

Lake Valley: Angora Fire – a helpless feeling

Publisher's note: *Lake Tahoe News this month has been running several stories leading up to today's 10th anniversary of the June 24, 2007, Angora Fire.*



The Angora Fire spreads rapidly through the forest.
Photo/LVFPD

By Kathryn Reed

"In the firehouse it was a quiet, somber mood. Everyone was really tired and we were all really sad. It was our local fire district. We were wishing we could have done more, but knew it was totally out of our control. It was

*a helpless feeling.” – Capt. Mike Mosca, Lake Valley Fire
Protection District*

Mosca wasn't supposed to work on June 24, 2007. He was camping with his family at Fallen Leaf Lake.

He and then Battalion Chief Joe MacAvoy had been mountain biking at Scott's Lake that morning. Siren, after siren wailed in the not so far distance. Coming down the trail into Meyers they saw the plume of smoke. It was black. Structures were on fire. The two had never pedaled as fast as they did that Sunday afternoon.

Mosca was dropped off at the station, while MacAvoy secured Mosca's family.

But there was no time for MacAvoy to save his own house from the destructive Angora Fire.

“The first two engines in Angora got to a vantage point to see the fire. They called the battalion chief to evacuate this neighborhood,” Mosca said.

Mosca had only been a captain for a few months at that point. That day he was an engineer – meaning he was driving the fire truck. Making the sharp left on Lake Tahoe Boulevard at Angora Creek it was impossible to see anything.



The sky was orange for days and nights as the Angora Fire raged. Photo/LVFPD

“Trees were torching up like Christmas trees. You could hardly see the road,” Mosca told *Lake Tahoe News*. “By Coyote Lane and Eagle Ridge you could hear the fire. It was like a freight train. Already houses were on fire. Spot fires thrown by the houses on fire exceeded our span of control. There was nothing we really could do.

“We got the engine out of those streets and pulled back to station 5 near Boulder Mountain to see what the fire was doing. When we saw it making a run through the neighborhood above Lake Tahoe Boulevard we went in to see what houses we could save.”

Most of the 254 houses that burned that day did so in the first eight hours.

Air suppression that first afternoon wasn't possible because the winds were so high.

"When it's that hot and intense and crowning the radiant heat is so intense you can't get within several hundred feet of the fire front because it will just burn you up," Mosca said.

Those who fought the fire that day were wondering how many people died, and how many they might know. After all, this was a locals' neighborhood, with most houses occupied by full-time residents.



The remains after the flames moved on from the neighborhood. Photo/LVFPD

Miraculously no people died, though some animals perished. In

fact, there were only minor injuries to firefighters. People for the most part obeyed orders from law enforcement to evacuate. Friends called friends. It was a community looking out for one another.

“It was amazing what law enforcement did. They knew where the disabled and elderly in the community were and they got them out,” Mosca recalled. “And they didn’t have safety gear. They were in summer street clothes.”

The fire was out in less than a week, having consumed about 3,100 acres – mostly U.S. Forest Service land. For the local firefighters after the first day they were no longer in control. On a fire of this size and nature the state and feds take over. The local guys are told to resume their regular duties.

“It’s hard when they come in and say ‘we have it from here and go back to your station’. But there is also the understanding they have an unlimited amount of resources and the command structure to run a giant scale event,” Mosca said.



Lake Valley firefighters on the Angora Fire in 2007.
Photo/LVFPD

That didn't mean Lake Valley, or even surrounding departments, stayed in their stations as the fire kept burning. They were in the neighborhood, especially the Lake Valley firefighters. They sifted through rubble, they listened to those who lost everything, and to those who wondered how and why their house survived.

They, too, though, were devastated.

Ten years later, about half of Lake Valley's employees are veterans of the Angora Fire. It's a physical and emotional memory with many lessons that are passed on.

Not long after the fire a counselor came in to do a critical incident stress debriefing. Attending was optional.

“We sat in a circle, talked about things, what we saw, what we did, what we felt,” Mosca said. “Guys cried, some were quiet.”

“One of the things the counselor said when we were in the group is one of the biggest problems is with our job we go in and we fix things. People call us because they are having a really bad day and we fix it. When we get a call and there is nothing we can do it is hard to deal with.”

About half of the two dozen Lake Valley employees live in Meyers or South Lake Tahoe. They hear the tone and they go to work. They did it that Sunday and they keep doing it, never knowing if it will be the next Angora.

Secrets of a canine mind

By Jeffrey Kluger, *Time*

Odds are you don't look forward to spending time in a magnetic resonance imager—and with good reason. The clanging, coffin-like machine seems purpose-built for sensory assault. But you're not Ninja, a 3-year-old pit-bull mix, who trots into a lab at Emory University in Atlanta, catches a glimpse of the MRI in which she'll spend her morning and leaps happily onto the table.

Ninja is one of the few dogs in the world that have been trained to sit utterly still in an MRI (the little bits of hot dog she gets as rewards help) so that neuroscientist Gregory Berns can peer into her brain as it works. “What's it like to be a dog?” Berns asks, a question that is both the focus of his work and the thrust of his next book. “No one can know with certainty. But I think our dogs are experiencing things very much the way we do.”

That is what we want to believe. Our love affair with dogs has been going on for 15,000 years, and there's no sign that it's flagging. About 44 percent of families in the U.S. include at least one dog, meaning a canine population of up to 80 million.

Most of the time, we give our dogs very good lives. We fancy that they understand us, and maybe they do: come home sad and they'll nuzzle your hand. They don't have language, but they communicate volumes—with their eyes, with their barks, with their entire expressive bodies.

Read the whole story

Evan Menchel – 1991-2017



Evan Allan Menchel

Evan Allan Menchel of South Lake Tahoe died June 20, 2017. He was 25.

He was born Dec. 30, 1991.

If you had ever met Evan, you remembered him. His time on this earth was short, but glorious. He had a different outlook on life that very few could conceive. He lived for experiences.

His love for humanity was embraceable. His joys were: hiking, skiing, cooking, biking, driving, swimming, cars, motorcycles and crafting.

He is survived by his mom and stepdad Lora Menchel and Todd Shewbridge; dad and stepmom Richard Menchel and Debra Menchel; sister Christine Menchel (Sky); and his beloved fur baby Audee; along with extended Menchel/Saunders family.

A celebration of life to be June 26, 3pm at Lake Tahoe Golf Course in Meyers.

Nevada spending money on rural tourism endeavors

New special events are slated for rural Nevada, including a quirky cooking festival that involves steam engines, as well as an event celebrating the 20th anniversary of the land-speed record.

Both are among projects funded by the Nevada Division of Tourism through its rural marketing grants program. TravelNevada distributed \$983,400 to 159 projects promoting tourism in rural Nevada. Grants were approved Wednesday by the Nevada Commission on Tourism, the advisory group for TravelNevada. TravelNevada is part of the Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs.

Among the funded projects:

- Lake Tahoe Incline Village Crystal Bay Visitors Bureau was granted \$10,000 for the North Lake Tahoe Luminaries social media campaign, which will promote area events in December. Funding will cover video production, drone footage, still imagery, content development and social media advertising costs.
 - NCOT also awarded \$10,000 to the Carson City Visitors Bureau for a statewide project, Nevada's Singletrack Mountain Bike Adventure campaign, which targets mountain bike enthusiasts as they travel across the state. Funds also will support two media familiarization tours.
 - The Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe received \$8,000 to design, produce and host a new website that will be compatible with smart phones and will include an events page, contact form and links to the tribe's social media networks. Tribal staff will be able to update and add content to the site, hosted by WordPress.
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Old-school typewriters attract new fans

By Russell Contreras, AP

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Typewriter enthusiasts gather at an Albuquerque restaurant to experiment with vintage Smith Coronas. Fans in Boston kneel in a city square and type stories about their lives during a pro-immigration demonstration. A documentary on typewriters featuring Tom Hanks and musician John Mayer is set for release this summer.

In the age of smartphones, social media and cyber hacking

fears, vintage typewriters that once gathered dust in attics and basements are attracting a new generation of fans across the U.S.

From public “type-ins” at bars to street poets selling personalized, typewritten poems on the spot, typewriters have emerged as popular items with aficionados hunting for them in thrift stores, online auction sites and antique shops. Some buy antique Underwoods to add to a growing collection. Others search for a midcentury Royal Quiet De Luxe – like a model author Ernest Hemingway used – to work on that simmering novel.

Read the whole story

Road Beat: Miata MX-5 RF, a true sports car



The MX-5 Miata will not disappoint. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Mazda's new fourth generation MX-5 Miata combines tradition with the contemporary. Tradition in the sense of a raw sports car of yesteryear and contemporary in the sense of being built with high tech, state of the art components wrapped in a chiseled, sensuous body as if carved by a Samurai sword.

While rippling with bulging muscles and deeply flared fenders, its flanks are sharply trimmed and defined. It is the best Miata design yet in the KODO-Soul in Motion design philosophy of Mazda which has brought us the best looking compact car in the Mazda 3 and mid-size car in the Mazda 6. If it were produced, the RX-9 would blow people's minds.

My RF (retractable fastback) model is more targa top than open air convertible as the flying buttresses won't come down without a hacksaw. The power top system and extra metal adds about 100 pounds.

Going back to its traditional roots, the new Miata is trimmer and a bit smaller paring weight by nearly 150 pounds, only sacrificing mass, but not safety, structure and/or ability. Riding on a 91-inch wheelbase the Miata stretches out less than 13 feet at 154 inches while width is a trim 68 inches. It stands an inch over four feet.



Specifications

Price \$24,915 to about \$34,000

Engine

2.0L DOHC, 16 valve, direct injected inline four 155 hp @ 6,000 rpm

148 lbs.-ft. of torque @ 4,600 rpm

Transmission

Six-speed manual

Six speed torque converter automatic

Configuration

Longitudinal front engine/rear wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 90.9 inches

Length 154.1 inches

Weight 68.3 inches

Height 49.0 inches

Track (f/r) 58.9/59.2 inches
Ground clearance 5.32 inches
Weight 2,485 pounds
(RF/automatic)
GVWR 2,892 (RF/automatic)
Fuel capacity 11.89 gallons
Trunk capacity 4.48 cubic
feet
Wheels 17X7 inch alloys
Tires 205/45X17
Steering 2.7 turns lock to
lock
Turning circle (wall to
wall) 32.9 feet

Performance

0-60 mph 7.08 seconds
50-70 mph 3.48 seconds
50-70 mph uphill 5.54
seconds
Top speed plenty fast
Fuel economy EPA rated
26/35/29 mpg
city/highway/combined.
Expect 33-34 mpg in rural
country driving. 44 mpg on
the highway at legal speeds.

Powering the new Miata is Mazda's Skyactiv 2.0L inline four used in many of its other models. Stomping out 155 hp at 6,000 rpm and 148 pounds of twist at 4,600 rpm, this somewhat long stroker is still a screamer, red lining and pulling strong to 6,800 rpm. But instead of the "mandatory" manual, my ride was outfitted with their quick paddle shifting automatic which adds 150 pounds along with the RF model and its 13 second folding power top over the base convertible.

Acceleration quickness with the auto cog swapper is slightly

reduced, not only from the extra few pounds but more important, taller gear ratios. Consequently 0-60 mph times go from 5.75 seconds to 7.08 seconds. Passing times are less changed with a level 50-70 mph run taking 3.48 second, almost identical to the manual but climbing a grade that time slows to 5.54 seconds, an excellent time but a second slower than the manual as well.

But don't give up on the auto just because it's a second slower to 60 mph, if feels great and responsive, better than the performance times reflect. In actuality this Miata is still very quick equaling the manual in level passing and is easier to drive than the manual system. With the paddles or the floor shifter, it responds lightning quick and holds the gear selected and will not downshift or upshift under throttle pressure like other "manual autos," a great feature.

Most of the performance differences are due to the taller gearing of the automatic. The auto turns just 2000 rpm at 70 mph while the manual spins the engine at 2,900 rpm. That translates to improved fuel economy. At 70 mph in a two-way run the auto averaged 43.9 mpg a six-mpg improvement over the manual. In most situations, less rpm means improved fuel economy. In my Highway 50 run to Carson City and back, Miata averaged an excellent 38.7 mpg, better than most economy cars. The EPA rates the Miata auto at 26/35/29 mpg city/highway/combined although my fuel economy for 400 miles of mostly hilly, rural driving averaged 35.4 mpg. With only 11.9 gallons of max fuel, range is over 400 miles, probably most drivers' limits anyway.

Miata's forte is when the road bends. Most every car can go straight, but changing directions is where we separate the men from the boys and in the Miata's case, it's about the biggest guy on the block and probably the neighborhood. In racing circles, more people race Miatas by huge numbers and one of the biggest winners lives right here in El Dorado County, Marc Hoover. His car, a race prepared Miata.

Having incredible credentials makes Miata what it is. Trick double wishbones up front and a multilink system in the rear with a stiff backbone frame. Track is a wide 59 inches and the electric power steering rack is a perfect 2.7 turns lock to lock while turning circle is a scant 33 feet, wall to wall. Not overtiring the car (205/45 rubber on 17X7 alloys) gives the Miata a playful attitude, still requiring driver skill and attention. You can rotate the car with throttle getting into a bit of oversteer and then use a "dab of oppo" all with total control and a huge smile on your face. This is what driving is all about and with the Miata's ability to communicate, it's almost telepathy. It doesn't get any better.

Ride quality is firm, not harsh mind you, but a muted, firm and very well controlled. Attitude remains pancake flat while noise is somewhat quiet, even with the top down. The tires do make some noise, especially on coarse surfaces.

Safety was all there including blind stop detection and lane departure warning. Miata's four wheel discs (front ventilated) are astounding, arresting forward progress in 36 feet from 40 mph. Of course, all the acronyms are standard. LED headlights are excellent as well.

Miata's new generation is a travel light interior. Seats are bathed in leather and offer great support and comfort. There are cupholders but must be attached to the inside kick panels. The good news is once attached they are located conveniently. There is no glove box, the center console is tiny and the rear vertical storage glove box between the seats requires a contortionist to access once seated. The trunk is limited to 4½ cubic feet.

Instrumentation is lean and mean with a big tach and speedo plus an info center which includes a full trip computer and above the center stack is even more relevant info on the radio/nav screen. The system is easy to use but requires several steps with the center control knob, sort of like a

mouse. But there probably isn't room for all the buttons and knobs that would be required otherwise. Considering the limited space, Mazda's system gets it done and works well.

Pricing for the new Miata RF starts at \$31,555 for a Club manual to \$33,825 for the Grand Touring Automatic. Everything else was standard including the seven-inch color touch screen. It was loaded, only the special paint called machine gray metallic was an extra \$300 bucks plus the \$835 for the boat from Hiroshima, Japan. It's the ultimate sports car for the buck.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Burning Man becomes museum exhibit

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

Walking into the Nevada Museum of Art's newest exhibition is like walking into a Burning Man time capsule.

A pair of dusty boots. A 1986 sketch of the man. Several jars of ash and melted glass collected from torched effigies over the years.

City of Dust, open to the public from July 1 through Jan. 7, 2018, is a more than 300-piece collection of Burning Man relics, just a sliver of the more than 6,000 items that the museum has collected for its Burning Man archive at the Center

for Art and Environment in Reno.

Read the whole story

Youth to put on Chautauqua performance

“People who United the States” will be the Chautauqua performance at the Dangberg Ranch in Minden on June 28 at 6:30pm.

The Douglas County Historical Society’s Young Chautauqua Program presenters are Jahmila Santiago, 15, as Sarah Winnemucca, 15-year-old Sandia Johnson as Abigail Fillmore, 6-year-old Sam Johnson as John Muir, 10-year-old Micaiah Maulis as Thomas Edison, and 9-year-old Mamre Maulis as John Glen.

The event is free.

The park is located at 1450 Highway88. This is an outdoor event, and visitors should bring their own seating. Dogs are not permitted.

Angora Fire: Life altering tragedy

Publisher’s note: *Lake Tahoe News this month will be running several stories leading up to the 10th anniversary of the*

Angora Fire on June 24, 2007.



Ken Herrmann's lot after the Angora Fire leveled his house in 2007. Photos/Ken Herrmann

By Ken Herrmann

First Wednesday

It had been a tough day. Actually, the last few days had been stressful and I had not been sleeping well. I am thinking again that it might be time to change my 25-year career to something new. But this evening I just want to go home and read a book, put on some CDs, turn on the idiot box, or do something else to relax.

I drive up the main drag and turn onto my street. A neighbors' dog, a big Saint Bernard, is out on the front lawn, as usual, looking very contented with its place in the sun.

I pull into the driveway and step out of my truck. As my feet

touch the ground the layer of pine pollen on the driveway puffs up around them. The pollen had been falling for about a week and gives a slightly yellow tinge to everything.

I set my lunch box on the front steps and open the side door to the garage.

One of my kayaks is just inside the door. Maybe this next Sunday I would get out on the lake for a while. I might even meet someone to paddle with in the future, and if she's cute and single, all the better.

A stack of boxes against the back wall holds a collection of "The World's Best Reading" from the magazine company. With the built-in shelves in this house, I can unbox them and start reading again. Other boxes hold remaining texts, work from college (both degrees) and general references that I have picked up through the years.

Also boxed are thousands of photographs documenting people, places, events, vacations and photo-logs including the bridge at Cal Poly and other work projects I'm proud of. I also have mementoes of driving athlete buses for the '84 Olympics, raising a guide dog, clogging in parades and being a parent in two years of the "Nutcracker" for Central Coast Dance.

Two two-drawer file cabinets hold documents and personal history papers including the "as your kid grows" binder of school papers, pictures, accomplishments and growth measurements that mom passed to me a few years ago. Now if I ever want to know who my third-grade teacher was, what my interests were, or how tall I was, I can look it up. But some of that stuff must be made up. Haven't I always been able to see the top of the refrigerator?



Not all the boxes were unpacked before Ken Herrmann's house burned to the ground.

A few other cabinets and corners of the garage hold tools or various parts of assorted things that I want to try to turn into something else. Parts to make unique fountains, or lamps, or a combination of the two. There is also the stack of irreplaceable old-growth heart redwood siding recovered from an early 1960s vintage sauna that I dismantled a few years back. Beautiful wood grain patterns ready to be turned into ... something.

On the workbench is the magazine with plans for deck chairs. As with making additions for my existing furniture to make it all taller, I would alter these plans to make taller furniture from scratch. I have gotten tired of "fitting" into "normal" sized (short) furniture. From now on, find it or make it. It would also be nice to have furniture on the front and back decks for the summer.

The plan, now that my year of ceramics classes at the college is over, is to spend the equivalent time per week, (probably end up being much more) in the garage. My tools, which have been in storage for three years, finally have their proper places. The last thing to finish is that the new, still boxed, Delta drill press gets a rolling platform and its own corner.

With combination chop saw, table saw, drill press and the multitude of other tools now arranged on steel shelves and in

drawers I can get back to my fountain designing, make furniture that fits, and what else? It's time to play!

Hand testing my off-road bike tires, I find that the rear tire is low again from a persistent slow leak. I'll have to remember to fix that before I get the desire to go riding the trails up the hill toward the ridge.

I pull out my plumbing toolbox to take into the house. There is a leak in one of the bathroom sinks that needs attention and this box has any tool I need to repair just about any plumbing fixture I might come across. It even has some standard replacement parts.

Going in the house I set my toolbox in the hall, and lunch box and mail on the counter.

The dishwasher is partly open to remind me to empty it. What luxury! This is the largest most comfortable kitchen I have ever had. Four months ago when I moved in I wasn't sure what to do with the space. But it has worked out and although the cabinets are not full by any means, I find that not being limited to four feet of counter space is wonderful. The dining counter is also a very comfortable place to work or eat a meal.



The upside down drafting table with G5 monitor, inside to the left.

Thirsty for some good old H₂O, I take down the mug sister gave me about 20 years ago, it's shaped like part of a saggy pair of jeans with my name written on a pant pocket. Always cute. Not her, the mug. Well, ... her sometimes too.

Boots off, I sit down to watch the last 20 minutes of a sci-fi show on the box. With no cable service and questionable satellite capability (trees) for the last three years, the swimmer TV (resurrected from a pool, by buddy Andy, 10 years ago) is finally getting to re-exercise its multiple channels capability, instead of the 2½ off the local airwaves.

Four months living here and my DVDs and CDs are still mostly boxed.

I've been enjoying the tree-based entertainment across the back deck or the many TV channels.

But the home-made "entertainment center" given to me by a friend on the coast some 12 years ago also might look better with DVDs and CDs in it rather than in boxes on it. Have to work on that as I might as well look as if I live here rather than just squatting.

Show over, I change into running shoes, shorts and T-shirt. The shirt is one of a collection of race shirts and fleece vests acquired from over 20 years of running benefit races, mostly 10Ks down in San Luis Obispo County.

On the way to the back deck for a pre-run stretch I notice that my Djembe, sitting on the fireplace hearth, and the tube-type amp and five-CD changer, just inside the door, are dusty. But also noticing that the window nearby is partially open I suspect that most of the "dust" is pine pollen. The stuff is everywhere.

Facing southeast the deck is mostly shaded this time of day. The garage is street level, the main house floor partly above that, with the lot sloping down to the back that puts me about

mid-tree height. Even my downstairs neighbors deck is 10 feet above the ground. My deck is a very nice place to hang out (deck chairs please!).

A chickadee is running up a tree beside the house. He stops on a branch to look at me (maybe he's just resting from the climb) then flicks his tail and continues up into the branches. The local Steller's jay has landed down the deck rail and is yelling at me for intruding on "his" deck, I'm stretched and not willing to argue, so out the front deck doors, down to the walk and off running I go.

Turning left down the street away from town I reconnect with the main drag and turn right toward the stub street of the Creek Road to connect with a single-track forest trail.

While the forest is green with grasses and new shoots on the fir trees, it is drying fast. The 28 percent, or there about, snowload this last winter was not good. Last year at this time the basin mountains had snow on them. Today, in mid-June, there is less snow in the highest protected areas than there was in late August of last year. Not good.

After a time of crossing gullies, a small stream and following old logging roads, I arrive at the pond and take a break to stretch. Mr. and Mrs. Mallard, unconcerned with my presence, are having a spirited discussion about something while cruising in the direction of the small island. The tree caressing mountain breeze in a clear blue sky is very refreshing.

Running again, I retrace my steps down the trail and turn left at the fork to take a longer route home, uphill from the neighborhood. This area still has its slash piles from the thinning operation of some seasons back. Judging by the condition of these piles, they are overdue for burning. The acres of piles burned around my previous solitary residence this last fall were evidence that these will also go to smoke

hot and fast.

I see the water tank. If not looking, distracted by nature, it's easy to miss it. From the street below it is practically invisible, hidden by the trees of the forest. The many hard switchbacks going up the hill turn easier as the trail eases downhill. I cut down across the easy switchbacks and join a side trail down to my road, turning right up toward the house.

The white Shepard-cross-whatever-he-is from across the street comes to say hello and walk with me as I cool down. This dog really has it made. He surveys his realm from an elevated driveway, gets attention nearly whenever he wants it, and though he could have a lot to say, he just smiles, wags his tail and wanders around. After I've cooled, he really wants to come in the house, but I give him another good scratch and rub, tell him to go home, and go inside.



What had been boxed family
China became rubble.

More H2O from the mug and I grab my toolbox to fix the leak. I find that the seal retaining screw is loose, but the seal is also worn so it is best to replace it. It turns out that I have a seal that fits, so in less than 10 minutes and no more leak. Magic!

Toolbox back to the front hall, I go to my office to check email. This "office" contains my 20-year-old queen-size futon

couch (3-year-old mattress), and the seven-wood slope-top desk that was someone's woodshop senior project. The desk is on blocks because it is of course, too short, but also so I can use one of the bar stools, (that I assembled and finished years back) for it and the drafting table (in flat position) that my G5 sits on.

The room also contains the solid red oak two-drawer/two shelf nightstand that I made for a lady but never had a chance to deliver (funny how people move on.). My '95 PowerMac is also here. Still as useful as the day it came off the line; its only failing is that it couldn't keep up with Internet speeds and software. If technology were only less shortsighted and money hungry, we could save a lot of energy and landfill space.

Against the wall, still not hung, is the tall bulletin board containing; lapel pins from events that I helped organize or attended (La Fiesta, Poly Royal, a parade or three), pinned birth announcements of nieces and nephews (six now) plus wedding invites and memorial notices (Uncle Bob, Mother Wood). Also pinned are pictures of me with a large boa constrictor around my neck and one of a nasal polyp. (Uh huh, next!)



Remnants of the snowblower and other items in the garage.

The less than 3-year-old G5 pulls a few notes and jokes written by friends from my ISP.

"Did you hear the one about the guy from Biloxi that found his hollering cat in the toilet with the top down? No? Me neither."

Here's another candidate for the Darwin Awards, seems he couldn't wait for his ship to make landfall.

"Waaas uuuup?"

Going online there are no interesting/available jobs with the parks, or any of the normal "Favorites list" places to check for options. How to find another place to take care of...?

The camp was perfect. Flexible schedule, a certain autonomy, but also long hours and a fair amount of responsibility. If the owners had not failed to support it or the staff, camp might have been a long time gig for me.

Well, I was on my own way out (in disgust) long before the Forest Service threw their wrench in the works and ended the job. It still bugs me though. (Phhhptttz and sputter). Maybe I really should consider a total career change, just as long as it's a creative trade.

Cooled from the run beyond the point of comfortable, I sign off and take a quick hot shower. I think the large, thick, colorful beach towel idea for bath mat/bathroom rug looks good. The four I have, in rotation, will keep the room lively and bright throughout the year.

Food! I whip up a cubed steak with my spices, a large salad with avocado and tomato, toast some thick raisin bread with butter, add a large milk and sit to eat. I decide to watch the TV news while eating so I pull out the "history" tray to balance the meal on.

Some 20 years previous I had worked at a student-housing complex in San Luis. The complex closed to become senior housing a year or so after I was there. About 14 years later

at a new job for the county schools I found, behind a refrigerator, a near mint-condition serving tray from the complex. Others that I know from that time were tickled to hear I had found the tray. It is a good reminder of college years to sit down with a Tropicana Village tray for a meal.

And as history goes, I still need to repack family China and crystal ware that are in boxes against the wall in the dinning room. That's eight boxes of cool old stuff. The crystal glasses are items I have enjoyed the look of as long as I can remember. It's also fun, when using the leaded crystal, to make them "sing" with a wet finger on the edge.

Dinner over and cleaned up (I'm tired of doing everything myself but the plants will not raise a leaf to help) I decide to take an evening walk.

Turning right out of the driveway I'll walk a route down to cross the boulevard, go through the meadow neighborhood reconnecting with the boulevard again a mile or so away for the loop back to the other end of my street. Nice houses in that area, and great views of the mountains and the wooded ridge above where I ran earlier.

As I leave the house I notice the white Shepard-cross-whatever-he-is on his driveway across the street. I call to him but, as is his want, he chooses not to respond and just sits and watches with a grin as I walk away.

As the sun lowers toward the mountains a few people are out enjoying the evening in yards or on the streets, some are still tending a barbecued meal. The cooler air encountered when the road crosses a draw leading down from the ridge and mountains is one reason this area of the basin is so pleasant.

Just before turning up my street, I notice the new house on the boulevard is progressing with floor joists going in and stacks of lumber on the driveway. A petrified deer stands not far away in a front yard. It's actually fake, but it always

catches the eye. Hunter instinct I guess.

The white Shepard-whatever-he-is finds me two lots from home. He trots up with a smile for a good rub and scratch before taking off again to rejoin his boys that are playing on the street.

Back inside I go through the mail and then TV channel surf to finally settle on a crime show for a while.

Show over and nearly time to hit the hay. I move out to the back deck for a breath of cool night air. This pollen is really covering everything.

This is a great house. It's winter warm and in a quiet, wooded residential area. Looking through the trees there are good views of Twin Peaks east, the mountains to the south, and the summit and highway pass southwest. I have all my stuff with me, and room to play as a counteractive activity to the job and the type of work I've burned out on over the last years.

I think I can do this for a while ... though the 28-year-old GMC truck may not last to the winter.

Well, ...just another beautiful day in the mountains.

Tomorrow would be another day.



A few ceramics were able to be salvaged from the burn pile.

Next Wednesday

It had been a tough day. Actually the last days had been stressful and I had not been sleeping well. Too much to think about (or try not to think about) and do, and not enough daylight/ business hours to do it all. And then there is still (maybe more now) this job thing that I keep doing. It floats my boat but fails to put any wind in my sails. But this evening I just want to go home and read a book, put on some CDs, turn on the idiot box, or do something else to relax.

The checkpoint officer, finished with my ID, hands it back issuing a further safety warning (like I need one!) and lets me go.

I drive up the main drag and turn onto my street. The neighbors have an American flag flying. Just another thing, of many lately, that tugs at my heartstrings.

I pull into the driveway and step out of my truck. As my feet touch the ground the layer of ash on the driveway puffs up around them. It covers most everything within sight, making the neighborhood either black or gray.

I figure I would spend an hour or two here, then go find another hotel for the next few days. Maybe by that time I will have found a new place to hang my hat (the 16-year-old hat that I no longer have). Oh, and I need to eat dinner somewhere too.

I open the back of the truck that now holds everything I own, it barely fills half the bed, (including the Schwinn Frontier with low tire pressure) and pull out the rake I recently got from dad and my folding military shovel, one of the very few tools I have left.

Today, maybe some of my ceramics from the hallway and my collection of belt buckles.

I walk past the garage with its collapsed/deformed metal door that is draped over the exploded snow blower and what remains of my 36-year-old Schwinn Varsity. The twisted skeletons of tool shelves and cabinets are witness to the heat of that fateful Sunday afternoon.

I'm putting off spending time in the garage, I'm trying to work up the courage.

Down the hill, below the garage, I enter the house through my housemate's front door. Well, at least where it would have been. I step into the foot of ash and rubble with its protruding charred appliances that is all that remains of an over two-story house that contained evidence of my near 47 years, and what was once my best home, to start looking.

The neighborhood of destroyed homes, charred trees and lack of wildlife stands quietly around me.

The quiet is occasionally lessened by a passing car with the people inside, usually behind raised windows to keep out the smell, wearing shocked or disbelieving looks on their faces.

Life is different now. I really don't know what to do next. My side of the fence is bare ground and ash. Is there green grass on the other side?

Tomorrow would be another day. Maybe ... a better one.



The brand new drill press that

never got out of the box.

Epilogue...

I was one of the victim/survivors of the Angora Fire that occurred on a very windy Sunday afternoon, June 24, 2007.

The wildfire, started by an illegal campfire, swept through 3,100 acres of forested land, destroying 254 human and thousands of wildlife homes, and killed or injured (some to die, or be euthanized later) hundreds, possibly thousands, of animals.

The fire left a portion of the Lake Tahoe Basin and its inhabitants with a scar to be seen, and felt, for years to come.

In January 2008, I moved out of the Lake Tahoe Basin to continue my recovery, trying to rediscover, and rebuild a life, in the warmer climate of San Luis Obispo. I was mostly using my heels and toes natural affinity for each other ... to keep moving. I miss Tahoe, and still visit every year to run the Kokanee 10K through the forest where I lived for three years.

Today, 10 years on, I am looking for a move and new opportunity to creatively enjoy life. I'm kind of burned out again, (figuratively) with what I'm doing.

Will's Kids returning to Valhalla

Valhalla will host Will's Kids for the second year on Aug. 4

from 11am-5pm.

This is a free and family-friendly event.

Participants will be able to enjoy a variety of arts and watch a children's version of this year's Shakespeare on the Lake production of "Love's Labours Lost," put on by the Young Shakespeare Program. The event begins at 11am with food trucks available for lunch and snacks. The play will begin at noon on the lawn between the boathouse and Valhalla.

After the play, at 1pm, the art fair will begin, allowing children of all ages to join in. There will be face painting, live art, crafts, hula hooping, a silent art auction and more! Workshops by various organizations and groups will also be available throughout the day.

Will's Kids is appropriate for all ages and free to attend.

Will's Kids is a collaboration between Live Violence Free, Tahoe Youth & Family Services, Boys & Girls Club of Lake Tahoe, the D.G. Manchetti Young Shakespeare Program, and Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival to bring art to the children of our community.