

Getting ship-shape for the road

By Jim Cornelius
News Editor

Sometimes, if you want something first-class and custom-built, you're best off doing the job yourself. That's a viable option — if you're Mark Yinger and you have the skill set, the temperament, and a brother willing to lend a hand.

Mark converted a Mercedes van into a quality camping vehicle in 2017, and he and his brother Mike finished one for Mike during Sisters' long winter.

"We wanted a van that was pretty simple and built to a different standard than the typical RV," Mark explained.

When he says "different standard," he's talking about nautical-grade quality. He comes by that kind of standard honestly. After retiring from a career in mineral exploration, he worked in a boatyard for five years, and built a 38-foot sailboat. The rigid demands of seaworthy construction come naturally.

"When you're in a boat, your life depends on it," he said.

The Yingers lined the van with alderwood plywood and used maple for finish veneer, and they used quarter-sawn white oak paneling — "the highest grade white oak you can buy." They installed marine-grade stoves,

adjustable for level, and a German-designed heating system and a bathroom. And everything is fit and finished with the skill of dedicated craftsmen.

They reckon that they put about \$15,000 in materials into the latest project.

They worked through the long, hard winter in a space at Sisters Car Connection, and took full advantage of Sisters' amenities.

"Lutton's Hardware ... was an amazing supplier of goods," Mark said. They put up with a million trips over there. They're a really good hardware store and we're happy to have them."

Coffee and breakfast at Angeline's Bakery & Café was something of a ritual, as was lunch at Sno-Cap or at Sisters Meat & Smokehouse. And Mike said that Life.Love. Yoga. was an essential contributor to his well-being.

The brothers took both vans down to Ruby Lake Wildlife Refuge in northeast Nevada to fish for big trout and hit the road through the mountain west. Mark said they get lots of comments wherever they go from people who are intrigued by the quality and ingenuity on display in



PHOTO BY JIM CORNELIUS

Mark Yinger in his 2007 van, crafted with skill and attention to detail.

their custom vans.

The brothers aren't looking to start a business. And yet...

"Mike and I have thought of building these for others," Mark said. "Each would be tailored to the customer. We had two young guys just happen to come by while we were working on Mike's and

they made it clear they would love to do this kind of work. I am sure there are talented young guys in Sisters that I could train up and then let them take it over."

There's surely a market there — for those who want a van that is absolutely ship-shape for the road.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Everything in the Mercedes van was crafted of the finest materials.

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