

Opinion: Dugard's nightmare a lesson for all

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the July 10, 2012, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

As Jaycee Lee Dugard, the young girl kidnapped in South Lake Tahoe and held captive for nearly 20 years, promotes a memoir of her ordeal, a federal judge in San Francisco has admitted what was obvious to most observers: Federal agents failed in their duty to monitor the convicted sex offender to grabbed her off of the street, raped her and fathered her two children.

A report by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, released on Friday by Chief U.S. District Judge James Ware, should be a warning as the states and federal government look to save money by releasing more prisoners from overcrowded prisons.

"Had Mr. Garrido's federal supervision been conducted properly from the onset," Ware wrote, "it is possible that he may have been deterred from some of the acts now attributed to him."

California officials already have admitted mistakes in their supervision of Garrido, who had been convicted of a particularly nasty attempted assault that started at Lake Tahoe and ended in a Reno storage unit when his intended victim escaped.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Tahoe Tallac Association committed to keeping culture alive

By Ginger Nicolay-Davis

On behalf of the nonprofit Tahoe Tallac Association, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the numerous volunteers and supporters of our efforts to keep the arts and culture alive in South Lake Tahoe. As president of the TTA board, I can attest to our ongoing financial challenges and that our board members continue to do the best job possible with the limited resources available. We, like so many organizations in town, have been hit hard by the current economic reality. Arts grants across the country are scarce and our board members consistently seek effective ways to bring in funding.



In the spirit of volunteerism and to help keep the annual Valhalla festival going, we, like previous board members over the past 30 years, are up for the challenge to secure funds. The work we do is a real labor of love – from our board, staff, volunteers, and our partner, the U.S. Forest Service – and this is why we are in it for countless hours. We are grateful for the new local Forest Service administration, as they've been working with us diligently to help us through our current financial situation.

As many of you know, the Valhalla site is a true gem in our community and most appreciate the unique talent offered in the summer festival line-up. When people step onto our site and into our theater, they tell us they're in awe of the experience. It connects them to performing arts, culture, the environment and beauty of Lake Tahoe. What most don't realize are the day-to-day, behind-the-scenes efforts to raise the

critical and necessary funding to keep the effort going. This is our ongoing reality and challenge as a nonprofit performing arts entity.

Losing board members can be difficult as we all aim for the higher goal of keeping our amazing site open and available to the community for the arts, culture, and historical preservation – this is our mission. It is with this mission in mind that we would like to continue the dialogue and invite more people in our community to participate with ideas, volunteerism, and financial contributions. Only together can we be successful. We thank you for your support over the years to help make TTA work and look forward to providing many more years of performing arts at this site.

Ginger Nicolay-Davis is president of the Tahoe Tallac Association.

Opinion: Sneaky attack on clean water rules

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the June 16, 2011, New York Times.*

Congress often kills or delays federal regulations it doesn't like by simply denying agencies the money they need to carry them out. This spares Congress from actually debating the regulation on its merits.

House Republicans are adept at this, especially on environmental rules. Their latest intended victim is a worthy initiative aimed at protecting streams and wetlands from development and pollution.

In April, the Obama administration issued new guidelines to federal agencies charged with enforcing the Clean Water Act, chiefly the Army Corps of Engineers. The guidelines, which the administration hopes to codify in a federal regulation later this year, are badly needed. Two muddled Supreme Court decisions, and earlier guidance from the George H. W. Bush administration, had effectively limited protections to navigable waterways. The new guidelines provide much-needed protections to thousands of miles of small streams and millions of acres of wetlands that are no less crucial to the health of the nation's drinking water and its aquatic ecosystems.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Finding flaws with opposing gay marriage

By Jonathan Dudley

When I was earning my master's degree in divinity at Yale, I never thought that years later, I'd be cheering the legalization of gay marriage in the state of New York. Still, while I was at Yale, I began to see an interesting pattern in some of the biblical passages I was analyzing.

Many conservatives use the Bible as a definitive source for why gays shouldn't be afforded the right to marry. The problem is that there is very little in the Bible about same-sex pairings, and what's there can easily be interpreted in multiple ways.

My point is that the biblical prop that politicians use to

condemn gays is an illusion as are other elements of their arguments. My arguments, backed by research, undermine the basis for the far right's objection to gays in America.

If the goal is legislation that both preserves marriage and reflects the Bible's teaching, it is far easier to argue that divorce should be illegal than it is to condemn gay marriage. Although the New Testament only contains one uncontested reference to same-sex pairings, divorce is condemned throughout the New Testament, both by Jesus and the Apostle Paul. What's more, the growing prevalence of divorce poses a far more credible threat to the culture of marriage in America than does the prospect of gay people marrying each other. In today's America, the divorce rate for new married couples is 50 percent.

As gay marriage is still outlawed by the Defense of Marriage Act, we can't blame the divorce rate on gay marriage. That figure is due to the dissolution of heterosexual marriages.

A growing number of theologians and young evangelicals have realized the Bible doesn't require Christians to condemn gay rights. In fact, there is a growing movement that supports the idea that some of the translations and interpretations of passages in contemporary Bibles are errant, and also that the Bible even provides fodder for supporting gay marriage.

The community of evangelical biblical scholars, almost exclusively white heterosexual men, has a history of producing interpretations of the Bible that reflects its own interests and disadvantages those without power. The same leaders that insist on the most rigorous, stringent reading possible on homosexuality have come up with all sorts of nuances and complicating considerations to justify leniency for themselves when it comes to more obvious biblical condemnations of divorce. So, why is it that same-sex relationships don't get the same treatment?

The reason is because it doesn't serve anyone involved with interpreting the Bible for the purposes of creating modern religious canon.

The same community that insists on "the traditional reading" of the Bible on homosexual relationships has embraced tendentious, historically recent interpretations claiming the Bible says life begins at conception. And the same intellectual habits and social structures that led yesterday's white evangelical community to ignore the civil rights movement, oppose the feminist movement, and drag its feet for far too long in the face of environmental destruction are still in place today – and they shape how evangelical leaders are thinking about homosexuality. In reality, the older generation's opposition to gay marriage tells us more about their allegiance to social conservatism than it does about their allegiance to the Bible.

Jonathan Dudley is a graduate of Calvin College, and Yale Divinity School, and is currently an medical student at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

Opinion: Get back to basics to get economy going

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the June 21, 2011, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

By now, it has become crystal clear that there is no magic bullet for what ails the American economy.

Nowhere is that more true than in Nevada, where the nation-leading unemployment rate fell slightly, to 12.1 percent in

April but rose in the state's two most populous counties, Washoe and Clark, where it matters most. (The jobless rate is more volatile in rural counties, where small changes in the actual numbers can cause wide swings in rates.)

What we've seen during the past few years is that there isn't much that either Congress or the Federal Reserve Board can do that will convince cautious consumers that this is a good time to start spending again or pessimistic business owners and managers that the time is right to hire again.

It should now be apparent that it will take considerable time for this state to regain what it lost when the once-booming economy collapsed. It will take patience and more than a little derring-do by entrepreneurs who see opportunities where everyone else sees only gloom.

Nevadans shouldn't be looking for a home run. What they need is a lot of singles.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Is era of cooperation over at Lake Tahoe?

Publisher's note: This editorial is from the July 3, 2011, Sacramento Bee.

The upcoming annual Lake Tahoe Summit, to be hosted this year by U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California on Aug. 16, promises to be a doozy. The challenges to the lake's legendary clarity and to cooperation between California and Nevada are

greater than ever.

- **Water quality.** Lake Tahoe remains one of the clearest large lakes in the world. But its famed clarity has been declining since the post-World War II building boom. Homes, casinos and golf courses brought sedimentation, pollution, and algae growth. University of California, Davis, scientists measured the lake's clarity at 102 feet in 1968, reaching a low of 64 feet in 1997. In 2009, it was 68 feet. Aggressive measures to attack pollution and sedimentation remain necessary.

- **Governance.** In a serious threat to two-state cooperation, the Nevada Legislature in June passed and the governor signed a bill to withdraw from the two-state compact governing Lake Tahoe by 2015 – unless California and the U.S. Congress adopt amendments to the compact to give Nevada greater voting power. Currently, the two states have equal representation, with seven members each on the governing board.

To approve changes to the regional plan, currently a majority of members (four) from each state must vote “aye,” a fair process. Nevada wants to change that – to nine of 14 votes without regard to state. It also wants to change the voting requirements for particular projects.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Independence from taxes worth celebrating

By Ted Gaines

As Californians celebrated our nation's independence and the

freedom that we all cherish, we also celebrated another gift of freedom over the holiday weekend – taxes went down. Gov. Jerry Brown at least temporarily abandoned his crusade for increased taxes and agreed to a budget that, while far from perfect, respects the hard-working families of our state.

Two years ago, despite my loud objections, the Legislature crafted a budget deal that attacked taxpayers from every side, raising the sales and personal income taxes, nearly doubling the state's already high vehicle license fee, and lowering the dependent credit allowed on state income taxes. These increases were to expire after two years unless the voters agreed to extend them in a special election.



Ted Gaines

In May 2009, when voters had the opportunity to weigh in with their opinion, every single county – even the vastly left-leaning Bay Area counties – said “no,” sending what should have been a clear signal to every California politician and pundit.

With that overwhelming electoral loss still close in the rearview mirror and unemployment running close to 12 percent, it's unfathomable that anyone would think that extending the higher taxes is an acceptable answer to the state's budget crisis. Unfortunately, the governor and legislative Democrats offered the same unimaginative solution they offer to every challenge faced by the state – more taxes. In this case, \$58 billion more in taxes over five years.

I did not support the initial tax increase and I did not

support any budget proposal that depended on tax extensions. With the remaining tax extensions that expired July 1, we will start to undo some of the damage done to families and employers over the past two years.

The dependent tax credit returned to \$309 per child, up from the punitive \$99 of the past two years. The state sales tax went down 1 percentage point. The vehicle license fee dropped from 1.15 percent of a car's value to 0.65 percent. The personal income tax increase had already temporarily expired after two tax cycles.

All told, this reduction in tax rates will save California taxpayers almost \$6 billion a year or approximately \$1,000 per family.

Lower taxes are expected to stimulate consumer demand for big-ticket items such as automobiles, which in turn, will help businesses profit and expand in our state.

If California is ever to escape the budget crisis cycle, we will not do it through higher taxes. We will not do it by making it harder to raise a family in our state or by making it more difficult to start and run a business. We will only grow our way out of our problems. And as Winston Churchill once said, trying to tax your way to prosperity is like standing in a bucket and trying to lift yourself up by the handle. It is self-defeating.

We should celebrate this victory, but it's not a time to rest. California's tax picture began to improve a little on July 1, but we are improving on what is still the 49th worst tax climate in the country. We still have work to do if we are going to provide the incentives for entrepreneurs to start their businesses here and create private sector jobs. I am going to continue to push for lower taxes and simpler, less burdensome regulations to let employers know that California is open for business.

I hope you were able to enjoy the Independence Day weekend, and enjoy the fact that for once, California taxes are heading in the right direction.

Ted Gaines represents 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.

Reminder: Personal fireworks illegal in Lake Tahoe Basin

By Michael D. Brown

Everyone enjoys fireworks during the Fourth of July. The North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District would like to remind everyone to enjoy them safely and responsibly. The National Fire Protection Association states that more fires are reported on July 4 than any other day of the year in the United States and more than half of the fires reported are caused by fireworks.



You can enjoy your holiday and the fireworks with just a few simple safety tips for you and your family:

- Leave fireworks to the professionals. Please do not use consumer fireworks (includes sparklers and firecrackers).
- The safest way to enjoy fireworks is to attend a public

display conducted by professionals.

- Please keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Never leave young children alone with an open flame.
- Teach older children to use fire responsibly.

Fireworks are illegal to possess or discharge in Washoe County or on any U.S. Forest Service property in the Lake Tahoe Basin and elsewhere. This includes all consumer fireworks (fireworks purchased by individuals) known as "safe and sane" brought in from out of state. The use of consumer fireworks can lead to devastating burns, other injuries, fires and even death. Not only are safety precautions a concern, the cost of suppression and any other injury or liability caused by fireworks is the direct responsibility of those persons using fireworks.

Anyone with fireworks may turn them into any fire station in any fire district without penalty at any time.

The National Fire Protection Association reported that in 2009 fireworks caused an estimated 18,000 reported fires, including 1,300 structure fires, 400 vehicle fires and 16,300 outside and other fires. These fires resulted in an estimated \$38 million in direct property damage.

On Independence Day in a typical year fireworks cause more outdoor fires in the United States than all other causes of outdoor fire combined. This emphasizes the fact that consumer fireworks are dangerous, especially with children and teens present. NFPA states that the risk of fireworks injury was highest for children ages 10–14, with more than twice the risk for the general population.

Please teach children that fireworks are not toys. Explain the dangers and ask your children to tell an adult if they find fireworks or another child playing with them.

Remember to use extra caution this 4th of July holiday. Please

extinguish cigarettes in proper designated receptacles and leave the fireworks to the professionals. Left to the professionals, fireworks can be a spectacular way to enjoy your 4th of July celebration.

Michael D. Brown is fire chief of North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District.

Opinion: One day Declaration of Independence will ring true

By Kathryn Reed

I was reminded a week ago how after 235 years, the intent of our forefathers through their words in the Declaration of Independence have yet to be fully realized.

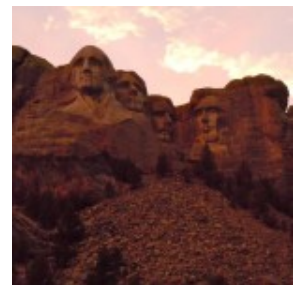
Today, as we mark the birth of the United States of America, take a moment to appreciate what we have as a nation and acknowledge how far we have to go.

I was at Crazy Horse on June 25 – which happens to be the anniversary of the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn. Gen. George Armstrong Custer went down in defeat to the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. Crazy Horse is the Lakota Sioux who led that battle for the victors.



Crazy Horse is destined to be the world's largest mountain carving.
Photos/Kathryn Reed

A massive stone carving honoring him has been in the works since 1948. It's being paid for through



Mount Rushmore

donations. It's obviously a slow process. Funding is such that major blasts only occur twice a year.

Down the road is Mount Rushmore – the granite carving memorializing Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Teddy Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. Construction began in 1927. The National Park Service, which runs the site today, took over ownership in 1933 before the faces were completed.

Our history books say “we” lost the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

That begs the questions: Who are “we” today? And whose land is it?

Crazy Horse is quoted as saying, “My lands are where my dead lie buried.”

Based on that criteria, I get to claim part of his Black Hills of South Dakota as well because we buried my dad’s ashes there a week ago today.

There is no denying the Indians were scattered throughout the United States well before Europeans took over. Winning the “war” at that time meant securing ownership of the land. Eventually we put the Indians on reservations – in isolation,



in a prison of sorts.

Perhaps now as they erect casino after casino (and not just in California) they are reaping a sort of revenge on the white man. Look at how we, I say we because I am of European ancestry, destroyed their land, their culture, their way of life.

Look at Lake Tahoe and Reno. Haven’t those Indian casinos helped destroy our economy, our way of life, and therefore our built landscape?

It is cliché to say what goes around, comes around. But it seems so appropriate here.

The Battle of Little Bighorn came 100 years after the Declaration of Independence was signed. Clearly, in that instance all men were not created equal. They could not all pursue life, liberty and happiness.

We are a young nation compared to most. We seem to keep trying to define ourselves by who we see in the mirror instead of who we are as a nation. Until we take off the blinders to realize “we are all created equal” does not mean “we all look the same,” we will continue to be stagnated by petty squabbles with one another that extend from sea to shining sea.

We have created wounds that have yet to heal. Maybe the first step would be to make Crazy Horse a national park. Perhaps then this monument to one of the first Americans would be finished in my lifetime. Maybe we could treat him and his people as equals like the Declaration of Independence says we all are.

Opinion: Unplug yourself to avoid future hearing loss

By Ronald Roth

Noise induced hearing loss is irreversible, but preventable. Approximately 26 million Americans between the ages 20 and 69 have high frequency hearing loss from overexposure to loud noise at work or during recreational activities.

NIHL at a younger age is thought to accelerate age-related hearing loss.

Hearing loss is a common sensory disorder, affecting tens of millions of people of all ages in the U.S. Noise from concerts, iPods, stereos, firearms and sporting events can result in NIHL when repetitive exposure occurs. Harmful noises at home also may come from lawnmowers, snowblowers and shop tools.

The plugged in generation

We have become a generation “plugged in” to amplified sound and high levels of noise from earbuds, headphones and video games. These can potentially damage the delicate structure of the inner ear, resulting in high-frequency hearing loss.

You can reduce noise exposure by:

- Limiting the time of continuous exposure to noise.
- Reducing the volume level.
- Wearing earplugs or earmuffs when shooting or running loud machinery. Special earplugs and earmuffs are available at hardware and sporting goods stores.
- Being alert to hazardous noise levels in the environment.
- Protecting the ears of children who are too young to protect their own.
- Making family, friends and colleagues aware of the hazards of noise that could be a detriment to them.

If you suspect you have hearing loss, have a medical exam by an otolaryngologist, a doctor that specializes in diseases of the ear, nose and throat.

Ronald Roth is board-certified in otolaryngology. He works for Barton Health in South Lake Tahoe.