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issue
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JEEP CAMPING

through the decades



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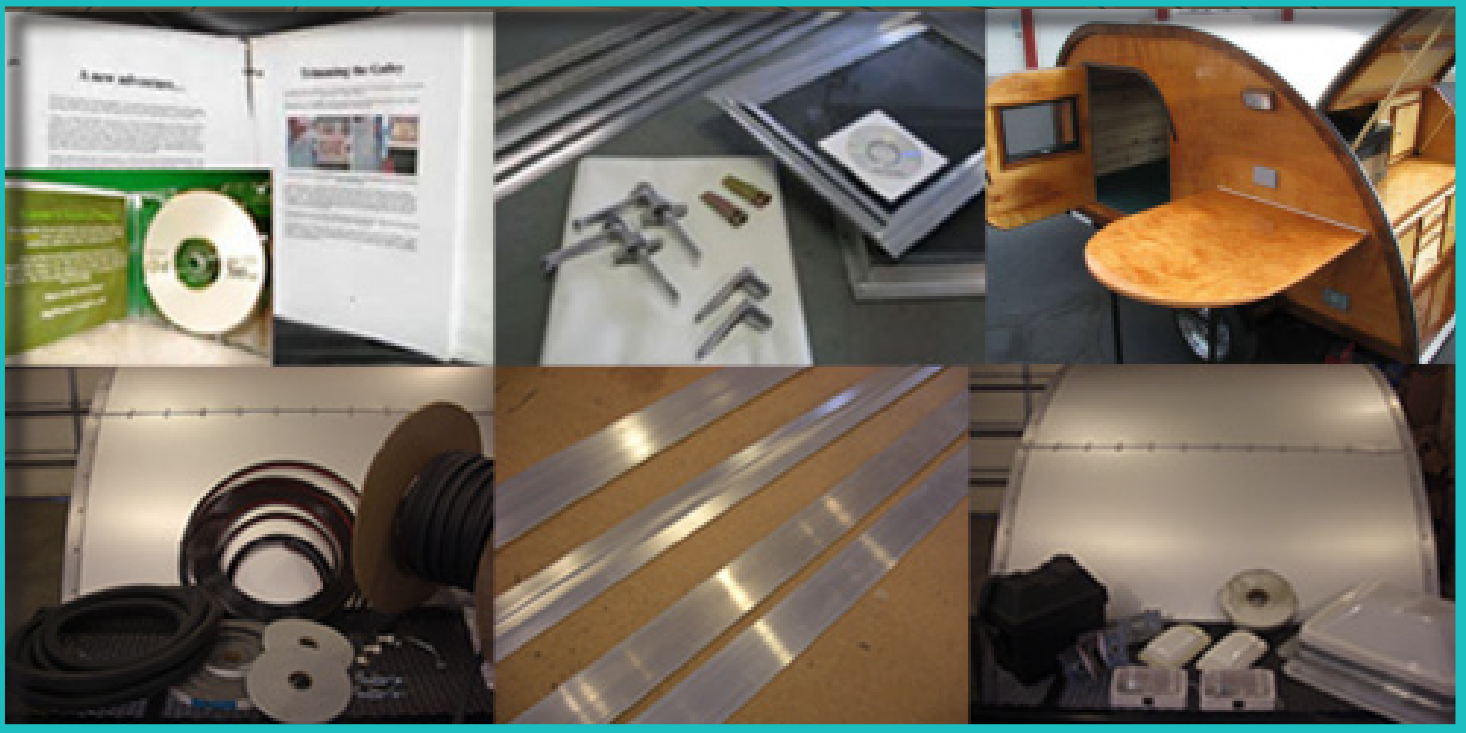
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M A G A Z I N E

Vol. 3 No. 6

Special Jeep Issue 2015

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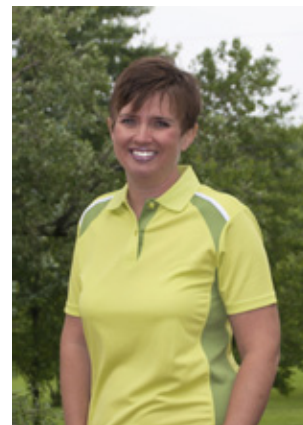
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Cool Tears & Jeeps

This is a very special issue of Cool Tears & Tiny Campers magazine as you can see by the cover. At the beginning of December, we will produce the November/December issue of Cool Tears and it will contain all the usual and broad-ranging coverage of teardrop camping that you have come to expect from us.

Several months ago it was brought to my attention the close relationship that the teardrop industry has with the Jeep industry. As I dug a little deeper into the idea of a Special Issue dedicated to the off-road Jeep camping lifestyle, I was amazed at the passionate level Jeepers have towards camping. It has been a joy to chat with several people who are devoted to advancing industry standards on campers that are pulled with Jeeps.

The cover story is a great reminder that Jeep camping has been and continues to be a family affair. A son's memories of off-roading with his parents turned into a passion for restoring the Jeep and teardrop that helped create those memories. But in all honesty, the Jeep and camper are just material items...at the heart of the story is a father's love. So as you delve into this issue, keep in mind the camping is fun but the memories created with family will last lifetimes.

Until next time...enjoy every sunrise!

SARAH TUCKER

Editor

Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine™
sarah@cooltears.com



Take the trip

Front Range Gear is
ready to outfit your
next great adventure

by Trevor Martensen

My love for the outdoors came at an early age. I grew up near the Maquoketa River in Monticello, Iowa. And my family had a cabin in Delhi, Iowa right on the Maquoketa. We practically lived outdoors - it was such a great time.



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*A friend once said,
If you enjoy what you do, you never have to work a day in your life.*

I am really fortunate that my boys, Ethan 13 and Evan 11, enjoy the outdoors as much as I did. We spend a lot of time fishing, hiking and taking the kayaks out for a day trip.

We do a lot of local camping in our free time. We pack up our vintage Toyota Land Cruiser “Troopy” and take smaller camping trips to our favorite lake on the weekends. It’s outfitted with a Tepui roof top tent that sparks a lot of conversation with fellow campers as we set up our site. People are intrigued and it’s special. It also has a FoxWing awning which allows us to get out from under the sun, sit and socialize with friends. Also, in the back of my troopy sits an 82 quart ARB refrigerator/freezer, which is great because we don’t have to mess with coolers and ice on longer trips. With the dual battery system, we are pretty self-sufficient and comfortable at the same time.



We do a variety of cooking on our trips. We are lucky here in Iowa, stoking up smoky campfires in the cool evenings is the best. And we love our s’mores! We’ve also been introduced to pudgy pies by some fellow roof top tent camping buddies of ours. It’s this time of relaxation, making new friends, sharing stories and just being together without schedules and racing everywhere that makes it so great.

In March of this year I decided to make Front Range Gear a reality. It was my love for the outdoors and this idea of helping others “outfit their next adventure” that gave me the push to go for it. Take the trip – that’s my motto. We have kayaks, food storage, roof top tents, off road vehicle accessories, numerous camping and hiking supplies. And most recently, Front Range Gear is also offering camping trailers - built right here in Iowa. Units start at 5’x8’ packed with storage, drop down cabinets, slide-out refrigerators and water storage. They can then be outfitted with a roof top tent. These units are great for the day hiker who wants





a base camp or an off road enthusiast who takes off four wheeling during the day. We also offer a sweet little tear drop trailer by Go Little Guy – we are excited to be on board with them with various models to choose from it makes a great compliment to our business.

We started simply in our four stall garage with kayaks lining the walls and will be moving into a more finished building that will house a nice little showroom for our little campers and tear drops and on the walls will be kayaks and the other products that we will be offering. My family and I are truly excited to be able to offer these services and products so if you're ever in the area of Monticello Iowa, stop in, have a coffee, and look at a tear drop or just say hi.





JEEP CAMPING

through the decades

by **Larry Shank**

In 1949, after reading about the roadless Southwest in National Geographic magazine, my folks took their first trip to the area in a Buick convertible. After being endlessly stuck in the sandy dirt roads, they bought a used red 1946 CJ-2A Jeep in 1950. Since they needed more room for supplies on the extensive backcountry trips, they bought a 1947 Kenskill teardrop trailer in 1952. And the following year, they traded up to the new Universal Jeep CJ-3B (seen above as Mom sets up camp in Monument Valley that summer.)

On the first trip with the teardrop in 1952, the red Jeep got stuck in a flash flood and quicksand on the Paria River in Utah. This became my favorite “Old Red Jeep Story” that Dad loved telling me as I grew up. The CJ-2A never fully recovered from that adventure (the drive train was equal parts fine sand, water and 90wt. oil.)

So in the spring of 1953 Dad bought the brand new green Jeep CJ-3B from Barney Motors in Burbank, CA.

I was born in 1954, but had to stay at home with Grandma during my folks’ trip in 1955. The following year, they bought a surplus army raft and a new 1956 Johnson outboard motor (we still have both) and they took me on my first camping/river trip at 18 months old.

Dad added lots of accessories and weight to the rig, and he soon grew tired of long slow runs in 2nd gear. He was a Lockheed engineer and he loved a mechanical/electrical challenge. Fortunately, this was 1955 and Chevrolet had just introduced their small block 265 ci V8 engine. Dad bought a new engine, in a crate, in late 1956. Dad and his friends in the Lockheed machine shop designed an engine/transmission adapter prototype out of wood, built the adapter out of steel, and installed it that

year. To complete the electrical part of the challenge, he maintained the Jeep’s 6-volt system in parallel with the Chevrolet 12-volt system. Two 6-volt batteries and several interfacing relays, created a system that was a maze to everyone except Dad.

The new Jeep and teardrop received continual updates and “improvements” as Dad challenged them on yearly trips to the Southwestern desert. Notable changes to the teardrop included: steel runners on the undercarriage, independent 12-volt battery and electric





lights, Sears tent modified to attach to the galley area, extended trailer tongue (to mount the outboard motor), new axle with larger wheels and tires, trailer brakes, reinforced tongue and axle (after repeated breaks and bends), and roof rack to carry the rubber raft or the aluminum boat he bought in 1961 (we still have it too).

The Jeep received more than its share of changes. It already had the Koenig PTO winch when it was purchased. Along with the V8, additions over the years included: engine driven air compressor, evaporative «air conditioner» (with straw covered windshield vent

and water drip feed), bumper mounted driving light (that steered with the front wheels), many additional gauges, passenger-side fuel tank, mods to the front grille to accommodate a larger radiator, 11' brakes, electric wipers and a Warn 30% overdrive. Dad initially extended the bed by dropping the tailgate. However, in the early 60's, he fabricated his own permanent extension. He bought a hard top from Sears and added an extra section to fit the longer body (unfortunately the top did not survive past the 90s).

Dad's rig became somewhat of a fixture both in the neighborhood in Glendale and in the backcountry of Arizona and Utah in the 50's, 60's and 70's. During our backcountry travels, Dad met several of the old guides and characters of the southwest. They were always intrigued with Dad's spirit of adventure (and the fact that he took his infant son into the most remote areas of the 48 states). They gave him directions that led us into Canyonlands, Monument Valley, Glen Canyon, and all over the Indian Country/Four Corners region.

Dad always needed to see what was over the next hill. He always took a vote before going over that hill, and he always rejected the group consensus to head back.

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We followed a lot of Jeep and wagon tracks to nowhere, but we discovered some great scenery and had unique adventures along the way. We had enough gas, food and water for about 5 days. This allowed Dad to get good and lost several times. Mom was often scared to death, but fortunately, I didn't know any better -- it was just fun!

The couple in the back of the Jeep in 1953 in Monument Valley is Frank and Louise (my folks best friends). This was Dad's favorite area to camp and explore. You could pull off the road, wagon track or goat path and camp anywhere you wanted. Mom was a stickler for a clean camp. She even picked up her cigarette butts when we left.

On a later trip in 1955, in almost the same places, they encountered the filming of a classic John Wayne / John Ford western movie, *The Searchers*. They returned to their campsite of the night before to find that Hollywood had taken over their site and Monument Valley in general. Those were the "good old days". Today camping is no longer allowed in the Valley. There is now the designated camp with all the "improvements," on the rim next to the Visitors Center. Dad was very concerned when that Visitors Center was built -- it spelled the end of Valley camping and free exploration of the area, and the invasion of Tourism. He was right.

Many of Mom and Dad's friends joined us on these trips. Most of them have remained close to this day, partly I believe, because of the unique bond these expeditions created. This photo shows a group ready for a trip on the Yampa River in Dinosaur National Park in 1956. Mom is on the left, Dad on the right, and me on the step.

The adventures continued until our last trip with the complete rig in the 80's. Dad continued to use his Jeep around town, but its age (and Mom and Dad's) ended



the long trips to the Southwest. However, my folks did continue to use the teardrop behind their Oldsmobile station wagon into the early 90's. My wife Pam and I took them on our last family trip with the trailer (behind my 1984 Jeep Scrambler) in 1992.

The Jeep got very little use into the mid 90's. Dad aged dramatically and passed away in 2001. Mom remained alert and active until she passed in 2003.

The restoration process started in 2002 with



the teardrop. The parts and resources were available from the Teardrop Trailer Fix-It Shop. It needed a new axle, wheels, tires and fenders, plus paint and lots of TLC. That was the easy job.

The Jeep project was started April of 2005 and is now practically done. It's not 100% like it was in its prime, but it's pretty close. It looks more complete with the Willys logos highlighted and the tailgate stencil applied. A roll bar was found at a recycler's and it was painted and installed. See a left side view of the rear body extension.

Some parts and accessories were completely worn out and other custom mods (like the 6volt/12volt system) were almost impossible to re-create. Plus, many of the parts Dad used in his modifications were not stock or well documented. I spent many hours of research determining current replacements (the brake system and electrical systems were the most time consuming). However, it has been restored in the spirit of Dads original. He (the Jeep) has new paint, wiring, seats, tires, brakes, 12-volt electrics, exhaust, radiator, etc.



Take a closer look at the dashboard (above) with the evaporative cooler and added gauges. The cooler was simple -- Dad just pumped water to the tube on the top and it flowed down through the straw. A vent in the windshield in front of the cooler blew air through the straw and you got wet. It worked great at 35+ MPH but was rough on the gauges, which also got wet. Since Dad was an engineer, so the first gauges (right to left) are aircraft surplus compass, altimeter and inclinometer (nose up/down). The next one was 12-volt amps and the standard gauges. Left to right: engine manifold vacuum, tachometer (belt driven from the generator) and «timing gauge.» (The timing could be adjusted to accommodate poor quality fuel. This was a fuel gauge adapted to monitor timing advanced or retarded from spec. There was a small «adjustment wheel» below the dash to adjust the timing as you drove.)

The engine and the T90 transmission were rebuilt about 1980, with very few miles driven since, and they seem to be in good shape. I cleaned the differentials and have flushed/changed all 90wt. oils three times. Hopefully the drive train is fairly healthy -- time will tell. The only issue so far was a drive train shudder on



startup from a stop, which is 90% reduced now due to new U-joints, new springs, and new motor and transmission mounts. The clutch is probably next for scrutiny.

The wheel bearings were inspected and repacked by a professional shop. The speedo cable broke as a result of the speedometer failing and locking up -- a new speedo from Walcks is installed and working perfectly. It looks like the transfer case intermediate gear/bearings may need servicing soon, due to the characteristic «growl» or «rumble». The entire trans/transfer/overdrive will come out for a full inspection.

The final detail will be an appropriate sun top. There is not a big hurry on this one. I have all of the Beachwood Canvass info as a starting point. Since my wife Pam did such a great job on the seats (120K JPEG), we may try to do a top ourselves to match the extended body... we will see.

I finally drove the Jeep and Teardrop on the road together for the first time in 20 years, in April 2006. All was well! We pulled the aluminum boat out of storage, and took the complete setup to a large Central California Car Show on April 23. We got quite a response from the people at the show. I was pleasantly surprised -- it looks like authentic 50s Jeeping/camping is «in.» We had the old pictures and documents from the 50s and 60s to show the history of the Jeep and trailer. Much appreciation was shown for the tradition of early 50s camping and offroading, with equipment as it was built and used then (not updated and overbuilt.)

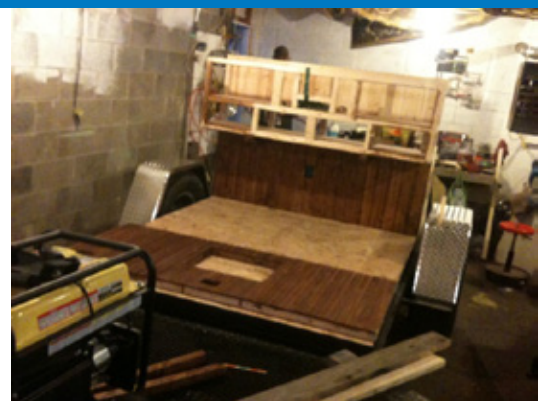
Neither the Jeep nor the teardrop will be 100% original or frame off restorations, and that was not the intent. Plenty of imperfections, or patina, remain on both to retain their character. Dad would have wanted it that way.



Built with Love, sweat and... teardrops

by Mark Cooper

My wife Bobbi and I have been together since high school. We bought our first home together and were blessed with two beautiful children, first a daughter and then a son. I always had dreams of building a teardrop camper, but the lack of time, money, and a dependable tow vehicle always put that dream on hold.



Fast forward 20 years. Bobbi and I both had worked very hard at improving our financial status and future. I secured a position with a good company and Bobbi continued to be a caring mother, along with working to help out as needed.

But then came a life hurdle. Our daughter had graduated and was expecting our first grandchild. Our son was preparing to graduate and pursue a college education. Everything seemed to be falling into place, until Bobbi and I both realized the inevitable, we were

about to be left with “an empty nest.” We both were scared and wondered if it might be possible that the children had been the “glue” that held us together all these years. Loving my wife and knowing in my heart that she loved me, I knew we needed to take action to continue our journey together. We needed some sort of common goal and recreation in our lives, but what?

After much thought we decided that one thing we had never been able to do together was to purchase a brand new vehicle. We both knew what we wanted and began our search for the perfect Jeep Wrangler. After several dealerships we found the Jeep we loved and a deal we felt comfortable with.

After purchasing the Jeep, we were still thinking of

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some sort of recreation that we could enjoy together. We both had enjoyed camping as children and then the light bulb went on again about building a teardrop of our own. But the original thoughts of a much less elaborate model would never do behind our brand new Jeep.

We began our build in December 2013. Due to the weather in Northern WV, we began the build in a small 8'x12' room in our basement. We built the entire shell and cabinetry along with other features including audio/video, electrical services and plumbing. Everything was "roughed in" and would require finishing. We had to design everything to be disassembled and moved to the garage for final assembly in the spring.

In the meantime, a frame was fabricated to specs by my sons high school metal working class at Brooke High School. Both new and recycled parts were used. Bobbi and I recycled and refinished 80% of the visible wood in the build.

After countless hours of fabricating we were ready to begin finishing and final assembly. The interior was all finished during assembly with different stains and washes and then treated with at least 3 coats of clear. The exterior faced us with a new challenge. We did not want to just stain or paint the 3/4" birch sides. So we decided to laminate the sides with aluminum sheeting. We used a contact cement



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and rolled the sheets into place and then trimmed them to the shape of the panels.

Of course we wanted to paint the camper to match the Jeep. Painting aluminum can be a very tedious process. We lightly sanded the surface, then etched the metal with an acid solution followed by self etching primer, regular prime, the base coat, and finally three coats of clear coat. We also wanted to include the "Oscar Mike" package to match our jeep. It also represents the Jeeps military roots as well as honoring our troops. I found sources online to help me with the graphics.

Now we were getting somewhere and it was starting to look like more than we had even dreamed of. We needed to decide on roofing and trim. For roofing we decided on pvc panels similar to what you would find in a tub surround. For trim and protection we turned to diamond plate panels and fenders. Aluminum RV trim and inserts were used on all seams to make it water tight. We welded a set of matching scissor jacks to the frame for leveling. We finished off by putting matching Jeep rims and tires on our new little home away from home.

With the compact size of the teardrop and the versatility of the Jeep, we wanted the camper to be campground friendly as well as usable "off the grid".

It is equipped with 30 amp service, 12 volt system as well as a 45 watt solar power system. It has both a fresh water hook up and a 12 gallon onboard storage tank with 12 volt pump to supply the sink and outdoor shower. It has a 20" flat screen television along with a Radio/DVD/CD entertainment center connected to surround sound speakers inside as well as in the kitchen area. We have a 5000btu A/C and a small electric fireplace to battle the elements. We have a pull out table under the cabinets inside for dining or playing games during inclement weather. In the near future we plan to add an onboard propane system with quick connects to supply our portable stove and an instant hot water heater. We jokingly tell everyone that is skeptical of its small size, that we have a kitchen, a living room, a dining room, a shower and a queen sized bedroom in there. They obviously don't believe us until we show them.

We completed our build in September 2014 just in time to go camping for Bobbi's birthday. We took it to Mohican Reservation Campgrounds in Loudonville, OH for one of their two annual Indian Pow-Wows. We also joined the camping club and return there often. The campground sits right on the Mohican River in the middle of Ohio's canoe capital. For our anniversary this year we took the camper to Niagra





Falls. In June we took it to Butler, Pa for the Bantam Heritage Jeep Festival. We belong to Heritage Region Jeep Alliance (HRJA.Org). They are a club that hosts a lot of trail riding and camping events throughout the year and does volunteer work at the festival. On the Fourth of July we were on our way to Zelienople, PA to participate in the parade with the club. When we arrived we realized that a couple of welds on the teardrops frame had broken and were forced to miss the parade and have it flat bedded home. I called Jay Scopel of Scopel's Mobile Welding. He came to our home and welded and reinforced everything so we would never have an issue again.

After talking with Sarah Tucker about including us in this issue of Cool Tears, we knew we needed the perfect spot to get a nice picture. The entire Loudonville area immediately came to mind and our camping club there entitled us to a free weekend in October. We took some beautiful pictures at the campground along the Mohican River. But we wanted something even better. As we thought, we remembered a grist mill we had visited on a previous trip.

The Wolf Creek Grist Mill sits along Rt. 3 in Loudonville, OH. It is a historical park that is run by a nonprofit organization.

Along with the operating grist mill, there are several other restored structures and equipment. There are picnic areas and they host several events throughout the year including a Wine Festival and an Oktoberfest. Upon arriving at the park, we were greeted by Dan and Brenda Roberts who are members and volunteers of the organization. We spoke with them and expressed our hopes of being able to take our Jeep and teardrop into the park to take pictures with the mill as our back drop. They were more than happy to allow us. Dan also let me know that not only was he considering a build of his own and would like to take a look at ours, but he is also an avid reader of Cool Tears.

Bobbi and I are always planning and looking forward to our next adventure together with our Jeep and teardrop. We have even discussed possibly traveling across country. We believe that we found the perfect recreation to enjoy together for the rest of our lives.





"We camp in our Hikers,
and we understand what is
needed to make a camper-
friendly teardrop trailer."

-Robert Reeve



With
Robert
Reeve

by Sarah Tucker

W

hen I began researching teardrop campers, I was



immediately intrigued with the guys at Hiker Trailer. These guys are passionate about camping, Jeeps and the off-road lifestyle. They have built their company on the ideal of helping others maximize the ease of off-road camping.



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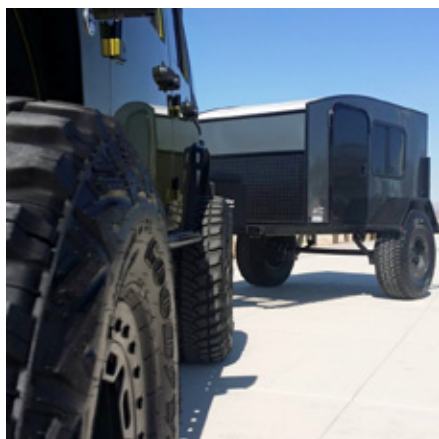
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How did Hiker Trailer get started?

Wes and I were both building traditional teardrops. Realizing that building traditional teardrops was going to be difficult with the competition of so many others building traditional style teardrop's (professional and home builders), I decided to end my business. I ended up selling my inventory to Wes. As we started talking, we developed a new prototype that would provide a more economical option for buyers, and remove some of the competition for us. Wes built the prototype, and I advertised it in Colorado. It sold in less than a day. We knew we had something good, so we teamed up and started Hiker Trailer.

What made Hiker Trailer decide to get into off-road trailers?

Hiker Trailer was receiving a lot of requests for an off-road version. We had already established a relationship with Randy Clary, because he is one of Hiker Trailers teardrop dealers. He specializes in building off-road chassis, so we worked with him to develop the chassis needed for our teardrop to create the Extreme Off-Road Hiker our customers had been asking for.

What are your most popular options or accessories?

We essentially design our teardrops as custom orders for each customer, so we have a number of options and accessories available to add to your trailer build. We have created everything from rooftop shark fishing platforms and rooftop tents to inside platform beds for extra storage.

The most popular requested options for our Extreme Off-Road Hiker teardrop include aluminum color choices, roof racks, custom wheels, and interior LED lighting.

What do you think sets your trailers apart from others?

The ability to customize the trailer to fit the individual customer's needs. Many of Hikers customers like to complete some of the smaller interior and exterior details themselves. So, we will build the trailer to their specification to help them prepare for the work they will do.

Hiker Trailer has more than 15 years of teardrop building experience. With this experience, we were able to design a new prototype to eliminate the issues we found to exist with traditional style teardrops. Our modern style teardrop is economical to purchase and in long-term maintenance. In addition, the chassis on the Extreme Off-Road teardrop is a superior design that allows for the rugged abuse of an expedition style off-road trailer.

Tell us about your favorite camping memory or trip.

Wes and I have different camping experiences and memories, but this is one of my favorite camping trips which seems appropriate.

In 2007, I led a group of Iowa Boy Scouts to Sylvan Lake Colorado for a week long trip of hiking, fishing, and camping. While we were there, a couple pulled in with a traditional teardrop, and it was the first one I had ever seen. As happens with me now, I approached

the couple and talked with them about their teardrop. That night, a severe storm hit the area, damaging our tents and site. We wished we had the protection of that teardrop. Throughout the rest of the trip, the other scout masters and I schemed about how we could build a trailer and use it for a future fundraiser. At the time, I was not thinking this would be a profession, but our fundraising advertisement brought in people wanting custom traditional teardrop trailers. That camping trip worked out pretty well for me!

How can our readers find out more about your campers or contact you to purchase a unit?

The best way for people to learn more about our Hiker Trailer teardrop trailers, including the Extreme Off-Road trailer, is to go to our web site at <http://www.hikertrailer.net>.

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