

Classic wooden boats bring history to Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Shimmering mahogany and sparkling chrome bob on the tranquil waters at Tahoe Keys Marina. At the far end of the pier, 69 wooden classics are docked, many with the owner inside.

This is Day 2 of the South Tahoe Wooden Boat Classic, which features woodies form 1929-73.

"Most have been restored back to their original condition," said Sandy Chase, who was working the event Friday.



"Saga" is one of 69 woodies at Tahoe Keys Marina with a story to tell. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Her husband, Lee, spent 11 years restoring their boat, including the Lycoming V-12 engine. There are only two of these engines on the West Coast, and only four in the United States.

Chase said she lost her garage so her husband could have a boathouse.

It's a mix of locals, second homeowners and those who love Tahoe who have brought their vessels to South Lake Tahoe for the public to view.

Rich Christopher of Morgan Hill brought "Clinker Toy" to Tahoe on July 29 for the show. She is a 1959 22-foot Chris Craft Sea Skiff with a 353 Chevy engine.

"I have had her for seven years. Last year was the first year she was in the water," Christopher said while sitting in his boat.

He can't even count the hours it took to fully restore the boat, including engine.

This is the first show he has come to that includes judging. Twenty-three awards will be given out, with the ceremony on Sunday at Sugar Pine Point on the West Shore. That event is from 11am-2pm.

Members of the local Boys & Girls Club cruised around as judges, too. Horns were going off, interior inspected and finish analyzed to determine the number of points each particular boat should be awarded.

A lot of money is tied up in these boats. Chase said a couple Rivas are scheduled to be auctioned at Pebble Beach in August with asking prices of \$260,000 and \$320,000.

"These boats become a member of the family," Chase said. "The value depends on the rarity of the boat and if the restoration brings it back to the original or not."

Mahogany is the dominant wood. It used to come from Africa, but that is hard to get now. Much of today's wood hails from Honduras.

As part of the Antique & Classic Boat Society, the local chapter is supposed to have an educational component – the boat show fits that criteria.

Tickets are \$20, though Raley's has them for \$15. Proceeds benefit Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society, Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe, the three Kiwanis Clubs on the South Shore, and the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department. The event is from 9am-5pm today at Tahoe Keys Marina on Venice Drive off Tahoe Keys Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe.

Now in its third year, the boat show is growing – 10 more boats this year, and a couple thousand people expected to weave among the docks these two days.

The Tahoe Maritime Museum has a booth. Membership is available, with certain categories coming with a ride on a woodie.

New this year is three racing boats. All on trailers – not in the water – because it is too rough for them.

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