

WEB EDITION

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RESCUE

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

FOUNDING MEMBER:
**MOUNTAIN RESCUE
ASSOCIATION**



BODY RECOVERY FROM PLANE CRASH—MARCH 15, 2002

--CHARLOTTE GUNN

On Tuesday, March 12, a small plane transporting a 16-year-old detainee and a juvenile corrections officer disappeared off the radar screen. When the crash site was located, at an altitude of about 9,500 feet in the Sawtooth Mountains, some 12 miles northeast of Atlanta, terrain and weather prevented immediate access. On Thursday, Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue received a request from the Boise County Sheriff's Office to ready a team of four strong people, comfortable on snowshoes in mountainous terrain, to do the recovery.



Winston and Sheriff Brown, ready to fly. -Photo by G. Gunn



Jerry and Tim prepare to load team gear.-Photo by G. Gunn

They were asked to take minimal packs, due to the space and altitude limitations for helicopters.

An Idaho Army National Guard helicopter plus an Idaho Helicopters machine leased by IMSARU, left Friday morning with the following passengers:

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Pre-mission briefing by Idaho Army National Guard Photo by G. Gunn

Sheriff Gary Brown, Leo Hennessey of State Parks (who, in addition to other assets, is very familiar with that area), and IMSARU members Winston Cheyney, Tim Henning, Jerry Newland (O.L.) and Kris Walker. They carried some lightweight tools, but were unable to transport heavy extrication gear.

ble on TV news videotape, is scattered and much of it is buried in at least six feet of snow. The ground crew, wearing snowshoes, worked five hours to locate and extricate the three bodies. This was a very difficult mission, both because of the physical danger and difficulty



Crew member Colson gives Tim and Jerry a safety briefing for the Black Hawk

The wreckage, barely visi-



Tim belts in for the half hour flight.

Photo by G. Gunn

and because of the emotional stress of body recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the dead and with the crew who volunteered to do this work. Cause of the crash has not yet been deter-

mined; the National Transportation Safety Board will continue its investigation when the site becomes accessible.

LOST SNOWBOARDER AT MT. BACHELOR, FEBRUARY 22-24, 2002

--TIM HENNING AND KRIS HOFFMAN

We left the Compound at about 10:30 p.m. Friday. After a long night of dodging deer and snowflakes, we arrived in Bend, OR at about 4:30 a.m., and decided to take a short nap in the parking lot at Denny's before breakfast. Kris thought herself lucky to get space to lie down above the front seats in George's motor home...until the scanner speaker blared to life directly over her head.



Search teams begin to gather for the morning briefing and assignments. Over 70 searchers were on the slopes this day.

Photo by T. Henning



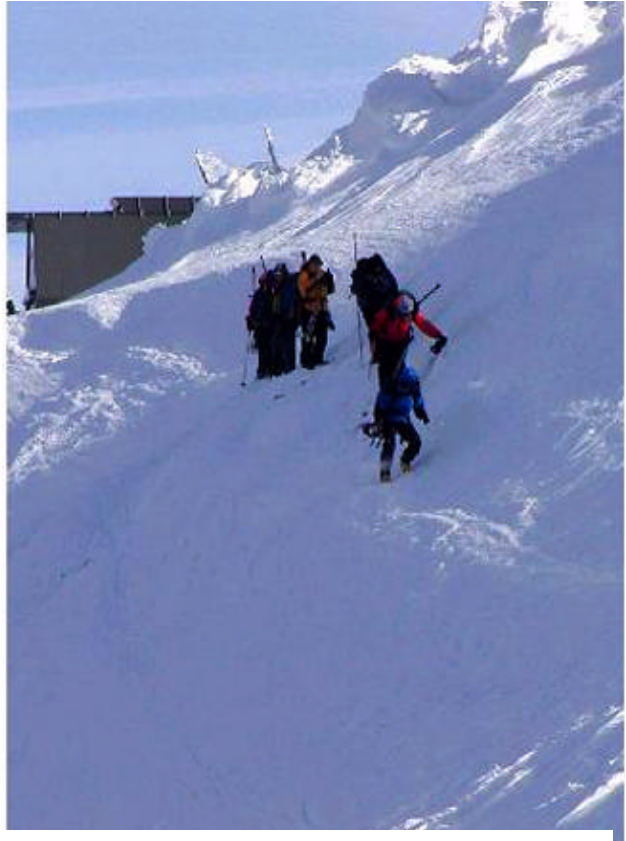
Leslie with Mingo and Brad being transported to search site. -Photo by T. Rockwell

We ate breakfast and then continued on to a back corner of the parking area at the Mt. Bachelor Ski Resort. Briefing included the information that the snowboarder had been missing for almost a week despite many man-hours of organized searching already done by Ski Patrol and regional SAR teams. Our assignment was to do a line search, focusing on areas where a person could be trapped,

such as tree wells, and other significant snow or terrain features. Three of our people remained at Search Base and the other ten rode up the Pine Marten lift, then hiked over to our search area.

This traverse to our search area was a little tricky. The snow and terrain on top are what you might expect from a hardpacked, black diamond ski run. We were on steep, icy snow that didn't offer much for footing, with wind blowing at about 20 mph, and were dodging skiers and snowboarders on their runs. Our snowshoes proved to be additional weight on our packs rather than traction devices. The probe poles also proved to be multi-purpose devices; Aimee found that they also worked as a self-arrest device.

Three of our members made the difficult decision that their mountaineering skills were insufficient for the conditions, and returned to Base. The remaining seven did the line search down the hill, searching the likely places where a skier might be injured or trapped. Brad, on the left flank, followed the search boundary of the adjacent team; he and Tom (on the right flank) had the additional jobs of flagging our search area and recording significant locations in their



A search team traverses the slope. -Photo by T. Henning



Typical search terrain and weather -Photo by T. Henning

GPS's. A snowcat picked us up around dusk and gave us a ride back to the Search Base.

A local Red Cross unit opened up an elementary school for searchers to sleep on Saturday night, and provided cots as well as towels for those who wanted to take hot showers. Two other MRA teams joined us for the night. We did find it a little hard to sleep with approximately 30 people all sleeping on brand new cots that squeaked and groaned whenever somebody moved (which was all night), but very much appreciated the comparative comfort. A local Baptist Church group fixed us a wonderful hot dinner, as well as pancakes, eggs, sausage and bacon for breakfast. A few of us were envious that Mingo got to eat breakfast before any of us (Oh, to be a search dog!) but we appreciated the facilities too much to complain.

Our search on Sunday was basically downhill from our previous day's search, in a gravity trap



Mingo staying warm as he waits to go into the field.

Photo by T. Henning

area off to the side of the Northwest Express lift line. Brad was team leader this time, and did a great job of keeping us in a functioning line. The snow here was much softer and less steep; Brad worked on skis while everyone else used snowshoes. By the time we got back to Base (via snowmobiles and ski lifts), debriefed and repacked, it was around 5 p.m....Oops, kind of late for those who had to be at work on Monday. We arrived back at the Compound between midnight and 1 a.m. A big

THANK YOU to Rod for meeting us at the Compound to help unload.

IMSARU participants included Brad Acker, Joey Clements, Richard Clements, George Gunn, Aimee Hastriter, Tim Henning, Kris Hoffman, Leslie Robertson, Tony Rockwell, Martha Vandivort, Suzanne Ventura, Tom Wheless and Everett Wood.



The missing subject's aunt (in striped hat) came into the field to express the family's thanks to the searchers.

Photo by T. Henning

Lessons learned:

1. Fully understand the PLS and its relative position to your search area, to help narrow (or speed up) the search area. At the top of our search, we spent too much time in an area that we could have worked through faster.

2. Be alert to conditions in relation to your own skills and tolerance for risk. The three searchers who chose to withdraw from the first part of the search did exactly the right thing. It was indeed dangerous terrain and beyond what they had expected.
3. Allow more time for moving people into and out of the field. This always takes more time than we expect.
4. One radio per team member is very useful. This really helped keep our team organized in diverse terrain and windy conditions. It was also very helpful when teams split apart. Again we thank Rod, who programmed our radios to include local channels before we left for the search site.
5. It is important to minimize the number of vehicles that are used. Among other things, fewer vehicles means more (tired) searchers per vehicle to share the burden of driving on the long trips.

Note: The body of the missing snowboarder was recovered on March 4, after the snow level had compacted/melted some two feet. She was head-down in a tree well, and news reports say she had died quickly of suffocation.

SNOWMOBILERS IN TROUBLE — FEBRUARY 4, 2002 **--BRAD ACKER**

At 5:30 a.m. on a Monday morning, a phone call from Rod Knopp can mean only one thing: Someone's weekend plans in the Idaho backcountry have gone terribly wrong. On this particular Monday morning, it was a father-and-son snowmobile outing, a "three-hour tour." The family had just had some major work done on their sleds and they wanted



Brad and Kris take a break as Snowmobilers wait to get into the field. Photo by G. Gunn

to test them out. Combine the mechanical uncertainty of freshly-repaired snowmobiles with a "quick trip" in unfamiliar terrain and the hair on the neck of every SAR volunteer in the county stands up.

At the Compound, Chris Harry was packing up 903 in the pre-dawn cold. Rod Knopp and Leslie Robertson were busy working as in-town coordinators. Jerry Newland was preparing for his role as Operations Leader. Tom Wheless, Suzanne Ventura and I were busy standing by. Chris quickly had all the essential gear packed onto 903, so Jerry and I were en route at a little after seven. Tom and Suzanne finished packing the secondary response items in his truck and were on the road slightly after us.



O.L. Jerry Newland briefs two snowmobilers on their assignment. Photo by G. Gunn

It was a short drive to the Idaho City Sheriff's office. I should say it was a short drive for me, as I slept most of the way. We met two friends of the lost party. Jerry had a short meeting with the Sheriff, and we headed for Mores Creek Summit parking lot which would be our base of operations. We were

soon met by Deputy Steve Dorau, his wife Mindy, George Gunn, Kris Hoffman, and snowmobilers with their sleds. It was at about this time that Chris Harry found himself fighting off the cold winter wind on the tarmac of the Boise Airport. Chris was to be aerial observer with pilot Bill Miller of the Ada County Aerial Sheriffs, but mechanical difficulties kept them on the ground.

We now had six IMSARU members on site. The plan was to use the volunteer snowmobile searchers in the field and the IMSARU members would run logistics from base camp. While Jerry was working on a search strategy, the rest of us were forming the volunteers into teams, taking names and lists of personal resource information, and outfitting the teams with unit radios and avalanche gear. The snowmobilers were very well prepared; many already had family service radios and avalanche transceivers.

The teams would be covering the major trails, looking for tracks that headed off trail, and searching a major terrain trap well known to suck in snowmobilers. Jerry, having experience in this area, and knowing how to make a long search short, sent one team directly to check out this terrain trap. (Some of the guys with us referred to it as "helicopter hole" because a few years ago several machines had to be sling-loaded out of there.)



Now in Medic mode, Jerry checks the subject for cold injuries. Photo by G. Gunn

All teams were out in the field and we



Subject, in dark hat, describes his ordeal to Tom and a snowmobile searcher.

were starting to reorganize base camp when team three called in with good news; they had located the subjects. They were in good condition, just cold and hungry. Where were they? you ask. Where else but in the helicopter hole. The sleds were stuck but the men were happy to ride back with the searchers and return later for their machines. Today it was not mechanical problems that got these two men in trouble, but lack of experience in the area.

Thanks to Cougar Mountain Snowmobile Club and to all the snowmobile searchers who showed up: Mindy and Steve Dorau; Kasey Carr and Paul Pinney; Doug Maestas, Trey Cambell and Rob Workmen; Toby Ashly, Jack Strathers and Doug Miller; Bart Andrae, Marvin Limbaugh and Shane Livingston. And special thanks to Paul Pinney for organizing this effective response.

**IDAHO NATIONAL ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL
LABORATORY- (Safety Education) —JANUARY 31, FEBRUARY 1 & 4
--KEN MURRY**

IMSARU members Ken Murry and Dan Scovel participated in the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) presentation of Cold Weather Environment at Northwest Nazarene University. Junior and senior high school students from around Idaho came to learn different aspects of cold weather environment, including snow, ice, water, oceans, climate and hypothermia. Of the 2,200 students who came to the conference, 500 participated in the hypothermia class.

Our mission was simple: Provide as much information about hypothermia as possible in 30 minutes. The course of action was clear: Define it, recognize it, treat it, and discuss options in clothing material and layering. Within the allowed time, we would talk about simple cold weather survival techniques.

The information was well received by the students. Most students had a perception of what hypothermia is; however, they didn't know how critical it can become in a short period of time. They all knew the concept of layering, but they didn't know that cotton is actually the worst thing they could wear. There was a lot of interest in synthetic materials like polypropylene, natural materials like silk, and waterproof materials like stretched PVC.

There was a lot of discussion on wilderness safety: Key information as to where you are going, whom you are with and when you are coming back, needs to be left with the family. We talked

about the two key safety components of the group—take care of yourself and watch out for others in the group. Just being prepared both mentally and physically can get you through most situations.

I personally had a really nice time with the kids, and INEEL was a very gracious host.

TROUT POND 2002
--SUZANNE VENTURA

February 28th through March 3rd brought probably the coldest, windiest temperatures of the winter to Boise. Yes, as luck would have it, these were also the dates of the Trout Pond held in conjunction with the Sportsman Show at the Western Idaho Fairgrounds. The Trout Pond is an annual fundraiser for IMSARU. BUT, unlike the rest of the Sportsman Show, we were outside in the wicked cold with wind chills somewhere below subzero. Despite the weather, the fish were biting this year and the kids and some persistent parents had fun catching them. This year we had a few California Golden Trout that added to the variety of fish in the Pond. We had another sturgeon this year, however he/she was “rescued” on Saturday and taken to a private pond. Some of the kids couldn’t understand the concept that the sturgeon was not to be caught! The Trout Pond wouldn’t have been such a great success without the help of the following brave IMSARU volunteers: Diane Mathews, Andrew and Piper Hyman, Brad Acker, Jackie Seiler, Christy Karnes, Tom Wheless, Jerry Newland, Chris Harry, Pam and Troy Green, Kris Hoffman, Martha Vandivort, Joey and Richard Clements, Tony Rockwell, Renée Johanson, Chris Johanson, Leslie Robertson, George Shaffer, Terry Reed, Aimee Hastriter, Wendy Campbell, Marc Burquist, Rose and Everett Wood.

Special thanks also go to Intermountain Outdoor Sports who donated fishing poles, tackle boxes, bait, hooks, lines and sinkers and anything else we needed; to Channel 7 for the advertising, to Spectra Productions for setting up the Pond and being gracious hosts, and to Nelsons RV who had an RV waiting for us to warm up in.

Thanks again to all those who helped out. It wouldn’t have been a success without you.

DROWNING VICTIM RECOVERED FROM BEARDSLEY RESERVOIR
AFTER 3 YEARS. SIDE-SCAN SONAR MISSION, FEB. 27-MAR.1, 2002
--CHARLOTTE GUNN

Beardsley Reservoir is just west of Yosemite, up from Sonora over a 6,000-foot pass then down again to about 3,400 feet. It is not a large reservoir in surface area, but can be very deep. A young man drowned there in an apparent boating accident **about 3-1/2 years ago**. When area law enforcement officials asked Gene Ralston to train them last July in use of side-scan sonar, Gene also located an image that he thought was a human body—in the area of the previous drowning. Unfortunately, the water at that point was about 150 feet deep.



The water level in Beardsley is now more than 60 feet shallower, “only” 88 feet at the location of the image, and the family has been very anxious to have the body recovered. Gene and Sandy agreed to return to the reservoir to aid in a major effort to give the family

At the time of this search, the lake was down significantly from its usual level Photo by G. Gunn

some closure. They left here on Monday afternoon, towing boat and equipment, and George and I followed on Tuesday morning as support team.

It should be noted that the lower water level made diving more feasible but also meant that backing a boat trailer down over sand and rocks to launch required an act of faith that one would be able to retrieve the boat later. Nonetheless, Gene and Sandy met with local officials in Sonora early Wednesday morning, then proceeded to the reservoir, rigged their boat for work, confirmed the image in the same spot as in July, and placed their acoustical target eighteen feet from the image. (The acoustical target is a four-foot box of copper tubing and wire mesh which makes a very clear image to use as reference point, both in interpreting the sonar images and for divers. They placed it far enough away to lessen the chance of stirring up silt that might not settle by the following morning.)

On Thursday morning, Tuolumne County, Calaveras County and Stanislaus County combined resources to bring in divers, support teams and law enforcement



Launching the boats took skill and determination.

Photo by G. Gunn

personnel. The water depth, elevation of the lake and the fact that people would be going over the 6,000-foot pass to return home that evening, meant that divers could spend only ten minutes on the bottom. There were also technical problems, including the video camera cord becoming entangled with anchored ropes, and time ran out without the body being located.

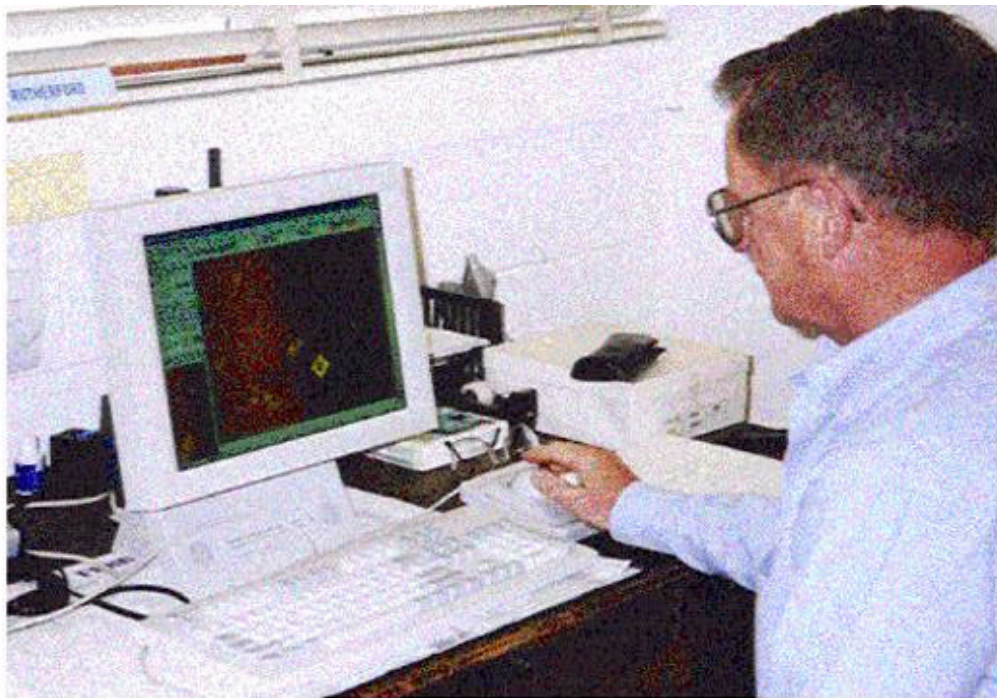


Divers from three counties joined in the recovery effort.

Photo by G. Gunn

Local people left for the night, promising to try again on Friday. Gene, Sandy and George went out to the site and moved the acoustical target to less than two feet from the image, then printed the results as shown by sonar.

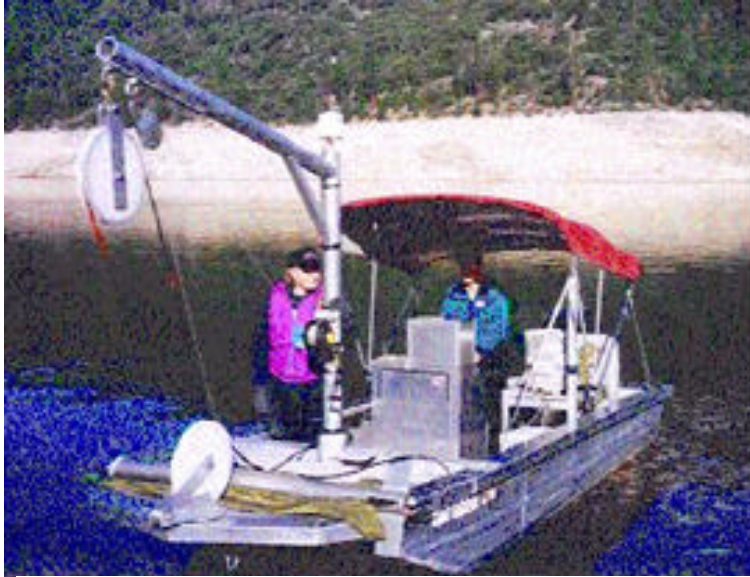
We then settled down for a quiet night in our two Idaho RV's plus the motor home rented by the family (including the widow and the mother of the missing man.) However, none of us slept through the windstorm that swept down the canyon, shaking the RV's and pelting them with driven sand. It probably didn't last *all* night—it just seemed that way. And it was obvious that if such wind continued, there would be no boats launched the next day.



Gene reviewing the day's sonar images. The bright square on the screen is the target echo.

Photo by G. Gunn

Friday morning dawned clear and almost still. Lt. Lunney was back in by 7 a.m.; Gene checked that the buoy had not been moved by the wind; divers arrived and prepared to try again. They started with a bounce dive, going down the cable to the acoustical target and seeing the body exactly where the sonar image had shown it. Recovery was not so simple, as the body was very fragile after that amount of time underwater, but the task was finished, to the relief of all



Gene and Sandy Ralston preparing to search the lake. Photo by G. Gunn

concerned. The family's grief is not over, but it was very important to them to have the body located, and this will allow them to proceed with the next steps in their grieving process.

All of us prefer rescue to recovery, but our job is to do whatever we can to help victims and their loved ones. [Some families do not want major efforts made to recover drowning victims, saying "Leave him in peace where he is." Some families are unable to rest until they have physical remains to bury.] We thank the dozens of California officials and

volunteers who allowed us to work with them on this incident. Special thanks go to Lt. Keith Lunney, to deputy Rick Rutherford, to Community Service volunteers Heinz Bueseman, Franz Benna, Dennis Kittredge, Bob Nylander and John Zeman, who were instrumental in organizing this effort.

George and I left for Idaho mid-day on Saturday; Gene and Sandy stayed to do another search in a different body of water.

SAFETY EDUCATION IN GARDEN VALLEY, FEBRUARY 16, 2002 **--JOHN KUHN**

Safety education is a significant part of the IMSARU charter. On Saturday, February 16, June Lee, John Kuhn, Ken Murry, and George Schaffer had an opportunity to share some of our mountain survival techniques with Boy Scouts from troops based in Emmett and Garden Valley. After meeting June at the Garden Valley post office at 9:00 a.m., we convoyed up the South Fork of the Payette to the Garden Valley Boy Scout camp-out area. Most of the Scouts and their leaders had camped out the previous evening in tents and various types of shelters, with temperatures dipping down to the teens.

The Scout leaders had 7 or 8 educational stations set up and the boys rotated to different stations every 45 minutes. The 4 of us utilized 3 stations: June and Ken joined forces to explain the contents of a 24-hour pack and the top 10 or so most essential items; George had a station demonstrating techniques of how to construct a snow cave; John showed methods for building a snow trench. Building snow shelters in 12-18 inches of snow proved to be quite interesting. However, with some improvising I believe the most important points were made. All of the boys who went through the snow shelter stations had a hand in constructing them. Those who went through the 24-hour pack station were treated to June's and Ken's attention to detail on the purpose of each item and had ample opportunity for questions. All of us used actual stories and

experiences of missing people to drive home the importance of outdoor winter survival techniques.

A chili feed at the conclusion of the sessions helped warm attendees for the drive home. This was a great experience and opportunity to pass on some of the knowledge and training we've received in IMSARU. We hope the Scouts, and their fathers alike, benefited from this training and will now be more prepared to meet challenges they may face in the outdoors.

AVALANCHE TRAINING, JANUARY 8 & 15, FEBRUARY 2-3, 2002 **--ANGELA BATEMAN**

A personal avalanche experience in November of 1974 set our own Winston Cheyney on a clear mission to educate and train others about the ever-present danger of avalanches in the backcountry. The entire IMSARU team is extremely grateful to Winston for this continued education. His time and efforts are truly appreciated by all.

We began our avalanche training for this year at the Compound on January 8. Winston showed videos on how snow and weather conditions combine to create slab conditions that can eventually cause slides. Some of the snow pack conditions included were wet, dry, heavy, light, and particularly surface hoar. Some of the footage was amazing, catching slides as they were occurring right beneath skiers. The new technology in snowmobiling (weight, tracking and



Snowshoes, skis and sled—all are transportation -Photo by K. Walker

power) has propelled that group to being one of the statistical leaders in triggering avalanches.

Classroom training continued the following week. This centered on how winter sports participants as well as SAR members could navigate and pick safe routes through the backcountry. It also included the basics on beacon training and avalanche search techniques. Here is a brief overview of the major topics:

1. Always wear avalanche beacons and know how to use them. Carry snow shovels and probes!
2. Ensure the safety of the rescue team before proceeding in to the slide area. Pick the route

carefully.

3. Most survivors are found within 20 minutes. Do not let anyone go for help; everyone stays and searches.
4. Take note of where the victim was last seen above the snow.
5. In that general line, look for victim's personal items—clothes, equipment, hat, gloves....
6. Spot probe in likely catch and debris areas.
7. Form a probe line, starting at bottom of largest deposit area, and work up.



"I could be wrong but it looks like snow to me"

Photo By K. Walker

Field training was February 2-3, near Pilot's Peak. Seven brave participants—Kris Walker, Jeff Munn, John Kuhn, Richard Clements, Marc Bursink, Angela Bateman and our trainer Winston Cheyney—ventured out and five of them stayed the night in true winter survival form. We snowshoed/skied about 1.5 miles back to our campsite and began packing down snow trench areas and making camp. We then headed out for about 2-1/2 hours of avalanche beacon training. Everyone got to practice several times. We

quickly found out that when the beacon is buried vertically, it is much trickier to find. Returning to camp, we finished our architectural marvels. We ended up with a single-man snow trench, a roomy snow-cave (Rich, you outdid us!) and a three-person snow trench. Dinner was fantastic, the stars were absolutely incredible and the weather was cold but clear.

Sleeping, well that was another matter. Rich in his snow-cave slept the best and woke up the latest. Winston's trench door collapsed in the middle of the night, leaving him a little more exposed to the elements than he had intended. And in the three-person trench, well, each had his own personal nightmare going. Angela discovered space phobia for the first time, while John's feet froze. Marc went out like a light but had tree roots underneath his pad that woke him later and never let him go back to sleep. It was a very long night, but you know, the funny thing is that in the morning, right after a cup of coffee, it just didn't seem all that bad. In fact, everyone was so happy



Richard with his luxury home. Photo by K. Walker

and proud of their accomplishments and enjoyed the morning sun and natural beauty of the snow so much, that rallying for a second day of training was a piece of cake.

After an uphill trek of about 2-1/2 hours, we learned how to dig a snow pit to check for the underlying slab conditions of the snow. We learned the basics of what to look for and tested the slabs with various techniques. We also ran through the basics of a probe pole line. One learning point: On the day hike it would have been smart to take along at least one stove for melting snow; several of us either ran out of, or were very low on, drinking water.

After that, it was back to camp—downhill all the way. We broke camp and headed out. It was a great training with great company! Each of us gained first-hand experience that will assist us in making educated decisions if ever faced with a winter search or avalanche rescue.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY **--GEORGE GUNN**

This last month's missions have reinforced the wisdom of the founders who set our unit firmly within the MRA team. Often we wonder why we spend so much time training for things like winter mountaineering. "We don't get those sorts of calls." Yet when the request came for a team to board the helicopter, the difficult part was limiting the list to just four. IMSARU is fortunate to have a depth of winter experience and technical training. These missions don't come often but IMSARU continues to train and be ready when the mission is at Bogus Basin, at Mt. Bachelor, in the Sawtooth Mountains....To be a team, we must practice together. It is critical that **everyone** continue to participate in our ongoing training program.

CHARGING FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE **POLICY STATEMENT**

There has been much recent discussion about whether organizations should charge people for search and rescue services. We recognize that many governmental agencies have serious budget problems and that individuals do bear responsibility for obeying "Out of Bounds" signs and similar warnings. However, Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit, Inc. is an all-volunteer unit which never has charged, and does not plan to charge, anyone for our services.

In addition to our dedication to public service, we do not want anyone to delay asking for help because of fear of the cost. As members of the international Mountain Rescue Association, "a volunteer organization dedicated to saving lives through rescue and mountain safety education," we subscribe to their policy: **"The expert volunteer teams of MRA are proud to be able to provide search and rescue at NO cost and have NO plans to charge in the future."**