

MY VIEW

Dave Burdett is spirit behind search and rescue

By Dick Wagner

Jason Pinney, the lost snowboarder rescued March 12, never knew Dave Burdett. But, he, and many others, are alive and well today as a result of Dave Burdett's founding of Santa Fe Search and Rescue in 1994.

Dave was 86 when he passed away on Feb. 27 of this year. At the young age of 70, Dave, with a handful of other outdoor enthusiasts, founded the all-volunteer Santa Fe Search and Rescue group. Today SFSAR has grown to more than 50 members and is widely considered one of the top search and rescue teams in New Mexico.

For the past 16 years, Dave's dedication to, and stewardship of, SFSAR provided our community with a well-trained cadre of volunteers willing to brave the harshest elements in the middle of the night in search of the lost and injured. Long after Dave "knew his limits" and gave up strapping on his own pack or responding as an incident commander, he expertly handled our team's dispatch at all hours of the day and night.

Every mission during this latter phase also included Dave's presence at the team's storage shed, regardless of the time of night, to ensure that all necessary gear went along; his precisely written notes detailing directions to incident base, contacts, and phone numbers were invaluable.



New Mexican file photo

Dave Burdett, left, who helped start the Santa Fe Search and Rescue group, was also a volunteer EMT. Burdett died Feb 27 at the age of 87.

Search and rescue in New Mexico is conducted under the auspices of the State Police. However, everyone on scene, from the incident commander and staff, to ground-pounders and K-9 teams, are volunteers. We receive no funding from the state; every dollar is from contributions, fund-raising, grants, and dues.

Dave was the first recipient of the Ralph

Dawdy Memorial Award, presented annually by the New Mexico Search and Rescue Council, but he never sought publicity or recognition. Dave was a true unsung hero in every sense of the term. The community, and Santa Fe Search and Rescue, will greatly miss him.

Santa Fean Dick Wagner is past president of Santa Fe Search and Rescue.