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TRAINING



Winter Shakedown

4-6 Feb., Fri.-Sun.
Round Valley,
San Jacinto Mountains

By Ed Hill



The winter shakedown had been postponed one month due to a lot of team activity in the ice chutes near the Palm Springs Tramway. Winter shakedown consists of a short snowshoe trip.

The trip is designed to uncover all those problems with one's winter gear that had not been fixed since winter. The plan was to start training on Friday night for those of us who like to acclimatize. The rest of the team would come in early Saturday morning.

I was late leaving work and ran into a horrendous traffic jam, so had visions of tracking the rest of the group to camp. My main problem would have been deciding which set of tracks belonged to RMRU. As it turned out everyone got a slow start, so I was able to hike in with the group. We camped about 200 yards west of Long Valley Ranger Station on a small flat near the trail. Once the tent was up, we enjoyed hot drinks before turning in for the night.

Early next morning we were awakened by Mary Bowman who brought the news that a doctor and his nurse had crashed in the Little San Bernardino Mountains, and we were placed on stand by. We decided that the Saturday contingent of RMRU members was enough to do the job without us. This would teach them to come in on Friday night instead of Saturday morning. They could follow our trail when the job was finished, and join us in the evening.

We decided to try and locate our old snowshoe trail to Round Valley. It is more direct and easier to follow in a blizzard. The trail basically ascends a small canyon and ends a short distance below Round Valley. The newly fallen unconsolidated snow made the going difficult. Each man broke trail for a couple of hundred yards before back to the end of the line. This way no one is tired out prematurely. At one point we veered right going up the canyon so ended up just below the ridge further North than we wanted to be. It was hard going, gaining the crest of the ridge and then following it along to a flat place where we took a break, ate and enjoyed the sunshine.

Hiking on toward Round Valley, we stopped for lunch in an open area just East of the regular trail. While eating we observed that the clouds were building up fast, and a storm was in the making. We decided to camp in a sheltered spot about 100 yards away.

Platforms were stomped in the snow, and the tents were pitched. Some mem-

bers decided to build wind walls out of snow blocks. Jim Fairchild, Pete Carlson and I snowshoed to the upper end of Round Valley. As we were hiking, the storm struck, and we continued on through a light snow fall. We passed several parties setting up their camps in sheltered spots. The snow level was almost up to the top of the door at the ranger station.

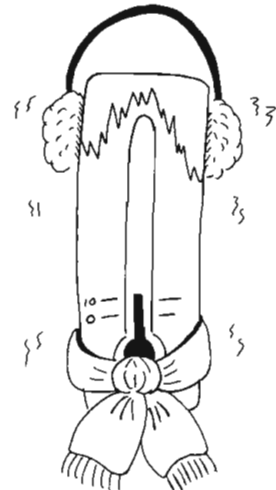
Just before dinner, the group that had been working the plane crash came into camp. They had followed the regular trail into Round Valley before contacting us on the radio and had to backtrack to our location. We set up the rest of the tents, and started cooking dinner. Everyone turned in early.

The next day we got off to a slow start. A lot of gear was semi-buried and had to be dug up. We went back in several groups. The last group did some rigging practice near Long Valley ranger station. While we were discussing the merits of various raises and lowers, it started to snow. We did not mind the snow, but when it started raining, we hiked back to the tram and an early return home. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

DEEP SNOW — RMRU member Pete Carlson poses for a snow depth shot at the Round Valley ranger cabin. Petes feet are nearly to the top of the cabin door.



Search and Rescue

EVACUATION

Mission No. 8306M

5 Feb., Sat.
East of Desert Hot Springs,
Riverside County

By John Dew



The early morning hours were serenely passing with most people doing what they are supposed to be doing!!! SLEEPING!!!! Then it happened. The phone brought me from this semi-conscious condition to reality.

"Hello, John, this is Al Andrews. (Al is our rescue team co-ordinator.) Indio Sheriff called and wants us to respond to a downed aircraft. Can you go?"

Realizing that the rest of the team was on top of San Jacinto Mountain on training made it even more urgent that all who were not on the mountain make a special effort. I would have gone anyway but this fact made it even more important.

"Sure, Al, I'll go. What time is it?"

"Well, John, it's a quarter to four. The plane has been located. (And the saddest of announcements) There are no survivors.... Where the plane finally stopped is hanging on the edge of a drop off. They can drive almost all the way to it. They called us to use our lines and expertise to anchor it so it won't fall on over the cliff."

Nothing in my realm of experience has such a note of finality, nor can remind us more poignantly of the frailty of life than Al's sobering words, "There are no survivors." — Each time we get a call of this nature we go hoping and praying that this will be the time we will find someone, but so far in the twenty plus years of the team it hasn't been our lot.

Upon arriving at the Indio S.O. we were informed that a doctor and his nurse were the subjects in the ill fated plane. The pair had been up on the high desert working, where they went one day each week to their office there and were



RMRU PHOTO BY GLENN HENDERSON

CRASH — There is not much that needs to be said about a plane crash other than, why?

going back home after work, about a ten or fifteen minute hop.

Upon arriving at the lower tram station to pick up one of the rescue vans we gathered those team members who had slept there intending to take the first tram to the top the next morning and the others Al was able to reach by phone, in all about eight or ten of us, and we retrieved the subjects from the aircraft.

After having something to eat the team members who had planned to go on training on Saturday morning made their way to the tram and the top of the mountain to finish the training exercises with those who were still up there, while the two of us who could not go on training this month made our way back home. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8307M

13-14 Feb., Sun.-Mon.
San Jacinto Mountains

By Glenn Henderson



At 8:30 Sunday night I received an emergency phone call from Kevin. A skier was reported overdue and lost by her husband. They had been skiing to Jean Peak and were part way up the mountain when she, Christhild Anderson, decided it was getting to icy and turned

back to go to the tram. When her husband Robert Anderson returned to the tram, Christhild was not there. He waited until 4:00 p.m. and then asked the rangers to help in finding her. The rangers then started searching and finding no sign, called RMRU out.

We met at the lower tram station and started gathering gear and getting ready to go. A sense of urgency is always felt by me and probably by all members in this type of search as the subject may be injured, possibly seriously, especially considering the weather report from the top of the tram— 20 to 25 M.P.H. winds and temperatures in the low 20's.

The tram did their usual great job by staying open way past closing hours and ferrying members and gear up the steep mountain. We finally got everyone to the upper tram station at about 12:00 a.m. Jim Fairchild was operations leader and made up four different teams to go four different ways. Before sending us out he interviewed Robert to better understand where he last saw his wife. While this was going on we got word that ranger Rick Brown had lost a crampon while searching and had slid 300—400 feet down an icy slope. He was reported to have difficulty breathing and some pain in the chest area from hitting a tree. He was helped to the Round Valley ranger cabin by head ranger Manfred Knaak where he spent the night.

Jim then fired up the teams, sending Bernie McIlvoy, Cameron Robbins and Craig Britton to the Tamarak Bench. Rick Pohlars, Mark Hebert and Mark Rhoads

were sent to the Wellman Divide. Joe Erickson and Jim Anholm to the Sid Davis Drainage. And that left Bruce Gahagan, Kevin Walker and I to go to the east end of the Wellman Divide.

Joe's team and ours started out together to the Round Valley ranger cabin before splitting up so that Jim who is a M.D. could check Rick Browns condition. He did not seem to be in serious condition, but still had some chest pains. From there we split up, Joe and Jim down the Sid Davis drainage, and us up onto the divide. Joe was especially excited as he knew he would end up back at base camp before daylight and would then get a lot of flying time in the morning, as the green light was already given for the helicopter at first light.

We completed our assignment at about 5:00 a.m. and all teams bivouaced until 6:30. After 1½ hours of sleep, everyone was ready to continue the search. As Joe was waiting in Long Valley for Don Landells to pick him up he saw a lone female skier coming towards him. He gave a shout and yes it was a still lost Christhild Anderson. She was fine after digging out a small snow cave, sitting on her skies, covering her feet with her daypack and spending a cold night on the mountain (smart girl). Joe led her to the ranger station and a reunion with her husband.

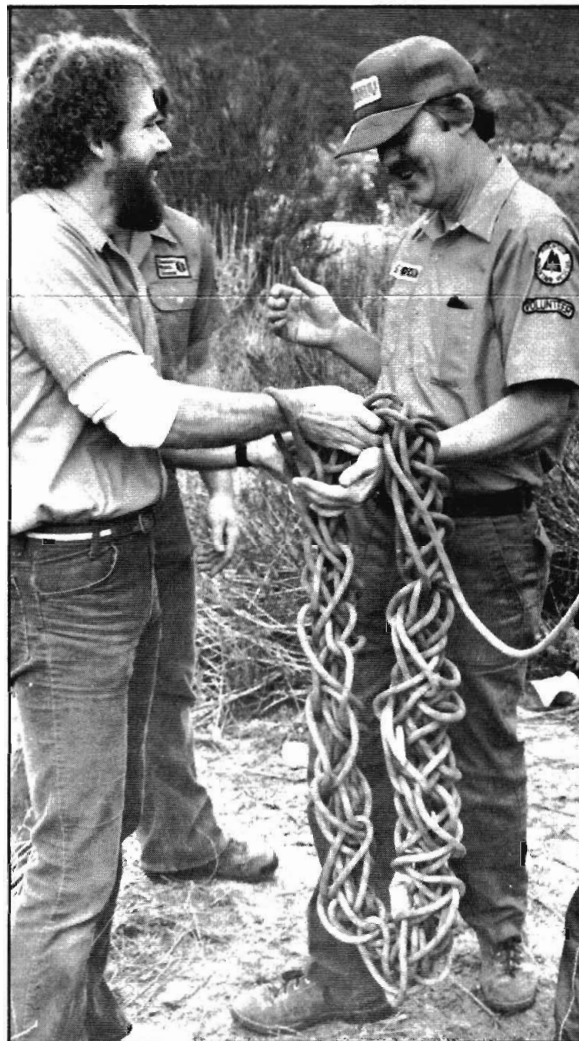
After hearing the good news on the radio my team set a record for packing up and beat it to the Round Valley ranger cabin. From there, Don flew us to the

Palm Springs Hospital with Rick Brown. Don then flew all other teams from the field to the lower tram (except Joe, he was already in base camp, and had to ride the tram down). Thus ended another successful RMRU mission with a smile on everyone's face. • RMRU

Ding BaTs

of the month

by Kevin Walker



These two eager members by the names of Mel (velcro) Krug and Glenn (owes Kevin) Henderson get to join the list of RMRU immortals. It seems that they got into an argument over who could bird nest (coil) a rope the fastest. Problem was, they both picked up different ends of the same rope to coil. As you can see, by the stuck hands, it was apparently a tie... Gotcha!



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

BACK AT LONG VALLEY — RMRU member Joe Erickson helps Christhild Anderson out of her skies after she wandered into the Long Valley area after spending a cold night out on the mountain.