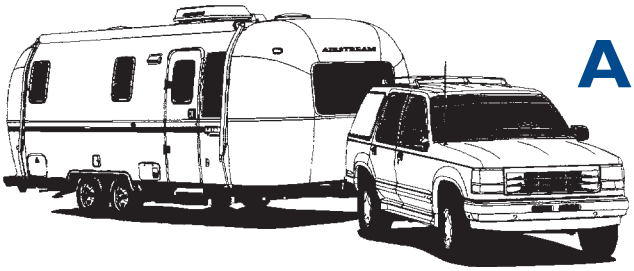

Airstream Tech Help Group

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This group has been established by WBCCI to help the membership with any of their technical RV problems. Examples of questions that might be of interest to many members will be published in the *Blue Beret*. We will respond directly to you, in response to your email or letter describing a problem you are having. We hope you will find this new service of value in the care and feeding of your RV. You may contact us as follows: techhelp@wbcci.org or by mail: Howard Lefkowitz, 11508 Colt Terrace, Silver Spring, MD 20902

Propane Catalytic Heater Safety Issue

I am on a caravan in Minnesota and one of the participants had a very dangerous experience with their catalytic heater. At the bottom of the catalytic heater, there is a propane connection (**a flare nut**) that is hard to see without getting down on the floor. This couple's flare nut had loosened over the years and had slid down the pipe about seven inches to the first bend. The propane supply to the heater was held in place only by the stiffness of the piping. When they arrived at the Bemidji stop it was cold, so they started the heater - - and came close to burning up the entire rig. **CHECK that flare nut!**

Jamie

Replacing The Water Heater In A 60s Vintage Trailer

QUESTION #1: I have a problem with the water heater in my 1966 Safari. It worked fine when we put the trailer away last fall. Now I can get no water through it. I disconnected the inlet and outlet lines, and they are clear. The obstruction is in the tank. Compressed air into the inlet (cold) will not produce a discharge from the outlet (hot). Air into the outlet will force water from the inlet. How do I remove the water heater?

ANSWER #1: Are you sure you have opened up the hot water bypass valves, which are used for winterizing the heater? They cut the heater out of the circuit, so you do not have to fill it with antifreeze. The water heater usually removes from the outside of the trailer by removing the screws all around the flange. It would take a pretty large obstruction to clog the tank.

Howard

QUESTION #2: Thanks for your prompt reply. I think that the Atwood Heater in the newer trailers does pull straight out the side. However, this is a 1966 model that used the larger 9 gal., Bowen Heater. I have removed the screws and flange. It appears to me that the tank is much larger than the cut-out. It has no bypass valves. Any thoughts?

ANSWER #2: I replaced the water heater in my 1967 six years ago. At the time I had the sink out of the trailer and was easily able to remove the water heater from the inside. My 67 Globe Trotter and 67 Trade Wind have identical baths, so your Safari probably does also. The molded fiberglass sink unit was easy to remove and replace, and makes replacing the water heater, adding bypass valves, replacing the Univolt (in Trade Wind) with an Intellipower, and re-plumbing the sink easy.

The Atwood G6A-7, 6 gallon gas only was my choice. It required a new outside panel to fill the gap between the new unit and the old hole -- see picture. If you go this route, use Alclad 2024-T3 aluminum so that it can be polished. I didn't know that at the time. An Internet search will find suppliers. Use Olympic rivets from Vintage Trailer Supply. They also sell a rivet shaver to produce a rounded head. Borrow one if you can, they're expensive. If I had it to do over, I would get a water heater with an electronic igniter. Good luck.

Jim

continued...

Airstream Tech Help Group continued

Furnace Noise

QUESTION: The furnace is starting to make a noise (sounds like the blower motor). It sounds like a bearing, or bushing not sure without taking a look.

I've never taken the furnace out or had it apart. From one of your articles, it indicated that I should do some periodic maintenance on the furnace. What would that entail? Also, I guess I would have to remove the oven in order to get at the furnace.

Any tips that you might have that could possibly save me some time would be appreciated . Thanks again. I look forward to hearing from you. Mike

ANSWER: Maintenance on a furnace consists of cleaning the gas jet, cleaning the burner with a wire brush, cleaning the combustion chamber, cleaning the spark electrode, cleaning the dirt and dust off the sail switch, checking all of the electrical connections (particularly the grounds) and cleaning the other internal parts.

I have heard a noise in several furnace units that sounded like a bad fan bearing but turned out to be the gas jet nozzle. It was partially blocked and the gas was somewhat restricted causing the whistling noise. The solution was to clean the nozzle by soaking it in vinegar overnight. If you do not have the time take a round wooden toothpick, wet it and twirl it in the nozzle opening.

Since the burner goes on first followed by the fan, if the noise starts immediately it is the gas nozzle. Also, the fan will run for some time after the burner has shut off so if the noise is still there with just the fan running it is the motor bearing. This will allow you to have the right parts available when you take the furnace out.

You almost always have to take the furnace out to do repairs or maintenance. Some RVs have removable panels that allow easy access, some can be removed from the outside and most will require a major effort. I usually find that troubleshooting the unit and fixing it takes almost no time compared to removing and re-installing it. Each trailer or motorhome furnace installation is different and I have never seen any guide. Howard

FOLLOW-UP: It was the motor bearing. Thanks for your help.

Mike