

Lost man with C.B.

May 11, 1979

Southwestern slope, San Jacinto Mtns

1979-016

By Kevin Walker

How does one begin to talk about a day that just shouldn't have been. My Dad, Walt Walker received a call from Capt. Ray Canova of the Banning station, Riverside County Sheriff's Department, that a man in his mid 20's had made contact with a Hemet React base station via C.B. radio. The message was quite weak, but he was able to tell the React base operator that he was at snow level in the Deer Springs area, he thought, and could not hike due to blisters on his feet.

Since we had a fairly good idea of where the lost man was, weather conditions being excellent and the gasoline shortage still hindering team members response time, it was decided that Walt, John Dew and myself would roll on this mission. We met Capt. Canova at the Banning Airport, shortly after that Don Landells arrived with his Bell Jet Ranger. Walt and I quickly loaded our gear and ourselves into the bird, and were off to Deer Springs.

As we neared the Deer Springs area we thought we were going to knock this one off in a matter of minutes, because as we made our first pass over the area, we spotted a solo pair of tracks in the snow. Needless to say, Don rolled the chopper back around and then slowly followed the tracks down the ridge to where tracks left the snow, and then we lost the tracks. For over an hour and a half we tried to find the tracks further down the drainage. With no luck and low fuel, Walt and Don decided to drop me off on a ridge in the area where the tracks were to check and see what I could find, while they went back for fuel.

During the 45 minutes that the helicopter was gone, I did some looking and shouting, with no luck. Before they returned, I made contact (via MRA radio) with Steve Vaughn of the Hemet Search and Rescue Team. Steve had been monitoring the rescue from their base radio located in the Hemet Police station, and asked if he could be of service. Since we were getting no where, I asked if he could get someone to help relay to us from the React station. Since the subject had a C.B., maybe he could transmit to Hemet and then Hemet could relay to us 'troopies' in the field, whenever we were close. Sound like the old hot and cold game?

When Walt and Don returned, they sat down and left me with a portable C. B. so that I might be able to hear the subject.

Like I said at the beginning, it was one of those days. For the next two hours I listened to the relay, from the subject to us, send Walt and Don from Black Mountain to Little Round Valley, all the while saying he could hear the chopper. Well needless to say, we were getting no where fast. Daylight would soon be a factor and we were running out of ideas. Walt came up with one last thing to try before darkness.

We would try a leap frog from ridge to ridge with the C.B. and see if I could home in on the subjects radio signal. After three attempts with no results (definitely a discouraging situation) Don moved me to a ridge that looked down towards Idyllwild on one side and the Banning highway on the other, not even close to the search area, but what the heck. After Don had let me out, I tried the radio, and got a response. The hiker had made it back around to the Idyllwild side. Sure enough, a few minutes later Walt spotted the hiker in very small clearing.

To make a long story short, we flew a very relieved and totally disoriented hiker back to Banning.

Comment: Should our very lost friend, really have taken a C.B.? Or should he have had a partner along? Should he have known the country better before going alone???

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.