

*Julie, Lee & Thomas'*

# California Adventure

Saturday-Sunday, 28 June-6 July

Thursday-Sunday at Lake Tahoe

## Tahoe trek closes reunion trip

### *Avoid repeating tragic history*

The most famous Tar Heel to spend the night where the town of Truckee, Calif., stands today was George Donner of Salem, N.C.

In 1846 he led a wagon train of 87 people, including his and his brother Jacob's families, west from Independence, Mo., to a spot near Lake Tahoe, where they intended to cross the Sierra Nevada over a 7,100-foot pass.

But the winter's usual 40 feet of snowfall began in October of that year, and the Donner Party had to camp just a few hundred yards from the motel where we have spent the last three nights at 5,800 feet.

Although four rescue parties from the western side of the Sierra reached them beginning in January, it was April 1847 before everyone could be dug out. By then, 39 members of the Donner Party had starved



**"Hey, Mac, the snow's almost melted, so I'm going swimming in Lake Tahoe."**

to death or perished from the cold, and some of the

rest had turned to cannibalism for survival.

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Donner is remembered today in the name of the pass he was unable to cross, the name of the small lake beneath it, and by a persistent joke in California restaurants in which one will occasionally hear an announcement over the PA system: "Donner, party of six, your table is ready."

We came to the Tahoe area to spend the Fourth of July weekend that closes our family reunion visit by Julie, Lee and Thomas. We stopped by Gordon's future alma mater, UC Davis, on the drive up from the Bay Area, to pick up some Aggie apparel. We arrived in time for dinner for our party of six at River Ranch, a small ski lodge with a dining patio on the Truckee River, which



**Looking east from the top of Donner Pass to Donner Lake 1,300 feet below with the town of Truckee at the far end. The first transcontinental railroad, still in use, is the white streak along the mountainside to the right.**

flows out of Lake Tahoe. For the Fourth of July on

Thursday, we returned to the river in a raft to test **Continued overleaf**



**The crew of the S.S. Minnow sets off down the Truckee River for a three-hour cruise.**

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On the afternoon of the Fourth, we visited Northstar, a ski resort that Jody, Emily and Gordon enjoy, for a ride up the mountain on the ski lifts and then a hike down.

Saturday we drove down the California side of Lake Tahoe to the South Shore and took the gondola to the top of Heavenly, another ski resort that has great views of the lake. Julie, Lee and Thomas fly back to the East Coast from Reno, Nev., today.



**Dining by the Truckee River on the River Ranch patio.**



**Charlie the Rescue Dog patrols the river.**

**Gordon and Thomas took the easy way down Northstar.**



**Entrance sign to Squaw Valley USA, site of the 1960 Olympic Winter Games. >>>**



**<<< Lee and Emily found some snow on their hike down the mountain at Northstar.**

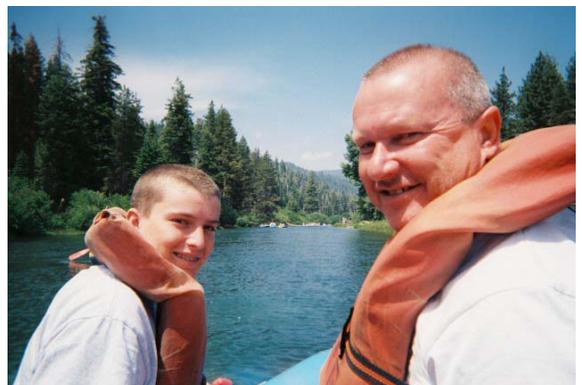


Leaving the UC Davis bookstore with our Aggie loot.



Safe on the dock at the end of the raft ride with River Ranch in the background. Lee and Thomas got bumped out of the raft on the last set of rapids.

Thomas and Lee took the bow positions to start our trip.





**Baldwin Beach on Lake Tahoe. Lake level is 6,200 feet above sea level.**



**Emily found Lake Tahoe a bit chilly for her taste, but Thomas and Lee took the full plunge.**

**A bit of Tahoe boating history in wood and chrome.**

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**Boats crowd around the island in Emerald Bay, Lake Tahoe**



**Julie and Lee look over Lake Tahoe from the 9,100-foot level of Heavenly Ski Resort on the South Shore. The north end of the lake is 22 miles away. Tahoe is the 2<sup>nd</sup> deepest U.S. lake – after Oregon’s Crater Lake – at 1,645 feet.**

Gordon reaches the top of the artificial climbing wall at Heavenly. >>>



Descending Heavenly in the gondola to close out our trip. VVV

