

# The Hillbilly



Publication of Watchung NJ Airstream Club

[www.airstreamclub.org/watchung-nj](http://www.airstreamclub.org/watchung-nj) September 2023

## President's Message



*Strange goat? Not quite. A four-horned Jacob's sheep at the Otsego, NY county fair. Photo D. Conley.*

Hello fellow Watchungers. The August Rally is but a memory now. Lots of planning by Linda, Laura and myself, and some really favorable weather from Mother nature helped ensure that everything went off without a hitch. Our Region 2, 1st.VP Patti Galupo was in attendance. Please come out again Patti, it's always a pleasure. A big thank you to Niki Palmer from SkyMed for coming up from Florida to give us a great presentation and for sponsoring our Friday night pizza dinner. If you're going to be out on the road and are interested SkyMed coverage, give Niki a call and she will explain all the benefits that being a SkyMed member will bring. She can be reached at 813-525-1432 or at [Niki.Palmer@Skymed.com](mailto:Niki.Palmer@Skymed.com)

Friday brought us to Knoebels to eat potato pancakes and people-watch. It was pretty crowded, with families and children from all over. The nice part of Knoebels is that there is no admission fee. You buy tickets to use for the rides that you want to go on. You can spend an entire day there and enjoy the park and a few rides, and not spend a fortune. Pretty rare in today's world.

Saturday a group of us went to Ashland PA to the Pioneer Coal Mine Museum. It was a good tour into the mine on an old mine railroad car. Dark, cold and wet. Narrow seams of coal on an angle going up from the floor of the mine. It really gives you an appreciation for what these

men and even boys endured to get coal from the earth.

A big thank you goes out to Linda and Laura Raymond for putting together some really nice raffle baskets for our charity. An even bigger thank you goes out to all the rally attendees for their generosity in donating money for St. Jude Children's Hospital. We raised \$361.00 from our small group, for a yearly running total so far of \$968.00. I think that really goes to the measure of our group. We're not uber-wealthy elites. We're just average people that are willing to open their hearts for the good of these children. It makes me proud to have friends such as all of you. Thank you again for your support.

So, on we go! We have 2 more opportunities to camp together before we go into luncheon season. There is still time and I believe a few spots left to sign up for the September rally at Pine Creek Campground in Newfield NY, and for our Oktoberfest rally at Peaceful Woodlands Campground in Blakeslee PA. See our website for signup details.

That's all for now. Rubber side down. George Kiesel

**"Don't walk in front of me; I may not follow. Don't walk behind me; I may not lead. Walk beside me; just be my friend." - Albert Camus**



## Region 2 President's Message

*Gary Russo writes:*



During the month of August, Patti Galupo and I were busy connecting with clubs in Region 2. Patti was at a Watchung rally in Pennsylvania. Suzanne and I had the chance to take part in the Metro club's potluck dinner Saturday night and to meet with people at the Finger Lakes RV Resort. What a great assortment of food! The next week we were at Laurel Hill State Park in Pennsylvania where we connected with the Al-Mon-O club. We are off to a running start!

While at each gathering, Patti and I continued to emphasize that the clubs run on volunteers and that when a vote on a topic comes along, it is an opportunity to voice their opinions. I cannot stress how important it is for you to Vote! A very low percentage of the membership votes.

You are ambassadors for your club and WBBCCI. I want to challenge all club members that if you see an Airstream Trailer without a Big Red Number (BRN). Go over and ask if they are a member of WBBCCI. If they are not them the advantages of being a member of the club.

Just a quick teaser, the Region 2 team has been working on the Region 2 2024 rally! Save the date May 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>. Right now, we have the date and are working with the event site on the particulars before we announce the location. Most people who know me know that I like to have a theme for the event. The 2024 Rallies theme will be 'Pursue Your Adventure'. Airstreamers are the adventurist type.

Safe travels and see you down the road!

## Second VP Search

*Frank deHerde writes:*

Hello Everyone,

Laura Raymond and I are searching for a member to fill the position of 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President for 2023-2024.

Before becoming an Officer in the Club, I thought an Executive Board position would be very time-consuming, which stopped me from getting involved. Then the Club needed someone to file for the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP position. I agreed to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> VP. After being a 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, a 1<sup>st</sup> VP, and President, I realized these positions only take 1 to 2 hours a month. Most months take zero time!

An explanation of the Duties of 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President are:

- ✓ *Assist the President and the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*
- ✓ *Assume the Duties of the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President in the absence of the said Officer*
- ✓ *Assume the Duties of the President in case of the absence of the President and 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*
- ✓ *Reach out to Members to plan Rallies and Luncheons.*

If you are thinking of or would like to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President. My email is [deherde@hotmail.com](mailto:deherde@hotmail.com), or call me at 908.419.4978 or contact Laura's email [LA9BSG@gmail.com](mailto:LA9BSG@gmail.com), or her cell 646.483.6539

*Thank You  
Frank DeHerde  
Past President*



## In Memorium: William Funk

*Fred Brugmans writes:*

On August 23 William Funk passed away in Dodgeville, WI. Bill was 93 years old. Bill and His wife Doris were old timers and Watchung past presidents, Bill in 1988 and Doris in 1995. They were very active in the club. They both worked full time and did not come home until well after 6.00 o'clock. Then they hooked up the trailer and went on their way to the weekend rally sometimes 2 or 3 hours down the road. It was not easy to set up camp close to midnight. But they would not miss a weekend.

One of their most amazing tales was their accident. I don't recall the exact year, maybe 1964 or 65. The Funks attended an International, in Wyoming, I think, and traded their trailer in for a brand-new Airstream. On the way home somewhere in Nebraska Doris was driving and got pushed off the Interstate by a passing eighteen-wheeler and rolled over. Totaled the trailer and the towing vehicle. They were not hurt but the trip was cancelled. A wrecker towed them to a small village and put them up in a barn. Bill contacted the dealer from which had purchased the brand-new unit a few days before and convinced the dealer to get a replacement unit and have it delivered to "the barn" in this little town in Nebraska. How he convinced the dealer to do this, I still do not know, but a week later the dealer showed up with a replacement trailer and took the battered unit back home. That took care of the Airstream, but there still was no towing vehicle. Bill went to a Hertz rental and rented a small box truck without mentioning what he wanted to do with it; the rental agency would have never given him the unit if he had. Box trucks do not come with trailer brakes unit and anti-sway supports. The owner of the barn where the remnants of the tow vehicle were stored helped Bill salvage the coupling from the tow vehicle and weld it onto the rear bumper of the box truck. How they ever made it to New Jersey I don't know, but Bill had some explaining to do for how the bumper of the box truck grew a tow hitch.

# Welcome New Members!

Pat and Flo Attanasio

## SUNSHINE

A Congratulations card was sent to Meg Riley on the birth of her new grandson, a Congratulations card was sent to Kerri and Luke Eilbacher on the birth of their daughter Cassidy, and a Sympathy card was sent to Lynda Kresge following the passing of her mom.

Would you like a card sent to another club member to wish them well? Please send a note to Linda Kiesel, our Sunshine Director. [lkiesel@ptd.net](mailto:lkiesel@ptd.net).

## September Birthdays

Tom Feury, Lynda Kresge, Mark Ratliff,  
Wilma Crawford, Rober Cucci

## *Bits and Pieces*

Items for the newsletter? Send them to Derek Conley by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. ([dconley1810@gmail.com](mailto:dconley1810@gmail.com))

Interested in joining the Watchung NJ Airstream club?

Contact:

President: George Kiesel ([gkiesel861@gmail.com](mailto:gkiesel861@gmail.com))

Membership: Lea Plant ([tenlea@aol.com](mailto:tenlea@aol.com))

## 2024 Watchung Airstream Club Luncheon and Rally Schedule

*With five months to go before the start of our 2024 season it's not too early to start thinking about next year's club activities. Please consider volunteering to help make 2024 another successful year. —Ed.*

DATE	WHAT/WHEN	HOSTS	COHOSTS	VENUE
January 2024	Luncheon	Ken and Nancy		
February 2024	Luncheon			
March 2024	Luncheon	Meg and Laura		
April 2024	Unbutton/Business Meeting			
May 2024	Region 2 Rally May 3-5	TBD	TBD	TBD
June 2024	Club Rally			
July 2024	Club Rally			
August 2024	Club Rally			
September 2024	Club Rally			
October 2024*	International Rally	WBCCI	NA	MO State Fairgrounds, Sedalia, MO
October 2024	Club Rally/Business Meeting			
November 2024	Luncheon			
December 2024	Luncheon/Officer Installation	Leslie DeHerde	Lea Plant	

\* Registration for the 2024 67<sup>th</sup> Airstream Club International Rally in Sedalia, Missouri has begun! If you want to park together, you must arrive/enter together. Currently some club members are planning to arrive a day early, 10/4/24. If you would like to join that group be sure to sign up for October 4<sup>th</sup> (additional \$50) then let Lea Plant know ([tenlea@aol.com](mailto:tenlea@aol.com)) so that she can send the list to Headquarters. They will let us know at a later date what time we will get parked. As October of 2024 gets closer, we will be in contact about where (outside of the Missouri State Fairgrounds) we will meet up.

## 2023 Luncheon and Rally Schedule

**2023 September Rally:** September 15-17, Pine Creek Campground in Newfield, New York. Hosted by Mark & Angie Ratliff and Cohost Rebecca Glick. See information below.

**2023 Octoberfest Rally & Business Meeting:** Rich & Kathi Short and Lea Plant. See information below.

**2023 November Luncheon** Hosted by Barbara Taylor and Michael Koczwara and cohosts Cathy and Jay McCarthy.

**2023 December Luncheon and Officer Installation** Lea Plant and George Kiesel

## How to Sign Up and Pay for an Event Online

*Our Treasurer writes:*

So, I have to admit that when I first tried to register for an event online I had difficulty navigating to the online event forms. For that reason I thought I would share this information just in case others have had the same experience as me.

1. First, log on to <https://airstreamclub.org/>
2. Click on the **EVENTS** tab
3. A map of the US will be displayed containing pins for all the events for all the Airstream clubs. Just above the map on the right side of the screen is the **Clubs** box. Click on the down arrow to display the list of clubs then scroll down to **Watchung NJ Club**. Clicking on this will cause the map to display only Watchung club events.
4. Find the event you wish to sign up for and click on the associated pin.
5. A text box giving a brief description of the event will be displayed. Click on the arrow in the orange box that says **More**.
6. A new page will be displayed. If a registration form has been created for the event this page will give you two options: online registration or mail-in registration using a download of the form. The online form allows payment via PayPal. If you prefer to pay via check download and print the form, which includes payment instructions. If there is no registration form available yet one will be at a later date.

Hope this helps 😊 Lois



# September 2023 Rally Information

*Mark Ratliff writes:*

The theme of the rally will be "Choose Your Own Adventure". On the second page of the online coupon ( <https://airstreamclub.org/watchung-september-2023-rally>) we have listed several events and attractions in the area with informational links for each. Examples include a cheese-making tour, horseback riding, a sail on Seneca Lake, and winery tours. At Friday's Happy Hour we will have a poster board where folks can use post-it notes to indicate which attraction(s) they would like to go to on Saturday. We will then put together groups that will go have fun together on Saturday.

Note one "special" event: The Tin Can Tourist group will be at Sampson State Park and we hope will be featuring a couple of members of Watchung, Hunt and Sue Jones. Tin Can Tourists have their open house on Saturday where you can see all of their refurbished vintage trailers.

Angie and I will arrive on Wednesday the 13th and leave on Monday the 18th. If you are arriving early or staying later, just let us know and we will find something fun to do.

If you have any questions, let me know. If you don't have any questions, then head on over to the rally web page and register <https://airstreamclub.org/watchung-september-2023-rally> .The rally will be held at [Pine Creek Campground](#) in Newfield NY from September 15 - 17. It is situated a little south of and about 1/2 way between Watkins Glen and Ithaca. Some of you will remember visiting the campground some years ago for a Region 2 rally. It's a nice campground in a convenient location for exploring the areas around Seneca and Cayuga lakes.

Here is the link to their [Campsite Map](#). Your hosts will be at site 138. Ask to reserve a site nearby if possible. Please give Pine Creek a call to make your reservation. You can call the main number at 607-273-1974.

Full hookup sites near site 138 cost \$52/night. [Current or retired military members receive a 10% discount.]. Other sites are available with more amperage, different lengths, and pull-through convenience at varying costs and in other locations within the campground. If you want to stay for extra days, feel free to arrive earlier and/or leave later. If you cancel one week in advance they will refund all but one night's stay. You have to pay the total amount at the time you make the reservation.

We hope you will join us. Mark Ratliff

## September Rally Itinerary

### Friday September 15

9 AM: Hiking/biking for those that arrive early.

Noon: Campground check-in

5 PM: Happy hour and a selection of Choose Your Own Adventure Activities Saturday Outings

6:30 PM: Pot luck dinner. Bring a dish to share.

### Saturday September 16

8-9 AM: Breakfast featuring Fred Brugman's Famous Canadian Oatmeal, fresh fruit and coffee

Noon: Choose Your Own Adventure Activities Saturday Outings

6:30 PM: Catered dinner

7-10 PM: Trick Shot Band, Pinecreek Campground Lodge

### Sunday September 17

8-9 AM: Breakfast. Yogurt, granola, coffee

11 AM: Campground checkout for those departing

\*\*\*\*\* Cut here and send with check if not registering online. Deadline September 8\*\*\*\*\*  
SEPTEMBER RALLY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_ Big Red Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Rally Fee per adult: \$35.00 x number of adults \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Pay and register online (link above)

Or

Make checks payable to Watchung NJ Airstream Club. Mail check and coupon to: Lois Wagner,  
29 Colony Court, New Providence, NJ 07974.

# October 2023 Rally Information

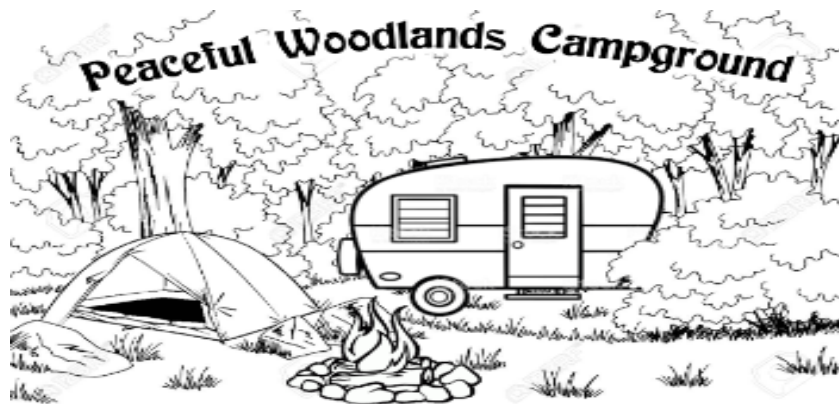
*Rich Short writes:*

Summer greetings to all.

There is still time and sites remaining to sign up for and attend our October Rally at Peaceful Woodlands Campground in the Pocono Mountains. We have nine rigs signed up for the Rally so far. Remember this is our Annual Business Meeting and also a Buddy Rally.

Below is the Rally coupon to send with your Rally Fee and contact info for the campground to reserve your site. Looking forward to seeing you!

Your hosts Rich and Kathi Short, Lea Plant.



**Peaceful Woodlands Family Campground 114 WT Family Blvd  
Blakeslee Pa 18610 570-646-9255  
<https://www.peacefulwoodlands.com/>**

**OKTOBERFEST RALLY : COLUMBUS DAY WEEKEND :  
OCTOBER 5 –9**

**Come on out and spend Columbus Day Weekend in the Pocono Mountains. Family owned and operated; the Peaceful Woodlands Campground sits on 50 acres at the base of the Dixon Miller Recreation Area (Elevation 2212 ft.) which is one of the highest accessible points**

overlooking the Pocono Plateau. Situated within easy driving distance to several State Parks, the Hauser Nature Center, and Austin T. Blakeslee Natural Area, you will find plenty of opportunity for hiking, exploring, bird watching, or just plain relaxing. This is a Buddy Rally and our **Club Business Meeting** when we vote for our 2024 slate of Officers.

Call the Campground, tell them you are with the **AIRSTREAM CLUB** and **make your reservation now** as we cannot hold the sites indefinitely. Please email Rich at [rcshort49@gmail.com](mailto:rcshort49@gmail.com) with your site # after you register with the campground. The Campground website has an interactive campsite map, with pictures and video. **B3, B7, D9, D11, D13, D14, F3, F5, F7, F11, F13, F14, S3, S5, S10** are our reserved sites. **To get the discount rate and reserve a site with the group you must call the Campground by July 30<sup>th</sup>! As they say on TV... "Don't delay-call today!"**

Full information about the Oktoberfest Rally will follow in the coming months.

We look forward to seeing you at Peaceful Woodlands in October.

**Your Hosts: Rich (609-618-0355) and Kathi Short 1512  
Lea Plant 2256**

October 5 (Thursday)

Campground Check in time: 3:00

Happy Hour: 4:00 - ? bring an appetizer to share

**BYO** plates, utensils, chairs, and beverage

Dinner: On Your Own

October 6 (Friday)

Explore the Area <https://www.peacefulwoodlands.com/local-activities.html>

\* Souper Happy Hour: 4:00 - 6:00

**BYO** plates, utensils, chairs, and beverage

6:00 - soup and bread will be provided

Campfire: weather permitting

\* Souper Happy Hour - Enjoy appetizers each brought to share and combine with our provided soup de jour for an easy dinner

October 7 (Saturday)

Breakfast: 8:30 - 9:30 (pancakes, sausage, juice)

**BYO** plates, utensils, chairs, and coffee

Explore the Area (see link above)

Happy Hour: 4:00 - 6:00 - bring an appetizer to share

Dinner: 6:00 (Brats, sides, dessert)

**BYO** plates, utensils, chairs, and beverage

After dinner: St. Jude's charity raffle

Campfire: weather permitting

The Hillbilly

October 8 (Sunday)

Continental Breakfast: 8:30 - 9:30

**BYO** plates, utensils, chairs, and coffee

Executive Meeting: 9:30

Annual Business Meeting (Members): 10:00

Explore the Area (see link above)

Dinner: On Your Own

October 9 (Monday)

Continental Breakfast: 8:30 - 9:30

**BYO** plates, utensils, chairs, and coffee

Campground Check out: 2:00

Please do not bring your pet during Happy Hour/mealtimes. Thank you.

Deadline for Rally Fee: September 20th

Hosts - Rich (908-618-0355) & Kathi Short and Lea Plant (973-477-0289)

\*\*\*\*\* CUT HERE AND SEND WITH CHECK IF NOT REGISTERING ONLINE \*\*\*\*\*

OCTOBER RALLY COUPON

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Cell# \_\_\_\_\_ BRN \_\_\_\_\_

Rally Fee per adult; \$15.00 x number of adults \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- Pay and register ONLINE

or

- Make checks payable to Watchung NJ Airstream Club. Mail check and coupon to:  
Lois Wagner, 29 Colony Court, New Providence NJ 07974-2332

# October 2023 Rally Information



## November Watchung Airstream Luncheon

Saturday, November 4, 2023 at 12:00

Location: The Little York, 569 Spring Mills Rd, Milford NJ

Hosts: Barbara & Michael Koczwarra Contact: [allofus1989@gmail.com](mailto:allofus1989@gmail.com) or 609-947-6789

Co-hosts: Cathy & Jay McCarthy Contact: [cathylmcc@msn.com](mailto:cathylmcc@msn.com) or 215-833-8647

Doors Open: 11:30 for Cash Bar Luncheon: 12:00

Entrée Choices – Please Select When Signing Up for Luncheon

- 1-Cobb Salad with Bleu Cheese Crumbles, Hard Boiled Egg, Bacon and All-Natural Grilled Chicken
- 2-Homemade Stuffed Shells with Tomato Sauce
- 3- Fried Onion Smashburger with Cooper Cheese served with hand cut French fries

Luncheon Includes: Pizza Appetizers  
Pitchers of Soda on the Table  
Coffee and/or Tea  
Assorted Mini Desserts

Please Bring a Donation for Our Food Drive (Flemington Area Food Pantry)

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**November luncheon coupon. RESERVATION DEADLINE: October 27, 2023**

**Maximum of 30 attendees – please sign up early!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ WBCCI #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

# of People: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$36.00 per person = Total \$: \_\_\_\_\_

Food Choice:  Cobb Salad  Stuffed Shells  Smashburger

Signup online at our website or mail check and completed form to Barbara Taylor, 44 Titus Mill Rd, Pennington NJ 08534. Make Checks payable to Watchung NJ Airstream Club

# August Rally Report

*Erika Beddiges writes:*

Watchung's August 2023 Rally was held at Lake Glory, Catawissa, PA. Among the many things to do in the area is Knoebels Amusement Park. Knoebels is one of the oldest amusement parks in Pennsylvania dating back 100 years! This year the Haunted House celebrated their 50th year anniversary. Aside from awesome rides and entertainment there is great food! Best of all, there is NO entrance fee! You only pay for what you want to do.

The "Lake Glory" campground is part of Knoebels. They have a shuttle that will take you and bring you back. The sites were spacious, the campground hosts and employees were friendly and helpful.

Our rally hosts George & Linda Kiesel and Co-host Laura Raymond made the rally an exceptional event. Wow, 16 rigs and 2 buddies attended. Buddy rallies are always great to have, leaving the door open for non-member dear friends and families. Watchung will always welcome you to join in the fun. It's about lasting friendships and carving memories to take forward with you in life.

We were very excited to have 2 of our new members join us. Flo and Pat Attanasio from Oak Ridge, NJ and



*Lea Plant and Kathi Short contemplate riding the Twister at Knoebels. Photo Rich Short.*



*One of the covered bridges we had to avoid on our way to the campground. Photo Rich Short.*

Sharon and Joe Moran also from NJ. It was a great pleasure to welcome them aboard.

There was never any shortage of fabulous food! Pancake breakfasts, compliments of our Hosts, and Happy Hour snacks provided by our campers. By the end of happy hour I saw many sharing and writing down recipes to take home with them. Great friendships are created over a meal and cocktail. I always wondered why it is called Happy Hour as the happiness always goes beyond an hour!

Friday night pizza dinner was provided by an energetic young lady, Nikki Palmer, who represents a service called Sky Med. Sky Med provides coverage that most other medical insurance falls short on: helicopter and ambulance services which

covers you 100% in the event of a major trauma. It is the type of coverage that travelers benefit from, pray they never have to use, yet are happy to have when the need arises. If you travel extensively you may want to reach out to Nikki and get the full explanation of what Sky Med will do for you. If interested, Nikki's mobile #813-525-1431.

The Watchung meeting was held Saturday morning, which our current president will fill you in on. I will however reach out to all members seasoned and new to think about stepping up the ladder to fill the open spot of 2nd Vice President. As 2nd V.P. you will get to be part of what keeps Watchung successful. For more details on responsibilities etc., contact George Kiesel who is the club expert, having done this for his third time! Might I mention he is the oldest member, not in age but in membership longevity.

Our hosts provided a fabulous barbecue meal on Saturday night catered by Dan's BBQ from Catawissa, PA. Pulled pork, pulled chicken, potato salad and mac n cheese. All following a table full



*Watchung club president George Kiesel with Region 2 First Vice President Patti Galupo. Photo Rich Short.*

of great appetizers. Chris almost had to roll me back to the camper, I was so full. It was all so good and hard to resist going back for more.

Patti Galupo, our Region 2 First Vice President chose to join our rally to get to know our Watchung members. It was great to meet her. She was full of stories and ideas of how to continue to build on our past success as a club. She also brought some super-sized shrimp to our happy hour festivities. Go big or go home!

Sometimes life gets in the way and you can't do everything you would like to do, which has been the case for Chris and I. The August rally was our first time out this season and we enjoyed reminiscing with our seasoned members, catching up with the buddies we've missed and getting to know our new members. There's nothing like sitting around the campfire swapping stories, enjoying the camaraderie and laughing til the embers die and we say goodnight. It was a great time for us. You don't know what you've missed until it's gone!

Hopefully next year we'll be able to come out more often. Til then, keep the shiny side up, smile more and laugh til it hurts or you pee yourself !

Warm regards to all,

Erika Beddiges  
Past First Lady



*George Kiesel's famous blueberry pancakes. Photo Laura Raymond.*



# Alaska Caravan Report

*Leslie DeHerde writes*

To begin, some basic information about caravanning with WBCCI. The first Alaska caravan was held in 1965 and has been coming up to our 49<sup>th</sup> state ever since. The Alaska caravan is one of the longest: 62 days. It is also one of the most challenging since Alaskan roads in places are still dirt and even the paved roads can be rough. I was able to make this trip with my grandparents in 1968 with the WBCCI Caravan. At that time there were about 100 campers on the trip. There is a long waiting list for the Alaskan caravan. We had been on the list for a few years and the caravan did not travel during Covid, making the list even longer. This year our name finally came up.

The caravan begins in Dawson Creek, Yukon in early July. For those of us in New Jersey it takes some



*Dirt portion of the Alaska Highway. Photo L. DeHerde.*



*Leslie DeHerde with her grandfather during the 1968 Alaska Caravan. Photo courtesy Leslie DeHerde.*

planning to

get there. We

stopped in

South Dakota and attended the Calgary Stampede on the way. At Dawson Creek we met our group of 32 campers and about 62 Airstreams and received our book that lays out the planned travel and activities for the entire 62 days. Our leaders made sure to answer any questions at our drivers' meetings the day we all arrived and then typically the evening prior to travelling to the next stop.

During our meetings the mantra was to be flexible: it is what it is and smile! This is a very important lesson to carry along as there can be challenges. We also had a volunteer weatherman that gave us an informal weather report for the upcoming travel day including a smoke report since in the early stages of the trip we were in areas of wildfires.

Alaska is still an untamed wilderness in so many areas that is important to be prepared with a spare



*Shockingly, New Jersey isn't listed on this Fairbanks mileage marker so Leslie had to make do with the next best alternative, New York City. Photo courtesy Leslie DeHerde.*

tire and key parts for your Airstream. There are areas of the trip where services are very limited; you may need to depend on your fellow travelers for advice and assistance.

The Alaska Highway, also called the ALCAN highway, short of Alaska-Canadian, is where the trip begins, and it is rough in many spots. This is the same highway I traveled to Alaska as a child; it was entirely dirt then. It is in much better shape now although there are still areas that are dirt and areas being repaired. Nevertheless, we managed quite well. In our group there were a few flat tires, but the campers had their own spares which only needed mounting. There have been some tow-vehicle issues but so far everyone has been able to continue the trip. The important thing is to take your time and know there will be DUST! I believe I will find dust for years to come and what nice memories I will have when I find it.

The campgrounds the caravan visits are different than what you may be accustomed to. They are generally more primitive and many of them are tight, but the majority have hookups. The caravan leaders arranged some Get Acquainted Meetings (GAMS) during the first few weeks on the road to allow the caravaners to get to know one another.

My favorite memory so far will be the night we left Delta junction by ferry (I believe it is the same ferry we went over in 1968) across the Yukon River to the top of the mountain highway. On the highway we dry camped in a gravel pit and five other Airstreamers joined us for the night. We stayed up to see the midnight sun and then in the A.M. had a potluck breakfast. We made blueberry pancakes, scrambled eggs and bacon with coffee of course. It was a special moment.

Some of our locations have had planned activities and all have had free time so you can go out on your own or with some other campers and explore the area or engage in an activity not



*On the 1968 Alaska Caravan an Airstream rides a ferry to get to the other side. Photo courtesy Leslie DeHerde.*

included. I found the planned activities all very nice and varied. Each area of Alaska has been unique, the beginning of the trip it was drier and was located in the gold rush areas. We then traveled to Denali which is a National Park so a bit more rural. Denali requires some pre-planning: there is a popular National Park Service bus tour that requires advance reservations and fills up quickly. Wildlife is plentiful in the park. We saw grizzly bears, sheep, and moose. We also were lucky enough to actually see Denali the mountain the park is named for as it is often shrouded in fog and clouds. It was spectacular. We also spent time on the coast and in Kenai where glaciers are abundant and fishing is a way of life. Then on to Homer and Valdez which are rainforest areas so a wetter and absolutely beautiful. We have not yet completed our journey, the caravan ends September 13 and we will then travel home.



*Bald eagle about to ignore the No Fishing sign. Photo L. DeHerde.*

Last but not Least

**And you thought Jersey has potholes?**



*Lois Wagner studies the 38-foot deep pothole in Archbald Pothole State Park near Scranton, PA. Discovered in 1884 by coal miners when the roof of a mine tunnel caved in, revealing the pothole above, the pothole was created by a huge vortex of glacial meltwater scouring the bedrock below a retreating glacier about 10,000 years ago.*



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