El Dorado County jury sentences man to death in CHP killing

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

An El Dorado County jury recommended a death sentence for David Charles Zanon for running down and killing California Highway Patrol Officer Scott Russell in 2007.

The jury returned the verdict Wednesday after four days of deliberation. The judge will formally impose sentencing at a later hearing.

“Justice was served. I’m very happy,” said Lynn Russell, the officer’s widow, who spoke briefly in front of the El Dorado County District Attorney’s Office.

After being found asleep in a car filled with stolen items on July 31, 2007, Zanon awoke and led officers on a lengthy chase from Rancho Cordova deep into El Dorado County.

Read the whole story

Nevada corn maze captures USDA’s attention

When Rick Lattin of Lattin Farms in Fallon planted his corn maze last May, he didn’t know it would draw the attention of the White House.



Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan visited Nevada earlier this month and was so delighted with the theme of the Lattin Farms maze, Know Your Farmer Know Your Food, that she posted a picture of it to the White House Blog.

The maze is carved out of 3 acres of corn, with a design that features produce, dairy and other farm products. The theme was inspired by the USDA Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative to better connect consumers with local producers.

This is the 12th year for the maze which has a different design cut into the corn each year.

“We love this new USDA campaign,” farmer Rick Lattin said in a press release. “We used it for our maze because it’s the perfect way to educate people while they’re having fun. We have a trail quiz inside the maze with questions about Nevada agriculture.”

Lattin is founder of NevadaGrown, a nonprofit association that promotes Nevada farmers.

Opinion: State water issues won’t wait for bond

By Juliet Christian-Smith and Heather Cooley

Now that California lawmakers have pulled an $11 billion water bond measure off the November ballot, California is facing new questions about how to fix our long-standing water problems,

including the long-term health of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and the future reliability of our water supply.

A number of commentators have praised or pilloried the delay of the bond, but one thing we can all agree on is that California's water challenges have not gone away. The recent state Water Resources Control Board report that finds we must halve our water withdrawals from the rivers and streams that sustain the Delta is simply one more indication that we have over-tapped California's precious water resources and that we must find innovative ways to do more with less.

The Legislature has two years to fix some of the key flaws with the current water bond, including its size, unclear definitions and unbalanced approaches. A recent Pacific Institute analysis – "The 2010 California Water Bond: What Does it Say and Do?" – offers principles for amending the current water bond to make it more effective. But it would be a serious mistake to do nothing until 2012. The good news is that there is a lot that can be done now.

Read the whole story

Juliet Christian-Smith is senior research associate and Heather Cooley is co-director of the Water Program at the Pacific Institute in Oakland. They are two of the authors of the new report "California's Next Million Acre-Feet: Saving Water, Energy and Money."

SLT Poverty to Prosperity

Forum on Oct. 8

Tomorrow’s prosperity is only possible by understanding and responding to those factors that contribute to poverty today. An increasing number of decision-makers and community leaders recognize that the pathway to prosperity is dependent on all sectors of the community working together.

South Lake Tahoe Poverty to Prosperity Forum 2010 is a day to provide that opportunity through awareness, education, linkage, and action.

Join business leaders, education boards and administrations, government officials, nonprofit directors and community decision-makers as we continue the strategic discussion that will define the critical linkages needed to move our South Lake Tahoe community from poverty to prosperity.

The gathering is Oct. 8 from 9am-4pm at Embassy Suites, 4130 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

Lunch will provided.

RSVP by Oct. 1 to Lori Blackburn at (530) 295.2403 or lblackburn@edcoe.org or go online www.eldoradocapc.org

Sponsors are Child Abuse Prevention Council of El Dorado County, El Dorado Community Foundation, El Dorado Office of Education, First 5 El Dorado, Lake Tahoe Gaming Alliance, South Lake Tahoe Area Fund at the El Dorado Community Foundation, and Tahoe Youth & Family Services.

Walk raises awareness about condition of farm animals

On Sept. 25, Truckee Tahoe will host its Third Annual Walk for Farm Animals, an event taking place in more than 75 cities across the United States and Canada to promote compassion for factory farmed animals and raise vital funds to support the lifesaving rescue, education and advocacy work of Farm Sanctuary, the nation's leading farm animal protection organization.

This year's national salk spokesperson is celebrity trainer and television personality Bob Harper from NBC's hit show "The Biggest Loser."

"Animals raised for food in the U.S. spend their entire lives in filth and darkness, kept in such severe confinement they cannot turn around, lie down or extend their limbs," Gene Baur, president and co-founder of Farm Sanctuary, said in a press release. "No one likes cruelty and when people learn about the abusive conditions inside factory farms, they are appalled and a growing number are getting active to raise awareness about these intolerable cruelties and put an end to the unnecessary suffering. For nearly 25 years, Farm Sanctuary's Walk for Farm Animals has provided a forum for people from all walks of life to spread a powerful message of compassion for farm animals in their own cities and hometowns. The exponential growth of the Walks is a very positive sign. This year, we are thrilled to have Bob Harper's support as our national spokesperson for the 2010 Walk for Farm Animals. Bob is as passionate about animal protection as he is about health and fitness, and with his support, the biggest winners this year will be farm animals."

The Truckee Tahoe Walk for Farm Animals starts at Plumas Bank in Truckee. Registration is at 9am Sept. 25, and the walk

begins at 10am. Those interested in registering for the 2010 Walk can learn more at walkforfarmanimals.org. Participants will receive a special limited-edition 2010 Walk t-shirt designed by vegan fashion house Vaute Couture, and special prizes will be awarded to walkers who reach fund-raising milestones.

Farm Sanctuary is the nation's leading farm animal protection organization. Since incorporating in 1986, Farm Sanctuary has worked to expose and stop cruel practices of the "food animal" industry through research and investigations, legal and institutional reforms, public awareness projects, youth education, and direct rescue and refuge efforts.

SF International Comedy Fest to make stop in Tahoe

The preliminary round of the 35th annual San Francisco International Comedy Festival will be at MontBleu casino in Stateline on Sept. 18 at 8pm.

Tahoe's comedy elimination competition will feature a dozen finalists who make it through qualifying rounds of hundreds this week at various Northern California venues. Comics have 5-7 minute to woo the audience and judges. The final round of competition is Oct. 3-9.

For details, click here.

Contestants from past years include Robin Williams, Ellen DeGeneres, Dane Cook, Dana Carvey, Roseanne Barr, Mark Curry and represent the pedigree of hot, national comedy club talent.

Karen Rontowski, an upbeat, granola-esque comedian is the evening's host.Described as a "New Age Hippie," her experience has earned headliner billing worldwide opening for legends such as Bob Hope and Ray Charles.

Tickets are $25 and are available at www.ticketmaster.com or the MontBleu box office at 800.648.3353.

California bill would reduce art requirements in high school

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

A bill that seeks to reduce dropout rates by changing high school graduation requirements statewide has arts education advocates bristling.

Assembly Bill 2446 would allow students to pick from a myriad of arts and career technical education or vocational classes instead of requiring them to take yearlong classes in arts or a foreign language.

"We feel it's bad educational policy as it sets one education area against another," said Joe Laddon, policy director of the California Arts Education Alliance.

Approved by the Legislature, the bill is on the desk of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has until Sept. 30 to sign or veto it.

Read the whole story

Authors give women rescue workers of 9/11 a voice

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Where are all the women?

Seeking the answer to that question completely changed the lives of the two women asking the question as well as the lives of the 30 women who answered it.

The media and politicians seemed to have not noticed the women in uniform on Sept. 11, 2001, and the days after who were part of the effort that saved 25,000 lives as New York City struggled to cope with the terrorist attacks. Then Mayor Rudolph Giuliani praised the men in several speeches. Then President George W. Bush put his arm around a public servant, thanking all the men for their selfless heroics.



Susan Hagen and Mary Carouba sign books after speaking Sept. 15 in Stateline. Photo/Kathryn

Reed

Three thousand miles away Susan Hagen and Mary Carouba were yelling at the television, baffled at where the women were. Why, they wondered, was the coverage so gender specific?

Words do matter, the authors told the crowded room at Harveys casino Sept. 15, where they had been invited by Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe.

“To be left out of the national conversation … it’s huge,” Carouba said.

They were in their mid-40s, both with careers, both wondering what they could do. Hagen had been a reporter in the 1970s before becoming a firefighter in 1994. Carouba was an investigative social worker who also did some standup comedy.

“In that moment we realized we couldn’t let it go. That’s how the book was born. We could go to New York and find those women,” Hagen said.

They had no media credentials. They knew no one in New York. They had never been to New York. They had never written a book. They pooled the limits of their credit cards to come up with a budget. Within a couple weeks they were in New York.

Now, where are the women? They asked a cab driver to take them wherever female cops might be hanging out. To a dark bar they were delivered. After a bit of posturing by the women in blue, they came around. They had many stories to tell.

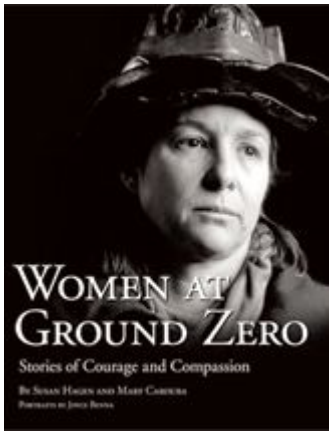
More than 6,000 of the 34,500 police officers in New York City are women. About one-third of the emergency medical technicians are women. Of the 12,500 firefighters, 25 are women. There might not be any female firefighters if it weren’t for a court ruling mandating they allow 25 in. They’ve never allowed any more than that number.

As word got out about Hagen and Carouba being in town, the women showed up at all hours of the day and night at the budding authors' hotel room. Tears were shed. Words not before uttered were shared with these Californians.

NYPD's requirements were two days of therapy that had to be taken within a year of the towers collapsing.

Carouba spoke to the families of the three women rescuers who died. Their stories are also in the book "Women at Ground Zero: Stories of Courage and Compassion."

Hagen and Carouba, who still live in Sonoma County, are working on a second book that will be out next year for the 10-year anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center. It will be a look at where the 30 women, who are still all alive, are today.



In there poignant, yet comedic, tale of how their book came to fruition, the duo spoke of bringing the 30 women and five others to the Wine Country a little more than a year after the planes crashed into the towers. They wanted to pay for everything. The invitations went all. Everyone accepted. Then Hagen and Carouba realized they had no idea what they were doing, and had no money to put the gang up.

People with money, they realized, weren't big spenders. It was a bag of $99 in coins from high school students in Sebastopol who were looking for a way to help a 9/11 cause that was the seed money.

This was also the first time the authors realized what exactly Soroptimist could do. They can raise money and organize events. Hagen and Carouba credit the women's group in Sonoma County for being instrumental in helping raise $140,000 so the New Yorkers could have a weeklong respite.

"These women had to come all the way across the country to get the recognition they should have gotten in New York," Carouba said.

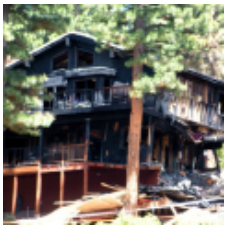
For more information about the book and the authors, click here.

NHP: Truck that plowed into Incline house had faulty brakes

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Faulty brakes were likely responsible for the fiery June crash of a lumber truck that launched off the end of a runaway truck ramp and into a Lake Tahoe home, according to a report by the Nevada Highway Patrol.

While much of the truck's wreckage was burned beyond the point of effective examination, experts did determine "at least one set of the brakes on the trailer were insufficient" to safely descend the steep Mount Rose Highway, members of the NHP's Major Accident Investigation Team concluded.



Faulty brakes likely led to a semi plowing into this Incline house in June. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“With the brakes that we could actually examine, there were problems,” said Trooper Eric Gallagher, who investigated the accident that killed 41-year-old Frederick Douglas Matthews and destroyed an Incline Village home.

“That was probably the main cause of it – insufficient braking,” Gallagher said. “A heavy truck like that can get serious momentum going down a hill like that.”

Read the whole story

SLT Women’s Center annual fundraiser on Sept. 25

South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center 11th Annual Sunset Gala by the Lake fundraiser is Sept. 25 from 5-8pm in Zephyr Cove.

There will be fine wines, hors d’oeuvres, desserts, classical guitar, and a silent auction.

Each year South Lake Tahoe Women’s Center serves more than 2,000 victims of abuse in our community. In 2009, the Women’s Center faced more than $200,000 in reductions in state funding for programs, and with no state budget signed for the current fiscal year, it is unclear if the agency experience the same reduction.

Purchase tickets online for $50 each or stop by 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd.