

Machine may replace handmade fireworks

By Nick Leiber, Bloomberg Businessweek

The U.S. spent close to \$1 billion on fireworks in 2012, according to the American Pyrotechnics Association. The trade group's executive director, Julie Heckman, expects sales to climb "a little bit" this year, continuing the market's steady upward trajectory.

Unsurprisingly, the bulk of what explodes in America's skies and crackles in backyards is imported from China, though a few display companies that put on shows do make a bit of their own stuff.

Less well known: Most fireworks are still made by hand to avoid accidental explosions in factories.

"The materials are friction sensitive," explains Heckman. "Until I did my first trip to China about 20 years ago, I would've never really appreciated 'made by hand.' The number of man hours (for) 20 minutes of enjoyment is just astronomical."

Fireworks veteran Jim Widmann of Sandy Hook, Conn., wants to speed up the manufacturing process. After learning the trade from fabled display giant Fireworks by Grucci and running his own outfit, he invented a machine that automates the most laborious step of making an aerial shell.

It pastes the paper that contains the gunpowder "about eight or 10 times faster" than it would take by hand, says Widmann, 55. He notes none of the roughly 450 machines he's sold through Connecticut Pyrotechnic Manufacturing, his 6-year-old business, has caused accidents.

And they're "pretty intuitive" to use, he says. "I've sold plenty of machines to people I haven't been able to speak one word with, using video, pictures and the manual."

His timing is good, says Phil Grucci, president and CEO of his family's storied "multimillion-dollar" fireworks business, which dates back to 1850.

Grucci says in China, "The labor that was available to manufacture fireworks is migrating to manufacture" more lucrative products, such as electronics and pharmaceuticals.

Widmann's "technology, and that technique for pasting a shell is now widely revolutionizing the labor reduction in some of the manufacturers in Asia," he says. It's "given China the ability to maintain their productivity."

The labor shortage "has left a lot of people asking, what's the future of fireworks manufacturing in China going to be? Part of the solution to that is increased automation," says Jesse Veverka, who just returned to the U.S. after shooting in Asia for "Passfire," his forthcoming documentary about fireworks culture.

Widmann doesn't expect to earn much from China. Even though Chinese factories are using his technology, few are buying his machines, which cost about \$2,500. After traveling in China's fireworks district multiple times and getting a Chinese patent, "It finally occurred to me that the Chinese are not going to buy my product," says Widmann. When they "decide to use something like this, they just knock it off, one way or another."

Widmann, who has sold his machines in 30 countries, says a lot of business comes from hobbyists in the U.S., which Veverka estimates "on the order of 50,000 people." They build their own for backyard fun in states with permissive fireworks laws.

And "I can pretty confidently say that every remaining

(display fireworks) manufacturer” in the U.S. uses the machine, says Widmann.

He is hopeful about bringing the business back to the U.S. “I’m a big proponent of American fireworks manufacturing, for obvious reasons: I sell a machine that does it,” says Widmann.

He says he’s been talking with the owners of one of the big display companies in the U.S. about its investment in domestic facilities to bring back some manufacturing, even if just for specialty items or to safeguard against shippers ending the transportation of fireworks.

“We’re not dead yet,” Widmann says. “There’s a chance there might be a resurrection.”

Bison Fire containment expected Monday

Updated 9:45pm:

Despite gusty winds and low humidity, fire personnel made significant progress today building containment lines and slowing the Bison Fire.

The fire is 30 percent contained, with full containment projected for July 8.

No injuries have been reported and no structures have been lost.

Pine Nut Road remains closed at the intersection of Out-R-Way to non-residents. A voluntary evacuation notice remains in effect for about 20 structures in the area.

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Updated 12:10pm:

The Bison Fire has grown to more than 7,000 acres.

High sustained winds and very low humidity have made the fire extremely difficult to contain, officials report.

An increasing number of fire crews and equipment will continue to build containment lines, with an emphasis on firefighter safety and minimizing impacts to structures.

The fire remains at 20 percent containment.

Contingency plans are in place for positioning of both air and ground resources should the fire move farther east.

No injuries have been reported and no structures have been lost.

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Changing winds have again put structures in the path of the Bison Fire.

The fire in the Pine Nut area of Douglas County has grown to more than 2,000 acres, with containment at 20 percent.

Twenty structures are in the line of the fire.

Heavy winds in the upper elevations have prevented the use of aircraft in certain locations. These winds have fueled this fire making, for extreme fire behavior and very dangerous situations, according to authorities.

The fire has crested the ridge south of Mount Siegal, the tallest peak east of Gardnerville.

Pine Nut Road at Out-R-Way is closed to non-residents.

— *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Cyclist airlifted from Sugar Pine Point



A CHP helicopter hoists an injured cyclist from Sugar Pine Point on July 6.
Photo/CalFire

Updated July 7:

The bicyclist, whose name still has not been released, crashed about four miles up the trail near Lost Lake.

At the same time there was a medical aid involving a person climbing in the rocks at Rooster Rock.

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A mountain biker was airlifted out of Sugar Pine Point State Park on Saturday evening.

The call came in at 2pm July 6 that a cyclist had hurt himself in a remote area of the West Shore park.

A California Highway Patrol helicopter was able to lift the man out of the park and deliver him to an awaiting ambulance about 6pm. He was then transported to Tahoe Forest Hospital.

El Dorado County sheriff's search and rescue, Meeks Bay Fire, CalFire and State Parks crews helped with the rescue.

The name of cyclist has not been released, nor the extent of his injuries

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Erosion project to affect Bijou golf course

Bijou Municipal Golf Course will be affected by the massive erosion control project in that section of South Lake Tahoe.

Holes 6, 7 and 8 will be closed from July 15-26. No more than two holes will be closed at one time.

The project is designed to reduce sediment flowing into Lake Tahoe.

Project plans may be reviewed at the city office at 1052 Tata Lane.

Skin cancer on the rise among young women

By Emma G. Fitzsimmons, New York Times

On a hot July day last summer, I was lying on the beach at Coney Island with my younger brother when he noticed a dark mole on the back of my arm. “You should really get that checked at the dermatologist,” he said in a worried tone.

It turned out that the mole on my arm was fine, but another one on my cheek was basal cell skin cancer. A few weeks later, I had surgery to remove it and left the plastic surgeon’s office with a 1.5-inch scar sloping down my right cheek.

Friends and colleagues were surprised to see the scar because I was only 28. Even the medical resident who attended my operation said I was the youngest skin cancer patient she had met.



People flock to the beaches of Lake Tahoe on Fourth of July weekend. Photo/LTN

But as I learned more about skin cancer, I discovered that it is becoming increasingly common, especially among young women. A recent study by the Mayo Clinic found that melanoma, the most serious type, had increased eightfold for women under 40

since 1970.

“There is this thought that, ‘It won’t happen to me because I’m young,’ but that’s not true anymore,” said Dr. Jerry Brewer, a dermatologist at the Mayo Clinic and an author of the study.

Experts say that tanning beds are a major factor behind the increase in all three types of skin cancer for young women. More than 20 million people use tanning beds each year, and 70 percent of customers are young white women, who are at increased risk of developing skin cancer. The lamps in tanning beds can give off 10 to 15 times the UVA radiation of normal sun exposure, accelerating the process of skin damage. Instead of getting skin cancer 30 or 40 years down the line, many young women are getting it five or 10 years later, Dr. Brewer said.

Though I have never used a tanning bed, my dermatologist said I had an unlucky trio of risk factors: fair skin and blue eyes, an upbringing in Texas, where I spent long days in the sun growing up, and a family history of skin cancer. My grandmother and aunt had melanoma and survived, and my mother had basal cell carcinoma too.

While more than three million cases of basal and squamous cell carcinoma are diagnosed each year, only about 2,000 people a year die from these non-melanoma skin cancers. Melanoma is a far more ominous diagnosis, causing about 9,400 deaths each year in the United States.

Dr. Darrell Rigel, a dermatology professor at NYU Langone Medical Center, says that every month at his New York practice, about two women in their 20s are found to have early melanoma, a dramatic rise from 20 years ago. Once melanoma is the size of a dime, there is a good chance that it has already spread and treatment may not work, Dr. Rigel said. “I know I’m looking at a death sentence on their arm, and they feel

perfectly fine,” he said. “It’s absolutely awful.”

This year, the Food and Drug Administration proposed new regulations for tanning beds that require them to have labels warning that they are not recommended for people under 18. And in April, New Jersey joined several other states in passing a law to prohibit indoor tanning for those under 17.

Even children can get melanoma. A recent study in the journal *Pediatrics* found that the number of cases among children and adolescents has been increasing each year by about 2 percent.

Another recent study, published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that while young women are more likely to be given a diagnosis of melanoma, young men are more likely to die from it. Researchers said the disparity was probably a consequence of behavioral tendencies – men are less likely to see a doctor or perform a skin self-examination – and possibly biological differences as well.

My brush with skin cancer has certainly changed how I view the sun. I don’t want another scar – or worse, a diagnosis of melanoma. I wear a 30 SPF sunscreen on my face every day and bought several sun-protective long-sleeve shirts to wear outdoors this summer. I am visiting my dermatologist every three months for a full body scan. (One annual checkup is recommended for those without a previous diagnosis.)

I returned to Texas in April for a friend’s wedding at a resort in the woods. After a long winter in New York, my husband and I were excited to go swimming at a pool near our cabin. In the past, I would have grabbed a lounge chair in the sun, seeing it as the perfect opportunity to arrive at the ceremony with a sun-kissed glow. But this time, I picked a chair under a wide umbrella. It’s just not worth it anymore.

Even a few sunburns can significantly raise your risk of skin cancer, Dr. Brewer said.

“Deciding how much sun you want to get is like asking how much cyanide you want in your breakfast cereal,” he said. “There is no amount of tan that is healthy.”

Truckee has free disaster guides

Truckee has the potential for a number of natural disasters. Wildland forest fire is clearly the No. 1 potential problem.

However, a variety of emergencies including wind storms, snow storms, extreme cold, flooding, earthquakes, hazardous waste spills, pandemic flu or act of terrorism might necessitate an emergency response. If an emergency suddenly occurred would you know what to do?

In order to ensure a safe response to a large scale emergency the Nevada County Office of Emergency Preparedness has published a Truckee Area evacuation guide. The guide provides valuable information on what to do before, during and after a major community emergency.

Guides are available in hard copy at the town of Truckee office 1 at 10183 Truckee Airport Road and through Truckee Fire. An online version is also available for download [here](#).

Hiking with kids – its about fun, not distance

By Mary Meehan, Lexington Herald-Leader

Author Jeff Alt didn't have to look far for inspiration for his book about hiking with children. He has two kids and started hiking with daughter Madison, 8, "right out of the gate." Son William, 5, also takes to the trail.

His hiking philosophy? If you start hiking with kids in a carrier when they are little, they will be more than ready to take to the trails on their own two feet as they grow older.

Alt's new book is "Get Your Kids Hiking: How to Start Them Young and Keep It Fun" (Beaufort Books Inc., \$13.95).

Alt is a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America. He has walked the Appalachian Trail, has hiked the John Muir Trail with his wife, and he carried his daughter, when she was 21 months old, across a path in Ireland.

He wrote the book "because we as a nation have become lazy. Everything is at our fingertips now."

Life is so fast-paced and programmed, he said, that even kids get into a dull routine: school, home, school, home. They are not exposed to the sensory experiences that come with being out in nature. He said he hopes the book will help encourage families to get off the couch and hit the trail.

The key to hiking with kids, he said, is letting them be the leaders. And, he said, parents need to focus on the experience – the butterflies on the trail, the mud on their shoes, the sounds of the forest. "That helps them engage in the outdoors. They can touch, feel and just see, learn and discover."

Distance is not a priority, he said.

“I let the child lead. If they stop, I stop,” he said. “The child is showing me what they are interested in. You may only get a half a mile into the forest, but they are going to have so much fun they will want to do it again.”

Alt, a speech pathologist, laid out the tips in his book to match the developmental stages of children. Hiking with elementary school-age children is different from hiking with teenagers.

He admits that getting teens to disconnect from their digital world to take a hike can be a challenge.

“With teenagers, you kind of have to intrigue them,” Alt said. One way, he said, is to invite them to bring a friend along.

The right equipment is important, too, he said, no matter the age of the child. Food, water, a backpack and proper shoes are the basics.

There is another advantage to being on the trail and away from things, he said. It’s a great time to talk to your kids.

“You can talk to them about some life lesson or ask them how they are feeling just before they go off to college.”

Tribute concert to Jerry Reed

Joey Carmon is putting on Guitar Man, a tribute show to Jerry Reed.

Reed was a singer who became a good ol’ boy actor in car chase movies like “Smokey and the Bandit”. Most everything about Reed was distinctive: his guitar playing, writing, voice and his sense of humor.

The event is July 14 from 5-7pm at the Genoa Town Park on Nixon Street.

Bring a blanket and picnic dinner.

Parasailing camp for teens

Through South Lake Tahoe's STAR camp teens can learn to parasail Aug. 5-7.

Preregistration is required. Space is limited. Campers will parasail over Lake Tahoe.

Bring swim stuff, sunscreen, tennis shoes, lunch, and a water bottle.

Cost is \$200.

For more info, call (530) 542.6056 or email Jen Menzel at jmenzel@cityofslt.us.

Traditional tribal celebration at Tallac Site

The Wa She Shu It'Deh Festival is part of the summerlong annual Valhalla Arts, Music and Theatre Festival.

It is a celebration of tribal traditions dating back 9,000 years.

The celebration will feature traditional American Indian dancers and drum performers, art, basket weaving displays and Native American food. The festival is free.

It will take place on the Grand Lawn from 10am-5pm, July 27-28.

The historic Tahoe Tallac Site is located two miles past the intersection of highways 50 and 89. Head toward the lake and just past Camp Richardson on the lake side of Highway 89, turn right on the road with the sign Valhalla.