

SOI News



Summer 2006

Scamp Owners International

Volume VIII Number 3



Scamp 1 parked along Mexico 1 in Baja's Desert National Park - see page 16.

Photograph by K R. Cranson

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From the Editor's Desk

As you read this issue of the *SOI News*, I will either be on the road to Oregon or have already arrived there.



Rod Cranson
Editor

Checking out a basaltic lava flow on the Bahia de Concepcion (Bay of Conception) along the Sea of Cortez in Southern Baja, Mexico (see page 16).

Photograph by S.K. Cranson

My mission is to deliver as many copies of my book, *Crater Lake – Gem of the Cascades*, to Crater Lake National Park as possible. I hope to spend July and some of August in the park and the surrounding area promoting and selling copies. If you happen to be traveling in Oregon, maybe we will cross paths at Crater Lake, a spectacular national park and my favorite place in the world!

May and June have been really busy, but fascinating months for us. On April 28th we boarded a KLM airliner bound for Amsterdam. From there, we continued on to Zurich, Switzerland where we spent several days. Visiting this fascinating country with its picturesque little towns nestled in the valleys of the Alps was an exciting experience. It would certainly be easy to decide to return for a longer stay! Then, back to Amsterdam and on to Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, for 5 weeks. Although we didn't see a single Scamp in Kenya, I have written a short article about our visit to a tea farm (page 9).

Even more fascinating was the opportunity to spend a few days in Masai Mara, one of Kenya's famous game preserves. Lions, leopards, cheetahs, all kinds of antelopes, as well as a host of other wildlife can be visited in their natural habitat. Zoos in the U.S.

will never be the same again! On another occasion, we traveled to one of the national parks in the Great Rift Valley west of Nairobi. The rift valley is one of the most intriguing geological features on the Earth's surface, this results as a large portion of eastern Africa continues to separate from the rest of that continent. Because of this, there are many volcanoes and other volcanic features, one of my favorite kinds of places to visit.

While I was in Africa, a number of SOI members were starting on a trip to Alaska, organized and hosted by **Alice** and **Jack Vernezz**. This should be a great adventure, a much different kind of ScampCamp. Alice has indicated that she will be reporting on their trip and I hope to have a complete summary in the fall issue of the newsletter.

As I announced in the spring issue, this will be my last year as editor of the *SOI News* (see page 16). It is my hope that one, or more, SOI members will step-up and take on the Editor's job. SOI is a vital organization and continues to grow as more Scamp owners, and others with small fiberglass travel trailers, learn about our activities and the newsletter. If no one is found to serve as editor, the next issue of the *SOI News* will likely be the last one.

Rod

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Southwest Fiberglass Rally

The Southwest Fiberglass Rally (formerly the West Coast Scamp Camp) had its first and final gathering at Terrible's Lakeside in Pahrump, Nevada, March 30, 31 through April 2, 2006. It was the largest ever with 22 fiberglass trailers. Lance and Mary MacArthur brought their vintage Boler and Chris and Ken Hildner brought their Fiber Stream. The rest of the company was made up of Scamps and Casitas of various ages.

Ed and Gayle McDonald and Don and Marjorie Odenbach towed their 13 foot Scamp with their Honda Elements. Talk about cute. Once again, Pat and Arleen Heiman set up a telescope for star gazing. Carol Upton provided beautiful name tags and Joy Avila made up identifying signs for each site, took the group photo and made a copy for each trailer.

One of the interesting innovations at this year's gathering was a "Just Desserts" gathering rather than a traditional Pot Luck. And, if you liked chocolate, there was

plenty.

This southwest gathering will resume in 2007 under the auspices of The Desert Eggs somewhere in Arizona at a time to be determined later. More information will be published as soon as it is available.

Report by **Teddy Law**

Buffalo Roundup

**Ken and Kay Broman
Covington, WA**

We picked up our new 16 foot Scamp at Backus on August 1, 2005. Ken had retired the previous year and we were new to the RV world, so we pulled it down to Iowa to visit friends on the return trip and then headed for Yellowstone Park and home to Covington, Washington. Ken was happy since Kay refuses to sleep in a tent anymore. The air conditioner worked fine in western Nebraska and the heater worked fine in Yellowstone.

Our first big trip was in October when we went to Custer State Park in South Dakota. We made reservations at



*The SOI Bird asks:
"Have you been to an
interesting place that
other members would
enjoy learning about?"*



Participants gather for a group portrait at the Southwest Fiberglass Rally at Pahrump, Nevada. Photograph by Joy Avila

the Blue Bell campground in the park for 4 nights. A nice location with showers and heated bathrooms but no electric hookup. Our battery and the propane tanks served us well for the four days.

The reason we chose that location was the 12th Annual Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival. On Saturday we toured the park and saw wild burros, mountain goats, buffalo, pronghorn, deer, and prairie dogs. There are several Visitor Centers with nice displays and also a lookout tower atop Mount Coolidge. We went to Mount Rushmore and also to the Crazy Horse Memorial. In the evenings there were campfires with rangers telling about the park and the animals. On Sunday we went to the festival area where there was a pancake breakfast followed by arts and crafts for sale. Lots of buffalo related products.

On the morning of the roundup we were up before first light and drove to the viewing area. There we carried our lawn chairs and blankets up atop a hill and settled in to watch the buffalo roundup. Once a year they herd about 2000 buffalo to pens and sort, brand and decide which will be sold. The park likes to keep only 800 over the winter. The remainder are sold at auction for private herds and meat. The proceeds from the auction help support the park.

About 8:30 AM the herd comes rumbling over a distant hill. They are chased by horseback riders and pickup trucks. To see 2000 in a herd is impressive and it makes one wonder what it was like to see the million animal herds that used to stop trains as they passed by. Once the herd is in the corral, we were released from the viewing area and walked down the see the animals in the pens. The buffalo were sorted and run into chutes where they were inoculated

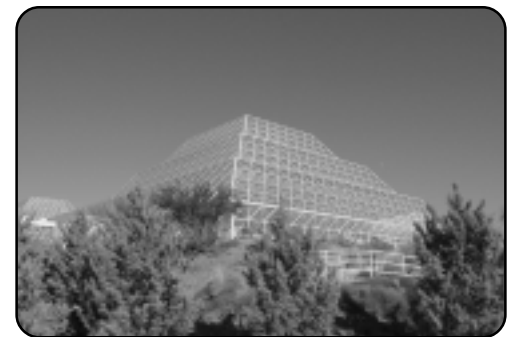
and branded. Some had radio collars installed. Then they were released to either a pen where they would return to the park or to a corral where they would wait for the auction. At noon we visited the tent where buffalo barbecue sandwiches were served.

The following morning we hooked up the Scamp and headed back to Washington. On the way, in Montana, we got caught in a snowstorm and had 4 inches of white stuff on the trailer the next morning. But farther west the snow disappeared and we had no problems getting home. We are impressed with the Scamp, Ken more than Kay, and are looking forward to trips in 2006. It pulls nicely behind our Chevy pickup.

We highly recommend the annual buffalo roundup at Custer State Park.

Biosphere 2

Some 30 miles north of Tucson a most unusual feature sets among the cactus and desert rocks. It looks like something out of a science fiction movie – a huge glass structure gleaming in the bright Arizona sun. Biosphere 2 was financed by Edward Bass, a Texas oil magnate, in an attempt to simulate 5 of the Earth's biomes (a self sustaining community of living or-



The massive glass structure of Biosphere 2 can be seen for miles across the Arizona desert.

all photographs by K R. Cranson



Two massive spherical domes like this one served as “lungs” for Biosphere 2 allowing the internal spaces to “breathe.”

ganisms), and originally was home for more than 3,000 species of plants from all parts of the world. Of course, Biosphere 1 is the Earth. The building covers over 3 acres in the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains and cost some \$150,000,000 to build in the late-1980s.

Upon completion in 1991, Biosphere 2 became home to 8 people (4 men and 4 women) who were sealed inside for an experiment planned to last 2 years. While the experiment did last the



A desert biome, one of the five established in Biosphere 2

full time planned, there were several problems. The oxygen level dropped and additional oxygen had to be pumped in. In addition, the crew was not able to produce enough food and more was

provided from outside Biosphere 2. A second crew of seven (4 men and 2 women) spent 6 months in the enclosure in 1994. This ended the original objective for the Biosphere 2. In 1995 the site was turned over to Columbia University to use as a research facility and many students spent a semester studying there.

While it is obvious that the interior is separated from the atmosphere by the steel and glass structure, it is also sealed off from the Earth below by a 500-ton welded stainless steel liner. The enclosure is nearly as long as two football fields and more than 90 feet high. It encloses 7,200,000 ft³ of space in the air tight facility. The 5 biomes include a rainforest, desert, savanna, marsh, and ocean. The plants to stock the various biomes were obtained from many locations around the world. A portion of the water for the 900,000 gallon “ocean” was transported to the site from the Pacific Ocean.

Biosphere 2 was open to the public and we visited during January, 2006. However, the future of the facility is uncertain at this time. Apparently, Biosphere 2 has been on the market and a recent report claims it has been sold to a development company. According to this report, the Fairfield Homes corporation will develop a planned community on some



This view of Biosphere 2 illustrates the massive amounts of glass necessary to enclose the structure.

1,600 acres around the site. What started as a dramatic experiment to study the Earth's atmosphere may end up being in the middle of a subdivision.
krc



Gulfport Volunteers

SOI Members, **Charles** and **Phyllis Bartley** of Fredericksburg, VA. spent the entire month of February (2006) in Gulfport, Mississippi. They worked with a Christian based organization in a rebuilding effort. As



Charles and Phyllis Bartley's Scamp camped in Gulfport.

the images show, they SCAMPED at the church where volunteers were based and fed. As usual, they were always the smallest camper but got the most attention – even over a \$750,000 Prevost one week!

The experience was priceless. Working with Christian volunteers from all over the United States was uplifting



*One of the projects that the Bartleys worked on during their stay in Gulfport.
Photographs by C. & P Bartley*

and they made life-long friends due to our common goal – to help others. The physical work was long hours, 6 am to 6 pm, but the rewards were lots of hugs and shared tears with volunteers

and the victims. The work to be done in the gulf will go on for years and they hope to return soon.

Great Parks

Saguaro National Park

The southern Arizona desert hosts a great variety of fascinating places to visit. One of the



most intriguing is Saguaro National Park near Tucson, composed of two units total-

ing more than 90,000 acres.



One of the giant saguaro cacti along a short nature trail near the visitor center.

Photographs by K.R. Cranson

Saguaro cactus is often described as the monarch of the southwest desert due to its size and "human-like" appearance. They live 150 years or more and may reach a height of 50 feet, the larg-

est cactus in the United States. Growth is very slow, a 15 year-old saguaro may be only a foot high, and their well-known "arms" develop only after the plant is 75 years old!

While both units have many saguaros,



Fish hook cactus along the Hugh Norris Trail.



Rocks in the park display interesting weathering patterns such as the rounding that has developed these granite boulders along the Hugh Norris Trail.

the east unit is the largest and features an aging saguaro forest along with a variety of other desert communities. Most of it is designated as wilderness. However, there is a paved one-way scenic road, the 8-mile Cactus Forest Drive, that starts at the visitor center near the west entrance. More exciting, though, is the 128 miles of trails that criss-cross desert terrain of the Rincon Mountains. Hiking one or more



A balancing granite boulder rests high above a forest of saguaro cacti along one of the many hiking trails.

of these routes is a good way to see some of the unusual birds and animals adopted to the Sonoran Desert that has an average rainfall of less than 12 inches a year.

A smaller west unit features the Red Hills Visitor Center with exhibits, audio-visual programs, books, maps, nature trails, and information about the park. There is also a 9-mile scenic drive, the Bajada Loop Drive, that begins at the visitor center and winds through a dense saguaro forest. Another 40 miles of hiking trails in the west unit of the Saguaro National Park traverse the Tucson Mountains. Both the Hugh Norris Trail and the King Canyon Trail leads to the Wasson Peak summit, at 1,428 meters (4,687 feet), the highest point in the park.

The Tucson Mountains represent a typical example of Arizona's Basin and Range Province. Although a complex geological area, part of the Tucson Mountains form a portion of a large caldera formed during a massive volcanic eruption (see Chiricahua National Monument in the 2006 Spring issue of the *SOI News*). Most interesting, however, are the fascinating erosional features that have developed in the granites along the Hugh Norris Trail.

Other than back country camps, there are no campgrounds in Saguaro National Park. However, camping is allowed at the Gilbert Ray Campground in the Tucson Mountain County Park adjacent to the west unit. There are 130 R.V. sites with 30 amp service at each site. There are modern restrooms, central water, and a dump station. Camping fees are \$20 per night for RVs on a first-come



Hiking is made easy on some of the trails as hundreds of cut granite steps have been placed on the steeper parts

basis. More information at Saguaro National Park, 3693 South Old Spanish Trail, Tucson, AZ, 85730, PH: 520-733-5100, or via E-mail: sagu_information@nps.gov. The park also has a web site at: www.nsp.gov/sagu.

SOI Profile

**Dick And Lois Hanson
Tucson, AZ**

Dick and Lois both have family living in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis, MN). While they were visiting family they decided to just take a look at the Scamp Factory in Backus, MN. How can you not fall in love with a cute little 13-footer



Dick and Lois pose at the Alaska welcome sign with their Scamp in the background.

Photographs by D. & L. Hanson

Scamp? They did look at a 5th wheel Scamp, but didn't have a tow vehicle to pull it with. So, on July 7th, 1999, they bought their first Scamp trailer and towed it home to Tucson, AZ. They added shelves, stenciling and special touches, and named it the *Arizona Egg*. Traveling, they put on 14,588 miles and 65 nights in the little 13-footer. But, they tired of making the bed back into a table and so sold it for about the same price that they paid for it. That is a good thing!

The Hanson's always wanted a 5th wheel Scamp and found one on the internet, a 2000 deluxe. It sounded just perfect, so lets go get it! Oops, it was in Munster, IN and it is the middle of

December. After rigging up the truck with a hitch, wiring, and plug, off they went. The weather was bad with temperatures at minus 10° below zero and a wind chill of 30° below zero. Before they could even look at the trailer, the snow had to be removed from around it. So, on December 22, 2001, with snow blowing and slippery roads they headed south with their "new" 5th wheel Scamp. When they crossed the New Mexico boarder the last bit of snow flew off the top of the Scamp's roof. What a perfect name for our new addition, *Snow Angel*.

Now, they can set out on adventures, the Rose Bowl Parade in California and the Balloon Festival in New Mexico. They spent a summer along the California and Oregon coasts. They traveled to Mexico for a relaxing week along the Sea of Cortez. Their dream has been to go to Alaska, so this past summer (2005) they did just that. On June 12, 2005, they left Tucson and crossed the Canadian boarder just north of Great Falls, MT. The Canadian Rocky Mountains take your breath away, snow covered and beautiful. Words cannot describe them! They were in road construction with mud, bumps, slow speeds. A very dirty Scamp and truck drove Dick crazy.

Summer in Alaska has 21 hours and 49 minutes of daylight that makes for very strange sleeping patterns. On the 29th of June, they crossed the boarder into Alaska from British Columbia. Passing over the



A visit to Alaska's North Pole

Alaskan pipeline was an interesting part of history. In Danali National Park they took the 8-hour adventure tour of the park. Among the wildlife they observed was a grizzle bear and her cubs, a fox family including cubs playing outside their den, moose, caribou, elk, and mountain goats. All in their natural habitat - awesome!

Fireweed is a wildflower that grows all over in Alaska. When the flowers reach the top of their stems, it is said that summer is over in Alaska. They hated to think about leaving Alaska, as they camped right next to the Gulf of Alaska and the Pacific Ocean. How do you remember it all? But, the time arrived as they had lots of miles to travel. In all, the Hanson's traveled 9,911 miles and spent 66 nights during a dream of a lifetime. Who knows where their next adventure will take them with their *Snow Agnel*?

It's Tea Time

If you think this article is about golf, you are on the wrong page. On the other hand, if you like a good cup of hot tea, you may find this story interesting. During a visit to Mrs. Mitchell's Tea Farm in Kenya, I learned a little about where that cup of tea comes from.



Evelyn Mitchell's father, AB McDonell, built this home at East Africa's first tea farm in 1930. It is now open for public visits.

Photographs by K.R. and S.K. Cranson

The farm is known as the Kiabmbethu Tea Farm located a few miles west of Nairobi, Kenya's capitol. At an elevation of about 7,200 feet above sea level, it is an ideal environment for tea bushes. The original bushes were grown from tea seeds brought from India in 1918. An attempt to grow coffee and other crops preceded the tea, but the farm is a little too high, although coffee is grown a short distance away at a lower elevation.

A little History - Tea is an old brew. According to one story, it was discovered in 2700 BC by a Chinese Emperor. In this account, a few tea leaves from a wild bush fell into a pot of boiling water being prepared for Shen Nung.



He liked the aroma, so tried drinking some of this strange concoction - and he liked it! And, as the story goes, the Emperor never drank plain water again. Much later, in the 1600s, tea reached Europe and gained favor in several countries. A couple hundred years after that, large amounts of tea were being imported to the American colonies. Of course, everyone knows about the "The Boston Tea Party" in 1773 resulting from the heavy taxes placed on tea by the British. Although such an incident may seem strange to us today, it became a major factor in our early history and subsequent war of independence.

Actually tea bushes had been grown in this area of Kenya since 1903, but only

Tea bushes are densely planted on the upland hills northwest of Nairobi, Kenya. They are kept trimmed to about 3 to 4 feet high allowing workers to easily pick the tea leaves.



Using the “flush” technique of picking tea leaves, only the youngest 3 leaves plus the bud from the end of each brack is selected. The larger round item here is a tea bush seed case that usually contains two seeds -- the small dark item resting on the leaf.

as ornamental shrubby. Apparently no one thought of making tea from them and the Kiabmbethu Tea Farm became the first to grow tea commercially in East Africa.

All true teas (not “herbal tea”) come from a single plant with a scientific name of *Camellia sinensis*. There are hundreds, or even thousands, of kinds of teas but this plant is the source of all! Subtle differences can effect the appearance and taste of tea including soil, the climate, elevation, and various conditions where the plants are grown.

Tea Leaves and Processing -

Of course, the tea leaves must be picked before any form of precessing can occur. While there is a movement toward mechanizing this aspect of the tea business, most tea leaves are still picked by hand. And, as you might suspect from all the different kinds of tea, there are several ways to harvest the leaves. These include: 1) selecting only the tiny shoots and unopened buds, 2) picking the youngest opened leaves, 2) choosing coarser leaves closer to the trunk of the plant and, 4) using a method of picking leaves called a “flush.” This last technique is what the Kiabmbethu Tea Farm uses, a newly sprouting bud along with three of the youngest leaves are picked as a bundle. A tea plant may flush three or more times during the growing season. And, in some parts of the world where tea is grown where there is no cold season, the tea plants may flush all

year.

The way tea leaves are processed is another important factor in the kind of tea produced. Once the leaves have been plucked they are processed in one of three ways. In general the following describe the steps taken in processing tea leaves:

“Weathering” is the first step where tea leaves are laid out on racks to dry – thus removing some of their moisture. This is followed by a technique called “rolling.” The leaves are rolled back and forth in an effort to break down the internal structure. Natural juices and enzymes are released during this phase and the “fermentation” process begins. At this time, the tea leaves are spread out on trays in a cool, but humid area. This allows them to oxidize during the fermentation phase. It’s during this time that the chemical nature of the tea leaf begins to change and that creates the specific flavor desired for the kind of tea being made. The longer that fermentation is allowed, the darker the tea will become and the stronger its flavor will be. In some cases, teas are not fermented at all.

To slow and eventually end the fermentation stage, the leaves are dried in a hot air chamber. This phase, called “firing,” will stabilize the leaves and lock in their flavor. The final step is “grading” where the resulting tea leaves are sorted for various kinds of tea and their quality. Some leaves are used to make loose teas while the fine particles (fannings and dust) are placed into tea bags.

Originally, there were no processing facilities at the Kiabmbethu Tea Farm so the tea leaves had to be processed on site or shipped to the coast for transport elsewhere. Later, however, a processing facility was established nearby and the tea leaves were taken there for processing.

Types of Tea - Historically, only green teas were used to brew tea. They

are not fermented. Rather, the leaves are steamed to kill the enzyme that causes fermentation. This results in soft, pliable tea leaves that are easier to process. By rolling the leaves on heated trays, their structure is broken down which tends to bring out the flavor juices. Then, they are “fired” (dried) until the tea leaves retain about 2% of their original moisture. Packing and shipping follow.

At the other end of the scale are black teas. These are not steamed like green teas, but rather they are allowed to wilt for a day or so. After this period they are soft enough to be rolled, usually by hand, into small balls that break down the cells releasing enzymes. This starts the fermentation process. The leaves are spread out and after some hours, based on the proper “smell” and color, they are fired. This dry heat kills the enzymes and stops the fermentation process. The leaves turn dark, a dark brown (not really black) and their moisture is reduced to about 2%. The tea may taste weak if the firing is not done properly. As with green tea, it is now ready for packing.

A more recent type is known as Oolong, Chinese for “black dragon.” It is only partially fermented to produce stronger in flavor than green teas, but is softer and lighter than black teas – it has characteristics of both.

Of course, any number of things can be added to change the flavor of the final cup of tea. Among these are: flower petals, (jasmine blossoms or orange flowers), flavor oils which are chemically identical to natural fruits, or berries to yield a fruity flavor (like raspberry or mango). Another type, known as herbal teas, are made from leaves, flowers, and roots. While carrying the name “tea,” they do not contain leaves from the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) and are not considered to be “True Tea” by some authorities.

My visit to Kenya’s first tea farm, the Kiabmbethu Tea Farm, was an interesting experience and certainly provided a different view. I will not likely take a cup of hot tea for granted again! krc



Laborers working their way through the tea fields with baskets. Most tea leaves are picked by hand and the workers are paid by the pound.

Going Solar

Scamps do well with their electrical appliances as long as they are “plugged in.” However, when you are boon docking and there is no 110 volt AC, things get a bit dicey. When we first got our Scamp, and I was ignorant of how such things worked, we run our battery down flat in just a couple days. Every since that experience, I have been interested in systems to keep the battery (or batteries) charged when not hooked up. During a trip to Arizona, I finally made a move.

Prior to leaving for the southwest, I found George Villec on the internet. He has a small company (GeoInnovation) that installs solar systems, primarily fixed installations on houses and businesses. However, George was most receptive to my questions and the possibility of putting a solar system on our 5th wheel. Upon arriving in Tucson, we visited George and decided



George Villec of GeoInnovation installing the solar panels on Scamp 1 in Tucson, Arizona.

Photographs by K R. Cranson



The ProStar-15 controller was mounted over the wardrobe right next to the radio.

on the details of what he would install on our trailer. During our discussions, I learned there are three components to a solar system for an RV; the solar panels, a controller for the panels, and a storage system (batteries).

The first question was where to put the solar panels on the Scamp's roof. This decision was dictated, to some degree, by the size of available panels. Our first thought was to use two 100-watt panels – that would have been the ideal option. However, the 100-watt panels were too large to conveniently fit without overlapping the raised portion of the roof. So, we decided on two panels, one 40-watt and one 60-watt, that fit nicely. So, we decided on 100-watts rather than the much larger configuration. George had these in stock as they were used. At first I questioned buying used panels, but it seems that solar panels have a life expectancy of about 25 years or so.

Next, was to select a controller for the solar panels. George recommended the ProStar-15 built by Morningstar Corporation in Washington Crossing, PA. It automatically feeds the current produced by the solar panels into the battery bringing it up to the desired voltage. The digital meter continually displays the battery voltage, solar current being generated and the load current. As the meter automatically scrolls through these 3 displays, a red LED light indicates which one is in the window. In addition, the ProStar-15 automatically performs a battery equalization to bring uneven cells into balance and extend its life. A push button can be used to perform an automatic self-diagnostic test of the system.

George came to where we

camped, spending two days on the installation, he completed a very careful and thorough job. The first job was to determine the location of the two solar panels on the Scamp's roof. Holes were drilled through the fiberglass to mount the brackets that supported the solar panels. The 40-watt panel was located on the sloping surface while the 60-watt fit directly behind it. This worked O.K. because we do not have an air conditioner. The two panels were wired together and the power cable passed into the Scamp in the storage space above the wardrobe.

This worked out nicely as we wanted the controller mounted on the wall above the storage area. Wiring between the controller and the power buss, located near the converter, was passed behind the refrigerator and up through the wardrobe. This made a nice clean solution with all the wiring located out-of-sight. The original wiring between the battery and the power buss thus became the route to recharge the batteries with power from the solar panels. A much better solution would be to connect the controller output directly to the batteries. This is a more complicated job due to where the wiring has to go. If solar panels (or just the wiring to the controller) could be installed during original construction, it would be a better solution.

Most Scamps are equipped with a deep-cycle 12-volt battery at the factory and that was what our 1998 Scamp 5th Wheel had. However, I learned that two 6-volt deep-cycle batteries connected in series provides much more storage than a single 12-volt battery. The difficulty in my case was space to mount them between the two propane tanks mounted on the front frame. After careful measurements, I concluded that with a little modification the two 6-volt batteries would fit. Of course, the original battery case would not work – I had to build a new platform and case to



The factory equipped single 12 volt battery was replaced with two 6 volt high amp batteries connected in series. Mounting it between the propane tanks made for a tight fit.

support and enclose the two batteries.

We had the opportunity to use the new solar system on several occasions during our 20 day trip down the Baja peninsula. Everything worked well and the batteries were easily charged up during the day. Of course, there was lots of sun as most days were clear. In my opinion, the alternative to adopting a solar system is to use a generator to recharge batteries. The initial cost, in our case, was about the same – \$800. But, I didn't like the thought of having to carry gasoline to service a generator. K R. Cranson

Future ScampCamps

There are 3 ScampCamps being planned over the next few months. These were reported in the Spring issue, please refer to page 15 of that issue for details, hosts, and how to make arrangements to attend.

Scamping the Baja from page 16

case. Actually, it was long sections of steep grades and sharp curves with some flat stretches in between!

One of our first important lessons was that the Mexicans use speed bumps to control traffic speed, much like we do in some situations. However, they use them on the major highways at what seems to be random locations – usually at places where pedestrians may be walking near the road. The interesting part is that these road obstacles may occur almost anywhere. I soon learned that some of these are announced by signs and small rattle strips before you encounter a major “hump.” The first one I hit, however, came without warning (as I had not yet learned to recognize the warning signs). The Da-

kota and Scamp did a violent bucking motion that jarred our teeth and made a jumble of the inside of the trailer.

Later that day, after we had stopped to camp for the night, we opened the door on the scamp to find it “flooded” inside. About 8 gallons of water from the fresh water tank was all over the floor. After drying up as much water as possible, I found that two screws holding the straps that secured the tank had pulled loose disconnecting the hose to the 12 volt pump. Almost all our fresh water supply was now in the carpeting, inside the cabinets, the storage compartments below the bench seats, and who knows where else. My first impulse was to repair it by reattaching the straps and we made an attempt at repair, but it soon became obvious that the tools and parts were not available to do so. Upon closer inspection I discovered the floor had been wet before under the water tank, had rotted out in places, and would not hold the screws necessary to secure the straps. Our solution was to simply empty



Our Scamp and Dakota camped along the Bahia Todos Santos just south of Ensenada in Baja California (northern Baja).



A long section of Mexico 1 near Calavina offers spectacular scenery such as these rounded granite boulders in Parque Natural (Desert National Park).



This barge load of salt is on the Laguna Oja Liebre, a bay of the Pacific Ocean, just west of Guerrero Negro. The salt produced here is reclaimed from sea water.

the tank and accept the fact that we would not be able to use the freshwater tank for the balance of the Baja trip.

That first evening, we camped

just south of Ensenada, one of the larger cities on the Baja along the Pacific Ocean. It offered a nice view across a small bay to the west and a nice beach when the tide was out. While the temperature was a bit on the “cool” side, the sun was bright and we enjoyed watching the birds along the beach. Later, a dramatic sunset graced the western skyline. While the physical setting was picturesque, the facilities were not like those usually found in the U.S. There were no hook-ups, the restrooms were rather bleak, and the showers had only cold water. It was a precursor of things to come, actually this campground was better than many we would use during the next 3 weeks.

Early the next morning we were back on Mexico 1 heading south through the mountains and several small towns. Our stop at a big Pemex gas station was our first experience buying fuel. Of course, gas was measured in liters rather than gallons, so a little metal adjustment was in order. I did a calculation and found that one gallon is 3.78 liters - and recorded that conversion factor for future reference. About 1 pm, just south of San Quintin, we turned off the highway for our evening’s camp. Like the first evening, the El Pabellon Campground was along the Pacific

Ocean beach. We wandered down the beach to collect sand dollars and watch a group of locals digging clams.

When we got up early the next morning, local fishermen were preparing their boats, called pangas, for a day out on the ocean. It was quite exciting to watch them launch their boats into the heavy surf along the beach. As we got back on the main road it had become obvious by now that Mexico 1 had very few places (turnouts) to get off the road for photography. Consequently, it was next to impossible for the driver to enjoy the dramatic scenery along the way and most of our photography was taken through the windows.

After a stop in El Rosario for gas, we had hoped to drive down a back road to a great sounding beach on the ocean where our guide book indicated there would be fossils and petrified wood. After about a mile, however, we had to turn back as the road was impassible with the Dakota and Scamp. This underlined another fact about the Baja - there are very few good roads other than Mexico 1! We had hoped to drive to a town along the Bahia de Los Angeles (Bay of Angles) on the Sea of Cortez, but the distance between gas stations was too far. So, our third night out was at a dry campground in Calavina - no hook-ups, no showers, and not much for restrooms. The upside was the rocks that outcrop around the camp - these granites have weathered into rounded boulders and interesting fantastic shapes. They are part of the Desert National Park

A few miles after entering Baja California Sur (South Baja, there are two provinces in the Baja), we camped at the Malarrimo RV Park in Guerrero Negro. This campground was one of the best (it had full hook-ups) we found during the entire trip and cost about the same as in the U.S. It served as our base for a whale watching tour the next day. Grey whales travel from Alaska to breed and have their young in the

shallow waters of Laguna Oja, just west of town. The adult whales, often with babies, were abundant and they frequently came close to our boat.

Continuing south on Mexico 1, we stopped at San Ignacio for lunch and to visit a 200+ year old mission, the San Ignacio Kadakaanman. The town sits in a valley with a water supply that supports a forest of palm trees. The volcanic terrain along the highway after leaving San Ignacio was spectacular. There were massive basaltic lava flows and rhyolite tuff deposits associated with a large volcano named Las 3 Virgenes, nearly 2,000 meters (6,000 ft.) high.

After passing through a rugged mountain region, we entered Santa Rosalia right on the Sea of Cortez. It was the site of a major copper mining center where the abandoned and rusting structures can still be seen. Our campground on this 6th day was at San Lucus Cove, right on a bay of the Sea of Cortez. When we arrived, the tide was out and all the boats were resting on the exposed muddy flats. The scene changed dramatically as we prepared to leave the next morning with the tide in. The mud flats were underwater, all the boats were floating, and the water was just a few feet from the RVs camped on the beach.

Just beyond Mulege, we drove along one of the most picturesque portions of Mexico 1 – the Bahia de Concepcion. This bay of the Sea of Cortez runs some miles with at least a dozen campgrounds right on the beach. At a stop in Loreto for gas, we found a very nice café for lunch just across the street from the city's waterfront park. A couple hours after we arrived at the Tripui RV Park, a caravan of BIG rigs pulled in and completely filled the sites. It was kind of exciting watching some of the activity involved with parking those RVs in the relatively small sites. I tried to use

their internet connections, but it was not working – the laundry facility, however, was most welcome.

Much of day 8 was spent driving along the relatively straight and level highway, farming country around Villa Constitucion. It was also one of our longest drives, 214 miles. After messing around in downtown La Paz, we finally found a very nice camping area a few miles north of town at Playa Tecolote. Although it was not actually a campground, there were many RVs “parked” along the beach. We found a spot and setup the Scamp for a 3 day stay. There were a couple restaurants right on the beach although we didn't try them. One day we drove into La Paz to a Dodge dealership to have something checked on the Dakota (the check engine light was on) and had a fun day visiting the shops and having a Mexican lunch along the waterfront park. The weather was great, sunny and warm every day, and we even saw a 16 foot Scamp.

This completes about half of the trip driving the length Mexico's Baja peninsula. The rest of our experience will be continued in Part 2 of Scamping the Baja in the next issue of the *SOI News*.



This grey whale and her calf enjoy the warm waters of Laguna Oja Liebre. These huge mammals come south from the northern Pacific to breed and have their young.



This native stone Jesuit mission was started before 1760 and completed about 25 years later. It is located in San Ignacio and represents early Catholic influence in the remote areas of the Baja.

Scamping the Baja

Part 1

by K R. Cranson



Many of the campgrounds along Baja beaches offer outstanding facilities.

Photographs by K R. Cranson

Driving the thousand miles plus down the length of the Baja Peninsula sounded like a great adventure as we sat in our Michigan dinning room last fall. So, we purchased a book on camping and campgrounds along Mexico Highway 1, the only road that goes all the way to the southern tip of the Baja. It sounded easy and our plans started taking shape. We would travel with Sharon's brother and sister-in-law who live in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. After arriving at their place, we spent nearly a week getting ready before departing for the Baja. SOI Members Larry and Teddy Page had also planned to go with us, but decided against the trip after learning of some of the potential problems. In retrospect, a

wise decision!

The day before we actually drove into Mexico for the trip down the Baja, we were off to a bad start. After walking across the boarder to get our visitor permits, the customs officer stopped me on the return trip. He wanted to know about my "stolen" passport, but eventually allowed us back

into the U.S. Maybe I should have seen this as a bad omen! The next morning we crossed the boarder into Mexico at a small town called Tecate about 35 miles east of San Diego to begin our journey south to Cabo San Lucas at the very southern end. Our first experience on Mexico roads was

Looking for an Editor

Scamp Owners International is looking for an editor for the **SOI News**. If you've had experience working with newsletters, writing, or printing, it could be a great challenge. In the past 7 years SOI has grown from about 30 members to well over 400. From all indications to date, it is expected to continue growing. If another editor is not found, the Fall issue will be the final one.

the 70 miles of Mexico Highway 3 between Tacate and Ensenada where it joins Mexico 1. My initial vision of Baja was way bad. Somehow, I imagined it would be a desert like that of southern Arizona with long stretches of flat pavement between distant mountain ranges. This was certainly not the

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