

## Auxiliary Vehicles – Wally Byam Caravan to Africa 1959 – 1960



Scout truck in Nairobi, Kenya with Pee Wee

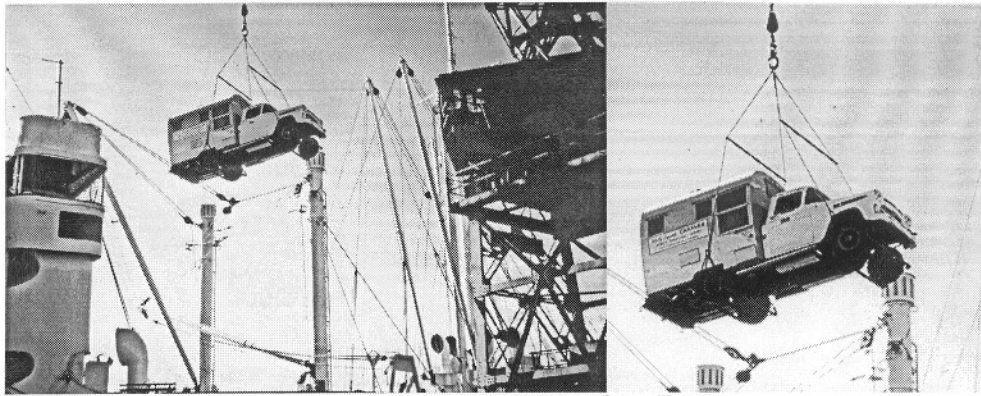
In the preparation for the African Caravan, Wally Byam planned for many issues that might face the toughest and demanding Caravan of his life. The logistics were beyond imagination for a private "invasion" of the continent of Africa. Just think of it Caravanner's, the owners of Airstreams, traveling from Cape Town, South Africa to Cairo, Egypt. Just think about it. Ordinary American citizens forming an extraordinary expedition of a lifetime.

There were needs for auxiliary vehicles. In the initial planning provisions were made for an Advance Scout Truck, a Mechanic's Truck and a third vehicle for the Caravan Photographer.

Two trucks were to be assembled at the Airstream Factory in Jackson Center, Ohio. The 3<sup>rd</sup> truck was already available for the trek.

I had contacted Wally about going on the African Caravan. He and I discussed what contribution I could make for the Caravan. We decided that an Advance Scout was needed. Wally then told me that minimums of 35 families were needed to justify my joining the African Caravan as the Advanced Scout. On April 3<sup>rd</sup> Wally left a message with my Father, Henry Schwamborn, you're going to Africa.

The three vehicles were on their way to Africa. The Scout Truck was manned with Dale Schwamborn (20 years of age) and Nick Charles (17 years of age.) The Mechanics Truck was to be manned by Arthur Ruiz, and the Photographer's Truck was to be for Peter Turner (Pete became a world famous photographer.)

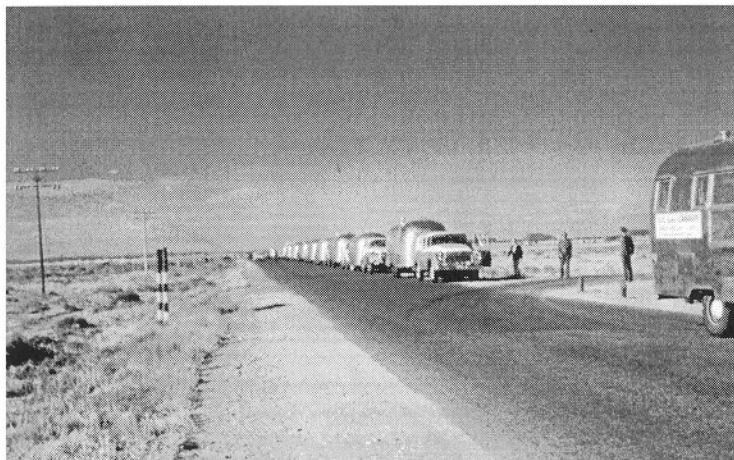


Scout Truck being unloaded in Cape Town  
off loaded from the African Enterprise

There have been questions about the Scout and Mechanic trucks.

Airstream (Wally Byam) purchased two one-ton trucks. These were cab only with rails. They had four wheel drives, winches, and 30-gallon gas tanks. Later, two additional 50-gallon gas tanks were added. I have no record of the horsepower, but it was more than adequate for Africa. Later on the two trucks played an active part in towing trailers, and winching trailers out of mud holes and eroded roads.

The "camper" was the classic Airstream curve. The difference was the missing front and rear caps. The floor was mounted to the truck rails. Then the ribbing, insulation, skins, vents, plumbing, electrical was 1959 state of the art Airstream. The door was centered in the middle of the back of the unit. On the curbside were two 5-gallon propane gas cylinders. We had eight windows, including the opaque door window. Three vents. A Junkers or Krupps instant water heater. Probably a 30-gallon stainless steel water tank. 12-volt electrical only, water filled from an outside inlet on the side of the vehicle.



Caravan Waiting behind Scout Truck, South Africa

Water purification was a marvel. Andy Charles, president of the Jackson Center plant and father of Nick Charles, had read about a filtration system perfected at UCLA. It was capable of filtering out particles many times smaller than the Bilharzias (schistosoma) parasite. In Africa and the Middle East there are snails that live in fresh water. They

have parasites, so small that they can penetrate the body cell structure. Once they are in your body they attack your liver and body organs. It is a fatal disease.

Nick and I believed what we were told. We never boiled or added chemicals to our water during the Caravan. We were never sick from our water...NEVER. The doctors, five in total, were constantly concerned about our water supply. Technology over Medicine! I was only sick once from the time I left Bakersfield, California. In New York City I fell victim to a tainted ice cube. You never expect to get the Central Park Trots when in NYC.

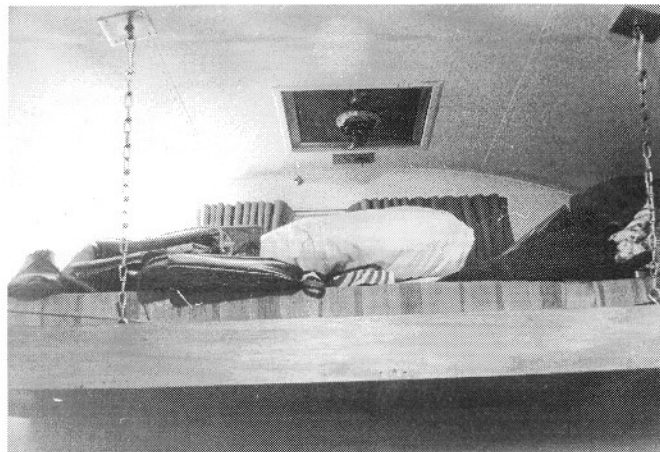
The charms of our vehicles were the living quarters. Compact, tight, functional, all Airstream. I calculate today that interior living space was 10 feet, remotely 11 feet.

Three feet for the bed and the bunk down back of the sofa, bed, and bunk sleeping area. Two feet for the sink area, two feet for the two-burner stove, and three feet for the toilet, shower, and sink. That's a whopping 10 feet. Again there might be a foot thrown in somewhere on a fractional distribution.

That covers the curbside.

On the roadside we had drawers, with a counter top, and a dual wardrobe...don't forget the Airstream style overhead cabinets on both sides.

Did you Mom ever tell you to have clean underwear, if you were going out? I bettcha she did. Especially if you might have an accident. The same holds true to the next picture. Keep you room nice and tidy. Well, this is the only interior picture of the Scout Truck...guess what the underwear is dirty!

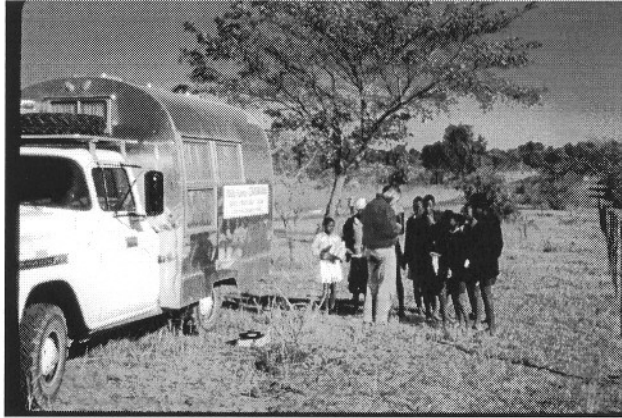


Yes, indeed...the bunk bed was a catchall when it was up

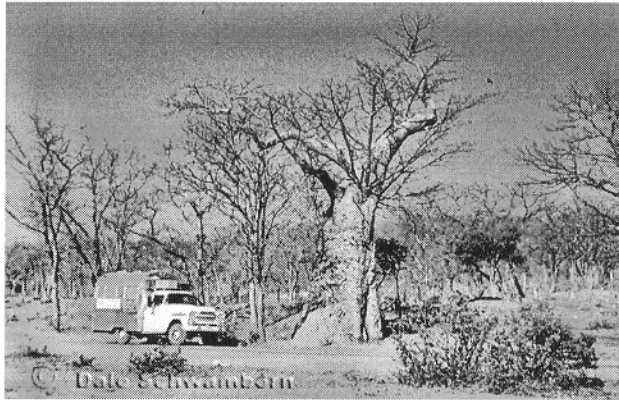
Nick and I could travel night and day. One driving, one sleeping and then change drivers to travel great distances in a short period of time.

I used the vehicle two times after coming back to the United States. Once was scouting the 1961 Eastern Canadian trip, prior to the Caravan. I went with a school chum. He and I met with the mayors and police for the scheduled stops on the itinerary.

Upon returning to the Santa Fe Springs, Airstream Plant, I lived in the unit while I worked on the production line. That was the last time I saw the unit. The unit stayed at the Plant and I returned for my senior year at the University of Oregon.



Scout Truck and Pee Wee with Natives gathered outside Kruger National Park, South Africa

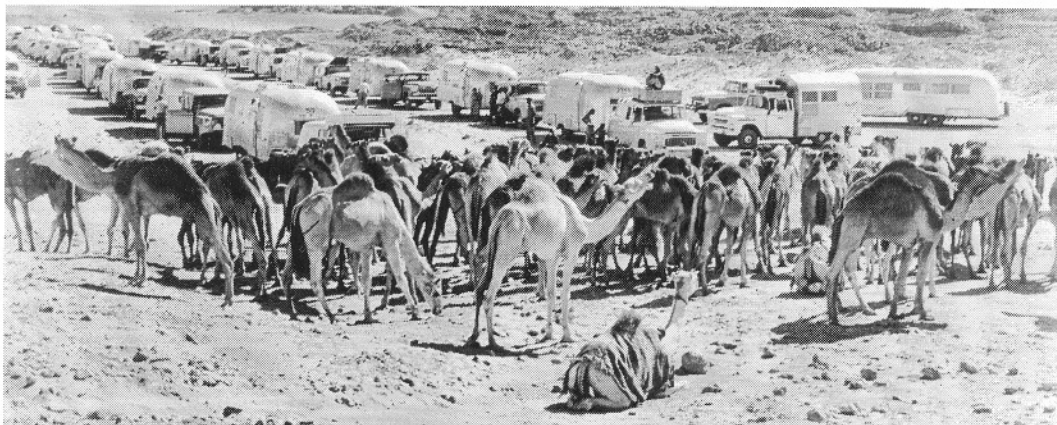


Scout Truck under the spread of a Baobab Tree



Servicing the Vehicle in Nairobi, Kenya





Two Caravans meeting in the Eastern Sudan



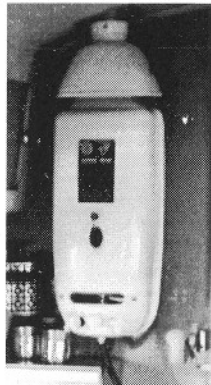
Desert Village Stop



Mechanics Truck, with German Cargo Trailer Refueling  
(Note the aux Vehicles were gasoline not diesel)



**Eight Airstream, three Aux Vehicles  
Cross the Nubian Desert in the Sudan**



**Instant Hot Water**