SnowLine

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

Established 1976

May 2005

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team's final meeting of the season is Monday, May 2, at 6:00 PM. We'll rendezvous at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut, of course, which reminds me... Please take the time to offer your sincere thanks to all the personnel at Granlibakken.

Since time immortal (or at least the last 25 years), Granlibakken has hosted the Nordic Team not only meeting space, but a kind of second home from which we have comfortably choreographed our monthly high jinks. Can you imagine the monthly Team meetings without the Ski Hut? Thank you, Granlibakken!

Dinner will be served to you on May 2—maybe even outside (if it ever stops snowing)—so show up hungry or show up famished, but do show up!

On the meeting agenda:
- Team searches, Team trainings, Team elections, Team Member of the Year!

Searches

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team was dispatched the night of March 20 to search for a missing hiker reported overdue from an outing in the Snow Mountain Wilderness, a wilderness that spans Lake and Colusa Counties. March 20 and 21 saw heavy precipitation across much of California.

Five Nordic Team searchers responded, arriving at the trailhead late the morning of March 21. The Team searchers were quite the sensation starting up the trail, as 3300 feet elevation, with skis on their packs. A foot of new, wet snow had fallen at the 5200 foot level. Casey Prince, the missing guy, was located by one of the local rescue groups at 2:30 that afternoon in good condition. He had spent the previous stormy night in an old cabin.

The Team was next called at 1:15 AM on April 9 by Nevada County. 14 skiers and snowshoers had been heading for Donner Summit's Grubb Hut, and there was strong evidence to suggest they never reached the cabin. Two feet of new snow had already fallen and it was snowing still.

Team skiers and the Team snowcat broke trail over Castle Pass and into Round Valley, arriving at the hut by about 5:00 AM. There, they found the missing party tucked in and fast asleep. The group, all part of a bachelor party, had missed the hut on their way in, working at Sugar Bowl—oops!—at the Onion Creek bridge. All were transported out.

These were the Team's eighth, ninth, and tenth responses this season.

Truck Search

Scoop Remenih, Ray O'Brien et al have done a fantastic job building the Team snowcat into one of the most functional search tools around. The crux of employing the Team cat into a search and rescue is getting the dam thing to the trailhead. The cat weighs in at about 6000 pounds (not counting the trailer) — that's a formidable load to be pulling up and down the Sierra during a blizzard at full gun. When you're driving on icy roads pulling a load that weighs more than the pulling vehicle—well, you do the physics. The Team is in a preliminary search phase for a flatbed truck that can carry the snowcat. Scoop and Ray would be interested in hearing about any leads you might have on a service truck that would be a capable and practical mothership for the Team snowcat. Please contact Scoop (583-1684) with any ideas.

From The Mail Bag

This correspondence from the leader of the Team's dispatch committee, Jackie Thomas...

It was the first day in a week without clouds, snow or rain. It was a night with a complete full moon. And it was a party many of us will never forget.

On March 25th, John Pang coordinated a snowcat ride up to Mt. Watson for all the behind the search and rescue scenes people. Thanks to John, Ray O'Brien and Scoop Remenih, a group of people which included TNSAR dispatch, truck team, Sheriff's office personnel and Great Ski Race workers took off from the TNSAR garage for an 'E' ride trip to Mt. Watson.

Next General Meeting is Monday, May 2, 2005, 6:00 pm at the Granlibakken Resort's Ski Hut
For many of the people who attended, it was the first time in a snow cat. We were all laughing and getting to know the people we work with at 2 AM on many mornings, and then the snow cat left the driveway. All of a sudden, the laughing turned into shocked, scared giggles. What did we get ourselves into? The trip was going very well for the first two or three minutes when all of a sudden a tree branch hit one of the windows on Scoop's older snow cat. Diane Reinsbro and I didn't think too much of it until Lisa Swartz noticed the broken window right behind our heads! Well, we're off to a good start! The snow was a pure, sparkling, white after the recent storms. We were given the guided tour on our trip up to Mt. Watson. We were able to see the sun set on our way up the mountain and the moon rise just as we arrived right on the peak of Mt. Watson. We all jumped out (well, we carefully lumbered out, still worried about falling off the mountain) grabbed our cameras and took as many pictures as we could while it was still light enough.

After the photo op, we went to the bonfire/dining area. The boys had built a bonfire earlier that day, in preparation for the grand lighting ceremony. Holly Beatley had the honor of shooting a flare into the fire temple. She hit it with the first shot (I'll never cross Holly again!) and we were treated to a huge column of fire shooting up into the sky.

Now it was time to open the champagne, beer and wine, cook a great dinner John had prepared for us and work on keeping the bonfire burning. We were treated to shrimp hors d'oeuvres, Teriyaki chicken, burgers, potato salad, garlic bread and cookies for dessert. It was quite a feast! We spent the evening around the fire getting to know each other and enjoying our dinner when a dog and a skier appeared out of nowhere. Doug Read and Rode crashed the party! Considering they skied (and ran) up the entire mountain, we were more than happy to let the party crashers in.

Much too soon, it was time to head back down the mountain. The snow cats decided they needed to race down and maybe try a few new trails. Well, when we ended up in someone's backyard, dropped down to the neighborhood street and ended up at Tahoe Lake Elementary school, the race took on a whole new element. Each snow cat can get through the streets of Tahoe City first! The snow cats met in the tie at the TNSAR garage in much the same manner they had left the garage. The cats were full of people laughing and talking about the wonderful adventure we had just shared.

Thanks John, Ray and Scoop!

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Survey Says!

At last month’s Nordic Team meeting, Paul Honeywell and Bernie Mellor handed out a questionnaire to Team members seeking everyone’s input on the strong and weak points of the Team’s trainings. Last word from Paul was that just three people had responded to the survey. Those two guys have done an outstanding job keeping the training calendar filled with a diverse set of exercises, so, it’s time to do them a favor. If you haven’t already, please respond with your most valuable comments and criticisms. The survey is available on the Team website, or you can contact Paul (546-8609) for a copy.

More than a little disappointed that Father Guido Sarducci wasn’t elected pope.

—Randall Osterhuber

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Team Officers

President: Russ Viehmann 525-6978
Vice President: Ray O’Brien 581-4358
Treasurer: Scott Schroepfer 546-2899
Secretary: Sue Devekken 412-3846
Board Members:
- Sarah Lagaas 775-745-7037
- Bernie Mellor 546-2238
- Direk Schoonmaker 583-3929
Directors-at-large:
- Randall Osterhuber 546-4491
- Joe Pace 581-1806
- Doug Read 583-4381
- Gerald Rockwell 583-3776
- Steve Twomey 525-7280

Committee Chairs

Cuisine: Debra Schroepfer 546-2899
Dispatch: Jackie Thomas 887-2687
Education: Jim Coffey 583-1276
Equipment: Brian York 583-4065
Great Ski Race ™: Doug Read 583-6381
- Randall Osterhuber 546-4491
Newsletter:
- Randall Osterhuber 546-4491
Snowcats:
- Scoop Rennehu 581-1684
Snowmobiles:
- Ray O’Brien 581-4388
Technology:
- Gerald Rockwell 583-3776
Training:
- Paul Honeywell 546-8609
- Bernie Mellor 546-2238
Truck:
- Peter York 583-4065
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- Mark Johnson 583-1308
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"When we first started seeing each other, we would always use the same word for snow."