

Opinion: When marrying a Native American meant renouncing U.S. citizenship

By Ann McGrath

Mixed couples in the United States—those who crossed boundaries between Indian nations and the European newcomers—left permanent legacies well beyond the families they created. They also shaped the meaning of nation and citizenship.

Historically, U.S. policymakers were troubled by such marriages not only on the grounds of race, but also because they created conflicting loyalties within the American nation. The questions of consent and coercion are at the essence of contests over sovereignty. And consent is a central tenet of Western marriage.

Until the 1930s, women of American birth who married foreign nationals faced particularly hard choices regarding their national identity. Under the principle of coverture, the legal status of a married woman, including her citizenship, was subsumed under that of her husband's.

The Marshall judgments of the Federal Court of the 1830s declared that Indian nations were nations in their own right, in the modern sense. However, they were classified as “domestic dependent nations” and considered subordinate to the United States. Indigenous families who had occupied their land for generations and who had matrilineal systems where the women had rights to land and property were gradually subsumed under a patriarchal system similar to that of the United States.

Controversies over citizenship continued. Consequently, during

an active time for the American Indian Wars, some of the most heated moments between Native Americans and U.S. citizens happened not on the battlefield, but across the more intimate sphere of heterosexual unions.

This was the case in Connecticut in 1825, when the talented editor and Cherokee Indian Elias Boudinot asked for the hand of Harriett Gold, a white woman from a highly regarded family. The town went mad, burning effigies of Harriett and an archetypal "Indian" on a huge bonfire, threatening to lynch Elias, and protesting the Native American man's "right" to marry a white woman.

Previously known as Gallegina Uwatie and Buck Watie, Elias had already crossed many transnational boundaries. He moved to Connecticut for an advanced education and strategically took the name of one of its patrons: Elias Boudinot, the New Jersey statesman, president of the Continental Congress, and president of the American Bible Society. Presented in fashionable clothing and practiced in the manners of American higher-ups, Elias was sought after by many of New England's philanthropic elites, regardless of his Cherokee roots.

Despite rejection by her beloved family members and almost every lifelong friend in her hometown, Harriett went ahead with the wedding. By cover of night, the newlyweds travelled to their new home, New Echota (in present-day Georgia), the capital of the Cherokee Nation.

It was 1825, and Harriett was emigrating—a decision with serious risks.

When Harriett became a resident in the Cherokee Nation, their matrilineal society meant that she had no clan status and, therefore, no official citizenship. The uprooted Harriett was deeply interested in belonging, and she understood the emotional bonds that would make that possible. Upon her arrival there, she reported that her new family "joyfully"

stated, "You are welcome in this nation." In turn, she proclaimed, "I am now at home. Here I expect to pass the remainder of my days." She was relieved that her relatives treated her like an old friend rather than a stranger.

Harriett was well aware of the uncertain future of her new nation—Native Americans were considered inevitably condemned by the arrival of Europeans on their lands—of the Cherokees' "final destiny," as she put it. In a letter to her parents, she made it clear where she stood: "Whatever may be their doom I shall share and suffer as a Cherokee."

Harriett's parents, who had adamantly opposed the marriage, soon travelled to the Cherokee nation in the South to visit their new family. Contrary to their own expectations, they were thoroughly impressed with what they saw. Harriett's father Benjamin became an advocate of the Cherokee nation, assisting in their political struggles to gain great support in the north. Proud of their grandchildren, his soft and wryly expressed affection translates across the ages: "The oldest little girl is as smart and pretty and healthy as can be found, and the next is a bright, well-looking child. All who see her say, 'she is the handsomest child I ever saw.' You must not think that I brag."

Through her family life, Harriett became a courageous border crosser. She was also a Cherokee nationalist who expounded the virtues of their civilization and backed their cause in asserting their sovereignty rights. The couple raised highly accomplished children who were proud Cherokees and who, as diplomats and lawyers, continued the struggle for their treaty entitlements through the courts.

Harriett had willingly joined a nation whose future was under constant threat from her own birth nation. Harriett and Elias's story reveals how intimacy and family shaped and redefined individuals and nations with a glue that neither colonizer nor colonized state could dissolve.

Ann McGrath's "Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia" was published by University of Nebraska Press in December 2015.

Opinion: Commonality between Brexit and Calif.'s coming election

By Joe Mathews

Do you think Brexit was a singularly British form of folly, having little to do with California? Think again. California is the global capital of Brexit-style votes, and this November's state ballot is littered with mini-Brexits.

Don't think of "a Brexit" as a vote to leave a larger political or economic union. (California isn't about to leave the U.S.—unless a Trump presidency stirs a Calexit movement). Brexit is better understood as a special kind of ballot measure—a plebiscite. Plebiscites are placed on the ballot not by citizens or interest groups, but by powerful politicians to serve their own political needs.



Joe Mathews

And plebiscites—to put it bluntly—are cursed. The term comes from the Latin pleb- (the common people) and scitum (decree). But these days it may as well mean “backfire.”

The plebiscite curse describes a tendency of plebiscites to blow up in the faces of the powerful people who pursue them. There are hundreds of examples around the world. Among the most famous was Chilean strongman Augusto Pinochet’s 1988 plebiscite to extend his constitutional power; dissidents beat the plebiscite and ended his hold on power (a campaign portrayed in the Oscar-nominated film “No”).

In the British Brexit, the self-cursed politician was Prime Minister David Cameron, who wanted his country to remain in the European Union but put the Brexit question to the voters in order to quiet, once and for all, the anti-EU voices within his own party. He assumed he could win the vote, and put the Tories’ Hamlet-like “to be or not to be European” debate to rest. Instead, the British voters decided to leave—and Cameron lost his job as prime minister.

This dynamic should not sound foreign to Californians. Our elected officials have long put measures on the ballot—and been hurt by their defeat or hamstrung by the unintended consequences of victory. The biggest and most recent example of the plebiscite curse here was Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s 2005 special election for four ballot initiatives of his own making. All four lost, and he only saved his governorship by repudiating his own effort and replacing his top advisors.

While politicians in other states have also damaged themselves with plebiscites, no place has been as profoundly cursed as California. One reason: our state is the only place where a law made by ballot initiative can’t be changed except by another vote of the people—forcing even plebiscite-averse politicians to go to the ballot. Indeed, California’s inflexible form of direct democracy—and a good part of the dysfunctional governing systems it has spawned—is itself a

plebiscite curse. In 1911, Gov. Hiram Johnson held a massive plebiscite to introduce the initiative and referendum process.

This year, the November ballot is getting criticism for its excessive length—17 statewide ballot measures—but we should pay extra attention to the ones placed on the ballot by elected officials who call on the people to deliver their desired results, instead of relying on the power of their offices.

Gov. Brown has his own plebiscitary initiative on the ballot. It would liberalize sentencing laws, but it's risky. With crime up in California and public safety a bigger concern nationally, Republicans might defeat it and try to cripple the governor's larger efforts to reduce the state's prison population and better re-integrate former prisoners into California communities.

Gavin Newsom, the lieutenant governor, is taking on the plebiscite curse with two initiatives—one to tighten gun controls and the other to legalize marijuana. He's using both measures to show leadership as part of his nascent campaign to succeed Brown as governor in 2018.

But his gun control measure has raised tensions with Democratic legislators pursuing similar measures in the Capitol. And if Newsom's two plebiscites lose, it could badly damage his candidacy—and his career.

The dangers of plebiscites go beyond the risks to politicians and their causes. When powerful elected officials use the ballot for their own devices, they can raise questions about the credibility of our democracy. Attorney General Kamala Harris has faced criticism for writing favorable ballot titles and expediting legal reviews of plebiscites put forth by other politicians. And this year, the California Supreme Court, whose chief justice has been pressing for more funding for the courts, recently allowed the governor's sentencing plebiscite

to make this year's ballot despite extensive alterations to the measure that have delayed previous ballot initiatives. It would seem direct democracy can be more direct for insiders.

As the Brexit vote in Britain reminds us, when the leadership of a state or country loses credibility, great and risky political earthquakes can result. From Europe to California, the plebiscite is a curse that can feed on itself.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zocalo Public Square.

Opinion: 'Gunsmoke' a TV show with longevity

By Larry Weitzman

"Gunsmoke" is the longest running live-action television show ever produced (1955-75). It debuted on Sept. 10, 1955; four days after Hugh O'Brien made his debut as Wyatt Earp, in "The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp". Both shows spawned a plethora of adult TV westerns for decades, but none had staying power of "Gunsmoke" as even the Wyatt Earp show terminated production after the 1961 season.

"Gunsmoke's" total production was a whopping 635 episodes as it started when a year of production consisted of 39 shows a season compared to today's season lengths of as little as 10 shows.



Larry Weitzman

While “Gunsmoke” started on TV in 1955, it was originally a radio show, first broadcast in March 1952, starring William Conrad (later TV star of “Cannon and Jake” and “Fatman”) but when looking for the TV lead of Marshal Matt Dillon, Cannon was too fat to be considered. Legend has it John Wayne was recommended for the TV lead, who in turn recommended 6-foot-7-inch James Arness for the job. Arness at the time was an up and coming actor who had a recent roll of playing “The Thing” in the 1954 sci-fi thriller of the same name. Cannon ended up directing two or more episodes of “Gunsmoke” for TV.

“Gunsmoke” writer John Meston (he also wrote and with producer Norman MacDonnell created “Gunsmoke”, the radio show which lasted until 1961) theme was good over evil and it was clearly defined and in most cases there was no excuse for the evil and Dillon (the good) always won. Meston also appeared to have a political cause, the plight of the American Indian. In one show even Gen. George Custer was discussed by Matt Dillon in a less than flattering light. Indians were mostly portrayed as righteous, honest and honorable. One continuing regular on the show was Tobeal, a guide and “investigator” for Dillion, played by Frank deKova.

Even Ken Curtis, who played Festus Hagen, a part time deputy for Dillon, played the role of an Indian scout in an early episode before he created Festus. Curtis, who was a big band singer (Tommy Dorsey Orchestra) and a son-in-law of director John Ford, played in about half a dozen early “Gunsmokes” in various rolls prior to becoming Festus. Contrary to the appearance of Festus, Curtis was a handsome man in real life.

Another characteristic of "Gunsmoke" outside of Chester, Doc and Kitty, were the various actors who made up the supporting cast. People like Warren Oates, Academy Award winner George Kennedy, Claude Akins, Lee Van Cleef, Charles Bronson, Wayne Rogers, Martin Landau, Buddy Ebsen, Ed Asner, Dennis Hopper (who was born in Dodge City), Jack Lord, James Whitmore, Ted Knight and Jack Klugman all were cast members in one or more shows. And these were in the early days of the show, in the black and white days. Oates, Akins, Kennedy and Rogers all did several shows as different characters. This was one place actors cut their teeth and learned their craft. And I am leaving many stars off the list. In later years even Harrison Ford did two episodes and Richard Dreyfuss, before "Jaws", did one show.

Of course the show launched the career of Burt Reynolds, who played Quint Asper, a half-Indian blacksmith and Dillon's part time deputy. Tom Skerritt played five characters in five shows from 1965-72.

And then there were the several regular characters, Chester Goode, Dr. Galen Adams, Kitty Russell. Dennis Weaver, who played Chester, left the show after nine years to pursue his own successful career (replaced by Ken Curtis, Burt Reynolds, Buck Taylor and Roger Ewing). Milburn Stone, who play crusty Doc Adams chose as his first name on the show, Galen, the name of an ancient Greek physician and medical researcher. Stone's career started in the 1930s where he worked at Monogram Pictures doing an adventure serial called "Tailspin Tommy," a serial I used to watch on TV as a kid. Stone appeared in 604 of the 635 episodes.

Stone was close to the other "Gunsmoke" star, Amanda Blake, Miss Kitty. Although born in Buffalo, N.Y., Blake died in 1989 in Sacramento at age 60. Besides playing the owner of the Long Branch Saloon (there is such a saloon in Dodge City), she was sort of Dillon's girlfriend in the show, although the relationship was never fully explained. Blake was an animal

lover and she sometimes brought her pet lion, Kemo, to the "Gunsmoke" set. She also started the first successful breeding program for cheetahs at her compound in Phoenix as well as the Arizona Animal Welfare League, the state's first no-kill animal shelter.

South Lake Tahoe veterinarian Patty Handel in her pre- and early teens remembers spending time on the "Gunsmoke" set and some time with Amanda Blake at backyard barbecues.

"Even in those early years I loved animals and when Amanda found out she remarked, 'Oh that's wonderful.' I met all of the "Gunsmoke" regulars, and they were all so nice and just regular people. Ken Curtis who played Festus was just like his character, Festus, and I remember standing next to James Arness and looking up and saying to myself 'he is a giant.' The set ran like clockwork and the attitude on the set seemed like one of their lighthearted episodes," Handel said.

Most everyone knows that Arness' younger brother was Peter Graves. Arness was seriously wounded in the leg when storming the beach as a rifleman at Anzio, Italy, during WWII. He was ordered off the landing craft first because of his height to test the depth of the water. He lived a private life mostly in Brentwood, although in the 1970s, as an airport bum, I heard that Arness had a De Havilland Beaver (the kind of plane from the movie "Six Days, Seven Nights") that he flew to his ranch near Paso Robles. People who knew him at the airport said he had a bad leg, a result of being seriously wounded at Anzio.

In the early years of "Gunsmoke" (first 10) Dillon almost always rode (sometimes in pain) the same good-looking Buckskin horse. Chester mostly rode the same sorrel horse with a blaze that had a small appendix marking at the top of his facial blaze.

"Gunsmoke" is still on TV, in the Direct TV system at Starzwest on channel 538, every day but Sunday. Check it out and see why

tens of millions tuned in every Saturday night at 10.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Letter: Kirkwood workers help at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Hosting their fourth Bread & Broth Adopt A Day of Nourishment dinner this year, Kirkwood Mountain Resort's \$250 sponsor donation fed 92 guests at B&B's dinner on July 18.

B&B's partnership with Kirkwood has provided so many meals to the food insecure of our community and has helped eased the struggle many face every day to secure nutritious and filling food.

Volunteering their personal time to crew at Kirkwood's AAD dinner were mountain dining management members Christian Anderson, Kirkwood Inn general manager; Jason Burholz, executive chef; Jonathan Frick, general store manager; Sean Groover, dining assistant manager; and Scarlett Mellin, dining director. With all that management skill and enthusiasm, this team did a fabulous job, which is greatly appreciated by the B&B volunteers.

"Always a pleasure to participate in a Bread & Broth Monday evening meal," was the collective comment of the Kirkwood team. "What a great group effort with lots of happy customers. Thank you for having us."

Bread & Broth couldn't be happier having the ongoing support of Kirkwood Mountain Resort and is extremely appreciative of

this very special partnership.

To partner with B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at carolsgerard@aol.com or 530.542.2876.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Did Protestant Christianity create the dismal American prison system?

By John Carl

While in Ireland teaching a criminal justice course this past semester, I had the opportunity to take a tour of an Irish prison.

The Irish prison service states one of its key missions is to protect human rights: The rights of the public and the rights of the offender. A tour of a temperature-controlled prison in the Irish city of Cork revealed prisoners had access to Wi-Fi, educational programs, drug treatment, and counseling. Clients interact with staff on a first-name basis. Prison food is high quality and health care is equivalent to what is available to the general public. As you may know, none of this is true in American prison systems.

As a criminology professor and U.S. prison system researcher, I get a front-row seat to the atrocious conditions that American prisoners live in, day in and day out, such as overcrowding, violence, rape, a program-funding deficit, and a

disappointing health care system.

As I toured through the Irish prison, I began to formulate a simple thought: In all common law countries—countries that are legally guided by judges—except the United States, going to prison is the punishment. Because that is the punishment, the prison does not have to “add to” the punishment.

In the Irish prison, workout rooms, in-cell TVs, and quality food were all present. As the prison staff discussed their jobs, they mentioned several concepts: All of their prisoners eventually return to society and the staff’s job is to keep them from returning to prison after their release.

Having studied prisons in the United States, I’ve found it is clear we do not share that ideology. In the United States, we view prison not only as the punishment, but also as the place for punishment, deliberately making prison more difficult in hopes of reducing recidivism. However, when comparing Ireland, which had a recidivism rate of 62 percent in 2007, and the United States, which had a recidivism rate of 67 percent in 2005, you quickly see that our “get tough” strategies have actually made return to prison rates higher.

Could this difference in the idea of punishment be related to some foundational ideology rooted in the religious history of these countries?

I started to reflect upon German sociologist Max Weber’s “A Protestant Ethic and a Spirit of Capitalism” during my time in Ireland. In it, Weber suggests that a major branch of Protestantism called Calvinistic Christianity laid the foundation for modern industrial capitalism by proposing beliefs and values that would lead adherents to adopt a “spirit of capitalism.”

Calvinistic Christianity is the belief that Calvinists took on as a reaction to the Lutheran movement and the Roman Catholic Church, with a theology that proposed a strict adherence to

the Bible and “right” living. While other sects of Christianity preach right living, early Calvinists were known for their intolerance of others perspectives. In addition, they dropped the more sacramental notions of sin and forgiveness found in Anglicanism, Catholicism, and Lutheranism and adopted a personal relationship of understanding between the penitent and God.

With Weber’s theory in mind, I began to consider the role of religion in the creation of the modern American criminal justice system. Of all the common law nations, only the United States had its origins rooted in a form of religious fundamentalism, known as Puritanism. Puritans believed that strict adherence to sacred scripture was the only real faith. A “pure” faith was a biblical faith, and that was generally rigid and unwavering in its adherence to their interpretation of scripture. Although the United States was and is a country without a dominant religion, many colonists incorporated beliefs rooted in Calvinistic Christianity into the new nation—and its laws.

Even though Pew Research Center data from 2015 shows 70 percent of the U.S. population practices Christianity, down from 78 percent in 2007, the religion—in particular, Calvinist Christianity—remains a cultural power in the country. Foundational ideologies of right and wrong, punishment and redemption, remain rooted in this religious tradition. These concepts are at the forefront of our in country’s attempt to deal with criminals. While it is certainly true that religion is weakening in the United Kingdom, with 46 percent of citizens identifying as Christian in 2012 from 59 percent in 2011, the U.K. and all other common law countries do not house their cultural roots in Calvinist Christianity. This difference is a plausible explanation for some of the differences in punitive social policies between the United States and its common law cousins around the world.

The Church of England, like the Roman Catholic Church,

recognizes the role of private and public confession for the forgiveness of sins. In these institutions, the penitent acknowledges his or her sin to a priest and is absolved, or washed clean, by the act of the Church. Once the sinner is forgiven, they are assured that he or she is "right with God," will never again need to confess that sin, and are free to go on with life, assured of salvation.

In Protestant sects, such as Calvinist Christians, Weber points out that the sinner has no such assurance of divine forgiveness or acceptance. In fact, Protestants who join a non-sacramental sect must trust that their confessions of guilt were heard by God, accepted as valid, and actually absolved. They are told that their confession to God is "heard" but no human being is touching them, absolving them, or telling them that a sacramental change has occurred. The forgiveness for most Protestants happens not in the public arena of a church, but in the private recesses of the mind. This personal confession, according to Weber, creates a level of insecurity about whether or not one has actually received God's forgiveness, which then forms a collective anxiety for Protestants who are not in sects that believe in a sacramental type of forgiveness.

Calvinists dealt with this anxiety by strict adherence to rules for "right living." For example, Puritan punishment in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter" is to force a woman caught in adultery to wear a red letter "A" around her neck. Violations of the rules were dealt with authoritatively. Since Calvinist sects and their deviants dominated the American religious ideology for hundreds of years, could this be one reason for the differences in punishment ideologies that trickled into criminal justice systems?

What emerges in the United States is a penal system grounded in a protestant fundamentalist religious history, with a strong sense of right and wrong and a penchant for justifying abuse of some, writing people off, and suggesting they are

going to hell because they didn't practice Christianity strictly enough.

John Carl, criminology professor at the University of Oklahoma, is the author of "A Country Called Prison: Mass Incarceration and the Making of a New Nation".

Opinion: Cold does not increase odds of catching cold

By Aaron E. Carroll, New York Times

I've become somewhat known for medical myth-busting (having been a co-author of three books on the subject), so a fairly large number of emails sent to me are from people with articles or studies that they think prove me wrong.

This week, as a few of us sniffle with summer colds, the emails are all about a new study that they think proves that cold weather makes you more likely to catch a cold.

I'm sorry to say that this continues to be a myth. Research doesn't support it.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Is art mimicking life in California?

By Joe Mathews

How is California doing these days? The answer depends on whether you believe Gov. Jerry Brown or Blink-182.

This summer has exposed a divide in perception of California between the political triumphalism of our elected officials and the more anxious state of affairs depicted in the broader culture.



Joe Mathews

Our state's political and media elites are selling the idea of a "California comeback." They say, in speeches, op-eds and books, that the Golden State, not so long ago dismissed as dysfunctional, is now a global and national model of balanced budgets and progressive policies on climate change and gun control.

But this summer, the portrayal of California by non-political storytellers is far less triumphant—in music and film, we're in a state of frustrations, forgotten places, and struggles.

No document speaks to this alternate view more powerfully than "California", the new album from Blink-182, the Southern California pop punk band. Blink-182's "California" this month rose to No. 1 on the Billboard 200 Chart, which ranks the top

albums across all genres.

"California" the album has no talk of comebacks. Its first song is called "Cynical" and it gets rougher from there, with tracks in which the narrator just tries to prevent decline. In "Home is Such a Lonely Place," Blink-182 sings, "we're falling faster than we can fly/Forgotten seconds out on Sunset Drive And I hold on tight/But not enough to hold you back."

The hit "Bored to Death" is even bleaker in its sense of disconnection in a California in which "life is too short to last long" and people are "broken, lost and cold and fading fast." The album's title track begins: "Beige little boxes in a row/Neighbors and friends that you don't know/Here's a form go wait in line." My favorite song on the album is "No Future," with its infectious and taunting chorus: "You don't know a thing about it/Hours lost to dawn from dusk/Yeah, they don't care about you."

Of course, Blink-182 is punk, of a sort, and punk isn't supposed to be happy. But the same sense of anxiety and foreboding about California has been a strong recent theme even from more upbeat singers. Last year's California-heavy album "Wildheart" from Miguel, the Grammy winner from San Pedro, was popular for its frankly sexual songs and mood, but couldn't disguise an underlying fear of decline. "Heart caught in a rip tide, cold Pacific waters keep on pulling me under," he sang on the album hit "Leaves," with its chorus juxtaposing "sweet California, sour California, bitter California."

Blink-182 writes about not being able to go home again, the same idea at the center of the plot of the year's top grossing movie, "Finding Dory", from Emeryville-based Pixar. Dory, a Pacific blue tang fish with Ellen DeGeneres' voice, rides a current to California, a scary journey. A giant squid tries to eat her fish friends, and she ends up confined to an aquarium.

Dory, it turns out, is from Morro Bay. And like so many Californians who grew up along the coast, she dreams of figuring out a way to return home and live near her parents. While this is very difficult for human Californians, given the daunting combination of stagnant incomes and sky-high housing prices, Dory is a fish in a movie fantasy so—spoiler alert!—she escapes the aquarium and finds her family in the waters of San Luis Obispo County.

Of course, these days, no California triumph can be celebrated whole-heartedly. The San Francisco start-up Niantic (a Google spin-off) had little time to celebrate the global triumph of its Pokémon Go, before a massive public backlash against the free smartphone game began. And then hackers shut it down, temporarily ruining everyone's fun.

California's mix of political triumphalism and cultural anxiety has left the public somewhere in the middle. In a new Field Poll, a narrow majority of voters says the state is "on the right track" even as other surveys show stubborn and broad concerns about the economy, drought and the country as a whole.

The best cultural approximation of this middle ground comes from a new song "The Other California," written by Erin Friedman who along with her husband, Craig, make up the duo Still Married. Their song is a celebration of the far north part of the state—the musicians also run a shipping business in Redding—that's "rugged, raw and real."

During a phone interview, I asked Erin Friedman to name her favorite California song and she mentioned the Eagles' "Hollywood Waltz," which argues for finding a middle ground between California's hype and disappointment.

"So give her this dance," went the chorus of that 1975 hit, "She can't be forsaken. Learn how to love her with all of her faults."

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zocalo Public Square.

Opinion: Tahoe doesn't have to be dangerous

By Cate Neal

A plunge into Lake Tahoe can literally take your breath away. It may be hot outside, but the lake can be dangerously cold. Lake Tahoe's average surface temperature in July is 63 degrees, and can drop to 53 degrees just 18 inches below the surface.



Cate Neal

One of the most dangerous consequences of submerging suddenly into cold water is a “cold-shock response.” This response is an uncontrollable gasp for air followed by a prolonged period of rapid breathing. Taking a couple gasps of air underwater is all it takes to drown. Another “cold-shock response” is a heart attack. When temperature of the blood cools down and returns the heart, it can cause congestive heart failure.

So what can we learn from others who take a dangerous plunge?

Here are few tips for a fun and safe day at the lake:

- Ease in slowly. Take your time getting in the water. Give your body time to adjust to the cooler temperature.
- Follow the rules. Swimmers should stay in designated areas. If you are paddling, wear a personal flotation device. Non-motorized crafts have the right away, but be aware of power boats.
- Watch for obstacles. If you are going to jump into the water, scout out any obstacles and jump in feet first. When paddling, know how to look for and avoid obstacles.
- Be weather aware. On Lake Tahoe, weather varies by the hour. Don't wait for the weather to change. Be aware of your surroundings and know the easiest way to shore.
- Skip swimming and drinking. Alcohol impairs judgment and increases risk-taking, a dangerous combination. Even experienced swimmers may venture out farther than they should. A leg cramp can make it challenging to get back to shore and even a chill can develop into hypothermia.
- Bring a buddy. Never swim alone. If you haven't seen your buddy for a couple of minutes, he or she may need your help.
- Supervise your children. Keep an eye on your children, especially if they are inexperienced swimmers. If possible, teach your little ones to swim at a young age.

Tahoe summers are a treasurable time with family and friends. You don't want to have children on an inflatable flamingo drag you to shore. Swim with caution and enjoy this magnificent lake.

Cate Neal is a registered nurse and the trauma program coordinator at Barton Memorial Hospital.

Opinion: Time to focus on Tahoe's shoreline

By Joanne S. Marchetta

Millions of people visit our region each year, and the shoreline is where most of them go to enjoy the beauty and the cold, famously clear water of Lake Tahoe.

The shoreline is also where a challenging mix of planning issues converge: Protecting the environment and our lake's awe-inspiring scenery, managing recreation access, and respecting private property rights.



Joanne
Marchetta

This year and next, TRPA will be working with the community to draft shoreline policies and regulations. The goal is to protect our lake's environment and scenery and enhance recreation access for people to enjoy it. It will be a difficult balancing act, and we have tried to update these policies before.

Lawsuits, widely varying priorities, difficult questions about science and the environmental impacts of boating, and deeply held interests have thwarted such efforts in the past, leaving shoreline regulations the one element of our Regional Plan where consensus has been elusive.

New pressures confronting Lake Tahoe make it all the more important to update our shoreline regulations, and interviews completed last fall with nearly 50 shoreline stakeholders suggest the time is ripe for success.

More people than ever are traveling to Lake Tahoe each year, and we expect our region's visitation numbers to continue to grow in the decades to come. Visitors and residents want to experience the unique beauty of our lake and we need to make sure that they have convenient, environmentally-friendly ways to do so.

And while an average snowpack this past winter brought Lake Tahoe back up to its natural rim this summer, many piers and boat ramps around the basin are still left high and dry. Climate change and predictions of longer, more frequent, and more severe droughts add a new layer of uncertainty to the shoreline planning initiative and raise difficult questions for the management of marinas, piers, buoy fields, and boat ramps.

TRPA is taking a collaborative and inclusive approach for this planning initiative. We have assembled more than a dozen shoreline stakeholders to work together and steer this process. That includes marina operators, environmental groups, multiple agencies involved in the review and permitting of shoreline projects, and private property owners. We are also reaching out to community members, homeowner associations, and other groups around the lake to get as many people as possible involved in this process and working together on this important issue.

TRPA has contracted with the Consensus Building Institute, a nationally-recognized mediation firm, to help stakeholders find common ground and agreed-upon solutions for managing Lake Tahoe's shoreline in ways that enhance recreation access and protect our environment. We've also put together a team of experts to help stakeholders work through difficult questions

about climate change, environmental impacts, and water quality conditions so policy questions are solved with the best-available science and information.

People can learn more about this ongoing planning process, find out about upcoming community workshops, and share their information and ideas through a **new website**.

Updated shoreline regulations for Lake Tahoe are one of TRPA's highest priorities. As you enjoy Lake Tahoe this summer, please visit the website to learn more about this important planning process and get involved. We are confident that with everyone working together for a common cause—the protection and betterment of our beautiful, environmentally-sensitive mountain lake—we can craft new shoreline regulations that will protect our lake and help people enjoy it responsibly for generations to come.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Opinion: Land, homes tend to be disappointing investments

By Robert J. Shiller, New York Times

Buy land: They're not making it anymore. That often repeated adage sounds like good financial advice.

But over the long run, it hasn't been. Despite solid price increases over the last few years, land and homes have actually been disappointing investments. It's worth considering why.

Let's start by looking at the numbers. The best long-term data on land in the United States is for farmland, which is valuable in its own right and can also be considered a great reservoir that can be converted to housing and other purposes at opportune times.

Over the century from 1915 to 2015, though, the real value of American farmland (deflated by the Consumer Price Index) increased only 3.1 times, according to the Department of Agriculture. That comes to an average increase of only 1.1 percent a year – and with a growing population, that's barely enough to keep per capita real land value unchanged.

Read the whole story