

South Tahoe treasurer resigns

By Kathryn Reed

Effective today, Stephen Wysong has resigned as treasurer of South Lake Tahoe, a position he has had since 1990.

Wysong is the second person to have this elected position – the other being John Upton. When the city was first incorporated in 1965 the treasurer position was not part of the mix.



Stephen Wysong

For a while, the treasurer attended City Council meetings. When Wysong realized no one was asking questions, he opted not to attend the lengthy sessions.

Wysong did not return calls or an email. He has been ill for a number of months.

“I was referred to Hospice care on November 24, 2009,” Wysong wrote in his resignation letter. “My oncologist indicates I likely have three months or less to live.”

The certified public accountant worked for the Internal Revenue Service before opening his own practice in South Lake Tahoe.

He and his first wife, Linda, raised their two children here. Andrew and Kelly were valedictorians of their classes at South Tahoe High School. Both went on to graduate from Cal.

"He never missed a Cal football game. He was very much a family man," said Jean Burns, who is a neighbor of Wysong and his wife, Robyn.

Burns said she is used to seeing Wysong out walking the family dogs.

"He is very much an animal lover," Burns said. "Their front door mat says 'this household is run solely for the comfort of our pets'."

Kiwanis has been a huge part of Wysong's life. Dave Borges met Wysong in 1985 in the service club.

"He has helped this community socially and economically," Borges said. "He is very unpretentious. If something needs to be done, he rolls up his sleeves and does it."

Borges relayed the story of how when Wysong was young he didn't do well in school until someone told him he needed glasses. His family was too poor to buy them. The Lions club came through with glasses and Wysong started producing A's in school.

Ron Weibel has also been a member of Kiwanis of Lake Tahoe with Wysong.

"He has been the backbone of the Kiwanis club for quite some time," Weibel said.

One trait Weibel said Wysong has is being a "tremendous listener". He also praised how good a father Wysong is.

He liked to play sports with his kids and continued to do so after they left home. Wysong was an avid skier in the winter and liked to be out on the lake in the summer.

As city treasurer, his main duties were to invest the city's funds.

The city has 30 days to appoint a replacement. If this doesn't happen, a special election must be called. This would likely cost about \$25,000.

Deputy City Treasurer MaryAnne Brand will fill the role until a permanent replacement is named. She is the person Wysong recommends serve out his term that expires at the end of 2010. She works in the city's finance department as well.

The council next meets Dec. 8 and the issue is on the agenda. If a decision is not made Tuesday, it's likely a special council meeting will need to be called.

Cutting a tree adds magic to the holiday

By Kathryn Reed

Charlie Brown Christmas trees are more abundant in the wild. Mother Nature doesn't seem to make perfectly coiffed trees.

Those "perfect" trees are found on lots because the owners of tree farms took the time and had the patience to make them so.

Many people make the tree cutting an annual event. It's not just people in Tahoe who do this. All those trees on car roofs, and sticking out of trunks and back windows are most likely people who came to the lake to cut their tree.



Cutting a Christmas tree is a ritual for many in Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Cutting trees is not a solitary event. It usually takes two haul it back to the car “ especially if you’ve hiked in a ways.

A group of friends gathers each Thanksgiving weekend in Stateline for a hearty breakfast before trekking into the forest with saws.

This year one Tahoe Paradise couple got a permit to cut a massive tree for their high-ceiling living room, while allowing family to cut small trees off their property.

Another couple, Rene and Mark Gorevin have been cutting their tree on and off for more than 20 years, having started the tradition when they lived in the Bay Area and did so at a farm there.

“Before the (2007 Angora) fire, we were even able to cut down fairly close to our house in allowed Forest Service land,” Renee Gorevin said. “That was fun as we took turns carrying it back to the house. The last 100 yards or so would involve some complaining about who wanted such a tall tree – of course everyone blamed mom-which I admit was true – our hands full of fresh pitch, our arms and backs straining. Thank

goodness Mark has the tools and skills and is able to build a stand for the tree as cutting down your own means you can't pay the extra three bucks to have the lot crew attach the stand.â€

Holidays are about traditions and making memories. The Gorevins certainly provided what should be a lasting memory for an exchange student from Mexico.

â€I remember Ilenia was cold all winter as she was used to 70 degree weather at Christmas time. Naturally that year we had to get a big tree to show off, especially in our open beam great room,â€ Gorevin said. â€She was thrilled and amazed to be able to take a short hike to USFS Christmas tree land and offer her advice about which tree to choose. What a trooper she was, bearing the cold, the sawing and carrying that 12-foot tree back home. We needed the big ladder to decorate that year.â€

If imperfection is what you are looking for this holiday season, then consider getting a permit from the U.S. Forest Service to cut a tree. The Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit issued about 3,500 permits in 2008.

National Forests have allowed the public to cut trees for decades, but it wasn't until 2003 that the local office started to do so.

â€There are two main purposes. The first is to provide the opportunity for the public to participate in a traditional holiday experience. The second, this helps at least in a modest way in reducing the overcrowded densities of small diameter trees in portions of the basin,â€ Rex Norman, UFSF spokesman said. â€The white fir is the most sought after tree, and this type coincidentally, represents the majority of our small tree overpopulation.â€

Each year the Forest Service's vegetation management staff scours the land to choose which areas to issue permits for.

Maps are supplied when the permit is issued.

The Forest Service isn't trying to compete with the lots that opened last weekend. But the self-cutting is a lot cheaper, albeit more work, too. Permits are \$10 and can be secured at the Forest Service office. All the money collected goes back to Washington into the general fund for the agency.

For more information, go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/ltbmu/passes-permits/holiday-tree.shtml>.

No matter where you get your tree, remember what Anna Getty, author of "I'm Dreaming of a Green Christmas" says – cutting a local Christmas tree is more green than artificial.

Ironwomen prove their mettle in Arizona

By Kathryn Reed

It wasn't about setting records – though others did that. This particular Sunday was about personal achievement.

Sisters Rene Brejc, 45, of Christmas Valley and Martine Milton, 46, of Reno completed the Ford Ironman Arizona in Tempe.



Martine Milton
and Rene Brejc
with finisher
medals from
their first
Ironman.

Photo/Provided

“Because it was my first Ironman my goal was to finish,” Brejc said. The course is closed after 17 hours.

Brejc finished the mega triathlon in 14 hours, 27 minutes. Her sister, who had to stop for two hours because of dehydration, crossed the finish line after a little more than 16 hours.

They didn’t care that the finishers had broken course records and were probably at home showered and relaxing while they still swam, cycled and ran. Neither of the winners had to contend with a broken bone.

Brejc broke one of her little toes 10 days before the Nov. 22 race so she didn’t run during that time. Her doctor told her she wouldn’t make it any worse by participating in the tri; it would just test her pain tolerance.

“I cut a hole in the shoe where the pinky toe is so I was able to run,” Brejc said.

Training began a year ago. An uncle who was 50 when he did his first Ironman inspired her to begin her quest.

“I would say the other big thing for me is I have a 9 and 12 year old. For my kids I wanted to show them if you put your

mind to something that seems really hard, you can make it happen," Brejc said.

They were on-hand to watch their mom compete, as were Brejc's husband and parents. Brejc said the Tempe Ironman is great for spectators because the cycling and running events are multiple loops.

Last summer she participated in the Donner triathlon as part of her training.

"I had never swam with a bunch of people in wetsuits. I kind of freaked out," Brejc said of the North Shore event. "I knew I had to overcome being able to swim in green mucky water with 2,400 people."

She said that was the biggest obstacle she had to overcome "feeling a bit claustrophobic in the water.

In the winter months training involved skate skiing and back country skiing. Much of her swimming was done at the South Lake Tahoe recreation complex. In the summer she was in Lake Tahoe off Baldwin Beach.

After the Arizona event she said that one Ironman was enough. Ten days later and she is talking about doing an Ironman in Idaho in 2011.

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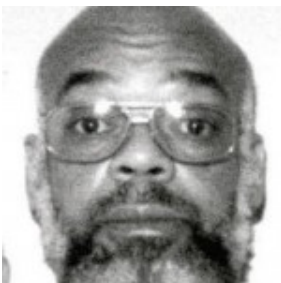
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Jury about to decide if Roberson killed his son

By Kathryn Reed

Jurors are expected to begin deliberations this afternoon in the South Lake Tahoe murder trial of the man accused of killing his 4-year-old son, but whose body has never been found.

Ulysses Roberson is on trial for first-degree murder in the killing of Alexander Olive in their Tahoe Keys home in either December 1985 or January 1986.



Uylsses
Roberson

Roberson calls the boy Salaam – meaning peace. El Dorado County Deputy District Attorney Tricia Kelliher in her initial

closing arguments on Monday pointed out what she called an irony for Roberson to name the boy "peace" when he probably never had a day of it in his short life.

Kelliher is scheduled to finish her closing arguments at 8:30 this morning in El Dorado County Superior Court. Judge Suzanne Kingsbury is presiding.

Defense attorney Monica Lynch in her closing arguments admonished local and other law enforcement for not following up on leads from people who thought they had seen the boy between 1988-2002.

"If the government had done its job, the reliability of these witnesses would not be questioned," Lynch said.

Sitting in the courtroom were FBI agent Chris Campion and South Lake Tahoe police Capt. Martin Hewlett – two of the primary investigators of the case.

Throughout the trial, which began Oct. 5, a slew of witnesses have taken the stand. Roberson was not one of them.

CSU Chico sociology Professor Janja Lulich, who is considered a cult expert, was brought in by the prosecution to talk about the mindsets of people who seemingly blindly follow a leader. Defense attorney Monica Lynch got her way in that the word "cult" was not allowed to be used throughout the trial.

Several of the women Roberson has been involved with have taken the stand.

Judy Olive, the boy's mother, sat in the same row as her two sisters and brother. It was her brother who helped her to leave the cult-like home Roberson had created, where he slept with several women and fathered even more children.

After Monday's hearing, Olive did not want to speak with *Lake Tahoe News*. "My only comment is I am appreciative of everyone doing their job," she said.

At times she was in tears, other times she stared intently at the person speaking. She and Roberson never seemed to make eye contact.

Roberson passed notes to his attorney while the prosecution spoke. While Lynch gave her arguments, he sat stoically – engaged in what was being said.

Roberson could face life in prison without the possibility of parole if the jury finds him guilty. Jurors must also consider two enhancements – that the crime was racially motivated and a form of torture.

Testimony during the trial painted Roberson as a racist who hated his young son for being half white.

Another issue the jury must consider is whether Raj Roberson was an accomplice to the crime. The defense must prove that this woman who essentially was wife No. 1 is not credible and therefore her testimony should be disregarded.

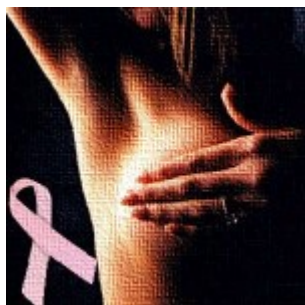
Lynch made a compelling case for that in her closing arguments. Liar was a repeated description of this woman who had taken the stand against Roberson.

Kelliher was forthright in depicting Roberson as an evil man whose self-absorption and need for control was often demonstrated through his abusiveness toward the women and children he lived with.

This is not Roberson's first run-in with the law. He is well known to Washington state authorities. [Click here for more on his past.](#)

Tahoe doctor is proof breast exams save lives

By Kelly Shanahan



I guess I am the woman whose life would be considered expendable under the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's new guidelines on mammography screening and breast self exam.

I guess Caroline, the 26-year-old medical student who sat next to me as we both got chemotherapy; and Linda, the ward clerk at my little hospital; and Melodie, the restaurant owner – all of whom felt their cancerous lumps on breast self exam – are expendable as well. I guess my patients and fellow breast cancer survivors Lisa, Karen, Marla, Chris, Carolyn, Tracey, Annette, Michelle, Jana, Diane, Alice, Shelley, Anne, Kelly, Pam, Carol, Rebecca, Suzanne and Lea – all of us diagnosed with breast cancer prior to age 50 – are unimportant.

I understand many women under 50 (1,904) will need to be screened to find one woman with breast cancer. I understand that this costs money. But breast cancers diagnosed in women in their 40s are often more aggressive, faster growing tumors, and finding these cancers earlier unequivocally saves lives. Even the USPSFT, in the same paper recommending stopping mammograms in women in their 40s, acknowledges a 15 percent reduction in the death rate in women between ages 40 – 50 who have regular mammograms. Finding cancer earlier saves money as well – a lumpectomy is cheaper than a mastectomy, and no chemo is way less expensive than having to undergo months of chemo for a later stage cancer.

I was diagnosed with stage 2B breast cancer at age 47. If I had followed the USPSTF guidelines, I wouldn't have my first mammo for another year. By that time, the cancer may well have spread to far reaches of my body, and I would be lucky if I survived to see my sixth-grade daughter graduate from high school. If I had had a digital mammogram every year since turning 40, instead of missing one year, my cancer may well have been diagnosed sooner. Losing both breasts and all my hair, vomiting and having bone pain from the chemo was no big deal; telling my daughter (9½ when I was diagnosed) that I had cancer and not being able to be there for her 100 percent because I was too sick, well that was what really hurt.

Thanks to a mammo, a mastectomy and months of chemotherapy, I am able to continue to be a productive member of society as a practicing gynecologist, a wife and a mom for, I hope, a very long time. The 22 other women I mentioned – secretaries, nurses, teachers, businesswomen, clerks, wives, moms, daughters – are all worth saving.

I stand with the American Cancer Society in condemning the USPSTF guidelines.

Dr. Kelly Shanahan owns Emerald Bay Center for Women's Health, which has offices in South Lake Tahoe and Minden.

Collins keeps fans at Harrah's swaying in their seats



By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – It was 1975 when Judy Collins won a Grammy for Song of the Year for “Send in the Clowns” the one song I knew she sang before I saw her in concert Saturday night.

What a shame that I thought this 70-year-old singer-songwriter was all about this one song. In fact, it turned out to be my least favorite song of the night.

Saturday night was like being introduced to someone for the first time, despite hearing her on CDs many a time at my parents. This night I listened with interest.

Collins dazzled the appreciative crowd at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe South Shore Room with lyrics and music of a bygone era. So much of what is on the airwaves today is noise. Collins belted out song after song with lyrics both audible and memorable “stories in words, with a richness coming from the guitar and piano she played so eloquently.

Much of the evening she was accompanied on piano by music director Russell Walden. Collins spent most of the night strumming her Martin, tuning it along the way “just like Eric Clapton.

Her vocal range is what it was years ago “hitting every note as though it was 1961 when she released her first album.

Walking onto the stage in a glittery black pantsuit, Collins began the 90-minute show with “Both Sides Now” the Joni Mitchell classic that is part of the Grammy Hall of Fame.

The longevity of her career has allowed Collins to be

associated with legends in the music industry. Before singing Harry Chapin's "Cat" in the Cradle she said, "Harry is up there looking for a rhyme for indictment." To this, the audience applauded.

This folk artist clearly has a strong following. As a contemporary and friend of Joan Baez, she taps into that style of musicianship that embraces artistry and simplicity.

Collins' easy manner on stage makes you feel like her friend by the time the night is over. She talks about the songs, the artists who may have first sang the song, the songwriters, life, getting older " and she continuously welcomes the audience to sing with her.

It was 1979 when Collins made her debut in the South Shore Room. She played 11 consecutive nights, two shows a night.

She talked about the beautiful home on Lake Tahoe that Bill Harrah owned and where all she did was sleep because of the schedule she had.

Collins capped the night with her renowned rendition of "Amazing Grace" in a cappella. It brought about the second standing ovation of the night " with the crowd clapping in hopes she'd return to the stage one more time.

Better diagnosis in the field for heart patients



SLT
firefighter
Doug Bailey
straps a heart
monitor onto
colleague
Brennen Davis.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Wires are strapped to Brennen Davis's chest. A South Lake Tahoe Fire Department paramedic reads the squiggly line on the monitor to analyze what is going on with the patient's heart.

Brennen is a healthy 24-year-old "no heart problems. He's the model for the day to demonstrate the latest piece of equipment he and other firefighter-paramedics at SLT and Lake Valley fire departments are using in the field.

The previous heart monitor didn't have a diagnostic capability. This 12-lead device is designed to tell first responders if the patient needs to go to a cardiac hospital or not.

The various leads give different views of the heart.

Capt. Chris Hertel said with the old equipment it was not possible to always definitively tell if someone was having a heart attack.

The information gathered allows paramedics to relay to emergency room personnel what to expect when the ambulance arrives.

“I like to leave it on during transport because there may be a change,” explained firefighter-paramedic Doug Bailey.

Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District has been using the monitor for about 18 months. With Carson-Tahoe Hospital in Carson City having the closest cath lab, Tahoe-Douglas drives patients there.

El Dorado County is working with Barton Memorial Hospital so starting next year patients would go right to Carson-Tahoe if need be. Most likely the person would be driven to Lake Tahoe Airport and airlifted by CalSTAR.

Five of the devices were bought for South Tahoe and Lake Valley at a cost of \$112,000.

Additional training was required by the staff to use the monitor. However, these devices are now part of regular schoolwork to become a paramedic.

Harrah's showroom – a 50-year history



By John Packer

STATELINE – In 1955, budding casino magnate William F. Harrah took a chance on the then-sleepy, seasonal resort town of Stateline on the South Shore of Lake Tahoe. He bought the Gateway Club on the lake side of Highway 50 and opened his second gambling house in Nevada, nearly 18 years after opening the bingo parlor that became Harrah's Reno.

Looking to expand, the next year he bought the former Stateline Country Club across the highway and, in 1958, added the adjacent Nevada Club to his holdings. These moves gave him the property needed to realize his vision for Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

In 1959, Bill Harrah decided it was time to roll the dice and spend more than \$3.5 million of borrowed money to expand Harrah's Tahoe and build a state-of-the-art nightclub and dinner theater with "Vegas-type stars performing every night of the year."

Built in just nine months, with construction crews often working around-the-clock, Harrah had insisted that his dream 850-seat theater (fairly large by the standards of the day) be ready in time to host the expected horde of visitors coming to the 1960 Winter Olympics in nearby Squaw Valley.

In December 1959, Harrah opened the South Shore Room with the one-and-only Red Skelton as the headliner.

The plan to attract the Olympic visitors, however, fell fairly flat: After spending their days watching the myriad events on the slopes, people were just too tired to trek to the South Shore for a show.

Despite a massive advertising and PR campaign, shows in the first quarter of 1960 – which included such contemporary stars as Patti Page, Fred Waring, Liberace, Victor Borge, Marlene Dietrich, Nat King Cole and Ray Bolger – drew disappointing numbers.

Undaunted, Harrah continued to insist on booking the top names in entertainment for two-week runs, two shows every night. Once again, his vision was vindicated. As April turned to May, vacationers and gamblers began to flock to the new entertainment Mecca.

The South Shore Room soon became “the place” outside of Las Vegas to see the biggest stars of the day.

For nearly 50 years, hundreds of the world’s most popular singers, comedians, Broadway shows, pop bands and rock bands have graced the maple boards of the legendary showroom, some on numerous occasions over several decades.

Superstars from today and yesterday, including Frank Sinatra, Jack Benny, Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand, Sammy Davis Jr., Bob Dylan, The Smothers Brothers, Jerry Lewis, Marlene Dietrich, Robin Williams, Willie Nelson, Tom Jones, Emmett Kelly, Huey Lewis & The News, Jonny Lang, Liberace, Johnny Mathis, Wayne Newton, Patti Page, Don Rickles, Diana Ross & The Supremes, The Lawrence Welk Show, George Burns, Donna Summer, Danny Thomas, Sarah Vaughan, Dionne Warwick, Bryan Adams, Andy Williams, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Loretta Lynn, Belafonte, Scott Hamilton & Dorothy Hamill, Tony Bennett, Sonny & Cher, Radio City Music Hall’s Rockettes, Carol Burnett, The Muppets, George Burns, Paul Anka, Ray Charles, Nat King Cole, Sammy Hagar, Billy Crystal, David Letterman, Bill Cosby, John Denver, Liza Minnelli, and many others, have played the famed Harrah’s Lake Tahoe stage. The list goes on and on.

In 2006, the South Shore Room underwent a multi-million dollar renovation. The project included a \$500,000 state-of-the-art sound system and a top to bottom renovation of the theater. The stage, which many performers have recognized for its efficient design, friendly feel and impeccable acoustics, was left relatively untouched – looking much like it did when the curtain first rose on Red Skelton on Dec. 21, 1959.

For more information about who is next to visit the South Shore Room, call 800.786.8208.

John Packer is regional director of entertainment for Harrah's Northern Nevada.

Lake Tahoe News gives thanks



Lake Tahoe News is thankful for its loyal subscribers and random readers, regular writers and occasional contributors, and wonderful advertisers and those who've sent donations to keep the operation going.

We look forward to being part of your Thanksgiving for many years to come.

Personally, I want to thank my family and friends for their love and support in this year that has definitely been more than an E ticket ride.

Kathryn Reed, *Lake Tahoe News* publisher

Turkeys become symbols of thanks



By Kathryn Reed

Construction paper in a rainbow of colors fills the round tables.

Magic markers and glue sticks are strewn about.

Giggles fill the room even though these youngsters are serious about the task their teacher Jo Anna Chamarro has given them.

They are making turkeys and giving thanks at the same time.

“I put I’m thankful for my cousin,” kindergartner Jasmine Gonzalez said.

Purple is her favorite color, but hers, like all of the birds, had multi-colored feathers.

On each “feather” they wrote a different person or thing they are thankful for. This included: mom, dad, grandma, family, Princess Goldie, friends, school, sister, brother, dog, cat, grandma and home.

Banana nut bread and apple cider were part of the festivities. This particular food was chosen because the students have been learning B and N sounds.

This is the third year Chamarro, who teaches at Sierra House Elementary School in South Lake Tahoe, has been doing something like this to infuse a bit of the true meaning of Thanksgiving into her students.

Several parents were also part of Tuesday afternoon’s festivities.