

Most U.S. flags being flown today were made in China

On this day in 1776, the Declaration of Independence was approved by the Continental Congress; setting the 13 colonies on the road to freedom as a sovereign nation. As always, this most American of holidays will be marked by parades, fireworks and backyard barbecues across the country.

Today there are an estimated 313.9 million people living in the United States compared to the 2.5 million in 1776.

Most U.S. flag are imported from China.

The value of fireworks imported from China in 2011 was \$232.3 million, representing the bulk of all U.S. fireworks imported (\$223.4 million). U.S. exports of fireworks, by comparison, came to just \$15.8 million in 2011, with Australia purchasing more than any other country (\$4.5 million), according to Foreign Trade Statistics.

Thirty-one places have “liberty” in their names. The most populous one as of April 1, 2010, was Liberty, Mo. (29,149). Iowa, with four, has more of these places than any other state: Libertyville, New Liberty, North Liberty and West Liberty.

Eleven places have “independence” in their names. The most populous one is Independence, Mo., with a population of 116,830.

While the British were the adversaries in 1776, the United Kingdom is the sixth-leading trading partner for the United States today.

Electric cars power California's summer travel

By Josie Garthwaite, New York Times

It doesn't sound as sexy as the 1967 Summer of Love, but for Californians with a passion for plug-ins, the warm months of 2012 are turning into the season of the electric car.



Tesla Roadster

Some four years after the \$100,000-plus Tesla Roadster became the nation's only new electric vehicle capable of highway speeds, a wave of more affordable plug-in cars are coming to market. And California, the state with the nation's largest auto market, the worst air quality and the most stringent emissions rules, is the first to catch the tide.

By summer's end, nearly a dozen plug-in cars and crossovers may be traveling the state's highways, including five or so that are arriving before the end of August. The latest models are from upstarts like Tesla and Coda Automotive as well as from global giants like Ford and Toyota.

Aside from the state's longtime role as a trend incubator, other factors have combined to make this a test bed for what proponents hope will be a new age in personal transportation. The state's policy makers have set tough emissions rules mandating a rising number of zero-emission vehicles, and they've offered tax incentives for buyers. As a hotbed of high technology and entertainment, California has plenty of influential early adopters with ready cash. An expanded charging infrastructure is being developed and, perhaps most important, battery-powered cars grant access to the coveted car-pool lanes on congested freeways.

[Read the whole story](#)

Green ways to celebrate Independence Day

Huffington Post

Sizzling temperatures, long days and melting popsicles mean one very important thing – the Fourth of July is just around the corner. Independence Day is a time to embrace your patriotic side by doing what Americans do best: having fun!



Unfortunately, some of the best summer activities come with a hefty eco price tag. Here are a few ways to green your favorite Fourth of July pastimes, so you can have your fun while still being kind to the land you live on.

[Read the whole story](#)

Chris Nelson – 1935-2012

Chris Nelson died June 29, 2012, at his home in Tahoe Donner. He was 76.

Well known for his efforts on behalf of the Tahoe Donner area, the founding director of the Truckee Tahoe Community Chorus and the OK Chorale, Chris and his family have been residents of the area for more than 16 years.

On Nov. 8, 1935, Chris was born on a farm in Richfield, Utah, where his parents Neil and Reva raised him and his brothers, Ted and Dan.

Though he began his musical career as a trombonist playing principal chairs in the University Orchestra, the Utah Symphony Orchestra under Maurice Abravanel and in back up orchestras for major stars such as Johnny Mathis. Chris also had a superb vocal talent that allowed him to have a major influence in both instrumental and vocal genres.

As a student, he worked as the assistant director of bands and studied conducting under Forrest Stoll. Later, his studies included conducting under Dennis DeCoteau of the San Francisco Ballet. He earned his bachelor and master's of music degrees from the University of Utah. It was at the university where he met his wife, Sharilyn. They married Dec. 17, 1962, and have one son and two daughters.

Upon college graduation, Chris taught elementary and junior high music. In 1964, the couple moved to Las Vegas where he built a 100-voice chorus at the junior high level. Though he had little training in vocal-choral music, he was extremely successful and his choirs won many awards. The real reason the Nelsons moved to Las Vegas was for Chris to play in

professional “relief” bands, a band that fills in when a performer’s main band takes a night off. Always the principal trombone, he played professionally behind some of the greatest jazz and pop singers in the world with gigs in Salt Lake City, Reno, Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

In the late-1960s, Chris took a high school position in Belmont, Calif., where he began one of the state’s first high school jazz bands. In 1971, Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill recruited Chris to start the community college’s jazz band and build the music program. He was chair of the music department for 15 of the 28 years he taught there.

Once the Nelsons moved to California, skiing became a big part of their lives. While Sharilyn learned to ski at age 6, Chris, despite his growing up in Utah, didn’t ski until graduate school. Even this past winter Chris was gliding effortlessly through the powder at Sugar Bowl (frequently with his grandchildren). He spent 10 years as a ski patroller at Sugar Bowl and taught skiing at Squaw Valley for nine years. He also started the Tahoe Donner Ski Club, which now has a membership of more than 250.

Extremely athletic, Chris began playing golf after moving to Truckee, frequently playing several times a week. When Chris wasn’t singing or playing outdoors, he could be found in the kitchen of the home he designed and helped build in Tahoe Donner. He was an accomplished cook who trained at the Hotel Utah in Salt Lake City and worked summers while in college at the Grand Canyon Hotel on the North Rim.

Retirement allowed him to expand his musical accomplishments. Eleven years ago he launched the community chorus, which has more than 60 singers from the Truckee, Tahoe, and Reno area. It has become Truckee’s major classical performing arts organization. The biannual concerts present styles ranging from jazz to classical, spiritual to standards, frequently with orchestra.

He also developed a highly lauded barbershop ensemble, the OK Chorale, that has performed programs of his own writing and composing.

For the past two years, Chris worked on the Performing Arts Commission (reporting to the Truckee Donner Recreation & Park Department) and been instrumental in the planning and design of a performing arts center for Truckee. There will be on a bond issue on November's ballot for the center.

Music was the center of Chris' life. The silence of his voice and his trombone will leave a tremendous void, save for the numerous students he inspired to become professional musicians and dedicated audiences for fine music. Through them, his voice and musical gift will continue to resonate.

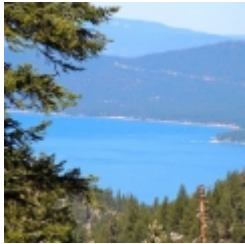
Survivors include his wife of almost 50 years, Sharilyn Nelson of Truckee; son Matt Nelson of Phoenix; daughters Courtney Murrell of Truckee (husband Mark Murrell, children Megan and Gavin), and Kimberly Eilian of New York City (husband Kevin Eilian, son Jerome); brothers Ted Nelson of Florida and Dan Nelson of Utah; and several nieces and nephews.

A celebration of life will be in this fall when the Truckee Tahoe Community Chorus assembles for its concert season.

Donations may be made to the Truckee Tahoe Community Chorus, P.O. Box 10756, Truckee, CA 96162.

Lake Tahoe venues among Nevada's best

Nevada magazine's annual poll of readers rates the state's best places to eat, drink and party, and two Lake Tahoe sites are among the winners this year.



Harvey's Lake Tahoe in Stateline was selected as best rural concert venue while Lake Tahoe-Nevada State Park in Incline Village won for best state park in northern Nevada.

Genoa also featured in several categories, including David Walley's Resort Hot Springs & Spa for a rural wedding venue and Genoa Lakes Golf Club & Resort for best rural golf course.

[Read the whole story](#)

Mitchell remains a strong voice in preserving Tahoe's past

By Susan Wood

With a glass of wine in hand and an incomparable view outside her Ski Run-area hilltop home, the woman who dedicated about half her life to Lake Tahoe history is sharing a bit of her own with a grateful community.

Betty Mitchell just turned 90 years old – but of course, one would never know it judging from her ongoing goals and the shape she's in. (The big party is this week.) She stacks her wood and still finds time to visit and help out at the museum run by the Lake Tahoe Historical Society, a group this charter member and past president has committed at least four decades to in South Lake Tahoe.

To many – Betty Mitchell is the Historical Society. Even Del Laine, herself a longtime anchor of this community, calls Mitchell “the heart of that organization.” To think, she hated history as a child.

“Now they do a good job (of teaching it), but when I was a kid, they presented it badly. It was a bore,” Mitchell said. The UC Berkeley grad had no interest in memorizing war years. She wanted to know why events occurred.

Nonetheless, Mitchell's blossoming interest in history came from her roots. Her father was a history buff, and like him, she would “shudder at the thought of losing everything,” meaning the archives and artifacts that define an area.

**“Here we have
the best
trails, the
best lakes and
the best
beaches. They
could have
done so much
more. They've
put the
emphasis in
the wrong
places. This
year, they're
finally
putting the
emphasis on**

recreation.
I'm glad to
see
that."

— Betty
Mitchell

"And that's what was happening here," she said of South Lake Tahoe.



Her involvement in the Historical Society has kept her healthy, moving and active. After all, it's difficult to think of a Cal alumni who majored in social services sitting and watching the world go by without participating.

Mitchell is modest, but not meek by any means.

In 1958, she and her late husband, Tom, moved to the Bijou area on Janet Avenue.

Back then, "Glenwood only went that far," she recalled. The Mitchells discovered they had to arrange for their two children, Pat and Linda, to get to school because the bus would only put neighborhoods on the route that housed at least seven students. This one had six.

Learning was crucial to the schoolteachers of the household. After serving as a pilot in the Army, Tom spent a lifetime in the teaching profession. After a career in social services, mainly in the San Joaquin Valley, Betty became a substitute teacher when their children were in school. The Livingston High School sweethearts moved here because "Tahoe had the best salaries for Tom," she said.

And of all the places to live, there was a prerequisite beyond money.

"I'm a mountain kid," she said.

The Mitchells were accustomed to small towns with small schools. Betty represented one of five students who attended the two-room Yosemite (National Park) Grammar School, which still stands today.

"It still looks like it did when I was a kid," she said.

The Mitchells seldom missed the every five-year reunion of their high school.

Eight years after moving to Tahoe, the couple had their Ski Run-area home built. It's a homey house that has Betty's character written all over it. The Declaration of Independence hangs on one wall. Antique bottles line the top of the kitchen cabinets. Tom's Merced ranch homestead deed signed by President Andrew Johnson adorns another wall.

Despite the important hangings, the Mitchell home is dominated by windows. "You'd never be allowed to put this many windows in this house today," she said, referring to TRPA rules.

The views are as rich with history and memories as the house.

One whole wall provides a panoramic mountain view, with Pyramid Peak dominating the landscape. During the Angora Fire five years ago, she watched in horror as the blaze crested the ridge and teased the Fallen Leaf Lake community.

"I saw that and wondered about Barbara (Craven)," Mitchell said of her friend, another longtime South Shore matriarch.

Five years before that, Mitchell was tested when the Gondola Fire raged up the ridge and threatened residents in the Saddle Road-Needle Peak area before the wind shifted and the blaze headed east.

The view of Lake Tahoe takes up another wall. And on the other side, she looks out at Heavenly Mountain Resort's Gunbarrel chairlift and Olympic run. In the winter, the twosome watched the ski activity – sometimes through binoculars for greater detail.

He'd announce when ski patrol were "bringing another body down," Mitchell says of her husband.

But in 1960, it was Squaw Valley that provided one of the most memorable times in Tahoe during Mitchell's 54 years here. The South Shore was also involved – mostly with building a bed base for the huge world-renowned endeavor. Beforehand, she and Tom worked as timers for pre-Olympic races.

Civic involvement was the mantra of the Mitchells.

Betty has been a member of Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe since 1969 and once served as president. She was also on the first Sierra Nevada Region Public Affairs Committee.

Her involvement in women's issues became the guiding principle on what she chose to volunteer for. She led the Soroptimist club's El Dorado County Commission on the Status of Women and was a founding member of the South Lake Tahoe Women's Center (now called Live Violence Free). She even became the executive director for one year. She also was a member of the Lake Tahoe Children's Theatre throughout the 1960s.

Together, the Mitchells were among three couples who spearheaded the drive for the city of South Lake Tahoe to incorporate, because as Betty saw it: "There were no rules, and we needed some."

The incorporation was spawned out of a desire for city services such as snow removal and public safety.

"She's one of the tireless people who joined an effort or

cause and works at it, works at it and works at it," said Laurel Ames, another Tahoe pioneer who organized the city effort. She's known Betty for about 50 years and characterizes her as "warm, engaging and outgoing."

"You know that if you call her up and ask a question, she'll have the answer," Ames told *Lake Tahoe News*. Ames considers Betty as the "glue" of the community.

Betty supported her husband's independent ventures as well.

Late after the city incorporated, Tom served on the city Planning Commission. The panel witnessed a lot of action when it came to the early stages of the sign ordinance. To this day, the controversial rule dictates what type of and how many signs may be placed on city streets. Betty remembered the politics ran rampant – especially on an issue plagued with perceived favoritism. Tom didn't budge at not giving exceptions for the biggest businesses in town. The *San Francisco Chronicle* ran the story when most reporting agencies were afraid to.

"It was really kind of typical. In small town USA, you decide if you want to live some place, and the reasons you do, and you know you have to put up with stuff," she said. "I feel connected to Tahoe. The things I like about it are still here. I don't want to live anywhere else."

Regardless of her love for Tahoe, there was a time Betty was pushed over the edge.

When *Sunset* magazine published a spread about a dozen years ago about Tahoe, it featured the recreation and beauty of the North Shore while the South Shore was shown as a haven for gambling. She grabbed the magazine known as the bible of Western culture, drove to the South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce office and left it on Executive Director Duane Wallace's desk. He wasn't there.

"I was so mad. I wished he had been there. Here we have the best trails, the best lakes and the best beaches. They could have done so much more," Mitchell said of the *Sunset* magazine spread. "They've put the emphasis in the wrong places. This year, they're finally putting the emphasis on recreation. I'm glad to see that."

Her own favorite hike is above Red Lake to Winnemucca Lake, a hotbed for wildflowers and one place where Betty dropped some of her husband's ashes after he died of cancer in 1994.

Despite her time with her children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren and her cat Buster plus her involvement with the California Widowed Persons Association, Betty admitted: "You never stop missing."

Memories abound of her adventures with Tom. She recalled joining others to do her preferred hike in a one-way shuttle with one vehicle parked at Woods Lake and another at the Carson Pass trailhead.

And it was Betty's vehicle Laine could remember most as the lighter side of this Tahoe mover and shaker's life – "a larger-than-life utility vehicle" upon which a passing motorist would need to strain to see her behind the wheel.

"We all knew it was Betty on the way – short of height but never short of stature," Laine told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Betty has been a strong force in the bedrock of the South Shore community and remains so today with her dedication to the history of our region."

Toiletries make a difference with travelers

By Bee-Shyuan Chang, New York Times

Since she's been hopscotching hotels across the country for the last six years, touring as the violinist for the Brooklyn-based band Ra Ra Riot, Rebecca Zeller has had ample opportunity to inspect in-room skin care amenities. "It definitely matters what's on the sink," said Zeller, 28. "It's always a little bit of a reward, especially after a long flight."

Zeller particularly enjoyed the full-size Cowshed products lining the showers at the Soho House's High Road House in London. And in remote Marfa, Tex., an insider brand made an impression. "They have a cool hotel there called Thunderbird that has Malin & Goetz products," she said. "We were bowled over."

But she was disappointed by one so-called boutique hotel owned by a national chain. "They had this generic shampoo and body wash all-in-one dispenser literally installed in the shower, like at a bad gym," Zeller said.

As Americans and Europeans head into prime travel season, the hospitality industry has been upgrading soaps, shampoos and conditioners, switching hotel-branded bottles for the kind of fancy names you might find in a department store or newfangled apothecary.

Read the whole story

Garden paradise grows in Sierra City

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

Painters and photographers are making the long trek up Highway 49 again this summer to capture one perfect moment, maybe more.

They set up their easels or tripods near the bridge that arches gracefully over the spring-fed pond. They surround themselves with blooming rhododendrons and native azaleas in the forest shade. Or they focus on the majestic buttes that tower over this little valley and gleam in the late- afternoon sun.

All this makes Don Phillips smile. He loves sharing his Big Springs Gardens with others. He's happy to see so many people enjoying it, too.

"People come up to me with almost tears in their eyes," he said. "They tell me how beautiful it is and how wonderful that's it's open. That's what keeps me going. I want to make it work."

Big Springs Gardens is Phillips' passion. On 113 acres surrounding his Sierra City home, he devoted 30 acres to a serene vision and a flower-filled forest with miles of trails and unforgettable views.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Kitten season is here. There are 15 kittens at the shelter, with more sure to arrive in the coming weeks. Orange, gray, black, white, you have your choice. All are very playful and energetic, and are anxious to go to a home. Please consider adopting two if you are able.



All kittens, as well as all of the other cats and dogs, are neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. They are 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 online to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

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

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go online.

TOCCATA putting on piano

concert

TOCCATA – Tahoe Symphony Orchestra – continues its summer season with a program that includes the Grieg Piano Concert, opera arias from Turandot and Carmen, and the Saint-Saens Organ Symphony.

The first concert is July 26 at 7pm at St. Theresa Catholic Church, South Lake Tahoe. Other concerts in the series will be presented July 28 and July 30, though the locations are not determined.

Tickets are \$25 adults, \$20 seniors, and \$5 students with youth under 19 free. Preferred seating is \$35.

For more information, call (775) 313.9697.