

# BLUE BERET

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WALLY BYAM CARAVAN CLUB INTERNATIONAL, INC.

MAY 2022



## Years of Airstream Innovation

CHARTING THE COURSE  
OF THE CUTTING EDGE



# President's Corner



We are celebrating 67 years this year as Wally Byam Caravan Club International (WBCCI) doing business as (dba) Airstream Club International (ACI). That is a lot of words and abbreviations to be proud of! This is the oldest single brand RV club in the world! That alone is pretty amazing. We have survived: Airstream being bought and sold, war, gas shortages/and price increase, Covid, disco and many more events. We are still growing and accomplishing so much during this. It shows us how strong the club is with all we been through. Every person, no matter how new you are, plays an important part in this club. There are items coming up for discussion and then voted on. As your president, I need to stay neutral on these matters for our club because I am responsible for the whole club. I am asking all of you to take the time to read, learn, discuss, and make wise choices. Every one of you have a vote; let your voices be heard for what you want to see happen. I am sure some of you are thinking it won't matter if I don't vote, I am not into the politics of the club, I am here to only camp. This is not the case, as we could be changing a system that has worked for over 20 years. Some members are for the changes, as others are against. We all need to look at making our club survive another 67 years. ACI is like an Airstream product. We have survived, like many vintage Airstreams, through all the events we been through. We are like the new rigs they are putting out with new designs and equipment in them. We all look at the new ones and we talk about the pros and cons. Please do this on the changes we

have coming in the near future. Make sure you get the answer to all your questions. The question you ask will be the same one that someone else is afraid to ask. This is your club; stand up and take pride in your rights as a club member. All that glistens is not gold, but Airstreams always shine!

I want to thank all of the members that have worked on special committees for changes, caravan leaders, rally host/co-host, and all volunteers. These people make this club so special for all of us. A special thanks to our staff at HQ in Jackson Center. They are an amazing support team that keeps us moving at a good pace. All of these people work hard with very little recognition. So, if you come across some of them, please tell them how much we appreciate them.

As we are under 120 days until the International Rally in Fryeburg, Maine, I want to tell you the people are EXCITED about us coming to town. This is going to be a very special time for all attending as the community waits with open arms to greet us. If you are thinking about going, it will be worth the trip! We have more than enough space so no one will be put on a waiting list. Looking forward to showing everyone the beauty of Maine and the northeast.

*Wally Byam*



Scan the QR code here to visit  
the Fryeburg Rally website!

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## on the cover...

Years of Airstream Innovation  
Charting the Course of the Cutting Edge - page 22

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Copy Deadline for the August issue is June 15

# Membership

Terri Warren BRN 284, Chair



With a mix of emotions, I tell you that this is my last membership column. In July, I will move to the position of International Secretary and it will be good to have a few months off in between to prepare for the Maine gathering.

First, I would like to thank Airstream Adventures NW for so generously providing 340 memberships to our club. They have been steadfast in believing that the purchase of a trailer is only the beginning – that customers value having a link to others who have been camping for a while so they can learn the ropes and get into using their Airstream in the best possible ways. To Ted Davis and his whole team, we are grateful for your generosity.

Second, I would like to express my excitement over the proposed and IBT approved motion to make the constitutional change to the governance structure of our club. Delegates will be voting on this in July and there is so much to be pleased with in this change. I'd like to start this discussion by telling you a story about my journey with leadership. I was asked by the nominating committee to come into the executive committee as the 3<sup>rd</sup> VP behind now-incoming president, Eric McHenry. I'd been almost every office in my Oregon club leadership, then Region 10 VP and president, and I was honored to be asked to run for the office of 3<sup>rd</sup> VP. I inquired about what the responsibilities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> VP are and was told that the first year, at the summer International

Rally meeting, I would be responsible for managing the outside activities of the rally – plumbing, electricity, parking, among other things. Some years ago, I had open heart surgery with some unfortunate sequelae, including an inability to handle hot weather while staying upright and conscious! So before accepting the role, I made an appointment with my cardiologist to discuss the heat we would experience at the rally. It was a flat out “no, you won't be able to handle the heat, you will disappoint others and endanger yourself. I would strongly advise against accepting this position”. So, I talked to some others in leadership – could I change up the duties and contribute in some other productive way. The answer there was also “no, we all had to do it when we were 3<sup>rd</sup> VP and so would you”. It felt like this was kind of like a fraternity hazing! Surely, there were other ways to handle this, but the final answer was no. If you can't do these tasks, you can't be in this role.

Since this happened, I've felt so strongly that this is not the way to select leaders for the club. Is it really a prerequisite that the person who will eventually oversee almost a million dollar budget and about 16,000 members be able to make sure the electrical connections in 104 degree weather are working or that pumpouts are happening with the right people on the right days? Are we looking for event coordinator skills or leadership skills? Yes, there may be some overlap, but is that how we choose

someone? I would strongly disagree. Yet we have been in the mode of selecting a “someone” to be the ultimate party planner for years now. The good news is that Headquarters is ready, willing and able to take over the rally tasks and responsibilities. There are new people in the office for whom rally coordination is a slam dunk. NOW our leadership team can focus on running the club, as it should be.

So, if not rally planning and implementing, what will officers and other members of the executive council do? To be clear, some of these things they already do but will now have more time to do well. They will ensure compliance with any regulatory agencies, do staff supervision, set long range goals and strategy, fundraising, communicate with members and third parties outside the club, do financial planning for the future, champion our club to outside agencies like Airstream, Inc., and recruit new board members, to name a few.

The new structure, as you'll read more about here, adds four people to what we currently call the executive committee – its new name will be executive council to reflect the addition of four people. The cool part is that the council will include people who have ZERO aspiration to be president. These people want to contribute their skills to the leadership our club but have no desire to be the person in charge. And the executive council of 10 people will join the 12 region presidents to form the International

# Ninety Years of Airstream Innovation

Airstream Staff

In the late 1950s, Airstream founder Wally Byam saw where the future of RV travel was headed, and he set about making sure Airstream was the company that blazed the trail forward. With almost three decades of design, engineering, and travel expertise under his belt, Wally envisioned a new kind of travel trailer that would create true travel independence – one that broke free from the necessity of shore power, water hookups, and waste disposal at the campsite. He understood that Airstreamers longed for a seismic shift in camping freedom, and he knew he could be the one to make it more than simply a dream.

The result of Wally's dreaming came to reality in the 1958 model year, the debut of the International Travel Trailer line. Bringing together years of cutting-edge product development, the International package was unlike any RV that had come before – fully self-contained, with a water heater, holding tanks, and batteries, as well as a kitchen, shower, and bathroom. It achieved something that had previously been impossible, letting owners leave behind the hookups at a campsite and head far afield with all the comforts of home. After trekking across the United States, south into Mexico and Central America, and across the post-war landscape of Europe, Wally keenly understood how breaking those limitations would open a new world of enjoyment for travelers. The International brought Wally's vision to life, and his Capetown to Cairo Caravan through Africa put many of his new concepts to the test in the wild, with Wally's famous Gold Trailer serving as the test unit.

Over the intervening decades, Airstream cemented itself as an American icon and a symbol of travel independence, and in 2021 celebrated a major milestone that many American companies can only dream of: Ninety years of business. Now, with Airstream's centennial just around the corner, the company continues building off Wally's innovative legacy and pushing the boundaries of what's possible in recreational vehicles. Drawing on improving technology, stronger and lighter materials, and the creative inspiration that has buoyed engineers and designers over the decades, today Airstream continues its legacy of charting the course toward the future of travel.

Like the International line before it, the recently announced eStream Concept Travel Trailer is redefining what it means to travel with all the comforts of home. A joint project between Airstream and its parent company Thor Industries, the eStream Concept Travel Trailer rethinks the limitations that campers face when hitching up and heading out. A massive battery bank nestled in the eStream's chassis untethers campers from the necessity of a shore power hookup, letting them stay off grid longer than ever while enjoying the comforts of home. The large-capacity batteries work in conjunction with a 900-watt solar rooftop to power the concept's all electric appliances. There's even enough power to run the air



conditioning without the need for a shore power hookup and the enticing promise of camping off the grid for up to two weeks without sacrificing comfort.

But the benefits of this innovative power management system extend beyond simply camping. With electric vehicle (EV) technology improving every day by leaps and bounds – and with EV tow vehicles on the horizon – the eStream's state-of-the-art power system helps extend range by powering drive-assist motors in the concept travel trailer's axle. Quite simply, the eStream tows as if it isn't even there as it moves forward in tandem with its tow vehicle. That's not only good news for travelers who want to go farther between fill ups (or charges), but also for



# HISTORICALLY SPEAKING

Joe Peplinski BRN 702, WBCCI Historian  
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## Airstream Resumes Business in May 1947

During 2021, Airstream celebrated the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in 1931. This month we celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Airstream resuming business after WWII on May 15, 1947. Airstream has been operating continuously ever since.

It was no small feat for Wally Byam to navigate the war years and restart Airstream in 1947 after shutting it down in 1941, so we will start with a review of what he did between 1941 and 1947. Some of the details that follow come from personal notebooks kept by Wally Byam during those years.

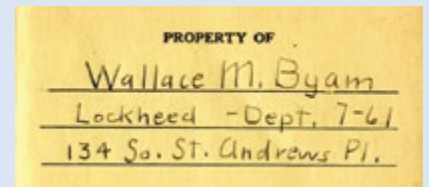
It is not currently known what Wally Byam did immediately after closing Airstream in mid-1941, but as the U.S. wartime manufacturing sector ramped up after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Wally put his leadership abilities, business sense, and riveted aluminum experience to good use in the aircraft industry. Specifically, in 1942 he began working at Lockheed Corporation in Burbank, CA where he spent most of his time working on the famous Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter aircraft program.

The often-repeated claims that Wally Byam also worked for Vultee Aircraft during WWII cannot be

confirmed and are most likely untrue. Evidence does show, however, that during his time at Lockheed, Wally worked closely with Vultee which, in addition to building its own aircraft, was a supplier to Lockheed. In early November 1943, the U.S. War Department finally announced that the Consolidated Vultee Aircraft factory in Nashville, TN was one of three Vultee factories that had already begun manufacturing a variety of parts for the P-38. Furthermore, it was announced that the Vultee Nashville factory would begin working to become a second source to build complete P-38 aircraft because Lockheed could not keep up with orders.

Before the official announcement was even made, Wally Byam was already hard at work getting Vultee Nashville all the information necessary for it to fulfill its orders for parts and eventually planes. He helped provide P-38 parts lists and blueprints as well as Lockheed specifications and operating procedures to Vultee. After months of effort, the first P-38 rolled off the line at the Vultee Nashville factory on December 31, 1944, but P-38 production there was short-lived. After the May 8, 1945 V-E Day (Victory in Europe Day), the U.S. government announced a plan to reduce the production of P-38 aircraft and other war

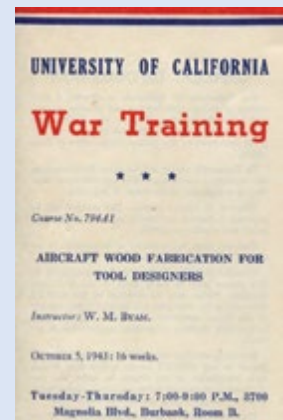
### Wally Byam During WWII



Lockheed Notebook Labels



Lockheed P-38 Lightning



1943 War Training Course Flier