

South Shore Olympic reporter tells stories from 1960

By Kathryn Reed

“I was too naïve to understand it was special,” Del Laine says. “I was excited to be there. The internationality of it.”

Now, 50 years later, Laine appreciates the work she did as a journalist covering the Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley from Feb. 18-28, 1960.

She was 29 years old, with the byline Del Wright. *Lake Tahoe News* was an eight-column weekly newspaper that was transformed into a daily for two weeks during the Olympics at Squaw Valley. Flip Brandt owned the South Lake Tahoe paper at the time.



Squaw's Alex Cushing answers questions from South Lake Tahoe's Del Wright during the 1960 Olympics.

Photo/Sarah Link

(The paper ceased to exist years ago “ but the name was resurrected last year as this online news source.)

Following the lead of *Sports Illustrated* writers kept Laine in the know of what to cover.

“I’ll never forget the hockey team. They were the real miracle on ice,” Laine said. The United States won gold in 1960. The college athletes beat Canada, Russia and then Czechoslovakia. This was in the middle of the Cold War and the Eastern Bloc was expected to dominate the ice.

Laine remembers the “egg” position “ something no one had seen a skier do before. We call it a tuck now. Jean Vuarnet of France is credited with creating the tuck position as he showed it off to the world on Siberia Bowl.

Laine talks about how the athletes all stayed in the village together, which was not something that had happened before or since. A camaraderie of sorts was evident.

She had access to Squaw Valley founder Alex Cushing, as well as the athletes “ winners and losers.

On some days seven Olympic stories covered the entire front page of *Lake Tahoe News*. Features about the athletes, that beef was the primary food served to them, the use of metal skis for the first time, how the Europeans were skeptical of the timekeepers’ abilities, the records that were smashed “ all of this was memorialized in the pages which are now tattered and a bit yellow.

Laine has other memorabilia from those days “ her press pass, items from *Sports Illustrated*, information distributed by the U.S. Olympic Committee, a calendar from Harrah’s Club.

South Lake Tahoe had hoped to capitalize on the Olympics being on the North Shore, but that never transpired, Laine said.

It was a hectic time to be a reporter “ no laptops, no cell

phones, no four-wheel drive. She remembers Highway 89 around Emerald Bay being closed once in those two weeks.

Laine and fellow *Lake Tahoe News* writer Jeanne Ireland would type their stories at Squaw, edit them on the drive back to the South Shore and have them cleaned up for the pressmen to convert their words into hot type.

Publisher's note: *Read Del Wright's reprinted synopsis of the 1960 Olympics on Jan. 15.*