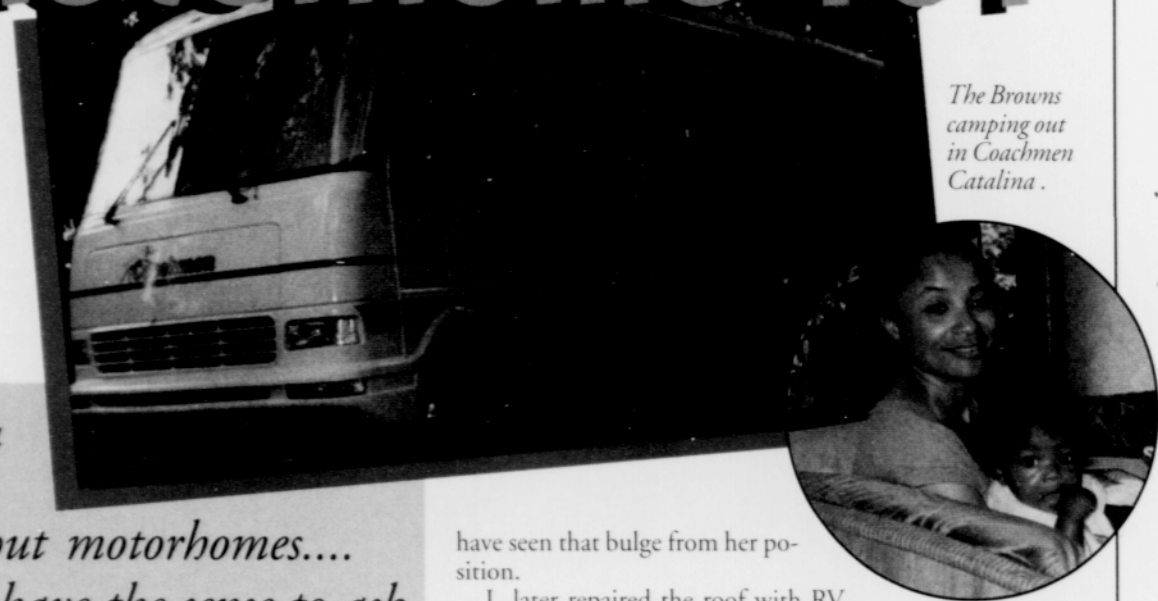


# Motorhome 101



*The Browns  
camping out  
in Coachmen  
Catalina.*

*What you  
need to  
know about motorhomes....  
but don't have the sense to ask*

*By Warren Brown*

You learn many things on motorhome trips, like humility. Here are two examples culled from our recent 5,300-mile trip through the South and Central United States in a 1998 Coachmen Catalina Class A motorhome.

## **The Learning Tree**

Dateline: Chincoteague Island, Va. (Tom's Cove RV Camp). I should've backed in. Perhaps, I shouldn't have tried to park there at all. What the hell? I should've missed that tree limb. It scraped the top-left edge of the motorhome, took off some of the rubber covering, dented the top-left-side molding, scratched the slide-out room's vinyl roof cover, and gave me a big headache. Exactly not the way to start an RV trip.

The damage was relatively minor--nothing functionally ruined. But I felt a little down--and a lot stupid. I wanted to blame somebody. My wife, Mary Anne, seemed the easiest target. RVing is at least a two-person affair--someone to pilot the vehicle, someone to navigate.

The navigator is all-important, especially when it comes to driving the big, 33-foot-long Coachman Catalina motorhome.

When docking--that is, parking at the campsite--it's the navigator's job to safely guide the pilot into position, something Mary Anne has done with aplomb on numerous occasions. This wasn't one of them.

After finding another camping spot, I went back to examine the offending tree limb. The thing was a botanical optical illusion. From the rear, where Mary Anne was standing and looking up, the limb appeared to rise high enough to provide clearance for the 12-ft.-high Catalina.

But when I walked around to the front of the tree limb, I saw the problem--a humongous bulge, angled downward, still wearing some of the residue of RV roof rubber. Mary Anne couldn't

have seen that bulge from her position.

I later repaired the roof with RV patching materials. But there was some other patching to do.

Mary Anne knew I had pointed a mental finger at her, even though I kept my mouth shut. "I should've never tried parking in that spot," I said. "Either that, or that tree limb should have been higher and turned the other way," she said.

I should've listened to her when she advised me, as soon as we entered the camp, to park in a clearing--sans trees, sans overhangs.

## **The Royal Flush**

There were warning signs. The sewage outlet hose slipped off twice. Each time it was no big deal. The stuff that flowed out was water from the soapy water holding tank. Motorhomes are equipped with three holding tanks: A fresh-water holding tank for showers, dish-cleaning and toilet flushes; a soapy water tank to handle runoff from the bathroom shower stall and sink, and from the kitchen sink and a third tank to hold toilet waste.

It is very important to dump the tanks in proper sequence: Dump the toilet tank first. Dump the soapy water tank second. Because waste from both tanks flow from the motorhome through the same hose, the soapy water washes away the stench of the toilet water. The fresh water is released through a separate outlet. Are you with me?

I could have easily fixed the slipping-hose problem. Mary Anne suggested buying a new hose with a tighter clamp. I agreed, but did nothing.

That's how I got the royal flush. Before returning the motorhome to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, which arranged the vehicle loan, I wanted to make sure all tanks were empty. So, I took the thing to a public dumping station in Fairfax County, Va.

I put the sewage outlet hose into the dump station's receptacle. I pulled the toilet waste valve. The sewage hose began to tremble and rumble.

It broke loose from the motorhome's sewage pipe. I was baptized! And in the process, I was born again. I swear, the next time, I'm going to listen to that woman.

VERY SERIOUS.

SERIOUS.




## THE 1998 NAVIGATOR

- Standard 5.4-liter V-8 engine
- Standard load-leveling suspension systems
- Standard integrated illuminated running boards
- Standard leather seating surfaces
- Standard second-row bucket seats with center console
- Burl wood interior-trim accents
- Duplicate steering wheel controls (audio and climate)
- Six-way power passenger's seat
- Memory power driver's seat and side mirrors



LINCOLN.

WHAT A LUXURY [  ] SHOULD BE.