

Fall, Fall Go Away



"I CRIED over beautiful things knowing no beautiful thing lasts."
--Carl Sandburg

BY: JEFF LANG

As summer slowly disappears in the rear view mirror, my thoughts drift to my longing for one last BBQ at the lake. Sadly, I must ready myself for fall and dismiss thoughts of sunny days, cookouts and beers.

Autumn is at hand giving way to kids returning to school, trees shedding their foliage and football. The harvest will be at its peak, and California produce will be distributed around the globe. It is a time of thanksgiving and abundance.

Yet fall also hangs over us like a shadow. Winter is not long off. This year I reject the shadow. This summer ends with a celebratory bang, not a whimper. I have vowed to take all I love about summer and roll it into one wild-and-crazy weekend.



A weekend full of camping, BBQs, fun and frolic. Ahhh, to bask in the glow of a sun-drenched afternoon. I defy the oncoming fall, standing tall in my double XL Hawaiian print swim trunks, chanting, "Summer, I will celebrate your greatness! I await your return! Oh! How I despise autumn and its shadow winter."

But where?

I called friends and asked them to join my celebration-without-a-destination. "Where will I go to wave goodbye to summer?" I asked. "What place has everything summer offers-sun, water, food, friends and fun? Surely, no place exists within driving distance of my home."

Through my inquiries, I was informed Angels Camp rents houseboats for just such occasions. Could my celebration of summer's end be just a short click away? With raw determination only a sun-worshiping Aztec warrior could understand, I typed www.houseboats.com into the address bar of my laptop and behold I now had a destination. Having never rented a houseboat, I was struck with how easy it was to navigate the website. All questions were answered; rate, days, hours, boats, clothing. If you have a question about houseboating, they have the answer. Still, renting a houseboat for someone with my limited intellect can be daunting. I called the folks at Houseboats.com explaining that I was on a mission to bring summer to an end with dignity. They informed me that the houseboat was up to the task, for budgets small to large.



Then, I explained that the last vessel I navigated was the inflatable banana beach lounge chair I used while vacationing at Lake Mendocino. They assured me that I could be taught to master the vessel by the crew member assigned to train me.

I glanced at the web page again. The boat was perfect, it had everything. Full kitchen, sleeping for 15, recreation deck, wet bar, sinks, microwave, oven, grill, BBQ, jacuzzi, slides for the kids, (and as it turned out, adults) and two fully operating restrooms with shower. I'm talking EVERYTHING! I made my decision. It's on. Like Daedalus worried about his son, I wondered if renting a houseboat at Angels Camp would melt my financial wings. For an individual, spending \$3000 to \$5000 on a houseboat is a bit spendy. However, when you get a few families together, or 15 of your best friends chipping in, the cost reduces to something right around a day at the Gilroy Garlic Festival and certainly less than a family of four spends for one day at the California State Fair. (I'm still paying off the credit card, cash advance and personal loan I took out to finance that overgrown money pit of a carnival.)

Of course I booked it.

It was magnificent. At the landing, we were met by two bright, efficient members of the staff who stowed our food, gear and necessities on the houseboat. We simply jumped on! I was first-mate and my brother, the skipper, (mostly because it was his credit card.) We were led through the vessel's operating procedures. If Carnival Cruises were run by this group, never would a vessel lose power or be stranded at sea for days.



This crew is efficient and informative. They know their vessels and anticipate our questions. We wandered through the boat fully equipped with large galley, digital television and radio, DVD and a top deck that included a wet bar, Jacuzzi and room to sunbathe. As our group settled in we pushed off and headed to sea, or lake. The fun was just starting. Margaritas and adult beverages flowed generously as we relaxed and worshiped the end of summer. Night soon fell to a beautiful sunset as we

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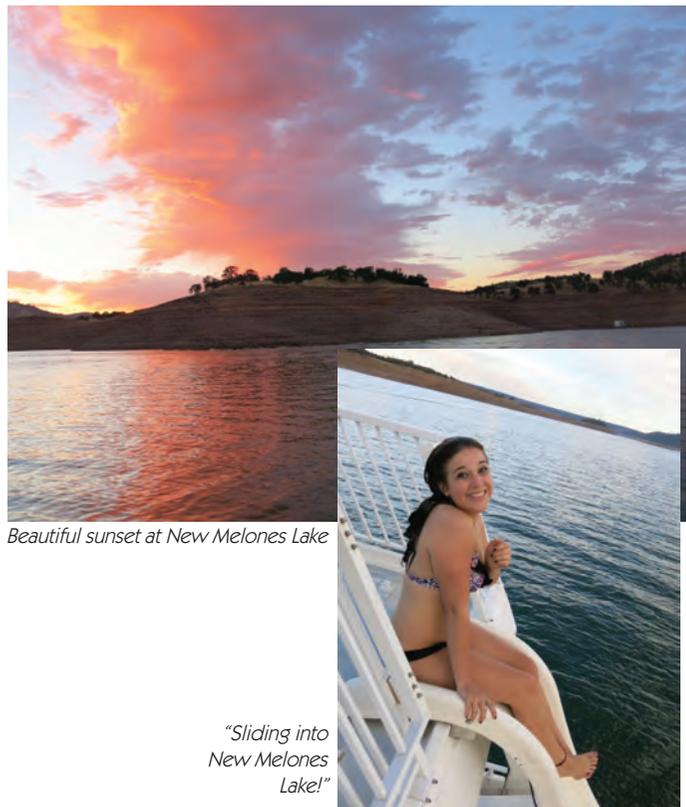
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nestled up to a cozy cove, Tying-off on the shore and tying one on upstairs. The night carried on to a beautiful starlight night. I'd like to say that quiet conversation took place as we drifted off in our awaited cabins. However, boom boxes blared as we howled at the moon, happily saying goodbye to a dear friend, until next year.

The next morning I awoke to the smell of pancakes and bacon. The kitchen was abuzz with bright eyed kids and blurry eyed adults looking forward to splashing in the cool water of New Melones. The weekend moved slowly and we lost track of time. Cell phones worked but after the first night we made a pact to turn them off or sacrifice them to the "mystical lake creatures" that roam at night looking for cellphones to destroy and stress to eliminate.

As we pulled up to shore, the "celebration-of-summers-end" concluded. I wondered why renting a houseboat eluded me for countless summers? As I waved goodbye to the staff who by now were friends I barked with a weathered voice not heard since John Paul Jones sailed the Atlantic, "Till next year my friends, till next year." "Why wait?" Amber Magarell replied. "We have boats available all year!"

All year? Even in autumn? Like William Cullen once said, "autumn, the year's last, loveliest smile."



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

- ACROSS**
- 1 Oppose vigorously
 - 7 Loathsome
 - 10 Little hisser
 - 13 Out-the-door priced
 - 14 Slippery
 - 16 Track figure
 - 17 Film credit
 - 18 Start of a giggle
 - 19 Book illustrations
 - 20 Microbe
 - 21 Julie Andrews title
 - 24 Light-footed
 - 26 Review closely
 - 27 Finished
 - 28 Require (of)
 - 29 Reset, as a pedometer
 - 30 Edible tubes
 - 31 Be enjoyable
 - 33 *Eve's Diary* setting
 - 34 Page of *Juno*
 - 35 Impress deeply
 - 39 Hit the roof
 - 41 Recital piece
 - 42 Customized
 - 45 Truck compartment
 - 47 Play the lead
 - 48 Country-style
 - 49 Explain to
 - 50 Formal wear
 - 51 *Eve's Diary* character
 - 52 Alehouse
 - 53 Academic URL ender
 - 55 Mariachi topper
 - 57 Light-footed
 - 61 In advance of
 - 62 Rubbish of a wreck
 - 63 Airline with an Oslo hub
 - 64 Got a peek at
 - 65 Stockpiles
- DOWN**
- 1 Picnic refuse
 - 2 Undivided
 - 3 Ft. Collins setting
 - 4 Movie commando on a rampage?
 - 5 Skin-care staple
 - 6 Spanish saint
 - 7 Tomato, technically
 - 8 Like crazy
 - 9 Clunker
 - 10 Orator of Caesar's time
 - 11 Opposed
 - 12 Described as
 - 15 Unsweetened stew?
 - 17 Yellowstone ersatz pill?
 - 21 Nod off
 - 22 All fired up
 - 23 Dole (out)
 - 25 "Lamp unto my feet" source
 - 26 Soup morsel
 - 29 Branch of Buddhism
 - 32 Brass part of a Steinway
 - 34 SFO info
 - 36 Baum barker
 - 37 Hammer part
 - 38 Saddle handgrip
 - 40 Slim swimmer
 - 42 Fully understands
 - 43 Author Welty
 - 44 Dumas dueler
 - 46 Mixes smoothly
 - 49 *Presumed Innocent* author
 - 52 Org. that promotes veganism
 - 54 Count carbs
 - 56 XING sites
 - 58 Wintry remark
 - 59 Make stuff up
 - 60 The last of us

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