



The Tahoe Maritime Museum's mission is to stimulate an interest in and an understanding of Lake Tahoe's rich maritime history through the highest standards of historic preservation, innovative interpretation and public education.

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Homewood, CA 96141

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Open: 10 am - 5 pm  
Thursdays - Tuesdays. Closed  
Wednesdays from Memorial Day  
through Labor Day

\$5 admission.  
FREE for Museum Members  
and youth <12

## TEASER 1924 40-foot Sweepstakes Runabout

Designed by George F. Crouch, Built by the Henry B. Nevins Corp., hull #267

By Brian Robinson

**T**EAUSER'S history began in February 1924 with a sketch of its little sister, Gold Cup racer *BABY BOOTLEGGER*, rendered by Naval Architect George F. Crouch for *BOOTLEGGER*'S owner, Caleb S. Bragg, a prominent race-car driver and eminent playboy. When Bragg showed the sketch to his good friend and colleague Richard F. Hoyt, Board Chairman of the Wright Aeronautical Corporation, Hoyt promptly decided to have a scaled-up 40-foot version of the design with a three-cockpit deck layout built at the same time. Hoyt wasn't interested in a Gold Cup class boat, but rather the larger Sweepstakes class design, a more practical application that he could not only race, but also use to commute from his country home on the Hudson River to his office at Hayden, Stone & Co., a prominent financial firm on Wall Street. The 40-foot super-speedboat was to be named *TEASER*.



*TEASER* circa 1925.

Crouch had pioneered the concave V-bottom speedboat design in 1901 and was a highly respected Naval Architect who graduated from the Webb Institute on Long Island, NY. In addition to the famous designs of *TEASER*, *BABY BOOTLEGGER*, and *MISS COLUMBIA*, Crouch was hired by Horace Dodge to design boats for the Dodge Boat & Plane Company. The revolutionary design of *BABY BOOTLEGGER* and *TEASER* came in part from Bragg's interest in seaplanes. The rolled sheer and torpedo shape of the boats mimicked the floats of Bragg's record setting planes, which became some of the earliest design exercises in aerodynamics. In the truest sense of form following function, not only did they become world record breaking craft, but both were equally pleasing to the eye.

Of course, both *TEASER* and *BABY BOOTLEGGER* were designated to carry Wright engines. To comply with American Power Boat Association Gold Cup Class rules (625-cubic-inch maximum displacement), *BABY BOOTLEGGER* was equipped with a Wright Tempest engine, a marine-converted

**See *TEASER* at the Museum on Friday, July 31 and at the Truckee Annex on July 12 and August 15.**

*Friends of the Museum are invited to an evening presentation on July 31.*

Hispano-Suiza aircraft V-8. For *TEASER* to comply with the Sweepstakes Class rules (waterline length<sup>3</sup> ÷ 25 = maximum engine cubic inch displacement) it was powered by the first Wright Typhoon V-12 marine engine, displacing 1947 cubic inches and weighing in at a mere 1860 pounds

dry. Although rated at a modest 600 horsepower when the massive power plant became available to the public in 1925, Hoyt's specially built, high-compression version actually put out in excess of 720 horsepower. The Typhoon was a marine-converted Wright T-3 Tornado aero engine used in the experimental Wright F2W and XO-3 airplanes and Martin SC-2 seaplanes, among others.

In 1929 Wright Aeronautical merged with Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor to become the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. Only 167 Typhoon engines were produced by Wright, and the majority were sold to the Russian government. Soon after the Wright and Curtiss engine divisions merged (1931), the Typhoon parts and tooling were sold to The Auto Engine Works in St. Paul, MN. Under "The Capitol" name, it became the model T12 marine engine, which retailed for \$20,000 – an enormous sum during the Great Depression. Fewer than 1,000 Capitol T12 engines were produced by The Auto Engine Works. It is one of these Capitol T12 models, of 600 horsepower, that powers *TEASER*. Only three Wright Typhoon / Capitol T12 engines are known to exist today.

Bragg and Hoyt asked Henry B. Nevins to build the two boats. Nevins had a sterling reputation of building the world's finest custom sailboats and yachts. He was known as a man who never cut corners. His City Island yard in New York seasoned their own lumber,

*Continued on next page*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Tom Bret

## *Bang and Go Back*



**D**uring the 1930s, power boat racing at Lake Tahoe under the sponsorship of the Tahoe Yacht Club was an important diversion from the economic challenges of the times. One of the more popular races was called the "Bang and Go Back". Contestants lined up facing the center of the Lake

and would race out from shore until the firing of a gun signaled the time to turn around and return to shore. For a year-by-year review of racing life at Tahoe during the tough times of the depression, see Carol Van Etten's book Lake Champions, on sale in the Museum Store.

In a loose analogy to the Bang and Go Back race, we have finished the first half of the Museum's 2009 season and the "gun" has gone off signaling the time for us to head back to shore. At this point, it is clear that the first half of our season has gone very well. Thanks to our dedicated staff, who continue to excel despite a mid-course reduction in expenses, and to our many volunteers, visitors continue to enjoy and learn from the history of our cherished Lake. Thanks also to our membership for their continued support we are well on our way to finishing the year with enough "fuel in our tanks" (also known as cash) to pay for planned expenses.

### *TEASER continued*

designed and machined their own fittings, and manufactured their own glue made of sour cream. With such attention to detail, Nevins built more cup-winning watercraft in the 1920s than anyone else. As his fame grew, boat builders came from Scandinavia and Scotland to work for him. Nevins knew every employee by first name. Even after he became a millionaire, he often brought his own lunch to work, ate outside with the loftsmen and mechanics. His friendship and ability entreated them to do their best work; his high standards demanded it. Once he set down this principle: "*The man who builds...yachts is a craftsman; outside of yacht building, there are few craft industries left. A good craftsman must have, first of all, a basic sense of integrity and pride in his work..He is only secondarily materialistic.*"

Hoyt never asked Nevins for a price before signing the contract for the construction of *TEASER*; instead, he relied on Nevins to set a fair charge. That final charge, when the boat was delivered only six months after construction began in March of 1924, was \$86,000. *TEASER* was photographed at its test launching on

August 9, 1924. On December 4, 1924, Hoyt and a crew of three decided to race the 20th Century Limited, the fastest train in the world, from New York City to Albany. *TEASER* beat the 20th Century Limited's time to Poughkeepsie, but was unable to go farther on account of floating ice. Hoyt decided to wait until spring to try the feat again, but never made a public announcement of an exact date that this race would take place. Famed speedboat racer Gar Wood announced that he would be the one to beat the 20th Century Limited in one of his race boats on May 21, 1925. *BABY GAR IV* and *BABY GAR V* were delivered from Detroit to the Columbia Yacht Club on Manhattan. Both of Wood's boats were Liberty V-12 powered.

On May 20, 1925, Hoyt and crew stole a march on Wood and ran *TEASER* against the 20th Century Limited train in "The Race Against the 20th Century Limited Train". An excerpt of the account of the race, reprinted from the July 1925 *Yachting Magazine*, follows:

In setting out to better the time of the 20th Century Limited, the fastest train in the United States, from Albany to New York, Mr. R. F. Hoyt's

You recently received our Annual Fund Report, which summarizes our fund raising efforts to date. Assuming we meet our other income goals, we need to raise \$50,000 to finish the year with a small budget surplus and cover planned expenses of approximately \$700,000. We know you have many demands for your charitable giving this year but hope you will find the Museum worthy of your continued support.

The museum has been developed based on the conviction that strong cultural programs enrich the lives of all members of the Tahoe community. Our education programs continue to receive rave reviews from students and teachers. In addition, our lectures are being attended by standing room only audiences. Our new exhibit highlighting the oldest surviving Gar Wood utility, WHISKEY, and the new boating experience exhibit entertain new visitors and bring them back for more. These are all strong indications that we are on course in our efforts to serve the community.

As always, we welcome your suggestions on how to make the Museum's programs more successful. While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. With your continued support and participation, the future will be even better than the past. I look forward to seeing you at the Museum.

*TEASER* proved how good a motorboat can be if properly designed, built and powered. Her Wright Typhoon engine drove her with ease to Albany and back in a day — a distance of approximately 300 miles — and faster in each direction than one could travel on the 20th Century Limited. The trip up the Hudson to the Albany Yacht Club was made in the phenomenal time of 2 hours and 40 minutes, the time of the 20th Century being 3 hours, 13 minutes. On the return trip rough waters forced a slower speed, the *TEASER* making the trip in 3 hours and 5 minutes...The start was made from the Columbia Yacht Club at 3 minutes of 8 o'clock on a Wednesday morning. Mr. Mead was at the wheel and those in the boat were C. F. Chapman, official observer for the American Power Boat Association, and Carl Christiansen and Theodore Carlisle, mechanics. Although the sun was out and the day apparently clear, a fog came up over the river and made navigation difficult at such high speed. However, with care, it was possible to steer a good course even under these adverse conditions. To add to the difficulties, large fields of driftwood were encountered, which



required considerable dodging to avoid. The crew had one thrill in the Tappan Zee, when a single pole followed immediately by a line of poles attached to nets perhaps one-half mile long, confronted the boat, making it necessary to run at full speed to starboard and parallel the nets to the end, where the course was again regained. Approaching Albany, TEASER met a Hudson River Day Line boat, which forced her to slow down for awhile to negotiate her wake. This was the only time during the entire trip when the throttle was touched, and then for less than a minute. The upper reaches of the river were surprisingly smooth, but contained some bad pieces of driftwood, which could be more readily picked up..Passing under the Castleman cut-off bridge and around a gentle bend in the river, TEASER reached Albany at 10:35 a.m. Here the crew found a royal welcome and all the boats on the river front, as well as many factories, greeted the speedy craft with their whistles...

TEASER was warmly welcomed by thousands of spectators. Factory sirens sounded and church bells rang to salute the heroes of the day. The following day, when Gar Wood arrived to race his boats against the train, he was less than pleased to hear the news that his record-to-be had been undercut by TEASER. Wood then publicly offered a bet of \$25,000 "or any other sporty amount," as enticement to Hoyt, to race TEASER against Wood's race boats on the Hudson River the following Monday. Wood wanted to make a point that his Liberty powered boats could beat anything with a Wright Typhoon engine. Hoyt, who probably felt that TEASER had already proven itself, declined Wood's offer. Wood managed to beat the Century's time by 21 minutes; yet his time was still 12 minutes slower than TEASER.

A month following the race, Hoyt was photographed enjoying TEASER away from competitive powerboat racing, attending the Harvard-Yale Regatta in New London, CT. Shortly thereafter however, Hoyt would have TEASER prepared for the upcoming Gold Cup (August 27-30, 1925). Hoyt watched Bragg win his second consecutive Gold Cup with BABY BOOTLEGGER before TEASER, in full race trim, including its racing number -T1- on its hull sides, entered the final races. First was the 24 mile Free For All Displacement race held on Aug. 29. TEASER took the lead at the start and held it to the finish, covering the course at an average speed of 49.7 mph. The final race of the 1925 Gold Cup, for the International Trophy, was scheduled for 105 miles (35 laps of the three-mile course). Again, TEASER was the winner, taking the lead right from the start, holding it until the finish line with a time of two hours six minutes 25 seconds, which was averaging 49.83 mph. TEASER's top speed record was just less than 60 miles per hour.

1925 was TEASER's only season of competitive racing. It is not clear what Hoyt's intentions were after that. Edsel Ford was interested in buying TEASER in 1928, but some faults were found by his surveyor (TEASER is rumored to have briefly sunk in 1927). Ford instead decided to order a new, near duplicate of TEASER, from Nevins. Ford's boat, which was also Wright Typhoon powered, was completed in 1929 and named TYPHOON.

After the Great Depression worsened, TEASER's storied tale grew cold. In 1980, Harold Orchard, a Santa Ana, CA resident, found the graying hull of TEASER wasting away in Jack Frauenheim's Boat Yard in Buffalo, NY.

It was not until after the boat arrived in Southern California that Orchard realized his purchase was the famous TEASER. The original Wright Typhoon engine had been long removed and replaced with a Kermath V-12. After years of searching, Orchard finally located a suitable Capitol T12, the closest thing possible to the original engine. The only problem was, the T12 was in Australia being readied for use in a tractor puller – which would likely have destroyed the rare motor. Orchard was able to trade an Allison V-12 to the Aussie owner to secure the proper engine for TEASER.

Orchard's initial restoration of TEASER was completed in 1989, when it was brought to Tahoe for a grand launching party at the Tahoe Yacht Club on the west shore prior to its debut at the Concours d'Elegance. Summers of adventures and misadventures followed; in 1995 TEASER actually sank in forty feet of water while on a mooring in Carnelian Bay. The damage was minimal, and TEASER was back on the Lake the next summer. Orchard reluctantly sold TEASER to Dave Olson in 1998. Following Olson's purchase, some structural and bottom improvements, as well as authenticity corrections were made, and the hull was refinished. TEASER was re-launched in 1999, and in 2000, returned to its home state for the Clayton Race Boat Regatta.

Tahoe is now TEASER's permanent home. In 2004, Tom and Polly Bredt purchased her and, in 2008, donated the masterpiece to the Museum for the public to enjoy. It is said that when George F. Crouch retired, thirty years after designing TEASER, he gave his collection of drawings to a friend saying, "If you must ever get rid of these, please throw out the TEASER and BABY BOOTLEGGER plans last."

*The author thanks Dan Acierno, Fred Farley, Gérald Guétat, Mark Mason, Dave Olson and Harold Orchard.*

*Brian Robinson is a noted antique and classic runabout historian, restorer and consultant. He serves as the Chief Judge for the Antique & Classic Boat Society's Southern California Chapter, a judge for the Lake Tahoe Concours d'Elegance, and is on the Board of Directors for the Chris-Craft Antique Boat Club, Inc. Brian is dedicated to the research and documentation of vintage speedboats and has a passion for historical accuracy. Brian and his father Tim operate Robinson Restoration in Fallbrook, CA.*

*Editor's note: For a transcript of an interview with former owner Hal Orchard, please see the News section at tahoemaritime.org.*

# DEVELOPMENT NOTES

Highlighting Gifts and Membership from March 16 - June 16, 2009

by Heather Leonard

## 2009 ANNUAL FUND CAMPAIGN

The Museum has an annual operating budget of approximately \$700,000. Although income from admissions and retail sales significantly exceeded our 2008 projections, a vast majority of revenue still comes from membership dues and contributions. To assist in this endeavor, the Museum is launching the 2009 Annual Fund Campaign to help us meet our 2009 operating expenses.

To date, the Museum has received almost \$48,000 in Annual Fund donations, \$22,520 of which was generated from the Museum's First Birthday Party and Cruising Auction Fundraiser. We are also pleased to announce that two anonymous donors have made generous pledges of \$25,000 each to the Annual Fund. One of these donations is contingent on our raising an equivalent amount of matching funds. Including the funds counting towards this matching gift, we need to raise \$50,000 to finish off our Annual Fund Campaign. Please help us continue and expand on our successes by contributing to the 2009 Annual Fund and meeting the \$25,000 Matching Gift Challenge.



- |                            |                                     |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Greg and Cathe Ackerman    | Kathie Hutchinson and Murmie Lawson | Ed and Deborah Scott          |
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| Larry and Andree Benson    | The Martha Mac Laughlin Family      | Bill Watson-Thunderbird Yacht |
| Tom and Polly Bredt        | Dr. Robert Marks                    | B.C. "Short" Wheeler          |
| John and Cheryl Cox        | Tom and Amy Mathews                 |                               |
| Bert and Sisi Damner       | Michael and Nora Oliver             |                               |
| Dave Ferrari               | Dave and Lynn Olson                 |                               |
| Hugh and Muriel Harris     | Ron and Lila Schmidt                |                               |

### NEW BUILDING DONORS

March 16 – June 16

- Tom and Polly Bredt
- Chevron
- Bert and Sisi Damner
- Bill and Olga Keever
- Don and Diane Sloat
- Paul and Susanne Walker

### MEMORIAL GIFTS

March 16 – June 16

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>In Memory of Bob Cunningham</i> | <i>In Memory of John Wheeler</i>    |
| Tom and Polly Bredt                | James and Virginia Balsdon          |
| Bill and Olga Keever               | Kathie Hutchinson and Murmie Lawson |
| Paul and Susanne Walker            | B.C. "Short" Wheeler                |
| <i>In Memory of Kendy Hooper</i>   |                                     |
| The Martha Mac Laughlin Family     |                                     |

## Tahoe Maritime Museum Membership Benefits

Membership Level	Free Admission	Subscription to Tahoe MariTimes newsletter	Lake Tour on Museum's Ride Boat (20 minutes)	Discount on Museum Store Purchases	Tahoe Memories DVD (on your next visit to the Museum)	Invitations to special Friends of the Museum Events	Numbered and Framed Friends Memento	Personal Breakfast with Executive Director
\$40	✓	✓						
\$100	✓	✓	2 people					
\$200	✓	✓	4 people	10%				
\$300	✓	✓	6 people	15%				
\$500	✓	✓	6 people	20%	✓			
\$1,000 Friend	✓	✓	6 people	20%	✓	✓	✓	
\$2,500 Sustaining Friend	✓	✓	6 people	20%	✓	✓	✓	✓

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

by Bill Kraus

As I am writing this, the weather on the Lake has been quite unseasonable – thunderstorms build over the mountains almost every afternoon for the last few weeks now. Of course, every chance I get I am out sailing on my small sloop along the West Shore, catching the gusts that funnel down Blackwood Canyon or through Meeks Bay while being mindful of the storms passing to the south and east.

Sailing along single-handed as I use my iPhone to watch real time animated radar of the storm cells, my mind contemplates what it must have been like to ply these waters a hundred years ago – long before cell phones, VHF, GPS, the Coast Guard, housing developments and roads. Sure – it is still all too easy to be complacent and get into trouble on the Lake – to underestimate the weather, the distance and the cold. But what must it have been like back then, when there were no charts, no ready access to assistance if one got into trouble?

As I cruise along the West Shore, I think of “Captain Dick” Barter, the first white man to call Emerald Bay home, who survived a capsizing near Sugar Pine Point in January 1870 only to lose several toes to frostbite - which he subsequently kept in a box to show visitors. Three years later, Captain Dick met his end in 1,400 feet of water off Rubicon Bay. His sailboat NANCY was found smashed among the rocks at Rubicon Point but Captain Dick was never found, although some say his ghost can be seen among the mist in Emerald Bay on cold winter evenings.

Technology comes at a cost – while modern advances have significantly improved our ability to get to our destination faster and more efficiently with help readily available if needed, it has made it much harder for us to truly appreciate what it must have been like to navigate these waters back in Captain Dick’s day. Part of our mission at the Museum is to help people get a sense of what that was really like.

As we embark on the 2009 summer season, we have some exciting programs, events, and exhibits at the Museum. In the wake of a very successful First Birthday Celebration on Memorial Day weekend, we are showcasing *WHISKEY*, a 1935 Gar Wood utility donated by George and Claire Schmitt. Jim Bell has provided us with beautifully colorized versions of classic Tahoe photographs. We have also launched a very popular lecture series, and we upgraded our ride boat exhibit to be truly interactive, where children can ‘drive’ around a buoy field in the ‘daytime’ – or ‘night’ (and which my son Bjorn has very much enjoyed beta-testing). And thanks to John and Michelle Schei, we also have some wonderful new additions to our retail store.

By now, you hopefully have received information about our Annual Fund, which is instrumental in helping us offset our yearly operating expenses. The Museum’s board and staff have worked diligently to ensure that our operating budget is as streamlined as possible while still enabling the Museum to achieve its important mission of preserving local maritime history and educating the public on the importance of that history. We recognize that in this economic climate, there are many competing needs, and we thank you once again for your continued support.



## Membership

I/we would like to join the Tahoe Maritime Museum and share in the Lake’s rich maritime history.

PLEASE CHECK:

- New Membership
- Renewing Membership
- Gift Membership

FAMILY:  \$40  \$100  \$200  \$300  \$500

FRIEND OF THE MUSEUM:  \$1,000  \$2,500

## Annual Fund

I/we would like to help the Museum’s mission by making the following donation to the Museum’s Annual Fund in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

**Thank You!**

Tahoe Maritime Museum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

## TAHOE MARITIME MUSEUM

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Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

My check for a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed (*Payable to Tahoe Maritime Museum*)

Please charge a total of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my  VISA  Mastercard

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# RENEWING AND NEW MEMBERS March 16 ~ June 16, 2009

## Sustaining Friends - \$2,500

Don and Suzanne Smith

## FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM

\* New Membership  
\*\* Upgraded Friends Membership

### Friends - \$1,000

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John and Michelle Schei  
Brad and Diane Shore  
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John Turner, Jr.  
Paul and Susanne Walker

## FAMILY MEMBERS

\* New Membership  
\*\* Upgraded Membership

### \$500

Greg Betty \*  
Terry and Carol Clapham \*

### \$300

Paul and Lorie Cress \*  
Tom and Jan Mathews \*\*

### \$200

Bud and Heidi Bensley \*\*  
Larry and LaNae Gralla  
Mike and Joy Hansen  
John and Marion Iles \*\*  
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Ronald G. Parson \*\*  
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Fred and Barbara Taylor  
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## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

- Successful programming is in large part due to the
- enthusiasm and support of our volunteers and docents.
- A sincere note of thanks to the following volunteers for
- all of their time: Bruce Adair, Elizabeth Hale, Captain
- Ron and Denise Kirby, Al and Cheryl Le Bel, Kathy and
- Paul Schultz, Tracy Neher and Michelle and John Schei.
- An additional note of thanks to the
- following volunteers: Cy and Jess Bersi, Donna Block,
- Tom and Polly Bredt, John Cox, Nancy Cunningham,
- Lizbeth Doving, Roy Dryer, Chas and Sandy
- Eldridge, Warren Fallat, Mackenzie Good, Iren Jenny,
- Josh Leonard, Steve Lind, Jenny Ludwig, Dick Morton,
- Nileta Morton, Scott Rush, Lila Schmidt and Deborah
- Scott.



*Museum members and active volunteers Kathy and Paul Schultz (above); Tracy and Bob Neher (right). Photo credit: Elizabeth Hale.*



# TAHOE BOATMAN

## CHRIS NEALSON

# A PIECE OF MARITIME HISTORY

By Carol Van Etten

Old Chris' illustrious career as a Tahoe waterman spanned the greater part of Tahoe's marine history, bearing witness to a simpler time when the unvarnished aspirations of an avid angler were adequate to the achievement of success.



One hundred twenty years ago, when the population of the Tahoe Basin swelled to three figures and the schools of trout that populated the Lake were beyond reckoning, Jens Christian Petersen Nielsen first laid his eyes on its expanse of azure blue. Though his name and exploits are little known, his story is an important one. "Old Chris" was a waterman whose prowess extended to all phases of nautical activity and whose longevity in the difficult niche of Tahoe marine enterprise is surpassed only by that of Jake Obexer.

According to a feature article that appeared in a 1936 issue of the Tahoe Tattler, the dauntless Dane found his way to America as a seaman aboard a sailing ship flying the flag of his native land, which dropped anchor in San Francisco Bay in 1889. While reconnoitering the teeming port in search of his future, Nielsen had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of Dr. Charles Brooks Brigham, a surgeon of world eminence who had purchased land at Tallac, seven years earlier. Enthused by Brigham's description of the remote alpine lake, Nielsen tagged along with the doctor's party that summer and immediately fell in love with the refreshing beauty of the high country, which reminded him of his native Denmark.

With his bell-bottomed background and a willingness to do an honest day's work, Nielsen quickly found gainful employment at the Lake. It was still the era of Tahoe's steamers, and one of his first jobs was as a member of the crew of men hired to drive one of the great, steam-powered vessels onto the beach at Tallac, where it was dismantled for salvage. While Nielsen was happy to find work in such a beautiful environment, he was more naturally

inclined toward the pursuit of fishing, which in the Tahoe of that far-off day could provide not only great personal enjoyment, but also a livelihood. By the early 1890s, Tahoe's commercial fishing industry had seen its zenith but wetting a line still brought exceptional results. Chris soon joined a group of perhaps 50 professional Tahoe anglers who fished "for the market." As the fabled "Gay Nineties" began, the prolific silver mines of Virginia City were in decline, and in consequence, so was Tahoe's lumber industry, which had flourished in the days when cordwood and timbers for the mineshafts had been required in tremendous quantities. Coincident with the precipitous drop in demand for lumber was the virtual depletion of the local forest.

As mining and lumbering faltered, tourism was enjoying growing popularity, and workers were finding a new livelihood catching fish for the tables of the Lake's growing list of summer resorts. By the late 1870s, the reputation of Tahoe's fabulous trout had spread far and wide, and "the market," a phrase that had initially referred exclusively to stores and eating establishments within the Basin, had grown to include the finest restaurants in San Francisco and Chicago. Packed in ice, the day's catch would travel several hundred miles by dawn of the following day, the better to appease the appetites of an appreciative group of diners whose numbers grew daily. As a consequence of this ill-conceived strategy, pressure on the Tahoe fishery was, by the mid-1890s, threatening to "kill the golden goose." In the same way that the voracious practices of the local lumber industry had all but destroyed Tahoe's old-growth forests, a generation of over-fishing had reduced the Lake's piscatorial plenty to a comparative pittance.

Inevitably, commercial angling was officially banned in 1917, and dozens of professional alpine anglers were forced to find other employment. While the new angling law spared the wholesale harvesting that had characterized Tahoe's commercial fishing era, a growing tourist industry was helping to foster recreational fishing at Tahoe, and Chris was among the forcibly retired market anglers who were beginning successful new careers guiding fishing parties. Nielsen's knowledge of the local fishery, ability to bring home a full creel and his friendly, easygoing manner, stood him in good stead in his new role of fishing guide.

Through his association with Dr. Brigham, Chris met other wealthy Tahoe landowners, most of whom owned summer estates and camps along the lakeshore and, in natural consequence, boats. In addition to Nielsen's fishing acumen, he possessed the array of skills requisite to keep their watercraft in shipshape condition, and he soon found that he could sustain himself through the lean months of the Sierra winter by maintaining and repairing this fleet. In the several seasons following Nielsen's arrival at Tahoe, he became acquainted with boat owners around the Lake. Among the noted personalities who were favorably impressed with his expertise was Edward G. Schmiedell, also of San Francisco. Like Dr. Brigham, Schmiedell had been one of the lucky souls who discovered Tahoe's virtues ahead of the hoards. In 1907, Schmiedell and his friend Senator William Kent had purchased adjacent tracts of land in

*Continued on next page*

the Tahoe Park area from Norman D. Rideout, a Marysville banker.

While these Tahoe Park parcels were remote in the way that all Tahoe property was at the time, the Schmiedells, Kents and several of their friends believed that the unspoiled beauty of the Lake was in grave danger of being undermined by development, and in an effort to preserve a small part of it, six families joined together to purchase approximately five acres on the eastern shore (from the Carson & Tahoe Lumber & Fluming Company). Known to the group as "Secret Harbor," this parcel was to be held in trust for the group's exclusive use as a picnic area and unimproved campground. At that time, no passable automobile road existed around the Lake's Nevada shoreline, and so in the summers of the 1920s and 30s, the Schmiedells, Kents and other members of the Secret Harbor Group frequently packed a picnic lunch and set off across the Lake aboard their seaworthy cruisers, often accompanied by Nielsen and William McFadden, boatman for the Kent family. Schmiedell's daughter, Elizabeth S. Fennelly, recalled the nature of these trips:



Ted Schmiedell (left) and Chris Nielsen (right). Courtesy of Elizabeth Schmiedell Fennelly

"(When we went across the Lake), we always towed boats, you know, in those days - rowboats. Because when they went over there (to Secret Harbor), they fished, but not with an outboard motor. That was unheard of. They just rowed. On the other side, they fished with these nine foot steel rods, and caught the big fish over there. One fish my mother played for six hours in a rowboat with Chris Nielsen rowing the boat."

Nielsen was a welcome addition to any group. He enjoyed the reputation of an amiable man worthy of great trust, and soon found himself included as a useful tag-along on his clients' trips far afield of the Lake, such as the educational expedition to Virginia City organized by Harry Poett, Sr. in 1916, hunting deer in 1910 with Ted Schmiedell, his boss's son or a picnic outing to the Rubicon River canyon.

Chris first met his future wife, Hulda Pettersen, when she was a chambermaid at Tallac, and in May 1902 the couple tied the knot in Oakland. It so happened that in 1907, Hulda's sister Freida married William McFadden, the Kents' boatman, and it was perhaps the circumstance of this union that brought the Niensens to the west shore of the Lake. In any event, by 1918 Nielsen had established his center of operations in the same Tahoe Park neighborhood where the Schmiedells and Kents had their summer homes, purchasing a lakefront parcel in the Sunnyside Tract, next

door to the McFaddens.

Once he had settled into the Tahoe Park property, Nielsen began to develop a year-round marine enterprise focused on boat maintenance and storage. His customer list included many well-known names then associated with Tahoe's old west shore, including William and Corona Bissell (of vacuum cleaner fame), William Wallace Mein and Clinton Walker. Prior to the inception of such famous power boat manufacturers as Chris-Craft, GarWood and Belle Isle, Tahoe's motorized fleet consisted of a hodge-podge of displacement hulls ranging from open launches to expansive cruisers, and though Nielsen did not have the facilities to handle the largest of these, he could accommodate the more diminutive among them. At the conclusion of each summer season, the pillars of early Tahoe society would direct their boatmen to deliver their prized watercraft to Nielsen's care, whereupon he would haul them out on his marine railway, winterize their cantankerous engines and perform such maintenance on their wooden hulls as their owners deemed necessary.

The nature of an early Tahoe boatyard was to be a bustling center of activity for three months of the year and a deserted repository of seasonal toys for the rest. When a customer acquired a new boat, its predecessor was often available for a song, and by taking advantage of this natural attrition of playthings, Chris was able to acquire a succession of inauspicious launches for his own use, which in subsequent stolen moments he could be found maneuvering into position over promising fishing holes. One such unidentified castoff, the KEMAH, served him in this capacity for many years, as recalled by Elizabeth Schmiedell Fennelly:

"The KEMAH was just an open boat. It kind of chugged along, as I remember. Chris must have gotten it from somebody else. I don't think Chris had her built by any manner or means."

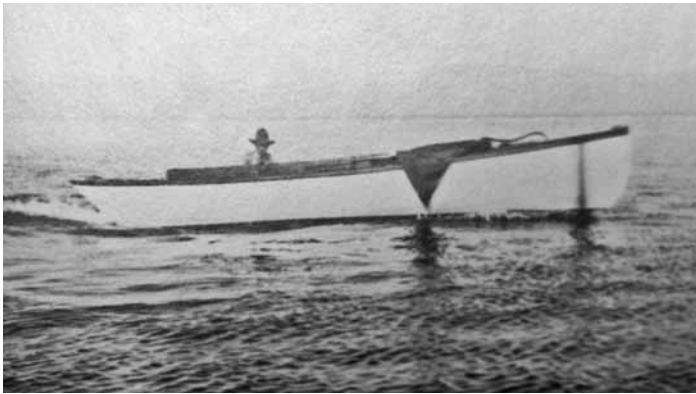
#### **A Pair to Draw To**

The nature of the early Tahoe resident was to be a character. Both Chris and Hulda subscribed to this personification with uncommon precision. Either one of the partners could achieve a state of remarkable animation when the occasion called for it (and sometimes when it didn't). Elizabeth Schmiedell Fennelly recalled an example of Nielsen's excitable nature when a crisis arose over the attempted cutting of the natural rim at the Lake Outlet:

"I can remember one time Chris coming up to the house: "Schmiedell! Schmiedell! They're going to blow up the dam! We've got to do something!" So the story was, they were going to take little Harry Poett over and moor him in a boat by the dam, because they said they would never take a life. But I don't think they ever came. Everybody went over with shotguns. It was all very exciting. Chris used to get very excited about things - Chris Nielsen."

Hulda, too, was an individual of unique personality. She possessed a voice of legendary projective qualities, capable of carrying a great distance when aided by the acoustical properties of the Lake, and no matter how far Chris and KEMAH might venture in the pursuit of a wily trout, he could be sure of hearing his wife's summons when it was time to return home. However, another Nielsen neighbor and client, Phoebe Briggs McClatchy Conley, remembered a gentler side of Hulda's personality:

"If she was a noisy, screaming woman, she was a



Nielsen at the KEMAH'S helm. Courtesy of Elizabeth Schmiedell Fennelly  
goodhearted one, and took care of Mac (our elderly caretaker) in the wintertime, 'til he finally had to go to the hospital. But that was a long period – many, many years, as the man grew old."

Hulda joined the Federated Women's Club of Tahoe City in 1927, its inaugural year, but four miles of twisty, dusty cow path stood between her and the meetings, and since she did not drive, she found regular attendance inconvenient. Except for the summer companionship of her sister Freida, Chris's propensity to wet a line at the least provocation rendered Hulda's life one of virtual isolation, and her most meaningful communications were transoceanic, conducted via post with her family in the Old Country. In 1934, lonesome for her homeland, Hulda returned to Liatorp, Sweden for a visit. The pilgrimage turned into an extended stay, and Hulda subsequently sent for her cat, Piggy, a formidable 24-pound feline who had lived in a more-or-less wild state since his mistress's departure. However, once the tedious bureaucratic

way had been paved by Hulda's appeals to two governments for passports, Piggy allowed himself to be captured by Chris and loaded aboard the little narrow gauge train in Tahoe City on the first leg of his trip to Scandinavia.

In Hulda's absence, Chris divided his days between tending his marine enterprise and outwitting the savvy trout. By the mid-1930s, he had become a veritable institution in Tahoe boating circles and achieved considerable local celebrity among younger members of the summer crowd, who found his yarns of early Tahoe enthralling. In 1936, Nielsen's expertise in Tahoe nautical matters was acknowledged by his selection to fill the post of Tahoe Navigation

Inspector, (elsewhere noted as Federal Marine Inspector & Lighthouse Keeper). News of his appointment appeared in the Tahoe Tattler on July 10, 1936.

Nielsen continued in the position for nearly a decade, keeping an ever-watchful eye on the boating public. However, in late 1945 the Danish nimrod, who had by then achieved the ripe old age of 75, sold his Tahoe Park property to Ralph Sears and his wife, Monica Briner, glad to put aside the obligations and cares of the workaday world. According to Monica's son, Bill Briner, Nielsen's marine improvements at the time of the sale included a splintery pier, an ancient marine railway and a hand-operated winch that Bill, then a student at UNR, used in the removal of a collection of derelict boats from Nielsen's old boathouse. "It was the toughest job I ever had," Briner remembers, "one boat after another."

By 1948, the new enterprise, which came to be known as Sunnyside Resort & Marina, had added a breakwater, enlarged the boathouse and acquired a small fleet of fishing boats that they made available for rent. As for Chris, he relocated permanently to the Auburn area.



Mrs. Broach, Nielsen's second wife (left) and Chris Nielsen (right).  
Courtesy of Pell Kruttschnitt

By the late 1940s, it had become clear that Hulda did not intend to return to her marriage with Chris, and he sued for divorce. In Auburn, he became acquainted with a widow named Mrs. Broach, and the couple eventually married. In the many years of his retirement, Chris continued to enjoy his favorite pastime: outsmarting fish.

Chris Nielsen died at the age of 94 in an Auburn rest home on July 16, 1961, perhaps dreaming of the one that got away. His illustrious career as a Tahoe waterman spanned the greater part of the Lake's marine history, bearing witness to a simpler time when the unvarnished aspirations of an avid angler were adequate to the achievement of success.

Good fishing to you, Chris!

#### ANNUAL MARINE SWAP


Get ready to clean your garage and storage sheds because our Annual Marine Swap takes place on Sunday, August 9. If you haven't had the chance to attend a previous Swap, be assured that this is THE place to find, trade and sell maritime memorabilia, artifacts, maritime-themed home décor as well as hard to find boat and engine parts. Take advantage of a \$10 discount with advance registration - see page 11.

*Wins Govt. Post*

Chris Nielsen

**Chris Nielsen  
Now Inspector**

Beware pranksters and all ye who skim the depths of Tahoe; henceforth, from this moment on you and your boats will be under the watchful eye of none other than Chris Nielsen, duly appointed this week by the Bureau of Marine Inspection, Department of Commerce, to the position of navigation inspector for Tahoe waters.

 **ME SCURVY DOGS, YE BE GETTING SOME BOOTY WHEN YE COMPLETE THESE ACTIVITIES AND BRING THIS SHEET TO THE MUSEUM!**

### TAHOE TRIVIA

1. Who were the first people to live in Tahoe?
2. What inspired Ole Envirude to design and build his first outboard motor?
3. What is the longest and most grand vessel to ever be on the Lake? How was she powered?
4. What is the name of the first boat in the Museum's collection?
5. What famous event too place in 1960? Where did it take place?
6. What is one thing boaters can do to avoid bringing Zebra mussels and other invasive species into Lake Tahoe?

*You may find some answers during your Museum visit!*

### WORD SEARCH

The word search below has 12 hidden words - diagonol, backwards, up and down. How many can you find?

V	M	O	L	D	S	A	L	T	O	T
M	E	U	B	B	S	T	L	B	R	P
U	B	S	P	R	C	A	A	L	U	S
E	U	E	E	I	U	H	K	I	C	T
S	C	R	S	A	R	O	E	M	K	R
U	K	T	S	A	V	A	M	E	O	O
M	O	A	V	H	Y	T	T	Y	D	P
L	A	N	D	L	U	B	B	E	R	E
R	B	S	P	S	C	U	R	L	Y	V

Avast	Old salt	Pirate
Blimey	Me bucko	Port
Lake	Mold	Scurvy
Landlubber	Museum	Sea

## EDUCATION UPDATE

BY NICOLE CHESLOCK

### Schools Program and Youth Visitors

More than 320 children ranging from nursery school to high school students from Truckee, North Lake Tahoe and Reno have been immersed in local maritime history through our interactive, fun and educational Schools Program. When students visit the Museum, they have the chance to connect with their surroundings in a new and creative way. They imagine racing on the Lake in one of the sporty hydroplanes on display, cruising through the water and docking at the Tahoe Tavern pier on SS TAHOE, and they discuss the qualities, such as water clarity, that have made Lake Tahoe such a special place for centuries. Students learn fun facts about the outboard motors in the Museum's collection, get exposed to the history of boating on Tahoe and engage in a hands-on activity or game while being surrounded by the maritime treasures exhibited in Homewood. Thank you for your continued support through membership and donations - these funds allow the Museum to offer local youth such amazing experiences close to home.

A new scavenger hunt welcomes young visitors - and the young at heart! An engaging pirate vocabulary sheet coupled with directions to find various objects around the Museum culminates in a great prize when children finish their exploration thanks to Michelle and John Schei who donated items to the Museum's prize box (*pirate cups available while supplies last*).

Smitty has completed a successful year running the Museum's Schools Program evidenced by the amount of returning classroom teachers and positive feedback from students and teachers and he continues to bring history to life for visitors through stories, tours and activities. Please join me in thanking Smitty for the excellent job he does sharing Tahoe history with visitors. I'd also like to thank Tahoe residents Kathy Schultz and Al Le Bel for donating so much of their time to make our education programs and events such a success.

### Lecture Series

The Museum's lecture series has been a hit - attracting more than 130 people - and delighting adults and youth with stories of classic wooden boats, restorations, Humboldt squid, underwater exploration, Steam Ship Tahoe and our local Coast Guard. Please join us for our upcoming lectures:

- "The World isn't Ready..." Tales of Mobsters, Monsters and Urban Legends by the Museum's Executive Director Bill Kraus on July 9
- Early Burton's information packed presentation on model making and the famous THUNDERBIRD on August 13.

A sincere note of thanks to the following people, organizations and companies for supporting the Museum's education programs: ACBS, Andree and Larry Benson, Tom and Polly Bredt, Bert and Sisi Damner, Hugh and Muriel Harris, Bill and Olga Keever, Tom and Jan Matthews, Michael and Nora Oliver, Ron and Lila Schmidt, Kathy and Paul Schultz, Woody and Denise Shackleton, Jim and Lisa Taylor, Bill Watson - Thunderbird Yacht, The Weekly, and Tahoe House Bakery and a tremendous thank you to Lizbeth Doving and Cheryl Le Bel for encouraging donations to our Schools Programs during the First Birthday FUNdraiser.

# EVENTS



Thank you to the above noted sponsors and donors for supporting our birthday celebration.

## NOT TO BE MISSED!

**July 9, 5 - 7PM**

*"The World isn't Ready..."*

Monsters, Mobsters, and Urban Myths of Tahoe's Deep by Bill Kraus, Ph.D.

**July 12, 10AM - 5PM**

Truckee Annex Open House

10434 River Park Place

**July 25, 10AM - 5PM**

Living History Day! FREE admission.

**July 31, 10AM - 5PM**

TEASER on display at the Museum

**July 31, 5:30PM**

*Friends of the Museum* TEASER Rountable

**August 1**

Gathering of Gar Woods, Obexer's Marina

**August 9, 8AM - 2PM**

Annual Marine Swap, Homewood

**August 13, 5 - 7PM**

Thunderbird - The Making of a Model with Earl Burton

**August 15, 10AM - 5PM**

Truckee Annex Open House

10434 River Park Place

**August 29, 5 - 7PM**

Family Night Out

Activities, Movie & Popcorn

**October - date TBA**

Annual Museum Meeting

## TAHOE MARITIME MUSEUM'S ANNUAL MARINE SWAP

8AM - 2PM Sunday, August 9

Museum Parking Area in Homewood, California

**Half Space: \$40**

**Full space: \$60**

**Vessel: \$100**

**Register before August 2 at above prices. Additional \$10 after August 2.**

Registration proceeds benefit the Tahoe Maritime Museum. *The event is free for viewing public.*

Call the Museum at (530) 525-9253 to register or mail this form to:

Tahoe Maritime Museum,  
P.O. Box 627, Homewood, CA 96141

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Space:  Half Space (\$40)  Full space (\$60)  Vessel (\$100)

Payment: Credit Card Number(Master Card/Visa): \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Check #: \_\_\_\_\_

# TAHOE MARITIME MUSEUM

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## WHAT'S NEW?

- Second floor **boat ride simulator** offers visitors interactive daytime and evening experiences "on the Lake"!
- 1935 Gar Wood, WHISKEY, on exhibit
- Color enhanced historic photos by local Tahoe resident Jim Bell on display and available for sale
- Maritime themed culinary and gift items in the Museum Shop



Chris Chase, Josh Leonard and Monty Kirven (left to right) enjoy the sunshine from SPLENDIDO, a 1957 24' Shephard at the Concours d'Elegance. *Photo credit: Heather Leonard*



150+ supporters celebrated our first birthday. Tony Brown and Nancy Cunningham enjoying a toast (above) and Jim and Lisa Taylor (left). *Photo credit: Elizabeth Hale*



## COVER STORY

### TEASER

*Arguably the most famous speedboat in the world...*

*By Brian Robinson*

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