

2 art workshops in Meyers in January

Bona Fide Books in Meyers has two events coming up this month.

The first is the Correspondence Club on Jan. 8 at 6pm. The focus will be mail art, creating correspondence using everyday items. This art form is an artistic movement centered on sending small scale works, interesting/fun inclusions, and unique mailings through the postal office. Cost is \$10.

Book Arts is Jan. 16 at 5:45pm. Coco Foy will be offering the cross-structure bookmaking/binding class using an upcycled beer box. Supplies needed: mat knife, awl, bone folder, needle, straight edge ruler, beer six pack box or cover cardstock, text paper, and linen thread. If you don't have these, there will be some available. Cost is \$10.

Bona Fide is at 1069 Magua St, No. 4, Meyers.

Traffic fatalities decline in Nevada in 2017

Preliminary data shows that 303 traffic fatalities occurred on Nevada roads in 2017, down from approximately 330 deaths the previous year.

The decline in traffic fatalities marks the first time since 2013 that traffic fatalities were less than the previous year in Nevada. Total year-end traffic deaths could be adjusted based on ongoing traffic crash investigations.

While overall traffic fatalities declined, the number of pedestrian deaths jumped from 80 in 2016 to 99 in 2017. Bicyclist deaths also rose; from six in 2016 to nine in 2017.

NDOT dedicates approximately \$10 million every year to pedestrian safety projects on state roads.

To help save lives, traffic safety partners across the state utilize focused strategies in six emphasis areas: pedestrian, intersection, seatbelt and motorcycle safety, as well as reducing impaired driving and limiting lane departure crashes by focusing on distracted driving.

Through the Nevada Department of Public Safety Joining Forces program's heightened enforcement campaigns, Nevada law enforcement officers in 2017 issued approximately 73,000 citations to help reduce impaired, unbuckled, distracted or otherwise unsafe driving.

Landscape, fire vegetation grants available in Nev.

The Nevada Division of Forestry is soliciting pre-proposals for two competitive grant program areas – landscape scale restoration and state fire assistance.

Nevada's urban and rural ecosystems are continuously threatened by invasions of non-native species, vegetation diseases, development disturbances, unsustainable management, and destructive natural events such as floods and wildfires.

This funding opportunity is made available through the USDA Forest Service, which enables cooperators to identify needs

and apply for funding. Funds may be used to implement restoration treatments that improve or restore urban/rural forests, rangelands, water resources, riparian areas, and wildlife habitat. Projects that mitigate extreme wildfire behavior, noxious weed infestations, and negative ecosystem impacts are also eligible.

For more information on landscape scale restoration grants, contact Heather Giger at 775.684.2552 or hdgiger@forestry.nv.gov. For more information on hazardous fuels grants, contact Ryan Shane at 775.684.2511 or rshane@forestry.nv.gov.

Where do those snowfall totals come from?

By Bill Syrett, The Conversation

The Blue Hill Observatory, a few miles south of Boston, recorded the deepest snow cover in its 130-year history a couple of years ago, an incredible 46 inches. In February 2015, Bangor, Maine tied its record for deepest snow at 53 inches. Mountainous locations will sometimes see triple-digit snow depths.

Impressive numbers for sure, but assuming you have a measuring stick long enough to reach the ground beneath all the white, really, how hard can it be to measure? You stick a ruler or yardstick into the snow and get a number, right? Well, not so fast. It's a little more complicated than you might think to get those oh-so-important snow totals for winter storms.

Since 1890, the National Weather Service has relied on a

network of volunteer observers, all strictly adhering to the NWS guidelines, to come up with snow measurement numbers over a region. There are over 8,700 cooperative observers across the country who send in their weather data to the NWS daily, some who have done it for over 75 years!

Snow measurement is inherently inexact, but attention to one's surroundings and sticking to the guidelines help those of us who do it on a regular basis stay consistent – and with long-term weather records, consistency is arguably just as important as accuracy.

First, we do need to differentiate between snow depth and snow fall.

How deep is your snow

Snow depth should be a measure of the average depth in a given location and its immediate surroundings. It's usually rounded to the nearest whole number. To get a representative number, you need a site with minimal drifting (not always easy to find) and several measurements should be averaged to get a final number. I like 10 because it makes the math easy.

Careful measurement is vital so we can make reasonable estimates for the amount of liquid contained in the snowpack. As hard as it is to believe at times, the snow will eventually melt, and rapid melting could cause problems with flooding. Also, hydrologists' models to predict water levels critically depend upon good initial data collection (though improved satellite data has helped reduce their reliance on any individual measurement).

Snow depth is like the sum of individual snowfalls, if one assumes no sublimation – snow turning into water vapor – or melting from the first snowfall until the present day. That assumption would almost always be wrong, of course, but if we suspend reality for a moment, the depth will still never exceed the sum of all snowfalls because snow is compressible.

So, two 10.5-inch snowfalls may only accumulate to a depth of 17 inches. It's the compressibility of snow that causes the greatest consternation and controversy with snowfall measurement.

How much snow did a storm bring

Snowfall is the amount of snow that accumulates during a given time, usually a 24-hour period. In a perfect world this 24-hour period would end at midnight, but the vast majority of National Weather Service cooperative observers take their daily observation in the morning.

To properly measure snowfall, you need a level and flat surface. As with snow depth, measuring snowfall should be unaffected by drifting. The National Weather Service suggests the use of a snowboard, which is a white surface that will absorb very little sunlight and stay close to the ambient air temperature, but any "cold" surface will do. Keeping in mind that consistency is critical, the goal here is to make a measurement that is representative of the surrounding area and consistent with others making snowfall measurements.

More complicated cases...

So, let's consider three common scenarios. Here in the East, we often have to deal with snow that changes to rain during the course of a storm. Imagine 6.0 inches of snow falls, then an inch of sleet which compacts the snow to a 4-inch depth. Then, on top of that we have an inch of freezing rain which further compacts the snow to 2.6-inch depth by the end of the observation period. What should be listed as the daily snowfall? The snow depth?

In this situation, when the snow transitions to sleet, the snowboard should be cleared and the maximum depth of snow recorded, which is 6 inches in this case. Do the same with the sleet and this will add an inch to the snowfall (technically, "solid precipitation") total. Freezing rain is never added to

the daily snowfall total because it is in liquid form when it reaches the ground. Thus, the daily snowfall is 7.0 inches (measured to the nearest tenth of an inch) while the snow depth at observation is rounded to 3 inches.

In the case where, say, three heavy snow showers occur one afternoon, each dumping 1.5 inches before melting completely, the daily snowfall would be 4.5 inches with an observed depth of zero at the daily observation time. This assumes an observer is there to measure each short-lived accumulation. But because most observers are volunteers that's not always the case, unfortunately.

Finally, we come to the controversy. Let's assume a steady snow falls for the entire 24-hour period at a rate of 2.0 inches per hour. If the snow board were cleared every hour, the daily snowfall would be 48.0 inches. But what if the observer could only be there at the daily observation time? By then the snow will have compacted some, depending upon the temperature and the amount of liquid in the snow, which can vary between about a quarter inch and three inches of liquid water for every 10" of snow.

This observer would log significantly less snowfall – for the exact same event – than the person who cleared the board every hour. This is a problem. The National Weather Service addresses it by mandating that no more than four snowfall measurements should be made in any 24-hour period. Ideally then, an observer who went to the snowboard every six hours and cleared 10.5 inches, 9.3 inches, 11.5 inches and 10.8 inches would get the officially correct snowfall measurement of 42.1 inches.

Several years ago, an observer in New York measured 77.0 inches of snow in a 24-hour period, which would have broken the record for heaviest one-day snowfall in U.S. history. However, it was determined that he cleared the snowboard much too frequently, thus inflating the daily total and

invalidating the record.

Intrigue, suspense, mystery, controversy! So much more than just sticking a ruler in the snow. If it all sounds like a daily dose of meteorological fun to you, maybe you've got what it takes to volunteer for the NWS's Cooperative Observer program, where it's not all about the white stuff. Daily high and low temperatures and precipitation of all forms are also measured, to strict NWS standards, of course.

Bill Syrett is a senior lecturer in meteorology and manager of the Joel N. Myers Weather Center, Pennsylvania State University.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency's Advisory Planning Commission will have a public hearing on the Meyers Area Plan on Jan. 10. The meeting begins at 9:30am at TRPA's office in Stateline. TRPA's Regional Plan Implementation Committee will have a public hearing on the plan Jan. 24 at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach. TRPA's Governing Board will consider adoption of the Meyers Area Plan at the Feb. 28 meeting in Stateline.

- Registration opens Jan. 16 for the Tahoe Rim Trail Association's youth backcountry camps. Go **online** for more info.

- Tahoe Donner General Manager Robb Etnyre has been elected to serve on the California Association of Community Managers' board of directors for a second consecutive term.

- Douglas County Public Library in Minden will be closed

Jan. 15 in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

- Check out this video from El Dorado County District Vern Pierson about crime prevention at an early age.

Washoe County, TRPA change permitting process

Washoe County and the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency are working to streamline project permitting for their customers.

People working on projects in the Washoe County portion of the Tahoe basin must now submit requests directly to TRPA planners.

Washoe County will continue to issue building permits and to provide the standard project review required under International Building Codes. Washoe County and TRPA are working together on this permitting transition.

Starting this month TRPA will make a planner available one day a week at Washoe County's Incline Community Center to accept and review project applications for conformance with TRPA regulations that apply to residential additions and modifications, new construction of single-family and multi-family residential structures, commercial projects, and qualified-exempt residential activities.

Project applications submitted to Washoe County prior to Dec. 5, 2017, will go through the process with Washoe County handling the review and will not have an interruption in their approval process. TRPA permit reviews are done on a first-come, first-served basis.

Questions about TRPA permit applications and regulations can be directed to Aly Borawski at 775.589.5229 or aborawski@trpa.org.

Poison at Truckee golf course nearly kills family pet

By Linda Fine Conaboy

Late fall was an unfortunate time for Bob, a Bernese Mountain dog. He didn't know that big danger prowled as he cavorted near the golf course close to his family's home at Schaffer's Mill in Truckee. Bob was less than a year old when he happened upon, and ingested, zinc phosphide, a poison so lethal that it requires multiple permits just to have it in possession.

It's generally used to kill rodents—that's what Schaffer's Mill Golf Course had in mind. Like many other golf courses, its use is just business as usual to get rid of varmints who burrow and plow the greens pursuing for food and making homes for themselves.

Bob is a well-loved member of the Daniel family. According to Bob's master, Mike Daniel, on this fateful day early in November, Bob picked up a scent and was off in search of something known only to him. Along the way, he found and ingested the poison, and the rest of the story has become an all too familiar saga in the war against burrowing pests. Bob became seriously ill, hovering near death for several days.



Two months after ingesting poison, Bob is still on the mend.
Photo/Mike Daniel

When Daniel realized how sick Bob was, he started a **GoFundMe account** to help defray the nearly \$12,000 it would take to nurse Bob back to health. As it turns out, to date, close to \$3,500 has been donated for Bob's cause.

According to Daniel's GoFundMe page, Bob was treated by internal specialists, receiving plasma infusions and untold numbers of additional medications. At one point, as the family prepared for the worst, Bob started to improve, ever so slightly and miraculously was able to go home. He's now known as Bionic Bob by the veterinarians who treated him.

In mid-December, Daniel told Lake Tahoe News that Bob was doing well at home, although he continues to need additional lab work. "He drained my entire back account," Daniel reported. "The bills are still going up, not to mention the travel costs." He added that to his knowledge, at least one other dog was harmed, not to mention that many wild animals may also have ingested the poison.

"Our main goal is to stop Schaffer's Mill Golf Course from

using this pesticide. It's apparent that other animals are eating it," he said, in reference to pictures of tracks leading to and from the site of the scattered pesticide pellets on the ground.

"We live in a place that is extremely environmentally conscious and to be using this stuff that is potentially harming our wildlife is not good. The wildlife in the area don't deserve this all in the name of gophers," Daniel said.

At Lake Tahoe and Truckee, not much golf is played this time of year, but winter's cold doesn't keep pesky critters, like voles and gophers, from going about their daily lives. It's just that when the ground is covered with snow, no one really knows what they're up to.

Whether it's your lawn, someone else's lawn or a golf course, when the snow melts, the evidence presents itself—vole trails of freshly milled earth loop around the grass looking like a drunken waiter dribbling hot chocolate on his way to the kitchen—and then there's the gopher holes, not to mention those fuzzy creatures called marmots scurrying around always on the prowl in search of their next ration of chow.

The internet is fraught with vendors offering traps, poison and bait to ward off these pests; judging from the plethora of ads, lawn owners need not suffer holey or roughed-up lawns; there are a multitude of ways to get rid of the culprits.

But in the case of Schaffer's Mill, the poison of choice is highly lethal and not selective in who or what it may kill.



The poison used for rodents at the Truckee golf course. Photo/Mike Daniel

According to Joshua Huntsinger, Placer County agricultural commissioner, his office is responsible for the regulation and the use of poisons such as zinc phosphide, an inorganic compound that combines phosphorous with zinc and is used for rodent bait.

The National Pesticide Information Center states that when an animal eats the substance, the acid in the animal's stomach turns it into phosphine, a highly toxic gas. The phosphine then crosses into the body's cells and stops the cells from producing energy, causing them to die. It affects all cells, but targets specifically those in the heart, lungs and liver.

It's been used in the U.S. for rodent bait since 1947 and is made to ensure that it will attract pests such as gophers, ground squirrels and field mice.

Some of the signs of zinc phosphide poisoning include headache, dizziness, vomiting, difficulty breathing as well as potential liver and kidney failure, convulsions and delirium. It affects animals the same way it does humans.

Because it is a highly toxic substance California closely regulates it.

"Schaffer's Mill has a restricted materials permit,"

Huntsinger told Lake Tahoe News, adding that in addition to the permit, two other restrictions on users are in place: 1) the materials must be used by a certified pesticide applicator, or be supervised by a certified applicator, and 2) prior to application, the permit holder must file a notice of intent.

"It's site specific and permits are evaluated for appropriateness," said Huntsinger. "If it's a spray, we would check the weather and maybe disallow it."

In addition, the methodology on the label must be strictly followed, the application rate is carefully spelled out and should a carcass be discovered, it must be quickly disposed of to eliminate spread of the poison.

In general, Huntsinger said, standards of care—was it applied in a careful and specific manner under proper conditions to avoid contamination—are stringently enforced.

"This can't be used if persons, animals or property may be damaged," he said. "An applicator shall not make or continue application if there is a reasonable possibility of non-targeted animals [being harmed]."

Huntsinger said he's aware of the complaint that was made and that his office is investigating whether a dog was actually harmed. "We need to satisfy all aspects," he said.

"Did a violation really occur? Maybe the golf course did everything right. Maybe the dog's owner was negligent. If there is a complaint about affected wildlife, we would investigate it. In this case, wildlife could have been involved."

Fast forward to late December, at the investigation's conclusion when Huntsinger contacted Lake Tahoe News to deliver the outcome of the investigation.

It was concluded, he said, that although Schaffer's Mill does have the necessary permit in hand and does have a certified person to apply the poison, they failed to file a notice of intent in a timely manner.

In addition, "It (zinc phosphide) was lying on the surface and it was ingested by one or two dogs. The question is, did Schaffer's Mill follow the rules and the label? Were there violations of the California law and regulations?"

Of the outcome of the investigation, Huntsinger said his office was unable to evaluate the pesticide for appropriateness or weather conditions. "In general, with restricted material, wind is not an issue. We're more worried about secondary poisoning. Is there a carnivore in danger?"

He added that the investigation concluded that the applicator complied with the label instructions at the rate of 1 teaspoon per burrow, placed inside the burrow and covered up.

"Rodents evidently pushed some of the bait on to the surface, but the golf course did monitor for dead rodents and bait on the surface. They did comply with the label's directions," Huntsinger said.

It was concluded that although dogs are prohibited on the golf course, Schaffer's Mill failed to enforce the prohibition. "The golf course knows dogs walk on the golf cart path. In this case, the dog was off leash, which is illegal in Placer County, and it strayed to an area where it shouldn't have been. Even though the golf course made an effort to do due diligence, it was the dog owner's negligence," Huntsinger said. "The bottom line in the case revealed one violation of the California Code of Regulations. But the larger issue is that the golf course appears not to be at fault. They did take specific steps to keep the bait out of the reach of dogs.

"We take it seriously when people don't comply. Our typical response is to issue administrative civil penalties when

violations of this nature are documented.”

As of today, no judgment has been issued; however, Huntsinger said his agency is required to take action.

“Although we haven’t issued anything yet, typically, this is a Class B violation carrying a fine of between \$250 and \$1,000. It may be many months before anything is actually resolved, even though action will be taken against Schaffer’s Mill,” Huntsinger said.

Repeated calls to Schaffer’s Mill have gone unheeded, although Lake Tahoe News spoke with Brent Haygarth, the organization’s general manager, who said he would prepare a statement for Lake Tahoe News addressing the situation.

No statement has been forthcoming.

There are several questions that come to mind regarding the future use of zinc phosphide—mainly, will Schaffer’s Mill continue to use the stuff? Do they feel a responsibility for the injured animals and do they worry about other wild creatures that may have also been harmed or killed?

According to Daniel, both Lahontan Golf Course and Martis Camp Golf Course have suspended use of the substance, but calls to course managers to verify this have not been returned.

Opinion: Bad legal advice costing EDC taxpayers

By Larry Weitzman

As to where the county continues to bury its head, you can

decide for yourself as the El Dorado Superior Court issued its final ruling on the \$33 million plus case of Austin v. El Dorado County, et al.

I previously wrote that a tentative ruling was issued by the court on Oct. 20 that denied the demurrer of El Dorado County, et al, claiming that the plaintiff's lawsuit was barred by the statute of limitations, saying that the Austin complaint wasn't timely filed. The court scheduled oral argument for Dec. 1, allowing the defendants, EDC, et al, another chance to make their case. The hearing lasted for about 1 hour and 40 minutes with the defendants monopolizing most of that time pleading their case, even giving the court 10 reasons why the SOL should apply and submitting new cases. Plaintiff said none of these arguments apply.



Larry Weitzman

On Dec. 11, the court issued its final ruling writing, "After careful review of the moving and opposing papers and further consideration of the arguments of the parties following oral argument, the court adopts its tentative ruling as the final ruling on the submitted matter."

In plain language the court said EDC, et al, lost and SOL is no defense. The court did sustain a minor part of the demurrer to join some developers in the suit, which is perfunctory matter.

The bottom line is that the county and the rest of the defendants have no defense. There is no such thing as substantial compliance, which you may hear about from county

counsel. This case is based on the statutory requirement of the county, et al, filing five-year Nexus studies which among other items need to "demonstrate" a clear and continuing need for the subject fees charged builders. The law says if you don't file the studies timely, the county, et al., must issue immediate refunds of all unexpended MFA fees including TIM fees, park fees and fire fees. The county has already ceded to refund the sheriff's substation fees.

The amount of unexpended fees at the time of the lawsuit was about \$33 million and for an additional year EDC continued collecting fees illegally which could amount to an additional \$10 million to \$20 million. It could even be worse in that money spent after the five-year filing date which is approximately July 2011 must also be refunded as it was illegally spent as the county's obligation to refund occurred one day after the five-year Nexus study due date. The county could be on the hook for an amount far in excess of the \$33 million prayer of the original Austin complaint, perhaps an amount in excess of \$50 million. Making matters worse is EDC now has no defense as there are official county documents in which the county admits to the failure to follow the statutory provisions of the Mitigation Fee Act.

In February 2015, I stood in front of the entire Board of Supervisors and told them in plain language that this was going to happen and explained the MFA to them. I looked my own supervisor, Mike Ranalli, in the eye and told him he is sitting on a ticking time bomb. He obviously did nothing and made no inquiry or investigation, for if he did, the Austin Case would have likely never happened. The board now, not liking being told things they don't want to hear or being placed in the public record decided to limit speakers' and the time they can talk by a new board edict against the First Amendment. Ranalli spoke in favor of limiting speech in front of the board and voted for the new edict.

In March 2015 I wrote a column on the MFA time bomb facing the

county and again in October 2015, explaining the Walker decision which is now the law regarding the MFA, the failure to file Nexus studies, the mandatory requirement of making refunds to the owners of properties upon which those fees were paid and the impact it will have on the county. Supervisors who showed up at the Monday morning El Dorado County Taxpayers Association breakfast meeting also heard this from me repeatedly. It's not like that can plead ignorance. Maybe they can plead stupidity, incompetence and negligence, but not ignorance. The buck stops with them, only they won't be liable for the tens of millions of dollars, you and I will. And Ranalli wants you to rehire him with your vote? First Ranalli must make the decision to rehire or fire county counsel, Mike Ciccozzi. It will make your decision to rehire Ranalli even easier.

On Nov. 9, I sent a question to county counsel asking for comments on the tentative ruling issued (which became the final ruling) to which he stated: "We are pleased that the court sustained our demurrer, though we disagree with portions of the court's tentative ruling. We look forward to the oral argument on Dec. 1."

Notice no comment to the fatal loss on the SOL issue. In a second request for a comment on the loss on the SOL issue, Ciccozzi did not respond.

The county has incurred an estimated \$300,000 in outside legal fees alone (county legal time has yet to be determined) so far on a failed defense and plans to spend hundreds of thousand dollars more in the briefing stage of the case of which they have no credible defense. With respect to the outside legal fees to date, I recently sent to following inquiry to the county's public information officer and received this response:

Carla, how much money has been spent (paid) to date on the Austin v. EDC litigation?

Sincerely, Larry

What's the angle of the column you're writing, and when might we expect to see it (in either the Lake Tahoe News or Mountain Democrat)?

Regards, Carla

What is EDC hiding? More important what is Ranalli and Novasel hiding? The response speaks for itself and considering the response, can you say, "no transparency in EDC." So much for the good governance manual on which EDC just spent tens of thousands of dollars. The county policy is "delayed justice is a victory" as when the final judgment comes down, neither the county counsel nor any of the board members will still be in office, leaving the mess for someone else to take the blame. County counsel, I am sure, keeps telling the board that they will win on appeal. One has to wonder about the amount of his lifetime retirement? Every outside lawyer who has looked at this case has said the county has no chance which makes the chance on appeal slim and none. County counsel must know this, yet he tells the board something else, something they want to hear, the board hoping against hope that it's not a lie. But it is.

So how does that help the county. It doesn't. It will cost the county millions of additional dollars, throwing good money after bad money in legal fees, while the legal rate of interest adds to the eventual full judgement and then there is no chance of a lesser settlement.

As I have written before, the county needs to get an independent legal opinion, not an opinion from someone who is buried so deep in his bad advice that another opinion could cause his immediate termination and certainly a non-renewal of his contract which is up for renewal in a few months. As you can clearly see, Ciccozzi can't let an independent opinion happen, the risk to him is too great, however the risk to the

residents of this county for it not to happen (getting a truly independent case evaluation) and to who county counsel owes a fiduciary obligation is far greater. County counsel cares much more about himself, his paycheck and retirement than the people he works for.

The EDC Board of Supervisors has been advised of this clear conflict time and time again. Two members are up for re-election, Ranalli and Sue Novasel. If they fail to act in the best interests of the county, which at a minimum is the hiring of an independent counsel and an evaluation of this matter, they are not doing their job which is to represent the best interests of their respective constituents and not the interests of themselves.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Sobering truth for those without pensions

By Peter Whoriskey, Washington Post

TULSA, Okla. — Tom Coomer has retired twice: once when he was 65, and then several years ago. Each time he realized that with just a Social Security check, “You can hardly make it these days.”

So here he is at 79, working full time at Walmart. During each eight-hour shift, he stands at the store entrance greeting customers, telling a joke and fetching a “buggy.” Or he is stationed at the exit, checking receipts and the shoppers that trip the theft alarm.

The way major U.S. companies provide for retiring workers has been shifting for about three decades, with more dropping traditional pensions every year. The first full generation of workers to retire since this turn offers a sobering preview of a labor force more and more dependent on their own savings for retirement.

Read the whole story

Wild horse advocates urge Nev. to undo giveaway plan

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Wild horse advocates want Nevada to reverse a decision they say puts free range horses between Reno and Carson City in grave danger.

More than a dozen gathered in front of the state capitol building Wednesday to call on Gov. Brian Sandoval to intervene.

Protestors want the state to reverse a decision by the Nevada Board of Agriculture to relinquish ownership of an estimated 3,000 horses roaming the Virginia Range.

Read the whole story