

**WEB EDITION**

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# RESCUE

**IDAHO MOUNTAIN SEARCH  
AND RESCUE UNIT, INC  
BOISE, IDAHO**

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**MOUNTAIN RESCUE  
ASSOCIATION**



## **IT'S A LONG HIKE FROM BULL TROUT LAKE TO KIRKHAM HOT SPRINGS JULY 3, 2002**

**--CHARLOTTE GUNN & GEORGE GUNN**



Food and drink are welcome after two unplanned nights out

Photo by K. Walker

The report said that a young man (who turned out to be 34 years old) had gone from Kirkham Hot Springs to Bull Trout Lake on the morning of July 1, and had left Bull Trout Lake at around 1 p.m., carrying water and a couple of apples, to hike back to Kirkham Hot Springs. He had not arrived, and Boise County called us to help find him.

Brad Acker, Rob Budka, Richard Clements, George Gunn (O.L.), Chris Harry, Andrew Hyman, Leslie Robertson with search dog Mingo, Dan Scovel, Kris Walker and Everett Wood met at the Compound at 5:30 a.m. for the drive up. Ada County Aerial Sheriff Joe Corlett and Charlotte Gunn took off from the Boise airport shortly after 7, and of course reached the search area before the ground crew; however, the most exciting thing they spotted from the air was a piece of bright blue plastic.

The ground team consulted with Sheriff Brown and Forest Service searchers, then with the person who had last seen the subject. This turned out to be an uncle who had given the subject a ride up to Bull Trout Lake--thus explaining how he had managed to get there before noon. The uncle also explained that his nephew was accustomed to traveling fast and light for long day hikes. Most helpful was the news that he had taken the young man to buy new boots recently. [See track on Page 11]

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He made a sketch of the sole pattern. Two Forest Service motorcycle searchers immediately recognized the sketch as similar to a footprint they had seen in several places the previous day.

The Forest Service gave us great cooperation. In addition to assigning several people to the mission, they provided space at the ranger station, up-to-date maps and permission to use their radio net. Our plan was for the Forest Service to transport our mantracking trained folks in one team combined with some Forest Service personnel to the last place the motorcyclist had seen the tracks. Everett would take his 4-wheeler and join with another Forest Service person, also with an ATV, to search up a drainage and intersect the trail the mantrackers expected to work. The motorcycles would lead the ground team to the search area then continue back the trail to Bull Trout Lake in case the subject turned back. 903 would do a road search. The remaining folks would move our operations from the ranger station to Kirkham Hot Springs Campground where we expected to have better communications with the field teams and aircraft. We could deploy the remaining people from there.

The convoy of tracking team and cyclists were on their way up a 4wd trail, almost to the track area, when they came upon the subject in the middle of the trail. The subject and rescuers were very happy to see each other. He was thirsty and hungry but in good shape.

Additional conversation elicited the information that the subject had thought his planned route was about 13 miles long. It is over 20 air miles, and probably about 35 ground miles, even if he had been able to follow it directly! It did not sound like he had done so. And he was still almost 6.5 miles from Highway 21 after 48 hours.

We brought him back to the ranger station where he was given further medical care and reunited with his family. We debriefed and headed back to town.

**Lessons Learned:**

Good intelligence is the basis of a successful search. The Boise County Sheriff's office and the Forest Service interviewed and reinterviewed people, piecing together the most-likely scenarios.

Having all the players share knowledge face-to-face brought out the track location information. That might never have come to light in a typical premission briefing.

Communications continue to be a problem. Access to the Sheriff's and Forest Service repeaters plus the fortunate placement of 903 (as a relay) made this one work.

Air assets are a useful tool. The subject saw the plane and was prepared to attempt to signal if it came back. The aircraft's search assignment would have taken it back over the subject if the ground team had not found him first. Air-to-ground communication continues to be a problem.

Experience, professionalism, local knowledge and a large dose of good fortune make it possible to conduct effective operations in vast areas with limited resources.

## SELWAY RIVER SEARCH, JULY 6-8, 2002 --CHARLOTTE GUNN

The previous weekend, two young men were wading on an underwater sandbar at Johnson Bar campground when their footing gave way and both fell into the river. One managed to make it to shore; the other did not. Idaho County called us and asked for water search dogs. The following



Pam Green with Inca, Vicky Dasenbrock and Kris Walker on the river search.

IMSARU members drove up at various times of the day and night on July 6: Kris Walker (towing one of his boats), Suzanne Ventura, Leslie Robertson with Mingo, Charlotte Gunn, George Gunn (towing Kris's smaller boat), Pam Green with Inca, Todd Culley, Rob Budka and Kit Brown. Vicky Dasenbrock of the Idaho County Sheriff's Posse coordinated the search.

Due to heavy rain and sudden snowmelt, the river had been very high at the time of the accident. When we arrived a week later, the sandbar where the two had been wading knee-deep was now out of the water by some six to ten inches, and the river had lots of shallow riffles to discourage motors. Fortunately, Kris not only had brought the inflatable cataraft of his own design, but he is a very experienced river runner and familiar with the area.



Kris gets ready to take Leslie Robertson and Mingo out for their turn at searching.

The boat could be launched from the beach at the campground; takeouts were wherever we could find a bit of beach with not-too-steep access to the road for six people to carry/drag the boat up to its trailer. Kris manned the oars for the multiple trips down the river, carrying dogs and handlers, observers, a deputy and the hopes of all concerned.

What did the rest of us do while Kris, Leslie and Pam worked the dogs? Just the usual—set up base camp and kept water hot; maintained the radio log; scouted possible takeout sites; did shore search; followed the boat in a vehicle to keep in radio touch; towed the trailer down to takeout and helped carry the boat up; kept communications lines open with Idaho County, divers and family/friends; discussed information and formulated plans. Mingo, working the road side of the river, indicated an area that needed attention. Lewis County divers checked some holes and eddies there but did not find the missing person. Afternoon winds came up strong and drove us off the river.

On Sunday, we again started at 6 a.m., when the world was cool and still. Inca took the road side of the river this time, and indicated the same area that Mingo had picked on Saturday. However, divers were not available and the best we could do was to leave the information with the local people and start our long drive home.

**Reflections on this mission:**

1. The call was for dog teams but our nine people were not too many for the tasks to be done. Idaho County got very busy with other problems, so it was mostly Vicky and us—and that worked just fine. Thanks to all who participated, especially to those who worked a full day on Friday and then made the long drive.

2. The Forest Service people kept apologizing for the accommodations (at the Cedar Flats site near Fenn Guard Station) but we appreciated bunks with mattresses instead of the hard ground. With flush toilets and showers, we were wallowing in luxury. John Hergent even offered fresh brewed coffee in the morning. Idaho County provided great sack lunches—hearty sandwiches and cookies and apples plus extras that had us sounding like kids with Christmas stockings: “I got a Crunch bar!” “I got a Baby Ruth!” “Look! There’s a Lifesaver in the bottom of the bag!” Then they paid for us to go out to dinner.

3. The inconveniences were ordinary: Several of us were stung by the “spider-bees.” (The name comes from Vicky’s story of camping on the beach Friday night.) The motor home quit on us just this side of Ontario; Bob Bennett was ready to come out from Payette and rescue Kris’s boat until the tow-truck driver said he could tow the whole rig. (So it was Gene Ralston who met us in Nampa and ferried us home.) Kris’s vehicle engine decided to dump all its oil on the way down White Bird Hill but the house he chose for asking to use a phone happened to belong to a professional mechanic who fixed his problem.

4. Some of the group drove on up to see the Selway Falls Saturday evening; all of us were astonished to hear that a kayaker had done the falls a couple of weeks previously and had survived. This is a gorgeous part of Idaho, and we were happy to brake for the deer and moose that wandered through. We’d like to return under happier circumstances.

## **TRACKING MEN**

### **--DIANE MATHEWS**

On May 17-19, Joel Hardin and crew came to Boise to give a UTS tracking class. The class was like many other classes, and I won't try to do it justice here, only point out a few of the keys that I picked up. Several IMSARU members chose to take the class, and several others chose to help out with the class:

--Thanks to Jennifer Rockwell for finding a place for the classroom instruction, and for the doughnuts!

--Thanks to Charlotte Gunn for bringing supper to the students on Friday evening.

--Also, Jim Cooper, Jeff Munn and Tim Henning joined Charlotte in setting up shade shelters, tables and chairs—which were greatly appreciated during the hot weekend.

--Many thanks also to Joey and Richard Clements for bringing food to the class for lunch and supper on Saturday.

--Thanks to George Gunn for whatever magic he pulled to get the class sponsored by our unit in spite of our dwindling funds. George also brought his motor home/mobile storage unit; it helped tremendously with the food arrangements.

--Many thanks to Tony Rockwell for prodding, encouraging, and inspiring enough IMSARU members to make a great turnout. Thanks to Tony, also, for heading up the organizational effort.

--Thanks to Ada County law enforcement for donating a weekend at the shooting range so that we could have an almost ideal location for the outdoor sessions. The only request is to have about 80 more large shade trees in place by the next time we have the class there.

--Thank you, Dan Scovel, Kris Hoffman and Bill Lindenau, for taking time out of the class to help with some of the logistics and doing behind-the-scenes work.

--And thanks to anyone else who helped out without me knowing about it.

Why do we spend so much time thanking people at the beginning of an article about tracking? Because in order to even begin a successful track of a lost person, it requires a team effort. A team effort made it possible to have a great class; teamwork is also one of the major points of the UTS tracking course. Teamwork includes the responding officer—who needs to know when, how, where, and what to look for and protect for the trackers—and hopefully a three-person team to do the tracking.

This UTS course focused on getting most of the class “track aware,” as many of us had never taken a course before. To anyone who has not taken a class: Tracking really is not rocket science; it's a matter of using something you already do. Children, once they have the dexterity to control crayons, can write; they just need to learn the standard symbols. And once they can focus on symbols, children can learn that those symbols mean things; they are words and can be interpreted. All of us write on the ground as we walk across it. And as adults, we have the ability to focus on broken twigs, crushed grass, dislodged pebbles, and a whole list of other things that the writer of this article is supposed to know by now. It's just a matter of learning how to read, or interpret, whether or not the twigs, grass, pebbles, etc. were altered by the missing person. Understanding this much is the first step in being track aware. See? It's not rocket science; tracking is just another language.

I was on a team that changed slightly five different times. This gave us a lot of practice in different communication styles, in understanding how long we can track without taking a break, and when it's time to vacate because of the snake slithering a few feet ahead. All of the team configurations worked well together; they just worked differently. The teams are usually made up of three people—one on point, who is focused most directly on the tracks, and two on either side (flankers) who look for a set of tracks that might be crossing the ones we are following. The flankers might also take a step back, look up, see if the tracks have a general direction. And lastly, they look for wildlife that the point person might not notice, being too focused on the space directly in front of him/her.

Members of our unit who attended the class were Dan Scovel, Tony Rockwell, Leslie Robertson, Diane Mathews, Bill Lindenau, Christie Karnes, Kris Hoffman, Aimee Hastriter and George Gunn. (If I missed anyone, then it's my fault for waiting too long to write this article.) In addition, there were law enforcement and SAR members from several different organizations. Each of us had fun learning in a very positive atmosphere and would be delighted to encourage anyone else to take the course.

## **WASHINGTON STATE CONFERENCE, MAY 15-18, 2002**

**--KEN MURRY**

The 2002 Washington State SAR Conference was held in Skamania County, Washington. It is located in the Southern Cascades in an area called Wind River, east of Vancouver and south of Mt. St. Helens. The conference site was the Wind River Nursery, an old Forest Service nursery.

The conference is held to bring together SAR people from around the northwest to attend classes, watch demonstrations and learn the many aspects of SAR. Classes ranged from basic skills to advanced classes on search techniques. There was specialized training for dog handlers and mounted SAR, and the introduction of goats as pack animals.

Guest instructors this year were two individuals from New Zealand. I had a chance to visit with them and learned that not only is their Search and Rescue an all-volunteer organization, but their Coast Guard is also all-volunteer.

I participated in helicopter training, which included: M.A.S.T. (Military Assistance to Safety and Traffic), Blackhawk, hoist capable. Medics onboard (EMT). 24/7 ready crew and the 304<sup>th</sup> (combat SAR), Pavehawk, hoist capable. Pararescue (PJs) onboard. No ready crew. Subjects included hoist operations, mission request, mission information, aircraft inbound, aircraft approach, short final, lower medic/PJ, packaging patient, tag line, medic/PJ recovery, emergency landing, in-flight emergency, safety around helicopters, safety approach zones and personal protection equipment.

I found it very educational to work around military rescue helicopters and their crew. Their techniques and equipment are different from those of most civilian operations. The classes bring the military flight crew and the SAR volunteers together to work as a team. We did several

scenarios in which we tried different techniques to see which ones would work best, trying to mesh the two groups together. After practicing for three days, we put on a two-hour demonstration for the 800 people attending the conference on Saturday. That is also the day I turned 49.

The 2003 Washington State SAR Conference will be held in Spokane on May 15-18, 2003. I would encourage people to attend. Contact me for information, or go to [www.spokanesar.org](http://www.spokanesar.org)

**LOST YOUNG MAN – MAY 28, 2002**  
**--DAN SCOVEL AND KRIS HOFFMAN**

When the call came in Monday night that Elmore County needed help in the morning to search for a lost kid, most of us immediately wondered “Why aren’t we starting tonight? It’s a kid!” The next morning we received our answer...our “kid” turned out to be a 20-year-old airman who walked away from a party in the desert. IMSARU members responding to the call were Brad Acker, Rob Budka, Pam Green with Inca, George Gunn, Chris Harry, Kris Hoffman, Diane Mathews, Jerry Newland, Leslie Robertson with Mingo, Dan Scovel, Kris Walker and Everett Wood.

Things really started out with a bang when George’s motor home blew a tire on the freeway just after we got out of town. We surely caused quite a bit of entertainment as five vehicles pulled over to the side. While Brad dodged traffic to set out road hazard signs, a few of us helped Leslie and Mingo transfer to Pam’s vehicle so that they and 903 could continue to the rendezvous point—thinking the rest of us would be another hour. But never fear, the IMSARU pit crew came through in record time, getting the RV jacked up and the shredded tire changed before it even quit smoking. Needless to say, it was quite impressive. Don’t ever let it be said that IMSARU can’t handle any emergency that comes up!

The subject had been at a party at Long Tom Reservoir (the Sage Hen Flat area north of Mountain Home) and walked away sometime during the night. No one at the party had a clear idea of what direction he had taken. A Blackhawk helicopter, using FLIR (infra-red), had during the night scanned the canyon to the south of the reservoir with no luck. Since they can fly only after twelve hours off, they were not due back to continue the search until late in the afternoon. However, Elmore County was able to arrange for assistance from Civil Air Patrol in the meantime.

Shortly after arriving, IMSARU members split into three ground search teams, plus Everett and Rob on ATV’s. One of the latest reports was that the missing man had called in from a cell phone at around 1 p.m. the previous day, reporting that he could see water and the sun was at his back. Therefore, IMSARU teams spread out to work different draws, searching towards the reservoir. Leslie and Mingo were the only ones to scare up a rattlesnake (thankfully) and we found nothing else except a few lizards and a million Mormon crickets. There’s nothing quite like the sound of a few thousand Mormon crickets moving through the brush; their movements through the vegetation could even be heard over the sound of the vehicles as we drove down the road.

Arriving back at base camp after approximately four hours of searching, we learned that Jim Noland and his Elmore County people had once again done an outstanding job of ferreting out information. With their unnamed connections, they were able to confirm which cell tower received the subject's phone call, and from what quarter the call came in; this confirmed that the subject did indeed make the call from the area where we were searching. Using that information, it was decided that those of us with man-tracking skills would form a team, go back out to the reservoir where the subject was last seen and begin scanning the road for sign. We hoped to find tracks veering off the road, giving us a direction of travel. Our own Jerry just happened to have the same cell service as the missing man, so it was also decided that we would head south until Jerry was able to receive service, thereby narrowing the field a little more. We had been at it for maybe five minutes when the Blackhawk arrived and began searching again the canyon just to the east of us. We were close enough to see into the back of the helicopter as it slowly sank into the canyon and also began working south. After what couldn't have been more than ten minutes, it suddenly rose out of the canyon and quickly took off back towards base camp. We soon received the call that the subject had been found and was being transported back to MHAFB. The subject was reported to be smiling and in good condition.

As always, Elmore County did a great job of bringing the information together quickly after spending a day and night searching. They were very appreciative of the response and number of IMSARU people who turned out, especially right after the holiday weekend. Thanks for including us, Elmore County; we enjoyed the opportunity to work with you once again!

## **THANKS AGAIN TO THE IDAHO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

IMSARU would like to thank the Robert I. and Barbara Troxell Fund of the Idaho Community Foundation for their generous donation. The money was spent to help pay for a helicopter used to locate and recover the bodies of three victims who died when a State of Idaho airplane crashed in central Idaho. As a non-profit, volunteer organization dependent upon our own fund-raising activities and donations, we greatly appreciate this help in financing a very expensive mission.

## **IT'S CORN BOOTH TIME AGAIN**

The Western Idaho Fair this year runs August 16-24, and we need everyone's help to be successful in our annual fund-raising effort—selling Hot Buttered Corn on the Cob. A few members have already started the preparations, but it takes everyone to make it happen. We need members, teenage children, spouses, friends, former members, neighbors, coworkers.... Just issue the invitation; you will be amazed how much people enjoy working in a Fair booth when they don't have to do it every day. We need help organizing and setting up the booth, selling from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day of the Fair, and taking down the booth. Do your share...and a little more! Page Aimee Hastriter at 433-4258 to schedule two or three shifts. (Let her know if you are age 62 or over, as senior citizens get cheaper tickets.)

## **MISSION AT ARROW ROCK DAM, JUNE 6 AND 9, 2002** **--ANGELA BATEMAN AND LESLIE ROBERTSON**

On Thursday, June 6, Sgt. Lambson of the Boise County Sheriff's Office called IMSARU and requested assistance in the form of search dog teams. A lost hiker/fisherman was reportedly late returning home after heading up to the Lucky Peak recreation area. Initial reports listed the 24-year-old male as leaving Boise on Tuesday to fish or hike at the reservoir. When he did not return to work as scheduled, the Sheriff's Office was notified and a search began.



This is the "wide-open" country around Arrow Rock Reservoir. —Photo by K. Walker

The subject's SUV was found parked, unlocked and with the keys under the seat, at a roadside pulloff just below Arrow Rock Dam. Boise County and Ada County Marine deputies conducted initial searches in the cove below the subject's SUV, near the Deer Creek trailhead. Rod Knopp had Leslie Robertson and Mingo search the area near the SUV and the ravine below. Very steep terrain leads down into the

creek draw, which is lined with dense vegetation—trees, thick brush and bushes. Mingo picked up no sign of human presence. Officers decided there was not enough information to continue an official search, especially when the family of the subject was not particularly concerned at this time.

On Sunday afternoon, June 9, IMSARU was called again to continue the search. The mission this time was a foot search of the surrounding area. Several members had planned on going out for a water practice session, but that was called off in order to participate in the mission. Base camp was at Mack's Creek Campground, just below Arrow Rock Dam. Gene and Sandy Ralston were on hand with their camper and boat. Rod gathered the latest available information and then he and Leslie began organizing the teams.

Team 1: Suzanne Ventura, Kris Hoffman and Joey Clements were to cover the ridge between Mack's Creek and Deer Creek. As the day waned and the terrain grew steeper, Suzanne elected to rejoin the road. Other than finding a water bottle, the team had no sightings to report.

Team 2: Richard Clements and Kevin Schrader were assigned a hasty search up the most logical road

that was nearest to the subject's parked SUV. They found lots of flagging tied to trees and shrubs, but nothing with a likely link to the missing man.

Team 3: David Kennedy and Kris Walker covered the ridge opposite team 1.

Team 4: Everett Wood and Rob Budka, on ATV's, followed the Mack's Creek drainage, covering ATV trails as far up as they were able to go. Again, no luck.

Team 5: Tony Rockwell, Jerry Newland and Angela Bateman arrived at about 5 p.m. Leslie asked the two experienced mantrackers and the one eager footpounder to review the SUV area again, approaching it with tracking in mind. This was not an easy assignment, as by now the area had been covered by all previous search activities in the the area. Work progressed slowly up the road with no real success. Teams 1, 2 and 5 met up late and headed back to base together. The other searchers also came in and all gave reports to Leslie and Rod.

We made one last effort to search the initial ravine that Leslie and Mingo had worked on Thursday. Wendy Campbell, having arrived late, joined several other members on this phase. The dense brush and steep terrain made for slow and tough going, with visibility very limited in the thick brush. With no findings, the team returned to base and the search was called for the night.

There is a lot of "intuition" in our work and a lot of "gut" feelings came out that day. Throughout the mission, members kept commenting on how odd the situation was, how things just weren't adding up, how this or that didn't make sense, that something felt wrong. Officers got mixed information from family and friends as to where the subject was heading, how he would get there—even a report that he has a history of heading off alone for days at a time. When reports indicated that he probably hitched a ride into Elmore County, we passed the mission on to their SAR unit. Since they were hosting the State Search and Rescue Association meeting the following weekend, the timing was inconvenient for them.

Elmore County personnel advertised for public information concerning the subject's trip, and someone came forward to say that he had picked up the hitchhiker and dropped him off in the Atlanta area. This respondent guided a search team to the drop-off point; when the searchers were unable to find any indication as to whether the subject was still in the area, the search was cancelled until more information becomes available.



Sometimes the "open country" gets pretty dense. —Photo by K. Walker

**Identifying this track made the mission a  
SUCCESS.** (see article on page 1)



**Keep your skills up!!**

**Contact Tony Rockwell for track-  
ing team practice information.**

**Mantracking is a perishable skill!**