



SnowLine

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

January 5 (that's 2004, according to my star chart) is the next general meeting of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team. Unless you're quarantined with a case of the trots, please plan on attending the meeting. It'll be at the Granlibakken Ski Hut, 6:30 PM. You're needed there!

Knew Snow

You don't see too many around Tahoe, but in the Rocky Mountain states just about every pickup truck belonging to a snow avalanche worker is bumper-stickered with the slogan KNOW SNOW. That is a very good suggestion. It's nice to think that the bumper sticker doesn't brag about the driver knowing snow as much as it recommends the *ongoing process* of knowing snow. As backcountry skiers and rescuers it is most definitely to our advantage to know snow. Not only its more predictable habits, but its idiosyncrasies, anomalies, and radical forms as well.

Atmospheric and snowpack extremes are more than just anecdotal, extremes define—and redefine—what our climate is capable of. How much can it physically snow overnight? What are aberrant patterns of snow distribution and redistribution? What threshold energies are required to accelerate snow metamorphism? The list is endless. We will probably never completely know snow, but logging an ongoing set of individual observations every time we ski, shovel, or otherwise make contact with the stuff will help hone and expand our knowledge. This brain labor is good exercise for the gray matter when contemplating the white matter. It might just come in handy when forming predictions on what to expect on the ski field, then verifying, voiding, and/or modifying that prediction based on further observation. Where will the snow be soft, hard, shallow, deep, cold, warm? Where and when will the snow be unstable? Stable? And as backcountry travelers, how can we increase safety, efficiency, and fun?

Keep a weather-eye out for extremes. A true atmospheric extreme is, by definition,

new. You may be the only one observing some unique phenomenon of the weather or snowpack. Many atmospheric extremes in and around the Tahoe Basin have occurred during the last 20 years. Have we entered through some new climatic portal or are we just better observers? Both maybe.

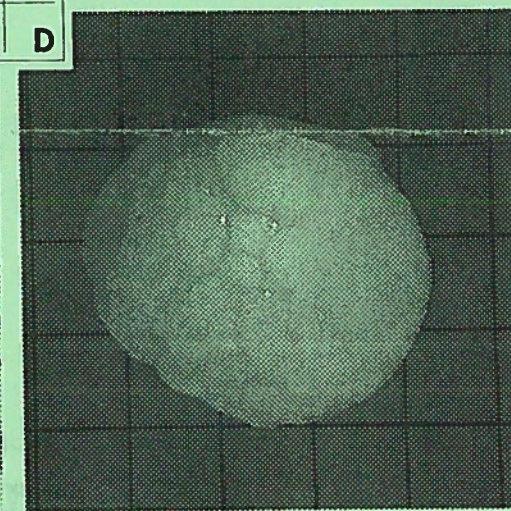
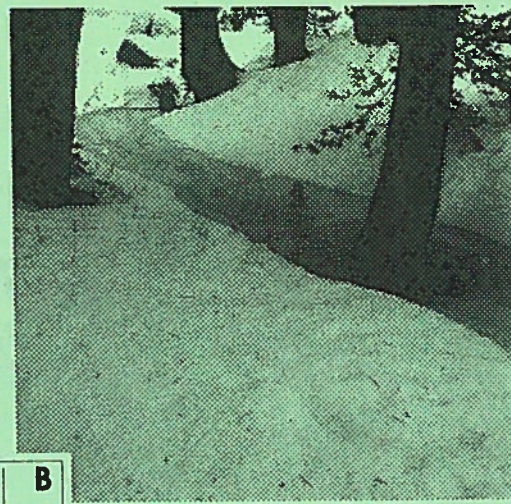
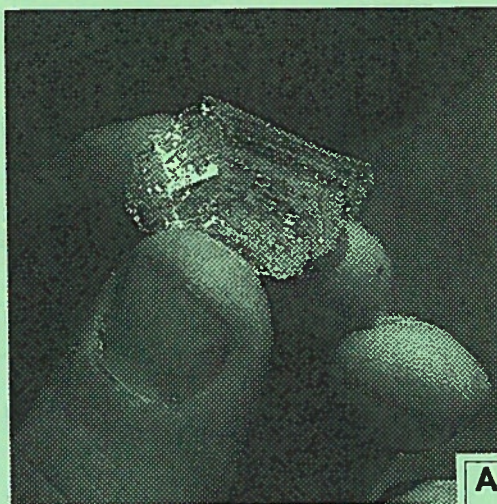
So, you finally go skiing in the rain after it's been pouring for five days—why is the

snow so fast and the skiing so good?

Truckee hits -30°C at night and cornices on the lee of Tinker Knob are collapsing. Is there a connection?

It just snowed two meters yet trail-breaking is only ankle-deep. Why?

Answers to these questions reveal insights into snow's behavior at the fringes of its existence. Stacking these observations onto



A) A 3 cm wide hoar crystal grown under the influence of a very strong ($40^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{cm}$) temperature gradient. B) Liquid water running on the super-saturated snowpack surface during a prolonged rain storm. C) Though they'd break at the slightest touch, these 30 cm long "rimcicles" were formed under extreme conditions of wind and moisture. D) A hail stone that fell on Donner Summit during the spring of 1998 had a long-axis diameter of 41 mm. A salesman at Steve's Caddie Shack in South Lake Tahoe told me a golf ball has a diameter of 42.7 mm. 1 cm grid.

Photographs by Randall Osterhuber

the thousands of others we've collected through our ski careers will help us better understand the steep and deep, and, at the very least, advance us one tiny step closer to knowing snow.

Boarder Rescued

Upon being ushered back to the search staging area, Ryan Stack, 18, from Pacifica, could not believe all the cop cars, rescue vehicles, and communication vans were for him. Twelve hours earlier, on December 7, Ryan had separated from his snowboarding buddies at Sierra-at-Tahoe and drifted out of bounds into Sayles Canyon. His friends—to Ryan's surprise and delight—reported him missing. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was called by El Dorado County at 11:00 PM.

While Ray O'Brien piloted the new Team snowcat (it performed excellent, by the way) with four Team skiers on-board to the top of the ski area and to Ryan's last seen point, two other Team skiers—Steve Twomey and Jim Rienstra—started skiing up Sayles Canyon from below. Fifteen minutes out of the starting blocks, Steve and Jim found Ryan huddled in an outhouse among the closed-up summer cabins low in the canyon. It was 3:30 AM (December 8). Wet, tired, and shivering uncontrollably, Ryan was ousted from his snowboarder standard-issue three wet cotton shirts and into some dry fleece and dry gloves. "He couldn't believe we were looking for him," said Jim, "He also thought it was about 7:00 PM."

Jim and Steve located Ryan by calling his name and blowing whistles. Their first moments of communication were somewhat reminiscent of Abbot and Costello's "Who's on First(?)" skit.

SEARCHERS [SKIING ALONG]: Ryan! Hey, Ryan! Ryyyaan!

RYAN [VIA outhouse]: Josh?

SEARCHERS: Ryan, is that you?

RYAN: Josh?

SEARCHERS: Are you Ryan?

RYAN: Josh?

SEARCHERS: Josh, are you lost?

RYAN: Yeah.

SEARCHERS [TO EACH OTHER]: Well, I guess we found Josh instead. (Proper introductions were soon forthcoming.)

This was the Team's second response and first rescue of the season.

Those Norwegians

In winter the only way of getting about is on snowshoes, not the great broad Canadian ones that we see sometimes at home, but the Norwegian ones—a strip of light elastic wood, three or four inches wide and seven to ten feet long, slightly turned up at the front end, with an arrangement near the center to fasten to the foot. With these they go everywhere, no matter how deep the snow is, and downhill they go with frightful velocity. At a race on snowshoes at an upper town last winter the papers announced that the time made by the winner was half a mile in thirty-seven seconds! And many men tell of going a mile in less than two minutes.

—William H. Brewer

Brewer's journal of the Whitney Survey of California, 1860-1864

Upcoming Trainings

It's been said many times before, and I'm certainly not the first to preach it, but: Please call each training organizer to let them know you'll attend, and please have signed-on for an OES card before you attend a Team training. Thank yee.

January 4: Roman Fail (581-0590) will lead a ski tour of Desolation Wilderness's Pyramid Peak. Meet at the Team garage (223 Fairway Drive, behind the Tahoe City Chevron station) at 7:00 AM.

January 10: Joe Pace (583-1806) will lead another ski tour somewhere above the West Shore and/or in Desolation. Call Joe to get the skinny. Meet at the garage at 7:30 AM.

January 15: Jonathan Laine (582-9466) and Mike Kennett (581-2101) will lead a wilderness first aid workshop at the Squaw Valley fire department, 6:30 PM. Bring along your search pack.

January 24: Ray O'Brien (581-4358) is formulating a field training that will incorporate both the Team skiers and the Team snow machines. Meet at the garage at 7:30 AM.

January 25: Previously canceled due to low/no snow, Peter Sporleder (546-0588) will once again coordinate a beginner telemark skier practice day. Meet in the Village at Northstar at 8:15 AM.

Happy Leap Year,

—Randall Osterhuber

Team Officers

President	Steve Twomey	525-7280
Vice President	Russ Viehmann	525-6978
Treasurer	Scott Schroepfer	546-2809
Secretary	Terri Viehmann	525-6978
Board Members	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
	Sarah Lagano	775-745-7037
	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
Directors-at-large	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
	Joe Pace	583-1806
	Doug Read	583-6381
	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376

Committee Chairs

Cuisine	Debra Schroepfer	546-2809
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
Snowcats	Scoop Remenih	583-1684
Snowmobiles	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Technology	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376
Training	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
	Bernie Mellor	546-2238
Website	Peter Sporleder	546-0588
All phone numbers area code (530) unless otherwise noted.		

Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team, Inc.

Post Office Box 7703

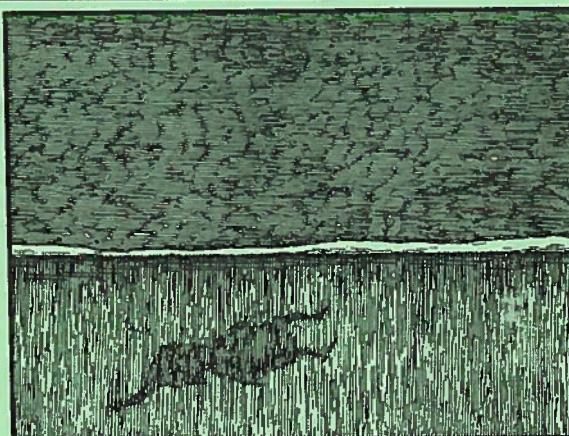
Tahoe City, California 96145

(530) 581-4038

www.tahoenordicsar.com

www.thegreatskirace.com

MARK JOHNSON
PO BOX 8258
TAHOE CITY CA 96145



W is for Winnie embedded in ice

—from *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*, by Edward Gorey



please keep us informed of your correct address!