



Ridge Route Communities  
**MUSEUM**  
& Historical Society

FALL 2021

# The Ridge Route Rambler

We're nuts  about history.

Editors: Chandra Sargent Mead and Bonnie Ketterl Kane



## THE DEMISE OF THE LEBEC HOTEL

When gas rationing ended at the end of World War II, the motoring public took to the roads once again. With more streamlined vehicles and the newly widened four-lane Highway 99, the early 1950's brought three state-of-the-art gasoline "superstations" to Lebec. The FRAZIER MOUNTAIN BREEZE declared "Development Booms at Lebec". The Coffee Shop out in front of the Lebec Hotel underwent major improvements and recorded some five thousand people passing through the doors of the cafe during a twenty-four hour period. However, with faster vehicles, overnight stays at the hotel declined, as did the clientele.

An unnamed newspaper of October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1953 carried an article about a raid on some illegal gambling at the Hotel. It read:

*"A State Department of Justice team, led by deputy director H. C. Robinson, investigated alleged gaming activities at the Lebec Hotel. Entering a large room directly above the Hotel lobby, Robinson said 'it was like walking into the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas'. He described the room, which covered a major portion of the second floor, as 'fabulous' or in terms of gambling jargon, 'a carpet joint'. No arrests were made and equipment, which included six tables, a roulette wheel and cashiers cage, was left intact."*

Some years later, former resident Jess Hawley remembered that on each side of the entry to the dining room there were stairs that led up to a casino area (no longer in use) and a patio/sun deck over the kitchen. Here he saw the roulette wheel, crap tables and piles of furniture, heavy with dust, stored up there.

The last owners of the hotel purchased it in June of 1957. They were a corporation called Simon Beverly, which ran the chain of Stan's Drive-Ins in Los Angeles. Simon Beverly, Inc. purchased 32 acres, which included the water company, hotel, café, business buildings and the three service stations. The company had owned the bar and restaurant for the past four years.

Neda and David Howard were hired to manage the Hotel, but only if she was allowed to remodel the upstairs rooms with new carpet and furniture. The Hotel had steam heaters in every room that had leaked badly over the years, so Mr. Howard repaired them all before the new carpet was put in. The hotel underwent a \$60,000 remodeling program to redecorate the inside, with 34 rooms completely refurnished "in modern style", and outside, a new roof was put on the building.

However, during the 1960's most of the seventy-two rooms were occupied on a monthly basis by workers of the "Feather River Project", when the California Aqueduct was put through Tejon Ranch, as well as workers building Interstate 5 and the dam at Pyramid Lake. The Hotel's rooms quickly became rather run down.

By the late 1960's when all the area huge construction projects were finishing up, the Hotel had become quite run down. The November 2, 1968 issue of the BAKERSFIELD CALIFORIAN reported that the President of the Simon-Beverly Corporation, Saul M. Meadows, was being threatened with the loss of his operating license for offering sub-standard housing. He was also facing charges for the poor operation of the water system that supplied the hotel, the adjoining commercial establishments and approximately 200 customers. The owner claimed he was making no improvements because a sale of the hotel was underway. The license was revoked and the sale did not go through. The article also indicated that a local water district was created to take over the operation of the community's water system. This, of course, indicates that the local water system was run through the Hotel wells.

The demise of the once thriving community of Lebec continued with the opening of Interstate 5. As travelers raced by, they no longer needed to stop. The newly established MOUNTAIN ENTERPRISE newspaper reported in the March 20, 1969 issue:

*"The tangled affairs of the Lebec Hotel and Simon-Beverly Inc. made news again this week with the premises, including the coffee shop and bar, padlocked – perhaps for good. The hotel had been closed several months ago for violations of the Kern County Health and safety code. However, it was found recently that as many as eleven persons were living in the hotel in direct violation to the condemnation order. These persons, mostly employees of the coffee shop and bar, have now been moved out and the Kern County Sheriff's Department has been asked to arrest anyone found trespassing on the premises. It was also found that several of the employees had never been paid while working there. The Simon-Beverly representative said there was no money with which to pay the workers. The Simon-Beverly Corporation was facing a \$7,000 fine for health and safety violations which they also could not pay."*

The MOUNTAIN ENTERPRISE of January 8, 1970 indicated that with a million dollars the grand old hotel could be saved. Transients from the highway were camping in it and even starting small fires in the rooms to warm themselves and cook with.



The Simon-Beverly Corp lost the Hotel property to foreclosure early in 1971 and in April of that year, the Tejon Ranch Company bought it, as well as the buildings along the old highway and the 44 acres that the buildings sat on. Deciding it would be too costly to revive the buildings and not being a part of Tejon's plans for the future, the decaying hotel and nearby coffee shop were destroyed just two weeks later, on April 27th, used as a county fire department practice burn. It took a number of tries to get the fire going.



The proud concrete reinforced walls stood until they were knocked down with a wrecking ball, and the debris was buried in the canyon behind.



Italian cypress trees are all that remain today of that wonderful part of the area's history.



## **HOLIDAY LIGHTS OPEN 11/25**

Once again, the museum staff will be creating a winter wonderland of lights for the Holidays. The expanded display of lights will begin on Thanksgiving weekend from 6 – 10 p.m. through New Year's Day. Drive by or walk-throughs are welcome.

## **RIDGE ROAD REPORT . . .**

The Ridge Route Preservation Organization volunteers removed a large rockslide that occurred earlier this year below Swede's Cut. For information on how you might help out with one of their work parties, go to the group's web site, [www.ridgeroute.org](http://www.ridgeroute.org).

## ASSISTANT CURATOR NAMED . .



Kevin Woten began as a volunteer at our museum immediately after retiring from the U.S. Postal Service in 2017. He also picked up an Associate Degree in History at College of the Canyons. In the 1980's he researched and co-wrote a book on mountain biking in the Saugus & Mt. Pinos areas. He has

been serving as the historian of the museum's map collection and curator of our Indian Center. Since our current curator Bonnie Kane has three books to finish, Kevin will now be training into the duties she has been doing for the last 25 years.

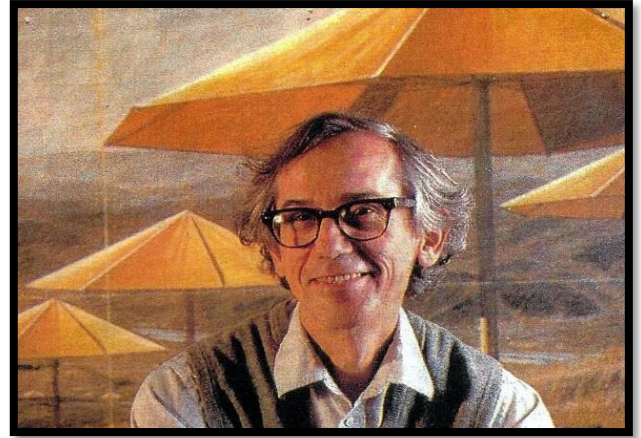
## IN APPRECIATION

Sending out our thanks to our local sign "guy", Gene Kolisnyk of Mountain Top Graphics, for making new signs for some of our outside exhibits as well as signage on our buildings, many of them for free.

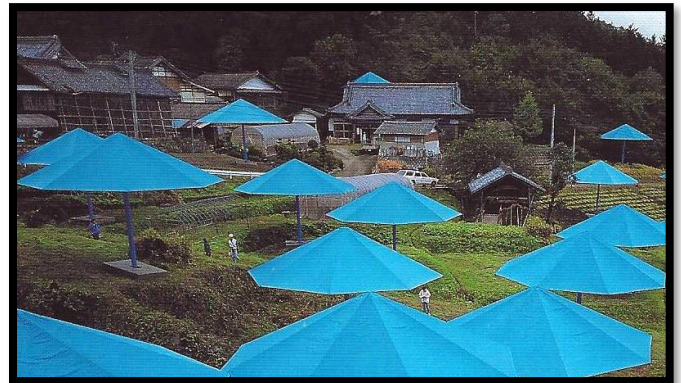
## UMBRELLAS

It was 30 years ago in 1991, that the artist Christo opened an exhibit of huge yellow umbrellas from the bottom of Grapevine Canyon south along Interstate Five and the old Ridge Route Road to

south of Gorman. The excitement and beauty of this art project will probably never be seen here again.



The exhibit was created to memorialize the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Opening on the same day in '91 was a matching exhibit of blue umbrellas in Japan, on the same longitude as the California display, joining the two countries together.



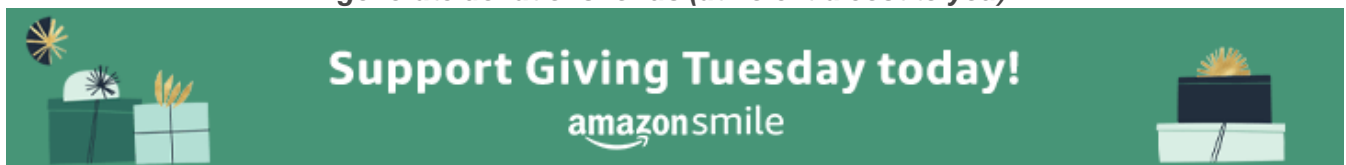
His creation gave our mountain area world-wide recognition; thousands came from all over the country to see it.

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*Tejon Mountain Village* 

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**November 30th**

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy Fall to you all! We have had quite a productive year, especially considering we were closed half the year. The museum has been open Friday, Saturday & Sunday from noon to 4 PM since the state allowed us to re-open in June.

In September, our Yard Sale was so good, and we had so much stuff donated that we continued a second weekend, and made enough to pay our annual insurance and chip away at some of our big dreams!



In October, our Lebec Hotel Centennial dinner event was SOLD OUT! We had a wonderful time at Tejon Ranch's Guest House with tours, skits, big band music, an auction and a lovely dinner. About 20 of our guests showed up in 1920's attire, which helped set the mood. Roger Csulak made a generous donation. We've received many kind notes from attendees on how much they enjoyed their evening!

Our first Ridge Route Tour planned for the 18<sup>th</sup> was cancelled due to closure of the National Forest. The weekend after the Centennial, Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, we did conduct a Ridge Route Tour, with a group of 16 people.

The Museum would like to welcome Jim Mason, who has volunteered for the position of archivist working to preserve our files, as well as a Board Member. Thank you and Welcome Jim!

We are including an envelope with this newsletter, so that you can renew your membership, donate or even sponsor an exhibit or event!

Sincerely, Bethel Billesbach



**Personal & Business Memberships**

Membership	Cost	Rambler	Discount*	Ad† Rambler	Online Ad†	Travel Mag	Tickets**
Senior (62+)	\$15	•	•				
General	\$25	•	•				
General Gold	\$50	•	•				1
Lifetime	\$500	•	•			•	1
Lifetime x2	\$750	•	•			•	2
<b>Business</b>							
Silver	\$50	•	•	•			
Gold	\$100	•	•	•	•		1
Platinum	\$250	•	•	•	•	•	2

**Annual Event, Exhibit & Acquisition Sponsorship Opportunities**

Events	Cost	Events	Cost	Events	Cost
Speaker	\$50	Cuddy Cabin	\$500	Prehistorio	\$1,000
Tea	\$75	Gas Station	\$750	Chumash	\$3,000
Patio Evening	\$100	Chumash Exhibit	\$1,000	Bell Tower	\$6,000
Tour	\$150	Landsoaping	\$2,000	East Side Property	\$20,000
Tour w/ Lunch*	\$300	Irrigation	\$3,000	Barn Property	\$50,000
Destination Dinner*	\$500	Lebeo Hotel Patio	\$4,000	2 <sup>nd</sup> Exhibit Hall	\$100,000
Speaker	\$50	Cuddy Cabin	\$500	Prehistorio	\$1,000

\* Discount on purchases of 10% in the museum store.      ^ Special Events  
 † Business Card ad in our quarterly Rambler newsletter.  
 ‡ Online Ad post our social media or a post on our website (with link).



Museum membership, sponsorship, & gifts are tax deductible; please check with your tax consultant or CPA for details. FIN 77-0431597

<p><b>Donations</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> \$_____ Any value is appreciated</p> <p><b>Membership</b></p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Personal</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Senior (62+)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$25 General</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 General Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Lifetime Couple</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Business</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Silver</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Platinum</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Sponsorship</b></p> <p><b>Events &amp; Exhibits</b></p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Speaker</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Tea</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patio Evening</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Tour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Tour w/ Lunch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Destination Dinner</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Cuddy Cabin</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Gas Station</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 Landsoaping</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Irrigation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$4,000 Lebeo Patio</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p><b>Acquisitions</b></p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Prehistorio</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$6,000 Bell Tower</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 East side property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 Barn property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibit Hall</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Personal</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Senior (62+)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$25 General</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 General Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Lifetime Couple</p>	<p><b>Business</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Silver</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Gold</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Platinum</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Speaker</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Tea</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Patio Evening</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Tour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$300 Tour w/ Lunch</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Destination Dinner</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Cuddy Cabin</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$750 Gas Station</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 Landsoaping</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Irrigation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$4,000 Lebeo Patio</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 Prehistorio</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$3,000 Chumash</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$6,000 Bell Tower</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 East side property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 Barn property</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibit Hall</p>	<p><b>Mail-in Form</b></p> <p>Name / Company _____</p> <p>Mailing Address _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>City, State, ZIP _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p> <p>Newsletter Format:    <input type="checkbox"/> Email    <input type="checkbox"/> US Mail</p>
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