

Historical characters of the North Shore

By Pat Dillon, Moonshine Ink

The early years of the white man's exploration and settlement of the Tahoe Basin provided many examples of eccentric characters. The more famous of these, such as Mark Twain and Pretty Boy Floyd, have been well-documented. I'm intrigued, however, by a lesser-known character from our neighborhood.

James Stewart – alias James McLaughlin – was well known as a timber faller in the late 1800s. It was said he could take down two trees in the time it took lesser men to fall one. He was also known to be a hot-tempered gunslinger when drinking – which he often did.

On Oct. 27, 1874, he mounted his horse at his camp at Lonely Gulch near Rubicon Peak and rode for Tahoe City to quench his thirst. Tying his horse in front of the Grand Central Hotel where Commons Beach is today, he stomped down to the Custom House bar on the wharf. Barkeep Fred A. Scott was serving a few happy regulars, but the bar became quiet at Stewart's entrance and most patrons wandered back up to the Grand Central where they might drink in peace.

Read the whole story

Open house at South Lake

Tahoe warm room

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless will host an open house on Feb. 15 from 4-6pm at the seasonal winter shelter at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd. in South Lake Tahoe.

The event will honor South Tahoe's faith community for their participation and support of TCH's operations over the past three years.

The coalition is also giving special recognition to faith leaders and organizations who have been deeply involved in the organization. These leaders include the Rev. Hillary Bittman from Unity at the Lake, the Rev. Robert C. Kelley from Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Mauricio Hurtado of St. Theresa Catholic Church, and Rabbi Evon Yakar from Temple Bat Yam. These organizations have partnered with Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless to raise funds, collect supplies, provide volunteers, promote awareness, and support operations of the Warm Room.

Additionally, an anonymous donor is offering a matching grant of up to \$1,000 for the month of February.

Guests of the open house are encouraged to bring a blanket for those seeking shelter in the Warm Room this season. Donations such as coffee, tea, sugar, creamer, individually wrapped granola bars, toilet paper, Lysol spray, Clorox wipes, hand warmers, and gift cards to local grocery stores are also needed. Financial contributions may be made **online** or mailed to PO Box 13514, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151.

EDC opening VHR meeting early to gather input

El Dorado County's Feb. 1 meeting on vacation home rentals is now starting at 5:30pm.

The 30-minute change before the Board of Supervisors convene will be an opportunity for people to use colored dots to signify what they believe are the benefits and problems associated with VHRs. Plus, there will be comment areas.

According to county spokeswoman Carla Hass, the dots will give supervisors an indication of what people are thinking before they hear from them.

The public will also have the opportunity to address the electeds about the issue.

The actual board meeting starts at 6pm at Lake Tahoe Airport. VHRs is the only item on the agenda.

Memorial snowshoe at Camp Rich in February

Fresh Tracks 5K Snowshoe Walk and Race – the Eric Nageotte Memorial – will be Feb. 25 at 10am at Camp Richardson.

Tahoe Mountain Milers Running Club is hosting the event. Beneficiaries are Girls On The Run-Sierra and Metastatic Breast Cancer in honor of club member Renee Gorevin and local doctor Kelly Shanahan.

Sign up by Feb. 10 to save \$10. Reserve a pair of snowshoes if you need them or bring your own. Walkers welcome.

Preregistration is \$25, which includes a winter beanie, snowshoe rental if needed, post-race refreshments, and continued day use of groomed Camp Richardson trails. Day of race registration is \$35. Signup **online**.

South Tahoe Action Team members sought

South Tahoe Fire Rescue is accepting applications for the next South Tahoe Action Team.

Classes begin Feb 5, and continue for the next three Mondays. Each of the four sessions starts at 5:30pm at the South Tahoe Fire Rescue Training Center located at 1100 Lyons Ave..

To register for this free class, contact Capt. Kim George at 530.542.6161 or kgeorge@cityofslt.us.

Curriculum will include instruction taught by members of the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department.

STAT team members will be expected to commit their time and will be called upon in times of natural disaster, large scale emergencies and times of need in the South Lake Tahoe area. Due to staffing and equipment limitations, the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department will be reliant on local citizens' abilities to assist in their neighborhoods with basic first aid and triage. STAT team members to be well versed in command structure, emergency first aid, lifting/moving techniques, use of extinguishers, flood safety and building collapse.

Measure R's 'extra' money for fields exhausted

By Kathryn Reed

The \$500,000 that Measure R provided for South Lake Tahoe fields has been spent.

The recreation joint powers authority that oversees the bond was given an update about the status last week. That board is made up of representatives from South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District.

Originally called Measure S when voters passed it in 2000, it was renamed Measure R in 2011. At that time voters agreed to restructure how the money was spent on fields and bike trails. The property tax assessment expires in 2030. (Voters could reauthorize it or it could be rewritten in some manner.)

Field improvements included the play area at Sierra House Elementary School, funds for South Tahoe High School's softball field, and the new field and new T-ball field at Al Tahoe.

Until the measure expires in 12 years, \$50,000 will continue to go toward field maintenance on an annual basis.

"It is designated to go for maintenance of the field and other facilities built with JPA money at LTCC," John Upton told *Lake Tahoe News*. Upton is the lone paid staff member of the JPA. He has overseen Measure S since the get-go, and was instrumental in it evolving into Measure R.

"The money goes to the city, which then transfers it to the consortium, of which the city is a partner. The provision for

the \$50,000 going to the city for that maintenance is part of the original JPA Joint Facilities Agreement,” Upton explained.

The Community Play Consortium was created in the past couple of years, with the city and Lake Tahoe Community College the members. They control the artificial turf field where the college soccer team plays, which was the original community field paid for by Measure S. The two new fields built last year near that site and where SnowGlobe was held the last two years are the other fields under the purview of the consortium.

At this time the consortium is satisfied with the \$50,000 it receives. Representatives can always ask for more, but there is no guarantee it would be forthcoming.

Lauren Thomaselli, who heads the city’s recreation department, told the JPA board that the long-awaited concession stand is finally going to be built. The \$15,000 left over from the restroom facility will be used for the food venue. It will be an addition to the current structure.

Opinion: Re-criminalizing cannabis is not the answer

By Miriam Boeri, The Conversation

In the 1930s, parents across the U.S. were panicked. A new documentary, “Reefer Madness,” suggested that evil marijuana dealers lurked in public schools, waiting to entice their children into a life of crime and degeneracy.

The documentary captured the essence of the anti-marijuana

campaign started by Harry Anslinger, a government employee eager to make a name for himself after Prohibition ended. Anslinger's campaign demonized marijuana as a dangerous drug, playing on the racist attitudes of white Americans in the early 20th century and stoking fears of marijuana as an "assassin of youth."

Over the decades, there's been a general trend toward greater social acceptance of marijuana by a more educated society, seeing the harm caused by the prohibition of marijuana. But then, on Jan. 4, Attorney General Jeff Sessions rescinded an Obama-era memorandum suggesting federal agents should let states regulate control of marijuana and focus their efforts on other drugs.

Re-criminalizing marijuana in light of current research findings, including my own research of more than 15 years, makes Sessions' proposed crackdown on legal marijuana look worse than reefer madness.

Researchers like myself, who regularly talk with people who are actively using hard drugs, know that legal cannabis can actually reduce the harmful effects of other drugs.

Re-criminalizing marijuana is a decision that makes little sense unless we consider the motives. History can shed some light here.

Media mogul William Randolph Hearst supported the criminalization of marijuana, in part because Hearst's paper-producing companies were being replaced by hemp. Likewise, DuPont's investment in nylon was threatened by hemp products.

Anslinger's tactics included racist accusations linking marijuana to Mexican immigrants. His campaign included stories of urban black men who enticed young white women to become sex-crazed and instantly addicted to marijuana.

Anslinger's campaign succeeded beyond his aims. His

fearmongering was based more on fiction than on facts, but it made him head of the Bureau of Narcotics for 30 years. The social construction of cannabis as one of the most dangerous drugs was completed in 1970, when marijuana was classified as a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act, meaning it had high potential for abuse and no acceptable medical use.

Almost 50 years later, the classification remains and Anslinger's views endure among many policymakers and Americans.

Spurious relationships

Today, marijuana critics often cite studies that show a connection between marijuana use and a host of negative outcomes, like use of harder drugs, criminality and lower IQ. Anslinger used the same tactics to incite fear.

But a correlation does not mean a causation. Some of these studies used flawed scientific methods or relied on false assumptions.

One popular myth, which started in Anslinger's campaign and continues today, is that marijuana is a gateway to heroin and other opioids. Despite research dispelling this as a causal connection, opponents of marijuana legalization continue to call marijuana a "gateway drug."

Studies on the brains of long-term marijuana users suggested a link between marijuana use and lower IQ. But later investigation showed that low IQ might actually be caused by smaller orbitofrontal cortices in the brains of children. Children with smaller prefrontal cortices are significantly more likely to start using marijuana early in life than those with larger prefrontal cortices.

One well-designed study that looked at marijuana use and brain development on adolescent twins over 10 years found no measurable link between marijuana use and lower IQ.

In a review of 60 studies on medical marijuana, over 63 percent found positive effects for debilitating diseases – such as multiple sclerosis, bipolar disorder, Parkinson’s disease and pain – while less than 8 percent found negative health effects.

The most harmful effect of criminalizing marijuana may not be its restriction on medical uses, but its devastating cost to American society, which experienced a 500 percent increase in incarceration due to the war on drugs.

The Portugal experiment

The tragedy in this policy is that decriminalizing drugs has shown to lower drug use – not increase it.

In 2000, Portugal had one of the worst drug problems in Europe. Then, in 2001, a new drug policy decriminalized all drugs. Drug control was taken out of the criminal justice system and put under the Ministry of Health.

Five years after Portugal’s decriminalization, drug use by young people was down. Teenagers between the ages of 16 and 18, for example, were 27.6 percent less likely to use drugs. What’s more, the number of people going to treatment went up, while drug-related deaths decreased.

Fifteen years later, Portugal still had lower rates of heroin and cocaine seizures, and lower rates of drug-related deaths, compared to the rest of Europe. Cannabis use in Portugal is now the lowest among all European countries. Moreover, Portugal’s policy change contributed to a reduced number of drug addicts with HIV.

The “Portugal Experiment” shows what happens when we take an honest look at a serious societal drug issue. Taking a tactic used by Anslinger, opponents of marijuana legalization claim it will lead to more use by young people. However, in states that legalized medical marijuana, use by young people did not

increase or even went down. Recent data show that use of marijuana by teens decreased even in states that legalized marijuana for recreational use.

As the U.S. battles an opioid epidemic, states where marijuana is legal have seen fewer deaths from opioid overdose.

More studies are finding medical marijuana patients were using marijuana as a substitute for pain pills. After a medical marijuana law was passed, use of prescription medication for which marijuana could serve as a clinical alternative fell significantly.

Faced with a deadly opioid epidemic, more of the medical establishment is beginning to acknowledge the potential of marijuana as a safer therapy for pain than opioids.

Listening to those who are suffering

In my own field research, I've conducted hundreds of interviews with people who used heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and other really dangerous drugs. Most of them used drugs to address social isolation, and emotional or physical pain, which led to addiction. They often told me that they used marijuana to help them stop using more problematic drugs or to reduce the side effects of withdrawing.

"In a lot of ways, that was my sanity," said a young man who had stopped all drugs but cannabis.

Marijuana became a gateway out of heroin, cocaine, crack and other more deadly drugs.

While the Institute of Medicine released a report in 1999 suggesting the development of medically useful cannabinoid-based drugs, the American Medical Association has largely ignored or dismissed subsequent studies on the benefits of cannabis.

Today, in many states, people can use marijuana to treat

illnesses and pain, reduce withdrawal symptoms, and combat cravings for more addictive drugs. They can also choose to use cannabis oil or a variety of healthier ways than smoking for consuming cannabis. This freedom may be jeopardized by a return to criminal marijuana.

Worse than ‘Reefer Madness’

Almost a century after Anslinger’s campaign, “Reefer Madness” is mocked in the media for its flagrant propaganda, and Anslinger’s influence on drug policy is shown as an example of government corruption. The ignorance and naiveté of “Reefer Madness” is seen as a bygone era.

So we have to ask, what kind of people want to re-criminalize cannabis today? What are their motives? Who profits from continuing to incarcerate people for using marijuana? Whose power will be diminished when a drug that has so many health benefits is provided without a prescription?

Miriam Boeri is an associate professor of sociology at Bentley University.

What might explain the unhappiness epidemic?

By Jean Twenge, The Conversation

We’d all like to be a little happier.

The problem is that much of what determines happiness is outside of our control. Some of us are genetically predisposed to see the world through rose-colored glasses, while others have a generally negative outlook. Bad things happen, to us

and in the world. People can be unkind, and jobs can be tedious.

But we do have some control over how we spend our leisure time. That's one reason why it's worth asking which leisure time activities are linked to happiness, and which aren't.

In a new analysis of 1 million U.S. teens, my co-authors and I looked at how teens were spending their free time and which activities correlated with happiness, and which didn't.

We wanted to see if changes in the way teens spend their free time might partially explain a startling drop in teens' happiness after 2012 – and perhaps the decline in adults' happiness since 2000 as well.

A possible culprit emerges

In our study, we analyzed data from a nationally representative survey of eighth-, 10th- and 12th-graders that's been conducted annually since 1991.

Every year, teens are asked about their general happiness, in addition to how they spend their time. We found that teens who spent more time seeing their friends in person, exercising, playing sports, attending religious services, reading or even doing homework were happier. However, teens who spent more time on the internet, playing computer games, on social media, texting, using video chat or watching TV were less happy.

In other words, every activity that didn't involve a screen was linked to more happiness, and every activity that involved a screen was linked to less happiness. The differences were considerable: Teens who spent more than five hours a day online were twice as likely to be unhappy as those who spent less than an hour a day.

Of course, it might be that unhappy people seek out screen activities. However, a growing number of studies show that

most of the causation goes from screen use to unhappiness, not the other way around.

In one experiment, people who were randomly assigned to give up Facebook for a week ended that time happier, less lonely and less depressed than those who continued to use Facebook. In another study, young adults required to give up Facebook for their jobs were happier than those who kept their accounts. In addition, several longitudinal studies show that screen time leads to unhappiness but unhappiness doesn't lead to more screen time.

If you wanted to give advice based on this research, it would be very simple: Put down your phone or tablet and go do something – just about anything – else.

It's not just teens

These links between happiness and time use are worrying news, as the current generation of teens (whom I call "iGen" in my book of the same name) spends more time with screens than any previous generation. Time spent online doubled between 2006 and 2016, and 82 percent of 12th-graders now use social media every day (up from 51 percent in 2008).

Sure enough, teens' happiness suddenly plummeted after 2012 (the year when the majority of Americans owned smartphones). So did teens' self-esteem and their satisfaction with their lives, especially their satisfaction with their friends, the amount of fun they were having, and their lives as a whole. These declines in well-being mirror other studies finding sharp increases in mental health issues among iGen, including in depressive symptoms, major depression, self-harm and suicide. Especially compared to the optimistic and almost relentlessly positive millennials, iGen is markedly less self-assured, and more are depressed.

A similar trend might be occurring for adults: My co-authors and I previously found that adults over age 30 were less happy

than they were 15 years ago, and that adults were having sex less frequently. There may be many reasons for these trends, but adults are also spending more time with screens than they used to. That might mean less face-to-face time with other people, including with their sexual partners. The result: less sex and less happiness.

Although both teen and adult happiness dropped during the years of high unemployment amid the Great Recession (2008-2010), happiness didn't rebound in the years after 2012 when the economy was doing progressively better. Instead, happiness continued to decline as the economy improved, making it unlikely that economic cycles were to blame for lower happiness after 2012.

Growing income inequality could play a role, especially for adults. But if so, one would expect that happiness would have been dropping continuously since the 1980s, when income inequality began to grow. Instead, happiness began to decline around 2000 for adults and around 2012 for teens. Nevertheless, it's possible that concerns about the job market and income inequality reached a tipping point in the early 2000s.

Somewhat surprisingly, we found that teens who didn't use digital media at all were actually a little less happy than those who used digital media a little bit (less than an hour a day). Happiness was then steadily lower with more hours of use. Thus, the happiest teens were those who used digital media, but for a limited amount of time.

The answer, then, is not to give up technology entirely. Instead, the solution is a familiar adage: everything in moderation. Use your phone for all the cool things it's good for. And then set it down and go do something else.

You might be happier for it.

Jean Twenge is a professor of psychology at San Diego State

Calif. proposing changes to CEQA guidelines

The California Natural Resources Agency is proposing to update guidelines for implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including new regulations that will streamline review of projects that are designed to improve air quality and public health.

Public comment on the proposal is due by 5pm March 15.

Proposed changes to the CEQA guidelines address nearly every step in the environmental review process to improve efficiency and better protect natural resources. The regulations align CEQA rules with other state environmental policies and goals, including reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

For more info, go **online**.

Thunder Valley bets \$56M in upgrades to beat competition

By Mark Glover, Sacramento Bee

Thunder Valley Casino Resort on Friday showed off \$56 million in upgrades and additions to its hotel and casino, a massive

effort to retain long-time visitors, attract high rollers from all corners of the nation and get a leg up on future competition.

On Friday, resort officials took media members on a hard-hat tour of the ongoing construction efforts in the casino area. That included a new 25,000-square-foot, smoke-free poker room and bingo hall, plus a planned expansion of the current poker room to new a high-limit slots area.

Officials also confirmed completion of the previously announced effort to finish three floors of its 17-story hotel, adding 111 rooms to the property.

California Indian casinos have long had an impact on Tahoe and Reno establishments.

Read the whole story