

# The SNU and WBCCI

*Written May 2016*

In 2002 when the SNU was struggling, the only advise offered by WBCCI and Region 12 was to fold up or merge with another Unit. Instead of heeding that advise, the SNU decided to continue and try and rebuild. Since 2002 the SNU has been an example of how to provide other struggling units with another option, one that works. Another motivation behind the decision to rebuild the SNU was to exemplify the original concepts of WBCCI as described in Wally Byam's Creed and Four Freedoms. We wanted to ensure that the SNU was inclusive and welcoming to all Airstreamers. We wanted to overcome the feelings, often expressed and personally experienced by several people that WBCCI was exclusive and cliquish, that Airstream owners were elitists or snobs. These decisions have led to a successful, stable and solid Unit.

The SNU has been the inspiration for several tools WBCCI uses to this day, all based on efforts the SNU created on its own to assist itself. These tools are the Merit Award, the Adopt-A- Dealer program, and the Media Guide. Even Jerry's statement about the SNU has been used as a promotional tool by WBCCI and Region 12, either directly or slightly modified. Now in 2016, with a lot of Units struggling and folding and new Units barely meeting minimum requirements, instead of recognizing what the SNU might have to offer to assist, WBCCI and Region 12 leadership have chosen to threaten to revoke the SNU charter.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Questions have been asked about the relationship between the SNU and WBCCI. In particular why do I have to pay dues to WBCCI to be a member of the SNU and what are the benefits of WBCCI membership. These questions have come up frequently over the years but the recent proposed actions from a Region 12 officer have brought them up again.

This document is meant to try to answer common questions related to the relationship between WBCCI and the SNU. The comments and information are based on my 15+ years of recording and tracking SNU membership and on my personal involvement, through my family's and my own membership in WBCCI through all of the 61 years it has existed.

- 1. If this effort to revoke the SNU charter succeeds, will this change anything for the 2016 year for the SNU?** - No. The rally schedule will not be impacted. Plans for the SNU special 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations will not change. Nothing else the SNU is doing or has planned will change.
- 2. Why do I have to pay dues to WBCCI to be a member of the SNU?** - WBCCI is the parent organization and as an affiliate of that organization, people who wish to belong to the SNU must pay dues for both groups. For WBCCI these dues help support the infra-structure, activities, and member benefits. This portion of the dues are established by WBCCI. The Unit dues support similar items as determined by the Unit and are set by the Unit in accord with its due process.

3. **What are the benefits of belonging to WBCCI?** - This is probably the most asked question. To help inform potential members and others, a list of benefits is included in the recruitment materials distributed by the SNU. Benefits of membership are also listed on the *Join or renew your membership! Page* on the SNU website. One of the key benefits is the ability to participate in the activities and events sponsored by the parent organization and all of its affiliated organizations or units.

If the SNU becomes an independent group without WBCCI charter, people who support the SNU can still participate in any and all WBCCI activities and receive all WBCCI member benefits (the Blue Beret, etc) by joining WBCCI as a member at large (MAL) or by choosing a WBCCI chartered unit as their home unit. Becoming a member of WBCCI through other channels would not impact your participation and support of the SNU.

4. **What impact will there be on the SNU if, as an independent group it can no longer promote its rallies and activities through the Blue Beret and other WBCCI methods?** - The short answer is almost no impact. The most successful methods the SNU has used to promote its activities and build membership has been through its website, through public service announcements in local papers and through word of mouth. The advantages of all three of these methods, in particular the website, is that people get a very clear and complete picture of what the SNU is all about, what we do, where we go and who we are. None of these three methods would change if the SNU no longer had a WBCCI charter. To date, the strongest supporters and most active participants of the SNU have come from these three sources.

The most recent example was the couple who came to the rally at Washoe Lake. They were looking for Airstream rallies in Nevada on the web and the SNU rally at Washoe Lake popped up near the top of the list.

The other primary source of information on new Airstream owners that the SNU receives from WBCCI is the lists of recent sales WBCCI receives from the Airstream company. In all the years I have dealt with these lists and sent information packets to those in our area, the number of people who have followed up in any way what so ever is basically, nil.

One caveat - The SNU will need to be aware of trademark and copyright issues if it operates as an independent entity to make sure it does not misuse any WBCCI trademark or cause anyone to believe its operations or activities are sanctioned, supported, or otherwise have anything to do with the WBCCI.

5. **What will happen to people who are members of the SNU if it is no longer a chartered unit with WBCCI?** - That totally depends on the members themselves. There is no real indicator that there will be any significant changes in those who choose to support and participate in SNU activities. The indications are that being an independent group might be a benefit. Many of the most active current SNU members are professed non-joiners. The primary reason they pay dues is because they want to support and be a part of the SNU. Many have no real interest in WBCCI and several have never participated in any WBCCI activity.

In relation to this, when reviewing the SNU email subscriber list and the list of people who have joined the SNU Facebook page, it is interesting to note that many of the people on both lists appear not to be WBCCI members. It is also interesting that many of the people who have paid dues to belong to the SNU, have done so for five or more years even though they have not been active or regular participants. The inference is that there is something the SNU stands for and is doing that people like and want to support.

From observations and actual communications with some of these people, it seems some of the reasons for this ongoing support are related to decisions made by the SNU in 2002. Those include:

- Focus on camping with fellow Airstreamers in some of the special places available in the Great Basin area.
- Focus on the basic concepts Wally Byam outlined in his Four Freedoms and Creed
- Being inclusive and welcoming to all Airstreamers. Among many other things, this includes enabling people to participate in rallies or other activities even without prior notification or registration. Most important, is our attitude and behavior. We strive to include everyone in the SNU family and make them feel from their first contact that they are part of the whole group.
- Simplify – This is evident in the SNU bylaws, officers and duties, rally structure, monetary and fiscal management and communications. The purpose was to structure the SNU more in line with it's actual resources and preferences and to meet the actual needs and interests of it's members.

6. **What about insurance and liability?** - The liability insurance provided by WBCCI is essentially focused on larger group activities. SNU activities have never been structured or extensive enough for this to be a concern. For instance, we don't rent facilities or equipment for our events. Regardless of whether or not the SNU is chartered by WBCCI, individual participant insurance would more likely to come into play. If the SNU becomes a group of friends who just enjoy camping together and who are not affiliated with any group, we would not be considered an "official" organization and not impacted by most regulatory issues.
7. **What about money issues?** - Things would get even simpler. In 2002 the SNU established the Kitty Kall System as a reimbursement mechanism whereby those who got something (like a lunch) could reimburse those who got that something (paid the tab) for them. This has worked extremely well and reflects the trust and friendship between SNU people. People paying lunch tabs, grocery costs for coffee and goodies, and fuel costs for community BBQ's have been reimbursed at a level comfortable for them. Participants have been able to contribute to expenses in a manner comfortable to them. The SNU does currently maintain a proper association budgeting and finance process with a checking account. Its primary use has been to transfer dues payments to WBCCI and pay budgeted expenses such as for association communications and other association business expenses. Within the last year, most dues are now paid directly through WBCCI. Any dues paid directly to the SNU and the Unit dues received by WBCCI have all been transferred between the two organizations via Paypal.

If the SNU becomes an independent group, dues payments to WBCCI would no longer be required. Dues and 'business expenses' for the SNU would join The Kitty Kall system and financial accounts terminated.

As a group of friends rather than an "official" group depending upon fixed financial arrangements, the SNU would not need to incorporate in the state of Nevada or file IRS returns. We would not worry about tax exempt status for no income or about corporate liability protection for a board that doesn't exist.

8. **What about organization and structure?** - This would depend on the decisions of the SNU group. Indications are that not much would change. The SNU has basically operated as a committee of the whole, since 2002. That year, the SNU decided it's three primary functions were rallies, the newsletter, and public service announcements. Everyone chips in to keep these and other things going, all on a voluntary basis. At this point in time, there are no indications, that anything related to the point of contact, the newsletter, the Facebook page, PSA's or rally planning would change. The biggest change would be that as an independent group, we would not be required to have a formal list of officers that would have to be submitted to a parent organization or be subject to bylaws reviews and other such irritations.

9. **What about the caché of belonging to the oldest single product RV club in existence since 1955?** - Granted we may lose this as an un-chartered unit but it seems to be of little interest to the majority of SNU supporters. Almost all SNU members joined because of the SNU and Airstream not because of WBCCI. As Jerry famously said "*It's the Airstreams that bring us together but it's the people who keep us together*"

If belonging to an established organization is important, joining or renewing through other channels will take care of this. Not being a chartered Unit of WBCCI does not exclude us from supporting the ideals, concepts and history that Wally Byam created nor does it impact the acknowledgement and appreciation for the history of the Sierra Nevada Unit.

Several years ago, when a similar threat was made towards the SNU, the membership determined at that time that if Region 12 and WBCCI followed through with revoking the SNU charter that the SNU would go it's own way. If current actions are carried out, then it may in fact become time for the SNU to become an independent group and get back to the basics of just going camping with like minded Airstreamers.