

Snow (snō), *n.* 1 Watery particles congealed into white or transparent crystals or flakes in the air, and falling to the earth, exhibiting a great variety of very beautiful and perfect forms. [1913 Webster]
No, I'm not going to say anything about George Bush, greenhouse gases or global warming. I'm just going to quietly agree with Mr. Webster's dated definition. Snow truly is beautiful, especially when it does what it is supposed to do, fall that is.

TS Eliot once said that April is the cruelest month, but had Mr. Elliot visited Tahoe this past January he may have revised *The Waste Land*. January was certainly cruel to us in terms of temperature and precipitation. I'm all for cold, but cold and dry is like pepperoni on a hot fudge sundae; not necessarily a good thing.

February, on the other hand, is a great month because it means we get to have two TNSAR meetings. Yes, it's true. Our next general meeting is 6:30pm, Monday, February 5th, at the Granlibakken ski hut...with an encore meeting 6:30pm, Monday, February 26th. Come fill up the GSR committees.

The Great Ski Race cometh and we have much to do to prepare for this historic event. Recently I sat down with Doug Read to talk about the history of the Great Ski Race. I thought others might be interested in learning how this event came to be. I caught up with Doug at the Tahoe XC Nordic center:

BW: Good afternoon Mr. Read.

DR: Well, thank you very much. It's nice to see you again Robert.

BW: It's not quite like Terry Gross.

DR: Well you got round glasses, so does she. Have you ever seen her picture? Oh my god, it's hilarious....

BW: So before we get started with The Great Ski Race, I think people would like to know a little bit about you and how you got into skiing and then eventually landed here in Tahoe.

DR: Well I grew up in the Midwest and it's a pretty frustrating place to live if you want to ski. But we did, we skied there and it was pretty hilarious. You've got to look up Wilmont Hills sometime....that's where we skied and it was pitiful. But we did it and then we'd always travel to the west during semester breaks. We'd take the California Zephyr to Colorado and go skiing.

BW: Were you Nordic skiing or downhill skiing?
DR: No, downhill skiing....leather boots and wooden skis. Then when I finished with the Navy and college and stuff, I came west to go live in a ski area. I moved to Alaska with some friends and then got a job at Alyeska. But I didn't really want to work there because they had a dress code. Then I came to down to Snowqualmie in Washington but they didn't believe I knew how to ski. So I talked to my friends who had a job at Squaw Valley and they said, "yeah we got jobs..." so I came down here.

BW: What year was that?

DR: Ah, 1970 or '71. I worked at a ski shop, Letour ski shop.

BW: Was that Fred Letour's shop? I think my Dad worked there in the sixties.

DR: Yeah. We got ski passes and we'd go skiing and ski in the storms, you know, when the

shop closed and man that was something. Then Fred got Nordic skis and we'd ski around the parking lot on those Nordic skis and I thought that was really fun....

BW: Those were the old wooden skis and bamboo poles?

DR: Yeah they'd break a lot. But we skied all over, up behind Kings Beach on Mt. Baldy and stuff. Then I saw a magazine with a telemark turn in it and I learned how to do that...Then I worked for Skip Reedy up in Donner and then Big Chief, that was fun. Then I decided to open up a ski lodge...a ski in ski out sort of place with snowcats to bring 'em in...up in Griff Creek between Baldy and Mt.

Watson...but then I realized it was much better to be a carpenter and just ski. Ski whenever I wanted. You know, you could ski in the dark, ski after work, ski in the morning before work, and ski every weekend. So I started doing that instead.

BW: So how did the Great Ski Race start?

DR: I think Skip Reedy started it. He had a Nordic center in Squaw Valley and sort of a side operation here in the Highlands. The first year he had the race was 1976, and I think 60 people did it. It was billed as a race from Tahoe City to Truckee.

BW: So that first race wasn't affiliated with TNSAR because we hadn't formed yet. Did Skip call it the Great Ski Race?

DR: Yeah, it might have been called the Great Race but that was a problem because some guy in Sacramento had a race called that so the name developed into the Great Ski Race.

BW: When did the race get affiliated with TNSAR?

DR: Well I think after the first year or two Skip used the High School to try and have them help put the race on and it just wasn't working out. And finally he said to me, "...would the search and rescue team like to put on the Great Ski Race?" And he said if you do, you can have all the profit. So we said sure we'll do it.

BW: Do you remember what year that was?

DR: I think like 1980 or something like that, early '80's. And we started putting it on and it was pretty funny. We had these snowcats and we'd drag these wooden sleds all the way over to Truckee...it was rugged.

BW: Who had the snowcat?

DR: It was that old silver one that was the Lake Tahoe Ski Club's, which we still use. And we had some episodes, but we did it. We had a lot of changes in the course...it used to wander around the Nordic center quite a bit before it climbed up to the Fiberboard Freeway and we had some rugged, really steep, steep climbs up on to that road. Then we finally got the trail through on the Orange trail, which is still used now. We had some real issues over on the Truckee side as well. Sometimes we'd just take our skis off and run for three or four blocks and then put them back on again and finish.

BW: I think there's only been one year when the race was cancelled for lack of snow.

DR: Yeah, several years we had to be over on the Truckee side with snowblowers just making a one ski wide track and some places where you just take them off and run through the mud and stuff.

BW: Well, today is January 26th and there's not much snow out there...

DR: No. it's not inconceivable that it could happen this year, but last year I developed another route, plan B, which winds around Mt.

Watson and that's definitely feasible and it would be a great route. People would love it. I've got all the permits and right now, today, we could run that course...that's an option but of course we'd rather do the historic route, you know Tahoe to Truckee.

BW: There are plans for developing the Hilltop area where the finish is. Will that threaten the finish line in the future?

DR: Well I've been in contact with the developer from Southern California and he says he's really in support of this race...he's a developer, not a Nordic ski racer...but I think he really gets a kick out of us...he's promised in the profile of his development that the race course will always be in perpetuity on his property, grant deeded into it, so we'll see. Hopefully he's honest on that.

BW: How does the Great Ski Race compare to all the other races you've been to?

DR: Yeah, I've been to a lot of races...and there are no other races like this. It's a big job to put it on, and all with volunteers and no paid staff...there just are no other races like this in the country or in the rest of the world...there isn't a race around that is put on by a whole group of volunteers like ours is and done to the degree that our race comes out...this race is pretty amazing...I've met national racers on the pro circuit and they can't wait to come out for our race...I mean national caliber guys and they can't wait to get out here, that's pretty unique.



Just in case you forgot what they look like.

----B. Wright

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Don't Forget! We have two meetings this month. Monday, February 5th and Monday, February 26th. 6:30pm, Granlibakken ski hut.

February 2007



SnowLine

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

Upcoming February Trainings

- February 5th ---Monday**
 Where: West Shore and Beyond
 When: 7:30am Team Garage
 Contact: Joe Pace 583-1806. Joe is going to help you get over the Monday blues with an all day tour somewhere on the West Shore. Bring a big lunch.
- February 7th ---Wednesday**
 Where: Team garage
 When: 6:30pm
 Contact: Steve Hoyt 582-0550. Steve is leading a training to practice some accident management skills in a search type setting. Please call to RSVP.
- February 11th --- Sunday**
 Where: Castle Peak
 When: 7:30am Team Garage; 8:00am Wild Cherries Coffee in Truckee.
 Contact: Russ Veihman 525-6978. Russ will lead a ski training up into the ever popular Donner Summit area with an avalanche scenario to practice those all important avalanche rescue skills.
- February 13th --- Tuesday**
 Where: Squaw Valley Fire Department
 When: 6:00pm
 Contact: Brain York 583-0465. Brain is hosting "technology night" to show and tell all the electronic gizmos we use during searches. Laptop computers are welcome. Please call to make sure Brian brings enough cookies.
- February 21st --- Wednesday**
 Where: West Shore and Beyond
 When: 7:30am Team garage
 Contact: Steve Reynaud 587-4723. Steve is leading an all day adventure exploring peaks and pockets of powder somewhere on the West Shore. Call for more details, if you need them.
- February 25th --- Sunday**
 Where: Sugar Bowl to the Cedars
 When: 7:30am garage or 8:15am Sugar Bowl---Judah lodge.
 Contact: Tony Bochene 426-3619. Tony is leading a great tour from Sugar Bowl to the Cedars and will incorporate all modes of transport in a search setting. Snowmobiles, snowcats, skis, and Gerald on snowshoes.
- February TBA**---Tony Bochene would like to host an informal gathering at the Team garage for new members interested in learning about the history of the Team's equipment and how we've managed to survive "the good old days." Stay tuned for more info.