

History: Amundsons reflect on a time gone by

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There was a time, the Amundsons remember, when bears walked down the Tahoe streets.



In 1946, when Patricia Amundson moved to the South Shore's Al Tahoe area, she recalls, "The mountain lions would still come down to the meadow and in the fall, usually when you would have the first dusting of snow, you could hear them screaming."

Then, there was that fierce winter of '51. There were about 400 people snowed in at the south end of the lake then.

"I was snowed in with the kids by myself for ten days," continues Patricia. "People didn't get so perturbed about it because you planned on it. You bought groceries once a month. You always had candles and you always had wood. People have very fond memories of that winter because you couldn't go anywhere, and they would walk over the snow and have a party at somebody's home, or a pot luck."

The Amundsons are long-time residents of Tahoe. Glenn Amundson was born in Montana but in 1932, when he was 16 years old, he, his dad, and his brothers lived at Tahoe one summer to work in the tree surgery business.

"We had a contract," he says, "for clearing four acres at Fallen Leaf Lake. They were going to burn all the timber, so we asked them if we could have it to build a log cabin. We had the selection of any of the logs we wanted."

About 80 of the biggest and best logs were chosen to build the house in which the Amundsons still live. "Everything you see cut here," says Glenn, pointing to the 24 rafters, "was cut by hand. They never even heard of a chain saw in those days."

In the '30s, says Glenn, "We had our choice of any lot in this two block area. At that time you would have to ski down to get your groceries. They wouldn't even plow the road out in the winter."

Even years later, says Patricia, "When you heard a car turn off the road, you knew it was for you because you were the only person who lived on the street. And when the snowplow came – it didn't make any difference what time of day or night it was – you would always have a pot of coffee on and some cookies, and you would holler to the fellows on the snowplow, 'Want a cup of coffee?' and they would come in and think nothing of it."

Glenn now runs a pier construction company where his son also works. The Amundsons feel it was good for their two children to be raised in Tahoe. "They were outside all the time," says Patricia. "They learned to entertain themselves. The kids learned to swim, loved the mountains, loved just to wander, just to see. I think both of the youngsters are very observant people."

"You learn," she adds, "not to total out your home, and that's what these mountains are. In other words, you don't destroy what you live in. Our kids, if they went hiking, and if there was trash, they hauled it back. All these mountains are their backyard. This is the thing that bothers youngsters who have been raised up here – to see what other people, who have not learned to love it and cherish it, do to it."

About today's tourist-bustling Tahoe, Patricia says, "You don't like to see it grow, but it cant' stand still."

There was a time when the Amundsons never locked their front

door. Now they have to. "We've had things taken right out of our front yard," says Patricia. "We had a goofy looking ceramic frog," adds Glenn, "and somebody stole it. Imagine stealing something as worthless as that."

But, they stress, they are still very happy at Tahoe. Says Glenn, "I wouldn't live any place else."

Observes Patricia, "Many years ago somebody said very facetiously that the people who lived at Tahoe were the people who were misfits and couldn't live anywhere else. Maybe so. I'm speaking primarily of people who have lived here a long time. They are maybe more individualists. They were more capable of doing and thinking for themselves."

– *Gail Bernice Sullivan, reprinted from the San Francisco Examiner.*