California skiers hit slopes in September

By Brennan Lagasse, San Francisco Chronicle

In the the last week of summer in California, I went skiing. Twice, actually. And to be honest, it was pretty good.

Both sessions were off Carson Pass near Kirkwood, and the conditions were a nod to last season's monster winter. For those with a mind to join the turns-all-year club, the Golden State hasn't had it this good in several years. Believe it or not, Mt. Shasta, Mt. Lassen, and resorts throughout the Sierra Nevada all have various panels, patches, and bowls that are still very skiable.

Since there are so many prime summer activities in the Sierra, it's fair to ask why someone might choose to go skiing in September. I think most people who do it would simply say, "Because we can."

Read the whole story

Seat belts save lives – even firefighters'

By Kathryn Reed

Maybe if seat belts had been mandatory in the 1960s a 29-year-old Lake Valley firefighter would not have died.

The July 9, 1964, *Tahoe Daily Tribune* had a story about Larry

Stewart who was a passenger in a pumper tanker driven by James Stephens. They were on their way to a fire at Camp Richardson. The engine went around a corner, the driver tried to avoid a car pulled off to the side, the ladders on the side of the engine were snagged on trees, and Stephens lost control. The fire truck ran into a tree.

The story says, “California Highway Patrolmen reaching the scene found Stewart pinned in the wreckage and Stephens standing nearby trying to give help.”

Stewart died and was buried at Happy Homestead Cemetery. Stephens survived with minor injuries.

When asked about the incident, current Lake Valley spokeswoman Kileigh Labrado said only one person was in the fire engine. Asked what the findings from the investigation were – she didn’t respond. Asked if there were seat belts in the engines then – more avoidance.

Ask any first responder and they’ll tell you seat belts save lives. It’s cops, firefighters, and paramedics who see the carnage when the safety devices aren’t worn.

In California, the law has been on the books since 1986. A couple of states enacted seat belt laws in 1985, with the last holdout being Maine in 1995. While that is when the law took effect, vehicles had seat belts long before then.

Besides being a state law, a seat belt is a required piece of equipment in the fire industry just like a helmet.

In Burton Clark’s book “I Can’t Save You, But I’ll Die Trying: The American Fire Culture” he has an entire chapter about seat belts.

Lake Valley is keeping pretty mum about the incident in August when a captain fell out of a moving fire engine after taking his seat belt off. The agency said it happened when he was

taking his jacket off and it got hung up on the door lever.

The captain is out on medical leave. The extent of his injuries has not been released, nor is it known if he intends to return to work.

The agency also isn't revealing if any of the three on board will be or have been disciplined. In the fire industry it is the driver's responsibility to ensure everyone has a seat belt on.

As for the California Highway Patrol, they are not assessing blame to the driver.

"This collision was found to be 'other than driver' simply because the driver of the fire truck did not have anything to do with his passenger falling from the truck. The passenger was removing his jacket when part of his uniform caught the handle, opening the door and allowing the passenger to fall out," Officer Ruth Loehr told *Lake Tahoe News*. "No citations were issued. We do not normally write citations from collisions."

The state Occupational Safety and Health Administration is still investigating. A fine is the likely outcome.

Lake Valley is governed by a board of directors, but it is not kept in the loop on things like this.

"To my knowledge there are 'no protocols' for when the board is notified of incidents," board Chairman Bob Bettencourt told *Lake Tahoe News*. "If there is a significant sensitive event or incident, it is brought to the board in a closed session which unfortunately cannot be disseminated outside the closed session."

Letter: Who is getting Kings Beach events center?

To the community,

Unbelievably, the NTPUD board voted 3 to 2 to lease the North Tahoe Event Center for 70 years to an LLC whose members were unknown as of the signing. Wow!

No concern about protecting the public interest there. At least, Sue Daniels and Tim Ferrell recognized the potential problems with this weird agreement. They stood up to the desperate atmosphere that pervaded the final discussions.

The rest of the board seemed to be saying that the entire future of Kings Beach rested with this wild Hail Mary, and that anyone not joining in on the lease was digging the grave for Kings Beach.

My advice, given that the board has gone into this long-term marriage not knowing whom they're marrying, nor what their marital partner has in mind following the signing ceremony, nor their partner's financial strength is: watch for the first hiccup which seems to run contrary to the lease or oral representations leading up to the signing.

I hope I'm wrong and that this lease proves the three pro-signing directors right even though the ill-conceived deal has not gotten off on an equal footing so far. Time will tell.

Ann Nichols, North Tahoe Preservation Alliance

Fire Fest incorporates all first responders

Helicopters are expected to be the stars this year at Fire Fest.

The annual event is Sept. 30, 10am-3pm outside Hard Rock Lake Tahoe. Admission is free.

This is an opportunity for families to have fun while learning about safety and conservation.

Activities include fire engines and other big trucks on display, a burn house sprinkler demonstration, K-9 and SWAT demonstration, vehicle extrication, home safety ideas, lots of special attractions for kids, such as water fights, face painting, fire extinguisher demonstration, campfire safety and a special appearance by Smokey Bear and other friends.

UNR quake lab tests bridge design for Caltrans



Three 27-ton, 14 x 14-foot table platens are lifted into place by the lab's 30-ton cranes as the lab crew continues installing equipment in the earthquake engineering facility at UNR. Photo/Mike Wolterbeek/UNR

By Scott Sonner, AP

RENO – Scientists at a Nevada earthquake lab on Wednesday tested new bridge designs with connectors they say are innovative and created to better withstand violent temblors and speed reconstruction efforts after major quake damage.

UNR engineers performed the experiments on a giant "shake table" to simulate violent motions of an earthquake to rattle a 100-ton, 70 foot bridge model to determine how well it would hold up.

UNR's Earthquake Engineering Lab is the largest of its kind in the United States.

The latest project is funded by Caltrans, which currently is developing plans for 10 pilot projects based on the developing bridge connector technology.

Read the whole story

Woman killed in motorcycle crash identified

The motorcyclist who died last weekend in Hope Valley has been identified as Charleen Blackburn.

The 64-year-old South Lake Tahoe woman was turning onto Highway 89 from Highway 88 on Sept. 17 when she was struck by a vehicle.

The driver was not able to break in time to avoid hitting the rider who turned in front of her.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Home pot delivery may be coming to Nev.

By Ray Hagar, Nevada Newsmakers

State Sen. Tick Segerblom, D-Las Vegas, predicted this week on Nevada Newsmakers that Nevada will soon have home delivery of recreational marijuana.

Segerblom, who helped guide regulations of Nevada's medical and recreational marijuana industries through the Legislature, said home deliveries will begin soon after the state enacts permanent regulations next year.

“It’s a done deal,” Segerblom said. “We’re doing it right now for medical (marijuana). It works perfect.

“The police like it,” Segerblom said from a Clark County perspective. “Obviously, you have to verify who is getting it but it is no different than someone going to a store, showing an ID and buying it.”

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· The inaugural Lake Tahoe Corn Hole Championships will be Sept. 24 at MontBleu in Stateline. Doors open at noon, advanced tickets $15 plus taxes and fees, $50 to enter the tournament. Must be 21 years or older. Fourteen teams of two will compete. For more info, call 775.588.3515.

· Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the ADVANCE Learn, Earn, Grow program is conducting a five-star guest service boot camp Sept. 25-28 and Oct. 2-5 from noon-4pm each day. For more info or to register, email ndavenport@ltcc.edu.

· National Brotherhood of Skiers has selected Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows to host its next NBS Black Summit. The event will run March 3-10.

· Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District does free car seat inspections. Call 775.588.3591 to make an appointment.

· On Nevada Public Lands Day (Sept. 30) fees will be waived at Nevada’s state parks. This includes entrance, camping (Saturday night), and boating, where applicable.

Learn how to market a business on a budget

Small businesses interested in marketing their business are invited to attend a small business seminar on Sept. 29, 8-9:30am at the North Tahoe PUD office in Tahoe Vista.

The seminar is free for members of the North Tahoe Business Association, Tahoe City Downtown Association, and North Lake Tahoe Resort Association and $20 for non-members.

The seminar will be lead by Melissa Forziat, a small business strategic marketing coach and event manager. She will cover:building referrals, customer retention and recognition, online marketing, in-person networking.

To register and for more information, go **online**.

Van Sickle park evolving as popularity grows



The mural on the old barn at Van Sickle Bi-state Park was recently refurbished by Angie's Signs in Meyers. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It's a park even for those who don't especially like the woods, or prefer to explore the outdoors in heels or flip flops. It's also a park for those wanting to hike the 165-mile Tahoe Rim Trail, or wanting a short trek to incredible views of Lake Tahoe.

Van Sickle Bi-state Park is proving to have a little something for a lot of people.

It's one of the few state parks anywhere that so many people can walk to from their hotel room.

Well more than sixty thousand people have visited the park this year. About 25,000 walked in, while another 30,000 drove. Those figures are from May 1 to Sept. 20. (The counters don't work in the winter.) And while the road is closed when it

snows, plenty of people walk in – some to snowshoe. The shoulder seasons are busy as well.

This park that opened in 2011 under adverse economic times has blossomed. Money is still an issue, but the two states continue to work for the greater good. The operating agreement is being revised, with partnerships expanded. The Van Sickle Foundation and Tahoe Rim Trail Association are key partners.

On Sept. 21 the California Tahoe Conservancy board members went on a little trek to this park that encompasses California and Nevada. It was the CTC that essentially bailed out California State Parks and came forward with funding, and continues to do so. Nevada State Parks, though, is the bigger player.



All the tools and materials to build the bridge were brought in by people or horses. Photo/LTN file

Starting Oct. 2 a ranger will be patrolling the park – the first time this has happened. Mike Shipman is a graduate of South Tahoe High School who now works for Nevada State Parks. He is who will be responsible for keeping an eye on things.

Homeless issues – notably fires in summer 2016 – were a huge issue, and continue to be a threat. Vandalism, graffiti and general misbehaving are all things Shipman will be handling – or hoping to prevent.

Frank Bosch and Linda Cook, who have been the onsite caretakers, are moving on – someplace out of the snow. Praise was given to them for the job they have done.

“We want to provide some level of visitor services. And we want to make sure the facilities stay clean,” Eric Johnson, administrator for Nevada State Parks, told *Lake Tahoe News* as to why a ranger has been hired.

A big change for the park will be the 20-site campground that is planned for the southern section of the Nevada side. It will have full hookups. The design is still a couple years out.



Views from hiking trails in Van Sickle Bi-State Park are stunning. Photo/LTN file

When the main road was built by Nevada Parks, the necessary infrastructure for the campground was installed.

The newest change was a fiberglass bridge that was installed last summer across the waterfall. It’s the first of its kind

in the Lake Tahoe Basin. The Tahoe Rim Trail Association, Clay Grubb in particular, gets the kudos for this endeavor.

The TRTA has been an incredible partner to this park, having built a connector trail to its main trail. The agency also often leads hikes along the various trails, and does trainings there.

Land managers, though, are worried about outside impacts to the park. Near the old barn the Gondola Vista condo project can be seen. Per the CTC's insistence a fence will go up to block direct access from this development.

The CTC is also worried if the parcel on the west side of the entrance were to ever be developed by owner Randy Lane. A super-sized house could be built there. CTC staff would like the agency to purchase that land if the owner is willing and the state ever has the money.

The proposed loop road could be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it will likely bring a huge influx of people to Van Sickle because Highway 50 would go directly in front of the park. This could be a strain on limited and fragile resources.

The entrance will have to be configured to accommodate the highway.

To make it so pedestrians and cyclists don't have to cross a four-lane highway to get to the park, an overpass is proposed closer to Harrah's Lake Tahoe. This, too, could provide for more traffic.

The park is here foremost because of Jack Van Sickle who in 1988 donated the 542 acres to Nevada in honor of his grandfather Henry Van Sickle. The younger Van Sickle died eight years before it opened.