‘Portraits of Change’ – a disappointing read

By Kathryn Reed

I kept hoping “Portraits of Change: Unparalleled Freedoms, Unanticipated Consequences” would get better. This book had so much potential.

Mary White Stewart, who is a professor of sociology at UNR, published the book this year.



It’s a look at four generations of her family – including herself, her daughters, her mom and her grandmothers. It delves into how the women’s movement changed the expectation of women and the options for women.

But so often I kept putting the book down because I just didn’t care what happened to her family. Unlike a good novel or autobiography, I never connected with her or her family. I never liked them or disliked them. I just didn’t care.

I expected more analysis, especially based on her profession. What readers get is more like a laundry list of what happened in their lives. But there was no context to the rest of the world in order to judge if these women represent the “average” family.

There needed to be more than just her family to make the book relevant.

The last chapter on age begins to go below the superficial and starts to ask questions about why women, particularly in the United States, react the way they do to getting older. But it was too little, too late.

I’m still wondering why I bothered to read all 143 pages.

Then and now: Changing landscapes





The Barton Meadow and Dunlap Ranch are the green zones adjacent to and above the Tahoe Keys area.

The older picture (courtesy of the Lake Tahoe Historical Society) is from 1939; while the more recent one is from Google Earth this year.

– Bill Kingman

Arctic vs. Antarctica – contrasting the poles



Mountains of Antarctica from a cruise ship. Photos/Robert S. Wood

By Robert S. Wood

I never thought I'd get to Antarctica. Way too expensive, though I'd lived and worked in the Arctic and traveled Patagonia as far south as the tip of South America. I badly wanted to compare the two polar regions, which I knew to be vastly, wildly different.

In the north one travels mainly on land and by bush plane; in the south it had to be by ship or air. But just flying over all that ice didn't interest me. Tours by ship commonly start at $15,000 per person and as much as $65,000 if you want to actually set foot on land. That's partly because of stiff entry requirements to prevent pollution like double-hulled ships with a special expensive fuel. And it's a long way from California.

My wife, Deanne, and I had cruised with Holland America Line (HAL), so we kept an eye on its Antarctic offerings. We

spotted a coming three-week cruise in January 2013 that started in Valparaiso, Chile, on the South Pacific, dove deep into Antarctic waters for four days cruising, then sailed north up the Atlantic to Buenos Aires. It sounded good, though way too expensive at $14,500 each.

What especially attracted me was that it cruised the Sarmiento Canal in Argentina where my buddy Jack Miller, with whom I'd camped in Patagonia, had made a handful of first ascents on inaccessible wilderness peaks. I'd always wanted to see those mountains. That made the HAL itinerary sound especially great. So did the dozen of glaciers emptying into the sea along the way.

Fortunately, cruise industry economics make it mandatory to somehow fill every cabin even if they have to cut prices to the bone. We talked to our agent at HAL and he offered us a decent discount, but the price was still way too much. The sailing was still three months away and we expected the price to drop a little further as time grew shorter. But there was always the risk that the boat would suddenly fill up and our chance would be gone.

We had just about decided to save our pennies and wait hopefully for next year, when in late November our agent called us, breathless. HAL was unexpectedly offering a special on "our" cruise. An ocean view cabin, he told us, would cost us just $2,400 each, barely $100 bucks a day. We grabbed it – our Christmas present to each other – and started planning. Bulky parkas wouldn't fit in our suitcases, so the strategy was to wear multiple layers of thinner winter garments for the warmth we'd need out on deck in Antarctica.

Our American Airlines jet landed in Santiago, Chile, in January, where the suddenly summer temperature was 90 degrees. Coming from winter in the U.S., it felt like our blood was boiling. A bus took us west through farmland for two hours to the seaport of Valparaiso, where we boarded the 1,300-

passenger HAL Veendam. The next morning we set sail down the mostly wild Chilean coast of Patagonia, behind which rose the shadowy spine of the Andes.

We had been promised a chance to go ashore at small fishing towns every other day to see the sights, but the notoriously stormy Patagonia weather threatened those excursions. Since the villages were all too small to have a dock that could accommodate the Veendam, the only away ashore was to climb into bobbing oversized lifeboats called tenders and plow through harbor waters to small fishing boat piers.

At Puerto Montt, two days sail south of Valparaiso, we planned to take an 11-hour bus-launch-bus excursion through the remote famed Chilean Lake District. But the captain decided the stormy bay's whitecaps made it too rough, and we were not allowed to attempt a landing. Sigh.

So we sailed on south. Every day it grew a little cooler, while at the same time the days grew longer as the latitude grew higher. So, paradoxically we got more sun as we approached Antarctica.

In the next four days, we managed to get our tenders ashore at several fishing villages, where we enjoyed barbecued lamb and Pisco sours and wine at one remote rancho/estancia behind the town of Chacabuco. On the way back to the ship our driver stopped at a local market where he helped us buy more wonderful Chilean wine – $30 on the ship – for four bucks a bottle.

Jack had warned us to watch out for the dreaded Trancura Fly, a giant bee native to Patagonia that was extremely aggressive and had a nasty sting.

On a driving excursion on a rocky road in the Simpson River Valley, we stopped to walk to a waterfall when suddenly we were attacked by a swarm of Trancuras. We ran for the van and got inside without being stung, but several bees came in with

us and zoomed angrily around inside, everybody cringing and swatting, until the frantic driver could kill the last of them.

The next day, when the captain announced we would be entering Sarmiento Canal around 11am, I made my way with my camera to the highest deck in the bow. Jack's photos of his climbs in the National Geographic had showed nothing but snow. Now in mid-summer there wasn't a flake in sight. We did, however, see the impressive Brujo Glacier, with its spawn of ice floes and bergs floating at its foot, as well as the landmark rusty red shipwreck of the Santa Leonor.

Punta Arenas, which I had visited almost 40 years before, had grown from a village to a seaport city. From it, I sent Deanne on a strenuous inland 12-hour bus-flight-bus excursion to see beautiful Paine National Park, a highlight of my trip back in the '70s. It was a gamble on the Patagonian weather, which thankfully held fair, and she returned beaming but weary with wonderful pictures.

Punta Arenas was our last civilization on the mainland. After that we made our way through thousands of Argentine uninhabited islands, weaving our way toward Tierra del Fuego. The next day we enjoyed a series of blue-tinged icefalls in Glacier Alley cruising through the fearsome Beagle Channel – tame that day as a lake – to the final island, Tierra del Fuego, planning to go ashore at Ushuaia, the continent's southernmost city that I had previously visited on our '70s camping trip.

When it came in sight I was astonished. The little village I remembered had also tripled in size into a large town, but again stormy seas prevented us from landing or even tendering ashore. Double sigh.

So we continued south through open empty seas in a twilight that refused to turn to darkness, through the feared Drake's

Passage where the Pacific and Atlantic oceans angrily meet. Our first sight of Antarctica, only hours from Ushuaia, were the black humps of islands that extend out from the tongue of Antarctica known as the Palmer Peninsula, some of which is actually outside the Antarctic Circle.

Everyday now there were several lectures by a pair of Antarctic expert brothers named David and Chris Wilson, whose famed uncle had accompanied the legendary Shackleton in the race to be first to reach the South Pole more than a century ago.

By now it was cold all the time, though the sun never set, and when the wind blew it was decidedly chilly on deck. Fortunately, there were ample heated, glassed in public lounges where views were better than those from our portholes and exposed balconies. Then a thick fog rolled in, obscuring the sun, providing a strange pearly gray lighting affect.

At St. George's Island on Admiralty Bay we passed three of the lonely stations that are the only man-made sights in Antarctica, beside wrecked vessels. Here, sharing a slightly sheltered bay, were the Polish, Russian and Chilean bases – forlorn clusters of low huts and crude blocky buildings set in clearings in the snow. A few figures in bulky dark clothing could be seen moving like ants between the buildings. Many of them stopped and waved at us, the only signs of distant civilization they were likely to see.

Offshore stood several small supply ships and research vessels. The only other boats we saw on the whole voyage were a big yellow German cruise ship blaring beer hall music and a small sailboat, not more than 30-feet long, dwarfed by the bergs it was sailing amongst. I shivered to think of living conditions on board, compared to our cozy cabins.

Now well inside the Antarctic Circle, the myriad islands were simply mounds and blocks of snow rising from pitch-black seas

flecked with ice floes and small icebergs. The only place we saw the black rock that revealed land in that world of white was on slopes so steep that the mantle of snow had avalanched off into the sea. It was a desolate sight that shouted cold, cold, cold. The sun had disappeared the night before behind a layer of fog and cloud that made a backlighted ceiling of gray at about 1,000 feet above the water.

The following day we began to pass bigger islands and more glaciers. It was sometimes possible to see three at one time. The old glacier ice was distinct from the snow by its pure blue glow. Mostly the weather was mild and cold, with low clouds that obscured the sun but revealed the moderate snow-covered dark peaks.

We saw hundreds of penguins strutting comically ashore from a distance through binoculars and dozens more looking up at us on passing icebergs, close-up.

We passed immovable-looking icebergs far bigger than the ship, explaining what had easily sunk the unsinkable Titanic. Often they were larger than the islands and topped with snow, but their baby blue ice looked much different. They rose hundreds of feet above the seas, meaning nearly a thousand feet of ice lay underwater – only the proverbial “tip of the iceberg” being visible. Hitting one would be like driving the ship into a sheer granite wall. Being summer, it never got completely dark.

Obviously, our 1300 passengers could not be taken ashore at any of these tiny stations, but several scientists arrived one morning in inflatable Zodiacs from the out-of-sight Palmer Station, one of three bases run for research by the United States. They delivered fascinating illustrated lectures and told us what life was like in the stations. If you weren’t passionately dedicated, as they were, life would definitely be grim.

These talks supplemented the excellent daily lectures and slide shows by the Wilson brothers and frequent reports on the loudspeaker from the captain, announcing glaciers, whale sightings, penguin colonies, etc., keeping us well informed. While on board the scientists clearly enjoyed basking in our spas and eating gourmet food in our warm dining rooms.

A map of our course looked like a can of worms, as the ship zigzagged among islands. And after showing a landmark to the starboard side of the ship, the captain would rotate it 180 degrees to show the port side cabins the sights.

The Argentine Station sat right next door to an Adele Penguin rookery. That might sound like good company, a source of entertainment, a floorshow for the lonely residents. But there was a price. “Eau de Penguino,” a stink said to clear one’s sinuses, was never absent. We could smell it from the ship. Adele Penguin poop, we learned, is pink, the only color we were to see in this black and white movie of the Antarctic.

As we pushed farther south toward the pole, the pack ice got thicker and icebergs were crowding us as the captain put the Veendam through some narrow straits on the way to Iceberg Alley. Pack ice finally blocked our entry into the Weddell Sea lying east of Palmer Land. At dinner, through the dining room windows, we often were treated to some lovely endless sunsets when the sun sank below the layer of fog and seemed to move sideways.

After cruising Antarctic waters for most of four sunless days, we headed north into the Atlantic, and immediately the sky turned blue and the sun came out. It was fun to run in our robes across the open aft deck and jump laughing into the deck hot tubs, despite the icy wind, to watch the last of the glittering snowy peaks recede in the distance.

We were supposed to go ashore at Stanley in the nearby Falkland Islands, but weather forecasts from there convinced

the captain (and his cost-conscious bosses ashore) to cancel that port, too – saving the ship substantial fuel money. Boo! Instead, we sailed into and landed at Puerto Madryn on the flat, bleak Argentine coast, where we got a taxi to take us to an Eco Museum (closed) with its giant outdoor whale skeleton and then on to a lively sea lion colony where the rare giant Albatross flew.

Two sea days later we docked in Montevideo, Uruguay, for a city tour. It was a beautiful European metropolis with many parks and gardens and bronze statuary commemorating its endless heroes. The following day came another city tour, this time of bustling cosmopolitan Buenos Aires whose gigantic soccer stadium, dwarfed most of our football arenas. That evening we disembarked, bused to the airport and began the long flight home.

I had been curious about how the Antarctic would stack up against the Arctic, to which I'd taken two great summer Alaskan trips. Except for the cold temperature, they were different in every way. Back in college a pal and I had built a camp trailer and drove it up the just opened Alcan Highway (then just a muddy trail) to Fairbanks.

There we got jobs in Point Barrow, then the northernmost year-round community in the world at the top of Alaska on the Arctic Ocean, working in the oil exploration camp kitchen and hanging out at the Arctic Research Laboratory, where we got to go on great field trips. We lived in wolf fur-lined parkas, but it didn't seem especially cold. We worked there two months under the circling midnight sun, enjoying the abundant wildlife (millions of caribou migrating, polar bears, musk oxen, endless birdlife) and the still intact thriving native Eskimo culture.

We loved the vast sweeping Arctic vistas, the lush green permafrost tundra bursting with color, light and wildlife. Contrast that with the Antarctic where the only plant life is

rare hair grass and lichen. The ice pack at the mountainous South Pole is over a mile thick, and the only creatures to be seen in that black and white world are penguins and whales.

Then just 10 years ago, Deanne and I rode a series of bush planes from Fairbanks to Gates of the Arctic National Park, where we crash-landed on a sandbar in the Alatna River under the mighty Brooks Range. There we blew up rafts and rafted south through the snow-free Arctic, portaged the rafts over a hill to a large lake where we were picked up by bush floatplanes for the flight back to Fairbanks.

The greatest similarities we found were between the beautiful windswept wonderland of Patagonia, where the natives have been extinct for a century, and busy northern Alaska where Eskimos still exist and still hunt seals and whales.

Of course we only saw a small slice of Antarctica on our cruise, and were unlucky with the foggy ceiling that hid the sun, but when it comes to choosing between which end of the earth to travel, I'll take the Arctic every time.

Robert S. Wood and his wife spend half the year in Lake Tahoe and the other half in Sedona. He is the author of a dozen books, including the original trail guide to Desolation Wilderness.

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Letter: LTN crossed the line

To the community,

I teach at STHS but would have the same reaction if that were not the case: it seems beyond unethical and irresponsible to

toss in that little reference at the end of the Kushner piece linking this situation even remotely to the Gronwald situation. I'm left wondering why? What does that serve to leave that kind of association to a man by all appearances who is being victimized rather than victimizing?

As an experienced writer, you well know the effect of such associations and should be ashamed of such a tactic. Does it serve any value even bringing up a long-ago-settled matter in the first place? I wonder at the editorializing motive here and consider if worse than unprofessional. Put yourself for a moment in his shoes: somebody levels an attack at you; an article is then written about it with a reference to other prosecuted and convicted journalists in the past? In what way exactly does that make sense or rise to any sort of journalistic standard?

Mike Filce, South Tahoe High School teacher

Climate change threatens maple syrup production

By Robert H. Westover, U.S. Forest Service

U.S. Forest Service research indicates that climate change will affect habitat suitability for maple trees, threatening the multimillion dollar maple syrup industry. Changes in climate have already had an impact on the iconic sugar maple trees of the Northeastern U.S.

Flow of maple sap, which is boiled down to make syrup, is controlled by alternating freezing and thawing cycles in the late winter. Maple trees also rely on snowpack during this

time to protect their roots from freezing.

Climate stressors may decrease the availability of maple syrup or shift production northward by the end of the next century because of direct changes in temperature, decreases in snowpack or increases in weather disturbances such as ice storms.



Tapping maple trees in Vermont to get sap. Photo/LTN file

“Climate change will produce winners and losers geographically. Folks who retrieve sap from maple trees in the far Northeastern region will get a longer sap flow season while those in the Southeastern regions will see a reduction,” said Dave Cleaves, climate change adviser for the Forest Service.

A study conducted by the Forest Service and Cornell University examined the relationships between sugar maple sap flow and temperature over the last several decades, and used climate models to project sap flow into the future. The researchers found that the number of sap flow days may not change in the Northeast, but the timing of peak production will shift earlier.

By adapting to an earlier tapping season, maple syrup producers in Vermont and other northern states may be able to sustain their livelihoods for the next 100 years. However, at

the southern extent of sugar maple habitat, such as Pennsylvania, overall production may be reduced sooner.

The Forest Service has developed an atlas of potential future habitat for 134 tree species in the Eastern United States. The atlas shows that climate change will likely reduce the amount of suitable habitat for maple trees in the coming century. While maple trees won't necessarily vanish from the landscape, there could be fewer trees that are more stressed, further reducing maple syrup availability.

TRPA to discuss draft EIR-EIS for power upgrade

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board will discuss the electrical transmission line upgrades from Kings Beach to Tahoe City on Oct. 23.

CalPeco, the parent company of Liberty Utilities, wants to improve the system in that part of the basin.

On the agenda are the draft environmental impact report and draft environmental impact statement.

The meeting begins at 9:30am at the North Tahoe Events Center in Kings Beach.

Snack food industry trying to be healthy

By Anne Marie Chaker, Wall Street Journal

Is a seaweed flake the new potato chip?

Hoping to elevate snack foods out of junk territory and into a healthier zone, more companies are offering munchables made from ingredients with ironclad nutritional credentials, including black beans, brown rice, seaweed and parsnips.

Never mind that recommended serving sizes in many cases are minuscule, or that calorie, fat or sodium profiles can rival or exceed those of old-school pretzels and potato chips.

The snack-food aisle’s neon-colored bags contain cheesy, spicy fare designed mainly for guys in their teens and 20s. The new munchies are directed at a potentially larger group—consumers who want to eat better but also love salty chips.

The proportion of consumers reporting that they eat three to four snacks a day in addition to meals rose to 31 percent in 2013, up from 19 percent in 2010, according to Chicago market research firm IRI.

Read the whole story

College students increasingly

take unconventional route

By Jeffrey J. Selingo, Chronicle of Higher Education

When the filmmakers behind the animated summer blockbuster Monsters University needed inspiration for their fictional campus, they visited three of the nation's best-known colleges: Harvard, MIT, and UC Berkeley.

Such name-brand campuses, having provided the backdrop for Hollywood productions, help shape our collective vision of college as a place where you go once in your life (often at age 18) and move through in a linear fashion over four years.

But that straight pathway isn't the one taken by about half of the students enrolled in college today, an enrollment pattern that Clifford Adelman, a noted higher-education researcher, says dates back to at least the 1970s. Even so, we still call students "nontraditional" if they attend college later in life or part-time, or if they attend multiple institutions.

Today's students are swirling through higher education more than ever before. They attend multiple institutions—sometimes at the same time—extend the time to graduation by taking off time between semesters, mix learning experiences like co-op programs or internships with traditional courses, and sign up for classes from alternative providers such as Coursera or edX, which offer free massive open online courses, or StraighterLine, which offers cheap introductory courses online.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe making plans for the holidays

The inaugural Light up South Lake Tahoe in 2012 saw multiple businesses along Highway 50 participating by decorating store fronts and turning on their lights as the South Lake Tahoe Fire Departments firetruck and streets department snowplow led the procession from Stateline to the Y.

This year’s event is Dec. 7. Businesses along Highway 50 will turn on their lights in a wave to Light up South Lake Tahoe.

Want to join in on the fun? Feel free to decorate your vehicle and follow along behind the procession. The festivities will conclude at the Y with the annual tree lighting, a special visit from Santa and hot cocoa and cookies.

South Tahoe Standup Paddle on Harrison Avenue was deemed Best Participation and Most Enthusiastic last year.

For more info, call (530) 542.6016.

Nevada Historic Preservation Office grants available

Nevada Historic Preservation Office will accept grant applications until 5pm Dec. 6.

Grant funding is provided by the National Park Service as part

of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and is used to support the preservation efforts of government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Grants may be used to support building rehabilitation, historic preservation surveys and projects that promote heritage tourism throughout the state. Previous projects funded by this program include the underwater exploration and documentation of the SS Tahoe scuttled near Glenbrook and the painting of the Fourth Ward School in Virginia City.

Priorities for the 2014 funding cycle include surveys and National Register nominations for mid-20th century architectural resources and for threatened historic and prehistoric archaeological resources.

For additional information about the grants, eligibility or an application, contact the State Historic Preservation Office at (775) 684.3450.