Insight

SPORTS
COLUMNIST THINKS BASEBALL'S WEALTH FLAUNTING SENDS WRONG MESSAGE **5B**

MIKE GROLL Associated Press
Ice climber Don Mellor poses at Pitchoff Quarry in Keene, N.Y.

OUTDOORS

Teacher wrote the book, literally, on ice climbing

Don Mellor has been climbing ice walls in the Adirondacks for 38 years

The 62-year-old has introduced the sport to many students at the school he teaches at

Mellor often helps rangers rescue fallen climbers

BY MICHAEL HILL
Associated Press

KEENE, N.Y.

Don Mellor has been scaling Adirondack ice for 38 winters and he's still wary. Climbers can slip on the glistening walls. Ice can crack, and give way. Mistakes can be costly.

"I'm alive because I'm a very negative thinker," Mellor said on a recent morning after scaling Pitchoff Quarry Wall, a 75-foot rock face covered with cascades of giant icicles. He had pulled himself up with bladed ice tools that look like small, high-tech scythes. Spiked crampons gave him toeholds, and a student below held his safety rope.

"I always figure something is going to go wrong, so I always have a backup plan," Mellor said. "I'm running about five backup plans all the time."

Mellor, 62, began ice climbing in the make-your-own tools era and has since introduced the sport to generations of students at a Lake Placid prep school where he is a teacher and counselor. He wrote the book, literally, on ice climbing in this rugged region, "Blue Lines: An Adirondack Ice

SEE ICE, 3B

"WE WANT OUR CITY TO BE AS INDEPENDENT AS IT CAN. THAT HAS TO BE WITH ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE.

Tom O'Malley, Atascadero mayor

JOE JOHNSTON jjohnston@thetribunenews.com
Atascadero Mayor Tom O'Malley sits in front of Atascadero founder E.G. Lewis' desk in his office at City Hall.

INTERVIEW WITH ATASCADERO MAYOR TOM O'MALLEY

What 2016 holds for Atascadero

Atascadero Mayor Tom O'Malley says the city's focus on marketing itself is key to economic growth

The city has embarked on new and revamped events, a coordinated marketing plan and zoo renovations

Bringing in new businesses and construction of the Del Rio commercial center also are economic drivers

BY NICK WILSON
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In 2015, Atascadero's mayor was a strong advocate for the city's efforts to rebrand itself and boost its marketing as a way to attract more visitors and improve the local economy. That work continues as the city moves forward in 2016.

Atascadero has brought in marketing consultants, hired a new deputy city manager to reinvigorate public events, and invested in the zoo and other city-owned properties to raise its profile in San Luis Obispo County and bring in more visitors.

Mayor Tom O'Malley said the campaign also includes encouraging new businesses to take a look at Atascadero and all it has to offer.

"We try to be business friendly," O'Malley said. "We want our city to be as independent as it can. That has to be with economic independence."

In a recent interview, O'Malley noted some key developments that helped improve the business climate in Atascadero last year and that will continue to be a focus this year and into the future.

EVENTS AND THE ZOO

In 2015, Atascadero began revamping and increasing the number of citywide events to encourage more visitors to come to town. A new deputy city manager position was created to focus on outreach, promotions and events and was filled by Terrie Banish, who was hired in April.

Banish is helping retool some of the city's traditional events, such as Colony Days and Hot El Camino Cruise Nite, and to create new events, such as this year's Tamale Festival, which drew about 7,000 people in January. She also has been tasked with helping to carry out a marketing plan with a goal to get visitors to "Stay, spend and enjoy!"

The city has invested in advertising on interior signage on the 16 buses that travel to and from Hearst Castle several times a day. More than 700,000 people visit the Castle each year, and Atascadero hopes to attract some of those tourists who might be planning to venture out to Paso Robles for wine tasting or to San Luis Obispo for a night on the town.

"What better way to remind

SEE ATASCADERO, 3B

COMMENTARY

Where the prescription for autism can be death

BY CHARLES LANE

In early childhood, the Dutch psychiatric patient known as 2014-77 suffered neglect and abuse. When he was about 10, doctors diagnosed him with autism. For approximately two decades thereafter, he was in and out of treatment and made repeated suicide attempts.

He suffered terribly, doctors later observed, from his inability to form relationships: "He responded to matters in a spontaneous and intense, sometimes even extreme, way. This led to problems."

A few years ago, 2014-77 asked a psychiatrist to end his life. In the Netherlands, doctors may perform euthanasia — not only for terminal physical illness but also upon the "voluntary and well-considered" request of those suffering "unbearably" from incurable mental conditions.

The doctor declined, citing his belief that the case was treatable, as well as his own moral qualms. But he did transmit the request to colleagues, as Dutch norms require. They treated 2014-77 for one more year, determined his case was, indeed, hopeless and, in due course, administered a fatal dose of drugs.

Thus did a man in his 30s whose only diagnosis was autism become one of 110 people to be euthanized for mental disorders in the Netherlands between 2011 and 2014. That's the rough equivalent of 2,000 people in the United States.

Case 2014-77 appears on the Dutch-language website of Holland's Regional Euthanasia Review Committees, which review mercy killing in the Netherlands — but almost never find fault. Of 5,306 euthanasias listed in the committees' 2014 annual report, the vast majority based on physical illness, regulators found a lack of "due care" in four, or 0.08 percent. The consequences of these rulings, if any, are unclear.

Now, however, doctors from elsewhere are starting to apply independent scrutiny to the increasingly common euthanasia of Holland's mentally ill, and their findings are not so reassuring. To the contrary.

According to an analysis of 66 of the 110 cases from 2011 to 2014, by psychiatrist Scott Kim of the National Institutes of Health and two colleagues, Dutch psychiatric patients were often euthanized despite disagreement among consulting physicians as to whether they met legal criteria. In 37 cases, patients refused possibly beneficial treatment, and doctors proceeded anyway.

In seven cases, doctors did not seek an independent psychiatric evaluation, contrary to recommendations by the Dutch Psychiatric Association.

Regulators, though, found a lack of "due care" in only one case — again, with unclear consequences.

The Kim report, published Feb. 10 in the journal JAMA Psychiatry, undercuts the very notion of a "voluntary and well-considered" request for

SEE EUTHANASIA, 3B

MIKE GROLL Associated Press

Don Mellor prepares to climb Pitchoff Quarry in Keene, N.Y. Mellor has introduced the sport to generations of students at a Lake Placid prep school where he is a teacher.

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ICE

Climber's Guide," and occasionally helps rangers rescue fallen climbers. Mellor is among the small cadre of veteran climbers who know winter routes up Adirondack rock faces like the back of their gloves.

"I think he's had a huge impact on the climbing community," said Adirondack Explorer editor Phil Brown, who mentions Mellor's role in pioneering routes, rescues, guiding and even climbing ethics.

Like a lot of ice climbers, Mellor is a rock climber who keeps busy in winter. But it's a different kind of climbing: rock routes are unchanging, while ice faces shift with freeze-and-thaw cycles.

MIKE GROLL Associated Press

Ice climber Don Mellor climbs Pitchoff Quarry in Keene, N.Y., in February.

Mellor likens rock climbing to ballet — climbers test their gymnastic ability as they reach out and find toe-holds. Mellor calls ice climbing a "thug sport," heavily dependent on arm strength. The climber is always battling fatigue.

"I think in a lot of sports you like the pain-pleasure dichotomy," he said. "And ice climbing can get uncomfortable. It can get scary."

Or worse. He once fell about 100 feet down a dome after he inadvertently cracked open ice under water pressure with his tool. He was soaked but avoided injury.

Not everyone is so lucky.

A Canadian climber fell more than 100 feet to his death on Poke-O-Moonshine in 2002 when the ice he was attached to broke off. Earlier this year, Mellor helped rangers in the High Peaks rescue a 40-year-old climber who suffered serious leg injuries in a 100-foot fall. Just three hours earlier, a 51-year-old man fainted during a climb.

Mellor tells his students to get their pulse down and control every move. Don't fixate on the ledge up above, look at the ice in front of your face.

"I say, 'Stop and look. Make it really static, not fluid at all, not nice and beautiful but stop and static so you can see what's going on,' " he said.

Mellor has written about the "renegade subculture" of ice climbing when he started in the 1970s. They made their own screws and heated up tools to bend them.

"I don't know how we lived," he says now.

The sport is more mainstream today, from Colorado to Vermont. Climbers can buy tools with carbon-fiber shafts for more than $300 and trade tips on social media.

Mellor has changed, too. He climbs with a hip replacement now and has amassed an encyclopedic knowledge of routes. He's been around long enough to appreciate the seasonal climbing cycle of rock and ice.

"I am glad every spring when it all melts, and I realize I've made it," he said with a laugh. "Rock climbing seems so safe."

FROM PAGE 1B

ATASCADERO

those visitors as they travel to the top of the Enchanted Hill that we have the only zoo on the Central Coast and we have one of the most historic buildings, being City Hall, and the only veterans memorial, the Faces of Freedom," Banish said.

O'Malley said the city also will focus on using Atascadero Lake Park to host festivities because the venue has plenty of space and can accommodate thousands of people.

The city-owned Charles Paddock Zoo, located within the park, also is undergoing upgrades in an effort to draw more locals and tourists. Improvements in recent months have included a remodeled aviary exhibit, which reopened Feb. 20 with new exotic birds, and a new turtle lab. A new red panda exhibit also is in the works.

"The city's job is to provide the infrastructure to support events," O'Malley said. "We see the Atascadero Lake Park and zoo as a place where can hold a lot more events. You can do larger events out there."

The city's assets, as defined in a recent marketing plan, are the downtown core with historic City Hall, Galaxy Theatre, Charles Paddock Zoo, Faces of Freedom Veterans Memorial, Atascadero Lake Park, Pavilion on the Lake, A-Town Skate Park and Chalk Mountain Golf Course.

IMPROVED MARKETING

Over the past year, the city has focused its efforts on strategically marketing Atascadero to raise its profile in the county to attract new businesses and draw more visitors to its restaurants, shops and events.

The city hired a consultant, the Coraggio Group, based in Portland, Ore., to work with the city on its promotions, branding and logo and to help develop a strategic plan. The city has spent about $31,500 for the consultant's services to date.

The city has also partnered with the Atascadero Chamber of Commerce and its Tourism Business Improvement District, which collects lodging fees for marketing purposes, to highlight local businesses and events.

O'Malley, a business owner himself who operates Portola Inn in Atascadero, said several new businesses have opened up in the city in recent months and years, including new restaurants, breweries and a gym.

"We just have had a rebirth of entrepreneurship," O'Malley said. "There are a number of restaurants and other businesses opening up, including some with younger owners."

O'Malley said the marketing efforts have helped attract the interest of several hotel chains.

"Marriott announced they were opening a new hotel," O'Malley said. "Additional hotels are interested, and we'll hear more about that in another year or two."

The marketing plan for this year focuses on promoting events from March through September with TV advertising and digital outreach, growing online search traffic related to city activities, and a retargeted social media plan. Email blasts for events such as Brew at the Zoo and Dancing in the Streets are included in the efforts.

Advertisements to attract tourists also will come in the form of billboards in "feeder markets" such as King City, Salinas and Santa Maria.

"Atascadero is a classic American family-friendly town offering something for the whole family to enjoy," the latest marketing plan states.

DEL RIO COMMERCIAL CENTER

O'Malley said the city is anticipating strong progress on the Del Rio commercial center at El Camino Real and Del Rio, which is expected to bring in about $1 million a year in tax revenues to the city once it's built. The project is progressing in the later planning stages, though it may not break ground this year, said developer Clint Pearce of Madonna Enterprises.

The new center at Del Rio and El Camino Real will include stores such as Walmart, which has not been without controversy. Opponents of the Walmart project say it would impact the area's roads, air quality and noise levels. Supporters welcome the revenues the store may bring and its potential ability to help Atascadero's economic growth.

Walmart's final map, which will include a detailed road and site improvement plan, is expected to be brought before the City Council in June.

"We're talking with lots of retailers and restaurants but none to announce (as to which will go into the center)," Pearce said in an email.

The project will provide people with the incentive to stay local and shop in town, O'Malley said.

"The best thing we can do for our environment is to improve our job, housing and shopping balance," O'Malley said. "If we get the shopping in our own town that our residents want, and meet all of our needs, and reduce vehicle miles that much, it's a huge impact on the environment."

DOWNTOWN CHANGES IN 2016 TO ADD 'CONNECTIVITY'

O'Malley said the city continues to work to improve its downtown, adding new infrastructure and a new sign ordinance.

A new project in the planning stages will add a pedestrian bridge from the Colony Square shopping center to the Sunken Gardens, along with construction of a plaza, reconstruction and expansion of the City Hall parking lot and a walking trail along the creek between El Camino Real and Lewis Avenue.

"What we're looking at with this is connectivity," O'Malley said. "We have our transit center right down the street. And you can go to lots of cute little restaurants by walking, faster than you can get in a car and drive around just because of the traffic."

On Tuesday, the City Council will consider whether to approve the project's design and award an engineering design contract, with the expectation that construction will start in spring 2017. More than $3 million in remaining 2010 redevelopment bond funds would be used.

A sign ordinance in 2015 cleaned up a litter of so-called "sandwich" signs, or A-frame signs, erected on city sidewalks to promote city business. The new policy allows temporary signs for up to 30 days that must be taken down for the next 60 days.

O'Malley said the city worked to slash fees and expedite the process of creating permanent signage as an incentive to business owners using A-frame signs. Costs for building permits for signage were lowered by almost 90 percent to $50 over an 18-month period, announced in September. Atascadero also now partners with local sign companies to "submit building permit applications digitally, cutting signage review time frames to less than 48 hours," according to the city's website.

Significant outreach to businesses on the changes led to widespread support for and cooperation with the new ordinance.

"I put that under my biggest surprise of 2015," O'Malley said. "If you tell somebody they can't do something, often you'll get that 'Oh, boy.' "

The Atascadero mayor said that he also enjoys the city's spirit of community and volunteerism, reflected in various communitywide projects.

"People here have a lot of pride in their community," O'Malley said.

How your lawmakers voted

Y – Voted yes
N – Voted no
O – Did not vote

CALIFORNIA Tally

For the week ending Feb. 26

By Roll Call Report Syndicate

Rep. Lois Capps, D-24	Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D	Sen. Barbara Boxer, D	
N			**Jurisdiction Over Civil Lawsuits:** The House passed, 229-189, a bill aimed at shifting many civil lawsuits from state to federal courts. The bill gives judges more tools for assigning cases to federal courts in "diversity of jurisdiction" disputes. A yes vote was to send HR 3624 to the Senate.
Y			**Sexual Abuse of Minors:** The House defeated, 180-239, a Democratic bid to exempt lawsuits alleging sexual abuse of minors from HR 3624 (above). A yes vote backed a motion aimed at assigning such suits to state rather than federal courts in "diversity of jurisdiction" disputes.
N			**Hunting, Fishing on Federal Land:** The House voted, 242-161, to permit hunting and fishing on all open federal lands unless agency heads rule otherwise. A yes vote was to pass HR 2406, which also bars environmental regulation of ammunition and fishing lures as toxic substances.
Y			**Fishing Tackle Contamination:** The House defeated, 165-238, a bid by Democrats to require industry research into the extent to which lead from fishing tackle contaminates ponds and streams used for recreational purposes. A yes vote was to add the requirement to HR 2406 (above).
	Y	Y	**FDA Chief Robert Califf:** The Senate confirmed, 89-4, Dr. Robert Califf to lead the Food and Drug Administration. A yes vote was to confirm Califf, 64, over objections to his previous ties to pharmaceutical firms and concerns that he would be a lax regulator of pain drugs such as OxyContin.

COMING UP THIS WEEK

In the week of Feb. 29, the Senate will debate a bill to address national epidemics of heroin and prescription pain-medicine addiction. The House schedule was to be announced.

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Ocean's deepest spot is a noisy place, scientists find

SEATTLE

The deepest spot on Earth is a surprisingly noisy place, scientists from Oregon discovered when they lowered a hydrophone almost 7 miles below the ocean surface into the Challenger Deep.

Left in place for several months, the device recorded the booming cries of whales, the rumble of ships passing overhead and crescendos from earthquakes deep in the planet's crust.

"This should be one of the quietest places in the world, but it was a lot noisier than we expected," said Oregon-based oceanographer Robert Dziak.

Only a handful of vessels have ever penetrated the Challenger Deep. If Mount Everest were tucked into the nearly 36,000-foot chasm, it would still be covered by more than a mile of water.

— THE SEATTLE TIMES

FROM PAGE 1B

EUTHANASIA

death from a patient who is, by definition, cognitively and/or emotionally troubled.

Dutch doctors have honored the request for lethal injection of a seemingly lucid, physically healthy woman in her 70s who said her life had become "meaningless" after her husband was euthanized a year earlier for a terminal physical illness. And they have done the same for people who were in the grip of delusions or hearing voices.

The World Psychiatric Association's policy on euthanasia, set forth 20 years ago, warns: "The psychiatrist, among whose patients are some who are severely incapacitated and incompetent to reach an informed decision, should be particularly careful of actions that could lead to the death of those who cannot protect themselves because of their disability."

Among the obvious risks, Columbia University psychiatrist Paul S. Appelbaum writes in a companion article to Kim's, is "inducing hopelessness among other individuals with similar conditions and removing pressure for an improvement in psychiatric and social services."

"Will psychiatrists conclude from the legalization of assisted death that it is acceptable to give up on treating some patients?" Appelbaum asks.

Some doctors already have. In 2009, a 37-year-old Belgian woman became distraught after a romantic breakup and began seeking a doctor to euthanize her, per that country's law, which is similar to Holland's.

The woman, Tine Nys, had a history of mental illness, including a teenage suicide attempt, but had more recently been doing well. In February 2010, however, she received a new diagnosis of autism and, two months later, a lethal injection. Her two surviving sisters have recently come forward to denounce the administering physician's "nonchalant" attitude.

Appelbaum chairs the World Psychiatric Association's ethics committee; he says it will address the situation in the Low Countries at a meeting in Munich in March.

It's late. Once the Netherlands authorized euthanasia for physical illnesses in 2002, demands to extend this "right" to the suffering mentally ill were inevitable and, indeed, logically consistent.

They are already being heard on this side of the Atlantic: Canadians are debating how to implement last year's ruling by their Supreme Court establishing a right to "physician-assisted dying" in cases of a "grievous and irremediable medical condition." A panel of experts advising Ontario and 10 other provinces and territories has urged that the ruling be construed to include mental illness.

And why not? The Canadian Supreme Court's opinion specifically said that, in Belgium and the Netherlands, the "predicted abuse and disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations has not materialized."

Charles Lane writes for The Washington Post.