Fire at Echo Lake cabin

Firefighters on Thursday quickly put out a fire at a cabin on the west end of Lower Echo Lake.

No one was injured and the cause is still under investigation. The extent of the damage has not be released.

Lake Valley, U.S. Forest Service and CalFire crews responded to the May 29 afternoon blaze.

The boat chalet at Echo Lake helped transport equipment.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Strawberry expert at center of battle over fruit's future

By Larry Gordon, Los Angeles Times

On an ocean-facing hillside with stunning views of Monterey Bay, Douglas Shaw circulates among thousands of strawberry plants he has helped to breed and grow. But the man who is considered California's most esteemed strawberry expert declines to choose his all-time favorite.

The UC Davis plant sciences professor is a bit like a father unwilling to favor one child above his others – patented strawberry varieties with names such as Albion, Benicia, Portola, Monterey and San Andreas. He's also an unsentimental scientist with an eye toward hardier and tastier descendants.

"You can't get too attached to them, because the idea is that

you are supposed to be replacing them with something better," he said.

He bites into one berry and reports that it tastes both sweet and acidic, a combination some people crave.

"It's not rocket science," he said of his evaluations. "It's objectivity."

Watsonville's fog, sandy soil and cool temperatures, often just in the 60s during summer days, make it ideal for growing the berries. Farmers here produce the most strawberries in the state, far surpassing growers in other productive areas in Santa Maria, Oxnard and Irvine.

Across town, the quasi-governmental California Strawberry Commission has its headquarters in an office suite decorated with photos of strawberry baskets and harvests and a floor rug in the shape of a berry. At the office entrance, as if emphasizing the connection to the world of fields and supermarkets, a white board lists temperatures throughout the state, prices and production statistics.

Watsonville has long been ground zero for California's $2.3-billion-a-year strawberry industry. Now it has taken center stage in a sour legal battle over the fruit's – and Shaw's – future.

Read the whole story

State suing several Tahoe gas

station owners

By Kathryn Reed

Several Lake Tahoe gas station owners are being sued by the state of California for allegedly mishandling underground storage tanks.

The State Water Resources Control Board has been after many of these defendants for years, with fines being levied in the past.

Besides tanks in El Dorado and Placer counties, the defendants also own property in Contra Costa, Sacramento and Yolo counties that are part of the lawsuit.



Owners of the Swiss Mart on Emerald Bay in South Lake Tahoe are being sued by the state.

According to a press release, the Attorney General's Office "is seeking a permanent injunction, civil penalties, and other equitable relief to remedy numerous violations observed at the facilities. Applying the minimum civil penalty of $500 per-day per-tank for each violation, the penalties could reach several million dollars."

Lake Tahoe properties include:

• 1140 Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe – American Oil.

• 3208 Highway 50, Meyers – Meyers Beacon.

• 2304 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe – South Lake Tahoe Mobile.

• 913 Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe – Swiss Mart.

• 8070 North Lake Blvd., Kings Beach – North Tahoe Station, TransAm, North Tahoe Beacon, North Tahoe Mobil.

The 30-page complaint says Azad Amiri and Sarbjit Singh Kang were the masterminds behind everything, including using family and friends as "strawmen" as a way to "conceal their actual ownership, operation and control of the real properties."

They are accused of failing to install and/or maintain automatic line leak detectors on underground-pressurized pipes that carry a hazardous substance at six locations, including 1140 Emerald Bay Road, 2304 Lake Tahoe Blvd. and 8070 North Lake Blvd. This would violate several state Health and Safety Codes.

At the above locations, and in Meyers and the Swiss Mart they are accused of failing to test and certify underground storage tank monitoring equipment.

They face several other charges related to how they operated the stations and storage tanks.

The complains also alleges they: commingled funds and other assets, failed to segregate funds of the separate entities, diverted corporate funds or assets without authority, failed to maintain adequate corporate records, used the corporate entity to procure labor-service-merchandise for another person, manipulated assets between entities, and used a corporation as subterfuge of illegal actions.

The complaint lists the following people connected to Lake

Tahoe:

- Azad Amiri owned properties at 1140 Emerald Bay Road and 913 Emerald Bay Road, both in South Lake Tahoe. He owned or operated the underground storage tanks at these locations.
- Dilpal Singh Dhillon is the owner of the property and underground storage tanks at 2304 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.
- Satar Hidarinejd was an officer, director or member or partner of Aria Oil Company that operated the underground storage tanks at 1140 Emerald Bay Road.
- Darshan Singh Kang, who lives in El Dorado County, was an officer or partner in South Tahoe Station Inc. and North Tahoe Station Inc. He has been at least a partial owner of the 3208 Highway 50 property in Meyers that locals know better as the Tveten parcel. Kang was responsible for operating the underground storage tanks there.
- Kaur Kang also has an interest in the Meyers parcel as well as the 913 Emerald Bay properties; and was an operator of the underground storage tanks.
- Sarbjit Singh Kang, a resident of El Dorado County, was partner or director for Kang Property Inc, North Tahoe Station Inc., South Tahoe Station Incl., and Tahoe 3208 Highway 50 Corp. He was part owner of the Meyers property, 913 Emerald Bay, 1140 Emerald Bay, and 2304 Lake Tahoe Blvd.
- Darshan S. Singh of El Dorado County is part owner of the Meyers property.
- Parmjit Singh is part owner of the 1140 Emerald Bay and 2304 Lake Tahoe Blvd. properties.
- Rajinder Singh was a director or officer in North Tahoe Station Inc.
- Raman S. Singh was part owner of the 2304 Lake Tahoe Blvd. property.

Companies with Tahoe ties that have been named include: Ameri Oil Company, Dara Petroleum Inc., Emerald Business Group Inc., Kang Property Inc., Meyers Holding Co., North Tahoe Station Inc., South Tahoe Station Inc., Tahoe 3208 Highway 50 Corp., Tahoe Blue LLC, Tahoe Blue Property Inc., and Tahoe Station Inc.

No bomb found at South Lake Tahoe Y

Updated 2pm:

No explosive devices were found at the Y center in South Lake Tahoe this afternoon.

Two South Lake Tahoe detectives and the school resource officer are trying to track down the kids who made the alleged threat. They want to determine if a device may have been planted elsewhere or was a hoax.

South Tahoe High School will be released at normal hours.

—

The South Lake Tahoe Raley's center at the Y has been evacuated and South Tahoe High School is in shelter in place because of a bomb threat.

"Students are remaining in the classrooms and are in no danger," the school district said in an email.

A Kmart employee overheard youths saying they were going to plant a bomb, South Lake Tahoe spokeswoman Tracy Franklin told *Lake Tahoe News*. She said the kids left the store about noon

May 29 and then the employee took a walk outside. That person heard a ticking device by the mailboxes and then called the police.

Officer Aaron Crawford, who has bomb experience, saw the suspicious device and called in Tahoe Douglas bomb squad. The first Tahoe Douglas crew then called in reinforcements.

STHS is on lockdown to keep those students safe and not bring more people into the area.

Highways 89 and 50 are open, as is Lake Tahoe Boulevard, and neighboring businesses.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Laxalt adds twist to Nevada AG race

By Jon Ralston, Politico

Dick Cheney calls him “courageous” and says electing him “is of the highest priority.”

John Bolton traveled across the country to headline a fundraiser for him. Newt Gingrich, Frank Fahrenkopf, Tom Ridge and Ed Meese (remember him?) all appeared at the same D.C. event to celebrate his candidacy. Donald Rumsfeld gave him a personal check for $5,000, part of a half-million-dollar haul.

Who is this remarkable contender attracting such a list of national GOP luminaries? What remarkably accomplished figure could warrant such attention? Who can command encomia from a former vice president, attorney general, defense secretary,

House speaker, chairman of the Republican National Committee and Homeland Security secretary?

Adam Laxalt, that's who.

Who?

Laxalt is only 34, has never run for office before and is campaigning for attorney general—attorney general!—in Nevada, where he has been a cipher until just recently and whose last name explains … everything. That's because Laxalt has one of the most unusual pedigrees in American politics: He's the grandson of Paul Laxalt, the former senator and Ronald Reagan confidant once known as "the first friend" — still, at 91, casting a long if not always visible shadow in Nevada politics.

Awkwardly, young Laxalt is also the illegitimate son of Sen. Pete Domenici, his grandfather's longtime Senate colleague. In fact, it was only last year that Adam Laxalt's mother Michelle, a 24-year-old Reagan operative at the time of the affair and now a well-known Washington lobbyist, revealed her son's parentage for the first time, a sensational revelation that almost certainly had the effect of clearing the way for his political career.

It gets better. Laxalt's Democratic foe is another political royal, Nevada Secretary of State Ross Miller, the son of a former governor and the overwhelming favorite to win. But that's also what's made the race such a spectacle: Miller, the Nevada Democratic Party's rising star and presumed 2018 gubernatorial candidate, has become a top target of Republican potentates like casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, who has launched a Stop Miller Now campaign and is bankrolling Laxalt along with his grandfather's Reagan-era friends.

As one prominent Nevada Republican puts it, "If his name were Adam Smith, this race would be a total joke." But his name is Adam Laxalt, and that's why Democrats aren't laughing.

Read the whole story

Sacramento couple rescued from Horsetail Falls

Two Sacramento residents unexpectedly spent a night in Desolation Wilderness after becoming disoriented.

Patti Hardesty and Mohammad Mostafa had been at Lake Aloha when they tried to hike out via Horsetail Falls. They called for help about 9pm May 26 when they became stranded in steep terrain on the east side of the falls.

Neither was prepared to spend the night.

A search and rescue team from El Dorado County was flown into the area and found the two. They all stayed Monday night in the woods.

The following morning the duo was airlifted by a California Highway Patrol helicopter to a landing area in Strawberry.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Clean Tahoe's Dump Day is May 31 from 8am to 4pm. Bring unwanted items to the South Tahoe Refuse Transfer Station for $5 per truckload.

• El Dorado County election officials need poll workers for the June 3 election, especially English speakers who are also fluent in Spanish or Tagalog. For more info, call 530.621.7480.

• League to Save Lake Tahoe partnered with 12 students and two teachers from Douglas High School's Environmental Club on Monday to remove 59 pounds of trash from El Dorado Beach in South Lake Tahoe in one hour.

• Scott Helmer is putting on a benefit concert for Tahoe Dream Foundation on June 13 from 7-10pm at the American Legion in South Lake Tahoe. For tickets, go online.

• Genoa's Sweet Sippin' Sundays strolls into its second month of the season on June 1 from 1-4pm. The cost is $12, which includes an event glass or $10 for return sippers who bring their event glass with them. For more info, email sweetsippinsundays@gmail.com or call 775.220.0605.

California Chrome fever

swells in Gardnerville

By Susan Wood

GARDNERVILLE – When California Chrome co-owner Steve Coburn told his wife, Carolyn, he was going to Sharkey's Casino to bet on their winning thoroughbred to launch his march with destiny, she stood by her man – and her horse.

"I gave him the money to do it," she told *Lake Tahoe News* of the undisclosed amount.

The Coburns, and hundreds of new friends, on May 28 were at the Carson Valley casino where they had placed that bet. They and their horse were bestowed with gifts, kudos and well wishes for another win in Elmont, N.Y., on June 7.



Steve Coburn, right, with Joe Asher, CEO of William Hill Sportbook, and Sharkey's owner Harold Holder. Photos/Susan Wood

The chestnut colt won the Kentucky Derby on May 3 – against 200 to 1 odds. It was the first time in 52 years a California horse won the first jewel of the horse-racing industry's Triple Crown. The horse continued its quest two weeks later and won the Preakness, along with the hearts and souls of many people who longed for a Cinderella story.

And that it is.

The prized horse only cost the Topaz Lake couple and co-owner Perry Martin of Yuba City $10,000. It has also brought redemption to 77-year-old trainer Art Sherman after a long Derby drought.

California Chrome – who gets his name from his white markings called “chrome” – also shares the same birthday with Steve Coburn’s late sister Brenda, who gets a prayer before every race. To this day, it’s difficult for Coburn to mention the connection without getting choked up, and Wednesday was no exception in his little hometown casino. The horse’s quest has also given jockey Victor Espinoza something for his brother, a former rider, to cheer about after a traumatic brain injury ended his career.

“Victor knows that horse. They understand each other,” Carolyn Coburn said, while sitting with family friend Teri Vandenberg at the casino bar. One could say the same about the Coburns, who have been married for 20 years.

“They are the most small-town, modest, humble people – so down to earth. They’ve been made celebrities overnight, and they’re overwhelmed,” Vandenberg said.



Carolyn and Steve Coburn on May 28 meeting hundreds of fans and signing autographs

at Sharkey's in Gardnerville.

Despite the fame, Steve Coburn went back to work at a company in Gardnerville that makes magnetic strips for items such as credit cards. On Wednesday, he bellied up to the bar clad in blue jeans, a T-shirt and a cap for a swig of beer and to take time out from the hoopla. He was soon surrounded by patrons wanting a picture taken with him and an autograph. His wife quietly watched from a distance.

Unlike her more well known husband, the Coburn matriarch is soft spoken, but a powerhouse anchor for the family, which now includes a four-legged equine who aptly pays for his board and keep.

Despite the rural Nevada roots, Carolyn Coburn dressed the part of a racehorse owner at the Derby with a signature hat.

"At the winner's circle, it blew off," she said.

The Coburns and Martins co-owned California Chrome's mother, Love the Chase, but she didn't have the same love of running like her son. What both horses loved were cookies from Mrs. Pastures.

Most in attendance at the Sharkey's ceremony and around the country say the same thing: "There's something about that horse," a thoroughbred that's become a working-class hero when he beat the million-dollar babies in Louisville.

Back in Gardnerville, fans couldn't be more pleased with seeing their connection to the horse – the Coburns.

"We're honored the Coburns like Sharkey's. This is such a Cinderella story," Sharkey's owner Harold Holder told *Lake Tahoe News*. He and the executives at the sportsbook company William Hill US stood out in their suits, but blended in with their enthusiasm.

Holder and William Hill CEO Joe Asher presented Coburn with a blanket so the Cinderella-storied horse can slip into something comfortable after the Belmont Stakes in June.

“I hope he wears it,” Holder said.

“Oh, he will,” Coburn quickly replied, as if speaking of a son. The executives also gave Coburn a $1,000 check to bet on his horse for a charity of his choice.

With no hesitation, Coburn promised the adoring crowd another win for California Chrome, which would be the first time a horse has won the Triple Crown since Affirmed took the title in 1978. A dozen others have tried since then.

“There’s no doubt in my mind he’ll win the Triple Crown,” Coburn announced. “The whole state of Nevada, and hell, the whole state of Kentucky is pulling for us.”

The local crowd cheered.

The same crowd went upstairs to stand in line for autographs of various items. Some came bearing gifts, including that of a Nevada license plate by an aide of Gov. Brian Sandoval’s. Carolyn Coburn was touched by a well-wisher presenting a necklace and earrings.

What’s the first thing the couple plans to do upon winning the Triple Crown?

“Probably cry,” they both said.

Letter: Valhalla teaches Scouts Tahoe history

To the community,

On May 27 from 6pm to 8pm, some members of our South Lake Tahoe Cub Scout Pack 592 were able to visit the Grand Hall, Boathouse and more out at Valhalla Tahoe.

Our hostess and docent, Carolyn Grubb of Valhalla Tahoem treated us to our own private tour of the area for about 25 children and their families. We played croquet on the Great Lawn and really enjoyed the evening together.

Thank you for your volunteer time and for sharing some of our Tahoe history with our Cub Scouts.

Sincerely,

Leslie Amato, Tiger Cub den leader

EDC supervisor candidates' financials

The latest campaign financial statements for the June primary have been filed.

Here are the documents for the six who are running for District 5 for El Dorado County supervisor:

Brown

Curtzwiler

Grego

Novasel

Piper

Swanson.