Lightning ignites several fires in Douglas County

Smoke is filling parts of the Lake Tahoe Basin this afternoon and the East Fork Fire and Paramedic District is responding to several reports of wildland fires within Douglas County.

Additional fire resources have been called from various agencies – Carson, BLM, Antelope Valley, Nevada Division of Forestry and Mono County.

This is what crews are working on:

• Highway 395 and Leviathan Mine Road, brush fire, size unknown.

• East Valley Road and Fish Springs, small brush fire.

• Pinenut Road near Sierra Spirit Ranch, two reports of smoke in this area

• Sunrise Pass Road.

Officials believe lightning ignited the fires.

No structures are currently threatened.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

History to come to life at

Ehrman mansion

Pine Lodge, the Ehrman family mansion at Sugar Pine Point State Park, will host Living History Day – a celebration of lakeshore life in the 1930s – on July 27 from 10am-3pm.

Living history activities will include tours, children's activity zone, antique car show, live music, hourly raffles and a silent auction, and a wooden boats display. Refreshments will be available for purchase. All events are free, though parking is $10.

Park visitors will be treated like guests of the late Florence and Sydney Ehrman, with many activities – concerts, historical talks, movies, painting with artists-in-residence and guided tours, all of them free. Entrance to the mansion is available on a first come, first serve basis. (Tours of the mansion are usually priced at $5 for adults and $3 for juniors.)

The Ehrmans were a wealthy San Francisco family who summered at the lake for 45 years.

Bring swimwear and towels to take advantage of the estate's beach. A bathhouse is available for changing clothes. Those who would like to picnic on the vast lawn overlooking the lake can bring their own lunch or buy hamburgers, hot dogs, barbecued chicken, ice cream bars and soft drinks on site.

Highways in Calif. some of the worst in U.S.

By Gary Richards, San Jose Mercury News

California’s highways continue to rank among the worst in the nation – a sorry distinction the state has held for more than a decade.

The Golden State’s highway system is ranked 47th among the 50 states in overall highway performance and efficiency in the latest annual highway report by the Reason Foundation. That is a slight improvement for California, which ranked 48th in the two previous studies and has ranked in the bottom 10 every year since 2000.

Only Alaska, Rhode Island and Hawaii have worse roads, while North Dakota, Kansas and Wyoming have the best and most cost-effective highways.

“I’ve noticed a lot of paving over the past few years, but there are so many roads with so many potholes,” said

Mark Lin of Stockton, who commutes over the Altamont Pass to the East Bay. “Interstate 580 is like driving in a Third World nation. It needs fixing bad.”

The report covers road conditions through 2009, the most recent year data was compiled by the Department of Transportation.

“It’s hard to believe it when you hit a pothole or see a bridge in Washington collapse, but the nation’s roads have been getting better,” said David Hartgen, author of the study and a professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. “There are still several states struggling and plenty of problem areas but progress continues to be made.”

Progress has been slow in California, which spent $679,000 per mile on road maintenance and other highway

upgrades. That’s a significant increase (24 percent) in per-mile highway expenditures over 2008, making per-mile spending in the state nearly five times the national average. But with

18,260 miles, California's highway system is the 11th largest in the nation and carries the most traffic of any state.

"California seems to lag behind the others," Hartgen said, noting that improvement was shown in only two of seven categories analyzed. "This report doesn't get into the why and we are not asserting they are doing a good job or if there is something fundamentally flawed in what they are doing. We'll let the locals decide that."

California's urban interstates are the most congested in the nation, ranking 50th. The state ranks next to last in urban interstate pavement condition and 49th in the condition of key rural roads.

More than 16 percent of urban interstate pavement in California is in poor condition. Only Hawaii ranks worse, with 27 percent of its urban interstate pavement rated as poor.

But there are bright spots. California ranks 14th in highway fatalities and 12th in the number of deficient bridges.

Not only are California's interstates full of potholes, they are also jammed – 80 percent of the state's urban interstates are congested. Minnesota has the next highest percentage of gridlocked interstates, with 78 percent deemed congested.

Transportation officials say decades of underfunding have contributed to today's poor road conditions in California. The state excise gas tax had not been raised in two decades until Monday, when it went up 3.5 cents.

"The trend is now being slowly reversed," said John Goodwin of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, "but our state dug itself a deep hole that we will not climb out of overnight."

Added Hans Larsen, head of the San Jose Department or Transportation: "The cracked and bumpy freeways, potholes, weeds, graffiti and trash are all clear evidence of the lack

of investment. The main source of funding for transportation has been the gas tax (and) it’s dying like a dinosaur as vehicles are getting more fuel-efficient or aren’t even using gas.”

Website publishing ‘hidden’ travel fees

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

High on the aggravation list for anyone who travels is the growing number of fees airlines and hotels add to customers’ bills.

To try to help the public avoid any last-minute surprises, a longtime travel executive developed a website to teach people about the hidden costs.

Bill Maloney, a former transportation sales and marketing official, recently launched FeeZing. The beta version features databases of airline fees, as well as ancillary charges for hotels in Las Vegas and Orlando, Fla. Maloney said he is days away from launching a fee list for California hotels.

Click here to read the whole story

Rural firefighting fees about to be mailed

At the direction of Calfire and as mandated by law, later this month the California State Board of Equalization will begin mailing fire prevention fee bills for fiscal year 2012-13 to owners of habitable structures located in a state responsibility area.

This includes people in the unincorporated areas of the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The BOE will update the billing schedule on its fire prevention fee website.

The Board of Forestry adopted new SRA boundary lines in May that will exclude some property owners from fee assessment in 2013-14 billing cycle.

Bill recipients who believe they should not have received a fire prevention fee bill may file an appeal, which is referred to as a petition for redetermination. A petition must be filed within 30 days of the date printed on the bill. Visit the fire prevention fee webpage for a copy of the petition form.

For more info, call 888.310.6447.

Teens can spend 3 days improving golf game

South Lake Tahoe’s STAR Teen Camp on July 22-24 is Golf Camp.

Preregistration is require. Space is limited.

Campers will experience Bijou Golf Course, Lake Tahoe Golf & Country Club, and Edgewood with putting and chipping. Bring golf clubs, polo shirt, appropriate footwear, water, hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, and lunch.

Cost of event is $200.

For more info, email Jen Menzel at jmenzel@cityofslt.us.

Safety when grilling keeps fire department away

By Teri Mizuhara

One of the best smells of summer is something cooking on the barbecue; one of the worst smells would be your home or yard on fire after something went awry while cooking outdoors.

Californians love to barbecue almost anything that is edible, from meat and veggies to pizza and fruit, we simply love to cook outdoors. In fact 81 percent of U.S. households have a barbecue or smoker and 71 percent of us barbeque on July 4.

With all this outdoor cooking comes unwanted fires and/or burn injuries, so to keep yourself and your family safe, please take a few minutes to review these fire safety tips.

Make sure your barbecue is in good working order. If you own a gas grill, refer to your owner’s manual for information regarding the tanks, fuel lines and venturi tubes or have it serviced by a professional

Place your barbecue away from the sides of a building/awnings/overhangs or anything else flammable. Keep them out of high traffic areas too.

Use caution when using lighter fluid to light charcoal and never add lighter fluid to an existing fire as it may flashback and cause the container to explode.

Supervise children and pets around all outdoor grills, and keep all lighters and matches away from children.

Never wear loose clothing while cooking at a barbeque as they can catch on fire. Make sure everyone understands stop-drop-roll in the event their clothing catches on fire.

Never use a barbecue in enclosed areas as carbon monoxide will be produced. CO is deadly and undetectable as it has no odor.

After you have finished grilling your food, turn off the gas grill. If you are using briquettes, make sure they are completely out, douse them with plenty of water and stir the mixture to ensure they are completely out.

Never hesitate to call 911 in the event you have an uncontrolled fire or someone is burned.

For more fire safety tips, call (530) 644.2345 to receive free fire and life safety brochures.

Teri Mizuhara is public information officer for the CalFire unit that includes El Dorado County.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Aspen Grove Owners Association has filed the paperwork to try to stop Northstar from building the Forest Flyer.

• As part of the Tahoe Art League 2013 Studio Tour, Bona Fide HQ will host Ken McNutt, Gloria McNutt Hildinger and David McNutt. Their work includes paintings, prints, pottery and more. The TAL Studio Tour takes place July 26-28 and Aug. 2-4, 10am-5pm. Bona Fide HQ is at 1069 Magua St. in Meyers behind the Getaway Cafe.

• The Tahoe Fat Tire Festival is Sept. 13-15 at Squaw Valley.

• STAR Camp is going to Wild Island on July 11 and Aug. 1. Cost is $35. Preregistration is required. Call (530) 542.6056 to register or for more info.

• The Deerfield Lodge in South Lake Tahoe is changing ownership.

Ken Smith – early S. Tahoe doc, former mayor dies

By Kathryn Reed

Ken Smith, Barton Memorial Hospital's first chief of staff and

former mayor of South Lake Tahoe, died June 28 in South Lake Tahoe. He was 87.

Dr. Smith was born in Alameda on April 21, 1926.

During World War II he spent much of his time in the Army in the Philippines. He left the service as a second lieutenant.

He returned to the Bay Area, where he had grown up, to do his undergraduate work at UC Berkeley. In 1954, he graduated from McGill University's medical school in Montreal.



Ken Smith

On July 16, 1950, he married Ruth Marilyn "Lynne" Zant.

It was in 1960 that the Smith family moved to South Lake Tahoe from Guerneville in Sonoma County. At that time there was no hospital in town. He was the second doctor in South Tahoe, with the other being Jim Whitely. The two had first met in the Bay Area.

Minor surgeries could be performed in their office, which was near where the senior center is now located. More intricate medical services required going to Carson Tahoe Hospital. A few beds were in their office in case someone had to spend the night.

While he delivered babies in his time, Dr. Smith was a general practitioner. Most people knew him as Doc Smith.

His daughter, Connie Hendryx, remembers as kids not being allowed to be on the phone for more than five minutes at a time because her dad was on call. This was at a time before call waiting or cell phones.

Barton Memorial Hospital opened Dec. 23, 1963. Dr. Smith became the first chief of staff.

With Whitely and Peter Irving, Dr. Smith opened a practice close to the hospital. At age 65 he retired in 1991.

At one time Dr. Smith was the medical director for Sierra Recovery Center, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center.

Local politics and the environment were important to him.

“They were very much environmentalists,” longtime local Patty Olson said of the Smiths. She said they were into the ecology of the lake.

The Smiths were each other’s best friend, according to their daughter. Bird watching was a passion of theirs. When he would see a particularly interesting bird on the feeder outside his window it was his wife that Dr. Smith would call.

He was one of the key players in helping incorporate South Lake Tahoe in 1965.

Dr. Smith was appointed to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Jan. 5, 1971, was elected in his own right, and then resigned on March 12, 1974. He was mayor for one year starting in spring 1973. He was also on the Planning Commission for about a decade starting in 1983.

While on the council Dr. Smith was instrumental in ridding the city streets of billboard advertisements as well as getting the power lines on Highway 50 to be put underground.

“A favorite thing after dinner was all six of us would sit around the table and just talk about environmental issues,

politics, everything," Hendryx said.

He served on the board for the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, was active with the League to Save Lake Tahoe, and was on the board of the Tahoe Rim Trail Association.

"He was so thrilled when it got built," Hendryx said of the 165-mile trail around Lake Tahoe.

Dr. Smith was also involved with the Boy Scouts, having served as a Scout leader.

Olson recalls when their kids were growing up – she and husband Neil had three, the Smiths four, Whitelys four and Ledbetters four – that they created their own day care so the adults could all have a day free of kids.

She said socially they played bridge together.

Olson remembers that as being a much different time in Tahoe, when people knew each other and pitched in to help one another.

For at least a decade the Smiths were known for having a party after school got out. All the neighbors were invited, hot dogs and popsicles were served, and it was a time for Dr. Smith to share his dry sense of humor.

His wife, Lynne, in 1999, and sister Jean Sharp preceded Dr. Smith in death. He is survived by sons Ken "Casey" Smith (Glenda) from Saratoga and Larry Smith (Debbie) from Butte, Mont.; and twin daughters Kelsey Julander (Dale) from Bakersfield and Connie Hendryx (Michael) from Yreka; and grandchildren Emilie Hendryx, and Allison and Adam Julander.

Services are pending. In lieu of flowers, the family asks donations be sent to one's favorite charity.

Letter: Casino workers give back to community

To the community,

For a second time during the month of June, Harrah's/Harveys casinos sponsored an Adopt a Day dinner at St. Theresa Church's parish hall. Bread & Broth is very grateful to Harrah's/Harveys casinos for their continued support of B&B's goal of providing hot, nutritious meals every Monday evening to the needy of the South Lake Tahoe community.

At the June 17 Adopt A Day dinner, Harrah's/Harveys HEROs employee community service organization was represented by Jackie Andrews, game supervisor; Jane Flavin, human resources; and Darlene Winkleman, assistant game manager. For three hours, these three ladies cheerfully assisted the B&B volunteers with the dinner's setup, serving and cleanup.

They summed up their volunteer service to be "very rewarding and it warms the heart to help and give back to our community."

Thanks to Harrah's/Harveys monetary donation and the HEROs' volunteers help, B&B's guests enjoyed a Mexican themed dinner and the company of fellow diners and volunteers. Bread & Broth would like to recognize and thank Harrah's/Harveys' Casinos for their commitment to B&B's Adopt of Nourishment program.

Caro Gerard, Bread & Broth