

# I LOVED MY MOTORHOME BUT THEY STOLE IT!

Her expression reflected her wounded spirit, the personal shock of violation. The motorhome had been their pride and joy. Since they could not store it where they were living, they rented a spot at a storage facility. There were other rigs and boats there, a night light over their rig, and an eight-foot fence around the compound with a parallel barrier gate on rollers that secured the entry against intruders. But one day their motorhome was just not there. They knew the day it happened because the thieves drove it through and over the locked barrier gate. When notified by the storage facility, they called the police. They called the insurance company. They called the loan holder. How can you get away and hide with something as large as a 36-foot motorhome?

Subsequently found, the motorhome had been burned and was just a useless shell. Lien papers, insurance papers, title, police reports were filled out in duplicate but the process has proven slow and bureaucratic. It takes time; more time than seems necessary. The insurance company also wanted copies of repair and maintenance records for the previous year. Imagine yourself in her shoes. The company holding the bank note gets ugly. They want their monthly payment each month, on time. Why should you have to pay on something that has been stolen and trashed? You explain to them that it was stolen and is a burned out shell. They say, "Yes, but!"

Eventually they call and threaten to repossess it. You invite them to go ahead since it is not worth the cost of moving to another salvage yard. You envision your good credit rating taking wings and flying away. You see a lawsuit in the near future and don't know what will happen next.

When I asked her what she would do differently to avoid ever facing this trauma again, she listed the following recommendations:

1. Keep the ignition and other important keys out of the motorhome.
2. Have a hidden engine battery disconnect installed.
3. Make an inventory of everything personal that you have in the motorhome.
4. Keep copies of insurance, title, and loan papers in a location other than the motorhome
5. Paint a two digit two-foot-sized number on your roof, so the unit can be easily identified by air surveillance.
6. Verify that the storage company has insurance.
7. Her suggestions offer relatively inexpensive strategies to avoid the headaches she experienced due to the theft of her motorhome.
8. To avoid motorhome theft while you are using the rig, consider implementing the following two suggestions. First, park the rig with the door facing the center of activity. Don't pull into a mall parking lot and park with the door pointed towards the woods thereby giving the thief the opportunity to break in unobserved. Additionally, parking with the door towards the woods would expose you to unobserved assault upon returning to the rig. Second, when parked keep the electric steps up in the travel position. When they are down someone can stand on them and observe the interior of the rig. They can also stand on them while breaking out the door window and use the step height to reach inside and open the door lock.