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THE X-CAMPER



Turtle UP Trailers



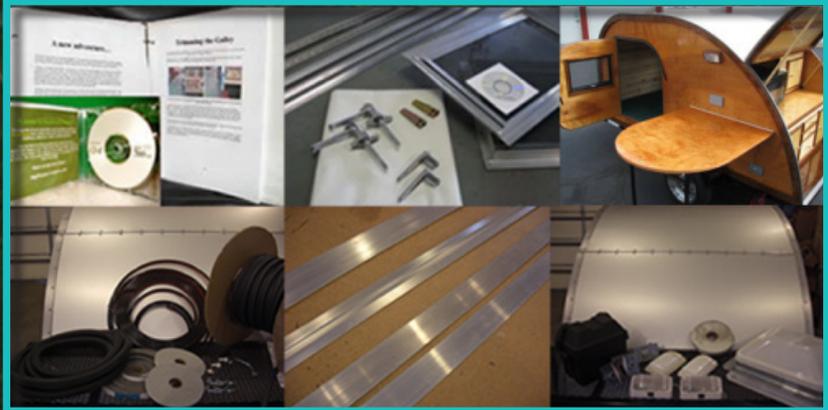
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Magazine

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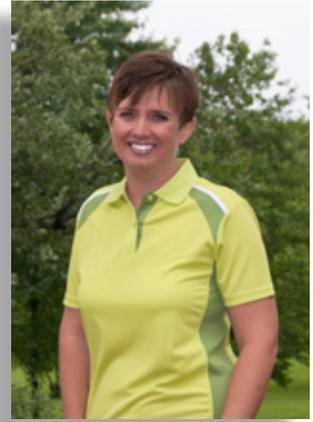
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Letter from the Editor:

Crossroads of America



The winter polar vortex is in full swing here in the Midwest. In fact, we are currently on our 8th snow day from school and summer seems to be looming far in the distance. But the promise of warmer weather and camping season is still true. This year it is once again time for a huge gathering at McCormick's Creek State Park in Indiana as teardrop fans from all over gather at [Crossroads of America](#).

Two years ago, I had the amazing opportunity of attending CRA with my husband. We were able to take a beautiful Silver Shadow teardrop from Missouri Teardrops and enjoyed the trip together. While the humidity and bugs were quite ridiculous, the friendships forged and memories made are some we will always cherish.

The Tearjerker organization does a wonderful job of putting on this event. They offer numerous mini classes, group breakfasts, dutch oven cook off, potluck dinners, and so much more. While none of the events are mandatory, I highly recommend joining in on the fun times.

McCormick's Creek is a beautiful campground with lots of shade. The bathrooms were tidy and well kept up. There is a beautiful creek just waiting to be explored. The campground is just a few short miles from a small town that holds so much of the "small town, America" charm.

So take it from me, go check out the [Crossroads of America](#) website and start planning your trip now! <http://cra2019.weebly.com/>

Until next time...enjoy every sunset!

SARAH TUCKER

Editor

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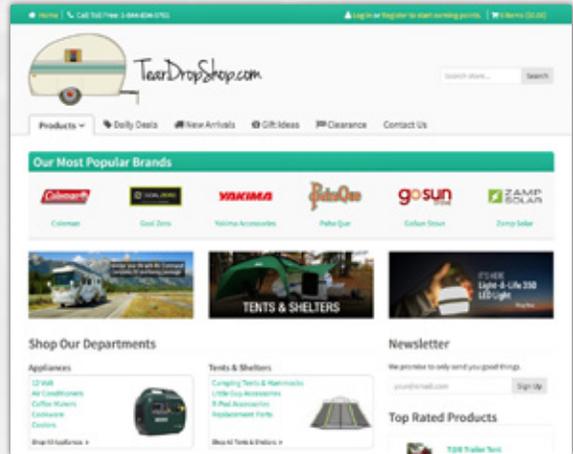
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ON THE TEARDROP TRAIL WITH MARILYN

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

TEARDROP BREAKFAST TACOS

In camp, we love to re-create our favorite breakfast treats. A popular part of Austin's amazing local food scene, breakfast tacos were influenced by regional Tex-Mex culinary traditions, but they are much more than scrambled eggs, cheese and meat, wrapped up in a tortilla. One local source observed that the world of breakfast tacos is infinite. They are ubiquitous, sold everywhere from road-side stands, food trailers, grocery and convenience stores, coffee shops and high-end eateries. Every Austinite has a favorite breakfast taco. Corn or flour tortillas? One crucial question when making breakfast tacos. Corn came first. In 1519, Cortez noticed the Aztecs' flat corn breads called "tlaxcalli." The Spanish colonizers started making flour tortillas. The choice is an individual one. Some folks feel that the corn tortilla is likely to collapse with the moisture from the egg mixture, Others value the taste and support of the flour tortilla. Both are found in the breakfast taco scene in Texas. Here are some great options for Teardrop Breakfast Tacos. Consider shopping at an ethnic market for unique ingredients. Choose your favorite or experiment.

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon of oil
- Eggs – two per person (Use a dash of milk or cream if preferred)
- Potatoes – boiled or hash brown-style, diced into ¼ inch cubes
- Onions, 1 clove garlic– diced
- Jalapeño pepper, chopped (optional)
- Meat – chorizo, bacon, green pork chili, barbecued brisket, diced into ¼ inch cubes and drained
- Tortillas – corn or flour – raw (one per taco)
- Cheese – Monterey Jack or cheddar – shredded
- Salsa – choose your favorite red or green, optional chili or a hot sauce like Tabasco or Cholula
- Avocado and Cilantro for garnish



Prepare before leaving home

- Cut to size, freeze meat and place in plastic bags – label
- Chop onions, garlic, peppers– place in plastic bags – label
- Use caution preparing Jalapeño or chipoltes •

- peppers – discard seeds and membranes. Chop, wash hands, place in plastic bags – label
- Refrigerate in ice chest or cooler

Cooking Methods

- Heat oil in a large skillet or griddle. We use cast iron.
- Cook bacon or sausage, drain fat.
- Add onions, peppers and cook for a few minutes on medium.
- Mix eggs with milk, salt & pepper. Add to skillet or griddle.
- Cook eggs until firm, remove from burner and top with shredded cheese.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Warm the tortillas in a dry skillet until they softer, or if you prefer leave just a bit longer until they show signs of being lightly toasted and begin to firm up. (Wrap tortillas in foil to stay warm until assembly)

To serve

Place tortillas on plates. Split egg mixture between tortillas, add cheese, roll if desired, top with sliced avocado and salsa or hot sauce of your choice. Tacos can be rolled in foil will stay warm. Enjoy!

THE X-CLIMBER

Third home-built teardrop combines all the best features for avid camper



 By **Bob Phillips**

Since his boyhood, Zack Engle has always enjoyed nature and the outdoors. He spent most summer weekends camping out in the backyard in a tent. Years later, after discovering teardrop campers and then building three of his own design, he said camping has become a lifestyle.

His third build – the X-Cubed Camper – incorporates the best of the best of what he’s learned from the earlier builds and from other teardrop builder/campers along the way. Zack said he settled on the unusual name because it was his third build and it has an angular profile. Also, it’s built more ruggedly and sturdily for boondocking in the mountains of Northern Pennsylvania.

“I’ve always loved to get out into the woods and cook some food over an open fire,” he said.

“During high school and college I didn’t need much of an excuse to toss a tent and a sleeping bag in my car and drive down to the beach for a weekend. Pitching a tent at Assateague Island National Seashore was a lot cheaper than getting a hotel, and a lot more relaxing than the hustle and bustle of the boardwalk. When I wasn’t headed to the beach, I was exploring dirt roads in the state forests, often getting rained on and



washed out.

“Sometime in the mid-2000s, I was on spring break from college and driving through Arizona. When I pulled into a gas station in the middle of the desert I noticed a really cool little camper being towed by a small SUV. Immediately I was thinking that I needed a little camper so I could get up off the wet ground and have a dry place to keep my gear.”



Upon returning, he determined through online research that the little red and white camper that he saw at the gas station was a \$20,000 T@B. Since that was way out of his price range, he started “scheming and dreaming, wondering” if he could build something small, lightweight, and inexpensive. The ideas really started flowing when he searched for teardrops on the Internet.

“In the winter of 2009 I finally had some time, money, and a place to build my first teardrop camper,” he recounted. “It was a 4x8 teardrop with a removable vinyl roof, loosely based on some plans

I found online. It was a pretty basic teardrop trailer, with a small battery, some LED lighting, and a foam mattress. It was basically a glorified tent on wheels, but it was comfortable and dry.”

After two seasons in his first teardrop camper, he sold it finance a bigger and better teardrop. The second trailer also featured a screened-in, removable vinyl roof, but was 5x9, had more LED lighting, more storage, a stereo system, and a basic solar setup. After using that teardrop extensively over a couple of seasons he got the itch to design and build another.



“They say the third time's the charm, and I have to agree. While I really loved both of my first builds I wanted something less whimsical and more rugged with the new design. I wanted something completely different and totally outside the box. It still had to have the design principles of a teardrop trailer -- compact and lightweight, sleeping two, and with rear galley -- but with a more aggressive appearance.

“After a few months of toying with many different profiles, design cues, and features, I finalized the new plans and had a complete 3D AutoCAD model as reference to start making sawdust.

“Having no welding skills, this new design was based on a 5x8 bolt-together trailer kit, with a few simple modifications. I sold the brand new leaf springs and axle from the kit and ordered a custom Dexter



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torsion axle, which easily bolted onto the frame. I also purchased a piece of 2x2 square tubing from a local metal supplier and used it to strengthen and extend the trailer tongue. To help tackle some mild dirt trails and give the design a more proportional appearance, I upgraded to much larger wheels and tires. Many ask why I didn't just have someone build me a full custom frame, but a custom frame doesn't come with the paperwork that many states require as part of the registration process.

“I still wanted to have the open feeling that my first two convertible teardrop campers had. Many teardrops are quite dark and can feel a little claustrophobic, so

the X-Cubed has two large acrylic skylights in the front section of the flat roof. This front section is also hinged at the top to open up if we really want to sleep under the stars.





“Inside the cabin, there are no cabinets. Cabinets take up space and limit flexibility. Instead there is simply a shelf with a removable rail to keep things from falling during transit. This lack of cabinets also helps contribute to the openness of the interior. Compared to a traditional teardrop, it’s like sleeping in a cave. At the front of the memory foam mattress is a headboard with padded denim-covered doors that slide open to reveal an electrical panel with charging ports, the 12VDC/120VAC power center, and also some storage. All the LED lighting, inside and out, is controlled by remote-control key fobs.

“The galley isn’t very traditional either. The lower galley has enough room for four 50-quart coolers, or any combination of storage containers, coolers, and even a small generator. The upper galley has a



couple of shelves to keep bread and buns from getting smashed and the galley counter is deep enough for divider compartments and plenty of prep space. Two granite tiles act as trivets, keeping hot cast iron from melting the countertop. The galley also acts as the entertainment hub with a marine-rated CD player with Bluetooth connection, which drives speakers inside and out.

“With all that room in the lower galley, provisions were made so that we can carry and operate a 5,000 Btu air conditioner for use where electric hookups are available. Fresh-air intake and hot-air exhaust vents have been cut into the galley floor, and the air conditioner blows cold air into the cabin through one of two passage doors that are in the lower galley bulkhead. When boondocking, our Beagles use the openings as their personal doggy-doors to get in and out of the camper on their own, as they want.

“On the exterior we have two 100-watt solar panels





one mounted on the roof and the other mounted on the rear hatch to power the two 100ah batteries that hang in a cage below the camper floor. The walls and roof are built using sandwich-panel construction -- 5mm plywood, 3/4" stick framing with rigid insulation and 5mm plywood. The exterior is finished with Kilz Primer and oil-based roll-on enamel paint. The black paint on the fenders and around the base of the camper is brushed-on rubberized bedliner."

Zack, 36, of Hanover, Penn., now shares The X-Cubed with his fiancé, Jenn, and two Beagles. He's been a member of the Liberty Bell Chapter of TearJerkers since January 2009. As one of chapter's youngest active members, he has been an administrator with the club since 2011 and has helped out as co-director since 2014.

"If it weren't for the TearJerkers I never would have met Jenn," he said. "I first met her parents when I was showing the X-Cubed at an outdoor show with the Liberty Bell Chapter in 2014. They happened to have a little fiberglass Scamp camper and decided to join the TearJerkers. We camped together many times and in 2016 we had a gathering not far from their home. Jenn joined us for the potluck dinner and we really hit it off. We're getting married on June 14.



"Anybody who has built their own teardrop will tell you they are never actually finished," he said. "A home-built teardrop, regardless of design or expense, really is a labor of love. And anybody who has camped in a teardrop will tell you it's like nothing else!"

Last winter, Zach and Jenn restored a classic 13-foot 1976 Serro Scotty Gaucho, completely stripping it down and rebuilding it from the ground up. It was a seven-month project and still needs a few finishing touches.

TEARDROP TIPS



from:

CLEANING TIPS

Acquire a good automotive washing squeegee. These are excellent for removing standing water on your teardrop after washing. Water left on will leave difficult to clean off water spots. Washing in the shade or on an overcast day helps too.

Choosing a stainless steel appliance cleaner for cleaning your stainless cook area: SS appliance cleaners come in a number of forms. There are creams, pastes, wipes, pump spray bottles and aerosol cans. The creams and pastes work great for occasional use in making a SS appliance look like new again but are too slow to use for a post meal cooking cleanup. The wipes are great because they are travel friendly. The pump spray bottles work great but will over apply so spray a little on a paper towel to apply and use a dry one to wipe clean. The aerosol cans work great to directly apply but use it very sparingly.

Chrome parts such as chrome wheels and hub caps should be kept waxed with a good automotive wax. Wax before and after visiting the seashore.

Clean chrome or polished stainless steel parts of your

teardrop with a fine 000 steel wool. This will shine it up and remove any stuck-on debris or rust spots that might have started. After removing rust spots seal the pores of the metal with automotive wax. Do Not use steel wool on the aluminum.

Make sure to always wash your teardrop before putting it away after a trip. Anything left on it can tarnish, stain and corrode when sitting. Driving in the rain is a classic example, the haze left on your vehicle after driving in the rain is generally concrete dust that will harm aluminum and chrome components on your teardrop if left on too long.

Stainless steel appliance cleaner wipes can be wasteful if you use one and throw it away after one use. Reuse the wipes by saving them in a sandwich bag or a travel soap container.

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

Watch monthly for more great camping helps!

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**ONE MAN'S JUNK
BECOMES ANOTHER
MAN'S TREAS...CAMPER**

By **Bob Phillips**

Here's proof that a serviceable teardrop camper doesn't require a big bundle of cash. D. Derek Drury built his cheap but stylish little teardrop with mostly discarded materials. It's built on a small "folding" trailer with a frame tailored from PVC pipe that he found discarded in a dumpster. Weighing just 605 pounds, it is light enough to remove from the trailer, if it's needed for hauling.

The idea for a small camper came to Derek a couple of years ago when he no longer needed the trailer to haul a lawn tractor. He thought his idea was unique, unaware at the time that tiny trailers were in vogue and that their popularity is growing.

"I thought my idea to create a micro-camper was original until the Internet informed me that folks have been doing this for years. They called them "teardrop campers" - and they were cool!

"I hope to someday build a nice teardrop camper like those I see in *CoolTears* magazine. But in 2016, if I wanted a camper I had to work within certain constraints. It needed to convert back into a utility trailer (just in case); it



needed to be as close to 'free' as possible (I am somewhat renowned for shamelessly re-purposing what my neighbors drag to the curb); and it had to be simple. My work/family commitments left me limited time for a garage side project.

"I began accumulating discarded plywood for a traditional teardrop build. This plan changed the day I noticed that a local church had discarded multiple dry-erase boards. While dumpster-diving for the white-boards, I discovered the church had also thrown away its portable puppet-show stages. I suddenly became the grateful owner of a lot of PVC pipe and fittings.

"When I worked in



construction as a teenager, we would sometimes bend PVC pipe over propane heaters to use as electrical conduit. I used this quirky expertise to transform the PVC pipe and fittings into a curving infrastructure to support a shell made of white board.

“After finding a practical use for my PVC/white-board windfall, I must admit that I became obsessed with the no cost challenge. I fashioned the internal shelves from fabric I salvaged from my kids’ defunct trampoline. Rather than purchasing windows, I created my own Wiley windows using tempered glass panes scrounged from someone’s discarded stereo cabinet.”

Some smaller items had to be purchased, such as new door handles and a roof vent (without the fan). For lighting he found two battery-powered push-button lights at a local thrift store. He also installed a 12-inch fluorescent bulb to use when the camper can be plugged in, the plug-in salvaged from his workplace.





The entire camper is covered using the “Poor-Man’s Fiberglass” technique. For the canvas he used a painter’s drop cloth, over which he applied many, many coats of primer and paint, all of which came from what he had on hand or what he salvaged from the curbs in his neighborhood.

“When the weather gets hot, I connect an old window-shaker AC unit through the side of the camper. The snap-shut A/C ports on the camper were salvaged from discarded air mattresses. I fashioned the conversion manifold out of old corrugated plastic real estate yard signs. The actual ducts are made from gutter hardware

“The plywood floor is bolted to the steel frame at multiple anchor points,” Derek explained. “I store the camper on saw horses above the trailer when it is detached. A square hole in the floor allows me to place the camper onto the frame by myself, if necessary. At some point, I may fashion a ‘pop-down’ foot-well to facilitate comfortable seating. I’ve learned that a DIY camper is never really finished.



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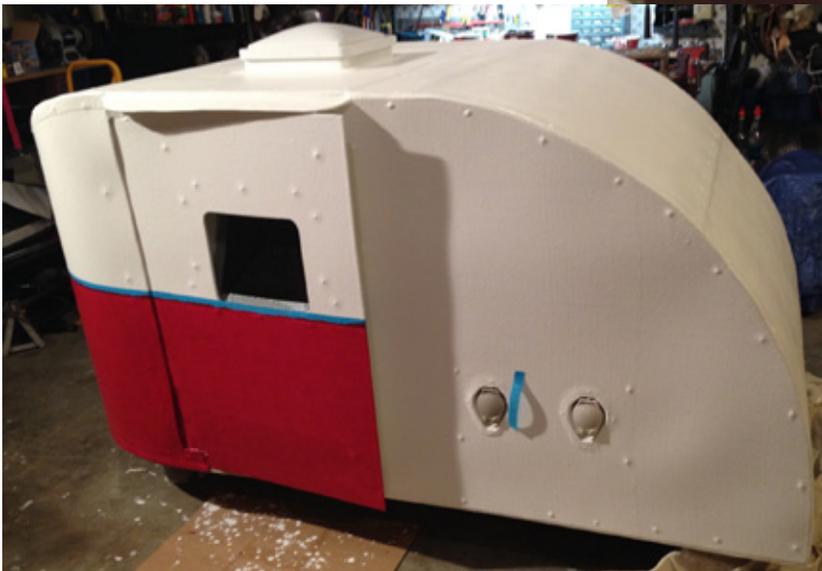
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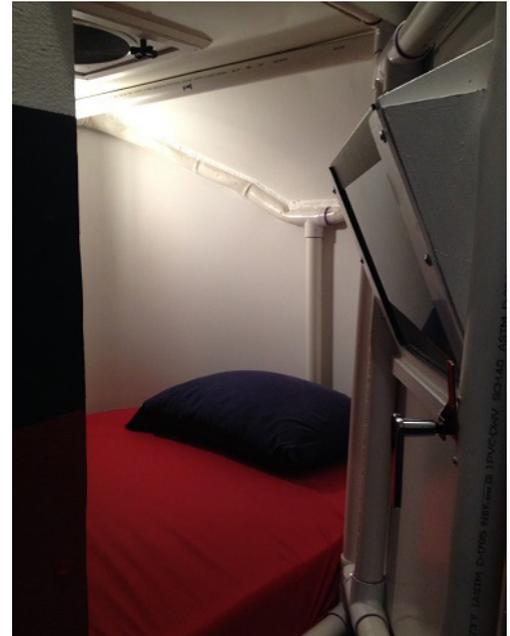
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insulated by my son's high-school hockey socks. I like that the A/C is external so I only take it when I might need it."

Now the fun of building the camper, which is mostly complete, has been replaced by the fun of camping. Derek said he's met a lot of interesting folks through the local chapter of TearJerkers.net.

"I've even been known to use it as my own personal motel on multi-day car trips," he said. "One lesson I've learned is if you plan to sleep with a partner, you'd better make sure your camper is wider than 4 feet.

"Maybe I can use that as an excuse to build a real teardrop camper! I wonder what the Curb Gods will bestow on me the next time.





Turtle UP Trailers



From a doggie sidecar to manufacturing teardrops

By Bob Phillips

As a boy growing up in Eastern Illinois, Andrew Kaufmann liked to tinker and build stuff out of metal at his grandfather's welding shop. When he became acquainted with teardrop campers, he knew that he had to build one. Now that has evolved into his own business, Turtle UP Trailers, based in Buckley, Ill., on I-57 about 100 miles south of Chicago.

Kaufman started building his own teardrop camper in 2014 and finished about a year later. While camping, he came up with several changes and modifications, which started him thinking about a trailer manufacturing business. He sold that camper in 2016 and Turtle UP was officially launched in 2017 as a full-service shop of steel-or aluminum- framed teardrops, trailer parts and accessories, and repairs.



“I have always been building or designing,” Andrew said. “I started working at my grandpa’s welding shop during the summers when I was 8 years old. He would have me making small parts, which mostly included a lot of the grunt work like cutting material to length on the bandsaw, or drilling a bunch of holes. As I grew I just kept on designing and building things. I love it.”



“I started a full-time summer job when I was 14 at the local trailer sales shop, working on utility and enclosed trailers. That matured into a six-year stint where I learned a lot about trailers and ultimately led me to think about it as a business opportunity. I started working at a CNC machine shop as maintenance manager fixing machines and learning how quality manufacturing works. Currently I am a Project Manager at a facility that manufactures large evaporative coils for refrigeration, along with running Turtle UP Trailers.”

“I had a beagle named Brandy that loved to ride in the car. Knowing how much she liked to ride, I designed a bicycle that had a sidecar and presented the idea to my father, who was not thrilled about the idea, but I slowly convinced him to help build it. Long story short, that bike was a hit. Not only did the dog like it, but everywhere I rode it attracted attention.

Turtle UP Trailers currently has a whale of an offer open – a 30 percent discount on five custom builds of its Beacon model. One couple has already taken advantage of that and saved nearly \$6,000 on their camper. The offer now stands on the next four teardrop sales. “I want to build to order so that most all of our teardrops will be completely unique and fully reflect the owner’s style,” Andrew said.

The company buys components like the axle, wheels and tires, but everything else is done in-



house. It took much longer than expected to build the first Beacon, Andrew said, because of changes made along the way. Among the changes was the entire tongue structure.

“I had the teardrop in rolling-chassis form and had started on the interior. I needed to transport the teardrop from my weld shop to my trailer shop, a 100-yard rock driveway separating the two, and I decided to have my wife pull the camper as I rode inside. I could feel some flex in the tongue that was unacceptable, so I redesigned the tongue structure, had to buy more material and cut off and remade the tongue. There were a couple other great learning experiences on the first Beacon that made me want to pull my hair out at the time, but ultimately propelled our trailers to the top of the class in quality.

“Since they were first built, most all teardrop shells are made of plywood. We build ours out of steel or aluminum. Our trailers come in around the same weight class as similar sized wooden tears and offer a much stronger structure, longer lifespan, less maintenance, and more insulation. When we designed our frame structure I wanted the base frame and shell to be one piece. I don’t like the idea of fasteners between the steel frame and a wood shell coming loose over time. I also was

concerned about weight, so that is why I designed the three piece arc structure that is very strong, repeatable, and locates all of the wall studs. Our walls are also 2 inches thick and fully insulated.

“Along with the metal frames we wanted to eliminate wood everywhere we could so customers wouldn’t have to worry about water damage or rot or any refinishing of any sort. We skin the interior wall with a composite sheet that is a ¼” thick and all of our cabinets are made of High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) which is what high-end outdoor kitchens are made of.”

The 6x10-foot Beacon model weighs around 1700 pounds complete and the 4x8-foot Squirt model is around 800 pounds dry weight. Both have a 40- to 75-pound tongue weight.



Turtle Up now offers wall kits for DIY enthusiasts that are exactly the same frames that are used on Turtle UP campers. The kit includes the three arc sections, studs cut to length and instructions sent right to the buyer's door. Shipping costs should be \$40 to \$80 depending on the distance. Other companies offer teardrop kits, but Andrew said he knows of no other offering metal 2" thick stud walls that can be insulated.

"I didn't come up with the idea, prospective customers did," he said. "People who would see our teardrop at shows kept asking me if they could just buy the walls, or if we offered a kit. I thought on it a bit and the answer was simple. There was no extra investment from me to be able to offer this and I didn't have to design anything.

"The wall kit box includes all of the components to build two teardrop-shaped stud walls. The walls can then be welded or bolted to a frame of the buyer's choice. The insulation, and interior and exterior skin are not included. I am working on the best way to supply a hatch kit and hope to be

able to supply a full-build kit in the future, but for now this is a great start and can still get builders everything they need for a full teardrop build; they just can't get everything with one click yet."

He's also toying with the idea of designing a wall kit that fastens together in a way other than welding but hasn't found a fastener he's satisfied with yet. One possibility he's looking at is aircraft rivets.

"A Turtle UP logo sticker will come with every wall kit and we encourage buyers to apply it to their build. I am offering these kits in hopes to be a one-stop shop for everything teardrops. If builders have questions, or want to talk about the best way to do an idea they are working on for their build, I want to help them out any way I can, as well as selling them parts to complete their build or pointing them in the right direction for everything they need."

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