

USS Arizona survivor recalls tragedy 75 years later

By Audrey McAvoy, AP

HONOLULU — Lauren Bruner was getting ready for church in 1941 on his battleship, the USS Arizona, when the alarm sounded.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had begun, and Bruner, then 21, scampered up five stories by ladder to the enormous anti-aircraft guns he was responsible for manning.

But bullets hit his left leg and explosions set off by the Sunday morning bombardment rocked his ship before he could get to the weapons. The ship sank just nine minutes later. Bruner escaped, but suffered severe burns.

This week Bruner, now 96, plans to visit a memorial over the Arizona's sunken wreckage and attend a remembrance ceremony at Pearl Harbor on the 75th anniversary of the Dec. 7, 1941, attack.

Bruner has traveled from his Southern California home for the events many times, but doesn't know how long the Arizona's few remaining survivors will be able to keep up the tradition.

"It's getting close to being the end pretty soon. There's only five of us left now," Bruner said.

More than 2,300 servicemen died in the Japanese attack that plunged the United States into World War II. Nearly half of those killed were on the Arizona, most still entombed in the wreckage.

The Navy and National Park Service expect several dozen attack survivors to attend the remembrance ceremony Wednesday on a pier overlooking the harbor. They, along with thousands of others, will observe a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m. — the

same minute the Japanese planes hit their first target in the harbor.

Back then, in 1941, Bruner didn't know who was attacking until the planes got close enough for him to see the red Rising Sun Japanese insignia on their sides. The aircraft shot at "everything in sight," he said. Then an explosion tore through his battle station.

"That's where the flames blew right through and cooked me right there," Bruner said in a telephone interview from his home in La Mirada.

With "everything burning," Bruner tried to get off the ship as fast as he could. But the water in the harbor 80 feet below – infused with leaked oil – was on fire, too, so jumping wasn't an option.

Bruner and a few fellow shipmates shouted to a sailor on the ship moored next to the Arizona to toss over some rope. The six of them tied the rope and carried themselves hand-over-hand across the 100-foot expanse to the USS Vestal.

"You're like a chicken getting barbecued," he said. All of them made it, becoming six of the 335 sailors and Marines on the Arizona to survive. Another 1,177 shipmates died.

Doctors on the USS Solace hospital ship wanted to amputate most of Bruner's hands, leaving him with just his forefingers and thumbs, he said. Ultimately they peeled off his dead skin and let new skin grow in. They put him in a special bed with hoops that allowed sheets to be draped above him but not touch him.

Navy documents recently uncovered by the genealogy and historical records company Ancestry show Bruner suffered burns on his face and the back of his neck, his right shoulder, right arm and forearm, fingers, hands, outer thighs and lower legs.

The burns on his right arm were particularly severe and took longer to heal, according to the documents, which Ancestry has posted in a special section for Pearl Harbor survivors within its military records site Fold3.com.

Bruner spent seven months recovering but returned to service, he said, because the Navy needed sailors to train new recruits to fight the war. He was on the USS Coghlan when it bombed Japanese positions on Attu Island in Alaska in 1943. His ship later took troops to the South Pacific and was near Guam when the war ended.

He doesn't like to rehash many details from Dec. 7. He said he just "grins and bears it" to cope with the memories.

"There are parts of this whole thing that I can't talk about. If I do talk about it, I cannot sleep," he said.

After the Navy, Bruner went to work for a former Marine's refrigeration business and spent 39 years with the company. He married twice, but outlived both wives.

Bruner wants his ashes interred inside his old battleship after he dies, like many other Arizona survivors who have chosen to be buried with their shipmates. Bruner said he prefers this to lying in a sparsely visited cemetery.

"I think I've got the last spot," he said, expressing confidence he'll be the last of the survivors to go.

Associated Press writer Christine Armario in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Tires deliberately punctured in South Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

The rash of flat tires on the South Shore continued this weekend, with five reports on Saturday and one Sunday.

Unsuspecting drivers in the area are driving over caltrops and ninja road stars. They can easily be purchased; with the main purpose being to deflate tires. They are being placed on the street and drivers puncture their tires after riding over them.



This is an example of the tool used to puncture tires.

“Some people are real jerks and they get their jollies making other people’s lives difficult,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Because the flat isn’t necessarily immediate it’s difficult to pinpoint the location of where the devices have been placed.

“I was driving home and turning onto Golden Bear and my low tire light came on,” one victim told *Lake Tahoe News* on Dec. 4. “It’s probably some kids who think that it is funny.”

The calls first came into the SLTPD sporadically about a week ago. Now neighboring jurisdictions are reporting the same problem.

The various crimes that the culprits could be charged with are all misdemeanors, which means they could receive a citation instead of going to jail. If a driver were to have an accident because of the flat, the seriousness of the crime could rise to a felony.

Officers are seeking the public's help in find the people responsible for putting the destructive devices on local streets.

Efficient woodstoves improve Tahoe air quality

By Kathryn Reed

Black smoke billowing from chimneys is exactly what air quality regulators don't want to see.

Woodstoves have become so efficient that little or no smoke should be seen. The problem is there are thousands of open face fireplaces and inefficient woodstoves in the basin. This contributes to poor air quality, and the soot reaching the lake degrades the clarity of Lake Tahoe.

"Older, outdated woodstoves generate significant emissions that harm air quality and the environment. Newer, more efficient woodstoves certified by EPA burn one-third less wood and can result in particulate matter emission reductions that are equivalent to removing five diesel buses from the roads,"

Tom Lotshaw with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The California Air Resources Board's initial draft plan that was released Dec. 2 calls for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. This mandate is the most ambitious of any state.

"This plan lays out a road map for California – and the rest of the world – to achieve climate goals that were inconceivable only a decade ago," Gov. Jerry Brown, who established this 2030 target by Executive Order in April 2015 and signed SB32 in September to codify it, said in a statement. "There are steep hills ahead, but we'll scale them by continuing to take a series of bold actions, including extending California's Cap-and-Trade Program."

El Dorado County is doing what it can to work on air quality issues. The problem is that much of the pollution is not generated in the county, but instead blows in from the west.



Efficient woodstoves improve air quality. Photo/LTN

"Parts of our county are in non-attainment for ozone standards and particulate matter standards," Adam Baughman, air quality

engineer with the El Dorado County Air Quality Management District, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We have deadlines in which to attain standard. We have to show reasonable forward progress. We will meet the ozone standard by about 2022.”

By providing rebates to people to take out their inefficient wood burning device and replacing it with a better model or even gas, the county is doing what it can to achieve the state air quality standards. Not all areas of the county can go to gas; only the basin and El Dorado Hills have natural gas.

“We try to do things like this with the incentives that help get us there without laying the hammer down,” Baughman said.

The program started in 2007, but has been revamped through the years. Funding has come from the feds and state. The rebate throughout the county is a few hundred dollars, in the basin it is more because TRPA has provided \$88,750 to the cause.

In the basin in El Dorado County 122 people have received rebates. Of these, 58 went to gas only units and 41 went back to wood. The rest did complete removal, with a couple going to pellet or electric.

Baughman said these conversions mean 6 tons of particulate matter that is 2.5 to 10 micrometers in diameter are no longer being emitted. Greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced by 300 tons. Countywide, those numbers are 20 tons of particulate matter and 777 tons of greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the website AirNow, “Particles less than or equal to 10 micrometers in diameter are so small that they can get into the lungs, potentially causing serious health problems. Ten micrometers are less than the width of a single human hair.”

For more information about the rebate program in El Dorado County, go **online**.

Speed, slick road cause vehicle to roll



A vehicle hit ice on Highway 88 on Dec. 4 and slid off the road. Photo/Gary Cooper

The ski day ended before it even started for two people headed to Kirkwood on Sunday.

The vehicle they were driving in careened off the side of the road and flipped. The passenger was taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with non-life threatening injuries.

"As of right now it appears speed was an issue for roadway conditions," an officer with the California Highway Patrol told *Lake Tahoe News*. He said the two were not from the Tahoe area.

This section of Highway 88 just past Caples Lake and before the ski resort is the same spot where there was a 15-car pileup last winter.

Officers and the driver of the vehicle used a rope to get from

the vehicle to the road.

CHP warns people that even though roads in the Sierra may appear to be dry, they could be icy, especially in shaded areas and around curves.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Lawmakers want to reform Calif. bail system

By Jazmine Ulloa, Los Angeles Times

California lawmakers next year will make it a top priority to reform the system through which judges award criminal offenders bail, saying courts across the state are punishing “the poor for being poor.”

Assemblyman Rob Bonta and state Sen. Bob Hertzberg said they plan to fire the first salvo Monday, when lawmakers descend upon the Capitol for the start of the 2017 legislative session. They will introduce bills stating the Legislature intends to enact laws that will reduce the number of people detained before trial and address the racial and economic disparities in the bail process.

The details of upcoming legislation are still under deliberation, but Bonta and Hertzberg said they have assembled a broad coalition of organizations and lawmakers from both sides of the aisle to tackle what they consider to be one of the most significant pushes – and likely one of the hardest battles – of the year.

Read the whole story

Tax refund scheme lands EDC woman in prison

Barbara Antonucci, an unlicensed tax preparer from El Dorado County, is going to prison for three years and six months.

She also must pay \$1,895,833 in restitution for conspiring to file false claims and filing false claims.

According to court documents, Antonucci and her co-conspirator, Sherry Taggart, 56, of El Dorado Hills, prepared tax returns for clients seeking to maximize their refunds from the Internal Revenue Service. In 2008, Antonucci began a scheme to obtain false refunds by preparing and filing false claims on behalf of clients with the IRS.

In total, including the period in which Antonucci operated the scheme by herself, the IRS issued more than \$1.8 million in illegitimate refunds from more than \$2.5 million illegitimate claims filed during the scheme.

In August, Antonucci pleaded guilty to conspiracy to file false claims and filing false claims.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Congress allows mass hacking by government

By Erin Kelly, USA Today

WASHINGTON – In a defeat for privacy advocates, Senate leaders rebuffed a last-ditch effort by a bipartisan group of senators to allow a vote to block a new rule that allows federal agents armed with a single search warrant to hack millions of Americans' computers or smartphones at once.

That rule took effect Thursday.

Sens. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., Chris Coons, D-Del., and Steve Daines, R-Mont., took to the Senate floor to seek agreement to bring up bills to stop the rule from taking effect or at least delay it for three to six months to give Congress more time to study it. Republican Senate leaders denied the three senators' requests for a vote.

[Read the whole story](#)

Calif. asks Trump for guidance on pot, banking

By Michael R. Blood, AP

LOS ANGELES – California Treasurer John Chiang on Friday appealed to President-elect Donald Trump for guidance on how the state's projected \$7 billion marijuana industry can participate in the nation's banking system while pot remains illegal under U.S. law.

California voters last month approved Proposition 64, which legalized the recreational use of marijuana, beginning in 2018. Largely at issue is how the state will collect an estimated \$1 billion in annual taxes from legal pot sales and cultivation, when cannabis businesses can face obstacles opening bank accounts, getting loans or obtaining insurance.

The “conflict between federal and state rules creates a number of difficulties for states that have legalized cannabis use, including collecting taxes, increased risk of serious crime and the inability of a legal industry under state law to engage in banking and commerce,” Chiang wrote to Trump.

“We have a year to develop a system that works in California and which addresses the many issues that exist as a result of the federal-state legal conflict,” he added. “Uncertainty about the position of your administration creates even more of a challenge.”

The California vote on Nov. 8 represented the national legalization movement’s biggest victory to date. The new law will attempt, at least in theory, to tame a market that now ranges from legal, medicinal production and sales to vast illegal grows operated by drug cartels.

With pot illegal on the federal level, it’s unclear what stance the incoming Trump administration will take with the new California pot economy and other weed-friendly states. Trump’s pick for attorney general, Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, has called marijuana a danger that should not be legalized.

Twenty-eight states and Washington, D.C., allow marijuana for medical or recreational purposes.

In other states, the business of legal marijuana has created a patchwork of banking and tax practices.

In Oregon, officials have built a fortified office, with bulletproof glass, security cameras and armed guards, for

collecting huge cash payments for pot taxes. In Washington, most businesses are paying taxes electronically, a sign of better access to bank accounts.

And the number of U.S. banks and credit unions willing to handle pot money under Treasury Department guidelines issued two years ago is growing, though they are often smaller institutions.

California tax collectors, however, released a report that concluded tax payments from marijuana-related businesses would be made in cash, since pot is illegal under federal law and businesses struggle to get access to banks.

Chiang wrote that federal policies have not provided certainty for financial institutions to give access to the cannabis industry and "California might exacerbate the banking problem even more."

The treasurer said he was forming a group to study banking issues that he says could hamper the coming legal pot economy in the state.

In general, the state will treat cannabis like alcohol. Taking effect in 2018, the law allows people 21 and older to legally possess up to an ounce of pot and grow six marijuana plants at home.

Associated Press writer John Antczak contributed.

The coming California drought

in 2017

By Jay Lund, KQED

California is a big, diverse place.

California probably will experience droughts this year of different types in different places, and no drought at all in some places, simultaneously. Even if conditions this year are very wet, with flooding, parts of California will have drought issues. (This is what makes California a great place to work on water problems.)

The first two months of this new water year have been wetter than average in the north and much drier than average in the south. But it is still early days.

Reservoir storage in California is now about 2.5 million acre-feet (3.08 billion cubic meters) below historical averages for this time of year. (This is 0.8 million acre-feet – 987 million cubic meters – better than two months ago.) Some major reservoirs are below average, particularly Oroville, Trinity, San Luis, New Melones and the Tulare Basin. Cachuma Reservoir near Santa Barbara is in the worst shape at 7 percent of capacity or 10 percent of average storage for this time of year.

Read the whole story

Vail CEO uses casino model to drive performance

By Daniel Fisher, Forbes

Like a monk on a mountaintop, Rob Katz is sitting in the Eagle's Nest, a gourmet restaurant high above the quaint faux-Swiss village of Vail, ready to impart wisdom. "If you're a casino you have these very committed, addicted gamblers," the 49-year-old CEO of Vail Resorts says, explaining his business. "Well, we have these very committed, addicted skiers."

As with resorts in Las Vegas and Macau, Vail Resorts accumulates enormous amounts of information about its customers and obsessively tracks their activities. On the slopes, for instance, there are radio-chip-equipped lift passes that record which runs skiers take and with whom they ride the lifts. Vail can even send targeted cable-television ads to their TV sets when they are home contemplating next winter's ski season.

High-end amenities like the Eagle's Nest or the Vail Mountain Club—with an initiation fee of \$275,000—may not add much to profits, but like the fine restaurants and high-roller clubs at a casino, they're necessary to entice and reward loyal skiers.

Vail owns Heavenly, Kirkwood and Northstar in the Lake Tahoe area.

Read the whole story