

Tahoe pioneer continues to be an inspiration to others

By Hal Cole

It's been two weeks since I last visited Margie. She has been ill for many months and this last visit was particularly impactful. I am very aware that every time we say a casual "goodbye" to family and friends it very well could be "farewell". It was very obvious to both of us that this visit was special. Her squeeze of my hand was a little tighter, the look in her eyes a little sadder.

My family's relationship with the Springmeyers began many years ago. In the early '60s my father would have his International Scout serviced at the Springmeyer Garage in the building just east of Izzy's where we first met Buzz, Margie's husband. Probably the first significant encounter was in 1969 when my wife, Francie, was 15 and living with her family on Glenwood Way. She kept her horse Gypsy, in the backyard, but would occasionally let her out to graze with the Springmeyer's cattle. Buzz would periodically chase her off, but at the same time seemed to like the young cowgirl and soon invited her to join his annual cattle drive from the Bijou Meadow up to High Meadows for the summer.

Growing up next to that meadow, it was always Francie's dream to live there. As fortune would have it, soon after we were married a lot on Pioneer Trail bordering the meadow was listed for sale. The price was more than the two of us could ever afford, but the owner was willing to allow us to make payments so we both took on second jobs and managed somehow to pay it off and began planning our future. Soon after our purchase, Margie would come by and tell us tales about our new home site, which she used to own, and her life. It wasn't long before Francie and Margie became quite close, sharing their

love for the land, Indian jewelry and animals.



Marjorie Springmeyer is a pioneer of Lake Tahoe who now lives in the Carson Valley full time. Photo/LTN file

Our destinies began to merge soon after we bought that property. We had just sold our home, the first I had ever built, and for the first time in our lives had money in the bank and began to plan on building a home on the meadow. Just two weeks after our escrow closed Margie tracked Francie down at work and told her that the meadow property next to our lot was going to be sold at a court ordered sale. Her two brothers, Knox and Bill, had petitioned the court to sell the property over Margie's objections. Margie told us if we showed up in court with a check we could buy her brothers' share of the meadow and share ownership with her. It would take all of our money to do it and meant that building a home would have to wait. We agreed and our friendship became a partnership. I soon after realized that the timing of that event was more than luck.

Over the subsequent years our two families would share many

more coincidences. Our daughter, Casey, was born on July 23, Margie's birthday. Casey was a young child staring out at the meadow when out of the blue she told her mom that a dog had pushed her in to the creek and she had died, but now she was back. She had no way of knowing that Margie's daughter, Connie, had drowned in the Bijou Creek when she was just 3 years old. Margie became Casey's godmother.

Margie's distrust of city hall and government in general inspired me to enter politics. I represented her on the Bijou Community Plan Committee and soon began my foray in local government, all the while using her as a sounding board.

I don't want this article to be about me, rather my view of a woman who has had a profound influence on my life and was truly one of Tahoe's pioneers. Her family, the Johnsons, was one of Tahoe's original landowners. She saw a land unspoiled and beautiful beyond description, but also suffered through much hardship. She was injured in a car accident while in high school, giving her a permanent limp that kept her from the athletic life she so loved. She has also witnessed the loss of her husband, daughter and two sons (Fred and Jon). My sister had also died at 3 years old so I know the effect the loss of a child has on a mother.

Margie lived in a world where women weren't supposed to be in charge. She stood up for herself to whoever crossed her. She is a survivor and to this day cares about Tahoe's future. At the conclusion of my last visit, I assured her that I would keep our meadow open and full of the animals we both love. I also asked her if there is anything she hasn't done or missed. She told me there were two things she hasn't done. She said that she had never had a glass of beer. When I asked what the second one was she whispered to me with that twinkle I know so well, "I can't tell you."

