Travel Down the Wally Byam Highway

Around the World Caravan Background Notes

by Dale Schwamborn #00002



Where we live may vary from houses, condos, apartments and possibly a mobile home. Each habitat has windows looking at the world that surrounds us. The views can be grass and trees, mountains, skyscrapers, but always a sight from our living environment.

Just imagine opening your front door, there is a sidewalk lined with grass, trees reaching skyward, a street and your neighbors' homes to the left, right and across the street.

Now visualize being in an Airstream far from home. You open your door. Your front yard is an Airstream wagon wheel shadowed by the Pyramids of Giza. The early morning sun is reflecting a once in a lifetime close up view of the pyramids. This is your front yard. This is why you left the United States. This is why you traveled 218 days and almost 15,000 miles to travel from Cape Town, Union of South Africa to Cairo, Egypt.

Wally Byam, Airstream's founder and owner, said we can do it, let's go the length of Africa. And we did.

As time goes by, hardships disappear and only memories from accomplishment remain. So it was of this Airstream Wally Byam African Caravan 1959-1960.

As seen in this picture, the Airstream Adventures truly made it to Cairo, Egypt. Wally sent me to the telegraph office the day we arrived in Cairo.

This telegram was very special and even poignant. It said,

Cairo, Egypt
February 6, 1960

"Because the impossible takes a little longer we arrived a little late but you can tell the world that the Wally Byam Caravan from Capetown to Cairo is history."

Wally Byam

Excerpt from Wally Byam to Art Costello and Andy Charles.

February 1960

"A few notes on the new Imperial Model- this was sparked by Haile Selassie. We may or may not present Haile Selassie with the trailer. We will if he agrees to do all of the things we want to do such as exhibit it in a lot of automobile shows, etc., etc., but it has terrific publicity value. This new Imperial line will always be gold and gold anodized and will include all of the very best things that the International used to include plus I want it to be completely equipped with knives and forks and spoons and cooking utensils, dishes and even chairs and a place to put them. I don't care what it sells for but it will be the finest trailer on earth, fit the King of Kings and You. It will be in the same classification with the Rolls Royce. It will cost like the very devil and be worth it and we will sell more than you believe possible. The self-same trailer as built by Royal Command for His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie, the first, Emperor of Ethiopia, King of Kings, the Lion of Judah and direct descendant of King Solomon." From Wally Byam

No Date, Year 2020

After 80 years, Airstream is proud to introduce the Imperial Airstream. This is a dream that Wally Byam had before he became ill. Wally planned this third Airstream line during the African Caravan, and set plans to build it. Due to his unfortunate and untimely death, the project never made it off the drawing board.

Today Wally's Imperial Airstream is your dream come true, etc., etc., etc.

