

Welcome to the fabulous



2009 Restoration Rally!

# What a Difference a Plant Makes - 1962 California vs. Ohio Airstreams

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by Fred Coldwell

Vintage Airstream Club Historian

This show is  
based on a  
24 page  
Airstream  
Factory  
Report dated  
November  
28, 1961

November 28, 1961

REPORT ON AIRSTREAM LOS ANGELES AND AIRSTREAM JACKSON CENTER DIFFERENCES

--Comparison between 1962 Airstream trailers, their methods of production and comparative cost in the Los Angeles plant and the Jackson Center plant--

This analysis is based primarily on the following general categories and in the order of assembly of the trailer at the Jackson Center plant: Appearance, material, construction, production method and cost. In each case, if the reason is known for the variation, it is set forth immediately following the statement of difference. When cost figures are stated, it should be kept in mind that they are estimated figures and not actually taken from the Bill of Materials or Cost Analysis sheets except in those cases where purchased-finished items are discussed.

Only points of difference are discussed in this report, with no note being taken of items that are alike to all practical purposes. In the report, the initials "LA" refer always to the Los Angeles plant and "JC" to the Jackson Center, Ohio plant.

SECTION I. . . . Layouts of the Various Models

There is a basic difference in every model due to the bathroom orientation being reversed between the two plants. The construction Code for California requires that the drain be located on the left rear corner of the trailer and it is felt in the JC plant that the right rear corner affords a more useable trailer, as well as lending somewhat more freedom in laying out the interior floor plans. This, in itself, does not constitute any great difference in cost.

REF: To Layout Sheets

Another difference in layout basically caused by the bathroom reversal is in the galley. LA could not use the corner galley as is used in JC due to the reversal of the bedrooms in the double bed models, which is caused by the bathroom. This has another effect on the LA models in that their water storage tanks cannot be easily mounted under the road-side bed, as in JC, because of the difficulty in reaching the tanks with a water fill line. This can be done but does not offer the best possible design.

Many of the images used in this show are all from that Report. The drawings are crisp, but most photos are poor due to damage from glue.

Some differences are specific to  
1962 model year trailers.

But other differences appear in  
earlier and/or later year trailers.

Many differences are subtle and not apparent after a detailed inspection.

Other differences are more readily noticeable.

I was amazed at the number of differences I never noticed before. Some of these differences are important when repairing or rebuilding a trailer.

Some differences explain  
“inconsistencies” in measurements  
obtained from different vintage  
Airstreams.

Some differences will astound you,  
others will bore you.

You'll laugh, you'll cry,  
but after seeing this show  
you will never be the same.

Enough already!

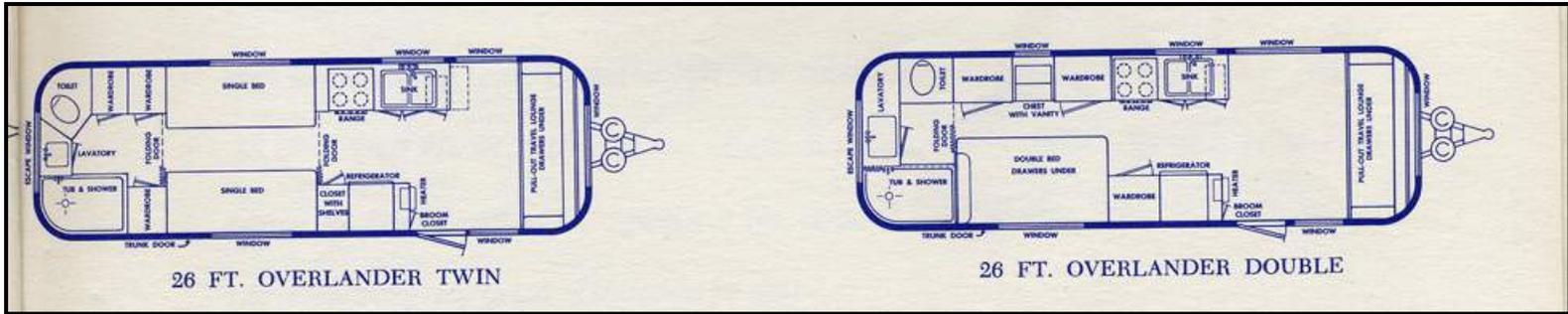
On with the Show.

The first difference between the Los Angeles, California (LA) and Jackson, Center Ohio (JC) trailers is bathroom layout for 1962 and earlier years.

- California mobile home Code required the drain be at the left rear corner.
- Ohio felt placing the drain at the right rear corner provides a more useable trailer and gives more freedom in interior floor plans.

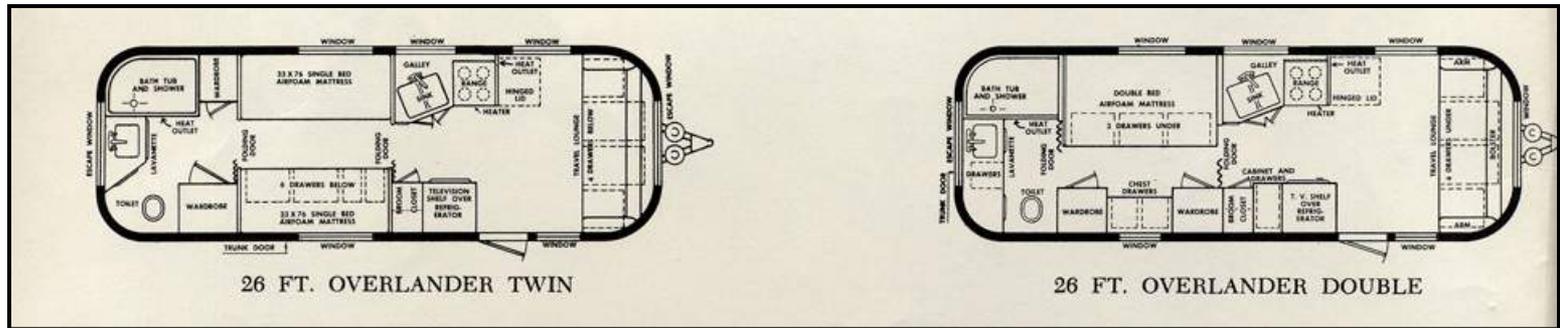
# Bathroom reversal impacts kitchen galley location.

- LA could not use JC corner galley in double bed models.
- LA water storage tanks could not be placed under road side double bed.



LA 26' Overlanders above – toilet street side

JC 26' Overlanders below – toilet curb side



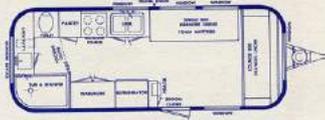
# L.A. THE 1962 AIRSTREAM FLEET



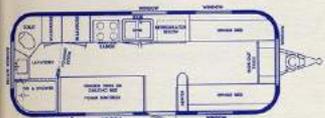
16 FT. BAMBI



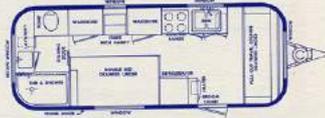
19 FT. GLOBE TROTTER



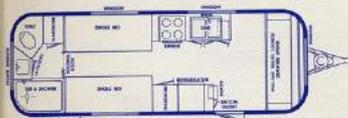
22 FT. FLYING CLOUD  
(Built for Two)



22 FT. SAFARI TWIN



22 FT. SAFARI DOUBLE



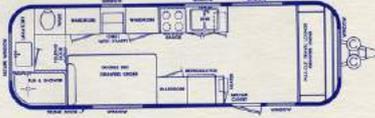
24 FT. TRADEWIND TWIN



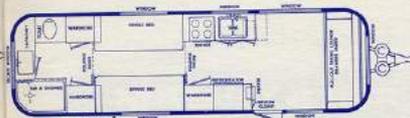
24 FT. TRADEWIND DOUBLE



26 FT. OVERLANDER TWIN



26 FT. OVERLANDER DOUBLE



28 FT. AMBASSADOR TWIN



28 FT. AMBASSADOR DOUBLE



30 FT. SOVEREIGN TWIN



30 FT. SOVEREIGN DOUBLE

**WIDEST CHOICE OF MODELS IN THE INDUSTRY**

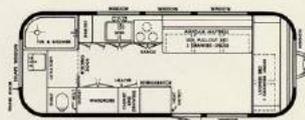
# J.C. THE 1962 AIRSTREAM FLEET



16 FT. BAMBI



19 FT. GLOBE TROTTER



22 FT. FLYING CLOUD  
(Built for Two)



22 FT. SAFARI TWIN



22 FT. SAFARI DOUBLE



24 FT. TRADEWIND TWIN



24 FT. TRADEWIND DOUBLE



26 FT. OVERLANDER TWIN



26 FT. OVERLANDER DOUBLE



28 FT. AMBASSADOR TWIN



28 FT. AMBASSADOR DOUBLE



30 FT. SOVEREIGN TWIN



30 FT. SOVEREIGN DOUBLE

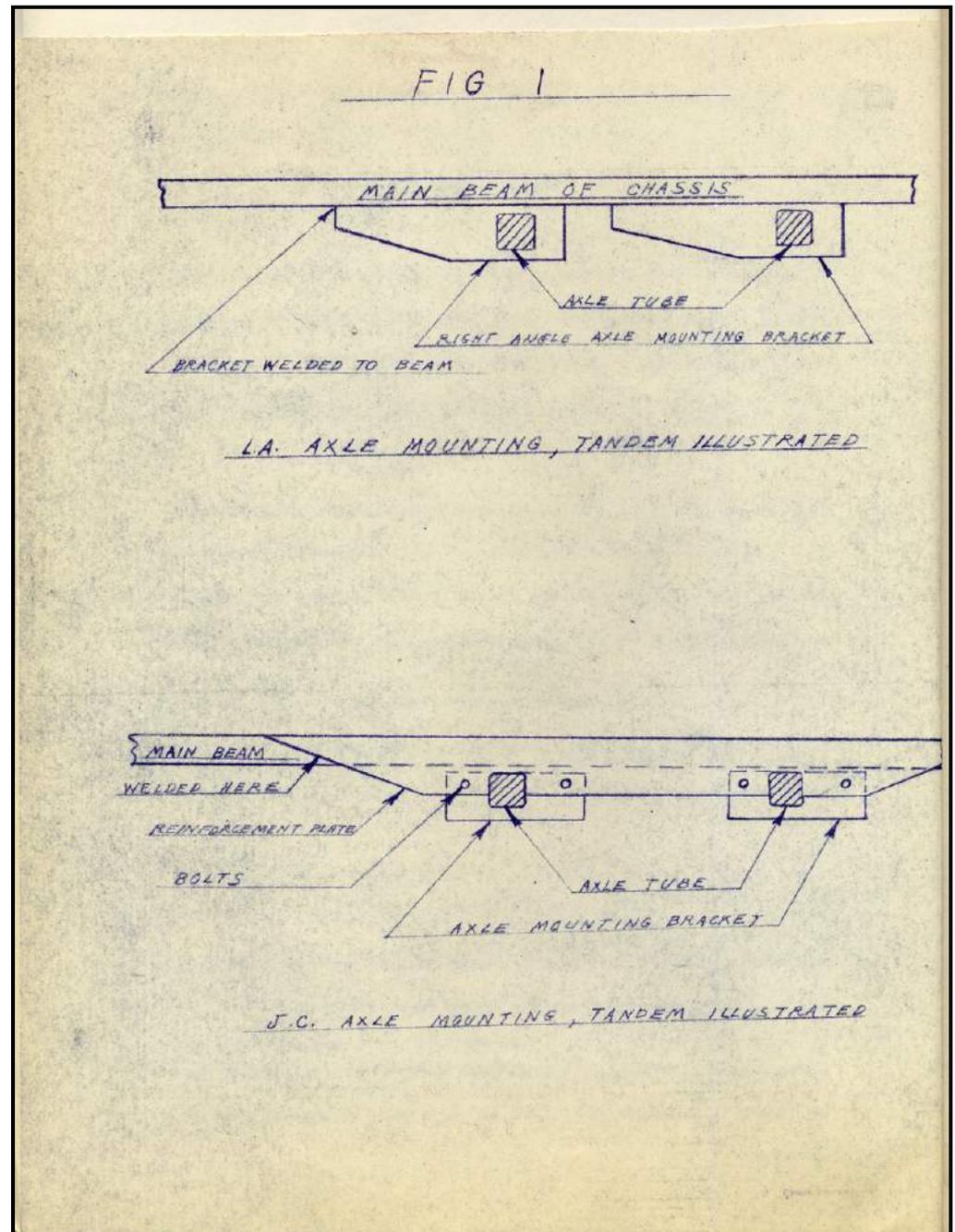
**WIDEST CHOICE OF MODELS IN THE INDUSTRY**

# Surprising differences existed in axel attachment methods.

- LA uses “right angle” bracket welded on.
- JC uses outside reinforcement plate bolted on.
- JC method 20% stronger with no weight gain.
- JC method allows easier axle replacement.

LA used axles with right angle brackets that were welded to the bottom of the frame rail.

JC used axles with a different style bracket that bolted to a plate welded to the outsides of the frame rails.



By the 1963 model year, both plants used axles like the JC axles that bolted to plates welded to the sides of the frame rails.

# Frames differ between LA and JC.

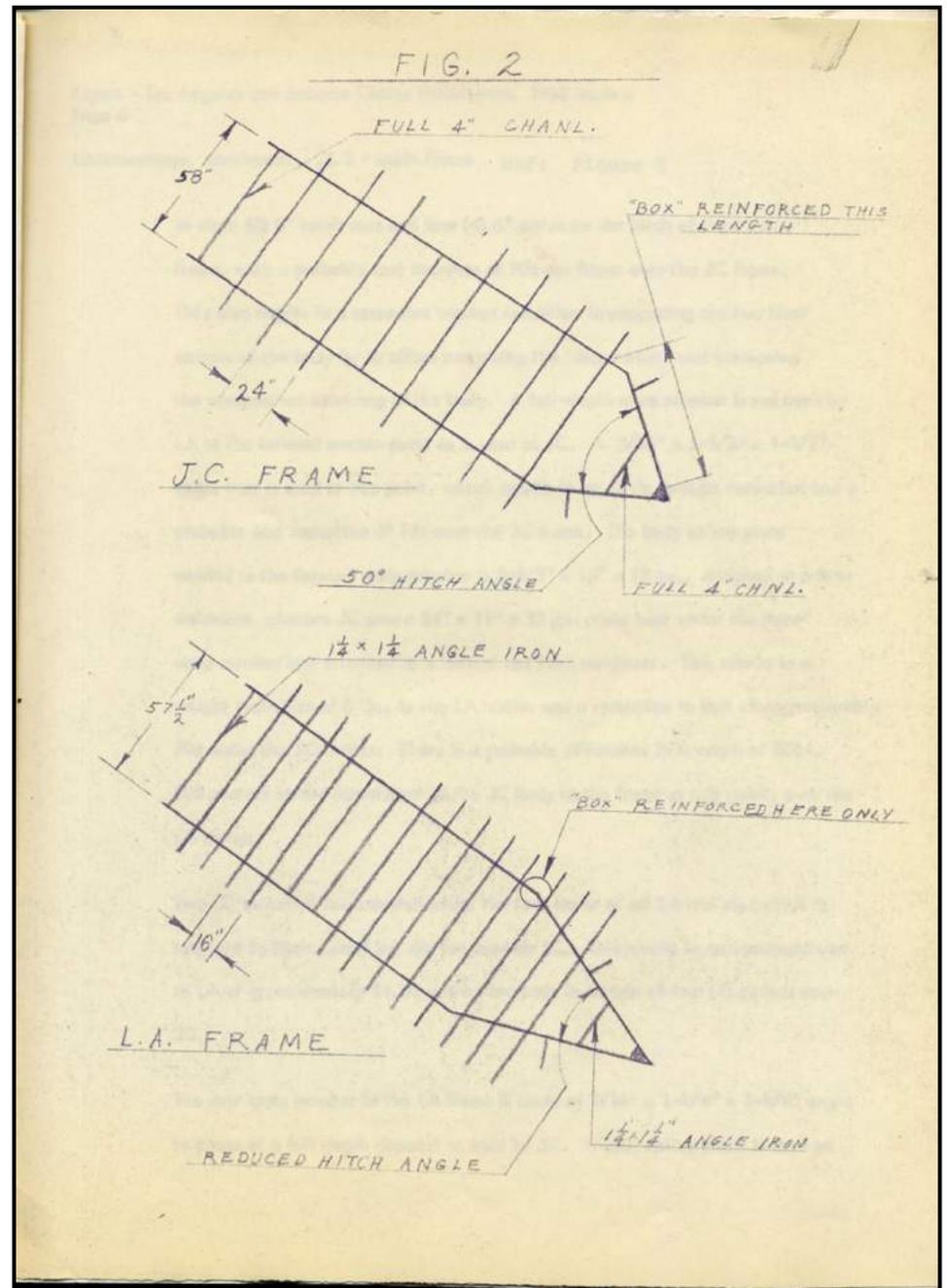
- outside width 57-1/2" for LA but 58" for JC.
  - reason for difference unknown.
- axles for each plant are NOT interchangeable.
  - each plant must order its own axles.

# JC frame

- 58" wide
- 50° hitch angle
- cross-members 24" OC
- rear channel 4"
- front "A" arms boxed

# LA frame

- 57-1/2" wide
- narrow hitch angle
- cross-members 16" OC
- rear iron 1-1/4" X 1-1/4"

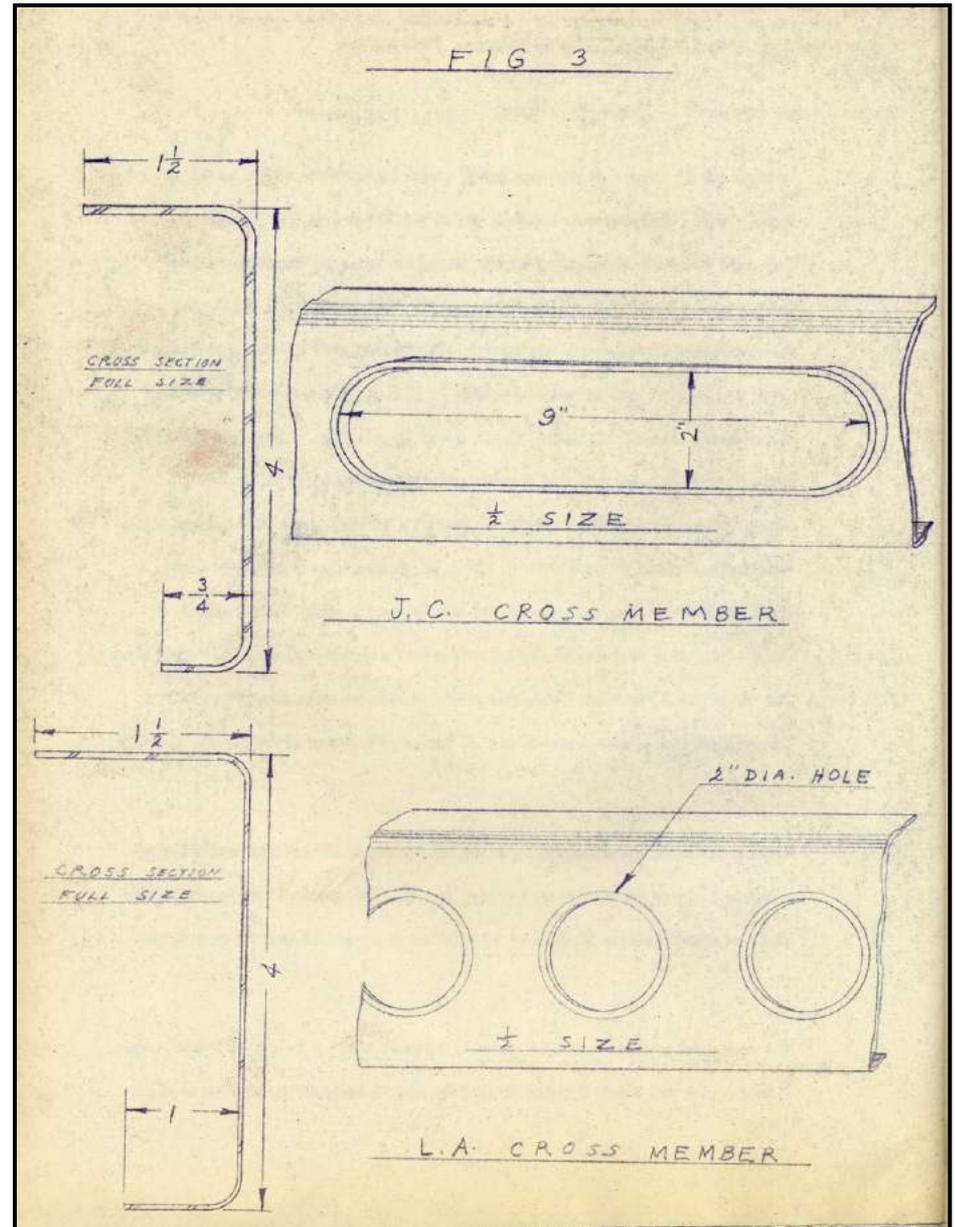


## JC cross member

- not as deep as LA
- oval lightening holes
- 24" on center

## LA cross member

- deeper than JC, top dimension 2" not 1-1/2".
- 2" dia. lightening holes
- 16" on center



LA floor support is about 1-1/2 times greater than JC floor support due to greater number of cross members.

But LA floor support at front corners is weaker due to narrow angle of frame “A” arms.

Only LA uses 2 tails skids required by the California mobile home Code.

# Front body splice (mounting) plate

- JC uses 24" X 11" 12 gauge plate bent under front cross member with lock and face welds.  
~ 200% to 300% stronger than LA at this point.
- LA uses 5-1/2" x 15" 12 gauge plate with face weld only.
  - Only LA uses a rear body splice plate.
- No rear end trunk doors on LA trailers due to bathroom layout.

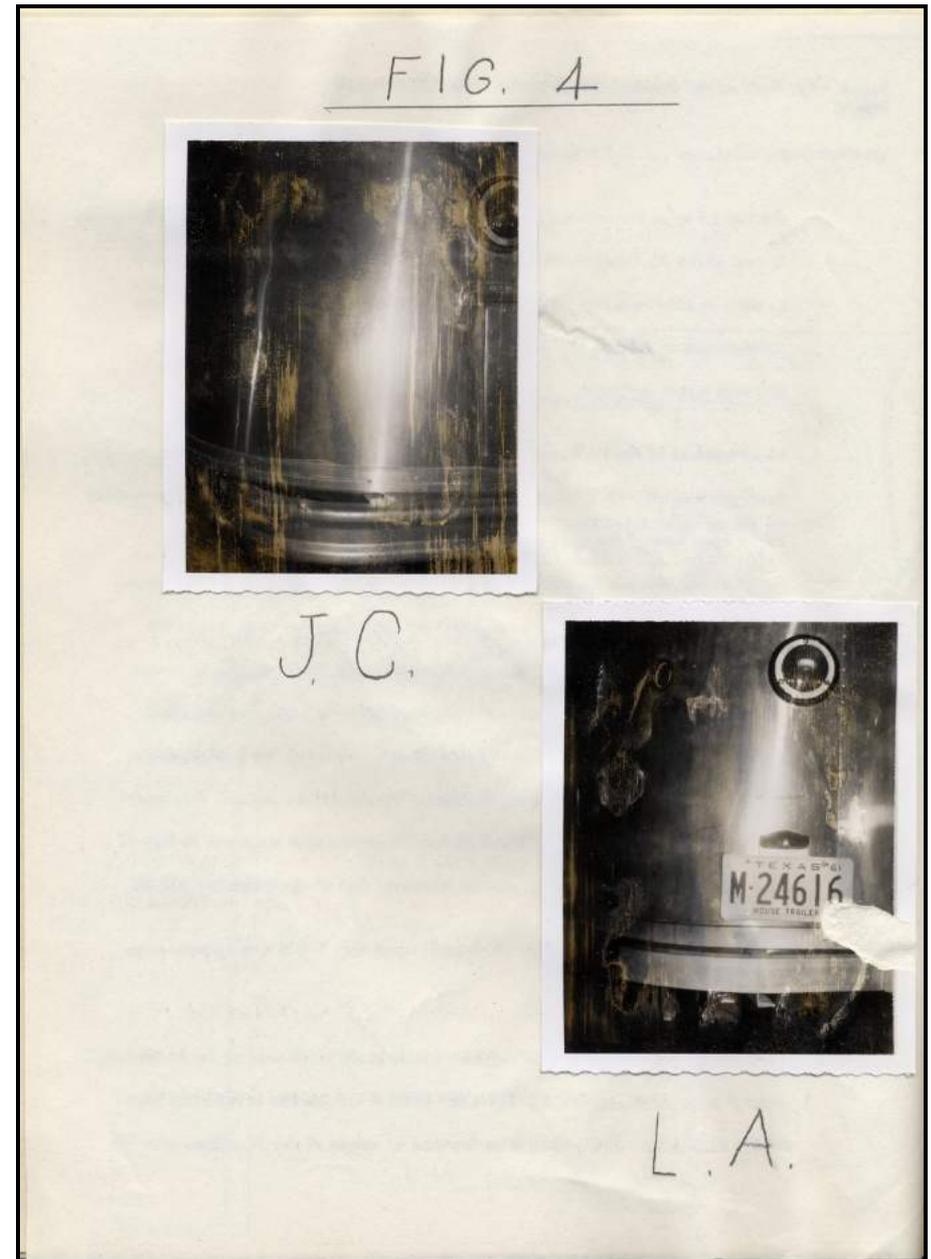
JC uses Kelsey-Hayes hubs, drums, wheels and brakes, and solid drop center wheels with tubeless tires.

LA uses Hadco hubs, drums, wheels and Bendix hydraulic or Warner electric brakes, with split rims wheels and tube tires.

JC uses roli-formed rear bumper on all models whereas LA uses it only on International models.

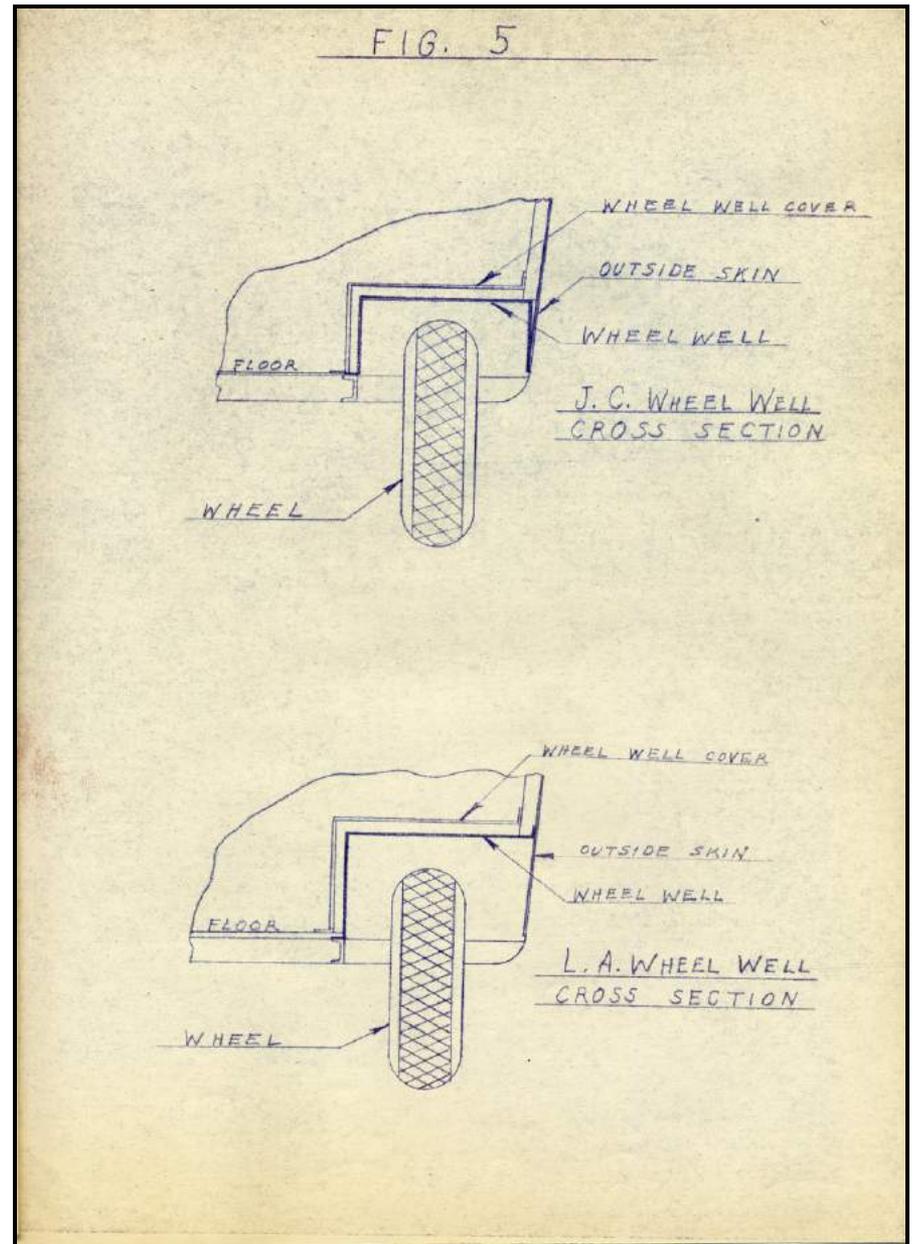
LA uses curved "C" channel rear bumpers on all other models.

LA uses Monroe shocks and JC uses Delco shocks.



JC uses boxed wheel wells whose outer skin attaches to trailer's outer skin.

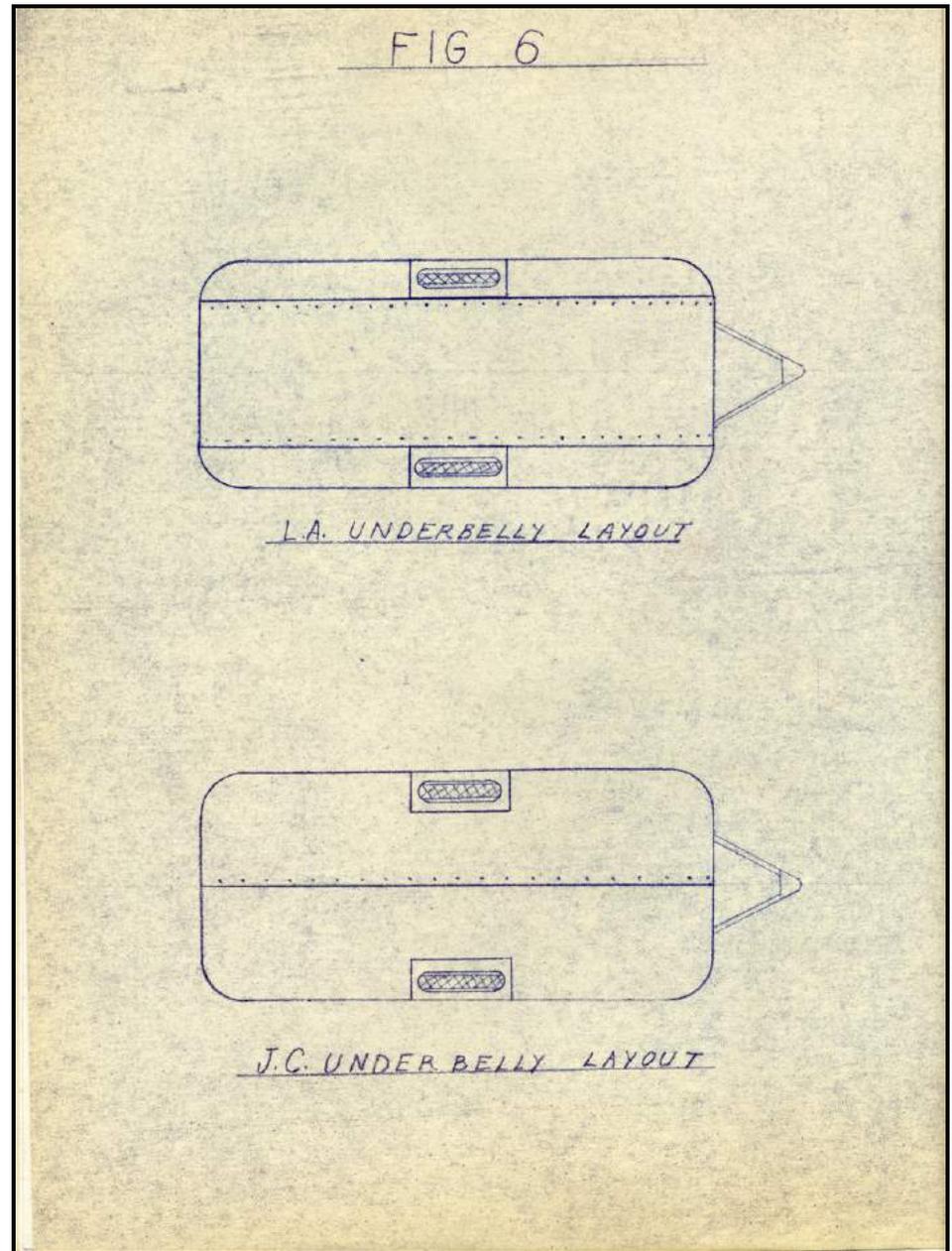
LA uses single wall "L" shaped wheel well. Only LA trailer body skin is outer wheel well skin.



# Belly Pans

LA uses 5 piece belly pan with 60" wide center strip and four 21" wide edge strips.

JC uses two 48" wide strips joined down the center and cut at wheel wells.



On average, the 1962 LA chassis weighed about 82 pounds more than the 1962 JC chassis and cost about \$21.80 more to produce.

# End Caps

- 7 panels each, similar in general appearance
  - LA uses 18.5" x 39.5" windows
  - JC uses 22" x 43" windows, costing \$2.92 more per trailer than LA windows.
- LA uses 6061-T6 for lower end wraps, while
  - JC uses 2024-T3 for lower wraps.

# Roof Sections

- produced in LA on flat table using fixed bucking bar, JC uses vertical roof jig, takes up less room.
- front roof vent is 3" behind end cap seam in LA trailers and 9" behind seam in JC trailers.
- rear vent 6" forward of rear end cap seam in LA trailers and 5" forward on JC trailers.
- LA uses 6061-T6 for roof panels, JC uses 2024-T3, saving \$2.88 on a LA 26' Overlander.

# Outside Shell

- side drape sheet appearance is identical.
  - LA uses 6061-T6 and JC uses 2024-T3.
  - LA uses only curb side storage doors.
  - JC uses rear and curb side storage doors.
- Window locations do not coincide between plants.
  - LA uses obscured glass for galley, JC clear glass.

JC centers license plate bracket between tail lights. Tail lights on rear panel

LA puts license plate 6" below left tail light. Tail lights on curved panels.

FIG. 7



J.C.



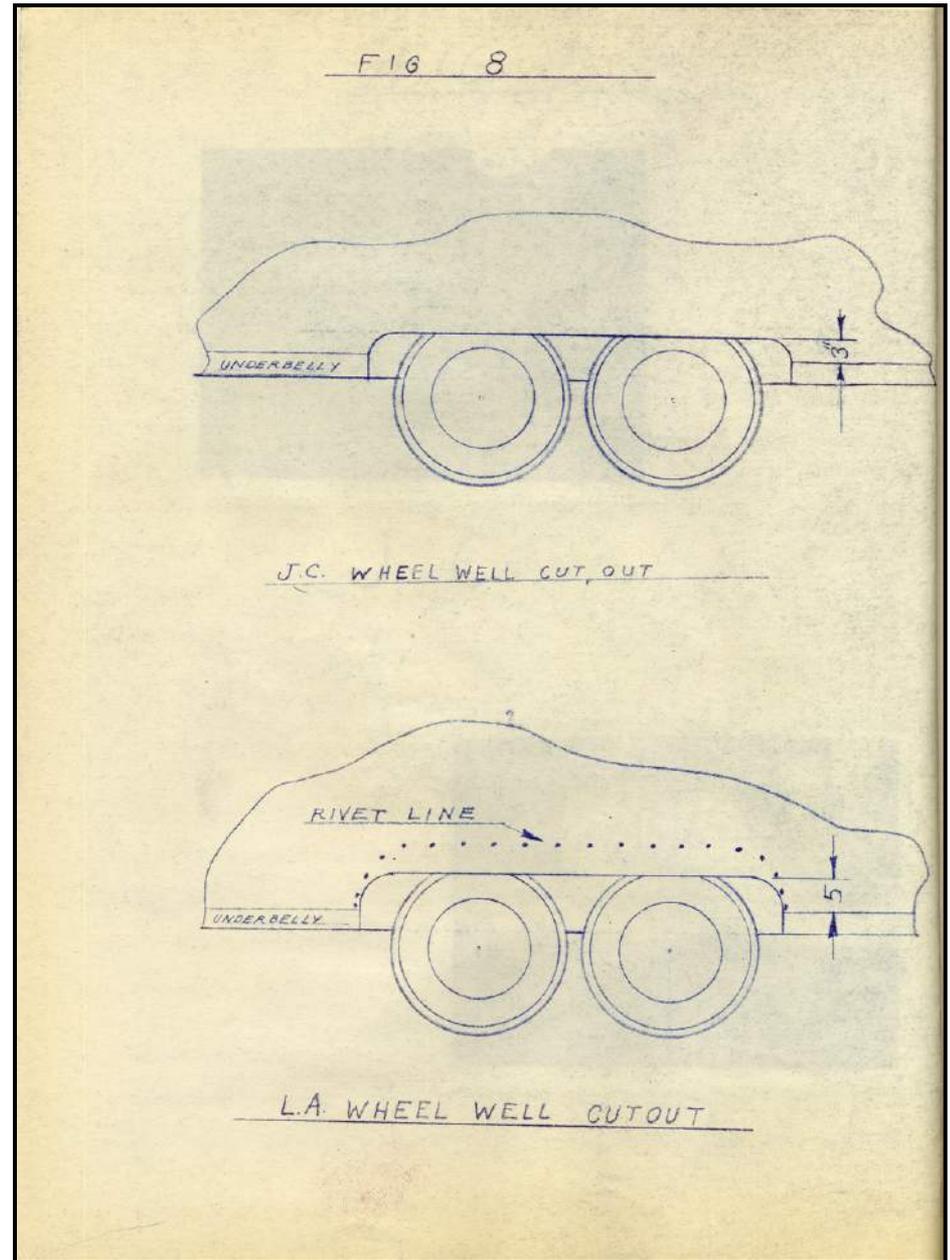
L.A.

# Wheel Wells

JC wheel well extends 5" up into side drape sheet.

LA wheel well extends 3" up into side drape sheet.

Can't gauge condition of Dura-Torque axle rubber by position of wheels in the wheel well.

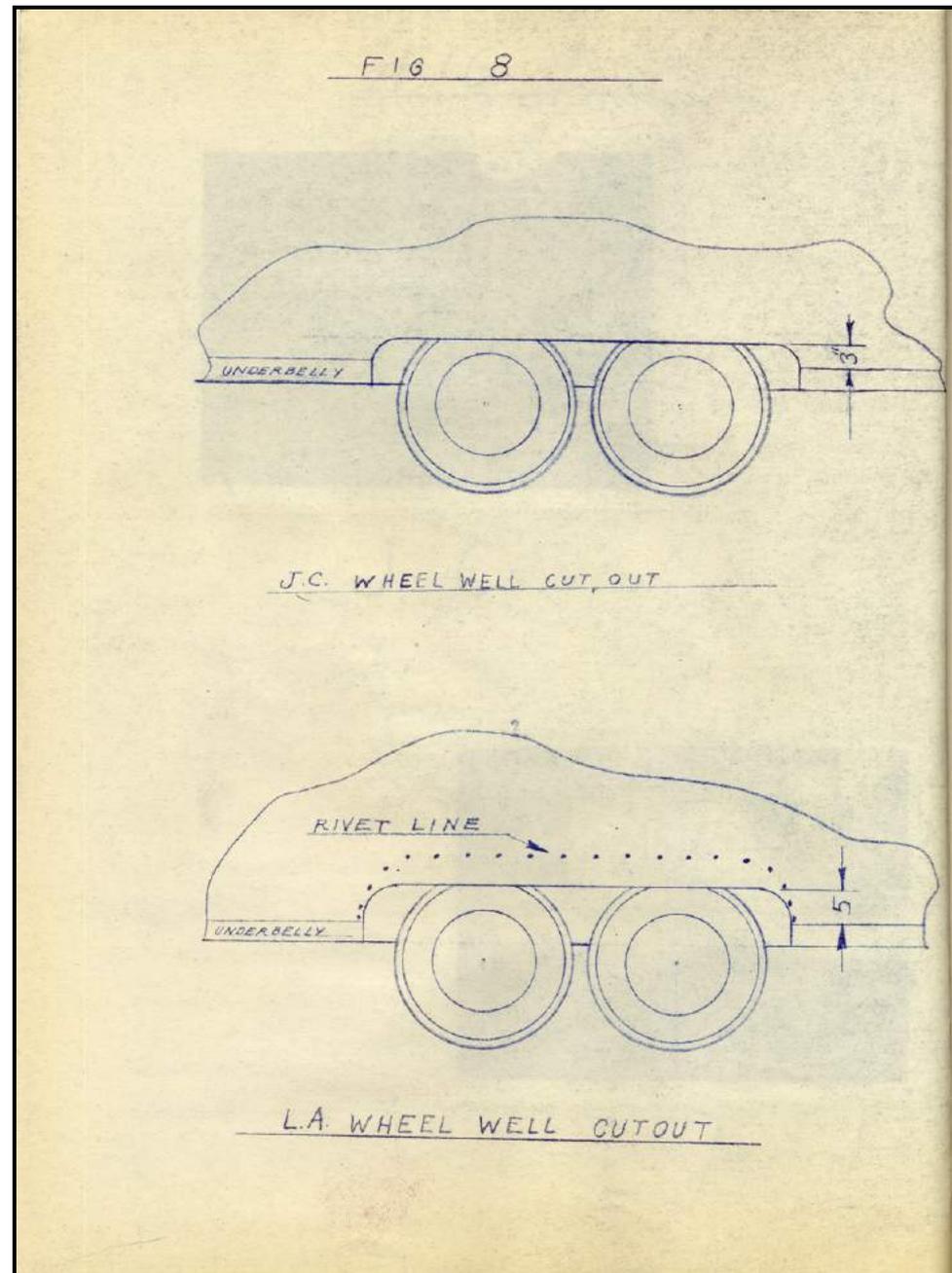


JC wheel well attaches to outside skin along with 3/16" wheel well trim, using same rivets.

LA single wall round wheel well bottom visibly attaches to outside skin with rivets. Wheel well trim is 3/8" wide.

-- JC lower rub rail is 2" wide flat ribbed aluminum stock.

--LA lower rub rail is 2" x 1/2" extruded "C" channel.



# Outside Body

- door locations differ due to floor plans.
- TV and radio antennas locations exactly reversed.
- JC flood light below curb side forward window.
- LA flood light above curb side forward window.
- JC shears 48" sheet for under side windows to floor.
- LA uses 42" sheet for side windows to floor line, saving \$2.90 per trailer over JC.

# Electrical wiring

--identical for all practical purposes.

--Code requirements virtually identical at both plants.

LA must place breaker box 36" above floor, not so JC.

LA uses twisted type multi-conductor wire for taillights,  
JC uses independent wires for taillights.

# Main Doors

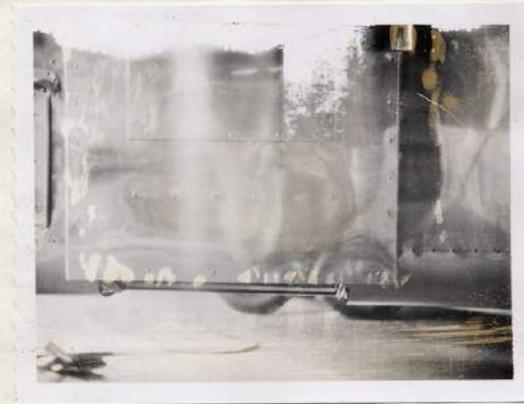
--differ significantly

--JC door 2-1/2" longer,  
covers swing-up step.

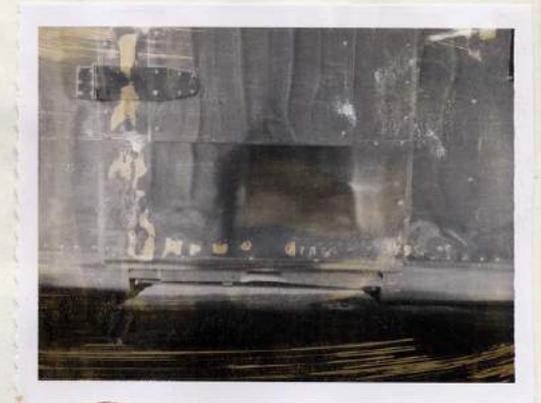
-JC door face made from  
1 piece of 2024-T3

-LA door face made  
from 4 pieces 6061-T6.

FIG 9



J.C.



L.A.

# Main Doors

JC door and screen door “flat beaded”  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” back on all edges.

LA door “flat beaded”  $\frac{1}{2}$ ” back on all edges and  
LA screen door broken over  $\frac{1}{4}$ ” on all edges.

JC uses combination keyed passage lock and separate knob-type deadbolt for safety.

LA uses plain passage lock with keyed deadbolt.

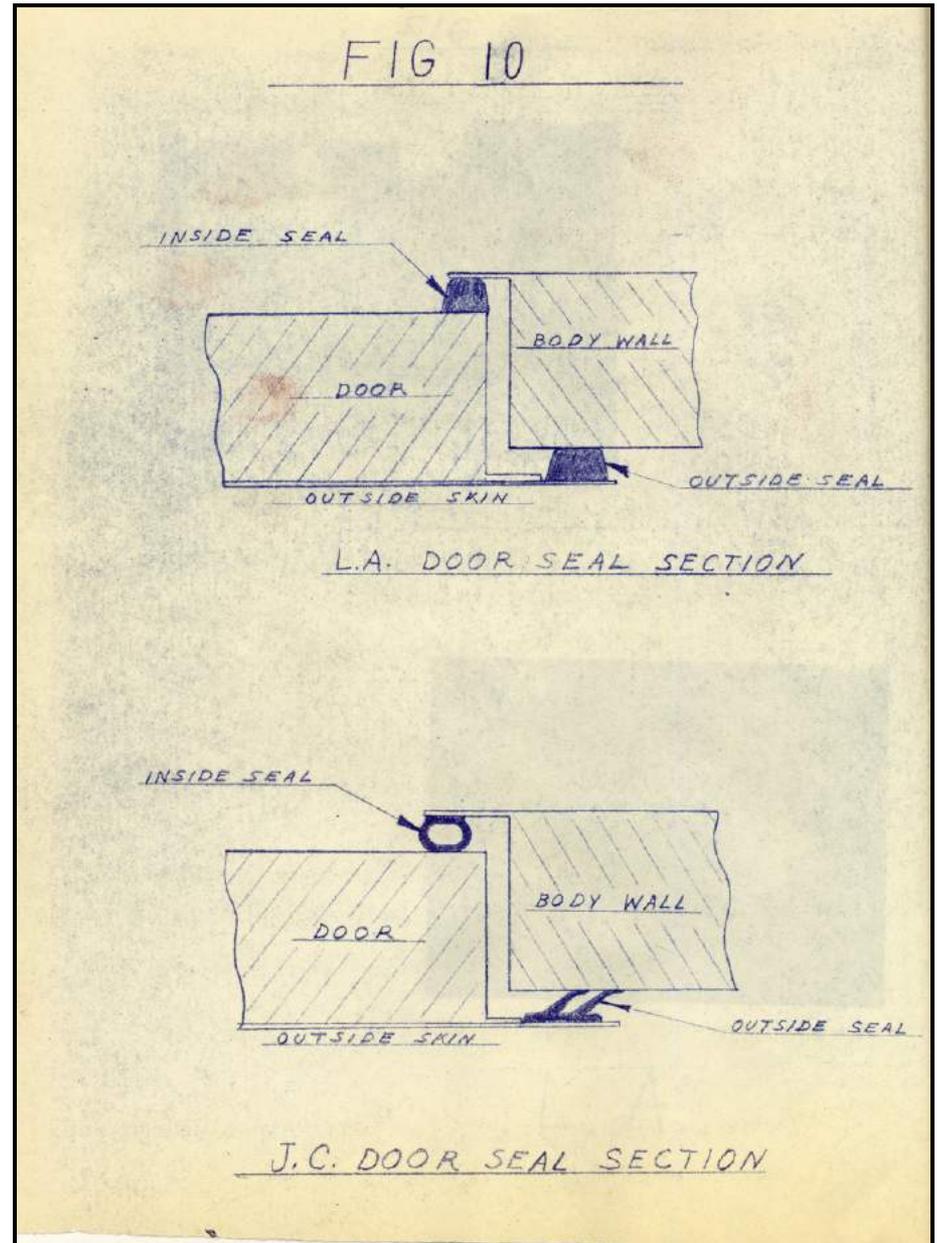
JC door jams have nylon striker with nylon pocket.

LA door jams have surface mounted reinforced plate.

# Exterior Door Seals

LA uses bar type sponge compression door seals at two locations.

JC uses two-lip sponge, deflected type outer door seal and hollow bulb type inner door seal.



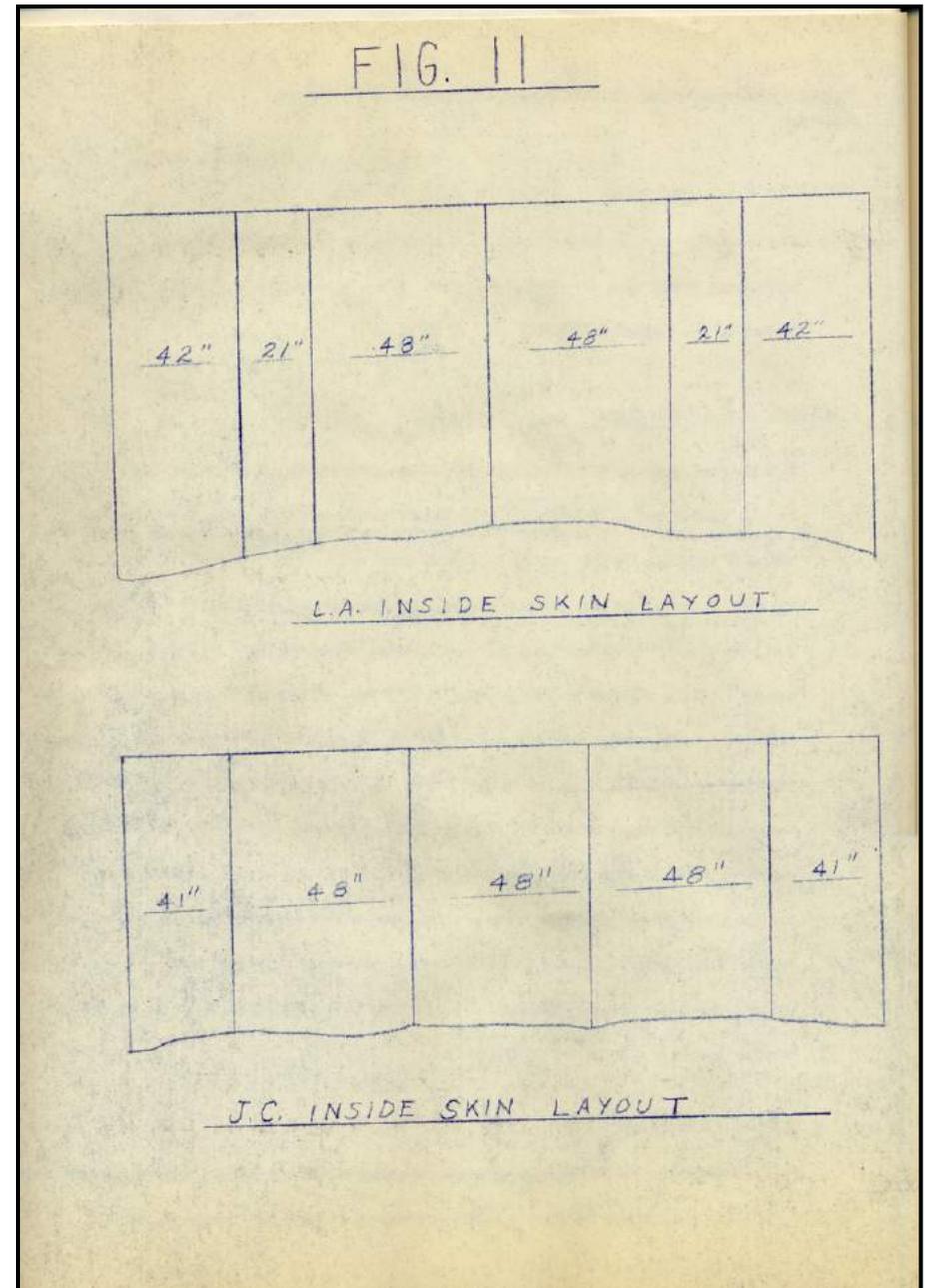
# Inside Skins

LA interior skin is made from 48" wide sheets with one seam running down the center of the ceiling.

LA uses 5052-H38 material.

JC ceiling is made from 48" sheets with two seams running down the ceiling.

JC uses 6061-T3 material.



# Trailer Bodies

LA body costs, on average, \$4.68 less than a JC body.

Strength of LA body about 6-8% less than a JC body.

LA body is 5/8" lower from crown point of bow to floor than the JC body. This makes a difference on sheet layout and has a minor effect on door clearances and ceiling light clearances.

# Bathrooms

Great differences caused by building codes in layout, exposed drainage vents, automatic flushing valve on toilet, and 1-1/2" diameter drain and vent lines.

JC uses larger bathtubs than LA.

JC uses conventional porcelain-steel bowl set in Formica covered plywood, whereas LA uses fiberglass molded countertop with built in sink bowl.

# Bathrooms (con't)

JC uses two different size medicine chests depending on trailer model, LA uses one size for all.

JC lavatory chest uses drawers and one swinging door whereas LA uses sliding door and fixed shelves.

JC uses two sets of faucets for sinks and tub whereas LA sometimes uses one combination faucet set with pull-up valve for shower head.

# Bathrooms (con't)

JC uses only upper curtain rod for rear window whereas  
LA uses both upper and lower curtain rods.

JC medicine chest mirror is somewhat larger than LA.

JC uses “Fuhry” light mounted above mirror whereas  
LA uses under-cab light mounted below.



J.C.



L.A.



FIG 12413

# Furniture

LA uses solid front, non-supported panel type construction where the main supporting structural members are exposed.

JC uses sub-frames with finished overlays.

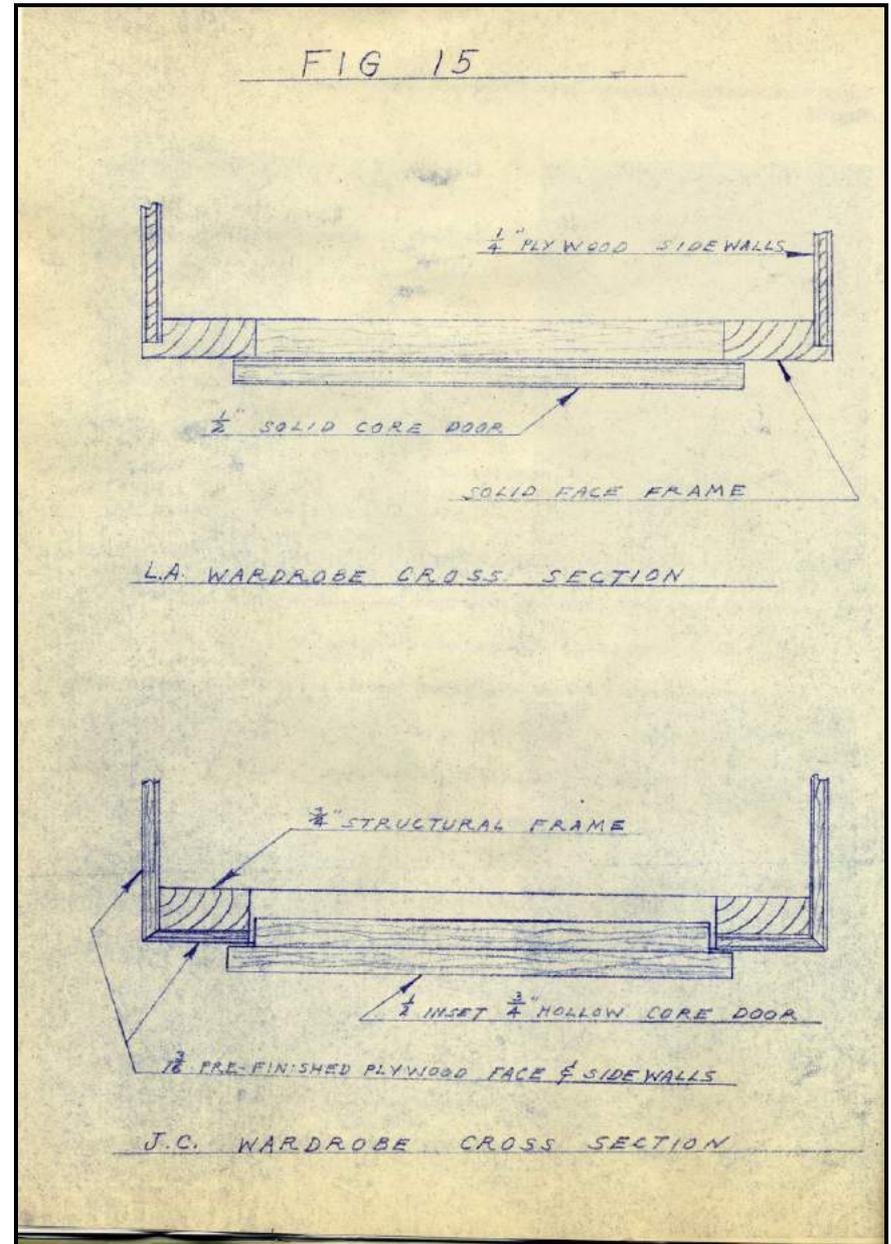
LA uses ash and ash plywood with sprayed-on tinted finish after installation.

JC uses oak pre-finished plywood and oak pre-finished exposed structural members.

# Furniture Details

LA uses exposed structural members and overlapping solid core doors.

JC hides structural members behind prefinished plywood and uses inset hollow core doors.



# Furniture (con't)

LA trailers show great variation in wood grain direction with lack-of depth finish. JC trailers more uniform in appearance.

LA offered third, lighter wood finish not available in JC.

Space above fridge has built-in cabinets by LA (to hide the warm air vent) but is left an open top shelf by JC.

--JC uses hidden fasteners wherever possible (staple wood panels to frames); LA uses few.

--JC uses finished window trim, LA uses unfinished aluminum window trim, for different appearances.

--JC beds are 21" high over mattress, LA beds are 24", leading to different drawer configurations underneath.

--JC drawers have mechanical travel latches, LA drawers are notched on bottom rails to stay put.

On average, LA furniture weighs 20% more per item than JC item and cost 10% to build, due to extra care needed to build in place because structural framework is visible and must be finished after installation.

Pre-applied finishes used at JC have more uniform appearance and fewer blemishes than worker-applied finishes used at LA.

# Galleys

JC galleys have angled sinks to left of stoves and flip-up covers over the stove. Only one stove color offered in JC.

LA galleys have straight sinks to right of stove and no cover over stove. Multiple stove colors available in LA trailers.

FIG 16



J. C.



L A

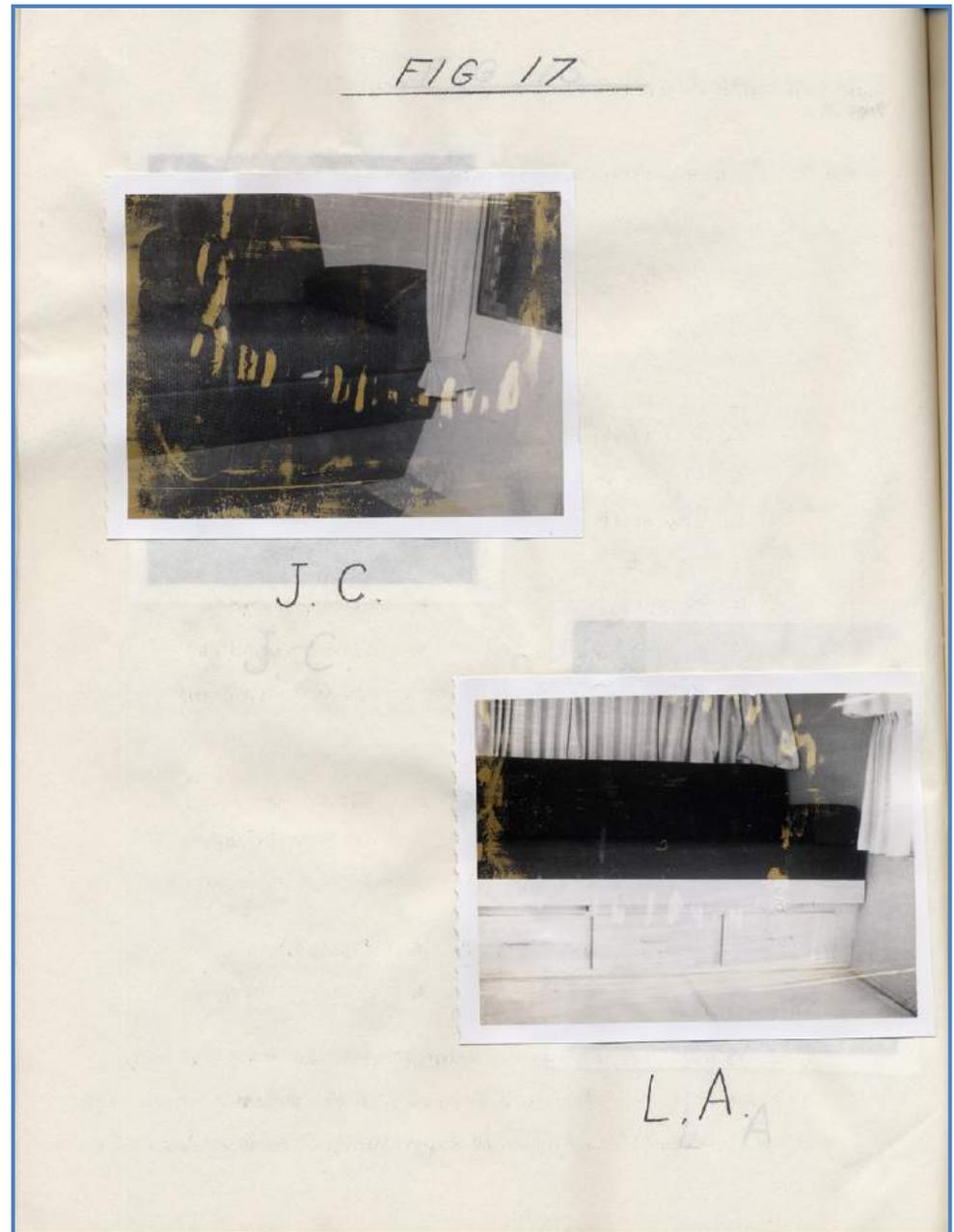
# Interior Fittings

- LA uses larger galley sinks in smaller trailers than JC.
- LA side roof lockers use lift-up doors, JC uses side roof lockers use sliding doors.
  - LA interior finish and fit-up less complex, less expensive and less sophisticated than used at JC.
- JC interiors offer better useability or convenience to the customer.

# Front Gauchos

JC uses slanted  
drawer fronts with  
square section arm  
rests.

LA uses vertical  
drawer fronts with flat  
section arm rests



JC front overhead locker is full faced design with 2 side-hinged swinging doors.

LA front overhead locker is non-faced design with 3 lift-up doors.

FIG 18



J.C.



L.A.

# Appliances

- LA offers both Dometic and Norcold refrigerators, JC uses only Dometic fridges.
- LA offers multiple colors on stoves, JC offers only one color (brown) stoves.
- LA units 22' and longer use Panel Ray heaters.
- JC units 19' and longer offer International heaters.

# Cost Summary

On an average basis, the cost of comparable items and parts is \$46.20 less for a LA trailer than a JC trailer. The space heater is the major item of cost difference.

On average, a JC trailer costs \$30.55 more to build than a LA trailer.

# Upholstery

--upholstery nearly identical from both plants.

--curtains identical in less expensive trailers

--in International trim trailers, LA uses same fasteners as in other trailers but JC uses snap-on type hangers and matching type slides, costing 20% more than standard curtains.

# Miscellaneous differences

--lavatory and galley faucets.

--interior trim and molding.

--tables of different design and manufacturer.

--interior wheel well covers; LA square and heavier,  
JC follow wheel contour.

# Miscellaneous differences

- LA pressurized water tanks aluminum and located in front of trailers with exposed filler pipe.
- JC pressurized water tanks welded galvanized steel and usually located under road side bed (most models, up front in remainder) with fill pipe behind own door.
- LA black water tanks use Sani-Ware drop out valves whereas JC uses Sargeant valves.

# Miscellaneous differences

- LA makes its own chassis, JC buys chassis from sub-contractor (no name given).
- LA installs floor tile before shell construction starts, JC installs floor tiles after interior is painted but before furniture is installed.
- LA installs end cap fiberglass and liner before roof or sides are attached; JC installs end liners at start of inside skin assembly.

# Miscellaneous differences

- LA attaches roof sheets to end sections on factory floor before ends are attached to the chassis.
- JC sets and anchors end sections to chassis and then attaches roof sheets.
- LA subcontracts interior painting, JC paints in-house.
- JC furniture built of pre-finished wood, LA finishes wood after furniture is installed.

As a result of this report,  
beginning in the 1963 model year,  
trailers built at the LA and JC plants  
began to have much more in  
common over time.

THE END



We hope you enjoyed the show!