

When Buzzards Are Circling Your RV

It's fifty-four degrees in the shade on Arizona's Interstate 40. You're hoping to see the Grand Canyon before sundown (a note to those of us laughing in the background that have been on that tarmac; there is no shade).

A nervous eye keeps glancing at the temperature needle on the dash as it begins to flicker, edging ever closer to that dreaded capital H, which you know that if the needle reaches it doesn't mean you're in actually in hell, but you could see it from here.

Your A/C is struggling to keep three out of four fingers clutching the steering wheel cool. The rest of you, and a very miserable wife, are perspiring most unromantically.

Buzzards have begun circling overhead smacking their lips at another overheated RV dinner (Okay. Point of fact here for those pedantic ones, buzzards don't actually have lips but beaks, and they can't smack them either). So, buzzards clacking their beaks circle, as ten-year-old radiator hoses begin to expand and contract like bellows of an accordion at two AM of an all-nighter German Oktoberfest.

A shudder rings through your engine as the thermostat clanks shut, the pistons in your engine begin to glow like your wife did after last year's holiday in

Acapulco. You still haven't let her forget her famous words "I don't think that SPF stuff really works, do you?" For the next week she became addicted to having her body smeared all over with Aloe Vera lotion, which could have led in other circumstances to nights of pleasure, except you didn't have any hearing aids to stop her screams every time you touched those areas of cherry redness covering 98 percent of her body.

The water pump turns to plasticene, the radiator implodes and your rubber hoses expand miraculously to eight times their size (a note to scientific persons here, rubber only expands about double in size, no matter what Goodyear or Trojan claims) releasing that dreaded mushroom cloud of steam that means the next several hours are going to be of you hiking across the desert, while tumbleweeds rattle by and coyotes howl to the moon, knowing getting lucky with the missus means being allowed to sleep indoors in the car seat and not under the RV for the next week with scorpions and rattlesnakes using you as a blanket and that's if you do find any water.

Facts are that over seventy percent of all highway breakdowns are cooling system related. Most manufacturers claim cooling hoses have a lifespan of seven years, 140,000 K's. So have them pressure tested and replaced every seven years.

Everything these days regarding vehicles seems to be getting more and more complex. Coolant systems and antifreeze included.

Where once we had simple green colored ethylene glycol antifreeze, we now have extended life, super dooper extended life, forever after into the next generation extended life antifreeze which can be used in embalming procedures to keep that smug smile (or scowl) on your face knowing your grandkids will never get a nickel out of your estate since you had the walls of your coffin lined in the new plastic hundreds thanks to the Canadian Mint.

We've used antifreeze in automobiles for many decades, because they not only lower the freezing point of your coolant but more importantly raise the boiling point. The original choice of green as a color has a rather interesting beginning. It was rumored that antifreeze was invented in Ireland when a Shamus McGintee had a batch of homemade beer go green. He left it on his porch in the middle of a cold winter night and discovered the next morning that it hadn't frozen due to the alcohol content. He had the great idea of putting it into his frosted over radiator and proceeded to blow himself, and his car, into a million bits after it heated up.

"Funny stuff that alcohol," was reported to be said at his sixteen-day-long wake after.

Years later a company read the article and decided to use methyl alcohol based antifreeze, still used in windshield washer systems, to produce the first antifreeze. In memory of poor old Shamus they decided to color it green.

Truth is, it's colored that way to distinguish it from other sources of leaks. Red for transmission fluid, brown or black (we'll talk about regular oil changes in

future articles) for engine oil. Although now there are several colors of antifreeze out there. So chances are, if it's bright green it's safe, and if it's gold colored there's been an inebriated Leprechaun urinating in your radiator. Ever wonder where he hid his pot of gold?

Have your antifreeze tested for PH content. This will determine if it is acidic or alkaline. Using pure straight antifreeze is not recommended, unless of course you're living in Nunavut. In which case you've already got whale blood in your veins or hooked on watching the Northern Lights while high on mushrooms.

Nowadays there are newer types of antifreeze, like Dexcool, which are based on OAT technology, (no this is not something you devour in the morning with toast). Organic Acid Technology (good to five years 250,000 k's), has a longer lifespan than glycol (typically two years 50,000 k's), but the two don't mix well. Kinda like drinking beer all night and ending it with a triple Vodka Amaratto shooter called "Singing on the great white telephone." Which is exactly what you'll be doing at three AM and this has nothing to do with opera or anything remotely musical.

Even newer are HOAT (Hybrid Organic Acid Technology) antifreezes put out by some manufacturers which also claim to give five year 250,000 k life spans. But HOAT substances will mix with all other types of antifreeze.

However these newer antifreezes are considered environmentally hazardous, so coming soon will be the new SOAT based antifreezes, which are

totally environmentally friendly (soybean based) substances. When they hit their 'best by' date they turn into a jelly tofu type substance that can be cut, browned, and seasoned with flavor enhancers to taste, smell and look like garlic toast. (Note to lawyer types, several grain companies have already begun a class action lawsuit to stop delivery of this product, claiming reduced lucrative summer garlic breads sales will plummet causing hardships in the bread industry).

But you don't care because you'll be yelling "Should'a had her flushed out and the hoses changed" while watching from the safety of your campfire as buzzards clack away at some other distressed RVer whose old hoses gave up doing the watuzzi with an old sludge filled radiator.

PS: I also hear that these new SOAT antifreezes have a 24SPF and with other smell enhancers (lavender, sandalwood), mildly heat up when applied on bodies for those sexy oh-la-la evenings. Will the wonders of science never cease!!!