

RESCUE HAS BEEN THE VOICE OF IMSARU SINCE JANUARY 1962

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RESCUE

IDAHO MOUNTAIN SEARCH
AND RESCUE UNIT, INC
BOISE, IDAHO

FOUNDING MEMBER:
MOUNTAIN RESCUE
ASSOCIATION



OPERATION NOBLE MUSTANG JANUARY 26, 2004 --AS TOLD TO CHARLOTTE GUNN

At 9:36 a.m. on Friday, Pat Vance of our local Humane Society called Pam Green and asked whether IMSARU could rescue a horse. It seems that Smokey, a 6-year-old mustang being used as a pack horse, and two other horses went AWOL from a hunting camp in October. The other two wandered back but Smokey had not been seen since, until about a week ago when snowmobilers found him stranded in around five feet of snow at an elevation a little above 8,000 feet in the mountains of central Idaho. His owner guesses that

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It's not a poor photo. The downdraft from a Blackhawk as it lifts Smokey creates whiteout conditions.

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Smokey survived that long by eating tree bark, pine needles and snow, but he was obviously suffering and would not still be there alive when the snows finally melt. Local people had hauled hay to Smokey via snowmobile (a three-hour journey each way) while trying to decide what to do.

Pam started making phone calls, to some of our members and to outside resources, to see what could be done. The Idaho Equine Hospital informed her that we would need an Anderson sling, and



The team assembles the Anderson sling before trying it on a local horse.



One of the planning sessions before the mission



Smokey in his wilderness prison.

Dave Pauli, Regional Director of the U.S. Humane Society referred her to Meredith Silverstein of the American Humane Society in Denver. Meredith not only located an Anderson sling that was available for loan, but arranged for Frontier Airlines' Angel Flight



The snow "corral"

to ship it to Boise free of charge on Friday evening. In the meantime, Col. Perry Barth of the Army National Guard was handling the paper work to arrange this as a training mission for two Blackhawk helicopters and their crews, Jerry Newland and Kris Walker were visiting the Idaho Equine Hospital to learn about slings for horses, and Pam



The Idaho Army National Guard flew a training mission that included transporting teams to rescue a stranded horse. For search and rescue, the key word is “teamwork.”

was fielding phone calls in all directions—including to the horse-owner’s family to let them know what was happening and to make sure they would arrange for a veterinarian to be part of the team.



Hooking line to harness

By about 5 p.m., all the pieces were in place for a joint operation to airlift the horse out of its white prison. However, winter storm warnings for Saturday and Sunday dictated that the event would happen on Monday.

So did everyone just sit around watching TV for the next two days? Not exactly. Kris picked up the Anderson sling at the airport late Friday evening. (Boise is still small-town enough that the airport security guards let Kris illegally leave his vehicle at the “Arrivals” curb while he retrieved his package, as they already knew the story of what he was doing.) Early Saturday afternoon, some of us met in Kris’s garage to assemble the sling and figure

out its logic. It is impressively sturdy and pieces that go together are marked by letters and numbers, but oops! part of the extension for stabilizing the horse's head was missing. Kris called Charles Anderson, developer of the sling, for a description of the missing part, then headed for the local home improvement store, bought parts, and returned home to fabricate what was needed. On Sunday, the six members of the IMSARU field team for this mission took the sling to a friend's ranch and practiced putting it on a live horse. George spent the time continuing his research on equine rescues and corresponding via the Internet. The Guard planned in detail their use of equipment and personnel, including sequence of actions.



It's a cold and lonely way to fly.

At 9 a.m. on Monday, IMSARU members Brad Acker, Jim Cooper, Bill Lindenau, Jerry Newland, Dave Ritzen-thaler and Kris Walker met the helicopter crews at Gowen Field for briefing. Departure was at 11 a.m. in two helicopters (code named "Roy" and "Rogers,") with stops to pick up veterinarian John Day at Twin Falls and Greg Bell of the owner's family. Three snowmobiles had left Twin Falls at 7 a.m. to proceed to the horse's location and prepare for the evacuation. This advance crew made it possible for the operation to go smoothly: Out in the open, they dug a pit over four feet deep and perhaps twelve feet across that served as a snow corral for handling Smokey, who was not quite sure he wanted all the attention, noise and activity. The pit was connected by a trench perhaps

twenty-five yards long to the tree area where Smokey had been living. When the rest of the team arrived, the mustang was in this accessible area, with people reassuring him that helicopters weren't big buzzards about to eat him.

From this point on, all the gears meshed. The vet administered a half-dose of sedative, the Anderson sling went on quickly and smoothly (Dave timed that at twelve minutes plus another five minutes for safety inspections), the Blackhawk came over and dropped the hook, the team did last-minute adjustments for balance, all but three people left the area. When the helicopter lifted the horse gently off his feet at the end of a 100-foot line, those last three

people dove out of the corral to avoid the possibility of hooves and humans colliding, and “Rogers” and Smokey headed slowly up and away to the plowed road about 6.5 miles from there. Kris was filming this part of the mission and his camera followed the flight up and up until helicopter and horse were small with distance...and Kris fell over backwards.

As soon as the corral area was clear, ground crew scrambled for the other helicopter, which flew much faster to the LZ in order to get people on the ground to help with Smokey’s landing. The ground was icy, and there was a bit of skidding by both people and horse, but there were no major difficulties. Smokey was undoubtedly happy to have the flight finished, and his owners and friends were even happier to have him safely out of the snowy wilderness. The Army National Guard personnel and IMSARU team loaded and headed back to Boise just ahead of another big bank of storm clouds. On Tuesday, a phone call from Twin Falls informed us that Smokey was home and eating everything offered.



Thoughts from this mission:

(1) This was a totally atypical mission for IMSARU, but it used the teamwork and wide range of skills of which we are so proud. The fact that we’ve never done it before doesn’t mean it can’t be done. (2) We owe thanks to an incredible number of people. A major key, of course, was the Idaho Army National Guard’s decision to take this as a training exercise; when the next occasion comes where the Guard and IMSARU need to work together to save human lives, we will be that much more ready and comfortable as a team. Add in all the local people, Humane Society staff, Frontier Airlines, Charles Anderson who developed the sling, Trina McGown who volunteered her horse and Mike Flagle who helped our team work with that horse, veterinarian John Day....and so many more. Teamwork is how it gets done. (3) The two days between Friday call and Monday mission allowed us to research, plan and train; no one would have wanted to be handling that sling for the first time with a frightened horse, deep snow and high-altitude cold. (4) Kris did such a good job with his video that this mission was the lead story on Channel 2’s evening news....and then national news service picked it up and suddenly people all over the country were seeing the event. It’s too bad we need Kris’s other technical and outdoor skills so that we can’t spare him to be our fulltime media person! (5) You might want to ask Kris for a description of how Bill buckles himself into a helicopter harness.

Kris, of whom we rarely see a photo, en route to doing a good deed.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Cougar Mountain Snowmobile Club for a donation of \$450.

Diane Fields for a cash donation.

World Reach (a program that matches HP employees' donations) and Douglas Nicholson, James Kurczewski and Kurt Ostwinckle for their cash gifts.

All those who designated donations to us through *United Way of Treasure Valley*.

The Bell Family for cash donations plus a basket full of goodies in honor of Smokey's return home.

Bob and Bessie Skinner for a donation in honor of the marriage of Kris Hoffman and Dan Scovel on January 31.

The IWCF Members' Philanthropic Gift Fund in the Idaho Community Foundation who, on the recommendation of *Kim Liebich*, gave us a grant of \$500.

All of the people and groups who sent donations *in memory of Robert Busch and Marsha Landolt*. [We forwarded these to Camas County and the Soldier Mountain Search and Rescue team, as they are the ones who responded after the avalanche.]

Stan Mock of Financial Planning Services for a laptop computer, a PDA and two desktop towers.

Michael W. Poe of Northwest Covers for two ATV covers for our members who use their personal ATVs on missions.

R.E.I. of Boise, who once again set us up as the gift-wrapping service in their store during the ten days before Christmas. They supply the space and most of the materials, and encourage customers to stop at our table after making purchases. We make hundreds of rustic bows and supply the people power—and keep all the donations.

* * * * *

Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit, Inc. is an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. We have no paid staff nor officers. Our members supply their own personal equipment as well as donating their time; many of them use vacation time or unpaid leave in order to respond to missions. Except for reimbursement by the state search-and-rescue fund for some specific direct expenses, our unit's budget is based on fund-raising activities (more volunteer time and energy!) and donations. We deeply appreciate those who help to underwrite our work.

TRAINING

GEORGE GUNN– Training Director

IMSARU has an extensive training plan for this year. Below is the calendar of both SAR and Medical training through Western Idaho Fair times. All members are encouraged to be active in training even if it is review for you. The key at the bottom is provided for those looking to move to the next rating. I would remind rescue specialists that you need to be involved in training **instruction** to maintain your current rating.

2004 TRAINING CALENDAR

| MONTH | | | LEADER |
|----------|----|---|------------------|
| January | 6 | Urban SAR | George Gunn |
| | 13 | Lost Person Behavior (Field 17 th) ** | Charlotte Gunn |
| | 20 | Cold Weather Injuries** | |
| February | 3 | Winter Mountaineering Classroom ## | Bob Meredith |
| | 10 | Winter Mountaineering cont. - (Field 14/15)## | Bob Meredith |
| | 17 | Primary and Secondary Medical Survey** | |
| March | 2 | How K-9s Relate to IMSARU | Martha Vandivort |
| | 9 | Aircraft Use / Helo Safety (Field 13 or 14)** | Dave Henry |
| | 16 | Head and Facial Injuries** | |
| April | 6 | Communications Update | Ed Emmel |
| | 13 | Medical Prep for Robie Creek Race | |
| | 20 | Navigation (Field 24 / 25) ** | |
| May | 4 | Technical Rescue ** | Brad Acker |
| | 11 | Desert Search/Cave Rescue (Bivouac 14/15) ++ | Jim Noland |
| | 18 | Heat Injuries** | |
| June | 1 | | |
| | 8 | Clue Aware / Mantracking (Field 12 th) ** | Rockwell et.al. |
| | 15 | Medical Skills Review## | |
| July | 6 | | |
| | 13 | PLB/ELT (Field 17/18) ** | Jerry Newland |
| | 20 | Bites and Stings** | |
| August | 3 | ICS For SAR ## 20-28 Western Id. Fair | SAR Managers |

N.B. Technician and Specialist levels require a current First Aid certificate

++ = Required for Technician

** = Applies to **both** Tech. and Specialist

@@ = Required for Specialist

= Required for Rescue Specialist

COMING EVENTS

TROUT POND – MARCH 4-7

IMSARU will again be running the Trout Pond at the Outdoors Show at the Fairgrounds. Note that the dates are a bit later, so maybe it will be less wintry than during some past experiences. We need volunteers to supervise the fishing by children ages 12 and under. This may include collecting the donations, baiting hooks, removing fish from hooks, supplying plastic bags for those who want to take their fish home, reminding adults that the activity is for the children, and repairing equipment. Spectra Productions, Channel 7 and other groups supply all the fish and equipment; we keep all the money. Volunteer for a couple of shifts and do your share! (You don't have to know anything about fishing to qualify.)

FIELD CERTIFICATION CLASS – FEBRUARY 19 AT 6 P.M.

This is the basic class for all applicants, required before you will be put on the call-out list. If your schedule is tight, you are welcome to bring your supper with you and eat while you learn. (One of the necessary Mountain Rescue skills is the ability to gobble food whenever and wherever you get the chance.) The class will probably run about three and one-half hours, and will cover some of the real elementary stuff that will help you avoid embarrassing yourself or the unit during a mission. You can also bring your equipment for the pack check that evening, or do that part at any regular meeting. If you have questions, talk to Karen Limani.

SNOW TRAINING WITH ELMORE COUNTY—FEBRUARY 28 AT 8 A.M.

Elmore County SAR has invited us to join them for training in working with snowmobiles. This will include safety, being a passenger, transporting search dogs and packs, perhaps even a chance to drive a machine. If time allows, we may also practice finding beacons. We will meet at The Pilot (formerly The Gearjammer) lower parking lot at the Mountain Home interchange at 8 a.m. Dress warmly; bring your field pack and lunch.

CANINE TEAMS CONTINUE TO TRAIN

Despite complications in many of our personal lives (yes, we do have personal lives) we continue to train as a larger group in addition to working as pairs and trios when schedules mesh. On January 3, we met at Indian Creek Reservoir where we ran tracks and air-scent problems. That training was cut a bit short by the pagers announcing standby for a mission. On January 18, we went down to Swan Falls, where Leslie had laid a track the previous day and had marked out areas for air-scent work. And on January 31, Joey introduced us to a school that has lots of hiding places, playground equipment for agility work, and plenty of space for some group obedience practice.

Thanks to those who scout the areas and plan training problems. We are always trying to introduce the dogs to as many different kinds of terrain and experiences as possible. And special thanks to Tom Kearney, Linda Kearney and Sabrina Scheri who have repeatedly come out to serve as “lost” subjects in rain and snow and mud and cold wind. Uh.... Forget that description of the weather and let any of the dog handlers know that **you** would like to come out and work with us; we are always looking for new scents.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSIST—FEBRUARY 5, 2004
--BY CHARLOTTE GUNN

The sound of a pager at 3:30 a.m. is not pleasant, but we needed to report to the Compound by 5 in order to assist law enforcement officers in another county with a search for a missing person. They especially requested canine teams. We were able to send six people with five dogs. IMSARU members who responded were Dan Scovel, Leslie Robertson with Mingo, Ron Moomey, Christy Karnes with Tali, Charlotte Gunn with Xena, Pam Green with Inca and Rush.

Note: Although a request may be for canine teams, we always need additional people besides the dog handlers. We need drivers and field personnel to walk with the canine team as extra eyes and hands, to navigate, and perhaps to carry water or other dog stuff. If you have trained with the canine teams, you will feel comfortable in how to help without distracting the dogs. If you haven't, ask the handler to fill you in before you start walking.

WE NOW HAVE MORE "HAMS" ON THE TEAM!

David Ritzenthaler volunteered to teach a free series of classes that prepare people to take the exam for an amateur radio license. Those who took the course are quick to praise Dave's teaching techniques, and the results confirm that. Test day was February 7 and every student who took the test passed. Congratulations to Marc Buursink, Ed Emmel, Linda Kearney, Tom Kearney, Karen Lemani and Martha Vandivort. And thank you, Dave! We look forward to ever better communications in the field (as soon as these newly-licensed hams spend lots of money on new toys.)

DUES AND PAGER FEES

IMSARU's finances operate on the calendar year, so 2004 dues were due on January 1. Dues are \$50 for applicants (includes orange shirt, first set of patches, training materials) and \$30 for continuing members. If you carry a State Comm. pager or a digital pager with only the group number, there is no fee for that. If you carry a digital pager with a discrete number that can be used to reach only you, the fee is \$36 for the year. Pay all these fees to Charlotte Gunn and be sure she gives you a receipt. If you can't remember whether you wrote that check last month or last year, ask Charlotte to check her list. If you aren't paid up by April (when you should be receiving your next newsletter,) you will no longer be a member.

SAR FIELD TRAINING—JANUARY 17, 2004
--BY CHARLOTTE GUNN

After two evening classes on Urban Search and Lost Person Behavior, we went out on Saturday morning to try out some theories. The scenario was that a man in his 60's, in the early stages of Alzheimer's, had disappeared from his motor home sometime after 10 p.m. and before his wife awoke at 5 a.m. The overnight temperature had been below freezing and he was probably not dressed for it.

We started with a discussion of where such a person was likely to be and what searchers could expect in terms of non-responsiveness and physical condition. Two tracking dog teams plus foot searchers then dispersed to check perimeters and try to follow the missing person. Although "Randy" was indeed not far from the parking lot, he also was totally non-responsive and had "crawled" under the sagebrush so that he was hard to find. When located, he required treatment for hypothermia and litter transportation back to the parking lot.

After a lunch break, participants took on a second problem: By coincidence, another vehicle in the parking lot was identified as belonging to a man reported to be having lots of personal problems and showing signs of depression. We again talked through what search theory would predict, and this time the prime search area was the hillside on the far edge of the flats. Sure enough, Jeff was eventually located there, and did a great imitation of someone who does not want to be found and whose behavior is somewhat threatening toward those who find him. Since Jeff refused treatment, we sent the litter out for various individuals to experience both the carry and the ride. Even two of the dogs did the latter.

It was great to have several inexperienced and less-experienced people participating in this hands-on training. And it was important that we had enough experienced members to make it a real team learning event.

MISSING SNOWMOBILERS AT THE USUAL PLACE-DEC. 29-30, 2003 --BY CHARLOTTE GUNN

Lots more fresh snow at Pilot Peak tempted two men on Sunday. When they did not return home that night, Boise County asked us to send a team. We had no snowmobiles of our own available, but Kris Hoffman, Jerry Newland and Everett Wood went up to Mores Creek Summit and spent the day in a blinding snowstorm as they talked to other snowmobilers in the area, asking them to be on the lookout for the two subjects. There was no sight of the missing men that day.

On Tuesday morning, our friends from Elmore County SAR brought six people with snowmobiles, and IMSARU sent another six people, up to continue the search. We arrived at the Sheriff's Office in Idaho City just as they received a report that the missing men were safe at home. Having come



Jerry plans strategy with volunteer snowmobile searchers.

that far that early, it seemed only right to go out to breakfast before driving back home. We were pleased to be joined at the table by Jim Shemwell who, having last year been one of the missing, was coming to be one of the searchers.

The two men later attended a meeting to tell us of their adventure: That thick layer of fresh snow had indeed been too much for their machines. When they had

to abandon them, they were better prepared than are many snowmobilers, with shovels and a GPS that showed them the way to the road and a distance of less than a mile and a half. However, walking through several feet of snow is exhausting and very slow. When they moved down into the bottom of the drainage, they were twice hit by small avalanches; fortunately, at least one of them was able to free himself each time and they escaped safely.

However, they lost a shovel and realized they had to fight their way back up into timber, where they dug their way from tree well to tree well. After more than 24 hours of struggle, they finally reached that highway where they expected to flag a motorist for a ride back to their vehicle. But the highway had been shut down because avalanche danger was so high, so they had another mile or so of walking before reaching their truck—which then got stuck in the parking lot. It was not a nice experience. The two men were very glad to get home and within a couple of days had gone shopping to equip themselves for their chosen sport—buying snowshoes in particular.

IMSARU members responding the second day included Winston Cheyney, Charlotte Gunn, George Gunn, Tim Henning, Bill Lindenau and Jim Noland.

OVERDUE SNOWMOBILERS—JANUARY 30, 2004

For once, the call did not say Pilot Peak—but Whoop-em-Up is in the same general area. Two snowmobilers went out on Thursday but did not return. Chris Harry, Jerry Newland, David Ritzenthaler and Martha Vandivort responded, arriving at the scene to learn that the subjects had found their way out and were on the way down to Idaho City to eat.

MISSING SNOWMOBILER—FEBRUARY 8, 2004 --CHARLOTTE GUNN

It was another of those 3:30 a.m. beeps that had me pressing every button on the alarm clock,



Leslie and Ron provide equipment for a volunteer searcher.

to no avail; 'twas my pager. Four men went snowmobiling yesterday (need I say where? Pilot Peak, of course!) and ran into trouble in the fresh snow. When three got stuck, the fourth went around them and found himself on a steep slope that sucked him down. The three managed to get their machines free, built a fire, and waited until about 2 a.m. before returning to Mores Creek Summit parking lot, where they started the subject's truck and drove down to the



A happy ending after a long night.

Leslie, Ron and Dave stopped in Idaho City to check in with the S.O. and met two of the subject's companions. When they reached Mores Creek Summit and looked at map and information, they asked Martha and Charlotte to divert and check some roads that connect with snowmobile trails from the area, while George took the motor home on up for base camp.

Four snowmobile teams, of two or three people each, went into the field, some carrying IMSARU GPS units and radios; two other teams were ready to go. These searchers included the two companions, three other friends, and members of the Boise Basin Trailbreakers. The weather cleared enough to allow Ada County Aerial Sheriff Jerry Terlisner to fly with Bill as observer. The first snowmobile teams in the field headed out to their assigned areas...and found the subject waiting for them at "Four Corners." When all returned to camp, EMT Ron checked the subject for medical problems; he both said he was, and seemed to be, healthy. The actual search time, from snowmobile teams leaving base to finding the subject, was only about an hour and forty minutes. [The subject turned out to be a man who has previously been a spontaneous

Sheriff's Office in Idaho City to report the problem. Unfortunately, they left the engine running at the S.O. and also locked the doors.

In the meantime, the 38-year-old subject had rolled his machine, cracking his faceplate and causing him to appreciate the helmet as a safety feature. He was in communication with his friends via family service radio (telling them he would follow the drainage out) until about 7 p.m. At that time, the subject was crawling up a steep slope through chest-deep snow when he dropped his radio and watched it slide down too far for pursuit. He later told searchers that he spent the rest of the night alternately slog-ging his way from tree to tree and resting until he got cold. The good news was the full moon that made night navigation less hazardous than usual.

Since our information indicated that the subject would find only an empty parking lot if he managed to make his way out, we dispatched three people as soon as they reached the Com-



My machine is still right about there....

ound. When all returned to camp, EMT Ron checked the subject for medical problems; he both said he was, and seemed to be, healthy. The actual search time, from snowmobile teams leaving base to finding the subject, was only about an hour and forty minutes. [The subject turned out to be a man who has previously been a spontaneous



volunteer helping us search for other overdue snowmobilers.]

So did we all go back to Idaho City for breakfast? No, don't forget about Martha and Charlotte driving those back roads to check for a tired-looking snowmobiler with no machine. Bear Run Road was a pleasant drive

through a new housing development and snowy hills. We returned to Idaho City and took Elk Creek Road, which also had snowy hills and a road that became quite narrow and then stopped abruptly at an obvious snowmobile crossroad. Trying to turn around, the truck's front end sunk into soft snow. Chains, shovel, branches, mats—nothing freed the wheels, so we admitted our problem via radio. After clearing the search site, the other four



How many people does it take to back one vehicle?

searchers came to help and we added tow straps, a jack, a come-along, and lively discussions of technique. At one point we had two vehicles stuck and six tired and frustrated people. However, we finally were able to slowly back each vehicle 200-300 yards to a firmer wide spot where we could turn around and head for a very late lunch. Some of us may in the future be a bit less disdainful of people who drive where they shouldn't and get stuck in the back-country....

IMSARU members who responded to this mission were Martha Vandivort, Leslie Robertson, Dave Ritzenthaler, Ron Moomey, Bill Lindenau (aerial observer), George Gunn and Charlotte Gunn. We also owe thanks to a local man named Vince, who came along and helped us with suggestions, materials and muscle.