Smell of smoke in S. Tahoe returns



Smoke did not hinder the Sept. 1 fireworks in South Lake Tahoe. Photos/Howie Nave



As long as the Rim Fire continues to burn near Yosemite, the Lake Tahoe Basin and western Nevada are subject to smoky days.

While mostly blue skies have returned this morning to the South Shore, the smell of smoke is more prevalent than it has been compared to the past couple days. The most impacted areas are Alpine and northern Mono counties. Afternoons and evenings

are forecast to be the worst, according to the National Weather Service in Reno.

The Rim Fire at 228,670 acres is the fourth largest fire in California. It is 60 percent contained, with full containment expected Sept. 20.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Barton Hospice offers ongoing bereavement classes

Barton Hospice encourages people who have experienced the loss of a loved one or have endured a significant, life-altering event to participate in the ongoing bereavement group called Reflections of Life and Loss.

The group meets the first and third Thursdays of the month from 5-6pm at 2092 Lake Tahoe Blvd., Suite 600, South Lake Tahoe.

The benefits of a bereavement group include sharing emotional connections with others when many cannot find peace with friends and family. In addition, the bereavement group will help teach attendees how to cope with certain situations. Support and bereavement groups offer people the opportunity to release emotions they may otherwise keep to themselves.

For questions or more information, call (530) 543.5581.

A summer of hard labor 30 years ago led to Tahoe's revered Flume mountain bike trail



After 30 years of being associated with the Flume Trail, Max Jones still has fun on it and likes getting first-timers to ride it. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

By Jessie Marchesseau

INCLINE VILLAGE – Every time Max Jones rides the Flume Trail, he can't help but take notice of a certain overhanging boulder that once caught the bar of a chain saw he was carrying on his back that sent him, his bicycle and the chain saw tumbling down the steep granite hillside "headed for Sand Harbor."

“It could have been bad, but ended up just being really dusty,” he said.

That was 1983, just days before Jones finished clearing the Flume Trail. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the summer Jones spent making the trail passable on a mountain bike. Today the 13.2-mile Flume ride with its sweeping views of Lake Tahoe is one of the most well known bike rides in Tahoe and is consistently ranked as one of the top mountain biking trails in the country. It goes from Spooner Lake to Incline Village.

Jones did not create the Flume Trail; it has been in existence since the 1870s when water flumes, or elevated wooden channels, transported water from Marlette Lake to nearby lumber operations and into an underground pipeline that took it all the way to Virginia City. The entire system was a true engineering feat in its day. Eventually replaced by a more modern pipeline in the mid-1900s, the wooden flumes were abandoned and mostly removed, but the flume route remained on many maps. This was how Jones learned of it soon after moving to Incline Village with his wife, Patti McMullen, in 1982.



A mountain biker heads out on the Flume Trail.

At the time, Jones was just breaking into the world of professional mountain biking, and was riding every local trail

he could find. In the summer of 1983, he decided to check out the blue line labeled “Flume Trail” on his maps. Having recently picked up his very first mountain bike sponsor, Ritchey bicycles, Jones took out his brand new Ritchey to test out the trail. What he found was an overgrown mess.

Though the entire ride is more than 13 miles, technically, the Flume Trail is only the 4.5-mile stretch of trail that connects Marlette Dam to Tunnel Creek Road. The first time Jones rode it, that 4.5-mile section took him nearly five hours. In some parts willow bushes were so thick he had to throw his brand new bike as far as he could into the bush then crawl through, grab and throw it again. Other sections had been completely wiped out by landslides.

After such an experience, most riders would have just written the trail off as unrideable and moved on, but for some reason Jones kept going back. He took tools with him, either on his back or strapped to his bicycle and worked on clearing the trail, little by little.

“Some days I’d work all day and get maybe a hundred feet,” Jones told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He worked all summer that year, clearing brush and boulders and hacking through abandoned aluminum pipes entirely by himself with nothing more than hand tools. Only during the final few days did he convince the local forest ranger to let him bring help and a chain saw to finish it.

“I wanted a place to ride. It’s as simple as that,” Jones said of the efforts he put into clearing the trail.

Jones spent 13 years – from 1983-96 – as a professional mountain biker. He has ridden all over the world, from Switzerland to Japan. He is a two-time national mountain bike champion, has had four top five finishes at the World Championships and has been inducted into the Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. He still thinks the Flume is one of the best

rides out there.

“It’s not technically the most difficult trail around, but I have yet to come across a trail that’s more scenic,” he said.

Now 55, Jones estimates he’s ridden the Flume Trail 300 or 400 times. As owner and operator of Flume Trail Bikes, which rents mountain bikes and shuttles riders between the start and finish points of the trail, he still has the opportunity to ride the Flume on a regular basis.

One of his favorite things is taking first-timers on the trail, especially ones who have never seen Lake Tahoe. The views from the narrow trail winding along the steep granite hillside are so spectacular riders have to be careful not to ride right off the edge.

“They are the best views of Tahoe at Tahoe,” Jones said, “and you have to work to get them. You can’t just step out of your car, which I think makes them better, actually.”

Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association President Kevin Joell also cites riding with first-time Flumers as one of his favorite things about the trail. He calls the views “absolutely spectacular” and said the consistent reaction he gets from other riders is just “wow.”

“It’s one of the top 10 most iconic trails in the world,” Joell said, pointing out that the Flume Trail graces the cover of the International Mountain Bicycling Association’s book on how to build great trails.

Joell has not ridden the trail as many times as Jones, but said it is still way more times than he can count. And he keeps going back, noticing something new every time.

Jones estimates somewhere between 20,000 and 50,000 people ride the Flume Trail every year, with 4,000 to 5,000 of those using his shuttle service.

Though he has only been running Flume Trail Bikes since about 2000, Jones has been involved with the trail in one way or another since he first cleared it. He and his wife ran a pro bike race on the trail for many years, and he helps with trail maintenance annually. The couple also spent 27 years running the cross country ski center at Spooner Lake as concessionaire for the Nevada Division of State Parks. They ran the ski center from the park in the winter and the bike business in the summer. In 2012, the couple stopped running the ski center and this summer moved Flume Trail Bikes to Tunnel Creek Station just south of Incline Village. This is their first year in the new location, and business is better than ever.

Though Jones may not have invented the Flume Trail, he did re-invent it. His vision and persistence paid off in the form of a world-class mountain bike trail which has since been enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of locals and visitors to Lake Tahoe.

Flume Trail tips from the experts:

• On the initial climb, be patient and allow your breathing to acclimate to the altitude change.

• Bring plenty of water and food. It’s going to take longer than you expect because you’re going to want to stop and take pictures and admire the views.

• Be cautious around blind corners, ring a bell or call out when approaching.

• Avoid riding through sand. Look ahead to spot how other riders have been navigating the area.

• If you’re afraid of heights, don’t look down. Focus on the trail ahead.

• Take your time and enjoy it.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Ramsey and Ralphie

Ramsey and Ralphie are two of the 15 sweet young kittens available at the shelter right now.

There are two other orange kittens, plus two Siamese, several tabby cats, and all possible colors – gray, black, white, tortie, and tan. Plus there are several nice adult cats.

Ramsey and Ralphie are neutered, microchipped, and vaccinated. They are at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes.

Go online to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

– Karen Kuentz

Letter: Time to rethink fire policy

To the community,

At the time of this letter, 41 wildfires are burning in the West. Controlled burns have become big business for the Forest Service, spending millions of our tax dollars. There could never be enough controlled burns performed in the whole West that would stop fires created by random lightning strikes. Controlled burns/wildfires create massive air pollution. Unfortunately environmental groups busy fighting coal fired power plants have turned a blind eye to control burns and wildfires, our the biggest source of pollution. It is a scientific fact that smoke reduces the quality and length of many peoples lives. It also puts firefighters lives at stake unnecessarily.

Firefighters know the three rules to controlling a fire. No. 1 is remove the oxygen source. In the case of wildfires this is not usually possible unless the fire can be smothered easily.

No. 2 is to remove the fuel. Logging for fire breaks is the key to stopping wildfires in the Southwest. Also thinning, and grazing are essential. Unfortunately, environmental groups are micromanaging the Forest Service’s attempts to log.

No. 3 is to remove the heat from the fire or surround and drown. Air tankers are desperately needed to put out wildfires immediately. Yes, air tankers are expensive, but after the initial cost they will save lives, provide clean air and generate peace of mind. Ask yourselves how expensive repeated useless control burns are and how much it costs to battle these huge wildfires?

The Forest Service says wildfires are a natural event. The bubonic plague was a natural event, but we don’t want to experience it in our lifetimes. It’s time for our government to do something that makes sense. Invest in air tankers and log/graze our forest for fire breaks. Call your federal lawmakers today.

Marsha Honn, Snowflake, Ariz.

SNC to host microfinance expert

Kapilananda Mondal has been promoting microfinance and community development in villages through West Bengal since 1983.

He will speak Sept. 12 at 5pm at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village.

Moving beyond traditional approaches to microfinance, Mondal has introduced microbanking to villagers based on his belief that rural areas can generate investment capital from within their own communities. His approach has spread to hundreds of villages and has caught the attention of microfinance practitioners from around the world.

Partnering with READ Global, he launched the Oceanic Library in the village of Ullon in West Bengal in 2008; the library has became the centerpiece for a village transformation.

Class targets aging boomers

The El Dorado County Commission on Aging, in collaboration with the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, is offering a free training series for seniors entitled Boomer Ed 101.

The training will be held on three Monday nights (Sept. 16, 23 and 30) from 5:30 to 7:30pm at the El Dorado Hills Senior Center at 990 Lassen Lane in El Dorado Hills.

The training is targeted for people born between the years of 1948 to 1953, and will focus on several key topics: Medicare (including coverage, benefits, group and private health plans, Parts A, B, C and D); Social Security (when to claim, how it relates to Medicare, etc.); veteran's issues and more.

Guest speakers will include representatives from the Social Security Administration, the Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (Medicare counselors) and El Dorado County Veterans services.

The deadline to register is Sept. 9. A donation of $15 per person or $20 per couple is requested for the class series.

For more information about the training, including how to register, call (916) 358.3575.

Dry farming turning out sweet produce

By Alastair Bland, NPR

A week without water can easily kill the average person.

But a garden that goes unwatered for months may produce sweeter, more flavorful fruits than anything available in most mainstream supermarkets – even in the scorching heat of a California summer. Commercial growers call it “dry farming,” and throughout the state, this unconventional technique seems to be catching on among small producers of tomatoes, apples, grapes, melons and potatoes.

At Happy Boys Farms, near Santa Cruz, sales director Jen Lynne believes dry farming could be an important agricultural practice in the future, when water will likely be a less abundant resource.

But the taste of her dry-farmed Early Girl tomatoes is the main reason chefs, wholesalers and individuals around the country are increasingly calling to place orders. She notes that many calls come from places where rain falls through the summer, making dry farming impossible.

Read the whole story

Geotourism Expo to show off Tahoe region

The annual Tahoe Geotourism Expo is designed to showcase the treasures of Tahoe.

Activities throughout the region include native ceremonies, drumming dancing to physical challenges, water yoga, nature and wildlife tours, historical enactments, hand-crafted music, interactive adventures, native twinning and beading, sand

castles crawls and fitness classes.

The two-day event is Sept. 7-8.

For more details, go online.

Competition in the Tooth Fairy world gets pricey

By Chris Taylor, Reuters

Kelly Bird Pierre knew the world had changed when she heard what the Tooth Fairy was giving out these days.

The 39-year-old educator from South Orange, New Jersey used to get a quarter whenever she lost one of her own baby teeth. But when her daughter Oona and son Jacques went through the same phase, reports from their schoolyard buddies swiftly got back to her: $3, $5, even $10 a tooth.

Pierre was shocked. “A dollar still seems reasonable to me,” she said.

Pierre and her parental peers had better get used to tooth inflation, because a new survey shows just how dear a baby tooth has become. The national average is now $3.70 per tooth, up 23 percent in a single year and 42 percent in just two years, according to a study that credit-card company Visa will release today.

“Tooth Fairy inflation clearly is surging,” marvels Jason Alderman, Visa’s senior director of global financial education. “It is due to a combination of things: one is a reflection of an improving economy, and that parents feel they

can afford to be generous in small areas.

“The other real driver is parental angst. It is very hard for us to say ‘no’ to our kids.”

Apparently so: For a full set of 20 baby teeth, at the going rate, that works out to $74. Especially for a young child, that is a serious sum.

Read the whole story