

Martin's Musings: Dreams Fulfilled

by Martin Perlot, President

OK, it's not exactly like getting a resolution out of the United Nations Security Council. But getting virtually the entire RV industry to agree on a single electronics standard was a pretty big achievement. And unlike most U.N. resolutions, this RV-C initiative is actually translating into action! Of course, we're not bringing about World Peace. But building a smarter RV is not a trivial ambition.

It all began about four years ago, when the RVIA (Recreational Vehicle Industry Association) held an open meeting to determine whether its members were interested in developing a universal industry standard for electronics. (The technical term is "multiplexing" - multiple devices sharing a single method of communications for the purposes of control, diagnostics, and instrumentation.) The meeting was packed, and the response was enthusiastic. The RVIA board quickly approved the creation of a committee, and we went to work. (Yours truly served as Chairman.) It took less than two years to work out all the major technical issues, and just a little longer to get the smaller details approved. That's fast - it took the automotive industry over a decade to do as much.

The reason for our quick success was surely that everyone in the industry had so much to gain. Usually the RV industry splits along a gaping fault line between the Suppliers and the Builders. But not this time. RV-C provides huge benefits for both.

RV-C provides two main advantages for the RV builders that adopt it. First, their service and production teams get a universal way of electronically diagnosing problems in the RV, which is a huge tool for improving warranty service. Second, their engineers have a new and powerful tool for designing innovative and intelligent features into their coaches. RV-C's exibility allows every RV builder to put together something unique, but without having to reinvent every piece.

Meanwhile, the component suppliers - like SilverLeaf - are equally well served. We are spared the expense of developing different products for each manufacturer, and we get access to the diagnostic tool technology. Service tools are expensive to develop and very difficult to get dealers to adopt. RV-C slashes our development costs and ensures that service centers will have the tools they need to work with our products.

Of course, we think the biggest winner will be you, the customers. RV-C should make servicing a coach much easier and faster, saving you a lot of hassle and money. And it will become much easier to find a competent technician, regardless of the type of coach you drive.

With all these benefits, you know the day will come when it will be unthinkable for a coach to be built without RV-C. Of course, I'm pretty sure it will also become unthinkable to build a coach without SilverLeaf!



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SilverLeaf

News

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VMS 240 CL: Color at a Monochrome Price

For five years the VMS 200 EL has reigned supreme as the country's leading RV vehicle monitor. So designing a replacement for our most popular product was quite a challenge. We wanted a product that was even easier to use, more visible, and looked even better in the dash. We got it with the VMS 240 CL.

Until recently, no LCD display has been able to match the VMS 200's ElectroLuminescent display for daylight readability. But we found a new "SuperTwist Nematic" LCD that has the same high-contrast quality of the EL, but adds full color capabilities. The display is slightly larger and considerably sharper. Icons and small text are much easier to read with the VMS 240's higher resolution display.

We also took the opportunity to redesign the entire face, making the most important buttons (Drive, Scan, and Trip) larger, and giving all the keys a subdued glow for night driving. Internally, the VMS 240 has more memory and a faster processor, which expands our ability to add new features to the unit. Yet the VMS 240 fits in exactly the same mounting hole and uses the same wiring, making it a direct drop-in replacement for any VMS 200.

And amazingly, even with all these improvements, we have been able to maintain the same price. The VMS 240 CL is \$1995.00, exactly as much as the unit it replaces. The VMS 200 EL is no longer in production, although we do have a limited supply of used and refurbished units available for sale at a discount. Parts and repairs for the VMS 200 EL will continue to be available for the foreseeable future.



Service Center Open for Installations

We pride ourselves on designing products that are simple to install, and we applaud the many people who have installed their VMS or other SilverLeaf products themselves. We love all the good dealers and centers who install and service our products. But we are also aware that there are some jobs that our customers would like to take straight to the source. For those projects we have a 6000 square foot service center ready for action.

Many of the visitors to our Albany, OR, facility come for quick updates and fine-tuning their systems. But we are capable of much more. In addition to installing our own products, our technicians can add GPS, camera systems, satellite radio, and much more. Many customers ask us to redesign their dash face, and with the help of a local plastics shop we'll rearrange your dash to make the best use of the space, adding the accessories you most desire. We will even install a full Digital Dash on virtually any model diesel coach.

Our Service Manager, Dale Kemper, has years of experience in production and engineering at Beaver Coaches, and ran his own service business for several years before joining SilverLeaf. At our facility he can draw upon the expertise of our entire staff of engineers, as well as his own technicians.

If you are in the area and would like some basic service - even a tutoring session on your SilverLeaf systems - we ask that you call a day or two ahead so we can make sure someone is available for you. If you would like an installation or major service, please call as early as possible so we can schedule a service bay and order any necessary parts.



You vs. The Cruise

In our seminars we make a few bold statements that sometimes surprise our audience. Judging from the reactions, we get, one of the most surprising points we make is this: An attentive driver will get better fuel economy than a driver using the cruise control. Most of us have been told for so long that the cruise control saves fuel that we take it for granted. But it is easy enough to prove this is just a canard.

To make the comparison fair, we'll assume the transmission is in economy mode. If it isn't, most coaches will downshift on almost any rise, sending the fuel rate sky high. If the transmission is in economy mode, the cruise control will do perfectly well in most conditions.

But efficient cruising alone is not enough to win this contest. When the cruise control hits the hills - and especially rolling terrain, like I-80 through western Iowa, or much of the upper South - she loses efficiency. The cruise is programmed to maintain a certain speed, regardless of the conditions. And whereas you might let the speed fluctuate, going a little slower up the roll and a little faster back down, the cruise will waste fuel trying to attain that hill.

The same is true when fighting headwinds. The cruise will try to power its way through the gusts, while your own foot will tend to maintain a fairly constant engine load and allow the speed to fluctuate.

You can prove to yourself how much the cruise can cost when you find yourself on a long, slow incline, such as you often find in the foothills leading up to a mountain pass. While the cruise tries to maintain speed on the slope, you'll notice the turbo boost pressure rise. With that rise will come a decline in fuel economy. If you cut the cruise control back - often even just two miles-per-hour - the reduced load allows the boost to relax and the fuel economy will rebound. As a bonus, you'll find the engine will run cooler as well.

Of course, few of us have the endurance to drive a long day without the cruise control. And 90% of the time it'll do just fine for us. But if you know when to turn it off, or to manually adjust the speed, you'll be able to cruise right by a few of those fuel stops.



VMS 240 CL



VMS 120 LC



VMS II



VMS 400 CL

Our Catalog of Fine VMS Products

VMS II	VMS Monitor for Beaver/Safari	\$995.00
VMS 120 LC	VMS Monitor w/ 2.5" LCD Display	Sale! \$995.00
VMS 240 CL	VMS Monitor w/ 4.4" STN Display	New! \$1995.00
VMS 400 CL	VMS Monitor w/ 6.4" Color Display	\$3995.00
VMS 616 CL	"Digital Dash" w/ 10.4" Color Display	\$11,995.00
RoadWatch	Road Temperature Sensor	\$295.00
Weather Station	Temp, Humidity, Baro/Altimeter, Compass	\$595.00
TireSafeGuard	Six-Tire Coach Kit	\$899.00
	Eight-Tire Coach Kit	\$1029.00
	Tow Car Kit	\$339.00
	Tow Car Kit w/ Car Display	\$399.00
VMSpc	PC Engine Monitor	\$395.00

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Manufacturer Report

The Big News around the industry is the adoption of RV-C as a standard for connecting coach components electronically. With RV-C, the RV world finally has a common method for controlling - and especially for diagnosing - all of our parts and pieces.

The hallmark of an RV-C coach is a small, circular diagnostic port. Any technician with an RV-C service tool can plug into that port and instantly analyze the components in that coach network. They can generally troubleshoot and configure all the system components in a matter of minutes. Since the same tool works for many brands of coaches and components, it is much easier for you to get service for your particular coach.

Country Coach

For the 2007 model year, Country Coach has adopted full RV-C Total Coach systems in all their top-line models, including the Intrigue, Magna, and Affinity. The systems include a VMS 240 or Digital Dash in the cockpit, plus a HMS 060 control panel in the salon. In addition to all the driver conveniences, these monitors watch and control all the major coach accessories - inverter, generator, tanks, genstart, and



SilverLeaf-equipped Country Coach.

Foretravel

In 2005 Foretravel's Phenix became the first production coach to feature a full RV-C network. The Phenix offers the Total Coach system with an optional VMS 400 CL. In addition, you can add TireSafeGuard tire monitoring and other SilverLeaf options to the Phenix package.

Alpine Coach

The most spectacular implementation of RV-C and the Total Coach concept is found in the new Alpine Apex coach. Western RV commissioned a custom control from SilverLeaf that uses the huge television sets as the monitor panel, and a simple-to-use remote control to access every feature of the

more. The VMS 240 and portions of the larger system are available on the Allure as well. Tire monitoring is available on every

system. The Apex is the first coach to feature HWH's RV-C-compliant slide rooms and levelers, and all of those features are integrated into the remote control, along with the generator and genstart, inverter, tanks and autofill, and more.

The Alpine Limited lacks the ability to run every system from the remote control, but it does feature a VMS 400, and optionally includes tire monitoring and other accessories.

Newell

Naturally, Newell isn't going to take a back seat to anyone in implementing state-of-the-art popular electronics. Newell has made the leap to RV-C, and is preparing to go a step farther and make the VMS 616 Digital Dash standard equipment! Newell is in the process of redesigning their cockpit to take specific advantage of the digital dash, and they will become the first manufacturer to make a



glass dash standard equipment. (Country Coach and Foretravel both install the VMS 616, but as an option.)

The decision to go 100% glass was an easy one for Karl Blade, owner of Newell Coach. Every year Newell builds a coach just for him, and this year's coach featured our dash. Two thousand miles later, he was completely convinced.

Outlaw Conversions

Bus converters generally shy away from getting involved with the chassis instrumentation, but Outlaw Conversions is not the ordinary bus converter. This Texas company has a distinct cowboy style, and they have been adding SilverLeaf monitors to their dashes for two years now. But now they are taking the ultimate step - full glass dashes and an RV-C Total Coach system in all their newest shells. We are also working on a new Total Coach system for their horse trailer conversions, which will be the first RV-C systems in any towable.

Coach offerings are subject to change. Contact the factories for the latest news on any of these coaches.