Rib ‘experiment’ has grown to be ‘Best in the West’

By Mel Shields, Sacramento Bee

The growth of John Ascuaga’s Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-Off over its 23 years has been nothing short of phenomenal.

While other special events nationwide have gone begging for attendees in a sad economy, this one is expected to grow even more this year. The fact that it takes place Labor Day weekend, one of the busiest periods in Northern Nevada tourism, doesn’t hurt, but the fact that it has a reputation for being well-run and providing a great atmosphere for families doesn’t hurt either. It’s remained remarkably blemish-free.

Last year, visitors to the Reno cook-off managed to polish off 200,000 pounds of ribs. There were a half million people in attendance. This year, the Nugget has ordered 280,000 pounds for the 24 competing cookers, all vying for a piece of the $14,000 cash purse. If that seems a bit small when compared with other competitions, remember that bragging rights are the big prize. The cook-off is usually cited as the country’s most prestigious.

The cooker with the target on its forehead is last year’s winner, Bone Daddy’s BBQ of Midland, Mich. Bone Daddy’s feat last year was more impressive because it also won the People’s Choice Award.

New competitors are rare in the competition, and there’s always a waiting list. This year has allowed for one – Uncle Bub’s out of Westmont, Ill., one of the most popular destinations in the Chicago area.

Read the whole story

Opinion: What Nevada’s cell phone law means

By Washoe County Sheriff’s Office

Nevada legislation aimed at decreasing the number of accidents caused by distracted driving will go into effect on Oct. 1.

“The goal of Nevada’s new ‘hand free’ legislation is to save lives,” Washoe County Assistant Sheriff Tim Kuzanek said.

According to information from AAA’s Foundation for Traffic Safety, distracted driving, including the use of cell phones is one of the major contributors to automobile accidents. Statistics show that between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes related to distracted driving occur every day in the United States. In the course of a year, distracted driving such as cell phone use, eating or drinking while driving, or anything else that takes your mind and eyes off the road, contributes to as many as one half of the 6 million crashes reported annually in this country. A 2010 AAA study also showed that the majority of drivers (62 percent) feel that talking on a cell phone is a very serious threat to safety, but they do not always behave accordingly or believe that others share these views. In fact, nearly 70 percent of those surveyed admitted to talking on their phones and 24 percent said they read or sent text messages or emails while driving in the previous month.

Nevada’s new texting law “makes it a crime for a person to manually type or enter text into a cellular telephone or other similar device, or to send or read data using any such device, while operating a motor vehicle. The law further prohibits a person from using such a device for voice communications unless the device is used with an accessory which allows the

person to communicate without using his or her hands, with certain limited exceptions.”

According to this legislation, drivers must use hands-free equipment in order to make or receive phone calls on cell phones or other wireless communications devices. Exceptions include emergency personnel, licensed amateur radio operators who are communicating certain public information, employees of public utilities who are responding to emergencies, or drivers who are reporting emergencies or responding to dangerous situations. GPS devices are not included in this legislation.

In accordance with the law, law enforcement will issue only warnings to violators from Oct. 1 through the end of 2011. Fines will be imposed beginning in 2012.

The Governors Highway Safety Association offers the following suggestions while driving:

- Turn it off. Turn off your phone or switch to silent mode before you get in the car.
- Spread the word. Set up a special message to tell callers that you are driving and you’ll get back to them as soon as possible, or sign up for as service that offers this.
- Find a Safe Place. If you need to make a call, find a legal and safe place to pull over and park first.
- Use your passengers. Ask a passenger to make the call for you.
- X the Text. Don’t ever text and drive, surf the web or read your email while driving. It is dangerous and against the law in most states.
- Prepare. Review maps and directions before you start to drive. If you need help when you are on the road, ask a passenger to help or pull over to a safe location to

review the map/directions again.

- Secure your pets. Pets can be a big distraction in the car. Always secure your pets property before you start to drive.
- Keep the kids safe. Pull over to a safe location to address situations with your children in the car.
- Focus on the task at hand. Refrain from smoking, eating, drinking, reading, and any other activity that takes your mind and eyes off the road.

Reno Balloon Race to honor those who died on 9/11

The Great Reno Balloon Race board of trustees, together with officials from Nevada, Reno, Sparks and Washoe County will honor the heroes and remember the lives lost in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the last day of the Great Reno Balloon Race – Sept. 11.

The official ceremony, which will take place at 6:30am before Mass Ascension, is scheduled to commence with a brief address from Gov. Brian Sandoval.

During Mass Ascension, all balloons will carry an American flag to decorate the sky in remembrance.

For early risers, the music tribute will begin at 5am with accompanying patriotic music and commentary during the Glow Show and Dawn Patrol.

The Great Reno Balloon Race is a nonprofit event provided to the community at no cost. The event celebrates its 30th

anniversary Sept. 9–11, 2011. For more information, go online.

9/11: Tahoe awakens to tragedy, Reno airport in chaos

Publisher's note: ***This is one in a 12-part series running from Sept. 1-12 about how Lake Tahoe is tied to 9/11.***

By Susan Wood

The early morning started out like any other day for me – in pursuit of coffee from the kitchen. Along the way, I turned on the television news and couldn't believe my eyes. A jet was flying into a high-rise building later identified as one of the Twin Towers in New York City.

Like most Americans on Sept. 11, 2001, I was transfixed. How could this be? Was the pilot suicidal or asleep?



From Sept. 1-12, Lake Tahoe News is looking at 9/11.

It didn’t take long before terrorism seeped into my cynical brain when I saw a second plane hit the next building.

Being a news reporter forced me to jump out of my workout clothes and onto the telephone, where I woke up the newspaper’s editor, Michael Green. He had no television, so I had to describe this unprecedented event on the East Coast and convince him it was bound to reverberate to the West.

The newsroom was rocking with activity that most community papers never see. It reminded me of the old days at larger newspapers. The conference room became a designated “war room.” Assignments were handed out readily to journalists who I’d never seen make it to work before 8am.

My primary assignment was clear and evident. I would drive to the Reno-Tahoe International Airport, where I certainly expected chaos.

On the way, I called the Federal Aviation Administration and got on a mass media conference call in which it was difficult to hear yourself think. Questions thrown out by journalists across the United States peppered the line. The FAA was shutting down airspace across the nation. The fear was astounding. Thirty-plus airplanes were unaccounted for, and aviation officials ran out of answers – abruptly leaving the conference call.

With another plane flying into the Pentagon and another into a Pennsylvania field by midmorning, targets all over the country became a real threat.

When I arrived at the airport, traffic was backed up. Police shuffled people away from the doors of the terminal as the airport was being evacuated. Frantic passengers crowded the rental car counters to make their destinations – the long way. They ran out of vehicles that day.

I’ve never seen such cooperative negotiation. I heard many

accounts of people sharing vehicles headed to states thousands of miles away from each other. Who knew when we would be able to fly again?



Susan Wood keeps covering stories that impact the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The thought entered the mind of Adam Mayberry, the airport's public information officer at that time. Now an Airport Authority trustee and spokesman for the city of Sparks, Mayberry was forced to go into overdrive 10 years ago. He established a few news conferences, kept a line open for him at all times and even spent the night at the Best Western across the street from the airport.

Sept. 11 started with a shrug by Mayberry, then disbelief turned into tragic shock and a long working day.

While law enforcement and maintenance crews were removing trash containers and shutting down roadways, Mayberry, who is a pilot, was concerned with the public safety message. With all the tools and tactics for various scenarios, nothing matched this event.

"We have all these emergency plans in place, but there's no scenario in that red binder of a national grounding as a result of a terrorist attack," Mayberry recently told *Lake Tahoe News*. And to top it all off, Airport Director Krys Bart

was struggling to return from a meeting in Canada.

Mayberry characterized the closing of the region’s airport as surreal. That was a good description. I stayed long enough that day for it to become a ghost town.

The few stragglers left to fend for themselves in trying to get home stayed glued to the televisions. I understood. It took me a few days to pull myself away. It was as though if I kept watching, the outcome would change.

It dawned on me what day it was – 9-1-1, an emergency call sign. I wondered why little mention was being made to that irony.

Instead, I concentrated on my work upon my return to the office late that afternoon. It was as active as the morning. I went home late that night exhausted – mentally, physically and emotionally. Nonetheless, I summoned enough energy to watch rescue efforts in New York pan out on television.

Outside of work, people’s consciousness in the days that followed fluctuated between a general haze and willingness to share. In times of crisis, we often pull together. There was an evident return to home and hearth as loved ones appreciated each other more and strangers in the remote town of South Lake Tahoe formed a kinship.

Forget talking about the weather. Our lives appeared to become more grounded in our roots and genuine humanity.

Susan Wood was a reporter for the Tahoe Daily Tribune on Sept. 11, 2001.

Spots available to compete in Flume Trail mountain bike race

Mountain bike racing returns to the famous Flume Trail above Lake Tahoe on Sept. 10.

The Great Tahoe Flume Race is presented by the Reno Wheelmen and sanctioned by USA Cycling. It is part of the Sierra Cup Regional Championship Series, a seven race point series to determine the best riders in Northern California and Nevada.



The race starts next to Spooner Lake in Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park at 9:30am. The course will take riders over 23 miles. The course has more than 3,300 feet of climbing and the entire course is above 7,000 feet.

There are age and ability categories for all levels of riders. All categories will complete the same course. All proceeds from the event go to supporting the all-volunteer backcountry patrol in the Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park. Celebrating its 10th year of service, the patrol provides directions, mechanical help, and medical assistance to all park users. It is an International Mountain Bicycling Association affiliated National Mountain Bike Patrol, and one of the largest chapters in the country.

Registration is online. The race is limited to the first 200 to sign up.

Sunset wine cruise benefit for TAP

A benefit for Tahoe Arts Project is planned for Sept. 15 from 6-8pm aboard the Safari Rose. The sunset wine cruise costs $55/person.

For tickets, call (530) 542.3632 or email tahoearts@aol.com.

Ill STHS student in need of financial assistance

South Tahoe High School student Cody Higgins is seriously ill and his family is in need of financial support to assist with medical expenses.

His family's friends and co-workers at State Farm Insurance, Jazzercise, and the Women of the Moose are having a fund raiser Sept. 8 from 5-7pm to help. The event will be at the South Lake Tahoe Moose Lodge, 961 Eloise Ave., South Lake Tahoe and will include a spaghetti dinner, raffles, 50/50, silent auctions, no host bar, free lemonade and bottled water for sale.

Admission is $10 for adults and $5 for children 12 and under.

Donations may be made at U.S. Bank, Account No.: Cody Higgins, at State Farm, 3351 Lake Tahoe Blvd., No. 3, or Lake Front Wedding Chapel. For more information, call Tina Roybal at (530) 318.4135 or Barbara Prado at (530) 541.4100.

2-day workshop on Writing the Family History

Check out “Grandma Went to Woodstock: Writing the Family History” Nov. 19-20 from 10am-2 pm. This two-day session will cover creating an outline, using the techniques of fiction to bring your story to life and researching your family history. The cost is $49, sign up online or by phone. Class size is limited.

All Bona Fide Books events feature entertainment, peculiarities and wholesome libations. Bona Fide HQ is located at 1069 Magua St., No. 4, Meyers, behind the Getaway Café.

For more information, go online or call (530) 573.1513.

Artist reception for Shelley Hocknell Zentner

An artist reception will be Nov. 5 from 6:30-9pm featuring the latest collection from painter Shelley Hocknell Zentner, “Written on the Body.” Music and refreshments will be provided.

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Scary Slam at Bona Fide Books

The second annual Scary Slam wraps up the month on Oct. 29 at 7pm. Costume contest, spooky guests, and surprise emcee. There’s a $5 entry fee to slam and no cost for the audience. Prizes for best slam and literary-inspired costume. Snacks, beverages and mysterious entertainment provided.

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