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# Grapes & Grains Growler February 2026



While winter may still have some of us bundled up, we're already looking ahead to an exciting year of Grapes & Grains adventures! Check out our open upcoming rallies and caravan—we couldn't be more excited about this year's lineup and the chance to get sippin' together again.

From the Desk of G&G President  
Steve Turley

## The Trials and Tribulations of Eleanor

Who exactly is Eleanor, and why is she relevant to the members of Grapes & Grains? Eleanor is a three-year-old, 28' Pottery Barn Special Edition currently dressed in BRN 5414. Her story is a bit...unique. Her name has a bit of history. Her vibe is pure Airstream.

Eleanor is in her second iteration, the first being a 2020 25' Flying Cloud. We purchased her on a Saturday, after waking up wondering what we wanted to do that day. I said, "Let's drive up to Ft. Worth and look at Airstreams!" Why not? Football season hadn't yet started, so we made the three-hour trek up to Ft. Worth, stopping (of course) at Slovacek's in West (IYKYK). Now, this was right after the dreaded COVID disaster and Airstream of DFW's six-acre, air-conditioned showroom sported a grand total of eight Airstreams for sale. You read that correctly—eight! Well, none were exactly what we were looking for, so we were trying to love an International with red leather seating. They called it "Serenity" and I'm not quite sure what is serene about that color or red, but there we were.

About that time, our salesman stuck his head in the door and said somebody was bringing in a Flying Cloud that was exactly what we were looking for. So, we grabbed some lunch, and they wheeled it into the showroom for us. With nearly six empty acres in which to park, one could only wish for a campsite so roomy! We returned from lunch, made a 12-second walk-through and licked the door handle (not really). We were Airstream owners! We sat on the J lounge and wondered what we should name her. The name came instantly, and we both agreed, Eleanor! Named after the Shelby GT from the movie "Gone in Sixty Seconds." Gone, just like our money!

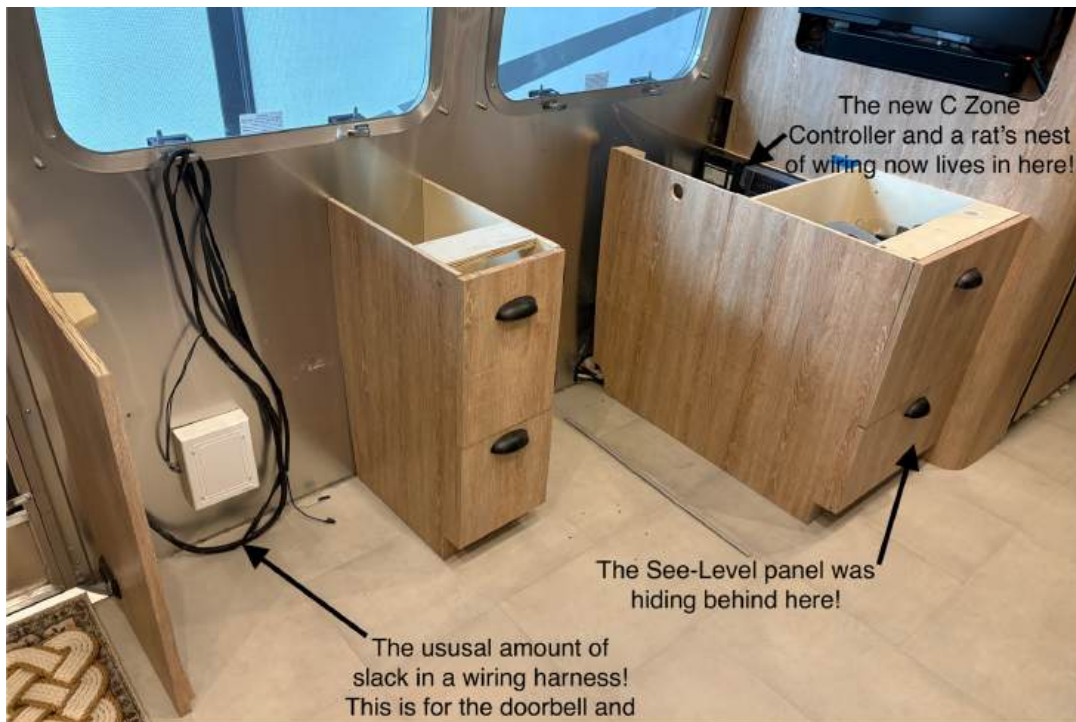
Fast forward to the International Rally in Rock Springs. I had spent a lot of time and effort building a custom coffee bar and storage compartment in that famous J lounge. I think this was the first rally we attended after spending a ridiculous amount of money to completely re-upholster the J lounge to make it feel more like the Pottery Barn Edition. So, what happened? On the last day of the rally, we traded her in on an actual Pottery Barn. And then made quite the spectacle completely emptying our Eleanor and trying to figure out where everything was going to go in the new rig. After about 36 hours' worth of work crammed into three hours, we towed her back over to our site and hooked back up for the last night before leaving the next morning. We sat on the couch and asked ourselves what we should name her? Eleanor! Of course! More money gone in sixty seconds!

Fast forward to this past fall, after camping season was over. Not being able to leave well enough alone, we began to update Eleanor. The plan was to pull out the dinette and replace it with an L-shaped dining bar that runs underneath the curbside windows. Did I mention we just paid a bunch more money to put new foam in the dinette cushions—that we're now not using at all? All went well until I unscrewed the dinette seat adjacent to the bathroom wall, under the TV. I already knew the C Zone system lived under there, along with the approximately 17 miles of extra wiring harness (everyone who's ever worked on an Airstream just rolled their eyes). What I could not see through the porthole designed for use only by GI Joe action figures, was a totally redundant SeeLevel display was also hiding under there. The one with the four buttons for Water, Black, Gray and Battery. The information that is displayed on the C Zone display right above it, and on my phone, if I cared to check there. Typically, that would not be an issue since, you know, there is always 17 miles of extra wiring attached. But NO! In this case, the SeeLevel display was screwed into the inside of the dinette base—totally invisible from above—and connected by no more than 1/2 inch of 18-gauge wire in a tiny 4-prong connector.

When I tilted the dinette seat away from the wall to see what was hanging up, the wires snapped, the unit shorted and out went all the lights. All of them! Since the C Zone system controls literally every electrical thing in the rig, Eleanor was officially out of

commission. And this was beyond my scope of expertise, so I wasn't going to be fixing this issue. Fortunately, I was able to call on Grapes & Grains member, Tim Love with Cross-Country RV Solutions. He was able to diagnose the issue, but the problem required factory-programmed parts to fix. We then called on Bob Jones RV repair in Houston to do the factory-authorized work. I broke it, so no warranty here! It's only money, even if it's "gone in sixty seconds!"

We just got Eleanor back from the shop last week, and I'm ready to proceed with the upgrade. I have the new cabinet bases in and am ready to build the countertop to fit. Eleanor will then be a one-of-a-kind, and she is excited to see our Grapes & Grains friends this year. We are excited to get back out there and start camping again. Our season starts in mid-March, and extends through the end of September, unless we find something else that we can squeeze into our schedule! We so look forward to seeing YOU out there this year. If you see us, be sure to stop by and say hello! We're always happy to show folks what can be done to make your Airstream your own! And maybe how NOT to break things while doing it.



The current state of Eleanor's remodel, sans the countertop.

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# Rallies! Rallies! Rallies!



## We still have spots available on these awesome Rallies and Caravan!

Sip of Texas IV - April 23-26 - New Braunfels, TX - ONE SPOT LEFT

**NEW!** Sipping Along the California Surf Caravan - May 4-16 - Paso Robles, CA to Napa, CA

**NEW!** Sip of the Northern Mitt - June 10-14 - Leelanau Peninsula, MI

**NEW!** Sip of the Salem Witch's Brew - June 24-28 - Salem, MA

Let's rock and rally! 🚚 ✨

Sign Up

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## From Matt's Cocktail Bar

### A Criterion For Your Collection

Depending on how you count ingredients, there are only two, maybe three if you include bitters, but it has taken up a permanent residence on my personal list of sippers. It's best served up in a coupe or Nick & Nora, but I suppose you could serve it over a large rock. If you do, you'd need to be careful how much dilution you would experience as the cocktail is very soft and delicate. There is no punchy rye or whisky so it might suffer a bit if served that way.

Created in the late 1800's, the Criterion started out as a large batch recipe and was only made for large groups of folks or for serving bar patrons throughout the evening. Over the years a single serving recipe, thankfully, is available with some adjustments to keep it in balance in smaller quantities. The cocktail is only Cognac with a small amount of Benedictine, but it gets its uniqueness from the Boker's Style Bitters.

Boker's Bitters were created by John Boker in the early 1800s, and features notes of cardamom, citrus, and coffee. They're a little hard to find but I have had success on Amazon grabbing Fee Brothers Cardamom bitters which impart an almost root beer note to the cocktail.

The expressed lemon on the rim is essential to pull in all your senses.

**The Criterion**

2.0 oz Cognac (Maison Rouge V.S.O.P.)

0.5 oz Benedictine

3 dashes of Cardamom Bitters

Stir with ice and strain into a coupe or Nick & Nora and express lemon peel over the top and rim.

Cheers,

Matt

#3044



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Getting to Know Your  
G&G Newsletter Editor



## **Meet Kelley McKinley G&G Newsletter Editor**

Here are five fun tidbits about Kelley McKinley, your new Grapes & Grains Newsletter Editor:

1. She's an Airstream weekend warrior.

Kelley and her husband Marcus spend as many weekends as possible exploring Virginia's state parks and scenic campgrounds in their Airstream. Their favorite spot? The rolling hills of the Shenandoah Valley.

2. She traded marathon running for scenic hikes.

Once an avid long-distance runner, Kelley now prefers to lace up her boots for peaceful hikes with beautiful views.

3. She's rediscovered her creative side through scrapbooking.

Kelley recently took up scrapbooking as a way to capture her favorite travel memories and add a personal touch to her adventures on the road.

4. She's passionate about making a difference.

Through her volunteer work with the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, Kelley helps raise awareness and build support for those affected by breast cancer.

5. She loves good food and great company.

From campground cookouts to potluck spreads, Kelley believes everything tastes better when shared with friends and paired with the perfect glass of wine.

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# Getting to Know Your G&G Regional Representatives

## Meet Sharon Haw & Barry Miller Region 2 Representatives

We love camping, hiking, biking -pretty much any outside activity...and then afterwards, we love hot showers, and comfortable beds. We consider ourselves camping realists—not glampers.

Barry's love for camping is one of the reasons why he joined the Army. He thought the army would be like one big camping trip. He was really surprised when he vfound that he didn't get to "camp" very much. Barry favorite training activities were the field excursions to “play army”. These were the few activities where he got to set up tents and camp out. The army is also where Barry acquired his love of strong coffee.



Personally, I have hiked and camped on the Appalachian Trail, in Yosemite, and in other beautiful parks with just a backpack of necessities and friends. Some memorable experiences include waking with my feet in icy water because it rained all night on an early winter hiking trip; watching the sunrise and sunset over the fire-kissed trees in Yosemite; avoiding mama bears and her cubs; and cooking fresh lake trout on a flat rock because I forgot to put my camping pan in my pack. Clearly, minimalist camping is no problem for us.

When Barry and I started dating, we tent camped a lot. We hiked everywhere we camped and usually chose campgrounds for the quality and challenges of the nearby trails. So, for the most part, normal camping. The one exception was our Bialetti espresso maker. There is nothing better than a strong espresso in the morning to prep for a pre-breakfast hike and the Bialetti makes an amazing espresso on the campfire. When our daughter Sami came along, we wanted to share with her our love of the outdoors and hiking. We changed to cabin camping because we wanted to reduce complexity and squeeze in as much fun as possible over a short weekend. As



Sami got older, life got more complicated, and we camped less frequently. School, sports, friends, other activities all took up our weekends and free time. We soon forgot how a simple weekend camping trip can relax and rejuvenate.

A few years ago, we started looking at RVs after Barry saw a Facebook post with a photo of an elderly couple asleep

in an Italian gondola. The caption read, "Why you shouldn't wait until retirement to travel". It was a wakeup call for him. He decided right then that we needed to start our pre-retirement travel plan. We started thinking about the easiest (and most fun) ways to take extended "vacations". How could we travel spontaneously and see the best parts of the country? Obviously, we should get an RV!

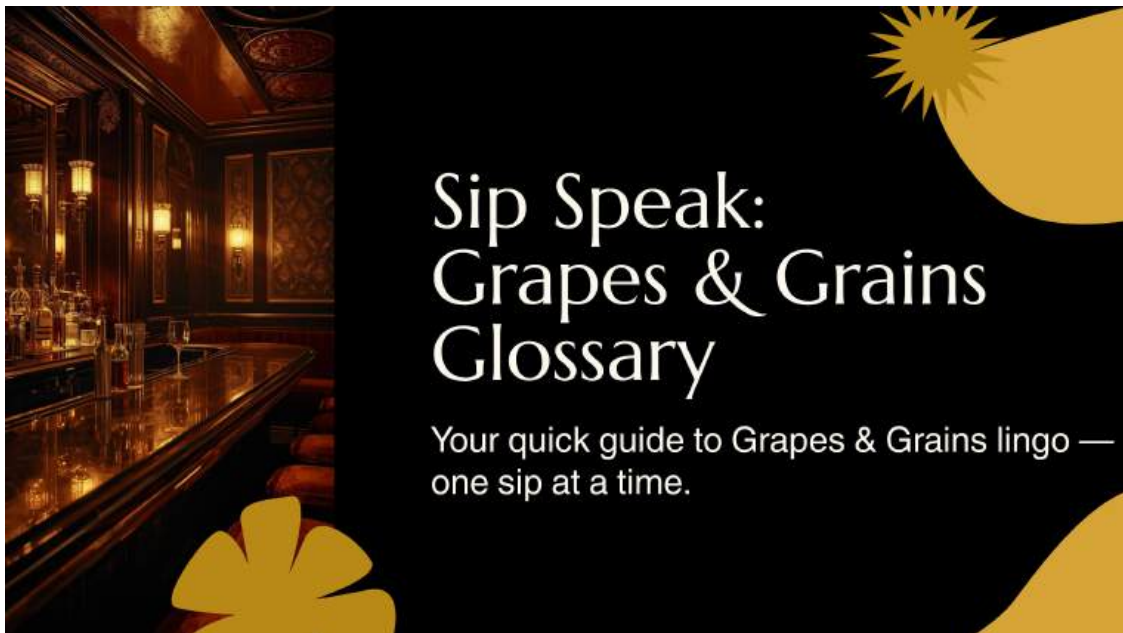
We looked at every kind of RV starting with the teardrops and class B camper vans. Neither of us realized that Airstream was still in business until a google search for travel trailer brands resulted in sites for the Airstream company, the Airstream Club, and many dealers and resellers. Once we saw one in person, we were hooked. We ordered our first Airstream in 2019, and I proceeded to make a camping reservation for every month starting in March 2020. We took delivery right before the pandemic hit. Every reservation I had made through July 2020 was cancelled and our beautiful new Airstream sat in our driveway. Our first trip in "The Guest House" was to Camp Hatteras in July 2020. It was a wonderful way to shakedown the new trailer, although Hatteras is so hot in July!

Since that first trip, we have mostly stayed close to home—Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and New York, and one stand out trip to the International in Missouri. We are looking forward to extending our travel reach next year and to get a little farther north and south. Our local Airstream clubs have helped us expand our friend circle and our new friends are an encyclopedia of all things Airstream and RV travel. Adding the Grapes and Grains Intra-Club created a way to connect with new friends from all over the U.S. and Canada who have travel experiences that have given us inspiration and encouragement to expand our travel radius.



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## Sip Speak




🍷 Welcome to Sip Speak—your go-to guide for the lingo, acronyms, and insider terms you’ll hear around Airstream Club International and our Grapes & Grains Intra-Club. Whether you’re a brand-new member still learning what “BRN” means, or a longtime rally-goer who occasionally scratches your head at a new abbreviation, this section is for you.

Each issue, we'll spotlight a few terms—keeping it light, clear, and useful—so everyone can feel right at home in the conversation. Because whether it's campground chatter, club business, or a Grapes & Grains toast, it's always more fun when you know the lingo.

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### **Sip**


A Sip is a Grapes & Grains rally that includes curated tastings, educational seminars, tours, and social gatherings focused on exploring premium wine, beer, or spirits with fellow members.

 Think of it as a boutique Grapes & Grains experience that is intimate in size and big on flavor, learning, and camaraderie.

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### **Caravan**


A Caravan is a group of Airstreamers traveling together on a planned route, often visiting multiple destinations over several days or weeks. Grapes & Grains Caravans frequently include exclusive tastings, distillery, brewery, or winery tours, and unique experiences along the way.

 Think of it as the ultimate road trip where the journey, the destinations, and the pours are all shared.

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### **Set Ups**


Set Ups refer to the BYO items members bring to Airstream Club rallies, Sips, and other Grapes & Grains events to enjoy the experience. This typically includes camp chairs, beverages, and table service such as plates, utensils, and cups/glasses for potlucks and tastings.

 Think of it as bringing everything you need to sip, savor, and settle in comfortably with friends.

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### **Host Rigs**

The Host Rig is the Airstream and campsite designated as the gathering spot for Grapes & Grains events, such as a bottle share, tasting, or social hour. The host welcomes fellow members to their site to sip, share, and socialize.

 Think of it as the clubhouse on wheels where the good pours and great conversations happen...campfire included.

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# Rallies! Rallies! Rallies!

**2026 Open or Waitlist Rallies Available**

- Sip of Virginia - April 9-12 ([WAITLIST](#))
- Sip of Texas IV - April 23-26 ([ONE SPOT LEFT](#))
- **NEW!** Sipping Along the California Surf Caravan - May 4-16 ([Click for more details](#))
- Grapes & Grains 101 - May 13-17 ([WAITLIST](#))
- Sip of Calistoga - May 21-26 ([WAITLIST](#))
- **NEW!** Sip of the Northern Mitt - June 10-14 ([Click for more details](#))
- **NEW!** Sip of the Salem Witch's Brew - June 24-28 ([Click for more details](#))
- Sipping Across The Dakotas - August 5-19 ([WAITLIST](#))



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