



March 2019 Airstreamer's Newsletter

February's Sierra Nevada luncheon brought out recent and old-time members for Mexican food at the Casa Grande Mexican Restaurant and Cantina; Susie Brown (2017), Anita & Gary Haskell (2007), Joan & John Lapham (2015), Terry & Eric Larson (2017), Diane Leipper (1995), Lyndi & Jack Schroeder (2004) and Dyann & Jerry Thornburg (2005). Gail and I (2007) were unable to make it up from Riverside but I picked my favorite, the Apretalados (shrimp & crab wrapped with bacon), from the photos found at <http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/memories/rallies/19ja-fb-lunches/gallery.html>.



(photos courtesy of sierranevadaairstreams.org)

Good news from a reliable source; many at the luncheon are planning to come to Washoe Lake, our 1st official rally of the year, weather permitting of course. My source also reported some excitement for our rally at the new Walker River State Recreation Area (May) and Rye Patch (April).

Speaking of Rye Patch, luncheon host Terry Larson (thanks Terry) reported on our April rally at Rye Patch State Recreation Area. We have the group campground reserved for Thursday thru Sunday. It's been a few years since the SNU has been here so Gary & Diane gave brief description on how to get there, some of the amenities and the campsites in the canyon along the tree lined Humboldt River. We'll have lots of space and close access to fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing; "water and shore birds, both resident and migratory, are common at Rye Patch. Canadian geese, coots, grebes and cormorants are frequently seen. Mule deer are known to roam the park and prong horned antelope are often sighted in the area surrounding the park" (sourced from the [nv.gov](http://parks.nv.gov) Rye Patch website). You can find out more about Rye Patch and its amenities at <http://parks.nv.gov/parks/rye-patch>.

Death Valley Dark Sky Festival Flash Rally – I had high hopes to support the Dark Sky Festival with a flash rally but life, rain and winter weather got in the way. We'll try to get this scheduled for next year as soon as the date for the festival is set.

Washoe Lake Rally, March 21st through the 24th The Sierra Nevada Unit will host its March Rally less than two weeks from now at Washoe Lake State Park Campground, Thursday March 15th through Sunday the 18th. We would like to invite our members and friends to share the weekend with us. Washoe Lake State Park is located in Washoe Valley at the southeast corner of the lake on Eastlake Blvd, 7 miles NE of I-580/US-395.

Find earlier rally photos at: <http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/memories/rallies/00-washoe-lake/gallery.html>. While these memories are from October 2000, they give us a hint of what to expect in Spring also; members sharing meals under cloudy skies that give way to sunshine, maybe a rainbow and views of snow covered peaks. The Washoe Lake Rally will be in the main campground where showers are available. Join us even if only for the day. Our evenings will include shared meals and/or a potluck dinner. Weather in March can be a factor so follow us on Facebook and keep up with your email for any last minute announcements.

Remember there are day use and camping fees at Washoe (\$5 & \$15 per day) and our rally Kitty donation of \$5 per

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night. Nevada residents, consider getting your yearly Annual Entrance Permit at \$75 if you frequent the state parks, you'll save on day use fees through the year; get the \$200 All Access Permit and it covers day, camping and other fees for the year

SNU Business:

1. **Membership** – The SNU is 27 members strong but we are still encouraging a few to renew through the current year
If you realize your membership has expired act now; we still want to share our Airstream hobby and lifestyle with you. Click on the WBCCI web page link: <https://wbcci.org>. Fill out the information as you click through the following pages and pay by PayPal or credit card; the WBCCI will handle the rest including forwarding your SNU renewal. Affiliates wanting to use PayPal or a check should call me, Don 951.264.0219.
2. **Washoe Lake State Park Rally, Thursday, March 21st thru Sunday the 24th, Washoe Valley, NV** – first regular rally of the year; we hope that mother nature cooperates this year with acceptable and warming weather for our official kickoff to rally season.
3. **Ballot for Region 12 Officers, March 25th** - Deadline for ballot submittal to the SNU by any means is Monday March 25th, 2019. The unit will tally the ballots and submit the results to Region 12 officials.
4. **Rye Patch Rally, Thursday April 11 thru Sunday the 14th, Lovelock, NV** – The SNU has reserved Rye Patch group campground for our members and guests. Make sure to get out for this rally in the northwestern portion of the Great Basin Desert; only three weeks after Washoe Lake..
5. The Sierra Nevada Unit **2019 Meeting and Rally Schedule** is out! Attached with this newsletter is the 2019 Rally & Event Calendar. Use it to plan your Airstream travels for the year. Want more, check out the interactive calendar on the WBCCI.org website.

Little Known Facts or Known Only to a Few – Sierra Nevada member Russell Decker KB6AYF took me up on my invitation for articles after his recent trip to Quartzsite for the annual amateur radio gathering “QuartzFest. Read about his (mis)adventure so you'll know the facts!

CHECK YOUR HITCH RECEIVER!

My usual trip to “QuartzFest”, a ham radio/RV event just south of Quartzsite, Arizona, every year starts out as a day and a half trip to my brother's home in Yuba City, CA for an ‘overnighter’ where he throws out an extension cord for this weary traveler. Another day's drive takes me to my sister's home in Visalia, CA. All went well for the first leg of my journey, but on the way to Visalia, something happened that would prove to be the realization of most every RV'ers nightmare.

I drive my 1983 Airstream 310 motor home and flat-tow my Jeep Grand Cherokee as I have done many, many times. I have a little monitor that gives me a nice color picture of how my jeep is doing under tow via a nice rear-mounted camera. My usual route between Yuba City to Visalia is CA99 Southbound due to the fact that my sister's home is only about 3 miles off of CA99 in Visalia. I travel in the far right lanes most of the time unless there is heavy merging traffic, and then the center lane is best. As I was entering North Fresno, CA, I glanced over to my rear camera monitor and noticed ... THERE WAS NO JEEP IN THE MONITOR!!!!!! Yes, you read that correctly. My Jeep had come off the motor home somewhere, somehow. I immediately pulled over to the shoulder on the right, jumped out of the motor home and ran to the back. My jeep was GONE. Not only was my jeep gone, but the hitch receiver was missing too. I made the ‘911’ call and spoke to the CHP dispatch. I told them what happened and the route I took. They called back and told me that nothing had been reported. My mind was blown. I jumped back into my motor home and took the next exit (Ashlan Rd. In Fresno), crossed back over the freeway and headed northbound in hopes of locating my jeep. As I started northbound, I realized that I could not see any southbound traffic at all due to all the oleander bushes in the center median. I could have driven right past it and not known. You wouldn't believe all the possible scenarios going around and around in my head during this drive.... Things like: Did my jeep cause an accident? Were people hurt? Did someone steal it? Etc, etc! Then....over 25 miles back, the oleanders went away exposing just the ‘jersey rail’ in the center median....and up ahead was my Jeep Grand Cherokee just sitting there next to the ‘jersey rail’ as if someone

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just parked it and walked away. Well, I had to drive a bit further up the freeway to find the nearest exit, which turned out to be near the south part of Chowchilla, CA. I crossed back over the freeway and was once again headed southbound to where my jeep was sitting. It was sitting in the center median just after the

freeway interchange where CA152 (from Los Banos/Gilroy) met up with CA99. I pulled over, got out, waited for traffic, and ran across to the jeep. All of the tow bar assembly, plus the hitch receiver was severely bent and underneath the jeep. I did notice two places on the 'jersey rail' where the jeep hit it and bounced off coming to rest about 24" from the edge. I knew that all of the tow apparatus had to come off, so I waited for traffic, then ran back across the southbound lanes of traffic back to the motor home to get a big hammer and my 1/2" socket extension bar to beat the tow pins off of the jeep's tow connection point. I ran back to the jeep, and after about 15 minutes, had both tow pins removed and dragged the tow bar assembly out from under the jeep. Both tow bars were bent around 45° but were intact and still connected to the hitch as were the safety cables, electrical cable and breakaway cable. Upon inspecting the motor home's hitch receiver that was under the jeep, I noticed that both weld points had failed, no doubt due to metal fatigue.



During this time, I had called the CHP dispatch to where the CHP officer showed up, called a tow truck with the flat bed. The jeep's tranny had locked up, so the jeep had to be dragged onto the flatbed of the tow truck. It was taken to the Jeep dealer in Madera, CA., about 10 miles away. I called my sister and told her of my 'accident' and she drove to Madera from her home, which is a good hours' drive. I unloaded the jeep, which always serves as my "storage area" into my sister's SUV and took it back to Visalia.

While in Visalia, I contacted an RV hitch specialist that not only welded my hitch receiver back on, but added a LOT of extra flat iron and angle iron to it so that I will never have to again experience a hitch failure. He was very kind to me and kept the price of the hitch fix under \$450. The replacement tow bar parts came to just a little over \$1,000. I can say that all the tow parts held up quite well, so I highly endorse the Roadmaster Inc. Falcon tow hitch! Oh, and did I mention that they had all of the replacement tow parts shipped to Visalia within 3 days with NO shipping charges? A big 'high five' to them.

I did have to leave the jeep at the Gill Auto Group in Madera for over 3 weeks for all the repairs, which included some body and paint, a new tranny, plus a new 2m/70cm ham radio antenna! I did make it to QuartzFest in Arizona, then my week after that in Tucson before returning back to Visalia.

Was that all you might ask? Oh no. My Isuzu turbo diesel started smoking badly. When I say badly, I mean, it is like an aerobatic airplane with "Smoke ON" on the ground bad, until I get up to freeway speeds of course. After a bit of research, I have determined that the turbocharger's seals have failed, as verified by the Isuzu mechanic in Tucson. So, a new or rebuilt turbo is in store for the future. I did not want to pay the \$5,700 for a new turbo from Isuzu, so I will be learning all about removing and installing them myself. The only other thing is my Turbo 475 transmission that started slipping real bad, but I will put that on the shelf for a later date.

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Bottom line for all of you that tow, which I suspect is almost all of you, is to inspect your hitches. Be sure all of the welds are strong and not cracked, and that you have sufficient bracing for the side mounting plates that bolt into the frame of your tow vehicle.

After towing my jeep to Arizona at least 4 times from Washington and twice to Sun Valley, Idaho; plus numerous trips into the northeastern parts of Washington, I thought all was well with the towing bits. Wrong. Inspect, inspect, inspect.

...Russell Decker, WBCCI #3426

Visit: <http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/owners-guide/maintaining/19ja09-decker-accident.pdf> for all the photos and a financial summary of Russell's story.

Members and Writers – Want a chance at reading your own work instead of hearing me drone on! Shoot me a copy of your article(s) on Airstream travel, maintenance, rally locations or anything related and we'll publish it. Maybe your article will be accepted for publication in the Blue Beret and you'll have the satisfaction of contributing to your club's history. Contact me soon to make the next issue!

For a Few, Remember to Renew! - <https://wbcci.org>

Wally Byam's Creed:

1. To place the great wide world at your doorstep for you who yearn to travel with all the comforts of home.
2. To provide a more satisfying, meaningful way of travel that offers complete travel independence, wherever and whenever you choose to go or stay.
3. To keep alive and make real an enduring promise of high adventure and faraway lands... of rediscovering old places and new interests.
4. To open a whole world of new experiences... a new dimension in enjoyment where travel adventure and good fellowship are your constant companions.
5. To encourage clubs and rallies that provide an endless source of friendships, travel fun and personal expressions.
6. To lead caravans wherever the four winds blow... over twinkling boulevards, across trackless deserts... to the traveled and untraveled corners of the earth.
7. To play some part in promoting international goodwill and understanding among the peoples of the world through person-to-person contact.
8. To refine and perfect our product by continuous travel-testing over the highways and byways of the world.
9. To strive endlessly to stir the venturesome spirit that moves you to follow a rainbow to its end... and thus make your travel dreams come true.

— Wally Byam

Don Williams, SNU President, kd6uvt@wbcci.net

What do you want to be in life, a spectator or a participant?

For more info on the Sierra Nevada Unit check out our web pages at: www.sierranevadaairstreams.org/snu/ , search for "Sierra Nevada Unit of the WBCCI" on Facebook or email us at: snu157@wbcci.net .