

Good, Bad and Bizarre amazing **Bard's** **AIRSTREAMS**

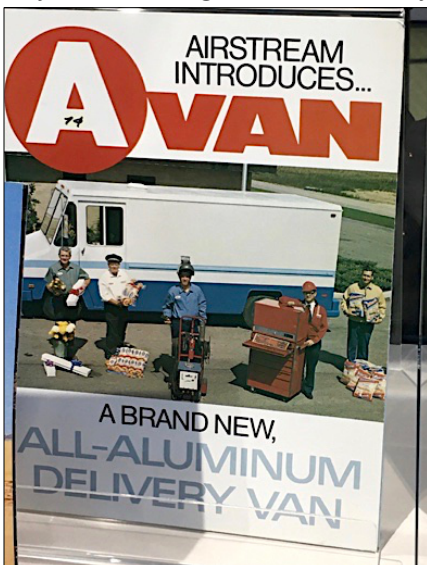
How many at Fryeburg noticed this often-forgotten piece of Airstream history?



Parked next to the Mountain View Pavilion, a bit forlorn looking, with a for sale sign propped up on its dashboard, it lured in those that were curious about this seemingly ordinary step van. Yes, it was an example of the Airstream A-Vans that were built in 1976 and 1977. These were all-aluminum bodied Airstream delivery trucks that became Airstream's short venture into the light weight truck market.

Let me set the stage historically, Beatrice Foods, a large corporate conglomerate, had purchased Airstream six years prior and had brought in a large amount of corporate cash to expand on the Airstream pedigree. Airstream was now producing the Argosy fleet of mid-priced travel trailers and was introducing the first motorhomes under the Argosy name badge. Affluent retirees were purchasing the longer high-end Airstreams in record numbers.

The oil embargo of 1973 Yom Kipper War had brought an awareness to the American public that the heavy steel based structures dominating the construction in the RV & truck industry were undesirable with the higher oil (fuel) cost that OPEC was demanding. Aluminum was proving to be very desirable and when you think of aluminum you think of Airstream. Airstream trailers were light-weight in those days benefiting from the heavy use of aluminum and plastic throughout their interiors.



Needless to say, aluminum was king and Airstream ventured into the lightweight truck industry in 1976. These all aluminum-welded body trucks were fitted with either a Ford or Chevy/GMC chassis. The largest contract was with the United States Postal Service. Unfortunately, the



price point that Airstream needed to sell them for was considerably higher than their heavier steel-based competition. Overall sales were disappointing and, with only about 500 produced, little is remembered about these Airstream A-Vans today.