Sno-Flake celebrating 50 years of flipping burgers in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Even after being harassed by his family every night for years that he smelled like French fries when he came home from work doesn't keep Bill Schneider away from the Sno-Flake Drive-In.

He and his wife, Trudy, eat at the old-style hamburger joint every time they come to South Lake Tahoe – which is about once a month. The Minden couple owned the restaurant from 1989 to about 1992.



Trudy and Bill Schneider used to own the Sno-Flake. Photos/Kathryn Reed

On Monday they were in town for their usual – turkey burgers.

Sno-Flake is in its 50th year, having opened July 19, 1961.

"When we bought it there was a lot of Mexican food. We changed it to hamburgers, French fries, chili and hotdogs," Bill Schneider said as his burger and chili were delivered.

During their ownership it was the Alpine burger what was popular. The burger with Swiss cheese and a slice of ham is no longer on the menu.

“We didn’t make much money on it, but we had a lot of customers,” Schneider said.

For current owners Duncan and Lisa Sennott it is the $5.79 Tahoe burger that is the best seller. It comes with sautéed mushrooms, onions and Monterey jack cheese.

The Sennotts have owned the Sno-Flake for six years, having bought it from Pete and Susie Richards. The Richards bought it from the Schneiders.



The Sno-Flake will be 50-years-old in 2011.

Every owner has made changes to the building as well as to the menu.

Duncan Sennott said regulars won’t let him take things off the menu, so he spends time adding to it. The one thing he did eliminate was the deep fried burritos.

“We have probably doubled the milkshakes and the health options,” Sennott said.

The Oreo shake is the most popular, but the seasonal shakes like the eggnog and pumpkin, which he is whipping up now, sell no matter the outside temperature.

Upgrading the ingredients started early, which includes using as much fresh stuff as possible.

“I wanted to make sure the food really tasted great,” Sennott said. “There’s not much I can cut. The burgers all have a following.”



Cook Rene Rizo mans the kitchen.

He said some people have been getting the same burger for the last 20 years.

The couple left life in corporate America to operate the burger joint. He used to be in international banking in San Francisco, while she was an attorney in the Bay Area. Lisa, who was his fiancée when they bought the place, now works for Laub & Laub.

Since buying the place they’ve added to their family. They have a 4-year-old daughter and 2-year-old son.

Duncan Sennott spends at least five days a week at the low-key eatery doing a bit of everything.

“I had been taking cooking classes at the culinary academy for years. We moved here and it seemed like a natural change,” Sennott said. He has no regrets, but admits it’s harder work than he ever imagined.

It’s the little things like being closed three days last week because the fire suppression system went off.

He’s not sure why Sno-Flake has lasted 50 years. Partly he thinks it’s the old building.



Sno-Flake workers know many customers by name.

“It’s a time warp to my childhood,” Sennott said.

Consistently good, hot food are other reasons. Location hasn’t hurt either – being walking distance to El Dorado Beach. Lines are the norm during the summer. It’s one of the few places to get soft serve cones on the South Shore. French fry connoisseurs (like this reporter) swear by their fries.

As for how to celebrate Sno-Flake turning 50, Sennott doesn’t have all that worked out. But he is entertaining rolling back prices to 1961 – if only for a day.

Ways to be green with gift wrapping

By Sharon Harvey-Rosenberg, McClatchy Newspapers

Scissors and clear tape transformed a store bag into festive wrapping paper for a gift. That green use of an old bag solved

an annual challenge of finding affordable wrapping paper. The sale of traditional gift paper is a profitable business, creating annual revenues of $2.6 billion dollars, according to Earth911, an environmental services company.

Alternative gift-wrapping ideas can save money and reduce landfill waste. If every American family replaced traditional gift wrapping paper with fabric or recycled paper for three gifts, the amount of paper saved would be enough to cover more than 45,000 football fields, according to the Sierra Club.

Read the whole story

Moseley gives up skates to return to skiing

By Jeffrey Weidel, Marin Independent Journal

This might not have made the Christmas wish list, but it could be one to add if you plan to be anywhere near Squaw Valley over the holidays.

Former Olympic gold medal skier Jonny Moseley, who grew up in Tiburon, will be skiing throughout the Christmas holidays at Squaw Valley ski resort and the public is welcome to join him, starting Wednesday. Moseley will be on the hill Thursday and Friday, as well as Sunday through Dec. 30.



Jonny Moseley

His return to the snow comes after a long run on ice. Moseley was eliminated from the television show “Skating with the Stars” after lasting until the next-to-last episode on the nationally televised ice skating competition broadcast. His partner was former pairs skater Brooke Castile. The finale (without Moseley) is set to air Monday.

One of the great things about anyone with a Christmas wish to ski with Moseley is that the price is right – a few turns on the slopes is free of charge (after the purchase of a Squaw lift ticket of course).

The daily tours meet each day at the top of the Funitel at 2pm and typically include 20-25 people at the start, and end several hours later with about half that number. An après ski gathering with Moseley takes place afterward at the Olympic House.

Read the whole story

Navy pilots lose flying status for dip in Lake Tahoe

By Jeanette Steele, San Diego Union-Tribune

Two Navy instructor pilots have been stripped of flying status

and two student pilots will have to repeat training because of a September incident in which they dipped two $33 million aircraft into Lake Tahoe while trying to take photos for the squadron’s Facebook page, a Navy official said Wednesday.

The Sept. 13 incident became public because a bystander caught the event on video and posted it on YouTube.

The video shows the two MH-60R Seahawk helicopters trying to hover low over the lake. In the video, one apparently loses control for a few seconds, dips its landing gear in the water, then pulls up. Both aircraft actually went into the water, though the footage only captured one, Navy officials have said.

Both helicopters were damaged and had to be flown to a Lake Tahoe airport for repairs, which cost $505,000.

Read the whole story

Cave Rock boat launch implements holiday hours

The boat launch facility at Cave Rock will be closed Christmas Day. The boat ramp will operate on a reduced schedule from 8am-2pm on New Year’s Day.

Only Tahoe issued watercraft seals will be accepted at the entrance booth on New Year’s Day. No inspections will be performed, so visitors are asked to obtain an inspection seal prior to Jan. 1.

Normal Cave Rock operating hours throughout winter are daily from 6am-4pm.

Mark Lundahl 1953-2010

By Guy Clifton, Reno Gazette-Journal

Mark Lundahl, managing editor at the Reno Gazette-Journal and veteran newspaperman, died Tuesday after a brief illness.

He was 57.

Lundahl joined the Gazette-Journal as a news reporter in March 1987 and held numerous titles during his 23 years at the paper, including assistant city editor, city editor, assistant managing editor, senior editor for news and multimedia and managing editor.



Mark Lundahl

He was remembered Tuesday for his skills as an editor, his calm under deadline pressure and his unbridled passion for news, history, music and gardening.

“Mark was an historian, a wordsmith and a coach,” said RGJ President and Publisher Ted Power. “He was the conscience and spirit of the newsroom. But mostly he was a friend with a smile and laugh to make everyone feel at ease and at home.”

Former RGJ editor Ward Bushee, now editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, promoted Lundahl to city editor in 1994. He said Lundahl “was a gifted newspaper man who had extraordinary

editing skills, news judgment and courage.”

Read the whole story

Snowpack, reservoir levels well above normal

By Tim Hearden, Capital Press

California’s record-setting rainfall in the past week has left many reservoirs flush with water and mountains smothered in snow.

The state’s Department of Water Resources is predicting its deliveries of state project water will be at least half of contractors’ requests – an extraordinarily high amount for this early in the season.

“The usual procedure is to start out conservatively at the first of the water year and see what kind of direction mother nature is going to take,” DWR spokesman Don Strickland said. “Obviously she is going in the right direction now, so it’s not beyond the possibility that water allocations could be increased again provided the storms keep coming on through.”

The prediction comes as the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation has been releasing water from several nearly full reservoirs to make room for more.

At Shasta Lake, crews have been sending 15,000 cubic feet per second down the Sacramento River, up from the normal 7,000 cfs. Releases from Folsom Lake near Sacramento were ramped up from 15,000 cfs to 30,000 cfs, and the Tolluch Reservoir on the Stanislaus River has been letting out 1,500 cfs rather

than the normal 200 cfs.

Bureau officials expected releases to ease back to normal by this weekend as the deluge lets up, spokesman Pete Lucero said.

“With all of our reservoirs, one of their main purposes is for flood control,” Lucero said. With these storms coming in this past weekend and coming up this week, we need to be sure we have enough flood reservation space within the reservoirs.”

There’s plenty more water coming. As of Dec. 21, the water content in snowpack statewide was 204 percent of normal for this time of year, including 274 percent of normal for the southern Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Read the whole story

Ski report: More snow is coming down



It’s snowing lightly this morning on the South Shore. No wind for a change.

It should be a great day to be on the slopes of Lake Tahoe.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

New Year’s Eve at Apres Wine Co.

New Year’s Eve Celebration Dinner at Après Wine Company is Dec. 31 starting at 9pm and lasting to?

A special menu has been designed to ring in the New Year. The bubbles will be flowing freely all night with champagne toasts at 10pm, 11pm and midnight.

Cost is $159 per couple; $85 singles. Seating is limited. For menu and to RSVP, call (530) 544.9463.

State Parks: Washoe Meadow sustains minimal damage

By Kathryn Reed

Furor by neighbors over what appeared to be a tree removal process gone awry led California State Parks and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency officials to survey the area last week.

Officials from both agencies toured Washoe Meadow State Park to look for any long-lasting damage created by the contractor who was doing over the snow tree removal.

“What they saw is none of the ruts caused by the contractor’s activity would deliver sediment to the stream,” Tamara Sasaki,

senior environmental scientist with State Parks, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Dec. 21. “Agency representatives observed ruts in three locations and areas where the equipment operated without any impact to soil or vegetation. They saw little soil compaction, which was a good thing.”

Some ruts were found in non-sensitive areas outside the meadow and wetlands, Sasaki said. The state will restore that 200-foot stretch after the snow melts.

TRPA and State Parks officials plan to revisit the area once the snow is gone from the South Shore park to “reassess the impacted area.”

“Then State Parks will do any remediation or anything that needs to be taken care of in 2011,” Sasaki said.