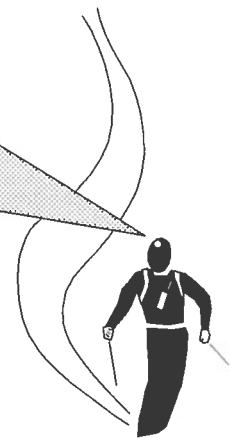


# SnowLine

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

Lake Tahoe · Truckee · Donner Summit

APRIL 1998



Next General Meeting is Monday, April 6, 1998, 7:00 p.m. at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut

## The Great Ski Race 1998

While everyone else in and around the Tahoe basin was bracing for more snow from the end of the snowiest February on record, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team volunteers were busy assembling the many pieces of The Great Ski Race. Every year the race preparations fall into place at different times and at different rates. Many people perform the same jobs year after year, but each year also sees new volunteers tackling different facets of the race. This seems the best synthesis: seasoned pros and fresh energy. And once again it paid off. Blessed with the first clear weather in four weeks, 750 storm-whipped Nordic skiers collectively scussed their long boards 30 km to Truckee, proclaiming it *race day!*

A little over one hour and twelve minutes after the start gun fired, Ben Husaby, of Bend, Oregon, was the first of the field to jet through the finish line. Though Ben had 749 skiers behind him, he skied a lonely course — second place skier Danny Buchanan was more than two minutes behind. Ben's slippery skis had hardly edged to a stop before he commenced answering questions from the press. He seemed hardly winded. More than five and half hours later, the 750th — and last — racer of the 1998 Great Ski Race crossed the finish line with a time of 6:48:20. And the race was over.

But hardly the party! The beer flowed, prizes were awarded, race souvenirs sold, and the racers bounced on the flexible (yikes!) dance floor of Cottonwood Restaurant.

When it was *all over*, the Nordic Team was left with what was probably one of the most successful Great Ski Races ever. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team would like to thank all the participants and sponsors of The Great Ski Race, especially Northstar at Tahoe, Diamond Peak Lake Tahoe, Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, Tahoe Forest Hospital, Sierra Pacific Power Company, SierraWest Bank, Clif Bar, Stoker Bar, Patagonia, Lakeview Cross Country Ski Area, and Cottonwood Restaurant at Hilltop Lodge. *Many thanks* for supporting The Great Ski Race and the life-saving efforts of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team!

## Ninth Team Response Of The Season

Referred to as the Lake Run, the fall-line route from the top of Mt. Judah/Donner Peak down to the west end of Donner Lake has grown exponentially in popularity: the top of this primarily north-facing powder route is now an easy hike from the top of Sugar Bowl's relatively new Mt. Judah chairlift. Faithful to local demographics, a large percentage of the Lake Run's devoted are snowboarders — hepcats they are, but with a weakness for riding only within view of a road. If unfamiliar with this backcountry, it's easy to get sucked skier's-right at a number of areas, forcing you into Emigrant or Coldstream Canyon. Emigrant and Coldstream Canyons do not lead to the west end of Donner Lake. Reversing a wrong turn in this terrain is not usually too

big a problem for a backcountry skier, but a boarder caught in Coldstream has a better chance of hailing a taxi than post-holing their way out of there. So was the case late the afternoon of February 20. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was called to search for a missing snowboarder last seen exiting the Sugar Bowl boundary.

With TEAM snowcat driver Scoop Remenih heading into Coldstream, and Team skiers Tony Bochene and Steve Reynaud preparing to exit Sugar Bowl, the California Highway Patrol helicopter H-20 came on scene and almost immediately spotted the wallowing boarder, high up in the Coldstream watershed. The chopper couldn't find a landing zone near the stranded snowboarder, so they did a low-elevation, full-power hover, and, in a maelstrom of tornadoing powder snow, yanked the young man into the plane.

## Sunnyside Event A Success

March 9 was the date and Sunnyside was the place for the latest fund-raiser benefiting Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team. Sunnyside, along with Mussetter Distributing, donated the venue and a

bunch of ski/snowboard equipment as raffle prizes with the proceeds going to the Team. I'll tell you it was standing room only in there most the night and rolls of raffle tickets were sold. Every 20 minutes or so more prizes would be given away. The raffle culminated with a Miller Genuine Draft snowboard (its base emblazoned with an image of a young woman dressed for riding on only the warmest of days) giveaway. Impart your thanks to the Sunnyside management next time you visit, and thanks also to Mussetter Distributing and Team President Gerald Rockwell who pulled it all together.

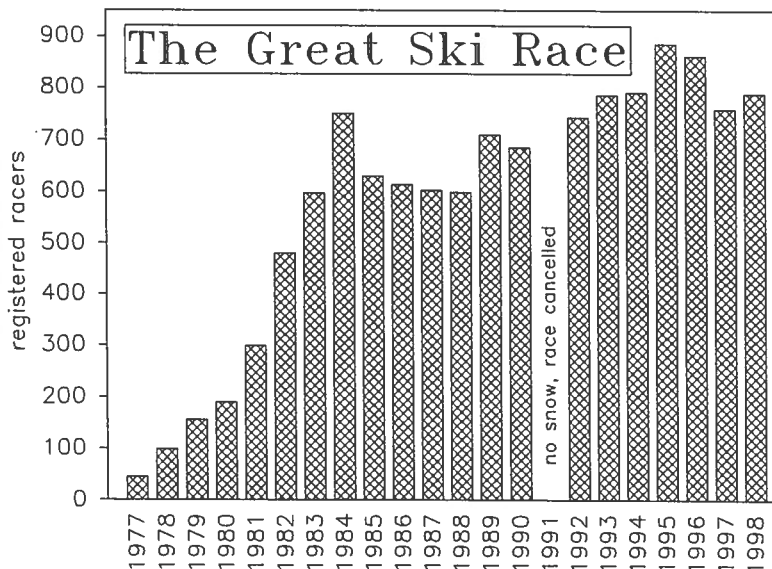
## Seal Weather

On March 21 and 22, Nordic Team members Randall Osterhuber, Gerald Rockwell,

Dirk Schoonmaker, Steve Twomey, and Russ Viehman guided nine members of the Sacramento Naval/Marine Corps Reserve Center's Naval Special Warfare Unit, Group 1 into the backcountry. This group collates once a month for varied and sundry training exercises, most of which would make Jean Claude Van Damme cover. Trained mostly as Naval SEALs, these guys are experienced technicians in underwater demolition, specialty firearms, HALO (High Altitude Low Opening) parachuting, jungle "insertion", and other wartime revelry. For the most part though, they're not backcountry skiers. Our job was to give them a taste of mountain skiing, avalanche awareness, and how to bivouac in a snow cave.

On a scale of 1 to 10, this group's skill level as skiers ranged somewhere between a 6 and 0.25; their go-for-it attitude and camaraderie probably rated about a 36. Attired in everything from purple Gore-tex to camo (lots of camo) to white nylon and black ninja-style snipers' masks, we led them into steep terrain and heavy weather.

Stay with me here...



After skiing out on Sunday in the pouring rain (and challenging snow), one SEAL, commenting on the weather, reported: "We prefer it like this." For the effort, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team received a fat-dollar amount from a Department of Defense purchase order.

## Equipment Review

In the March 1998 issue of *Snow Line*, we talked a bit about the new generation of triangulating avalanche transceivers, notably the Tracker DTS. Since those paragraphs, I've had the opportunity to play with one and talk to a few others who have as well.

The unit's exterior case is pretty sparse of bells and whistles (good) and has four red LEDs displaying direction arrows that point you to the buried beacon. Distance (m) to the buried beacon is also displayed. As you get closer to the buried unit, the cadence of the tone increases, not the volume (like current transceivers). This feature worked pretty well; the thing really screams as you spiral in. The direction arrows and the display of distance did not work so cleanly. By the time you reach the last couple meters, the transceiver starts to feed you false information on both direction and distance; here it's probably advisable to resort to a standard grid-searching technique.

A switch on the front of the case lets you (even in double mitts) toggle between transmit and receive mode. But as Mike Hatchett (filmmaker and extreme snowboarder) noted at the March 12 Steep 'N' Deep avalanche awareness program (of which Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was a sponsor): just by wearing his and pressing his chest against the snow, he can get the thing to convert to receive mode — a potentially dangerous design flaw. After five minutes the unit automatically converts back to transmit, but those five minutes could be awfully precious if you're buried. The main on/off switch is located on the back and is a simple rotating dial *without* a locked "ON" position. Another design flaw.

In summary, the electronics seem to be promising, but this first generation transceiver has some bugs to be reworked. The obvious lack of safety features leads one to believe that its designers have spent little time on the snow.

## Nordic Team Trainings

Most of the following trainings are all-day ski tours. If you're new to the Tahoe backcountry and need to figure out what those climbing skins are used for, you should show up acting enthusiastic. If you feel you know some local backcountry and can put your skins on in less than 30 seconds, you ought to show up acting humble. In any case, show up.

The Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team garage is located at 223 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City, behind the Tahoe City Chevron.

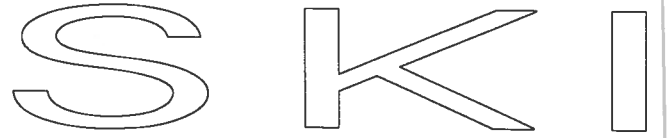
**March 29:** All-day ski tour. Meet at the garage at 7:30 A.M. Call Steve Twomey for additional beta.

**April 4:** Joe Pace leads an all-day ski tour. Garage, 7:30 A.M.

**April 9:** Avalanche transceiver practice at the Team garage, 6:00 P.M.

**April 18:** Ski tour in the Mt. Rose area. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 A.M. or near the Incline Lake entrance road (off the Mt. Rose Highway) at 8:00.

**April 25:** A ski tour geared toward the more beginning backcountry skier. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 A.M.



## 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	587-2687
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	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	Whitney Foehl	583-8611
	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
The Great Ski Race™	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Newsletter	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Snowcats	Tony Remenih	583-1684
Snowmobiles	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Training	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
Truck/Equipment	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team garage		581-4038
All phone numbers area code (530).		

## The Great Ski Race

Sunday

March 7, 1999

9:00 a.m. SHARP!

Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team, Inc.  
P.O. Box 7703  
Tahoe City, California 96145

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