



SnowLine

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

As I sit here on Donner Summit and type, the clock is just about to tip into the midnight hour and the official *start* of winter. You wouldn't know it

if you stuck your mug out the door. More than 2 meters of snow are on the ground already, more on this date than any year since 1982. And I don't need to remind you that winter 1982-83 was one badass storm machine. It raged all season long. We skied Siberia Bowl under that next September's full moon on snow so old and hard my teeth were loose for a week afterward. But September firm is born of mornings like this: when the digital scale displays surface snow densities less than 6%. I know, I know, it's slop by Wyoming standards, but if them cowboy skiers promise not to feel sorry for me skiing in the rain, I promise not to feel sorry for them during sub-zero bovine uterine exams. And since we're talkin' about veterinarian procedures requiring elbow-length exam gloves, the next meeting of Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Team is Monday night, **January 7, 2002.**

Attend. Toast the New Year. Get vaccinated.

Search

As Evan exited the idling helicopter and walked across the Squaw Valley parking lot he didn't look one bit flustered. Evan had just spent the previous 24 hours among the highest reaches of the North Fork of the American River but you wouldn't have known it by looking at him. An acute observer would have recognized his lift ticket was post-dated by one day, but like the other skiers roaming

the lot he simply looked dressed for a day on the snow.

At about 11:00 AM the previous morning (December 18), Evan Metteo, 29, from San Francisco, began skiing down the western

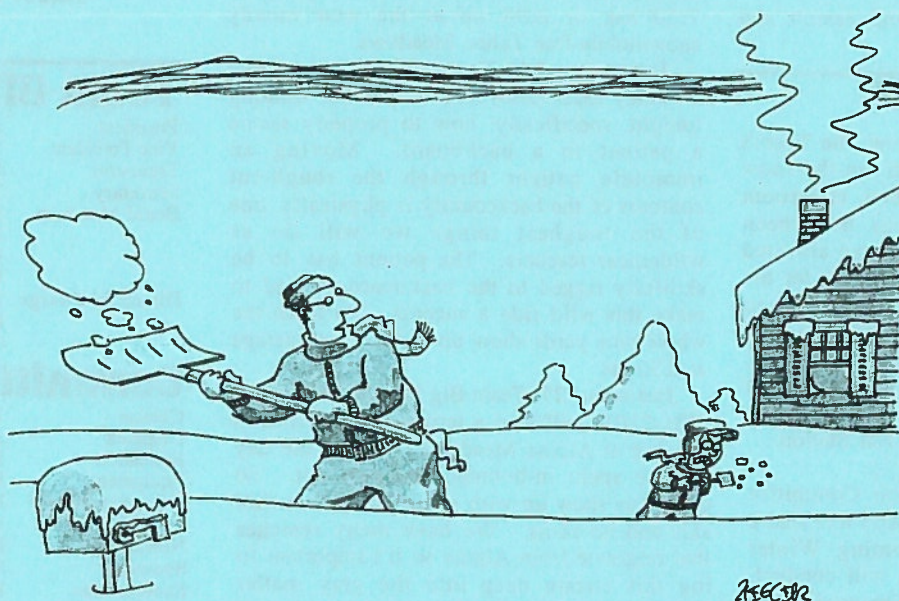
It was only 5:00 PM. Four hours later, after Evan was reported missing, the Nordic Team was called to search.

Over the next 12 hours more than 30 Team members responded. Three ski teams searched the Five Lakes, Whiskey Creek, Middle Fork (American), and Shirley Creek drainages. Another Team searched the back side of the KT-22/Red Dog area. In the ensuing hours many mini dramas were played and won, but by sunrise the only tracks we had discovered were either our own or those of a thousand different bunny rabbits.

Meanwhile, back at the staging area (Squaw Valley Fire Station), Team members Gerald Rockwell and Randy Sharp sported incandescent tans from laboring in front of the Team laptop. As each ski Team arrived back at base, Gerald and Randy uploaded their recording GPS and produced outstanding 5-color topo maps complete with each ski Team's route.

If, say, at 0300 you pulled off the ski trail to pee on a fir tree, there was the blip on the map. Hell, I thought, if there's got to be a Big Brother, it may as well be Gerald. The maps were a fantastic visual display of what we had done. But more importantly, since Evan was still out there somewhere, the maps showed what we hadn't yet done. And they showed it in living color.

Two more ski Teams were dispatched at 7:00 AM to fill in the blanks: one continuing behind KT-22, another to circle Granite Chief. An hour later, under the pale light of a sun too weak to melt Velveeta, two observant pilots aboard a California Highway Patrol fixed-wing aircraft spotted the long powdery trail of Evan, and in short order the orange parka-clad skier himself. He was 6.5 km (4 miles) north of the ski area and half way up the big south-



"It's a poor craftsman, son, who blames his tools."

most boundary of Squaw Valley ski area from Granite Chief. At some point he unknowingly exited the ski area and began dropping into the Chief Creek drainage. Chief Creek flows northeast then north then northwest until it turns toward its long descent into the Sacramento Valley as the American River. Whether Evan had any particular interest in the hydro-geography of his particular route I didn't ask. With nerdish delight, you, however, can note he started his descent of the river drainage from its highest pinnacle.

That day the snow conditions could be described as cold and deep; a scene worthy of a cheap refrigerator magnet or a Thomas Kinkade painting (is that redundant?). Evan punched north through the soft snow all day, stopping to dig into a powdery tree well at 4:30, the dramatic sky foretelling a stiff winter night. He hunkered down in the dark.

facing plate just west and south of Tinker Knob.

Evan's location was radioed to the Granite Chief ski Team (who started skiing north) and CareFlight (based out of South Lake Tahoe). By 9:30, the CareFlight helo had landed and picked up Evan. Team skier Ron Driller arrived a few minutes later. In a blink of an eye, and by the miracle of modern rotor technology, they were delivered to the asphalt outside the fire station. "I'm really thankful," Evan said, "Thanks alot. I decided to move up the peak," he told me, "so I'd be easier to find." If he had any trepidation about surviving a winter night in the Sierra, or that someone would be searching for him at all, he didn't show it. He was taking it all in stride.

Evan was dressed head-to-toe in the latest high-tech fabrics, and it paid off. He suffered no more than a restless night. When asked if he managed any sleep in his powdery snow cave, Evan replied, "No, but I did get in lots of jumping jacks."

This was the Team's second search and rescue of the season.

Trainings

With all the early-season snow, the Team's training schedule is full with on-the-snow practices as well as more cerebral, classroom sessions. The Team trainings have been popular this year; some events have attracted more than 20 skiers. So, be sure to let the training organizer know of your intent to attend, and don't get caught participating in a Team training without an OES card! If you do, Bernie and Paul will get you! As always, the Team garage is located at 223 Fairway Drive in Tahoe City, behind the Chevron Station.

Here's the drill:

THURS

January 3: Team Education Committee Chair Karen Honeywell (546-8609) will lead a training session on the upcoming Winter Awareness programs the Team will conduct. Karen is skilled in teaching and managing the school kids, and she's distilled the Winter Awareness message down to be concise,

informative, and fun! Everyone on the Team needs to help out with the upcoming presentations, so please do attend. Meet at the Team garage at 6:30 PM.

January 12: Team Director Russ Viehmann (582-1695) will lead a backcountry ski day for advanced skiers only. The group will access the backcountry with the help of Squaw Valley USA's lifts. This will be an all-day tour, so don't show up feeling timid. Meet at the Team garage at 7:00 AM, or outside the tram building at Squaw at 7:30.

January 15: Jim Coffey (583-1276) will MC a discussion on snow and avalanche safety at the Kings Beach Fire Station at 6:30 PM.

January 20: Hey, there's only one guy I know that shows up to Team meetings in a necktie, then has the audacity to lead a Team training! Yep, Fenimore's back. David (546-3597) will lead a tour in the Mt. Rose area for all ski abilities, but especially geared for the intermediate skier. Meet at the Team garage at 7:30 AM, or 8:30 up at the now mostly snowmobile-free Tahoe Meadows.

January 24: Team Vice Pres Steve Twomey (525-7280) leads a medical training tonight, specifically: how to properly secure a patient to a backboard. Moving an immobile patient through the rough-cut contours of the backcountry is physically one of the toughest things we will do as wilderness rescuers. The patient has to be skillfully rigged to the backboard or sled to make this wild ride a success. To learn the whole nine yards show up at the Team garage at 6:30 PM.

January 27: Team Big Dog Mike Kennett (581-2101) will lead a terrain familiarization training at Alpine Meadows. Part of the day will be spent in-bounds, and part out. So don't dare show up with some pansy downhill skis and no skins. We have many searches that originate from Alpine so it's important to log this terrain deep into the gray matter before the next stormy-night search. Meet at

the Team garage at 7:30 AM, or at Alpine at 8:00.

February 2 and 3: Dave "off-the-couch" Olson (582-1843) will lead an overnight training in the vicinity of Martis Peak. For those of you shy about bivin' out in the frost, you can participate just for the day. Meet at the Team garage February 2 at 7:30 AM.

Clinging to a thin facade of respectability,
—Randall Osterhuber

Q. What was spotted during the Evan Metteo search?

- burning meteor
- UFO
- coyote "essence"
- all of the above

No, this is not the answer.

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
	Randy Sharp	587-2877
	Russ Viehmann	582-1695
Directors-at-large	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
	Douglas Read	583-6381
	Gerald Rockwell	583-5376

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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	546-4491
	Randall Osterhuber	546-4491
Newsletter	Scoop Remenih	583-1684
Snowcats	Ray O'Brien	581-4358
Snowmobiles	Paul Honeywell	546-8609
Training	Bernie Mellor	546-2238

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