

LAND LINE

MAGAZINE

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Under fire

Random highway shootings lend darker meaning to phrases like defensive driving and 'travel safe.'

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Is the medical certification process a career-threatening mess?

Driven together

OOIDA members share story of fate and friendship

how to live large
in a tiny home



how to live large in a tiny home

Tiny homes – a part of the minimalist sustainable living movement – are growing in popularity. Basically, it's a social trend where people want a cleverly condensed living space. For trucking, that efficiency is really nothing new

By Staff Writers Sandi Soendker,
Greg Grisolano and Mark Schremmer

They are trucking's adventurers, lovers of the road, big milers and hard-working business professionals. The truck owners and operators who have invested in custom sleepers for their work trucks are masters at highway living, achieving both appeal and comfort by choosing the right in-cab power and necessities.

For this feature, *Land Line* staff talked to some OOIDA members who have taken to the road in tiny homes.

OOIDA Life Member

David Sweetman, Tallahassee, Fla., has been a professional driver since 1972 and leased to Horseless Carriage Carriers of Paterson, N.J., since 1984.

Dave transports new Ferrari, Maserati, vintage, show and collector cars to private owners, dealers and museums. Along with being responsible for tours and events and logistics for motor car events, shows and races, Dave is a regular contributing columnist for *Land Line*. Along with driving, he does all this from his rolling office on the road. Recently, he decided on a new Kenworth truck with a custom sleeper that is being built by ARI Legacy Sleepers in Shippshewana, Ind. Like Dave's other "Horseless" trucks, it will be green.

It won't be road-ready until September, but we asked Dave to share some of his in-cab preferences



Dave Sweetman's new truck will be like his others, Horseless Carriage green. To power this list of needs/wants, Dave ordered a marine-grade inverter and 7,500-watt Onan generator from ARI.

and what he chose to power the equipment and appliances he has spec'd.

He says he ordered a new Kenworth T680 and went with Kenworth's in-dash navigation system, rather than use an outside separate-type GPS. The premium stereo from Kenworth is a standard.

"I have ripped out the systems in years past, but don't do



Larry and Sarah Hendrix's 2017 KW T880 has a 260-inch custom sleeper. (Submitted photo)

At the back of the 260-inch tiny home is a 50-inch garage for their motorcycle. Sarah says Larry had to have it. (Submitted photo)



The spread in *Interior Design Showcase Magazine*? Nope, it's the Hendrix's new ARI custom living quarters. (Courtesy of ARI Legacy Custom Sleepers)

that anymore as their system has gotten better," he said.

"I have a phone in a cradle on the dash hooked to a BlueParrott wireless headset, even though the in-dash stereo has a Bluetooth option. I prefer the clarity and loudness of the earpiece and no background noise of the microphone."

In the custom sleeper, he wants a microwave, fridge/freezer, full shower and toilet, 32-inch television, Dish Network satellite, two-burner electric stove and roof air conditioning.

To power this list of needs and

wants, Dave ordered a marine-grade inverter and 7,500-watt Onan generator from ARI.

"I don't do a lot of gadgets, but I want a few doo-dads. Other than that, I'm all about the business," says the guy with five transponders mounted to his windshield.

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OODA Members

Larry and Sarah Hendrix, Fort Wayne, Ind., operate L&S Express and are leased to Southern Pride. They just bought a candy-apple red 2017 Kenworth T880 with a 260-inch custom sleeper that possibly overqualifies them for the moniker "tiny home." The custom sleeper built by ARI has something most minimalist structures do not – a garage.

"How big is it? It's big," says Sarah. The whole rig has a 410-inch wheelbase. The sleeper itself is 260 inches, which includes 210 inches of living space; the other 50 inches is a garage for their motorcycle.

Some of the features are microwave/convection oven, 36-inch flat screen television, an entertainment center, a refrigerator and freezer, office area and bathroom with a shower, plus kitchen and bathroom sinks and plenty of tile and design features.

"Both of us drive, and we've been doing it a long time. We started out saying 'we'd never be able to afford that' but here we are 20 years later on our fourth one. We haul airplane parts

Continued on **Page 72**

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LAND LINE 71

From Page 71

and jet engines,” says Sarah. “A lot of the time we are on the tarmac where we might sit for several days waiting for them to change out an engine.”

For the same reasons the tiny house movement appeals to many, for Larry and Sarah it’s all about practicality, comfort and the need for more time and freedom.

“We also have all RV hookups for city water and stuff so we can pull into an RV park and hook up,” she says. “We have our dogs with us (two toy poodles) and, well, we just built to our comfort.”

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OOIDA Life Member

Leo Wilkins of St. Charles, Mich., has been a truck driver for 47 years. His 2012 Peterbilt 389 has a 132-inch custom sleeper with all of the accommodations you would expect from a typical apartment. Built by ARI, it’s the third big sleeper he’s had since 1997.

The living quarters include a refrigerator and freezer, shower, toilet, hot and cold water, microwave and convection oven, two-burner glass top stove, a stainless steel sink, a full-size bed, double wardrobe closet, seven cabinets, five storage drawers, DIRECTV with in-motion satellite and a DVD player.

Everything is powered by a 5,500-watt generator.

“I like the fact that you can cook your own meals,” he said. “You don’t have to go to the truck stop. You can take your shower there. It’s completely self-containing. The only things I need at the truck stop are fuel and water. If you have a layover, it’s pretty convenient. Actually, it’s pretty convenient whenever.”

Wilkins is on the road about 260 days a year in his 2012 Peterbilt 389.

“When my wife Rita is with me, it’s like we’re on a constant vacation,” Wilkins said. “We’ll stay out three or four months and just



Leo and Rita Wilkins stay out for months, just traveling around the country in his 2012 Pete 389 with 132-inch ARI custom sleeper. (Submitted photo)



Leo Wilkins likes the fact he doesn’t have to rely on truck stops for anything but fuel and water. (Submitted photo)

travel around the country. The bed folds up into the wall, and then you have a little dinette set. It’s just really practical.”

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OOIDA Life Member

Ron Stears’ 2001 Peterbilt 379 takes the concept of “home away from home” to a new level. Nicknamed “RoadHouse,” the Vero Beach, Fla.-resident’s ride has a complete 2005 Forest River Ultra Lite travel trailer attached to the cab, rather than a standard sleeper.

Inside are all the creature comforts one would expect from a camper, including a full-size refrigerator,

shower, commode, 1,000-watt microwave and a television, all running off a 3,000-watt inverter.

“I had a 5,000-watt inverter that failed, but I didn’t like it anyway. The constant fan would kill the batteries,” he said. “I went down to a 3,000-watt inverter and haven’t had any problems.”

A car hauler running exclusively up and down the East Coast five days a week, Stears says unlike the “super sleepers” on other rigs, he’s still able to haul up to seven cars at a time since the camper weighs 3,000 pounds.

Stears said his experience with gel pack batteries hasn’t been great,



Inside Ron Stears' 2005 Forest River Ultra Lite Travel Trailer are all the basic comforts you'd expect. (Submitted photo)

so he prefers two 8D standard Caterpillar batteries with the inverter, at a cost of about \$160 apiece.

The camper has a propane furnace with a 20-pound cylinder that provides hot water for showers, as well as power to the refrigerator when the inverter isn't running, and heat on cold nights when it's time to sleep. Stears said he gets about two to three weeks of use on one tank during winter. When he shuts the truck off at night, it kicks over to propane.

"I eat out of that refrigerator for \$100 a week, and I eat good," he said.

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OOIDA Life Members

Bob and Linda Caffee began their over-the-road careers after their children left home for college. Linda says it took a couple of tries to "find their groove" but since 2000, that groove has been trucking. As team drivers, they haul expedited freight for Landstar Express America.

In June of 2014, *Land Line* Editor-at-Large John Bendel joined Bob and Linda Caffee to watch

their 2015 Freightliner Cascadia Evolution roll off the assembly line. From there it went to Bolt Custom Trucks in Fort Wayne, Ind., for its customized sleeper.

Last September, *NBC Nightly News* aired a TV feature on the pair and their innovative home on the road, which is interesting because even though the "Caffcadia" may have plenty of coolness, there is no TV.

"We don't need one; we have a computer," says Linda. "We want things that have dual use. It's the rule for living in a tiny house. Everything has its place; you cannot have clutter. I love collapsible everything, bowls, cups, etc. You can have a lot of stuff, but you've got to keep it organized. Stackables, small see-through containers. You have to when you live in 100 inches by 100 inches."

Linda and Bob say you learn to move around each other. "It's like the waltz when you are both getting dressed," she says. "You get to where you don't even think about it."

The Caffees have an Onan 7000-

Continued on Page 79

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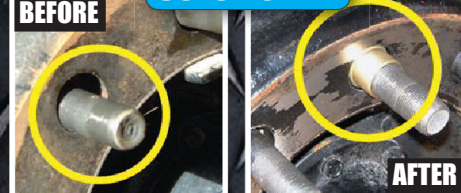
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how to live large in a tiny home

From Page 73

watt generator, shorepower, and a 6,000-watt sine wave inverter. At night, they plug in their electronics and charge them. "We are very connected. You have to be when you stay out as long as we do. I have a complete office.

"Sometimes we are out three months at a time. In the truck, a swarm of business is going on all the time. Going home to Silex, Mo., only four times a year actually makes your house time a vacation."

Linda says the "Caffcadia 2" really is their tiny home. One day she'll write a book about it. **LL**



Linda says it's like living in a soup bowl, and you have rules to make it work for two people. (Photo by 365trucking.com)
Bob and Linda stay out sometimes three months at a time. (Photo courtesy of Bolt Custom Trucks)

Power is knowledge

Wanting to upgrade your own tiny house with more power? Better have a list of what you want heading in.

By **Charlie Morasch**, contributing writer

The veteran driver had a question for these power experts.

Visiting a truck fleet, Xantrex inverters had described the benefits of upgrading the company's trucks from its 1,000-watt capability.

The driver, who happened to be bald, reached into his bunker and showed Xantrex representatives the device that had flummoxed his company truck's battery system.

An 1800-watt hair dryer.

"He said, 'my wife uses this every morning,'" said Steve Carlson, Xantrex sales manager. "He didn't understand why it wouldn't work. We were trying to get them to realize they need to offer a bigger inverter."

Carlson said Xantrex usually suggests truck owners sit down with authorized inverter installers and spec out the electric appliances and devices they expect to use by looking at the back of the product or owner's manuals.

"We usually say to add about 20 percent to that just to have a little overhead; then you choose the wattage of your inverter based on that

number," Carlson said. "We've found that the 1,800-watt range is kind of the sweet spot, so for many of the truck OEMs that we supply inverters to, they all use an 1,800-watt charge to work from. It works good in every application."

In the last few years, Carlson said, truck owners have seen batteries drained and inverters damaged by small appliances that require brief surges.

Microwaves, for instance, often have a soft-start capability that allows a cooking power of 700 watts to use about 1,100 to 1,200 watts.

"With some microwaves you can buy at Wal-Mart, the soft start capability has been removed to save money and that 1,200 watts for cooking starts out at 5,000 watts," Carlson said. "You want to make sure whatever inverter you buy has the capability to handle high loads because that split-second surge will really damage that inverter."

Inverters sold from truck stops or other sources often oversell the proper amount of power needed, Carlson said.

Inverters that carry the UL 458 listing, he said, have been tested

How much power (watts) do you need?

Here's a list of average wattage ratings for the most common appliances you might choose to use in your cab.

Water heater 40-gal.	5,000
Full electric range	4,500
Hair dryer	1,600
Toaster oven	1,225
Coffeemaker	1,050
Microwave	925
Refrigerator	725
26-inch LCD color TV	110
Laptop	25
VCR/DVD	25
Tablet	10-12

and approved for safety by the Underwriters Laboratories association.

Carlson said that bald trucker wound up using his hair dryer and a Xantrex inverter to thaw an engine component while in minus 30 degrees in North Dakota.

"That hair dryer saved him," Carlson said, with a laugh. **LL**