

The Sierra Nevada Unit Region 12

# Wally Byam Caravan Club International, Inc.

the Airstream R V Association.



## Celebrating the Golden Anniversary

### 2005 - 50th Anniversary of the Wally Byam Caravan Club International

"During the 1955 Caravan to Eastern Canada, a group of Airstreamers met to form the nucleus of the Wally Byam Caravan Club."

**From the book *Airstream* written by Robert Landau and James Phillippi published in 1984**

# 2005 Golden Anniversary

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## Four Freedoms

Excerpts from the book *Trailer Travel Here and Abroad* by Wally Byam

Freedom from Arrangements - from reservations, schedules, taxi's, tips, etc; in short, most of the inconveniences of modern travel

Freedom from the problems of age - trailer travel provides an antidote to boredom, an economical way to make new friends, visit new places, and share new adventures. Trailer travel makes it easier to take care of and amuse children.

Freedom to know - Trailer travel provides a better opportunity to get to know a country and it's people and an increased opportunity to discover the world.

Freedom for fun - All of the first three freedoms add up to the fourth. You just plain begin to relax and enjoy life to the full.

## Wally Byam

Born in Baker, Oregon, Founder and chairman of Airstream Trailers, Inc, As a young boy Wally assisted his grandfather herding sheep and living in a two-wheeled wagon covered with cloth towed by a donkey. The wagon had a mat for a bed, a kerosene cook stove, a wash pail and some books. Byam graduated from Stanford in 1923 with a degree in law. Instead of practicing law he ended up in publishing. During this time he came across an article on how to build a trailer. This eventually led to Wally building trailers in his backyard for sale. He conceived the name "Airstream" in 1934 because he thought his trailers traveled like a stream of air. In the winter of 1951, during a conversation with a customer, the first glimmer of an idea about caravans was born. Wally Byam's involvement with Airstreaming and caravanning continued until his death in 1962.

## Quotes from Wally Byam

From the book *Trailer Travel Here and Abroad* by Wally Byam

"A well-built travel trailer is so feather-light you almost forget it's there after the first few miles."

"A number was assigned to each trailer to be painted on the outside so they could be checked in at each stop. Names were also painted on the trailers so people could find each other easily in camp. I gave everyone a blue beret to serve as a sort of identification badge of the group." This is part of the arrangements of the first caravan to Mexico in 1951.

"From the time Cornelius Vanderbilt and I toured Europe in the summer of 1948, I had been completely sold on it as the most exciting place to travel - especially by trailer - in the whole world."

"It was at Copenhagen, (at the 1953 International Trailer Rally) indeed, that I received my come-uppance. Anxious not to offend anyone with a crude display of American wealth and proficiency, we had decided to take a rather primitive little 16-foot Airstream Bubble. But when I saw the fancy European trailers there, I was the one who was embarrassed."

"Parked right alongside us was one of the smartest little French jobs you ever saw...an interior that looked like Madame Pompadour's boudoir. The German trailers were mechanically ingenious, full of folding and unfolding furnishings...The British trailer was ...absolutely the last word in conservative taste...."

"I think trailering should begin at home. It is cheaper, more necessary to our education and, very important to neophytes, more convenient (than trailering abroad)."

"Trailering has been developed to a high art in America because we developed the automobile that made it possible, a technology that could make it more comfortable, and an elaborate highway network and system of fine trailer parks to make it more pleasurable."

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is Wally Byam?

Wally Byam is the creator of the Airstream trailer and founder of the Wally Byam Caravan Club (WBCCI)

### What is WBCCI?

A non-profit primarily volunteer organization with headquarters in Jackson Center, Ohio. The organization, which includes Canada and Mexico is comprised of regional divisions. Each region is composed of between 25 to 500 local units.

### How did the first Caravan occur and when?

Mr. Byam, in a discussion with a customer who had recently purchased an Airstream but wasn't getting as much out of trailering as he could, suggested they go on a trip together. That way Byam could help him learn about the "efficiency and pleasure" of trailer travel. The year was 1951.

### What are the big red numbers all about?

The numbers indicate membership in WBCCI. They came about during the second trip (the first somewhat official caravan) to Mexico and were used to identify trailers so they could be checked in at each stop. They are included in the member directory so when you pass an Airstream on the road you can look them up and see who they are and where they are from.

### What are the red stars you see on some Airstreams with the numbers?

The stars indicate tenure. Each star represents five years membership in WBCCI.

### When was the first Airstream trailer built?

On January 17, 1936 Byam's Airstream Trailer Company introduced the **Clipper**. This trailer is still on display at the Airstream factory. Mr. Byam had been building trailers and improving techniques since the late 1920's. The Clipper though, is considered the first official Airstream.

### What makes Airstream trailers unique?

Airstream trailers are recognized world-wide because of their aluminum semi-monocoque construction exterior that is much like that used in the aircraft industry. Their construction makes the Airstream lighter in weight than most other trailers and the rounded, aerodynamic shape with low center of gravity makes towing smoother and requires less horsepower.

### Who can become a member of WBCCI?

Anyone who owns an Airstream RV product can become a member. Membership is paid to the international headquarters on an annual basis. For an additional minimal cost you can also become a member of your local unit.

### What do members of WBCCI do?

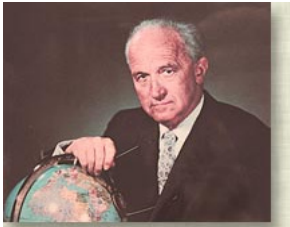
The primary activities are caravans and rallies. Caravans are extended trips that cover a specific section of a country or visits to several countries. Rallies are held in a specific location and usually range from two or three days to a week or more. Both rallies and caravans can be sponsored and organized by the Airstream company, by WBCCI, by individual regions, or by local units. There are also special event rallies usually centered around a specific local event such as the Rose Parade in CA, or the Mardi Gra in LA. Since its inception, WBCCI has also been involved in community service projects. In addition to promoting good will, WBCCI supports local programs both at the international and the local Unit level. A committee for the International rally is in charge of determining, organizing, and carrying out a local service project in conjunction with the rally. Many units adopt a specific non-profit or charity and provide support through various activities and contributions.

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## WBCCI International Rallies Photo Gallery



1959 Wisconsin Dells, WI



Wally Byam, Founder WBCCI



1960 Colorado Springs, CO



1967 Santa Rosa, CA



1962 Auburn, WA



1986 Boise, ID



1998 Boise, ID

"I remember my first brush with Airstreams. Once I was flying from Ohio to Pennsylvania when I passed over what must have been 500 trailers at an Airstream rally. The reflection from all those silver trailers nearly blinded me. The formation looked magnificent from the sky." Bob Cummings

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## From the Harrison/Leipper family archives



**1957 Palm Springs rally**



**1959 Wisconsin Dells rally**



**1962 Rally at Window Rock, AZ**



**1957 Mexican Caravan - gas line**



**1965 Rally at Belmont, NV**



**1958 Boston Bar Ferry**



**1963 Rally at Owensborough, KY**



**1967 Rally at Llano, TX**

Florida Rally 1958 – Comments from Bryan and Jo Harrison's Travel Log – Spent the afternoon visiting with the Byam's with the Best's listening to some fine stereo music. They have records and tapes.

Photo galleries of various Airstream rallies of the 1950's and 1960's are located on the web:

<http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/memories/travelogues/index.html>

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## Important Dates

- 1934 Wally Byam conceived the name Airstream for his trailers
- 1936 The Clipper, the first "official" Airstream was built
- 1948 Wally Byam formed his own company, Airstream Trailers, Inc
- 1951 First Caravan organized. Destination - Central America
- 1955 WBCCI founded on August 3 at Kentville Nova Scotia. There were 80 charter members
- 1956 First European caravan and first caravan to Cuba
- 1958 The first International WBCCI rally was held Bull Shoals, AR. 300 attended.
- 1959 A caravan traveled 9,000 miles from Capetown to Cairo in Africa
- 1962 Wally Byam died. A foundation was created in his name for the purpose of hosting foreign groups on annual trailer tours of America
- 1978 All manufacturing and executive capabilities were centralized in the Jackson Center headquarters.

## The Wally Byam Creed

- "In the heart of these words is an entire life's dream. To those of you who find in the promise of these words your promise. I bequeath this creed. . . my dream belongs to you." - Wally Byam
- To Place the great wide world at your doorstep for you who yearn to travel with all the comforts of home.
  - To provide a more satisfying, meaningful way of travel that offers complete travel independence, wherever and whenever you choose.
  - To keep alive and make real an enduring promise of high adventure and faraway lands . . .of rediscovering old places and new interests.
  - To open a whole world of new experiences . . .a new dimension in enjoyment where travel adventure and good fellowship are your constant companions.
  - To encourage clubs and rallies that provide an endless source of friendships, travel fun, and personal expression.
  - To lead caravans wherever the four winds blow. . .over twinkling boulevards, across trackless deserts. . .to the traveled and untraveled corners of the earth.
  - To play some part in promoting international goodwill and understanding among the peoples of the world through person-to-person contact.
  - To refine and perfect our product by continuous travel-testing over the highways and byways of the world.
  - To strive endlessly to stir the venturesome spirit that moves you to follow a rainbow to its end. . .and thus make your travel dreams come true.



## A few favorite traditions of Airstreamers

- Pot Luck Meals - A community meal held at rallies and other gatherings. Food is contributed by all participants. There are numerous variations on the pot luck including the "mustgo" meal held at the end of a rally. This provides an opportunity to get rid of leftovers before hitting the road.
- Happy Hour - A social time at the end of the day before supper. This provides a chance for everyone to share the days experiences and adventures and discuss plans for the evening and the following day. Often includes light snacks.
- Entertainment & Education - Rallies and other gatherings usually include some form of entertainment, usually provided by the rally participants. Skits, slide shows, crafts, games, sports, and all kinds of music related activities are some of the favorites. Airstreamers also like to learn about the areas they visit. Museum tours, site visits, and checking out local specialties are some examples.

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## From the Harrison/Leipper family archives

Records indicate that Bryan & Jo Harrison became members of WBCCI in 1955, the year the club was organized. The Harrison/Leipper families have been members of WBCCI continuously ever since.

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| <p style="text-align: right;">MAY, 1957</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">WHY CARAVANS?</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">By HELEN BYAM SCHWAMBOERN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Why Caravans?</p> <p>A question asked everywhere these days—in Europe, in Central America, in Canada, in the U. S. Not only the local people want to know but trailercritics everywhere. So, why Caravans?</p> <p>Principally, our aims in organizing the new world-famed Wally Byam Caravan tours are twofold: create goodwill for our country and the ever-growing army of trailerites, and to teach our Airstream owners how to use their trailers.</p> <p>Those who have been on Wally Byam Caravans know how much fun it is. They know Wally's talent for finding the most interesting places to see—and the most interesting way to see them. They know the joys of the closest community of Caravanners, of making true and lifelong friends. They know the nostalgic feeling of just thinking of "Meeting Time," and the stimulation of Wally's "Bull Sessions." They know the quiet contentment of evenings around a blazing bonfire, singing the old songs—and learning new ones—and swap-</p> <p>ping yarns. They know the anticipation of "cut-of-the-world" pot-luck suppers as only the lady Caravanners know how to prepare them. They know the gaiety of the fish fries and hamburger casts on beaches or amid the towering trees of a national forest.</p> <p>We could go on and on—but to know what a Wally Byam Caravan is really like, you just have to go—there just aren't enough lyrical words to express it all.</p> <p>If you are interested in any of the great tours planned by the Wally Byam Caravan—no matter where—please write. There is a tremendous amount of advance work to be done on all Caravans, and the sooner we know your hopes and ideas and plans, the more efficiently we can "hit the road."</p> <h3 style="text-align: center;">What to Bring on a Caravan</h3> <p>Oldtimers from previous Caravanners all know what to bring. So this advice is strictly for newcomers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Two 50-foot light cords.</li> <li>2. A bucket (or two) to put under your sink or sewer drain for short stops where there's no sewer connection and where we cannot "sopher heels" (a hole for the drain).</li> <li>3. Some blocks to chock wheels and level the trailer.</li> <li>4. A shovel.</li> <li>5. Fire extinguisher.</li> <li>6. Gasoline for extra gas.</li> <li>7. Water can.</li> <li>8. 50-foot water hose; sewer hose; brass hose "Y."</li> <li>9. Tow chain or tow rope—just in case.</li> <li>10. Kerosene, or gasoline, lanterns, a good flashlight, some candles.</li> <li>11. Good tires.</li> <li>12. Finally—if you have color slides or movies, bring them. We all like to see others' pictures.</li> </ol> | <p>"Over 60 percent of all Airstreams ever built - including some of the original \$5 plans - are still rolling down the highways"</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>WBCCI Media Kit</b></p> <p>"A big step forward in trailer construction came when we dropped the floor between the axles and raised the ceiling so we could stand up inside. This was a real milestone - we were able to install a table with an inset wash basin, a gasoline stove for cooking.....even an ice box, in addition to a bed"</p> <p>"The second most important development in trailers came, of course, with the discovery and application of liquefied petroleum gas. Butane and propane provided low-cost, dependable and easily stored fuel for light, heat, cooking and refrigeration. It came as a godsend to the trailer industry and was the first step toward real self-containment."</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Wally Byam - Trailer Travel Here and Abroad</b></p> |
| <p>Article from the May 1957 newsletter - The Caravaner</p> <p>"An Airstream trailer can go over any road. Only in a few places will your trailer ever be hooked up to electricity or water from a hose."</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>From the bulletin for the 1957 WBCCI Caravan to Mexico</b></p>  |  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Logo for the 1963 Bimidji, MN Sixth Annual WBCCI International Rally</b></p>  |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Cordial Bienvenida le Dió el Pueblo a la Caravana</p>  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1957 Newspaper article regarding WBCCI Mexican Caravan</b></p>  | <p>Several things surprised those of us who started building trailers commercially in the early days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The ease with which they could be towed.</li> <li>* The apparent unlimited number of gadgets that could be incorporated into trailer design</li> <li>* The way folks took to trailers, even during the depression years....</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Wally Byam - Trailer Travel Here and Abroad</b></p>   |

# Check out <http://SierraNevadaAirstreams.org>

## Communications

Tell us your thoughts! Send us photographs or articles or links to share with others on this site. See also [Photo Policies](#) for use of photographs.

Check out the weekly tips, hints, and ideas weblog ; [SNUZE](#).



[Boca Reservoir](#)

[North on 395 from Reno](#) -|- [Washoe County](#) -|- [US 50](#) -|- [US 95](#) -|- [South on 395 from Carson City](#) -|- [Interstate 80](#) -|- [Ca 89](#) -|- [US 97](#) -|- [Other special spots](#) -|

The Sierra Nevada and Great Basin area - places to go, to see, to enjoy

**Other locations** -|- [Southern Oregon scenery \(Oregon Outback Scenic Byway\)](#) -|- [Goose Lake Oregon State Park](#) -|- -|-

## Destinations



Gas line 1957 Mexico Caravan

[Rallies](#) -|- [Travelogues](#) -|- [Caravans](#) -|- [Restorations and Projects](#) -|- [Show and Tell](#)

See photo galleries of Airstream rallies and caravans from the 1950's through 2005. Check out various Airstream restoration projects and unique adaptations. Take a photo tour through some special Airstreams.

## Memories



[Tools for repacking the wheel bearings](#)

[Preparing](#) -|- [Driving](#) -|- [Living](#) -|- [Touring](#) -|- [Participating](#) -|- [Maintaining](#) -|- [Understanding](#) -|- [The family side of RV'ing](#) -|- [The natural world of the Great Basin](#) -|- [The communities we live in](#) -|-

Information for the RV enthusiast on using your recreational vehicle to enjoy the Sierra Nevada airstreams.

## Owner's Guide



[Unit Profile - Who We are, What we do](#) -|- [Newsletter subscription sign up](#) -|- [2005 Rally and event schedule](#) -|- [Photo gallery of SNU members trailers](#)

[Join now or renew your membership for 2005](#). Please complete this form and return it to the SNU treasurer

The Sierra Nevada Unit, WBCCI welcomes anyone who owns an Airstream RV. The Unit covers Northern Nevada and the Eastern Sierra area. The Sierra Nevada Unit is part of [Region 12 of WBCCI](#)

### **2005 - 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wally Byam Caravan Club**

See a photo gallery of memorabilia and pictures from early rallies and caravans, check out a photo gallery of Airstreams owned by three generations of the Harrison/Leipper family. Browse through other documents and pictures.

## WBCCI Sierra Nevada Unit



[81 towing machine](#)

Buy sell trade? Resources for finding parts, pieces, accessories, and other things.

Reno, NV now has the only authorized **Airstream dealer in Nevada**

## Commerce



Backside of [Peavine](#)

Opinions and views about politics, religion, and other topics that can touch us deeply. Propaganda, religion, rights, science, war.

[Whispers in the airstreams](#); an idea log on politics, science, education and manners of thinking.

## Quicksand



This site is a member of the **Airstream WebRing**: Visit the [hub](#) to see the member sites or the [next](#) or [previous](#) web sites in the ring.

## Airstream WebRing

## Resources and additional information

<http://wbcci.org>

*Trailer Travel Here and Abroad* published in 1960

*Airstream* published in 1984

*Airstream The History of the Land Yacht* published in 2000

WBCCI 2004 Media Kit

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