Fire damages attic of S. Tahoe ski shop

The South Lake Tahoe Fire Department made quick work of a commercial structure fire in a ski rental shop Nov. 26. The fire at 1098 Ski Run Blvd. was located in the attic of a single story commercial building.

The quick actions of the owner fire crews limited the damage to the attic space and did not affect any of the stock or operations in the shop. The cause of the fire was due to faulty electrical installation.

This fire had the potential to spread to adjacent properties and the recent snows made access to the building difficult, said SLTFD Division Chief Marty Scheuerman.

Units from South Lake Tahoe, Lake Valley and Tahoe Douglas responded.

Squaw's Ganong posts best result of career in super G

By Elizabeth Karam, U.S. Ski Team

LAKE LOUISE, Alberta -– Two-time Audi FIS Alpine World Cup overall champion Bode Miller of Franconia, N.H., led the U.S. in Lake Louise with 12th in the super G. Tobias Gruenenfelder nabbed the victory for the first win of his career in 1:32.31.

Double U.S. champion Travis Ganong of Squaw Valley posted the best result of his young career with 20th, while 2006 Olympic

champ Ted Ligety of Park Cit continued to show improvement in speed events with 23rd.

“It is nice to finally get a race under my belt,” said Ligety, who was sitting second in the season opening giant slalom before the race was called due to fog. “I felt like I skied well but just didn’t have the speed. For the whole U.S. team in general, it’s been a lack of volume. Normally we get the bulk of our speed training in Chile and this year we didn’t have the opportunity and then we went to New Zealand and had bad weather.”

With a consistent track and clear weather, Miller posted another solid finish, just over a half a second behind Gruenenfelder. Rounding out the podium was Switzerland’s Carlo Janka and Austria’s Romed Baumann in a race decided by a mere 0.07 seconds.

For Ganong, who captured the U.S. downhill and super G title last season, it was all about pushing out the noise to find focus.

“Marco [Sullivan of Squaw Valley] radioed up saying it was in good shape and that was just perfect,” said Ganong, who climbed 26 spots in the race. “I changed my game plan to charge all the way, and it worked. In the start I was like, calm down, look at this view and let’s just have fun. That put me in a peaceful content light. Maybe that’s the new thing.”

The men will head to Beaver Creek for the Audi Birds of Prey World Cup Dec. 3-5. With weather reports pointing to snow throughout the week, organizers have bumped the first downhill training run to Nov. 30 in order to maximize training opportunities.

Official results, Audi FIS Alpine World Cup, Lake Louise, Nov. 28, Super G

1. Tobias Gruenenfelder, Switzerland 1:32.31

2. Carlo Janka, Switzerland, 1:32.38

3. Romed Baumann, Austria, 1:32.58

4. Mario Scheiber, Austria, 1:32.60

5. Didier Cuche, Switzerland, 1:32.67

—

12. Bode Miller, Franconia, N.H., 1:33.12

20. Travis Ganong, Squaw Valley, 1:33.65

23. Ted Ligety, Park City, 1:33.79

—

35. Andrew Weibrecht, Lake Placid, 1:34.47

44. Steven Nyman, Sundance, 1:34.84

46. Marco Sullivan, Squaw Valley, 1:34.91

47. Tommy Biesemeyer, Keene, N.Y., 1:35.01

49. Erik Fisher, Middleton, Idaho, 1:35.17

63. Chris Frank, Rhinelander, Wis., 1:37.09

Trek through Napa Valley offers more than wine tasting

By Laurie Brazil

CALISTOGA – The crush is fading, fall colors are stunning. Ah, a weekday in the Napa Valley. It means fewer visitors, more

attention, and detailed information from the people pouring the wine.

Our short trek started on the main artery, Highway 29, with a stop at the popular V. Satuii picnic grounds, complete with a tour from the gardener of 25 years. After sharing his handiwork, he revealed that a not to be overlooked site is the recently completed Castello di Amorosa, an authentic Tuscan castle built by winery owner Dario Sattui.

He didn't mislead us. This is a must-see medieval 12th century reproduction in a magnificent setting with eight levels, complete with moat, drawbridge, dungeon and torture chamber.



Grapes hang on the vines in Napa Valley late this year. Photos/Laurie Brazil

Tasting in a stone basement is often served by native Italians, with the owner seen with his German shepherd in tow among the sheep, goats and chickens.

Just down the road from Calistoga is Clos Pegase, an estate winery, with its surrounding sculpture garden that includes some of the world's greatest 20th century works of art and meticulously manicured gardens. It includes the breathtaking Cave Theater, a dramatic setting for celebrations,

presentations and special events. Clos, being the French word for an enclosed vineyard, is where every wine is made from that winery's grapes. Pegase, being the French word for Pegasus, the winged mythological horse, is the background for their label.

Not to be missed is Chateau Montelena, the site and subject of the movie "Bottle Shock." A beautiful winery complete with pathways, lake, and Asian inspired sitting areas. This elegant site is quite an experience – visually and historically. Chateau Montelena produced the American Chardonnay that in the 1976 wine competition the Judgment of Paris defeated French entries in a blind taste test. This was the first time a wine from the United States had won.

Our respite and stay at The Lodge in Calistoga offered an economical visit complete with breakfast, pool, sauna, and an ideal setting in a small town with a great selection of restaurants within walking distance. The rooms are well appointed and include amenities for a complete experience. Calistoga has upped its game quite a bit since our last visit and offers many boutiques, top-notch eateries and local music.



A bit of history at Chateau Montelena.

Not to be missed on the Silverado Trail is the long-standing notable Stag's Leap, with its friendly and generous staff. Their architectural creativity of the Caves and Arcade, 17th

century original paintings of ancient celestial maps, and the unique sculpture of The Greeter are a few examples of the beautiful collection of artwork at the winery.

Duckhorn boasts being Wine & Spirits magazine's 2010 Winery of the Year. In the traditionally designed Estate House and outdoor veranda you can enjoy the winery's waterfowl art collection or view their unique temperature-controlled above ground cellar.

A relatively new addition to the valley, Darioush, houses a 22,000-square-foot winery; the first in America to combine architecture, design and Persian culture is a unique experience. The yellow stone used for the 16 monumental 18-foot freestanding columns was quarried near the region of Persepolis and exported to Turkey and Italy for cutting and tumbling before it reached the Silverado Trail in Napa. There is the feel that you're in the middle of distant lands and exotic locations.

Black Stallion, a more modern looking facility, became the latest addition to the small collection of wineries in Napa Valley's newly designated Oak Knoll District in July 2007. Located on the grounds of a historic equestrian center, a spectacular sculpture of a black stallion in motion is positioned at the entrance.



Hot air balloons offer a 360-degree view of the

Wine Country.

The coup de grais remains St. Helena's ever-constant Rombauer, not only some of the best Chardonnay but a true class act in their presentation and engrossing staff. Our host, Jim, was knowledgeable and his enthusiasm to share his insight was paired with a true admiration and closeness to the family. Irma Rombauer was the renowned author of the book the "Joy of Cooking" one of the United States' most published cookbooks, having been in print continuously since 1936 with more than 18 million copies sold.



Rombauer on the Silverado Trail.

Hence, the Rombauer family's winemaking philosophy-to create a wine that complements the joy of good food as well as it complements the joy of good company. Though a tasting fee is now the par at most Napa establishments, at Rombauer their glasses are included in a beautiful gift bag and their wine is packaged in a cloth embellished carrier. The grounds afford rustic pathways with over one hundred varieties of plants and flowers that accompany sitting areas for picnics with whimsical metal sculpture throughout.

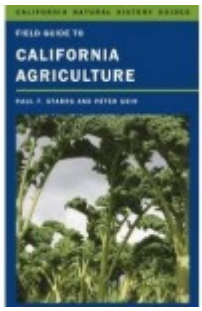
Breathtaking views abound at every juncture – sweeping landscapes, picturesque rolling hills planted with photo ops at every turn. Although you can indulge in a myriad treatments, world renowned food or abundant activities the valley can also be experienced as a short economical stay just

a few hours from our own jewel.

Guidebook takes new approach to Calif. agriculture

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The authors of the first-ever “Field Guide to California Agriculture” want people to think about where their food is coming from – and to think about it in new ways.



The guide, recently published by the University of California Press, opens with something that looks little like a field guide and nothing like agriculture.

A two-page spread shortly after the table of contents looks like nothing so much as an array of paint chips.

The grid of 160 little colored squares begins with what looks like an amethyst purple and ends with school-bus yellow.

Read the whole story

Ski report: Dress warm, expect moisture in the morning

Remnants of the latest storm will hang around this morning. Make sure the waterproof jacket is worn today along with the warm fleece.



Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.

K’s Kitchen: Chili is the perfect winter meal

By Kathryn Reed

Tired of turkey? Tired of cooking? Still want the house to be filled with an enticing aroma?



Chili – it’s the answer to all of those questions. Yes, it will take a bit of cooking, but nothing like a Thanksgiving dinner.

This is the quintessential winter meal. And with winter having

settled into Lake Tahoe it’s already been served up in our house.

Sue is the chili maker. Although most of the ingredients below go into her concoction each time, sometimes there are substitutes when something isn’t in a cupboard. I’ll admit I like it best when she puts in a few extra dashes of the spices.

It’s perfect when she starts the process in the morning and it simmers all day. The aroma gets more intense as the hours go by. As much as it’s making me hungry, I stop eating. I want to save myself for dinner.

She often serves the chili with a little grated cheese on top. A dollop of sour cream would make it even more decadent. Served with a green salad, corn bread and Sam Adams makes for a perfect meal.

The great thing about chili is that it is even better the next day. And if a bowl isn’t what you are craving, consider the chili as a topping on a baked potato. Another great alternative is putting scrambled eggs in a tortilla and adding some chili.

Sue claims this will serve 10, but I’m not so sure based on how many ladles we consume in one sitting.

Sue’s Crockpot Chili

1 C corn (frozen or canned)

12 oz. ground beef or soy ground

1 C yellow onion, chopped

1 large can chopped olives

1 15 oz. can tomato sauce

2 15 oz. cans kidney beans

1 tomato, chopped

1 15 oz. can chili beans

2 dashes chili oil

2 dashes chili powder

1 dash cayenne pepper

1 dash salt

Throw all items in crockpot like confetti and let the celebratory mix do its stuff. Cook on high for two hours. Simmer at least four hours.

Weidinger PR snags industry awards for work in Tahoe

Weidinger Public Relations received four Awards of Excellence at the Public Relations Society of America, Sierra Nevada Chapter's 24th annual Silver Spikes program.

The South Shore agency won the category "Internet Based Communication" recognizing social media efforts for growth of the Lake Tahoe Visitor Authority's social media website. WPR acquired the LTVA Facebook page with 61,000 fans and increased the fan base by more than 23 percent to 79,000 within one year (data as of September 30, 2010). The page has continued to grow and is now boasting 83,900-plus fans.



The WPR team takes pics after the awards at a booth full of costumes. Phil Weidinger, (l-r) Marissa Schriver, Jenn Boyd, Julie Koster .

WPR’s American Century Championship entry for the category of “Ongoing Programs with Budget over $25,000” received an Award of Excellence. The success of the celebrity golf tournament’s PR efforts stemmed from collaboration between WPR and Vizion Group of Philadelphia.

WPR also received acknowledgment in the “Special Events & Observances with Budget over $25,000” category for the annual Golf the High Sierra Media Tour.

The fourth Award of Excellence was in the category “Ongoing Programs, all-inclusive budget of $25,000 or less” for the firm’s campaign focused on the Virginia and Truckee Railroad.

Baccarat does not succumb to pressures of recession

By Liz Benston, Las Vegas Sun

No casino game may be more intimidating than baccarat, typically played at high limits in elegant, sequestered rooms with tuxedoed dealers, attentive casino managers and waitresses quick to appear with fine cocktails.



It was played by European royalty in the 13th century and by James Bond in the 20th, memorialized in such stylish films as “Dr. No” and “Casino Royale.”

And yet, for a game wrapped in mystique, baccarat is one of the simplest games in a casino. Were it repackaged as a carnival game at a county fair, its aristocratic trappings stripped away, it could be called “Count to Nine.”

The baccarat played in the United States and many other countries requires no skill. Moves are forced by the cards players are dealt. Simply put, the two- or three-card hand closest to the value of nine wins, excluding face cards and “10” cards that are worth zero.

Read the whole story

Drop in elevation provides scenic, easy hike near Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

GARDNERVILLE – Every now and then I don't know what to do in Tahoe. OK, it's more like every May and early November. Too much snow to hike, not enough to ski.

Two weeks ago was no different.

On what started as a sunny Sunday, we headed to the Carson Valley in search of new terrain where we could get our hiking boots a little dusty. The drop in elevation (4,476 feet) brought us up close to terrain we don't find in the mountains.



Expansive views along the Faye-Luther trail. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Sagebrush is everywhere. The long spindly bitterbrush protrudes above other flora. A few of the rabbitbrush's yellow flowers are intact. A hint of fall lingers on the branches of trees lining Luther Creek.

Farther up, white alder, willow and Jeffrey pines fill the landscape.

Though we didn’t see animals other than squirrels and horses, this area is home to hummingbirds, Bullock’s oriole, yellow warblers and the California toad.

Dogs are allowed on leashes. The horse people weren’t following this rule. Of course they also don’t have to clean up after their animals even though they make bigger messes – and lots of them in this area.

Starting out from the Faye-Luther trailhead we check out the map at the entrance. Myriad loops interconnect in a relatively small area. A flyer tells us about the Carson Valley Trails Association – a 16-year-old nonprofit “working with partners to provide access to public lands through a recreational trail system for present and future generations to enjoy.”

Appropriately named, the Sandy Trail leads us from the parking area toward the mountains we just crossed. Not far in is a sign that points to California in the direction we are headed, to Nevada where we parked. I thought nothing of the sign as we went by. It made sense to me.

What I had a hard time accepting until I saw multiple maps is the sign was actually the state line. Most of our hike was in California even though most of our drive was in Nevada. It just didn’t seem right. But I think the Bureau of Land Management knows which state its land is in.

An interpretive loop guides us along. We’re slow as we read most of the signs. It’s an education about who the trail is named after. The Faye family started a ranch near Luther Creek in 1863 and in 1905 was the first family in the area to have electricity.

Luther Creek starts its migration to the Carson Valley from Jobs Peak. Today it is used by farmers and never reaches the Carson River.

Ira Luther, who the creek and Luther Pass are named after,

settled in the area in the 1850s. He tried to get the Central Pacific Railroad to cross what is now Luther Pass.

Luther is credited with naming Douglas County after Illinois Sen. Stephen Arnold Douglas.

We venture off on the Grand View Loop – figuring out quickly how it got its name. Here on the western edge of the Great Basin and in the Carson Range views of the Carson Valley are vast, with the Pinenut Range in the distance to the east.

A grove of Jeffrey pines fills the trail by the same name.

Had we not been taking pictures and reading the signs we would have finished these three miles in no time. For the most part it's an easy hike. The trail gradually climbs at the start. Grand View is a bit steeper. But for anyone used to Tahoe, this is easy.

Next time, which is likely to be in the spring for wildflowers and butterflies, we'll start at the Jobs Peak Ranch trailhead to add a little mileage – assuming it's not too hot then.

Getting there:

From the South Shore, take Kingsbury Grade to the Carson Valley.

Turn right at bottom of the hill on Foothill Road.

We parked at the second trailhead on the right. This has shorter loops. The first trailhead (Jobs Peak Ranch) gives you a longer trek.

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D’Agostini thanks supporters, ready to be sheriff

To the community,

It’s official. The election was certified and we won.

There are no words to adequately thank you for making this campaign a success, however, every day I serve as your sheriff, I commit to work hard for the citizens of El Dorado County. I could not have accomplished this monumental task without the hard work, dedication and support from all of you. This was truly a community effort. My hope is that you will stay involved in serving. Just think of the great things we can accomplish in our county.

Janine and I have made many new friends, strengthened old relationships and look forward to new doors opening within our community. The journey has been long and hard fought and an experience we will always cherish.

Since the day after the election, I’ve been working with the current administration at our sheriff’s office getting up to speed on budget, personnel and other important transitional topics.

In the near future, look forward to another email letting everyone know when and where I will be sworn in as sheriff of El Dorado County.

Again, thank you all for everything and for keeping the faith.

John D’Agostini, El Dorado County sheriff-elect