

## Support Search and Rescue: Get Lost!

I saw this bumper sticker this past weekend somewhere near Mono Lake. It reminded me of years past when fire seasons were uneventful and some desperately unemployed fire fighters went out and intentionally ignited wildfires just to get off the dole. Them's were the days, eh? Two thousand some odd homes have been torched in southern California in the past week and the economic losses (from the arson related fires?) are estimated in the billions of dollars...did everyone hear that joke? Ah, but I digress. Where was I...oh yeah, that bumper sticker. Well that bumper sticker got me thinking about the phenomenal dearth of searches we've had these past few years. It seems that the last two or three winters (at least) have been pretty slow from a search and rescue point of view. Not that we haven't had the occasional epic all-nighter, but why does it seem like our call outs are getting fewer and fewer these days? Could be the weather...too few backcountry powder days equals fewer unprepared skiers and boarders wandering around where and when they shouldn't be. Could be our educational efforts...maybe our third grade winter safety training program is paying ginormous dividends. Could be reality TV programming...so many fantastic reality TV shows to watch that there is simply no time to go skiing. Could be global warming...everything else going wrong in the universe seems to be tied to our climatic hangover. Could be that my pager batteries are dead and we really ARE having lots of searches...or it could simply be pure, unadulterated, natural variability. Some winters are just busier than others regardless of solar flares, Nostradamus, or the wacky business happening *right now* in Area 51. But that's just one of the unique challenges of the search and rescue business; how to stay emotionally psyched, and physically prepared, and mentally focused when NO ONE IS GETTING LOST! Maybe there's something to that bumper sticker afterall...maybe we should open all ski area boundaries, or subvert the dominant polypropylene paradigm and encourage cotton long underwear and Levi ski apparel, or maybe we should just keep doing what we do best knowing full well that when you least expect it the pagers will in fact start beeping. Assuming you did put new batteries in....

**Go Forth and Educate** This is a great time of year for folks to catch up on essential pre-search season literature. Assuming you are not too busy getting in shape for the upcoming season, go out and get yourself a copy of *Snow Sense: A Guide For Evaluating Snow Avalanche Hazard*. This is the paperback bible for anyone wandering around in the wintertime backcountry. It was written by Jill A. Fredston and Doug Fesler from the Alaska Mountain Safety Center, which is one of the preeminent

outfits for avalanche forecasting, mitigation, and hazard evaluation. According to Powder Magazine, "Jill Fredston and Doug Fesler are the best avalanche instructors in North America, period." A mere \$8.95 will get you a copy of this gem. It is truly a 'must have' for anyone bold enough to forsake lift lines. Written in a straight forward, no nonsense manner, *Snow Sense* covers all the basics of avalanche awareness. Anyone and everyone interested in learning how to travel safely in the backcountry should read this book. As they say, read it and then read it again. Also highly recommended are *Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain* by Bruce Tremper, *The Avalanche Handbook* by David McClung and Peter Schaerer, *The ABCs of Avalanche Safety* by Sue A. Ferguson and Edward R. Lachapelle, and *Avalanche Safety for Skier's and Climber's* by Tony Daffern. These books are not typically on the bookshelf at the Bookshelf or Borders or the other bourgeois booksellers, but they can be ordered online or from your favorite independent bookstore. For those who are more experiential learners, look up *Snowy*



Joint Placer County and Nevada County Training at SugarBowl. September 27, 2007  
Photo by Sara Barrett

*Torrents*, which is a multi-volume compendium of U.S. avalanche accident descriptions and analyses. Talk about armchair adventure. As avalanche.org puts it, "There's nothing like painlessly learning from the mistakes of others!" There are also many videos available including the classic *Winning the Avalanche Game* produced by the Utah Avalanche Center and Betsy Armstrong's and Knox Williams's *Avalanche Awareness: A Question of Balance*, or TNSAR's very own *Winter Awareness* video/DVD. The bottom line is that there are many, many ways to hone your skills regardless of whether or not this is your first season or you are as old as Doug Read. Remember, ignorance is not bliss, it's just plain dumb.

**SnowCat Strut** As many of you know, TNSAR's Larry Sevison organized an ad hoc fundraising event for a new TNSAR truck to haul the Team's snowcat. In spite of the bumper sticker on Scoop's truck that clearly says, "Safety Third" the snowcat team is indeed concerned about safe travel whilst in route to searches and has been

actively pursuing funds to purchase an appropriately outfitted truck to haul the snowcat. The event, held on October 16<sup>th</sup> at Lahontan, was a huge success not only for the money raised (though that is always welcome and appreciated) but also for the connections made. In spite of the fact that we are an organization that is far more comfortable in gortex than gabardine suits, several Team members attended this event and purportedly behaved well and managed to rub elbows with some of the major movers and shakers of Placer County without spilling too many cocktails and appetizers. Some of the guests included Placer County Supervisor Bruce Kranz, Placer County Sheriff Department's Jeff Granum, and several Placer County Planning Commission members (including Larry). Also present, and perhaps most serendipitous for TNSAR, was Art Chapman of JMA Ventures, LLC. As you no doubt have heard, JMA Ventures purchased Homewood ski area last year and just recently took over operations at Alpine Meadows. Now with the legendary Kent "Hoopi" Hoopingartner at the helm at Homewood and (with equal legendary status) Jim Kercher at the helm at Alpine, Art has thoroughly stacked the ski area decks in his favor in Lake Tahoe. TNSAR will undoubtedly benefit from having Hoopi and Jim guiding these two popular resorts. To have TNSAR operations closely aligned with Hoopi and Jim's operations will certainly result in a win-win situation for all involved, especially for those skiers and boarders who wander outside of ski area boundaries and for the rest of us who chase them down.

Three cheers (and then some) for Larry!

Spilling cocktails with the best of them...

----B. Wright

## Team Officers

President	Russ Viehmann	525-6978
Vice President	Brian York	583-0465
Treasurer	Scott Schroepfer	546-2809
Secretary	Pam LeFrancois	546-7393
Board Members	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
	Mark Johnson	583-1308
	Jimmy Smith	582-4448
	Jonathan Laine	582-9466
Directors-at-large	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
	Joe Pace	583-1806
	Doug Read	583-6381
	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376
	Steve Twomey	525-7280

## Committee Chairs

Cuisine	Debra Schroepfer	546-2809
Dispatch	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	TBD	
Equipment	Brian York	583-0465
Great Ski Race	Doug Read	583-6381
	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
Newsletter	Bob Wright	546-7273
Snowcats	Scoop Remenih	583-1684
Snowmobiles	TJ Johnson	308-2530
Technology	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376
Training	Bernie Mellor	546-2238
Truck	Peter York	583-0465
Website	Mark Johnson	583-1308

All phone numbers area code (530) unless otherwise noted

## Upcoming November Trainings

### November 13<sup>th</sup> ---Tuesday

Where: Page Meadows

When: 6:00 PM Team Garage or 6:30 PM Silver

Tip

Contact: Bernie Mellor 546-2238. Bernie will be leading a GPS familiarization training in and around Page Meadows. Believe it or not, we have had searches out there in the meadow so this will be a great hands-on opportunity to learn about and practice using GPS units. Dress accordingly and call before you show up!

### November 17<sup>th</sup> ---Saturday

Where: Castle Peak and beyond

When: 8:00 AM garage or 8:30 AM Wild

Cherries

Contact: Paul Honeywell 546-8609. Paul will be taking folks up to Castle Peak for a terrain familiarization training. Lord knows what the weather will have in store so it is imperative to call Paul before this training. It could be skis and parkas, shorts and tennis shoes or anything in between.

### November 29<sup>th</sup> ---Thursday

Where: Burton Creek Substation

When: 6:30 PM

Contact: Jimmy Smith 582-4448. Jimmy will be leading a Com Van 101 training. This is an entry level training for anyone interested in the finer workings of the communications van. This training is open to all and is a great introductory training to learn about some of the crucial communication elements that go on "behind the scenes" at a search. Please call to RSVP.



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

# SNOWLINE

November 2007

Post Office Box 7703  
Tahoe City, California 96145  
(530) 581-4038  
[www.tahoenordicsar.com](http://www.tahoenordicsar.com)  
[www.thegreatskirace.com](http://www.thegreatskirace.com)

MARK JOHNSON  
PO BOX 8258 TAHOE CITY  
CA 96145

The next TNSAR general meeting is Monday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm at  
the Granlibakken ski hut.

30 OCT 2007 PM 2 T

RENO NV 895



USA 41