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Jim Fairchild, Editor — Kevin Walker, Publisher — Dona Halcrow, Artist

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8521M

6 May, Mon.
Snowcreek
San Jacinto Mountains

By Joe Erickson



I have Mondays off from work because I work Saturdays. Filling Monday afternoons with something meaningful, (like a nap), is always challenging. I was actually pleased when my pager went off at around 1:30 pm for a North Face search.

Marvin Organ and his buddies were attempting to climb the North Face of Mt. San Jacinto over the weekend and became separated on Sunday. Marvin had the food, a small pack, and 120' long rope.

As I have some limitations on my ascent into higher altitudes due to a brain injury (Ed. note: High Altitude Cerebral Edema — HACE) incurred on another mission, I expected to sit in base camp all afternoon. However...

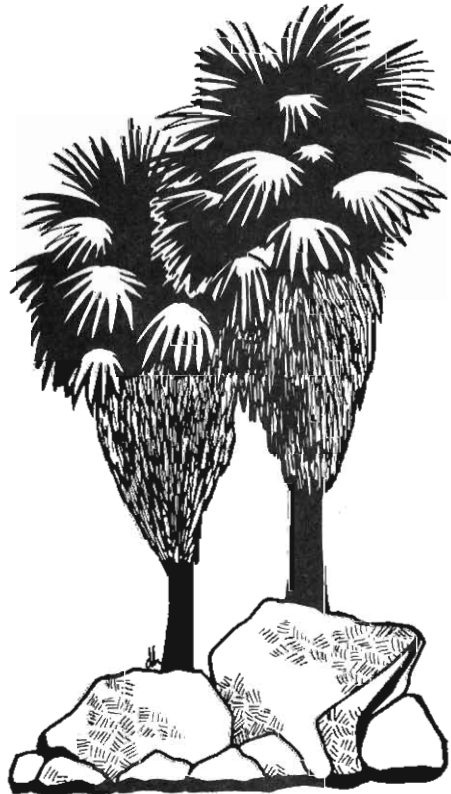
The Isthmus is where Falls Creek and Snowcreek come very close together, at 4000' elevation, and is a favorite campsite for those going up the mountain. It is low enough altitude for my brain and an excellent place to look for tracks going up or down the North Face.

The "however" is that Jim Fairchild and I were flown by helicopter a few hours before dark to the Isthmus with the intention of establishing a direction of travel for Marvin. We were standing on the rocks above the campsite where we were heli-tacked from the bird, settling into our assignment by yelling and listening, looking and tracking, when we thought we might have heard a voice answer from

above. Remember, the streams either side and below us were noisy, and it was difficult to hear any sound besides rushing water. We continued to look, yell, and listen, when sure enough, there was a person up there. (Ed. note: Joe did a fine job of spotting Marvin in tall shrubs 400 yds. away).

He was escorted back to the Isthmus as Jim photographed. (After Kevin Walker had flown by and handed Jim a camera and extra film — just like passing a baton during a relay race). The helicopter returned for Marvin, Jim, and me after dropping off Kevin and Rob Gardner at base camp. Mike Donovan piloted the Jet Ranger III into a fine rock outcropping smoothly and confidently, while Jim took more photos. Marvin was carefully loaded in and buckled up.

Following a pleasant flight back to base camp we had a meal generously provided by the Riverside County Sheriff's Office, and I was home by 8:00 pm. • RMRU



SEARCH

Mission No. 8522M

10 May, Fri.
Joshua Tree National Monument

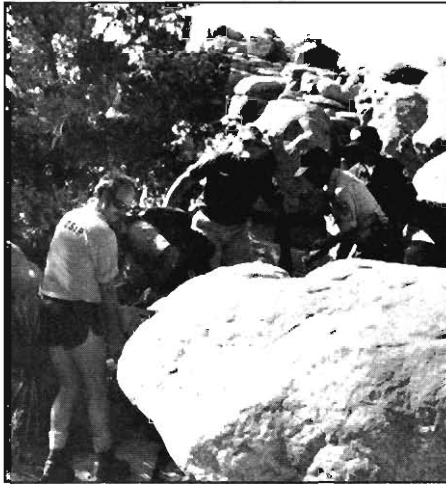
By Glenn Henderson



Through ranger Tom Patterson of the Joshua Tree National Monument we were called to help search for a missing adult at Hidden Valley Campground. Fellow members Joe Erickson, Kevin Walker, Rob

Gardner, Jim Fairchild, Bill, George and myself responded to the Hidden Valley Camp. There we learned that we would be looking for Eric Greenspan of Los Angeles. Eric was last seen by friends on May 8th. Eric's car was located in the Hidden Valley Campground at 5:30 AM the day of the call. Called in along with RMRU to help JOSAR (Joshua Tree Search and Rescue) was the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team and the California Rescue Dog Association. Teams were made up and given assignments. Since RMRU was one of the first to arrive, we were given a perimeter assignment of the camp. Jim and Bill were a team as were Joe and I, and then Kevin and Rob. As we searched, a Bell 212 helicopter arrived from El Toro Marine Base piloted by Bob Moran. After they had checked in, Tom Patterson joined them for an air search of the area. We completed our perimeter search and started spreading out. The search dogs were now in the field, as was Sierra Madre. Strangely enough, as Joe and I approached a formation of rocks (several stories high) on the edge of the Wonderland of Rocks, the helicopter flew over and then stopped and hovered. Joe and I converged on the scene as Tom Patterson and medic Mike Anjelo rappelled out of the helicopter. On a ledge in the formation we found the body of Eric. Still in his hand was a handgun. Rob and Kevin were close behind. The news was radioed back to base. A few more teams converged on the scene. The coroner was contacted and responded to the monument. After his investigation was completed, we assisted in the carryout. Our team hound dog Joe stayed and helped looked for the shell casing, which he found. An unusual note, information given to

the park service and field teams was to be looking for a hiking boot or a running shoe. Eric was wearing cowboy boots. Earlier in the day Joe and I came across those very same prints in the vicinity. So goes the search game. To the family and friends of Eric we would like to express our sympathy on the loss of your family member. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM PATTERSON

GROUP EFFORT — The body of Eric Greenspan is carried out of the Wonderland of Rocks by JOSAR, Sierra Madre, and RMRU members back to the Hidden Valley Campground.

CALL

Mission No. 8523C

**19 May, Sun.
Yosemite National Park**

Sunday evening we received a call for a search at Yosemite National Park in the Sierras. A call-out was done, but no members were available to respond. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8524M

**20 May, Mon.
Tahquitz Drainage
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Kevin Walker



As most Monday missions start, this one began with a call from the Sheriff at around noon. Respond to Camp Maranatha, Idyllwild for a search. Walt Walker, Rob Gardner, and I arrived within minutes of one another. Not long after Mike Donovan from Landells Aviation arrived with 40MC. The three of us gathered gear and climbed

in. As we departed I saw more members arriving, and fellow member Gordon Lee started the sign-in process. As we flew towards the saddle Walt clued us in. We were going to look for Robert Denny, age 41, from Manhattan Beach. He and a friend Ernie Johnson had become separated the day before on a day hike from their established camp near Skunk Cabbage Meadow. Ernie hiked out early in the morning and reported Bob missing to the rangers, who in turn called the S.O. Upon reaching the saddle we started sweeping across from one end to the other of the Tahquitz drainage. The plan was to do this down to Caramba. If nothing was found, Rob and I would be let off to search for tracks and Walt and Mike would go back and get more members to be put out at various key locations. We were between Laws and Caramba when Walt spotted a person on top of some rocks waving a blue object. Upon a quick close check, the description matched and we had found our man. Now getting him would be a little harder. Because of the forest being so dense in that particular area Mike had to fly to the Tahquitz ridge about a half mile away. There he put Rob and I out on a rock formation. It was a great day out and the hike down to Bob went far too fast. We soon linked up with a very relieved Robert Denny. After giving Bob a snack and some water we started back for the helispot. Along the way he told us that after he became separated he walked for a period of time and then realizing that he was lost, stopped and waited. We commended him for doing that, as most of the people we go out to look for, don't use that kind of common sense. Anyway a short time later we were back in position. Mike came back in, we loaded Bob on board, they flew out. Minutes later Mike was back for Rob and I, back to Idyllwild and the end of another successful and rewarding mission. • 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.

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 \$25 or more to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit
Post Office Box 5444
Riverside, California 92517



Familiarization

**3-5 May, Fri.-Sun.
Pacific Crest Trail
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Mark Rhoads



The training plan called for a gathering of participants at a scenic campsite just north of Saddle Junction, two-and-a-half miles hiking distance up from Humber Park. This worked well because we all arrived and were bed-

ded down under a very bright moon before too late an hour. There was Randy Iwasuik, Curtis Pontynen, Kathy Davis, Joe Erickson, Kevin Walker, Bill Blaschko, Jim Fairchild, Craig Britton, Bill George, Rob Gardner, Mel Krug, Ray Hussey, Glenn Henderson, and myself. Sleep came easy and we wondered what conditions would be met on the morrow.

Our objective for today, Saturday, was the west shoulder of Folly Peak which is northwest of and a few hundred feet lower than Mt. San Jacinto. The clear, warm morning saw us toiling up the Angel's Glide Trail northwards, soon to go around a corner of the ridge into snowcovered terrain. Before long we found the Strawberry Cienega Trail that goes west to connect with the Deer Springs Trail. We had a good rest and re-watering at the cienega. From there the trail descends to the previously mentioned junction where we rested a while and waited for everyone to re-group.

Now our work really began, for the trail ascends to a junction featuring a confluence of the Marion Mountain, Seven Pines, and Deer Springs Trails. A lot of downed trees had to be climbed over, under, and through, and snowpatches caused us to either slip-slide or posthole into. Lunch was consumed alongside the springs of Deer Springs. Just after commencing the hike again we branched off onto the Fuller Ridge Trail, a route laid out by someone who made it from the roadhead off the Black Mountain-Camp Lackey road, but who could never make up his mind whether to go up or down hill. It's really a "roller-coaster ride" sort of way to go. Where two streams descend there are deep gullies in the mountain,

and on the shaded sides thereof we encountered more snow banks which were a real thrash to negotiate. Finally, we arrived at the area where we expected to camp, but decided to travel a bit farther to make Sunday's mileage a bit less. By now the snowbanks had delayed us somewhat, and we were grateful to find a truly ideal campsite. The PCT did not look much traveled prior to our arrival, and we figured that those who planned to trek the full 2600 miles from the Mexican border to the Canadian Border had found an alternate, snow-free route around our high country. We had, on March 28, found a PCT enthusiast who had been stymied by the snow. Ah! supper, bed, and sleep, along with a convivial evening — what could rise up to deter us tomorrow?

Sunday began with breakfast, of course, then we trudged down rocky, dusty switchbacks on the south side of the ridge, then up more switchbacks and over the ridge into more snow, and more snow! The snow quit just as we reached the road. We went down it a ways to find our last place to tank up with water, and had a snack. Before long we were on the stretch of the PCT that literally extends for miles across almost never ending switchbacks, descending so gradually that one almost goes berserk after walking a mile and then seeing someone else only two hundred feet above but back a mile. This would not have been as bad only the air pollution obscured views of the precipitous and spectacular North Face country. We were blessed by a partial cloud cover and inter-

mittent breeze — the temperature only climbed to 95 deg. F. It was an agonizingly long descent featuring hot foot surfaces, blisters, and tantalizing visions of pools, milk shakes, and shade. Nevertheless, the little community of Snowcreek came into view and gradually nearer. The trail crosses the road from the community to the Palm Spring Desert Agency Caretaker's house about a mile from the end. The last party walked in at the 4 o'clock hour, and it was over.

Our thirty-mile trek was worth it for the familiarization, and furthermore gave us a firm determination to hike that last 12 miles only if it were a life-at-stake situation. • RMRU