



Teardroppers of **O**regon and **W**ashington
Serving those who are or wannabe be teardroppers

TOW Line

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A REPORT ON THE KELSON CAMPOUT

There was a great time had by all of us teardroppers on the Kelson Spread near Kent, Washington. The feature of the weekend was a gathering of us along with a rally of **BIG** motor homes called Eagles. Ed Kelson's business is converting these big 40 to 45 foot long buses into deluxe coaches. We got to tour a few of the 14. One had the most elegant woodworking you ever saw. It was driven by a specially built 600 horsepower diesel engine that got 10 mile per gallon (most get six). It must be worth \$500 K at least.

These Eagle folks were hosts to us little guys (they called us the Eaglets) with suppers and breakfasts for the three days. They were much appreciated!! Headquarters was the Don and Annette Kelson RV – a bus that Ed had widened and heightened for his parents. We sure thank Ed's parents for inviting us - and for their Eagles for hosting us with the meals.

We had a terrible rainstorm on Saturday afternoon, but all survived. It was great to see all the kids and adults out after the storm playing and visiting while our Dutch oven cooking was being done in preparation for the potluck. The Eagles hosted the main dish – a great prime rib. After the dinner, drawings for all families were made with the prize for us teardroppers a wonderfully monogrammed potholder custom made by Ed's mother, Annette.

Wandering around the Kelso property was a view of the history of farming. Ed has put old farm equipment all around his place. For this farm boy, they were a great look. In addition, there are outbuildings that replicate a vintage gas station and shop. One of Ed's specialties is the restoration of old gas pumps. There must have been a couple hundred pumps in original rusted condition or in premier restored condition. Every glass top ever made for these pumps is displayed in the shop building. Many other vintage gas station things are displayed on shelves too. And vintage oil cans – maybe 200 and more in Ed's collection. It is a wonderful collection of the past

On Sunday, we took the opportunity to drive to Issaquah for a cruise in. It was great to see all the vintage cars and trucks. A lot of interest in our teardrop trailers was seen as well. A couple of our TD guys actually got trophy awards for their cars. One is a very customized late 1940's Lincoln and the other a perfect bright yellow Model A Ford with matching storage trailer made from a vintage Coca Cola machine.

A VISIT WITH BILL WORMAN – FOUNDER OF THE KIT TEARDROP

Bill Worman is a remarkable man. At the age of 12, he was a ham operator, at 17 a union journeyman electrician and before the age of 21 working in the movie industry in Southern California. During WWII, he worked in aircraft factories.

His passion for most of his adult life has been airplanes. In fact, he has duplicated to the very last rivet an extremely rare 1929 Fairchild two-place, open-cockpit airplane. His apartment is in a loft in the back of his airplane hanger. Today, this 86 year-old is earning his pilot's license.

After WWII, Bill founded Kit Manufacturing, a company that survives to this day. TOW Line (TL) had a very enjoyable time visiting with Bill at his home on Orcas Island in Washington.

TL: I've often wondered where you came up with the idea of making teardrop trailers.

BW: *I was a hunter in those early years of my life. And so was one of my co-workers. We decided that we needed something to sleep in so we could go on overnight hunting trips. So, we came up with the design and after the war ended, we decided to go into business together.*

TL: I understand that when the company was founded in 1946 you were building trailers with only one door. When was it you decided to build them with two doors and why?

BW: The 1947 model had two doors. Actually, my partner and I decided to take one of the 1946 models out on an overnight hunting trip. My partner was a BIG guy and during the night, he had to get up. After crawling over me to get out, I decided that we needed two doors.

TL: I've read that those early trailers used WWII surplus Jeep wheels that had bullet holes in them. Is there any truth to this?

BW: Yes. You see, with the automobile industry starting up again after the war, it was impossible for us to buy from traditional wheel suppliers. Nobody would talk to use. But, in those days, the government was bringing surplus war equipment back to the states. We found a supply of wheels that had been stored close to the fighting front in the Pacific. And, it's true – probably two or three wheels out of hundred had bullet holes in them that we welded up.

TL: As a mechanical engineer, I'm intrigued about the suspension you used on those early trailers. We have a trailer in our family that was built on an original suspension that used long torque tubes for springs. These tubes are placed side-by-side so that the wheels are not opposite one another but, instead, one wheel is farther to the rear than the other.

BL: The same situation existed after the war with the spring industry. We just could not buy traditional axles and springs with automobile production getting started. I knew of a large supply of surplus high strength tubing so I had an engineer friend calculate what we needed to make a torsion-bar suspension. The longer the tube, the better the spring, so that's why they were attached to the trailer frame side-by-side. We knew that if we welded the end of the tubing to the wheel-spindle crank arm we would weaken the alloy of the steel. I was familiar with a tapered pin method of attachment, so that's what we used. I also really liked the clean profile on the trailer bottom with this type of suspension.

TL: I've never seen the original fenders, but I've heard that they looked like "cardboard" with a flange on the outside of the fender. What are the details of this fender design?

BW: We were fortunate to work with a pioneering fiberglass company. However, the early process was to mold the fenders using burlap with the resin. They switched to fiberglass fabric when it proved superior. Yes, we used some of those burlap fenders at first. The outside flange made the fender easier to bolt onto the outside of the trailer sides.

TL: What do you attribute the popularity of the teardrop trailer after WWII?

BW: I think that people wanted to get out and travel. During the war, most everyone was making pretty good money. But with the nation on the ration system, you did not have any extras you could spend your money on. And, you did not have time to go anywhere because the whole nation was working 24 hours a day in the war effort. So after the war, the teardrop offered the public a way to visit all the places in America they dreamed of during the war. Also, the trailer was light enough that cars of those days could tow them easily. I think the motoring public was very cautious about towing anything because it was not a common thing to do in those years..

TL: It seems that the hot-bed of teardrop trailer production in Southern California sort of came to an end in three or four years of the war's end. Why do you think this happened?

BW: I think that the people wanted more luxury and more inside room than a full-sized camping trailer offered. In fact, Kit made a full-sized camp trailer for a while.

TL: When did you leave your involvement with Kit Manufacturing?

BW: We were actually building the trailers in a plant that also built a folding-wall expanding trailer I designed for government housing. It could legally be towed down the road, but when set up offered more space when the walls folded out and the floor folded down from both sides of the trailer. I started to spend more and more time with this line, so sold out to my partner, who is still with Kit Manufacturing headquartered in Long Beach, California.

This is just a snapshot of our wonderful visit with Bill Worman. I wanted to write a TOW Line article that focused on a few of the questions I thought would interest readers.

TOW presented Bill with a copy of the book, *Trailer Travel, a Visual History of Mobile America*. He thanked us and as he looked through it, commented several times how much he enjoyed seeing the vintage images. Memories must have abounded!!

THE "GREAT OREGON CAMPOUT" AT CHAMPOEG

Gary Wampole, the founder of the teardrop gathering at Champoeg State Park, tells us that all the spaces in the group site have been taken. However, there are adjacent regular camping sites with water and power that can be used for any overflow teardrop campers. To reserve a site, call 1-800-452-5687 Monday to Friday (8 AM to 7 PM PDT). Ask for a site near the "Group Campers". Everyone is welcome to join in the fun, relaxation, potluck and campfire at the group site. The group site comes with a building that is used for meals in case of rain.

You will have to call Gary for more information on schedule and registration details. That way, you can plan what food to bring for this weekend gathering. There is a registration fee to cover dash plaque and group site costs. For **Gary**, call **(503) 876-4431**.

Gary really hosts a great meet. Lots to see at this historic Oregon state park. There is great shopping at nearby factory stores and at a local town known for its antique stores. In addition, there is a well-known truck museum just down the freeway that's located on the grounds of the Antique Power Land just north of Salem.

A "SNAP, CRACKEL AND POP" FOURTH AT THE MASDENS

By Katie Boehme

You could not have a better Fourth of July celebration than the campout at Ken and Marty Masdens. It was a delight in every way – great hospitality, perfect weather, five beautiful acres to park your tear with shade trees and a mountain view. Add to this the patriotic and enthusiastic events of the nearby small town of Carnation. A deluxe bonus is the private 1936 Masden "car show" and Ken's rumble seat rides in the county. Our collective thanks to Ken and Marty for being such generous hosts!!!

Ken and Marty's pristine garage (mine should look so good) lined with Marty's colorful paintings made a cheerful setting for all our meals together and was a great place for teardrop fellowship. We even had a TV/VCR to view some very entertaining vintage trailer shows

In Carnation on the Fourth, you could enjoy the firemen's pancake breakfast; the senior's strawberry shortcake and a show and shine car show. There was a children's parade with decorated bikes, pets and kids to lead off the "grand parade". Of course some teardroppers added to the merriment of the big parade. It was fun to hear onlooker's comment, "Look, those are the trailers I was telling you about. They actually sleep in them and see the back – it lifts up – they have a kitchen in there!" or "Oh those are really cute!"

After a potluck supper, we all headed back to town to view a first class fireworks display that included some ground launched spiraling rockets I've never seen. You're up so close to the show – it's as big and fun as any show I've been to.

Other fun times of the weekend included a caravan trip to Snoqualmie Falls and a fun shopping time in the quaint town of Snohomish. Of course, we all over-ate at the potlucks and Dutch oven yummy feast. We also enjoyed pancakes and omelets together for our breakfasts courtesy of Ken and Marty. Door prizes and dash plaques were Masden gifts also.

And now for your trivia question for the day, how Carnation got its name - yes the wonderful village of Tolt founded in 1906, was renamed for the Carnation dairy (moo-oooo). However, they did not rename the town when Nestlé bought out Carnation in later years (unfortunately Nestlé does not give out free samples– but the Masdens kept us well supplied with chocolate). P.S.- Mark your calendars now for the 2004 Masden Fourth – don't miss it!!!

WOODY TEARDROP IN A WOODWORKING MAGAZINE

Jim Smith's woody teardrop trailer was seen in the August issue of the *Woodworker's Journal* magazine. The title: "The Happy Camper – And His Wooden Trailer". Included were three color pictures showing the galley, side profile and one with Jim's boat mounted on top.

To quote the article:

Jim Smith's woody teardrop trailer is a love story. "It just totally consumed me," the Edmonds, Washington man says – and the idea came from his girlfriend. After sleeping in their truck following an exhausting climb on Mount St. Helens, she suggested a teardrop trailer would be nice.

Jim spent two years building one, mostly out of mahogany and oak, with some black walnut and maple. The boat on top took another four months. "I just keep thinking of new things that it needs," says Jim.

So far, the trailer has been on about 15 camping trips. People have occasionally asked if he built the trailer to sell, but Jim says he's having too much fun driving it around. "I've had it be all one color from the dust from going down a road – you just get out the lemon Pledge and the rags, and it cleans right up."

One of the woodworking stores in the Seattle awarded Jim a prize for the best project. That led to Jim's TD being featured in the magazine. We agree. His tear is a champion!!

RV SHOW WITH TEARDROP TRAILER DISPLAY

The TOW Line just got word that the **September 11th to 14th** RV Show at the Portland Expo Center has invited teardroppers to participate with a display of their trailers. There is room for ten trailers or trailer/vintage car combinations. To register your entry, please mail your entry **via snail mail** only. Your registration needs to be known for insurance purposes. Name, address and phone number are

required. List your teardrop as well as any vintage tow vehicle you want to display. The registrants will be contacted directly by the show organizers. The dated postmark will determine your reservation position. Any entry received after all the spots have been filled will be alternates to anyone dropping out. If there are space constraints, priority will be given to trailers. **Send your letter to this TOW Line editor. See the masthead on top of page 1 for the address. Registrations close on September 3rd.**

An entry is a trailer or a trailer/vintage car combination with the registrant the legal owner of the entry. Please, only one entry per registered last name. We want to give as many TOW affiliates as possible an opportunity to display their trailer. Any vintage trailer is welcome as long as it can be towed and is road legal. Vintage camp trailers are also welcome. But keep in mind that they will be displayed in a show environment. All propane tanks **MUST** be left home.

Set up will be during the day on Wednesday, September 10th. Move out will be after the show closes on Sunday at 6:00 PM. The trailers and vehicles will be placed behind a low barrier to prevent the public from crawling in and around them. You would be welcome to stay with the display on some of the days to talk to spectators. Entry and parking passes will be provided.

By the way, each registered last name will be paid \$200.

OREGON LICENSE PLATES FOR VINTAGE TRAILERS

In response to the article about licensing teardrop trailers in Oregon, the TOW Line received an e-mail message from Steve Knebel in Scappoose, Oregon. This TOW affiliate has successfully worked with the Oregon Legislature to get a bill through that allows the use of antique plates on travel trailers. The bill stipulates that a one-time fee be paid. The use of the plate has the same restrictions on it as antique plates for vintage vehicles in Oregon. The governor signed the bill into law recently, but it will take a few weeks for the DMV to get instructions on how to administer the new law. You will also be able to take a "vintage" plate to the DMV and have it registered for your trailer.

I imagine that we will be scrounging all of the swap meets for vintage trailer plates. I wonder if a newly minted plate will also work? Fortunately, most old travel trailers are sold with their original plate. We'll have to examine the regulations when they finally appear on the Oregon DMV web site.

Our congratulations to Steve!! Other states could also benefit from a similar law. We will forward any message sent to the TOW Line regarding this issue for Steve's personal attention on how you can work with your state legislature to pass a similar bill.

LeMAY 2003 – A STELLER EVENT ON THIS, OUR SIXTH YEAR

The LeMay Open House will feature the LeMay collection's teardrop trailer that TOW restored to original condition. It will be placed in the middle of our teardrop display.

The highlight of the weekend is the opportunity and fun of meeting one another, making new friends, displaying our trailers and volunteering to help with the Open House. To recap:

*We're the guests of the Harold E. LeMay Museum, "America's Car Museum". We gather at LeMay's Marymount Campus where we set up our rigs in a very nice grassy area right in the middle of the automobile collection. Restrooms and showers are in adjoining buildings. Electrical hookups are **not** available. We have access to water. This is a dry camping spot, so we are self-contained with regards to cooking with **no** campfires permitted. Open-flame BBQ's **prohibited**. We will be having a potluck supper on Friday evening. Later, we will have a general meeting to review what will be happening on Saturday. Saturday arrivals must park in the regular display areas on the campus, as there will be no room with the regular campers. Sorry, smoking in designated areas only while camping. **No** alcoholic beverages permitted at any time.*

Remember – Good fellowship, eats together and a GREAT campfire. Register ASAP!!!!

For directions and questions about how to drive to the Marymount Campus, contact **Jack Jacobson** at (253) 927-6568 or at his e-mail address of Castiron43@aol.com

A NEW INVITATIONAL CAMPOUT – WITH FOOD TO EAT!!!

Submitted by Steven Price

The Cascade Geographic Society is inviting all teardrop trailers to come and join them during the Salmon and Mushroom Festival, **October 4th and 5th** of 2003. The festival is held at the Mt. Hood RV Village in Welches, Oregon (about 30 miles east of Portland on Hwy 26). Activities include the State Chili Championships on Saturday and a Salmon Grilling Contest on Sunday. There are vendors and live entertainment both days.

The festival would like to showcase the trailers so anyone participating will receive a discounted rate, \$15 the first night and \$7 the second night for a full hookup and access to the pool. The festival will ask the public to look at the trailers on Saturday and will have a "Peoples Choice" ballot with the winner receiving a really great prize. Hours of the festival are 10 to 4 on Saturday and 11 to 4 on Sunday. Teardroppers will be considered part of the "cooks" group and are invited to the Friday Social and the Saturday potluck. We are talking major quantities of meat and chili for this weekend.

Contact **Steven** or **Debra Price** at 503-252-1897 or spdplpvp@msn.com for more information or reservations.

Editor's note: Steven and Debra were Spring Fling visitors and checked out our teardrops. They and two of their neighbors are building teardrop trailers this summer. This gathering sure sounds GREAT and we are looking forward to attending.

THE NWCCA SHOW – OUR FUND RAISER FOR GATHERINGS

TOW (Teardroppers of Oregon and Washington) is a member of the Northwest Car Collectors Association. Members receive proceeds from the Car Show and Swap Meet held at the Portland Expo Center on **October 18th and 19th** this year. TOW's net proceeds are distributed each year between the various teardrop camping gatherings in our area. An accounting of TOW expenses is reported each year in the TOW Line.

We volunteer duty time during the event. Every club pulls the same amount of duty time, regardless of their size. Every volunteer gets a FREE gate and parking pass. TOW pays \$25 gas money for those who travel over 80 miles from the Expo Center. Volunteers needed are:

1. Friday setup day – Outside traffic control – 11 AM to 2 PM – 2 needed.
2. Friday setup day – Duty parking lot (outside) – 5 PM to 9 PM – 2 needed.
(Friday volunteers can use their gate and parking pass on Saturday and Sunday.)
3. Saturday – Inside security – 2 PM to 6 PM – 6 needed.
4. Sunday – Inside security – 7 AM to 11 AM – 2 needed.
5. Sunday – Clean-up after move out – 3 PM to 6 PM – 1 needed.

So, e-mail a reply or phone Marty your selection of duty time. See the masthead on page 1 for the contact information. We all have to remember that TOW is fined for anyone not showing up.

The duty time is not rocket science so it's on-the-job training when you report to the duty office. Stay tuned for more details after the roster is filled out. **Need to know by Sept 1.**

TRUCK SHOW IN SHELTON, WASHINGTON

We've received a note from **Roy Friis** regarding the invitation to us teardroppers to participate with a display of our trailers at the **August 8th & 9th** truck show. Roy has reserved a lawn area where we can park our trailers. We're hoping that this new event will draw lots of teardroppers who live in that part of Washington. Contact **360-866-7716** or rjfriis@attbi.com

TIME FOR SNIPPETS

1. See the next page for a schedule of teardrop events in our part of the world.
2. Get rid of embarrassing spring squeaks – put milk carton cardboard between the leaves.
3. The History Channel show on vintage travel trailers was a great experience.
4. Could there be a Pacific Northwest **Dutch Oven Cook-off Championship** in the future?
5. The Teardrop Message Board is a great read – link in the www.teardrops.net web site.
6. Anyone interested in a teardrop trailer-building seminar this winter? Contact the editor.
7. TD for sale in South Bend, WA – Call **Bob Kammer** at **360-875-6392** or **1-800-201-6392**
8. Teardroppers are invited to tour Curtis Trailer's Transportation Museum Sept 27th
9. **Chris Boeh** has a brand new teardrop trailer for sale. **503-284-1933** in Portland.
10. Don't forget "Tin Can Tourists", **Mt. Baker** vintage trailer rally August 14th to 17th.

TEARDROP CALENDAR FOR 2003

(More details in this TOW Line unless noted)

AUGUST 8TH – 9TH Truck Show Display - Washington

Teardroppers invited to display vintage/restorod cars/trucks & trailers at the Mason County Fairgrounds near Shelton. Overnight camping available.
Contact **Roy Friis** at rjfriis@attbi.com; 360-866-7716.

AUGUST 14TH – 17TH *Tin Can Tourists' Fabulous Mt. Baker Rally*

Teardroppers have been invited to participate in this vintage travel trailer event. Held at the Deming Log Show Grounds nine miles east of Bellingham, Wash.
Contact **Pat Ewing** at pre52@verizon.net; 360-966-4253.

AUGUST 22RD – 23TH *Truck Show Display – Oregon*

Display trailers in Brooks at Antique Powerland. Lots to see and do during this show. Many vintage trucks and other vehicles to view. Overnight camping available. Contact **Jim Abbott** at jsn4d@aol.com; 503-874-0330.

AUGUST 29TH – 31ST *LeMay Open House Display/Campout*

On the Marymount Campus in Tacoma, Washington. Register ASAP.
Contact **Jack Jacobson** at castiron43@aol.com; 253-927-6568. Rumor has it that there will be a gang-buster of a skit again this year. See it to believe it.

SEPTEMBER 11TH – 14TH *RV Show Teardrop Display – Portland*

Display teardrop trailers at a RV Show at the Expo Center. Contact **Marty/Katie Boehme** at ktormarty@bctonline.com, 503-632-6563 to register. All trailers will be paid \$200 to display. Any vintage camping trailer welcome.

SEPTEMBER 26TH – 28TH *Oregon Teardrop Campout at Champoeg*

Family campout at Champoeg State Park just south of Portland.
Contact **Gary Wampole** at teardrop@onlinemac.com or at 503-876-4431

OCTOBER 4TH – 5TH *Mt. Hood Salmon & Mushroom Festival*

Camp with the contestants for this food and fun weekend of Championship Chili cooking and grilling of Salmon and mushrooms. Contact **Steven Price** at 503-252-1897 or spdplpvp@msn.com for RV site reservations.

OCTOBER 17TH – 19TH *NWCCA Car Show with Teardrop Display*

Display of our teardrop trailers at the Car Show/Swap Meet in Portland
Contact **Marty** at ktormarty@bctonline.com; 503-632-6563