1 dead, 1 injured in Truckee area plane crash

A Tahoe City woman died and a Tahoe City man was critically injured Monday morning when the plane they were in crashed about six miles from the Truckee airport.

Darla Sue Farnell, 55, was pronounced dead at the scene. Ray Richard Farnell, 70, was listed in critical condition the evening of March 3 at Renown Medical Center.

At this time it is not known why the Piper PA-46 Malibu crashed Monday just before 11am on Martis Creek near Juniper Creek. The FAA and National Transportation Safety Board are investigating.

Placer County sheriff's deputies learned of the crash from the Oakland Air Traffic Control Center.

It took a couple hours for rescue personnel to find the downed plane in rugged terrain.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

---

4 hurt when chairs fall from British Columbia ski lift

By CBC News

Two children, one of whom was on a chairlift at the Crystal Mountain Ski Resort near Kelowna, B.C., when a number of ski chairs fell more than 20 feet to the ground Saturday, say it's

an experience they'll never forget.

Two people are in critical condition and two others sustained minor injuries after an empty chair at the West Kelowna ski hill hit a tower and fell more than 20 feet causing other chairs to fall.

Crystal Mountain Ski Resort General manager Mike Morin says 15 people were evacuated from the lift after the accident, none of whom sustained injuries.

Morin says an empty chair started swinging and then hit a tower, causing the line to go off the track, and other chairs to fall.

Read the whole story

Vineyard managers using dowsers to find water

By Jason Dearen, AP

ST. HELENA – With California in the grips of drought, farmers throughout the state are using a mysterious and some say foolhardy tool for locating underground water: dowsers, or water witches.

Practitioners of dowsing use rudimentary tools – usually copper sticks or wooden "divining rods" that resemble large wishbones – and what they describe as a natural energy to find water or minerals hidden deep underground.

While state and federal water scientists disapprove of dowsing, California "witchers" are busy as farmers seek to

drill more groundwater wells due to the state's record drought that persists despite recent rain.

The nation's fourth-largest wine maker, Bronco Wine Co., says it uses dowsers on its 40,000 acres of California vineyards, and dozens of smaller farmers and homeowners looking for wells on their property also pay for dowsers. Nationwide, the American Society of Dowsers, Inc. boasts dozens of local chapters, which meet annually at a conference.

"It's kind of bizarre. Scientists don't believe in it, but I do and most of the farmers in the valley do," said Marc Mondavi, a vineyard owner whose family has been growing grapes and making wine since the mid-20th century in the Napa Valley.

Mondavi doesn't just believe in dowsing, he practices it.

On a recent afternoon, standing in this family's Charles Krug vineyard holding two copper divining rods, Mondavi walked slowly forward through the dormant vines.

After about 40 feet, the rods quickly crossed and Mondavi – a popular dowser in the world famous wine region– stopped. "This is the edge of our underground stream," he said during the demonstration. Mondavi said he was introduced to "witching" by the father of an old girlfriend, and realized he had a proclivity for the practice.

After the valley's most popular dowser died in recent years, Mondavi has become the go-to water witch in Napa Valley. He charges about $500 per site visit, and more, if a well he discovers ends up pumping more than 50 gallons per minute.

With more farmers relying on groundwater to irrigate crops, Mondavi's phone has been ringing often as growers worry about extended years of dryness.

He had six witching jobs lined up over a recent weekend, three homes whose springs were running dry and three vineyards. It's

so popular that he’s even created a line of wines called “The Divining Rod” that will be sold nationwide this year.

While popular, scientists say dowsers are often just lucky, looking for water in places where it’s already known to likely exist.

“There’s no scientific basis to dowsing. If you want to go to a palm reader or a mentalist, then you’re the same person who’s going to go out and hire a dowser,” said Tom Ballard, a hydrogeologist with Taber Consultants, a geological engineering firm based in West Sacramento.

“The success is really an illusion. In most places you’re going to be able to drill and find some water,” he said.

Still, the consistent interest in water witches nationwide even spurred The U.S. Geological Survey to officially weigh in on the fairly harmless practice.

Dowsing has not held up well under scientific scrutiny, the USGS said, adding that dowsers are often successful in areas where groundwater is abundant.

“The natural explanation of ‘successful’ water dowsing is that in many areas water would be hard to miss. The dowser commonly implies that the spot indicated by the rod is the only one where water could be found, but this is not necessarily true,” the survey said in its report.

Christopher Bonds, senior engineering geologist for the state Department of Water Resources, said his agency does not advocate using witchers.

“DWR is an advocate for having qualified and licensed water professionals locate groundwater resources using established scientific methods,” Bonds said in an email.

Don’t tell that to John Franzia, co-owner of Bronco Wine Co., the nation’s fourth-largest wine producer based on sales. It

makes wine under hundreds of labels, including the famous “Two Buck Chuck.”

Bronco also owns more vineyard land in California than anyone else, and when it needs a new well there’s a good chance a dowser will be employed.

Franzia said the company uses many technologies to find water on its 40,000-acres, but turns to dowsers often and with great success.

“I’ve used witchers for probably the last 15-to-20 years,” Franzia said. “Seems like the witchers do the better job than the guys with all the electrical equipment. I believe in them.”

Brown not sure legalized pot a good idea

By AP

Gov. Jerry Brown said he is not sure legalizing pot is a good idea in his state because the country could lose its competitive edge if too many people are getting stoned.

If pot smoking gains more legitimacy in the nation’s most populous state, Brown said he worries it could have negative ripple effects.

“The problem with anything, a certain amount is OK. But there is a tendency to go to extremes,” he said in a wide-ranging interview aired Sunday on NBC’s “Meet the Press.” “And all of a sudden, if there’s advertising and legitimacy, how many people can get stoned and still have a great state or a great

nation?”

Californians voted to legalize medical marijuana in 1996. But Brown said he is watching closely to see how Colorado and Washington handle their new laws that go a step further by regulating the growth and sale of taxed pot at state-licensed stores.

“We have medical marijuana, which gets very close to what they have in Colorado and Washington. I’d really like those two states to show us how it’s going to work,” he said. “The world’s pretty dangerous, very competitive. I think we need to stay alert, if not 24 hours a day, more than some of the potheads might be able to put together.”

Brown, who was interviewed remotely from San Francisco, also discussed California’s drought problems, climate change and his future political career.

Now, as he prepares to run for his fourth term as governor, Brown said that despite his progressive politics, the key to turning California’s budget deficit into a projected multibillion-dollar budget surplus was exerting fiscal discipline.

“You’ve got to be tough on spending. No matter how liberal you want to be, at the end of the day, fiscal discipline is the fundamental predicate of a free society,” he said.

Calif. cities, police chiefs change tune on pot

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

The last time lawmakers tried to regulate California's medical marijuana industry, the League of California Cities warned of "a radical expansion of existing law" and "a slippery slope to distribution of marijuana for recreational use." And police groups rushed out talking points protesting the "creation of a massive, for-profit medical marijuana model."

California cities and police were long considered obstructionists to regulatory legislation they said would legitimize marijuana businesses. But now they are jumping into the marijuana-regulation effort out of fear that the state is inevitably moving toward a sanctioned cannabis industry with or without their input.

Expressing alarm over the changing "marijuana arena," the League of California Cities and the California Police Chiefs Association announced Feb. 21 that they are dropping their policy of "unconditional opposition" to laws sanctioning marijuana businesses in California. They are backing a new bill that would license medical marijuana dispensaries and cultivators while setting new restrictions on doctors recommending marijuana to patients.

Read the whole story

Parvo infected pups at Meyers shelter died

Updated March 3:

El Dorado County officials neglected to inform the public until today that the two dogs that had parvo were actually two puppies that had died by the time they sent out the notice

last week.

“We did not feel that information was relevant as the primary purpose was to notify the public that the facility kennels were closed and to emphasize the importance of prevention,” Margaret Williams, spokeswoman for the El Dorado County Health & Human Services Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “In addition to the two puppies, we were informed of two dogs that were impounded at the shelter but released to their owner on Feb. 18. These dogs came down with parvovirus after leaving the shelter. We are not certain if they acquired the virus at the shelter or through another contact in the community. We believe one of those dogs is doing well and recovering, and one has since passed.”

The remaining six dogs at the shelter are healthy, however adoption of dogs at the Meyers shelter have been suspended until March 11.

——

Dog adoptions at the animal shelter in Meyers have been suspended because of two cases of parvo this week.

The dog kennel area at the shelter will be closed until March 11 while shelter staff investigate, perform additional deep cleaning and disinfecting of all kennels and monitor the current dogs on site.

“We want to keep a watchful eye on the dogs and take every precaution to ensure that they are healthy,” said Robert Gerat, supervising animal services officer in South Lake Tahoe, said in a statement.

The business office and cat adoption area will remain open.

Canine parvovirus is a highly contagious viral disease that can produce life-threatening illness in dogs. The virus can be spread to other dogs through direct contact with an infected

dog’s feces. Symptoms of parvovirus typically include lethargy, vomiting, loss of appetite and bloody diarrhea that can lead to dehydration.

Rebuilding iconic engines a passion for Reno resident

By AP

RENO -– In a lifetime spent under the hood, Reno’s Everett Adams has quietly built an encyclopedic knowledge of engines and a museum’s worth of cars, boats, airplanes and memorabilia.

Adams, 80, has had a hand in the restoration and recreations of some world famous motorized machines – ranging from George Whittell’s famed boat the Thunderbird to the around-the-world-winning Thomas Flyer automobile to the 1911 Renault Town Car in which Kate Winslett and Leonardo DiCaprio famously made out in during the James Cameron film, “The Titanic.”

Adams and his crew at Adams’ Custom Engines on Glendale Avenue built a replica of the Renault that went down with the Titanic in only 60 days. Adams was in Baja, Mexico during the filming of the movie, even getting a bit part as a chauffeur in the film.



The Thunderbird is one of the engine's Everett Adams has rebuilt. Photo/LTN file

"It was quite an experience," said Adams, who has numerous great experiences since moving to Reno in 1957 to go to work as a Ferrari mechanic for Bill Harrah. He also built engines and was the crew chief for Harrah's racing hydroplane, the Tahoe Miss; worked as a crew chief for Indy cars; and worked as a mechanic at Harrah's Automobile Collection until 1965 when he left and started Adams Custom Engines.

It's safe to say his business is largely a well-kept secret. The company has never advertised itself, instead relying on word-of-mouth recommendations from one car person to the next.

The name is also a bit of a misnomer, because the company does much more than just engines. It rebuilds and restores classic vehicles, often from the ground up, often hand-crafting parts that are impossible to find. It also has a "modern side," where it works on contemporary vehicles.

The business has completed more than 380 body-off vehicles over the years, meaning the body is taken off the frame and the vehicle is restored from the ground up. Each of those vehicles is documented in photo albums that Adams keeps in his office.

Almost 50 years later, it is still a labor of love for Adams, who said he still enjoys being in the shop and the fabrication area where parts are refurbished, restored or built from

scratch. Through the years, the shop has created its own molds and dyes for parts that are hard or simply impossible to find anymore.

Adams has also amassed a huge collection of manuals, books, magazines and other materials that can help he and his staff in any project brought to them – from Rolls Royce and Ferrari to Corvettes to classic cars of any vintage.

“We’re just now organizing our books and moving them to one of the other warehouses, which we’re converting into a library,” he said. “We’re going to have a research section with probably 1,500 volumes.”

When completed, the research library will also be a bit of a museum with displays on the history of the business, vintage posters, memorabilia and ephemera that Adams has accumulated through the years.

When it’s completed, the plan is to have the research library available to car enthusiasts.

For Adams, who still enjoys driving the 1932 Ford he bought for $25 in 1949, it’s about sharing a love and a passion for all things mechanical.

“We’ve had a lot of fun,” he said. “I’ve had a lot of enjoyment out of this.”

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Pink Chase Tahoe returns to Mt. Rose Ski Resort on March 6. The annual event raises awareness about women's health issues. Registration is $50. To register and for more info, go online.

• The Regional Transportation Commission will host an open house on March 6 from 7-10am and 3-5:50pm to talk about bringing summer service to Sand Harbor on weekends and holidays. The open house is at the TRC 4th Street station in Reno.

• Here are the El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra roadwork schedules this week from Caltrans.

• Dan Spano of Paradise Real Estate is now on the Incline Board of Realtors.

• Incline high's girls basketball team won the Divsion III state championship March 1 over three-time dfending champs Pershing County. This is the teams first state title in 29 years.

Caesars selling properties to restructure debt

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Caesars Entertainment Corp. said Monday it's selling four

properties – three on the Strip and Harrah's New Orleans – to its Caesars Growth Partners subsidiary for $2.2 billion.

The transaction, which the company said in a statement will result in cash proceeds of $1.8 billion, will allow Caesars Entertainment to reduce a portion of its gaming industry-high $23 billion of debt.

Caesars Entertainment will transfer ownership of Bally's Las Vegas, The Quad and the under-construction The Cromwell, along with Harrah's New Orleans, to Caesars Growth Partners for $2.2 billion.

Caesars Entertainment is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys.

Read the whole story

SnowGlobe promoter wants contract, more from city

By Kathryn Reed

SnowGlobe promoters want a multi-year contract and for the city to pony up more money.

The South Lake Tahoe City Council on March 4 will talk about whether the reported $6 million the three-day music festival brings into the region is worth the trade-offs.

2013 was the third year the event has been staged at the Lake Tahoe Community College ball fields on Dec. 29-31.

"Once the field is replaced, we don't recommend coming back to

that field," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The field is likely to be replaced in three years at a cost of about $500,000. The city has been setting aside money to replace it and has about 75 percent of what it needs in the bank. A large portion of the money comes from Measure S/R dollars, the recreation measure.

Snow actually causes more damage to the artificial turf field than an event like SnowGlobe. And last year was the first time the field was partially covered to prevent wear and tear.

Chad Donnelly, SnowGlobe promoter, wants the city to pay $25,000 in promotional expenses, pickup some transportation costs, and pay for garbage removal.

Donnelly did not return a phone call. It is not known how much he makes off the concert. The cheapest three-day tickets for 2013 were $149. It's estimated 10,000 to 12,000 people attend the concert. Most do so all three days.

Donnelly has told the city 94 percent of the concertgoers are from outside the area. He bases this on ZIP codes from credit cards used to purchase tickets. From there he extrapolated that $2 million is being spent by attendees on lodging and $4 million on other things.

Kerry said she agrees with those figures.

"They definitely drive money into the local economy," Kerry said.

But she added that the business community might want offer to help since they have benefited tremendously two of the three years because there was so little snow to draw people to town.

Lake Tahoe Community College will also have to weigh in on any contract because they own half the field. In addition, the physical education building is used, as is the parking lot.

Even if an agreement can be reached for this year and the next couple years, a long-term solution needs to be found if SnowGlobe is going to stay on the South Shore.

Lake Tahoe Airport is out of the question based on FAA regulations. Stateline casinos have said they need the parking that time of year so the answer is “no”. Heavenly is a definite “no”. The parking lot at any Lake Tahoe Unified School District property is a “no” because alcohol sales would not be allowed.

Camp Richardson and Bijou Community Park have not been ruled out.

The other alternative is after five or six years of Donnelly branding SnowGlobe enough people might attend no matter the date, meaning that another time of year could be found to bring the event to South Lake Tahoe.

–

Note: The South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting on March 4 starts at 9am at Lake Tahoe airport.