

# 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

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Walt Walker, Editor  
Hank Schmel, Publisher

# WELCOME!

## TO RMRU'S BACKYARD





# WELCOME!

Again, we the members of RMRU say "Welcome to our backyard." This is our training ground, the area many of us have spent over 20 years becoming familiar with its faces in all seasons, the home of the majority of our actual search and rescue operations. Right within the boundaries of these majestic mountains, their monolithic outcroppings, their staggering canyons, the desert they pour out on to, we have experienced technical rescue and evacuation problems, traumatic injury, lashing winter storms, advancing lightening danger, lost children, overdue hikers, heart attack victims, poison reaction from unedible plants, death and even a helicopter crash into the pine trees with one of our members aboard.

As with all dedicated SAR people we can safely say that we would not give up a single experience. From each and every problem we learn, from each and every dealing with someone in pain or fear we strive to make the next time an easier, faster, safer solution.

In September of 1961 five men, who had been working with search and rescue as reserve deputies of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, formed a rescue team. Soon we became an incorporated entity—Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit. Today two men, Jim Fairchild and Walt Walker, remain of the original group. Walt served as Secretary-Treasurer in the beginning, then 5½ years as President. Jim then took over the helm as President for several years and has served as training chairman for many years doing an excellent job keeping training current, up-to-date, and meaningful. Walt is now back in the President's chair beginning his second year this go around. Backing up these two men are 25 great men, all of whom make us the unit we are today.

When the Southern California Region MRA was formed on May 4, 1963 at China Lake, two RMRU members were there to sign the newly worded By-Laws, Don Ricker and Walt Walker. RMRU's 'backyard' was where the first Region seminar was held and has been the area for all but one of the seminars.

We consider ourselves to be most fortunate for the working relationship we have with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. They are most instrumental in the success we have known with missions being carried out quickly, safely, routinely, and completely. We are their right arm in SAR operations, they are our right arm in the assistance and support they give us. We are deeply grateful for this working relationship which exists between these two bodies of service.

Within CR-MRA the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit originated the Sustaining Membership program of donations. Because our Unit has a non-profit, tax-deductible permit with the Federal and State Governments we can accept donations from people interested in the services we provide society. From the donations received from hundreds of concerned people we have been able to purchase our truck, enlarge our life-saving equipment potential, and build our communications system. Most of our men carry radio pagers with them throughout their waking hours and have same pagers bedside throughout the evening and night hours. This is of great value in expediting the beginning of a rescue mission. Our financial need is an ongoing thing and we as a group, owe much thanks to our Sustaining Members whom we hardly ever meet. They are the people who give us the instruments with which helping others is made so much better.

We of RMRU consider ourselves unique—look around you. The beauty is everywhere. And as more and more people are

beginning to want to know this beauty the need for expert SAR personnel increases. Our men like this county, this mountain, these out-of-doors. And we do want others to feel the same and share the same, SAFELY. We, as all who gather this weekend, feel intense pride in our ability to help those injured, strayed and lost. We are also aware that education within this field of endeavor must be an ongoing entity and so we strive to grow. We of RMRU feel great commitment to our Unit and to SAR and we want Volunteer Mountain Rescue to maintain its intense commitment to the principles it was founded upon. Once again, all of us within RMRU say "Welcome to our backyard! May your weekend be rewarding, educational, and meaningful."



A happy ending. a small child lost, reunited with his parents

## ELECTION RESULTS!

Walt Walker, President  
Rich Quackenbush, Vice-President  
Ed Hill, Secretary  
Pete Carlson, Treasurer  
Bernie McIlvoy, Director  
Rick Pohlers, Director  
Hank Schmel, Director

## COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN APPOINTMENTS:

Al Andrews, Communications  
Bernie McIlvoy, Equipment Development  
Pete Carlson, Finance  
Pete Carlson, MRA Representative  
Ray Castilonia, M.D. and  
Norm Mellor, M.D., Medical  
Rich Quackenbush, Membership  
Jim Fairchild, Newsletter  
Hank Schmel, Public Relations  
Jim Garvey, Rescue  
Mike Daugherty, Sustaining Membership  
Board of Directors, Training  
Rick Pohlers, Vehicle & Equipment

# Search and Rescue

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## **4 APRIL, FRI.—SEARCH—No. 7512C** **Yosemite National Park**

In the early morning hours RMRU received a call for assistance in searching for a missing cross country skier. Due to both lack of transportation and an operations leader, no members from RMRU went up north. As of this writing the man has still not been found.

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## **7 APRIL, MON.—SEARCH—No. 7513A** **San Jacinto Mountains**

At noontime RMRU received a phone call from the Indio office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department requesting our help in locating two men. They had left the upper terminal of the Palm Springs Tramway Saturday morning and had planned on descending Tahquitz Canyon.

Luckily for them and RMRU, the snow was too deep to cross without snowshoes, and they had descended ridges into Palm Springs. They notified the Palm Springs Police Department they were out, while we were on the way. With the help of our paging system, members were turned around while enroute.

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## **9 APRIL, WED.—SEARCH—No. 7514M** **North Face, San Jacinto Mtn.** **By Rick Pohlers**

It was late afternoon when we received a cheerful invitation to go hiking in the Snow Creek area, scene of many rescues and trainings. Mt. San Jacinto was especially breathtaking that day, after a series of storms that had left it freshly coated in snow down to the 4000 foot level. So nice to leave work and hike in the clear crisp air.

Anyway, seems that two teenagers (a girl and boy) had left their car parked and hadn't been seen since Friday. The parents of the girl were concerned, especially with so much rain and cold weather.

The rain concerned us also since it had probably erased all tracks. So the "head Wog" went up with good ole Don Landells for a recon of Snow Creek and Falls Creek up to about the 6500' level.

After a thorough air search of both canyons, Walt returned to lay the search plan on us. One team consisting of Sonny Lawrence and Jim Garvey would be dropped off at the Ismus, look around for signs of activity and contour their way around to Snow Creek, yelling and looking. Pete and I were to go up to the snow line, check to see they did not go up that far and work our way down after the other team.

The first team was put out and Don looked around on his

way back. Then Pete and I were flown in. However, on the way up we spotted some blankets spread out on a rock, just above the largest fall in Falls Creek. Flying over we saw a camp and two people, all of which had been missed during the Wog's air search. So Don put the bird down on a helispot the forest service had so conveniently built for us.

We found a girl and boy in a rather soggy camp site by the creek who fit the general description. They said that they were not the people we were looking for but would keep an eye out for them. They seemed rather nervous though.

We went off back towards the chopper and radioed back to base what we had learned. We related they said they are not who we are looking for. The word was to go back and get more information, i.e., eye color, clothing, etc. Seemed rather strange to us, we're not too used to finding folks that don't want to be found.

So back we went and in a folksy way asked for some identification. The girl had none and the boy despite having a wallet with many cards could not produce one with his name on it. Now we were starting to get suspicious, like maybe we were getting fed a story. So now what? If they are who we think they are what do we do if they don't want to leave? Call in a heavy, right!

So, in flies Mr. Bad (Walt Walker) to lay it on like it is. Upon seeing this mean looking dude come strolling into their camp our "victims" immediately confessed up to who they were and pleaded for mercy. We told the kids he is not as mean as he pretends to be and that we won't let him throw them in jail (for camping in an unauthorized area and for running away from home.)

Somehow the two kids had managed to pack in tons of canned goods, clothing, bedding and assorted junk. We helped them pack it into two duffle bags and haul it out. While doing this we noticed what kind of condition the two were in, cold and wet. Both were shivering from wet clothes, being unable to start a fire (all their matches were wet). Every bit of clothing and bedding was also wet and again they had been unable to dry it. This, plus camping in the cold air flow by the creek, meant that if we had not found them, they could very well have gone into hypothermia and been in serious trouble by morning. So we all flew out again admiring the spectacular scenery created by the new fallen snow.

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## **21 APRIL, MON.—SEARCH—No. 7515M** **North Face, San Jacinto Mtn.** **By Jim Fairchild**

The magnificent North Face of San Jacinto Mtn. is steadily increasing its challenge to mountaineers. We are frequently asked for information and route descriptions of the area, we hear of more and more parties going up there, and our calls to that area for one reason or another are coming at shorter intervals. It's a wonderful area—I've been hiking up there since 1946. Hmm, even earlier, like when there was a fish hatchery in Snowcreek before the flood of 1938. 1946 was my first climb of the peak via the East Fork of Snowcreek.

We got word from the Riverside County Sheriff's Departments' Banning office that two young men were overdue in this same area. Our base was located near the Snowcreek community at the foot of the mountain, 1100' el. Landells had just landed with his supercharged Bell helicopter, and soon I was chatting with him as we searched upward along the plateau and canyon. As we rose above 5000' el. Don had to circle to gain, and on about the second

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



time around we saw tracks going up the snowfield. About that time Larry Brown radioed from base that, using my 15X spotting scope, tracks were visible to him. Up and up they went, then into a funny detour into a chute leading to Folly Peak. It would have been much folly to have persisted, I guess they figured that out, for we saw where they roped-down back into the main canyon. About 400' below the peak they left the main gully for the rocks and trees—awfully steep in there. We found out later they bivouacked there, just below the summit. They were sort of late because of lollygagging around the day before and camping low.

We saw the tracks reach the summit ridge, 10,800' el. tramp in circles, then go to the peak, we wondered if they were in the shelter hut, but no one came out. On down the east ridge following tracks, then lots of circling around Tamrack Valley and Round Valley. Finally, down at Long Valley we questioned the ranger who had alerted the Sheriff in the first place that the boys were overdue, he'd seen them not.

Back up to Round Valley and look, there is a four letter message in the snow! "PHOK" This we took to mean that Paul Hacker, one of the missing, was OK. We set down and I followed their tracks until they took a direction toward Long Valley. We circled a lot while my stomach wished we weren't, then headed for Long Valley again, the ranger's signal indicated no one yet; going back up along the trail Don spotted them walking along. We went back to Long Valley,

hiked up the trail a half mile and found the two, very slow and tired. So, it was over.

Following a most informative slow circling descent of Falls Creek back to base, Don took off like a gymnast from a trampoline, we took off for dinner in Banning.

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:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc.  
P. O. Box 5444  
Riverside, Calif. 92507



While tending the stokes litter during evacuation of an injured man, RMRU member Bernie McIlvoy also monitored the oxygen being administered.





RMRU member Ray Castilonia, M.D. observed life signs of a severely injured man while fellow team member Walt Walker started giving oxygen.

## THE PRESIDENT'S BOX



Looking back on the almost 14 years that RMRU has been in existence brings many things to mind. The hardships in the beginning were many, both physically and mentally. The equipment, what little we had, was very primitive compared with today's. Personal equipment was the same, little of it, and not the greatest in the world. I personally can think of a few sub-freezing nights that I would not want to endure again. In our first full year of operation we had 7 missions. In the bumper year of 1972 we had 59 missions. However, June 25, 1970, will be a date I will long remember as the *wildest* helicopter ride of my life.

(CONTINUED NEXT COLUMN)

How about 1974? The following figures quickly recap a busy year:

21 Searches	4,330
12 Rescues	670
10 Aborts	210
6 Calls	10
11 Trainings	2,600
Public Education	383
	8,002 Volunteer Hours

That grand total breaks down to an average for each man on the Unit of eight 40 hour work weeks. How many volunteer organizations do you know, of any kind, that put those kind of hours in?

Just like everyone else, I find less and less time each day to do more and more. For some months I have been remiss in writing for this column. Since it could be some time before I write again, I would like to thank some people.

First, I want to express my thanks to Jim Fairchild for his recent stint as Training Chairman. Jim never does a job half way (just read the training write-up in this issue). We're not going to let Jim off completely, I have already asked to help RMRU in other ways.

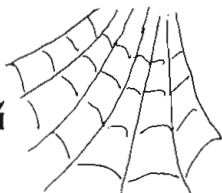
Second, thanks go out to all those members who have

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taken photographs of missions and trainings that have been used in the newsletter. A special thanks this issue to RMRU photographer Hank Schmel for the four color photographs that appear.

Third, last but not least, thanks to my son Kevin Walker for his most recent work for RMRU. He has just completed a number of woodworking projects within the big orange van. Also, a great job of cleaning both the inside and the outside of the van. —Thanks again to all, Walt.

## from Old'en Days



### RMRU NEWSLETTER, May 1960

A report on a demonstration to the Association for Outdoor Education Conference held in Idyllwild. The demonstration included a pararescue jump (by a RMRU member and the plane was piloted by a RMRU member), tracking complete with a RMRU Bloodhound, rescue and aerial evacuation of 'Sierra Sam,' a training dummy loaned to us by Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team.

Elections Results: President, Walt Walker; 1st Vice-President, Paul Sanders; 2nd Vice-President, James Fairchild; Secretary-Treasurer, Don Ricker; Quartermaster, Jake Johnson; Assistant Quartermaster, Bob Minter.

### RMRU NEWSLETTER, May 1965

A report on an Easter Weekend search for a man missing near Elsinore. RMRU called in other Region teams for assistance. While searching on Sunday Rae Anderson, of the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team was struck by a huge Rattlesnake. Rae was rushed to the USC Medical Center where he spent many days on the critical list.

Sustaining Membership Chairman, Al Andrews reported that Christmas had come early. Due to the efforts of RMRU wives and their rummage sale and the donations of the Sustaining Members, enough money had been raised to order the new Ford Super Van.

RMRU members were guest lectures and Ice Axe Instructors for the Riverside Chapter, Sierra Club Basic Mountaineering Course.

Election Results: President, Walt Walker; Vice-President, Jim Fairchild; Secretary, Al Andrews; Treasurer, Bill Speck; Quartermaster, Don Ricker; Directors, Mike Daugherty and Ron Harris.

you. Most of us very frequently are told by friends and acquaintances that great enjoyment and satisfaction are derived from reading the newsletter and learning what we do and where the money contributed is spent.

Most of the time the pages tell of successful, occasionally adventurous missions. Thank God, this is the way it goes.

But, behind the scenes, there can be all sorts of unsettling things happen. We don't mean the actual conduct of the missions is fraught with problems, but back home or at work or along the way.

Usually, a call-out means disrupting or cancelling family plans back home (for those few of us who are married) meaning disappointed, possibly irate children and spouses. Not too bad though, most families are really exceptionally tolerant and forgiving. Now, at work there can be great disruption because most of us were doing something at the time of the call that really needed doing. When some of the men leave for SAR, others under them are adversely affected. Some of our men are tottering on the fence of staying employed and not because they choose to go help someone in need in the wilderness. Even along the way from home or work to base camp various horrors await: like blow-outs, engine failures, coming upon wrecks that demand help, and lastly, the one that sticks in my craw like an unswallowed lobster claw, getting cited by the California Highway Patrol.

Well, it's all part of the game. If we're gonna be nutty enough to hang it all out during the process of conducting a mission, we've got to expect contra temps. If these things that plague us can be called stresses, then maybe we can cite the most deadly stress of all: total stress-free life. I have yet to know an un-busy, un-involved SAR person, and probably never will.

Now, have you gotten the idea we would rather not have call-outs? We hope not, for the worst blow of all would be to find out we were really needed but not called. We're in SAR to help whoever needs help, whenever and wherever.



This photo taken while evacuating a severely injured young man from Tahquitz Canyon, could easily be titled 'EMOTION.'



## The Road Runner

sez- by Jim Fairchild

We hope all of you who read the **RMRU Newsletter** realize the fond feeling we, on the active portion of the unit, have for



## *Sustaining Members*

by Mike Daugherty

Our thanks to the following three renewing members:

\*Idyllwild Property Owners Association

Laura M. Hudkins

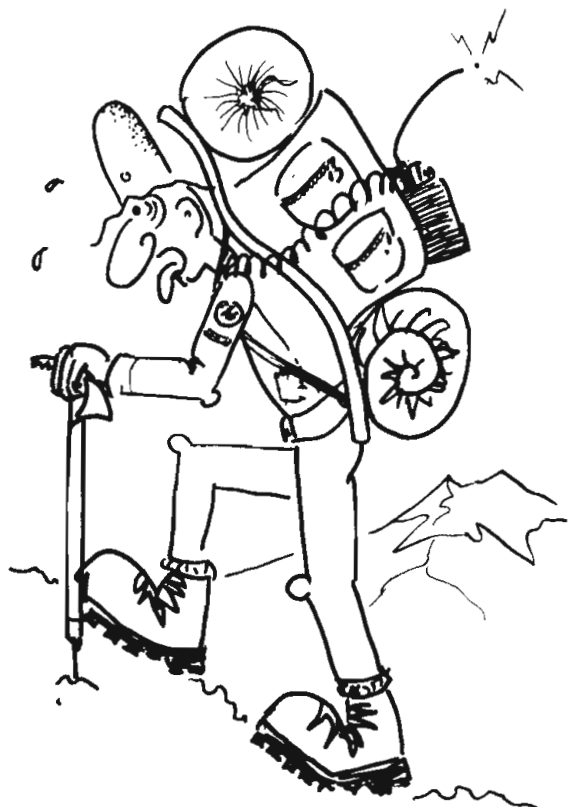
\*Rubidoux Grange No. 611

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

Message following is for Sustaining Members only—to be read in a stage whisper . . . (If the truth be known, the Sustaining Membership Chairman is not altogether comfortable with such a short list, distinguished though it may be. Bear in mind that the traditionally busy summer months lie just ahead. RMRU will likely be needing the sustenance provided by a longer list than this. Your check to RMRU will bring you not only a prominent place on the extensive list of names sure to appear here next month, but our thanks as well.)

## **RMRU-toons**

by RICK POHLERS



"If Walker sends me to Caramba, one more time, I'll..."

## **TRAINING**



**25-27 APRIL, FRI.-SUN.**

**By Larry Roland**

Friday, April 25, 8 p.m. found Fairchild and I at the roadhead of Horsethief Creek waiting for our fellow search and rescuers. They were late due to a critical auto accident they came upon and assisted in administering first aid and obtaining an ambulance. Little did we know that others of our team were performing life or death procedures as they have been trained, so we started hiking.

The wind was blowing and it was cloudy, yet occasionally the moon peeked through and lit the up-and-down path that leads to the creek crossing. Since this was primarily a training to learn and practice woodcraft skills, we lost no time, even in the dark, of learning the edible plants, tracking, etc. Jim pointed out the Yucca Whipplei whose flower petals can be eaten, and the Agave whose flower stalk can be melted and then dried for later consumption.

All too soon we were there, descending the last bluff into Horsethief Creek crossing. We had smelled smoke while walking in so decided to investigate. Stealthily edging our way over rock and deadfall we were able to conceal ourselves within 30 feet of the campfire. After observing for a time we walked into their camp, said hello and met three teenage campers who invited us to set up camp with them. We warmed up a bit and talked while they smoked some unknown substance and then we set off to cook supper, set up our camp and await the arrival of the other team members. One by one they drifted in, (bringing with them a whole raft of Boy Scouts who stayed up all night,) and joined us for supper until it began to rain and we had to set up shelter and hit the sack.

Six a.m. was too early when Fairchild, who undoubtedly had been up an hour before watching birds, sounded the horrendous "Time to get up" command. It had rained and snowed all night so we took our time eating and packing while our gear finished drying out. It didn't take long though, until we were on our way up the creek, noting every edible or survival item in the area. Numerous times we stopped to discuss the utility of a grape vine, or jaw bone, or ascertain the number of people in the party ahead of us by their tracks and how old they were. There were countless signs of deer and sheep and coyote as well. Then we came to the old Horsethief corral and set up camp for more training activities.

After dinner and a much too short siesta we were back at it. Each of the nine men was assigned to a task of building a fire drill or digging for water, or locating a suitable piece of flint for striking and starting a fire or locating edible plants or possible animal food. When we had finished experimenting and practicing these crafts with minimal success, we all agreed that it's best to just take a good match kit! No sooner had we finished woodcraft skills than Ed Hill got "lost" and we began tracking exercises. We made quick work of his trail and caught him hiding behind some rocks trying to cover up

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

his white hat. Back to camp and supper and campfire tales before bedtime.

Sunday morning found us rested and hungry as usual. After another big breakfast we were ready for more training. Our task was to search and track two of our members, Pete and Bernie, who would lay trail similar to a lost party. They had a good 45 minutes lead by the time we realized they were gone and were able to organize ourselves. Six of us got together and set off up the creek looking for tracks. We quickly got on their trail taking turns leading while the rest of the group kept a lookout for them to separate. Sure enough, they separated shortly and we had to split up; Hill, Brown and myself in one group and Quackenbush, Garvey and Wyatt in the other. From then on it was step by step as we tried to follow the tracks and uncover the numerous tricks they used to confuse us. Fortunately, we were able to stay with them across rocks and brush for three hours until we located them at the summit of Sheep Mountain.

After a short rest on the summit, we returned to base camp a couple of miles away and prepared for the hike out. The remainder of the trip was spent picking up trash and reviewing various things we had learned over the weekend.

Personally, I feel I learned more this training about both actual searching and survival skills than in any other training. I

would like to thank Jim Fairchild for all the work and effort he put into this training and all past trainings and all the time and advice he has given me as a new member on the team.

Thanks Jim!

## Coming Events ---

14 May, Board Meeting  
28 May, Regular Meeting  
31 May & 1 June, Training  
11 June, Board Meeting  
25 June, Regular Meeting  
27-29 June, Training



On a recent winter training unit members were caught resting in RMRU's Bishop Ultimate four-man tent. Pictured

from left to right: Ed Hill, Pete Carlson, Rich Quackenbush, Larry Brown and Jim Garvey.