There are 13 families in Cardston which are lucky they still have dads. Following the avalanche at Middle Kootenay Pass on Wednesday, Jan. 4 one man is dead and 13 others are happy to still be around to tell the rest of the world what happened.

Neal Hoglund, 49, of Fort Macleod died when he was buried by the avalanche. His body was found following a search by 15 men moving one step at a time shoulder to shoulder. Steve Zuback, one of the men, said they used probes and spent 4.5 hours before they found the body of their friend.

All the time they were looking there remained the possibility of another avalanche as there was still 30 feet of snow left on the top ready to come down, according to Zuback. The pass is five or six miles south of the Westcastle ski hill.

The search party was organized by a member of the ski patrol at Westcastle and Zuback said, "We got a very good job out of the rescue help." He said within an hour of the slide they had organized and were searching and the helicopter was on its way with a dog and medical help.

Hoglund and Zuback were in a party which included Jim Baird and Jerry Zuback. When they got up there they met up with 10 other people from Cardston. Zuback said he had never seen so many people from one community there in the 20 years he has been going up there.

Zuback said they have been snowmobiling in that area without mishap for 20 years and the group has an agreement that they do not stop to help each other on the way up because they are have stalled or are stuck. Hoglund had stalled on the way up and was sitting on his machine when the others went by.

Zuback said they were only 30 seconds away from where Hoglund was, waiting for Don Leavitt to get his machine out of the trail. He said Leavitt had turned around to take another run at the hill when he got stuck across the trail.

Zuback said he saw the snow coming and tried to signal to Leavitt but everything happened too fast. He said one minute Leavitt was on the trail and the next he had a 10-foot wall of snow behind him. He said the slide missed Leavitt by inches. Zuback and Baird were about 30 feet away from the edge of the slide.

"If we hadn't been waiting for Donny we would have all been down with Neal. We were only 30 seconds from helping Neal out."

He said it took Baird, Leavitt and him about half an hour before they reached the bottom of the hill because they were afraid of another slide. In that time both those on the bottom and the ones on the top thought all the others were buried. He said it was quite confusing with people going for help and the fact they weren't all together. He said it was about an hour before they got an accurate head count and knew for sure Hoglund was the only person missing.

"The worst part was looking for Neal. We dug several false holes." He said they were very tired but "no one gave up one bit."

All the time this was going on at the hill there were people in Cardston who didn't know what had happened and who was missing. Debbie Zuback, Steve's wife said she and Bard Baird complete sweep up the hill but with all landmarks gone it was hard to get their bearings and they missed Hoglund. He said one member of the party moved off to the side and found the snowmobile and that gave them a little help in looking for their friend.

He said after they found the machine they went 50 feet above the machine and started their search once more. Zuback said when they found Hoglund's body it took another three-quarters of an hour with three men digging steadily to get him out. "He was cemented in."

He said it was unlikely Hoglund even knew what hit him. His machine was destroyed by the snow. The men were all wearing helmets so his face was not covered with snow but he was definitely unable to move after he was buried. Zuback said it was hard on all those who searched as they knew Hoglund well and as they dug him out it was not pleasant.

He said the worst part and most scary was when the helicopter landed within 50 feet of where Hoglund was buried. He said they were standing in an eight-foot hole with 30 feet ready to come off the mountain while the helicopter stirred up the snow.

Zuback said of all the people who went up to the area to snowmobile Hoglund probably loved it the best. "Neal just loved to do it."

Zuback said the group is very conscious of avalanches. "We're very, very conscious of snow slides. We didn't think there was enough snow. We're quite conscious in our minds. We totally misread the conditions. It didn't appear dangerous."

He said the men who were up there
In honor of the marriage between

Peter David Zuback

and

Valerie Eileen Lorinczy

an Open House

will be held on

Sunday, September 2, 1990

at

212 - 7 St. West, Cardston

2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Friends and relatives please accept this as your invitation.