

Overdue 56-year-old man

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Skyline Ridge, San Jacinto Mtns
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By Kevin Walker

Sometimes it is truly difficult to write a newsletter article, and this is one of those times. I will not dwell or spend a lot of time talking about all the particulars, I will just tell the story. I would like to mention though, that it was a difficult mission, and also a costly mission.

The team was called out at 0730 Sunday morning. We met at the Palm Springs Tram. There we learned that we would be looking for Herbert Hone, 56, of Hemet. Saturday morning he had set out from Palm Springs to hike the Skyline trail to the upper Station of the tram. When he did not return home, his wife notified the rangers who in turn called the Sheriff. Jim Fairchild, Bill Blaschko, Joe Erickson and Cameron Robbins rode the tram and started down the trail from Long Valley. Joel Rothschild, Dave Ezell, Rob Gardner, and I started from the bottom. Mary Bowman manned the radios at base.

After about an hour of hiking, and getting above the majority of short distance foot prints, we came across a set of Nike Approach prints that were the exact size in question. Not long after that the teams above cut the same print leaving the badly grown over trail, and starting down a small stream bed. And of course the stream bed was heading towards Tahquitz Canyon. At base, Ops. Leader Walt Walker and Asst. Ops. Rick Pohlers decided to ask for air support. The OK was quickly given and Brian from Landells Aviation responded. Walt and Rick were picked up and let out on a ridge near the main search area. As they were being flown in, Joe and Cam came across gear that had been left behind that belonged to Mr. Hone. As the search intensified, Brian was asked to come down to our low elevation and move us into the search area several thousand feet above in elevation. On the first load Dave and Rob were picked up from our one runner boulder. Joel and I waited for the helicopter to return. But that did not happen. Because we were so low, we could not hear what was happening higher on the mountain. Apparently as the two were being let out the tail rotor struck a large bush, damaging the tail enough that Brian quickly flew to the Grapevine helispot where he could land and inspect the damage. Luckily it was minor in the respect that the chopper could be flown back to Landells Aviation in Desert Hot Springs. But it was serious enough that the tail rotor which had to be replaced, which amounted to a lot of money. After some time Don Landells returned with helicopter 40MC and picked Joel and I up from our rock. Before putting us off

we did some air search with no results. But as we made one last pass up Tahquitz Canyon I spotted two women hikers just below the Grapevine in the canyon. Don landed (remember this part, it plays an important part in my story later), and then left as I hiked down to question the pair. Neither had seen or heard anyone as they hiked up the canyon. I thanked them and asked that they keep their eyes open for anyone fitting the description. Don returned and picked me up and then let us out on a small ridge, where we spent the remainder of the day searching. At dusk, Don flew the teams back to base at the Palm Springs Airport.

Over dinner that night we discussed what had been done, and what we could do the following morning. That night a friend of Mary Bowman graciously invited us into her home so we could get a good nights sleep, and be able to start very early in the morning.

Monday morning we met at the lower tram station and also joining us again was Don. Bill Blaschko and I were the first two in. Jim Fairchild took over as Ops. because Walt was unable to return until the afternoon. Don let Bill and I out on the Skyline Ridge after some air search so that I could have an overview of the search area during the day. Second in was Dave and Cam. They were dropped down below the ridge where the prints had last been seen. As each team had come in, we had Don fly a different search pattern to take advantage of air time. On the third flight in with Rob and Mel, Don stated on the radio that all of the normal areas had been looked at so all he could do was widen the search area again and look over some of the same spots one more time. Not long after that Don came back on the air and stated that they had just spotted a smoldering campfire above the Grapevine helispot, and there were the two women I had seen the day before but along with them, was a man. They landed, and after hiking the short distance up it was confirmed that it indeed was Herbert Hone.

Mr. Hone was quickly helped into the helicopter, and flown out along with one of the two women, who was not feeling well herself. Back at base, as Don flew the remainder of us out, Mr. Hone told the personnel in a rather outspoken manner of how he had lost the trail, and being separated from his equipment in a manner that did not quite jive with the way we found it. He also said that he saw the helicopter land and let a person out the day before (that person being myself), and that the person did not see him, got back in and left. He did make it hard on us, in that Mr. Hone was wearing almost all tan colored clothing, and



Jim Fairchild

ERRANT HIKER - Hebert Hone and RMRU member Joe Erickson pause for the photographer, after Mr. Hone has been located in the Tahquitz Canyon and then flown back to Palm Springs.

because he thought we had landed to pick him up he did not make any attempt to be seen or heard. Luckily for Mr. Hone, he did link up with the two women who convinced him to stay with him until we returned again. The two took excellent care of Mr. Hone, and to them we say thank you.

I truly do enjoy being on this team. My closest friends are also members. And I do receive great satisfaction knowing that we do provide a special service to those in need. But it is somewhat difficult to be enthused when you have spent two days out, away from family and work, find a person who indeed needed our help, and then barely even receive a thank you. Well, at least Mr. Herbert Hone will be able to go out another day and enjoy the wilderness.

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.