

Sick Solo Hiker

January 2-3, 1976
Skunk Cabbage Meadow, San Jacinto Mts
1976-002

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Our new year was punctuated by a call for help for a reportedly very sick solo hiker near Willow Creek. Being a long weekend available team members were few, so they reached on the back page of the call sheet for associate members and found me.

The call was for us to meet at the Palm Springs Aerial Tram, which we did, only to find that the informants, after some thought and further questioning, were now sure that the victim was near the top of the Devil's Slide Trail; so we all abandoned the tram and headed for Idyllwild and Humber Park. Gary Gillespie and Bernie McIlvoy were sent ahead in Gary's Alfa Romeo so they could bomb (like fast) to the victim.

We all arrived just before Gary and Bernie left so I joined them since I had a stove and we hurried to where the victim was last reported only to find he wasn't there. We walked through the cold, icy woods calling his name until near the upper end of Skunk Cabbage Meadow we heard a call. We found the victim had been befriended by two campers and they had taken him to their camp and fed and cared for him. He was in perfect condition.

It turned out that he had hiked to San Jacinto Peak and upon his return got very ill with severe breathing difficulty. He got scared and called for help and two other campers heard his cry. They remembered the ranger at Long Valley, near the tram, and hiked that way to report the sick man. They apparently were not familiar with the area and thus the conflicting reports. As it turned out, even if they had pinpointed his exact location, he wouldn't have been there because the two campers who took him in moved him to their camp.

We bivouaced for the night and hiked the now well hiker out after daylight. What started out to be a potential nightmare of evacuation by litter down an icy trail turned out to be a rather pleasant night on the mountain. Many thanks to the backup crew that wrestled the litter two thirds of the way up the trail before being told to turn back.

We reaffirmed that making your presence known by shouting the victim's name

pays off. Also, unfortunately, we once again learned that a thorough, in depth interrogation of the informants can save a lot of extra effort.

Many thanks to the Riverside Radio Association and their ham radio system for the back up of our communications system by getting messages to our coordinator, families and employers.

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.