

# RMRU NEWSLETTER

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

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Jim Fairchild, Editor  
Walt Walker, Publisher  
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## TRAINING



### 26 - 28 March, Fri. - Sun. Snow & Ice Training Mt. San Gorgonio Area

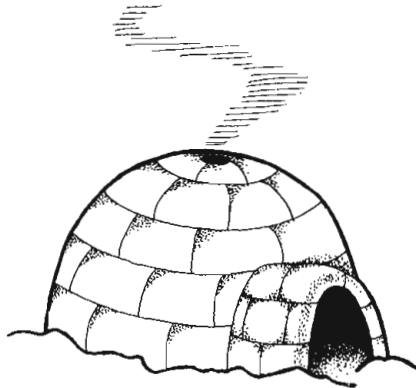
By Gary Anderson

Snowshoers Jim Fairchild, Pete Carlson, Larry Roland, and Ray Castilonia were first to arrive and set camp Friday afternoon at the base of the Little Draw. I understand their trip in was somewhat slowed after Jim presented from his pack the first of two large fruit pies. After setting camp, the rest of the afternoon was spent constructing the first igloo. Skiers Walt and Kevin Walker promptly arrived and willingly inhabited the new shelter.

Larry Brown and I made it to camp shortly afterwards and gladly "squeezed" into the four-man Bishop Ultimate with Pete. Such luxury! Other late-comers settled in through the night so that by morning we awoke to find bivouaced bodies sprawled all over the area.

Saturday opened with clear skies and the hush of M.S.R. stoves. We were shortly up and on our way to the practice slopes, where a wide range of topics was reviewed with everyone taking the opportunity to improve his skills. Throughout the day we explored self-arrest techniques while sliding in various positions, roped as well as unroped. We also reviewed an array of snow anchors and belay practices.

While clouds slowly fought their way over the wind swept ridge, we



spent the last of the daylight hours back at camp building two more igloos. The clouds finally had their way in the early evening as they sprinkled our tents and snowdomes with a light snow.

The Bishop Saturday-night social hour this year was informative, if not overly exciting; being characterized by theoretical discussions of mass trauma, meningitis, and staphylococcus gastroenteritis from Andy's donuts. Meanwhile, the guys in the igloos; Steve Zappe, Jim Garvey, Tom Aldrich, Rick Pohlers, Ed Hill and a visitor\* concerned themselves with the lighter topics of shrimp casserole and warm beverages.

Cloudless and windy skies returned again on Sunday and set the day for our peak climb of San Gorgonio. Kicking and following steps up the Little Draw to the Jepson Peak-San G. ridge was the trudge part of the climb. Of course the view from the peak was spectacular, but the glisading back down the Draw was the real highlight of the climb and the trip. What goes up, must come down . . . but a lot faster.

Our annual weekend of ice axe training at the Little Draw was completely successful this year. I say completely because along with sharpening our mountaineering skills and enjoying good companionship, we avoided any injuries to team members; a hazard which occurred all too frequently in past ice axe trainings.

\*The "visitor" was Ken Dahlke, leader of a backpacking class from Biola College who led a trip this winter wherein we rescued four hypothermia victims. ■ RMRU

## Search and Rescue

### SEARCH

Mission No. 7616M

1 Mar., Mon.  
Long Canyon, east of  
Desert Hot Springs

By Keith Borges

Shortly after 1700 on the afternoon of 1 March, a call was received by the Los Angeles Tower that a light plane was in trouble. Contact was broken soon thereafter.

About this time, a Water Department employee working in the Long Canyon area saw a plane go down somewhere up canyon of him. Seeing a ball of flame and believing it to be close by, the Sheriff and the Palm Desert Fire Dept. were notified.

The Fire Dept. personnel drove up Long Canyon as far as possible, and finding nothing, began hiking in, hoping to come upon the wreckage. A Civil Air Patrol plane, out of Palm Springs, arrived and spotted the wreckage, still burning. Due to the use of four radio frequencies being used (Fire Dept., Sheriff, Palm Springs Tower, and CAP) the communications and coordination were very poor.

By now, darkness had fallen and no contact had been made by ground units. The weather, stormy and windy all day, was getting even worse. One of the firemen had fallen on a cholla cactus and the others,

(See Cholla Cactus, Page 2)

## Cholla Cactus

(Continued from page 1)

with no extended search equipment were called off. At this time the Sheriff's Dept. called for RMRU.

RMRU member Bob Claybrook, having monitored some of the previous transmissions on his scanner, was already on his way. After having spoken with personnel at the roadhead, determining that no fixed position had been located, that the plane had still been burning when last seen, and that no life had been seen near the wreckage, he surmised further search for possible survivors would be futile at this point and waited to brief other RMRU members as they arrived.

Members turning out were Bob Claybrook, Keith Borges, John Dew, Bernie McIlvoy, Pete Carlson (Ops Leader), Jim Fairchild, Rich Quackenbush, Art Bridge, Rick Pohlers, Gary Anderson, and Steve Zappe. Phil Blank, from the Riverside Amateur Radio Association, was also out with us and several of his cohorts were monitoring from their homes.

Upon arrival of several members, the van, and the Ops Leader, it was decided to follow Bob's conclusion and return at daybreak. Desert Hot Springs Fire Dept. had offered the Fire Station for bedding down, most members graciously accepted.

Reveille went at 0450 (somebody flipped the lights on early). The Sheriff arrived about 0530 and everyone started for the roadhead. Shortly after setting up base, Don Landells arrived with his Bell Ranger 206 helicopter.

Jim Fairchild and Bob Claybrook flew with Don for the search and initial contact. The wreckage was spotted by Bob, after the bird had flown in the general direction and started a circular search pattern.

The wreckage was on a Southwesterly slope of an adjacent canyon with approximately 60° grade, 3300' el. Initial survey indicated the plane had impacted, burst into flame, and slid approximately 40 feet. The wreckage was so badly mangled, burned, and melted that aircraft identification was indiscernable at this time.

Initially, two bodies were found

and the Coroner was contacted. Coroner's instructions were to leave the bodies as is until his arrival at the scene. During the wait for the Coroner, it was discovered that there were two bodies together at one point, making a total of three. At this time it was also determined to be a single engine plane, still of unknown make.

Also during the wait, it was determined that those members at base who wished could secure from the mission. At this time several members left for home and work. Pete Carlson turned Ops Leader duties over to Bernie McIlvoy at this time and left also.

Upon the Coroner's arrival, John Dew, Keith Borges, and the Coroner flew to the scene. During removal of the bodies, Jim spotted another engine and the Coroner found a plate marked "Piper". Don presumed the plane was a Piper Aztec. At this time John and Keith were flown out with the bodies.

The bodies were laid out at base to await the arrival of the Coroner's wagon. A Sheriff's Deputy was flown to the scene to await FAA investigators. On the return flight, Jim and Bob returned to base. For RMRU personnel, the mission was at an end.

RMRU members retired to Hayden's Coffee Shop for breakfast, following which members returned home and to work. This tragic, but successful, mission will be remembered by some for a long time. ■ RMRU

## SEARCH

### Mission No. 7617M

### 2 March, Tues. San Jacinto Mountain High Country

By Jim Fairchild

The previous mission just ended was another bitter disappointment. We picked up after a plane crash that had no survivors. If there must be a next plane crash, we most vigorously pray that all aboard will survive so it turns into a rescue.

We stopped in at the Banning Sheriff's Office on the way home, only it was not on the way home, but

up to Idyllwild. Two boys 17 and 18 years old were overdue from a backpacking trip into the San Jacinto Mountains. They hiked in Friday evening, 27 Feb., expecting to be home Sunday evening. Weather conditions gave us great concern, for had they encountered problems like injury or getting wet, they could need a lot of rescuing. We drove up and established base at the Idyllwild Fire Station, in which a small room constitutes the local Sheriff Station.

The pager call and callout procedure resulted in thirteen RMRU members gathering for assignments into the search area, to wit, Tahquitz Valley and environs.

Thus began another saga of snowshoeing up the Devil's Slide Trail from Humber Park at 6400' el. to Saddle Junction, just over 8000' el. Bernie McIlvoy and Gary Anderson drew the scenic tour - get to Caramba Camp, three miles beyond and 1600' below Saddle Junction, and determine whether they'd gone that far. We always cover that area when people are lost or overdue in the Tahquitz Valley region because they often head on down toward the desert in the precipitous canyon. John Dew, Hal Fulkman, Pete Carlson, Rich Quackenbush, Rick Pohlers, Ray Castilonia, Ed Hill, Steve Zappe, Larry Roland were soon ascending on assignments - mainly to check trails and camping areas. John and Hal were to set up a permanent camp at the saddle, which we always do in case the lost parties wander westward. Also, a radio relay is needed there.

John Muratet, a bit new to the search game and winter conditions, assisted me at base, a truly great need when answers and decisions loomed to keep the Ops Leader hopping. Really, the men in the field, while meeting strenuous exercise and weather conditions, are to be envied. But, someone must direct the operation, albeit a confining job when mountain SAR is your "bag."

Meanwhile, back on the mountain, strong winds and falling snow became the lot of searchers and victims alike. Somewhat lower temperatures during the storm were reported from the field - frozen clothing, icicles on beards, and incipient

(Continued on page 3)

hypothermia nagged at times. The roaring wind made communication between men difficult, so yelling for the objects of our search, Erick Peterson and Roger Newman, became a joke. All the parties camped as most of the initial assignments were completed.

Early Tuesday evening we opted to call for assistance from other Mountain Rescue Association units. Some would be sent into the Tahquitz Valley area, some others into the Round, Tamarack Valley region, even to San Jacinto Peak. The latter because we found that the boys had applied for a camping permit in Tamarack Valley. Therefore, teams were deployed from the upper station of the tramway early Wednesday morning.

The storm continued in gusts and squalls, it was moving eastward rather fast, at times giving indication of abating, then quickly plunging into heavy snowfall. Fourteen inches of snow stacked onto vehicle roofs in Idyllwild.

Wednesday night the field parties camped at seven localities on the mountain. We were kept up-to-the-hour on weather reports coming into base camp. We looked forward to cleared skies early Thursday morning, hoping for low velocity winds so that Landell's helicopter could fly without undue hazard. I asked Phil Lester of Sierra Madre to direct the ground search from the upper station of the tramway on Thursday, and we opted to move base over to the lower station. Rich Quackenbush would direct operations from Idyllwild for the Tahquitz Valley area.

While I slipped new chains on a new station wagon, Pete took RMRU's van over to the Chevron station in Idyllwild where the chains were put on it in just minutes. Our drive down to Banning and thence to the tram would have been uneventful had the van not become too intimate with a snowbank. A bit of digging and rocking pried it away from the grasp. Down at the road leading to the tram we found a locked gate, so we "camped" that night in the backs of our respective vehicles.

Thursday went superbly well. Clear skies and a calm atmosphere greeted Don Landells, Sgt. George Conroy and myself as we flew a search pattern. Main thing was to

check the summit cabin sixty yards east and below the peak of San Jacinto (10,000' el.) A steady thirty-knot breeze from the north made it easy for Don to hover as I stepped off the skid into waist-deep snow, only thirty yards north of the cabin. Following a strenuous struggle I was in the empty cabin, instantly convinced the boys were holed-up somewhere much lower. The ground parties were asked to carefully check trails and campsites in both drainages now populated by MRA teams. Of course, they were already doing just that, but I opted to postpone search of higher areas.

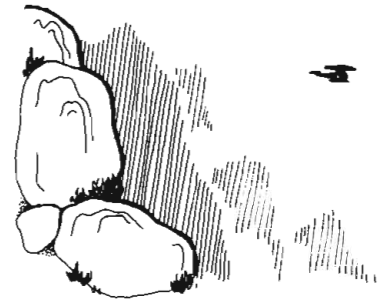
We circled the high country closely, seeing not one green or brown hint of the thick forest - snow and ice deeply covered vegetation and earth. We could track a coyote til we found him sitting disconsolately on a snowy rock, tail curled over his toes. Thus we knew that we could instantly spot human sign from a great distance. We covered the Willow Creek drainage that is between the search areas of Round Valley and Tahquitz Valley, continuing on down Tahquitz Canyon to 2000' el., thence back to base for fuel.

On the next flight Mr. Peterson accompanied us as back seat observer. We covered the west side of the high country, then headed for Tahquitz Valley again. We could tell the search parties were handling their assignments well, if slowly because of the snow conditions. Over Saddle Junction I said hello to Larry Roland who was functioning as relay. Over Little Tahquitz Valley a few seconds later (a half hour's snowshoe) Ed Hill and John Inskeep waved. Don turned northwest over the western extremity of Tahquitz Valley where two people were standing near an orange tarp and a huge figure-eight tramped in the snow. They were waving.

"Hmm, they sure don't look like searchers," I thought.

"There they are" said Don.

As the bird circled once preparatory to landing the father pointed excitedly at them. We plopped into the snow fifty feet from Erick and Roger. I slid out again, this time only knee-deep snow. After a short exhortation to keep heads down and move slowly about the bird, the boys were in and we flew back to base, radioing to field units the boys were



aboard and O.K.

As I watched the boys and fathers embrace and everyone else smile I could not but think back to Tuesday morning when we bagged up three once lively, happy humans there at the plane crash. Quite a contrast.

Roger and Erick hiked up to the Saddle Junction on Friday and camped. Saturday they snowshoed down the Tahquitz drainage to near Camba and camped, then hiked south to the ridge and looked out over mountains and desert. Sunday they retraced their direction westerly and camped somewhere below Reed's Meadow. Monday they tried to hike out but were confused as to direction and becoming wet and cold, realized the incipient signs of hypothermia were appearing. They were in upper Tahquitz Meadow and headed a hundred yards south into a really dense forest of white fir where they spent Monday through Thursday morning. The long, productive storm kept them pinned down. Fuel ran out and food almost did. On Wednesday they thought they heard searchers' yells but their whistle failed to carry sound the two hundred yards or so back to the searchers. Thursday morning they heard the helicopter fly over early, but were still in the tent. Incidentally, the tent was well hidden both from the ground and from the air. One would have had to come within twenty yards to see it - half buried in snow as well. Obviously, they were ready for us the second time over, and their ordeal ended. Their simple decision to stay camped in the tent in the sheltering grove of firs kept them alive. Had they persisted in fighting the storm to get out of the mountain they would have frozen to death.

Our sincere thanks to fellow Mountain Rescue Association teams, Sierra Madre, China Lake, San Diego, and San Dimas for their manpower and support. ■ RMRU

## RESCUE

**Mission No. 7618M**

**26 Mar., Fri.  
Elsinore area**

*By Hal Fulkman*

At approximately 1620, while driving down Vacation Drive in the resort town of Canyon Lake, I witnessed debris falling from the sky. The debris appeared to be from an aircraft. The main section of the craft came down what looked to be about a mile off the paved road, but was determined later to be a distance closer to one half mile.

Driving immediately to the closest point I could reach with my vehicle I proceeded on foot to the area where I saw the main section impacted. The debris from the craft was scattered over a 2,000 yard area and many pieces were observed, including the main wing sections, while enroute to where the fuselage impacted.

When I arrived at the fuselage there were two spectators at the scene. I asked the spectators not to touch or remove anything. Upon inspection of the cockpit I observed that the pilot had been killed upon impact. Not being able to render any aid to the pilot, I turned my attention to preserving the crash scene from souvenir hunting spectators.

Shortly thereafter Deputy Mullin from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, Elsinore office, arrived on the scene along with an invasion of additional spectators. After I identified myself as an RMRU member to Deputy Mullin, he asked me to stand-by the fuselage while he cleared the area of spectators.

RMRU's van had been dispatched, manned by Hank Schmel, but was returned to base because of accessibility of the crash scene to the sheriff's department. Upon the return of an additional deputy, we began locating objects that might be beneficial to the investigation.

Within approximately one and one half hours the coroner arrived and a representative from the F.A.A. arrived approximately an hour after the coroner. After several photo-

graphs were taken, the body was removed.

At this time the F.A.A. man requested that I locate as many parts of the aircraft as I could find in the dark. After examining the sections of the craft, it was determined that it was a high performance Czechoslovakian made sailplane and that the pilot had attempted a maneuver beyond the capability of the craft.

■ RMRU

## RESCUE

**Mission No. 7619M**

**28 March, Sun.  
Tahquitz Canyon**

*By Bob Claybrook*

With the team training at San Geronio, the last thing we needed was a rescue! I was at work at about 1:15 when the phone rang and a friend of mine informed me that the helicopter was going to land at the mouth of Tahquitz Canyon at 1:45 - would I please be there.

I hurried home to get my gear and made a mad dash for the road head. Upon arrival I found Deputy Ron Dye from the Sheriff's office waiting. The helicopter had gone to the wrong canyon so we waited a little longer. I asked Ron for details on what we had. He had 2 informants, Dave Dubler and Mike Guillan, whose friend, Steve Warner age 20 of Pomona, had fallen the night before about 11:00. He had fallen about 35 feet.

The next team member to arrive was Hank Schmel. We discussed the situation and decided that Deputy Dye and I would fly in and stabilize the victim. A Western helicopter arrived, piloted by Jim Davidson.

We flew up the canyon and located the victim. Jim dropped us off on a good boulder. We had a short climb to the victim. Upon arrival we found him to have a possible broken ankle and back injury. At this time more team members were flown in. They were John Dew, Hal Fulkman, Hank Schmel and Gary Gillespie. The van had not yet arrived so we borrowed equipment from the Palm Springs Fire Department in the form of a

Stokes basket and a chain saw for cutting a better heliport.

The van arrived with Steve Stevens, Rich Quackenbush and Bernie McIlvoy. A better heliport was located and the victim was moved up to it. Jim flew in and we loaded the victim into the helicopter and flew him to Desert Hospital where the Palm Springs Police Department helped us unload him and also control traffic so we could land on the street. After everyone was flown out of the canyon, we all enjoyed a meal provided by the Sheriff. ■ RMRU



## The Road Runner Sez- By Jim Fairchild


It might be valuable for us to consider a number of misconceptions that are common in regards to the operation of RMRU.

First, we are, no kidding, volunteers. Our payment comes in the form of tremendous jubilation and satisfaction in being able to save and assist people with problems in the wilderness. We buy all our own equipment, work out our own arrangements with employers as to time off for SAR, and receive no personal recompense whatever. Yes, as mentioned in write-ups of missions past, we do usually have a meal paid for by the Sheriff's Office after a mission. We appreciate this a great deal. To become paid professional SAR men we would want at least \$25.00 per hour, and who could afford that?

Second, we are not officially connected with any agency. For a few years before RMRU's birth some of us were deputies and even issued a badge, but that ended when we formally organized. Now, we want to emphatically state that the spirit and action of cooperation and helpfulness between RMRU and the Riverside County Sheriff Office is superb. There is a bond of trust between us - the S. O. knows it can depend upon us to carry out the mission to the best of our ability, and we know they will support us to the best of theirs.

We are not even deputized while on duty for a mission. The citizens of our county should be exceedingly pleased that this is the situation.

Third, we have no waiting list for applicants. We happily accept the application of anyone who (21 yrs. or older) has some mountaineering background, sincerely desires to help people through mountain SAR, and who can get off work and away from any other obligations to do so. The last qualification keeps our unit small! Of course, the applicant must be approved by the Membership Committee and Board of Directors unanimously, and by 65% of the entire voting membership. Our overwhelmingly major reason for losing members is relocation in another part of the state or nation. ■ RMRU

from   
**Old'en Days**

**Ten Years Ago**

*RMRU was requested by the Sheriff's Office to help locate a body in a canal near Indio. Walt Walker and Stu Hirsch, SCUBA equipped, went down to search. No body was found then or later.*

*We trained in helitac north of San Bernardino with Western Helicopters. We still have some fine pictures of departing a bird hovering ten feet above the ground.*

*There is an item in that letter stating that the Training Manual sheets would be handed out at the next meeting - part of our 1966 Edition. Coincidental, because this weekend is my deadline (self-imposed) to have the third draft of our 1976 Edition ready for printing.*

**Five Years Ago**

*More coincidental copy: the goal to be listed in our new Training Manual is, "Am I as prepared for Search and Rescue as I would want my rescuers to be?" In the Roadrunner Sez for March, 1971, "Am I as prepared in every way for the next mission as I would want my teammates to be if I were the victim?" Food for thought.*

*Bob Nelson, a former member, wrote a dramatic description of the rescue of an injured girl in lower Tahquitz Canyon. She had head lacerations and a broken femur. We gave first aid, placed her in a litter and carried her across the canyon, a technical rigging was arranged and we were hauled up a seventy foot cliff. Nearby a reasonably flat rocky slab permitted a hovering helicopter to accept the litter and one attendant, and soon the girl was in the hospital. Bob wrote masterfully of how we handled the girl's "need" just before being hoisted up the cliff-face - she had to urinate. A crafty use of towels and plastic carried it off beautifully, attesting to the power of innovation, etc.*



# \$USTAINING MEMBERS —

BY MIKE DAUGHERTY

This month we would like to take special note of three unusual sustaining membership donations. First of all, RMRU has received an exceptionally generous donation to the Rescue Van fund. This single donation brings the goal of a new van much closer than any of us had dared hope it might be. Second, we want to recognize the donation of our radio pagers by Mr. Henry Gothelf of the Circle City Hospital in Corona. These pagers have been in service with RMRU for some time now and are having a substantial positive impact on our operations. Finally, we want to take note of a Sustaining Membership first. This month we have a sustaining member who became both a new member and a renewing member in the space of one month. As regular readers know, the somewhat idiosyncratic S/M Chairman is ever alert to these statistical and/or historical firsts and can be relied upon to take prompt note of them.

Our thanks to:

**New —**

- Mr. Robert S. Kowell
- \*Edwards Realty
- \*BIOLA College
- Clark Fund of the  
Municipal Museum
- Mr. Jerry Miller
- Mr. Austin Hicks
- \*Mr. David W. Jameson  
Life Member
- \*Mr. Henry Gothelf, Administrator  
Circle City Hospital  
Corona, California

**Renewing —**

- \*Bob MacPherson
- Mr. John Johnston
- \*Rubidoux Grange No. 611
- M/M Kenneth Andrews
- \*Kennel Club of Riverside
- M/M Albin Merzals
- Mr. Robert Kowell
- Soroptimist Club of  
San Jacinto - Hemet Valley
- \***Century Club** member,  
donation of \$100 or more.