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Founding Member: Mountain Rescue Association

Rescue



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VEHICLE IN THE RIVER – FEBRUARY 26, 2016 --CHARLOTTE GUNN

The good news was that the call came at midday, giving us lots of notice for a mission the following morning to a vehicle submerged in the Payette River east of Garden Valley. (Since the reporting party had waited two days to call the Sheriff’s Office, we were not talking about “rescue.”) The bad news was that Highway 17 is 200-300 feet above the river at that point, with steep cliffs. The tow truck had responded to the scene but was unable to access the vehicle, and the vehicle was too far underwater for any I.D. (The canyon is quite narrow at that point, but the vehicle was in water 10-12 feet deep, running close to 1500cfs.) Tracks where the vehicle left the highway were quite obvious; the assumptions at this point included the likelihood of one or more bodies inside. Even standing at the top of the cliff with someone pointing out the vehicle, it was difficult to spot it underwater and that far down in the shadowy canyon.

Twenty-two members responded to the Compound at 0645 on Friday, where Rod gave us a few more details plus maps; we left in the two IMSARU trucks plus four POVs, and one more member joined us in his vehicle just before we turned up Highway 55 toward Horseshoe Bend. All of us are at least somewhat familiar with the road after it turns off at Banks, winding along the river and often with very narrow berm, and we were mentally trying to figure out how we would be able to set up for our mission without blocking the road for hours. Shortly before reaching the site, four of our members crossed



It’s a long way down to access the vehicle.

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the bridge and went in to the south side of the river to find a site for anchoring a line across the water. (The catch here was that the landowners on the south side are known to be very unwelcoming to strangers. Our team found no one home when they went to the house to ask permission.) When our team later decided against using a highline, those four became the safety and raft guide-rope crew on that side. For the rest of us, it was a relief to meet Boise County S.O.'s Corporal Josh McIntosh at a long and wide stretch of berm with enough space for all the vehicles and equipment, although limited space for the raft haul line.



There are other solid anchors besides trees and rocks.

After a briefing and safety discussion, our technical team scouted the area, discounted the idea of using a highline, and instead found three locations for anchors, using a large tree, our vehicles, and a rock outcropping. The B & W Tow truck arrived and Mike J. helped maneuver the tow line and hook down the hill. Meanwhile, our crew strung lines from the anchors, took Brian's raft down to the water's edge, and double-checked everything for safety. Jeff, Aaron and Brandon were the guide-rope crew on the south side, with Mike M. ready farther downstream with the safety throw-rope. Mike J. and Jake held the raft's guide-rope on the north side, with Greg manning the safety throw-rope about 100 feet downstream from the vehicle. The raft, controlled by Chris upstream and the guide-ropes from each side, took Brian, Jim and Tom downstream to the vehicle. They reported that the tow cable was much heavier than anticipated, requiring some modification of plans in getting Jim (experienced diver in his wetsuit) set to go partway into the water to attach the tow hook; that hook and cable then had to be handheld until the truck could

put tension on it. Once the raft was safely back upstream, the tow truck started the long lift. As soon as the license plate was visible, Boise County S.O. checked it and learned that the vehicle was reported stolen last December. The best guess at that point was that it was a deliberate "accident" to dispose of the vehicle.



Line-handling and safety crew on the other side of river.

By 1340 the wrecked pickup was at the top, our equipment was soon dismantled and repacked, and Francisco led the debriefing. This was another mission that required multiple skills—from the technical set-ups that allowed people to safely descend and ascend the steep terrain as well as maneuver the raft

on the river, to the sheer muscle to take that raft down and back up the steep cliff, to the alertness of the safety crews at river's edge--and repaid those long hours.

of training. As Tech Team Leader, Francisco must have cloned himself; he seemed to be everywhere as he went up and down the hill checking personally and via radio that the work stations were set up correctly and safely, and everyone was ready to go. We returned to the Compound at about 1545 and the crew then had to unpack, inventory and set wet equipment out to dry...another couple of hours of work for those who stayed.

Members responding were: Jeff Ball, Chris Brookman, Aaron Burdin, Steve Camkin, Francisco Castellon (Tech Team Leader), Nathan Channer, Kevin Gaskell, Melissa Gaskell, Jake Gillis, Charlotte Gunn, Mike Johnson, Michael Mancuso, Brandon Mart, Ted Marx, Brian Mitchell, Mike Rowe (Safety Officer), Ken Swickard, Eddie Thomas, Jim Vandermaas, Greg Weber, Tom Wheless, Everett Wood and Jimmie Yorgensen (O.L.).

P.S. - One lighter moment was the "tire problem" alert in 901 before we got out of town. Fortunately, Jimmie knows everyone in Boise and the Les Schwab manager and assistant manager were preparing to open the store; they brought out the compressor and cheerfully added the air. Thank you, Les Schwab!

2016 ISSAR WINTER MEETING HOSTED BY VALLEY COUNTY SAR --JIMMIE YORGENSEN

Larry Mangum, Valley County SAR Commander, and his group of SAR volunteers put on a very successful winter meeting. The venue was the beautiful Trinity Pines Camp and Conference Center in Cascade, ID, where everyone was impressed with the quality of the accommodations, the staff and the food. Larry Mangum and Sheriff Patty Bolin made the welcome speeches.

This year's program included a Disabled Veterans' snowmobile ride to Burgdorf Hot Springs, a presentation by our own Brandon Mart on the use of unmanned aircraft (drones) for SAR, a valuable discussion on how to deal with family members during a search, and included a GPS course and contest for attendees.

The meeting concluded on Sunday with an ISSAR business meeting. One of the highlights of this year's conference was the presentation of the Everett Bogart Award to long-time Elmore County SAR volunteer Norm Spidell, for his many years of outstanding support for the Elmore County SAR Group. A large number of Elmore County members were present to surprise Norm and his wife upon presentation of this prestigious award.

Eleven counties were represented at this year's winter meeting. Next year's meeting will be hosted by Washington County SAR and the date will be moved back to February. It was nice to make new acquaintances and see old friends again. Well done, Valley County!

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MANTRACKER TRAINING --CHARLOTTE GUNN

Joel Hardin makes it look easy, but those of us who try to track people across various surfaces can assure you that it's a lot of work. We try to schedule two training sessions per month, one for a couple of hours on a weekday evening (yes, we do train in the dark) and one for three hours or so on a weekend. Locations vary from public spaces in and near Boise, to warehouses, to the Idaho City area. The photo shows one of those indoor sessions, where trackers are controlling the angle of their lights in order to see tracks that disappear when lighted from overhead.

Each member must eventually certify at a JHPTS course and maintain that certification by continuing to train with our local group and attending the professional classes. IMSARU currently has 14 members in the mantracking program, ranging from novices (not yet certified) through Basic, Apprentice and Journeyman certifications. We offer a "Track Aware" short seminar twice a year for our general members; it is one of the requirements for those who want to become Search Technicians and move on up the skill levels. And IMSARU will be sponsoring a JHPTS weekend course in the Cascade area this coming September, open to trackers from all across the country.



CONGRATULATIONS TO JIMMIE YORGENSEN! He earned his Journeyman certification in the JHPTS program and will now be serving as an assistant instructor.

CHANGE IN NEW MEMBER PROCEDURES --CHARLOTTE GUNN

Too many new members disappear within a short time after joining. We have to suspect that some people join with unrealistic expectations because we are failing to make clear what IMSARU membership involves in terms of time, effort, costs, and perhaps how seldom we get to feel like heroes.

Therefore, IMSARU has put a moratorium on new applications until at least May first, while a committee works on improving the application process. By the time you read this, the Board will have approved (or not) a revised text for the "JOIN" page on our website. The next step will be to agree on topics for an introductory meeting of potential applicants. Only after attending that meeting would an individual actually submit an application, pay dues, attend the SAR Academy (which is a more intensive "short course" about IMSARU) and become a member. The proposal is to have these entry points for new members only three times a year rather than our past practice of accepting applications at any meeting. Meanwhile, our weekly meetings are open to the public and prospective members are encouraged to attend and get to know us.

2016 IDAHO SPORTSMAN SHOW, MARCH 3-6, 2016
--MIKE ROWE

I had the pleasure of working IMSARU's booth at the Idaho Sportsman Show on Saturday. For years prior to my involvement with IMSARU, I have walked by their booth and have been impressed by the volunteers and organization. And I know from my experience in how many incidents they have helped law enforcement agencies with SAR operations.

Delinda, Greg, Ken and Vicki set up the booth area on Thursday, at an outstanding location directly across from the front entrance of the main Expo building, making it very hard to miss. Attendance was limited on Thursday and Friday evenings, but the show was very busy on Saturday and Sunday. There were many opportunities to share IMSARU's role in Search and Rescue with attendees as well as to connect with some prospective members. It was also a great opportunity for new members to work with some of our more seasoned crew, sharing stories and experiences. And we certainly appreciate the donations from the public. Of course,

the K-9s and their handlers were of big interest to the public.



Ken, Vicki and Scott handled the redeployment of the equipment from the Expo back to the Compound on Sunday. IMSARU members working the event included Michael Buckingham, Steve Caldwell, Delinda Castellon, Taylor Grisham with K-9 Sasha, Jerry Holmes, Steve Hunt, Mike Johnson, Linda Kearney with K-9

Can you guess which of the four was most popular?
The K-9 searchers always get the attention.

Cayenne, Tom Kearney, Brandon Mart, Ted Marx, Jeff Munn, Mike Rowe, Ken Swickard, Vicki Swickard, Greg Weber and Scott Walls.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

We very much appreciate cash donations from the following:

Mr. Ronald Christensen

The Idaho Adventure Motorcycle Club

The Benevity Community Impact Fund

Attendees at the Idaho Sportsman Show

Those who made donations to us via The United Way of Northern Utah Combined Federal Fund

WINTER OVERNIGHT TRAINING – FEBRUARY 13-14, 2016 --MELISSA GASKELL

One of the qualifications for winter certification is to spend a night out in the snow, so this year we had 16 IMSARU members and a guest on our winter overnight training, led by Francisco. This outing is an opportunity to expose new members to a winter overnight outdoors, so they are prepared if a mission requires that. Of the 16 members, 9 were doing this training with IMSARU for the first time.

We made the trek up Highway 21 to just past Mores Creek Summit, about 15 miles north of Idaho City, and hiked 1.2 miles in to set up camp. When we arrived at our camping area, at about 6,000 feet elevation, we found ideal snow conditions for building snow shelters. The day was beautiful, with temperature in the 50's, as members started constructing their shelters.



Some slept in tents.

Our group created a variety of dwellings, including tree-wells, snow caves, trenches with tarp covers, tents and the impressive “Brad Mahal” constructed by experienced camper Brad. Several members also constructed our kiva-style “living room,” complete with bench seating for 17+ encircling our slowly sinking fire pit. That evening we sat around the campfire and enjoyed good company and mostly clear skies well into the night, with a crescent moon visible—but no stars. Members’ dinners included Moun-

tain House freeze-dried meals, sandwiches, and other hot dishes; Amanda made a delicious Dutch oven apple cobbler to share.

Overnight, the clouds rolled in and precipitation started with a light freezing rain that eventually turned to snow. Most everyone reported a warm, comfortable night due to the cloud cover keeping temperatures mild. We woke up on Sunday morning to five inches of fresh powder and trees caked in snow. After breaking camp, Francisco and Brad gave the newer members a chance to practice searching for avalanche beacons before we hiked back down to our vehicles.



Some built more elaborate shelters.

This training was a great opportunity for new members to try their hands at building snow structures, evaluate how their gear performed, and even take note of gear they might want to add to or subtract from their packs in the future. For the more experienced winter campers, this was an opportunity to evaluate the skill level of new team members and discuss some of the tactics needed to

get a rescuer and a subject safely through a winter night out in the field when/if the need arises during a mission.

Members attending were Brad Acker, Steve Camkin, Francisco Castellon, Ron Christensen, Joel Fahrner, Jim Findley, Kevin Gaskell, Melissa Gaskell, Steve Hankins, Dan Herring, Steph Jenkins, Amanda Leader, Phil Lewis, Becky Louber, Ted Marx and Gregg Rettschlag. Cade Preston of the Idaho Division of Aeronautics joined us.

The "Living Room" for relaxation and cheerful conversation after shelters were ready.



2015 GEORGE GUNN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD --JIMMIE YORGENSEN

George and Charlotte Gunn have a long history of outstanding service and dedication to the Idaho Mountain Search and Rescue Unit (IMSARU) here in Boise. Much of what the unit has transitioned into over the years can be credited to the efforts of the Gunns since their joining the unit in 1973. George passed away in 2012 and Charlotte has made up for both of them with her ongoing service and hard work providing critical services and her expertise for the good of the unit.

Many years ago, IMSARU created their most prestigious award for members who really went above and beyond with their service and dedication for an extended period of time. The award was called "The Distinguished Service Award" (informally referred to as "The Rock" because it is presented as a rock plaque and the recipients' names are added to a large rock on the wall of our meeting room.) This honor is not awarded every year; when it is, the plaque is traditionally presented at our Christmas party. Following George's death, the unit chose to honor George by renaming this special award "The George Gunn Distinguished Service Award."

This year we are all excited and proud to announce that the 2015 recipient of "The George Gunn Distinguished Service Award" is Charlotte Gunn. Her 40-plus-years legacy with IMSARU speaks for itself, and seeing her name alongside her husband's was a priority for all of us. Charlotte, all of us want to thank you for being our mentor, advisor, mediator, sounding board and our inspiration. We will look forward to seeing you every Tuesday evening as usual.