

NOW THAT THE GUYS ARE HERE  
THEY HAVE TO PICK THEIR

SHELTER:

**SNOW**

OR **SNOW**

*As the shadows get longer, the Scouts  
rush to complete their shelters before  
they run out of sunshine.*



*Travis Meloche takes his turn digging as Ryan Royer takes a much-deserved break.*

# IGLOO, TRENCH CAVE.

## HUNTER LARSEN, 14,

and Joe Simpson, 13, know what it takes to survive overnight on Mount Rainier in the middle of winter.

"Polypropylene everywhere," Hunter says.

"Yeah, it's that gear that saves your life, man," Joe says.

"The odds of dying are low, Joe."

Hunter nods, and says, "As long as you wear polypropylene everywhere."

In 2005, Lakewood, Wash., Troop 51's traditional snow camping trip to Mount Rainier (said, rain-EAR) was canceled for a lack of snow. Now, in 2006, Mother Nature is making up for it—big time.

The group is headed to Dead Horse Creek at Paradise Ranger Station on Mount Rainier. With 162 inches of snow on the ground right now, there will be plenty of white stuff to build shelters.

Their overnighter is only one day and one night, but it's spent on some challenging terrain. Mount Rainier, for example, is a training ground for climbers preparing for an ascent of Mount Everest or K2. People have died on it.

So, as always, the group is taking every precaution to ensure a safe trip. Spending the night in a snow shelter holds risks of frost-

bite and other severe weather challenges if the campers aren't properly prepared.

Leading up to this trip, Troop 51 got two months of training sessions including one from a local mountain safety program. Now that the guys are here, they have to pick their shelter: igloo, snow trench or snow cave.

## CHOOSE WISELY

An igloo, made entirely of snow blocks, takes the longest to build and requires snow of the right consistency. And a snow trench is a trench with an A-shaped roof.

The group decides on snow caves.

"Snow caves are adjustable," Joe says. "You just dig out what you need. With an igloo, you need to map out what you're doing before you start."

For the inexperienced snow campers among them, choosing the proper shelter was just the first of many worries. Fortunately, Troop 51 has half a dozen experienced snow campers with answers.

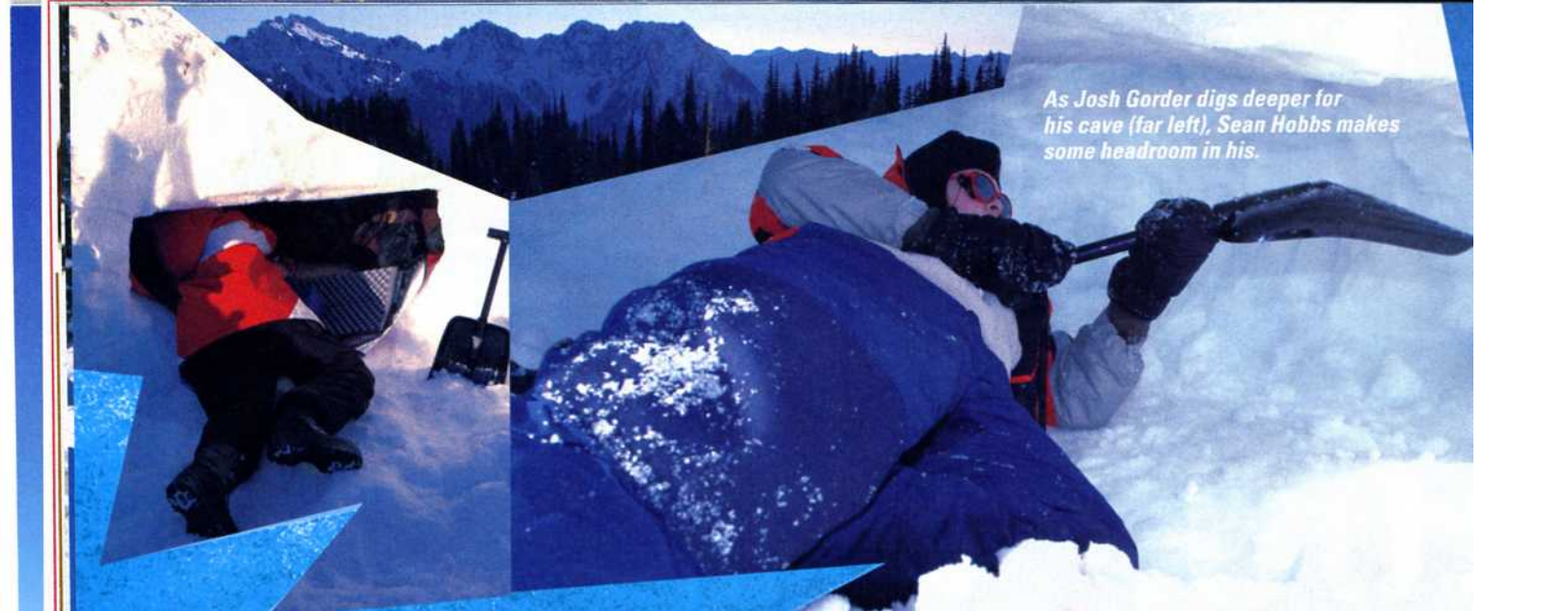
"How cold does it get in the cave?" asks 12-year-old Sean Hobbs.

"Never lower than 32 degrees," answers Marty Hile, 18. "Just be sure to sleep in your wool cap. That makes all the difference."

"What do I do if I fall in the snow?" asks 12-year-old Josh Gorder. "There's like 13 feet of it."

Experienced snow camper Tom Truitt has the answer.





As Josh Gorder digs deeper for his cave (far left), Sean Hobbs makes some headroom in his.

**“ANY SCOUT COULD DO IT... YOU JUST HAVE TO RESPECT THE MOUNTAIN.”**

“Dig yourself out,” Tom says. “You’re not going to fall that far down. You’ll end up loving your snowshoes.”

Each member of the group has packed extra socks, a wool hat, extra gloves, winter clothes made of wool and (of course) polypropylene, plastic cooking utensils, snowshoes, poles and plenty of water.

## GETTING TO WORK

The guys divide into five teams with at least one experienced camper per team. Each team has at least one wood shovel, its handle cut short for easier digging inside the cave.

“We took turns digging down for the entrance, then up into the cave,” says Kris Zarebski, 14. “We excavated, then pulled out the snow.”

As fun and as useful as snow caves can be, there are some disadvantages. The people digging the caves might get wet, from either melted snow or sweat.

Also, snow caves take a long time to build. “It took us three and a half hours and we really had to hustle at the end because we only had 45 minutes of light left,” says 14-year-old Tom Meloche.

A.J. McReynolds, 11, and Matt Lewis, 10, are two new Scouts who on Thursday crossed over from being Webelos Scouts. They’re just visiting the campsite for the day.

“It was a lot of fun,” A.J. says. “I put on goggles, lay on my back and used a pot to dig out the ceiling.”

Some of Troop 51’s caves have a different design. Some have a circular shape, others have a T-block shape. Snow blocks are

pushed into the small entrances after sleeping areas were dug into the hillside.

“It was much harder than I thought,” says 15-year-old Ernie Stinchcomb. “You really need to know how to dig and use your shovel.”

## LEARNING THE HARD WAY

Travis has some advice for the inexperienced Scouts.

“Drink lots of water,” he says.

The snow cave can be the easiest shelter to build and can be built under a variety of snow conditions. Make sure you get the site right, because once it’s set, it freezes and almost like concrete by the morning.

“Make sure you make enough headroom in your cave,” Josh says. “It’s really hard to get dressed in the morning when you keep hitting your head.”

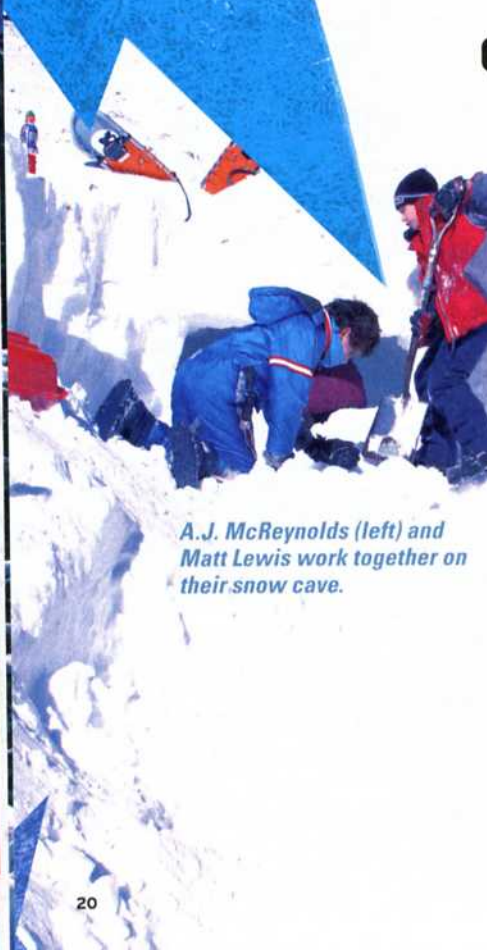
Kris learned one lesson the hard way. It’s a lot colder outside the cave than inside. That’s a good thing, provided you bring your boots inside the cave with you.

“Don’t leave your boots outside,” Kris says. “Bring them in the cave, or they will freeze.”

After a restful night in the snow, it takes only an hour the next morning to collapse the shelters to leave the area safe for skiers or other campers who could otherwise fall into the caves.

Michael Bruno, 13, began this trip as a novice, but he leaves as an expert.

“Any Scout could do it,” Michael says. “I could teach them how. You just have to respect the mountain...and bring lots of polypropylene.” ✦



A.J. McReynolds (left) and Matt Lewis work together on their snow cave.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Mount Rainier held the world record for snowfall for more than 25 years with 1,122 inches in 1971 at Paradise Ranger Station. In 1998, Mount Baker, also in Washington, got 1,140 inches.

At 14,410 feet, Mount Rainier is an active volcano encased in more than 35 square miles of snow and ice. **It also features 26 major glaciers and numbers of unnamed snow and ice patches.**

For more information, click on [www.nps.gov/mora](http://www.nps.gov/mora) or write to Tahoma Woods, Star Route, Ashford, WA 98304-9751.

*A.J. and Matt relax in the warmth of their very own snow cave.*



# MT. RAINIER IS AN ACTIVE VOLCANO ENCASED IN MORE THAN 35 MILES OF SNOW & ICE

## BUILDING A T-SHAPED SNOW CAVE

The Scouts of Troop 51 experimented with a variety of methods for building snow caves. Depending on the amount and consistency of the snow, some kinds of caves are more suitable than others. **One example is the T-shaped snow cave**, which is easier to build in soft snow and requires a considerably tall drift. It allows two campers to work at the same time. Here's how you can build your own:



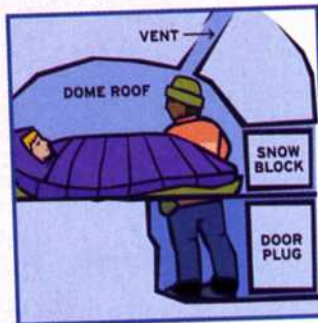
- Dig a rectangular entrance platform 18 inches wide by 5 feet high. Dig about 3 feet into the snow bank.



- Dig a waist-high platform 4 feet wide and 18 inches high centered on top of the entrance platform.



- Continue digging from the entrance platform in a standing or kneeling position. Expand the cave in all directions except down.



- When the first camper can sit on the floor inside the cave, have a second camper dig on the other side. Expand the cave until it is about 7 feet long, 5 feet wide and 3 1/2 feet high.