

LA CONEXIÓN MEXICANA

ESCAPEES RV CLUB CHAPTER 8

Spring 2020

Mission statement, Chapter 8 Officers.....	2
Officers' Reports	3
News	12
Members' Stories	17

Website: www.mexicanconnection08.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/EscapeesMexicanConnection



Chapter 8 Officers elected February 26, 2020:

President – Cassandra Dennis
Immediate Past President – Ed Dennis
First Vice President / Wagonmaster – Phylana Ladd
Second Vice President - Open
Secretary – Dory Johnson
Treasurer – Steve Bufty
Assistant Treasurer – Ron Wroblewski
Membership – Jay Hoult
Webmaster – Bill Johnson
Historian – Herb Baldwin
Newsletter Editor – Cece Wroblewski

The purpose of Chapter 8 is to:

- Introduce Escapees Chapter 8 Mexican Connection members to RV travel in Mexico, its scenery, traditions, food, culture 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.

Refer to the Chapter 8 website for the Chapter Standing Rules and Bylaws.

Officers' Reports

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Kassandra Dennis

Hola fellow Chapter 8 Members!

Frankly, it was not easy wearing two hats (President & Wagonmaster) this past year... but having an active Executive Board, compassionate Charity Committee and energetic Rally Volunteers, Chapter 8 resulted in yet another rally that was far better than anticipated!



Our group worked so well together that much got accomplished. We had a couple of meaningful Executive Board Meetings before the rally start. An "All Special Volunteers Welcome" Brain storming session as to the future of Chapter 8 created a smooth and harmonious way to get the job done. I am so proud of all who contributed... way to go Board Members, Group Leaders, Charity Committee, Tail Gunners and Parking Chairs working in sync so beautifully!

We also had our 35th Chapter Anniversary celebration at Potrero Park!



Our Chapter was started by an intrepid few SKPs while traveling in Mexico who thought it would be great to share the ins and outs that make RVing in Mexico special! Thirty-five years of introducing new RVer's to travelling in Mexico and passing it forward through Chapter 8 to the next group of newbies. This is really something of which we can all be proud. Many friendships have been made on each side of the border. Chapter 8 also added Charity (hands-on projects and cash donations from our famous & fun SKP auction) in the last decade or so to our mission statement. Consequently, Chapter 8 has provided the opportunity to offer safe and fun rallies and caravans to thousands of Mexico-savvy SKPS for three and a half decades!

Many of you are aware that the Escapees RV Club had decided to have multiple competing commercial Hangouts or Xscapers Convergencies in San Felipe during our traditional rally dates. Given the continuing success of recent Chapter 8 Rallies & Caravans, it was no surprise that SKP interest in Mexico would proliferate... which is why Chapter 8 started in the first place. However, there is a difference between meeting up with a group of SKP friends to party South of the Border... and the Chapter 8 Rallies that not only enjoy fiestas with old and new SKP friends... but also dive into local culture, get tips on how to travel safely, explore the unusual, and lend a hand or a peso where it is

needed most. And since Chapter 8 is part of the non-profit Escapees Social Network, Inc. and all of our leaders are non-paid volunteers... our rallies and caravans provide more fun, adventure and information for your travel dollar.

You can read the letter (later in this newsletter) that was sent to the Escapees RV Club Leaders from our Chapter in hopes of better coordination for future events so that we help each other attain our different goals. I am sure many of you understand that Baja California is currently our safest area to live up to our mission statement (introducing RVer's to travelling in Mexico). Mainland Mexico (outside the Free Travel Zone of the Mexican States of Baja California, Baja California Sur & parts of Sonora) is currently not suitable for our Chapter as a gentle introduction to travel in Mexico. The Free Zone has fewer Mexican travel restrictions & fees, a fascinating variety of sights and scenes, plentiful U.S. made ULSD diesel and Top Tier gasoline, and warm-hearted locals who are especially welcoming to Chapter 8 Members. That all adds up to having our rallies and caravans in the Free Zone where we can create more effective introductions to Mexico's people & places, customs & "carnivals," and unique experiences that commercial tours have yet to find.



San Felipe beach



Carl petting a whale in Baja Sur

For 2020, we were able to change the rally format by offering two Chapter 8 Member Hosted Add-On Extensions. So, while the Official Rally ended in Ensenada... most of the attendees continued on to either party in San Felipe or caravan through Catavina, touch the whales in Guerrero Negro, and enjoy the relaxed beach life and festive restaurants of Playa Santispac. Those who went on the 2018 "Wine to Whales", 2019 "Rolling Rally" and 2020 "Baja Adventure" discovered that each Chapter 8 adventure provided its own unique experience. Last year we had 100 attendees... this year only about half as many but with a feeling of camaraderie and add-on exploration that made this rally outstanding. We always seek new adventures to balance the needs of new and old Chapter members, creating a different group dynamic each year.

We had a successful General Meeting at the end of our rally with new Members stepping up to Board positions. It is my great pleasure to welcome our new Board Members for 2020/2021:

Herb Baldwin (Historian), Cece Wroblewski (Newsletter Editor), and of course our new Wagonmaster and Vice President, Phylana Ladd. All the other Board Members agreed to stay on for another year for which we are grateful given their experience and dedication to the Mexican Connection.

We are excited to once again have such a full and competent Executive Board... and the 2021 Rally under the leadership of Phylana and her assistants!

Since our Board meets in person once a year when our rallies are being held, we have decided to start e-Meetings during the year in order to address necessary issues. This format is working well and we plan on continuing this.

Our website is looking wonderful thanks to our Webmaster Bill Johnson (who also administers our busy FB page). We have had much interest and exchange on our FB page in addition to sending out newsletters and updates directly to the membership. If you have not already visited our FB page or website recently, please take a moment to enjoy the fantastic photos and happy comments from our last rally.

Kassandra Dennis
President, Escapees, Chapter 8
The Mexican Connection



Tecate Bakery Customer

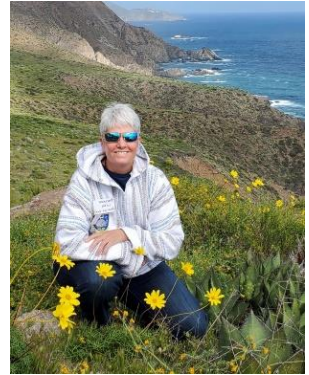


2020 Baja Rally Jackets Give-away

Message from 2021 Wagonmaster by Phylana Ladd

Hola Amigas y Amigos! My name is Phylana Ladd, and I'm super excited to be the Wagonmaster for the 2021 Escapees Chapter 8 Mexican Connection Rally! This year's Rally was my first trip into Mexico, and I completely fell in love with the Mexican people, their culture and traditions, and their beautiful country. And I can't wait to introduce others to the wonder of Mexico!

Just a bit about me... I'm a Marine Corps veteran (1980 - 1987), retired from Caterpillar (2016), and have lived full-time with my three cats in my 30' Lazy Daze motor home since January 2019. Since being on the road, aside from the 2 months spent in Baja California, MX, and BLM land near Yuma, I have spent the vast majority of my time east of the Mississippi, as well as in Texas attending the RV Training Academy's RV Inspector and RV Tech Training courses; I am a Level II Certified RV Inspector. Going forward, I can't wait for the border to open back up so I can go back to Mexico to do more scouting and planning for the 2021 Rally!



I do so hope to see you on our next Escapees Chapter 8 - Mexican Connection adventure into Mexico in 2021! Watch for a lot more detail coming up in the Summer Newsletter and the Chapter 8 website and Facebook group. If you have any questions about the Rally or the survey, please feel free to contact me via 2021wagonmaster@gmail.com.

Please click here <http://mexicanconnection08.com/2021-rally-survey/> to participate in the 2021 Rally Survey. Muchas Gracias!

Treasurer's Report April 2020 by Steve Bufty

The Treasurer says ... our annual Rally in Mexico was again a very successful and joyful event thanks to the great volunteer efforts by the entire group of Rally attendees from the Wagonmaster, to the Board Members, and to all the participants who jumped in to help with the many facets of this great event.

Even though the destinations for this year's Rally were a repeat of the previous year, it was like doing the same thing over again but for the very first time. That was partially attributable to a mix of old and new attendees, old and new events, and everyone pulling together as a team to make it a successful and fun Rally.

We visited Baja's Guadalupe Valley and the Punta Banda area south of Ensenada. In the Guadalupe Valley we had a wonderful visit to the Zoologico Parque del Niño where everyone enjoyed the interaction with the staff and the animals. In the nearby area we all enjoyed restaurants and of course wine tasting at L.A. Cetto Winery. And at La Jolla Beach Camp south of Ensenada we enjoyed the beach, participated in charity events, experienced local restaurants and scenery, experienced a fabulous off-road trip where no one drove over a cliff this year 😊, and soaked in the overall ambiance of seaside Mexico.



Financially, \$16,651.00 flowed in for the Rally and \$17,557.01 flowed out, and in the end our records all balanced to the penny with the Rally producing a small net loss of \$906.01 which was well offset by gains from the Rallies of the previous two years. The big numbers that we can all be proud of were the charity amounts where we raised \$8280 through direct donations, auction sales, and even a haircut challenge (you had to be there!)

Along with charity “seed money” passed forward from the previous Rally, and a slightly larger amount of “seed money” passed forward to next year’s Rally, we were able to distribute a total of \$8000 in monetary charitable donations this year. These donations included \$1000 to a **Scholarship Fund for Higher Education**, \$100 for supplies to a local **Battered Woman’s Shelter**, \$1500 to purchase two washing machines plus fans for the local **Casa del Abuelas** old age home, \$1500 for the **Christmas Basket Fund for the Needy** in the local Punta Banda community handled by Miguel Pabloff, a \$600 contribution to the Gertrude Pearlman Theater for costumes for the **Grupo Folklorica**, and \$2300 to the **Zoologico Parque del Niño Jersey** for needed supplies for the staff and the animals. The net result was that the Rally raised enough charitable funds so that in addition to the local Mexican charities that we all supported, we were also able to send a \$1000 donation to **Escapees CARE** as we very much like to do each year.



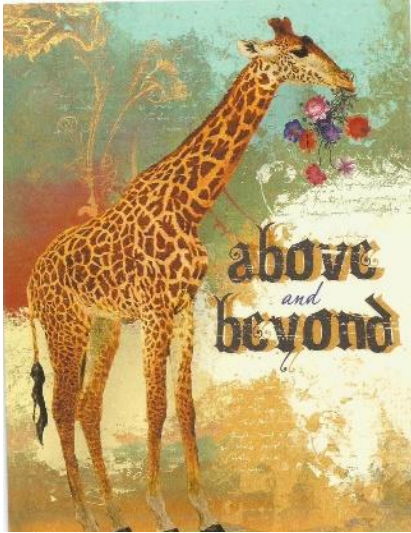
Aside from the monetary contributions listed above, we also donated a large amount of what we call “in-kind” donations which are material goods such as food and clothing that will be reported by the Charity Committee. We also had a large group of volunteers who armed themselves with all the tools necessary and in one smooth operation installed drywall in one of the new buildings being built for the needy seniors at Casa del Abuelas. And while many labored with the drywall, others entertained and comforted the seniors who seemed extremely appreciative of the attention and diversion from their day-to-day existence. Good job everybody!

We should all be very proud of the charitable contributions that we made in time, effort, and direct monetary aid to the needy causes of the communities where we visited and of course to the needs at our parent organization. Thank you all for your contributions, your patience in dealing with all my fiscal pickiness throughout the year and during the Rally, and we will look forward to another successful, fun, and benevolent year ahead.

Your Humble Treasurer ... *Steve Bufty*



Casa del Abuelas donations and service



Dear Cassandra and all Escapees!
On behalf of the Committee for Scholarships for Higher Education and the students we sponsor I want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts!
Your generous donation pays for 10 semesters of high school assuring that 5 of our outstanding students attend

school, continuing their education and working toward a better life.

thank you
^{so}
much

We so enjoyed our time getting to know you. We hope our paths cross in the future.

Sincerely, Claire Eversole

“Dear Cassandra and all Escapees!

On behalf of the Committee for Scholarships for Higher Education and the students we sponsor I want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts! Your generous donation pays for 10 semesters of high school assuring that 5 of our outstanding students attend school, continuing their education and working toward a better life. We enjoyed our time getting to know you. We hope our paths cross in the future. Sincerely, Claire Eversole”

Thank you card from LaJolla Scholarship Committee

Service Committee Chairperson Report by Nancy Hoult

“Travel South of the border and give back more than the enriching experiences we gain, through charity donations and business patronization.” These words from the Chapter 8 Mission Statement sum up the work of the Service Committee. This years’ service and charity work reflected the good character and generosity of all who attended. Our Charity Committee includes Nancy Hoult, Committee Chair, Steve Bufty, Treasurer, Donna Patten, Dory Johnson, Gary Hatt, Ed Dennis, and Kassandra Dennis, Chapter President. These hard-working committee members created so many opportunities for the Rally members to serve and donate goods, time, and money to improve conditions for the people we encountered in Baja Mexico.

One method of contributing to the locals is through “in-kind” donations - that is, new and gently used clothes, computers, pots and pans, sports equipment, school supplies, as well as food with a long shelf life. The Rally members donated goods valued at \$2300 and many of these items were donated to a charity home for the elderly, Casa del Abuelas. They loved the coloring books and blankets! Basketballs and soccer balls as well as food went to families in a local migrant worker camp. Clothes for women and children were sent to a local home for battered women.

The largest fund raising effort is the annual auction where members bid outrageous prices for goods donated by other members, like a \$100 baseball cap with “Mexican Connection 2020” embroidered on it.



To make it even more fun our auctioneers and “Vanna’s” dressed up in eye-catching costumes as they elicited excitement and competition from the bidders. Our “bartender” Jean sold margaritas to the happy bidders. The proceeds benefited the local children’s dance group, Grupo Folklorica, the zoo we visited in Guadalupe Valley, Zoologico Parque del Niño Jersey, a local scholarship fund for high school students, and our own Escapees CARE organization. In addition the money was used to purchase washing machines and fans for the Casa del Abuelas and contributed to Christmas baskets distributed by Miguel Pabloff, owner of LaJolla Beach Club.

Many rally members see the service project as a highlight of the trip. This year a handy group of our men and women installed insulation and painted trim in a 6 bedroom group home at the Casa del Abuelas. While that was going on others were visiting with the grandparents. We visited with one bed-ridden man who spoke great English. As we passed out blankets, sweaters, and some colorful bracelets to a large group, some were able to communicate in Spanish or just smiles. Then Malcolm Russ tuned up his violin and played many hand-clapping tunes. Everyone brightened up and several started dancing to the happy tunes. No language barrier there!



Service is a major goal for the Mexican Connection Rally and 2020 turned out to be a record-breaking year for generosity and charity given with a smile.

Historian Report by Herb Baldwin

I've been asked to share a little with our readers about the role of the Chapter 8 Historian and some of the resources available to you, the members of Chapter 8. Here goes.



The Railroad er,.. Election

For some reason still unknown to me, I was nominated and elected as Escapees Chapter 8 Historian during the annual Membership Meeting held in February of 2020 during the Baja Adventure Rally at La Jolla Beach Camp. I feel unqualified to hold any position on the board as we are relatively new (5 years) Escapees and became familiar with Chapter 8 only this year. But I guess somebody's gotta do it, eh?

Duties

Duties of the Historian include the collection, review, sorting, and archiving (digitally) of all chapter documents to make these available to anyone in the future for research of the events and/or actions by members or the Board of Directors of the organization.

What's Included in the archives are:

- Newsletters (from as far back as 1992),
- Board member lists,
- Board & General membership meeting minutes,
- Treasurers reports,
- historical By-Laws and Standing Rules,
- commonly used forms,
- Chapter 8 logo design and ordering info,
- an early video commercial clip,
- rally info web pages, and
- lots more miscellaneous info related to our travel in Mexico as Chapter 8.

How It's Stored

In order to make all these documents easy to store and retrieve by others as needed, they are all categorized (previously by others) and now stored on Google Drive. If you have a need or interest in any particular document or group of documents please reach out to me in an email to herbsells@gmail.com and I'll see that I search through the archives for the documents you request and forward them on to you.

Send me what you have

Additionally, if you have any documents that you feel should be preserved in our archive, please send them along to me as well at herbsells@gmail.com.



Hola from the webmaster by Bill Johnson



I have enjoyed this position for over a year now and have been working hard to make the website a better experience for the users. I am also responsible for the administration of the [Escapée Mexican Connection](#) Facebook page.

Please take some time and go to the website and view the over 200 pictures taken on our 2020 Baja Adventure Rally. I am still looking for pictures in from of city names (Like the Tecate pictures on the site), pictures in the Valentines frame, pictures from Folklorico Dance and pictures from add-on trips. These pictures become our legacy and are very fun to review.

WEBSITE:

<http://mexicanconnection08.com>

EMAIL:

Ch8comms@gmail.com

Check out the Photo Gallery on our outstanding Website



News

The Letter to the Escapees RV Club Leaders:



Escapees Social Network, Inc., Chapter 8 **The Mexican Connection** 100 Rainbow Drive, Livingston, Texas 77351



Punta Banda, Baja California, Mexico

March 15, 2020

Shawn Loring, CEO Escapees Inc.
100 Rainbow Drive,
Livingston, Texas 77351

Dear Shawn and fellow Escapee Leaders:

Since 1985, Chapter 8 has spread the Escapee Spirit of Joe & Kay Peterson with non-profit RV Rallies in Mexico. Over the years, thousands of Escapees have learned how to travel safely in a foreign country without a single negative event of any consequence. In the past decade, Chapter 8 has added charity to our Mission Statement benefitting Escapee's CARE as well as nonprofit charities south of the border keeping the spirit of Joe & Kay alive with tens of thousands of dollars. But, being an Escapee in the Spirit of Joe & Kay is more than legacy in giving, it is a legacy in growing within ourselves and helping our fellow SKPs grow in a way of which we can all be justly proud. As we have grown, so have other branches of the Peterson SKP Tree... and conflict has grown where harmony reigned for thirty-five years.

Ideally, The Mexican Connection picks a new destination every year and Chapter 8 has gone as far as Mexico City with over 150 RVs. But in recent years, internal changes within Mexico such as declining oil production led to the introduction of Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel from the U.S.A. further constricting areas of safe refueling. Areas of relative safety, abundance of facilities and ease of access further limit practical choices for bringing first timers to Mexico as related in our Mission Statement. The Mexican Government declared a small "Free Zone" to encourage vehicular tourists to the Baja Peninsula and parts of Sonora further constricting the prime areas during temperate weather for Mexican Hangouts, Convergences and Chapter 8 Rallies.

Our Chapter's recent multi-year revitalizing effort is paying off with increased enthusiasm and energy from the Executive Board through to a resurgent swelling of our membership and Facebook participation. As loyal SKPs with long memories, we recognize the necessity of having forprofit components of the Escapees RV Club and many of our members are Xscapers as well. Although Chapter 8 started out as an integral part of the Escapees RV Club, in recent years we were repurposed as a chapter of the Escapees Social Network, Inc. Here we have the opportunity to follow the Spirit of Joe & Kay but within the non-profit course of a 501(c)(9) owned by the Escapees RV Club. Thus, by Escapees RV Club design, we cannot be the profit centers that Hangouts and Convergencies can be... though we pay our own bills, follow the path of Joe & Kay for our fellow SKPs, and provide services and financial benefits to others along the way.

The popularity of our unique Caravans, Rallies, and Add-on trips to Mexico has spilled over into a demand for Hangouts and Convergences that are direct competition to the few destinations and similar times as our annual

events through which we rotate. Consequently, the ability of our unpaid volunteers to continue our chapter (once Escapees' largest) is being undermined by lure of Mexican "party hearty" hype that detracts from cultural, historic, philanthropic, and international relations opportunities.

The Mexican Connection is all about having a great time in Mexico... and learning how to travel, shop, relate with the locals, see the sights, and lend a hand or a peso where it is needed along the way. Last year we reconstructed and repainted a rural school playground, donated school supplies to students, and provided costumes and shoes for a children's Folklorico Dance Heritage group. Our advice and support for a unique non-profit Children's Park and Zoo over the past three years culminated in the award for the Best New Exhibit of all the Zoos and Aquaria in Mexico... and the plaque of the exhibit honors the Escapees RV Club, Chapter 8.

This year, we purchased and installed fiberglass insulation for a new building for the needy elderly, gave scholarships to outstanding students, used Amazon to deliver needed supplies to a children's learning center, and provided special needs for a battered women's shelter. We also provided a Food Bank for the hungry and blankets, clothing, and shoes to those whose makeshift homes we visit. Each year we generously provide special funds to Escapees' CARE from our annual Charity Auctions. Everywhere we go in Mexico we leave behind Escapees decals and fond memories for those whose lives we touch... as we ourselves are also touched by who we have grown to be.

Jim & Lockie Sailor can attest to the quality that the volunteer leaders of Chapter 8 rallies provide to fellow Escapees and the good will we create for the Escapees RV Club south of the border. Last year, as in previous years, Chapter 8 sponsored a Mexican Connection Fiesta Social at the Escapade with poignant scenes from our 2019 rally with Mexican food & drinks for over 200 smiling SKPs! However, we cannot compete with SKP Hangout & Convergence publicity.

In 2020, three other Escapees events directly competed with our 35 year old traditional February rally. Consequently, our website, Facebook page and Chapter officers were blindsided with Hangout and Convergence SKPs asking for guidance from their fellow Mexican Connection SKPs... and we served them too. That meant that we had to alter our plans, lose some of our confused members to competing Escapee/Xscaper events and change our event to a shorter main rally with innovative add-on extensions to exotic locations. Despite the turmoil that led to fewer participants, our 2020 Baja Adventure was one of the best ever... and proudly raised a record amount of goods, services and cash for charitable events on both sides of the border.

Our rallies often grow to being two or three times larger than a typical commercial rally. When commercial rallies are going to places we might go, we communicate together for everyone's benefit since large campground facilities are relatively rare in Mexico. At the very least, it would seem that the various Escapees for-profit and non-profit events should coordinate the timing and destinations of activities in Mexico so all Escapees could benefit in future years... and allow the legacy of Joe & Kay to continue to be the force behind our Mexican Connection!

Yours for future Escapee relevance,
Kassandra M. Dennis, President
On behalf of the Executive Board Chapter 8,
The Mexican Connection Escapees Social Network, Inc.



Reply from Escapees RV Club Board:



ESCAPEES RV Club[®]

www.escapees.com

100 Rainbow Drive · Livingston, Texas · 77351-9300

April 1st, 2020

Dear Cassandra,

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Escapees Board of Directors with your thoughts and concerns regarding event opportunities in Mexico. We want to start this letter by expressing our appreciation for all the years Chapter 8 has served Escapees and provided an incredible opportunity for our members to be a part of. It brings us great joy to hear that you are thriving and seeing increased enthusiasm, and we hope that you only continue to grow with each passing year.

With that said, we hope to clarify a few misconceptions you might have about Mexico Convergences and Hangouts, or those programs in general. We hope you realize that it is not, and never will be, Escapees intention to take traction away or lure people away from any of our Chapters. We can assure you that if our Event Directors or attendees from these events have asked questions regarding Mexico in any Facebook pages, that it was with the sole intention of partaking in the Escapees caring and sharing attitude, not to harm your efforts. We would hope that anybody from your Chapter would feel comfortable enough to ask questions to the community, wherever they see fit. We are all in this together; and, we should be fostering conversations to help one another.

It is very important to us that Escapees Chapters continue to thrive, and it is a topic that comes up often in our board meetings. We have always pushed our members to look into Chapter opportunities; and, specifically, when it comes to Mexico, we always tout Chapter 8 and the great work you all are doing on your trips. More importantly, our Event Directors plug you guys to their attendees while in Mexico. We can sympathize with your feelings and interpretations of what we are doing with our events. But again, it is not our boards, nor our Event Directors, intention to take away from your Chapter/rally.

We feel it is worthwhile noting that our Event Directors do work hard to bring volunteerism and help to local communities into all of their events—Mexico is no exception. They organize volunteer/donating efforts where possible; and, they also work with local restaurants and businesses to bring our attendees to them or organize event activities. Contrary to what some might believe, Xscapers events do not revolve around partying. Our members are passionate about getting together as a community and giving back anywhere possible.

When it comes to timing, we are working on a schedule between our other events so there is only a limited timeframe that we can book our events in Mexico. This is for the benefit of the Event Directors and the attendees who attend multiple events within a few months' time. Again, it is not our intention to overlap with your rally; and, we will try to be more conscious of this moving forward, but we cannot guarantee that there will never be conflicting dates.

We feel it might be helpful to share some background about why Xscapers and the Hangouts came to be. As an organization, we were missing the mark on providing our own internal resources for certain demographics of RVers. Our number 1 priority as an organization is community. And, at the end of the day, we were not meeting our own needs. With the creation of Xscapers, we were able to provide a niche atmosphere for working RVers. As time went on, there were a lot of members who found themselves at those events, but felt they did not fit in. They also did not feel that HOPs or Chapters were what they were looking for either (though we sure encourage them to try them all). Thus, the ideas started formulating for a program that would eventually turn into Hangouts. Events have always been in our wheelhouse, and this is just a natural progression of expansion for the organization. The point here is, Xscapers is not for everyone. Hangouts are not for everyone. Chapters are not for everyone. Our goal was to create as many opportunities as possible so that the members can choose what works best for their needs and lifestyle. No program should be intentionally harming each other. Rather, they should be working together to provide the best experience possible for their respective communities.

The last major point we wanted to address are the comments about Convergences and Hangouts being a profit center for Escapees RV Club. While we don't feel the need to dive too deep into details, we would like you guys to know that it's a false statement. The priority of these particular programs is providing a means for Escapees members to get together, and we strive to keep them as affordable as possible for members. We work hard and make sacrifices as a business to make this happen, which is why we feel the need to address it.

We hope that we have been able to clear the air and that this letter will support a healthier relationship moving forward. If you have ideas on how we can assist your Chapter, please always feel free to bring those forward to Lockie and the board. We are here for you and want you to succeed!

Sincerely,
The Escapees RV Club Board

Reply from Melanie Carr, Vice President of Escapees:

From: Melanie Carr <melaniecarr@escapees.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 6, 2020 11:21 AM
To: Ed Dennis <ed@ekdennis.com>; Cassandra Dennis <kassandra@ekdennis.com>
Cc: chapterdirectors@escapees.com
Subject: Mexico 2021

Hi Cassandra and Ed,

First off, I hope you both are doing well and staying safe out there during these difficult times. I wanted to take a moment to check in with you guys regarding Escapees' plans for Mexico events in 2021. I tried to take a look on your website to see if you've made any announcements regarding your rally dates or plans, but didn't see anything posted yet. I figured it would be best to send you guys an email and let you know what we currently have in the works.

Both our Escapees Hangouts and Xscapers Convergence teams are beginning to plan their return to Victor's RV Park in San Felipe. The dates they are working to secure with them are:

- Session 1 (Xscapers): Friday, Feb. 19 to Monday, Mar. 1
- Session 2 (Hangouts): Tuesday, Mar. 2 to Friday, Mar. 12

As we mentioned in our recent letter, it is never our intention to purposely conflict with your rally. Unfortunately, we do work on time constraints because January through March is our heavy social season and we hold a lot of back to back events. When you factor in our event directors time and travel flexibility, we have a short window to make Mexico work. However, we do want to open up the lines of communication so we can better discuss these things with you guys and at least give the courtesy of informing you guys of our plans ahead of time.

Even if we do end up running into conflicting dates, I would love to open the door to discuss ways we can assist you and benefit the Escapees community at large to help them find the right events that will work for their needs. I speak on behalf of the entire Board of Directors when I say we appreciate your loyalty to the organization and all you do to help members travel safely and give back to the local communities in Mexico.

Please let me know any thoughts you guys have on the information I've provided so far and I look forward to exploring ways we can work together.

SKP Hugs,
Melanie Carr
Escapees RV Club | Vice President

Members' Stories from Mexican Connection 2020

Sunrise Inspiration by Shari Nova

This snapshot of a couple witnessing the serenity and beauty of a San Felipe sunrise represents the awe and curiosity I felt every day of the 2020 Mexican Connection rally. Cassandra and her team led 25 rigs and 60 people on a carefully crafted journey designed to introduce us to the Baja California terrain, Mexican culture and their gentle people, worthy humanitarian projects and each other.



To some, this was just another chance to camp with friends. To me, this experience opened doors I didn't know existed. From the Potrero meet and greet to crossing the border back into Los Estados Unidos, every day changed my perception of foreign travel, altruistic opportunities and finding comfort in the company of 59 new best friends.



Did I learn a lot and enjoy this trip? YES! Did Cassandra and her team fulfill the Mexican Connection mission to introduce travelers to Mexico and empower us to go back again on our own? ABSOLUTELY! Will I come back with this group again next year? HELL YES!

In the meantime, I'll sip a margarita from time to time, look at my pictures and long for the freedom and joy of those fun filled pre-corona virus days!

Tecate Bakery by Cece Wroblewski

One of life's little pleasures is fresh bakery and our walking excursion to Tecate, the border town in Baja Mexico, yielded a great example of this. This bakery sported every kind of tempting confection you can imagine – bread, croissants, rolls, empanadas, jelly-filled sweets, and of course chocolate coated rolls of every sort. The biggest challenge was to read the Spanish names of the goodies on the shelves. Some of us walked away with a week's worth of pastries! As this picture documents, Paul Kinard knows the proper way to transport a good-sized French bread roll. Nice look, Paul!



Thank you Parking Team! by Connie Farley & Jim McEver

Jim and I want to say “Mucho Gracias!” to our hardworking volunteers on the Parking Team for all your help at the 2020 Baja Adventure Rally.

Your orange flags, vests and smiling faces were a welcome sight for our rally participants and the arriving travelers certainly knew they were in the right place.

From Potrero County Park, California to Zoologico Parque del Niño Jersey, in Guadalupe, Baja California to La Jolla Beach Campo, Punta Bunda; your help was essential.

One of our favorite aspects of being parking co-chairs was getting to know the individuals who made the team so functional and social:

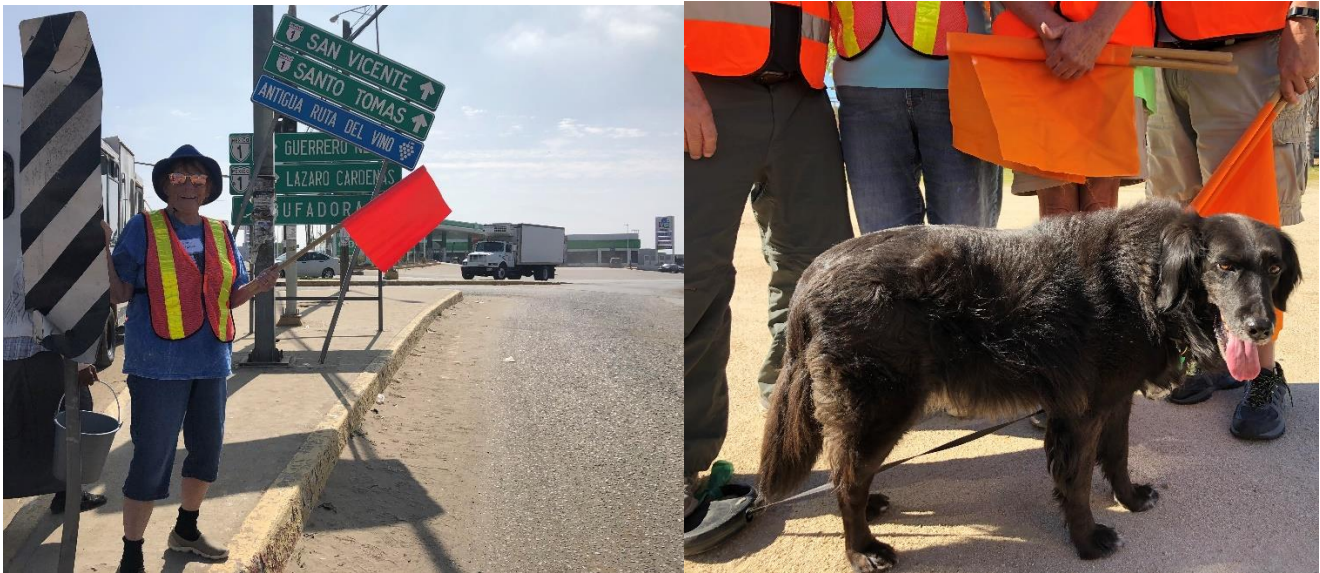
Herb & Kathy Baldwin, Heidy Bell, Carl Cranfill, Dennis & Mary Gauthier, Alan & Beverly Tackman (plus Raven)!

Muchas gracias amigos, see you next year!

Pictured: Dennis, Heidy, Carl, Alan, Kathy, Herb, Jim and Mary (seated)



Beverly working the Calimex corner... and Raven



Herb & Kathy's Experience by Herb Baldwin

Although we have been Escapees for about 5 years now, we really had no clue about Chapter 8. We had heard of "Mexican Connection" but really had no interest in finding out more - after all, any press we read or video we may have seen on TV was always bad news. Who would want to risk their lives going to Mexico?



Fortunately, we were working the Escapee membership booth at the Big Tent (Quartzsite) RV Show in January of 2019 when Ed Dennis (currently serving as Past President of Chapter 8) came by the booth. Ed told us about the Chapter 8 trip to Baja California that was to take place the next month and to let us know they still had 4 spots open. Listening to Ed tell us about the trip and the chapter and its service work was the catalyst that got us excited about going!

We were convinced we'd be the first ones to sign up for the 2020 trip - wherever it was going to be! We admit, Kathy was still a little apprehensive about making the trip to Mexico. She was worried about road conditions, different (strange) foods, language barriers, dry camping, and our personal safety.

But that all changed when we pulled into Potrero Park for pre-trip staging. Jim and Connie (our parking chairpersons) made us feel so welcome and appreciated. Knowing that they were experienced Mexico travelers and that they were going to be leading the parking made both our comfort levels go way up.

From that point on things only got better. As we traveled further south and as we had more opportunities to meet and get to know our fellow Chapter 8 members, we became more and more relaxed and comfortable knowing that this was going to be a very special experience.

Of course, we all remember the zoo and its dedicated caretakers along with seniors at the elder living home who were so deserving of our time and donations. The auction was “tons of fun” and raised thousands for scholarships, the children’s dance troupe, CARE, and the zoo.



We had plenty of time to enjoy the surrounding area too. While camped at the zoo, we had the opportunity to visit some of the local wineries, take in some of the nearby restaurants, shop at “Liz” grocery store along with perusing many of the street vendors to buy some local honey or olives. Once down to La Jolla Beach some of us visited the blowhole, went on a guided off-road trip, or just spent time relaxing on the beach. Our planned social times together included daily Happy Hours and meetings/meals over at the social hall across the street.

Kathy and I have traveled to many places and had many wonderful experiences, and we’ve agreed we won’t go to the same place twice. BUT, we had such a fulfilling experience with the Chapter 8 Mexican Connection Baja Rally that we’re very much looking forward to hearing about the plans for the 2021 rally. Who knows? We just might sign up to tag along!

Off-Roading by Sue Morgan

What an exhilarating ride with a bunch of crazy, wonderful people!!



Photos from Nancy Hoult, Sue Morgan, Ron Nedved



Up Close and Personal by Cece Wroblewski

Visiting the [Zoológico Parque del Niño Jersey](#) in Guadalupe Valley was a special treat especially because we could get up close and personal with the animals. 4 days flew by when we camped next to the Zoo and experienced holding creatures, cleaning cages (including scooping poop!), creating enrichment activities, and preparing and placing food all around in their cages. Imagine holding a boa constrictor as Carl does in this picture or petting iguanas as Ron and Herb show us. I don't remember the name of the mother and daughter creatures that I got to hand feed. Anyone able to supply the name? Doesn't Jean look brave holding that snake?





Enjoying close camaraderie at Hussong's Cantina while we still could! By Steve Bufty



A thousand dollar haircut! By Steve Buffy

(It wasn't really a thousand dollars but that sounds better than \$940.)

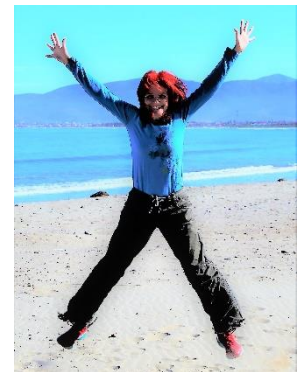
Marty McMahon challenged all of us to donate toward the Chapter charities and if we reached the goal, he would have Heidi Bell shave his head. It worked! Here he's shown with look-alikes Ken Koch and Paul Kinard.



2020 Baja Adventure Rally Wrap Up! By Wagonmaster Kassandra Dennis

It is my pleasure to announce that our 2020 Baja Adventure Rally was a smashing success! Many new friendships were made and friendships from previous rallies were rekindled.

We left Potrero Park on Feb. 14, had an easy Border Crossing, and enjoyed a festive Valentine Welcome at the Children's Zoo in the heart of Mexico's Wine Country. The Grand Gazebo was romantically festooned with hearts, flowers, and balloons! Chef Perlita, (Zoo Director Perla's daughter) created a wonderful Valentine Dinner with all the trimmings. Malcolm (the attendee) became Malcolm (the violin toting troubadour) who regaled us with romantic ballads, impromptu humor, and vivid violin virtuosity. The lions, tigers, wolves continued their nightly serenade as we dozed off in our first night at the Zoo.



The next morning, a “Behind the Scenes” Zoo Tour demonstrated why this little Zoo has earned a BIG reputation for its care, concern, and life enhancement of captive animals. Last year, with the help of Chapter 8’s contribution, the Zoo won the prestigious “Best New Exhibit” award in competition with all zoos and aquariums in Mexico! The following day, we had split up in small groups as “Zookeepers for a Day” helping the Zoo staff with the care, cleaning and feeding of exotic species. Most of the animals were rescued from illegal captivity, gross mistreatment, or when an owner of a once cuddly baby was faced with a roaring hungry tiger. Without humane rescue facilities, the alternative is death.

Chapter 8 President Cassandra Dennis and Zoo On-Site Manager Arturo Alcantar with “Best All New Exhibit Mexican Zoo” Trophy



We had plenty of free time to explore the local wineries, wine tours, and wonderful wine tastings. Many of us carpooled to attend fun and impromptu outings as the local cuisine is fabulous and many well-known chefs preside at the wineries.

After enjoying several days in the famous Valle de Guadalupe, it was off to our third and final rally location: La Jolla Beach Camp on the outskirts of Ensenada in Punta Banda. We once again travelled in small groups of about 6 rigs and as our rally was smaller this year (26 rigs) we did not have to get up very early for travel. Driving through the beautiful city of Ensenada was well coordinated by our competent Group Leaders, Jim and Connie, Steve and Donna, Gary, Paul and Vicky... and thanks to our very own CB expert Herb, we all had fun sharing on our CB radios on Channel 8 (of course!).

Special thanks to our fabulous Group Leaders and Tail Gunners, you guys were tops in patiently answering all questions from “crossing the border” to “where can I get propane,” etc.

At La Jolla Beach Camp, our Parking Team led by Jim and Connie did a great job and got us all into the highly desired beachfront spots or 15-amp electric spots. Here, fresh reverse osmosis drinking water and propane were delivered directly to our rigs. For those not wanting to use the dump station, a honey wagon made a stop on our first day as well.

We enjoyed warm and sunny days on the Pacific Ocean and some of us even took the time to dig a hole on the beach to allow for the hot thermal water to pool and make an impromptu hot tub. You cannot beat Happy Hour in a hot tub on the beach with your Friends from Chapter 8!

Once again, we were lucky to have the support and welcome from the Pabloff family regarding camping needs but even more so, with their guidance, we found some wonderful charities to support. Our welcome dinner was lovingly prepared and accompanied by a Balladeer Trio of Baja musicians and some of us even got up and danced! 😊

Having a competent mechanic with a shop on site at La Jolla Beach Camp was much appreciated as last minute rig issues such as jacks not levelling properly, car starter and battery issues and last but not least, a stuck slide out were easily and competently addressed and all at a fraction of what it costs in the USA.

Once again, we visited the beautiful city of Ensenada on a big charter bus and played tourist for the day and bring back fresh produce and artisanal cheese from the Farmers Market and giant fresh shrimp and other seafood from the Fish Market!

A 2-hour live dance performance by the local children's Folklorico Dancers was followed by a lively and fun SKP Auction. Jean, a rally attendee who had been a bartender in a previous life, spoiled us all with fresh popcorn and excellent donation-based margaritas which helped to liven up our auction experience. We were able to borrow fun costumes for our Auctioneers from the inventory of the beautiful 99-seat theater next door. Then we went to the theatre for a play in English by local expats with homes in La Jolla.

The 5-person Charity committee and helpers under Nancy's guidance did a wonderful job organizing the donated In-Kind items (such as blankets, toys etc.), food bank items and our famous SKP auction. Our Hands-On service project was a smashing success and we finished our project with a wonderful lunch at the grandparent's home... full of good spirit!

On free days, some visited the Bufadora blowhole, while others visited the Carnival, or took their 4x4 on a ride over the mountains for spectacular views from high up of the ocean sprinkled with some geocaching! For our farewell dinner we visited La Bufadora restaurant, had a Tequila tour by the owner, and got a taste of one of the most exquisite Tequilas made! He made us a special offer for his high-end Tequila that comes in a beautifully decorated wooden box and many of us could not resist purchasing a bottle...



All too soon it was time to say goodbye as our fabulous rally came to an end



and Miguel Pabloff surprised each rig with a personal farewell and a bottle of his Christmas wine. They treated us like family and shall be dearly missed.

However, some were not ready for the fun to end, so many of you travelled further south or east to one of our pre-advertised add-on locations. The Grey Whale/Playa Santispac add-on trip was a big hit (two groups of several rigs) and proved to be quite adventurous while others travelled from the Pacific Ocean over the mountains to a relaxing adventure on the Sea of Cortez in San Felipe with our Add-On Host Gary. Some of us stayed at La Jolla Beach Camp a bit longer and enjoyed the soothing ocean waves plus feasting on fabulous fresh shrimp and fish tacos at Lupita's as often as possible. I think we all agreed that there are no better shrimp tacos to be found anywhere...period!

After three years of being Wagonmaster and/or Co-Wagonmaster with my husband Ed, we are thrilled to have found another energetic Chapter 8 member and 2020 rally attendee, Phylana Ladd (and her assistants), to step up to being next year's Wagonmaster! What a treat it will be! We hope to see you all next year for more fun, sun and cultural immersion!

Kassandra
2020 Baja Adventure Rally Wagonmaster signing off...

Membership Reminder: Chapter 8's membership fee is due by April 30

\$10 for 1 year

\$25 for 3 years

\$40 for 5 years

Please renew on the Chapter 8 website's Membership Renewal page –

<http://mexicanconnection08.com/new-renew-membership/>

Here's to a great 2020 Mexican Connection Baja Rally



**Let us read your story in the
Summer 2020 Newsletter!!
Where has your RV taken you and how have you spent
your “Shelter at Home” season?
Hmmm?**



**Send a note and pictures to the newsletter editor
Cece.wroblewski@gmail.com**