



Injured Team Member

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San Jacinto Mountains
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It was pleasant to be into cool, crisp mountain air after the tram ride up the hill. We had come up on our annual winter shakedown and were all anxious to try out our skills and equipment. Thus, began what was to be an exciting weekend.

Soon after hitting the trail, we split into two groups, one taking the snowshoe trail and the other the regular trail. Most of the group took the snowshoe trail and some members soon found out the limitations of their snowshoes and/or bindings in steep powder-type snow.

Jim Fairchild, Larry Roland and the author had taken the regular trail and reached the campsite on a ridge overlooking the Willow Creek drainage well ahead of the snowshoe trail group headed by "Mr. Bad", Walt Walker and company.

After a restful, quiet night, everyone reluctantly arose. Fairchild and company were first on the trail, while "Mr. Bad's" group took their time to enjoy a hearty breakfast with all the trimmings. Eventually, old guys like Mike Daugherty and Art Bridge finally got the new guys like Charles Bujan, Hal Fulkman, Steve Zappe and Tom Aldrich up and going.

The plan for the day was to proceed to Tamarack Valley, then on to Miller Peak and perhaps on to San Jacinto Peak. Jim's team soon reached Tamarack Valley although Jim was experiencing some difficulty with his hip. Because of his malady, it was decided that he would stay there along with Walt's group, including his son, Kevin and John Dew. About lunch time the rest of the troops reached Tamarack and decided to continue on up the hill. Larry Roland joined the group going up which also included Pete Carlson, Ed Hill, Hal Fulkman, Larry Brown, Charles Bujan, old guys Art Bridge and Mike Daugherty and the dynamic duo "A & Z" (Tom Aldrich and Steve Zappe).

While the "summit team" was trucking up the slopes, the group down below was setting up camp and snowshoeing around the valley. It was at this time that Jim really got uncomfortable and discussed the possibility of not being able to walk out. So what started out to be an ordinary training soon became an extraordinary rescue.

(We haven't seen many rescues lately, so we have to create our own. Ed. Note)

For some reason the guys up the hill were less than enthusiastic about coming down since the big grunt up, setting up camp and starting supper. However, Art and Mike came down to keep Jim company and have less of a hike in the morning.

"Commander" Walker meanwhile had taken charge of the situation and after issuing orders to the staff about getting the team dogsled up early the next morning, left for the tram. The "Commander" was accompanied by aide-de-camp, "Corporal" Kevin.

Jim felt better the next morning, after a nice supper and restful night, but was still in no shape to walk out. So the Ranger Station was contacted by radio and they in turn gave the "GO" sign to "Commander Bad".

Mike and Art packed up and left after breakfast followed by Larry Brown and Charles Bujan who had come down late the previous evening. Meanwhile, the rest of the troops slowly got going up the hill, as there was going to be a lot of walking and might as well conserve energy.

The plan was for everyone to go down to the tram, dump weight and then march back with the toboggan. Bernie McIlvoy brought the sled out from Riverside and met Walt and Kevin at the tram. Walt and Kevin then teamed up with Mike, Art and Charles to bring in the sleigh. So with cursing, sweating, the gnashing of teeth and agony, the bulky sled was pushed, towed, pulled and kicked up the hill. We had never used it and this "mission" was proving to be an eye opener.

It took a while for the uphill team to get downhill and then back up the hill, never catching up with the sled which had been towed up the trail at breakneck speed by "Jean Claude" Walker's team on skis. (Skinny skiers, watch out! Here he comes!) So, by lunch time everyone was back together again at the head of Tamarack Valley. The faithful sled dogs had come back up the hill eager to tow the sled down the trail with its precious cargo. Harnesses were rigged, loads distributed and Jim firmly tied and tucked in. And we were off with the barking and howls of the eager beasts (sound effects courtesy of Steve Zappe. Good job, Steve!) The sled was expertly guided by long-time dog expert "Jean Claude" Walker on his 12-foot boards.

The race downhill was uneventful except for the gasps and queries from tourists and skinny skiers: "Is he hurt bad?" "No lady, he got tired of walking!" They were all impressed at the tram when we dumped Jim out and he painfully walked up the ramp.

And thus, another job done, another life saved, another adventure lived by that fearless, funny band of mountaineers.

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.