



Bill and Jenn at the Grand Canyon



Bill pulling the trailer to the next adventure

I Knew I Was a TrailBlazer



This month, TrailBlazer would like to introduce you to Bill and Jenn Gehr, a couple that has been full-timing for five years, but working with RVs for 34. If the name sounds familiar it's because Bill Gehr is TrailBlazer's very own Ask RV Bill. Get to know the man behind the column a bit better with this month's "I Knew I was a TrailBlazer" feature!

TB: How long have you been camping and RVing? Who introduced you to it? Tell us how it all began!

BG: Long before we met each other over seven years ago, both Jenn and I felt as though we had been camping our entire lives. In 1972, I went to work for an Airstream dealer in Ventura, California, and then in 1979, I started Bill's RV Service in the same town. My very first motorhome was given to me unexpectedly by a former customer who had passed away and left it to me in her will. Jenn has been camping with her family since she was five. Her father, Steve, should have received a medal for his patience and good humor in driving the family of four around the western part of the United States over many a summers with the old Winnebago, fondly named "Shamu." Annual trips to Lake Havasu, off-road trips to the Mojave Desert, and camping at Carpinteria State Beach in beautiful

Southern California were a way of life for us both. We love outdoor activities and RVing simply came naturally to us. We have been on the road as full-timers for five years now!

TB: How did you first hear about Thousand Trails?

BG: A friend of mine had purchased a Platinum membership to TT and explained to me the benefits of having such a campground membership. As I was looking to retire and begin my dream of traveling full-time, my wife and I saw many benefits in purchasing an Elite membership. Our first Thousand Trails outing was to the Rancho Oso preserve in Santa Barbara, California.

TB: What is one of your fondest camping memories? How about one of your fondest TT memories?

BG: Honestly, we could write an entire book on this subject alone! Being that we are from the West Coast it was very exciting to have an opportunity to have many TT parks to choose from when traveling to the east. Three and a half years ago, we went east to pick up our first Boston Bulldog in Plainville, Connecticut. It was an easy decision to make the Sturbridge, Massachusetts preserve our home base for a month to get the puppy used to RV life and potty training before we continued

on our journey. At Sturbridge, there is a large, peaceful lake surrounded by beautiful poplars. During our visit we watched a beaver nibble down a golden leafed Aspen tree and we watched it fall into the water. We took a picture of this and actually won the grand prize for the Thousand Trails photo contest!

TB: Any funny camping/RVing stories?

BG: One of our other favorite Thousand Trails parks is Bend-Sunriver in Bend, Oregon. With pristine views of snowcapped Mount Bachelor and the lazy little Deschutes River winding around the preserve, it's hard not to fall in love. A fond memory of this location was when we rented kayaks and saw bald eagle chicks being fed by their caring parents. What a treat for us native Californians!

Another favorite memory took place at the Gateway to Cape Cod preserve in Rochester, Massachusetts, where we took our bicycles on the ferry over to Martha's Vineyard. We cycled close to 50 miles that day and enjoyed lunch overlooking Chappaquiddick! On the ferry ride home that evening, the perfect sunset capped off yet another perfect day as full-time RVers. Every week we have those moments where we look at each other and say, "THIS is why we do what we do!"

TB: What type of camper are you/what equipment do you use? What do you prefer and why? (ex: fifth wheel, RV, tent, cabins, etc.)

BG: We had a motorhome in the past, and quickly sold it. Jenn has an extensive background in the horse world, and is very comfortable driving a truck and trailer configuration. In addition, we absolutely love the panoramic back window views that are offered in a fifth wheel. We travel with two mountain bikes and two road bikes so the floor plan configuration for storage is most conducive for us and our lifestyle towing a trailer. Our first fifth wheel was a 32-foot and we quickly outgrew it. Now we travel in a 36-foot, full wall slide Carriage Cameo that is towed by our F350 King Ranch dually truck.

TB: Where have you gone that you wouldn't have otherwise, if it hadn't been for your Thousand Trails membership?

BG: Having a Thousand Trails membership encouraged us to go further east than we might have initially wanted to travel. We love scenic byways and rich history so planning a four month trip to the East Coast was so easy knowing we had direct access to Thousand Trails all along the way. Knowing there would be a plethora of lobster rolls to eat, venturing out on a whale watch excursion and having the opportunity to watch the fall colors change along the East Coast was a dream of ours that we have enjoyed making come true! The Moody Beach preserve in Maine is one of our very favorites!

TB: What is your favorite part about the outdoor lifestyle?

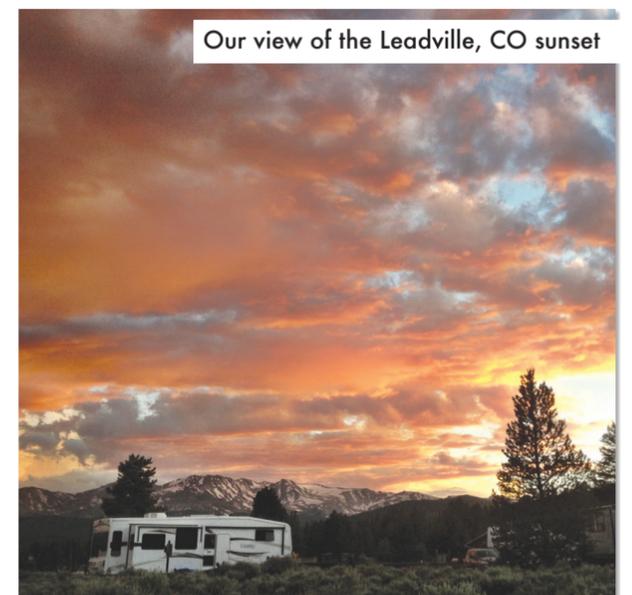
BG: Experiencing firsthand and on a daily basis, God's majestic handiwork! We are avid outdoors folks and love exploring the trails with our two dogs, cycling into little



Jenn with the dogs, Brie and Ginger



The Gehr's award-winning photo of the Sturbridge preserve



Our view of the Leadville, CO sunset

Find The Evergreen Tree

An evergreen tree is hidden somewhere in this issue. Drop us a postcard telling us where you found it, and if your card is drawn you'll win a \$25 American Express Gift Card!

Judy Johnson

from **Woodland, CA**

found the evergreen tree on page 54 of the November/December issue. Did you find the tree in this issue? Send your entry (postcards only) to

TrailBlazer Evergreen Tree,
Two North Riverside Plaza,
Suite 800, Chicago, IL 60606.

Postmark deadline is March 31, and remember – the tree could be a different color and size.

Fast Facts entries will be entered in our Monthly Drawing to win a **\$25 American Express Gift Card!**

This month's Fast Facts winner is

Nate Booth
of Camarillo, CA

A	B	M		O	B	E	D		C	A	A	M	
R	A	Y		F	I	R	E		O	A	H	E	
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Answers - Crossword puzzle can be found on page 50

4	9	6	2	3	1	8	7	5
1	7	3	5	8	6	4	9	2
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7	6	4	9	5	2	3	8	1
6	3	7	1	9	8	2	5	4
5	1	2	6	7	4	9	3	8
9	4	8	3	2	5	7	1	6

Answers - Sudoku puzzle can be found on page 62



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unknown towns for lunch, and fly fishing the days away. John Muir summed it up in one famous sentence – “The mountains are calling and I must go.”

TB: Can you finish this sentence? **I knew I was a TrailBlazer when...**

BG: We turned the key to begin our dream of traveling as full-time RVers!

TB: Feel free to share any other camping/RVing stories here.

BG: Without fail, every campground we visit we end up making new friends. Some of those friends have become our closest over the last few years. People who camp on a regular basis are generally friendly, genuinely helpful and downright thankful! We know those are the types of individuals we want as our friends/neighbors. Colorado

has a special place in our heart for RV life and outdoor adventures. From mountain bike training for the famed Leadville Silver Rush 50 mountain bike race, learning to fly fish in fast-moving waters, and ordering up a dream bike at the Moots factory in Steamboat Springs, the last two summers and falls have been more than we could have hoped for. This spring and summer we will be enjoying Thousand Trails all the way up the Pacific Northwest, one right after another! Now that we have been on the road for number of years people often ask us where we are going to stop and settle down. Settle down!? RV Life is for us! Even our personalized license plate says so! We know that life is short and that tomorrow is not guaranteed so we live each day to the fullest! We are already planning upcoming trips all the way through 2016 and beyond. Maybe we will see you on the open road! Follow us at www.BillGehr.com. ■