



The NorCal News

Volume 59 Number 2

The Poppy

March 2022

President's Message

Spring has sprung in Ripon, it's the middle of February as I write this and it's almond blossom time. If you like the picture I've included and you'd like to park your Airstream among the almond blossoms next year, sign up to host a rally. All rally hosts will be entered into a drawing to be awarded a three-night stay at the Verdegaal Farm in Ripon next year. **(ED. Note: See pg. 14)**



Every five years of membership members receive a Service Star. This year there are 35 members receiving a

star, 20 of them are from the class of 2017. See page for a complete list.

Due to a schedule conflict, I need to select a delegate and an alternate from NorCal to represent NorCal at the International Rally in Maine. Billie and I will be on The Canadian Rockies Caravan until the end of July so will not be able to attend the International. One of the duties of the delegate is to carry the NorCal Flag during the opening ceremonies. If you are attending the rally and are interested in participating in this way, please contact me.

Finally, a special thanks to Pat Lazzereschi and Lori Bibby for their work behind the scene to get the rallies organized and put on.

Bob Verdegaal

"I haven't been everywhere, but it's on my list."

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From the Editor

Greetings everyone and welcome to the March Issue of the Poppy. This month we feature a report from our Immediate Past President John Bibby, who attended the ever popular Rose Parade Rally this year. He too raved about the experience, despite the rain and presence of Covid that closed a



good portion of the L.A. area while he was there. The important news is that the Rally will continue, and is being publicized and marketed to a national audience, so read his article and check out the Facebook page he mentions, especially if you have never attended.

We have an article submitted by member J.P. Sherry of Sacramento, which fits into our intermittent series "Campfire Tales." Picture yourself sitting around a campfire, libation in hand, as J.P. tells you about making choices while travelling on a dark and stormy day in the Mojave. You might relate. Or perhaps not. In any event, I thought it was a fun read. Thanks for the contribution J.P. If anyone else wants to contribute a "Campfire Tale" of their own, plus submit to me at Ungerman72@gmail.com.

Additionally, despite the lack of an official rally the past two months, Airstreamers were seen "out and about" and sent me photos that I have shared. Thanks to Darlene Winchell and Carmen Ortiz for sending them to me. And of course we have the May Rally Summary and Coupon featuring the "Round Up in Red Bluff" Rally, western-themed of course.

Plus: take note of the incentive for hosting rallies this year on page 14. I have been to the Verdegaal farm in February, and this is a wonderful prize!

I apologize for the lack of a Fun Calendar this month. Turns out, due to a mishap with my dog and another dog last month, I managed to fracture my spine in the L1 vertebrae. I'll tell you – it is VERY painful!!! And debilitating.

The fracture is healing slowly, but will take months to fully heal. In the meantime, it is difficult to sit for long periods. Obtaining the procedure to deal with the fracture will probably take longer. The Fun Calendar is time consuming to do, and due to my injury, I did not have the time to devote to it. Hopefully it will return in the next few months.

Please take and send me photos of the Lodi rally this month (March) and possibly April if I cannot make it. And see you down the road ...

Elisa

2022 Rally Schedule

March 2-6	Lodi Grape Festival Grounds	Lodi
Hosts: Pat Lazzereschi, Mike & Phyllis Minadeo		
April 6-10	Gold Country Campground Pine Grove	
Hosts: Greg & Janet Motta, Jill & Dave Wilson		
April 21-24	Region 12 Cali Rally	Parkfield
Hosts: Region 12: FULL		
May 11-15	Journey KOA	Red Bluff
Hosts: Elisa & Ed Ungerman, Bill & Kathy Maffei		
June 8-12	Emerald Forest RV Park	Trinidad
Hosts: Chris & Dean Davison, Carmen & Jose Ortiz		
July 23-29	International Rally	Fryeburg, Maine
Hosts: Airstream Club International		
July 27-31	Olema Campground	Olema
Hosts: Tary & Janie Salinger, Paul & Victoria Bartelst		
Sept. 7-11	Paso Robles RV Ranch	Paso Robles
Hosts: NEEDED		
Sept. 15-19	Region 12 Rally	Mission Bay San Diego
Hosts: https://airstreamclub.org/2022-region-12-rally		
Oct. 5-9	Berry Creek Rancheria	Oroville
Hosts: NEEDED		
Nov. 2-6	Skyline RV Park	Napa
Hosts: Tary & Janie Salinger, Amy & Thomas Webster		
Dec. 7-11	Black Oak Casino	Tuolumne
Hosts: NEEDED		

The Fine Print

New info shown in green. Dates are arrival and departure, although you can often request early arrival or Monday departure. Sign-ups are accomplished by submitting a completed Registration form and payment by the due date to the club Registrar. "Buddy" events allow you to invite a non-member even if they don't own an Airstream. Events lacking hosts or the minimum number of campers may be cancelled. Rallies are subject to COVID restrictions and protocols.



Round Up in Red Bluff

Around the bend of the Sacramento River literally lies Red Bluff, Ca., the site of the May Rally. Our campsite will be at the Red Bluff KOA (formerly The Durango), located on the river's edge, with quick access to walking trails that parallel the river. The RV Park is spacious, with a nice clubhouse, lovely grounds, pool/hot spa, and a communal fire pit area.



While the annual Red Bluff Round-up Rodeo will be long over, we will be rounding up our Airstreams for socialization and fun during the week of May 8th.

To welcome you to Red Bluff, we will have Buckin' Bronco Taco Night on Wednesday, catered by a very popular local Mexican Restaurant. On Thursday we are planning a putting contest at the campground's putting green – so bring any spare putters you may have. Golf balls will be provided if you do not have any. Prizes will be awarded in various categories. You need not be a golfer to have fun and perhaps win.

On Friday afternoon, we have arranged tastings at the Fall River Brewing Company, a Redding craft Brewery that creates its own beers and seltzers.
<https://www.fallriverbrewing.com/>



According to its website, the Company started in the garage of its founder in 2012 and has since grown exponentially. Typically on Fridays, the brewery has a food truck on site, along with plenty of picnic tables and room to spread out while tasting and noshing. It is both dog and kid friendly. We will have sign ups at the Rally to reserve your time slot.

On Saturday, our Western Night Ribs N' Chicken BBQ will be catered by a premiere BBQ restaurant in Redding, after which Jim and Deb Christie and John and Lori Bibby, all members of the Lincoln Sun City Western Dance group, will lead us in dancing to a play-list curated by Jim Christie, President of the group.

Beyond that, there are bike trails to access:
<https://www.bikemap.net/en/1/5570065/>, museums and historical tours to visit:
https://www.tripadvisor.com/AttractionProductReview-g32950-d23752205-Self_Guided_Walking_Tour_in_China_town-Red_Bluff_California.html,
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g32950-d4453867-Reviews-Gaumer_s_Jewelry_Museum-Red_Bluff_California.html, and parks to enjoy:
<https://cityoffredbluff.wixsite.com/parksandrecreation/parks>.

There are wineries in the area and The Rolling Hills Casino, just a few miles south of the campsite, includes a lovely golf course along with the usual gambling fare. Bonus: there is a highly rated ice cream and chocolate shop for those who cannot do without!

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=pumpkinland%20chocolate%20company>

So pack your Western wear, boots and bandanas and drive on up (for most of you) or down (for some of you) to the Round Up in Red Bluff. Ye Haw!

*Your Hosts: Cathy & Bill Maffei,
Elisa & Ed Ungerman*

Round Up in Red Bluff

KOA Red Bluff Journey
 100 Lake Ave, Red Bluff, CA 96080
May 11 - 15, 2022



Coupon Due March 31, 2022

Name: _____

Cell Phone _____

Email: _____

BRNI# _____

Arrival Day _____

Departure Day _____

RV length _____

Rally Nights _____ nights @ \$69 per night

Parking Fee \$ _____

Rally Fee _____ persons @ \$7.50 pp (per person)

Rally Fee \$ _____

Wed. Buckin' Bronco Taco Dinner _____ person @ \$22.50 pp

Wed. Dinner \$ _____

Friday: Fall River Brewery Tasting _____ persons @ \$12 pp
(Note: the pours are large enough to split if you wish)

Fri. Beer Tasting \$ _____

Saturday: Western Night BBQ Dinner _____ persons @ \$25.00 pp

Sat. Dinner \$ _____

TOTAL RALLY COST \$ _____

INSTRUCTIONS

• Either directly register online using the jotform link: <https://form.jotform.com/220556045039149> or follow the 'Register for the Rally' link on the webpage, or send this form and payment to the registrar at norcalregistrar3854@gmail.com. **It is preferred you register online**, which makes it easier for the Registrar and Treasurer to keep track of rally registrations.

• **Send all payments directly to the Registrar. Make your checks payable to WBCCI/NorCal** and mail to NorCal Registrar Lori Bibby, 3029 Black Hawk Ln., Lincoln, CA 95648-7716. Note: All online payments have been suspended pending implementation of the new online payment system.

• **Refund Policy:** Cancellations and/or changes to registration must be received no later than Wednesday of the week prior to the rally, in other words, a week before the start of the rally. Refunds will be available depending on funds recovered in all categories. Parking fees are refunded according to RV park cancellation policy. Meals, tours, rally fees, etc., are refunded if money has not been spent by the hosts.

• **Please contact the Rally Registrar if you have ANY changes to your registration**, or wish to register after the deadline. **973-270-4132**.

• **Under no circumstances are members to contact the RV Park with changes or cancellations.**

• NorCal abides by the federal, state and local COVID19 mandates to keep not only its members safe but also the employees of the RV Parks and the communities we visit safe, which in turn allows us to continue to rally during the pandemic. If you are unable or unwilling to do so, please do not sign up for this rally. If you are ill or not feeling well, please stay home and get better. Thank you for your courtesy in this regard.

• Please inform the Registrar if you need a handicap accommodation, or if this is your first NorCal rally.

Rose Parade Rally '21-22

Soon after joining NorCal, we noticed many member badges had a small embroidered red rose attached. We quickly learned this was a memento provided to those who attend the Region 12 Rose Parade Rally in Pasadena. Virtually everyone we talked to who previously attended said this was an outstanding rally, and highly recommended we add it to our list. I was finally able to attend this year!

This was the 133rd Rose Parade, also known as the Tournament of Roses Parade. It is held annually on New Year's Day in Pasadena, CA. If New Year's Day falls on a Sunday (which it will in 2023) – then the parade is held on Monday, January 2nd. The parade travels about 5.5 miles along Colorado Blvd. It features elaborate and beautifully decorated floral floats, equestrian units, and selected high school, college, and military marching bands.

This year was also the 40th WBCCI Rose Parade Rally – easily making it the oldest urban Airstream rally ever. The Smithson's and the Stansbury's have teamed up to host this rally for the past 10 years. Their detailed planning and information bulletins prior to the rally were superb. It allowed those of us in attendance to arrive prepared, have a great time, and enjoy the many events associated with the parade. Most of us also used our free time to enjoy some of the interesting attractions and dining options in the surrounding area.



Official Greeters: Cecelia Stansbury & Hedda Smithson

The Rally registration fee pays for the parking, some meals (we had 2 dinners and 3 breakfasts provided), grandstand seat tickets for the

parade, and other rally expenses. A few weeks before the start of the rally, the Hosts will give you an opportunity to separately purchase tickets for "extra events". This year our extra event options were Bandfest and Equestfest. Bandfest is a preview of the parade bands as they perform their award-winning field shows that led to their selection. Three shows over two days give everyone a chance to see these talented musicians, dancers, and auxiliary performers in action before they complete the parade. This event is held in the Robinson Stadium at Pasadena City College (about 1 mile from rally site).



Equestfest showcases the beautiful horses and talented riders as they perform drills and demonstrate trick riding and roping. Despite a light rain, we were still able to see some of the horses up close and talk to the riders. There was a food truck, along with some vendors selling various souvenir items. This event is held at a beautiful venue: the LA Equestrian Center in Burbank (about a 25-minute drive from rally site).

My advice is to get tickets for ALL extra events!



A cowgirl drill team performing



The rally location is a secluded parking lot associated with the Pasadena School District. The Hosts provide rented security fencing to close off the parking lot, and a large tent with tables and chairs for meals and gatherings. Due to the limited space for staging and maneuvering at the rally site, arriving rigs are directed to first stop at the "bull pen" – this is actually a very large parking lot at Pasadena City College with room to stage the rigs. One of the Hosts will greet you and contact the rally site "parker" to announce your arrival and length of rig. Once the parker is ready for you, you will drive a few blocks to the rally location. Since this is dry camping, it doesn't take long to park and get set up. After everyone is set up, it's amazing to see how the Airstreams are expertly arranged into such a confined parking lot. Luckily, we had a drone pilot in attendance to provide a unique overhead view!



Rose Parade Continued



The rally kicked off on the first day with a happy hour, announcements, introductions, and dinner. We had 18 rigs from California, 3 from Nevada, 1 from Colorado, 1 from Washington, 2 from Ohio, 1 from Michigan, 1 from Arizona, 1 from Alabama, and 1 from Texas.

Historically the weather in Pasadena is quite nice during the Rose Parade Rally. This particular year, we had periods of very heavy rain the first few days. No complaints, as we really need the rain after several drought years. The rain did slow down our ability to charge batteries with solar, but we were still able to enjoy the Equestfest under a large, covered arena, and the scaled-down Bandfest from a vantage point under the covered parking garage to see the bands performing on the field.

In addition to various other local sights and attractions, many of us followed our host's recommendation to visit a nearby restaurant called "The Hat" for a world-famous pastrami sandwich – it was excellent!

On Friday (New Year's Eve) the sky turned blue, and we were back to some great southern California weather, with sunsets to match.



After enjoying a free day on our own, we all gathered for happy hour, dinner, and New Year's celebration on New York time (9:00pm our time) at

the big tent. It was a very fun and memorable time with a fire pit, various beverages of choice, music, dancing, and lots of conversation and laughter. We capped off the evening with a festive version of Auld Lang Syne before turning in for the night.

Saturday morning (New Year's Day) we all gathered for coffee at the tent before making the short walk to our grandstand seats on the corner of Colorado Blvd and Hudson Avenue. The parade itself kicked off at 8:00 am, but since we were seated towards the end of the parade route, it took about 15 or 20 minutes for the first entries to pass by. We did see an amazing low altitude fly over by an Air Force B2 Bomber all the way from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. Once the parade entries started going by, we could easily follow along with the official souvenir program that was included in our rally welcome bag.



After seeing television coverage of the Rose Parade over the years, I can say that nothing compares to watching it live! The cadence and music from the bands are crisp and clear, the floats are beautiful and intricate, and the buzz from the crowd all combine to make this a truly amazing experience.

This was the final year the Smithsons and Stansburys will host this rally. We are grateful for everything they have done over the

years to preserve this unique rally for everyone to enjoy.



After more than a decade of hosting this Rally, the Stansburys and Smithsons have passed the batton.



Tom's last year dishing up Oatmeal and Ice Cream for breakfast.

Fortunately, new rally hosts have stepped up: the Handshoes and the Vrielings. They have created a new public Facebook page named "WBCCI Rose Parade Airstream Rally" to generate interest: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1003752686842909>. Here you can see posts/photos from this year's rally in addition to useful information about future rallies.

Now that I've attended the R.P. Rally and affixed the small embroidered red rose to my badge, I too can now highly recommend that you add the Rose Parade Rally to your future travel plans. Registration info is found at the Region 12 website. It will be a great time!



- John Bibby

NorCal Officers & Committee Chairs

Welcome New Members

President	Bob Verdegaal
1 st Vice President	Jim Christie
2 nd Vice President	Carmen Ortiz
Secretary	Gail Crutchfield
Treasurer	Jose Ortiz
Senior Trustee	Dean Davison
Senior Trustee	Carol Echols
Trustee	Tary Salinger
Trustee	Mark Winchell
Imm. Past President	John Bibby
Parliamentarian	Hedda Smithson
Constitution & Bylaws	Hedda Smithson
Membership	Marget Williams
Newsletter Editor	Elisa Ungerman
Directory/Audio Visual	Tom Smithson
Webmaster	Carmen Ortiz
Registrar	Lori Bibby
Rally Chair	Pat Lazzereschi
Caravan Chair	Bob Vasser
Sunshine	Cathy Maffei

- John Burnett & Anne Barnett
- Glenna Lee & Chris Stephen
- Raul & Rhonda Muela
- Dianne & Brian Laurence
- Tonya Long
- Debbie Ames & Doug Fritz

**Airstream Club International
on the Web**
<https://airstreamclub.org/>
Region 12 on the Web
<https://airstreamclub.org/region12>
NorCal on the Web
<https://airstreamclub.org/northern-california>



NorCal Membership Numbers

156 Unit/Life Members
40 Affiliate Members
 196 Total Members

Welcome New Affiliates



Rachel Powers

Walter & Lee Smith

James & Jami Goldstene

Melody Rasco

Philip & Margie Glassey

Chelsea & Kyle Train

Walter Smith & Lee Ann

Maura Sullivan & Corky Rey

Lori Johnston & Chris
Castillo



- 2 Luann Hollis
- 2 Claudette Paige
- 3 Dave Wilson
- 4 Dennis Richardson
- 10 Dee Aguilar
- 12 Chet Weaver
- 20 Larry Jones
- 20 Marget Williams
- 30 Deborah Christie
- 30 Eric French
- 30 Tony Sica
- 31 Claudia Sherry

March Anniversaries

- 11 Alan/Dee Aguilar
- 13 John/Lori Bibby
- 21 Tom/Deanna Bai
- 30 Grover/Cathy Sandy

IMPORTANT NOTICE

NorCal would like to recognize the Birthdays and Anniversaries of **all** our Members and Associates.

NorCal was previously able obtain this information when it directly handled membership applications. But now, application forms are now processed through the International Club, and their form does not ask for this information.

Therefore, if you have joined within the past year, our records do not include your Birthday and Anniversary. To ensure you are included in the Newsletter, please send Marget Williams (our Membership Chair) an e-mail with your Name (First and Last) and your Birthday and Anniversary (Month and Day only).

norcalmembership@comcast.net



2022 Star Report



Since 1996, WBCCI, known now as The Airstream Club, honors those members who maintain their membership. Two inch red plastic stars are the official recognition of the duration of membership in the International Club, each depicting five years of membership. The following have earned stars this year, or in some cases last year, but were inadvertently overlooked last year. Congratulations to the Vassers for **50 years** of continuous membership (*ED note: joined the year I graduated from High School!!*) And the Warrens for 35 years. Thanks to Tom Smithson for the compilation.

Editor

January 8, 2022

Membership Report - Stars

Name	Type	WBCCI	Joined	Last Year	Total Stars	New
Aspinwall, Jim & Kathleen	Club	5510	2012	1	2	1
Bacurin, Ron & Gaby	Club	7849	2017	0	1	1
Bartelt, Paul & Victoria	Club	25016	2017	0	1	1
Boeschen, Dann & Susan	Club	21996	2017	0	1	1
Czeszynski, Alan & Michelle	Club	5247	2017	0	1	1
Diamond, John & Mary	Club	5769	2010		2	1
Drew, Ralph & Margaret	Club	1337	2017	0	1	1
Gin/Ng, Marion & Ted	Club	18887	2017	0	1	1
Hambrick/Rutledge, Bill &	Club	13560	2017	0	1	1
Havill/Kraft, Charlie & Michael	Club	20448	2017	0	1	1
Henry, Jack & Mike	Club	7514	2017	0	1	1
Hewen, Paul	Club	26241	1997		5	1
Jackson, Robbie & Eileen	Club	6004	2017	0	1	1
Jester, Michael & Roberta	Club	21784	2017	0	1	1
Kirstien, David	Club	13866	2006		3	1
Krauter, Gordon & Paula	Club	6026	2017	0	1	1
Kurzrock, Matt & Carol	Club	10291	2014		1	1
Lingsch, Mike & Mary	Club	5951	2017	0	1	1
Locklin, Molly	Club	1258	2015		1	1
Lyons, Norman & Judy	Club	3688	2017	0	1	1
Motta, Gregg & Janet	Club	6646	2017	0	1	1
Myers, Roy & Linda	Club	1174	2002	3	4	1
Reistroffer/Hilliard, Kirk &	Club	9956	1997	4	5	1
Richardson, Dennis & Karen	Club	28210	2002	3	4	1
Roen, Bruce & Debra	Club	6100	2017	0	1	1
Rowlands/Haley, Bobbie &	Club	5409	2017	0	1	1
Scheuer, Brian & Juliet	Club	7099	2007	2	3	1
Sutter, Charlie & Tamara	Club	1083	2017	0	1	1
Tansey, Alden & Daria	Club	5945	1987	6	7	1
Tate, Joe	Life	8048	2017	0	1	1
Ungerma, Edward & Elisa	Club	3334	2017	0	1	1
Vasser, Bob & Elaine	Club	26071	1972	9	10	1
Warren, Larry & Kathy	Life	3995	1987	6	7	1
White, John & Elain	Club	5962	1992	5	6	1

1

CAMPFIRE STORIES:

WHEN LIVING THE AIRSTREAM LIFE CAN BE HARROWING!



In our family, a “Daddy-cut” is a short-cut chosen by the driver of the tow vehicle (almost always me) in which an alternate route to a given place is selected. According to my family, the Daddy-cut is ALWAYS longer than the regular road. This is probably true. According to me (the Daddy in said “Daddy-cut”), the Daddy-cut shows us things we never would have seen on the main road, and despite the angst and tired grumpiness of the driver and the passengers, we are better people for having experienced this. Usually Daddy-cuts are creations of my imagination. Sometimes they are Google’s artificial intelligence’s form of a nasty prank. This is one such story.

THE GOOD

This past Christmas, we took an Airstreaming trip from Sacramento to Tucson. During that trip, we stopped at Pismo Beach (cold but clear and beautiful), Ventura’s Rincon Highway (same), through Riverside, on to Phoenix and then Tucson. To be adequately forewarned about Google’s proclivities (and why I decided to ignore them at my peril), you must first know about our trip from Ventura to Riverside. On December 23, 2020, at 9:00 a.m., I turned on Google maps. The trip clocked in at 2 hours. So, on the road we went. The rains started and as everyone knows, no one in Los Angeles can drive in the rain. The rain that week was exceptional in that an atmospheric river descended on Los Angeles, closed I-5 at the Grapevine with snow, and caused minor flooding across the region. Our trip got longer and longer and longer, and I got more and more frustrated. Mind you, I followed the most direct route between Ventura and Riverside, following the advice of Google the entire way. Despite the complete absence of any Daddy-cut, we would go five minutes down the road in stop and go traffic and the estimated time of arrival would grow by 10 minutes. Needless to say, this was infuriating and the two-hour drive turned into 5. (GRRRRR) The good news is we got to Riverside, saw our grandson, and had a nice visit. We had a wonderful visit with my wife’s brother and our other son and a great time with Papa EJ and Marsha in Tucson.

I, being the wonderful, adoring husband that I am, dropped my dear wife off at Phoenix’s Sky Harbor airport so she could enjoy a direct flight back to Sacramento, (and avoid the 10-11 hours of driving home). I then Airstreamed from Phoenix. While I was sorely tested to stop at the Patton Museum at Chiriaco Summit (which supposedly has decent free dry camping behind it) and even at Dessert Center, where you can find a decent open space on the south side of Highway 10, the threat of another large winter storm heading to Los Angeles kept me pushing on in the hopes I would make it through before the storm.

As luck would have it, the next atmospheric river hit while I was in Riverside. Over the prior night, the snow level dropped to 4,500 feet or so, and once again the major route between Los Angeles and Sacramento (I-5) was blocked by snow. I should have taken this into account when I left, but I promised my bride I’d be home for New Years. It was already December 30th, and I had two four-hour drives left, broken up by an overnight in Visalia.

THE BAD

If you are still with me, here’s where the story gets “bad.” Riverside to Visalia is normally a 4.5 - 5 hour drive. Not on December 30, 2021, however. I made it a seven-hour drive by starting to follow Google, deciding to ignore Google, and then following it again.

Thinking I’m smarter than everyone else (I’m not, but I think that sometimes), I headed off on highway 215 North towards the mountains. The first sign that traffic would be heavier than normal was that at 9:15 a.m. on a Thursday, traffic was already backed up on a road to pretty much nowhere. The rain continued to pick up and as I turned onto Highway 138, I thought to myself, maybe I should have stayed home, celebrated the New Year with the grandkid and got on the road with everyone else on January 1st. Nah, . . . I’ll go, it’ll be fine.

The rain got harder and harder, and the snow line got closer and closer. As I passed the cutoff for Highway 2 to Wrightwood, I could see the snow was sticking on the ground a couple hundred feet higher than my current elevation. There were snow plows driving on the same road as me. . . This can’t be good. The temperature was hovering at 38 degrees and the green truck in front of me (I’ll call the Green Monster) did not have a trailer, so it was throwing sprays of water high into the air making it hard to see the road, despite the wipers going full bore.

Go around him, you say; slow down, you say. When I slowed, the Green Monster slowed. When I sped up, the Green Monster sped up. It was almost as if he was trying to make my life harder. Well, I took a deep breath, kept as much distance from him as I could and kept driving. The altitude got lower and lower and the temperature got higher and higher and the rain got harder and harder. I was dutifully following Google Maps (as were hundreds of my fellow travelers, as you will see in a moment), and the Green Monster.

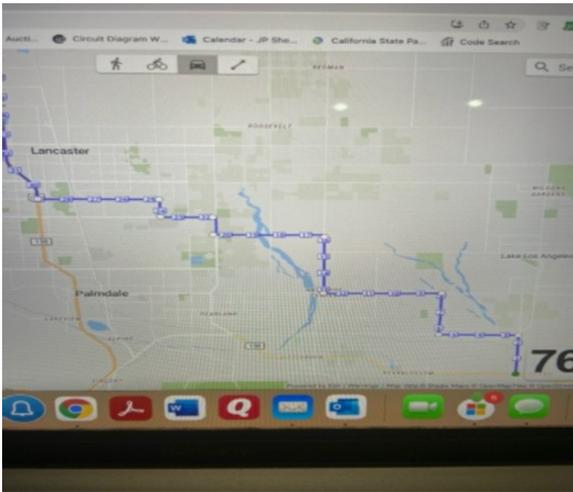
Highway 138 has lots and lots of dips in the road. They are especially fun when it’s dry and you can get a little speed to go through them. It’s almost like being on a roller

Continued next page

coaster. With an Airstream behind you, it's not as much fun, but still a pretty easy drive. But on December 30th, there was the added component of near record rainfall in the Southern California desert. On the side of the mountains I was on, the topography drops steadily from the mountains and all of that water was running off the mountain. Guess where it crossed Highway 138? Yep, in each of those dips. The good news for me, was that the Eastbound side I was on the north and had significant flooding while the Westbound side (my side), was mostly dry. Despite that, every third or fourth dip, the truck on the Eastbound side would shower me and the Airstream with a huge wave of muddy water.

Additionally, Highway 138 is usually filled with traffic as it rambles to Lancaster. All of the roads to the north of that road resemble a Mad Max set with compounds, burnt-out cars, boats, dilapidated houses, and randomly-dumped trash, resembling a post-apocalyptic scene, especially poignant in this time of Covid.

Google suddenly had a great idea. If you turn right here, you'll save 4 minutes getting to your next stop in Lancaster. I'm all for getting to my destination more quickly, so I follow the direction and think I'm now out from behind the Green Monster. Google seemingly put me on a path of right and left turns as it slowly but surely directed me to the Lancaster Costco, through desert I've never seen.



All of a sudden, the Green Monster is back. Yep, right in front of me. He must have gotten the same Google direction a few blocks up the road. Now, this was good and bad. He was still spewing water when we hit 55 and obscuring my vision, but it was less frequent. However, the roads north of the main road are not as nice as Highway 138. They don't have dips, but what they did have were "road flooded" signs and water washing across the road.

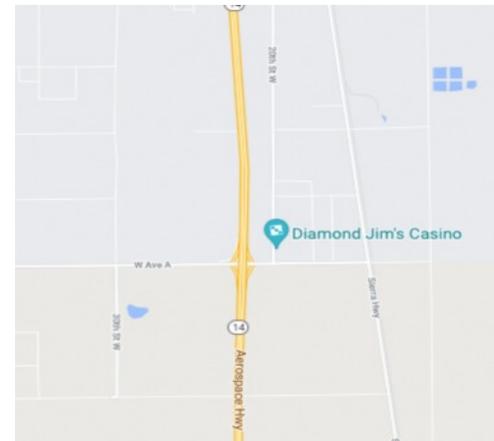
So, there I was on the Mad Max set, pulling my trailer, in a major rainstorm, behind the Green Monster, watching as the road disappeared under one newly created river after another. But now, the Green Monster was performing a service; he went through each of these rivers before I did, showing me how deep the water was, thereby allowing me safe passage to Costco.



After a fill up at Costco (a decision I really appreciated later), I was back onto Highway 14 headed to the alternative route around the summit: Highway 58. Guess what?? To avoid the closed I-5, everyone else following Google maps had the same idea.

The normal alternate route is Highway 14, to Highway 58, to Highway 99 to Visalia. From Lancaster, it should normally take 3 to 3.5 hours to Visalia. Not today. As I got near "Diamond Jim's Casino," Google maps announced that if I took a right turn and took a detour through the desert that ended up at the Tehachapi-Willow Springs Road, I would save 20 minutes. Now, after the last 40 minutes of driving back roads (all paved mind you) through minor flash flood after flash flood, I should have just stayed on Highway 14. But save 20 minutes? Plus: it's just me and the dog and the trailer, and we're ready for anything, right?

As I got closer to Jim's Casino, the delay on Highway 14 goes from 20 minutes to 22 minutes to 23 minutes. Fearful of another trip like last week, I decided the Google detour is the solution, even though my rational brain said, "stay on Highway 14."

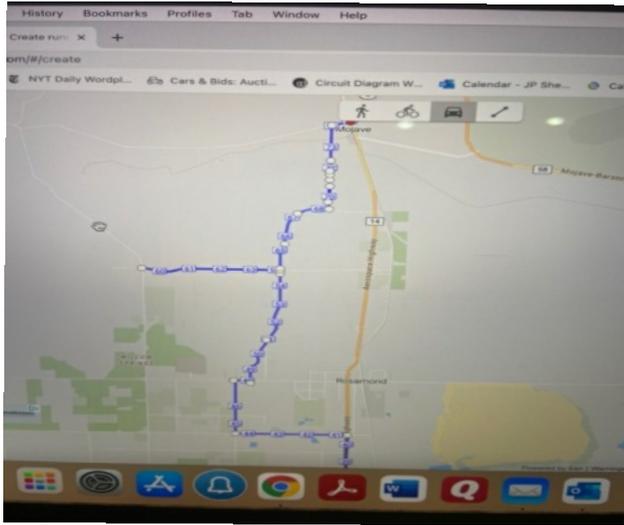


I got off the highway with about 20 other cars and followed this detour. As I drove down West Avenue A, Google said, if you turn right here, you'll save another 4 minutes. What could possibly go wrong? So, right turn I took.

This road was another of those roads you can only find in the desert. No houses, no businesses, just wide-open spaces. The road took me by an abandoned mine with what looked like a small ghost town perched on the side of the hill. It was all fenced in and looked like any wild west movie you've ever seen. I was waiting for Wyatt Earp to ride up on his horse and have a shoot-out at the coral that had seen better days. It took me over a hill like the ones you see in all those van-life videos. Indeed, some folks had staked out camping in this area, although it was hard for me to imagine hanging out in the rain in a small van in "nowheresville." It

continued through some huge windmills, and up and over a hill with no cell service, and past...well . . . nothing. I'm starting to wonder where the heck we're going and then Google said turn right and let's go back to Highway 14.

a moment when he caused a truck turning right onto my road to block traffic going the other way. He added to his gift by opening up the side of the road that was big enough for me to go right and then make a full U-turn to go back the way I came. Yay!!! I was back on track. I've learned my lesson; I should have followed the "Google Route" back there. But then I wouldn't have learned the virtue of patiently waiting for that opportunity to make my turn-around as I did.

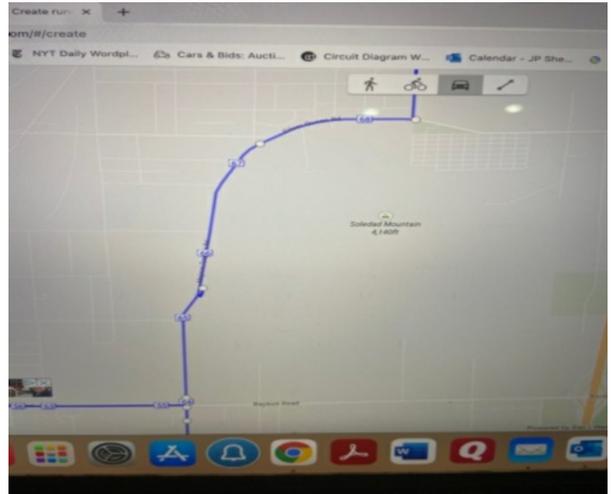


THE UGLY

"No! No! No!," my irrational brain said. Google had repeatedly steered me wrong and misrepresented the time to destination. The original detour was to Tehachapi/Willow Springs Road, we are well more than halfway there, and darn it, that's where we're going; So, instead of turning right and heading back to the big four lane highway and traffic jam, I turned left and headed down the two-lane road in the middle of nowhere. I checked the Google map again and again. My mountain pass seemed open and a shorter path.

Where Backus Road hits Mojave-Tropico Road, Google said turn left onto Mojave and go north. Now, I'm in a line of hundreds of cars. It's pouring rain, but we seem headed in the right direction. I travelled on the back side of the gravel mine you can see from Highway 14 and it's actually kind of cool looking on this side. Mojave turns into Silver Queen and at the intersection of Silver Queen and Holt Street, I can go straight to Highway 14 or turn left onto Holt, a small road that leads to Reefer City. Google says turn left although Highway 14 is mere I mile straight ahead. Now that I think about it, Google was taking people off Highway 14 to get around that 24-minute delay. Little did Google users know it was a trap!

Heading down this two-way road, I found more of those dips again. This time, however, they were full on both sides of the road with 6 inches to a foot of water in them. The traffic on the other side of the road was heavy and going in the opposite direction. Moreover, those folks were also in a hurry, and nary a one slowed down as they hit the huge puddles in the road. My truck and camper were covered wave after muddy wave of water and desert sand.

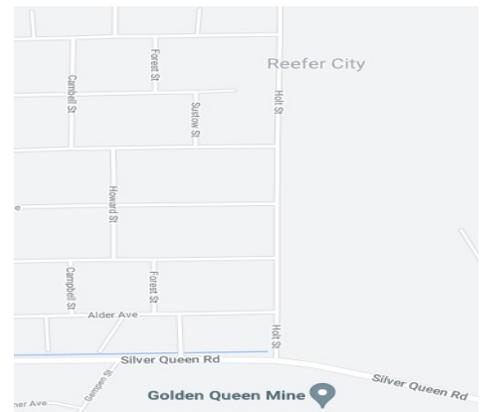


As we got closer to the junction of Backus Road and Tehachapi/Willow Springs, I saw those tell-tale red lines on the Google maps for the Tehachapi/Willow Springs road. Oh no! What's going on? As I got within a half a city block of the junction, I noticed every car was turning towards me and away from the detour. That's cuz the road was closed. . . Yikes! No wonder all the traffic in the opposite direction! So, there I was on a two-lane road towing my Airstream, with dozens of cars behind me, traffic whizzing by me going the other way, all the while coming up to a dead-end T. What do I do?

Imagine if you will: you are on a two-lane road in the middle of desert in pouring rain. The road is back-to-back with traffic going east toward Highway 14 – 100s of cars now. On the other side of Holt, it's back-to-back to back traffic coming west from Highway 14, converging on Holt street that

My first try was to turn around in the road I was on. There wasn't enough room. I'm stressing out because of the LA style traffic jam around me, trying not to jackknife the trailer. As you might imagine, the crowd around me was not patient. But somehow, I managed to back up into the road in the direction I was going. God smiled on me for

shows up on Google maps as a regular road paralleling 14 until it hooks up with Oak Creek Road, which takes you to Highway 14. An on-coming Greyhound bus turned right onto Holt coming from Highway 14.



(Clearly, he's a bus driver who drives for a living;

this must be the right way to go.) Then a truck driver turns to follow the bus. (*Another “professional driver;” this is absolutely the way.*) Then a Camry follows them, and it was my turn. (*Should I follow all these people? Well, if the bus and the truck break down, there will be lots of people out here; someone to help pull me out of any problems and if they get stuck, someone will come and find me.*) Decision made - away we all went.

For the past 20 miles, I've been on back roads in the high desert. Some places have a few houses. Little towns litter the landscape. All of the roads have been paved. But now, I'm on Holt Street. I have no idea what "Reefer City" is, but apparently, I passed it and must have blinked. Then, a red Lexus IS 250 comes the other way. She looks worried. I wonder why she's going that way? A few feet later, the road turns to a dirt road.



This photo does not do the road justice. It was dark (even though it was noon), pouring down rain. The road was muddy and filled with potholes and puddles. Huge windmills are on my left. There is desert on both sides of the road. A solar panel farm comes up the right. The puddles in the road start to get bigger. This is nuts! What am I doing? We were cruising along at 3 miles per hour. The bus and the truck started weaving back and forth across the road when we came to puddles larger than the cars on the road. Most were filled with a half foot of water. Traffic was actually coming from the other direction. From time to time, they drove out in the desert to avoid us. One puddle was so large, we crossed the road, drove up onto a track that someone has made in the desert and travelled 200 yards in the desert before returning to the road. I dutifully followed along. . . cuz . . . where am I going to go now? I made sure there was enough clearance that I did not scrape the Joshua Trees on either side of this new "path."

I figured to myself, if the truck, bus and Camry make it through, I can too, right? In my two-wheel drive truck with a 25-foot trailer. Slowly and unsteadily, we made forward progress. Sometimes at 1 mph, other times at 5 mph. Good

thing I had a full tank of gas, full tanks of water and the batteries were charged up. Thought I could live out here for a while if I got stuck. There were times the wheels start to slip, but I'm in first gear and I vowed not to stop no matter what the cars in front of me do. The Camry putted along. The truck kept moving. The bus was plodding forward. We're all going wherever we are going together.

Until we reach Oak Creek Road. Google says cross the road and keep going straight. I'm thinking: "Nope, sorry, not gonna happen. I'm going only on paved roads from now on." So, despite the fact that the bus and the truck continue forward, I turn right, toward Highway 14. It bears noting the top of that the crown of the road we were on was so steep, that the bus and the truck ground their rear bumpers into the road as they descend back into the dirt. I can't imagine what that would have done to the rear plumbing of the Airstream, not to mention the bumper. Google was having a field day with us.

EPILOGUE

I finally made it to Highway 14, and eventually onto Highways 58 and 99. My "quick" detour to save 20 minutes (per Google) did no such thing - adding two plus hours and 78 extra miles. The good news is we made it; we're safe; we're healthy; and we saw lots of the desert I would never ever otherwise have seen. The bad news is that it took two extra hours, I almost got stuck three times, dealt with some aberrant drivers, and the rig became filthy; coated in sand and mud from the desert. During the rest of my drive home, I knew who else Google tricked into this ridiculous detour: the cars that looked like we were off-road enthusiasts. As car after car passed me on Highway 99 wearing the same patina of sand and mud, I knew they had experienced the same thing I did.

I'm not sure I'm a better person for having experienced this, but certainly I have a story to tell. I hope you enjoyed reading it. It is hard to know if the moral is to follow Google and do a Daddy-cut, or stick to the main roads. In this case, either path seemed to have adverse consequences. But if you want to get somewhere the safest way, I say stick to the major roads. Maybe my family (sometimes) knows best. Travel safe. See you down the road.



By: JP Sherry





Attention Rally Hosts And Would-Be Rally Hosts

Our Club President Bob Verdegal and his First Lady Billie Verdegal are offering a wonderful prize to anyone who hosts a Club Rally during 2022: a three-night stay on their farm during Almond blossom time. They own several almond orchards in Ripon, California (South of Manteca) and when the almond blossoms are in full bloom in February, the sight is stunning. Plus the Verdegal's farm is quite nice too, while Billie and Bob are the most gracious of hosts. So for those not yet hosting, check out page 2; there are still rallies without hosts, and sign up! The winner will be announced at the December Rally.

Editor

NorCalers Out and About



Several NorCalers met up for a bike ride in Monterey in February. It turned out some Norcalers were staying at the Monterey Fairgrounds while others camped at the Monterey Elks Lodge during the same week.



Some NorCalers spent a Saturday bike riding the American River Parkway in Sacramento and posing for this selfy with First V.P. Jim Christie.

You can order your NorCal Garden Flag directly from Flagology. Complete instructions are in the January Poppy issue. For any questions, the NorCal contact is John Bibby (707) 592-4891. The Flagology contact is Connor Young (855) 347-4922. Click here to order, or copy and paste in your browser: <https://www.flagology.com/product/personalized-norcal-airstream-club-garden-flag-12-5-x-18/>



You can obtain your colorful NorCal Membership Badge whenever you attend a rally. Contact Marget Williams to get yours for free, a perk of membership. Also, now available is the NEW five inch club logo sticker for your Airstream or Tow Vehicle when you attend rally. It has the same design shown on the masthead of The Poppy. Be sure to request one from Marget.

