This Eagle Took On A Big Cat

by Sonnie Gray

My wife Patti and I had owned a 1962 0/1 Eagle when I happened upon this coach, an 0/1 which been converted by a Gospel Group and was in need of a lot of updating. At the time we were doing this along as we tried to keep the bus where we could use it.

In 1996 we discovered a 1972 0/5 Eagle, that we looked at it and subsequently striked a deal. The coach had been used as a Entertainer coach which was once owned by Delbert McClinton that they toured with until it was in an accident. It originally was converted by Gary Turlington in 1992, and the coach was in great shape other than being wrecked in the front.

Due to my work load at that time, as I was self employed building signs and monitor cabinets for the DFW Airport and airlines, I didn't have sufficient time to work on it. Then in early January of 1997 with the help of my good friend Richard Locke we worked eight long weekends to change out the complete front clip. We were able to salvage the front cap but this entailed a lot of work, including fabricating a new door, installing a new fiberglass dash and all instruments along with the clutch and throttle linkage, air lines, steering column, the work was time intensive as I had nothing to go by except a bundle of wires to trace out. The front clip that I bought was use in the movie Selena but it was just a frame, so this took time to install new skins, ligh ts, bumpers, wiper motors, windshields, drivers window, door window, etc.

We had everything put back together and then took a short test drive. Confident with the coaches reliability we went back home and loaded everything for a trip including our car on trailer. We loaded everything we needed and then made a toast, we were on our way to California for the Bus Conversion Convention at the Orange County Fairgrounds. We had barely gone twelve miles when the clutch went completely out as we coasted into a Wal-Mart parking lot. Since it happened to be very late we decided to just go

