

Building the Mini Mack: Single Mom's Off-Road Masterpiece

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April 2017

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and tiny campers

TEARDROP STYLE Wedded Bliss



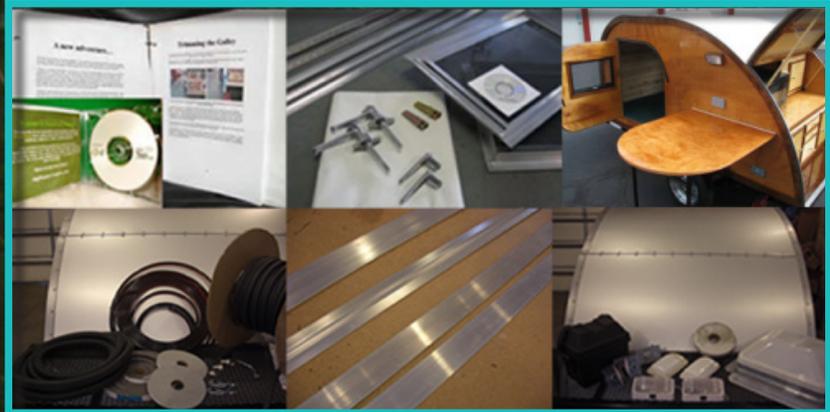
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Magazine

Vol. 5 No. 4

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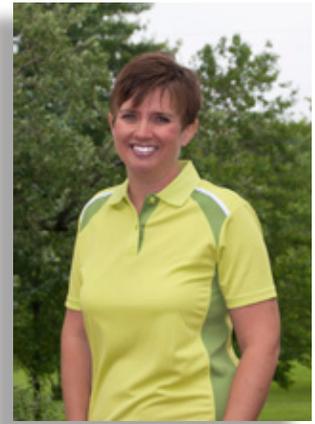
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Letter from the Editor:

National Park Week, CRA News



The [National Park Service](#) in conjunction with the [National Park Foundation](#) are celebrating National Park Week! April 15-23, 2017 has been dedicated to celebrating America's national heritage. Basically the week is a way to put the perks of having amazing national parks front and center. From free visit weekends to Park Rx Day to celebrating park volunteers, each park is participating in the week. Regardless of your political feelings (thank goodness politics aren't park of camping!) [click this link to watch the Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke's invitation to explore a park near you!](#)

Once again this year the great folks from the Tearjerker's groups are planning a huge blowout gathering in July. While bummed that we cannot attend this year (next year we will for sure be in attendance), we are sending a box of swag!

From the hosts, "With expectations of a record shattering attendance, we have already identified and confirmed over 100 trailers (nearly 190 campers) that have registered for the 3rd of the series of CRA – Tearjerker Gatherings. CRA 2017 will be held at its usual location in Southern Indiana at the McCormick's Creek State Park (Spencer, Indiana). Special events including the traditional "builder's seminar" as well as "Corn Hole" games. All of the information you need to know is shown on the web site including camping reservations links, maps and attendees from around North America at <http://cra2017.weebly.com/> Come and join us in July 2017 and help us make more memories of a great event."



Until next time...enjoy every sunrise!

SARAH TUCKER

Editor

Cool Tears

and Tiny Campers Magazine™

sarah@cooltears.com

BABS & TOM ZEHREN

1. In with the back of the Grand Teton's.
2. The only folks camping at the base of Mount Borah, the highest mountain in Idaho.
3. Greeted by this glorious rainbow at Devil's Tower in WY.



1.



3. 2.

Tears *in the wild*



LINDA PARQUE

Took her cedar strip kayak, and cedar teardrop to Dungeness Spit on the Strait of Juan de Fuca in Washington State - August 2016. Yes, she made them both. Her Dad made the stained glass windows in the teardrop (named Eddy Flower.)



SIMON FORD | AUSTRALIA

Chillin' out with their beloved pooch Mazzy near Daylesford, Victoria, Australia.

LORELEI VAUGHN | WALTON, OREGON

In the coast range mountains of Oregon on Wildcat Creek, which is just big enough to do some paddling around with short kayaks.



Take your teardrop to the wild and send us a photo of your adventure!

Email your best shot to us, along with a brief description of your adventure, and we will publish the most inspiring collections.

Put **TEARS IN THE WILD** in the subject line and send to sarah@cooltears.com



MIKE BEAM | MT. NEBO, ARKANSAS

Husband and wife are both teachers in KS and built their teardrop in 2015. What an amazing campsite on this flat top mountain. A great place to hike and camp.



TEARDROP STYLE *Wedded Bliss*





by Sarah Tucker

“Instead of spending tons of money on a wedding and white wedding dress, why not buy a white teardrop?”

These were the words Sean Henry said to his fiancée, Katieri. With those words the plans kicked into high gear! The first order of business was to find and purchase a teardrop. They chose a white T@G and promptly tucked it away into hiding for a month. After finding the T@G, they needed an officiant. Great friends agreed to officiate the wedding and even rented their own teardrop to join in on the trip.

With those two major details completed and in place, the pair decided to contact a few outdoor companies for contributions to their unique wedding plans. They were successful in their search

when they found Mountain Khakis and Hoka boots. Both companies donated their wedding apparel.

New Hampshire's White Mountains was the chosen location. Along with their two friends, two teardrops, and our dog Harper they headed to



WHITE MOUNTAINS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

<.....
The White Mountains are a mountain range covering about a quarter of the state of New Hampshire and a small portion of western Maine in the United States.

Highest point: Mount Washington

Region: New England

Elevation: 6,289

Area: 3,440 mi²



the mountains. They set up camp that would also serve as the honeymoon suite for a few days. That night the decision was made to hike Mt. Parker the following day for the wedding ceremony. The mountain over-looks the Presidential Range with great views of Mt. Washington. Their friend Michele officiated the ceremony, Harper acted as a four legged bridesmaid, and Michele's husband acted as the witness.

Katieri and Sean were the married on a beautiful day, in a place close to their hearts-on top of a mountain- with a great dog and two great friends. With their honeymoon suite in "tow" they continued to hike the White Mountains for a few days and then set off to the coast of Maine. Overall, it was a great 10 day wedding adventure!

Several hours post-wedding they did fill in their families about both the teardrop purchase and the wedding. A few days after the trip, they experienced what so many teardroppers understand, showing off their camper to random strangers. A young couple stopped them for a tour



.....
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 Inside us all exists an adventurous soul - a wild heart that is called from nature to live authentically and free from modern society. For many outdoor and mountain enthusiasts pure freedom and rugged adventure has become a way of life. Mountain Khakis was developed specifically for this lifestyle.



wedding. A few days after the trip, they experienced what so many teardroppers understand, showing off their camper to random strangers. A young couple stopped them for a tour and after hearing their story the guy turns to his girlfriend and with a bit of smirk remarks, "That's the best looking wedding dress I have ever seen!" Time will only tell if the couple embarks on a similar wedding adventure.

Sean and Katieri now reside in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania where Katieri teaches in a private school and Sean owns a hair salon.

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by John Bradley

I was going to build a teardrop several years back and was looking into it when one came up for sale around the corner. The guy had built it for a festival, owned it for a year and decided to sell it. I went out of curiosity, just to have a look at one close up and loved what he had done. So I persuaded my wife to let me buy it.





We used the teardrop for the next year and as I made modifications to it. I lowered the sides and shaping it more teardrop. I recovered the inside and decorated the kitchen which was originally silver and tan. I bought new wheels and added side skirts. I then recovered the inside.



My hot rod had an accident which led to having the whole car painted. The custom painter that worked on the hot rod really liked my teardrop. He wanted to paint the teardrop to match the car. He even airbrushed the car on the back of the hatch door

The reason I mentioned this is because after the teardrop was painted, I realized the wood had rotted out. It was a situation where I had to find some way to save all the work that had



been done on the outside even though the complete inside was ruined.

By this time my wife loved the teardrop, so we decided to remove the kitchen and rebuild it. However when I pulled the kitchen out, I discovered to my horror that the whole thing was damp and water damaged all the way to the other end. That being said we decided to rip it all out and see if we can save it. I installed a dehumidifier for two weeks and pulled all the water out. Removing the rotten floor was the next order of business. I then painted and sealed the walls with anti-fungle varnish and then a coat of wood Gardner varnish. The interior covering is veltrim, which can be purchased from eBay. I used burgundy for the bottom and silver grey for the top and it is spray glued onto the walls and ceiling, it is fire and water resistant with the added benefit of looking cool.

I decided to remake the whole interior to better fit our wants and needs. So I used shower board for the kitchen and inside



cabinet, the sides are plywood and the inside roof is Latvian birch ply that bends. I bought new sockets and my wife wanted a tv installed. I googled a lot and made a lot of cardboard templates. There was a design in my head and I went with that. I also didn't want cabinet doors in the back so I made sliding units and cut them to size. They were then fitted in the back and I made doors and fitted handles.

I added sockets for electric hook up at campsites and installed a battery under the floor. I trimmed everything with chrome and it framed everything





perfect. My friend came down and wired the whole thing for me as he is a electrician. So I now have custom lighting inside and USB sockets for cell phones and tablets and external sockets to use in the awning. I trimmed the kitchen in a checkered flag design and gave it that little diner look. I installed a metal awning strip to go around the teardrop and bought a Vango Airbeam awning.

John Bradley and his wife is Carol live between Glasgow and Edinburgh in a small town called east Whitburn in Scotland. They intend to do a two week tour this year with the teardrop to Ireland.



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BUILDING THE MINI MACK



**SINGLE MOM'S
OFF-ROAD
MASTERPIECE**



by April Lee

The majority of my spare time is spent with a great group of friends-members of the Pine Belt Jeep Club-camping and rock crawling at various ORV (off-road vehicle) parks in the south. If we're not crawling, we are at least prepping the Jeeps for the next ultimate weekend adventure. The ORV parks we frequent are usually less than a half-day drive and offer primitive and RV sites with bathhouse amenities.



In October 2014, on one of the very first trips I took with this group, the weather was obnoxious with sleet, snow, 30 mph winds, and temps struggling to rise above 30 degrees. Most of the group was sporting their pop-ups and ultra-lite campers. In my tent, I was determined to stick it out. In case you were not aware, snow in the South usually equals chaos! After making it through the first night and cleaning up after breakfast, a huge gust of wind picked up my tent and ripped every stake loop from the bottom of the tent. It tossed and twisted the tent around the closest tree. Unfortunately, I was still in the tent... now wrapped around the tree like a cocoon. I spent the rest of the weekend sleeping in the Jeep and weighing my options for camping in the future.



As a recently divorced single mother, spending \$10K to \$15K for a camper was not at the top of my list, and I am not a fan of pop-up campers. However, as the previous owner of a construction

company, I felt I could be resourceful and find an older, small vintage camper and repair/remodel it. Even then, I was not familiar with the teardrop designs. It wasn't until I was searching the internet for a project camper that I was introduced to the teardrop designs. I quickly became fascinated by the DIY teardrop projects and equally impressed with the off-road versions of the teardrop designs.

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The indecisiveness of the type of camper I wanted forced me to resort to a list of "must haves" versus "wants." Because I would be pulling it with a Jeep, I preferred the weight stay below 2500 lbs. The cost would need to stay within a meager \$5,000 budget. The camper must also be equipped with some type of kitchen and bathroom. A bathhouse can provide the shower, but for the cost and effort of a new camper, I was not going to continue

to walk a half-mile to a bathroom. And last, but not least, there had to be an option to comfortably escape any unforeseen harsh elements. Yes... the memory of being rescued is still fresh.

The off-road teardrop design was by far the most attractive but it lacked several of the “must haves” due to its size. The vintage campers were practical in size, but purchasing and remodeling a vintage camper was not going to be cost-effective and stay within the budget constraints. By deciding to combine the two designs, I was able to include the “must haves” and the “wants.”



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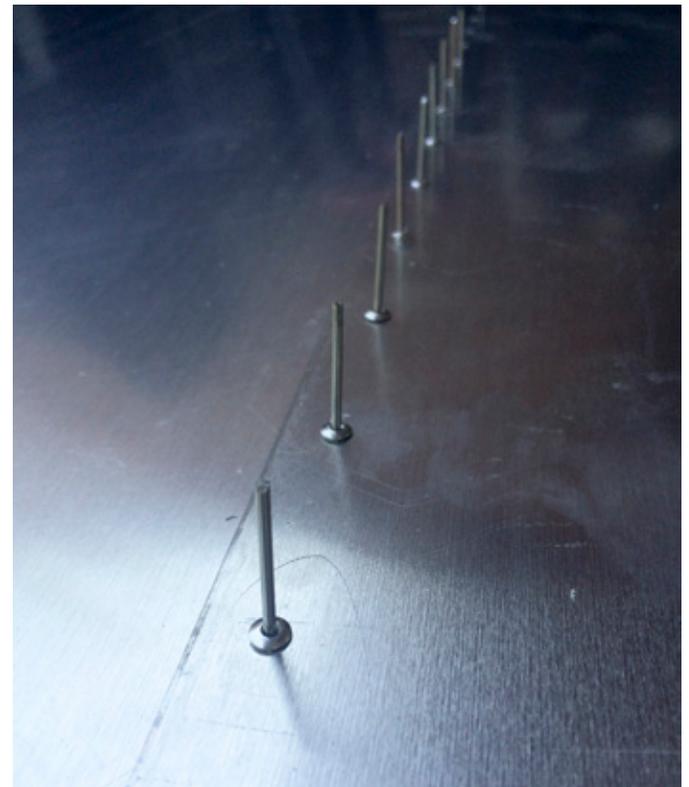
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As a result of my previous building and fabricating experience, planning the build without a kit or a set of plans was a tedious but familiar process. However, constructing a project that would be traveling at a speed of 65 mph absolutely terrified to me. This forced me to diligently research each and every aspect of the build. I frequented blogs, manuals, and YouTube videos for six months. I also sought out other builders, fabricators, mechanics, plumbers, and

electricians for professional advice on each step of the process. I think it's very important to never underestimate any project. Never be afraid to verify your own thought process and ideas. It is my experience that you will always find someone who is willing to share their own techniques and especially their mistakes.

When I began the planning process, I did not know how to complete every single part of the





project, nor did I know where I was going to find all the necessary parts to complete the project. While researching all the major parts such as windows, doors, water tanks, pumps, and tables, it became very apparent that even the smallest of details would need to be determined very early on in the process based on the lack of available choices for camper parts. For instance, the depth of the kitchen counter was determined after I decided which sink I would use and the width of the bathroom was partly designed based on the width of the water tank I chose. I like to say this was a “backward build.” I had to know exactly which items I would purchase, so I could use the exact product measurements, right down to the thickness of the walls, to determine what size the trailer platform would be.



I started the build in the first week of May 2016 with the goal of traveling from Mississippi to an annual rock crawling event in Missouri in September 2016. This would prove to be an ambitious goal, since the project would take third seat behind my children and my job.





The build process was like no other project I have ever tackled. It was definitely a love/hate relationship. The oversize teardrop design I chose has the obvious radius curve aspect that follows you throughout the entire build. Since I didn't start with a set of plans, I had to lay out the camper's radius using several sheets of poster board for the pattern base. I then used a strip of mat board to position (and reposition) the curve until it mimicked my original vision.

Most of the structural build was straightforward and the shell went together rather quickly. Then came the aluminum work, which was definitely the learning curve of the build. I specifically chose to use a mill finish aluminum for its vintage aesthetics. The flexibility and weight of the aluminum makes it a great compliment to all the camper's curves. However, those same attributes render it delicate to handle. Carrying a 10 foot sheet of aluminum by yourself without scratching or creasing it is quite difficult. Let's just say... carrying 2 sheets of aluminum riveted together and applying it as a skin by yourself involves a lot of thinking "outside the box."

Some of the finer details of the project required

the most patience but are ultimately my favorite parts of the final product. Making sure the rivets were placed exactly the same distance apart, fabricating the door to match the radius of the trailer, and adding the nautical window to the door are among a few on that list.

I'm also very fond of the interior. It's very simple, functional, and contemporary. It has a combination of 12-volt and 110-power, LED lighting, and an electronic charging station for phones and tablets. The 10-gallon water tank and water pump work great for washing dishes. The table and benches convert into a double bed. It's 6'4" at its tallest point and provides for a convenient escape during a storm. However, the camper was intentionally created without a stove. Cooking outdoors while camping is all part of the fun!

I was very mindful of staying within budget. I saved every scrap of material and used it every chance I could. Leftover aluminum was used for the countertop, tabletop, and cabinet panels. All the upholstery fabric was purchased on clearance from a fabric store going out of business for less than \$10. I was able to purchase a new refrigerator



for half the price by waiting until they were on sale for college students at the beginning of the semester. The flooring was also caught on sale for less than \$1 per square foot.

The project was completed by the first of September 2016... 2 weeks ahead of schedule. After passing all road tests and leak tests, it was time for a name. This whole journey started on a Jeep ride. My Jeep was affectionately nick-named Big Mack, as a third behind my two daughters, MiKaylan and McKenzie. Following suit, the camper instantly became known as Mini Mack.

Mini Mack traveled from Mississippi to Missouri for her first camping trip. The oversized teardrop functioned perfectly and was a great conversation piece. I met many new friends who were just curious about what type of camper it was. Mini Mack was mistaken several times for other great campers... once as a T@B and a few times as an Airstream.

After several camping trips, I am very happy with its functionality and nostalgic look. I've already started a list for some small additions to make it even better. I'm in the process of designing a rear bumper to hold the spare without compromising the overall retro design. I'm also going to add 2 more leveling jacks to the front of the camper and a few interior shelves. The shelves will be hinged to fold away when they aren't needed. In the future, I would like to incorporate some type of awning system.

The entire project has been a great experience and has far exceeded my expectations. We look forward to making many more memories on our weekend adventures and meeting other happy campers along the way!

See the entire build on Instagram: [projectminimack](https://www.instagram.com/projectminimack)



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