70th Anniversary of the Sinking of the USS Indianapolis

The USS Indianapolis was sunk 70 years ago on 29 July 1945. One of the China Lake Museum’s docents, Lynn McIntire, had two relatives associated with it. Her father’s youngest brother, Harold M Butler, came to work at China Lake in 1944 with Cal Tech Laboratory. He worked on the Camel Project (Manhattan Project) A-Bomb. He continued working at China Lake for Cal Tech until the early 1950’s.

Her mother’s youngest brother (David Jump) joined the Navy in 1944. He went to Officer’s School and graduated as ENS David A. Jump. His first major shipboard assignment was aboard the USS Indianapolis in July 1945. It carried the A-Bomb to Tinian. The second torpedo hit the ship in the area where he was asleep; he did not survive.

Two uncles, both involved with different aspects of the A-Bomb, were a part of the USS Indianapolis’ history. The following is the dramatic story of the USS Indianapolis, the last American ship to be sunk in WWII by the Japanese. This is a reprint from Parade Magazine by permission of the Managing Editor, Neil Pond.

CLMF thanks Lynn for providing article.

(con’t on page 2)

President’s Message

We are now re-focusing our efforts to move to Kern Regional Park adjacent to Maturango Museum since neither the Hospital Board nor our Board wanted to pursue our leasing the downstairs of the Marriott Office Building. The Hospital was concerned about us not being able to raise sufficient funds to move at the end of 5 years, and the cost of leasing from them would have been unsustainable. The limited 5 year maximum lease period was also problematic to our Board. Our role did help provide a good deal for the Hospital so it was a win for them. Our Board has decided to move forward with a priority to have an affordable presence as soon as possible in Ridgecrest. At no additional cost, our
This is a story that began one horrific night in the black waters of the Pacific in the Summer of 1945 and only now, 55 years later, is nearing its conclusion. She was, by any measurement, a ship of destiny—the heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis, carrying a crew of nearly 1200 men. On July 16, 1945, she sailed out of San Francisco. Onboard she had a secret cargo that not even her captain was privy to. Encased in a heavy lead cylinder was Uranium 235, the heart for two bombs of never-before-seen explosive power that would soon obliterate two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and change the world forever.

After depositing her cargo on the island of Tinian in the western Pacific, she proceeded to Guam. From there, she was to cross the Philippine Sea to a base that the Navy had established on Leyte in the Philippine Islands. She never got there. It would be the greatest single sea disaster in the history of the U.S. Navy.

Although the Indianapolis had no submarine-detection gear, the request of her captain, Charles Butler McVay, III, for a destroyer escort was rebuffed. The threat of enemy submarines along the cruiser’s route, he was told, was practically nonexistent. As a precaution he was instructed to zigzag at his own discretion, depending on the visibility and the weather.

Late on the evening of July 29, the sky had a cloud cover that made it almost impossible to see one end of the ship from the other, and the Indianapolis ceased zigzagging. Before retiring Captain McVay left orders to resume zigzagging if conditions changed. Around midnight, for a brief interval, the clouds suddenly parted, revealing a quarter moon. At that precise moment, one of the few Japanese submarines still operating, the I-58, surfaced and spotted the cruiser. Six torpedoes were fired. One blew off the bow of the ship. The second slammed into her powder magazines and fuel tanks. She sank in only 12 minutes. In those frantic minutes, at least three SOS messages were sent over an international distress frequency channel.

About 300 men went down with the ship. Some 900 more, many of them naked or in their underwear, managed to don life jackets and leap into the oil-covered ocean. Others, including Captain McVay, found refuge on a handful of rubber rafts. In the morning, they had no doubt they would be quickly rescued. But the day passed. Then a second day. And a third. Their kapok life jackets were designed to keep them afloat for 48 hours. Now they had to keep their chins high to keep breathing.

The sun beat down mercilessly on their faces, ulcerated by oil and salt water. Surrounded by water, they had no water to drink. In despair, some did any way and died. Others began to hallucinate and swim off to mirages that promised a safe haven. Sharks circled them and attacked. The men could see the incoming fins and hear the screams.

By the fourth day, all hope seemed gone. The incredible fact is that they hadn’t even been missed. Nobody knew they were out there, dying one after another. Then, miraculously, around noon on the fourth day, the pilot of a Navy patrol plane on a routine flight happened to spot an oil slick in the middle of nowhere and heads bobbing in it. By the time a massive rescue operation was completed, barely quarter of the crew – 317 men – survived. The Navy announced the sinking of the Indianapolis on the same day that Japan surrendered.
70th Anniversary of the Sinking of the USS Indianapolis

which did not make it headline news. But the media started making inquiries. How could this have happened? In fairly short order, the Navy’s response was to court-martial Captain McVay and find him guilty of ‘hazarding’ his ship while the nation was at war. The question of why all those men were left helpless in the ocean was not addressed. At the time, that seemed to bring closure to the whole affair.

But the story was far from closed. In 1958, Richard F Newcomb, an Associated Press features editor, wrote a bestselling book about the Indianapolis catastrophe and the subsequent court-martial of McVay titled Abandon Ship!, an updated version of which will be published next January by HarperCollins.

But Abandon Ship! was much more than another best-seller. It would trigger bitter controversy that rages to this day, with allegations of shameful injustices and massive cover-ups, duplicity, personal humiliation and convenient scapegoats. Decades later, it would be discovered that the Navy’s high command knew all that the Indianapolis was sailing into extreme danger and never warned the captain.

The unspeakable ordeal the survivors had endured was such that they did not talk about it to their families, friends or even other survivors. The Navy announced the sinking of the Indianapolis on the same day that Japan surrendered, which did not make it headline news. But the media started making inquiries. How could this have happened? In fairly short order, the Navy’s response was to court-martial Captain McVay and find him guilty of ‘hazarding’ his ship while the nation was at war. The question of why all those men were left helpless in the ocean was not addressed. At the time, that seemed to bring closure to the whole affair.

But Newcomb, helped in large part because he himself had been an enlisted Navy correspondent with a Purple Heart, got enough of them to talk to him. Publication of his book was a catharsis for them all and led to their first reunion in 1960. Giles McCoy, who had been part of a Marine detachment aboard the cruiser, told a Washington Post reporter covering one of the reunions, ‘I got the idea for the reunions after the book came out. It was an emotional cleansing.’

Seaman John Bullard could speak freely now. ‘Somebody yelled, ‘Shark!’’ he recalled for the Post reporter, ‘and we saw this fin crossing toward us...A fellow had drifted off from the group. You know how the bobber on a catfish line floats on the surface above the bait and runs when a fish hits? The last time I saw this fellow, his head was running like a bobber. A shark had hit him. His was like a bobber.’

Coxswain Mike K Kuryla remembered ‘the exposure and dehydration were worse than the sharks. We were blistered like prunes. During the day, you’d roast and pray for night. At night, you’d freeze and pray for day. If you gave up, you died. One guy said, ‘I’ll see you good buddies,’ and he swam away and was gone.’

Captain McVay reluctantly attended the first reunion. Because of his court-martial conviction, he had been receiving vicious hate mail from relatives of those who had died, accusing him of murder. He was unsure of the reception he would get. To his evident surprise, McVay was emotionally embraced and saluted by the survivors as a man they were proud to serve under. But even this was not enough to sustain him. In 1968, on a day when he opened another piece of hate mail, he committed suicide. At that first reunion, Richard F Newcomb was named an
honorary survivor’ because of his book, and efforts were begun to clear the captain’s name on the grounds that he had unfairly been made a scapegoat for what had happened. But it wasn’t until the early 1990’s that declassified documents stunningly revealed that the Navy’s high command revealed they knew the I-58, as well as a sister Japanese submarine, had been lurking in the Indianapolis’ path. Even worse, only four days before, a US destroyer had been torpedoed in that same area; McVay was told none of this. The reason was that the Navy did not want to risk exposing its most closely held secret – that it had broken Japan’s naval codes. Who in the chain of command made this decision not to inform McVay remains murky. The Navy claims that there is nothing on paper and all the participants are dead.

Still, Senators and Congressman were loath to get involved. The Navy wasn’t giving an inch. There must be more to this than anyone knew.

Then, in 1996, things took another dramatic turn. An 11-year-old schoolboy in Pensacola, FL named Hunter Scott watched the movie Jaws. In it was a scene in which a character recalls how the sunken cruiser’s crew had been attacked by sharks. Scott decided to look further in the tragedy. Utilizing a list of the survivors that was put together after the publication of Abandon Ship! he learned that they were unanimous in saying a dreadful wrong had been perpetrated against their captain.

Young Scott also learned that at least three Navy locations had received the SOS signals and that they were either ignored or dismissed as a Japanese trick. In 1999, a combination of Scott’s research and meetings with him and a number of survivors convinced Sen. Bob Smith (R, N.H.), himself a Navy veteran, that there was ample evidence for history ‘not to be rewritten’ as he put it, but ‘corrected’.

Smith went to Sen. John Warner (R., VA) chairman of the Armed Service Committee. Warner initially was skeptical. A former Secretary of the Navy, he was acutely aware of the responsibilities involved in ‘command accountability’. But as he told me ‘meeting face-to-face with those survivors turned me around.’

At hearings convened by Senator Warner last fall, Harlan M Twible, who had been a ensign aboard the doomed ship declared: “What a difference it would have made if the captain’s request for a destroyer escort had been granted. Can you imagine us having to stay in those waters for five nights and four days?”

Paul J Murphy, who heads up the USS Indianapolis Survivors Organization, testified with consuming passion. ‘Please help us restore our captain’s good name. Time is running out for those of us waiting, for whom this has been a goal for more than 50 years.’

The Navy’s Judge Advocate General, however, Rear ADM John D Huston, responded that he had personally reviewed the trial record of McVay’s conviction and that ‘the proceeding were fair and provided full due process of law’.

The Vice Chief of Naval Operations, ADM Donald L Pilling, left many at the hearing bewildered when he stated that the captain had not been court-martialed for losing his ship but because he failed to zigzag. Asked, ‘If the Indianapolis had not zigzagged and still arrived safely, would McVay still have been court-martialed?’ the admiral had no real answer. He insisted, ‘Each commander is separately responsible for his own deficiencies without regard to the culpability of others’. The
fact that no one else who played a part in the disaster faced a court-martial was not addressed.

This past spring, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed a resolution that the charges against McVay were ‘not morally sustainable’ and that his conviction was a ‘miscarriage of justice that led to his unjust humiliation and damage to his career.’

The Senate version was less harsh. It called for recognition of the captain’s ‘lack of culpability’ but stopped short of saying that an injustice had occurred. Now a compromise resolution must be agreed upon. Only then will the final chapter of the *Indianapolis* and her brave crew be written.

Be on the lookout in the next few weeks while Mary Lattig, new Gift Shop Manager, brings in a new look and layout along with new merchandise and features. Mary brings to us a wealth of experience from running her own bookstore and gift shop to developing and running the beautiful Maturango Museum Gift Shop for many years; we are thrilled to have her expertise for our new business venture as we make the move into Ridgecrest. She has a lot of great ideas to upscale our look and new items to tempt you to buy. Mary is also tech savvy and will be handling our marketing to the community using social media and her imaginative marketing ideas.

Watch for more information on our Grand Re-Opening in September. Check out, and like us, on Facebook. Share with your friends and contacts to spread the word. Visit the Facebook page daily to find out what is happening with the new look and new merchandise.

A new membership package will be developed with extra incentives for our current and new members. Some of her ideas are to partner with other military museums to develop reciprocal agreements for admissions. Also, to work with the base on easier access to the museum. A pricing strategy is to be adopted for better profit margins. Older merchandise is being reduced; so look for some great sale opportunities. Stock up now for your holiday shopping.

Please remember, the sales in the Gift Shop directly support the museum and help to preserve the history and contributions from China Lake to the local community as well as to our fleet.

**FOUNDER’S PROGRAM**

**New Members**

**BENEFACTORS:**

Vincent and Gloria Avalos
Stephen Chapman
John and Judy Ward

**FOUNDERS:**

Karen Bruno
Kristina Cook
Thomas and Teresa Cooper
Jacobs Naval Systems Group
Roy Johanboek
Allen and Bonnie Jones
Ann and Burt Wagner
Fred and Donna Weals
JD and Phyllis Williams

Thank you to all donors to the Founders Program. With your help spreading the word, we will have a new and bigger Museum more quickly!
Major Contributions of CalTech/Naval Ordnance Test Station (NOTS) China Lake:

1. **Problem:** The Manhattan Project (Atomic Bomb) urgently needed a remote location to develop a new explosive, which could be machined into lenses for application to the implosion version of the atomic bomb (Fat Man), and the development and production of the high-speed, precise switching network contributing to the spherical detonation implosion technology, and test components for, and conduct the necessary ballistic tests, to finalize the atomic bomb into a deliverable weapon, and to train flight crews on how to handle and deliver the bomb.

   **Solution:** Professional connections between the scientists on the Manhattan Project and those on the Navy's CalTech Rocket program provided a workable solution by moving much of the weaponization work (ballistics, training, etc.) on the Atomic Bomb to a remote location at The Naval Ordnance Test Station (NOTS) and using the established Rocket program's contracting apparatus to secretly acquire much needed materials for the Atomic Bomb under the guise of the Rocket project, helping to preserve security of the Manhattan Project.

2. **Problem:** When war broke out in Korea, an urgent request was made for an anti-tank rocket to destroy Soviet JS-3 tanks believed to be on the way to North Korea from the Soviet Union.

   **Solution:** The 6.5" Antitank Aircraft Rocket (ATAR) (nicknamed RAM) was designed, tested and 600 rockets were hand-produced at NOTS with the first planeload on its way to Korea in less than one month.

3. **Problem:** A long-range rocket-propelled antisubmarine weapon to be forward-launched under sonar direction from a surface-ship was needed to combat enemy submarines.

   **Solution:** Weapon A (nicknamed the “Flying Milk Bottle”) was developed, tested and introduced to the Fleet. NOTS was selected because of its experience in rocketry and underwater ordnance and its unique facilities for such a development program. A non-magnetic plastic warhead casing was developed that withstood pressures up to 1,000 feet water depth. After Fleet introduction in 1951 Weapon A remained in the Fleet weapon inventory for eighteen years.

4. **Problem:** A new rocket was needed that could be fired with rapid and deadly effect from jet aircraft to destroy high-speed Soviet bombers. The rocket was intended for firing in salvos of 25 rounds from a tubular launcher, achieve a burn velocity of 2,000 feet per second and have a payload of 1.5 pounds of high explosive detonated by a contact fuze equipped with a short delay.

   **Solution:** The 2.75" Folding Fin Aircraft Rocket (nicknamed “Mighty Mouse”) was designed, tested and deployed heavily by all services of the U.S. armed forces with about 50 million produced by 1973. It has become the most fired weapon in history save for bullets, and is still in use today (although now much modified over the original design).

**Note:** By the conclusion of World War II rockets were fast becoming a major weapon of war. The Army was procuring rockets to the tune of $150,000,000 per year. The Navy had 1,200 war plants in a program turning out rockets at eight times that amount. The Navy’s expenditures for rocket weapons in 1945 was $100,000,000 per month.
President’s Message (con’t from page 1)

The architect has phased the original building plan into multiple phases. Phase 1 is a 2800 sq ft modular support building to hold our Gift Shop, a small exhibit, and fundraising emphasis with infrastructure (water, power, gas, sewage, parking lot, lighting) to support it and the future museum building. We still need philanthropists, since such building projects usually start with major donors, which we do not presently have. However, the Founders Campaign, with your help to find enough $5,000 Founders, can work to provide sufficient funds to continue with building Phase 2A, a 6000 sq ft permanent building for the Gift Shop, exhibit to tell the basic China Lake story, and a rocket science teaching area. Phase 2B is additional growth to 10,000-16,000 sq ft, the size of our current museum and greater. We are thrilled to have the support of Laura Hickle, an experienced facilities grant writer, who is donating her time to work two grants 1) a Community Heritage Grant which would fund recording of China Lake history stories from a Ridgecrest 9-11 1000 Flag event in 2016, and 2) a CA museum facilities grant to support Phase 1. We are also thrilled to have Mary Lattig now re-inventing our Gift Shop in the current Museum on Base, and setting it up to be movable into Ridgecrest. Be sure to bring your family to the Museum Sept 26 for our Gift Shop Reopening and for a sampling of Dr. Bob Smith’s Rocket Science demonstrations. Also, come play golf with us Oct. 24th!

Thank you all for your continuing support both financially and as volunteers. We need more of your volunteer support as we make this move into Ridgecrest next year, so please call our office if you can help, 760-939-3530.

~Alice Campbell
President

Spotlight: Business Membership in CLMF

AltaOne Federal Credit Union
Ashley Furniture Homestore
The Boeing Company
Coldwell Banker Best Realty
Cosner-Neipp Corporation
Daily Independent
Desert Valleys Federal Credit Union
Electric Motor Works, Inc.
IWV Insurance Agency
Jacobs Naval Systems Group
Lone Star Aerospace
McDonald’s
Neely Accountancy Corp.
Raytheon Company
Ridgecrest Area Convention & Visitor Bureau
Ridgecrest Automotive, LLC
SpringHill Suites and Hampton Inn
The Swap Sheet
Tax Time Services, Inc.
Toss & Service Master
Vincent Avalos, Edward Jones Investments
Warren’s Automotive

The newsletter will be sent electronically. You may email us at chinalakemuseum@mediacombb.net. Please put in the subject line “Electronic Newsletter.” If you would like to receive it via USPS, please let us know, (760) 939-3530.

Board of Directors
President..........................Alice Campbell
VP Development..................Pat Connell
VP Public Relations...............Bob Peoples
VP Building Committee........Wayne Doucette
VP Operations....................Pat Doucette
Treasurer........................Chris Tofner
Secretary..........................Dr. Bob Smith
Building Fundraiser..............John Freeman

Members
Rick Bruckman ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Tony Damian
Rick Ferris ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Elsa Henni
Ted Ribulton ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Dave Maxwell
Bettye Moody ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Kathy Vejtasa
$70 per person includes

- 4 person scramble - shot gun start
- CLMF Golf T-shirts
- 18 holes with Golf Cart
- Prizes and contests

For More Information Contact:
(760) 939-3530
chinalakemuseum@mediacombb.net

Base access for day of event*

TOURNAMENT REGISTRATION FORM

Early Registration Method of Payment

☐ Checks payable to: CLMF
☐ Charge My Credit Card/CVV

Expiration Date: ____________

Signature: ____________________

*Contact us for base access by October 12th
**Tee time** will begin at 9AM on October 24, with drink opportunities and a meal preceding awards and winnings.

To help us properly plan for this event, please pre-register by phone, mail or in person.

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**Mission**

The China Lake Museum is the United States Navy’s premier science and technology history and heritage exhibit. The Museum’s purpose is to inspire, educate, and encourage our present and future generations to achieve success through innovation and exploration and obtain peace through strength. Because of what China Lake did and does, American citizens are free to innovate and create new vistas across the full spectrum of American life.

“China Lake is where America comes for defense.”

**Vision**

China Lake Museum Foundation has a vision to create a self-sustaining, historical, educational, entertaining museum that:

- Shares history of China Lake and the development of Naval Armament and Technology
- Nurtures curiosity in science and engineering in youth

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Player 1 Name: Cell:(   )

Player 2 Name: Cell:(   )

Player 3 Name: Cell:(   )

Player 4 Name: Cell:(   )

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Shirt Sizes are now on a first come first serve basis

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Single Registration Available!

China Lake Museum Foundation
P.O. Box 217
Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0217
Science Camp 2015 was held at the China Lake Museum of Armament and Technology. Two three-day classes were held. The first was on the mornings of 7, 8, and 9 July, and the second on the mornings of 21, 22, 23 July. The first was for 10 year old students and the second for 11 year old students. The students were from the 'Moving on Up' daycare center. Students learned about the science of flight, rockets, robots, quad copters, and parachutes. In addition, the students also enjoyed a field trip to the NAWC-WD Range Control Center and Armitage Field. A total of 39 students participated in Science Camp. Science Camp is jointly sponsored by the China Lake Museum Foundation and the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division through an Educational Partnership Agreement.

3, 2, 1 Blast Off! A Science Camp student launches her water rocket under the watchful eye of Dr. Bob

Photo courtesy of Frank Markian
Future Museum Building Plans
Build Yourself a Legacy

Alice and Bob Campbell share building plans with Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy during his visit to Ridgecrest, August 4. Kevin indicated an interest in helping make it possible and is a “Founder” and Life Member of the Foundation.

Join the China Lake Family!

Become a Founder today for $5,000! Or a Benefactor for more than $5,000 with naming rights!

Founders, Benefactors, and Business Partners will help our community realize “The Dream”.

Help move the “Secret City’s” Museum into the City of Ridgecrest, where it will not be such a secret anymore.

Questions?
Call John Freeman (760) 382-7776,
Bob Campbell (760) 377-7085 or
Wayne Doucette (760) 447-1484
China Lake Founder/Donor/Contributor Pledge Agreement

□ Founder ($5,000 or more) – I pledge $_________________ to the China Lake Museum Foundation.

□ Payment enclosed

□ If you prefer to pledge only at this time or pay in installments please indicate by filling out the information below.

I understand that my name (or a name designated by me) will be added to a Founder’s Plaque in the Museum. I also understand that I will be given the opportunity to document my China Lake story, which will be incorporated as a permanent part of the Museum history. A complimentary life membership (if not already a life member) and future “Founders Club” benefits will be included. Benefactor Founders (over $5,000) will be given opportunities for naming rights commensurate with the amount pledged.

□ Donor ($1000 - $4999) – I pledge $________________ to the China Lake Museum Foundation.

□ Payment enclosed

□ If you prefer to pledge only at this time please indicate by filling out the information below.

I understand that my name (or a name designated by me) will be added to a List of Donors in the Museum.

□ Contributor (less than $1000) – I pledge $_________________ to the China Lake Museum Foundation.

□ Payment enclosed

□ If you prefer to pledge only at this time please indicate by filling out the information below.

Donations at the time of pledge are highly encouraged however pledges to be billed at a later date will be accepted. We, the undersigned, agree that pledges will not be called due until such time as the Foundation executes a construction notice to proceed. When my pledge is called due by order of the Board of the China Lake Museum Foundation, I agree to make payment in full or in installments as agreed to below within thirty (30) days of the “call” which will be made by certified mail. I understand the pledge and subsequent donation identified as part of this agreement will be used in support of construction of the building and the outside areas of the Museum complex, relocation and refurbishment of existing exhibits and development of new exhibits, and to sustain operations of the Museum in its new location. I understand that none of this pledge and subsequent donation will be used to pay a commission to any volunteer, employee or agent of the China Lake Museum Foundation.

□ I wish to make this pledge and subsequent donation in the name of: ______________________________________

□ I, __________(initial) authorize the China Lake Museum Foundation to acknowledge my pledge and subsequent donation within the museum and in museum publications.

□ I, __________(initial) wish to keep my pledge and subsequent donation anonymous.

□ I, __________(initial) wish to fulfill my pledge with annual installments of $__________ over a period of ______ years (three (3) years or less preferred) and authorize the CLMF to bill me each year on the anniversary of the call for payment of pledges.

_________________________________________________________________    __________________________________
Signature                                                      Printed Name
_________________________________________________________________
Address (Street, City, State, Zip)                             _______________________     __________________________________
Accepted by:
__________________________________________________________________    __________________________________
Foundation Signature                                           Printed Name
____________________________________________________________________________________
Date                                                           Phone Number
Title

Please submit signed pledge form and donations to CLMF, PO Box 217, Ridgecrest, CA 93556.

No goods or services are provided for this donation. Your donation is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law for this non-profit 501(C) (3) organization, Tax ID #77-0340083. (A signed copy of this form will serve as your receipt.)

Thank you for your support in preserving the heritage of China Lake and especially those individuals who over the past seven decades have contributed to the defense and freedom of our great Nation.
I want to help support the Museum!

Please accept my payment of:

[ ] $10  [ ] $200  [ ] $500
[ ] $1,000  [ ] $5,000  [ ] ______

For checks intended for the new building “Founders Program”, please use the form included in this newsletter, or note on your check “Founders Program”.

[ ] Enclosed is my [ ] Check  [ ] Visa  [ ] MasterCard  [ ] Other ______

Card Number: ________________________________
Expiration Date: ___________________  CVC: ________
Signature: ________________________________

Or call (760) 939-3530 to make your credit card donation.