

Vol. 45 March-April 2012 No.2

**WEB
EDITION**

RESCUE

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

FOUNDING MEMBER:
**MOUNTAIN RESCUE
ASSOCIATION**



**PAYETTE RIVER VEHICLE RECOVERY – MARCH 25, 2012
--MIKE JOHNSON**

A page went out Saturday evening, stating we had a possible technical mission...but we wouldn't be needed until the next morning. I immediately got that sinking feeling in my gut as I knew this was not a rescue; it was a recovery. Late Saturday afternoon a passerby near Kirkham Hot Springs had

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Gregg in his inflatable kayak attaches tow line to submerged vehicle.

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WINTER CAMPING TRAINING – FEBRUARY 18, 2012 **--A J HORNBERGER**

This was a day to hone the critical skill of winter camping, with the goal of perfecting our ability to build proficient snow shelters, using techniques new to some and polished by others. We gathered at the Compound to issue avalanche beacons and snowshoes to those who needed them and for a simple briefing: Hike up to our site, dig in, and build a sufficient snow shelter to outlast the elements for an overnight stay.

Nine IMSARU members and a guest from Blaine County SAR packed our trucks and started the drive toward Sunset Mountain, outside of Idaho City. Once we left the city limits we were greeted with heavy snowfall. We parked with a little over a mile's worth of a trudge ahead of us to reach our camping site 3-1/2 miles from the Sunset lookout. Once parked, the snowfall picked up again, laying fresh powder across the trail. Jamie and John brought non-unit snow sleds; the rest of us were stacked with our 48-hour packs as we followed our expedition leader Francisco. The trek up the hill was a good example of the capabilities and limitations of snow sleds, but they seemed to be a very useful asset. The uphill hike had us all nice and warm, ready to build our dwellings for the night.



Digging snow shelters should always be done in nice weather like this!

At our Tuesday-evening training we had discussed the techniques used to build common cold-weather shelters. Once at our site and with the snowfall lightening up, we set down our packs and gear to probe out spots with ample snow to start our construction. Steve, Ron and I were together for this escapade, and searched around a 100-yard radius for the most ideal location. We found our deepest point westward, facing away from the wind with about six feet of snow, and decided to try our hands at using the “keyhole” or “tee” opening for construction of a snow cave. We dug our opening trench, then dug in vertically and horizontally for a shelter roughly seven by twelve feet. We considered that one big cave for the three of us, with the snow as insulation and our body heat, would be warmer than individual caves. This seemed to be a popular idea, as another group did the same. It seemed as though the construction of everyone’s caves went very smoothly with few difficulties.

No more than five minutes after the completion of all the snow shelters, the elements decided to test our craftsmanship; the wild storm gave us a chance to change out of our now drenched clothes and make a nice hot meal. The two-hour wall of white powder then gave way to bright blue sky for the rest of the day. This was pleasant and allowed us to consult with each other about our construction and to relax. It is a good idea to take the time to build different shelters in a non-emergency scenario. This allows us to learn from our mistakes in a relaxed environment and gives us confidence in our knowledge for emergency situations.

Before nightfall we all went on the hunt for firewood, with everyone looking forward to a warm fire on a starlit night. With the fire started and our toes defrosted, we conversed and watched the clear night sky until the fire died down and we all headed back to our caves for a good night’s sleep...or so we thought. We woke in the morning to groggy grins and tired faces. We had all stayed warm through the night but it did not hide the fact that we had spent that night in a cave two feet tall.

We packed up our gear, had a well-mannered morning meal, and began the slog down with bright blue sky. Back at our trucks in no time, we headed back to the Compound where we unloaded our gear, called our families to assure them we had lived through the night, and headed home to hot coffee and a warm bed.

Whether we use manmade items such as a tarpaulin or natural resources, we should make it a point to become familiar with different types of survival shelters. Countless articles about people lost in the backcountry reach the media yearly, and proficiency in shelter building could make the difference between life and death in an emergency.

IMSARU members participating included Ron Anderson, Francisco Castellon, John Ferguson, Steve Huffman, A J Hornberger, Mike Johnson, Carolyn Lyon and Jamie Simpson. Guests were Clay Landon (Blaine County SAR) and Chatchawan Sukkha.

(Continued from Page 1)

noticed some recent tracks in the ditch plus skid marks and glass on the road; when he looked down the embankment, there was a vehicle almost completely submerged in the river. First responders determined that the crash was not survivable and that it was too dangerous to get to the car before dark.

I gathered all of my equipment and tried to mentally prepare myself for what we were about to face, going over every scenario I could imagine to be sure I was ready for whatever rope system would be required; I probably slept about three to four hours.

On Sunday morning the team assembled at the Compound at 0730 to load equipment and assign vehicles. We took both 901 and 902, heading toward the Fire Station in Garden Valley, where we were to receive our briefing from Garden Valley Fire and Rescue.



Highline across the river, to be used in lowering tow strap to vehicle.

Arriving on scene, we were met by the Lowman Ambulance crew, Boise County Chief Deputy Dale Rogers and Sheriff Ben Roeber. Chief Rogers was the IC and Owen Miller the OL. A plan was quickly formulated to erect a highline across the river, to be used to guide a cable from the tow truck down to the wreck. In order to attach the cable to the vehicle, the plan called for us to insert one of our members into the river upstream by kayak. This was the safest way to get the job done, given the conditions. We had to consider the flow of the river, debris from the wreck, natural obstacles such as rocks, and stability of the vehicle: Was it going to stay put, or would it dislodge as soon as it was touched? If it dislodged, we had to make sure our kayaker could get away from it quickly! Two Garden Valley Swift Water Rescue personnel and one of our members went downstream with throw bags in the event something unexpected should happen.

Owen assembled a team and sent us to the far side of the river, then used the line gun to get the rope across. We anchored the highline to a very large tree and, working back and forth with the near-side team, began rigging the pulley and tag lines. Once this was set up, Owen and the near-side team attached a tow strap and cable from the tow truck to the highline pulley. Now it was time to get our man in the water. Gregg is a Rescue Technician on the Tech Team and also a fairly accomplished kayaker, so he was the perfect man for this part of the operation.

When Gregg was in position on the side of the river, just upstream of the car, the tow truck operator began slowly letting out cable. As he did this, we pulled the tag line on the far side until the cable was all the way over on our side of the river. We had to rig another pulley system with a separate line to the cable and tow strap that would allow us to lower it to Gregg. This was then moved back to the center of the river and placed just above the vehicle. As planned, Gregg worked into position in an eddy formed by the car and attached a short rope to the rear glass lift strut so he would have both hands free to attach the cable. On Gregg's command, we began lowering the tow strap and cable to him. Now imagine sitting in an inflatable kayak on a rushing river, wrestling with a tow strap that is being pulled on by the river's current, and a cable approximately 7/8" in diameter with a hook the size of your head on the end! Despite all this, Gregg was able to get the strap attached around the C-pillar and to move downstream away from the car. Very nice work, Gregg!

The tow truck operator began pulling in the cable, slowly moving the car up out of the river toward the bank. When it was secure, Garden Valley Fire and Rescue members crawled inside, where they discovered a single occupant. Owen and the near-side team quickly set up a raise/lower system and sent a litter down to the edge of the river. The man's body was carefully placed in the litter and covered, then hauled up the slope to a waiting ambulance. This is the sad part of what we do—a bad situation with a very unfortunate ending.

With everything secure and the car out of the water, we took down our highline, re-packed everything, debriefed with GVFD and BCSO. The operation had gone very smoothly and was performed as safely as possible. Thank you, Garden Valley Fire and Rescue, for your expertise, support and use of your rescue truck. Thanks also to Lowman Ambulance crew and to the Boise County Sheriff's department.

IMSARU members were: Jared Belsher, Francisco Castellon, Danny Cone, John Ferguson, Jake Gillis, Mike Johnson, Bill Lindenau, Carolyn Lyon, Owen Miller, Gregg Rettschlag and Tom Wheless. Rod Knopp handled in-town coordination.

SEARCH AT SWAN FALLS – MARCH 20 & 25, 2012
--GREGG RETTSCHLAG

The text message came in at about 0630: Ada County was requesting our help in searching for a missing male near the Swan Falls dam. A great member turnout (especially for a weekday search) arrived at the Compound and more arranged to meet us at Swan Falls, where we would rendezvous with Ada County officers some 4+ miles downstream from the dam.

On scene we met the IC, Sgt. Pat Schneider, and were informed that the subject's vehicle had been found there the night before by family members. A collection of empty beer cans (of a brand preferred by the subject) had been found a short distance away on a rock outcropping above the river. Family and law enforcement had been around the vehicle, so finding tracks pertaining to the subject would be difficult. At this point, the forecast for snow came to fruition. Increasingly heavy snow flurries and strong winds were going to make for wet, cold conditions.

As OL, Jimmie decided to put a hasty team into the field to cut for sign near the beer cans; Linda led a tracking team with Steve and Carolyn assisting and they were joined by Deputy Running. Attention then turned to moving K9 teams into the field. Kim with K9 Kiwi, Mac and Kimber were sent to walk the river bank. Ann with K9 Watson, Francisco and Tom were also sent out along the river bank. Jamie with K9 Yoki and Luke were sent along a trail that moves up the hillside toward the canyon wall that hems in this section of the Snake River. Judd with K9 Zora arrived a bit later, so Francisco left his first team to accompany Judd along the river bank. Jake stepped into the role of running Base Camp communications, taking up residence in 902. We also learned from Sgt. Schneider that one of their boats was on the way, as well as a boat from the Canyon County Sheriff's Office.

Only minor clues were coming in from our field teams. The tracking team found stubbed-out cigarettes which family members confirmed as the brand preferred by the missing man. The dogs did show interest in a few areas along the shore, but no other evidence indicated our subject being there. Jamie and Luke found only a single apple core to suggest that anyone may have been recently on the upward trail.

After searching well downstream from where the subject's vehicle was located, all ground teams were brought back to Base Camp. By this time, the Ada County Sheriff's boat was on scene and ready to take a K9 team with them. Judd took K9 Zora on the boat with Jamie as observer. Also on the boat were Sgt. Russell and Deputy Fowler of Ada County, plus Roger Gunn, a member of the Idaho Jet Boat Association who would serve as a guide to provide additional safety while navigating this potentially dangerous stretch of the river.

With the majority of our group rehabbing in Base Camp while the boat crew searched, Ann organized us into a search line to comb the area upstream from the vehicle—a lower probability area, but one we were able to clear to a high level of certainty. Shortly after the line searchers returned to Base, the boat team also returned. As during the shore search, Zora did show some interest in a few locations but nothing absolute. There were also no additional visual clues from members of the boat team. At this point, Sgt. Schneider decided to call off the official search.

Later that afternoon, Rod was able to arrange for pilot Jerry Terlisner of the Ada County Aerial Sheriffs to fly an observer over the canyon. Jerry and Jake left the Boise Airport at 1650 and visual conditions had improved enough that Jake stated he could see for about twenty miles. Winds were still quite strong, a concern for searching close to the canyon. They searched downstream about five miles from the vehicle's location. Turbulence in and around the canyon required them to fly at canyon rim height rather than close above the river, but Jake reported he could still see the bottom of the river. After several sweeps with no new information, they returned to the airport.

Day One participants were Ron Anderson, Judd Ballard with K9 Zora, Francisco Castellon, Jake Gillis (ground search and air observer), Steve Huffman, Kim Juda with K9 Kiwi, Linda Kearney, Carolyn Lyon, Ross Mackintosh, Ann Moser with K9 Watson, Gregg Rettschlag, Jamie Simpson with K9 Yoki, Kimber Smith, Luke Sugden, Tom Wheless, Everett Wood and Jimmie Yorgensen. Rod Knopp was in-town coordinator and Jerry Terlisner was the pilot.

ADDITIONAL SEARCH DAY, MARCH 25

On Sunday a group returned to the area near Swan Falls to continue assisting with the search, now being conducted by the family from Celebration Park (downstream from the point last seen). This effort involved K9 teams and Gene Ralston working sidescan sonar with assistance from private boat owners. Ann with K9 Watson worked from a boat starting at the point last seen and downstream. Judd with K9 Zora started about a mile below Ann's starting point, working downstream. Also working aboard volunteer boats were Dave Ferguson with K9 Buddy and Rena Ferguson with K9 Kai from Snake River Search.

Once again the K9s did show interest at points along the river, upriver from those noted during the original search. With downstream winds lower in intensity on Sunday than those encountered on the first day, it is not surprising that the K9 detection would move closer (upstream) to the source of any scent. Gene was able to work these areas with the sonar equipment and obtain data to be analyzed with improved video equipment after the field work was complete.

SNOWMOBILERS STRANDED ON PILOT PEAK – MARCH 1, 2012 --RON ANDERSON

I had joined IMSARU in March of 2011 and had been attending training classes religiously for almost a year but somehow managed to miss every actual mission. Oh, I had been close a couple of times: Once, while attending a Boise State football game, my pager went off just before halftime so I rushed home to get my gear, only to be cancelled just minutes before reaching the Compound. The second time, I actually arrived at the Compound only to find that the overdue hunters had been found. I was beginning to think that missions were only myths of the Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Gods of old.

As it turned out, I was attending one of the Thursday-night tracking classes for newer members when suddenly everyone's pagers went off and instructor Charlotte Gunn immediately announced that class was over for the evening because we had a mission. Finally I was in the right place at the right time. But as you can guess, I was somewhat skeptical that the mission was actually going to take place and didn't want to drive all the way to Meridian to get my gear only to be disappointed again, so the first thing I said to Charlotte was "Is this actually going to happen?" She laughed but said I could ask Rod as he was in the office. Rod explained that three snowmobilers stranded up near Pilot Peak were requesting our help. Knowing I would have to go home for my winter gear, I asked him if a snowmobile would be helpful and he said maybe, if I could be back in 45 minutes.

The real story was that my snowmobile was in storage and hadn't been started in over a year, but I wasn't going to let a little obstacle like that keep me from my first mission. I raced back to Meridian for warm clothing and food, stopping by the storage unit for my snowmobile and trailer. Rod called my cell phone to let me know most of the team had left the Compound and I could just head up to Pilot Peak. After a brief stop in Idaho City to re-group, we finally arrived at the Mores Creek Summit parking area at around 2200 hours.

Once on scene, Jimmie Yorgensen assumed the role of OL and quickly devised a plan to send a three-member hasty team in on snowmobiles to assess the situation. Mark, Owen and I headed out, only to find a large snowdrift blocking our way approximately ¼ mile up the trail. After 30 minutes of shoveling, we finally made it through only to encounter another drift shortly. We continued our trek for almost two miles, encountering many large drifts, before finally reaching a drift so large that we knew we would have to turn back. We returned to Base Camp at around 0200, wet, hungry and exhausted. After a quick bite of Cup-a-Coup and hot chocolate, the decision was to make a second attempt to reach the stranded snowmobilers, this time using cross-country skis and snowshoes to make the final traverse to their location. This time Mark, Gregg, Jake and I headed up the trail, finally reaching the point where we had been stopped earlier. At that point the other three continued the mission on skis and snowshoes while I returned to Base.

At around 0600 Mark, Gregg and Jake returned to Base with the three snowmobilers. Two of the latter were able to bring out their machines along the trail tramped down by the foot traffic; the third machine was not cooperating and its rider walked out on one of the extra pairs of snowshoes our team had carried in. The rescued men shook the hands of all the IMSARU rescue team while they shared some hot chocolate before heading home. All in all it was a great first mission for me: We found our subjects alive and well, they were re-united with their worried families and I got to ride my snowmobile for the first time in a long while. What could be better?

IMSARU members participating included: Jimmie Yorgensen, Tom Wheless, Mark Westerdoll, Gregg Rettschlag, Alisa Rettschlag, Owen Miller, Steve Huffman, Mike Holloway, Jake Gillis and Ron Anderson. Rod Knopp was in-town coordinator, with several other members who were at the Compound helping to get the team on the road.

FOLLOWUP SESSION:

On Tuesday, April 3, the three rescued subjects came to our meeting, with pizza and cold drinks for all, and shared their memories and reactions with our members. We so seldom get to really talk with the people we have helped (because they are evacuated before most of our teams return from the field or for other reasons) that it was very satisfying to have this face-to-face opportunity. They talked about how a peaceful ride turned into a problem with a major change in weather, the options they discussed and decisions they made, how they spent their time in the snowy dark, how much effort it took to find fuel to keep the fire going...and how happily surprised they were to see lights coming up the trail toward them in the wee hours of the morning. In turn, we were impressed by how well they kept their heads and by how prepared they were with emergency equipment for the unexpected.

BULLETIN BOARD PROJECT **--ANN FINLEY**

The bulletin board at the west end of the meeting room (the one to which most of our backs are usually turned during meetings) is about to undergo a makeover. It's a fair-sized space and we may be able to use a number of ideas for filling it. This is a *call for ideas/suggestions*.

Suggestions so far (in order of priority):

Photos of members.

Photos of recent missions.

Thank-you letters and cards.

News and photos of interest to/of each of our specialty teams.

News of other SAR units around the country.

News, pictures and stories not necessarily SAR-related but on topics of interest to our members, e.g., an article on dogs in the military (some are able and eager to parachute from a plane at 30,000 feet), a story on avalanche skiing in Idaho that appeared in *Sierra Magazine*, rescues that become news.

Pease check out the bulletin board and share your ideas.

You can email Ann at Teamtarek@q.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

Employees of Hewlett-Packard, and the H-P Company Foundation that matches their gifts.

The Good Sam Club, Capitol Gypsy Chapter

Marcel and Anna Marie Roy

In memory of Dr. Anthony

Joyce and Harold Barcus

Family and Friends of Kevin Clemens

Nancy and Terry Coffin for a donation in memory of Earnest Coffin (a charter member of IM-SARU) and Dorothy Coffin, and of George Gunn

Gifts from the following people in honor of George Gunn.

Carrie and Neal Foreman

Harry Kline and June Lee

Gayle Moore

Dan and Kris Scovel

Marvin and Annie Pillers

Elmore County Search and Rescue

Gail and Ron Pirnie

Penny Brinkley

Charles and Elaine Gill

John and Joy Bielenberg

Fred and Connie Hill

The Idaho State Trackers Association

Dean and Amy Hayashida

Ron and Elly Moomey

Joel and Janet Hardin

Roger Perkins

Clayton Landon for Blaine County SAR

Ada County Aerial Sheriffs

Susan Norton, Joel Stark and Dylan Stark

Jimmie and Leslie Yorgensen

Fred and Jeannie Jones

CALENDAR

April 10	Prep for Race to Robie Creek	7:30 p.m.
April 14	Memorial & Celebration of George Gunn's Life All are welcome.	2:00 p.m. At the Compound, 2519 Federal Way
April 17	Prep for Race to Robie Creek	7:30 p.m.
April 19	Tracker Training, Class #5	6:30 p.m.
April 20	Set up Base for Race to Robie Creek If you can't be there at 4 but can help later, meet at the Robie Creek finish area—lots of hands needed!	At the Compound 4:00 p.m.
April 21	Race to Robie Creek	All Day on the racecourse
April 22	K9 Team Training	Contact Judd at 830-5013
April 24	Business Meeting	7:30 p.m.
May 1	General Meeting	7:30 p.m.
May 3	Tracker Training, Class #6	6:30 p.m.
May 5	K9 Team Training	Contact Linda at 371-1175
May 8	SAR Training	7:30 p.m.
May 9	CERT Class	Contact Mike Johnson for information. Evening
May 11	CERT Class	Evening
May 12	CERT Class	All day
May 12	SAR Field Training	Time & Place TBA
May 15	Medical Training	7:30 p.m.
May 18-20	K9 Team Testing	
May 22	Business Meeting	7:30 p.m.
May 23	K9 Team Meeting	All are welcome. 7:30 p.m.
May 29	Board Meeting?	

SAR Training for June 12 and 16 will be ELT.

GEORGE SCOTT GUNN, JULY 30, 1940—MARCH 14, 2012

George started his involvement with wilderness search and rescue in Fort Collins, Co, where he joined Club 100 (the precursor of Larimer County SAR) in 1970 and did his first technical climbing with goldline and a swami belt. Upon moving to Idaho in 1973, he and Charlotte joined Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue that spring and never looked back. George spent many years in various official positions—especially Training Director and President—and many more as a behind-the-scenes force for organization and getting projects done. He was probably proudest of being the individual who started our K9 program (with Shelby, Hobo and Xena in succession) and who kept talking about mantracking as a useful skill until the unit eventually established a team operating under Joel Hardin’s program.

George considered training an absolute and on-going necessity. He shared his knowledge and skills with other groups, and continued to attend seminars and classes to keep up to date. Most of all, George was always ready to go on the mission if at all possible, taking his pickup camper and then later his small 4wd motor home to places no motor home had been before and using it as the OL’s office plus providing hot beverages and snacks for hungry/tired/cold team members. As age and health problems slowed him, George continued with search management and unit projects until a few weeks before the cancer took him.

A few quotes from many spoken and written messages:

From Former Students and/or Counselees at Nampa Senior High and Skyview Senior High:

“You always had time for me.” “You got me through the rough times of my life [including suicide attempts].” “You always believed in me.” “I wish my dad was like you.”

From Former Collegues in Education and in Religious Work:

“Whether speaking in his long-held position as parliamentarian or as an involved member, he did not confront but conversed. He did not demand but described his viewpoint. It was always a well-thought-out one.” “George was always willing to invest his time with students as well as faculty members. He was a role model to be emulated, a man who lived according to his words.” “I know of few people who have blessed a community and a church to the extent George did.”

From Search and Rescue People:

“George was an inspiration, a leader, a teacher (in the large sense of the word), an icon, a man who ‘got ‘er done’ and inspired others to ‘get ‘er done’.” “He will be missed, but he will be joyfully remembered in his great legacy of works.” “...it was an honor working with George and we admired his dignity and grace. He touched many lives in this world, including ours!” “He seemed very humble—doing a lot and yet saying little about what he had done.” “As long as I am around, George will remain alive in my memory and influence my decisions.”



GEORGE SCOTT GUNN
JULY 30, 1940 – MARCH 14, 2012

There will be a second celebration of George's life at 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 14, at the IMSARU Compound on Federal Way. This one will include an MRA Honor Guard, individuals' memories, and the party that George suggested.

ALL ARE WELCOME.