

Heritage of Travel and Family

Fortune smiled on me upon my birth. I found two wonderful parents, Henry and Helen Byam Schwamborn. I received the heritage of the Schwamborn and Byam families.

My Mother was a first cousin of Wallace Merle Byam (Wally Byam). Their fathers were brothers. I was a first cousin, once removed of Wally's.

Wally Byam is best known as the founder and owner of Airstream Trailers, Inc. Spinoffs of the manufacturing side of Airstream were Caravans going to Mexico, Central America, Canada, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

The Wally Byam Caravan adventurers and Airstream owners wanted to maintain the spirit of the Caravans. Because of these associations, they formed a club in 1955. Thus was born the Wally Byam Caravan Club. Wally Byam picked his cousin, Helen Byam Schwamborn to organize and supervise the Club. I became a charter member in 1955.

My childhood was weekend trips to the Byam's residence in Los Angeles, and visits by Wally to our home.

In 1951, my parents were asked if could hike with Wally, his wife and friends through the High Sierra Mountains in California. I did and Wally gave me the lifelong nickname of "Pee Wee".

A few weeks later Wally contacted my parents. He asked them if I could accompany him on his first Caravan. The 1951 Caravan traveled to Mexico and Central America.

That was my beginning in the Airstream and Caravan World. I traveled to Eastern Canada in 1955 and 1957. When I graduated from high school in 1956, I joined the Caravan in Switzerland.

In 1958, the plans were being firmed up for the Wally Byam Caravan of a lifetime...Cape Town to Cairo. I contacted Wally and asked if I could join the Caravan. It was determined that I would be the advance scout.

There was one stipulation, that there had to be a minimum of 35 Airstream families on the Caravan. In April 1959, my Father received a call from Wally. Dad wrote me a note, "Wally is taking you to Africa." We wound up with 41 Airstreams, and 3 auxiliary vehicles.

Africa was amazing then and it is still the amazing adventure today after 50 years. I returned to my university studies in the fall of 1960.

I worked for 4½ years at the Airstream factory in California.

My Mother continued to work with Caravans and Airstream until her retirement in 1979 at the age of 79.

My direct association with Airstream, and the Wally Byam Caravan Club was dormant until 2004. In 2004, my Mother passed away. There is the coincidence that my Mother and Wally both passed on July 22.

That October a writer, Russ Banham, contacted me. He was writing a book about Airstream, *Wanderlust, Airstream at 75*. We exchanged hours of conversation and reviewed hundreds of documents and photographs.

The word was out that a mysterious person with historical significance had emerged.

Since then I have traveled to many rallies, dedications, and compiled and written brief history snippets.

Last year I traveled over 20,000 miles and 65 days, with the participation in 7 major events.

I have several events planned this year.

I need to find time to write a "book". It will be a loosely composed journal style dealing with the history of Airstream, Wally Byam, Helen Byam Schwamborn, and the Wally Byam Caravan Club. There will be many pictures, stories, copies of letters, a few of my life long anecdotes. Once I dedicate my time, I will have it written and ready to print.

That is a brief story of which there are no Kings, Queens, Dukes or Duchesses, just a very fortunate son.