

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3



Volume 42

Number 2

January

2016



President

Bill Coleman

1st Vice President

Jim Weilhammer

2nd Vice President

Tom Beyer

Secretary

Katherine Kamiya

Treasurer

Martina Pelley

Trustees

Bill Worthington

Carol Montague

Craig Brinkley

Hugh Cowart

Membership

Mary & Chip Adams

Historian

Chris Duncan

Directory/Webpage

RoseMarie Anderson

Happy New Year fellow Big Benders!

By Bill Coleman

As always, each Holiday Season arrives and departs in a whirlwind of frenzied delight and exhaustion. Linda and I certainly hope your Holidays were exceptionally merry and bright!

The Big Bend 2016 calendar offers something for everyone we hope. We realize some of you prefer to camp in State Parks while others like the extra amenities of a private park. Whatever your preferences please come aboard and celebrate our wonderful Unit camaraderie in new and familiar venues. We welcome you to host a rally-we still have openings for the April-October rallies. We look forward to a fun filled year.

I will be giving Bonnie Lewis a well-earned break from coordinating the rally schedule. Many thanks to Bonnie for your dedication to keeping us all so well informed and motivated. Please notify me at ourplantation@gmail.com and your rally host(s) of your intentions to attend and site number (if assigned). I will publish the rally status on monthly basis.

What's Inside

Santa Brings Christmas to the Big Bend - 2

CanOpener 2016 – 5

Our Experience as Volunteer Campground Hosts – 6

Searching for an Airstream – 8

2016 Rally Schedule – 9

Welcoming New Members - 12

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

Santa Brings Christmas to the Big Bend

By Bill Coleman

What a great evening at the Old Town Café. The tables were brightly decorated with poinsettias and red jingle bells. With candy canes in hand, Santa greeted: the Montague's, Skipper's, White's, Jim Hentz, Culley's, Cowart's, Jim Weilhammer, Katherine Kamiya, Hurst's, Worthington's, Beyer's, Thompson's, Wood's, Brinkley's, Welch's, Spenard's, Duncan's, Nancy Davis, the Marine Corps Toys for Tots representative and his wife.

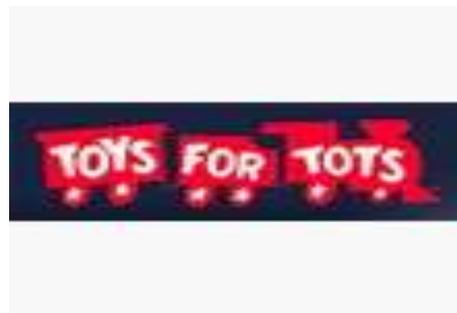


Santa (aka Bill) and Linda Coleman and Hugh and Judy Cowart

After the social hour our Marine thanked us for our generous donations of toys for children in our community. He also provided a history of the Toys for Tots program launched as a national campaign in 1948. It was so interesting to hear that Walt Disney Studios designed the red [toy train logo](#). Also, until 1979, Marine reservists (frequently in their [dress blue uniforms](#)) and volunteers would collect and refurbish used toys. In 1980, only new toys were accepted, as reservists were no longer able to dedicate drill hours to refurbish toys. There were also legal concerns including the mixed message of giving hand-me-down toys as a message of hope. In 1991, the [Secretary of Defense](#) authorized the creation and affiliation with the [non-profit](#) charity foundation. In 1995, the Secretary of Defense approved Toys for Tots as an official mission of the Marine Corps Reserve.

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3



THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3



Katherine Kamiya and Jim Weilhammer and Shearn and Ginger Spenard



Hugh Cowart

After dinner the entertainment commenced. Hugh Cowart pulled out his ukulele, we pulled our jingle bells and Hugh led us in a rousing carol sing-along. Thank you Hugh for being our maestro extraordinaire!

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

CanOpener 2016

By Katherine Kamiya and Jim Weilhammer

We were “first timers” at the CanOpener 2016 held January 7th-10th at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park in Santa Rosa Beach, FL. We joined veteran participants, Elna and Jay Thompson and Connie and Bear Schenk from the Big Bend Florida Unit. This year marked the 10th anniversary of this open, no fee, Airstream rally. The CanOpener is not sponsored by any person or organization and runs on the efforts of dedicated volunteers. Participation has grown each year and it was estimated that there were 130 rigs from across the U.S. and Canada at this year’s rally.

Florida did not welcome participants with our legendary sunshine but in spite of cloudy and rainy skies, the group was very congenial and fun-loving. All the people we met seemed to take to heart the *Hints for a Happy CanOpener*:

- 1) *Get out of your trailer, walk around and meet your fellow CanOpenians.*
- 2) *Participate in as many or as little of the activities as you like.*
- 3) *If you see a fire ring, walk up, introduce yourself and join the party.*
- 4) *Remember this is a very large gathering so be flexible and know that all activities are always weather dependent.*
- 5) *Smile and be thankful you own an Airstream and are part of the most awesome traveling community on the planet.*

Thursday evening we enjoyed dinner at a local restaurant with the Thompsons, Schenks and Jim Cocks, 3rd Vice President on the International Board of Trustees and his wife Debbie. The Cocks have been full-timers for eight years and we enjoyed hearing about their adventures.

The CanOpener schedule of events incorporated local park activities including a live concert on Thursday night and a Saturday breakfast fundraiser by the Friends of Topsail Hill Preserve. Foley RV Center and Airstream of Mississippi provided door prizes and CanOpener t-shirts for all participants. The Chili Pot Luck was a lunchtime event on Saturday with more pots of chili than we have ever seen. Ingredients ranged from beef to venison and turkey and flavors from mild to scorching hot. Salads, breads and desserts rounded out the menu and it was an amazing spread that filled the clubhouse. A Cornhole Invitational Tournament followed. Jim paid the \$1.00 entry fee and was soundly beaten in his first attempt at the game. Amy and Lamar Waymire visited in the afternoon and between bands of showers were able to visit with friends from the unit and get a look at the range of Airstreams on site. We answered questions about our unit rallies and provided information to two potential members. In the late afternoon, pizza and libations were followed by karaoke and dancing at the clubhouse. Sunday morning started with a coffee bar and light continental breakfast. Since the event was scheduled early for travelers, participants were welcomed in their robes and pajamas. This continued the light hearted mood of the weekend and we were honestly a bit envious of the Airstream-themed flannel pajamas. We left on Sunday before the re-scheduled Open House which welcomed participants to visit other trailers.

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3



We met lots of interesting people and look forward to participating again in the future. The CanOpener 2017 will be held January 7-10th at Topsail Hill Preserve State Park. For more information go to <http://www.airforums.com/forums/f47/canopener-2016-a-130377.html>

Our Experiences as Volunteer Campground Hosts

By Chip and Mary Adams

The Conecuh National Forest is the southern- most national forest in Alabama, encompassing 84,000 acres between Andalusia, Alabama and the Florida line. This public land supports long leaf pines and shallow ponds and bogs. It provides a wide variety of recreational activities, including hunting, fishing, canoeing, camping, hiking, backpacking, picnicking, bicycling, shooting sports, wildlife viewing, and nature study.

The Campground at Open Pond provides scenic views, well maintained facilities, and a diversity of recreational opportunities. The campground includes 10 primitive sites and about 60 sites with water and electricity. There is easy access to boating, fishing, hiking and bicycle riding. It also includes a day use area for picnicking and a log group shelter built in the 1930's by the CCC. Swimming is available at nearby Blue Lake also operated by the Forest Service.

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

Our Experiences as Volunteer Campground Hosts continued . . .

Work provided by the two volunteer park hosts include checking in each camper, by meeting them, checking that they have a receipt posted on their site with dates staying in the park, recording their license plates numbers, and providing them with a set of rules while in the park. Other duties include checking rest rooms and maintaining supplies between the visits of the contract cleaner, providing help to campers, and light maintenance. This usually is about 25 hours a week, with lighter duty during week days. Although reservations are not accepted, people do call with questions about facilities and occupation numbers. Campers often have questions about local activities, where to shop, do laundry, and good restaurants. The job doesn't have normal 9-5 hours. A large camper unit might arrive at 9:00 p.m. and need help parking or there might be a problem with water or electricity early in the morning.

It was interesting to meet campers and find where they live. Although the park is a favorite among the local fishermen, hunters, hikers, it also provides camping for those traveling thru or those seeking pleasant temperatures. We met people from Denmark, Poland, and all over the U.S. It was also interesting to see the wide variety of camping equipment. There were tent campers, tents on top of open equipment trailers, enclosed equipment trailers which had been modified into RV's, all sizes of tag-a-longs, 5th wheels, and motorhomes.



We have found each hosting position and each campground is different. We had a shorter stay at Holy Ground Corp of Engineer Day Park in Lownesboro, Alabama. This is a historic site of Creek battles of Red Eagle. This park had gatekeepers and park host. We were gatekeepers and duties were mainly opening and locking gates and making sure park was empty at dark. The schedule there was 5 days on and 5 days off, working at least 10 hours a week.

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

Our Experiences as Volunteer Campground Hosts continued . . .

The gate hosts were parked on side by side sites just outside the gatehouse. The other gate hosts were on site before we arrived. They consisted of a couple with two teenage boys, two large dogs and two pot-bellied pigs. It became obvious very soon that they had been using both sites and the pigs were more comfortable at our site, under the Airstream or Chip's boat and trailer. They promised to keep them up and even tried to erect a portable pen, which the pigs simply rooted under and did their thing (at our house). The ranger promised he would take care of it each time we saw him. The dogs barked, and I can hardly complain since we also have two dogs who will bark. The teenagers played their music around-the-clock, using those large speakers which usually go in the trunk of an auto. Even when you couldn't hear the word or melody of the song you could hear and feel the loud BOOM BOOM! The boys told me daily that all I had to do was tell them it was bothering me. I told them daily.

Their camping equipment was also unusual. It sat on three wheels, was an old FEMA unit. And had no sewage hooked up and no tanks(?) Their site had enough workout equipment scattered around that it could have outfitted a gym. When they left the campground they tied the howling dogs outside and put the pigs inside. We lasted 21 days. We suggest that you check out the campground, facilities, and other host if possible before making a commitment. We think this was an unusual occurrence. Holy Ground had been without host for several months and they made allowances so the rangers would not have to make two daily trips to the park.

Updates on Holy Ground- The pigs have left the park and they are seeking hosts.

We did have to complete an application for these positions and background checks were made. Although no money exchanged hands, it was an opportunity to camp without paying and to have water, electricity, and sewage provided. We were at Open Pond Campground from mid- August through November.

"We definitely would consider a similar opportunity in our area."

Searching for an Airstream

Andy and Rachel Marchison, former Big Bend Florida Unit members, are looking for another Airstream trailer. They want something newer than 1998 in the 25-28 foot range. Please contact them at averlite6534@gmail.com or (931) 287-7722 if you know someone who wants to sell.

Debi McDaniel is interested in replacing an aging Trail Lite with an Airstream trailer. She is in the Tallahassee area and is seeking a 28-30 foot trailer with a front bedroom, dining booth and sofa. She is not anxious to renovate another trailer and would like something in good condition and newer than 2000. Please contact her at saltwater.cowgirl@ymail.com.

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

2016 Rally Schedule

Bill Coleman, President

Last Updated: 01/03/2016

Please email Bill Coleman at ourplantation@gmail.com and the rally hosts to confirm your participation and site number.

DATE/HOST	PLACE	ATTENDEES	SITES
January 15-18 No Host Rally	Ho Hum RV Park 2132 Highway 98 Carrabelle, FL 32322 (850) 697-3926 Suggested activities: Carrabelle History Museum, Camp Gordon Johnson World War II Museum, Crooked River Lighthouse, Carrabelle Bottle house.	Bill & Linda Coleman Shearn & Ginger Spenard Steffany & Sara Perkins Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya Chip & Mary Adams Connie & Bear Schenk	
February 12-14 Hosts: Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya and Shearn & Ginger Spenard	Yellow Jacket RV Resort 55 S.E. 50s Avenue Old Town , FL 32680 (352) 542-8365 Suggested activities: boat docks and rentals, nice kitchen in outdoor pavilion, heated pool and spa, modern clubhouse, Wi-Fi and cable.	Shearn & Ginger Spenard Steffany Perkins Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya Bill & Linda Coleman Tom & Karon Beyer	#34 #35 #38 #46 #42
March 11-13 Hosts: Craig & Monica Brinkley and Tom & Karon Beyer	Fort Pickens Campground 1400 Fort Pickens Road Gulf Breeze, FL 32563 (850) 934-2622 www.recreation.gov Suggested activities: touring Fort Pickens,	Bill & Linda Coleman Craig & Monica Brinkley Tom & Karon Beyer Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya	E13 E30 E16 E59

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

DATE/HOST	PLACE	ATTENDEES	SITES
	swimming, museum, fishing, canoeing at Blackwater River State Park.		
April 8-10 Hosts Needed	Chehaw Park Campground 105 Chehaw Park Road Albany, GA 31701 (229) 430-5277 Suggested activities: Chehaw Park Zoo, Native American Festival, Flint RiverQuarium, Albany Museum of Art, Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge and Swamp, Swamp train tour, guided boat tours into the Okefenokee Swamp.		
6-11	Florida State Rally Sunshine Key Resort 38801 Overseas Highway Big Pine Key 33043 (888) 408-5018 http://floridaunit027.wbcci.net/florida-state-rally/	Chip & Mary Adams Tom & Karon Beyer Bill & Linda Coleman Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya Don & Sandy Wood Tom & Karon Beyer	
27-May 1	Region 3 Rally Meadow Event Park Doswell, VA http://region3.wbcci.net/region-3-rally-registration/	Elna & Jay Thompson	
May 13-15 Hosts Needed	T. H. Stone Memorial St. Joseph Peninsula State Park 8899 Cape San Blas Road Port St. Joe, FL 32456 (850) 227-1327 www.reserveamerica.com	Craig & Monica Brinkley Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya Bill & Linda Coleman	#002 #052 #102

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

DATE/HOST	PLACE	ATTENDEES	SITES
June 28-July 5	WBCCI International Rally Lewisburg, VA	Elna & Jay Thompson Jim & Shelia Skipper Carol & Winston Montague Rosemarie & Gary Anderson Bill & Linda Coleman Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya	
September 9-11 Hosts Needed	Buddy Rally Eagles Roost RV Resort 5465 Mill Stone Road Lake Park, GA 31636 (229) 559-5192 www.eaglesroostresort.com Suggested activities: adjacent flea market, Lake Park Outlet Mall, Wild Adventures Amusement Park, Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village (45 miles), Farmhouse Restaurant.	Bill & Linda Coleman	
October 7-10 Hosts Needed	Emerald Lake RV Resort 698 Enterprise Road Colquitt, GA 39837 (229) 758-9929 www.emeraldakerv.com Suggested activities: Swamp Gravy, official folk life play of Georgia, (800) 514-3849, walking tour of Colquitt murals, Tarrer Inn, 15 S. Cuthbert Street, Colquitt, (229) 758-2888.	Bill & Linda Coleman	
November 4-6 Hosts: Rosemarie & Gary Anderson	Installation Rally Live Oak Landing 229 Pitts Avenue Freeport, FL 32439 (877) 436-5063	Bill & Linda Coleman Rosemarie & Gary Anderson Jim Weilhammer & Katherine Kamiya	

THE BIG BENDER

BIG BEND FLORIDA UNIT 153 REGION 3

Looking for Stories

Do you have a great Airstream story or adventure you would like to share? Maybe you have a technical tip or wonderful place you would recommend for a future visit. Write it up and send it with photos to katherinekamiya@hotmail.com. Your feedback and ideas are always welcome!

Welcome New Members

We are pleased to have new members to welcome to the Big Bend Florida Unit in 2016:

-  Susan Hooks, Newberry, FL
-  Isabel and Ken Pollard, Virginia Beach, VA
-  Gordon and Patricia Renovitch, Crawfordville, FL

We hope to see you soon at an upcoming rally.

***"Adventure is where you find it, any place, every place,
except at home in a rocking chair."***

Wally Byam

