



THE CHINA LAKER

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Newsletter of the China Lake Museum Foundation

Summer 2013

China Lake Personal History

By Lois Allan

Lois Allan is an independent writer and lecturer, formerly of Portland, Oregon (that is, after some thirty years at China Lake). Arriving in the Pacific Northwest in 1987, Lois wrote extensively for west coast and national art periodicals. She is the author of *Contemporary Printmaking in the Northwest* and *Contemporary Art in the Northwest*. She holds a bachelor's degree from Ohio State University and a master's degree from Claremont Graduate School. Lois now resides in Claremont, California, but is a frequent visitor to Ridgecrest to visit her great grandchildren, Alyssa, Taylor and Conner Auld. Lois prepared this article as her introduction to her new home community in Claremont, CA. Most of her new friends were not aware of China Lake.

In the early days at Los Alamos, the scientists and everybody else had to cope with never ending mud. At China Lake, it was sand. When the wind blew, which was most of the time, it got into absolutely everything, including one's body orifices. There aren't many weather effects you can literally chew, but when sand gets in your mouth, you have that uncanny and unwelcome ability. As at Los Alamos, construction was the villainous cause of our misery. In the beginning years of the 1940s both of these high security, highly technical facilities charged with creating and producing new kinds of weapons to be used in the war--the Second World War, that is, had to be constructed as quickly as humanly possible. Such problems as mud and blowing sand were no more than a nuisance, albeit a very annoying one.

The name "China Lake" refers to a dry lake on the premises of what was originally titled the Naval Ordnance Test Station. (The official name, after several changes, is now the Naval Air

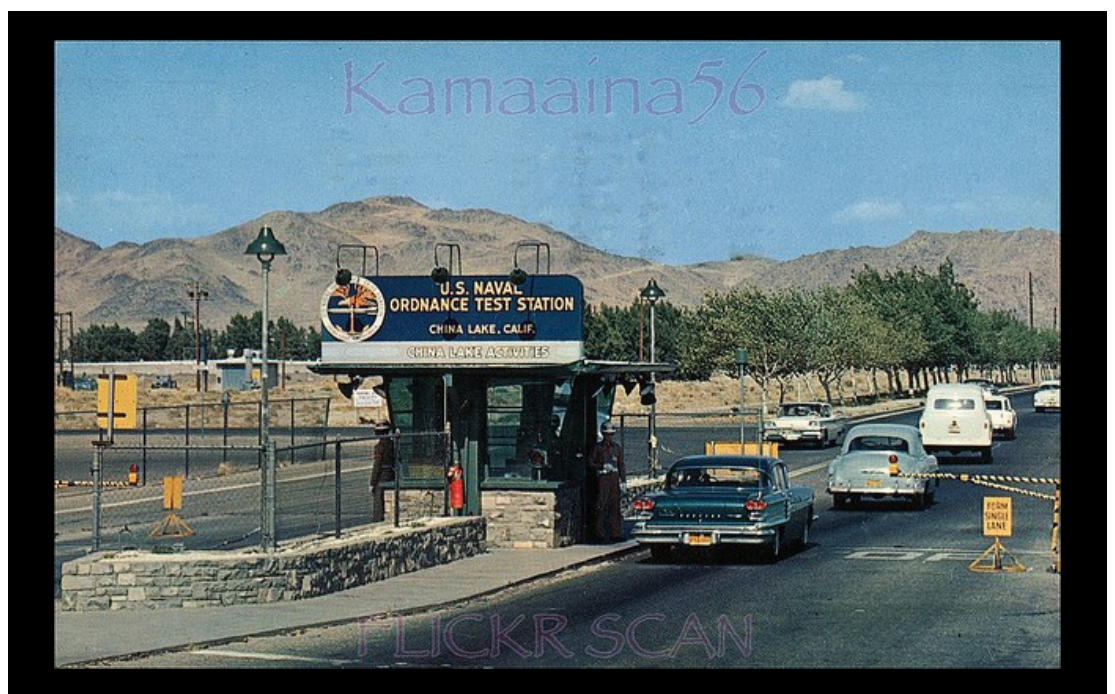


Weapons Station.) Although the lake has had no water since the Paleolithic Era, the name, which comes from the Chinese workers who toiled in the potash mines in the area early in the 20th century, has become the unofficial and more commonly used identification. The place also is commonly referred to by locals as "the base" or "the station."

In the spring of 1943 the Army operated a small airfield in Inyokern, a speck of a village in Kern County, California, in the Mojave Desert. CalTech at this time had begun an experimental program to develop forward-firing rockets, and a proving ground near Pasadena was urgently needed. The Army permitted the Inyokern facility to be used while a larger, adequate facility was being built about eight miles to the east. By November, construction was far enough along that the Naval Ordnance Test Station could be officially established. Its operation was taken over by the Navy, as it provided the funding and its pilots tested the experimental rockets. Also, General Leslie Groves, the director of the Manhattan Project, had assigned a part of the work to NOTS, but this was kept so secret that only the few scientists involved knew about it.

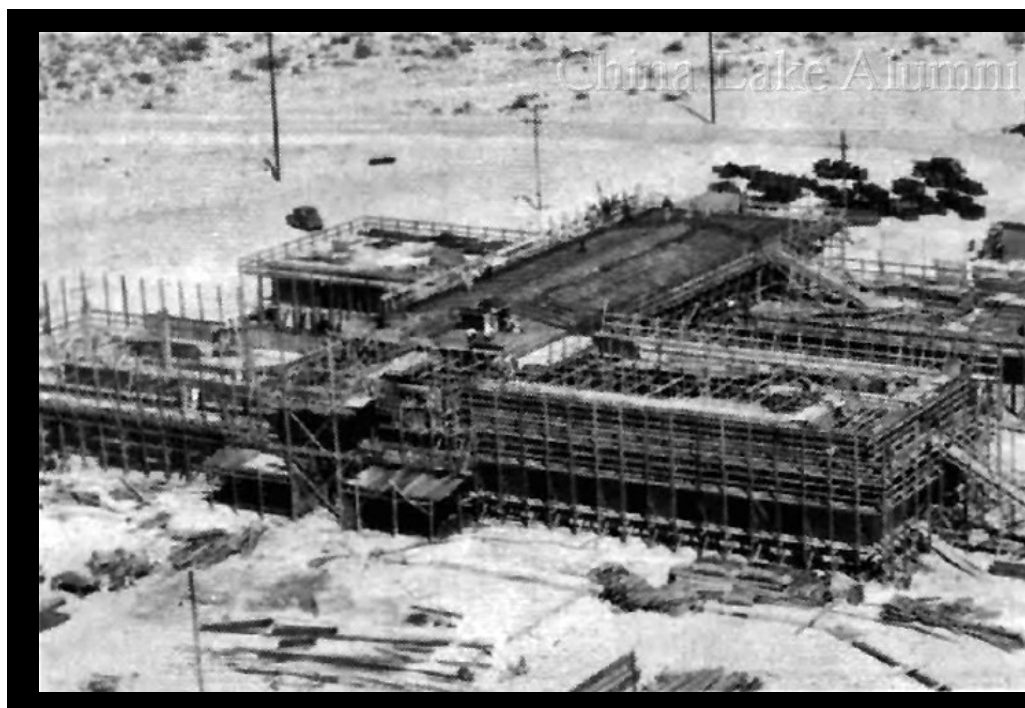
This was its status when I arrived on a hot afternoon in May of 1945 at the end of a very long journey across the United States. I was broke, had no prospects, and was sick of my two travelling companions. I got a job that very day in the personnel department, thinking that as soon as I saved up enough money, I'd go home. I had no idea that my life had just taken a new and permanent direction. I had graduated from Ohio State University in December, and from there, went to a family Christmas get-together at my grandmother's home in Burgaw, NC., and then on to Miami for a visit with an aunt and uncle. When I heard soon after from my mother that she had joined the WAC (Women's Army Corps), I decided to stay and was quickly employed at a Navy air station.

One of my co-workers was a woman who was being transferred to a new Navy station in California's Mojave Desert. She had gas coupons, a husband, and an old Packard car, and with all that, planned to make a leisurely drive across the country. When she asked me if I'd like to come along, I was delighted. I'd never been to California and, in fact, my family's travels had been severely limited by the depression to trips from our home in South Charleston, WV, to see our many relatives in North Carolina. Thus, the three of us set out with happy anticipation, which was soon replaced with daily anxiety as the car alternately boiled and blew tires all the way across the country. (Our many mishaps and misadventures are another story—a good one, but not relevant here.) I was relieved and happy to arrive at our destination even though



the few buildings behind a formidable, guarded fence and surrounded by sand as far as the eye could see looked godforsaken. The one very large building was Michelson Laboratory where scientists were already at work. The airfield and some office buildings were completed, but housing was still underway. Barracks for enlisted Navy personnel were in use, as well as some temporary quarters for high ranking civilians and officers, but the rest of us civilians had even less appealing accommodations.

My assigned quarters consisted of the upper bunk in the two story building that was to be the Marine barracks. Since the Marines, who were to provide security, weren't to arrive for a few months, the building was used to house civilians. We had to make do with communal living; men were on the first floor and women, upstairs. There were no rooms, just the open space of the entire floor with rows of double decker bunks. I have a vivid memory of the huge bathroom with its row of urinals draped with wet feminine laundry. Meals were



provided across the road in the mess hall, which was staffed by Navy cooks. The food wasn't anything to write home about, but it was plentiful and food coupons weren't required. The mess hall, where everyone, regardless of rank, sat on benches at long tables, was also where people met and socialized. Dates, often followed by romances, flourished. For me, social life consisted of get-togethers to listen to

someone's classical records and going to the movies (ten cent admission charge) provided by the administration.

My work consisted of processing new employees, of which there were many. There was an influx of scientists from the Radiation Laboratory at Berkeley as the Manhattan Project was winding down with the completion of the atomic bomb. Employees who were no longer needed had the choice of going to Oak Ridge, Los Alamos, or China Lake. All of these facilities were still involved in continuing atomic research, but at China Lake there was more emphasis on rockets. For the scientists who preferred remaining in California, China Lake was the obvious choice.

The summer of 1945 was defined by VJ Day, the day Japan surrendered, August 15th. Some China Lakers thought that the work there would end, but it soon became apparent that war is an ongoing, never ending business. Life and work went on as usual. The only difference was that the urgency lessened, making basic research possible. Experimentation with air-to-air weapons continued, and ultimately resulted in the design and production of one of the Navy's most efficient weapons, the Sidewinder. It was so named because, like the small, eponymous

rattlesnake, it was a heat seeking rocket. This weapon is still prominent in the Navy's arsenal. Among the Rad Lab recruits was a young physicist with whom I became friendly in the mess hall.

My mother met him, too, when she was visiting from the Army base in San Bernardino where she was stationed. In November she was to be discharged and she asked me if I'd like to meet her in San Francisco for a few days before she headed east to Columbus, Ohio, where she had made arrangements to live and work. When I replied that I had no way to get there as I didn't have a car and there was no public transportation, she said, "Why don't you ask that Allan boy for a ride? He said he was going home to Alameda for Thanksgiving and he has a car." I did, and that was the beginning of my new life. By Valentine's Day, 1946, Wallace Allan and I were engaged; on St. Patrick's Day we married.

Our wedding, the first at China Lake, took place in a little addition to the Quonset hut that served as the chapel. Our wedding reception was held at the Officers' Club where the only charge had been sugar coupons so that the cook could make the cake. After a brief honeymoon trip we were fortunate to be assigned a studio apartment in a recently finished building that strongly resembled a motel. (In the coming 30 years that we lived on the base, as our family and rank increased we progressed from the studio apartment, to a one-bedroom duplex, a two-bedroom duplex, a three-bedroom duplex, and finally, a four bedroom house.)

The post-war conditions were hardly different; the scientists (all men, with less than a half dozen women) were absorbed in work that now revolved around staying ahead of the U.S.S.R.'s advances in rocketry and being on the forefront of preparations for the Korean conflict. The wives were absorbed in getting the necessities of a

permanent community established. They organized as a chapter of A.A.U.W. with committees assigned various projects. Highest priority was schools. I was on that committee, and I remember going to Bakersfield, the county seat about 130 miles distant, to meet with our county commissioner. He was an old-time country politician and kept bellowing at us, "You people got no assessed evaluation. You ladies go home and tend to your tea parties." We went home to tea parties that became strategy meetings. With the backing of Navy officials and sympathetic Congressional representatives, legislation to fund schools in federally impacted areas was enacted.

These women came to China Lake with many academic and career backgrounds. They became teachers, they began a mental health clinic, organized a classical music association; they brought to China Lake all the things that bring about a vibrant community. It was a great place to raise children. They could go to the pool, to school, to the movies, to their friends' homes on their bicycles in complete safety. It seemed such a paradox to me that while the work consisted of creating better ways to kill people, life on the base was as secure as it could possibly be. I should add that the stated purpose of the work was and is our nation's defense. We old-time alumni prefer to think of it that way.



President's Message by Bob Campbell

We are very pleased that Bruce Auld has joined us as the Chief Development Officer. His goal is to raise the funds to support the Museum and exhibit plaza. He has stepped up the campaign several notches and he will be sharing some of his progress at the Annual Members Meeting. So please plan to join us the evening of October 15. Bruce and Ann Auld have graciously offered to host the event at their home. Refreshments will be provided. Besides the normal business that must be completed, we will have an update of the work by the architect. The plans include both the development of the corner parcel into a plaza and the building concept plans. Please mark your calendars.

Bob Smith, Scott Millett, Bill Erwin, Joe Seibold, Marc Moulton and others have been working to complete the Walleye exhibit. The exhibit will be opened on Friday November 1, 2013 and is progressing very nicely. We are in the process of setting up a forum of "shooters and designers" to be held on Friday, November 1. The forum will be held as part of an educational outreach event in the McLean laboratory and the public will be invited. We will then hold a reception at the Museum along with the ribbon cutting for the new exhibit.

You will be separately notified with details for both the Annual Members Meeting and the Walleye Anniversary events by the end of September so that you can plan accordingly. For now, please mark your Calendars regarding both events.

Please welcome Sara Campbell to the CLMF Staff.



Sara will work the Gift Shop on Friday afternoons and on Saturdays. Sara says that the most important thing you need to know about her is that she is an avid NASCAR fan. She is also proud to be a Desert Storm Veteran who served on the USS Jason (Auxiliary Repair Ship). She brings a great deal of experience to the job. She is currently retired - sort of. She has maintained the accounts receivable and payable and runs the cash register for the local VFW. She volunteers at the Fresno VA Hospital by visiting our Veterans and paying them special attention, especially the Vets who can't get out of their room. Sara worked 15 years as a Budget Technician and Senior Office manager at NAWCWD China Lake. She has 12 years of active duty and 9 years of Reserve time in the US Navy. Welcome Sara Campbell!!!!

Volunteers!



WE NEED YOU!

Volunteers are desperately needed at the China Lake Museum. Front desk Greeters/ Hosts and Gift Shop Volunteers are in short supply. Due to other assignments and health problems, the Museum Volunteer Corps has become a little thin lately. We need your help for just a few hours a week. The Museum and Gift Shop is open from 10AM to 4PM Monday through Saturday. Volunteers typically work a 3 hour shift (10AM to 1PM or 1PM to 4PM) although a 10AM to 4PM gig is welcomed. Actually, we'll take any gig! You get to interact with folks from all over the World. It's fun, rewarding, and we need your help!

Greeter/Host: Welcome visitors at the lobby and assist them in getting started - signed in, help with getting videos running, answer questions, direct visitors to the Gift Shop if necessary, and make sure artifacts don't walk off or get damaged.

Gift Shop: If you have ever wanted to work in retail, this is a great opportunity. Provide friendly help to customers, run the cash register, help keep the shelves stocked, help with barcoding merchandise, and come up with creative marketing and display ideas.

Please consider volunteering a little of your time. Contact Craig Porter or Teri Raley at the Museum.

Many hands make light work!

Craig Porter
VP of Operations
(760) 446-3400 (home)
(760) 608-2316 (cell)
cporter148@mehsi.com

Teri Raley
Office Manager
(760) 939-3530 (Museum)
(760) 495-2607 (cell)
clmf1@chinalakemuseum.org

Volunteers!

From our oldest to our youngest! The passion will never die!



Dick DeMarco started his journey in December of 1942. After he got his 2 year degree in Mechanical Engineering, he enlisted in the military when the war broke out and continued other schooling that the military asked of him. When the war was over he went back to school and got his bachelors in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Illinois. He then was picked up by China Lake Base on July 10, 1954. All of this to say that in the late 90's he designed the gift shop and became a Docent under Burrell Hays as President. Dick is an amazing docent. He is the oldest of our docents and comes to stay with us all day on Mondays just for the chance of the thrill of getting to show off our museum.

Scott Millet grew up in China Lake as his dad managed a contract on base. He went to school to be a Mechanical Engineer but started working more as a Systems Engineer for a career. He came back to China Lake for the nature, opportunity, leading edge technology and the climate in the valley. He has so much pride in China Lake that he was excited about the opportunity to share it in the museum when he retired. Compared to other bases, China Lake is head and shoulders above all. Our loyalty and priority is to invent, develop and deliver on our obligations to warfighters and tax payers, not management chains. He is proud of the fact that China Lake refuses to do the wrong thing and careers have been sacrificed for people standing up for what is right!



**Wanting to see our two wonderful volunteers, visit on Mondays or make a personal appointment.
Teri Raley in the Gift Shop (760) 939-3530.**

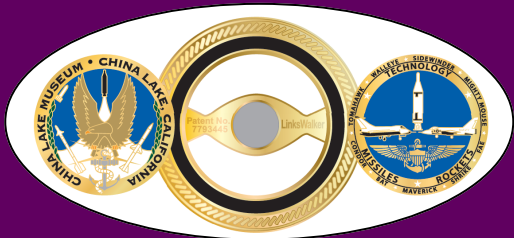
Excitement in the Gift Shop!

Blow out Sale!

Sept 6th–21st

40% off all

- ◆ Toys
- ◆ Kids Books
- ◆ Clothing
- ◆ DVD's
- ◆ Flags



We have so many **NEW** and **EXCITING** items in the gift shop. Please come check it out!



Operating hours:

10am-4pm Monday-Saturday

(760) 939-3530

Luggage Tags



25% - 40% OFF Everything!



In Loving Memory

Thank you to the generous donors of the Foundation. With their help we are able to get Personalized Memorial Bricks.



Tom Hamilton

*Bob and Alice Campbell
Harold and Roselyn Okamoto*

Ted Lotee

*Steven and Leah Little
Fred and Donna Weals
Dick and Vivian Wright*

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Events

Mark your Calendar
for future Lectures:

September 12

October 10

November 7

December 5

IGI-Global
Publishers of Knowledge
Since 1988

Author's Lecture Series

You are invited to attend a lecture

Mission Adaptive Displays

"The Right Information at the Right Time"

Presented By

Captain Kevin M. Smith

Noted Aviator, Author, Inventor

National Museum of Armament & Technology

USO Building

Thursday, September 12th, 2013

7:00–8:00pm

Q & A After the Lecture

Historic USO Building
230 w. Ridgecrest Blvd.
Ridgecrest Ca. 93555

Available soon from IGI-Global

Mission Adaptive Display Technologies
and
Operational Decision Making in Aviation
BY

Captain Kevin M. Smith

Events

*Lots of Fun and Exciting things
going on at the museum!*

Inventory Time

We need your help

Set the calendar Monday, September 30th at 9am

I need a total of 10 volunteers to help inventory the gift shop.

To sign up contact Teri (760) 939-3530

Annual Members Meeting

October 15, 2013 at Bruce Auld's house.

Look for your invitation at the end of September!

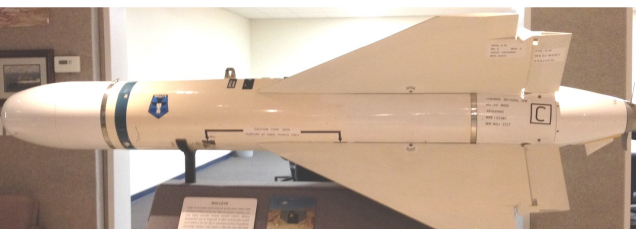
COMMUNITY DAY

OCTOBER 26, 2013 10AM TO 4PM.

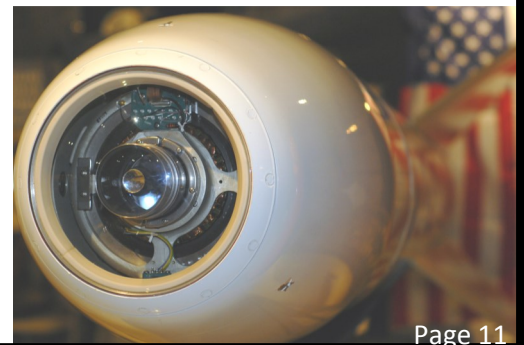
COME CHECK OUT THE BASE AND THE MUSEUM.

50 Years of Walleye

November 1, 2013



*Experience the NEW interactive Walleye display
— 50 years since the first successful launch!*



China Lake Museum Foundation Welcomes Bruce Auld as Chief Development Officer



Life-long resident of the Indian Wells Valley, Bruce Auld, has joined the China Lake Museum Foundation as its Chief Development Officer.

Auld was “dispensed” to Howard and Barbara Auld on July 11, 1948 at the China Lake Dispensary. He attended Richmond

Elementary School and in 1980 was appointed principal of the same Richmond Elementary School. When his appointment to the position of principal was announced, Dorothy Jackson, Bruce’s remedial third grade summer school teacher remarked, “That’s impossible!”

Auld served as superintendent of the Sierra Sands Unified School District for six years (1991 – 1997), then served as superintendent in the Lamont School District, the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District (deputy) and the El Segundo Unified School District. For the past five years, he has served the Sierra Sands Unified School District in the capacity of Measure A and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Construction Management Consultant, coordinating some \$40 million in school modernization and new construction.

In his first month of affiliation with China Lake Museum Foundation, Auld traveled to Washington DC with his grandson, Conner Auld, seeking private construction funding for the proposed re-location of the China Lake Museum on Kern County land adjacent to the Maturango Museum.

China Lake Museum Foundation president, Bob Campbell, is encouraged by Auld’s affiliation with the foundation, citing, “Bruce’s passion for the community and the museum has energized the foundation’s commitment to locating a world class testimony to the 70 years of extraordinary support to the fleet and the nation’s warfighters in Ridgecrest, where it can be readily accessible for to all to see.”

You help put the pieces together for the museum!

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Alta One FCU
Ashley Furniture Home Store
The Boeing Company
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Cosner-Neipp Corporation
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San Joaquin Valley Quality Cotton Growers Assoc.
Southern Sierra General Engineering, Inc.
The Swap Sheet
Tejon Ranch Company
Toss

New Memberships

Steve Felix
Mike Wright

Museum Campaign Contributors

from May 1, 2013– Present

John and Frances DeRosa Jr.
Robert Gould
William and Jean Harris
Geraldine Pracchia
Dennis and Susan Raglin
Seldon and Fran Staniloff

Donations

from May 1, 2013– Present

Ken and Leilani Banks
David Payte
Gene and Kathy Vejtasa

China Lake Museum Foundation

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We could save a lot of money by sending you your newsletter electronically...and you'd get it in **color**! If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically please send an email, from the email address you would like your newsletter sent, to clmf1@chinalakemuseum.org.

Please put in the subject line "Electronic Newsletter."

Museum Campaign

In addition to our annual Dinner Auction, we are very excited to tell you about two projects we will be kicking off in June. One is our new static display that will be the first phase of moving the Museum off base. We already have a signed lease from the County and they are funding the initial infrastructure costs. We will need approximately \$35,000 to complete the project. We will be displaying weapons and aircraft, which will have to be mounted, and we will need a low fence around part of the perimeter. Contributors will be able to have their name displayed on the fence or possibly on a monument also erected on this site. The larger the donation, the more space.

The other project for the summer will be the establishment of the fund for the Larry Zabel Memorial conference room and gallery to be built in the China Lake Museum in Ridgecrest. We estimate that the room will be 1,000 sq. ft. at a build cost of \$150,000. The gallery will not only have a permanent display of Larry's China Lake commemorative and naval art, it will also serve as the administrative conference room to support meetings and other special art exhibits. A contributor will be able to have the room named after an individual or company, with one large donation. If we obtain many small donors, their names will be proudly displayed on one wall in the room. We intend to have an artist's rendition for both projects and an opportunity for donations at the Dinner Auction and will have a more fully developed description of the projects mentioned above.

We hope to have two or three Cultivation Dinners this fall and winter. These events are supported by generous Foundation members that host individuals in their home, so we can introduce them to our passion for the Museum.

I welcome any suggestions you have, or offers of support regarding any of the above projects. There are naming opportunities for other spaces within the future Museum. My email is paconnell@huges.net.

Pat Connell
VP Development



YES!

I want to help build a new Museum in Ridgecrest!

Please accept my payment of:

- \$100 \$200 \$500
- \$1,000 \$5,000 _____

CLMF
P.O. Box 217
Ridgecrest, CA 93556

Your gift is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law for a 501(C)(3) organization.

Please make checks payable to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed is my Check Visa MasterCard Other _____

Card Number: _____

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