

RESCUE

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



MEMBER:
**MOUNTAIN RESCUE
ASSOCIATION**
SINCE 1960



S.A.R. TRAINING – ANCHORS AND SYSTEMS – MARCH 17, 2001 --BRAD ACKER

We headed north on Black's Creek Road, destination unknown. Jeff Munn was our leader, followed by Kris Walker, Martha Vandivort, Jerry Newland, Kris Hoffman, Tim Henning, Aimee Hastriter and Brad Acker. We took a left at the fork, went up and down, around some corners and finally came to rest on the side of the road a few hundred yards from an 800-foot shale field, the ankle-twisting kind. It was a relief when we were told we would be working to the west on a nice, fairly clean rock face with a run-out slope of sage and other brush. Identifying the plants was



of little concern until Martha told us much of it was poison oak.

Jerry gave us our first problem: Assemble a scree evacuation system, load and belay line. We gathered all needed technical and safety

gear and headed up the slope. Upon reaching the bottom of the face, we received more detailed instructions: Each line had to have a four-point load distribution anchor system; the load line would first be set up for lowering but needed to be able to convert to a hauling system. We were also given the goal of trying to use natural, placed and bolted protection in our anchor systems. We split into groups, one assembling the load line anchors and the other working on the belay. We discussed elements of protection, such as examination of natural protection, location selection for bolt placement, correct piton placement, and identification of good and poor spots for nuts, cams or chocks. We also discussed anticipated load angles with regard to directional loading of anchors and drop distance considerations if an anchor should fail, along with how to minimize that distance. Jerry found a good reason for testing natural anchors that at first appear “bomb proof,” as he ended up with a good-sized rock in his lap. Thankfully, he was not hurt.

After much discussion and demonstration, both lines were ready. Martha decided to give Rescue Randy the day off, so we loaded her into the litter. Aimee was our medical person and gave all commands. Before long, we were at the bottom of the hill. The teams at top switched the systems to hauling and we started on our way back up. It was then time for lunch. Most groups have a hard time finding someone to deliver dessert, but not us. Charlotte and George showed up moments earlier and where Charlotte goes, chocolate is sure to follow. Thanks, Charlotte!



After lunch, we worked on vertical systems. We again set up load and belay lines, took turns swinging the hammer for a bolted placement and did more piton and nut placements. In addition to all the anchor system principles we worked on with the scree evacuations, we had to consider elements such as edge protection for the ropes and safety lines for people working near the edge. When the lines were set, we took turns rappelling to the bottom of the cliff. All in all, the weather was great, the training was fun, my poison oak lasted only a few days, and who could forget the dessert?

For those members interested in climbing and technical rescue, our climbing team is currently meeting on the first and third Thursdays of each month, at 7:00 p.m. at the Compound.

ELMORE COUNTY SEARCH – APRIL 6, 27

--LESLIE ROBERTSON

It started with a phone call from Jim Noland with Elmore County Sheriff's SAR. They had a potential search for a man who was last seen on May 7, 2000. They were still in the process of investigating but were wondering if any dog handlers, in particular with cadaver-trained dogs, would be available soon. A couple of phone calls and a promise of an easy flat trail search later (I won't fall for that one again!) and we agreed to meet that Friday.

April 6

George Gunn and I, along with Mingo, met Elmore SAR, deputies and a family member at the sheriff's office for a briefing. There we learned several things:

The subject had last been seen on May 7 when he had borrowed a friend's fishing equipment. His car was found abandoned, apparently haphazardly with a flat tire, near Abbot Camp outside of Pine on May 16. It had been towed at that time. Before his disappearance, he was reportedly despondent. His job as an itinerant building trades worker often kept him out of contact with family and friends for many months, but his family got concerned when he didn't call for several family birthdays and holidays, and reported him missing.

In our usual parade of SAR personnel vehicles, we headed to the site where the subject's truck had been found. As we pulled into the spot, George made the prophetic comment that a despondent person might be attracted to the highest spot in view, on the other side of the road across from the campgrounds. While some of Elmore SAR went to retrieve Noland's trailer fender which had been left along the road, the IMSARU team made a quick search between the road and the river to see if anything caught our interest. Nothing did.

On to the camp where we were to establish a base and complete the final phase of our involvement. The original plan was for the IMSARU team to fairly hastily work a trail which headed out of Abbot Camp, followed along the river and led to several flat grassy areas where someone might go to be alone. It looked like an easy walk and we thought we would be done in an hour or so, depending on how many spots looked like they needed further investigation.

Before heading off, George and I decided that lunch was in order. Jim sent off a team of younger, better-conditioned guys to the other side of the road to check around the ridge and high knoll while we ate and caught up on each team's SAR activities. Just as we were preparing to head out, the team radioed in with the news that they had found a hat. The family member who joined us was able to confirm on the spot that it was a company hat that he had given to the subject.

Plans now changed; we were all headed UP. The climb wasn't fast or pretty, but we all eventually made it. The initial team took us to the hat. The fact that they found it at all was an amazing blend of their great observational skills and pure luck. The other thing that is amazing is all of the stuff a person can find in the middle of nowhere! In an urban setting, you expect to have to sort through all kinds of junk in order to find the real clues. In a wilderness setting, who would think you would have to sort through Mylar balloons, sardine tins and a myriad of miscellaneous pop cans!? If hunters and hikers would pack out their trash, it would make our job a whole lot easier.

Mingo and I left the rest of the crew behind so that we could search the bowl the rest of the way up with minimal distraction. Of course, the wind was at our backs, but sometimes that is helpful when

you suspect you are looking for smaller clues. We were almost to the top when we got a call to head back down. The folks following us had found some bones that could be human. They were wondering if Mingo could confirm it. Mingo did alert at the bones, so they were bagged for further analysis.

At the top, people spread out and worked east and west along the ridge. The most significant thing up there was a towel lying out in the middle of nowhere. After documenting the stuff with a camera, flagging and GPS, we all headed back down in a line doing a finer search for more clues. The deputies did their thing and we all made the treacherous trip back down to the camp--good timing because it was starting to really get chilly.

After a great dinner courtesy of Elmore County SAR, we returned home with the promise to keep in touch. Early the next week, Jim called to let us know that they were going to have to suspend the search for a while because it had snowed ten inches in the search area that weekend. Also, none of the bones retrieved were human. He would let us know when and if they would need us again.

Reflections:

1. Do not make assumptions based on your own comfort about where a person may or may not go.
2. Make sure to give plenty of time for fresh scent to dissipate before taking a cross-trained dog in to clear an area. There is time and no need to rush things.
3. It is always nice to work with old (as in having previously worked together) colleagues. There is a continuation of the teamwork and communication from past experience that makes things a whole lot easier.

Jim's timing was perfect in that his next call arrived at the Compound during a post-meeting gab session. George and Jim began the arrangements for another joint effort on the following Saturday.

April 27

George met friends from our sister MRA team, Bonneville County Sheriff's SAR--Dave Forker with Bailey, Dave Ferguson with Denali and Rena Ferguson with Kochi--on Friday evening at the Abbot Campground. Renée Johanson rode up with Mingo and me to get an early start. The rest of the IMSARU team, including Jerry Newland, Martha Vandivort, Kit Brown, Brad Acker and Everett Wood, were a couple of hours behind us. Rod Knopp also came up with his handy laptop to provide some more cerebral and technical support. Elmore County had about ten people in the field and the subject's family and friends supplied another half dozen people.

On another search after our previous involvement, searchers had found a pair of shoes that some good interviewing and detective work indicated were almost definitely those of the subject. The idea was to get dogs into the field early to work the gulches surrounding the shoes' location as much as possible, then let ground-pounders follow later.

Jim, Mick Berger, and another Elmore SAR person met us early, to provide transportation to the top so we could work downhill. The ATV trailer that Jim had completed the night before was impressive! It was the perfect size for a medium-to-large dog crate and additional equipment, allowing an additional rider on the machine. I'm not sure who decided that Forker and Bailey along with Farrell would start from the bottom and work up, but I was happy that they had volunteered

Denali tried to prove that, despite her age, she was still ready to take on the mountain by running behind Rena and Kochi until Dave could catch up. Talk about flexibility in travel: Kochi and Denali ended up making most of the trip in the same crate! At the top, Mick helped us get oriented and we divided up the area.

When starting, there was some confusion as to exactly who was where because our GPS datum did not match the map's, but once we figured it out, we were all where we thought we were! That is always a good sign. [Thank you Bob Meredith for your tricky Oman lesson. It made enough of an impression on us that we were able to quickly figure out our problem!] Renée did a fantastic job with our positions, bearings, etc. After she worked it out, Rod would confirm it from his position in Abbot Camp. What a great resource and confidence builder to have someone tell you that you are 3/8 of an inch left of where you last checked in, just like you marked. Of course, knowing that it took us 1-1/2 hours to get there was a little depressing!

A frustrating part of this search, as with many, was that the terrain just did not allow us to cover as much as we thought we should. Every gulch and drainage had several fingers that could've been explored. We had to keep reminding ourselves that there were others behind us who would search and we needed to do as much as we could, but could not possibly do everything. Still, it was hard to look back and know that little gully would have wait for later. By the end of the search, we were all extremely tired of walking sidehill. At one point, I gave up and finished the climb down on my rear. Yes, that dirt was put there on purpose this time. Fortunately, Renée didn't have a camera. I did make her promise that she would inform me before I got back to base if my pants hadn't survived intact.

Again we found bones, but none elicited a response from any of the dogs. As soon as we would finish flagging and documenting a bone of suspicious length and size, we would go another ten feet and find wedged behind a rock the skull or hoof that told us it was not what we were trying to find.

After the long day, it was wonderful to have a real dinner waiting for us. Renée's delight at the provided Twinkies was fun to see. Mingo's delight confused me a bit until Renée confessed that she had shared her Twinkies with him on the Blaine County trip! No wonder he rode back from there on her lap!

Despite the circumstances, the search was good. It is always a pleasure working with personnel from Bonneville and Elmore Counties. It really did not feel like three separate units; everyone came together and worked as one well-trained team. The variety of resources each team provided helped clear a lot of ground and consciences that day. Once Rod had downloaded each of our GPS and plotted it out on the computer, it was encouraging to see exactly how much ground had been covered.

As always, our sympathies are with the family as they continue to work through their grief and the unknowns.

SEARCH IN ELMORE COUNTY—A NOVICE PERSPECTIVE RENÉE JOHANSON

At roughly 5,600 ft., with no idea where I really was on the map, even *after* getting a GPS reading, I was extremely thankful to be teamed up with Leslie Robertson and Mingo. When Leslie asked me to be her navigator, I jumped at the chance, even while questioning her sanity in asking.

Prior to the Elmore County search, my experience with my GPS unit was limited to a brief encounter with its power button. Thanks to Leslie's patience and willingness to not only show me how to take a reading within the correct parameters, but also to trust me with the job, by the time we left the search area I could use a GPS and map with a fair degree of accuracy. As important as this was, it was only one of many things I learned that day.

I also learned that a search dog in action is an amazing tool and a search team working together can cover an incredible amount of space. I learned to appreciate flat terrain; it was a scarce commodity for Leslie, Mingo, and myself. When we weren't scrambling through thickets, we were "side-hill walking," always keeping in mind that each step we took downhill made the trip uphill that much longer. I wondered if we would ever walk straight again. At one point, toward the end of the day, I knelt down to check under an overhang in the drain we were negotiating and realized that my legs weren't going to get me back up. It was disconcerting for a moment. Luckily, there was an available tree trunk I could haul myself upright with. My 3:45 a.m. wake-up was catching up with me.

The weather was agreeable though. Cloud cover kept us from getting too warm for most of the day and the cool breeze felt great after an uphill trek.

Among the other numerous things I learned on this, my second mission, there are two that really stand out. First, Leslie has great form when sliding downhill on her backside. On a scale of 1-10, I would have given her a 9. Secondly, Mingo isn't the only search dog who can truly appreciate the occasional Twinkie. Oh yeah... one more thing. If there's fur and a hoof still attached to the bone, chances are good that I don't need to call it in.

CLIMBING TEAM TRAINING – APRIL 8, 2001 --BRAD ACKER

The climbing team got together on a partly summer and mostly winter Sunday morning, gathering at the Compound at 9 a.m. The crowd was not huge, but we had enough to have fun and learn some new techniques. After a short briefing, Kris Walker, Bob Meredith, David Hay, Aimee Hastriter, Adam Chitwood and Brad Acker headed up to Table Rock. Our goal for the day was to work on personal rappel and belay systems typical of those used in general rock climbing and mountaineering. Skills were also being demonstrated in preparation for two climbs planned for the near future. (We will be climbing Leatherman Peak on May 26-28, and Hayburn Mountain on June 23-24.)



Hey guy, where is your helmet?



Upon arrival at Table Rock, we picked a moderate 80-degree route where we could take turns rappeling and climbing with a belay at the top. We got out the bolt kit and started swinging, placed three new bolts and assembled a three-point load-distribution anchor system. We tried several different styles of rappeling devices such as a Munter hitch, a figure-8 and mechanical devices. We then moved to an overhanging section of rock, to make things a little more fun. A 5.13 route is no problem—when you are going down, that is.



XENA CHRONICLES, CHAPTER 4

A. Early in March, I threw Xena’s favorite toy, a hard rubber barbell, for a few minutes before going in to measure kibble for supper. It was unusual that she did not follow me into the garage to supervise my measurement, and when I came back into the kitchen I heard a ripping noise from the back room. Since she had, earlier in the day, been tasting the fringe on the area rug until we yelled at her, I assumed she was back at that and went shouting into the room. She looked up with a mouthful of cord-type stuff, which I of course grabbed from her while continuing to inform her what a bad mistake she had made. I then looked at the rug and saw the fringe intact.

Xena solved the mystery by returning to her assault on the couch, where upholstery was shredded, until I physically dragged her away. It turned out that the couch had stolen her toy (it had rolled underneath) and she was determined to make the bully give it back. The irony of this is that we had only a few weeks earlier been bemoaning Xena’s focus on food reward and wondering whether we would ever find “the toy she would kill for.” As they say, be careful what you wish for!



B. What would you think if your black-haired puppy came to see you with a white nose, white chin and white whiskers? I thought she had somehow gotten into the paint in the front room, but was sure I had sealed the cans tightly and that she could not have opened a metal gallon can without my hearing it. That's right, the cans were still undisturbed where I had left them. Time to look in the back yard....

It was "only" a half-pint plastic container of wood filler, which could be carried and opened stealthily. Xena had eaten most of it. A call to Poison Control

verified the label's claim of Non-Toxic, but the amount could cause intestinal blockage. After Hobo's earlier trick of eating her bandage, we knew the routine—mixture of hydrogen peroxide and water forced in via squeeze bottle, then wait for her to vomit. We also knew to wait for her to vomit a second time before taking her back into the house. We now know to wait for her to vomit a third and a fourth time before taking her in.

AND XENA'S FRIENDS

Lest you think George and I are the only ones whose puppies provide adventures, let me introduce you to Schatz, Suzanne Ventura's GSD. This is a starving puppy whose owner never feeds her, so Schatz had to help herself to the bananas on the counter—eating all the fruit while leaving the skins neatly attached in the original bunch. Another day, she ate a whole bottle of Cosequin; fortunately this is non-toxic, but it is a *very* expensive snack and needs to be administered daily—once a month does not have the desired effect. Or maybe you should meet Jeb, Paula McCollum's blue-tick hound. Jeb is normally friendly to everyone, but I have it from a reliable source that when he was staying temporarily with the Rockwells, Jeb dashed out of the garage and chased a terrified neighbor into her house. (All he really wanted to do was to slobber on her, but she apparently did not realize that.) Even Angie, Martha Vandivort's gentle GSD, went through the stage of checking the kitchen counters for snacks and toys; when Martha tried the standard booby-trap of aluminum cans with coins for extra clank, Angie knocked them over and was delighted with the new toys. It is indeed true that a dog with the energy, determination and problem-solving attitude to be a good search dog is not necessarily easy to live with.

REDNECK RACE TO ROBIE CREEK – APRIL 21, 2001 **--CHARLOTTE GUNN**

You might be a redneck racer...If you bought your racing shoes at the flea market...If your underwear doubles as your running shorts....If your sports bra is a roll of duct tape....If your favorite carbo load is donuts and beer. These and other informative signs decorated the track up to Aldape Summit for the 24th annual semi-marathon. For those of us who worked on the summit and for those who like to party for hours at the finish, there were too many clouds, too little warmth, and excessive moisture, but for the serious runners it was great weather. Medical problems were limited to moleskin, Band-Aids, dehydration and a twisted ankle or two. There was a time when all the cots at our finish-line aid station were occupied, but everyone eventually got up and walked away under their own power. The biggest problem seemed to be the length of the line waiting for buses out of the finish area. (If you aren't familiar with Robie Creek, the wonder is not that the lines were long, but that the organization manages to shuttle that many people out in less than a week.)

Had there been problems during the race, people were ready. In addition to the race committee, there were personnel from Ada County EMS, the ham radio group, 14 people from Mores Creek Ambulance service and 16 people from IMSARU. As it was, we cheered the racers on, helped clean up trash, occupied our folding chairs and reminded ourselves that there is no way of knowing ahead of time what the need will be. IMSARU participants included Kit Brown, Aaron Garrison, Charlotte Gunn, Aimee Hastriter, Kris Hoffman, Chris Karnes, Rod Knopp, Bill Lindenau on his ATV, Eric Mundell, Jeff Munn, Steve Pack, Leslie Robertson, Dan Scovel, Jennifer Sims, Martha Vandivort and Tom Wheless.

COMING EVENTS

Search Management Class May 19-20 Sponsored by IMSARU. **This class is open to everyone.** We have received certification from P.O.S.T for 20 hours credit. See the following URL to download information from our web site:

<http://www.imsaru.org/safety.html#mtraining>

Field Training / Practical Application for SAR Manager class Joint training with Idaho Wing of the CAP 9-10 June 2001 at Prairie, ID. CAP will be transporting SAR assets from around the state to participate in this mock search. This is our annual overnight field bivouac event.

Mantracking Class. June 29-July 1. Sponsored by Blaine County SAR; presented by Universal Tracking Services, Inc. Will be held at Smiley Creek, about 35 miles north of Ketchum. Contact person is Mike Barto at (208) 788-5966.

MRA Intermountain Region training / recertification July 14-15 at The City of Rocks.

**SEARCH TRAINING IN
BLAINE COUNTY –
APRIL 14, 2001
--MARTHA VANDIVORT**

On Friday the 13th, I set out in my shiny new 4wd truck, in caravan with Tom Wheless and his passenger Brad Acker, to drive to the Kamima desert for an interagency adventure. According to Blaine County SAR, “We will be searching for a subject who disappeared 4-1/2 years ago and was never found. We will also be conducting clue finding, compass and GPS training while searching.” We

were to start briefing at 9 a.m. on Saturday and to be done by early afternoon, with Blaine County furnishing planning, leadership, communications and hamburgers. Bonneville County and Mini-Cassia SAR were also invited, as were cadaver dog teams from any of the groups.



Skip DeHennis gives the pre-search briefing.



Inside the base motor home, plotting Easter egg coordinates

I entered the UTM coordinates into my GPS before setting off, using zone 11 (since the zone had been omitted from the instructions.) As we drove east on Highway 20 toward Carey, my GPS indicated I was getting farther and farther away from my objective. This made no sense. I tried zone 12. Indeed, Idaho has two—and I have since confirmed, only two—UTM zones.

Shortly past Carey, we turned into the desert and discovered the unexpected—thick, slick mud with lots of puddles and small ponds. My new 4wd got immediate necessary use and its “lunar mist” color was soon covered by mud. After making the correct guess at a Y in the road, we went on for a long time in the mud before eventually arriving at the only grassy place in miles and miles and miles of sagebrush. It was

occupied by a Sheriff’s truck and large motor home, both empty.

My first concern was to let our other people coming later know that 4wd would be needed. Cell phone coverage wasn’t perfect, but I was able to get through with the message. The three of us stood around a while before concluding that no one else was coming on Friday (except George Gunn, who



would be late). Those who were with me on the Idaho Power search will not be surprised that I decided to put my sleeping bag on an unused couch in the empty motor home. Oops!—Eventually four men appeared to sleep there. Actually, I slept very comfortably and warmly in a tent even with heavy horizontal snow.

The rest of the IMSARU group arrived at around 9 the next morning: Kit Brown, Joey Clements, Richard Clements, Jim Cooper, Kris Hoffman, Renee Johansen, Chris Karnes, Rod Knopp, Bonnie Lind, Paula McCollum with Jeb, Jerry Newland and Leslie Robertson with Mingo. When I asked Jerry how the road was, his understated reply was, “Well, it was muddy.”

Each unit was asked to detail one member to work at base camp while everyone else went into the field. Blaine County split us up into teams, mostly two people led by a Blaine County person where possible. Each group had at least one GPS, radio and compass, and a map showing the roads whose vicinity we were to search. Mini-Cassia had brought some ATV’s, which were used on roads that hadn’t been searched the first time out. A plane was overhead much of the time to help with communications, although it never got far enough south to help two of our teams who were unable to speak with base camp. Rod solved that problem by driving his vehicle south and parking on a high spot where he could talk to both base and the field teams.

I worked with Mike (from Blaine County) and Rena Ferguson (from Bonneville County) and her dog Kochi. The surprise was when we discovered the first clue—a bright pink plastic Easter egg with instructions to use our compass to find the next egg. We found



five eggs—our quota—and reported the UTM of each. As is normal for searches, we did not find one very short road we were supposed to search; it no longer existed. And we found two roads that were not on the map. The only other things we found, except for the footprints of the person who placed the eggs, were very large cow femur and tibia bones and some very small bone fragments. Early in the afternoon, we met up with the truck from the group searching south of us, then returned to our truck and back to base camp.

The hamburgers and visiting were very enjoyable while waiting until our last and most southerly two teams arrived from their thorough search. We left late in the afternoon and drove a mostly dry desert road out to the highway. My new truck got an amazingly thorough baptism by mud, but mud is much better than scratches. Various people said their vehicles had never before been that dirty on any mission, and many quarters were spent at Boise-area car washes during the weekend.

Skip DeHennis, of Blaine County, reported afterwards that there were over forty participants from four different agencies. They searched approximately thirty-seven miles of road. Ten of the twelve foot teams found all of the clues that had been placed in their areas. The ATV teams found sixty percent of the clues in their areas; the ATV's covered five times as much road as the foot teams. The participants ate over seventy hamburgers.

Like many IMSARU adventures, this issue ends with Charlotte's Chocolate.

