

With deteriorating weather forecast, Jim requested help from So. Cal. Mountain Rescue Association units. By noon Tuesday, San Diego, Sierra Madre and Altadena had teams on the hill.

The wet weather and poor visibility hampered the effectiveness of the field units. Even the home town Riverside personnel had a hard time keeping their bearings with 50 foot visibility and all trails covered with snow. Small ridges and drainages passed by so quickly during summer hiking suddenly added a speculative ingredient to our routefinding going cross-country. The job to stay dry, crucially important in cold, winter weather, became paramount, challenging even the execution of our assignments. The rescue operation continued slowly.

It took our group till 2:30 pm Tuesday to get to Crumba; we had intermittent tracks along the way but we weren't on the trail. While Gary Anderson and myself started pitching camp in rapidly declining weather, Bernie and Rich Quackenbush checked below the first falls for tracks leading into Tahquitz Canyon.

"Relay, 458."

"Relay by."

"We have tracks dropping over the side into Tahquitz canyon, suggest a bird fly under the ceiling and check as high as possible in the canyon."

"10-4" The message was relayed.

By 3:15 pm, the blizzard had hit, four team members cooked hot soup with a bacon bar mixed in while it snowed with incredible intensity outside. All the field units on the mountain were huddled in tents somewhere. Bud had six guys crammed in his two-man Ultimate tent. The bird was searching below.

"458, relay."

"Go ahead relay."

"The victims have been found in Tahquitz canyon. One MRA code 1 (o.k.), and two MRA code 4's (fatalities). The helicopter is effecting a pick-up of MRA 1 now."

"10-4, thanks for the information."

The shock of death in the mountains is never dulled, no matter how many times you meet it, you still get a powerful blow. Fifty men on the mountain searching in vain as death struck before they could help. The storms ferocity seemed to dramatize the death message as if to mock our futile efforts on the mountain.

By the next morning we had 18" of fresh powder and an outrageously beautiful day. Looking out of the tent, one could hardly imagine the fatal weather of the past few days. Perfection was the word. Snow clad trees cast against a blemish free sky of brilliant blue with the sun shining brightly on the diamond-like snow crystals: a picture post card.

Relay broke tranquility with the message that Idyllwild was getting snow flurries and clouds were moving over the saddle. Our group sacrificed breakfast and moved quickly to the heliport above Crumba.

Within an hour, in the face of the approaching storm, our group was lifted from the mountain locale to a relatively warm Palm Springs. The other groups were making their way down the Devil Slide trail to Idyllwild.

The story was told. Charles Breece, 51, and James Rutherford, 17, had gone for a week-end hike from Humber Park. After the snowfall covered the trails Saturday night, the pair was unable to find their way and ended up in Crumba Camp where they spent Sunday night. Most of Monday was spent trying to circumvent the upper canyon waterfalls. Enroute down the canyon, the hikers found the body of a third traveller. Speculation was that this could be Ronald Gidcumb, missing from our search of February 7th. Since the body has yet to be recovered, positive identification has not been made. Lower down the canyon, the pair in passing a waterfall, tried to jump over it and swim to shore. In doing so, Charles drown. Efforts by James to administer mouth to mouth resusitation were futile. James was then picked up Tuesday night by helicopter about 2/3's the way down the canyon.

The new base of operations was at Romona Rd. where a combined team of San Diego and Sierra Madre units were getting ready to evacuate the body of Charles. Bernie McIlvoy went along to provide familiarity with the area. The evacuation was non-technical.

The remanents of field unit 458 were flown into upper Tahquitz Canyon to try and locate the unidentified body as the exact location had yet been determined. The first body evacuation went quickly without any problems; the search for the second body was fruitless and called off Wednesday evening at the close of the third day on the mountain. Most of us had jobs to return to after two days absence. A body search was scheduled for the following Saturday.

Missing work in chance of saving someone is one thing, but after two days absence, the benefit of taking more time off to search for a body is questionable.

A well deserved meal sent three rescue units home after one of our longest, grimmest missions in the past couple years. Our thanks for a most cooperative and successful effort from our sister units: Altadena, San Diego and Sierra Madre.

7 FEB., WED. — EVACUATION — No. 7316M
Tahquitz Canyon
by Bernie McIlvoy

From unconsciousness I awoke to something jabbing me in my ribs. For a moment I could have been anywhere. But for now I'm in a tent with Gary Anderson beating his fists against my chest. He's

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asleep. He thinks he's beating the snow off from the top of the tent. It has been snowing heavily all night and about every hour one of us would beat the snow off. This is necessary to prevent the weight from collapsing the tent. I awake him and we laugh while the tent gets a good beating.

As I lie in my half bag, waiting for sleep, the events of the last two days are flowing through my mind.

This is our second night of the search for two hikers. They have been missing for several days. Tonight the four of us, (Rich Quackenbush, Jack Schnurr, Gary and myself), are at the most remote camp in the San Jacinto Mountains. The infamous Caramba Camp.

Earlier tonight, just as it was getting dark, a message came over our two way radio that the two hikers have been spotted by helicopter in Tahquitz Canyon. One was alive and well, but the other hiker Charles A. Breece had drowned earlier in one of the many deep pools in the canyon. Because it was almost dark only the uninjured hiker could be picked up by the bird.

The body of the other hiker would have to wait until tomorrow to be evacuated. The reason for this is helicopter pilots don't fly at night in mountainous terrain and we didn't have a search team close enough to reach the body tonight.

During the search RMRU requested assistance from San Diego and Sierra Madre Rescue Teams. Both teams participated admirably during the search.

Wednesday morning we awoke to find over a foot of snow had fallen during the night. Due to our remote location and the threatening weather base camp decided to fly us out early that morning.

At base camp it was decided to have the San Diego team do the body recovery.

Steve Barker from the San Diego team was appointed operation leader and I was appointed to be the safety officer.

Steve and I flew in first to locate a helispot. Steve had six more of his men to assure adequate man power if the evacuation turned out to be technical.

We had to rappel down a sixty foot cliff to get to the body. Steve had his men to secure the body in a litter while he searched for a better helispot. Steve found one shortly and called the pilot to fly in to get confirmation that the location was all right.

Steve figured that this new helispot would save several hours in the evacuation time.

This helispot could be reached in five minutes on foot. Where the other one would require hours and one technical lift up a sixty foot cliff.

The body was moved to the helispot while the bird flew in. The loading of the litter on the bird was routine and went flawlessly.

An hour later we were all back at base camp deciding where to eat before returning home.

We wish to thank San Diego and Sierra Madre

for their assistance. It's always a pleasure to work with competent men such as these.

10 MAR., SAT. - EVACUATION - No. 7317M
Tahquitz Canyon
by Hank Schmel

"Body of missing man found in rugged canyon."
These were the headlines in the Sunday morning paper.

This mission had its beginning when two hikers, for whom we were searching had seen the body on Tuesday morning March 7. Unable to locate the body later that day, it was decided that a search would be organized for Saturday morning, March 10.

I had gotten up about 4:45 Saturday morning, had a good breakfast, picked up Bernie at 5:30 and we both met Pete Carlson at the fire house with the truck. We arrived at the Ramon Road Base (Mrs. Dolly's) at 6:45 and were met by Lt. Campbell and Sgt. Herring of the Banning Sheriff's office, the Coroner Fred Smith and Bob Claybrook, Dan MacIntosh and Rich Quackenbush from the team. Don Landells came in about 7:20 whereupon we all got together, along with James Rutherford, the lost hiker of the previous mission, and laid out our plan for the search. While this was going on Jim Fairchild arrived on the scene and played the role of radio relay down at the airport, where he was able to reach both Base and Field operations. Bernie and Jim Rutherford went in first. They flew up to Caramba and then came slowly down the canyon in hopes that they would find the spot where Rutherford and Breece had spent Monday night camping.

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While Don Landells holds his chopper on a one runner touch down, Hank Schmel climbs out, while other RMRU members unload gear. Dan MacIntosh, in the left corner of the photo, is giving Helitac hand signals to pilot Don Landells.

This didn't pan out to well so Don flew out Rutherford and brought in Pete, Rich, Dan and myself to meet Bernie at what is now known as MacIntosh's helo spot. We started down the canyon at that point and found nothing until 9:50 when I noticed a wrapper from Brown and Serve sausage and an empty packet from Lipton Soup. This we found was where the hikers had breakfast. They reported seeing the body an hour and a half after leaving this spot. We continued on down the canyon and at 10:05



RMRU members prepare the litter, with body secured in it, for a aerial pick-up by the helicopter.

came upon the body of Ronald Gidcumb. The area was a little different than described to us by Jim Rutherford but never the less we did indeed have positive I.D. on the body. Ronald had traveled a great distance in only stocking feet. It appeared to us that he had been hypothermic and tried to warm his frostbitten extremities. His body was partially covered with shrub and would have been most difficult to find if we had not had some clues to work with.

We called for the body bag and other necessary gear. While we waited for Don to fly in and make the drop we had lunch, which was topped off by a cherry pie with whipped cream, compliments of Dan MacIntosh. Landells came in with the litter slung under the bird and made the drop. Rich, Dan and myself took care of the body. The litter was then hooked up to the cable hanging from a hovering Don Landells. This was the end of the type of mission we don't care for but must be done.



Don Landells once again holds his powerful machine on a one runner touch down while RMRU members load gear from the same helispot that team member, Dan MacIntosh, had to be evacuated from last summer.

17 & 18 MAR., SAT. & SUN. — SEARCH — No. 7317M
Coyote Canyon
by Hank Schmel

Jim and I arrived with the Van at the Calif. Div. of Forestry about 0100 Sunday morning, where we met Sgt. Herring and a few of the team members. We then went to the roadhead above "Turkey Track" on the De Anza trail. Ed Hill, Bob Claybrook, Rich Quackenbush, Pete Carlson, Dan MacIntosh, Dennis Simpson and Dave Nehan were all there. About this time I asked Bill Herring for the information on the boys. He told me they were from Troop 62, River-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

side. I said "Troop 62," he said "That's what I said . . . do you know them." "I sure do and Bob Swartzal is the Scoutmaster" . . . It was a concerned, nervous and humble scoutmaster that filled us in on all the details of the two lost boys, Rodger Sprehn and Scott McMinn. They were last seen at "Turkey Track" six miles from their destination, Adler Canyon.

The team got together and laid out the plans for the next few hours. Pete Carlson would take his group, MacIntosh, Simpson and Nehan, into Parks Canyon while Claybrook, Hill, Quackenbush and myself would check out Adler Canyon where the troop now lay camped for the night. Jim Fairchild, who wasn't at all healthy remained at base with the scoutmaster. The Sheriff, Bob and Dan all had 4-wheel drive vehicles which would take us to our drop-off areas. It was nearly 5 a.m. Sunday morning when I called Jim and told him we would catch a few hours sleep.

At 0630 with the sun already 5 degrees above the horizon, we awakened, had breakfast and made our plans for the morning. Bob Claybrook, having a bad ankle, was assigned as an observer in the Sheriff's Cessna 210 with Sam Ketchem piloting. Pete and crew continued to search Parks Canyon, while my team would cover the area down to middle willows.

All the hikers and campers we met said that they had not seen the two boys walk through the canyon. It seemed obvious that anyone walking through the area between the willows would have to be seen by campers along the side of the trail. In one area where Ed and I walked it couldn't have been more than 50 yards wide with both walls of the canyon rising sharply.



Jack Schnurr, veteran RMRU member talks to the boys who were the object of the all night search.

The time was 0940, Jack Schnurr had arrived and relieved a very sick Jim Fairchild. The San Diego and DeAnza Rescue Units had been called by this time. Dave Nehan relieved a "green gilled" Bob Claybrook. Hill, "Quack" and myself headed up to Tule Canyon that hadn't been looked into as yet. San Diego and DeAnza units were working their way up Coyote Canyon from Borrego Springs. Rich Morris joined us along with four members from the San Diego unit. Adam 1 (the plane) had spotted a yellow tube tent and two sleeping bags 2 miles up from Adler Canyon. This information turned my team back to Adler while Pete's team continued up Tule. The equipment found turned out to be that of other campers. This made us think that as we had discussed earlier that the boys had gotten a ride down the canyon. With the many cyclist and jeepsters this seemed logical. At 1400 hours Jack Schnurr reported that the lost boys had been found in Sheep Canyon almost 18 miles away. Ed Goodell and Bob Meacham of the DeAnza Rescue Unit out of El Centro had picked them up and would bring them to base camp at "Turkey Track." The boys were in good shape and had almost two gallons of water between them. Troop 62 had learned a lesson not soon to be forgotten.

Sequal to Coyote Canyon Rescue - 3-22-73

Many questions were answered as to why no one saw the two "lost" scouts hike down the canyon. The story that came out later in the week is that they had stayed at Turkey Track and later in the day hitched a ride on motor cycles directly to the spot where they were found in Sheep Canyon.

26 MAR., MON. - SEARCH - No. 7319A

San Jacinto Mountains

by Walt Walker

With storms once again hitting the high country over the weekend it was not to much of a surprise when RMRU received a call from the Banning station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. Two young had been reported overdue from a backpack. We had barely completed the callout when Al Andrews received the word that the missing pair had walked out.

23 MAR., FRI. - RESCUE - No. 7318A

Near Mt. Palamar

by Pete Carlson

At 1630 Friday afternoon RMRU received a call from the Elsinore station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department requesting help with a plane crash near the San Diego and Riverside County lines. When we arrived it was found that it was an easy area to get to and we were not needed.



24 & 25 MAR., SAT. & SUN.
Tahquitz Canyon Familiarization
By A. R. "Bud" White

San Gorgonio Ice Axe and Technical training had to be postponed for the second month because of too much snow. The deep powder from continuous storms makes ice axe practice impossible so the alternate training was selected based on the statistic that in 1972, ten of the thirty one rescues (this doesn't include searches) were in Tahquitz Canyon. The plan for training was familiarization with the "organic trails" as Bernie calls them that bypass the waterfalls and lead into the third valley which is well above the main concentration of hippies who live between the first and second falls (some people call them the third falls).

Fourteen assembled at Ann Dolley's Saturday morning and headed straight up the ridge behind the water tank. The heat was an incongruous experience for most of us who have seen nothing but snow on missions and training since December. Between the heat, the steepness, the scrambling and the packs, there was some real soul searching done on "why haven't I trained more during the week". But it was soon over. At 2700' we cut the hippie trail into third valley and traversed into the canyon: Hiking upstream past several small groups of campers we found an idyllic pool with polished sides and sandy bottom where we all reverted to nature long enough to find the water really did come from that snow up there on the ridge. Some of us even got a little sunburned. I hope the shutterbugs keep their slides for private showings.

Bernie, "au naturel", climbed fifty feet up the side of the canyon and set up an anchor and then proceeded to do a 5.8 in the same condition in bare feet yet. I did it with Joe's P.A.'s and Dan did it the next morning in his hiking boots. We practiced M.A.s (mechanical advantages), rigging and S.E.A.s (self equalizing anchors) until 10:00 am then headed down the canyon. Beautiful trip. Of interest was the short bypass of the second falls on the north side of the canyon that the hippies had shown Bernie and Pete on one rescue. The hike out was uneventful but I will comment on the conditions.

The farther down the canyon you go the more trash, garbage, abandoned equipment and odor you encounter. The unbelievable conditions from below

the first falls (Tahquitz Falls) to the cars is a condemnation of all who use the area. I can remember seven or eight years ago, going up to the first falls with my family and it was a beautiful stroll. Today, I go because I must.

In trying to help publish the newsletter on time and in anticipation of the March training we printed the photograph on this page that had been taken on the January training thinking no one would know. But once again good 'ole Mother Nature' didn't cooperate and the regular winter training was postponed again. Pete Carlson was captured on film by Hank Schmel and if you look closely you can see Hank mirrored in Pete's goggles. Once again Hank has done his usual great job with the camera. However, the photos of the Tahquitz Canyon training had to be censored.

CONTINUATION OF THE 'ROADRUNNER SEZ --'

Ever hear of Herpeszoster? The shingles? Your crotchety Roadrunner is six days into this incredibly miserable malady, suffering appropriately. Tonight at regular meeting Dr. Mellor is going to display my bag of bones under the guise of training. Too often, I'm the example of what not to do. Pres. Jim.

(Editor's Note: Apologies to Jim Fairchild for not keeping his write-up in one piece and all the RMRU members who took pictures that were used this month in the newsletter. I mislaid the sheet provided by Hank Schmel that denoted who took which photo.)

Things people don't find in their trusty first aid manuals

EDMONDS, Wash. (UPI) — Fourth grade elementary pupils came up with the answers in a quiz on first aid:

For head colds: "Use an agonizer to spray the nose until it drops in the throat."

For nose bleed: "Put the nose lower than the body."

For snakebite: "Bleed the wound and rape the victim in a blanket for shock."

For fractures: "To see if the limb is broken, wiggle it gently back and forth."

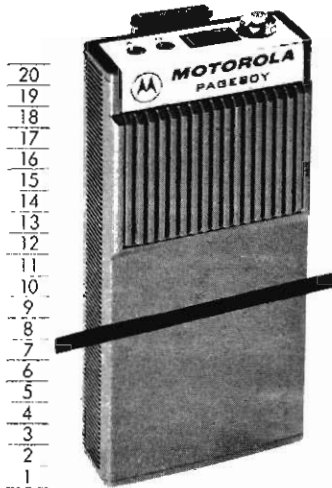
For fainting: "Rub the person's chest, or if it is a lady, rub her arm above the hand."

Asphyxiation: "Apply artificial respiration until the victim's dead."

Sustaining Members

by Al Andrews

Pager Fund



As of this writing we have three more pagers which are being checked out and will be in service soon. This brings the total to seven which is quite short of the twenty unit system we wish to achieve. We must rely on our sustaining members to provide the needed funds to complete this system. The units we are buying are used, with a new unit guarantee and cost \$196 each with the rechargeable battery and charger. We hope you will find it possible to renew your memberships early this year making it possible for us to complete the system by June to be ready for the busy summer season.

A big thank you to the following for joining our Sustaining Membership at this time:

- *Mr. and Mrs. Nelson E. Gidcumb
- Mrs. Nancy P. Gillis
- Estell Davis
- Nella Sherwood

- *J. Korber Foundation Inc.
- Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Switzer

Also we want to pass on our appreciation to those listed below for renewing their memberships early this year:

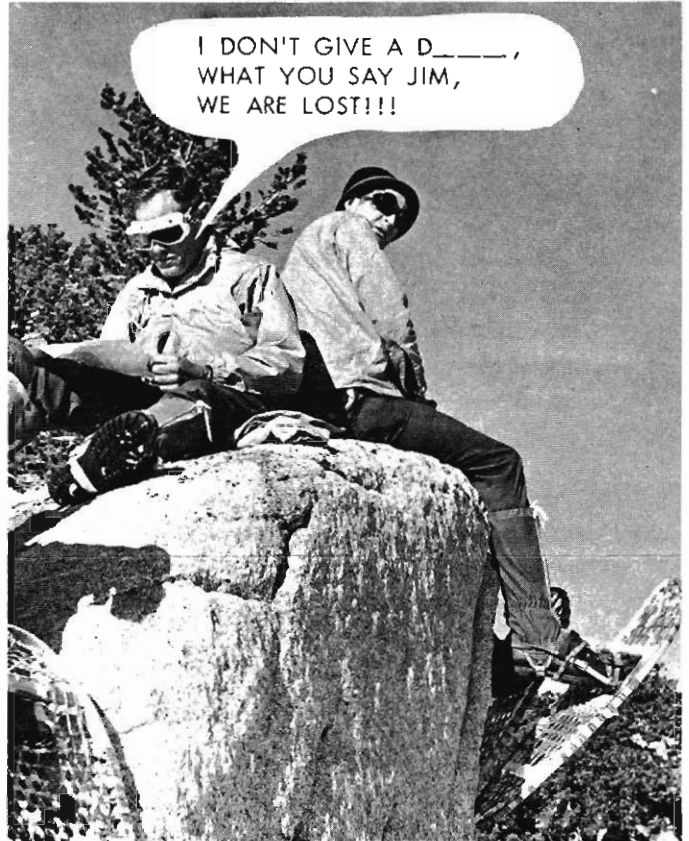
- Riverside County Pomona C. W. A.
- Mr. and Mrs. Harold E. Carlson
- Mr. and Mrs. John Moore
- *Mr. Robert L. Stern
- Mr. Philip C. Moedt

*Century Club member – Donation of \$100 or more.

Ding Bat

of the month

by HANK SCHMEL



"HANK, HOW
COME YOU
ALWAYS PICK
ON PRES. JIM?"
ED. WALT

