

Missing Park Ranger

November 6, 1977
San Jacinto Mtns
1977-029

By Steve Jensen

At 0230 hours (2:30 a.m.) Sunday morning RMRU was called out to search for Rick Brown, a San Jacinto State Park ranger. Rick was reported overdue on a Saturday day hike patrol by the Long Valley Ranger Station. His scheduled route was via trail from Long Valley to Wellman's Cienega, then cross country over Marion Mountain, Jean Peak saddle to Deer Springs, followed by a return on trail through Little Round Valley to Long Valley.

The last radio communication with Rick was at 1700 hours, (5:00 p.m.) on Saturday afternoon at which time the weather in the area he was patrolling was poor, with visibility of less than 100 feet and falling snow. The transmission was badly broken and the only word understood for sure was "all right". When the hours passed with no sign of Rick, concern filled those who had heard that last radio broadcast. "Did we really hear the word "all right?" "Could we have possibly misunderstood?" "Why isn't he here? He knows these hills well." AND the worry started. To give him until nine thirty was ample time, but here it is well past midnight, so the call for help was made.

RMRU met at the Allandale Ranger Station at 0400 where Jim Fairchild (Base Camp Operator) made assignments for personnel to climb toward the area of the ranger's planned route from both sides of the mountain. Those ascending from the west were Tom Aldrich, Pete Carlson, Hal Fulkman, Rick Pohlars, Kevin Walker and Bob Snead (another State Park Ranger). From the east, (using the 0700 tram), came Ed Hill, Steve Jensen, Bernie McIlvoy, Steve Zappe and two State Park rangers, Mike Hamilton and Keith Molle. John Dew and new RMRU member Randy Beaty assisted Jim Fairchild at Base.

By 1015 a.m. the two teams climbing from the west had reached Little Round Valley and the Marion-Jean Saddle, while the teams ascending from the east had reached Wellman's Divide and Tamarack Junction. Soon thereafter the missing ranger was spotted descending on the trail at Wellman's Divide. He was in good spirits but had spent a chilly night bivouacking on top of Jean Peak when the inclement weather prevented him from making any further progress. Complicating matters, the batteries in his radio had failed. This made it impossible for him to

notify anyone of his situation, even though he thought he had done so.

Despite the call out at a most uncivilized hour of the morning, the search went quite smoothly, resulting in a happy conclusion. It gave RMRU an opportunity to meet and work with a number of the State Park Rangers, and the exhilaration of being on San Jacinto with a fresh dusting of snow more than made up for the lack of sleep the night before.

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.