

Search for senile man

March 25, 1974

Palm Springs Tram, Long Valley

1974-008

After an exhausting three day search in Jensen Canyon, the members of RMRU were about to partake on a well deserved, warm night at home. Pete Carlson was busily deciding on what to do with a newly acquired friend who had become quite attached to him during the long search, and Jim Fairchild was about to devour his favorite entrée when the phone rang.

Packing began. Switching from low desert to cold summit gear, each member kept in mind the differing requirements between these two altitudes. With the disappointment of a recent failure and the knowledge of night-time conditions at the top of Chino Canyon, each man prepared for himself clothing, food and heat for the worst of conditions in the area.

Pete Carlson, being less than enamoured with his new companion, sought the aid of two RMRU members in persuading a dissolution of the relationship. Having an unsuccessful attempt at separation, Pete and his companion were obliged to pick up Bernie McIlvoy before proceeding to seek the aid of a physician. After a local anesthetic, Pete's friend – an mildly engorged *Dermacentor* tick, was successfully removed and RMRU proceeded to Palm Springs Tram.

At the time of arrival at the tramway, Bob Claybrook and Jack Schnurr had collected appropriate information and had deployed to the upper station. The victim was a 75 year old Caucasian male, dressed in gray-blue jacket and plaid trousers, who had been missing since he put his wife on the tram car at the upper station, and missed the car himself. He was senile, unfamiliar with the area, and had no experience in mountains. There was no evidence that the victim was still in the area. Questions appeared in every rescue member's mind as to the potentiality of a searching attempt. Despite this apprehension, teams were deployed, looking for tracks in the snow filled canyons at the top of the tram.

One team was sitting on the rounded boulders southeast of the tram, identifying surrounding terrain. Miller, San Jacinto, Jean Peaks, Tamarack, Round and Long Valleys were easily visible from the view point. The question arose: if a victim followed the drainage of Long Canyon, would he enter Tahquitz Canyon above or below the dangerous area? Then suddenly, a gray-haired man appeared in the entrance of Long Canyon. He was clearly visible and appeared to be talking to someone. The two-man team investigated. As they approached the gray-haired

man, he looked up quickly and spouted, "Hello there, young man. How are you today?" Confused but content, Tunas Vankirk was lead to his family.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.