

Tahoe resident passes first step to be on 'Amazing Race'

By Brenda Knox

PORTLAND – Nineteen degrees. I thought I was still in Lake Tahoe, but I was in Portland on one of the coldest days on record, standing in the unofficial line to audition for the “Amazing Race”.

My teammate Marc and I arrived a week ago Thursday to prepare for the Feb. 26 casting call.

It was 4:30pm Friday and the line had already started. We decided I would stand in line until Marc got back, and we'd wait until the kid we hired to spend the night got there. Well, best-laid plans are sometimes just that.



Being flexible is a good quality to have on the “Amazing Race”, but I didn't know it was going to start before we auditioned.

Unprepared for the cold, I stood in line while Marc got our winter gloves, sleeping bags, blankets, and heavy coats. At least I had taken my earmuffs and a pair of gloves downtown with me, and Marc left me his coat. Unfortunately, I had on my thin socks and not so warm shoes. The cold began to set in. I started dancing and moving as much as possible. Another auditioner who had just stopped by to see what was happening was even less prepared because she was coming from work. We continued dancing. People were huddled in sleeping bags and putting up tents. Propane bottles attached to portable heaters started appearing. William, from The Dalles, put on his balaclava, then his thick beanie cap. Time: 5:30pm; one hour

down, only 16.5 hours to go until auditions start.

Our overnight stand-in arrives with his mother. She tells me she really prefers her son not to stay out all night in this cold. No kidding. I did not want to stay out in it either, but when you are an "Amazing Race" candidate you just roll with it. I convinced him to stay for a couple of hours so we could get all our warm stuff and some food in our bellies before our overnight on the sidewalk in 10-degree temperatures. Sleeping on the street is obviously not for the faint of heart. I advised Marc of our situation and he indicated he'd be there in about 10 minutes.

The thought of a warm car minutes away made my fingers feel warmer. Twenty minutes later, I'm still dancing around in the cold and my phone rings. I say to my fellow freezing auditioners, "It's Marc, he's lost." Sure enough, he was. I give him directions, and then begin surveying the crowd, maybe another partner to race around the world with, someone with a better sense of direction. But, I love Marc, and we will work this out. It's 6:30pm; Marc finally arrives. I no longer have feeling in my feet, but the excitement of the experience and adventure propels me on.

Two hours later we return, ready to spend the night in the below freezing temperatures. Another quick side note, we were pulled over by Portland police across for all to see, for making an illegal U-turn when Marc went the wrong direction again. Thankfully, he just gave us a warning. I believe "obey all traffic laws" is more than likely a rule on the "Amazing Race". Obviously, Marc and I have a few things to practice.

We relieved our paid stand-in and had just started to settle in when the organizers of the casting call decided it might not be such a good idea to have all these people spend the night in the cold. I estimate by about 8:30pm there were 300 people lined up. They handed out tickets and told us to get in line at 10am Saturday. We were ticket 22 and we would be in

the first 25 teams to audition in the morning. Celebrating the warmth of being inside, we enjoyed margaritas at Stanford's bar.



Brenda Knox
and Marc
Ockerman

We arrived at Stanford's at 9:15am Saturday, temperature 18 degrees and rising slowly. Looking at the line of roughly 2,000 people snaking along the side streets to Stanford's we are thankful for having lined up the night before and securing ticket 22. After sipping hot mochas at Starbucks, we settle in to the line. At 11am, the first 30 teams are ushered into the restaurant for auditions. We are freezing after standing in line for more than an hour.

Two by two we audition after handing in release waivers and providing our contact numbers. Two minutes was all the time we had to give it our all. Wearing black sweaters with red underneath, we introduced ourselves and talked. We don't dance, we don't sing, we don't play instruments, but we stood close, arms entwined, attempting charm and a bit of conflict, and it was over as fast as it started.

Now, we wait and hope that this was only the first step in our quest for an adventure around the world.

Brenda Knox lives in Tahoe Paradise and Marc Ockerman is a former Stateline resident who lives in Palm Springs. The "Amazing Race" is a reality television show pitting teams of two against other contestants in an array of adventures

throughout the world. The Tahoe duo should find out this month if they make it to the next stage in the selection process.