



## Frequently asked questions

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### What are the big red numbers on the RVs?

The red numbers displayed on the RVs are the WBAC membership number assigned to that Airstream owner and his household. WBAC publishes a membership directory annually so that if a member spots another Airstream on the road, at a rally, or on a caravan, it is easy to look up who it belongs to. The practice of displaying the numbers was adopted by Wally Byam during the early caravans of the 1950s. WBAC members continue to use the numbers to identify one another. This is especially useful when seeking out old friends at large rallies where hundreds of trailers are present.

All club members are assigned an official membership identification number which remains with them as long as the membership is in good standing. The number can be transferred to any Airstream they subsequently own. They are self-adhesive red vinyl issued upon joining the club. Displaying them is beneficial, but not mandatory.

### What do the red stars alongside the membership numbers mean?

The stars indicate the number of years the owner of that Airstream has been a club member. Each star represents at least five years of membership. Another star can be added each five-year membership anniversary. Some Airstreams sport eight stars, indicating the owners have been WBAC club members for at least 40 years!



### What's the difference between a rally and a caravan?

On a caravan, typically a group of 10 to 60 Airstream owners embark upon an organized road trip to a variety of destinations along a designated route. Caravans can last anywhere from two weeks to two months. Most often, they are based on a theme. Some explore history: Civil War, American Revolution, Cajun Heritage, Viking Trail, and Landmarks West (following the Lewis & Clark trail). Others take in the beauty of the U.S. and Canada: Taste of the Blue Ridge, Sho-me the Ozarks, Southwest Adventure, Springtime in the Rockies, North to Alaska. Other caravans focus on a specific part of the country or activity: Made in America; Kentucky Bourbon & Beyond; Gone to Texas; Ores, Shores, Waters, & Lights; Nor' by Nor' East; Canadian Rocky Mountain. Caravan leaders are volunteers and the cost of camping, touring, and many meals is covered by a kitty fee.



*Capetown to Cairo African Caravan in 1955*

## **Frequently Asked Questions (continued)**

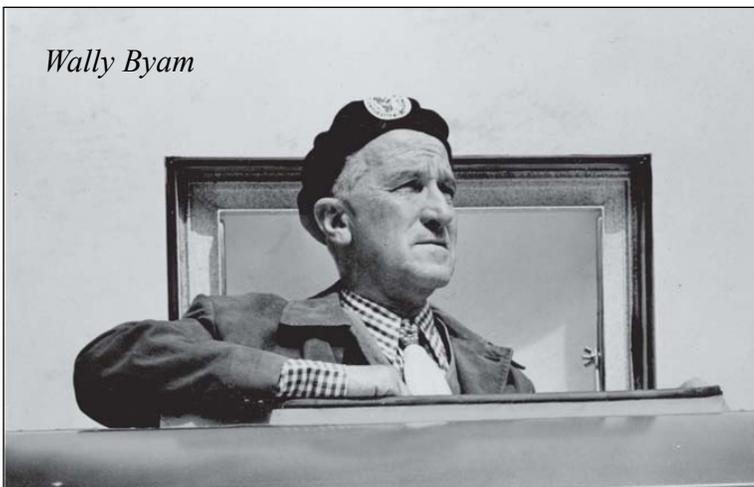
Rallies are planned and held in one fixed location near places of interest, usually by local units and clubs. Most often, they are conducted over a long weekend and include fun, food and fellowship not too distant from the members' homes.

Any WBAC member can sign up to participate in any club caravan (if space is available). Also, any WBAC member can attend any WBAC rallies, wherever rallies are being held. So, for example, if a member of a local WBAC club in Virginia is traveling with his/her Airstream in Florida, he/she is welcome to attend a weekend rally being held by a Florida WBAC club or unit.

Additionally, it is not uncommon for several local units or clubs to jointly host a rally. There are also a number "Region" or "National" rallies based on special activities or events. Examples include the Annual International Rally, the Galax (Virginia) Fiddler's Convention Rally, the Balloon Fiesta in New Mexico, and the Rose Parade in California.

Many local clubs and units engage in rallies with a community service theme. Such rallies may include tidying up a local park, painting an historic building, or working with a local charity.

### **What's the significance of the blue beret?**



*Wally Byam*

Airstream and club founder, Wally Byam, began wearing his signature blue beret in 1948 while in Europe with the first Airstream trailer to travel abroad. He said, "In my endeavor to do as the French do, I bought a little French beret. I found that it made a wonderful trailer headgear. It kept you head warm, kept you hair in place, and gave you some protection when popping in and out of low doors. Best of all, you could roll it up and put it in your pocket." Soon, Wally began gifting them to friends and on the first caravan, gave a beret to everyone on the tour. Thus, the blue beret became a badge of Airstream ownership and was adopted as the official symbol for the club when it was founded in 1955.

Today, the beret is not worn as frequently by Airstreamers as it was in years past, but most club members own one. Also, *The Blue Beret* is the name of the Club's magazine.

### **How many local clubs and units comprise WBAC?**

In 2019, there are 13,000 members of 109 local clubs and units in the U.S. and Canada, and one unit in Europe. They are geographically grouped into 12 Regions.

### **What is a "member-at-large"?**

A member-at-large (MAL) is an Airstream owner who elects to join WBAC but does not want to be a member of a local unit or club. MALs have all the rights and privileges of local club or unit members and are permitted attendance at all rallies and on caravans.

### **Did a bicyclist actually tow an Airstream. When did that happen?**

It happened in the spring of 1948, at the request of Wally Byam. Renowned cyclist Alfred Latourneau pulled a 22-foot Airstream Liner to demonstrate the trailers were lightweight. The stunt was photographed at Van Nuys Airport in California and appeared in the April 1948 issue of *Travel Trailer* magazine.



## **Frequently Asked Questions (continued)**

### **What is “courtesy parking”?**

More than 500 Airstream Club members offer free RV overnight parking space on their residence property to WBAC club members who may be traveling through the area. Contact information listing members who offer courtesy parking is published annually in the WBAC directory.

### **How big (or small) are today’s Airstream RVs?**

New Airstream trailers made and sold today come in a variety of designs ranging from a 16-foot, single-axle “Bambi” to a 33-foot, double-axle “Classic.” Airstream is also producing a new small trailer using a fiberglass shell called “Nest,” and a lightweight, lower cost aluminum trailer, called Basecamp for “adventure camping.” The Basecamp, aimed at young families, can be optionally expanded with attachable side and rear tents. Today’s motorized “touring coaches” built by Airstream include the Interstate and the spacious Atlas. These are luxury “Class B” motorhomes using a Mercedes/Sprinter chassis. But the trailers remain the most popular company product. Because they are so iconic and uniquely American, many people buy older trailers and restore them with modern or retro interior designs. That’s why there is a “Vintage Airstream Club” within the larger, WBAC.

### **How were Airstreams involved with NASA’s Manned Space Program?**

TV viewers worldwide often saw America’s astronauts being transported to the rocket launch pad in motorized vans made by Airstream. Also, the most famous Airstream trailer of all time was the Mobile Quarantine Facility (MQF), built by Airstream for NASA. This was a 35-foot trailer specially modified to biologically isolate astronauts returning from the moon for fear they would bring back “moon germs.” After their historic moon landing, Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins entered the MQF as soon as they were recovered from their ocean splashdown on July 24, 1969, and remained in isolated confinement until scientists were certain they did not return to earth with any extraterrestrial diseases. A photo and video beamed around the world was of President Nixon congratulating the three astronauts who were visible through the rear window of the MQF aboard the recovery ship, U.S.S. Hornet. Today the MQF is on display at the Udvar-Hazy Center of the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum.



*President Nixon congratulates Astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin & Collins on the U.S.S. Hornet. It was July 24, 1969. The men were isolated inside the Mobile Quarantine Facility upon splashdown. The MQF was a specially built, biologically sealed, Airstream trailer serving as a precaution, just in case the Astronauts returned to earth infected with “moon germs.” They did not.*

VISIT THE RALLY WEBSITE: <https://doswell.wbcc.net>