

Rich history of water skiing resurrected on West Shore

By Stephen Ward

Scores of water sport enthusiasts speed across the West Shore of Lake Tahoe, soaring through the air and performing strategic tricks such as pyramids and operating delta wing kites while water skiing. The public gathers around the edge of the shore to witness the mesmerizing performance unfolding before them, quietly marveling at each graceful act.

The scene illustrated above is a glimpse of the Water Ski Carnival the Tahoe Yacht Club used to conduct at Chamber's Landing and Homewood each summer from 1953 well into the 1990s, before the loss of key sponsors that had kept the festivity afloat. The water ski exhibitions at the time were initially two-day events that preceded the Tahoe Yacht Club's boat races. Later the exhibition was granted its own separate time slot during the summer.



Water skiing has been popular on Lake Tahoe for more than half a century. Photo/Tahoe Maritime Museum

This weekend, however, the Tahoe Maritime Museum, with the assistance of Obexer's Marina, hopes to restore what used to be a tradition on the West Shore of Lake Tahoe.

Starting tonight at 5, the Tahoe Maritime Museum will host a water ski roundtable discussion, featuring eminent historical and contemporary figures of Lake Tahoe's water sports history. Scheduled speakers include acclaimed water skier Mary Jo Shepherd, High Sierra Water Ski School owner Lee Schmidt, and 1950s water school outfitters Ron Rupp and Les Bartlett.

On Friday, the topics discussed tonight will be brought to life. The Water Ski Exhibition at the south end of Obexer's Marina Pier will feature local talent operating everything from water skis and wakeboards to aquaplanes and slalom skis. The event will commence at 8am and will last for about two hours. Spectators can view the exhibition from the shoreline or sign up at the roundtable discussion tonight to survey the function on a boat.

Saturday from 10am-5pm is the annual Living History Day at the Tahoe Maritime Museum, and is the one day each year where admission to the museum is free. The Living History Day will highlight the topics discussed at the roundtable discussion, as well as having displays of boats and trophies issued at the Water Ski Carnivals of the past.

The Tahoe Maritime Museum is open Thursday-Tuesday from now until Sept. 30, and is located in Homewood, next to Homewood Mountain Resort. Admission for the lecture series is \$8 for adults and free for children younger than 12. For more information, [click here](#) or call (530) 525.9253.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

(Old photos: Provided by Tahoe Maritime Museum; New photos: Provided by Warren Fallat)