

LA CONEXIÓN

MEXICANA

*Escapees Chapter 8 RV Club
Summer 2009 - Volume XXV - Number 2*



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President's Message

Cynthia Ponder, Chapter 8 President

It is such a great pleasure to be the President of Chapter 8. The past few months have been very full with a wonderful rally for next February being planned, our budget audited and reviewed as required by the Escapees, our membership being updated, and a wonderful experience at the Escapade in Sedalia. The Mexican Connection is alive and growing!!

Thanks to all who stopped by the booth on the row and who came to our social. The enthusiasm and support we had from new and experienced members of the Mexican Connection was outstanding.

The Escapade will be held in Goshen, Indiana Sept. 12-17 next year. Historically fall rallies are usually larger and we will already have full details about our 2011 rally at that escapade, needing even more official volunteers, so start planning ahead to spend a day on the row in the Chapter 8 booth when you attend the Escapade. We will also need a Row Coordinator.



Carnaval parade 2009 in Guaymas.

Photo: B. Ellis

Julianna la Fleche did an outstanding job this year in that role, spending most of the Escapade in the booth by herself and getting several new members to join just by sharing her enthusiasm. This is one of the reasons we know we need folks to sign up for a day next year so know one has to spend the entire time on the row. Jim and I will claim one day- who else is ready to sign up? Julianna also did an outstanding job of planning one of the best socials held at the entire Escapade!!! Many thanks to Julianna.

Denny and Sue Orr, Escapade Chapter Coordinators were present at our social as were Roger and Liz Grant who are Volunteer Club Representatives and will join us in Bahia de Kino in February. Don Damkaer and Mike and Terry Church were both wonderful about mentioning our chapter and rally in their seminars and were present at the social. We are hoping they and many others we met at the Escapade will be able to join us in February if their schedules permit.

Jim and I are workamping this summer in Mancos, CO where we have met a couple who were already staying at the Guaymas hotel where the rally was held this year. They worked with Julianna to help in collecting money for our first animal charity outreach - a homeless dog. The dog now has a new Mexican family to live with, is a loving pet, in good health and with a full coat of shiny hair. The excess amount of our donations went to help in making sure all of the cats that stay around the hotel were also spayed and neutered.



A fishing boat in the Sea of Cortez at Bahia de Kino.

Photo: C. Ponder

On June 25th Jim and I will join our Wagonmaster's, the Billers, to help finalize the arrangements for the 2010 rally. We are looking forward to seeing many of you there and having your help to make this a wonderful, relaxing and fun rally.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Claudia Ellis for her dedication in putting together a written Wagon Master manual for Chapter 8. She did this while working to put together our wonderful rally in Guaymas in 2009. It contains invaluable resources for future Wagon Masters, giving them a starting point to look at, as they begin their jobs. Each subsequent Wagon Master will be adding information to it and we will be putting it in electronic format as well.

It will be passed forward to make the sharing of information to those volunteering to take on this important role in The Mexican Connection more consistent and will help us to retain the gathered wisdom of past Wagon Masters to build on in the future. If you are a past Chapter 8 Wagon Master and still have documentation on your rally and planning processes please email me at pondermexico@gmail.com so we can add your input into this manual.



2010 Rally to Bahia de Kino

Ed & Jan Biller '10 Wagon Master

Planning for the 2010 Rally at Bahia de Kino is still underway. A planning trip to the pre Rally location (Pima County Fairgrounds) in Tucson, AZ followed by a trip into Mexico to visit Bahia de Kino will take place June 24 to July 14. During this trip it is hoped to iron out camping locations, charity, and activities. We will then have a pretty good idea of costs for the trip and final itinerary.

Tentative forms and details, including approximate costs will be posted by August 1 on the Mexican Connection Website.

Registration is still planned to start on October 1, 2009. All details will be final at that time. Watch the Mexican Connection website for registration forms and other details.

It's not too early to consider how you can volunteer to make this rally a success. Participants should consider volunteering for all the areas they are interested in so if one area is not available, then we will know where else you would be willing to assist. Here are some possible categories:

Registration _____

First Aid _____

RV/car maintenance _____

Tail gunners _____

Parking _____

Interpreter _____

Photography _____

Pet sitting _____

Group Leader _____

CB technician _____

Charity Committee _____

Chips & dip setup _____

Auctioneer _____

Room Setup _____

During the rally at Bahia de Kino we are encouraging participants who have a specialty or expertise to share in an informal afternoon session, lead a talk, or activity. Currently there may be a geocache session and a geology session. Other examples for specialty sharing include:

First Aid, Hair Cutting, Nature, Fly Fishing, Golf Tips, Knife Sharpening, Astronomy, Desert Plants, Birding etc.

It's also not too early to commit on a volunteer position.

Please contact the Wagon Master with your intentions.

Thanks for your help.

Ed and Jan Biller Wagonmaster2010@yahoo.com



One of the beaches at Bahia de Kino, site of Chapter 8's 2010 rally.

Photo: C. Ponder

Escapade 2009: The Chapter 8 Experience

Juliana la Fleche, Row Representative

At the Opening Ceremony the first day, there was a Parade of Banners for Chapter and Certified Birds of a Feather groups. As each BoF banner passed the stage, Susie Orr, Chapter and BOF Coordinator, gave a brief description of the group.

The next days were busy, really busy, so busy that for four days I forgot to take a picture! However, our booth was bright and colorful with displays of both our large and small banners, a big map of Mexico, bright tablecloths and serapes, and on the front table was a large bowl of Dichos for visitors to sample. Dichos are the Mexican fortune cookies we sampled in Douglas prior to our entry into Mexico last February. We played Pete Petrie's CDs with pictures from our Guaymas rally and other pictures of Mexico on a large monitor. The CDs were the finishing touch to a bright, inviting booth.

The Row was inside this year and there were Bingo cards again, so LOTS of people came by our booth. Although a few expressed concerns about the safety of travel to Mexico, most were reassured by our plans for Bahía de Kino, such that we added several new members plus a number of membership renewals.

Our social was quite well attended with an interesting hors d'oeuvres buffet: lots of exotic cheeses, as well as Mexican snacks and, of course, more Dichos!. Cynthia Ponder's PowerPoint presentation on next year's Bahía de Kino rally was very well received. There was a lot of discussion and it appeared most people were making plans to attend next year's rally in February.

Even though those four days were exciting, they were rather long days. Next time you attend an Escapade, consider volunteering for a couple of hours at the Chapter 8 booth. Escapade 2010 in Goshen comes at an inconvenient time for me but I would eagerly be Row Rep again - introvert that I am. It was easy talking with people one-on-one about the Mexican Connection because it's something I wholeheartedly believe in: introductions to Mexico for the uninitiated, and our charitable work. (As for the latter, you may want to keep donations in mind this entire year for the rally next February. If you come upon sales or find items you think appropriate, put them away for Chapter 8!)



Summary of 2009 Guaymas Rally

Claudia Ellis, '09 Wagon Master

Being your Wagon Master was quite an odyssey. We began with the concept of following the Southern Pacific Railroad from its inception in Douglas to the equipment repair yard at Benjamin Hill, ending at its terminus at the Hotel Playa de Cortes in Guaymas. Then my humble first assistant Brian managed to get three different confirmations of when Carnaval would be celebrated in Guaymas, so the rally theme was changed.



Our transportation in Benjamin Hill, provided by the small town, from our campsite to the festival on the church plaza.

Photo: B. Ellis

There were some stressful times in the Ellis household as we worked toward putting together the 2009 rally. In traveling 5 different routes to choose the best one for the rally we experienced many adventures. We drove 55 miles (including one place where the bridge had been removed and a four wheel drive vehicle got stuck). Horses at times blocked our path (always when we were going uphill). Being stopped at a border station right out of a Hollywood set - small shack, official border crossing gate, the official wearing civilian clothing but with a baseball style cap (with official insignia) inquiring in heavily

accented English where we had come from (I can tell you that Florida is not the correct answer) and asking to see our papers before we finally traveled the route we selected. During that planning phase we became the object of the Federales interest as we kept transiting the Mexican border during a one week period and got our very own up-close and personal inspection of our RV by U.S. Customs for the same reason.

Yet being Wagon Master has brought Brian and me closer together - he no longer leaves me alone unattended when we're in a place where I may volunteer. He was in the RV at the 2007 rally when I became Wagon Master. That's why our club email address is no retorno 2 rig.

Three weeks before the rally started Roger "Spook" and Brenda McFillen were kind enough to accompany us to Guaymas. As parking chair, Spook checked out all of our potential parking sites to make sure they were large enough and to look for any obstacles to safe parking which would need to be corrected before our rally group arrived.

A week before the rally began we went to stay with Robbyn Gibbon who kindly let us boondock in Douglas, AZ. We spent this time making final preparations for the rally in Douglas and Aqua Prieta as well as Guaymas. My Spanish is very limited and working with an interpreter always left a little mystery in our plans.



Part of our tour of Benjamin Hill included the old train yards where our group was invited to climb aboard. Mike Parent and our bus driver on engine, Cynthia Ponder at bottom of photo.

Photo: B. Ellis

The rally date arrived, as did you who came with us on the adventure. One caterer had to back out due to lack of staff on Valentine's Day. On President's Day Ginny couldn't get a bus, nor could we charter one anywhere for the trip to the border. The heat was off at the Douglas Air Museum, which caused an instant change of plans. The group leaders, Brian and I dealt with questions, comments and complaints on a daily basis

On the plus side, since we didn't really know what was going to transpire in Agua Prieta and Benjamin Hill it was like a surprise party with events unfolding in real time. Daily the Peso plummeted and I had more money to spend on the rally participants. I associate steel drums with the Caribbean, not Mexico, never envisioned ballet or a TV show called Mexican Idol, didn't know we'd have a police escort to block traffic or a TV and newspaper crew following us. Benjamin Hill presented an even bigger surprise because we left Douglas not knowing whether indeed everything had been prepared or the rally would be parking by the Pemex. I am truly sorry that Pete Petrie's group missed the fiesta the town put on. We were told that despite being poor and having lost all 3 of their major employers they gave Mexican Connection everything they could and touched the hearts of many. Halib asked that I let you know that members of Mexican Connection are welcome to stay at the soccer field any time, that the town will put together a fiesta for future rallies on just a few weeks notice but most importantly he said, "We are a small, poor town. We have no reason to celebrate, but you came and gave us a reason to have a party and reminded us that we are a community. Thank you for giving so much to us."



Steel drums were part of the entertainment provided for us by students from Agua Prieta.

Photo: B. Ellis

We left for Guaymas believing that everything else would go smoothly. This is the only place we had a detailed, signed contract. I'm sure you all remember our first meeting on arrival day. To the rally participants, thank you for your patience. It was only our third time in Mexico and as I've described, a work in progress, which is why I don't have any photos and would really appreciate it if you'd send some to me at noretorno2rig@yahoo.com.

I know for returnees I changed a lot of things. I planned the route so the participants would have a few hours of traveling in groups within their comfort zone of being in the U.S. -

finding a travel speed to travel, setting the squelch on CB radios, learning whether your group leader can't tell his right from his left. I opted to not use mileage in compiling the road log because I wanted you to become familiar with Mexican mileposts and signage to facilitate your further travels. Because Brian and I were on our first rally when I volunteered, I was open to allowing businesses and towns to use the rally as their first - from La Fiesta, who just days before the rally accepted the catering job in Douglas to Agua Prieta and Benjamin Hill exploring the possibility that they could enhance their economy through tourism. If you want to return to the area, Cochise County Fairgrounds is open for camping and Ginny Jordan can take a group with a minimum of 6 people on walking tours of Douglas and Agua Prieta.

Mexican Connection is a club and like any organization there's always a core group of people who actively pitch in to help on an on-going basis, not just the one time a year we have a rally. They are the lifeblood of any organization and they certainly make being Wagon Master a bit easier.

For the 2009 rally I had some really wonderful people who gave generously of themselves, their time and their resources.

First I had Pete Petrie, former President, who not only inspired me to take on the Herculean task but who also acted as a sounding board for my ideas. He didn't always understand my vision (Douglas/Agua Prieta being sister cities, stopping in Benjamin Hill, not having buses for Carnival) but he always supported my decisions.

George Young, Treasurer, for meeting us in Douglas, not only for moral support but to give me a quick lesson on rally finances and transition a smooth handoff to Sherrie Petrie who was kind enough to act as treasurer during the course of the rally which includes keeping a running tally of how much money is left in the budget - she also had to deal with the currency fluctuations.



Cathy & Harry Mulvihill walking back to the Escapees' campsite from a visit to the Pearl Factory in a pretty Guaymas neighborhood.

Photo: B. Ellis

Joanne Korsmo is to be thanked for suggesting Guaymas - she was one of only two people who responded to my request for suggestions on where to have a rally. For the two rallies we attended we were Tom Korsmo's Wascally Wabbits. His patient training was put to good use. He instructed the Group Leaders, presented the road log review for the '09 rally, wrote a tutorial for future Wagon Masters to use in training their Group Leaders and as editor of the club's newsletter good-naturedly endured my computer illiteracy.

Spook and Brenda McFillen continually buoyed my spirits when I couldn't make any progress in planning because I

couldn't get commitments from the various entities that are involved in planning and running a rally. Spook helped check over our RV after we were forced into the side of a cement truck during the pre-rally run. We didn't mention this little mishap during the rally because we didn't want to give the participants something to worry about. He diagramed the parking plans, met with Demi at the Hotel Playa de Cortes concerning the sites and has contributed a tutorial on parking for future Wagon Masters.

Robbyn Gibbons let us stay at her place on several occasions during the planning and execution of the rally, let me fill her living room (I had rally paraphernalia shipped to her), drove us around showing us where things were, found a last minute replacement for the caterer, put hundreds of miles on her vehicle gathering tourist information and visiting Ginny for me when I needed her to focus on our soon-to-be-held rally.

Lin and Maryke Hines handled the enormous task of rally registration.

Finally there's my best friend and humble first assistant, Brian. He listened to my rants when I got stuck in the planning process, searched the Internet to see if there were solutions or offered another tack for me to take. He was at the wheel on all our route planning forays boondocking at Pemexes, searched with me for non-existent tourist information booths, kept our landline so I could call Mexico using a calling card. He's my anchor - always there with a hot cup of tea, a soothing word or the very wise advice of walking away from a problem - it might resolve itself or a solution will appear.

To all of these people I'm truly grateful that they helped make your rally the success that it was.

Claudia Ellis, noretorno2rig@yahoo.com

Mega Membership Contest

Pete Petrie, Membership Chair

This is your chance to win **BIG (\$\$\$\$)**. All you have to do is provide the Membership Chair a short description with photo if possible of your most unique experience in Mexico. We all have a great many memories traveling in Mexico. Your experience doesn't have to be connected with a rally; it can be while you were traveling with fiends or by yourself.

The rules are simple:

1. Submit your experience to the Membership Chair with picture if possible. Please keep verbal description to one page.
2. One prize will be awarded per quarter. Quarter is defined as the date of the "Chapter 8 Newsletter", publication. Newsletter publication will end a quarter and begin another.
3. All experiences will be retained and automatically submitted for consideration in the next quarter. However, you may update your experience.
4. All members are eligible, except the Membership Chair and assistant, and believe me I have had a few experiences.
5. Send entry to Pete Petrie, Membership Chair. PO Box 636, Freeport, FL., 32439 or email to petrieae@earthlink.net.

And the PRIZE is a ...yes, you guessed it...a free year's membership to "Chapter 8, The Mexican Connection".

Oh, while you are submitting your entry you might as well send a check to renew your membership.



*Pete Petrie, Membership Chair, poses with
A metal sculpture in Guadalajara
March 2009.*

Photo: B. Ellis

CHAPTER 8 COMMUNICATIONS

Website: www.mexicanconnection08.com

Voice Mail: Dial 888-757-7701 extension 8008

News Group: To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to Mexican_Connection-subscribe@yahoo.com

All Address Changes: PetrieAE@earthlink.net

All submissions to the editor:
ch8newsletter@gmail.com

NOTAS de la REDACTOR

Notes from the editor:



Anyone wanting to include an article or picture for consideration in a future newsletter should send the editor an email with the input as an attached file about two weeks before the end of the quarter, which is the publication date for the newsletters. Word documents are best as that can easily be edited and formatted. However, you may choose to simply type your article in the body of an email (with no formatting please) if you have trouble attaching a document to your emails. Photos should have people and places identified. Also include the name of the photographer.

Muchas Gracias!

BIG SHOES TO FILL...

As the brand new Chapter 8 Newsletter Editor, I realize I have a wonderful example to follow. Tom Korsmo was dedicated to delivering the best Chapter Newsletter for our members for many years. He and Joanne will be greatly missed and certainly not forgotten. The Korsmo's were the team leaders (Wascally Wabbits) for our very first excursion into Mexico with our RV and we're truly grateful for all he taught us and for all his patience. Thanks to Tom, and all our other wonderful friends in Escapees Chapter 8, we have now enjoyed several trips south of the border and gained enough confidence to travel there alone as well as with the group. It's my goal to continue to produce a quality newsletter following Tom's model. Please feel free to contact me with any suggestions for additions or changes.

Barbara Ellis, ch8newsletter@gmail.com



Funcionarios de Capitulo 8

Chapter 8 Elected Officers

President

Cynthia Ponder #70507

1st Vice President

Ed & Jan Biller # 102953

2nd Vice President

Jim Ponder #70303

Secretary

Earl Reese # 85963

Treasurer

George Young #87456

Immediate Past Presidents

Lin & Maryke Hines #70910

*** Appointed Officers at Large ***

Membership Chairman

Pete Petrie #58590

Historian

Bob Kominski #74642

Webmaster &

News Group Manager

Don Busick #21725

Newsletter Editor &

Voicemail Administrator

Barb Ellis #93736

*Officers' email addresses are
hyperlinked on the Chapter 8 website*



Adios Tom & Joanne