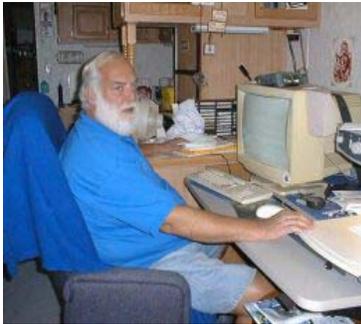


## The Blind Guy

### Being Legally Blind Doesn't Stop This Solo Fulltimer

*by Nick Russell*

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Ken Murray is living proof that if you really want to enjoy the fulltime RV lifestyle, nothing can stop you. As the old saying goes, where there's a will, there's a way. Ken, who is known in RV circles as The Blind Guy, is probably the only legally blind solo fulltimer.

Born and raised in Massachusetts, the 58 year old Murray graduated from Boston University Law School and had a distinguished career as a military Judge Advocate General (JAG) officer with the Air Force, serving in posts from Iceland to Florida. He left the military for a short time and worked as a public defender in Phoenix, Arizona, then tried private practice, which he says he hated. In 1978 Ken, by then a single parent, went back into uniform and served in Minot, North Dakota and at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. His specialty was resolving contract disputes with civilian suppliers to the military. Between his active duty and Reserve time, Ken, retired as a lieutenant colonel. After retirement, he continued to work for the military as a Civil Service employee.

Ken began to lose his vision in 1991 as a result of a disease known as histoplasmosis, which he said is a virus found in bird droppings. The first indications are mild flu-like symptoms. In less than one percent of people, it returns to attack the lungs or eyes, causing the blood vessels in the retina to erupt. Stress has a major impact on the progress of the disease, and Ken said that he was involved in a long major trial that required him to work ten to fourteen hours a day, seven days a week. The disease left the center of both of his eyes dead, but with peripheral vision. By 1997 the disease had progressed to where he turned in his driver's license.

Ken says he joined all of the associations for the blind and went to their conventions, where he met blind people who embraced life in spite of their handicaps. "I decided I could sit in the house and vegetate, or I could get out and live life," Ken recalls. "I decided I had some living to do. People have this tragic image of blind people, and it just isn't so."

In 1995, Ken had purchased a Thor Electra and loved the solid RV. He wanted to go fulltime, but instead bought a home in Kettering, Ohio. Two years ago a friend brought him to an Escapees Club Escapade, where Ken learned about commercial RV transporting companies. He realized then that his dreams of fulltiming could come true. Ken sold his house, and last May he moved into his present RV, a 38 foot fifth wheel trailer with a slide out.

He contacted two different RV transport companies, Hinkley RV Transport and Horizon Transport, and says both were more than happy to work with him. Both companies have some 200 drivers nationwide, and while they usually deliver new RVs, when Ken wants to move he calls their dispatcher and they have a driver hook onto his trailer and move him to a new park.

Ken likes RV parks with lots of facilities, and his first destination was Wolf's Lake Camping Resort in Knox, Pennsylvania, where he spent seven weeks. From there he had his trailer moved to Lewisburg, West Virginia for Fall Escapade, with plans to go to Branson, Missouri following Escapade, and then on to Fun N' Sun in San Benito, Texas, where he says he may stay the winter.

Ken says that he has found that paying an RV transport company \$1.20 a mile to move him every four to six weeks is probably no more expensive than purchasing, insuring, and maintaining a truck if he were sighted. The friendly RVing community has greatly helped Ken deal with life on the road. He says a perfect example was when he ran out of propane recently, and had several offers to take his tanks in to a supplier get them filled. His campground neighbors are also quick to offer rides to the store or wherever else he needs to go.



"Originally I had two plans to make this happen, Ken says with a sly smile. "Plan A was to advertise for a compatible woman with a truck. Send photo of truck. Plan B was to hire commercial drivers." So far the compatible woman hasn't shown up with her truck, but that hasn't slowed Ken down at all.

The gregarious Ken makes friends easily, and is a member of the Escapees Solos group. He has signs on the sides of his rig that say "The Blind Guy" and says wherever he has traveled, he has had no trouble getting to know people. He has a cargo bicycle and loves to ride through the RV parks where he is staying. Because Ken has trouble recognizing people's faces until he gets close to them, sometimes he has to invade others comfort zones to carry on a conversation. But when people understand his motives, they do not feel threatened.

Ken has a son and a daughter, who is a teacher in Kyoto, Japan. He says both of his adult children think his new lifestyle is great. For Ken Murray, there is no better way to live. "I used to have such a stressful life," he says. "Now I'm completely de-stressed. My biggest decision these days is, do I take a nap, or walk outside and see people. I'm going to do this a long, long time, either on Plan A or Plan B."

Update: Ken married Hazel in 2003 and no longer travels solo.

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