

by Workamper Darren Koepf

# THE GREAT ENGINEER RESCUE

It became clear to me after watching a movie with my four-year-old daughter, that Tinkerbell and I have a lot in common. In the movie, “The Great Fairy Rescue,” Tinkerbell’s fascination with how things worked lead to her being captured and taken inside a human house. Her capture prompted the other fairies to launch a daring fairy rescue.

After some intense action sequences and nail biting suspense, it was Tinkerbell’s quick study and understanding of the workings of a car engine that saved the day – just in the nick-of-time! Like Tinkerbell, I have always liked to tinker and study how things worked. I think that is why, over the past 25 years, I migrated towards a career of designing and commissioning industrial automation systems, but became, in effect, captured by my career. I think my story could accurately be titled, “The Great Engineer Rescue.”

Once upon a time, I would spend most of my days in the field as a commissioning engineer. For many years, I would work out-of-town for a few weeks and then be home for a weekend. This was not the best formula for a happy, healthy and vibrant marriage no matter how much money I was bringing home.

I figured my wife, Anne, could come with me and stay in the hotel. But life in a hotel room is not all that great for weeks at a time. So we decided to buy a used RV and stay at a campground near my project sites and life has not been the same since.

This solution solved so many problems because I got to be ‘home’

every night, sleep in my own bed and eat home-cooked meals. I had my wife, my cats, good income, PerDiem allowance - we were living the life. And then...we became pregnant! It wasn’t that this was not part of the grand family plan, but it took living in an RV to find that magic moment.

However, my days and nights were still filled with the stress of commissioning multi-million dollar automation projects, impossible deadlines, working unbearable hours, endless meetings and frequently switching schedules from days to nights as the project demanded.

So while working on a project in Buffalo, NY my daughter was born. My work did not really afford the daddy luxuries of watching her first steps, her first words, her first feedings, etc. I did change her first diaper though, but I was becoming a stranger to her.

Oh, but the income and thrill of tinkering and making things work just in the nick-of-time to save the day was awesome, but to be honest, I really wanted to be there for those firsts and no amount of pixie dust will bring those moments back.

And then...we became pregnant again! (There must have been something about that relaxing campground lifestyle, eh?) My son was almost born in Miami, but we decided to detour to my home town in Louisiana where family could help out.

Now, my wife and daughter were in Louisiana, while I was in Miami, commissioning another multi-million dollar automation project, to an impossible deadline, working even more unbearable hours with even more

meetings and frequently switching schedules from days to nights as the project demanded. Okay – this was not turning out to be such a good family-friendly-career anymore. I had become captured and I needed an exit strategy or I was going to miss the very thing I was working so hard for.

We had joined Escapees RV Club, even before we had our RV, so we could get mail delivered to our different hotels. There was a spot in their magazine for a company called ‘Workamper News’ that offered to find Great People Great Jobs in Great Places. Could that be us?

We decided to check this company out and we signed up for their magazine. We now had a get-out-of-jail pass, but no exit strategy since I still needed to generate income for my new family.

Being in my early 40’s, retirement was many years off. Most of the jobs we saw advertised would not generate the income we desired. A nine month clock was ticking and I needed to have my exit strategy synchronized with my son’s exit strategy.

I needed to be rescued and engineer a new career path; a livelihood that would allow me to keep my wife as a Mommy-on-Demand and create a new position for me as Daddy-on-Demand. Something that would allow us to travel the country and see and do things with our kids, but somehow still generate the income we desired. Tick, tock, tick, tock...

Coinciding with my son’s birth, I resigned my position as a Sr. Systems Engineer in the summer of 2010, thus ending my lucrative income stream and all the benefits that came with it.

To be honest, I was scared to death and wondered if I had made a devastating decision as a new father. Many of my colleagues thought I was crazy or delusional for resigning, but I chose family over career so I thought they were crazy for staying given the same choice. I believed in God, family and the resources I found in Workamper News to help navigate my way.

With young family in tow, we traveled to Campbellsville, KY and I worked as a stower at Amazon for the Christmas season of 2010 for my ‘rebound’ gig.

After that, we traveled back to Buffalo where I had an automation teaching opportunity lined up for the summer. Anne worked night security at the RV park in exchange for rent, but we had to pay for electricity. Systems in our RV were starting to fail due to neglect of any maintenance whatsoever.

This was no way to live and sustain my family for the next 20 years. If we were going to travel and maintain this full-time RV lifestyle, which we loved, I knew I needed to get some things fixed on our rig and generate some stable income.

I knew how to spell RV, and for fun, I had automated some of the electrical systems, but knew absolutely nothing about water heaters, refrigerators, furnaces, batteries, converters or really anything that made my ‘house’ work. I was overwhelmed. We had been living in our used RV for about 5 years by then and it was 4 years old when we bought it.

I tuned into a Workamper webinar and listened to this guy called the “RV Professor.” He was explaining

different topics about RV maintenance. I thought, “Wow! Could I really fix these things myself?” Terry Cooper was about to rock my world and change my life in a huge way and for the better!

I signed up for Terry’s ‘RV Technician Take Home Course.’ In the evenings and weekends, I hyper-studied every video numerous times and read every article he referenced. I took every test until I really understood the information, however it was presented. I then bought some basic tools and started working on my RV.

I found it was true what the Professor has always said – 80% of this stuff was easy to fix! With Terry’s information, some tools and a little bit of pixie dust, I was able to get all of my RV systems fully functioning again. It was not only easy, but I really liked the tinkering aspect of it!

In a short time, the front desk at the campground was sending RV folks my way with little repair jobs and I could see how this could become quite lucrative!

At that time, I didn’t have a lot of experience working on many RVs, but the way Terry explained things in his videos, helped me have confidence to service most of the RV systems I came across. With this new-found RV know-how, a new vocation was beginning to take shape, including the ability to travel full-time like Anne and I had dreamed about.

I also felt that the income would present itself as I learned more! I looked at this opportunity as though I was a farmer and the RVs were my crops and as long as I tended to my crops I would reap a bountiful harvest.

After many emails to Terry bugging him with comments and questions, we decided to schedule a phone call. Terry asked if I had considered becoming an RV Technician. I thought that it would be a great pathway to learn the other 20% of the systems on RVs and become a better ‘farmer.’

Through a contact Terry knew in Texas, my family relocated there and I got a job as an RV Technician at the end of 2011. This turned out to be a



Above: Workamper and RV Tech Darren Koepf with his wife and kids. Right top: The Koepps’ camp site setup. Right lower: Darren’s daughter helps Daddy with the remodeling of their RV.



perfect fit for a tinkerer like me; I had steady income to support my family and every RV I fixed was in effect its own 'project' which really fit with my previous career mind-set. I have lots of things to tinker and fix and on many occasions I have even saved the day, just in the nick-of-time!

This past January, I got an opportunity to save a family vacation and keep everyone warm. On some diesel pushers there is an AquaHot hydraulic system which is used for room heating and hot-water generation for showers, etc. On this particular trip the family found that their system was not functioning at all and they stopped by, cold and desperate, for any assistance.

While the kids watched movies I got busy diagnosing and troubleshooting the system. It turned out the AquaHot power switch on the inside of his coach was defective. So I fabricated a simple toggle switch outside, right next to the AquaHot, to get the system working again and get them down the road. I ordered the correct parts and when they passed back through on their way home I made the final repair.

Some other fun opportunities I have had a chance to tinker with would include radiant heat flooring with factory installed sensors wired to the wrong zones. Before I determined that the issue was the sensor wires, a lot of folks were scratching their heads and making strange faces at the floor and thermostat. Easy fix once the system was understood.

There was also the phantom generator that started for no apparent reason. I determined there was a defective module that was sending these phantom signals. I sprinkled some pixie dust and installed a new module and everyone is happy now. Or the satellite receiver that needed to be reset every day for no apparent reason. That one turned out to be a bad coax cable between the satellite dish and receiver – who knew.

I have found that this craft is a lot like a CSI episode or a really good who-done-it story. There are so many



Left: The flexibility that being an RV Tech provides, enables Darren to enjoy a lunch-time nap with his son in their RV camped closeby. Right: Darren in his former career as a Sr. Systems Engineer.



Left lower: As an RV Tech, Darren fixed an HDMI cable after a thief stole a TV from an RV. Right lower: Here's what happens when an AquaHot water line freezes. All photos provided by Darren Koepp.



systems on these coaches and this 20% that Terry talks about is enough to keep me happily tinkering for years.

Now here is the kicker...I am still a full-time RVer, so my family was offered to 'camp' at the dealership rent/utility free! Oh, but wait, it gets better... I walk home and have lunch with my wife and kids every day and can be that Daddy-on-Demand I longed to be!

Oh and get this...as an employee, I get huge discounts on parts, accessories and even on RVs (like the one we recently bought, while bypassing the entire dreadful sales process and saving thousands on dealer markups) - pinch me! This has been the best Workamper gig in 7 years of full-timing!

Good RV Techs are always in demand throughout the country; there has been no shortage of job offers from other dealerships, many making me very enticing offers. Camping on site, rent free, has not been an issue and creates a win/win for both parties.

This whole opportunity came about because of the knowledge I gained from the courses I took from Terry – Terry systematized a successful rescue for me and many others, thus saving us from becoming trapped in our careers. He provided a solution that would generate

income, provide travel opportunities and a way to start our own sustainable family business.

These days I work full-time as an RV Technician and continue learning more about these systems which I find very fulfilling. I am also studying course material to become certified in this new vocation. Some of the systems I am a natural at, but others I need to hit the books and get my hands dirty.

Every day offers another opportunity to learn something. At nights, I am in the midst of an extreme RV makeover on our new RV, but this time, it is on my schedule. And more importantly, I have my family with me to help me out. They are able to be included in the process of seeing their new home being transformed. As soon as we move in to our newly completed RV, and the time is right, we will launch out on our own mobile RV tech service and start to cultivate our 'RV crops.'

We look forward to growing and learning with our kids and staying at inspiring locations throughout the country. Thanks to Workamper News, Terry Cooper and a little bit of pixie dust, this really has been a fairy tale ending and a "Great Engineer Rescue!"

# RV Maintenance Technician for Campgrounds

Did you know that when a campground rents a spot, it is for a specific lot for a specific time? If the renter has problems with their RV, many times they need to leave and the campground loses the revenue for that lot rental. Are you looking to enhance your Workamper skills so you can make more money? Are you looking for a way to make your Awesome Applicants Resume stand apart from others?

**Are you one of those folks that gets satisfaction from helping others?**

from Terry Cooper



**the Texas RV Professor**  
RVDA/RVIA Master  
Certified RV Technician &  
Professional Trainer

Training Program consists of:

- A. Five Days of Hands-On Training Sessions
  1. RV Electrical Systems
  2. Propane System
  3. Water Systems
  4. The RV Appliances
  5. RV Exterior Systems
- B. Personal Resource Notebook
- C. Four RV Appliance Maintenance DVDS (a \$119.80 value).
- D. The Atwood and Suburban Water Heater Repair manuals (a \$79.90 value).
- E. One year subscription to the Professor's RV Maintenance Tech Newsletter (\$99 value).
- F. Skills competency Final Exam
- G. Completion Diploma

We know that 80% of the problems that folks have with their RVs are things that are Easy to Access and Easy to Fix - all things that you as an RV Maintenance Technician for Campgrounds can do.

So many of the problems RVers have are simple things like a tripped circuit breaker, a blown fuse, a valve that has been improperly closed or other more complicated issues. However, if you know how the system works and where to look for the problem, then you can help others.

As an RV Maintenance Technician for Campgrounds, you will have the ability to resolve those issues that the campground guests can have. Why not put your skills and knowledge to work helping others and make money as a Workamper.

**Great news!!** You are at the right place at the right time!! Workamper® University and the Texas RV Professor from Mobile RV Academy are offering a **live, 5-day course with hands-on training in Heber Springs, Arkansas in June or Monument, Colorado in September** - where you can become an RV Maintenance Technician for Campgrounds.

It all begins when you

**visit [www.workamper.com/cgtech](http://www.workamper.com/cgtech)**

and sign up for one of the limited number of seats in the 5-day RV Maintenance Technician for Campground course for \$1,597.00

We even have an easy, three-payment plan to help those that need to pay it out before they come to class...think of it like LAYWAY for your future.

Three easy payments of \$577.00 each.

Don't forget all your meals, lodging and course tuition for the RV Maintenance Technician for Campgrounds course can be deducted as skills training expenses on your taxes.

**5-Day Live Training Course**

June 2013 in Arkansas -- September 2013 in Colorado

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