Pierini: ‘I have decades of hard-earned experience’



Ron Pierini

Publisher’s note: ***Lake Tahoe News asked the three Douglas County sheriff’s candidates a series of questions. The responses are running in the order they were received. All but one question is the same.***

Name: Ron Pierini

Age: 62

Occupation: Sheriff, Douglas County

What groups, nonprofits, other civic involvement are you part of outside of work?: Kiwanis, Minden/Douglas Elks, Nevada Department of Wildlife Hunter Safety Education, Carson Valley Chukar Club/ Wildlife Conservation, Tahoe-Douglas Rotary Club, Austin’s House, Ducks Unlimited, International Footprint Association, Suicide Prevention Network, Partnership for Community Resources and Operation Game Thief.

In Tahoe during the morning commute there are often multiple deputies out on Highway 50. How is enforcing speed the best use of limited resources?: Our statistics and records will show that deputies perform a variety of duties that are spread fairly evenly throughout our jurisdiction in the Tahoe basin.

An important aspect of their duties is traffic enforcement on Highway 50. Traffic issues and dangerous drivers are the leading source of complaints and reports from our citizens. The accidents and resulting injuries and deaths on Highway 50 do show it has been and remains, a public safety concern, particularly during the peak tourist season in summer, and during the hazardous weather and road conditions of winter. Traffic enforcement (including speeding) is a proven mechanism to nip many larger issues in the bud. Such issues include accidents, impaired drivers, and dangerous drivers that end up requiring many public safety resources to respond to. I am committed to the safety of our residents and visitors, and traffic enforcement is an important aspect of that commitment.

When the South Shore is busy rental units often have so many vehicles they spillover onto the streets to create a problem for locals and pose a safety issue. Currently, nothing is being done about this issue. What do you think should be done to address this ongoing issue?: Rental properties, and the subsequent impact of their use to full-time residents has always been an issue in the Tahoe basin. My staff and I have met with several of the GIDs and homeowner groups to discuss their concerns and respond within our ability and existing laws. Our office does respond to, and take enforcement action on noise complaints, public drunkenness, disorderly conduct and other misdemeanor offenses that are routinely associated with this issue. We also enforce parking violations that occur in fire and snow removal zones. However, we do not have the authority to regulate the amount of vehicles parked in a lawful manner, or to whom or how a residence is leased. Perhaps it is possible to improve the regulation of rental units. I assume that the various homeowner associations could review and revise applicable CC&Rs and work with their appointed representatives. Together they could consider county ordinances that may be drafted or modified to address the matter.

Do you believe it's better for the head of a law enforcement agency to come from inside or outside the department? Why?: I believe it is better for the CEO of a law enforcement agency to come from within the department. If you look at agencies across the country, there is more success and stability when the chief or sheriff knows the agency, the people, and the community. That person has an intimate knowledge of the agency when they have risen through the ranks, worked the various positions, and understand the relationships and personalities. Each agency is different and this unique experiential knowledge just cannot be obtained any other way. Such a leader has a deeply vested interest in keeping the agency viable and successful.

Why do you want to be sheriff?: I want to continue being sheriff of Douglas County Sheriff's Office because I believe in our mission as a department and in my own calling to serve and protect the community of Douglas County. I consider DCSO and the entire community of Douglas as an extension of my own "family". I want to keep Douglas County a safe place to live. I have a personal stake in DCSO and in the community of Douglas.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: Because, unlike the other candidates, I have decades of hard-earned experience and an indisputable track record that is all uniquely specific to the office I am running for.

What is your stand on medical marijuana? What kind of enforcement issue would that present for the department?: My personal position on medical marijuana is irrelevant because medical marijuana is a constitutional right in the state of Nevada. Our eligible citizens may cultivate, possess and use medical marijuana in accordance with the applicable laws. As the elected sheriff, I am sworn to uphold and defend that right. Our agency has not experienced any enforcement issues with medical marijuana users. We have had people using the drug illegally, under the guise of medical marijuana, but

those cases are easy to identify and address because the law is very clear.

What do you believe is needed for a good relationship between the sheriff's department and county commissioners?: Open and frank communication, a cooperative attitude and work ethic, and a sense of community-oriented government have been my cornerstones of success with our elected Board of Commissioners. During my tenure as sheriff, I have always enjoyed a productive relationship with every commissioner.

If the commissioners cut your budget by 10 percent, what program or people would you cut? Please be specific.: The fiscal budget for 2012-13 required we make a $450,000 reduction, so unfortunately we have "real world experience" in how a 10 percent budget reduction would be accomplished. About 87 percent of our budget is comprised of salary and benefits, which is standard in any service-related industry, so despite deep cuts to service and supplies, ancillary programs, and a 5 percent salary reduction, which the unions graciously volunteered to do, we still had to eliminate four positions to meet the FY12-13 mandate. A 10 percent reduction in our budget equals approximately $1.5 million, and the only way to meet that mandate would be the elimination of about 15 positions. Union contracts require that the last 15 persons hired would be laid off. Subsequent transfers and adjustments to remaining staff are also governed by union contract.

What is your relationship with businesses at Lake Tahoe that work with the sheriff's department on various events? If anything, what would you consider changing?: We enjoy a fabulous relationship with the businesses at Lake Tahoe who work with my staff at the various events throughout the year. We regularly meet before, during, and after all events to identify and address concerns and issues. I encourage you to contact Edgewood regarding the Celebrity Golf Classic, or Harrah's/Harveys regarding the summer outdoor concert series, I am confident they share my positive outlook on our

relationship.

The sheriff's department has always refused to make the New Year's Eve celebration at Stateline a sanctioned or permitted event. The casinos have asked for this and have wanted to expand the festivities, but DCSO says no. Do you believe this is a good policy? Why or why not? And how would you address it?: Special events in Lake Tahoe require significant coordination to ensure they are safe and enjoyable. DCSO is not in charge of sanctioning such events; rather DCSO's role is to provide law enforcement to ensure the public is safe. Sanctioning would have to be approved by the board of county commissioners, and permitting must be approved by the state of Nevada, as Highway 50 is a state highway. I support this cooperation so the public and businesses can directly petition the board of county commissioners who oversee the sanctioning and permitting of special events. This last New Year's Eve, the Horizon Casino was the first entity that hosted a recognized event on New Year's Eve. They applied for, and received a permit from the clerk treasurer's office for the "Summer Winter Action Tours" festival. My staff worked closely with the casino and the event organizer and provided the security they requested from DCSO.

You have been with DCSO for decades. Why do you believe it's not time for change in leadership at the top?: I have been in the position of sheriff at DCSO for only 16 years. During this time, through retirements and promotions, our command staff has seen a number of new faces. And when I say "new" I mean new to command staff, not new to DCSO. Each one of our command staff has been here for years, working their way up the ranks. Whether it is personnel, management styles, operations techniques things are constantly changing at the command level. This constant, upward evolution is one of the keys to running a successful department. We are always changing at the top.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies make less than South Lake

Tahoe police officers and El Dorado County sheriff's deputies. Does this hamper efforts to recruit employees? Do you believe deputies should be paid more? Why or why not? If yes, how would you go about getting them more money?: Our officers do make less than SLTPD and EDSO, but our recruitment competition is in the Reno area market, and those agencies also make more money, so yes, it does hamper recruitment and retention. I support our officers making a wage that is competitive with the agencies that we compete against in recruitment. Under Nevada law, I do not have the authority to provide them any wage increase, or decrease. Wage and benefit increases for our officers are governed under N.R.S. 288 that provides for collective bargaining. DCSO has three different collective bargaining units (employee unions). Those unions negotiate with the County Commission for wage and benefit matters.

What is lacking in the department right now in terms of personnel or equipment or other resources? How would you address those needs?: Due to the reductions of FY12-13 our staffing levels are tight, but we are maintaining excellent service levels, a high crime resolution rate, and one of the lowest crime rates in Nevada. Our tentative budget for FY14-15 sees the return of three deputy positions to our agency, so we will have some relief to our personnel resources. Our personnel have some of the best equipment available and DCSO is a leader in technology in Nevada, so our immediate needs are in good shape. I am glad to add that because of sound planning our future looks bright as well.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing Douglas County Sheriff's Office and how do you plan to resolve it?: Nevada is experiencing a recovery to the economic crisis. The biggest issue facing DCSO, and law enforcement in general, is to continue to serve the public in the most efficient manner possible despite such tough economic times. So while there is recovery, it is slow and will take longer than in other areas of the country, therefore we must plan accordingly. We must be

ever diligent in the recruitment and retention of good personnel, the prudent purchase of good equipment, and to maximize the return on our technology investments. I have a very experienced and motivated staff and I am confident we will continue to serve our citizens well.

What is one do-over you would like to have in terms of a professional decision you have made?: Like any tenured leader, there are decisions that did not succeed as I had hoped, but I have always looked to the future, learned from my mistakes and moved on. Most critical DCSO decisions are made collectively by highly educated, highly dedicated command staff that all share the same core philosophy of being honest and doing the right thing, even if it isn't necessarily the popular thing. This method has proven to help us (and me) avoid the desire for "do-overs" when it comes to decisions. I am fortunate that in my 16 years as sheriff none of my decisions have had a negative impact or effect on public safety, or the confidence our community has on our organization.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not already know?: I enjoy being with my family; we spend a great deal of time being outdoors including camping, fishing, hiking and hunting. I also very much enjoy volunteering for nonprofit organizations. Recently, my wife and I discovered a love of "attempted" landscaping in our yard, but this is a definite work in progress, to say the least.

Letter: Heavenly works hard at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Heavenly Mountain Resort’s product sales and services team members had a very busy night serving the 98 guests who attended Bread & Broth’s dinner April 14.

The hard working volunteers representing the PSS team were Paul Hopkins, director; Kelly Carmichael, manager; James Mitchell, assistant manager, Jimi Herbst, manager; and Jolena Hearn, greeter/host manager.

“It is always a joy to work with the crew at Bread & Broth,” said Paul Hopkins. He and his fellow Heavenly crew members have all previously volunteered at B&B dinners and their experience and helpfulness also makes them favorites with the B&B volunteers.

Bread & Broth applauds Heavenly Mountain Resort and its employees for their generous contributions of time and money to our Adopt A Day of Nourishment program and the less fortunate.

“This is a great opportunity to give back to the community in which we live,” said Jimi Herbs.

You can tell by the smiles, thanks and appreciative words of our dinner guests, that they too are very thankful that Heavenly Mountain Resorts and its employees are so involved and committed to helping their community.

For more B&B information, go online or find us on Facebook.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Golf tourney benefits Gene Upshaw Memorial Fund

NFL hall of famers, former Major League Baseball players and other sports celebrities, including Olympic freestyle skiing gold medalist Jonny Moseley, will gather July 13-14 to pay tribute to the former Oakland Raider Gene Upshaw.

They will be raising funds for cancer programs and traumatic brain injury research during the 6th annual Gene Upshaw Memorial Golf Classic at the Golf Club at Gray's Crossing in Truckee.

This is the signature fundraiser for the Gene Upshaw Memorial Fund at the Tahoe Forest Health System Foundation.

Upshaw died in August 2008 of pancreatic cancer at the age of 63.

For more info, go online.

Rides available on historic railcar

The Nevada State Railroad Museum will operate and offer rides aboard Virginia & Truckee Railway's McKeen motor car No. 22 on May 10 from 10am-4pm.

The car is a National Historic Landmark.

The car entered service for the V&T on May 9, 1910, and was retired in 1945. No. 22 is the only restored and operable

McKeen motor car remaining.

Train fares are $8 for those 12 and older; $4 museum members and children 4-11; free for children 3 or younger.

The Nevada State Railroad Museum is at 2180 South Carson St., Carson City.

Nevada adopts rules for high school graduation

By Paul Takahashi, Las Vegas Sun

Current eighth- and ninth-graders won't have to pass new exams in math, reading and writing to graduate from high school, Nevada's K-12 education leaders decided Thursday.

Earlier this year, the Nevada State Board of Education began phasing out the current High School Proficiency Exam in favor of new assessments aligned with more rigorous academic standards, called the Common Core State Standards.

State lawmakers have mandated that starting with the current crop of freshmen (class of 2017), students must take four end-of-course exams in algebra I, geometry, reading and writing to graduate.

However, the Nevada Education Department wants to "field-test" these new end-of-course exams – essentially test the new tests before fully adopting them. The field tests would help ensure the test results are valid.

Read the whole story

Massive tree thinning project to get under way

The multi-year South Shore Fuels Reduction and Healthy Forest Restoration Project is about to resume.

On April 21, work will take place between Highway 89 and Cascade Lake, and between the west end of Gardner Mountain and lower Angora Ridge. Approximately 380 acres in these areas will be thinned by hand, which is done by crews with chainsaws and involves piling the material for burning at a later time. Work is expected to last approximately one month.

Work in units along Lake Tahoe Boulevard near South Tahoe High School and the Sand Pit OHV area may begin as early as May 1. Approximately 80 acres in these units will be thinned using mechanical equipment, which cuts the tree down, cuts the tree into sections in the cutting area, and then removes the tree and as much material as possible.

The Forest Service will officially close these areas while crews are working.

The Forest Service will provide periodic updates online.

For general information on the South Shore project, go online.

Lake Tahoe SummerFest tickets on sale

Tickets to the third annual Lake Tahoe SummerFest, a series of classical music concerts the first three weekends in August, are on sale.

Prices go up June 1.

The Lake Tahoe SummerFest orchestra is comprised of world renowned musicians representative of international symphonies including the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver, among others.

Lake Tahoe SummerFest is in an intimate, 500-seat concert tent on the Sierra Nevada College campus in Incline Village.

Featured soloists will be New York Metropolitan Opera star Matthew Polenzani, Aug. 1-3, and U.S. Billboard Classical Chart best-selling pianist Simone Dinnerstein, Aug. 7-9.symphonies and operas throughout the world and has appeared as conductor for the Arizona Opera, London Symphony, the Mariinsky Orchestra, (formerly the Kirov), Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Moscow Symphony.

For more info and tickets, go online.

Children’s bereavement camp taking signups

Local children are invited to participate in the seventh annual Camp Sunrise bereavement camp.

The camp serves ages 7-14 who have experienced the death of a loved one.

It is sponsored by the Barton Foundation and Home Health and Hospice.

The camp is at Galilee Camp and Retreat Center in Glenbrook.

At Camp Sunrise, campers receive grief education and support including memory exercises, physical activity, honoring ceremonies, and talking circles. All activities, including lodging and meals, are free for campers.

Camper applications are available online. Space is limited. Applications are due May 16.

For any additional info, call 530.543.5614.

Nutting trial has far-reaching political ramifications

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Ray Nutting goes on trial for felony malfeasance Tuesday, and the political rancor is seething in El Dorado County.

In the courtroom, Nutting, a four-term county supervisor, faces prosecution for alleged misconduct related to state grants he took for clearing brush on his family ranch. But it is the spectacle surrounding his case that envelops this county east.

The prosecution of the veteran timber rancher, a stout defender of private property rights and a hero to tea party conservatives, is revealing angry divisions within the local Republican Party faithful and deep-rooted antagonisms in a county long known for its bare-knuckled politics.

In typically procedural court documents, District Attorney Vern Pierson and his top prosecutor call Nutting a “hypocrite” and blast him for supporting “puppet candidates” for office and directing “underhanded efforts … to try his case in the media.”

In turn, Nutting ripped the prosecutor, saying, “Pierson is ruthless and will stoop to the lowest levels” to destroy his enemies.

The trial has been preceded by months of angry theatrics as Nutting supporters have jammed meetings of the Board of Supervisors, protesting what they consider “bullying” tactics of a powerful county auditor-controller, Joe Harn, who triggered the prosecution by alerting the district attorney to alleged discrepancies in Nutting’s invoices for state-funded work on his ranch.

Critics of the supervisor, who has recused himself from virtually every board action since his indictment, are calling on him to step down. Meanwhile, divisions over the trial permeate county election races.

The actual legal proceedings, People of the State of Californa v. Raymond James Nutting, will take place at the turn-of-the century courthouse in Old Placerville. A retired state appellate judge from outside the county, Timothy S. Buckley,

will preside over the trial because El Dorado judges recused themselves from the case.

Read the whole story

Catalogs continue to play vital role for retailers

By Elizabeth Holmes, Wall Street Journal

When everything is available for sale on your smartphone, why do catalogs still clutter your mailbox?

The old-school marketing format has survived to play a crucial creative role in modern e-commerce. Today, the catalog is bait for customers, like a store window display, and a source of inspiration, the way roaming through store aisles can be. The hope is shoppers will mark pages they like and then head online, or into a store, to buy.

Today’s catalogs are no longer phone-book-size compilations of every item a retailer sells. Instead, they have fewer pages and merchandise descriptions, and more and bigger photos and lifestyle images.

For retailers, creating the inspiration comes with hefty costs, including expensive photo shoots and rising postage rates. And with catalogs produced many months in advance, they lock retailers into specific trends and merchandise, unlike digital marketing pieces that can be updated in minutes.

Even so, the potential for boosting sales has brought new interest in print catalogs. Some retailers founded primarily online are entering the fray, including Bonobos, the menswear

brand built on the idea of better-fitting pants. And many traditional store retailers with a history of catalogs remain as committed as ever.

Read the whole story