

Non-explosive device left at SLT courthouse

Updated 2:05pm

A suspected pipe bomb was found this morning outside the El Dorado County Superior Courthouse in South Lake Tahoe.

The Tahoe Douglas bomb squad X-rayed the device. No explosives were found, though it was described as a “mock device” by officials.

Police are investigating who may have left the device that was put together to look like a pipe bomb.

It was found on the sidewalk by the courthouse by a maintenance work just before 7am May 4.

The courthouse along with the police department and county offices on the other side of the courtyard at the government center were evacuated for a few hours. South Tahoe Middle School students were sheltering in place.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Smart & Final is going in where Staples is in South Lake Tahoe. Smart & Final used to be in the Bijou Center where CVS is located. Staples is closing June 3.

- A change of plans – the Ski Run Farmers Market is returning to South Lake Tahoe.

- Boot Camp for New Dads is a father-to-father workshop designed to inspire and equip men to become confidently engaged with their infants, support their mates, and navigate their transformation into dads. It is May 12, 6:30-9:30pm at Sign up at 1077B 4th St., South Lake Tahoe. Cost is \$20. Sign up **online** under Family classes or series.

- This **video** from Caltrans shows what it takes to clear mountain passes after the winter.

- Learn about having chickens in the Tahoe-Truckee area in a workshop on May 14 from 10-noon at Truckee River Sanctuary, Kayhoe Court, Truckee. Local laws, safety from predators, coop design, feeding and handling, and selection of cold hardy breeds will be part of the learning process.

NDOT improving safety on Mt. Rose Highway

The Nevada Department of Transportation has begun a project to enhance the Mt. Rose Highway truck escape ramp.

The truck ramp, located on the westbound side of the highway in Incline Village, will be converted from the current rock surface to asphalt. A series of six pre-tensioned drag nets will be added to the truck ramp to catch the front grill of runaway vehicles and help safely absorb the impact to slow, then ultimately stop, the vehicle.

The asphalt surface of the truck ramp will be heated in the winter.

Two roadside flashing signs and one large overhead digital

message sign will also be installed to alert drivers when a vehicle is in the truck ramp.

Approximately 5,000 vehicles travel this section of the Mt. Rose Highway every day, including semi-trucks, according to NDOT.

During construction, there will be periodic lane closures. Truck traffic will not be permitted on Mt. Rose Highway during construction.

Q & D Construction is scheduled to complete the \$4.6 million project this fall.

7 units lost in South Lake Tahoe fire



Fire destroys seven condos in Tahoe Keys on May 3.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Old construction is one of the main reasons so many units in a Tahoe Keys condo complex were destroyed on Tuesday.

"The fire was hidden in a bunch of void spaces due to construction. Once it was in the common attic it was really hard to cut off. That is why it spread to the top of the units," Karl Koeppen, shift commander with South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Current building codes necessitate separate attic spaces with fire blocks.

The fire on Ala Wai was reported just before 2pm May 3 by a neighbor. The fire was contained at 4:10pm, with crews on scene until 9pm.

Seven of the nine units will have to be rebuilt because of

fire, water and/or smoke damage. The two end units are still being assessed as to whether they will be habitable.

A handful of people were displaced. Some were assisted by the Red Cross, while others went to stay with friends.

Only smoke was visible when crews first arrived; from the originating unit and the eaves of neighboring ones.

Two holes were sawed into the roof to create a draft to help find the fire. Simultaneously firefighters were on each of the two floors looking for it. It had been spreading through the walls for about 90 minutes before firefighters arrived.

The unit where the fire started was having work done so it could be rented.

“With a torch, I took the fitting off,” contractor John Dean told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It hit insulation. I put water on it. When I left there was no indication of flames.”

When he came back smoke was everywhere.

Because there were no injuries no criminal charges are likely to be filed. The rough damage estimate is at \$3 million.

Dwindling snowpack topic of forum

The Citizen’s Climate Lobby is putting on a talk about the local snowpack, lake level, and how the future of the South Shore depends on it. Enjoy free drinks, appetizers, raffle prizes as well as an optional discussion that will leave us all talking about climate change at the local level.

The Save Our Snow discussion will be May 12 from 5-6pm inside The Loft's theater at Heavenly Village in South Lake Tahoe. Bonnie Turnbull and Nick Exline from the Citizen's Climate Lobby will share data on the snowpack, lake level, and how the local economy could be affected by the predicted climate changes.

Exline, one of the founders of the non-partisan South Lake Tahoe Citizens Climate Lobby, looks to market driven solutions to combat climate change.

Following the talk will be a mixer for the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce from 6-8pm.

The event is \$10 for chamber members and \$20 for non-members. Space for the forum is limited. Register **online**.

McClintock faces hostile crowd in South Tahoe



South Lake Tahoe resident Bonnie Turnbull, left, spars with Rep. Tom

McClintock over climate change.

Photo/Kathryn reed

By Kathryn Reed

Audience question: *What causes climate change?*

Rep. Tom McClintock's answer: *"It's a natural phenomenon. It has more to do with solar cycles than human activity."*

To this, most of the 50 people in attendance at the May 3 town hall at South Tahoe Public Utility District's board room erupted in disbelief. Based on reactions to and interactions with the congressman, it's unlikely most of the attendees will be voting for the Republican this year.

McClintock is making the rounds of his district, spelling out what he has done back in Washington, D.C., and what he hopes to do going forward.

Climate change was an overriding theme at Tuesday's gathering. Several people tried to engage McClintock in a debate, that at times escalated into a near shouting match.

Many were armed with facts. Local resident Bonnie Turnbull even had a chart to add to her concerns. John Friedrich, who was in Paris during the climate summit last year, read information from his tablet.

McClintock all the while stuck to his talking points – the climate has been changing for 4 billion years.

One person shouted, "Your naiveté is absolutely stunning."

McClintock claims this is the first such meeting where the crowd wouldn't let him finish his sentence. What they were upset with were the rehearsed answers that were not based on science. At no time did McClintock cite sources for his beliefs/facts.

Several asked how he can dispute the facts when **97 percent** of the scientific community says climate change is real and human caused. McClintock's assertion was that the data is nearly 20 years old. It's actually a figure from 2013. This is when the congressman did what he accused the audience of – not listening.

Before opening the floor to questions, the congressman talked about if mandatory spending – like Medicare and Social Security – were under the discretionary column, that the budget would be easier to balance.

Forest health is another concern of his. Something he often says at these meetings is that the timber will come out one way or another – either harvested or via fire. He wants to allow trees to be felled for profit. That is not allowed in the basin anymore.

“The forests are dying because we've allowed them to be catastrophically overgrown,” McClintock said.

Part of his bill that is a scaled down version of the Senate's Lake Tahoe Restoration Act calls for more forest thinning. It has passed out of committee.

He is also working to get more funding to fight fires, including having forest fires be listed as a natural disaster so they qualify for federal aid in the same manner as earthquakes and hurricanes.

McClintock's answer to dealing with drought was to create more storage. But in order to build more dams in California, he said, environmental regulations need to change.

An attendee brought up subsidies for oil companies.

“I'm against all subsidies. Period. People deserve honest pricing,” McClintock said.

Another person spoke about being against trade agreements,

saying the United States usually comes out on the losing end.

McClintock disagreed, touted the merits of NAFTA, adding, "Generally speaking I support free trade."

Jude Wood, executive director of the local Boys & Girls Club, asked McClintock what he is doing to help families and touched on immigration.

The congressman said he won't help those who are here illegally, even if it were their parents who brought them here. He said a path to citizenship exists and that everyone should follow it.

As for families, he'd like to raise the child deduction when it comes to filing taxes.

Opinion: Placing Zika virus in a broader perspective

By James Wilson

As you all have no doubt seen in the media, we have yet another exotic public health threat on the radar: Zika virus. While the vast majority of people infected either experience minimal symptoms, many develop dengue-like symptoms of rash, fever, and joint pain. Worse, pregnant women who are infected are experiencing between an 18-50 percent rate of birth defects known as microencephaly ("small fetal head"). Microencephaly may lead to a child with neurological issues such as cerebral palsy. We have also noted paralysis (Guillain Barre Syndrome) in a limited group of 20- to 30-year-old adults, where the case fatality in this group is as high as 50

percent.



James Wilson

Zika virus is a national security issue because in Brazil we estimate as many as 1.3 million infected, with 3,500 cases of microencephaly. At one single hospital, they reported nearly 100 cases of paralysis in adults, of whom half died. There is no vaccine or anti-viral medication. Zika has spread explosively in the tropical belt of the Americas, and now the expected media hyperbole has arrived.

It is believed that Zika virus is transmitted in a primate-mosquito cycle similar to dengue virus. However, we are not 100 percent sure of this, and we have called for studies to examine whether this virus is capable of infecting birds. Our threat assessment for the nation will be dramatically different if the virus spreads in a similar manner as West Nile versus dengue. West Nile is ecologically established, with locally acquired cases reported here in the United States every year. Dengue, on the other hand, does not transmit locally but in occasional circumstances and in very focal areas of California, Texas, and Florida. But many cases are imported yearly.

The World Health Organization has drawn comparisons between the current Zika crisis and the Ebola disaster. The two situations could not be more dissimilar. Ebola was associated with an approximate 70 percent case fatality rate and 15,216 confirmed cases as of Jan. 20 for all of West Africa. Recall there was great concern at the time of virus mutation leading

to a more transmissible form of Ebola. It turns out this was not the case. And CDC's forecasts of more than a million cases in West Africa were not realized.

Zika virus infection estimates so far are as high as 2 million cases across 18 tropical American countries, with more than 3,500 birth defects documented. Fatalities have been rarely reported among patients with sickle cell disease. It should be emphasized that Zika was not the only Africa-origin exotic virus to recently be introduced to tropical America: Chikungunya was also introduced two years ago and spread rapidly as well. The difference is the impact: Zika has been associated with birth defects. So, to compare Ebola and Zika is truly not appropriate: it is apples and mangoes.

Many in the global public health community have embraced a public communications tactic of frightening politicians to action. It is unfortunate the community feels the need to take this path. However, repeated hyperbole associated with public communication has badly eroded credibility of the entire global public health enterprise. Careful balancing of what is/is not known in context that avoids hyperbole is recommended. That said, WHO is under heavy fire right now due to the perception they are again slow to respond.

Our bottom line assessment is this: Zika virus will cause great disruption in the tropical belt of the Americas. We will see imported cases of Zika to the U.S. in multiple states, including Nevada. It is highly unlikely to see sustained epidemic transmission of Zika in the U.S. Here in Nevada we do not have the appropriate mosquito species to support transmission. We are advising all men and women of child-bearing age to avoid unnecessary travel to the tropical Americas until herd immunity has been established given the significant risk to the unborn. The key tool for our clinicians in the state of Nevada is access to laboratory testing. And our state Public Health Laboratory will soon have this test available.

James Wilson is an associate research professor in the School of Community Health Sciences and is director of the Nevada Center for Infectious Disease Forecasting. Wilson, a physician, is considered one of the world's leading disease forecasting experts.

Ex-Nev. power broker Whittemore out of prison

By Jeff German, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Former power broker Harvey Whittemore was released from a federal halfway house Monday after serving 21 months of a two-year prison term for breaking campaign contribution laws.

Whittemore, 63, who surrendered in August 2014 at a federal prison camp in Lompoc, California, spent the last three months in the halfway house. He now will serve two years of supervised release in Nevada.

His lead Las Vegas lawyer, Dominic Gentile, declined to comment Monday.

A Reno federal jury in 2013 found Whittemore guilty of funneling \$133,400 in unlawful contributions to the campaign of Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev.

Read the whole story

Businesses looking to attract Gen Z

By Howard Riell, Las Vegas Sun

Generation Z may reside at the tail end of the alphabet, but marketers who fail to give it top-of-mind attention do so at their own risk.

Experts may differ on when the earliest members of Generation Z (also called iGen or post-millennials) were born, with opinions ranging from 1990 to 2001, but it's agreed they share some traits as consumers. And businesses with an eye on the future should know what they are and how to address them.

"The next generation of American consumers is ethnically diverse, tech-savvy and on the move," said Chicago-based research firm Technomic Inc. in its recent study, "GEN Z: Decoding the Behaviors of the Next Generation." "They are discerning consumers. ... As they mature, they are more influenced by their peers and by digital and traditional media."

"Gen Z is the first generation to experience multichannel and digital marketing on a daily basis, and almost since birth," said Jackie Rodriguez, senior manager at Technomic. "As older Gen Zers' sphere of influence widens, they still look to outside sources of information rather than making independent decisions."

Read the whole story

Historic Tahoe boathouse's transformation into idyllic theater a test in patience and love



Lake Tahoe is the backdrop from the Boathouse Theatre.
Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

A woman named Spain and a man known as Dr. Love, along with a cadre of other devoted arts aficionados, are responsible for transforming what was a dilapidated boathouse into an iconic theater.

This summer the Boathouse Theatre at Valhalla is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The Tahoe Tallac Association, now known as Valhalla Tahoe, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2009.

There was a time when the boathouse was slated for demolition.

"We looked at the two big boathouses. The architectural historian said you could take one down if you retain one," Bill Morgan told *Lake Tahoe News*. He was forest supervisor of Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit from 1975-85. Both still exist today, but it was the one that is now a theater that was eyed for demolition.

When Morgan came on board the plans on the books were to raze most of the buildings at the site.

Carol Spain and others challenged that thinking when they proposed creating an arts and cultural center out of what had been estates owned by wealthy San Franciscans.

To do so would take money and hours of volunteer time. Musicians and other artists donated their time. But the group needed more money. A friend of Spain's introduced her to Barbara Vucanovich, a Nevada congresswoman at the time.

"She said come see me," Spain recalled. "She introduced me to some people; that started the whole ball rolling seeking federal money." That was the first of many visits where the purpose was to get money from the feds. After all, the land to this day is still owned by the U.S. Forest Service.

Dave Kurtzman was along for three of the excursions. Those turned out to be more about relationship building than check writing.

It was a meeting in Tahoe that really got the purse strings to loosen up. Sen. Harry Reid, D-



Valhalla Boathouse Theatre 20th anniversary fundraiser – Lucky Baldwin Poker Promenade and Concert featuring Radoslav Lorkovic is June 25 at 6pm. Lucky Baldwin, Claire Heller, George Pope and other historic characters will be at various stations

Nev., was speaking at a local Rotary meeting that Kurtzman and Spain decided to attend. They prearranged for a private meeting with the senator that included Dennis Crabb, who was then city attorney of South Lake Tahoe, along with some of Reid's aides.

"We got a quarter million dollars," Kurtzman told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I think the Forest Service was ticked off because the quarter million just got moved from other funds."

That was the seed money needed to make their dream a reality. And it sealed the deal with the reluctant USFS office that the arts festival was staying.

Spain left Tahoe – and therefore the Tallac Association – in 2002. She plans to come back next month for the anniversary celebration.

Leo Buscaglia's influence

Leo Buscaglia – aka Dr. Love – first became acquainted with the Tallac Association after he attended one of the Starlight Jazz concerts at the Forest Service amphitheater. Through a mutual friend Spain secured tickets for him to the sold-out show. Spain was reluctant to do so at first; she didn't know who Buscaglia was and such favors were met with caution.

"Leo came up to me and said this was the most wonderful experience under the stars and the great music. He said if I if ever need any help, just get in touch with him. That was the wrong thing to say," Spain said with laughter.

Buscaglia had been a professor at USC, and in the 1960s taught

between Valhalla and the Baldwin Museum. Various stations around the Tallac Historic Site will offer food and drinks, and interpretive history. The concert will follow the poker run. Cost is \$75. Tickets are available online.

a class called Love. Through that course, his books and lectures he became known as Dr. Love.

He moved to Glenbrook permanently in 1989. He died nine years later from a heart attack. By the time of his death he had sold more than 11 million books.

Spain soon figured out who Buscaglia was and decided to tap him to help raise money for the boathouse renovation. Harveys had a speakers series at the time, which Buscaglia headlined a few times. He arranged for most of the proceeds to go to the boathouse renovation.

Before the boathouse was renovated, the Grand Hall at Valhalla is where performances were staged. Buscaglia would bring his books, sign them and then give the boathouse the proceeds.

When Buscaglia died his estate gave \$40,000 to the boathouse.



The boathouse was neglected for years before the arts community took over. Photo/USFS

A bit of history

William Tevis as part of his 75-acre estate built the boathouse in the late 1800s.

He later sold the parcel to George Pope Sr. of the Pope & Talbot Lumber and Shipping Company. Pope's boat, The Sheik, was stored in the boathouse that is now the theater. At the time it was the biggest and fastest boat on the lake.

Pope in 1924 sold 3.3 acres to San Francisco financier Walter Heller, with the boathouse being part of that transaction.

The boathouse at one time had four bedrooms and a bathroom on the second level.

The Forest Service acquired the estates between 1965 and 1971. In total the area is 74 acres.

Before the arts group took over the boathouse it had fallen into disrepair and was being used for storage.

It was the late Bob Harris who as the forest supervisor green lighted the renovation of the boathouse.

The transformation

"I was always borrowing stuff from the casinos ... pianos, speaker systems, you name it," Spain said. "They were tearing up the Harrah's stage and replacing it. Supposedly it was cherry wood and many famous people danced on it. They trucked it out to the empty boathouse. The carpenters looked at it and said you can't use it."

That example spoke to the generosity of the community and the stumbling blocks to get the work done.

The Stateline casinos were huge supporters of what was going on on the other side of the South Shore. Lights and sound systems were donated. Workers gave their time.

Ken Kurtzman was the architect on the project. (He, too, plans to be at the party in June.)

Everything had to be photographed before work could begin because of the historical nature of the building. Interviews with anyone who might have a speck of information about the old days were conducted, including with members of the Washoe tribe.

An apartment used to be upstairs where the bathrooms and sound system are today. Originally the second floor was going to have balcony seating, but because there was no way of working the bathrooms into the first floor design, they went upstairs instead of the added chairs.

The floor was naturally sloped, which made it ideal for a theater. The old tracks for the boats were covered. Outside, though, they are still prominent. The seats came from an old theater in Colorado.

"The exterior is pretty much exactly how it was," Dave Kurtzman told *Lake Tahoe News*.

That's true in terms of aesthetics.

"When I started working out at Valhalla with the Forest Service in the '70s at that time the only thing holding up the boathouse was the big tree next to it. It was really rickety," Steve Yonker with Yonker Construction told *Lake Tahoe News*. "To begin with there were cables inside holding things together. We replaced those with cross members. There was quite a bit of engineering in there."

Yonker was one of few contractors to work on the renovation. He built the stage and installed insulation.

"We had to deal with the big doors on back so they could be opened up with a view right to the lake," Yonker said.

The roof, siding and single-pane windows were replaced.

Jail inmates provided some of the labor.

For actors, though, there are still constraints. There are no dressing rooms. The back is tiny.

“The boathouse when you saw it, it was in a rough state. It was kind of just a wild dream that came true,” Spain said. “To have those doors open, to have the glass wall and pianist on stage in front of it ... it is just a lovely, lovely experience. So, when it all came together, it was better than the dream.”



The exterior of the boathouse looks much like it did when it was used to store watercraft. Photo/Provided

Modern day

While a variety of musical and theatrical performances have graced the stage of the boathouse in the last 20 years, the facility is still in need of upgrades.

The curtains came down earlier this spring for cleaning and all festival director Evangeline Elston could think about was

what if they fell apart.

"The boathouse really needs a lot of TLC," she told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A fundraiser on June 25 is designed to be part celebration of the theater's milestone anniversary, an opportunity to recognize those who made it a reality and for the public to learn that more needs to be done.

"I would like to completely revamp the technology – the lighting, sound system. I would like to do interior stuff that would not be invasive to the look and feel, but might improve how it works, like lighting in the back of the house," Elston said. And replacing the curtains is also on the to-do list.

Changing the lights to LED will cost a minimum of \$15,000. Besides being more energy efficient, the threat of fire would be greatly diminished.

Every time the building is closed up for the night the circuit breakers are flipped so the lights can't just come on because if they did, the fear is that a fire would start based on how hot the lights are and that the building is old wood.

The association plans to do an in depth needs assessment so by the end of the season the board of this nonprofit has a better idea of the costs associated with doing all the wanted upgrades.

The boathouse fundraiser is June 25, three days after the season opens.