

The Morning I Impaled My RV

By Beth Jappay

Well, you guessed it. This month's article is not about a fly fishing technique, but rather another of my amusing stories about the hazards of taking a very old RV on fishing trips.

Fair's fair, this escapade was completely self-inflicted and had nothing to do with the age of my RV (other than not having a functional back-up camera). It occurred during our club's Crane Prairie trip in June...

Due to a 6-hour delay in leaving (from trying to catch my elderly cat) I arrived at my campsite late on Friday. By that time it was too late to launch my pontoon, so I headed straight to my campsite. I quickly discovered that a boat trailer on the other side of the road would make it difficult to back into my site.



Parking head-first into the site, I noticed that two of the bordering wooden posts showed damage from one or more collisions. Obviously, this campsite was one of the more difficult ones to navigate.

The next morning, I got an early start in order to launch my pontoon at the boat ramp. Backing the RV out of the campsite solo I had to rely on my side mirrors due to a non-functioning backup camera. Noticing a mild resistance and thinking it was a clump of grass, I gave my rig a little gas when I suddenly both heard and felt a THUMP. I immediately hit the brakes and tried to reverse direction, but felt another (deep metallic) THUMP with little to no movement followed by my motor dying.





Exiting my RV, I discovered that I had backed over the site number marker (made from a half I-beam length of steel). My 6-inch diameter solid steel back bumper and then tow bar had bent it over, but once passed those two it had sprung back vertically and had then stabbed upward into the underside of the RV. It punctured through 1/8"-thick stainless steel plating and into the insulation-lined space underneath, creating a 6+ inch hole. I crawled under the RV for a closer look and was very thankful to see that it had missed the luggage carrier (which held my pontoon), missed the fresh water lines to my bathroom sink, missed my black water tank, and missed the wiring to my taillights and brake lights. It was immediately obvious that if I attempted to drive backward I would rip out the underside of my RV, and that my very heavy back bumper would not allow me to drive forward. It appeared to me that my RV would sustain the least damage if I could cut the beam with an acetylene torch, and I wondered if there was a mobile welder out of Bend that I could contact and that would work on a Saturday. I then remembered that my phone had no bars.

At this point Dave wandered over and crawled under the RV to lie next to me; he took a look but didn't have any additional ideas. I wondered aloud if the campground host would have better local contacts, but Dave let me know that the campground host was based out of the nearby Rock Creek campground, though he was responsible for both,

Having a vague idea that Lenny could drive me to the Rock Creek campground, I walked to his campsite and interrupted his fly tying. He let me know I had just missed the campground host. He walked back to my campsite and also crawled underneath; it was his initial opinion that I should just punch the accelerator and drive off of the impalement. He quickly changed his mind, admitting that he would have done so when he was younger but was older and hopefully wiser now. Fortunately at this point the campground host (Sebastian) circled around and I flagged him down. He also crawled underneath to assess the problem then suggested digging out the bottom of the post, encircling it with chains, and dragging it out with his pickup. He had a shovel in the back of his pickup and after 10 minutes of shoveling he jumped in his pickup and drove to his Rock Creek campsite to grab his chains.

When he returned he was on his cell phone with his supervisor, who told him to get my insurance information and to under no circumstances offer any assistance beyond loaning me his shovel. He apologized multiple times for his inability to render further assistance.



At this point I sat on the ground for over an hour shoveled as far down the post as possible, discovering that the post was embedded in cement at its base. After I had a hole about 3' deep I jumped back in the RV and drove it forward, steering it as far to the right as possible to keep from damaging my luggage carrier.



The result was anticlimactic, though I did get a better look at the post, which was pretty impressively bent for such a thick bar of steel. Anxious to get on the water and get fishing, I put off a more intensive inspection of the RV until later.



I then successfully backed out of the campsite and drove to the boat launch to put my pontoon in. By the time I dropped the RV back off at my site, the campsite host had already filled in the deep hole and had taken upon himself to also remove the two previously-damaged edge posts (I'm fairly certain he didn't feel I was responsible for those as well).



At this point I decided to further inspect my rig for damage. I removed everything under my bathroom sink, but didn't find any holes in the linoleum. I also crawled back under the rig and found the hole in the steel undercarriage was now a ragged 8 inches, and that there was a 4" insulation-lined space under the stainless-steel undercarriage with a thick stainless-steel plate between the space and my subfloor.

Fortunately, it still appeared to have missed impaling anything vital. There are some advantages to having a 1978 RV that had been built like a tank.