

# Quest is on to save Tahoe's famous Thunderbird Lodge

By Adam Rasmussen, Channel 2 News

The Thunderbird Lodge and yacht in Lake Tahoe first opened in the early 1930s, and over the years have become one of northern Nevada's biggest cultural tourist attractions.

But the lodge is struggling, and now the Thunderbird Preservation Society is raising money to keep the famous yacht at Lake Tahoe. Officials say keeping it in the water and maintaining it is important to the community.

"It's kind of like a racehorse," says Dave Marion, captain of the yacht. "You put it in gear and it wants to go even at idle speed."

The Thunderbird yacht is arguably the most valuable wooden boat in the country. Described as a mix of a car, a boat and an airplane, George Whittell Jr. first put in the Lake Tahoe waters in 1940. It entertained celebrities like Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Ty Cobb. It was bought by Bill Harrah in 1962, who put two Allison aircraft engines in it. But any future boat rides could be coming to an end soon.

"Our mission is to preserve the historic estate, the yacht, and to educate the public," says Bill Watson with the Thunderbird Preservation Society.

And to preserve the yacht, the Thunderbird Preservation Society needs to raise \$1.5 million. They say if they can't raise that much, it could be moved from Lake Tahoe. And while the boat has entertained so many celebrities over the years, it's one today that is doing his best to keep the boat floating in Tahoe.

“This is certainly a part of the history of Tahoe, and it would be such a waste, such a shame if it were no longer taken care of,” says C.B. Sullenberger.

**Read the whole story**