Domestic violence call ends with 6 lbs. of pot recovered

A domestic violence call in Meyers on Monday ended with 6 pounds of marijuana being confiscated in Stateline.



A 20-year-old woman called El Dorado County sheriff's deputies at 10:08am Feb. 11 saying her 28-year-old husband had hurt her. He was not at the Delaware Street residence when deputies arrived.

"While deputies were interviewing [the woman] at her mother's residence, a neighbor in the area of the Delaware residence reported seeing two males break a window and enter the residence," sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The suspects left in a dark colored Toyota Corolla. Douglas County sheriff's deputies in Stateline located it, but no one was with the vehicle. Van Arnum said Douglas officials found about 6 pounds of marijuana in the car.

The domestic violence incident and drug recovery remain under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Barton Auxiliary’s blood drives collected 699 pints of blood in 2012.

• Here are the Caltrans weekly roadwork schedules for El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra.

• Margie Maxhimer has joined the South Lake Tahoe Cabinet of the El Dorado Community Foundation.

• Alison Elder was recently recognized as 2012 Realtor of the Year by her peers at Chase International Real Estate.

• Barton Women’s Health has hired Kenneth Spielvogel, obstetrician and gynecologist.

Ski report: Take sunscreen



The day is starting off chilly, but it will be sunny.

Here is the Feb. 12 ski report.

— Curtis Fong

Controlled burn set for Kings Beach

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will conduct prescribed fire operations on Regency Way in Kings Beach beginning Feb. 12, and continuing as conditions allow.

Crews expect to burn approximately 2 acres.

Residents and visitors can expect to see smoke from this prescribed fire project area. The Forest Service strives to minimize the impacts of smoke on local communities. Smoke-sensitive residents should consider staying indoors and keeping doors, windows and outside vents closed.

To directly receive prescribed fire updates, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

From humble start, largest U.S. ski resort turns 50

By Susan Wood

VAIL – With just a passing glance of the sweeping views off the Mountaintop Express chairlift at 11,250 feet, it's difficult not to get naturally sentimental about how a vision of a mountaineering soldier turned into Colorado's premier ski resort and the flagship for a corporate empire running nine ski area properties. Heavenly, Northstar and Kirkwood are among them.

That's because Vail Mountain Resort had modest beginnings.

In 1957, rancher and engineer Earl Eaton and Pete Seibert – who was a member of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division in World War II – climbed to the top of Vail's distinct ridge that divides the front side and its massive back bowl area that stretches seven-miles across. The founding duo was seeking an adventure that would keep their feet in the mountains professionally and personally.



The One gondola opened in November at Vail. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Five years later in December, Vail opened with one gondola and

two chairlifts – two-person seats with wooden slats, fewer than 50 employees and two bowls to frolic in, Sunup and Sundown. A lift ticket cost $5.

“It was small,” Pete Seibert Jr. told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Sometimes he remembers those days like they were yesterday. His late father was engrossed in getting the ski area off the ground, but had fun in the process.

“(Dad) used to say that if you’re doing it right, you don’t need a vacation. He never complained about what was going on. He loved the whole process. I think it was because he saw how each day’s progress fit into his ultimate dream. His stories were about the characters working on the mountain or the next ‘big thing’,” said Seibert, one of three children. “(Dad) passed on the ‘mountain’ side to me.”

The 57-year-old Vail real estate executive, who has worked for Slifer Smith & Frampton Real Estate for 20 years, grew to love skiing through his father.

“I would get out of school every day at 1 and skied every day, and that’s what my childhood was like,” he said.

What were his favorite runs?

This depends on the snow conditions. But the protégé has a fondness for China Bowl, especially in the spring with its grainy corn snow. The Genghis Khan run serviced by the Tea Cup Express chairlift provides wide-open, steep terrain that looks like something straight out of a Warren Miller film.

Then again, Seibert Jr. was influenced by the legends of the sport.

“Of all the runs we skied, I’d have to say Riva Ridge was my favorite. I learned to love big sweeping turns from following (dad),” he said. “The other part to skiing Riva is to roll right into Tourist Trap without stopping.”

The 4-mile run that starts between the Mountaintop Express and Northwoods chairlifts empties into the Vail Village. At the time, the Village, as it has become to be known, was a small collective of shops the neighborhood children roamed in until it was time for supper at home.

“(The kids) always skied with friends and visited the shopkeepers.

“Everybody knew us. We would go to the deli and if a parent was looking for us, they’d say: ‘He was here 15 minutes ago.’ In the summer, it was real (Huckleberry) Finn stuff,” Seibert said.

Vail has embedded itself into Seibert’s life.

“In the beginning, everybody was in it for the success of the area. It took teamwork to survive – from the (ski area) employees to the shopkeepers,” he said. “(Dad) was convinced it would be successful from the start.”

Seibert left Vail to attend Middlebury College. He returned to Vail to work on the ski patrol, followed his father to Snowbasin, Utah, then moved on to Sun Valley, Idaho, working at Bald Mountain. He came home to Vail 26 years ago, and now with children of his own, is dug in to his home base.

A lot has happened along the way to this gigantic ski mountain that lives up to its tagline: “Like nothing on Earth.”

The skiable terrain amounts to 5,289 acres. Almost 200 runs are blanketed with an average of 366 inches of snow per year. Vail’s staff members provide complimentary tours including those reaching Blue Sky Basin – the farthest back bowl that provides some of the most fun one can have outside. It opened a dozen years ago. Two years after, Seibert Sr. died of cancer at age 77.

Today, express chairlifts line the multi-mountain resort and

spread the million skiers and snowboarders out. By California's standards, it's hardly crowded – even on the weekend.

"While the technology has given us faster lifts and better equipment, the best part is we get more runs in, and there is more to ski," Seibert said.

In honor of its 50th anniversary, Vail replaced the Vista Bahn chairlift and unveiled in November the One Gondola based at the village. The 10-seater cars (probably six-to-eight comfortably) comes equipped with WiFi capability for the technology crowd and heated, padded seats for when it's chilly. It ends at the mid-Vail area.

Much has changed in chairlift technology.

So to appreciate what it had in the past, the largest ski resort in the United States placed an original Bell Gondola car at the village base where the new one is located.

On a recent run, the new gondola stopped for what seemed like half a minute. As passengers relished the quiet scene, a Denver man noted: "This doesn't usually stop this long."

The ride time is just less than eight minutes, traveling 1,200 feet per minute.

"One" – named as a tribute to Colorado's first "Bell" gondola – is swift, comfortable and apparently reliable.

Of the 111 cars, the 50th is painted gold as a reminder that the lift represents an integral part of Vail's celebrations honoring its heritage.

Along with its returning events such as the Taste of Vail and Vail Film Festival, Vail has scheduled a few new ones for its big occasion. They started last December and span the ski season into April.

In February, the ski area switched its attention from the downhill skiing exploits of mega host athlete Lindsey Vonn to snowboarding. The ski area introduced a 22-foot halfpipe in order to host the Burton U.S. Open Snowboarding Championships, which was staged in Vermont for the last 30 years.

Vail plans to cap off its 50th birthday season with Ski Heritage Week. The April 8-15 event will feature the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame Annual Induction Ceremony. Seibert was inducted in 1980.

Fitting indeed, considering that steps away from ground zero for Vail Mountain lies the Colorado Ski Museum. Inside, the historic site plays a DVD featuring the founding of the resort as a sentimental, passionate tribute to Seibert and company.

One could almost imagine what Eaton and Seibert were thinking when they hiked to the top.

“It’s a once in a lifetime opportunity for me to be a part of something that has significantly contributed to who I am and how I feel about skiing and snowboarding, the mountain, the town and my home,” Vail Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Chris Jarnot told *Lake Tahoe News*.

One can visit a small plaza called Seibert Circle off Bridge Street built in Seibert’s honor. Riders may also feel his spirit in Pete’s Bowl off Blue Sky Basin. Others may experience the late Eaton’s by dropping into Earl’s Bowl on the perimeter right alongside Pete’s.

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Opinion: A CEQA advance environmentalists should explore

By Stuart Leavenworth

For environmentalists in the Golden State, few laws are more sacred than the California Environmental Quality Act. Enacted in 1970, the law gives citizens and interest groups the power to challenge the decisions of local governments and state regulators and block projects they find objectionable.



Used at its best, CEQA has protected poor communities from toxic incinerators and landfills. It has helped conservationists stop big development projects in the wrong places, such as the sensitive Martis Valley near Lake Tahoe.

Yet because of its sweeping nature, CEQA has sometimes been abused in cities, undermining the kind of transit-friendly development that environmentalists say they support.

As the S.F. Streets blog has detailed, litigants using CEQA were able to delay for four years a new bicycle plan for San Francisco, delaying safety improvements that would encourage more cycling. Here in Sacramento, a union attempting to organize health care workers sued to block Sutter Medical Center's expansion, ostensibly for environmental reasons, but most likely as a way to leverage labor concessions. I've heard infill developers say that CEQA can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to an urban project, making it easier to develop out in the hinterlands.

In this legislative session, Gov. Jerry Brown's call for CEQA

reform has generated a predictable smackdown, with business interests on one side and environmental and labor interests on the other. Somewhere in between are infill developers and sustainable cities advocates who recognize CEQA sometimes runs counter to their goals.

The business coalition supports a bill by state Sen. Michael Rubio, D-East Bakersfield, which would create a “standards-based” approach to CEQA. Projects would be exempted from environmental review if they met standards established by other laws.

Critics fear this would lead to a “race to the bottom” on standards, with bad developments getting the green light in areas that had weak zoning and pollution rules. Said Bruce Reznik, executive director of the Planning and Conservation League: “The standards-based approach is either naive or an attempt to cut the public out of the process.”

CEQA defenders might be right that Rubio is overreaching. But their failure to acknowledge the law’s abuses almost assures that a Rubio measure, or something like it, will eventually pass. Ask environmentalists about misuse of the law, and they say such cases are infrequent. Show them a study that concludes that infill projects are challenged more often than “Greenfield” projects, and they wave it off, saying such challenges are rarely successful.

I can understand, to a degree, why environmentalists resist any real compromise. They feel under siege. Globally they (and we) are losing the battle to reduce greenhouse gases. Locally, they face an expansion of oil industry fracking and continued urban sprawl. Many are fed up with the politics of compromise that they feel leads to such defeats.

Yet environmentalists need to ask themselves: Is there a reform to CEQA that might actually advance their goals? Could there be a CEQA exemption that, as California grows, might

reduce greenhouse gases instead of expand them?

There might be. Instead of the standards-based approach – which might allow jurisdictions to more easily approve sprawl-type projects – how about a CEQA exemption that helps us renew and green our cities?

The compromise I suggest would create a CEQA exemption for housing, transit and certain mixed-use projects within cities – and only cities. It would not apply to developments that counties might want in their unincorporated areas.

This exemption would not be a blanket pass. We could still require, for instance, that housing proposed for a "brownfields" site underwent a CEQA review for toxics. But if a project met certain conditions that were not of "state interest," then cities could approve it with no CEQA review.

This compromise would still allow environmentalists to block leapfrog projects that threaten sensitive habitats. Yet by applying strictly to cities, it would give a leg up to projects that reused land and were near transit stations – filling in the empty lots that dot central Sacramento and so many cities.

This proposal would hardly avoid controversy. Counties and land speculators would fight it. Unions would seek to kill it, since it would limit their ability to use this environmental law to extract non-environmental concessions.

CEQA defenders may also claim it is unnecessary. They point to a 2011 law, Senate Bill 226, that allows infill projects to avoid environmental review if their potential impacts were addressed in a prior, program-level analysis done by local jurisdictions. Yet the law is so complicated, and is so dependent on state guidelines and local actions, that it is unclear if SB 226 will deliver real benefits.

Gov. Jerry Brown could be the force to bring this proposed

compromise together, or something like it. The governor believes in “subsidiarity” – shifting responsibility from the state to local officials. CEQA could be modified to give elected city leaders more control. If environmentalists didn’t like those decisions, they could organize and elect new city leaders. That’s the way democracy is supposed to work.

Stuart Leavenworth is editorial page editor of the Sacramento Bee.

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3 Diamond Peak racers land in top 5

By Lisa O’Daly

Far West under 14 athletes from around the Lake Tahoe Basin met at Squaw Valley over the blue sky weekend to compete in the third race of the season, the Parallel.

GS gates, or panel gates, are set approximately every 15 meters, with a similar course set adjacent to it. Frozen spectators witnessed an exciting race on Exhibition as two skiers raced side by side, each in their own course with every inch in the full view of the crowd. While each course has its own timing system so technically participants only race against the clock, racers still attempt to beat the athlete they pair with at the start. It was a cold weekend of spectacular crashes and close finishes on hard snow conditions for the 150 ski racers who competed.



Casey Delaney of Diamond Peak lands on podium in weekend race. Photo/Provided

“This race was essentially a sprint. The short, 30-second course requires athletes to be tight on the panel and keep their skis in the fall line. This means taking risks,” commented Diamond Peak Ski Foundation Coach Mark Norton.

Some of those risks paid off for the Diamond Peak racers, with several earning top 15 and podium finishes.

On Saturday, Diamond Peak’s men’s team sparkled with three racers in the top five. Casey Delaney’s combined time of 1:06.75 landed him at the top of the podium. Teammate Payton Norton’s solid runs earned him third place (1:08.08), followed by Winston Pretti in fourth at just 0.06 seconds behind (1:08.14). Dashiell Prince-Judd of Sugar Bowl was second (1:07.38).

On Sunday, Prince-Judd took the win (1:04.05) and Diamond Peak’s Delaney came in second (1:04.79), with Norton a close third (1:04.81).

Diamond Peak’s team continued to show its strength in the U14 boys with Noah Cleary placing 12th (1:10.25) on Saturday and 19th (1:07.41) on Sunday, followed by Corey Huber (23, 23). Other teammates racing at Squaw also skied well: Nick Fischer (24, 35), Tommy Corcoran (32, 42), Daniel D’Olimpio (38, DNF), Connor Huber (39, 41), Bodie Glavish (40, 53), Trent Funke

(41, 50), Jeff Miller (43, DNF), and Tim Novak (DNS, 57).

“There is a lot of depth in this 12-, 13-year-old age class (U14) and our kids continue to dazzle the coaches with their dedication, camaraderie, and spirit,” said DPSF Coach Raquel Norton.

The Diamond Peak ladies skied solidly both days. DPSF racer Madison Idso led her teammates on Saturday with a 17th place (1:12.23), with Bridgette Johnson right on her heels in 18th (1:12.38), Emily Donahue 21st (1:12.79), Sophia Holm 23rd (1:13.20), and Laurel Taylor 26th (1:14.29). Taylor fired up on Sunday and really pulled out the stops to post a fast enough combined time (1:08.96) to crack the top 15 with 15th place. Donahue showed her consistency with a 20th (1:09.97), and Johnson was not far off in 30th (1:11.75). Unfortunately, both Idso and Holm had crashes and did not finish on Sunday. Teammates Rachel Meyer (50, 49) and Katie Fisher (67, 62) had repeatedly consistent runs.

Lisa O’Daly is a parent volunteer with the Diamond Peak Ski Education Foundation.

STHS basketball teams playing at home in postseason



The boys and girls basketball teams at South Tahoe High School will be hosting playoff games this week.

This is the first time in years for the Vikings to be playing at home in the postseason. For the boys, it's the first home playoff came since 2000.

The boys host Churchill County on Feb. 12 at 7pm. The girls entertain Truckee on Feb. 13 at 7pm.

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911 system in Washoe County experiencing problems

The 911 system in Washoe County is having problems.

The local land line phone system is currently experiencing issues at this time. Parts of Washoe County, Reno, Sparks and Carson City have been affected. As a result, some residents' land line phone service is temporarily unavailable.

Citizens who are experiencing an emergency where they need to call 911 should dial 911 on their cell phones.

The cell phone network is unaffected at this time.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Lower calorie fast foods gaining in popularity

By Nancy Shute, NPR

Lower-calorie foods are driving growth and profits for chain restaurants, according to fresh research, suggesting that people are making smarter choices when it comes to burgers and fries.



We're still ordering the burger and fries, mind you. But we're going for smaller portions and shunning sugary drinks. French fry sales dropped about 2 percent from 2006 to 2011, while sales of lower-calorie beverages rose 10 percent, the study found.

That should make for happy restaurant chains, which have argued that Americans really don't want salads and other healthy offerings pushed by public health officials.

The report, from the Hudson Institute, analyzed sales at 21 restaurant chains, including McDonald's, Applebee's, Burger King, Cracker Barrel, IHOP, Panera Bread and KFC.

Restaurants that offered more lower-calorie services saw a 9 percent increase in food and beverage sales from 2006 to 2011, while restaurants that didn't saw sales drop by 16 percent.

The researchers defined lower calorie as a main item with fewer than 500 calories, a side dish with fewer than 150 calories, and a beverage below 50 calories for an eight-ounce serving.

“You go to McDonald’s and get a plain old burger, and you don’t get many calories,” says Hank Cardello, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and author of the report. It was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

A former food industry executive at companies like Coca-Cola and General Mills, Cardello is of the belief that badgering people about eating healthy isn’t necessarily the only way – or the best way – to solve the nation’s obesity crisis.

“We found some good performance in restaurants that were selling smaller-portion chicken sandwiches,” Cardello says. Even if that’s a fried chicken sandwich, he notes, smaller means fewer calories. And for the restaurants, “You don’t give up profits by doing that.”

New federal regulations requiring chain restaurants to post calorie counts will take effect next year, but some, including McDonald’s, already provide that information. Earlier studies have found that posted calorie counts don’t drive people to make better choices, and that they can actually be so confusing as to be useless. But this study suggests that people are starting to pay attention.

Cardello hopes the dollar figures will get restaurateurs to pay attention, too.

“The restaurant industry as a whole is a very show-me industry; show me why I should change.” He knows he’s not going to convert the chains to being public-health advocates. But now, the chains will know that they should “get with the program, or you leave money on the table.”