



*Above is the complex that Ragsdale built in 1921. The cafe is still open.  
 Below right, abandoned gas pump show regular at 39.9 per gallon.*

this God forsaken spot where they constructed a small shack with a lean-to that served as the repair garage. A Model T truck became a tow truck. Gasoline was pumped by hand from a 55 gallon drum. Ragsdale's wife served food and refreshments to weary travelers. Ragsdale named his oasis "Desert Center". In 1921, the sand road running through Desert Center was relocated five miles north, just off the T, straightened, paved, and named U.S. Route 60. Ragsdale abandoned his original Desert Center and built a new town with an adobe cafe with an attached gasoline station and a huge service garage on the south side of the road. On the north side of the road, he built a series of wooden structures including a market and a post office. Next to the service station on the south he built several cabins and a large "plunge" or swimming pool. Further to the west there were more cabins. Much of what he built in the twenties stands to this day.

When Ragsdale needed a teacher for his own children and the few others in the town, he hastily built a basic structure of stick framing with paper

**(Continued on Page 5)**

## California's Almost Ghost Town

A great one day trip for the region in Southern California would be to the almost ghost town of Desert Center which is just north of Interstate 10 about midway between Palm Springs and Blythe. While there is nothing much going on here now, other than the sex life of lizards, there is a lot of history in and around the town. The General George S. Patton Museum is at Chiriaco Summit, eight miles to the west. Lake Tamarisk with motels and golf is just to the north. Near there is an airport and auto raceway. Further north is a huge abandoned iron mine. In every direction are all kinds of desert exploration attractions.

We were told about Desert Center at a coffee shop in Blythe while returning from a family visit to Phoenix in May. Interstate 10 between Palm Springs and Phoenix is just nothing but miles and miles of desert miles and miles, but Desert Center is a place that has been capturing the imagination of desert rats, artists, and photographers since it virtually shut down about 30 years ago.

The town was founded in 1921 by "Desert Steve Ragsdale" a wandering preacher. In 1915, he was driving the sandy road between Phoenix and Los Angeles when his vehicle broke down near a place called Gruendyke's Well. There he was rescued by a prospector named Bill Gruendyke. Upon his return, Ragsdale bought out Gruendyke and moved his family to



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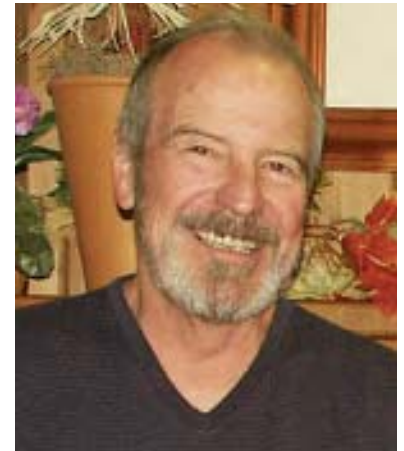
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## Director's message



It seems like its been awhile since Jan and I attended a Lincoln function, but we made up for the traveling this entails with a road trip of our own that included Jan's college reunion in Fredericksburg, Virginia (the main purpose of the trip) and visits to the Corvette assembly plant in Bowling Green, Kentucky, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, numerous Presidential libraries, Buddy Holly's Memorial in Clear Lake, Iowa, and the Henry Ford Museum and Edsel Ford's estate. Anyway, it's great to be back in the West and looking forward to all the cool Lincoln events that are upcoming this summer.

Sadly, we must note the passing of LCOC-National Executive VP Art Whitmire, July 4. Many of you have had pleasant dealings with Art in his capacity of National Meet Chair/liason, and his talent and guidance in this role will be sorely missed. I know that Jeremy Sanford will miss Art's gentle arm-twisting to host a 2012 Western National Meet. Our warmest thoughts and sympathy go out to Carol and family.

On a happier note, I was viewing the Barrett-Jackson classic car auction in Orange County a few weeks ago when a couple appeared on the auction block who looked very familiar. Sure enough, it was esteemed Western Region members Tom and Candy Spiel. You all know Tom and Candy for their award winning cars, and they made the wonderful charitable gesture of donating their white '57 Convertible to the Loma Linda Medical Center's Children's Hospital. The enthusiastic crowd bid the Spiels Lincoln up to \$105,000.00, all proceeds went directly to this great Inland Empire institution! Nice going Tom and Candy!

Well, we've been home way too long, so it's off to Palm Springs for a few days, but we're looking forward to seeing all of you and your Lincolns and Continentals real soon.

Last chance to run for the Western Region Board of Directors. Please contact me if you are interested.

"Peggy Sue" keeps running through my head.  
This column is dedicated to Art Whitmire and Betty Ford.

Continentaly yours, *Marv*

## Coming Events

### Northern California

June 25  
Sutter Gold Mine Tour  
Meet in Sacramento

July 24  
Cadillac LaSalle Club  
Portal Park Snow  
Registration form is available at  
[www.lcocwestern.org/events](http://www.lcocwestern.org/events)  
Call Jeremy at (916) 769-2333  
for further details"

August 20  
Annual Wine Country Picnic

September 11  
Fun Ford Sunday  
Solano County Fair  
Grounds Vallejo

### Southern California

July 30  
Nethercutt Collection Tour  
Sylmar, California

October 2  
All Ford Picnic, LaPalma  
Park, Anaheim  
more info later.



*Mike and Janet Gribble's 1947  
Lincoln Continental Cabriolet  
was Best of Show  
at Morro Bay.*

## 2011 LCOC Western Region Northern California Events

•June 25. Sutter Gold Mine Tour. Sutter Gold Mine offers a comprehensive look into the gold mining process and its historical progression from gold panning and hydraulic mining to hard rock techniques. Besides that, it's just plain fun to go underground and see what's usually only seen by miners: the inside of the Earth. Members meet at 10:30am at the Wendy's restaurant just off US 50 at 2750 Power Inn Rd. Sacramento and enjoyed a scenic drive up into the historic Mother Lode with a pot luck picnic lunch!

•Saturday, August 20. Annual Wine Country Picnic at Simi Winery, 11am – 2pm, Healdsburg Ave. Healdsburg, CA 95448. Our fourth annual Wine Country Picnic will be held at the historic Simi Winery in Healdsburg. A tour and tasting will take place at 11am and will be followed by a catered picnic lunch in the winery's grove. There is a

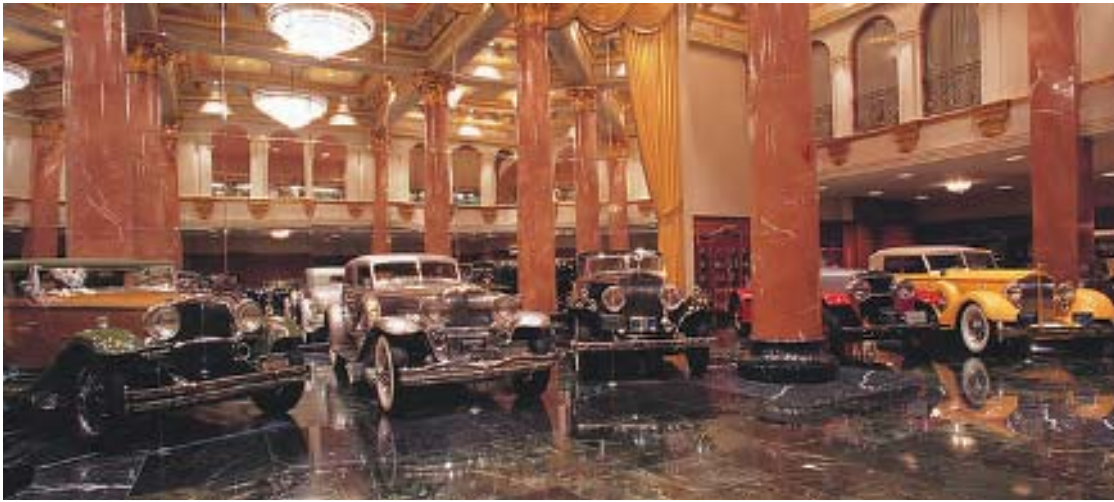
\$20 fee per person for this event, RSVP by August 17, 2011. Thanks to a connection at the winery, all Simi wines may be purchased in advance at a 50% discount, please contact Jeremy for more information. Simi is located in Sonoma County approximately 70 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge. From San Francisco go north on Hwy 101 to the Dry Creek Road exit in Healdsburg Turn right onto Dry Creek Road; then turn left on Healdsburg Avenue. Simi is located one mile north at 16275 Healdsburg Avenue Please contact Jeremy Sanford for more info or to RSVP.

•September 11. Fun Ford Sunday Vallejo. This is an annual event held the second Sunday in September at the Solano County Fairgrounds, it is open to all Ford produced automobiles. Clubs stake out their own areas when they arrive.

The Continental Confab is published and mailed every six weeks. Dates are published annually. The deadline for submitting articles and ads is 20 days prior to the planned mailing date. All articles and ads should be submitted in writing to: 1780 Iris Way, Escondido, CA or e-mail [t,howley@cox.net](mailto:t,howley@cox.net).

Western Region dues are \$30 a year; add \$10 for Western Region membership outside the U.S. (Canada or Mexico). All dues are payable in U.S. currency to Western Region Membership Chairman, 9318 Chaparral Road, Canoga Park, California 91304-1206. Membership in the Western Region of LCOC is open to all parties interested in Lincoln Continental automobiles. Ownership of a Lincoln automobile is not necessary to join LCOC. You must, however, be or become a member of the National LCOC to be eligible to join the Western Region. Dues are in addition to Region dues. The Continental Confab is the official publication of the Western Region LCOC. It is distributed by First Class Mail to Western Region Members. Material contained in the Confab is intended to be as factual as possible, but neither the Western Region nor the editors assume any responsibility for the correctness of the material or its sources. Nothing in the Confab will be reproduced without the written permission of the editors and the Western Region Board of Managers. Car-related marketplace ads are free to members, except those conducting a commercial enterprise. Ads will run for three issues. Advertisers must contact editors to extend or modify ads. Non-member ads are \$10 per issue, with a three issue minimum. We request you notify editors when vehicle or parts are sold. All free ads are subject to editing and space availability. The deadline for submission of articles or ads is the 20th of the month prior to the issue requested. All article contributions may be submitted in writing to: Confab, 1780 Iris Way, Escondido, CA 92027.

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*These photos show the Nethercutt Museum, Train, and Collection.*



## Western Region Tour of the Nethercutt Collection Saturday, July 30

The LCOC Western Region toured the Nethercutt Collection and Museum, (<http://nethercuttcollection.org/>) in Sylmar on Saturday, July 30th. This was a totally FREE event!

The Nethercutt Collection and museum is located in Sylmar at the base of the San Gabriel foothills in the San Fernando Valley. The Nethercutt Museum is a world-class collection of over 250 cars, various mechanical musical instruments, antique furniture and a fully restored Steam locomotive and private rail car. This unique collection was started back in the 1950s by JB Nethercutt, co-founder in Merle Norman Cosmetics and his wife Dorothy. It is housed in two buildings located across the street from each other.

The museum is single level building that contains mostly rare, beautifully restored automobilia from the 20s and 30s. This collection is more about the luxury cars than antique everyday cars. Packard's, Bentleys, Cadillac's, Pierce-Arrows, Lincolns, Duesenberg's, Cords, Auburns, and quite a few Rolls Royce's are all in mint condition and meticulously maintained as all of these automobiles are as drivable today as they were when they rolled off the showroom floor. Positioned throughout the museum are five unusual mechanical instruments including a rare bow front Mills Violano Virtuoso -- only 17 of these exist, worth about a quarter million dollars, which still accepts nickels from the museum visitors

to play violin and piano duets.

There is also a massive collection of hood ornaments, and there is a large library available for automotive research. Before you leave the main museum can see a beautifully restored 1937 Canadian Pacific Royal Hudson locomotive and a 1912 Pullman private railcar located to the rear and outside. The Private Pullman Car was once owned by the eldest daughter of Santa Anita Race Track founder, E.J. "Lucky" Baldwin.

We met for lunch at 11:30 a.m. at the Bear Pit Bar-B-Que, 10825 Sepulveda Boulevard., Mission The tour of the Collection followed lunch at 1:15. The tour lasted for approximately two hours. A full report on the tour will be carried in the next issue of *The Confab*.

**(Desert Center,  
continued from Page 1)**

board walls to use as a schoolhouse. A mechanic with a large family came out from Los Angeles and his wife became the school's teacher. With the town now in full swing Ragsdale retreated to his writing shack on the far south side of the road. There he became the world's worst poet.

Within a few years, Ragsdale operated a number of small businesses in locations such as Cactus City, Hell, Skyway, Box Canyon, and Shaver's Well. Around 1950, it was claimed he had an affair with an office worker in his employ and left Desert Center altogether. He lived the rest of his life at his log cabin near the summit of Santa Rosa Mountain. His sons took over the operations of Desert Center and added a modern service station in the sixties. "Desert Steve" died in 1971.

The Ragsdales were not the only force in Desert Center. In the early 1930s, Dr. Sidney R. Garfield constructed a small clinic near the town to serve men working on the Colorado River Aquaduct project, but his clinic was not profitable. Henry J. Kaiser, who was building the stretch of the Colorado River Aqueduct through the Desert Center vicinity, came to Garfield with the idea of a medical insurance plan for his 5,000 workers. By teaming up with Kaiser and his plan Garfield soon had a profitable clinic. When the aqueduct project was finished, Kaiser constructed the Grand Coulee Dam, (now the Hoover Dam) and Garfield managed the workers' health care, and now there were 50,000 workers. Garfield's operation eventually became Kaiser Permanente. Yes, its origins were in Desert Center. The ruins of Dr. Garfield's later medical center in Desert Center survive, but Kaiser Permanente has moved on.

There was a third influence in Desert Center, the U.S. Army. In 1942, under the direction of Major General George S. Patton, the Desert Center Army Air Field was established to support operations in the California-Arizona Maneuver Area. The base covered 18,000 square miles. It trained



*The cafe as it looks today.*



*Abandoned caboose. The rock contains a historic plaque.*



*The newer gas station is also abandoned.*



*This is the long garage that contains the locomotive from "Tough Guys."*

by famed locomotive Southern Pacific 4449, and ran it to the Mexican border. The locomotive that actually was run to the end of the track and into the desert sand remains in the big service garage to the west of the old service station. But it is not the real thing. It appears to be made of fiberglass, and has no wheels.

There are several abandoned trucks in Desert Center. We are told there are some real old trucks, possibly even Ragsdale's original Model T Ford tow truck. We know that in the thirties and forties many Lincoln L sedans and coupes were converted into tow trucks but doubt that any of them were used in Desert Center. *Tim Howley author.*

*The weathered sign on the cafe.*

troops for combat in the deserts of North Africa. A museum honoring Patton and his training complex is located eight miles to the west of Desert Center.

There was more to come. The site of Kaiser Steel's Eagle Mountain Mine, one of the largest open-pit iron mining operations in the world, is located about 13 miles north of Desert Center. The rich iron ore deposit was discovered by geologists employed by Henry J. Kaiser during construction of the Colorado River Aqueduct in the early 1930s. The Eagle Mountain Mine operated at capacity from World War II until it shut down in the late 1980s.

Today Desert Center survives, but just barely. In the seventies Interstate 10 replaced old Highway 60 and the town was bypassed. From then on it declined but it did not disappear. The two service stations and the many tourist cabins in the town went out of business long ago. The adobe cafe hangs on and is open most days.

The making of major motion pictures in the area is now the town's only industry of note. A portion of the Eagle Mountain Railroad south of Desert Center was used in the filming of the movie *Tough Guys*, a 1986 comedy starring Burt Lancaster and Kirk Douglas. They played a couple of ex cons who planned the last great train robbery. They hijacked a train, pulled



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*Left, some of the Morro Bay crowd at the Inn on Friday evening.*

*Below, Morro Rock and Morro Bay at sunset.*



**Photos from John Walcek of the Morro Bay Meet**

*Below, Weller's 1973 Continental Mark IV in the town of Morro Bay. Below right, Radford's 1941 Lincoln Continental Coupe and a non member's Lincoln Continental Coupe.*





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Maybe you remember my dad Walt Rhea I have a handful of OLD 60's car seats and door panels if you know of anybody who wants them. We are cleaning out our warehouse in Anaheim and before we threw them out I thought maybe some member would like them for free. Debbie Rhea. Radarsonics@aol.com MAY

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