

Gatherings - Walk the Winds & Falling Tears

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October
November
2013

COOL Tears™

and tiny campers

Off the Beaten Path



Wheelhouse
A Father-Daughter Project

**Camp-Inn
Teardrops**
An Interview with
Craig Edevold



COOL Tears™ and tiny campers

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Great Suggestions and Cool Photos

Thanks to you, the reader, Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine continues to grow and change. Last month I asked “What would you like to see?” in future issues and I received a number of emails with great ideas. Some of those ideas are already in the process of being implemented. Things are really busy around here so give us a little time to get them going, but we are working on them.

One immediate change you may have noticed is that this is not the October issue. It is the October/November issue. As most of you already know we publish the magazine every other month and until now the issue was labeled based on the month it came out. However that was confusing especially for new subscribers. They were looking for the in-between months thinking they had missed issues.

Another suggestion came from a recent gathering I attended. One of the teardroppers showed me a very old picture they had come across that had a teardrop in it. It was not a picture of a vintage teardrop it was a vintage picture of a teardrop. It was really neat to see a vintage teardrop in its original environment. He gave me permission to publish it so you can enjoy it too. He thought there might be others out there with similar pictures.

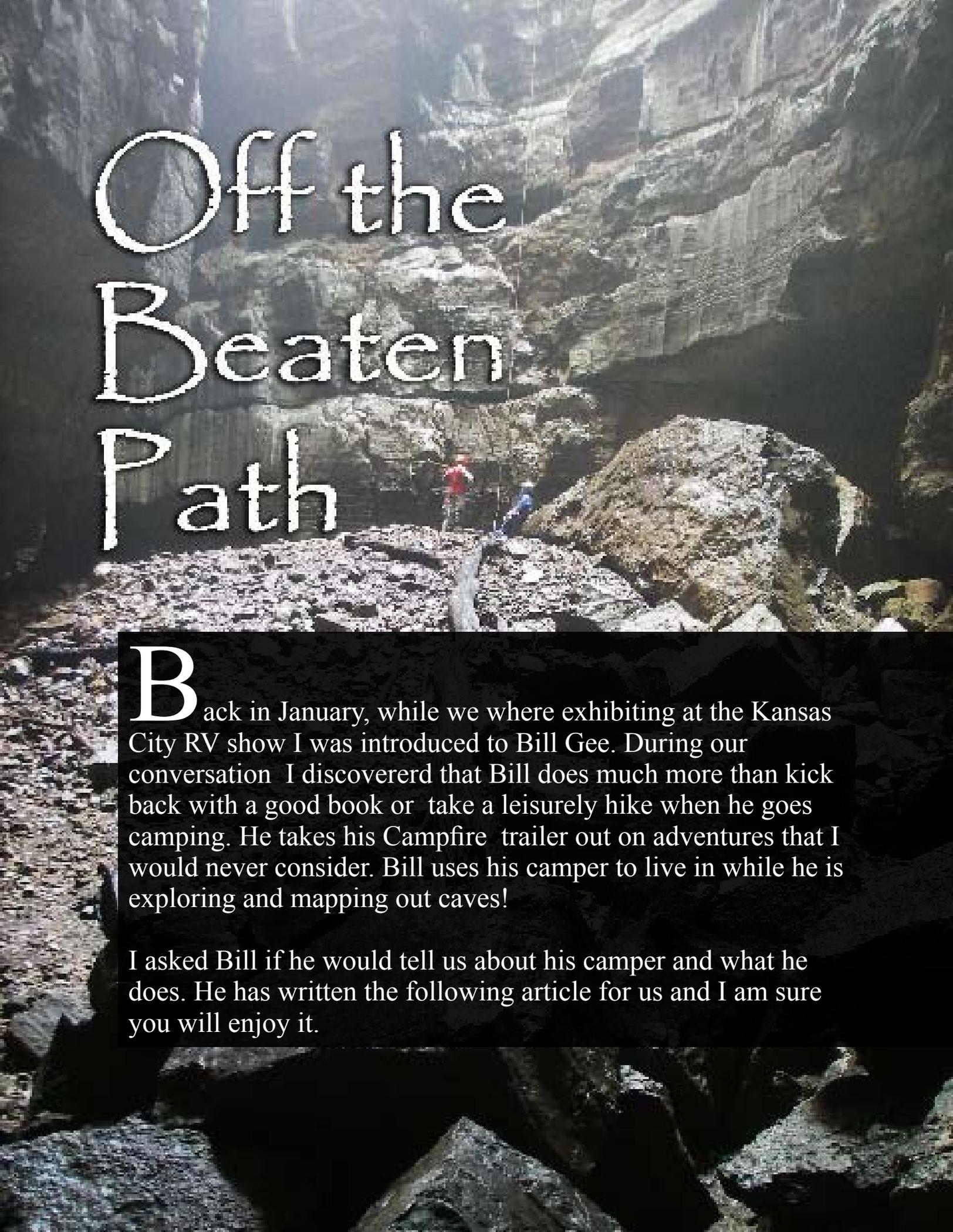
Do you have any old pictures of teardrops or other tiny or unique camping trailers? Maybe it is one of a camper your dad or grandfather built or just a family photo that happened to capture one. Send them to us so we can share them with everyone!

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Cross".

Kevin Cross
Editor
Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine™



A photograph of a rocky cave interior. The walls and ceiling are covered in various shades of brown and grey rock formations. In the center, two people are visible: one in a red shirt and another in a blue shirt, both appearing to be exploring or mapping the cave. The lighting is somewhat dim, highlighting the textures of the rock.

Off the Beaten Path

Back in January, while we were exhibiting at the Kansas City RV show I was introduced to Bill Gee. During our conversation I discovered that Bill does much more than kick back with a good book or take a leisurely hike when he goes camping. He takes his Campfire trailer out on adventures that I would never consider. Bill uses his camper to live in while he is exploring and mapping out caves!

I asked Bill if he would tell us about his camper and what he does. He has written the following article for us and I am sure you will enjoy it.

Years ago I worked at a Radio Shack store in Omaha. The manager of the service department was a member of the local Jayco camping club. I had a tent at the time, and spent several weekends tent camping with the group. Eventually I was able to save a few bucks and buy a small second-hand Jayco popup camper. That allowed me to become a real member of the Jayco group.

That first camper was destroyed in a thunderstorm in 1993. Straight-line winds turned it over on its side. I was in the storm shelter at the time. The insurance settlement went to another Jayco popup, slightly larger. After some years that was traded on a fancy Jayco popup, this time with a shower and toilet unit. Those midnight excursions are much nicer when the bathroom is just two steps from the bed! It also let me avoid the campground showers. Sometimes I felt I came out dirtier than I went in when showering at a campground.

I have always preferred the road less traveled. In 1996 I went to the Jayco International Rally at the Amana Colonies. For my second week of vacation I went to Mammoth Cave National Park in central Kentucky. I had visited a few smaller commercial caves before that and thought they were pretty neat. A cave like Mammoth - the longest cave in the world - would be a definite step up.

The National Park Service offers quite a few guided cave tours at Mammoth Cave. Most of them are electrically lit and go on paved trails. I wanted something a bit different, so I signed up for their wild cave tour. I was not disappointed! It was pretty wild for a ranger-led tour. The first part goes in parallel to a regular tourist trail. After lunch in the Snowball Dining Room, the wild cave tour goes way off trail. It is still not the far reaches of the cave, but it gets into areas that most people never see. I was hooked.

Over the next three years I visited the other three major National Park Service caves. Wind Cave and Jewel Cave are both in the Black Hills region of South

Dakota, and Carlsbad Caverns is in southeast New Mexico. All of them offer ranger-led off-trail wild cave tours. Carlsbad offers several of them including one that is not in Carlsbad Caverns.

The campgrounds at both Mammoth Cave and Wind Cave are run by the National Park Service. They are clean and well run, but there are no utilities. Water comes from a few spigots and bathrooms are just vault toilets. Mammoth offers pay showers at a private vendor just outside the campground. At Carlsbad the campground is in White's City and is privately run. It is really just a parking lot with utilities run in along the edges. I did not care - I had all the water and power I needed on the camper.

In early 2000 I was thinking I needed to get more serious about caving. One evening I was on an IRC chat room where the main topic was popup campers. Another person came on with an alias of "Caver". He and I got to talking about caving. It turned out he lives in Sikeston, Missouri and was deeply involved in the Missouri caving community. He told me about a bi-annual caving event in Missouri called MVOR, and hooked me up with the organizers so I could get an invitation.

The southern half of Missouri covers the Ozark Plateau, a large dome of limestone. The dome extends into northern Arkansas and a bit of Kansas and Oklahoma. There are over 6000 known caves in Missouri, second only to Tennessee which has nearly 8000. Missouri cavers are still discovering caves at a rate of around 100 per year. There is a lot of opportunity!

Eventually I found Kansas City Area Grotto, a group of cavers from Kansas City. I started attending their meetings and going caving with them. Within a couple of years I found that my Jayco popup camper had some problems.

Caves are almost never located near a regular campground. They are usually on the other end of a forest



road, across a cow pasture or otherwise remote. Most cavers camp in tents or the back of their truck, but I wanted to be more comfortable than that. Caving happens year-round, and cold weather is something that has to be dealt with. I found that my canvas popup camper, even with a furnace, was too cold to live in during the winter. It was also very low to the ground, totally unsuited for going off of paved roads.

I shopped around for a year. The man I met on the IRC chat mentioned to me a brand of camper called Chalet. He had just bought one and was really happy with it. I found a competing brand called ALiner which offered a full bath setup. It took some doing to find a dealer, but eventually I found Reliable RV in Springfield. We worked out a deal, and I took delivery of the ALiner in spring 2002. (Note - Reliable RV is still in business but they dropped ALiner some years ago.)



The ALiner was a great camper. It folds down like a popup, but has hard walls with insulation all over. I camped in that trailer in all kinds of weather including

winter temperatures down to nearly zero. The furnace had no trouble keeping the inside warm. In very cold weather the water system cannot be used, but everything else was usable.

For the next 8 years I used the heck out of the ALiner. I documented over 75,000 miles on it, camping in states from Michigan to Alabama to New Mexico. The ALiner towed very well. It increased my fuel consumption, but not as much as I had feared. It was quick and easy to set up even in a driving rain. It had plenty of ground clearance.

One thing I really came to appreciate on the ALiner was the tires. The factory tires were way over-rated for the weight of the camper. All three of my Jayco campers had tire trouble, sometimes going less than 8000 miles on a set of tires. They were all running at about 90 to 95% of the rated tire capacity. I suffered several blowouts and tread separation events while traveling. The ALiner tires went over 60,000 miles and were still usable.

I also learned with the ALiner that radial tires on a trailer are far better than bias-ply. They ride smoother and wear better.

In caving I became involved in a major project cave in Missouri. Carroll Cave is now the second-longest cave in the state. I joined the National Speleological Society which is the umbrella organization for North American cavers. I took several week-long courses



in cave rescue techniques, and I learned how to use single-rope technique. All of this required much travel - and camping!

The ALiner was a great camper, but eventually

it started to show its age and heavy use. The seals where the walls and roof came together were never quite tight, so it leaked a lot of air. On a windy day the drafts were annoying. It was never as drafty as a canvas popup, but I wanted something tighter.

It took several years to find my current camper. I stumbled on it quite by accident while attending the annual Kansas City RV show. Missouri Teardrops had a couple of Campfire campers. These are regular travel trailers, though much smaller than most. They probably qualify as “canned ham” campers. We worked out a deal, the factory built one just for me, and I took delivery in April 2010.



My Campfire is 12 feet long in the box and 6 feet wide. The inside height is about 69 inches. It is a good thing I am short! A tall person would be very uncomfortable. The overall height is only 90 inches even with the high-lift axle that I ordered. The interior height comes from a dropped floor.

The entire frame is made of welded aluminum. There is no wood in the structure. The back two feet of the camper is a wet bath with a toilet

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and a hand shower. You have to sit down to use it. One side of that area is storage. The refrigerator is next to the entry door. The galley is on the opposite wall with a small sink and a two-burner stove. There are drawers and cabinets under the galley and a small pantry cabinet beside it. The front 4 feet is a dinette that converts into a bed.

The fresh water tank is 15 gallons. The water heater is 6 gallons and has electric spark ignition. The black water tank is about 6 or 7 gallons and the gray water tank is 10 gallons. All of this will get me through a weekend with no problem.

Working with Missouri Teardrops and Sierra Motors was a pleasure. We were able to work out a custom build just for me and get it priced within a few weeks. My camper has a number of options.

The axle is a high-rise using 45-degree drop arms instead of the standard straight-back arms. That raises the entire unit about 3 or 4 inches. I had them insulate all of the water lines. Since I almost always camp where there is no power, I deleted both the microwave (normally above the fridge) and the air conditioner (normally under the galley). Both of those areas are now storage cabinets. They added a second battery box and wired it into the electrical system. I ordered 14 inch tires instead of the standard 13 inch. Two propane tanks, a Fantastic Fan vent, no television prep, an



A three dimensional maze which simulates some of the obstacles found in caves. The entrance is on the left, and the man in the red shirt is coming out.



Inside the Speleobox. The man in the photo is about 5 feet tall and 110 pounds.



Me hanging on a rope, one of the first ventures.



A map of the longest floor. Mammoth Cave National Park.



...pe in Jones Pit. This was
...rtical caves I visited.



The entrance passage at Geronimo Springs Cave. The passage is about 120 feet long and 12 to 14 inches high. This photo shows it when the stream was very low. After crawling through this, the cave opens up into nice large walking passage.



...st cave in the world laid out on a gymnasium
...ve has over 400 miles of mapped passage.



Drilling a hole in the bottom of the stream with a hammer drill. We anchored a stilling well to the stream bottom to protect a data logger. The data logger measures water depth and temperature.

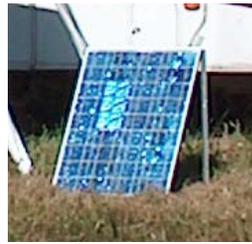
extra 12 volt outlet and four stabilizers round out the major changes I ordered.

The factory did a custom change on their own initiative. All along I was telling them that I camp a lot in cold weather. They decided to run two furnace ducts. One is the normal large duct that vents directly into the living space. The other is a smaller duct that runs all the way around the camper inside the cabinets, behind walls, past the fresh water tank and water pump before venting into the living space. Along that run they cut a bunch of slits in the duct. The result is that warm air gets behind walls and cabinets where it can help keep the water lines from freezing.

They had a great idea and it has worked well. I have camped in some seriously cold weather, yet the water lines have never frozen on me. It is not perfect. The waste water tanks are both under the floor where they cannot be heated, so I have to be careful of them freezing.

Ordering 14 inch wheels and tires proved to be a bad decision. As it turns out, the wheel well openings are not quite big enough to accommodate the larger tires when the trailer bounces. I found after a couple of trips that the tires were bumping into the frame. I talked it over with Missouri Teardrops, and we arranged a change to 13 inch wheels and tires. As long as we were at it, I had them use radial tires instead of bias-ply.

After we did the swap, I had not driven half a mile before noticing how much smoother the camper was riding. Those radial tires made a HUGE difference in the trailer ride quality. I have about 22,000 miles on the camper now, and the tires are getting worn. They are not going to last as long as the ALiner tires did. Even so, it's been three years which is far longer than I ever went on any of my Jayco campers.



Some years ago I bought an 80 watt solar panel and associated equipment for my ALiner. That equipment is transferred to the Campfire. The 80 watt panel and two 75 amp-hour AGM batteries

give me all the power I need for a weekend. In the summer I will never run out of power. I have camped for 16 straight days with no power but the solar panel, and the batteries never got below 80% charge. In the winter the furnace takes a lot of power and there is less sun, so it will not go forever. The solar panel will add two days to a winter camping trip.

Campfire campers are no longer made. Sierra Motors decided to get out of the regular camper business after only three or four years. They are now concentrating on their original business of doing horse trailer conversions.

Having a self-contained camper makes some aspects of caving much more comfortable. The temperature in Missouri caves is about 56 degrees all the time. Most Missouri caves are very wet, so you get soaked completely through during a cave trip. When you



come out into a cold January night, it is really nice to have a warm camper to go get a shower, wash off the mud and get a good night sleep before driving home.

In March 2013 I helped with a cave gating project southeast of Springfield, Missouri. When I arrived at the site, there was 6 inches of snow on the ground. It snowed on us for three of the four days we worked on that cave gate. Most of the snow did not stick, but it was cold and damp. I was very glad to get back home to my camper at the end of each day.



One of the attractions of caving is I can usually combine a caving weekend with a camping weekend. I get two favorite activities at the same time! With a travel trailer, I can pull over in any convenient spot and use the toilet. No more hunting for a gas station. I can also hop inside and fix a quick lunch while traveling. I have not done it often, but having a travel trailer lets me get a night of sleep at many Walmart parking lots. The folding trailers - even the ALiner - were not suitable for that.



I plan to get in many more years of camping and caving. The Campfire is going to get many more miles off the beaten path.

Web sites related to this article:

<http://www.jayco.com>

<http://www.aliner.com>

<http://www.chaletrv.com>

<http://www.kcgrotto.org>

<http://www.caves.org>

(National Speleological Society)

<http://www.caves.org/commission/ncrc/national>

(National Cave Rescue Commission)

<http://www.mvor.org>

<http://www.carrollcave.org>

<http://www.missouriteardroptailers.com>



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“WALK THE WINDS” AND “FALLING TEARS”

By: Grant Whipp

We hear it a lot, from all parts of the country (and several parts of the world): “I’d really like to attend a gathering (or go to more), but there isn’t anything going on locally!”

From the beginning, I’ve always said “Hold one and they will come!” It only takes two trailers to have a gathering, and whether you end up with two, twenty, or 120, the fact is that whenever and wherever you can get teardroppers and tiny trailer enthusiasts together, you’re going to have a good time!

As an example, here are two that we attended this summer, a second-year event and a first-year event: “Walk the Winds 2013” and “Falling Tears”.

Walk the Winds

Back towards the end of 2011, Mike Eggers from Pavillion, WY, was making the same lament I mentioned above ... there just weren't any gatherings in the Wyoming/Idaho/Montana/Dakotas area. After a lot of encouragement and a few promises of help, Mike found a location, picked a date, reserved the campground, and (somewhat) patiently waited to see who would turn up. As it turned out, 15 trailers and their owners/occupants attended the August 2012 event and had such a good time that it was decided to do another one in 2013!

If all you know about Wyoming is what you've heard, read, or experienced about the southern part along I-80, you might wonder why anyone would want to intentionally CAMP there! But, like so many other states throughout this beautiful country, there is so much more to it than what lies within sight of the freeways and main highways ... and yes, even more than Devil's Tower, the Tetons, and Yellowstone National Parks!



Pinedale, WY, sits on State Hwy 191, which is the main north/south access into and out of Yellowstone, on the west side of the state. Some twenty-four miles northeast of Pinedale lies New Forks Lake, very near the headwaters of the Green River ... it is somewhat remote, but all the roads are good and easily traveled by any typical economy sedan. The Group Campsite near New Forks Lake is the sight of the “Walk the Winds” Gatherings, and as you can see in the photos, is mostly a wide open “meadow” surrounded by the local pines, juniper, and sagebrush. There are a couple of vault-type toilets, but it is basically primitive camping ... you must bring in any water you may need, and the closest services are in Pinedale. “Primitive” suites us just fine, and judging from all the folks in the 15 other trailers, suited everyone else just as well! There were campers from as far away as California (Carol A. from Sacramento and Kay & I, though we were actually on our way home from the East Coast)

Lil BEAR
Tag Alongs

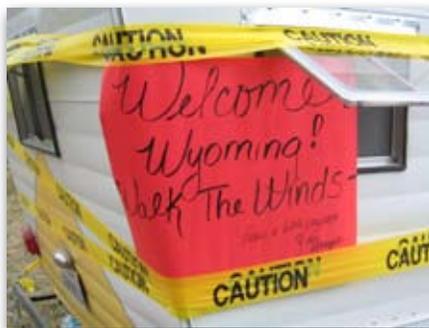
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and I think Nebraska, but most were from Colorado, Idaho, Montana, and of course several from Wyoming. We pot-lucked every night, and Sunday's omelet-in-a-bag breakfast was also a community effort ... campfires and great conversations were the order each evening, while many stories were picked up and continued the next day ... and a couple of folks brought kayaks, so paddling and fishing the lake were common activities, along with plenty of hiking opportunities.

One camper came back after a day of hiking and fishing with tales of spectacular scenery that rivaled Yosemite, CA, so we had to check it out! The trek included 17 miles of wash-board road from hell, but once at Green Lakes (the headwaters of the Green River), the sights were indeed as described, and yes, nearly rivaled Yosemite! We'll definitely be going back to spend more time and hike the many trails to even more stunning vistas. There are some very nice campgrounds there, as well, but if you want to take a trailer that far in, plan on going very s-l-o-w-l-y!

All in all it was a great gathering in a good location with fabulous people and terrific weather ... you really can't ask for much more! Several of us were having such a good time that we stayed over Sunday night and left on Monday. Next year's dates for "Walk the Winds 2014" are already set - August 14-18 ... so put it on your calendar, and if you will be anywhere close to Pinedale, WY, during that time, we highly recommend that you attend this event ... you won't be sorry!





Falling Tears

In many ways, Nevada has a lot in common with Wyoming ... at first glance, many wonder why anyone would want to camp in such a barren wilderness? But for several years now, a lot of folks have been taking their teardrops out to such remote locations as Hickison Petroglyphs (east of Austin, just off Hwy 50), Berlin-Ichthyosaur (southeast of Austin, very remote!), and Unionville (east and over the mountains from Lovelock) ... and northern Nevada is home to a LOT of active teardroppers.

While camping in the far-flung areas of their State certainly has its appeal, Johnny & Terry of Reno thought it'd be a good idea to have a gathering a little closer to home and something a bit more accessible. Since the Unionville event had been moved to a June

date for 2013, that left the mid-September slot open, so they chose that time to host "Falling Tears".

Davis Creek Recreation Area & Campgrounds sits in a stand of Jeffery Pines on the northeast edge of the Wahsoe Lake Basin, at the base of the eastern front of the Sierra-Nevada Mountains, between Reno and Carson City ... along with being a nicely maintained and equipped facility, it boasts some pretty beautiful views through the trees and across the basin to the foothills to the east (which just happen to be home to



Photo by: Sharon H.

the infamous Virginia City and surrounding mines)! Up into the mountains to the west is Lake Tahoe, and with attractions like the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Carson City, casinos, and all manner of places to shop and sites to see, there was no shortage of things to do in-and-around the area.

Kay & I met up with Sharon H. of Redding and caravanned over, arriving about mid-afternoon on Thursday, and set up camp with about seven or eight other teardrops that were already there. It was the maiden



Photo by: Sharon H.

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voyage for our recently-acquired all-original 1947 KIT Kamper Deluxe (its first time back on the roads since 1965), and we brought our pet parrot "Bird." (He's become a bit of a "fixture" at the local campouts that we attend.) A few other trailers showed up in the late afternoon & evening, and after some dinner, we



Photo by: Sharon H.

huddled around a couple of propane fire-pits before retiring to a cozy nights sleep.

Though it was a bit chilly in the morning, Friday dawned bright, sunny, and with the promise of warm temperatures. Our plan was to take in some sights, visit Virginia City for the first time in 30 years, get back to camp in time to prepare for the potluck dinner, then have all day Saturday to visit and take



Photo by: Dave McC

pictures. Things went pretty much as we expected, and we got back in the afternoon to find the group site filled with teardrops and happy campers ... but the winds had come up and the temps dropped a bit. Dinner was fabulous (as usual) and then we put four of the propane fire-pits in a row where we all gath-



Photo by: Dave McC

ered 'round for some wonderful albeit slightly wind-blown conversation and friendly camaraderie. During the night, though, Kay had to get up twice to start the car and warm up Bird to keep him from getting too cold ... it was a harbinger of things to come!

Saturday dawned cold, mostly cloudy, and windier ... with a forecast of rain that afternoon and evening. In the overall scheme of things, it really wasn't all that bad, and everybody made the best of it ... milling around and going from trailer to trailer, occasionally huddling under canopies next to portable firepits and going on short hikes when there was a break in the weather. Bird couldn't handle being outside, and staying in the trailer without heat wasn't much better, so we took him for a ride ... after a second ride and some dinner, we decided that it would simply be better for him (and easier for us) if we just went home. So we packed up, said our sad farewells, and left ... without pictures, and not nearly enough visiting.

Everyone else toughed it out, had a pretty good time of it after all, and although it got down to 28° that night, Sunday turned out to be a beautiful day! 19 trailers attended, plus a couple of "dropped in just to say hi"s, with folks coming from both ends of California, northern Nevada, and even one couple from Idaho. By nearly all accounts, it was another great gathering, and although nothing official has been announced, all indications are that there will be a Falling Tears in 2014, probably around the same time of year (mid-September). Keep an eye on the Events Calendars an the T&TTT Forum, and we'll look forward to seeing you there next year!



Camp-Inn Teardrop Trailers



An interview with Craig Edevold

Some months ago I ran across some images and eventually the web site of Camp-Inn Teardrop trailers. My first impression was that it looked like a well built trailer and had a nice retro look.

Over time I continued to catch glimpses of these trailers and started to hear about them in conversations with teardroppers at gatherings I attended as well as a few other places. At one particular small gathering I spoke with a retired engineer who had created one of the nicest home built trailers I have ever seen. He asked if I had heard of Camp-Inn trailers and went on to tell me that, in his opinion they were the best commercially built trailers on the market. This sparked my interest and I knew at that point that I had to find out more about this company and their campers.

We had the opportunity to meet Craig and his wife Betsy at the Cross Roads of America Gathering in July and had a very nice conversation with them. They were so nice to talk with and I was very impressed with their business philosophy. I asked Craig if we could do an interview for the magazine and he agreed. I hope you enjoy it.

Every manufacturer I have interviewed has had a unique story about how they got into the business of building trailers and you have an interesting story as well. So how did Camp-Inn trailers get started?

Cary and I worked together back in 2000 and I discovered that he loves to design and build things as I do. In our free time, we built kitchen cabinets for both our homes, and a custom car.

I decided I wanted to take a 3 week “retro” trip with my family along the original Route 66, from Chicago to the Grand Canyon, and then up through Utah’s National Parks.

I was a tent camper. But with such an aggressive travel agenda I wanted overnight accommodations that were quick and easy.

I did some quick math... 3 week trip = 21 nights One hour setup every night + one hour teardown every morning, times 21 stops = 42 hours of work in a 3 week trip....That sounded like work!

I looked at various small travel trailers on the market, and couldn’t find one that worked for me. I wanted to be able to pull it with the family car. I reasoned that if he had to buy a truck, it would double the cost of buying the trailer, and then I would have a truck I didn’t need except to pull the trailer. Everything was either too heavy, or created too much wind resistance.

One day Cary tossed a magazine across the desk to me that had a photograph of an old 1938 Teardrop Camper. It was love at first site.

I researched all the existing vintage designs for teardrops and all had their shortcomings. The bed was too small... only one door... no sink or stove... So, after quickly concluding that a Teardrop Camper of my dreams didn’t exist, Cary and I built one.

During the Route 66 road trip the trailer attracted a lot of attention and everyone wanted one. After returning Cary and I discussed and dreamed of creating a

business building these unique little trailers. We spent a couple years refining their design and setting up shop, and in April 2002, we quit our jobs and followed our dreams.

In talking with teardroppers from around the nation I have found that Camp-Inn has a reputation for being a very high quality trailer. What sets your trailers apart from others on the market?

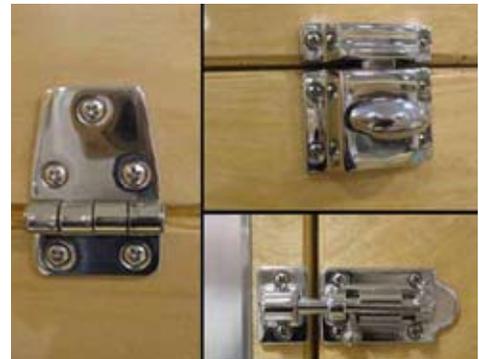
When we started Camp-Inn, our very first trailer was fairly basic. Even though it was basic, it had several innovative design changes from the vintage designs. It had two doors, 5 feet wide, queen size bed, front windows, etc... When we started building them for other folks, we created two models, a basic trailer that was similar to that first trailer, and an Ultra model with even more bells and whistles. We thought we would sell a lot of the basic trailers and one or two “loaded” models each year. The opposite has been true.

We realized that one of the biggest challenges to managing nationwide sales was minimizing the “service” and “warranty” issues. We reasoned that it was better to spend money upfront on quality than to fix stuff later. So, as we evaluated every component, we asked, “is there a higher quality version that will be more reliable?” We

found that the marine industry had much higher quality components than the standard RV fare, so we gravitated toward marine

sources for hardware and fixtures. Marine hinges and latches, marine lights, marine plywood, marine faucet, waterproof urethane glue and marine sealants etc... make our trailers less like a typical RV and more like a boat.

I have a background as a Mechanical Engineer in new



product design and Cary has an associate degree in product design. We used this experience and expertise to design each new option. We were familiar with many manufacturing processes and designing to



utilize those processes to our advantage. As a result, we designed and had manufactured for our teardrops a custom trailer frame, rotational molded water tanks and AC drain pan, custom extruded aluminum door and body trim and hinges, waterjet and laser cut parts and an electropolished stainless bumper, just to name a few of our manufacturing processes.

One of the biggest factors promoting our quality is that I use our trailers... a lot! I still use the third trailer we built (our first demo). That trailer has over 75,000 miles on it. It has been from Maine to California,

and from Florida to Alaska. Betsy and I have visited 39 states in our teardrops. Using our trailers, I know what works and what doesn't.

When I think of Camp-Inn one of the first things I think of is the Raindrop because of its unique shape. How did you come up with that particular design?

Short answer: My brain short-circuited one night.

Long answer: One of our employees (Joe) wanted to buy one of our trailers, but he had two

young boys. We started throwing around ideas of teardrops with two bedrooms, or slide-outs, or pop-ups. Nothing was working. Every idea had huge problems or deviated too far from the "teardrop" concept. About 10 pm one evening, I was looking at pictures online from a teardrop gathering in California. I was scanning a page of thumbnails, when out of the corner of my eye I saw the "Raindrop." When I looked straight at the picture, I realized it was an illusion and was actually just two teardrops behind a couple trees. As I continued looking at other pictures, I had that "Ah-Ha!" moment that what I thought I



had seen would actually work. I immediately started designing the Raindrop and by about 3 am, I had concept drawings ready. I thought the design, and the way I had come up with the design, were strange. So the initial drawings were actually titled “Bizarre.”

The next morning (actually that morning) I brought the drawings to work and showed them to Joe. He liked the idea and wanted to try building one. We decided to call it the “Raindrop” since “teardrop traditionalists” would throw rocks at us if we tried to pass it off as a “Teardrop” trailer.



We built the first one, and it all worked. I still wasn't convinced that anyone else would want one, but we put it on our web page and slowly it started to

catch on. The Raindrop is now almost 50% of our sales. (The introduction of the Raindrop at the first International Teardrop Gathering in Minden, NE is another story.)

You offer quite a number of optional features and accessories for your campers. What are some of the more popular upgrades?

Many of our standard features (like Fantastic roof fan, stainless fenders, folding dining table and cooler



stand) started out as options or upgrades. When we found out that 80% of the people ordered them and half of the people that didn't order them, wished they had, we made them standard equipment. The remaining options are fairly split. About 60% get Air Conditioning, 50% get the TV option and 30% get the furnace.

About a year ago, I designed a new “teardrop” shaped main door hinge. We made it standard on the Ultra models. Most of the people buying Classics and lower models upgrade to the new teardrop hinges.



80% of our customers get one of our side entrance tents. When I designed this tent, I designed it to be flexible so it could fit most

teardrops both manufactured and home built. We sell as many side tents to other teardrop owners as we sell to our own customers.

You still use one of your original teardrops when you camp. I think you mentioned that it is the second one you built. You obviously have newer, fancier, optioned-out models available. Why not show up at gatherings in the best Camp-Inn has to offer?

First, when I go to teardrop gatherings, I don't want people to feel that I am hijacking the gathering to push my product. I attend the gatherings to enjoy spending time with other teardroppers. I don't want to spend all my time “selling” my trailer.

Second, at most gatherings, we have customers attending, that DO have the latest-greatest-brand-new Camp-Inn. I would rather let them enjoy the attention and “oohs” and “ahhs.”

Third, the trailer we use, #0002, a 2001 550 Ultra,



is the one in which we have made almost all of our teardrop memories. We like to brag about how far she has gone and how many places we have visited with her. People are impressed that it still looks great after all it has been through.

You recently hosted your 10th annual Camp-Inn Camp-Outt. Can you tell us a little bit about that event and how it went?

The last full weekend of September, every year, we put on the Camp-Inn Camp-Outt teardrop gathering at a nearby county park. Our gathering is open to all campers, regardless of brand, or camping style. Many of our closest camping friends do not own a Camp-Inn, and a few don't even have a teardrop.

Attendance 194

- 91 Teardrops
- 10 Other (tents, RV's)
- 24 States represented
- Farthest West - SanJose, CA - 2,167 miles
- Farthest East - Maine Poland, 1,338 miles
- Farthest South - Amarillo, TX 1,142 miles
- Over 44,000 miles cumulative travel by all participants.
- Best quote from the weekend: "This is great, I finally get to meet people I have known for years!" (referring to the Unofficial Camp-Inn Forum)

How can our readers find out more about Camp-Inn Trailers or place an order for their own custom camper?

We welcome visitors to tour our teardrop factory any weekday from 9am to 4:30 pm. (other times by appointment)

If you can't attend our shop, most of our customers are willing to show-off their trailers. If you contact us with your address, we will find a customer near you who is willing to show you their trailer.



Customers picking up the 600th Camp-Inn earlier this summer.

Our web page, www.tinycamper.com, has the most complete and up-to-date information as well as pricing.

You can order one in person, by phone, email, or regular mail. Most orders are handled through email. We can help you walk through the numerous options, answering why you might or might not need each. This is most quickly handled by phone or in person, but email gives you a chance to read and re-read our responses.

We do have a couple "try before you buy" rental trailers. You can rent one for a weekend or for a couple weeks. This is the best way to satisfy yourself that "teardrops work for you." And, half of your rental cost is credited toward your purchase of a Camp-Inn. For more information, visit the Unofficial Camp-Inn Forum at: <http://www.campinnforum.com> this is a forum started and run by individual Camp-Inn owners.



Wheelhouse

I have always enjoyed building things, even just thinking about building them. Kami, my 17 year old daughter, knew that I had purchased plans for a couple of small boats and also, recently, plans for a teardrop convertible camper. She has a love for vintage things and she is also very creative, so she liked the idea of a little retro teardrop trailer. As we were to find out, everyone that sees one falls in love with these cute little campers.



Then, one day inspired by her teacher, Kami came home from school with a list of 101 things to do in 1,001 days. On her list, “Build a teardrop trailer with my Dad”. Now was the time to seize the moment and bring out the plans I had tucked away a few months earlier and so began our 3 month project in the spring of 2013.

Our first step was to review the plans I purchased from [Z Kaylor Designs](#) in late 2012. After Kami and I collaborated, it was decided the trailer should be wider to fit 3 people. Widening it, to fit a queen size mattress, unfortunately distorted the teardrop shape. We both felt it needed to be “cute,” and proportional. As I struggled a bit with the new radius and measurements, I decided to call my math-whiz brother, Andy, to consult. Funny thing, deep in discussion on the phone without any solution we were going back and forth as to how the numbers would work when Kami politely interrupts by holding up a picture she sketched on scratch paper within minutes, outlining the perfect dimensions, and said “will this work?”. Uh – “Yes!”, I responded in disbelief. From there, we threw the other reworked plans to the side and got to work on Kami’s.

Our next step was to secure a trailer. Easy! My dad had three Harbor Freight trailers and had been trying to give me one for years. It had been sitting outside for about 10 years but seemed to be in great shape. (The age there is an important piece to know for our later adventure.) We brought it home and right away ordered new tires and camper jacks for it. The tires were bigger (12”), top rated for highway speeds and had beautiful aluminum alloy rims. After painting the trailer black we were off to a great start!



The weather was chilly when we began the build in April and we accomplished quite a bit being hidden away in the garage. In a few weekends between work and school we were able to quickly complete the trailer floor, hidden compartments, and the weatherproof tar coating. As the weather warmed, we moved out to



the driveway and set up the cured sides. This is when progress started slowing down. Neighbors and passers by were so intrigued they would stop by for peeks and



tours. It was quickly acknowledged that the amazing retro creativity was all due to Kami as it was her details that people “ooh’d and ahh’d” about. She certainly is very artistic with a great eye for design.

I was able to get credit for the swept back wheel wells, but she did the rest. She wanted the cool round windows and insisted on the unique door shape rather than a production door that she dubbed as “bor-ing.” She had the idea of buying vintage road maps off EBAY and wallpapering the interior with them. People absolutely loved the maps. The thing they like most though



was that it was a father/daughter project, which was certainly my favorite part.

Kami continued to spill out ideas that led to antique shopping for items such as the interior boat lights and copper

bucket found with her grandma for the sink. Chrome trim, artistic drawer pulls, and even a VW car symbol to match our car were a must for her to give it more pizzazz. My favorite idea of hers was a penny countertop. Thankfully, our good friend, Sheila collected pennies for us and other friends and family offered



donations, too. The rest of the ideas I contributed seemed to address the overall functionality. We added air conditioning, an aluminum utility box for a Honda generator, and ribs for the screened top. Our project now has been named the Wheelhouse!

As the teardrop started to take shape it became obvious that something this cool had to go on a big trip. These last three years we have tried to plan EPIC summer vacations for our kids to remember. The project was to be completed in the nick of time to meet our scheduled Fourth of July vacation. Up

until now, this project was all father/daughter and it was time to bring in mom. She had always wanted to see the Grand Canyon and hike the Wave in the Vermillion Cliffs. So, this teardrop was going from Grand Rapids, Michigan to Northern Arizona to tour the North Rim of the Grand Canyon and parts of Southern Utah to see Zion; Bryce Canyon and the Vermillion Cliffs.

We worked on it right up until the day of departure and really finished it up nicely. Our vacation driving out was flawless, other than



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one hiccup near Marshall, IA, when the axle on the trailer gave out. In retrospect, it would have been much smarter to use a newer Harbor Freight trailer or replace the axle on my dad's older one that had been stored outside for 10 years. We ended up being stranded at a Pilot gas station in Iowa for 24 hours while we scoured the town(s) and beautiful countryside for a new axel. We were used to "looks" on our trip and people pointing, but now we had a teardrop on jacks



with no wheels. I liked to tell the people looking at it inquisitively that it was a hovercraft.

After putting the trailer back together with a brand new 2000 lbs axle it was stronger and better than ever. The rest of the trip was simply enjoying our vacation and the views of the canyons. I will always treasure witnessing my daughter eagerly give tours and answer questions about the trailer, such as: "What year is it?" - "This year." and "What make is it?" - "Homemade." The funniest time of all was

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leaving a scenic look-out point to the canyons to return to our car. When we turned around, 8-10 tourists were pointing their cameras at the teardrop instead of the canyon.

All and all, this was one of the best experiences ever. It was so much fun to build with Kami. I enjoyed the neighbors stopping by to check the progress and running into strangers that would ask us excitedly about the “cute little trailer.” We are both happy and proud of how it turned out and will never forget the time we had building it and our epic trip out West to the Grand Canyon in the summer of 2013!



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Campfire Cookin'

Soup's On!

By Rhonda Gentry

Autumn has arrived. It is now cool enough to enjoy sitting by the fire while a nice soup or stew simmers in the coals. The three recipes that I'm sharing in this issue cook up nicely on charcoal or wood fire, using ingredients that most of us keep on hand.

Chicken and Noodles/or Dumplings



The basic soup:

Start with about two pounds of chicken pieces in a large heavy pot or Dutch oven. For good stock, use pieces on the bone. The bones and marrow really do add to the flavor.

Pour in enough water to completely cover the chicken, adding a sprinkle of salt if you like, then set on the fire and bring to a boil. Let it simmer for about 20 minutes, then check for doneness. When the chicken pulls easily off of the bone, remove the pieces from the broth and take out the bones. Cut the chicken into bite-sized pieces.

While you are boning the chicken, add the following to the broth:

- 2-3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2-3 stalks of celery, chopped
- 2-3 large carrots, peeled and chopped

If you like your veggies really soft, feel free to add them with the chicken. If you are inclined to do so, you can improve the flavor of the vegetables by sautéing them in a little butter before adding them to the broth.

Now put the chicken back in the pot. Add any of the following, depending upon your personal taste:

- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2-3 tablespoons of chopped spinach, parsley or cilantro
- 1-2 tablespoons poultry seasoning or rosemary herb mix

Add either noodles or dumplings (recipes follow.)

Noodles:

- 1 1/3 cups flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon oil

Mix together, adding just enough water to make a firm dough. Divide the dough in half for easier handling. Roll out the dough on a flour-covered board. To slice into noodles quickly and evenly, roll the dough into a cylinder, jelly-roll style. Slice cross-wise into the width that you prefer. Toss into the simmering soup and continue cooking just until the noodles are done, about 10 minutes.

**Dumplings:**

This is the dumpling recipe from the old Betty Crocker cookbook. It makes a bread-like dumpling. Although the original recipes says not to put them in direct contact with the liquid, I do and they turn out wonderfully. If you prefer the original texture, use less liquid and a Dutch oven, so that you can place coals on top during the final cooking period. This will give you nice, toasty brown biscuits on top of your chicken and vegetables.

- 1½ cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons shortening or oil
- ¾ cup milk

Mix all ingredients together then drop by small teaspoons into the simmering broth. Cover and cook about 15-20 minutes, or until the dumplings are done.

Hamburger and Kidney Beans

This is my husband's favorite soup. Although it looks like chili, the flavor is totally different.

Brown together:

- 4 strips of bacon, chopped into pieces
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 pound ground beef or turkey
- 2-3 cloves garlic, chopped

Drain the grease and add:

- 2 cans of kidney beans
- Dash nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons molasses
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 2-3 tablespoons ketchup OR 1 small can tomato sauce OR 1 1/2 cups tomato juice

Add enough water to make a chili-like consistency. Cover, place over hot coals and simmer 20 minutes to 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add more water, if necessary.

This is great with cornbread or crackers.

Potato Soup

This soup has so many possible variations! Add clams to make clam chowder or corn to make corn chowder. The addition of ham and cheese turn the soup into hearty casserole. And then there's always bacon, because, well, everything tastes better with bacon.

Place a heavy pot over some not-very-hot coals (you don't want to scorch the milk) and stir together:

- ½ stick butter
- 1 small onion, chopped or 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 2-3 stalks celery, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 4-6 potatoes, cut into bite-sized pieces

When the vegetables begin to get tender, add enough milk to cover, about a quart. For thicker soup, substitute evaporated milk for some of the fresh. You may also thicken the soup by stirring some flour into the vegetables before adding the milk.

Salt and pepper to taste. A sprinkle of red pepper flakes and /or turmeric add a nice bit of color and heat.

Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 30 minutes or more, until soup is hot and the potatoes are soft.



Oregon Trail'R is developing two new teardrop models!

TerraDrop - This long-awaited model is designed to match and compliment the more angular and aggressive styling of your off-road capable tow vehicle. It is configurable to include rugged all-terrain tires, off-road capable suspension, Jeep-style fenders, and a multi-axis tow coupler. All this combined with our heavy duty fully-boxed steel frame makes this a VERY capable teardrop! TerraDrop is built on the same 5' x 8' footprint as our FronTear model, but with its more angular lines, it gains a fair amount of internal volume. This extra space provides for added storage and an even more spacious interior.

TerraDrop Sport - This is a very simple, lightweight teardrop designed for adventure! With a body that is only 42" wide and 84" long, Sport is ideal for a solo

occupant or a cozy couple. It retains the same 78" bed length as all of our teardrops, but has an internal width of 40.5". At roughly 500 lbs and 60" wide overall, it is light and small enough to tow behind utility ATVs or side by sides like the Yamaha Rhino. Sport is fully street legal, which also makes it an ideal solution for small tow vehicles with a low towing capacity such as hybrids or two seater sport cars. We haven't seen anything like this available commercially, and we are very excited about the way our prototype is shaping up.

Both new models are built with the same meticulous attention to detail, superior materials, and exceedingly high quality control as our FronTear model. Both of these models will be ready for order by early-mid Spring 2014. Look for more details and pictures in upcoming issues of Cool Tears!



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