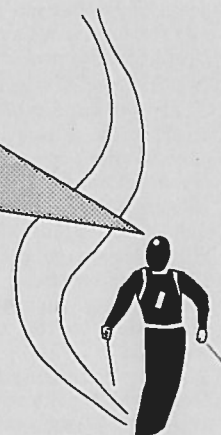


SnowLine

The Official Newsletter of the Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team, Inc.

Lake Tahoe · Truckee · Donner Summit

APRIL 1997



Next General Meeting is Monday, April 7, 1997, 7:00 p.m. at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut

Global Chaos

I'm without the advantage of a TV, but I will bet that Pete Giddings' suits are still tailored just a little too tight. The airtight look agrees with a studio backdrop — trim, concise, uncluttered. Pete Giddings predicts weather on camera.

When Mike Pechner calls you on the telephone you recognize his voice right off. It's a little like a phonograph speaker inside a freshly galvanized Pontiac fender. No mistaking it. Pechner has a distinctive voice, a broadcast voice. Mike Pechner predicts weather on radio.

Nevadans in the know love to quote John James. As the official state climate personality, he's quick with a statistic. His *Reno Gazette-Journal* quotes are usually worth recalling: "In my mind, the chances aren't very good, but who knows." John James predicts weather in print.

James, Pechner, and Giddings are probably as qualified as any to predict weather, or at least as qualified as any *attempting* to predict weather. But the lesser qualified are everywhere, and they are predicting weather faster than the soapless flock to Amway.

Will it rain Tuesday? Ask a Union Pacific railman, or a flight nurse, or your dog groomer. They will tell you, and with conviction. Will April be snowy? Your neighbor should know; the muffler guy too. Cold and dry or warm and wet over the weekend? Get the answer at the PTA (or search and rescue!) meeting. So many forecasts are passed around, the atmosphere itself becomes saturated. Over time, this state of supersaturation has an effect. We become barometric believers. Micro climate missionaries. Doppler disciples...

-SLAP!!!- Before we sweep all our sense into the bottom drawer, let's stop, take a deep Bill Clinton inhale, and enjoy a refreshing moment of lucidity. There, better? We now remember, when... Pete Giddings flubbed a forecast and it cost the business owners of North Lake Tahoe a ski weekend's worth of revenue. We remember, when... Pechner's four-foot snowstorm turned out to be a partly cloudy day. We remember, that... John James' statistical analyses are based on precipitation records from a state that gets no precipitation. Yes, we remember: *weather forecasts are not gospel truth*, no matter how skilled the forecaster. At best, forecasts are based on mathematical models running time- and space-limited data sets. Even fueled by 1997 technology, the mightiest Cray still isn't fast enough to model the fluid, mutant nature of the global atmosphere. The most synchronized weather satellites blink down upon us, but have difficulty seeing the storm for the cloud.

Wow, the sky looks bluer already.

The Great Ski Race — 1997

For the past two years in a row, weather forecasts predicting impending doom have hovered over The Great Ski Race (these gridlocking blizzards have never materialized). Do weather forecasts, by keeping skiers away, play the bad guy on The Great Ski Race stage? In retrospect I'd say nope, not really a bad guy, just a Harry Dean Stanton-type blowing cigarette smoke in your face. One thing's clear as air: despite a couple inches of new snow, reduced visibility, and every

flavor of storm forecast, 635 cross-country skiers vacated their Barcaloungers and lined up for the start of this year's Great Ski Race. When the start gun went off, the field moved forward into the storm, seemingly in slow motion — as if they were all used to it.

30 kilometers later, the gravity-fed finish was as woolly as ever — the punchy new snow tripping up more than one pudding-legged skier. As more and more skiers crossed the finish, the clearer the sky became (contrary to popular forecast). By noon, you could skip around in a *seabernet* purple T-shirt. (Not *too* much mud was downloaded into Hilltop Lodge by the circulating masses; as usual it was a bit of a circus inside. The wide variety of matted-hair skiers costumed in everything from gabardine knickers to nipple-revealing lycra were only slightly less of a spectacle than the bar scene in *Star Wars*.)

It's remarkable how significant this race is. Not only for Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team, but for the blue-jean clad skiers who ski three days a year and labor over the course for five and a half hours; and for the local racers who choreograph their entire season's fitness to peak on Great Ski Race day. The race volunteers, who come forward and put out, remain undaunted by the work — they are the champions of this event! (Everyone seems to have a quip of a good time, too.) Great job all!

By any measure the 21st annual Great Ski Race was a big success. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team would like to pay *special thanks* to Jennifer Haag and Mike Blide at Cottonwood Restaurant, Rose and Mike Wolterbeek and the staff of Lakeview Cross Country Ski Area, and Russ Jones from Northstar-at-Tahoe. Couldn't have done it without ya!

February Member Of The Month

At the February 24 Nordic Team meeting, Team President Gerald Rockwell, freshly sawed out of his leg cast, announced Karen Honeywell as the February *Team Member of the Month*.

When it comes to ideas for the Team's Education Committee, Karen never fails to pull new tricks out of her trenchcoat (literally and figuratively). She has educated and entertained local fourth-graders and Team members alike with her witty, upbeat, and fast-paced Winter Awareness programs. Karen recently was interviewed on the local Truckee television station where she most eloquently furthered the good word on how to stay healthy and safe in the winter wilderness. Karen, you're awesome! Way to go!

Steep And Deep

About 200 raccoon-eyed skiers and boarders showed up for the annual *Steep and Deep* avalanche awareness presentation held March 12 at the Plaza Bar, Squaw Valley. This event is put on by the Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows ski patrols and highlights winter action - adventure photography

peppered with sound advice for treading the off-piste steep and deep. Nordic Team members Jeff Rieger and Randall Osterhuber were among the many presenters who laid out some boiler-plate advice; Jeff gave a talk about the Team's John Wilson (found by the Team unconscious and

If you can spare the time, please read on...



photo: osterhuber

deeply hypothermic on Castle Peak) search of March 1995, and Randall was featured in an avalanche safety video sponsored by Ortovox. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was a sponsor of this event.

History: 15 Years Ago

Always matter-of-fact and well spoken, Larry Heywood, ski patrol director for Alpine Meadows ski area, is one of several avalanche practitioners interviewed on the Discovery Channel's avalanche presentation *Avalanche* (this is one of the more entertaining avalanche videos). In the film, Larry talks about the large, destructive avalanche that swept Alpine Meadows destroying the Summit lift building and killing seven people, including mountain manager Bernie Kingery. That fatal avalanche released 15 years ago this month, on March 31, 1982. Many members of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team responded to the accident; the memory of those scenes remain indelible.

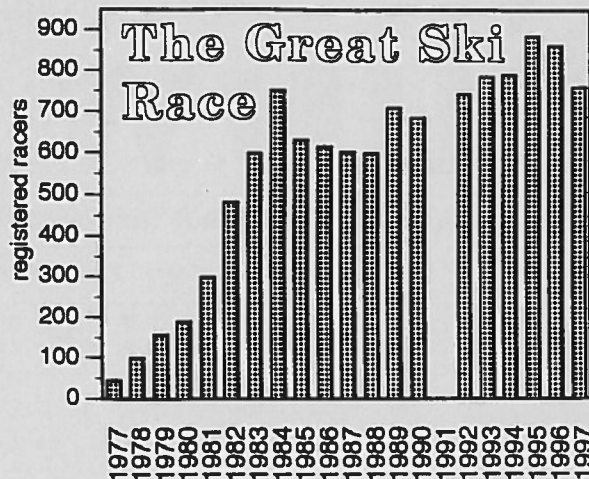
Larry comments in *Avalanche* that at the time no one at Alpine Meadows envisioned those particular slopes capable of producing an avalanche of such magnitude. And it is no wonder. After the storm ended on April 8, the Central Sierra Snow Laboratory on nearby Donner Pass had recorded 486 centimeters (191.5 inches) of new snow. This storm remains by and far the snowiest on the Lab's records. This should act as a reminder (while reading this newsletter the last week in March) that "late season" snowfall in the Sierra Nevada can be formidable. A reminder, mind you, *not* a forecast!

Nordic Team Trainings

April 5: An overnight trip to the Benson Hut. Meet at the Team garage (223 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City, behind the Tahoe City Chevron) at 8:30 A.M. Call Peter Sporleder to reserve a bunk in the hut.

April 13: Meet 8:00 A.M. at the Nordic Team garage fed, watered, and lookin' good. Of tall order is a Gerald Rockwell-conceived all-day ski tour.

April 17: One more all-day tour (never enough). Meet at the Nordic Team garage - 8:00 A.M. Call Dirk Schoonmaker for info on this one.



Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team Officers

President	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376
Vice President	Joe Pace	583-1806
Treasurer	Scott Schroepfer	546-2809
Secretary	Jackie Thomas	546-3592
Board Members	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
	Steve Twomey	525-7280
	Medora Weiser	525-9248
	Chris Worcester	582-4648

Committee Chairs

Cuisine	Debra Schroepfer	546-2809
Dispatch	Medora Weiser	525-9248
Education	Mona Treat	581-5759
The Great Ski Race™	Douglas Read	583-6381
Newsletter	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Snowcats	Tony Remenih	583-1684
Snowmobiles	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Training	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
	Peter Sporleder	546-0588
Truck/Equipment	Jean Wernette	546-2238
Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team garage		581-4038

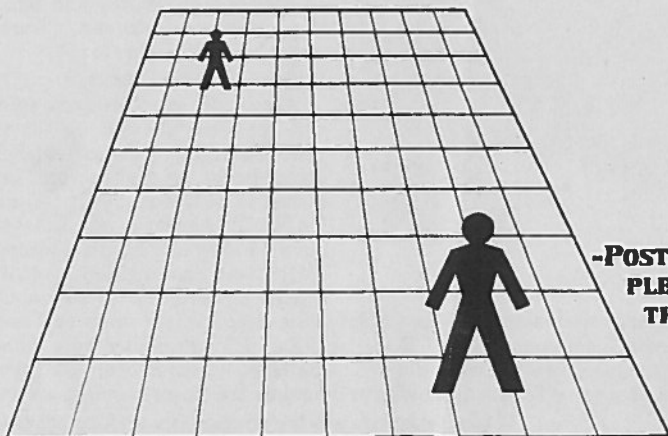
All phone numbers area code (916).

Photograph scanned courtesy of Compass Art, Tahoe Vista, CA.

"All mountain good."

—Sherpa Dawa Tenzing, when asked
which was his favorite peak to climb

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