

Bill Craven – 1928-2016

By Kathryn Reed

A quiet man who never wanted much attention, but whose family has left a rich history at Fallen Leaf Lake has died.

Bill Craven died Dec. 28, 2016. He was 88.



Bill Craven's impact on Fallen Leaf Lake will be long-lasting. Photo/LTN file

His grandfather, William W. Price, started Camp Agassiz for boys in 1895, which led to the resort at Fallen Leaf Lake. It started as a tent camp. Price and his wife, Bertha, had Fallen Leaf Lodge up and running in 1909. They also operated the Housekeeping Camp.

To start with there was no indoor refrigeration; the ice house was located near what is now Stanford Sierra Camp. Supplies were bought at the Celio's in Meyers because there was no commercial development at the Y in South Lake Tahoe then.

Born in 1928, Mr. Craven, spent his childhood summers at the lodge. In those days it was possible to take the train from San Francisco to the Tahoe Tavern and the S.S. Tahoe steamer to Camp Richardson. Most of the time, though, the trip was made by car.

In the mid-1940s, Mr. Craven met his future wife, Barbara Granger, at Fallen Leaf. Their families had neighboring cabins. She was 18 and he was 16. The couple managed the lodge from 1972 to 1985. They were among a handful of people who lived at Fallen Leaf Lake year round. Mrs. Craven continues to live there.

Mr. Craven's mother, Harriet Price Craven, and her sister Francis Price Street ran the lodge before he took it over.

The 20-acre lodge site was sold to the Stanford Alumni Association in 1951, which was appropriate since his grandfather graduated from Stanford. That is where Stanford Sierra Camp now exists. The families operated the adjacent 78-acre parcel as a camp and cabin rentals until the 1980s.

In the forward for Janet Beales Kaidantzis' book "Fallen Leaf: A Lake and its People 1850-1950" Mr. Craven wrote, "Fallen Leaf Lake's happiest years occurred during the one-hundred-year period of this book. For most of that time, the Lake was unknown and sparsely populated. It took great effort to get here; those who made the trip were hardy types who appreciated nature and simple living."

Mr. Craven attended UNR, where he graduated in 1951 with a degree in mining engineering. He worked as a mining engineer in Ione until he took over the lodge.

Mr. Craven served as the president of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society. His mother had been a founding member of the organization.

In October 2010 he gave a talk at the South Lake Tahoe Library that was videotaped. Per his instructions, the Historical Society could not release copies of it until after his death. Mostly he talks about others and not his contributions to the South Shore.

He got his driver's license when he was 13. During World War

II he drove a truck for Sierra Tahoe Market which was dealing in the black market for meat.

At the talk he admitted that when gaming came to the Stateline as a 15-year-old he was playing penny slots.

Mr. Craven was saddened to see regulations put in place that essentially curtailed the building of old-style Tahoe cabins, but instead favored McMansions.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara; a son and daughter; and several grandchildren.

Per his request there were no services. Donations may be made to the UNR Foundation, Mackay School of Mining, PO Box 162, Reno, NV 89557.