

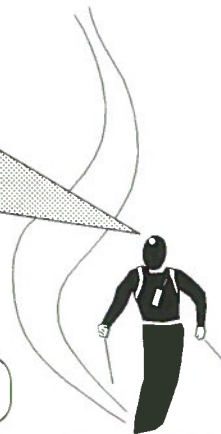
# SnowLine

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

FEBRUARY 1998

Lake Tahoe · Truckee · Donner Summit

Next General Meeting is Monday, February 2, 1998, 7:00 p.m. at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut



## Nordic Team Assists Snowmobilers

Early the afternoon of January 5, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was called to assist two stranded snowmobilers. A couple in their early thirties – novices to the winter environment – had snowmobiled up The Great Ski Race™ trail from Truckee and rolled their snow machine. The man could not right the machine in the deep powder snow by himself, so he started out on foot leaving his snowmobile and paraplegic wife both mired in the snow. The woman called for help on her cell phone.

Team members Scoop Remenih and Ray O'Brien responded. An hour later, not far up from The Great Ski Race road crossing, Scoop and Ray (in Scoop's snowcat) came upon the 'bilers, now back on their machine and heading for cover (some other snowmobilers had helped get the toppled machine back on track). Both the man and woman were dressed in cool and comfortable cotton; Scoop couldn't help but notice that the woman looked "absolutely terrified." Scoop and Ray escorted them back to safety.

This had been the maiden voyage for their brand-new Polaris snowmobile; the machine is now for sale.

## Toasted Underwear Helps Save 'Bilers

At 1:00 P.M. January 18, snowmobilers Steve Rainwater, 33 (Carnelian Bay), Mark Sweet Sr., 45, and Mark Sweet Jr., 26 (Reno, both), left the high end of Agate Road on Tahoe's north shore to ride up Watson Peak and Mt. Baldy. By dark, the three had not returned and were reported missing by Rainwater's girlfriend. A snowstorm of particularly blunt intensity raged through the Tahoe Sierra that night, commencing about 4:00 P.M. and dropping better than a half meter of new snow by sunrise. Nordic Team snowmobilers Ray O'Brien, Rich Wright, Shawn Kelly, and Rod Mayne rode and searched through the night – and through the storm – covering all the popular snowmobile routes that the lost trio may have taken. Visibility was a few meters; crest winds were violent and sustained. The snowmobilers found no trace of the lost guys. At 7:30 the next morning, Larry Severson fired-up his snowcat and pulled eight Nordic Team skiers from the top of Brockway summit up to within ten minutes of the top of Mt. Baldy. Visibility was starting to open up at Lake level, but low-scudding nacreous clouds were still plentiful on the ridge top. At 9:30, as the searchers were splitting up between Juniper Creek and Gray Creek, a call came over the radio announcing that the three missing snowmobilers had just busted out of the woods onto Glenshire Drive.

In the decreasing visibility of the previous afternoon, the three got trapped on a side-hill causing them to yaw into the Juniper Creek

drainage. They managed to nurse their machines through some complex terrain, but were forced to biv-down in a tree-well at dark. To construct a fire-starting torch, one of the 'bilers stripped off his underwear, curled the pants around a stick, and submerged them into his gas tank (talk about dangerous combustibles). The snowmobilers were suitably chuffed (and one a little chafed) but unharmed upon reaching Glenshire the next morning.

## Lost Hikers Play It Conservative – And Safe

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was next called out late that same afternoon (January 19). A Sierra Club group of six snowshoers had trudged in and spent the three-day weekend at the Ludlow Hut (11 kilometers from pavement; Tahoe's west shore). By dark on the third

day, only four had managed to return to their car. At 7:00 P.M., Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team had seven skiers, four snowmobiles, and one snowcat heading toward the hut and searching the adjacent terrain, fat with powder snow. About three kilometers from the hut, the Team came across two ski poles sticking up out of the snow. They were banded together with a scrap of rope. On one end of the rope was tied a clear plastic bottle. There was a note inside: ASSISTANCE REQUIRED! WE DO NOT KNOW OUR WAY OUT OF THIS AREA. WE ARE SITTING TIGHT AT LUDLOW HUT WAITING FOR ASSISTANCE. THANK YOU [signed] MARTIN EDWARDS, ED SCHRIEBER. The note went on to say that their trail back to the hut was marked with sticks (it was); they gave their Sierra Club affiliation (Sonoma/Napa), the group contact person, and even an additional contact. Of course the note was timed and dated. Martin and Ed were indeed back at the hut (warm and dry); they thrilled to the long bouncy snowcat ride out of there.

Not only had these two done the right thing by turning back

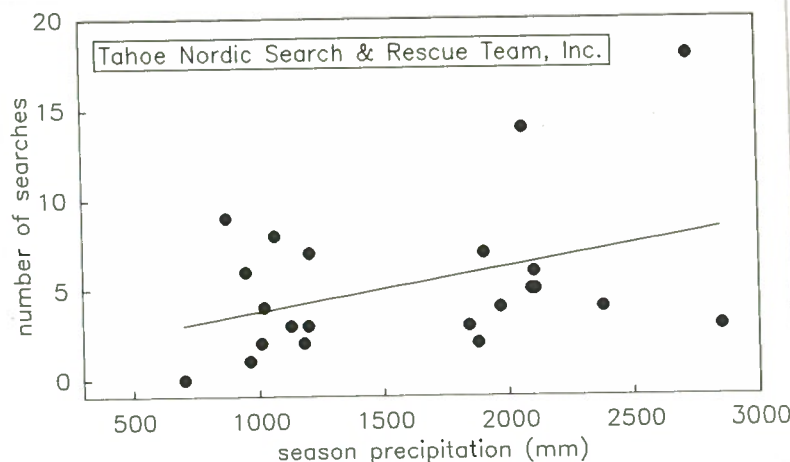
once they were defeated, they documented that fact quite nicely.

This was the Nordic Team's sixth response this season.

## Lieutenant Shannon, Photographer

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team extends many thanks to Keith Shannon of the Placer County Sheriff's Office who attended the January 1998 Nordic Team meeting and fired off about 40 Polaroid mug shots of Nordic Team members for new OES cards. These cards, which register Nordic Team members with the Office of Emergency Service, are required for participation on any Team search and rescue.

So, Bill Clinton and three nuns go cross country skiing...



Many of the Nordic Team's search and rescues occur during storms. Storms bring more snow, more winter recreationists, less visibility, and a whole lot more opportunity for things to go wrong. It would therefore be logical to infer that the stormier the winter, the more searches we'd have. Much discussion has been held along these lines, especially sparked by years when the Team has had few searches. Above is a plot of total season precipitation against the number of searches, for the Nordic Team's twenty-two years. By applying the least squares method, the data are used to derive an equation of a line that best fit their distribution. The square of the regression coefficient  $R$ , is a measure of the fit of the data points to the line. If all data points fall directly onto the line, the  $R^2$  value will equal 1.00. The  $R^2$  value for the above data is 0.14. This arguably represents a weak correlation. However, the slope of the line is positive, that is: as the winters become stormier and stormier, the more searches Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team is likely to have. If the correlation was more significant, one could use the equation of this line to predict how many searches we'd have by how stormy the year was, or how stormy the year might be by how many searches we had. Since neither of these parameters can be known beforehand, this is a futile exercise, best left to soothsayers, weather forecasters, and other psychics.

Registration with the OES assures medical and equipment coverage during our rescues. Many of the cards issued four years ago will expire in 1998. So, if you did *not* attend the January Team meeting, you most likely need to make arrangements with Keith or someone else at the Sheriff's station (Tahoe City) to sign up for a new card. Dirk Schoonmaker has a list of those who need new cards so you might want to check with him too.

### Book Sales To Benefit Team

Denali climber Ruth Anne Kocour, author of *Facing the Extreme*, will be signing copies of her book **January 31** from 6 - 8 P.M. at the Bookshelf at Hooligan Rocks bookstore in Truckee. Ruth will also present a slide show on her Alaska Range climb. Part of the proceeds from sales of *Facing the Extreme* will be donated to Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team.

### Training Chair Switch-a-roo

Pursuing other interests out of the area, Peter Sporleder will step down as the chair of the Team's Training Committee at the end of January. Peter has put much energy and enthusiasm into the Team over the past years. He effectively doubled the Team training opportunities from twice a month to darn-near weekly, offering theoretical and practical training exercises for all, beginners to veterans. For all his efforts, Peter was elected as the 1996 Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team Member of the Year. Thanks, Peter!

The Team welcomes Paul Honeywell as the new training chairman.

### Team Trainings At-A-Glance

Following is the training schedule for the next month or so. If you have ideas for a training exercise and/or would like to lead/organize one, give training coordinator Paul Honeywell a call. The Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team garage is located at 223 Fairway Drive, Tahoe City, behind the Tahoe City Chevron. As promised:

**January 31:** Terrain familiarization in and around Squaw Valley ski area. Meet 7:30 A.M. at the Team garage or 8:15 in front of the Squaw tram building.

**February 7:** Come work with avalanche transceivers, GPS, map, compass, etc. — all in the dark. Meet at the Team garage at 4:30 P.M. or the top of Silvertip Drive (Paige Meadows) at 5:00.

**February 21:** A ski of and around Donner Summit's Castle Peak. Meet at the garage at 7:30 A.M. or at the trailhead (Boreal exit, I-80) at 8:15.

**February 28:** A backcountry ski tour — women highly encouraged to attend. Location TBA. Meet at the garage at 7:30 A.M.



"The knees are the first thing to go."

### 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
	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Newspaper	Tony Remenih	583-1684
Snowcats	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Snowmobiles	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
Training	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
Truck/Equipment	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team garage		581-4038

All phone numbers area code (530).

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