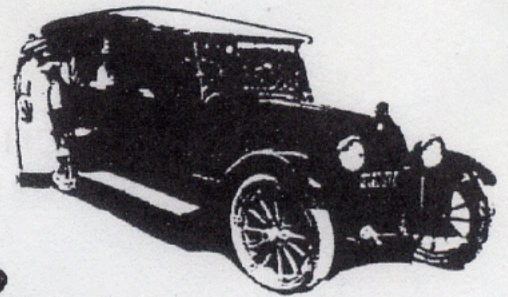


LINCOLN HIGHWAY ASSOCIATION  
CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER

# THE TRAVELER



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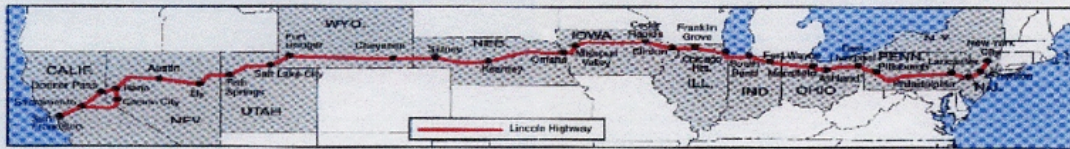


That 1928 REO Speedwagon





## THE "COAST TO COAST" LINCOLN HIGHWAY



A CONTINUOUS CONNECTING IMPROVED HIGHWAY FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC

**Mary Ramsey, President**  
**California Chapter**  
**Lincoln Highway Association**

**P.O. Box 492**  
**Foresthill, CA 95631**  
**(530) 367-3987**

### ● Next Quarterly Chapter Meeting:

Is a tour of the Heidrick Ag Center and Hays Antique Truck Museum, in Woodland on **Saturday, October 11, 2003.**

They'll be ready for us **at 10:00 a.m.**

Entry to the museum is **\$6 for adults and \$5 for seniors.**

Take I-5 north to the County Road 102 exit. At the signal at the end of the ramp, go straight across Road 102 onto Hays Lane. The museum is about one block straight ahead on the left. We will have lunch after the tour in Woodland. Bring family and friends to this great display of agricultural and truck history.

- Our chapter is in need of a new editor since the passing of Wes Hammond. Wes did a great job and enjoyed the history he researched for the "Traveler." He will be missed!

Please call me and volunteer at 530-367-~~2747~~ **3987**

- Our project to install an interpretative plaque in San Francisco is on hold. The city of San Francisco is in the process of conducting city wide uniform signage in their parks. It will be 9 to 12 months before they adopt uniform signage. They were impressed with the information packet prepared by George Clark. I thank George for his tireless efforts in this project and hope it moves forward soon.

- January 10, 2004

Chapter election of officers: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

- Here's the best news of all! I got married on September 27<sup>th</sup> to Dustin Ramsey. I have moved to 6035 Happy Pines Drive, Foresthill, 95631. Phone: 530-367-3987.

Mary Louise Ramsey

- Norman Root, State Director, has had several occasions during the past year to need to communicate with the membership quickly. This has been done through e-mail. We have e-mail addresses for about one third of the chapter membership. If you haven't received an e-mail in the past month, then we don't have your e-mail address. If you have e-mail and would like to be kept in the loop, please send your e-mail address to: [normanroot@netzero.com](mailto:normanroot@netzero.com)



# That Nebulous Covered Wagon

By Norman Root

Very few even know about the Lincoln Highway Boy Scout Safety Tour of 1928, nor the REO Speedwagon in which they rode. But if a truck was involved, someone amongst the volunteer corps at the Hays Truck Museum, in Woodland, surely knows about it.

At the end of March 2003, I received a phone call from Joe Weber, a volunteer at Hays Truck Museum, asking if I had ever heard of the 1928 Lincoln Highway Boy Scout Safety Tour and the REO Speedwagon truck that they used; and do I have any pictures? The museum has a REO Speedwagon just sitting doing nothing. They are considering building a replica of the Scout's truck to be used in the museum's Lincoln Highway Marker Post exhibit.

Yes, I have pictures, amongst copies of the memorabilia loaned a few years ago by Bernie Queneau. I agreed to meet the Hays team at their semi annual "Change of Time" swap meet the next week end.



Bernie Queneau third from right, in 1928.

I brought photos, news clippings and magazine articles telling about the Lincoln Highway Boy Scout Safety Tour of 1928. Excitement began to grow on the faces of the Hays team as they passed around and examined the documentation. They began making mental task assignments; woodwork, canvas work, sign painting and truck restoration. Al Garcia, head volunteer at Hays said, "Just give us six months and you're going to see something!"

Shortly thereafter I was reminded of the Lincoln Highway 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemorative motor tour to arrive in San Francisco on September 1<sup>st</sup>. September 1<sup>st</sup> is also exactly 75 years to the day that the Boy Scouts placed those now famous concrete marker posts back in 1928, all 3400 on the same day! The cross country Lincoln Highway Boy Scout Safety Tour, which arrived in August of 1928, is considered the advance party, paving the way for that Herculean post setting event on September 1<sup>st</sup>.

Boy, wouldn't be terrific if Hays could have their truck at the Western Terminus celebration on September 1<sup>st</sup>? And wouldn't it be fantastic if we could get Bernie Queneau, the sole remaining scout who rode across country in the REO back in 1928, to attend?

But September 1st is less than six months away, the projected delivery date envisioned by the Hays team. So I began feeding them information and news releases about the commemorative tour hoping to generate excitement and enthusiasm at the museum to speed up the project to meet the September 1<sup>st</sup> date. Months passed and in mid July I had not heard anything from Hays. So I called to make sure that the REO project was on schedule.

The voice at the other end of the line said; "They'd better not be working on the REO Speedwagon. The volunteer restoration shop is seven years behind schedule on already paid for truck restoration work." A couple of days later, Al Garcia called to confess that the REO project had not even been started. The shop is way over booked, but the REO project would be easy; the wood work, the canvas work and sign painting would be easy but there isn't enough time to make the truck operable. He would talk to the volunteers in the shop. Then another couple of days later he called again, and in the mean time all of that easy work had somehow become difficult.



I mulled the project over in my mind for another couple of days. I called and offered to bend the ribs, do the wood work, obtain the canvas, and even trailer the truck to San Francisco, if need be. They accepted all of my offer except that my half ton Suburban and 5000 pound trailer were both too light to safely handle the towing. But, if I was willing to do all of that work, then they would find a way to get the truck to San Francisco on September 1<sup>st</sup>.

The first thing I needed to do was to order the canvas. The Military Vehicle Preservation Association was holding their annual national convention in Alameda the next week. I was going to order a canvas top for my 1941 Dodge Weapons Carrier there anyway. On the way to the convention I stopped off at the museum and took some measurements off of the REO truck and penciled them onto a photograph of the Boy Scout truck.

At the Beachwood Canvas Works booth I asked if they had white canvas, and not just the military O.D. that they are used to handling? And could they do a custom job for me? I also mentioned the short deadline. September 1<sup>st</sup> is only five weeks away and I need to have my hands on the canvas top at least one week before that, so that I can get the lettering painted on and the canvas mounted on the truck. Daniel Janquitto, the owner asked so many questions that I began to have my doubts. His wife assured me that they work best under pressure. That's easy for her to say, she's the canvas sewer and she's going to be on vacation.

Since Dan was going to go on a month long vacation following the convention, he would have to phone this special order in to his New Jersey shop. During the next few days, I began to ponder all of Dan's questions and thought about a lot of details that I had overlooked in the information that I had provided. I began to visualize and fear numerous things that could go wrong.

I headed up to my Siskiyou County ranch where I could begin bending the ribs in the shop there. Then about a week and a half later my wife took a call from Beachwood. I thought; "WOW, they already have the canvas cover done!" Upon returning the call, they wanted to know if I was serious. Of course I am, I gave you a \$1000 deposit. They asked if the REO truck is ready? I lied that it was. We were going on vacation ourselves so my wife gave Beachwood a phone number where we could be reached. I expected to find the canvas cover on my door step when I got back from vacation.

Before leaving on vacation I tried to line up a sign painter to get ready. I'd have the canvas to them one week before September 1<sup>st</sup>. But it turns out that sign makers don't paint any more, it's a lost skill. They all use computers now that cut plastic letters that stick on plastic banners. They suggested making the covered wagon top out of plastic that they could stick their letters to. Not an option. Then someone recalled an old sign painter who might still do some hand work. I called, and left a message explaining my dilemma.

Got another call from Beachwood while on vacation. Does the canvas have to be white? They could provide some German Army desert corps light tan. If they have to use white then it would have to be special ordered that same day. Then do it!

Upon arriving back from vacation, I was able to make contact with Jim Ingram, the sign painter. I showed him pictures and explained the urgency and short deadline. He said he could handle it, not fully realizing that September 1<sup>st</sup> is less than a week and a half away. I said the canvas will come flat and I'd get it to him on Monday, so he can have it all week. At this point I didn't even know if Beachwood was going to get the canvas done anyway. But Jim wanted to have the canvas mounted on the ribs. Oh, oh. I don't have the ribs done nor the canvas to mount either. I had planned to drop the canvas off with Jim, then head back to the ranch for the rest of the week to finish the ribs and floor. I'd deliver them to Hays just in time to mount on the REO so they could take it directly to San Francisco on September 1st.



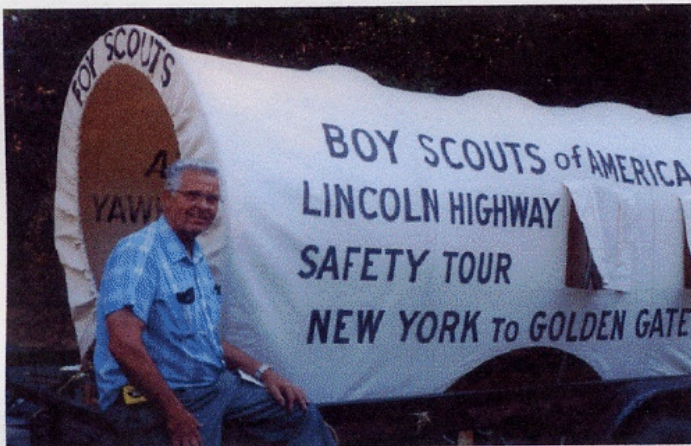
Then, just ten days before September 1<sup>st</sup>, another call. The canvas is ready, but it will take a week to ship it to California. But I need it in three days! So it got shipped overnight. But now I'd have to go to the ranch right away, to finish bending the ribs and build the wooden floor before the canvas comes.

Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, exactly one week to go. Got back from the ranch with ribs and wagon floor all built and loaded on my trailer. The canvas had indeed arrived while I was gone. I spent all day trying to stretch that canvas over the ribs and tie it down. I'm amazed at how well the canvas fits. We were all working independently and just from a photograph.

Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, six days left. I delivered the covered wagon to Jim Ingram, but he wasn't home that day. He was out on another urgent job. I left the trailer there.

Wednesday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, five days left. Jim Ingram called. I'd have to move the trailer. Some brown stuff is dripping out of his tree and staining the canvas. When I got there, Jim had started penciling the letter outlines on the canvas. I was encouraged that something was happening. We might just make it after all.

Thursday night, August 28<sup>th</sup>, just three more days left. Jim called and said he's been able to work on the lettering one hour one day and two hours on another, and he's about three quarters done with one side. He's going to Oregon for the Labor Day weekend, but he can get back on it Monday. Monday is too late! It will all be over by then.



Jim Ingram with the finished product early Friday morning.

Early Friday morning Jim called back. He stayed up all night and finished the painting. I raced out to Penryn to pick up the covered wagon and delivered it to the museum in Woodland. I'd be able to get it there when someone is there to help lift it onto the truck. Wrong! The shop crew only works on Tuesdays. I left a call with Al Garcia, which he didn't get until late that night. He called back, and said he'd have someone at the museum on Saturday morning to help set the top up on the REO truck.

Saturday morning with just two days left, Al and only one other guy were there at the museum. But they didn't need manpower anyway, they're smarter than me. They used a fork lift instead.



Al Garcia fitting bolts to the REO frame.



Cliff Simes tightening hold down bolts.



They loaded the truck onto my under rated rig, which apparently didn't make any difference anymore. But what have they done with my tie downs? Both guys were at the museum in the morning before I got there. We quickly ascertained that they had been stolen off of my trailer, which sat outside the museum overnight. But, they were able to snag some chains and binders off of another truck at the museum and let me take the whole thing home.

Sunday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, the final day. With the loaded rig in my driveway I spent the day hosing off cob webs, cleaning the truck and making sure all the rigging knots were official Boy Scout.

Monday, September 1<sup>st</sup>. I get up early and head for the Holiday Inn in Auburn, the final overnight stopover place for the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary tour group. They expect to be on the road around 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. I want to be there by 7:30 a.m. so we can leave as soon as possible. It will take all day to get to Lincoln Park.



I park under the motel canopy to surprise everyone with the covered wagon as they come out. I may be asked to lead the parade since I know the Lincoln Highway route, and the word out is that the maps, so far, have been grossly inadequate. But, I'm the one who gets surprised. Some vehicles have already left, most people go out the back door, some are out looking for a gas station, and others are still sleeping in.

By 8:30 a.m., I just have to leave, we'll barely make it to Lincoln Park by 4:00 p.m. now, what's more 2:30 p.m. as predicted in the tour schedule. People think this will be an easy day, it's only 100 miles to San Francisco. But what they don't realize is that 60 of those miles are on city streets.

I take off and about ten cars follow me. By the time we get to Auburn Boulevard in Sacramento, the cell phones are ringing madly. We have to be in Davis for a 10:00 a.m. reception, and the Mayor is already there. Get on the freeway right away! So I get on the freeway at Marconi Avenue. Some of my followers are not happy, this isn't the Lincoln Highway.

We arrive at Center Park in Davis only five minutes late. But the ceremony is already winding down. Wait a minute, there's Bob Lichty thanking the Mayor. How did he get here? He was still standing on the porch of the Auburn motel when I left. He confessed that he doesn't follow the Lincoln Highway. He always waits to be the last one to leave, then races his brand new Lincoln down the freeway to meet us as we arrive at the next stopping point. I'm surprised again, cheating by using the freeway and not even in a vintage vehicle either.





Davis Boy Scouts at the ceremony.



Davis Boy Scouts with the REO.

The Davis Historical Society has gone all out. There is a parade with antique cars and a wagon train, a ceremony in front of an original 1928 marker post, two 1928 Boy Scouts who set that post, several modern Boy Scout troops, a Mayoral proclamation, and an open house reception at the museum, but we're rushed out of there to get moving again.

A few follow me along the old Lincoln Highway, but when I stop at the Ulatis Creek Bridge in Vacaville as the instructions say, I'm told that we're out of time, get back on the freeway and go straight to Vallejo. We have to be there at 12:00 noon sharp! I didn't think we'd be getting to the Vallejo museum lunch stop until around 2:00 p.m.

I do take the Cherry Glen Road scenic byway though, before cheating again and getting back onto the freeway. We arrive at the USA World Classics car museum at exactly noon. But most of the tour is already here. This is where we finally catch up with Bernie Queneau. He hasn't seen the covered wagon yet. I had expected to surprise him in Auburn, but he was an early bird who had left before I got there.



Bernie climbed all over the REO covered wagon in Vallejo.

We're told at the museum to take the freeway all the way in to San Francisco in order make the 2:30 p.m. arrival and ceremony time. What? I just put out a news release yesterday listing the arrival time as 4:00 p.m. I knew there was no way we could get to San Francisco by 2:30 p.m. How was I to know that we were going to be cheating?

We arrive at Lincoln Park right at 2:30 p.m. I ask George Clark to delay the ceremony hoping that the media can get here. There had been a mysterious message left on my telephone saying that they would meet me at the Park at 3:00 p.m. Maybe it was someone from the media. Besides, tour participants are still dribbling in. We had all left Vallejo at different times and had taken different routes through San Francisco.

The Ceremony starts shortly after 3:00 p.m. George has Bernie and Boy Scout Troop 17 unveil the proposed interpretive plaque for the Western Terminus marker. Then there are the usual welcoming, introductions and appreciation speeches.





Esther and Bernie Queneau, George Clark, and Bob Lichty.



Bernie and Scout Steve Tortorelli unveil proposed plaque.



Troop 17 exploring the REO Speedwagon.



Al Mangus with Robert Srein's 1932 Packard.



Bernie with Troop 17.





Shortly before 4:00 p.m., the people who have read my news release begin to show up, including Craig Harmon with his fire truck, “Spirit of Lincoln Way”. J. R. Manning in his Model A, the only one who didn’t cheat, but followed the Lincoln Highway all the way, arrives. There are four more tour cars following him. However, most of the original revelers have left. The Boy Scouts are gone, and the proposed Western Terminus interpretive plaque is gone. The REO Speedwagon is still here as is Jim Cassler’s souvenir trailer.

So, I walk up to the Western Terminus marker, in front of the newly assembled crowd, and begin to recite everything, that I could remember, that the earlier speakers had said.




Eileen and Mary Sarah Bradley with J.R. Manning.



Craig Harmon with his fire truck, “Spirit of Lincoln Way”.

A hectic and anxious five weeks have concluded. After numerous fits and starts, that elusive covered wagon finally made it. All has ended up well, all that fuss seems to be worth it. The covered wagon has been a hit and appreciated by all.

The REO Speedwagon will become part of a permanent Lincoln Highway exhibit to be built in the Hays Truck Museum. 



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