

Old Bus Review

May / June 2008, # 107

The Useful Mods Edition



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Old Bus Review #107

This is issue #107 of *Old Bus Review*, published by NEATO (Northeast Association of Transporter Owners, Inc.) Publication dates are during the second weeks of January, March, May, July, September, and November (or thereabouts).

Northeast Association of Transporter Owners, Inc. (NEATO) was established to help members maintain, restore, buy, or sell pre-1968 Volkswagen Transporters (Microbuses, Kombis, Campers, Single- and Double-Cab Pickups, etc.) Membership is open to all owners and admirers of these vehicles and ownership of a pre-1968 VW Transporter is **not** a prerequisite to join. Membership in NEATO (which includes a subscription for 6 issues of *Old Bus Review* and a copy of the *Transporter Tourist and Traveler Directory*) is \$28 per year. Overseas dues are \$38 per year. Please make checks payable to **NEATO**. Joining can also be done through our website via PayPal: www.neatoclub.org. Membership dues and changes of address should be sent to:

NEATO/Membership Coordinator
c/o George Bossarte
353 Broadway
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Phone: (617) 876-0390

Email: gbeng@world.std.com

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Observe proper safety precautions when working around a vehicle, especially an older vehicle. Pay strict attention to a manufacturer's directions, wear safety goggles, gloves, respirators and proper clothing. With proper care, the old car hobby can be accident-free *and* fun

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This Old Bus Review

Dear Members—

Welcome to *OBR*, #107. Sent along with this issue is the *2008-2009 Transporter Tourist & Traveler Directory*. This booklet isn't a list of *all* the members of NEATO and LiMBO, but it is a list of those folks who are willing to make their phone listing public to other members (*bless their hearts!*). NEATO pioneered the concept of this booklet to members of the Busing World in 1989, and it has helped many on the road. It has also served as a community directory to help find like-minded Bus People while traveling, for that proverbial "coffee and conversation." *May it serve you as you roam!*

This issue of *OBR* offers a couple articles on what we hope will be an Annual Theme: *Useful Mods*—those wonderful little things you can do to make your bus perform better. **Please Note:** no bus was harmed for the photo essay by Riedel & Furst: carefully cropped photos hide the fact that there was no "bus" beyond the frame of the pictures. Yes, I guess that means they hacked an already dismembered salvage bus. *But, hey, it was the '90s!*

Looking for a New Editor: We need a new person to create the next generation of *Old Bus Reviews*. If you would like to apprentice the job, you'll get the full support of the club council. If you only want to do a few pages, or an occasional page, that would be fine! If your chapter would like to have a one-time, or a regular feature, that would be great! We're looking for editorial input on any level, and we'd like to hear from anyone interested: we'll hold your hand through the "getting started" period, if you need that. *There's a great club here, with a glorious history, that you can help carry forward!*

We're still looking for contributions on the following topics for future *OBRs*: If you have contributions on these themes—or others—please send them in!

- **Mousegray: The New Black.** *A photo essay of the elusive Mousegray Buses from 1961-1964. If you have one of these critters, we want to hear from you!*
- **Nice Roads for a Splitty.** *Descriptions of memorable stretches of road or highway you've travelled.*
- **Passin' It On.** *Stories of the elders of our Bus-Lovin' Obsession passing on the enthusiasm to the younger generation.*

If you're enjoying the newsletter lately (or not) let us know—we love your feedback (thrive on it, actually!).

If you can't be with the Bus you love, love the Bus you're with!

Rev. Mike Robus (*defrocked*), Temporary Editor

P.O. Box 56277

Philadelphia, PA 19130

(215) 939-7510

Email: obrlite@earthlink.net

Letters from Members

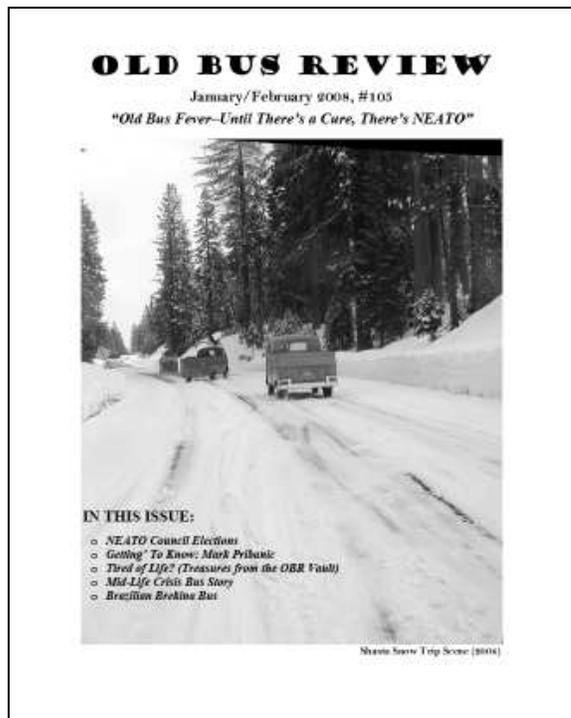
April 29, 2008

Subject: OBR#106

Letters from Members

I want to reply to a letter from Chris Pollard in OBR#106. While his letter was completely fascinating, I do have to make one clarification: I am a woman not a guy. ☺

A previous issue of OBR had a cover photo of my single cab cavorting in the snow on a Shasta Snow Trip and while it is not surprising to me any more when my gender is misidentified as male, I do like to pipe up if only to demonstrate that there are a few women hobbyists... and according to one fellow hobbyist, only a handful of women who'll work on their rigs.



It has been a few years since my single cab made that trip and in the photo my pick-up is between two buses driven stately and directly by two men while my pick-up and I were cutting it up. It certainly was fun, a complete blast... and I've done it more recently with my panel.

The Shasta Snow Trip is a fantastic way to get to know your rig's capabilities as well as your own. Driving paved roads gets pretty boring after awhile and certainly after one has experienced the exhilaration of high speed travel along primitive roads.

Sincerely,
Rachel Hollis
Monterrey, California

Roster of the Rollers

Roll-call of Recent, Renewing & Returning NEATO Members

- Rainer Schindler**, Fort Lauderdale, Florida *
- William Navidi**, Jacksonville, Florida *
- Thomas Guthrie**, Riverside, California ('72 Bus) *
- Chris Rheinschild**, Clemmons, North Carolina ('63 single cab, '67 13-window, '70 Westfalia) *
- Paul Smith**, Belton, Texas ('61 Single Cab) *
- Pete Sottnik**, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma ('59 D-D Panel, '64 DC, '71 Westfalia, '82 Westfalia Diesel) ***
- John Lago**, Oshkosh, Wisconsin ('62 Bus) **
- James H. Alton, II**, San Dimas, California ('66 21-window walkthrough) **
- Robert W. Elwell**, Westminster, Maryland ('67 SO42) **
- Robert J. "Scotty" Knox**, Lake Havasu City, Arizona ('58 Deluxe, '70 Dormobile, '68 Bus, '78 Bus) **
- Ray Hair**, Denton, Texas **
- Lance Elwell**, Alexandria, Virginia (3 Buses owned) *
- Donald Dahl**, Everett, Washington ('65 sub-hatch Westy SO33, '84 Westy) **
- Larry Hamre**, Eau Claire, Wisconsin (Looking for a Bus) **
- Bill Webner**, Elyria, Ohio ('61 SO23, '70 Panel, '76 Westy) **
- Jeff Fetterman**, Edina, Minnesota ('59 Deluxe) **
- Michael Krakowiak**, Santa Cruz, California ('64 Camper) **
- Don Cerow**, Santa Cruz, California ('77 Bus) *

* = Recent Member ** = Renewing Member *** = Returning after an absence

Getting' to Know:

Stewart Alcorn

- 1) **Age?** Well, I was born in 1964 and I hate doing math.
- 2) **Married, single? Any kids, pets?** Married to Susan since 1989. No kids but we have a cat named Coal.
- 3) **Joined NEATO?** Oh man. . . I first joined back in 1990 or 1991 (back when the *OBR* came as folded sheets of paper and the most important section was the classified ads, which took up most of the *OBR*), fell out the cargo doors a while ago and am sending a check to rejoin.
- 4) **Where are you from?** Susan says 'the loony bin,' but we have our house in Kenmore, Washington (suburb north of Seattle) and my job is in Olympia, so I am somewhere in that area.
- 5) **Tell us about your first bus.** I was in kindergarten and it would come by and pick me and a couple other kids up to take us to the indoctrination center. Fortunately they

determined I could walk that distance before I started 1st grade. Years later I got my first VW bus, a 1963 walk-thru Deluxe, which I still have.

- 6) **What motivated you to buy your first bus?** I don't know when I first began seeing more than a box while staring at a VW bus but I grew up in VWs, mostly squarebacks, so I was predisposed to it I guess. Anyhow, after seeing a number of buses I knew I had to get a 23-window Deluxe, so I was on the hunt for a good one through the later half of my college days. When I got my BS degree my parents told me they would buy me a car for a graduation present. . . any car I wanted. I believe they were thinking I would want a new Honda Quaalude, or some other 'practical' car. So they (mostly Mom) were a bit horrified when I announced what I really wanted. Although there was some 'discussion' on the matter, in the end they honored their original gift idea. Also,

fortunately, soon afterward this really nice 1963 Deluxe was in the *Hot VWs* classifieds. Getting this bus was quite an adventure and its story can be found in the Sept/Oct 1991 *OBR*.

- 7) **How many buses have you owned?** One! I have wanted others but Susan has put her foot down regarding having a bunch of cars strewn about the yard.

- 8) **Do you wrench on your own bus or farm out?** The only thing I have farmed out is a tranny rebuild and a little bodywork. Half the fun of these cars is the ability to work on them yourself, so why give someone else the pleasure and pay them too?

- 9) **Stock or slammed?** Personally I think slammed buses look silly. . . most of the time. I am a stock guy but can



Here is a shot of me and my better half, Susan, the day I got the bus back from the painter

appreciate a quality custom. Too often though, customization is like 80s hair-metal bands. The first one or two to put on Spandex and poof up the hair were different, but when every other band followed it became annoying.

10) **Best road trip done in your bus?** The bus and I have been on many road trips, so many that I have been in 34 of the lower 48 states in my bus. But my best road trip would have to have been when I went from Corvallis, Oregon (where I went for my undergraduate degree) to College Park, Maryland (where I went to graduate school). One of my best friends from childhood and I spent two and a half months putting 13,000 miles on the bus. We traveled from Oregon over to Michigan, then back to Utah, down to Arizona, across to Florida and finally up to Maryland. A smile always ends up on my face when I think of that trip.

11) **Favorite color combo of a bus?** Sealing wax red and chestnut brown. Unfortunately that color combo was not available for my year bus, but SWR and light beige looks pretty good too. Sealing wax red is similar to the color of Copper River sockeye salmon filets. . . another thing I really love.

12) **Best breakdown story?** Right after I bought the bus Susan and I went on a 'shakedown cruz' out to southeastern Oregon with some friends. We were headed out one morning and the smell of gas was pervasive. I pulled over and looked at the engine and it was covered in gas. . . YIKES!!! The gas line from the pump to the carb was cracked and loose. Fortunately our friends had been going to that area for years and knew the folks who owned the closest pit stop, over in Nevada. They had a new hose but no hose-clamps; I bought those as soon as I was back home along with a fire extinguisher. Not much of a breakdown story but it has a happy ending and it made me go through the entire bus with a critical eye towards safety.

13) **Dream bus?** Well, the 1963 walk-thru Deluxe is pretty close, but I do like the bullet turn indicators better than the fried eggs. I also have a soft spot in my heart for single-cabs.

14) **Custom paint or OG paint?** See answer to #9

15) **Favorite bus accessory or add-on?** Like most bus pilots I like the safari windows (no wonder there are several companies repoping them). Years ago there was a bus in *Hot VWs* with a vintage coffee maker that plugged into a cigarette lighter. When the coffee was ready you would tilt it to pour out the hot beverage. Now I don't drink much coffee but that was a damn cool accessory. But being a fisherman I must say that the bus-boat is my favorite accessory.

16) **Tell us something you're proud of, non-bus related.** I do wildlife art paintings, mostly of fish. In 1999 a painting I had done of some sockeye salmon was selected as the featured artwork for the Issaquah Salmon Days. The limited edition prints and my artist proofs sold out at the festival.

17) **Any advice to new bus owners?** Don't just buy the Idiots Guide. Take it out of the plastic and use it to get to know your bus. Twice I have stopped to help folks on the side of the road who are about to do crazy things to their VW in an attempt to fix it, and there sits the Idiots Guide unopened, and in one case, still in the plastic. That book instills confidence, which in turn allows you to drive your old bus more, which in turn makes you happy.

18) **Tunes?** Mostly audio-caffeine. . . Tool, Led Zeppelin, Hendrix, Nirvana, old Kiss Some easy listening. . . Cake, Grateful Dead, Pink Floyd... And a healthy sprinkling of Jazz.

19) **What do you do to support your bus habit?** I work for the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife in the fish health lab. We monitor the fish in all of the state hatcheries for various bacteria and viruses.

20) **Worst/funniest trend with buses?** The worst trend had to have been cutting out the rear wheel wells. Anything that involves surgery to the bus is not good in my book. Funniest? Trying to make a bus go fast enough to show up a Ferrari. . . it's a friggin' bus you knucklehead! If you want a fast car don't start with a bus. It's even funnier when they retain the stock brakes.

21) **Samba ID name?** Stewthefish.



MICRO ALBUM

Flash Your Holes

John Lago

Sometimes when you cut parts out of something, the subtraction actually ends up as an addition. For instance, if you cut the temper tantrums out of the time spent working on hard-to-reach parts of your Bus, think how that adds to the experience. Taking this logic one step further, what could you cut out of your Bus proper to save the agony of flying into a tantrum in the first place?

With me, it was a few simple access holes.

Look at the picture. See them holes. Them some bidges ain't there just because some drunk got silly with a sawzall. You'll notice that big hole—**Hole #1**—is very strategically~cut through the sheet metal over the engine compartment. If you could angle the picture up, you'd be looking down through the hole and saying, "Isn't that celestial? No more pulling the motor to get at the generator." Right. The size and placement of the hole allows you to pull up the whole fan shroud, generator and all. Think of what this means when you have something like a leaking seal on the oil cooler. Pull the whole motor? Just to get at two little oil seals? Yo mama. Also, the spark plugs are easier to reach—especially in the rain. As is the carburetor, among other things.

Hole #2 allows access to the fuel tank sending unit. For a long time, fuel tank sending units hated me. Either that or they thought they were in the union and thought they only had to show up and not actually work. Because in one summer I went through three sending units. There was no way in Bombay an ambition-challenged road rummy like me was going to waste all his party time repeatedly pulling a motor and fuel tank to

get at some steenking leettle sending unit, so that's why the hole. Sending units slip in and out of there like 87 millimeter pistons in 90 millimeter jugs. Pull the motor and fuel tank? Just to get at a lousy little sending unit?

Homey don't play that.

A little lower in the picture you see **Hole #3**. If you could stick the business end of a flashlight in there you'd be likely to say, "Hmmm." Then you'd say, "What an easy way to access the filler plug on the tranny," since it's directly inside and slightly to the left. Also, no more clumsy crawling under the Bus or taking off the rear tire to reach in and add oil. The clutch adjusting nut is in plain view too, so you know what that means.

And while you had the flashlight in there, it's likely you also noticed something else. You noticed the proximity of that miserable little section of brake line between the tee and the left rear hose. That thing is evil. As short and rigid as it is, and hidden way back as it is, its function goes way beyond delivering brake fluid. For this particular part, delivering brake fluid is only a cover. Its real purpose is to cause cross-threading on itself and related parts to the point where the guy who's stuck with the maintenance goes from a solid and a liquid to a rapidly expanding and highly explosive gas. We won't elaborate, other than to say that with that access hole cut where it is, the malefactive little section of brake line is no longer able to convert a mild-mannered mechanic into something that would not make mother proud.



Holes. They're not just naturally occurring phenomena in your wheel wells and rocker panels anymore. They can actually have a function other than a collective repository for gobs of Bondo.

Oh. And one more function. Deliberately cut holes in your Bus have the added ability to provide entertainment.

For instance, say you're into day two of a multi-day VW campout and interest is beginning to slacken. To ramp things up to their former level of excitement, flash your holes. Make sure to identify the purists beforehand, and make sure they witness the flashing. You can see where this is going. Purists hate modifications—especially modifications involving surgery. “What!” they say shocked. “You cut your Bus!?”

Explaining why you did the cutting ramps up the excitement even more. “A mechanical shortcut? Get outta Dodge!”

What usually follows is an animated lecture on the proper treatment of German Iron. You don't cut your Bus. It's no less than heresy to claim that there is such a thing as a mechanical shortcut, because taking the time and putting in the effort to go the long way around is actually a form of foreplay, and to deny this process is to cancel a feeling at the end of the job that can only be described as orgasmic.

Hasta Levitra, baby.

Anyway, you have to love that about our bunch. United by Buses and divided by opinions, and yet we make it work. Whether driving home a Bus or driving home a point, this is a tribe that strives to drive alive.



Mid-Life Crisis Bus Story

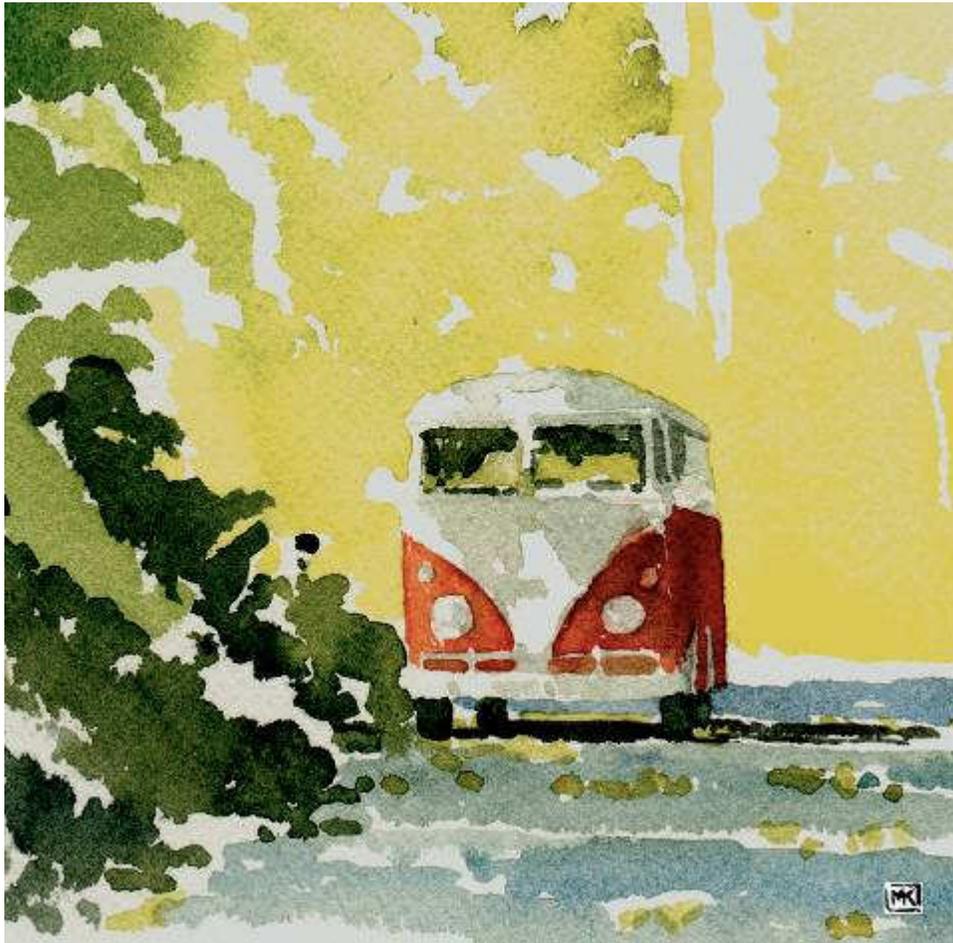
By Michael Kluckner

Part 3: On the Road Again

The bus was fixed, tuned, cleaned and ready to go. The man knew he was risking ridicule from his friends if he set off for California to retrace his route of 25 years earlier. Maybe he needed a new set of friends. Maybe he was completely out of synch with the world around him. Maybe he had to make a trip in the slow lane and spend minimum time on the Interstates and maximum time along the little roads—William Least Heat Moon's *Blue Highways*—tracing the coastlines of Washington, Oregon and northern California.

He realized that the bus's windshield was a two-way lens. Looking out from his slow-moving burro, he could see the fast-paced, modern world speeding by him, the occupants of the sleek modern sedans and fortress-like SUVs isolated by their wealth. Ironically, the lens worked both ways and he found that strangers were defining him through their perception of the old bus. As he chugged around, louts flashed peace symbols and gas jockeys asked whether he'd heard that Jerry Garcia had died.

He was aware of the Winnebago warriors, most of them elderly, who had the spirit of wanderlust he had when he was young. He told himself it's only because they never went further than their hair-dryer cords could reach when they were young—that's why



they're on the road now. But in their RVs they're not really traveling because they're pulling along enough stuff to fill a standard bungalow. They congregated in ghettos with hook-ups and sani-dumps where they watched their TVs and whiled away the time between meals. But the question nagged at him: were they really losers or were they merely more prosperous versions of what he once was? If

he went with the bus into an RV park, would they shun him and not invite him inside their motor homes to see their gun collections and hear about their operations?

In his experience, people headed either south or west if they were looking for something. He packed in his sleeping bag, the old Coleman stove, a pot and a fry pan, and a cooler with a little food, and headed

south. Once on the road he quickly fell into the routine of the smell, the noise of the engine, the bus following ruts in the pavement like a dog following a scent. The sun poured through the windshield onto his forearm and hand. Occasionally the bus seemed to become unhinged and wander for a minute, like it had a mind of its own. It *was* a vehicle for the Blue Highways, the secondary roads that are windy not twisty, rolling not hilly, without too many big bumps or dents. When he hit a real bump, like a railway crossing, the bus let out a crashing din and the front end pitched, with him above it tossed like a cork on a stormy sea.

Once on the road he quickly fell into the routine of the smell, the noise of the engine, the bus following ruts in the pavement like a dog following a scent.

It was happiest at about 35 to 45 mph, and he was astonished at the gap between third and fourth gears and how little torque there was in fourth, how he felt he'd be passed going uphill by loaded gravel trucks. He quickly relearned Bus Driving 101, rocketing down the hills breaking the sound barrier in order to rush up the other side. "Did I ever actually travel in these things?" he asked himself. It had been years since he had done any long-distance, or at least multi-hour-at-bus-speed, driving.

But slowly, slowly, he got used to it. He found on smooth straight stretches that he could drive with just one hand, perhaps his left one, and rest his right elbow on the wheel with his hand at his chin, like Rodin's thinker. It seemed appropriate because there wasn't much else to do but think, except on rough roads where he needed all his concentration to keep the bus from seeking a resting place in a ditch. He was uninterested in playing with the radio, and had no tapes to play, so he set to remembering whether his old buses had radios. Gradually, an image rose in his mind, as lazy and blurred as smoke from a cigarette, of a rectangular cutout, a hole on either side and some vertical lines cut in the metal panel—just the space for one. But there was enough sound already, of metal, whining engine fan, throaty exhaust noise, rumble of tires.

It was all very simple, but it made him anxious. He was on a level with all the pickups and the Sport Utility Vehicles, but they were huge and aggressive beside his little hippie van, menacing like bikers in a bar, and he felt like he was strapped to the front bumper.

He stopped at a roadside bar, figuring on a beer and a burger before making some more miles. It was early in the evening and quiet. Only the crack of the balls on the pool table in the back room and some low murmurs of conversation competed with a Shania Twain concert on the monster TV. The

bartender managed to be both busy with the accounts and attentive to him and the few others who were drinking there. She only had a couple of hours to go on her shift, she said, then home to sleep before an early start the next morning driving school bus. Rural America.

Back in the bus, driving south under the stars, the wind whistled through a crack in the body, or was it the vent window? The bus pitched along on the bumps, the headlights barely cutting through the blackness ahead. So hard to concentrate—the shapes and shadows on the side of the road formed into distracting beasts that were still taking shape in his mind although he'd passed them by. Once in a while lights appeared in the tiny wing mirror and, even though it was a secondary road, they blew up in size like a balloon, then bobbed in and out impatiently until a straight stretch appeared and they could blast past.

He could see the road below through the little hole for the gas pedal stem. He was *out there*, and recalled Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: "You see things vacationing on a motorcycle in a way that is completely different from any other. In a car you're always in a compartment, and because you're used to it you don't realize that through that car window everything is just more TV."

You're a passive observer and it is all moving by you boringly in a frame. On a cycle the frame is gone. You're completely in contact with it all. You're *in* the scene, not just watching it anymore, and the sense of presence is overwhelming. That concrete whizzing by five inches below your foot is the real thing, the same stuff you walk on, it's right there, so blurred you can't focus on it ..."

It has everything to do with being in control, and driving an old bus is like flying a flag that says you can do it.

So a VW bus is somewhere very much there, he thought, your hand almost touching the windshield, your separation from the SUVs and semitrailers being just a shield of rusty metal with maybe a spare tire bolted to the front like a big hard pillow, a primitive airbag. A shield of rusty metal, the front of a VW bus—that's what it reminded him of. A knight's shield—all it lacked was the handle on the inside.

Concentrate! The van swerved, unnervingly, and the raw taste of adrenalin instantly coated his tongue and jarred him awake. He caught a shallow breath—the harsh cool air from outside.

He felt insecure behind the wheel at night. Did he survive all those all-nighters because he was wide awake and a good driver, or just because he was lucky or there was no traffic on the road? Like Kerouac in *On The Road*, or John and Michelle and Denny and Cass crossing the country, Phillips writing "Go Where You Wanna Go" in his mind as the miles clicked by. The song began to play in his mind. Like that trip north from San Francisco to Vancouver in the winter, about 19 hours total, even though there was the ice storm in Grant's...

Concentrate! He sat up straighter and peered more intently into the blackness. A car came at him and streaked past, very close to the center line.

Someone had said that a bus is a metaphor for living your life at a slower pace, for being in control. As John Muir wrote, you just have to leave earlier. It has everything to do with being in control, and driving an old bus is like flying a flag that says you can do it. And when you went slower, and took longer to start, your beast of burden lasted longer. That was "conservation," in a manner of speaking,

even though the VW was practically cave-man technology even in the 60s and 70s. But by comparison with the American cars that were around at the time, the VW was economical, environmentally friendly (by being fuel efficient) and reliable.

John Muir. The best technical writer ever, perhaps? If he had lived he could have coached the generations who have since tried to write manuals for

TVs, VCRs and Microsoft operating systems, and the world would be a saner place. Muir's *Compleat Idiot's Guide* was like a Codex, a Talisman. Years ago he had kept it in his bus more because its mystical vibes might influence the engine than because he would be able to leap into action and fix something. It was magical and could be summoned to deal with all manner of devils. So different from other auto repair books, which lacked the funkiness and seemed somehow more manly but would say as their first instruction: "Remove the engine." Well, how?

He began to reflect again on Pirsig's book from so long ago. Pirsig and his son Chris rode together on one motorcycle while his friends John and Sylvia rode another. Pirsig analyzed the little disharmonies between John and Sylvia, and between him and John. The latter was the guy thing, which was obviously very important to Pirsig, "a matter," he wrote, "of small importance: how much one should maintain one's own motorcycle. It seems natural and normal to me to make use of the small tool kits and instruction booklets supplied with each machine, and keep it tuned and adjusted myself." John couldn't be bothered—he preferred to let a competent mechanic take care of those things so that they would be done right. Pirsig reflected on this in his roadhouse conversations with John, when they were having beers and the motorcycle was on Pirsig's mind, but he found that it stopped the conversation in its tracks. John was not interested, but Pirsig, who sounded like a real pain in the ass, just kept probing and probing like it's "a tooth with a missing filling. You can never leave it alone."

The bus ploughed on into the blackness. He thought more about its mechanical reality in the digital age. It didn't have a working speedometer and he couldn't imagine it needing one. He just went as fast as he could and knew he wasn't breaking any limits. And then there were the "instruments," the two warning lights: a red one on the left that said the fan belt hadn't broken, and a green one on the right that said the engine hadn't yet dried out and seized. You didn't really need either one if your ears were working, if you were paying attention to the sounds of the machine. Like Robert Louis Stevenson's donkey, Modestine, on his travels through southern France. "I shall call you Modestine," he said aloud to his bus. At night, Stevenson bedded down with the donkey tethered nearby and went to sleep listening to the sound of her grazing; he thought he should soon bed down and listen to his bus ticking and cooling and rusting.

He felt the kick of adrenaline again. Was that a microsleep? He sat up straight, his back beginning to ache. There must be a place to pull off up ahead. An RV park, or a campground? He felt a curious sense of estrangement from everything, born of his first day on the road. Like Least Heat Moon, who took off after learning he'd lost his job, his wife had a lover, and the weather was breaking records for cold; "a man who couldn't make things go right could at least go," he wrote. "He could quit trying to get out of the way of life. Chuck routine. Live the real jeopardy of circumstance. It was a question of dignity."



Up ahead on the right an old neon sign glowed. He backed off the throttle and geared down to third, hoping it was some kind of campground. The sign was for a motel, but a painted board nearby, illuminated in the sickly green wash of a cobra-head mercury vapor lamp, said "RVs - Hookups." A yellow incandescent lamp, blurred by the swarming of a thousand bugs, hung above the doorway to the office. It would have to do; he didn't know where

he was, didn't want to just pull off and park. He thought quickly of spending the night on the roadside, but in his mind could hear banjos playing the opening chords of the theme from "Deliverance."

His spot in the RV park was between two huge Winnebagos. With the bus's rear bench turned into a bed and his sleeping bag rolled out, he lay down and found he could watch the TV in the living room of the rolling castle next door. It wasn't a program he recognized and, anyway, he couldn't hear the sound. Should've made new curtains. It was hardly an auspicious beginning to a return to the road, but at least he had made it through the first day. He rolled the other way and was quickly asleep.

The End

Michael Kluckner is a Canadian artist and writer living in Australia.

Original art on page -- by the author.



From the Vault: This story first appeared in OBR November/December 1996:

Easy Transporter Modifications for Fun and Profit

by Jon Furst and Cletus Riedel (with help from Ed O'Donnell)



Picture #1

Tools needed: Measuring tape (metric), small cutting utensils, a medium size chisel, large hammer, marking device, and an incredibly dangerous reciprocating saw.



Picture #2

Use the measuring tape and lay out the area to remove, taking into consideration the size of tires you will be mounting. We are installing 215/85 R16 BR-945's, so some serious hogging out is in order.



Picture #3

Mark the area with something you can see clearly such as a grease pencil, magic marker, or a can of John Deere green spray paint. Keep your lines straight so to insure a professional finish.

Picture #4

Take the incredibly dangerous reciprocating saw and turn it on. Laugh in the face of apparent danger, and cut vertical strips just short (6.375 mm) of the line.



Picture #5

Now with a handy helper, start bending the strips back into the wheel well. I personally prefer this method than just cutting the opening because this creates a little radius, giving it a finished look. So what if the strips rattle, *all* buses rattle, don't they?



Picture #6

The finished product. Now mount your superwide 50's on Cragar SS rims (with adapters) and cruise!

Gettin' to Know:

Stan Wohlfarth



1) **Age:** 43

2) **Married, single? Any kids, pets?** Married 20 years to one wife, 3 kids and 3 cats

3) **Joined NEATO?** Been a 'friend' of NEATO since the late 80's serving in various leadership roles with LiMBO (www.limbobus.org). Actually joined as an official NEATO member about 2004.

4) **Where are you from?** I live in the Boston, Massachusetts area. Grew up in Dayton, Ohio.

5) **Tell us about your first Bus?** My first bus was a '71 Westfalia. I found it in New Hampshire and it had previously been used to haul vending machines.

6) **What motivated you to buy your first Bus?** I needed something bigger and better for camping than a bug.

7) **How many Buses have you owned?** I have owned 4 buses. I still have 3 of them. The '71 is long gone.

8) **Do you wrench on your own Buses or farm out?** I wrench on my own bus. How could I not? My day job is making VW service manuals for Bentley Publishers.

9) **Stock or Slammed?** Stock. I need the ground clearance for off-

road adventures.

10) **Best road trip done in your Bus?** My son Ben and I drove my '81 Westy out to Mt. Rushmore in 2000. We had a great time and spent over 2 weeks on the road.

11) **Favorite Color Combo of a Bus?** Seagull Grey over Mango Green

12) **Best breakdown story:** I've had plenty of breakdowns, but the most memorable was the first one. The fuel pump on my Dad's '72 Beetle failed. This was before I was even old enough to drive. I managed to replace the fuel pump with a new one, but didn't get the fuel lines back on correctly. I came that close to saving the day...

13) **Dream Bus?** Seagull Grey/Mango Green, double door Standard, with sunroof.

14) **Custom paint or OG color?** OG color

15) **Favorite bus accessory or add on?** Westfalia Big Top tent

16) **Tell us something you're proud of, non-bus related?** I'm proud of my kids and all the VW and Audi service manuals I've produced over the past 13 years.

17) **Any advice to new Bus owners?** My advice to new bus owners would be to first get a good service manual (John Muir's Idiot's guide or Bentley) and be patient. I see so many new bus owners figuring out all the modifications (lowering, custom paint, etc.) they are going to make before their first bus

even arrives. I strongly believe in starting with a stock mechanical restoration and then driving the bus for awhile before screwing it up with customizing.

18) **Tunes?** Rock, old and new

19) **What do you do to support your Bus habit?** I sell VW parts to support my bus habit

20) **Worst/funniest trend with Buses?** Buses that are too low with narrowed beams and low profile tires

21) **Samba Id name:** Stanagon.



There Are a Million Untold Bus Stories—We Would Love to Have Yours!

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George Bossarte
Phone: (617) 876-0390

gbeng@world.std.com



NEATO CHAPTERS

ARIZONA

London Bridge Bullis
2185 W. Acoma Blvd.
Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403
Ronnie Feitelson: (928) 680-7664
ronnie@oldvolks.com
www.old-volks.com

CALIFORNIA

Bakersfield Utilities & Sambas (B.U.S.)

3208 Vassar St.
Bakersfield, CA 93306
Sandy Foley: (661) 871-1210
bugs_and_buses@yahoo.com

Orange County Transporter Owners (OCTO)

722 14th Street
Huntington Beach, CA 92648
Erik Kopljen: (714) 374-7506
www.octo.org

Sacramento Samba Society

Todd Olmstead
8540 Pheasant Ridge Lane
Orangevale, CA 95662-2139
(916) 813-1961

Vintage Transporter Owners

1393 Chrysolite Ave.
Mentone, CA 92359
Johnny Salazar: (909) 389-9477
www.KeepItStock.com

COLORADO

Colorado Bus Club

P.O. Box 1116
Lyons, CO 80540
Bruce Journey: (303) 823-5189
66westys@prodigy.net

FLORIDA

Das Kool Bullis

1901 Strickland Road
Neptune Beach, FL 32266
Mark Pribanic: (904) 434-5818
pribanic356@yahoo.com

MISSOURI

Kansas City Kombis
4712 N.W. 80th; Kansas City, MO
64151

Pinkney Newell: (816) 587-2838
pinknewell@aol.com

Missouri Micros

5006 Kirk Hill Road
Columbia, MO 65201
David Filcoff: (573) 214-0359
v-dub@elvis.mu.org

Springfield Area Micro-Bus

Addicts (S.A.M.B.A.)
Lance & Wendy Moeller
(417) 833-0939

NEW MEXICO

Route 66 Splits

524 Sixth, NW; Albuquerque, NM
87102

J.P. Henriksen: (505) 247-1177
a59camper@yahoo.com

NORTH CAROLINA

Piedmont Transporter Owners

1624 Wilmore Drive
Charlotte, NC 28203
(704) 376-8912
Jake Armour: Volksheads@aol.com
Bryan Mitchell:
bryanmitchell@gmail.com

OHIO/MICHIGAN

Lake Erie Area Kombi Owners Involvement League (LEAKOIL)

35 Hanover Road; Pleasant Ridge,
MI 48069
Bill Webner: (440) 322-9459 (Ohio)
wwebner@oh.rr.com

Keith Price: (248) 545-8414
(Michigan)

pricebug@comcast.net

OKLAHOMA

T-Town Transporters aka The Oklahoma Bus Heads

Pete Sottnik
300 N. Gardenia Ave.
Broken Arrow, OK 74012-2111
(918) 258-1401
bushead59@yahoo.com

WASHINGTON

Cascade Kombis
241 - 11th Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102
Zach Yeager: (206) 266-0114 (day)
(425) 922-9224 (eve)
zach@yeagerworks.com
www.cascadekombis.org

WISCONSIN

Die Busbesizer Gruppe
2978 N. Pierce Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212
Dan Soiney: (414) 562-0172
dansoiney@hotmail.com
www.dreamwater.com/dbg

CANADA

ALBERTA

Caretakers of Alberta Transporters

David J. Glass
Box 896
Pincher Creek, Alberta T0K 1W0
CANADA
(403) 627-2081
buggy@telusplanet.net

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Bulli Boys Transporter Klub
4150 Dollarton Highway
North Vancouver, BC, V7G 1A2
CANADA
Kevin Thornton: (604) 985-0093
info@bulliboys.com
www.bulliboys.com

