

#1

AFRICAN ENTERPRISE NEW YORK to CAPE TOWN

Were we going to Darkest Africa, Primitive Africa, Wild Africa, so many cliché phrases for the most formidable continent on Earth?

Distances play a very important part in the story surrounding the Airstream Wally Byam African Caravan.

A straight-line distance from New York to Cape Town is 7,800 miles, or 6,778 nautical miles. With our two island stops the mileage is probably a few hundred miles longer than noted.

The Airstreams and tow vehicles went by sea from North America to Cape Town. A few Caravanners, including Wally and Stella Byam flew to Cape Town.

I sailed on the African Enterprise, owned by the Farrell Lines. Eighteen days sailing the Atlantic Ocean from north to south, experiencing food fit for

royalty. Seeing the Southern Lights for the first time, crossing the equator, and watching with amazement when sink water changed from clockwise to counter clockwise.

Caravanners made up one-third of the passenger roster. This gave us the opportunity to know each other and talk about the adventures ahead.

In our cabin was Bob Nolte, 18 years traveling with his grandparents, from Montana; Nick Charles, age 17 and son of Andy Charles President of Airstream Inc. Jackson Center, Ohio and assistant advance scout; and myself Dale "Pee Wee" Schwamborn, age 20 and lead scout.

No details, no details but you must understand confined for over two weeks three young men can find many ways to entertain themselves.

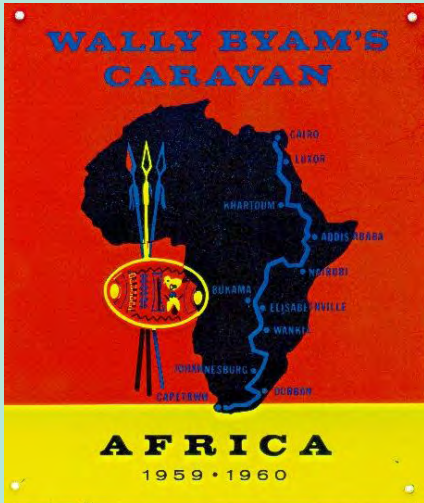
Here is an example. There were two daughters traveling with their parents to South Africa. The father had accepted a professorial position at the University of Stellenbosch. We made a stop to unload needed materials at Ascension Island. I then convinced the two young ladies that Ascension Island was built and secured on pontoons. It was created during the Second World War with a combined effort between the United States and the United Kingdom. This misinformation lasted only a few days until the father set the record straight.

The Cape Rollers is the meeting of the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean converging upon each other. This is a phenomenon introducing ship passengers to leaving one ocean to the other as they approach Cape Town.

Your ship begins contorting up and down, and around all at the same time. It lasts for only a short period but has the roughness to wake you up.

At last, the African Enterprise has reached Cape Town.

1959 AFRICAN HIGHWAY TRAVEL SUMMERIZED



1959 became a vintage year for Airstream Trailers Inc. Wally Byam, owner and originator of the Airstream travel trailer, will lead a Caravan of 41 Airstream families and three auxiliary vehicles from Cape Town, Union of South Africa overland to Cairo, Egypt and beyond.

The Caravan followed the above route in blue through Africa. All trips have a starting point; here Wally is standing by Stella's Gold Airstream and his International Harvester truck. Africa begins when the voyage from the United States lands in Cape Town and rigs are unloaded.

When lecturing about the Airstream Wally Byam African Caravan, one enduring question is about the roads.

With this commentary on the roads we will explore, paved highways, strip roads, excellent unpaved roads, extreme washboard roads, dusty roads, quagmire roads, mountain roads and no roads.

Let's begin our travels on the African highways and byways.



South African roads were paved and traveling was smooth. The first major change in our highways occurred in the Rhodesia's when we traveled on strip roads. When two vehicles approached each other, each vehicle moved to the side letting their

drivers side stay on their track. Through South Africa and Colonial nations driving is left hand drive.

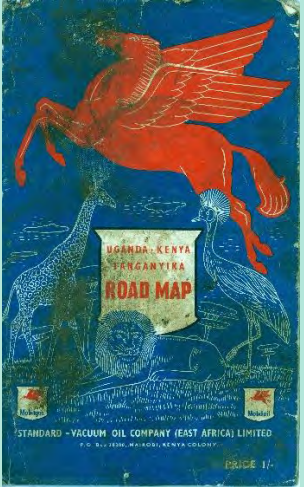


Just east from Victoria Falls is a marvelous engineering feat, the bridge going from Southern to Northern Rhodesia over the Zambesi River gorge. On the unpaved roads in the Belgian Congo the Caravan might encounter natives along the road side, roads traveling through forests or an occasional baobab tree. The ancient tale handed down by native generations tells of an elephant hungry for the tender leaves at the very top of the tree, uprooted the tree, ate the leaves, and then replanted the tree upside down. Today you see the massive baobab's trunk and the roots spreading out above reaching the sky.



In crossing Luvua River the Caravanners loaded their rigs on the Kiambi Ferry. The ferry was clever and appeared risky planks overlaying each other on top of four boats for buoyance. Crossing time and return time for the ferry is under one hour.

The roads we traveled in the Congo went from acceptable to spring breaking washboard. As required repairs were made in route by the Caravanners to reattach underbelly aluminum and re-leaf broken springs.



Have you ever attended a preview for a movie, or enjoyed a coming attraction at the movies? The day the Caravan was to leave Nairobi we had a preview, a quagmire. You can see from the above pictures that our camping ground became Mudsville. Even with four-wheel drive tow vehicles bogged down. It took pushing, pulling and shoving to get on the road to head north. The Scout Truck and Mechanic's Truck were equipped with winches which pulled many rigs from the campground.



The Northern Frontier District or NFD isn't the most hospitable landscape as you can see in the picture where the Scout Truck stopped for lunch. The British Interior Department, in Nairobi, said the road was fragile, and that we would experience dust as we traveled through miles and miles of silty roads. Several nights it became

necessary to thoroughly purge the Airstreams from dust before cooking meals and going to bed. Inadvertently we created our own Haboob.



We take it for granted in the United States about where we can obtain fuel for our vehicles. There is easy access and an ample fuel supply. What do you do in Africa? In cities gasoline is readily available. Many outposts have gasoline but not in huge quantities. Most villages don't have gas supplies, for sale, but for selected consumption.

One way to assure yourself to have a constant gasoline supply is to what the Advance Scout truck and Mechanic's truck had. Our Chevrolet trucks came with a thirty gallon tank and two fifty gallon auxiliary tanks. Use for talking points ten mile per gallon. The range to zero is 1,500 miles. We replenished our gasoline at every opportunity.

There were locations that gasoline stations were several hundred miles away. Before the Caravan left the United States the Wally Byam and Helen Byam Schwamborn made contacts with the international oil companies, Mobil, Shell and BP.

As needed the oil companies sent tanker trucks to specified locations to refill the Caravan's needs. Above you will see a Mobil tanker. All vehicles used gasoline.

Twice the Caravan refilled from 55 gallon drums loaded on flatbed trucks.



A TrILERMAN'S PRAYER by Wally Byam¹

O Lord, give us springs that won't break.

Give us rocker arms that won't wear out the bearings,

Give us shackles that won't elongate the holes

Give us a water heater that we can light from the inside

and not have to go out in the wind and the rain to try and light it with a blowtorch

Give us water tanks that don't leak, either water or air

Give us tubing that doesn't break at the flares

Give us windows and wheel housings that don't leak dust

Give us roof locker doors that will stay closed

And above all, O Lord, give us a stove that will stay together

In one piece at least for a day or two of washboard roads and we thank those for finally giving us a refrigerator that will make ice under most any condition, the same as Swedish inventions

But we pray, O Lord for a door for the refrigerator more solidly built that

will stay on under any road conditions And if it is at all in reason, we would like rivets on the inside skin that would not come out, especially on the bows and around the door and **we would like a door lock that wouldn't shake loose and a door handle that wouldn't break** off in a place and a way to carry eggs outside of burying them in the bed clothes and some way of keeping the clothes hangers from jumping off the rods.

But with all the things we want, we thank Thee for the best

beds on earth, a trailer that is remarkably cool, even in the desert heat, windows that open **wide and give good ventilation, a tight roof that doesn't leak, even in the flash floods and the tropical rains of the Belgian Congo, refrigerators that make ice under any and all conditions. A bathtub and a shower that allows a human being to keep as clean as a human being should and a toilet that flushes and a septic tank that doesn't have too much odor on the inside** and a trailer that is with all a haven of comfort on mountain grades, in rock waste lands and in monotonous deserts and it is always home wherever your wheels may stop.



Wally Byam with concern watches Pete Turner, Caravan Photographer's

¹ From Wally Byam written on the 10th of November in Moyale in Ethiopia with the worst roads of the entire caravan just ahead of us.

auxillary vehicle tow the Gold Airstream through the boggy, muddy roadway with assist from Caravanners and Ethiopian Imperial guards.

Considering the roads, the long days, and the International Harvester's broken drive trains it is no wonder that Wally wrote his "*A TrILERMAN'S Prayer*" one evening to reflect on the events unfolding during the day.

The Southern Ethiopian monsoons completely flooded the roads and they became impassable without strong backs, sweat and callouses. Everyone joined into road recovery. At one end a group shoveled solid earth into buckets, once filled a bucket brigade passed the earth to the end of the line. At the end of the line the earth was judiciously spread to fill in the quagmire and create a drivable surface. Several men chopped bushes and small trees to use as filler.

The Emperor Haile Selassie sent ten Imperial Guards to travel with us through the south of Ethiopia. There was concern that several tribes might attempt to harass or even attack the Caravan. The Palace didn't have dominion over several tribes in the south. These tribes had rituals that were potential threats to the Caravan.

Notice the guards were assisting in reworking the road.

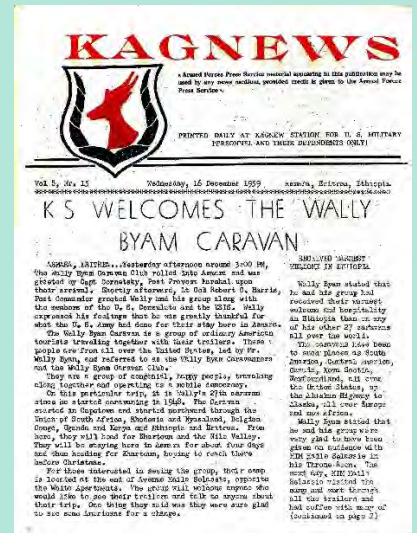


As we left the mud fields we found an even greater challenge with rocks, gulley's, and steep hills that were in our way in reaching Addis Abba.

As the Allied Army made up of British and South African soldier moved towards Addis Abba to fight the Italian Army they built a highway. So after 15 years with no upkeep and complete neglect, erosion decimated the highway. Making our way through this rugged area we broke axles, spider gears, and had to tow vehicles away from the Airstreams and use a "Come-A-Long" wench with manpower to free Airstreams from ruts. Reality set in were the naysayers in Johannesburg correct?



Simple engineering was used to construct a plank bridge, typical in Mexico also. Along the road we went through native villages and were the day's attraction. The roads were now graded with occasional but not overpowering washboard conditions. Addis Ababa's elevation is 7800 feet above sea level.



Our last climb in Ethiopia was Mussolini Pass, so named by the Italian Corp of engineers in the 1930's as they invaded the nation and headed for the capital of Addis Abba. As you can see Pete Turner had a wonderful photo opportunity as we traveled around horse shoe bends and curves towing up the pass.

In route to Khartoum, Sudan we stopped off an American military base. Kagnew Station located in the city of Asmara, Eritrea an Ethiopian province. (Later to become an independent nation.) Kagnew was set up during the Second World War as secret communication base and remained so for many years after the war.

The Caravan remained on the base through Christmas day. We had full base privileges. It was interesting to see the Caravan blend in with the military. As it is with most bases the soldiers were young, some younger, the same age and of

course older than I was at the time. I celebrated my 21st birthday on base. Having hamburgers, French fries and other forgotten foods that we left behind in the United States we frequented the base café.

In our youth we listened to the Top 40, and so catching up on American pop music was enjoyable. Mack the Knife, The Three Bells, I'm Going to Get Married, Heartache by the Numbers and on and on and on learning what was cool back home.

It is time to leave the American Oasis.

One of the few times we were in harm's way became the road from Asmara to the Sudanese border. It seems an aggressive and violent band of bandits and cutthroats had heard that an American group will be traveling through their territory. One of the vehicles was a trailer made of solid gold; the Shifters reportedly were waiting to capture this pure gold trailer.

As a precaution the Army base sent two jeeps with automatic weapons to see us through Shifters domain. We made it to the Sudan without incident.



After leaving Asmara we were back on dirt roads with the typical occasional wash boards, and bumps.

Not too many miles into the Sudan on the way to Khartoum we met a camel caravan at a watering hole. For most Caravanners this became an unimaginable occasion. The camel drivers allowed us to ride their camels. Personally the camel glides as in walks and trots, it is a memory that I preferred a camel to horse for riding. We spent a few hours with caravan and then returned to our trip.

We spent New Year's in Khartoum and then resumed our trip north to Egypt.

While we were in Khartoum Wally visited the Egyptian Embassy to obtain permission to drive overland to Aswan, Egypt. The Embassy denied land access from the Sudan to Aswan.

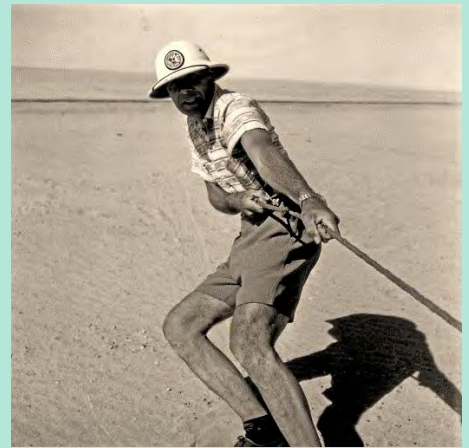
Two decisions were made. This first was to split the Caravan at Atbara. One group would load their rigs on railcars to Wadi Halfa and that a group that wanted to travel across the Nubian Desert could, knowing that there were no roads, just sand.

Wally had a stipulation that they auxiliary vehicles had to go with the group. The Scout Truck and Mechanics Truck for standby assistance and the photographers truck, so that Pete Turner could photograph the trip.

The other decision was to arrange for barges to carry our trucks and Airstream from Wadi Halfa to Aswan.



By rail or by sand traps?



There is no doubt that the Nubian Desert will swallow you vehicle. It took pushing, pulling, towing and steel traction tracks to make it through.



Here is an excerpt from Pee Wee Schwamborn to his parents back in Bakersifeld talking about the Nubian Desert trek.

Just briefly about our trip through the desert. seven trailers and the three solo trucks crossed the Nubian Desert to Wadi Halfa. It took eight days, alot of deep sand, two broken axles, several ~~flats~~ flats, burned out bearing in Pete's truck, fractured spider gears in one truck, and Nick, Art and I towing Pete's truck were stuck in one hole for ten hours! This is just a brief sketch of the desert crossing.



Airstream #1 is being loaded on the barge with Wally's supervision. The Scout Truck is already loaded.



Merrily, merrily, merrily we float along float along down the Nile. A rare opportunity presented itself we reached Abu Simbal. We stopped and went ashore and visited this marvelous antiquity. Today Abu Simbal has been move to high ground piece by piece to be reconstructed and safe from the High Aswan Dam and Lake Nasser.

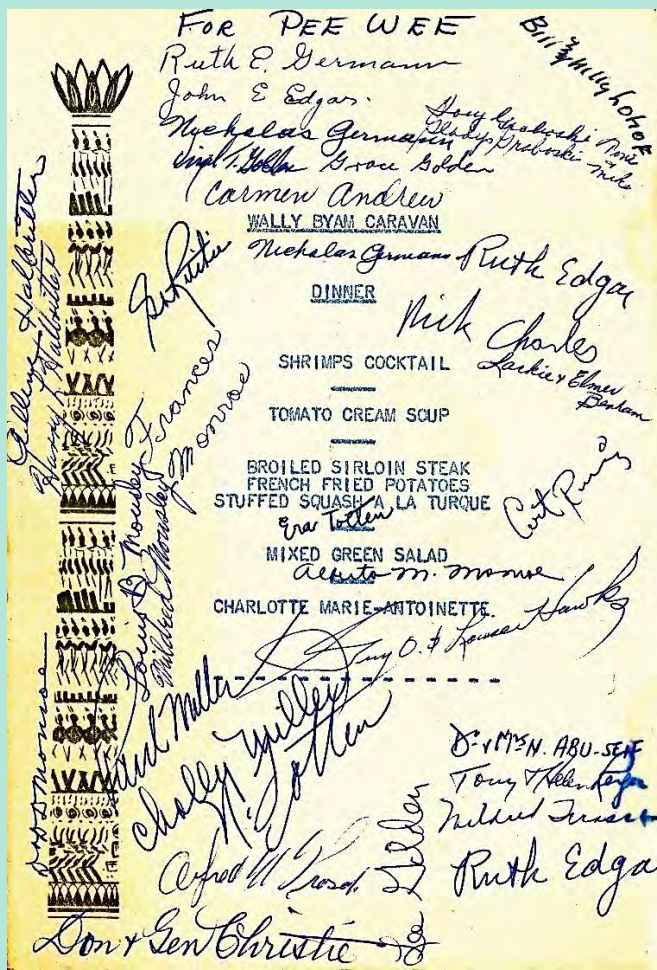
Wally Byam out did his negotiation skills when he arranged with the Egyptian Department of Antiquities to allow the Caravan to stay at the Pyramids of Giza. Just think of opening your Airstream's door in the early morning and having the pyramids in your front yard with the sun rising over them. Thank you Mr. Byam, Wally you have made dreams come true. Wally always had the right words for the right time as you see the content of his cable back to Helen Byam Schwamborn for Airstream and press release.



**Cairo, Egypt
February 6, 1960**

**Because the impossible
takes a little longer we
arrived a little late but
you can tell the world
that the Wally Byam
Caravan from Capetown
to Cairo is history.**

Wally Byam



DOWN IN ETHIOPIA
 MUDDY AND WET
 WE BUILT THE ROADS
 WITH MUSCLE AND SWEAT
 WITH PICKS AND SHOVELS
 AND WASTE BASKETS TOO
 WE FILLED IN MUD HOLES SO WE COULD GET THROUGH



Like any achievement in life, you celebrate. And did we ever do it. Our banquet was held at Nile Hilton, a four course meal fit for a Caravanner. The menu became an autograph sheet as you have seen above. Did we have entertainment? Did we ever. The kids created a skit with songs that not only was a hi-light that evening but one to be remembered forever.

Hum to yourself the music for "Down in the Valley" and then include the lyrics from the program, "Down in Ethiopia."

Did we do the impossible? Maybe? One thing we knew the commentaries in Johannesburg were true with the exception of one forecast.

The roads were as bad as they discussed in the newspaper. Their one forecast that we would turn around, well, we made it through.

Consider the following. Wally's leadership was underestimated by the South Africans. Then maybe the most important of all is the stick-to-itiveness and American ingenuity and the spirit of never giving up.

We did it.



As we entered the continent of Africa we left. We loaded our rigs on to cargo ship in Alexandria, Egypt to ship to Beirut, Lebanon.

In Cape Town our Airstreams and trucks were off loaded with dockside cranes.

In Alexandria we cringed our toes and the Airstreams were lifed off dock, and hung in the air moving like a pendulum until the barge reached the ship and lowered the Airstreams.

We now say goodbye to Africa and look forward to traveling through the Middle East, the Balkans and meeting the 1960 Airstream Wally Byam

Caravan at the Trieste, Italy border.



DIPLOMACY, A REVIEW AFTER 50 YEARS

1959 AIRSTREAM'S WALLY BYAM AFRICAN CARAVAN

As years go by the mind drifts into the past reminding us about the journey we have made.

All events require a proper execution, leading to a positive conclusion. When your knowledge or wisdom fails to grasp the event, your conclusion may not turn out the way you wanted it to be.

In life there are occasions that you may face a situation that is demanding with acrimonious consequences if not properly dealt with. I had one such event earlier in life.

In 1959, Airstream's Wally Byam African Caravan had been traveling through the Union of South Africa for several weeks. My position on the Caravan was the Advance Scout. With me as an assistant was Nick Charles, he was 17 years old and I was 20.

Basic duties check the roadways, find a campsite and mark the route with signs, meet with city officials, find the post office and other required conveniences.

Sometime in late July Nick and I were several days ahead. Our stop was Bloemfontein, the Orange Free State capitol. We went to the city and met with the mayor and city manager.

The Afrikaans or Boers controlled the Union of South Africa. The population demography in 1959 is 70% native and 14% white. The other minorities are considered Asian, or colored. With a population of 17,000,000 the breakdown is 11.9 million blacks and a minority white population of 2.4 million. A ratio of 5:1.

How do you manage a “hostile” population when you are in a smaller minority? The Afrikaans created apartheid. This kept the races separate with a harsh judicial system and an overpowering police state.

This abbreviated view into South Africa government is information to explain the encounter Nick and I had with the mayor and town clerk.

We were cordially greeted and began introducing the Caravan to the gentlemen. We introduced Wally Byam, the Caravanners, Airstreams and our goal to travel the length of Africa from Cape Town to Cairo.

In turn they began to talk about their city, our campsite, and South Africa. They it turned racial and political.

Nick and I were asked if we had learned anything about race control during our trip in South Africa. The citizens need to learn that the kaffir is nothing more than cattle and should be handled as such.

Wow!

I was confronted with a hot potato, a political issue that might endanger our stay if their statement was answered negatively or being misquoted and repeated if agreed upon.

My only answer was, “The United States is a young nation and we have so much to learn.” That was it.

Sometime in the not too distant past I thought about this meeting and my answer. Who was I? I was a 20 year old, a junior in college, no diplomatic training, and what gave me the knowledge or strength to address a seemingly tough situation with a non-committal amiable answer?

Heading the list was working with and understanding Wally Byam and what he might do and expect me to do. The close relationship since 1951, Wally had been a mentor in many ways. My responsibility was to represent Wally.

There were 41 Airstream families. I represented them; I could never let them down. From my first Caravan in 1951 and three additional Caravans I learned who Caravanners were, Americans traveling for companionship, new horizons and the love of their Airstreams.

As an American citizen, I must honor my Nation. Never short change our values by creating an international disagreement, or subjugating it to endorsing other's views not held by our Nation.

The years rolled by and the answer came to me. As the advance scout, I represented Wally Byam, Wally Byam Caravanners, and the United States of America. These elements were always there but never linked together as an answer to something happening in 1959.

Let's examine other view of South African life in 1959.

Politics are always a touchy situation, especially when you are traveling overseas.

The Airstream Wally Byam Caravan will be going to Africa. The Caravan will do something that no other trailer group has ever done; go from the Union of South Africa to Egypt. The route is Cape Town to Cairo.

Africa is in various political changes going from colonial rule to self-rule. The first and major change will be the independence of the Belgian Congo to self-rule from Belgium. The British

colony rule will soon be coming to an end in other colonial territories. Egypt is a military dictatorship under the control of Abdul Nasser, and an alliance called the United Arab Republics with Syria and Iraq. Ethiopia is an absolute monarchy being ruled by the Emperor Haile Selassie.

The Union of South Africa is a different story. When the Afrikaans took control from the British, they established a white's only democracy. They literally interned all blacks in townships with severe curfews. The native population was allowed outside the townships to work only, to leave and return at legal hours set by the government.

The formal and insidious name for this form of government is Apartheid.

The Caravan members were indoctrinated about the restrictions and their responsibilities to honor the government of South Africa's rules and regulations applying to racial separations.

The state religion was the Dutch Reformed Church. Dating a young lady of the Jewish faith in Cape Town and meeting a young man in Durban of the Jewish faith I found that as a small minority they had problems.

The Native Townships were viewed from a distance

Kraals in the countryside

Durban after a date sitting in the truck police hustle a black lady from a house.

It was long after midnight and the non-white curfew, when the police car pulled up in front of us. Several policeman left their car and went briskly to the front door of the home.

In an instant the police came out with a black women struggling from the men dragging her to the police car.

One can only imagine the reason. The girl had missed returning to her Township, missed the curfew, or was reported by a neighbor. A report from a neighbor is typical in a repressive society.

In Johannesburg it was with pleasure in meeting a person of Indonesian ancestry, Muslim, considered a non-white, as an Asian with limited rights under apartheid in a restricted area and controlled by curfew.

What a mix of ethnic and racial categories. White, Black, Asian, Cape Colored, non-white and not to mention religious distinctions, Dutch Reformed Church, Anglican, Jewish, Muslim and native.

Breaking all laws, rules and regulations I went to my new found friends home. The two laws were very simple, breaking curfew and visiting and a non-white residential area during the curfew hours.

The evening is a special memory.

My new found friend lived in a modest but upscale home vastly different than those lived by blacks in townships. His wife and two children (a boy and a girl) were most gracious.

Our meal was strictly from Indonesia. Spice meats, vegetable, various pungent sauces, and the staple with any Asian meal white rice.

After dinner we discussed his life in an Apartheid Society. His work was the equivalent to a CPA in the United States. He had received a degree at the university. The family had the liberty to go camping with their caravan (travel trailer) on vacation.

He grinned from ear to ear when he proudly mentions that he had received his papers to leave Johannesburg and travel on his haj to Mecca. A lifelong dream for any Muslim and even more special considering the restrictive government he lived under.

Long before his birth the Dutch introduced slave labor from Indonesia. His forefathers worked in servitude building a better life for the Dutch.

The one comment he made that is most important dealt with freedom.

“I have a good job, reasonable remuneration, an education, a nice home for my family, some limited freedom to travel. But until I have the right to vote and participate in my government I will never have freedom.”

It is amazing how Americans take for granted the singular power of one vote.

POLITICAL HUMOR FROM 1959 UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

While in the Union of South Africa in 1959 the political climate was tense, as it would remain until the Afrikaans relinquished their hold on the country to a fully Democratic nation under the Presidency of Nelson Mandela in 1994, after general elections were held.

In 1959 I found that the humor was sardonic, and dark, or sometimes referred to as **"black humor."**

One joke told to me is self-explanatory in defining their disparaging humor.

"In the United States you have John Wayne, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope.

Here is South Africa we have Strijdom¹, Verwoerd² and no hope."

The two Prime Ministers were Afrikaans and represented Apartheid enforcement.

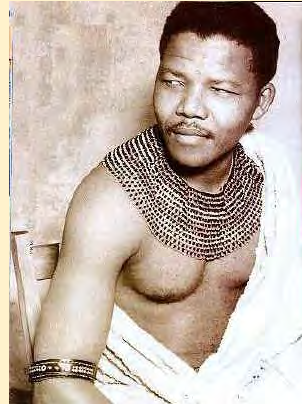
The humor, if it is humor, is primarily from the English residents living under the repressive Afrikaans government.



STRIJDOM



VERWOERD



MANDELA



MANDELA



MANDELA



MANDELA

¹ Johannes Gerhardus Strijdom, Prime Minister 1954-1958

² Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, Prime Minister 1958-1966

1959 AIRSTREAM WALLY BYAM AFRICAN CARAVAN – FACTOIDS



Wally Byam arrives in Cape Town, Union of South Africa and conducts his first Caravan meeting.

Today the African Caravan still holds the mystique that it did in 1959. This is an Airstream trip through "Dark Africa" with memories of Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*.

- 41 Airstream families
- 85 adults and 21 children
- Average age 55.2 years (exclusive from the children's ages)
- 31 International Harvester tow vehicles, 2 Fords, 1 Land Rover, 9 Chevrolets, and 1 Dodge Power Wagon (This includes the 3 auxiliary vehicles)

- The Caravanners came from twenty-five states.

In *Cape Town to Cairo*, by Lillie B. Douglass wrote the following statistics, based on the Douglass records.

- 221 days in Africa
- 99 over-night stops
- 14,207 truck miles

Harry and Allene Halbritter wrote a letter to Helen Byam Schwamborn in 1960, explaining their expenditures for the trip. The costs will not include the cost for their Airstream and tow vehicle. (The calculations are based on traveling through Africa, the Middle East and Europe for 330 days.)

- \$2250.00 Airstream and tow vehicle from New Orleans to Cape Town
- \$920.00 Two passengers from New Orleans to Cape Town
- \$686.00 Barge expense from Waddi Halfa, Sudan to Aswan, Egypt and shipping costs from Alexandria, Egypt to Beirut, Lebanon
- \$1627.00 Shipping expense for equipment and passage for two from Rotterdam, Holland to New York City
- \$2800.00 Actual money spent for 11 months on trip
- \$300.00 Food stocked before leaving the United States
- \$3100.00 total, when divided by 330 days the daily expenditures averages to \$9.30 per day.
- \$26.00 a day when you average daily, equipment and passenger expenses together.

The following information is a composite made from the African Caravan roster and Wally Byam Caravan directories.

- 15 Airstreams families had traveled on prior Caravans
- 26 were newbies
- 2 Scouts had been on previous Caravans
- 1 The photographer was new to Caravans
- 7 African Caravan families traveled on the 1963 Around-the-World Caravan including 1 of the scouts



WALLY BYAM 1959

"For in the final analysis the real measure of living is in seeking out and meeting challenges. What point is there, really in always doing what is easiest?"

There is no substitute for experiencing a thing firsthand. You have to feel the pains to enjoy the delights. You have to feel your *own* back aching, your *own* arms turning to lead, the rough calluses on your fingers. If you don't you can never appreciate the view from the mountain top.

Mountain tops it seems to me don't just come naturally. You've got to climb your own, see for yourself. After everything is said and done, that's what '*life*'¹ is all about. ... we know that what is worth while does not come easily. Part of the joy of triumph is the earning of it. If everyone could learn this little lesson it would be a happier and wiser world."

These are the last two paragraphs from Wally Byam's book, "Trailer Travel Here and Abroad."²

This isn't just the last two pages from a book, this is a summation for Wally Byam's life, and a positive thinking attitude.

¹ Liberty has been taken to change the word 'caravanning' for the word 'life'

² There were several sentences deleted from the two paragraphs.

The Ketch Caravan

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." Mark Twain

Years ago in eastern Oregon and western Idaho, a young lad tended his grandfather's sheep. At night gazing at the stars and the moon, did he conjure visions of travel, foreign lands, sailing, exotic foods, and diversity in native peoples?

Had he read *Two Year Before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana, Jr.; *The Sea Wolf* by Jack London; *Life on the Mississippi* by Mark Twain; *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville or the ancient seafaring classic, Homer's *Odyssey* the amazing voyages of Odysseus?

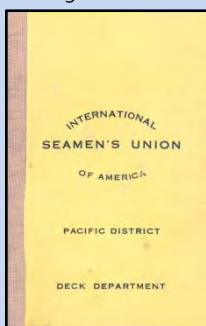
We will never know what the young Wallace Merle Byam dreamt of, or read. We do know that the outdoors and sailing played a major part in his life.

Wally spent his youth in the beautiful lands of eastern Oregon and the rugged Oregon Pacific coastline.



Wally Byam posing on the Oregon coastline

In 1918 Wallace, join the Seaman's Union. I remember Wally talking about Tahiti as a sailor's paradise. Others have written that he was cabin boy. Dreams were now a reality. The foreign lands are a reality. The Ocean is home, if only for a while. Wally apparently did his sailing during the summers, while at Stanford University.



CERTIFICATE OF PROBATIONARY MEMBERSHIP IN THE
SAILORS' UNION OF THE PACIFIC
 INITIATION FEE \$5.00
 1343 A HEADQUARTERS 59 Clay Street
 San Francisco, Cal., Sec. NOV 7 1918

This Certifies, That I, the Secretary have this day received of
 Name Wallace M. Davis No. 1070
 Where Born Ore. When Born 1896-74
 Height 5.10 Color of Eyes blue Color of Hair dark
 Built medium Citizen of U. S.? On the Coast since
 The sum of Five Dollars, Initiation Fee, in trust for the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, the same to be turned over to the Treasurer within twenty-four hours.
John A. Jensen Secretary, P.T.

UNITED STATES SHIPPING BOARD
 STATES SHIPPING BOARD
 RECRUITING SERVICE
 RECRUITING SEAMAN'S CERTIFICATE
 SEAMAN
 Port of S. Cal.

(THE WITHIN NAMED SEAMAN IS ON THE EMERGENCY FLEET REGISTRATION LIST; FORM K SHOULD BE EITHER IN THE CUSTODY OF THE MASTER OF THE VESSEL ON WHICH HE IS SAILING, OR OF ONE OF THE AGENTS OF THE RECRUITING SERVICE. AN INDEPENDENT MEDICAL BOARD IS FILED WITH THE RECRUITING SERVICE.)

Signature of Seaman Wallace M. Davis Nationality: American
 Age 22 on 7-4 1918 Height 5'7"
 Vessel Salmon Flag Am.
 No. 3359 Date of arrival Nov. 22, 1918 Port of arrival S. Cal.

The sailor papers are made out to Wallace Merle Davis. Carrie Biswell Byam, his mother remarried after a divorce in 1899 from Ray Byam, and married David T. Davis. Wallace loved and respected his stepfather. To honor Mr. Davis he had his name changed from Byam to Davis. After graduation from Stanford, he changed his surname back to Byam.

During his university days, Wally camped with his chums. Amazingly, he owned a motorcycle. This love of powered two wheel vehicles carried over into later years on Caravans.¹



Camping during his college days, note sailors cap

In 1935, Wallace Byam added the Clipper to his production. This new model was constructed on the principals of aircraft design, aluminum, riveted, sleek and very, very shiny. Its name derived from the famous Clipper ships of the past. One Airstream Clipper has had a nautical interior.



Custom Airstream Clipper with a seafaring motif

Clipper, Silver Cloud, Liner, Flying Cloud, Cruiser, Wanderer, Wee Wind, Caravel, and Trade Wind, these are Airstream model names that express sailing in nautical terms and

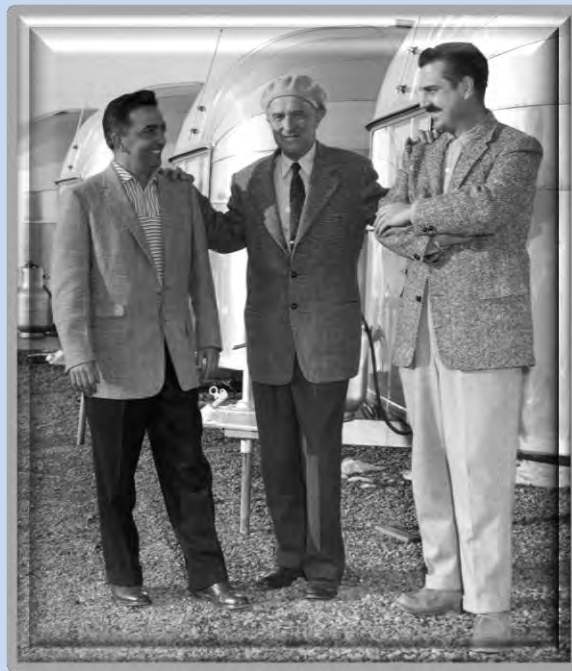
¹ He had a series of small bikes, a Vespa motor scooter, and a Solex bicycle.

possible names for a sailing ship. When these names aren't model specific the remaining Airstream models are more typically describing land travel. One of the hybrids of interest is the models singled out as Land Yachts.

Wally even had a Springer Spaniel named Skipper.

On one of Wally's summer trips to Europe in the 1950's; he took Stella, his wife, out for a sail in the Mediterranean near Marseille, France. Stella wrote my mother, Helen Byam Schwamborn, that their day on the sea was fun, but Wally was an accomplished sailor.

Before the 1959 Wally Byam African Caravan, Wally put into place his plans for retirement. He selected his team to run Airstream. In California Art Costello became president, and in Ohio Andy Charles assume the duties of president. While Wally became the chairman of the board.

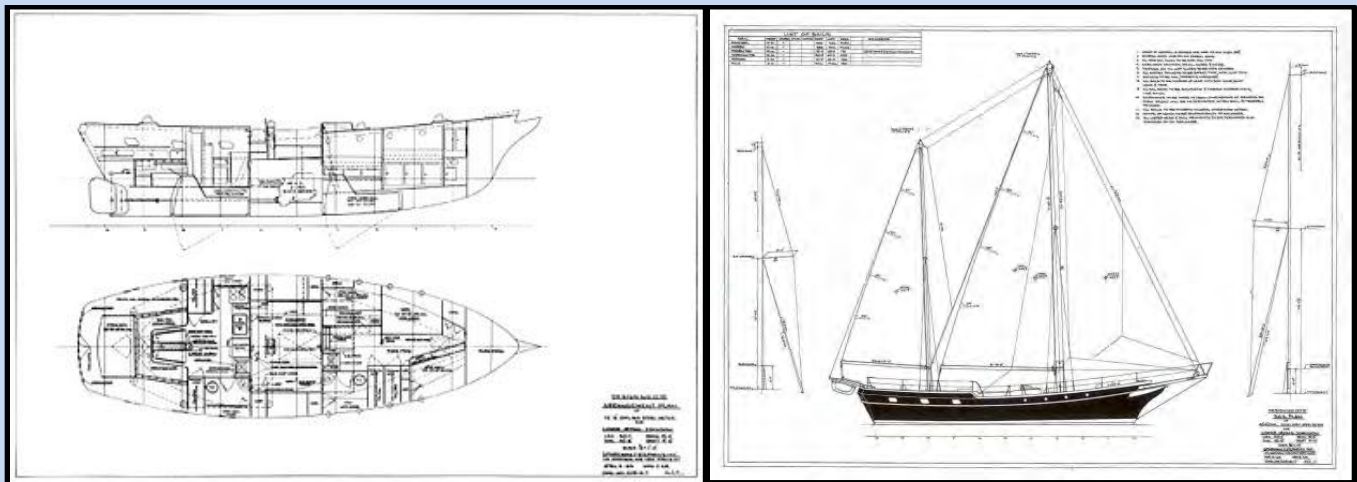


Art, Wally and Andy

In 1958, Wally and Stella took along needed cruise and vacation to Tahiti. When they returned Wally and I talked about the trip. "Pee Wee, the paradise I first visited as a young sailor, hasn't changed!"



Wally planned to retire from Airstream, order a ketch, and sail the waterways of Europe and the high seas. During the African Caravan, Wally received plans and specifications for his ketch. The prestigious and world-renowned design company Sparkman-Stephens received the project. Jack Garmhausen, Airstream's corporate attorney in Sidney, Ohio guided the process along. Jack an avid was fully capable when it came to be the go-to-man for Wally and Sparkman-Stephens. Several evenings on the African Caravan, Wally shared his package of drawings and specifications for his new ketch. How he beamed with anticipation to board the *Caravan* and sail the oceans, the canals and rivers.



Drawings of the Yankee, typical of those for the Caravan

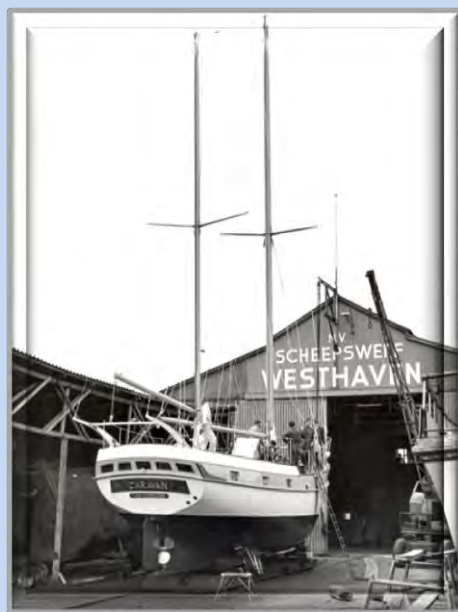
The *Caravan* is one of eight boats with this design from Sparkman-Stephens. One of its famous sisters is the ketch *Yankee*, owned at that time by the world famous sailor Irving Johnson. The *National Geographic* featured several stories about the sailings of

Irving Johnson and the *Yankee*.²

The Caravan is built at the Westhaven Scheepswerf shipyard in Zaanndam, Holland.



One of the traditions before the main mast is secured is to place a gold coin at the bottom of the cylinder. With the many superstitions in sailing, the gold coin will bring the ship good luck. Here is a picture of Wally doing just that. The coin was provided by the Schwamborn Family (Henry, Helen and Dale)



² The Yankee came up for sale in 2010 and this quote tells you more about Wally's ketch *Caravan*. "If there ever was a design that can be described as having a colorful and famous history it is Yankee. Designed for world-wide cruising, but in particular cruising the canal systems of Europe, she is the subject of numerous books, articles and videos.

Built for Irving Johnson a retired professional sailor, the boat was built of Corten steel for strength and twin centerboards for shallow draft and was specifically designed to allow the owner to "beach" the boat without injury to her. With the masts stepped on deck an ingenious tabernacle system allows the owner to single-handedly raise and lower the sailplan himself. At least 8 boats were built to this design." from a Sparkman-Stephens newsletter dated August 27, 2010

Wally became terminally ill in 1961. Airstream had the ketch Caravan transported by freighter from the Netherlands. Here is a newspaper clipping showing the Caravan being unloaded from the freighter.



\$195,000 YACHT—The 52-foot 40-ton ketch Caravan just built in Amsterdam for Wally Byam, owner of the Airstream Trailer Co., was brought here piggyback on the Hamburg-America Line's Esperanza. The yacht is designed to sleep 11 and is the latest in luxury, cost-

ing \$195,000. It is air conditioned, has an all-electric galley, is steam heated even to bathroom towelracks, has deepfreeze, hydraulic anchor lifts, hinged masts which lower flush with the deck to allow it under bridges and diesel auxiliary power. It was designed by

Sparkman and Stevens, designers of the America Cup defender Columbia, and has teakwood decks and steel hull. It was unloaded at Berth B12 in Long Beach under the direction of Capt. O. W. Hay of San Pedro and will be kept at Southwind Marina.

The Caravan's home port is San Pedro, California. Wally's health is not good, but he is able to go aboard his ketch, walk the decks, and visit the cabins and galley. He took a motorized trip around the area. The following pictures are from San Pedro.





*There is nothing like lying flat on your back on the deck, alone except for the helmsman aft at the wheel, silence except for the lapping of the sea against the side of the ship. At that time you can be equal to Ulysses and brother to **him.**" - Errol Flynn*

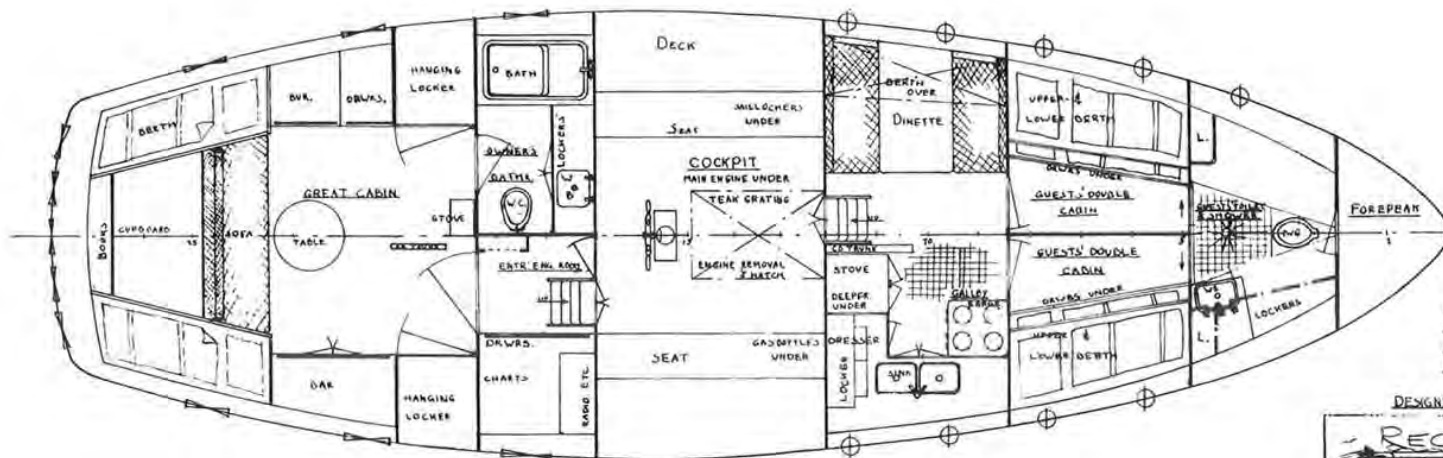
On July 22, 1962, Wally Byam left us. Now the voyages of the *Caravan* sail through the celestial skies, with Wally at the helm. With sails full, he pilots ever into the horizon. There are no mornings or evenings just calm oceans and trade winds at his back. Wally and Stella sail forever together.

=====

Addendum to Project

The *Yankee* went on the for sale block in 2010. There are the routine pictures used for selling the ketch. I have copied them to give you a flavor of what the *Caravan* might have looked like.





SPARKMAN & STEPHENS, INC.
 RECORDED
 JUL 10 1952
 REPTV

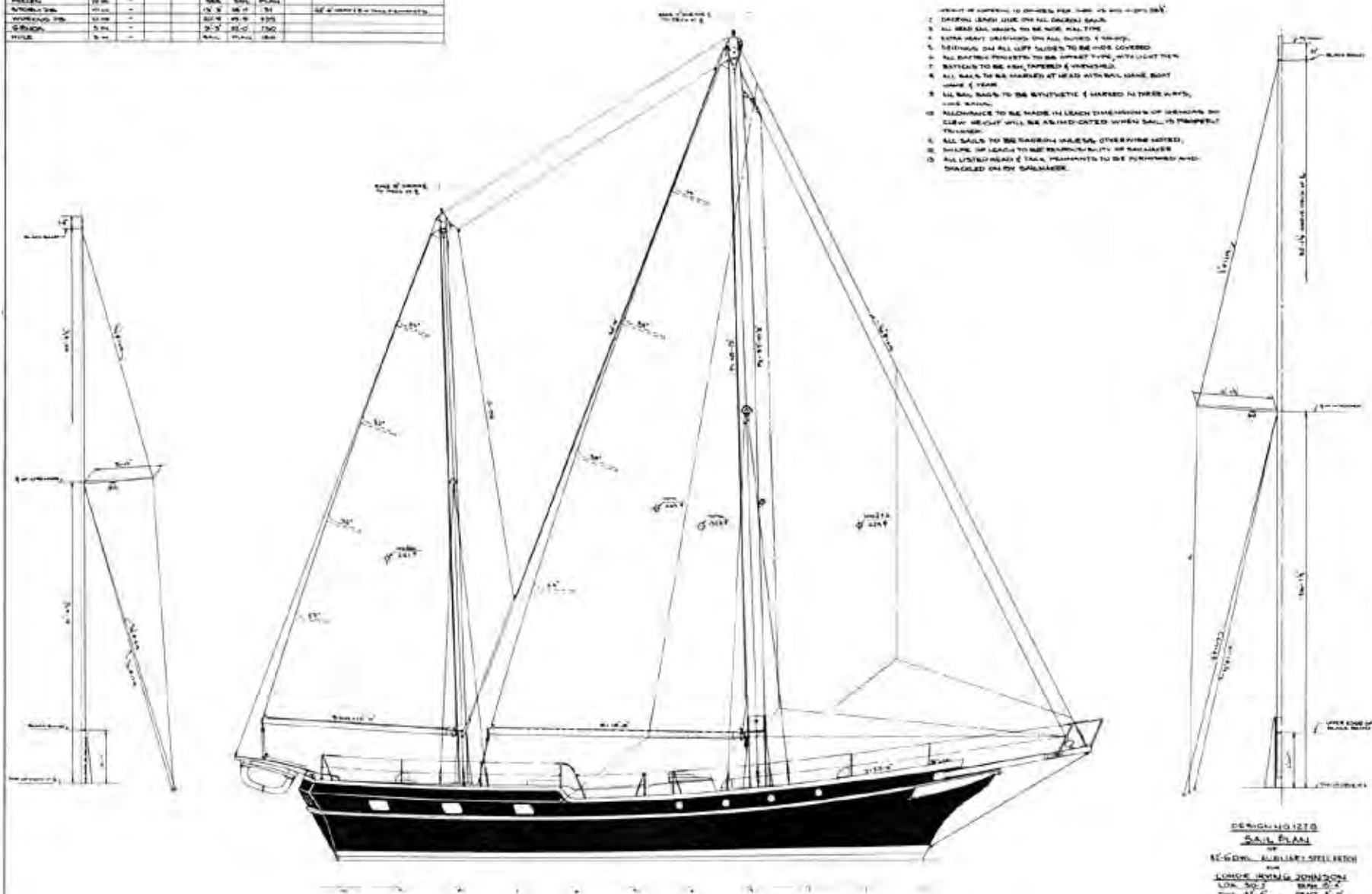
PRINCIPAL DIMENSIONS:
 LENGTH CA 30'-2" = 9.20 m
 LWL 22'-6" = 6.88 m
 BEAM 13'-4" = 4.07 m
 DRAUGHT 4'-0" = 1.21 m

DESIGN NO. 1278-C1
 DESIGNED BY SPARKMAN & STEPHENS, INC.

RECORD PRINT		
HOLLAND		
Boat: 4216 WL AVX. STEEL KETCH "CARAVAN"		
Customer: REVISED LAY - OUT PLAN		
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"	Gen. P. 125/126/127	Change No.
Date: 5-9-61	Des.	Rev. No. 79
Alls rechten voorbehouden volgens de wet.		No. 1278-12

INS AS BUILT

LIST OF SAILS						
SAIL	HEIGHT	LEAD	DEPTH	FOOT	LOVE	AREA
MASTHEAD	10' 0"	-	-	100	100	1000
MIZEN	10' 0"	-	-	100	100	1000
MAIN	10' 0"	-	-	100	100	1000
GENOA	10' 0"	-	-	100	100	1000
SPRIT	10' 0"	-	-	100	100	1000
TOTAL	50' 0"	-	-	500	500	5000



1. HEIGHT OF MASTHEAD IS SHOWN FOR 100' TO 100' ONLY.
2. DIRECTION LINES ARE ON ALL DUCKTAIL SAILS.
3. ALL HEAD SAIL LEADS TO BE WIRE RAIL TYPE.
4. SAILS MUST BE COVERED ON ALL SIDES & TOP.
5. MIZEN ON ALL LEFT SLIDES TO BE WIRE COVERED.
6. ALL SPRIT LEADS TO BE WIRE TYPE WITH LIGHT TIE.
7. BOATHEAD TO BE WIRE TAPERED & WINDSHIELD.
8. ALL SAILS TO BE MARKED AT HEAD WITH SAIL LEAD BOAT LEAD & YEAR.
9. ALL SAIL BAGS TO BE SYNTHETIC & MARKED IN THREE WAYS, LINE NUMBER.
10. RECOMMENDATION TO BE MADE IN LEAD DIMENSIONS OF WINDSHIELD OR CLEAR WEIGHT WILL BE INDICATED WHEN SAIL IS PRESENT THROUGH.
11. ALL SAILS TO BE THROUGH HULLS, OTHER VIMS NOTED.
12. SAILS TO BE LEADS TO BE THROUGH HULLS OF HULLS.
13. ALL LISTS/HEADS & TACKS PRESENT TO BE PURCHASED AND TRACKED ON BY SAILMAKER.

DESIGNER
SAIL PLAN
 OF
 MIZEN, MAIN, GENOA, SPRIT
 FOR
 LONGE BOAT JOHNSTON
 LON. 50' 0" MAX. 5' 0"
 GEN. 10' 0" MAX. 1' 0"
 SPRIT 10' 0" MAX. 1' 0"
 TACK 10' 0" MAX. 1' 0"
 NEW PLAN
 1964-1965 & 1966

I went on the web and found the Sparkman & Stephens website on Sunday June 5, 2011, I received this answer early this morning June 6, 2011. What a great response. There are priceless pictures for the story regarding Wally Byam's Ketch Caravan.

Dear Dale,

She is design 1278-C1, a sistership to sailing yacht Yankee. [Click here for a link to our Blogsite and information about Yankee.](#)

Our records show that Caravan was built by the builders of Yankee as well, the Westhaven Schweepswerf shipyard of Zanddam, Holland and launched in June of 1959.

I have attached a series of images of the boat as well as small scale study plans. It's a different layout from Yankee.

Best Regards,

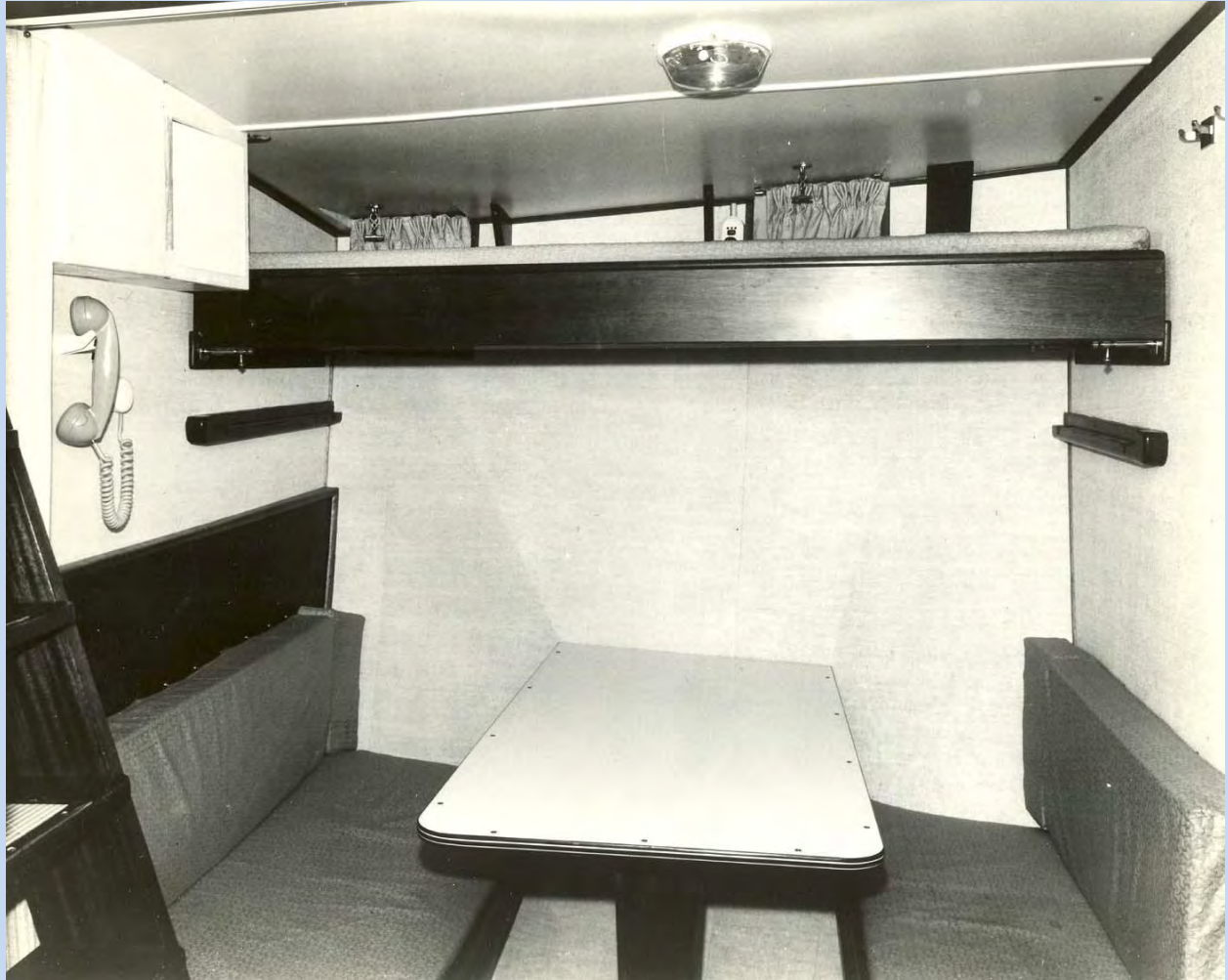
**Bruce Johnson
President and Chief Designer
Sparkman & Stephens
529 Fifth Avenue - New York, NY 10017
Tel: 1 212 661 1240**















WALLY BYAM RETIRES FROM AIRSTREAM



The Airstream Wally Byam African Caravan began in 1959. Prior to Caravan, Wally Byam looked to the future and his retirement from his company. Late in the 1950's he turned the factory operations over to Art Costello in California and Andy Charles in Jackson Center. Airstream had a separate Sales Division that organized the caravans, and managed the office for the Wally Byam Caravan Club. Wally had Helen Byam Schwamborn in place to continue the Caravans and assistance for the WBCCI.

Until his retirement, scheduled after the African Caravan, he still controlled the Corporation.

Wally Byam is retiring? A question yet to be answered, what will Wally Byam do? Hike the High Sierras? Mt. Everest? Airstream in South America? Australia? What will he be doing?

Among his many achievements is sailing.

As a child did he read Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, and Jack London?

In his youth Wally served as a cabin boy up the Pacific Coast from Oregon to Alaska. Later he traveled the Pacific Ocean and talked often about Tahiti.

His knowledge of the sea came in handy as the Sigma Chi fraternity manager. He posted a sign, "Steak Tonight." After the dinner one of his frat brother's made a comment that the steaks seemed quite salty and fishy. Wally smiled and told him that he found a great deal on whale steaks.

Any Airstream aficionado knows Wally and Airstream's use of nautical names for products, Clipper, Yacht, Tradewind, Caraval, Cloud, Cruiser and the partitions in the Airstream are bulkheads.

In 1955 while scouting the 1956 European Caravan Stella Byam wrote Helen Byam Schwamborn from Marseilles. Wally is quite the sailor we went out sailing for the afternoon and I was impressed with his knowledge in our excursion.

Retirement plans were being made before he left to Africa to build a ketch to sail the European canals and rivers; and to cross the Pacific and to island hopping.

Wally followed the sailing adventures of Irving and Electra Johnson. Wally's ketch to be is a sister ship to the Johnson's boat. The designer for both ketches is the world famous New York boat designers Sparkman-Stephens. The Johnson's were featured in four National Geographic articles and they wrote many books and were renowned lecturers. (Irving Johnson's life and story is a fascinating adventure.)

Wally selected Jack Garmhausen, Airstream corporate attorney and sail boat owner, to co-ordinate the yacht procurement. Before Africa, Wally is readily available to make decisions. Once on the African Caravan communications was made from Jack to Wally at Caravan mail stops.

When the mail was picked up and brought back to camp, Wally opened his package dealing with his boat. And he spent the night going over the details.

He agreed with this, didn't with some information and added question or commentaries and then mailed the package back to Jack in Sidney, Ohio.

In 1955 when Helen Byam Schwamborn joined Airstream our first stop before the Eastern Canadian Caravan was Airstream Jackson Center. After meeting the Airstream management Jack Garmhausen asked my mother if I could spend the night on his sailboat at the Sandusky Yacht Club. This was a first for me. Maybe the most memorable part happened in the evening and morning sliding and gliding over the thousands of dead mayflies on the deck.

When Wally returned to the United States it was full steam ahead on his ketch. It was aptly named the *Caravan*.

The design is complete, and there is a target date for the main-mast stepping. In ancient times the tradition began to place a coin underneath the ship's mast. It was believed in the ship sank it was payment to pay Charon the fee to cross the river Styx. As legends go it was placed under the mast as a tribute to their gods for the ship's successful construction.

The Schwamborn family asked Wally if we could furnish the coin, he agreed. I remember the day my mother and I went to Wickersham's Jewelry in Bakersfield, California to purchase the gold coin for the ketch *Caravan*.

The day Wally set the coin he had a photographer take a picture of the ceremony, seen above.

Unfortunately Wally Byam became terminally ill. The *Caravan* had passed all trail runs and was ready to sail. The time to sail it across the Atlantic, through the canal, and up the western coast of the Pacific to Los Angeles might be late for Wally to go aboard.

When the ketch arrived in Long Beach there was a picture of the boat on the freighter *Esperanza* and a short description. The description read,

"\$195,000 YACHT – The 52-foot 40-ton ketch Caravan just built in Amsterdam for Wally Byam, owner of Airstream Trailer Co, was brought here piggyback on the Hamburg-America Line's Esperanza. The yacht is designed to sleep 11 and is the latest in luxury, costing \$195,000. It is air conditioned, has an all-electric galley, is steam heated even to bathroom towelracks, has deepfreeze, hydraulic anchor lifts, hinged masts which lower flush with the deck to allow it under bridges and diesel auxiliary power. It was designed by Sparkman and Stevens,

designers of the America Cup defender Columbia, and has teakwood decks and steel hull. It was unloaded at Berth B12 in Long Beach under the direction of Capt. O. W. Hay of San Pedro and will be kept at Southwind Marina."

Wally was able to take a motorized ride on the *Caravan* around the harbor.

Wally Byam passed away on July 22, 1962.

There is a distinct difference when you mention Wally Byam today. "What would Wally say?" "What would Wally do?" He has become a patch, a logo, a mention in articles.

Wally was and will always be my cousin, mentor, employer, friend and benefactor. Knowing that he was retiring after the African Caravan and going to sail the world, it was sad when I walked the *Caravan's* decks and walking through the cabin; knowing that Wally was dying and would never sail the European waterways, or head for Tahiti.

Several years ago I mentioned Wally's retirement and his ketch *Caravan*. The person asked why I hadn't written about his sailing and his ketch.

That Sunday I began writing up a story (information later used by Fred Coldwell in his Airstream Life's article about the ketch *Caravan*). I took a long shot late that evening and sent an e-mail to Sparkman-Stephens requesting information.

When I woke up and turned on my computer there was a response from the President of Sparkman-Stephens. Attached were the sail configuration, cabin and hull plans, interior and exterior photographs, and trail run photos.

* * * * *

May the tradewinds always caress
Wally's face as he travels on distant
heavenly shores



Yacht Caravan

Wally Byam's plan was to retire and sail around the waterways in Europe and even journey on Trans-Pacific voyages. This stationery represents the letters never written and sadly his ketch he never sailed.



Wally placing gold coin before setting the mast.



The Ketch Caravan during harbor testing

PERMANENT ADDRESS: WALLY BYAM'S CARAVAN, BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A.
Important mail so addressed will be forwarded world wide by air mail immediately



AIRSTREAM ADVICE TO A YOUNG OWNER

In 2009, celebrating the African Caravan's 50th Anniversary, an Airstream group rendezvoused in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The Airstream group caravanned from Cape Girardeau to Cairo, Illinois...fulfilling the Cape to Cairo celebration.

The next day at the campsite a Video Photographer from Kansas City interviewed me.

Since 2005 I had given many talks with a myriad of questions. The interviewer asks several questions as he recorded my responses. Then he asked a new question, previously never asked.

What advise will you give a 23 year old, and a new Airstream owner?

Wow!

I answered it spontaneously and surprised myself with the depth and content in my response.

As a 23 year old, you have purchased the best possible trailer, the Airstream. It is so much more than a product it is your door to our Nation. I want to give you some thoughts about your Airstream and the United States.



On your first trip visit the farmlands and rural towns. See the soy fields in Ohio, the corn rows in Iowa, the cattle in Nebraska. Understand what the farmers and ranchers do to feed not only our country, but many nations in the world. Park your Airstream several nights in a small farming community. Walk the Main Street or maybe it is Market Street talk to the shop owners, talk with citizens walking down the sidewalks. You will find that these are friendly folk, hardworking individuals, patriotic citizens, they are the fabric that constitute the "of the people, by the people, for the people."



We have a beautiful country, with amazing natural wonders, lakes, deserts, oceans, and mountains preserved in many areas with National Parks. I want you to visit the beauty that abounds this wonderful land of ours.

You must see the sunrise and sunset on the majestic Grand Tetons in Wyoming, and then head north to the Teton's neighbor Yellowstone National Park and view the rugged landscape, the rich hot springs and see Old Faithful explode at timed intervals. Feel the concern when you drive past a sign telling you are below sea level in Death Valley, or your first encounter with an alligator in the Everglades. Nature's cathedral, Sequoia, where the ancient trees force you to bend you neck, back, back, back and then you see the sky. Next door is Yosemite with majestic chiseled granite landmarks and a glacier carved valley.



Walk the hallowed grounds at Gettysburg National Park where thousands died to reunite our Nation. The beginning of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address may suffice in summing up the conflict between the North and the South.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

When you visit the Grand Canyon stand close to the edge and take in the depth, width, colored layers in front of you. You will be awestricken at the vastness and grandeur that is The Grand Canyon.



You leave now for Metropolitan America.

There is no doubt that you are enjoying and understanding why you purchased your Airstream. Without it only dreams from travel brochures, with your Airstream the dreams become real.

There are so many metropolitan areas you might visit, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Dallas, but you want to visit New York City the largest city in the United States.

New Jersey is your starting point for New York City. You will find a convenient RV park for you Airstream near a train station. With your train schedule you will take the New Jersey Transit into the "City."



Your visit itinerary includes the Empire State Building, Wall Street, Central Park and Harlem.

If you have seen the wide open spaces while traveling through Iowa, New York City is where each building is tightly stacked and built next to each other street after street and block after block and row after row.

Unlike the rural towns you visited where a three story building is a skyscraper, New York is the home of high rise buildings. The most photographed and visited is the Empire State Building, 102 stories and 1454 feet high in Mid-Town Manhattan. Take the elevator to the top observation deck and marvel at the concrete forest that is the heart of New York City.





Wall Street is the financial district and economic machine for the United States and in many ways the economic center of the world. If it has value and it can be traded for value and profit this is space to do it in. The banking industry is here and is the realm for transmitting currencies.

In the center, almost, is Central Park. This is so out of character in such a densely populated island, but is desperately required to break up the concrete monotony that is Manhattan. This is a wonderful outdoor playground for families, visitors, concerts, and walks in the moonlight.



© Terri Lundberg aka Black Chick On Tour

New York is noted for being a melting pot of religious and ethnic groups. You have Little Italy, German Town, China Town, and most impressive Harlem.



You must visit Harlem; you need to understand what it is like for ethnic groups to gather into one area. The African American population is diversified. You have affluent neighborhoods, and you have tenement-ghetto areas. You have the Apollo Theatre where music legends were born, you have extremes with vicious gangs, and people living under the poverty level. Yet the Harlem pride is second to none in New York City.



As it is with all urban cities, they provide the workforce that creates the products that we use domestically and sell internationally. Urbanization is not an easy life, but without workers...no economy.

It is fitting that your next stop is Washington D.C. our Nation's Capital.

See that large majestic dome that is our Capitol Building it houses the Congress of the United States, the Legislative Branch of



Government. They pass the laws to govern our Nation. When laws are passed, they are sent over to the President to sign into law or to reject with a veto.



The white building behind the fences is our American Home, the White House. The President of the United States and his family reside there. Parts of the White House are wings with offices where the Executive Branch fulfills its duties to our Nation.

Washington D.C. is dotted with monuments, statues and memorials. The Lincoln Memorial historically and traditionally has been the number one monument. You need to go up the stairs and see the stately Abraham Lincoln sitting down and looking out with a hopeful look that we are one nation indivisible.

Along the way view the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the memorials to the Second World War, and Korean War Memorial.

Now you are standing in front of the Viet Nam Wall. When you see it your stomach will tighten and your tear ducts will fill. On this



very long and visible black wall are names inscribed for over 50,000 military personnel that gave their lives. For too long they have not had the respect they deserve, they died for our Nation and they need to have the peace and respect allotted all military heroes.



Washington D.C. is an open air lesson in history and living civics.

One final journey. As we leave Washington we cross the Potomac to Arlington National Cemetery.

Don't have any misgivings as to why you have traveled to Arlington.

You and your Airstream have traveled to rural and urban landscapes, you have visited the natural wonders in our country, and you have viewed our government.



Now as you look at the hillsides covered with monuments for those that protected our Nation, please understand the deeper meaning that these thousands and thousands of lives represent, it is their sacrifice that made it possible for you to make your journey, and own your Airstream.



Never forget what the ultimate sacrifice is, laying down you own life for others. Marines, sailors, soldiers and others have done this for you and me.

As you leave you pass the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and read, "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."



I believe I have covered a good plan for you and the use of your brand new Airstream. Travel with your Airstream, enjoy it and appreciate your Nation.



1959 – 1960 AIRSTREAM'S WALLY BYAM AFRICAN CARAVAN



1959



1959



2011

Dale "Pee Wee" Schwamborn
Advance Scout

It seems just like yesterday that I traveled from Cape Town to Cairo. The years have passed since 1959, some 55 years. The memories are still vivid; life provides you recall. I was there as the Advance Scout, traveling with the 1959 Airstream Wally Byam African Caravan.

A birthright is important especially when your families are Byam and Schwamborn.

Wally Byam, my mother's first cousin, is the Airstream trailer founder and owner. In 1951, he conducted his first Caravan to Mexico and Central America. Fortune smiled on a 12-year-old nicknamed Pee Wee (Dale Schwamborn), as Wally's guest and went with him on this trip.

A few years later Wally hired his cousin, my mother Helen Byam Schwamborn. He put her in charge of Caravans and the newly formed Wally Byam Caravan Club, founded by Airstream owners.

In 1958, Wally began his plans for a Caravan of a lifetime to go the length of Africa.

When I heard that an African Caravan was being planned I called him and asked if I could go.

There were limitations. There must be at least 35 Airstream families.

April 1959 I received the news that Wally is taking me to Africa.

The following highlights are my remembrances for a few moments in Africa.

POLITICAL HUMOR FROM 1959 UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

While in the Union of South Africa in 1959 the political climate was tense, as it would remain until the Afrikaans relinquished their hold on the country to a fully Democratic nation under the Presidency of Nelson Mandela in 1994, after general elections were held.

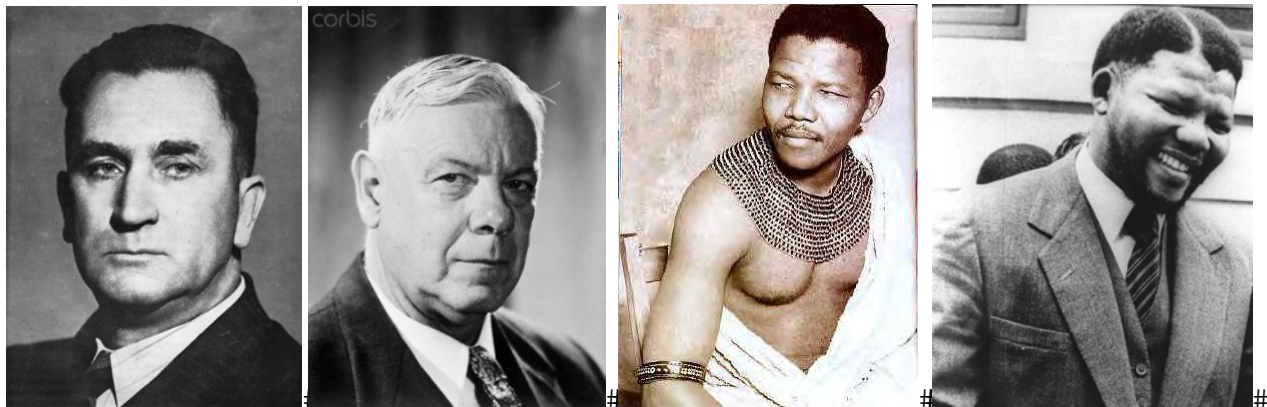
In 1959 I found that the humor was sardonic, and dark, or sometimes referred to as "black humor."

One joke told to me is self-explanatory in defining their disparaging humor.

***"In the United States you have John Wayne, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope.
Here is South Africa we have Strijdom¹, Verwoerd² and no hope."***

The two Prime Ministers were Afrikaans and represented Apartheid enforcement.

The humor, if it is humor, is primarily from the English residents living under the repressive Afrikaans government.



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#####

¹ Johannes Gerhardus Strijdom, Prime Minister 1954-1958
² Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, Prime Minister 1958-1966#

Tents, Ships, and Rivets

...Wally Byam's Airstream...

By: Dale "Pee Wee" Schwamborn

<Insert Image113.jpg>

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There is a cliché telling us that when a child is born the child receives parents and family as accorded by birth. My heritage is steeped in the Byam and Schwamborn families.

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Helen Byam Schwamborn, my mother, and Wally Byam her first cousin were siblings whose fathers were brothers.

Wally and Helen bonded in the 1930's and became good friends. The Byams and Schwamborns went camping together and other social activities.

In 1951 Wally Byam decided to expand the Airstream image by forming his first Caravan to Mexico and Central America.

Wally asked my parents if I could go camping in the California High Sierras for a week. Wally gave me a nickname on the hike, Pee Wee; it has been part of my Airstream life now for 65 years.

Our time camping gave Wally the opportunity to evaluate Dale now Pee Wee for traveling as his guest on his 1st Caravan.

In 1955 Wally needed someone to organize, and plan Caravans for him. He hired my mother, Helen. The Airstream owners formed a Club, which Helen was in charge of managing the Headquarters, the Wally Byam Caravan Club International.

There were several additional Caravans I went on the two most memorable were the 1956 European Caravan, traveling with my mother. The other was working for Wally as the Advance Scout on the 1959 African Caravan from Cape Town to Cairo. The African Caravan lasted ten months including the Middle East, Balkans and joining a European Caravan in Trieste, Italy.

Wally and Helen were a team, and the most important aspect in their relationship was Helen was Wally's sounding board, I can only imagine about what was said between. All discussions were held in confidence. I'm asked about what they talked about. I have no idea.

In 1960 Wally wrote a very telling letter to Helen that shows the years they shared together. "Your thinking and analysis has helped me a great deal. Again I give thanks for your excellent judgment—which I have never known to be anything but perfect. I am really proud of my little cousin. Thanks again, Wally".

Wallace Merle Byam passed away in 1962.

What was a loss to the Airstream and the recreational vehicle world was even a greater family loss.

Wally was my cousin, friend, mentor and employer and I dearly miss this wonderful man.

Helen Byam Schwamborn went on to work with Airstream as a board member. ~~S~~he was also on the board for the Wally Byam Foundation and other notable duties.

She helped in the planning for the Around-the-World Caravan trans-continental travel from Singapore to Portugal. Visiting a geographical feast by going to India, Nepal, Thailand, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Europe and most notably traveling to the Soviet Union and parking in Red Square.

After serving two years in U.S. Army I went to work for Airstream in their California factory for five years.

Helen retired at the age 75, in 1979.

In 1983 Gerard Letourneau, Airstream president, acknowledges Helen's contribution to Airstream in a letter.

He said, "...without the WBCCI and its support to the company, the future would have been doubtful for the company.

Your earlier efforts to make the Club what it is today is recognized and sincerely appreciated. Indirectly, your help "saved" Airstream more than anyone could realize."

My mother passed away in 2004.

Since her passing I have worked with several writers for articles and books. The most notable is Russ Banham and his marvelous Airstream history as penned in Wanderlust, Airstream at 75.

Today I give talks about Wally Byam, Helen Byam Schwamborn, and the 1959 Airstream Wally Byam African Caravan. *For Turning Tiny, this is Wally Byam's story.*

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"It didn't matter how big our house was; it mattered that there was love in it."

— Peter Buffett, *Life Is What You Make It: Find Your Own Path to Fulfillment*

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"Wally Byam is universally recognized as the father of the travel trailer industry in America. He knew travel trailers as no one else ever did. But just manufacturing wasn't enough for Wally Byam. Wally not only built them, he used them; he not only used them himself but through the Wally Byam Caravans he opened unlimited vistas of trailer travel to thousands who searched for adventure and new experiences."¹

¹ From the 1963 Wally Byam Store Catalog

Wallace Merle Byam came from pioneer stock and was born in Baker City, Oregon.

His life experiences **including that of a sheepherder** began to accumulate and guide him towards a self-contained trailer and a following of loyal owners traveling the compass in the United States and overseas.

As a youth he tended his grandfather's sheep in the rolling hills of eastern Oregon, living in a shepherd's cart. **This largely outdoor lifestyle certainly played a part** in his later love **of camping, especially** in the **California High Sierras**.

Wallace learned to live in close quarters with **just** a bed, **food storage** and **survival** essentials with sparse space for anything else.

In 1921 he graduated from Stanford University in **History**. His degree isn't his only achievement **though**. He was a seaman many times over as a cabin boy on the Alaska fishing routes, and a sailor landing in Tahiti. **His time at sea also contributed to his understanding of small spaces as** he learned to live with a bunk and a locker in pocket-sized **berthing** quarters.

Wally stayed the avid camper enjoying the healthy hikes, open range and clean air.

Marion James and Wally Byam were married on June 21, 1924, and quickly became a tent camping couple enjoying the lifestyle of life outdoors. Marion was not however, fond of sleeping on or even near the ground launching a desire within Wally to find a more suitable camping situation for he and his bride. Though the exact details are not known it is widely believed that Byam bought a Ford chassis in the late-1920s from an auto junk dealer. This early trailer was more of a tent contraption on the Model T chassis. It was a start and launched Byam into a new, yet fledgling business, in which he was intent on designing a tear-drop shaped camping trailer and even manufacturing them.

"Throughout the late twenties I—and hundreds of others like me—continued to experiment with our back yard models. We discarded a thousand screwball ideas for every one that worked. I built boxes, tents, and trailer bodies on Model T chassis in effort to solve the whole problems of mobile living..."²

Byam sold complete trailer kits, and finished trailers he built in his Los Angeles backyard. By 1930 he had abandoned advertising and publishing (his trade at the time) to become a full-time builder of Masonite travel trailers. The Airstream Company was incorporated in 1931. The Torpedo was the first factory-produced Airstream model, and by early 1932, ~~there were over a thousand Torpedoes on the road.~~

This home-crafted trailer was the 17' Torpedo, slept four adults with one double bed in the rear and two single bunks capable of being mounted along the sides, ~~and was detailed with hot and cold running water, a sink, a two-burner gas stove, a shower, and provisions for a commode,~~ a space

² Trailer Travel Here and Abroad by Wally Byam page 17

heater, a vent and a fan. It is important to note that Byam's plans were for the basic shell alone and that the inside still had to be outfitted with any mechanics the owner may want. On average the completed **The Torpedo** weighed 3,150 pounds and was made of Masonite rather than the stainless steel aluminum Airstream known today. The Torpedo was of wooden monoque construction in that there is no frame. The body is the frame. The tongue is bolted to wooden stringers under the front floorboards. The semi-elliptical springs that support the wheels and axle are bolted to steel plates in the wheel wells and under the floorboards in the central area of the trailer. The Torpedo also has three belly tanks: 1) 20 gallon fresh water 2) 7 gallon sewage, and 3) 20 gallon gray water (sink and shower water). It was quite a creation for Depression-ridden America!

Wally Byam was an inventor and a cultivator though. He kept up with the times and the availability of materials and designed the Airstream Airlite offering new floor plans and lengths to compete in the burgeoning manufacturing field and the advancement in customer requirements.

<Insert Image114.jpg>

The modern Airstream gained its look from a much earlier advancement. In 1917 Anthony Fokker and Hugo Junkers applied duraluminum to Luftwaffe planes to make them lighter. This also required them to engineer pneumatic tools and a wide range of rivets to attach the metal. This allowed Hawley Bowlus, an engineer working with pilot Charles Lindbergh, to apply riveting to gliders and ultimately, travel trailers. He is best known for his Bowlus Road Chief travel trailer, the first technical application of duraluminum and rivets to manufacture a trailer.

From all of this rich manufacturing heritage Wally Byam saw the potential to engineer his own aluminum and rivet travel trailer. He began from the ground up and engineered and designed the Airstream Clipper in 1936. This addition, and its rivet design ultimately gave birth to the 1947 postwar Airstreams, which have continued into the 21st Century. The innovation doesn't stop there though.

In 1941 Airstream received a contract from the Farm Security Administration to build emergency housing for defense workers in San Diego, California. Wally would take his understanding of small spaces and essential living to the mobile real estate world building simple, 8' x 20' houses that would contain a bedroom, a kitchen, and a dinette. Other provisions would be made for showering and laundry. The relocatable housing trailers were designed to be used by families and dormitories to house single men.³

³ Los Angeles Times April 24, 1941

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On December 7, 1941, The Day of Infamy, the United States declares war on Japan and the Axis and almost instantly switches American manufacturing from consumer goods to war materials. Airstream was forced to take a hiatus for nearly six years due to material shortages.

Wally Byam went to work at Lockheed's Burbank plant supervising some 300 employees as well as teaching at University of California at Los Angeles.

In a series of notebooks from this period it became apparent that Wally was preparing to break into the camping world with a catalog, a how-to book and designs for camping gear. Camping had always been second nature to him. The notebooks outlined everything it would take to open an outdoor camping store and catalog center including how to finance the endeavor, how to begin operations, and even how to craft a book that would help the novice camper.

Wally never brought this dream to fruition though and towards the end of the war Curtis Wright contacted Wally Byam about designing and managing a new trailer venture. Wright had the financial backing and experience in manufacturing trailers to open said company and in 1946 the Curtis Wright trailer came to fruition.

Byam reopened Airstream in 1947 and by 1948 demand was booming.

Even with his rediscovered success Wally Byam expressed a concern about the travel trailer industry. Through the Great Depression, war years, and post-war housing there was a stigma attached to "trailers". Too many trailers became derelicts in trailer parks or vagrant housing dotting the landscape. The more genteel home owners came up with a derogative connotation for trailer dwellers, "Trailer Trash." The phrase didn't distinguish between stationary travel trailers and mobile homes from those used by families on vacation or weekend jaunts.

WHAT IS A TRAVEL TRAILER?

"A travel trailer is one whose un-laden weight is not more than the normal passenger car that tows it – used mainly for travel and not as a residence exclusively and legally towable without permits in any state in which it is used."

After the trip Wally authored a book entitled *Fifth Avenue on Wheels*. In it he dispensed insights and tips as well as ideas and wisdom on both travel and life. In its pages he continued to advocate a change in opinions about recreational vehicles.

Over the next decade Airstream organized additional Caravans to Mexico, Central America and Canada.

The Wally Byam Caravans expanded to include Cuba, 1956 Europe, 1959 African Caravan, and 1963 Around-the-World Caravan. The 1956 European Caravan spent six months touring western Europe, and had a write up in the June 1957 National Geographic magazine. The African Caravan traveled overland from Cape Town, Union of South Africa to Cairo, Egypt United Arab Republic, then to the Middle East

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and Europe. The Around-the-World Caravan traveled over 31,000 miles from Singapore to Portugal and lands' end. It took them 403 days with stops on the way in India, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey to name only a few of the countries traveled through, and they even parked the group in Red Square in Moscow, Soviet Union.

The 1959 Wally Byam African Caravan established a new role for Caravanners, as a Caravan Scout. It is a tale worthy to be told by David Livingstone, the missionary and African explorer. At 20 years old I was extremely fortunate to hold this title ~~prior to~~ on the African Caravan.

The job description was a simple one: check road conditions, find campsites, find local conveniences and talk with officials. Officials applied to town clerks, mayors, tourist guides, and government officers, for travel considerations and permissions. The scout truck itself was even a testament to reduced living space. With an interior space of approximately 7-1/2' x 13', it was everything Byam built upon in his career.

Having a back door created an aisle to the front of the unit. The sitting area's back was the upper bunk that was held in place by two chains when in the up position. The galley consisted of a small single sink, a two-burner gas range, a small 3 cubic foot gas refrigerator. For hot water, over the kitchen, was a Junkers instant water heater. The shower had a marine toilet and mounted shower head. There was a black or septic tank, but no grey or dirty water tank. The thirty-gallon water tank had an exterior filler pipe and cap. Water was obtained by carrying and filling the water tank with a jerry can and rarely at a service station with a hose. There were no water hookups available in Africa.

In another feat of engineering U.C.L.A provided a water purification system that filtered out the smallest parasite that would be encountered on the trip. The entire trip was completed without boiling water or adding chemicals. There were several doctors on the caravan who were always adamant about boiling water but the new technology of filtered water proved too much to resist!

The scout truck was a ton and a half Chevrolet rail, with the Airstream compartment attached to the frame. It was equipped with a four-wheel drive, a front mounted winch, a standard 30-gallon gas tank and two 50-gallon auxiliary gas tanks. The tanks were always topped of when gasoline was available. It was assumed that 10 mpg would give the caravan 1300 miles of driving.

There is one question frequently asked, "What did you eat during the trip?" "Who did the cooking?" I cooked and the assistant did the dishes, an equitable division of labor.

This is a quotation in a letter written to my parents.

"We took the spare time and allotted it to servicing the truck, filling up the propane, washing the van, doing our laundry, etc. At this point the question arises - "do you boys do your own cooking? I do the cooking and Nick does the dishes. Our meals in the African Scout Car are varied. For breakfast some pancakes, or hot oats, maybe bacon, sausage and eggs, possibly with potatoes. Milk or tea is the morning beverage. For lunch we generally eat light, soup. Dinner is varied - steak, spaghetti, potatoes, peas, string beans, carrots, and plenty of fresh fruit. Also on our menu is macaroni, pot roast, lamb chops, smothered steak, etc. Desert is generally fruit, but we do have cake, Jell-O and ice cream. I do the shopping and all of food I bought in the market, so far we haven't had to live out of cans, and all of our food is fresh."

Living in approximately 80 sq. ft. for over ten months was wonderful, amazing and unbelievable.

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Wally Byam's mind was always in motion. He was constantly considering trailer enhancements, designs, materials and marketing moves. It is no wonder then that when he returned from the 1959 African Caravan, he put his team to work on a project; for the sake of mystery, "Project Bambi."

He and Stella spent four months in a scaled down custom Airstream. Wally understood that a couple could travel in comfort in a small trailer that didn't require a top of the line tow vehicle. He wanted a trailer that was capable of being towed by a smaller vehicle altogether. The Bambi had a 13-foot exterior body length and an exterior width of 81 inches. The interior floor space approximately 81.3 sq. ft. and became a very popular model.

Wally had another idea in the late 1950s. He created a two-mold small fiberglass trailer. It looked similar to a Casita trailer. The prototype, the only one produced, was ready to test in 1962. The mold designer and fiberglass department manager took it all the way to Managua, Nicaragua that year. Airstream quietly shelved the project for reasons still undetermined. Today the prototype is in Colorado being restored.

Sadly Wallace Merle Byam passed away on July 22, 1962.

"In our eyes, Wally Byam was the prime vehicle on which the travel trailer road to its present-day popularity and usefulness in an age of recreational prosperity.

It will never be argued that Wally Byam will remain an exciting and important chapter in the annual of travel trailering." - Art Griffin, Editor & Publisher Trail-R-News

"Wally was delightfully human... he decided that Airstream and Wally Byam should be synonymous. No one who knew him, however distantly, ca regret not knowing him better, for at heart he was sentimentalist who was determined that he would sell people an object that would make their lives happier, and then show them how to use it." - Jack Kneass, Managing Editor Trail-R-News

Stella Byam eventually sold the company to several members of the Airstream Board in the **mid to late** early 1960s. The company remained private until 1966 when it went public. In less than a year Beatrice Foods, a conglomerate, purchased the company.

In 1973 the RV industry underwent its first near miss when the oil crisis crippled the United States and gasoline prices skyrocketed. Changes had to be made. Automobile requirements in the United States changed and large sedans with super plus horsepower engines gave way to small mid-size and compact cars with reduced engine capacities. What would the RV industry do?

The recreational world switched to light weight trucks with traction, transmissions and horsepower to tow trailers. This led to van conversions, motorhomes, and fifth wheels joining the existing travel trailer industry. As a company Airstream changed as well. It was purchased by Thor Industries and its product line expanded.

The RV industry **likewise changed introducing** light weight feather trailers, traditional trailers, class "B" conversions, hefty fifth wheelers, and behemoth motorhomes; with varieties and modifications too numerous to categorize.

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In recent years vintage recreational vehicles have grown in popularity. The Tin Can Tourists, Vintage Airstream Club and other organizations anchor enthusiasts. There is a thriving industry remodeling, and refurbishing the old RV's. Vintage trailers fit very nicely with the do-it-yourself families.

There is a phenomenon today with all recreational vehicles, the "full-timers." Most full-timers are retired and want the fresh air, the horizon and adventure more than a stationary dwelling and physical assets. Let's call them "road warriors" for they go everywhere and their numbers of kindred spirits is growing. As with the tiny house movement, living space in the recreational vehicle world is determined by the individual, financial means, environmental beliefs, life styles, locality, and fluidity; tenants Wally Byam understood all too well.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

1 From three years, old until his death Wallace Merle Byam faces one challenge
2 after another that he had to face and overcome.

3 At three years, he did not know that the divorce between his father Bertram
4 Byam and his mother Carrie Biswell Byam is a life's challenge¹. The love that
5 given from his grandparents James and Sudie Biswell, and aunts and uncles,
6 sheltered him for several years before his mother remarried. She married Dave
7 Davis from Baker City, OR.

8 During his formative years before graduating from high school, various letters
9 and comments indicate that the Dave Davis family moved around Oregon.
10 Dave is a butcher by trade.

11 Wally graduated from high school just shy from his 20th birthday. Later in
12 1916, his stepfather Dave Davis died from a riding accident, and early in 1917,
13 his beloved mother passed away from a long illness.

14 He entered Stanford University in Palo Alto. If the family contributed funds for
15 his education, there is no knowledge of their assistance. Through letters and
16 speculation, we believe that he earned money during the summers as a sailor.
17 Financial gains come from running the food concessions at Stanford's football
18 and basketball games. Then covering his room and board he is the house
19 manager for the Sigma Chi fraternity.

20 Upon his graduation, as it is for all students, will the world be an oyster
21 sheltering a pearl, or with disillusionment?

22 There are spotty records for the 1920's decade.

23 Wally changed his name from Wallace Davis, back to his Byam birth name.

¹ During these years, divorce was a social taboo nurtured by gossip, hearsay and moral indignation.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

24 He utilizes his training and experiences as the advertisement manager for the
25 Stanford University's newspaper.

26 The Los Angeles Times hires him for his advertising experience. Soon he leaves
27 and joins the "Penny Newspaper Group" a fledgling newspaper organization
28 founded by Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. This meeting and collaboration leads to a
29 life-long friendship.

30 Wally meets and marries his first wife, Marion.

31 He opens a publishing office for the rage of the day, radios.

32 In 1929, something happens that shatters the business world in the United
33 States and universally, the Wall Street Crash fueled a worldwide depression.

34 Wally steps up to meet the Depression Years by doing something bold and
35 daring. Where millions are not working, not traveling and not enjoying
36 vacations he opens a recreational vehicle company and calls it Airstream².

37 The financial history within Airstream is a pressing challenge from start-up in
38 the 1930's and into the early 1950's. Three times the padlock closed the doors
39 at Airstream. This is probably back taxes to the government. Any less-driven
40 entrepreneur, than Wally, might have just walked away and called it quits. He
41 didn't.

42 The re-investment during the 1930's depended on what materials had to be
43 purchased to complete an Airstream in station on the line. It might be
44 windows. It could be plywood for an exterior side. Just about any material

² How to do it "Torpedo Trailer" kits were packaged and sold by Wally through Mechanix Illustrated and Popular Mechanics. The exact costs varies but is reported to have been \$5.00, and that the sale of the plans funded Airstream.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

45 needed to complete a production phase and move it on. Cash and cash outlay
46 is tight and judiciously guarded.

47 After seeing the Bowlus Trailer, Wally is determined to build a better all
48 aluminum aerodynamic trailer. The first Airstream Clipper came off the line in
49 1936³.

50 Wally's friends and other manufactures questioned wisdom, without hesitation
51 they probably said, "What is Byam doing? He's manufacturing a luxury trailer
52 during the Depression."

53 He saw a limited market, one that he had to enter. He knew that his
54 engineering and designs are the future for Airstream. During the thirties, there
55 are few Clippers built and sold, but the foundation is laid for Airstream
56 generations in the future.

57 Temporarily Airstream ceased production during the Second World War.

58 Wally Byam went to work at Lockheed in Burbank, California, as an engineer
59 and department supervisor.

60 He found himself only as a number in a vast sea comprised with departments,
61 supervisors and workers.

62 Having owned his own business, supervisor a minimal work force, he felt that
63 he could best serve the war effort in a smaller component factory with fewer
64 employees. There are notes written to prepare letters of introduction and
65 résumés. His employment concerns didn't change his employment with
66 Lockheed.

³ Not mentioned is Airstream's second product and the main Airstream trailer, the Airlite.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

67 In his wartime notebooks, there is absolutely no indication that he will return
68 to manufacturing Airstreams after the war.

69 For over thirty-five years, since he shepherded his grandfather's sheep,
70 outdoor camping and hiking became a primary get-away to relax and enjoy
71 the freedom offered in the mountains. Wally is quite fond in hiking the trails
72 in California's High Sierras.

73 There is no dilemma in Wally's mind as he plans to enter the Camping Industry
74 when the war is over. His notebooks are rich in details for a camping catalog,
75 a book on camping, financing, and a time schedule. He is planning an office,
76 in the same garage that gave birth to Airstream, with a partition consisting
77 with a blanket draped over a cord, and creating an office area.

78 The war in Europe (V-E Day) ended on May 8, 1945, and the war ceased with
79 Japan (V-J Day) on August 15, 1945.

80 Late in 1944, it is apparent that the allies were pushing the Axis nations back
81 on all fronts and WW2 is reaching its end. This is when Wally planned his jump
82 from Airstream to camping. But what happened to divert him back into
83 manufacturing trailers?

84 Prior to the war Airstream built trailers for housing wartime employees, the
85 United States is gearing up for a war and also supporting England with war
86 materials. At the same time, Curtis (Curt) Wright is also building housing.
87 There is no doubt that Wally and Curt knew each other during the thirties and
88 while building housing for employees.

89 Speculation tells us that Curt is interested in manufacturing an airplane-
90 constructed trailer when the war ends. It is probable that Curt approached

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

91 Wally after May 1945, and maybe soon after August 1945 with an offer Wally
92 could not refuse.

93 The Curtis-Wright Clipper and a modified Airlite trailer went into production.
94 The year is 1946, there is a company employee photograph dated September
95 12, 1946, in that picture is Wally, a young worker Art Costello and future
96 Airstream employees.

97 Eleven days after this company photograph, on September 23, Wally wrote a
98 poignant letter demanding \$25,000.00 in back commissions, and stressing that
99 he was an unsecured creditor. There is no doubt in Wally's mind that what is
100 said will open the door for termination.

101 If there is, an amiable or disagreeable termination we will never know. We do
102 know that in 1947 Airstream resumes production, Art Costello leaves with
103 Wally.

104 The early postwar Airstreams are engineered and designed by Wally Byam.
105 Financial solvency is still a day to day concern for the company.

106 A unique quality that made the Company survive is custom models to satisfy
107 customer needs. Wally uniquely used wide butcher paper and with a 1:1 ration
108 created a floorplan for each customer. This attention to detail and customer
109 requirements is a model for growing a business.

110 Neil Vanderbilt Jr., Wally's longtime friend, and Wally collaborate on an
111 Airstream trip to Europe in 1948. Neil is filming postwar Europe for lecture
112 tours. In Wally's mind is writing a book that will open overseas trailering for
113 Americans. He also wants a close look and the trailer industry in Europe and
114 the United Kingdom. Even more important is road testing the Airstream and
115 possible improvements in both design and materials.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

116 Airstream as late as 1951 still had financial problems with the government.

117 Wally Byam came up with a planned Caravan to Mexico and Central America
118 leaving from El Paso, Texas late 1951.

119 The motivation for Caravans is pure publicity to promote Wally Byam. From
120 the first Caravan until the 1955 Eastern Canadian Caravan all trailer makes are
121 allowed to join the Caravans.

122 Wally achieved the recognition that so few entrepreneurs ever achieve. If you
123 say Wally Byam immediately Airstream pops up, and the reverse happens
124 when you say Airstream, Byam appears.

125 Wally married his second wife Stella in 1952.

126 In 1952 Wally Byam saw the need to open a plant in the eastern United States.
127 The Airstream sales, nationally, had taken the Main Street Los Angeles plant
128 beyond its ability to satisfy sales.⁴

129 Late summer Wally toured the mid-west looking for a suitable building to buy
130 and open a factory. Indiana, Illinois and Ohio are states that he traveled to.
131 Traveling down a country road in Ohio he saw a factory building for sale. He
132 decided that his new plant will be located in Jackson Center, Ohio a small
133 farming community.

134 As a successful trailer manufacturer he began canvassing banks for a loan.
135 Airstream's history, position in the industry, and future objectives became a

⁴ "Wally Byam was a man in motion, a mover of persons and things, a center of action and excitement. He was somehow free of the usual weaknesses and restraints of modern man--the unreasoned need to conform, the desire for high status, the craving for unnecessary wealth. He was an ordered man, the order coming from within him. He knew where he was going and above all, why." Written by Frank Palmer, aka Frank Quattrocchi, from Guerin, Johnstone and Gage, Airstream's advertising agency. This is a press release.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

136 solid business plan for obtaining the startup money. Wally also, very wisely
137 added Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr. to the company board.

138 Wally is uncanny when it came to selecting candidates to manage Airstream.
139 We mentioned Art Costello that joined Wally directly from the Curtis Wright
140 work force. During his years at Lockheed Wally met an engineer, Andrew
141 (Andy) Charles. Andy joined Airstream several years after 1947.

142 Funding the new plant in Ohio is completed, adequate funding, but modest.

143 The next decision will be the person to manage the new factory.

144 Art Costello's seniority and desire to remain in California cancelled his
145 appointment. Next in-line and well versed for this plant startup and to manage
146 the factory is Andy Charles. Andy accepted the opportunity after deliberating
147 over several personal matters.

148 Wally's decision to open the Jackson Center factory proved not only to be the
149 correct decision, but the financial support to grow Airstream.

150 Airstream is now receiving international attention. Three publications headline
151 the publicity for the company, 1954 Look Magazine, 1955 Life Magazine, and
152 in 1957 The National Geographic Magazine. These articles are mainstream and
153 with eye appeal for the readers. Not bad!

154 The Airstream Wally Byam Caravans from 1951 through the summer of 1955
155 are open to all trailer makes.

156 Then in 1955 Airstream owners, who had asked for an Airstream Only Owners
157 Club, formed and finalized their club in Kentville, Nova Scotia, Canada during
158 Airstream's Wally Byam Eastern Canadian Caravan.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

159 The Eastern Canadian Caravan added another leg to Wally's management team
160 when he hired his cousin, Helen Byam Schwamborn. He and Stella left from
161 Montreal to scout the 1956 European Caravan. Wally turned the Caravan over
162 to his cousin. Also he gave her instructions to work closely with the Airstream
163 owners to form their Club. They did and she did, together they established the
164 Wally Byam Caravan Club.

165 Further instructions from Wally to Helen are to open an office for planning and
166 organizing Airstream Caravans, and to take full responsibility in supporting the
167 Airstream owners.

168 The new headquarters is financially supported by Airstream, Helen, employees,
169 office rent and necessities for an office are paid for my Airstream. Wally
170 understands the importance of the newly founded Club and will support it
171 100% with the understanding that the Club belongs to the Airstream owners
172 and not to the Airstream company. There is no doubt that Wally understands
173 the sales value stemming from the WBCCI.

174 The new headquarters is located in Bakersfield, California in Helen's home. The
175 timing is perfect with the 1956 Airstream Wally Byam European Caravan
176 coming up in less than one year.

177 The European Caravan will be the first major overseas venture for Airstream.
178 You can imagine the details that go into a trip like this. Mailings, passports,
179 visas, trailer and tow vehicle rates, booking passengers on ships, itinerary,
180 Airstream owner commitments, U.S. State Department and foreign ministries
181 the list goes on and on for planning an extensive six months tour of Western
182 Europe!

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

183 Helen and Wally worked closely on the details. Helen is ready for future
184 overseas caravans. (Africa, Around-the-World, Europe and definitely the closer
185 home caravans to Mexico, Central America and Canada.)

186 The benefits that Wally Byam predicted came true after the Jackson Center
187 factory opened. The Main Street, Los Angeles factory is cramped, archaic and
188 not able to keep up with the demand for Airstreams. Besides headlining with
189 the European Caravan, Airstream will move to Norwalk/Santa Fe Springs,
190 California to a new plant. This will firmly entrench Airstream as the leader not
191 only in the luxury market, but the recreational industry.

192 We have all been asked, mostly tongue in cheek, is your glass ½ empty or ½
193 full. The answer we give is ½ full, why not; you don't your friends to know
194 you suffer from a psychosis. You can rest assured that Wally Byam's glass was
195 always full. From early years he followed personal guidelines practicing the
196 "power of positive thinking."

197 When Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote, *Tarzan of the Apes* or Elmo Lincoln played
198 Tarzan in the 1918 movie had Wally read the book or gone to the movie? Then
199 in 1925 an American couple traveled from Cairo to Cape Town in 135 days,
200 and had a complete National Geographic Magazine dedicated to their journey.
201 When did Wally Byam get the "great notion" to take Airstreams to Africa? In
202 his book, *Trailer Travel Here and Abroad*, Wally said, "...the Caravan to Africa,
203 certainly our most ambitious undertaking to date, came about practically by
204 accident." There were plans to go from Europe to India and for several reasons
205 the emphasis shifted to an African Caravan. Wally also said, "Thus in the
206 summer of 1959, my words to Harry Halbritter in Acapulco so many years
207 earlier became prophetic, we would Caravan from Cape Town to Cairo.

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208 Looking back only one man is capable to lead a Caravan to Africa and that is
209 Wally Byam. Also the trip became a tough nut to crack many times and for
210 various reasons.

211 There were 31 International Harvester trucks that were plagued with broken
212 spider gears, broken axles and other engineering problems. Roads went from
213 paved highways, stripped roads, dirt roads, wash board and rock boulevards,
214 heavy dust, no roads, muddy roads, steep winding roads, to the deep sands in
215 the Nubian Desert...roads varied considerably.

216 Through hardships Wally put together a lengthy improvement list. In a letter
217 Wally specifically advise his factories what had to be done and when it had to
218 be done. Maybe the greatest change is going to be the duro-torque rubberized
219 axle. The instructions detailed how to improve door mounts, cabinet
220 installation, securing the oven/range, and improvements that raised the
221 quality, and road ability for Airstream.

222 Caravans and Airstream owners meant a great deal to advancements for the
223 Airstream. Wally used his product, talked to the owners and never took any
224 suggestion lightly.

225 Upon returning home Wally has vision problems and went to an
226 Ophthalmologist for several eye tests. The tests were inclusive but his
227 Ophthalmologist suggested he see a Neurosurgeon for further testing.

228 Sadly the doctor found that Wally had a brain tumor. In less than two years
229 after the African Caravan he passed away in 1962.

230 Wally met many challenges throughout his life; he faced each one as it came
231 up, settled them and moved on.

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

232 He left a capable team in place after his death. Art Costello, Airstream
233 California; Andy Charles, Airstream Ohio; and Helen Byam Schwamborn
234 Airstream Caravans and the Wally Byam Caravan, with these three Airstream
235 is destined to survive the passing of Wally Byam.

236 Today Airstream is still in business, and has retained its prestige. The iconic
237 legend moves forward, Airstream is.

238 It is important to understand the driving force that motivated Wally Byam. The
239 following words, Wally tells us what is worthwhile in life, and his motive to
240 continue on no matter what the challenge is.

241 *"For in the final analysis the real measure of living is in seeking out*
242 *and meeting challenges. What point is there, really in always doing*
243 *what is easiest?*

244 *There is no substitute for experiencing a thing firsthand. You have*
245 *to feel the pains to enjoy the delights. You have to feel your own*
246 *back aching, your own arms turning to lead, the rough calluses on*
247 *your fingers. If you don't you can never appreciate the view from*
248 *the mountain top.*

249 *Mountain tops it seems to me don't just come naturally. You've got*
250 *to climb your own, see for yourself. After everything is said and*
251 *done, that's what 'life'⁵ is all about. ...we know that what is worth*
252 *while does not come easily. Part of the joy of triumph is the earning*
253 *of it. If everyone could learn this little lesson it would be a happier*
254 *and wiser world."*

255 *These are the last two paragraphs from Wally Byam's book,*
256 *"Trailer Travel Here and Abroad."⁶*

⁵ Liberty has been taken to change the word 'caravanning' for the word 'life'

⁶ There were several sentence deleted from the two paragraphs

WALLY BYAM'S CHALLENGED LIFE 1896 TO 1962

257 *This isn't just the last two pages from a book. This is a*
258 *summation for Wally's life.*

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CLIENT: AIRSTREAM

PRODUCT/SERVICE: Throwback Thursday, Was Airstream an Accident?

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Wally Byam, not unlike a mighty oak growing from an acorn, groomed and cultivated himself over the course of his lifetime.

Frequently, the question comes up: why did Wally have the vision to create an Airstream, the legendary and iconic recreational vehicle whose lifetime stretches from one century to the next?

Wallace Merle Byam came from pioneer stock. His paternal and maternal grandparents came overland on the Oregon Trail to settle down in Eastern Oregon.

As an adolescent, he tended to his grandfather's sheep on the rolling hills of eastern Oregon. This fostered his deep-seated love for camping. His sailing the South Pacific and visiting Tahiti as a young man instilled traveler's wanderlust.

Wally wanted the best education possible, so he chose the most-acclaimed university on the West Coast, Stanford. As advertising manager for the university's newspaper, he learned sales and marketing.

After graduation, business networking played a great part in his life. Having worked for Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. in advertising, the two became lifelong friends.

With the Great Depression upon the nation, Wally looked for a new field of work. His next endeavor, influenced by his great love for camping and hiking, was to supplant the burgeoning recreational industry with something he loved. Airstream was born, as a do-it-yourself kit sold in magazines, then in a production shop where he could manufacture and sell the Airstream Torpedo.

Even after having his facilities padlocked by the government three times, he never gave up on his dream. A major step in 1951 was the initial Wally Byam Caravan to Mexico and Central America. This was followed the next year with the opening of a second Airstream plant in Jackson Center, Ohio.

The Airstream Wally Byam Caravans played a major role in growing the company with continuous groups going to Mexico, Central America, and Canada

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in addition to high-profile Caravans to Europe and Africa.

Wally Byam had a rare talent to pick staffs that were required to move the company forward. He taught them the “ropes” and kindly guided them to levels in their positions they thought were impossible. Wally knew they were not only capable of performing loftier duties, but that they had far more fuel in their tanks than they realized.

His team performed just as he had envisioned. Art Costello, president of the California operation, carried on after Wally’s death as Chairman of the Board. Andy Charles, who established the Jackson Center, Ohio plant, later led the 1963 Around-the-World Caravan. Helen Byam Schwamborn, organizer and leader of the Airstream Wally Byam Caravans, was also responsible for coordinating and developing the Wally Byam Caravan Club, International.

Airstream developed over a period of many years. Wally Byam built the company, step-by-step, by ensuring that failure was not an option, even in the roughest of times.

Wally’s words show you how his mind worked. In 1916, a few months after he graduated from Jefferson High School in Portland, he wrote the following:

“I am a man of extreme – either I will be a big boss, a rousing success, or a blank failure. In my heart I know I’ll be a great big glorious success, and that my name will go down in history.”

In 1944, while working for Lockheed Aviation, he evaluated the inner-Byam.

“My ancestors did not work for others. It is not in my blood.”

In 1952, on the first Caravan, there were many hardships but in a letter, Wally wrote the following, which adequately defines his inner strength.

“I guess it is the same stubborn stick-to-it-iveness that drove my forbearers West.”

Writer and friend Jack Kneass, after Wally’s death, had introspective words about him.

“No one who knew him, however distantly, can regret not knowing him better, for at heart he was a sentimentalist who was determined that he would sell people an object that would make their lives happier, and then show them how to use it.”

#

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by *Dale Schwamborn*