

U.S. NEWS

Christmas Trees Take Route

Spruces and firs make the trek to big cities for lighting festivities; a driver from North Pole

By Sara Randazzo

On a recent day in Seattle, a white-bearded truck driver from Alaska took the wheel of a big rig towing a 74-foot spruce on a cross-country journey.

The driver, John Schank, was on his way to Washington, D.C., where he is set to deliver a Christmas tree hailing from Alaska's Chugach National Forest to the U.S. Capitol lawn.

"This is my first rodeo with a Christmas tree," said Mr. Schank, a Michigan native who has worked in Alaska for more than 40 years, hauling oil service-related goods on the often treacherous route from Fairbanks to Prudhoe Bay.

Across the country, Christmas trees are arriving in city centers to await tree-lighting ceremonies in coming weeks. In New York and Detroit, Norway spruces rolled into town in early November to unseasonably warm weather. In Sacramento, a 51-foot tree recently arrived outside California's Capitol building after being cut down during a snowstorm from a state-operated research forest.

The U.S. Capitol's Christmas tree, which comes from a national forest each year, is making the trek from outside the lower 48 states for the first time, a record 4,000 miles. It landed in Washington state by cargo ship after traveling through gale-force winds, and it is taking a 10-city tour while cradled on an 80-foot trailer encased in a container that allows passersby to catch a glimpse. Each night, a security detail stands watch to protect the tree from vandals; a 40-gallon "bladder" attached to its base keeps it hydrated.

Selected for his safe driving record, Mr. Schank, a driver



A crane extends above the Lutz spruce in an Alaska national forest before its move to Washington.

with Lynden Transport, hails from near the town of North Pole and looks the part of holiday deliveryman thanks to his Santa Claus beard. "Everybody tells me I'm a look-alike," Mr. Schank, 63 years old, said in a folksy drawl. "So be it."

Transporting a massive conifer isn't cheap. Bruce Ward, an outdoorsman who runs a nonprofit that organizes the U.S. Capitol tree operation each year, said he has tallied at least \$600,000 in corporate donations so far, not including labor. Corporate sponsors range from Shell Oil, which is providing fuel for the tree's voyage, to Alaska Airlines, which is transporting more than 4,000 handmade ornaments.

To alleviate environmental concerns, most cities turn the trees into lumber or mulch in January and plant new trees to replace those cut down. Mr. Ward, who helped build the Continental Divide Trail between Mexico and Canada before going into tree organizing, said he has never seen a formal protest from environ-

mental groups.

In Manhattan, Albert Asendorf watched last week as a bushy Norway spruce from his yard in New York state's Hudson Valley arrived at Rockefeller Center to adorn the iconic square.

"We were afraid of it falling on the house," Mr. Asendorf, a 62-year-old retired mainte-

Norway spruces rolled into New York and Detroit to warm weather this month.

nance worker, said of why he donated the aging tree, which he watched grow from human height when he was a child to nearly 80 feet.

Once Rockefeller Center's head gardener, Erik Pauze, selected Mr. Asendorf's tree earlier this year, he made frequent trips up to Gardiner, N.Y., to douse it with 800 gallons of "compost tea"—liquid that has been soaked in com-

post—or, on other trips, 1,700 gallons of water.

Many states seem intent on keeping the cost to taxpayers low when it comes to holiday decorating. In New York, commercial real-estate company Tishman Speyer picks up the bill for maintenance and transport of the Rockefeller Center tree. Each year, Nova Scotia donates an evergreen as thanks for Boston's aid during a 1917 Halifax explosion that killed thousands of people.

The annual rites bring the occasional controversy.

Last year, a scraggly tree in Reading, Pa., drew an outcry from a local official and residents. Rather than replace the 50-foot tree, the city decorated it with a single red ornament, in reference to Charlie Brown's sad-sack tree in the "Peanuts" Christmas special. This year, volunteers worked for months to secure a worthy Christmas tree, according to a Reading spokeswoman, and recently celebrated the arrival of a 25-foot fir donated by a local business.

Student Arrested In Missouri Threat

By Mark Peters and Melissa Korn

COLUMBIA, Mo.—University of Missouri police arrested a 19-year-old student Wednesday over threats made on social media, capping days of turmoil after two top school officials resigned amid protests about racial incidents on campus.

Authorities arrested Hunter Michael Park, a student at the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla. The school, part of the University of Missouri System, is about 90 miles from the Columbia campus. Mr. Park was charged with making a terroristic threat, said the Boone County Sheriff's Office in Columbia, which is holding him.

Officials said they didn't have information about a lawyer for Mr. Park and that he would be arraigned Thursday.

At the Columbia campus, police overnight alerted students that they were investigating threats online. Authorities said there was no immediate danger and that security had been increased to keep students safe. Authorities later announced they had in custody the suspect who they alleged posted threats on the anonymous, location-based messaging app Yik Yak and on other social-media sites.

"Threats of violence of any kind are not tolerated," Missouri S&T Chancellor Cheryl B. Schrader said after Mr. Park's arrest. "As a campus, we are grateful that this situation did not escalate," she said.

Three top administrators from the flagship campus posted a statement on the school's website Wednesday lamenting that people in the community "have suffered threats against their lives and humanity" and calling such threats "reprehensible."

Yik Yak co-founder and Chief Operating Officer Brooks

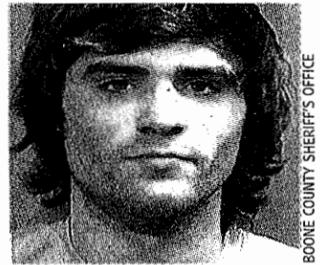
Buffington posted on the app's blog Wednesday that the threats "were both upsetting and completely unacceptable. Let's not waste any words here: This sort of behavior is NOT what Yik Yak is to be used for. Period."

The post noted that Yik Yak works with local authorities to help in investigations.

On campus, students walked to morning classes as police patrol vehicles passed by. An encampment set up by protesters was dismantled. Students had been gathering at the site for more than a week, with some sleeping in tents. Several protesters interviewed on Tuesday by The Wall Street Journal declined to provide their names, citing concerns for their safety.

R. Bowen Loftin, chancellor of the Columbia campus, and Tim Wolfe, president of the University of Missouri system, resigned Monday as the protests grew. The demonstrations were triggered by a series of incidents, including a police investigation of a swastika scribbled with feces in a dorm and racial epithets directed at black students.

The protests gained national attention after members of the school's football team threatened to boycott games, a move that was supported by the team's coaching staff. Mr. Loftin and Mr. Wolfe also faced criticism from faculty, graduate students and state lawmakers over issues unrelated to racial tensions.



Hunter Michael Park

BOONE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Geffen Donates \$100 Million To Fund UCLA Prep School

By Melissa Korn

Entertainment mogul David Geffen has given another \$100 million to the University of California, Los Angeles, to fund a college-prep school on campus, the latest effort by a high-profile donor to help reshape K-12 education.

Mr. Geffen has now given more than \$400 million to UCLA and is the school's largest individual donor, the

school said Thursday.

The latest donation by Mr. Geffen reflects a trend among philanthropists to seek to influence K-12 education broadly, rather than simply give money to their alma maters. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg donated \$100 million to the Newark, N.J., public-school system in 2010, while the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has given hundreds of millions of dollars toward many education

initiatives. Results of the efforts have been mixed.

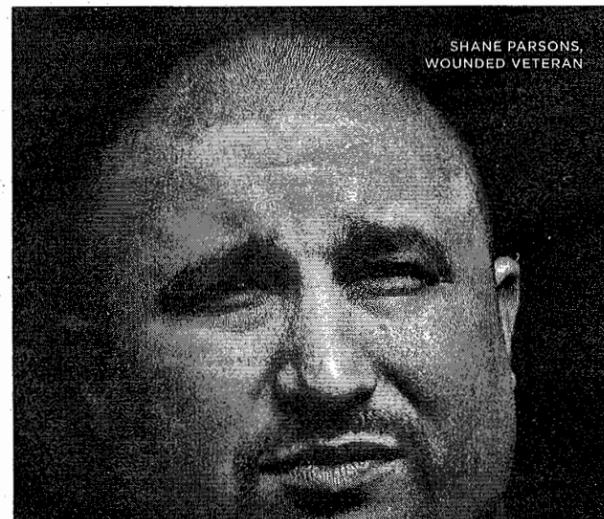
The gift from Mr. Geffen will fund the Geffen Academy at UCLA, an independent school housed on the university's campus for students in grades six through 12.

The new school, set to open for the 2017-2018 academic year, will ultimately grow to more than 600 students, the university said—half from the local community and half from UCLA-affiliated families. Mr. Geffen's gift will provide financial aid to low- and middle-income students, as well as funds for facilities, faculty and curriculum development.

"Diverse learning environments are the best learning environments," Mr. Geffen said of the plan to bring together students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

He said one impetus for the gift was that he wanted to help the university attract top instructors. The dearth of slots in affordable, high-quality local schools for faculty families has been a hindrance in recruiting such talent, he said.

UCLA already has a school on campus for students in preschool through sixth grade,



SHANE PARSONS, WOUNDED VETERAN

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