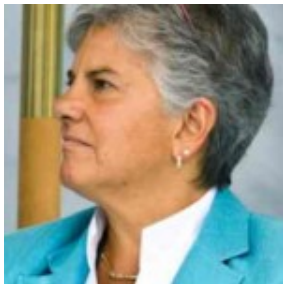


Opinion: Reason to be optimistic about lake clarity

By Joanne Marchetta

UC Davis and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency recently released their yearly water clarity readings for Lake Tahoe. The good news: Mid-lake water clarity improved significantly in 2014, with an average reading of 77.8 feet. That's 7.5 feet greater than the average reading for 2013, and almost 14 feet greater than the 64.1 feet measured in 1997, Lake Tahoe's lowest recorded clarity.

Water clarity averaged 78.7 feet in summer months. That's a yearly increase of 13 feet and the highest summer average recorded since 2002. Average winter clarity improved by about one foot, continuing a pattern of steady improvement since 1997.



Joanne
Marchetta

Mid-lake water clarity is the depth to which a 10-inch white disk, called a Secchi disk, remains visible when lowered below the lake's surface. Clarity readings have been taken at Lake Tahoe each year since 1968, one year before TRPA was created. We have one of the longest continuous records for water clarity anywhere in the world.

Water clarity is an iconic indicator of Lake Tahoe's

environmental wellbeing. Science tells us that clarity is heavily influenced by fine sediment pollution, and that about 70 percent of the sediment washing into Lake Tahoe with stormwater comes from roads and other developed areas. Most of the development around the Tahoe basin was built before stormwater treatment systems were required, or is located on environmentally sensitive land where it would not be allowed today.

Last year's improved clarity readings are yet another sign that our public and private work to reduce stormwater pollution and erosion through the Environmental Improvement Program has successfully halted the long-running decline in water clarity at Lake Tahoe. But they should not be interpreted as a victory in our mandate and collaborative work to restore its famed clarity levels that once measured 100 feet.

Last year's clarity readings were also influenced in part by the severe drought now entering its fourth year. Reduced precipitation means less stormwater and less fine sediment pollution flowing into the Lake, and warm winter weather causes shallow seasonal mixing of the Lake's water, both of which can improve annual clarity readings.

There is reason for optimism about these improved clarity readings. Public and private projects completed over the last two decades to improve water quality and restore sensitive environmental areas such as streams and wetlands are having a positive impact on mid-lake clarity and other key environmental indicators at Lake Tahoe. That success is no small feat for a lake that holds 39 trillion gallons of water and a watershed that takes about 650 years for an average drop of water to flow into the lake and out the Truckee River.

Environmental improvement program projects continue to be implemented around the Lake Tahoe region and incorporated into the area plans local governments and TRPA are designing to

both restore our natural environment and revitalize and improve our communities. They also are being incorporated into the Lake Tahoe Total Maximum Daily Load Program, which requires all local jurisdictions to reduce their fine sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen pollution loads.

Even with this progress, we have not lost sight of other challenges already upon us at Lake Tahoe. Funding to continue the collaborative Environmental Improvement Program is stretched thin and meeting our restoration mandates will stall without new resources. That's why TRPA is working closely with our federal delegation to introduce and pass the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, which would ensure that adequate federal funding remains available to leverage with state and local funding and private investment for continued environmental gain.

The potential long-term impacts of drought and the continued warming of air and water temperatures also pose new questions for the future. While we're moving in a positive direction on mid-lake clarity, we remain concerned about the shoreline's nearshore waters which are fouled with increased algae growth, reduced water quality, and the spread of aquatic invasive species. TRPA remains strongly committed to leading the collaborative partnership in the Tahoe basin to tackle these challenges head on and we thank you for working with us for the benefit of the lake and our communities.

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

Time to enroll in LTUSD kindergarten for fall

To be eligible for enrollment in kindergarten in Lake Tahoe Unified School District a child must be 5 on or before Sept. 1, 2015. If your child will be 5 after Sept. 1, 2015, or before Dec. 2, 2015, he or she qualifies for transitional kindergarten, a two-year kindergarten program located at Tahoe Valley Elementary School.

Registration for fall is May 4-8.

California law requires that:

1. You bring child's birth certificate.
2. You bring proof of immunizations, which includes the Varicella (chicken pox), hepatitis B and for most children the last booster shot. Children will not be enrolled in school without presenting an up-to-date immunization record.
3. Your child has a health examination upon entry to school.
4. Your child has an oral health examination upon entry to school (dental examinations that have occurred in the last 12 months meet this requirement).
5. You bring proof of California residency.

Call your neighborhood school to schedule an appointment:

Bijou Community School 530.543.2337; Sierra House Elementary 530.543.2327; Tahoe Valley Elementary 530.543.2350.

Amgen bike race to impact vehicle travel

Motorists can expect delays May 8-9 when riders in the Amgen Tour of California make their way around Lake Tahoe.

Cyclists will start and finish at Heavenly Mountain Resort. Partial road closures and delays will affect drivers from approximately 11 a.m. through noon.

Fourteen of the top women's cycling teams from around the world will take part in the Amgen Tour of California Women's Race Title, which takes place in three stages. The Lake Tahoe Road Race is the first stage. Stage 2 will take place in and around Heavenly, and the third in Sacramento.

Cyclists will travel clockwise around Lake Tahoe May 8, entering Tahoma at approximately 12:01pm. They are expected to reach Tahoe City at 12:23; Kings Beach at 12:45; crossing through Stateline in Crystal Bay at 12:50; Highway 28 at 1:04; and Highway 50 at 1:29pm.

Travelers should expect 20-minute delays along the course.

WHS, DCSD remain at odds about priorities

By Kathryn Reed

Whittell High School parents, teachers and staff spent months coming up with ideas about how the district could improve the 7-12 school. The top priority was to keep the integrity of the

middle school and high school concepts despite the grade levels being under one roof.

This was the promise several years ago when the three lake schools were consolidated into two.

This week that promise was officially dissolved. The Douglas County School District board on April 14 agreed with the recommendations presented by Superintendent Lisa Noonan. (Board member Tom Moore was absent.)

No additional staff will be hired for WHS. To deal with an incoming seventh-grade class of more than 40 students, the committee recommended hiring another teacher. This large class will necessitate another section of classes at this grade level. That in turn will take a teacher or teachers out of high school sections.

WHS has 14 full-time instructors and four part-time. A dozen of them teach at the middle and high school levels.

Currently the enrollment at WHS is:

- 7th grade: 35
- 8th: 32
- 9th: 45
- 10th: 31
- 11th: 30
- 12th: 26.

Stacy Noyes, a parent on the committee, told the board the decision is not equitable, that the electeds are not doing their job and that the students deserve better than what they are getting.

Principal Crespin Esquivel is caught in the middle of trying

to please his boss, the board, staff, parents and students.

Even before Tuesday's meeting he knew he was not going to have the luxury of more staff. He created the 2015-16 master schedule with that in mind. But what will be new is that all students will be on the same bell schedule. This means little kids changing classes at the same times the big kids are. They've always done so separately.

Esquivel was able to keep the lunch periods separate between the middle and high schoolers.

"My obligation is to do what's best for the kids," Esquivel told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He said he is open to new ideas, to being creative. To do so, though, takes the blessing of the district and possibly the state. Esquivel would like the board and district personnel to come to his Zephyr Cove school next year to see how difficult it is to put a master schedule together. He's made the offer, but doubts he'll have any takers.

To make things work, economics and speech will no longer be offered as standalone classes. And grade levels will have to be combined for some sections with teachers asked to essentially teach two classes in one period.

With Whittell being so small, it is hard at times to offer electives beyond graduation requirements, let alone what colleges are looking for. Parents often plot a student's four-year trek starting freshman year to ensure the proper credits are attained because not everything is offered every year.

Noonan said she is doing the best she can. With the Legislature still in session, funding for the next school year has not been solidified. This is why she won't advocate for more staff at Whittell.

"We have a lot of needs and they have price tags and I don't

have additional recourses coming in at this time,” Noonan told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s hard to see people sad and frustrated.”

But it’s not like the district has suspended all additional spending. The board this week approved the use of short-term substitutes to be used when the gifted and talented teacher is out. (Board member Robbe Lehmann’s child is in this program.)

Other action taken in response to the committee include:

- Creating a memorandum of understanding with Lake Tahoe Unified School District so students in each district could cross the state line. Noonan said a draft has been created, but she has yet to meet with LTUSD officials. The goal is to finalize it by August, with implementation for the 2016-17 school year.
- An online AP computer science course will be offered in the fall. A teacher spearheaded this.
- Dual credits between high school and community colleges are an issue being contemplated by the Legislature.

Noonan said there is a possibility for more changes down the road if funding becomes available. She said the document serves as a blueprint for WHS and will be used like a strategic plan.

Wife guilty in death of ex-LTBMU chief

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

PLACERVILLE — Colleen Harris insisted the shotgun death of her

husband was a horrible event shrouded by the “gray fog” of traumatic memory loss.

In less than two hours, a Placerville jury Wednesday returned a verdict that was crystal clear: The 73-year-old grandmother was guilty of first-degree murder for gunning down her third husband, Robert Edward “Bob” Harris, 72.

The Placerville land surveyor, known to extended family as “Grandma Cokie,” dropped her head and put her hand over her face. She cried as she tried to shield herself from the lenses of photographers in the courtroom.

The jury rejected lesser charges of second-degree murder, manslaughter and involuntary manslaughter. As a result, Colleen Harris stands to receive a punishment of 50 years to life for first-degree murder with a firearm when she is sentenced June 5.

Read the whole story

California wildlife officials setting up checkpoint

California Department of Fish and Wildlife officials will be conducting a wildlife checkpoint operation in the Eastern Sierra in late April to promote safety, education and compliance with laws and regulations.

CDFW wildlife officers will be conducting the inspection on westbound Highway 108, north of Bridgeport, on April 27 from 8am-4pm, weather permitting.

The wildlife checkpoint is being conducted to protect and conserve fish and wildlife, and to encourage safety and sportsmanship by promoting voluntary compliance with laws, rules and regulations through education, preventative patrol and enforcement.

All anglers and hunters will be required to stop and submit to an inspection. CDFW officers will also be providing informative literature about the invasive quagga mussel and New Zealand mudsnail.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Douglas County Manager Jim Nichols has been invited to attend the State Administration of Foreign Expert Affairs in Shenzhen, China, where he will have the chance to meet with numerous Chinese officials, business leaders and dignitaries. He is paying for the trip.
- Douglas County dispatch recently achieved its accreditation for emergency medical dispatch from the International Academy of Emergency Dispatch. Douglas County 911 is the first all-risk center in Nevada to achieve accreditation for medical dispatch.
- Truckee officials approved a new look and name for the town's transit – Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit.
- On May 2 from 1-pm and 2:30-3:30pm is Young Chautauqua at Nevada State Museum, 600 N. Carson St., Carson City. Young performers will bring historical characters to life: meet Osa Johnson, Robert Baden-Powell, John Muir, Amelia Earhart, Anne Frank, and Coco Chanel. Cost is \$8 for adults; free for museum

members and ages 17 and under.

CalPERS contributions to rise more than 9%

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

CalPERS is about to raise pension contribution rates again, this time by more than 9 percent, a move that will cost state government and local school districts nearly \$600 million.

The increases are the latest step by CalPERS to gradually shore up its finances. In early 2014, CalPERS said it would embark on a series of significant rate hikes, and on Tuesday the pension fund's finance and administration committee recommended higher rates for the upcoming fiscal year.

While CalPERS is continuing to deal with the lingering effects of the 2008 crash in the financial markets, it pinned the latest rate hike primarily on growth in government payrolls and recent demographic assumptions that show retirees living longer.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Why I quit high

school football

By Rian Bosse

I wore football pads, real pads, like the pros wear, for the first time when I was 12 years old, walking out onto the practice field at the start of my seventh-grade season, moms and dads cheering the entire team on before we ran our first wind sprint. I felt so much anticipation before heading out on to that field. I made sure the foam guards fit snug around my knees and thighs and that the contraption wrapped around my shoulders and chest wouldn't give. I saw the world through a facemask when I put my helmet on, something I'd only experienced through toy helmets up to that point in my life.

All I could think about was how I had waited my whole life for this. I could feel the glory of doing something big, making some catch or tackle in a varsity game in the years to come. I had no idea that I'd be done with football only four years later, that I'd leave the game by my own choice before I finished high school. I quit organized ball my sophomore year without giving any reasons to my coaches or ever really coming up with one for myself.

It wasn't until the weeks leading up to my graduation from college in 2012 that I found my reason, something I think I knew all along. One of my favorite players, one of the most energetic and enthusiastic linebackers of all time, Junior Seau, was found dead after taking his own life. It sparked a national conversation about the physical toll the game takes on players, especially on professional players who dedicate years to what is potentially killing them. For me, it was a realization of how much I hated the pain everyone experiences playing. Of course, Seau experienced a lot more pain than I ever did. Tests revealed he suffered from CTE, a type of chronic brain damage that was later found in many other players, most likely caused by repetitive hits to the head.

But I was finally honest with myself. I quit playing football all those years before because I was afraid of getting hurt. I couldn't tell anyone at the time, including myself, because of the stigma against quitters, against those who couldn't take the pain required to play, especially in the conservative part of rural Minnesota where I grew up. There's so much ritual, so much rite of passage associated with playing junior high and high school football, that quitting is almost akin to leaving a cult.

With how important football is to my family, I remained a loyal fan of both my college and professional teams, but I never played another down. In a family ingrained with football culture that is especially difficult. My father loves to tell stories about the game. From watching his favorite team, the Browns, as a kid growing up in Ohio to attending some of the greatest games in the Orange Bowl when he moved to South Florida as an adult. Even more, he loves telling stories from his days playing.

My older brother, who also quit before he finished high school, likes to talk about the time he broke the leg of the coach's son in a tackling drill during a summer practice his final season. Though he's in his thirties now, I can see whenever he tells it that the story still carries a sense of achievement for him.

These two men taught me the game, my father who threw me routes in our back yard, who told me to always come down with the ball whenever it was thrown too high, even if it meant a terrifying hit from a defender. And my brother, who chased me all through the house, picked me up, and threw me down wherever he could, always trying to hit me hardest so I'd be ready for the real thing someday.

Yet I have no football stories to tell, at least no stories of personal glory, no big games that I helped win or hard hits I put on other players. The only memories I really have of the

game are times I felt terrible pain, times I really questioned why I even played at all.

The first time was eighth grade, in a game we lost by some large margin, which was how most of our games turned out. I ran with the ball toward the sideline when an opposing player dove and caught my shoulder pads at the back just below the neck, what's known as a "horse collar" tackle. My full sprint stopped immediately, shoulder pads pulled up to my throat, the full weight of the player cutting off the air in my windpipe.

When I popped up in front of my coach, gasping for air, eyes already watering from the sudden pain, he knew immediately that I wanted to sit out the next few plays.

Frustrated by the score, maybe misreading how hurt I actually was, he yelled, "Fine! Get on the bench!"

I walked over, gasping, trying to breathe through thick mucus that had suddenly formed in my throat, what I thought was blood. I started to cry. To this day, I can't remember if I played again in that game. I do remember an odd wheeze in my throat for a week or so after.

Still, I pressed on for two more years, that dream of playing in a big game taking me back to the first practice each summer, until another incident when I was a player on the junior varsity. It happened during tackling drills we ran as a team with the older juniors and seniors. In one line was the offense that, one by one, picked up a ball and sprinted over three tackling dummies before trying to avoid a single defender on the other end. The defense, in the other line, took turns popping up off their backs after the whistle, trying to tackle the guy coming at them with the ball.

Somehow I paired up with one of the biggest defensive seniors on the team. He was, I remember, always a nice enough guy outside of football, but turned agitated and mean with the excitement of the drill. After the coach blew the whistle, I

only made it to the last dummy. Trying to take the last step over, I caught this senior's shoulder pad in mid air just above the chest. My helmet popped half off, the chin guard caught on my throat. The world went black for a second and, once I staggered to my feet, I "saw stars" for the first time in my life. Head ringing, I stumbled back to the end of the line. For what it's worth, the coach complimented my bravery getting back up.

A year later, I tried to forget the whole thing as I sat at home alone while another round of summer practices started a new season. I never wanted to feel pain like that again.

Reflecting on this aspect of my past after Seau's death and the national discussion on head trauma that followed made me realize that I am part of the last generation to play football before its serious injuries, especially head injuries, were ever a consideration. Between 2010 and 2012, years that coincide with what many consider to be the "concussion crisis" in the NFL, participation in the youth football program Pop Warner dropped 9.5 percent, according to ESPN. I graduated high school in 2007. As someone who really does love the game, it's difficult to see the number of young players entering high school drop across the country. It's even more difficult to know I was one of them.

But if the game is going to survive, it's important to realize that people like me do have stories to tell, just not the ones of glory and triumph. It's not to make accommodations for weaker players, but to realize the game's dangerous potential and make changes to an ultra-competitive culture that desperately needs it.

I don't think you can ever make football entirely safe. I don't think you ever need to. But a game isn't enjoyable when it becomes something more than a game, especially something that leaves so much destruction and defeat behind.

Rian Bosse is a graduate student at Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism. He no longer plays the game, but he enjoys watching and rooting on the Minnesota Vikings. He wrote this for Zocalo Public Square.

Lawyer for Placerville grandmother calls husband's killing an accident

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

The murder defense of Placerville grandmother Colleen Harris came down today to a drop of blood and a terrible accident.

"I'd like to talk to you about a drop of blood," defense lawyer David Weiner began as laid out his closing argument that Colleen, 73, is not guilty of the brutal shotgun slaying of her husband, Robert Edward "Bob" Harris, 72, in their rustic home on Wilderness Court.

That drop of blood was found on the hand of Bob Harris in a gruesome crime scene in which the retired U.S. Forest Service supervisor was found dead in his marital bed Jan. 5, 2013 from a shotgun blast that violently exploded out his face.

Arguing that his client didn't kill her husband, Weiner said the blood on Bob Harris' hand underscored the defense's argument that Bob was holding the shotgun and that blood spattered on his hand as it went off.

The prosecution has argued that Colleen Harris, a Placerville land surveyor known to extended family as “Grandma Cokie,” killed her husband in an act of premediated murder because she believed he had just made a phone call to his extramarital lover.

Read the whole story