

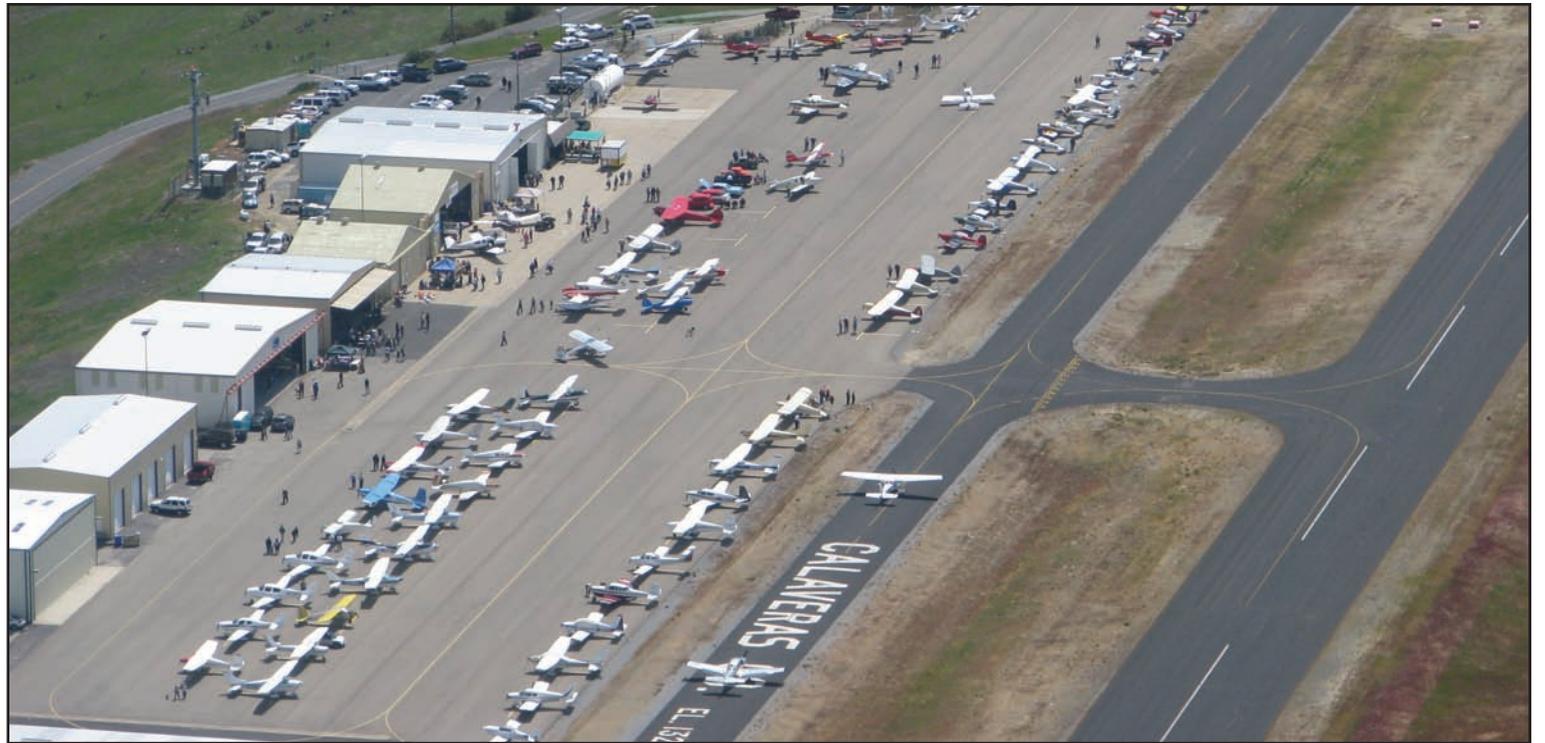
Continued from previous page

help of an area nonprofit that works with kids to help with parking on the hill that leads to the runway. Maybe you'll find a kind soul who will give you a ride to the top.

If you need to know more about the airport, don't miss Kathy's presentation on April 26 at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in San Andreas as the Calaveras County Historical Society welcomes her for its monthly dinner meeting. Kathy will guide you through the flight plans that were the first airstrips in the county through to today's popular Mother Lode refueling stop. A lasagna dinner with cupcakes for dessert adds to the enjoyment. Tickets are \$18 at 754-1058; call now.

From supporting those who need our open minds and pocketbooks to soaring above the foothills, this is some high-altitude fun we're having this weekend.

Reach Mike Taylor at [mtaylor@sierralodestar.com](mailto:mtaylor@sierralodestar.com).



Pilots from all over Northern California visit Calaveras County for the annual fly-in on Saturday.



## Tuolumne Talk

Harmony Wheeler

# Our bear needs a name

That was just one of the stuffed bear's journeys over the past 80 or 90 years.

The friendly neighborhood bear has a long history that Twain Harte resident Winnie Lovine has helped research over the past few months.

"We do know from interviews that the earliest memories of him are in the very early '30s," Lovine said. "He was received by someone who worked for the state agriculture department in Sonora, when its small building was located where the courthouse square is today, along with some other small buildings. The Veteran's Hall building (across from courthouse square today) was built during the Great Depression. The right front room on the first floor in the hall was where they moved the department."

Lovine said people started to bring items to the building to Ruth Anne Newport to keep for the county.

"Mrs. Newport was the first person we know of at that time who received the brown bear in the '30s," Lovine said. "We have no idea who brought in the preserved bear, but it was at that time that he was received there. When the county gave the historical society the old jailhouse to use as a museum and it was renovated for a collection, the bear was brought in and has been in a corner of the jail cell that holds the Carl DeFerrari gun collection all these years. Hopefully paperwork will show up someday to tell us more."

Today, the bear stands in a donated

protective glass box at the Tuolumne County Museum and History Research Center on Bradford Street in Sonora.

"Hopefully this bear renewal will stir up old memories from some of our old timers who may remember coming home from school and stopping at the new Veteran's Memorial Building across from courthouse square to pet our bear and maybe pull a few of the rough hairs from his head," Lovine said.

The museum wishes to create new memories as well. Our pet bear needs a name, and the museum has decided to give third- through sixth-graders the chance to have input on the bear's name, which could be male or female. The actual sex of the bear is unknown. Children can file ballots for the bear's name between now and May 19. A name will be chosen Sept. 19, which is National Museum Day. There are two ballot boxes in Sonora, one at the museum and one in the children's area at the main branch of the Tuolumne County Library on Greenley Road.

Bears play a central yet often unrecognized role in the stories and history of California and the foothills. Our state animal is a bear, and Lovine said she has interviewed several people with stuffed bears and bear stories to tell. She wants to hear more tales, too, and encourages residents to e-mail her at [wmlovine@bigplanet.com](mailto:wmlovine@bigplanet.com) with any more information they might have.

"We want our bear to be an important part of Tuolumne County's his-

tory, like a mascot," she said.

Send your Tuolumne County events to Harmony Wheeler at [hwheeler@sierralodestar.com](mailto:hwheeler@sierralodestar.com) and [mtaylor@sierralodestar.com](mailto:mtaylor@sierralodestar.com).

Courtesy Winnie Lovine

This stuffed bear has been at the Tuolumne County Museum for decades.



My dad gently urged me to wake up. We had just spent the night camping out in our small, red Ford. I didn't care we had no tent; I was in kindergarten, an innocent, carefree child who was about to have the most exciting, exhilarating experience of my young life. Everything seems bigger and better when you're young, so, with its paws on the front of our car, the bear in front of me seemed enormous. Being the humble youngster I was, I, of course, made sure to take a soda can the bear had stepped on to show and tell at school with me so I could brag about it.

I still love telling that story. I'm sure there are those in the foothills area who are used to having trouble with bears getting into garbage cans, but for my kindergarten self, and the child inside me, the thrill of the memory lives on.

I can't imagine what people must have thought when they saw a bear's head looking out of a car window one day – like a dog that loves the wind. It wasn't a live bear, it was a mounted animal that has roamed the county for some time. Bumps in the road were enough to break an arm and send the stuffed bear back to the taxidermist many years ago.

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