Opinion: A Cheech Thanksgiving

By Joe Mathews

This week, California should give thanks for Cheech.

Richard Anthony Marin deserves our gratitude not just because his new autobiography, “Cheech Is Not My Real Name … But Don’t Call Me Chong,” is the best California book of the year. Or because he provides hope that short, bald men still can be stars.



Joe Mathews

The biggest reason to thank Cheech now is that his life embodies Thanksgiving itself: a big, robust meal that includes many different flavors but is ultimately for everyone. This California entertainer reminds us, happily, that our state’s cultural mainstream is so much more interesting and inclusive than we acknowledge.

Indeed, Cheech is evidence of a California paradox: To stay in the mainstream here, it helps to start as an outsider. And Cheech is most often identified as a “cult” figure—one-half of the stoner comedy team, Cheech and Chong, that made the 1978 film “Up in Smoke.” But his career has been much bigger and more mainstream than that.

Indeed, the dirty secret of Cheech’s life, as he tells it, is

just how much of a square he's been. Marin was a middle-class kid who spent his early years in African-American South Central Los Angeles. His father was an LAPD officer; his mother was president of the PTA. But by his teens, the family had relocated to a white neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley.

Racially and ethnically, he was an outsider in both places, so he fit in as much as he could. The future stoner actor-musician-writer-comedian was a Cub Scout, a Boy Scout, an altar boy, and "a little wiseass who got straight A's" first at Catholic schools and later at San Fernando Valley State College (now Cal State Northridge). He even worked in the signature L.A. industry—aerospace—during college, manufacturing airplane galleys at Nordskog.

The book's signature moment—recounted by Cheech as the Apostle Paul might have recalled his trip to Damascus—is when he smoked marijuana for the first time, and found that the allegedly mind-rotting substance expanded his perspective. He thought: "What else have they been lying about?"

And with that, he discovered art, awakened politically, dodged the draft, met Tommy Chong and began playing shows all over the world. The rest is California history. He bought a house in Malibu, and even practiced transcendental meditation, as taught by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Cheech proudly identifies as Chicano and Latino, but sees his heritage as bridge, not niche. The glory of being Latino, in his telling, is that you are part of a diverse demographic that contains multitudes. "My face has some kind of international malleability to it. Add your own preferences or prejudice to it, and I could be anything," he writes.

But narrow-minded Hollywood types couldn't see his natural breadth at first. Marin countered by writing his own material, most successfully in the 1987 film "Born in East L.A." The

movie is quintessential Cheech—a comedy framing the Mexican-American story as fundamentally American, and demonstrating the absurdities of putting people in boxes.

Marin's other strategy was to find roles in the most middle-of-the-road TV and movie productions and make them his own. He did a spin-off of the "Golden Girls," and co-starred with Don Johnson on the middlebrow but high-ratings police procedural "Nash Bridges," set and filmed in San Francisco. While living there, he appeared in the premiere of a Sam Shepard play, "The Late Henry Moss", at San Francisco's Theatre On The Square. And he turned himself into a regular voice in the animated films of Emeryville-based Pixar films, most notably as Ramone in the "Cars" films.

Marin is unapologetic about mainstream success. His book includes an entire chapter on how he became champion of "Celebrity Jeopardy." By his account, his old partner, Tommy Chong, foundered because he was not willing to evolve to reach audiences.

Marin has made news more recently as a noted collector of Chicano art. The city of Riverside wants to turn over its main library for the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry. Marin, ever mainstream, emphasizes that, "Chicano art is American art."

Despite his cult status, it's hard to call Cheech countercultural now. The man who performed his most recent marriage, Antonio Villaraigosa, is a leading candidate for California governor. In January, recreational marijuana will become legal in his home state.

Now that Cheech is an institution, maybe it's time to honor him as one. Perhaps California could create its own version of Mt. Rushmore; the natural place would be the Granite Mountains, in the Mojave Desert.

There would be many great candidates for this pantheon. But

why not start by carving the old stoner in stone?

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Arthritis likely to follow torn ligaments

By Ginga Kolata, New York Times

When Jason Lalli tore his left anterior cruciate ligament at age 26, he thought he would be fine as soon as he had his knee repaired. As a soccer player who competed through college and then on recreational teams, he knew that A.C.L. injuries could be debilitating but also that orthopedists could fix them.

He figured that he would miss a season, but that he could play and coach the game he loved for the rest of his life.

Four years later, his knee began to ache, and the pain became more constant over time, nagging almost “like a toothache,” he said. Within about another year, Lalli’s doctor did more work on the knee and gave him bad news: He had arthritis.

Orthopedists have believed for years that torn tendons or ligaments put patients, no matter how young, at risk for arthritis. But quantifying the long-term risk has been difficult because most orthopedic patients are not studied for extended periods after their injuries.

Read the whole story

Sandoval hopes next guv protects education investment

By Noah Glick, KUNR

As Nevada’s gubernatorial race begins to heat up, current Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval says he hopes one key piece of his legacy remains intact for the next administration.

Sandoval says he wants to hear what all the candidates have to say, but there’s one specific issue on his mind.

“Obviously, I’m going to be very protective of particularly my education package and what we did to invest in education, to reform education and to fund education,” he said. “And anything that takes away from any of those would be a great concern to me.”

Read the whole story

Tips to make holiday shopping a safe activity

With Black Friday just days away and the holiday season here, the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office offers 12 Tips of Holiday Safety to help people stay focused on personal safety.

Be careful not to get so caught up in the shopping frenzy that you lose awareness of your surroundings. If you see suspicious

activity in your neighborhood or while out shopping, report it to law enforcement or store security.

In the spirit of Black Friday week, here are an additional 12 tips focused on holiday shopping:

- Avoid shopping alone; there is added safety when shopping with a companion.
- Always lock vehicles and keep valuables out of sight, preferably in the trunk or locked compartment.
- Before sunrise and after sunset, park and walk in well-lighted areas.
- Stay alert to your surroundings. Take time to look around for possible suspicious persons, vehicles, and/or situations.
- When in crowded places, be alert for potential thieves. Don’t overload yourself with packages.
- Maintain visibility and mobility to avoid potential threats.
- Be wary of unsolicited phone calls. The holiday season is notorious for con-artists who use this “season of giving” to take advantage of your kindness.
- When possible, avoid carrying large amounts of cash and valuables, and avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- When using the new “chip” credit cards, make sure they have not been left in the card reader before leaving the checkout counter.
- Keep close track of all personal belongings and never leave them unattended.
- Keep a record of all your credit card numbers in a secure place at home.
- When shopping with children, keep a close eye on them at all times. Consider coaching them to go to a store clerk or security guard if they become separated and be sure they know their first and last name so they can advise someone who they are. Give children a contact phone number that they can carry on their person in case they

do become lost.

SLT mayor highlights staff accomplishments



Mayor Austin Sass on Nov. 21 talks to department heads during a break. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It was a bit of a grade-school level civics lesson for those who sat through the South Lake Tahoe mayor's address on Tuesday.

It was not about laying a path for the future. It wasn't about what the council has done in his one year holding the gavel. It wasn't about how the electeds' policy decisions have come

to fruition – good or bad; or lessons learned; or any vision.

Then again, Austin Sass on Nov. 21 said his address was not going to be like others. “It’s not really a state of the city.” And his talk lived up to that introduction.

Normally, the mayor takes the opportunity of his or her last full council meeting to tout what has happened in the last year, with a bit of a nod to what lies ahead. Sass altered that tradition.

Another noticeable difference was the room was not packed as it has been in years past for the annual mayor’s address.

Instead, Sass launched into how the most important part of the city is the nearly 200 employees. But in an odd twist he did not speak of the accomplishments of the city manager or city attorney. Those are the only two employees the City Council has any say over. The council hires and fires, disciplines, and give raises to those two employees.

And those two had to have had accomplishments in order for Sass to bestow praise on the department heads.

Two other workers not mentioned were the city clerk and treasurer, and the latter was in the audience. Maybe it’s because they are both elected officials and Sass doesn’t see them as integral to the operation of the city.

Sass’ address was more like that of a boss praising his employees, but these individuals are not his employees.

There is not a single employee the council has any control over other than the city manager and city attorney. In fact, the protocol in City Code is that council members are not allowed to give direction directly to staff outside the city manager or city attorney.

During his talk, Sass walked around to where each department head was sitting. He patted most on the shoulder as he stood

over them. He introduced them and then he listed their accomplishments.

Some accomplishments of the city department include:

· Growing the city’s social media presence;

· Champions Plaza;

· Responding to more than 3,200 fire incidents in 2017;

· Increased training for firefighters;

· 24,097 airport operations; the highest it’s been since 1992;

· 395 arrests by police officers this year;

· 8,029 miles of roads plowed;

· 1,153 potholes filled;

· Community ball fields built;

· Debt refinancing saves $1 million annually;

· 1,372 building permits issued;

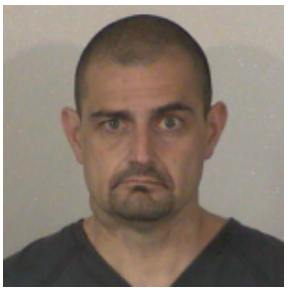
· 7,000 special events in the city;

· 6,400 rounds of golf at Bijou.

At the end of the speech, the audience was left with how much work the various departments do but no sense of what the council does. Sass seemed to paint a picture for how effective and efficient a city manager led government works, what great leaders there are among staff, while reducing the role of the electeds to essentially being figure heads.

At the Dec. 12 council meeting the five electeds will choose among themselves who will be the next mayor and mayor pro tem.

SLT man arrested in Carson Valley on drug charges



Patrick MacRoberts



Clinton Neely

A South Lake Tahoe man was arrested in Gardnerville on a slew of drug charges.

Douglas County deputies stopped a vehicle on Nov. 19 at 7:37pm for alleged traffic violations. The car matched one that was called in that evening as being suspicious by the reporting party.

The passenger, Patrick MacRoberts, 45, from South Lake Tahoe was arrested on two warrants. He also was charged with trafficking in cocaine (more than 4 grams), trafficking in methamphetamine (more than 4 grams), possession of heroin, and

possession of drug paraphernalia. MacRoberts was on probation in El Dorado County.

The driver, Clinton Neely, 34, of Gardnerville was arrested on charges of trafficking in methamphetamine (more than 28 grams), possession of a hypodermic needle, possession of drug paraphernalia, driving without tail lights and no driver's license in possession.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Opinion: Giving thanks to sugar pine lovers

By Maria Mircheva

In the time of Thanksgiving, we at the Sugar Pine Foundation are thinking of the people and organizations that have made our work possible. We are especially thankful to the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation and Patagonia, our first funders, but also to all our partners and volunteers.

Twelve years ago, the Sugar Pine Foundation was just an idea. The idea was that sugar pines are beautiful trees that are under threat and we need to do whatever we can to preserve them. Sugar pines have the striking, long pine cones that people use to make holiday decorations.

All white pines in the Tahoe basin – sugar pine, western white pine and white bark pine – have important ecological roles to provide food and shelter to birds and animals, and contribute to forest diversity and resilience. Unfortunately, there is a nonnative invasive fungus, called white pine blister rust that

infects all white pines. This fungus has been in the area for the last 20 years. Land managers have agreed that the most effective restoration strategy is to find seed trees that are naturally resistant to the fungus and plant their progeny.

That was the idea behind starting the Sugar Pine Foundation. At first it was just a couple of guys in the forest shooting a sling shot to get pine cones from healthy sugar pines. They were lucky that the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation board decided that this was a worthwhile effort and funded the search for blister rust resistant sugar pine trees. Since then, the Sugar Pine Foundation has flourished into a full blown small nonprofit that plants 10,000 sugar pines a year with the help of 700 volunteers.

Today, the Sugar Pine Foundation has three part-time staff and a six-person board of directors. The Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, through the Nature Fund, Martis Fund, Tahoe Donner Fund, Wiesner Fund and a few other funds has contributed more than $100,000 to our efforts. Various other organizations, including Patagonia, American Forests, Tree Cycler, Arbor Foundation, National Forest Foundation, Rose Foundation, Tahoe Mountain Resorts Foundation, Truckee Tahoe Airport District and Bently Foundation have made significant contributions as well.

This year marks the planting of our 100,000 tree. To find planting sites, we partner with all the land-managing agencies in Tahoe – the U.S. Forest Service, California and Nevada state parks, California Tahoe Conservancy, Truckee Donner Land Trust, Tahoe Donner Forestry, Vail Resorts and various other public and private landowners. Our planting sites are often fire scars, but also areas where the forest was mechanically or hand thinned.

Countless local schoolchildren and community volunteers have helped us plant seedlings and we would like to thank all of them – students from North and South Tahoe middle schools,

Tahoe Expedition Academy, Sierra Expeditionary School, Forest Charter School, Lake Tahoe Community College, Sierra Nevada College, University of Nevada, SOS Outreach, Tahoe Turning Point, Girls and Boy Scouts, all Rotary clubs, Patagonia, Vail, Southwest Gas, Bently, Nevada Energy, Hyatt, Starbucks, Hard Rock and Harrah's and Harveys employees, and everyone else.

There are a lot of challenges to our forests these days. Years of fire suppression have left the forests too dense and have heightened the risks of wildfires, drought and pathogen mortality. A bark beetle epidemic took place in the southern and central Sierra last year. Sugar pines were hit hard by mountain pine beetle in North Tahoe. Mistletoe is widespread on Jeffrey pines on the East Shore. Fir engraver beetle and root rot are damaging white firs on the West Shore. The warming weather is exacerbating fires, drought and bark beetle outbreaks. Nonnative invasive species are taking a toll on the ecosystem especially when other disturbances are present. As beneficiaries of clean water, beauty, shade, and other ecosystem benefits of the forest, we have a responsibility to manage our forests and keep them healthy. Reforestation is a part of that effort: it benefits both forest and ecosystem health, and helps decrease carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Thanks to all our supporters for being a part of it!

Maria Mircheva is executive director of the Sugar Pine Foundation.

Dems see opportunity in a

strongly GOP Tahoe district

By Chris Megerian, Los Angeles Times

Regina Bateson was at home trying to get her young children to fall asleep before they realized Donald Trump would be their next president. Jessica Morse was volunteering in an empty office in Colorado surrounded by the wreckage of Hillary Clinton’s failed campaign. Roza Calderon felt like she was living through a nightmare as she watched the results roll in with a friend.

None of these three women, all Democrats, had run for office before. Now they’re all vying to unseat Rep. Tom McClintock, a conservative Republican who hasn’t faced serious opposition from their party since winning his seat almost a decade ago.

The campaign could prove to be a test of just how far Democrats can reach outside their political comfort zone during next year’s midterm elections. Republicans have a 15-point voter registration advantage here. Trump won by more than 14 points.

Read the whole story

Time to shop for Live Violence Free clients

The Adopt A Child Christmas Tree is decorated with wish list items from more than 150 Live Violence Free family members.

People have until Dec. 11 to pick a child to buy gifts for.

All gifts must be delivered to LVF no later than Dec. 15.

All children’s gifts are to be unwrapped. Adult gifts may be wrapped. Suggested amount spent on a gift is $50.

Live Violence Free is at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

For more info, call 530.544.2118, ext. 7640.

Thanksgiving can be a dangerous time in the kitchen



By Bart Chambers

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and fire injuries and Thanksgiving Day is one of the peak days for home cooking fires.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 1,760 home cooking fires on Thanksgiving in 2015. Unattended cooking was the leading contributing factor in cooking fires and fire deaths.

No matter how many years you've been cooking or how many Thanksgiving feasts you've served, you always need to make safety your main ingredient.

Follow these tips for a fire safe kitchen and home during the holidays

- Check smoke alarms to ensure they are functioning properly by using the test button.

- Never leave food that is cooking unattended and use a timer.

- Have a safe cooking area. Clear items away from the stove area that can catch fire. Position pot handles so that they can’t be bumped or knocked over.

- Be prepared. Keep a large pan lid or baking sheet handy to smother pan fires. Have a properly functioning fire extinguisher and know how to use it.

- Stay alert. If smoke or grease starts to boil in a pan, turn the burner off.

- Keep the floor area clear to prevent tripping.

- Wear short sleeves or roll sleeves up while cooking. Don’t lean over burners. Use potholders and oven mitts to handle hot cookware.

- Keep children at least three feet away from the stove.

- Keep knives and other potentially dangerous objects out of the reach of children and secure appliance cords so they do not dangle from counters.

Deep-frying a turkey has many fire safety risks. Do not attempt to fry a frozen or partially frozen turkey as they will cause oil to splatter which can start a fire. Do not overfill the fryer with oil. Use a fryer with thermostat controls to manage the oil temperature. The fryer should be placed on a flat surface that cannot burn and is positioned away from anything that can catch fire. Keep children and pets clear of the fryer and have a responsible adult attend to the fryer while it is in use.

Bart Chambers is the Nevada fire marshal.