Art rubbings of Basque sheepherders on display

By Geralda Miller, Reno Gazette-Journal

Many of the Basque sheepherders who spent the summer months in the early 20th century in the Sierra Nevada used the aspen trees as their canvases.

With a pocket knife or nail as their tool, the men who came to the West from the Pyrenees region between France and Spain would carve figures into the soft skin of the tree.

They depicted the animals that lived around them in the forest, religious symbols, old-country homesteads, women in various stages of dress and undress – some erotic, some elegant in attire of the period.

Some reflect ancient stone art while others evoke the styles of Pablo Picasso or Henri Matisse.

Because of the nudes and images of people engaged in erotic activities, for years, many people, including the Basques, did not appreciate the artistic expressions. Today, they are recognized as a cultural phenomenon.

“People used to think of it just as graffiti,” said Sheryln Hayes-Zorn, acting director of the Nevada Historical Society. “But I think people now realize it’s an art form of culture, of a group of young men that lived out in Nevada while working with the sheep. It is very simplistic, but there’s a lot of detail. I think it’s a study of humanity of people as well as of a culture, showing what these young men were longing for or missing or seeing in nature.”

While the aspen groves are the original art galleries, reproductions of 38 of the carvings are on exhibit through

April 14 in the main hall of the Nevada Historical Society.

Read the whole story

Snow Fiesta

North Tahoe Family Resource Center and Adventure Risk Challenge are celebrating Snow Fiesta on March 10 from 6-10pm at the North Lake Tahoe Event Center.

This is a drug and alcohol-free family event.

Tickets are $10 and all proceeds benefit the North Tahoe FRC and ARC. Kids under 5 are free and 6- to 12-year-olds are $5. Tickets can be purchased at the door or in advance at the North Tahoe Family Resource Center, Syd’s Bagelry & Espresso and Tahoe City, and Bill’s Rotisserie in Truckee.

Want to volunteer? Email Jen at jgurecki@berkeley.edu or call (530) 416.5682.

More information is online.

Snow cancels classes; roads a mess in Lake Tahoe Basin

Blizzard conditions this morning have forced schools in the Lake Tahoe Basin to call a snow day.

Closed for the day are:

• Lake Tahoe Unified School District

• Lake Tahoe Community College, including Child Development Center

• Douglas County schools at the lake

• Tahoe Truckee Unified School District

• Incline Village schools

• Sierra Nevada College.



Walking along Highway 50 will continue to be dangerous today -- and chains are needed. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Washoe County schools outside the basin are on a two-hour delay.

The heaviest snow on this Leap Day is expected through 10am. But another storm is on the heels of this one, so snow is likely to be falling through Thursday.

A winter storm warning remains in effect through noon March 1. Because strong winds are part of this system it will make

driving hazardous. Expect whiteout conditions over mountain passes.

For road information, click on the state icons at the top of *Lake Tahoe News'* home page. Highway 89 around Emerald Bay is closed.

According to the Sierra Avalanche Center, "A trend of increasing avalanche danger is expected to occur this afternoon through (Thursday)."

– Kathryn Reed

Are you happy winter is here or would you rather skip to summer?

2-day session for aspiring children's book writers-illustrators

Bona Fide Books is offering a two-day session "So You Want to

Write and/or Illustrate a Children's Book. Now What?" at Bona Fide HQ in Meyers on March 22 from 7-9pm and March 24 from 10am-2:30pm.

Writer and illustrator Kristen Schwartz will lead this two-part session aimed toward helping writers and illustrators of children's, middle grade and young adult books find their footing in the publishing industry. The Thursday session is a Q&A and a breakdown of top tips and tricks for creating and submitting marketable work for younger audiences.

This session is free and open to the public, to be followed by a $75 intensive, personalized class on Saturday. Part two will include familiarizing writers and illustrators with industry tools and the query process, and working directly with attendees on how to publish their personal projects.

Space is limited. Call (530) 573.1513 to reserve a spot.

Famous chef talks about her 2 cookbook collections

By Paula Forbes, Eater

Beard Award winning chef Traci Des Jardins has four restaurants — Jardinière, Mijita Cocina Mexicana, and Public

House in San Francisco, and Manzanita at the Ritz-Carlton at Northstar – and two cookbook collections: one antique, one modern. (She is also working on a cookbook of her own to be released in fall 2013.)

Below, Des Jardins talks about what draws her to both old and new books, the need for encyclopedic cookbooks, and the one book she thinks is worth "all of the accolades that it got."

So tell me about your cookbooks.

I have a whole range. I do a lot of the modern books, the books that are just being published. And then I have a collection of antique books. Celia Sacks, the owner of San Francisco's Omnivore Bookstore, is an old friend of mine, and she was an antiquarian book cataloguer in her former life. So she started collecting books for me a long time ago, and looking at these different collections of books across the board, culinary books. So she would call me and say, "Hey, I got this really cool book! Do you want to come see it?" So that's how I started collecting antique books. I have two collections: I have a modern collection, and then I have a pretty significant library of antique books.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Raggio's death leaves a void in Nevada

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Feb. 28, 2012, Reno Gazette-Journal.***

No one who knew Bill Raggio could doubt his toughness.

He was, after all, a former Washoe County district attorney best known for burning down Joe Conforte's brothel near Wadsworth – in a community more often willing to turn a blind eye to the shenanigans of Conforte and his ilk.

Fifty years later, Raggio, who died last week while vacationing in Australia, showed his toughness again when he went against his own party to support U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., for re-election. Raggio knew he'd receive harsh criticism in the heat of one of the nastiest political contests in recent memory. As always, Raggio did what he thought was right and let the cards fall where they may. The criticism came, but Raggio never backed down.

It was a toughness that made him a formidable foe as his party's leader in the Nevada Legislature. He could twist arms with the best of them, driving his opponents crazy, especially those in Southern Nevada who learned early on that Northern Nevada was not to be messed with as long as Raggio was in charge.

Read the whole story

TTUSD focusing on young readers

A campaign has recently been launched by several nonprofits and foundations called the Tahoe Truckee Reads Campaign. This is a call to action to improve reading proficiency for all children by third grade. Currently, two-thirds of the students in the U.S. and 47 percent of children at Tahoe Truckee Unified School District are not reading at the expected proficiency levels by the end of the third grade, and among

low-income children, this drops to 24 percent.

Research shows that up to third grade, kids are learning to read and after third grade, kids have to "read to learn."

Third-grade reading proficiency is a key indicator of school success. To address this, the Tahoe Truckee Reads Campaign has been launched, with a focus on what can be done before children get to school, in preschool and from kindergarten through third grade, as well as during summer vacation to reduce summer learning loss.

A planning meeting is set for March 1 at Truckee Elementary School, 5-7pm, and translation services will be provided. RSVP to Laura Abbey Brown at exed@ttcf.net.

Sierra water content 10 times less than what it was in 2011

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	19.4 inches	4.9 inches	18
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	17.7 inches	3.9 inches	16
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	30.5 inches	8.3 inches	33
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	24 inches	6 inches	26

Source: DWR

By Kathryn Reed

PHILLIPS STATION – "In California we talk about averages and

normal, but it doesn’t describe our weather well. We have more extremes.”

Tuesday’s snow survey compared to a year ago is an example of the extremes Frank Gehrke is talking about. On Feb. 28 the water content near the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe was 16 percent of normal compared to 178 percent of normal a year ago.

Gehrke, who measures the snow near Echo Summit five times a year for the state Department of Water Resources, won’t make any predictions about what March will bring. But to play catch up “we need a significant, major turn around in the storm track,” Gehrke said.

The snow depth was 17.7 inches, with 3.9 inches worth of water.



Frank Gehrke finds little snow to measure Feb. 28 near Sierra-at-Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Years like this were also recorded in 1945, 1963 and 1991. In ’45 and ’91 the slow start was followed by a tremendous March. But history does not necessarily repeat itself.

“We’re not doing too well up here,” Gehrke said.

To those who don’t live in the area it might have been hard to believe Gehrke. He was breaking tracks as he snowshoed through fresh snow. Trees were covered with white stuff. A bitter wind whipped through the air and storm clouds passed overhead.

But snow in the Sierra has been scarce as the measurements show. Storms have been sporadic at best.

Normally the water content increases with the February measurement by 4 to 5 inches. In the past month it went up one-tenth of an inch.

There is so little snow, with so little water content that instead of measuring each of the stops along the route, Gehrke pours the collections into a bucket to be measured at the end.

“In shallow snowpacks it’s more accurate to weigh it in bulk,” he said.

While those in Tahoe know the dismal snowfall has created a cash-flow problem for most businesses in the region, the impact to the rest of California likely won’t be felt until this summer or later.

Reservoirs are doing OK based on runoff from last winter, but the State Water Project has reduced the amount of water it expects to deliver to entities down stream to 50 percent of their allocation. This is down from projections of 60 percent. Last year these 29 public agencies that service 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland received 80 percent of their allocation.

If the snowpack does not improve this year, water managers will need to think about how best to allocate resources for next year.

But March is trying to do its best to not be dry and disappointing. The winter storm warning issued by the National

Weather Service is from 10pm Wednesday to noon Thursday – the first day of March. With it, expect 2 to 4 feet of snow above 7,000 feet and 12 to 30 inches below that elevation.

Talk about TRPA

The “fireside chat” originally scheduled for Feb. 27 at Sierra Nevada College with Joanne Marchetta, executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, has been rescheduled for 6-7:30pm March 5 at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences on the campus of Sierra Nevada College at Incline Village.

The subject of the presentation is 21st Century Environmentalism and the Regional Plan update.