

Recovery Of Bones

**May 17-18, 1976
Jenson Canyon
1976-026**

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We received a call Monday at 1600 hours informing us that a young man hiking the Pacific Crest Trail had found a skull and bones in Jenson Canyon. The Pacific Crest Trail goes cross country in this area and it is easy to become lost. By the time we were assembled at the mouth of Jenson Canyon in Cabazon it was 1800 and dark. We made plans with Chip, the informant, to go in the next day with a helicopter and bring out the remains.

At 0600 Bernie McIlvoy, John Muratet, John Dew, and myself were at Jenson Canyon. Don Landells was only minutes behind in his Bell jetranger. Bernie and Chip went in first and had no problems locating the pack and remains. Don let Bernie off about 1/4 mile away on a boulder. Next John M. and I came in to join Bernie.

Don went back to base to wait and we hiked over to the pack. The pack was on a rock about 300 feet above the stream. We went through the pack first. We found the usual hiking gear and also a note:

about the 24th July 1974

I Joe Cermack 11 E. James Way, Cary, Ill. had to leave this pack after being stranded in this canyon. I do not believe anyone will ever find this, but if anyone does, its yours to keep. for you would have had to struggle like I did to get it.

Signed Joseph F. Cermack The skeletal remains were about 100 feet down a chute of loose rocks. We then guessed that Joe had tried to get down to the water and fell. We went down and got all the remains and some pieces of clothing. NOTE: We had been in shirt sleeves and sweating in about 70 degree weather. There had been clouds in the sky, but we hadn't really noticed them. All of a sudden it began to hail and rain very hard. The temperature dropped 20 to 50 in 30conds. We put on our parkas, but still got soaked in 2 minutes. In 5 minutes it was all over and back to 70F. (Most people don't realize how fast the weather can change in the semidesert foothills, and we must always be prepared.)

By this time we had everything back to the pack and were ready to hike back to our pick-up rock. As we hiked back we could not help wondering why so many people go solo hiking with so little experience. Solo hiking is never a good thing to do, but most people do not have experience either. From the canyon Joe said he was stranded in, it took us 15 minutes of easy hiking to reach a ridge from which we could walk down to Cabazon in 1 1/2 hours with no problems. Of course we are experienced mountaineers and he was not.

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.