

Horizon hotel-casino to be reincarnated

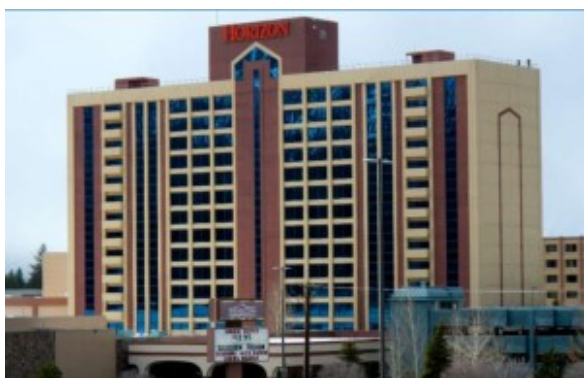
By Kathryn Reed

Say goodbye to the Horizon.

While it isn't going to be bulldozed, it is going to be gutted after the lease with LV Casino LLC expires March 31.

Taking over operations is Warner Hospitality Group out of Las Vegas. The company is under contract with the owners to remodel the dilapidated Stateline casino. It will be a multi-phase project, with the first phase slated to open in June.

The Park family has forever been the property owners. Family members were having disagreements on how to manage the business that includes cattle in the Carson Valley, the Horizon and MontBleu casinos, Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course and the future Edgewood Lodge so they opted last year to divide holdings among family members.



Called "The Ho" by locals, the Horizon hotel-casino is about to undergo a remodel.

Photo/LTN

Jon and David Park now own the Horizon and the cattle company. Neither is returning phone calls.

Horizon Stadium Theaters operators have been told they will be out of business at the end of the month. Reservations for the hotel are not being accepted beyond the night of March 30.

"We are in the dark," a reservation specialist said of his future and the property's after this month.

Warner Gaming officials declined to say anything other than a plan is being worked on.

A person close to the changes, but who could not speak on the record, *told Lake Tahoe News*, "They're looking to do some Hard Rock-related stuff with the Horizon, but some licensing stuff has to be worked out, including what to do with the corporate owned Hard Rock in Harveys."

Warner runs the Hard Rock hotel-casino in Las Vegas and is developing one in Sioux City, Iowa, among its other properties.

The Hard Rock inside Harveys is a concessionaire for the casino company. This means Caesars Entertainment, parent company of Harveys, does not have a say if a Hard Rock-themed hotel goes in next door. Nor have Harveys officials been approached about what Horizon plans to become.

The local Hard Rock, which has a restaurant and retail outlet, deferred comment to corporate PR, which deferred to Brookfield Real Estate Management Partners in New York. Multiple calls were not returned.

Nichols Engineering and Environmental Services in Stateline is working on the remodel, but would not comment about specifics.

"Both the county and TRPA will sign off on the permits. TRPA will authorize the changes under their conditional permit, and building department will authorize any construction required of building and fire codes – e.g., electrical, mechanical, plumbing, structural, etc," Mimi Moss, Douglas County

community development director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Jeff Cowen, with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, told *Lake Tahoe News*, "They are looking to do improvements at the property that are consistent with the South Shore Vision Plan." He said no application for a permit has been submitted.

The 539-room hotel has been on the decline for years. The gaming floor only has slot machines. The place is often like a ghost town.

The building opened in 1965 as Del Webb's Sahara-Tahoe. In its heyday Elvis Presley, Phyllis Diller and the Osmond Brothers would play there. It was like having a Las Vegas style hotel-casino in Lake Tahoe.

In 1983, it was renamed Del Webb's High Sierra. At that time it had a western theme.

Columbia Sussex took over the operations and renamed it the Horizon in 1990. LV Casino, a subsidiary of Columbia Sussex, took over operations in 2009.

Vineyard managers using dowsers to find water

By Jason Dearen, AP

ST. HELENA — With California in the grips of drought, farmers throughout the state are using a mysterious and some say foolhardy tool for locating underground water: dowsers, or water witches.

Practitioners of dowsing use rudimentary tools — usually

copper sticks or wooden “divining rods” that resemble large wishbones – and what they describe as a natural energy to find water or minerals hidden deep underground.

While state and federal water scientists disapprove of dowsing, California “witchers” are busy as farmers seek to drill more groundwater wells due to the state’s record drought that persists despite recent rain.

The nation’s fourth-largest wine maker, Bronco Wine Co., says it uses dowsers on its 40,000 acres of California vineyards, and dozens of smaller farmers and homeowners looking for wells on their property also pay for dowsers. Nationwide, the American Society of Dowsters, Inc. boasts dozens of local chapters, which meet annually at a conference.

“It’s kind of bizarre. Scientists don’t believe in it, but I do and most of the farmers in the valley do,” said Marc Mondavi, a vineyard owner whose family has been growing grapes and making wine since the mid-20th century in the Napa Valley.

Mondavi doesn’t just believe in dowsing, he practices it.

On a recent afternoon, standing in this family’s Charles Krug vineyard holding two copper divining rods, Mondavi walked slowly forward through the dormant vines.

After about 40 feet, the rods quickly crossed and Mondavi – a popular dowser in the world famous wine region– stopped. “This is the edge of our underground stream,” he said during the demonstration. Mondavi said he was introduced to “witching” by the father of an old girlfriend, and realized he had a proclivity for the practice.

After the valley’s most popular dowser died in recent years, Mondavi has become the go-to water witch in Napa Valley. He charges about \$500 per site visit, and more, if a well he discovers ends up pumping more than 50 gallons per minute.

With more farmers relying on groundwater to irrigate crops, Mondavi's phone has been ringing often as growers worry about extended years of dryness.

He had six witching jobs lined up over a recent weekend, three homes whose springs were running dry and three vineyards. It's so popular that he's even created a line of wines called "The Divining Rod" that will be sold nationwide this year.

While popular, scientists say dowsers are often just lucky, looking for water in places where it's already known to likely exist.

"There's no scientific basis to dowsing. If you want to go to a palm reader or a mentalist, then you're the same person who's going to go out and hire a dowser," said Tom Ballard, a hydrogeologist with Taber Consultants, a geological engineering firm based in West Sacramento.

"The success is really an illusion. In most places you're going to be able to drill and find some water," he said.

Still, the consistent interest in water witches nationwide even spurred The U.S. Geological Survey to officially weigh in on the fairly harmless practice.

Dowsing has not held up well under scientific scrutiny, the USGS said, adding that dowsers are often successful in areas where groundwater is abundant.

"The natural explanation of 'successful' water dowsing is that in many areas water would be hard to miss. The dowser commonly implies that the spot indicated by the rod is the only one where water could be found, but this is not necessarily true," the survey said in its report.

Christopher Bonds, senior engineering geologist for the state Department of Water Resources, said his agency does not advocate using witchers.

“DWR is an advocate for having qualified and licensed water professionals locate groundwater resources using established scientific methods,” Bonds said in an email.

Don’t tell that to John Franzia, co-owner of Bronco Wine Co., the nation’s fourth-largest wine producer based on sales. It makes wine under hundreds of labels, including the famous “Two Buck Chuck.”

Bronco also owns more vineyard land in California than anyone else, and when it needs a new well there’s a good chance a dowser will be employed.

Franzia said the company uses many technologies to find water on its 40,000-acres, but turns to dowsers often and with great success.

“I’ve used witchers for probably the last 15-to-20 years,” Franzia said. “Seems like the witchers do the better job than the guys with all the electrical equipment. I believe in them.”

Rebuilding iconic engines a passion for Reno resident

By AP

RENO -- In a lifetime spent under the hood, Reno’s Everett Adams has quietly built an encyclopedic knowledge of engines and a museum’s worth of cars, boats, airplanes and memorabilia.

Adams, 80, has had a hand in the restoration and recreations of some world famous motorized machines – ranging from George

Whittell's famed boat the Thunderbird to the around-the-world-winning Thomas Flyer automobile to the 1911 Renault Town Car in which Kate Winslett and Leonardo DiCaprio famously made out in during the James Cameron film, "The Titanic."

Adams and his crew at Adams' Custom Engines on Glendale Avenue built a replica of the Renault that went down with the Titanic in only 60 days. Adams was in Baja, Mexico during the filming of the movie, even getting a bit part as a chauffeur in the film.



The Thunderbird is one of the engine's Everett Adams has rebuilt. Photo/LTN file

"It was quite an experience," said Adams, who has numerous great experiences since moving to Reno in 1957 to go to work as a Ferrari mechanic for Bill Harrah. He also built engines and was the crew chief for Harrah's racing hydroplane, the Tahoe Miss; worked as a crew chief for Indy cars; and worked as a mechanic at Harrah's Automobile Collection until 1965 when he left and started Adams Custom Engines.

It's safe to say his business is largely a well-kept secret. The company has never advertised itself, instead relying on word-of-mouth recommendations from one car person to the next.

The name is also a bit of a misnomer, because the company does much more than just engines. It rebuilds and restores classic vehicles, often from the ground up, often hand-crafting parts

that are impossible to find. It also has a “modern side,” where it works on contemporary vehicles.

The business has completed more than 380 body-off vehicles over the years, meaning the body is taken off the frame and the vehicle is restored from the ground up. Each of those vehicles is documented in photo albums that Adams keeps in his office.

Almost 50 years later, it is still a labor of love for Adams, who said he still enjoys being in the shop and the fabrication area where parts are refurbished, restored or built from scratch. Through the years, the shop has created its own molds and dyes for parts that are hard or simply impossible to find anymore.

Adams has also amassed a huge collection of manuals, books, magazines and other materials that can help he and his staff in any project brought to them – from Rolls Royce and Ferrari to Corvettes to classic cars of any vintage.

“We’re just now organizing our books and moving them to one of the other warehouses, which we’re converting into a library,” he said. “We’re going to have a research section with probably 1,500 volumes.”

When completed, the research library will also be a bit of a museum with displays on the history of the business, vintage posters, memorabilia and ephemera that Adams has accumulated through the years.

When it’s completed, the plan is to have the research library available to car enthusiasts.

For Adams, who still enjoys driving the 1932 Ford he bought for \$25 in 1949, it’s about sharing a love and a passion for all things mechanical.

“We’ve had a lot of fun,” he said. “I’ve had a lot of

enjoyment out of this.”

SnowGlobe promoter wants contract, more from city

By Kathryn Reed

SnowGlobe promoters want a multi-year contract and for the city to pony up more money.

The South Lake Tahoe City Council on March 4 will talk about whether the reported \$6 million the three-day music festival brings into the region is worth the trade-offs.

2013 was the third year the event has been staged at the Lake Tahoe Community College ball fields on Dec. 29-31.

“Once the field is replaced, we don’t recommend coming back to that field,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The field is likely to be replaced in three years at a cost of about \$500,000. The city has been setting aside money to replace it and has about 75 percent of what it needs in the bank. A large portion of the money comes from Measure S/R dollars, the recreation measure.

Snow actually causes more damage to the artificial turf field than an event like SnowGlobe. And last year was the first time the field was partially covered to prevent wear and tear.

Chad Donnelly, SnowGlobe promoter, wants the city to pay \$25,000 in promotional expenses, pickup some transportation costs, and pay for garbage removal.

Donnelly did not return a phone call. It is not known how much he makes off the concert. The cheapest three-day tickets for 2013 were \$149. It's estimated 10,000 to 12,000 people attend the concert. Most do so all three days.

Donnelly has told the city 94 percent of the concertgoers are from outside the area. He bases this on ZIP codes from credit cards used to purchase tickets. From there he extrapolated that \$2 million is being spent by attendees on lodging and \$4 million on other things.

Kerry said she agrees with those figures.

"They definitely drive money into the local economy," Kerry said.

But she added that the business community might want offer to help since they have benefited tremendously two of the three years because there was so little snow to draw people to town.

Lake Tahoe Community College will also have to weigh in on any contract because they own half the field. In addition, the physical education building is used, as is the parking lot.

Even if an agreement can be reached for this year and the next couple years, a long-term solution needs to be found if SnowGlobe is going to stay on the South Shore.

Lake Tahoe Airport is out of the question based on FAA regulations. Stateline casinos have said they need the parking that time of year so the answer is "no". Heavenly is a definite "no". The parking lot at any Lake Tahoe Unified School District property is a "no" because alcohol sales would not be allowed.

Camp Richardson and Bijou Community Park have not been ruled out.

The other alternative is after five or six years of Donnelly branding SnowGlobe enough people might attend no matter the

date, meaning that another time of year could be found to bring the event to South Lake Tahoe.

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Note: The South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting on March 4 starts at 9am at Lake Tahoe airport.

Republicans split on dividing California

By Molly K. Hooper and Jasmine Sachar, *The Hill*

Republican lawmakers in Congress are lukewarm on a conservative-backed proposal to split California into six states.

Republicans from the Golden State say they are watching conservative venture capitalist Tim Draper's effort with "great interest." But few are endorsing it.

In a recent survey of the California congressional delegation, *The Hill* found that Democrats oppose the proposition, while Republicans are generally divided. While California GOP lawmakers agree that the most populous state in the U.S. is "ungovernable" as is, they would prefer to consider a more conservative division of the state.

Read the whole story

Tricks on skis not limited to the slopes

By Aidan Lewis, BBC News

Slopestyle skiers made a successful debut at the Winter Olympics in Sochi, eliciting gasps with their stunts and jumps. Many miles away in northern parts of the U.S., a growing number of skiers use city settings to perform and film similar tricks.

They scope out urban landscapes to find rails to skid down and walls to slam their skis against. They wait for schools and libraries to close, sometimes emerging only under cover of darkness. They play cat and mouse with the police.

The skiers say that cities allow them to be more creative, and offer greater variety than resorts.

Read the whole story

STMS students express themselves in writing

By Kathryn Reed

Fifteen South Tahoe Middle School students proved their generation could express themselves in more than 140

characters. And they can do so about serious topics.

Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra honored the students last week at the annual Writing Festival awards breakfast. These aren't all overachievers. Some are English learners, other are average students. But what they have in common is they are the top writers out of a school of nearly 800 students.

Most of the first-place winners chose to read their essays. They did so in a room full of Soroptimists, parents, siblings and grandparents.

Eighth-grader Leah Marino was the last to go, but seemed to captivate the audience the most with her essay on the need for schools to be a safe place for students. She advocated for having surveillance cameras in schools to thwart the threat of violence.

"It's only a matter of time before it becomes normal," Marino said of school shootings.

She's not worried about stomping on the privacy of students.

"What privacy is there to invade at school?" Marino asked.

Marino said the cameras would curtail the use of guns, fights and drugs.

Seventh-grader Alexis Andersen wrote about the need to have a teen curfew.



Alexis Andersen talks about teen curfews while Soroptimist Wendy David listens. Photo/LTN

“Is it better to be at a party or get good grades and have a successful life?” she asked.

Sixth-graders McKenna Beisel and Emma Aaron tackled the topic of homework.

“I strongly believe kids don’t have time for homework,” Beisel said.

She questioned the importance of hours of homework after spending the day in school. Beisel added that homework takes away from time for sports and family.

While Aaron believes in homework, she said there is such thing as too much.

“It’s important teachers give out learning work and not busy work,” Aaron said.

The Writing Festival winners are:

6th Grade High Point Program

- Diana Chavez – first
- Saintychelle Bascao – second

6th Grade Language Arts

- Emma Aaron – first
- Logan Chapman – second
- Anne Edwards – third

7th Grade Read 180 Program

- Danny Guillen – first
- Ervin Espino – second

7th Grade Language Arts:

- Alexis Anderson – first
- Chase Cunningham – second
- Riley Turner – third

8th Grade Read 180 Program

- McKenna Beisel – first
- Faith Brown – second

8th Grade Language Arts

- Leah Marino – first
- Mia Idzorek – second
- Bailey Segers – third.

Academy would be wrong to

snub DiCaprio

By Jeremy Miller

It's finally here! The Oscar season draws to a close Sunday night, with many of us sitting and watching Hollywood's elite gather for the 86th Academy Awards.

Of the last five years, this year is by and far the most unpredictable.

This year we have an extremely widespread variety, especially when it comes to the Best Picture category. Nominated films include Spike Jonze's "Her", "12 Years a Slave", "American Hustle", "Gravity" and of course Martin Scorsese's "The Wolf of Wall Street". Paul Greengrass' "Captain Phillips" also snuck into the running despite an early release in the season. When you put a guy like Tom Hanks into an inspirational, action packed powerhouse like this one, you can be sure you'd see it nominated for something, but with heavy hitters in every best picture nominee it's not as if he's got an easy competition.



Leonardo DiCaprio is up for best actor for his performance in "Wolf of Wall Street".

Spike Jonze's "Her", the semi-futuristic love story involving

a lonely man and his operating system, has won the heart of just about every critic in America. While it's an underdog compared to the season's blockbusters, I believe it has a strong chance. I also happened to be biased toward the film, as I'm a total sap for quirky indie romance flicks.

The real competition in my opinion is between Alfonso Cuarón's "Gravity", "12 Years a Slave" and "American Hustle". Many think that Scorsese will walk away with a best picture Oscar; however I think that his film "The Wolf of Wall Street" was nothing more than a new-age remake of his classic "Goodfellas".

The Academy Awards also tend to be heavily political. It's as if there's an unspoken agreement that a film can't win based on certain principles of which "Wolf" definitely violates.

"Gravity" is a heavy contender as the film takes place in space and was an absolute masterpiece in terms of aesthetics and special effects. Sandra Bullock definitely takes away some of the power as I feel her performance was lacking, especially compared to co-star and legend George Clooney by her side.

"12 Years a Slave" is definitely a likely winner as its subject content is what the Academy lives for – controversial, powerful, educational, and a thick emotional backbone.

"American Hustle" is also the talk of the town as its edginess and bold plot set it apart from its competition. It's in a category all its own really as a period piece that's packed full of drama, drugs, sex appeal and an all-star cast.

The best actor category is another unknown for those of us trying to predict the winners. The nominees are Christian Bale ("American Hustle"), Chiwetel Ejiofor ("12 Years a Slave"), Bruce Dern ("Nebraska") Matthew McConaughey ("Dallas Buyers Club"), and last but certainly not least, Leonardo DiCaprio for his performance in "Wolf of Wall Street".

I was a huge fan of "Nebraska", and I absolutely love Bruce Dern. I feel he'll get snubbed because the film didn't have nearly as much opportunity for real power as the rest. McConaughey definitely pushed himself to the limits physically for his role, but as far as just all around acting, he delivered but didn't blow me away. Christian Bale is one of my all-time faves, and I have a certain affinity for him as I am a huge Batman fan, so I'd be OK with him taking home the "W". Chiwetel Ejiofor has always been a talented and often overseen actor. His performance warrants an Oscar, but honestly, because the Academy is so political, I almost don't want him to win just based on that.

Now, as many of you may know, DiCaprio has had a rough streak at the Oscars. He's been snubbed more times than anyone in the last 20 years. He was looked over for his most notable roles in "The Departed" and "Blood Diamond" and really I just want the guy to win an Oscar. He's deserved one for years and I think that finally the Academy will take an honest look at his talents and give him the credit that he's deserved for so long.

As far as the Oscar for best actress in a leading role, I believe it is between two of the five contenders. It's between Amy Adams for her role in "Hustle" and Sandra Bullock for "Gravity". As previously stated, I don't believe Bullock really brought the power, but I could see how she'd be nominated out of respect for the torture of shooting a movie that takes place in space. It's not easy to sit in front of a green screen and act as though there's no gravity, being suspended by wires all day long. If it were up to me, and I based it on talent alone, Adams would win it by a long shot.

The last category I'll discuss is for best director. The nominees that have a chance are David O. Russell for "American Hustle", Alfonso Cuarón for "Gravity", and Alexander Payne for "Nebraska". Payne definitely has a shot as almost all of his films bring him home a bucket of awards. His depiction of

loneliness and familial bond was near perfect in his film “Nebraska” and though not a blockbuster with a shut out weekend at the box office, his film was moving and powerful and beautifully depicted. “Hustle” was a good time, sure, but best director material? I don’t think so. It wasn’t unique in the way its story was told, and the camera work was so-so. Alfonso broke the ceiling of science fiction with newly developed camera techniques and technologies and that right there is worthy of an Oscar.

All that being said who are my official picks for Sunday night?:

- Best Picture – “Her”
- Best Director – Alfonso Cuarón for “Gravity”
- Best Actor in a Leading Role – Leonardo DiCaprio for “Wolf of Wall Street”
- Best Actress in a Leading Role – Amy Adams for “American Hustle”
- Actress in a supporting role – Jennifer Lawrence for “American Hustle”
- Actor in a supporting role – Jonah Hill for “Wolf of Wall Street”.

I would like to end this piece by saying that if DiCaprio gets snubbed one more time by the Academy, I am going to flip out and lose faith in the members of the Academy. Though the movie wasn’t my favorite, he deserves it, just give him one. Enjoy the Oscars on ABC at 4pm. See you on the red carpet.

For a full list of nominees and any other information on the 86th Academy Awards, go online.

South Lake Tahoe resident Jeremy Miller has more movie reviews online.

2013 among the worst years for human rights

By Daniel Rothman, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – With a Syrian chemical weapons attack that killed more than 1,000 civilians, violent crackdowns against protesters in Turkey and Ukraine and a string of anti-gay laws from Russia to Uganda, human rights abuses last year ranked among the worst in years, the State Department concluded Thursday in its annual review of more than 200 countries and territories.

“The year 2013 may well be known for some of the most egregious atrocities in recent memory,” Uzra Zeya, acting assistant secretary of State for democracy, human rights and labor, said during a briefing Thursday.

In addition to highlighting violence in Syria, Secretary of State John Kerry, who also attended the briefing, pointed to democratic back-sliding in several nations that threw off dictatorships during the “Arab Spring,” including Egypt.

[Read the whole story](#)

85 died 50 years ago in worst

Tahoe plane crash

By Bill Kingman and Kathryn Reed

The worst plane crash in Lake Tahoe's history was 50 years ago on March 1, 1964, when all 85 people on board the Paradise Airlines flight died.

They were coming from the Bay Area to Lake Tahoe Airport, then known as Tahoe Valley Airport, in South Lake Tahoe when the plane struck Genoa Peak.

Weather at Tahoe was snow, alternating with clearing, then back to snow. It was heavy at times.

The captain had aborted his first landing approach due to near-zero visibility and then tried to loop around. But he failed to clear the trees atop Genoa Peak.

By early afternoon, it was apparent that the Paradise Airlines propeller-powered Lockheed Constellation in bound from San Jose to Tahoe was missing.

Search craft spotted the wreckage at the crest of Genoa Peak the next morning. Snow covered much of the debris.



This is a Lockheed Constellation at Tahoe Valley Airport in 1963.
Photo/Dave Borges

The peak has an elevation of 8,675 feet. Speculation is that had the plane been 300 feet higher it could have cleared the peak.

All 81 passengers and four crew members, including the airline's chief pilot, died.

Another pilot warned the Paradise of icing at 12,000 feet, according to Aviation Safety Network.

The cause of the crash was ruled, "The pilot's deviation from prescribed [visual flight rules] flight procedures in attempting a visual landing approach in adverse weather conditions. This resulted in an abandoned approach and geographical disorientation while flying below the minimum altitude prescribed for operations in mountainous areas."

There was no tower at the airport then. One was built later, but today it is not operational.

The Civil Aeronautics Board grounded the airline.

Mike Ritter would ride motorcycles up the dirt roads north of Kingsbury Grade in the early 1970s. In 1973, he came across the crash site.



The crash site in October 2013. Photo/Chuck Westby

"The crash site was fascinating, particularly to a former Air Force radar controller who'd read his share of aircraft accident reports and even participated in a few," Ritter told

Lake Tahoe News. "The crash site was about 10 years old by that time, but we could stand on the ridge looking west and see the path of the aircraft as it crashed through the tree tops, cutting them off. It appeared, from that path of broken tree tops, that the aircraft hit about 30 feet below the ridge and spread a debris field over the top and down the east side of the mountain. With the exception of what looked to be a very large landing gear strut, most of identifiable pieces of the plane had been removed. But the bushes on the east slope were covered with small deteriorating scraps of blue and grey plastic material, very likely upholstery covers and/or cabin trim. At the peak of the ridge, centered on the impact site, visitors, probably over a period of time, had built a rock cairn, close to 6-feet tall and personal property that folks had found around the crash site – wallets, shoes, glasses etc. – had been placed on the rocks of the cairn. I was impressed with how respectfully the site seemed to have been treated."

As a runner he revisited the site on occasion. Eventually the debris was removed or nature covered it.