

PREP IT RIGHT!

HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF & YOUR COACH FOR SUCCESSFUL LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL

We have been all over north America, from Canada to Mexico and coast to coast with virtually no issues, and you can too

*Jerry & Sharon Work
78 Royale, Kerby, Oregon*

HERE IS HOW

- ❁ Today we will talk about how we prepare ourselves and our coach for memorable adventures,
- ❁ Share with you a number of modifications that makes it easy to live in the small space of a GMC for weeks or months at a time without killing one another,
- ❁ and, if there is time, we would like you to share what you have done that you feel is important to making your coach more fun for long distance travel.

BUT, FIRST....

- ❁ Let's welcome all of you who are attending a GMC Western States rally for the first time. Please stand up so we can give you a big round of welcome applause.

BACK TO PREPARATIONS FOR MAKING THE GMC YOUR HOME ON THE ROAD

- ❖ If your purpose is to meet a fixed schedule or time goal, a 35+ yr. old motor coach is not the way to start out
- ❖ GMCs allows little private space or solitary time
- ❖ Teamwork/agreement - give & take are required- from daily chores to bigger decisions about destinations & desires
- ❖ Be patient, flexible, adaptable and honor the other person, we depend on each other
- ❖ Realize our uniqueness, attractiveness to strangers. The GMC is a celebrity so be open to curiosity, adoration, folks' needs to share & to learn. Some are potential owners.

IN THE BEGINNING.....

GM started by designing the interior first and so should we as we prepare to live in our coaches for an extended period.

Here we are a couple of summers ago in the Maritime Provinces in eastern Canada, a long way from Oregon!



The initial GM design team included

- designers from Frigidaire with home and kitchen design expertise,
- human factors experts, specialists in the physical, psychological and behavioral aspects of product design,
- exterior design personnel, and
- engineers with both truck and bus expertise.

Some 75 people in all.....

They started by studying 115 different motor home floor plans offered by 75 manufacturers ranging in size from 20 to 28 feet

From that study they developed a series of "ideal" floor plans and chassis designs which they then tried out in scale models

Only then did the exterior of the motor home began to take shape.

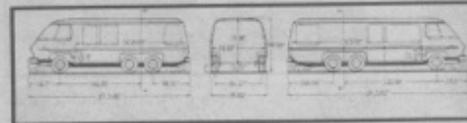
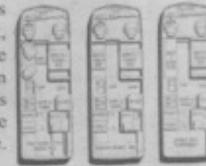
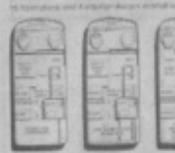
From there full size mock ups were done for a variety of plans that looked good in scale. For each mock up they did computer models to make sure the result would achieve the balance and chassis dynamics they sought.

Size, originally planned for 20 and 24 feet became 23 and 26 feet, the two sizes they felt they needed in order to provide the right amount of living space for their final configurations.

even our kids chipped in. These ideal plans were then tried out in scale models, which represented the chassis that Kurt has described.

At this point, the exterior of the Motor Home began to take shape in scale models shaped and sized around the developing interior architecture.

Next more experimentation... the building and trying out of full size mock ups with a variety of plans that looked good in scale.



All were done with the goal to improve things – provide more space or additional convenience.



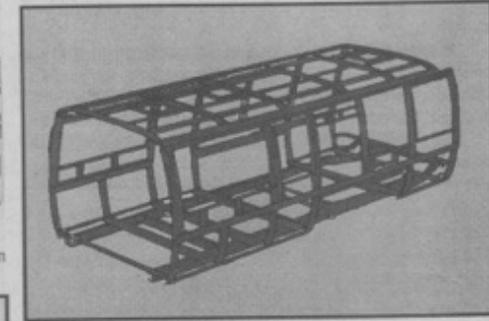
Full size studies in cardboard and plywood are fast and they enabled us to actually experience the results of various arrangements. But, we did not experiment in the usual way.

The chassis and body in combination were very much a part of every study. Everytime a major component was



16 GMC Motorhome Marketplace

moved, its effect on weight distribution was carefully considered. Necessary adjustments – were determined by computer and every mock up represented the balanced motor home we were seeking to design.



Once we had finally determined interior layout and arrangement, we were ready to begin the final development of the exterior.

Size, originally planned for 20 and 24 feet, became 23



feet and 26 feet. These two sizes were necessary to provide the correct amount of living space – to give most people what we knew they wanted in their motor homes.

Their desire for privacy, for example, led to the development of our mid bath and dressing room.



Our bath is located to accommodate families or two

April 1999

When they thought they had it right they invited about 50 women and their husbands, all owners of motor homes, in to spot where minor adjustments might improve things

- The final step - that of interior decor - was done in consultation with the staff of House and Garden magazine whose color research and merchandising program was followed by hundreds of manufacturers of home furnishings.
- That would assure the owner that accessories to coordinate each interior would be available in the right colors and textures.
- Each interior was designed to present a different look, designed specifically for a particular segment of the motor home market
- Their goal was an interior that would appeal to almost every personal taste. No single customer would like them all, but every customer would become excited by at least one of them.

So, as you think about living in your coach for an extended period of time, start at the front door.....





❖ **In the daylight, walk into your coach and compare it with how you feel in your home.**

❖ You want to make your coach feel and live as comfortably as your home - it will be your home for the whole long distance adventure.

❖ You would never put up with a sagging ceiling in your home, so why put up with a sagging ceiling in your coach? Do it yourself or have any auto upholstery shop do it for you. It makes a huge difference in how you feel while inside your coach.

❖ Is everything as clean and tidy as it is in your home? If not, make it that way!

❖ **Do you like the wall coverings, cabinets and floors as much as you do in your home?**

- ❖ The colors and coverings of the 70s are far different from what we favor today so you will likely want to make changes before you leave on your adventure.
- ❖ There are specialty paints that can be used to cover the laminate cabinets, walls and dash area quite easily and quickly. Get them at an auto paint store, not a big box store. SEM is one very good brand.
- ❖ Clean & prep the surfaces, mask off everything you don't want painted, open the windows, wear a respirator made for painting and you will be amazed at the change you can accomplish in a weekend working together.

✿ **Kitchen and bath counter tops are a bit more involved to change so leave them alone unless you really don't like being around them.**

✿ Same with window coverings. They are not hard to change out, but you may need to also change the valances and surrounds which would lead to a bigger job.

✿ Kitchen and bath sinks & faucets are easy to change out. Buy ones scaled for small spaces, like bar fixtures. A change here will really impact you positively!

✿ Floors are an area where there are lots of options. The easy things to put down are snap together laminates from places like Costco or big box stores. Replacing carpet is a lot harder. Any competent flooring person can do your coach in a short time so it is not that expensive to hire it done if you don't want to tackle this job yourself.



❖ **Don't tackle upholstery or moving walls unless you really know what you are doing!**

❖ This can be a bottomless time pit that could derail your whole preparation process.

❖ Stand back and look at how much you have accomplished in a fairly short period of time and for a reasonable investment.

❖ Now when you walk in the door of your coach you will smile and say, “**I feel at home**”, because you are!

Think you can't do it?
How would you like this neat interior?



Where is it?

IN A GARBAGE TRUCK!



Here is where we hang out. Yup, maybe a little more elaborate than you may want to do, but whatever your taste & budget, make it comfortable for you.



Here is a look forward, and yes, we do smile when we walk through the door!



✱ **There is one more step. At night, with all your coach lights on, walk into your coach again and compare it with how you feel in your home.**

- ✱ Lighting plays a major role in how we feel in a space.
- ✱ Remember grandma's farm house? Likely had only a few ceiling light fixtures which did little for the aesthetics of the rooms!
- ✱ 70s RV lighting similarly left a LOT to be desired. Florescent tubes in the ceiling and harsh incandescent bulb fixtures under the cabinets were the best available at the time, but you don't have to put up with them now.
- ✱ There are many LED, halogen and rope light options that will really improve the way you feel in your coach.

WITH THE INTERIOR AESTHETICS HANDLED, NOW LET'S DO THE REST.....

- ❖ The big six for reliability
- ❖ The big five for living well on board
- ❖ The big five for fun and staying connected
- ❖ Some interesting modifications that solved minor annoyances for us. Even minor annoyances can become major when you live in your GMC for weeks or months at a time.

THE BIG SIX FOR RELIABILITY

- * **Make sure your tires have good tread and are less than five years old.** Have your tire dealer inspect them for bulges or signs of deterioration. You don't want to deal with a blowout on the road!
- * **Pay special attention to your radiator.** The old ones can be hard to repair on the road and the new aluminum one will keep your engine cool in any weather or terrain. Change the fluid, hoses & belts before leaving home.
- * **Have your brakes inspected and the brake fluid changed.** Easy to do at home, very expensive to have done on the road.
- * **Make sure your alternator and starter motor are good** - again, cheap and easy to test or change at home, but a real nuisance and expensive to have done on the road.
- * **Have your exhaust system checked thoroughly by a competent muffler shop.** A hole in an exhaust pipe can burn through the wooden floor of your coach and leaking exhaust fumes can be very dangerous.
- * **Re-gear your coach!** Whether you tow or not, coast-to-coast trips mean mountains and the original gearing is just too high to be comfortable, plus it puts an undo strain on your whole coach.

THERE IS A MACHINE TO CHANGE OUT ALL
FOUR CRITICAL FLUIDS - EVEN OUR LITTLE 4
STOPLIGHT TOWN HAS THEM



*Transmission
fluid changer*



Engine coolant changer



*Power steering
fluid changer*



Brake fluid changer

THE BIG FIVE FOR LIVING WELL ON BOARD

- ✱ Make sure your generator starts easily and runs reliably as you will use it a lot on a long trip, especially if it is hot and muggy outside!
- ✱ The refrigerator is the most used appliance in your coach. Be sure it cools properly both on propane and on AC. You can't live well on board without it.
- ✱ Once you cross the continental divide in the summer, your dash air will never be off. The roof air will be on nearly every time you park somewhere. 90/90 in a GMC is no fun if either fails to work correctly.
- ✱ You only need your furnace when you need it....but, when you need it there are few alternatives unless you are plugged into shore power. Again, they are easy to diagnose and fix at home, but they can be a bear to fix on the road.
- ✱ Same with your hot water heater. On a long trip you really want to have hot water whenever you want it! I can't imagine a cold shower on the road.....

THE BIG FIVE FOR FUN AND STAYING CONNECTED WHILE ON THE ROAD - THE FIRST 3

- ❖ **Auto satellite finder and a flat panel TV with a digital tuner. You will use these nearly every day so why not change out that old stuff now?**
- ❖ **Take your home phone and number and your internet connection with you using something like the Verizon Home Phone connect and an internet connection something like the Verizon Mifi2200. A lap top computer or an iPad can keep you on the internet and with GPS navigation no matter where you are. We use our iPad several hours every day we are on the road and it is perfect for the small interior of a GMC.**
- ❖ **A cell phone with broad coverage is a great convenience and the new, no contract plans from places like Smarttalk.com (unlimited voice, text and data with no LD or roaming charges for \$45 per month) are really affordable and work well all over the country. We use this with our Nokia N8 smart phone. It can also be a wifi hot spot, but that ties your cell phone to where you want to surf the internet.**



We use a three hand set wireless "home phone" so the Verizon Home Phone Connect rings all over our building just like our old land line did. We also take this with us when we travel so the phone is just like home.

Plug your existing home phone into the Verizon Home Phone Connect. It uses the cell phone towers instead of the phone jack on the wall inside inside your home. You keep your existing home phone number and can take it with you when you travel. \$20/month unlimited local & LD calling with no LD or roaming charges anywhere in the US.

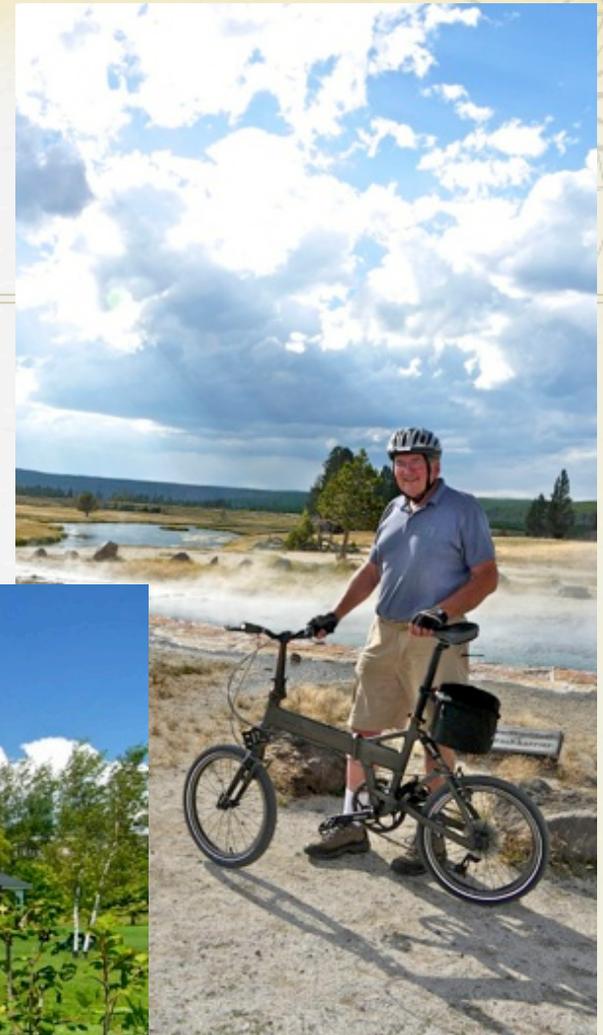


The small black box is a wireless router that uses cell phone towers to provide internet access. It has a limited broadcast range so the box to the right is a wifi repeater that sends signals all over our 5000 sq. ft. building. Wifi everywhere and we can take it with us on the road. \$50 per month for 5gb of band width and no contract. \$10 per gb over that. Speed is around .75 to 1.5 mb down and .5 mb up so about the same or a bit slower than standard DSL. This one is 3g & a 4g is also available.



MORE ON THE BIG FIVE FOR FUN AND STAYING CONNECTED WHILE ON THE ROAD

- ✦ **Folding chairs, a folding table, a good BBQ and bikes within easy reach from the ground are really useful. We took off our roof pod and mounted everything on the back, so no more climbing....**
- ✦ **Bicycles give you mobility without having to tow. We love our folding bikes.....**



BEFORE WE CAN LEAVE HOME WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE MUNDANE DETAILS

- * Set up bills for automatic payment
- * Make arrangements about your mail
- * Stop paper, garbage, deliveries
- * Make arrangements for care of houseplants, “goldfish and turtles”, garden watering
- * Empty refrigerator if possible, turn it off and block the doors open
- * Put hot water on vacation hold
- * Unplug remotely controlled appliances so they don’t come on unexpectedly
- * Transfer all dated foods from cupboards to coach
- * Remove from coach any appliances not used often, i.e., rice cooker, French press
- * Take a notebook for diary, gas log (date of fill-up, location, amount, running total and cumulative mileage)
- * Arrange for medicine and vitamins to continue your usual regimen
- * Be sure to have sunscreen for any time of year
- * Take clothes for all seasons but we usually carry way too many
- * Have work clothes and beach shoes



WITH DETAILS OUT OF THE WAY, BACK TO GETTING YOURSELF READY

- ❖ Teamwork/agreement - give & take are required- from daily chores to bigger decisions about destinations & desires.
- ❖ Be patient, flexible, adaptable and honor your partner. We depend on each other as we are daily in new situations.
- ❖ Realize our uniqueness, attractiveness to strangers. The GMC is a celebrity so be open to curiosity, adoration, folks' need to share & to learn. Be willing to take the time. Some are potential owners.



*Examples of give
and take ...*



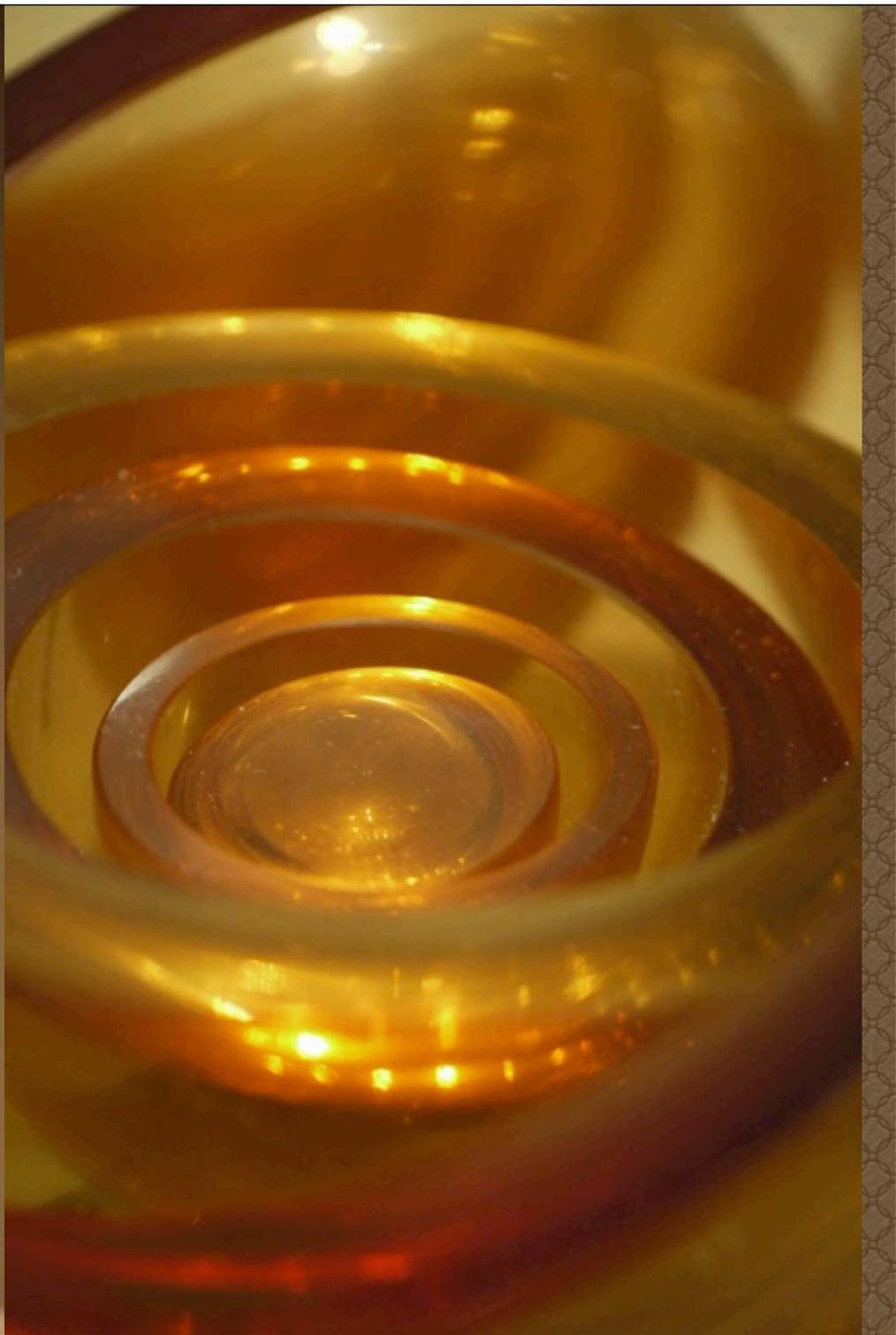
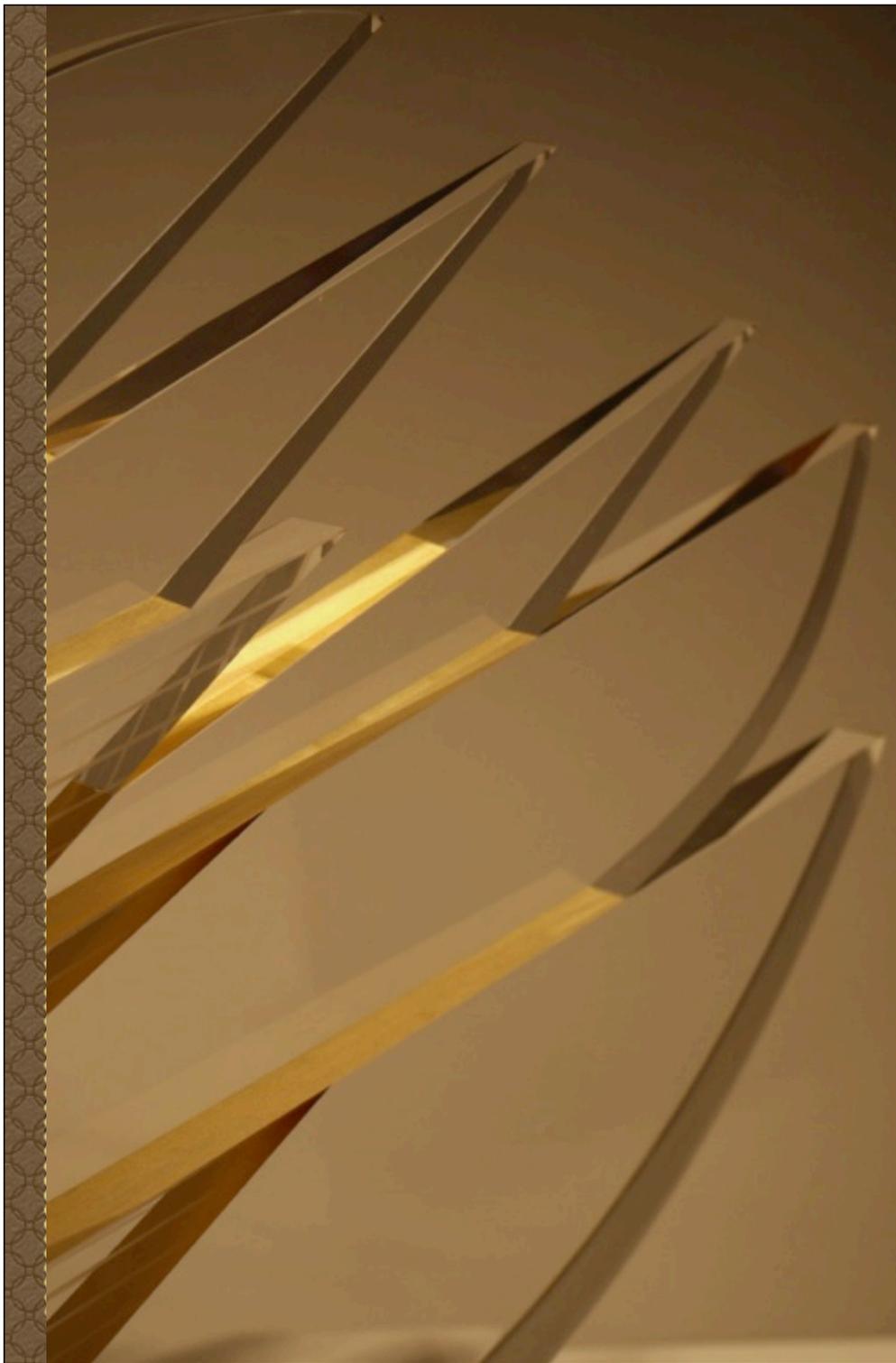


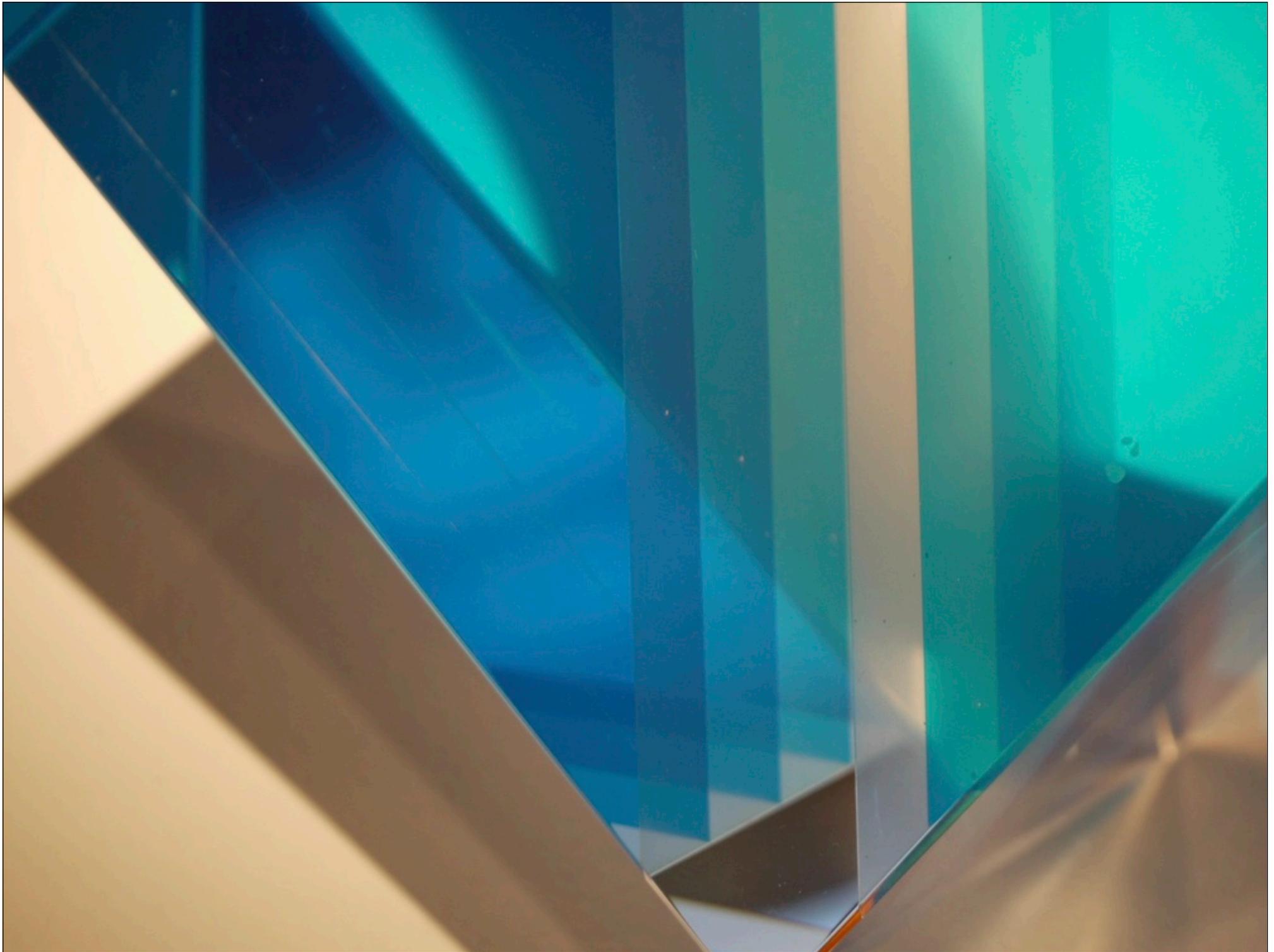
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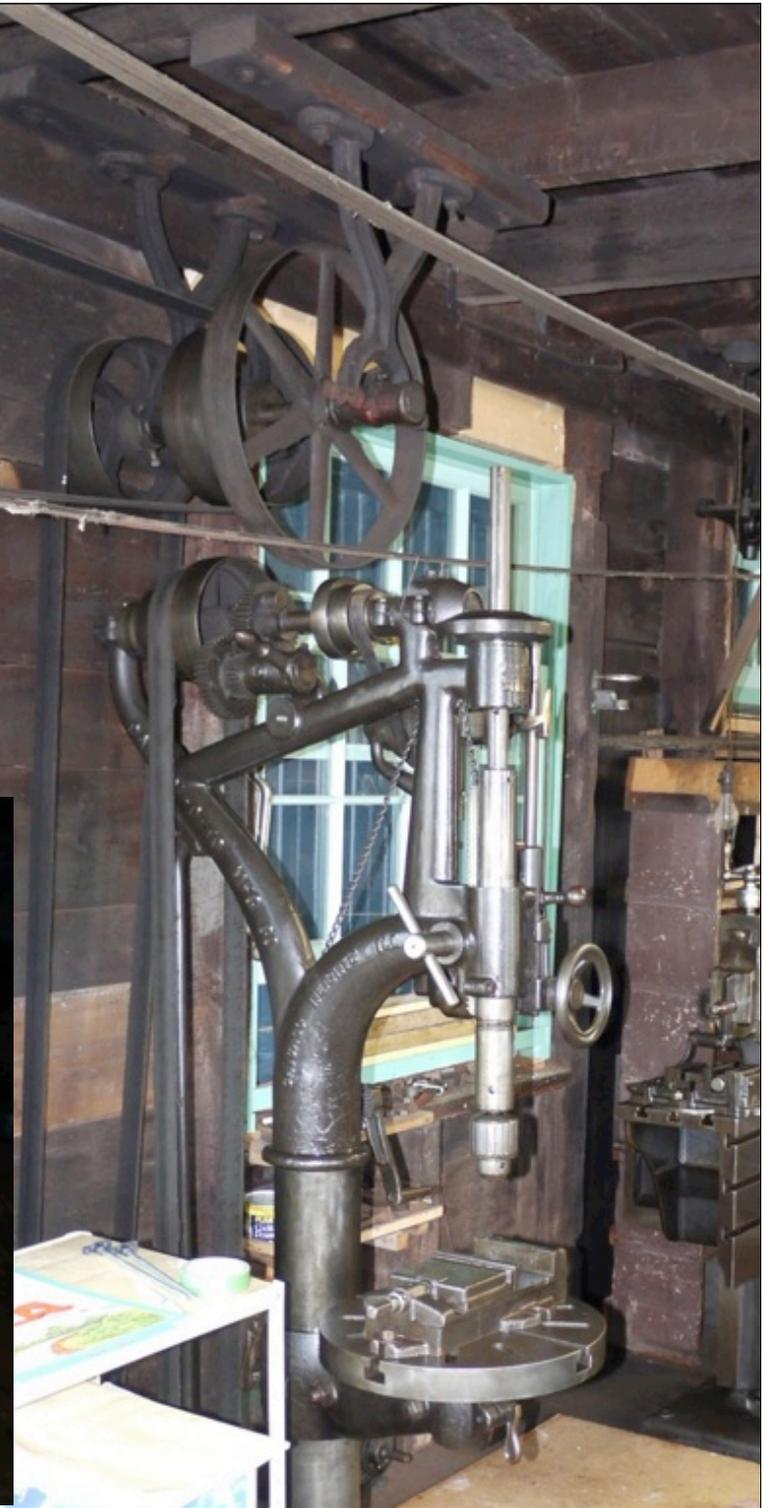
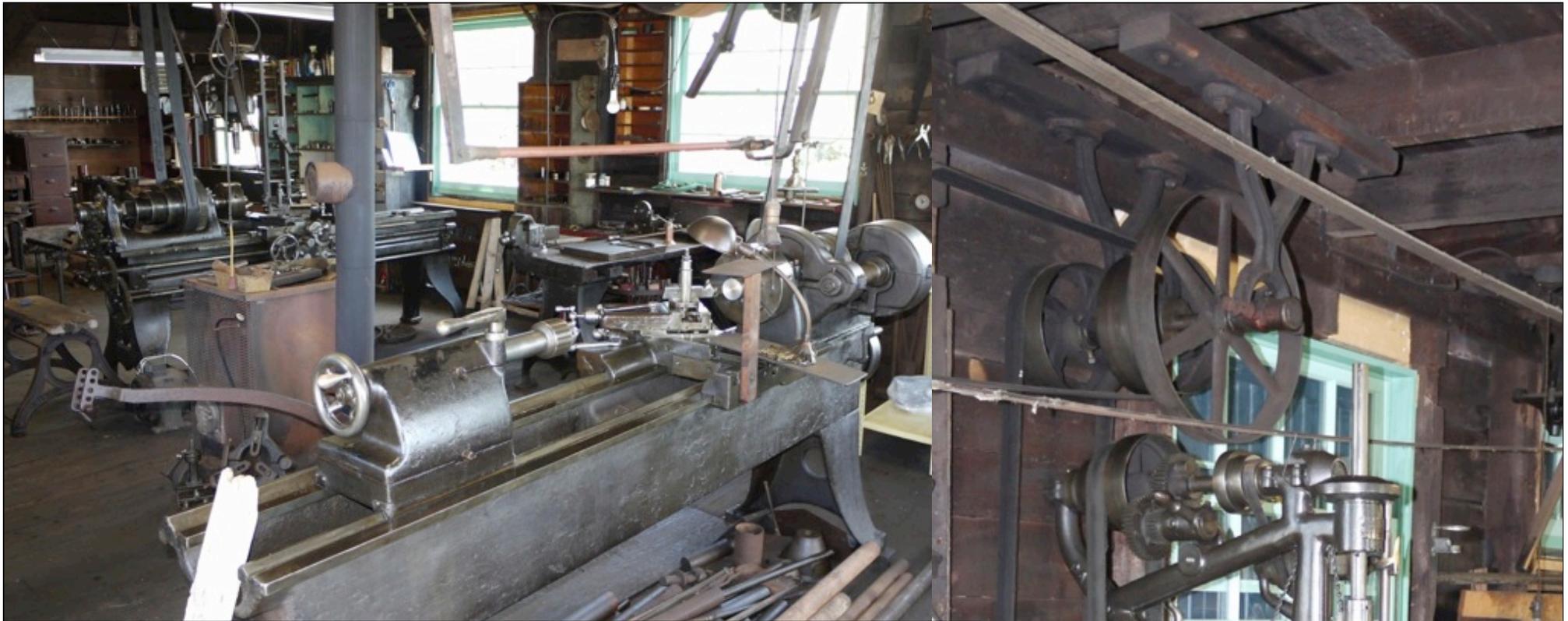












Yucky greasy stuff!

*Anne of Green Gables is
much more my thing*





*No matter where you go,
someone always wants to talk
GMC*



Even potential future owners while touring a Frank Lloyd Wright house



And brand new GMC owners in the strangest places



JUST FOR FUN, HERE IS WHAT IT IS LIKE TO
REVISIT MARRIED STUDENT HOUSING
NEARLY 50 YEARS LATER!



*Amherst, MA, 1962 and
2010, same parking spot*

BACK TO PREPARING THE COACH....

I DON'T FEEL SAFE CLIMBING AROUND ON TOP ANYMORE SO WE REMOVED THE POD, LADDER AND RAILS. THAT LEFT THE QUESTION OF WHERE CAN WE PUT ALL THE OUTDOOR "STUFF"?

I designed and built a slick rack that fits over the spare tire and holds the folding bikes horizontally by their seat tubes



TOP VIEW

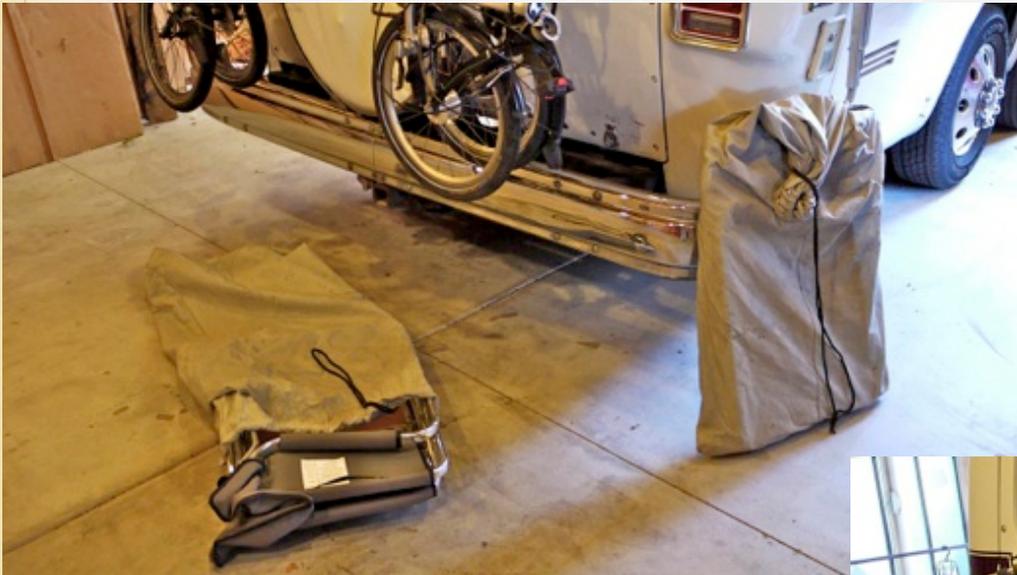


TAKES LESS THAN A MINUTE TO MOUNT OR
DISMOUNT THE BIKES

Built in cable locks keep them secure



THE FOLDING CHAIRS FIT INTO BAGS AND
THEY GO ON NEXT, BEHIND THE BIKES



FINALLY, THE FOLDING TABLE AND BBQ.
EVERYTHING CAN BE REACHED FROM THE
GROUND



ANOTHER GOOD ADDITION



Auto satellite dishes like this Winegard Roadtrip unit are great time savers. They can be mounted either on the ladder or on the roof. If you park under trees you want to be able to remove the unit and take to where there is a clear view of the southern sky. Climbing to get to it is a pain.

So, I designed and built a vertical mount that allows it to lock up for normal use or slide down for easy removal from the ground. Extension cables plug into receptacles installed through the back wall of the coach.

LAST THING TO TALK ABOUT IS THE DINING TABLE

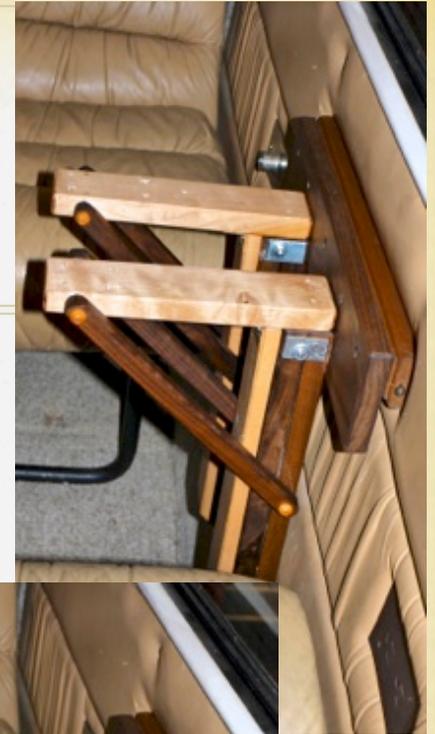
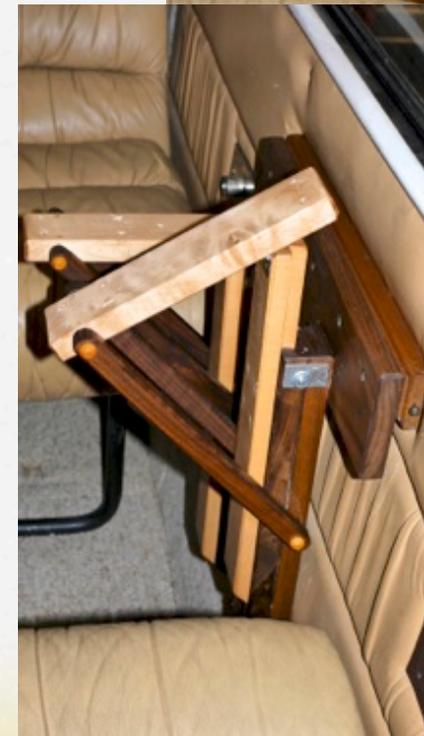
- ✿ In our coach the large kitchen and dinette are forward, the seating area is in the rear lounge, so no couch up front
- ✿ The table was large and awkward to set up and take down, and it was intimidating for guests coming in
- ✿ We shortened it by 3” so two people can now pass each other when one is standing at the kitchen counter
- ✿ And, I designed an articulating hinge so the table can be set up or self-stored out of the way against the wall in a few seconds.

SELF STORING TABLE



HINGE DETAIL

It is done with a sliding dovetail vertical member to mount the hinge so it always stays against the wall and levers to articulate the mounted table to sit on the floor when stored



FINAL THOUGHTS

- * “Conventional wisdom” on the GMC net and in many of our seminars is that attention should first be given to the heavy, dirty, ugly mechanical stuff before attacking the interior. We think that is backward.
- * How many times have we heard the story of someone who put so much time and money into fixing the mechanicals that they never used the coach, grew tired of it and sold it without ever going anywhere. Have you ever heard of someone getting discouraged while fixing up the interior? Not often. Most people become energized as they see their home on the road become a beautiful place in which they take great pride.
- * The simple fact is that nearly any competent mechanic can do the common mechanical work on a GMC so that is easy to farm out if you run out of energy or patience. But it is hard to farm out a lot of the interior stuff.
- * **We all purchased our coaches with the idea of using them for a new adventure, and we think that is a lot better than having them up on jacks and all greasy!**



NOW LETS HEAR WHAT
ALL OF YOU THINK
ARE THE MOST
IMPORTANT CHANGES
YOU HAVE MADE FOR
FUN LONG DISTANCE
TRAVEL