Spa treatments run the gamut in Whistler

By Kathryn Reed

WHISTLER, British Columbia – It was a month ago today that I met Robert. He certainly made a lasting impression because I remember exactly how he made me feel by the time he was done with me.

He seemed to manipulate my body into pretzel-like positions. I was in heaven. I'm in heaven just reflecting on it.



Vida Spa at Whistler

My neck finally moved in all directions like it's supposed to. It did take some manipulation and patience on his part to get it out of creaky computer neck position – my name for the usual constant state of duress I find myself in.

Robert is one of the many massage therapists at Vida Spa inside the Fairmont Chateau Whistler.

This was the first Thai massage I had experienced. No wonder people rave about them. All that stretching was just what I needed that day – and every day.

At times when I was conscious of what was going on, I had flashbacks of previous massages of Shiatsu, Lomi Lomi and Watsu (even though the latter is in water).

Sue experienced her first hot stone massage. Fanny made her so relaxed she forgot about the stones between her toes until the therapist took them out.

The basalt rock that is used in hot stone massage is said to have energy. During full moons the rocks used at Vida are set outside to absorb that energy.



A client at Vida receives hot stone massage. Photo/Provided

A slew of spa treatments are offered at Vida – including more traditional deep tissue massage.

As wonderful as Robert made my muscles feel, I do have two complaints. The first is where spa clients are supposed to change. (I came dressed in loose fitting clothing as is normal for receiving Thai massage.) But Sue and others who would be without clothes for their massage had to change into a robe in the hotel's changing area by the indoor pool-hot tub.

As guests of the Fairmont and not being that modest, it wasn't any big deal for her to walk in a robe through the hotel. For others, though, I could see the lack of privacy being an issue.

My other complaint is the price. The cost of each of our hour massages together is what I charge at A Massage at Tahoe for four one-hour treatments. Yes, the convenience of being at the

hotel has a price. But these fees are the same whether you're a guest or not – so not everyone would see the convenience in going to Vida like we did. Yes, Thai and hot stone take extra training. But, still – $150 for an hour massage is too much.

I just hope Robert and Fanny got a higher cut than the spa, but that isn't always how it works at places like this.

Vida Spa, which has been operating since 2002, also has three locations in Vancouver and one in Seattle. For more information, click here.

My other massage experience while in Whistler last month was at Taman Sari Royal Heritage Spa inside the Summit Lodge. Like at the Fairmont, the spa here is a separate entity from the hotel.

After filling out a short form, which is not uncommon, spa director Julie Wahono engaged me in conversation. She knew I worked for this website. That's why it surprised me how she went on and on about how much better the hotel was when it was owned by Kimpton.

Our experience at the hotel was great and one we would like to repeat, but without going to the spa.

Wahono talked about how it's the best spa in Whistler – that customers tell her that. Not this customer.

It was not the best way to start the massage. I'm there in a robe. I don't have a pen or paper in hand. This was not an interview, but still I got an earful. It was weird. I've been a massage therapist since 1997. Making clients relaxed is important. It wasn't working.

On the form it asked if I wanted my breasts and/or buttocks worked on. I had not seen that on an in-take form before. No to the former, yes to the latter.

I think a more relevant question is a person's occupation

because that can tell a therapist a lot about the likely aches and pains a person has.

Maryann was my therapist. She was good, but she wasn't Robert. I had the hour Javanese massage, a deep tissue where only the palms and thumbs are used. Unfortunately Maryann's thick accent prevented me from understanding her. She handed me something to begin with which I couldn't figure out what it was in the darkness of the room. After the massage I realized it was a pair of underwear. I'm still scratching my head on that one.

I have to disagree with the spa director. Taman is not the best place for a massage in Whistler. If I were to spend $150 on a massage, my money will be given to Vida.

Tangible Olympic memories for sale

By Kathryn Reed

WHISTLER, British Columbia – Shopping probably should be added as an Olympic sport. Merchandising already seems to be one.

It's a bit overwhelming all the trinkets that can be purchased in British Columbia.



Olympic pins could drain a person's wallet. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Pins have been traded at several Olympics. It’s hard to know why they need to be traded when nearly every store in Whistler was selling them before the Games began. Maybe they are sold-out now that the Olympics are halfway over.

Some pins are for an individual event. Some have a single flag representing a specific country. Many have the U.S. and Canadian flags.

Most cost about $8.

For those ordering a bottle of wine at the Wildflower restaurant at Fairmont Chateau Whistler a pin is given to all those imbibing – at least that was the case before the Games started.

Stuffed versions of the three official and one unofficial Olympic mascot are everywhere.



Olympic mascots are everywhere in Whistler. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Quatchi is a young Sasquatch, also known as the legendary Bigfoot, from the Pacific Northwest forests. Miga is a sea bear that lives off the British Columbia coast. Sumi is an animal spirit displaying legendary traits. Mukmuk, the unofficial mascot, is a marmot from Vancouver.



All things Olympian are for sale. Photo/Susan Wood

Even though Olympic goods ranging from clothing to all kinds of drinking glasses to postcards are in many of the stores, there’s a store in Whistler that only sells Olympic merchandise.

Sugarland coming to Lake Tahoe

Sugarland is slated for another big country music weekend at the 2010 Lake Tahoe Summer Concert Series at Harveys Outdoor Arena on July 10.

Tickets go on sale at 10am March 22.

Sugarland – Jennifer Nettles and Kristian Bush – won two Grammy Awards in 2009 for Best Country Song and Best Country Performance by a Duo or Group. Two months later, the Academy of Country Music proclaimed the emergent superstars the



Sugarland

top Vocal Duo of the Year, ending Brooks & Dunn's nine-year run.

Nettles also received the Milestone Award from the ACM, presented to her by Reba McEntire. At the time, they had been performing together as a duo for five years.

In 2009, they also won the CMT Music Award for Duo Video of the Year ("All I Wanna Do") and the Country Music Association Award for Vocal Duo of the Year. Sugarland has sold over 8 million records.

This month, Sugarland released the single, "Wide Open," on iTunes for the Team USA Soundtrack for the 2010 Winter Olympics. They also appeared with many other artists on the remake of "We Are The World: 25 for Haiti," which premiered during the opening ceremonies of the Vancouver Olympics.

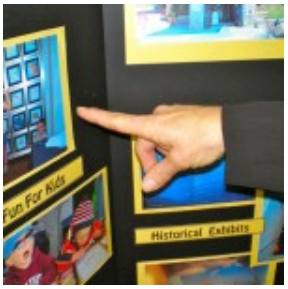
Tickets are through www.ticketmaster.com and www.apeconcerts.com, ranging from $59.50-$125.

Explore Tahoe has something to offer locals

By Laurie Brazil

Although many of us locals think we know our “lake”, there’s a lot of events and information that we could benefit from at the Explore Tahoe venue at Heavenly Village.

The Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra was enlightened at one of their early morning meetings by Lauren Thomaselli about the displays and objectives of this relatively new program.



Explore Tahoe in South Lake Tahoe has information for locals and tourists. Photo/Provided

This urban trailhead was designed to not only welcome visitors, but also educate and inspire all of us to take advantage of our beautiful environment but do so with respect and appreciation. The interactive displays and environmentally inspired artwork will impress guests and Tahoe-ites alike.

Their objective is to encourage guests to plan their visit, take advantage of our mass transit to protect our natural

resources and to ensure that their visit is memorable. The staff wants to inspire patrons to take advantage of all that our South Shore has to offer and enjoy our recreation with a conscience.

The visitor and interpretive center is open year round and you are encouraged to visit www.recreationintahoe.com or call (530) 542.2908 for hours, current tours, events, and displays.

Make sure you take advantage of their newest addition of a 12 foot square topo-relief map with 27 points of interest that light up.

This dynamic facility is co-sponsored by the city of South Lake Tahoe, Heavenly Mountain Resort, U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe Heritage Foundation, California Tahoe Conservancy, BlueGo, and Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

Laurie Brazil is a member of Soroptimist International of Tahoe Sierra.

Weidinger PR scores industry awards



Weidinger Public Relations of Stateline went four for four, including two Silver Spike Awards and two Awards of Excellence, at the Public Relations Society of America, Sierra Nevada Chapterâ€™s 23rd annual awards program.

The Silver Spike designation is the top award given. Seven Silver Spikes were presented to public relations agencies, firms and businesses throughout the Sierra Nevada.

Weidinger PR struck silver in the â€œSpecial Events & Observances with Budget under $10,000â€ category for its efforts on behalf of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad.

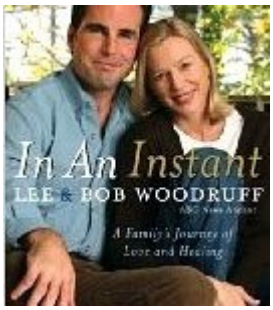
The second silver was in the â€œSpecial Purpose Videoâ€ category for a viral video campaign, â€œBecome a Granlibakken Vikingâ€ on behalf of the Granlibakken Conference Center & Lodge.

WPRâ€™s American Century Championship entry in â€œSpecial Events & Observances with Budget over $25,000+â€ received the highest award given within the category. The success of the celebrity golf tournamentâ€™s PR efforts was collaboration between WPR and Vizion Group of Philadelphia.

WPR also received an Award of Excellence in the â€œOverall Campaign with Budget over $25,000+â€ category for the firmâ€™s year-round PR campaign with the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.

Weidinger Public Relations, established in 1985, specializes in travel, tourism, real estate, recreation, and special and sporting events. For more information, call (775) 588.2412 or visit www.weidingerpr.com.

Powerhouse news couple gives talk at Squaw



Three years ago in Iraq , the lives of Bob Woodruff and his family changed forever when an improvised explosive device detonated near the armored vehicle in which Woodruff was traveling. He suffered a traumatic brain injury and nearly lost his life. The bomb’s devastation proved to be more than physical, however, and it had a life-changing impact on the entire Woodruff family.

The coupleâ€™s book, “In an Instant: A Familyâ€™s Journey of Love, Courage, and Healing,” documents their familyâ€™s journey to recovery following Woodruffâ€™s roadside bomb injury. Lee Woodruffâ€™s book â€œPerfectly Imperfect: A Life in Progress,â€ tackles the universal topics of life, such as friends and family.

The former ABC World News Tonight co-anchor and current foreign correspondent Woodruff and his wife, Lee Woodruff, spoke at Truckee Tahoe Community Foundationâ€™s Queen of Hearts Womenâ€™s Fund lunch Feb. 17 at the Resort at Squaw Creek.

â€œ(We) talk about our own familyâ€™s journey to heal and also how being able to give back helped in our own healing,â€ Lee Woodruff, a contributing editor for ABCâ€™s “Good Morning Americaâ€ and a freelance writer, said in a press release. â€œThe Queen of Heartâ€™s mission of philanthropy is near and dear to our own hearts.â€

Bob Woodruff is back at work reporting for ABC News shows on a variety of international and national stories with his â€œBob Woodruff Reportsâ€ unit. He has continued to cover stories that focus attention on the needs of veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The Woodruff family also established the Bob Woodruff Family Fund for Traumatic Brain Injury and Remind.org to raise money for members of the military who need cognitive rehabilitiation

and care following traumatic brain injuries while serving their country.

â€œWe got lucky as a family with our own healing,â€ Lee Woodruff said. â€œWe wanted to help those who served their country to heal with all of the resources we had.â€

Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation Queen of Hearts Women's Fund launched in February 2006. The goal was to identify 1,000 women to give a minimum of $1,000 and raise $1 million within one year. The group exceeded this goal and has raised $1.3 million to date. Queen of Hearts Women's Fund is broad based in its funding interests making grants in nonprofit organizations ranging from arts, culture and public benefit to health and human services.

'The Laramie Project' at LTCC

â€œThe Laramie Projectâ€ is a docu-drama about the 1998 hate-crime murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student who was brutally beaten by two young men, tied to a fence, and left to die.

It will be performed at Lake Tahoe Community College's Duke Theatre in March.

Writer-director MoisÃ©s Kaufman and actors of New Yorkâ€™s Tectonic Theatre Project journeyed to Laramie to interview townspeople about the horrific murder. After 400 hours of interviews, what emerges is an unusual and powerful theater piece focusing on the citizens of Laramie, how they were affected and ultimately changed by this act of brutality within their community.

Mature themes and content â€“ may not be suitable for children under 15.

A series of events, including panel and post-show discussions, will be held in conjunction with this production, culminating in a Candlelight Vigil Against Hate following the final Saturday evening performance on March 20.

Performances: March 12, 13, 18, 19, 20 at 7:30pm, March 14 and 21 at 2pm.

DCSO Capt. Mike Biaggini dies

It is with great sorrow that Douglas County Sheriff Ron Pierini reports the passing of one of his finest officers, Capt. Mike Biaggini.

Capt. Biaggini passed away at approximately 6am Feb. 17. He was at his home in Gardnerville with family when he passed.



Mike Biaggini

Capt. Biaggini, 55, had been battling cancer for approximately eight years.

Capt. Biaggini began his career with the Douglas County Sheriffâ€™s Office in 1981. During his 28 year career, he had worked in every capacity, and in every division, at the

sheriffâ€™s office.

During his tenure with the Douglas County Sheriffâ€™s Office, Capt. Biaggini served as commander of the Patrol, Investigations and Administration Divisions, Chief Deputy Coroner, Honor Guard Commander, Crisis Negotiation Team Supervisor, SWAT Sniper, Professional Standards Unit Leader, Lead Defensive Tactics Instructor, and supervisor of the Boat Patrol, Search and Rescue, Mounted Posse and Reserve Officer programs. Capt. Biaggini was a 1997 graduate of the FBI Academy.

Memorial services will be announced at a later date.

TRPA announces Best in Basin winners

On Feb. 24, the Best in the Basin awards will be given out at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board meeting in Stateline.

The 20-year-old awards program recognizes work on projects demonstrating exceptional planning, design and compatibility with the Lake Tahoe environment. Local professionals in the fields of architecture, landscaping, planning, engineering, and resource management served as independent judges.



Best New Construction, Industrial

Winners are:

Best Erosion Control Project: Tahoe Vista Erosion Control project, Environmental Improvement Program Project Number 212, Placer County. Kansas McGahan, PE, Placer County project engineer; Camp, Dresser, McKee (CDM, Inc.), project design; Gold Valley Construction, contractor.

Best BMP Retrofit: Kings Run Condominiums, 1300 Regency Way, Tahoe Vista. Webb Land Surveying and Leroy Civil engineering, preliminary design; Basile Management Practice (Lake Tahoe BMP, Tahoe City), engineering and construction.

Best Restoration Project: Third Creek Stream Restoration, Environmental Improvement Program Project Number 562, Incline Village. Lead agency, Incline Village General Improvement District (Brad Johnson, engineering manager); agency partners, US Army Corps of Engineers, Nevada Division of State Lands, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency; design consultant, Entrix, Inc. (chief engineer Charley Miller, P.E.); contractor, Burdick Construction, Inc.

Best Defensible Space Project: Carnelian Woods Townhomes, 5101 North Lake Blvd., Tahoe City. Bruce Seybold, registered professional forester, North Tahoe Fire Protection District; Cross Check Services, contractor.

Best Forest Fuels Reduction Project: China Gardens Fuels Reduction Project, China Garden Court, Glenbrook. Glenbrook Homeowners Association, property owner; Tahoe Douglas Fire Department Zephyr Hand Crew, hand thinning work; Cold Creek Land Services, contractor.

Public Service Award: South Tahoe Area Transit Authority/BlueGO, South Y Transit Center remodel, South Lake

Tahoe. DML Construction, contractor; Lake Tahoe Heating and Plumbing, subcontractor; Winters Electric, subcontractor.

Best Affordable Housing Project: Kelly Ridge Apartments (affordable housing for seniors), 1447 Herbert Ave. South Lake Tahoe. Tahoe Senior Housing II, L.P., owner; Randy Borges, Borges Architectural Group, architect; American Baptist Homes of the West, developer; Boward Builders, general contractor. Funding through California Housing Finance Agency, California HOME Program, South Lake Tahoe Redevelopment Agency. Project coordination by Tahoe Area Coordination Council for the Disabled (TACCD).

Best Residential Rebuild: Kirschenbaum Residence Homewood. Scott Gillespie, Sandbox Studio, designer; Lowe Construction, contractor.

Best Residential Modification: Fett Residence, Highway 28, Crystal Bay. Elise Fett & Associates, architecture and engineering; Michael Horn Construction, contractor.

Adaptation of a Vintage Home: Gordon Residents, Elks Point. ("The Little Stone House") Architect, Elise Fett; Engineer, James Swann of Mountain Engineering; Contractor, East Slope Construction; Kemper Hendrick of Kemper Masonry, masonry work; Cameron Boyle and Shane Jett-Pierce, carpentry; Micah Langdon of Design Workshop, landscape design; Western Environments Inc. of Carson City, outdoor stone work, with landscape design implementation; Bruce Tilley of Tilley Plumbing, plumbing work; Steve Bowman of Bowman and Son Electrical, electrical work; cabinetry by Mark Bartholomucci of Gardnerville; Judith Schultz, The Mill, Lodi, interior design.

Best New Construction, Industrial: South Tahoe Industrial Park, 1772 D St., South Lake Tahoe. Owners: Steven D. Leman & Tom Haen. Landscape design by Steve Leman; general contractor, Thomas Haen Co.; civil engineer, Jim Haen; landscaping by Tahoe Outdoor Living.

Best Commercial Rebuild: Ski Run Center, intersection of Ski Run Boulevard and Highway 50, South Lake Tahoe. Engineering and architectural work by MWA Inc.; Gardner’s Construction, contractor.

In addition to the awards, the Best in the Basin judges singled out the following three projects for honorable mention:

South Tahoe Public Utility District, 1275 Meadow Crest Drive, South Lake Tahoe. Special recognition for drought resistant landscaping/demonstration garden at administrative offices. Landscape contractor, Aspen Hollow Nursery; landscape design, John Thiel, PE, Design Workshop.

Caltrans and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board. Special recognition for implementing Natural Environment As Treatment (NEAT) planning initiative for water quality projects along 38 miles of Lake Tahoe Basin highways. This approach helps avoid unnecessary cost of mechanical treatments where appropriate. Architects, engineers and contractors, Rood Rodgers Inc.

Lake Village/Golden Sierra Power. Special recognition for solar retrofit at 118 Snowbird Court, Stateline. Peter Lusich, owner; project design, Mark Johnson, Golden Sierra Power; racking design, Direct Power and Water; roof calculation and engineering, Building Concepts; online electrical diagram, Mt. View Electric.

MontBleu saving money going

green

MontBleu casino in Stateline received an $80,692 credit as an incentive from NV Energy for installing an energy efficient lighting system throughout the property that will save $200,000 annually on lighting expenses.

The six-month light system overhaul was completed in January.

MontBleu saw a return on investment within four months of installing energy efficient lighting throughout the casino, hotel, and parking garage.

MontBleu is researching converting its hot water pumps to run on frequency drives which will regulate heat throughout the property and will reduce usage by 40 percent.

Upcoming efforts include plans to reduce toilet water tank and faucet waste; collecting used vegetable oil to produce biodiesel; conversion of company vehicles to biodiesel; implementing bike-to-work days and recycling ink jet/toner cartridges.