

# Charlotte RV Service Opens in Southwest, Florida

## Another location for Vehicle Clinic and Amos Slater

Article and photos by Larry Plachno



The new Charlotte RV Service Center in southwest Florida combines a new location with many years of heavy vehicle maintenance and repair experience. It is a second facility for Amos Slater and his respected Vehicle Clinic of Detroit but with more emphasis on RV and conversion units. The facility can handle just about any type of motorcoach or RV service and repairs including engines and painting.

Saturday, May 22, witnessed the Grand Opening celebration for a new business known as Charlotte RV Service. This new company is located in Charlotte Harbor, Florida, across the bridge from Punta Gorda and approximately midway between Fort Meyers and Sarasota on the Sunshine State's southwest Gulf Coast. While this new facility offers every kind of repair and service for recreational vehicles, it also does expert work on converted coaches and charter and tour motorcoaches.

How can one facility be so versatile? The answer is that this new operation is a second location for the highly regarded Vehicle Clinic in Detroit and its owner, Amos Slater. Moreover, the opening commemorates 60 years of involvement in the bus business by the Slater family. The story behind all of this helps explain why Amos Slater has been so successful in heavy vehicle repair.

Our story starts with Allen (A.J.) Slater who was born in Kentucky very close to the West Virginia state line. Due to the shortage of bus drivers during World War II, Slater

got into the bus industry at the age of 16. Being big for his age, he managed to land a job in 1944 and 1945 with the Scott and Nichols Bus Company in nearby Williamson, West Virginia, driving Ford Transit buses in city transit service.

In 1949, Slater moved up to driving inter-city scheduled and charter coaches for Carolina Coach Co. (Carolina Trailways) out of Salisbury, Maryland. Like many bus drivers, Slater noted the attractive girls who rode on his bus. However, in 1954 and 1955, he developed a particular interest in a pretty young



Like Vehicle Clinic in Detroit, Charlotte RV Service can handle repairs and maintenance on commercial and converted coaches. This MCI converted by Angola Coach was in the shop for several items.



Charlotte RV Service also handles repairs and maintenance on RV units including both the chassis and motor home equipment. They are also the local repair facility for the El Monte RV rental fleet.

lady named Geneva who rode his bus to attend nursing school at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. As has happened countless times, bus driver Slater persuaded the pretty young passenger to become his bride.

Slater brought his family to Philadelphia in 1958 when he moved up into management as dispatcher and supervisor for Safeway Trailways. Three years later, in 1961, he moved his family to Toledo when offered the position of Toledo terminal manager and driver supervisor for the American Bus Lines division of Continental Trailways. At this time, Toledo was a major station for Trailways and a very busy location. Geneva helped out by selling charters and tours in Toledo, a talent that would serve the family well in following years.

It was in 1966 that Slater moved his family to Detroit to take over the Detroit Agency Station for Trailways. In spite of its size, Detroit was not located on the major Trailways through routes and hence depended more on package express than passengers for income.

Allen Slater died in June of 1977, but the family continued on briefly with the Detroit Agency Station. Two things happened later that year to change the path of the Slater family. One was a change in commission structure by Trailways in October which made the Detroit Agency Station less profitable. The second was the graduation from the University of Michigan by Amos Slater in December. As a result, the Slater family gave up the Trailways Agency and instead opened a tour operator business under the name of Charter Bus Unlimited.

In 1983, the Slater family purchased their first bus. Eventually, Charter Bus Unlimited operated 21 coaches which included 13 Prevosts. Amos Slater took charge of the com-

pany garage where he learned a great deal about motorcoach service and maintenance. Amos holds ASE certification in all fields of heavy-duty vehicle repairs as well as ASE certification for electrical, air conditioning, engine, machinest and body/paint. Amos graduated from Chrysler Corporation's Motech Automotive Education Center.

In retrospect, Amos made a wise choice and decided to use his knowledge of motorcoach service and maintenance. In January of 1994, he opened Vehicle Clinic in an industrial section of Detroit and began doing work exclusively for coach owners. Vehicle Clinic has a building with 4,500 square feet and a paved fenced area of about 1-1/4 acre. Amos started with the philosophy of doing it right the first time, which has been a key to his success. Accommodating the schedules for

the buses as well as providing cost effective repairs have created a very loyal clientele of repeat customers.

In addition to smaller operators, who do not have their own mechanics, the customers of Vehicle Clinic include several larger companies who do not want to do the heavy and technical work. The garage also keeps a large stock of coach parts so they can fix most any emergency in the same day. Today, Vehicle Clinic continues its enviable reputation for excellent service at good prices. Most of the staff have been there since its founding. Geneva Slater oversees operations on a daily basis.

Amos was originally introduced to the Southwest Gulf Coast of Florida by a friend who is the owner of a Prevost conversion

In addition to the fenced and lighted parking area, Charlotte RV Service Center has 14,500 square feet of garage and office space. Expert service personnel and equipment can handle an extremely wide range of items including engine work, electrical systems, air conditioning, body work and even RV and conversion equipment. In addition to the service bays, Charlotte RV Service also has a new, modern paint booth.





One of the major features of Charlotte RV Service Center is its state-of-the-art heated paint booth. Paint is prepared using a computerized paint matching system from PPG.



Both Charlotte RV Service Center in southwest Florida and Vehicle Clinic in Detroit have service trucks for emergency help when your bus, conversion or RV refuses to start.

coach. He became more interested when he found out that Punta Gorda had been voted the number one place to live in the South. Research disclosed that the area was heavily populated with RVs, but that there was limited availability of heavy vehicle repair, maintenance, body work and painting. Several people who knew Amos encouraged him to provide these needed services. What resulted was an operation similar to Vehicle Clinic but with more emphasis on RV units.

A suitable facility was found near the corner of U.S. 41 and Harper Avenue in Charlotte Harbor. Included are 14,500 square feet of garage and office space plus three acres of paved, fenced, lighted parking. Amos then set about searching for competent staff and suitable equipment. Business actually started on March 1, 2004.

Charlotte RV Service offers virtually every type of maintenance and service for buses, recreational vehicles and even trucks. Body

work is available on fiberglass, aluminum, steel, stainless steel and laminate panels. Service is available on chassis including suspension systems and even the Eagle Torsilastic® system. The company has the equipment and expertise to handle all types of electrical work including AC and DC, as well as generators and inverters. Available also is service on air conditioning systems, plus gasoline and diesel engine work including Detroit Diesel, Caterpillar and Cummins. Charlotte RV Service can also do interior and

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remodeling work on RVs and converted coach software. RV equipment, such as refrigerators, heating systems and water systems and LP systems can also be repaired as part of the "One-Stop Shopping" philosophy.

Noteworthy is the fact that Charlotte RV Service has had a brand new 56-foot long, heated painting booth installed which meets all legal requirements. It includes a computerized paint matching system from PPG. The company is also the local repair facility for the El Monte RV rental fleet.

The grand opening on May 22 turned into a major event. A substantial number of people came to see the facility and meet the staff. Charlie Shoe, a local radio personality, broadcast live from the facility for three hours on radio station WCVU, an easy listening station located at 104.9. Refreshments were provided, and the facility was open for inspection.

Plans are already underway to provide for future expansion. A parcel of land has been acquired which covers 11 acres on Highway 41 close to Charlotte RV Storage in nearby Punta Gorda. In addition to providing storage for RV units, Charlotte RV Storage has been increasingly active with converted coach sales. Bob Dingle, known by many in the converted coach industry,

has recently stepped in as the manager of consignment sales.

For more information on service or repairs for charter and tour coaches, con-

verted coaches and RVs, you can phone Charlotte RV Service at (941) 883-5555, or go to [www.CharlotteRVService.com](http://www.CharlotteRVService.com). The telephone number for Vehicle Clinic in Detroit is (313) 895-7600. □

As part of the grand opening celebration of Charlotte RV Service Center on May 22, radio station WCVU did a live broadcast from the facility. *From left to right:* Well-known local radio personality Charlie Shoe, Bill Robinson from Charlotte RV Storage and Amos Slater from Charlotte RV Service Center and Vehicle Clinic.



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