

RMRU NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT, INC.
A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT CORPORATION
P. O. BOX 5444, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92507
MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

Volume XI, Issue 3, March 1975

Walt Walker, Editor

Coming Events ---

12 March, Board Meeting
26 March, Regular Meeting
29 March, Training

Search and Rescue

2 FEB., SAT. — SEARCH — No. 7503M

Devil Slide Trail, Idyllwild

By Pete Carlson

A few years ago everyone was expecting a call on a Sunday night for a search or rescue. Lately we have not had calls period. But this Sunday night was to break the draught. At 1920 the phone rang, upon answering the message was a 13 year old boy missing above Humber Park in Idyllwild.

Arriving at Humber Park found Hank at base, Jim Fairchild and Rich Morris packing, and me tying my boots. The story was a group of people were hiking and playing in the snow, when Doug climbed up 100 feet above the trail to some big snow fields. He saw some deer prints and followed them a ways. Suddenly he realized he did not know how to get back. He followed the prints thinking they would hit a trail. It got dark so he stopped and sat down to wait for help.

Within 5 minutes of reaching Humber we started hiking up the trail with the informant who would show us where Doug left the trail. It took 30 minutes to reach the spot. Rich stayed with the informant while Jim and I started tracking Doug. We had been yelling every 5 minutes and continued to do so. We tracked Doug from snow field to snow field for about 100 yards. We gave a yell and heard a faint answer, but could not get a definite direction. After a few minutes I heard a faint yell up and a long ways off.

Jim and I went back to the trail and started hiking, while Rich waited for Jim Garvey to come up and take the informant back to

base. As we reached Jolly Springs we knew he was above us somewhere, we continued up the trail. After 100 yards we determined he was now behind us, so back to Jolly Springs. Rich was now coming up to join us as Jim Garvey escorted the informant back to base.

We had 12 men at base, but because Walt was out in Palm Desert checking out a report of a broken leg up in a canyon, everyone stayed in base. Doug sounded all right and we thought we could handle it. Normally everyone would have been hiking just in case of a problem.

I left my pack at Jolly Springs so I could help Doug get down to the trail easier. Jim and I slowly started up the 50-60 degree slope yelling every 100 feet to Doug so we had the right direction. After 500 feet of climbing we saw Doug standing by a tree and shivering quite a bit.

We immediately put a sweater, wool hat, and gloves on Doug. Then sat him down on a large piece of insolate, put on a down parka, and wrapped his legs in a second parka. As this was going on we continually talked encouragement to Doug and started some water to boil. Within 10 minutes Doug was drinking hot soup and by now Rich had joined us. We advised base that everything was under control and to send everyone out to Palm Desert except one man with a radio at base. Larry Rolland was elected and became base as Hank took the truck and everyone went to help out Walt. (see next write up)

Dougs feet were cold so Jim took off Dougs boots and socks, which were wet, and put Dougs feet on his stomach to warm them. Rich put Dougs boots on his stomach to warm them. I cleaned up our gear and got a rope out to belay Doug down to the trail. When all was warm, Jim put dry socks on Doug and then his boots. I tied the rope around Doug and followed him about 8 feet behind with a belay on him.

Going down Doug slipped only a few times and was held easily each time. The last 30 feet to the trail I stood behind a tree and just lowered Doug down. I got my pack, and kept Doug on belay until we were off the icy parts of the trail. At 2430 we reached Humber Park and a very happy mother.

After a few minutes of thanks and getting our clothes back from Doug, as he got into a warm car, we took off for Palm Desert to help out.

2 FEB., SUN. — RESCUE — No. 7504M

La Quinta, (southwest of Indio)

By Walt Walker

When the call had come for the previous mission I declined to roll as I had a chest type of cold and thought that an evening hike, with snow on the ground, wouldn't do me any good. About 45

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

minutes later Al Andrews called again and said that he had just received a call from the Indio station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a young man had fallen and suffered a possible broken ankle.

Al and I discussed the situation and finally decided that I and my son Kevin would hike in, (elevation about 200 feet) give first aid and provide warmth and/or shelter until the rest of the team was available or call for help from another MRA team.

We drove to La Quinta and met the deputy and spoke with the informants, a mother, daughter and son. A group of nine friends had taken a day hike into the local hills and canyons and on the way out the young man had fallen about 25 feet. He could not walk and the rest of the group gathered what meager wood was available so that the injured man would have a fire when it got cold. They all had hiked out, leaving the injured man alone.

It was finally decided that the son and daughter would lead us to the injured man, who was reported to be about a mile up canyon. (On almost every mission that I have been on in the past when we were told that it was one or two miles in, it turned out to be about half that distance.) We drove to the roadhead, Kevin and I donned our packs and the four of us started hiking at 10:00 p.m.

We had only walked a short distance when we were faced with what turned out to be the smallest and only one of many dry waterfalls. As we met the others, we either climbed up them or out and around them. Sometime after midnight the young lad who had been doing a very good job of back tracking his earlier route out, lost his way. Kevin and I took a look at his shoe sole design, which fortunately was rather unusual. We began to track him, in reverse, up the canyon.

Arriving at a waterfall that our head lamps could not light the top of, that morning in the light we discovered it to be about 350 feet tall) we climbed around it to our right. Once again we dropped back into the canyon, above the waterfall, and continued our tracking up canyon and calling. At 2:20 a.m. we received a response to our calling and within a few minutes were at the side of a very happy but cold and shaky victim. (His fire had long before gone out from lack of wood.) Kevin began collecting wood while I put extra clothing on the injured man. With the fire going and the shaking stopped I examined his ankle which was grossly swollen and very tender. I radioed back to the roadhead, (the team had found the subject of the previous search very quickly and drove immediately to La Quinta) that we would wait till morning for a helicopter evacuation.

Shortly after first light we received the good news that Don Landells was on his way in his supercharged helicopter. Kevin began looking for a helispot while I radioed to base to send in two RMRU members along with a full leg airsplint and two brush cutting tools. By the time the helicopter arrived we had selected a one runner helispot, to evacuate the injured man from, and a second one for a full touch down to fly everyone else out from.

Pete Carlson and Rich Morris arrived in the helicopter along with the requested equipment. While Pete and Kevin cleared brush from the one runner helispot, Rich and I put the airsplint on the injured man's leg. We radioed to Don to return and everyone carried the injured man to the helispot. He was quickly placed inside the hovering machine and then flown to the roadhead. The rest of us hiked over to the second helispot and were flown out two at a time.

A short drive to Indio, breakfast provided by the sheriff's department, critique of the mission by everyone, the drive home and finally into bed with a tired body completed another successful mission.

5 FEB., WED. — SEARCH — No. 7505A

San Jacinto Mountains

By Pete Carlson

Around noon, we received a request from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department to search for two boys a day overdue on a overnight hike to Skunk Cabbage meadow. As we were doing the call out the Sheriff called to say the boys had just walked out. The boys were fine and had just spent an extra day out because it had been snowing the day they had planned to hike out.

18 FEB., TUE. — SEARCH — No. 7507M

San Jacinto Mountains

By Pete Carlson

Two men hiked up to Round Valley on Saturday, climbed the peak on Sunday, and should have come out on Monday. On Tuesday by noon RMRU was rolling to Idyllwild to start a search. I arrived at Idyllwild and Walt Walker informed me that Don Landells and his helicopter would be here in 15 minutes.

When Don arrived, I went up for a quick search. Don had seen a tent on his flight over from Palm Desert, so we went to check it out. Just as we found the tent and were circling it, we got word that the men had just hiked out to Humber Park.

It had snowed on Sunday and the men became disoriented trying to hike out on Monday. But by Tuesday they had gotten straightened out and found their way out.

21-23 FEB., FRI.-SUN. — TRAINING

23 FEB., SUN. — RESCUE — No. 7508M

San Gorgonio Area

By Rich Quackenbush

Our annual combined winter frolic, training and rescue took place again at the 'Little Draw' on the slopes of Mt. San Gorgonio.

The operation began on Friday, Feb. 21 at 9:00 a.m. with five of us leaving from Poopout Hill on the edge of the San Gorgonio Wilderness Area and hiking two miles into Slushy Meadows where we donned snowshoes and continued on up toward our training area at the timberline at the Little Draw . . .

Arriving at about 1:00 p.m. in a gusting wind, we proceeded to set up tents, dig snow caves, and build igloos, generally making ourselves comfortable.

The remainder of the group, not being able to get away from work, family and other duties Friday morning, arrived later in the evening or Saturday morning.

Saturday dawned cool and windy, the temperature being in the low twenties. Attired in wool, down, an outside layer of nylon and crampons we (by this time, 15 of us) climbed up onto a steepish wind blown snow slope to practice arresting falls using the ice ax. This is done by propelling oneself down the slope in various attitudes and positions so as to simulate a fall and then to use the ice ax to arrest the fall. The idea is to be able to handle the ice ax

correctly by reflex while falling on a steep slope.

After about three hours of this sort of thing, Bud White, while sliding at a high velocity, caught a crampon on the hard snow and sustained an injury to his foot. The exact nature of the injury was undetermined but Bud was unable to put any weight on his foot without a great deal of pain.

He was still in pain the next morning, despite having taken a considerable amount of medication the night before. Gary Gillespie, Larry Roland and Bernie MacIlvoy descended early Sunday morning to get the stokes litter and toboggan that are stashed part way down the mountain. Bernie continued on down to call for help from the rest of the team. Garry and Larry returned with the litter and toboggan and we loaded Bud into it and proceeded down the mountain with ropes fore and aft.

We arrived at Slushy in about two hours and were met by Bernie and other team members with the wheeled litter. After a lunch and a rest Bud was wheeled out to the cars at Poopout and the mission-training was about over.

At this writing Bud was getting around without crutches and has no broken bones. He apparently sustained a bad sprain in his foot. We hope he recovers soon.



The Road Runner

sez— by Jim Fairchild

Some random thoughts regarding situations pertinent to RMRU'S operations. It never ceases to baffle one's mind how problematic and complicated a process it becomes to conduct what ought to be, at first acquaintance, a simple, straightforward organization.

Wherever and whenever a number of mountaineers, FWD enthusiasts, radio operators, ambulance drivers, pilots, and other emergency buffs get together, there one finds a would-be SAR unit. Often this occurs on-the-spot due to a sudden emergency. At other times these groups organize to a certain extent and plan for future calls. Rarely, one finds a unit that has been operating in a highly organized manner for years. We can now list a dozen units right here in Riverside County that claim to be SAR units. We know of two that are organized and seek calls from governing agencies. Besides these, we get calls about monthly from Scouting's Explorer Posts stating, "We're ready to go on SAR, would you come instruct us," or, "How do we get the Sheriff's Office to call us?" All this is part of the American Way of volunteer efforts. However, we would ask those who aspire to Mountain Rescue: (a) do you have the experience and expertise, (b) the necessary equipment, (c) the necessary physical conditioning, (d) the tactical, organizational capability, (e) the dedication and devotion. (f) the availability? When a call comes it requires a total commitment of all these factors to be successful. To this date, here in this county, our Sheriff's Office sees fit to call only RMRU for true mountain rescue. We are only a tool of that Office, we have nothing to say (officially) about other units. If others come along and qualify and take over our "job" in SAR, then we will be freed to participate as we would like in other wilderness pursuits — fun weekends climbing and hiking, hunting, birding, and the like — no more frustrating "aborts," no

more messed-up situations at work, no more broken social engagements, and so on. Yes, it would hurt not to be in a position to help those hurting in the wilderness, some of us Love it!

Speaking from the vantage point of "hindsight," people familiar with our efforts often wonder why we call for a helicopter so often. Two major reasons: first, for the sake of reaching a victim quicker; second, to save a truly frightening number of man-hours away from work. Also from the vantage point of hindsight, we can say that many of our missions would require another day in the field to complete without the birds, perhaps more. Minor reasons would be: less danger to fewer searchers; shorter suffering time for injured victims; faster deployment of searchers, and so on. But birds cost much money. Our county budgets a certain amount to SAR which is used up about half way through each year. Hindsight also tells us that a number of times the victims walk out by themselves while we are searching by helicopter. Well, who can tell us that ahead of time? This presents quite a problem to all concerned.

"Well, I'm never going to wear crampons during training from now on . . ." "OK, but how is a person to effectively practice ice ax arrest without them?" Thus goes the controversy. We've had injuries to men who wore crampons while sliding down ice slopes learning and reviewing how to stop themselves with an ice ax. If we don't wear them, we are faking the situation — you won't be on dangerous slopes without them carrying only the ice ax (we hope). Our philosophy is to try to practice skills in as realistic, hopefully more difficult mode than actual missions will require. If a real mission requires of us skills to a greater degree than we are accustomed, we may not make the grade.

By the Grace of God we've managed to get the job done so far, and eagerly look forward to the next challenge. We've seen enough lives saved outright because of our efforts to know the whole scene is worth it — aborts, false alarms, shortages, threatened problems — when we get a call we answer it to the best of our ability. We hope it's always enough.

Sustaining Members

by Mike Daugherty

I had plans to use this column to announce the first rescue conducted by the Sustaining Membership (as opposed to the rescue team proper). Yes sir, I had the outlines of quite a story — your heroic sustaining membership chairman climbing at Tahquitz Rock, high winds, blowing ice, bitter cold, men of steel matching themselves against the raw power of nature. Then down below, a cry for help! Without a moment's hesitation the old fire horses answered the call. Down out of leaden skies we swoop to the aid of the injured climber to the strains of appropriate music (key of E flat).

But, I've thought better of it. After all, the object here is to recognize a different sort of effort on behalf of the victim of a mountain mishap. Besides, the details of how we helped the Idyllwild Fire Dept. evacuate a climber with a sprained ankle might prove rather dull stuff, particularly when compared with what often appears in these pages.

Instead, I'd like to break with tradition. As those of you who have been with us awhile know full well, we make a point of personally thanking everyone who contributes to RMRU. We don't always get right to it (apologies to my vast secretarial staff — no criticism intended), but we hope that the sincerity of the effort overcomes that. Because of this, we usually just list the names of the new and renewing members in this column without additional comment. The basic idea is that, in an outfit as elite as our sustaining membership, no special recognition is called for. We still think that this is a sound policy. However, because their support involves the efforts of a large number of people, we'd like to single out two organizations for special thanks. Appropriately enough, the *Soroptimist Club of San Jacinto-Hemet* and *Kennel Club of Riverside* are both on the renewing list this month. These organizations have literally adopted RMRU and provide very substantial ongoing support of the team. So, we wanted to break with tradition as a means of letting them know that their efforts on our behalf are deeply appreciated. Keep up the good work!

New

M. S. Bunge

Renewing

M/M Irwin J. Kelly

M/M Robert Spenger

Dr/M Jay Wallis

Fred Camphausen

*M/M Milton Levy

M/M H. E. Carlson

*Kennel Club of Riverside

*Soroptimist Club of San Jacinto-Hemet

**Century Club — donation of \$100 or more.*

Misplaced in the rush!

16 FEB., SUN. — RESCUE? — No. 7506M

Tahquitz Canyon

By Hank Schmel

Ah! Let's see now . . . a little spot here I missed. One more coat of varnish and then I can put the floor boards back. If I have you wondering what I was doing when we got the call to locate a man with a broken leg in Tahquitz Canyon, well I'm building an airplane, a genuine World War I Sopwith Pup.

Jim Fairchild and I drove the van and arrived on the scene at 1500 (3:00 p.m.) where we met Walt Walker. As I got out of the van I looked toward the canyon and was immediately filled with emotion for the view brought back many nostalgic memories of days past. It had been almost four months since we had a mission in there.

Deputy Glenn Hermanson, from the Riverside County Sheriff's Indio station drove up and immediately started gathering information from the informant Carl Freman. Walt then got information from Carl that would be pertinent to the search. During all this I had confirmed that Don Landells would arrive, via helicopter, at 1615 (4:15 p.m.). Jim was getting ready to fly in for a quick surveillance. We had hoped Jim would go up and simply pick up the gent with what was believed to be a broken left ankle because we only had five members answer the first call. Rich Morris and Steve Stephens joined us just before the bird arrived. Jim took off for the second canyon on the west side of the main canyon. This is in the area of the second falls. They had no success in locating the victim or any signs of him. Walt had decided to put everyone in the field, by helicopter, Jim and Steve up on the high ridge and Rich and I in a small side canyon that would lead us just below the first falls. The time was now 1800 (6:00 p.m.) Sonny Lawrence arrived, took over base, allowing Walt to fly the canyon. Rich and I had worked our way to the bottom and were making our way towards two campers who Walt briefly talked to from the bird. This was the culmination of all our efforts, for in one simple statement, to these campers, and one short reply we had our suspicions confirmed. The gent with the broken ankle had been helped out earlier.

The varnish on my floor boards was dry when I got home . . . Quick drying huh!

The *RMRU Newsletter* is published monthly by the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc. It is intended primarily to inform the regular and sustaining members.

If you would like to receive the newsletter on a regular basis, and at the same time become a sustaining member, send your tax deductible donation of \$10 or more to:

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