17 structures lost in Sand Fire



Roads are closed near the fire for safety reasons. Photo/Bill Kingman

Ten houses and seven outbuildings have been reduced to ash in the Sand Fire that is burning in rural El Dorado and Amador counties.

The 3,800-acre blaze is 35 percent contained. The fire started July 25 when a vehicle drove onto dry vegetation.

Highway 49 is open, but several roads in the Fair Play and Plymouth area are closed. More than 1,000 people have been evacuated. A shelter is set up at Ponderosa High School and animals are being taken to the El Dorado County Fairgrounds in Placerville.

Smoke is drifting east through the Highway 50 corridor and into Truckee.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Syrup may be the super fuel athletes need

By Berne Broudy, Outside

Beets are so 2013. That's right: maple syrup is the world's newest super fuel, and it will soon be available in tear-top packets like the ones used by Honey Stinger and Gu.

A new company – called UnTapped and backed by pro racer Ted King – plans to package the maple syrup as an energy gel. Each packet, which contains only pure maple syrup from Vermont's Slopeside Syrup – has 100 calories of natural energy. It's available now for pre-order on Indiegogo.

Maple syrup has many of the minerals and electrolytes athletes need to perform at the top of their games. A tablespoon of pure maple syrup has two milligrams of sodium – critical to help maintain blood fluid levels during exercise. That same amount of syrup also has 42 milligrams of potassium to prevent muscle cramping. Manganese – a trace element linked to better bone health – occurs naturally in maple syrup, as does iron.

There's more. According to a 2011 study from researchers at the University of Rhode Island, Canadian maple syrup has anti-inflammatory properties: one of the lead researchers went so far as to call it "a champion food" with many of the same healthy compounds found in berries, tea, red wine, and flax seed.

Read the whole story

SLT to Kings Beach SUP race in September

The Tahoe Fall Classic on Sept. 13–14 is the third and final race in The Tahoe Cup race series.

This 22-mile point-to-point race from El Dorado Beach in South Lake Tahoe to Kings Beach State Beach is the longest inland distance paddleboard race in the world. It is expected to draw hundreds of competitors.

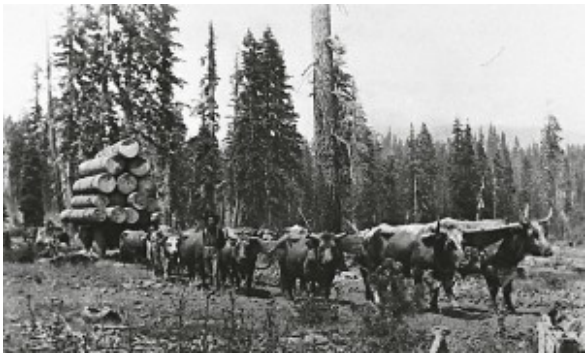
SUP demos are provided throughout the weekend compliments of SURFTECH and lunch is provided by Men Wielding Fire.

Registration is available online.

There is a $300 cash purse awarded to the first paddler to finish. Awards will be given to men's and women's first, second, and third place finishers in the Open (including youth, under 18 and masters 55-plus), Outrigger OC1 division, and the Elite Series $20K CASH PURSE Race.

In conjunction with the Tahoe Fall Classic, the inaugural North Lake Tahoe Ukulele Festival takes place on Kings Beach at the North Tahoe Event Center.

Then and now: Spooner Summit a logging mecca



Oxen bring logs out of the forest in the 1800s. Historic photos/Lake Tahoe Historical Society

With beasts and steam power, Lake Tahoe was raided for wood from the 1850s to the 1890s to build booming Virginia City and its mines.



Glenbrook was once a bustling lumber town.



Trains played a huge role in transporting lumber during the Comstock.

Lumber from the mills at Glenbrook traversed upward by rail to Spooner Summit where a flume then floated it down Clear Creek Grade to roughly the area where today's Carson City Costco building stands on Old Clear Creek Road.



A flume at the top of Spooner Summit in the late 1800s.

From there the lumber was wheeled to Virginia City.
Old Clear Creek Road was the original Highway 50 route over Spooner Summit to Lake Tahoe until today's four-lane highway debuted in the late 1950s.



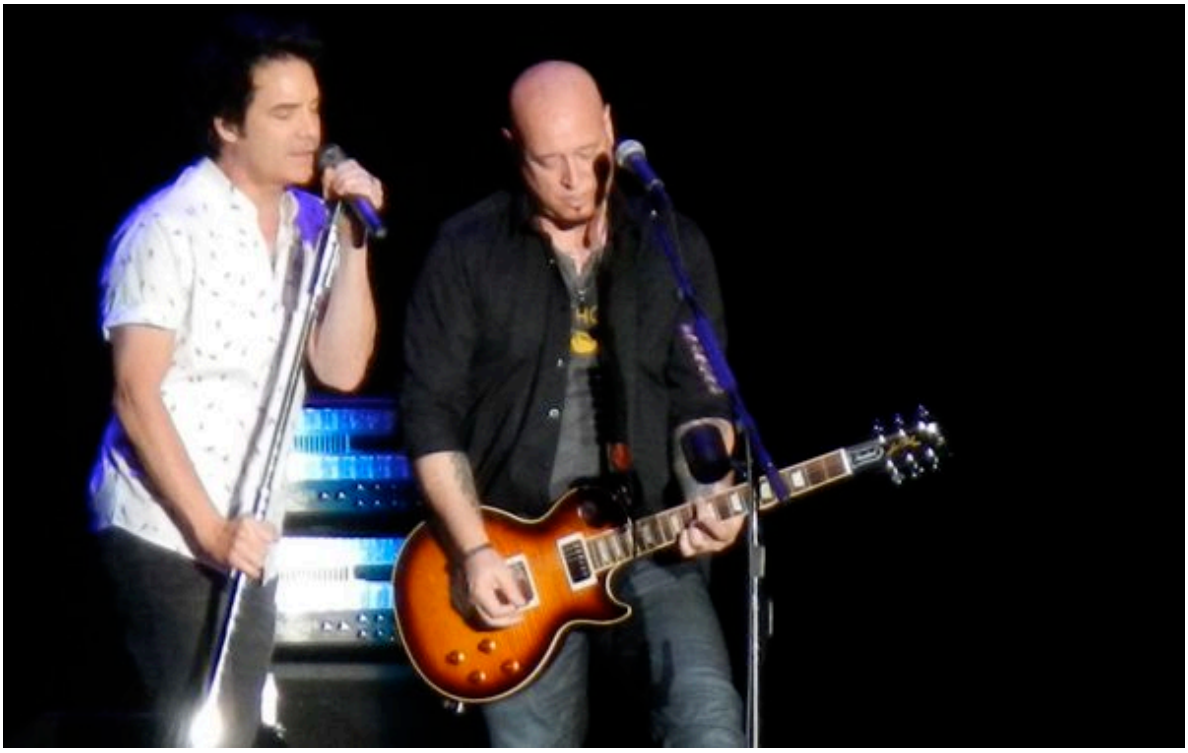
Flumes eased the transport of logs.



Spooner Summit in 2014. Photo/Bill Kingman

– Bill Kingman

Train nails it with old and new tracks



Pat Monahan and Jimmy Stafford founded the San Francisco band Train. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – It didn't take long to realize Americana rock band Train would transport its audience through time during Friday night's outdoor summer concert series at Harveys.

After a notable, guitar-driven opening act by Striking Matches – which with one album out already has songs featured on the show "Nashville," a train whistle launched the 20-year-old San Francisco-based band onto the stage.

People immediately rose to their feet with the opening number and 2003 mega hit "Calling All Angels."

The enthusiastic crowd sang "I won't give up if you don't give up" with such zeal, it may have been heard at the top of Heavenly Mountain Resort.

The high-energy show July 25 never let up or down.

The song "Save Me San Francisco" kept people on their feet.

The 2009 hit was written after what lead guitarist Jimmy Stafford described to *Lake Tahoe News* as a three-year slowing down for the band, which he and lead singer Pat Monahan founded in San Francisco. Their tenure together has produced eight albums.



Jimmy Stafford brings the crowd to its feet with his guitar riffs.

“We felt like we wanted to get back to our Bay Area roots because we didn’t know if anybody cared about us any more,” Stafford said.

The move paid off. It became their second career top hit, and the doubt about the band’s popularity disappeared.

With “Get to Me,” and its lyrics of whether to “parasail or first class mail,” Monahan threw his head back in complete abandon with a perfect segue to the band’s second Billboard top 20 hit “Meet Virginia.” Monahan sang it like a slam poet.

Stafford, with his heavily tattooed arms, commanded the stage at one point for a noteworthy guitar solo.

Train has proven to stand the test of time and lived up to its

think-outside-the-box, diverse reputation. Beyond the rock-pop sound, the band also gave the audience a taste of a little Latin with its popular number “50 Ways to Say Goodbye.”

During that rhythm-induced tune, Monahan said Stafford asked to say goodbye to several Train T-shirts. In throwing them out, Monahan even hinted to having “an arm like Tim Lincecum” – referencing the Cy Young award-winning San Francisco Giants pitcher.

With its known ability to write songs of a different genre and play a variety of instruments ranging from ukulele for Stafford and saxophone for Monahan, the band has never seemed confined to being pigeon-holed in one music category. Band members seem to thrive on the unexpected – even while the fans expect a sound they follow and revere.

“We pride ourselves on that,” Stafford told *LTN*.

In the early days, Train played in small venues at Lake Tahoe while staying at the late singer Donna Summer’s house and enjoying Bloody Mary’s at Rosie’s in Tahoe City, according to the 50-year-old Illinois musician. And, the band hasn’t given up experimenting with varying arena sizes or trying out different genres.

Along the lines of his garage-band roots, Monahan even provided a sampling of the legendary rock band Led Zeppelin with his distinct interpretation of lead Robert Plant’s bellowing voice. Later he channeled no less than Bob Marley for a taste of Reggae. And for one of the encores, the band belted out “Dream On” of Aerosmith, which is coming to town next month.

But for the most part, it was all about Train and its songs.



Several women are invited on stage to sing and take selfies with Pat Monahan.

Many from the excited multi-generational crowd at Harveys danced, swayed, fist-pumped, screamed and mouthed most of the lyrics to their numerous hit songs. And, the Grammy award-winning band was more than accommodating to get the audience into it – even in pictures, as Monahan admitted to going "crazy a little bit" at taking selfies with cameras from the front.

If that wasn't enough for being up close and personal, Monahan brought more than 30 women on stage to dance and sing the "Mermaid" song from the 2012 album "California 37" – named for the Bay Area highway.

"I've never been so scared in my life. You girls were hunting me down like I was the last garment at the mall," Monahan joked later.

Major fans Laura Edgar, 48, of Mill Valley and her two daughters Erin, 12, and Chelsea, 14, described a freeing experience when they blast the band's music while they're riding on Highway 37. The trio painted their fingernails with mermaids for the occasion and didn't miss a beat when it came

to celebrating the show, which offered a trip down memory lane.

“It’s happy music we can sing to in the car,” the mother said, adding: “It’s clean – they’re genuine and authentic.”

Edgar likes that Monahan sings about his life and means what he sings. Evidence of that was proven with his heart-filled “When I Look to the Sky,” one of Monahan’s self-proclaimed favorite songs that serves as a dedication to “anybody who has ever lost anyone.” (The line: “something tells me you’re here with me” reduced this writer to tears.)

After all, Train’s biggest hit “Drops of Jupiter” was written as an emotional tribute to Monahan having lost his mother to cancer, according to Stafford.

“(Monahan) woke up from a dream and felt strongly she had come to him. He had a vision of her floating in space,” Stafford said.

The band has just sold its 1 millionth bottle on its wine label that supports “Family House,” a Bay Area nonprofit to benefit children with cancer.

Train further showed its heart with a rather poignant version of “Marry Me.” Stafford, who closed his eyes playing most of the song, earlier told Lake Tahoe News that some in the audience through the years have either proposed or gotten married on stage to the 2010 hit tune. (Drummer Drew Shoals is an ordained minister.)

The band’s musical ability has always transcended, as shown with Monahan helping Shoals on the drums during one of their earliest recordings “Free.” And the members show no sign of slowing down. They served up their latest “Angel in Blue Jeans” off their soon-to-be-released album. The song has a hint of the new band Of Monsters and Men with their “Little Talks.”

The audience was certainly receptive to Train’s latest tune, which resembled music one could ride a horse to.

But then again, it was the signature older numbers that got the biggest response. The screams were loud and long near the end of the show during “Hey Soul Sister” off the 2009 “Save Me San Francisco” album. And Monahan appeared to work so hard on stage to entertain, he seemed out of breath. But then he picked up the pace further with the bouncy hit “Drive By.”

When the band left the stage, one man could be heard saying: “Drops of Jupiter.” Train didn’t disappoint when it served up its biggest hit for the encore.

“These are the songs that still put smiles on people’s faces, and that’s why we do them,” Stafford, who admitted to living his dream as a child, said in the interview.

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Notes:

Harvey’s Summer Outdoor Concert Series continues with:

• July 30 Journey, Steve Miller Band
• Aug. 2 Lady Gaga
• Aug. 3 Boston, Doobie Brothers
• Aug. 8 Aerosmith, Slash
• Aug. 14 Bruno Mars
• Aug. 16 Sammy Hagar and Friends
• Aug. 24 Rascal Flats, Sheryl Crow
• Aug. 29-30 Eagles.

Opinion: KY Jelly a management tool in EDC

By Larry Weitzman

In late January 2013 an email was sent to many county employees by Kim Kerr who listed her title as ACAO (assistant chief administrative officer) and interim Department of Transportation director.

The body of the email had three points, one about recruitment, a series of bullet points about training opportunities, but it was point No. 2 that was a bit mind blowing and inappropriate. It was a copy of an article that Kerr chose to attach to her email which was titled and contained "Three indispensible tools for local government managers." She went on to tell the reader how this article will allow you to decide how to prioritize the interruptions and better control your day. At a minimum it will limit discussion. As you will read later, it sure will, especially as one of the tools is a tube of KY Jelly, a lubricant that's sole purpose is to ease the pain caused by the insertion of objects into certain body cavities.



Larry Weitzman

The article was written by a retired Air Force Maj. Gabe Gabrielsen, who after retirement worked as a county administrator and is now a guest speaker at conferences and consultant. It appears on his website from which it was copied. Gabrielsen describes the three indispensible tools as

an egg timer to limit subordinates from taking too much of your time, two bicycle handle bar grips to grab so the subordinates can get a grip when they are excited or flustered, and finally a tube of KY Jelly to ease the pain when things don't go your way or Gabrielsen couldn't help the subordinate. In a phone call with Gabrielsen, he said that sending this article to your employees or subordinates unsolicited might be a bit inappropriate, at least without explanation.

If you are not familiar with KY Jelly, it is a sterile lubricant that is used medically to allow or ease the insertion of devices into certain human body parts. It is commonly advertised on television to be used in a sexual manner. Kerr also thinks it is an indispensible county government management tool. As said in the 1942 movie "Casablanca" by the character Capt. Louis Renault (played by Claude Rains) "I'm shocked, shocked …"

Many people could and would interpret the tube of KY Jelly some other way, a way that is entirely inappropriate in a working environment. Showing someone a tube of KY Jelly would be an insult or an off color put down to many people. Such as if you don't like the way things are, here is a tube of KY Jelly. I will refrain from giving you my interpretation as it's definitely not even close to appropriate. To others it could be thought of as sexual harassment. You get the idea.

Reading this article on the Internet at your own choice is not the problem, but sending it to your employees as three indispensible tools to manage your time is another issue and then sending it to your employees that you as the boss are going to use the three indispensible "tools" as described in the article against your employees makes it even worse. That becomes almost unbelievable. What makes Kim Kerr so special to conduct county business in such a condescending, crude, off color and insulting manner?

When someone complained about this email with the attached article as being offensive, highly inappropriate and sexually harassing it eventually cost him his career and reputation with the county via the Terri Daly kangaroo court. It may eventually cost the county millions if and when litigation is commenced.

What did CAO Terri Daly appointee, Karl Knobelauch, the director of Human Resources find with respect to the article? He found after an alleged "thorough investigation and analysis," Daly appointee and subordinate Knobelauch (also from Amador County) concluded that the sending of the article to employees and telling them to read it did not rise to a violation of the county's policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in the workplace. But Daly and Kerr continued with their planned elimination of the complaining party who was eventually forced to leave. But it's not over as we shall see soon.

Kerr's modus operandi didn't start here or in Ione. According to one of my interviewees, while Kerr was employed by Humboldt County she was suspended for 30 days for harassment. The spots on a leopard do not change. Without a release from Kerr, Humboldt County will not release the records. It is just like John Kerry who promised 10 years ago to sign and file a Form 180 to release his naval records. He has yet to do it.

This incident is just another indication that if there is a culture of fear, harassment and retaliation in the county, it lies with the ACAO whose CDA department has the lowest satisfaction rating in the county at 22 percent. Using the Van Dermyden interpretation of that number means that 78 percent of the CDA employees are unhappy and probably live in fear, just as the employees of the city of Ione did for four continuous years when Kerr was the city manager. It turned out that hell at one time was located only 30 miles south of Placerville only to find it rising.

Carlson correction

In one of my recent columns I was misled by Daly more than I realized. In my first conversation with Daly, she implied that Bernard Carlson's investigation of Kerr occurred before Kerr was hired and that Daly asked Carlson to do it. I have now learned that Carlson's investigation of Kerr was done on his own as a result of the Amador Grand Jury findings. He mainly interviewed business people and found many interviewed thought that thought Kerr did an OK job and was perhaps unfairly targeted by the grand jury. Of course it is unknown if those interviewed had the detailed information that I uncovered such as the CPA audits, failed bank reconciliations, misdirected deposits and the depletion of the Local Agency Investment Fund. It may be that Daly tried to use Carlson for more cover and intentionally mislead me.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

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5 houses destroyed in Sand Fire



Smoke clouds the sunset July 26 from Snows Road looking toward Somerset and Fair

Play. Photo/Bill Kingman

Five houses and seven out buildings have been consumed by the fast moving Sand Fire that is burning in the wine region of El Dorado and Amador counties.

Smoke from the 4,000-acre blaze is infiltrating the Truckee area, and the smell of smoke is strong through the American River canyon into Placerville from Lake Tahoe. As of Saturday evening the fire was 20 percent contained. Authorities as warning people that smoke could be an issue for the next few days.

The fire is east of Highway 49 and five miles north of Plymouth.

More than 450 people have been evacuated in the Fair Play, Somerset and Outingdale communities. This area is home to vineyards and ranches. Several horse trailers were seen fleeing the area.

CalFire said the fire started July 25 when a vehicle drove over dry vegetation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

TRT needs volunteers for backcountry camps

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association's annual backcountry camps at the Marlette Peak Campground are Aug. 1-3 and Aug. 16-17.

At this year's camp the TRTA aims to reconstruct the Marlette Peak Trail so it can be opened back up to equestrians and

mountain bikers.

Participants will camp out, work, be fed and get to experience a camp camaraderie. The TRTA is seeking volunteers to assist with trail work including widening tread, clearing brush, and building rock retaining walls. In addition, the camps need kitchen volunteers to help the camp chef’s prepare hearty meals.

Go online for more information and to register.

Placer County consolidates Tahoe City offices

An office suite in a Placer County owned building in Tahoe City was recently retrofitted to provide shared office space for 5th District Supervisor Jennifer Montgomery, County Executive Officer David Boesch, the Tahoe manager for the county executive office, and Tahoe field representative.

The meeting room will be the ongoing site for the monthly “Coffee with the Supervisor” on the fourth Thursday of every month at 9am.

The building is at 775 North Lake Blvd. It has been used for several years by the Placer County Community Development Resource Agency, Planning Services, Building Department, assessor, and Environmental Health. When a tenant on the upper floor did not renew the lease, the county consolidated into one location.

The county also has several other locations on the North Shore

where county offices are located, including the sheriff's substation in Burton Creek in Tahoe City, the Department of Public Works offices in Tahoe Vista and Health and Human Services offices and clinics in Kings Beach and Carnelian Bay.

Election to replace Nutting stirs up EDC

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

At the Cielo Estate winery in Shingle Springs, political upheaval in El Dorado County seemed to drift away momentarily Wednesday evening as a gentle breeze faintly ruffled leaves of heritage oaks.

Inside a reception room, as guests sipped Sierra foothills Pinot Grigio, five of the six special election candidates for District 2 supervisor politely discussed pointed matters of development, traffic and water.

A 45-minute drive away in Fair Play, guests at the hacienda-style Perry Creek Winery listened to soft guitar music, nibbled finger foods and raised glasses of Zinfandel in a fundraiser for the other District 2 candidate, Jennifer Nutting.

Yet such pastoral settings are ultimately unable to obscure the bitterness, dysfunction and strangeness of the supervisorial special election that roil El Dorado County these days.

After a politically charged prosecution, visiting Superior Court Judge Timothy S. Buckley on June 6 ordered four-term

Supervisor Ray Nutting ousted from office over misdemeanor convictions for improperly raising bail money. Nutting's wife, Jennifer, is now running for his seat, even as he seeks to halt the Sept. 9 special election.

Last week, Nutting sought a judicial stay of the vote in a writ that claimed his rights were violated by his removal. He charged that the judge wrongfully "excluded me from my office, withheld my salary … and prohibited me from performing my duties" based on an unproven allegation of official misconduct.

The state's 3rd District Court of Appeal is not required to rule before the special election. If the court fails to act by Sept. 9, the winner will fill the District 2 seat. And even if he prevails on appeal, Nutting won't be able to reclaim the office – though can sue the county for damages.

So as the legal challenges fester, and with no guarantee of a vote, five special-election candidates met at the Cielo Estate forum. Before about 100 people, they weighed in on proposed subdivision developments and traffic-inducing projects and sparred over who best could protect the county's rustic flavor.

Read the whole story