

The Arc (Yes, ARC)
Joseph Herrin 11-15-2010

Since my youth I have been interested in architecture. In my high school days (I graduated in 1979) I took all the drafting classes that were offered. This was in the days when everything was drawn by hand on a drafting board with a straightedge, triangles, and compass. Computer Aided Drafting and programs like AutoCAD were still years in the future.

I very much enjoyed drafting. We mainly drew machine parts, but in my senior year I was able to begin drawing house plans. I especially liked drawing the exterior view of a home. We could do this in either two point, or three point perspective. This gave the house an appearance of being viewed from a specific position with vanishing points. I regularly scored at the top of my class in drafting, though it was not something I ever desired to do as an occupation.

I believe part of the attraction of drafting was that I could draw very realistic images with the tools given to me. Without these tools, I am one of the worst artists you have ever encountered. My best drawings of people look like a child's stick figures. I do not have a mind that retains images to be recalled and put down on paper. My freehand skills are non-existent. But give me measurements, straight-edges, triangles, curves, and compass and I can create decent images.

I believe it was in my senior year of High School that I began pondering what kind of home I would design as a dream home. I fixated on two different shapes. One was a geodesic dome. The other was a hexagon shaped home that had all the rooms built around a central atrium that was part greenhouse, and part arboretum. I envisioned trees, tropical foliage and running water in the central atrium, and the rooms around it all having a view toward the center. It was much more energy efficient to put the windows on the inside of the home, rather than on the outer walls.

One of the great challenges would be to take this central space and utilize it fully. When I was around 12 or 13, I remember getting a small five gallon aquarium and making it into a terrarium. Living in Oregon, it was not difficult to find mosses, small ferns and lichen covered rocks to decorate the terrarium. I believe this delight in creating micro-worlds, highly ordered and efficient has remained with me, and was manifested in my home designs as a teenager.

I grew up in standard stick frame homes. They were well built, and comfortable, but were no frills. I remember at some point visiting another person's home and being captivated by the fact that they had curved doorways and arches in the home. What a difference this made from my customary living space of straight lines and ninety degree angles. I thought the curves were very beautiful, making the home very distinctive.

I have shared these things to inform you of the great grace and love of Yahweh that I have observed in something that most people would overlook. My heavenly Father has given me a vehicle with a curved roof, one long archway, to convert into a mobile habitation. Consider how unusual this is. How many vehicles do you see on the roads today with arched roofs? The majority of cars and trucks have flat roofs.

If we look for the mercy and love of our Father, we will find it in many places. I see the Father's love and kindness toward me in that He has provided me with a school bus with a curved ceiling to make into a place of habitation. He knows that I find arcs, curves, and arches, very attractive, and He has demonstrated His awareness of what brings delight to my soul by providing me with this specific vehicle.



Above is a picture of the bus when I first purchased it. It was basically an empty shell, but what wonderful lines it has. It is like that terrarium I had as a child. It is a space awaiting someone to design and construct it into a thing of practical function and pleasing form. I consider it a great act of my Father's kindness that He has given to me this project to work on.

I have spent most of my recent years ministering through the written word. This too is something the Father has shaped me for, and given me a delight in doing. Yet, He knows that I also enjoy working with my hands, constructing things.

Have you considered how much attitude has to do with our enjoyment of life? We can carry into this life an attitude of complaint and murmuring where every day is filled with obstacles, miseries, and woes to be recounted. We can look at the negative constantly and be surly and depressed. Or we can have an attitude of thanksgiving, discovering the Father's mercies, and seeing His acute awareness of our innermost thoughts, joys and delights. I see the Father's mercy even in the shape of the roof of this bus I have been given to work on. I like it very much, and I am grateful for it.

As I have been working on the roof and ceiling I have found numerous things for which to be thankful. When installing the air conditioner on the roof I was blessed to consider that a curved roof will not hold water, which will cut down on leaks significantly.

Of course, it is more challenging to work with curves. In the last post I showed a picture of the wall panels I have been cutting. They have to be curved along the roof line in order to fit. It is much easier to cut straight lines. A person with a complaining spirit might be tempted to bicker about the added complexity of dealing with arcs, but I find it well worth the effort. The added beauty of a curve is worth a little patient labor.

The past three days I have been working on the ceiling in the bus. One of the very first things I purchased when planning this project was interlocking foam tiles. They are sold as flooring to provide a cushioned walking area. I had pondered what I could cover the steel ceiling of the bus with. Foam has the benefit of being a good insulator against both temperature fluctuations and sounds. It is also pliable, and can be shaped to an arch.

I did some research online, and found that others had used various types of foam on the ceilings of buses. It was recommended by one man to use contact cement (Weldwood) as it adheres instantly and forms an excellent permanent bond. So, this is what I have been using. One caveat, should you try this yourself. They call it *contact* cement for good reason. Once the two surfaces to be glued together touch, there is an instant bond.

This calls for some planning in piecing things together. Following is an example of the process I have been using.



(Click on any picture to view as a larger image.)

If the space you are working on has some squareness to it, then it is good to begin in a corner. I began in the front of the bus at the passenger side. The first piece was a challenge as you have to prevent the center from touching until you have the edges aligned. It is very difficult to remove the tile once it has made contact. It is not impossible to get it unstuck, but is difficult.

Using a small paint roller, I apply contact cement to the back of the tile, and to the ceiling. Each surface must be allowed to dry. Depending on the temperature (must be above 65 degrees), this can take between 5 to 15 minutes. Then the surfaces will bond instantly when brought together.

As you can see, putting the interlocking tiles in place is much like working a jigsaw puzzle. This is an easy puzzle, for all the pieces are identical.

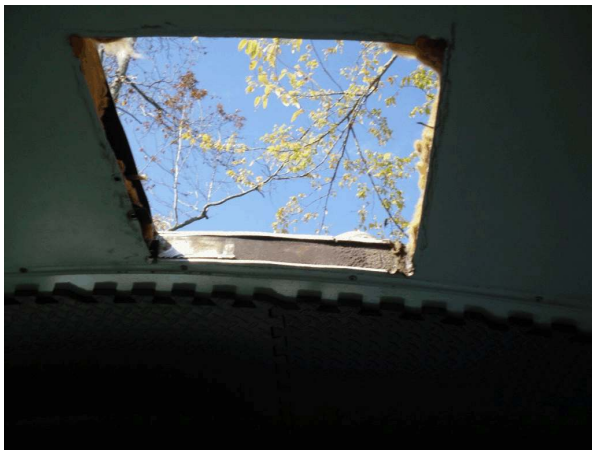


Pictured above is the first row of tile all the way to the opposite side. All that is left is the final edge piece to dress out the boundary between the wall and

ceiling.



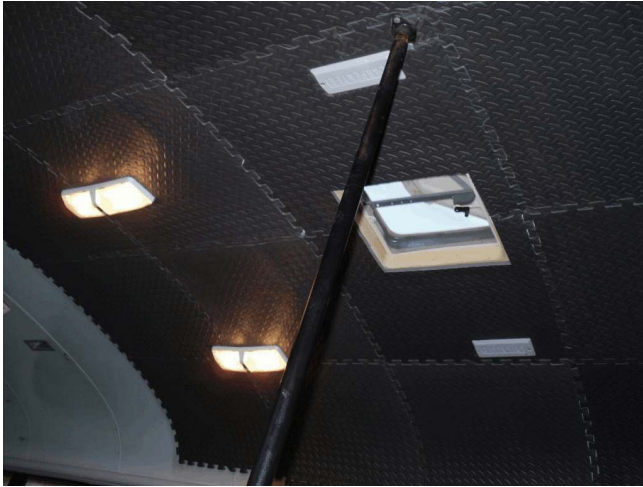
And here is the final piece in place for the first course of tile. I had to take a break from gluing tile at this point, for I needed to install a ceiling vent. I had salvaged a vent from the RV in Tennessee. There was previously a small round vent in the ceiling, which can be seen in these pictures, but it was inadequate, and had been painted completely shut up on the roof. I needed to cut a hole, and install the new vent, before putting more ceiling tiles up.



You can see the vent hole cut with a beautiful Georgia sky shining above. The Father has given me excellent weather for working on the bus so far. I am also very thankful for this. The few rainy or cold days we have had have fallen at times when I have been able to take care of other business, such as printing newsletters for prisoners, writing blogs, and answering e-mail.

It requires some patience to perform this work on the ceiling. I have spent three days on it so far, and will need one more to finish. There are a lot of lights and other objects to cut around. Each tile has to be installed

individually, and then measurements taken from the edges for the next piece. When allowing glue to dry, this takes time, but the end result is worth the patient effort.



This photo was taken from the front step of the bus, looking in. It shows the vent installed, and several courses of tiles glued in place. You will also see four lights in place. Two are the original Carpenter Bus lights. They run off of the main battery. The others, which are lit, I installed. They run off of auxiliary power, or shore power and have switches on each light. These too were salvaged from the RV in Tennessee.

I did the bathroom ceiling the first day, and the area over the beds the second day. All I have left now is a section toward the middle where the air conditioner is mounted.



The bus already sounds much quieter inside with this foam tile covering the smooth metal ceiling. It also tones down the brightness of the interior, and the

grey contrasts well with the white and black which are found throughout the bus.

The Thanksgiving Holiday is about a week and a half away. I encourage you to take the time to consider what ways the Father may be demonstrating His love and intimate awareness of your character in the details of your life. Perhaps you too will find many things to be thankful for. Has the Father been sending blessings to you, especially designed for you, with your character, background, and personality in mind? Have you been noticing? I am certain He would be delighted to receive thanks from the grateful hearts of His sons and daughters.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.