

RMRU

RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

NEWSLETTER

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Training

Winter Trip

5-7 March, Fri.-Sun.
San Geronio Mountains

By Mark Rhoads

It all started about 8 p.m. Friday night. Except for those who had hiked in earlier that day, we all met on the road above Jenks Lake to start the long hike up to Christmas Tree Hill for our winter train-



PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

THE AD SAID, THEY'D CLIMB ANYTHING IN SIGHT — RMRU member Kevin Walker takes a breather while ascending Christmas Tree Hill on skins and skis. Kevin is a downhill skier, but this was his first trip into the backcountry on the boards.



PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

MOCK ACCIDENT — RMRU member Kevin Walker lays up against a small tree after taking an imaginary fall down an ice slope. New member Glenn Henderson (partially obscured) discusses first aid techniques with RMRU Dr. Jim Anholm. The object of this problem was to treat for injuries, and then raise the injured climber to the ridge above with only the items carried in a call out pack.

ing. A few of us had anticipated at least fair snow conditions, so we brought skis. Well, one member put it this way: "By golly," he said, "this brown stuff shore is hard to ski on!" Needless to say, skis are awkward and heavy when they're carried on your pack!

By and by, we made it to 'Slushy Meadows', just below Christmas Tree Hill where, upon arriving, we made a unanimous decision to spend the night and leave conquering the hill until morning. Well, morning came too soon again! But we were able to face the fact and across the river, through the woods and up the hill we went. Ugh!

Saturday was quite a full day, after several hours of ice axe practice (FUN!), setting up MA's (no, not Master of Art's) and SEA's on different types of snow anchors, Kevin decided to go scouting for a prime ice axe hill. Silly Kevin, he should of known better than to take off by himself to do something as potentially dangerous as ice-axing can be! After a while, it was noticed that Kevin hadn't been seen for a while. Well, whaddya



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

LOOK OUT BELOW - RMRU member Mark Rhoads slides away head first during ice axe practice, as Pete Carlson gets out of his way below.

know, we fell right into a mock rescue. Kevin had taken a fall straight into a tree that nearly stopped him dead (don't clap, he was only faking). Us less experienced (alias, B-Team) members got a chance to use the skills that we had been learning earlier in the day. I feel that this type of practice is needed regularly for all members to hone newly learned techniques and keep us prepared for a real rescue — we can't afford to get rusty! In this mock rescue, I had the opportunity to be the operations leader. I found out that this job isn't as easy as it looks; I now have a better idea of what it is all about. By the time this 'rescue' was over, it was quite late in the day, the remainder of which was spent in the articulate design and construction of a snow shelter, including the usual carousing.

Sunday came, and after a fast hike out and a long drive home, it was all over. It feels good to have that feeling that you have learned and/or accomplished something. I'm glad that I had this feeling when I got home. Overall this was a great training. • RMRU

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8208M

**13-14 March, Sat.-Sun.
West of Anza**

By Bruce Gahagan

The call came at 14:30 on Saturday. Shortly after that, RMRU members arrived on the scene.

Upon arrival we were briefed by the Sheriff's deputy and members of Hemet Valley Search and Rescue (HVSr) who had been there since early in the day. We were informed that a 56 year old woman (name withheld) had not been seen for several days; and was possibly despondent over the loss of her husband several weeks before. At that time the general consensus of opinion was that she either wandered off in the hills, was hurt and succumbed to the elements or committed suicide.

As the pieces started to fall together we were informed that there was a 9 mm slug found on the back porch and various other casings and possible bullet holes in the vicinity of her trailer. After the briefing RMRU members started a close-

in visual search of the trailer and immediate area. The subject's car, purse, and other personal effects seemed to be undisturbed as to show that she might still be in the immediate area.

After a closer observation the team sleuth, Joe Erickson, turned up other casings and slugs both inside and outside of the trailer that were missed by the Sheriff's department and HVSr.

Night fell and it was determined that the search would continue at 0800 on Sunday. RMRU members showed up along with the Deputy and posse and a couple members of HVSr. After a short briefing the search was contained to an approximate one mile radius sweep. Nothing was discovered in the rain drenched area, and all members returned to the base for reorganization and reassignment.

It was the team members' opinion since Saturday evening that all the evidence gathered pointed to a homicide. After a brief discussion of everything gathered it was pointed out that the woman was concerned over the attitude of her step-son toward her handling of her husband's will. She had previously stated to friends and neighbors that she was frightened over her step-son's grievances; and was in possible fear for her life.

The day she was last seen was also the same day a brown car matching the description of the step-son's car was seen near her trailer.

During the reorganization meeting Sunday morning, Gary Fritzinger of HVSr, found a soft patch of ground under a wire spool end. Several members started digging and after a couple of feet the subject's body was found.

The proper agencies were notified and the search was determined over, but not the story. While all members were waiting for the authorities to arrive, the prime suspect drove up the driveway. But instead of coming to his father and step-mother's trailer, he drove to the neighbor's house instead. (Very Suspicious.)

The deputies called for a back-up and waited for the suspect's next move. The suspect left and was stopped and questioned by the deputies. It was later determined that under questioning he admitted to having guns, except a 9 mm, which was determined that indeed he had one registered under his own name. (Very, very suspicious.) As detectives arrived the team members were released and went home. The last known information received was that the suspect was arrested that day. The next day detectives uncovered the suspect's 9 mm in a back building minus one barrel. The suspect has since been released on insufficient evidence, case pending. • RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 8209M

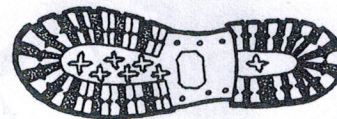
**26 March, Sat.
Cottonwood Canyon,
West of Whitewater**

By Kevin Walker

At about 5:30 p.m. Saturday my call captain phoned me with news that a youth had fallen off a waterfall in Cottonwood Canyon, a canyon west of the Whitewater drainage that feeds into the Banning Pass. Information was sketchy, all that was known was that the youth had fallen off the waterfall into some sort of a crack and was stuck. Reports out also said that he was not breathing and that his companions were giving him CPR.

With that I grabbed my orange shirt and rescue gear and headed for the rescue garage for the No. 1 van, and was on my way to the Verbania off ramp of I-10. Upon arriving at the roadhead I was met by Captain Ray Canova of the Banning S. O. Close behind me were fellow members Glenn Henderson, Bruce Gahagan, Jim Fairchild, Joe Erickson, Craig Beasley, and with the No. 2 van was Rick Pohlers and Bernie McIlvoy, all pushing the speed limit hoping to arrive in time to do some good.

The Captain told us that CDF and P.S. paramedics had already been called and were with the youth. After hooking up a radio link with the hospital the youth was pronounced dead on the scene. The Captain asked if we would stand by and wait till all personnel were out before we headed home. Just as the light was beginning to fade, a helicopter carrying the body flew over enroute to the Pass Hospital. With the last of the personnel out we headed for home. • RMRU



Notice!

The **RMRU Newsletter** is published 12 times per year by the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc. It is intended primarily to inform the Regular and Sustaining Members.

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