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**HeadwatersNews**  
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**Archived Story**

-- for April 1, 2005 --

**Darby woman killed in California avalanche**

By *MICHAEL MOORE of the Missoulian*

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A Darby woman was killed in a California avalanche on Saturday as she, her husband and five other skiers descended Mount Tom, in the Sierra Nevada near the California-Nevada border.

Christine Seashore, 56, of Darby and a well-known Bishop, Calif., man - 52-year-old Will Crljenko - died in the afternoon avalanche, which swept the victims a quarter-mile down the hill.

Although Seashore's fellow skiers, including her husband, Jon Turk, found her within 20 minutes, they could not revive her. Inyo County Sheriff's Sgt. Randy Nixon, who heads the department's search and rescue team, said Seashore was buried under about 10 feet of snow.

Crljenko, a backcountry legend in the Bishop area, was buried under 7 feet of snow, but his body wasn't found for more than an hour. He had been climbing, hiking and skiing the eastern Sierra for nearly 40 years, the Inyo County Register in Bishop reported.

The seven skiers were on the east face of 13,652-foot Mount Tom in midafternoon Saturday. According to Nixon and press accounts, the group was about 200 feet below a ridge that slopes down into Elderberry Canyon, at an elevation of about 12,000 feet on a mountain that has been inundated by snow during a very wet winter.

Avalanche danger was listed as high over the weekend by the Eastern Sierra Avalanche Center.

According to Nixon, two skiers came down the hill without incident, but the slide enveloped the next pair, Seashore and Crljenko. The remaining three skiers started a downhill traverse to help their friends and triggered a secondary slide. Two skied out of that slide, but another was swept about 1,000 feet downhill and suffered a broken leg, Nixon said.

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The surviving skiers came out and reported the slide about two hours after it occurred, but Seashore and Crljenko weren't flown off the mountain until Sunday.

According to a story in Tuesday's Inyo County Register, the deaths are the first by avalanche in the eastern Sierra in about a decade. Mount Tom is east of Yosemite National Park and about 10 miles north of Bishop.

All the skiers involved in Saturday's slide wore avalanche beacons and carried the proper rescue equipment, and Seashore and Turk were experienced backcountry skiers.

"It's been a heavy snow year and, in a way, it's sort of avalanche roulette out there," said Jerry Cimino, patrol captain for the law enforcement division of the Inyo National Forest.

Turk is the author of two adventure books, "In the Wake of the Jomon" and "Cold Oceans," and he and Seashore were well known in the Bitterroot's adventure community. Some of the stories in "Cold Oceans" recount trips Turk and Seashore made by kayak, including a journey through the Northwest Passage and a long paddle from Canada's Ellesmere Island to Greenland.

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