



Old Aluminum Adventures

A T A L E O F T W O A I R S T R E A M S



A temporary light bar gives Ruby modern safety while on the road, yet removes for vintage shows.

ment Ruby's functionality externally without impairing her originality. Folding wood chairs, old canvas folding camp seats and make-do snack tables encourage alfresco dining.

Ruby's original rear highway lighting was a single combination tail / brake light, sufficient for 1948 but wholly inadequate for 2004. The tail lamp is dim and the brake light, at best, is half as bright. To improve highway visibility and clearly signal my intentions to drivers behind me, I attached a light bar that can be removed for shows by undoing a single bolt. The original tail-light has been converted from 6 to 12 volts and wired to act in tandem with the new tail lights. Thus, the trailer's original lighting system is preserved for posterity yet lightly supplemented with

Original butane tank (not currently used).



modern tail lamps for driving safety.

All three beehive side marker lights have been updated with bright 12 volt bulbs. A commercial truck wiring box mounted to Ruby's pipe frame up front connects the trailer wiring harness to the tow vehicle's 7-blade tow plug socket. Dual safety chains have been added to the pipe frame with an exhaust pipe clamp from an 18-wheeler, which has the same 4-inch diameter as Ruby's pipe frame. If Ruby ever ends up in a museum, all these updates can be removed by unbolting and replacing light bulbs, returning her lighting system to factory original condition.

A stamping in the original butane storage tank reveals it was built on January 8, 1948 by Butane, Ltd., 1804 South Main Street, Los Angeles, California. It may be safe to use, but I doubt any dealer would fill it. I'm keeping it on Ruby for show only and will use a newer propane tank for the grill.

Same with the beautiful cast aluminum deco design butane heater. It is not vented and lacks a shut off valve. So rather than use it for heat or chance someone accidentally knocking the control knob to "On", I'll take the chill off with a new Coleman portable catalytic heater. The original 3 burner stove top also lacks a shut-off valve and the knobs don't have to be pushed in before being turned on. I'm still pondering how to adapt it for safer use, and may do so if the propane grill and microwave cannot satisfy my cooking needs.

Camping in a preserved trailer is akin to marrying a spouse whose initial attractiveness overshadows a few inbred quirks: you must learn to accept that which cannot be changed. Ruby remains as cute as a bug's ear, but she's not comfortable for extended camping. Her 4 foot deep rear semi-circular bed is roomy and inviting but has become soft and saggy with age. Her 3 foot deep front semi-circular bed is



smaller but provides better back support, so that is where I curl up each night.

Ruby's originality has been preserved for posterity yet updated for Airstreaming in today's world by supplementing her 1948 features with non-permanent newer ones. Her increased utility today does not impair the enjoyable simplicity of her 1948 original features. • • •

