Truths about Twain and Tahoe unfold in painful prose

By Kathryn Reed

Mark Twain and Lake Tahoe; I never thought those two subjects put into one book could bore me.

I like Twain, Tahoe and history, but "Fairest Picture: Mark Twain at Lake Tahoe" by David Antonucci was painful to get through. Part of the problem is I don't think it was edited well. And the writing falls flat. I almost felt like I was in a boring lecture hall.



If it weren't for the author being from the Lake Tahoe Basin, history guru Dave Borges singing the praises of the book, and Antonucci's book "Snowball's Chance" getting a favorable review on *Lake Tahoe News* nearly two years ago, I would have put the book down without completing it.

Delving into what part is true, what is embellished and what are falsehoods when it came to what Twain wrote about Tahoe and what others have subsequently said are worthy endeavors. For that, Antonucci should be applauded. His research skills are not in question.

Maybe it was my mistake in assuming I was about to read something different. It read much like research paper – all 294 pages. Maybe I was just hoping for a little Twain to come out on the pages.

One problem is the book is disjointed. Thus, the need for a better editor.

Another is it took too long to get into the parts about Twain.

While the history at the beginning is interesting, if that's what you are looking for, it's not what I expected to read from the get-go.

On pages 240-41 are charts giving "yes" and "no" answers to where things actually are compared to what Twain or others wrote. Had this been at the beginning and then the supporting material for the answers outlined, it would have read better and been more interesting.

The diagrams, old photos – those are what makes this book worth picking up.

Chapter 7 "In the footsteps of Mark Twain" is also a highlight. It tells readers how to retrace the steps of the famous author. That would have made for a perfect final chapter. That goes back to the editing process.

The one thing I learned is Twain did not call the lake the "Jewel of the Sierra". Antonucci says credit for that phrase should be given to David Starr Jordan, who was a naturalist, president of Stanford University and director of the Sierra Club.

Some of the references to lake clarity were also interesting, especially in light of all that is going with that subject.

Antonucci writes, "According to the 1985 scientific study, existing beaches at Lake Tahoe formed in one of two ways. The sediment discharges of nearby streams nourished the formation of beaches under natural pre-Tahoe Dam conditions. Other beaches formed more recently, when the Tahoe Dam raised the lake to an unnatural level that initiated erosion of the otherwise stable waterfront cliffs and backshore."

What will you remember most about 2011?

Opinion: Still looking for the earmarks ban

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Dec. 18, 2011, Sacramento Bee.***

The $1.1 trillion spending bill passed by the House of Representatives on Friday includes all kinds of necessary spending and all kinds of earmarks that are far more questionable.

According to U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Oklahoma, the omnibus spending bill includes:

• $40 million for a "National Bio- and Agro-defense Facility" sought by outgoing Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas.

• $30 million for the "Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering Teaching and Research Corridor" at the University of Alabama, solicited by Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Alabama.

• $21 million for the "Yazoo Basin, Mississippi Delta Headwater Project" sought by both senators from Mississippi.

And that's just the start of it. As analysts look deeper into this spending bill, they are sure to find other earmarks far

more porky than the ones listed above.

One thing they won't find is authorization of levee work in Natomas that is essential to protect lives and property. The Sacramento region, to be sure, did receive more than $42 million in appropriations for flood control work already authorized by Congress, and it should be thankful for that. But because of Republican rules restricting use of "earmarks" in the House, Congress has yet to act on the authorization needed to continue the Natomas levee improvements.

The Republican restrictions on earmarks would be easier to swallow if the House enforced them uniformly. Yet that's not the case. Just this month, Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., released a study that identified 115 earmarks in this year's defense authorization bill worth $834 million. House Republicans sought 40 of these, and Democrats sought 75.

Read the whole story

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3 top youth shredder movies shot by S. Lake Tahoe firm

By Kathryn Reed

Snowboarding over a car may not be an original trick, but how many 5-year-olds can say they've done it?

Bailey Duran for one.

First Tracks Productions in South Lake Tahoe immortalized the event on film. This video and two others by the local company caught the attention of Ski Channel. The three are part of a top 10 list of best mini shredder (aka kid) videos of the

year. The one of Bailey jumping the car is No. 1.



Lexis Roland at Regan Beach in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Carrie Reiter

“The folks at Ski Channel came across them organically. We didn’t send them to them,” said Anthony Cupaiuolo, who with his wife, Karen Johnson, started the ski film company in fall 2001.

Bailey is from Connecticut and mostly skis Vermont. Dylan Heinstein is from the Bay Area and is part of the Burton program at Northstar. His whole video was shot at Northstar. Lexi Roland is from Minnesota, though a significant amount of the winning video was shot in Lake Tahoe.

It’s not that First Tracks doesn’t work with Tahoe area youth; it’s all about parents finding them. And with the Internet making the world smaller, people have more choices readily available for whatever they want.

While there are “Little League parents” in the ski world, Cupaiuolo says most of the parents he runs into are easy to work with. Parents aren’t likely to ask someone to shoot their kid knowing a tantrum might be thrown. The kids Cupaiuolo has worked with all want to be on the slopes.

“It’s easy because all the kids I work with are doing this

because they love it," Cupaiuolo told *Lake Tahoe News*.

When he started in the ski film industry it was all about the backcountry and making a DVD to sell each year. But with everyone thinking they can shoot quality video, YouTube's popularity and the public's desire for immediacy, the last DVD First Tracks Productions put out was in 2009.

That's not to say the company is only shooting kids. They like to mix it up. Cupaiuolo likes being in the backcountry on a splitboard.

"Working with adults you can talk about what it is we are looking for," Cupaiuolo said. "Kids want to play and have fun."

But at the same time those youngsters have seen plenty of film to know what tricks are hot, who's doing what and that camera angles, sunlight and shadows all play a part in how a video of them will ultimately look.

And these aren't your average youngsters.

"The kids we have been filming are already on a level where they are doing stuff I don't do. You have to check your ego aside," Cupaiuolo said.

His footage of Lexi was part of the Warren Miller movie two years ago. The legendary film company has been talking to Cupaiuolo about the talent he will be shooting this winter in case there is an opportunity to incorporate it into the 2012 Warren Miller film.

With a bit more time on their hands now that First Tracks isn't doing an annual video, the company is expanding a bit.

This summer they were at Northstar to shoot the All Women Sports Camp.

Mountain biking and BMX were sports shot this past year by

First Tracks. Next summer kayaking and surfing are on the list of things to film.

They regularly shoot promotional footage for Prior Splitboards in British Columbia, as well as work for other companies. With video being a growing segment for how companies promote themselves, short travel vignettes are becoming popular.

What Cupaiuolo is working on is securing a six-episode television project featuring young athletes. He wouldn't give more away about it at this point.

While Cupaiuolo and Johnson have a 9-month-old daughter, she isn't on YouTube yet. Cupaiuolo said family and friends don't understand why only four videos of the little one exist. He says that may change when Olivia starts riding. Then he'll definitely have a Tahoe kid in his stable.

Squaw, Alpine challenge riders to raise the most money to fight hunger

To the community,

As we dance for snow, there are people in our community who can't get enough food to eat. So Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows are engaging in a friendly little competition to raise money for Project MANA, Truckee/North Lake Tahoe's hunger relief organization.

To kick things off I will donate $1,000 – $500 on behalf of

each resort and now we are going to see who can raise more money – Squaw or Alpine. Through New Year's Day employees and guests can make online donations on behalf of either Squaw or Alpine. One hundred percent of all donations go to Project MANA. While each resort hopes to be the one to raise the most money, the winners will be the hungry people that Project MANA feeds.

We've heard from many of you about the rituals you have to make it snow. From not washing the car to leaving your summer stuff on the lawn. Some of you have gone so far as to leave your powder boards at the shop so they won't be accessible when it dumps snow. That's dedication. We hope you'll join us in our new snow dance effort and make a donation today to Project MANA. Hunger happens every day to people in all walks of life. Organizations like Project MANA help them through the hard times so they can land solidly on their feet.

Several years ago Project MANA helped a husband and wife who moved here from Colorado for his job. They quickly realized they could not survive on his salary alone and came to Project MANA for food while she looked for work. Eventually she got a good job and between the two salaries they no longer needed Project MANA's services. A couple of years later she became the president of a community charity that provides grants to local nonprofits and Project MANA is one of the recipients. True story.

We hope you'll join us in helping those in the Truckee/Tahoe community who are not getting enough to eat. Make your donation today.

Kindest regards and snow filled thoughts,

Andy Wirth, president and CEO Squaw

Special courts give veterans a second chance

By Foon Rhee, Sacramento Bee

Amos Lee Gregory Jr. didn't get help for post-traumatic stress from his time aboard Navy attack submarines. He got by – until the day he snapped.

He was headed to prison – until he found a court just for military veterans. There, he finally received treatment and counseling, and also awakened an interest in art that is now his career.

Wednesday marked a big milestone – after 18 months in Santa Clara County's veterans court, he "graduated."

He tried to act nonchalant about it, but when the judge declared that Gregory had completed all his requirements and wiped his record clean, his fist pump gave away how much it means.

"Everything," he told me. "The court saved my life."

Veterans courts have been steadily expanding across California. Now, they're coming to the Sacramento region; judges and advocates in El Dorado County plan to start one on Jan. 1. The state Department of Veterans Affairs hopes 20 are established by July – just as thousands of soldiers come home to California from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Read the whole story

Youth dies from injuries after falling from chairlift

By Reno Gazette-Journal

SODA SPRINGS — A 7-year-old boy has died after falling about 60 feet from a chair lift at the Sugar Bowl ski resort west of Lake Tahoe.

Resort spokesman John Monson says the boy, a member of the Sugar Bowl Ski Team, died Tuesday due to injuries sustained in the fall. He was practicing with the team when he fell Sunday from the Mount Lincoln lift.

The boy was taken to Renown Medical Center in Reno, where he had surgery to relieve pressure in his skull from a head injury.

Read the whole story

Study: Millennials find Internet a basic necessity in life

By Mike TeSelle, KCRA-TV

The importance of online social media is as important as the basic necessities of life for the millennial generation,

according to a new survey by Cisco.

“One in three said the Internet was as important as air, water, food and shelter,” Cisco Senior Vice President Carlos Dominguez said.

Dominguez also said a majority of Internet users ignore company security policies or engage in other risky personal behaviors online.

Seven out of 10 employees worldwide admitted to breaking company policy with varying regularity, said the annual Cisco Connected World Technology Report.

Read the whole story

Public boat ramps in Tahoe closed Dec. 25, Jan. 1

Cave Rock, Sand Harbor and Lake Forest launch boat ramps will be closed Christmas and New Year’s Day.

No inspections or decontaminations will be available either day.

Private facilities, such as the Tahoe Keys Marina, Obexer’s, or Ski Beach may be open and should be contacted directly for hours of operation. Private launch ramps/marinas will only launch wire-sealed boats.

Warren Hellman – 1934-2011

By Peter Lattman, New York Times

Warren Hellman, a Wall Street investor who was president of Lehman Brothers and whose passion for bluegrass inspired him to create a San Francisco music festival that draws hundreds of thousands of people a year, died on Sunday in San Francisco. He was 77.

The cause was complications of leukemia, according to a spokeswoman for Hellman & Freidman, the investment firm he co-founded.

Mr. Hellman, whose parents came from two prominent San Francisco families, had a finance career on both coasts. After nearly 20 years at Lehman in New York, he started several money management businesses, including Hellman & Friedman in San Francisco, one of the country's most successful private equity funds.



Warren Hellman

More recently Mr. Hellman focused on philanthropy, bestowing millions of dollars on cultural, educational and medical charities in the Bay Area.

He was also a lead investor and member of Sugar Bowl Resort's board of directors.

The three-day concert he founded, Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, held each year in Golden Gate Park, has been financed entirely

by him.

Wiry, impish and informal — he favored frayed khakis and cowboy shirts — Mr. Hellman was something of a free spirit. He traveled around the country with his bluegrass band, the Wronglers, performing with them as recently as October. An accomplished endurance athlete, he twice completed a 100-mile running race through the Sierra Nevada mountains.

“Warren was an individualist,” said James D. Wolfensohn, the former president of the World Bank and a business-school classmate of Mr. Hellman’s. “He had the confidence and access that comes along with being from a prominent family, but never rested on his laurels and lived the life he wanted.”

Frederick Warren Hellman was born on July 25, 1934, in Manhattan. He was not, as many assumed, an heir to the Hellmann’s mayonnaise fortune; his pedigree was in the finance and rag trades. His father was Marco F. Hellman, an investment banker. His mother was the former Ruth Koshland, whose relatives were prosperous wool merchants in California.

His great-grandfather, Isaias W. Hellman, was a Jewish immigrant from Bavaria who became one of California’s leading financiers and served as president of Wells Fargo Nevada National Bank, which later became Wells Fargo.

Mr. Hellman grew up in San Francisco and graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, where he played varsity water polo. After graduating from Harvard Business School in 1959, he joined Lehman Brothers, where his uncle, Frederick L. Ehrman, was a senior executive and later chairman.

Read the whole story