

# Visions in Leisure and Business

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## Introduction

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## **COOPERATOR**

The Journal is working with the Recreation Vehicle/Manufactured Housing Hall of Fame in Elkhart, Indiana as a collaborator. The museum provides the comprehensive history and importance artifacts of the RVing community. This issue includes personal insights and reflections from RV and Camping participants. Leaders in the RV community were contacted to submit reflections, stories, and insights of their journey in RVing and Camping. These statements gave a more complete picture of the RV world, where it has been, and where it's going. The consultants from the Museum were Mike Green and Kelsey McDaniel. Their advice was invaluable.

<https://www.rvmhhalloffame.org/>

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**Smilie, D. 2024 The Origins of the Vintage Trailer Movement, Vintage Camper Trailers, Vol. 13 (2/72), pp 36-39.**

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**This article illustrates the importance of the museum and its preservation of the history of the RVing movement.**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Summary used with permission**

In connection with the centenary celebrations of the Tin Can Tourists (TCT) and on the occasion of (re)founders Forrest and Jeri Bone being inducted into the Recreational Vehicle/Manufactured Housing Hall of Fame, I found myself keen to delve deeper. While my grasp over vintage trailer movement's origins was fairly substantial, a curiosity arose within me for its roots in Western civilization. Thus began an explorative quest which led to this comprehensive article featuring details on early vintage trailer clubs and their related events across the nation.

One point that warrants specific attention is the transition observed from "old trailer" possession to "vintage" ownership. Historically speaking, there has always been a predilection towards collecting, safeguarding, or rejuvenating age-old artifacts, including trailers. This affinity often stemmed out as an inherent fascination towards certain commodities. The advent of vintage trailer clubs along with digital platforms substantially simplified owners' search for fellow enthusiasts.

Historic evidence indicates that forming dedicated groups by Trailer owners is not exactly breaking new ground; it's rather a long-standing tradition. To illustrate one such instance - TCT was founded back in 1919 itself whose successful journey emboldened another short-lived

antagonism named Automobile Tourists Association toward late thirties i.e.,1939 precisely . Subsequently emerged brand-defined factions like Airstream's Wally Byam Caravan Club International (WBCCI) circa 1955 whereas Travel Trailer Clubs of America offering guidance and support for setting up local chapters came around in 1957. There were also instances where club activities were exclusive only to teardrop trailers but none seem primarily centered specifically around mid-century-marked vintage trailers.

## INTRODUCTION

RVs have been a part of the American scene that has influenced different segments of the populations significantly. It has not been investigated or explored as much as the influence of the American automobile. The RV is a significant part of the leisure industry. The popularity of this activity is very extensive and has had a significant influence upon the social development of the American dream and it continues even stronger today.

The available literature is quite extensive, but much is primarily anecdotal. The primary perspective is from a micro framework. Many of the stories that are told are about individual experiences they give insight into impacts of RVing. This does not suggest that there are not macro writings that give information about the larger perspective. As a result, this issue of Visions is exploring the foundation of RVing from a macro perspective and the important elements that have and will influence its future.

## **DEDICATION**

This issue of Visions is dedicated to Al Hasslebeck. The awards that he has received are many and it is not the purpose of this note to review his awards. He was curator and historian for the Recreation Vehicle/Manufactured Housing Hall of Fame for 20 years. The primary purpose of this dedication is to point out an individual who has a passion for RVing. He is not only an individual who talks about change, but one who has brought significant transformations in the RV industry. He has served as spokesperson and effectively has developed and guided the RV Museum. He is a noted historian of RVing and one of his accomplishments was the development of the library at the museum. His ability as a storyteller makes the RVing experience come alive. His accomplishments not only include administration, but also the raising of funds to make significant changes in RVing. He has represented the movement through print, television, and movies.

Al wrote two books after turning 50, each of which sold thousands of copies. His first was titled “The Dumb Things Sold Just Like That” and recounted the beginning of the RV industry as it started during the Great Depression.

The second book was about Elkhart, where many RV manufacturers and supply firms are headquartered. It was entitled “RV Capital of the World: A Fun-Filled Indiana History,”. It explored how the industry grew from ideas nurtured by a few individuals into an empire that now generating billions of dollars in sales every year.

**Al is a Hero.**



**The following websites give insight into the personality of this Hero.**

<https://www.staugustine.com/story/news/2010/04/14/1910-2010-rv-industry-celebrates-100-years-exploration-and-innovation/16235745007/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/05/automobiles/05CAMPER.html>

<https://woodallscm.com/hesselbart-addresses-national-china-rv-rally/>

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/>

[https://www.elkharttruth.com/features/book-by-rv-historian-al-hesselbart-discusses-rise-of-elkhart-countys-dominant-industry/article\\_3d278a20-125b-5738-be08-83ee5684f282.html](https://www.elkharttruth.com/features/book-by-rv-historian-al-hesselbart-discusses-rise-of-elkhart-countys-dominant-industry/article_3d278a20-125b-5738-be08-83ee5684f282.html)

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/commemorating-100-years-of-the-rv-56915006/>

<https://rvbusiness.com/retired-al-hesselbart-still-promoting-rv-industry/>

<https://forwardfrom50.com/episode-004-al-hesselbart-finds-new-purpose-in-his-70s-as-a-country-performer/>

<https://forwardfrom50.com/al-hesselbart-museum-curator-starts-new-life-as-a-performer/>

## RECOGNITION

The individual that has to be recognized is George Allen. He is the individual that has made a significant contribution to this issue. He has been an advisor and has provided much of the technical perspective in regard to the development of this RV content.

He must be acclaimed for contributions that he has made to the housing movement. The one characteristic that is part of his personality is the passion for this movement. It has made him one of the individuals who is acknowledged as an expert in the field.

George Allen is a noted author and expertise in manufactured housing and land lease communities. His autobiography, From SmittyAlpha6 to MHMaven is available via [www.educatemhc.com](http://www.educatemhc.com). He also has authored a Chapbook of Prayer & Chapbook of Business Management & Wisdom, as well as other important titles.

George Allen

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