



Overdue solo day-hiker

**January 23, 1983
San Jacinto Mountains
1983-005**

By Kevin Walker

The calmness of this particular morning was broken by the sound of the pager. Rendezvous: lower station of the Palm Springs Tram, for a search. Upon reaching the tram, we were informed by the sheriff that Charles Vanutta from San Diego had been reported overdue by his wife from a day hike on Saturday. His route of travel was to have been from the tram to Mt. San Jacinto and back again. Weather on Saturday was poor, to the extent of snow falling on and off all day. The storm was now breaking up which would allow us to use a helicopter to air search and then put field teams out.

As we finished loading our packs Don Landells arrived with one of his 206 Rangers. Walt and I loaded our packs in the cargo compartment and climbed in. As Don made his way up the mountain, dodging the fluffy clouds, we talked about where to start. First order of business would be to cut tracks along the escarpment from the tram to Mt. San Jacinto. After doing that Don flew us down the ski route from the summit back to Round Valley. Searching was difficult as hikers and skiers had already been into the search area since the storm. We were working the 10,000 foot ridge when base radioed and said that Charles had just wandered out to the Banning-Idyllwild Highway near Pine Cove. So ... back to base, thanks to Don, and back home.

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.