



The Bethany Citation 86

It looks good on paper, but how does it work?
A longtime camping couple puts this
trailer to the acid test

JAKE AND GEN TURK

IT'S OBVIOUS that Bethany intended the '72 Citation 86 camping trailer to be the last word in luxurious, uncomplicated camping. We tested the unit and found that, in most ways, Bethany has succeeded. The trailer is handsome, comfortable, convenient, and easy to handle.

Our test unit was a standard Citation 86 with the following optional features: privacy drapes, a range/oven combination, a U-shaped dinette, a gas furnace, surge brakes, and a spare tire and wheel with cover.

After loading the trailer with our gear and filling the water tanks and LP gas bottle, our rig weighed in at 2100 pounds, with a hitch weight of 300 pounds.

The vehicle we used for towing was our 1969 American Motors' Rebel station wagon with a 232 cu. in., V-8 engine. We had reservations about its ability to pull the rig, but we found that it handled easily in all traffic conditions. We credit the trailer's Dura-flex torsion axle—the same type of axle used in Airstream RVs—for that. The surge brakes on the Citation are, we feel, a necessity because of the weight of the unit.

The trailer's 2 x 4-foot side rails that go into the frame are reinforced with 7½-foot channel iron on 20-inch centers. This base gives the floor a good support that is immediately evident. The welded, boxed-steel, A-frame type undercarriage on 13-inch wheels offers ample clearance over any rough ground that might be encountered. Therefore, the Citation can follow nearly any type of towing vehicle.

Our only criticism is towing the rig is one that can be applied to most trailer manufacturers. The LP gas bottle rack "chirped" as we traveled. We learned to live with it, however, since we could find no immediate solution to the problem.



Photos, Jake Turk.

The Bethany converts from a camper to a comfortable campsite home in about 12 minutes.

Once in camp, raising the 12-foot fiberglass top was easy—much more so than some crank-type models we've used in the past. Bethany trailers come equipped with a spring-loaded, counter-balanced raising mechanism that eliminates the need for cranks, pulleys, or cables. The raising mechanism required very little effort, but some reach, both in opening and closing the trailer.

All camping trailers evaluated for the *BETTER CAMPING Driver/Test Report* are subjected to a standard set-up and tear-down procedure that goes like this: After the trailer has been completely set up for camping two times, the entire operation is repeated and timed in an attempt to determine the normal set-up time that will be required by an owner. The test takes place on reasonably level ground, so conditions for each trailer will be similar. Only two people participate. Based on this procedure, the set-up

time for the Citation was 12 minutes; the tear-down time was 10 minutes. This compares very favorably with other camping trailers.

The side walls of the Bethany are permanently attached to the top. We fastened the bottoms of the side walls simply by slipping the canvas bead into an extruded metal molding. Both the side canvas and the aluminum door are conveniently stored against the ceiling for travel.

The canvas to the door is also attached by the bead-to-molding method but, here, it presented a problem. We felt that the fitting on both top sides of the combination door was poor and, in spite of a small metal canopy over the door, found that the rain trickled inside slightly. Bethany has since changed some of the hardware on the door in an attempt to overcome this problem.

The interior of the trailer is a splash of color that out-rivaled the

flamboyant fall hues along the Wisconsin River where we camped. The privacy curtains, drapes, upholstery, and mattress cushions are a floral pattern of orange, brown, green, and yellow, a little busy for our taste. Changing any one of them to a solid color would help. The ceiling is a white fiber paneling.

As advertised, the Bethany can ably sleep six adults. The beds are sufficient to support our ample frames. The two mattress cushions are composed of polyurethane foam and measure 74 x 48 x 3 inches. The dinette also converts into a bed, 75 x 48 x 3 inches. Privacy curtains for each bed permit independent sleeping arrangements.

After many years of camping with a portable oven that required wind screens, constant watching, and a few prayers to produce edible biscuits, it was a pleasure to turn them out without anguish in the Magic Chef oven. We declare the porcelain, three-burner stove with regulated oven to be a boon to the harried woodswife. The oven also has a keep-warm setting for late arrivals to meals.

Instead of the optional electric refrigerator, our unit included an upright insulated ice box situated next to the door for easy access while on the road. It was a built-in, plastic model with storage space in the door, and it retained cold very well.

The single, stainless steel sink has a five-gallon portable holding tank for waste water. We could have used a cover for the sink to gain additional work area. There is a small work space, 10 x 20 inches, next to the sink. Two larger counters—one measuring 16 x 54 inches and the other 21 x 54 inches—are situated away from the galley. To use them, we found ourselves constantly reaching across the main traffic areas. All the work space is covered with a yellow formica. The dinette table, an ample 32 x 42 inches, is also covered with the same material. The flooring is a yellow Mobile cushioned vinyl.

STORAGE space is always a problem for campers, but Bethany has provided plenty of it. Altogether, there are eight drawers plus space under the sink and oven and beside the water tank. There is also a storage area underneath each dinette seat. The drawers are finished in a pleasant burnt oak color, with antique copper-finished latch-type fixtures. There are only two knobs or pulls on the storage units, fortunately, since we kept catching our fingers in them.

As veteran tent-trailerites, our prime requisite for camping is getting the most we can from the out-of-doors, while still enjoying some of the con-

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The camper can sleep up to six people. The unit's windows unzip to let in light and air.

PRICES AND SPECIFICATIONS

BETHANY CITATION 86

Made by Bethany Travelers, 6820 Auto Club Road, Minneapolis, MN 55431. Test vehicle equipped with optional privacy drapes, range with oven, U-shaped dinette, gas furnace, surge brakes, and spare tire and wheel with cover. Standard features include .040 aluminum body, welded boxed-steel A-frame undercarriage, Dura-Flex torsion axle, high-speed Timkin roller bearings, fiberglass wheel wells, adjustable front jack with wheel, steel-reinforced fiberglass top, spring-loaded raising mechanism, aluminum screen door, 10.10 Army duck canvas walls, 3-way windows, stabilizer jacks, safety chains, automobile wiring harness, 3-burner stove, ice box, stainless steel sink, combination pump and city water hookup, 5 gal. waste tank, 13 gal. water tank with fill and drain, 20 lb. gas bottle with rack and regulator, 110 v. electric outlet, 15 amp. power cord, 12 v. dome light, canvas clothes closet, burnt oak paneling, vinyl flooring, Scotch Guard protected cushions, fold away doorstep.

Dimensions: Total weight, 2100 lbs.; hitch weight, 300 lbs.; overall length, unit folded, 192"; height, 54"; width, 82"; overall length, unit open, 236"; width, 82"; height 96"; interior length, 136"; width, 78"; height, 78". Five-lug 13" wheels with 7.00 x 13 tires. Surge brakes with 7" drums. 14" ball hitch. **Handling:** (12-ft. lane change made in 3 seconds at 45 m.p.h.) excellent. Price as tested, approximately \$2295, plus taxes and license. **Circle No. 101.**



Included in the Bethany's rear sleeping area are a double bed, a counter, and a convenient, curtained privacy dressing room.

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veniences of home. Bethany has taken this into consideration by providing full, three-way windows on both sides of the trailer and all around the bed areas. From the inside of the unit, we never missed a thing that went on outside.

All windows on the Citation have double zippers, allowing them to be opened to any position from either side. Each window consists of a layer of clear plastic; a layer of fiberglass screening, also with double zippers, that keeps out the wind and rain while still admitting plenty of light; and, for privacy, drapes that can be zipped over the screening.

Bethany offers several other conveniences for the camper. Outstanding among them is a self-storing, 25-foot electric power cord. A city-water hookup provides running water to the sink. And the doorstep is self-storing.

In addition to the fixed, self-storing jacks in the rear of the unit, two portable screw jacks are furnished for the front.

A garment bag is provided as a standard feature and—better yet—a rod is included on the ceiling to hang it, with room to spare. We thought this really was enlightened engineering. There also is a privacy room, 2 x 3 feet, consisting of an all-round, movable drape. It could serve as a dressing room or to house a portable toilet.

In general, the few problems that we encountered with the Citation 86 were of a very minor nature. We were impressed with the quality of the materials and the workmanship that went into the construction of the trailer. Bethany has produced a functional camper that stresses safety, durability, and convenience. It should provide lasting service. ✓