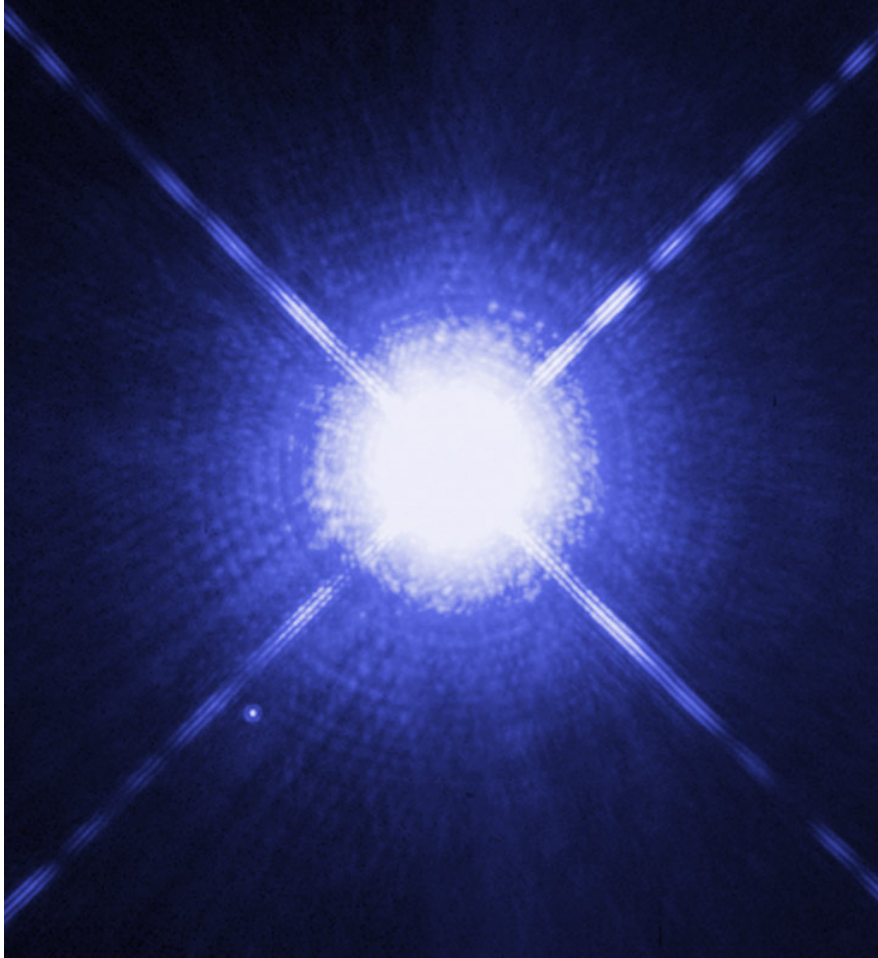


Star Guide: Sirius – the next brightest star



This is a Hubble Space Telescope image of Sirius and the Pup. Photo/Provided

By Tony Berendsen

Every day Earth is immersed in the light of our nearest star the sun and bathed in the lifeblood of its energy. For most life on our planet the proximity of our star provides an environment of nurturing survival. The distance between Earth and the sun is just right for us, not too far or too close. Every night the shade of the Earth darkens the sky and our sight is cast into the depths of space. It is during those hours of night we see the sun's close neighbors, and the next brightest star: Sirius.

One reason for the brightness of Sirius is its closeness to the Earth. It is the seventh closest star at about 8.5 light years and is heading our way as it drifts through the galaxy. So, over the next 60,000 years it will become even brighter, continuing to be the brightest for 200,000 years. Another reason Sirius is so bright is its size and luminosity which is about twice that of the sun.

Rigel Kentaurus (Alpha Centauri) the three-star system, that is the closest to the sun at 4.3 light years, comes in third in brightness after Canopus of the constellation Carina at a whopping distance of 313 light years.

It's more common than not for stars to have companions, and Sirius is no exception; it's a binary star. Sirius' companion isn't a main sequence star anymore, though. It is a white dwarf. Our sun will become a white dwarf in a few billion years; a star that has depleted its supply of fusionable fuel and gravitationally collapsed. The companion star is called Sirius B, or the Pup.

The Pup orbits around Sirius in a very elliptical path every 50 years at mean distance close to the size of the orbit of Uranus. It once was a hot blue star about five times as massive as the sun, and so bright that during its main sequence stage it would have overshadowed Sirius, possibly casting a shadow on a moonless night here on Earth. But because it was such a massive star, it used up its fuel quickly, in about 250 million years, only completing one orbit around our galaxy before becoming a white dwarf. In comparison the sun, a modest sized star, it has orbited around the galaxy more than 16 times.

Today the Pup is very small and very dim. Its brightness is about one-tenth the brightness of Sirius and it has gravitationally collapsed to about the size of the Earth. Matter is so condensed on the Pup that a piece the size of a sugar cube would weigh more than 2,000 pounds

Sirius is a winter star for us in the northern latitudes rising above the horizon in the east shortly after sunrise, and very easy to find in the night sky because of its brightness. Your favorite star gazing app can help you, or if you can find the belt of Orion use the belt stars pointing to the east to find your way.

On the other hand, the Pup is not easy to find due to the relative brightness of Sirius. To see the Pup you will need a telescope of good optics at high magnification. Florin's blog "How to see Sirius B" describes some excellent procedures for finding the Pup. <http://florin.myip.org/blog/how-see-sirius-b>

Of the thousands of visual stars in our sky, one supplies us with the gift of life, and the others hold the knowledge of the universe for us to discover. I hope you take a minute to enjoy the view this winter and take some time to wonder about the amazing cosmos we see in the day and at night.

Tony Berendsen runs Tahoe Star Tours. He may be reached at 775. 232.0844 or tony@tahoestartours.com.

Letter: Realtors say thank you

To the community,

The South Tahoe Association of Realtors would like to thank all of the generous donors that helped make our silent auction on Dec. 10 a success. We raised more than \$1,200 toward future scholarship awards for South Tahoe graduating seniors and community service projects in South Lake Tahoe.

We want to thank: Tami Africa, Michelle Blue-Benedict, Blue Angel Café, Don & Janice Bosson, Mary Briggs, Elements Day Spa, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Homes & Land – Paul and Ann Johnson, Rhonda Keen, Dean Kellogg, Lakeside Inn & Casino, MontBleu Casino Resort & Spa, On Tahoe Time – Jana Nelson, Riva Grill, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Theresa Souers, South Shore Bikes, Yoga and Shala.

Sharon Kerrigan, STAR

SLT trying to get a handle on vacation rentals



Large homes like this one being built near Heavenly

Mountain Resort's Cal Lodge to be used as a vacation home rental is adding fuel to the heated issue in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

Of the 140 citations South Lake Tahoe has issued to vacation home owners, 68 were for renting without a permit.

The illegal operators are ordered to immediately stop advertising their rental. While they can go through the permit process to come into compliance, it's not a slam dunk to get approved. And once cited, the city keeps an eye on the property to monitor for repeat infractions.

In the last fiscal year the city conducted 24 audits to see if people were paying the amount of transient occupancy tax they were supposed to. The city has collected \$58,592 in the last year in previously unpaid TOT.

"We collect TOT on the honor system. We can audit them when it seems like they are underreporting," Maureen Stuhlman, who handles vacation home rental enforcement for South Lake Tahoe, said.

Stuhlman and Kevin Fabino, who runs the Community Development department for the city, gave an update on the VHR situation to the City Council last week.

In July during the last VHR presentation, 1,858 VHR permits existed. Today, that number is 1,149. About 426 of those permits are for time shares. One-hundred and thirty have expired since the summer. The city expects another 150 to be considered expired in the next month.

When the new ordinance was enacted in October 2015 an inspection component was added. The criteria have scared some people.

The city has made a concerted effort in the last four months to address expired permits; trying to surmise if people are renting illegally or have gotten out of the business.

“I would say 95 percent of those inspections have been completed,” Fabino said. “It has been a huge undertaking to address expired permits. At one time there were 700 to 900.”

Fabino said his department is trying to gather better data, but that the city’s antiquated system has made it difficult to do so.

Another change in the permit process is allowing people to object to the house becoming a VHR. A zoning administrator reviews any challenges. Part of the criteria is looking at how the rental would impact the character of the neighborhood.

“For us it is a real balancing act,” Fabino said.

Jerry Goodman was the only member of the public who spoke at the Dec. 13 meeting. He has a number of vacation rentals on his street and has been a vocal opponent of VHRs. At Tuesday’s meeting he stressed that the character of a residential neighborhood would always be changed because these are not residents staying the night.

Another aspect to the VHR is that High Sierra Patrol started working Dec. 16. Now the city is being proactive instead of reactive. Before it was all about responding when a complaint was called in. The people will now regularly patrol areas known to have problem houses. They won’t interact with the guests, but instead will call an issue in to the community service officer who will respond to the residence.

Letter: Food donors help Bread & Broth

To the community,

In October, Bread & Broth reached the 27-year milestone for serving meals to the Lake Tahoe South Shore community. Currently, Bread & Broth serves a full-course Monday meal at St. Theresa Church Grace Hall and a soup and simple entrée at Second Serving at the Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church on Friday.

These two weekly meals and the food give away bags distributed at the meals are supported by generous stores, businesses and restaurants that have donated food, beverages and soups to our program throughout the past year.

Bread & Broth would like to acknowledge and extend a special thank you to the following businesses who are our partners in easing hunger in our community.

Donating twice weekly are Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, Raley's stores at the Y, and the Starbuck Stores at Heavenly, the Y and Crescent V. Grass Roots, Raley's at Crescent V Shopping Center, Safeway and Sugar Pine Bakery give on a weekly basis and twice monthly donations are made by Barton Hospital, Subway and Andy's Produce Market in Sebastopol. For the dogs and cats of our dinner guests, Lake Tahoe Humane Society & SPCA donates pet food every week.

Bread & Broth would also like to thank the following stores and businesses that donate one to two times throughout the year: Curtis Fong Bike Rides, Fallen Leaf Lake Marina Store, Heavenly Mountain Resort, Kirkwood Mountain Resort, Sierra-at-Tahoe, and various farmers' market vendors during the summer.

The Second Serving on Friday wishes to thank our soup sponsors: MontBleu Resort Casino & Spa and Ridge Tahoe provide soup on a monthly basis and approximately every other month soups are provided by Blue Angel Café, Café Fiore, Freshies, Nepheles, Primos Italian Restaurant, Riva Grill, and Tep's Villa Roma.

When shopping, please consider supporting those stores, businesses and restaurants that support Bread & Broth. For more information on how you and your business can partner with Bread & Broth, please visit our **website**.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Anderson takes top honors in big air event



Jamie Anderson soars to the top of the podium on Dec. 17.
Photo/U.S. Snowboarding

By USSA

COPPER MOUNTAIN, Colo. – American snowboarders found more success at the final event of the Toyota U.S. Grand Prix weekend: the Team USA Winter Champions Series big air. Jamie Anderson (Meyers) landed the win for the women and Ryan Stassel (Anchorage) took third for the men.

It was the defending Olympic slopestyle champion's trademark smooth style that earned Anderson the win on Saturday

With the best two of three jumps scored, Anderson started with a switch backside 540 and followed up with a Cab 720. Julia Marino (Westport, Conn.), who won the scaffolding big air event at Fenway Park in February, finished fourth with a double cork 900 and a backflip. Enni Rukajarvi of Finland was second and Klaudia Medlova of Slovakia, who landed the first double cork 1080 in competition, was third.

Stassel out did serious competition on the big air jump, putting down a frontside 1440 and a switch backside double 1260. Conditions deteriorated as the contest went on, with flat light making it very difficult for riders to spot their landings. Sitting in second place after his third run, Stassel had to watch multiple riders take their runs before he was assured a podium position.

“I put down two runs and the scores weren’t the highest,” Stassel said. “So when it came down to the third one, it was really a nail biter. I was just waiting it out and I was able to hold on.”

The dominant Canadian jumpers topped the podium—Max Parrot in first and Sebastien Toutant in second.

The U.S. Grand Prix/World Cup big air event was part of the Team USA Winter Champions Series. Big air will make its Olympic debut at PyeongChang, South Korea in 2018.

\$1.17M to help Nev. erase rape kit backlog

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – A panel of lawmakers Thursday accepted a \$1.17 million federal grant to continue to chip away at the backlog of thousands of untested rape kits in Nevada.

The Legislature’s Interim Finance Committee authorized the use of the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative funding for the attorney general’s office and local police agencies to

continue the effort, even as some lawmakers expressed frustration at the pace of the effort.

So far, the state has received nearly \$5 million in grants and settlement funds earmarked for the endeavor statewide. That funding is in addition to a separate \$2 million grant received by Southern Nevada law enforcement for rape kit testing.

Read the whole story

Truckee's winter economy started with chicken wire, water



The first Ice Palace was next to the Truckee Hotel. Photo/Truckee Donner Historical Society

By Abby Stevens, Moonshine Ink

In the autumn of 1894, snow came to Truckee earlier than usual. The temperatures dropped to sub-zero in the evenings, but despite the cold, one man stood over a pile of manmade ice while looking out over Truckee from the famed Rocking Stone and his mansion on the hillside.

For weeks following the snowfall he twisted chicken wire, shoveled snow, and each night watered his creation with tender loving care. Why was this man watering ice, you may ask? His son asked him the same question but the man wouldn't tell.

Charles McGlashan, the ice maker, wasn't just avoiding household chores – the giant icicle was his idea of economic expansion for Truckee.

At first, locals were skeptical about whether people living in the Bay Area would ever travel up to Truckee in the winter, even for a festival.

Read the whole story

Prescribed fire planned by Tahoe fire agencies

The North Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Douglas fire protection districts may continue prescribed fire operations next week if conditions are favorable.

Operations may take place near Glenbrook, Round Hill, Lower Kingsbury Grade and Tahoe City. To view a map with project locations and details, go **online**.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send

email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816.

Vernice Rianda – 1928-2016



Vernice Rianda

Vernice Rianda leaves behind a legacy of unparalleled kindness and selflessness.

She died Dec. 10, 2016. She was 88.

Vernice and her husband, Allen, retired to South Lake Tahoe in 1983. Vernice worked at the Lake Tahoe Community College bookstore for many years.

She loved spending time with her grandchildren and family, and rooting for the San Francisco Giants.

In 2013, she left the snow for her final move to Gold Country in Sutter Creek. Her family and friends were the most important part of her life.

Vernice was born on Valentine's Day 1928 in Parks, Neb. During

the height of the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, her family moved to Colorado. She grew up in Denver with seven siblings.

In 1947, she graduated from East High School and moved west to San Francisco, where she met her husband and Oakland native, Allen. They settled in Salinas where they raised four children. She worked for Monterey County Municipal Court as a clerk for 15 years.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Allen, of 57 years; son Robert; and daughter Ginger.

She is survived by her daughters, Linda Rianda of Sutter Creek; Sue (Bob) Novasel of South Lake Tahoe; daughter-in-law, Vera Rianda of Springfield, Ore.; granddaughters, Shayna Dorris of San Antonio, Texas; Meghan Dorris of Gardnerville; Kylie Novasel of Aspen, Colo., and Molly Novasel of South Lake Tahoe; and her great-granddaughter Ianthe.

Graveside services will be Dec. 19 at 10am at Happy Homestead Cemetery in South Lake Tahoe. There will be a celebration of life immediately afterward at Lake Tahoe Golf Course in Meyers.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her name to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, 1485 Cherry Hills Circle, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150.

Letter: South Tahoe library says thank you

To the community,

The South Lake Tahoe Library would like to send a special

thank you to the SOS Outreach teen volunteers for helping out with our Winter Extravaganza event.

They were a big help in assisting children, teens and adults in creating handmade holiday decorations.

We would also like to say thank you to Santa and Mrs. Claus for coming to the library to take photos and visit with the children, which made the event extra special.

The staff at the South Lake Tahoe Library would also like to thank the community and the Friends of the Library for their continued support and to wish everyone a very Happy Holidays.

Kimberly Diebolt, library assistant