

RMRU NEWSLETTER

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The Road Runner Sez- By Jim Fairchild

It is not often that we meet the people we've helped through SAR after delivering them back to the roadhead, parents, hospital, and so forth.

Thursday evening (29 April) I had the pleasure to meet and talk with Mike Shea out at the March Air Force Base Hospital. His wife, Steve

Fereday, and another couple were there. Mike is in traction for his fractured femur, has a fractured patella as the result of a sharp stick penetrating the knee, and a badly sprained ankle, plus "800" cuts and scratches as his doctor said. He's in great spirits and is looking forward to coming to an RMRU meeting when back on his feet. Steve plans to attend our May meeting. We reminisced on how he was alive through the Grace of God - RMRU was given the opportunity to evacuate a reprieved climber who will recover. Ever so much better than evacuating a lifeless climber, husband, pilot, friend. ■ RMRU

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 7620M

5 April, Mon.

Santa Ana Mts., San Mateo Canyon, Fisherman's Camp

By Jim Fairchild

At 6 pm a carload of us were headed for Art Bridge's first aid class over in Claremont. At the intersection of Etiwanda and the Pomona Freeway the pager beeped and said to call Al Andrews. We found that two young boys were missing from the remote Fisherman's Camp, reached by steep dirt road and surrounded by also steep, brush-covered hills. Even worse, the canyons are

frequently choked with dense patches of poison oak. A rainstorm had swept the area that morning, and the night was downright cold.

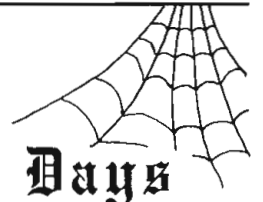
We found ourselves in the above environment late in the evening. We had good manpower and the R-CARES radio group was there to support our communications. Two representatives from supposedly competent agencies had assured me that San Mateo Canyon had been searched both up and down by their groups during the day, going from Fisherman's Camp upstream to the Girl Scoup Camp about six miles away. Therefore, I opted to send two strong search teams out, one down San Mateo Canyon, one up Tenaja Canyon which joins the first canyon at the camp. A third party would scour the immediate vicinity. The teams deployed out into the blackness. Various onlookers disappeared. The foster mother of the boys and the sheriff deputy were conferring over by the campfire. I stayed at the van as Ops Leader because of a horrible allergy to poison oak.

Our search was for Pat Baumgartner, 8 years old, and Ron Wickware, 7 years old. They had two friendly

(Continued on page 2)

from

Old'en Days



Five Years Ago

While many of us were assisting the Sierra Club with ice ax training over on Mt. Baldy, a young man became stranded on a loose-rock bluff up Cottonwood Canyon north of Cabazon. It was a risky and messy technical evacuation engineered by Mike Daughtery, John Murdock, Mike Orr, Bernie McIlvoy, Phil Moedt, and Dick Caffroy.

Two weeks later RMRU handled a call for three missing teen-aged girls down Dark Canyon. It was a boulder-hopping, bush-wacking thrash that found the girls coming back up the canyon.

Sunday night of the same weekend a young man got confused in the San Jacinto Mountain high country and eluded searchers until found by hikers in the Willow Creek area. It was another mission where we zoomed into Caramba Camp (a really great hike (drag) from Humber Park - 6 miles of up and down) to check whether the lost one has passed that way, either by tracks or questioning of campers, or both.

Ten Years Ago

No SAR activity, but it was noted that our biggest turn-out of men enjoyed and profited from a tremendous winter training on Mt. San Gorgonio.

Then too, we had our famous (infamous?) public display session out at the Riverside Auto Center.



dogs with them. They had all been missing since 0800 that morning. Various people searched for a while, then the foster mother drove out the road to notify the Sheriff. We felt that had the boys desired to do so, which is not the usual case, they could have covered several miles from the camp. Chances were they had not gone too far and were curled up with the dogs, shivering. Well, no traces were found by the parties, except the group close to camp found undefined tracks around the corner of the canyon upstream. One team returned to camp in a few hours having been blocked by a patch of poison oak no one had gone through. Pete and Bernie went home to wash down with strong soap. Steve and Tom turned in to be ready for a choice assignment I had in mind for dawn. Quack, Ed, Gary, and Hal were far downstream, out of contact, but we knew they were bivouacked and would ascend a hill for radio check at dawn.

So, I drove the van up to a fine lookout point about a mile upstream from the camp and three-hundred feet above the stream. At dawn I was using binoculars on the slopes when a dog barked, once. The sound seemed to come from my level, almost directly west. Well, we will search that area with the helicopter which is due shortly. Sure enough, Don Landells with Pete and Bernie aboard in his Bell Jet Ranger II pops over a northern ridge. They check the side of the hill and a canyon a bit west. Then they drone slowly up San Mateo Canyon. I radio that they've gone past where the dog barked. They radio back that they spotted boys and dogs in the stream bottom. Don lands and before long humans and canines are gathered up, but not without a chase for one of the friendly but scared dogs. Quack's team is asked to find a helispot and are picked up after the thankful reunion back at the van.

Wouldn't you know, they were found where Steve and Tom were assigned, but had not yet been deployed. RMRU has a quaint saying, "If you ain't searched it yourself, it ain't been searched." Once again, children were found relatively close to the point last seen, were in great spirits, and survived the cold night far better than adults would have.

RESCUE

Mission No. 7621M

**15 April, Thurs.
Black Hill**

By Larry Roland

At 3:30 P.M. about fifteen minutes after returning home from a strenuous 4-day climb to Picacco del Diablo in Baja, the phone rang. "We have an airplane crash near the Pines to Palms highway about five miles southwest of Palm Desert; six people aboard. Can you go?" After a moment of silence I said "yes" thinking I might be able to help in base camp if my body refused to go hiking. So I called Jim Garvey, also just back from Picacco, and made arrangements to drive out together.

I have to admit I took longer than the 20 minutes allowed to get ready, nevertheless, we made it in good time for an early supper in Palm Desert. Naturally all our haste was useless since operations had been postponed until daylight and clearer weather. We were hospitably taken care of for the night by the Palm Desert Fire Department.

The plane and occupants were much less fortunate than we as there were no survivors of the crash. Apparently the six place charter from San Diego to Palm Springs encountered severe turbulence due to strong storm activity, overcast skies and rain over the San Jacinto Mountain area which caused the plane to come apart in the air. The tail section was located on the south side of Black Hill (3,689') while the fuselage was on the north side pointing downhill where it burned about ½ mile from the highway.

The next day we located even more aircraft parts scattered over four square miles of hillside. We were able to recover the charred remains and with the help of Landell's Aviation helicopter were able to airlift them off the slope. The rest of the day was spent picking up the pieces of strewn aircraft and assisting the Federal Transportation and Safety investigation team. Probably the only thing that remains now is a black spot on the side of Black Hill

and the vague memories of those who were involved.

Like mountain climbing, Search and Rescue also has ups and downs.

■ RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 7622M

**24 April, Sat.
Desert Hot Springs**

By Harold Fulkman

On April 24, 1976 the RMRU received a call from the Riverside Sheriff's Office that four girls were missing in the rugged terrain on the outskirts of the resort town of Desert Hot Springs. The meeting place was to be at Long Canyon. After arriving with the van, Jim Fairchild and Larry Roland went to question the parents and gather any additional information that might be beneficial.

Upon returning, Jim briefed us on what information he had obtained; specifically that the four girls had left at about 1700 hours to go for a hike to the nearby foothills. The girls ranged in age from 13 to 9 years and all were sisters. The girls were dressed in light summer clothing and foot gear consisted of deck shoes.

By this time 8 RMRU members had responded and it was decided that the search should not be delayed any longer by waiting for more of the team to show up. The men were broken up into two main teams with Rick Quackenbush and myself on one team. Our assignment was to parallel the paved part of Long Canyon Dr. looking for prints until we reached the dirt road that leads into the canyon itself. The shoulder of the paved section of the road proved to be fruitless, and when we reached the turn off, we cut cross country toward the foothills that had been the girls destination.

Our trail was soon crossed by a large wash that came out of Long Canyon. We proceeded to check for tracks for approximately ¼ mile in each direction, up and down the wash. It was at this time, 0030, we received word through our radio that one of the other teams, made up of Bernie McIlvoy and John Dew, had discovered the girls tracks.

John and Bernie's assignment was to cut cross country diagonally between the girls home and the foothills. A trailer park was directly in their path and it was on the outskirts of the park that the prints were found. The prints were a good set and looked like they might be easy to follow. Also, an arrow was found drawn in the sand pointing in the direction in which they went.

Because the tracks were close to a dirt road, the van was brought to their location. From the advantage of a small knoll, Rich and I could see the lights of the van approximately two miles away, "line of sight." We had an advantage whereby the ground due west of the van had already been covered, and by heading straight for the van we would cross the girls tracks if they went northwest or north.

As we moved southeast toward the van, we overheard John say that the tracks had disappeared at the edge of another dirt road. Each man knew what the dismal possibility of this discovery could mean. But as a search and rescue unit, our job is not to speculate on possible foul play; this is left in the hands of the sheriff's office. Our job is to assume that the victim is lost, and in need of our help.

As Rich and I moved toward the van we noticed that the area was criss-crossed with many dirt roads. One of the roads headed in the direction we wanted to go and so we took advantage of it hoping to see tracks in the soft berms on either side of the road.

One thing we weren't expecting was the 18" sidewinder that popped into the beam of my flashlight some 3 - 4 feet ahead of me. The snake was moving in the same direction we were and seemed unaffected by our presence. Rich and I agreed that our new found friend was not a compatible traveling companion; so with a side-step, a fast pace, and a fond farewell, we moved on down the road reassuring ourselves that there was absolutely no truth to that old wives tale about snakes traveling in pairs.

Upon reaching the van, Rich and I took a food and water break. Jim, who along with Larry Roland was running base, told us that one more foot print had been discovered. The time was about 0400 and the sky was

getting grey. Jim said he would like us to get to the top of a nearby hill before dawn to look for any movement at first light. The hill we selected turned out to be considerably more difficult to climb than it had first appeared.

After reaching the summit, we continued shouting the girls names as we had been doing all through the night. It was at this time we heard a loud whistle. I returned with a shout and asked them to identify themselves. One of them called out her name and they were indeed the ones we were looking for. After dropping down into a deep canyon and back up the other side, we were able to reach the girls in about 30 minutes.

After discovering that the girls were in good shape, we descended to the bottom of the hill and waited for the rest of the teams to join us. While we were waiting, the girls told us that darkness had caught them at the top of the hill, and they were unable to get down. After the teams grouped up, we all hiked out to the van and the girls were returned safely to their home. ■ RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 7623M

25 & 26 April, Sun. & Mon. Tahquitz Rock San Jacinto Mountains

By Walt Walker

Late Sunday afternoon RMRU was notified by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that there was an injured climber on Tahquitz Rock. Sending my son, Kevin, to load gear for both of us, I called fellow unit member John Dew. We agreed to ride up the hill together.

Since the call was for an injury we all hurried, even faster, than our normal quick response. As we drove along John, Kevin and I discussed a plan of action since we would be 45 minutes ahead of the rest of the unit members.

Two unit handtalkie radios are kept in the Hemet - San Jacinto area since three unit members, who live there, are generally able to respond to rescue missions. When we arrived at the Humber Park roadhead we

were given information about the accident by the deputy. He pointed to the general area where the climber had been reported to have fallen. We gave him one of the unit radios, so that we could communicate, since we would be leaving ahead of the rest of the unit members.

Hiking up toward Lunch Rock, we stopped a couple of times to call out. It wasn't until we were well around to the north side of the rock that we received a response to our yells. It was now dark and beginning to turn quite cold. Scrambling up a rock I caught sight of the beam from a lone flashlight.

We had been given the impression that the climber was somewhere up on the rock. But when we arrived at the light we found that the injured climber, Mike Shea, was laying at the base of the climbing rock. We quickly introduced ourselves, took off our packs and put on our parkas.

Mike's climbing partner related that an anchor had failed while Mike was rappelling down the steep rock face. Mike had traveled over 100 feet during the accident, ending up on a snow bank. Other climbers and Mike's partner had given what first aid they could and covered him with a sleeping bag.

Mike was in amazingly good spirits as I talked to him while conducting an examination to determine the extent of his injuries. Lifting up the foot end of the sleeping bag, I was confronted with copious amounts of blood covering his clothing and the snow. At this time I could not determine where he was hemorrhaging from. So out came my oversize bandage scissors and I began cutting the right pantleg of his climbing knickers, going almost to the waistband, much to Mike's dismay. No gross wounds could be seen and I suspected the guilty area was underneath him. Calling John over, who had been supervising the building of a fire, I directed him to maintain traction on the right leg. With the help of others we rotated Mike onto his back.

A two inch avulsion immediately came into view. Surmising, from the combination of pain in the area and the opening in the flesh and skin, the femur (upper leg bone) was probably completely fractured through. It had most likely knifed through the

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muscle and skin during the fall and then retreated. Applying a compression dressing, without causing more pain was a problem, but one I was able to solve from training in the hospital emergency room and experience in the field.

The examination had previously revealed that the right ankle and knee could also contain fractures. Applying adequate traction was going to be very tough. 461, our hand-talkie, crackled to life. RMRU's van had arrived and Jim Fairchild, via the radio, was requesting us to advise him of needed equipment.

On the top of our list, was the Hare traction leg splint. This was closely followed by the rescue sleeping bag and the wheeled litter. A

length of climbing rope, warm clothing and flashlights for the people who had first given aid, were also needed. Jim radioed back that unit members were arriving and the requested equipment would soon be on the way along with more manpower.

John and I made Mike as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, while Kevin kept the warming fire going. In very good time our fellow members arrived along with the needed equipment. The Hare splint was unpacked and readied for use. With John holding traction on the ankle, we applied the splint. Our job was complicated because of the pain and tenderness in both the ankle and the knee areas. We rose to the occasion by special padding and

supports. While we were splinting other members prepared the rescue sleeping bag and the litter. We gathered around Mike, and with great difficulty due to poor footing (snow and loose rocks), lifted him up and placed him in the litter. After he was secured into the litter we packed all our gear and started the long trip down, **cross country**, to Humber Park.

With all the usual problems of transporting a victim in a great deal of pain, we arrived back at base well after midnight. Mike was loaded into the Idyllwild Volunteer Fire Department ambulance and was on his way to the hospital. Very tired, but elated that we had been able to help a fellow climber in **need**, we headed home. ■ RMRU