Opinion: It’s not always good when life imitates art

To the community,

Whether friend or foe, I urge everyone to read Frank Kafka’s latest psychodrama like it’s “Poland’s Affair”. The plotline is much like Kafka’s “Trial”. A man is accused of a crime, but he cannot find anyone who will tell him what is the crime. Thus, he cannot answer any charge brought against him. He is defenseless. So the tale is a horror story. A mind game wherein the accused for weeks and months must wait for someone to tell him what is his crime, his fate.

The story takes place in a small alpine town. Some call it paradise, but for the accused it has become hell.



Bill Crawford

The citizens are powerless because the local powers that be have sealed their lips. The town manager isn’t talking, nor is the police chief. In the story there is a rumor that the national police are playing in this game of terror. They are silent.

In this horror story the reader is left hanging because it ends without a resolution. The reader must guess as to the fate of the accused. By the way, Kafka died in 1924, so he wrote “Poland’s Affair” from his grave to remind us that his voice is still alive and loud and clear. Some voices are

immortal. There is such a thing as state of terrorism.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: A lesson in civility

By Cal Thomas

When one writes about moral convictions, it's probably a good idea to consistently live up to them. That way people can still disagree with your convictions, but they have a difficult time accusing you of hypocrisy.

Earlier this month at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, I failed to live up to one of my highest principles. Here's the background. The story about the Obama administration's attempt to force Catholic and other faith-based institutions to offer employees free contraception in their health care coverage was still fresh. I was asked to be on a panel before what looked like a crowd of about 1,000 conservatives, hungry for "red meat."



Cal Thomas

A clip was played from Rachel Maddow's MSNBC program. It featured her commenting on the subject. I stupidly said before thinking, "I think she's the best argument in favor of her parents using contraception." I then added, "and all the rest of the crowd at MSNBC, too, for that matter."

It didn't matter that far worse things have been said in print and on TV about me. I am not supposed to behave like that. I co-wrote a book with my liberal Democratic friend, Bob Beckel, called "Common Ground: How to Stop the Partisan War That is Destroying America." We also write a column together for USA Today. One of the principles in which I believe is not to engage in name-calling; which, to my shame, I did.

The next morning I felt bad about it, so I called Ms. Maddow to apologize. It wasn't one of those meaningless "if I've offended anyone…" apologies; it was heartfelt. I had embarrassed myself and was a bad example to those who read my column and expect better from me.

Maddow could not have been more gracious. She immediately accepted my apology. On her show she said publicly, "I completely believe his apology. I completely accept his apology." To be forgiven by one you have wronged is a blessing, it's even cleansing.

Politics has always been a contact sport. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams went at each other like the worst of enemies, using some of the most outrageous and slanderous language. I don't have bona fides equal to their founding of America, so there is nothing of similar magnitude on which I can fall back.

Maddow also accepted my invitation to lunch and we will soon meet in New York. I am looking forward to it. Since the incident, which, of course, garnered a mini-tornado of media and blogosphere coverage, I have watched a couple of her shows. Without engaging in any qualifiers, she is a strong and competent advocate for her position. Why do so many of us only

watch programs that reinforce what we already believe? Where is the growth in that? Whatever else she may or may not be, she is my fellow American.

I have many liberal friends acquired over the years. They are impossible to avoid in the media, but I don't wish to avoid them. They became my friends because I stopped seeing them as labels and began seeing them as persons with innate worth. That is what I failed to do in my first response to Rachel Maddow. One might expect a pro-lifer like me to support the birth of fellow human beings and not suggest they should never have been born.

I expect to like Rachel Maddow because my instinct is to separate the value of a person from his or her political position. For some strange reason (demon possession, perhaps) I failed to do that at CPAC.

So, apology delivered and accepted and lunch will soon be served. I'm trying to decide whose career might be hurt more should someone take a picture of us enjoying a meal and –it is to be hoped, at least by me – each other.

Cal Thomas is co-author with Bob Beckel of "Common Ground: How to Stop the Partisan War That is Destroying America".

Opinion: CSEA gives back to Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to warmly thank the California School

Employees Association Chapter No. 286 [the classified employees at Lake Tahoe Unified School District] and its volunteers for their continued support in our Adopt-A-Day of Nourishment Program.

Volunteers from CSEA spent their Monday helping Bread & Broth volunteers serve those in need a well balanced nutritious meal to people from the community. The Bread & Broth staff that Monday was excited that the CSEA were there to offer their support for our Adopt-A-Day of Nourishment through the Bread & Broth program.

Bread & Broth is able to continue its mission of feeding the hungry of South Lake Tahoe in large part because of the generosity of the local community. A $250 sponsorship covers the cost of food and beverages for the approximately 100 people who visit each Monday evening. To find out how your family or business can Adopt-A-Day of Nourishment, contact Connie Yale at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 544.4945.

Bread & Broth

Opinion: When will the United States elect a president who is worth celebrating?

Today we celebrate 44 men. It’s Presidents’ Day.

Not that long ago Abraham Lincoln and George Washington were honored separately on their February birthdays. Instead of squabbling over which, if any, presidents were worthy of having a federal holiday dedicated in their honor, one day –

the third Monday of February – is set aside to recognize all of the presidents of the United States.

This being a presidential election year *Lake Tahoe News* believes it is more important than other years to pause and reflect about these men who some say are the most important leader in the world.



Mount Rushmore immortalizes four presidents. Are any others worthy of such recognition? Photo/LTN

What are the qualities we like in a leader?

Put aside party affiliation. Put aside gender. Put aside race. Put aside religion. Now answer that question.

It's time for a frank discussion about what leadership means. It's time to set priorities for this country. How are we supposed to pick a person to lead us if collectively we don't know where we want to be led?

Is picking the lesser of two evils really the choice we should be left with? In a country of millions are the people vying for the Republican nomination and the current president really the best either party can come up with?

How can we have hope when the powers that be rely on individuals and the “wisdom” of those who have led us into this oblivion? How can we believe in candidates who can’t figure out what they stand for, equate homosexuality to bestiality or think cheating on a dying wife can be explained away?

Simply put, being president is a job. We, the people, are the bosses of the president. But instead it feels more like they are the boss of us – telling us what we need and want. Until the people take control, tell the president, Congress and other people in power what we want, we will be taken on a ride we may not want to be on.

We are the bosses of all politicians. One way to evaluate them is how we vote. But why wait every two, four or six years for that to happen. Performance evaluations are the norm in most lines of work. They should be told what is working and what isn’t. But we have to tell them, not them telling us.

We all have choices. We can sit back and complain. We can point fingers. We can say one person alone cannot make a difference.

Or, we can make our opinions known, we can take responsibility, and we can be a voice for the change we want in our communities, our states, and our country.

While it will always make sense to have one day to collectively celebrate the presidents of the United States, *Lake Tahoe News* would like to think all who have held and will hold that office would be worthy of having their individual day to be recognized. Maybe in 2017 after the 2016 election we can start on that path.

Opinion: Proposition 13 is outmoded

By Russell Hancock and Emmett D. Carson

Ever since its passage, Proposition 13 has been the “third rail” of California politics: Political leaders touch it at their peril.

We think it’s time to take a fresh look.

Our two organizations released last week the 2012 Silicon Valley Index, a comprehensive analysis of our region’s health. The report is filled with encouraging news about our regional economy, including a rebound in the tech sector and the revving up of our innovation engine.

But the same report shows local governments in a state of crisis, with decreasing revenues and rising expenses, no longer able to provide the essential social services and capital investments we need to sustain vibrant communities.

Even a stunning economic recovery won’t address our fiscal woes. That’s because our state’s tax system, geared toward an early 20th century economy, no longer tracks with the 21st century economy that is being invented in Silicon Valley.

Our current system is based on taxing sales in brick-and-mortar establishments, on the most volatile sources of personal income (stock options and capital gains), and — increasingly — on property taxes.

However, today’s knowledge economy increasingly provides goods and services through the Internet without providing needed tax revenue for state and local governments.

Russell Hancock is president and CEO of Joint Venture Silicon Valley. Emmett D. Carson is CEO and president of Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Governor’s tax ideas are bad for California

By Ted Gaines

This month marks Presidents Day, and as we celebrate Lincoln’s birthday it’s timely that we look at the tax farce troubling his home state of Illinois. Last year, in a move that must have left legislative Democrats dizzy with admiration and envy, the Illinois Legislature jacked personal income tax rates up by 67 percent and corporate tax rates up by nearly 50 percent.

Despite assurances that were made when the taxes were passed, the legislature still has not closed their budget gap, and they won’t until they get the political will to control their spending.



Ted Gaines

Let Illinois be a lesson to everyone who believes in the magical powers of tax increases. They do not occur in a vacuum. Unless governments have the discipline to rein in spending – which California certainly does not – tax increases just enable more extravagant spending plans and takes money away from the working families who have earned it.

California's problem is not that the people are taxed too little, but that the government spends too much. We have to examine every possible avenue for saving money so that we can keep providing core government services, such as education and public safety, at a price we can afford.

For example, why does California have a full-time Legislature? Texas and more than 40 other states do just fine with part-time legislatures that meet far less often than California's and where the legislators make far less than we make every year.

Besides the savings, it's a good idea to get legislators away from the Capitol cocoon more often and out in the real world, living and working under the rules they pass in Sacramento. I own a business and I'm constantly frustrated by the maze of regulations that grows and changes with every legislative session. I know how hard California makes it for businesses to succeed.

In my business I can't just keep spending and spending and then force my clients to pay more and more to cover my spending. When times are tight, I have to cut back, find ways to save money, provide the same services more efficiently.

Government should be taking that same approach, when unemployment is eleven percent and state government is running multibillion dollar deficits. Now is not the time to be growing government.

But, incredibly, Gov. Jerry Brown's budget plan spends $6 billion more in 2012-13 than in 2011-12.

And to pay for it, Brown and the Democrats want to pass the bill along to their customers. The governor is pushing for a five-year, $35 billion tax increase. Sales taxes and income taxes will go up during those five years, costing families precious dollars that they could use for groceries, vacations, school clothes and thousands of other necessities that are already hard to afford in our high-cost, highly regulated state.

Let’s take a private-sector approach before we shake down taxpayers any further. How about putting a stop to the $100 billion-plus high speed rail plan that will soak up billions of dollars a year for decades? How about allowing schools to contract with the private sector to provide services like transportation or food service?

I oppose Brown’s call for higher taxes. State tax rates went down last year, but state tax revenues are growing and are expected to continue growing for the next several years. This indicates that our economy – slowly and precariously – is moving forward. Let’s not kill that momentum by larding on even higher, unnecessary taxes.

Ted Gaines is the state senator representing the 1st Senate District, which includes all or parts of Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sacramento and Sierra counties.

Opinion: Redevelopment appears to have a slight

heart beat

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

Redevelopment is dead after more than six decades as a multibillion-dollar government economic development tool.

Or is it?

As the decree to kill redevelopment takes effect, the Capitol is buzzing with efforts to bring it – or something like it, or some substitute – back.

Gov. Jerry Brown nixed redevelopment advocates' efforts to delay its execution by 10 weeks, supposedly to give the 400-plus local agencies more time to make an orderly shutdown, but in reality to keep it alive in hopes of a reprieve.

"I don't think we can delay this funeral," Brown said, making it clear that he'd veto any extension bill.

Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, who had voted for redevelopment's death sentence last year, popped up with Senate Bill 654 to let cities retain the low-income housing funds that redevelopment agencies had amassed, rather than having them distributed to schools and other local governments.

If enacted, it would hold back $1.4 billion, eating into money that Brown wants from redevelopment's demise by shifting their funds to school districts.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Find a way to keep state parks open

By Noreen Evans

California's state park system was established in 1926. Ranging from San Onofre State Beach in Southern California to Del Norte Redwoods in the north, California's 270 state parks include historic treasures such as California's missions, Fort Ross and our first state Capitol, as well as natural wonders like Lake Tahoe, the redwood forests and Castle Crags. Our parks provide summer vacation sites for families, as well as destinations for tourists from all over the world.

Our parks belong to the people, and the people have loved them and invested time and money in them. While I applaud the *Press Democrat's* support for keeping our state parks open ("State parks need allies mot rivalries," Sunday), I am dismayed that the *Press Democrat* fails to recognize the real problem: the state is actively undermining ongoing negotiations with local nonprofits.

Nonprofit supporters were in the process of developing operating agreements for several beloved North Coast parks — Hendy Woods, Russian Gulch, Standish-Hickey, Westport Union Landing, Austin Creek and Sugarloaf Ridge. Local citizens were actively engaged in developing these operating agreements to save their local parks. However, the state has delayed its negotiations with these nonprofits, while at the same time developing requests for proposals aimed at private, for-profit companies.

Fortunately, the state backed off its proposal to privatize 11 parks in their entirety after being faced with stiff opposition from myself and others and with increased media scrutiny. However, the state is proceeding to seek bids for

concessions from for-profit companies to take over some operations in these parks.

State Sen. Noreen Evans, D-Santa Rosa, represents the 2nd Senatorial District, which includes all or portions of Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Napa, Solano and Sonoma counties. She chairs the Legislative Women's Caucus and the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Keep strong, independent media alive

By Kathryn Reed

The Fourth Estate. That has long been the media's role. We are there to ask the tough and unpopular questions. We are there to report the answers.



What happens if no one asks those questions?

Now in my third decade as a professional journalist, I have seen plenty of changes through the years. Two things I embrace – the choice of news outlets beyond the three networks I grew up with and the ability to get real-time news instead of the three-hour tape delay TV news broadcast.

In some ways, those are also the two things that bother me the

most about the changes in the news industry, too. Choice is great – but at what cost? With so many niche publications – online, print, TV – many people are not getting a breadth of news. It's focused, targeted – almost written just for them. I worry if people don't read things beyond what they are interested in, as well as things they disagree with, that we will have an ill informed society. And what happens when those people go to the ballot box?

Not every story is fun to read. Trust me, they aren't fun to report or write either.

If I could just write what I wanted, it would be food, outdoors and travel stories. But as much as I need to write about other things, I firmly believe we need to be reading all the other things.

Real-time news is great. But accuracy should come before being the first to report something. Old-school? Perhaps. But it's what is so often missing with the 24-hour news cycle. We equate "best" with being "first" – not "best" with having the "best" story.

It's getting harder for news outlets of any kind to deliver in-depth stories. That 24-hour cycle is part of the problem. The media is in a bit of a game of trying to keep up with the Joneses. It's not serving the public well.

The other problem is the lack of revenue media has. Newspapers blew it when they gave away their content for free on the Internet. It made entities like *Lake Tahoe News* unable to charge for content. It's just not mainstream to do so or something the public has an appetite for.

But it takes money for all media outlets to survive. In-depth stories like the two-part series on drugs on the South Shore that will run on *Lake Tahoe News* Feb. 17-18 take money to produce. People forget that reporters still cost money. It doesn't matter that their stories are online. The same amount

of work goes into a well researched, well written, well edited story no matter the medium.

Today is Support Your Media Day. *Lake Tahoe News* is the only source for news about Lake Tahoe seven days a week and it is not affiliated with any other media. We are grateful to our advertisers. And we are grateful to our loyal readers who send in donations via the button at the bottom of the page or checks in the mail.

Thank you for supporting *Lake Tahoe News* today and every day – whether it's monetarily, through story suggestions, news tips or being a reader.

Kathryn Reed is publisher of Lake Tahoe News.

Opinion: Schoolchildren showing importance of state parks

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Feb. 12, 2012, Sacramento Bee.*

Slowly but surely, nonprofits and local communities are exploring what they can do to keep open the 70 state parks slated to close on July 1.

So far, 10 parks have been removed from the closure list. The latest is a gem in our region, the South Yuba River State Park, with a lovely canyon and covered bridge, near Grass Valley.

Elementary school students at the public Grass Valley Charter School were among those who lobbied local leaders and helped the South Yuba River Citizens League collect 10,000 petition signatures. The Nevada County Board of Supervisors, the Nevada City and Grass Valley city councils and Truckee Town Council signed a letter to the governor.

State Parks officials announced Wednesday that the park will remain open, with new parking fees at entry kiosks and self-serve devices at park entry sites. Nevada County agreed to “no parking” signs along the public road adjacent to the park, so visitors will use the park’s lot and pay the fee.

The kids and the community still are trying get neighboring Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park off the closure list. That’s the site of the largest hydraulic mining operation in California in the 1870s and early 1880s.

Other parks have gotten off the closure list with timely donations and active nonprofits.

Read the whole story