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The following pages are remembrances of the founding of the Wally Byam Caravan Club; Wally Byam, Helen Byam Schwamborn and the 1955 Eastern Wally Byam Caravan. It forms the background information used in part for my speech given at the dedication of founding of the WBCCI, on August 17, 2005 in Kentville, Nova Scotia, Canada. A memorial plaque was unveiled, on the grounds of Robert Palmetier's former china shop. At this location the Caravan parked, and the Club began.

Not all of the following information was used during the speech. It was available for use as appropriate.

1. Helen Byam Schwamborn had a great sense of humor. One of her favorite jokes and anecdotes is following.

In Ottawa in 1957 the Caravan had a beautiful campsite on a grassy park. I had wandered off to meet some young ladies of the city. I was engaged in deep teenage discussions.

My Mother was ready for dinner. Her repetitive calling "Dale, Dale, Dale," didn't bring me home.

Charlie Kiefer, also aka "Kitty", a future International President, was parked next to our trailer (#2). Charlie heard my Mother's plead for Dale to come to dinner. He assured my Mother that he would find me, retrieve me, and have me back for dinner and dishes.

Charlie approached the group of young people, singled me out and addressed me.

Pee Wee, your wife is waiting dinner for you and the baby needs changing.

It worked, to my chagrin; it broke up the group, cooked my goose and became one of my Mother's favorite Caravan stories.

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2. *The second section is a history, based on oral history, 1st hand participation with the Club and Caravans, and excerpts and revisions from the 1955 daily journal kept by Helen Byam Schwamborn.*

Let's go back to the beginning.

Wally Byam was born in 1896 and Helen Byam Schwamborn in 1904 in Baker, OR.

As children and young adults they had little contact.

Little did either know that Wally would become Mr. Airstream and Helen would become Ms. Wally Byam Caravan Club.

Due to divorce Wally had disdain for the Byam side of his family. His Mother, the Biswell family side, raised him and later his Mother married Dave Davis.

When you read *Wanderlust*, the great new book by Russ Banham, you will read that Wally, at 19, used the word "Byamish" to mean the lack of fortitude.

As a child, Helen spent many hours with her Byam grandparents and knew that to be a Byam was something special. Whereas, Wally spent little time with the Byam's.

This was to change in 1930 when Helen and Henry Schwamborn moved to California.

Wally, an acclimated Southern Californian by this time, took the Schwamborns under his wing.

Wally and Helens friendship developed through the 30's, 40's and early 50's. During this period Helen dispelled the "Byamish" attitude, as they discussed their grandparents. And Helen became affectionately addressed by Wally as his, "little cousin."

It was an inside thing for Wally to remind my Mother that she was a Byam and a Byam can do it, or she would remind Wally that he was a Byam and they could "dood it."

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This ongoing family affirmation meant something. To be a Byam was positive and full of the can do attitude to accomplish things.

I actually was the first Schwamborn to become an Airstreamer. Wally took me on the 1st Caravan to Mexico and Central America, in 1951, as his guest. Earlier that year Wally bestowed the name of "Pee Wee" on me, a 5'2", twelve year old, and the smallest one of the group. Caravaners knew me as Pee Wee, and who in the heck is this Dale, guy?

Wally had the European Caravan scheduled for 1956. He needed to scout and make arrangements for the Caravan.

Wally talked with his "little cousin" sometime early in the spring of 1955 about her going on the Caravan and taking over for him when he and Stel left for Europe.

(The dated items are from HBS's 1955 journal.)

On **May 16th** Helen asked for a leave of absence from her employer. On **May 21st** she called Wally and told him it was all set.

This diminutive 5'2" lady was about to tow a trailer, drive a truck, lead a Caravan, organize a club and go down in history.

Her journey began at 3:30 P.M. on **June 15th** when Wally piloted us to route 66. In typically Wally fashion pointed east to Jackson Center, Ohio and beyond.

June 25th the bivouac was in Sault Ste. Marie. 20 trailers were there. Wally and Stel arrived at 9:00 PM.

July 4th we celebrated Wally's birthday in Algonquin Provincial Park, with a spaghetti dinner.

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July 11th their farewell dinner for Stel and Wally in Montreal.

Wally set up an advisory board to work with my Mother.

Hamp Millender, Texas
Oscar Selent, Michigan
Fred Beltner, Nebraska
Mark Smith, Illinois
Pop Riley, Arizona
John McNamara, Indiana

Helen became the second Caravan leader, other than Wally to guide the Airstreamers.

July 15th Wally and Stel confirmed their arrival in Europe from Dusseldorf, Germany.

One duty, Wally left Helen, was the organization of the club. The Caravaners had asked Wally if they could form a club. Airstream owners had requested that they have a club.

This was the summer it would happen. A Wally Byam Caravan Club!

The by-laws committee began their work and the meetings began. There were many, many evenings in July and August spent in crafting the club.

August 1st On to Annapolis Royal good parade with an Airstream. On to Kentville, Palmeter's lovely summer home. The largest bone china establishment in Canada. Beautiful. Welcomed by Her Worship Mayor Porter... Party on the lawn and a farewell to the Mc Namaras."

August 3rd Meeting at 9:00 AM regarding Caravan Club, later with the board, a final with by-laws committee, and meet with Mr. Palmeter regarding evening party.

Wonderful party, hamburger bar-b-que. Gift of plate.

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The Wally Byam Caravan is official! August 3, 1955!

3. These are excerpts from a letter written by Wally Byam to Art Costello and Andy Charles July 11, 1955, from Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

"This caravan has been an unusual success. As I leave it, it is rolling well, committees are functioning real well.

Much of this has been due to Helen. She has turned out to be a top hand organizer, a natural leader of the type of people who come on caravans, a very good secretary and as hard a worker as I have been. In addition she is much smoother at handling the people than I am and in spite of the fact that she is my cousin I can tell you honestly and truthfully that she is universally liked and accepted by the Caravaners. You will find this out for yourselves as you talk to the Caravanners on their return.

So to simplify the caravan and its activities in my own mind I am mentally turning the caravan to her. As far as I am concerned I want her to me Miss or Mrs. or Mr. Wally Byam Caravan. Anything that concerns the caravan I would like to be her responsibility.

Helen will also have charge of promoting and working with the Airstream Trailer Clubs."

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4. These are excerpts from a letter written by Gerry Letourneau, former President of Airstream to Helen Byam Schwamborn.

“So much has happened to Airstream over the past few years and I must say that 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. Airstream today is very successful and on a firm path....” June 15, 1983

Last year my Mother went on ahead to scout the way for her family. She passed away on July 22, 2004.

In working with the Russ Banham, the author, I found a curious coincidence. My Mother and Wally both passed away on July 22nd.

Her life of service to the Club, Airstream, her family and friends was summed up at her Bakersfield Memorial Service, **“She never met a stranger.”**

Today we are recognizing 50 years of fellowship, and membership. Three names stand out as prime movers.

Louis and Alice Beatty	Escondido, CA
S. J. (Mac) and Hazel McDonald	Imperial Beach, CA
Jim (Mac) and Nina McCoy	Compton, CA

Canada, and especially Nova Scotia, Kentville and Mr. Palmeter were our wonderful hosts that showed the Caravan the hospitality and friendship that laid the cornerstone of the Club and greater things to come.

Helen is interned at the Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, CA; with her husband, my father, Henry the love of her life. An appropriate psalm is written on their marker.

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***“If I ride the morning winds to the
farthest oceans,
even there your hand will guide me,
your strength
will support me.”***

Psalms

129: 9, 10