Police investigating homicide at Stateline area motel

A welfare check of a woman at a South Lake Tahoe motel turned into a coroner’s case Wednesday afternoon.

South Lake Tahoe police officers entered the Stateline area motel on June 20 and found a 40-year-old woman deceased on the bed.

No one from the Lone Pine Lodge would speak to *Lake Tahoe News* on the record and police are keeping mum other than to say they are treating the death as a homicide at this point.

A toddler had been heard crying in the room, which prompted the welfare check. Child Protective Services is caring for the child.

Police said more information should be released on Thursday.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Firefighters douse small blaze at Bijou disc golf course

A small fire at the disc golf course in South Lake Tahoe was quickly extinguished Wednesday afternoon.

While the fire was only 5-feet by 5-feet, three agencies responded in case it were to have grown. South Lake Tahoe,

Lake Valley and the U.S. Forest Service responded to hole 22.

A witness told firefighters he saw some kids in the area before he saw the fire. He also told crews he was able to put out a small fire a couple days earlier.

Karl Koeppen, shift commander with South Tahoe, told *Lake Tahoe News* there is no definitive cause of how the June 20 fire started.

Firefighters throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin and region are on heightened alert because a small fire can grow into something unmanageable in short order. Plus, there have been a number of red flag days – which is unusual for this early in the season.

While June 20 was not one of those days, Thursday has already been labeled a red flag day because of the expected 40 mph gusts.

Koeppen said with how dry everything is the threat of fire increases as the winds increase.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Shrinking snowpack may impact electric bills

By Craig Miller, KQED

While much is uncertain about California's warming climate, there is little doubt that it's already changing the fundamentals of how most of us get our water. In fact, the Bureau of Reclamation has estimated that the Sierra snowpack could be reduced by half as soon as a decade from now.

And that has some far-reaching implications that could even show up on your electric bill.

“When you hear people talk about a depleted snowpack, it’s because of warmer temperatures and the snow just cannot stay in the hills,” says Robert Shibatani, a hydrologist and consultant to numerous government agencies. He says the “hydrograph” for California – the “usual” pattern of precipitation and runoff – is already changing. “There’s no question about it,” he told me in a recent interview. “That’s not an if. It’s not even a when, because I can tell you the when. It’s happening now.”

Shibatani says it’s not that we’ll get less precipitation, necessarily, but warming temperatures will mean more of it falling as rain at higher elevations. And the relatively steady runoff we’ve come to count on to fill the reservoirs and spin the turbines throughout the summer and fall will be compressed into the late winter and early spring.

“What it’s gonna mean is that we’re gonna spill more often,” says Einar Maisch, strategic planning director for the Placer County Water Agency. “And that means we’re gonna lose generation.”

Read the whole story

Living History Day at Ehrman Mansion

The California State Parks and the Sierra State Parks Foundation will be hosting Living History Day at Pine Lodge, a celebration of the anniversary of the lodge also known as the

Ehrman Mansion, at Sugar Pine Point State Park on July 28 from 10am to 4pm.

Living history activities will include open house tours, a children's activity zone, an antique car show and a wooden boats display. Refreshments will be available for purchase. All events are free, though there is a $10 parking fee.

Organizers of the event are looking for members of the community to help put on this annual living history day presentation. People of all ages are needed to wear costumes and play roles of the Ehrman family members, guests and employees. Helpers are also needed for the children's zone that will include crafts, games, and activities.

Volunteers are needed to serve as greeters, parking attendants, facilities assistants, boathouse docents, crafters and raffle assistants. Volunteers may contact Heidi Doyle at (530) 583.3074 for additional information.

California universities reject proposed 'Student Athlete Bill of Rights'

By Hannah Madans, Sacramento Bee

Four California universities with big-time sports programs are fighting a legislative effort that could radically change the way schools recruit, educate and retain student athletes.

The schools are opposing the "Student Athlete Bill of Rights,"

they say, because it would be too expensive, put their programs at a competitive disadvantage and may go against NCAA rules.

Senate Bill 1525, by Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Los Angeles, would require schools earning more than $10 million a year in media revenue from athletic programs to continue an athlete's scholarship if he or she is no longer able to participate in athletics, and would allow athletes to switch schools without restriction. The bill also would force schools to provide student athletes with life skills and financial workshops and pay health care premiums for low-income individuals.

"It's evident to me we're losing focus on the mission of the university itself," Padilla said. Student athletes, he added, "should be competing second to getting an education."

His measure would affect USC, UCLA, UC Berkeley and Stanford University. Other schools would be affected if their media revenue reaches the $10 million threshold.

The bill's centerpiece provision would require schools to provide scholarships to athletes who become injured or whose scholarships aren't renewed for nondisciplinary reasons. The impact would be tempered at some schools, however, because this provision would not apply to athletes on teams with a graduation rate greater than 60 percent. At Stanford, for instance, all athletic teams have a graduation rate over 90 percent, said Patrick Dunkley, Stanford's deputy director of athletics.

Read the whole story

Herbal medicine class on South Shore

Herbal Medicine Making will be taught June 29 from 5:30-8:30pm through Lake Tahoe Community College's Connect Education program.

Herbal medicines can be shrouded in mystery, but in reality they are simple to make when you tailor them to meet your specific needs.

In this workshop, there will be discussions on tastes, types, and basic chemistry and formulating.

For more information, go online.

Civil War vets to get new markers at Truckee cemetery

California is a long way from the battlegrounds of the U.S. Civil War. So it may surprise people that 22 known veterans of that 19th century conflict are buried at the Sierra Mountain Cemetery in Truckee. Ten of the soldiers' graves are marked with headstones; six are not. And six others recently got new headstones.

To dedicate those new grave markers and honor all the Civil War vets, local historical groups have organized a special ceremony at the cemetery next Saturday. Participating in the dedication will be Rep. Tom McClintock, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Battle Born Civil War Reenactors, the Fort Point Garrison Civil War Band, Patriot Guard Riders,

the Truckee Civil Air Patrol and the Mountain Belles.

The military call Taps (celebrating its 150th anniversary this year) will be played on an authentic Civil War bugle.

Sierra Mountain Cemetery is on East Jibboom Street in Truckee. The event is June 23 at 10am.

— *Sacramento Bee*

Knitters and crocheters meeting at library monthly

Do you like knitting or crocheting? Would you like to share your enjoyment with others?

If yes, then come to the South Lake Tahoe library each Wednesday from 5-7pm, and on the first Saturday of each month from 1-3pm for Spin A Yarn—an informal gathering of crafters.

Some yarn is provided, but bring knitting needles or crochet hooks.

People of all ages and experience are welcome.

For more information, call (530) 573.3185.

Police release details of suspicious package found near Safeway

Updated: June 20, 2012, 7:25am:

Details released Wednesday morning from South Lake Tahoe police: What was found was a large dark colored piece of luggage, about 2-feet wide, 4-feet long and 2-feet deep. In part, an unsigned note accused specific federal, county, and city law enforcement and court officials in the Midwest of committing a violent crime against the unknown person who had left the package.

Safeway was evacuated, as were all the rooms of the Best Western Timber Cove Lodge that faced the highway.

There was miscellaneous packaging, photographs and clothing in the container, but no explosives were found.

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A suspicious device caused officials to close down Highway 50 in South Lake Tahoe in front of Safeway on Tuesday night.

Tahoe Douglas bomb squad officials were called out to determine if the device found near the bus stop was an explosive.

Eric Guevin, spokesman for Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, told *Lake Tahoe News* his crew X-rayed the item; this confirmed it was not an explosive device.

“We want to err on the side of safety and not make any assumptions,” South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler said as to why the bomb squad was called June 19. “We try to keep things as safe as we can. We don’t want our citizens or

officers in harms way."

A Safeway customer service rep said, "We are not at liberty to say anything." She deferred comment to the closed corporate offices. So it's not known if the excitement disrupted business.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

RGJ photographer on assignment roughed up by deputies

By Scott Sonner, AP

RENO – The executive editor of the *Reno Gazette-Journal* was preparing a formal complaint to local law enforcement Tuesday after he said one of his veteran photographers covering a brush fire was roughed up by sheriff's deputies who forced him to the ground and cited him for obstructing public officers.

Photo editor Tim Dunn, 60, was taking photos of the fire that destroyed two homes north of town in Sun Valley on Monday afternoon when Washoe County sheriff's deputies confronted him and detained him for more than a half hour, Executive Editor Beryl Love said.

"In the process of delivering the citation, he was forced to the ground," Love told the *Associated Press*, adding that the "excessive force" was a violation of Dunn's rights.

"He was handcuffed and left standing there for 30 or 40 minutes while the deputies were deciding whether to give him a

citation. This was after he was complying with deputy's direction and was in the process of walking to the area he told him," he said. "His face was pushed into some gravel. "

The newspaper was investigating, but the three deputies involved appear to be the only witnesses to the incident other than Dunn, who said he did not provoke the treatment, Love said.

Washoe County sheriff's Deputy Armando Avina confirmed Dunn was detained for less than an hour near the scene of the fire Monday before he was issued a misdemeanor citation for resisting a public officer.

"The deputies on scene used their discretion and did not arrest and book Mr. Dunn, a citation was issued in lieu of arrest," Avina said Tuesday.

Barry Smith, executive director of the Nevada Press Association and a longtime area newspaperman, said he doesn't remember any such incident in the past 20 years.

"There are occasionally disagreements over where people should be and how much access there is, but I've never heard of a deputy actually beating up a photographer," he told *AP*. "I'm outraged."

A photo of Dunn on the *Gazette-Journal's* website Tuesday afternoon showed his cheek and right hand with large scrapes.

Dunn, an award winning photographer and chief photo editor with 37 years in the business, said he had been told to leave the area and was directed to another location farther away from the scene. He said he ultimately was taken to the ground by two deputies – one who shoved his foot on his back, and the other who pushed his face in the gravel.

Dunn said the deputies accused him of trying to impersonate a firefighter because he was wearing yellow, protective fire

gear, a helmet, and goggles. But he noted that area fire personnel who conduct annual training emphasize the need for media to wear such clothes while covering wildfires.

“I kept thinking this was not really happening,” Dunn said.

“There was no way I was obstructing any activity at that fire. It was in mop-up mode,” he told *AP* Tuesday night, adding he didn’t get the names of the deputies. “It’s hard to write when you’re in handcuffs.”

Love said the newspaper was preparing a formal administrative complaint and advising Dunn on possible civil actions “appropriate for the injuries he sustained.” He said it wasn’t the first time his staff had run into trouble with authorities while trying to cover wildfires.

“We have had several instances during the past year when our reporters and photographers were not given access to fire scenes where we clearly had a right to be. But this goes above and beyond press access,” Love said in a statement later Tuesday.

“The brutal nature in which Tim, a veteran photographer with more than 20 years of experience, was treated by sheriff deputies is beyond comprehension. Their use of excessive force on a fellow professional who also has an important job to do is shocking. His rights were clearly violated.”

Avina said sheriff’s Capt. J. Spencer made initial contact with Dunn at 5:15pm and instructed deputies to detain him one minute later. He said the captain asked a dispatcher for a formal case number for resisting a public officer at 5:22pm, issued Dunn a misdemeanor citation and told him he was free to leave at 6:05pm.

Avina said he couldn’t comment further.

Smith said he spent much of Tuesday researching relevant state

statutes, rules and regulations. He said fire officials and law officers “clearly do not have the authority to order the media around at any kind of an emergency site.” He said obvious exceptions include “if somebody is obstructing the firefighters from getting to the scene or doing their job, or there is some imminent danger the reporter or photographer is not aware of – and in that case, they should be advising them.”

“Nevada journalists are trained how to respond to wildfires,” said Smith, who intends to support the newspaper in its action. “It sounds to me like the fire officials and deputies need to be trained on how to respond to the media.”

Smith called it “absolutely preposterous” that Dunn could have been mistaken for a firefighter. He said his gear is specifically called for in the 20-page Sierra Front Media Fire Guide published by an interagency coalition that includes the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Nevada Division of Forestry and others.

“Please keep in mind appropriate attire when you are covering fire operations. … We cannot guarantee that the supply unit will have sizes of fire clothing that will fit you. It is always best to come to a wildfire fully equipped,” according to the guide. It also states, “Remember that the decision to assume risk remains with the journalist.”

Smith said, “The whole idea of ‘move or you’re going to be arrested’ is way outside that policy.”

Fire investigators determined Tuesday the fire was caused by sparks from power lines in high winds that ignited dry grass at about 4pm Monday. The four-alarm blaze destroyed two homes and damaged a third.