

THUNDERBIRD

Lake Tahoe

2020-2021

SPECIAL EDITION



THUNDERBIRD



Legendary connections

When George's lantern was lit, it symbolized a quiet connection that guests were welcome at the Thunderbird Lodge.

Chase International's connections brought about the historic sale of Lake Tahoe's most mesmerizing property in order that future generations may continue to experience this magical place.

The original connection between luxury and the lake - Chase International is the right connection for luxury Lake Tahoe properties and those who wish to own them.

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Shireen Piramoon & Bill Watson

A NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

Welcome to what may be the most unusual period in the 80-plus year history of Thunderbird Lodge and Thunderbird yacht.

First, I wish to express to Thunderbird's supporters my deepest gratitude for keeping us afloat when the pandemic shut down our tours, public programs, and fundraising events. Your gifts let us use the down time to put Thunderbird's historical collections and archives in order, crawl through neglected attics, deep clean Thunderbird Lodge, investigate closets that have not been opened in decades, perform long deferred maintenance work, and more. I cannot thank enough our talented volunteers and (albeit much smaller) staff for their dedication in these most adverse circumstances.

The theme of this magazine is two-fold: reaching new heights and (belatedly) celebrating Thunderbird yacht's 80th birthday! As vaccinations reach the masses, and smoke from this summer's wildfires diminish, we are preparing to reopen Thunderbird Lodge with a robust array of public education programs and members' activities.

While it will take time for life at the Lodge and aboard the Yacht to return to normal, we anticipate 2022 will see the return of public and private group tours, additional members' activities, outdoor events for small wedding and corporate groups, and enhanced digital programming.

To our Castle and Flagship donors—and members of the Tahoe-Nevada Heritage Circle—thank you so much for your continuing support. Favorite activities including Thunder Thursday receptions and winemakers' fundraising dinners will return when it is safe to do so. And a special shout out to the Weezie and David Reese Family who pledged a generous legacy gift to help support Thunderbird Lake Tahoe in the coming years.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge all those who cannot be with us in 2021. I personally lost to COVID dear friends, business associates, and relatives. Thunderbird will miss the energy of our volunteers, members, and longtime supporters now gone. We keep each family in our thoughts and dedicate this issue to those who were promoted to glory in these perilous times.

Sincerely,

Bill Watson

Bill Watson
Chief Executive & Curator



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CONTENTS

SUMMER 2020-2021 SPECIAL EDITION

THUNDERBIRD YACHT 1940-2020



01. PRESERVATION PARTNERS/SUPPORTERS
Honoring those who help support Thunderbird Lake Tahoe

02. WELCOME
A letter from the Chief Executive

04. THUNDERBIRD LODGE PRESERVATION
Carrying the legacy forward

06. THUNDERBIRD PROGRAMS
Explore Thunderbird's many programs

08. SAVE-THE-CASTLE
Funding preservation and education programs

10. THUNDERBIRD YACHT
80th Birthday Tribute

12. THE INNOVATOR
George Whittell

14. THE ENTERTAINER
Bill Harrah

16. THE PHILANTHROPISTS
Joan and Buzz Gibb

18. THE KEEPERS
Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society

22. THUNDERBIRD YACHT
A Short History

25. TREASURES OF TAHOE
It's About the Yacht

28. LAKE TAHOE WATER UPDATE - 2021
Lookback: 6 years of Lake Tahoe Water levels

30. CASTLE TOURS
The various ways to visit Thunderbird Lodge

30. THUNDERFAIRE
Lakeside Food and Wine

32. COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
Social Media - History Presentations - Digital Content

34. CORPORATE AND FAMILY EVENTS
Sponsor a special occasion or memorable event

35. WEDDINGS
Weddings - Castle Rehearsal Dinners

36. MEMBERS' HAPPENINGS
Events and Occasions

38. LEGACY GIFTS
Help to preserve and ensure public access

40. OUR VOLUNTEERS
Nearly a 100 Volunteers come together each year

42. LAST BARK

PRESERVATION

CAPTAIN GEORGE WHITTELL JR. IS THE CATALYST FOR ALL THAT THUNDERBIRD LAKE TAHOE DOES TODAY.

Our work is to ensure that we pay Whittell's legacy forward.



The Thunderbird Archives hold a large collection of early Lake Tahoe films, including these home movies from Captain Whittell's 60th birthday celebration. Whittell hired Hollywood's Castle Films (later a division of Universal Studios) to document the week's festivities in color and with sound!



This 16mm projector remains at Thunderbird Lodge. George Whittell loved the science of filmmaking and watching movies. Not content to change reels during the intermission of a long film, Whittell installed two such projectors so that his viewing would not be interrupted.



GEORGE WHITTELL ESTATE NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

More than 10,000 visitors experience the George Whittell Estate each year, Nevada's only National Historic District at Lake Tahoe. Sitting at the crossroads of history, the estate's public tours and education programs offer a window into the region's past. Native American, westward expansion, Anglo settlement, lumbering, mining, railroading, maritime transit, rusticating, tourism, casino gaming, conservation, real estate development, environmental activism, and recreation all intersect here. Once encompassing nearly 45,000 acres, Whittell secured the expansive estate from development and, thus, Nevada's shoreline remains pristine and open as compared to the Lake's built-up California side.

THUNDERBIRD LODGE

The historic Thunderbird Lodge is the focal point of Captain George Whittell Jr.'s estate. Situated on the shores of Lake Tahoe, the Lodge and adjacent buildings were the only structures in the area for many years since George Whittell was fiercely private and owned over 25 miles of shoreline. Designed by Frederic J. DeLongchamps and constructed in 1936, the Tudor-style mansion served as the summer residence for the Captain, his wife Elia, their guests, and the many exotic animals. Innovative technology was incorporated into the Lodge, which is what you would expect from the Captain who demonstrated his passion for living life to the fullest with his yachts, airplanes, poker games with celebrities, and hidden passages. After the Captain died in 1969, Jack Dreyfus acquired Thunderbird Lodge and added the more contemporary rooms where many events and activities occur today. Today the Lodge and Estate are the epicenter of the non-profit Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society's charitable and education programs.

OUTCOMES

Thunderbird may seem like just another beautiful estate on a stunning lake, but our vision—and our future—is much greater. In the past 20 years, we have preserved the late George Whittell's grand Lake Tahoe estate and his prized Thunderbird yacht. Through public tours, charitable contributions in all amounts, educational programs, exclusive corporate and social events, and our coveted membership program, Thunderbird Lake Tahoe has become a global model for historic preservation. Drawing from more than 25,000 objects, Thunderbird will soon launch one of the nation's first digital museums: showcasing Lake Tahoe's cultural and environmental history to researchers and audiences worldwide. The outcome of our hard work has resulted in Thunderbird truly becoming the Museum of Lake Tahoe art and history.

THUNDERBIRD ART AND HISTORY ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

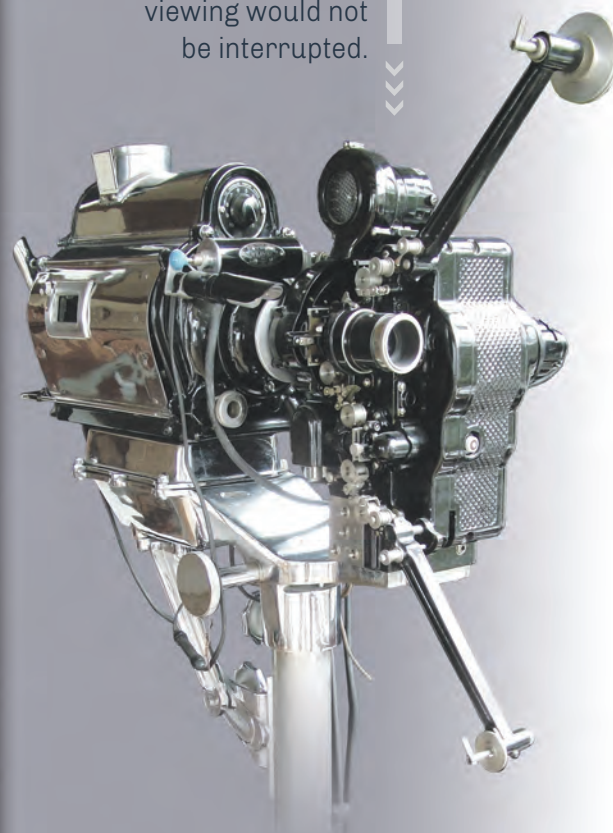
Extensive collections and archives pertaining to the greater Lake Tahoe-area makes Thunderbird the de facto repository for the region's art, films, photographs, furnishings, government and corporate records, maps, artifacts salvaged from the Lake, family heirlooms, land held in trust, and hotel, casino, and recreation memorabilia. Once the largest private landowner in Nevada, Captain George Whittell Jr. cherished all that is Lake Tahoe. We uphold his passion for the region by preserving, expanding, and sharing these valuable collections.

PROGRAMS

Thunderbird's prime directive is to preserve the Lake Tahoe region's cultural resources for public appreciation. Professional and volunteer craftsmen continuously work on archival, maintenance, and repair projects. Each task presents an opportunity for learning, and estate visitors frequently experience "preservation in progress." Public education is woven into the fabric of Thunderbird's cloth. Through interpretive tours, speakers' bureau, school field trips, fireside chats, and digital programs, Thunderbird projects Lake Tahoe's art and history to the public at-large. In partnership with public television, we are presently producing a documentary film on the history of Lake Tahoe's east shore.

THUNDERBIRD YACHT

Built in 1939 in Bay City, Michigan, *Thunderbird* yacht originally operated with two Kermath marine engines, the same engines that were used in WWII landing craft. In 1962 Whittell sold the yacht to Bill Harrah, who installed two 1100 horsepower Allison aircraft engines. After several owners the yacht was acquired by Thunderbird Lake Tahoe in 2011. *Thunderbird* serves as a floating classroom where children of all ages learn about Lake Tahoe's maritime heritage, cultural significance, and ecology.





EXPLORE THUNDERBIRD'S MANY PROGRAMS

INSPIRING CURIOSITY,
APPRECIATION,
UNDERSTANDING,
AND STEWARDSHIP.

To make reservations or for more information about any of these programs or activities, please visit: thunderbirdtahoe.org or call 775.832.8750.



Artists-at-the-Castle

Grants give local artisans unprecedented access to create and sell art at Thunderbird Lodge, Nevada's only cultural heritage center at Lake Tahoe.



Historic Preservation

Thunderbird spends more than 80% of its revenue, expertise, energy, and human capital on preservation projects, operating and maintaining Thunderbird Lodge and Yacht, and caring for its Lake Tahoe Art and History Collection. The public observes preservation-in-progress including architecture, stone masonry, shipwrighting, archiving and more. Thunderbird is always seeking skilled volunteers to help with preservation and restoration projects.



Speakers' Bureau

Staff and volunteers are available to groups, schools, clubs, and service organizations to speak about a wide range of Lake Tahoe art, history, and science topics.



Facility Grants

During off-peak times, qualified public charities and government agencies utilize the Whittell Estate for board and staff retreats, public meetings, and program activities. Past beneficiaries include the Nevada Commission for Cultural Centers and Historic Preservation, Boys and Girls Club of North Lake Tahoe, Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation, U.C. Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, Nevada Museum of Art, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Tahoe Maritime Museum, and many more.



Art, History, and Lifestyle Collections

Thunderbird safeguards more than 25,000 items in its extensive collection of Lake Tahoe maps, paintings, photography, drawings, artwork, documents, films, and 3D artifacts. Presently campaigning for funds to become one of America's first digital museums, Thunderbird is developing the facilities and systems necessary to make its entire collection available online to researchers and the public at large.



Public Education Tours

Guided public tours of the George Whittell Estate and Thunderbird Lodge are offered Tuesday – Saturday from May through October. Private and group tours, including visits with wine tasting and hors d'oeuvres, are available year-round.



Thunderkids

A framework for teachers to develop and implement unique curriculums in a historic setting. In peak years, more than 2,000 students engage in Thunderbird's K-12 educational programs.

Save-the-Castle™

FUNDING THUNDERBIRD'S PRESERVATION
AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

BY RAISING \$1 MILLION
IN SAVE-THE-CASTLE™ CONTRIBUTIONS OVER
2 YEARS, THE NON-PROFIT THUNDERBIRD
LAKE TAHOE ORGANIZATION WILL RECEIVE A
GENEROUS MATCHING GIFT.

Save-the-Castle™ is a new concept in giving where thousands of contributors making small to moderate-sized gifts make a huge impact on saving Lake Tahoe's treasures. And each contributor earns a chance to preview Thunderbird programs and experiences including Secrets-of-the-Castle tours by the Curator, dinners at Thunderbird Lodge, *Thunderbird* yacht cruises, and more.

GIVE \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500, \$5,000 OR ANY AMOUNT

For each \$25,000 generated by the Save-the-Castle™ program, the Thunderbird Governing Board of Directors will randomly choose one Save-the-Castle contributor to bring along a guest and visit Thunderbird Lodge for a complimentary preview of Thunderbird's educational programs, historic vehicles and vessels, and experiential activities.¹

**MAKE NO MISTAKE: EVERYONE WINS BECAUSE YOU ARE SAVING
NATIONAL TREASURES! AT THE VERY LEAST,
EACH CONTRIBUTOR RECEIVES A THUNDERBIRD KEEPSAKE
AND THE THUNDERBIRD LAKE TAHOE MAGAZINE.**

Increase your chances of being invited to Thunderbird Lodge by making additional contributions at thunderbirdtahoe.org/savethecastle. Ask your friends to do the same! The more families who participate—and the more each family donates—the greater your opportunity for a once-in-a-lifetime experience at Lake Tahoe's Castle-in-the-Sky.

By contributing to Save-the-Castle™, you are ensuring Thunderbird Lodge and *Thunderbird* yacht remain available to the public. More importantly, your charitable contribution is safeguarding a vast collection of historic treasures for future generations, and you are helping to build Lake Tahoe's first art and history museum at Incline Village, Nevada.

Additionally, you will be recognized as a Thunderbird supporter and receive invitations to programs and activities reserved exclusively for Save-the-Castle™ contributors.

Please begin making your Save-the-Castle™ contributions today!

**YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SAVE-THE-CASTLE™ ARE TAX
DEDUCTIBLE TO THE EXTENT PERMITTED BY LAW.**

¹ Thunderbird's Governing Board uses automated tools to randomly select contributors to visit Thunderbird Lodge and preview programs and experiences. Save-the-Castle™ is a charitable giving program and is not a raffle, lottery, or contest. Awards are void where prohibited by Law. Program rules, eligibility, and selection criteria are subject to change at any time without notice. Thunderbird Lake Tahoe reserves all rights.



BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE

Whittell commissioned Naval Architect John L. Hacker to design a new kind of speedboat: one having the lines of his Duesenberg automobiles and DC-2 aircraft. He envisioned a powerful and stylish yacht that would seamlessly cut through the afternoon chop kicked up by the Zephyr winds along Lake Tahoe's East Shore.

Whittell specified the boat's fit and finish: double-planked Honduran mahogany over a frame of sawn white oak, polished stainless steel houses, and gleaming crystal accents.

A year-round boat, there was forced-air cabin heat to keep passengers cozy on inclement days, hot and cold running water, a shower, wardrobe, four Pullman-style berths, galley, and an ample head. No creature comfort was overlooked!

When Hacker lost his own shop to the Great Depression, he worked for Ben Huskins' Bay City, Michigan boat works. In early 1939, Hacker anticipated a 36-month construction schedule. With laborers desperate for work and working three shifts each day, *Thunderbird* was finished in 11 months, for a then staggering price of \$83,500. After November sea trials on the Saginaw River, Hacker shipped her by rail the following summer to Lake Tahoe.

Thunderbird arrived at Mayfield's Boatyard in the early hours of July 12, 1940. (Mayfield's, the former railroad engine house and shops, is now home to the Tahoe Yacht Club and Tahoe City Marina.)

Making headlines across the nation, Whittell deprived the press of a scoop when, in the wee hours of July 15, 1940, he slipped *Thunderbird* quietly out of Mayfield's as reporters slept soundly nearby. Whittell berthed her in a cavernous steel boathouse blasted into solid rock and connected to Thunderbird Lodge by a 600-foot-long tunnel.

During World War II, at the age of 60, the U.S. government deemed the Captain too old to serve the war effort. Possibly feeling dejected, he lost his passion for technology, socializing, and gallivanting, including cruising aboard his yacht.

Thirty years after building his prized vessel, Whittell sold *Thunderbird* to casino magnate Bill Harrah who added a flying bridge and replaced her twin Kermath Sea Raider engines (having only 83 operating hours) with V-12 Allison engines from WWII fighter aircraft. Harrah coined *Thunderbird* his 70 mile-an-hour cocktail lounge, entertaining the likes of Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Sammy Davis Jr., Liza Minelli, and many more.

80 years after arriving on Lake Tahoe, the party continues aboard *Thunderbird* yacht. Please join us for celebrations during the summer of 2022, as global circumstances permit.



THE INNOVATOR

GEORGE WHITTELL

Born into great wealth, Captain George Whittell Jr. embodied the Great Gatsby era. His story is one of a man larger than life—worldly, passionate, and enigmatic. Accounts of his fortune, mixed with colorful stories of his love for animals, automobiles, and artisan crafts, have circulated for years along with some rather tall tales. Today these legends are the legacy and lore of George Whittell and his fabulous Thunderbird Lodge and Yacht.



Whittell's 60th birthday portrait taken at Thunderbird Lodge, Lake Tahoe. [On or about September 28, 1940]

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—1881

George Jr. was the second child of Anna and George Whittell Sr. However, at age four, he became the sole heir to the family fortune when his older brother, Nicholas, died of diphtheria. Seven years later, a foster brother, Alfred, would join the family, but it would be George who remained the center of his parents' universe.

Shrewd investors during California's Gold Rush, Nicholas Luning, and fellow financiers like Charles Crocker and William Ralston built lucrative empires and virtually ran the State of California. As he amassed his fortune, the perceptive Luning became impressed with the business acumen of his daughter Anna's husband, George Whittell Sr., and bequeathed a controlling portion of his estate to his son-in-law. Luning's instincts were correct; Whittell Sr. increased the family fortune, mostly in real estate.

THE GOOD TIMES

Whittell Jr. was not interested in his father's professions of real estate and finance. He much preferred the "seat of your pants" lifestyle of travel, fast cars, pretty girls... and even a rumored stint with the Barnum & Bailey Circus.

George's love of beautiful things, especially motor vehicles, led him to purchase six Duesenbergs, considered one of the world's finest automobiles. These were unique motorcars combining speed and technology with a refined sense of luxury. From a young age, Whittell raced all over the country in the amateur leagues, rarely winning, but always performing well. Later he went on to own a 175-foot sailing yacht, various planes, and Lake Tahoe's famous *Thunderbird* motor yacht.

COMING INTO HIS OWN

George was purported to have had three wives but only married twice. While serving in Europe during the First World War (where he earned or purchased a commission in the military at the rank of Captain), Whittell met his final wife and life partner, Elia Pascal. Wed in 1919, the wanderlust in him seemed to settle down just a tad. After the death of Whittell Sr., the couple moved in with George's mother, Anna, at the family estate in Woodside, California. It was there that George and Elia indulged in their love of exotic animals, creating a private zoo for their lions, cheetahs, elephant, monkey, zebra, and a host of other species.

In 1931 Anna Whittell passed away, leaving the vast Whittell fortune to her natural son. A lengthy court battle ensued between George and his foster sibling, Alfred, draining away any semblance of brotherly affection. For the next six years, the two revealed family secrets in a deadlocked battle over the estate. Finally settling with Alfred, and forever severing their relationship, Captain Whittell (as he now liked to be called) was in the position to leverage the family fortune for his own purposes.



A companion to his *Thunderbird* yacht, Whittell owned a Douglas DC2 airliner also named *Thunderbird*. Whittell was fond of traveling high and fast. [Circa 1938]



Photo courtesy of Mary Hotchkiss and Stan Whitey.

Whittell dynamited a solid granite hillside to construct a concrete and steel boathouse at Lake Tahoe. [Spring 1940]

THUNDERBIRD LODGE

Drawn by Nevada State architect Frederic DeLongchamps, the eclectic *Thunderbird Lodge* is "French chateau meets rustic arts and crafts" in design. This crowning jewel nestled within over 40,000 acres of logged-over timber lands Whittell acquired on Tahoe's Nevada shoreline. A vacation home, George and Elia spent summers here boating, fishing, and swimming. Occasionally, they enjoyed winters filled with dog sledding, skiing, and snowshoeing. By the time the estate was finished, it included ten buildings, a 600' long underground tunnel, and a steel boathouse blasted out of solid granite for *Thunderbird* yacht. But as Whittell advanced in years, his trips to his Lodge became less frequent. His final visit was in 1968. One year later, he passed away at age 87.



Thunderbird rocks gently in her newly constructed steel boathouse at *Thunderbird Lodge*. [Fall 1940]

DRAWN TO NEVADA

1937 marked a radical change in George Whittell's life. After settling out-of-court with Alfred and selling off certain of his father's Whittell Realty Co. holdings, George Whittell relocated to Nevada to insulate his new-found wealth from the tax man. During this time, he met Norman Biltz, a Reno financier, land speculator, and rancher. Biltz convinced Whittell to invest in a development project on the east shore of Lake Tahoe. Their grandiose plans included a casino at Sand Harbor connected by tram to a ski resort on Rifle Peak. Architectural renderings were drawn up and surveys done, but Whittell cooled to the idea of development. This left Biltz furious, and without a wealthy partner to cover the project expenses. Of all the vast ideas they conjured, the only significant properties completed were *Thunderbird Lodge* and—decades later—*Incline Village*.



Thunderbird awaits sea trials on the Saginaw River at Huskin Boat and Motor Works, Bay City, Michigan. [November 1939]

WHITTELL'S LEGACY

George Whittell Jr. was a scion of his time – when, in the spirit of Jay Gatsby, grand fabrications and eccentricities were the fashion of the elite. But Whittell's legacy at Lake Tahoe is one of conservation. He clearly appreciated the Lake's majestic beauty. Some who knew him claimed he was very concerned about rapid growth at the Lake and wished to protect the pristine shoreline; others felt it was due to his reclusiveness and a desire to keep people away. No matter the reason, his ownership and stewardship provided us with an east shore landscape relatively untouched by development and preserved intact for future generations.

Today, the non-profit *Thunderbird Lake Tahoe* carries on the tradition of George Whittell. Through preservation, education, conservation, and—yes—rowdy good times, *Thunderbird* members protect Tahoe's heritage with the grandest collection of regional art and historical artifacts known to exist, including the fabulous *Thunderbird* yacht now celebrating her 80th birthday. *Thunderbird Lodge* is the place to experience Lake Tahoe's Art and History and honor Captain George Whittell Jr.

THE ENTERTAINER

BILL HARRAH

In 1962, the now reclusive George Whittell allowed Nevada casino magnate William Fisk Harrah a rare visit to Thunderbird Lodge. After a lively conversation, Whittell agreed to sell Harrah two Duesenberg automobiles and the *Thunderbird* yacht. This began a storied chapter in *Thunderbird's* history and a fast friendship between the two men for the remainder of Whittell's life.



Here Scherry and Bill Harrah and other members of Harrah's team prepare to take *Thunderbird* for their first spin on Lake Tahoe. The yacht had not cruised since 1946 and required much finesse that day to keep running. [September 1962]



Each summer, Bill Harrah operated *Thunderbird* from his Villa Harrah at Skyland Estates on Tahoe's east shore. This was one home where Harrah lodged performers during their engagements at his showrooms.



Harrah entertained lavishly aboard his yacht. Celebrities escaped adoring fans for a peaceful day on the Lake. Here the Harrahs host Mr. & Mrs. Tony Bennett.



P38 crew uncrating Allison V1710 engine in the South Pacific. [Circa 1944]

U.S. Army Air Force photo.

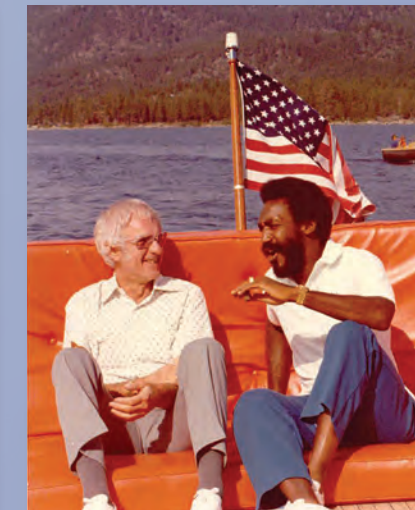


Among the many changes he made, Harrah replaced the original Kermath marine engines with Allison V1710 motors from World War II vintage P38 Lightning fighter aircraft. Harrah affectionately called *Thunderbird* his "70 mile-per-hour cocktail lounge."

Photo by Dewitt Jones



By 1965, a reconfiguration by Harrah was nearly complete. He replaced the interior berths and shower with a very 1960s cocktail lounge; however, the galley was retained. [Circa 1970]



The 1970s were *Thunderbird's* golden years at Lake Tahoe, transporting celebrities about the Lake with great frequency. Longtime friends, entertainer Bill Cosby and Bill Harrah discuss business on deck. [Circa 1970's]



Harrah regularly hauled *Thunderbird* out to his famous Auto Collection in Sparks, Nevada, for service. Each year, the vessel was completely sanded and received 15-20 coats of varnish. [Circa 1960's]



Following Harrah's untimely death in 1978, Holiday Inn acquired the assets of Harrah's casinos including *Thunderbird* yacht. Wooden boat aficionado Owen Owens purchased the Yacht at auction but died a short time later and never received his new toy. The vessel remained in the parking lot at Harrah's Automobile Collection until collected by the next owner.

THE PHILANTHROPISTS

JOAN and BUZZ GIBB

Joan and Buzz Gibb owned *Thunderbird* yacht longer than anyone else, 26 years altogether. The Gibbs spoke with *Thunderbird* Curator Bill Watson by telephone from their home in Florida about having owned the world's most famous classic wooden boat.

BUZZ RECALLS...

"We owned a chain of motor inns named "Thunderbird" and always thought it would be fun to have the *Thunderbird* yacht. In 1981 at a charity auction we ran into Lois Owens, then owner of *Thunderbird*. We bought the yacht and hauled her to the Bay Area to make urgently needed repairs and a few improvements. I had just developed the Waterfront Plaza Hotel at Jack London Square in Oakland (California) and thought it would be fun to charter *Thunderbird* out on San Francisco Bay. I fondly recall the day we took Gardner and Lois Mein, publishers of the *Nob Hill Gazette*, to deliver newspapers to houseboats in Sausalito. Then visited Forbes Kiddoo, a shipyard owner, at his self-created Forbes Island. We eventually moved *Thunderbird* home to Lake Tahoe because the salt water was damaging her two World War II aircraft engines as well as her hull, and Joan and I were spending more time at Tahoe.

I sometimes say *Thunderbird* will follow me forever. I continue to support her for a worthy cause: preserving Lake Tahoe's art and history for present and future generations. Now raising my glass to our next 80-years together!"



In 1981, hoteliers Joan and Buzz Gibb take ownership of *Thunderbird* yacht from the Owens family who acquired her after Bill Harrah's death in 1978. Mr. Gibb took the yacht to Alameda for urgent restoration work and, for a brief time, operated her in charter service on the San Francisco Bay. [Circa 1983]

The Gibbs deploy *Thunderbird* to raise more than \$2-million for Tahoe education, arts, and environmental causes including Tahoe Forest Health System Foundation, League to Save Lake Tahoe, Tahoe Environmental Research Center, Boys and Girls Clubs, Make-a-Wish, Tahoe Yacht Club Foundation, and various law enforcement agencies. [Circa 1980s and 1990s]



It is not often one finds an 18-ton tow boat skimming Tahoe's waves in excess of 40mph. Although this stunt cost the skipper his job, waterskiing behind *Thunderbird* sure looks like fun! [Spring, 2007]



Former Nevada Governor and U.S. Senator Paul Laxalt enjoys a day with family and friends aboard *Thunderbird*. [Circa 1980s]

Like so many of the stars who cruised aboard *Thunderbird* during the Harrah's years, Tony Bennett returned to become a good friend of the Gibbs.



JOAN ADDS...

"Early on, we received a letter from Father Don Mason, a Jesuit priest then teaching at Japan's Sophia University. Back in the 1940s, as a teenager, Father Mason was George Whittell's butler and his duties included caring for *Thunderbird*. He sure had some stories to tell! When Father Mason was diagnosed with a terminal illness, Jack Dreyfus, then current owner of *Thunderbird* Lodge, let us take Father Mason back there for a memory-making cruise aboard *Thunderbird* before he died in 1986. Later, I served 15-years as a Director of the non-profit *Thunderbird* Lodge Preservation Society formed to save *Thunderbird* Lodge's unique heritage. I was then able to return *Thunderbird* to her original boathouse and use her to support the Society's charitable and educational programs. Eventually, with the help of Bill Watson and Foundation 36, we conveyed *Thunderbird* to the Preservation Society where she always will be well cared for.

Thunderbird connected us to wonderful people. She helped us raise money for many worthy causes: children's enrichment, the arts, and environmental improvement. In many ways she, and those whom we met through her, have changed our lives forever. Happy 80th O' Gal! Our best years are yet to come!"



Former U.S. President Gerald Ford paid *Thunderbird* a visit for a Lake Tahoe cruise in 1997. Buzz Gibb recalls this presidential visit as one of the most exciting days aboard the Yacht. [Summer, 1997]



The Gibbs updated the interior to the latest in 1980s fashion. One just has to love the mauve sofa seats. [Circa 1980s]



Joan Gibb rechristens *Thunderbird*



With much fanfare, the Gibbs celebrated *Thunderbird's* 50th in 1990. [1990]



As this holiday card demonstrates, *Thunderbird* quickly entwines herself in the Gibbs' lives. [Circa 1980s]



THE KEEPERS

THUNDERBIRD LODGE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Today, *Thunderbird* yacht is owned by the non-profit Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society, or Thunderbird Lake Tahoe. In addition to raising much needed funds for preservation, the vessel serves as a floating classroom for the non-profit organization's charitable and educational programs.



Photo by Eric Jarvis. Used by permission.

Thunderbird awaits a full day of public tours in her boathouse at Lake Tahoe's Thunderbird Lodge National Historic District. [2007]



Photo by Eric Jarvis. Used by permission.

Thunderbird is dwarfed by the mountains of the Carson Range on Tahoe's east shore. [2007]

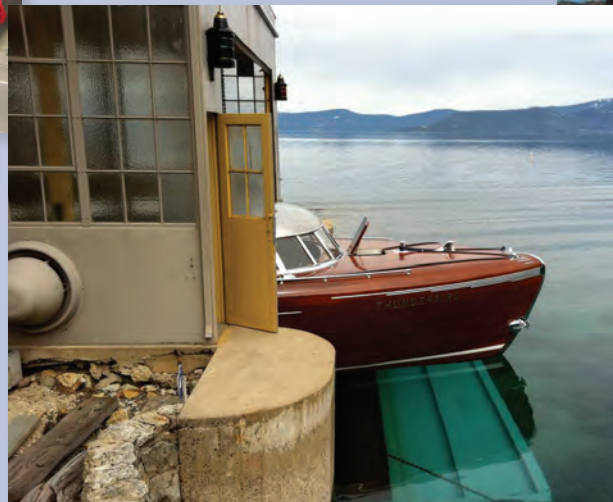


Until the cradle was repaired in *Thunderbird's* historic boathouse, *Thunderbird* was hauled from Lake Tahoe to Weaver Aviation at Carson City each year for winter maintenance. [2004]

Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger pilots *Thunderbird* into the dock at the Lake Tahoe Hyatt Resort before he speaks at a fundraising event to benefit the educational programs of the non-profit Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society. [2011]



Photo by Cyprian. Used by permission.



Thunderbird noses out into Lake Tahoe for a summer cruise. [2010]



A U.S. Postal Service stamp series honors *Thunderbird* and other Lake Tahoe vintage wooden boats. [2007]

U.S. Postal Service photo. Used by permission.



Thunderbird dwarfs the pack during the photoshoot for the U.S. Postal Service wooden boat stamp series. [2007]



Photo by Steve and Cheryl Caplan. Used by permission.

Thunderbird darts into Emerald Bay for a quick on-board wedding ceremony following the inaugural ACBS South Lake Tahoe Wooden Boat Classic show. [2008]



After all these years, the celebrities keep coming aboard. L-R actor John O'Hurley, *Thunderbird* Lake Tahoe Curator Bill Watson, and former Vice President Dan Quayle. [2008]



Photo by Steve and Cheryl Caplan

Thunderbird shows off her art deco detail. [2008]



Steve Lapkin photo. Used by permission.

Thunderbird passes across the bow of the photo boat. [2008]



Steve Lapkin photo. Used by permission.



“LIFE ISN'T ABOUT WAITING FOR THE STORM TO PASS;
IT'S LEARNING HOW TO DANCE IN THE RAIN.”

The Lady of the Lake needs your help to keep dancing.

Become a Thunderbird Lake Tahoe Flagship member
or contributor today.

Photo by Eric Jarvis. Used by permission.

THUNDERBIRD YACHT

A Short History



George Whittell commissioned John L. Hacker to design *Thunderbird*. (PHOTO: John Hacker at a race in Detroit)



Launch and sea trials on the Saginaw River.



Arrives at Norman Mayfield's Tahoe Boat Works, Tahoe City, California.

Operated by Whittell.



Laid up at the Thunderbird Lodge boathouse.



Thunderbird's bottom is refurbished and interior replaced at Svendsen's Boat Works in Alameda, California.



Buzz Gibb acquires Tahoe City Marina at Tahoe City, California, and returns *Thunderbird* to the place where she was launched on Lake Tahoe 44 years earlier.



The Gibb's return *Thunderbird* to her original home at the Whittell Boat House at Thunderbird Lodge National Historic District on Lake Tahoe's east shore.



Foundation 36 conveys *Thunderbird* to Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society, where *Thunderbird* is maintained and operated in support of the society's educational and charitable programs.

1939
(Spring)

1939
(November)

1940
(July 12th)

1940-1941
(Summer)

1942-1962

1978
(June 30th)

1979
(November 24th)

1981-1982
(Fall to Spring)

1984

2001

2011

2020-2021

1939
(Summer)

1940
(Early July)

1940
(July 15th)

1962
(September)

1963-1964

1979
(June)

1981

1982-1983

1984-2006

2007

2020-2021



Constructed at Huskins Boat and Motor Works at Bay City, Michigan.



Loaded onto a flatcar and shipped by rail from Bay City to Lake Tahoe.



Launched on Lake Tahoe (her official birthday).



Purchased by casino owner Bill Harrah. Considered the "golden years" of *Thunderbird*. (PHOTO: Inaugural cruise under Harrah's ownership)



Harrah replaced the Kermath engines with Allison's, changed the configuration, and added the deck house flybridge superstructure.



Thunderbird is auctioned off to a journalist named Owen Owens following the acquisition of Harrah's.

Hoteliers Joan and Buzz Gibb acquire *Thunderbird* from Lois Owens, widow of Owen, and take delivery in the parking lot at Harrah's Auto Collection in Sparks, Nevada.



The Gibb's operate *Thunderbird* in a charter service on Lake Tahoe but mostly use her to raise more than \$2 million for various arts, children's, and environmental charities.



The Gibb's operate *Thunderbird* in a charter service on San Francisco Bay from Jack London Square in Oakland.



In a part cash and part charitable gift transaction, Joan Gibb conveys *Thunderbird* to the public trust in care of the non-profit Foundation 36.



Thunderbird celebrates her 80th birthday on Lake Tahoe.

Treasures of Tahoe

1 MINI MODELS

In his first boat modeling project, it took Thunderbird Lake Tahoe volunteer Earl W. Burton seven years to complete these two scale replicas of *Thunderbird* yacht. On the left is the replica of the yacht that was delivered to Captain George Whittell at Lake Tahoe in 1940. The model on the right shows how she appears today as modified by casino mogul William F. Harrah.

3 NO BITING

For his own protection, Captain Whittell wore these leather wrist cuffs when training his pet lion, Bill.

4 ALL SEEING

Spyglasses and binoculars were always handy at Thunderbird Lodge. There were always exciting things to see on the Lake or adjacent beaches.

5 POSH

A red light is mounted on the port (left) side of a boat, and green on the starboard (right) side. Captain Whittell filled Thunderbird Lodge with nautical décor from his various watercraft.



6 FOOT IN MOUTH

Whittell bequeathed to his attorney this ashtray made from an elephant's foot.

7 KNOCKOUT PUNCH

This boxing glove was autographed to George Whittell by the champ, Jack Dempsey.

8 20,000 LEAGUES

Family films show Whittell walking on the lake bottom in his Cove, breathing through a hose connected to this diving bell helmet. Later, he converted the device into a table lamp.

GUIDANCE

In the past, Lake Tahoe had many more foggy days than in recent years. This compass (mounted in a binnacle) allowed Whittell to safely navigate *Thunderbird* to his favorite drinking establishments around the Lake.



SPEED DEMONS

Powered by twin WWII vintage Allison engines from a P-38 Lightning aircraft, *Thunderbird* motors across Lake Tahoe at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour. Installed by Bill Harrah in 1964, these engines deliver 1,250 horsepower each to 23-inch propellers.

BULLETPROOF GEARING

Near the end of World War II, the U.S. Navy experimented with powering its fleet of PT boats with Allison V-1710 engines just like those used in *Thunderbird*. Packard Marine developed special transmissions (impervious to small arms fire) for this top-secret project and, today, all of these industrial-grade units reside in *Thunderbird's* spare parts inventory.

TAKE US HOME

On the hillside high above Thunderbird Lodge was a non-directional beacon radio transmitter used in aircraft Automatic Direction Finders. Whittell installed one such ADF unit by Bendix Corporation aboard *Thunderbird*. Coupled to an automatic steering system, Whittell could press a button, and *Thunderbird* would come about and return home.

FILL 'ER UP

George Whittell's state-of-the-art 1930s technology included fuel and oil tanks built into the foundations of his steel and concrete boathouse, a structure blasted into solid rock at Thunderbird Lodge. Meticulously refurbished by Thunderbird Lake Tahoe volunteers, this restored gauge showed the quantity of fuel in a tank. To meet environmental regulations, Whittell's tanks were abandoned in the 1970s and filled-in with a mixture of concrete slurry.

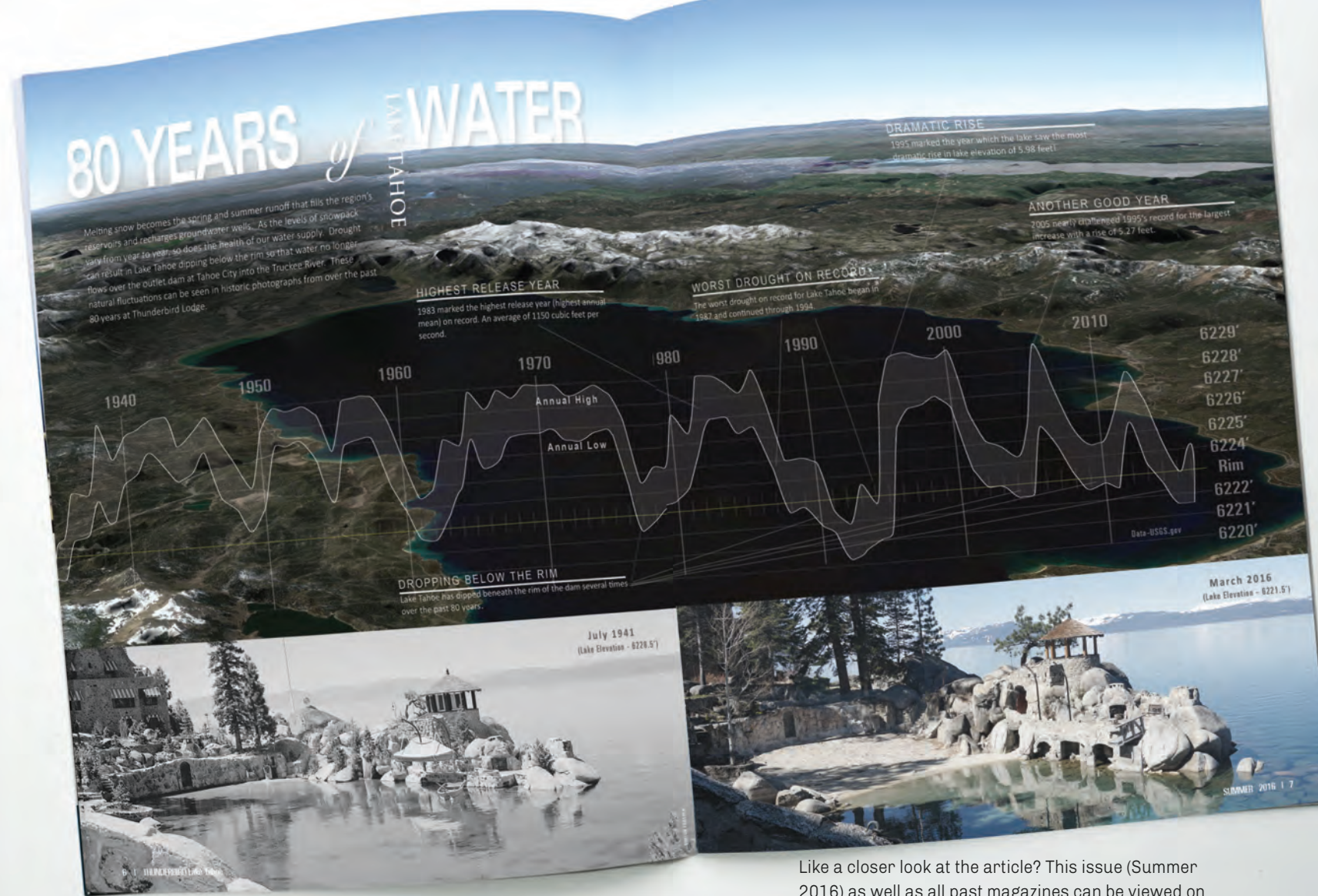


LAKE TAHOE WATER UPDATE - 2021

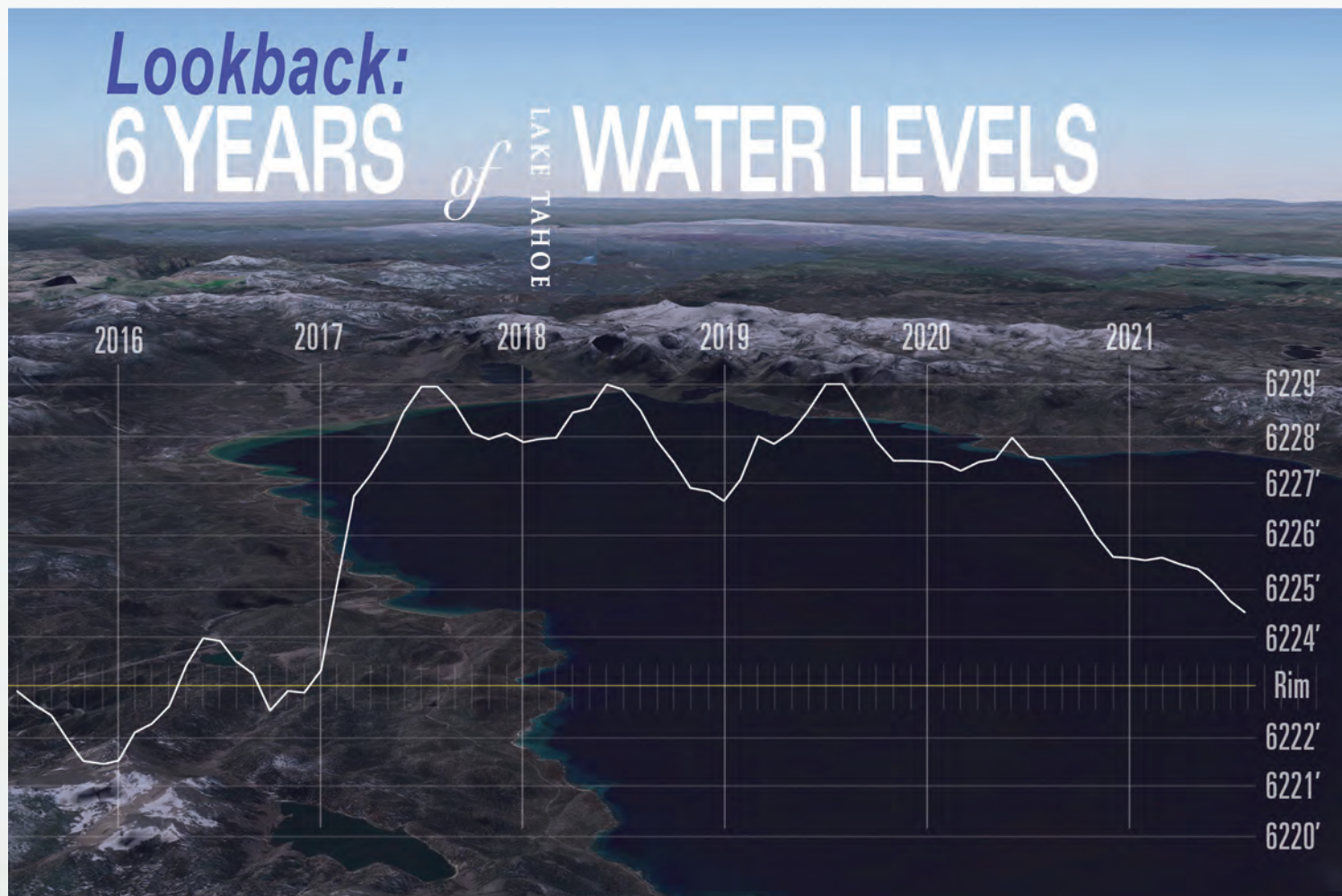
It has been five years since we published our graph showing 80 years of Lake Tahoe's annual fluctuating water level. Given how this publication is dedicated to the 80th birthday of the *Thunderbird* yacht, and its operation being tied so closely with water levels, we think it is time to bring the chart up to date with the latest data. This year we saw the lake level reach its annual high mark much earlier in the year than usual - 6,225.7' on February 13th. Lake Tahoe's high-water mark usually happens between June 1 and August 1. It's all about the winter season snowpack. This however is not the first time the lake has had such an early fill event. In 1988, the lake reached its annual height of 6,224.9' on January 15th!



Thunderbird Yacht Boathouse Water Level Gauge, July 15, 2021



Like a closer look at the article? This issue (Summer 2016) as well as all past magazines can be viewed on our website under "Useful Links". Check it out!



(Data Source: USGS Water Resources)

Why does this matter? The *Thunderbird* yacht draws (the lowest part of the craft below water) 3' 6" (this is 6" less than it used to be after modifying the yacht's rudders some years ago). As the yacht has its home in the enclosed boathouse at Thunderbird Lodge, clearance of the props and rudder become an issue once the lake water level drops below the lake's rim height of 6,223', thus operation of the yacht halts until the following spring when water levels rise. In 2021, yacht operations came to a full-stop in August.

Another interesting fact - the lake has dropped below the rim of 6,223 feet 20 times since 1935. This means that over the last 85 years the lake has fallen below the rim almost a quarter of the time.



Tahoe City Dam on the Truckee River

The dam was built between 1909 and 1913 and stands 18.2 ft (5.5 m) high and 109 ft (33 m) long, raising Lake Tahoe by up to 10.1 ft (3.1 m).[4] Outflows from the dam are regulated by a gated spillway with 17 bays, with a maximum release capacity of 2,100 cubic feet per second (59 m3/s). It is situated 400 feet downstream from the lake's natural shore. This is meant to help hydraulic control during a dry season with low water levels.

CASTLE TOURS

Docent-guided tours reveal the mystery and legacy of George Whittell Jr., the enigmatic tycoon who purchased and protected nearly 45,000 acres of Lake Tahoe's east shore. You'll discover the history of the Lighthouse Room, Old Lodge, servants' quarters with original kitchen, and the 600' underground tunnel leading to the cavernous boathouse. You'll likely get a glimpse of the legendary wooden speedboat, *Thunderbird*, built for Whittell in 1939 and powered by twin Allison engines from vintage WWII fighter aircraft. Along the way, you'll walk the serpentine Dragon's Tail path to the enchanting Card House with its famous poker game stories.



Tours by Land

All land tours include shuttle bus transportation departing from the Incline Village and Crystal Bay Visitor's Center located at 969 Tahoe Blvd, Incline Village, Nevada. Check in 30 minutes prior to your tour.

[Note: shuttle buses do not operate during the COVID public health emergency and guests will be given driving instructions.]

The upgraded tour with wine and cheese is offered afternoons for adults only. This extended 2-hour tour allows extra time on the grounds and includes a selection of wine, beer, and artisan cheeses.

For the current schedule and pricing for land tours, please visit thunderbirdtahoe.org online or call 1-800-GO-TAHOE (1-800-468-2463).

Cruise Tahoe from South Shore

Cruise aboard a historic wooden boat from South Shore Lake Tahoe to Thunderbird Lodge. Includes continental breakfast and picnic lunch on the Lodge grounds.

For information and reservations, call 1 (775) 230-8907 or book online at cruisetahoe.com.

Tahoe Adventure Company Paddle Tours

Local adventure guides lead kayaking tours from Nevada's Sand Harbor State Park to Thunderbird Lodge. These tours include all equipment and a picnic lunch on the Lodge grounds.

For information and reservations, call 1 (530) 913-9212 or book online at tahoeadventurecompany.com.

Private Group and School Tours

Private group, family, school, and corporate activity tours of Thunderbird Lodge are offered at select times year-round. For information about reserving a private tour, call 1 (775) 832-8752 or visit thunderbirdtahoe.org.

All tours offer breathtaking views of our majestic lake, elegant gardens, lagoons, waterfalls, fountains, and the nearby mountain ranges. Discover the magic of Thunderbird Lodge—the history, the architecture, and stories of Lake Tahoe's gilded age.

There are various ways to visit Thunderbird Lodge: by land, by paddle craft, or by tour boat. Public tours are available on select days Tuesday through Saturday all summer long, and each affords a memorable experience. Please try them all!

When weather permits, the Lodge is open for private, corporate, and group tours year-round.

DISCLOSURES

- Reservations are required for all tours. Self-guided tours are not available.
- Smoking is not permitted in the buildings, on the grounds, or aboard shuttle busses and watercraft.
- Children must be six years of age or older.
- Comfortable walking shoes are required, and a warm jacket is recommended.
- Unless otherwise directed, there is no self-parking at Thunderbird Lodge.
- Guided tours are offered at special events and open houses throughout the season.
- Tour schedules, pricing, and offerings are subject to change without notice. Management reserves all rights.
- Approved facial coverings must be properly worn at all times while aboard vessels, on shuttle buses, inside buildings, and when social distancing is not possible or practical.

THUNDERFAIRE Lakeside Food and Wine

In summer, Thunderbird assembles the region's finest food and beverage purveyors for a one-day fundraising event in the style of an old-world festival.

Stroll grottoes and secret passages of the Whittell Estate while taking in the sights, entertainment, and Tahoe-centric crafts by showcased local artists featured throughout the expansive property. Sample delicious bites from celebrated chefs and taste fine wines, craft brews, and distilled spirits proffered throughout the grounds.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

THUNDERBIRD SOCIAL MEDIA

Be sure to visit Thunderbird Lake Tahoe's official Facebook page [@ThunderbirdTahoe](#) for the latest information about Thunderbird events, preservation and education programs, activities, and offerings.

On Instagram, you may find us [@ThunderbirdLakeTahoe](#).

Also, explore Lake Tahoe's history through the eyes of Captain George Whittell Jr. on Facebook [@CaptainWhittell](#). Read vignettes from the Captain's life about his animals, cars, boats, and travels.

OPEN HOUSES AND HISTORY PRESENTATIONS

During the month of May, Historic Preservation Month, and at other times throughout the year, preservation professionals present a series of lectures and open houses at Thunderbird Lodge. Topics have included the *Myths of Thunderbird Lodge*, *Tahoe Legends and Lore*, *Engineering Marvel: the Flumes and the Virginia and Gold Hill Water Company*, and *Tahoe Tsunami*.

DIGITAL CONTENT

Coming soon!

The Thunderbird team is creating an exciting new channel containing online content about the history, legend, lore of Thunderbird Lodge and Yacht, and the greater Lake Tahoe region.

Stories feature Captain George Whittell Jr. and his fabled menagerie of wild animals, incomparable air and watercraft, and perspectives on his impacts on Lake Tahoe's Nevada shoreline as he conserved more than 40,000 acres of alpine landscape.

Please visit thunderbirdtahoe.org for the latest information on updates, scheduling, and pricing for these public programs and activities.

As stewards of Lake Tahoe's art and history, we make Thunderbird Lodge and Yacht available a few times each year for major supporters of Thunderbird's programs.

CORPORATE AND FAMILY EVENTS

THE CHARITABLE, EDUCATIONAL, AND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS OF THE NON-PROFIT THUNDERBIRD LAKE TAHOE ARE SUPPORTED ENTIRELY BY PHILANTHROPY.



EXECUTIVE MEETINGS & TEAM GETAWAYS

Plan, review, collaborate and celebrate shared success in the finest secure and private setting that is sure to inspire. 180-degree panoramic views of the Lake Tahoe basin are the backdrop for your business retreat or event. A variety of corporate sponsorships may be tailored to suit your needs.

ENCHANTED GATHERINGS

A grand reason for every season! Family gatherings, a special anniversary, a long-awaited reunion, birthdays, proposals, and more. Our regional network of professional event partners will assist you in expertly crafting each detail from start to finish.

OVERNIGHT LODGING

Cap your evening with an overnight stay in our fairytale stone cottage—rusticate in luxury at Thunderbird Lodge. Occupancy is limited to two guests in one cottage per night.



THUNDERBIRD YACHT CRUISES

To enhance your occasion, the "Lady of the Lake", *Thunderbird* yacht, will grace the pristine blue Tahoe waters. Up to 16 passengers may join a breathtaking cruise, all the while sipping on fine wines, tasting delicious hors d' oeuvres, and learning about Lake Tahoe history as the shoreline passes by.



MAGICAL WEDDINGS

THUNDERBIRD LODGE IS A DISTINCTIVE HIDEAWAY, A FAIRYTALE WEDDING LOCATION, AND AN ELEGANT ESTATE



Magical Memories

A Thunderbird wedding is an experience unlike any other. It is *the* setting for making magical memories on your special day.



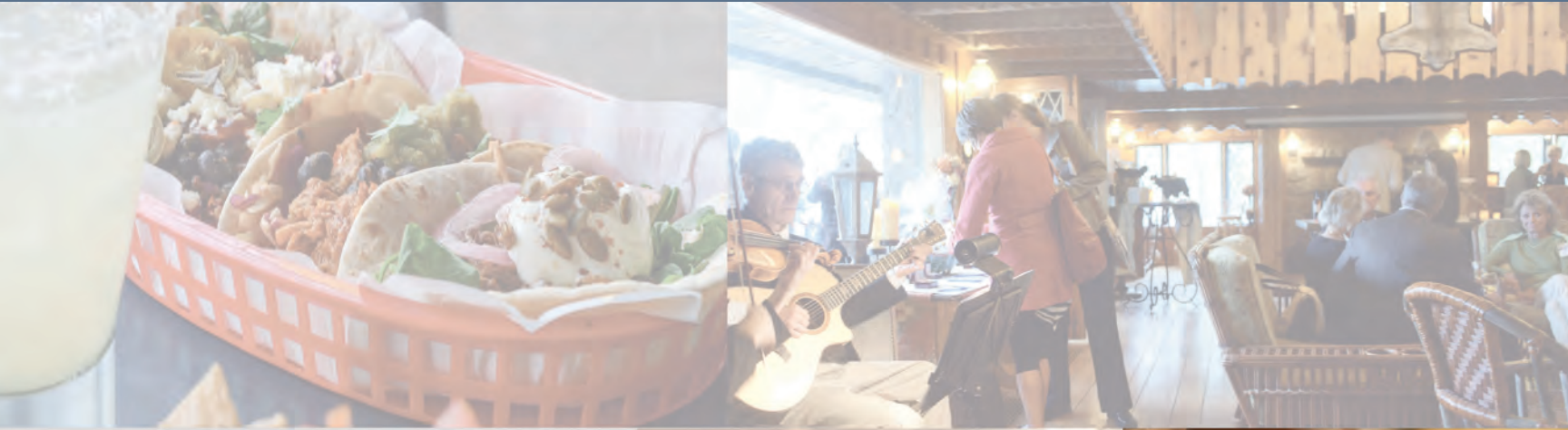
MEMBER HAPPENINGS

These events are typical of events and activities in a regular summer season. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, many events are suspended or curtailed in accordance with public health guidelines.



FULL MOON CRUISES

Experience the beauty of Lake Tahoe in a whole new way – under the light of a full moon while cruising aboard the incredible *Thunderbird* yacht. Delectable desserts and aperitifs served onboard making your magical journey complete.



MEMBERS OPEN HOUSE

July and August, Tuesdays and Fridays, 5pm – 7pm

Savor summer evenings at Thunderbird Lodge. Flagship and Castle supporters are invited to gather each Tuesday and Friday for complimentary beverages, artisan cheeses, and camaraderie in a setting steeped in history. Enjoy panoramic views of Lake Tahoe while learning about the region through a diverse selection of educational programs and presentations. Docent-guided property tours will be offered. Member couples plus two invited guests only please.

THUNDER THURSDAY RECEPTIONS

Last Thursday of the Month, May – October, History Presentation 5pm, Reception 5:30 – 8pm

Celebrate the heritage of Captain George Whittell and Thunderbird Lodge. On the last Thursday of each month May – October, members gather to share their love of Thunderbird and Lake Tahoe while enjoying a dazzling array of gourmet hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, fine wine, and craft beers. Regular appearances by a variety of artists, entertainers, and winemakers. Member couples only please.

These programs available to Flagship and Castle supporters only. Docking privileges and yachting events are available to Thunderbird Castle supporters, plus Flagship members at the Commodore and Admiral's levels only. Programs and privileges subject to change without notice. Management reserves all rights.



CHAIRMAN'S RECEPTION

At the close of each summer season, the Chairman of Thunderbird's Governing Board of Directors invites Thunderbird's valued supporters to an intimate reception in celebration of Thunderbird's charitable and educational programs. Thunderbird could not survive without its members and supporters, and this is the Governing Board's opportunity to express its gratitude and update members on the latest happenings.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Thunderbird Lake Tahoe invites its members to attend special programs and networking events centered on holidays all year long. These activities are typically scheduled around Cinco de Mayo, Independence Day, and the December holidays.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED FOR ALL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. FOR RESERVATIONS, CALL (775) 832-8752 OR SEND E-MAIL TO RESERVATIONS@THUNDERBIRDTAHOE.ORG.

JOIN US

Elite Flagship members cover Thunderbird Lake Tahoe's operating expenses with annual gifts at the Captain, Commodore, or Admiral levels. Thunderbird receives a substantial matching gift in those years when there are 50 or more members signed-up at the Commodore or Admiral's levels. For more information about joining, please visit: thunderbirdtahoe.org/membership

LEGACY GIFTS

MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE.

PASSIONATE DONORS EAGER TO GROW THE PRESERVATION FUND HAVE PLEDGED TO MATCH \$100,000 AND HIGHER CONTRIBUTIONS DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR.

The Preservation Fund represents a portfolio of major gifts received from individual donors, businesses, family foundations, private foundations, and donor advised funds at community foundations. The Fund's corpus—or principal balance—is never touched and only the investment income the Fund earns is used for regular maintenance of Thunderbird Lodge and Yacht.

To sustain preservation and ensure public access for generations to come, Thunderbird must grow its Preservation Fund to \$20-million. We remain extremely grateful to the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation and all our individual donors who started us on this journey. The Thunderbird team is proud of its success in growing the Preservation Fund to halfway of its target goal.

CASTLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Despite numerous economic challenges over the past years, Thunderbird Lake Tahoe is occasionally blessed with gifts of \$100,000 or more to its Preservation Fund. Major contributors at this level gain unparalleled access to programs and members only events. There are many ways to structure your Castle contribution including multi-year gift commitments, transfer of highly appreciated stocks or securities, gifting an I.R.A. distribution, donor advised funds, or making a bequest from your estate.

MAKING A BEQUEST

Bequests let you make a meaningful gift to Thunderbird Lake Tahoe without jeopardizing your family's security. A bequest can be cash or tangible property, or can be a percentage of your estate, or a specific dollar value. Your bequest may be designated for general purposes, the permanent Preservation Fund, or for a specific Thunderbird program or preservation project.

Although you are not obligated to disclose any intended gift, doing so will allow Thunderbird to appropriately thank you for your generosity and update you about charitable works and progress toward achieving the Preservation Fund goals.

GIFTS OF ALL KINDS

Over the years, Thunderbird has benefited from gifts of all kinds including real property, highly valued boats and cars, appreciated securities, bonds, and art and historic artifacts consistent with the Thunderbird mission. If you wish to support Thunderbird and our long-term preservation efforts, please do not hesitate to have a conversation with us.



YOU MAKE A PROFOUND DIFFERENCE

YOU CONTRIBUTE, YOU PARTICIPATE, AND YOU CARE.

Visitors regularly ask about ways to help with Thunderbird maintenance and preservation programs.

As a supporter of Thunderbird Lake Tahoe, YOU make a profound difference in maintaining this beautiful estate, yacht, and the untouched land around us. We are grateful for your continued support.



END-OF-YEAR GIFT

A contribution beyond your membership goes a long way toward completing critical preservation projects. Gifts of appreciated stock, mandatory I.R.A. distributions, and contributions of any kind will push Thunderbird over the finish line on many programs and projects.

RENEW OR UPGRADE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

In order to receive a considerable matching gift, Thunderbird must maintain 50 families gifting \$10,000 each year. If you haven't yet renewed your gift or upgraded to a higher level, please consider doing so to take advantage of this year's charitable deduction and continue to enjoy all of the privileges of membership.

SPONSOR THE CASTLE FOR THE DAY

For a \$50,000 sponsorship, Thunderbird Lodge will close to the public and it will be your castle for one day. The perfect way to celebrate a wedding, special occasion, or host a corporate or family event. We make only a limited number of these sponsorships available each year.



For more information about making a Legacy Gift to Thunderbird Lake Tahoe, please contact Chief Executive and Curator, Bill Watson, at 775.832.8755 or email watson@thunderbirdtahoe.org.

OUR VOLUNTEERS...

...are donors, long-time Tahoe Basin residents, and dedicated friends who give their time to maintain the world of Thunderbird. The lasting friendships they form and results of the work they do for preservation are rewarding enough, then add to that fireside chats, potluck dinners, and more special occasions making a fun and satisfying season at the castle.



PASSIONATE

Volunteers give their spring through fall time to maintain the beautiful grounds, assist with events, and help with restoration projects such as archiving, painting, stonework, yacht maintenance, and anything else that may come up around the Estate.



TO OUR VOLUNTEERS
A HEARTFELT THANK YOU
for all you do!



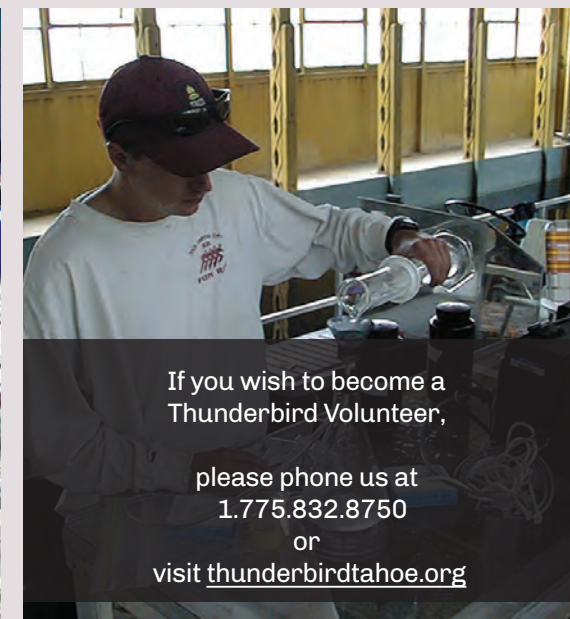
SKILLED DOCENTS

Trained volunteers become highly skilled tour guides, educating and entertaining our guests about the historic estate and legacy of bon vivant, Captain George Whittell Jr.



HOSTS & HOSTESSES

Nearly 100 volunteers come together each year to help preserve Thunderbird Lodge and Yacht and welcome over 10,000 visitors from around the world.



If you wish to become a Thunderbird Volunteer,
 please phone us at
 1.775.832.8750
 or
 visit thunderbirdtahoe.org



Last Bark

A Proud Sponsor of Thunderbird Lake Tahoe

I am writing this note shortly before my 14th birthday. Against all odds, I am still kicking. My doghouse (Thunderbird Lodge) is great, thanks to our loyal and generous members who preserve my exceptional digs. Although I am somewhat insignificant in the line of succession....3rd or 4th....after Bill the lion and Mingo the elephant, my one wish is to make sure the gems I've enjoyed all my life remain when I am gone.

Summer 2021 rolled me over and caused me to sit and shake with contemplation. After the whole COVID scare—yes, I bark at people wearing masks because I do not recognize them—I found myself and my people juggling the activities I so looked forward to, postponing my planned swims and social events, and having to invest my hard-earned dog bones in air purifiers to do what I used to do naturally....breathe Tahoe air. The smoke this year was ruff.

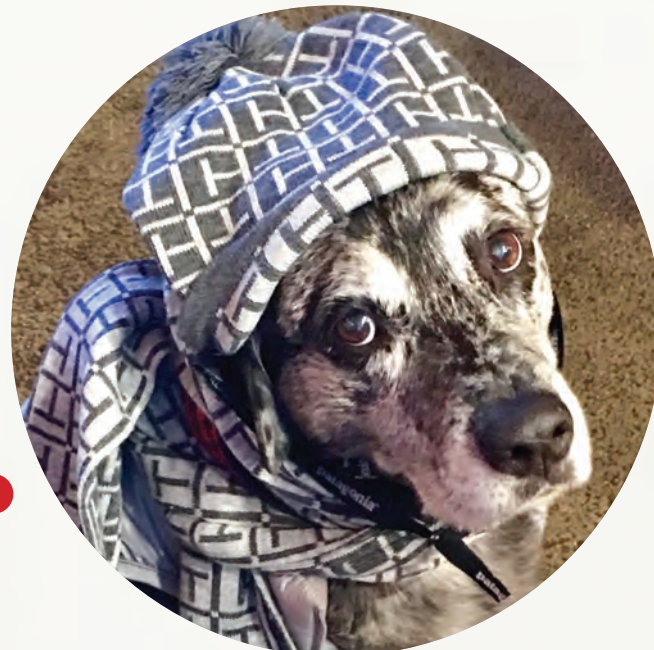
Some say I am a "Pollyanna", and maybe that's why I am still here. I'm guessing puppy heaven can't hold a candle to my big, beautiful swimming pool (Lake Tahoe) and my personal Lodge that is taken care of by

generous members, volunteers, and staff. I wag my tail when I see the love you people have for my special places.

You see, I embody the American dream: rescued from the dumpster to become the resident diva! As they say, I fell down the right chimney. Through a series of very fortunate events, I've landed a life Paris Hilton would envy. Chefs cook for me and our guests dote on me. All I must do is give meaningful tours on my *Callieghbird* yacht and control my urge to chase a squirrel now and then. I cannot hear anymore, so I safely indulge in one more sunset swim and ignore Mom and Dad's commands to come home.

I wish for another "normal" year so to enjoy the human and canine friendships I've made, lap up delicious food I'm not supposed to eat, and watch the stewards of this magical place move the needle forward to ensure that ... when I come back in my next life ... I can still enjoy the stunning, unpolluted waters of my pool, and see my Castle-in-the-Sky remain intact and thriving for future generations to enjoy.

With Love and Licks,
Calliegh the Thunderdog



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*This issue of THUNDERBIRD magazine is dedicated to the friendship and philanthropy of Joan Gibb, now of Jupiter, Florida. Without Joan's early passion and commitment for preserving Thunderbird Lodge and Yacht, these treasures would have been lost forever.
Happy Birthday Joan!*

The mission of Thunderbird Lake Tahoe is to inspire curiosity, appreciation, understanding and stewardship of Lake Tahoe's art, history and environment through preservation, education and conservation.

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