

## Fire in our RV!!!

Well, this month ended with a life altering experience. Most of you are aware that we had a fire in our coach. This is something we have listened to others talk about, but somehow never dreamed we would be giving a first hand account of our own. This occurred in the pre dawn hours of August 30th. Although it is like a bad dream, I have to say we have much to be thankful for, as it could have been much worse. Everyone can follow the restoration process on our web site, so I will not need to put pictures of the actual fire in this newsletter.

Let me back up to before the fire, where we left off following our departure from John & Barbara. We headed for Elkhart, IN for the second time this year to meet up with Ed & Kaye Lee. We ended up back in the Elkhart Campground. While here we also saw Pete & Nancy from the 400 chapter as well as Wally Ford.

By the 19th of August we finally headed East with Ed & Kaye. We ended up at the Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio. We had been here before and is a great place to stay. This was the site of our fire on the 30th.

I really have difficulty putting into words the experience of that morning. Most of you know that we were asleep when the fire started. I woke sometime between 5 AM and 6 AM. It was still dark outside. I think I heard some noise, a popping or cracking, not sure. When I stood up and looked to the front of the coach, visibility was poor. As I walked forward, I realized it was smoke and immediately called for Bob to get up. At the same time, the smoke detector went off. We began to exit the coach and walked around to the outside wall of the refrigerator, which confirmed the presence of the fire in the refrigerator area. There were flames on the ground from the blown out vent cover. Kaye was running toward our coach, screaming for us to wake up, not knowing we were already outside. Our friends and other camp ground people started coming to our aide with fire extinguishers. Smoke was billowing up towards the roof. At this point I grabbed Whiskers, our black cat, (who seemed frozen in fear) off the dash and put him in the car. I then moved the car away from the coach, while Bob was involved with others trying to put out the fire. I didn't know where our white cat, Princess was, as I hadn't seen her. Obviously, we couldn't re-enter the coach and just called her. It took only minutes for the density of the smoke to become overwhelming and flames could be seen coming out of the roof. The very sad result was that we lost her to smoke inhalation. The fireman gave her oxygen to try and revive her, but it was too late. We miss her so very much!

It didn't take long for us to realize how lucky we were and how we were blessed! The fire scene told the story. We were only minutes from being overcome by smoke ourselves! We were on a military base in stead of being in a rural area, miles from any fire department.

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The camper directly behind us was a fireman on vacation, and quickly took the lead in helping to control the fire until the fire company arrived. That fire could have started any time at all, when we weren't home, which probably would have resulted in loosing both cats and the motor home too. I was glad that I was successful in putting my surgery behind me the month before. This could have happened during my recovery period or worse. Ed & Kaye Lee, our 400 friends were tremendously supportive following the fire and we are eternally grateful to them. People at the scene were so very helpful, including the firemen. The fire chief personally made arrangements for our beloved Princess to be picked up at the scene, to take care of her little body. We had her cremated. The fire chief also made arrangements for temporary housing on base for us until we could figure out what we were doing. The next few days was spent pulling ourselves together, getting over the shock of it all and talking with our insurance company, GMAC. Although the actual flames of the fire seemed to be confined to the area of the refrigerator, there was extensive smoke and water damage through out. GMAC sent an engineer out to assess the cause of the fire. The decision was then made by GMAC to move it back to Elkhart, IN to Elkhart Service and Collision, who we knew and were happy with.

Now what do we do? So this is what it feels like to be homeless, although we are better off than many. Coming back to Elkhart for the third time this year, we found support from our close friends, Henry & Anne and their daughter, Wendy and son-in-law, Henry. Henry and Anne are full timer's, just not HR owners. We met them before they went on the road and traveled with them on a few occasions. It is in times like these that you realize who your friends really are. We have lived day by day, waiting, waiting, waiting, first for one inspector, than another inspector, then for the tear down process so we can ultimately get to the restoration. It is a process and there is no way around it, but when you are the one who is homeless, we are the ones who have the real sense of urgency. I really don't know what I will do with the September newsletter. I will have to wait and see. Thank you for all the phone calls and notes from our friends. We really appreciate your caring.

