

A Very Outraged Customer

The galley slide on our 2013 Itasca Ellipse 42QD had been jamming, refusing to go in or out consistently. This same slide had been repaired by Winnebago slightly more than a year ago. That time, the slide failed less than 6 months after purchasing this new \$350,000 motor home from Winnebago in August at the 2012 Grand National Rally in Forest City, IA. We were in Morgan Hill, CA and took the RV to a Winnebago authorized dealer, Pan Pacific RV Centers, who took one look at the slide and observed parts falling out. They told us that it was beyond their abilities and not to extend it until it could be serviced.

We lived with the slide retracted for four months until we could return to Forest City, IA to have the problem resolved. We drove 2000 miles incurring fuel costs, campground expenses, etc., to return a lemon to the factory. In addition to the slide failure, the jacks had failed, a vent fan had died, there were broken floor tiles, shifted walls, failed accent lighting, a failed drivers' side camera, etc. This **BRAND NEW** coach, that had just been purchased at the Grand National Rally in August of 2012, was turning out to be an albatross.

Since this ill fated roll out, the problems with this "quality" coach have continued unabated. The main thermostat failed leaving us in 100° degree heat in Paso Robles with no A/C, the transfer switch failed leaving us without power, all three vent fans failed, the microwave failed, a roof air conditioner failed, walls have continued to shift grinding against the slides, the dash air failed, the driver's side cameras failed again, the HDMI video switch failed, the in-dash navigation/ audio system failed, the accent lighting failed again, the slide door between the lounge and the bedroom had to be completely rebuilt by me after falling off the track numerous times, and insult to insult, the galley slide catastrophically failed again. Added to all of these major failures are the innumerable poor finish items: crooked doors, loose moldings, stripped screws, and so on.

But now the coach is not under warranty. Instead I have to rely on the extended warranty sold to us by Lichtsinn Motors in Iowa where we initially purchased the coach.

After innumerable jams, lockups, etc., I was finally able to get the slide back in and take it to Mike Thompson RV in Colton, CA for examination and repair on November 20, 2014. This appears to have been a mistake, but more on that later.

Mike Thompson's repair facility decided to fully extend the slide for diagnosis without seeing if that would present a problem. The slide almost fell from the coach due to a complete failure of the Schwintek slide mechanism. A simple online search reveals that this company's products seem to fail more often than work. This design is a very poor choice for the top-of-the-line flagship Winnebago product.

So now, Mike Thompson, the authorized Winnebago repair facility, has broken our **home** to the point that it is uninhabitable. Since we are full time motor homers, we had no choice but to move into a hotel with our two dogs. Mike Thompson took NO responsibility for breaking our home. Instead they were "so sorry", but since we weren't their customer, we were on our own. Sorry, but I thought since I was paying for repairs, I was a customer.

Mike Thompson broke the coach on November 20, 2014. It took them an entire week until November 26, 2014 to submit the claim to the extended warranty company, American Financial Warranty Corporation. Since the parts were ordered from Winnebago, the cost of the repair parts

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should have been immediately available during that call or no later than the next day. Mike Thompson was aware that since the coach was unusable, we were in a hotel this entire time. Because of their glacial pace, we had now spent \$800 because of their parts department's ineptitude. Since warranty companies routinely require claims to have an inspection, I was unsurprised that they required one. And, surprise, surprise, since it's Thanksgiving weekend, no inspector was available until Monday (another \$500 to the hotel). Because we were out of the coach, we had to host our daughter for Thanksgiving in our hotel room instead of in our motor home at our site in Outdoor Resorts Indio..

The coach was finally inspected on Monday, December 1. The warranty company then took two days to make the decision that they would only cover a portion of the cost because it was more than book costs for both materials and labor. In the meantime, Mike Thompson, through the service advisor was been expressing how sorry he is that I am not their customer but that I just had to wait. He did find time however to send one of their salesmen to drop off a brochure and attempt to sell me a Tiffin RV.

The insurance company denied part of the labor claim and parts claim saying it is not "book". The service advisor at Mike Thompson said that they are denying the full parts cost claim because the insurance company is not allowing the full markup that Mike Thompson requires. I am sure that Winnebago gives their dealers wholesale pricing but apparently the markup to retail is insufficient for Mike Thompson so they are holding our coach hostage unless we agree to their demands. This is also true of their labor charges. The book rate for repairing a slide is 12 hours as confirmed with the insurance company and Winnebago customer service. Mike Thompson claimed 20 hours. Naturally the insurance company balked. Mike Thompson's position is that they will turn down the job and we can just take the coach elsewhere unless we agree to their terms. Since they made the coach immovable, we have no choice but to agree to this.

I intend to be on site while all repairs are made, logging every hour that is worked. However, when I mentioned this, the service advisor said this was a "contract job", implying that if they worked 2 hours or 20 hours making the repairs, that I would be billed for the entire amount. Also, when I spoke to the service advisor this morning, he stated that by watching the job it would take twice as long.

Bottom line, I purchased the top of the line product from a company that I thought valued quality engineering and had quality manufacturing and quality control procedures. My experience with the Ellipse has been anything but that.

As full timers, we have been inconvenienced over and over again as our coach has been out of service. This last disaster is the worst. We have been living in a hotel for three weeks with no end in sight. We are subject to the whims of an authorized dealer who is demanding exorbitant amounts for repairs because they believe we have no recourse but to acquiesce. The service advisor has driven home the point over and over that we would be treated very differently if we had purchased this coach from Mike Thompson. However, after talking with their coach customers at Outdoor Resorts, all have shared the same level of bad service.

As full timers, we do have some recourse though. We live in Outdoor Resorts Indio, a 400+ site Class A motor home resort in Indio, CA. Across the street is Motorcoach Country Club, another resort with 400+ Class A motor homes. Down the road is Desert Shores Motorcoach RV Resort,

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and there are many more in the area. We all socialize and know each other. All of the RVers in Outdoor Resorts Indio are aware of our travails and inquire each day about our progress.

I purchased, what I thought, was a quality product, from a quality manufacturer, backed by a quality company that had quality service outlets nationwide. None of this has been borne out.

As of today, I am out of pocket \$3300 for the cost of the hotel alone and, since Mike Thompson has not even begun repair, at least another \$800-\$900. Added to this will be the \$100 deductible from the insurance company plus the additional amounts Mike Thompson is demanding, \$375 for parts on top of their wholesale to retail markup, plus 8 hours of service at \$105-\$125 per hour depending on how they bill it out, so another \$840-\$1000.

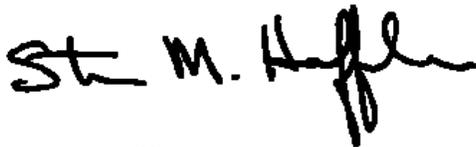
I would like for Winnebago to fix this mess. Through inadequate engineering practices, poor vendor qualification, deficient product testing, completely missing quality assurance, and poor dealer oversight, I am facing a \$5000+ bill for the repair of this "top of the line" product. If it were not for the extended warranty, the bill would be more than \$10,000. This does not even consider all the other repairs for which we have already paid. If we are not able to resolve this in an equitable way, I will try to ensure that no one else is subjected to the series of bad decisions by Winnebago and its suppliers and dealers. I will submit this letter, along with your response to:

- FMCA Magazine
- Good Sam Magazine
- Motor Home Magazine
- Escapees Magazine

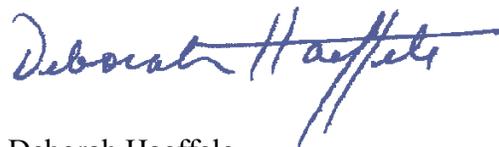
and so on. I will also put a copy of this letter in the mailbox of every resident here at Outdoor Resorts, and make copies available to Motorcoach, Desert Shores, and all other RV resorts in the area. Additionally, Mike Thompson brings motor homes to Outdoor Resorts every Tuesday, hoping for sales. I will be there for the rest of the season and subsequent ones outlining my experience. Also, the FMCA show is in Indio from January 7-11, 2015. I will also be there at the Mike Thompson exhibit or whoever else is representing Winnebago to warn potential customers. As a side note, two families here in the resort who were considering an Ellipse are having strong second thoughts after our experience. And the season is just beginning.

Please let me know your response

Sincerely yours,



Steve Haeffele
2013 Itasca Ellipse 70R96P245219



Deborah Haeffele