

# RMRU NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT, INC.  
A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

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Contributions by the Members

## COMING EVENTS ---

12 November. Wednesday on the rocks (MT. Rubidoux). 1900, Ninth & Loring. We'll drive up if the gate is unlocked (It will be).

19 November. Regular Meeting. 1930, Highland Outfitters. Work on a "Knot of the month;" conduct unit business; plan for the training session, and we have Norman Mellor lined up for another fine presentation on a medical first aid problem.

21-23 November. Mt. San Jacinto Familiarization Hike. We'll start up the mountain from three different roadheads Friday; proceed along trails and cross-country Saturday to the peak for a big camp; then trade keys to vehicles and descend by different routes Sunday. We hope this year that more than two men will carry minimum bivouac gear as planned. Get's kinda chilly up there in November, even snowy.

10 December. Board Meeting. 1900, Al Andrews Residence.

## SAR ACTIVITY ---

19 October, 1969

There are times when we are called upon to do a job which we intensely dislike but which we do in spite of our feelings because it must be done and because we are the only ones with the skills, equipment and experience to do it safely.

The ringing of our telephones on Saturday evening signaled the start of one of these missions. A hunter had descended from the mountains north of the San Gorgonio pass to report to Sheriff's deputies that he had discovered the site of a recent aircraft crash and that there were two bodies in the wreckage. Sgt. Brandon of the Banning substation wanted to evacuate the victims using only his own personnel but, when it was determined that the crash site was on steep terrain at 5400 ft. and a long way from the nearest trail or roadhead, he reluctantly decided to ask RMRU for assistance.

Accordingly, 8 AM Sunday morning found us assembled on a deserted roadhead north of the freeway near Cabazon watching Darrel Ellenberg of Western Helicopters land a super charged Bell. Walt and I went in on the first load and, using the hunter's description of the location, we quickly located the wreckage. While Darrel flew back for the coroner, FAA and CAB men and other RMRU personnel we surveyed the situation.

The aircraft, a Cessna 356 (the immediate predecessor of the 357, a two engine, push-pull aircraft) had impacted about 20 feet below the crest of a ridge on the west side and the bulk of the debris was scattered down the hill on the east side of the ridge. We soon located the bodies of two men and a woman and they were removed from the wreckage and evacuated by helicopter. Since the debris was scattered over a wide area, we decided that a thorough sweep search was indicated. We were just about to begin this search when word reached us over the radio that there was a possibility that two teenage girls had also been aboard the aircraft. We began the search at the impact site and swept along the line of travel of the wreckage. About 300 feet downhill from the main part of the aircraft we made the sad discovery of the two girls' bodies. Using our brush axes we cleared a path back up to our helispot (helicopter landing site) on the ridge and completed the strenuous job of bringing them up to the ridge crest. By mid



afternoon we had all been flown back out and were on our way home trying to forget what we had seen.

As an organization and as individuals, we are motivated by the desire to use our particular skills to help save human life. Yet, the victims of this accident were beyond help and because of that we all experienced a violent revulsion when confronted by this task. But, to have left this to others would have been to unnecessarily expose them to the risks inherent in this sort of operation. It is to those we are capable of protecting that we are obligated. - Mike

19 October, Search, Whitewater Canyon, southeast of San Gorgonio Mountain.

Late Sunday evening RMRU was called by the Riverside County Sheriff's Dept. to go after a stranded hunter. Information regarding his plight indicated that he was alone, perhaps injured, and on a ledge above a drop-off. We met at the Banning Sub-Station and caravanned to a roadhead in Mission Canyon. From there we packed ourselves onto and into a pair of 4-whl. vehicles for an arduous 8-mile drive to the Whitewater Canyon. Then, with the hunter's two companions, we traversed the canyon floor heading southwest to the far bank. Every step was over stones and boulders washed down by the flooding river last winter. At the far bank one companion pointed up a very steep hillside and told us "he's up there, over the low saddle." Well, three hours later, over a thousand feet higher, and slashed all over from busting through the dense triumvirate of scrub oak, manzanita, and buck-brush (ceonothus), Briggs, Daugherty, and Fairchild greeted the first hints of dawn. Beautiful, but discouraging, we had not made voice contact with Wally, the subject of our struggles. And, of course, the batteries in our radio had long since gone blah. Base kept on saying, "457, go ahead." We kept on saying \_\_\_\_\_! We opted to descend a likely ridge and before long raised Wally with a shout. We scrambled nearer and saw him ensconced on a ledge. Just then another intrepid group from RMRU came bouncing over a lower saddle (the right one) and unhesitatingly hopped over and gave Wally a drink of water. We were deploying a rope to make a spectacular rescue. On well, fatigue makes everything look tougher, and our side was steeper. We all escorted Wally down to terra firma, hiked back to the "road," drove and walked back to our vehicles, and headed for the San Gorgonio Inn for brunch. - Jim

26 October - Search - San Jacinto Wild Area

Sunday night, we received word that Mrs. Laura Hammans of Long Beach had not hiked out with the rest of her group from Skunk Cabbage Meadow. By 1:00 a.m. we had two teams moving up the devil's Slide trail. Jim Fairchild and Steve Bryant had drawn the unenviable or unavoidable trip to Caramba; the rest of us would search Skunk Cabbage Meadow, Tahquitz and Little Tahquitz Valley. At the saddle Mike Daugherty decided that Phil Moedt and I would search Skunk Cabbage Meadow and hike down the Willow Creek trail to the Willow Creek crossing while Mike, Jack Schnurr and Tom Dadson would concentrate on Tahquitz Valley.

After some initial wonderings around Skunk Cabbage Meadow, Phil and I hiked down the Willow Creek trail. (An area certainly looks differently at night compared to the same area during the day.) We were almost to Willow Creek crossing when we heard replies to our shouts. Laura was in her sleeping bag in her tent on a ridge just across from the trail. Outside of no dinner, she was in excellent condition.

I called Jim to tell him that the victim was found and got him and Steve out of their camp at Caramba. They decided to hike over to us and pick up the rest of the team at Skunk Cabbage Meadow.

At dawn, the rest of the team arrived, and we hiked back to Idyllwild to the excellent breakfast at the Alpine Pantry provided by the Sheriff. - Ed Hill



This month I want to send two open letters. The first to the Regular members of RMRU and the second to the Sustaining members of RMRU.

Dear Fellow RMRU Member:

Have you ever stopped to consider the different groups of people around. We as mountain-



eers are probably one of the most individualistic. Most of us don't relate much with bureaucrats. As such, it is difficult to make us into one. For anytime we begin to lose, or think we are losing, our individuality we stop being organizational and become i-organizational.

Hence one of the problems of a mountain rescue unit. It is difficult to create an organizational pattern that meshes any individual with a common goal. The goal as I see it is two-fold. First to become an effective group during a crisis in order to save a life, and secondly, to build an organization that is in a constant state of readiness to accomplish the first task. On rescues there never has, to my knowledge been any problems amongst the group. I feel that all individualism has been laid aside to cooperate and arrive at the most effective solution in carrying out our mission. As for the second goal however, I believe it hasn't always been properly dealt with, and consequently many endeavors have fallen by the wayside. Safety education, organized training, various committees and many other things have suffered miserably at various times.

RMRU has just had it's eighth birthday and as I reflect back it has aided in alleviating much pain and suffering. Many people are alive today because of what we have accomplished. Furthermore, it seems that today we are beginning to realize the full impact of our secondary goals. People within our organization have within the last year or so been far more cooperative, from realizing the importance of safety education to keeping the freezer stocked with batteries for the portable radios. I don't know what this is attributed to but, whatever it is, let's keep it going. From the organizational point of view the value is indisputable. The more financially solvent, the better trained, the more effective we are at our primary goal of saving lives. The dividend to be paid, however, is much deeper and nebulous than that. The more effectively we can cooperate to solve our organizational problems, the more effective our efforts on a rescue.

May I repeat that I don't know the how or why of our recent positive strides, however, I do know that generally we are accomplishing our organizational tasks better than ever. This is not to say that we have all the answers, but it does say that we have more than did six months ago. Possibly our organization is such that we can effectively operate a group for our goals and still maintain our personal individuality. - Pres. Walt

Dear Friend and Sustaining Member:

If you have not been a Sustaining Member for long or even if you have, I would like to point out some facts. In 1968 RMRU participated in 22 missions and the members volunteered 3,380 hours on those missions. (One mission alone required 864 to find a lost lad alive.) This year so far we have participated in 27 missions that have required 3,286 hours. We are beginning to feel the pinch in our equipment and treasury. Climbing ropes are wearing out faster than anticipated. Batteries for the portable radios are used up faster because of the increased hours. The list is endless and is topped by our most pressing problem, the truck. Many years ago a 1955 panel truck was donated to the unit and it has served well. However, it is almost falling apart faster than we can patch it up. A vehicle is a very important part of our life saving activities as it transports all the specialized rescue equipment to the base of operations. We are working on many different plans to solve the problem. But, we will in the end still need money.

As 1969 draws to a close, so does the taxable year. If you have had a good year and could use an extra deduction I appeal to you. We have started a savings account and any money donated to the truck fund will be so deposited. Of course, all donations are tax deductible on your state and federal income tax returns.

Please HELP us now so that we may continue to HELP those who are lost or injured.  
- Pres. Walt

PAST TRAINING ---

This month's technical session at Jumbo Rocks was especially enjoyable and valuable. We have a fine group of newer men who enthusiastically learned and practiced a number of the more commonly used skills in technical terrain evacuation, while the experienced men set up and used a new method of lowering a victim in the Stokes litter. In the afternoon the two groups combined to run through the new techniques several times, as well as rappels, mechanical advantages, piton craft, bouldering, climbing on friction, belaying, and our old vertical-type litter lowering. We are pleased to have made a significant



contact with the National Park Service through Rangers Jim Lynch and Scott Evans. These men trained with us for the day, learning some of the techniques we use, and exchanging problems and ideas in connection with lost and injured persons. We look forward to working closely with them in the future when they need RMRU for a mission in Joshua Tr. National Monument.

Wednesday on the rocks. Last night (29 Oct.) Ed Hill, Phil Moedt, Steve Bryant, Chris Rush, Jack Schnurr, and Trng. Chm. Jim spent three hours on a little cliff on Mt. Rubidoux practicing more rigging and lowering techniques. These sessions really pay off for new and veteran rescue men alike. We give intensive instruction on more than fifty skills -- we've seen it make a great difference on real missions. A few times up there and new men become competent and confident, the old hands review and help the new men. All the while we're gaining teamwork, the most essential quality in SAR.



### The Road Runner sez

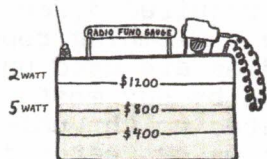
Late nights, early mornings, hectic pace of living, ravages of a serious cold and infection, these elements of life made the Roadrunner wonder if he could take another step after reaching Caramba. We had fulfilled our assignment by checking the trail and the environs of camp, then were to set up the tent and get

the much dreamed of rest. How far can one hike after exhaustion says "quit?" Turn the radio back on and check with Ed. "We have the victim in voice contact and she's O.K.!" Great news, she's O.K., shock, we must hike four miles, mostly uphill, to the location. Re-stow the tent, struggle into packs (shoulders ache from 37 lbs. in a rucksack) and stagger off. Just after dawn we arrived, the victim gave us a cheery "hello." It was worth it, we did it, we'll do it again. Congratulations to Ed and Phil for finding and caring for Laura. She said, "These boys really know what they are doing and are just great."

RMRU, RU WINTERIZED? Have you varnished your snowshoes, sharpened your crampons, checked your trusty ice ax, put your down garments in ready position, services your vehicle appropriately? It has been our observation that in most snow and all rainstorms everyone gets completely soaked unless covered completely with one, preferably two layers of waterproof protection: hood, poncho, pants, gaiters, pack cover. Remember, waterproof water repellent means nothing to precipitation.

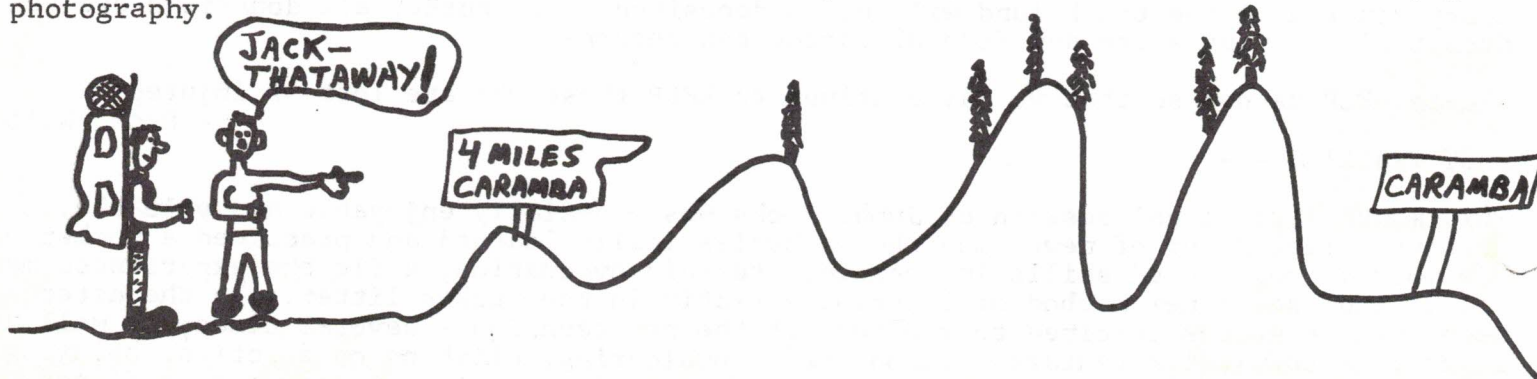
### SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP ---

As mentioned last month our fourth 5-watt radio is on order and delivery is expected the latter part of November. The fund gauges are being presented each month to show the status of our two most important projects which are progressing quite well. This month we would like to welcome the following to our sustaining membership: Mr. & Mrs. R. O. Ridenour, Dale O. Huseboe, DDS, Hyatt Elementary School Parents Club (San Jacinto) and the Little Lake Parents Club (Hemet). - Al



CALL-OUT RESPONSE. It does not make any points with the victim if you can roll from your house in 5 minutes in practice, what counts is how fast you can get away for a real mission.

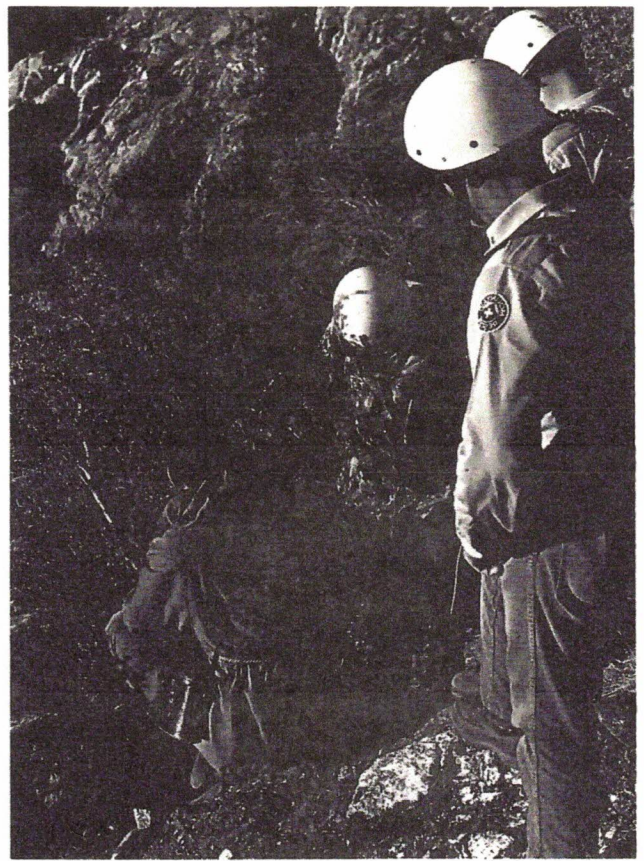
(Photo Ed. Note) Once again team member Bill Speck has outdone himself with truly great photography.







RMRU prepares to move the airplane wreckage.



A weary deer hunter is roped up for his descent.



Team members prepare and practice the, new to RMRU, self controlled brakebar lowering of a litter.

