

Key figure in CalPERS bribery scandal lived large

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Living like a high roller right to the bitter end, Alfred Villalobos had himself chauffeured to the shooting range where police say he killed himself last month, putting a bullet through his head.

The man accused of bribing the chief executive of California's giant public pension fund was staying at the posh Silver Legacy Resort Casino in downtown Reno when he rode a chauffeured limousine Jan. 13 to an indoor shooting range on the outskirts of the city. Once there, he downed two cans of Red Bull purchased from a vending machine, rented a pistol and stepped into the range.

Villalobos, a stocky 71-year-old with jet black hair who used to live in Stateline, fired more than 100 rounds at a silhouette target before shooting himself, according to an investigative report compiled by Reno police. He died a little more than a month before he was supposed to go on trial on bribery charges in California, where he was facing up to 30 years in prison.

Villalobos' macabre demise effectively ended the federal government's prosecution of the bribery case that shook the nation's largest public pension fund – but left a tangle of questions about the finances of the man in the middle of the scandal.

With the California Public Employees' Retirement System, earning \$50 million in commissions off the pension fund investments he brokered for his big Wall Street clients. But after the state of California named him in a civil suit in 2010, claiming he bribed his way to his millions, he filed for

bankruptcy protection and watched as court officials systematically liquidated his treasures to pay his debts.

His Lake Tahoe mansion was sold, along with a vacation home in Hawaii. Out went the fancy wine collection and the multimillion-dollar art collection. Toward the end, Villalobos was getting by on just \$1,800 a month, mostly from Social Security and Medicare, said Sheila Van Duyne, one of his lawyers.

Read the whole story

Rock slide closes Hwy. 50 at Cave Rock

A rock slide at Cave Rock has closed the west bound lanes of Highway 50.

A vehicle came across the slide at 10:41pm Feb. 7, according to the Nevada Highway Patrol. No one was injured.

Crews are on the scene. It is not known when the road will reopen.

Eastbound lanes are not affected.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: Pot use doesn't increase car crashes

By David Shepardson, Detroit News

A government study released late Friday found no evidence that marijuana use leads to a higher risk of getting into a traffic crash.

But safety advocates believe it is still dangerous to drive after smoking significant amounts of marijuana, and the government plans more testing.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said a 20-month survey of drivers in 2013 and 2014 found that while drinking dramatically raises the chance of a crash, there was no evidence that marijuana use is statistically significant in boosting wreck rates.

The agency said the issue is of growing importance in the wake of marijuana being legalized in Colorado, Oregon, Alaska and Washington state for recreational use.

The report's findings were based on two surveys. The National Roadside Survey, which collected information from volunteer drivers at 300 research checkpoints across the U.S., and a second study – the largest of its kind ever conducted – that assessed whether marijuana use by drivers is associated with greater risk of crashes. That study, in Virginia, gathered data over 20 months from more than 3,000 drivers who were in crashes, as well as a comparison group of 6,000 drivers who did not crash.

Read the whole story

Wildfire destroys 40 structures near Mammoth



Round fire off Highway 395 atop Sherwin Grade between Bishop and Mammoth on Feb. 7. Photo/Bill Kingman

Updated 5:45pm:

A fire burning near Mammoth has consumed at least 40 structures and 7,000 acres. It is 50 percent contained.

The Round Fire is burning west of Highway 395 at the Sherwin Grade.

The communities of Paradise (not the one by Chico) and Swall Meadows are under a mandatory evacuation.

Fire officials said significant rain stopped the forward rate of the fire about 2am Saturday. Downed power lines and venting propane tanks make re-entry for residents dangerous.

The cause is under investigation.

One person has been injured.

SLT cracking down on storm drain pollution

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe businesses with contaminants at their businesses that could reach Lake Tahoe via a storm drain are soon going to face stricter scrutiny.

The city is developing a commercial stormwater program that will affect 188 businesses – 12 gas stations, 33 automotive related businesses, 141 restaurants and two industrial enterprises.

Jason Burke, the city's stormwater program manager, explained to the City Council earlier this week the reasons for the fee and how the inspections will work.

The council still needs to formally adopt the program. Before that happens, though, Burke and his colleagues want to schedule a meeting with businesses so most questions are answered before the council votes.

Part of the city's stormwater permit from the Lahontan Water Quality Control Board requires this oversight. Plus, in 2009 the city failed an audit by the EPA.

"They looked into the stormwater program and we were not proactively inspecting these businesses," Burke told *Lake Tahoe News*.



What goes in storm drains
ends up in Lake Tahoe.
Photo/LTN

The permit with Lahontan holds the city liable for anything that goes in its storm drains no matter how it got there or who put it there.

Burke said staff cutbacks and working on other issues regarding Lahontan's mandate to reduce pollutants getting into the lake took precedence which is why the new program is just now getting under way.

The change will have the city being proactive instead of reactive. Burke showed photos of examples of issues the city has dealt with – including an auto repair shop on Jan. 12 leaking brake fluid into a gutter that is 200 feet from a stream environmental zone, a restaurant waste leaking into a drain on Jan. 7, and a non-secure grease bin dumped and washed into a drain next to the Upper Truckee River on Aug. 7, 2014.

The new policy is designed to identify potential pollutant sources so the types of issues above are less likely to occur.

An inspector has been hired. The inspection fees are designed to cover the bulk of the program – about \$20,000. The city is not allowed to profit off the fee, only recover costs.

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Notes:

- Businesses that have questions may contact Jason Burke at 530.542.6038 or jburke@cityofslt.us.

Caesars CEO lacks casino experience, stormy exit from Hertz

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Caesars Entertainment's next chief executive left his last job after revelations of accounting problems at his company and calls for his resignation from some investors.

Mark Frissora, the Caesars CEO-designate who formerly headed the rental car company Hertz, now wades into another financially fraught corporate environment. The largest operating division of Caesars is trying to eliminate nearly \$10 billion of debt through a complicated – and controversial – bankruptcy restructuring.

Nonetheless, Caesars executives and casino analysts seem relatively confident that Frissora can successfully take the reins from outgoing CEO Gary Loveman.

For one thing, Loveman is staying on as Caesars chairman, and the company said he would continue to oversee the restructuring process. Also, Frissora's previous management experience, though outside the casino industry, isn't as unrelated to his new post as it may initially appear.

Read the whole story

2 patients tested for measles in Placer County

By Richard Chang, Sacramento Bee

At least two people are being tested for measles in Placer County, public health officials confirmed Thursday.

Robert Oldham, public health officer for Placer County, said the pending cases aren't any cause for alarm. Measles tests, he said, are constantly being conducted because doctors across the state are carefully watching for the disease in patients.

Read the whole story

Incline's Radio Shack on closure list

Radio Shack's bankruptcy filing this week is affecting Lake Tahoe.

The Incline Village Radio Shack store is on the list to be closed. The South Lake Tahoe store is one of the 1,750 that will remain open.

The stores staying open are expected to become co-branded Sprint stores.

The company filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy this week. The

announcement included that nearly 4,000 stores will be shuttered.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Round Hill woman guilty of killing husband



Tatiana Leibel

A jury on Feb. 5 found a Round Hill woman guilty of shooting her husband to death a year ago.

Harry Leibel, 64, died of a single gunshot wound on Feb. 23, 2014, at the couple's home.

At first Tatiana Leibel, 51, told authorities her husband shot himself. Jurors on Thursday found her guilty of second-degree murder.

Leibel is scheduled to be sentenced April 24. She was being held without bail.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Congress revives effort to ban online gambling

By Associated Press

A Utah congressman is reviving an effort to ban online gambling throughout the United States.

Republican Rep. Jason Chaffetz reintroduced his Restoration of America's Wire Act bill on Wednesday. The measure would reverse the Justice Department's 2011 decision allowing online gambling with the exception of sports betting. It's identical to one he introduced during the last session.

The director of the research firm GamblingCompliance Chris Krafcik doesn't expect the bill to pass.

He says two powerful forces have lined up on opposite sides of the issue, which likely will lead to a stalemate. Las Vegas Sands CEO and billionaire political donor Sheldon Adelson supports the ban. Caesars Entertainment, MGM Resorts and lawmakers advocating state's rights oppose the effort.

Online gambling's currently legal in only Nevada, New Jersey and Delaware.