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

Last winter Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team needed some saving of its own. The Great Ski Race was approaching—a race with nearly 900 registered racers—and we had no one online to handle the race's computer registration and electronic race results output. Up to the plate stepped Team member Amy Horne, who, with a high level of organizational and technological skill, spearheaded one of the race's largest (if not most complicated) tasks. Amy had help, of course, and to all we're grateful. But every job has a task-master, and Amy was it. So when Amy approaches you recruiting for this year's race, make sure to say yes.

During May of 1998, Amy was involved in an avalanche accident on the slopes of Oregon's Mt. Hood. One of her rope mates was killed in the slide and Amy was severely injured. At the next meeting of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team—November 5—Amy will tell her tale of that fateful day and the lessons learned. As another winter presses upon the mountains of the American West, let Amy's story serve as a reminder to sharpen our weather-eye to the consequences of operating on steep, deep snow. Please attend the next Team meeting!

October 12, 2001

At 7:15 PM on October 12, Placer County dispatch paged Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team and requested our help with an injured climber. A 911 call had been made from the base of the Big Chief climbing crag reporting a climber with a serious head injury. The local fire departments had been dispatched shortly before and were in route.

After completing and descending their climb, two local climbers were gathering their gear and pulling down their rope. The pulled rope dislodged a bowling ball-sized rock from high up and it struck one of the climbers on the side of his head. It wasn't until 15 minutes into the Team callout that we learned the injured climber was Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team President Joe Pace. (Ironically, one of the five or six phone calls I had made in the previous minutes was to Joe's house: "Joe, it's Randall, it's 7:23, we have a callout, call me if you get in."

I can tell you for certain that every Team member that was running to get their gear and get out the door turned that run into a sprint when they learned that it was Joe that was hurt. Doug Read said he hit 35 mph on his driveway; the Nordic Team truck made record time down the river road; even my rusty Toyota may have exceeded a speed limit or two across SR 89.

The backside of Big Chief (the rescue staging area) is accessed from The Great Ski usual pretty self. There was blood all over him and most of surrounding area, his face was multi-colored, tending most toward the black and blue ends of the spectrum, his eyes were swollen and blood flowed out of one ear. Marc Stamm, Joe's housemate, workmate, and climbing partner, had blood all over his pants and no shirt on. He had used all his available clothing to quench the bleeding and to keep Joe as warm as possible from the already sharp, cold night air. The medics had a C-collar and oxygen mask on Joe, his head wound bandaged, and were closely monitoring his blood pressure, pulse, and level of consciousness. On "3" he moved J.P. onto a litter, and strapped him down tight for the hand-carried rollercoaster ride out of there.

The carry went (relatively) fast and smooth with at least 15 people managing the litter. At a couple steep parts of the climbers' trail we all made a human chain, passing Joe from one pair of hands to the next. Joe was conscious the entire way out, and answered (correctly) all the questions directed at him non-stop in an attempt to keep him conscious. By 10:20 PM, Joe had been ferried from us to a Truckee Fire Ambulance then to a nearby LZ and into a CalStar helicopter. He was flown immediately to Washoe Medical Center in Reno. October 12 was Joe's 44th birthday.

Without exaggeration I can say Joe Pace is one of the strongest guys I know. It seems every time I see him he looks thinner and stronger than the last. That extreme fitness came to his aid, I think, in battling this severe injury. As of this writing (October 16) Joe has endured nearly three hours of brain surgery and a couple days in the ICU with every tube, wire, and conduit imaginable stuck, poked, and otherwise hard-wired into him. He is up, walking around, suffering a new haircut, and a couple days away from coming home from the hospital altogether. That kind of turn-around, from what can only be described as an extremely serious injury, attests to the physical and mental strength Joe possesses.

Next General Meeting is Monday, November 5, 2001, 6:30 pm at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut
Team Trainings

Here’s the list of Team trainings for November and beyond. Remember to sign up for a civil defense (OES) card and come to the trainings prepared—for sun, wind, or lake-effect snow! Depending on weather, some of the scheduled hikes may become ski tours. In any case, call the training organizer.

The Nordic Team garage is located at 223 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City, behind the Chevron Station.

November 11: A training in the Mt. Rose area with Russ Viehmann (582-1695). Meet at the Team garage at 8:00 AM or up at Tahoe Meadows at 8:45.

November 14: Jim Coffey (583-1276) will lead an avalanche transective practice at the Team garage, 6:00 PM.

November 17: Gerald Rockwell (583-5376) will conduct a computer training (the laptop on board the Team truck is loaded with the TOPO! software and can help the search coordinator keep track of searchers in the field) at the Team garage, 1:00 PM.

November 18: A training in the Castle Peak area with Steve Reynaud (587-4723). Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM or at Wild Cherries Coffee House in Truckee at 8:00.

December 1: Peter Sporleder (546-0588) will lead an all-day hike from Incline Lake to Martis Peak. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM.

Milestone

Sad news, I’m afraid. Long-time Alpine Meadows ski patroller and Truckee resident Andre Benier died of colon cancer on October 8. He was 46 years old.

Though Andre was never a full time member of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team, many Team members knew him well. Andre was a key player in many of our searches that originated at Alpine Meadows. He helped the Team skiers orient themselves to the terrain, weather, and snow stability at the commencement of many stormy search nights. Often he was still at the ski area long into the night having arrived at the mountain the previous morning for pre-dawn avalanche control. He patrolled at Alpine Meadows for 18 winters. Andre is survived in Truckee by his wife Mary Ellen, son Stefan, and many friends.

Team Officers

President: Joe Pace 583-1806
Vice President: Steve Twomey 525-7280
Secretary: Scott Schroepfer 546-2809
Treasurer: Terri Viehmann 582-1693
Board Members: Karen Honeywell 546-8699
Ray O’Brien 581-4388
Randy Sharp 587-2877
Russ Viehmann 582-1695
Directors-at-large: Douglas Read 583-6381
Gerald Rockwell 583-3376

Committee Chairs

Cuisine: Debra Schroepfer 546-2809
Dispatch: Jackie Thomas 587-2687
Education: Karen Honeywell 546-8699
Equipment: Russ Viehmann 582-1695
Great Ski Race: Douglas Read 583-6381
Newsletter: Randall Osterhoub 546-4491
Snowcats: Scoop Remenih 583-1684
Snowmobiles: Ray O’Brien 581-4388
Training: Paul Honeywell 546-8699
Bernie Mellor 546-2238
All phone numbers area code (530).