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FOUNDATION 36 ACQUIRES VENERABLE THUNDERBIRD YACHT Vintage Wooden Vessel To Remain At Historic Lake Tahoe Estate

May 7, 2007, Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Incline Village resident Joan Gibb saves a maritime treasure for her adopted state of Nevada. Through the generosity of Mrs. Gibb and the financial assistance of retired casino gaming executive, Bill Watson, Foundation 36 has acquired Mrs. Gibb's legendary Thunderbird Yacht, formerly owned by the eccentric San Francisco real estate heir, George C. Whittell, and casino magnate Bill Harrah.

Designed by Naval architect John Hacker and built for Whittell by Michigan's Huskin Boatworks, the 55-ft mahogany and stainless steel Thunderbird commuter was launched at Tahoe City in 1940. Hidden inside Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge boathouse, Lake Tahoe's most famous personal watercraft was rarely seen until 1963 when Harrah's Auto Collection acquired her and installed twin 1000-horsepower Allison aircraft engines. After Harrah's death, Holiday Inn dismantled the Sparks, Nevada-based collection and auctioned off the Thunderbird. In recent years, Mrs. Gibb used the yacht to benefit the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society, operator of the George Whittell Thunderbird Lodge National Historic District at Sand Harbor, Lake Tahoe.

"With this acquisition, Mrs. Gibb's lifetime contributions to benefit Thunderbird Lodge amount to several million dollars", says Watson, Manager and Curator of the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society. "Her gifts, with funding from Foundation 36, will ideally permit this Queen-of-the-Lake to cruise Lake Tahoe and reside in the Whittell boathouse for generations to come."

Mrs. Gibb adds, "The prospect of eventually selling the Thunderbird boat to a private collector and having her leave Lake Tahoe wasn't very appealing. Foundation 36 is in the business of saving Nevada's historic treasures. Bill Watson's financial assistance allows Foundation 36 to hold the boat in trust to benefit Nevada and the Thunderbird Lodge Preservation Society while insulating the Society from the very real costs of operating and maintaining a vintage wooden boat of this kind. Our combined multi-million dollar contributions are a nice launch for the Preservation Society's \$10-million capital campaign to save, restore, and preserve Whittell's Thunderbird Lodge and the Yacht."

With support from the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs' State Historic Preservation Office, Foundation 36 will seek a National Historic Landmark designation for both the Thunderbird Yacht and the George C. Whittell Thunderbird Lodge National Historic District. State Historic Preservation Officer Ron James explains, "Both the Lodge and Yacht have national significance with respect to their architecture, the men who built them, and Lake Tahoe's contribution to the nation. They are certainly worthy of the Landmark designation and we are overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement when citizens step forward to save Nevada's vulnerable historic resources."

About Foundation 36. Casino gaming technology pioneer, Bill Watson, created Foundation 36 as a way to give something back to the Silver State that educated him and fostered his professional career. Foundation 36 is a Nevada non-profit corporation having tax exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code. Based at Lake Tahoe, Nevada, Foundation 36 accepts tax deductible contributions to preserve Nevada's historic, cultural, and natural treasures including the Thunderbird Yacht. For more information, please visit www.Foundation36.org or www.ThunderbirdLodge.org.