of the year, he brainstormed ideas, but spring rolled around, and he still hadn't started. By April, he decided it was time to stop brainstorming and start building.



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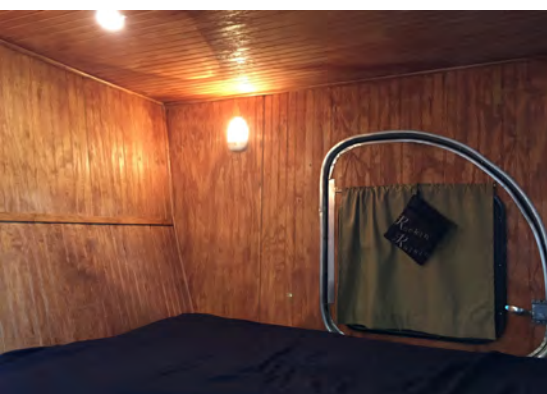
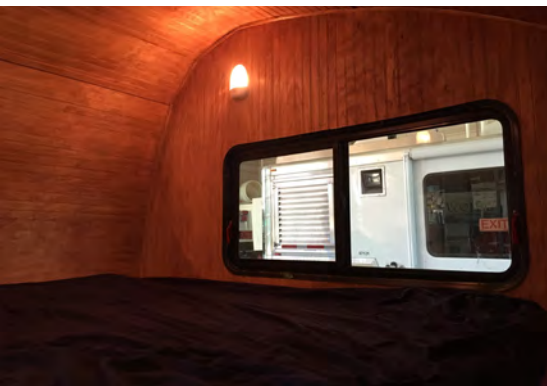
Since we were already planning a June vacation in Branson with his parents, he aimed to finish the teardrop by then so we could have a test voyage before the Yellowstone trip. Instead of renting a cabin, like we'd originally planned, he told his parents to bring their teardrop from Arizona to Oklahoma, and then we would travel together to Branson. As you might guess, by this time, I was really beginning to worry.

Mike's main concern with the teardrop design was the size of the camper. Since we have two children, we wanted a comfortable place for us all to sleep. So he decided to make a few modifications on the traditional teardrop design.

The idea: our teardrop would have a raisable roof which would fit a queen bed in both the upper and lower floors. If there's one thing Mike likes, it's originality. He wanted a one-of-a-kind teardrop. And thus, the Rockin' Raisin was born. Mike has worked with steel fabrication

quite a bit over the years, so he decided to build the Rockin' Raisin with a steel frame structure. With the help of my dad, a retired mechanical engineer, Mike designed the structure in CAD (computer aided design) so that the two steel structural halves could be built exactly to specifications.





On the first day of actual construction, Mike completed the entire trailer which would support the teardrop.

"I thought this was going to be a pretty quick project," Mike said. "I was wrong about that!"

Things slowed down a bit when he began building the two steel halves—the lower half built out of 1 1/2 14-gauge square tubing, and the upper half made from 1 1/4 18-gauge square tubing. After completing the two halves, he put them together and thanks to the careful design, they fit perfectly.

Mike used an electric-powered winch to raise and lower the upper half and installed stay poles which would secure the upper floor in the desired position. The next step was skinning the trailer in plywood. This proved to be quite difficult.

"If I had it to do over again, I would omit this step and go with aluminum siding," Mike said. "It was extremely time consuming and also added a lot of extra weight. It probably wasn't necessary."

But once the wood siding was in, he applied .060 aluminum mill finish siding using contact cement. He then trimmed out the trailer in all aluminum, which he figured would make for a "low maintenance design."

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The interior of the trailer became his next focus and Mike added wiring for several 12 volt lights and two 120 volt outlets for fans. He insulated the interior with 3/4 inch foam panels and used pine bead board to coat the interior structure.

"This made for a very nice, durable finish," he said.

The final part of the teardrop construction involved finishing out the rear galley as well as the cabinet for the inside AC unit. He placed the unit in the rear of the lower teardrop section.

"I figured there was no way I could get the kids and wife out camping without AC," he said. (This is true.) "So it had to go in."

The AC unit vents to the outside from down below and also draws from the floor.

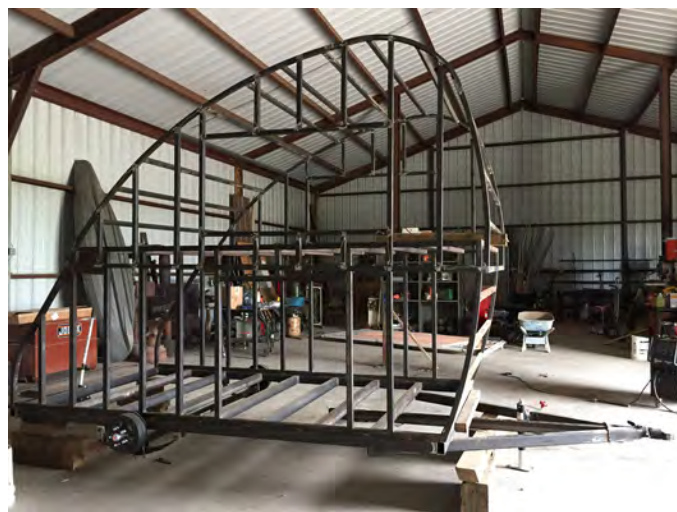
"The two air spaces have to be separated, but it does work and we have run the unit in 100 degree heat for several days without it overheating."

Since Mike's dad built his teardrop with a full kitchen in the rear but said he preferred using a separate outdoor kitchen instead (for space reasons), Mike decided to forgo building a kitchen into the back of the Rockin' Raisin.

He constructed the rear galley out of all aluminum and designed it in order to store a few coolers as well as containers for food and camping gear.

"Something I wish I would have done is stretch out the rear galley a foot or two and build the door so that it could open with the top part of the camper down (it only opens when it's up)," he said. "But other than that, it's a perfect trailer for our family."

Mike surprised us all when he managed to meet the deadline for the Branson trip with his parents. I must admit the maiden voyage was a little nerve-racking (at least for



me!), and we did experience a few hiccups (such as the gasket between the two halves not working properly). But once we arrived home, he did a little fine tuning so the camper would be ready for the big Yellowstone trip.

The Rockin' Raisin worked perfectly during our week-long trip to Yellowstone, and it earned quite a few looks (and questions) as well.

In September, Mike took on the monumental task of polishing the entire trailer, taking it from a mill to a mirror finish using rouge bars and buffing wheels. This probably took around sixty hours, but it really made a difference.

The Rockin' Raisin made one other trip this year— to Green Leaf State Park for a hunting expedition. Mike says he's really looking forward to taking it on an "off the grid" trout fishing trip in Colorado next summer as well.

We haven't decided where our next family camping destination will be, but we'll be traveling in style for sure with the Rockin' Raisin!

If you'd like to check out more about the Rockin' Raisin, check out [rockinraisin.com](http://rockinraisin.com).

Photo by Tiny Trailer



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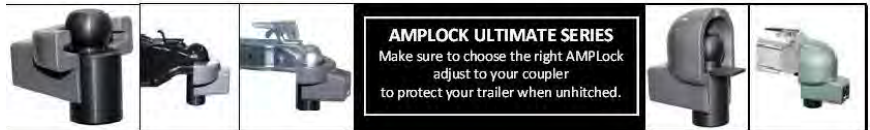


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