

Walt Currier – 1934-2013

Longtime South Lake Tahoe resident Walter Currier died July 6. He was 78.

He born on Sept. 4, 1934.

Walter, known to all as Walt, began teaching at the age of 21 in Martinez in 1955. He taught at Martinez Elementary School until 1961. He then moved his family to South Lake Tahoe where he was first hired to teach seventh grade at Al Tahoe Middle School which was combined with the high school.

In 1962 he moved to Tahoe Valley Elementary to teach sixth grade. He then became a teaching vice principal, and then principal from 1965 until 1970.

In 1970 he became principal of Bijou Elementary School; serving that community until 1978.

In 1978 he became principal of the Meyers Elementary School; serving that community until 1983.

In 1983 he became principal of Sierra House Elementary School; serving that community until 1987.

In 1987 he became principal of South Tahoe Middle School.

In spring and summer of 1988 he served as interim superintendent of Lake Tahoe Unified School District.

He then began working for El Dorado County as the director of Court Schools, which included El Dorado Juvenile Hall in Placerville.

At the same time he was a liaison to the project Right of Passage which enabled students to graduate high school who struggled in the public system.

He retired from the county in 1994 to spend time with his

wife, Nancy, and children Janiece, Walter Jr. and Mark and dog Frankie.

Walt was an avid runner for decades and then enjoyed his walks in the woods with Frankie.

He spent his last days at Cascade of the Sierras in Spanish Springs, Nev., with his daughter, Janiece, son-in-law, John, and grandson, Jess Walsh.

He was well loved and will be missed by all.

Tahoe author ready to sign latest release

Lake Tahoe author Todd Borg has released his latest book "Tahoe Chase".

He has scheduled a slew of signings.

The dates are:

July 26 4-7pm: Artifacts, 4000 Lake Tahoe Blvd (in the Raleys center at Stateline)

July 27 11am: Talk and signing, Sundance Bookstore at 121 California Ave., Reno

July 27 3pm: Signing at Geared for Games, Boatworks Mall, Tahoe City

July 31 6:30pm: Talk and sign at the South Lake Tahoe Library, Rufus Allen Boulevard, South Lake Tahoe

Aug. 1 3 ppm: Signing at The Bookshelf, 11429 Westgate Shopping

Center, Truckee

Aug. 1 5-8pm: Signing at Truckee Thursdays downtown Truckee

Aug. 2 6:30pm: Talk and signing at Shelby's Books, 1663 Lucerne St., Minden Village, Minden

Aug. 4 8:30am: Signing at Red Hut Cafe at Ski Run Boulevard, South Lake Tahoe

Aug. 10 1pm: Talk at the Cameron Park Library, 2500 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park

Aug. 11 8:30am: Signing at Red Hut Cafe Reno, 3480 Lakeside, No. 1, Reno

Aug. 17 3pm: Talk and signing at El Dorado Arts Council Gallery, 459 Main St., Placerville

Aug. 18 8:30am: Signing at Red Hut Cafe, 4385 S. Carson St, Carson City.

Nicki Bluhm to headline on the North Shore

Nicki Bluhm and the Gramblers are going to be headlining the Crystal Bay Club on Sept. 1.

The San Francisco based band is releasing a self-titled sophomore album on Aug 27.

Since the beginning of 2013, the group has headlined more than 80 shows around the country and performed at esteemed festivals including Bonnaroo, Newport, SXSW and Hangout.

The band became a household name after the viral video in 2012 for their “Van Session” cover of Hall and Oates “I Can’t Go For That” – which features the band, in their van, performing the song on travel sized instruments. This particular session has garnered over 3 million hits and the Van Sessions have 2.5 million hits overall.

The concert starts at 9pm.

Steve Martin to bring music, comedy to MontBleu

Steve Martin and the Steep Canyon Rangers featuring Edie Brickell will bring a blend of music and comedy to MontBleu in Stateline on Oct. 5.

The show combines bluegrass music, heavy on the banjo, with dashes of Martin’s comedy.

The show begins at 9pm. Tickets are between \$60 and \$80 and are available through Ticketmaster.com or the MontBleu Box Office, 888.829.7630.

6 days to see artists in S.

Tahoe at work

The annual Tahoe Art League Studio Tour is for six days over two long weekends.

The free event is July 26-28 and Aug. 2-4.

Twenty-three artists will be at 11 locations on the South Shore.

This is an opportunity to see artists' work up close.

The tour route map is available at the TAL Art Center, 3062 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Village People to perform in Lake Tahoe

The Village People will be taking over MontBleu in Stateline on Aug. 3.

With more than three decades of party music, the Village People will perform their hits "YMCA," "In The Navy" and "Macho Man," and "Go West" plus disco cover classics packaged and arranged to bring fans to their feet.

The show begins at 9pm. Tickets are \$25 and available through Ticketmaster.com or the MontBleu Box Office, 888.829.7630.

The Village People hit the disco scene in 1977. The Village People are Eric Anzalone, Alex Briley, Felipe Rose, David Hodo, Ray Simpson and Jeff Olson.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Zion

Zion is one of three little dogs at the shelter right now who look like they are siblings – but they are not related.

Zion is a Chihuahua mix who is a little shy at first, but he warms up quickly and is loving and gentle. He loves other dogs, is fine with cats and seems to like kids. His favorite activity is snuggling.

Zion is neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. He is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to www.petfinder.com to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information about adopting a pet.

– Karen Kuentz

Thunderbird Lodge – a glimpse into old Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – Along the East Shore of Lake Tahoe is one of Nevada's most famous houses that belonged to a man few have heard of.

The Thunderbird Lodge was George Whittell's escape from the world and especially people.

And while Howard Hughes and William Randolph Hearst Jr. were his peers – especially in terms of wealth – Whittell did not leave a legacy like those men did. He was a bit eccentric and liked to keep to himself.

What he left is a swath of undeveloped land along with a house made of native wood and rock that sits on a pristine piece of Lake Tahoe shoreline.



The Thunderbird Lodge in Incline Village is open for tours throughout the summer.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

Whittell was born into San Francisco money and never had to work. He did serve in World War I.

Against his parents' wishes he joined the Barnum and Bailey Circus. His love of big animals continued long after that stint. He had a barn built at Thunderbird for his elephants that had Dutch doors so they would have a lake view. There was even a fireplace to keep them warm.

But the climate in and elevation of Tahoe didn't suit these animals; so back to his Woodside estate they went.

Bill the Lion, though, was known to roam the grounds in Tahoe. And stories are that overnight guests might wake to a big kiss from the wild cat.

At one point Whittell owned 40,000 acres on the Nevada side of Tahoe that included 24 miles of shoreline. After the 1929 stock market crash the Carson & Tahoe Lumber and Fluming Company and other landholders needed cash. Whittell was able to buy much of it for 6 cents an acre.

His property went from the state line on the North Shore to Zephyr Cove. That is how Whittell High School got its name.

Construction on the estate began in 1936. In the 1980s Jack Dreyfus bought the property and added on. However, at the time the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency said the construction could not be historical in nature. That policy has been reversed, and if the addition were built now, it would have to match the original architecture.

Having the building be of two distinct time periods allows the visitor to know what is old and what is new. Part of the new is built on top of what was a deck for Whittell.

The old is not so spectacular inside – especially the living area. What is interesting is the long tunnel that is rock lined that has a couple escape routes. One is to the game

room. Docents said Whittell would disappear from poker games if he were losing.

A small, dark room in the tunnel is not on the plans for the house. Samples of the soot from the ceiling revealed this was where opium was smoked.

The tunnel also leads to the boathouse where the Thunderbird yacht is moored.

In 1939, John Hacker, a Naval architect, designed the vessel to resemble Whittell's personal DC-2 aircraft and his many Duesenbergs automobiles. It has two vintage V-12 Allison Aircraft engines. Jet fuel is available at the Tahoe City Marina.

When first built the Thunderbird cost \$87,000. That is about \$3.3 million in today's dollars. It is 55-feet long and made of Honduran mahogany.

To charter the boat it costs \$5,000 an hour. It gets one-quarter mile per gallon.

Today the Thunderbird Preservation Society owns the estate, which includes about 6 acres, the house and five cottages, and the yacht.

Susan Grove, lodge manager, said the society is trying to change its image from being elitist to being more inclusive. One way to do that is to create a \$20 million endowment (\$6 million is in the bank) so from that pot the annual expenses could be paid. She said it costs \$1 million to maintain the site, the boat, pay off the loan on the boat and pay the few employees. (Most of the work is done by volunteers – even the executive director works for free.)

The Dreyfus side of the estate is where the bulk of the fundraising events take place – from cocktail parties for society members to weddings to winemaker dinners. This room is

what was their great room. Walls of windows look onto the shimmering lake.

Docents said the Dreyfuses never spent the night at the house because they believed it was haunted.

The Dreyfus kitchen has been changed a bit so it is a working commercial kitchen. The Whittell kitchen looks much like it would have decades ago with the old appliances. But it was functional, with an island that has a marble top.

Earlier this month the original fountain was finally restored at a cost of \$300,000. But what remains is an odd looking addition from the Dreyfus-period.

“It’s expensive to keep things up. We want to do things historically accurate,” Grove told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Whittell had three wives, but no children. When he died in 1969 he left the bulk of his estate, which was valued at more than \$300 million, to animal rights organizations.

It was in 1999 that the preservation society got the Thunderbird Lodge. Tours began in 2002.

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Notes:

- Tours are \$39 if starting by land. There are also tours via the old Tahoe out of the Tahoe Keys Marina and kayak tours starting in Tahoe City.
- Tours are May-October.
- More info is online.
- The Thunderbird Yacht will be at South Tahoe Wooden Boat Classic at Tahoe Keys Marina July 26-27. More info is online.

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Children's book author to talk in Tahoe

Kate Parkhurst will share her new children's picture book, "The Invasion of the Cavity Creatures" at the South Lake Tahoe library on July 27.

This story illustrates the importance of oral hygiene. The characters take readers on an adventure through Tongue Town as they fight off the Cavity Creatures that have invaded their precious Molar Mountains.

The free event put on by Friends of the Library is at 11am at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Books will be available for purchase.

Placer County museums to be free for a weekend

Nineteen Placer County local museums from Roseville to North Lake Tahoe will participate in the 6th annual Heritage Trail on Aug. 10-11.

The event captures the county's history with exhibits and

activities.

Admission is free on this special weekend and the museums will be open from 10am until 4pm.

Six of the 19 museums are in south Placer County. Another six are in Auburn and close enough together that visitors can walk to all six. The remaining museums are in the county's mountain communities.

Bus tours that visit several museums each day are available both days. Buses depart from and return to Auburn. Tickets for the bus tours are \$10 per day and required reservations can be made by calling (530) 889.6500. The bus tours have sold out in previous years.

Here's a list of the participating museums.