

POLISHING AN AIRSTREAM TRAILER

SECOND EDITION

It has been six or seven years since we wrote about Airstream polishing. Fred Bothman, WBCCI # 9318, who provided the original information, has worked the polishing metamorphosis on four trailers since that time. His most recent 17 foot 1964 Bambi 2 now has such a mirror finish that you can put your arm against the side and clearly see each reflected arm hair. Where his first attempt could be described as shiny with a white haze, this most recent has an absolutely spectacular molten finish. Fred describes the most recent procedure.

Step 1 – Take off all awnings, nameplates, plastic pieces, and miscellaneous hardware. Get Strip-Eze in an aerosol can and use it to strip the plastic coat. Choose a cloudy day with high humidity; spray a 10-foot section, top to bottom. When it turns white, hose it off. Do the whole trailer.

Step 2 – Get Super Heavy Duty Rubbing Compound from 3-M at paint or automotive finishing stores. Buy an industrial buffer with a 10 – 12 inch double-sided buffing pad. Get 3 cutting and 2 buffing pads. Put a small amount of rubbing compound on the surface and high-speed buff with the cutting pad. If it turns black instantly you have used too much compound. Do this process in the shade. You are taking the grain out of the metal. It will look good when finished but will have a light haze and swirl marks. **Step 3** – Buy one pound of Nuvite grade C polishing paste from www.perfectpolish.com on the Internet. With a new cutting pad on the buffer, use finger daubs of the paste and buff again. This process goes much faster and gets rid of the heavy swirl marks.

Step 4 – Buy one gallon Aluminum Prep or Star Bright at a NAPA Auto Parts store. Dilute the acid to recommended strength. Choose a shady afternoon so the sun does not dry it too quickly. Use a very soft plastic bristly brush with a push broom handle and wash the surface with the acid. Do one side at a time and rinse with water before it dries. While rubber gloves are not mandatory, they are recommended, as is eye covering. When done rinsing, rinse again with emphasis on all cracks. Finally, RINSE AGAIN! If you don't get the acid all rinsed off you will leave heavy white streaks in the metal. After the process the Airstream will turn a white milk color.

Step 5 – Use the high speed buffer with buffing pads and Nuvite S to remove the milky white. A finger full of the compound will do a 3' by 3' area. This will produce a mirror shine with swirl marks from the high-speed buffer.

As a footnote, Fred painted the trailer top without completing any polishing steps on it. He used Interlux Blue Glo White, an aluminum boat paint that is self leveling (brush marks settle out). He purchased one quart and applied it in the shade.



Fred Bothman and his refinished trailer -submitted by Deborah Brooks, #9314