



Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. • P. O. Box 2001, Ridgecrest, CA 93556 • 760-375-8456

Vol. 30 No. 9

December 2015

To see our schedule of events, visit us at hsumd.org or on Facebook at [hsumd](https://www.facebook.com/hsumd)

Holiday Dinner Meeting – Dec. 15



Time: 6 p.m., with dinner at 6:30
Place: The Historic USO
Tickets: \$10 each at HSUMD Gift Shop
Make reservation by Dec. 11
Bring: Dessert

The time is here for our Holiday Dinner Meeting, Dec 15. Doors will open at 6 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Once again Chuck Cordell and his crew have agreed to

prepare the dinner, with our guests (you!) providing dessert. This year's dinner will include tri tip, baked beans, mashed potatoes, salad and roll, plus something sweet from you.



Tickets are \$10 per person and are available at the HSUMD Gift Shop.

Please purchase your ticket or call in your reservation by Dec. 11. We will have great entertainment again this year during dinner, as well as something new.

Dig in your closet for one of your holiday-themed ties, shirts, or sweaters. We all know you've owned one you can dig out for the occasion. Wear your holiday finery proudly and you may be the winner of the prize for the most admired or the most outrageous.

— Carol Porter



Photos by Liz from last year's dinner

President's Message — An Eventful Year!

Extend a very Merry Christmas greeting to all of our members as we start the month of December.

As I look back on this past "membership year," I am amazed at all we've accomplished together.

We finished the restoration of the historic Isabella one-room schoolhouse (later a Ridgecrest Parks & Recreation building), and dedicated it to our Upper Mojave Desert vets as the new Veterans Memorial Building.

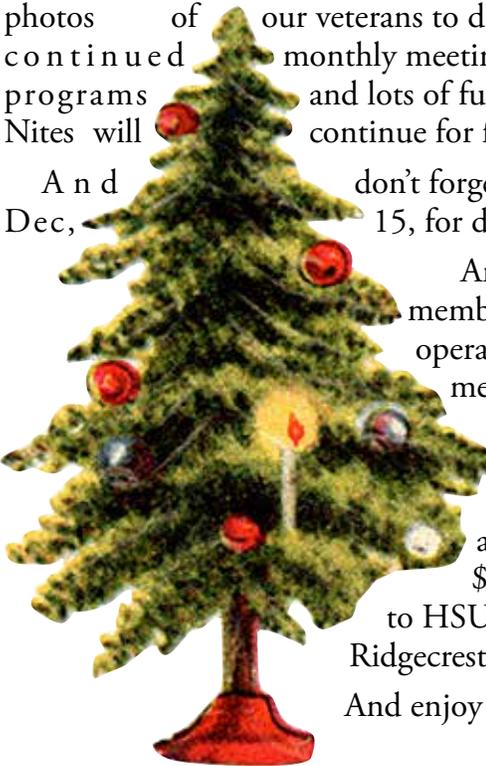
We celebrated the 70th anniversary of our Historic USO Building with a whirlwind of a semi-formal dinner and music, a formal ceremony and rededication, an actual USO show in Ridgecrest, and historic movies showing in our venerated building.

Our Gift Shop has been renewed and focused on our guests and their families from near and far. It looks better than ever.

And on, and on, and on It has indeed been a historic year for our Society!

Now we look forward to our next year — 2016 — and many more events and parties and presentations and exhibits. We have started to plan on a restoration of the historic jail that sits just to the north of our Veterans Memorial Building. We are continuing to gather the stories and photos of our veterans to display in our VMB. We are planning continued monthly meetings for our members with special programs and lots of fun. Open Mic and Classic Movie Nites will continue for families and friends.

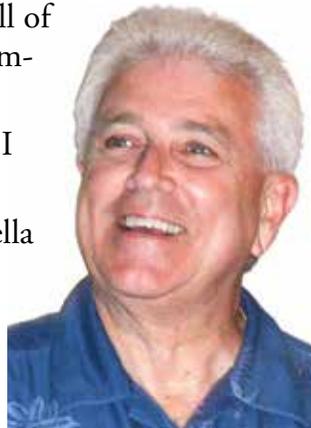
And don't forget to join us this month on Tuesday, Dec, 15, for dinner and special entertainment.



And...please don't forget that your membership dues are due now. We can operate only with the sustaining support of memberships and donations. Our membership year starts in January. Please rejoin our hearty band of volunteers and renew your membership! (Dues are \$35 per individual or family and \$45 per business; send your check to HSUMD, 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd., Ridgecrest, CA 93555.)

And enjoy a wondrous holiday season!

— *Tex Hoppus*



Tex Hoppus

Genealogical Committee

No meeting this month. Our committee will join the rest of us at our dinner meeting on Dec. 15.

— *Tex Hoppus*

70TH ANNIVERSARY MEMORY BOOKLET

Be sure to pick up your free 70th Anniversary Memory Booklet at the Historic USO Building. It contains nostalgic photos, brand new photos from our anniversary events, and fun facts from the 1940s through our 70th anniversary events. It's our holiday gift to you.

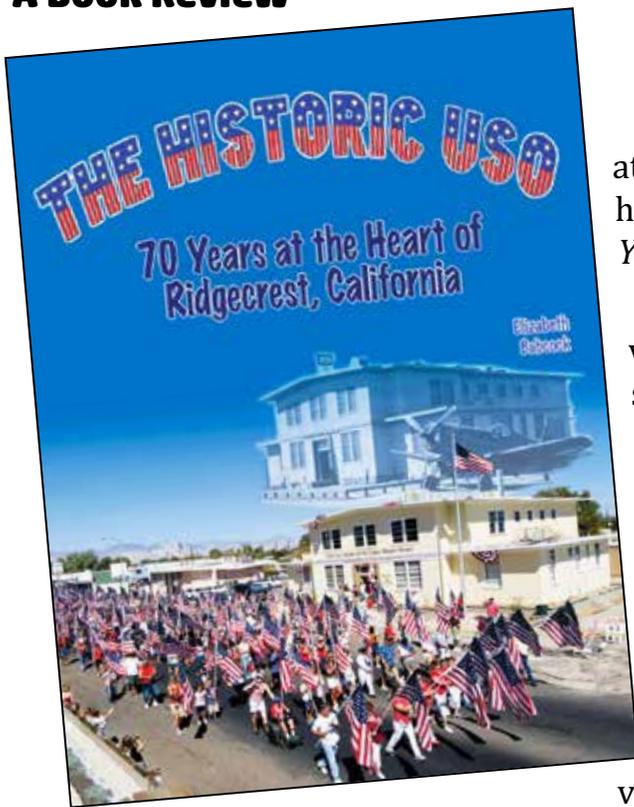
— *Donna McCrohan Rosenthal*



Last month we asked for suggestions on a name for our new "host" in the lobby of the Historic USO Building. We have a winner! "Edgar" will greet you as you enter the lobby, and he quietly offers an opportunity to drop a donation on his tray. When you get a chance, stop by and say "Hi" to Edgar.

Photo by Tex

A Book Review



Our History!

Elizabeth Babcock, renowned author, history curator at the Maturango Museum, and Life Member of HSUMD, has just finished a new book, *THE HISTORIC USO: 70 Years at the Heart of Ridgecrest, California*.

When we asked Liz last year to pen a history of our venerable building, she soon realized that the building's story encompassed far more than those few short months when the structure was new and just a USO Club.

Liz proceeded to use primary sources that included an invaluable scrapbook donated to HSUMD by Oliver K. "Frank" Franklin. Frank's mother, Mildred Franklin, had put the scrapbook together to commemorate the Historic USO Building's earliest years. Liz's research also included inter-

views with some of you!

And the product of Liz's hard work and remarkable intellect is . . . Well, let me quote what she wrote at the beginning of her book:

"Ridgecrest's Historic USO Building has experienced seven full decades of service in the Indian Wells Valley, with its walls sometimes ringing with the joyous sounds of parties, dances, plays, and meetings and sometimes echoing only to the sounds of silence, interrupted only by occasional visitors poking through the debris of previous eras. Today the building stands restored to its former glory — but a lot happened to it during those intervening 70 years."

Liz proceeds to open our eyes to not only the history specific to our venerable building but also the history of our city and community. Many of you, in enjoying the book's narrative and many photographs, will see your own words or images, but all will learn and see the history of this place we call home.

I don't want to sound like a teenager and use the word "awesome" but I will tell you that her book is, well, awesome!

— *Tex Hoppus*

The new book is available in our Gift Shop now. It would make a great Christmas gift for your friends and relatives. With its new index, you can look up names you know — the book includes many, many familiar names.

Thanks for 70th

We received the following note from Norman George the day after our building rededication. Norman, a major benefactor, drove here from Redondo Beach just for the event.

Good afternoon, Tex and all —

I just wanted to say congratulations to everyone for a very successful event yesterday. The program was very well organized, the speakers were good, the refreshments were fine, and the Veterans Memorial Building looks wonderful.

Although it wasn't expected and maybe not convenient, heck, I even enjoyed the rain! I'm just sorry I wasn't able to make the other related festivities.

It's so very gratifying to see the HSUMD being such a vital part of the Valley community, and especially to see the Historic USO Building continuing to be the community center for everyone.

Congratulations again, thanks, and very best wishes to all.

— *Norman*

Displays Progressing in VMB - Volunteer Hosts Needed

Our collections continue to grow, with donations from not only members but also other folks here in town who have treasures they are willing to share and have preserved.

As displays come in, the veterans' memory area in our Veterans Memorial Building is beginning to show a representation of those who served.

We have our Korean War Exhibit on the west wall with info on locals who served as well as a show of the many weapons developed here at NOTS.

We are looking for volunteers to sign up as hosts for the VMB. A two-hour time frame Monday through Saturday between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. is our goal. We would like to have the building open for guests on a regular basis rather than opening the door briefly by request. There will be WiFi available, so you are welcome to bring your laptop or tablet.

We know it won't be particularly busy on a daily basis,

and the alternate of special requests is too limiting. Of course if you are afraid you will be bored, your collections director always has things to give you to sort, organize and work on.

Carol and Nick Coy donated a large collection of information and photos last week. You may have seen these photos at the car show on Petroglyph Weekend. Thank you, Coys! The photos will be displayed soon.

As of now I am receiving many items for the VMB that are not ready for display, and this is slowing down the process. I'm not complaining, just explaining. I welcome ready-to-display information as well.

Come by and take a look if you are having trouble imagining a display of your or a family member's information. We're looking for family pictures that show local veterans, plus brief information about them.

See you at the dinner.

— Carol Porter

GREAT GOOFS IN GREAT MOVIES

Hello, movie fans! You probably are not aware that many of your favorite classic films contain "gaffes," or mistakes in production that showed up in the films' final release.

Making movies has always been a very expensive investment, and more often than not, depending on the severity of the goof — whether caused by a lack of continuity control (making sure props, wardrobe, set décor, etc., are consistent from scene to scene), budget constraints or just plain directorial laziness, these gaffes were ultimately left in final prints.

These mistakes escape notice from the average moviegoer. But I watch my favorite films time and time again and have become pretty savvy at finding these wonderful little treats!

Let's take "Gone With the Wind," probably the most beloved of all mov-

ies. Recall the scene where Ashley Wilkes (Leslie Howard) has returned wounded from the raid where Scarlett's husband, Mr. Kennedy, was killed. Melanie (Olivia DeHavilland) grabs a gas lamp and follows the men taking her husband to the bedroom.

Look quickly. There is a most noticeable electric cord coming out of the bottom of that lamp. Hmmm.

Another favorite of every movie buff, "The Wizard of Oz," has a real doozy. Note when the Scarecrow (Ray Bolger) is lamenting, in song and dance, about wanting a brain. If you watch carefully, you will see Dorothy's famous ruby red slippers turn to black for a split second. I kid you not.

More recently, in the camp classic, "Mommie, Dearest," daughter Christi-

Olivia DeHavilland's gaffe didn't keep her from winning an Oscar for her role!

Oscars.com



na is talking to mom, Joan Crawford, on her harvest gold telephone in one scene, and in a later moment taking place in the very same spot, the phone has turned to basic black.

And in a film that I showed a few years ago, "Desk Set," has Katharine Hepburn entering an elevator with a bouquet of white carnations. When she departs at the first floor, the flow-

See p. 7

No 'Pictures of Us' This Month – Instead...

'The Night Before Christmas'

as interpreted by Dr.
Walter B. LaBerge

The popular "Pictures of Us" series by Mark Pahuta and Leroy Doig III will return in January with a showing of "Everyone Complains About the Weather," a fast-paced look at the ways China Lake dared to fool with Mother Nature. That'll be on Jan. 26 in the Historic USO. More about that in our next newsletter. In the meantime, I thought I'd use this space for a little holiday-appropriate nostalgia from old China Lake. — ed.

Twas the night before Christmas and all
thru the lab
Not a creature was working, not even
a dab.
The doors were all locked and tested with
care,
In the fear that the watchman soon would
be there.
Our navord was nestled all snug in its file,
And our mag amps and circuits were quiet
awhile.
Wilcox at his home and I in my sack
Had just settled down for the sleep that
we lack.
When out of my phone there arose such a clatter,
I clawed at the hook to see what was the matter.
Away to the desk I sped for my pad
To write down the news, for t'was bound to be bad.
The sound of the voice on the Inyokern phone
Was the most pitiful voice that ever was known.
More rapid than coursers, his orders they came,



Sid Crockett
worries, 1951.

He whistled, and shouted, and called us by name:
"Now Crockett! Now Wilcox! Now Montank!
Now Hummer!
Now Walter! And Bartling! You must fire before
summer.
To the track at B4 the rocket we'll haul.
Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!
So out past the housetops in jeeps we now flew
With meters and fuzes, and blow-out plugs too.
And then in a twinkling, we saw at the track
A figure whose Ford was all beat up and black.
As I drew in my slide rule and jumped with a bound,
I knew in a twinkling, McLean was around,
He was dressed in his suit, all ashes and soot,
With bags in his pockets where hardware was put.

The rocket was ready to jump into space,
To get it all ready had been quite a race.
Crockett was worried — it might fall apart,
Lechner was worried — it never would start.

They started the countdown, the cameras began,
They lit off the fuze, and everyone ran;

The blast, and the roar, and a furious light
The spectators gasped in terrified fright.
The rocket, it trembled in a spasm of fit;
But lo and behold, it moved not a bit.
Then all of a sudden, when time to depart,
It trembled and shook and fell quite apart.

McLean was embarrassed, his eyes on the
ground;
The designers, poor fellows, were not to be
found.
As the first light of Christmas crept over B4,
Poor old SIDEWINDER was gone and no
more;

And poor old McLean climbed into his Ford,
Trying to think what to say to BuOrd.

MERRY CHRISTMAS
Walter B. LaBerge
Branch 5, AOD, 1952



Sidewinder leaders mentioned in the poem, from left, are Bill
McLean, Howie Wilcox, and Walt LaBerge. U.S. Navy photos

Looking for Unique Holiday Gifts?

Visit Our Gift Shop — Longer Xmas Hours for Your Shopping Convenience



Our new B Mountain hats!

Photo by Michelle

New in the gift shop: B Mountain hats! These hats come in three styles: baseball, a nylon hat with full brim and wind cord, and a canvas outback hat.

Also new: our *Historic USO* book by Liz Babcock, now with an index! Another great gift is *Tales of the Upper Mojave Desert and the Eastern Sierra* by John Di Pol. Both of these books also benefit HSUMD, since all profits come to us!

And here's a traditional favorite! We are fully stocked with holiday-wrapped See's Candy and many See's holiday specialty items. Pecan Buds and Cashew Brittle for those non peanut eaters are also in stock.

During the week of Christmas our Gift Shop will have extended hours:

Dec. 21, 22, 23 Open 11-5

Dec. 24 Open 11-4

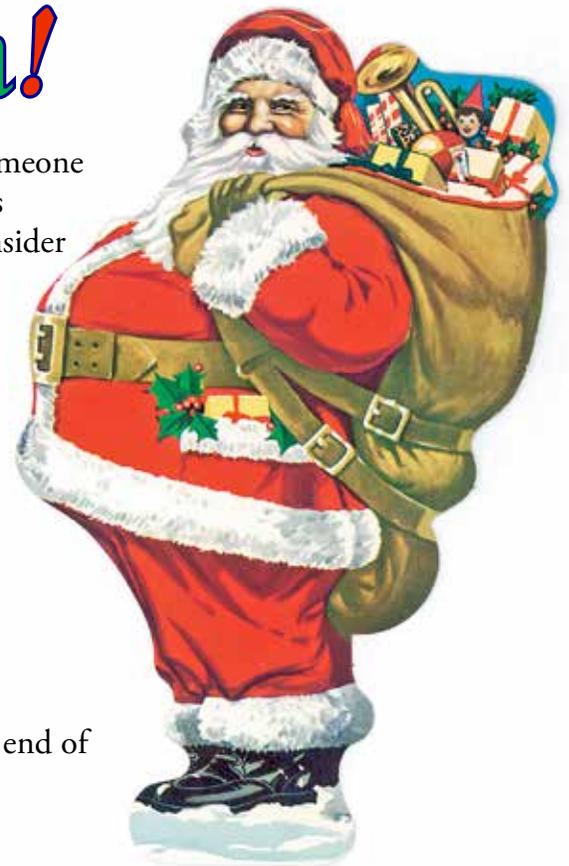
— Michelle Andreoli

Be an HSUMD Santa!

What can you get someone who already has everything? Know someone out of town who'd like a monthly reminder of life in the Indian Wells Valley? Got a friend or family member who's nuts about history? Consider giving a gift of the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert. A membership costs a mere \$35, and it would give your recipient monthly news of our Society via our newsletter.

Or you could order a commemorative brick in your recipient's name, giving him or her a permanent presence in Ridgecrest and helping HSUMD at the same time. Please contact Andrew Sound (information given on the last page) to learn more about how to get a brick giving your favorite recipient a presence forever on the walkway in the front of the Historic USO Building. Our sidewalk already has a gratifying number of bricks, but there's still plenty of room for more.

Don't forget to renew your own membership, which expires at the end of December! Family or individual dues are \$35 a year.



GREAT GOOFS

From p. 4

ers had mysteriously turned pink.

These gaffes are SOOO fun to catch!

All this is leading up to our Classic Movie Night's final installment of its "Glorious Technicolor" series.

On **Wednesday, Dec. 16, at 7 p.m. at the Historic USO Building,**

Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney, and Vera-Ellen star in Irving Berlin's tuneful holiday classic ... well, you probably know the title.

This perennial favorite contains a humongous goof. You might recall the scene where Rosie and Vera are in their dressing room, chatting about

their brother who was stationed in Alaska. All eyes are naturally on Rosemary while she is speaking, so you will probably not spot Vera pouring the same cup of coffee ... two times! I kid you not.

Watch for it when we screen this holiday favorite, and you will wonder how you ever let this gaffe get by you!

And watch for our next exciting film series, "Wow! What a Cast" premiering Wednesday, Dec. 30 at 7 p.m. with the first film to star the legendary "Rat Pack" i.e. Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis,

Jr. and Joey Bishop.

A multi-casino heist in 1960s Las Vegas is a real nostalgic blast from the past. You won't believe that Vegas ever looked so ... small!

Other films in the series feature such mega-stars as Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert, Lauren Bacall, Betty Grable, Marilyn Monroe and many more.

So — start the New Year off with a star-studded bang every flex Wednesday at your Historic USO Building! Happy Holidays, movie fans!

— Nick Rogers

Our Member Categories

HSUMD has three membership categories — all very important to us. Our regular memberships are \$25 per individual or family. Our business memberships are \$35 each.

We also have a special category: life member, which is something the board bestows only on members who have supported HSUMD in sustained and special ways.

Life Members

Kathy Armstrong
Elizabeth Babcock
Delores Di Pol
Cliff and Susanne Fountain
E. Norman George
Lyle Gregory
Ron Hise

Douglas A. Johnson
Roger McEntee
Bill Nevins
Gerry Pracchia
James E. Simmons
Fred Weals

New Members

Eugene and Judy Breitenstein

Mark Melnick

Business Members – please patronize them!

Allen County Public Library,
Genealogy Department
Anna Marie Bergens, Realtor
Best Western China Lake Inn
Cal-Sun Pools
Clarion Inn
Comfort Inn
Cordell Construction
Dave Pearson Enterprises
DeathValley.com
Desert Empire Fair
The Dog Haus
Earth Landscaping

Econo-Lodge
Edward Jones Investments
Brook H. Andreoli
Explore Historic California
The Flower Shoppe
Friends of Cerro Gordo
Heritage Inn
Phyllis M. Hix, Attorney
JJack & Dana Lyons, Realtors
Maturango Museum
Motion Tire & Wheel
Nevins Tech. Consultants
The News Review (Farris)

Peoples Images
Pleistocene Foundation
Professional Tax & Business Services
Red Rock Books
Ridgecrest Automotive
Ridgecrest Moving & Storage
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way to see this
newsletter in color!

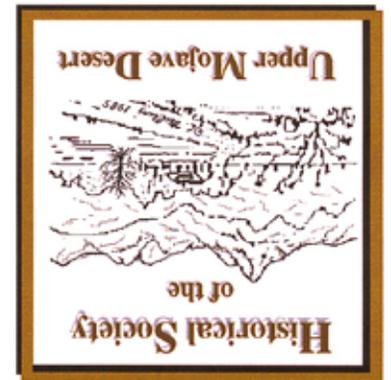
Just send an e-mail to our
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cock, lizbab@fastmail.fm, and
ask her to put you on the list
to get a PDF copy e-mailed
to you each month.

We don't plan to stop
sending paper copies, since
we know most of you prefer
that, but we thought you
might also like to see the
color version online.

Important Reminders

- ★ Annual dues are \$35 (family) and \$45 (business).
- ★ Please remember the Historical Society in your wills, trusts and other gift giving. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

MEETING OF DECEMBER 2015
Tuesday, Dec 15, 6 p.m. (NOTE: an hour earlier than usual), Historic USO Building



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