



THE VINTAGE ADVANTAGE

News Items for Vintage Airstream Owners & Admirers



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Vintage Airstream Club

A WBCCI IntraClub

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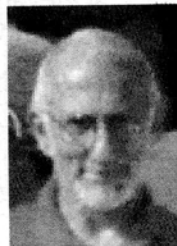
The Vintage Advantage Quarterly Newsletter

Annual dues of \$10 payable to "Vintage Airstream Club". Send all dues, applications and classified ads to the VAC Treasurer, Mr. Edward Stanley. **The Vintage Advantage (VA)** is the official newsletter of the Vintage Airstream Club, which is an IntraClub of the Wally Byam Caravan Club International, Inc. (WBCCI), the recreational vehicle club of Airstream owners. The VA welcomes contributions of letters, articles, photographs, news items and classified advertisements, however, their publication does not constitute endorsement. The opinions of the authors are their own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the VA, the VAC or the WBCCI.

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RESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I will begin by explaining the retraction of the reserved parking offer made in the Winter '98 VA issue. Vintage activities include two events that require the participants to be parked in the Vintage area. These events provide recognition for all the hard work members did to their trailers. The officers had been deluged with concerns that employed members may not be able to participate because they cannot arrive with the Vintage parade. Boise parking will be large, much like it was in Rapid City, so we told

everyone that there should be no problem parking late arrivals. For families driving across the country to show their trailer, "should be no problem" is not a viable answer. I thought that if the VAC knew when pre-registered members are to arrive, all we would need to do is obtain that number of additional spaces, put the VAC member's name and arrival time on a small sign and meet them at the gate. VACers could then escort them to "their" site and park them without involving the already overworked parking committee. Sounded like a good solution that should make everyone happy, all we would need to do is sell the idea to the parking chairman and the IBT.

Of course by the time we thought up this wonderful idea the newsletter deadline had arrived. Not a problem, we will just announce guaranteed parking in the newsletter, then obtain the needed approvals. That was one of our worst ideas. It seems that unbeknown to me, other IntraClubs asked for guaranteed parking and were turned down so the Vintage Club was similarly not afforded that privilege. I hope everyone understands how this came about and accept with my apologies, especially any Vintage members who may feel it necessary to change their summer vacation plans.

Many topics of our VACer e-mail messages, letters and conversations included parking and the question "When will we have Vintage only events?" I must agree that Vintage only events will not only eliminate the International Rally parking problems but additional Vintage activities could also be added. Many volunteers are needed to organize such an event so please contact us if you can help.

The Wagon Wheels '98 Caravan, being hosted by Preston Pearson, promises to be great fun. We are looking forward to meeting and joining all the caravaners that become part of this wonderful event. A leader is needed to host the 1999 Dayton, OH International Rally Wagon Wheels caravan. Please let us know if you can undertake this responsibility.

The Vintage breakfast will be Friday at the college. I feel everyone will enjoy the "Bronco Breakfast" so bring a hearty appetite. Tickets will be on sale at the Vintage table and from all officers.

The Vintage parade into the rally grounds will assemble in the center of the Factory Outlet mall parking lot, located at the intersection of Interstate 84, Exit 57 and Highway 21. A police escort will meet us Thursday, June 25th at 10:15 AM, thus allowing us to arrive at the rally site with time to raise our flags for the 11:00 AM parade through the Rally grounds to our parking places. The mall manager, Thayne Fisher, has given permission for early arrivals to camp in the parking lot. Ellen and I hope to see you all in Boise. We plan to have a great time so please come and join us.

Clyde Wagner, #8441

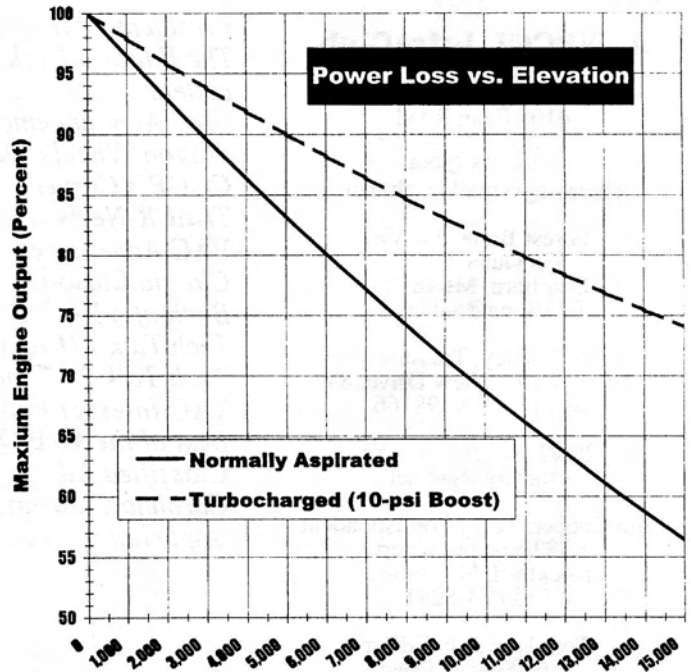


THE EDITOR'S DESK

Spring is finally here and the Rally season is coming fast. This means it's time to polish, paint and make last minute repairs. Most my major jobs have been completed and now we're getting anxious for school recess to hit the road.

With the 41st WBCCI International Rally to be held in Boise, ID this year, many folks will be crossing the Rocky Mountains on their way to the Rally. After my experiences driving cross-country last year, I knew that my engine seemed severely retarded at elevation.

Recently this point was brought home in a "Tech Talk" article appearing in the *March 1998* (p. 107-8) of **Car Craft** that was accompanied with a graph (reprinted below). The graph shows the percentage of maximum engine output as a function of elevation for both a normally aspirated engine and a turbocharged engine (with a 10-psi boost). As reprinted in the graph below, note that at 10,000 feet (comparable to crossing the Rocky Mountains near Denver), a normally aspirated engine is reduced by 32%!

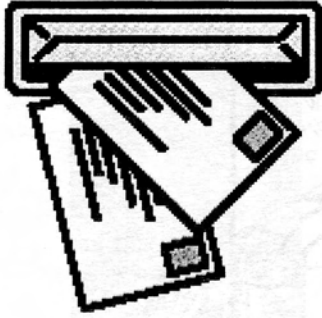


This helps explain why my performance is limited at elevation (although I am within the van GCVW) but I am still wondering why the octane levels at gas stations out west are less. Any reader comments or insights?

To try and improve the van's response, I have upgraded the exhaust system, added an improved fuel regulator, an air breather intake and a multiple spark discharge ignition system with a new tuneup. I had each of these additions examined on a Dynameter to monitor the degree of improvement. I think that we are now ready for the road but every trip I find new surprises (which explains my box of spare parts). And unfortunately, the van is not getting any younger!

This issue of the Vintage Advantage seems to focus more on restorations and improvements which is to be expected since we are just now entering the heart of the traveling season. I expect that our next issue will feature more road articles but I need more contributions from our members. Send them in!

If you're planning to attend International then please stop by and say hello. We'll be arriving on Saturday, June 27th so please keep the light on!



HELP WITH POSTAGE
Please send change of address cards to membership chairman.



LETTERS

“Mister Cooper”

All things happen in their time. We saved a 1965 Overlander from the ravages of time and abuse, moved in and began restoration. It has taken us two years of work and love, however, the trailer seems to like us. We've seen some older trailers about and wonder if anyone really cared about them as we do. Many times when I see a vintage trailer, I inquire about it. Often to find that people do not seem to know what they have.

We have been in the Lakeview Lazy Daze RV Park in Junction, TX for over a year now and have observed the comings and goings of several vintage trailers. So I was pleasantly surprised when I was sitting at my campsite when someone yelled from the road "Nice '64," to which my husband yelled back "it's a '65!" The man then pulled down into the park. He was towing a 1970's model Airstream, of which we were happy to see. As it turned out, the man was none other than Bud Cooper, the founder of the VAC, along with his wife Bettye. Bud showed us how to remove the dents from the aluminum skin as well as some polishing tips. Since we had already taken a year stripping off the plastic coating and polishing by hand, Mr. Cooper thought it looked great. It turned out that we had mutual friends, including Diane McElligott (#4396) and Ed Smith's Shady Dell trailer park in Bisbee, AZ.

We are happy to be part of the VAC and hope to meet other members on the road. Thanks Bud!

Kirk and Toni Griffin, VAC Friend

VAC ANNOUNCEMENTS

VAC International Rally Schedule of Events

Monday, June 15

Wagon Wheels '98 Caravan

Thursday, June 25

At 10:15 AM, Meet at the Factory Outlet Mall (**I-84** Exit 57) for the Police escort and Parade into the Rally grounds

Sunday, June 28

"The Missing Years"
by Bud Cooper

"My Fathers 1935 Airstream"
by Dr. Norman Holman, Jr.

Tuesday, June 30

VAC Open House
VAC Concours d'Elegance

Thursday, July 2

VAC Membership Meeting
and Group Photo

Friday, July 3

VAC Breakfast

Saturday, July 4

July 4th Parade
(includes VAC Concours winners)

Sunday, July 5

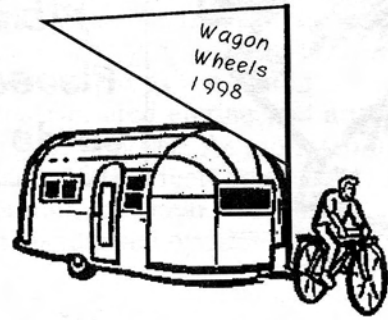
End of Rally

Clyde Wagner, #8441

Membership Report

The Vintage Airstream Club (VAC) is the exception to the (WBCCI) rule as we are having another year of strong growth. Last year at this time we had a total of VAC members/associates/friends of 659, while this year (April 15, 1998) we have a total of 937, that is an increase of 42%. Our membership breakdown is as follows: 539 Members, 46 Associates, 352 Friends.

Ed Stanley, #21491
VAC Membership Chairman



Nominations for the 1998-99 VAC Offices

As required by the VAC Constitution, I am hereby submitting the report of the Nominating Committee to the VAC membership. Through response to a September 13, 1997, memorandum sent to each of the candidates, they have indicated a willingness to serve.

The candidates for VAC office are the following:

President Forrest Bone (#9712)
1st Vice President . . . Tom Reed (#10283)
2nd Vice President . . . To Be Determined
3rd Vice President . . . Don Perry (#5031)
Treasurer Ed Stanley (#21491)
Recording Secretary . . Marianne Pruitt (#6667)
Technical Correspondent
. Rutherford Cooper (#2601)
Immediate Past President
. Clyde Wagner (#8441)

As noted above, a candidate for the 2nd Vice President remains undetermined.

Dick Mumma, #4333
Chairperson, VAC Nominating Committee

Vintage Bulletin Board

We are in need of a Vintage Bulletin Board measuring 2-ft wide by 4-ft high for the 1998 WBCCI International Rally in Boise. Many of the units and IntraClubs have fashioned bulletin boards by using two pieces of nicely finished 1/4" thick plywood, 1" by 2" border on 3 sides with the open ends hinged together to form a 2' by 2' by 4" suitcase when closed. When opened it turns into a 2-ft by 4-ft bulletin board with a 1" by 2" border.

If we have any volunteer carpenters willing to tackle a job of this type please let me know.

Clyde Wagner, #8441

Wagon Wheels '98 Caravan (WBCCI National Caravan No. N-27-Q)

Well it didn't take long but it has happened. WE ARE SOLD OUT! All 25 trailers have preregistered and sent in deposits so the participation is here.

The caravan appears to be heavily loaded with VACers who are promising to continue with the enthusiastic VAC spirit. The VAC Wagon Wheels '98 caravan was granted WBCCI National Caravan designation number N-27-Q and is slated for travel from June 15 to 24, 1998.

Stop by at International and hear the stories we're sure to tell.



Preston B. Pearson, #5502
Wagon Wheels '98 Caravan Wagon Master





COOP'S CORNER

First Trailers -

I received this one from Past VAC President Stan Baston, "The first trailer our family had, and the one in which I first camped, was a Covered Wagon, a leatherette covered trailer without brakes. We had this trailer for quite a few years and while most of our trips were in the peninsula of Lake Erie, PA, I remember we took it to California on one trip. They bought the trailer when I was probably 2 years old."

"The second trailer our family had was a Kit Companion. That had a very troublesome independent wheel suspension, and the frame only went to the suspension; it was wood from there back. Florence and I took that trailer on our honeymoon - to Lake Erie, of course. No wonder Dad wanted a trailer that he wasn't fixing all the time and thus the Airstream came into our family."

Allergies -

Ellen Kinnear and Marilyn McVicker have a great deal of experience with living in an Airstream as a way of avoiding problems with allergies. They have offered to share their knowledge with others who have similar afflictions. Ph. 410/665-7352.

More about Hehr windows -

The glass retainer strips for these windows from Airstreams of the 1960's are still not available.

Many people are ordering part 009-344 (black). The attachment ribs on the back side can be cut off with a razor knife. The front, the visible part, can then be cemented against the glass with clear bathtub caulk. This makes a very acceptable looking job.

Lost name plates -

S&E Silkscreen and Engraving of 220 9th St. S, Great Falls, MT 59405; 800/974-3141, can make a very attractive looking name plate if yours is lost or damaged. Typical cost is about \$35. Send them your damaged plate as a sample.

Silver Palace

A 27-minute color VCR video documentary (Dolphin Communications Inc., 1763 R Street NW, Suite 400, Washington DC 20009; \$24.95).

This is a well filmed, fair and evenly balanced representation of Airstreams and their owners. The film is a depiction of the 23rd WBCCI International Rally at Notre Dame and a later caravan. Could be a good recruiting device. Includes good footage of Wally Byam and WBCCIers both living and dead.

Miss America weighs 250 lbs!

Guess you never expect to see this headline in your newspaper. Why not? I predict that you will answer something like, "Too much of a good thing is no longer a good thing." My point is that the same thing is true in the Concours d'Elegance contests. After all, the concours is a beauty pageant. The judges are looking for that which is tasteful, appropriate, clean, neat, well kept, and in short, beautiful. Don't make the mistake of thinking that more is necessarily better. Too many cute ideas may come off as clutter to a judge.

Ride in your trailer -

Balancing a hub/drum assembly smoothed out a flutter in my Bambi. I spotted it first while riding in the trailer, something you

should do every year. When balancing the wheels failed to correct the problem, I looked further. With the trailer jacked up and the wheel removed, I noticed that the hub/drum, which is a really heavy casting, always stopped turning with the same spot down. Nudging it backward and forward confirmed what I suspected. This isn't supposed to happen, so I do not know of weights available from the store. I attached these with wire till I achieved the best balance, then fabricated a piece of steel that bolts to the hub. Standard tire weights are bolted to it.

Airstream - The Timeless Journey

Several VACers have asked about a book I authored last year. The publisher, Proprietary, informs me that page layouts and other details of production have proven more time consuming than expected, so it will not be available for the 1998 WBCCI International Rally but certainly should be by next year. Begin asking at your book store this fall. The title is listed in "Books In Print" a list which your store has and will tell how to order it when available. Try Barnes and Noble.

Volunteers Available

Speaking of volunteers, Kirk and Toni Griffin, P.O. Box 831, Junction, TX 76849 called to volunteer for a job, any job, just so it doesn't require a computer. I'm sure the officers will soon find a suitable assignment. Kirk and Toni have a very sharp '65.



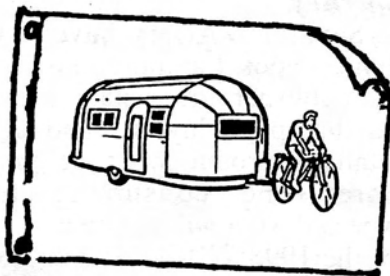
★
Flag Master

On behalf of the club, I extend thanks to Dan and Julie Kelner who volunteered to become flag masters for the club. In fairness, I must further add that three other folks in quick succession also volunteered (I've been telling you all along that there is something special about Vintage people!).

Address flag requests to:

Dan and Julie Kelner, Flag Masters
11087 Ogle Road
Poulsbo, WA 98370

800/768-5726 (days)



The flag is of royal blue nylon with the club logo in gold. Size is 2 X 3 ft. Price is \$20 post paid.

★
Region 9 Rally

Odessa, Texas was the site of the Region 9 Rally this year. On March 23, eight vintage trailers were on hand. Winners of the 1998 Region 9 Rally Concours d'Elegance are:

Best in Show—Forrest and Jeri-Ann Bone (#9712)

Reserve Best in Show—Clyde and Ellen Wagner (#8441)

Second Reserve—Diane McElligott (#4396)

Members Choice—George and Barbara Radzykewycz (#6121)

Rutherford L. Cooper (#2601) officiated. Next years rally will be at Wichita Falls, Texas on March 22, 1999.

★
Next Issue: My list of great leaks -

I will start this off by telling about some of the leaks I have found in trailers past and present. After that I depend on you to tell me about the greatest leaks you have discovered. Get the jump on me. Send me your great leak today!

Rutherford L. Cooper, #2601



[The following column appeared on page 53 of the July 1955 issue of the *Trail-R-News*]

**WALLY BYAM CARAVAN
TO TOUR EASTERN
CANADA**

The Wally Byam Caravan this month is off on another grand tour, this time to Eastern Canada. Thanks to arrangements with the Canadian Tourist Bureau and the usual trail-blazing by Wally Byam's scouts, the present Caravan promises to be a real Fifth Avenue tour abroad - but at Woolworth prices.

Starting at Sault St. Marie, Michigan, at the end of June, the Caravaners' itinerary includes Ottawa, Ontario, July 1 - 8; Quebec City, July 9 - 15; Gaspe Peninsula, July 15 - 19; Newcastle, New Brunswick, July 20 - 26; Moncton, New Brunswick, July 27 - August 4; Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, August 5 - 13; and ending at Bangor, Maine, about August 15.

Luck seems to be with Wally

Byam's Caravan as usual - the trailerists will be able to join in some of Canada's most colorful and important national celebrations, and the Canadian government is rolling out the red carpet for the wheeled visitors from south of the border.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the Soo Canal, busiest canal of its kind in the world, which has meant a great deal to the United States, making the ore available to steel mills in American industrial regions. The event marks a milestone in U. S. - Canadian relations - so the Caravan's participation in it is most appropriate. Secondly, Canada is observing the 200th anniversary of the expulsion of the Acadians, made famous by Longfellow's poem, "Evangeline." The Acadians have since greatly increased in population, and a big celebration of their "Survival" is scheduled. They are coming from as far away as Louisiana to join in the fun, along with Wally Byam's Caravaners.

Members of the group will find some of the best fishing of their lives in Nova Scotia and big fishing derbys are on the Caravan's schedule, along with lobster bakes, a whaling schooner trip and other attractions. Quebec is having some important religious festivals this year, too, and the Caravan will reach that city in time to join in.

Best news of all for many veteran Caravaners on this trip is the fact that the roads and bridges have all been found so good that for once the Caravan is able to dispense with its customary tow truck.

Trail-R-News
July, 1955

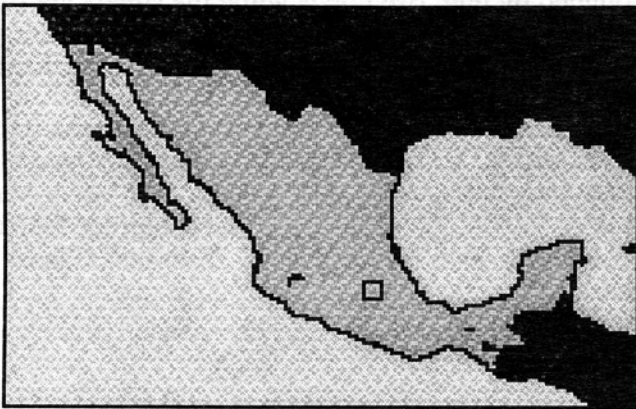
VENTILATE YOUR TRAILER

Remove cooking odors and fumes, keep your trailer fresh, with these famous fans. Easily installed over vent above stove without interfering with screen or slide closer. About 5" across. Order by number. No. 1759, 110-Volt A. C. Price, each \$5.75, prepaid

LYDON-BRICHER MFG. CO.
2500 UNIVERSITY AVE. ST. PAUL 4, MINN.

A detailed illustration of a cylindrical fan unit with a metal mesh screen on top, designed to fit over a trailer vent.

VAC Adventures with Bettye and Bud



San Loreto, Sunday - Tired from driving, but found a mini-market open. The stock was sparse and plain, bought baked cakes, a sort of roll, a donut, pickles and other basics. My change came to \$5.40 (5 pesos and 40 Centavos), a nuisance to the clerk. A peso is 12.5 cents to us. Local custom is to just forget the Centavos as insignificant, but she knows that a foreigner would expect exact change. She reaches into a jar and gives me a gum ball. Now on the island of Yap in the Pacific Ocean, a 10-ft diameter coin made of stone 3-ft thick is legal tender and will purchase a wife. Apparently in Mexico, a gum ball is legal tender.

Next day we take a drive off into the country with Lorraine and Duane Smith (#5354), the only other Vintage members on the caravan. And, the only ones adventurous enough to try an unpaved road into the mountains. The road was far better than I expected since it consisted of decent gravel most of the time. The road turned, twisted, climbed, plunged, dipped, dove, and tumbled. We loved it. A short haul just before the mission was so steep I don't think a two wheel drive vehicle could have made it although it was



paved with blocks of stone, like a wall laying down. After an hour we arrived at Los Parras, a place where there had once been a mission. A black and

white dog circled, snapping at my back side and barking fiercely. I patted my knee. He bounced over, tail wagging and put both paws on my chest. The faker!

The road to La Paz is exceptionally beautiful. I

noted in my log that it ranks with the best mountain scenery that we have ever seen. It looks as though this had been a flat plain which was pierced from below by pointed rocks. We stop, take pictures, and I make a hasty sketch. The roads are tiring because they demand constant attention. A sign advises travelers that this road was constructed to promote economic development, (that means for trucks) and that it is not a high speed highway. Not exceptionally rough, it bobs and weaves, having big bites missing from the edge, and scattered holes. Some are reddish, some black. Some have a painted center line, others none. As always, Mexico builds roads in tramos (stretches) as though one builder had never heard of the other. And, the slope of the surface is constantly changing so that one must steer left first, now right, then neutral. There isn't a lot of space for errors because one foot from the edge the surface drops into, well, you name it.

La Paz - It means the peace, and to us it means sleeping-in and some days of leisure in the capital of the state. A neighbor interrupts my breakfast to advise that three archaeologists are just now excavating a human burial on the beach nearby. I slither into yesterdays clothes and am gone. Sure enough. I introduce myself to three businesslike gentlemen. Looking just like archaeologists all over the world, one speaks fair English. They give me permission to TOUCH and photograph the finds they have made. Most interesting, a male, 170-cm high, buried on rock, face down, under a shallow covering of sand. The salt has preserved the skeleton very well. This is number 42 of those found in the same area. They estimate he died about 2000 years ago. The indigenous people lived on shell fish which they dug after finding them with their feet, may have never used boats at all.

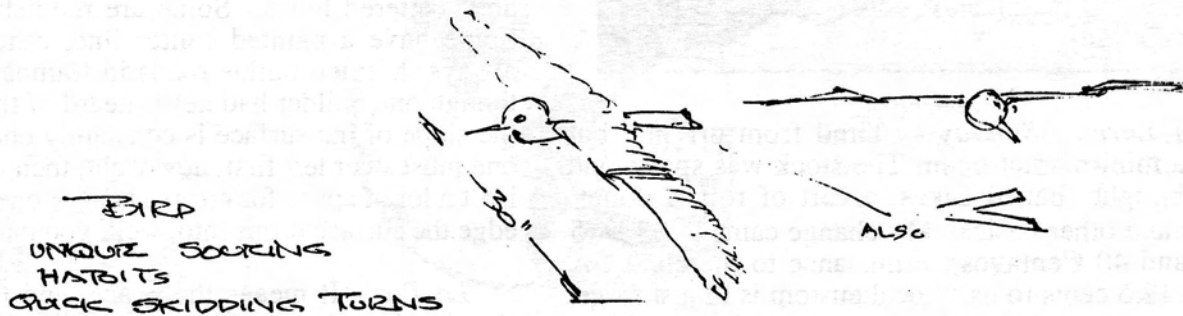
Our park is modern, clean but very tightly packed. Some of the vehicles detect reverse polarity. The power is killed to this group. A dozen large dogs romp and bark in the neighborhood surrounding the park, we worry, but by 9 PM all is quiet.

The INAH museum is very interesting with displays that illustrated burials similar to the one I had seen. Other exhibits show the cave art for which the Baja is famous. We found that there are more than 200 caves which have painted scenes. They are well protected by the government, but they can be visited with guides at many places along the road. We vowed to take a day for this kind of exploring even if we had to catch up later. Our caravan leader urged us to do this. We made a rough plan and continued on with mounting excitement.

Cabo De San Lucas - Cabo means cape or headland. This is the southern tip of Baja. With water and lights, our park was very adequate. I eyeball a derelict '59 Airstream, a 26 footer with the serial 6972. Borderline restorable, but fun to think about. Everyone in the caravan has been looking for old "streams" and calling on the CB. We passed the *Tropic of Cancer* today, the geographers gateway to the tropics. It got really hot today.

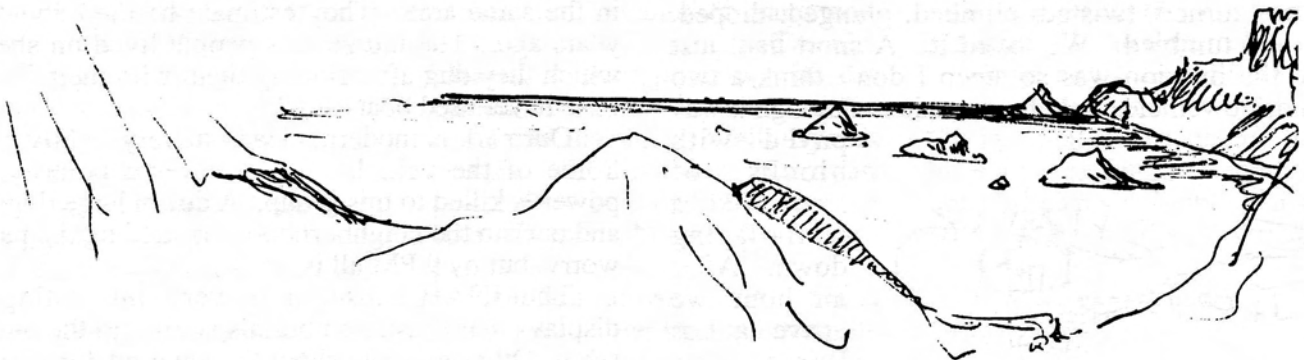
We explore the city which is beautiful. The harbor is surrounded by high rise hotels while the streets are filled with their well-heeled guests. We were astounded at the private yachts, their size, numbers, and splendor. A cruise ship arrived. Anchoring out in the bay, they debarked guests using a launch they carry along for the purpose. The people watching and the picture taking were great.

Out in the harbor a cluster of rocks protrudes from the water like a beacon. A glass bottomed boat took us out for a closeup look. Flocks of birds follow us as we circle getting views of schools of fish. Overhead, frigate birds wheeled along side of pelicans. There were beaches with bathers and picnickers, some had their own boats, some came by water taxi. One rock contained a population of seals, I estimated 35. They show neither fear nor curiosity, but are fun to watch. There are several openings through which the sea washes from one side to the other, an altogether fascinating place to spend an hour or a week.



We explored with our car, finding where the working class lives. A mountain side lot with water and lights, but no sewer, sells for \$2500 pesos or about \$313 US, so the sign said.

A hotel with a magnificent view of the bay provided us with a memorable breakfast complete with whale sightings. A trip to the ladies room provided Bettye with a surprising story. It seems her visit coincided with that of two maids who were intent on cleaning the bathroom the Mexican way. This consists of dumping two large pails of water on the tile floor and then stirring this mass with mops. The water level was 1/2 to 3/4 inches. Bettye hung back because she would have needed water wings. The whole affair was no bigger than a Bambi and served two persons. One unfortunate lady from the caravan was now marooned at one of the stations with feet held high. She thought that the entire property had suddenly subsided into the ocean.



Next issue – more hair raising adventures with Bettye and Bud.

Rutherford L. Cooper, #2601

CLASSIC TRAILER CLOSE-UP

1954 18-ft Wanderer



'54 AIRSTREAM THE WANDERER

The WANDERER is the travel trailer for two. Ideal for rough, back country travel, off the beaten track, where others rarely venture. Extremely light weight, sturdy and tough, it will go any place a jeep can tow it. Truly the worlds finest small travel trailer it has been road tested all over the world.

In addition to the famous all aluminum, all riveted, lifetime Airstream construction, a brand new interior arrangement has been designed that provides amazing roominess and better livability. For the first time we are able to offer a toilet* and twin beds in a trailer of this size. Galley and toilet up forward provides greater living room space. A 48 inch cross bed instead of twin beds will allow additional floor space, an extra drawer, larger wardrobe and addition of drop leaf table over wheel housing. This new different interior is proving tremendously popular. BE SURE TO SEE IT.

* Optional at extra cost.

**WORLD'S
FINEST
LIGHTWEIGHT
TRAVEL
TRAILERS**

Travel Tested Over The Highways Of The World!

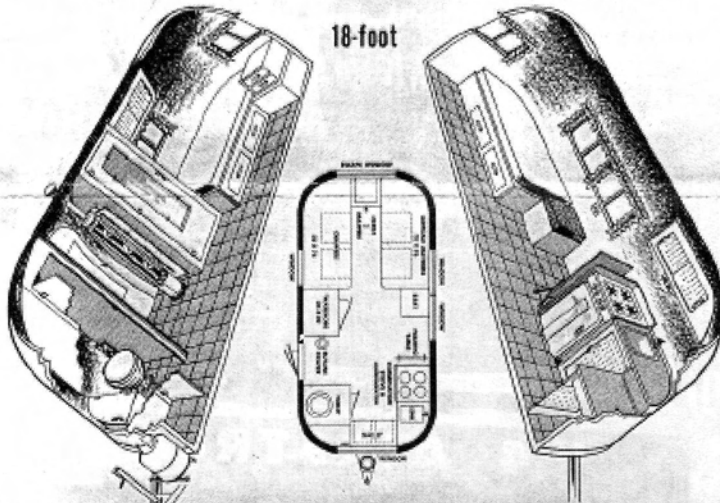


**AIRSTREAM
TRAILERS, INC.**

108 CHURCH STREET
JACKSON CENTER, OHIO

New... Different... Ultra Modern...

INTERIOR ARRANGEMENTS



Airstream's New... WANDERER

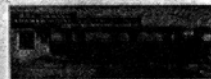
✓ CHECK THESE FEATURES!

Overall length—18 ft.
Body length—15 ft.
Overall weight—2,135 lbs.
Stock weight—870 lbs.
12" twin beds or 60" crew bed.
Solid aluminum construction.
Total insulation at zero cost.
Oil or butane radiant heat.
Single and range refrigerator combination. Four burner range over 4 cu. ft. combination ice-chest refrigerator.

Passion seat.
36" of forward galley work top.
26" of Dual lockers.
Overhead wardrobe.
16 Drawers.
Beautifully grained wood cabinets.
Curtain and lateral draw shades.
Lithium lead foot.
5 opening windows 1 seat vent.
Durable cross ventilation.
Bunk bed.

2 awning rail.
Trunk compartments.
Ramp type rear window.
Door hinged on forward edge for added safety.
Fiberglas insulation.
Steel bumper. Shock absorbers.
Electric brakes.
Truck wheels 708 x 14 six ply tires.

MODERN SERVICE DEPARTMENT SUPPLIER



BILL HOUSH TRAILER SALES

WEST FIRST AND UNIVERSITY
MARSH 8-6400
DES MOINES IA IOWA
May 3, 1954

As Modern As Tomorrow • Built To Outlast Them All

Mr C.A. Crispin
Tipton, Iowa

Dear Mr Crispin,

Thank you for your letter received today, we are sorry to advise that we do not have anything in a used Airstream or clipper to offer, in fact we have not had a used trailer of this type for more than two years. When folks buy them especially the Airstream they keep them for life.

We are glad to enclose literature on the 18' Airstream, the retail on this one is \$2660.00 and your cost would be \$2261.00 or \$20.00 less if you want to pick it up at the factory, plus sales tax and license. The factory is Jackson Center, Ohio.

If there is any further information you desire please write us, looking forward with pleasure to serving you we remain,

Very truly yours

Bill Housh Mobile Homes

By *Bill Housh*

Carl Crispin, #11763

Birth of a Vintage Airstreamer

Part III

The following is a continuing story about the find and restoration of a vintage Airstream trailer as performed by VAC member Rick Davis (#1602).



New Information

Right after the last article appeared, I received a call from vintage club member, Ray Rodenwald (#14331) who had recently purchased a trailer matching the description of my 1954. His trailer sounded like it was in much better condition than mine plus he had all the original paperwork with it which he offered to copy and share with me. According to the original brochure, my 1954 is a Safari, not a Flying Cloud as first supposed. The trailer originally came in 3 interior colors where mine is referred to as tender green. It is a spatter paint which looks sort of like split pea soup with white specks. The weight was specified at 2500 lbs dry and the marine toilet was an option as was a gas refrigerator. The pictures show only a single gas bottle. It originally sold for about \$3100 in 1954 which seems like a lot for a trailer with no hot water or shower back when a coke was still 5 cents.

The Wiring

The original wiring consisted of two 110 Volt (AC) circuits, one feeding each side of the trailer. The system was protected by fuses in a ceramic fuse block where both sides of the line were fused. This is a dangerous practice that is unacceptable by today's standards. Wiring was run inside the walls, above window level, with drops to the various outlets. Most of the wiring was done with romex but the wiring to several lights was zip cord. Apparently this practice was continued into the 1960's. To actually replace the wiring would have required removing most of the upper panels and the overhead cabinets. I already had all the lower panels off and wasn't ready to go further. The original wiring appeared to be in decent condition.

I decided to replace all the outlets with modern 3-prong grounded receptacles by maintaining the ground pin through the body, not strictly code, but seemingly a safe approach none the less. On removing the original outlets I discovered that 5 of the 7 original outlets were wired incorrectly. The neutral (white) lead should go to the shiny screw on the outlet, and the black to the brass screw. This was probably no big deal in 1954, but many modern appliances and television sets have one side of the chassis hooked directly to the line and contain a polarized plug that can only be inserted into the outlet one way. If the insulated case is damaged,

and/or the plug is wired incorrectly, there is a serious risk of shock or worse. If yours is an older trailer it would be a good idea to CHECK THE OUTLET WIRING. In addition, fuses or circuit breakers should only be on the hot (black lead) for safety reasons. For my case I used a surplus electrical load control center (Progressive Dynamics Model 723Q) which includes a 120 Volt (AC) panel board with a 30 Amperes main breaker and 3 more breakers; an AC to DC convertor with a 12 Volt (DC) distribution panel and a 10 Amperes battery charger with an LED indicator. The unit was purchased through the VA classified ads from fellow VACer Tom Howarth (#6490).

The trailer originally had no 12 Volt (DC), or perhaps even 6 Volt (DC), wiring. At the time of this trailer's manufacturing, 1954 was a transition period when cars were going from 6 to 12 Volt (DC) systems. Some 12 Volt (DC) wiring for a couple lights had been added by a previous owner but they were not adequate.

With the lower panels off, I was able to run several circuits through the walls and bring them into one of the overhead cabinets. This required removing some rivets from the center roof panel to permit it to be pulled down so wiring could be run down the middle to provide power for several overhead lights. A sub panel was installed in front to bring power to a water pump and under cabinet lighting as well as a pair of wall switches placed by the door. A battery was installed in the rear compartment and tied to the new charge line. No attempt was made to salvage any of the original 110 Volt (AC) lights.

Interior Paint

The interior had been painted several times, and much of it was peeling. It was obvious that painting over it again would not be satisfactory and removing it was going to be a formidable but necessary task. I started with paint remover. It was slow and messy, particularly the bottom layer of *tender green*, which proved to not be tender at all. It also was not good stuff to breath and providing enough ventilation made for cold working conditions in December. The cold air also slowed the paint remover. A different brand was suggested but it also didn't work. The hardware store told me I was the first one who ever returned a can of paint remover, but they did replace it with the another

type. I avoided anything with "safe" in the name, figuring it probably wouldn't do the job. I soon realized that if the job was going to be completed in any reasonable time that another approach was needed. I finally decided to use a coarse disk and body grinder anywhere that there were no rivets while continuing with the paint remover and a wire brush on the rivet lines. This worked fairly well, except that I was now breathing paint dust, probably containing lead, instead of paint remover. Needless to say both a breathing mask and eye protection were a must. The lower panels were done outside while laid out on saw horses, which was much easier. Paint remover will destroy the crystal on your watch, plexiglass, and probably other things. Two coats of high-fill automotive primer were sprayed on and wet sanded, which removed most of the grinder marks.

For the final color coats I wanted to use an oil based paint that would be readily available, both in bulk and also in spray cans for touch up. I finally selected a satin finish eggshell color Rustoleum product from the "outdoor decor" line. It had been 30 years since I had handled a spray gun, and the job was approached with considerable trepidation. It also didn't help that I had to be ready to paint any time the temperature exceeded 50 degrees F. The lower panels were painted in the garage, which gave me a chance to determine the right amount of thinning. Automotive enamel reducer seemed to work a bit better than the recommended mineral spirits. Drying time with enamel is slow to begin with and the cool temperatures made it worse. The upside is that there are no flies to get stuck in the new paint.

Finally the temperature bounced up to 60 degrees F and I fearfully attacked the inside of the trailer. I had every light I could find in there and it still wasn't enough to see through the paint fog. Two coats were applied. When the air cleared and the paint dried the results were better than expected. Not perfect, but no glaring mistakes either. The color was a good choice and the satin finish tends to mask scratches, dents etc.

The Floor

The portions of the original floor that remained after repairs still had the old 9-inch tile in place. The adhesive proved to be bombproof; no amount of heat, cold, or combination would make these come up without either leaving something behind or taking up part of the plywood. Finally the blade off a garden hoe was welded to an old air chisel tool. Using the air chisel helped tremendously but the weld would break every 5 or 6 tiles and have to be redone.

Once the tile was up, the remaining glue was washed off with water. The dents and gouges were filled with leveling compound and the new tile, carefully selected to match the color of local dirt, was installed without incident.

Leaks

Every time it rained vast amounts of water instantly poured into the rear of the trailer, explaining why most of the rear floor ended up in the belly pan. I tried covering different joints with tape and sprayed the hose on things until I finally determined the leaks were in the joints of the uppermost of the 13 rear segments. I dug stuff out of the joints with a knife, airhose, etc. to get them as clean as possible. I then ran masking tape down the edges to control the mess and worked gutter seal into the joint with my fingers. This was done on a hot day when the sealant was thinnest. It was a messy job but if it sticks to the trailer as well as it stuck to me it should be ok. It seems to be flexible after six months with no leaks so far.

Refrigerator

The original refrigerator, presumably electric as there was no vent, was under the kitchen counter. A previous owner had removed it and installed a larger gas unit on the other side. The dinette had been moved back and a roadside cabinet removed. A lower vent grill had been installed and the upper vent had been provided by removing part of the forward panorama window and installing a grill. The 10 gallon water tank that had been in this spot was removed, leaving no water supply. Some thought was given to going back to the original layout, but this would have created some venting problems. The modification really wasn't badly engineered so I decided to stay with the concept. I had installed the larger refrigerator from the 1954 into my 1970 Globetrotter with the idea of putting the removed 4 cu ft unit into the 1954. A new enclosure was constructed and sized so it could be easily modified to accept a current model refrigerator later.

Water

A 30 gallon water tank was installed and boxed in under the kitchen counter where the original refrigerator had been. Shelves had been placed above. I was able to plumb the rocker type hand pump faucets to work, and then tie the city water faucets to a 12 Volt (DC) Shurflo water pump. I can now convince visitors I am really roughing it and use the automatic system when no one is looking. There are presently no plans to install a water heater

Bathroom

The original marine toilet was attached to a very small (I estimate 5 gallon) holding tank which made a really ugly pod under the left front corner. This was not really acceptable plus it didn't have a dump valve anyway. Maybe it was capped off somehow. There was some really fancy plumbing, all copper, with gate valves that would allow each sink to individually empty into the tank. With a front location and 3-inch deep frame, there does not appear to be a practical way to put a tank underneath.

One option considered was a Sealand toilet with an above floor holding tank but this seems to be an expensive option. These setups have been known to be sucked flat if pumped out at a rally while not vented. I've finally decided on the Porta Potti route until a better scheme appears. For gray water a "blue tank" will have to do.

Carpentry

While the trailer itself was well built, Wally must have been on a caravan when the carpentry was done. It is really very crude. Fortunately I am capable of doing really crude carpentry, so the decor has been maintained. New panelling has replaced all the original and the plywood dinette has been faced with new wood. One of the dinette seats was 3 inches smaller on one side (and 2 inches on the other side) than its mate, whether from the factory or modification will never be known.

Awning

The arms of a permanently mounted awning would make it impossible to open either window on the curb side. An A&E 2500 has been ordered because the arms fold up into a case for storage. It will be interesting to see how (and if) it works out.

Brakes

The original brakes were Warner. They work and would appear to be good for a few more miles before anything needs to be done. Warner parts are no longer available. Kelsey-Hayes 12x2 backing plates will bolt on but the spindle size is different on the Kelsey drum I borrowed from one of the other trailers. I spoke with a Dexter representative who told me I could have a whole new 6000 lb axle fabricated, including new drums, brakes, bearings, etc. for about \$300. I would be interested in how others may have solved this problem.

I have tried to stay pretty much with the original concept of the trailer. Most modernization, lights, water pump, etc. are not really that obvious. A Fantastic Fan vent is the only readily apparent change. As of this writing, the stove needs to be reinstalled and the bottom skin put back in place so gas lines can be run. Hopefully a test trip will be taken soon and then we will be ready to head west to join the Wagon Wheels '98 Caravan before the International Rally.

Rick Davis, #1602



TECH TALK 1

Frame Separation

The condition called "frame separation", is actually a collection of different structural failures. The most visible symptom is the frame dropping away from the body at the rear of the trailer, so the entire syndrome carries this name tag.

The Airstream frame separation problem developed so slowly and silently, that it was cured before many of us knew the problem existed. The earliest example known to this author is a 1966 trailer. The final cure came in 1982 midyear when the frame section was increased to five inches. For those of us who admire vintage Airstreams, a review of the facts is interesting.

Identification

To determine if a trailer is in a failure stage, look for one or more of the following four symptoms:

- 1) *The frame appears to drop down at the rear of the body, leaving a gap between the floor and the frame of from 1/8-inch to an inch or more. When the trailer is viewed from the rear, a gap appears between the trunk and the body on one or both sides. The bumper may droop on one side. The owner can often insert his hand into the gap. The frame reinforcing plate over the axles may show a ripple.*
- 2) *The owner may notice changes inside the trailer. Commonly, the partitions and bulkheads appear to be rising up, closing the gap under the ceiling. In advanced cases, they may actually dent or pierce the ceiling of the coach.*
- 3) *Sometimes, the body sags visibly in the rear, creating a buckle at the rear of the wheel opening. This is visible as a pronounced ripple or bulge in the body close to the rear wheels.*
- 4) *In a few cases, separation takes place at the front. This shears off and loosens the thirty-four 3/16-inch rivets at the front of the body behind the gas bottles.*

Usually, symptoms develop gradually. There are many trailers on the road which show traces of these symptoms but they may never get any worse. These trailers are not destined for the junk heap. Catastrophic failure is not an issue here, in other words if a trailer shows evidence of type 1 failure, that does not mean that other symptoms will rapidly develop.

Many trailers showing severe separation are never repaired. If very low mileage is anticipated during the owners life time, this is often a sensible choice. Failure is almost always gradual, not catastrophic. In northern climates, ice and snow will melt on the trunk and water will run in on the floor. Rot and ply separation will gradually result, but even this will be ignored by many

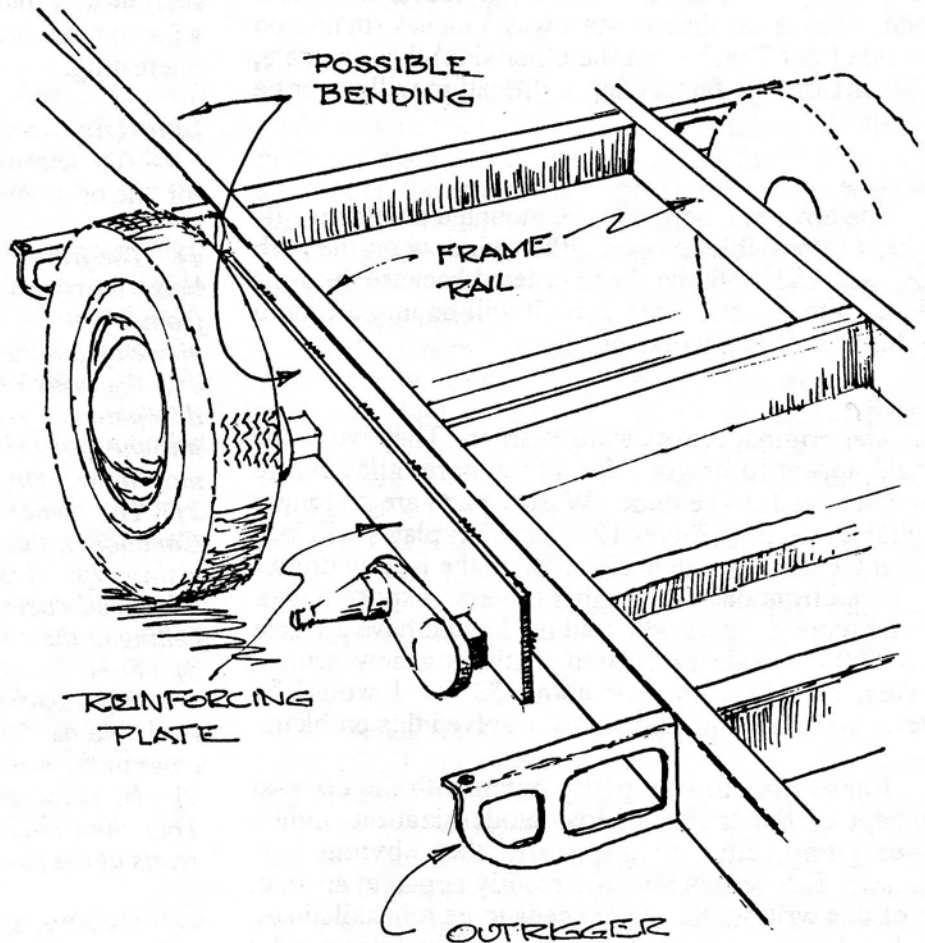
owners. Cautious buyers will be aware of the problem and will reject such a trailer if they anticipate substantial mileage. Experience has shown that certain factors combine to encourage failure; this explains why certain trailers fail and others don't. Or, why failure may progress to a point and then go no further. Here are some known factors:

- 1) *Mileage. This is obvious. However, it has been said that an Airstream does not actually care how many miles it has been towed, it cares about how many rough railroad crossings it has been over. Being airborne is definitely something an Airstream does not love. Note - The condition of the interstate highway system in 1998 is so poor that even a cautious driver can expect to see his trailer airborne occasionally.*
- 2) *Loading. Heavy loads, especially in the rear such as motorcycles, bicycles, and tools are a known factor.*
- 3) *Length of unit. Failures in 23 foot tandems are extremely rare, but are relatively frequent at lengths over 27 ft.*
- 4) *Rear bath. Dealers report fewer failures with center bath trailers. Prudent owners of rear bath trailers will avoid traveling great distances with both holding tanks full since this adds about 320 pounds at the rear. An additional consideration is the fact that the tanks themselves tend to fail under this kind of duty.*
- 5) *Rust through lack of caulking and general tender loving care.*
- 6) *Rust caused by mice.*

The design of the Airstream has always relied to a degree on the body itself for strength and rigidity. An extreme case was the series of trailers built between 1946 and 1949, in which there was no frame in the usual sense; a reinforced floor was bolted to the body and this served as a frame. It worked quite well until the weights of the trailers increased through the addition of appliances and water systems. A regular frame was added in 1950. This ended the problems until about 1966 when a series of changes aimed at removing weight led to the problems we occasionally encounter today. Problems continued till midyear 1982 when the frame was beefed up and the frame section (its vertical dimension) was increased from 4 inches to 5 inches, effectively eliminating further concern. These later design trailers can be identified by measuring the frame depth at the tongue.

Failure should not be envisioned as a simple bending downward of the frame rails at the rear, although this is obviously involved. The bending takes place first where the rails join the massive reinforcing plate to which the axles attach. Sometimes the reinforcing plate itself fails, in which case it will show ripples in the bottom edge. Following this, the outriggers in the vicinity of the wheels see a greatly increased load (frame rails run fore and aft along the length of the trailer while cross members periodically connect the left rail to the right rail and outriggers extend outward to the left and right extremity of the body as shown in the sketch on the right).

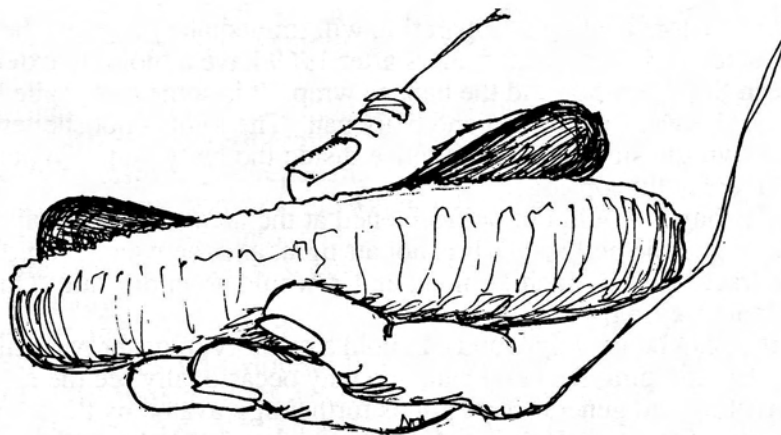
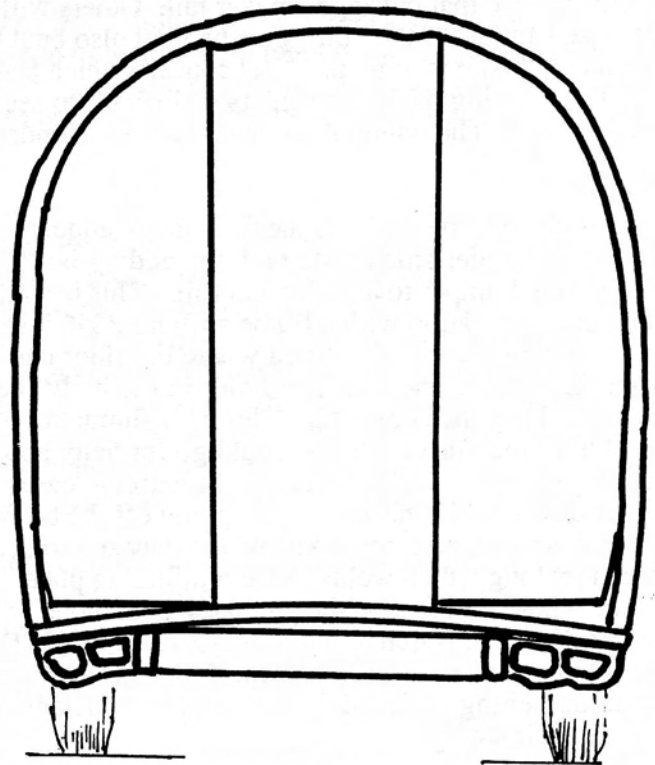
Outriggers fail by gradually bending downward at their tips as shown in the sketch at the top of page 15. Outriggers at the rear of the trailer see opposite forces, they try to bend upward at their tips. Over the wheels, the floor of the coach then arches upward with a crest running down the aisle. This is what forces the partitions (bulkheads) up into the ceiling as shown.



AIRSTREAM FRAME
ONE WHEEL REMOVED

Why, then, does the frame separate at the rear? This is because of the bending that takes place in the outriggers over the wheels. Some outriggers are forced down as the wheels try to hammer their way up through the floor. Others are forced to bend up as the rear end of the frame tries to bend downward toward the road. To visualize what is happening, perform the following experiment in your head: Imagine taking a perfectly straight hot dog and resting it on a perfectly straight (half) bun. You are looking at an Airstream upside down, the wheels are up, the roof is down. The hot dog is the frame, the bun is the body with floor and outriggers. Now, press down on the dog at its center; your finger is the wheels trying to climb up through the floor (down in this case). See the hot dog sketch below. Under the pressure of your finger, the hot dog settles down into the bun. But, notice how the ends of the hot dog tip up, opening a gap between dog and bun. This is the separation that you see at the rear of the trailer. Now you should understand what is happening during frame separation. The frame, under the hammering of the wheels, mashes up into the trailer body, but the rear tips of the frame go the other way, they separate from the body.

Congratulations! At last you fully understand type 1 frame separation. If you wish, you may now eat the hot dog.



In type 2 failure the bulkheads rise up toward the ceiling. Refer back to the frame separation illustration of the rear of the trailer shown at the top of the page to see what is going on. In this figure, note that type 1 failure has already occurred; the tips of the outriggers have been forced down in the neighborhood of the wheels, while the frame rails have risen up. This forces the floor to arch up in the center aisle, lifting the bulkheads with it. If this type of failure is ignored, it can progress to the point where a factory repair is necessary.

In type 3 failure (no illustration), type 1 failure has progressed to the point where the body structure can no longer resist the bending forces. The entire body shell has been forced into a curve where the wheels are high, and both front and rear are lower. The weakest part of the body, at the wheel cutouts, is the first to show this stress. It responds by buckling gently outward. Adding a frame stiffening kit may often cause the buckle to disappear.

There is another kind of failure, type 4, which occurs at the front of the trailer. It is, fortunately, rare, but see how nicely it fits in with what you have already learned. At the front, where the tongue (wishbone) emerges, there is a vertical steel cross plate to which the body is attached with thirty-four 3/16-inch rivets (visible behind the LP tanks). At times these rivets will be sheared off due to the fact that type 1 failure has set in. The frame is now bent down at the rear, and the body is fighting to remain straight. Frame separation in the front looks exactly the same as in the rear except that the damage is hidden from view. The tongue appears to drop down, some or all of the thirty-four rivets will have sheared off or show looseness and deformation.

A lively debate may be built around the question of what happens first, the type 1 or the type 2 failure? Or, to

phrase the question more precisely, what bends first, the frame rails or the outriggers? There will be those who stoutly believe that outriggers never fail. Others will say that it would be impossible for the frame to separate as in the type 1 failure if the outriggers had not also bent to accommodate this new configuration. And if that is a true statement, then it is of no practical concern which bent first since the end result is the same.

The bending of the outriggers is difficult to see and measure. The curvature of the floor can be seen using a straight edge. The rising of the bulkheads is an undeniable fact. It is hard to imagine any other reason for this.

Repair

As always, the dealer is the first line of enquiry. Many can perform a repair operation which secures the frame back to the under side of the body by adding bolts or other connections. This eliminates the unsightly gaps and restores the bumper to a horizontal trim. This is a relatively inexpensive repair and has a good track record. If it is done in combination with a frame stiffening kit, it can be considered a permanent fix in all but the worst cases. In order to gain access to the area where the floor can be bolted to the frame, they use various strategies. Working from the outside, they cut two holes in the body shell, insert bolts and other fastening parts, and draw the frame upward. They then cover the holes with aluminum plates or reflectors.

Of all the places the you could go for help, apparently the factory has the most highly developed equipment, techniques and skills for repairs. In extreme cases they can support the coach at the front and rear, pulling the center downward if necessary, stripping off the belly coverings as required, and reinforcing the frame as required. They also have reinforcing kits which they sell to dealers. The simplest of these, is an angle iron knee brace about three feet long which welds to the reinforcing plate. Enquiries could be directed to: 1) Your dealer, who can often fix the whole problem on the premises. Additionally, the dealer can give you detailed advice on how to proceed. 2) To Mr. Kenneth Burch at the factory (937/596-6111).

Outriggers are available from dealers as a service part. Since they are a key part of the structure, replacement or strengthening of failed ones should be considered. As you will see, they frequently rust to a point where they lose all their strength.

Prevention

Glancing over the list of factors leading to separation will immediately suggest the things which an owner can control. Rust is a serious factor. All Airstream trailers after 1969 have a molding extending around the bottom of the body at the joint between the side walls and the banana wrap. It is sometimes called the rub rail. This molding conceals the sheet metal joint between side walls and belly pan. The joint is not sheltered, that is, its configuration permits rain water to run down the side walls and thence inside the belly pan. To help prevent rust damage this molding should be kept caulked at the top edge.

An inexperienced trailer buyer would not be frightened at the idea of occasional rain water entering the four inch cavity between the floor and the belly pan. It is not air tight, and the water should soon escape. The depth of the water could only be a fraction of an inch at most, and it would soon dry out. Only the bottom of the frame members would see occasional wetting.

Wrong! In actual fact, it can be very tight and can hold a quantity of water particularly if it is parked at an odd angle for a period of time. By dropping the belly pan, one may occasionally see the rust and the distinct water line where the water lay. The rusting and general corrosion is further aggravated by the electrogalvanic action between the aluminum and steel parts. Frame parts 1/8-inch thick can develop holes and the outriggers can be severely weakened. This is often a factor in frame separation.

It can be a wise idea to drill 1/8-inch holes in the belly pan for drainage. But, cracks over 1/4-inch wide should be repaired as they will admit mice (*reference: an Agriculture Department bulletin on rodent control*).

Recently there was seen a 24 year old trailer with a frame rail so badly rusted that it had to have reinforcing plates added. Outriggers are even more vulnerable. It has been said that the loss of a single outrigger is of no importance. This is true only if the balance of the frame structure is in tact. Often, however, the entire frame is severely weakened due to general rusting.

At times the belly pan will contain mud from travel in the rain. This can accumulate to an alarming depth, and it tends to keep the frame wet which in turn, accelerates the rust damage.

Mice

Mice can be a serious factor in the structural destruction of an Airstream. Mice can enter trailers at two levels; they normally enter through openings in the belly pan, or by running up the power cord while the trunk door is open. Thus they gain entry to the space under the floor. If the trailer floor has been carefully sealed and caulked, they cannot gain entry to the living space above. Otherwise, they will invade the entire trailer. There is no excuse for a mouse ever to enter an Airstream. It is your duty to seek out all openings between the floor and belly pan, and in the belly pan itself, sealing them off with aluminum, wood, caulking or combinations thereof.

Mice thrive in the space under the floor. In a new trailer, all of the spun glass insulation is held up against the wooden floor, none of it is in contact with the belly pan. The mice, however, very quickly discover that this is ideal nesting material and pull it down, packing it neatly from top to bottom with tunnels running throughout. This is disastrous, because once wet, it remains wet almost forever, greatly accelerating the rusting process. This is especially bad on the outriggers which are of rather thin construction to start with. It is not unusual for an outrigger to completely transform into a handful of mud.

Inspection

Unfortunately, all of these areas are hidden from view and few owners are sufficiently curious to take a look. However, there is great satisfaction in knowing what is behind closed doors. To check a trailer for any of the above conditions, one can remove all or part of the belly pan, but the difficulty of doing this deters many owners. Alternately, cut U-shaped openings in the belly pan about four by four inches. Wear goggles or face mask, otherwise there is a high probability of getting a foreign object in your eye. These cautions apply to all operations requiring the lowering of belly pan parts. Wear a long sleeved shirt and observe the safety precautions that follow. Choose a place about four inches to the outside from a main frame rail and about midway between outriggers. This way one can reach nearly arms length in two directions, feeling around to access the condition. A flashlight has limited range but can be useful. A 3/8-inch hole drilled in the belly pan is sufficient to get a cut started. Using aircraft shears, finish the U-shaped cut.

Pull the flap down carefully with a pair of pliers. Do not yet reach into the opening, but first apply masking tape to the raw edges, then reach inside (there have been no reports of owners bleeding to death under their old trailers, please keep the VACer record unblemished in this regard!).

Whatever is revealed by the first opening may suggest the degree of further exploration which is necessary. Sometimes rust is confined to one side of the trailer only, depending on how it was habitually stored. Tapping against the belly pan may reveal deposits of mud, rust debris, or maybe even a mouse nest. Cut as many openings as are required for your satisfaction, but remember that you must close up each one in a thoroughly mouse proof manor. A 5-inch by 5-inch aluminum patch and four pop rivets is suggested. Real restoration nuts will be tempted to spray some aluminum paint around, taking advantage of the openings. It can't hurt, and it will make the steel parts clearly visible. Those experienced in this sort of investigation suggest finishing the day by taking two aspirins and retiring early.

For owners of all years having a trunk space built into the rear bumper, this area holds high interest. The early signs of frame separation occur here, but furthermore, the design invites water leakage which can start floor rot in the rear where it cannot easily be inspected or repaired.

The lid, being flat, holds water and some of this water will run through the hinge. There does not seem to be a simple cure for this, so owners put nothing into the trunk which will not survive a soaking. There are frame parts which also get soaked. To retard rusting, chip, scrape and wire brush everything that can be reached and spray on aluminum paint. Inspect annually.

Where the rub rail goes around the rear of the trailer, keep the top of it caulked. Caulk the bottom of this same rail to the nonmoving part of the trunk lid. Monitor this joint as watertight through annual inspections. Doing all this without creating an unsightly mess requires a delicate hand. This nonmoving part is held up to the trailer floor by some screws or pop rivets. Without caulking, this seam will remain almost continuously wet, eventually destroying the plywood of the floor. Aggravating this condition is the fact that the lid is flat making it retain snow and ice. During freeze/thaw conditions, water is continuously being supplied from above.

Historical Note

To keep this problem in perspective, it should be noted that we are mainly looking at problems which didn't show up till the first trailers were fifteen or so years old. Sometimes Beatrice Foods is given the blame for the entire problem. These charges may be groundless as failures can be traced back as far as 1966 models, while Beatrice did not take over Airstream Company until December of 1967. The 1969 model would have been largely designed by this time. We are looking at a phenomenon which revealed itself only slowly. Few manufacturers are interested in random failures that occur twenty years after manufacture.

Rutherford L. Cooper, #2601

[Author's note: Four years ago, it was my intention to write a short paper on this subject. As I got into it, I found that a short paper was out of the question and as a result, had no paper at all. This is a complex subject. I have talked to many bright people who's opinions I respect, but they do not all agree on the causes nor cures. Therefore, I must offer my own ideas knowing that they will not be universally accepted. Bear with me, like yourself, I am a volunteer.]

TECH TALK 2

E-mail on the Road

Telephones, cellular phones and pagers remain the first, fastest, most convenient and most available means of communication. However, they are usually also the most expensive choice for the casual traveler to stay in touch with home and friends. The computer literate traveler soon misses the convenience and low price of electronic mail (e-mail) and starts to think about ways to use this service for routine communication when on the road. Within the United States this can be accomplished for a reasonable price. Within North America it is still a very practical approach and with a bit more effort, it can be accomplished world wide. Two hurdles must be met; the service type and the physical connection.

Service Type

At least three types of service exist; proprietary e-mail services, Internet based e-mail services, and national Internet service providers. The best known proprietary e-mail service is Juno (<http://www.juno.com>). This is a free service supported by advertising with over 200 local phone numbers throughout the U.S. While 200 local numbers sounds like a lot, many campgrounds seem to be located just outside the free local calling area. No Internet connection is required nor provided. Internet based E-mail services, such as Bigfoot (<http://www.bigfoot.com>) and HotMail (<http://www.hotmail.com>) allow you to use the Internet to call up their web page and, with a code word, a "subscriber" may access their e-mail deposited at that site. The service is free, being supported by advertising. The advantage of this type of system is that it can be accessed from any internet connected computer throughout the world. This is the inexpensive choice for world-wide travelers to keep in touch. Many truck stops and some hotels now provide computers for free/inexpensive Internet access. This is becoming the preferred way for interstate truckers to maintain contact with dispatchers and friends.

National Internet services, providers such as AT&T (<http://www.att.com>), AOL (<http://aol.com>) and Sprint (<http://www.sprint.com>) provide 200 to 400 local phone numbers in the states for member access to both e-mail and Internet. Again, many campgrounds seem to be located on the edge of cities, just outside of the free local calling area. At least one national provider, AOL, provides a nationwide 800 number, but they charge several dollars an hour for connection service. This is expensive for surfing the net, but for a 10 second e-mail connection it becomes reasonable.

International Internet providers vary with the country, but a list is given on The List (<http://www.the>

[list.com](http://www.the)). Sprint is one of the larger international Internet service providers with service across much of the world where unfettered access is allowed.

Physical Connection

Actually connecting the computer to the telephone line can become a problem, especially outside of the United States. Inside the United States, if you have a portable computer with a modem, you merely take the computer to the phone, plug a short phone cable into the standard phone wall jack and you are in business. If you have a desktop computer with a modem in the trailer the simplest solution is to pick up a 100-ft reel of telephone cable from Radio Shack and plug into the nearest unsuspecting telephone wall jack.

Unfortunately you may not always have access to a telephone with a jack such as when using a pay phone. Also many foreign and/or private telephones, especially those found in airplanes, cellular systems, businesses and hotels do not have standard telephone jacks. Furthermore, many of these nonstandard systems have nonstandard voltages and have a difficult time reading the electrical signals from the two most popular direct connection laptop modems, *Hayes and Megahertz*. A solution is to use an acoustic modem that bypasses the direct electrical connection and all of the electrical impedance matching problems by using sound to activate the telephone microphone to transmit data. As long as a mechanically secure acoustic path is made with the microphone and earphone, the system will work, although it is somewhat slower than a direct electrical connection. Acoustic modems are readily available although not at the corner computer shop. The two most popular are: Konexx Coupler (800-275-6354; <http://www.konexx.com>), priced at \$149; and Road Warrior Telecoupler II (800-274-4277; <http://www.warrior.com>) priced at \$159.95. Both work consistently at 14.4-kilobytes per second on most phones and, on good phone lines, are capable of working up to 28-kilobytes per second. While 14.4k is more than adequate for e-mail, it will be slow for Internet surfing. In some third world country phone systems that still have carbon microphones the transmission rate may be reduced significantly below 14.4k, but that will still be adequate for most e-mail applications short of transmitting very large documents. Both companies have lots of gizmos to help the traveler use direct connection modems. The Mobile Connector (\$149 from Kinexx) lets you directly connect a normal modem between the handset and the phone base of a hotel phone. If you have to connect to the wall jack of a phone system, be aware some private phone lines (especially hotel telephones, both U.S. and abroad) operate at a higher than normal voltage that can fry modems. Modem Saver (\$49) from Road Warrior measures this voltage and warns you before you make a direct plug-in connection. If you travel abroad, you can buy region-specific adapters for both electrical and

telephone connections from both Road Warrior and TeleAdapt (408/370-5105; <http://www.teleadapt.com>). Connector styles vary from country to country, and even within some countries. Kits range in price from \$40 for a single country to \$255 for a regional kit for Europe or South America.

If you insist on wireless communication, there are over a dozen competing systems, ranging from the affordable cellular phone, to short and long range two-way radio services to direct satellite link. In the cellular phone category, Megahertz makes a \$300 direct connect cellular phone modem that can be connected electrically to many cellular phones (check before buying because styles vary wildly). Performance is rarely more than 9.6k. Since the limiting performance parameter of cellular phones appears to be the bandwidth of the radio link and not the attached phone lines, acoustic modems typically do just as well with cellular phones as the more expensive direct connection modem, but getting the mechanical fit to the microphone and earphone can be a problem. While Konexx and Road Warrior both make many adapters for this purpose, a pocket knife, foam and rubber bands often work just as well. Even with the expensive connect times of cellular phones, the price becomes reasonable based on the typical ten second E-mail message connection. Note, if your cellular service rounds up to the next minute, consolidate by typing several messages and placing them in a queue to be sent together the next time the phone is connected.

Short and long range radio links usually run from \$300 to a few thousand for the radio and \$15-\$200 per month service, plus \$1 to \$3 per minute. Full global service is available for voice, E-mail and FAX. Connect speeds are low compared to telephone lines, ranging from 1.5 to 2.5k. AT&T (888/627-4835; <http://www.atmobsat.com/highsea.htm>), Globe Wireless (800/266-2209; <http://www.globewireless.com>), SeaMail (<http://www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/xaero>) are but three of several. Because of the costs, the services are not practical for the casual user.

For the ultimate wireless system, the satellite phone is the way to go. At \$3000 per unit, and \$3 per minute, it is worldwide and can connect directly to your computer. Connect speeds vary from 1.2 to 9.6k. Orbcomm (703/406-5000 and at <http://www.orbcomm.net>), Comsat-C and Comsat-M (301/214-3100 and at <http://www.comsat.com>) are but three of the currently operational systems.

Because competition is high, prices are dropping rapidly and today's exotic wireless system may be tomorrow's price loss leader. A quick survey through the Internet will give up-to-date pricing and leads to new companies providing new services.

Don Grayson, #2758



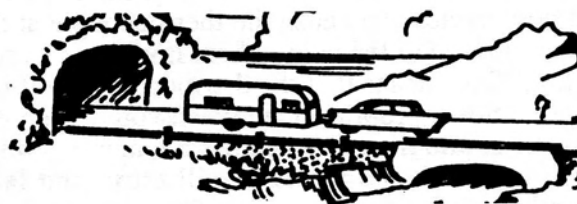
THE VAC INTERNET HOMEPAGE

Our website operator is Mr. Duane Hedahl (#1175) who may be contacted via e-mail at: dhdhl@initco.net.

The VAC Internet website address is:

<http://www.commerce-center.com/vac/>

where there is a dash between the words "commerce" and "center" as required for proper webpage access.



BEST OF THE WEB

Questions & Charlie Answers

This column is a regular VA feature with the best questions and answers from the Airstream Central Internet website (<http://www.channel1.com/users/brosius/air.htm>). The Airstream Central website (and this column) is written by Mr. Charles Burke, a 1972 Airstream factory trained technician who is currently employed in the parts department at an Airstream dealership. Mr. Burke regularly answers questions concerning Airstreams and has agreed to take the best of these each quarter and republish them for the VA.

Subj: Split Rim Wheels

Question: I have a 1953 Airstream Overlander that has split rim wheels. They appear to be in good condition and I even have a spare. My question is, should I replace these wheels and if so, why? I realize that these types of wheels can be dangerous when filling with air if they are not re-assembled correctly, but are there any other reasons to replace them?

Charlie: Split rim wheels are all but outlawed. I would be surprised if you can find anyone who would

service them. I strongly recommend you get them changed immediately. Use standard Dodge wheels for replacement.

Subj: Furnace Pilot Light

Question: I have a 1966 17' Airstream Caravel travel trailer (TT) in which I am having a problem with the pilot light. I turn the furnace on, it reaches the set temperature and then the furnace kicks off as it should, however the pilot light also kicks out with it. Now the furnace will not light back up as the temperature drops and the furnace should be turning on. To gain more heat I need to relight the furnace again. The furnace is a "Hydro Flame Furnace" Model RC-9A (S/N R 21605).

I have read about having to put a 1/2 cup of alcohol in the LP bottles before filling them, is this needed or not? Any ideas?

Charlie: It has been a long time since I've heard the one about putting alcohol in the LP tanks. Please don't do that! The intent of this procedure is to eliminate moisture in the LP system and while this might have had some benefit in the past, it is no longer necessary and it was never safe.

Moisture is not related to your problem. Repeated heat-cool cycles can cause the thermocouple at the gas valve to loosen to the point where it will work cold and not hot. This means that the thermocouple will need to be reset with appropriate care when you tighten it. The tip that fits into the gas valve has a diaphragm in it and if you tighten it too much, it will crush and fail. To properly install a thermocouple, finger tighten and then wrench it another 1/4 turn. For your case, loosen it back out of the threads and reset as described.

If that doesn't work, the next step is to replace the thermocouple. Make note of the length and purchase a generic replacement of at least that length. If it comes down to this and additional parts are needed, try calling DTI (800/289-0919) for availability and the name of a nearby dealer.

Subj: 1969 Airstream

Question: Am looking at a 1969 unit, approx. 28' with rear bath, mid-ship and front beds. Unit appears to have had some rot replaced at door but otherwise seems solid and everything on it works (now anyway). Know and trust the seller (dealer) but would like some information on what to look out for. Does this model have any particular weaknesses or pitfalls that may not be readily apparent?

Charlie: The principle concern with the '69 trailers is that it was a crossover year. The shell design was brand new although the interior was pretty much a carry over from 1968 models. The window operators, and even the front curved wing windows, were unique to that year. The appliances are the same for most all coaches built that year. Airstreams are typically built so well they will outlast the appliances in them and in fact, most of the appliances have far exceeded their service

life. Every day they work past their service life is icing on the cake. Which is not to say they won't continue to operate for many years but keep in mind that lack of use does not extend the life of an appliance. As a minimum, have all the appliances operationally checked for an LP leak and pressure test.

Subj: To tow or not to tow?

Question: I have a 1970 31' International TT with a rear bath. A 1976 manual says the weight is 5000 lb, however when I asked the weight of a new 31' Airstream TT from a local dealer, I was told they are 7000 lbs! How can there be a 2000 lb difference and what is the actual weight of my 1970 trailer? Can these new TT's be towed with a car like in the old days?

Charlie: Your mixing dry weight with the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating. The dry weight of your coach is just under 5000 lbs but the coach is designed to handle up to 6800 lbs including water, gas, options and "stuff". And yes the newer coaches are that much heavier. Their GVWR is over 9000 lbs. The only new car manufacturer that is still willing to take on the modern weights is Cadillac. Of course your 1970 TT is within the weight range of more vehicles. Generally if the tow vehicle has a box-on-frame construction it is possible. Check with a dealer for the vehicle that you are interested in. Give them the VIN and they should be able to give you a tow rating. You may have to contact the manufacturers regional offices. It is generally accepted with cars that you need to augment the vehicles with an external transmission cooler.

Subj: Door for a 1965 Caravel

Question: I have found a 1965 Caravel for sale which has a sprung door. It bows out about 4" at the top and 3" at the bottom. It still shuts and the latch holds. Seller says the door came open while being towed (suicide door) and has been told that it can be welded for about \$150. If I have to get another door does it have to be from a Caravel? And the every elusive question, how much will it cost? Will a new door be a direct fit and can it be polished to match the trailer?

Charlie: Ok everybody listen up, I'm about to reveal a trade secret. Unless the door frame is fractured, the door is repairable. Even if fractured, if it's close then the fractures can be welded and the door will be good as new. Simply put, NEVER replace the door just because it's bent. It can be repaired with a 2X4. Not to hit it, but to bend it back into shape. We have seen several doors that popped open on the road and have successfully fixed them all.

Using the latch area as a fulcrum point, bend the upper and lower parts of the door just past the point where it's square. When it relaxes it will spring back slightly. This takes repeated times to coax it back into place squarely. Cost is zero, and it will match as good as the old one.

Subj: Bambi's awning

Question: I have a 1961 Bambi which has a single rail with a slot for an awning. What did the original awning look like and where might I be able to replace it? I am looking into fixing up something like the original before I install a modern roll down awning. Any idea of the color of the original?

Charlie: In those days an RV awning was composed of a piece of canvas 8' wide by the length desired with two poles. This type of awning design is now called a dining fly. The side to the coach had a welt to hold the fabric in the awning rail. The outside edge of the awning had two grommet holes for the poles where the whole thing was anchored by two ropes and ground anchors at each pole. A drawback of this design it that it is considered a pain to set up and take down. It took a minimum of two people.

Henry Duda, the founder of Zip Dee awning, says in his biography that the difficulty associated with the setup was his motivation for developing the Zip Dee awning [see VA Fall '97 for a write-up of Mr. Dudas founding of the Zip Dee Company to address this specific issue]. Mr. Duda was an Airstream owner and his first customers were all Airstreamers. Original awning colors ran the gamete of colors but far and way the most popular was blue. The Zip Dee awning put on Airstream TTs was Blue Fancy, a color still available from Zip Dee. One added note, if you want to put a roll up style awning on your coach it will have to be a Zip Dee as no one else makes hardware that will fit. And since your Bambi is shorter than standard you will have to work closely with a Zip Dee dealer to successfully install it. Zip Dee may be contacted at 800/338-2378.



CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Anyone may advertise in the VA since membership in the VAC is not a requirement. As a VAC member or Friend, one advertisement per year may be placed in the VA for no cost as a subscriber. Any additional advertisements in the same year cost \$5.00 per advertisement. For non-VA subscribers, the cost of each advertisement is \$5.00. In order to place an advertisement in the VA, send all information to Mr. Ed Stanley, Treasurer, who in turn will forward them to the editor in the format shown.



AIRSTREAM PARTS

For Sale: We renovate trailers from the 1950's through the 1970's and have misc. parts available including full interiors, bed hardware, small 'fridge, fiberglass tubs, interior cowlings, etc. Have just completed two 1960's Airstreams (Land Yacht and Ambassador) as well as a 1975 Safari. I have parts left over from each, call for details. Tad Taylor, 802/896-6891.

For Sale: Four wheel vacuum disk brake parts including calipers, good pads & booster. Taken from a 1977, 31' Airstream TT. \$100 plus shipping. Dwight Dixon (#4122), 5009 Lake Dawnwood Drive, McHenry, IL 60050; 815/344-1375.

For Sale: Original toilet from 1962 16' Bambi, very good condition. Howard Lawson (#8060), 2889 Marian St., Lewiston, MI 49756; 517/786-4349.

For Sale: Route-66 tapestry fabric. New material on a roll (7.5 yds. by 54 inches width). List price is %195, will take \$75 plus cost to mail. Bob Harper, PO Box 1461, Camden, SC 29020; 803/432-3528.

Wanted: Zip Dee awning to fit 1967 Caravel. Framework must be in good condition, canvas condition unimportant. May be able to shorten longer unit. Chuck Grote (#6770), #87 Hammond Cres., Red Deer, AB CANADA T4N 6J5; 403/347-4295; FAX: 403/347-5968.

Wanted: Three light covers for 1965 Overlander. Covers measure 13.5x4.5x2.5 inches with a recessed aluminum strip center. Also looking for plastic overhead cabinet clips. Toni Griffin, PO Box 831, Junction, TX 76849; 915/446-3679.

TRAVEL TRAILERS WANTED

1940's through '70's, Airstream travel trailers with rough interiors, I buy to renovate. Tad Taylor, 802/896-6891.

Bambi or Bambi II: In good or restorable condition within 500 miles. Have 1967 Caravel in original condition to trade or will purchase outright. Bill Hossfield, 50 Oakwood Drive, Ringwood, NJ 07456; 973/839-9053.

TRAVEL TRAILERS FOR SALE

1950 24' Airstream, \$2,000. Needs restoring, interior almost gutted, has good floor. 1959 25' Airstream, \$3,500. Has been partially restored and includes almost everything needed for use. Both models can be pulled. Elmer Judge (#7488), 100 S. Idaho Rd. #124 Apache Jct., AZ 85219; 520/477-2395.

1959 22' Airstream Landyacht, \$2,000. Single axle, exterior and floor in good condition. Kitchen complete with sink, stove, etc., and a 3-yr. old Norcold 'fridge. Tub, shower, basin and toilet in rear; two couches, two LP tanks and good rubber. Needs brake work for towing. Norman Christensen, Box 281, Edmore, ND 58330; 701/644-2424.

1959 22' Airstream Caravanner, \$7,500. Original furnishings include working stove, double sink, counter, 'fridge, toilet, shower, walnut woodwork. New tires, AC, upholstery, drapes, vinyl flooring, cat. heater. Checked out thoroughly by factory last spring. Sleeps 4, used very little, same family for 33 years, lovingly maintained, clean and road ready. Steve & Julie Renier, Omaha, NE; 402/390-2091; FAX: 402/333-7405.

1959 24' Tradewind, \$3,500. Single axle, all original, twin beds, AC, LP 'fridge, heat, hot water, rear bath, road ready. Needs to be restored. 1961 26' Overlander, \$7,600. Tandem axle, 90% original, center bed, rear bath, new tires, road ready. 1962 22' Safari, \$7,000. Single axle, excellent condition, AC, awning, all original, front sleeper, rear bath, road ready. Bill Adamson (#7483), 2609 Brooken Hill, Ft. Smith, AZ 72908; 501/646-2341 (from 5 pm to 9 pm).

1960 24' Tradewind, \$1,650. Good, original condition, floors are solid, all appliances in working order, twin beds. Brushed in rear by tree branch. Ray and Virginia Rodenwald (#14331), 4110 E. Superior St., Duluth, MN 55804; 218/525-5326.

1960 26' Airstream, negotiable. Good condition, nearly original unit in Eugene, OR. Dining table folds up & bench seating added to dining area folds into a bed. Needs a little TLC to resume active service. Wendy Manley, San Francisco, CA; 415/750-1365; FAX: 415/421-5044; wendy.manley@w-b-m.com.

1962 16' Bambi. Excellent condition, exterior and interior redone in 1997. Howard Lawson (#8060), 2889 Marian St., Lewiston, MI 49756; 517/786-4349.

1962 19' Globetrotter, \$4,500. Excellent condition, original hardwood cabinets and kitchen fixtures. New 110V/12VDC LP/elect 'fridge, new cushion covers and drapes. Full bath with tub and shower. Bruce and Alma de la Ronde (#6004), Jamestown, RI; 401/423-1431.

1966 17' Caravel, \$6,000. Restored, not all original, many new parts, Honorable Mention for Best Substitute Part at the 1995 WBCCI International Rally Concours d'Elegance for the davenport/table. Leon Hadley (#14262), 6641 Colfax Ave., Lincoln, NE 68507; 402/464-8648.

1968 20' Globetrotter, \$6,500. Second owner, features include elec. jack, Zip Dee awnings, two 40# LP tanks, rear bath, LP heat, original owners manual. Bill Steeg (#1405), 1600 Northgate Road, Baltimore, MD 21218; 410/323-3636.

1971 31' Sovereign, \$5,000. Road worthy, excellent condition, all systems in working order with few fix-its needed, dual axle with new tires, A/C, awning, TV antenna, two 30# LP tanks, 50 gal water tank, battery, LP furnace/hot water, LP/elect 'fridge, 4 burner LP stove, double sink, fold away table, twin beds w/ stow-away bunks over beds, couch makes into double bed, new curtains, shower/tub and owners manual. Bob & Mary Gerhardt, Box 171, Windsor, MA 01270; 413/684-2042 or toll free (888) 870-1700-366019.



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