

Founding Member: Mountain Rescue Association

Rescue

Web Edition



IDAHO MOUNTAIN SEARCH AND RESCUE UNIT, INC. Boise, Idaho

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CORN BOOTH AT THE WESTERN IDAHO FAIR, 2018 --ALISA RETTSCHLAG & ROSE WOOD

“I come here every year just for the corn,” one lady stated. Another said, “I’ve been buying your hot buttered corn from this booth for at least 20 years and it is always the best!” Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit’s Corn Booth has obviously become a “tradition” of the Western Idaho Fair. Since the mid-1960’s, IMSARU has sold hot buttered corn, water and pop as one of many concessionaires at the Fair. With thanks to people like Madeleine Strasser for the conception of this giant fundraising idea and to all who have kept it going since, the Corn Booth has provided us with a large piece of our budget income every year.

Though we sell corn for only ten days, it is a big endeavor that starts around late January when the Fair Board accepts concessionaire applications, and goes until mid-September when the last bill is paid. All of our members know that the whole month of August is dedicated to Corn Booth duties.

This year, we had a few changes and a few challenges. We mastered one of the consummate challenges early in January when Tom Wheless, one of our long-term members, volunteered to do the scheduling of workers. Being the Scheduler is one of the most difficult jobs in the pre-planning of the Fair, as the scheduler must find people to fill ten day shifts and ten evening shifts, with 8-12 people per shift—all unpaid volunteers, with most workers coming from IMSARU members and their families. At least one or two shifts per year are filled by generous organizations such as Boise Company and Ada County Emergency Management folks. Tom started recruiting early to fill shifts...which made all the difference; he started in June and he filled almost all of our shifts. Thank you, Tom!

Secondly, Don Hefner of Volcanic Farms (our corn supplier for many years) had passed away. His wife Donna Hefner and their daughter Angie took over the supply operation. As a customer, we saw no change in their exceptional service as our corn provider. However, we will all miss Don; he was a

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gentle soul. Some of our members remember fondly how, after delivering corn to our booth, Don would sit, help us shuck, and entertain us with his stories.

Our third change (and challenge) was that we were no longer able to sell fountain drinks, as our longtime supplier of syrup and the fountain drink machine, told us before the Fair that we did not sell enough for them to supply us. Our Swire Coca Cola contact, Javier, offered to provide cases of 20-ounce bottles and a refrigerator instead of the fountain and supplies. It worked out great! Ironically, though more expensive, we sold more, there was less mess, no need for cups or lids, and fewer problems with bees and wasps flying around.

The Fair itself had a major change: it installed and operated the Sky Lift. This is a ski lift that allows one (for a fee of \$6) to start at the entrance gates and be transported over the Fair, dropping them off near the roller coaster rides—and closer to our booth. The other “new excitement” for us was a fire at the Funnel Cake booth near us when their fire-suppression failed to kick on. Scott Walls grabbed our fire extinguisher and dashed over, quickly joined by at least three other booth operators with their extinguishers, and the fire was out before the official fire-fighters could reach the scene. The booth reopened after cleanup and inspection by Fire Department personnel, and the booth operators treated our workers with free funnel cakes.

Even with the changes and challenges, we had another very successful year. We replenished our budget...and of course it makes us feel good to know that people say they come to the Fair just to eat our delicious hot buttered corn! Additionally, more members--new and old, with too many friends and family to list here--joined in the fun of the Corn Booth, working multiple shifts and giving up days and evenings of their summer. Now that is dedication! It is such dedication that makes us who we are.



Kids old and young enjoyed munching on the tasty corn. Aftermath of IMSARU members putting out a fire in the neighboring funnel cake booth. It looks like training and preparation does actually pay off!. It is believed that the crew feasted on a “thank you” reward of free funnel cakes

MOUNTAIN RESCUE RE-ACCREDITATION

For any reader not familiar with the MRA:

The international organization of the Mountain Rescue Association requires that each of its member groups be tested every five years to its standards in order to continue MRA membership. This is done in two parts: three-season operations and winter operations. For the three-season testing (which we just completed) at least three evaluators—from at least two different teams—go to the home area of the team to be tested, and test both search and technical rock rescue. In addition to the team exercises, five members of the technical rock team are tested individually. For the winter testing, our group normally meets with other MRA teams in a good snow area to demonstrate those skills, which include avalanche search.

Naturally, the types of missions vary according to location—IMSARU, for example, does many more searches than technical rescues, while some other units specialize in the technical and leave much of the searching to junior groups. However, all MRA teams have to pass the basic tests.

MRA RE-ACCREDITATION—BASE CAMP PERSPECTIVE

--JAMIE SIMPSON

After eight years of skillfully avoiding getting drafted into the Command trailer, I broke my cardinal rule: Never stand around base looking like you have nothing to do. I learned that tech members and K-9 handlers have one major similarity: Once they get their hands on a rope (or leash), it is nearly impossible to get them to let go! Since Sasha was the only dog, and Taylor was hogging the leash, Ann and I got caught unawares and drafted into the Command trailer. It turned out to be pretty fun and challenging.

Keeping track of where everyone was, who was leading each team, and what skills and resources were available was overwhelming at first. Having a sticky note representing each person and moving them around the board to each area where we had people stationed really helps if you are a visual person. Fortunately, Dan Scovel was there to help us prep the teams, hand out assignments, and determine who to send where and when. [Editor's note: It's 99% certain that Dan invented this sticky-note procedure; he has used it for many years at the Race to Robie Creek.] I finally got the answer to the great mystery of "Why do we have resources sitting in base camp when they could be out there searching?" Well, because: If you send out all of your resources, you won't have anyone left to send when new information or situation develops...Duh! The people waiting in base are there for a reason.

Final analysis: If you don't have a leash, rope, tracking stick, bike, transport vehicle or drone, working in the Command trailer is a lot more interesting than sitting in base wondering when you will get into the field.

MRA RE-ACCREDITATION—TRACKER PERSPECTIVE

--MIKE ROWE

This MRA re-accreditation (commonly called "recert") was the first I was privileged to be involved with. As part of our Search scenario, our evaluators from Utah gave us a missing female subject in the Grime's Creek Road area just west of Highway 21. Our subject, "Mia," had been hiking with some friends and hadn't been seen since the night prior. The scenario we were given had the potential of using every search and recovery team within our unit.

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Almost immediately upon arrival, members of our tracking team including Dan Scovel, Alisa Rettschlag, Aaron Burdin and myself were directed to begin processing the area around our subject's Subaru Forester where our missing person was last known to have been. The dusty dirt parking lot had many foot tracks and we worked to narrow down to those tracks we believed might belong to our subject. We worked the track evidence to the edge of the parking lot and then worked along the roadside with no further evidence of our subject's travel. As we regrouped, a search team had located a backpack near a cliff edge. Soon a "body" was spotted at the base of the cliff. Our tracking team was cut in half, with Dan taking over the OL function, Gregg moving into his Tech Team role and Aaron also being reassigned to the Tech Team. I was initially confused as to whether this subject was our missing "person"; we soon learned that it was a different fall victim and our first subject was still missing. The Tech Team began a high-angle recovery, and we were still looking for "Mia."

Alisa and I responded to the area near the body recovery operation and began cutting for sign. We received a clue from a "trail runner" that a female subject was seen walking on a ridgeline to the northeast of our location. Another clue was that a male subject was also seen with the female. Based on this information, we requested another search team to respond to our area. Alisa located a set of foot tracks leading up the side of the ridge and indicating that two people had walked there. I requested another team to help us with the wide ridge search and we soon had two search teams in addition to Alisa and myself. We called our subject's name repeatedly as we worked our way up the ridge while the UAS searched overhead. Unfortunately, the UAS was not able to see the subject due to the vegetation and lighting.

Near the top of the ridge, we finally made verbal contact with our subjects. Upon contacting them, we learned that "Mia" was OK, but the male subject with her had a leg injury that required a low-angle technical recovery. Our Tech Team was redeployed from the "deceased" subject to our living subject to successfully get him off the ridge. The scenario proved to be a challenging search and recovery, but a great experience for those of us experiencing our first MRA re-accreditation test.

MRA RE-ACCREDITATION—TECHNICAL RESCUE --FRANCISCO CASTELLON

I arrived at the Compound around 7:15 a.m., anxious to get the tech equipment ready to go, only to find that Ron already had loaded in his truck everything we needed. Not knowing what our tech scenarios would be, we figured we should also load some additional equipment "just in case." We were introduced to our evaluators not long after 8 a.m. and they told us the expectations and plan for the day. After the formalities, we were given a very brief summary of the "callout" much like a regular mission, and were then dispatched to the Grimes Creek area.

Upon arrival, Chris Brookman assumed command of the situation and instructed folks where to stage command, vehicles and equipment...a reminder of how much work goes into managing an operation like this. While I was making sure to have my equipment ready to go in case I was assigned to field duty, one of our evaluators visited with us, inquiring what we were carrying in our packs and if we were ready to go into the field at a moment's notice...which we certainly were. Not long after, Command requested Jeff Munn to get his technical team ready, as one of the field teams had found a subject at the bottom of a cliff and was not able to get access. It seemed that this was to be the high-angle part of the evaluation.

Brad and Attila were dispatched to the area as an initial tech response, to assess the need for additional tech resources. In the meantime, Jeff put together a backup tech group of Ron, John, Aaron and myself, to be joined later by Gregg and Chris. Dodi and Eddie were already on scene as additional resources as well. Sure enough, the second tech group was dispatched to the area with the goal of retrieving the "injured subject." After arriving at the location and gathering information from Brad and Eddie, we were informed that this was in fact a recovery. [In SAR terms, that means a deceased subject.] The rest of the

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tech team was quickly briefed on the situation and the proposed plan for recovery. Chris was assigned to work the litter; Aaron and Gregg were to set up the high directional and work the edge; John would operate the main line and Ron would lead the belay-line group with Dodi and Attila. Brad rappelled down to the victim to ensure there was nothing missed in the initial size-up that could cause problems for the litter attendant. It took the team just under an hour to set up the entire system, using a sideways A-frame for the edge transition. Special kudos to Ron and his belay team for all the improvisation they had to come up with in order to set up a working belay line. It was a true test of skills and patience on their part!

Just as we were ready to start operating the system and put the attendant over the edge, we were informed that a second subject had been found in low-angle terrain and needed to be evacuated ASAP. Thank goodness for that extra gear that was packed! We left all the equipment set-up except for the ropes, not knowing how long a lower or raise would be on the low-angle slope. Arriving at the new location, we found a subject with an ankle injury that would prevent hiking out. Alisa's team had done a great job of caring for the subject and clearing an area for us to be able to lower him down to the road. Tech assignments were the same as before and we had a working system in just over 30 minutes. The subject was packaged and lowered to the road without incident.

Once that operation was completed, we returned to the high-angle recovery location and got to run the system this time. The evaluators asked questions about our set-up and provided feedback, some of which we put into action right away. The main objectives for evaluation were the efficiency and safety of running the system, and showing competency on passing a knot in the lower or raise operation of the main/belay lines. Having done this successfully, we took the system apart and moved on to the remaining part of the evaluation—the personal skills test for five people in the tech group.

The personal skills test included: (1) Show what we carry in our packs. (2) Discuss basic aspects of tech rescue (i.e. fall factors, anchors, angles, etc.) (3) Talk about first-aid principles such as hypo- and hyperthermia. (4) Show proficiency with knots and hitches, and (5) ascend up and rappel down a rope with a knot in it. Ron, Chris, Aaron, Brad and I were the five tech members who volunteered to go through these skills tests, and were happy to complete them successfully, ending the tech portion of the MRA re-accreditation.

As someone working in the front lines in this re-cert and being focused only on a specific aspect of this “mission,” it occurred to me afterward that although re-cert tends to be a bit heavy on the tech side, I would argue that this particular re-cert was a true test of leadership and organization from the Command side of things. Having to make decisions on where and how to allocate limited resources for multiple subjects is certainly a position that I'm happy I was not in, but I'm most decidedly glad that someone who knew how to do it was definitely in charge!

The high-directional in action during recertification. The evaluator is inspecting the system and its operation.



**MISSING HUNTER IN GARDEN VALLEY AREA
SEPTEMBER 30--OCTOBER 1, 2018
--GREGG RETTSCHLAG**

It felt familiar...a mission call in late afternoon; Boise County requested a search for a missing/overdue hunter in the Garden Valley area. We learned that he had left home two days earlier, and his truck was found on a Forest Service road a short drive from his cabin.

Fifteen IMSARU members arrived at the search location at dusk and quickly got a tracking team (Alisa and Ken) looking for clues at the subject's vehicle and working on determination of direction of travel. Our goal for the night was to use senses other than sight; that meant a K-9 search team (Jamie with K-9 Yoki) and ground teams calling out to the subject. These teams would mostly stick to corridor searches, staying on roads and trails as the safest way to deploy in steep and brushy terrain in the dark. This also had the benefit of providing recon info to help us learn about roads and trails not on our maps... information that would be helpful if the search extended into the following day. We also had help from two of the subject's friends, two solid outdoorsmen who rerouted from other hunting plans as soon as they heard their friend was missing. Knowing their friend's skill set and tendencies proved to be very valuable.

In all, five teams went into the field that night, with three individuals remaining to run ops in base camp. We were not able to develop any definitive clues but did have a better idea of the lay of the land as well as a feel for most likely direction of travel. We closed down operations at 2:00 a.m. and half of our people had to return to Boise. The seven of us who were able to stay overnight and continue the search the next day looked around for accommodations such as a truck-top tent, trailer floors, or just good old-fashioned out under the stars on a tarp. A bit of levity was added when a lumbering black Labrador showed up, apparently from a hunting camp nearby. He immediately adopted us and refused to leave despite our pleas for him to do so. As we woke in the morning, he was still there with his dopey look, showing no remorse for the garbage he had decided to sort through and leave strewn about camp.

Day Two of the search started early for me. Unable to shut off the planning side of my ops work, I decided to roll out at 6 a.m., make some coffee, delicately step by Kristin sleeping on the floor of the Command trailer, and park myself in front of the mapping software. It would be a challenging day, as I would have to find a way to incorporate a number of family and friends coming to help with the search. To that end, I held IMSARU members in base camp to work as team leads for mixed IMSARU/spontaneous volunteer teams, to ensure we have someone with knowledge of communications and search tactics on each team. In parallel with my efforts, Rod was working the phone in Boise, arranging for a pilot to conduct an aerial search with an IMSARU observer/searcher on board.

With daylight, our trackers revisited the vehicle, as well as working on cutting for sign on a few roads to increase our confidence that our subject had headed in the previously determined direction of travel. With spontaneous searchers on hand, we teamed Aaron up with the subject's father to check out a ridgeline trail leading away from the area. Daniel had led a team with the subject's two hunting buddies the night before, so he teamed up with them again. They helped us set boundaries for an area search that included terrain they felt the subject would be interested in hunting, as well as noting that they saw evidence of predators (coyotes) congregating in the area. Christopher deployed as team lead with another of the subject's friends, also working a ridgeline trail. While working on the next team assignment, I heard radio traffic indicating that Daniel's team had found the subject, deceased. [This message was radioed in wording only our members would know.] My focus turned to stopping search activity and

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notifying the Boise County Sheriff rep on-scene. The situation was now complicated: The team that located the subject included his friends; the subject's wife and mother were in base camp and would need to be notified; the subject's father was in the field, a long way from base. Several IMSARU team members were in the difficult position of notification as well as providing emotional first aid to people experiencing a very traumatic event.

There are legal issues involved in an unattended death and that means a rep from the coroner's office must be called, resulting in hours of waiting for that person to arrive on scene. We set up our teams for the extraction process while waiting for the deputy coroner to arrive, be escorted into the field, and complete the investigation. The non-IMSARU volunteers rose up once more, coming to the aid of their friend and his family. While IMSARU tech members set up a system to lower the deceased down the steep slope to the road below, the friends assisted with the litter, then walked the litter down the road to base camp. A tired group turned to breaking down base camp and returning home, just under 24 hours from when the event started.

IMSARU members participating were:

Day 1: Angie Christensen, Ron Christensen, Nick Dawson, Alex Deduck, Curtis Frasier, Kristin Freeman, Charlotte Gunn (in-town coord), Rod Knopp (in-town coord), Doug Loertscher, Brian Marinelli, Alisa Rettschlag, Gregg Rettschlag, Daniel Roberts, Jamie Simpson w/K-9 Yoki, Rick Stratton, Ken Swickard and Eddie-Dean Thomas.

Day 2: Aaron Burdin, Ron Christensen, Kristin Freeman, Charlotte Gunn (aerial observer), Jerry Holmes, Rich Jendro, Rod Knopp (in-town coord), Doug Loertscher, Alisa Rettschlag, Gregg Rettschlag, Daniel Roberts, Rick Stratton, Ken Swickard, Christopher Weltner. Jerry Terlisner was pilot for the aerial search.



Base camp on a brisk fall morning.

CALENDAR

Nov. 6	General Meeting – Debrief any missions plus....	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 13	Training Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 17	Field Training – Time & Place to be announced	
Nov. 20	Medical Training	7:00 p.m.
Nov. 27	Business Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Dec. 1	IMSARU Christmas Party on Saturday! We still need a committee to make arrangements. This traditionally starts with a potluck supper, followed by entertainment--sometimes a speaker, serious and/or fun awards. Location and exact starting time yet to be determined.	

Note that there will be only three “regular” meetings in December, as the 25th is Christmas Day. Specific content for each of those three will be decided, but plan on meetings at 7 p.m. at the Compound on December 4, 11, and 18.

OFFICERS ELECTED FOR 2019

IMSARU officers were elected on October 2, giving them two months to coordinate roles with current officers. New officers are marked with an asterisk. The officers for 2019 will be:

President: Gregg Rettschlag	Logistics Director: Eddie-Dean Thomas*
Vice President: Ron Christensen	Medical Director: Colin Sesek
Coordinator: Rod Knopp	P.R. Director: Aaron Burdin*
Secretary: Alisa Rettschlag	Technical Rescue Director: Jeff Munn
Treasurer: Jim Findley*	Training Director: Chris Brookman
Facilities Director: Christopher Weltner*	

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

Mr. Scott Robertson of Kirby Graphix Ltd. Co. for the major discounted price for our logo stickers.

Mr. Kenneth Swickard for personally paying the price of the logo stickers.

The Race to Robie Creek committee for the generous donation to IMSARU.