

Salvation Yard

Need a gizmo for your RV? Just call on Colaw

TEXT & PHOTOS BY BEVERLY EDWARDS

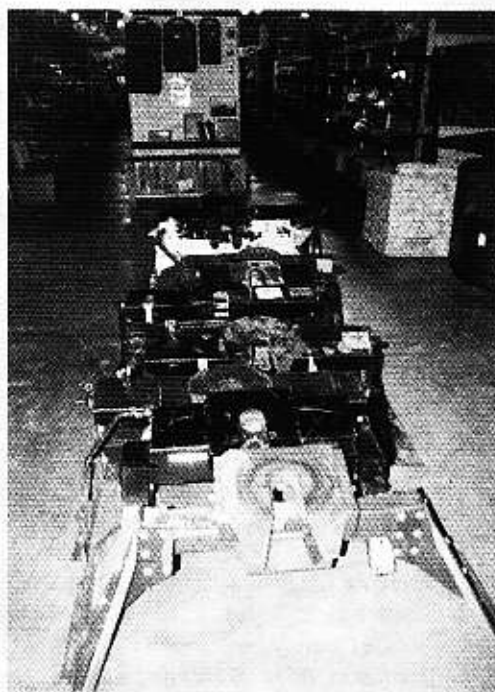
ANYONE WHO HAS OWNED ANY SIZE OR TYPE of RV is aware that nearly any part/component/hardware may be in need of replacement sometime during the life of the vehicle. Maybe it's as easy to locate as an appliance or an AC generator, or as difficult as an end cap or side panel. Even something that seems as mundane as a broken window can send an RV owner on a search that may seem hopeless, especially on an older vehicle that no longer is in production.

That's where Colaw RV Salvage comes in. Situated in the southwest Missouri community of Carthage, Colaw is the largest operation of its kind in the country, and every year the company fills thousands of orders for everything from seats and doors to awnings and engines. Maybe you're in the market for a replacement television or other electronic equipment. Or, how about tires and wheels? You're sure to find them at Colaw.

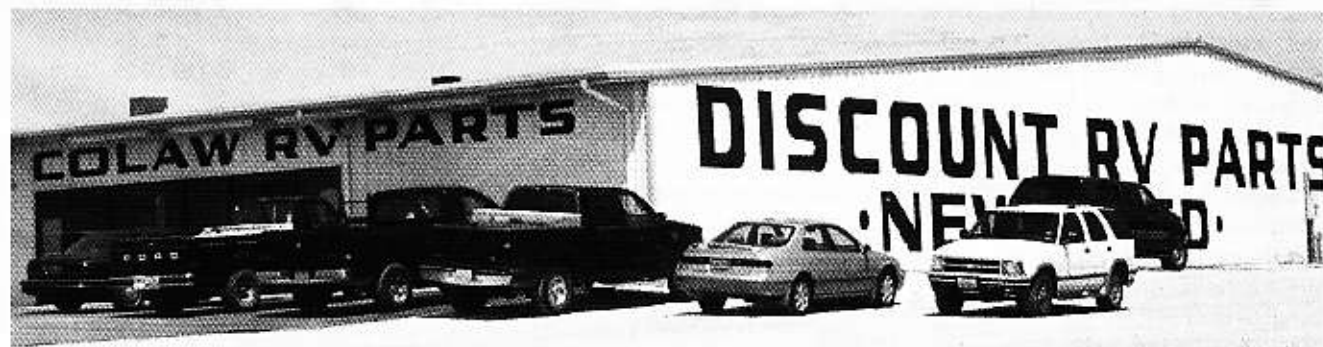
A tour of Colaw's 80-acre facility is a real eye-opener. In addition to somewhat-damaged-but-intact vehicles that are restorable and for sale as-is, on the back lot you'll see

row after row of trailers and motorhomes of nearly every description that appear to be total wrecks. Some have obviously rolled over and others are little more than shells, but according to Mike Booker, manager of Colaw, it's rare that parts can't be salvaged from even the most demolished rig. The body might be smashed, but perhaps the engine is almost new, along with the jacks, axles and hitches, or even water storage and holding tanks. Every vehicle acquired by Colaw has some salvage value.

Colaw has managed to build a very large inventory that continues to grow. For the most part, Colaw purchases vehicles from insurance companies. Trailers and motorhomes are expensive to repair, and damage that might seem to be minor can prompt an insurance company to total the unit rather than pay for repairs. Vehicles that have been in accidents are obvious targets for being considered a total loss, but on an older rig, something as simple as hail damage can lead to writing off the entire vehicle. To replace a roof, windows, side panels and paint frequently is too costly, so the customer is paid off by the insurance company and Colaw



Colaw RV Salvage is visible from I-40 in Carthage, Missouri. Hitches, furniture and electronics are some of the items available.





Microwave ovens from salvaged vehicles are tested before being sold as used RV parts.

buys the vehicle for salvage.

Colaw does not repair vehicles, but there are rigs on the lot that, although damaged, are drivable. Chances are you'll find what it would take to bring the unit up to snuff right from Colaw's inventory, but you'll be on your own to cart the parts away or arrange to have them shipped to your destination for repairs. In the case of AC generators, appliances, engines and other equipment, Colaw's technicians make certain that these items are in working condition before being sold.


While Colaw can be considered a one-stop shopping center for all of your RV needs, it isn't necessary to make a trip to Missouri to search for new or used merchandise. Chances are you can find what you're looking for on the company's Web site. Every day, Colaw ships merchandise to customers, no matter how large or small the item, and on any day, the company's truck might be headed for any corner of the country to pick up the remains of damaged RVs.

Colaw's inventory is so complete that a person could take a shell in good condition and end up with a usable unit, which is why Colaw is popular with people converting buses into motorhomes. Maybe you have a rig that needs a facelift. Through Colaw, you could get carpeting, window coverings of almost any variety, furniture and mattresses. You can even get upholstery fabric to recover your existing RV furniture and new or used cabinets to install in your rig.

In addition to buying damaged ve-

hicles, Colaw takes on new surplus inventory from RV manufacturers. The company also sells new products at a discount, and while it does sell complete RVs, Colaw doesn't take trade-ins.

Colaw has filled a definite need in the RV marketplace. There was a time when owners of older vehicles were hard-pressed to find replacement parts. Since many RV owners do not put a lot of mileage on their rigs, there are thousands of vehicles out there that

are old in terms of years, but far from being ready for retirement. Some may be from manufacturers no longer in business, or so many model years back that current companies no longer carry parts for them. If you're one of those RV owners, chances are that Colaw can put you back on the road again. 

 Colaw RV Parts & Salvage,
(877) 548-2125,
colawrvsalvage.com.

Other Sources

Can't make it to Colaw? Here's a list of some other RV salvage yards and services across the country.

Arizona RV Salvage, (Used RV parts), (877) 824-8242, azrvinc.com.

Bontrager's Surplus RV Parts, Michigan, (Surplus RV parts), (269) 483-7017, bontragers.com.

Brandon Auto Salvage, Florida, (Used RV parts), (800) 282-7462, brandonautosalvage.com.

Cherokee RV Salvage, Colorado, (Used RV parts), (877) 291-3433, cherokeervparts.com.

Giant Recreation World, Florida, (RV parts, appliance manuals), (800) 654-8475, giantrecreationworld.com.

National Recovery Service Inc., North Carolina, (New & used parts, RV repairs), (336) 622-7285, nationalrecoveryservice.com.

RV Doctor George, California, (Used RV parts), (916) 927-7837, rvdoctorgeorge.com.

RV Surplus & Salvage, Indiana, (Used RV parts), (574) 264-5575, rvsurplussalvage.com.

Singleton RV Salvage & Sales, Washington, (Used RV parts), (360) 273-9566, olywa.net/singletonsrv.

State Line Salvage, Indiana, (Used RV parts), (574) 825-7540.

Walt's RV Surplus, California, (New & surplus RV parts), (909) 823-0563, waltsrvparts.com.