



SnowLine

The Official Newsletter of the
TAHOE NORDIC SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM, INC.
 Lake Tahoe • Truckee • Donner Summit

The third meeting of the season for Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team is slated for Monday evening, **December 1, 6:30 PM** at the Granlibakken Ski Hut in Tahoe City. With real snow now on the ground, and the Tahoe Basin ski areas slowly spreading open their doors, the ski season—and the winter search season—begins to gain momentum. Please direct your personal inertia toward Granlibakken Monday night and be part of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team. It's a great way to enhance—and give back to—your community!

No Pussy Cats

Over-the-snow tractors have a long and sometimes hilarious history traversing (or attempting to traverse) the world's snow and ice fields. From chained-up Model T's breaking trail over Donner Pass Road, to military "weasels" dodging crevasses in Antarctica, machines motating over and through the snow have been as varied in design as the medium they ply. Rotating screw-drive cylinders, Rommel-style half-track trucks, and fan-driven modified ski boats have all had their day. Most, thankfully, have taken their final bow.

Over-the-snow vehicle design in the United States was driven and streamlined by the increased demand for recreational vehicles. Most notably for ski area utility. Before the hydraulic-drive grooming platforms that lay out the smooth corduroy of today's ski parks, the U.S. over-the-snow vehicle market was dominated by the Tucker Sno-Cat of Medford, Oregon, and the Logan, Utah based Thiokol Chemical Corporation's "Spryte." Both these machines have played important roles in winter search and rescue.

The Tucker Sno-Cats, almost all painted a "search and rescue" orange, incorporate four independent drive pontoons with rotating steel cleats. The cleats of many of the older models circled the pontoons on no less than 150 bearing sets per pontoon. One grease fitting per bearing equates to 600 grease points per vehicle. Recommended

lubrication schedule: daily(!) The early Sno-Cat designs paralleled the huge, bloated Detroit auto industry of the day. Some models came with enormous Chrysler 454 cubic inch motors, delivering more than enough power to torque into splinters their own universal joints and drive shafts when the pontoons froze fast to the ground. Their muscle is legendary for deep-snow trail breaking. If you were unlucky enough to get a Tucker without power steering, well, let's just say no one with forearms smaller than the California governor's could steer the darn thing through the trees. Nevertheless, many Tucker Sno-Cats are still in use today. My neighbor runs one that was manufactured three years before I was born. I'm 44.

An off-shoot of Thiokol Corporation's

heavy industry, the Spryte over-the-snow vehicle was an almost instant success. Wider, and lower to the ground than the Sno-Cat, the Spryte is propelled using two full-length revolving rubber tracks with steel cross cleats, or grousers. The Spryte was pretty energetic in deep snows, more stable on side hills than the Sno-Cat, and could be outfitted with a variety of cabs, utility beds, plow blades, and snow grooming sleds. It quickly became a standard vehicle at ski areas across the U.S. (The Great Ski Race was for many years groomed with a culvert towed behind Larry Sevison's Spryte.) Many Sprytes (and its smaller cousin, the Imp) are still in use today including five of the tractors owned and operated by Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team members.



Water skiing, duck hunting, or simply cruising the snowy landscape (60 mph recommended), the Nordak II promises "hours of relaxation" in a vehicle that's "a priceless performer, a handsome looker." This 1960s production model was powered by a Corvair engine with a ducted fan, producing "twice the thrust of ordinary propellers." Anyone recognize the landscape?

The Team's primary "snocat" drivers, Scoop Remenih, Larry Sevison, Dave Gleske, Ray O'Brien, and Tony Bochen, have all put a lot of time, energy, and money into making—and keeping—their machines available for search and rescue. Scoop and Larry both have been at it for well over two decades, with countless rescues to their credit.

Because snocats have proved vital to the Team's winter rescues, and because the cost and wear-and-tear associated with snocat operation is high, Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team decided to acquire its own cat. This would take the pressure off the individual members and their machines, while still securing their snocat operating skill and experience. In a deal orchestrated between the Nordic Team, the Placer County Water District, and the Tahoe City PUD, a relatively new, low use-hour LMC 1500 (the contemporary version of the Spryte) is now housed in the Nordic Team's garage. We've contracted a long-term, one dollar lease of the snocat from the PUD; the Nordic Team is fully responsible for the snocat's operation, transportation, maintenance, and upkeep. The new machine is in excellent repair, has a very practical cab for our purposes, and is currently being outfitted with a six-way plow blade. Also, a three-axle trailer on which the machine will be transported is being readied for the task.

Like securing the Team's Toyota truck in 1983, and building our own garage (and getting a bigger equipment truck) in the early 1990s, this is a significant step for the Team. Once again it raises the bar on the Team's responsibilities, both organizationally and financially. This is reflective of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team's total commitment



*A Tucker Sno-Cat eases the daily commute on Donner Summit, April 1963.
Photograph by F.R. Adams*

in bringing the highest level of readiness, professionalism, and diversity of resources to mountain search and rescue.

Team Trainings

Once again, a friendly reminder: if you're planning on attending a Team training, please have a valid OES card, call the training organizer to let them know you'll attend, and show up prepared and on-time.

November 22: An ascent of Billy's Peak. Mike Kennett (581-2101) is organizing this ski tour. Meet at the Team garage (223 Fairway Drive, behind the Chevron station in Tahoe City) at 7:30 AM, or the intersection of Deep Creek and Highway 89 at 8:00.

December 3: Avalanche transceiver practice at the Team garage, 6:30 PM. Paul Honeywell (546-8609) is the contact.

December 7: A practice day for beginner telemark skiers. Meet at the Northstar village

at 8:15 AM. Peter Sporleder (546-0588) is the contact.

December 14: Russ Viehmann (525-6978) will lead a terrain familiarization at Sugar Bowl. Meet: 7:30 AM at the Team garage, 8:00 at Wild Cherries in Truckee, or 8:30 at the Judah Lodge on the Summit.

December 20: Doug Read (583-6381) is organizing a mock search in the Pole Creek drainage. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM or the bottom of the Pole Creek road at 8:00.

Hoping you, like me, have a lot to be thankful for,

—Randall Osterhuber

Team Officers

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Treasurer	Scott Schroeffer	546-2809
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	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
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	Joe Pace	583-1806
	Doug Read	583-6381
	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376

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Dispatch	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
Equipment	Russ Viehmann	525-6978
Great Ski Race™	Doug Read	583-6381
	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
Newsletter	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
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Snowmobiles	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
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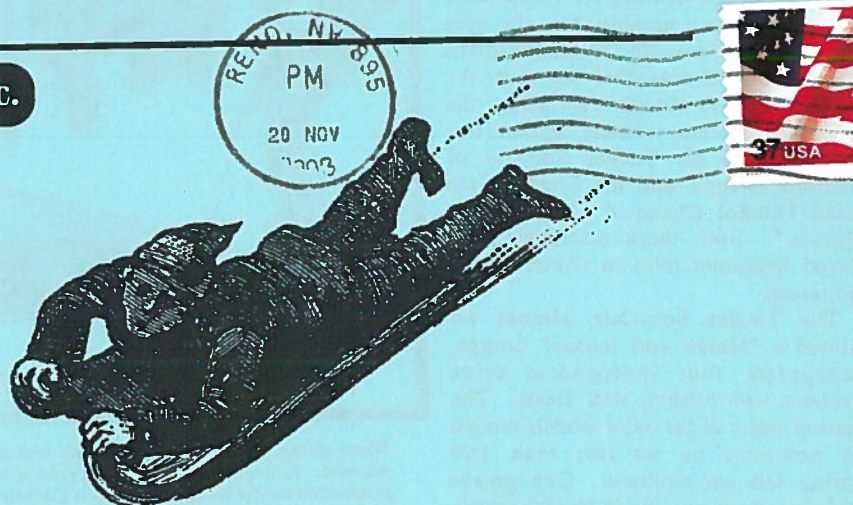
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