

But the grants are too small and the federal restrictions too tight to make those kinds of purchases. Instead, Alpine's Terrorism Council has spent \$172 on megaphones to shout out instructions during a disaster, \$15,000 on Internet access for county computers and a T1 line for broadband capability.

SEARCH

They also spent \$8,000 of bioterrorism money on satellite phones for key county officials. Alpine's cell phone service is limited to a single 3-foot space near a road sign.

They don't have the money or need to buy the bomb robots and infrared cameras for helicopters like Los Angeles and other big cities. Instead, Alpine has dug up and dusted off its old civil defense sirens from the 1950s, which will be used to warn people in case of a terrorist attack. They hope to use some homeland security money to buy a few new sirens at \$3,000 apiece. Levy is the quintessential small-town protector of the peace. He's the ham radio specialist who has pieced together the sheriff's communication system. He patrols the back roads and volunteers as a firefighter.

He's also a financial magician for the department, cobbling together homeland security and other "nickel-and-dime" grants so he can buy big-ticket items that will actually benefit the county. That's how he pulled together enough money for a new emergency response vehicle.

On a recent day, Levy took a break from rifle-cleaning class at a campground dining hall to show off the biggest purchase Alpine County has made since 9/11.

The \$137,000 truck has as many uses as a Swiss Army knife. Pull a panel here and out pops a trio of metal cutters. Push a button there and up goes a tree of flood lamps with enough wattage to illuminate an entire neighborhood in the middle of the night. A water hose and oxygen tanks and decontamination gear are also onboard.

"My feeling is taxpayers should get the biggest bang for their money. We should be buying things that have dual use.

"This," he said, patting the green and silver truck with pride, "isn't going to just sit in a warehouse and collect dust for 15 years."

The shiny vehicle, with less than 500 miles on the odometer, is parked next to a 1968 firetruck that is still in use. The best Levy can say about the ancient and battered red truck is: "It still pumps water."

The new truck will be used for car accidents and wildfires, floods and earthquakes — the litany of California disasters.

The odds are much higher for a natural disaster than a terrorist striking within the forests of Ponderosa pines, or even living there furtively hatching horrific plans, Levy said. Although 26 dams straddle the icy rivers that thread the county and eventually feed into the agriculture belt of the state, no one really worries about terrorists sabotaging these headwaters.

"Markleeville is a small town ... nobody knows about us," she said. "As a small-town resident, I think it's going to happen in a big city, not here."

"I think we'd notice right away if somebody's driving a truckload of something up to a dam," Levy said. "Up here, somebody's going to say, 'Hey what are you doing?' because we're so small."

Instead, Alpine's Terrorism Council is planning for the fear factor that will drive hundreds if not thousands of city dwellers to remote towns in the event of an urban terrorist attack.

Of the 1,200 people living in Alpine County, 800 are full-time residents. On winter weekends, the population can swell to 12,000 with skiers flocking to popular resorts.

If smallpox was let loose on San Francisco, or a dirty bomb set off in Sacramento, people would run for the hills of Alpine County, to their ski condos in Kirkwood and Bear Valley or campgrounds in Woodfords or Markleeville.

But in these hills, there are no services, no hospitals, not even a clinic to treat the injured or exposed.

"People from the city can come up here but we don't have any way to feed them," said Christina Isaacs, who splits her time between Alpine and Mono managing each county's bioterrorism programs.

"We don't have any way to care for them medically. You can't buy gas in this county if you don't have a credit card."

In that event, signs may be posted at the county borders along highways saying "No services available. You're on your own."

Alpine has just 11 deputies, a single Highway Patrol officer, and four volunteer fire departments, including one that gets 170 calls a year. The county does not have a hospital or a 24-hour urgent care clinic, making it ineligible for one of the biggest terrorism grants — a federal Health Resources and Services Administration program for hospitals and clinics.

While Ventura, Los Angeles and other counties are stockpiling antibiotics purchased through those grants, Alpine officials are wondering where they would store such a supply, even if they could acquire one.

"We don't have any way to rotate the stockpile of pharmaceuticals," Hannah said. "The state says use your pharmacy. We don't have a pharmacy."

A lonely patrol

After 13 years in Ventura County, California Highway Patrol Officer Sherry Reehl traded the increasing bustle of Highway 101 for one of the more coveted beats in the state — a 200-mile winding stretch of mostly two-lane roads called Beat 100.

"That's where I prefer to work. There's places to go and things to see," Reehl, 43, said of the isolated but scenic route traversing three mountain passes in Alpine County.

"Just look at my office," she said as she crested the summit of Carson Pass during a recent shift. Out her left window, a few hundred feet below the highway, was Caples Lake, where a lone canoe floated in the still green water.

Some days, the radio is so quiet she wonders if it's broken.

For eight years, Reehl has traveled these highways, investigating motorcycle crashes in the summer and pulling stranded motorists out of snowbanks in the winter. Most of the time, she's the only officer on patrol and backup is at least 20 minutes away in South Lake Tahoe.

Reehl has a hard time imagining terrorists striking here, but in the wake of Sept. 11, she can't comfortably dismiss the possibility.

"I think that's true of any American these days," she said. "You see something out of place and you think of terrorism now. It's always there."

She takes a closer look at cars parked on roadsides for more than a few days. She drives around a road maintenance compound where tire tracks were spotted near a shed storing explosives for avalanche control. The tracks probably wouldn't have been reported to the CHP three years ago.

And Reehl — like all other state Highway Patrol officers — must go on tactical alert whenever Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge raises the national terror level from yellow to orange. When that happens, Reehl's shift lengthens from eight to 12 hours.

"We're just stretching ourselves a little thinner," she said. "We don't have anything here."

Bears, not terror

People who live in this remote, peaceful hamlet along the spine of the Sierra Nevada range don't worry much about the possibility of terror. Markleeville, the county seat, has a main street three blocks long. The village green is a bar with cable TV.

Residents drive 20 minutes over the state line to Nevada to buy the necessities: food, gas, bottled water, snow shovels, clothes. Acres of ranches with grazing horses make up the neighborhoods.

Bessie Platten, the county's head librarian, moved here four years ago from Phoenix and doesn't miss the accoutrements of big-city life — 24-hour mini-marts, shopping malls, traffic.

The extra money for homeland security is nice, but Platten suspects the county wouldn't miss it either.

She worries more about a bear that broke into her house recently than the seesawing colors of the nation's terror alert system. She couldn't even say what the colors mean.

Alpine County

The Record-Courier ■ Gardnerville, Nevada

Kirkwood to open after snow dump

Staff and news service reports

Kirkwood will open on Saturday after a powerful storm left 3-4 feet of snow in Alpine County and more on the way.

The storms that began pounding the Sierra on Sunday have brought about 4 feet of snow at Kirkwood, which will be open weekends until Nov. 20, when it will be open daily.

Chairs 5 and 11 will be in operation with reduced ticket prices.

The last time Kirkwood opened in October was 1990 on Halloween, according to resort President Tim Cohee, who is on a business trip in Colorado.

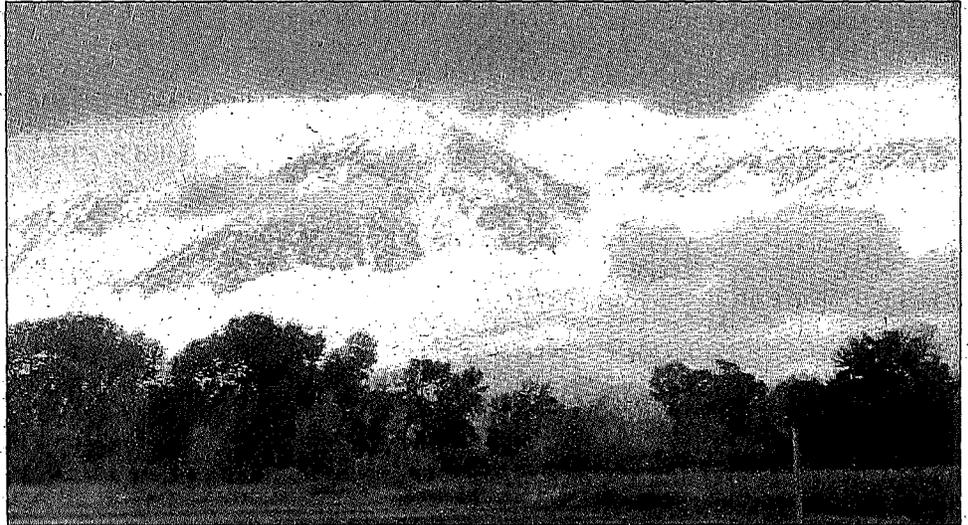
He pushed for the early opening during a conference call with directors Wednesday morning. By afternoon groomers were on the slopes.

Marketing Manager Tracy Miller said there is enough snow coverage for skiers to use the Conestoga and Shotgun runs as well as the gullies parallel to Chairs 5 and 11.

Sierra-at-Tahoe plans to open Oct. 30 at the latest, said spokeswoman Mindi Befu, who had a busy day fielding calls from skiers and the press.

The early storm was a mixed blessing at Heavenly Mountain Resort, which is finishing up \$10 million worth of upgrades this summer, said spokeswoman Molly Cuffe.

Cuffe said the resort is sticking with its Nov. 19 opening date but if more storms come officials could re-evaluate when to



JESSICA COMBOS/The R-C

Rain and Snow: The mountain view after the storm on Wednesday. Photo taken off of Highway 395 by Industrial Way.

start.

With 400 job openings Kirkwood will have a job fair Saturday. Miller is encouraging job applicants to bring their gear. Likely new employees can ski or snowboard for \$10.

For others, adult lift tickets are \$20, \$15 for juniors and seniors and \$5 for children under 12.

There will be no rentals but the restaurants will be open, she said.

The storm left nearly an inch of precipitation in Carson Valley on Wednesday and

a lighter storm is expected to arrive in the Valley this weekend.

While the Valley experienced only a brief snow flurry Wednesday afternoon, the cold storm out of the Pacific Northwest caused temperatures to drop enough for accumulation at Lake Tahoe, said Rudy Cruz, meteorologist for the National Weather Service.

"All and all it's been a pretty strong weather system," Cruz said. "Lots of moisture and cold temperatures makes for lots of snow in the Sierra."

Commission to vote on proposed Markleeville lodge

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

A decision that will affect plans to build a time-share resort in Markleeville is expected to be revealed at the next Alpine County Planning Commission meeting on Oct. 28.

The issue has been closed for public comment since the Sept. 30 commission meeting, when planning commissioners voted to come back on Oct. 28 with their decision on whether they

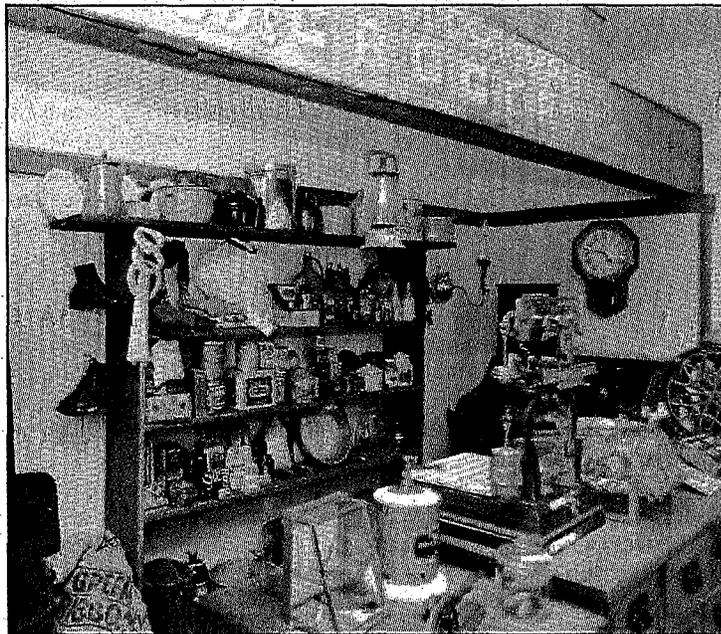
will require a mitigated negative declaration or a more extensive environmental impact report for the proposed Markleeville Village-Mahalee Lodge — a 40-room lodge with

spa, restaurant, meeting space and outdoor pool, 17 cabins and 14 other buildings — totalling 35,445 square feet.

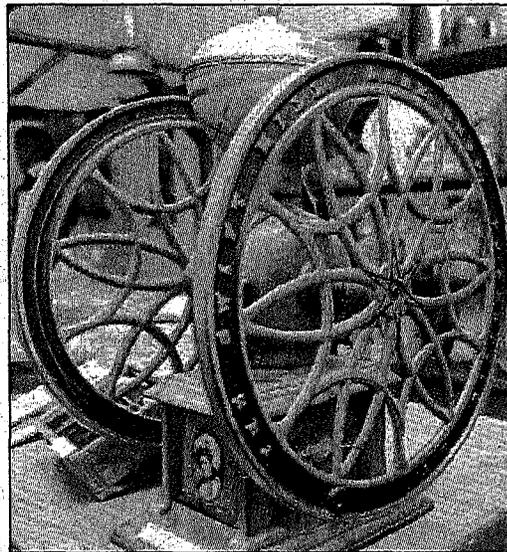
Following the commission's decision, the item will go before

the Alpine County Board of Supervisors for approval.

The Planning Commission will meet at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 28 in the county building at Turtle Rock Park.



Alpine County: A replica of a dry goods store, above, is in the Alpine County Museum in Markleeville. A coffee grinder, right, in the museum store is circa 1900.



SHANNON LITZ
/The R-C

Alpine County Museum event heralds season closure

by **Jo Rafferty**
Staff Writer

Oct. 31 will be the final day Alpine County Museum will be open for this season, and the museum commemorates this with its annual community get together.

A museum store sale will take place during the get together

from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

"We get a lot of people who come by and say 'I haven't been here yet this year,'" said the museum director, Dick Edwards.

After Oct. 31, the museum will be closed except for private tours. To arrange a tour, call the museum at (530) 694-2317.

Markleeville developer told to study project impact

by Jo Rafterly
Staff Writer

Alpine County planning commissioners voted 4-1 on Thursday to require an environmental impact report on a Markleeville project that some residents would like to see down-sized.

Now it's up to the developer, Tom Abdoo of High Mountain Properties, to accept or appeal the decision.

The commission was to decide

between the environmental impact report and a less extensive study.

"One important distinction in the EIR is you're required in California to look at alternatives, such as a scaled-down alternative," said Planning Director Brian Peters. "In the end the county might decide on the alternative."

The proposed Markleeville Village and Mahalee Lodge to include 70 fractional-ownership cabins, a 40-room lodge and 14 two-story commercial buildings, would stretch across 36 acres, including

the property behind the Alpine County Museum on School Street.

Fractional-ownership is much like a time-share, but owners receive a title for their percentage of the building, according to Peters.

Nancy Thornburg of Friends of Markleeville, which has about 30 active members, said, "I'd like to see a smaller lodge and some commercial buildings on Montgomery Street, but none of those cabins on



Nice view: Tom Abdoo's proposed Markleeville Village will overlook the Alpine County town.

See **Impact** on page 2

Planners to visit project site

Staff reports

Alpine County planning commissioners will make a site visit to the location of the Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge project at their Sept. 30 meeting.

The visit will take place at 4:30 p.m. and will convene in front of the Alpine County Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center located at Webster

Street. Planning commissioners will then reconvene for their regular meeting at 7 p.m. at Turtle Rock Park, 17300 Highway 89.

The lodge project is proposed by High Mountain Properties, owned by Carson Valley businessman Thomas Abdoo.

The development is expected to include a 40-room lodge with spa, restaurant, and a commercial development.

NEV. APPEAL - S.M. N. E. 1788 5-31-04

Supervisors meet on Tuesday

Staff Reports

A request by Kirkwood Mountain Resort to move the Amador-Alpine county line slightly to put two homes inside the Alpine border will be discussed at the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday.

Kirkwood is developing a neighborhood on its property, and these houses will be between chairs 6 and 7 near the end of the Olympic run, Kirkwood spokesperson Tracy Miller said.

"At the end of the day you can ski down to your house," she said.

Other items on the agenda include:

■ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services will make a presentation on the Paiute Cutthroat Trout Restoration Project.

■ A public hearing will be held to get citizen input on adoption of a resolution authorizing development of the Alpine County Groundwater Management Plan.

■ A public hearing will be held regarding an appeal of the Planning Commission's decision to approve the exterior colors and materials for a building called the "Soda Shop Building," a proposed commercial building for the northwest corner of Montgomery and Main Street in Markleeville.

■ The possible adoption of the final budget for the fiscal year 2004-2005.

The board of supervisors

will meet at 9 a.m. on Tuesday at the County Administrative Building in Markleeville.

Boxer addresses Alpiners

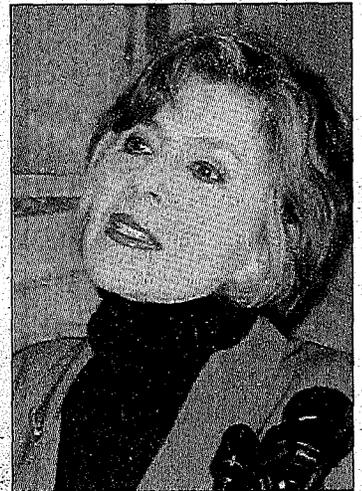
by Irving Krauss

Special to the R-C

Speaking before a crowd of more than 40 people on Oct. 22 at Sorensen's Resort in Hope Valley, California Senator Barbara Boxer described her legislative efforts to gain health care, protect the environment, secure American jobs and expand education.

She noted that the No Child Left Behind Act, which she supports, has not been adequately funded by President Bush. She said that the administration's proposed budget sharply reduces veterans' benefits.

Boxer added that there has been serious backtracking on the Clear Air Act and other environmental issues. The audience included visitors from Nevada.



Senator visits: Barbara Boxer made a campaign stop in Alpine County on Oct. 22.

Abbie Peters, Alpine County Democratic Central Committee treasurer, welcomed the crowd and chair Mary Walker introduced the senator. Brian Wallace, chair of the California-Nevada Washoe Tribe presented Boxer with a small, intricately woven child's rattle, which she said she would present to a grandchild.

The event was hosted by the Alpine County Democratic Central Committee.

Husband and wife retire from county

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Husband and wife and fellow Alpine County employees, Tom and Judi Nagel, are retiring within several weeks of each other.

Judi Nagel, 60, was the Alpine County Public Works office supervisor and has been working there for 20 years. Her last day was on Thursday.

Tom Nagel, 57, has been a detective for Alpine County Sheriff's Department for 21 years. Tom will continue working until the middle of December.

Although they will miss certain aspects of their jobs, they said they are looking forward to retirement.

"I am going to miss the people and the public that I've worked with all these years," said Judi.

Judi and Tom have lived in Woodfords, Calif. in the same house for 27-1/2 years. They raised two children there who went to Douglas High School; Mark, who is an electrical engineer in Texas and Keith, a fireman in Seattle. The Nagels have five grandchildren.

"This is a good place to raise our children, a good place to

work and we love the people," said Judi of living in the small Alpine County town.

Both Judi and Tom at one time lived in Los Angeles. Tom worked for the Los Angeles Police Department for five years, then Douglas County Sheriff's Department for five more years before coming to Alpine County.

"Even the bad guys are of nicer quality here," Tom said.

Tom and Judi's supervisors regret them leaving.

"It's been a privilege working with Tom over the past 20 years," said Alpine County Sheriff John Crawford. "He's been the type of officer who really cares about his community. He's worked his way up from deputy into investigations.

"He's done some really wonderful work. He's truly going to be missed in our department."

"I'm losing more than my right hand, I'm losing both hands," said Judi's boss, director of Public Works and county surveyor Leonard Turnbeaugh. "She can run the place without me and I know I can't run the place without her."

"She is and always will be the heart and soul of public works," said Public Works administrative assistant April Livesay.



JESSICA COMBOS/The R-C

Husband and wife retire: Tom and Judi Nagel retired — Judi on Wednesday after 20 years and Tom, Dec. 15 after 21 years.

"And he's Mr. Heart and Soul," she said of Tom.

"We've both been very fortunate to have exemplary bosses," said Tom.

Tom, the sole crime detective for the county besides one narcotics detective, said he has always enjoyed detective work.

"I enjoy digging, then I go work it off on my motorcycle," he said.

Tom and Judi, who have been married for 33 years, met while Tom was riding a motorcycle.

"We met because of motorcycles, I courted her on a motorcycle and we still enjoy it," he said, laughing.

When asked if she rides her

own motorcycle, Judi shook her head and said that she has only ridden on the back of his.

Judi and Tom's immediate plans are going to visit their son's family in Texas for the next few weeks, then come back just before Thanksgiving.

"We're going to enjoy the holidays as retired people and then the first of the year we'll figure out what we want to do," Judi said.

Besides doing a lot more hiking, the couple is looking forward to traveling in the next few years.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Kirkwood does October

Staff reports

KIRKWOOD — Much can be said for skiing and boarding in October.

"I've never skied this early here," said Craig Gabriel, an expert skier, who came down Mokelumne run off the Solitude chairlift Sunday.

This weekend four lifts will be running, 1, 5, 6 and 11, with 1,000 acres open.

"Chair 6 is the high speed Cornice Express that goes to the top of the mountain," said Tracy Miller, Kirkwood spokesperson.

Last weekend was the Alpine County ski resort's earliest opening ever. More than 2,000 came out for the first day of operations Saturday, President Tim Cohee said Sunday.

And this weekend promises to be even better.

"We've gotten another 2 feet of snow. It looks like February out here," said Miller.

The ski resort is open for weekends from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. until Nov. 20, when daily operations begin. This weekend the ticket prices will be \$47 for adults, up from \$20 on opening weekend. Ski and snowboard rentals are available, as well as limited ski school for beginners and private lessons.

Impact: Alpine

Continued from page 1
the mountainside.”

Thornburg and Dick Edwards, Alpine County Museum director, have questions regarding the project that they're not sure will have satisfactory answers without cutting back on the plans.

“One of my main objections is these cabins are 20 feet apart in an area of timber,” said Edwards, adding that he's not sure if that conforms with laws regarding defensible space.

Abdoo officials could not be reached for comment.

Peters said the proposed cabins are actually 10 feet apart.

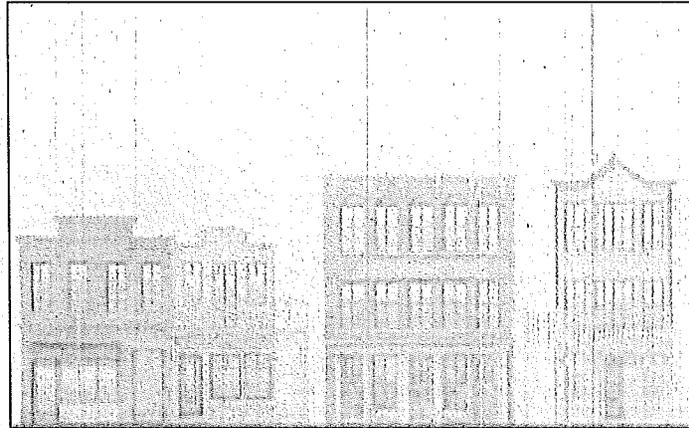
“The standard county ordinance requires residences to be at least 20 feet from the lot boundary lines,” (which would leave 40 feet between houses), said Peters. “What they're proposing is 10 feet apart.

“Because they're proposing a planned development, that can vary. It will be up to the county to decide.”

Thornburg and Edwards questioned the safety of an irrigation ditch that wraps around the property.

Peters said that a portion of the ditch would either have to be placed in a culvert or moved.

Wastewater treatment facilities for the town are not suffi-



Markleeville: A drawing of Ton Abdoo's project.

cient to service the project, and Abdoo has proposed to install an on-site wastewater treatment.

He hired a civil engineer who has said it will work, but Friends of Markleeville have their own engineer, Norman Hantzsche, who said, “My overall finding is that the plan for on-site wastewater treatment and disposal, as presently proposed, is not feasible.”

Ultimately, the wastewater treatment issue will go before the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, according to Peters.

“In the end they're the ones who have to give the permit,” he said.

This permit as well as several from other agencies will be required before the project could get off the ground, Peters said. And this wouldn't even happen until after the county approves the environmental impact report, which would take approximately a year to complete.

Thornburg and Edwards said they wonder if the well water on the land is sufficient, and said it is high in manganese.

“We needed an EIR to get these questions answered,” said Thornburg.

Edwards, a California park ranger for 36 years, said that 40-50 percent of the Jeffrey and pinion pines on the property would have to be removed.

“Being a park ranger all those years, I'm really against the vista changing. It's irreplaceable.”

But their main concern is the impact the resort may have on their small Alpine County town, and the possibility of increased vandalism.

“It will be a playground for the new tenants out here,” said Edwards. “There are more homes there than there are in the whole town of Markleeville.”

“It's something I really don't think this community's ready to cope with, at least not as we are today.”

Supervisors say no brick in project

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

The Alpine County Board of Supervisors said no brick will go on the face of the proposed Soda Springs Building at Tuesday's meeting — but not without a heated debate.

The vote was 2-2, with District 5 Supervisor Chris Gansberg, Jr. and District 2 Supervisor Herman Zellmer dissenting.

The supervisors were to decide whether to uphold the Alpine County Planning Commission's and Historic Design Review Committee's decision to not allow developer Tom Abdoo of High Mountain Properties to put brick on the facade of the proposed Soda Springs Building, on the corner of Montgomery and Main streets in Markleeville.

Arguments carried over into Abdoo's plans for the proposed Mahalee Lodge/Markleeville Village project, which would include a 40-room lodge, 70 cabins and 14 commercial buildings, as well.

"Mr. Abdoo has a right to appeal these decisions," said Zellmer, to Abdoo. "I don't know why you want to appeal this. It's been fight you, fight you, fight you around every turn.

"I know all over California there are a lot of other communities that would love to have your project. It doesn't seem to be wanted here. I can't believe we're going to do this all along the process."

Zellmer and Gansberg argued

they don't believe the Historic Design Review Committee's findings that there have been no brick buildings in Markleeville throughout history.

Gansberg pulled a couple of old bricks out of a garbage bag he had underneath the table, and said he found them in old dump sites around town.

"I think it's right for the county to approve this project," he said. Zellmer said they need the revenue Abdoo's projects would bring to the county.

"We've got to do something here because it's dying," he said. "If we're going to fight everybody who wants to do something to help this community ..."

Chair Terry Woodrow, District 4 supervisor, although she voted in favor of the commission's and design review committee's decision, warned the 25-plus, standing-room-only audience and District 1 Supervisor Donald Jardine, the only other yes vote, not to take the matter lightly.

"Our number one business is tourism," said Woodrow, using the town of Murphys, Calif. as an example. "Their businesses are just flourishing from tourism that came in (after upgrades to the downtown area.)

"What if (Abdoo is) not allowed to do brick? Is he just going to go away?"

However, Woodrow moved to second Jardine's suggestion to go along with the planning commission's and Historic Design Review Committee's decision to not allow the bricks.

Markleeville developer faces hurdles

by Jo Rafferty

Staff Writer

The developer who is proposing Mahalee Lodge/Markleeville Village in the town of Markleeville and three of the four supervisors present at the Alpine County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday have said they think the project's opponents have gone too far.

"I just wanted to express it's really a sad day when everyone is so negative about some growth in the community," said Chair Terry Woodrow.

But, Friends of Markleeville member Nancy Thornburg said, following Tuesday's meeting, "We are not anti-growth. We are pro-Markleeville."

Woodrow was one of two supervisors who had backed the Historical Design Review Committee's recommendation to not allow developer Tom Abdo's request to put brick on the facade of the proposed Soda Shop, on the corner of Montgomery and Main streets in Markleeville.

However, Woodrow and other supervisors expressed their reluctance at setting up yet another hurdle for the developer to jump over.

"We shouldn't have to bring everything to this level," said Supervisor Herman Zellmer. "So far, everything has been argued about — the name, how many feet between the cabins ..."

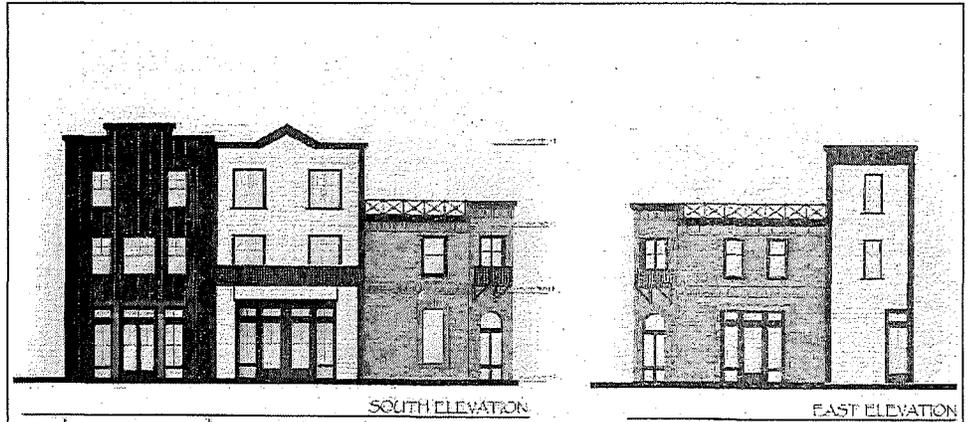
Supervisor Chris Gansberg said the fight against the development had gone as far as "bodily harm" to Abdo.

Abdo substantiated this claim on Thursday, although he said he didn't want to "create any more animosity."

"Someone really tried to do something," he said. There have also been phone threats to some of the project's team members, he added.

Abdo said that all the concessions he has had to make up until now have cost him an additional \$150,000-\$250,000 in engineering costs and legal fees. Many people have asked him why he hasn't just abandoned the project, he said.

"I haven't left the project because I really love the area as much as anyone else," he said. "Everyone who works for me — they



The proposed Soda Shop building (the third and fourth buildings from the left) is shown from two angles.

We are trying in every way known to man to follow the rules exactly as they are.

Tom Abdo

High Mountain Properties

love it — they have a passion for it." "It's not about money. There's a lot more to life than just making money," he said.

Abdo said the 40-room lodge, 70 cabins and 14 commercial buildings, "is going to be a really beautiful project." He said he has hired "top-notch guys," including, environmental consultant Carter Schleicher, civil engineer Blaise D'Angelo, Dennis Smith, a wastewater specialist with Western Engineering, Ben Fagen of Ben Fagen Designs and Ed Williams, the lead architect for the Marriott Grand Residence Club Tahoe.

All of his investments in Markleeville — from this project, to a restaurant and hotel that have already been developed, the proposed Soda Shop building and 900 acres he owns outside town — will cost him close to \$40 million, he said.

But, what he said he hopes is to bring financial help to a town that he and Zellmer and Gansberg have said is dying.

"It's going to mean incredible revenues to Alpine County," he said.

Williams, his architect, said the project will bring the county an estimated \$600,000 in the first year.

Following Tuesday's meeting, Abdo said he will not fight the fact that bricks will not be allowed on the Soda Shop building.

"We'll probably change (the facade)," he said. "Although my attorney says we would win in court."

Abdo said he had been forced to build his own wastewater treatment facility after the county refused to let them upgrade its system for their use.

In addition, he said that a timber harvest plan and more fire hydrants are included in their project.

"If it isn't the fire issue, it's the water issue," said Abdo. "They'll always come up with something."

"We are trying in every way known to man to follow the rules exactly as they are."

Information provided by the Friends of Markleeville said, "(We) would like to state that throughout the review process of both the Soda Shop proposal and the bigger project (the Mahalee Lodge/Markleeville Village) we have focused our attention strictly on the projects, their compliance with laws and regulations, their feasibility and with our concerns about possible negative impacts on the small town of Markleeville."

Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Leslie thanks voters for their support

Staff Reports

Assemblyman Tim Leslie (R-Tahoe City) Wednesday expressed his gratitude to the people of the Fourth Assembly District for returning him to Sacramento for one final term.

"Even though I have served for nearly two decades in the Legislature, this election victory is no less humbling," said Leslie, who won reelection to his final term with 67 percent of the vote.

"I pledge — both to those who gave me their vote and those who voted for my opponent — to continue to work for their interests and not the special interests. I will fight for local control, job creation, and strong public safety, as well as better roads, schools, and water storage. I promise also to work to defend our freedoms, to stand-up for the most defenseless among us, and to promote the strength of the traditional family.

"I want to congratulate my worthy opponent, Todd



LESLIE

Schwenk, who ran a spirited and well-fought race. I know he inspired many people by the earnest and unrelenting effort he

made in the face of overwhelming odds. His campaign exemplified what is the best about Americans and our democracy.

"As I enter my last term, I recognize the many challenges facing our state: a built-in budget deficit, declining water capacity, inadequate roads and public transportation, and struggling schools. Thus, I want to spend my last years in the Legislature cementing what I hope is a compelling record of working to move California forward, to make her the best she can be. This is crucial not only for us today, but for the world our children will inherit from us."

BRIEFS

Basketry topic at society meeting

The Alpine County Historical Society will have a general meeting on Nov. 18 at Turtle Rock Park.

Featured will be a presentation by Jim Hubbard on Washoe Basketry.

No-host social hour will be at 5:30 p.m., a potluck dinner at 6:15 p.m. and the program begins at 7 p.m. Door prizes will be given.

For information, call the society at (530) 694-2317.

County artists sought

Alpine County artists are needed to showcase their artwork at Woodfords Antiques in Woodfords, Calif. Set-up date is before Nov. 23 and the store will be open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 26-28, Dec. 4, 5, 11, 12 and 18-24. Hot cider and cookies will be available to the public. A 10 percent consignment fee will be charged. The event will be advertised through the chamber of commerce, Kirkwood, the Record-Courier, local bulletin boards and county offices, and will be announced at local meetings. For information call Ellen Martin, evenings at (530)694-2360.

ad of history

Thursday
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Bouillabaisse Fridays . MEDITERR.
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This unique and imaginative display was created by Jim and Dinette Greenwood of South Lake Tahoe to promote the ongoing "Great Stories and Film" program. A small group of interested patrons attended February's showing of the adventure film "Pirates of the Caribbean." The community gathers once a month to view a film of special interest. Call the Alpine County Library at (530) 694-2120 for next month's selection.

On Thursday, March 4, pre-school children from the Alpine County Early Learning Center took a field trip to the library to view the whimsical presentation which included a reading of the book "How I Became a Pirate" by Melinda Long. The children were delighted by the short movie clip and the music from the Disney-land ride, Pirates of the Caribbean.

A collection of books on pirate tales awaits you at the library and the special exhibit will be open the remainder of this week and next. Yo-ho, Yo-ho, a Pirates Life for me.

Tuesday results

Alpine County, we have landed in the news

by Al Pettit

A real, live, genuine, traditional NEWSPAPER, that is. Remember those portable, eye-friendly pages that used to be available without spending \$1,000 plus on a state-of-the-art computer equipment you mostly could not understand? OK, you asked for it, and in some cases screamed bloody murder for it, so here it is. Now shut up.

After the Alpine Enterprise collapsed after a 20-plus year unprofitable run with numerous publishers, copycat and gismo addicted as I am, I thought Internet. Online like the big guys, cutting edge, fast lane ... why not? With the generous help of Alpine resident, and computer guru David Griffith, we made a fairly decent showing on the information highway. Problem was, not all our readers traveled this route. Complaints came pouring in: "We want a REAL paper," "I don't have or want or can afford a computer." etc. So, about a year ago this March, while recuperating from a bout of pneumonia, I simply gave up and shut up.

Now comes Alpine County's Feb. 3 Candidates Night, for the now infamous "early California Primary" (intended to lead the

nation to ... fill in your choice here) where apparently there was more screaming and yelling about our lack of a newspaper than screaming and yelling about or among the candidates. Shortly thereafter, Judy Molnar, assistant to the board of supervisors, having also been inundated with comments from the "Why don't we have ..." contingent, initiated contact with The Record-Courier Publisher Janet Geary. Ms. Geary agreed to meet with Judy, Alpine Chamber Director Theresa Burkhauser, Chamber officials, Alpine Planning Commissioner Bill Morgan, and myself.

The outcome was far more than we ever expected. Geary graciously offered the county at least one page per week in The Record-Courier Friday edition. She also offered to

send up reporters when necessary. I was asked by the chamber to act as liaison between Alpine County and the paper. I agreed. Then I checked liaison in Webster's Dictionary. The etymology is middle French, and the first meaning is "a binding or thickening agent used in cooking." The second meaning is R rated. No, X. You probably saw the movie. Forget it. But I have a reputation for making simple things sound thick and murky, so perhaps the label is apt.

In any event, our contact a The Record-Courier is Regina Purcell, (775) 782-5121, ext 211, e-mail: rpurcell@recordcourier.com. Items for publication for Friday must be received by her by 1 p.m. the prior Thursday. You can send items to her directly by e-mail. If so,

because she uses Mac equipment, text must be pasted in the body of the e-mail, not by attachment. She can receive attachments of photos or text in PDF format. You can also send material to me: alprise@gbis.com, or contact me by (530) 695-2237.

Please be advised this is a work in progress. We want to develop a core group of regular, reliable contributors. I do not intend to be a roving reporter but will help you in any way I can. We want our section in The Record-Courier to become a truly community effort to reflect the diverse view individuals have on a wide range of subjects. Our respective roles will be better defined as we gain experience working together. I am eagerly looking forward to this new challenge as I hope all of you are.

Worship With Us
Grace Community Church

We have an outstanding nursery. Our nursery is designed for the security, health and happiness of your baby. The nursery staff is a caring and trained group of women, our attention on our great God and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, the preaching of God's Word is the hub of all our believe that the truths of the Bible are best summed up in what is commonly called Reformed Theology. Although there is not space here to give a full statement of faith, it is suffi-



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AHOE NEWS



■ Whittell powers way to regional title.

— Sports



Provided by Lori Morris

Kirkwood Valley fills with black smoke from a fire at its power plant on Sunday.

Fire closes Kirkwood

Crowded mountain shut down at midday, should open Thursday

By Susan Wood
Tribune staff writer

KIRKWOOD — A fire broke out Sunday afternoon in the Kirkwood Mountain Resort power house, cutting operations at the Alpine County ski area and power to nearby valley residents at midday.

The ski area was ordered closed by 12:30 p.m., shortly after crews from the Kirkwood Volunteer, Lake Valley and Woodfords fire departments spent about 10 minutes extinguishing the fire that could be seen across the valley.

Witnesses gave accounts of billowing flames and smoke from the building located near the Red Cliffs Lodge.

"Our chair stopped. Then we looked over and saw the Reut stopped, and we knew — this isn't just somebody falling off the lift," Rusty Sammon said, returning to his vehicle at 2 p.m.

The San Francisco man was on The Wagon Wheel chairlift, commonly known as "The Wall."

"Smoke filled the sky," said Paul McDonald, Sammon's buddy.

The backup generators kicked in 20 minutes later, allowing

See **Kirkwood**, Back page



Dan Thrift/Tahoe Daily Tribune

Diehard boarders hike Kirkwood Mountain Resort after a fire shut down lift operation on Sunday afternoon.

Kirkwood

From Page A1

skiers and boarders on the chairlifts to get off.

As of press time, power was expected to be restored to residents Sunday night and to the ski resort by Thursday for Veteran's Day weekend, President Tim Cohee said, surveying the damage. The ski area has operated on weekends over the last few weeks, its earliest opening ever.

Cohee said the mountain was full of people and he was grateful the structure was ventilated and therefore did not burn to the ground.

One employee received damage to his hand from a fire extinguisher.

No estimates were given of damage to the building, with the roof sustaining the bulk of it. The blaze started when an

engine overheated and ignited the wood frame.

"It's amazing we received minimal damage. We had a full mountain," Cohee said.

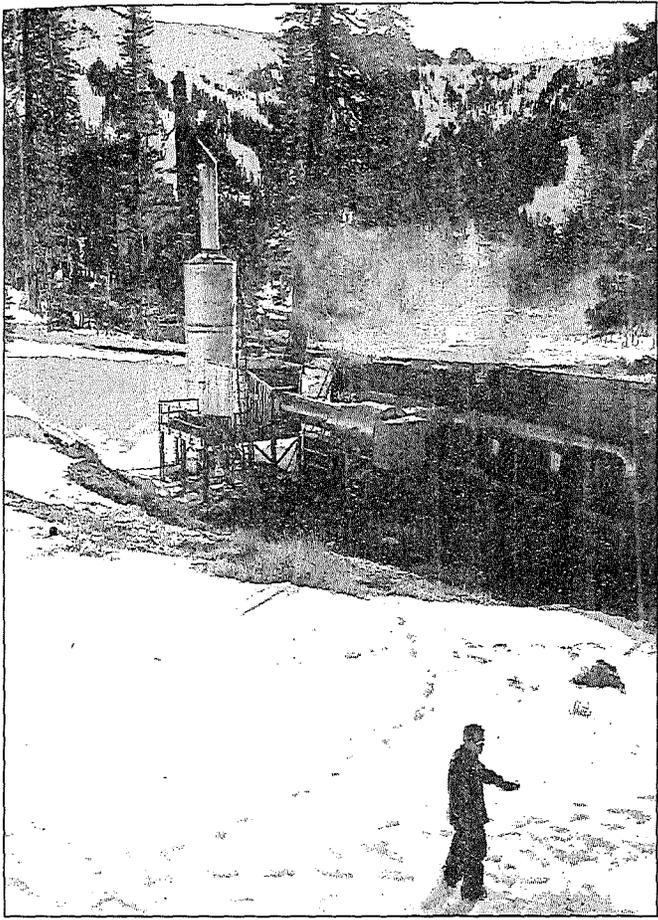
At least a handful of Kirkwood employees either work at the Volunteer Fire Department or have in the past. There's also a protocol in place to handle such emergencies.

Cohee was pleased with the responsiveness of the agencies and his staff.

Those who bought tickets get a free day in lieu of Sunday's half-day of operations. Pass holders were given drink vouchers.

Patrons at Bub's Sports Bar were greeted with candles burning in the restrooms.

— Susan Wood can be reached at (530) 542-8009 or via e-mail at swood@tahoedailytribune.com



Dan Thrift/Tahoe Daily Tribune

Kirkwood Mountain Resort snow maker Zach Moore records the damage done by a fire in the powerhouse which shut down operations on Sunday.

Blaze at Kirkwood resort caused by engine exhaust

Full power restored, slopes open Thursday

By Gregory Crofton
Tribune staff writer

Portable generators restored power to Kirkwood Mountain Resort late Monday morning after a fire in its powerhouse caused lights to go out and ski lifts to stop turning.

The fire, which started Sunday around noon, ignited because exhaust from one of the resort's six diesel-fueled generators heated wood that was part of the powerhouse structure, said Tim Cohee, president of the resort. The fire burned into the roof of the building but spared the engines and other equipment inside.

"The damage is not near as bad as anyone thought," Cohee said. "The engine was running fine. The wood simply had gotten hot too many times too often and lost its integrity."

The building had been subjected to regular fire inspections this year and in past years. Damage caused by the fire is unknown but it will cost at least \$100,000, Cohee said.

On Tuesday morning, Cohee awaited the arrival of a third portable generator. The three generators will provide an ample amount of power for the resort and 600 houses and condominiums in the valley, Cohee said.

The generators will be used until a temporary

See *Kirkwood*, Back page

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Kirkwood

From Page A1

A temporary roof is installed on the powerhouse and its engines can be restarted. Construction of the temporary roof is scheduled to start today and be finished before Christmas. A permanent roof will be built in the summer.

The resort will be open for business for the Veterans Day weekend — Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday — as planned. Daily operation of the

mountain is scheduled to start November 20.

"The resort has restored 100 percent of its capability for power so there will be no lag in operations," Cohee said. "It could not go any better than it has. The building inspector, the fire insurance inspectors, the air board, the local fire department, the county and the staff have all done a fantastic job."

— Gregory Crofton can be reached at (530) 542-8045 or by e-mail at gcrofton@tahoedailytribune.com

Hearing date to be set for project

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

The developer who's proposing a resort for the town of Markleeville is disputing a planning commission decision to require an environmental impact study on the project.

Brian Peters, Alpine County planning director, said he will ask Alpine County Board of Supervisors at the Nov. 16 meeting if a public hearing date can be set to obtain input on the issue, preferably on Dec. 7.

"The date and time will be determined on the 16th," said Peters.

Tom Abdo of High Mountain Properties is proposing Markleeville Village and Mahalee Lodge, which consists of a 40-room lodge, 70 fractional-ownership cabins and 14

commercial buildings.

Residents of Markleeville and members of Friends of Markleeville have pushed for the environmental impact study, and have said they believe the project will be too much for the small town.

The environmental study would require alternatives to the proposed project, according to Peters.

Other items on the agenda include:

- Possible adoption of the Alpine County Community Fire Plan

- A request for approval of Merrill driveway and for a cul-de-sac on Jenny Mae Way, to determine if they are in compliance with the Fire Safe Regulations for State Responsibility Areas.

Exhaust caused Kirkwood fire

Portable generators restored power to Kirkwood Mountain Resort late Monday morning after a fire in its powerhouse caused lights to go out and ski lifts to stop turning.

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six diesel-fueled generators heated wood that was part of the powerhouse structure, said Tim Cohee, president of the resort.

The resort will be open for business on Veteran's Day weekend. Daily operation of the mountain is scheduled to start Nov. 20.

kind of advertising. The early snow galvanizes people and it stimulates action."

Stephanie Ness

a spokeswoman for the California Ski Industry Association

Ski time – ready or not



Sacramento Bee/Jay Mather

When you're 3 and from Tulsa, Okla., like Taliesin McCombs, skiing is an acquired taste. His mother, Melissa McCombs, lends him a hand at Squaw Valley on Sunday. The early snow has brought eager skiers, but most resorts aren't reporting an early profit jump.

SACRAMENTO BEE
THU, NOV. 11, 2004
D8

Early snow puts pressure on Sierra resorts

By Clint Swett
BEE STAFF WRITER

This year's record October snowfall blanketed the Sierra in white and juiced up skier enthusiasm. But it's been a decidedly mixed blessing for Tahoe-area resorts.

In dumping up to 4 feet of snow on the mountains, last month's storms laid a foundation for what could be a very year for the ski business.

It also spawned some logistical problems.

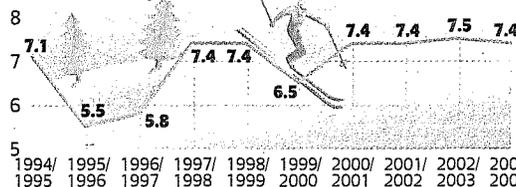
Many ski areas, for instance, had to scramble to fill jobs, ranging from lift operators to cooks and parking-lot attendants.

Off-season construction projects were halted in their final stages as workers

Ski visits flat

California and Nevada resorts have seen flat business in recent years, but record early snowfall this year may help boost their fortunes.

Millions of visitors per season



Source: California Ski Industry Association

Sacramento Bee/Mitchell Brooks

coped with stormy conditions.

And while hard-core skiers and snowboarders showed up for early season fun, many already had purchased season passes, so they brought no additional

revenue to the resort's balance sheets.

"It's been a mixed blessing, to say the least," said Molly Cuffe, a spokeswoman for Heavenly Mountain Resort in South Lake Tahoe.

Despite abundant snow, Heavenly has delayed opening until Nov. 19 because it's still doing \$10 million in major construction projects, some of which

were delayed by the storms.

The resort hasn't finished installing a new six-passenger chairlift that replaces two older lifts. And it's also in the middle

► SKI, back page, D8



Sacramento Bee/Jay Mather

Lift lines were short Sunday at Squaw Valley. The early snow has left the resort scrambling to find enough workers to handle operations.

advertising," said Stephanie Ness, a spokeswoman for the California Ski Industry Association. "The early snow galvanizes people and it stimulates action."

Indeed, resort lodgings are showing big boosts in early season reservations. The (800) AT-TAHOE service for south shore reservations reports an 18 percent increase for November reservations and a 78 percent

jump for December bookings compared with a year ago at this time. (The Christmas holiday season can account for as much as a third of a resort's annual revenue.)

At the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, lodging reservations for November to March are 76 percent higher than they were a year ago, said Andy Chapman, the group's director of tourism.

Local ski shops are reporting mixed business. "If it's raining, then people are coming into our store," said Bill Proffitt, owner of Land Park Ski & Sports on Freeport Boulevard, which has seen a 43 percent jump in sales from this time last year.

Helm of Sun Valley on Howe Avenue is overflowing with skis getting tune-ups and other services, but store owner Chuck

Helm said sales have been surprisingly slow, given the early snowfall.

"We thought it would be stronger, but the elections made things a little flat," he said. "We think people have been holding off on their purchases."

□ □ □

The Bee's Clint Swett can be reached at (916) 321-1976 or cswett@sacbee.com.

Bill Proffit

owner of Land Park Ski & Sports on Freeport Boulevard, which has seen a 43 percent jump in sales from this time last year

Ski: Bookings for lodgings show big jump

► FROM PAGE D1

of overhauling the exterior of its East Peak day lodge.

"The early snow has really helped energize everyone about the ski season, but it's put us a little bit behind," she said.

Cuffe's comments were echoed by other resort operators who, while thankful for the heavy snowfall, said they would probably only break even for the month.

One major exception is Kirkwood Mountain Resort on Highway 88 in Alpine County.

Traditionally one of the first resorts to open every season, Kirkwood has been pulling in a record number of customers, said company President Tim Cohee.

"We aren't just looking at a momentum builder ... where you are just getting a couple of hundred people a day," Cohee said. "We've never had anything like this before."

Since the resort opened Oct. 23, Kirkwood has had more than 17,000 customers, about half of whom purchased single-day lift tickets at up to \$47 each.

The snowfall has even

boosted season-pass sales, Cohee said. "We'll sign up 400 new pass holders on any given day," he said. "This is a financial winner."

With up to 5 feet of snow now on the mountain and more than 1,000 acres set to open, Kirkwood's biggest problem is finding enough people to operate the resort at full capacity, Cohee said.

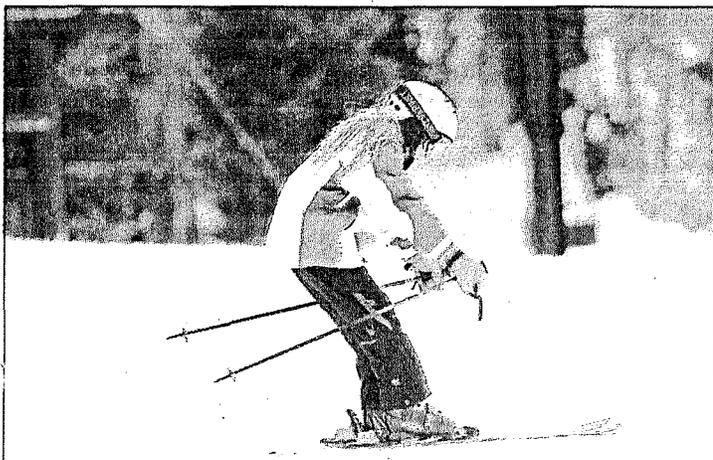
Squaw Valley also is scrambling to find enough people to staff its early season operations, said resort spokeswoman Katja Dahl.

The resort's annual hiring fair didn't occur until last weekend, so Squaw had to call in hires from last season and draft its year-round crew to fill seasonal jobs, she said.

"There will not be big revenues for us from this," she said. "I'm sure it will be a net positive, but this means a lot of unanticipated costs, too."

The real payoff, experts say, comes from the optimism and enthusiasm that the early snow has generated.

"From a marketing standpoint, you can't buy this kind of



Sacramento Bee/Jay Mather

Kaitlin Ramirez, 10, had a lot of room to ski Sunday at Squaw Valley. She and her dad, Mario Ramirez, came from Reno.

Author asks 'What's your comfort food?'

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Gina Gigli, Markleeville resident and published author who wrote "Poco Pane Poco Vino: A little bread a little wine," has come out with a new book, "What's Eating America."

"This one deals with food cultures of the new world. The first one dealt with food cultures of the old world," said Gigli.

Both books contain illustrations by Gigli, who is also an artist and along with her husband Ruggero Gigli owns the Villa Gigli Trattoria restaurant in Markleeville.

In "What's Eating America," Gigli confronts people from all walks of life and asks them the question, "What is your comfort food in these times of stress?"

Gigli and her husband traveled across the U.S. twice and she interviewed randomly selected strangers — 120 people in all.

"It was so much fun," said Gigli.

Gigli tells the tale of traveling across the country during the 2001-02 and the 2002-03 holiday seasons.

"We made two wintertime journeys to the east coast during the sensitive 18-month period after the terror attacks hit the U.S. in New York at the World Trade Center and in Washington, D.C., at the Pentagon, September 11, 2001 and before U.S. military action against Iraq's regime, March 20, 2003," said Gigli in "What's

Eating America."

"We met flaming patriots darkened by xenophobia, Bible-belters talking about killing and war veterans trembling in fear," she said.

Gigli said it is a light book, even though the content was serious.

"I wanted to know how other Americans were coping with sudden and unstable world affairs," said Gigli. "African-American, caucasian, Hispanic, Native American, young, old, city dwellers and country folk all willingly talked about their fears of terrorism and opinions of war, as the United States government inexorably approached the road to Baghdad."

Upon her return from her second road trip, Gigli realized she had talked to 60 people on each vacation, 30 each direction.

She describes each person she interviews in vivid detail, and the comfort food they like best.

"People voluntarily told me their recipes," said Gigli. "I thought about it, but decided not to test them. I decided I did not want to change (the recipes)."

In her last chapter, Gigli stressed the importance of slowing down when cooking or eating meals with the family.

"Let's think more about letting our kids help us peel potatoes from time to time," said Gigli. "Maybe then they'll know what a potato looks like."

Gigli will be signing books at Neighbors



Author signing: Gina Gigli will sign her books at the lake and in Gardnerville.

Books, 4000 Lake Tahoe Blvd. No. 23, in South Lake Tahoe, Calif., from 2-4 p.m. on Saturday.

From noon-2 p.m. on Nov. 20, she will sign books at the Book Den, 1328 Highway 395 No. 304 in Gardnerville.

More information on Gina and Ruggero Gigli is available on their Web site at www.villagigli.com

BRIEFS

Turkey bingo held in Turtle Rock

Turkey bingo will be held 7-10 p.m. Nov. 20 at Turtle Rock Park in Markleeville. The cost

is 25 cents per card or five cards for \$1. You must be at least 18 years old to play. Desserts and coffee will be available. Attendees can enter a raffle with great prizes — you need not be present to win. Proceeds will benefit the Alpine Children's Center. For informa-

tion call (530) 694-2390 or (530) 694-0570. No child care services will be provided this year.

State capitol kiosk ideas needed

The Alpine County Chamber of Commerce is soliciting ideas

for the remodeling of the Alpine County kiosk, located in the state capitol in Sacramento. If you have suggestions or ideas, stop by the chamber office or e-mail comments to info@alpinecounty.com, or call (530) 694-2475. The deadline is Dec. 17.

Folks in high country take pride in highest voter turnout

MARKLEEVILLE - It is California's least populous county, with 1,208 residents and not a single movie theater, bank, barbershop or high school.

But it can lay claim to a special distinction this year when, on Election Day, little Alpine County racked up the biggest percentage - 86.3 percent - of voter turnout in the state.

Now, this may not seem like much to city dwellers, who boasted this year of braving long lines and strange new contraptions to cast their votes. And it may not seem like very many votes, really, since the "highest percentage" in Alpine County translates into exactly 714 votes.

But the consistently high turnout here - and the county's extraordinarily high percentage of registered voters among those eligible - is an ongoing source of pride in Alpine County, a beautiful but isolated region along the crest of the central Sierra Nevada, south of Lake Tahoe.

Politics here, locals say, is serious

business.

"People in rural counties take more of an interest in politics because we're closer to it," says Dave Kirby, 68, owner of Woodfords Station diner, deli and general store, where locals gather daily at 7 a.m. to jaw over matters, political and otherwise.

"One or two votes can make a lot of difference around here." And how. Kirby and other residents love to tell the story of the sheriff's race a few elections back, when incumbent Skip Veatch was challenged by Lou Roper of the California Highway Patrol in the primary - ending in a tie. Veatch came out on top in a runoff.

A local auditor's race that also went to runoff was won by only three votes.

"In our county, we know our vote makes a difference and does count," says Alpine County Clerk Barbara



MARJIE LUNDSTROM
About California

seat named for a 19th-century settler killed in a gunfight. The candidate, who he says lived with his wife and mother, was counting on - surely - at least three votes in his bid for county supervisor.

He got two.

"We kidded him about that for years," said Zellmer, a 67-year-old retired Caltrans man and rancher, who was the county's fire chief for 17 years and served with search and rescue for 25 years. "He never did figure it out." This year, though, most agreed it was the presidential race, not local politics, that fueled the interest. More than 86 percent of Alpine County's regis-

tered voters weighed in, while most California counties' turnout percentages hovered in the 60s to low 70s.

Dave Zellmer, a regular at the morning coffee klatch in Woodfords (population 150), still chuckles over the story many years back of a candidate from Markleeville, the county

seat named for a 19th-century settler killed in a gunfight. The candidate, who he says lived with his wife and mother, was counting on - surely - at least three votes in his bid for county supervisor.

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tered voters weighed in, while most California counties' turnout percentages hovered in the 60s to low 70s. The county, which is almost evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, ultimately tipped toward Sen. John Kerry. But four years ago, voters here went with George W. Bush. Zellmer believes the aging of the county's population helps explain the election-year enthusiasm. "Most of us are on the older side, so we're more into politics," said Zellmer, refueling his cup this week at the J. Marklee Toll Station coffee shop in Markleeville, six miles down Highway 89 from Woodfords.

Elections Code when a precinct's number of registered voters is 250 or less.

"Want to know our magic secret? We vote by mail!" 74-year-old Dave Brees exclaimed, working the register this week at the Markleeville General Store.

Absentee voting is a perk for the aging population, he says, and a practicality. As November elections descend, so also does winter, and the closures of Ebbett's and Monitor passes seal off the heavy tourism flows until spring.

Linda Merrill, 48, who runs The Mountain and The Garden bed and breakfast in Woodfords, rather misses her wintry treks to the fire station to cast her vote.

But no one expects election enthusiasm here to diminish any time soon.

"We know we're small and we know we don't have much say," says Brees, "but we do like to say it."

□ □ □

Reach Marjie Lundstrom at (916) 321-1055 or mlundstrom@sacbee.com. Back columns: www.sacbee.com/lundstrom.

Tiny Alpine County leads California in voter turnout

Associated Press

MARKLEEVILLE, Calif. — In the nation's most populous state, the 1,208 residents of little Alpine County outdid the millions in California's metropolitan areas when it came to performing their civic duty on Election Day.

More than 86 percent of voters in the isolated county cast ballots on Nov. 2.

Those 714 votes may not have made a dent in the presidential sweepstakes — Democrat John Kerry carried California thanks mostly to voters in coastal cities. But the level of voter participation they represent still is impressive for a county that lacks a single high school.

"We know we're small and we know we don't have much say," said 74-year-old Alpine County resident Dave Brees, "but we do like to say it."

Alpine County has only five voting precincts. It and Sierra County to the south are the only two in the state that vote exclusively by mail.

The privilege is reserved under state law for precincts that have fewer than 250 voters, but also helps when the snow closes

Ebbett's and Monitor passes before Election Day, as it did this winter.

Although voter turnout across the state was above average, few other California counties registered participation levels above 70 percent.

"People in rural counties take more of an interest in politics because we're closer to it," said Dave Kirby, 68, owner of Woodfords Station diner, deli and general store, a center of daily political debate in the town of 150.

"One or two votes can make a lot of difference around here," he told The Sacramento Bee.

The local sheriff survived a tie vote that resulted in a runoff election several years ago, while an auditor's race was decided by three votes.

Woodfords resident Dave Zellmer, 67, tells the story of a candidate years back who was running for county supervisor. Because he lived with his wife and mother, he figured he was assured of at least three votes.

He got two.

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NEV. APPEAL 11-14-04

Alpine County leads California in turnout

Associated Press

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Kirkwood hosts telemark fair Dec. 11, 12

The 2004-2005 TeleFair, a nationwide tour of telemark clinics that offers free instruction and use of high-end ski equipment, will inaugurate the season at Kirkwood Mountain

Resort. Freeheel skiers can participate in clinics that range from first-timer lessons to advanced clinics on how to ski powder, bumps, the park and more.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort will offer discounted lift tickets to all TeleFair participants. The TeleFair will be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Dec. 11 and 12 based at Red Cliffs Day Lodge.

Kirkwood improves slopes

by Susan Wood
R-C News Service

Things are looking up in more ways than one at Kirkwood Mountain Resort this year.

The Alpine County ski area kicks off the season with improvements that show off the mountain and its focus on adventure.

High-angle grooming has expanded terrain, with two new snow cats added to the fleet.

This year, Kirkwood plans to offer top-to-bottom groomed terrain off the following chairlifts — Cornice Express, Sunrise and Wagon Wheel, known as The Wall.

“We’ll have three times as much high terrain (groomed),”

Kirkwood spokeswoman Tracy Miller said.

Groomers may get into some nooks and crannies like those found near Thunder Saddle that have kept moderate skiers and boarders to the more known, lower slopes.

“A lot of people have been intimidated with getting to the top of the mountain,” Miller said.

“They’ll be happier because there will be no question where most of the skiers will be,” she said.

Boarders will see their Stomping Grounds Terrain Park tripled in size this year, with a state-of-the-art sound system and longer Superpipe off the Solitude chairlift.

Those who have a sense of adventure will appreciate

Expedition Kirkwood finding a home in the Village Plaza.

The program started last year as a way of introducing enthusiasts to the backcountry.

For example, groups of five may reserve a Powder Cat Tour on Red Cliffs for weekends and holidays.

Courses on backcountry awareness and the Beacon Basin where people can test their avalanche transceivers accommodate those who explore the outer regions of the resort.

For skiers and boarders just starting, the resort has lowered the price of its Learn to Ski program from \$70 to \$59.

“We thought it was too expensive,” Miller said. “We want to introduce people to the sport.”

Sheriff's log

Oct. 21

■ On Oct. 21 a victim reported that their vehicle, parked in Hope Valley had been vandalized. A window had been broken but no property had been taken.

Oct. 27

■ A 36 year-old Markleeville man

was arrested after deputies responded to a reported domestic violence. The man was booked into jail on charges of spousal battery.

Nov. 4

■ A 28-year-old Antioch man and a 22-year-old Oakley man were arrested for trespassing after riding their snowmobiles around a ski resort at night. Upon arrest, both men admitted knowing it was

wrong to ride in that area.

Nov. 7

■ A 20-year-old Markleeville man was booked into jail on a charge of possession of stolen property. He was found to be in possession of a shotgun taken in a Woodfords area burglary that occurred in 2001.

■ A 16-year-old San Andreas teen was arrested for shoplifting in the Kirkwood area.



The Sacramento Bee

This story is taken from [Marjie Lundstrom](#) at [sacbee.com](#).

Marjie Lundstrom: When rural fire alarms sound, fewer spry enough to answer

By Marjie Lundstrom -- Bee Columnist

Published 2:15 am PST Saturday, November 20, 2004

If fire breaks out in Clint Celio's corner of Alpine County, or a motorist crashes along his stretch of Highway 88, the pagers go off. And Celio and crew are off and running.

But even the most precise plans have a way of unraveling, and in beautiful Alpine County, the future of the volunteer fire department - a backbone of California rural life - is very much imperiled.

When I visited the sparsely populated county of 1,208 last week, high in the Sierra Nevada south of Lake Tahoe, I wanted to hear more about the county's remarkable voter turnout on Election Day - the highest in the state.

I got an earful. But what I also heard about from these politically engaged residents is the state of their own back yard, and the forces threatening to change their way of life.

It is a story playing out in many parts of rural California, where the pool of young, able-bodied volunteer firefighters is dwindling, driven out by high housing prices and lack of employment. For those young people who remain or move into the county - not just for seasonal, ski-area work - the motivation and will to take on huge, unpaid commitments are also shrinking.

"Nowadays, the people who live here have to work so hard to make a living just to keep up with the cost of living," said newly elected county Supervisor Skip Veatch, 59, who was the county's sheriff for 12 years. "The young people, they don't seem to have the time and - some, frankly, don't have the interest - to do a lot of volunteer work."

It wasn't that way when Veatch moved to the county 31 years ago from the Bay Area to manage a Bank of America branch (it's gone now). Before becoming sheriff in 1990, he was a volunteer firefighter, search and rescue worker, emergency medical technician and deputy sheriff. Last week, I met another resident, 67-year-old Dave Zellmer, whose "résumé" of volunteer work and community involvement is similarly deep. But they are aging, and the heady days of rushing to a fire or accident scene have passed.

"There's a point where you just can't anymore - you become more of a danger," says Dave Kirby, 68, a former volunteer firefighter who owns the Woodfords Station diner and market, where locals faithfully assemble for coffee each morning at 7. "I could drive the truck if I had to, but I couldn't drag the hose and climb on roofs anymore."

Through the first half of this century, the state projects that the percentage of 18-to 34-year-olds living in Alpine County will tumble from 23 percent this year to less than 15 percent by 2050. In rural Sierra County to the north, the projected decline of 18-to 34-year-olds is less precipitous, from 25 percent this year to 21 percent by 2050.

Like many parts of California, rural and urban, housing costs are helping press the exodus. The median sale price for a home in Alpine County ballooned from \$147,750 in 1996 to \$310,909 the first nine months of this year, according to DataQuick Information Systems.

Veatch knows of one small cabin with less than 700 square feet in Woodfords (population 150) that's under contract for around \$250,000.

But people are coming all the same - Bay Area retirees, among them - and volunteers like Celio worry about the county's long-term ability to serve them. Celio, 30, who grew up here and returned in 1998 after getting his bachelor's and master's degrees in Colorado, remembers well the 1987 Acorn fire that destroyed 24 homes in the county.

Today there are four volunteer fire departments in the 727-square-mile county, where 95 percent of the land is publicly owned. Celio, assistant chief of the Woodfords department, has only four fully trained volunteers to tackle some 150 calls a year.

There is nothing Barney Fife-ish about expectations. In January, volunteer firefighters in California came under Cal-OSHA jurisdiction, and training requirements are rigorous. Where once a volunteer might put in a few hours every other month, Celio said, a volunteer can now expect to put in 40 to 100 hours annually to "keep up on basics."

Celio and Veatch agree that the future of firefighting is among the county's most pressing issues, and a committee is hard at work studying options.

But, like the scent of pine trees here, change is almost certainly in the air.

"Unfortunately," says Celio, "you can't point to one thing and just fix it. ... It's the growing pains of a small, rural community."

Reach Marjie Lundstrom at (916) 321-1055 or mlundstrom@sacbee.com. Back columns: www.sacbee.com/lundstrom.

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Alpine hosts artists, authors and antiques

Woodfords arts and crafts show begins today and continues until Christmas

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

On what may well be one of the final few weekends of sunshine and dry roads, Woodfords Antiques at Woodfords Station in Woodfords, Calif. will be selling original artwork, publications and antiques.

Alpine County's Artists, Authors & Antiques is featuring works made only by Alpine County residents — gourd art, papier mache, jewelry, quilts, pillows, framed photographs, watercolors, drawings, knives, brightly-colored beaded purses, pins, pens, belts and eyeglass holders.

"I make beadwork on just about everything," said Dale Bennett, of Washoe and Paiute ancestry, while holding up a fishing pole she decorated with a beaded grip.

"Washoe beadwork is very fine," said store organizer Ellen Martin, as she rolled a beaded pen between her fingers.

"This is the sign of a great beadworker. You can't see where it begins and where it ends."

The pen was made by Ben-

DETAILS

What: Artists, Authors & Antiques

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. today through Sunday, Dec. 4-5, Dec. 11-12, Dec. 18-24

Where: Woodfords

nett's daughter, Nicole, who is following in her mother's footsteps.

The Bennetts keep it all in the family.

Next to the beadwork lay several handcrafted and polished antler- and wood-handled knives by Greg Bennett, who, accompanied by his son, David, hunts deer for the antlers and leather for the sheaths.

Bennett makes the knife blades out of saw blades.

There are actually 21 artists and authors who have signed up to display their wares. Martin is one of them, with several crafts to sell, including dolls, pinecone art, fabric bowls, vests and hats, pillows and quilts.

Also the assistant at the Alpine County Museum, Martin brought with her many items normally sold at the museum

like stuffed animals for the kids.

Pen and ink greeting cards, pine needle baskets, wreaths, etched glass and knitted and crocheted accessories are also available for sale.

Original framed photographs, paintings and drawings depict Alpine County scenery.

Martin said Dave and Lynda Kirby's Woodfords Station restaurant, will be open during the sale, and their slogan is "Soup, sandwich and shop."

"My wife makes all the pies and cornbread," said Dave Kirby, restaurant owner for more than 21 years.

Alpine County's Artists, Authors & Antiques will begin today for Thanksgiving weekend, and be open on Dec. 4-5, Dec. 11-12 and Dec. 18-24. Woodfords Antiques is located on Highway 88 near the intersection with Highway 89.

The hours are 10 a.m. through 5 p.m. or by appointment.

Hot cider and goodies will be available. All purchases will be giftwrapped.

Martin hopes customers will come from Carson Valley, since she said they always have supported Alpine County artists.

If the store is successful during the holidays, it may remain open on weekends through the

spring.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.



Art show: Greg Bennett makes knives out of antlers, wood and saw blades. Dale Bennett, center, does beadwork on fishing pole handles, eyeglass string holders and pens. At right, Ellen Martin holds up one of her creations for the Woodfords Art Show. Martin sews and creates pinecone art.

BELINDA GRANT/The R-C

How to find a Christmas Tree

How to get started

Both the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have programs for people to cut trees on the agencies' lands. Forest Service permits are \$10 for a single tree, \$20 for two trees (the maximum per family). BLM permits are \$5 with a maximum of two per family. Permits can be obtained at the USFS or BLM office nearest you, 1536 Carson St. for the Forest Service, 5665 Morgan Mill Road, both in Carson City. No refunds on permits. Call 882-2766 for USFS information, 885-6000 for BLM.

Where can trees be cut with the permit?

When you pick up your permit at the Forest Service you'll get three maps. One is of the Dog Valley cutting area, near Verdi. Second is the Highway 4 cutting area south down Highway 88 and left past Markleeville. Burnside cutting area at Picketts Junction, where highways 88 and 89 meet, requires you to park at the highway and either cross-country ski or snowshoe a mile. The BLM offers cutting areas in the Pine Nut Mountains, Clan Alpine, Desatoya Mountains and south-east of Hawthorne.

What kind of trees are available?

In the BLM areas the piñon is the tree of choice. It has a nice

scent but is also sticky with sap. Jeffery pine, the white pine and incense cedar are Forest Service land favorites.

What's the best way to cut a tree?

Carson Ranger District Ranger Franklin Pemberton advises using a bow saw. "Ten quick strokes and you have the cut done. A chain saw is heavy, hard to start in the winter and, besides, it makes a lot of noise, not something conducive to peace and quiet in the woods." The maximum diameter for a Christmas tree is 6 inches at the base of the tree. And you must cut no higher than 6 inches from the ground. Cutting higher than that is called 'topping' and it causes damage to the forest in that the stump will continue to grow but eventually die after using nutrition that could have gone to surviving trees. And you must cut within 10 feet of a living, green tree. This thins the forest for a better survival rate of trees. Display the pink permit tag from the tree when carting it home.

How do you get the tree home?

"Wrap it in a blanket or plastic and tie it to the top of the car," advised Pemberton. "Have the trunk end pointing forward. We don't recommend using a trailer, they clog up the area and create a muddy mess."

— R-C News Service

LAKE TAHOE

Red ink locks up Alpine jail expansion

By Jo Rafferty
Tribune News Service

Until California's budget picture starts to look brighter, plans to expand Alpine County's inmate capacity beyond a single holding cell will stay on hold.

Funding department officials had hoped for new construction is not available. Until it is, the cell located in the basement of the Alpine County Courthouse, which was built in 1928, will have to suffice.

"With what occurred in California with the state and county budget, it was not feasible to move forward on a new facility at this time," said Sheriff John Crawford.

Property behind the general store, adjacent to the Alpine County Administration Build-

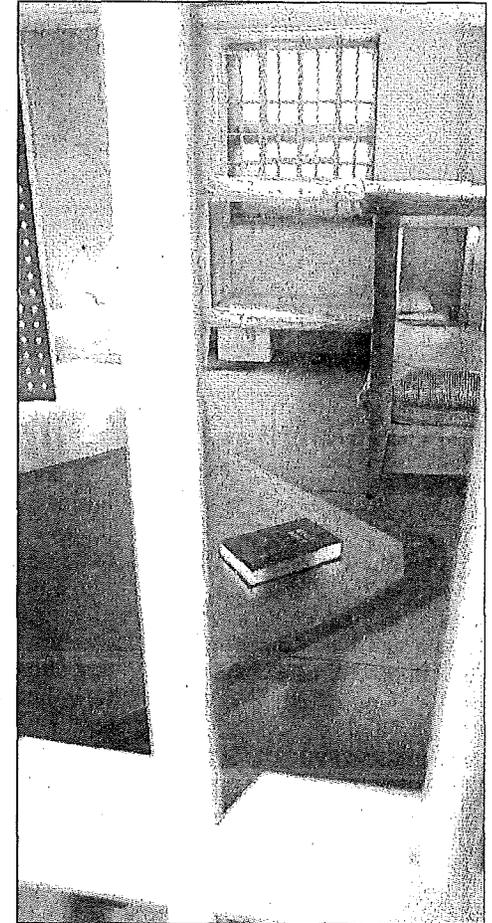
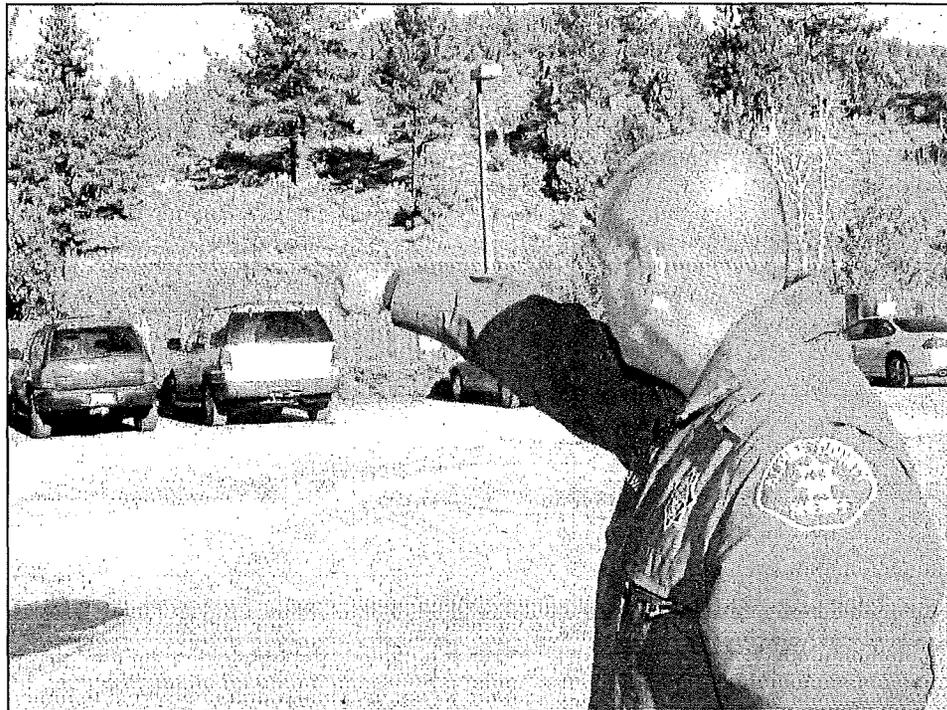
ing, was purchased a few years ago for the future Alpine County Sheriff's Office, but right now no funding is available to build on it, according to Leonard Turnbeaugh, director of Public Works and county surveyor.

Coring of the soil and drafting of floor plans have been done so far, but the sheriff's office is still in the preliminary planning stages, he said.

"We're looking for funding sources," said Turnbeaugh.

Currently there is one holding cell, used only for prisoners waiting to go to court. Two cells were available until several years ago, but one is now being used as a storage room.

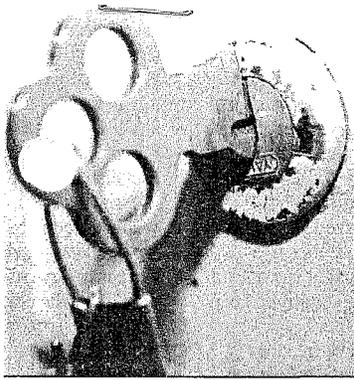
Inmates are taken to El Dorado County Jail in South Lake Tahoe until their court date.



Jessica Combos / Tribune News Service

The holding cell, above, under the courthouse in Markleeville since 1928, is still used for the court's purposes.

Alpine County Sheriff John Crawford, left, points out the possible location for the new sheriff's office in Markleeville.



Red ink locks up Alpine plans

California's smallest county finds state finances key to building new Sheriff's Office

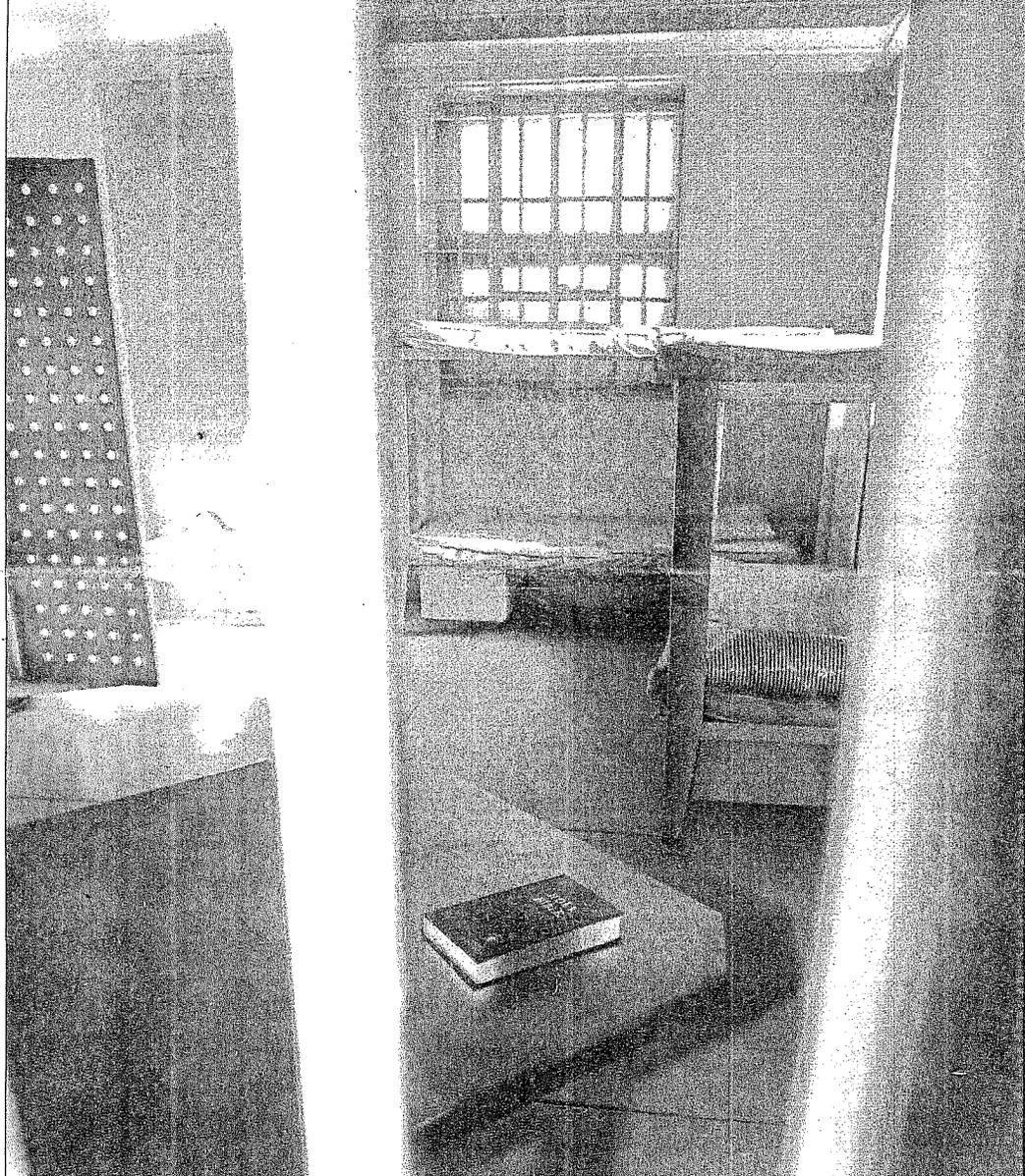
By Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

California's budget picture starts to look brighter, plans to expand Alpine County's inmate capacity beyond a single holding cell will stay on hold.

Funding department officials had hoped would help build a new sheriff's office with is not available right now. Until it is, the cell located in the basement of the Alpine County Courthouse, which was built in 1928, will have to suffice.

"With what occurred in California with the state and county budget it was not feasible to move forward on a new facility at this time," said Sheriff John Crawford.

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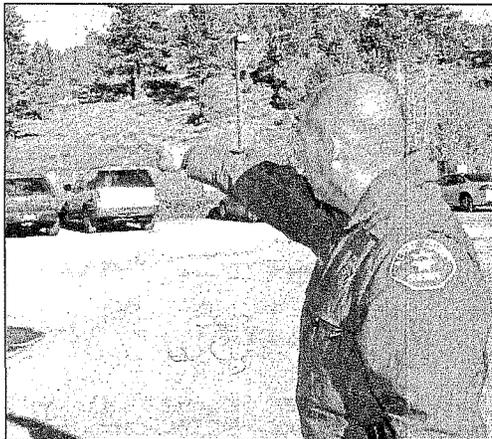
JESSICA COMBOS/R-C photos

Coring of the soil and drafting of floor plans is what's been done so far, but the sheriff's office is still in the preliminary planning stages, he said.

"We're looking for funding sources," said Turnbeaugh.

Currently there is one holding cell, used only for prisoners waiting to go to court. Two cells were available until several years ago, but one is now being used as a storage room.

Inmates are taken to El Dorado County Jail in South Lake Tahoe until their court date.



Holding Cell: from 1928, this holding cell is under the courthouse in Markleeville, and is still used for the court's purposes. At top left, The key to the cell, which was built with the Alpine County Courthouse in 1928. At left, Sheriff John Crawford points out the location for the new sheriff's office.

See **Alpine** on page 4

Alpine: One cell left in courthouse

Continued from page 1

Currently there is one holding cell, used only for prisoners waiting to go to court. Two cells were available until several years ago, but one is now being used as a storage room.

Inmates are taken to El Dorado County Jail in South Lake Tahoe until their court date, according to Turnbeaugh.

"Right now they go up to the lake, pick up a prisoner to bring him to court and then bring him back," he said.

A new building would only house more holding cells and not a full jail, he said, because a jail would require more deputies.

"Staffing could be a quick way to bankrupt a small department like ours," said Turnbeaugh.

Crawford, who has been Alpine County's sheriff for about two years, said he is one of 13 deputies that now cover all of the county, including Bear Valley.

Besides Crawford, there are six patrolmen and two deputies who are assigned to investigations and an undersheriff, Robert Levy. In Bear Valley there are two deputies and a sergeant who also run the volunteer fire department.

"We are one of the smallest agencies in the state," said Crawford.

Last year the department suffered \$120,000 in budget cuts and this year it is up to \$160,000.

"Communications took a huge hit. We can't afford to get cut any further," Crawford said.

Rural sheriff's funding in the amount of \$221,000 that was to be put toward the construction of the new building, went to help with the county's finances, he said.

All the county departments had pitched in money to offset the county deficit, according to Crawford.

"In the end we managed to all pull together," he said. "Every department was affected, and we were not immune."

The county's \$15.5 million budget was finalized and adopted on Nov. 2, said Assistant County Clerk Barbara Howard.

"If everybody's wish lists were granted, we would have had a \$2.5 million deficit," she said.

She said in January or February the county will revisit the budget to see if there is more than what was previously estimated.

"It's there's more, the depart-

ments can be a little less frugal," Howard said.

Despite the cuts, Crawford said the department is making sure the community's safety is not affected.

"We still provide for the citizens," he said. "We're both active on the patrol. Rob's out there handling calls, I'm handling calls."

A Bible on the table lends atmosphere in the 1920s holding cell. The cell is available for viewing, he said.

"We have an open door policy. Anybody who wants to have a tour — we let them come in.

"People always ask, could you take a picture of them behind the bars," Crawford said.

"If this keeps up, we'll have to start charging in order to make our budget," joked Levy.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Triple meetings in Markleeville

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Alpine County will be buzzing next week with three meetings taking place, with the hot subject being the planned Abdo project.

The proposed Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge, includes a 40-room lodge in the town of Markleeville with a spa, a restaurant, a meeting space, an outdoor pool, 70 fractional-ownership cabins and 14 commercial buildings.

Tom Abdo of High Mountain Properties is the developer.

After a regular meeting of the Alpine County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday at 9 a.m. in the Alpine County Administrative Building in Markleeville, supervisors will meet again that same day at 1 p.m. at Turtle Rock Park, 17300 Highway 89 in Markleeville to tackle the question of whether to require a full environmental review or allow a shorter environmental declaration on the project.

Public participation and input is desired. The supervisors may make their decision during the public hearing.

"The environmental determination is a decision on the type of environmental review document that must be completed for the project," said Brian Peters, planning director for Alpine County in a statement.

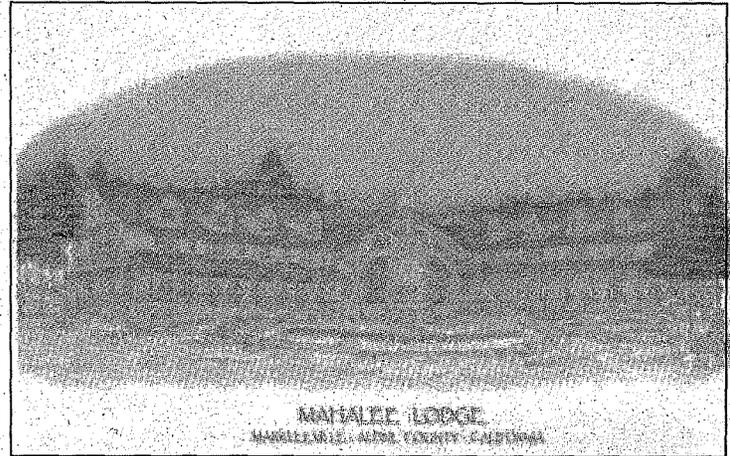
MEETINGS

Board of supervisors: 9 a.m. Tuesday, in the Administrative Building
Public hearing on Abdo project: 1 p.m. Tuesday, at Turtle Rock Park
Planning commission: 6 p.m. Thursday, at Turtle Rock Park

The planning commission had voted 4-1 on Oct. 28 to recommend the full environmental report. Now it is the Alpine County Board of Supervisors' turn to make the final decision. The county must approve a completed environmental document before it can consider approving the project itself, according to Peters.

At 6 p.m. on Thursday, during the regular Alpine County Planning Commission meeting also at Turtle Rock Park, the direction of the meeting will depend on supervisors' decisions on the environmental review requirements.

If the board does not require a full environmental report, the commission will begin the process of amending the general plan to accommodate the project. Amendments include chang-



Provided by the Alpine County Planning Commission

Rendering: An artist's rendering of the proposed Mahalee Lodge.

ing the land use designation and zoning for the property.

If a full environmental report is required, then the amendment process will be dropped for the time being.

"If there is an EIR required, as far as the project going forward, it has to stop. Then we'll proceed with an EIR," said Peters. "It's a pretty big week next week. It's a pretty big week this week getting ready for it."

Other items the planning commission will consider are:

■ Amending the conditional use permit the the Mountain Club Condominiums at Kirkwood Mountain Resort to increase commercial space from

5,000 to 10,000 square feet

■ Discussion of a proposed public process for reviewing the Design Historic Combined District ordinance

Some of the issues to be discussed at the 9 a.m., Tuesday, Board of Supervisors meeting include:

■ An update by the U.S. Forest Service representatives regarding Alpine County

■ Notice of vacancies on the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board and request for solicitation of applicants

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Workshop a success

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

The workshop on a fire plan for Alpine County was a success, according to Alpine County Fire Safe Council coordinator Clint Celio of C.G. Celio & Sons.

The Fire Safe Council met on Nov. 22 to mull over a draft of the Alpine County Community Fire Plan and to get comments from county supervisors and the public.

"It centered around how to get some of the high priorities done," said Celio. "Based on the comments we got Monday and we got from the rest of the board, what we're going to do is update the plan."

Celio said the plan should be finalized by the end of the year.

Communities within the county that are most at risk are Woodfords, Markleeville, Bear

Valley and Kirkwood, according to the fire plan.

In Woodfords, the Mesa Vista and Upper Diamond Valley/Manzanita Lane planning areas received the highest risk ratings. Alpine Village, Crystal Springs, River Ranch and the Washoe Indian Colony got medium-risk ratings.

In Markleeville, the Markleevillage/Thornburg subdivision and the Shay Creek subdivision were rated as high risks for fire. Downtown Markleeville and the Morrison subdivision received a medium-risk rating.

Ratings for the Kirkwood and Bear Valley planning areas have not been completed.

The fire plan states that the homeowner is the first line of defense in protecting structures from wildfire.

"In general, defensible space needs to be improved around structures," it said.

Child care food program offered

Staff reports

Alpine Children's Center announces the sponsorship of the Child Care Food Program. All children in attendance will be offered the same meals at no separate charge with no physical segregation of or other discrimination against any child because of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. The food program is available

without charge to all eligible participants. If you believe you have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability, write immediately to Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Va. 22302. For more information, contact: Alpine Children's Center, 49 Hawkside Drive Markleeville, Calif. 96120, (530) 694-2390.



Dan Thrift/Tahoe Daily Tribune

From left, Rory, Troy and Noah Sedgwick, from Gardnerville, charge down the hill after finding their Christmas Tree on Sunday morning near Ebbett's Pass.

In search of the perfect tree

Families travel to Alpine town for holiday tradition

"It's all about the family. We used to go to the tree lot in the city, but this is more fun."

Rory Sedgwick, father of two sons

By Susan Wood
Tribune staff writer

MARKLEEVILLE — Ann and Dino Molinari bolted from the woods Sunday — with the bounty of the forest in their hands.

The San Francisco couple dragged two trees on a toboggan, marking the 28th year she went into the wilderness off Highway 4 in Alpine County to get the Christmas symbol.

"I come up every year and visit my folks," the 35-year-old woman said.

Molinari grew up in Markleeville and remembers the childhood tradition with her parents. Now, she brings her husband, who stuffed the trees into the truck.

school. The other was headed to their living room.

Molinari said she prefers a tree with fewer branches to show off her ornaments.

"I'm kind of partial to the Charlie Brown tree," she said.

The Molinaris spent \$10 each for two permits from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Markleeville, one of three offices for a district that offers a total of 3,500 permits for cutting between Nov. 22 to Dec. 24.

Of its 300-permit allocation, the ranger station sold 73 permits on Saturday alone.

"We even got a bunch of people last weekend" U.S. Forest Service worker

Adam Makda said of the storm over Thanksgiving weekend. "These people are pretty determined."

Some people come up for the day, drink hot chocolate and playing Christmas music.

Because a storm predicted to hit Sunday sputtered, skies were sunny and clear. The sunny skies drew a crowd at the designated cutting area north of Ebbetts Pass.

The Molinaris weren't alone in the holiday tradition. There were just as many sled and toboggan trails as tire tracks.

"It's all about the family," Rory Sedgwick said, holding his find with 16-year-old son, Troy, as Noah, 6, looked on. Their

See **Tree**, Back page

Tree

From Page A1

sixth visit to these woods looked like boys' day out.

"We used to go to the tree lot in the city, but this is more fun," the father said.

This year, the Sedgwicks scaled down the size of their clan and the Christmas tree.

"We need to make it fit," he said, admitting last year's 14-footer was too big.

It was the Tolberts first time in the woods to get their family tree, which is intended to go on a pedestal.

Nathan Tolbert turned up the volume on his truck to hear Christmas carols as he and his wife, Christi, searched the woods with 6-year-old Cameron.

"That's part of the festivities," the Minden man said. He threw in a few more jackets in case the weather turned sour.

He placed a tree saw in the back of the truck.

"And if that doesn't work, there's always this," he said, holding up a sledge hammer.

Friend and neighbor Kippy Lanker recorded the event with a camera attached to a tripod.

The gang trudged up the hill, debating whether they should spread out to cover more ground.

By the time the patriarch approached a bluff that looked like the end of the road, he saw what appeared to be the perfect

tree — standing at 5-foot, 5 inches.

"Well, you know I can't make this decision (alone)," he said, calling over his wife.

Once she gave her approval, Tolbert's son was asked to come help cut down the tree.

"OK, I got it started, so you can keep going," he said, crouching down with his son.

The trio carried out the spruce tree in the direction of the truck's stereo.

Christmas tree permits are on sale in national forests across the West. Prices vary depending on the forest. In 2003, more than 232,000 permits were issued, bringing about \$1.3 million in revenue to the federal agency, according to Associated Press reports.

Permit holders cannot cut trees in wilderness areas, recreation campgrounds and picnic areas, or close to rivers, streams or paved roads. The cut tree must be within 10 feet of another. Only two trees per household are allowed to be taken.

Noncompliance of Forest Service restrictions may result in a maximum penalty of \$5,000 and six months in jail.

Beyond the woods, Christmas trees can be found in nursery and grocer parking lots.

In its 50th year, the National Christmas Tree Association estimates U.S. consumers will buy 24 million trees for the holiday. That's up by a half million.

to catch some of the other teams, girls from ountry," Kate Lambdin

1 by Hillyard in 77th lton in 91st (20:53.74), :03.83), Anna Lambdin and Laurel Morrow in

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which represents the ducation office, said the ; created controversy in California districts.

attorney general opin- lly gives some guid- ie said.

pinion, which basically ch below a court deci- ted a conflict with Cali- w would occur if a dis- l a policy to require a consent to release a om school for private services.

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CALIFORNIA LOTTERY

Fantasy 5

■ Sunday, Dec. 5
WINNING NUMBERS

9 24 27 30 35

Daily 3

■ Sunday, Dec. 5
MIDDAY EVENING

7 4 2 2 4 3

The Record-Courier

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12-8-04

Workshop a success

by Jo Rafferty

December 3, 2004

 Print  Email

The workshop on a fire plan for Alpine County was a success, according to Alpine County Fire Safe Council coordinator Clint Celio of C.G. Celio & Sons.

The Fire Safe Council met on Nov. 22 to mull over a draft of the Alpine County Community Fire Plan and to get comments from county supervisors and the public.

"It centered around how to get some of the high priorities done," said Celio. "Based on the comments we got Monday and we got from the rest of the board, what we're going to do is update the plan."

Celio said the plan should be finalized by the end of the year.

Communities within the county that are most at risk are Woodfords, Markleeville, Bear Valley and Kirkwood, according to the fire plan.

In Woodfords, the Mesa Vista and Upper Diamond Valley/Manzanita Lane planning areas received the highest risk ratings. Alpine Village, Crystal Springs, River Ranch and the Washoe Indian Colony got medium-risk ratings.

In Markleeville, the Markleevillage/Thornburg subdivision and the Shay Creek subdivision were rated as high risks for fire. Downtown Markleeville and the Morrison subdivision received a medium-risk rating.

Ratings for the Kirkwood and Bear Valley planning areas have not been completed.

The fire plan states that the homeowner is the first line of defense in protecting structures from wildfire.

"In general, defensible space needs to be improved around structures," it said.

Markleeville project reduced

Environmental review decision postponed until later this month

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

It was a surprise to the 40 or so people who attended an Alpine County Board of Supervisors public hearing Tuesday, when developer Tom Abdoo presented a reduced version of the Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge project.

In spite of these changes, Friends of Markleeville members continued to push for a full environmental review, to the disapproval of some of the supervisors.

"I'm ready to go ahead with the project and get it going," said Supervisor Herman Zellmer, who is finishing his term this year. "I was quite disappointed that the project was going to be reduced."

The plans now include 25 rooms instead of 40 for the lodge, 49 timeshare cabins instead of 70 and no restaurant.

"Without the restaurant the need for employment will be greatly reduced," said Zellmer. "People were complaining that the restaurant will produce wastewater. In order to reduce the wastewater (Abdoo) reduced the project."

Zellmer said that Alpine County, especially Markleeville, is in trouble financially. He said the library and museum are funded solely with the general fund.

"Those are the kinds of things

that really cost us," said Zellmer. "Needed services in Markleeville would be wonderful."

Friends of Markleeville member Nancy Thornburg said it was unfair that Zellmer had prewritten a speech he gave following the closing of the public hearing. She said this indicated to her that Zellmer had already made his decision without considering new information brought forward.

Thornburg said that a letter she brought to the meeting that 148 people had signed urging the board to consider a full environmental review had not been fully considered.

Of the signatures, 143 were from residents who live in the Markleeville area.

"Some of our major concerns have been mitigated," said Thornburg. "But we were urging them to do an (environmental impact report) to assure it would be a good project."

Zellmer said he had gone through all the paperwork regarding the project, which filled two 4-inch binders, before he had decided to support the project with the environmental study that has already been conducted.

Thornburg said she is uneasy about the current plans for the water and wastewater disposal.

"They have not drilled. They have not proven their water source," she said.

Abdoo said on the phone on Wednesday that he had gotten rid of the restaurant to alleviate concerns about the amount of

wastewater it would produce.

"The wastewater is controlled by (Lahontan Water Quality Control Board), the same regulatory agency that regulates Markleeville," said Abdoo. "If we don't control the wastewater, then we don't have a project. Lahontan will not approve it."

"The same with the water. The water has to meet county health requirements or we don't have a project."

Of the reduction he made in the project size, Abdoo said, "We just listened to the community. We listened to all their concerns."

Abdoo said he wishes people would focus on how the project would save the county museum and library and attract new businesses to the area. Included in the plans are 14 commercial buildings.

"This project will make people think, 'Let's go shopping in Markleeville,'" said Abdoo.

Other changes, according to Planning Director Brian Peters, are that a road has been deleted from the plan and the town ditch will not be moved. Culverts and bridges have been proposed to partially cover the ditch for safety.

Chair Terry Woodrow asked for a summary of the new plans before she makes a decision regarding the extent of the environmental study.

Peters said he will prepare the summary and the supervisors will most likely vote on the environmental report issue at a meeting on Dec. 21.

Reckless snowmobile driver arrested

■ On Nov. 19, a 19 year-old Gardnerville man turned himself in at the Sheriff's Office and was arrested for domestic violence and battery.

■ On Nov. 22, deputies responded to a report of a missing 17-year-old female. As the deputies began investigating the juvenile returned home and was counseled on her behavior.

■ On Nov. 22, deputies responded to a reported theft in the Woodfords area. Approximately \$13,000 worth of jewelry and coins were reported stolen. The investigation is continuing.

■ On Nov. 28, a deputy

stopped a vehicle that was being driven in an erratic manner. The

Sheriff's report

driver, a 53-year-old Carson City man, was ultimately arrested for driving under the influence.

■ On Nov. 29, a 62-year-old Boise, Idaho, man turned him-

self in at the Sheriff's Office and was arrested for reckless driving.

■ On Nov. 29, a 50-year-old South Lake Tahoe man turned himself in at the Sheriff's Office and was arrested for driving on a suspended license.

■ On Dec. 4, deputies on snowmobile patrol arrested a 41-year-old Suisun, Calif., man for operating a snowmobile in a wilderness area.

Ready for snowmobiling at Lake Alpine

Staff reports

Grooming began on Highway 4 on Dec. 9, starting at the

SnoPark area at Lake Alpine. this winter.

Snowmobilers may come and enjoy beautiful Alpine County

Call Bear Valley General Store at (209) 753-2842.

Roughing it in winter: Breakup sends Tahoe man into isolation

By Robyn Moormeister
R-C News Service

INDIAN CREEK RESERVOIR — After a breakup, some people seek the refuge of a night out with friends and the weekend buried in a warm bed, covers over the head.

Not Shad Lafontise, 26, who's taking heartbreak to another level — the desolate ice and snow of Indian Creek Reservoir, where he's set up his one-man camp, complete with a homemade fishing pole, a journal and a quart of whiskey.

"I'm living the outdoor pioneer lifestyle," said the whisker-covered 6'5" handyman, flanked on all sides by a breathtaking winter landscape. "I'm having the time of my life doing what most people only dream of."

For two months, he's been fishing, swinging his self-whittled splitting maul for firewood, hiking for miles and writing for clarity and reflection.

He sleeps under six layers of blankets in freezing temperatures every night, listening to a hand-held radio.

He washes his gutting knife and dishes with run-off from his solar shower. Next, he'll make his own snowshoes out of tree branches.

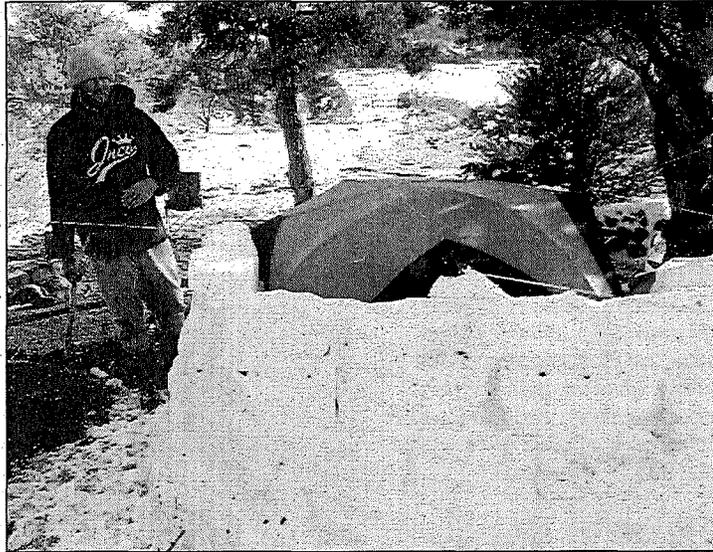
He says he's never been more fulfilled.

The break-up of a two-year relationship and the severed bond with his ex-girlfriend's son, Lawrence, drove him to it.

"That was my boy," Lafontise said, holding up a school photo of Lawrence, a cute, grinning tow-headed child.

"I took him on his first camping trip here when he was three and a half."

The relationship broke up in September when, according to Lafontise, he learned his girlfriend had cheated on him with one of his good friends. The two are now engaged to be married.



RICK GUNN/R-C News Service

Surviving in the wilderness: Shad Lafontise stands near his tent, which is surrounded by a snow wall. He has lived outside since Oct. 14.

I figure I should do this while I'm young and free.'

Shad Lafontise
Making a go of the rugged life

"It's a good thing," he said, his gritty fingernails moving over the photo. "At least I know it wasn't love."

He's funding his adventure with worker's compensation after his right arm was broken on the job.

Before the trip, he had the metal disc and five screws removed.

About every two weeks, Lafontise stops in at Woodfords store on Highway 88 to stock up on beef jerky and candy for his long hikes and Coors Light for his long nights.

"He's not the best-smelling guy in the world," said store owner Dave Kirby. "It takes all kinds. A lot of people aren't willing to be that cold. You know, it's pretty hard to be that

uncomfortable."

Lafontise said he's always been enamored with the rugged survival lifestyle spelled out in pages of hunting and fishing magazines.

He welcomes an oncoming storm.

"Bring it on," he said. "I'll just wait for it to be over so I can enjoy the sun again."

Staring at the stars from his dome tent behind his four-foot wall of ice, the South Lake Tahoe man comes to a new realization about himself nearly every night.

He knows he has "a strong mentality and he can hack it in harsh conditions." He knows he wants a "rugged" woman as strong as he is.

"I'm finding myself and what I want," he said. "I figure I should do this while I'm young and free."

When he's done with his adventure in March, he plans to write a book about his time on the icy reservoir, titled "One Great Escape, The Next Chapter."

In the next chapter, he said he'll head out east to find, marry and have kids with the woman of his dreams.

Alpine children's center to close

R-C Dec. 15, 2004



Center: Ten-year-old Jef Newby draws at the Alpine County Children's Center Thursday afternoon. Below, Dion Mortimer, 6 and Marijah Snyder, 5 work on a craft project at the Alpine County Children's center, Thursday.

SHANNON LITZ/ R-C photos

Competition, budget restraints blamed for center's end

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Jo Daugherty sat at a long table in the Alpine County Children's Center helping the children create glitter glue pictures, talking about how the center she has worked at for 24 years will soon be closing.

In a grandmotherly voice, Daugherty, 61, reminded the kids to be polite.

"May I please use the purple, may I use the green please," she said. "Use all those nice words that you learned since you've been here."

It was Thursday afternoon and the parents of the 11 children who were doing their artwork were beginning to arrive to pick up their charges.

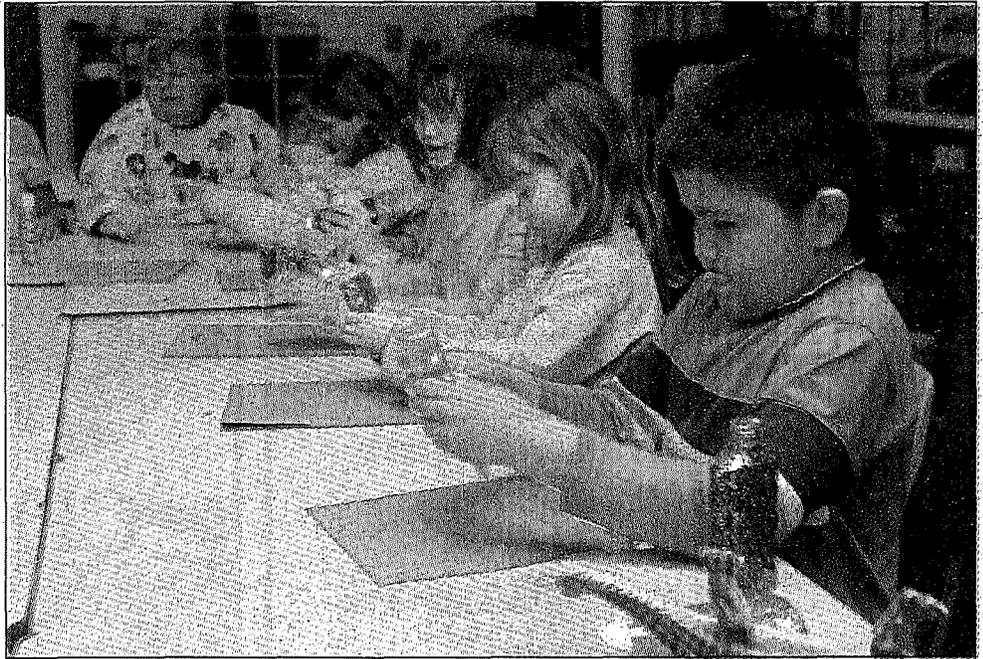
Rian Snyder, 8, of Markleevillage said she has been going to the center since she was 18 months old. Then the center had had an infant program, Daugherty said.

Rian said she wasn't sure where she will go when the center closes on Jan. 31.

"I'm going to go to tutoring if my grandma's here," she said. "If my grandma's not here I'm going to JoJo's."

Rian was referring to Daugherty, who the children call JoJo.

Daugherty, director of the center, said losing some of the county's funding and the opening of an after-school program at Diamond Valley School two years ago are a couple of reasons why she thinks the center is closing. She also said the opening of The Alpine County Office of Education Early Learning Center in Woodfords in January



may have done them some harm. The Early Learning Center has an infant-toddler program, that the center no longer provides.

The lowered enrollment, especially the loss of full-time kids, was damaging to Alpine County Children's Center. A teacher has to be there all day, even if the students aren't, she said. The small, low brown building currently employs two full-time teachers (including Daugherty), one part-time teacher and office person and one part-time office person.

"We've known for the last couple of years that we've been losing money every

year," said Daugherty. "It just doesn't generate enough money if (the children) don't come all the time. If we had more full-time kids, it would have helped us."

Daugherty said she thinks the center's closing will be a hardship to the 14-16 school age and five or six preschoolers who are enrolled at the center. She said the center is the only child care center in the area that is open until 6 p.m. and the children there are fed breakfast, lunch and dinner at no charge.

See **Alpine** on page 7

Alpine: Care center closing

Continued from page 1

The center is funded through the federal latch key and sliding scale grants.

Janis Doyal of Woodfords was picking up her four grandchildren who have been attending the center for more than a year.

Doyal said she'll miss the convenience. Deanna Doyal, 9, said she'll miss playing with Legos.

Teddy Doyal, 6, said she'll miss her friends, naming off at least five of them. Shania Doyal, 3, was too shy to answer, but her older brother Jack, 8, said, "I'm going to

miss storing stuff in the locker."

"I think it's kind of a sad thing," said Galit Greenwood, who was picking up her daughter. "I have one child here now, but all of my children have gone here in the past. For so many years it was a great thing for the community."

Jeff Newvy, 10, said he is in his second year at the school. He isn't sure where he is going to go after the center closes, since he is moving to Gardnerville.

"He is definitely my boy. We don't have many here," said Daugherty, motioning toward

the room full of girls.

Daugherty said she might see if she can do volunteer work at Diamond Valley School, or she might just take a break.

She has been working at the center ever since she got her elementary school teaching credential.

She has been a foster parent to at least 20 children for almost 20 years, including two foster daughters who are leaving her home right before Christmas.

"It depends," she said. "I just may rest for awhile."

Markleeville project goes back

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

The developer of the Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge project hopes reducing the size of the project will also reduce the trouble he has had getting it approved.

Alpine County planning commissioners raised concerns with the developer of Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge on Thursday as preliminary work to prepare for possible zoning and general plan changes.

Tom Abdo of High Mountain Properties and his associates presented a reduced plan for the project to the Alpine County Board of Supervisors at a Dec. 7 public hearing. Supervisors, who were supposed to have voted on the type of environmental study they felt was required for the project, then delayed their decision until they could see a new project description.

At Thursday's planning commission meeting, Abdo and his associates answered commissioners' questions for a few hours before both groups decided to hold a new public hearing regarding zoning and general plan amendments 6 p.m. Dec. 29 in the Planning Department Building at Turtle Rock Park.

"The project description has been changed," said Peters. "We're at an in-between mode. We need to re-notice and hold a new public hearing on the project."

Ed Williams, High Mountain Properties' architect, explained to the commission the changes that had been presented to the supervisors that he said adds up to a 30-35 percent reduction in the plan, including:

- Reducing the lodge from 43 to 25 rooms
- Reducing the size of the lodge parking lot
- Eliminating the restaurant
- Moving the road leading to the lodge so it will not require moving the town ditch
- Eliminating 21 of the time-share cabins, making the count

'We're very easy. We can be manipulated. We're just trying to listen to people and do what they requested.'

Tom Abdo
Project developer

now 49 instead of 70 and eliminating the road they were to be located on

■ Making the garages on the cabins attached instead of detached, which reduces the site coverage

"That latest change, I really applaud you guys for doing that," said commissioner Gunter Kaiser.

Still left in the project are the 49 time-share cabins, a lodge with a spa and lots for 14 commercial buildings for lease behind the existing downtown in Markleeville. The resort is to wrap around the hillside directly behind the Alpine County Museum.

"Is this the last change?" commissioner Bill Morgan asked Abdo.

"We're very easy," said Abdo. "We can be manipulated. We're just trying to listen to people and do what they requested."

Peters said an amendment to the general plan is contingent on an adequate water supply.

Civil engineer on the project, Dennis Smith of Western Engineering & Surveying Services of Carson City, said he's certain the water supply is there from a previous test he ran on an existing well on the property.

"The first thing we have to do is build a new well, for construction purposes and to prove there is adequate water," said Smith. "We're confident we can find new fractures."

Even if zoning and general plan amendments are approved

to drawing board

R-C

Dec. 17, 2004

DETAILS

What: Public hearing
When: 6 p.m. Dec. 29
Where: Turtle Rock Park
Info: (530) 694-1878

and the environmental issue is resolved, specific design issues could still stand in its way, according to Director of Public Works Leonard Turnbaugh in a telephone interview prior to the meeting on Thursday.

Turnbaugh said the current plan specifies a 60-foot vertical curve in uphill and downhill dips in the road and the state of California requires 100-foot vertical curves. The diameter of turnarounds on the cul-de-sacs are also less than the state required 100 feet. Another pos-

sible hitch could be the construction of two intersections with Highway 89, now included in the project's plans, according to Turnbaugh.

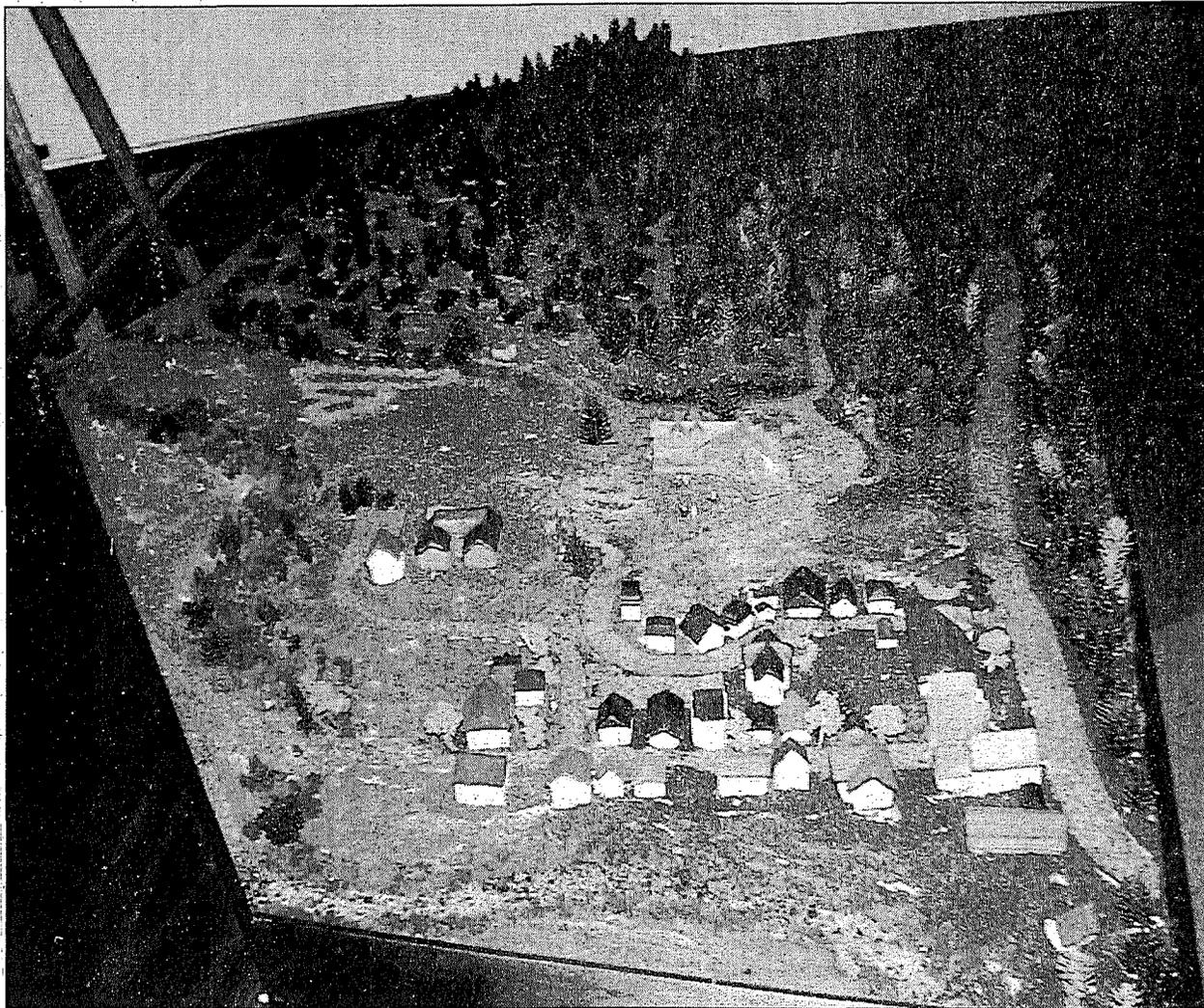
"They will have to go to Caltrans to get a permit to have an intersection with 89," said Turnbaugh. "If Caltrans says no — there's no project. There are obvious things you need to know prior to construction."

On Thursday, Williams said he had already received some comments from Caltrans regarding the intersections.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

R-C

Dec. 17, 2004



Town model:
Civil engineer on the project. Blaise D'Angelo and his team of workers spent 300 hours creating this model of Mahala Lodge/ Markeeville Village that was on display at the Dec. 9 Alpine County Planning Commission meeting.

JO RAFFERTY/
The R-C

Alpine: Residents may sue

Continued from page 1

Planning Commission and the board of supervisor's advisory committee in November had been ignored, the attorney said.

"... opinions of agency staff and planning commissioners qualify as substantial evidence sufficient to trigger an (environmental report)," said Susan Brandt-Hawley of the Brandt-Hawley Law Group in Glen Ellen, Calif. in the letter.

Brandt-Hawley also said that an environmental study had not been conducted since the project was reduced.

At the Dec. 7 board of supervisors meeting, developer Tom Abdo of Markleeville U.S.A. announced that the project, Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge was downsized. Now it is to include 49 fractionally-owned cabins instead of the original 70. Lodge rooms were reduced from 43 to 25 and plans for a restaurant were scrapped.

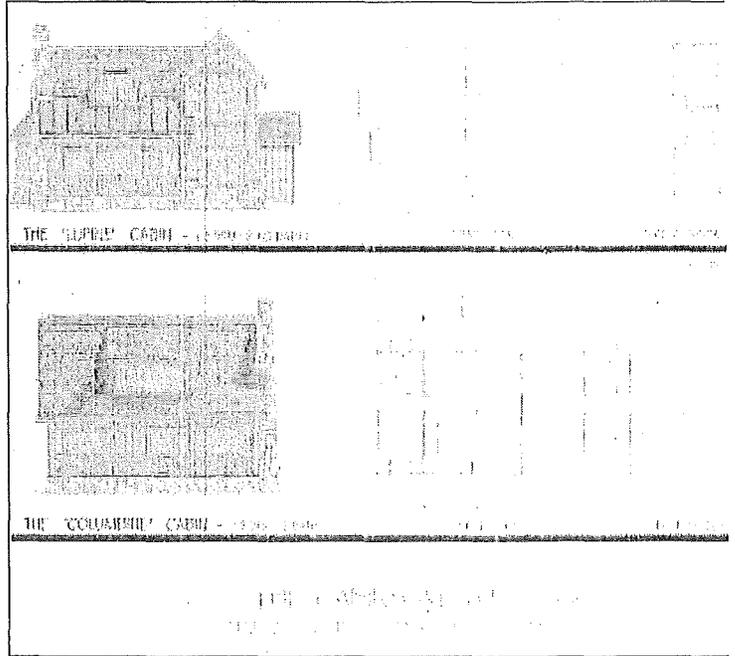
Alpine County supervisor and vice chairman Donald Jardine, the only supervisor who supports the more detailed environmental report, said his vote reflected his desire to support the community.

"I think you need to represent your community and do the right thing," said Jardine. "Everyone could walk away with a real good project with an environmental document."

County counsel and the other three supervisors held a different view.

"I can't say, based on the attorney's letter that the board is required to recommend an EIR," said Alpine County Counsel Dennis Crabb.

Public Works Director



Drawing: An artist's rendering of an example of one of the 49 cabins proposed for the Markleeville Village and Mahalee Lodge project.

Leonard Turnbeaugh advised the board that their decision on the environmental study did not determine whether or not the project will proceed.

"They can't do anything if they can't meet (Lahontan Water Quality Control Board's standards). There's no project. If they can't meet Caltrans' standards it's the same thing. It's not up to us to decide," said Turnbeaugh.

"After seeing significant changes and revised mitigation measures ... I know there are still a lot of issues, but those will be dealt with," said board chair Terry Woodrow.

Supervisor Chris Gansberg made the motion to accept the lesser environmental study on the project, and supervisor Herman Zellmer seconded it. Gans-

berg, Zellmer and Woodrow voted in favor, leaving Jardine as the sole "no" vote.

"I think it needs more study," said Jardine.

Friends of Markleeville member Nancy Thornburg said the group will meet on Dec. 28 to discuss whether to proceed with legal action.

"This is precedent setting for other developments on the books," she said. "The law requires an EIR."

Crabb said project proponent Abdo has agreed to pay for any defense if a suit is brought against the county.

"The county will not accept any liability in that circumstance," he said.

Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121 ext 213

Markleeville group may sue Alpine

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Alpine County may be facing a lawsuit after supervisors voted 3-1 on Tuesday in favor of a lesser environmental study

over a more detailed one on a proposed time-share resort in Markleeville.

"They broke the law," said Nancy Thornburg, representing the group Friends of Markleeville, which is considering suing the county.

Members of Friends of Markleeville hired a lawyer who said in a letter, given to supervisors prior to Tuesday's meeting, that she thought the more extensive environmental report was necessary.

Recommendations for the environmental report made by the Alpine County

Inside
Page 9
Alpine planners to meet on Markleeville project

RECORD COURIER 12-24-04

Briefs

Winter hours at visitor's center

Alpine County Visitor Center's winter hours are effective beginning on Jan. 3.

The hours will be 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The center will be closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

Alpine Chamber directors elected

Alpine County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors board members were elected for a two-year term at the Dec. 16 chamber meeting in Markleeville.

Congratulations go to: Amy Broadhurst of Kirkwood Mountain Resort, David Cooper of Markleeville Gas and David Johnston of the Bear Valley General Store.

Outgoing members are Brad Davis, vice president, Carson River Resort and Debbi Waldear of Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

— Staff reports

Commission to discuss Markleeville development

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Zoning and general plan amendments to allow for a Markleeville resort will be considered at an Alpine County Planning Commission meeting next week.

This is just off the heels of the board of supervisors' approval on Tuesday of the environmental study on the 36-acre project.

Plans for Markleeville Village and Mahalee Lodge were scaled down by developer Tom Abdo of Markleeville U.S.A., a development corporation, earlier this month.

Markleeville Village-Mahalee Lodge includes:

■ Twelve commercial lots that allow for the development of 25,488 square feet of mixed-use buildings, both commercial and residential. This includes four affordable employee apartments and 10 other apartments.

■ A total of 49 cabins proposed for fractional ownership.

■ A 25-room lodge with 5,000 square feet of spa area,

DETAILS

What: Alpine County Planning Commission public hearing

When: 6 p.m. on Dec. 29

Where: Planning Department, Turtle Rock Park, 17300 Highway 89, Markleeville

underground parking, a Native American artifacts display area, an outdoor pool and deck and a cultural walk.

■ Infrastructure and site improvements to support the project, including roads, drive-

ways, parking areas, a water supply system, a wastewater treatment system and other utilities.

General Plan and zoning district amendments up for approval are changing respective land use designations and the zoning ordinance for the 36-acre parcel from Commercial-Residential to Planned Development.

The public hearing will be held at 6 p.m. on Dec. 29 at Turtle Rock Park.

The planning commission is scheduled to meet again at its regular meeting, 6 p.m. on Jan. 27.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at

jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782- 5121, ext. 213.

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Zoning changes recommended

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Zoning and general plan amendments paving the way for a time-share project in Markleeville were recommended Wednesday night by Alpine County planning commissioners.

The proposal for the 25-room lodge, 49 time-shares and commercial property has proved contentious in the past year, and the decision this week was met with the same disapproval by some audience members and letter writers.

The night before, members of the group Friends of Markleeville met to decide on the issue of suing the county for its Dec. 21 decision to allow a lesser environmental study (mitigated negative declaration) instead of a more comprehensive environmental report (environmental impact report).

Nancy Thornburg, 45-year resident of the county Friends of Markleeville member declined to say what the group's decision had been. Thornburg said they would wait to see what develops at the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday before any decision would be made.

"We're trying to avoid suing, if we can," said Thornburg.

The Planning Commission also received five letters of opposition to zoning and general plan amendments.

"They didn't even consider those," said Thornburg.

Questions raised included why changes were needed when the project itself had not been approved and whether the shift from Commercial-Residential to Planned Development could lead to larger projects on the 36 acres.

Planning Director Brian Peters said recommendations for zoning, general plan and the tentative map are all separate.

However, these items were all considered as one in the negative declaration, according to a letter written to the commission by Amy Skewes-Cox and Robert Twiss.

"The negative declaration covered a linked, three-part set: project, rezoning and tentative map. These three actions have now been separated, which would be OK; except that the negative declaration did not cover such a split and the range of options given to the developer in a separate rezoning was not taken into account," said the letter.

The new tentative map has not yet been submitted by the developer Tom Abdoo of Markleeville U.S.A., since the Mahalee Lodge/Markleeville Village project reduction last month.

Peters said specifications within the amendments would not allow any upgrades to the project.

"It's very specific for the project that's being proposed," said Peters.

Letters to the Planning Commission also addressed two subjects: inadequate fire safety and sewage water disposal.

Citing the lack of 20-foot setbacks from cabin property lines and "contradictory" sewage disposal engineering reports, Robert Leonard of Markleeville said, "This development can be an asset to the community only if it is done correctly. Approval of anything less is not in the interest of fire safety and public health of future residents and their neighbors."

The Planning Commission will present its recommendations before the board of supervisors in February, according to Peters. The new tentative map will be submitted early next week, possibly going before the county technical advisory committee by its meeting of Jan. 11.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.



JUST HAVIN' FUN: From left: Director of Public Works Leonard Turnbeaugh, newly appointed Public Works office supervisor Douglas Metz and Building & Grounds Supervisor Russell Simonov were caught in their Christmas finest on Dec. 21 at the Alpine County employee holiday potluck luncheon at Turtle Rock Park. Russell just received that morning, from the Alpine County Board of Supervisors, the 2004 Alpine County Safety Recognition Award for Outstanding Workplace Safety for his work in implementing 65 fire/life safety recommendations in county buildings.

Kirkwood, Indian casino work together

By Susan Wood
R-C News Service

Long known for their combined efforts in the South Lake Tahoe area, skiing and gaming have become promotional bedfellows in Amador County as well.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort kicked off an early ski season in October with a new ally to help publicize the small county southwest of the lake as a travel destination — the Jackson Rancheria. The Indian casino is 55 miles southeast of Kirkwood off Highway 88.

"If we get people to stay at Jackson or Minden, they'll ski at Kirkwood. There's not a lot going on out there," Kirkwood Sales Manager Holly Collins said Tuesday. "They just look at us as a gold mine and we think it's a nice option."

In the last few months, Kirkwood has provided photographs, logos, brochures and

most frequently video footage for a television commercial that Jackson wants to produce. The casino ran an advertisement on the back page of "Via," AAA's membership magazine.

Kirkwood, which has offered no funds for the cooperative advertising, has sold 50 tickets to the casino for \$47 each. In turn, the Rancheria places them in \$85 ski packages that cover a ticket and hotel room.

"We have found (skiing is) an activity people enjoy and we want to support Amador County businesses," Jackson Rancheria spokesman Rich Hoffman said.

The two businesses are located an hour apart off Highway 88, but management from both agree they're close enough for visitors to frequent the two resorts.

If a large group wants transportation between Kirkwood and Jackson, casino manage-

ment may consider running a shuttle bus between the towns.

"We're confident Kirkwood is a great resort. We've already identified this as a no-brainer," he said. "And it's common for the casino industry to put in these kinds of special offers."

LA Times
1/2005

COLUMN ONE

Divided by a White Curtain

■ Winter snows cleave six California counties straddling Sierra's crest. The seasonal barrier severs links between residents on both slopes.

By ERIC BAILEY
Times Staff Writer

BEAR VALLEY, Calif. — Each winter, snow drapes the shoulders of the Sierra Nevada with drifts that divide and conquer, cutting off one side of California from the other. Up here in Alpine County, the Stephens family has made overcoming that blockade a frosty tradition.

Instead of piling into an SUV to visit grandparents on the opposite slope of the mountains, each member of the clan climbs aboard a snowmobile.

As they have every Christmas and most Thanksgivings for a dozen years, the kids follow Dad up snow-cruised Highway 4, over the icy crest of Ebbetts Pass and down to Grandma's house for turkey dinner.

Practicality, not adventure, prompts these and other wind-whipped treks. Snow closes Highway 4 to cars all winter. The alternative route to the Sierra's far side is a circuitous seven-hour round trip through four counties. A snowmobile cuts the journey to less than an hour each way.

Rick Stephens, a no-nonsense Alpine County sheriff's sergeant with a walrus mustache, shrugs as if it's no big deal. Such is life in California's cleaved counties.

Even in the most placid season, the state's highest ridgeline looms as an obstacle to civilization's spread. Big winters like this year's turn that physical division into a brick wall, a seasonal shutdown that shapes life in ways big and insignificant.

In lofty Alpine County, where 9,000-foot peaks capped by abundant snow fit the region's name, package delivery firms won't guarantee overnight delivery from one side of the county to the other, though it's barely 20 miles as the crow flies.

Courts in Markleeville, the county seat, don't bother with winter jury duty for residents
[See Sierra, Page A19]

P-C 1-7-05

Public hearing date set

On Tuesday the Alpine County Board of Supervisors set a date for a public hearing on amendments to the general plan and the zoning ordinance regarding the proposed Markleeville Village and Mahalee Lodge project.

The proposal is for a 25-room lodge, 49 time-shares

and commercial property.

The board will meet on the subject at 1:30 Feb. 1 at the Planning Commission office in Turtle Rock Park in Markleeville.

Planning commissioners had recommended the general plan and zoning changes at a Dec. 29 meeting.

Tribe represented on board of sups

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Phillip Bennett hopes his presence as the fifth member of the Alpine County Board of Supervisors will open up more communication between the Washoe Tribe and the county.

Bennett had not been very involved in Alpine County issues prior to running, but decided to represent District 3 out of responsibility, since the Washoe Tribe has had no one to represent it on the board for the past four years.

"For me it will be educational," said Bennett. "My main focus would be communication between the two entities — the Washoe people and Alpine County."

Bennett said he is concerned about water and environmental

issues that affect the county.

Bennett was raised in the Hungalelti community where he resides. From 1992-1998 he served on the Woodfords Indian Community Council, now called the Hungalelti Community Council. Both terms he was tribal chairman, and represented the tribe on the Washoe Tribal Council.

While he was chairman, Bennett was successful in getting a block grant to build a gymnasium on tribal land. With a high incidence of diabetes in tribal members, Bennett had pushed for the gym, which is scheduled to open in late January or in February.

His previous governmental experience should help him as supervisor, he said.

Bennett has worked as an archaeological contractor and a



CHRISTINE BRANSCOMBE/Special to the R-C

Swearing in: Superior Court Judge David DeVore administers the oath of office to Phillip Bennett, District 3, on Monday. Other officials sworn in on Monday were: Skip Veatch, District 2; Gunter Kaiser, District 5; Judge Richard Specchio; District Attorney William Richmond; and school board trustees Earl O'Neal and Mary Wood.

licensed hairdresser for the tribe. Tatyanna Jim, 12, goes to Diamond Valley Elementary.

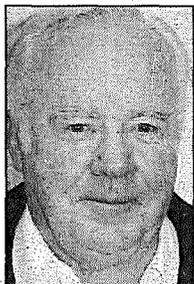
He has been the single father of two foster children for the last four years. Bennett's son, Jermaine Jim, 16, attends Douglas High School and daughter

Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Gunter Kaiser is new District 5 supervisor

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Gunter Kaiser, the newly-elected Alpine County supervisor representing District 5, plans to use his business experience and knowledge of the county in his position.



Kaiser

Soaring brought Kaiser to the area after his retirement, but as time went by he became involved in Alpine County politics, serving as a planning commissioner for five

years.

"While on the Planning Commission I got more involved in other issues," said Kaiser. "I like to keep myself challenged ... to be involved."

As the owner of a glider and a certified commercial pilot, Kaiser was attracted to the great flying conditions in the Valley.

'I like to keep myself challenged ... to be involved.'

Gunter Kaiser
Supervisor District 5

"I've been coming up to Carson Valley for the last 30 years because I'm an avid glider pilot," said Kaiser. "I said whenever I retire I'm going to move where the soaring activity occurs."

Now a naturalized U.S. citizen, he was originally a toolmaker journeyman who moved from Germany to California in March 1960.

Seven months later he was drafted into the U.S. Army. He trained in Fort Ord, Calif., then in Fort Sill, Okla., before he was shipped overseas back to Germany. In all he served two years active duty plus reserve time.

"After my return from the Army I worked in my trade for 15 years until I worked my

way up in the manufacturing industry," said Kaiser.

During this time he was also taking classes at Clairemont University and eventually earned a masters degree in business after working full-time and going to school full-time for many years.

Planning ahead, Kaiser and his wife Lois Kaiser bought property in Woodfords 15 years ago. After his retirement they made it their home.

Lois is now a volunteer at the Alpine County Museum, and in between flying, Kaiser plans to devote much of his time to the county.

"After 45 years in the manufacturing industry, this is my first attempt at a public office," said Kaiser, who can speak three languages fluently.

"As an incoming new supervisor I feel I have a couple advantages. I have absolutely no conflict of interest and I have the time to devote to that new job."

Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Veatch takes District 2 seat

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

With 12 years behind him as sheriff of Alpine County and 32 years as a county resident, Skip Veatch thinks he'll do a first-class job representing District 2.

He has been attending board of supervisors meetings for 15 years, brushed up on local issues the last few months, and feels ready to go.

"My style is to approach things with an open mind and discuss things," said Veatch. "I have a little different management style. I just think I can do a better job and time will tell."

Veatch admits you don't really know how difficult a particular job is until you're doing it. He was with the Sheriff's Department for 26 years, starting as a deputy sheriff, then was undersheriff for five years before becoming sheriff.

"Being undersheriff for five years I thought I knew what being sheriff was all about," said Veatch. "Boy, was I wrong."

During the campaign, he said he tried to maintain a sense of decency, unlike some of the national campaign tactics.

"I try to run positive cam-



Veatch

paigns on my own merits and don't mention my opponents," he said.

Veatch said he also likes to ask questions

in order to learn more about specific issues.

"One of the most important things is to have public input at these forums," said Veatch. "It will give you good insight as to what's going on."

Veatch, 59, has been married to his wife Edie Veatch for 35 years, has two children and three grandchildren.

He retired from Alpine County Sheriff's Department in 2002 and took two years off before gearing up to be a supervisor.

"I just hope that the next four years go well," said Veatch. "I hope I can make good, sound decisions."

"I think I can."

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

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Snow keeps skiers out, in

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

The end of the series of storms over the past two weeks on Tuesday was a signal to skiers and snowboarders to head for the powder — but they couldn't get to Kirkwood Mountain Resort because Highway 88 was closed.

On the other hand, the lucky few who were already there got to spend an extra night, said Emily Paton in guest services on Tuesday afternoon.

"I'm sure they're all counting their lucky stars they got stuck up here with the snow the way it is," Paton said.

Roads closed very early Tuesday morning and by 4 p.m. only Highway 88 in the direction of Jackson had opened up.

The voice message machine at Kirkwood boasted the resort has the most snow on the entire planet, and Paton said it's true.

After checking numerous Web sites of other ski resorts around the world on the computer and comparing their base of snow to Kirkwood's 180-254 inches, Paton said, "We have the most snow in the universe. Maybe I should say the world. We haven't kicked Mars yet."

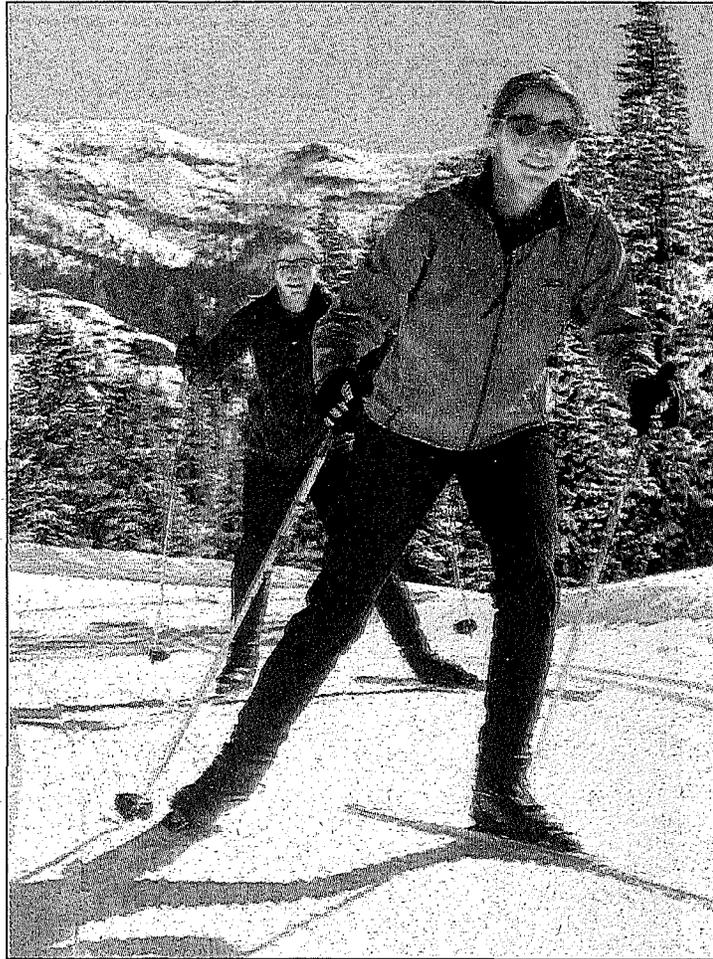
Paton said in the past three or four days 98-117 inches, or 9 to a little less than 10 feet, of snow had dumped at the resort by 5 a.m. Tuesday morning, and it was still coming down.

Many of Kirkwood's staff could not get to work on Tuesday, but lots of them were stuck there, according to Paton, who said that by afternoon five lifts were in operation.

"It's great fun on a day like this," she said.

More than 80 kilometers of groomed cross country ski and snowshoe trails wind their way through the scenic terrain surrounding the Kirkwood Cross Country Center, making it one of the most extensive trail systems in the nation.

Run by eight-time World Masters Champion, Debbie Waldear, the center caters to enthusiasts with a full range of



Lots of powder: Rachel Marker, left, and Cindy Drake enjoy cross country skiing at Kirkwood Mountain Resort.

equipment and services. Lessons, clinics, top-of-the-line rentals, guided full moon tours and races are offered throughout the season.

Located at a base-elevation of 7,800 feet and with more than 500 inches of snowfall annually, the groomed and patrolled trails give skiers and snowshoers the feeling of being miles away from civilization. Three interconnected trail systems nestled in Alpine Valley provide skiing for all abilities from first-timers to avid back-country enthusiasts. Skiers can take in the panoramic views from the ridgetop above Caples Lake, glide along the base of impressive lava cliffs and roll along creeks through tranquil meadows.

Dogs are allowed on two trails, the High Trail behind historic Kirkwood Inn and Inner

Loop around the Kirkwood Meadow with views of Kirkwood Mountain Resort. A series of trailside warming huts offers skiers a place to stop and sip hot cocoa, meet up with other skiers or unpack a picnic lunch.

at Kirkwood

R-C
Jan. 14, 2005

'I'm sure they're all counting their lucky stars they got stuck up here with the snow the way it is.'

Emily Paton

Kirkwood Mountain Resort guest services

A day lodge offers a wood-burning fire on snowy days and outdoor picnic tables on the deck for sunny days.

Waldear, Director of Kirkwood Cross Country since 1987, recently brought home a gold and two silver medals from the World Masters Nordic Competition in Kiruna, Sweden. She has won eight medals in five World Masters and is a past winner of the Great American Ski Chase, a series of 10 long-distance races. She will be training Olympic-hopefuls this season as well as coaching the elite members of the California Olympic Junior Team.

Events at the Cross Country Center this season include guided Full Moon snowshoe tours on Jan. 22, Feb. 19 and March 26. The tours are \$15, equipment rental is an additional \$7.

A ski skate clinic will be conducted by Waldear on Jan. 23 and Feb. 20 to help skiers improve skating technique and develop the more natural, centered method of skating used by the U.S. Ski Team.

The Soup & Shoe Guided Snowshoe Hike offers participants a full day of striding on snowshoes, spectacular views of the High Sierra and a warm soup lunch. Cost is \$25 per person plus \$10 for equipment rental. Soup & Shoe Hikes are offered on Jan. 8, Feb. 6 and March 13.

A specialty Skijoring clinic — a day of cross country skiing with your pooch harnessed to your waist — will be held on Feb. 19 by Debby and Ken McMaster. Participants must bring their own dog, harnesses will be provided.

The annual Echo to Kirkwood race takes off from Echo Summit on March 12 and crosses the Sierra Crest over a well-marked backcountry route to finish at Kirkwood 13 miles later. A favorite for local Nordic and backcountry skiers, this event showcases some of the most beautiful terrain in the Sierra.

For further information or reservations, call the Kirkwood Cross Country Center at (209) 258-7248.

Sheriff's log

■ On Dec. 11, a 52-year-old Tahoe City man and a 38-year-old Citrus Heights, Calif. man were cited for snowmobiling in a wilderness area.

■ On Dec. 12, deputies responded to a reported armed robbery and stabbing in the Woodfords area. The investigation revealed that the stabbing victim had made up the story of being robbed to cover up his illegal entry into a former girlfriend's home. The stabbing victim, a 22-year-old Citrus Heights, Calif. man who suffered minor injuries, was arrested for filing a false report and illegal entry into the home.

■ On Dec. 13, the same 22-year-old Citrus Heights, Calif. man who had been arrested the evening before made threatening phone calls to his former girlfriend's family. On Dec. 13 he was arrested for making terrorist threats.

■ On Dec. 14, a 49-year-old Markleeville man and a 54-year-old Markleeville man were arrested in the Woodfords area for public intoxication.

■ On Dec. 18, deputies in Bear Valley responded to a local business for a reported disturbance. A 26-year-old Bear Valley man was arrested for assault on an officer, obstructing an officer and disturbing the peace.

■ On Dec. 18, in the Kirkwood area, a 34-year-old Wilseyville, Calif. man was arrested for an outstanding warrant and driving on a suspended license.

■ On Dec. 20, deputies responded to the Kirkwood area on a possible sexual assault. An investigation is underway.

■ On Dec. 23, a 33-year-old Kirkwood man was arrested for possession of marijuana.

■ On Dec. 22, in the Kirkwood area, a 23-year-old San Luis Obsipo, CA man and a 21-year-old South Lake Tahoe man were arrested for possession of alcohol in a vehicle and possession of marijuana in a vehicle.

■ On Dec. 29, deputies responded to a reported attempted kidnapping in the Woodfords area. The reporting person was a 7-year-old girl. After investigation, it was discovered that the girl had made up her story and had possibly been influenced by a scary movie she had watched.

R-C

1-14-05

Megan's law info on Internet

Staff Reports

The Alpine County Sheriff's Department has information regarding Megan's Law — information about registered sex offenders — available to the general public.

By visiting the Department of Justice's Web site and accepting the disclaimer, you can immediately have access to names of sex offenders who are registered in the state of California.

The site reports, "As a result of a new law, this Internet site will provide you with access to information on more than 63,000 persons required to register in California as sex offenders.

Specific home addresses are displayed on more than 33,500 offenders in California

communities; as to these persons, the site displays the last registered address reported by the offender. An additional 30,500 offenders are included on the site with listing by zip code, city and county.

Once you have read and acknowledged the disclaimer, you may search the database by a sex offender's specific name, obtain zip code and city/county listings, obtain detailed personal profile information on each registrant and use a map application to search your neighborhood or anywhere throughout the state to determine the specific location of any of those registrants whom the law allows to display a home address.

The direct link to this Web site is:
<http://meganslaw.ca.gov/disclaimer.htm>

Resource issues to be discussed

Staff Reports

The Alpine County Resource Advisory Committee will meet 6:30 p.m., Monday at the Diamond Valley School near Woodfords, Calif.

The committee will be discussing issues relevant to natural resources in Alpine County. The public is invited to attend.

The Alpine County RAC is a committee of volunteers who were selected by the Secretary of Agriculture to advise the Forest Service on the use of moneys allocated to the county through the

DETAILS

What: Alpine County Resource Advisory Committee

When: 6:30 p.m. Monday

Where: Diamond Valley School

Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-determination Act of 2000.

The congressionally-mandated committee consists of 15 county

residents representing a broad section of the community including outdoor recreation, environmental, mineral, education, cattle, elected officials and Native American and other interests.

The Alpine County RAC is charged to decide how to spend the approximately \$140,000 per year that comes to the county.

The funds must be used to benefit the national forests in the county, and can be used for projects on adjacent private or other agency land as long as the work helps the ecosystem or watershed of the forest.

Day Trip: Social worker Sherri Dennis talks to people on the bus going to Casino Fandango on Wednesday from Alpine County. Dennis organized a new program that offers a bus trip for seniors, ages 50 and older, every Wednesday.

SHANNON LITZ/
The R-C



Seniors climb aboard for mid-week bus trip

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Acting as chaperone and chauffeur seemed to be great fun for social worker Sherri Dennis and Douglas County Rural Transit driver Sheila Waller when they took a group of seniors Wednesday down to Casino Fandango in Carson City.

The nine people who boarded the bus in front of the Alpine County Health and Human Services building at 10 a.m. had chosen to go to the Fandango, according to Dennis, because of its "wonderful buffet."

"This is my first trip. They said there's going to be a buffet today," said 91-year-old Hubert Bruns, an Alpine County native.

"So far I haven't seen anybody but females here," he said, peering back from the front seat at the women sitting in the plush seats on the DART bus.

"We're going to pick up another gentleman in Carson — Elwood," said Dennis. "You guys could have a high ball."

Bruns chuckled.

Dennis was speaking of an old friend of Bruns', Elwood Davis, who now resides in an assisted living home in Carson City. The bus was scheduled to pick him up on the way to the Fandango.

First it would stop to pick up any riders from the Douglas County Senior Center in Gardnerville.

Dennis, classified as a Social Worker III at Alpine County Health and Human Services, came up with the idea for a program that gets senior citizens in Alpine and Douglas County out of the house on Wednesdays.

DETAILS

■ For more information on the Wednesday senior trips, call Sherri Dennis at Alpine County Health and Human Services, (530) 694-2235.

■ For more information on the Alpine Mountain Transit Bus schedule, call (530) 783-6456.

"I want to encourage our seniors a little bit more to ride our bus," said Dennis.

Starting in January, every Wednesday of each month Waller takes a break from her regular schedule of about 50 stops a day to drive this group of seniors ages 50 and older to various spots around the region.

"Wherever they want to go, that's where I take them," said Waller, who calls herself the "chauffeur" rather than a bus driver.

■ The first Wednesday of every month, seniors from Alpine County travel up to the Douglas County Senior Center for lunch and bingo. The cost is \$1 for bus fare, a donation for lunch and 50 cents per game.

■ The second Wednesday of the month is a bus trip to Carson City, with the riders naming the location. The bus stops at the Douglas County Senior Center to pick up people who want to come along.

■ The third Wednesday of the month is a bus trip to South Lake Tahoe. "Need to visit the DMV, Social Security? Have a doctor's appointment? Or just hop aboard for a ride around South Shore," says the

Alpine County Mountain Transit brochure.

■ The fourth Wednesday is saved for special events. Fares vary for this ride. The trip to Fandango cost a total of \$10 each, which included the bus fare and the buffet meal. Waller's meal was also paid for by the seniors, rather than giving her a tip.

Any money leftover is split two ways: half goes toward the bus and half toward the senior riders' club, called the 50-plus Club by consensus, according to Dennis.

Dennis said that riders never need to worry about being left somewhere. The bus drivers won't leave without everyone being accounted for. Riders are always returned to Alpine County by 2-2:30 p.m. on the Wednesday trips.

Jan. 5 there was just one rider. Jan. 12 there were four who went to Wal-Mart, Michael's Arts & Crafts and Chili's for lunch. Jan. 19 three riders went to South Lake Tahoe.

Dennis hopes to attract more seniors to her Wednesday bus trips in the future. Some of the folks who go can still drive, she said, but choose to come along for the company and the comfortable ride. So far, she has gotten only good feedback from people, who have said it has been "well organized."

Everyone gave the seniors hugs before boarding the bus, including Waller, Dennis and Gail Day, senior nutritionist for Health and Human Services, who was going along for the ride.

"You kind of get to be friends," she said.

For more information call Sherri Dennis at Alpine County Health and Human Services, (530) 694-2235.

Markleeville project addressed at two meetings

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Two meetings will take place next week in Alpine County concerning the proposed Markleeville Village-Mahalee Lodge project.

First, on Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors will meet at 9 a.m. in the Administration Board Room in Markleeville.

At 9:30 a.m. the members of the group Friends of Markleeville are scheduled to speak before the board regarding the board's approval of an environmental document for the project.

Friends of Markleeville members are expected to make a plea for a more extensive environmental report on the project at this time. A 10-page letter from an attorney hired by Friends has been submitted to the supervisors, as well as an updated engineer's report.

The Markleeville Village-Mahalee Lodge project consists of 12 commercial lots, a 25-room lodge with a spa area, out-

door pool and cultural walk and 49 fractionally-owned cabins, to be located on 36 acres in Markleeville.

■ Also on Tuesday, at 1:30 p.m. at Turtle Rock Park Alpine County Supervisors will hold a public hearing to consider amendments to the county's general plan and zoning ordinance, necessary in order to accommodate the project. Turtle Rock Park is located at 17300 Highway 89 in Markleeville.

Written comments may be submitted in advance of the public hearing to the Alpine County Board of Supervisors, P.O. Box 158, Markleeville, Calif. 96120, faxed to (530) 694-2491, dropped off at the county clerk's office in Markleeville (County Administration, 99 Water St.) or e-mailed to the county clerk at asstcoclerk@alpinecountyca.com.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Alcoholics Anonymous to meet

Alcoholics Anonymous will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Bear Valley Library, Bear Valley.

Food for Families in Need

Food for Families in Need will be at the Alpine County Women's Center in Markleeville, 2-4 p.m. Wednesday.

Family Support Council to meet

The Alpine Family Support

Council will meet at 9 a.m. Wednesday in the Alpine County Health and Human Services Building in Markleeville.

Al-Anon meeting

Al-Anon will meet at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Bear Valley Library, Bear Valley.

Art and antiques sale

Alpine County's Artists, Authors & Antiques will once again be featured at Woodfords Station in Woodfords next weekend: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Feb. 5 and Feb. 6.

Local artists and writers' works and antiques will be available on sale during this event.

R-C
Jan. 28, 2005

Sheriff's log

■ After responding to the Woodfords area for a disturbance on Jan. 1, a 21-year-old Markleeville man was arrested for Domestic Violence and Battery.

■ On Jan. 6, a 25-year-old

man with no permanent address was arrested for several sex offenses. He is being charged with multiple felonies.

■ On Jan. 8, a victim reported accidentally leaving several valuable items in her rental cabin at a resort in the Woodfords area. Upon contacting the resort, the property was not

located.

■ On Jan. 10, in the Bear Valley area, two men from Montera, Calif. were arrested for public intoxication.

■ On Jan. 15, in the Kirkwood area, a 37-year-old Sunnysvale, Calif. woman was arrested for possession of a

forged ski pass.

■ On Jan. 15, in the Kirkwood area, a 21-year-old Gardnerville man was arrested for possession of marijuana.

■ On Jan. 16, in the Kirkwood area, a 21-year-old transient man was arrested for theft and public intoxication.

Briefs

Grover Hot Springs has winter hours

Grover Hot Springs' winter hours are 2-8 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sat-

urday and Sunday. The hot springs is closed on Wednesdays. Call (530) 694-2249.

Friends of the Library to meet on Saturday

Friends of the Library will meet at 9 a.m. Feb. 5 at the Markleeville Library.

Amendments approved despite

lawsuit threat

R-C

Feb. 4, 2005

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Alpine County supervisors approved a general plan amendment and the first reading of a zoning amendment for a timeshare project in Markleeville Tuesday, despite the threat of litigation.

County Counsel Dennis Crabb prepared an indemnity agreement to exclude the county from financial obligation if forced to fight a lawsuit.

If certain environmental issues are not resolved, members of the group Friends of Markleeville said they will consider suing the county.

"I have to advise you, the county is headed into litigation over this issue," said Markleeville resident Steve Hibbs to the board at the Tuesday morning meeting.

Friends of Markleeville requested that the board of supervisors reconsider the 2004 board's approval of a shorter environmental study over a more comprehensive environmental study on the proposed project.

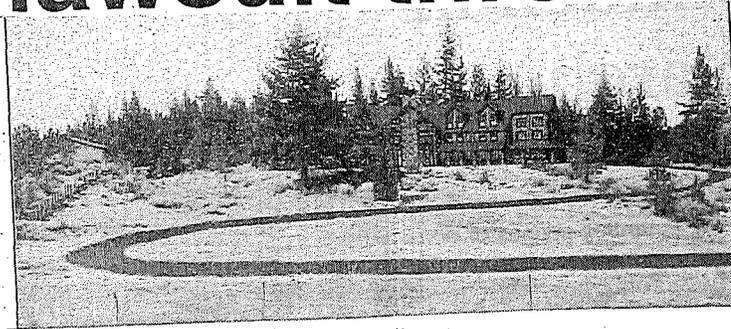
At Tuesday's meeting, the request was denied.

Friends of Markleeville, a group of approximately 30 to 40 town residents, submitted letters prior to the meeting that were written by an environmental attorney and two civil engineers. All of the letters stated that the project — 49 timeshare cabins, a 25-room lodge and 12 commercial lots — warranted a more comprehensive environmental study (an environmental impact report).

Crabb pointed out that both sides, the developer and Friends of Markleeville, have "equally good engineers and attorneys."

Former Chairman Terry Woodrow was the only supervisor who could motion to reconsider the past board's decision, according to Robert's Rules of Order, since she was the only one on the board who voted for the shorter environmental study in December, said Crabb.

Woodrow, who admitted she was in the hot seat, declined to change her stance.



"I didn't take my decision lightly," she said. "I still stand by my decision. I'm not willing to make a motion to reconsider it at this time."

"If Supervisor Woodrow is not prepared to make a motion, there's nothing further to discuss," said Crabb.

About 15 members of Friends of Markleeville agreed to meet later to decide whether to file a lawsuit.

A lawsuit can only be filed within 30 days after the county approves the project and files the proper paperwork, according to developer Tom Abdo's attorney, Whit Manley.

Manley, who attended a public hearing on zoning and general plan amendments Tuesday afternoon at Turtle Rock Park, said if a lawsuit is filed, it would not hold up the project.

"It could take six months to win," he said.

Crabb said that a defense

indemnity agreement had been signed by Abdo.

"The developer is required to take all financial responsibility in case of litigation," said Crabb.

The board of supervisors voted to change general plan land use designations for the 36-acre site from commercial, residential medium density and residential low density, to planned development.

They also voted in favor of changes to the zoning district to accommodate the project.

Supervisor Gunter Kaiser added a condition to the general plan amendment to require the developer to provide a safety structure over the town ditch, which runs in front of the proposed lodge.

Changes were made to the zoning ordinance amendment as well.

"If a dispute exists, we would want the most stringent condi-

tions to govern," said Kaiser.

Kaiser also added a provision that "reasonable and doable conditions can be applied within the project" if necessary at a later date.

"I've never heard of anything being done to a town with this significant impact without an environmental impact report," said Shay Creek Home Owners Association director and civil engineer Ed McCormick. "Given the level of public controversy, it's almost infathomable to me that you would proceed without an environmental impact report."

"I think a lot of people think (the project's) being shoved down their throats," said supervisor Skip Veatch, who, along with Don Jardine, were the two supervisors who voted no on the amendments on Tuesday.

Veatch said two engineers, including McCormick, had stated in letters that the wastewater



Markleeville development: Above, Markleeville resident Forrest Robinson, left, and civil engineer Ed McCormick examine the computer renditions and maps of the proposed Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge project. Above right, a computer rendition of the Mahalee Lodge. Right, the developer's team, back row left to right, environmental consultant Carter Schleicher, engineer Dennis Smith, developer Tom Abdo, architect Ed Williams and attorney Tim Pemberton. Front row left to right, Abdo's daughter Joely Abdo and attorney Whit Manley.

disposal system proposed by the developer wouldn't work.

"I'm not positive that enough evidence has been given," he said.

McCormick's letter said; "Upon review of the proposed project, I can say unequivocally that this project requires an EIR for the developer and Alpine County to ensure that it complies with the California Environmental Quality Act."

California engineer Norman Hantzsche said in a letter, "A continued lack of recognition of appropriate design methodology will lead to the probable failure of the wastewater system for this project."

A letter from a Friends of Markleeville attorney Susan Brandt-Hawley said an environmental impact report is necessary in a project "that may have significant environmental impacts."

She said the developer has estimated the project will add 282 new residents and visitors to the town of Markleeville. According to the 2000 Census, Markleeville has a population of 237.

"A fair argument has been made that the project will induce substantial population growth and that impact is potentially significant," she said.

Abdo, of Markleeville U.S.A., said since he began buying property in Markleeville 14-15 years ago, including a restaurant, a bar and a lodge, he has always been committed to doing a quality job.

"My love and my passion is to try to make this town the best it could possibly be," said Abdo.

Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Feb. 8, 2005
LA Times

A line in the snow

The frosty acrimony between snowmobilers and cross-country skiers in Hope Valley perfectly frames the country's muscle-versus-machine battles on frozen turf, as **Christopher Reynolds** reports. It's tough to negotiate when neither side speaks the same language.



Alpine County, Calif.

The trees of Hope Valley are flocked and stately. All along Forestdale Creek Road, about a dozen miles south of Lake Tahoe, the scenery is straight out of the Hallmark winter collection. But don't be deceived. In the nationwide scuffle between snowmobilers and those who scorn them, this is contested territory. ¶ "You can hear them for miles," says Debbi Waldear, a champion cross-country skier and longtime local crusader against snowmobile traffic. Then she returns to her smooth stroke and long strides, a tiny, wiry figure gliding through pines on a lonely weekday afternoon. Her dog, Sage, bounds alongside. ¶ "To sit on something and go fast," says Waldear, "is not at all attractive to me." ¶ At the moment, thanks to a federal judge in Sacramento, Waldear and fellow crusaders are down, and the snowmobilers are on top. But this battle has been

seesawing for 12 years, and nobody expects it to end soon. If the big noise in Hope Valley has shown anything, it's that snowmobilers are from Mars and skiers are from Venus.

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'I own this land'

Pliny Olivier leans against one of his machines, gazing out at the woods. If he's not angry, he's certainly firm.

"I made a lot of money in this life, and I paid a lot of taxes," he says. "And I own this land."

He is no more native here than Waldear. He grew up poor, one of eight kids with a game warden dad, in the swamps of Louisiana. He found his way to college, moved to Florida, succeeded in business, semi-retired in his 50s, and fell in love with the Sierra.

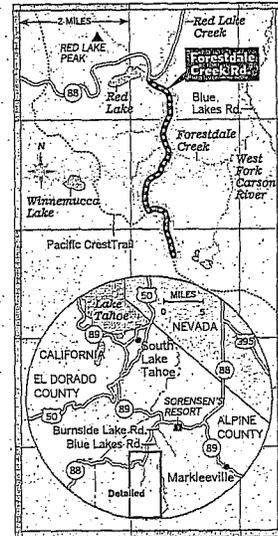
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LORENA INQUIZZI Los Angeles Times

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On the Web: See additional photos of Alpine County snowmobilers and cross-country skiers at latimes.com/snowmobile.

Tough adversary

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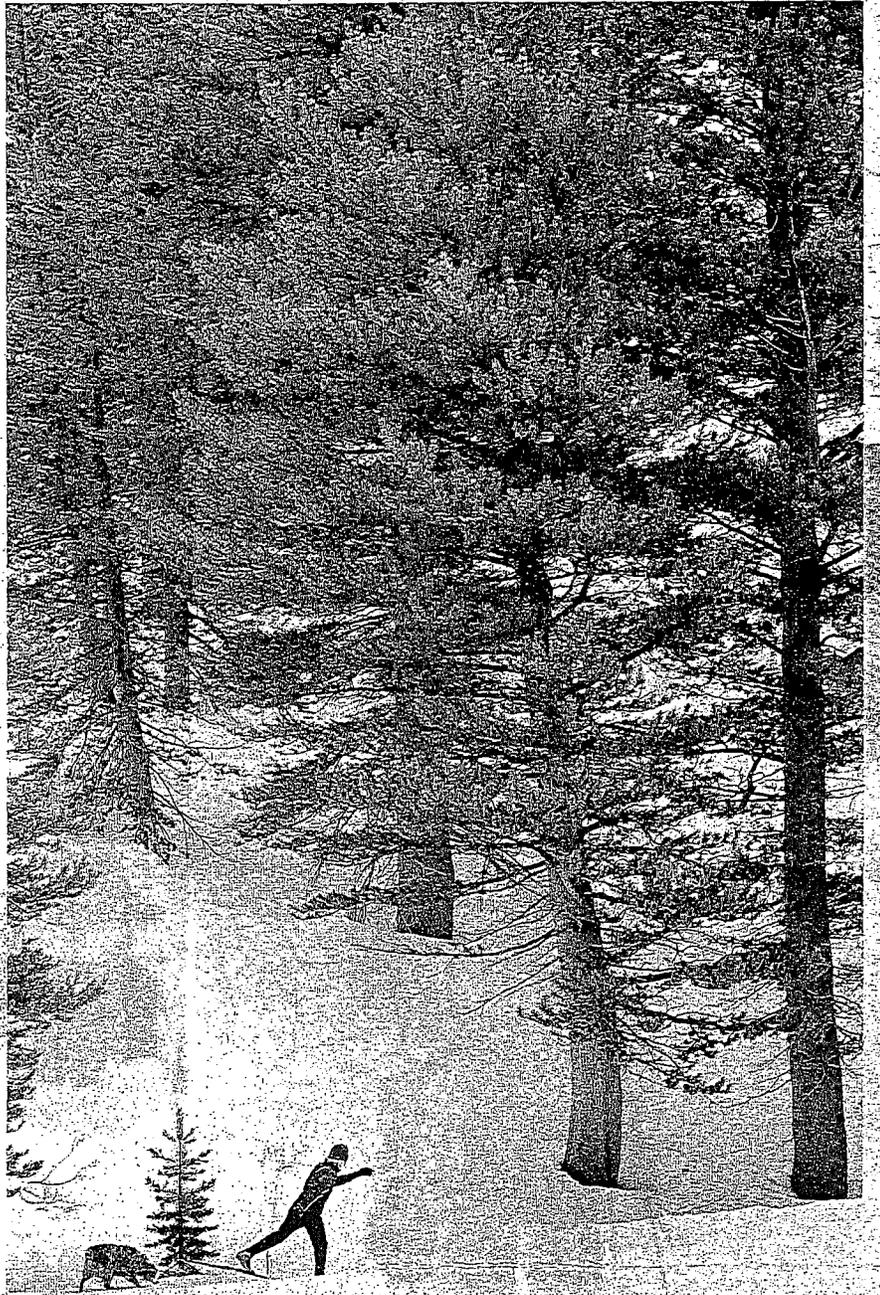
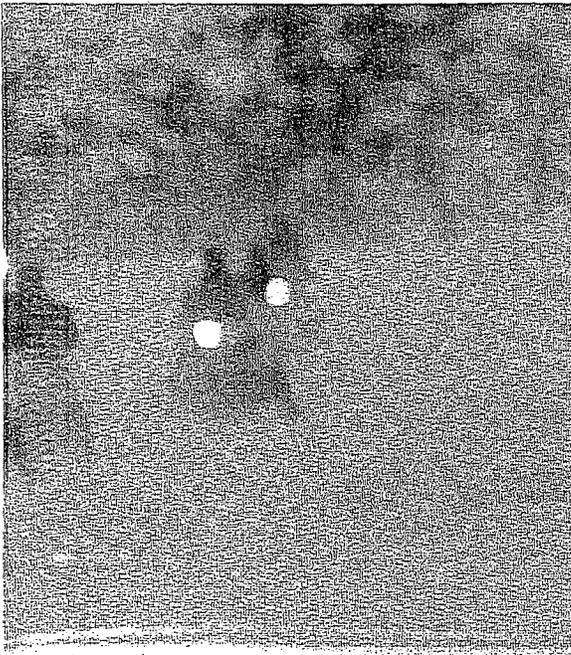
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MUTUAL LIFTOFF: There is some peaceful coexistence in the Hope Valley feud. Snowmobiles and skiers, above and below, share Blue Lakes Road.



LEADING THE CHARGE: Champion cross-country skier Debbi Waldear, president of Friends of Hope Valley, is fighting to outlaw Forestdale Creek Road to snowmobilers. "There's so much fear in them about losing territory," she says.

<http://www.latimes.com/features/outdoors/la-os-snowmobile8feb08,1,2548276.story?ctrack=1&csset=true>

A line in the snow

The frosty acrimony between snowmobilers and cross-country skiers in Hope Valley perfectly frames the country's muscle-versus-machine battles on frozen turf.

By Christopher Reynolds
Times Staff Writer

February 8, 2005

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"They sound loud when you stand right next to them. But get 75 yards away and you can lose [track of] people," says Olivier. "It's not noisy — well, *they* might think it's noisy. But it's not noisy."

Competing needs

Flag them down on the trail, and you find that many snowmobilers and skiers play together just fine. Larry Mainberger, a 70-year-old retiree from upstate New York, pauses on his skis along Blue Lakes Road. He used to snowmobile but isn't up to hauling the heavy machinery around anymore.

"You can hear them a long way off," says Mainberger. "But basically it's the smell of the belts burning that bothers most skiers. Smell that? That's the worst problem." Nevertheless, his prescription for Hope Valley is: "Leave it the way it is."

Rob Levy, Alpine County's undersheriff and an avid snowmobiler in his off-hours, thinks along the same lines.

"We don't manage by closure. We manage by providing multiple opportunities for folks that are designed in such a way that everyone can enjoy their recreation experience," he says.

Snowmobiling, he says, has "exploded" in Alpine County. "It's a great sport for a lot of people It's going to continue to expand and we have to come up with a good plan to manage that."

As a start, Levy has proposed a 20-mph speed limit on the most popular stretch of the Forestdale Creek Road. (Right now, snowmobilers can go as fast as seems "reasonable and prudent," but are supposed to drop down to 15 mph when passing a skier.) But like so many past compromise pitches, that's not going to please everyone.

"I'm a snowmobiler and I freaking hate cross-country skiers," says Jesse, a 23-year-old from Stateline, Nev., who declines to give a last name. "They're dangerous. They're in the way."

Skiers and snowmobilers "have to be separated," suggests 61-year-old Markleeville skier Jim Donald. "We just don't get along After they pass over a piece of ground, you can smell the oil and gas for hours sometimes."

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LOS ANGELES TIMES
TUE, FEB. 8, 2005
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Every year, the legal wrangling gets more complicated. But at bottom, the argument is simple. Some nordic skiers and environmentalists, led by Waldear, want to move snowmobiles out of Hope Valley. Snowmobilers, most of whom don't mind sharing turf with skiers, want to hold onto the territory they've got.

The feud goes back to the early 1990s,

when snowmobilers began turning up in the area in significant numbers and the U.S. Forest Service started revising plans for how this territory should be used. In many ways, the tussling has come down to three rural roads, all of which go unplowed in winter.

The motorized crowd has Blue Lakes Road, a 14-mile route where a state-run snow park welcomes snowmobiles and skiers alike. The muscle-powered crew has Burnside Lake Road, which was set aside more than a decade ago by Alpine County's supervisors and Forest Service officials as a motor-free playground. In the minds of many snowmobilers, this was the compromise that was supposed to bring peace in the valley.

Now, however, the spotlight has moved a few miles up Highway 88 to the meadows, hills and stands of pine along Forestdale Creek Road. In 1997 and in 2000, skiers sued the Forest Service, arguing that it wasn't doing enough to protect the interests of non-motorized users. But in a ruling last September, U.S. District Judge David Levi rebuffed the skiers and the Forest Service.

First, Levi ruled, the skiers can't expect the feds to restrict Forestdale Creek Road because it was apparently a county road before the feds ever arrived and therefore under jurisdiction of Alpine County's Board of Supervisors. Second,

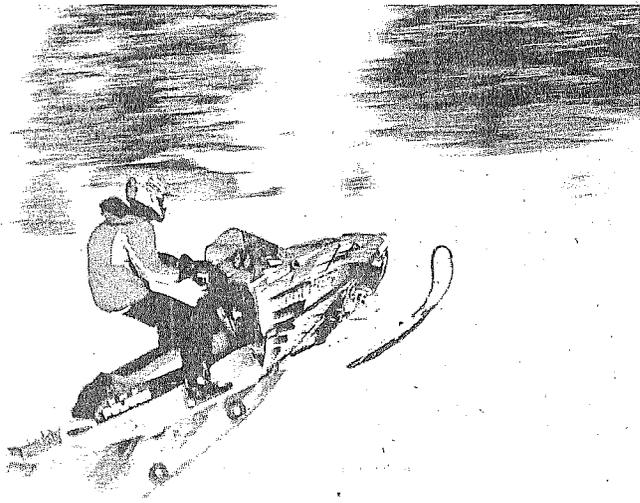


DIVIDED CAMPS: Cross-country skiers are a hazard and an impediment.

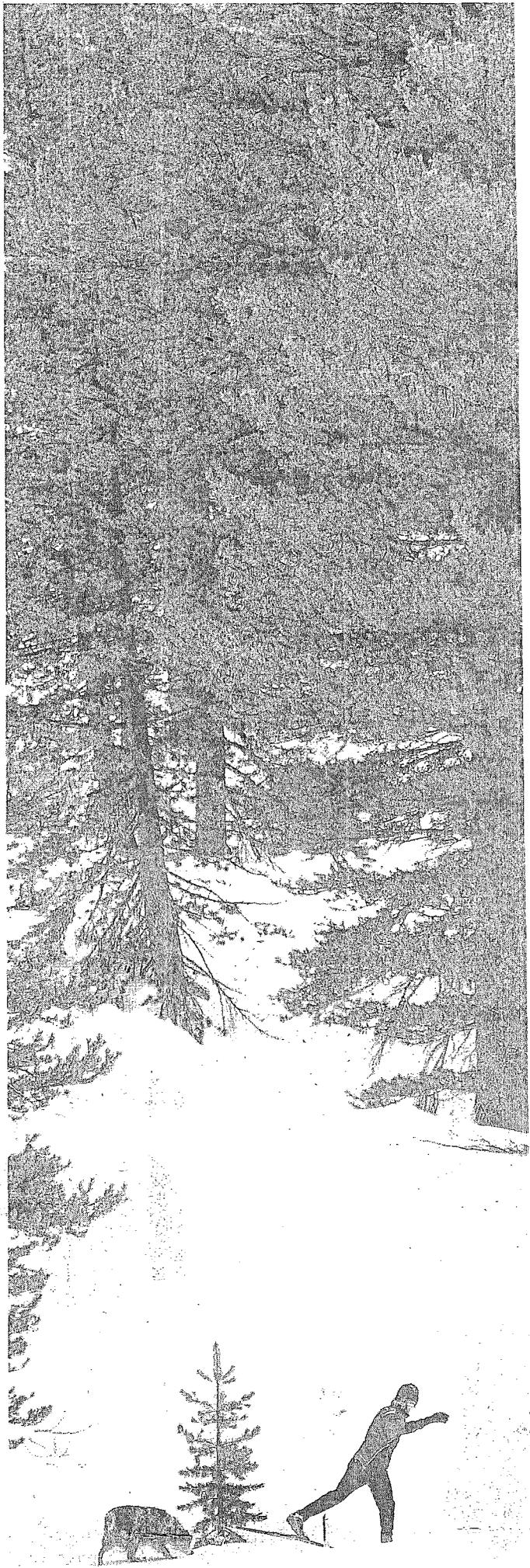
Levi ruled that the Forest Service hasn't done nearly enough research on alleged user conflicts to justify new limits on snowmobiles anywhere.

Not to be quieted, however, skiers have turned to the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. A decision is pending. In the meantime, Forest Service rangers, who say they don't have the money to pay for research, have their hands full patrolling the forest, and occasionally citing snowmobilers who stray into forbidden wilderness areas.

"There is enough room to make this work," says Gary Schiff, the ranger in charge of Hope Valley and the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest's Carson District. "But people have to come to the table and want to work it out."



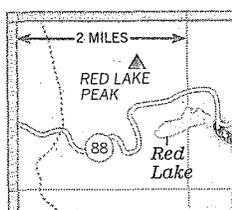
MUTUAL LIFTOFF: *There is some peaceful coexistence in the Hope Valley feud. Snowmobiles and skiers, above and below, share Blue Lakes Road.*

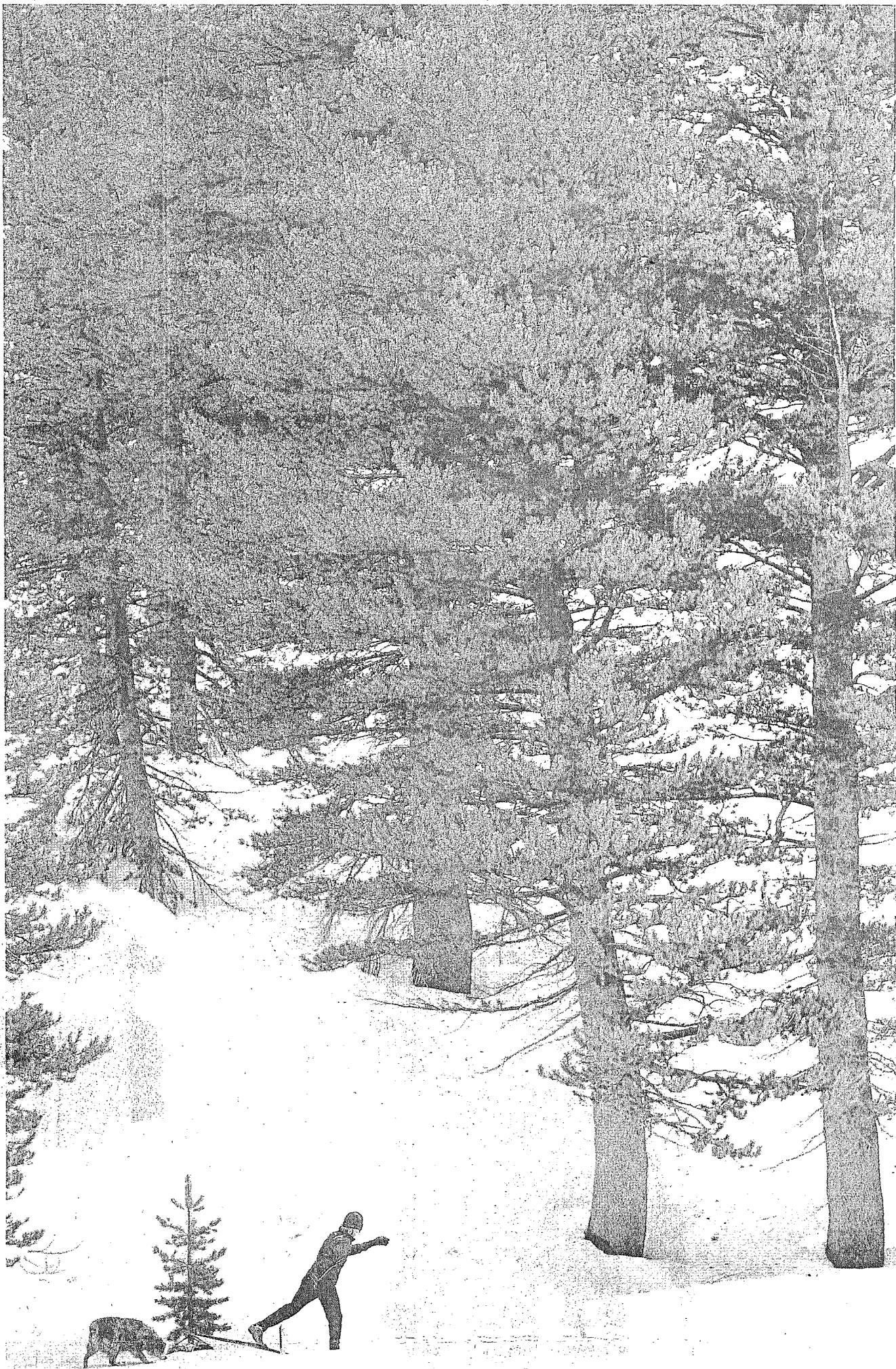


LEADING THE CHARGE: *Champion cross-country skier, fighting to outlaw Forestdale Creek Road to snowmobilers. "Ther*

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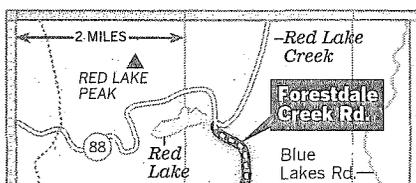


the Hope Valley Road.

LEADING THE CHARGE: *Champion cross-country skier Debbi Waldear, president of Friends of Hope Valley, is fighting to outlaw Forestdale Creek Road to snowmobilers. "There's so much fear in them about losing territory," she says.*

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20-mph speed limit on the most popular stretch of the Forestdale Creek Road. (Right now, snowmobilers can go as fast as seems "reasonable and prudent," but are supposed to drop down to 15 mph when passing a skier.) But like so many past compromise pitches, that's not going to please everyone

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Still, Waldear says, her group was ready to make a deal three years ago. The idea was to close Forestdale Creek Road to snowmobiles during the coldest months but open it in early and late winter when the snow is patchy on other access routes to the backcountry. But snowmobilers hated the idea and the county supervisors shot it down.

"There's so much fear in them about losing territory," Waldear says of the snowmobilers. "It seems to bring out the anger. And it's definitely gotten worse."

'I own this land'

Pliny Olivier leans against one of his machines, gazing out at the woods. If he's not angry, he's certainly firm.

"I made a lot of money in this life, and I paid a lot of taxes," he says. "And I own this land."

He is no more native here than Waldear. He grew up poor, one of eight kids with a game warden dad, in the swamps of Louisiana. He found his way to college, moved to Florida, succeeded in business, semi-retired in his 50s, and fell in love with the Sierra.

Now, at 59, he lives far from the crayfish and crepe myrtles in Zephyr Cove, Nev., along the southeast edge of Lake Tahoe. In seven years as a full-time resident, he's accumulated five snowmobiles and the California Nevada Snowmobile Assn.'s prize as most dedicated snowmobiler of 2004. He is the president of the Lake Tahoe Snowmobile Assn., which claims about 60 members, most from the south shore of Lake Tahoe.

Given good snow, Olivier will go riding three times a week. Given a chance to introduce a newcomer to the sport, he'll block off a day, pack sandwiches, load up his trailer and head for the countryside.

"It's the most awesome nature experience you can have. There's no deer out here, nor bear, there's nothing to disturb. You're just making tracks on snow," he says.

There is, however, the exhaust. Though pollution hasn't been part of the legal wrangling, environmentalists point out the dirty little clouds that rise when someone yanks a starter cord and a

20-mph speed limit on the most popular stretch of the Forestdale Creek Road. (Right now, snowmobilers can go as fast as seems "reasonable and prudent," but are supposed to drop down to 15 mph when passing a skier.) But like so many past compromise pitches, that's not going to please everyone.

"I'm a snowmobiler and I freaking hate cross-country skiers," says Jesse, a 23-year-old from Stateline, Nev., who declines to give a last name. "They're dangerous. They're in the way."

Skiers and snowmobilers "have to be separated," suggests 61-year-old Markleeville skier Jim Donald. "We just don't get along . . . After they pass over a piece of ground, you can smell the oil and gas for hours sometimes."

The wall comes down

Whether or not you want them roaring through your favorite woods, when you need to get somewhere quickly — say you have a medical emergency — snowmobiles can be handy machines.

A little after 3 p.m. on the day of Olivier's excursion to Forestdale Creek Road, the advancing hour and a worsening snowstorm drive him back to his SUV. He's lashing the snowmobiles to his trailer when a lone distraught skier straggles into view.

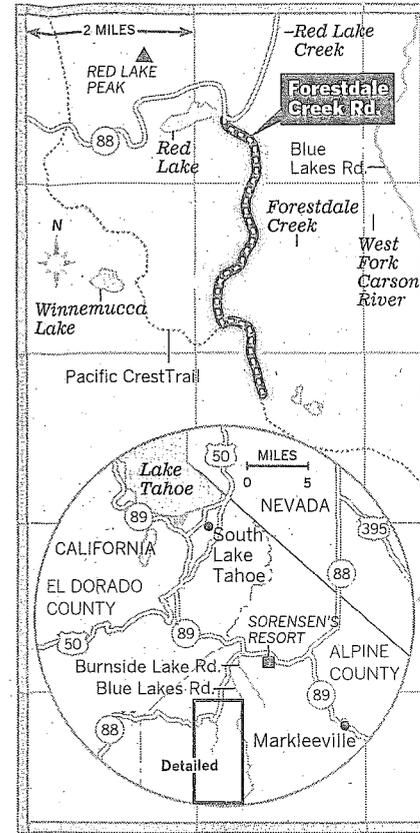
"Can you help us?" hollers Susan Burgers, 43. "We have a skier with a broken leg."

Burgers and her friend, who live in Watsonville, have been making winter visits and skiing on this trail for more than a decade; in fact, they like following the compacted snowmobile tracks. But today, in their haste to get out of the storm, they rushed themselves. Her friend got tangled up and went down hard.

She is down about a mile back, Burgers tells Olivier, unable to ski or walk. Snow is falling hard, there isn't another soul around and nobody can raise a cell-phone signal.

Olivier yanks a snowmobile back off the trailer and zooms off into the woods. Minutes later, he's back with 45-year-old Diana Deering on board, one of her legs twisted like a pretzel in black snow pants.

Olivier, waving off her thanks, clears out room up front in his SUV so he can haul her to the hospital. Deering eyes the



LORENA INIGUEZ Los Angeles Times

and you can lose [track of] people," says Olivier. "It's not noisy — well, *they* might think it's noisy. But it's not noisy."

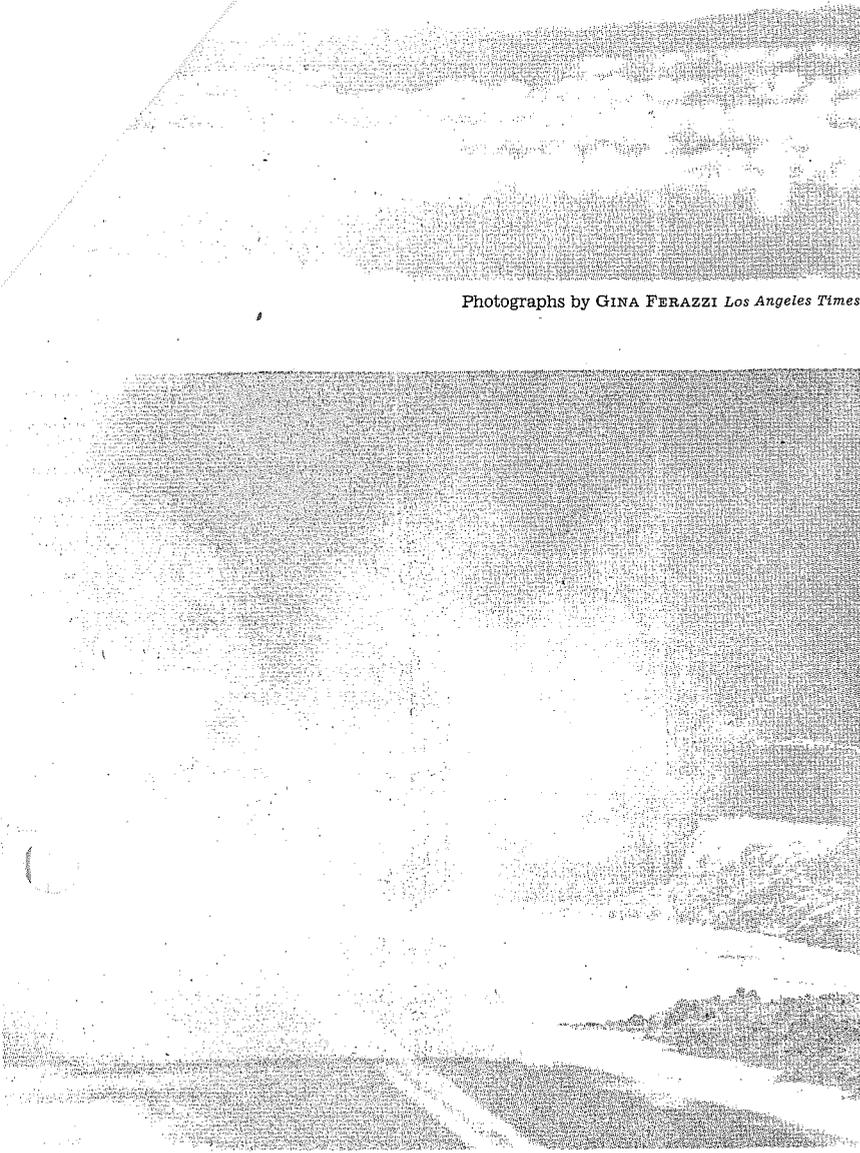
Competing needs

Flag them down on the trail, and you find that many snowmobilers and skiers play together just fine. Larry Mainberger, a 70-year-old retiree from upstate New York, pauses on his skis along Blue Lakes Road. He used to snowmobile but isn't up to hauling the heavy machinery around anymore.

"You can hear them a long way off," says Mainberger. "But basically it's the smell of the belts burning that bothers most skiers. Smell that? That's the worst problem." Nevertheless, his prescription for Hope Valley is: "Leave it the way it is."

Rob Levy, Alpine County's undersheriff and an avid snowmobiler in his off-hours, thinks along the same lines.

"We don't manage by closure. We



Photographs by GINA FERRAZZI Los Angeles Times

complain about the machines' noise and lingering exhaust. Snowmobilers claim lawsuit seeking to ban snowmobiles was rebuffed and skiers have filed an appeal.

Tough adversary

Ask Debbi Waldear how she got so good at skiing so fast, and you hear a clue to how she's persisted through a dozen years of snowmobile skirmishing.

"Not everybody's really competitive. I am," says Waldear. "I don't like losing."

she's won eight worldwide master's championships. Now she lives in Markleeville, Alpine County's seat of local government, trains promising young skiers and manages the Kirkwood Cross-Country Ski Center, a few miles outside Hope Valley. She thrives, she says, on the endurance the sport demands and the solitude it delivers. But she's not as alone

and, says Waldear. I don't like losing.
A wiry 55-year-old who stands just under 5 feet tall, Waldear was not born to snow country. She grew up in the Bay Area and only arrived here in the Sierra after college, aiming to spend a year as a ski bum. Instead she stayed, stepped a pair of nordic skis and liked the fit. Within two years of taking up cross-country skiing at age 30, she was winning statewide competitions. Since then,

as she used to be.
Hence her other, nonpaying job as president of the Friends of Hope Valley. That group formed in the 1980s to keep a power-line project out of the area and later lobbied successfully for government acquisition of land in the valley.
Now snowmobiles dominate the agenda. Her group claims about 300 members, most of whom, Waldear ac-

snowmobile engine stirs to life. Olivier's favorite snowmobile, a Polaris, cost about \$9,500 and carries an 800-cc engine. Like most snowmobiles, it gets a little under 10 miles per gallon. But technology is improving all the time, he notes, and these machines are getting steadily more efficient and quieter.
"They sound loud when you stand right next to them. But get 75 yards away

manage by providing multiple opportunities for folks that are designed in such a way that everyone can enjoy their recreation experience," he says.
Snowmobiling, he says, has "exploded" in Alpine County. "It's a great sport for a lot of people It's going to continue to expand and we have to come up with a good plan to manage that."
As a start, Levy has proposed a

snowmobile.
"I have no idea why people are attracted to it," she says quietly. "But they are, and we have to respect that."

On the Web: See additional photos of Alpine County snowmobilers and cross-country skiers at latimes.com/snowmobile.

Friends of Markleeville seeks full project review

On Feb. 1, the Friends of Markleeville again asked the board of supervisors to require an environmental impact report for the Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge project which is proposed for downtown Markleeville by developer Tom Abdo. This development includes a 25 room lodge (without a restaurant, but with a 5,000-square-foot spa and swimming pool), 49 fractional time share cabins, and 12 commercial/residential buildings totaling 25,488 square feet on 36 acres.

An EIR for this project is clearly required by California law — the California Environmental Quality Act. It is not discretionary. Our attorney advised the board that “The administrative record contains substantial evidence supporting fair argument of significant environmental impact requiring the preparation of an EIR. The revised project does not eliminate the significant environmental impacts that the Planning Commission identified in

Guest opinion

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October 2004, nor do the mitigations in the Mitigated Negative Declaration reduce the impacts to a less than significant level.”

The Friends have had numerous concerns about the impacts of this very large project on the tiny town of Markleeville, concerns which we have expressed at many meetings and in numerous letters. Probably the most important of these has to do with the wastewater treatment and disposal plan. Two reports by a highly qualified engineer emphatically states that as designed the plan will not work. He concluded that “A continued lack of recognition of appropriate design methodology will lead to the probable failure of the wastewater system for this project.”

The board has consistently ignored the reports from this engineer. For this reason I put together the following statement which I intended to read at the supervisors’ meeting. But county counsel essentially refused to allow public comment and I was not able to do so. For that reason I am submitting it to the The Record-Courier as an opinion piece so the public will understand why we are doing what we are doing.

“Perhaps the concern with this wastewater situation can be better understood with a brief review of the Sierra Pines Trailer Park saga in Woodfords.

The Grand Jury Report of August 2001 thoroughly documents that the people in the 30 trailers in that trailer court lived with a dangerously failing septic and leach field situation from around 1988, when existing documentation shows that it first began to be reported, until late 2001 or 2002. Complaints were filed with the Alpine County Health

Department time and time again. The department made attempts to have the situation corrected without success. There appears to have been marginal involvement by the Lahontan Regional Quality Control Board. But it was not until the board of supervisors got a community development block grant (public money) to replace this private system in, I believe, 2002, that the people in the trailer court were finally free from the dangers and unpleasantness that had plagued them for 14 years.

I believe you are also aware of the situation involving Sorensen’s Resort in which the Lahontan staff has been trying for years to bring the septic situation there into compliance with the waste discharge permit requirements.

Only when Sorensen’s obtained permission from the county to discharge into the South Tahoe PUD line does this problem seem to be nearing resolution.

See **Review** on page 5

Review: Alpine development

Continued from page 4

In both cases the ultimate resolution to commercial waste discharge problems involved the county time and expense and risk to Alpine County taxpayers. In both cases resolution took many years. In both cases the actions of the regulatory agencies responsible for correcting such situations left much to be desired.

Thus our concern about the questionable Markleeville Village plan and its possible impact on the people and businesses of Markleeville

The case histories I have just cited demonstrate in practical terms why the county must not leave it to other regulatory agencies to resolve the conflict and enforce compliance. Enlist

their help, yes. Total reliance, no.

We must know up front that this wastewater treatment and disposal system for this project will work, and that is clearly not the case right now. So more information is needed and alternatives must be explored. And these are among the things an EIR will accomplish."

The Friends of Markleeville are looking into pursuing further legal action to require an EIR. Donations are gratefully accepted at PO Box 156,

Markleeville, CA 96120.

■ Nancy Thornburg is an Alpine County resident and a member of the Friends of Markleeville.

Forest Service wants ideas

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Franklin Pemberton is searching for ideas on how to help the ecosystem or watershed of the forest.

As Alpine Resource Advisory Committee Coordinator, he has until the first week in April to receive the suggestions.

Each year counties throughout the U.S. receive funding through the Secure Rural School and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, commonly called Payments to States. This year Alpine County has about \$170,000, of which about \$50,000 was rolled over from last year, to be used toward the health of the Toiyabe National Forest or providing employment opportunities related to it.

"It's a great program. It helps rural communities complete projects they otherwise might not be able to. I just love it," said Pemberton.

Last year's funding included projects such as: Installing guard rails on the bridge over Silver Creek in Bear Valley; putting in temporary toilets at Lake Alpine; a hazardous materials box for the Alpine County Sheriff's Department truck; building a water tank in upper Markleeville to supply water for fighting fires; digging a well at the Hope Valley campground; \$50,000 in forest thinning (hazardous fuels reduction) in the Grover Hot Springs area; and hiring a fire safe council coordinator, Clint Celio, to create a fire safe plan for the district.

"These are all really good projects," said Pemberton. "These are incredibly beneficial to the communities."

According to the Secure Rural School and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, each year from 2001-2006 the law allows counties to receive a payment from the federal government

DETAILS

For more information or to request a project application, call Franklin Pemberton at (775) 884-8150. Project proposals may also be submitted via the Internet by doing a search for Payments to States, under the Title II heading click on RACs, click on Alpine County and then on Propose a Title II Project. Proposals should be submitted by April 4.

based on the state average of their top three years of payments from federal lands, said information on the Payments to States Web site.

The act has three purposes. Besides enhancing forest ecosystem health and providing employment opportunities, federal funds also go toward helping to support roads and schools and improving cooperative relationships among federal land management agencies.

Since the law is only in effect until 2006, Pemberton said he hopes it will be renewed when legislation comes up for review.

"Depending on the success of it, it could be voted down," said Pemberton. "It's gotten great reviews across the nation, so hopefully it won't be."

The Alpine County Resource Advisory Committee is a group of 11 volunteers who were selected by the Secretary of Agriculture to advise the forest service on the use of federal funding allocated to the county. The members represent a broad section of the community including, outdoor recreation, environmental, elected officials and other interests.

Feb. 14, 2005

LA Times

COLUMN ONE

Divided by a White Curtain

■ Winter snows cleave
six California counties
straddling Sierra's crest.
The seasonal barrier
severs links between
residents on both slopes.

By ERIC BAILEY
Times Staff Writer

BEAR VALLEY, Calif. —

Each winter, snow drapes the shoulders of the Sierra Nevada with drifts that divide and conquer, cutting off one side of California from the other. Up here in Alpine County, the Stephens family has made overcoming that blockade a frosty tradition.

Instead of piling into an SUV to visit grandparents on the opposite slope of the mountains, each member of the clan climbs aboard a snowmobile.

As they have every Christmas and most Thanksgivings for a dozen years, the kids follow Dad up snow-custed Highway 4, over the icy crest of Ebbetts Pass and down to Grandma's house for turkey dinner.

Practicality, not adventure, prompts these and other wind-whipped treks. Snow closes Highway 4 to cars all winter. The alternative route to the Sierra's far side is a circuitous seven-hour round trip through four counties. A snowmobile cuts the journey to less than an hour each way.

Rick Stephens, a no-nonsense Alpine County sheriff's sergeant with a walrus mustache, shrugs as if it's no big deal. Such is life in California's cleaved counties.

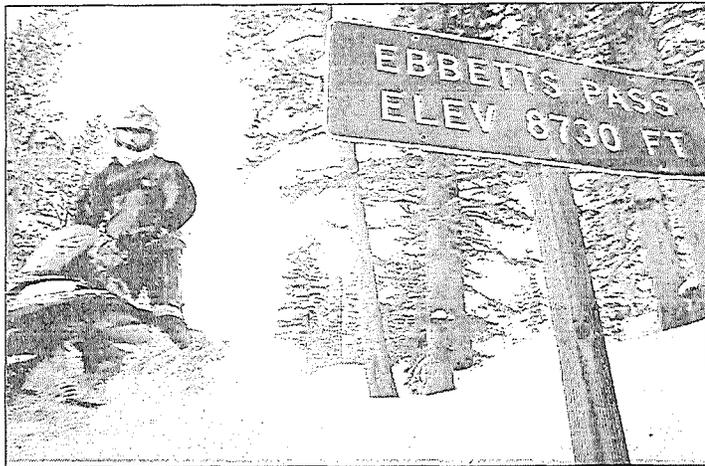
Even in the most placid season, the state's highest ridgeline looms as an obstacle to civilization's spread. Big winters like this year's turn that physical division into a brick wall, a seasonal shutdown that shapes life in ways big and insignificant.

In lofty Alpine County, where 9,000-foot peaks capped by abundant snow fit the region's name, package delivery firms won't guarantee overnight delivery from one side of the county to the other, though it's barely 20 miles as the crow flies.

Courts in Markleeville, the county seat, don't bother with winter jury duty for residents

[See Sierra, Page A19]

Los Angeles Times Mon Feb. 14, 2005 P A 1



IT'S FASTER': Alpine County Sheriff's Sgt. Rick Stephens zooms over snowbound highways. Summer speeds are slower.



ALPINE RESCUE: Snowmobiler Chris Engelesman gets fuel on the John Crawford, far right, says he makes the trek seven or eight times each

Sierra Snows Complicate Ties on Slopes

[Sierra, from Page A1]

who can be marooned on the wrong slope. A county building official once drove 15 hours through two snowstorms to inspect a new foundation.

Randy Gibson, Alpine's long-time building chief, endured that arduous trip in the winter of 2003. He said it was not so much a hassle as "just another day in paradise."

The disruption hits in the six counties that straddle the Sierra to the north and south of Lake Tahoe: Alpine, El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, Sierra and Plumas. Each came into being shortly after the Gold Rush, their boundaries drawn to suit the need for towns and mineral assay offices close to the mines.

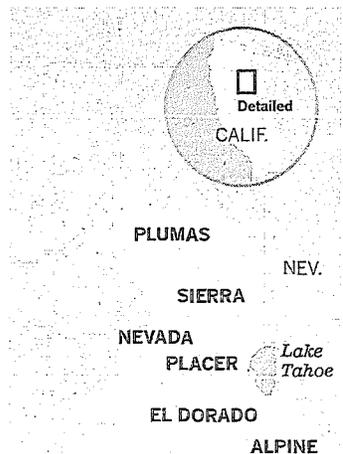
Nancy Thornburg, a longtime Alpine County resident, says the county lines spring from an early mistake, the drawing of the state boundary east of the Sierra:

Folks on the Sierra's east side may live in California, but they shop and send their kids to school in Nevada. They watch Nevada TV stations. They keep abreast of Nevada politics.

"Some idiot way back when drew the state boundary at the wildflower line on the east side instead of where it should have

Divided counties

Six Northern California counties that straddle the Sierra Nevada are effectively split by winter snowstorms, making travel and commerce difficult.



Los Angeles Times

"The barrier is as much psychological as it is physical"

at the county building department.

"It was pretty exhausting," he said. "But it sure is boring making that drive in a car."

A few years before, Paul Peterson journeyed to an Alpine County Chamber of Commerce meeting in Markleeville on cross-country skis.

Peterson said he did the math and learned that it would take less time to ski than to drive. So he packed a water bottle, some matches and a Swiss Army knife, just in case. As he set out, a local snowplow operator suggested he was crazy.

But the intrepid chamber member enjoyed some tactical advantages. Peterson, 46, has wintered in Bear Valley for three decades, runs a cross-country ski business and knows this swath of the Sierra as well as he knows his living room. The scenic 2.5-hour journey went without a hitch, Peterson said. "It was a peak lifetime experience."

There's plenty of precedent

'Some idiot way back when drew the state boundary at the wildflower line on the east side instead of where it should have been, up

Nancy Thornburg, a longtime

evening, exhausted but happy to be back on the side he considers a Shangri-La compared to snowed-in Bear Valley. "They don't like it over there when I tell them ancient man had enough sense to migrate."

Stephens, the Alpine County sheriff's sergeant, is that rare resident who has lived on both sides of the divide. He grew up in Markleeville, where his dad ran the towing service. But a love of snowmobile racing led him as an adult to Bear Valley, where the entire community — adults going to work, kids heading to school — gets around on the mo-

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Photographs by ROBERT DURELL *Los Angeles Times*

ALPINE RESCUE: Snowmobiler Chris Engelesman gets fuel on the trail between Bear Valley and Markleeville. Alpine County Sheriff John Crawford, far right, says he makes the trek seven or eight times each winter.

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ago to serve as pit chief for his son, 20-year-old Luke, a racer last seen on TV at the Winter X-Games. Dad still gets plenty of time on a snowmobile patrolling the town's snow-decked streets. Stephens and his two deputies also make runs up Highway 4 on weekends, rescuing busted-up snowboarders and stranded tourists.

"It's faster on a snowmobile in winter than driving the road in summer," he said, noting how the highway narrows to a single lane in some spots and makes maddening switchbacks. His record through the snow: 22 min-

Stephens and Deputy Jeff Stanford whizzing up the road. Luke Stephens tagged along for the trip, occasionally snaking into the winter wilds to whiz up peaks and fly off jumps.

Over the course of a couple of hours, they stopped to check on a three-legged bear wintering in a bathroom near the snowed-in Hermit Valley rest stop and later offered help to a broken-down snowmobiler from Sweden.

Near Ebbetts Pass, another snowmobiler slowed to greet them. It was Sheriff John Crawford. The sheriff handed over some department documents and chewed the fat with Stephens. "I ride over seven or eight times a winter," said Crawford, whose department has almost as many snowmobiles (nine) as sworn deputies (13).

Crawford's worst trip was the day spent struggling through thick snow to reach the summit. But days like this make up for it, he said, gazing through sunglasses to where the summit and

Los Angeles Times

shop and send their kids to school in Nevada. They watch Nevada TV stations. They keep abreast of Nevada politics.

"Some idiot way back when drew the state boundary at the wildflower line on the east side instead of where it should have been, up on the summit," Thornburg said. "If they'd done it right to start with, we'd be part of Nevada and everyone would be happy."

In some spots, the cultural divide is deeper than the snowdrifts.

Consider that Sierra County's annual Kit and Caboodle Fair on the east side rarely attracts anyone from west slope towns. Vice versa for the west side's annual mountain bike festival.

"They've got their little world over there, and we've got ours," said Brooks Mitchell, a county supervisor. "It's basically been that way for about 150 years."

As brutal as winter driving conditions get in Mitchell's neck of the woods, travel is tougher to the south, as the Sierra peaks rise ever higher. Interstate 80, the bustling highway into Lake Tahoe's north shore, tops out a tad higher than 7,000 feet, but farther south, the elevation of Ebbetts Pass is more than 8,700 feet, Sonora Pass reaches 9,600 feet and Yosemite National Park's Tioga Pass is nearly 10,000 feet.

The California Department of Transportation shuts down the three passes each winter, padlocking metal gates at the foot of the highway ascent on each side of the Sierra, sometimes for more than half the year.

Residents greet it as a part of life. And adapt.

"The barrier is as much psychological as it is physical," said Eric Jung, a real estate agent in Bear Valley, located amid the conifers on the Sierra's west slope.

Jung knows every bend in the road, battling long winter drives during four terms on the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. The lovely journey of 40 miles over Ebbetts Pass in the summer swells to nearly 160 miles on the circuitous winter route. There is no snowmobiling for him: "I have to have my heated cocoon with my CD player."

Alpine school trustee Jema Kimmel used to make the long drive across the mountains for board meetings (her record for the journey is a couple days away from home because she was snowed in).

Then she got resourceful. Kimmel now spends board-meeting night cozying up beside a speakerphone in the teachers' room of Bear Valley School as her peers gather in Markleeville. Sometimes a teacher or parent joins her to listen in, but "most of the time I'm there by myself."

Others turn resourcefulness in a more adventurous direction.

Bruce Orvis, who runs the Bear Valley water system, strapped a mountain bike to the back of his snowmobile after Highway 4 shut down the winter before last. When the snowline faded on the Nevada side, he jumped on the bike to ride the last few miles to an appointment

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There's plenty of precedent. Starting in 1856, Norse immigrant Jon Torsteinson-Rue (you might know him as Snowshoe Thompson) delivered mail across the central Sierra each winter atop 10-foot oak skis. Thompson retired in Alpine County and became a county supervisor.

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He gave up racing a few years

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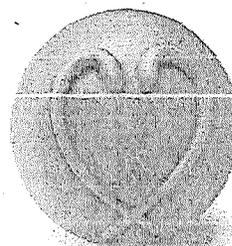
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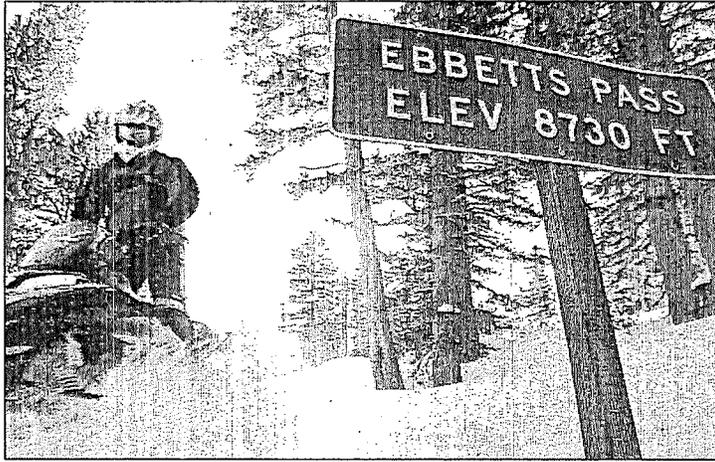
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THE SEDU
TRUF





IT'S FASTER': Alpine County Sheriff's Sgt. Rick Stephens zooms over snowbound highways. Summer speeds are slower.

The California Department of Transportation shuts down the three passes each winter, padlocking metal gates at the foot of the highway ascent on each side of the Sierra, sometimes for more than half the year.

Residents greet it as a part of life. And adapt.

Divided counties

Six Northern California counties that straddle the Sierra Nevada are effectively split by winter snowstorms, making travel and commerce difficult.

Sierra Snows Complicate Ties on Slopes

[Sierra, from Page A1] who can be marooned on the wrong slope. A county building official once drove 15 hours through two snowstorms to inspect a new foundation.

Randy Gibson, Alpine's long-time building chief, endured that arduous trip in the winter of 2003. He said it was not so much a hassle as "just another day in paradise."

The disruption hits in the six counties that straddle the Sierra to the north and south of Lake Tahoe: Alpine, El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, Sierra and Plumas. Each came into being shortly after the Gold Rush, their boundaries drawn to suit the need for towns and mineral assay offices close to the mines.

Nancy Thornburg, a longtime Alpine County resident, says the county lines spring from an early mistake, the drawing of the state boundary east of the Sierra.

Folks on the Sierra's east side may live in California, but they shop and send their kids to school in Nevada. They watch Nevada TV stations. They keep abreast of Nevada politics.

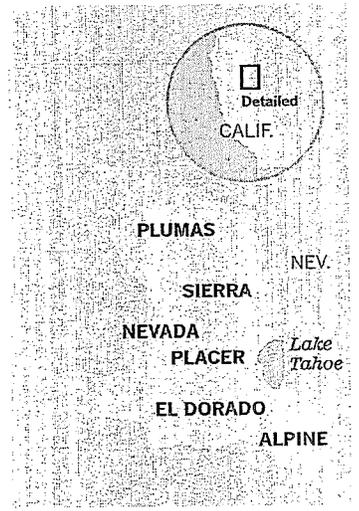
"Some idiot way back when drew the state boundary at the wildflower line on the east side instead of where it should have been, up on the summit," Thornburg said. "If they'd done it right to start with, we'd be part of Nevada and everyone would be happy."

In some spots, the cultural divide is deeper than the snowdrifts.

Consider that Sierra County's annual Kit and Caboodle Fair on the east side rarely attracts anyone from west slope towns. Vice versa for the west side's annual mountain bike festival.

"They've got their little world over there, and we've got ours," said Brooks Mitchell, a county supervisor. "It's basically been that way for about 150 years."

As brutal as winter driving conditions get in Mitchell's neck of the woods, travel is tougher to the south, as the Sierra peaks rise ever higher. Interstate 80, the bustling highway into Lake Tahoe's north shore, tops out a tad higher than 7,000 feet, but farther south, the elevation of Ebbetts Pass is more than 8,700 feet, Sonora Pass reaches 9,600 feet and Yosemite National Park's Tioga Pass is nearly 10,000 feet.



Los Angeles Times

"The barrier is as much psychological as it is physical," said Eric Jung, a real estate agent in Bear Valley, located amid the conifers on the Sierra's west slope.

Jung knows every bend in the road, battling long winter drives during four terms on the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. The lovely journey of 40 miles over Ebbetts Pass in the summer swells to nearly 160 miles on the circuitous winter route. There is no snowmobiling for him: "I have to have my heated cocoon with my CD player."

Alpine school trustee Jema Kimmel used to make the long drive across the mountains for board meetings (her record for the journey is a couple days away from home because she was snowed in).



Then she got resourceful. Kimmel now spends board-meeting night cozying up beside a speakerphone in the teachers' room of Bear Valley School as her peers gather in Markleeville. Sometimes a teacher or parent joins her to listen in, but "most of the time I'm there by myself."

Others turn resourcefulness in a more adventurous direction.

Bruce Orvis, who runs the Bear Valley water system, strapped a mountain bike to the back of his snowmobile after Highway 4 shut down the winter before last. When the snowline faded on the Nevada side, he jumped on the bike to ride the last few miles to an appointment

Photographs by ROBERT DURELL *Los Angeles Times*

ALPINE RESCUE: Snowmobiler Chris Engelesman gets fuel on the trail between Bear Valley and Markleeville. Alpine County Sheriff John Crawford, far right, says he makes the trek seven or eight times each winter.

at the county building department.

"It was pretty exhausting," he said. "But it sure is boring making that drive in a car."

A few years before, Paul Petersen journeyed to an Alpine County Chamber of Commerce meeting in Markleeville on cross-country skis.

Peterson said he did the math and learned that it would take less time to ski than to drive. So he packed a water bottle, some matches and a Swiss Army knife, just in case. As he set out, a local snowplow operator suggested he was crazy.

But the intrepid chamber member enjoyed some tactical advantages. Peterson, 46, has wintered in Bear Valley for three decades, runs a cross-country ski business and knows this swath of the Sierra as well as he knows his living room. The scenic 2.5-hour journey went without a hitch, Peterson said. "It was a peak lifetime experience."

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Nancy Thornburg, a longtime Alpine County resident

evening, exhausted but happy to be back on the side he considers a Shangri-La compared to snowed-in Bear Valley. "They don't like it over there when I tell them ancient man had enough sense to migrate."

Stephens, the Alpine County sheriff's sergeant, is that rare resident who has lived on both sides of the divide. He grew up in Markleeville, where his dad ran the towing service. But a love of snowmobile racing led him as an adult to Bear Valley, where the entire community — adults going to work, kids heading to school — gets around on the motorized sleds.

He gave up racing a few years

ago to serve as pit chief for his son, 20-year-old Luke, a racer last seen on TV at the Winter X-Games. Dad still gets plenty of time on a snowmobile patrolling the town's snow-decked streets. Stephens and his two deputies also make runs up Highway 4 on weekends, rescuing busted-up snowboarders and stranded tourists.

"It's faster on a snowmobile in winter than driving the road in summer," he said, noting how the highway narrows to a single lane in some spots and makes maddening switchbacks. His record through the snow: 22 minutes gate to gate.

One recent afternoon found

Stephens and Deputy Jeff Stanford whizzing up the road. Luke Stephens tagged along for the trip, occasionally snaking into the winter wilds to whiz up peaks and fly off jumps.

Over the course of a couple of hours, they stopped to check on a three-legged bear wintering in a bathroom near the snowed-in Hermit Valley rest stop and later offered help to a broken-down snowmobiler from Sweden.

Near Ebbetts Pass, another snowmobiler slowed to greet them. It was Sheriff John Crawford. The sheriff handed over some department documents and chewed the fat with Stephens. "I ride over seven or eight times a winter," said Crawford, whose department has almost as many snowmobiles (nine) as sworn deputies (13).

Crawford's worst trip was the day spent struggling through thick snow to reach the summit. But days like this make up for it, he said, gazing through sunglasses to where the summit and sky collide.

"It sure beats driving."

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

90+: Hubert Bruns, 91, right, was one of 66 in the 90+ Club who were honored at a birthday party at the Douglas County Senior Center on Wednesday. Elwood Davis, 94, left, old friend of Bruns' and former Alpine County resident now living in an assisted-living home in Carson City, was unable to attend.



Provided to the R-C



SHANNON LITZ/The R-C

Supervisors stall on zoning

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

The Alpine County Technical Advisory Committee will be asked to come back with determinations about the safety of the Markleeville town ditch due to its close proximity with the proposed Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge.

Supervisors said during Tuesday's board meeting that more information is needed before a zoning ordinance can be amended to allow the project.

Project architect Ed Williams of Markleeville U.S.A., a Nevada corporation, submitted a change to the original plan. He proposed to move a property line and seven cabins located along the town ditch 5 feet farther away from the ditch.

Supervisor Gunter Kaiser said he thought the variance was "out of sync," and he needed more technical advice before approving a zoning amendment.

"If we adopt a zoning ordinance today, amending it two months from now doesn't

make much sense to me," said Kaiser. "Let TAC catch up with us. Let's get more information from them."

Friends of Markleeville member Stephen Hibbs said he had sent a description of the project to an insurance company, and received a negative response back about "having small children near free-flowing water."

"The underwriter asked, 'What can they possibly be thinking?'" said Hibbs.

"I'm sure Mr. Abdoo is going to secure insurance coverage of his own," said Williams.

The board will also ask the technical advisory committee to consider whether physical barriers need to be provided over the ditch.

Williams asked why the developer Tom Abdoo should have to provide barriers when no one else in the county does.

"Everyone near the ditch throughout the county should have to provide physical barriers then," said Williams. "Why

should Mr. Abdoo be required when nobody else is?"

Kaiser suggested moving a road or removing four to seven of the cabins that run along the ditch.

"Eliminating all cabins one to seven in my mind would provide additional safety," Kaiser said.

Project plans include 49 fractionally-owned timeshare cabins in all, a 25-room lodge and 14 commercial spaces.

The technical advisory committee will meet to discuss the safety issues at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday at Turtle Rock Park in Markleeville.

Results from that meeting will be included on the Board of Supervisors' March 15 agenda, along with a new resolution to approve a zoning ordinance amendment.

A resolution to monitor construction of the 36-acre Markleeville project was also considered on Tuesday.

It was uncertain where the funding would come from to do

daily checks on the progress of the development, but Planning Director Brian Peters said if the developer fails to comply with the county, future permits could be withheld.

"There's this big hammer out there hanging over them," he said.

Peters said there is a 25 percent surcharge on building permit fees for multifamily projects that could go toward paying for monitoring of the project.

Alpine County has never had an occasion to use this fee before, he said.

According to the California Environmental Quality Act, if necessary, more fees can be charged to the developer, said Peters.

Supervisors decided to hold off on their decision on monitoring the project until the March 15 meeting, also.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Volunteers sought for public service

Staff Reports

Alpine County is in need of public representatives for two volunteer positions. The Social Service Transportation Advisory Council is searching for a senior to serve a term that began July 1, 2004 and will last through June

2007.

A public member is also needed to serve on the Family Support and Child Abuse Prevention Council. This term lasts from Jan. 1, 2005 through Dec. 31, 2006. For an application, call the county clerk's office at (530) 694-2281.

50+ Club goes bowling in Ranchos

On Feb. 23, senior bus riders will be going bowling at the Silver Strike in the Gardnerville Ran-

BRIEFS

chos. Members of the 50+ Club leave Alpine County Health and Human Services at 10 a.m. The cost is \$10 to bowl, eat and ride, or \$5 for nonbowlers for pizza and bus fare. For more information, call Sherri Dennis at Health and Human Services, (530) 694-2235.

Yard sale on Saturday

A going out of business yard sale will take place 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at the Alpine Children's Center, 49 Hawkside Drive in Woodfords. For more information, call Edie or Jo at (530) 694-2390 or (530) 694-2034.

AA to meet

Alcoholics Anonymous will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Bear Valley Library.

Book club meeting

The book club is meeting at 12 p.m. Wednesday at the Markleeville Library.

Planning Commission meets Thursday

The Alpine County Planning Commission meeting will take place at 6 p.m. Thursday at Turtle Rock Park in Markleeville.

State position open

The State of California Department of Parks and Recreation is offering an examination for a pool lifeguard at Grover's Hot Springs. The exam will take place at 1416 9th St. Room 1018 Sacramento, Calif. 95814. Call (916) 653-9685.

Sno Park permits are still available

Sno Park permits are available until May 30. The cost is \$5 daily and \$25 season. Purchase permits at the Alpine County Visitors Center, Sorensen's and Woodfords Station.

Senior trip to Reno

Seniors are going to the El Dorado in Reno for a dinner buffet and to see Siegfried & Roy presents Darren Romeo in "The Voice of Magic." The bus leaves Alpine County Health and Human Services at 1:45 p.m. on Feb. 24. Call Sherri Dennis at (530) 694-2235.

Peace and crime in state's tiniest county

DA's days busier than you'd expect

By William Ferchland
Tribune staff writer

MARKLEEVILLE — The office was a bit difficult to find. Before the recent move, the Alpine County district attorney's work station was a cubbyhole of an office in the old, but visible, courthouse in Markleeville.

With the help of directions supplied by the chamber of commerce, Will Richmond, a district attorney in solitude from prosecuting in the least populated California county, was found in a rectangle-shaped office on a side street.

He was on the phone. An assistant was gone, walking to the courthouse a few blocks away, leaving him as the

Alpine County's wild past
— See **Sierra Scene, 1C**

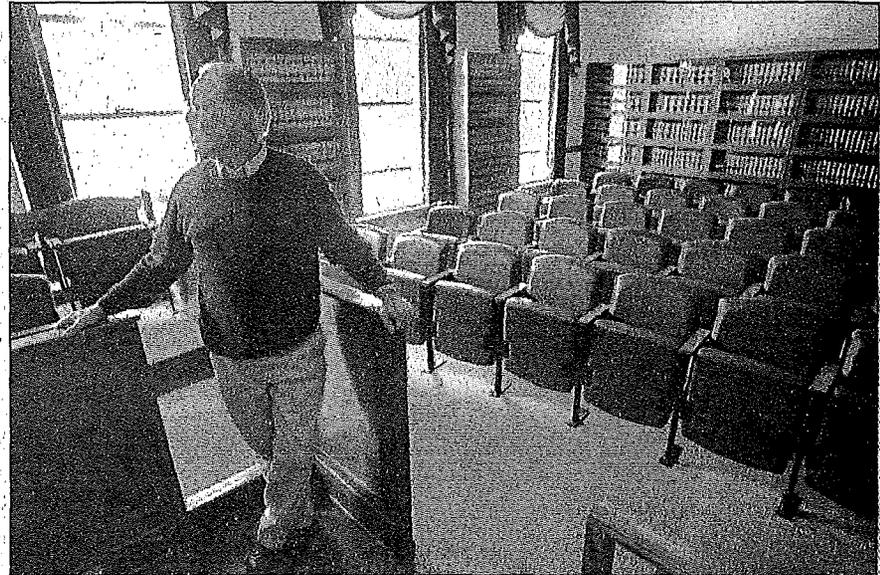
only staff member in the office.

It's like that sometimes for Richmond, district attorney of Alpine County, population 1,209 according to a 2003 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau.

A knee-jerk description of Richmond could be a fish out of water. Raised and educated in the Bay Area, Richmond received his undergraduate degree from Stanford University. He went to law school in San Francisco at UC Hastings College of the Law.

On June 26, 1969, he was admitted into the State Bar of California.

The 36 years of experience in law, which sent him to Santa Clara County



Dan Thrift/Tahoe Daily Tribune

Will Richmond in the tastefully decorated Alpine County courtroom.

and private practice in other counties, allowed Richmond to perform his duties as district attorney of Alpine County.

"It would be a really difficult place to learn your trade as a prosecutor or lawyer," he said. "There isn't enough opportunity to be exposed to the full

spectrum of what a district attorney might do. You have cases of all kinds here but they don't occur in the same volume."

Four years ago, there were about 150 cases, Richmond said. Now it's about

See **County**, Page A15

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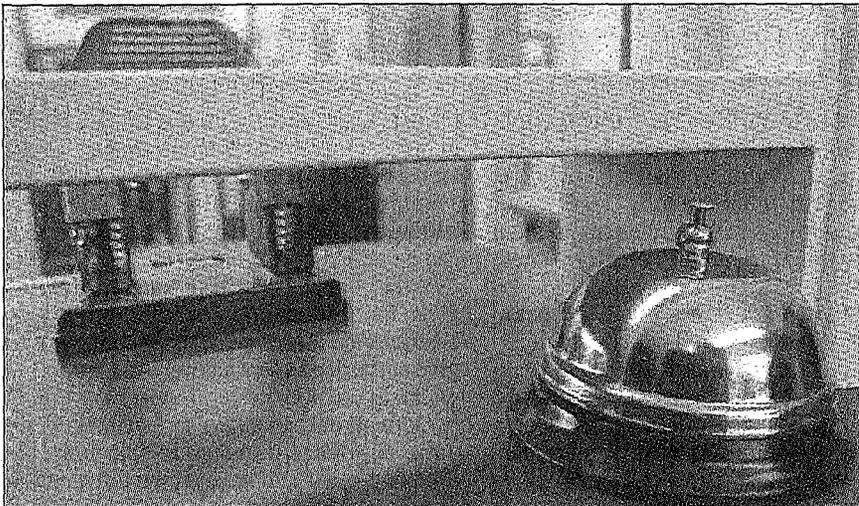
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Tahoe Daily Tribune



Dan Thrift/Tahoe Daily Tribune

A bell is used to alert Richmond to a visitor to his office.

County

From Page A1

400.

While there is the absence of chief, assistant or deputy district attorneys, Richmond does receive help from Karen Dustman. The holder of many titles, including legal services specialist and victim and witness coordinator, Dustman has a law degree and is able to fill in for Richmond when necessary.

Not surprisingly, crime here typically revolves around the county's two ski resorts, Kirkwood and Bear Valley. A Kirkwood employee pleaded guilty to one count of forcible rape earlier this month.

Last year a snowboarder at Kirkwood

collided with a skier and was charged with assault and battery, Richmond said. The impact contained so much force that the skier, a Santa Cruz surgeon, had trouble holding medical instruments.

Then there was a case of snowmobilers riding while drunk.

Misdemeanors reign. Theft, ski pass fraud, trespassing and public intoxication occur frequently in the winter. An ice fisherman might be charged with having an extra pole in the water.

"You think you're huddled over your hole in the ice and nobody is going to care," Richmond said.

In the summer, cases involve construction matters such as pollution and illegal development.

Feb
Jan 18-20, 2005



Dan Thrift/Tahoe Daily Tribune

Karen Dustman holds many titles and fills in for the Alpine County district attorney when he's not around.

"It's a slowed-down pace, but when you put it all together it's not quite as laid back as everybody thinks," said Alpine County Superior Court Judge Richard Specchio, who shares duties with Presiding Judge David Devore.

Colleen Hemingway remembered prosecuting many drunken driving cases when she was Alpine County's district attorney in the late 1990s.

One case in particular is stored well in her memory. A woman driving to the Bay Area tailgated another woman on Highway 88. After a couple miles, the driver in front pulled to the shoulder. But instead of passing, the woman also pulled to the side, got out and pounded the driver's head into the car, Hemingway said.

The woman was charged with assault causing great bodily injury but was released from custody. She did not return to court and is wanted by the county to face the charges.

"I'd love to find her still," said Hemingway, who lives in the Carson Valley.

While Sierra County shares the distinction of having a one-person district attorney's office, Hemingway said members of the California District Attorneys Association treated her "like their little sister which I thought was fun."

As a prosecutor with other counties, Richmond was envious of the Alpine County position. As a circuit prosecutor on environment issues, which basically allowed him to prosecute cases involving erosion, stream zones and the like,

Richmond's life embraces the outdoors and the rustic.

His house rests in a forest and is powered by sun and wind. It has no phone but there is one spot that provides service for a cell phone, albeit with static. He has an urge to end his cable service, yet that would mean an end to watching Stanford basketball games.

El Dorado County Assistant District Attorney Hans Uthe has worked with Richmond on several occasions.

"He is professional, ethical, experienced and just all around very knowledgeable about his profession, and I think the people of Alpine County should be very pleased to have someone of that caliber holding that office over there," he said.

Arts C2
Entertainment C3
Religion C4
Comics C6
Health C8

SIERRA SCENE

C1

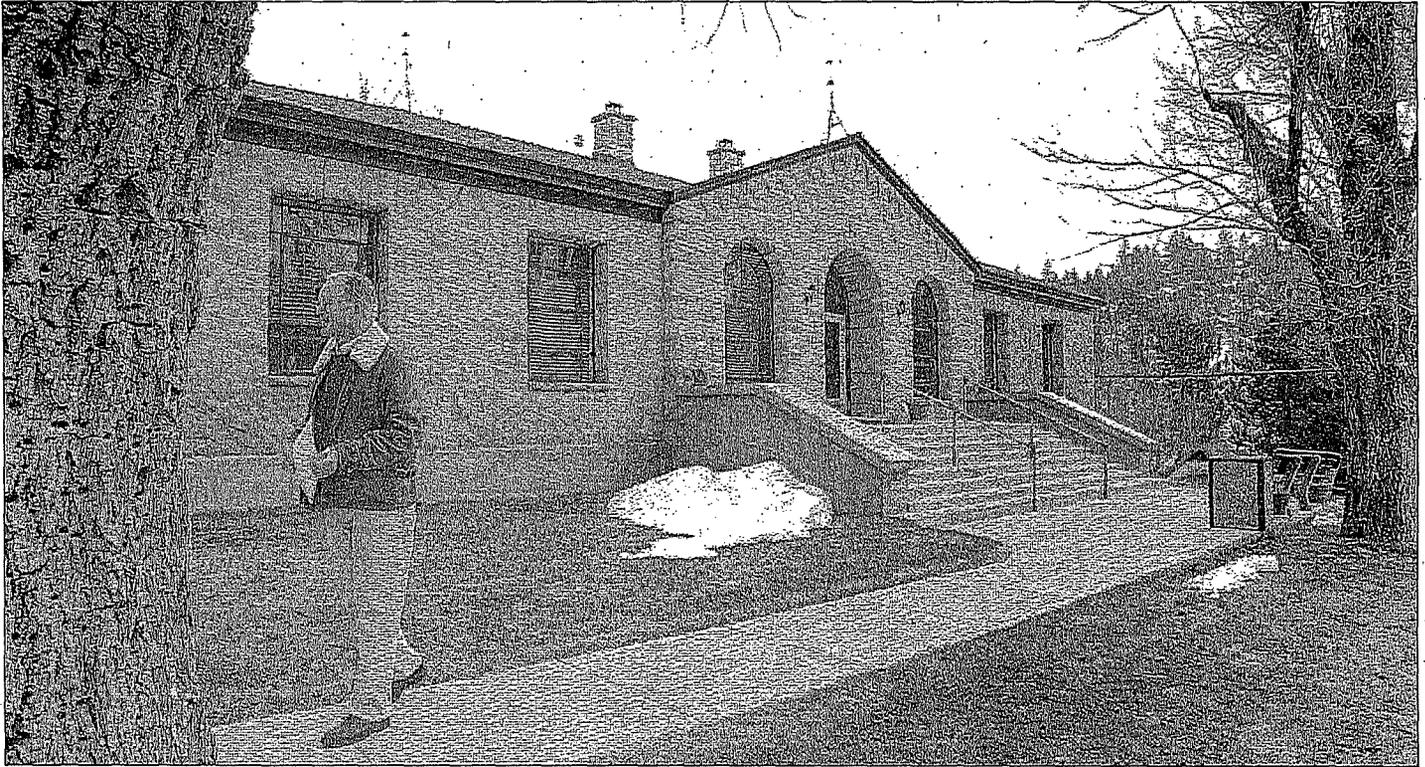
South Lake Tahoe, Calif. *

Tahoe Daily Tribune

Weekend edition, February 18 - 20, 2005



Alpine County District Attorney Will Richmond, outside the courthouse, serves California's smallest county.



Alpine County District Attorney Will Richmond, outside the courthouse, serves California's smallest county.

Law in a land of streams, meadows, ski slopes

Alpine County courtroom brings nostalgia

By William Ferchland
Tribune staff writer

MARKLEEVILLE — The only courthouse in Alpine County holds four jury trials each year. The blue synthetic leather seats show no sign of wear, unlike the enclosed law books dating back to the 19th century that adorn the surrounding back walls in glass bookcases.

Law in a town of 1,200 can be scarce and memorable. Pull it back to a county of 1,200 people and you get something more historic, visceral and unique.

Formed in 1864, Alpine County is the smallest county in California based on its population. Two ski resorts, Kirkwood Mountain Resort in the north and Bear Valley in the south, balloon that population with visitors and part-time employees.

As the only county exempt from the one-day/one-trial jury system, each season has a week designated for a jury trial. In winter, when Highway 4 is closed between the county seat, Markleeville, and Bear Valley, residents who cannot travel to Markleeville are excused from duty.

Will Richmond, the county's district attorney, enjoys his job since it allows him to also work as a circuit prosecutor in other counties handling environmental issues.

"I came into the mountains to do environment work for a collection of coun-

ties," he said. "I jumped at the chance to become the Alpine County district attorney."

The county, with its 743 square miles of mostly pristine meadows, fishable lakes and craggy wilderness, creates many memories. Private practice attorney Bart Weitzenberg brightens at his own.

In Weitzenberg's arsenal of attorney stories, it ranks at the very top and has not been matched by colleagues in more than three decades of practicing law.

It was an Alpine County case, about 15 years ago, the Sonoma County attorney recalled. It was a noncriminal matter.

Two skiers were enjoying Kirkwood Meadows when they hit an unseen cliff.

Weitzenberg sued Kirkwood Mountain Resort for not installing boundaries. At the onset, the case was the strangest he experienced, he said.

"It was a time warp back to the days of the old Wild West," he said. "The judge ran out of prospective jurors to choose from and we needed some more so he utilized a statute rarely used anymore and authorized the courtroom bailiff to go out and round up citizens of the county as prospective jurors."

Barflies and diners at the former Cutthroat Saloon, ice fishermen and bank tellers and their customers were rounded up. When the judge asked if there was any reason for them not to serve as jurors, all but one raised their hand. The

only one who sat still was the judge's niece, Weitzenberg said.

During the jury's deliberation, Weitzenberg fly-fished in his suit at the East Fork Carson River, which runs next to the courthouse.

And, in the first time in history, the jury sided with the plaintiff, a win for the Sonoma County attorney and his client, he said.

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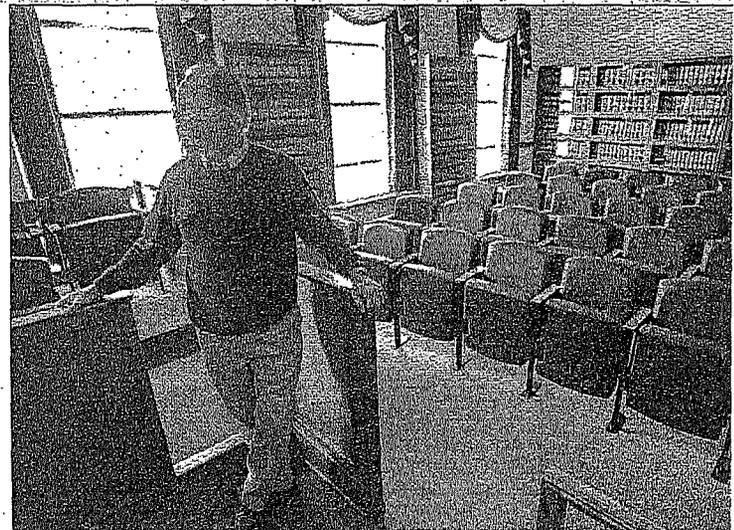
anybody has heard," he said.

Richmond said, those times have passed.

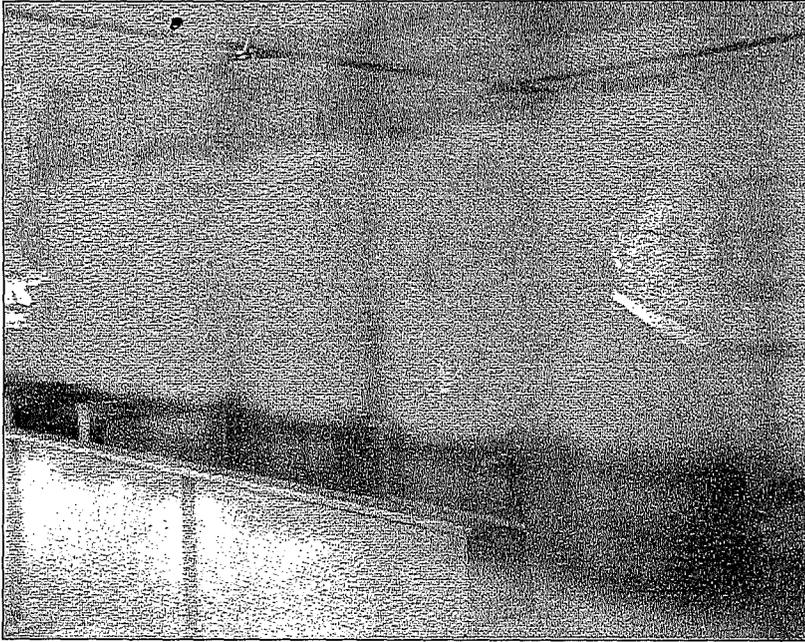
"We're not pulling people out the bars for our juries anymore," he said.

But the small-town charm is there. Alpine County Superior Court Judge Richard Specchio said divorces are minimal.

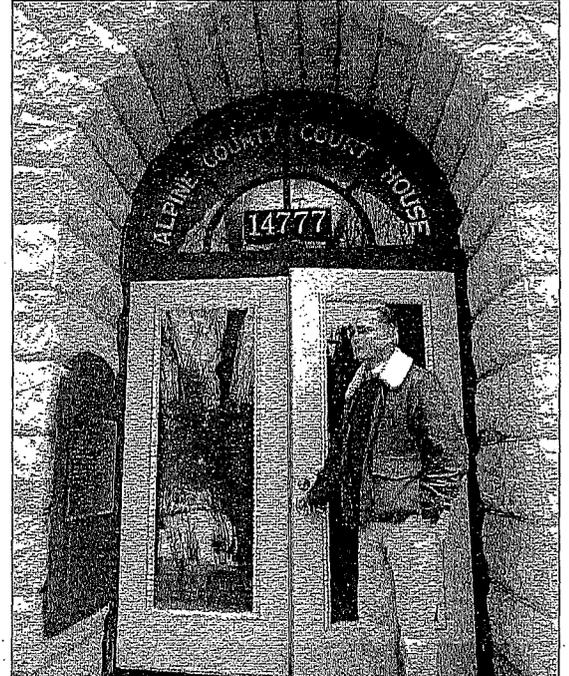
"It's just a beautiful little town," he said. "It just has the nicest people in the world; a real cohesion over there."



Richmond in the tastefully decorated Alpine County courtroom.



Richmond is reflected in the law book cabinetry housing publications dating back to



Law in a land of streams, meadows, mountains and skiing

BY WILLIAM FERCHLAND
Nevada Appeal News Service

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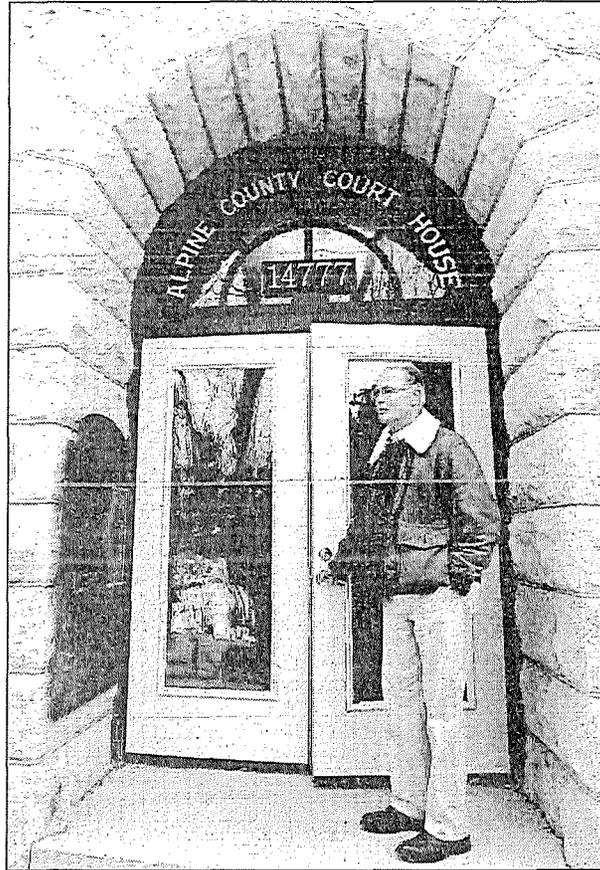
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Former Alpine County Judge Will Richmond enters the Alpine County Courthouse.

DAN THRIFT
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MOUNTAIN LIVING

High Sierra county cut in half in winter

By Eric Bailey
LOS ANGELES TIMES

BEAR VALLEY — Each winter, snow drapes the shoulders of the Sierra Nevada with drifts that divide and conquer, cutting off one side of California from the other. Up here in Alpine County, the Stephens family has made overcoming that blockade a frosty tradition.

Instead of piling into an SUV to visit grandparents on the opposite slope of the mountains, each member of the clan climbs aboard a snowmobile.

As they have every Christmas and most Thanksgivings for a dozen years, the kids follow Dad up the snow-custed state Route 4, over the icy crest of Ebbetts Pass and down to Grandma's house for turkey dinner.

Practicality, not adventure, prompts these and other wind-whipped treks. Snow closes Route 4 to cars all winter. The alternative route to the Sierra's far side is a circuitous seven-hour round trip through four counties. A snowmobile cuts the journey to less than an hour each way.

Rick Stephens, a no-nonsense Alpine County sheriff's sergeant with a walrus mustache, shrugs as if it's no big deal. Such is life in California's cleaved counties.

Even in the most placid season, the state's highest ridge-line looms as an obstacle to civilization's spread. Big winters like this year's turn that physical division into a brick wall, a seasonal shutdown that shapes life in ways big and insignificant.

In lofty Alpine County, where 9,000-foot peaks capped by abundant snow fit the region's name, package delivery firms won't guarantee overnight delivery from one side of the county to the other, though it's barely 20 miles as the crow flies.

Courts in Markleeville, the county seat, don't bother with

winter jury duty for residents who can be marooned on the wrong slope. A county building official once drove 15 hours through two snowstorms to inspect a new foundation.

Randy Gibson, Alpine's longtime building chief, endured that arduous trip in the winter of 2003. He said it was not so much a hassle as "just another day in paradise."

The disruption hits in the six counties that straddle the Sierra to the north and south of Lake Tahoe: Alpine, El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, Sierra and Plumas. Each came into being shortly after the Gold Rush, their boundaries drawn to suit the need for towns and mineral assay offices close to the mines.

Nancy Thornburg, a longtime Alpine County resident, says the county lines spring from an early mistake, the drawing of the state boundary east of the Sierra.

Folks on the Sierra's east side may live in California, but they shop and send their kids to school in Nevada. They watch Nevada TV stations. They keep abreast of Nevada politics.

"Some idiot way back when drew the state boundary at the wildflower line on the east side instead of where it should have been, up on the summit," Thornburg said. "If they'd done it right to start with, we'd be part of Nevada and everyone would be happy."

In some spots, the cultural divide is deeper than the snowdrifts.

Consider that Sierra County's annual Kit and Caboodle fair on the east side rarely attracts anyone from west slope towns. Vice versa for the west side's annual mountain bike festival.

"They've got their little world over there, and we've got ours," said Brooks Mitchell, a county supervisor.

"It's basically been that way for about 150 years."

As brutal as winter driving conditions get in Mitchell's neck of the woods, travel is tougher to the south, as the Sierra peaks rise ever higher. Interstate 80, the bustling highway into Lake Tahoe's north shore, tops out a tad higher than 7,000 feet, but farther south, the elevation of Ebbetts Pass is more than 8,700 feet, Sonora Pass reaches 9,600 feet and Yosemite National Park's Tioga Pass is nearly 10,000 feet.

The California Department of Transportation shuts down the three passes each winter, padlocking metal gates at the foot of the highway ascent on each side of the Sierra, sometimes for more than half the year.

Residents greet it as a part of life. And adapt.

"The barrier is as much psychological as it is physical," said Eric Jung, a real estate agent in Bear Valley, located amid the conifers on the Sierra's west slope.

Jung knows every bend in the road, battling long winter drives during four terms on the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. The lovely journey of 40 miles over Ebbetts Pass in the summer swells to nearly 160 miles on the circuitous winter route. There is no snowmobiling for him: "I have to have my heated cocoon with my CD player."

Alpine school trustee Jema Kimmel used to make the long drive across the mountains for board meetings (her record for the journey is a couple days away from home because she was snowed in).

Then she got resourceful. Kimmel now spends board-meeting night cozying up beside a speakerphone in the teachers' room of Bear Valley School as her peers gather in Markleeville. Sometimes a teacher or parent joins her to



Snowmobiler Chris E. John Crawford, far ri

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Others turn resc in a more adventu tion.

Bruce Orvis, w/ Bear Valley was strapped a mount the back of his sno ter Route 4 shut dc ter before last. snowline faded on side, he jumped on ride the last few appointment at 1 building departme

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LOS ANGELES TIMES

Snowmobiler Chris Engelesman gets fuel on the trail between Bear Valley and Markleeville. Alpine County Sheriff John Crawford, far right, says he makes the trek seven or eight times each winter.

listen in, but "most of the time I'm there by myself."

Others turn resourcefulness in a more adventurous direction.

Bruce Orvis, who runs the Bear Valley water system, strapped a mountain bike to the back of his snowmobile after Route 4 shut down the winter before last. When the snowline faded on the Nevada side, he jumped on the bike to ride the last few miles to an appointment at the county building department.

"It was pretty exhausting," he said. "But it sure is boring making that drive in a car."

A few years before, Paul Peterson journeyed to an Alpine County Chamber of Commerce meeting in Markleeville on cross-country skis.

Peterson said he did the math and learned that it would take less time to ski than to drive. So he packed a water bottle, some matches and a Swiss Army knife, just in case. As he set out, a local snowplow operator suggested he was crazy.

But the intrepid chamber member enjoyed some tactical

advantages. Peterson, 46, has wintered in Bear Valley for three decades, runs a cross-country ski business and knows this swath of the Sierra as well as he knows his living room. The scenic 2.5-hour journey went without a hitch, Peterson said. "It was a peak lifetime experience."

Most contemporary denizens of Alpine County — where 93 percent of the terrain is public forest and the population of 1,250 is the smallest among California counties — forgo the snowshoes, skis and snowmobiles. They either jump in their cars and grumble or don't make the trip at all.

"I can drive to San Francisco faster than I can get to Markleeville," said Phil Davis, a Bear Valley resident for nearly four decades. "I simply avoid it."

Some are not so lucky. Leonard Turnbeaugh, Alpine County public works director, drives from his Markleeville office to meetings each month in Bear Valley. Not long ago, a storm forced him to reroute all the way to Lake Tahoe, adding at

least 50 miles to an already lengthy trip.

He arrived home at 9 in the evening, exhausted but happy to be back on the side he considers a Shangri-La compared to snowed-in Bear Valley. "They don't like it over there when I tell them ancient man had enough sense to migrate."

Stephens, the Alpine County sheriff's sergeant, has lived on both sides of the divide. He grew up in Markleeville, where his dad ran the towing service. But a love of snowmobile racing led him as an adult to Bear Valley, where the entire community — adults going to work, kids heading to school — gets around on the motorized sleds.

He gave up racing a few years ago to serve as pit chief for his son, 20-year-old Luke, a racer last seen on TV at the Winter X-Games. Dad still gets plenty of time on a snowmobile patrolling the town's snow-decked streets. Stephens and his two deputies also make runs up Route 4 on weekends, rescuing busted-up snowboarders and stranded tourists.

R-C
Feb. 25, 2005

STRIKE



SHANNON LITZ/The R-C

50-plus Club: Dolores Clark of Alpine County bowls at the Silver Strike Lanes in the Gardnerville Ranchos on Wednesday. Clark is a member of the 50-plus Club in Alpine County. For more information on the program call Sherri Dennis at Alpine County Health and Human Services, (530) 694-2235.

R.C. Feb. 25, 2005

Diamond Valley students hit the slopes

By **Teddy Williams**
Special to the R-C

During the month of late January into February the entire Diamond Valley School went up to Kirkwood for fun-filled days of cross country skiing. The schools different grades went up in groups.

During the 6-8th grade trips we went up in one big group and did some of the harder trails, like Agony. That was eventually rewarded by a fun downhill slope called Ecstasy. After going for a long ski trip we get to eat a great lunch and then have free time. During free time we can either stay on the starting hill and just mess around there or we can take one of the many exciting trails such as the Snowshoe Thomson trail where you read about the life of Snowshoe Thomson who brought mail and other things between here and Placerville.

A special thanks to Andy Lovell who went up to the mountain with every group, our awesome bus drivers Harold,



Provided by Diamond Valley School

Winter wonders: Phoebe Hamilton, left and Taylor Emby participated in cross country skiing at Kirkwood Resort.

Pete, and Leonard drove the kids to and from Kirkwood, and all the teacher, parent chaperones and ski instructors that spent their time with us.

This week was ski week where Kirkwood hosted Diamond Valley School students at reduced priced ski tickets and

equipment.

So even if you didn't have your own equipment, for a fraction of the cost the bus could take you skiing.

■ Teddy Williams is an eighth-grader at Diamond Valley School in Woodfords, Calif.

St. Patrick's Day party

Alpine County Historical Society is celebrating St. Patrick's Day with a party on

March 17 at Turtle Rock Park. No-host social hour will be at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:15 p.m. and a short general meeting at 7 p.m. This is in place of February's general meeting. The His-

torical Society will provide corned beef and cabbage. Participants are asked to bring an appetizer, salad, bread or dessert. For information, call the Historical Society at (530)

694-2317.

■ Call Jo Rafferty at 782-5121 or e-mail jrafferty@recordcourier.com with Alpine County story ideas or suggestions.

Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday

The Alpine County Board of Supervisors will meet at 9 a.m. Tuesday in the County Administrative Office Building in Markleeville, Calif.

Continued updates will be presented by U.S. Forest Service representatives and on the Bear Valley Summer Recreation Program. The board could decide on priorities for the planning department.

Transfer of property for construction of a new USFS guard station could be approved.

Chamber of Commerce to meet on March 16

The Alpine County Chamber of Commerce will meet at 5:30 p.m. March 16 at Turtle Rock Park in Markleeville, Calif. Chamber members and families are invited. Members can showcase their businesses with table top displays. For information, call (530) 694-2317.

Volunteers needed

Volunteer opportunities for

the upcoming Tour of the Alps — Death Ride on July 9 in Markleeville, Calif. are available. Contact Death Ride manager Joe Marzocco at info@deathride.com.

Nancy Thornburg

From: "Nancy Thornburg" <nthornburg@gbis.com>
To: "William Ferchland" <wferchland@tahoedailytribune.com>
Sent: Monday, February 28, 2005 4:38 PM
Subject: Re: Fwd(2): Letter to the Editor

Caption to photo: Will Richmond, who is a fine DA, is not and never has been an Alpine County Judge.

PP1. The court may hold any number of trials in a year. Trials are scheduled during four months of the year.

The "blue synthetic leather seats show no sign of wear" because they are practically brand new.

PP2. I hope you were not implying that law in a county of 1,200 people "can be scarce and memorable". We tend to take pride in our law enforcement personnel and our court system.

What do you mean by "more historic, visceral and unique" ?

PP7 Alpine County has 776 square miles, not 743 ("Alpine Heritage") square miles. Actually, most of it is in forest land, mostly US Forest Service and some BLM.

Who is Bart Weitzenberg? If he has "an arsenal of attorney stories", some or many concerning Alpine County, it would be very nice if he would share them with our local history collectors. His stories have not been matched by his colleagues in what way?

PP10 It seems unlikely that skiers would "hit an unseen cliff".

PP13 Barflies and diners at the local saloon are certainly not the only prospective jurors that were sought when they ran out of summoned jurors.

fishermen would probably not be very close by and are likely not local citizens. And 15 years ago we didn't even have a bank any more.

PP 14 The East Fork Carson River does not flow by the Courthouse. Markleeville Creek flows by the Courthouse. The East Fork is a mile or two away.

PP 15 "...in the first time in history, ..." ??????????? I seriously doubt that.

PP 16 I also seriously doubt that it was the "most unique case anybody has heard..." although since that is a direct quote I suppose it's Weitzenberg who is responsible for that one.

PP 19 It's true that divorces are minimal. So are marriages. So are deaths.

Last paragraph: Judge Specchio is correct: it is a beautiful town, and it has the nicest people in the world. It also has an Archives with lots of interesting history in it. It has an active historical society. And it has a very good museum with a treasure trove of Alpine County history, documents, photographs, and artifacts.

Forgive me if I sounded a little testy. I have been a member of the Historical Society of Alpine County since its formation in 1964, am a historian and a writer, have been a journalist, and was the Museum Director for fifteen years. I know from experience that whatever gets written and printed tends to go down in the public mind, now and in the future, as "accurate" and "historical" which is one reason that articles such as this need to be seriously researched for accuracy even if they are somewhat "tongue in cheek". There are people here in the community who could have

helped with that.

I would like to know more about the case Weitzenberg was citing as it sounds vaguely familiar.

(rs.) Nancy Thornburg, Markleeville

----- Original Message -----

From: "William Ferchland" <wferchland@tahoedailytribune.com>

To: <nthornburg@gbis.com>

Sent: Monday, February 28, 2005 12:14 PM

Subject: Re: Fwd(2): Letter to the Editor

> Ms. Thornburg,

>

>

> I received your e-mail about the story about Will Richmond, Alpine County's

> district attorney. I'd like to correspond with you on your complaints.

> What exactly would you like to discuss?

>

> William Ferchland

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Letters to the editor

RECORD
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Guest opinion on Sorensen's sewer contained error

EDITOR:

In the Feb. 9 issue of The Record-Courier, you printed a Guest Opinion by Nancy Thornburg of Markleeville, which contained untruthful information about Sorensen's Resort and our septic discharge system.

Sorensen's is monitored by both the county and the state of California and has a very good

track record when it comes to septic discharge. We have not been out of compliance with our waste discharge permit requirements, and the "situation" Thornburg writes about is our voluntary effort to upgrade our septic system.

We were not required to do this by any agency, and there were no problems precipitating our decision to do so. In fact, Alpine County has a long-standing contract with the South Tahoe Public Utility District, which allows 150,000 gallons a day of treated sewage from Alpine County to be put into their system of approximately 6 million gallons a day. We have had a 10-year contract with Alpine County which allows Sorensen's to hook into this line. And it makes perfect sense, as the South Tahoe effluent line runs right through our property. Our addition would add approximately 4,000 gallons of treated effluent daily, which is a drop in the bucket for a system that can hold a flow up to 8.5 million gallons a day.

We have been good citizens, business owners, and stewards of our land and the public lands surrounding us for over 23 years. The effort to improve our discharge system is not costing the

The Record-Courier ■ Gardnerville, Ne

taxpayers extra money. The job of these public agencies is to regulate water quality in the first place. In fact, however, it has cost us thousands of dollars to go through the public permitting process and we have been willing to do so for the long-term improvement of our property and our environment. We have the approvals of Alpine County, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the South Pacific Utility District to put a new and innovative sewage treatment facility in place.

Nancy Thornburg, in fact, has been previously reminded in writing by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board that much of her information was incorrect about the operation of our septic system. We hope you will now know and understand, as well as your readers, that Sorensen's Resort, a historic business entity with roots in the Carson Valley, has been good for our communities in California and Nevada by continuously trying to improve our operation from guest services to septic systems.

John and Patty Brissenden
Hope Valley

with the Califo Conservation Corps, gives a tour of the organization's building Meyers. members can share a room, Edmond, 23, said privacy is the biggest bonus of the new facility.

Conservation Corps faring well in Meyers

ty says
good'

of kids," Gordon said. "Out of a group of 10 of them, maybe two are bad seeds and that gives them a bad rap."

Gordon said the bad ones are Corps members being noisy or disrespectful. But in general, she said, there haven't been any significant problems since the Tahoe Center of the California Conservation Corps moved into Meyers in December.

It took three weeks for members of the Tahoe Center to move from an old ski lodge at the top of Echo Summit into the three-story building behind Lira's Super-

market.

But it took longer than that for the director of the Tahoe Center, Gary Ray, to bolster enough support from the Meyers community for it to welcome the organization, which hires out crews of 18 to 23 year olds for forest management and other conservation work, back into Meyers.

"At first I was hesitant, but that was only because of word of mouth," said Steve Parker, manager of Lira's Super-

See **Corps**, Back page

Ski resorts recover from brutal holiday storms

By Susan Wood
Tribune staff writer

Talk about a recovery.

The three South Shore ski resorts have all but fully gained back the business lost at the end of December and beginning of January when Mother Nature brought on the snow too much too fast, closing roads and chairlifts during the height of the holidays.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort could end up with a record year, President Tim Cohee said Wednesday.

The Alpine County ski area shows a 15 percent increase this season compared to last year. A record year hovers at about 350,000 skier visits in a season.

"We've recovered really, really well. We've had good luck and

See **Resorts**, Back page

Bear killing case hits Placer County DA's desk

By Megan Michelson
Tribune News Service

TAHOE CITY — One month after the killing of three sleeping bears under a Tahoma-area home, a Placer County Deputy District Attorney began investigating the incident this week to determine if legal action should be taken against the hired hunters and homeowners.

The Department of Fish and Game submitted an incident report to Placer County Deputy District Attorney Chris Cattran, who will review the documents and determine if criminal charges should be filed.

Russell Tonda, a Granite Bay resident and homeowner in the Chamberlands neighborhood, obtained a depredation permit for the killing of the one bear he

thought had caused more than \$100,000 worth of damage to his home and was still sleeping underneath his house.

Tonda hired three licensed hunters, who shot and killed all three bears on Feb. 4, although their permit only allowed for the removal of one bear. The hunters reportedly told DFG Warden Vada Comacho, who arrived on the scene of the shootings, that the bears had charged them, forcing them to kill all three.

BEAR League Executive Director Ann Bryant disputes this, saying that the hunters wrongfully killed a mother and her two cubs — a family of bears that Bryant said she offered to remove from the house weeks before the shooting. Bryant said she would like to see legal action taken against the homeowners and the three hired hunters.

"In all the cases previously where this has happened (the DFG) has turned a blind eye and have never taken (legal action)," Bryant wrote in an e-mail to the Tahoe World. "However, as dramatically opposed as (the BEAR League) has normally been in the past, this time we will support the DFG and will walk by their side in hopes of winning a conviction against these cold-blooded killers."

The DFG, as a state agency, cannot file charges on its own, but can recommend to the district attorney to take legal action. According to DFG spokesman Pat Foy, the agency submitted a report but is not suggesting that a crime has occurred.

"What we submitted was an internal document called a wildlife incident report, which is when something takes place that

is related to wildlife but not related to crime, like when a mountain lion runs through a school yard," Foy said.

DFG Capt. Mark Lucero confirmed the department's actions.

"We've gathered the facts of the incident and submitted them to the district attorney for his review," he said. "He'll deem what, if any, action should be taken."

Bryant, as well as two other BEAR League members who were present at the scene, will also be submitting witness statements to Cattran for his review.

Since the killing of hibernating bears with a valid depredation permit does not violate state law, there's no guarantee the incident will warrant prosecution. It will be up to Cattran to decide if there is sufficient evidence for criminal charges.

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Sports

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By Megan Michelson
Tribune News Service

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Bear killing case hits Placer County DAs des

is related to wildlife crime, like when a crime, like when a

job that brings her into contact with groups of California Conservation Corps members when they come in for a snack.

"Overall they're a pretty good bunch lodge at the top of Echo Summit into the three-story building behind Lira's Super-

It took three weeks for members of the Tahoe Center to move from an old ski Vation Corps moved into Meyers in December.

18 to 23 year olds for forest management and other conservation work back into Meyers.

"At first I was hesitant, but that was only because of word of mouth," said Steve Parker, manager of Lira's Super-

See Corps, Back page

the business lost at the end of December any when Mother Nature brought on the closing roads and chairlifts during the Kirkwood Mountain Resort could end President Tim Cohee said Wednesday.

The Alpine County ski area shows a record season compared to last year. A record 350,000 skier visits in a season.

"We've recovered really, really well. We

Thursday, March 3, 2005

Businesses

From Page A1

according to Andy Chapman, spokesman for the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association. It runs the phone line.

It's difficult to say all businesses in town are up or down, with some doing better than others at different points in time.

breaking any records," Hamsch said. "It reinforces to me the need for marketing. There's so much heavy competition."

To Inn By the Lake General Manager Dan McHale, that's enough to throw out the welcome mat with its best showing. He's opted to participate in the LTVA campaign. McHale has seen a steady number of reservations come in for the spring, but he's not taking any chances in the competitive game of tourism.

Paul Nanzig, Rainbow Mountain manager, has seen a recent uptick in the last month. The Ski Run Boulevard retailer and rental shop has seen a number of skiers diverted from the Rockies and the Northwest to Tahoe. As it turns out, the business is up over last year at this time. He declined to say by how much.

That's precisely what the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority had in mind.

February has been good, but we're hoping for some midweek business. Of course, it's not as strong as we'd like," McHale said. "It helps that the snow conditions are so great."

"We saw losses since the (Heavenly) gondola opened, but in spite of that, we're experiencing a gain this season," he said. "I attribute it to the marketing and the parking."

As a means to keep up the momentum, the lake's tourism agency plans to spend \$25,000 to target its flagship market — the Northern California drive-up visitor. It asked lodging properties to participate at \$200 a pop.

For when they show up, McHale will be ready with more amenities this spring.

It appears that with less parking available near Stateline, some skiers have opted to park at the California Base Lodge and stop to rent equipment along the way.

LTVA Executive Director Patrick Kaler will soon bring final plans to his board on the number of cooperative partners and media. The idea is to use radio, public relations and the Internet as vehicles.

The Inn has beefed up its breakfast bar to include more food with protein and installed a fitness center with at least a dozen Nautilus machines. All the rooms have been equipped with microwaves, and the suites have received upgrades.

"It works in our favor to have a horrible parking situation there," he said.

"The feedback we got was that February was pretty good, but March was looking lean," LTVA Chairman Tim Smith said. "Some people see Presidents Day weekend as the end of the season, and we say: 'Don't write off Tahoe.'"

"It's a real motivator for us. I think that's true for everything," he said, while swinging open the door of one of the suite's new stainless steel doors.

Then again, Stateline-area businesses may be holding their own.

Gaming wins for the casinos in 2004 were up about 1 percent, and chef Ed Papke at the Chart House on Kingsbury Grade said business has been "awesome" with the snow conditions.

Resorts

From Page A1

year.

Then, Martin Luther King and Presidents Day holiday weekends helped make up the difference.

pushing its closing date to May 1. Kirkwood and Sierra-at Tahoe have not announced tentative closing dates.

from the loss in revenue from the New Year's holiday," Sierra spokeswoman Nicole Belt said, while also speaking for its sister resort, Northstar-at-Tahoe.

great weather," he said. Snow at night and clear skies during the day have kept people coming.

Kirkwood's amenities and marketing focus has also paid off.

For one, a backcountry program called Expedition Kirkwood has put the resort on the adventurer's map. For inbound skiers, high angle grooming has resulted in the finishing off of 11 black diamond runs. And deep snow helps.

"The concept behind the extended-season is we felt it would underscore the great conditions. When we have great conditions like this, we give our season pass holders a few extra weeks," Vice President of Marketing John Wagnon said. "We see enough momentum to carry us into the spring."

The ski area had a record day over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend. And winter break for students last month gave the resort a boost during the middle of the week. To ensure the resort keeps the momentum, it plans to aim a promotion at colleges.

The ski season has proven to be a roller coaster ride for Kirkwood. It had a great start with the earliest opening ever in October. But the storms annihilated visitation from Dec. 30 to Jan. 10. The place was closed off Dec. 30, 31 and Jan. 1, 8 and 9 — constituting 10 percent of the resort's business for a typical

Heavenly Mountain Resort has rolled in an exceptional snow base,

So does Sierra-at-Tahoe. "We've made good progress

"Spring events really help," Belt said.

County sued over timeshare project

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

A group has filed suit in Alpine County Superior Court against the county, disputing its decision to allow a timeshare project without requiring an environmental impact report.

The suit filed by the Friends of Markleeville on Tuesday challenges the Alpine County Board of Supervisor's decision to amend its general plan as the first step in approval of the Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge project without first preparing the report, according to a report provided by Friends of Markleeville.

"Based upon what was said at the public hearings, it was no surprise," said county counsel Dennis Crabb.

The developer has already signed an indemnity agreement relieving the county from paying any legal fees in the event of litigation, Crabb said. The suit was handed over to the developer Tom Abdoos of Markleeville U.S.A. on Tuesday.

The proposed project includes 14 commercial spaces, a 25-room lodge, 49 cabins to be sold as fractional timeshares and related infrastructure — water supply and storage, roadways and a wastewater facility.

Another case that took place about two months ago, Pocket Protectors vs. the City of Sacramento, ruled in favor of the people, according to Crabb. This in turn resulted in more strict standards regarding when an environmental impact report, the more extensive environmental study, should be required over a less comprehensive mitigated negative declaration.

"The new standard went toward having to

prepare an EIR," said Crabb.

Crabb said since the court's decision other cases challenging the lack of reports on projects have been popping up all over the state.

"Alpine County is far from alone," he said.

Crabb said the next step for the Friends of Markleeville is to assemble all the documents and prepare them for submission to the court.

"Under the California Environmental Quality Act, it is mandatory that the next step is to hold a settlement conference, with the plaintiff, the defendant and their respective principals present," said Crabb. "This is designed to see if they can settle out of court."

If the case is not settled, then hearings will proceed.

"We're going to fight them and feel confident that we'll kick their rears," said Abdoos. "We have excellent attorneys. We're not all that worried."

Three lawyers are in the Markleeville U.S.A. legal team, including a California environmental attorney Whit Manley, the former Alpine County district attorney and county counsel Tim Pemberton and a Reno firm.

Abdoos said that he feels the Friends of Markleeville who are fighting the development are just a small percentage and that most of the people in Markleeville support the project.

"There's a small percentage, only 10 or 12 of them, who are fighting this," he said. "We have had so many people come by the restaurant and call us and say 'keep fighting.' There are so many people against the Friends of Markleeville."

"Only the people who are angry attend the meetings. The people who are happy with things are the silent majority."

"It's unfortunate that these people are calling themselves environmentalists when they are just trying to stop me."

"It doesn't affect me, it affects all these people who wanted jobs," he said.

"They can delay me, but never in a million years are they going to stop me. It's just frustrating."

Attorney Susan Brandt-Hawley of the Brandt-Hawley Law Group will represent Friends of Markleeville.

"The petition for writ of mandamus asks the court to set aside the project approval while an EIR is prepared as required by the California Environmental Quality Act. This will allow for consideration of project impacts, mitigations and alternatives in light of the significant environmental impacts relating to wastewater, water supply, historic and cultural resources, scenic vistas and aesthetics, fire safety and public service and growth inducement," said Brandt-Hawley.

"An EIR will allow objective consideration of project impacts and feasible alternatives to preserve Markleeville's environment while still allowing a reasonable development project," said Friends of Markleeville members Steve Hibbs and Nancy Thornburg, both Markleeville residents.

"This will give the Board of Supervisors more information upon which to base a decision. The county's technical advisory committee and planning commission have raised numerous concerns about the project's environmental impacts as have many residents and property owners in the Markleeville area."

Layoffs threaten Diamond Valley School

School staff cuts take county by surprise

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

One of California's distinguished schools is in danger of losing some key players, according to a teachers' union official.

"We have a championship team," said district teacher Joe Voss, a member of the Alpine County Teachers Association, of proposed layoffs at Diamond Valley School. "We're over-budget, so let's get rid of the quarterback and the star runningback."

Parents, teachers and administrators at the school were taken by surprise Tuesday when they heard about an Alpine County School District Board meeting taking place that night concerning the layoff of five district staff members, including two full-time teachers and Diamond Valley's principal.

About 60 people, many with less than a few hours' notice, attended the meeting regarding the school with 87 children currently enrolled.

"The public was adamant about making sure they were there and making their opinions heard," said Voss, who is on the negotiating and bargaining team for the county.

District Superintendent Jim Parsons said the potential cuts are due to a \$240,000 deficit, but some parents and teachers see it as a retaliation.

California law requires that school staff members be notified by March 15 if there is a chance they will be laid

See **School** on page 10

Continued

School: Layoffs possible

Continued from page 1

off. The final decision on layoffs won't be made until the May 15 board meeting, according to Parsons.

Parsons said a lot of the problem is the declining enrollment at Diamond Valley, a kindergarten- through eighth-grade school.

"We've been one of those places caught with declining enrollment," said Parsons. "The school was staffed for 130 kids, and we now have 87."

With a budget that's \$240,000 in the hole, Parsons said the district can't afford to keep on six full-time teachers and the principal.

"When I first got to this district there was no principal," said Parsons. "Now we have a principal running a school of 87 kids. It was either the principal or a teacher."

The Diamond Valley School staff, who will be noticed following the board's decision on Tuesday, are: principal Katy Hadley; first-grade teacher Robin McCully; sixth- through eighth-grade Spanish and technology teacher and librarian Rita Lovell; and an American Indian Education Reading Program instructor Deirdre Wallace. In addition, the district would lose one of two teachers at Bear Valley High School, Stephanie Bowen. The reading program as well as a library media position would be cut altogether, according to Voss.

"You simply cannot run a school without a principal, kindergarten teacher, library-media teacher and technology teacher," said parent Chris Branscombe. "This is our children's education, not to mention the livelihood of those who have chosen to spend their career guiding our children to a better future."

Parsons, who is in his 17th year as superintendent, said he thinks that once the budget is worked out funding should be available to keep some of the staff.

"I'm pretty certain not all these people will be laid off by the time the budget is worked," said Parsons. "My guess is one or two people may lose their jobs out of the five."

The average teachers salary in similar districts begins at \$36,720 and tops out at \$57,429, he said.

"We've run deficits and paid the money out of contingency funding for the last three years," said Parsons, "but the number

of kids keeps going down. In three years we've lost 31 kids at Diamond Valley School."

With the current state allotment at \$5,598 per child, Parsons said, "That's \$173,000-plus we've lost."

Parsons said he plans to hold a public budget workshop sometime after April 10 when the district meets on the budget.

"The more people understand what's going on, the better off we'll be," he said.

However, some teachers and parents blame the layoffs on past issues with the district.

Early last year court proceedings were impending about a reading specialist who began at a salary that union officials said was illegal, according to Voss.

"She just happened to be my wife," said Parsons, "which made it real juicy."

"A couple of other people paid on the same salary schedule were not asked about it," he said.

In September, Parson's wife resigned and the case was dropped.

"Many of the school district staff see the actions as retaliatory," said Ginger Craik, a teacher at Diamond Valley School who is not being noticed, in a letter to The Record-Courier. "She resigned at the beginning of the

school employees, as well as members of the community, believe that he is now making good on those threats."

While Voss doesn't deny the district has been grappling with financial issues for years, he said the union doesn't agree with the district on numbers.

"One of the critical issues was how they went about mak-

most with the students."

Diamond Valley School was given the California Distinguished School award for the first time for two of the five years that principal Hadley has been its principal, he said.

Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Letters to the editor

RED
COURIER
3-4-05

Termination notices not justified

EDITOR:

The Alpine County Board of Education convened a special meeting on Tuesday evening, March 1. The people of Alpine County barely received legal notice of the meeting because the agenda was minimally posted just 25½ hours prior to the start of the meeting. (24 hours public posting is required.)

The reason for the special meeting was to serve termination notices on four teachers and the Diamond Valley School principal. The audience was told repeatedly that this had to be done in an emergency meeting because the regular March 10 meeting did not come before the March 15 deadline for such action.

Many of the school district staff see the actions as strictly retaliatory. The school board hired the wife of the superintendent to fill a

reading specialist position three years ago. She was placed on a special salary schedule, so that she could receive a much higher salary than other teachers. This action was a clear violation of California Education Code as well as a violation of the teaching contract. After meeting with a labor mediator, both the district and the teachers association mutually agreed to properly place the reading specialist, according to years and qualifications. The school board followed with another contract violation by placing her too high on the regular salary schedule. She resigned at the beginning of the current school year amid a flurry of threats made to the teachers by the superintendent. Many school employees, as well as members of the community, believe that he is now making good on those threats.

The school board does not discuss controversial issues in public. A large part of the community was at the meeting in unanimous opposition to the actions of the school board, and some solutions were offered to the "money crisis." Many questions were raised about why this was never brought to the public's attention sooner, giving all the interested parties time to review the budgets and submit their input. With a "money crisis" looming, the school board and superintendent decided that cutting the most critical components of the education process, the teachers, programs and the principal, was the best approach to take. These decisions are com-

The Record-Courier ■ Gardnerville, Nevada

ing from a district and superintendent which has always gone by the motto of "Whatever is best for the students!" In spite of this, the school board voted as it had intended, without discussion. Dr. Parsons, the superintendent, stated that workshops or hearings on the matter "probably would make no difference" in the way the board voted.

Ginger Craik
Markleeville

Sunday
Focus

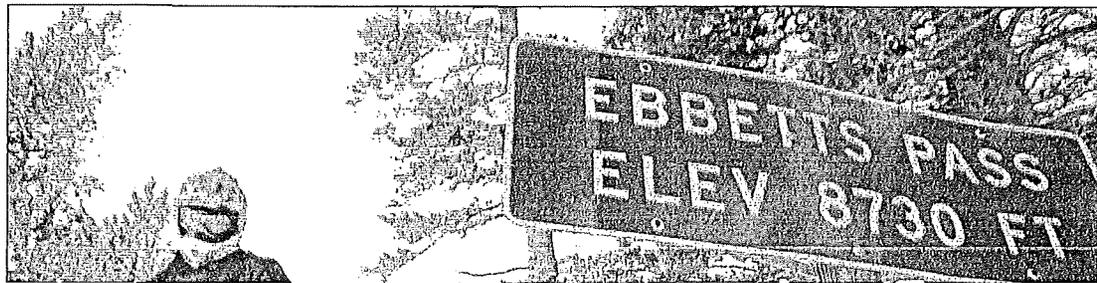
Index
Your TimeC2
PeopleC3
TravelC4

A PERSONAL APPEAL

C1
Sunday
March 6, 2005

Sierra Split

A region divided by a white curtain





ROBERT DURELL/LOS ANGELES TIMES

Alpine County Deputy Sheriff Rick Stephens, zooms by the summit of Ebbetts Pass on Highway 4, Feb. 1. Every winter snow closes the pass forcing residents to make a three-hour drive between Markleeville and Bear Valley or make an hour snowmobile drive.

BY ERIC BAILEY
Los Angeles Times

BEAR VALLEY, Calif. — Each winter, snow drapes the shoulders of the Sierra Nevada with drifts that divide and conquer, cutting off one side of California from the other. Up here in Alpine County, the Stephens family has made overcoming that blockade a frosty tradition.

Instead of piling into an SUV to visit grandparents on the opposite slope of the mountains, each member of the clan climbs aboard a snowmobile.

As they have every Christmas and most Thanksgivings for a dozen years, the kids follow Dad up the snow-custed state Route 4, over the icy crest of Ebbetts Pass and down to Grandma's house for turkey dinner.

Practicality, not adventure, prompts these and other wind-whipped treks. Snow closes Route 4 to cars all winter. The alternative route to the Sierra's far side is a circuitous seven-hour round trip



three passes each winter, padlocking metal gates at the foot of the highway ascent on each side of the Sierra, sometimes for more than half the year.

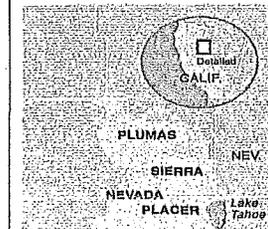
Residents greet it as a part of life. And adapt.

"The barrier is as much psychological as it is physical," said Eric Jung, a real estate agent in Bear Valley, located amid the conifers on the Sierra's west slope.

Jung knows every bend in the road, battling long winter drives during four terms on the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. The lovely journey of 40 miles over Ebbetts Pass in the summer months

Divided counties

Six Northern California counties that straddle the Sierra Nevada are effectively split by winter snowstorms, making travel and commerce difficult.



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Practicality, not adventure, prompts these and other wind-whipped treks. Snow closes Route 4 to cars all winter. The alternative route to the Sierra's far side is a circuitous seven-hour round trip through four counties. A snowmobile cuts the journey to less than an hour each way.

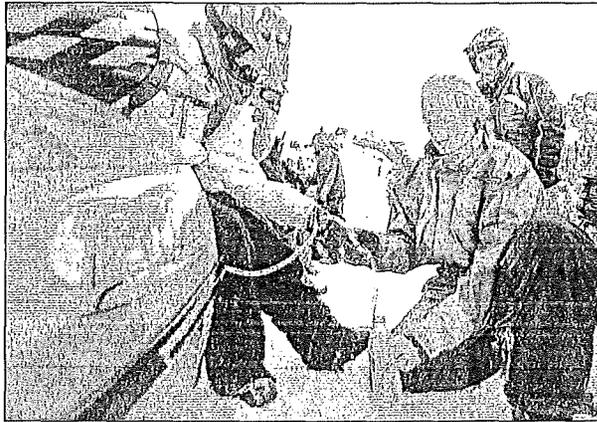
Rick Stephens, a no-nonsense Alpine County sheriff's sergeant with a walrus mustache, shrugs as if it's no big deal. Such is life in California's cleaved counties.

Even in the most placid season, the state's highest ridgeline looms as an obstacle to civilization's spread. Big winters like this year's turn that physical division into a brick wall, a seasonal shutdown that shapes life in ways big and insignificant.

In lofty Alpine County, where 9,000-foot peaks capped by abundant snow fit the region's name, package delivery firms won't guarantee overnight delivery from one side of the county to the other, though it's barely 20 miles as the crow flies.

Courts in Markleeville, the county seat, don't bother with winter jury duty for residents who can be marooned on the wrong slope. A county building official once drove 15 hours through two snowstorms to inspect a new foundation.

Randy Gibson, Alpine's longtime building chief, endured that arduous trip in the winter of 2003. He



Snowmobiler Chris Engelesman gets fuel on the trail between Bear Valley and Markleeville.

said it was not so much a hassle as "just another day in paradise."

The disruption hits in the six counties that straddle the Sierra to the north and south of Lake Tahoe: Alpine, El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, Sierra and Plumas. Each came into being shortly after the Gold Rush, their boundaries drawn to suit the need for towns and mineral assay offices close to the mines.

Nancy Thornburg, a longtime Alpine County resident, says the county lines spring from an early mistake, the drawing of the state boundary east of the Sierra.

Folks on the Sierra's east side may live in California, but they shop and send their kids to school in Nevada. They watch Nevada TV stations. They keep abreast of Nevada politics.

"Some idiot way back when drew the state boundary at the wild-flower line on the east side instead of where it should have been, up on the summit," Thornburg said. "If they'd done it right to start with, we'd be part of Nevada and every-

one would be happy."

In some spots, the cultural divide is deeper than the snowdrifts.

Consider that Sierra County's annual Kit and Caboodle fair on the east side rarely attracts anyone from west slope towns. Vice versa for the west side's annual mountain bike festival.

"They've got their little world over there, and we've got ours," said Brooks Mitchell, a county supervisor. "It's basically been that way for about 150 years."

As brutal as winter driving conditions get in Mitchell's neck of the woods, travel is tougher to the south, as the Sierra peaks rise ever higher. Interstate 80, the bustling highway into Lake Tahoe's north shore, tops out a tad higher than 7,000 feet, but farther south, the elevation of Ebbetts Pass is more than 8,700 feet, Sonora Pass reaches 9,600 feet and Yosemite National Park's Tioga Pass is nearly 10,000 feet.

The California Department of Transportation shuts down the

three passes each winter, padlocking metal gates at the foot of the highway ascent on each side of the Sierra, sometimes for more than half the year.

Residents greet it as a part of life. And adapt.

"The barrier is as much psychological as it is physical," said Eric Jung, a real estate agent in Bear Valley, located amid the conifers on the Sierra's west slope.

Jung knows every bend in the road, battling long winter drives during four terms on the Alpine County Board of Supervisors. The lovely journey of 40 miles over Ebbetts Pass in the summer swells to nearly 160 miles on the circuitous winter route. There is no snowmobiling for him: "I have to have my heated cocoon with my CD player."

Rick Stephens, the Alpine County sheriff's sergeant, has lived on both sides of the divide. He grew up in Markleeville, where his dad ran the towing service. But a love of snowmobile racing led him as an adult to Bear Valley, where the entire community — adults going to work, kids heading to school — gets around on the motorized sleds.

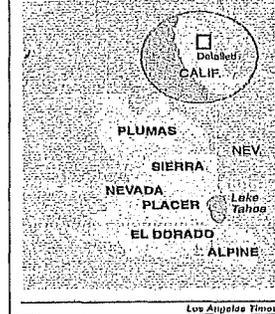
He gave up racing a few years ago to serve as pit chief for his son, 20-year-old Luke, a racer last seen on TV at the Winter X-Games. Dad still gets plenty of time on a snowmobile patrolling the town's snow-decked streets. Stephens and his two deputies also make runs up Route 4 on weekends, rescuing busted-up snowboarders and stranded tourists.

"It's faster on a snowmobile in winter than driving the road in summer," he said, noting how the highway narrows to a single lane in some spots and makes maddening switchbacks. His record through the snow: 22 minutes gate to gate.

One recent afternoon found

Divided counties

Six Northern California counties that straddle the Sierra Nevada are effectively split by winter snowstorms, making travel and commerce difficult.



Stephens and Deputy Jeff Stanford whizzing up the road. Luke Stephens tagged along for the trip, occasionally snaking into the winter wilds to whiz up peaks and fly off jumps.

Over the course of a couple of hours, they stopped to check on a three-legged bear wintering in a bathroom near the snowed-in Hermit Valley rest stop and later offered help to a broken-down snowmobiler from Sweden.

Near Ebbetts Pass, another snowmobiler slowed to greet them. It was Sheriff John Crawford. The sheriff handed over some department documents and chewed the fat with Stephens. "I ride over seven or eight times a winter," said Crawford, whose department has almost as many snowmobiles (nine) as sworn deputies (13).

Crawford's worst trip was the day spent struggling through thick snow to reach the summit. But days like this make up for it, he said, gazing through sunglasses to where the summit and sky collide.

"It sure beats driving."

Letters to the editor

Another view on Alpine's teachers

EDITOR:

I am writing to provide some additional information concerning the letter from Mrs. Craik in your March 4 issue.

The reading specialist hired in Alpine County was indeed placed on a separate salary schedule, the same schedule used for our program resource specialist, certificated technology coordinator,

and library media coordinator. This salary schedule has been used for over 10 years and has never before been questioned by the local teacher's union. In fact, a past president of the local teacher's union was once on the same schedule at the same level as the reading specialist position. The library media coordinator is still on a separate schedule, and the local teacher's union has still not challenged her placement.

Our separate schedule was not raised as an issue until last year, when the local teacher's union brought in a regional California Teachers Association representative, withdrew from interest-based bargaining negotiations, and began a more adversarial negotiation relationship with the district. As the district legal fees climbed into the tens of thousands of dollars, the reading specialist resigned to end the conflict.

We can not afford to spend unnecessary money right now. Still the legal fees related to union activities over the last year are at about \$50,000 and climbing. Nor should our fiscal situation be a

3-9-05

The Record-Courier ■ Gardnerville, Nevada

surprise to anyone. Last year's board minutes reflect concerns for the district budget deficit as presented in public hearing. The teachers involved in negotiations for the last two years have been aware of the detailed losses in our revenues and enrollment. On Jan. 20, I met with the Diamond Valley School staff to explain the latest developments in the state budget and loss of enrollment and told them that lay offs were a probability.

As to who might be laid off, that is determined in the state of California entirely by education code, according to a seniority list. If certificated people are laid off, neither the board nor I have control over who it might be. We can only decide the number of positions, and the people involved must be notified by law before March 15. We will not, however, receive final state budget information until May or after.

The Diamond Valley School currently has six regular classroom teachers, two special education teachers, and a library media coordinator. The school is also served by four classroom aides. We now have 84 students in the school. Just counting the regular classroom teachers, the class ratio is 14-1, but there are usually two working adults in each room of 14. Even if all the proposed layoffs were to take place, the classroom ratio would be less than 17-1 throughout the school, still with two working adults per room of 17.

I would be glad to provide any further information concerning this issue for anyone contacting my office.

James W. Parsons, superintendent
Alpine County Unified School District
Markleeville

Plaintiffs object to developer's comments

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Last week's filing of a lawsuit against Alpine County over its decision to allow a timeshare project without requiring a full environmental impact report prompted objectional comments from the developer, plaintiffs said.

Some of the statements Tom Abdo of Markleeville U.S.A. made were offensive or untrue, said members of Friends of Markleeville.

"The fact that he said this about the people shows me that he doesn't care about the people," said Alpine County Museum Director Dick Edwards, speaking as a resident.

"We have a petition we gave to the Board of Supervisors with 184 signatures, asking them to require an EIR," said Nancy Thornburg, a Markleeville resident since 1958. "There are 40 to 50 active contributing members in Friends of Markleeville." Throughout the meeting process she said residents and members of Friends have attended the meetings.

The two were responding to last week's Record-Courier article where Abdo said he would "kick their rears" and "there's a small percentage, only 10 or 12 of them, who are fighting this."

The proposed project consists of 49 fractionally-owned cabins, a 25-room lodge, a spa, outdoor swimming pool and 14 commercial spaces.

Prior to filing of the lawsuit last week, Abdo signed an indemnity agreement with the county saying he'll pay for any litigation fees.

Edwards wondered why Abdo won't have an environmental impact report prepared for the project.

"I realize it can be expensive, but, there's got to be some money for an EIR," he said.

Whit Manley, environmental attorney for the project, said the decision to go forward without an impact report wasn't up to the developer. The Planning Commission had voted in favor of an environmental impact report a

comprehensive negative declaration would be sufficient.

"The decision on whether to do an EIR or a negative declaration is the county's decision," said Manley. "They looked at the evidence presented to them and concluded the project wouldn't have any environmental impacts. (The county) would be doing the wrong thing if it went ahead and asked for an EIR."

Of the Friends of Markleeville, Manley said, "I suspect they just hope the whole project dries up and blows away. They don't like it. They're going to be disappointed that the Board of Supervisors doesn't share their opinion."

"I think it's very sad that the former Board of Supervisors have put us in this position by refusing to understand and follow California and environmental law," said Thornburg.

Reasons for wanting an environmental impact report include its requirement to provide alternatives, according to Thornburg.

One area of controversy has been the safety of the town ditch, which runs directly through the property.

"An EIR would bring up other possibilities, like culverting the entire ditch," said Thornburg.

Reasons for not wanting the project, according to Thornburg and Edwards, include, the effect new businesses may have on existing small businesses and the amount and type of people the resort would bring to Markleeville, which has a current population of 237 people.

"People come up here and bring their problems and leave their inhibitions at home," said Edwards.

Gina Gigli, a 30-year resident, along with her husband Ruggero Gigli, owns a restaurant that faces the land where the resort is proposed to be. Villa Gigli is open only on weekends five months out of the year.

Gigli is a member of Friends of Markleeville, but said she is speaking as a resident.

"We love it the way it is," said Gigli. "I'm afraid they're going to destroy why people come here."

"But, the point is that they bought the land and they are entitled to do what they want to do with it. I just feel that they should file an environmental impact report. The decision to go forward without it was done very hurriedly by the old board. People are very worried about it."

Another comment by Abdo

in the March 4 issue of The Record-Courier stated that people waiting for jobs at the proposed resort are disappointed in the delays.

"Most of the jobs will be low-income service jobs. What this community needs are some better paying jobs," said Thornburg.

As a Parks and Recreation employee for 36 years, Edwards said he has seen what tourism can do to a town.

In the '60s he visited the town of Julian, Calif., which then looked much like Markleeville. In November 2004 he went back to visit and was surprised at what he saw.

"The sad part is cars are everywhere. I had to park four blocks away and people were parked in front of driveways," he said. "There are four public restrooms in that town. They charge 25 cents a piece."

"It's hard to be small anymore."

"It was inevitable that somebody would notice the potential here," said Thornburg.

Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday

The Alpine County Board of Supervisors will meet at 9

BRIEFS a.m. Tuesday in the

Administrative Building in Markleeville.

Topics will include a second reading and possible adoption of amendments to the zoning ordinance regarding the proposed

Markleeville Village/Mahalle Lodge project to be located in Markleeville.

A continued request for a resolution approving a mitigation monitoring plan for the project will also be considered, as well as a request for transfer of property for construction of a new U.S. Forest Service guard station. For information, call (530) 694-2287.

694-1878 for information.

St. Patrick's party

The Alpine County Historical Society is presenting a St. Patrick's Day party and program on March 17 at Turtle Rock Park. Alpine Trio will play for the group. A no-host social hour will begin at 5:30 p.m., dinner will be at 6:15 p.m. and a program will take place at 7 p.m. The Historical Society will provide corned beef and cabbage, and participants are asked to bring an appetizer, salad, bread or dessert. For information, call (530) 694-2317.

Commission meeting

The Alpine County Planning Commission will meet at 6 p.m. Thursday at Turtle Rock Park, 17300 Highway 89, Markleeville. Call (530)

Staff feel left in the dark by administration

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Rita Lovell was perhaps one of the most surprised of five Alpine County Unified School District staff members who received their "intent" to layoff notices after a special board meeting last week.

After serving as a substitute teacher and teaching full time for three years at the small kindergarten-through eighth-grade Markleeville school while working toward her master's degree, Lovell thought her future was set.

In California it is mandatory to give district staff notice by March 15 if there is any chance they will not be coming back the next year.

However, after comparing her notice to the four others, Lovell discovered that on hers and principal Katy Hadley's notice, the word "intent" had been left off.

"In so many words I was told that it was (my final notice)," said Lovell. "But, officially, I won't know until May."

District superintendent Jim Parsons said if the layoffs happen it's because of declining enrollment (down from 130 to 87 in the last few years) and a \$240,000 budget deficit. The budget won't be complete until April and the final decision on layoffs won't be made until a May 15 board meeting.

"All the letters read as though they are laid off," said Parsons. "It's conceivable that nobody will get laid off. No final decision has been made on anybody."

"Really, nothing else is going to happen until April when we go over the budget."

Lovell said she thinks she may be able to keep her job by becoming a classified worker instead of a certificated teacher, a position that would pay considerably less. This disappointed her, since her master's degree should be completed within a year and she wants to stay working in the small town community she lives in.

Lovell has been working as a sixth-through eighth-grade Spanish and technology teacher as well as serving as the library/media person.

What bothers her the most, she said, is how the school board leaves the teachers and others involved out of the decision-making process.

"The whole issue is that we are left in the dark," said Lovell. "There is a serious lack of trust. We're trying to protect the interest of the kids."

Joe Voss, a district teacher at Woodfords High School and member of the Alpine County Teachers Association, said he had no knowledge of the upcoming intents to layoff.

"They've been working on this for a while," said Voss. "In a negotiation

meeting in February we asked the district what their layoff plans were — they said they didn't have any at this time."

However, Parsons said that he met with the Diamond Valley School staff on Jan. 20. "(We met) to explain the latest developments in the state budget and loss of enrollment and told them that layoffs were a probability," said Parsons in a letter.

Lovell's husband, Andy Lovell, is a member of the Alpine County School District Site Council, a state-mandated group of parents and teachers that meet to distribute funds.

Up until now, Andy Lovell said he has been afraid to speak up because of the fear his wife could lose her teaching position.

"It was never brought up to us that something was coming up," he said.

Andy Lovell said at the site council meeting on Jan. 20, Parsons asked the council for \$60,000 to increase an after-school program from 1½ to four hours. Although the shorter program is required, the longer one was not.

He admitted that Parsons had been hinting at budget problems for about two years, but nothing definite had ever been presented to the council.

"He said that whether we approved this, either way there were some people at risk," Lovell said. "But, he never asked us for money to prevent any layoffs.

"Nothing's clear. He doesn't really tell us what's going on."

Lovell said the council eventually approved \$70,000 for the new after-school position, but that a person had already been hired. He wondered why this position was not being considered for elimination, when others who have worked there longer received their notices.

"(Parsons) said he was getting rid of people because of seniority," said Andy. "The \$60,000 would have retained two of the teachers."

"I'm just a dad," he said, "but even when you don't know every fact, you know when you're being manipulated."

Also at issue is \$700,000 the school district loaned the Alpine County Office of Education in order to help purchase the Early Learning Center in Woodfords in October 2003.

According to Parsons, the money came from one-time funds, not from ongoing monies that are used to pay teachers' salaries.

The private school was purchased for less than it would have cost to build a school, at \$1.2 million Parsons said. The Office of Education used \$500,000 it had accumulated in a contingency fund along with the \$700,000. The First 5 Commission spent \$500,000 to remodel the building.

The county is now making monthly payments at 5 percent interest for the

next 15 years, a higher rate than what it was making before, Parsons said.

Parsons said in prior years the district was using contingency monies to pay for teachers' salaries, but with declining enrollment and a classroom ratio of 14-1, he couldn't justify it any longer.

"How far do we spend down our one-time contingency fund until people get laid off?" asked Parsons.

Parsons said he is not sure how much is in the contingency fund now, but will know more after budget meetings in April. This fund is necessary for emergencies, such as a boiler that is going out at a Bear Valley school.

"We will still have disagreements," he said. "We will still have people who think we should use contingency funds for paying teaching salaries."

"It's complicated and leaves room for all kinds of interpretations."

The principal, first-grade teacher Robin McCully, Lovell, American Indian Education reading program instructor Deirdre Wallace and Bear Valley High School teacher Stephanie Brown received notices.

A library assistant, the school nurse and a disciplinary aide were already let go this school year.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Staff feel left in the dark by administration

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Rita Lovell was perhaps one of the most surprised of five Alpine County Unified School District staff members who received their "intent" to layoff notices after a special board meeting last week.

After serving as a substitute teacher and teaching full time for three years at the small kindergarten- through eighth-grade Markleeville school while working toward her master's degree, Lovell thought her future was set.

In California it is mandatory to give district staff notice by March 15 if there is any chance they will not be coming back the next year.

However, after comparing her notice to the four others, Lovell discovered that on hers and principal Katy Hadley's notice, the word "intent" had been left off.

"In so many words I was told that it was (my final notice)," said Lovell. "But, officially, I won't know until May."

District superintendent Jim Parsons said if the layoffs happen it's because of declining enrollment (down from 130 to 87 in the last few years) and a \$240,000 budget deficit. The budget won't be complete until April and the final decision on layoffs won't be made until a May 15 board meeting.

"All the letters read as though they are laid off," said Parsons. "It's conceivable that nobody will get laid off. No final decision has been made on anybody."

"Really, nothing else is going to happen until April when we go over the budget."

Lovell said she thinks she may be able to keep her job by becoming a classified worker instead of a certificated teacher, a position that would pay considerably less. This disappointed her, since her master's degree should be completed within a year and she wants to stay working in the small town community she lives in.

Lovell has been working as a sixth-through eighth-grade Spanish and technology teacher as well as serving as the library/media person.

What bothers her the most, she said, is how the school board leaves the teachers and others involved out of the decision-making process.

"The whole issue is that we are left in the dark," said Lovell. "There is a serious lack of trust. We're trying to protect the interest of the kids."

Joe Voss, a district teacher at Woodfords High School and member of the Alpine County Teachers Association, said he had no knowledge of the upcoming intents to layoff.

"They've been working on this for a while," said Voss. "In a negotiation

meeting in February we asked the district what their layoff plans were — they said they didn't have any at this time."

However, Parsons said that he met with the Diamond Valley School staff on Jan. 20. "(We met) to explain the latest developments in the state budget and loss of enrollment and told them that layoffs were a probability," said Parsons in a letter.

Lovell's husband, Andy Lovell, is a member of the Alpine County School District Site Council, a state-mandated group of parents and teachers that meet to distribute funds.

Up until now, Andy Lovell said he has been afraid to speak up because of the fear his wife could lose her teaching position.

"It was never brought up to us that something was coming up," he said.

Andy Lovell said at the site council meeting on Jan. 20, Parsons asked the council for \$60,000 to increase an after-school program from 1½ to four hours. Although the shorter program is required, the longer one was not.

He admitted that Parsons had been hinting at budget problems for about two years, but nothing definite had ever been presented to the council.

"He said that whether we approved this, either way there were some people at risk," Lovell said. "But, he never asked us for money to prevent any layoffs."

"Nothing's clear. He doesn't really tell us what's going on."

Lovell said the council eventually approved \$70,000 for the new after-school position, but that a person had already been hired. He wondered why this position was not being considered for elimination, when others who have worked there longer received their notices.

"(Parsons) said he was getting rid of people because of seniority," said Andy. "The \$60,000 would have retained two of the teachers."

"I'm just a dad," he said, "but even when you don't know every fact, you know when you're being manipulated."

Also at issue is \$700,000 the school district loaned the Alpine County Office of Education in order to help purchase the Early Learning Center in Woodfords in October 2003.

According to Parsons, the money came from one-time funds, not from ongoing monies that are used to pay teachers' salaries.

The private school was purchased for less than it would have cost to build a school, at \$1.2 million Parsons said. The Office of Education used \$500,000 it had accumulated in a contingency fund along with the \$700,000. The First 5 Commission spent \$500,000 to remodel the building.

The county is now making monthly payments at 5 percent interest for the

next 15 years, a higher rate than what it was making before, Parsons said.

Parsons said in prior years the district was using contingency monies to pay for teachers' salaries, but with declining enrollment and a classroom ratio of 14-1, he couldn't justify it any longer.

"How far do we spend down our one-time contingency fund until people get laid off?" asked Parsons.

Parsons said he is not sure how much is in the contingency fund now, but will know more after budget meetings in April. This fund is necessary for emergencies, such as a boiler that is going out at a Bear Valley school.

"We will still have disagreements," he said. "We will still have people who think we should use contingency funds for paying teaching salaries."

"It's complicated and leaves room for all kinds of interpretations."

The principal, first-grade teacher Robin McCully, Lovell, American Indian Education reading program instructor Deirdre Wallace and Bear Valley High School teacher Stephanie Brown received notices.

A library assistant, the school nurse and a disciplinary aide were already let go this school year.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Opinion is writer's, not group's

R-C
3-9-05

EDITOR:

In regards to my guest opinion piece printed Feb. 9 entitled "Friends of Markleeville seeks full project review" I would like to make the following clarification.

The opinion was mine and did not necessarily reflect the opinions of all of the Friends of Markleeville.

Nancy Thornburg
Markleeville

Savor the

Picture of Alpine lawsuit incomplete

RD 3-11-05

EDITOR:

The March 4 edition of The Record-Courier article on the recently-filed lawsuit against Alpine County did not provide the complete picture. Community members have banded together to require the county to conduct an EIR before proceeding with the proposed residential project, Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge, that would more than double the size of Markleeville. There are many reasons to suspect that this large project could have unmitigated impacts on the tiny, historic center of Alpine County.

In your article, the developer suggests that the lawsuit is the result of a handful of disgruntled locals. Nothing could be farther from the truth. On Nov. 22, the community submitted a petition to the Board of Supervisors with 148 signatures from residents and property owners requesting an environmental impact report. According to the last census, that represents about 75 percent of Markleeville residents. This is not a handful of locals, but the vast majority.

The comments reported in The Record-Courier article reflect the developer's arrogance and disrespect for a community that has worked hard for decades (in some cases, generations) to preserve and enhance Markleeville's quality of life, unique heritage, and unspoiled alpine scenery. There are very different forces in play here. On one hand, there is a community determined to retain its character, and on the other, a developer with clear visions of profit.

Phil Bellman
Markleeville

R-C
March 18, 2005



Provided to the R-C
Awarded: Justin Peets was awarded for overall excellence.

Diamond Valley School students awarded

On Wednesday, Feb. 16 at 6:30 p.m. students and parents gathered at Diamond Valley School for the annual Block DV awards ceremony.

Block DV is Diamond Valley's highest award that is only presented to students in fourth-through eighth-grade. It requires students to excel in many different categories that include curricular, athletics, co-curricular, leadership and service and citizenship. The students earn points for grades, after and during school activities, sports and many other things. Block DV is awarded twice a year, once each semester. The students have to have good behavior and passing grades. On Block DV night, Diamond Valley Principal Mrs. Hadley and Alpine County Superintendent Dr. Parsons presented a framed certificate and a pin to all students who have received Block DV before. The newcomers get a framed certificate, a pin and a chenille block that says DV.

Before the ceremony, some teachers passed out cake and punch to everyone. It's an exciting night for everyone. The next semester, students who got

KATY BRANSCOMBE

Block DV the first time will try hard to get it again and students that didn't get it the first time will try harder to get it. I think Block DV is a great way to make students try harder to excel in school. Congratulations to the students who made Block DV: fourth grade, Logan Cambridge, Deanna Doyal, Alfred Duran, Chelsee Guerrero, Phoebe Hamilton, Cody Vann and Tessa Williams; fifth grade, Matthew Aarons, Riley Curry, George Dick, Taylor Embry, Brittainny Colon, Gabe Merrill, William Rubino and Brandon Crawford; sixth grade, Meghan Hadley and Reena Spansail; seventh grade, Katy Branscombe, Jessica Burt and Kristin Slavik; and eighth grade, Salinthea Guerrero, Minneah Holdridge, Macy Matlock, Justin Peets, Lucerina Rivera and Teddy Williams.

■ Katy Branscombe is a seventh-grader at Diamond Valley School.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT VS. MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Mitigated negative declaration:

"A mitigated negative declaration is appropriate when an initial study has been prepared and a determination can be made that no significant environmental effects will occur because revisions to the project have been made or mitigation measures will be implemented which will reduce all potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels."

Environmental impact report:

"(An environmental impact report is) a detailed statement prepared under CEQA describing and analyzing the significant environmental effects of a project and discussing ways to mitigate or avoid the effects."

■ From the University of California California Environmental Quality Act Handbook.

SHERIFF'S LOG

■ On March 11, deputies responded to a residence in Bear Valley. Karen Whitaker, 49, of Red Bluff, Calif. had died during the night.

At this time the cause of death is unknown, but appears to be natural. An autopsy will be performed to determine the cause of death.

■ On March 6, the Search and Rescue team responded to the Blue Lakes Road area, where they eventually located an injured snowmobiler. The victim was in the backcountry and a California Highway Patrol Helicopter was able to remove the victim. The victim required Cal-Star medical helicopter transport to a trauma center.

■ On March 6, deputies

responded to the Woodfords area where they arrested a 52-year-old Markleeville woman for willful cruelty to a child and immoral acts before a child. The woman allegedly became very intoxicated while caring for minor children.

■ On March 3, deputies responded to the Woodfords area for a family disturbance. The altercation was verbal in nature and deputies were able to resolve the situation at the scene.

■ On Feb. 27, in the Kirkwood area, two 24-year-old Merced, Calif. men were arrested for possession of marijuana

and possession of an illegal prescription drug.

■ On Feb. 27, the Search and Rescue team responded to the area of Armstrong Pass, which borders Alpine and El Dorado Counties to assist El Dorado County in finding three missing persons. On Feb. 28, snowmobile teams located them. They had spent the night outside and were possibly suffering from hypothermia. Two of them were evacuated by helicopter to the hospital and one was able to ride his snowmobile out with the rescuers.

■ On Feb. 26, three people were separately issued citations for operating their snowmobiles in the wilderness area. Each person stated they had not read

the information signs posted at the trailhead and had not obtained the free map available at the trailhead. All three also stated they had not seen the signs at the wilderness boundary.

■ On Feb. 24, deputies responded to the Kirkwood area, where a 25-year-old San Francisco man was arrested for forgery of a ski pass.

■ On Feb. 23, deputies responded to a neighborhood in Woodfords for a reported disturbance. A 21-year-old Markleeville woman was arrested for public intoxication and battery.

■ On Feb. 20, deputies responded to the Kirkwood area where a 47-year-old Ripon,

Calf. man was arrested for skiing in a closed area.

■ On Feb. 19, deputies responded to a residence in Woodfords where a burglary was reported. An investigation is underway.

■ On Feb. 18, deputies responded to the Kirkwood area, where they located a 14-year-old runaway juvenile. The juvenile was returned to her parents. An 18-year-old Gardnerville man was arrested for furnishing alco-

hol to a minor.

■ On Feb. 18, deputies assisted Amador County by responding to a domestic dispute in the Kirkwood area. There were no injuries and the matter was turned over to Amador County.

■ On Feb. 13, after responding to a reported theft in the Bear Valley area, a 17-year-old Dorrington, Calif. man was arrested for felony grand theft of a snowboard.

R-c

March 18, 2005

Developers get zoning changes

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Zoning ordinance changes and a monitoring plan for a timeshare project in Markleeville were approved by Alpine County supervisors in a 4-1 vote on Tuesday.

The one dissenter Chair Don Jardine said he couldn't vote in favor because of the lack of an environmental impact report for the proposed Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge resort. He cited the Planning Commission's recommendation for an environmental report for the project in December.

"I agreed with the Planning Commission that there should be an environmental impact report," said Jardine. "There is concern even to the last moment of this second reading. These changes that we're talking about could have been addressed through an EIR."

The environmental impact report is the subject of a lawsuit filed against the county by the Friends of Markleeville, a group with 40-50 members. The lawsuit claims that an environmental impact report is required according to the California Environmental Quality Act. A less comprehensive environmental study, a mitigated negative declaration, was prepared on the project last summer. County supervisors voted against the environmental impact report in spite of the Planning Commission's recommendation.

The proposed project includes 49 cabins, a 25-room lodge, 14 commercial buildings, several employee housing units and possible residential buildings — totaling 64 structures in all.

The Alpine County Technical Advisory Committee recommended the following changes to the zoning ordinance, which the Board of Supervisors approved:

■ Realignment of one of the streets to allow for a 30-foot setback, instead of 15

DETAILS

The proposed project, the Markleeville Village/Mahalee Lodge, includes 49 cabins, a 25-room lodge, 14 commercial buildings, several employee housing units and possible residential buildings — totaling 64 structures in all — in the town of Markleeville.

The lack of an environmental impact report for the project is the subject of a lawsuit filed against the county by the Friends of Markleeville, a group with 40-50 members. The lawsuit claims that an environmental impact report is required according to the California Environmental Quality Act. A less comprehensive environmental study, a mitigated negative declaration, was prepared on the project last summer. County supervisors voted against the environmental impact report in spite of the Planning Commission's recommendation in December.

feet, from the center of the town ditch to the rear of the cabins.

■ No requirement for a physical barrier over the town ditch at this time, although the idea could be revisited when approval of the tentative map is requested.

After a few more changes to wording in the ordinance, Supervisor Gunter Kaiser said he likes the changes, especially since more safety guidelines were added.

"The applicant better take this document to heart," he said.

A monitoring plan to oversee the project

was also approved by supervisors, but again concerns were raised.

"I don't know if the county knows enough about the wastewater treatment," said Supervisor Skip Veatch.

The wastewater treatment will be monitored by the Lahontan Regional Water Control Board, said Alpine County Planning Director Brian Peters.

Jardine said he shared Veatch's concern.

"There have been systems in the county monitored by Lahontan that haven't fared well," he said.

Longtime resident of Markleeville Nancy Thornburg asked Peters if he would be monitoring all 106 mitigation measures on his own.

"Are we going to be hiring more people?" she asked.

Peters said he would have to contract out to do the monitoring, and would pay for additional help with a 25 percent surcharge on the building permit fee.

Kaiser said that more funding could be acquired from the developer if needed, since CEQA authorizes local agencies to assess fees.

Kaiser also asked for additional changes, including having the developer Tom Abdo of Markleeville U.S.A. fund a museum exhibit and any educational materials the Alpine County Museum would provide.

Additionally, the developer and the museum would have to agree on a historical consultant who would oversee the project.

Attorney for the developer Whit Manley said he thought Abdo would agree to the changes.

Again, Jardine said he objected to the monitoring plan because of the lack of an environmental impact report.

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

Afraid Markleeville will go the way of other towns

by Dick Edwards
Special to the R-C

Recently, I visited the community of Julian in San Diego County. Its environment is similar to Markleeville, in the pines at an elevation of 4,500 feet, the streets are few and narrow and it seems quaint filled with curio shops and restaurants.

Years ago, when I first visited Julian, it was quiet and peaceful like Markleeville is today. It was a very pleasant place to visit. Like Markleeville, some of the local people were anxious to bring business and wealth to those who owned property and businesses, they dreamed of people flocking from the urban centers of San Diego County and filling their pockets and the city coffers with dollars, their dream has come true, but sometimes dreams become nightmares.

Rushing to fill a vision they

Guest opinion

ignored this environmentally sensitive area and the historic values. And like the movie "Field of Dreams," they built a new Julian and the people came. What the community did not consider was infrastructure. And what was once a pleasant place to visit is today a visitors' and locals' nightmare.

Without considering infrastructure, Julian created a traffic nightmare — parking is impossible, local residents are faced with driveways blocked by a thoughtless visitors. People wait in line to get into restaurants and stores blocking foot traffic and any thought of a casual walk through town. Julian had become a Chamber of Commerce's

dream, but not a pleasant place to visit.

Visitors wait in line at the four public unisex restrooms and pay 25 cents for the privilege. All the stores and restaurants have a sign in the window, "Restrooms are for paying customers only." Fire and enforcement are overwhelmed as both are functions of the County or State and Julian is a low priority for these functions.

What's this all mean to Markleeville? Well, a project being considered here has mesmerized a part of the community with visions of visitors filling the streets, and of course for a few, wealth. Typical of what is happening all across America, a community wants more revenue, but never thinks of the cost in the long run. They rush to bring people to the community but do not plan for simple things like parking, restrooms, fire and law enforcement. They want what the visitor

will bring, "money," nothing more, expecting that the facilities will somehow magically appear in the future.

It seems Markleeville's future will become what I have seen in Julian and it frightens me. But then, greed drives a great number of individuals in today's world, looking for the "fast buck," while ignoring the future of an area.

I wonder whose dream will come true, a developer and a few who look for wealth, or will it be a haven for those who seek a simpler life among the pines and Markleeville Creek. I am afraid the dream will become a nightmare and the streets of Markleeville will be congested with cars and people desperately looking for somewhere to park, eat, buy curios and use a restroom.

■ Dick Edwards is the Alpine County Museum Director in Markleeville.

R-C 3-20-05

Law enforcement nothing new for Alpine's Crawford

Sheriff reflects on way of life, changes in Alpine

by Jo Rafferty
Staff Writer

Growing up in a tight-knit community in Mono County, Alpine County Sheriff John Crawford got to know the law enforcement officers as more than just cops.

He saw that they were people, he liked what they were doing and made friends with them.

"I think I got to know the other side, not just arresting people," said Crawford, who has been sheriff since November 2002. "You're there to help and be part of the community. I never really considered law enforcement before that."

Crawford, 40, admits that his crew of 13 — consisting of three deputies, an undersheriff, Search and Rescue volunteers and two support staff — are not running from call to call in a county with approximately 1,200 residents, mostly from the towns of Markleeville, Woodfords, Bear Valley and Kirkwood.

However, with 760 miles to cover, which span El Dorado to Amador to Mono County to Tuolumne County to the Calaveras County border, Crawford sometimes has to rely on others who may be able to get to the scene of an accident or crime quicker than



Official: John Crawford is the Alpine County Sheriff. Below, he speaks about county programs at a recent Alpine County senior luncheon.

SHANNON LITZ/The R-C

ALPINE COUNTY

See page 8 in today's R-C for more Alpine

"Winter and summer have become more and more busy for us because more people are coming here for vacations," he said. "More and more people coming here find out what a great place it is."

When asked what he thinks about a proposed timeshare project for Markleeville — Markleeville Resort/Mahalee Lodge with 49 cabins, a 25-room lodge, a spa and 14 commercial spaces — Crawford seemed worried.

"A development like that coming in with that amount of people would impact us greatly," said Crawford. "I've asked for impact fees, funding, to help offset those costs."

"I've watched the county change. We're in the courts more. Now we're seeing new developments coming in. The citizens, they're very concerned."

Crawford said he's seeing people relocate from Douglas County.

"You look at the development going on in Douglas County — we see the push. This is the backyard for a lot of those folks."

In spite of these problems, Crawford wouldn't give up the scenery, the small-town way of life and especially the people he knows so well in Alpine County. While out on patrol, sometimes residents flag him down and invite him in to dinner.

1,200 residents, mostly from the towns of Markleville, Woodfords, Bear Valley and Kirkwood.

However, with 760 miles to cover, which span El Dorado to Amador to Mono County to Tuolumne County to the Calaveras County border, Crawford sometimes has to rely on others who may be able to get to the scene of an accident or crime quicker than he can.

"We do a lot of work with other counties and the CHP," he said. "Citizens here at Kirkwood helped stop a fight between officers and some people."

With budget cuts, Crawford said he is lucky to have volunteers who are ready to hop on their snowmobiles to assist lost or injured winter recreation enthusiasts.

"Staffing levels haven't increased, they've decreased," said Crawford. "We're three positions down."

Crawford has to be ready to go at any given moment.

"We are the supervisors, so we constantly monitor our radios 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said Crawford. "It's a way of life. It's how I started here."

"When you're a deputy, when you're needed, you respond out."

Crawford motioned toward the rear of his SUV which is loaded with all kinds of emergency equipment, including food and water.

"This is life out here in the mountains," he said.

Kirkwood Mountain and Bear Valley resorts and Blue Lakes Road Snow Park are regular stops for him. On a warm Thursday afternoon following a snowstorm, about 50

Official: John Crawford is the Alpine County Sheriff. Below, he speaks about county programs at a recent Alpine County senior luncheon.

ALPINE COUNTY

See page 8 in today's R-C for more Alpine County coverage.

cars were lined up at the snow park, down a dead-end road off Highway 88. People go there to snowmobile, cross-country ski and snowshoe, he explained.

"Their loved ones will call if they don't come home tonight," said Crawford.

Caples Lake, and the Toiyabe Forest are also common areas where people get into trouble.

"This area in the wintertime keeps us busy," he said, looking out over frozen Caples Lake.

About a month and a half ago, Crawford was down in the Bear Valley area with the Mono County sheriff at about 3 p.m., when they came across human tracks in the snow.

"The sheriff of Mono County led the way," said Crawford. "He followed (the tracks) down to a certain point, down in a deep canyon. We established voice contact. We thought the individual had broken his leg. He hadn't eaten all day, hadn't had any water. We administered first aid, built a fire and a shelter. We had food and water. We waited for Mammoth County



Search and Rescue until 7 p.m. at night when they got him out."

Kirkwood can attract up to 6,000 people on a holiday or weekend day, he said.

"The DA handled 400 cases last year: quite a few thefts, related to skis and snow-

boards," said Crawford.

Alpine County has seen murders, rapes and its share of drug problems, said Crawford, and lately these incidents have been increasing.

Crawford first joined the sheriff's department as a deputy 20 years ago. Since

then he has seen the population and the number of vacationers grow. He is concerned about the county's future.

ment going on in Douglas County — we see the push. This is the backyard for a lot of those folks."

In spite of these problems, Crawford wouldn't give up the scenery, the small-town way of life and especially the people he knows so well in Alpine County. While out on patrol, sometimes residents flag him down and invite him in to dinner.

He and his deputies try to keep in touch with the community as much as possible.

They attend occasional senior lunches at Health and Human Services to teach seniors about law enforcement services.

The sheriff's department has developed a program where people who have committed low-level crimes can work off their debt by helping a senior paint a house or stack wood.

"It's neighbors helping neighbors," said Crawford. "It's been real rewarding — to be able to make a difference, to be able to help people."

"It seems like I just got started yesterday," he said, pointing to the snow covered hillsides of Alpine as he traveled through Woodfords, to Kirkwood and back, part of the route he takes daily to check on what's going on in the county.

"It's a wonderful place to be."

■ Jo Rafferty can be reached at jrafferty@recordcourier.com or 782-5121, ext. 213.

SHANNON LITZ/The R-C

Law in a land of streams, ski slopes

by William Ferchland

R-C News Service

The only courthouse in Alpine County holds four jury trials each year. The blue synthetic leather seats show no sign of wear, unlike the enclosed law books dating back to the 19th century that adorn the surrounding back walls in glass bookcases.

Law in a small county can be scarce and memorable. Pull it back to a county of 1,200 people and you get something more historic, visceral and unique.

Formed in 1864, Alpine County is the smallest county in California based on its population. Two ski resorts, Kirkwood Mountain Resort in the north and Bear Valley in the south, balloon that population with visitors and part-time employees.

As the only county exempt from the one-day/one-trial jury system, each season has a week designated for a jury trial. In winter, when Highway 4 is closed between the county seat, Markleeville, and Bear Valley, residents who cannot travel to Markleeville are excused from duty.

Will Richmond, the county's district attorney, enjoys his job since it allows him to also work as a circuit prosecutor in other counties handling environmental issues.

"I came into the mountains to do environment work for a collection of counties," he said. "I jumped at the chance to become the Alpine County district attorney."

The county, with its 743

square miles of mostly pristine meadows, fishable lakes and craggy wilderness, creates many memories. Private practice attorney Bart Weitzenberg brightens at his own.

In Weitzenberg's arsenal of attorney stories, this memory ranks at the very top and has not been matched by colleagues in more than three decades of practicing law.

It was an Alpine County case, about 15 years ago, the Sonoma County attorney recalled. It was a noncriminal matter.

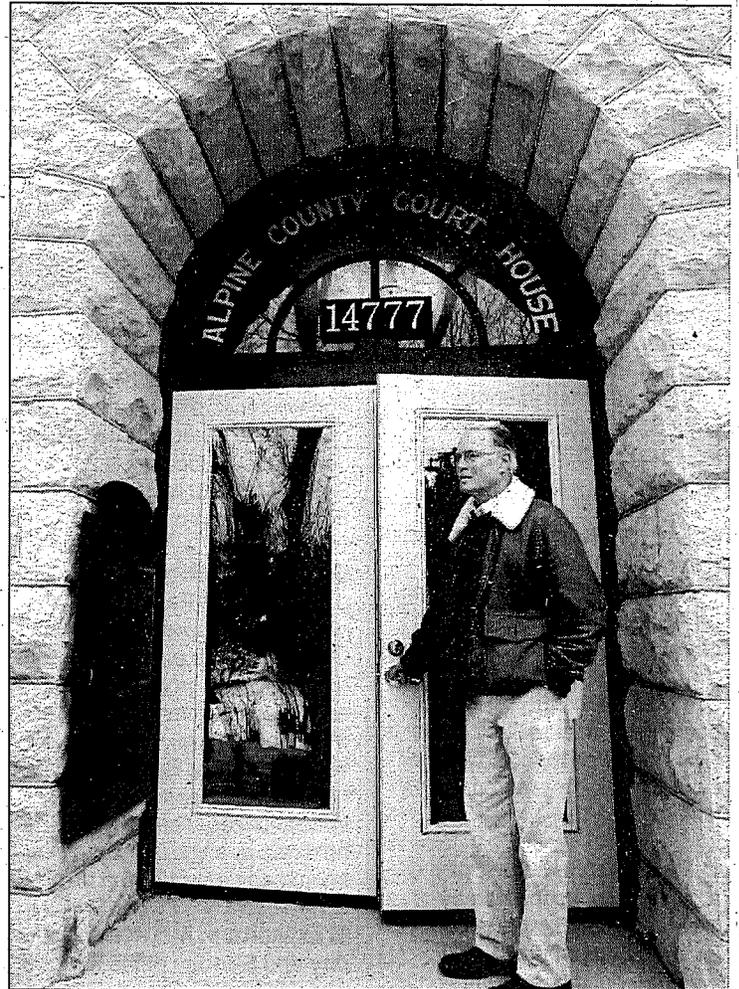
Two skiers were enjoying Kirkwood Meadows when they hit an unseen cliff.

Weitzenberg sued Kirkwood Mountain Resort for not installing boundaries. At the onset, the case was the strangest he experienced, he said.

"It was a time warp back to the days of the old Wild West," he said. "The judge ran out of prospective jurors to choose from and we needed some more so he utilized a statute rarely used anymore and authorized the courtroom bailiff to go out and round up citizens of the county as prospective jurors."

Barflies and diners at the former Cutthroat Saloon, ice fishermen and bank tellers and their customers were rounded up. When the judge asked if there was any reason for them not to serve as jurors, all but one raised their hand. The only one who sat still was the judge's niece, Weitzenberg said.

During the jury's deliberation, Weitzenberg fly-fished in his suit at the East Fork Carson



DAN THRIFT/R-C News Service

Ready for work: District Attorney Will Richmond enters the Alpine County Courthouse in Markleeville, Calif.

River, which runs next to the courthouse.

And, in the first time in history, the jury sided with the plaintiff, a win for the Sonoma County attorney and his client, he said.

"That case is not only the most unique case I ever tried but the most unique case anybody has heard," he said.

Richmond said those times have passed.

But the small-town charm is there. Alpine County Superior Court Judge Richard Specchio said divorces are minimal.

"It's just a beautiful little town," he said. "It just has the nicest people in the world; a real cohesion over there."



Submitted photo

Ready readers: Diamond Valley School first- and second-grade students listen to children's author Karen Gedig Burnett on March 2, Read Across America Day.

Learning to read can be a lot of fun

By Salina Guerrero
Special to the R-C

It's past that time of year again, March 2, Theodor Geisel's birthday, otherwise known as Dr. Seuss. Schools across America celebrate his birthday. We here at Diamond Valley School celebrated it on March 3 and hosted an author's visit.

Karen Gedig Burnett is a children's book author and has been an elementary school counselor for over 20 years. During this time she has constructed many programs for children to help them develop their life skills. She wrote the following books: "Simon's Hook," "The Magical Mar-

velous Megan G. Beamer (A Day in the Life of a Dreamer)," "Katie's Rose," "If the World Were Blind" and many more.

Ms. Burnett gave two presentations to Diamond Valley School students in these groups: Kindergarten-fourth grade, and fifth-eight grade. In addition, on this day Diamond Valley students had the opportunity to wear their pajamas or sweats, slippers, etc. to school. The school provided students with healthy snacks they ate while they took the whole day to read in their homeroom classes.

■ Salina Guerrero is an eighth-grader at Diamond Valley School.

Hung-A-Lel-Ti Native American Science Bowl 2005 a success

Staff Reports

This year Hung-A-Lel-Ti youth again participated in the National Native American Science Bowl. The Science Bowl is a friendly academic competition with regular American Indian high school students.

Team members included: seniors Nicole Bennett, Anthony Caldera, and Ramsey Horse, junior Jessica Bennett and sophomore Emmy Frank, all students at Douglas High School.

The students began practice in November with the help of a practice team, which included Douglas High School juniors Jermaine Jim and Anthony Wedlock, sophomore Ben Gonzalez, Woodfords High School junior Rosie Gabriel and Pau-Wa-Lu freshman Mike Rojas. These

students committed to attend practice three days a week after school and help raise funds for the trip.

David Roberts Jr. and Jason Bryan were the team coaches, and each participated in the Science Bowl as high school students. This year the competition was held at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Team Hung-A-Lel-Ti advanced through three matches in the morning round to the championship round. With five seconds to spare in the match against Santa Fe Indian School, Anthony Caldera correctly

answered a biology toss up question to bring the team within two points of advancing.

Anthony Caldera, the team captain was one of 10 all-stars selected from the competition.

While in Albuquerque the team visited the Pueblo Indian Cultural Center, which is owned and operated by the 13 Pueblo tribes in New Mexico. They dined in the restaurant that

included traditional foods like oven bread, posole and chili stew. They also visited the Southwest Indian Polytechnical Institute campus known as SIPI.

Woodfords Indian Education Center/Alpine TANF sponsored the team and a spaghetti dinner helped raise funds for the trip.

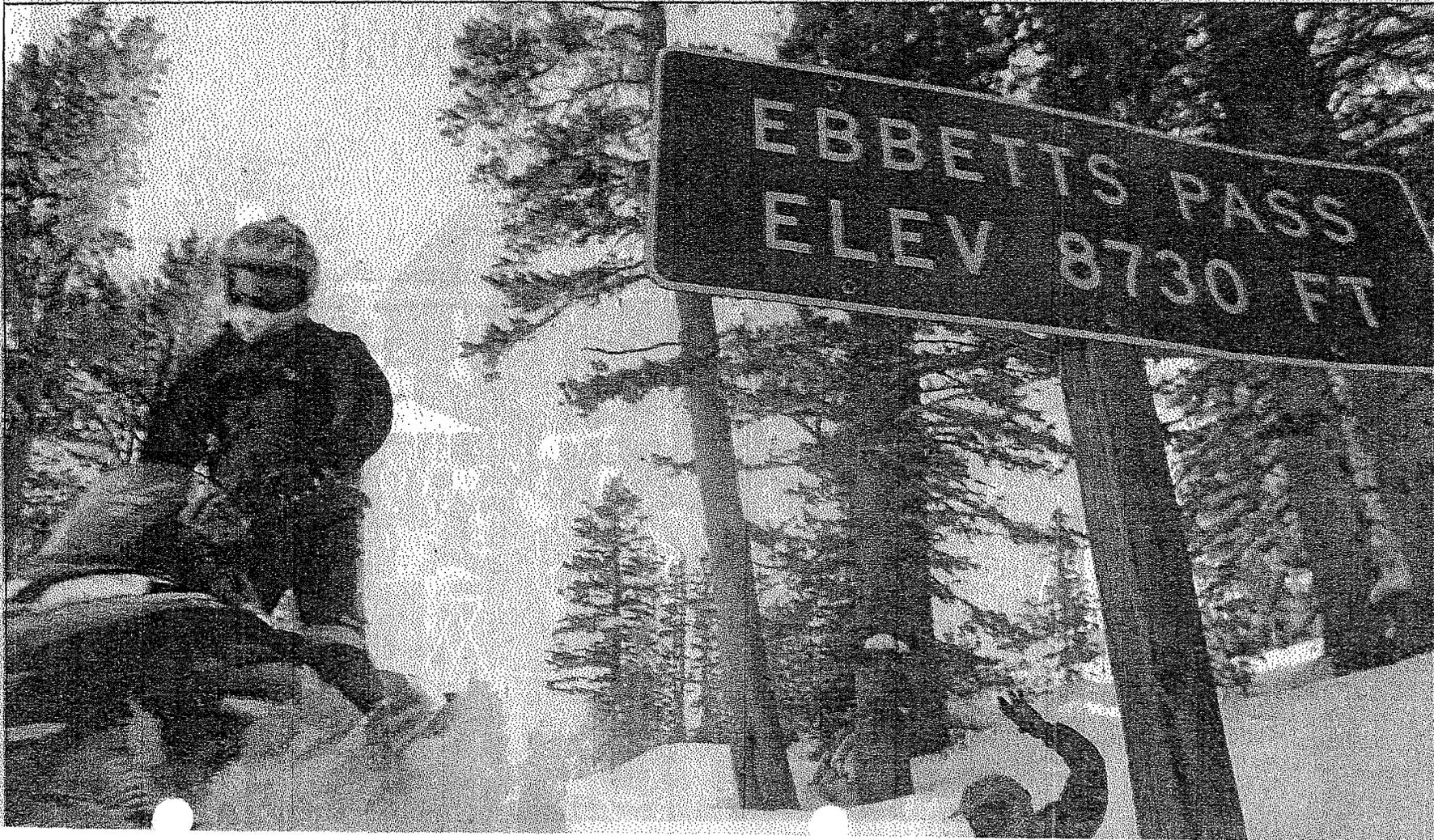
Information provided by the Woodfords Indian Education Center in Markleeville.

LifeStyles

READY, SET, GO

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Collision Course

They've drawn a line in the snow in benign-sounding Hope Valley, where the frosty acrimony between snowmobilers and cross-country skiers frames the nation's ongoing muscle-vs.-machine snow battle.

By **CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS**
LOS ANGELES TIMES

KIRKWOOD — In the snow fields of Hope Valley, hope springs eternal. The trees are flocked and stately. All along Forestdale Creek Road, about a dozen miles south of Lake Tahoe, the scenery is straight out of the Hallmark winter collection.

But don't be deceived. In the nationwide scuffle between snowmobilers and those who scorn them, this is contested territory.

"You can hear them for miles," says Debbi

In the public safety office scheme of things in isolated Alpine County, east of Angels Camp, Rick Stephens, above, doubles as a sheriff's sergeant and a fire chief. And, of necessity, both he and his son, Luke — a high-flying veteran of TV's X Games — are wizards on snowmobiles.

See Page F-4

ROBERT DURELL/LOS ANGELES TIMES
and AL GOLUB/THE MODESTO BEE



COMMISSION Course

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Waldear, a champion cross-country skier and longtime crusader against snowmobile traffic. Then she returns to her smooth stroke and long strides, a tiny, wiry figure gliding through pines on a lonely weekday afternoon. Her dog, Sage, bounds alongside.

"To sit on something and go fast," says Waldear, "is not at all attractive to me."

Still, there are signs of peaceful coexistence in the Great Hope Valley Feud: Snowmobiles and skiers have been seen sharing Blue Lakes Road.

SEE PAGE F-3, SNOW

Skiers complain about snowmobile noise and fumes. Snowmobilers claim skiers are a hazard and an impediment. A lawsuit seeking to ban snowmobiles was rebuffed, but the battle is far from over.



Los Angeles Camp, Rick Phillips, above, doubles as a sheriff's sergeant and a fire chief. And, of necessity, both he and his son, Luke — a high-flying veteran of TV's X Games — are wizards on snowmobiles.

See Page F-4

ROBERT DURELL/LOS ANGELES TIMES
and AL GOLUB/THE MODESTO BEE

LEZLIE STERLING/THE SACRAMENTO BEE

Above: Cross-country skiers set out from Bear Valley on a blue-sky spring day.

Left: Joan Breithauer takes her golden retriever, Mindy, for a snowmobile ride near Truckee.