

WEB EDITION

Vol. 42 Jan./Feb. 2009 No.1

RESCUE

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS

Jan. 31—Feb. 5, Bogus Basin Area

Missing Sledders -p. 1

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

FOUNDING MEMBER:
**MOUNTAIN RESCUE
ASSOCIATION**



HAPPY ENDING TO A TERRIFYING DAY JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1, 2009

--DANIEL MOORE



Pagers went off at about 8 p.m. to search for two missing teenage boys up near Bogus Basin ski resort. A family was spending the day sledding near the road when the 14-year-old and his 15-year-old friend decided to break away and go find a steeper hill...without telling the parents. When the parents realized the boys were missing, their search included driving up to the ski lodge to see whether the boys might have gone for hot chocolate and driving down to the city in case they had decided to hitch a ride home; while in the city, they picked up the friend's father. Fortunately, the parents eventually learned that a younger brother had followed the missing pair to where they took their sleds off the downhill side of the road, and they called the Boise County S. O., who then called IMSARU.

Unfortunately, the fathers borrowed a flashlight from a good Samaritan in the parking lot and started down the hill, following the obvious tracks of their missing sons into the Sinker Creek basin. When the flashlight batteries died, the fathers were stuck. The only good news was that they had cellphone contact and our

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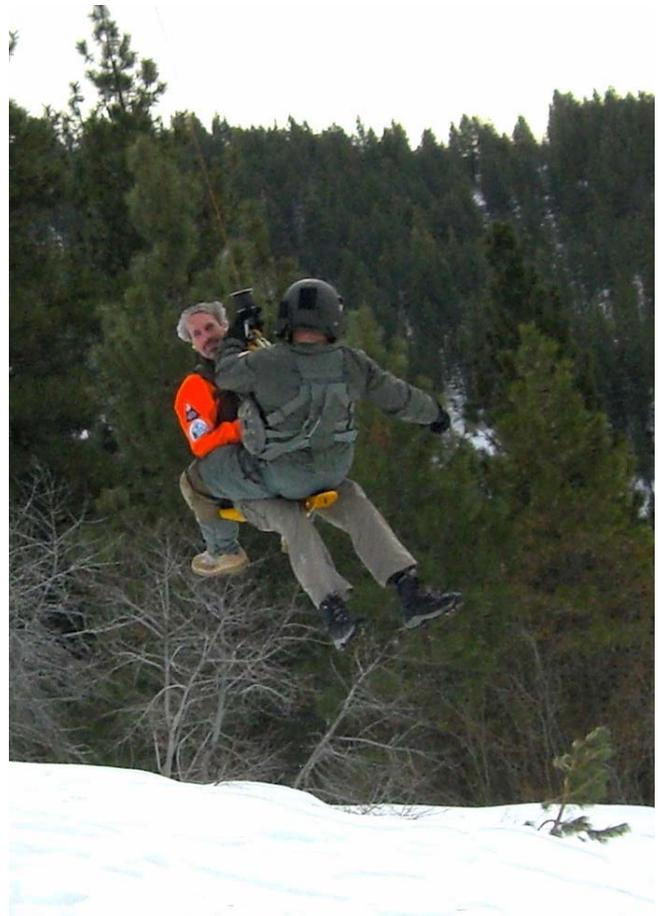
search manager was able to convince them to stay where they were and let our team catch up with them.

The first IMSARU vehicle arrived on scene at about 9:30 p.m., with George as search manager, and he quickly assembled a team to start on containment downhill of where the boys went off the road. He then assembled another team of Carl, Wade, Tom and myself to start tracking the boys and their fathers. Carl took the lead and I was the tail most of the time. We finally caught up to the fathers at about 12:30 a.m.; they were tired, hungry and cold. Wade and Tom stayed with the fathers, fed them and gave them handwarmers for their feet and hands, while Carl and I continued on the boys' tracks. George and Tom did an amazing job of

communicating to get the fathers out, with George giving Tom a series of waypoints so they could plan their route like geo-cachers. The problem was that the terrain was so remote and steep that if you didn't stay on the tops of the ridges it was very easy to get yourself turned around in a "gravity bowl."

From the point where Carl and I left the fathers, the boys had continued downhill on their sleds and we estimated that they were at least two hours ahead of us. We hustled down the ravine as quickly and as safely as we could. Even with our snowshoes, we fell through the soft snow on about every other step, and the willows made navigation difficult. About three-quarters of the way down the ravine we found the sleds stuck in the snow vertically. I read the GPS coordinates to Carl, who then relayed them to Base. While we were doing this the boys heard us talking and yelled for help. The ravine opened up into a big bowl, with the tracks leading to the left and the voices coming from the right. Carl made the good decision to follow the tracks because they are more trustworthy than voices in that terrain.

When we stopped along the trail and asked the boys if they could see our lights above them, they



All photos from this mission by D. Gomez

said “No, we are above you!” Carl got wide-eyed, looked at me and said “That means we go down and then back up and back up some more.” I just shrugged as I was still in shock at how far these two boys had walked. From this point on Carl and I moved as fast as we could. As we climbed up the last ridge we heard the encouraging words repeated over and over and over: “Straight up. NO, straight up!” (The hill we were climbing was about a 45-degree slope and we were making a zig-zag pattern in moving around trees and rocks.)

We found the boys at around 2:15 a.m. They had found a dry place to sit and wait, with their feet up on the tree in front of them to keep from sliding down the hill. Carl is the EMT, so he checked the boys while I worked on getting warm water and dry clothes ready. They had frozen feet (solid ice covering sneakers and partway up their pant legs after having crossed a stream) and were moderately hypothermic. Their shoes were so frozen that Carl broke his trauma shears, which are supposed to be able to cut through pennies. He then had to improvise, using a knife to loosen the shoes and scissors to cut off the socks. After Carl had treated the boys’ feet we worked on removing their four layers of cotton clothing; they had the layering system down pat but didn’t have the proper materials. We had to cut off snow pants and jeans, which were frozen rock-hard. The hill did make it very difficult to work; we continuously had stuff sliding down away from us.

Carl and I each had an extra set of warm base-layer-type clothing to put on the boys. Once we had completely changed the boys’ clothes, we used Carl’s avalanche shovel to dig out two terraces, one for the boys and one for a fire. We had the boys sit on a sleep pad and a tarp, then covered them with Carl’s fancy new heat blanket and another tarp over the top. I continued to prepare warm food and liquids while Carl collected enough wood to start a fire. Carl and I then took turns collecting firewood and keeping the exhausted boys awake. (If you’re ever stuck overnight in the back-country with Carl, you’ll be amazed at his repertory of improvised games.) This is how we spent the next twelve hours, as the boys said they could not walk.

Back at Base, George had the difficult job of figuring out how to get us out of this very remote and tough spot. He started out trying to send a team of four with extra supplies and equipment needed to rescue the two boys. However, that team experienced the difficulties of a heavy litter load and a lot of brush in very steep country; George eventually had to send more people to help extract them. Todd Wernex from Parks and Recreation, with our David G. as passenger and navigator, tried to find a snowmobile route to us but there was no feasible way. They then went to scout an area for a helicopter to come in, after which Dave joined us on foot while Todd worked at getting his snowmobile out.

The Army National Guard at Gowen Field has had a hoist-certified Blackhawk for about six months, after many years when there was no such machine in the state, and Boise County was able to arrange for its use. Our first plan was to litter the boys about 75 yards up the hill and then about 100 yards to the LZ, but we were forced to come up with a different plan because our window for the helicopter was narrowing and the other team wasn’t going to make it to us in time to assist in the evacuation. We then left our gear, planning on David and me carrying it out later, because we heard that the helicopter would take the two subjects and one medical attendant. The Blackhawk arrived at about 2 p.m. and hoisted the two boys and Carl up to the helicopter. I assisted one of the boys to the hoist operator and he told me they would be back to get David and me as well as try to get our other field team. That was music to my ears, as the hike out wasn’t going to be fun.

The catch was that we weren’t even back to our gear yet when the helicopter returned from dropping the boys at Bogus Basin. It hovered above us and followed us to our gear, where the prop wash blew

everything around. We later learned that the Blackhawk didn't need as much space as we had thought they did for a hoist; they found an acceptable area about 50 feet from our camping spot. The crew hoisted David and me up with all of our gear and quickly flew us over to Bogus Basin. However, they were unable to get the other field team out, so all of us waited while those envious individuals slogged their way back on foot.

Another mission that was a potential disaster turned out successful. Without teamwork it could not have been done. Good job, IMSARU members! And thank you, Idaho Army National Guard, for this first use of the new helicopter hoist for SAR rescue in Idaho. The helicopter crew was CW4 Robert Briggs, Pilot in Command; CW2 Josh Provencio, Co-pilot; 1SGT David Berlinguet, Deployer; SSG Ty Bramble, Hoist Operator/Crew Chief.

IMSARU members participating were John Ferguson, Kent Fritchman, David Gomez, George Gunn (O.L.), Chris Harry, Carl Kidwell, Wade Kimball, Ross Mackintosh, Daniel Moore, Ann Moser, David Oren, Ashley Pierce, Lee Pierce, Rick Thompson, Tom Wheless and Everett Wood. Rod Knopp was in-town coordinator. Winston Cheyney delivered maps to Base; Linda Kearney and Tom Kearney delivered real food on Sunday.

SNOWBOARDER GETS TOO MUCH ADVENTURE – FEBRUARY 3, 2009 --CHARLOTTE GUNN

A 17-year-old exchange student from Japan went snowboarding at Bogus Basin ski area on Sunday. Inexperienced at the sport, he became separated from the people he knew and they could not find him at the end of the day. Ski Patrol searched well into the early morning hours, with the Director of the area out all night. Our pagers went off at 6:40 a.m.

A dozen members responded with skis, snowshoes and one search dog. Another member went up as observer in a fixed-wing with pilot Jerry Terlisner of the Ada County Aerial Sheriffs. Our crew was asked to work the perimeter and just outside of Bogus' boundaries; they placed our repeater and divided into teams. The plane had been up over an hour and the Sno-cat was just starting out to transport one ground team when the news arrived.

The missing young man had been picked up by a local couple as he walked along a road in the Clear Creek drainage. They took him to their home for food, dry clothes and a chance to warm up, and called the Boise County Sheriff's Office. The young man had apparently drifted off-course and too far down, and felt that continuing downhill was more practical than trying to walk back up. He said he had walked all night, being too cold and hungry to sleep, and various estimates suggested he may have covered close to twenty miles...going well beyond the search zone.

This is a memory of Idaho that one young Japanese man will never forget. With it goes his astonishment that so many people who had never met him would care enough to help him in so many ways. Personally, I am delighted to have someone carry that impression of Idahoans back home with him, even though I wouldn't recommend the method of acquiring the knowledge.

IMSARU members participating were: Casey Allen, Winston Cheyney with K9 Skadi, Danny Cone (air observer), John Ferguson, George Gunn, Chris Harry, Tim Henning, Tom Kearney, Ross Mackintosh, David Oren, Phil Sander, Tom Wheless, Everett Wood. Rod Knopp was in-town coordinator.

CALENDAR

Feb. 17	Medical Training	7:30 p.m.
Feb. 19	Mantrackers Training at the Compound	6:30 p.m.
Feb. 24	Business Meeting	7:30 p.m.
Mar. 2	Tech Team Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Mar. 3	General Meeting	7:30 p.m.
Mar. 10	SAR Training	7:30 p.m.
Mar. 14-15	SAR Field Training	Time & Place T.B.A.
Mar. 16	Tech Team Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Mar. 17	Medical Training	7:30 p.m.
Mar. 21	Tech Team Field Training – Technical Snow Mission	Time & Place T.B.A.
Mar. 22	IMSARU Strategic Planning	8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.
Mar. 24	Business Meeting	7:30 p.m.
Mar. 28-29	Wilderness First Aid Class IMSARU Members Only You must pre-register for this class.	9:00 a.m. – 5 p.m. Both Days Place T.B.A.
Mar. 31	Mantrackers Planning Session NO UNIT MEETING SCHEDULED AT THIS TIME	7:00 p.m.
Apr. 6	Tech Team Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Apr. 7	General Meeting—Prep for Race to Robie Creek?	7:30 p.m.
Apr. 9	Mantrackers Field Training Contact George or Charlotte Gunn at 378-7787.	6:30 p.m.
Apr. 14	Preparations for Race to Robie Creek	7:30 p.m.
Apr. 18	Race to Robie Creek	All Day
Apr. 20	Tech Team Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Apr. 21	T.B.A. – Schedule still in progress.	7:30 p.m.
Apr. 23	Mantrackers Field Training Contact Jimmie Yorgensen at 345-1450.	6:30 p.m.

SNOWSHOER NEAR BOGUS BASIN – FEBRUARY 4-5, 2009 --CHARLOTTE GUNN

It was our third call in four days to the Bogus Basin area. A 61-year-old woman, an experienced snowshoer, went for an outing in an area she has traveled before. When she realized she had taken a wrong turn—still felt oriented but couldn't find her way back to the trail, and it was getting dark—she used her cell phone to call her husband, who reported her missing to the Boise County Sheriff shortly after 6:30 p.m. She then took shelter under an evergreen, scooping up a big pile of needles and burrowing into them for insulation while she waited for help or daylight, whichever might arrive first. This very smart move on her part shortened our task, as we didn't have to catch up with a moving target, and it greatly decreased the danger of injury that accompanies travel across unfamiliar terrain in the dark.

The B.C.S.O. called us and 32 members responded, many quickly reassembling the packs they had unloaded for laundry and drying after the two preceding missions. Three remained at the Compound for in-town coordination (phones, radio, paperwork, etc.) while the others wound back up the hill to the subject's vehicle with their snowshoes, snowmobiles, tracking sticks and lights.

The missing lady's cell phone battery had died by now, but she had described the general area where she thought she was, and several tracking teams set out on foot, on snowmobiles and in vehicles to find her trail—checking roadsides and trail areas—while others went to likely exit points for a person who wandered off her route. It may sound simple to follow snowshoe tracks from a person's vehicle to the person, but this is a popular recreation area and the trackers had to examine age, stride, marks that indicated use of one or two or no poles, etc. (at night, in varying terrain) and decide which of multiple tracks was their subject's.

A three-person team found the missing snowshoer at about midnight and escorted her back to base camp to meet her husband. All of our teams remained on site another two hours until the lucky team who'd been sent deep into the Dry Creek drainage to catch anyone who might exit that way (after snowshoe tracks had been seen heading in that direction) fought their way back up again. The drive home was enlivened by deer scattered across the road and by finding vehicles left in Boise covered with frost, as the inversion had kept the valley colder than the mountain.

Members responding included: Amanda Barsness, Danny Cone, John Ferguson, Collin Garner with snowmobile, George Gunn, Chris Harry, Tim Henning, Randy Jordan, Linda Kearney, Tom Kearney, Carl Kidwell, Wade Kimball, Bill Lindenau, Ross Mackintosh, Clint Matthews, Owen Miller, Patty Miller, Daniel Moore, Josh Nichols, David Oren, Ashley Pierce, Lee Pierce, Dan Scovel, Kris Scovel, Lori Thompson, Rick Thompson, Mark Westerdoll with snowmobiles, Everett Wood and Avery Wynings. In-town coordination was handled by Charlotte Gunn, Michael Mancuso and Rose Wood.

LAST CALL FOR 2009 MEMBER DUES

One more time: When we revised our calendar for paying dues this last year (in order to make our membership lists for the MRA, the I.S.S.A.R. and NASAR more accurate), we established mid-February as the cut-off date for continuing members to pay their 2009 dues. By the time you are reading this, it will be mid-February. If you have not paid your dues, we will assume you do not

intend to continue and will remove you from our mailing list, call-out list, etc. Please contact Charlotte immediately at the return address on this newsletter or 378-7787 or cpgunn@cableone.net if there has been an error in your status.

NOTE: Jimmie Yorgensen spent many hours trying to contact last year's members who have disappeared into the shadows. If he couldn't reach you directly, he left a message on your answering machine. We thank Jimmie for all of his work, and hope that in the future members who decide they need to spend their efforts elsewhere will tell us so we can also spend our efforts on other projects.

ANSWER TO MOST-FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS: "IT ALL DEPENDS...."

People interested in joining IMSARU or just chatting at public events can be counted on to ask how often we have missions or what kinds of missions are most common. We try not to roll our eyes, but it's impossible to give a general answer that is accurate. Some examples:

In October of 2005, we responded to four overdue hunter calls, plus three cancelled before we left town; a father and son stranded overnight on Thompson Peak near Stanley; two missing woodcutters. In October of 2008 our only field response was for a suicide in the foothills of Boise. (But our neighbors in Elmore County SAR were exhausted from searching for missing hunters.)

In one recent winter we discussed setting up a spike camp at Mores Creek Summit because we were up there so many times for missing snowmobilers. Last winter we were thinking more along the lines of an IQ test for a driver's license after we had so many calls for people who had driven where they shouldn't and had vehicles stuck in mud and/or snow.

So, please note that the statistics below are valid only for 2008. They are sorted in the format requested by the Mountain Rescue Association.

Total # of Missions, including stand-bys	33
Mission person-hours	2056
Search missions	15
Technical missions	2
Recovery missions	2
Public Education presentations*	12
Public Education person-hours*	144
Training Events**	93
Training person-hours**	4001

*Includes only defined groups—not general displays at expo-type events.

**Includes specialty teams as well as all-unit training.

Mission Subjects' Activities

Hiking	5
Snow Machine	6
Hunting	2
Automobile/Motorcycle	6
Other	14 (ATVs, walkaways, suicidal, boating, drowning)

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

For Cash Donations:

**The American Legion Auxiliary, Caldwell, in memory of Dorothy Watson
Diane Fields
Jimmie and Leslie Yorgensen
The Race to Robie Creek Committee
Cheryl Shurtleff-Young and Richard Young
The HP Company Foundation and Hewlett-Packard Employees**

For Other Special Help:

Metal Supermarkets for the generous pricing on tread metal for our Command Post trailer
The Army National Guard—especially **CW4 Robert Briggs, Pilot in Command; CW2 Josh Proven-
cio, Co-Pilot; 1SGT David Berlinguet, Deployer; and SSG Ty Bramble, Hoist Operator/Crew
Chief**—for using their helicopter hoist to save lives on February 1.

BACKGROUND PROJECTS

If you watched the news reports and interviews after the recent three-in-a-row missions, you may have wondered who called Chris Harry and Clint Matthews to be there for background interest during one interview. The answer is: No one. This just happened when members were at the Compound doing tasks that never make the news but help keep the unit functioning. We have no staff, but there is often someone working on the property—Rod printing mailing labels for this newsletter, Chris repacking gear after a training or mission, Mike Mancuso refilling supplies, Jimmie Yorgensen doing yard work in the summer....

Two recent projects deserve special mention: Clint has been painting the meeting room—cream walls and cheerful blue woodwork. We aren't sure he always goes home at night, but we know he has spent a lot of hours making the room look clean and fresh. And the Command Post trailer is progressing slowly but has moved a big step forward recently due to work by Chris, George Gunn, Tom Wheless and David Oren on wiring, internal fittings, etc.

Thank you to all these people and to the many others who do the unglamorous but necessary work in between the mission calls.

SNOW TRAVEL TRAINING – JANUARY 17, 2009 --DAVID OREN AND CASEY ALLEN

This year's snow travel training took place above Idaho City near Centerville. The class all rallied up at the Compound at about 8 a.m. and arrived at Trudy's around 9:15 a.m. As with many mountain town cafes, the food was definitely worth the wait. Grease, salt, sugar—umm good!

Chris drove 902 up with all the gear by 10:30 a.m., so we went to the training site and unloaded. Crystal-clear blue skies were a wonderful change of scenery from Boise's sunless inversion, the snow was white, and the rescue gods smiled upon us all day.

Bob was good enough to lead this training session. He schooled us on the different types of sleds and litters, including how they should be utilized in various conditions and situations. We set up the Ferno litter on a sled behind one of the snowmobiles, with Casey in it as our subject. An example loop of how the sled maneuvered showed us how important it is to package subjects according to their possible injury and means of transport—especially considering how quickly Casey became covered in blown snow.

The technical aspects of using the Aukia with skis were discussed thoroughly, as well as the need to insulate the subject well if the Stokes litter was to be used. In either case, blowing snow behind the snowmobile would again be an issue. David was packaged into the Smith mountain litter as a mock subject and pulled for a distance by Tom, John and Mark with Casey on brakes. All porters were very shortly huffing and puffing, as hauling the subject through snow-covered terrain is always a lot of work.

Mark gave us a great lesson on safe snowmobile riding technique. He also instructed us on snow conditions, which included an explanation of the possible hazards involved when hoar-frost is present. Kent took the initiative to dig us a snow pit during one of our stops on the snowmobile trip, at which time Bob and Mark tag-teamed teaching the snow pit lesson.

Mark brought three snowmobiles for us to train on, while Bob brought his ATV with snow tracks in place of tires...very cool! For lower-speed travel, this setup is highly effective—lots of torque and the machine won't overheat as snowmobiles sometimes do under this type of strain. Kent and David enjoyed a short jaunt on snowshoes. We were all hoping for a good show out of John as he was towed by Mark behind one of the snowmobiles, but alas he stayed vertical the entire time without incident. A good time learning was had by all, and we left feeling more confident and definitely more competent.

A big THANK YOU to Bob Meredith, Mark Westerdoll and Chris Harry! Without them, this training would not have been a success. Others participating were Casey Allen, John Ferguson, Kent Fritchman, David Oren and Tom Wheless.



David goes for a ride.

—Photo by C. Harry

[Editor's Note: The following week, Winston Cheyney taught avalanche safety, with classroom sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings followed by field sessions at Bogus Basin on Saturday and Sunday. Our three missions—two of them through-the-night critical incidents—January 31 through February 5 put these winter skills to use immediately but left no time and energy for writing more newsletter articles. If you have to choose between doing it and writing about it, the decision is obvious.]



Winston Cheyney teaches about Avalanches to an overfull-house audience.



Why is this rescuer smiling?

He has just learned that after nearly 20 hours in the field, he **will** be lifted out by that Blackhawk.