Back to K2: Reno woman makes third trip

By Ruth Anne Kocour

Roads to K2: There are none – no flight-seeing tours either. Located in the heart of the Karakoram mountain range, K2 is surrounded by glaciers, wild rivers and many of the world's highest peaks, 19 more than 25,000 feet tall.

K2 straddles the border between Pakistan and the Xingjian Uygur Autonomous Region of China (Xingjian for short), both fraught with riots, ethnic upheavals and terrorist attacks. It's a lonely place.

Last fall, I returned to K2 accompanied by four Muslims (Shiite and Sunni) and three kara buras, the wooly black camels of Central Asia.

San Francisco to Beijing to Urumqi – all the way across China – in one very long day. After spending the night in Urumqi, I flew on to Khasgar, an ancient oasis empire along the Silk Road set amid moving sand dunes, immense mud flats, and areas that from the air look like southern Utah, only bigger.

Read the whole story

Ruth Anne Kocour is author of the book, "Facing the Extreme." Contact her at www.ruthannekocour.com.

Social media workshop for business

Parasol Community Collaboration presents “It’s 2010. Is Your Business Social?” on Oct. 7 from 9am-noon.

RSVP: pcc@parasol.org or (775) 298.0119

Description: Learn how to use social media in your marketing mix and how to effectively listen, engage and measure your social media efforts with real-life examples specific to non-profits and small businesses.

Topics include:

-The power of social media

-Social media strategy

-Content management

-Case studies

-Measurements, benchmarks, and ROI

Instructor: Milena Regos

Location: DWR Center, 948 Incline Way, Incline Village

Sample the Sierra sells out – surpasses expectations

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe suddenly became walkable Saturday.

“I’m at a wine walk,” one guy said to the person on the other end of his cell phone.

A block of Ski Run Boulevard was closed off for the inaugural Sample the Sierra. It was all about blending wine and food together to make a feast of sorts for much of the afternoon Aug. 21. Art and jewelry were for sale. Other local businesses had booths as well.



A mix of locals and out-of-towners enjoy Sample the Sierra on Aug. 21. Photos/Kathryn Reed

It far exceeded most people’s expectations. With the 500 $20 wristbands selling out, it left some without the opportunity to Sample the Sierra. Another 200-plus food-only tickets were sold. Organizers are hoping to break even.

For the South Shore, this was a unique event because so few are outdoors unless it’s an athletic competition. Most are indoors at one of the casinos.

People could ride their bikes. Even the intermittent rain and brief hail didn’t send people away. Restaurants along the route were doing a brisk business from people who wanted a

more complete meal.

Music filled the air. People worked off their food and wine indulgence by dancing to the various musical groups. Stages at both ends of the food booths kept people entertained as they ate and drank.

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and El Dorado Community Foundation are the forces behind the event, along with a slew of other sponsors.

“It was better than we expected. It will be bigger next year,” Isabella Mill with the chamber said.

Booths with nothing to consume formed the perimeter, while the food and wine were in the center of the boulevard. Wineries were paired with restaurants, while growers were paired with restaurants to make the sampling complete. Mt. Tallac Brewery was the lone beer purveyor.

Alex Elsaesser from the Black Bear Inn was using blueberries in his dessert that were supplied by an El Dorado County farmer. The dessert was paired with port from Latcham Vineyards in Fair Play.

People were going back for seconds and thirds at the various booths, the food and wine were that yummy.

“The layout will definitely be different next year, “said Tina Bruess with the chamber. This will be to spread the consumption lines out a bit.

Already organizers are considering expanding the venue beyond one block. With more than 700 wristbands given out, that would be understandable. It was free to walk the street. It only cost money to eat and drink.

“An informal survey of vendors says they will be back next year,” Bruess said.

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Life’s realities told through poems

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – A hike gone wrong, the perfect birthday party, secrets from a hotel room.

All of these are wrapped into Janet Smith’s book “All of a Sudden Nothing Happened.” The Tahoe resident and Lake Tahoe Community College instructor read from her book of poetry on Friday at Bona Fide Books to a crowd that asked for an encore from this poet.

Though she jokes many of her poems are less than happy, feel-good works, many touch on the realities of life.



Janet Smith reads from her book of poems Aug. 20. Photos/Kathryn Reed

“You are invited” is about the perfect child’s birthday.

“When you are a kid your expectations are so big,” Smith told the nearly 40 people gathered to listen. “It’s never what you think.”

Despite what seems like a book of sadness, she did dedicate it to her parents.

Before reading “We hiked to a lake where I was unhappy” she said, “If you have a partner you hike with, you have been there.”

This was Bona Fide’s inaugural event. The publishing house is operated by Kim Wyatt. The offices on the street behind Getaway Café in Meyers are open for people to sit, read, exchange a book, get some writing done, commune with others.



Fire spinner Aleassa Anzelone.

To start and end the evening, fire spinners Aleassa Anzelone and Dalton Tutt dazzled the guests.

“All of Sudden Nothing Happened” ($15) is available at the college bookstore, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and will be at Bona Fide in September.

Fly fishers unknowingly transporting invasive species

By Felicity Barringer, New York Times

For fly fishers who pride themselves on a conservationist ethic, it hurts to discover that they may be trampling on that ethic every time they wade into a trout stream.



Blame their boots – or, more precisely, their felt soles. Growing scientific evidence suggests that felt, which helps anglers stay upright on slick rocks, is also a vehicle for noxious microorganisms that hitchhike to new places and disrupt freshwater ecosystems.

That is why Alaska and Vermont recently approved bans on felt-soled boots and Maryland plans to do so soon.

“If you were trying to design a material to transport microscopic material around,” said Jack Williams, an expert on invasive species with the environmental group Trout Unlimited, “felt on the bottom of someone’s boots in a stream would be as close to perfection as you could find.”

Read the whole story

Winds spark fire danger in Tahoe-Reno region

Dry, windy weather is the forecast for all of Saturday. This in turn means a red flag warning when it comes to the threat

of fire in the Lake Tahoe-Reno region.

The National Weather Service's red flag warning is in effect from 11am-11pm Aug. 21. There is a lake wind advisory until 8pm.

Winds are expected to be from the south at 10-20mph, with gusts up to 30mph.

It is a strong low pressure system off the coast that is creating the winds.

Sunday and Monday should bring less wind and cooler temperatures.

Timber firm closes plant supplying NV Energy

By Jane Braxton Little, Sacramento Bee

Sierra Pacific Industries' 15 power plant workers learned Friday that the timber company was closing the electricity-generation facility at the end of their shifts.

Sierra Pacific officials also sent a notice to NV Energy, a Reno utility company, announcing that they were suspending operations at the Loyalton plant "effective immediately," said Mark Pawlicki, a spokesman for the Anderson-based timber company.

He cited federal government decisions that have "cut off" the supply of wood chips and waste used at the co-generation plant in Sierra County.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Suggestions are being sought for next year's update of the Lake Tahoe Bike Trail Map. Send ideas to Like Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, P.O. Box 1147, Zephyr Cove, NV 89448 or by email to biketahoe@aol.com.

• Aramark has launched a new user-friendly website, that takes clients, employees and travelers on a tour of the company's capabilities and experiential programs. The website for Zephyr Cove Resort and Lake Tahoe Cruises has also been revamped.

• If you like "beachy/campfire" music, join the Tahoe Aunties Ukulele Band every Wednesday from 5:30-6:30pm at the platform at Regan Beach in South Lake Tahoe. Sing-a-long and bring an instrument.

• The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals this week said mud washing off logging roads is pollution. This means the Environmental Protection Agency must create rules for logging roads on federal, state and private lands across the West so they will meet Clean Water Act standards.

• The nonprofit sector is struggling nationwide. Click here for a report about it.

• The U.S. Board on Geographic Names will consider naming a cove at Lake Tahoe after Samuel Clemens (aka Mark Twain) when the group meets in Tahoe next month.

Remote reservoir provides plenty of paddling fun

By Kathryn Reed

POLLOCK PINES – Advantages to leaving the basin with a canoe include avoiding a wicked downpour and knowing you have something to float in if it's really bad when you get back. Luckily the canoe could stay on the truck as we returned to South Tahoe on this particular Sunday.

As clouds formed in the distance on what I call the backside of Desolation Wilderness, we paddled in full sunshine.



Sue Wood's maiden voyage at Union Valley Reservoir. Photos/Kathryn Reed

It was the first time either Sue or I had had been to Union Valley Reservoir. Tucked into the Crystal Basin Recreation Area of the Eldorado National Forest, it is much larger than I anticipated. My arms aren't strong enough to paddle the perimeter. Perhaps a multi-day camping trip is needed to

experience the whole reservoir as well as the surrounding bodies of water.

Around different bends are what seem to be private beaches – but they aren't. It's just that these people got there first.

It looks like the high water mark is about 6 feet from the vast shoreline. The reservoir belongs to Sacramento Municipal Utility District, even though an El Dorado County sheriff's boat is patrolling the lake in this area owned by the U.S. Forest Service.

Even though motorboats are allowed, the chaos of Lake Tahoe wasn't evident – even on a Sunday in August.

Campers dot the shoreline, with some sites visible from the water. People are swimming, splashing and floating.

A few kayakers are out.

The water is cool, but welcoming.

To get there: Go west on Highway 50, turn right on Ice House Road, go 16 miles and you'll see signs for the reservoir. Also in this area are Loon Lake and Ice House Reservoir. From Tahoe it's the long way to Wrights Lake. The $7 day use fee is good at other bodies of water in the area on the same day. For more information, call (530) 647.5415.

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Problem Incline bear still

eludes Nevada trackers

By Marie C. Baca, Wall Street Journal

INCLINE VILLAGE – In hot pursuit of a notorious burglar along the shores of Lake Tahoe this year, Carl Lackey organized a night patrol to catch the perp. His tools included a fire extinguisher, pepper spray and two dogs that respond only to commands in Russian.

“These dogs were bred to hunt,” says Mr. Lackey, 45 years old.

Mr. Lackey’s nemesis: a 700-pound black bear dubbed Bubba.

The bear has been a longtime target for Mr. Lackey, a biologist with the Nevada Department of Wildlife. Recently, his quest search took on greater urgency.

Driven from the mountains by the 2009-2010 winter—the snowiest in five years—and feeding off the garbage left by tourists, Bubba is living large on Lake Tahoe’s shores. The bear has broken into at least 50 homes in search of food the past year, causing more than $70,000 of damage, and leaving stinky, basketball-size deposits as his calling card.

So Mr. Lackey has ramped up his bear-catching techniques, deviating from his usual strategy of just laying traps by going on 3 a.m. patrols. This past winter, he placed a shoot-to-kill order, declaring Bubba dangerous and saying the bear “needs to go out of the population.”

Read the whole story

Watch the video