

A Condensed History of the AVION TRAVELCADE CLUB

This article has been created as part of the 70th commemoration of when the first Avion travel trailers rolled off the assembly line at the plant located at 1300 E. Empire Avenue in Benton Harbor, Michigan in 1956. For more complete and detailed history we strongly recommend purchasing the book called SILVER AVIONS AND CAYOS, written by Robert J. Muncy and still available today through his daughter-in-law Pam Muncy at 828-773-3032 (TxT/Cell)

2026 AVION TRAVELCADE NATIONAL RALLY (September 15-18, 2026) Pigeon Forge, TN

THE FIRST "NATIONAL AVION RALLY" SINCE 2006!

Sincerely,

Your Rally Hosts, Kevin & Luise Sherman (1987, 32S Model) a.k.a

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In the 1950s there was no such thing as Facebook, emails, text messages, Instagram, etc. The major way for a company to advertise their product was to do flashy display ads and to be hopefully featured in magazines and newspapers. Such was the case with the Avion Coach Corporation located in Benton Harbor, MI. Once production of their all-aluminum travel trailers really began to catch on, they determined the advantageous need to continue to keep in contact with their customers. After all, the RV industry is well known for customers "upsizing" after a few years of owning their RV.

In May of 1959 the company began publishing a simple black & white mailed newsletter. Google defines the term "Travelcade" as "A coordinated column, procession or caravan of tourists or recreational vehicles traveling together on a trip, tour or rally". [In fact, Google cites "most famously used by vintage trailer owner organizations (such as the historic Avion Travelcade Club...)] According to Robert Muncy's book, originally Avion owners were often referred to as **Travelcadeters**, but the term **Avioner** became a common descriptor as well. Why? Well, the AVION TRAVELCADE CLUB was optional for Avion owners! This is why you see Travelcade membership numbers (those big black or red numbers on the right front and rear) of many Avions, but not on others. Sometimes only a "ghost" fade mark shows the prior membership of its owners. It is important to note that the CLUB #'s went with the OWNERS of the Avion, not the trailer/truck camper itself. This is why when doing research in the archives of the Travelcade Directories you can search by Travelcade Member # on the RV or by Name of owner.

The Avion Travelcade Club took hold and grew quickly. In June of 1959 the first "Travelcade" caravan was led by Vic & Irene Bailey (our own Dean Bailey who faithfully attended the Silver Avion Fellowship Rallies each July in Elkhart, Indiana passed away in February 2026. He took over the Avion dealership held by his father in New London, OH until his own retirement) At this first Travelcade there were 8 trailers and 25 people. They traveled 10,000 miles through Canada and into Alaska. Let's understand...in 1959 those AK roads were really ROUGH and camping quite primitive for sure! *AS AN ASIDE....We (Kevin & Luise) traveled all over Alaska in the summer of 2023 for nearly 3 months-- and we are happy to report that most of the roads in AK were now a lot better than those we have experienced in the lower 48!*

DID YOU KNOW? Many Avion Dealerships were known to give a FREE FIRST YEAR MEMBERSHIP to people who purchased their first Avion. Over the years membership numbers we have seen extended into thousands at one time. **Avion spotting's on the highways & byways were as frequent as any name brand RV of today!**

More about the Avion Travelcade Club History....

In 1960, a "Travelcade" caravan dubbed the Avion Amigo Caravan, it consisted of 34 Avion trailers and 75 people and toured Mexico. Shortly after the great success of these two events, **the company formally created the AVION TRAVELCADE CLUB in January 1961**. The company and the Avion trailer owners surely saw that momentum for these types of planned gatherings was growing in popularity. By May of 1960 the club had a dedicated staff person who oversaw club activities and had officially appointed directors. Many successful large events followed annually.

AVION TRAVELCADE HIGHLIGHTS:

FEBRUARY 1961: First Membership Directory was published/mailed to Club members. It contained 134 member listings. It also recognized State Units that had been formed along with club bylaws, etc.

1963: The Club became "international" when the Eastern Canada Unit was organized in Barrie, Ontario, Canada.

1961-1971 the Club grew, conducted many rendezvous, Travelcades and other social functions which were almost fully supported financially by the Avion Coach Corporation in Benton Harbor.

Winter 1971: Winter Rendezvous in Sebring, FL, Avion Coach Corporation President, Robert Ligon, announced that the Club dues would be increased from \$3.00 per year to \$10.00 per year. He explained that (*due to great club growth no doubt*) the company simply could not afford to continue the same level of financial support as in the past. As a result- approximately 1/3 of the members dropped their membership according to information shared in Mr. Muncy's book.

FALL 1975: Fall Rendezvous in Oklahoma City, OK: President Ligon announced that the Avion Travelcade Club would need to be a separate and independent entity responsible for its own financial support. As a result, rally fees were charged to attendees in addition to the annual membership fees.

WINTER 1976: The Winter Rendezvous in Eustis, Florida saw a \$12,000 surplus income from attendee event fees. Over the next several years the club's financial situation was very good and they were able to handle all of their financial obligations, remain independent with elected volunteer board of directors and officers and scheduled many outstanding events, Travelcade caravans and Rendezvous all over the USA.

• **BUT TIMES THEY WERE A 'CHANGIN.....**

1976: the FLEETWOOD Corporation purchased the Avion Coach Corporation. By this time, according to author Muncy, the Travelcade Club was its own separate entity, he surmises, as evidenced by it was not part of the acquisition terms of the sale. While the Club seemed to be rolling along just fine, according to Muncy some leaders of the Club felt the need to merge the Club with a Fleetwood owned and controlled club. **Identity issues....**

APRIL 2005; The Avion Travelcade Club fully merged with Club Fleetwood. The new name was the Fleetwood Travelcade Club and all Fleetwood brand RVs were welcomed as members. The Avion Travelcade Club no longer existed explained Robert Muncy in his SILVER AVIONS AND CAYO book. Avion membership evaporated quickly.

SAMPLES OF ATTENDANCE NUMBERS TO AVION RENDESVOUS & THEIR LOCATIONS:

1960 SEBRING, FL	25 AVIONS ATTENDING
1964 LEHIGH ACRES, FL (1 st Int'l)	376 AVIONS ATTENDING
1968 SEBRING, FL	682 AVIONS ATTENDING
1970 COLDWATER, MI (highest ever attendance)	818 AVIONS ATTENDING
1972 SEBRING, FL/	712 AVIONS ATTENDING
1973 ELKHORN, WI	488 AVIONS ATTENDING

These events were so massive and well-orchestrated by volunteers- they had their own Security Team (*made up primarily of retired PD & security officer Avion owners*) They also had a very skilled, specific crew that would meet 1st time attendees and personally affix their official Travelcade Numbers onto their trailers so they were perfectly located, level and on display according to prescribed Club "specs". RED NUMBERS were free to new members. BLACK NUMBERS were available for a small upcharge. **THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THIS 2026 AVION TRAVELCADE NATIONAL RALLY TO KEEP THE SPIRIT ALIVE FOR ALL TRAVELCADERS/AVIONERS!**