Travel Down the Wally Byam Highway

Around the World Caravan Background Notes

by Dale Schwamborn #00002

Wow! What a year! Airstream is having their first Airstream Wally Byam Caravan to Eastern Canada. Wally and Stella Byam are leaving for Europe from Montreal, Canada to scout and make preliminary preparations for the 1956 Caravan to Europe. Helen Byam Schwamborn has joined Airstream to organize and lead Caravans and to organize and manage the newly created Wally Byam Caravan Club formed by Airstream owners during the Eastern Canadian Caravan. This is one special year moving Airstream forward.

Wally Byam always enjoyed and celebrated his birthday on the Fourth of July for this was a very special day and he also was able to pay tribute with pride for our Nation's Independence Day.



This picture is from Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada. It is July 4 and the Caravanners are celebrating Wally's birthday day with an all-out potluck.

Behind the Canadian flag is Stella, then Wally and Helen. On the far right is John McNamara. John and his wife are traveling with their four children for the summer. John's Brother Bill also has an Airstream and is traveling with his wife and daughter. Two brothers and two sisters make up the two marriages. How often do brothers marry sisters and travel in Airstreams?

So often at a celebration for Wally, Caravanners make model Airstreams. Sometime from cardboard sprayed with silver paint, other times from aluminum wrap or from aluminum sheeting.

Regardless the construction Wally cherished each and every tribute for him and his Airstreams.



This is the 1959 Airstream Wally Byam African Caravan, and we find Al Frosch, #2345 hanging up the family laundry.

However, our story begins months before the Caravan begins.

One evening Al comes literally running into his home and announces to his wife Mildred, "We are going to Africa." All she could say, "What?"

He relates how he had seen a Caravan to Mexico and Central America, with the group traveling with Airstreams and a leader named Wally Byam. What is even more interesting is this Byam is going to have a Caravan from Cape Town, Union of South Africa to Cairo, Egypt and beyond.

The Frosch family consists of Al, Mildred, Judy (age 12), Linda (age 10) and Susan (age 6).

Al buys his Airstream and International Harvester, tow vehicle. Apparently, the family is on their way to Africa. Wait a minute.

Who is going to bring in the cranberry crop? Al needs to stay at home on their farm to do just that, harvest the cranberries. He does.

Therefore, Mildred, with three daughters, a first time Airstreamer sails for Africa. It will be several weeks until Al catches up with the Caravan.

I just love their story.

Al had the confidence that his wife could manage with his three daughters to go to Africa until his arrival. The youngest Caravanner was Susan Frosch at age six.

There is no doubt that a farming environment and family exercise a can-do spirit. Even with the father hanging up the laundry.

Not until the 1963 Airstream Wally Byam Around-the-World Caravan will there be a younger child traveling on a Caravan. McGregor Smith, Jr., writer, wrote "Thank You Marco Polo" the story of the first Around-the-World Caravan, he made the trek with his wife and three children, the youngest was age one.

Airstreamers have so many experiences whether traveling cross Africa, Asia or the United States. The Airstream has that magical quality that opens your life for new friendships, and adventures. A wonderful life!