



The Airstream legend began with a single man and a most singular dream. That man was Wally Byam. He was born July 4, 1896 in Baker City, Oregon. In 1929, Wally Byam purchased a Model T Ford chassis, built a platform on it, towed it with his car to a campsite, and painstakingly erected a tent on it. The effort was tiresome and unpleasant, especially when it rained. Spurred on by his first wife Marion, Wally built a tear-drop-shaped permanent shelter on the platform that enclosed a small ice chest and kerosene stove.

When he was a young boy he travelled extensively with his grandfather, who led a mule train in Baker, Oregon and later when he was growing up he worked as a shepherd where he lived in a two-wheeled shepherd's cart outfitted with a kerosene cook stove, a sleeping bag, and wash pail. The combination of his early travelling and his shepherds cart no doubt spawned his dream. His dream was simply this: to build the perfect travel trailer, one that would move like a stream of air; one that would be light enough to be towed by a standard automobile and importantly it should do it with first-class living accommodations and anywhere in the world.

Thus, nearly three quarters of a century ago he gave birth to the very first Airstream trailer. And with it was born yet another dream, a dream of new freedom, new places, new experiences, and new friendships. It was a dream so powerful, so enduring it did far more than create a new way of travel; it created a new way of life shared by thousands upon thousands of families.

As a young man he joined the merchant marines, and then studied law at Stanford University. He also owned an advertising agency, and became a magazine publisher. The starting blocks for his dream had arrived. As a magazine publisher he produced a do-it-yourself magazine featuring an article describing how to build a travel trailer. However when his readers complained about the plans, he tried them out for himself and indeed, he discovered that the plans were flawed. Wally Byam was thus inspired to build his own travel trailer. Initially he considered his first attempt was rather primitive but nevertheless his design had a profound influence the evolution of travel trailers of the future.

He dropped the floor down between the wheels and raised the ceiling height so that his design made it possible for the occupants to stand straight upright when inside their trailer. He also around the same time wrote an article describing how to build his trailer for under \$100. The second time round he got an enthusiastic response from his readers for it.





Did you know?

- The most commonly recognized aluminum Trailer the world over is an Airstream.
- Airstream is the oldest manufacturer of recreational vehicles in the U.S.
- The aluminum-skinned Airstream is based on an airplane fuselage, with rounded corners to help increase gas mileage – their aerodynamics cut drag by 20%.
- It takes about 240 man hours to build the average Airstream.
- Several specially-built Airstream trailers are commonly used to transport American officials around the world. The trailers are strapped down inside a military cargo plane, usually a C-17

Globemaster III, an American strategic airlifter. Vice Presidents, First Ladies, Generals, and Admirals are among the more frequent travelers.

- When flying across Afghanistan in 2008 to visit the troops, First Lady Laura Bush was cocooned in her own private Airstream trailer which had been towed on board The Spirit of Strom Thurmond, named after one of the country's longest serving senators.
- Airstream was the first trailer to have a holding tank, the first ladder frame, the first pressurized water system and the first fully self-contained travel trailer.
- In 1951, the first Airstream caravan left for Central America traveling from Mexico to Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua.
- In 1955, the United States military used an Airstream in atomic bomb testing in the Nevada desert.
- The Capetown to Cairo Caravan began in Africa in 1959. More than 100 caravanners visited the pyramids of Egypt and the camels of central African desert. They met Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and visited a Pygmy enclave.
- President John F. Kennedy had a mobile Airstream office which he used during a visit to White Sands, New Mexico, where the Army demonstrated its latest weaponry for Kennedy and Vice-president Lyndon Johnson in the early 1960s.
- In 1964 President Lyndon Johnson's daughter Lynda Bird toured America in a caravan of Airstreams to help publicize the nation's beauty in the, "See America First" campaign. The tour was covered by National Geographic and McCall's magazine.
- A caravan of 100 people in 45 Airstream trailers set out from Singapore in 1964, to trace portions of the route that explorer Marco Polo had traveled in the late 13th century. They covered 35,000 miles in 403 days – visiting almost every country in southern Asia plus the western Soviet Union and most of Europe.
- Every Airstream is inundated for 40 minutes at 100 pounds of pressure in a special rain test booth to ensure that it's water-tight.
- In 1969, Neil Armstrong and members of the Apollo 11 were quarantined for three weeks in a specially-built Airstream after returning from the first voyage to the moon, until it could be determined that there was little likelihood of them having brought back "lunar pathogens" with them. President Richard Nixon visited them while they were quarantined.
- For decades, NASA has used a fleet of Airstreams to transport astronauts to the launch pad.
- In 1974, a record 4,493 Airstreams attended the WBCCI International Rally in Lexington, Kentucky.
- Between 1975 and 1979, Airstream branched out during the recession to make postal vans, airport people movers and funeral hearses.
- Airstreamers are a group of RVers who share a community spirit because of their mutual love of the trailers.
- The first caravan to China departed in 1985.
- By the 75th Anniversary of Airstream in 2006 sixty-five percent of all Airstreams ever built were still on the road.
- A 1960 Airstream Bambi Travel Trailer is on display at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), in the Architecture and Design section for excelling in style and design.
- There are many Airstream trailers used as coffee shops and restaurants across America.
- In 2008 Airstream partnered with longtime fan Jesse James to create a one-of-a-kind motorcycle with a sidecar rig with Airstream designs features. The \$300K Airstream Chopper

was built by James' company West Coast Choppers, in exchange for an Airstream trailer which he gave his wife, actress Sandra Bullock, for her birthday.

- Airstream was featured on NBC's Celebrity Apprentice in 2008, where candidates competed to create successful businesses inside Airstream trailers.

- An Airstream trailer was featured in the 2000 box-office hit Charlie's Angels, starring Cameron Diaz, Lucy Liu and Drew Barrymore.

- Airstreams have also been featured in films including Raising Arizona, What's Eating Gilbert's Grape, Independence Day, Mars Attacks!!, American Odyssey, and The Hills Have Eyes, among others.

- Celebrity owners include: Tom Hanks who was gifted by his wife Rita Wilson, Colin Farrell, Sean Penn, Brad Pitt, Denzel Washington, Sandra Bullock, David Duchovny, Tim Burton, Lenny Kravitz, Green Day's Billy Joe Armstrong, John Melloncamp, Eddie Vedder, and AC/DC's Brian Johnson.

- In 2003, Airstream linked up with Silver Joe's Coffee to provide travelers with a unique coffee experience in a sleek, silver, aerodynamic can that invites consumers to taste the adventure of sipping on the road.

- In mid-2008 Airstream unveiled the new Airstream PanAmerica "Crossover" trailer, designed for the adventurer that wants to explore every mountain road and open highway. The new 34-foot 2009 Airstream PanAmerica can haul two motorcycles, ATVs or other action/adventure gear, up to 3,000 pounds worth. The rear 11 feet of the trailer is configured as a garage, complete with a durable aluminum interior skin and textured floor.