

Learning from dogs with cancer

By Susan Jenks, New York Times

Peter Way, an engineer in Fort Collins, Colo., was devastated when his black Labrador, Prince, developed melanoma in his mouth shortly after turning 10. "His upper palate was not looking so good, and he was getting worse," Way said.

On the advice of a friend, he enrolled Prince in a clinical trial at Colorado State University's Flint Animal Cancer Center, where researchers were testing a subcutaneous delivery method for Interleukin 12, a powerful immune enhancer that is also under study for treating advanced cancers in people.

The drug initially boosted Prince's ability to fight off the melanoma, giving him eight months before the cancer "came roaring back" and the dog had to be put down. But Way has no regrets.

Read the whole story

Nonprofits receive \$55,600 from celebrity golf tourney

Thirty organizations shared \$55,600 in grants provided from revenues from the 2015 American Century Championship.

Grants ranging from \$500 to \$7,500 were distributed to Assistance League of Sierra Foothills, Bringing Art to Schools, Big Brothers Big Sisters of El Dorado County, Boys

and Girls Club of Lake Tahoe, Bread & Broth 4 Kids, CASA El Dorado, Clean Tahoe Program, Food Bank El Dorado County, H.E.R.O. Scholarship Fund, Lake Tahoe Bicycle Coalition, Lake Tahoe Educational Fund, Lake Tahoe Environmental Science Magnet School, Live Violence Free, Juvenile Service Council of El Dorado County, Kahle Community Center, Kelly Ridge, Kiwanis Coats for Kids, Saint Joseph Community Land Trust, South Lake Tahoe Cancer League, South Lake Tahoe Police Activities League, South Tahoe Vikings Booster Club, Tahoe Arts Project, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue, Tahoe Prosperity Center, Tahoe Regional Young Professionals, Tahoe Senior Plaza, Tahoe Magic, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Whittell Booster Club, and Zephyr Cove Elementary School.

The LTVA, in partnership with NBC Sports and American Century Investments, previously directed an additional \$51,500 through on-site volunteer organizations and other efforts during tournament week to area high schools, Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe, South Lake Tahoe Booster Club, Boys and Girls Club of South Lake Tahoe, and the Gene Upshaw Scholarship.

Latest hotel amenity – books

By Shivani Vora, New York Times

Hotels may be giving a lot of attention to upgrading in-room technology, but a handful are going the old-fashioned amenity route: creating in-room libraries.

These libraries help guests make a meaningful connection with their hotel, said Bobby Zur, who owns Travel Artistry, a consultancy in Franklin Lakes, N.J.

“Books in your room are a counterrevolution to technology overload and are almost comforting for guests,” he said. “They also give the properties a unique identity.”

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe honors veterans



Matt Panks, South Lake Tahoe American Legion commander, leads the Veterans Day ceremony. Photo/Lisa Herron

Nearly 100 people filled the American Legion Hall in South Lake Tahoe this morning to pay tribute to veterans near and far, those serving and those who have served, those still alive and those who have died.

Legion Cmdr. Matt Panks offered a tribute, while South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole and El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel shared their sentiments.

Veterans Day is always celebrated on Nov. 11 at 11am to mark the end of World War I.

Normally small U.S. flags are placed on the grave markers at Happy Homestead Cemetery in South Lake Tahoe to recognize those who have served in the Armed Forces. That was not able to happen this year because of the snow.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Vet haunted by guilt, smell of blood and gunpowder

By Rick Martinez

It has been 45 years since I returned to the U.S. from Vietnam. I was only 19, but the year I spent there made me feel like I had already lived 10 lifetimes. My family said, “Welcome Home,” but I have never fully come home.

Why do I still carry so much pain from that war? I have been told more than 100 times: “Put it behind you and move on with your life.” But Vietnam hangs onto my innermost thoughts like a newborn to its mother’s warmth.

The friends I left behind wouldn’t want me to be in this bad state of mind. They would want me to cherish life. Sometimes I think: *Why didn’t I die with them? They are the lucky ones. They are at peace now.* I wonder if I will ever know what it is like to be truly at peace.

The clinical name for what I’m struggling with is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), an anxiety disorder where

the “fight-or-flight” responses triggered by a terrifying event can’t be turned off.

PTSD reminds me of an evil thief who tries to steal everything from you—your life, your family, and your mind. It won’t let you get close to people. It eats you alive from the inside out. PTSD has no mercy and its only goal is to devour your mind, body, and spirit. It’s a beast that never sleeps.

The first 13 years after I returned from the war were tough. My first wife left me after we lost our second child to miscarriage; I think the miscarriages might have been related to my exposure to Agent Orange. I remarried four years later. My second wife and I had two beautiful children together, but she left me when they were 4 and 6. I wanted love and yet, I pushed it away. It was hard for me to show my emotions. My heart couldn’t take losing anymore, so I built a wall around my feelings.

I could go on and on about the things that went wrong after I came back from Vietnam, but that was nothing compared to what happened over Memorial Day in 1983. That is always a hard time for me, and in 1983—after years of just barely holding it together—I snapped. I was back in Vietnam. I could smell gunpowder and blood.

Every day when I wake up, the PTSD monster says, *Just stay in bed. Don’t get up.* I finally listened to the monster. I could not get out of bed. I became dead to the world. I shut down.

My schedule for nine months was: Wake up at 7:30am. Take a hot shower for my crippling arthritis. Make a bowl of ramen soup and eat it. I was back in bed by 9am, and I’d stay there until 7:30 the following morning, only to repeat the routine once again.

At the end of the ninth month, my brother knocked on my bedroom door. I had just finished my soup, and was back in bed and about to nod off. He insisted on taking me to the Veterans

Affairs hospital in West Los Angeles. The next day, I was admitted to the VA hospital for severe PTSD.

Growing up in the Antelope Valley north of LA, I wanted to be a priest. But at 17, I decided instead to serve my country. I joined the Marine Corps. In December 1968, I went to boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. The drill instructors really knew how to make men out of boys! Every day, we did hundreds of brutal squat thrusts, sit-ups, chin-ups, and pull-ups. There was lots of running, going through the obstacle course, and marching in formation.

The drill instructors called us “maggots” “pukes,” “scum bags,” “slimy worms.” And they always put motherf— in front of everything. The verbal abuse was at full volume, from the time we woke up until we went to sleep.

Next I went through intense combat training at Camp Pendleton. That’s where they teach you tactical field maneuvers, weapons training, how to kill, how to survive, and—you guessed it—more running, physical training, marching in formation, and of course, verbal abuse.

They transformed us into “lean, mean fighting machines.” I became part of a polished, synchronized team. Your life depends on what they teach you in the classroom and out in the field. We were trained in a replica Vietnamese “village” with about six or seven palm huts, a fenced animal pen, a water well, an ox cart, and large woven baskets that contained rice and/or weapons. We were made aware of the areas of possible booby-traps and the fact that the enemy lurked on the perimeter of the “village.” They actually had us in Vietnam before we even left the States.

At the end of our training, we were told that we were prepared to enter the battlefield. That some of us might not come back—and that some of us might come back and wish we hadn’t.

When we landed in Vietnam and the stewardess opened the door of the plane, I was blasted with the largest dose of high-humidity heat that I have ever experienced in my life.

By the time I hit the tarmac, I was drenched in sweat. I smelled a new smell, like nothing I had ever smelled before. It was a combination of campfires, diesel fuel, jet fuel, sweaty Marines, the stewardess' perfume, a jungle smell, gunpowder, and burning rubber ... *Rubber? My boots?* The concrete tarmac at that hour was about 130 degrees. Enough to literally fry an egg. I thought: *This is going to be my home for the next 365 days?*

After I had finished my Marine Corp training, I thought I was prepared for the Vietnam War. Looking back on that experience now, nothing could have prepared me for the death and destruction of that insane war. I saw more death than I could have ever imagined.

I saw a young boy, about 12 years old, on a bike toss a grenade into a moving jeep, killing a young officer and his driver. It happened right in front of my truck, but I could not stop. I was transporting ammunition, and the attack could have been an ambush for my cargo.

I lost a friend who died in my arms. We were in a firefight, and I was praying for him to live. But then the flares went off overhead, and I saw blood coming out of his eyes, nose, and ears. I saw where his skull was cracked. I realized if he lived, he would be a vegetable ... and I found myself praying for him to die.

Of all the painful things I had to deal with in therapy, watching my friend die is up there at the top of the list. The camaraderie in a combat zone is stronger than even blood ties.

Once, while on a search-and-destroy mission, we had unknowingly set up our camp right on top of a Viet Cong underground tunnel complex. The enemy kept popping up in the middle of the night shooting AK-47 rounds into our camp and bunkers. After meticulously searching the area for two days, we finally found the trap doors that led down into the tunnel complex.

Someone had to go in and take care of business and I was small enough to fit into the 2-foot-wide trap doors. I became a "tunnel rat," with a flashlight in my left hand, and a .45 in my right. My goal was to search and destroy, and to clear the tunnel.

Those tunnel complexes were heavily booby-trapped and designed to take out intruders. For every 10 military dogs that got sent into the tunnels, an average of only two survived. It was a low survival rate for soldiers, also.

When I went in, my movements were very slow. My eyes were trying to adjust to the darkness; my ears seemed to be able to hear the sand move under my body. My hearing seemed to stretch out into the darkness. I could hear myself breathing and thought, *I'm too loud*. As I moved forward, feeling with my hands the sides, the top, and the floor, I thought, *Stay calm, careful. Be ready for anything. God, please help me*.

There were trip wires and little grass mats covered by sand to conceal bunches of sharp bamboo sticks that had been dipped in poison. But they didn't get me—I made it out.

I felt hands patting me on the back as we knelt down to examine the treasures I had brought up—some old, worn maps; three Chicom grenades; a M1 carbine rifle. After that day, everyone (including the officers) called me "Snake."

It was the third tunnel I entered later that would haunt me the most. It had enemy inside. The three Viet Cong decided to escape through another exit and perish at the hands of my

fellow Marines instead of confronting me—why they chose to do this is a question I can never answer. I acknowledge it as Divine Intervention.

It is a miracle that I made it out of that insane war.

When I was at the VA hospital in 1984, part of my treatment was exposure therapy where you relive a painful experience to get control over your feelings about the trauma. In “flooding,” you talk about a lot of bad memories at once. It’s called flooding for a reason: the tears.

Therapy triggered so many memories and opened up my mind like a river. The sight of dead Viet Cong soldiers, especially the children and elderly, kept coming back to me. The Viet Cong child soldiers (some as young as 12) and the grandma and grandpa soldiers made it really hard for me to put the Vietnam War behind me. How can you really justify war? It was a no-win war for them and for us. They fought for a cause that they thought was right, and so did we. They fought with courage and tenacity, just like us.

Talking about what happened in Vietnam took me right back there. The adrenaline would kick in, and I’d go into combat mode. I felt locked up with anxiety and all these emotions. Then, instead of sleeping around the clock, I hardly ever slept.

Slowly, I started to talk with other patients, the therapists, and nurses. I was discharged from the hospital after three months of treatment.

But Vietnam remained at the surface. Once I was on the outside again, I was really afraid. Now all my issues weren’t buried and repressed. The flashbacks were just as intense as the

experience itself. I was alone in a world that did not seem to care about or understand me as a Vietnam veteran.

I still had a hard time sleeping. I still felt extremely anxious in crowds. I had zero tolerance for listening to people talk—whatever they said seemed so unnecessary and unimportant. I completely shut myself off from my family, my (few) friends, and society. I was out of sync with everyone. Thoughts of suicide began to whirl about in my mind. I had no hope of ever living a productive life again.

On my way back to the States, I saw a jacket—I think it was in a shop at the Da Nang Airport. On the back of the jacket was a map of Vietnam and it said: “When I die, I am surely going to heaven because I served my time in hell.” I bought the jacket.

Vietnam was hell, but it turned out I had to fight in another war. In 1984, I headed into the war within.

Rick Martinez lives with his wife, Maria, in San Antonio. Together, they have 16 grandchildren. This essay is part one of The War I Never Stopped Fighting, a project of Zócalo Public Square.

Polar Express train tickets going fast

Two weeks before the Polar Express takes its first ride from Carson City to the completely reimagined North Pole aboard the Virginia & Truckee Railroad 88 percent of tickets have already been sold.

The seven-week schedule, Nov. 19 to Dec. 22, features 12 rides per weekend. Now in its fifth season, the all-ages holiday train will depart Carson City for a series of one-hour round-trip journeys to the North Pole. The ride is filled with stories, adventure and characters that come to life.

Because of the demand, more trips and passenger cars were added this season. Last year more than 14,000 passengers rode the train.

VIP tickets are \$82 for adults and \$72 for children 2-12 – free for children under 2 who sit on a lap. Coach tickets are \$46 for adults and \$36 for children – free for children under 2 who sit on a lap.

To purchase tickets, call 877.724.5007.

Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe



Allie

Allie is one of 17 cats and kittens at the shelter right now. She is a 3-year-old female gray tabby shorthair with a huge purr.

She loves to be around people, and is good with other cats and well-mannered dogs. She was left behind when her owners moved.

Allie is spayed, microchipped, tested for FIV, and vaccinated. She is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs and cats who are waiting for their new homes. Go to the Tahoe animal shelter's Facebook page to see photos and descriptions of all pets at the shelter.

Call 530.573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go **online**.

– Karen Kuentz

2 books that are catnip for map geeks

By Christopher Reynolds, Los Angeles Times

If you're a map geek – and many travelers are – you may wish to avert your eyes. Two books – one new, one renewed – are here to tempt you as the holidays approach.

As these volumes show, maps can be deeply addictive because each one is a new worldview, with its own style and grammar.

Depending on who has designed it (and toward what end), a map can bring elegance from chaos and lead you to places you'd never have gone otherwise.

Conversely, a map can blunt your curiosity, twist the truth, break your spirit.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe glitters as it turns 50



More than 200 people mingle before the festivities to celebrate South Lake Tahoe's 50th birthday begin Nov. 7. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

"History is what binds us."

That was just one of the sentiments expressed by South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole on Saturday night as more than 200 people came together to celebrate the city's 50th birthday.



It was on Nov. 30, 1965, that South Lake Tahoe became an incorporated city.

The milestones – some positive, some sad, all critical to the city being what it is today – were captured through video, personal stories, and the written word.

While the city is bound to have more parties at other significant markers, it is at 50 when many of those who helped establish the city are still here to tell their story. Yesteryear's visionaries aren't likely to be around for the 75th celebration. That is what made Nov. 7 special – the past,

present and future were all in one room for a few hours.



A golden anniversary.

It was a night to remember those who had the foresight to strive for incorporation, the recognition that the area would be better off governing itself than being saddled with decisions made 60 miles away in Placerville, and to illustrate what has occurred in these five decades and what is possible going forward.

Thirteen former or current councilmembers attended the festivities at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel. Members of the Brad Murphy (the first mayor) and Norm Woods (councilman) families were in attendance.

The sold-out event included former and current city staff, as well as a who's who list of community members.

It was a night to better understand some of the struggles that have taken place – such as development and redevelopment, finances, the loss of local soldiers, and the Angora Fire.

It was a night to embrace accomplishments – Lakeview Commons, recreation center, environmental stewardship.

It was a night to look at the future – Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care moving into the city limits, Tahoe Mountain Lab building a hub for the untraditional work force, expanded recreation opportunities and a city that will be vibrant when the 100th

celebration takes place.



City Manager Nancy Kerry, second from left, is flanked by the four councilmembers who attended the Nov. 7 party.

Cole touched on four entities that to him have made a profound difference to this area:

- Heavenly – especially singling out how the ski resort was built by locals and had world-class events, and is still integral to the fabric of the city.
- Barton Memorial Hospital – recalling the days before there was a hospital and how it is rare for a community hospital to still be locally owned-operated.
- South Tahoe Public Utility District – for being a pioneer in treating sewage to keep Tahoe blue.
- Edgewood – to the Park family that has been key to Tahoe since the 1800s and is continuing to evolve.

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Notes:

- The commemorative book is available for purchase by emailing Tracy Franklin – tfranklin@cityofslt.us.
- The three-part video shown Saturday night is available on **YouTube**.

Bob Rockwell (Old Long Skiis) – 1953-2015



Bob Rockwell and his dog
Lucky. Photos/Provided

“Old Long Skiis” is now making first tracks with his dog Clarity in a secret powder bowl high above Meiss Meadow.

Robert Porter Rockwell Jr. died Nov. 3, 2015. He was 61.



Bob Rockwell
loved to tell
stories.

Bob was born in San Jose to Mona and Robert P. Rockwell Sr. on Dec. 29, 1953. The family moved to South Lake Tahoe in the early 1960s and began a long history of running motels, shops,

and other businesses.

Brought up with a great work ethic, his first job was cleaning up the beach at Ski Run Marina and taking out tourists in an aluminum boat over to Emerald Bay, acting as tour guide. He was only in grade school at the time. Folks loved his enthusiasm and hearing his knowledge of the lake.

He graduated from South Tahoe High School in 1972, where he earned his "block T" letter on the ski team. Working at the drive-in theater on Glenwood was a blast for Bob. Next he managed the A&W Drive-In for his folks, then later he became the tram operator at Heavenly Valley Ski Area. As an avid skier, this was one of his favorite occupations.

He worked for South Tahoe Refuse next, and was there for over 30 years, starting at the bottom and working his way up to supervisor of the collections crew. One person's trash is another one's treasure, and boy, the treasures he would bring home. He had so many hilarious stories of his days with STR.

His contagious laugh and great sense of humor made him an unforgettable person to know. Bob was a kind, caring, generous person who went out of his way to help others, be it snowblowing the neighbors' driveways, kitty sitting, or sharing the veggies from his garden.

He loved skiing, boating, fishing, duck hunting, camping, and every aspect of living at Tahoe. Bob especially loved boat camping in his Bayliner cabin cruiser; rising early he would troll the tranquil waters of Emerald Bay listening to the ospreys call.

Bob leaves behind his loving father, Robert P. Rockwell Sr. of San Jose; brother Eric Rockwell of New York City; sisters Linda (Del) Sessions of San Jose, Michele (Larry) Mowrey of Sacramento; and loving partner of 25 years Christy A. Prouty of South Lake Tahoe.

Buddy the dog and Ashleigh the cat will miss him as well as everyone else who had the pleasure to know him. He was well known in our community will be dearly missed by many.

In lieu of flowers, donations to the Lake Tahoe Historical Society (P.O. Box 18501, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151) or American Heart Association would have pleased Bob.

A celebration of life for Bob will be announced at a later date.