

Dallas

Fort Parker State Park, Texas, U.S.

—

June 7, 2017 by [Scott Gilbertson](#)

From Austin we drifted north, toward Dallas, hitting a milestone along the way:





I spied this vintage GMC by the side of the road. Later I was talking to someone at a gas station not far from here who said there was a Travco further down the same road.

We pulled into Fort Parker State Park on a Thursday afternoon and spent the next day watching the campground fill up. This is more or less the pattern, even in summer, the weekends are jammed full, during the week we have the campgrounds to ourselves.





Using the fan to fly origami birds



We passed a couple of days in Fort Parker State Park and then headed north to Plano, TX to visit Corrinne's sister and her family. Thanks to the bus we ended up spending an entire week in Plano. Let this be a lesson to those of you who have invited us to your homes, sometimes we way overstay to that point when the smell of rotten fish is upon us. We tried to get it off in the pool.





Possibly worse we shipped a ton of parts, random purchases, laptops I'm reviewing and other stuff that piled up around the house. Seriously, think twice before you invite us over. It all starts out innocently enough. We show up for a couple days, make some vague plans and then. Then.







Technically Kenny's birthday, but since the girls are close too they joined in. And Elliott, he manages to weasel his way into all sorts of things.

The engine was, yet again, running hot on the way into Plano. I figured since we had a couple days and there wasn't really room to park on the street anyway, I would take it to a repair shop and get the radiator fixed and have a place to park — two birds one stone sort of thing.

I found a tiny pinhole size leak in the back side of the radiator, but then the shop that I went to at first turned out to not be able to solder. Kids these days. But they didn't seem opposed to me leaving the bus there for a few days, so we pulled the radiator off and I drove it over to another shop that did solder (I had the first shop replace two belts, which was about the same price as paying for a week's worth of parking).

The old guy at the radiator shop — by the way, never trust a mechanic under 50 — took one look at the radiator and said I can't patch that. When we first got it off and I saw the back my reaction was very similar. I believe what I said was, oh shit. The pinhole leak was small enough that you could only find it when it was pressurized, but it had obviously been going for some time. And the fins were bent in at the corners which means someone had probably been in there already.

Long story short, for those that don't find engine adventures entertaining¹, I gave him the go ahead to re-core it. Expensive, but we want to be able to get into the mountains and not worry about overheating. I even considered making it four core, but held off on that since clearance could have been an issue.

Getting the new cores and having it all rebuilt added a weekend and some change to our stay. But it gave

me time to install the water tank and get the solar panels on the roof. So I spent my morning in the alley behind a mechanic's wrestling a 65 gallon water tank under a bed and crimping pex. To do all that I had to empty out everything under the bed and pile it out in the alley with me. And then run back and forth to home depot ten times in two days. Oh who am I kidding, it was probably almost twice that many times. I actually didn't think much of the whole project, but then one day I just left everything outside the bus while I was at home depot and I came back around the corner and realized it looked like a small tornado had hit a dumpster and blown everything all over the alley.

In the afternoons I would eventually start sweating so much my eyebrows would fall me and I couldn't see anymore. I'd give up and pack it up. Fortunately there was a pool back at the house and I could spend some time recovering in proper fashion — floating it all away. The kids of course spent nearly all their time in the pool playing with their cousins.

Eventually I got the water tank in and the radiator back in to. Started it up, drove home, everything seemed fine. Well. Maybe it was a tad hotter than I'd like, but it was 95 that evening so I dismissed it.

We said our goodbyes and headed west, into the sunset.





We weren't even out of the subdivision when the temperature gauge started to climb again. There was some creative swearing in the bus for a few miles. It's frustrating to fix something and realize you didn't have the right problem, but it's even more frustrating when you spent almost \$1000 doing it. I stopped at an auto parts store and let the bus cool, while I contemplating trying to install a new thermostat in the parking lot. Me pulling out radiators at the side of the road, it could be a thing. The part store intervened and saved me from myself by not having the part I needed anyway.

Eventually the engine cooled and I thought screw this, let's push on. Perhaps not the best choice, but I'm stubborn and I needed to get on the road. I also decided to test something hairbrained. Back when we first entered Texas I put some insulation around the engine doghouse, mostly just to cut down on the heat coming off the engine into the cabin, but also to cut down on the noise. It happened to coincide with the engine starting to run hot, so I thought well, let's crack the doghouse and see what happens, maybe that extra airflow was helping.

Crazy, I know. But. *But*. Well, no that didn't help at all, but it did reveal something interesting — a loud clattering sound that was previously muffled enough that I assumed it was just some pans in the oven rattling. But with the engine hood open it was very clearly louder and coming from the engine. The mechanically inclined could probably put those two clues together — rattling metal sounds and overheating engine — and figure out the problem. It took me about 20 miles but it slowly started to dawn on me, water pumps have ball bearings in them.

We pushed it as far as Denton, which wasn't far and, very frustrated, called around looking for someone to take a look. About five different shops didn't want anything to do with it, one shop did, but couldn't get to it for another week. Finally on the advice of one of the other shops I called a place way outside of town that supposedly "did old engines". No one answered so I said screw it, let's drive out there and see. So I did and somehow convinced the shop owner, who was mainly a rat rod and custom car builder, to take a look at the bus. Well, I didn't really convince him, the bus did, the bus is cool like that.

So he agreed to replace the water pump the next day. We grabbed a hotel room to wait it out.

-
1. If engine adventures bore this is not the blog for you. Until we get everything dialed in I expect to have more engine adventures. [←](#)

2 Comments



Drew Eldridge June 29, 2017 at 2:14 p.m.

Bout time. I was jonesing for a new adventure. I almost sent a message on FB. You have to give the people what they need. An escape and hope that there is life outside of my cubicle.

I know its frustrating at times out there. But its worse in here.

Happy trails.



[Scott](#) June 29, 2017 at 3:06 p.m.

@drew-

I got a few more cued up, but I can't upload photos at the moment. Waiting to see if a forest fire is going to force us to evacuate our current camp. Can't go down and use coffee shop wifi cause I'm scared they won't let me back to get the bus. Never leave the bus.