

The

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1919 Transcontinental Motor Convoy crossing Nebraska



2009 MVPA Transcontinental Convoy in El Dorado Hills

MILITARY CONVOY REENACTMENT ROLLS INTO EL DORADO HILLS

On July 7, El Dorado Hills saw a re-enactment of a journey made almost a hundred years ago, as a convoy of restored military vehicles organized by the Military Vehicle Preservation Association made their way down the old Lincoln Highway in El Dorado Hills, drove past Town Center on White Rock Road, and headed out on their way to San Francisco via Stockton. The 2009 convoy marks both the 90th anniversary of an earlier 1919 convoy, and the year of Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday.

Ninety years ago, in 1919, the Army's Motor Transport Corps organized the Transcontinental Motor Convoy to drive from Washington D.C. to San Francisco, traversing the then newly-created Lincoln National Highway, which was named in honor of President Lincoln. The 1919 trip was undertaken to prove the need for good roads, and it was hoped that the trip would show off the military's capacity to utilize modern warfare machinery. Other objectives of the expedition were to test various military vehicles, many developed too late for use in World War I, and to determine by actual experience the feasibility of moving an army across the continent. Eighty-one vehicles and 300 men made up the 1919 convoy.

The 1919 convoy set a world-record pace for the time, traveling a total continuous distance of 3,251 miles, and it arrived in San Francisco after 62 days of travel, only five days behind schedule. Their average speed was six miles per hour, with drivers having to stop frequently to overcome obstacles. The 1919 Transcontinental Motor Convoy was overall judged to be a great success.

The 1919 convoy's route, the Lincoln Highway, crosses all or part of eleven states, from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco, and the route is nearly 3,300 miles long. The 2009 convoy is using the original route of the 1919 convoy, following the Lincoln Highway as closely as possible. Some portions of the original route are now privately owned and not open to the public, while some are in roughly the same condition they were 90 years ago. One of the remaining original sections of the Lincoln Highway in El Dorado Hills was seen last month by those who attended Clarksville Day, put on by the Clarksville Region Historical Society.

In 1912, there were almost no good roads to speak of in the United States. The relatively few miles of improved road were only around towns and cities. Most roads were just dirt; only a few were lucky enough to have gravel or brick. Asphalt and concrete

were yet to come. That year, promoter Carl Fisher teamed up with Frank Seiberling, president of Goodyear, and Henry Joy, president of the Packard Motor Car Company, to build a highway that would span the continent, from coast to coast. From that idea eventually came the Lincoln Highway, the first trans-continental highway.

Around 1925, the United States went from having a system of named highways to a federal highway system, and all named roads were converted to numbered ones. The Lincoln Highway was broken up into U.S. 1, U.S. 30, U.S. 530, U.S. 40, and U.S. 50. As far as the 2009 convoy organizers can determine, this convoy marks the first time the original route has been retraced with military vehicles since the original 1919 convoy. Open to military vehicles of all eras, the 2009 convoy included military jeeps, trucks, radio vehicles, ambulances and motorcycles.

For more information about the convoy, see the Clarksville Region Historical Society web site, edhhhistory.org, or the Military Vehicle Preservation Association web site, mvpap.org; for information about the Lincoln Highway, see the Lincoln Highway Association web site, lincolnhighwayassoc.org. ~



SOME PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENTS WILL GO DOWN THIS YEAR

Homeowners in El Dorado County will be getting their property tax bills in October. Residential property taxes on the 2009-2010 bill will be based on the value of homes as of January 1, 2009. The manner in which property taxes are assessed in California is enshrined in Article 13 of the California Constitution, which was added by the voters when they passed Proposition 13 in 1978.

Proposition 13 first required property assessments to be “rolled back” to the 1975-76 level for the 1978-79 fiscal year. Properties that have not sold or undergone new construction since February 1975 are said to have a 1975 base year value. The base year value is the current market value (or “full cash value”) of real property in 1975-76, or in any subsequent year based upon a change in ownership or new construction.

Each property’s base year value must be adjusted each year to reflect inflation as measured by the California Consumer Price Index, but an upward adjustment cannot exceed 2 percent. This process continues until the property changes ownership or undergoes new construction. The value that reflects the annual inflation indexing is known as the adjusted, or factored, base year value. Each year, the adjusted base year value is the maximum assessable amount for the property for that year.

Property assessments are reviewed each year for a decline in value. If the current market value of a property is below its adjusted base year value, the property is temporarily reassessed to reflect the lower value, that is, current market value. This type of reduction is frequently referred to by the original proposition number approved by the voters, or a “Proposition 8” (or Prop 8) adjustment. At some future year, when the property’s current market value exceeds its adjusted base year value, the adjusted base year value is restored to the assessment roll.

When the El Dorado County Assessor reviewed home values this year, the assessed values of about 17,000 homes in the county were reduced because the value had fallen below the adjusted base year value. Those property owners were advised of the reduction in late June by a letter from the assessor. According to persons in the assessor’s office, substantially all of the reductions were made to homes purchased in the period that saw the greatest rise in home prices, 2003 to 2007.

Homeowners who believe their home value has fallen below their adjusted base year value may request that the assessor look at their home’s value for a possible reduced assessment. However, a decline in value that is still above the home’s adjusted base value will not result in a reduction in assessed value.

Homeowners may get information about what qualifies as a reduction in assessed value, or request a reappraisal, by going to the county assessor’s page on the El Dorado County county website, co.el-dorado.ca.us/assessor/index.htm, and clicking on the “Decline in Value” link.

Another way in which to ask for a reduced assessment is to file an assessment appeal, which is a more formal procedure, but can be done by any homeowner. The filing period is from July 2 through November 30, or 60 days from the notice date in the case of an escape assessment or supplemental assessment. Contact the El Dorado County Assessment Appeals Board (El Dorado County Board of Equalization) at the Board of Supervisors Office, 330 Fair Lane, Placerville, Ca. 95667, or telephone 530-621-5654. Requesting an assessment review or filing an assessment appeal does not relieve a homeowner from paying their property tax bill.

Consumer advocates and the county assessor also warn homeowners not to fall victim to property tax scams. Recently, homeowners have been receiving solicitations in El Dorado County and across the state from private companies, such as Property Tax Assessors Records Corp., which charge a fee to complete an exemption claim form to be filed with the Assessor’s Office. Any property owner may file a claim directly with the Assessor at no charge, without using the service offered by these businesses. Homeowners with questions can contact the assessor at (530) 621-5719. ~



DOT SPEAKERS GIVE BLAC ROADS UPDATE

County Department of Transportation (DOT) representatives Russ Nygaard, Deputy Director, Engineering and Facilities, and Matt Smeltzer, Deputy Director, Design, spoke to the membership at the regular monthly BLAC meeting on Monday evening, July 6, 2009.

Russ gave an update on the reorganization at the county. He said that the General Services Department has been closed down and that DOT Engineering and Facilities is now in charge of county facilities, leases, parks and recreation, airports, building maintenance, and rivers. Tom Celio, Deputy Director – Maintenance, is in charge of roads and grounds maintenance. Only three people will be doing building maintenance for the whole county.

The Parks and Recreation Department is working on a new county recreation master plan, which will cover parks, recreation, and rivers. Bass Lake Regional Park will be included in that master plan.

Matt Smeltzer, the new Deputy Director – Design, is located in the DOT offices in the Business Park. Matt gave an update on road projects that affect Bass Lake Road. He said that the plans for the northern part of Silver Springs Parkway are ready for approval, but DOT is still working on the related contracts and agreements. Regrettably, the southern connector section down to Madera will not be done until after the northern end of Silver Springs is completed. The best case for the northern section would be a spring 2010 start, according to Matt. The problem is that there is one section of the lower connector that doesn’t have an owner, so the county will have to go through the condemnation process to get clear title to the orphan parcel in question. That process will take about a year, so that it looks as if completion of Silver Springs Parkway all the way from Green Valley Road down to Bass Lake Road is years away.

Russ and Matt agreed that due to the economy and the housing downturn, any

(continued on page 4)

THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Hello All,

What a summer! Aside from a few really hot days, this summer is proving to be a pleasant one, with warm days and cool evenings. Fran and I spend most evenings out on the patio enjoying the sunset with a glass of wine.

The only downside to a temperate or cool summer is that our grapes in the vineyard have less time to ripen. Grapes grow and ripen with heat, rather than sunshine. Vignerons, or grape growers, use a calculation known as "degree days" as a measurement of the heat available during the growing season. The method generally consists of summing the average daily temperature over 50°F for each day from April through October. Degree day calculations are a reasonably good predictor for the rate of grapevine growth during the season, and the level of fruit maturity in the fall. This measurement also serves as a means of comparing the potential of different locations as grape growing regions.

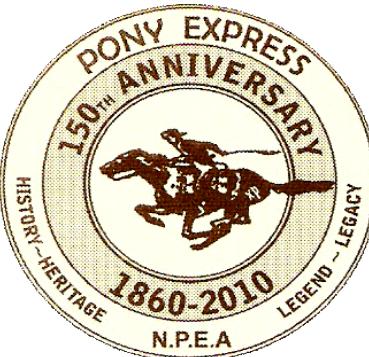
Heat is especially needed to bring the sugar in the ripening grapes to the ideal level for harvest. A short growing season will not allow the grapes to fully ripen. Zinfandel needs about 60 days from veraison, or when the grapes start to turn red, to fully ripen for harvest. So far, the grapes have remained as green as grass. That means our harvest is being pushed out past Labor Day each day that goes by that the grapes don't start to turn red.

Luckily, the average daily temperatures for September start in the low nineties and taper off to the mid-eighties by the end of the month. Well, we shall see.

Good luck with all your gardens this summer!

John E. Thomson

President



PONY EXPRESS 150th YEAR CELEBRATION

It became a legend in the space of just nineteen months. Starting in April of 1860, the Pony Express mail route between the states of Missouri and California was the fastest and most direct means of transcontinental communication, until the arrival of the telegraph in October of 1861. The Pony Express riders may have been overtaken by technology, but their reputation for swiftness and reliability lives on today. In 2010 we will mark the 150th Anniversary of the Pony Express.

The original Pony Express route started in St. Joseph, Missouri, and traversed Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California. The riders took about ten days to get from St. Joseph to Sacramento. Some fifty of the original 157 Pony Express stations along the route still survive today.

In years past, commemorative Pony Express re-rides over the original route were run on a twenty-four-hour basis, with a relay of riders traveling day and night. For example, for this year's 2009 east-to-west reenactment ride, the rider was at Rescue Post Office on the morning of Friday, June 19, 2009, at 2:04AM, got to Pleasant Grove House on Green Valley Road in Rescue at 2:39AM, and arrived at the Folsom Historical Museum at 3:59AM. This was much too early to attract many spectators from our local community. However, the direction of the re-ride alternates each year, so that in 2008 the rider passed Pleasant Grove in the early afternoon.

In 2010, the Annual Pony Express Re-ride will trace the route from west to east and most riding stages will take place during the day in order to give local communities a chance to hold a Pony Express anniversary celebration as the rider passes through. The mail will be carried up the river from San Francisco to Sacramento by boat, then

transferred to the riders. The mail will be carried by Pony Express riders in a specially-designed saddlebag, called a mochila, that can hold twenty pounds of mail.

You may see a video of the 2008 Pleasant Grove remount on the Clarksville Region Historical Society web site at edhhistory.org/ReRide2008.htm. More information on the 2010 reenactment is available at the Pony Express Association web site at xphomestation.com. ~



FORTY YEARS AGO MAN WENT TO THE MOON

Forty years ago, on July 16, 1969, a Saturn V rocket launched Apollo 11 into the sky from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The event went smoothly and as scheduled.

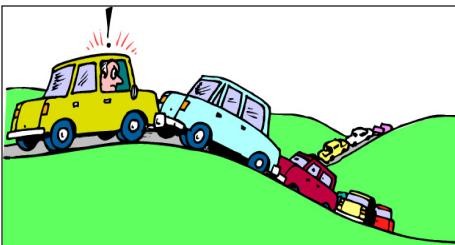
After one-and-a-half orbits around earth, Apollo 11 left the Saturn V rockets behind as they began their three-day journey to the moon.

On July 19, Apollo 11 entered the moon's orbit. After spending a full day in lunar orbit, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin boarded the lunar module (nicknamed Eagle) and detached it from the command module for their descent to the moon's surface.

Armstrong guided the lunar module to a safe landing on the moon at 4:18 p.m. on July 20, 1969. Armstrong reported to the command center in Houston, "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." Armstrong and Aldrin spent the next six-and-a-half hours resting and then preparing themselves for their moon walk.

At 10:28 p.m. EDT, Armstrong turned on the video cameras that transmitted images from the moon to over half a billion people on earth who sat watching their televisions in wonder.

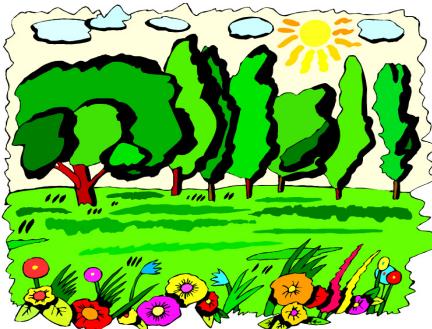
Neil Armstrong was the first person out of the lunar module. Armstrong said, "I'm going to step off the LEM now." (referring to the lunar module) He then turned and climbed down a ladder, and became the first person to set foot on the moon at 10:56 p.m. July 20, 1969, stating as he placed his foot: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." ~



LOCAL DRIVERS NIX CARBON TAX TO EASE TRAFFIC

A recent Sacramento State study has found that drivers are opposed to a carbon surcharge (in actuality a tax) to fund rapid transit. Though drivers in Yolo, El Dorado and Sacramento counties say traffic is a problem, they aren't willing to pay for a measure to fix it. The survey found most people in the region consider traffic congestion, carbon dioxide and other air pollutants to be problems. Despite those concerns, less than a third would vote "yes" on a carbon surcharge that would amount to 10 cents more per gallon of gas; the surcharge would fund more public transit.

Local citizens' opinions reflect the skepticism voiced by the nation as a whole, as reported in the latest poll from the Pew Research Center on people's top priorities. The Pew poll found global warming ranked dead last among 40 concerns ranked by the 1,503 respondents of the poll. The number of people who said traffic congestion is a "big problem" was only 43 percent in this recent survey, the lowest since it began in 2002. The number of people who think carbon dioxide and other air pollutants are a problem has also declined, though 81 percent of those surveyed still said it was a concern. ~



July

*Loud is the summer's busy song
The smallest breeze can find a tongue,
While insects of each tiny size
Grow teasing with their melodies,
Till noon burns with its blistering breath
Around, and day lies still as death.*

- John Clare

DOT UPDATE (continued)

improvements to Bass Lake Road are going to be delayed four or five years because the road improvements are dependent on developer fees. No development means no fees, and no road improvements. Serrano is delaying its various development projects on Bass Lake Road, including the shopping center at Serrano Parkway. Also, nothing is happening on the southern end of Bass Lake Road since D.R. Horton bailed out of its planned development there.

BLAC President John Thomson expressed the urgent need for right-turn pockets on Bass Lake Road at Madera Way (the entry to Woodridge), Bridlewood Drive (the entry to Bridlewood Canyon), and Hollow Oak Drive (the entry to Laurel Oak). Each of these intersections is constructed so that a driver has to slow down considerably to make a right turn, and drivers speeding behind those turning often are not paying attention and do not expect one to turn. Many times drivers swerve into the oncoming lane to avoid a collision. John stated that rear-end accidents and many near-misses have already occurred at these intersections, and at least one fatality has been reported. John asked if there were some way that the residents of these neighborhoods could obtain grants or other public money to fund the right-turn pockets.

Russ and Matt agreed to look into the matter, and promised to explore whether any temporary and less-expensive short-term fixes could be possible.

In news about nearby projects, the Saratoga Way extension is languishing because there are no funds to build it, but plans are going forward. The developer that was to fund the extension has put off any work.

On Highway 50, Matt sees Phase 1 of the HOV lanes extension project, from the El Dorado Hills Boulevard interchange up

to Bass Lake Road, as being completed in 2010. Phase 2 of the HOV lanes is scheduled to begin immediately following the completion of Phase 1 in 2010, and will include the Bass Lake interchange and build east toward the Cameron Park Drive interchange. Phase 2 is funded by the casino settlement agreement between the county and the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians.

A lively question and answer period followed the presentation, and the speakers were given a hearty round of applause. ~

BLAC TO HOST HUBER IN AUGUST

The Bass Lake Action Committee will host District 10 Assemblymember Alyson Huber as a guest speaker at its regular August monthly meeting. Ann Baird, Huber's District Office Director, will also attend. The meeting will be held at 7:00 PM on August 3, 2009, at the home of Tasha and Louis Camacho, 2076 Summer Drive, El Dorado Hills.

For further information, please call BLAC Vice President Kathy Prevost at 530-672-6836 ~

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