

The Peach State Caravanner

Volume 59 / Issue 5 / October 2020



In Memory of Fred Gavin

The Top of Georgia has been blessed by people like Fred Gavin. This issue is dedicated to Fred and other pioneers who have loved, appreciated and contributed to life at the Top. We owe these folks a debt of gratitude for laying a foundation of honesty, integrity and decorum.

This issue highlights some "History and Heritage" of the Top of Georgia honoring the values and traditions that have sustained this Club and Park for over 50 years!

President's Letter



We had a productive business meeting during the non-rally Labor Day weekend! With a great slate of nominees to vote on and no floor nominations, they

were voted into office via acclamation! Here is next year's leadership team:

President – Murphy Harrell

President – Elect – Mary Anne Meeks

1st VP – Doug Ralston

Treasurer – John Meeks

Secretary – Kimberly Funderburg

Returning (2nd Year) Directors – Dick Sells & Clara Ellis

New (1st Year) Directors – Bill Harris & Gigi Haque

It has been disappointing this year without rallies where we meet friends and enjoy various activities. The park, however, has been quite full compared to some years as many new Airstreamers are visiting. Looks like my next BINGO game will be in January at Land Yacht Harbor in Melbourne, FL!

On a more encouraging note, we have made some improvements. Documents are available to board members only at this time, saved in the cloud so they are available anywhere and anytime we have an internet connection. We hope to make “read only” access to the rest of the club in the near future. Documents include:

1. Projects our Property Manager has scheduled to be accomplished soon
2. Five-year facility improvement plan
3. Minutes from Board and Business meetings
4. Board response to comments, complaints, and compliments received in 2019
5. Financial reports, including audit by club members
6. Property Inventory reports
7. Host notebook

Board meetings were planned all year to be held in the pavilion so anyone interested could attend. We accomplished that on the Friday before Labor Day with about 20 non-Board members attending.

We successfully supported two sister club rallies at the TOP – Argosy and Palmetto Cove. This was a plan that Charlotte began last year. In August, we enjoyed the results of her efforts to better utilize our park and increase revenue for future infrastructure improvements.

In wrapping up this final letter as President of your club, I would like to thank everyone who served on the Board, committing many hours in management of the park and club, including some short notice conference calls and emails! Thank-you to everyone that worked on the various projects in our park. Keeping the park looking beautiful is a major effort and all the work is performed by volunteers that love the TOP! Also, thanks go out to the members that served on a committee – our club and park could not exist without these important committees and I encourage those of you who may be interested in volunteering on one of the committees listed in the directory to contact me or any board member.

The First Lady and I have been humbled by the great trust you placed in us, two and a half years ago, when we were first drafted onto the Board by the current Region 3 President, Bill Wild. We look forward to continuing our friendships in the coming years with folks we have met at the TOP. Our plans for next year are focusing on another winter spent in Leilani at Land Yacht Harbor of Melbourne and taking some longer trips with Gracie, perhaps joining a WBCCI Caravan and other trips with friends.

Thank you for a great year of support and may God bless each and every one of you over the coming months!

*Tim & Caroyl Johnson,
President and First Lady*

Loving Concerns



So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. Ephesians 6:9

Sympathy:

Clara Ellis' brother, Larry Duncan, died on Sept. 4. "I feel blessed to have had such a kind and loving brother." A Memorial Service will be held at a later date.

Fred Gavin passed away on 9-6-2020. Fred was a long-time member of the Top of Georgia and contributed so much to the park over the years. Debbie and Danny Cribbs became members of the TOG because of his love for our park.

Sympathy cards or emails may be made to: Danny and Debbie Cribbs, 2339 Valrico Forrest Dr., Valrico, FL 33594
email: dananddecribbs@aol.com

Illness and Surgery:

Rick Sibly had heart surgery on Aug. 20.

Norma Mantz has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She's counting on your prayers and would love to hear from you with cards, calls or emails. She and Karl live at: 527 Midline Place, Melbourne, FL 32934
Email: silverbullet1710@msn.com

Debbie Cribbs recently had gall bladder surgery. Keep her in your prayers and let her know how much you care.

Dot Wheeler is facing cancer and Carlton's brother, Clinton Wheeler passed away on Sept. 19th. Please share your sympathy with the Wheeler family.

Financial Report

This fiscal year has been good financially for the Club and Park. Net Income for the Club and Park year to date is \$41,547: \$3,078 for the Club and \$38,469 for the Park. The primary income driver for the Club is Membership Dues. The reason Club Net Income is high is a lack of rallies, International and other related expenses due to COVID.

The Park Net Income of \$38,469 is due to the increase in the number of Airstreams in the Park over the Spring and Summer months. Hosting an Airstream and Argosy rally in August (at the same time) almost filled the Park and helped increase Park revenue as well.

John Meeks, Treasurer

Membership

1. Renewal forms will no longer be provided by WBCCI, all renewals are done online at <https://airstreamclub.org/current-members/membership-renewal> or by phone/fax:

Ph 937-596-5211
Fax 937-596-5542

2. WBCCI membership dues went up \$75.
Top of Georgia dues remains \$15.

3. Deadlines to renew and be included in TOG & WBCCI directories will be Dec 31.

Jaime Collins, Membership
togairstream@gmail.com

“The Renaissance Man”

Top of Georgia had its own Renaissance Man in Fred Gavin. There’s not much Fred couldn’t do, and if you needed a part, odds are good he could help you get it...or even have it in his camper right at his fingertips. He was a member of TOG since 1976, having purchased his first Airstream in 1972. He helped with the development of the expansion across the bridge, and was the go-to guy for advice on repairs and improvements.

That’s par for the course for farmers, who are among the smartest and most versatile people on the face of the earth. And Fred was one of the smartest farmers I’ve ever met. What’s more he was a professional carpenter, having built a number of houses including two for himself—alone—and one of solid cedar. He retired, sold his farm to his son, and began travelling at age 45. He had travelled in every one of the 50 states except Hawaii, going to Alaska three times. He had been in every one of the Canadian provinces except Newfoundland, and to the Holy Land, Egypt, and five European countries. He spent three summers in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Fred once built his own motor home from a “blank” van shell, and once modified a conventional Airstream A-frame to create a gooseneck camper. “It towed so well you didn’t know it was back there”. Trailer Life liked the idea so well that it featured the design in its November 1972 issue. He picked up his steel-fabrication techniques during a couple of years working for the Atlantic Coastline Railroad.

Fred didn’t have an auspicious start in life; he only finished ninth grade, quitting school to start a charcoal business. He was born with one brother and three sisters on Gavin Road in Dover, Florida, named for his grandfather, who was a courier in the Confederate Army at age 15. He made his home near Zephyr Hills, Florida, as does his son, Dennis; his daughter, Debbie, and son Patrick live nearby. His father was a harsh taskmaster, and after repeated

tries Fred was able to join the Navy in 1945 at age 18 when he finally got his weight up to 115 pounds. After his discharge, he built a dairy barn for his father and built his own farm buildings, at one time growing 40 acres of irrigated strawberries with two deep 12-inch wells and tending 65,000 laying hens. He designed and built his own feed mill, working with Dr. Harms of the University of Florida College of Agriculture to develop ideal poultry feed formulas for starter, grower, and laying mash ranging from 16% to 20% protein. “I could make better feed than I could buy,” he recalled, “and could get antibiotics into the feed fast when a disease got started.”

Fred married his first wife, Alene, at age 20. After joining TOG, they travelled with the Fortners and were friends with all the pioneers. After Alene’s death he married Polly, and they also became regulars at TOG until her death. “I was married to two of the best women in the world,” he declared. “Losing them never gets easier.”

Over several years, Fred built almost every shelf unit in the TOG library. The Board of Directors recently named the library for him in honor of his contributions.

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Ben Moon



**Southern women
love a “True
Southern
Gentleman”!**

Our First 20 years, Briefly

1961: Organizational meeting to form a Georgia Unit Georgia Unit granted a charter at Fourth International in Hershey; officers elected. June 9: first rally; those attending considered charter members.

1962: First Christmas party held; buying a site proposed there.

1963: First Peach State Caravanner mailed; first mention of bell being rung to herald arrival of trailers.

1964: Constitution and by-laws proposed; action taken to have unit incorporated. At International, Joe and Mary Belle Bennett organized, printed and delivered daily what became the Blue Beret.

1965: Constitution and by-laws adopted. Georgia Unit incorporated; new charter accepted.

1966: Possible club site found; donations taken. Ray Haycraft, Georgia Unit, elected Vice President of International. Leased club site in Rabun Co. from Georgia Power. Cread's land leased for the club; Joe Bennett names the spot Top of Georgia.

1967: Top of Georgia officially opened March 18 with 20 complete hookups; rally and camp host were started. Ray Haycraft installed as International President. First Buddy Rally

1968: Voted to have pavilion built. Electricity improved; new sanitary station and septic tank added; club now has 48 complete hook-ups.

1969: New pavilion first used at Buddy Rally.

1970: New ovens used at Buddy Rally; nature trails cleared; telephone installed. Pavilion paid off.

1971: Ice Breaker Rally held with 14 inches of snow.

1972: All rallies held at the Top. Trailer pads added: 102 complete hook-up sites.

1973: Water system improved; pet section completed. Property leased for 10 more years.

1974: Bridge built at lower end of park; hosted first caravan to stop at the Top. First Memorial Service held.

1975: Committee appointed to investigate purchase of property. Host patio was paved.

1976: Upper circle paved; road across bridge developed and graveled; 24 sites added.

1977: At special business meeting, possible purchase of property passed; installed roll-up doors at pavilion.

1978: Property purchased January 12. Lower lot graded, filled and sodded.

1979: "Big Breakfasts" started. First motorhome attended a rally. Open end of pavilion enclosed and repainted.

1980: Septic tank added; new water lines laid; underground electric wires laid. Lower end: three septic tanks added; water lines laid; new electric laid.

1981: Unit's 20th Anniversary. Patio added to rear of pavilion; telephone moved to a booth; iron gate added; 200 chairs donated; fans added.

**Reprinted with permission
from Pat King**

Year 2021 will be the 60th Anniversary of the Top of Georgia. To learn more about our park and club, visit the newly restored Archives Room located in the former office area.



Judy Baker has done an outstanding job restoring the mountain of files, documents, pictures and other memorabilia pertaining to our past and present. Damage from the tornado was extensive, but Judy managed to save these valuable documents and move these materials to the new Archive Room.

THANK YOU, JUDY

“Looking Back in Time”

At most every rally, we would have over 200 trailers. Sometimes we would be full and had to double park and put some on the street above the park. There were rally sites between each regular site.

During a Rally Week, the host would get on the speaker early Sunday morning and tell everyone to roll their awnings up and remove all cars from rally sites to free up space.

Trash cans were placed at all regular sites. On Monday, the host would announce on the PA for everyone to put their trash cans on the street. Creed Dyer would drive his truck up the street and the men would put the trash on his truck. Mr. Dyer would carry the trash to the dump.

The pavilion was half the size it is now. There was a fireplace in front of the serving window. Look on the floor there and you can see where it was. There was a massive building program in 1968 and we added the kitchen, bathrooms, library, and stage.

To become a member, you had to attend 2 rallies, and have a sponsor. When you joined, they called you up front to introduce you to members. They asked you to turn around so members could vote to accept you or not. You could hear what they were saying. Some would say something funny like “we don’t need another skinny blond”.

You thought you were not going to be voted in because of the crazy things they were saying. They turned you around and welcomed you to the Top of Georgia Family!



Jean Gilbert sponsored Joe and Clara Ellis, 2013

October 2020

“Old Fashion Fun”

When the budget didn’t allow for paid entertainment, we created our own!



The Top of Georgia Girls perform for the members. Lead singer was Charles Whittington (center), who was skillfully and artfully prepped to be “one of the girls”.



Woodlawn Farm-toured a 100-year old schoolhouse where Al Holcomb attended school. The ladies gathered at an old-fashioned Merry-go-round; baby chicks romping around the chicken coop and farm fresh, organic eggs.



Celebrating the 50-year anniversary! Cast from the “Brenda Holcombe Presents Carol Burnett” skits. The cast included (l to r) Steve Rosenthal, Warren Fore, Lin Thompkins, Pat King, Ben Moon, Debbie Waters, Betty Ivy, Charles Whittington, Jean Gilbert, Ron Roskosh, Jo Roskosh, and Jackie Whittington.



Our own Minnie Pearl (Lin Thompkins) has entertained us for many years, swapping puns with Warren Fore or reciting beautiful poems, stories and other inspiring literature!

Page 5

The Airstream Park
Memories from Over the
Years.....

July 2, 2020

We have been at the park for a week. The Park, with its changing seasons, is as beautiful as ever. Summer brings hot days, cool nights, lots of wildlife, a bear or two, squirrels, chipmunks, snakes, lots of birds, a rare hummingbird (sitting) and one independent cat named "Wally". Mornings are crisp, with the aroma of coffee, bacon frying, birds singing, and another hot day as the campground comes to life. The evening brings beautiful sunsets, frogs and crickets beginning their evening song, a whip-poor-will in the distance and a "whooh" from an owl, giving closure to a beautiful day. The campground is operated by volunteer members of the TOP of Georgia Airstream Park. Opportunities abound for anyone wanting to donate time to the park upkeep. The camp host is in charge of keeping people, parking, etc. running smoothly. Oh, how exciting it is when an airstream comes rolling in to camp. The host rings the bell to announce a first-time new visitor or member coming back to camp. Campers come from every State in the Union, as well as Canada. The dog parade starts early every morning and ends at sunset every evening. Everyone gets plenty of exercise. Campers enjoy



conversations, sharing experiences of the day and swapping ideas of things to do in the future, like airstream repairs or area tours.

The three pavilions in the Park provide swings, ceiling fans and local art from the summer park campers. Every evening you can find campers enjoying old friends and meeting new friends. Last evening an impromptu get together for all campers was hosted by members, Brad & Kate. They served homemade scones, raspberry or

blueberry and every flavor in between. What a wonderful dessert treat and what fun we had sampling those scones.

We have been members here for many years. Every visit is like coming home to our friends and adopted family. It is a place where you can relax, heal, grow and experience the natural beauty of this earth.



We have especially missed the annual rallies. Greeting our fellow campers as we walk (still a little sleepy) to the pavilion for breakfast; knowing a hot one awaits with scramble eggs, coffee, fried bacon, orange juice or sausage and pancakes. We miss the Ladies Teas, and Men's Breakfast out, the wine tours, antiquing, member specialty workshops and music. We miss trout fishing, exploring nearby waterfalls, shopping and concerts. We miss Sunday morning singing. We are even starting to miss those long board meetings and business meetings. We miss you all!



We will be back in October to experience another season at the Top of Georgia. So, keep your silver side up and safe travels till then.

.....**Michael and Stephanie Lankford**

DID YOU KNOW?

- ... that there's a small waterfall coming from under Alt 75 behind the water tank at the upper end of the Park?
- ... that the remains of a bathroom for the original RV Park can be seen through the trees behind Site 12 in the upper loop?



- ... that there's a bench at the water's edge just inside the gate leading to the water tank/electrical building area? (Caveat: lots of bear sightings in that area)



- ... that the trail that starts in the lower loop between the tether ball poles goes up the mountain to steps leading to a cross erected by Cread Dyer in memory of his son? If you look closely, you can see it when you are coming up the road from Helen. Try looking in the winter when it's much easier to spot.

- ... that there's a spring which originates under the Pavilion and comes out the large pipe next to the stone steps leading from the Pavilion down to the Fire Pit?



- ... that the two springs that “sprang” along the main drive after the tornado have gone dry? And just when the frogs filled it with tadpoles!



- ... that our own Andrews Creek is a tributary of the Chattahoochee River? Up by the Park, the Chattahoochee is barely deep enough to cover its rock floor. In Atlanta, the River is much deeper and is Atlanta's main water source. (Please be careful what you throw in that creek.)
- ... that the northern border of our Park abuts U.S. Forest Service property?

Have you seen any hidden gems at the Top?
Top of Georgia Airstream Park

**October Rally and Installation,
October 14 - 18, 2020**

AVENUE OF FLAGS



Wednesday, October 14
OPEN

Thursday, October 15

10:00 A Brasstown Bald Field Trip
6:30 P Rally Registration
Adults \$20; Kids 9-18, \$6; < 9,
free
7:00 P Welcome/Announcements, Tim
Johnson
Bingo & Popcorn, Mary Anne
Meeks

Friday, October 16

8:30 A Coffee and Doughnuts @ Pavilion
10:15 A Helen to Hardman Trail Hike –
flat, paved
Lunch in Helen
2:30 P Board Meeting
5:30 P Rally Registration
6:00 P Hot Dogs and S'Mores at the
Main Fire Pit
Announcements, @ Pavilion, Tim
Johnson
Meet and Greet

Saturday, October 17

10:00 A New Member Orientation*,
Jaime Collins
2:00 – 5:00 Christian Jones Concert in the
Flagpole Circle
Bring drinks; no dogs please
6:00 P Dinner @ Pavilion
7:00 P Installation

Sunday, October 18
OPEN

NOTES:

* Please sign up for these activities if planning
to attend

What a year this has been. A sign in my
neighborhood says “OMG / Please Make it Stop
/ 2020”. Amen!

We are all ready for a beautiful fall weekend in
our favorite Airstream Park. Wouldn't it be a
glorious sight to see flags flown from every
Airstream at our upcoming rally? U.S. flags,
State flags, Top flags*, or even flags for your
branch of the service. Let's show our colors.

*There are still a few Top flags available from
the host now or Rick Sibly or Julian Clements
during the rally.

Nancy Sibly,
Rally Committee



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2019–2020 Top of Georgia Airstream Club Rally Events	
<i>Rallies held at Top of Georgia Airstream Park unless noted otherwise.</i>	
Date	Event
Nov 28, 2019	Thanksgiving Gathering
Dec 7	Holiday Luncheon at Eatonton (Rock Eagle)
Mar 30–Apr 5, 2020	Airstream Club Int. Region 3 Rally, Myrtle Beach, SC
Apr 13-14	Spring Work Days
Apr 15-19	Spring Rally Business Meeting
May 20-25	Memorial Day Buddy Rally
Jun 20-27	Airstream Club International Rally, Loveland, CO
Jul 4	Patriotic Celebration
Jul 22-26	Youth Rally Buddy
Sep 2-7	Labor Day Rally Elections
Oct 14-18	Fall Rally Installation of Officers



Officers

President: Tim Johnson; President-Elect: Murphy Harrell; First Vice-President: Mary Anne Meeks; Secretary: Kimberly Funderburg; Treasurer: John Meeks; Directors: Rick Sibly, Tom Baker, Dick Sells, Clara Ellis; Past-President: Charlotte Williamson