

**aFrom: HAROLD F. SEELEY <spudmtn@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 11, 2016 4:36 PM
To: history@wbcci.org
Subject: Historically Speaking - Big Red Numbers**

As a new member of WBCCI I found this article extremely interesting and timely. We're trying to finish the renovation of a 57 Overlander this summer. We've been able to save a few items such as decals and plaques that were attached to the trailer. From your information I see that the original owner joined WBCCI in 1958, #1996. The original warranty is still glued to the closet door and has penciled in a purchase date of 9/57, but for some reason is titled as a 1958. Perhaps they did not register the unit until 1958. I know from an automotive standpoint, some European cars were titled by register year not manufactured year.

I was especially pleased that we were able to obtain #1996 when we joined WBCCI so the originality can continue. If time permits any information you would have regarding the prior history/owners would be appreciated. We plan to display all the items saved so it can be passed on to the next owner, after we've had our adventures. Here is some of the additional information we know from items found.

The PO I bought the unit from did not title the trailer, he owned it about 25 years. The 2nd PO had a Montana title. His name was Thomas Miller. On the front cap, underneath the round WBCCI sticker is the outline of a Wally Byam Caravan sticker. The stickers are both below the number. On the rear cap, there is no WBCCI sticker, but the outline of a Wally Byam Caravan sticker is visible underneath the number. There was a round decal on one window from the Arizona Unit with a gold border.

A second round decal is for the 6th International Rally in Bemidji, MN. An eight sided brass medallion from the 8th International Rally in Laramie, WY.

An eight sided brass medallion from the 10th International Rally in Santa Rosa, CA

I have a untitled photo of the unit in a caravan line. I assume from the 10th Rally, palm trees in the background. The tow vehicle is a 1967 Pontiac Catalina.

There is another unit in the photo at the front of the caravan line. WBCCI #6801, towed by a 1967 Pontiac Bonneville station wagon.

Region 11 rally medallion from the 1968 rally at Four Corners.

The PO told me a story that is interesting, but I found no documentation to substantiate. The previous/first (not sure which) owner was a naval

recruiter and purchased the trailer to act as a mobile office. I suppose that could explain a Montana title and membership in the Arizona unit.

Thanks in advance for any pieces you can add to the history of this trailer.

May 14, 2016

Hi Harold,

Glad you enjoyed the article and found it informative. Here is a bit more information regarding your Airstream and WBCCI number.

Airstream model year changeover timing varied over the years, but like for cars it generally occurs well before the calendar year changes. Currently, Airstream Model Year changeover occurs in mid-May, meaning that there are likely 2017 Airstreams on the production line as I type this message. Back in the 1950's and 1960's the changeover dates were a little later and I believe may have differed between the Ohio and California plants and, also from year to year, with changeovers typically occurring somewhere between June and September. Therefore a 9/57 (Sept 1957) production might be appropriate for either a 1957 or 1958 Airstream, but I too have heard that occasionally they got titled according to the year they were first titled in, meaning a trailer built in 1957 might be titled as a 1958 for first sold to a customer in 1958.

Now regarding your WBCCI #1996. This number was first assigned in 1958, which also might be appropriate for a 1957 or 1958 Airstream as many people joined the club soon after they bought a new Airstream. #1996 has been assigned to club members as follows over the years:

1958-62: L.W. & Lillian Lewis, Iowa City, IA, caravan 23 - Mexico Winter 1960.

1963-71: Roy & Gladys Lutz, Sun City, AZ, no caravans.

1972: Unassigned.

1973-74: Thomas & Ilene Green, Pasco, WA, no caravans.

1975-76: Unassigned.

1977-80 Thomas & Ilene Green, Pasco, WA, no caravans.

1981-1985: Unassigned.

1986: Charles & Geneva Sampson, Lacey, WA, no caravans.

1987: Charles & Geneva Sampson, c/o Peter Mallard, Kansas City, MO, no caravans.

1988-91: Unassigned.

1992-94: Hayden & Geraldine Burn, Madison, MS, no caravans.

1995: Unassigned (did not search any further, because this is within the 25 year window that you already know ownership for)

So what can we tell from this Membership Directory information combined with the info you provided?

1. We know for sure the trailer was in the club for the years 1963 (Bemidji), 1965 (Laramie), 1967 (Santa Rosa), and 1968 (Four Corners) because of the rally medallions. This pretty much means that the Lutz's owned your Overlander. The Arizona Unit decal also supports the Lutz's owning your Overlander. In the 1967 Membership Directory, #6801 was assigned to Donald A. & Edith Rea of Sun City, AZ, which would make it likely that they traveled to the Int'l Rally with the Lutz's, being that they were from the same home town.

2. We also know that #1996 was first assigned the shortly after your Overlander was built suggesting the Lewis's may have also owned it and taken it on their Mexico caravan. The Wally Byam's Caravan sticker was last used about 1963, so it's presence alone does not mean your Overlander was clearly in the club prior to the Lutz's owning it in 1963, but it suggests it may have been in the club before 1963. Since there was no unassigned time between the Lewis's and the Lutz's, it is quite possible that the Lewis's sold their Airstream to the Lutz's (although we cannot prove it). In such a case of sale of an Airstream the typical 1 to 2 year waiting period can be waived before reassigning a number. Right now I can only say that maybe the Lewis's owned your Overlander, because the distance between Iowa and Arizona make a sale from the Lewis' to the Lutz's less likely than if they lived in the same town or even the same state, but such sales did occasionally occur. Such a sale could have occurred, for example, at the 1962 International Rally if both couples attended it or maybe if the Lewis's wintered in Arizona and had a "for sale" sign in the window. We can only speculate.

3. Because of the unassigned periods before #1996 was reassigned to later members, those appear to be cases of random reassignment of an unused number and therefore those members likely did not ever own your Overlander.

4. Thomas Miller was never a WBCCI member under the number 1996. I spot checked a few directories and did not find a Thomas Miller from Montana as a member under any WBCCI number, but I did not check all directories. I did find a least one Thomas Miller that was a member over the years, but he was from Oklahoma.

5. Sometimes Membership Directories list an owner according to a military rank, such a "Col.". This is not the case for either L.W. Lewis or Roy Lutz, so I can't help you with any possible military relationship.

Well that's about all I can turn up. I am pretty certain that the Lutz's owned your Overlander and consider the Lewis's a definite maybe. Enjoy that Overlander and make some memories of your own!

**Joe Peplinski
WBCCI Historian**

Airforums: Harold - March 9, 2017

In reviewing some literature from the late fifty's I noted that our layout matches the brochure for a 1957, not a 1958. We have the single axle and toilet in the shower stall. 1958 literature indicates dual axles are standard, but I've seen photos tagged as 1958s with single axles. Of course, the literature does not specify CA vs OH so it is still a unsolved question.

Airforums: Joe Peplinski - October 27, 2020

According to Airstream production records, the order or build date for your Overlander was during the week of Sept 2, 1957, so it was built in September, delivered to the dealer in September, and apparently sold to the customer in September. Fast service! The dealer was Bert's Trailer Sales, but at the current time I have no idea in what city and state Bert's was located at in September 1957.