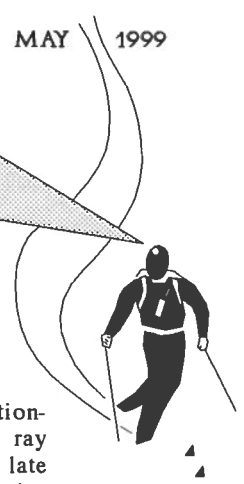


SnowLine

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

Lake Tahoe · Truckee · Donner Summit



First things first: Training. For what may be the last Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team training of winter 1999, Team skiers are requested to meet **April 24, 7:45 AM** outside the Squaw Valley USA tram building. From there we'll nab a ride up to High Camp, leap-frog to the top of the Granite Chief chair and ski west along the Middle Fork/North Fork American River divide. This ridge, right under the nose of hundreds of thousands of ski area customers all winter, is seldom skied. Five ascents await: Granite Chief, with its Polaroid of a naked lady stashed on top; Thunder Mountain, sporting Waimea cornices; Needle Peak (columnar basalt, fluorescent lichens); Three Coyotes, sometimes a triple-summitted knife edge; and Lyon Peak, topping huge granite basins. We'll eventually ski down into the North Fork drainage and rendezvous with Scoop and his snowcat(s). A couple years ago, on an especially dynamic day, we spotted Mt. Shasta from the summit of Needle Peak, a clean 300 km straight north. Also on the training docket... Team member John Pang will teach another CPR refresher class in May if enough Team members are interested. Call John at 581-2641.

False Alarm

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was called by the Placer County Sheriffs the afternoon of March 31 in response to a missing persons report. Two snowmobilers, mistakenly reported missing, were last seen in the vicinity of the Sierra Club's Ludlow Hut, 11 km or so up the Miller Lake jeep trail. Nordic Team skiers, snowcats, and snowmobiles, as well as a Placer County helicopter, descended on the hut with smothering efficiency only to find the two 'bilers enjoying (up to that moment) their solitude. They had in fact conspired to spend the night at the hut, and did just that.

Season's Wrap

If your calendar has been full this winter, and you haven't attended enough of the Nordic Team meetings, it's not too late! The last general meeting for the winter will be held Monday, **May 3, 6:30 PM** at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut. On

schedule for the evening are dinner! (served for you), annual elections for Team officers, presentation of the Team Member Of The Year award, wrap-up of the winter search season and preparation for the summer search season, plus lots of free-range humor. See you **May 3!**

Future Mock

In the 1960s my dad would bring me to the annual General Motors car show. There would always be a "Cars of the Future" exhibit. The smooth-fendered "bubble" cars looked pretty exotic next to the 1966 Impala and Bonneville wagons. Today, of course, those bubble cars are everywhere. The future is upon us. And I remember one day in grade school math class we had to figure out how old we'd be in the year 2000. And (yikes!) that calculation is proving true. The future is upon us.

I can also clearly recall hanging out in our wool knickers just after a search (in the rain)

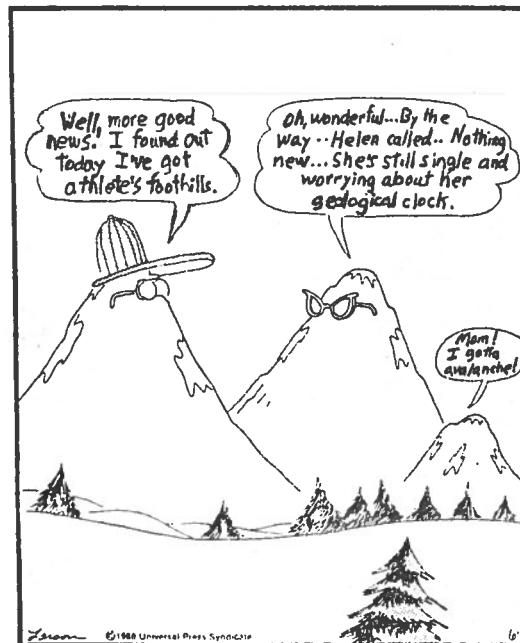
heat-seeking, motion-detecting, night-vision ray guns. Even in the late 1970s Gore-Tex was a pipe dream, plastic cross-country ski boots would never be (they'd crack first time you'd flex 'em), and if you *had* to have a ski with a metal edge, soft aluminum seemed best. At the time there was lots of imagination but no real notion of today's backcountry gear.

Hit RETURN and upload Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team 1999.

The Team's twenty-third year. Our Team skiers are blessed with plastic boots (warm, dry, comfortable), lithium-celled halogen-vacuum headlamps (no more 4 feet of wire running down to the 6 pound lantern battery on your belt), seam-sealed storm clothing ("guaranteed to keep you dry"), stylish fleece insulation (all petroleum by-product), no gaiters (plastic boots), clear lensed goggles (with defogging fan), shaped skis (wider than roof shingles), custom cut climbing skins (to match the shape), wrist-mounted altimeter-barometer-thermometer-chronometer-heart monitor (never needs winding), 16-channel radios the size of a Twinkie (with clip-on microphone), GPS receivers the size of a candy bar ("Oh man, I can only get six satellites."), cell phones the size of a shoe horn (with 99 memory dial, call waiting, voice mail, caller ID, conference call), voice pagers the size of an Oreo (but not nearly as tasty), directional avalanche transceivers (directional or not: DON'T GET CAUGHT!), nylon flare guns (red or white 12-gauge flares), carbon-fiber adjustable-length ski pole/probes (proper swing weight), CPR face shields (it ain't the '70s anymore), laminated topographic maps (bubble-jet printed from CD-ROM), mylar-wrapped energy bars (Marin County's answer to pemmican), spun ceramic water filters (it ain't the '70s anymore), and toilet paper (some things never change). The future is upon us indeed.

After a half dozen pilsners, the Team searchers of 23 years ago could probably have been convinced of a couple changes coming their way, but most of the above list would be pure Buck Rogers fantasy. And when we sit down and speculate today about the search of tomorrow, are we fantasizing or predicting?

DOUBLE CLICK here to upload Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team 2057.



Mountain families

speculating on whether there would ever be a truly waterproof parka and that maybe one day we'd track lost people in the woods using

Next General Meeting is Monday, May 3, 1999, 6:30 p.m. at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut

The Team's eighty-first year. Upstairs in the Nordic Team garage (its siding still in need of oil) three Nordic Team rescue skiers are seated around a 2-square-meter flat plasma-coupled active 3-D matrix monitor. None of the skiers are older than 26. The image is at resolution 20x, more than adequate, especially considering the introductory subscription rate. One of the skiers works the "beam", illuminating 25-square-meter grids within what we once knew as the Granite Chief quadrangle. Trigonometry is good: more than 300 satellites. Upon illuminating grid 137, worked in order from a simple location probability algorithm, the lost woman is spotted. Detail is especially fine, containing even negative reflectivity off all the ion-rich metals of her boot buckles. She is not moving and has a body temperature of at least 33° C. The cross hairs are aligned and her coordinates are transmitted to the receiving units coupled to each of the six field skiers' radios. The skiers are poised on the Sierra crest. It is snowing hard so aircraft are out of the question. Each field skier wears goggles with full color, brightness, value, and contrast adjustable lenses so visibility even in this weather is not a problem. Light, warm shirts are all that is needed under their wired parkas. The sealed isotope-gradient (I-G) batteries—each good for at least 24 hours—will maintain the wire mesh within their parkas at any temperature the skier requires. As one skier turns her parka's thermostat down she can't help but think how bulky insulation is so twentieth century. Each skier's AWD, or Avalanche Warning Device, is on high sensitivity because of all the recent snow. The AWD constantly monitors acoustic signatures in the top two meters of the snowfield and warns its user if their presence is propagating mechanical signals outside the stable range. The AWD still have a very limited spatial range, so the rescuers ski with caution. Most of the skiers have their GPS units set to five minutes—industry standard, so to speak—that is, every five minutes a message will be transmitted directing the skier to their destination or

announcing their location or both. Three of the six skiers have their unit's volumes turned all the way down, at least for now. They know the terrain, and besides, it's bothersome to have the recorded voice telling you left when you need (temporarily) to go right. When they reach the lost woman she is healthy but tired. They get her into a one-piece I-G heated suit, ditching her nylon parka and snowboard. The searchers break out a pair of trapezoidal-cross-section titanium skis that telescope to full length. They are fitted with a universal binding and have a mass of three kilograms per pair. She is clipped in and off they climb. Plenty of hot fluids and food are available (courtesy of the I-G batteries) for the hike out. The party is met at first opportunity by a snow machine. Narrower and one-and-a-half times as long as a '66 Bonneville, the machines travel exclusively on a cushion of air. Their power consumption is therefore inversely proportional to the surface snow densities. In deep light snow, their range is considerably limited by fuel capacity. Hence, the high-capacity external fuel tanks. No skiers tow behind the machines anymore: the powder cloud is too much.

Fantasy? Not completely. Much of this technology is in place today, if only in its infancy. GPS receivers are now available on a wrist watch, and GPS receivers designed to be plugged into a portable radio will be used this summer to monitor the position of emergency response crews in various situations. Battery technology has taken and will most likely continue to take huge leaps. And computers—

Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team Officers

President	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376
Vice President	Joe Pace	583-1806
Treasurer	Scott Schroeffer	546-2809
Secretary	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Board Members	Steve Matson	546-7968
	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
	Steve Twomey	525-7280
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Committee Chairs

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Dispatch	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	Whitney Foehl	(775) 322-4368
	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
The Great Ski Race™	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Newsletter	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Snowcats	Tony Remenih	583-1684
Snowmobiles	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Training	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
Truck/Equipment	Russ Viehman	582-1695
Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team garage		581-4038
All phone numbers area code (530) unless noted otherwise.		

you ask—fast enough to handle information simultaneously from several satellites? Well, you can darn near buy one of those at Costco.

Back at the garage the skiers on "beam" rotation watch and monitor the progress of the rescue as best they can. They are alarmed when the door suddenly flies open and there stands Doug Read. Everyone of the old guard is long dead of course, but not young Doug, having celebrated his 109th birthday the previous summer. He was going to go for a tour today but couldn't muster the strength to get the blue wax out of the tin, case-hardened in place since 1976. With all eyes on Doug he taps the window with his ski pole/cane and announces, "Boys, there's some skiin' out there!"

Have a great future summer!

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team, Inc.

Post Office Box 7703

Tahoe City, California 96145

www.tahoenordicsar.com



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