Northstar to Big Chief

Sixteen brave souls showed up for the Jan. 13 training session expecting glare ice and breakable crust from Northstar to Big Chief.

To their delight, the north-facing backside of Mt. Pluto was dusted with about three inches of light powder snow. After familiarization with orientation points and discussion by Phred Stoner, Ski Patrol leader at Northstar, the group carved up the sparsely wooded slope and watched Doug Read and Colleen Connors jump a few fallen logs. After stopping for lunch between Sawtooth Ridge and the base of Pluto, one group headed down Deer Creek and the other headed up, and I mean up. Sawtooth Ridge for more orientation.

From both Mt. Pluto and the top of the ridge a good view of Martis Valley, Squaw Valley, Alpine Meadows and Donner Summit were available.

The group who went up Sawtooth found another great slope, this one with perfect springlike conditions. The joy of skiing was damped a bit, though, when the group made it to Deer Creek for the trash back to Highway 89.

The breakable crust and ice everyone expected was waiting under the trees along the creek.

The best part of the day was packing 14 people into the "new" transport vehicle (a Chevy Suburban of unknown age) supplied by "Scoop" Remenih who drove the group to Northstar from Big Chief that morning.

The transport did well, to everyone's surprise, even towing a trailer with all the packs and ski equipment.

Thanks to Northstar for their co-operation and the use of the lifts.

GREAT SKI RACE

The race finally has a sponsor; in fact, two of them! Heart Federal Savings is donating several thousand dollars for over 700 T-shirts, and Dab Beer is kicking in for the bibs, as well as 850 bottles of beer to enhance the post-race festivities at Don Juan's. Among the merchants donating prizes, Concord Toyota is giving at least a 6-month lease on a 4x4 Tercel. Lots of other prizes, too, courtesy of many local businesses. We still have to shell out for brochures and outhouse facilities, though. More info on the greatest X-C race in California at the next meeting.

ALPINE AVALANCHE CLINIC

Sunday, January 9th at an even dozen Nordic team members showed up at Alpine Meadows Ski Area bright and early for an avalanche clinic and training session. The group spent an initial hour in the patrol room listening to Professional Ski Patrol leader Larry Heywood explain Alpine’s Avalanche Alerting & Rescue Plan, and then to Avalanche Forecaster Jim Plehn.

Plehn explained some of the scientific methods currently in use at Alpine to predict avalanche danger. Briefly, this involves four factors: precipitation intensity, wind velocity and direction, new snow and old snow stratigraphy and temperature.

The mountain is divided into three zones: upper, with a lot of windloading, big cornices and little skier-compacting; lower, with less wind and more ski-compaction; and Scott Peak, cross-swept by the winds, with less overall snow and more compaction.

Plehn called this season the "most interesting" from an avalanche hunter’s perspective since 1970-71, with thin starting zones and fat runouts which in some cases stripped the snow clear to the ground, leaving bare dirt.

Attendees had a chance to see Alpine’s Avalanche Atlas, with hundreds of potential starting zones all over the mountain documented and photographed, illustrating how site-specific the ski area’s avalanche control program has become.

Following these informative presentations the team adjourned to a nearby slope where Bob Moore led a probe drill. Then Don Huber and his pal Smokey demonstrated just how fast a trained SAR dog can excavate a victim from six feet under the snow.

After lunch the team rode up Scott chair, climbed the rest of the way to the top, and skied down the ridge to Deer Park, doing Skadi drills along the way and finding a few pockets of decent snow amidst the crust.

Thanks to Alpine Meadows, WOOF, Deer Park and the U.S. Forest Service for a good day.

E.M.T. TRAINING

Beginning Monday night, February 7th. Jan Noseworthy will be teaching an E.M.T. course. It will run every Monday into the spring. If you’re interested call Jan at 587-1361, or catch her at Tahoe Forest Hospital.

LIBRARY

The Tahoe City Truckee and Kings Beach libraries have a good selection of SAR literature, including many books donated by the Nordic team. Bibliographies have been printed and will be available to members at the next general meeting.

CHAIR—Susan Antipa 587-3062
EDUCATION

The committee was really busy last week taking the winter survival program to area schools, and the effort continues through Feb 9th. The theme this year is “Wear a Hat”, and the presentation involves classroom lectures, slides and outdoor demonstrations on constructing emergency shelters.

The two avalanche seminars conducted by Chris Burnett and Don Starbard at Heart Federal in Tahoe City were well-attended, thanks to the Bernie Kineary Memorial Fund for sponsoring them.

Thanks for the success of Winter Awareness Week go to: Nancy McNair, Lynne Reilly, Andy Smith, Diane Iglesias, Bruce Kuecker, Jeff Menzer, Kate Ullberg, Wendy Warren, Doug Read, Joanne Corbin, Susan Antipa, Todd Lloyd, Colleen Connors, Linda Russell, Stephanie Atwood, Don Ahlert, Sandy Sequoia, Scott Schroepper, Rick Foster, Ken Menzer, Candy Cox, Noel Hargreaves and many more who signed up at the last minute.

MORE TRAINING

Feb 8, 9 & 10 there will be a survival training for the SAR community, probably on the backside of Northstar. The format will be something like a day of lectures, a 1/2 day demonstration, and an overnight exercise. The Sac CHP is sending 12 people, and there may be some participants from McClellan AFB. Call Chris for details, 583-1844.

ARMCHAIR ADVENTURE

At the Passage Bar & Restaurant in Truckee, Tuesday night usually means a slide show. Here’s the schedule for Feb:

FEB: 4—“Skiing in the USA” by Powder photographer, Larry Proctor
FEB: 11—“Six Years In the Galapagos” by Jack Grove
FEB: 25—“Skiing the Haute Route from Switzerland to Chamonix” by John Harding (same show seen at the Dec. TNSAR meeting)

THE NEXT GENERAL MEETING

is on Monday night, February 7th, at Granlibakken. At present there is a good chance that Placer County Chief Deputy Ed Presley will be the guest speaker. Also the SAR truck will be there for inspection, and so will some of the 1st Aid packs. Chris will show a sneak preview of the slide show if there’s time. See you there!

REMEMBER...the MARCH general meeting takes place one week earlier than usual: Monday night, Feb 28th.

Nominations for the Board of Directors will be held at that time.

PERSONALS

For Sale: pair of 190 cm, metal edged Kastle LW’s, waxable, brand new, $110. Call Chris, 583-1844.

Ravingly attractive mountain man desires hot number with stacks of wood. Chains required, high heels optional. Contact D.E.R., care of this publication.