

Opinion: Is Tahoe a glass half full?

By Garry Bowen

Consolidating what seems to be a frenetic effort to actually define South Lake Tahoe, especially in the last few months, for this article we'll start with Feb. 21, when South Tahoe officials strategized about *a future* (not *the* future as originally titled).

As moderator, Ted Gaebler (co-author of "Reinventing Government", 1992), asked them each to offer an unalloyed expression of a vision, and, as subsequent meetings like the very recent tourism forum tried to do the same, twice now, with Park City presentations (the first was last summer at a leadership forum at MontBleu), an appropriate vision would seem to be rather cloudy or opaque, at best, as our best minds need a most-needed added focus to bring any vision to fruition. The best will be their own persuasion.



Garry Bowen

To that end, I remain entranced with yet another book title: Joan Baez's brother-in-law Richard Farina wrote a book called "I've Been Down So Long, It Looks like Up to Me", which is why I used the word frenetic above, as someone still thinks of Tahoe as in the doldrums, needing a significant boost so as to be able to look up.

In spite of one leader's earlier idea that "South Shore is poised for growth", this was somewhat fortified by City Manager Nancy Kerry's comment at the strategy session that, "South Shore is starting to take hold", although the question of what exactly its taking hold of mirrors *Lake Tahoe News'* report – "barely touched upon was how to turn the ideas into reality", tabled, as a lot of things are, for yet another "(budget) meeting in April".

The running theme from that and the one just concluded is a lack of vision as Kerry stated in February, "Until we know who we are, we won't know why we are doing it" and there is "no shared agreement of who we are". This ironically coincides with the message that Park City emphasized (perhaps led by forum organizers as subject matter), also fortified by yet another forum, that of Tahoe Regional Young Professionals, as Jamie Orr and Scott Fair on that panel said that Tahoe "needs to decide", respectively, "what it wants to be when it grows up" and "what it wants to look like". So, what's been envisioned so far?

We are in the ramp-up to South Lake Tahoe's 50th birthday. In 1965, the slogan was "America's All-Year Playground", eerily reminiscent of the current vision proffered. The major difference is in the corporate leadership we continue to rely on, as they went decidedly covetous of their customer base over the years, not really understanding Tahoe's real attractions, for the sake of job and bottom-line profit protection.

Harrah's, for example, gained prominence by what real estate still knows as "location, location, location" – being the first place encountered as the state line was crossed, they placed a very-wide parking entry there, the better to welcome those coming to patronize. The mistake was in making that subservient to hotel interests (on both sides), shifting significant cash flows away from their own business model.

Today's re-emphasis on recreation is partly due to not understanding how it worked back-in-the-day. If someone no longer wanted to "play" at the casino corridor, they could very quickly redeem their car and be on their way to whatever other Tahoe attraction beckoned, as there was almost immediately five or six cars entering to take their place to everyone's benefit, resident and visitor alike with a much higher experiential value.

Also misunderstood was Harrah's commitment to its visiting clientele (comprising the now-decimated lodging community), as the South Shore room bookings were designed to "make hay while the sun shines" (i.e., the reason the best-known entertainers were always three weeks in July), thereby filling most of the motels in town for the entire summer, not being able to trust the other seasons to build the numbers up, or not to be able to adequately access the South Shore due to Echo closures, etc. That was their strategy – the roads may be closed or be inaccessible; family school years that shifted, etc., but business went on, at least partially by a Harrah's-Greyhound bus system I had a hand in organizing – as shift work demanded customers, if full employment were to be: food-on-the-table, clothes-to-buy, etc.

As corporate ownership came about (remember, Harvey Gross and Bill Harrah were entrepreneurial), bottom-line issues became higher concerns, corporate leaders in their brilliance ended up "exporting" gaming everywhere, which also ended up being a cause celebre for ill-managed civic and tribal municipalities to satisfy beyond their means. This of course was at the expense of a place like South Shore, absent other business vitality, but where it all began.

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce Executive Director B Gorman has stated that this decline was in 1997, but it actually started with the above-mentioned shift (late 1970s and on), as the momentum was great enough to not have anyone notice any abrupt change, therefore not making needed

adjustments, until the lodging industry kept turning over and over as earlier expectations of buying one were not met.

That turnover included a continual rotating cast change so it became difficult to conjure up a vision, absent knowing what the issues really are from a historical perspective, one that I'm intimately familiar with. For example, the shift in Harrah's ownership from a five-star hotel sold to an essentially very large motel company shifted the service aspects to the detrimental side, as some entering are not checking in at a hotel, so parking valets didn't ordinarily have to cater to those with luggage, to be staying in the limited number of rooms. More of a major shift than is noticed by the average person.

There are other examples of strategic missteps, in wait.

In the current day, Lake Tahoe generally, and South Shore especially, doesn't have the perspective necessary to create a vision, as they watch the casino industry stumble around. Now even winter weather doesn't cooperate as yet another changing cast of ownership keeps trying to find its way back to "year-round".

It is said that the word "obvious" is actually a conundrum, as what is obvious to one is not to another – that's why communication is needed, and in South Shore's case, a historical perspective to "right-the-ship", in putting the "wind back-in-the-sails" is navigating in a language of the future, if we truly want one.

Vision has the connotation of a long-view, which itself might seem obvious, but the last few decades here have been definitively short-sighted, absent any real marketing message eliciting Lake Tahoe's timeless qualities, with more of a "slot promotional" approach due to its need to cover itself in mostly a "short-term" manner. This contributes to the churning feeling of anxiety in the middle of humanity's impending need

for more serenity and space, not less – that a place like Tahoe can provide if done well.

There are ways to share Tahoe naturally that are not explored, but can result in its reviving a global cachet – what is natural beauty, if not for its ultimate attraction, from however far away on the planet.

Now, the city hopes to engage the public (yet again), but in my own experience, unless they firmly have in mind really listening (being able to both discern, then act on), any learning will follow an already outlying response pattern: “that’ll never happen here”. And its professional’ version, exemplified by a vivid reminder when a city department head was called to answer a question by the City Council, the response was in the same mode as “not happening here” and “our consultant came up with a number of ideas, but our decision was that our people were not ready for that”.

Why then the need to consult if the consultation is rendered moot via existing biases as inadequate?

The same question concerns the engagement of the citizens – and my counsel in past candidacies – the key to success is both “trust and transparency”, and an adequate perspective with which to judge, now still in short supply.

From my long-term perspective, consider this my “speak up”, as inaugural to another 50 years or more.

Depending on queries and response here, a next installment might be: A glass half-empty.

Garry Bowen has more than a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health. He may be reached at tahoefuture@gmail.com or 775.690.6900.

Letter: Questioning parking lot at Kirkwood

Publisher's note: *This letter is addressed to Julie Saylor with El Dorado County and was sent to Lake Tahoe News.*

Dear Julie,

I request that my comments be read, and made available, during the TC-TAC [Tri-County Technical Advisory Committee] meeting (Item G.1) on May 8, 2015.

To Whom It May Concern:

I have owned a home, and adjacent lot, on Dangberg Drive in Kirkwood since 1987 and am very opposed to the large parking lot being proposed. I am co-founder of the Friends of Kirkwood Association and spent several years, working more than full time, on the Kirkwood Specific Plan and the Mountain Master Development Plan (MMDP) for the Kirkwood Ski Resort. During this time, I attended countless public meetings and became well versed in the public planning process, CEQA and the environmental review process for federal lands. Friends of Kirkwood Association has hundreds of members who support thoughtful development and preservation of Kirkwoods' natural environment. I am concerned, and I am certain that hundreds of other Kirkwood "regulars," are concerned about several aspects of this significant proposal, which would create long term, irreversible, negative impacts to the Kirkwood area.

Simply put, there is no good reason to allow a parking lot on the School Site. "Saving" (i.e. not cutting down) the large

trees would still allow the area to effectively become solid pavement. Please let's not destroy the incomparable beauty of Kirkwood by believing the statement, set forth by the project proponent, that trees will be "saved."

The current plan for development in Kirkwood should be followed. This Specific Plan was put into place by the county Boards of Supervisors for the Kirkwood area after several public meetings seeking public input, hundreds of thoughtful letters from the public, a few rounds of CEQA reports, and dozens of other meetings. This occurred during a several year period.

The Kirkwood Specific Plan, if I correctly remember, specifically states that the School Site is to remain

undisturbed if not used as a school. Further, the Kirkwood Specific Plan calls for multi-level parking structures on existing parking lots. Therefore, this type of structure should be built before allowing a new parking lot to sprawl out onto a relatively undisturbed natural area.

Please remember that the CEQA review for Kirkwood involved several parking and traffic studies – and that various parking options were considered. Many other environmental impacts were considered and reviewed including, but not limited to: water quality run-off from paved/developed areas, air quality, visual impacts to public lands, among many others.

The truth is that we (the public) were promised by the Kirkwood developer/ski resort that parking would be sufficient, when we raised traffic and parking concerns during the public planning process, about building multi-family units on the then-existing Timber Creek parking lot. The Kirkwood ski resort ("Project Proponent") assured us there would be enough parking and that

traffic problems would be limited to a very few ski days.

However, now that the project proponent has made profits (millions?) by selling the Timber Creek parking lot for development, it is asking to re-zone a couple acres to effectively replace the Timber Creek parking lot.

Instead, the Kirkwood Specific Plan should be followed and the profits made by selling the Timber Creek parking lot should be used, if truly needed, to build multi-level parking in existing parking lots. The public should not have to pay for this by enduring diminished environmental quality at Kirkwood.

Further, the need for additional parking should be firmly demonstrated by the Project Proponent, before **any** additional parking is approved, considering the well-known and documented down turn in skiers days, likely caused in part by record low snowfall the past several winters.

The piecemeal approach to planning is strictly forbidden by CEQA. Approving a zoning change for the School Site would definitely constitute such an approach. Let's not start down that path.

If additional parking is truly needed: it should be accomplished by multi-level parking, thoughtfully done. More not-well-thought-out construction and "improvements" should not be allowed. Let's not allow, as the popular folk song by Joni Mitchell goes, "They paved over paradise, put up a parking lot!"

Sincerely,

Reid D. Bennett, president Friends of Kirkwood Association

I-80 delays expected as overcrossing is raised

Motorists will need additional time when traveling on eastbound Interstate 80 under the Weimar Cross Road Overcrossing in Placer County.

One lane of Interstate 80 will be closed for three-quarters of a mile at Weimar Cross Road as crews excavate the section of Interstate 80 under the overcrossing as part of the Raise80 project, which is increasing the vertical clearance of nine freeway overcrossings on Interstate 80 in south Placer County.

The lane closure is scheduled from 8pm May 10 through 5am May 22. Eastbound motorists can expect delays of 15 to 30 minutes throughout the project with significantly longer delays of up to 90 minutes on May 15 and May 16. Westbound traffic will not be affected.

Visits to U.S. ski areas fall 5% in 2014-15

By Jason Blevins, Denver Post

The snowless winter in California overwhelmed the snowy East to yield the ski resort industry's second worst season in 16 years. Resorts across the U.S. saw visits fall to 53.6 million, according to a preliminary count by the National Ski Areas Association.

While it wasn't as bad as the 2011-12 season, when visits plummeted 16 percent from the previous season to 51 million, visits for the 2014-15 season fell 5 percent. The season finished 3.8 percent below the five-year average of 55.7 million.

Snowfall was down 28 percent across the country, according to early results from the the NSAA's annual Kottke Survey.

Read the whole story

Cavendish, Armstrong highlight Tour of California

By Associated Press

Mark Cavendish and Kristin Armstrong will highlight the Tour of California.

Eighty-four women representing 14 teams will begin two days of racing Friday in the Sierra Nevada with a 74-mile counterclockwise loop around Lake Tahoe in the new women's three-day stage race.

Poor weather, including possible snow, is forecast Friday and Saturday.

Lisa Brennauer of Germany, the current world time trial titlist, and American Lauren Stephens, who claimed the national racing series last year, are the top contenders.

Armstrong, now in her second retirement comeback, will join 24 women competing in Big Bear Lake next Thursday in individual time trial to coincide with stage 6 of the men's race.

"I am really excited about the Tahoe course," Stephens said. "All the climbing. They definitely look like difficult stages. The Sacramento stage will be a day for the fans. It will be such a short circuit, the fans can watch the whole race."

Cavendish of Britain, who has five stages in the Tour of California among his more than 150 career wins, will be favored in the opening stage of the eight-day men's race Sunday in Sacramento. The race ends May 17 at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

The 126.2-mile men's opening stage will start at the same location as the end day of the women's stage race, a 34-mile circuit race. The 18-team field will ride through numerous Central Valley cities before returning to Sacramento for an afternoon finish.

Robert Gesink of the Netherlands, a climbing specialist who won the overall race in 2012, is the only returning titlist. American Lawson Craddock will compete after finishing third last year, 1 minute and 48 seconds behind titlist Bradley Wiggins of Britain.

Wiggins, the 2012 Tour de France winner, is not entered.

Marcel Kittel of Germany withdrew from the event Thursday with a lingering shoulder ailment. His team will have seven riders and the starting field will be reduced to 143.

Twain impersonator to perform in S. Tahoe

Famed Mark Twain impressionist McAvoy Layne will bring the

Tahoe Tales of the legendary writer and humorist to Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe on May 23.

Internationally known as the ghost of Mark Twain, Layne will bring Twain's local area lore, half-truths and embellishments to light.

For nearly three decades and more than 4,000 performances Layne has been preeminent in preserving the wit and wisdom of Twain.

Doors open at 6:30pm, the performance at 7pm. Seating is limited to 50, with tickets costing \$20. Call 530.543.2113.

Caesars CEO: 1st quarter best since 2008

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Caesars Entertainment, the casino giant that controls Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys in Stateline, reported its first-quarter earnings Wednesday.

Revenue: \$2.2 billion, up 8.8 percent from the first quarter of last year.

That includes financial results from the company's division Caesars Entertainment Operating Co., which filed for bankruptcy on Jan. 15. Caesars disclosed the figure in supplemental information May 6, but the company has actually deconsolidated the operating division from its main financial results because of the bankruptcy.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- TRYP is hosting a workshop about how to negotiate raises and other important topics in the workplace. It is May 20 from 6-7pm at Inn by the Lake, 3300 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe. It is free for members, \$5 for non-members.
 - A film crew from Fox Business Network will be at South Tahoe High School on May 8 to film a segment to be part of "In View", which is hosted by Larry King. The school board earlier this year approved the filming.
 - Medical providers from Barton Health's Tahoe Center for Orthopedics and Emergency Department have volunteered to provide medical support at the Amgen Tour of California on May 8-9. Emergency and orthopedic physicians, athletic trainers, physical therapists, and nurses will be ready to help athletes on the course and at the finish line.
 - Lake Valley Fire Protection District's budget will be discussed at a May 14, 7pm public hearing at the Keetak Street station in Meyers.
 - Stacey F. Herhusky of Incline Law Group has been recognized by the National Academy of Family Law Attorneys as one of Nevada's top 10 family law attorneys.
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4 on sailboat barely survive Lake Tahoe storm; South Shore marina loses rental boat



A rental boat at Camp Richardson capsizes May 7. Photo/Bob Sweatt

By Kathryn Reed

A skipper with 30 years of experience on Lake Tahoe was barely able to make it to shore safely on Wednesday because of the 4 to 8 foot waves.

Mike Young of Incline Village left Obexer's in Homewood about 2pm May 6 destined for Incline Village, but wound up at Camp Richardson about 7pm. By that time all four on board the vessel had their lifejackets on, the Coast Guard had been called and uncertainty was setting in.

"We were pretty close to the East Shore. We saw one little squall coming across the west to Incline and thought it would blow by and we would be good," Young told *Lake Tahoe News*. "But it filled up fast."

Someone on shore alerted Young that the waves were high and

the wind was howling so it would best to try to land elsewhere.

Young wasn't worried about whether the boat could handle the storm; he just needed a place to dock.

He called the U.S. Coast Guard when he was off Zephyr Cove.

"They said when you are in trouble, call us and we will send a helicopter," Young said.

The Coast Guard, which is stationed in Tahoe City, said the boat was not in distress. Uncertainty, alert and distress are the three levels of search and rescue, according to the USCG. Because the boat was able to sail, it did not need rescuing, according to USCG protocols.

"We are not allowed to give navigational advice," Thomas Hussey, USCG boatswain's mate second class, told *Lake Tahoe News*. This is because if the vessel does not make it, the Coast Guard does not want to be held liable.

Hussey said it was from Camp Richardson personnel that they heard the boat was going to moor there.

Young said the decision was made to head south because that was the direction the wind was coming from.

He turned the sailboat around. At first shelter was found at a cove near D.L. Bliss State Park. Waves were 3 to 4 feet going across the lake. Then he tried to find a nearby buoy, but was unsuccessful so he headed toward the mouth of Emerald Bay.

A call to Camp Rich was made and people there said it was not windy. But that didn't last.

Bob Hassett, who runs Camp Rich Marina, said in a one-hour period the wind at Lake Tahoe Airport measured 5 mph from the southwest and then it was variable before having gusts of 30 mph out of the northeast.

“That is abnormal,” Hassett told *Lake Tahoe News* of the 180-degree change. “Then it churned the lake. The waves were from one direction, wind from another and that is where you have troubles.”

By the time Young, who was under motor power for this stretch, made his way to the South Shore resort the wind had done the 180 and he said waves reached 8 feet at times.

Camp Rich employees went out in a skiff to retrieve the four from the sailboat. While Hassett said he doesn't like to put employees in harms way, not helping wasn't an option. Young was appreciative of all the assistance the Camp Rich guys provided.

For now the sailboat is on a buoy; waiting for the weather to clear so it can be sailed to its home port in Incline.

In addition to Hassett's employees assisting with rescuing the four sailboaters, Hassett lost one of his rental motorboats and another was damaged, but is salvageable. New, the boat costs between \$30,000 and \$50,000.

Still, the marina operator said he would open for business May 15.

Handbell ensemble to play in South Lake Tahoe

Tintabulations, a community handbell ensemble from Reno, is putting on a concert in South Lake Tahoe on June 7.

Their concert series entitled How The West Was Rung is an homage to the ensemble's home state of Nevada in celebration

of its sesquicentennial. Classical, jazz and pop tunes are all part of the concert, as well as original works for bells written by some of the nation's foremost handbell composers.

Performing on 120 bells and chimes, the 15 musicians that comprise Tintabulations prove that bell ringing is not just a holiday tradition.

The free concert starts at 2pm at Hope Lutheran Church, 930 Julie Lane, South Lake Tahoe.