Lake Tahoe ski report, Dec. 8



It’s one of those “sick” days in Lake Tahoe – “like, dude, the powder is so sick.” And sick as in “boss, I just can’t make it in today.” Details about what’s happening on the mountains are in the ski report that is provided by Curtis Fong, the Guy from Lake Tahoe.

What’s a cool gift for less than $20?

Shop – it’s a four letter word in a super negative way for so many people this time of year.

With the economy being what it is, household incomes such as they are and the pressure to buy, buy, buy this time of year, let’s help each other out.

Twenty dollars. What if that were the maximum amount you could spend on a gift? What would you buy? What would you make? What would you sell someone?

Send your suggestions to **info@LakeTahoeNews.net**. Suggest ideas to other readers about what $20 or less can buy, who it might be good for if that’s not obvious, where to buy it, how to make it. Make the ideas as Lake Tahoe or Sierra Nevada oriented as possible. If you have a picture of the item, the store, yourself, then send it along as a jpeg. Include your name and contact information in case we have questions. If you are OK with your name being credited with the suggestion, indicate it’s fine to publish it. Your phone number and/or email address will not be published.

Keep what you write to 150 words or so.

Keep the ideas family friendly and legal.

Lake Tahoe News reserves the right not to print all of the suggestions and to edit them.

Mountain driving is no biggie if you take it easy

By Kathryn Reed

Driving into Lake Tahoe after a major dump isn't the nightmare newscasters off the hill make it out to be. I know. I did it Monday afternoon.

It took longer, sure, but it wasn't scary. I wasn't some place I shouldn't have been. The only thing that was upsetting was not being able to fill up on gas in Placerville before heading into the mountains. I like to do that just in case I get stuck and need to leave the engine running to stay warm.



Snow covers the foothills Dec. 7. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Placerville was without electricity – so gas pumps couldn't work.

It was a magical sight to see snow as I crested a hill before El Dorado Hills. I don't remember seeing snow that low before. Mixed with the golden grasses of the foothills, it was almost surreal.

The white stuff kept accumulating as I headed east. Trees not used to snow were weighted down, some literally on the ground. Limbs looked like they were about to split.

Chains were required on the east side of Placerville. The pavement was dry there, but not much farther up the road was slick and white.

A few vehicle drove by way too fast – seeming to be exceeding the speed limit. Most of us kept a moderate pace up the mountain.

The American River is dotted with what looks like large snowballs, but in reality are boulders covered with snow.

Occasionally the sun peaked out. Flurries were in pockets along the way. Visibility decreased severely at one point.

Driving in the mountains just takes patience – which gives one plenty of time to enjoy the scenery. But it was also reassuring to know I had a shovel, blanket, food, water and clothing in the Jeep just in case it wasn't an uneventful excursion back home.

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Lake Tahoe = white and cold

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County workers can sleep in – start time is 10am today. Backcountry skiers better think twice about strapping on skis or a board. All resorts are giddy about the snow accumulations. And the storms have only just begun.

County Supervisor Norma Santiago told *Lake Tahoe News* on Monday night that staff will meet to "assess how we are with power and computers. If it doesn't look good, we may close the offices again."



Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe about 3:30pm Dec. 7. Photo/Kathryn Reed

County offices were closed all day Monday.

Not much was going on in Placerville Monday afternoon when a *Lake Tahoe News* reporter drove through. Power was out – meaning no gas was available, no coffee, nothing.

The Board of Supervisors has moved today's regular meeting to Thursday. Closed session will still begin at 8am, with open session at 9am in Placerville.

Santiago said parts of rural El Dorado County on the West

Slope received 1.5 feet of snow. This brought everything to a halt.

Trees along Highway 50 west of the county seat were bent in ways that would make a contortionist proud.

But the reality is the winds with the storm, and the snowload on trees and power lines meant the town was dark. Pacific Gas & Electric officials expected electricity to be restored Monday night.

“It’s really hard on the rural roads. Some parts of (Highway) 49 have only one lane plowed. It’s hard to get into the deeper county roads,” Santiago said.

A Red Cross trailer was being hauled into Placerville about 1pm Monday. The county set up a shelter Monday at the town hall so people would have a warm place to spend the night. It’s at 549 Main St. in Placerville.

For more information about what’s going on in El Dorado County, go to www.edcgov.us (though the website has been down) or call 866.934.8771.

Other storm issues

In Nevada, Gov. Jim Gibbons shut down all non-essential government offices in Northern Nevada on Monday. Carson City, the state capital, received more than 18 inches of snow. That amount essentially cripples this part of the Sierra.

Slick roads are being blamed for Sunday’s accident on Interstate 80 near Donner Summit that claimed the life of a 14-year-old boy from Orangevale.

All regional offices of AAA were closed Monday, though they are expected to be open today.

Schools are also set to open their doors after most called it a snow day Monday.

The Sierra Avalanche Center reports the danger is high above the treeline and moderate below it. It’s always risky when light fluffy snow like what dumped in the last couple of days sits on top of a hard, deep slab. This is often prime condition for an avalanche.

“This one wasn’t so much the water content. It was so dry to start with we piled up the snow efficiently,” Mark Faucette, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, said late Monday night. “It maybe was a little underforecast. We got a couple feet of snow at lake level.”

Less water content makes for better skiing; more water content eventually fills parched reservoirs.

It’s too soon to tell how freezing temperatures will affect crops. Citrus is the big concern this time of year. It can handle temps just below freezing.

What’s next?

Some forecasts show snow for six of the next nine days for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Even though the winter storm warning was canceled by the National Weather Service on Monday at 6:14pm, the snow was still falling for several hours afterward, especially in the South Lake area.

The overnight low for the basin was expected to be in negatives digits. This means roads this morning are likely to like an ice rink.

Several residential streets throughout the region never saw a plow on Monday

Highways in the area were closed at various times because of periods of heavy snowfall and spinouts.

Remember, four-wheel drive does not mean drive the speed limit

or faster in winter conditions, nor does four-wheel drive allow you to brake faster.

“(Tuesday) won’t warm up much at all. We are still mainly going to be below freezing as a high for a big chunk of the week,” Faucette said.

He said the storm moving in Thursday night into Friday will bring snow, but not the accumulations originally forecast.

It’s more likely a foot or two will arrive at lake level Saturday night into Sunday. More moisture will come with this storm – which means temperatures will be rising. Snow levels are expected to be below 6,000 feet.

An even warmer storm is farther out. Mid-next week snow levels may not drop below 8,000 feet.

Ski resort update

Resorts in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin received more than 2 feet of snow in 24 hours.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort, which is notorious for recording more snow than anyone else, boasted of 3 feet of fresh powder by noon Dec. 7. This means more terrain will open today.

With the storms rolling in all week, the resort that is about 45 minutes south of South Lake Tahoe, expects to have eight chairs operating this weekend, including the Timber Creek area, several other resort restaurants and amenities.

Prices today will be $48 for adults.

Most all of the resorts will be open within 10 days. Opening dates: Dec. 12, Donner Ski Ranch; Dec. 17, Diamond Peak; Dec. 18, Granlibakken Resort, Homewood Mountain Resort and Tahoe Donner.

“This is the type of storm that sets us up for the winter

season," Andy Chapman, tourism director for North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, said in a press release. "Resorts are open and the lifts are cranking, and with an abundance of deals and packages, there has never been a better time to ski and board North Lake Tahoe."

The same can easily be said for all the shores of Lake Tahoe.



Placerville is full of snow on Monday. Photos/Kathryn Reed



Red Cross helps out in Placerville.



No last name Mike checks for 4-wheel drive/chains just outside of Placerville on Highway 50.

Roberson guilty of second-degree murder

By Kathryn Reed

Premeditation. That was the sticking point for jurors in the Ulysses Roberson trial. Without being able to say he killed his son with forethought, the panel on Monday morning convicted Roberson of second-degree murder.

The former South Lake Tahoe resident will be sentenced Jan. 6. He could get 15 years to life for killing his 4-year-old son Alexander Olive. Olive's body has never been found.



Ulysses Roberson

"We're very satisfied with the outcome and thankful the family

and the community can have some resolution on this after so long," FBI agent Chris Campion said.

Campion worked this case for years. The boy was killed in either December 1985 or January 1986.

Chris Cefalu was one of six alternates for the 12-member jury. Until the last day of closing arguments on Nov. 30 he thought his job was done because the alternates would not be part of the deliberations. One of the female jurors was dismissed and he had more work to do regarding the case.

"We got to the point (Monday morning) where everyone gave their opinion about what charge was appropriate," Cefalu said. "It got to the point where we couldn't prove first degree and then we decided murder in the second degree because we agreed it was murder."

Cefalu had high praise for jury foreman Charles Emmett and El Dorado County Superior Court Judge Suzanne Kingsbury.

"The nature of the case was circumstantial mostly. That is a tough concept," Cefalu said.

Keith Cooney was an alternate the entire time on the case that started in early October.

"I found some of the testimony, pictures and evidence pretty disturbing," Cooney said. "There were times when I was silently screaming at the witnesses on the stand – 'how can you walk into a room and see a child hanging upside down and not do anything'."

His voice fills with disgust thinking about how the boy's mother, Judy Olive (who also goes by Ruby and Rosemary), knew about it and did nothing but allow her son to be further tortured by Roberson.

It came out during the trial that Roberson hated his son for being half white. But it's unclear how he justified sleeping

with a white woman.

Plenty of blame can go around in the case. But those close to the case say it was eerie how Roberson never showed remorse.

Young vocalists unite for holiday extravaganza

An ensemble of voices will come together Dec. 15-16 for the 15th annual MontBleu Holiday Extravaganza.

The show consists of third-fifth, sixth-eighth, and ninthth-12th grade choirs, as well as a Faculty/Parent choir.

Included is the award winning Blue Ribbon Classical Choir and the new STMS Advanced Choir called â€œThe Belles of Christmas.â€ The finale includes more than 270 singers. Special guests include selected performers from Marcia Sarosik Shining Stars dance troupe.

Pre-show entertainment includes music as performed by local student groups, and the Faculty Parent Choir will welcome guests by singing as patrons enter the showroom.

Some of the highlighted songs include:

â€¢ Elementary kids: â€œRun, Run Reindeerâ€ and â€œSeven Feet of Snowâ€

â€¢ Middle school: â€œItâ€™s Almost Time for Christmasâ€ and â€œChristmas Gloriaâ€

â€¢ Blue Ribbon Choir: â€œBorn Today is the Holy Childâ€ and â€œA Soft Wind Blewâ€

â€¢ Finale: â€œYule Be Rockinâ€™â€ and â€œLights of Hannukahâ€ featuring all nine local choirs.

Music begins in the MontBleu Showroom at 7pm each night. Tickets are $8 for adults and $5 for students and seniors, free for those under 5. Tickets are available at the door.

Blue Ribbon Classical Choir

The award winning Blue Ribbon Classical Choir is the most advanced choir in the entire choir program. It is an all â€œtrebleâ€ (female) choir featuring the best trained singers with the most singing experience.

The choir was founded by Paul Kushner in 1997. This choir has performed all over Northern California and Nevada for more 12 years. It has performed the national anthem for the San Francisco Giants two years in a row.

They have won top honors in music competitions in past few years. This choir also performs all over the Tahoe area: at schools, churches, for charitable and community organizations.

For booking information, contact Paul Kushner at: (530) 541.4111, ext. 267 (8:00-9:30am) or email: pkushner@ltusd.org.

South Tahoe High School Chorus

The South Tahoe High School Chorus is an open choir class led by Bob Grant.

South Tahoe Middle School Honor Choir

The South Tahoe Middle School Honor Choir was started in the year 2000. The choir consists of auditioned middle school aged singers from South Tahoe Middle School, Whittell High School, St. Theresa School, and home schoolers.

Belles of Christmas

The Belles of Christmas is a new group, having formed in

November 2009. It consists of most of the top middle school singers in South Lake Tahoe. They have a robust Christmas schedule as they are booked for nearly 10 concerts this holiday season.

Tahoe Elementary Honor Choir

Led by Paul Kushner, the Tahoe Elementary Honor Choir was founded in the fall 1995 and continues to shine every year as the Holiday season nears. The TEHC consists of auditioned singers from third, fourth and fifth grades drawn from all elementary schools in the South Tahoe area.

A dream of Kushnerâ€™s came together back in 1991 starting with â€œThe 12 Kids of Christmas.â€ This group eventually grew to more than 240 choir members. The kids are taught proper singing techniques, choreography, and stage presence. Each year the schools all come together to perform a â€œHoliday Extravaganzaâ€ at the MontBleu Showroom in Stateline.

Community Holiday Tree & Menorah lighting a success

Thank you South Lake Tahoe!

The Community Holiday Tree & Menorah lighting, hosted by the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority last Friday, was a big success (despite the fact that more than half of the tree lights did not turn on). The event was attended by over 400 locals and visitors and was enjoyed by all.

The LTVA would like to thank Mayor Jerry Birdwell for his

heartfelt welcome, and the following for their contribution and support: Sierra Pacific Power, Lake DJ/Derek Tarpey, Temple Bat Yam, Tahoe Schools Choir, Borges Sleigh Rides, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Aramark/Lake Tahoe Cruises, Riva Grill, Safeway Bijou & Round Hill, Raleys, Grocery Outlet, Lakeside Inn, MontBleu, Sierra Tahoe Wood Products, Leadership Lake Tahoe and the City of SLT Parks & Recreation Department.

Very special thanks to Santa Claus and all his elves and helpers. We look forward to seeing you on the first Friday of December next year for this annual community event.

Sue Barton, deputy director Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority

Census takers needed in South Tahoe

The Census Bureau is actively looking for census takers â€“ or what they call enumerators. To get more information, call 866.861.2010.

There is information in Spanish as well.

The hiring process starts with a test people need to take. The first testing day is Dec. 14, 9am to 5pm at the city offices at the airport.

Ivan Twiss is the Census representative in South Lake Tahoe – (530) 919.5220.

Controlled burn on East Shore

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will begin prescribed fire operations in several areas located on the East Shore of Lake Tahoe starting Dec. 8 as weather and staffing allow.

Operations will be conducted in the Skyland and Round Hill (near Elks Point Road) areas and may last throughout the week.

Residents and travelers can expect to see smoke from prescribed fire project areas.

Other fire protection agencies, state and local, may also be conducting prescribed fire operations during this period.

This and other prescribed fire projects are designed to reduce wildfire risks to communities and critical resources. Smoke management is part of every prescribed fire burn plan, and efforts will be taken to reduce actual or potential smoke impacts on community areas.

North Shore eateries – the place for apres ski fun

Apres-ski activities can be just as memorable as the time spent on the slopes and North Lake Tahoe is keeping things lively with a fresh influx of eateries and watering holes and longtime favorites, offering even more options for posh cocktails, cold brews and unforgettable flavors.

The area’s most anticipated opening is Manzanita at The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe. Located mid-mountain at

Northstar-at-Tahoe, Manzanita will be helmed by Traci Des Jardins, the James Beard award-winning chef behind San Francisco's Jardiniere and Mijita Cocina Mexicana. Skiers and snowboarders can end their day with Des Jardins' signature French-inspired cuisine infused with mountain flavors created with organic ingredients and sustainable, locally grown meat and produce. Bound-to-be favorites include Liberty Farms duck meatballs with mission figs and Lucques olives and Dungeness crab sliders. Manzanita opens Dec. 9.

Tahoe City recently got a taste of Thai when Thai Kitchen opened this fall. The city's Cobblestone Center is also home to a new wine bar, Corkscrews Wine & Cheese Bar, with a sleek, modern look, boasting an impressive selection of boutique wine labels and cheese, including Cowgirl Creamery's Mt. Tam goat cheese.

Also new this winter is Squaw Valley's Cornice Cantina. Located in the old Red Dog at Squaw Valley USA, the Cantina serves authentic Mexican food and margaritas till midnight. The Village at Squaw's Twenty-Two Bistro & Bar celebrates its one-year anniversary this December and basks in the glow of KT-22. The eatery serves up small plates of New American cuisine as well as substantial entrees for skied-up appetites. The owner of the Village's Uncorked opened Soupa last year, which features affordable, house-made comfort foods from organic, sustainable ingredients.

Fat Cat Cafein Tahoe City re-opened its doors last May after an extensive remodel. Guests can pick their poison from an extensive martini and cocktail menu at the cherry-wood bar and enjoy "share plates" with friends. Popular items include the Alley Cat, a dirty martini with blue cheese-stuffed olives; along with Thai lettuce wraps; and Fat Cat Mac, a four-cheese macaroni and cheese with smoked bacon, crimini mushrooms and truffle oil. Live music is featured Friday and Saturday evenings.

The masterminds behind Moody’s Bistro will also be celebrating the one-year anniversary of Baxter’s Bistro and Lounge in the Village at Northstar. Chef Mark Estee and JJ Morgan welcome hungry skiers and riders with live jazz and comfort food created with farm-to-table ingredients in a hip atmosphere. New this winter is an outdoor patio with fire pit and couches where revelers can keep warm with seasonal cocktails, such as the Naughty Cider.

Incline Village welcomed Bite in December 2007. The lounge-style bar and restaurant boasts a chic and dramatic atmosphere, specializing in small plate and American tapas. The bar creates artisan cocktails from scratch, using premium spirits, house-made infused syrups and fresh herbs and fruit. Locals swear by the Lemon Ginger Zinger and the Lime Basil Gimlet, as well as the Ahi Sliders with Arugula, Pickled Ginger and Wasabi Aioli. Truckee’s FiftyFifty Brewing Company also opened in 2007 and is the place to head for an authentic taste of Sierra-brewed beer. Local favorites include pints of Rockslide IPA, preferably served with huge plates of nachos, Belgian mussels and frites or bourbon-grilled shrimp over sweet potato fries.

Famous fixtures such as the Lone Eagle Grille, Gar Woods Grill and Pier, Moody’s Bistro and Lounge and Big Water Grille still serve as beacons for post-slope revelers. It’s Old Tahoe ambiance overlooking the waters of Lake Tahoe at the Hyatt Regency’s Lone Eagle Grille in Incline Village, where winter enthusiasts rest their weary limbs next to stone fireplaces. The food is hearty and includes seared elk chop and rosemary grilled quail. Gar Woods in Carnelian Bay offers expansive lake views and Warm Woodys (the winter counterpart to their renowned slushy Wet Woody, which is available throughout the year). Moody’s stylish setting exudes warmth while boasting one of the area’s coolest atmospheres and menus. Located in the Truckee Hotel, Moody’s is known for live music (including impromptu performances by Sir Paul McCartney), the Aviation

Cocktail and the “Big Ass Pork Chop.” Big Water Grille provides spectacular, panoramic lake views and a wine list with 200 different wines from around the world.

Winter enthusiasts have also long flocked to PlumpJack Cafe, Sunnyside and Caliente. Situated at the base of Squaw, PlumpJack remains an energetic scene where high-end city folk and local ski bums mingle over Crockett’s Cool Breezes. Sunnyside Lodge’s location right on the water continues to pique the interest of visitors, but it’s the fish tacos and crispy zucchini sticks that keep them coming back. It’s always animated at Caliente in Kings Beach, especially at their monthly tequila tastings hosted by distillery representatives.