

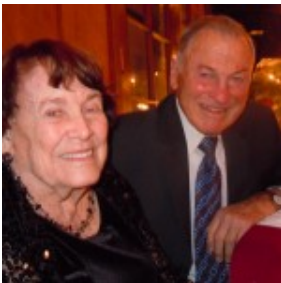
Former Valhalla owners reminisce about Tahoe estate

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – Imagine nearly a hundred people in your house eating dinner and you don't know most of them.

That was the reality Saturday night for Dee Dee and Raymond Goodrich. They used to own the Heller Estate. On Dec. 4 they were special guests for the Tahoe Tallac Association's annual gala.

It was about 10 years since they were last in Lake Tahoe. The Goodrichs, who will have been married 68 years in January, came up in the summer. On camera they told stories of what life was like when they summured on the shores of Lake Tahoe, what the house was like, how it was decorated.



Dee Dee and
Raymond
Goodrich

Sitting near the large fireplace in what is now known as the Grand Hall, members of the family chatted before the festivities began. Then they took their seat at the head table.

The couple, who reside in Santa Cruz, spoke a bit with *Lake Tahoe News* that night about their 10 years of owning what is

now considered a historic estate. They bought the property from Wilber Kuhl in 1955. He had bought it from heirs of Walter and Claire Heller who first built the estate in the 1920s.

Raymond Goodrich is quick to say he wished he'd never sold the place in 1965. At the time, the property was owned with two other couples. One of the partners died and the Goodrichs didn't have the money to buy the others out.

Each couple stayed one month during the summer. The Goodrichs said they had it best with August being their month.

Three fireplaces kept the wide-open wood and rock structure warm. Even though central heating has since been installed, the single-pane windows and drafty old doors prove spending the night at the estate would be a chilling experience.

But it was those cold winters that provided refrigeration all summer for the Goodrichs and others. Raymond Goodrich explained how part of what is now the boathouse theater was an icehouse. Ed Zeller was the caretaker who lived year-round at the estate in a building near the boathouse that no longer exists. He made sure the blocks of ice were ready for summer.

"There was enough to last all summer," Goodrich said of the ice.

The couple describes the stove they had as "monstrous."

"It had eight burners and in the middle a griddle," Dee Dee Goodrich said.

Her husband recalls many a morning watching Dee Dee making stacks and stacks of pancakes.

The expansive bottom floor where festivities are conducted is the same as it was when originally built. So is the U-shape upstairs.

Dee Dee Goodrich said besides the two suites there were three other bedrooms.

“There was a big sleeping porch, which was everyone’s favorite,” she said.

Raymond Goodrich often had to fly in for the weekends. At that time Lake Tahoe Airport’s runway was 6,000 feet. It’s 8,541 feet now. Having been a Navy pilot during World War II gave him plenty of practice landing on small strips.

The Goodrichs are pleased to see their old home being well cared for by the Tahoe Tallac Association. The association operates the summer arts festival at their old home and the boathouse. The vast lawn where croquet was once played by the Goodrich family, now is seldom used because of limitations the U.S. Forest Service has imposed on the association. The land is owned by the Forest Service, which acquired the property in 1971 from the South Tahoe Valhalla Corporation, the group the Goodrichs sold to. That group had planned to turn the area into a members-only yacht club.

While the land is now in public ownership, the Forest Service limits the access and uses. The 30-plus year prickly relationship between the arts group and Forest Service is said to be gradually softening.