Weekend writing workshops

Writing Escape Workshop: A three-hour workshop on a weekend from 10am to 1pm in downtown Truckee.

Play with language and meaning in several writing prompts, generate new material, explore craft, and inspire ourselves to develop a consistent writing practice. Each workshop is different and involves much writing.

For all levels of experience and any genre.

It costs $35 each or $60 for two. The workshops are Jan. 23, March 13 and May 14.

For more info and to sign up, contact Karen Terrey at tangledrootswriting@gmail.com or (530) 386.3901.

Winter dam release changes rivers' characteristics

By Matt Weiser, Sacramento Bee

Sacramento may be 100 miles from the ocean, but it's still a community defined by water.

The past two weeks offered a powerful reminder, as both the Sacramento and American rivers have swelled substantially in response to a stormy December. Such high flows haven't been seen since the winter of 2005-06.

For some, it's an inconvenience. Parts of the American River Parkway bike path went underwater two weeks ago when releases

from Folsom Dam were doubled – to 30,000 cubic feet per second – to make way for upstream runoff. This forced some bicycle commuters to find a detour.

For others, the high flows are a thrilling reminder that a little weather can give our normally glassy-smooth rivers a whole different character.

Dams may control the flow on most Central Valley rivers, but they can't suppress everything Mother Nature dishes out.

"It seems like it's unusual because we've had a fairly long dry spell," said Rob Hartman, hydrologist in charge of the California-Nevada River Forecast Center, a branch of the National Weather Service in Sacramento.

"In reality," he said, "you would expect this to happen several times each winter, and it's not a problem. We're just trending back toward normalcy."

Read the whole story

Northstar COO not planning major changes in initial season

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – Driving into Northstar-at-Tahoe and schussing down the slopes it doesn't seem like anything is different. For now, the experience is the same.

But with Vail Resorts buying the North Shore resort in October

and Bill Rock coming on board in December as chief operating officer, change is inevitable.

The first noticeable change will be this month when Northstar starts serving the Epic Burger – which sounds like a Big Mac based on the description on Vail's website as "two fresh Angus quarter pound patties, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, organic white cheddar cheese, and a special sauce."



Bill Rock has been at the helm of Northstar-at-Tahoe for a month. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Other dining changes will be assessed as all the players become more familiar with one another.

All the employees have been retained, with some of the mountain hosts becoming full-time workers.

Jessica Van Pernis, communications manager for Northstar, said, "The Vail team was surprised how lean we were."

In regards to staffing, Rock said, "There may be structural changes down the road."

Vail also owns Heavenly Mountain Resort on the South Shore, so it's possible some blending of resources in Tahoe may occur

besides the extra help that is in Colorado.

The man in charge

Rock, who with his wife and twin 5-year-old son and daughter moved to Truckee in early December, is in observation mode at the resort.

His kids are eager to ski in Lake Tahoe. Each got in 25 days of skiing last season.

Rock said his daughter was ecstatic to be moving to California – already having a sense of style at a young age. And only after a couple laps around the outdoor ice rink in the village she apparently is a natural on skates.

Until moving here from West Virginia the only Tahoe area resort Rock had skied was Kirkwood. He had been to Squaw in the summer.

He quickly went all over Mount Pluto – Northstar's mountain with its summit of 8,600 feet.

"This mountain is laid out well. My first day it was easy to figure out," Rock said during a wide-ranging interview with *Lake Tahoe News*.

Dressed in his gray Northstar jacket Rock doesn't look like a corporate executive. With a radiant smile, he jokes about probably not needing another cup of coffee, but he opts for java instead of the alcohol that is being poured at the bar in the pub at the Northstar Village.

He seems energized by the prospect of taking over a mountain much larger than where he came from in West Virginia or in Durango.

But similarities abound between the resorts he's worked at – one being experience with homeowners.

The first month he spent mostly getting to know the mountain and employees. With the holidays behind him, Rock plans to reach out to the community this month.

Addressing issues

It’s Dec. 27 and the parking lot is full. Parking is one of the problems skiers and riders have with Northstar. Rock said recent surveys of guests show less frustration with parking, but he said there is room for more improvement.

“We know where we fall short. There are days like today where people will not get the experience of a lifetime,” Rock said. “Sometimes it’s hard to find a place to park and sometimes it’s hard to find a place to eat. We will address it for next year.”

There was a time when Northstar restricted the number of skiers allowed on the mountain. That has not happened for at least five years. Rock isn’t sure quotas would be reintroduced.

For now, Rock said, “We are dedicated to providing the experience of a lifetime for guests.”

LTN asked how that is possible when Northstar seems to be struggling with its identity because it used to be a laid back family-friendly resort before it tried transforming itself with a village like other resorts, and eventually had a Ritz-Carlton open mid-mountain in December 2009.

“We are going to be a place for people to connect,” Rock said. “They create their own memories.”

He said Northstar caters to everyone. With lodging that runs the gamut from hotel-like offerings to studios to the Ritz, he said it’s possible to be all things to all people.

It’s also possible on the mountain, Rock said, with what he described as a world-class terrain park, and a variety of

skiable acreage for all levels.

Besides being a ski resort, Northstar has a well-known mountain bike park that for the last few years has been host to the national collegiate championships.

In May, the resort is the end point for the first stage of the Amgen Tour de California road bike race that starts in South Lake Tahoe.

Rock is looking forward to getting out on his bike. The 42-year-old used to do some racing – including as a triathlete.

Weekend of barrel tasting at El Dorado County wineries

Be among the first to discover the nuances of a new vintage by joining El Dorado's award winning winemakers in their cellars for a weekend of barrel tasting.

More than 20 El Dorado wineries offering samples straight from the barrel. The weekend features sales on wine futures, light food pairings, demonstrations and other activities.

Bring out the Barrel is from 11am–5pm, Jan. 29-30.

Details on participating wineries, and a printer-friendly map is at www.ElDoradoWines.org.

A weekend pass is $20 at www.ElDoradoWines.org in advance; $25 thereafter. Buy four tickets for the price of three. Sunday only is $15 advance; $20 thereafter. Designated drivers are $5.

Temblor near Markleeville

The ground was rumbling near Markleeville at 3:57 Saturday afternoon.

The U.S. Geological Service recorded a 3.6 earthquake 4 miles from the tiny Alpine County town.

It was felt 146 miles away in Sacramento.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

A foot of snow possible in Tahoe in the next 24 hours

The National Weather Service has issued a 24-hour winter weather advisory for the Lake Tahoe Basin beginning at 10pm Saturday.

Snow accumulations are predicted to be 10 to 18 inches above 7,000 feet, with 6 to 12 inches at lake level. Highest amounts will occur south of Highway 50.

The agency said travel in the basin and in Alpine County tonight through Monday morning.

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3 stabbed at Stateline after New Year’s Eve party subsided

Ten people were arrested in the downtown casino core area of Stateline on New Year’s Eve. Charges included affray, assault, battery, domestic battery, disorderly conduct, trespassing, minor consuming alcohol and civil protective custody.

Sheriff’s investigators are also investigating a battery with a deadly weapon incident that occurred in the pre-dawn hours on New Year’s Day. The incident involved several male Hispanics who were involved in a brawl outside the casinos in Stateline. During the incident, three of the subjects were stabbed with a knife by one of the other combatants.

Two of the victims were transported to area hospitals for emergency medical care. The third victim refused medical treatment. Names of the involved parties are withheld pending investigation.

One person was arrested outside the casino core area for DUI.

The Douglas County Sheriff’s Office reports the crowd seemed no larger than in past years.

Highway 50 was closed to vehicle traffic at about 10pm to allow celebrants to flow into the roadway as they celebrated the coming of the New Year. The highway was reopened at approximately 1am after the crowd peacefully moved off the street and back into the casinos or other locales.

The Minden-Gardnerville area reported a similarly quiet evening; with one person arrested for domestic battery and one person arrested for minor consuming alcohol.

Sale of Sierra Pacific Power Co. complete

Sierra Pacific Power Company (aka NV Energy) and Liberty Energy Utilities Co. announced today the completion of the sale of Sierra Pacific's California electric distribution and generation assets to a subsidiary of Liberty Energy Utilities Co. and Emera Inc. Effective immediately, the customers previously served by Sierra Pacific Power Company, will now be served by the subsidiary, known as Liberty Energy – California Pacific Electric Company.

The sale was originally announced in April 2009 and last month the final state and federal regulatory approvals were granted to complete the transaction.

"We're proud to have served this area of California for well over 100 years," Michael Yackira, president and CEO of NV Energy, said in a press release. "Many of our long-time California employees who are experienced utility professionals are staying on with Liberty Energy to provide continuing safe and reliable electric service."

Bob Dodds, president of Liberty energy, in that same release said, "We look forward to providing a seamless transition for all of our customers and continuing to deliver the high level of service they have come to expect. As a company, we are highly focused on safety and reliability and are committed to providing a very positive customer experience well into the future."

The phone number for Liberty Energy is 800.782.2506 or go online.

NHP makes 14 DUI arrests on New Year's Eve

In a 12-hour period between 7pm New Year's Eve until 7am New Years Day, troopers from the Nevada Highway Patrol arrested 14 motorists for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Two DUI arrests were in the Carson City area, two near Fernley, and the remaining 10 were in the greater Reno-Sparks area. One of the alcohol-related arrests involved a motor vehicle collision on Interstate 80 near the Virginia Street interchange about 10:43pm. The injuries sustained in that collision were believed to be minor in nature.

One year ago the DUI arrests for the same 12-hour period were slightly higher at 18.

Several overtime shifts for this weekend's DUI saturation patrols were funded by grants from the Nevada Office of Traffic Safety and the Northern Nevada DUI Task Force.

Missing snowboarder found alive at Heavenly

Updated: 9:35am.

By Kathryn Reed

The snowboarder who went missing at Heavenly Mountain Resort

on New Year's Eve was located about 2:30am New Year's Day, according to resort officials.

"He ducked the rope off Canyon chair, which we obviously don't recommend or condone. That is what we have backcountry gates for," Russ Pecoraro, Heavenly spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News* Saturday morning.

El Dorado County sheriff's search and rescue crews on snowmobiles located the individual. The sheriff's department is the lead agency, not the resort. Law enforcement continues not to return phone calls.

The male, whose age and hometown are unknown, was found in High Meadow curled up in a ball. He was brought to a road where medics from Lake Valley Fire Department assessed him. According to fire officials, the snowboarder refused treatment and did not want to be transported to a hospital.

With snow starting to fall early this morning in the basin and overnight lows in single digits, it's possible this could have been a recovery instead of a rescue.

About 6 inches have fallen at lake level on the South Shore as of 8:30am.

Ski conditions outside designated trails are precarious because of the amount of snow that has fallen this season as well as the temperatures and consistency of the snow.

For those venturing in the backcountry, be sure to check with the Sierra Avalanche Center for current conditions. Today is rated moderate.

With storms coming one right after another, it makes it difficult for rescuers to find a missing person. This is because tracks get covered, conditions prohibit crews from going out and the missing person is not likely to be equipped to cope with such conditions for an extended period of time.

Lake Tahoe had its first fatality of the season this week when a snowboarder was found in a tree well at Alpine Meadows.

A winter weather advisory remains in effect until 10 this morning. Snow is expected to taper off this afternoon, with another storm rolling in Sunday.