



SnowLine

The Official Newsletter of the

TAHOE NORDIC SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM, INC.
Lake Tahoe • Truckee • Donner Summit

Among professional educators there is conclusive research linking teenage violence with teenage depression caused by the over consumptiveness "necessary" to live the "culture of the moment" portrayed by the media. It's easy and convenient to assign all erroneous information to the media (or "press" as they were known in Weegee's day), and many do. Radio, newspaper, magazine, and television undoubtedly have tremendous power over what we know of things outside our own personal spheres of operation. *What really happened with the fighter jet collision over the South China Sea? Were public shares of Cisco Systems really worth \$67 at one time, and if so, to whom?* One insight we all have into the gauge of the media's power is the ability to scrutinize their reporting of affairs *within* our spheres of operation. Whether it's aeronautical design, sheep ranching, or identifying a counterfeit Van Gogh, if you know something—or a lot—about a particular subject, you can measure the media's reporting of it. And so it is with rescue.

Throughout the history of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team, various local, state, national, and sometimes world news organizations have reported on our search and rescue activities. This is good. This is good because our Team's financial health depends on fund raising and donations—possible only if the public knows who we are and what we do. Media coverage is good too because of our Team's education mandate. The media can help educate the public by spreading the good word on winter awareness. But as any searcher learns in short order, the information reported by the media is not always appropriate or accurate.

Relevant or suitable information and the correctness of that information may be two

distinct things. It is up to the individual search and rescue agencies, search subjects and their family, and media editorial boards to decide what is appropriate information and what is not. Is there worth in describing the gory details of a single car wreck, or is the public better served by the statistics of car wrecks? One group's level of "appropriateness" may not be on the same tack as another's. Not much we'll ever be able to do about that except argue it ad infinitum. That the information laid forth by the media

job of the Public Information Officer is to disseminate information about the search and rescue activity to the public, including the media. Two observations I have made on the individuals who occupy these positions: 1.) they have formal training on how to deal and talk with the media, and 2.) they are not active ground searchers. This is a confusing mix. Up until the time lost people are found and/or rescued, we, as searchers, deal with information that is often (and often in a big way) comprised primarily of *misinformation*.

We've witnessed this time and time again. Much information is accurate, of course, but so much that we have to go on comes to us third, or fourth-hand. Any kindergarten student can tell you what happens when a single piece of repeated information is passed through a circle of individual story tellers. (One on-going challenge the Nordic Team faced from its inception, and still battles today, is to get the reporting party on-scene for the searchers to interview. The reporting party's story told first-hand and that told third-hand have been wildly different.) As the media's information about a search originates farther and farther from the source (the ground searchers), one can only expect that information to be less and less accurate.

One proposed solution for making the Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team's media relations simpler is to not talk with the media at all, a blanket boycott, or

letting someone else handle it. I can expect this would only inject a flux of wrong information into a media pool that is already challenged to get things right. I foresee a more proactive solution. We must become more skilled in recognizing the media's strengths—and shortcomings—and learn to use those to the advantage of all concerned. Just as any searcher must develop skills to navigate through the mountains or splint a broken humerus, we must develop the skills necessary to explain search and rescue to a TV



be correct is essential. No one individual or agency, whatever side of the search story they may be on, will ultimately benefit from misinformation, conjecture, or make-believe. Sometimes the truth can hurt, especially when it conflicts with the general public's impression of search and rescues (Jeeps, Winstons, Baywatch). No matter how rosy the lens, very few angles on a disaster will yield a cookies and ice cream view.

The Nordic Team has been involved with many large searches where a Public Information Officer has been assigned. The

reporter that has never spent an open night in the mountains, or that has never skied backcountry snow. Media relation skills are necessary not only because we want our search activities reported fairly and accurately, but because the media is very hard to hide from: you can't not talk with them. High on their list of attributes is persistence—they'll find you. The names of searchers are public information, and most of us are listed in the phone book. Being cold-called, at home, days after a search, happens all the time.

The media is scary but not to be feared. Being well-spoken while on camera is desirable, but not necessary—they edit everything anyway. You can swear and cuss and have the language skills of a drugstore cowboy but chances are none of that technicolor prose will make it past the cutting room floor. The scary part is that no matter how skilled and conscientious we are, we have no power over the final product—printed, filmed, or broadcast.

The answer? John Lennon said it was love. He may be right. But until our affection for reporters, journalists, and news anchors reaches a new level of tenderness, we should rely on education. Us being educated to the ways of the media, the media being educated to the way we do business in the mountains.

'Bilers Rescued

Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team's ninth search and rescue of the season took place on April 10 just after a powerful snowstorm.

Steve Ryan, 35, and Daniel Good, 32, both residents of North Lake Tahoe, were reported overdue from a snowmobile trip by Ryan's wife. The two 'bilers had headed up Blackwood Canyon the morning of April 9; the previous two days saw at least a foot of new snowfall at Lake level, and three times that at the Barker Pass elevations. The new powder snow made for a long day for the two 'bilers, and by 8:00 PM they had not returned from their adventure.

The Nordic Team snowmobilers were called out at 1:10 AM (April 10) to search for the missing snowmachiners. Ray O'Brien and Bryan DeVore responded, joining Placer County Deputies Fred Carey and Scott Baumgardner.

For the next several hours the four searchers covered much ground on their machines, chased down many tracks, and had quite the time of it themselves in the deep, unconsolidated snow. After several hours of searching and riding the difficult snows, Fred and Scott located the two stranded snowmobiles and their riders. It was just before 5:00 AM. The stranded guys had headed down a draw (on the north side of Barker Pass) and couldn't get back up. They'd spent considerable time and effort trying to foot-pack a trail for their machines before darkness set in. Their problems were compounded by one machine with a broken pull cord and low fuel reserves. They wisely decided to biv, kick up a large fire, and continue the work in the morning.

With the help of the four searchers, the six of them managed to get the stuck machines up and out and back on the trail. Meanwhile, Team snowcat driver Scoop Remenih headed up Blackwood with extra gasoline. Everyone was safely back at the Blackwood trailhead just after first light.

As stated earlier this was the ninth field response of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team this season. Many of the searchers involved with these rescues have been mentioned here in *SnowLine*. But searchers only do not make a strong Team. Behind the scene of every search and rescue our Team conducts are individuals involved with dispatch, managing the Nordic Team truck, equipment, and finances, leading and teaching training exercises, even buying the food and beverage to keep everyone fully fueled. As the winter season winds down, we owe it to each other to offer a hearty congratulations for all the Team does. The Nordic Team does not have employees, this is all-volunteer work, in addition to our day jobs. Feel proud, feel inspired, feel your head just barely fitting through the door.

Spring Cleaning

Team Director Dirk Schoonmaker (583-2929) is organizing a Team garage clean-up and repair day, Saturday, June 2, at 9:00 AM. Dirk asks everyone to bring brooms, rakes, repair tools, etc. to help whip the Nordic Team garage—and the property—back into shape. After the flurry of multiple winter searches and trainings, and The Great Ski Race, the garage gets a little neglected. Please help keep the Team's real property in tip-top condition. Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team will provide lunch for all.

Next Meeting

The next, and last, Nordic Team meeting of the winter season will be held Monday night, May 7, 6:00 PM at the Granlibakken Ski Hut just south of Tahoe City. Team President Joe Pace asks me to remind you of a few things on tap for the upcoming May 7 meeting: Nordic Team Board of Director elections; bestowing the highly coveted *Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team Member of the Year* award (this citation honors the Team member that most dedicated themselves to the purpose of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team); the planning of summer hikes and organized dryland trainings; a slide show (everyone please bring some slides); and last but not least a complimentary dinner that will be served to all in attendance (I challenge you to find a better deal than that!). Please make sure you attend this May 7 event and celebrate a successful winter search season and the upcoming summer.

Warning you not to believe everything you read,
—Randall Osterhuber

Team Officers

President	Joe Pace	583-1806
Vice President	Steve Twomey	525-7280
Treasurer	Scott Schroepfer	546-2809
Secretary	Terri Viehmann	582-1695
Board Members	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Directors-at-large	Dirk Schoonmaker	583-2929
	Russ Viehmann	582-1695
	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376

Committee Chairs

Cuisine	Debra Schroepfer	546-2809
Dispatch	Jackie Thomas	587-2687
Education	Karen Honeywell	546-8609
Equipment	Russ Viehmann	582-1695
Great Ski Race™	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
Newsletter	Randall Osterhuber	587-3092
	Scoop Remenih	583-1684
Snowcats	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Snowmobiles	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
	Bernie Mellor	546-2238
Training		
All phone numbers area code (530).		

Tahoe Nordic Search & Rescue Team, Inc.

Post Office Box 7703
Tahoe City, California 96145
(530) 581-4038
www.tahoenordicsar.com

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Permit #135
Truckee, CA
96160

please keep us informed of your correct address!