Northwest coast – a wet, green change of scenery

By Toni Sopocko

OCEAN CITY, Wash. – Even living in a beautiful place like Lake Tahoe, sometimes you've just got to get out of Dodge.

For this year's fall adventure we decided to take the land yacht (our 19-foot trailer) somewhere it had never been before – the Washington coast. We settled on shooting for the Olympic coastal town of Ocean City because it has a state park with campgrounds and we have generally had good luck with those in other states.

We were not disappointed.



Fires on the beach in Washington. Photos/Toni Sopocko

The park was great and it was just a short stroll through the shrubbery to the beach from our site.

But I had a hankering for more so we cruised north a little to another state park at a place called Pacific Beach. I thought I had found RV paradise. The state park has a few tent sites, but it's heaven for trailers and motor homes with its

beachfront property on a river mouth. We lucked out and got a site right at the sand and were able to watch the sun set that night while sitting on the lawn right behind our trailer.

High tide brought the waves up nearly to the breakwater below the trailers and low tide had us walking out hundreds of yards to the clam beds. The dogs had a fabulous time chasing seagulls from the shore during the day while we walked the beach collecting sand dollars.

At night we built bonfires on the beach and chatted with other campers.

It’s a great spot, but small, so next time we’ll make reservations. As it was, the coming weekend was open season on those thousands of clams that we knew lurked in the sand so we had to vacate our site. The timing was actually fortunate because a storm was heading in and with the total exposure of the campground; I suspect it might have been an uncomfortable weekend.



Northwest ocean beaches provide plenty of space to stroll.

While in Washington we took a couple side trips into the Olympic National Park. It’s a stunning place, though awfully wet. Shades of green on green like you’ve never seen in your life.

We drove around Lake Quinault, a lovely little lake. While there we saw the biggest Sitka spruce in the world and took a hike through a blow-down forest. They must get some incredible winds up there.

We wandered around the Hoh River – a distinct possibility for a future trip. We noted quite a bit of elk poop while there, so did some more snooping and were rewarded by watching a small herd ford the river. Several does and calves and one big buck that posed for some out-of-focus photos.

Buzzed up to the town of Forks where the “Twilight” movie was filmed to have some lunch. It’s a cute little town, seriously into its vampires. Even saw Bella the truck at the information center.

In the future I’d do a complete circle of the Olympic National Park when we can spend more time there – but not during the rainy season.

We headed south from there to Fort Stevens State Park in Oregon, just outside of Astoria. Astoria is a great little city at the mouth of the Columbia River. Lots to do. If you ever get there, you’ve got to go the Columbia River Maritime Museum. It’s a beautiful building with excellent displays of nautical history. Give it at least three hours. We spent most of a rainy day there, absolutely enthralled.

Astoria also has lots of good restaurants. One little spot we found was the Portway Pub. It’s “the oldest watering hole in the oldest American settlement west of the Rockies”. That alone was recommendation enough for me. They had great burgers and beer.



A lighthouse with history.

Fort Stevens Park is a nice place to camp, too. We did have to hole up for a day and a half in the storm, but the campground is well protected from the elements.

When we were able to get out, we found the park has a wonderful system of bicycle and pedestrian trails that wind for miles to the beaches, river and historic fort. There are batteries and barracks and a museum with lots of good information for the history buff. Fort Stevens was in operation from the Civil War to WWII. It was even shelled by a Japanese submarine, but no damage done and no fire returned, as the sub was too far offshore.

We spent a few days exploring the beach and the fort until it was time to get back to the road to head home.

I still have the sound of the surf in my head and in my heart.

Mt. Tallac students prove importance of alternative ed

By Kathryn Reed

A sense of pride fills the students as they give adults tours of the school. They talk about their campus with enthusiasm.

They know the answers to every question asked.

Starting in the hallway at Mount Tallac High School is a wall of student photos. They are part of the three A's. Every week the wall is updated to reflect those who have excelled in academics, attendance and attitude.

On Wednesday, seniors Arnulfo Jimenez and Carlos Lopez take *Lake Tahoe News* around to the various classrooms as part of the annual open house at the alternative school in South Lake Tahoe.



Mount Tallac students Arnulfo Jimenez, left, and Carols Lopez give a tour of the school. Photo/Kathryn Reed

About 40 people came through the morning of Oct. 20 – including most of the school board and Superintendent Jim Tarwater. It was considered an honor to be picked as one of the guides.

Some of these students have lives many in the community could not relate to.

The student who gave Tarwater his tour is living with her 18-

year-old sister who is pregnant. Their parents were deported. The Tallac student works 40 hours a week to help support her non-traditional household. Before going to college next year, her first stop will be to visit her parents.

Jimenez and Lopez didn't talk about their plight, what brought them to the continuation high school. What they wanted to talk about was continuing their education and getting jobs after high school graduation.

They like the flexibility Tallac offers them and the education they are receiving.

Jimenez explains how Matt Kauffman has started Sphere of Influence as an offshoot of the regular art class he teaches.

"It keeps kids from tagging illegally," Jimenez explains. "It helps the community and it keeps the kids out of danger."

Sharing this teaching space is Jackie Tan, who joined the staff earlier this fall from Diamond Springs.

Tan is working with the students to master math so they will be able to pass the state high school exit exam.

Hardly a speck of wall space is visible in Steve Simmons class. Student work is everywhere. Simmons teaches history, life and physical science, and monitors physical education credits.

"The kids set their own pace. No one micromanages. It's up to them," Simmons said. "They need to see the value in education."

Clearly, the girls who use the nursery next to Simmons' classroom see the value of an education even though they are already parents.

"Most of the girls are parents by themselves," Lopez says outside the nursery where the little ones are sleeping.

The campus is expanding a bit. While the main high school just up the road gets millions upon millions of dollars in new buildings and equipment, Mount Tallac got one of South Tahoe High's old portables.

The plan is this fall after some work is completed it will be usable as a counseling site. Right now privacy at the school is an issue. Principal Susan Baker and counselor Amy Jackson share office space.

Tours of Mount Tallac may be scheduled any time – not just on open house day – by calling (530) 543.2245.

Convinced 'Conviction' is the real deal



Conviction

Rated R

4 bagels out of 5

By Howie Nave

When I look back on this year in movies (my Best of/Worst of comes out in late December) I know already that some of my

favs were based on true stories or were bio pics. Maybe because true life trumps fiction or you know the characters are real people. It’s amazing the human spirit can overcome practically any adversity.

Hilary Swank has starred in real life based movies such as “Amelia,“ ”Million Dollar Baby,” “Iron Jawed Angels,” “Boys Don’t Cry,” “Cries Unheard: The Donna Yaklich Story” and now “Conviction” where Swank again turns in a powerful performance. It’s a little predictable knowing the eventual outcome, but like most things, the journey is usually the best part.

Swank virtually channels Betty Anne Waters, a high school dropout from Ayer, Mass., who grew up in a series of foster homes with no stability other than that of her older brother, Kenny, (played convincingly by Sam Rockwell). Her only semblance of family life is her brother, so when he’s convicted of a 1983 murder Betty sets out on a journey to do anything to prove him innocent. She believes that he’s been wrongfully accused of murder. It doesn’t help that a few corrupt individuals bent on making sure he never sees the light of day divvy small-town justice out. Without giving too much away, the murder victim was responsible in part for Kenny’s predicament in life so it seemed only natural that Kenny would be the prime suspect.



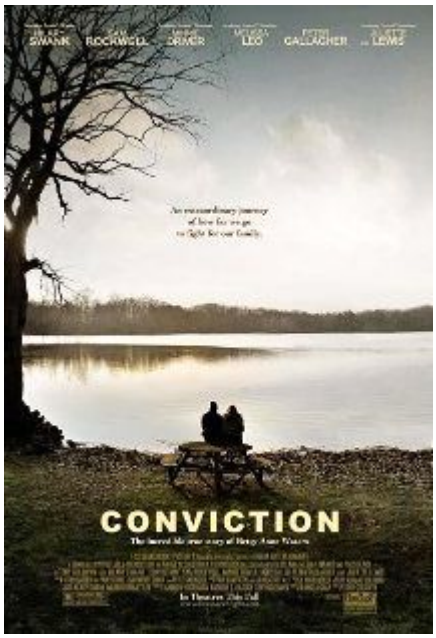
Hilary Swank and Sam Rockwell in "Conviction".

It’s ironic that Betty’s drive to lift herself out of her predicament happens when her brother is incarcerated and her journey starts from getting her GED to eventually getting through law school where she meets her best friend and colleague Abra Rice (Minnie Driver) that things start to rev up in a dramatic fashion. Another driving force during this time is the introduction of attorney Barry Scheck (Peter Gallagher).

The timing looking back is incredible, and had DNA not found its way into the national spotlight, things would have been dramatically different. Rockwell captures the troubled personality Kenny; revealing his hotheaded attitude that only strengthens the case for the prosecution. He’s no angel. That’s evident by crooked Officer Nancy Taylor (played by Melissa Leo) bent on putting him away.

There‘s a lot of white trash here and it’s hard at times not to pigeonhole people, even Betty. But outward appearances can be deceiving and soon you find yourself believing you can’t just judge everyone by one broad stroke. Swank’s passion in her character is Oscar worthy and she stops at nothing and lets no one misdirect here even when the roadblocks placed in front of her at times are insurmountable.

The cast of “Conviction” is outstanding and you know you’re watching a good movie when you forget that the actors are playing real people; some you loathe and have to step back emotionally knowing that they are just acting. Case in point: Juliette Lewis as a low life, sub-human who is just evil and you want to just yell obscenities at her on the screen but then that wouldn’t be a good thing to do now would it?



I walked away from this movie wondering why can't we have more lawyers like Betty? Granted she became one with only one purpose in mind, but to know you're right and can't be denied is pretty powerful stuff. Director Tony Goldwyn uses his cast wisely balancing the emotions created and building the tension to the point of boiling over and then slowly pulling back to let a few cooler minds prevail and in the process taking us along for the ride that is well worth the price.

"Conviction" is rated R for language and some violent images and clocks in at 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.

Learning the ropes before taking on family business

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

To come home, one must leave first.

And for self-professed local boy Ryan Sheltra, leaving the comforts of home made his return that much sweeter.

As the son of one of the long-time owners of the Bonanza Casino in Reno, one would think Sheltra was a shoe-in for the family business. But Sheltra wasn't recruited by dad Russ

until he finished stints at Hilton properties in Las Vegas and Lake Tahoe.

Sheltra was wrapping up a six-and-a-half-year career at the former Caesars Tahoe when he got an offer from the very man who encouraged him to learn the business outside of the Bonanza. To sweeten the pot, the older Sheltra even offered to retire.

Read the whole story

‘EDGE’ contributors bring out their dark side

By Kathryn Reed

From the cover I should have known I was not in for light, happy reading. For some reason the toy outlined in chalk as though one of the two standing wooden figurines shot the other didn’t deter me – or rather, it didn’t occur to me what might loom inside.

“EDGE – 2010” is more dark than it is edgy. Finishing it on a gloomy New England day while on vacation earlier this month seemed like a perfect setting.

Published by Tahoe Writers Works, it is a compilation of fiction, poetry and artwork from people throughout the United States. Their brief biographies in the back of the 125-page paperback are impressive.

The overwhelming feeling I was left with is the ominous cloud that seems to hover over Lake Tahoe apparently has been

visiting much of the country. Perhaps these bleak economic times have put these writers in a dark mood. It's not that their stories are about finances. Most are relationships.

But happy they are not.

Armine Iknadossian's "Color Theory" paints a bleak picture in poetic form of love gone awry. It's a glimpse into how the simplest of words and definitions wreak havoc on a relationship.

Dave Murcar's "I Was Destroyed by God" grabbed me the most. The short story is about what happens when God allows the main character to take a bite of Adam and Eve's apple.

It's well written, gripping and a bit thought provoking.

"Lights Out" by Donald Levering reads like a true story of a parent concerned about his daughter's obsession with animal bones.

Some entries I didn't want to read, and one I just couldn't for personal reasons. That was Paria Kooklan's "Burial" which starts, "Today is my father's funeral …"

It was the reprints of the original oil on canvas by Kit Night that were the brightest spots in the book. A bit of happiness and color among the dark, black letters.

Perhaps if I had read "EDGE" at a time when I was immersed in the chaos of my every day life instead of escaping on vacation to a land of marvelous beauty with its fall foliage, I would have connected more with the book. Or maybe it's just that poetry and fiction are not what I usually pick up to read.

Still, the work is good, and those who prefer this genre are apt to find the selections captivating.

"EDGE" is available online through Tahoe Writers Works.

Halloween revelry at Bona Fide Books

October is upon us, so is the time for literary Halloween revelry. Join Bona Fide Books the evening of Oct. 30 starting at 7pm for a scary slam and costume party.



Candy, beer and Vincent Price movies will be provided.

Bring your best original or classic scary story to perform for the chance to win a fabulous prize. Dress up as your favorite literary figure – everything from Edgar Allen Poe to Lolita is fair game. The best costume will also win a prize, so get funky and creative.

Bona Fide is at 1069 Magua St., No. 4, Meyers behind The Getaway Cafe. The event is free – but donations are welcome.

History: Finding a place for Washoe culture

Publisher's note: ***This is from the July 1973 Lake Tahoe Historical Society newsletter.***

By Mike Magliari, Lake Tahoe Historical Society

Until recently, little research was done concerning the Washoe Indians. Aside from the Washoe Indian Trail on Taylor Creek and Dat-so-la-lee basket collections, there wasn't much one could see pertaining to Lake Tahoe's earlier inhabitants. Most local historical literature we have is devoted to events dating back only as far Fremont's discovery of the Lake in 1844.



But now, a major investigation of the Washoe's is being carried out by a team from the University of Nevada, working under a $6,000 grant, that is making an archaeological survey of the Taylor Creek area. This survey will cover the Fallen Leaf region from the creek to Glen Alpine. The purpose of the investigation is to determine the extent of the Washoe inhabitation of the area, which was once their summer home before they were place on reservation in the Carson Valley.

Mr. Elliot Graham of the Forest Service stated that the Forest Service is interested in the investigation because they want to be sure that the future construction of campsites near Fallen Leaf will not destroy the remains of the Indian culture.

The team in its first week, has already discovered four living sites along with grinding stones. Some of these remains are 3,000 years old. The general result of the survey will be made public, however specific location of sites will not be, in order to prevent destruction of the sites by rock-hounds and collectors.

The Washoe Indian tribe, located in Woodfords and the Carson Valley, is also interested in the survey. The Wahoe's wish to build an Indian cultural center and Indian campground on land leased form the Forest Service. Their center will probably be located near the Visitors Center near Taylor Creek. The Washoes have already taken out an application for the land.

They will use the center to tell the history of their tribe and to sell Indian crafts.

The idea of an Indian cultural center is a good one and will provide a much needed addition to the historical development of the Lake Tahoe region.

Nevada Day festivities tap into aviation history

Nevada Day, a four-day celebration of the Silver State's admission to the Union in 1864, will recognize "100 Years of Aviation in Nevada." The centennial marks the history-making flight of daredevil pilot Ivy Baldwin just west of Carson City – at elevation 4,675 feet the highest at that time.

Lt. Col. (Ret.) Dick Rutan of the U.S. Air Force will serve as grand marshal for the 2010 celebration. A modern day aviation pioneer, Rutan is known for piloting the first nonstop unrefueled flight around the world in 1986 and was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 2002. He flew 325 missions in Vietnam and was awarded the Silver Star, five Distinguished Flying Crosses, 16 Air Medals and a Purple Heart.

Currently, he is flying a Berkut, a homebuilt, experimental airplane with hopes to establish additional world records, while breaking some of his own.

Nevada Day festivities will include family activities with history, live music, contests, dining events, parades and carnivals.

Details:

Oct. 28

· RSVP Carnival will provide carnival rides for adults and children at Mills Park in Carson City. The RSVP Carnival will open at 4pm Thursday and noon Oct. 29–31. Admission is free, with a fee for rides.

Oct. 29

· The Carson Nugget hosts the Grand Marshal Dinner beginning at 6pm with a social and cocktail hour followed by a buffet dinner at 7pm. After dinner the grand marshal, Dick Rutan, treats guests to a presentation highlighting his many accomplishments. Tickets are $30. (775) 882.2600

Oct. 30

· A Pancake Breakfast will be hosted by the Carson City Republican Women's Club at the Governor's Mansion from 7-9:30am gives residents a chance to meet political representatives prior to the parade. Adults are $6 and children under 10 are $3. Proceeds benefit Carson City High School and Dayton High School. (775) 884.3011

· An Air Show will include all types of aircraft, including an 8am hot-air balloon launch (weather permitting), followed by a flyover of F-18 Hornets and an F-16 Falcon from Fallon Naval Air Station and a Lockheed C-130 Hercules transport plane from the Nevada Air Guard. The flyover will signal the start of the Nevada Day Parade at 10am. Parade festivities feature marching bands, floats, equestrian groups and historical displays. The parade starts at William St. and Carson St. and ends at the intersection of Stewart and Carson streets. (775) 882.2600

CalStar provides link from accidents to specialized care

By Stephen Ward

In 1983, Dr. Donald Trunkey, an innovative physician with a dream to help injured patients regardless of their financial constraints, formed the California Shock/Trauma Air Rescue service.

Since then, CalStar has helped the Tahoe area provide quick transportation to nearby hospitals, with more than 3,000 transports since Tahoe's CalStar-6 base opened in 2001.

Bryan Pond, a 47-year-old Meyers resident, has been with CalStar for more than 10 years. He works with a 5,500-pound, 28-foot long Eurocopter B0 105, capable of going 149mph, with a rotor span of more than 32 feet.



Landing on highways is normal for Calstar so patients are taken to hospitals faster. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The nonprofit medical flight service's purpose is to get people with traumatic injuries to the nearest hospital as soon as possible.

Pond said the numbers haven't fluctuated much within the last few years, with this years 247-patient transports being considered average.

"The most common accident we deal with are car wrecks," Pond said. "In the winters, we have skiers we need to help, and in the summer there are boating accidents. I'd say that car wrecks are the types of accidents we deal with most, though."

Something that sets the organization apart is that it flies two critical air nurses rather than the normal regime of one nurse and one paramedic.

CalStar doesn't just transport people to and from hospitals. The organization also helps agencies such as Lake Valley Fire Department with wildfires and during inclement weather, and is featured at Barton Health's annual skills lab to help inform medics and nurses about the latest technology within their field.

Carson Tahoe Regional Medical Center partnered with CalStar in 2008 to install rescue vehicles with portable EKG devices. With the device, the EKG technology can determine the precise location of the abnormal blood flow to the heart by transmitting a 12-lead electrocardiogram image, which is instantly transmitted to the staff at CTRMC to prepare for the patient's arrival. The technology has been incredibly helpful and the relationship between CTRMC and CalStar continues to be a strong one, according to CTRMC spokesman Jon Tyler.

Medical centers such as Barton Health uses CalStar not only to receive patients, but also to transport them to other hospitals if their conditions require extensive help.

Karla Peterson, the base hospital coordinator who has been

working for Barton for more than 18 years, considers CalStar to be an integral part of the hospital.

“As a small hospital, we need to be able to take anyone in,” Peterson said. “However, we are aware of our limited resources and need to have a way to transport patients that need more help. If we didn’t have them, we’d be in trouble.”

Nicole Shearer, public relations business partner at Renown Medical Center in Reno, also considers the air ambulance service a commodity.

“Renown Health has a good partnership with CalStar,” Shearer said. “As the only Level II Trauma Center between Sacramento and Salt Lake City, services like those offered by CalStar help Renown’s rural patients get the care they need.”

Today, the company has more than eight full-time bases and has an abundance of helicopters and planes in its fleet, including four MD 902 Explorer helicopters and a Cessna 421.

CalStar is continuing to assist the Northern California region, with the South Lake Tahoe outfit striving to maintain close relations with the hospitals it partners with.

CalStar has a membership program that will cut the cost if their service is ever needed. Information is on CalStar’s website.

Love, loneliness and laughter in a series of monologues

The Dakota Organization will present “Talking With…,” a study of love, loneliness and obsession where laughter mingles with

perpetual sadness.

The play is Oct. 21-23 at 7:30pm and Oct. 24 at 2pm at the CVIC Hall, 1602 Esmeralda in Minden. Tickets are $15 for general admission and $10 for students and seniors.



This play consists of 10 monologues by women who speak in depth and with humor of the things that they have encountered in the lives. The characters of a snake handler, daughter, baton twirler, washed-up rodeo cowgirl, tattooed woman, older woman in the twilight of her years, belabored (literally) immigrant, a McDonald’s devotee and ex-rodeo queen talk with us about the lessons that they learned. In this study of women’s lives, Jane Martin’s characters address the value of quirky behavior and society’s indifference toward it.