

The VINTAGE

a d v a n t a g e

The official newsletter of the Vintage Airstream Club



Big Red Numbers – Where are they now?

From Around the World
to saving the Future.

...Chasing old 8671



National Parks Are Calling Cataloging History Batteries & Hubs Int'l Rally Update Art Roads

Spring 2008

a i r s t r e a m . n e t

The VINTAGE AIRSTREAM CLUB is an Intra-club of the Wally Byam Caravan Club International (WBCCI)

In this Issue

Cross-Country The National Parks are calling your name. In this issue check out Death Valley National Park on the California/Nevada border. It's one of the hottest, lowest and driest places, and you'll be amazed at what you'll find there – geological wonders, rare flora, oasis' and an abundance of adventure opportunities.



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Big Red Numbers Restoring the past to help save the future. Read about the history of this Wally Byam Caravan gem – Around-The-World Caravan Airstream, Safari #8671. Rob Keller is the new owner of this vintage beauty and plans to turn it into the EMoViTO (Enormous Mobile Vintage Trailer Observatory) – the world's largest mobile beehive observatory.



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The VINTAGE advantage

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VINTAGE AIRSTREAM CLUB OFFICERS 2007 – 2008

Elected Officers: (Elected at the WBCCI International Rally every July)

Shari Davis (#1824), President
Maxwell@insideout-design.net
2520 Gray Street
Edgewater, CO 80214

Herb Spies (#1861), 1st Vice President
Spies@nwflorida.net
P.O. Box 844
Shalimar, FL 32579

Fred Delaney (#7271), 2nd Vice President
fdelaney@cox.net
3634 Jennings
San Diego, CA 92106

Rob Baker (#2820), 3rd Vice President
robbaker91@roadrunner.com
115 County Rt. 16
Plymouth, NY 13832

Jim Cooper (#3056), Treasurer
jcchome@frii.com
6200 Choke Cherry Drive
Loveland, CO 80537

Sidra Spies (#1861), Recording Secretary
sssbiol@yahoo.com
P.O. Box 844
Shalimar, FL 32579

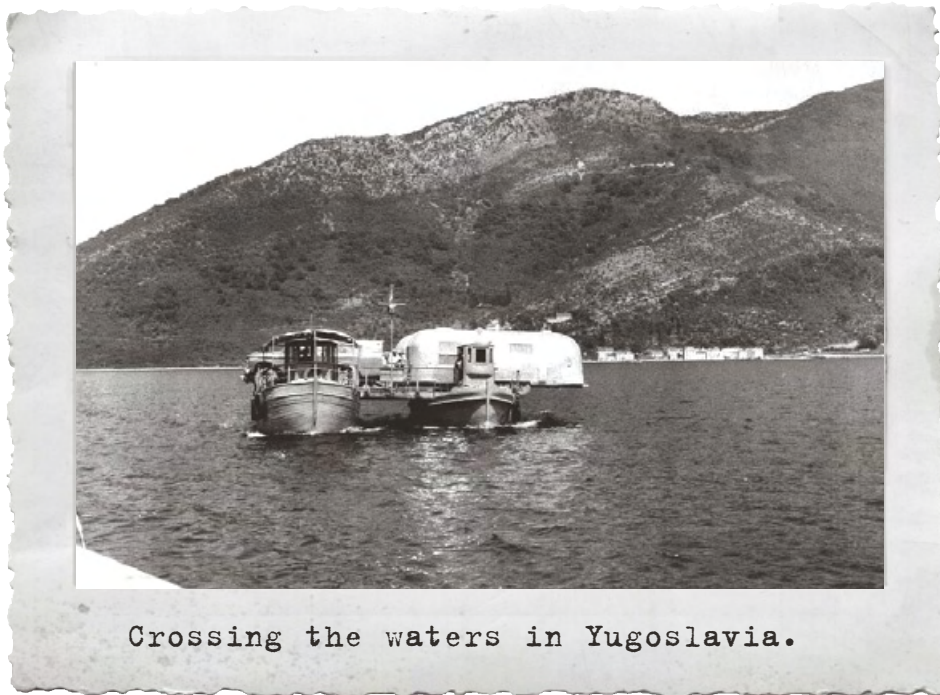
Forrest McClure (#2671), VAC Librarian
forrest@mcclurefamily.org
13992 E. Marina Dr. #301
Aurora, CO 80014

Ed Emerick (#4425), Immediate Past President
eemerick@new.rr.com
838 E. Eldorado Street
Appleton, WI 54911

Past Presidents:

2006-2007 Ed EMERICK (#4425)
2005-2006 Wayne MOORE (#15116)
2004-2005 Bob HERMAN (#8556)
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Where are They Now?



From Around the World to saving the Future.

Chasing Old 8671...



"Around the World"
Caravan Logo

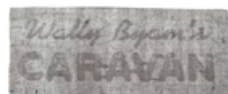


Hawaii



Japan

Caravan
Sticker



Singapore

This is the story of a very special 1963 Airstream Safari...one that participated in the 1963-64 Around the World Caravan! This trailer first crossed my path in

December 2007 when I saw an eBay auction for a trailer that was purported to have been on that historic caravan – a 1963, 22-foot Airstream Safari Twin bearing the WBCCI number 8671. One of the photos was intriguing, because it showed a list of countries painted onto the inside of the door! The auction listing reported that the trailer originally belonged to Cecil and Mary Tolle of Elwood, Indiana. Could this really be a trailer from the Around the World Caravan? I immediately set out to determine the answer. First, I checked my copy of *Thank You Marco Polo – the Story of the First Around the World Trailer Caravan*, by McGregor Smith Jr. That book recounts the details of this historic caravan from the viewpoint of one of the participants. And sure enough, on the last two pages of the book, the participants list does indeed list Cecil and Mary Tolle from Elwood, Indiana. So now I know that the Tolle's were on the caravan, but was this trailer on the caravan? The book does not say what trailer they had, and none of the photos show #8671, so more sleuthing would be required.

The eBay auction provided several decent photos of the trailer showing some unusual characteristics, so maybe I can find it in published photos from the caravan, even if I can't see the #8671. From the eBay photos I note that next to the door it has a double Jalousie window that I have never seen before – the upper half is at least twice as tall as the lower half. Usually on an early 60s Safari Twin, there is a single, larger Jalousie window next to the door. And the trailer has some unusual reflectors on the rear and

Joe Peplinski found out that the future of vintage Airstream Safari, #8671 is a-buzz.

sides of the trailer – could they have been added specifically for the caravan? Armed with these details, I searched all known photos from the caravan and nowhere could I

find evidence of this trailer, but I had one last resource. With great interest I again watched the five VHS videos about the Around the World Caravan that I bought from Airstream several years ago. Tapes #1 and #2 yielded nothing definite, but as Vincent Price narrates, at about 8 minutes into tape #3 while the caravan is traveling thru India, there it is...it's barely visible, but you can make out #8671 on what is clearly an early 60s 22-foot Safari! And it has that unusual window and the extra reflectors! It is being pulled by what looks like a Ford pickup truck with a box on the back and extra tires on top of the box. I finally had my proof. Further checks showed this truck and trailer combination again in tape #5, first loading onto a boat and then crossing the Adriatic Sea on its way to Yugoslavia and then leaving Prague on its way to "Soviet Russia." Unfortunately on tape #5, the number 8671 is never visible, but the other details make it clear that this is the same truck and trailer. So not only did this trailer travel thru Asia, it continued to complete the tour of Europe that followed! As I finished watching the videos, one unanswerable question nagged at me, was it possible that Cecil and Mary Tolle themselves could be seen somewhere in the many scenes that showed caravanners? Anyway, after watching the videos, it's official, now I am definitely interested in this trailer. I contacted the eBay seller and set up an opportunity to look the trailer over in person. It's in Ohio, perhaps 3 hours from home – certainly not too far to travel for a closer look. So on December 26, 2007, I took a good hard look and a few photos. What I found was a trailer in rougher condition than the eBay description and photos suggested.



Calcutta, India



Burma (Myanmar)



Thailand



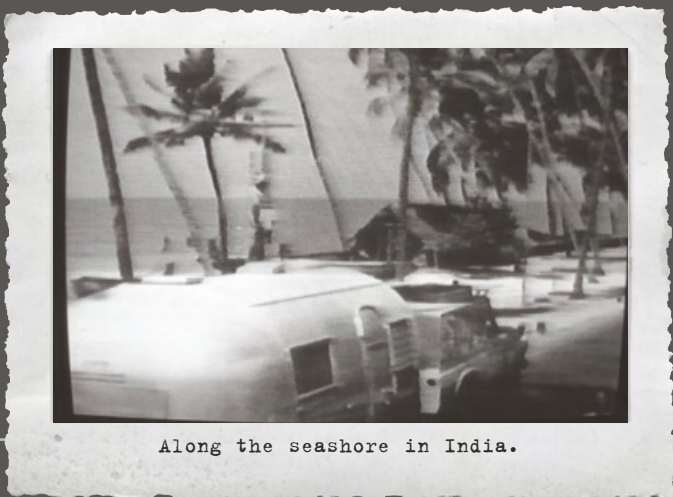
It looked to me like it hadn't been used recently. There were a couple of patches on the skin, and a couple of minor dents. The fridge, furnace, water heater and much of the plumbing had been replaced a long time ago. Some of the cabinetry was falling apart and I found signs of water leaks and rear end separation – none of this is surprising, I suppose, after so many bone jarring miles on that caravan and many travels since. But at least it was all there – the bones were present to allow a solid restoration for someone ambitious. I jotted down the serial number: 223T130, confirming that this trailer was the 30th 1963 Safari built in Jackson Center, Ohio and confirming that it only sported Land Yacht trim, and not the

International trim level that one might expect on a trailer that would take such a journey. Interestingly, the eBay seller said he bought it from a guy named Cecil in Indiana – same name and state as the original owner. As I left with a realization of the true condition of the trailer and the work it would take to restore, my heart sank, because I knew it would be bid up beyond my comfort zone. And so it was, selling for \$3700 when the auction closed on December 28, 2007.

I did not think about this trailer too much after that, just hoping that it was going to a good home and would be restored to its former glory. Then the Fall 2007 *Vintage Advantage* arrived about a week later. After reading the "Where are They Now" article, I knew I needed to write an article about this trailer. A quick check with the editor and I was committed to the story for the next issue. Now I had to get to work. I contacted other WBCCI members who had old Membership Directories and then the WBCCI Headquarters in Jackson Center trying to find out among other questions, how long Cecil and Mary Tolle were in WBCCI, who else might have been assigned the number 8671 over the years and whether the Tolle's had taken this trailer on other caravans besides the Around the World Caravan.

Slowly the information trickled in. #8671 had been assigned to the Tolles from 1963 thru 1980. They did not renew for 1981. Then, from 1984 thru 1988, #8671 was assigned to Ralph and Muriel Roberts of Green Valley, Arizona, before

#8671 from the Around the World Caravan video.



being unassigned from 1989 thru 2000. In 2001 through 2004 and then again in 2007 it was assigned to Cecil and Elizabeth Copley of Butlerville, Indiana, so that must have been the Cecil that sold the trailer in late 2007.

Even more interesting was the discovery that Cecil and Mary Tolle actually participated in eight Airstream Company caravans:

- #33 – Eastern Canada Summer 1963
- #35 – Around the World 1963-64
- #77 – Mexico Winter 1971
- #85 – Yucatan Winter 1972
- #90 – Mexico-Guatemala Winter 1973
- #97 – Mexico-Guatemala Winter 1974
- #103 – Eastern Mexico Winter 1975
- #108 – Central American Odyssey Winter 1976.

Clearly the Tolle's and this trailer were well traveled.

And what about the participants on the Around the World caravan? Of the 47 trailers that participated on the Around the World Caravan, it turns out #8671 was the highest number. It was even higher than the highest number in the 1963 WBCCI Membership Directory, which was 8024. So Cecil and Mary Tolle joined WBCCI after the 1963 Directory was published! Could it be that the Tolle's bought the 1963 Airstream Safari and joined WBCCI specifically to go on this Caravan? That theory is supported by the fact that the next

highest WBCCI number on the caravan was #8511, which belonged to the McGregor Smith Jr. family. The Smith's joined WBCCI specifically so that McGregor Smith could be the official publicist for the Caravan. In fact, Airstream supplied the trailer they used on the trip. One has to wonder if the Tolle's participated in the 1963 Eastern Canada Caravan as a "shake down" before the big one? Another nagging question is why did the Tolle's get a Land Yacht, rather than an International? Was this a rushed purchase "off the lot" rather than a trailer carefully ordered for the Caravan? We may never know the answers to these questions, but it's fun to speculate.

As I continued my research, I stumbled upon the fact that, of the 105 people that participated in the Around the World caravan, one is still a member of WBCCI today – Marjorie Nolen. Marjorie still has WBCCI membership number 5232 that she and her husband Lawrence and their two sons Lawrence Jr. and John used on the caravan. I was able to call and talk to Marjorie and she was absolutely delightful. She is now 93, but was a relatively young 49 when the caravan started, well below the average of 64! Marjorie clearly remembered Mary Tolle, who was a school teacher because her sons enjoyed spending time with Mary. Marjorie had other memories to share like the day the caravan only moved 8 miles because the roads were so bad. She noted that she made many enduring friendships on that caravan and it would have been hard not to do so after spending a year camped along side each other.



Over the Adriatic.



Leaving Prague en route to Soviet Russia.

One unfortunate fact was that the Nolen's trailer was destroyed in a traffic accident in Kansas after their return to the U.S. and although Marjorie was injured, she recovered and no one died in the accident. Marjorie offered to show me the slides and photos she and her sons have from the caravan – I only wish I lived closer so I could take her up on that offer.

I must say that my conversation with Marjorie inspired me to read *Thank You Marco Polo* again to see if it would yield any more personal details about Cecil and Mary Tolle. One notable incident that is documented in the book occurred while the Caravan was camped in Malacca, Malaysia. Cecil Tolle, who was noted to be a retired mechanic, was astonished to see 3,500 school children arriving to visit the Tolle's trailer! As it turns out, since Mary was a school teacher, she was invited to visit one of the local schools. In return she invited some students to visit her trailer. They in turn invited the entire student population of Malacca! Another noted event was the time the Tolle's visited a farm co-operative in Czechoslovakia and Mary, who grew up as an Indiana farm girl, tried her hand at milking a cow and was successful, gathering hugs all around! And I must relay one other incident noted in the book that puts the era of this caravan in perspective, and that was while in Cambodia, the caravanners received the message that President Kennedy had been assassinated. At first it was thought to be a Communist plot to embarrass them, but eventually the truth of it sunk in. How hard that must have been to deal with this news while they were so far away from home.

Unfortunately, this was about all I was able to discover about the Tolles. But the story of #8671 does not end here. The next part of the mystery was to find out what happened to the 1963 Safari trailer after the Tolle's did not renew in WBCCI. I was able to find a phone number for Cecil Copley and gave him a call to find out. It turns out that Cecil and Elizabeth Copley bought the trailer in 1998 after finding it for sale on

the side of the road. The guy they bought it from received it in trade for a riding lawn mower! Through a title search, Cecil confirmed that there were perhaps five or six previous owners, but the trailer had been registered in Indiana its whole life. This confirms that this trailer never belonged to Ralph and Muriel Roberts of Arizona when they were assigned #8671. Cecil noted that he and his wife Elizabeth used the trailer regularly, often camping at military bases – an option that was available to him as a retired veteran. Sometimes they slept five in the little trailer when they took three teen-aged foster children with them. The Copley's took the trailer to Missouri several times, and to Arkansas and Texas, and even to Key West, Florida! One trip was to Kentucky, in order for the trailer to be part of a display about "Travel Before Interstates." Another was to the 2001 Region 5 Vintage Airstream Rally at RV Heritage Foundation Museum in Goshen, Indiana. That was perhaps the first introduction for this trailer to the VAC and photos from this occasion show Cecil Copley proudly standing in front of the trailer. Cecil noted that at one time he considered donating the trailer to the RV Heritage Foundation Museum, but eventually he decided to "keep it in circulation." As time wore on many people would see the trailer at his home and stop to inquire if it was for sale. He never really considered it to be for sale, but one day when caught at a weak moment Cecil accepted an offer from a guy from Ohio, an incident that he now regrets. Shortly thereafter the trailer showed up for sale on eBay.

So what is next for old #8671? The eBay auction was won by Rob Keller from Napa, California. Rob is currently making plans to pick the trailer up in Ohio and transport it back to California for restoration. Once restored, Rob plans to use the trailer as part of mobile honeybee educational project. Rob is fully aware of the significance of this historic trailer and he intends to preserve it and write the next chapter in its history. With any luck, maybe we'll even see him joining WBCCI



France



Russia



Czechoslovakia



Turkey

and the VAC in the near future. (See page 16 for more about Rob Keller and his work with honeybees.)

Let me close by noting that 1963 Safari #8671 is just one of three documented surviving trailers of the 47 that participated in the Around the World Caravan, that I know of. The second is a 1962 Overlander #5289, that was taken on the caravan by Dr. Floyd and Ethel Yeager of Marion, Ohio. That trailer is now located in Florida and is owned by the VAC's own Herb Spies. Herb purchased this trailer in Ohio by way of an eBay auction a few years ago. He has set up a Blog about his trailer that can be viewed here: <http://62overlander.blogspot.com>. Herb has also met the children of the original owners of his trailer.

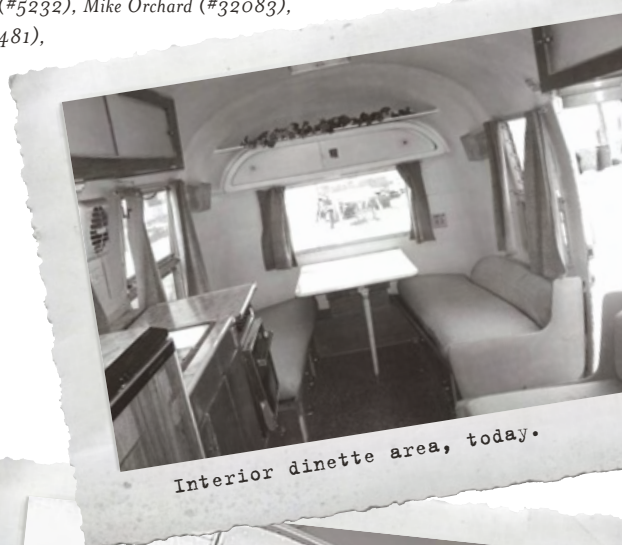
The final documented Around the World survivor that I am aware of is a 1963 Overlander #7667, which was taken on the caravan by Roy and Evelyn Landis of Evanston, Illinois. Its current owners and whereabouts are unknown, but that trailer and the original 1963 4x4 Ford pickup that pulled it on the Around the World Caravan were offered for auction on eBay in August, 2006. To the best of my recollection, that auction did not meet reserve and the trailer was never re-listed on eBay. At the time of the auction, the trailer was noted to be in Monrovia, California and it was being offered for sale by just the 2nd owners. If you have any more information about this trailer, or any other trailer that you believe participated on the Around the World Caravan, I would like to hear about it. I would even like to hear of rumors of other surviving trailers from this caravan.

Likewise, I would love to hear about any trailer that is purported to have been on the 1959 Cape Town to Cairo Caravan. To my knowledge, the only documented survivor of that caravan is Wally's gold 22-foot World Traveler that sits outside the Airstream Factory in Jackson Center, Ohio.

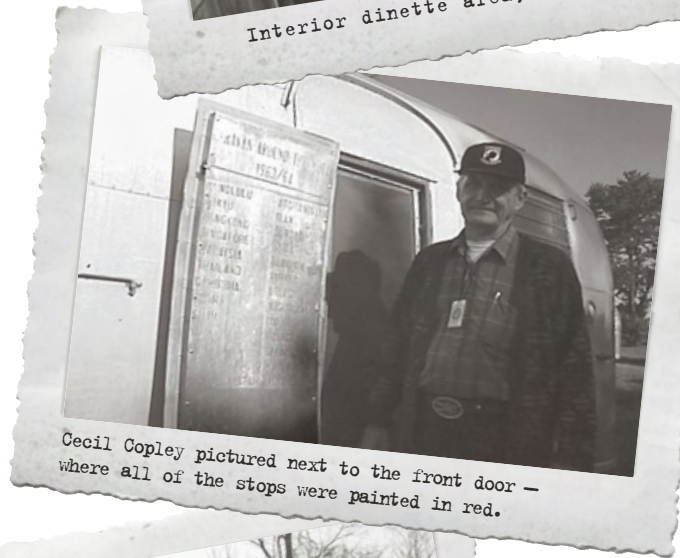
There must be more survivors from both caravans waiting to be discovered.

We need to begin documenting and properly preserving these historic trailers, and I'd like to do my small part. Please contact me at kodiak66joe@wowway.com if you have any more information. Thanks! 🌐

I wish to acknowledge the following people who researched and provided information I used in this story: Cecil Copley (#8671), Leo Garvey (#6006), Rob Keller, Marjorie Nolen (#5232), Mike Orchard (#32083), Dallas Peak (#8481), Cindy Reed, Herb Spies (#1861), and Dot Stengel.



Interior dinette area, today.



Cecil Copley pictured next to the front door — where all of the stops were painted in red.



Exterior curbside.



● Pakistan



● Egypt

EMoViTO

(Enormous Mobile Vintage Trailer Observatory)

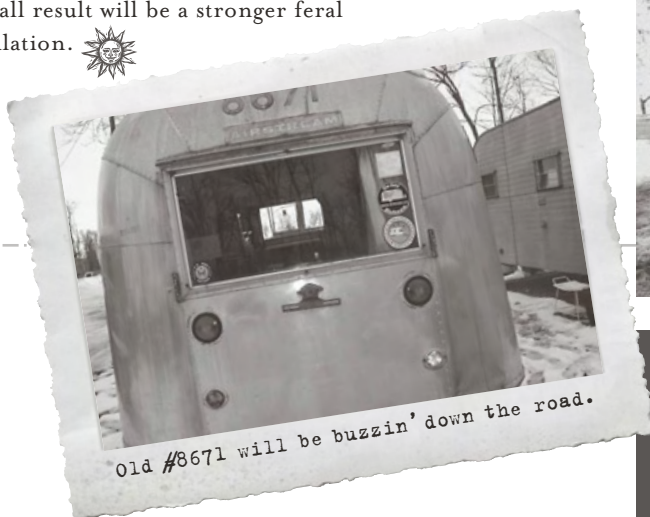
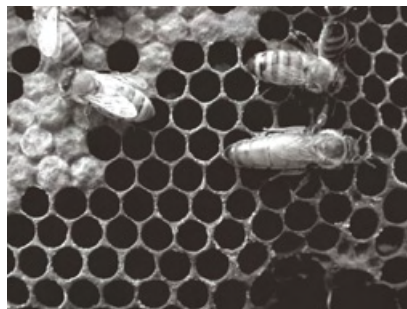
AROUND THE WORLD CARAVAN SAFARI, No. 8671, IS BEING RESTORED BY NEW OWNER, ROB KELLER, AND WILL BE HEADING OUT ON A NEW JOURNEY — ONE THAT COULD HELP SAVE THE WORLD.

In 2006, across the U.S., and for unknown reasons, honeybee colonies suddenly began to die. Colony Collapse Disease or (CCD), losses threaten the honey and pollination industries, and researchers are looking for causes and remedies.

Honeybees are essential for the production of over 90 food crops. It is estimated that 2 out of every 3 bites of food we put into our mouths result from the bee pollination process. We are dependent on bees for the pollination of our crops. Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "If honey bees become extinct, human society will follow in four years." He was speaking in regards to the symbiotic relationship of all life on the planet.

Initial studies of dying colonies revealed a large number of disease organisms present, with no one disease being identified as the culprit. Ongoing studies of beekeepers experiencing CCD have found a few common management factors, but no common environmental agents or chemicals that can be attributed to the problem. It is considered the disease of 1000 cuts because there are so many factors that may be involved.

Rob Keller hopes to help turn CCD around by educating the public on the conditions the bees are experiencing. His plan is to turn Old #8671 into a mobile bee observatory called the EMoViTO (Enormous Mobile Vintage Trailer Observatory). It would be the world's largest mobile beehive observatory. In 2007, Rob received a grant from The Walter and Elise Haas Fund for his project. The plan is to address the plight of the honeybee population and ways humans can change agricultural practices to protect honeybees. And, to help develop colonies that resist the environmental factors affecting them. By splitting stronger colonies away from weaker ones he hopes to breed stronger bees that can be released back into the wild. The overall result will be a stronger feral bee population. ☀



Old #8671 will be buzzin' down the road.