Expect delays on Hwy. 89 in Tahoe City

Traffic on Highway 89 in Tahoe City between Grimsel Pass Road and Wilson Avenue will be slowed down as Southwest Gas works on its natural gas pipeline system.

The work begins June 18 and is expected to last until October.

Expect delays Monday-Thursday from 7am-7pm.

Opinion: If only we had Walter Cronkite today

By Tina Brown, Newsweek

What a lucky dog Walter Cronkite was. You really could be the Voice of God in an era when all America was called to worship at 7 o’clock every night at a temple called the evening news and there was an oracular ring to every scripted utterance. Cronkite was a construct of national authority. Because TV news had an unchallenged monopoly on America’s attention span, he controlled not just the message of the news but also the message of himself as Uncle Walter, the man America could trust. That reassuring probity was all the more treasured because his rise coincided with the country’s descent into the swamp of Vietnam, a war with which his reputation for honesty became intricately interwoven.

Yet after reading Douglas Brinkley’s superb new biography,

Cronkite, media critic Howard Kurtz, *Newsweek's* Washington bureau chief, decides that today he might well be writing that Cronkite should be kicked off the air. Uncle Walter committed all manner of journalistic infractions, from taking freebie trips to manipulating a softball taped interview to make himself look combative. He even caroused with strippers.

Of course ours is not an age of icons: we are too cynical and irreverent now—and just plain nasty—to leave people on a pedestal for too long. So the larger question is what use Cronkite made of his cloak of immunity from apparent human weakness. The answer is that he used it judiciously. Nobody who saw his broadcasts will ever forget that evening in 1968, when back in New York after weeks in the jungles of Vietnam, he shed his ostensibly neutral role to deliver the verdict to the nation that, for all the propaganda, the war was unwinnable. He could no longer accept watching Americans fight and die for a lost cause because politicians would not admit the obvious. That wasn't humbug. That was brave.

Perhaps we could have done with Cronkite when TV networks allowed themselves to be bullied by the Bush administration into jingoistic coverage of the invasion of Iraq and Fox was calling out dissenters as unpatriotic. One likes to think he would have told it straight and, more important, people would have believed him—if only because there was no one else to listen to. Today, attention is so fractured, there is no commanding voice capable of making a distracted American public focus on the consequences of another unwinnable war. Thanks to media absenteeism and an all-volunteer Army, there is a heart-breaking disconnect between the men and women who sacrifice so much and the oblivious rest of us who don't.

Read the whole story

Lakeview Commons to be dedicated

The dedication of Lakeview Commons in South Lake Tahoe is June 20 at 2pm.

It will be followed by a concert and barbecue at 3pm.

Complimentary food, commemorative items, and speeches by politicians are part of the event.

The public is invited.

Janitor sentenced to 50 years for killing Placerville principal

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

A Placerville elementary school janitor on Friday was sentenced to 50 years to life in prison for gunning down the school's beloved principal.

John Luebbers, 45, was convicted April 24 of first-degree murder in the Feb. 2, 2011, shooting of his 20-year friend and golfing partner, Louisiana Schnell School Principal Sam LaCara, 50.

El Dorado Superior Court Judge James R. Wagoner imposed the mandatory sentence of 25 years to life on the murder count, plus a 25-year sentencing enhancement for use of a firearm during the killing.

According to testimony in the trial, Luebbers, the school's lead custodian, became livid over interviews for a night janitor. Luebbers, who had been golfing with LaCara just days earlier, preferred one candidate and the principal and school district preferred another.

Read the whole story

People increasingly leaving pets in hot vehicles

An alarming increase in "dog in hot vehicle" reports this spring has the Washoe County Regional Animal Services reminding pet owners that leaving a pet in an enclosed vehicle, even for a short time, can be a deadly idea.

In May, dispatchers received 68 high priority calls for dogs left in an enclosed vehicle during hot temperatures. This is more than five times the number reported during May 2011, when there were 13 calls for dogs in vehicles.

So far there have been no pet fatalities as a result of pets being left in hot cars.

“When it gets to the point where an animal’s well-being is threatened, Animal Control Officers will take the necessary steps, as obligated by the law, to save an endangered animal by removing it from the vehicle. Even if they have to break a window to do it,” Regional Animal Services Manager Barry Brode said. “Our goal is to prevent this from happening by getting this important message out to the public now.”

Temperatures inside a closed automobile can easily rise to 20 degrees or warmer than outside temperatures. This could prove deadly to a pet.

The public is encouraged to report distressed animals locked in hot cars immediately by contacting Washoe County Regional Animal Services dispatch at (775) 322.3647.

Nevada parks department has grant money available

The Nevada Division of State Parks has about $270,980 in federal funds for local park and recreation capital improvement and acquisition projects through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program.

All political subdivisions, including counties, incorporated cities, unincorporated towns, general improvement districts and tribal governments are potentially eligible for the 50-50 matching grants offered through the program.

Individual funding requests range between a minimum of $25,000 ($50,000 total project budget with a 50 percent match) and no maximum. However, applicants should be aware that the maximum amount is rarely awarded to any single recipient. Exceptions

to the $25,000 minimum rule will be considered on a case-by-case basis for political subdivisions serving populations of less than 10,000. Local matches may exceed 50 percent, but the federal share cannot exceed 50 percent of the total project amount.

Application packages, including the application forms and grants manual, are available on State Parks' website. The due date for grant applications is Aug. 31 by 5pm.

$92.1 bil. budget deal ensures Calif. lawmakers get paid

By Chris Megerian and Anthony York, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO — California lawmakers narrowly met a constitutional deadline to pass a state budget Friday, but their work is not finished as they continue a tug-of-war with Gov. Jerry Brown over just how deeply to cut social services in the $92.1-billion plan.

The budget — pushed through the Legislature by Democrats without a single Republican vote — makes fewer cuts to welfare and child care than the governor had sought and funds those programs through accounting maneuvers he opposes.

Once Brown receives the budget, he has 12 days to sign it into law, trim some spending unilaterally, or veto the entire plan and send it back to the Legislature for revisions.

On Friday, the governor signaled only that he would continue negotiating with Democratic leaders. The spending plan can be

modified with follow-up legislation.

“We’re still not there yet,” said Brown spokesman Gil Duran.

Passage of the budget seemed to be almost a non-event in the Capitol compared to years past – in part because it was only a prelude to the battle at the polls in November, when Brown and his allies will try to persuade voters to approve billions in new taxes.

The budget passed Friday leaves a hole of more than $8 billion, which Democrats hope will be filled by temporary increases in both the state sales tax and income tax on the wealthy. If Brown’s tax proposals are rejected, California’s public schools would bear the brunt of the pain, and the academic year in some districts could be shortened by three weeks.

Read the whole story

Class about gardening at a high elevation

Learn how to have a summer garden living in Lake Tahoe.

The June 30 9am-noon class is part of LTCC’s community ed program.

This workshop will provide a comprehensive list of duties, how to work in harmony with nature, and suggest suitable plants for handling adversities and inclement weather. Learn how to have more success and less frustration in your garden.

For more information, go online.

Angora Fire – 5 years later part 3 coming June 17

Day 3 of *Lake Tahoe News'* four-part series on Angora Fire – 5 years later will run June 17.



Sunday's stories will be about the water supply provided by South Tahoe Public Utility District, landscaping issues, a university study that includes the Angora Fire, and TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta's point-of-view.

If you missed the June 10 installment, here are links to those stories:

Dealing with insurance companies.

Annual garden show focuses on Angora properties.

Cutbacks would challenge future wildland firefighting resources.

Importance of defensible space.

Supervisor Norma Santiago talks about El Dorado County.

If you missed the June 3 installment, here are links to those stories:

Susan Wood was the first reporter on the scene.

Forest Supervisor Nancy Gibson looks forward.

A garden grows from the ashes.

No arrests made.

State senator to host Angora forum.

Baby birds learning to fly throughout Tahoe

By Cheryl Millham

Fledglings are falling out of trees like rain from a cloud. The early nesting is over and the birds are about 6 weeks old.

Fledglings can’t learn to fly in the nest. They have to come to the ground first. All of the body feathers are in place, but they have very short tails. Some fledglings are very smart and learn to fly in one day. However, for some it takes three days and even up to a week.

The parents will protect them (as much as they can) and feed them – while they are on the ground. “Our” responsibility is to let them stay with their family. Keep your dogs and cats away and under control.

Also, educate our children about the ways of wild birds.

If birds fledge in your yard, pick them up and set it outside of your fenced area. The mom and dad will find them and continue to care for them.

Remember, it is a false old wives tale that says, “If you

touch a baby bird, the mom won't take care of it!" The fact is birds cannot smell. The only bird which has the ability to smell is the turkey vulture.

More calls

I received another call from a man who wanted me to come and get a bear and take it out into the forest.

Well, for everyone's information, the city of South Lake Tahoe is the only incorporated city within a national forest in all of the United States. So, we live in a very special place.

Lake Tahoe is a beautiful place and the early settlers decided to build houses. They put in roads and then more people moved in. Within a short time a small community was born. The wildlife that lived here (past tense), just moved over. Then the killing started. Humans were not happy in sharing their new home with the wildlife. And, it has not stopped.

It seems that whenever someone is inconvenienced by wildlife, their first thought is to have it killed or moved.

When Tom and I managed the boat marina at Camp Richardson (1976-82), one of the owners of a sailboat, who grew up in South Lake Tahoe, told us he remembered going to a government office and picking up some grain that was tinted red. It was poisoned grain to kill squirrels. People were complaining about too many squirrels, so – what do they do? – start killing them.

More and more people moved to Tahoe with more cats, more dogs, more houses and more roads. The wildlife just learned how to co-exist with humans. I'll bet the wildlife wishes (or wished) the humans would learn how to co-exist with them. Either that or move back to where they came from.

So, remember – before there were houses, roads, dogs, cats and humans, the wildlife called Tahoe home.

Cheryl Millham is executive director of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe.