



Two Women Requested Assistance

April 17, 1999
Pacific Crest Trail, Wellman's Divide
1999-006

By Pete Carlson

Lee called me at 8:15 PM to say that there were two women at Wellman's Divide in shorts and T-shirts calling on their cell-phone to say that they needed help. They had been on a day hike and got caught by darkness and deep snow as the trail they were on had ended. He wanted me to be with him as the first team because he wanted another strong fast hiker and everyone he had called in Idyllwild was not home. I quickly got my gear together, which was all over the place from a snow camp the weekend before and, with the help of my son William, in 20 minutes we had everything in the car and were off to the Tramway.

When I got there I found Lee, Ray, Phil, Jim Fairchild, and Darrell Bell. I took everything into the tram car and we started up at 10:00 PM. As we rode up I packed my pack with extra jackets and pants for the subjects. Jim had a cold and Ray could not go in the field this night. So my son William, who has been training with the team for 2 years now, got his pack ready to help carry extra gear in to the subjects. We started hiking at 10:30 PM up the trail to Round Valley and on to Wellman's Divide. It is a 3-1/2 mile hike up about 2,000 feet in elevation. We completed it in 1-1/2 hours arriving at the subjects at midnight.

They were sitting against a tree with a torn space blanket over them and shivering quite badly. Lee went directly to them and started an assessment. We had been hiking in long underwear with shorts over them and long sleeve tops because we were hiking hard and did not want to overheat. I quickly put on my pile jacket and Gore-Tex jacket over that. Then William and I started pulling out extra pile jackets and pants which Lee and I put on the subjects. Next we pulled out sleeping bags and put the women in them. Lastly we put out pads under the sleeping bags and threw a tarp over the two subjects. Lee started his stove while William and I collected firewood and started a fire.

They had been doing a loop trail, but because of the deep snow, no one had completed the whole loop. When they got to where the loop ended it was getting dark and they did not have time to retrace their path back. It had been a warm day when they started from the Tramway, but by nighttime it was below freezing. Their boots and socks were wet so they took them off to warm their feet. But in only minutes their boots and socks froze solid. With the fire going we were able to dry

out their socks and boots completely in about 90 minutes. We gave them each 4 hot drinks and lots of food to munch on. By 2:00 a.m. they were feeling ready to go. We gave them our ski poles for balance and started the hike out.

The section of trail from Round Valley down to the Tramway stream crossing was icy on the way up, so a team of Mike Wimbrow and Rick Rhay came up to meet us with in-step crampons for the women to wear on the ice. We met them at lower Round Valley. After putting the crampons on them we proceeded on the Tramway. Back at the Tram we gathered up extra gear and all the base camp equipment and rode back down to our cars. We started home about 4:30 a.m. I pulled in my driveway at 6:00 a.m., 10 hours after I had left, and went straight to bed.

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.