2 men brandish weapon during robbery at S. Tahoe gas station

Two men armed with at least one gun and wearing masks robbed a South Lake Tahoe gas station Saturday night.

Officials are not saying how much money the men stole from the USA gas station at 2470 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

The suspects entered the store area of the station about 10:30pm Oct. 8, “pulled a large revolver type handgun on the clerk”, demanded money and then left, according to officers. Neither the clerk nor the three customers were injured.



A suspect pulls a gun Oct. 8 on a S. Tahoe gas station clerk. Photos/Provided

The K-9 unit was not able to track down the suspects.



Officers are looking for this men.

The suspect with the handgun was wearing a light colored hooded jacket, baggie blue jeans, black shoes, black gloves and a black face mask. He was described as having a large build, approximately 5-feet-9, with light olive colored skin .

The other suspect carrying a red backpack was wearing a grey sweat shirt with black shoulders, blue jeans, white shoes, and wearing a dark hood/facemask. He was described as having a large build, approximately 5-feet-11, with light colored skin tone.

Anyone with information regarding this case is asked to call South Lake Tahoe police detectives at (530) 542.6100.

TRPA releases first set of changes involving Regional Plan update

Updated: Oct. 17, 2011.

As part of the Regional Plan update, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has released the public draft of an overhauled

Code of Ordinances that is more than 1 pound lighter than the current code.

Most of the changes in the draft document will not need to wait next year's scheduled adoption of the Regional Plan update to take effect. The TRPA Governing Board could vote to adopt the reformatted and what staff is calling a more understandable version of the code in November.

The next phase will make substantive changes to the Code of Ordinances in order to implement updated policies of the broader Regional Plan.

The public review draft documents are available online.

A joint public workshop with the TRPA Governing Board and Advisory Planning Commission is scheduled for Oct. 26 in Kings Beach. The TRPA Governing Board is scheduled to consider adoption of the revisions at its Nov. 16 meeting.

Dravecky to speak in Minden

Former San Francisco Giants pitcher Dave Dravecky will speak at LifePoint Church in Minden Oct. 22-23.

Dravecky pitched for the Giants from 1987-1989. He came back from cancer, but career ended when his pitching arm snapped during a game in 1989.

LifePoint Church is at 1095 Stephanie Way. For more information, call (775) 267.0151.

NLTFPD working with students about fire issues

The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District will be teaming up with schoolteachers and students to talk about fire safety during the month of October.

Fire Prevention Week is celebrated nationally Oct. 9-15.

The district will host tours of the fire station and visit pre-schools all month. The theme this year focuses on protecting your family from fire. Fires can strike anywhere, but household fires are often the most tragic and are the most preventable. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, 75 percent of all fire fatalities occur in home fires.

There are several things families can do to protect their families: Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and testing them monthly, remember to change smoke alarm batteries twice a year, and practice a family escape plan.

“Over the next several weeks our fire district will be teaching our students the importance of not only smoke alarms, but making a Home Fire Escape Plan and practicing the plan. Students can experience firsthand in our smoke safety trailer how to properly exit a home, then call 911 from their safe meeting place, and once out, not to go back inside,” public education/information officer Tia Rancourt said in a statement.

Literature will be sent home with students for the entire family.

To learn more about Fire Prevention Week and how to “Protect Your Family from Fire”, go online.

Muscle therapy Sausalito-style – bike, kayak, massage

By Susan Wood

SAUSALITO – The term R&R must have been born here.

When visitors are ready to venture out of their rooms in this Marin County haven, they'll find plenty to do – activities that encompass relaxation and recreation.

For starters, the historic Casa Madrona hotel sits in the center of town on Bridgeway Avenue next to the shoreline. A short walk from our hotel places us in the hands of accomplished massage therapists at the newly remodeled spa at the hotel built in 1885 overlooking Richardson Bay.



On water or land, Sausalito has something for most everyone. Photos/Kathryn Reed

At the first stop for our appointment, Kae and I received warm towels to place on our faces. It immediately took me back to

my flying experience with Thai Air, which I swear could teach our domestic carriers how to treat airline passengers.

Next came a waiting room with comfy lounge chairs. We were early so I almost drifted off to sleep holding my cup of lemon water. From there, Elizabeth took me to her room for a “solar flare” body treatment, and Gary gave Kae a “Sea-to-Shore” massage. The therapies each cost $105.

His experienced hands put her to sleep. I stayed awake to ask questions about my treatment being that I usually just get a massage at spas. This was much more. Elizabeth, a Point Reyes native, started me off with a sugar scrub. After a quick shower, my skin felt silky – and not dry. It got even better from there with my shea butter rub with hot basalt stones, then a four-layer body wrap that included a solar blanket – something I would definitely appreciate on a cold, drizzly day. (That was the day before.)

The bridge to fall or even winter

Lake Tahoe’s Mark Twain said it best as I learned on our rite of passage crossing the Golden Gate Bridge on bicycles: “The coldest winter I’ve ever spent was a summer in San Francisco.”

Out of the partly sunny skies of our Sausalito hotel, Inn Above Tide, is a short route to the famed suspension bridge a few miles away. The world-renowned landmark was drenched with fog, but we didn’t care as we made our way down Alexander Avenue to the Conzelman Street parking lot. It is a huge hangout for cyclists of all abilities.

We took the 1.7-mile path on the west side of the bridge, which just reopened after being closed for a seismic retrofit. (The east side deemed for pedestrians is now closed for the construction job.)

The bridge built in 1937 accommodates six lanes of traffic, but I was more enamored with my own little world on the path

and looking over the edge. When I looked down, I was amazed by the dramatic drop to a rocky coastline and open, rough seas. Upon looking up, the bridge pillars disappear in the fog. The wind blew our bicycles to a complete stop at the occasional hairpin turns around the towers, so respect should be paid to the structure and the invigorating elements when crossing it. The Golden Gate was designated a California Historical landmark seven years ago.

From peddle to paddle, fog to sunshine

Another ideal option for things to do in Sausalito is taking a kayak through Richardson Bay – especially on a sunbathing day in which the water glistens and lies still as glass. The activity made up the highlight for the last day of our weekender based out of Inn Above Tide. A 15-minute walk down Bridgeway to Liberty Ship Way brought us to Ellie, who provided friendly tips and instruction at Sea Trek.

The touring marine company offers a long list of excursions and rentals. We took a two-person ocean kayak farther north in Richardson Bay where smiling, lazy seals and sea lions, and intrepid blue herons and pelicans allowed us to cruise up and greet them on the docks after a 10-minute paddle. Weaving down through the houseboat village turned out to be an architectural sightseeing treat. I soon discovered “houseboat” is a relative term. Some were mansions. Others had that Marin County character – complete with a peace sign on at least one exterior wall.

And without a boat or bicycle, a driving tour can provide a memorable experience using Sausalito as a launching pad. Our trip up Highway 1 included lunch at the Olema Inn with me envisioning my Tacoma truck was really a Porsche Boxster. We can all dream.

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Future of pesticide use in Lake Tahoe debated

By Kathryn Reed

“Can we trust Lahontan to protect our interests? I don’t know.”

Those were South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Bruce Grego’s words at Tuesday’s City Council meeting. Lahontan was in the building to give a presentation about the likelihood of the water board soon allowing pesticides to be used to eradicate aquatic invasive species.



Milfoil is a problem in the Tahoe Keys and elsewhere in Lake Tahoe. Photo/TRCD

While the regional water board intends to have a lengthy process for anyone wanting to go this route, Grego isn’t sure they are trustworthy.

On the other hand, Mayor Hal Cole said he couldn’t imagine the agency permitting the use of a substance that would threaten

the drinking water supply. He added that having grown up here he knows the lake doesn’t look like it did decades ago.

While South Lake Tahoe does not get its water from Lake Tahoe, other purveyors in the basin do, plus the outflow in Tahoe City via the Truckee River is the drinking water source for Reno and other areas.

At issue are the various nonnative species in Tahoe that are posing various problems for the lake, while aesthetically creating an eyesore at the shoreline for beach-goers.

The presentation at the Oct. 4 council meeting was for information purposes only. Lahontan is taking comments on the proposal before its December board meeting in South Lake Tahoe. (Location and time not yet set.) The Environmental Protection Agency must sign off on the proposal, which would not happen until at least spring 2012.

Mary Fiore-Wagner with Lahontan told the council the current policy is too restrictive and that entities like county vector control violate the policy when spraying to wipe out mosquitoes. Instead of turning a blind eye to this reality, the policy would legally allow for such chemical uses around waterways.

This is not just a Tahoe issue. The pesticide use would affect Lahontan’s entire jurisdiction, which is a large swath of the state.

Dan Sussman of Lahontan tried to reassure the council that the robust permit and monitoring process is designed to have public safety as the top priority.

Lahontan’s philosophy is the use of pesticides provides another tool to deal with aquatic invasive species that when used judicially will be an overall benefit to the environment.

Tahoe City celebrates fall with Harvest Festival

The Tahoe City PUD Parks and Recreation Department's annual Harvest Festival and Pumpkin Patch is Oct. 22 from 10am-2pm.

This family event is the wrap up to the Tahoe City Downtown Associations yearly Oktoberfest which is the backbone of the fall celebration in Tahoe City.

Although there isn't much fall harvesting in the basin besides pine needles and firewood, Tahoe City likes to participate in a tradition that takes place worldwide.

The Harvest Festival and Pumpkin Patch is going into its fourth year at Rideout Community Center. Back for the second year is the "Pumpkin Seed."

For more information, call (530) 583.3440, ext.14.

Opinion: California must boost water storage

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Oct. 5, 2011, Contra Costa Times.***

There's nothing like a couple of wet years to dampen arguments that environmental protection regulations are depleting water supplies needed by agricultural and urban users.

A record 6.5 million acre-feet has been pumped from the Delta this year, mostly to Central Valley farms and Southern California. That is enough to serve the state's entire population for a year and a half.

Much of the water went to refill water banks and reservoirs, which were depleted during the dry years from 2007 through 2009.

It was the three-year drought, not environmental rules, that resulted in water pumping reductions to the dismay of farmers, who blamed what they believed were overly strict pumping regulations to protect fish and wildlife.

Even with all the record pumping this year, millions of acre-feet of water went out to sea. In one period earlier this year, 3 million acre-feet of fresh water flowed to the sea in just 10 days.

That is the amount of water that makes the difference between California having an adequate water supply and an insufficient one.

If California's annual rain and snowfall were similar to those of the past couple of years, there would be far fewer problems with meeting everyone's needs. But that is not the case.

Read the whole story

Tightening grape supply alters winery strategies

By Rudy Ruitenberg, Bloomberg News

U.S. wineries producing lower-cost wines face shrinking profit margins as a tightening supply of domestic grapes lifts prices for the fruit, Rabobank International said.

Rising grape costs are prompting some large U.S. wine companies to rethink supply strategies, Rabobank analysts Stephen Rannekleiv, Marc Soccio and Valeria Mutis wrote in a report published Wednesday. That may help vineyard prices “in the near future,” they wrote.

U.S. wine consumption has risen for the past 17 years, while grape area has been “fairly flat,” Rabobank said. Spot prices for Chardonnay grapes in the Napa Valley rose to between $1,300 and $2,000 a metric ton this year from $700 to $1,300 in 2010, San Rafael wine and grape broker Ciatti Co. said in a July presentation.

“Wineries that are more exposed to the spot market are most affected,” the analysts wrote, adding that wine-merchant brands will be under “significant margin pressure. Estate-driven wineries that own their own production are currently in an enviable position.”

Vineyard profits in California have been too low to attract more planting as imported wine created a ceiling on prices for the state’s growers, Rabobank said. At the same time, bulk imports helped keep costs in check for Californian wineries, according to the report.

Read the whole story

‘Do nothing’ becomes mantra during Sausalito hotel stay

By Susan Wood

SAUSALITO – In a place where boats dominate the landscape, the fantasy of permanently drifting through life here like the ebb and flow of the tide became our weekend reality at the Inn Above Tide.

From the moment we drove in, inn staffer David greeted us with a sincere welcoming to the gated parking area. There I knew we were in store for something special. He later brought up the luggage only to ask if we’d like Champagne flutes. The attention to detail is unmatched.



Sometimes it's best just to watch the world go by from a hotel balcony. Photos/Kathryn Reed

In all my days of travel exploration, I have never experienced such a hotel where I’ve wanted to stay inside the whole time wrapped in a cushy robe and soft slippers with the quiet lapping sounds of the tide touching the building just below. The shore is so close one could almost treat the deck like a

diving board.

It’s no wonder at least three guest service workers at this 15-year-old independent boutique hotel warned us of others who show up but never leave the room. (If you do find yourself out during the day, like we did to bike across the Golden Gate Bridge, here’s a lunch tip: Get it to go at the Venice Gourmet Deli to enjoy on the balcony. We opted for pasta salad, marinated mushrooms and a veggie sandwich – one of five on the menu).

The next day, we didn’t go out until 2:30pm, except to drop one floor for a feast of quiche, fruit, muffins, bagels, coffee and fresh-squeezed orange juice in the common area for breakfast. A woman from Los Angeles who comes every year calls the inn “paradise.” The next morning, I brought a breakfast tray to our room to dine on the balcony.

Although the inn starts the day with a list of possible activities, why bother leaving the room? The view from the private deck or even from the bed is beyond mesmerizing. That’s why the inn provides binoculars as an added perk. The balcony above the bay by the ferry dock in this Marin town became my favorite space. The Bay Bridge is within view, along with Angel Island, Belvedere and across the bay to San Francisco. All 29 rooms come with this view and a private deck equipped with teak patio furniture. It’s an ideal setting for breakfast and lunch or even dinner as the lights of San Francisco come on. If there’s a nip in the air, a flick of a switch ignites a gas fireplace and an oversized tub can warm up the inner self.

We slept with the slider open all night. Seagulls, foghorns and boat motors are further reminders of the marine environment by day and night.

In the evening, the inn serves an ample supply of wine and cheese.

A friendly chat with Chuck from Boston reinforced the idea that this is a place for special occasions. He and his wife were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

And for special occasions, it’s highly recommended a guest bring a furnished wallet. Ten rooms start at $320 a night and go up to $1,100 a night for the penthouse suite.

An unusual complimentary amenity is bicycles to use for exploring.

For a fee, a guest may order in-room dining through Room Service of Marin (in keeping with the never-leave theme) and a private in-room massage and other spa services (for enhancing the relaxed mood). We opted to head down the street to the Casa Madrona’s new remodeled spa, which the Inn recommends for a full service facility.

If you go:

The Inn Above Tide is located at 30 Portal in Sausalito off Bridgeway Avenue near the ferry docks. The hotel may be reached by calling (415) 332.9535 or 800.893.8433, or go online.

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