

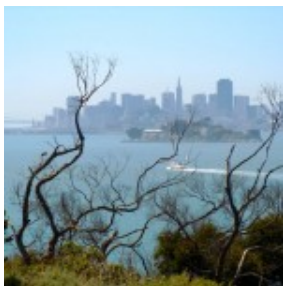
Angel Island in the middle of SF Bay lives up to its name

By Kathryn Reed

ANGEL ISLAND – “Not a bad view.”

It was the mantra for the day and the reason we barely made the 5-mile loop in our allotted one-hour bike rental time period.

Views of San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge, Bay Bridge, Alcatraz – it’s all so breathtaking from the perimeter trail around Angel Island.



San Francisco
from Angel
Island.

Photos/Kathryn
Reed

I think I was a kid with my parents and a group of friends the last time I was on this island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. It was Sue’s first trip.

If I learned about the history of the island those many years ago, it was forgotten. Reading “Shanghai Girls” earlier this year gave me a glimpse into life of people trying to immigrate to the United States in the last century who were stopped at Angel Island before being allowed on the mainland.

On the ferry from The City a group of women said they were going to the island to retrace their family heritage.

Along the perimeter trail is the immigration station. (We had to walk back to it because we ran out of time on the bikes.)

Walking through the compound, reading about the conditions, seeing pictures – it's one of those times when I don't like being white. It's one of those times when I wonder why our history books don't teach us more. It's one of those times when I wonder if we'll ever embrace our similarities instead of continuing to point out our differences.

Asians were separated from Europeans – and treated much worse. Men and women – even if married – were separated.

Barbed wire surrounded the dormitories – and still does – even though these were not criminals and even though this is an island.

The island has a rich history. It was used during the Civil War in 1863 as an Army outpost in case the Confederate ships sailed into the bay.

In 1954, it was one of 19 Nike Missile sites in the Bay Area.

Today it is a state park.

Old buildings are scattered about. Some you can go into. Park workers also live on the island.

Ferries leave from a couple terminals in San Francisco, as well as Tiburon and Alameda. Our roundtrip ticket cost \$16 each. The hour bike rental was \$10 each. We could have paid \$35 each for a half-day rental.

Although it's bound to be cold, camping is allowed on the island. With the views so incredible during the day, they must be even more breathtaking at night.

We chose not to bag a peak on this trip. Mount Livermore is the highest point on the island at 781 feet.

Back in The City

It's Fourth of July weekend in San Francisco and it's hopping. The Marriott on Fourth Street is a central location for all things we have planned. Walking and easy to use public transit mean not having to drive for three days.

Chinatown provides a shopping opportunity for ingredients I can't get in Tahoe.

North Beach provides outdoor seating at a fun Italian restaurant.

The Giants don't win – but there's never a bad day at the ballpark.

Before the game we catch some rays and relaxation on the lawn at Yerba Buena Gardens.

The only disappointment is the fireworks that night. It's hard to beat the ones on the South Shore.

Near the Ferry Building is an outdoor art fair as well as a zip line. It's set up across the asphalt and above the tourists who hope the cables hold.

Everything I love about cities – the energy, the constant choices of things to do, the abundance of delicious food, reliable public transit, how easy it is to find things – sometimes I miss all of that.

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USFS expands offerings at Lake Tahoe recreation sites

By Kathryn Reed

Hunger pangs in the outdoors are never a good thing, but especially when the cooler is empty or one was never packed.

Tahoe Treats, a division of California Land Management, is operating nine concessions throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin for the U.S. Forest Service.

“The limit is when you change the character of the National Forest,” Don Lane, USFS recreation forester, said as to what will be offered. “We think there is so much demand in the basin for these kinds of little amenities.”



Tahoe Treats trailer at Pope Beach is steps from the sand.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lane said it's a careful balance between giving people what they want and not overdeveloping recreation sites, even if the structures are temporary.

“We want to make sure when people go (to the beaches) with

their families that they don't have an overwhelming sense of commercialism," Lane said.

Getting into the powerboat or personal watercraft business is not something Lane foresees happening; instead, letting the marinas around the lake handle that aspect of recreation.

Larry Chapman has his Tahoe Treats trailers at Pope Beach and Inspiration Point on the South Shore. He's working on getting one in at Nevada Beach, but is having to muddle through red taped because the state doesn't allow food trailers for extended periods of time. The plan is for it to be operating in mid-August.

Pizza is what people are ordering most often, though nachos are a big seller, too, Chapman said.

For people wanting to cool down, an array of drinks is available. So are ice cream bars and shaved ice.

One thing the Inspiration Point cart has that the other doesn't is chili cheese dogs because it has warmers inside. And with no other food options between Camp Richardson and Tahoma, this cart can often have a line in the parking lot.

Because it took so long for summer to arrive in Lake Tahoe, workers were selling coffee, hot chocolate and tea at the start of the season.

While these are called carts, they are really trailers that hook up to the back of a vehicle.

Besides food offerings that have cropped up in the last couple years and that are expanding, kayak rentals are another convenience on Forest Service beaches.

Chapman is having Steve Lannoy with Kayak Tahoe operate the water sport concessionaire. Rentals are available at Pope, Baldwin and Nevada beaches.

Lannoy pays Chapman a fee and Chapman pays the Forest Service a percentage of his sales.

Lane said it's easier to hire a concessionaire to operate facilities because they have the expertise as well as the manpower.

California Land Management has been working in the basin since 1985. The company has been running the Forest Service owned campsite at Fallen Leaf Lake for years. They also run the William Kent Campground in Tahoe City and Meeks Bay on the West Shore for the Forest Service.

First bi-state park in U.S. ready for hikers, bikers, horses

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Making sure there is enough water pressure to fight a fire had been holding up the opening of Van Sickle Bi-State Park. Not anymore. The park officially opens today.

Considering part of the 725-acre park encompasses some of the 673 acres charred in the 2002 Gondola Fire, adequate fire suppression capabilities are a big deal – as it is for any forested area.



Sue, Brenda
and Roni
straddle the
state line at
Van Sickle Bi-
State Park.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Even though the park was not officially open, people were still accessing the area that is walking distance from the main bed base on the South Shore at the state line.

It is destined to be one of the must-do hikes in the Lake Tahoe Basin because of the easy accessibility to some incredible views of the emerald water. The only thing that would make the scenery better is to obliterate some of the built environment, but that isn't likely to happen any time soon.

An offshoot, though not yet marked, leads to a vista that captures the sprawling South Shore. Boats bob along in the water. Granite boulders invite one to lounge a while.

With views like this not far from the trail that starts from the upper parking area, it means for those who don't want to or can't hike far, they too, will get to enjoy the natural beauty.

Mount Tallac is the dominant feature besides the lake. With so much snow still on the mountaintops, it's easy to pick out other peaks across the lake like Rubicon.

Massive sugar pines dangle like earrings from trees.

Hiking farther, the trail cuts through part of the 9-year-old burn area – a fire started from a reckless smoker who tossed a cigarette butt out the Heavenly Gondola.

Wildflowers, while not in abundance, are scattered on both sides of the trail.

Initially Van Sickle was supposed to be run by the parks systems in both states. The entrance sign makes it obvious that is not happening. Nevada Division of State Parks and California Tahoe Conservancy are recognized as the operators. This is the only park in the country to cover two states.

California State Parks is in such dire financial straits, what with 70 of 208 parks slated for closure, money for a new one was not to be found.

One advantage of California State Parks not being involved is that dogs are allowed on leash.

Work on the trail that connects to the Tahoe Rim Trail is ongoing, with volunteer crews out in force on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

“As for finishing the trail connector, we are hoping to finish it this year,” Mary Bennington, TRTA executive director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

If it weren't for her nonprofit organization, the park would not open at all this summer.

A couple small signs say the trail is not open beyond the waterfall. Nothing at the waterfall says stop, but the trail clearly deteriorates about a half mile farther. As Brenda said, it looks like someone dragged a pick behind her to designate where the trail should be built.

This park was a dream of the late Jack Van Sickle who donated

more than two-thirds of the land for the park. His old barn sits in the day use area, as do smaller buildings.

Besides hikers, the park is open to equestrians and mountain bikers. The gate will be open when snow isn't on the ground; and then from dawn to dusk.

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe heading east on Highway 50, turn right on Heavenly Village Way. The park entrance is on Montreal Avenue at Heavenly Village Way. The day use parking is up a short ways, with parking for trail access farther up the road.

A walking path off the driveway entrance is to the right. Foot access is also farther east off the Loop Road behind Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

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Lake Tahoe fire districts question where money from Nev. Fire Safe Council is

By Anne Knowles

The Nevada Fire Safe Council is undergoing an audit after Lake Tahoe Basin fire protection districts complained they had not been reimbursed by the organization for hazardous fuels reduction work done as far back as two years ago.

The NFSC, a nonprofit that procures grants and provides funding for fuels reduction projects and other fire safety

work, has hired Muckel Anderson CPAs, a Reno-based accounting firm, to audit the last three years. The NFSC's last audit, completed in January 2009, was for 2006.

The district complaints also triggered a series of payments from the NFSC that Andrew List, the Carson City group's executive director, said brings them almost up to date.



Money for work done in April at Lake Christopher in South Lake Tahoe has not all been paid.
Photo/LTN

"We are in the current calendar year," said List, meaning the outstanding balance owed is for projects completed in 2011. "We're waiting to receive grants money and we're working on it."

List said in the last week the NFSC sent out about \$500,000 to the various fire protection districts and is now less than \$200,000 in arrears.

The fire districts say the amount owed is higher.

"It was in the ballpark of \$1 million and as much as two years behind," Duane Whitelaw, fire chief of North Tahoe Fire District, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The North Tahoe Fire District received a check for about \$100,000, said Whitelaw, but is still owed another \$200,000. Lake Valley Fire District received about \$80,000, with another \$70,000 still outstanding, according to Gareth Harris, Lake Valley's fire chief.

Mike Brown, fire chief for the North Lake Tahoe Fire District, said the district is awaiting payment for work done in 2010.

Asked if the NFSC has explained the delay in payments, Whitelaw said, "Not to our satisfaction."

The fire chiefs said fuels reduction work is ongoing and has not been affected by the reimbursement problems, but each said they would like to see the money faster.

"None of us want to float the money on our general ledger," Whitelaw said. "We're all anxious to get paid."

"We'd like to get paid quicker, and we'd love to see the process streamlined," Lake Valley's Harris said. "But it hasn't held us up."

Harris said Lake Valley fire crews were back at work in the area after spending five weeks in Arizona helping with the state's historic wildfires.

In an unusual case, the NFSC has declined payment on an approved project.

The Lake Christopher project went close to 75 percent over budget, said List, and the NFSC board of directors has asked the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department for more information explaining the project's cost overrun.

List said they hoped to resolve the issue when more information is provided.

"I have a lot of respect for the contractor" on the Lake Christopher project, said List. "But we're trying to see why

the project went so far over. It's a mystery."

Ray Zachau, South Lake Tahoe fire marshal, said the original estimate for the 48-acre project called for removal of 30 tons of material per acre, but once the contractor started working that grew to about 69 tons per acre. He said they gave the contractor the go-ahead to complete the project.

"We've been denied payment on work already done," Zachau said. "We're owed about \$170,000."

Zachau is concerned the NFSC is moving beyond what he sees as its charter to act as a financial agent for the fire districts into more of a technical role managing the projects.

"They've hijacked the process," Zachau told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The NFSC's audit was initiated last month and should be completed before mid-August, according to List. It will cover 2008, 2009 and 2010.

The NFSC receives the bulk of its money from U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, and has spent about \$5 million annually for the last three years, List said.

The Internal Revenue Service requires that a 501(c)(3), the IRS designation for a nonprofit, conduct an audit for any year in which it spends \$500,000 or more in federal grant money.

Asked why the group has not kept up with its audits, Joan Presley, chairman of the NFSC's volunteer board of directors and Reno fire marshal, said it had hired a California firm 18 months ago that never completed the audit, then had trouble finding another firm.

"It was an oversight," she said. "We made a mistake."

Action sports camp turning Boreal into year-round resort

By Katherine E. Hill

Boreal Mountain Resort is transforming itself into a year-round destination for freestylers from all sports. Known for its terrain parks attracting freeriders and freeskiers each winter, Boreal is hoping to capture more of the freestyle market with an indoor facility that will serve as part-camp, part-training ground for skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, BMX riding and cheer-gymnastics.

The 33,000-square-foot facility is under construction next to the ticket windows, with plans to open the center – dubbed Woodward Tahoe – next summer, according to Boreal General Manager Jody Churich. The goal of the camp is to provide an action sports training center to youth and to provide Boreal with year-round business.



Boreal is becoming more than a ski resort.

“It’s the economy of it ... it’s very much the point of it to fill in the valleys” when there is no snow, Churich told *Lake*

Tahoe News.

The project also is helping to fill the valleys of the local economy with Truckee-based J&S Construction building the camp. Churich estimates that the project would employ between 50 and 75 people during construction.

Churich said Boreal had been looking at the Camp Woodward program, based in Woodward, Pa., for about a year before deciding to contract with the company to build an instructional facility at the resort.

"Copper Mountain built in 2009 and we're owned by the same company," she said. "I looked at it and it's a niche very heavily skewed in action sports and terrain parks." She said that makes it a perfect fit for Boreal.

Powdr Corp., which owns Boreal and Soda Springs resorts on Donner Summit, recently acquired and partnered with Camp Woodward, Churich said. She said the decision to build Woodward Tahoe at Boreal was made before Powdr Corp. purchased Woodward.

Woodward Tahoe will be open for about 10 months of the year, Churich said, with closures likely in September and October for maintenance. The center will offer weeklong programs in a camp-like setting for the summer months, while also offering half- and full-day programs open to everyone the rest of the year.

The camps are geared toward action sports with an emphasis of freestyle instruction and will focus on snowboarding, skiing, skateboard, BMX and cheer-gymnastics. The programs will be open to kids as young as 7 to 8 years up to 17 years of age. The camps will be tailored according to age and discipline. The weeklong camps also will offer onsite lodging at existing facilities at Boreal.



Woodward Tahoe
will open at
Boreal in
2012.

When completed, Woodward Tahoe will feature an indoor skate park, ski-ride ramps, trampolines, a digital media area and foam pits. The foam pits are used for practicing freestyle maneuvers for all of the sports and contain large foam blocks that young athletes can use to practice grabs and other tricky maneuvers before trying them on the slopes or the parks, Churich said. As well, there will be an outdoor park and pipe for riding in the summer.

Churich said they believe there's a market for more youth-based action sports camps and noted that a skiing and snowboarding camp offered in June at Boreal was a success.

In addition to facilities at Cooper Mountain in Colorado and the camp in Pennsylvania, Camp Woodward operates camps geared toward action sports in Wisconsin, Tehachapi, and Beijing.

Boreal will be open for summer skiing and riding on July 23 with the Castle Peak quad chairlift running from 9am to 2pm, with a full terrain park and one run open. Beginner terrain will not be available, but rental equipment and food and beverages will be available. Tickets are \$25.

Gardeners show off what can be done in Lake Tahoe yards

By Kathryn Reed

Whimsical, practical, lush, inviting, colorful – that’s what people will find as they meander through the six gardens on the annual Lake Tahoe Historical Society Garden tour.

Concentrated mostly near the Y in South Lake Tahoe, the property owners have been working hard to get their gardens in tip-top shape for the July 31 event. With such a long, wet spring, it means not as much color in some yards because blooms are late this year. But it also means irises are still out, which is unusual.



The
Piscitellis
have more than
plants
decorating
their yard.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

“Everything is late,” Lynne Bajuk, with the historical society, said walking through one of the gardens during the preview.

Three of the six gardens belong to people who are or were

employed by Lake Tahoe Community College. A fourth LTCC gardener was to be on the tour, but Trout Creek flooded the yard, which prevented the homeowner from being able to participate.

A little bit of everything is presented this year. One yard in Tahoe Keys is an example of what can be done with an extremely small space. It's a good showpiece for people who don't want to spend much time in their yard.

Creeping thyme acts as a ground cover, lupine brings color, as will the ragosa when it blooms.

Another yard on the water is just the opposite – open, sunny, and more work. It's a bit more traditional, with several potted plants. Jim Duke said his back still hurts from all the bending over.

Vibrant orange poppies sprout from the rocks near the water's edge. Taking a peek from the dock, it would be a reason to paddle through the Keys – as kayakers were doing that day – to get a view of all the backyards along the canals.

Once the daises come out, this yard will be even more eye-catching.

Nearby, but not on the water, is a home in the Keys with a yard that definitely takes a lot of work.

Jim and Pam Jennett have lived here for eight years. It's impossible to tell they started with a dirt lot.

Jennifer Cressy with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District described their yard as a "classic cottage garden."

Erigonium – a purple thistle that looks like a miniature artichoke plant – is one of the more rare plants on the tour. The back is full of flowers, but not overdone.

"So much comes up naturally," Pam Jennett said. "We are always

needing to thin things. All of the columbine is volunteer.”

Bearded tongue dot the front yard, along with an array of other plants circling the lawn.

Tony and Shelley Piscitelli for 10 years have been working on various aspects of their yard.

“There are a lot of fun things in the yard,” Tony Piscitelli said as he took people from the front to the back.

Old bicycles and a Tonka truck have been incorporated into the yard in a decorative, creative manner. Reusing things is what they like to do.

A greenhouse helps be able to keep things alive through the winter and to be able to have color in their yard sooner than a lot of neighbors.

A couple miles away Becca Harper Cunningham also uses a greenhouse to work her magic. That’s the only way a lemon tree can survive in Lake Tahoe. She has the largest vegetable garden in the tour – with tomatoes that are already red, beans, broccoli, lettuce, asparagus and Swiss chard.

Her hollyhock is about 3-feet tall, but by August when it’s blooming will have doubled in size.

“This is all play. I have a hard time leaving the yard,” Cunningham said.

Tickets for the July 31 tour, which is the historical society’s main fundraiser, are \$20. They may be purchased at the museum (3058 Lake Tahoe Blvd.) or at Aspen Hollow, Nels Garden Center, Sun Basin and Tahoe Outdoor Living.

Music and refreshments will be served at the Lake Tahoe Community College demonstration garden.

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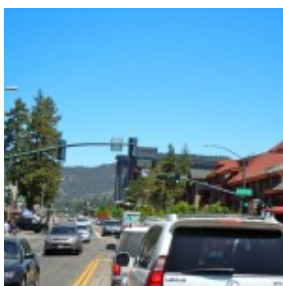
Players in both states developing South Shore vision

By Kathryn Reed

Taking a look at the South Shore it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out things must change or the area will be irrelevant to tourists.

Various stakeholders who want to revamp the area from Ski Run Boulevard on the California side to Kahle Drive on the Nevada side have put out a call to action. The state line is not an impediment, but instead viewed as nothing more than a traffic light along Highway 50.

"It benefits us if we work regionally," Lisa Granahan, economic vitality manager, in Douglas County said. A collaborative approach with more partners is also beneficial when it comes time to look for funding for specific plans.



Driving down
Highway 50
it's hard to
know the
recreation
opportunities
that abound on

the South
Shore.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

As South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony O'Rourke put it, "We are one market ... one destination. Tourists could care less about the state line."

Redevelopment attorney Lew Feldman is impressed so far with how things have evolved since last fall.

"The level of participation is extraordinary. It is a new day in terms of trying to achieve environmental and economic excellence," Feldman said.

Design Workshop's Aspen and Lake Tahoe offices have been massaging the vision that is starting to evolve. This week more clarity to the direction players want to go will come to light.

A two-day charette is scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday, with Wednesday being a working day. It is not open to the public.

Richard Shaw of Design Workshop says what will make this plan different than all the others sitting on shelves collecting dust is that it will have a vision for the South Shore out 25 to 30 years, with some ideas that can be implemented immediately. A working document should be completed this fall.

Starting in Douglas County

All of this talk of turning the economic and environmental tide around began in Douglas County. Knowing government cannot cure all that ails society, a partnership has been formed with private entities to help various regions in the county – with one person designated as the "champion" of a particular project.

Tahoe is one of 12 projects in the county.

Granahan said government can't do it alone. She said bringing the private sector on board makes sense because businesses have a lot to lose by not helping to improve the economy.

In the county's strategic plan it's about concepts more than it is specifics to provide more latitude and creativity.

At Lake Tahoe the "champion" is Mike Bradford, CEO of Lakeside Casino. He has assembled interested people – including Andrew Strain from Heavenly Mountain Resort, O'Rourke, Feldman, Douglas County officials, Embassy Suites, Edgewood Companies and others.

Bradford said, "The refrain coming back was the problem is we don't have a plan."

Gaming is no longer king and everyone wants recreation to be the leading tourism draw to the area. It's also one of the three components to the Lake Tahoe Prosperity Plan. (B Gorman with Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce did not return multiple calls.)

South Tahoe Alliance of Resorts (the former Gaming Alliance) is paying Design Workshop \$50,000 to come up with a plan.

"This town is dying. Someone needs to resuscitate it," Bradford said. "We need a discovery a day for tourists."

Finding consensus

"I'm not disagreeing the initial reason people travel to Tahoe is the lake," Shaw told *Lake Tahoe News*. "But the reality is when you are there, particularly on the South Shore, it's a struggle to find recreation opportunities. Short of high rises, there is almost no view opportunity."

He pointed out while locals and repeat visitors know where the public beaches are, it is near impossible for a first-time

visitor to find them. The same goes with mountain bike trails and other outdoor activities that the marketing gurus are telling them exist here.

Bradford simplified the goal of all of this – “To draw a picture of what Tahoe should be.”

While sitting in his casino’s restaurant Bradford readily admits the gaming model is no longer relevant.

“We never created a connectivity,” he says. “That is what we are focused on now. How we connect the product.”

The product is no longer what’s inside, but everything that is outside.

Feldman says it’s time “community character” is a factor in planning.

“This will help TRPA understand what the local jurisdictions and property owners in the Compact area believe is necessary and desirable to achieve environmental and economic excellence,” Feldman said.

(TRPA officials were not available for comment.)

What those involved in this process want is to show the bi-state regulatory agency there are other ways to accomplish environmental goals, which in turn will stimulate the economy. But change must come from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to make all of this a reality. Stakeholders are hoping to be influential as the Regional Plan update is being worked on and should be released late 2012.

So many people today speak to the built environment being horrible for the natural environment. This is because what was erected in the 1960s had little or no thought about sediment, what pollutes the lake and how runoff without treatment is not a good thing if Lake Tahoe is not to turn into a brown body of water.

“It’s a very risky and costly process to gain approval for a project (in the Lake Tahoe Basin),” Shaw said. “There is a conflict between the business model that can succeed and what development parameters are.”

Wagner wins celeb tourney; Sakic sinks hole-in-one

By Dan Hinxman, Reno Gazette-Journal

STATELINE – The best golfer at Edgewood Tahoe this past week didn’t play a single hole in the 22nd annual American Century Championship celebrity golf tournament.

But he did play a major role.

PGA Tour player David Berganio Jr., caddied for longtime friend Jack Wagner, and when Wagner’s big lead began to evaporate Sunday, Berganio helped steer him to victory.



Jack Wagner

“It’s a combination of friendship and a pro going, you know, ‘Hey, dude, work through this. You gotta work through this,’” Wagner said after eking out a three-point win over Romo. “‘You’re as good or better than anyone else out here on the greens. You’re the best putter by far in the tournament. Knock

it in.' ...

"Today I stayed pretty positive. That's a lot to do with David, by the way."

Wagner, who led throughout the tournament, had a 10-point lead through the first nine holes over playing partner Tony Romo, but Romo's six-point eagle on No. 11 closed the gap.

By the time the two reached the par-3 17th, Wagner's lead was down to two. He sank a 10-footer for birdie right after Romo missed his 12-foot birdie try, and then both players hit their second shot on 18 into Lake Laimbeer. Romo needed to make about a 30-footer to force Wagner to get up and down in three shots, but he missed and Wagner claimed his second ACC title in five years.

It put the finishing touches on a day of quality golf, with Wagner shooting a three-under 69 and Romo shooting a 66. Wagner finished with 80 points, the second-highest total in the tournament's modified Stableford scoring history (since 2003).

Wagner also became the first golfer since 2003 to go wire-to-wire, capturing the \$125,000 check as the tournament celebrated a record weeklong crowd of 40,156, about 6.5 percent higher than the previous record set last year.

Wagner's check was tiny, though, compared to the one Joe Sakic received. The retired NHL star aced the 167-yard 17th hole to win \$500,000, nearly the amount of the entire purse (\$600,000). The ace was worth \$1 million, half of which goes to the Lance Armstrong charity, Livestrong.

Read the whole story

South Dakota – a land of family, history, endless fun

By Kathryn Reed

CUSTER STATE PARK, S.D. – Where the buffalo roam, granite presidents dominate, Indians try to assimilate and families reunite.

South Dakota. It's my home and I've never lived there. That's what happens when your parents are high school sweethearts, your three sisters are born there and family reunions are scheduled every five years.

And I'm OK with that.



Buffalo enjoy
the grass
inside Custer
State Park.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

The Black Hills is gorgeous, with a ruggedness and beauty that conjure images of the Sierra and Rockies – it's all the granite and pines.

And just like the more famous destinations, the Black Hills is a recreation spot for all things outdoors.

One morning is spent hiking to the top of Harney Peak –

elevation 7,242. It's the highest peak west of the Pyrenees. The 6-mile roundtrip trek provides stunning views of The Hills, especially from the lookout tower at the top.

The youngest to complete the trip – albeit with some help from his dad – is my 4-year-old grandnephew. And the oldest is my mom, at age 76.

We've been spending several days every five years in Custer State Park cabins since the 1990s.

It's a bittersweet trip this time. We are burying my dad's ashes. My parents have had plots in The Hills for years. It makes my connection to this part of the world so much stronger now.

While the family changes – in appearance and numbers – we have a closeness I cherish. Some I see in between these gatherings, for others this is the only opportunity. We are dispersed across the world.

We meet at Mount Rushmore to see The Faces as the sun is setting and stay for the lighting. (This is a must for anyone who visits.) Five years ago we were there for Fourth of July fireworks – something magical about being someplace so American on that holiday.

I can't count the times I have seen those four stone presidents. I never get tired of going there. Partly it's the knowledge environmentalists would never allow something like this to be chiseled again, partly because we could never agree whose faces to carve, and partly it's the sense of patriotism that envelops me.

Earlier we had visited Crazy Horse, the even larger carving of the Sioux Indian who won the Battle of Little Big Horn over Custer. Although it's hard for me to tell the change in five years, clearly there has been some. I keep wondering if I'll see its completion in my lifetime.

Custer State Park isn't like any state park I've been to in California. It feels like a National Park. President Calvin Coolidge considered it his summer home.

A herd of about 1,300 bison call the 71,000-acre park home. They are best viewed along the 18-mile Wildlife Loop Road.

Mom has to tell us not to get out of the car – yes, even at our age.

Burros, prairie dogs, antelope and deer are other animals along the route.

One of the things about this part of the Midwest is there is so much to do – from touristy sites that take your money, to paddling on Sylvan Lake which is walking distance from our cabin, to checking out Rapid City.

Maybe I should have voted to return in three years instead of five.

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Wagner has all he needs to lead ACC golf tourney

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – People swarm Tim Tebow for his autograph. No one yells to John Elway at the driving range.

Oh, the contrasts of being the current Denver Broncos quarterback compared to the former. While Tebow has the imminent conclusion of the NFL lockout on his mind, Elway is

ready to open his fifth Colorado restaurant – the latest at the Lodge at Vail.

Quarterbacks seem to do well at the American Century Celebrity Golf Tournament. After play was over Saturday, Tony Romo was in second place and Chris Chandler in third.

Remaining atop the leader board is actor Jack Wagner.



Jack Wagner is the leader of the tournament for the second day in a row.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

Dressed all in black, he looked more like he should be headlining the concert that night at Harveys.

One woman yelled to him, “You’re all I need.” Wagner’s 1985 ballad “All I Need” topped the Billboard Charts.

At 51, he still has a boyish appearance that makes women who followed his early acting career on “General Hospital” want to call him Frisco instead of Jack.

Charles Barkley is in the cellar, but not at the very bottom. That honor goes to Jay DeMarcus, with Jimmer Fredette separating the two.

Barkley looked a bit winded by the late afternoon, needing to summon a chair to sit in and have autograph seekers come to

him one at a time on the putting green.

At the same time, Fredette, the rookie who signed with the Sacramento Kings, is walking the rope, signing everything put in front of him, smiling with fans for photos and looking about 10 years younger than his 22 years.

Asked how he likes like California, the New York native said, "Nice weather. Better than New York."

While this tournament is about the golf for many of the players, for the fans it is part golf and part seeing their idols.

In an hour Joey Werblun, 13, of San Francisco secured 28 autographs. Elway was his most cherished signature at that point.

Guy Fieri of Food Network fame is using the woodfire oven on a trailer he built at his home in Santa Rosa to create pizzas fans at the driving range were raving about. Joe Theismann comes up to give his buddy a hug and then is asked what he wants on his pie.

"I'm a simple guy. I like tomatoes," Theismann says. Fieri convinces him to put some barbecued chicken on his personal pizza.

For fans who don't want to leave the action at the 17th hole, Jennifer Emkjer and Allie Brascia are delivering cocktails from the Edgewood concession. The UNR students work for a promotions company that sends them to different events to work.

The final round of the three-day tournament starts Sunday at Edgewood Tahoe at 8:05am with Deron Williams, Tim Brown and Mason Crosby.

Susan Wood contributed.

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