

youth

Wally Trabing's

# Mostly about People



3-26-71

## Modern Tom Sawyers

Most people are charmed by the Tom Sawyer concept but are often uppity and sniffy when they see it materialized in a modern manner.

It has become popular among youth to buy up old buses and remake them into mobile homes. I have been curious about this and yesterday, seeing one on Church Street, I knocked on the door and introduced myself.

The bearded, long-haired 20-year-old who was master of the bus welcomed me in and we got to talking. He is Bob Milholland, who was born and raised in Capitola, but now lives in Aspen, Colorado.

He and his wife, Ann, who is expecting a baby in October, are visiting this area because it's warm and because of friends.

They've lived in their bus about a year. Their goal: the simple life, perhaps a small farm, a house and work to provide the basics.

Establishment types may categorize this as "idealistic," but in reality it has been a fact of life since America began.

Bob did his year in Europe, came back and met his wife and they migrated to Aspen where they became ski bums, although they don't like the term.

He worked as a maintenance man at a resort until he paid for a used 28-passenger blue shuttle bus.

Stripping the inside he built a rather royal looking alcove in back and installed a double bed, cutting a round hole in the roof above for a plastic bubble skylight.

"I dug postholes for a man in exchange for letting me strip the insides of an old trailer and took out the cabinets," he said.

He nailed shut the top drawer of one cabinet and dropped a small sink from the top. There's a chemical toilet which closes to make a nice seat, a rather Victorian rocker (picked up at a dump) with its legs cut off for another, a used rug on the floor and lots of shelf space, and the whole thing is frankly homey.

"All this cost me about \$1,000," he said. "Probably the most expensive item is the wall heater which cost \$50."

Milholland figures they can travel on about \$50 a month. Both are vegetarians and this is economical.

He makes and repairs sandals — sits out in the sun when they park for a day. The young identify with this scene and bring him work.

"We've got everything we want for now," he said. "It's easy to make friends, people are always curious about our bus. We carry two bikes on the front and ride about enjoying the beauty of an area when we want to remain a bit."

There are problems inherent in the free life. People get sniffy when they see a big bus parked on their street; sometimes a policeman will make inquiries. A few are up tight, but most are friendly and nice, they say.

"We try to project positiveness. You'd be surprised what a smile will do to breakdown barriers," he said.

The problem is that if you don't fit into an established pattern, people tend to suspect the worst.

"We don't consider ourselves vagabonds," she said; "just persons down home. We are looking for a simple life. We're really happy. Once you get started doing this it's great."

He said: "We don't know where we are going next, except that we want to return to Colorado in May, when it's beautiful."

Their small dog, Thaddeus, was curled up in a chair. When the baby arrives, they still expect to travel for awhile.

He marked off an imaginary line on the roof of the bus.

"I plan to cut out this section and build a small bedroom on top for the baby."

Still the home instinct is strong in both of them.

"Actually, as we travel, we are looking for land," he said.

She said: "We want a house. Some place where I can sit with my baby in the sun."

I thanked them and left and a little while later they were gone.