

Whispers of an RV Gypsy



I realized
that I could
change my life
for the better
and I took
a chance on
doing what
I love, which
is travel.

Ed Lonsbary owns a piece of equipment that can only be described as a movie star trailer with a diesel engine. His “home on wheels” has its own bathroom, full kitchen, bedroom and spacious living area. He carries 120 gallons of fresh water onboard wherever he goes and lives in the motorcoach for weeks, sometimes months on end, while his wife takes care of the business of his travel. He travels with and befriends strangers for a few days or a few weeks, going throughout the country and across U.S. borders into Mexico and Canada. “We just go down the road and see what is around the bend,” Lonsbary says.

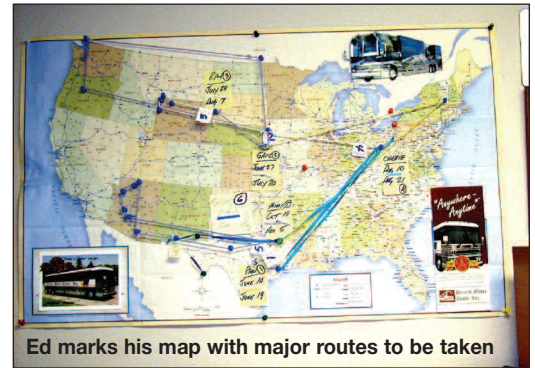
Seven years ago, Ed was a corporate executive who was “burnt out after twenty seven years in the corporate world.” It hit him one day watching TV – his life was not what he wanted it to be. He was successful and financially well off but it did not satisfy him – he needed a new challenge. “I had wanderlust in my heart,” he mused. “I realized that I could change my life for the better and I took a chance on doing what I love, which is travel.”

He recruited his wife as his partner and, together, they bought a palatial motorcoach/bus conversion and turned it into a business. For the last seven years, Ed and his wife, Patty, have owned and operated their own private motorcoach company, Private Motor Coach, Inc., out of Whitehouse, Texas. Patty acts as manager for the company while maintaining her life and career at home, but plans to join Ed in the coming year.

Who does this?

His typical passenger, and coincidentally his favorite, is older, someone who has that same wanderlust in his or her heart but feels trapped by the restraints of their disability or poor health. With the coach, they have their medications, their cushions, their oxygen tank all within reach. And, because his coach is not ADA-approved, he’s taken a creative approach to accommodating those in wheelchairs – he’s carried them onto the coach himself.

This bond is one of the reasons he has been so



Ed marks his map with major routes to be taken

successful. On top of the marketing strategies he uses – having an informative website, keyword search engine optimization, calls, emails – he has been blessed with positive word of mouth and recommendations from previous customers.

And why?

The main contrast to other tour operators, and perhaps the most unique product his company offers, is that he doesn’t plan his trips in advance and then sell them. Due to the nature of the RV lifestyle, getting out onto the open road, visiting tiny towns, drinking their local coffee, reading their newspaper and sleeping wherever there is a safe place to park the coach, there is no need for detailed, advanced planning.

Once a client tells him where they want to go, he sits down with them and plots out major hubs they want to hit. He then marks his map with major routes to be taken and they play the trip by ear. And, because he is a one-man show, they have little dependence on the outside world besides the need for a diesel pump and a watering hole.

Of his customers: “It takes about a week for them to slip out of the daily grind. They start to breathe easier and start to really talk with their travel companions, not just mundane chatter but real conversations.”

New Horizons

With his wife soon joining him, he’s considering a new market – South America. He’s also considering a new medium. He is taking his lifestyle to the small screen and to the publisher’s desk. He plans to produce a travel show and a guide to being what he calls an “RV gypsy,” a term his wife isn’t always pleased with.

There’s a certain romance to the life he has chosen, an RV gypsy romance, if you will.