

Wally, Me and Pee Wee

by Dale "Pee Wee" Schwamborn #00002

The 1st Caravanners rendezvoused at the El Rancho Grande Trailer Park in El Paso, Texas.

Our first major stop was in Chihuahua. Wally arranged for several buses. The most memorable stop on the tour was meeting Senora Pancho Villa, the widow of the notorious bandit-general. To the side of her residence was the car he was in when he was assassinated. The car was completely riddled with bullet holes.

In Aguascalientes, Mexico, Stel and I went to the market to prepare stew for Wally, Clive, Gareth, her mother and the two of us. It was the most beautiful stew, bright carrots, onions, potatoes, good beef, great gravy, just about everything you want for dinner. I forgot one ingredient, fresh red chili peppers. Stel and I tasted the concoction and to our chagrin the Scoville rating of the stew was beyond our ability to consume. Wally took the gang out for dinner. The last time peppers were in or on the menu.

Aguascalientes is well known for the ranches that raise bulls for Corrida, or Bull Ring. These fighting bulls are trained and worked with until it is time for them to go for ancient sport of bullfighting. As observer, it was interesting to see the trainers work with the bulls. The matador surprised me by walking up to me and handing me the cape. The Caravanners whistled, yelled, clapped and gave their approval for Pee Wee to get into the ring. This was Wally's doing all the way. With enormous trepidation, I entered the ring. Here I am 12 years old, maybe 5'2", 105 pounds and I have to face a bull. Oh my! My eyes were fixed on the gate that the bulls came out from. The gate came up and out came a baby bull not much older than a calf. I prepared myself to emulate the matadors cape movements. As the little bull got closer, he became larger in my mind. Then I ran toward it, wrapped

the cape around its head and ran as fast as I could to a protective barrier. Yes, I was Pee Wee the bullfighter better known as the one that got away. Upon seeing the way I handled the little bull, the Caravanners whooped, hollered and broke out in uproarious laughter. My days as a bullfighter stayed in Aguascalientes at the ranch.

Upon arrival in Mexico City, we parked behind a high fence at a school, protected by broken glass on the barrier's top. We were just a few miles from the Zocolo or center of the city. While we were here I turned thirteen, I'm now a teenager.

Christmas Eve 1951, my first Christmas away from home. A group of Caravanners are going into the downtown area of Mexico City. I ask Wally if I can go. He approves these were friends of long standing. The sequence of events I can't explain. Somewhere near the Zocolo, I was asked to get out of the car. I did.

Why they let a thirteen year old gringo out in the middle of a foreign city is still a mystery. This is how the story begins. I begin walking down a street. There is one block, right after another with myriads of small shops, and street vendors. I see youngsters setting off bottle rockets. Small firecracker sized rockets that can be hand held, lit and sent soaring into the sky. During my evening I set off several hundred. I may have walked a mile, or two and I noticed that the shops were closing, and that the foot traffic was disappearing. It was time to find a taxi cab and return to the Caravan. The taxi in sight was being closed for the evening. I ran over to the owner, and in Spanish asked him libro, libro, libro...how funny, I was saying, book, book, book. The word I searched for was libre, or free. I gave him the name of the school and off we went. Wally was notified that his charge

had returned. We discussed his concern and his responsibility for me. "I understand." Many years later I learned that he was going to send me home by plane, that he had too many responsibilities with the Caravan. His responsibility to my parents was at the head of the list and he couldn't allow me to be a number one concern.

Comments from "Wallace" to Helen from Guatemala City. Wally tells my mother, "At about this point several in the party told me that Pee Wee was running wild and needed more supervision. He had learned his way around in the cities and liked to play with the kids in town which I could see no reason for avoiding but I did want to know where he was going and about when he was coming back. I spoke to him about it and the next I knew he didn't come home until after midnight and I gave him hell for that. Since then I rule with an iron hand a role that I know little about and he has been a good little boy ever since. He will unquestionably be a big success in retailing."

I wasn't sent home. Stel and her mother left the Caravan in Mexico City and returned to Los Angeles with their Airstream.



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