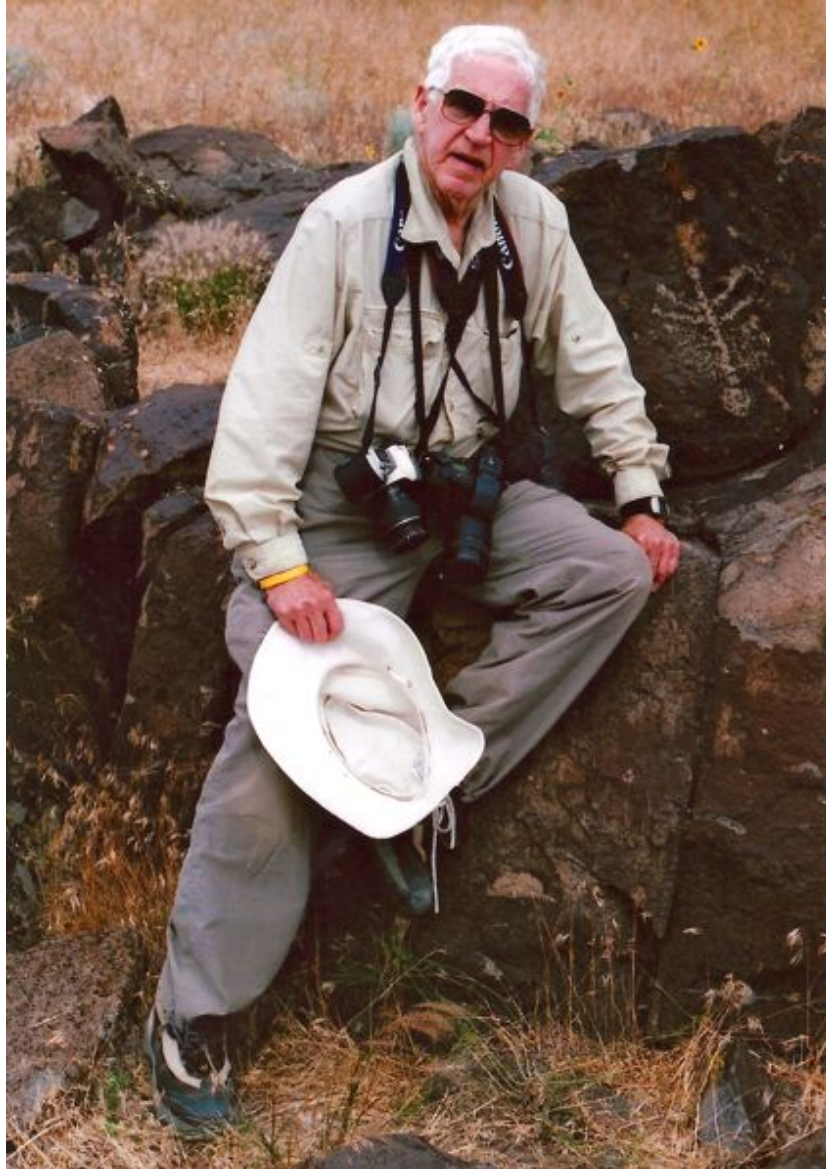


Laine – chronicling Tahoe one shot at a time



Ed Laine has been capturing Lake Tahoe for decades. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

An artist is what Ed Laine always wanted to be. But he didn't expect it to involve a camera.

He had majored in art at the University of Oregon, with the idea he would be creating pottery as a living. But life isn't

always predictable. Collecting a hundred bucks a month making pottery wasn't paying the bills so he had to find another line of work.

"The market wasn't here yet. It would be today I think," Laine told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I was striving to do more commercialized pottery."

And thus he launched his career in advertising and photography, where he saw the South Shore grow, businesses come and go, and lived through the evolution of printmaking.

The 82-year-old moved to South Lake Tahoe in September 1957. Not long after that he went to work at the *Tahoe Daily Tribune*. His job title? "Everything," he said.

"It was all lead and ink at that time," Laine said of the printing process, which he also called "cumbersome".

Everything was shot with film. It was processed in a darkroom on site. (The *Tribune* didn't use digital cameras until 2003.)

Laine remembers the time he was told to go get pictures of a bear hanging out by the California Lodge at Heavenly. It was standing on its back legs munching on a head of lettuce not more than 40 feet away. He kept shooting and shooting.

When he got back to the lab there were no images.

"It was completely blank," Laine recalled. "I had forgotten to pull the slides."

Camera equipment was much more complicated back in the day.

When color photography came around all the aluminum plates on the press had to be removed and the color put on. This would double or triple the length of a press run. It's why color photos used to be rare in publications and why color ads once cost more than black and white.

With a population of less than 5,000 at the time in South Lake Tahoe, it also meant there were not many businesses. Selling ads was hard. The good thing at the time is businesses didn't have a ton of choices for reaching the consumer.

The biggest advertisers were Harrah's, Harveys, Outdoorsman and Barney's.

By the time Laine left the *Tribune* in 1967 he had married Del, who wrote columns for the paper about skiing, hiking, bowling, fishing, gossip and other activities.

Together they opened Laine Associates. It was an ad agency. But there were not enough advertisers to sustain the business so they took the photography aspect of the company and started Laine Photolabs.

Weddings were the principal component of the business. Some were shot at the top of the tram at Heavenly Mountain Resort others at Taylor Creek, and even more at one of the beaches around Tahoe.

"Mothers of the bride were the worst," Laine said. He added, if they had sisters, it got even worse.

The equipment was heavy. Laine was using a 4 x 5 Speed Graphic that he had to lug around.

The one-hour photo business became a reality when they moved from South Lake to Round Hill in 1989.

Laine Photolabs had contracts with area schools and then moved into sports photography. The business closed in 2010. While Laine was active in the company up until the end, his daughter, Brooke, was running it by that time.

(The Laines have four children and 10 grandchildren.)

Through the years Laine also did other jobs relating to photography. He did quite a bit of work for South Tahoe Public

Utility District.

"When they ran the piping over Luther Pass I was hired to photograph it day and night. I had to camp out there," Laine said.

For about seven years he volunteered to photograph sections of the Tahoe Rim Trail for the nonprofit association. It involved lugging heavy camera gear into various locations.

For the Lake Tahoe Historical Society Laine did a substantial amount of photocopying of old pictures that were donated to the organization.

A retired police sergeant from Fresno started an institute in South Lake Tahoe for officers to learn how to photograph evidence. Laine was one of the instructors.

Laine has kept some of the old photo equipment, but it's all boxed up now. He admits if he is going to shoot anything today, he has a small digital camera.

As for the pottery, he never picked it up again.