

Bones from Pearl Harbor tomb ship may be identified

By Michael E. Ruane, Washington Post

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. — Inside an old aircraft factory here, behind the glass windows of a pristine laboratory, the lost crew of the USS Oklahoma rests on special tables covered in black foam.

Their bones are brown with age after 50 years in the ground and, before that, months entombed in their sunken battleship beneath the oily waters of Pearl Harbor.

Legs, arms, ribs, vertebrae. Some have blue tags tied with string, identifying the type of bone. Some have beige tags, indicating that experts also want samples for DNA testing.

They are the unidentified remains of hundreds of sailors and Marines who perished 74 years ago Monday, when Japan launched a surprise air attack on Hawaii and plunged the United States into World War II.

Now, seven decades later, the government is trying to put names to the old salts and teenage sailors who died when their ship was sunk by enemy torpedoes Sunday morning, Dec. 7, 1941.

Read the whole story

Arrest made in South Tahoe

drive-by shooting

An ex-felon with a violent criminal past was arrested Dec. 4 in connection with the **Oct. 14 drive-by shooting** in South Lake Tahoe.



Sam Tovar

South Tahoe police officers and drug task force agents arrested 43-year-old Samuel Tovar, who also goes by David Angels and other names, at 10pm Friday at a residence on San Francisco Avenue. Bail was set at \$1 million.

Inside the apartment investigators said they found a .40-caliber Glock handgun that is believed to be the weapon used in the drive-by shooting. Also located was a 5.56 x 45mm-caliber SKS semiautomatic assault rifle. As an ex-felon Angels is prohibited from possessing firearms or ammunition.

Officers said it's possible this was a gang-related incident.

The investigation began almost two months ago, after a 19-year-old South Lake Tahoe man was shot in the leg during a drive-by shooting on Spruce Avenue in the area of Ski Run Boulevard.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Vacuum exists among top ranks of EDC

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County is lacking leadership. There is no permanent chief administrative officer, no permanent assistant chief administrative officer, no IT director, no risk manager, and no chief deputy county counsel.

The county for more than a year has had an interim CAO – which is the top position.

It won't be until January at the earliest that supervisors Sue Novasel and Brian Veerkamp present to their colleagues the names of firms that could be hired to find a CAO. Impeding the process today are the holidays and the fact papers have been filed to recall all five supervisors. The latter could make the pool of candidates small.

Novasel said she hopes three to five CAO candidates would be interviewed in March or April.

There has been no explanation as to why the board has been so slow to take any action until now.

Pamela Knorr, current human resources chief, had been appointed interim CAO in November 2014 after the board essentially fired Terri Daly. Knorr had the position until June, at which time the board appointed Larry Combs acting chief administrative officer.

Combs makes \$92,000 a year to work 20 hours a week. In addition to this he collects \$185,167.92 a year from Sutter County and a \$13,689.60 from Merced County. The latter two

figures are his respective pensions from having been CAO in those counties. The Sutter allocation will soon top \$190,000 with cost of living adjustments.

Combs' decisions as CAO of Sutter County have the state now asking for \$3.1 million because of MediCal overcharges and other unauthorized expenses, the *Appeal Democrat* newspaper reported in November. Sutter is a tiny county and that kind of hit to its budget would be similar to El Dorado County having to come up with \$6 million.

Combs is also chair of the California Statewide Communities Development Authority. This group oversees the California PACE Program or Property Assessed Clean Energy. In September the supervisors agreed to implement this program. It is free except for administrative costs, which were not disclosed in the staff report. He is not paid for his work on CSCDA, so it is not legally a conflict of interest for Combs to have recommended the county work with this group.

Instead of waiting for the Board of Supervisors to hire a CAO, Combs is looking for an assistant. Most head honchos like to pick their subordinates. This likely won't be the case in El Dorado County.

"We were hoping to be able to hire the assistant CAO when we hire a permanent CAO, but that process is just beginning," Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We feel it is better to go out for an assistant CAO now rather than wait."

Michael Ciccozzi has been on loan from the County Counsels Office to be acting CAO. That office wants him back.

"He didn't want to apply for CAO so we thought it best to get another assistant, so Larry is out looking for a good assistant," Novasel said.

Combs did not return multiple phone calls so it is not known what he is looking for in an assistant, when he hopes to have

that person on board or what type of background check might be done on this future employee.

When it came to doing the background check on Combs, Novasel said the county's Human Resources Department conducted it. There was never any background check done on Knorr, though, who heads the HR Department and was fired as CAO in Alpine County.

Lack of background checks or ones without any substance are the norm in El Dorado County.

It's possible this may change. Novasel said the firm that is hired for the permanent CAO search would do the background check on people the county might hire for that position.

College degrees translate into cash

By G. Scott Thomas, San Francisco Business Times

It pays to have a college diploma – and preferably more than one.

The linkage of education and income couldn't be clearer in new data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The typical worker with a master's degree earns 20 percent more than a colleague who holds a bachelor's degree and 98 percent more than somebody who never went beyond high school.

And there's a second benefit. The danger of unemployment declines dramatically as the level of educational attainment rises.

Read the whole story

Driver airlifted to Reno after accident in Meyers



Lake Valley, CalFire and South Lake Tahoe crews help at the Dec. 6 accident in Meyers.

Photo/Provided

It took Lake Valley fire paramedics 90 minutes to extricate a woman from her SUV on Sunday after it rolled over in Meyers.

The 17-year-old driver, whose name has not been released, was on Highway 89 near Portal when she went into a ditch. The

cause of the Dec. 6 accident is under investigation.

CalStar flew the girl to Renown Medical Center in Reno with a fractured femur.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Safeway must pay almost \$42M for website sales

By Bob Egelko, San Francisco Chronicle

A federal judge in San Francisco has ordered Safeway to pay almost \$42 million to customers nationwide who bought groceries from the market chain's website and were unaware that they were being charged 10 percent above store prices.

U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar granted \$30.9 million in damages and \$10.9 million in interest Monday to online shoppers who had registered with Safeway.com between 2006, when the website opened, and November 2011, when the company reworded its policy to declare that online prices "may differ from your local store."

Read the whole story

Uber launching service in Lake Tahoe

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

Fresh powder apparently isn't the only thing hitting Lake Tahoe in December.

Ridesharing service Uber is planning a simultaneous launch on both sides of Tahoe before the end of the year, filling a key market in its Nevada and California territories.

Uber was not able to provide a specific date for the launch but it could happen as early as late this week, spokeswoman Laura Zapata told the *Reno Gazette-Journal*.

"We're building supply and gearing up for it," Zapata said by phone. "People have been asking about Tahoe, especially here in the Bay Area right now because they're hearing that ski season is going to be awesome."

[Read the whole story](#)

Shooting prompts Nev. politician to drop NRA membership

By Mariam Baksh, Huffington Post

Democrat John Oceguera, a former speaker of the Nevada assembly who's running for Congress, resigned his lifetime NRA

membership because of what he said was the group's opposition to "any legislation that would help keep guns out of the hands of terrorists."

"I am law-abiding gun owner, and have been a Life Member of the National Rifle Association," Oceguela wrote in letter to NRA CEO Wayne LaPierre on Thursday, posted on Oceguela's campaign website. "I grew up in a family of hunters. But more importantly, I'm a father and a husband. I believe that keeping our families safe is our most fundamental priority."

Oceguela's NRA resignation followed last week's mass shooting in San Bernardino that police said was carried out by a husband and wife using legally purchased assault-style rifles and semi-automatic pistols.

Read the whole story

Western governors endorse prescreening tourists outside U.S.

By Ken Ritter, AP

Governors from 19 Western states called Friday for expansion of a program that screens international travelers at airports abroad, in a bid to encourage tourism and stop terrorists before they arrive in the U.S.

Montana Gov. Steve Bullock told the Western Governors' Association in Las Vegas that expanding a U.S. government pre-clearance program would serve two purposes.

“First, it enhances national security by keeping potential terrorists from even arriving on U.S.,” he said. “Second, it encourages tourists to travel to the U.S. by reducing the hassle and wait times at customs checkpoints” when they arrive.

Security was a key issue for Bullock, a Democrat, and the Republican governors of Wyoming, Idaho and Nevada during the conference at the Four Seasons resort.

But Bullock said the resolution endorsed by governors of 15 of the 19 states, with some ballots still pending, was in the works long before a mass shooting Wednesday in nearby Southern California killed 14 people and wounded 21 at a holiday event at a government office in San Bernardino. The husband-and-wife assailants, who had ties to Pakistan, were killed in a shootout with police.

The governors’ resolution asks U.S. customs and immigration authorities to put screeners at airports in Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and England. It notes that screeners are currently stationed at 15 airports in Ireland, Canada, Aruba, the Bahamas, Bermuda and the United Arab Emirates

The governors also approved resolutions calling for federal funding for sustainable forest management in the West, implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill and safe transportation of defense-related radioactive waste.

Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead, association chairman, called security the No. 1 priority for governors of every state, not just the 19 members of the association, also including Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Utah and Washington.

“You can’t think of security of any individual state without thinking of the security of the country as a whole,” Mead

said, adding that he expected the larger and separate National Governors Association might address the issue.

Gov. Brian Sandoval offered prayers and condolences to people affected by the shooting and pointed to preparations being made for New Year's Eve events including fireworks expected to draw up to 350,000 people to the Las Vegas Strip. Sandoval said 1,500 law enforcement officials and the National Guard will be involved.

"We have to be extremely vigilant how we protect our visitors (and) how we protect our residents," he said.

U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell focused during a keynote speech on issues including drought, wildfires, species protection and abandoned mines. She urged states to continue working with federal officials to address them.

Jewell said adopting rules this year to protect habitat for the greater sage grouse in 11 Western states, rather than declare the chicken-sized bird an endangered species, was one example of cooperation.

The nation's top land manager acknowledged the breadth of the regulations created lots of work for lawyers.

"But I will say that it's way better than a listing," she said. "It provides certainty to developers ... states ... and the conservation community as well."

Jewell and Sandoval met separately and reached agreement to use new maps of sage grouse habitat in Nevada to correct inaccuracies that showed the birds living near urban areas in Reno and Sparks – stopping plans for a badly needed school and a veterans' cemetery.

The budget-busting cost of fighting wildfires was another burning issue during the twice-yearly governors' meeting.

Robert Bonnie, a U.S. Department of Agriculture

undersecretary, said the cost of fighting wildfires has exploded from about 16 percent of the U.S. Forest Service budget in the mid-1990s to more than half the agency budget in recent drought-stricken years.

Fires this year in Washington state and California were among the worst on record, and Idaho Gov. Butch Otter noted that the so-called Soda Fire in the southwest of his state burned nearly 450 square miles.

States are calling for the federal government to classify severe wildfires as natural disasters for funding purposes.

Bonnie said the problem is that the Forest Service spent \$3 billion of its \$5 billion budget fighting fires that charred nearly 10 million acres in 2015, leaving few resources for needed forest management, research and recreation programs.

Brown critical of Nevada's gun laws

By David Siders, Sacramento Bee

LE BOURGET, France – Gov. Jerry Brown said Saturday that “wide open” gun laws in Nevada and Arizona are a “gigantic back door through which any terrorist can walk,” while he was noncommittal on efforts to strengthen gun control measures in California.

Brown, arriving in France for climate talks after the mass shooting in San Bernardino this week, called the shooting a “terrorist attack.” The guns used were purchased legally in California before being modified, authorities have said.

Asked if stricter gun control laws were warranted, as some activists have argued, the fourth-term Democrat replied, "California has some of the toughest gun control laws of any state. And Nevada and Arizona are wide open, so that's a gigantic back door through which any terrorist can walk."

Read the whole story