

**My Memories**  
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The experiences I had growing up in Truckee during the 1960 Winter Olympics era helped shape my life and left me with cherished memories.

**Truckee in the Early Years**

In 1954 at the age of six, with my parents and sister Janice, moved to Donner Lake. Just before my seventh birthday I saw my first snow storm and got my first pair of wooden skis with bear trap cable bindings, bare wood bases, and bamboo poles from the church rummage sale. At the time in second grade having skis were important because at the old elementary school in Truckee skiing our main outside activity in the winter. During recess we would ski down the small hills surrounding the play ground and once a week our ski instructor, Mr. (Bud) Jones, gave lessons on ski positioning, falling, and then getting up correctly. If time and weather permitted we would side step and herringbone up the hill behind the school by the USFS office and then ski down. Once a year the schools from Truckee, Kings Beach and Tahoe City would meet for a competition at either Squaw Valley or Granlibakken. Everyone was given a ribbon for competing and it was the first time I would meet several of the people I became friends with later in high school and college.

Truckee was just a small town. On Truckee's Main Street downtown we had the U.S. Post Office, Municipal Court, Sierra Sun paper office, clothing, toys, liquor, sporting and grocery stores along with cafes and bars, but no store selling ski equipment. We also had a theater but it had burned down one winter when the temperature was so cold water froze on the fire hydrants. The Fire Department was all volunteer and when needed a large siren would sound in the middle of town. Except for the scheduled trains and vehicle traffic passing through town it remained fairly quiet.

Life in Truckee was "lay back". Resident Deputy Sheriff Roy Waters did not (visibly) wear a gun, the jail inmates (mostly there for public intoxication) would let themselves out in the morning to clean the sidewalks, eat breakfast at Good Fellows Cafe and go back to jail to rest. Though Hwy. 40 was also Main Street it would be re-routed through the Alley (aka Jibboom Street which was known as the "red light district" at that time) for celebrations like the annual Buck Stew and when the population hit 1,000 people. To make a telephone call we still used the local operator on party lines and our phone number was the same three digits as our U.S. Post Office box. In fifth grade (1956-57) we were given a class by the phone company on how to use a dial phone which were to be installed soon, then we would need to remember the LU (for Luther) and 5 digits.

During third grade (1955-56) my parents bought a house on the hill behind the Veterans Hall in Truckee with a direct view of Hill Top lodge along with the old ski jump and ice skating pond. My sister and I would walk to Hill Top and with \$.50 we could and ski all day and our parents would give a ride home. There were also times my parents took us to Squaw Valley to use the rope tow where a half day pass was \$.75. I dreamed someday of getting on the chair lift but at the time \$5 for a day was out of the question. Today this seems very inexpensive but in 1955 our family of four's weekly food budget was \$15-20 a week.

My father, Robert, was in charge of California Agricultural Inspection Station in Truckee and retired after over 38-years of public service. My mother, Arlene, taught grammar school at the Tahoe City and Truckee Elementary Schools and retired after over 20-years of teaching. My sister Janice, after graduating from UC Davis, became an Army Dietician treating wounded service members in U.S. Army Hospitals and later became an owner of a chain of liquor and convenience stores in Ventura area where she lives today.

### **Pre-Olympic**

Our time in Truckee was short lived. Within months of moving into our new home my parents received a letter saying to accommodate the 1960 Olympics there was to be a new freeway built to replace Hwy. 40 and our house was sitting dead center on the planned route. After many months of negotiations we were able to move the house off the hill down to the MacGyver's pond area, then close Hwy. 40 for periods of time and relocate it to Donner Lake where it still stands (see photos attached). The new location was located very close to the Frank "Chappie" Snyder family. Frank Snyder was the commander of the local CHP office and had been the personal driver for California Governor Knight and was assigned to the Truckee CHP office because of the pending Olympic games.

The new elementary school was built in time for my 7th grade year (1959) and the 1960 Olympics. Because the schools were to be used for the games we had the month off which was exciting. I was told the Olympic torch was going to be carried by high school students. Though I was not in high school yet I still showed up in the staging area at the west end of Donner Lake. Before carrying the torch we were required to practice passing the torch safely (as shown in photo attached). As luck had it my leg of the carry was about 200 yards up the back road behind my house and my best friend Steve Davis got to ski down the hill after I handed it to him. The lessons Mr. Jones had taught me in second and third grade of climbing hills came in very handy that day. After the Olympics I was invited to an awards ceremony in a large ski lodge at Sugar Bowl where the attendees were to be given a pageantry pin by Walt Disney. I had never been in the lodge before, nor have I since, and because of the number of people in attendance it is a blur today. At 13-years old seeing my friends was much more exciting than seeing Walt Disney anyway, but I still value the pin I received.

### **Olympics**

Frank Snyder had unlimited access to the events and was also able to drive his CHP patrol car into the main area. His step-son, Chuck Trainor, and I would go with him and take in everything we could. We stood outside Blythe Arena and were able to listen to the USA and USSR hockey match and see the speed skating and figure skating practice. We made friends with a woman working in a souvenir shop who would give us two pins and we would return her one from a foreign county and keep the other (see photo attached). I am sorry to say as a 13-year old I was more interested in the people trading souvenirs at the event than the actual competitive events. Chuck and I still remain in touch and he is a successful real estate attorney in Sacramento.

Though the cost to enter the games was nominal most locals did not have to pay. It seemed like everyone in town had free passes given to them for something. I knew one grammar school teacher who brought a bucket and mop and made a badge that said

"House Keeping" and would just tell the people working at the inside events "just checking" and viewed many of the skating events in Blythe Arena. This may have contributed to the lower paid attendance then forecasted for the event.

### **Post Olympic Years**

In 8th grade (1961) I had made friends with Patty Kelly whose parents operated Soda Springs resort. At the time it had a J-bar lift which was unique. Patty invited me to join her skiing but after the first run I knew she was out of my league, both on skis and looks. Also this was about the time Donner Ski Ranch initiated the first night skiing which was fun, but very cold. Though I went to school with the Board (Buni and Candy) sisters, whose parents managed Sugar Bowl, because of the difficulty actually getting to the ski area most locals did not ski there. Boreal Ridge became operational about my junior or senior year but never skied it. Patty went on to ski for Tahoe Truckee High School and Sierra College championship ski teams. I have lost contact with her since.

In the 9th grade I worked for Alpine Meadows as a general "go for" in its first year of operation. The next three winters two of my life long friends, Steve Davis and Chuck Spillner, and I worked on the lift crew in Squaw Valley and skiing changed from being a sport to a job for us. This job required us to be first of the mountain after it was cleared by the ski patrol. We would ride frozen chair lifts to the top of lifts in the morning and shovel snow to get the operations safe. It is not fun sitting on a frozen chair over the big span of KT22 and have the lift stall at 7:30 am in a blizzard. When the avalanche came down and buried the bottom of another lift we were the ones that skied in and had to dig down 20-30 feet of hard packed snow so the tower could be repaired. At the end of the day we would be the last to leave hill and race down the mountain assisting in the sweeping procedures. Looking back I would describe us as being strong and tough. We desired to ski at a pace and on terrain that challenged our abilities.

Steve went on to be a regional manager for a major propane company in Nevada and Idaho. Chuck received his PhD. in chemistry working for a major chemical company and later taught in college until retirement. Chuck now teaches skiing at a local ski resort.

Because Alex Cushing, who was credited for helping to bring the Olympics to Squaw Valley, lived in his house just under the Squaw 1 lift we saw him quite frequently. I was always impressed on how well dressed he was in his racing cloths. He had not become a better skier and always skied alone and never seemed very happy. Though Mr. Cushing was seen almost daily he would rarely take the time to talk to his employees. The rumor was that KT22 was named for Mr. Cushing needs to make 22 kick turns to get down, but I never asked him. His children had attended Truckee Elementary in the early years but had moved to another venue after the 1960 Olympics. The Poulsen children attended Tahoe City schools until high school when they attended Tahoe Truckee.

Though the job did sound like work it was also had moments of fun many skiers only dreamed of like being the first, and only, skiers in Siberia Bowl in the early morning sun skiing three abreast in 18 inches of fresh powder from top to the bottom. By this time I had progressed to a new pair of boots and a used pair of Kneissl 215cm skis with the long thong bindings designed to keep the rider firmly attached in the most rugged conditions (purchased from a ski patrol member). I credited Mr. Jones again on teaching me how to fall correctly preventing any major injuries. Though I considered myself a good skier I

was not great like Greg Moore, Lance Poulsen, Larry Lindsey, Patty Kelly, Dick Nielsen, Vikki Jones and the numerous others that attended Tahoe Truckee High School like Olympic metal winner Jimmy Huega, who attended before my time, but was still a high school hero.

After graduating for Tahoe Truckee High School 1965 I work for the California State Park in Squaw Valley before college. This was not the normal state park with campgrounds or picnic area. My job was painting and cleaning the state owned investments left over from the Olympic games. Because winters are so hard on buildings, and these were not designed to ever be permanent, they required a lot of work. It was sad to see how fast the pride of Lake Tahoe was being demolished. Blythe Arena was still used for ice skating and a movie theater was made out of what I believe was the Olympic Center and the Village was used to host large groups events.

### **After Truckee**

In 1968 I married my Sierra College sweetheart Sharleen Simmons from Newcastle. We were then living in San Jose on a very limited budget and because of other pressing commitments we did not continue skiing. Our family was growing having one son while in San Jose and two more after moving to El Dorado County in 1976.

Though I took several years off from skiing until about 1980 when I found myself assigned to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office at South Lake Tahoe in-charge of the search and rescue mission. I needed to purchase new Alpine and Nordic equipment and could not believe the changes. (my new Rossignols were the first new skis I ever had owned). Skis had gotten shorter, bindings were made to be safe and were just step in, the poles no longer had straps but the Alpine boots had become almost impossible to walk in. It took a few days to get my feeling for the hill back but I really enjoyed both types of skiing again, but tried to avoid returning to skiing at a pace and on terrain that challenged my abilities as I did in my younger years.

As a family skiing again became part of our lives. Sharleen and I enjoyed going to North Star on our "get away" days. All our boys learned to both downhill (including snowboarding) and cross country skiing while attending Meyers and then Pollock Pines Elementary schools. I feel I could still get down most advanced hills but not sure how the old body would respond to the falls, even though Mr. Jones had trained me well.

Sharleen taught and retired as a first grade teacher at Charles Brown Elementary in El Dorado after teaching for over 20-years of service. I eventually retired as the Undersheriff of El Dorado County then worked as the Chief of Public Safety and Crime Prevention for the Governor of California and a Senior Management Consultant for Peace Officer Standards and Training in the California Department of Justice. We live in Placerville and in addition to our three sons we have five grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

I cherish my memories and wish I could thank the many people for the full life I have had and the unique opportunities I enjoyed.



Arriving at bottom of hill  
By McGivers pond



Going past Calif. Inspection  
Station on (old) Hwy 40



Arrived at lot on Hwy 40 at Donner Lake (from rear)





Jim Roth

Steve Davis

David Sorani



VIII OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES . CALIFORNIA 1960



Japan



USA



USA



Finland



Pageantry



USSR

