Prosecutors seek Garrido's psychiatric interview tape

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee

Prosecutors in the Jaycee Lee Dugard kidnapping case are asking a judge for access to an audiotaped interview of kidnapping suspect Phillip Garrido, saying the tape made in the El Dorado County Jail two weeks ago is needed for them to prepare for an upcoming trial that will determine Garrido's mental state.

The taped interview was conducted by Dr. David Glassmire, an expert appointed by El Dorado Superior Court Judge Douglas Phimister to assess Garrido's mental competence. Jail officials taped his interview "on or about" Dec. 18, court documents released Monday indicate.

In the documents, prosecutors say they asked jail officials Dec. 20 to "turn over the audio recordings so that we could copy and discover the audio to the defense."

But jail officials refused, citing a court order that had been issued Dec. 15 requiring the tape to remain sealed until Glassmire's written report is issued, prosecutors said. The judge indicated when he appointed Glassmire on Dec. 2 that he expected it to take 60 days for a mental exam and written report to be completed.

Read the whole story

Deaths on Nevada highways increase in 2010 from 2009

Initial numbers show that 256 fatalities occurred on Nevada roads in 2010; 13 more than in 2009, which was the fewest state traffic fatalities in more than 20 years.

“These are so much more than numbers. Any rise in fatalities is truly tragic, and the loss and toll on individuals and families across the state is something no one should have to endure,” Traci Pearl, administrator of the Nevada Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety, said in a statement. “Although these numbers are lower than Nevada’s high of 434 roadway deaths in 2006, we as transportation and safety professionals will continue working every day to make roads as safe as possible with engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency medical solutions. But the most important part is for all motorists to do their part by always driving safely and attentively and wearing seat belts.”

Since 2006, many safety strategies have been implemented on Nevada roads, including more than 2,000 miles of centerline rumble strips installed on state freeways, road safety audits to enhance traffic safety, continuing installation of pedestrian walking countdown timers at approximately 120 crosswalks throughout northern Nevada, Nevada’s first pedestrian safety action planning and child passenger safety training for all peace officers statewide, to name a few.

Many of the traffic safety initiatives are part of the Nevada Strategic Highway Safety Plan. Overseen by the Nevada Department of Transportation, the SHSP brings Nevada traffic and safety agencies together to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries with the ultimate goal of zero traffic deaths on Nevada roads.

Following these safety efforts and other factors, traffic deaths dropped from an all-time high of 434 in 2006 to 256 in 2010.

“One death on our roads is too many,” NDOT Director Susan Martinovich said in the same release. “That is why we’re asking all Nevadans to drive carefully every time so we can all get where we’re going safely. Buckling up, paying attention to the road and not driving under the influence can save lives!”

First-time parents deliver first baby of the year at Barton

By Jessie Marchesseau

The South Lake Tahoe’s 2011 New Year’s baby was actually born the day after New Year’s.

Kaleb Morales was born at 7:23am on Jan. 2 at Barton Memorial Hospital. He weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces and measured 20 inches.



The Morales family.

He is the first child for parents Yuliana and Francisco Morales of South Lake Tahoe.

Of having the first baby of the year, Yuliana Morales said, “We were really excited, especially when we found out we were the first. We thought someone else probably had one (Saturday).”

She said her friends and family had joked about her having the New Year’s baby because she was due on the fifth. But she did not think it would really happen.

The new parents were even more excited when they found out about the gift basket they would be receiving. The basket is a tradition for the New Year’s baby, and this year it features $850 worth of goodies including gift certificates, baby clothes, gym memberships, flowers, a savings account, and a cocktail reception and one- night stay at a local hotel.

Kaleb’s tiny footprint will also be engraved and displayed at the hospital as part of the Footprints to the Future.

Suspect arrested after fleeing accident on Mt. Rose Highway

On New Year’s Day at approximately 10:10am, troopers from the Nevada Highway Patrol were dispatched to a motor vehicle accident on the Mount Rose Highway near Fawn Lane that resulted in a chase and one person being arrested.

Witnesses to the accident and the victim-motorists at the scene provided troopers a description of the errant male

driver who fled on foot from the scene.

The driver of a silver BMW 325 sedan, later identified as 38-year-old Ryan D. Simpson of Reno, was traveling west on the four-lane highway and allowed his vehicle to strike the rear of a parked silver Chevrolet Silverado whose occupants were outside of their vehicle assisting another motorist who was installing tire chains on his car, according to officers.

Both vehicles were parked on the right shoulder and were not in the travel lane.

Simpson's car rotated off of the highway and down a short embankment. The unrestrained motorist sustained several lacerations to his head when his face traveled through a portion of the windshield. None of the motorists who were standing outside of their vehicles were injured and the third vehicle was not struck.

There was an obvious blood trail to follow, but the fleeing subject had a significant start on his trek ahead of troopers and deputies.

A short time later two troopers saw Simpson in a field near a residential area in the vicinity of the Mount Rose Highway. He was taken into custody and an ambulance was immediately summoned. Simpson was taken to the hospital where he was treated and medically discharged for his injuries.

He was transported from the hospital and taken to the Washoe County jail and booked on the following charges:

* DUI alcohol and drugs –second offense

* Failure to use due care while driving

* Duty to give information/stop to render aid

* Hit and run property damage accident

* Failure to report accident to police

* Possession of marijuana, less than 1 ounce

* Possession of drug paraphernalia.

He was in custody this morning with a bail amount of $3,435.

Sunny weather predicted for the week

The National Weather Service has cancelled the winter weather advisory for today in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Mostly sunny weather is in the forecast for this first week of the new year. Highs are expected to be about 30 degrees at the beginning of the week, warming to balmy 42 on Friday.

Increase in childhood diabetes puts strain on school nurses

By Jessie Marchesseau

In any given hour at Sierra House Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe, half a dozen kids are in and out of the nurse’s office. Illnesses, injuries, bloody noses and burns are among the ailments.

A young girl wearing purple jeans and a bright orange bow in her hair wanders into the office looking right at home. She pulls out a lunch menu and starts perusing the choices for the day. This is Maritza Torres. She is 10 years old and she has diabetes.

Torres, happily sucking on a candy cane, explains how she thinks having diabetes is easy, but she still does not like it.

“I have to get a shot all the time and if I want to play soccer or something, I have to check my blood sugar all the time,” she says.

Everyday Torres and the school nurse decide what she is going to eat for lunch, calculate the carbohydrates, test her blood sugar and administer the proper amount of insulin.



Kelsey Buckley, 8, Makenzie McMillen, 10, and McKenna Brewer, 10, are used to having medical kits with them at all times. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

This might not seem to take up a great deal of time in the

school nurse's day, but Torres is not alone in this battle. Nine other students in the four other schools within Lake Tahoe Unified School District also suffer from diabetes, and all vie for the nurses' time.

Having 10 diabetic students in LTUSD is a significant increase from a decade ago when Rand Norberg was the only one.

His mother, Loreen, a second-grade teacher for LTUSD, remembers being "scared to death" when she found out her son had Type I diabetes. He was in third grade.

"At that time, I had so much faith in our school nurses, and just kept saying, 'they know more than I do,'" she said.

Loreen Norberg refers to the nurses as "a god-send" and credits Margaret McKean, a school nurse for LTUSD, with teaching her some of the most important aspects of helping her son deal with diabetes.

Without the school nurses and staff available to help Rand manage his blood sugar and administer insulin daily, Norberg said she would likely have had to quit her job in order to monitor her son. This is a consequence not uncommon among families with a diabetic child.

Rand, like Maritza Torres, received an insulin injection everyday at lunch and any other time he ate.

"A lot of times it fell in the hands of the school secretary," Norberg said. "I was fine with that. As long as he got his shot, I didn't care who did it."

However, administering insulin shots is now restricted to the school nurse, the child or a relative. This means LTUSD nurses need to be available to assist all 10 diabetic students every day.

McKean says there are too many students with diabetes in different places, and she cannot be in two places at once. The

additional care needed for these students prompted the district to hire two additional part-time nurses this fall, bringing the total to two full-time and three part-time nurses.

“I think the school district is really going above and beyond in the budget crunch,” McKean said.

The number of students needing and using school medical services may make it somewhat hard to believe that having a school nurse in California is not all that common. The state does not provide funding for nurses, so it is up to individual districts to decide to have a nurse on staff.

“We’ve made it our priority in our district: our kids with diabetes and our kids with food allergies,” McKean said. “It’s a life or death situation.”

McKean has been a school nurse for 28 years and has seen the number of diabetic students increase greatly in recent years. More and more children are being diagnosed with Type I diabetes, and the medical community has not yet figured out why.

She explained how what is usually in the news is Type II diabetes. It is often caused by being overweight and can be reversed over time. Type I, however, is not a result of weight issues. Type I is what most of the LTUSD students suffer from. It can never be eliminated. They will live with it for the rest of their lives, and it can be deadly if not properly managed.

Susie Brumbach, school nurse for the Douglas County schools at the lake, said she has not seen the same increase LTUSD has. Brumbach said she is aware of one student with Type I diabetes at her schools and has not had a diabetic student at the elementary level in more than 10 years.

LTUSD, however, has not been so fortunate. Seven of the 10

diabetic students are at the elementary or middle school level. Many of them are relatively independent and either wear insulin pumps or administer their own injections, but they still require a nurse’s supervision.

Each of these students has their own manual of sorts in the nurse’s office with all relevant information regarding their condition. There are also diabetes protocols and insulin calculation formulas posted on the walls.

Even though 10-year-old Maritza Torres says having diabetes is easy, Loreen Norberg has a different opinion. She knows the seriousness of the disease and says she wishes the school district would have shown greater concern and hired more nurses before the school year started. She felt so strongly about it that she appeared before the school board at the beginning of the school year to tell them why.

“When somebody has a disability, it needs to be taken care of from day one,” she said. “They hired extra nurses, but not soon enough.”

Her son Rand is 20 now. He graduated from the LTUSD system and went away to college. Norberg said she still worries about him being on his own and dealing with diabetes. But tears come to her eyes when she says how proud she is of him mentoring children who are newly diagnosed with diabetes.

This mix of emotions about being the parent of a diabetic child does not appear to be unique to Loreen Norberg.

When asked how her mom feels about her having diabetes, Maritza responded: “She’s happy that I’m OK, and sad that I have it.”

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Summit in Vegas this week to address wild horses

By Lynda V. Mapes, Seattle Times

Horse people hope the new year will bring a solution to an old problem: too many horses.

A horse summit planned for the first week of the year is expected to draw to Las Vegas representatives from Northwest tribes, federal agencies and conservation groups, as well as wildlife advocates, and horse people vexed by too many horses with no market to cull the herds.

“Its bad and getting worse,” said Sue Wallis, a Wyoming legislator and member of United Horsemen, a Wyoming-based nonprofit organizing the summit. She backs development of a plant in Wyoming where horses can be slaughtered for human consumption – a solution she says is the humane and ethical solution to the problem.

“We are not just some meat-industry schmucks,” she said of slaughter supporters. “What we need is humane and regulated horse processing in the U.S. where we can control it, and we can set really high standards. We are horse people concerned about the well being of the horse.”

Read the whole story

Winter snow points to economic recovery

By Rob Sabo, Northern Nevada Business Weekly

After 21 consecutive months of declining revenues from taxes on hotel occupancy, the Reno-Sparks market saw gains for six of 10 months at the start of this year, leading to optimism that the worst might be over.

The declines in hotel room tax began in March of 2008 and continued through November of 2009. But with many months in 2010 trending up from the same period a year earlier, hoteliers and tourism officials head into the new year measured optimism.

“Hopefully we are past the worst of it and the bottom is behind us,” says Ellen Oppenheimer, president and chief executive officer of the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority. “It appears that we are seeing some ups and downs and a little more general positive findings as we look ahead in the economy.”

Still, the RSCVA planned conservatively for the current fiscal year, Oppenheimer says. Two of the region’s primary markets for tourism – Nevada and California – have the highest and third-highest unemployment rates in the nation.

“Those are key feeder markets for leisure travel to Reno-Tahoe,” Oppenheimer says. “People still want to travel and take getaways, but they are staying fewer nights and trending down in spending. But the good news is that there are still people out there traveling. People feel they are entitled to a getaway or vacation, and when they can afford it and make the time they are going.”

Bill Hughes, director of marketing operations for the

Peppermill Resort, Spa Casino, says the property and others in the region appear to see light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. Large-scale upgrades completed in recent years at the Peppermill, such as the Tuscany Tower, new convention space, and an executive boardroom have helped the property draw new convention business and fill rooms, Hughes says.

Read the whole story

Sandoval ready to take helm of Nevada

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

As Nevada prepares for Monday's inauguration of Brian Sandoval as governor, a sense of hope stirs among some state leaders.

They hope Sandoval's tenure will be marked by cooperation and compromise and not the rancor that existed under the administration of Gov. Jim Gibbons.

"Everybody feels positive," said Dan Klaich, chancellor of Nevada's higher education system. "I think everyone has been exhausted by the confrontations over the past four years and wants to give the governor-elect every shot and opportunity to be successful.

"But that doesn't make the problems go away," said Klaich, referring to the state's nation-leading unemployment, foreclosure crisis and a projected $1.1 billion budget deficit that Democrats say could rise to as high as $2.9 billion. "So, while everybody feels strongly about solving the problems, it still means that there are very large problems out there to

solve.”

Sandoval said he was pleased to hear about the positive attitude as he prepares to be sworn-in as Nevada’s first Hispanic governor.

“I embrace that,” said Sandoval, 47. “I am glad people feel that way because they are going to get a governor, staff and an administration that is going to wake up every day and think about what they are going to do for the people of this state.”

Monday will be a day Sandoval said he’ll never forget.

It will be the crowning moment of a fast-rising political career that has seen Sandoval go from state assemblyman, Gaming Commission chairman, Nevada attorney general, federal judge and now governor in 16 years. It was just 30 years ago that Sandoval was the student-body president at Bishop Manogue High in Reno.

Read the whole story

Temblor near Markleeville

The ground was rumbling near Markleeville at 3:57 Saturday afternoon.

The U.S. Geological Service recorded a 3.6 earthquake 4 miles from the tiny Alpine County town.

It was felt 146 miles away in Sacramento.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report