



# Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert

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

Vol. 33, No. 5

May 2018

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

## Iconic Hwy 395 Featured at Our Annual Dinner May 15

We hope to see you our annual dinner meeting Tuesday, May 15, at the Historic USO Building, 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd. Doors will open at 6 p.m., with dinner served at 6:30. A brief business meeting, including board elections, will follow at 7.

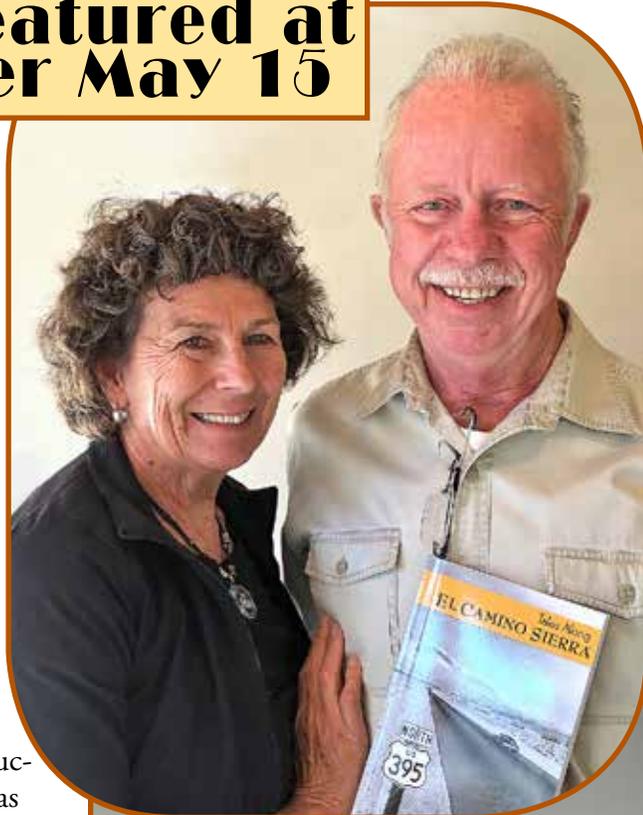
The dinner will be tri-tip prepared by Board-member Chuck Cordell and his Habitat for Humanity crew. The cost is a modest \$10, with tickets available at the gift shop. Please get your ticket by Friday, May 11, so we can get an accurate count for the meal.

Our presentation will be “The History of El Camino Sierra” by author David Woodruff. Iconic Highway 395 was originally known as El Camino Sierra. Part of a promotional effort by the Inyo Good Road Club to get a share of the first state road construction bond in 1910, this magical ribbon of blacktop has been creating fond memories and sentimental journeys ever since.

Combining an engaging and amusing narrative with rarely seen historical photos, Woodruff brings to life the area’s rich human history that has helped shape the social culture of this cherished region as well as often creating an enduring impact upon the human psyche.

Our speaker lives in Independence, where he shares a passion for Eastern California history with his wife Gayle (the book’s co-author). David is the author of four books on Eastern California history, writes a history column for the *Inyo Register*, produces a daily history program for KSRW radio in Bishop and is on the board of trustees and the past president of the Friends of the Eastern California Museum. He became interested in the almost lost history of El Camino Sierra while he was doing research on a related topic at the Eastern California Museum.

We meet on the third Tuesday of most months. For more information on this or future meetings, call HSUMD at 760-375-8456.  
— Andrew Sound

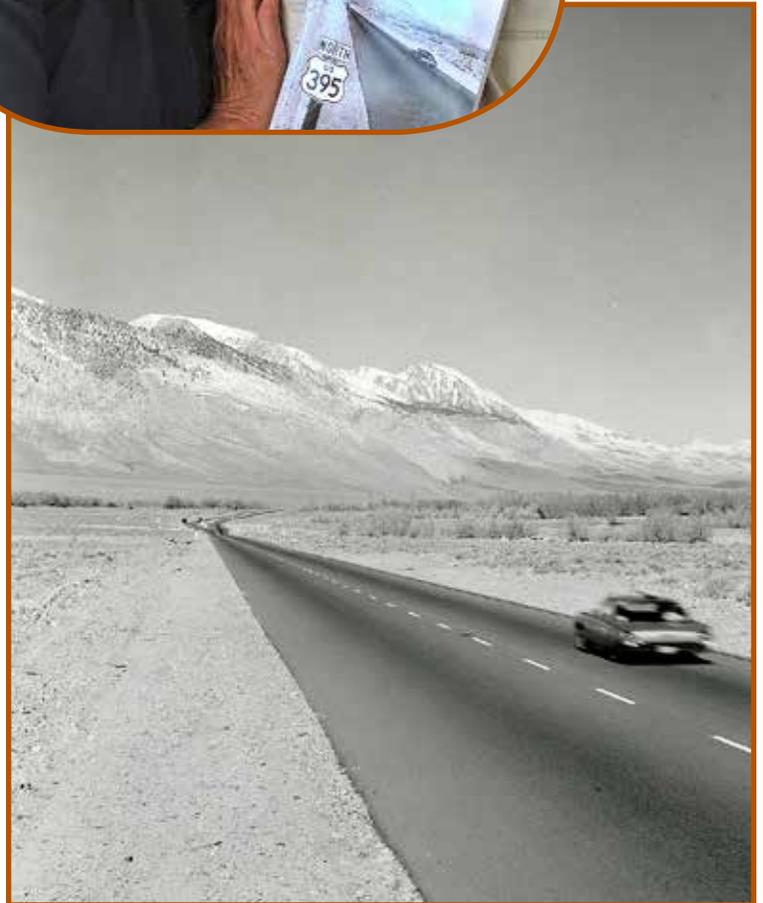


Gayle and David Woodruff with their book.

*Photo by Liz*

Car (below) drives along El Camino Sierra (Hwy 395) about 1961, just north of Independence.

*Photo courtesy of California Department of Transportation*



**President's Message —****HSUMD Happenings and Thanks**

Tex Hoppus

**I**t is with sadness that we bid adieu to one of our directors – Dave Austin. Dave has served us well this past year and has written and submitted a request for our building to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. Unfortunately, working full-time while simultaneously completing graduate studies does not leave enough time for Dave to continue with us. But he still loves us!

It is with happiness that we welcome Bob and Carol Dezellem to our fold of very active volunteers. Gift Shop Manager Joe De Pina trained them to operate the shop, and they have started doing that and much more. Sweet!

Many of you have been thoughtful and generous with donations toward the restoration of the outsides of our historical firehouse and its nearby engine houses. I cannot mention each donor, but I will publicly express appreciation to Ridgecrest's Elks Lodge #1913. The Elks are always there for us, and we do value their support. (Note: Our Flag collection box is well-used by the public as a way to gather American flags for proper retirement, and it is the Elks Lodge that takes those flags and conducts an annual retirement ceremony.)

Carol Porter gave much of her time and talent to conducting our Wildflower Photo Contest, which we have been offering to the public for several years in coordination with the Maturango Museum's Wildflower Exhibit each spring. The collaboration and cooperation between HSUMD and the museum are wonderful examples of our community's partnerships. And, expanding that teamwork further, HSUMD and Maturango Museum and the China Lake Museum have all been collaborating in many ways to better serve our collective community. Well done!

Don't forget our monthly Veterans Breakfast – free to veterans and their spouses on the third Thursday morning of every month. We have lots of volunteers who help prepare and serve breakfast to our revered vets, and I've included a photo of two of the volunteers in this edition. We are honored by these two young men and proud that they represent our nation's future.

FYI: VFW's Ship 4084 donated its historic sign to us 3 years ago this month. The local VFW building dates from the same era as does our Historic USO Building (circa 1945), and the sign we received dates from its early days of serving our community. The old sign, as I'm sure you've noticed, hangs proudly in our auditorium.

Just a reminder as we move toward summer: Be very careful if you go for a run and take your computer with you. You could jog your memory!

— Tex Hoppus

**HSUMD'S Open Mic Night is the place to be for great music and ambiance every non-flex Friday. Admission is a mere \$2 per adult. Children younger than 12 are free. Beers and wines are available along with the usual candies, sodas, popcorn, and Jumbo Crumville hot dogs. The entertainment starts at 7 sharp.**



Matthew Moreno, E1 (age 13), and Julian Leal, E1 (age 13), volunteer to serve at our Veterans Breakfast.

Photo by Tex Hoppus

## Report on Collections

# *Come See Our Station Street Improvements*

Let me start off with a big THANK YOU to all you donors to our request for funds to rehab the exterior of the Original Firehouse. What an amazing response we have had.

I am sending a special thanks to the members of our local Elks organization for their support of this latest request for funds. I believe we will still have a nest egg to start on the large huts.

Of course donations are still welcome. These and continuing donations are put in a special fund for the rehabilitation of the Station Street area.

We are looking pretty spiffy back there on Station Street. If you have

not been in to see the interior or just want to take a quick look around, you can stop by to see me any Tuesday or Wednesday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Of course you can visit on other days too but those are my regular hours. You would also have a chance to meet your collection volunteers on those days.

I joined other HSUMD members on May 5 at the Naval Air Weapons Station Community Day, sharing examples of the items and records we preserve and collect. Hope you stopped by and saw us in the area in front of the Navy Exhibit Center (former China Lake Museum or still more former NOTS Officers' Club).

See you all at the annual meeting and election of board members May 15. I will have a special exhibit up in the auditorium by then, so come early enough to take a look.

— Carol Porter

Our Historic USO Gift Shop stocks engrossing books and videos, See's delicious candy, and many other unique items designed to offer just what you've been seeking for a gift . . . or for yourself. Please stop and shop during our open hours — it all benefits HSUMD!

### WINNING DUO —

Rosie Burdette and Ken Sanger hold their winning photos while Contest Coordinator Carol Porter shows off two other winners from our recent Wildflower and Landscape Photo Contest in which viewers selected the winners. At left Rosie holds her charming coyote (third place landscape) and wildflowers (third place floral) photos. Ken has a job holding his dramatically unfolding flower (second place floral) and Joshua tree (first place landscape), as well as a dramatic shot of Fish Rocks (second place landscape) by Alice Atwood and unfolding flower (second place floral), while Contest Coordinator Carol holds two floral closeups by Dave Palmer (who tied himself for first place in the floral category). Carol reported that a gratifying number of people showed up to enjoy the artistry of the local subjects captured by some of our valley's many talented photographers. The winners were treated to small shopping sprees in our Gift Shop



# Candidates for Election to HSUMD Board

An election for HSUMD Board positions whose incumbents have completed their terms will be part of our Annual Meeting on May 15.

Each boardmember serves a two-year term, and our Bylaws call for these terms to be staggered so that we don't have all members leaving or joining the board at one time.

The five boardmembers shown below have all agreed to run for another two year term. Additionally, nominations will be accepted from the floor during the Annual

Meeting, provided that the person being nominated is present and agrees to run.

Continuing to serve the second year of their two-year terms, having been elected (or reelected) last year, are John Abbott, Richard Hendricks, Tex Hoppus and Nick Rogers

— *Nominating Committee*  
*Craig Porter, Kay Farrell,*  
*Don Snyder, and*  
*Alan Woodman*

## Chuck Cordell

"I have been a Ridgecrest resident since 1955. I have been on the board of the Historical Society for about 10 years and am the committee chair for renovation, major repairs, and changes to the HSUMD facilities.

"I would like to continue the Society's building projects if you so choose."



## Doug Lueck

"In 1963 at the age of 18, while camping and hiking in the desert, I was one of several people who discovered Avalwatz Silver Mine, a small mining town in Death Valley. Finding this ghost town started my interest in cultural history.

"I moved to Ridgecrest in 1990. Since then I was instrumental in saving "Doc," the last salvageable B-29 on base; have served on the Desert Empire Fair Board for 14 years; have been a volunteer for the BLM's Wild Horse and Burro program; have been the commander of the Old West Mounted Lawmen's Association since 2012, and am Executive Director of the Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"I came onto the HSUMD board 10 years ago and have been both vice president and president."

## Carol Porter

"I joined the HSUMD Board in October 2009, working with collections, exhibits and history. With the continued help of great volunteers we are making progress in indexing, sorting and digitizing. We have made a dent in the task before us.

"I also enjoy helping to host the many events held in the HSUMD facilities.



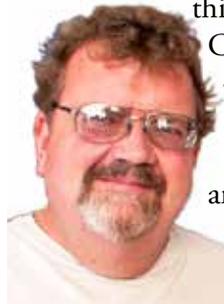
"The Veterans Memorial Building collections and exhibits aspect is continuing to grow as an ongoing project. I find preserving items, stories and photos entrusted to the HSUMD especially rewarding. I will be pleased to serve another term."

## Andrew Sound

"I was born in Ridgecrest and have lived here ever since, give or take my college years. I work on the base.

"Local history has interested me more and more as I see the changes in town in the time I've lived here – I still think of the building that now houses the Crossroads Church as 'the new drugstore' – so I joined the Historical Society several years ago.

"I was first elected to the board in 2002, and since then I have served as publicity director, vice president, secretary, treasurer and now programs and publications director, but I have gained the most satisfaction from my small part in restoring the Historic USO Building."



## Matthew Zubia

"Hello, I am a current HSUMD board member. I am seeking another term so that I can continue to be a part of shaping the future of this great organization.

"I am committed to helping foster a positive outlook for new members, maintaining strong relationships with current members, and being available to all members who have an interest in coming along with me for the ride.

"My other goal, of equal importance, is to bring aboard exciting new activities and fundraising events. These are an important part of our charter to help sustain our organization.

"Thank for your support throughout my time on the board and if you elect me as the incumbent, it would be my pleasure to serve."



# The Magic Is Back . . . for Year 6

This summer marks the sixth season of classic films presented every Wednesday evening at 7 p.m., from mid-May to early August. Hosted by HSUMD Boardmember Nick Rogers, the “Summer of Movie Magic” film series is the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert’s annual program to raise funds for the renewal of the license that allows the presentation of feature films at the Historic USO Building for a year’s period.

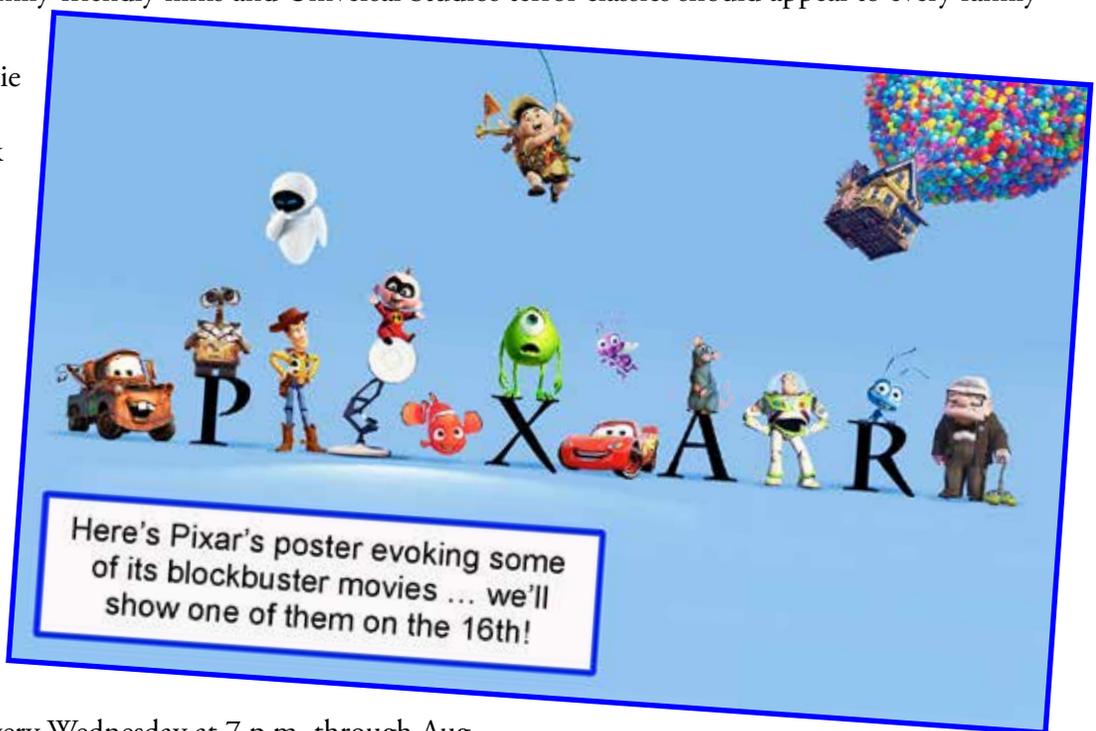
Stepping forth to procure this license are 13 returning local businesses, many of which are now participating for their fifth year. Three new businesses have also come on board, making this the Society’s most successful summer yet. These organizations and businesses are very community-minded and greatly support the efforts to bring wholesome classic filmed entertainment to the community. They also support the ongoing mission of HSUMD to offer the Historic USO Building as a cultural center for Ridgecrest.

This year the “Sensational Sixteen” businesses and organizations include returning supporters Baxendale’s, Cordell Construction Co., Cosner-Neipp Computing, Jack and Dana Lyons – Best Realty, the Maturango Museum, the Museum of Western Film History - Lone Pine, Red Rock Books, Ridgecrest Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Ridge Writers, Roaming Dog Kitchen, Romancing the West, S & M Coins and Collectibles, and Warren’s Automotive. Our three new “Bright Stars” are Center Pharmacy – a service of Ridgecrest Regional Hospital, Tender Cuts Meats (supplier of many food items used in our thrifty Snack Bar), and Ridgecrest Cinemas, who will be presenting a collection of retro family favorites during the summer. (How awesome is that?)

This special Classic Movie Night film series also provides an inexpensive night out for kids, who will be out of school, and their parents. The blend of family-friendly films and Universal Studios terror classics should appeal to every family member.

Before each show, hungry movie buffs can enjoy inexpensive taste treats, offered by the thrifty Snack Bar, such as the Jumbo “Crumville” Hot Dog plate, the “Coso Queso,” Grilled Cheese Sandwich, candies, fresh popcorn, ice cream, (free for the kids!), coffee with free refills, and a variety of refreshing hand-crafted sodas from the local Indian Wells Valley Brewery.

The “Summer of Movie Magic” begins on Wednesday, May 16, with a wildly popular Walt Disney/Pixar animated classic feature film.



Our summer series will play every Wednesday at 7 p.m. through Aug.

8. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free, but a \$2 donation is greatly appreciated for the continued upkeep of our

The Rand Desert Museum is having difficulties staying open and finding help to put on this year’s annual Old West Celebration in September. Volunteers are needed. If you can help in any way, please contact [randdesertmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:randdesertmuseum@gmail.com), call 760-608-7776 or write to P.O. Box 307, Randsburg, CA 93554.

beautiful movie “palace.” Printed programs with film titles, show dates and descriptions, and sponsor information are available in the lobby of the Historic USO Building. For more information, call 760-375-8456.

It’s back! Movie Magic ... every Wednesday ... All Summer Long!

— Nick Rogers



# Celebrating China Lake's 75th

*Here's another short article in honor of the anniversary of the establishment of the Naval Ordnance Test Station, a milestone coming up this Nov. 8 — exactly 75 years after the establishing letter that officially brought NOTS roaring to life in the Indian Wells Valley.*

Robert Allen “Al” Boyack, who died this past April 8, was well known in this valley as a great guy and a generous sharer of his photographic talents. More than that, though, he was an exemplar of the “China Lake Way,” a hard-charging brook-no-obstacles credo that resulted in amazing products and a whole lot of fun achieving them.

When China Lake celebrated its 50th, Al was presented with a special plaque reading, “Robert Al Boyack, Pay Number 001110, in recognition of your continuous employment at China Lake from July 10, 1945, presented at China Lake’s 50th Anniversary celebration, Saturday, November 6, 1993.” That low pay number was the one he was assigned at age 17, when he began work here.

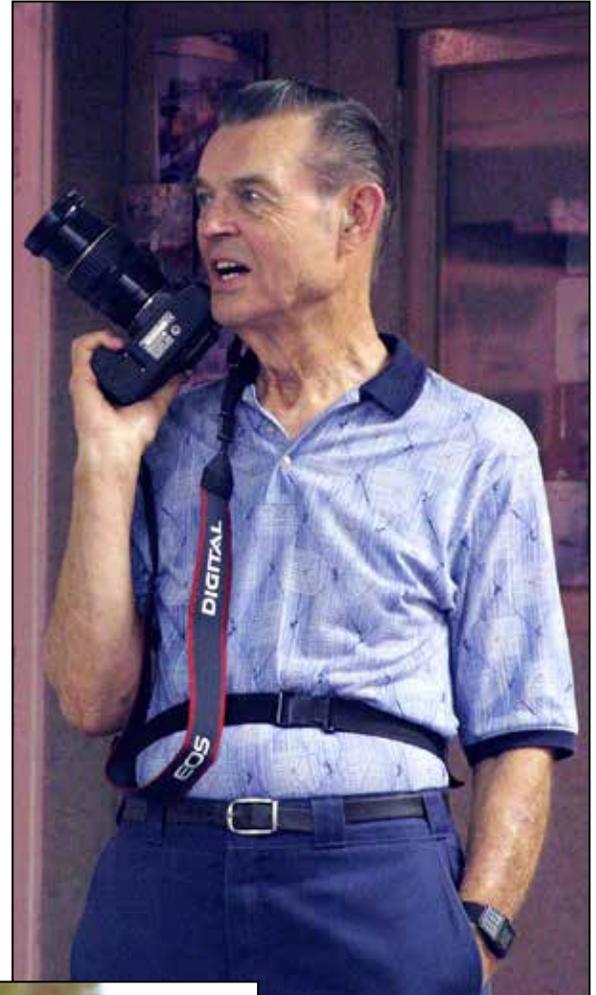
He went on to accumulate an amazing 61 years on the job. By the time he retired, his potential retirement income had reached the point where he was basically working for free. Asked why he still kept going, he would point out that his three hobbies were photography, riding his bike, and working. “Why would I quit?” he’d say, “I’m doing all three of those things already.”

Al, whose dad and brother also worked on the base, began his employment as a gofer in the Public Works Department. With some excellent mentors, he progressed from helper to machinist to modelmaker. Most of his career was at the China Lake Pilot Plant, and he was proud of the fact that he earned the Clarence Renne Award, the award plaque and symbol crafted by Al himself. His recognition came because of his extensive remodeling and repair on CLPP’s vast and varied facilities.

Al was a man who knew what he wanted — and once he reached the spot that gave him the day-to-day challenges he liked, he turned down promotions in the interest of career happiness.

Al and his wife Darlene moved away from our valley in 2016, but he left behind indelible memories — and a vast collection of his photos, documenting hundreds of his fellow employees at work and at play.

— Liz Babcock



Two views of Al Boyack, camera at the ready, enjoying China Lake historical events.

Above, he listens to a presentation inside the former China Lake Museum (originally the O Club) in July 2005.

At left, Al joins his brother Zeke on Nov. 3, 2002, at a picnic celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Sidewinder missile.

Photos by Liz



## HSUMD Shout-Out to Vickie and Beltone

Vickie Culver of Ridgecrest's Beltone Hearing Center shows off a couple of the Historical Society books she displays for clients to read while they're waiting for appointments. Vickie wanted to learn some of the history of our area, so she purchased books from our Gift Shop. She tells us that several people have gotten so enthused about our books that they have visited the Historic USO to get copies of their own. Not only that, but Vickie reports that clients are then inspired to share their own histories. Thank you, Vickie and Beltone, for sharing our books and bringing us new readers!

*Photo by Liz*

## Member Categories

HSUMD has three membership categories — all very important to us. Our regular memberships are \$35 per individual or family. Our business memberships are \$45 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. Our life members' names are displayed on our website.

## *New Members*

Little Deer Durvin  
Tim Heflin

## *Business and Service Members – please patronize them!*

Ale's Steakhouse and Bar  
Allen County Public Library,  
Genealogy Department  
Anna Marie Bergens, Realtor  
Best Western China Lake Inn  
Bob & Ardyce's Bicycle Shop  
California Route 66 Museum  
Cal-Sun Pools  
Clarion Inn  
Comfort Inn  
Cordell Construction Co.  
Cruise Planners-IWV  
DeathValley.com  
Desert Empire Fair  
Desert Garage Door

Earth Landscaping  
Econo-Lodge  
Edward Jones Investments –  
Brook H. Andreoli  
The Flower Shoppe  
Heritage Inn  
Phyllis M. Hix, Attorney  
IWV Premier Landscaping  
Jack & Dana Lyons, Realtors  
Maturango Museum  
Motion Tire & Wheel  
Nevins Tech. Consultants  
*The News Review*  
Pleistocene Foundation

Professional Tax & Business Services  
Rand Desert Museum  
Red Rock Books  
Ridgecrest Area Convention &  
Visitors Bureau  
Ridgecrest Automotive, LLC  
Ridgecrest Moving & Storage  
Ridgecrest Regional Hospital  
Roaming Dog Kitchen  
S&M Coins & Collectibles  
Starbucks  
Gary P. Staab & Assoc., Inc.  
*The Swap Sheet*  
Vaughn Realty  
Warren's Automotive

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**Here's an easy way to see this newsletter in color!**

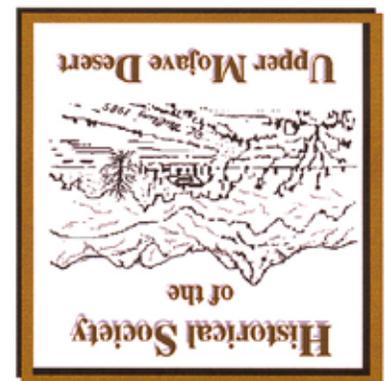
Just send an e-mail to [lizbab@fastmail.fm](mailto:lizbab@fastmail.fm) and ask to be put on the list to get a PDF copy e-mailed to you each month.

We don't plan to stop sending paper copies, but online is the way to go if you prefer living color.

## 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 MAY 2018**  
Tuesday, May 17, 6:30 p.m., Historic USO Building



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