



Missing Hiker

**January 2nd, 2004
Mount Baldy (out of county mission)
2004-002**

by Rick Maschek

As I was returning home from being canceled on a "Rescue in Humber Park" called out, I heard LA Air Rescue 5 on the radio trying to call the ski patrol. I looked up the Cajon Pass and could see them flying around Mt. Baldy. With the sun about to go down and a storm approaching, I prepared for a possible mutual aid call out the next day and consumed massive quantities of liquids as I had just given blood the day before.

Sure enough, at 0501 I was awakened by the page to be at Mt. Baldy by 06:00. I got there a few minutes after and met with Jim Fairchild who was the only other RMRU person there at the time. I was told to be ready in 40 minutes for something and then asked if I could be ready to go in 5 minutes with a group made up of two Altadena searchers and the team leader who was from West Valley SAR. We were to get a ride on a helicopter up to the top of Baldy and search from the PLS down into the bowl. We could not get a break in the weather so were transported to the ski hut trailhead at San Antonio Falls to hike up to the bowl. There was a slight rain most of the way up to the bowl in 32 degree temperatures. It was nice to be able to stop at the ski hut, hang wet clothes up to dry and eat some food. Then we proceeded to hike up the switchbacks to the ridge dividing the bowl from Goode Canyon. We searched back and forth across the ridge on hard pack snow alternating with ice and then down and across the bowl with no luck finding any sign of the missing person, Charles Koa. We ended up at the ski hut and again stopped in to briefly warm up.

The others wanted to go back down due to being cold and wet so we headed back down the trail still occasionally calling out Charles name. We arrived back at the trailhead in the dark, four cold, wet and hungry searchers. I was to use the next day before going back out again on Sunday.

Our thanks to the Sierra Club for allowing the use of their Ski Hut and the caretaker there (forgot her name) who had a fire going with hot water for food and drink.

Second Article by William Carlson

Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep Beep. That sound could only mean one thing at 0400 in the morning. I thought to myself, "Why do people get lost at 04:00?" After calling the rescue line I learned that a man was missing on Mt. Baldy after taking a fall and the lead team was requesting additional resources. Our team was to meet at the Mt. Baldy fire department station at 06:00 to receive an assignment. I arrived and met up with Jim Fairchild and learned some unknown information about the search. Rick Mascheck was already in the field searching an area known as the Baldy Bowl. Travis Henderson showed up soon after and he and I were teamed up with two members of the Los Angeles County SAR team.

Our assignment was to hike from the top of the ski lift across the Devils Backbone and look for sign. We were also yelling off both sides of the Backbone to listen for a voice. We headed up and began our search in the worst conditions possible. We covered our lower area in pouring rain and quickly became damp. As we climbed higher the rain turned to sleet and snow. Everything was fast becoming frozen. At a certain point we put on our crampons and got out our ice axes because of the icy conditions that were present.

A couple of places were quite icy so we slowed down and took our time. Around 14:00 we took a break to rethink our plan. We were leaving the trees and no longer would be able to have visibility of where we were. This can be dangerous because of the steep ridges and drops so we opted to radio base that we were deciding to turn around for safety reasons. We continued to yell all the way back but because of the strong winds and the storm we knew that our voices were only carrying 100 feet if that. When we returned to the top of the ski resort we noticed that we had about a one inch layer of ice caked on everything. It was obvious that this missing man would be in bad shape if he were found.

We returned to base and they told us to rest up and get ready to head out again tomorrow so we enjoyed a nice dinner and headed home. Many members from our team were going to return the next day to continue the search.

Members Present 1-2-04: William Carlson, Travis Henderson, Jim Fairchild, and Rick Mascheck.

Note: the search was temporarily suspended 1-4-04 and resumed again a week later.....almost 3 weeks after the search began the missing mans body was recovered.

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.