

# **La Conexión**

## *Mexicana*

**Escapees RV Club Chapter 8**

**Spring 2018**

**Wagonmaster's Wrap up**

**Chapter 8 Charity in  
Baja California**

**Beautiful Baja California**

# La Conexión Mexicana

Escapees RV Club Chapter 8

Member of Escapees Social Network, Inc.

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Spring 2018 - Volume 39, No. 1

**Chapter 8 Website:** [www.mexicanconnection08.com](http://www.mexicanconnection08.com)

## On the cover:

The sun sets on the beach at El Pabellon in San Quintin, Baja California where participants spent one night and enjoyed a tamale dinner. Photo by Bob Pettit.

## Reports and Information

Mission statement, Chapter 8 Officers .....	3
News Briefs .....	4
Editor's Notebook .....	5
President's Message .....	6
Treasurer's Report .....	9
Charity Committee Report .....	11
Membership Notes .....	17
Historian's Record .....	18
Secretary's Notes .....	19
Next Issue & Submitting Content.....	38

## Features

Wagonmaster's Wrap Up .....	21
Beautiful Baja California .....	26
Faces and Places .....	34

## The Mission of Chapter 8, which was organized in 1985, is to:

- ◆ Expose Escapees Chapter 8 Mexican Connection members to RV travel in Mexico, its traditions, culture, scenery, food, and folklore.
- ◆ Travel South of the Border and give back more than the enriching experiences we gain, through charity donations and business patronization.
- ◆ Enable Chapter 8 members to feel comfortable to return to Mexico for future Rallies as well as their own road trip adventures.



**Chapter 8 Website:** [www.mexicanconnection08.com](http://www.mexicanconnection08.com)

### Escapees Chapter 8 Officers

President — Ed Dennis, [ed@ekdennis.com](mailto:ed@ekdennis.com)

Immediate Past President — Cynthia Ponder, [cynacat@gmail.com](mailto:cynacat@gmail.com)

1st VP & 2019 Wagonmaster — Kassandra Dennis, [kassandra@ekdennis.com](mailto:kassandra@ekdennis.com)

2nd VP & 2020 Wagonmaster — Bob Payne, [bobsapayne@aol.com](mailto:bobsapayne@aol.com)

3rd VP & 2021 Wagonmaster — **Vacant, please volunteer**

Treasurer — Steve Bufty, [stevebufty@yahoo.com](mailto:stevebufty@yahoo.com)

Secretary — Jean Pedersen, [jeancarolp@yahoo.com](mailto:jeancarolp@yahoo.com)

Membership — Jay Hault, [hault2@yahoo.com](mailto:hault2@yahoo.com)

Webmaster — Virginia Danby, [vtcdanby@gmail.com](mailto:vtcdanby@gmail.com) (leave of absence)

Newsletter Editor — Joseph M. de Leon, [josephmdeleon@gmail.com](mailto:josephmdeleon@gmail.com)

Newsletter Layout/Graphics — Joseph M. de Leon, [josephmdeleon@gmail.com](mailto:josephmdeleon@gmail.com)

Historian — Debby Clark, [debrv@me.com](mailto:debrv@me.com)

## **News Briefs**

various sources

### **New Chapter 8 officers, row reps elected**

Congratulations to Secretary Jean Pedersen, Newsletter Editor Joseph de Leon, and Historian Debby Clark, who were nominated, seconded, and voted in without opposition, as was Bob Payne as 2nd Vice President – this makes Bob Wagonmaster in 2020. The position of Wagonmaster 2019 was contested and decided by secret ballot in favor of Kassandra Dennis. Cynthia Ponder remains on the Board as Immediate Past President and Ed Dennis, having served as 1st Vice President last year and Wagonmaster 2018, is now serving as President. Jim McEver and Connie Farley were elected Chapter 8 row reps for this year's Escapade.

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### **Webmaster takes leave**

Virginia Danby, who was elected Chapter 8 Webmaster in February, is currently unable to fulfill that role because of an unexpected family situation. Debby Clark, Chapter 8 Historian, and Joseph M. de Leon, Chapter 8 Newsletter Editor, have agreed to help cover the duties through June. By the end of June, Virginia has said she will decide if she's up for the task of resuming Webmaster duties or if she will need to resign. If anyone wishes to volunteer as Webmaster at this time, Virginia has offered to step down.

Please join Chapter 8 leadership in wishing Virginia's family peace and our warmest wishes.

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### **Volunteer for a Wagonmaster position**

The position of Third Vice President, who will become the Wagonmaster in 2021, is currently open. If you're interested in volunteering or would like to know what's involved, please message Chapter 8 President Ed Dennis at [ed@ekdennis.com](mailto:ed@ekdennis.com).



## Editor's Notebook

Joseph M. de Leon

*Baja California* is a place where endearing people live on beautifully rugged land never far from water. Of all the towns and beaches we saw in the 51 days we spent in Baja California, *Ensenada* was our favorite. The city is dynamic, offering everything one can imagine from shopping and excellent food to museums and music.



*Joseph is a former graphics and web producer and newspaper reporter currently working for the U.S. Forest Service. He travels in a Class C motorhome with his wife Denise and their dog Kimbo. Chapter 8 archival photo*

*La Jolla* Beach Camp, a small community just to the south of the bustling city, stole our hearts the day we arrived. Its shimmering beaches, blue Pacific water, and breathtaking views called us back after the caravan ended. We joined fellow RVers and traveled to *Bahia de Los Angeles* and *San Felipe* by way of *Coco's Corner*, then spent another 3 weeks at *La Jolla*, which means "the jewel."

As the new editor of *La Conexión Mexicana*, I hope this newsletter will be one of Chapter 8's jewels.

The updated format aims to make it easier for you to enjoy on a tablet or mobile phone, offers lots of photos, and provides an opportunity for you to learn or share your experience. As a Chapter 8 member, you have either traveled to Mexico in an RV or you aspire to. Tell your story. Submit your photos. That is our publication's lifeblood and a great way to make a Mexican connection before our next rally.

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## President's Message

Ed Dennis

*iSaludos a todos mis amigos de la Conexión Mexicana!*

There is a burst of energy flowing northward from 500 miles deep in *Baja California...* as a nearly full complement of newly elected officers (and one old treasurer 😊) stepped up to make this a significant year for our venerable Mexican Connection. The modern configuration of this Spring Newsletter by Editor Joseph de Leon is testimony to the wave of enthusiasm that has swept the Chapter 8 membership.



*Ed Dennis, Chapter 8 Mexican Connection President and 2018 Wine to Whales Wagonmaster. Chapter 8 archival photo*

Since the Chapter was chartered in 1985, the General Meeting at the end of each annual rally in Mexico determines what changes are made to the Bylaws and Standing Rules and who our leaders will be. So, by definition, those who attend each year's rally hold the future of Chapter 8 in their collective hands. And this year, the successful winners of positions of 1st Vice President/Wagonmaster 2019 (Kassandra Dennis), Secretary (Jean Pedersen), and Membership Chairperson (Jay Hoult) had more than one nomination! It is refreshing to see our Executive Board be a contest of qualified people rather than the too often "arm twisted" participant recruitment.

Upon becoming president, I was entrusted with two heavy boxes of Chapter 8 archives that chronicle a wide variety of Mexican lore, Chapter 8 rallies and caravans, Official Chapter 8 Bylaw and Standing Rules changes and a wealth of other minutia that may test the unabashed enthusiasm of our new Historian, Debby Clark.

The Third Vice President/Wagonmaster 2021 is the lone vacancy on the Executive Board. Hopefully, the work that your new Executive Board has undertaken to demystify and simplify the roles of Chapter 8 officers will encourage more people to get in line to become Wagonmasters and create their very own version of our signature annual Rally. From personal experience, being a Chapter 8 Wagonmaster is an opportunity to serve one's fellow RVers like few volunteer positions can. Confidently, I expect that the challenges and opportunities of various Chapter 8 positions will be chronicled in future newsletter editions this year.

There were a couple of questions raised last year about Wagonmaster Compensation and Board Appointment of Officers that were examined in detail and suggestions are now being offered by Board Members. Since such changes can only be ratified by a vote of the Membership at a General Meeting, the results of the study will be published for all to see in a later edition of our newsletter.

After all is said and done... the Mexican Connection is a wonderful opportunity for a newcomer to find a way to enjoy the real Mexico... and for the Chapter 8 veteran to be his/her guide! And for the last decade, the opportunity to become part of the process of helping others rise above their lot is a separate joy within each rally open to each attendee. While "charity" may begin at home... it is alive and well in pueblos touched by heartfelt Mexican Connection charity events.

As we were putting Chapter 8 paraphernalia into its new safe storage locker, I was reminded about how wonderful, fun and caring the Caravan had



*Glimpses of "the real Mexico," El Mercado Negro fish market in downtown Ensenada (top), and street musicians playing music for tips in the streets of Baja California. Photos by Bob Pettit*



been... and how long it would be until a new group would be together. Then, as we separated the items for the Chapter 8 Social at the Escapade, I remembered how there were more people at the last Escapade Fiesta Social than there were on the Caravan. Our annual trips to Mexico create a special feeling that resonates each time we meet fellow Chapter 8 rally friends along the road. Due to size limitations, only a limited number of members can meet in Mexico each year. But, fortunately, everyone does have an opportunity to enjoy the Mexican Connection Newsletter... or check in at the website [www.mexicanconnection08.com](http://www.mexicanconnection08.com).

On that note, bear in mind that Chapter 8 new Webmaster Virginia Danby and new Newsletter Editor Joseph de Leon have the talent, experience and desire to make our everyday connections to the Mexican Connection something we can all enjoy! I have had a glimpse of what Joseph envisions for the Newsletter in the short term and the professionalism that Virginia has for the long-term rebuilding of the website... and I am excited! They have much to do in addition to their everyday activities and need our patient support as good things are happening because good people have stepped up!

Mexico is having a spurt of better road building, much better fuel availability throughout Mexico. Also, with last year's cooperation between Secretary of Tourism's office and our Wagonmasters, Chapter 8 is building a better "connection" to assure future Mexican travel adventures for years to come.



*While many roads in Baja California needed repair, several stretches were newly maintained.  
Chapter 8 archival photo*

**Ed**

Ed Dennis, President  
Escapes RV Club, Chapter 8

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## Treasurer's Report

Steve Bufty

Because of other commitments, I was unable to attend the recent Wine to Whales Rally to Baja California, Mexico. I would like to thank our prior Membership chairperson, Maryke Hines, for accepting the duty of filling in as Acting Treasurer during the caravan. It was a bit of a struggle to get Maryke authorized to access the Chapter 8 bank account and, although the final authorization came through as she was leaving home to attend the rally, she was able to deal with the bank to get sufficient funds in the form of dollars and pesos to cover the expenses of the caravan as it moved from destination to destination, and equally as important, to keep records of all the money in and money out during the rally.



*Maryke Hines, left, and Cassandra Dennis register Wine to Whales participants at Potrero County Park. Photo by Connie Farley and Jim McEver*

Thank you, Maryke!

Our fiscal year ends April 30 so that we have time to reconcile all of the year-long finances and especially those associated with the February rally. The last outgoing expenses were just wrapped up within the final week of April, a formal Treasurer's Report will be published shortly, and our Form 990-N income taxes will be filed for the fiscal year ending April 30th.

We have finished the fiscal year with every penny recorded and accounted for and a balanced accounting sheet. Without stating specific numbers in this newsletter, we have finished the year on a

positive note with a healthy balance of Charity “seed money” toward our 2019 rally, all monies from the 2018 Wine to Whales Rally properly dispersed, and a General Fund balance that will allow our current Wagonmaster to be able to make any required advance deposits necessary for next year’s rally, without the benefit of having received any advance collections toward that future rally.

In addition to all the enjoyment that everyone seemed to have gleaned from this year’s rally, not to mention the good Mexican food, we should all be proud of the benefit that we brought to the Mexican people in the form of our business and especially in the form of over \$10,000 USD in charity donations to eleven worthy organizations.

To all who contributed ... *bravo!* ... and *gracias!*



*Our donations made a lot of children, teachers, and staff very happy. Thanks to all 2018 Wine to Whales participants! Photo by Lin & Maryke Hines*

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# Charity Committee Report

Janet Pilger

Our 2018 Chapter 8 Caravan participants contributed nearly \$10,000 USD as well as amazing quantities of in-kind donations that were distributed from *Tecate* to *Guerrero Negro* with great appreciation by the communities we visited. The Charity Committee thanks everyone for their interest and support in our charity efforts in Mexico. The 2018 Charity funds came from the following sources: Charity money carried over from 2017, money contributed with the 2018 Rally registrations, an exciting live auction, and 2 Silent auctions.



*Chapter 8 donations help some of the most vulnerable people along the caravan route. A staff member at Casa Gabriel checks on one of 24 disabled residents. Photo by Lin & Maryke Hines*

The 2018 Charity Committee consisted of Chairperson Janet Pilger, Maryke Hines, President Cynthia Ponder, Judy and Jerry Funk, and Kathleen Hare. The Committee visited 10 organizations and prioritized their needs vs. their current support levels.

Following is a summary of the organizations that were considered and the Charity Committee's U.S. dollars recommended and final U.S. dollars approved at the General Meeting.



*Members of the Charity Committee and caravan participants meet potential recipients during a charity evaluation. Chapter 8 archival photo*



## U.S. dollars approved for donation at the General Meeting

Scholarship Fund, Punta Banda	\$300.00
Los Adoptables, Rescue Me, Kitty Korner, Punta Banda	\$300.00
Christmas Baskets, La Jolla	\$350.00
Angel Fort Amador School, Guerrero Negro	\$500.00
Escapees CARE, Livingston	\$500.00
Primary School in Santa Maria	\$700.00
CAM Handicapped School, Guerrero Negro	\$800.00
Orquesta Esperanza, Ensenada	\$1,000.00
Casa Esperanza, Punta Banda	\$1,000.00
Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey, Guadalupe Valley	\$2,000.00
Gabriel House, Punta Banda	\$2,500.00
Funds raised in 2018	<b>\$9,950.00</b>
Left over Funds from 2017	\$500.00
<b>Total donations:</b>	<b>\$10,450.00</b>

Left over Funds from 2018 **\$761.00**

### **Pabloff Family Christmas Baskets:**

The Pabloff family is a local family in *Ensenada* that has been giving baskets to the poor in *Punta Banda* for many years. The family is very generous in supporting their community. Charity Recommends: \$350 USD towards blankets for the Christmas baskets; many in-kind donations included clothes, toys, food, kitchen supplies, a walker, and canes were given.



*Miguel Pabloff, right, explains how his family has supported the community surrounding La Jolla Beach Camp, especially during Christmas, for decades. Chapter 8 archival photo*

**Scholarship for Higher Education:** Has been running for 26 years to help the talented and needy children be able to have opportunities for education. They provide high school and college scholarships with the understanding that their families will support them, their grades will be kept up, and also return to their community and work for at least 1 year. Charity recommends: \$300 USD to be given to their general fund.

**Rescue Me/Katty Korner/ Los Adoptables Animal Shelters:**

Many dogs and cats run loose in town with local people unable to pay for spaying/neutering. These organizations donate back money made at thrift stores to the care of these animals. Much more is needed for food. Charity recommends: \$300 USD for dog and cat food, which will be purchased by Charity Committee.



*Tina McClure, manager of Los Adoptables, cares for stray and abandoned dogs in Punta Banda, Baja California. Courtesy photo*

**Orquesta Esperanza for Children:** After-school program designed to keep children off streets and away from drugs with a musical teaching program with instruments and a choir. Some participants have gone on to college to continue their music careers. Children present concerts every 2 months to help raise money for instruments and placement. More is needed. Charity recommends \$1,000 USD for instruments to help add additional needy children.



*Photo illustration courtesy MorgueFile.com*

### **Casa Esperanza Women's Shelter and Primary School:**

Shelter and school founded to protect women and children from abuse. Nine families were there during our visit with 26 children. This organization tries to support independence/empowerment for the mothers. They have a day care that also supports local children while mothers work. Primary school on site with a new school being donated and built by a local builder. In-kind donations of cold weather jackets, children's clothing, women's clothing, diapers, food, toys were given. Charity recommends: \$1,000 USD to be given with charity member going with director to purchase further necessities.



*Chapter 8 donations provided several shopping carts for residents of the shelter and school. Chapter 8 archival photo*

### **Casa Gabriel Disabled Children Home:**

Gabriel House has 24 disabled residents ages 4-36 years old, with a variety of illnesses, such as Down syndrome, spina bifida, brain damage, and autism. They are very short staffed with only 4 full-time staff and a very loving couple that volunteers. This organization has the most needs of any other organization we saw. We observed many beds without sheets, very few towels. Five of the children are bed ridden with tube feedings. In-kind donations were given of food, toys, children clothes, some school supplies. Charity recommends: \$2,500 USD to be given and charity member to go shopping for additional needs.



*Gabriel House residents always enjoy visiting with resident and volunteer Linda. Photo by Lin & Maryke Hines*



**Santa Maria La Pabellon Primary School:** We visited the school and were told the government does not supply anything, including salaries or food, to them from January through April. The teachers and parents band together to meet the school and children's needs. In-kind donations were given of food, children clothes, toys, school supplies. Charity recommends: \$950 USD to be given and charity member goes shopping with director.

**CAM #6 School in Guerrero Negro for special needs children:** We visited the school and the director presented what the school needs – school supplies and a photocopier. Charity recommends: \$800 USD that will be used to buy a photocopier and supplies.

**Angel Fort Amador Primary School:** This school was visited while empty and the vice principal visited us to give us more information on their needs. This school is in the area where mostly fishermen live. It was explained that they are of the poorest in *Guerrero Negro*. The government built the school and pays teachers. The children often come to school with shabby clothing and shoes and not much food. Charity recommends: \$500 USD given with charity member and vice principal to shop for immediate needs.

**Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey:** This was our first visit to a zoo that takes care of exotic wild animals that have been abandoned and unable to survive on their own in the wild. The government sends these animals that were kept as pets and abandoned. They are owned by the Jersey Dairy but operate separately. The veterinarian is working with the San Diego Zoo with stem cell research. The park and animal shelter have many needs including medical equipment. Charity recommends: \$2,250 USD to be given to their general fund for clinical equipment.



*Zoo staff purchased plants to improve quality of life, offering animals a more natural habitat. Courtesy photo*

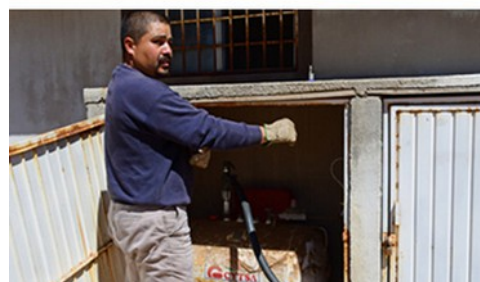
Everyone should be bursting with pride and joy for everything that was donated. We made a lot of children, teachers, and staff very happy. The Charity Committee thanks all the volunteers that helped make this rally a huge success. Special thanks to Ed and Kassandra Dennis for a fantastic Wine to Whales Caravan.

### **Zoo Update**

Dr. Mercado, *Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey* veterinarian, bought antibiotics for the zoo's hoof stock, as well as 20 dart needles to anesthetize and give medicine to animals. Staff decided to invest in plants for the squirrel monkey and marmoset exhibits. This will improve their quality of life, offering a more natural habitat.

### **Santa Maria School El Pabellon Update**

Lin and Maryke Hines returned here with the approved Chapter 8 funds and purchased propane to fill up the kitchen tank. They also took the kitchen supervisor and head teacher to the school's preferred market and purchased more than 3 full shopping carts of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats so staff could make breakfast and lunches for the kids. They also bought 60 cups so each child has their own to stop the spread of disease. We spent \$4000 MXN and left \$11,100 MXN in an account with the market manager for the school to draw on as needed.



*Propane delivery. Photo by Maryke and Lin Hines*

### **Guerrero Negro – CAM School Update**

Donations paid for a copier the school needed. Alan, the director of CAM, was also given money to purchase sport balls for their school and also for the elementary school in Guerrero Negro. He planned to go to Mexicali to buy better quality balls than they can buy in town.

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*CAM director Alan and Maryke Hines show off the school's new printer. Photo by Maryke and Lin Hines*

## Membership Notes

Jay Hoult



*About half of the 2018 Wine to Whales attendees -- most of them new members -- posed for a group photo near two sand sculptures erected in the caravan's honor at La Jolla Beach Camp in Punta Banda, Baja California. Photo by Cathy Michels Dunham*

Greetings from your new membership chairman.

If you missed the Wine 2 Whales rally, you missed a great one! The next year should be even better for membership growth because of that rally. All Escapees will hear about it at the Row, so I expect many new members as a result.

As I have just recently taken over this position, I don't have a good count on the current member numbers. However, by the time you read this, our club renewal date will have passed and the next newsletter should show an accurate member count.

Check your membership date to see if you need to renew now. May 1st is the club annual renewal date. I will be sending reminders to all whose membership has expired. You don't want to miss the next Mexican Connection rally, details should be elsewhere in this issue.

See you down the road!

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## Historian's Record

Debby Clark

As of February, 2018, I was elected to be the Chapter 8 Historian. I don't know much about the position as yet, but I'm gathering information and have a genuine desire to catalog and protect Chapter 8 historical items, and to ensure they are accessible as necessary by the Executive Board and members.



*This 1965 photo shows La Jolla Beach Camp, one of the 2018 Wine to Whales destinations in Punta Banda, Baja California, as it was during the early days of its development. Pabloff courtesy photo*

A little about me: My husband Jeff and I have been members of Escapees for about eight years, and a member of Chapter 8 for about three years. I have a background in project management of digital technical information, and how to bring that information to people in an easy format. I retired from civil service in 2010, and we've been RV'ing steadily since then. We are not full-timers, but we do make cross-country trips each year, as well as local camping.

We went on our first Mexican Caravan in February of this year. We ended up having to come home early due to illness, but we were in awe of what we saw and of the good work that everyone does to fulfill the Chapter 8 mission.

I have boxes of documents and items to go through, and my plan is to organize all the information, digitize it (if it hasn't already been done), and make it accessible via the website. I look forward to working with the current President, Ed Dennis, and all the Board members to ensure that Chapter 8 history is documented and safeguarded to ensure all current and future members can know and savor our history.

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# Secretary's Notes

Jean Pedersen

## General Meeting Notes (Feb. 24, 2018)

Note: Since the elected Secretary, Barb Ely, was not present, Valerie Payne took notes at the Meeting and these were subsequently transcribed into this document by Jean Pedersen, the Secretary elected at the end of this Meeting.

Executive Officers present: Cynthia Ponder, President; Jim Ponder, President; Maryke Hines, Acting Treasurer and Membership Chair; Lin Hines, Newsletter Editor; Ed and Kassandra Dennis, Wagonmasters

- Maryke Hines, Membership Chair, indicated that there were 179 active paid memberships and all Rally participants are members of the Chapter.
- Motion made by Lin Hines and seconded to accept the updated Standing Rules as approved by the Board on 2/4/18. Motion passed.
- Janet Pilger, Charity Committee Chair, read the Committee's recommended list of charity organizations to receive Chapter 8 money and suggested support. Motion was made by Sarah Baker and seconded by Nick Alvanos to accept the Charity money distribution recommendation. [See page 11](#) for details about the charity donations.
- [See page 4](#) for details about who was elected to the board



*Charity Committee Chairperson Janet Pilger explains the needs of several prospective charity recipients during the 2018 Wine to Whales Caravan. Photo by Bob Pettitt*

## Board Meeting Notes (Feb. 25, 2018)

Executive Officers present: Cynthia Ponder, Immediate Past President; Ed Dennis, President; Kassandra Dennis, Wagonmaster & First Vice President; Jay Hault, Membership; Virginia Danby, Webmaster; Bob Payne, Second Vice President; Jean Pedersen, Secretary; Maryke Hines represented Treasurer Steve Bufty

- Purpose of this meeting was to welcome the newly Elected Board Members, introduce everyone to each other, provide contact information to everyone, and outline how Chapter 8 Board business would be conducted via email since members are not able to get together physically until the next Chapter Rally.
- Virginia Danby suggested that a virtual meeting could be arranged so that board members could discuss matters “face to face” if desired or necessary.
- New business 1: develop a rule on how to appoint people for acting positions when necessary and to determine the scope of their authority.
- New business 2: clarify the Standing Rule on reimbursement to the Wagonmaster(s) for legitimate time and expenses.
- Ed Dennis stated that both issues are complicated and needed more discussion than possible in the time frame of this meeting. He proposed that he would compose emails on each subject with the pros and cons and send to everyone on the board.



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*Caravan participants attended several meetings during the 21-day trip that included such topics as travel planning, orientations to day trips, and elections. Photo by Jim McEver and Connie Farley*



# Wagonmaster's Wrap-up



*Most of the 43 rigs on the 2018 Wine to Whales caravan can be seen in this aerial photo taken at La Jolla Beach Camp in Punta Banda, Baja California. Participants spent 8 days enjoying the beach and exploring nearby gems. Chapter 8 archival photo*

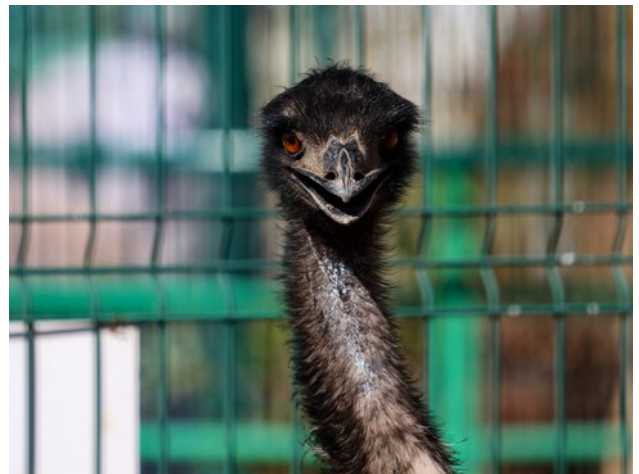
## **¡Saludos a todos nuestros amigos de los Vinos a Ballenas Baja Caravana!**

Building a Caravan to *Baja* from scratch for Chapter 8 is a daunting task... but the joy reflected in the eighty plus folks who signed our thank you cards and included a thank you token was an unexpected and humbling experience. We took on this task because no one else was willing to... and we believed that Chapter 8 deserved to have a 2018 Caravan that would rally others to the cause of encouraging new people to sample the beautiful country and warmhearted people south of the border down Mexico way. As a couple interested in helping others help themselves, Chapter 8 was also a portal for people to learn the joy of making life a bit better for those challenged by life in an aspiring third-world country.

The overwhelming feedback from the Wine to Whales *Baja Caravan* was that it was an unqualified success in so many ways. Of course, like any daring adventure, there were lessons learned in the comprehensive feedback furnished by Caravanners in our survey. We will publish results of that survey in future issues of this newsletter. Suffice to say that there were so many attendees (and potential attendees who couldn't make the 2018 version) that wish the 2019 Rally would include innovation and adventure that made the 2018 Caravan special.

While the vineyards of the *Valle de Guadalupe* and the Whale Tours of *Guerrero Negro* were the featured attractions in the 2018 Caravan, the *Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey* in the *Valle de Guadalupe* and the *La Jolla Beach Camp* south of *Ensenada* were clearly the most highly rated experiences.

The *Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey* began as a philanthropic dream of the owner of a large Mexican dairy. After his death, the *Parque* is transitioning into a self-sustaining family venue with a wide variety of childrens' playgrounds and discovery amenities. The park is in a picturesque setting surrounded by a worthwhile zoo of animals who were rescued from places where they had been illegally kept or abandoned as they grew older. Situated in the



*Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey maintains many confiscated and rescued animals. Photo by Bob Pettit*



*Boondocking within earshot of lion roars and hippo bellows. Chapter 8 archival photo*



middle of the wine country where 90% of Mexican wines are grown, the Children's Zoo is a convenient hub from which to explore the vineyard fruits of this remarkable upscale corner of *Baja*.

*La Jolla* Beach Camp was founded by the Pabloff Family which began with an immigrant from the Ukraine who chose to seek his fortune in *Baja California*. 96-year old Alejandro Pabloff turned a Pacific Coast wasteland into a spirited community of mostly ex-pat *Americano* homes



*Then and now: In an undated photo, a youthful Alejandro Pabloff has yet to establish La Jolla Beach Camp. These days, the patriarch of the Pabloff family still gives to the community he founded. Historic photo courtesy the Pabloff family; contemporary photo by Bob Pettit*

and a beautiful ocean beach and RV Park. Situated between the bustling City of *Ensenada* and the natural wonder of *La Bufadora*, *La Jolla* Beach Camp is a community in the center of a wide array of things to do... and a place where random acts of charity pays great dividends to both giver and recipient. Tracing the history of various charities in this area invariably leads to the same Alejandro Pabloff who started each charity and helped it transition into a community effort to grow and serve.

The Caravan began at beautiful *Potrero* County Park, the jewel of the San Diego County Park & Recreation Department. It is just a few miles to *Tecate, Mexico*. In our estimation the "most friendly" and least "border town-like"



*El Mejor Pan de Tecate offers an amazing variety of sweet bread. Photo by Joseph M. de Leon*



community on the U.S./Mexican border... and we have seen them all. From *Tecate's* signature bakery to its famous namesake brewery, there is a rich diversity of Mexican culture which makes it an ideal springboard into the cultural wealth that makes learning how to explore *Baja California* a special adventure all its own.

After all is said and done... the Mexican Connection is a wonderful opportunity for a newcomer to find a way to enjoy the real Mexico... and the Chapter 8 veteran to be his/her guide! And for the past decade, the opportunity to become part of the process of helping others rise above their lot is a separate joy within each rally open to each attendee.



*A few of the many faces of those who benefited from charity money raised during the 2018 Wine to Whales Caravan. Photo by Lin & Maryke Hines*

The next opportunity to sample the Mexican Connection is at the [58th Escapade in Sedalia](#) (MO) May 27-June 1, 2018. Chapter 8 will have its enthusiastic ROW representatives, Jim McEver & Connie Farley, answering questions about the Caravan that was and the Rolling Rally that's yet to be. Chapter 8's big Escapade event is a spirited Mexican Fiesta Social where plans for our next Rally are revealed.







*Grape vines at L.A. Cetto, the oldest winery in Baja California, lay dormant in the Valle de Guadalupe, awaiting spring rains and sun. Photo by Joseph M. de Leon*



*Top left: Seating area at L.A. Cetto; top right: stainless steel fermentation tanks at L.A. Cetto; bottom left: a flight of craft beer at Bodegas Cielu Winery & Brewery. Photos by Joseph M. de Leon*





*Wagonmasters Cassandra and Ed Dennis enjoy a festive whale watching trip in Baja California Sur. Chapter 8 archival photo*



*Top left: Eliza Ridley, Chapter 8's youngest whale watcher, joins Mama Emma Ridley; bottom left: Eloise Ridley and Grandpa Kevin G. Ridley make Chapter 8's multi-generational connection; center: Several caravan participants had the opportunity to touch a gray whale; right: Spy hopping gray whale in Baja California Sur, Mexico. Experts believe whales pop out of the water to visually inspect the environment above the water line, according to [Dolphin Communication Project](#). Chapter 8 archival photos*



Mexican Connection members attending the Escapade join in hosting our fellow SKPs with Wine to Whales tales and serving tasty tacos, authentic *bebidas*, and *tres leches* for dessert. To be a Fiesta Social Hour Volunteer or give Jim & Connie a break on the ROW, contact Jim at [mceverj@me.com](mailto:mceverj@me.com) or Connie at [far2const@yahoo.com](mailto:far2const@yahoo.com) and join in the fun of growing your Mexican Connection!



*Connie Farley and Jim McEver. Courtesy photo*

In today's world of south-of-the-border doubt, suspicion, and innuendo... there is heartfelt and wonderful experience that awaits those who register for the next Mexican Connection Rolling Rally to places in Mexico that even tour companies have not yet found...

## *Kassandra*

Kassandra Dennis  
Wagonmaster 2019  
Escapes RV Club,  
Chapter 8

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*La Gringa, a boondocking site and wildlife sanctuary on the Sea of Cortez, boasts pristine shores and deep blue water. Photo by Bob Pettit*

# Beautiful Baja California

Article and photos by Connie Farley

I'd never been to Baja California in Mexico and honestly never thought I would until my husband Jim McEver and I participated in the 2018 Escapees Chapter 8 Mexican Connection Wine to Whales trip. And what a fabulous journey it was!



Each stop on our adventure was well planned thanks to our creative Wagonmasters Ed and Kassandra Dennis.

*Some of the 42 rigs in the caravan - lined up at La Jolla Beach Camp, home of the Pabloff Family, our gracious hosts. Beautiful bay-front camping.*

We caravanned for 22 days during which we visited a zoo, several wineries, numerous beaches, a festive carnival, dined on local specialties, raised contributions for charity, hiked to ancient historical sights, jeep toured, went whale watching, toured a commercial salt operation and made life-long new friends.

The trip started with the pre-rally gathering at the beautiful tree lined campground of Potrero County Park in California. Here we met our fellow travelers and completed paperwork for entry into Mexico. The 2018 trip had a large portion of first timers, including us. Although we were newbies we always felt included as the warmth and cordiality of all the trip participants bubbled with friendship.

There was never a moment when I felt uneasy or awkward in Mexico, even though I don't speak Spanish, as Ed and Kassandra arranged local experts to be guides from our first entry across the border to our

last tour in Guerrero Negro 500 miles to the south.

For me, additional confidence was gained as we were surrounded by Chapter 8 members with vast experience in Mexican travels, as several of the chapters' past officials were in the RV caravan, providing guidance and information along the way.

This trip provided incredible insight into to the welcoming culture of Mexico, showcasing their generosity to north of the border visitors.

Our experience has certainly broadened our minds to foreign travel and as an added delight introduced us to many new found traveling friends!

Until next time – safe and happy travels!

### **Pre-rally rendezvous at Potrero County Park CA.**



*Terry & Jane McClay with Denise Valdez & Joseph de Leon - getting to know our fellow travelers.*





*Thank you Parking Committee - we couldn't have caravanned without you! A small group from the parking committee at Potrero County Park. Mike Dumenil, Daisy & Chip Cartwright, Cynthia Ponder.*

## **Tecate, Mexico**



*Jean Pedersen at Amigos (open air) Restaurante toasting with a cerveza and a delicious taco.*



*Nancy & Jay Hout - Grupo Seis Leaders - enjoying a sweet moment on the streets of Tecate.*

## **Zoológico Parque del Nino Jersey, Guadalupe Valley, Mexico**



*Kassandra relaxing to Jim McEver's Native America Flute lullaby.*



*Tours at L.A. Cetto and Cieli Wineries. Jerry Dixon, Jean Pedersen sampling craft beers.*



## Ensenada, Mexico area



*Music is in the air! Chip & Daisy Cartwright pick up the swinging beat at the lovely Port of Ensenada.*



*At La Jolla Beach Camp Chapter 8 hosted the yearly charity auction which raises funds for local organizations.*



*La Bufadora, the largest blowhole in North America, includes vendors and restaurants.*



## El Molino Viejo



*Cynthia Ponder, 2017 Chapter 8 President, makes a point during a group meeting. Ed & Cassandra held regular group meetings to keep everyone aware of the day's activities and to answer questions.*

## El Pabellon Beach RV Park



*Pot Luck Happy Hour and Tamale Fest. Ed & Cassandra, Tony Sparks.*



*All of us were eager to eat! Lots of tamales in those pots!*

## Rancho Santa Ines



*A scene of everyday life where water is precious. The warm hospitality of the family made this campsite so worthwhile.*



*We had an Inez family guided tour to a cave containing "secret" pictographs. The tall plants are boojum trees.*



*Of course, no trip to Mexico would be complete without mentioning the conditions of the highways and this stretch of Mex 1 between El Pabellon and Santa Ines was a tour guide's dilemma . We encountered frequent crater-sized pot holes, crumbling pavement, shoulders with sheer drop offs, and innumerable 18-wheelers traveling fast. Cautious driving was a must!*



## Final stop Guerrero Negro

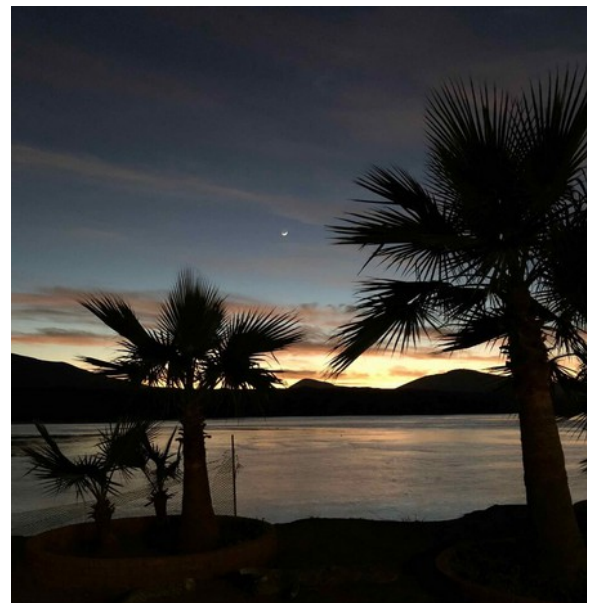


*Getting ready to board for whale watching in Laguna Ojo de Liebre (Scammon's Lagoon). Connie Farley and Jim McEver.*

Don't miss Jim and Connie at the [58th Escapade in Sedalia](#) (MO) May 27-June 1, 2018!



*A windy day on the lagoon but we were bundled up and excited to see the whales.*



*I'll always remember the tropical sunsets of Baja California – it is a special place.*



# Faces & Places

Photos by Bob Elliot



*(Left) Pete's Camp, San Felipe: Cindy Petitt, Julie Klein, Dee Dee Sparks, Nancy Wall, Connie Farley, Cathy Dunham*

*(Right) Group 6: Jay Hoult, Teri Wolf, Nancy Hoult, Gerald Zieg, Dee Dee Sparks, Cathy Dunham, Bob Elliott, Connie Farley, Jean Pedersen, Tony Sparks, Kaiya Tway, Joe Larrabee*







*(Right) San Felipe: East coast return group. Don Klein, Julie Klein, Dee Dee Sparks, Tony Sparks, Cathy Dunham, Kaiya Tway, Joe Larrabee*



*(Below) Bahia de Los Angeles: Connie Farley, Jim McEver, Judy Preston, Dee Dee Sparks, Nancy Wall, Cathy Dunham, Bob Elliott, Don Klein, Julie Klein*



*(Right) Coco poses with his wall decorations at Coco's Corner on the famous dirt road connecting HWY 1 with HWY 5.*

## Upcoming Issue & Submitting Content

Joseph M. de Leon

The next issue of *La Conexión Mexicana*, scheduled in your inbox and on the Chapter 8 website in mid-July, is shaping up nicely! Here's what's in store:



*This is one of my favorite photos of our dog, Kimbo from the 2018 Wine to Whales caravan. I bet you have a favorite pet photo to share. Photo by Joseph M. de Leon*

- **Wine to Whales participant survey results** – Chapter 8 President Ed Dennis will share your end-of-caravan feedback.
- **2019 Caravan sneak peak** – 2019 Wagonmaster Kassandra Dennis offers an early look at what's in store next year.
- **CB radios calm rough roads** – Chapter 8 Secretary Jean Pedersen describes how CB radios helped caravan participants navigate some harsh highways we encountered
- **Pet showcase** – There were quite a few furry faces on the 2018 Wine to Whales caravan. If your pooch attended this year's caravan and you want your pet featured or if you have a pet photo you'd like to share, please e-mail me at [josephmdeleon@gmail.com](mailto:josephmdeleon@gmail.com).
- **Art on the road** – Mexico is full of vibrant art of every sort imaginable. We'll feature some of the best we saw. You probably have a photo of art you encountered in Mexico – please consider submitting it for consideration!

If you have any story or photo essay ideas, I'd love to hear them. Maybe it's a side trip you took. Or maybe you have a different perspective on a topic we've already covered. We're all eager to see something interesting, learn something new, or relive fun moments.

Until next time, happy travels!



## **Content Submission Guidelines:**

Contributing to *La Conexión Mexicana* is easy and can be as long as a multi-page article or as simple as a single photo. Please follow the guidelines below or e-mail me if what you have in mind isn't covered.

1. **Meet the deadline** – Summer 2018: **June 30, 2018**, published mid-July; Fall 2018: **Sept. 30**, published mid-Oct.; Winter 2018: **Dec. 15**, published early Jan.
2. **Make articles lively** – Whether just a few paragraphs or a few pages, write short, descriptive sentences. Imagine you're telling the story to a friend. Write complete sentences and double check you spelled names and places correctly.
3. **Include photo captions** – make sure to write a caption for each photo you submit. Include captions in a text file, using the photo's file name to distinguish each caption. The best captions include the location, names of folks pictured, and offer a bit of additional information not obvious from the photo.
4. **Submit a few files by e-mail** – If you're submitting an article or a few photos, please send to [josephmdeleon@gmail.com](mailto:josephmdeleon@gmail.com). Use a subject line that describes the attached files, for example "San Felipe article with photos," not "Here you go."
5. **Consider using "the cloud" if submitting lots of files** – There are many free services available, including DropBox and SmugMug. I'm happy to offer my opinion on how to do this. Alternatively, you can group photos in several e-mails.
6. **File formats** – for articles, Word (.doc), text (.txt), and Rich Text Format (.rtf) work well, or you can include the text of the article in the body of the e-mail. For photos, please submit photos in .jpg format. If at all possible, downsize photos to no larger than about 1 megabyte. It'll make your upload and my download quicker, especially when Wi-Fi is spotty or unavailable.



*Boojum trees have been known  
to grow as tall as 50 feet.  
Photo by Bob Petitt*

