The headline is somewhat facetious. No one would have ever confused Nick Gunter with the popular image of a large, barrel-chested Santa Claus with a flowing white beard and big black boots. The diminutive Gunter looked anything but. Yet in terms of local stature, there was hardly anyone larger than Nick Gunter, who died on November 19 at the age of 95, his primary caregiver and dear friend Judy Weber by his side. Gunter served as Dave McCoy’s right-hand man (official title: Controller) for several decades as McCoy built Mammoth Mountain. And theirs was a beautiful partnership. Dave was the spender and builder and Nick was the saver and the two did more than enough of both to make magic.

As Allerra Resorts CEO Rusty Gregory reflected this week, “The two of them equaled five or six in terms of the dynamic.”

But just as they were different in temperament, Dave and Nick also grew up in different environments. Dave was a working-class kid from California, while Nick was born and raised in Germany into a family of wealth and sophistication.

His father was a doctor. His mother was a writer. His grandmother lived in a mansion which was later converted into the central police station in Munich, Germany. The family had a chauffeur, a private tutor, a housekeeper...

He lived the majority of the year in Munich and spent summers at the family residences in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Krueht in Germany. But it’s hard to imagine we would even know Nick if not for the rise of Hitler.

His family received warnings from friends in high-level government positions that they should get out of the country while they still could (his given last name: Katzenstein) and they quickly made the move to London.

Nick attended boarding school for four years in London before relocating to New York where he attended George Washington High School. He enlisted in the U.S. Army after graduation, and shipped out to New Guinea in the South Pacific where he served during World War II. He worked in procurement. He cultivated a pet monkey. He was also not so fond of the lodging.

When asked later in life why he didn’t like to camp, Nick would say, “I did all my camping with Uncle Sam.”

After receiving his honorable discharge, Nick moved to Sherman Oaks, Calif., with his grandson and earned a degree in Accounting from Woodbury University. While in Southern California, Nick served as the President of the Edelweiss Ski Club based in the Los Angeles area.

According to Evan Russell, who worked for many years with Nick at MMSA, Nick met Dave in the late ’40s while skiing the McGee Mountain rope tow.

Then, as the legend goes, one day Accountant Gunter asked Dave if he needed any help with the books.

Dave responded by handing Nick a drawer full of cash and receipts, saying “See what you can make of this.”

In short order, Gunter became McCoy’s first full-time employee.

see COVID, page 10

The guests are getting what they want because they’re finding places to rent, a lot of the homeowners are getting what they want because they’re getting rent, the Mountain’s getting some portion of what they want by having guests up there ... meanwhile lodging is getting nothing, we’re sitting at zero, the town is making no TOT. From everything that I’ve seen ... the stay at home order has done nothing to move the needle at all.”

Covid-19 continues to spike around California, depleting ICU capacity in many areas and spreading rapidly through communities.

Monterey County recorded 76 positive cases last week, down from the prior week, but the overall positivity rate has remained high. ICU capacity remains at 0.6% in the Southern California region, an indicator that the stay-at-home order may not be lifted after three weeks on December 27.

Morris also told an anecdote: Snowcreek had only one guest over the weekend who claimed to be an essential worker. After that guest arrived, the “essential worker” then had a party with multiple groups of people.

Part of the frustration expressed by the lodging operators was related to findings that hotels and motels in Bishop are using loopholes in the order’s language to allow guests to stay in rooms. There’s a provision allowing for stranded travelers to spend a night at a hotel, motel etc. At that point, it’s a matter of how much work a hotel wants to do to prove that someone is actually stranded in town.

One Mammoth hotelier said that after they’d turned down someone looking to stay at their establishment, the visitor said his party would simply head back to Bishop and stay the night there.

Mammoth Lakes Finance Director Rob Patterson, who also serves on the local code enforcement team, said that both he and Town manager Dan Holler had spoken with representatives from Inyo County and the City of Bishop about the issue. Patterson told the lodging association that he and Holler had been told that the area has limited capacity for enforcement and that lodging operators have been told to only host essential workers. “We all can see what that’s produced,” Patterson said.

Cheryl Witherill, General Manager at 1849 Condos in Mammoth, reported that a number of people have reached out asking for renting space for a month, which is allowed. However, that sort of arrangement requires a lease which, as Sierra Nevada Resort Manager Brent Truax remarked, can make things complicated if a client/tenant is uncooperative.

Diane Stilwell, who operates 101 Great Escapes, said that she had heard from nurses in Southern California that...
IT STARTS WITH A COUGH

Every time you hear a cough these days, you fear the worst. Uh oh. Covid. Unless you live with a goatherd.

Then your fear shifts. Because the next thing you know, you’ll have a goat living in your kitchen.

Or three:

Goat kids were born not too long ago at the Lunch residence. One of the kids developed a cough. It’s apparently too cold outside for him and he’s not too hearty. So he and his siblings have been living in the house ever since.

One of the siblings has diarrhea.

The other day, they escaped their kitchen pen. Photo below.

I haven’t checked under the tree to see if they left any “gifts” during their prison break.

They do go outside during the days when it warms up, so I have a window from about 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. where the kitchen is free.

Limiting kitchen hours has really helped me keep off the pounds over the holiday. No easy access to the eggnog. The whiskey stash, however, has been moved to my home office.

And every time I hear that cough, I reach for a Devil’s Creek Distillery (www.devilsstreetdistillery.com) bottle of small batch bourbon. The perfect Christmas gift for a man held hostage.

Because every cough means three more houseguests for another night - and they’re inessential workers for Godsakes. Where is County code enforcement when you need it?!?

You know what Christmas film I truly identify with these days? Elf. Particularly the James Caan character who plays Buddy’s dad.

In regard to the graphic which appears on page four.

This has been in the works for some time. The person who requested we put something together on the Town was Allen Pietrasanta.

To paraphrase Allen, whom I miss seeing at Inyo Associates gatherings, he’d say, “I love the Mammoth melodrama, but for someone who doesn’t live there, it’s so difficult to follow. Hard to keep track of who’s who.”

The graphic is imperfect. Every time I thought I had it dialed, there was one more detail which I’d missed. One more connection I felt should be explained.
**WHO’S IN CHARGE?**

**SPECIAL FUNDING SOURCES**

**Non-Government Organizations**

**Mammoth Lakes Tourism**
- Funded by a combination of TOT revenue, business license revenue and Tourism Business Improvement District revenue.
- 2020-2021 budget: $6 million
- Lynda Salcido
- Eric Clark
- Michael Ledesma
- John Morris
- Matt Hammer
- Jeremy Goico
- Rhonda Duggan
- Pat Foster
- Jess Karell-SNR
- John Urdi
- Michael Vanderhurst
- Matt Gebo

**Mammoth Lakes Housing**
- Funded by a share of Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue.
- 2020-2021 budget: $420,000
- John Wentworth
- Kirk Stapp
- Jennifer Kreitz
- Lindsay Barksdale
- Tom Hodges
- Zoraya Cruz
- Richard Plaisted
- Agnes Vianzon
- Tony Perkins
- Patricia Robertson
- Staffer

**Mammoth Lakes Recreation**
- Partially funded by contract with MLTPA.
- 2020-2021 budget: $400,000
- John Louis
- Betsy Truax
- Laurel Martin
- Sean Turner
- Dan O’Connell
- Christi Constable

**Mammoth Recreation Commission**
- Betsy Truax
- Laurel Martin
- Sean Turner
- Dan O’Connell
- Christi Constable

**Mammoth Planning & Economic Development Commission**
- Michael Vanderhurst
- Paul Chang
- Greg Eckert
- Jennifer Burrows
- Jessica Kennedy
- Former MLD/Chamber
- Sandra Moberly
- Staffer

**Mammoth Lodging Assn.**
- Chair: John Morris

**Mammoth Restaurant Assn.**
- Chair: Peter Corcoran
- Chair: Brandon Brocia

**Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access (MLTPA)**
- Partially funded by contract with MLTPA.
- 2020-2021 budget: $300,000 from Measure R
- John Wentworth
- Wendy Schneider
- John Urdi
- Silver Chesak
- Alistair Veitch
- Dallas Veitch

**Business Assistance**
- The Town of Mammoth Lakes will spend $700,000 funding four rounds of local business assistance in 2020.
- Committee Rounds 1-3
  - Alicia Vennos
  - Jeff Simpson
  - Tom Parker
  - Ken Brengle
  - Brianna Goico
  - Staffer
- Committee Round 4
  - Alicia Vennos
  - Jeff Simpson
  - Jennifer Burrows
  - Brooke Bien
  - Sandra Moberly
  - Staffer

**Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID)**
- FY 2019-2020 Revenue: $4.5 million
- FY 2020-2021 Revenue: $3.2 million
- **Revenue Sources**
  - 1% assessment on lodging, 1.5% on retail sales, 1.5% on restaurants and 2% of lift ticket and ski school sales
- John Wentworth
- Lynda Salcido
- Kirk Stapp
- Bill Sausser
- Sarah Rea
- Town Mgr. Dan Holler

**THE TICKER**
- Mammoth Lakes Police
- Department's FY 2020-2021 budget is approx. $4.7 million, almost 25% of the Town's General Fund.
- This budget has increased 14% over the past three years. MLPD salary costs are up 22.7% over the past three years.
- The Town spends $2 million/year paying off the airport lawsuit which it lost in 2008.
- John Morris and Michael Ledesma are the only holdovers who’ve sat on the Mammoth Lakes Tourism Board since TBID was established in 2013.
- **IT Takes Two:** several couples have partners who are both actively engaged in civic life in Mammoth. Sandra DiDomizio and Michael Vanderhurst, Betsy and Brent Truax and Brianna and Jeremy Goico.

**The Town’s internal housing budget dwarfs the Mammoth Lakes Housing budget:** $730,000 versus $420,000.

**In third quarter FY18-19, Town Council allocated $2.0M from the General Fund to support special projects to produce housing.**
- In the fall of 2019, the Town purchased two condominiums for $665,446 to provide employee housing for the Town.
- To support the Town’s emergency response to COVID-19, staff requested reallocation of $1.0M from this previous allocation to provide funding for emergency response.
- Staff is recommending the remaining $334,554 be used to offset the above deficit.
- **TOML 2020-2021 approved budget**
- The Town of Mammoth Lakes trimmed its budget 10% year-over-year from FY 2019-2020 to FY 2020-2021, however its labor costs increased slightly.

**Town Commissions**

**Mammoth Lakes Police Commission**
- John Louis
- Lynda Salcido
- Kirk Stapp
- Bill Sausser
- Sarah Rea
- Town Manager Dan Holler

**2019-2020 General Fund Budget:**
- $23.2 million
- 2020-2021 General Fund Budget: $20.3 million
- Key revenue sources: 13% Transient Occupancy Tax (60%), Property Tax (16%), Sales Tax (11%)

**Measure U:** User Utility Tax
- FY 2020-2021 Revenue: $870,000
- EXPENDITURES:
  - Programming: $281,000
  - Rec Coordinator: $75,000
  - Special Projects: $25,000
  - Transit Services: $18,000
- MACC set aside: $300,000
- MACC (Mammoth Arts & Cultural Center) set aside: $300,000
- Transfers: $300,000
- FY 2020-2021 Revenue: $281,000
- EXPENDITURES:
  - Staffer: $100,000
  - Facility: $140,000
  - MUF Debt Service: $614,000
  - Maintenance: $40,000
  - Special Projects: $25,000
  - Trails contract w/MLTPA: $300,000

**Measure R:** Sales Tax
- FY 2020-2021 Revenue: $1 million
- EXPENDITURES:
  - Trails contract w/MLTPA: $300,000
  - Special Projects: $25,000
  - Maintenance: $40,000
  - MUF Debt Service: $614,000
  - Sales Tax
  - Measure R: $250,000
  - User Utility Tax
  - FY 2019-2020, $1 million

**Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID)**
- FY 2019-2020 Revenue: $4.5 million
- FY 2020-2021 Revenue: $3.2 million
- Derived from 1% assessment on lodging, 1.5% on retail sales, 1.5% on restaurants and 2% of lift ticket and ski school sales.

**Non-Government Organizations**

**Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce**
- Funded by the Town of Mammoth Lakes
- 2020-2021 Budget: approx. $300,000
- Andrea Walker
- Rich Sanfilippo
- Camille Miller
- Jeremy Goico
- Tom Parker
- Sandra DiDomizio
- Alisa Mohler Harper
- Kelli Moore
- Brent Truax: SNR
- John Urdi
- Ken Brengle
- Brianna Goico
- Staffer

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  - Staffer: $100,000
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- Chair: Brandon Brocia

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  - Jeff Simpson
  - Tom Parker
  - Ken Brengle
  - Brianna Goico
  - Staffer
- Committee Round 4
  - Alicia Vennos
  - Jeff Simpson
  - Jennifer Burrows
  - Brooke Bien
  - Sandra Moberly
  - Staffer

**COLOR KEY**
- MMSA Affiliated County Supervisor
- Town Councilmember
- Other
- Those whose names appear more than once, or who are affiliated or who are married to others.
- *Councilmembers and Supervisors who appear more than once, retain their original colors.*
YOUR WELL-BEING IS OUR TOP PRIORITY!
As a California recognized essential business, we’re open and committed to providing a safe shopping experience.

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15% OFF
Cannot be combined with other offers. Must show proof of Mammoth Lakes residency.

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Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546

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GREAT GIFTS!
Everything you need for under the tree.

Happy Holidays from
MAMMOTH HOLISTICS
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Santa’s elves are here to help you shop!

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HOLIDAY HOURS: 10AM - 6PM DAILY
CLOSED DEC 25

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FASHION • CALIFORNIA STYLE

501 Old Mammoth Rd
in THE PLAZA
NEXT TO VONS

Apparel, Footwear, Jewelry, Hats, Gloves, Scarves, Denim, Coats & More!
**Letters**

**How Much Moore Can We Take?**

The following letter was addressed to United States Forest Service Regional Forester Randy Moore.

**Dear Supervisor Moore,**

First, I would like to thank you for all of the hard work you and your team to reopen Forest lands in the Eastern Sierra following the terrible fires this fall. As a town we are so grateful that you heard us and made the necessary adjustments as needed for our unique circumstances. I am a concerned community member and business owner in June Lake. This week it was announced that June Mountain’s opening is being delayed due to lack of snow despite a month of snowmaking, cold temperatures and enough natural snow to cover the ground throughout town. What is the public’s recourse to hold the leaseholder of June Mountain accountable to provide public access to public land? If there isn’t enough snow to operate, the public should have free, unimpeded access to public land. If there is enough snow to operate, the leaseholder should be forced to operate and provide public access to public land, or relinquish their lease on public land. Please let us know what we can do as a community to access our public land that our taxes pay to maintain.

Alisa Powell Rosa
June Lake

---

**Curb the narcissism**

The following letter was addressed to United States Forest Service Regional Forester Randy Moore.

**Dear Supervisor Moore,**

First, I would like to thank you for your tireless efforts as we continue down the uncertain path this pandemic has put before us. Again, a sincere and deep thank you! However the purpose of this email is to share my concerns and thoughts as to our community’s way forward. My wife and myself have been long time business owners in the Sierra, we own a Resort/Lodge on Thomas Edison Lake, and have a Homeowners Service here in Mammoth lakes. We live in Swall Meadows.

Our emotions at this time are quite unsettled as we see the hospitals throughout this state go into crisis mode. No ICU beds, running out of room for services, shortages of equipment, burnt out staff etc. This state and the communities that make it up cannot continue with its current trajectory and plan. If it does, it’s guaranteed that a public health care disaster will occur.

I am disturbed that people are still flocking here to recreate. I have personally witnessed not only my clients but other residents and 2nd homeowners jamming their homes with family and friends. This activity has been common since Thanksgiving and appears that it will continue through the Christmas/New Years Holidays. Yes, the Mountain and businesses are doing their part to enforce Covid protocols and safety measures but and it’s a big BUT, the public is not.

Unfortunately the allure of skiing and getting out from their cramped cities is a great excuse to make for poor judgments during this time we should be "Staying at Home" and limiting our contacts with family and friends. I am afraid our mountain community is going to play a big part in the Covid surge this state will experience in January; a surge that all health care providers are warning us about.

Dr. Boo and Staff,

First, let me thank you for your tireless efforts as we continue down the uncertain path this pandemic has put before us. Again, a sincere and deep thank you! However the purpose of this email is to share my concerns and thoughts as to our community’s way forward. My wife and myself have been long time business owners in the Sierra, we own a Resort/Lodge on Thomas Edison Lake, and have a Homeowners Service here in Mammoth lakes. We live in Swall Meadows.

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**Press Release**

Mr. Rogers once said, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” This is particularly good advice considering the strange year this has been. There have been lots of scary things and thank goodness there will always be people who help. The June Lake Loop Women’s Club and Chamber of Commerce found two very generous and kind helpers this year in the June Lake community and recognized them officially last Saturday. This summer, Erica Johnsen, started a movement in the Eastern Sierra by just picking up trash. She was picking up after our not-so-clean visitors, maybe a few locals too, but then she started encouraging others to get out and join her and the Sierra Trash Eliminators were established. There were group clean up events (social distanced) and independent efforts that have been chronicled in the Facebook group Erica started. The group now has over 1200 members.
By Page

On December 18, a petition was circulated, prepared by the local business community via the Chamber of Commerce, that asked local authorities to consider terminating the regional stay-at-home order.

After additional revisions on Monday, December 21, the petition was sent to Mammoth Lakes Town Council, the Mono County Board of Supervisors, and county/town staff.

It reads as follows:

“This statement is presented on behalf of the Mono County Business Community. We need you, as our elected and administrative officials, to represent the interest of businesses in Mammoth Lakes and Mono County.

The call to action has now become crystal clear: terminate the Regional Stay At Home Order. We need you to fight to convince the Governor that the Mono County and Mammoth Lakes business communities will not survive if the order is extended beyond December 27. Having guests fill our lodging establishments is extended beyond December 27. Having guests fill our lodging establishments is extended, many of our businesses will be joining the ranks of those violating the orders. They will have to permanently close or declare bankruptcy.

One group of our businesses estimated that our county, as a whole, is losing $3 million a day during this shutdown. As a 100% seasonal tourist economy, losing Christmas, MLK and President’s week-ends is tantamount to losing our businesses.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the Regional Stay At Home Order end for Mono County on December 27.

Thank you for your consideration.

The petition had 546 listed supporters as of Thursday representing a total of 3,600 employees.

Mammoth Town Council and the Mono Board of Supervisors held a special joint meeting on Wednesday, December 23, to address the petition along with other Covid-19 related items.

Town Manager Dan Holler opened the meeting with a presentation on the current state of Covid-19 in the region.

Holler reported that local cases continue to rise at a steady rate, with no particular sector or industry bearing the brunt of the increase in cases; he also said that there had been another death in Mono County, bringing the total to 4.

In regard to the regional stay-at-home order, Holler said “the consensus is that the stay-at-home order will not be lifted on the 27th” and recommended that lodging operators cancel reservations from December 28th going forward at least one week. The state will review regional projections on a weekly basis.

He also gave an update on community assistance efforts: a second (fifth) round of business assistance will be initiated after January 1, 2021 due to an influx of applications, and IMACA will be hosting food bank distribution on Center St. in Mammoth Lakes on the 5th and 19th of January.

Mammoth Hospital CEO Tom Parker also gave an update on Covid-19.

He also gave an update on Covid-19.

While some have recently come out in opposition or defiance on the state orders, Morris explained that “there’s not a legal method to do that, it’s just a way to say ‘we don’t care.’”

In the case of the city of Atwater in Riverside county, the state immediately said that the municipality is not eligible for CARES act funding, asked that any CARES act money already allocated be pushed the tenets of #StaySafeToStayOpen and we will continue to do so.

Businesses are facing the desperate decision to stay open in violation of the orders or go bankrupt. The reality is, if the Regional Stay at Home Order is extended, many of our businesses will be joining the ranks of those violating the orders. They will have to permanently close or declare bankruptcy.

One group of our businesses estimated that our county, as a whole, is losing $3 million a day during this shutdown. As a 100% seasonal tourist economy, losing Christmas, MLK and President’s week-ends is tantamount to losing our businesses.

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He also gave an update on community assistance efforts: a second (fifth) round of business assistance will be initiated after January 1, 2021 due to an influx of applications, and IMACA will be hosting food bank distribution on Center St. in Mammoth Lakes on the 5th and 19th of January.

Mammoth Hospital CEO Tom Parker updated the gathered officials on the current status, explaining that the hospital is still able to transfer patients to Renown Hospital in Reno, albeit on a case-by-case basis. He also said that the hospital has faced challenges in repatriating patients that have respiratory conditions, as altitude can play a factor in how they recover.

Parker said that hospital staff has discussed the stay-at-home order and the tier system and determined that the hospital would be comfortable in the purple tier of restrictions if that is where Town Council and the Supervisors ultimately opt to go.

He also took time to talk about safety precautions related to the spread of disease, in particular the need for widespread masking. “I would like to see us put more emphasis in the county or Town on potentially enforcing masks,” Parker said, and suggested having those with more authority (le police) have a part in educating the public.

Mammoth Town Counsel Andy Morris and Mono County Counsel Stacey Simon took time to educate the officials on how towns and authorities that defied state orders had overall fared.

While some have recently come out in opposition or defiance on the state orders, Morris explained that “there’s not a legal method to do that, it’s just a way to say ‘we don’t care.’”

In the case of the city of Atwater in Riverside county, the state immediately said that the municipality is not eligible for CARES act funding, asked that any CARES act money already allocated be
ROBERT LEE ROSS 1940-2020

In loving memory of Robert “Bob” Lee Ross who died on Sunday, December 20, 2020 in Gardnerville, Nev. He was 80 years old.

Bob was born on August 14, 1940 in West Ossipee, New Hampshire to Ernest and Mary Ross. Bob leaves behind his beloved wife of 62 years, Emelie; his three children- Mark, Melody and Monte; his four grandchildren- Shanna, Clayton, Jessica and Elliott; and his six great-grandchildren- Felix, Nicolas, Bria, Dade, Cash and Maverick.

At the age of 16 Bob hitchhiked across the country to create a good life for his family. From humble beginnings and a strong propensity for hard work and perseverance, Bob created a prosperous roofing business in Mammoth Lakes. He went on to establish and own Mammoth Building Materials, Sierra Custom Door and found further success in other investment properties across several states. He was truly a self-made man and worked hard to create a good life for his family.

Bob had a legendary fighting spirit and always stood up for what he thought was right. Equally matched in spirit and always stood up for what he thought was right. Equally matched with his heart and all he worked so hard for. May he rest in the peace of God’s great love.

Due to the current unprecedented circumstances, there will not be a service for Bob Ross. In lieu of flowers please make a donation to the charity of your choice.

MONO COUNTY WELCOMES NEW ASSISTANT CAO

On December 15th, the Mono County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a three-year employment agreement for John C. Craig as Assistant County Administrative Officer for Mono County. Mr. Craig most recently served as Deputy City Manager for Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and will officially start with Mono County on January 4, 2021.

Upon Bob Lawton’s promotion to County Administrative Officer (CAO), Mono County began an extensive recruitment to fill the vacant Assistant CAO position. The nationwide recruitment resulted in 41 candidates. This initial pool of candidates was narrowed down to seven, and an interview team designated by the county was tasked with interviewing each of the semi-finalists for final recommendations. The top three candidates were ultimately interviewed by CAO Lawton.

“We are happy to welcome Mr. Craig and his family to beautiful Mono County, and look forward to working with him,” said Supervisor Stacy Corless, Chair of the Mono County Board of Supervisors. “His extensive local government experience will no doubt be benefit to our community.”

Mr. Craig has more than 20 years’ experience in county and city government, as well as the private sector, in a variety of disciplines and functions. Mr. Craig’s primary responsibilities as Assistant CAO will include support-
MAMMOTH REAL ESTATE
Hometown Strength. National Clout.
MammothRealEstate.com

COLDWELL BANKER

COLDWELL BANKER

BURGLARIES IN EAST MONO COUNTY

During the early morning hours of December 22, 2020, the Mono County Sheriff’s Office responded to a report of multiple armed burglaries in the White Mountain Estates Area. The suspect was caught on a home security camera. If you recognize the suspect or have home security footage that could aid in identifying the individual, please contact the Mono County Sheriff’s Office by calling 760-932-7549, ext 7.

A number of the supervisors said that they hear their constituents’ concerns but stressed the importance of focusing on local Covid-19 case numbers and not complying with social distancing and masking.

A number of the supervisors said that they believe that the state has handled the situation and the stay-at-home order. They also expressed frustration with how the state has handled the situation and the stay-at-home order.

When it came time to discuss the petition and what actions could possibly be taken by the assembled officials, representatives from multiple state agencies to threaten to pull local business licenses.

It’s unlikely the County would wish to jeopardize Walker fire relief or the Town would risk housing grant funding for The Parcel in an act of defiance.

Simon said that state law mandates that county public health officers enforce and carry out any state public health orders.

“A jurisdiction that says we don’t care and doesn’t think it’s valid, is actually violating the law,” Morris said, with Simon adding, “Only a court can declare a state law unconstitutional.”

One commenter on the item, Bita Klein, asked why such heavy fines are levied against rental violators in Mammoth Lakes and questioned whether that would raise the possibility of a class-action lawsuit against local authorities. “I’ve been breaking my back for Mono County but this is just too much,” Klein said, “Come on guys, this is the United States of America, that’s my property.”

One written comment from Jackie Dodson posed the hypothetical of what would happen if the majority of businesses opted to simply open in defiance of the law, saying that those who do not want to participate do not have to.

When it came time to discuss the petition and what actions could possibly be taken by the assembled officials, representatives from multiple state agencies to threaten to pull local business licenses.

It’s unlikely the County would wish to jeopardize Walker fire relief or the Town would risk housing grant funding for The Parcel in an act of defiance.

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LODGING

continued from page 1

ICUs are not full and that the ICU metrics are only based on public county hospital metrics. Stillwell argued that if true, “we will never get out of this if we’re grouped with LA because they have four of these hideous areas filled with gang members and people living in huge households.”

Health officials have repeatedly stressed that part of the ICU capacity measurement is related to available personnel as opposed to strictly the number of beds available.

Holler joined the call to answer questions and provide clarity about the communications that the town has been having internally and with the state.

“Unless it is a politically driven change and a change in the hospital metrics, [the stay at home order] is not going to change,” Holler said. And things may even get worse due to another surge coming after the holiday season due to increased travel.

Holler also said that there has been a debate about pulling the plug on Mammoth Mountain operations to disincentivize visitors from coming to the area. At the same time, doing so would mean losing out into their own separate subregion.

Holler said that those businesses then assume risk if the state ends up punishing them. That could mean loss of liquor license or OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) fines. Moreover, he explained, Mono County has some of the highest infection rates in the state, which further complicates a safe reopening.

“Why is that happening?” Morris asked. “If that’s a product of locals gathering and local activity, then the question is: what’s going to change that?”

Although Mammoth Hospital has remained in the “Green” category, able to care for any patients that require admittance, the hospital’s overall capacity can very easily be exceeded by a surge of very ill Covid-19 patients; Holler touched upon this information when responding to questions about reopening. “We open back up at some level, do we let [the spread of Covid-19] go until we lose the hospital and then we go back into lockdown?” he asked. That scenario introduces the possibility of rationing care and prioritizing patients.

“It’s kind of your choice if you get Covid,” Stillwell said, “none of us here have Covid. It was kind of our choice because we did something … if going to Vons gives you Covid with masks and six feet, everyone would have it.”

While Holler agreed in part with the rationale, he said that the inability to treat or transfer patients with serious injuries or illness not related to Covid-19 could make for a very tricky situation. At that point, he argued, a person’s choices are no longer just impacting themselves but a broader system already straining to care for everyone in need.

A recurring theme at the meeting was the lack of government assistance for lodging operations; they are ineligible for the town’s recent assistance funding package and the state has not issued licenses or OSHA fines. Holler said, would come out to be used to determine if a region can lift the stay-at-home order. That projection won’t be available until December 27.

Holler dismissed rumors that the town was headed for a total shutdown this week. When asked about plans for dealing with MMUSA, Holler said that he had been in conversation with the Mountain and that Mammoth Hospital’s ability to care for patients is a condition that is closely monitored.

If that capacity dips below comfortable thresholds, that may trigger MMUSA to shutter its operations for the time being.
This unparalleled property encompasses two of the best lots in Mammoth Lakes, taking full advantage of the stunning views surrounding this incredible mountain lodge home. Every detail in both architecture and design have been meticulously thought out to offer the discerning owner the epitome of luxury in one of California’s best known year-round playgrounds. Approaching the home, one notices the authentic timber logs and the views of the majestic Sherwin Range that are framed in most windows throughout the home.

An impressive two-story entry opens into an enormous entertaining space anchored by an oversized stone hearth and floor-to-ceiling picture windows that truly bring the outside in. The gourmet kitchen features beautiful finishes and high-end appliances; this home is a paradise for entertaining and family gatherings. The master bedroom suite rounds out the ground floor and opens to a private balcony. Four additional bedrooms, all en suite, are located up a grand staircase and separated from each other by a mezzanine that crosses the entire length of the main living space below. No mountain estate is complete without an oversized bonus room and this one delivers. This home leaves nothing to be desired, it will delight and charm all who come to visit, truly a luxury property in a magical setting!

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THE SHEET | Saturday, December 26, 2020

8

I have owned a second home in Mammoth for a little more than 20 years and have seen the ups and downs in local real estate values during that time. Despite any recent in-crease in values, it has always been my thinking that Mammoth real estate on the whole is greatly undervalued. What do you think?

A retrospective, the late 1990s was maybe the most opportune time to purchase property in Mammoth. There was a series of events that made it this way starting in 1980. And there have been an interesting sequence of events since 2000 also. It all leads to where we are today. Let’s look at some history and current market conditions that all suggest that Mammoth’s real estate is likely to be undervalued at the present time.

What most people don’t realize is that in 1980 Mammoth real estate values were some of the highest amongst all of the mountain resort communities in North America. That included almost all of today’s glitzy and very expensive resorts. Much of it was driven by the popularity of Mammoth Mountain as a ski area, a strong southern California population of Mammoth as a resort. Much of it was driven by the station wagon up Highway 395 and ski clubs arrived in droves in their buses. People skied (and stood in long lift lines) and people partied.

But in the spring of 1980 there was a series of strong earthquakes around the Mammoth region. Mt. St. Helens had blown-up a week earlier. The media mixed video footage of the Mt. St. Helens eruption with reports of Mammoth’s earthquakes. It was fake news of the era and they did it repeatedly. This was long before webcams so there was no ability for out-of-towners to see for themselves. There was a resulting cascade of negative information about the Mammoth volcano erupting and imminent eruptions and “lava flowing down Main Street” — Years later, many people truly believed Mammoth Mountain had erupted and the town had been decimated. It was the beginning of a long decline and stagnation of local real estate values.

The California recession of the early 1980s stalled a slight recovery in the 1989-90 period and values slid even further for the balance of the decade. We had to wait until the year 2000 to see any real appreciation. By then, In- trawest was driving the Mammoth real estate train and local values rose like the rest of California. The noted peak was in spring of 2006, but there were sporadic higher sales into 2007.

Even with recent appreciation, the local market has still not recovered to the peak numbers of that period. Up until the spring of this year most values were still ~75-80% of the peak 14 years ago. Considering the general inflation in the past 14 years, this alone is a solid argument for the Mammoth market being undervalued, especially considering that most real estate markets in California have exceeded their 2006 values in the past few years.

Now we have several new factors impacting values. In my July 3rd Q&A column of this year, I questioned what the future supply and demand characteristics of the local market might look like. It was quite uncertain at that time. There was some demand and clearly panicked/motivated sellers. The market was showing activity, and there was the beginning of what I referred to as significant “movement” by both buyers and sellers in the market. Six months later, we know that demand has sky-rocketed well beyond supply especially in the larger home and condominium market. The available inventory of both homes and condos is currently far lower than anyone can recall.

One of the most significant factors driving demand is the new work-from-home (WFH) trend. It is clearly driving the demand for larger properties in the entire region. And so is the desire to have a place “out of the city.” And in the past seven months we’ve seen numerous “move-up” buyers; existing owners purchasing larger properties. Many of these WFH owners intend to spend considerable time here in Mammoth in the future. And they will undoubtedly be making improvements to their properties. I also believe many will eventually build their own custom homes. Some (maybe many) of these large second homes may actually become primary residences. Places like Truckee are already experiencing this.

When considering whether current properties are undervalued, we need to look at replacement cost. This metric is often used as part of an assessment of a property’s value. For the past decade see OSTER, page 13
most of Mammoth's properties have been selling below replacement cost. Many far below. This is why there has been so little real estate development. Only the best developers have been able to eke out profits. And really only when the land could be acquired inexpensively.

But now construction costs are skyrocketing. Lumber, concrete, and other materials are being impacted by various economic forces. This alone is raising the basic value of existing properties. The new construction offerings in Mammoth are starting to look like bargains in light of these rising costs. If developers are able to re-structure their costs to absorb these new charges are certain to increase, and likely in the immediate future. Almost everything currently on the market could be undervalued if these construction costs remain high or go even higher. And these higher costs do nothing to help the community solve its workforce housing crisis.

There is the scarcity issue. Many visitors see infinite land in the area and can’t comprehend the scarcity of developable land. But Mammoth is a landlocked island. Our County (Mono) is basically 95% government owned. And they are not selling. There is actually more private land moving to public ownership then vice-versa. And to “conserve” our resources. Within Mammoth a good chunk of the undeveloped land is zoned for hotel or condo hotel. A year ago we thought there was the potential for new development in this segment. Covid has thrown a big wrench into this. And with construction costs rising significantly and condo hotel values relatively stagnant, this land will likely remain undeveloped for at least another decade, or longer. (Westin Monache units are currently selling at ~2/3rds of what they sold for new some 13 years ago. This fact alone should scare off condo hotel developers and construction lenders.)

The biggest chunk of remaining undevelopable land is in the Snowcreek Meadow. All of Snowcreek has been a very hot seller in the past seven months. If the market conditions continue, commercial and new units may accelerate. Prices are sure to climb. And just recently, vacant single-family home lots are selling. Their values have been suppressed because of the inherent high cost of construction in Mammoth. But every year there are fewer and fewer available undeveloped residential lots. More scarcity.

And an important metric in property valuation is the income or revenue approach. Here’s is another area where things have become crazy in Mammoth. There has almost always been strong rental demand in Mammoth. But now there is heavy demand for short-term rental (STR), long-term rental, and even medium-term rental (MTR). What some people are willing to pay is off the charts, especially in the medium and long-term. Many of these are new WFHers. All of this fundamentally makes properties more valuable.

The likes of Airbnb, VRBO, Bookings, etc., have certainly enhanced rentability, revenues, and values in the past few years. And the potential for owner usage (including WFH) and revenue is still the main attraction for STRs. But the lockdowns have created a surprising new demand for rentals in the two-to-six month range. In the past there was very little market for this outside of seasonal (winter) rentals. This new demand is different, and undoubtedly influenced by WFH. These renters appear willing to pay substantial amounts for quality, well-outfitted properties. Like ones that are currently in the STR market. And this is where the demand is looking for available properties, and finding them (which in turn reduces the supply of STR properties).

Interestingly, this new demand for MTR can be fulfilled in properties that are not permitted for STR. Rentals of 31 days or longer are permitted in single-family neighborhoods. This could create a whole new dynamic. And these rentals have the potential to have very high rates. Some second homeowners of single-family homes are likely to be interested in this new revenue stream opportunity. If the MTR demand continues it could become very popular to cater to this crowd. Basically, the entire town is permitted for MTR. This is important. And there will be no TOT due on these rentals.

Rents in the long-term market have climbed substantially. This is a disaster for local workers and renters. Many of the new WFH crowd can simply pay more in rent than local residents. All of these higher rents simply make the properties more valuable. And pure income properties like apartment buildings have seen significant increases in selling prices in the past couple of years (thanks mostly to ZIRP). Now they are positioned to go even higher. Ultimately, all of this higher revenue potential equates to higher real estate values. It is already happening.

Months ago the pundits said everything is going to be re-priced and re-valued due to Covid-19. It is happening. All of Mammoth, and not all of it is good. We’d better get to building the 500 workforce housing units at The Parcel and continue exploring even more affordable housing opportunities. And maybe we need to organize concentrated dispersed camping areas around town where people can live; RVs, elaborate tent camping and miscellaneous bivouacs. It is already loosely happening. Our leaders need to get out ahead of it. Maybe this is where we need spring structures.

As the long undervalued real estate in Mammoth continues to increase in value because of the current market forces, there is no more important time for our community leaders to be prudent in their actions and decision making. The public needs to pay attention. And the people who have made substantial investments in the community continue to do so. I’m hoping the younger generation of local residents and business people and other newcomers to the community can rise to the clarion call.

Paul Oster is the Broker/Owner of RE/MAX of Mammoth (celebrating 30 years). For other timely real estate information you can go to www.MammothRealEstateBlog.com. For legal, accounting, or construction advice, please seek out the appropriate professional.
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Mammoth Lakes, for more information and to apply: https://tinyurl.com/mammothspa@aol.com. Mammoth newcomers shall be considered first. These positions offer vacation accrual, benefits and paid holidays. Experience is preferred, but not required. Heavy lifting is required. Please provide a cover letter and resume/letter of introduction to mammothspa@aol.com.

Eastern Sierra Transit Authority Operation Supervisor – Mammoth Lakes, ESTA is recruiting for Operations Supervisor for its Mammoth Lakes location. This fulltime, year round position will provide the management and operational support for all of ESTA’s operations in the Mammoth Lakes area. ESTA operates 27 vehicles and this position supervises 25 to 45 drivers depending on the season. Job description and application are available online at www.extranet.com/jobs. First round of application review will be January 15, 2021.

Salary And Benefit Information: The hourly salary range is $26.44 - $31.57 plus $.50 per hour Mammoth Premium Benefits include: - PERS retirement: Classic 2% @55 formula; FIPRA 2% @ 62 formula - Health Insurance - Paid Holidays: - Comprehensive Leave: - Vision/Dental Reimbursement: - Life Insurance:
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You see a person of immediate for limpieza de condominios. Se paga por contacto. Mammoth Lakes General Plan Land Use Element/Zoning Environmental Impact Report for the Town of Mammoth Lakes 2020 General Plan Update (State Clearinghouse No. 2020042155, dated May 2007 and Town of Mammoth Lakes General Plan Land Use Element/Zoning Code Amendments and Mobility Element Draft Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse No. 2015102827, dated June 2016) and/or impacts would be less than significant.
Therefore, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21091, CEQA does not apply to such effects. This business is conducted at a place to stay over Christmas break. Ho ho ho. Please call me. If you want to do anything for a little service name listed above on January, 2020. File number #2020-0210 (12/26, 1/2, 1/9, 1/16). Mammoth Food & Beverage, LLC. 645 Old Mammoth Rd. P.O. Box 24 Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546
Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546
10001 Minaret Rd. , P.O. Box 24 Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

STATEMENT OF ABANDONMENT OF USE OF FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT:

Mammoth Lakes Friends of the Library 645 Old Mammoth Rd, P.O. Box 1468 Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546
Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

Mammoth Lakes Food & Beverage, LLC.
MMSA Food & Beverage, LLC.
Mammoth Hospitality Management, LLC.
Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546
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TOWN STUFF

December 24/

December 26-27/
Mono County Public Health Free Covid-19 Testing in Bridgeport at the Community Center (355 Sage Brush), 11 a.m. - 5 p.m both days.

Monday, December 28/
Mono Lakes Lodging Round Table meets 10 a.m. Viewing available thru Zoom at https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88670501007

Special Joint Mammoth Lakes Town Council and Planning and Economic Development Meeting @ 10 a.m.
Viewing available through Granicus on the Town website

Thursday, December 31/
Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce PPE Distribution at the Main Street Visitor’s Center. 10 a.m.-noon or while supplies last. In the event of inclement weather, supplies will be distributed via the side door of the office.

Ongoing
Mono County Libraries - Winter Reading Challenge 2021
In January 1st to January 31st, Mono County Libraries will participate in Beanstack’s Fourth Annual Winter Reading Challenge. The theme is Book Like Us, encouraging participants to find a book in which they see a reflection of themselves. Participants can log their reading on our Beanstack site at monocolibraries.beanstack.org. #WinterRead2021 #BooksLikeUs #MonoReads

There is an unscheduled vacancy on the Bishop Planning Commission. This appointment will be in effect until April 9, 2021. All interested persons may contact Bishop City Hall @ (760) 873-5863 Ext. 24. Applications and descriptions of duties and responsibilities are available at City Hall and on the City’s website at http://www.cityofbishop.com. Applications accepted until 4 p.m. on Jan. 8, 2021.

C5 Studios “Ancestors of the Arts” art show ongoing @ C5, 210 South Warren St. in Bishop (back of the old J.C. Penney bldg.). Weekend hours: 10-5 Friday - Saturday and 10-1 Sunday. More Info: See story p. 21

The Inyo Council for the Arts Holiday Gallery Show is up at the ICAs new location at 130 Willow Street in Bishop! Gallery hours are Monday-Friday, 10-4. Masks, physical distancing required. Info: 760.873.8014/info@ctoy.org

Mono Arts Council’s “Howling at the Moon” art show is currently on display at the MAC Gallery inside the Minaret Mall across the way from Minaret Cinemas. Hours: 12-5, Friday-Monday.

Laws Museum, located just outside Bishop off Highway 6, is open Friday-Friday- Monday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Info: www.lawsmuseum.org/760.873.2500.

Monday, December 28/
Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce PPE Distribution at the Main Street Visitor’s Center. 10 a.m.-noon or while supplies last. In the event of inclement weather, supplies will be distributed via the side door of the office.

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ORD 20-13


WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, Governor Newsom issued a Proclamation of a State of Emergency in the State of California related to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the County of Mono Health Officer declared on March 13, 2020, a public health emergency related to COVID-19 on March 13, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2020, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Mono, State of California, hereby continued the public health emergency related to COVID-19 as proclaimed by the Health Officer of the County of Mono on March 13, 2020, and

WHEREAS, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Newsom’s emergency proclamation, on March 17, 2020, the Board of Supervisors of the County of Mono, State of California, hereby ordered all County employees to report to work on an urgent basis to address the immediate threat to the public health from the COVID-19 pandemic, and

WHEREAS, serving as a mechanism for the enforcement of the Orders, some of the citations issued under Ordinance No. 1.2.0.01, which are described as follows:

- The above recitals are true and correct, and are incor-

- The Administrative Citation and all notices to be given or served pursuant to this Ordinance shall be given or served to the Responsible Party in accordance with the timelines and provisions as set forth in this Ordinance, including but not limited to the provisions of this Ordinance, including but not limited to a civil action for collection of civil penalties.

- In the event that the County believes are relevant and supportive of its case.

- Public Health Orders that a member of the public has violated the COVID-19 Orders by setting a time and date for the hearing.

- The County Health Officer, or designee, determines that a violation occurred, the County will give notice to the Responsible Party pursuant to Section 5, including an offer of an administrative appeal.

- A. The Hearing Officer’s decision shall be final.

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- If the Board of Supervisors of the County of Mono finds and declares all of the following:

- The County of Mono, State of California, HEREBY ORDINATES

- NOW, THEREFORE, The Board of Supervisors of the County of Mono finds and declares all of the following:

- The above recitals are true and correct, and are incor-

- The Board of Supervisors hereby ordains that this Ordinance become the final administrative order of the County.

- Whether the Responsible Party has been previously

- The Hearing Officer’s decision shall be final.

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but there were a lot of pretty girls in the rose. "There used to be four," he told her, and presented her with a single broken Nick knocked on her hotel room door moth locals over the years. Claire Roy European vacations by scores of Mammoth Mountain and the many trips (Nick was accompanied on his happened to fall during one European much as good friends. These weren't necessarily paramours so for companionship and drew a bevy of friends he made over the years. Mammoth Mountain and the many money, " recalls Murphy. Nick just wanted to keep the energy. Nick was so gung-ho he says, "I'd create an he first entered management. Gregory said he had his share of Rusty Gregory said he had his share of battles with Nick in his early says when he first entered management. Gregory was so gung-ho he says, "I'd create an emergency so I could go solve it. But sometimes you get lost in the hypotetical and waste too much time and energy. Nick just wanted to keep the money in the bank as long as possible." A life lesson for us all.

Nick Gunter's family came from Mammoth Mountain and the many friends he made over the years. A lifelong bachelor, he never suffered for companionship and drew a bevy of attractive women into his social circle. These weren't necessarily paramours so much as good friends. As Pam Murphy said, her birthday happened to fall during one European trip (Nick was accompanied on his European vacations by scores of Mammoth locals over the years. Claire Roy went three times, her husband six), and Nick knocked on her hotel room door and presented her with a single broken rose. "There used to be four," he told her, "but there were a lot of pretty girls in the bar." Murphy said she introduced Nick one year to Christine Hansen, a former Playmate of the Year who was the weather person for KCRA television in Sacramento. Every year thereafter, Hansen would wish Nick a happy birthday on air. He loved it. He was great company, and he had standing dinner invitations all over Mammoth, from the Vanco family to the Walker family and more. "He was by far the most lovable person I ever met," said Jill Vanko. "I would rather spend a night listening to his stories than anything else." He had a great sense of humor, and "never was an old person," said Jill. He was always current, direct, and could make you laugh until you (both) cried. "Our family was better when he was at our table."

From Bea Beyer: "Nick had an incredible sense of integrity. If you dropped a penny, he'd retrieve it and hand it back to you. His integrity is to be celebrated, as it's a concept that's dying so fast these days...

From Claire Roy: "I went to work at MMSSA in 1985. And I had to get the stamp (from Nick's office) to sign the checks. He was busy, snapped at me, and made me cry. And then, feeling badly about it, he invited me to his Christmas party." They were friends thereafter. "We watched Monday Night Football with him every week."

Mary Walker said that people would look at Nick and think he was shy, but he was so voluble when he opened up to you, and the stories he told would illustrate his character. For example: Imagine getting yanked to dinner afterwards on Evan Russell also had a story revealing another flaw - a thrill for speed. Not uncommon in lifelong skiers. "Nick's German heritage left him with an appreciation of good German food, beer and Mercedes cars... and in the early days, there was not a bank in Mammoth. The ski area banked with Bank of America in Bishop and I accompanied Nick on one of his bank runs. He got a speeding ticket going down to Bishop and a speeding ticket driving home from two different Highway Patrol officers."

What people revisited time and again when speaking of Nick was how he brought people together - on European trips, at his annual birthday parties, on mountain bikes, and ski days ("He was always skiing with a pretty girl" -Rusty) and when someone was alone and might want company (T.J. and Nick would always take Mary Walker for dinner at the Mammoth Mountain Inn when her husband had to go out of town for work). From Jim Vanko: "Speaking for the entire Vanko clan, we always felt that Nick had an amazing way of bringing people together (as long as it wasn't for his birthday). He was the glue that brought and held people together from all over the world! Nick was an 'international treasure. And he was ours! ... I suspect there's a lot of people out there that had the exact same relationship. We were all the lucky ones."

Nick Gunter is survived by his Moun
tain family. He was preceded in death by his brother, his sister and a nephew.

LIFE LESSONS FROM A LEGEND
By Katie Vanko

You are never too full for “second breakfast” or ice cream cones. Travel as much as you can History is like a story, and this is how it should be taught Follow your dreams and work really hard Fondue requires a lot of special tricks, and it makes every holiday special. There are a lot of flavors of Grappa in the world. The best movies take place in Italy with fast cars and pretty ladies. The more snow the better Laugh until you cry, The Olympics and baseball are actually really fun to watch. Friends are family.

Back in the day with lifelong friends Lilly and Al Miller

Nick pictured with Max Reigg, Mammoth Mountain’s European baker who relocated from Zugg, Switzerland to Mammoth in the 1960s and later opened the Swiss Cafe/Alpenrose restaurant with partner Hilde Ruland. At right is Ben Roma, son of Tony
HorrorScopes

By Clouds McCloud

Capricorn: The Goat is the symbol of Capricorn and this is very fitting, especially as we leave 2020 behind. Goats are very good at going after what they really want in life. They don’t let things like walls or mountains hold them back. The Stars are saying that 2021 is a great year to go after dreams. Since this is something Caps are good at, try to show the rest of the signs how overcoming obstacles is done: just remember it’s okay to charge extra for the behind-the-scenes content.

Aquarius: 2021 will be a year that features change. Luckily, the changes will, ultimately, lead to good things. Of course, patience isn’t your strong suit … or a suit anyone likes to wear. That’s why it will help to remember this line. “When you know that good things are going to happen, you don’t mind the hiccups along the way.” If that doesn’t work, remember that enjoying time in your birthday suit is a good way to make time fly.

Pisces: Friendships will be the star of your 2021. This last year has undoubtedly been draining on you. So the next year will be about re-energizing and restoring. But this year your friends, old and new, will be providing much of the fuel. Your assignment is to actually allow others to help you, keeping in mind that “gas, grass or ass—no one rides for free.”

Aries: Love is in your forecast for 2021. As are plenty of sunny days, some snoozy and cloudy ones and some much needed rainy ones, too. Aries actually need rainy days more than most. That’s because you’re always so on the go you wear yourself down. Sometimes you need Mother Nature to call a Time Out every now and again. That’s why your assignment for 2021 is to appreciate rain delays, wrong turns and even lonely moments and use them to recharge for the next page in your adventure.

Taurus: 2021 should be a very lucrative year for most signs. The plague and anger that have hampered America in 2020 will both begin to heal. That’s why any extra effort in 2021 is promised to be rewarded. Since Taureans usually enjoy effort itself rewarding, this should be a very good year for you indeed. That’s why your assignment is to be more understanding of others and to save and share some of your abundance—especially anything that makes you feel bountiful.

Gemini: The next year will get off to a bit of a rough start, but by the time winter begins to wane, many parts of life will be moving forward and looking up. The spring will be full of healing, the summer full of hope, and the fall will be a thankful time. To help you get through any of the challenging moments, just adopt one of these lines: From Thoreau, “Time is but a stream I go a-fishing by;” And from Bertrand Russell, “Time you enjoy wasting is not wasted time.”

Cancer: As a healing and social sign, 2020 has been as hard on you. That’s why you’ll be happy to hear that 2021 is all about healing and positive change. One thing you’ll have to change to make the most out of it is your attitude about accepting help. Since you are usually the one helping everyone else, this year will be about others helping and healing you. Your assignment is to actually let them, especially if they want to use their special healing tools on you. So your assignment is to actually accept help. Since you are usually the most out of it is your attitude about how you feel about yourself and how others care for you. It would be good to realize that even fleeting moments of perfection are created by imperfection. So start accepting that most others love and appreciate you the best they can. You don’t need to feel abandoned or rejected or jealous just because the other person is flawed. That’s why your theme song for 2020 comes from Andra Day, “All we need is hope and for that we have each other … and we will rise up!”

Sagittarius: Change is the theme of 2021. For many signs likes yours this will include positive changes in both your financial and truly personal matters. To help you embrace this, try to remember that this time is the most valuable commodity we have and we often spend it poorly. Having lots of money and possessions isn’t very fulfilling if you can’t share them with others. So your mission for 2021 is to create more affluence in all areas of your life by helping others enjoy the richness of life as well.
MLT and the Town and MMSA have the money. That’s why we talk about them a lot. That’s why they’re scrutinized to a greater extent. If you don’t like the press coverage, grow thicker skin.

Goico’s wife serving as Chamber staff while he sits on the board is not a good look. He probably should’ve resigned that position once she took the job. I did talk to fellow board members about the conflict. They said Brianna Goico got the job because she was far and away the most qualified candidate. So, sometimes, in a small town... What’s not in the graphic, because it’s a county board, is the detail that Michael Vanderhurst also serves on the Mono County Tourism Board, which is staffed by Vennos and Simpson. This guy goes to a lot of meetings. And when his kids were younger, he used to referee Hot Shots basketball league games as well. Maybe he has a double that we don’t know about.

Wentworth is unpaid in his role as MLTPA Executive Director (and Found- er). The Town does not have a financial interest in Council decisions regarding MLTPA (if Council directs money towards MLTPA, he doesn’t see any pecuniary benefit). He says he does not vote on invocations to MLTPA.

John Urdi serves as MLTPA’s Treasurer. I’m not sure I like the dynamic of MLT’s Executive Director serving on the board of Wentworth’s pet organiza-
tion. Strikes me as awkward. I don’t like the appearance of Urdi serving on the Chamber board, either.

To pivot away from the page four graphic (but not entirely).

How many local business owners in Mammoth had a good laugh when they received their business license renewal fee in the mail. Right after Thanksgiving. Right before a townwide shutdown. And right before the Town decided to initiate a 4th round of business assistance.

Pretty hilarious, to “give away” $400,000 in business assistance just as you collect an estimated $400,000 in business license fees.

What a sacrifice!

I went through my form. Plugged in the numbers. You know what happens when you experience a 35% decline in revenue over the course of a year? You want to know how that affects your business license renewal fee?

Ten bucks.

I’m off 35%. The town’s off ten bucks.

I’m off 35%. The Town’s off ten bucks.

One was mostly full-time. The others were part-time. Call it 2 FTE (full-time equivalents).

We have 2 FTE left. You think local government has sacrificed any FTE this year? Hell, no! Can’t get those business license renewals out on time unless you have all hands on deck.

Mammoth Lakes Tourism hasn’t sacrificed either.

It’s not like I want to see people lose their jobs. I don’t. But those organizations need to look in the mirror and make meaningful con-
cessions and demonstr-
ate that they’re row-
ing in the same boat. One lodging per-
tinent texted me about this. Said in the same batch of mail there was another notice from the Town stating that (late) TOT will be pe-
nalized again starting with December. “What December?” he asked rhetorically. “Merry Christmas! Ha.”

We all know the current Mammoth Town Council and MLT Board are too chickenshit to ask for sacrifice from the rest of the community (And I’m not even suggesting major sacrifice. But I am suggesting some discomfort). So I will say this. When Covid has come and gone and we’re all vaccinated and back to some semblance of normality (minus the businesses that just couldn’t make it, minus the neighbors and friends we will miss), those that remain will have long memories. They will know who made real sacrifice, as opposed to those who flapped their gums. And the elec-
tions of 2022 will prove fascinating.

Leading me to the next riff. In last weekend’s Wall Street Journal, there was a column titled “Why Are Americans So Distrustful of Each Other?” by Kevin Vallier.

According to Vallier, surveys in the early ‘70s indicated that half of Ameri-
cans said most people can be trusted.

Today that percentage is less than one third.

Social trust levels, said Vallier, harden with age. In other words, it’s no surprise that disillusioned, grumpy old men don’t trust anyone (with maybe the ex-
ception of fellow grumpy old men who share their politics).

The United States is the only estab-
lished democracy to see a major decline in social trust.

Trust levels, meanwhile, are notably increasing in Sweden, Australia and Germany. We’re trending in Brazil’s direction (5%).

“The negative relationship between diversity and trust is stronger in the U.S. than in almost any other country.” In other words, people don’t trust others who don’t look like them or share simi-
lar backgrounds.

Social distrust also correlates with economic inequality.

There’s also a connection between the political and social. 70% of each party’s voters believe the other party’s voters can’t be trusted.

I dug up a July 25 story from The Economists titled “The geometry of a pandemic” just to remind myself that I’m not completely insane and that what we’re experiencing with Covid right now was entirely predictable and easily anticipated.

The thesis. Americans began easing their lockdowns while their caseloads were three times (and more) higher than in Europe.

Making a second wave and exponen-
tial spread that much more likely.

“Rajiv Rival of Johns Hopkins Univer-
sity has modeled the effect on infections of different levels of activity. On April 12th, he reckons 95% of the population was staying at home (leaving the house only for essential visits) with 5% ignor-
ing lockdown rules.

Based on those assumptions, his model predicts that America would have 559,400 cases on that day - an accurate assessment (it actually had 554,849).

On July 14th, Mr. Rimal assumed that 80% of the population was staying at home, i.e. only a gradual change. On this basis, his model predicts the coun-
try would have 3.6 million cases, again, not that far off the actual number and confirming the impact of modest rises in activity.

If people really alter their behavior, the number would rise even further: to 5.6 million cases if the stay-at-home share drops to 60% and to 9.5 million if it falls to 20%. America’s death toll could top 400,000. Such is the dark logic of geometric growth.

The implication of these figures is that, when the virus is widespread, even small amounts of activity can make infections soar.

Current case numbers nationwide. 18.3 million cases and 323,000 deaths.

We Americans don’t like staying at home.

And we sure as hell don’t like follow-
ing orders and/or taking advice.

Local favorite Slocums closed their doors for good in March, at the outset of the Covid-19 pan-
demic, after 37 years in business. The business began as a waffle house before changing to a seafood restaurant called “Captain’s Table.” Slocums Happy Hour was consistently considered to be one of the best in town and finding a seat at the bar at 4 p.m. on a Saturday was akin to a Bigfoot sighting in its rarity.

Photos Courtesy of Matthew Lehman
A NEW HOME FOR FAMILY FUN

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