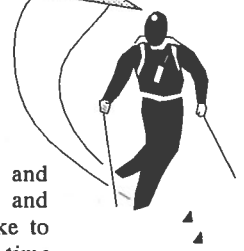


SnowLine

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

Lake Tahoe • Truckee • Donner Summit



Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team has looked for 255 different people during its tenure. Of those, 254 have been found. One remains unaccounted for.

On or about April 24, 1982, Stuart Garbowitz, 26, and Harry Novac, 30, both from New York, went missing from Squaw Valley Ski Area. The weather during this time was warm and clear; spring conditions dominated the ski area. It was several days before their absence was noticed: a dust-covered rental car in the parking lot and untouched luggage in their condominium were the only clues. The rescue community was apprised of the situation and Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team launched a search on May 2, but to no avail. With few clues and no tracks, neither skier was found.

Later that summer, in the middle of July, both pairs of their skis were found several miles down along Five Lakes Creek. Shortly thereafter the body of Harry Novac was located underwater in a log-jam of the creek.

In October of that year the mother of Stuart Garbowitz wired a substantial amount of money to Placer County to fund an all-out search effort for her son. In the history of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team no other search has fielded as many searchers. No less than 60 ground searchers, equestrians, rescue dogs, and air support poured down the Five Lakes Creek drainage during a two-day effort. We found cowboy boots, scraps of aircraft, ski gloves (not attributed to Garbowitz), and ancient fire rings. We spent the last night on the exposed shores of Hell Hole Reservoir, then were flown out—a half dozen at a time—by Mike Brown in his amphibious Beaver aircraft.

In short order the Garbowitz family brought a lawsuit against Squaw Valley, claiming the ski area negligent in allowing the skiers to escape their boundary. In 24 years this is about as close as Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team has ever come to a lawsuit surrounding a search and rescue. A couple Nordic Team members testified at the trial; Squaw Valley was acquitted of all charges.

At the November and December Nordic Team meetings of this year, attorneys Mike Bigelow and Steve Lieberman spoke on the subject of the Team's legal liability. The bottom line is that liability is always present, but because we operate under the auspices of

one county sheriff or another, an "umbrella" of immunity covers us. This is not to say the Team is untouchable. But short of the Team or some Team member *willfully* trying to do harm to a subject of our search and rescues, there seems small chance that any judge or sitting jury would find the overriding good intentions of our Team—or any rescue team—legally liable for its actions/inactions.

From time to time selected Team members have speculated on this point, but few have worried. The fine and talented people that make up Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team are the best insurance—and assurance—against rescue-based court cases.

As of December 21, 1999, Stuart Garbowitz remains missing.

Snow: The Enemy

It may have passed your calendar unnoticed, but not mine. December 15 was St. Valerian's Day, invoked for the protection from cold and snow. I celebrated with no pomp or ceremony, just made sure my fingers and toes stayed out of the trash bin (an old Reinhard Messner joke: What's black and sits in the garbage can?) and my head above the crystals. Two Texas-sized high pressure systems banked off our Pacific coast are currently keeping us dry as a cow, but at this time of year weather potential is high. You can bet we're on the cusp of some load-bearing snowstorm.

In most mountain ranges, including the Sierra Nevada, there is an incontrovertible link between snowstorms and avalanches. Snow instability and avalanche activity both increase as snow falls. Historically, the activity of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team increases during storms too. Snowstorms bring weather that trips-up many folk in the mountain, inducing search and rescues; and plentiful snows also give us additional opportunity to train for and practice our craft. Even under the guardianship of St. Valerian there will always be (at least) a small measure of uncertainty when messing about on the steep and deep—the hazards can be minimized but never eliminated.

In response to that realization, Team members Jeff Rieger and Christine Flowers will be running avalanche transceiver competitions starting **January 10**. These will be held on the ski hill directly behind the

Granlibakken Ski Hut and are designed to be fun and fast-paced. If you'd like to participate, *show up on time* (6:30 PM)—lots of competitors are expected. Prizes will be awarded. Jeff stresses that these are not trainings or instructional exercises; rather, he hopes skiers will practice for the competitions beforehand, therefore becoming better and faster all-around beacon searchers.

Avalanche Education

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team is custodian of the Bernie Kingery Fund, money set aside for snow avalanche education. Bernie Kingery was the mountain manager at Alpine Meadows Ski Area where he died in an avalanche on March 31, 1982. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team is accepting applications from Team members wishing to secure money to further their avalanche education. Please forward a letter to the Nordic Team Board of Directors outlining what, when, why, and how much. Please be specific, and prompt: the next avalanche season is upon us!

Hug A Tree

Karen Honeywell, the Nordic Team Education Committee Chair, is taking volunteer sign-ups for the upcoming Winter Awareness programs for the local fourth-graders. The programs will be held during January. Choreographing all the volunteers, the teachers, and the students is a big job, a job made easier if you help. You don't have to be a searcher or even a skier to participate. The program at each school is divided into three "stations" (Observations, Signals, Shelters) and are all brief, informative, and FUN! The kids love it and so will you. Donate a couple hours one morning to the next generation of winter adventurers. Call Karen; or better yet, attend the next meeting of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team **January 3**.

January Trainings

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team offers lots of great trainings and training opportunities this month. Remember to sign up for an OES card from the Placer County

Next General Meeting is Monday, January 3, 2000, 6:30 p.m. at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut

Sheriff in Tahoe City if you haven't done so already. An OES card is required to participate in any Nordic Team search or training. If you just can't stay off the telephone and feel the need for additional information on an upcoming training, please call the specific training's contact person (phone numbers not listed below are listed under the Team Officer section of *Snow Line*).

The Nordic Team garage is located at 223 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City, up behind the Chevron station.

January 2: Steve Matson will lead an all-day ski tour in the Mt. Rose area. This training will cover skiing skills, route finding, snow safety, and a host of other life-affirming exercises. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM (ready to go!) or up at Sheep Flat

(Mt. Rose Highway) at 8:15.

January 6: Avalanche transceiver practice at the Team garage, 6:30 PM. This is a great opportunity to both hone your skills before the transceiver competition and/or get (re)acquainted with avalanche beacons. Bring your own beacon if you have one. Bernie Mellor will host this fun and informative evening.

January 9: Telemark skiing instruction for beginner and intermediate skiers at Northstar-at-Tahoe. This clinic is encouraged for all who'd like to tighten up their skiing as well as those who want to address free-heel skiing for the first time. If you're feeling mighty confident with the telemark turn show up for this event and you can help those in need. Peter Sporleder (546-0588) is the contact person. Meet at the Team garage at 8:00 AM or at the village at Northstar at 8:30.

January 10: Avalanche transceiver competition (see above for more information) at the ski hill at Granlibakken in Tahoe City, 6:30 PM. Contact Jeff Rieger or Christine Flowers (581-1202, both) for more info.

January 15: Team skier Paul Honeywell will lead an ascent and descent of Mt. Tallac. Mt. Tallac, the flagship peak of Lake Tahoe, offers spectacular skiing and views. Paul urges skiers of all abilities to attend this training as there are ski descent routes for all skill levels. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM to carpool south (there may

be very limited parking near the mountain's base).

January 23: Team skiers will meet at Alpine Meadows Ski Area, ascend to the Sierra crest via the ski lifts, then ski out-of-bounds. This training will cover territory that we have searched often—it's important to know and understand the layout of the different drainages and terrain features surrounding the ski area. Team skier Jim Granger (581-1251) is leading this one; meet at the Team garage at 8:00 AM or in front of the ski patrol building at Alpine at 8:30.

January 29: Training Committee co-Chair Bernie Mellor will be leading an all-day ski tour through the mountains of the Lake Tahoe basin. *What* particular mountains are to be announced at the **January 3** meeting and in the February 2000 edition of *Snow Line*. However, skiers participating on this tour can plan on meeting at the Team garage at 7:30 AM.

Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team Officers

President	Joe Pace	583-1806
Vice President	Steve Twomey	525-7280
Treasurer	Scott Schroepfer	546-2809
Secretary	Terri Viehmann	582-1695
Board Members	Steve Matson	546-7968
	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
	Russ Viehmann	582-1695
	Medora Weiser	583-2620

Committee Chairs

Cuisine	Debra Schroepfer	546-2809
Dispatch	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
The Great Ski Race™	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Newsletter	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Snowcats	Scoop Remenih	583-1684
Snowmobiles	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Training	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
	Bernie Mellor	546-2238
Truck/Equipment	Russ Viehmann	582-1695
Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team garage		581-4038
All phone numbers area code (530).		



Snowducking.

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team, Inc.

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The Year is 2000.
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