

Volume XXII, Issue X, August 1986

Rob Gardner, Editor — Kevin Walker, Publisher — Dona Halcrow, Artist

Search and Rescue

CALL

Mission No. 8629C

**3 Aug., Sun.
Santa Ana Canyon,
Riverside County**

We received a call from the Riverside office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that three teenage girls were missing in the Santa Ana River bottom near Norco and that assistance was needed. As the callout procedure was starting, we were re-notified that the three had been located and our assistance was no longer needed. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8630M

**5 Aug., Tues.
Hurkey Creek
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Bob Sairs



6:30.

I met Rob in Palm Desert at 5:30 Wednesday morning and we drove to Hurkey Creek Park to meet the rest of the team.

After we assembled, it was decided to set up base on Apple Canyon Road near the entrance to Roosevelt Camp, and next to a very large field that continued down Garner Valley.

Kevin Walker then assigned three teams

of two (Jim Fairchild - Henry Negrete, Bernie McIlvoy - Steve Bryant, and Kevin Walker - Rob Gardner) to begin the search, and I remained at base to man the radio. Just after the search began we learned from the parents of Mr. Weatherbie, through the Sheriff's office, the subject had been depressed and moody over his health, and had left home on July 30th. His car had been reported seen by the park ranger about the same date. It was also learned the subject had previously gone off by himself, and had been "missing" for 18 days before returning. This information along with the wide open area where the car had been parked made it difficult to establish just what direction the subject might have taken. The three teams, however, continued to search the immediate area for some sign to indicate where the subject might have traveled. Unfortunately, nothing concrete was found, and all teams returned to base about 9:30 A.M.

After some discussion the decision was made to drive on up Apple Canyon Road to see if any kind of sign of the subject could be found. This also proved fruitless.

Due to "all" the circumstances: the subject's history, the open area where he left the car, and the time elapsed from the subject leaving his car until the search was initiated; the decision was reluctantly made to abandon the search. The team then returned to Idyllwild for lunch.

All things considered it was a frustrating as well as fruitless mission, but at least an effort was made by RMRU.

• RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 63

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

ABORT

Mission No. 8631A

**15-16 Aug., Fri.-Sat.
June Lake
High Sierra**

By Jim Fairchild



Upon learning there was a region-wide call for mountain rescue manpower, Ray Hussey and the writer were soon driving out to Moreno Valley to meet our illustrious new team president, Kevin Walker. He soon zoomed up in a red sports car and handed us a radio. We zoomed northward into the setting sun over a hot high desert.

We telephoned the Sierra Madre SAR periodically to reaffirm the mission was still "on." Darkness fell and we continued on our way, not knowing anything about the mission except that someone was missing, and that we were to go to the June Lake turnoff, a drive one way of about 325 miles. Our progress along Highway 395 was about 75 mph, when we were swiftly passed by a van from the Altadena SAR Team. I got out of Ray's pick-up to check on why we weren't moving, big surprise, we were moving!!! Then I tried to get our radio out of its bag, put on the antenna and microphone, turn it on, and call Altadena before they sped out of radio range. This brilliant plan was foiled by the absence of a microphone.

Not too far south of our destination Ray thought he saw the Sierra Madre van heading south. This meant the mission must have been secured quite recently. Sure enough, at the command station at the aforementioned turnoff we learned that the missing male adult had been found. He had headed exactly 180 degrees the opposite direction he should have when returning from a climb of Mt. Davis — just north of the famous Ritter-Banner Massif.

Memories of the excellent fare provided at "The Stove," a quaint restaurant in Mammoth Lakes, impelled us over there for supper. Also stirred were memories of

another northward dash that ended in Lone Pine for supper, the subject of a rescue having been saved moments before our arrival.

So, we headed home, catching a few hours sleep near the cinder dome at the turnout to Fossil Falls.

Ah! But wait! Even frustrating long drives have their rewards, or, awards, even citations. Ray and I were driving along the highway, both dozing, just south of Inyokern when a vehicle behind us started flashing its headlights, then turned on a nasty red light. You guessed it, your indomitable rescue heroes were properly stopped, asked "why," and written-up.

• RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 40

SEARCH

Mission No. 8632M

**16-17 Aug., Sat.-Sun.
North Fork, San Jacinto River,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Mel Krug



Friends and family had just left my home after celebrating my daughter Melinda's 12th birthday when the phone rang. At the other end was Kevin Walker with news of a search for five young people out of Lawler

Lodge, and that because there were several members away on vacations the turnout would be slim. After saying yes I loaded my gear and drove to the Riverside County operated camp along highway 243. Since I live in Chino, I was surprised to arrive at the rendezvous point and find the vans still not there. I learned from fellow members present that there might be another mission starting at Tahquitz Rock (see mission no. 8633A), which did not please me at all, but fortunately that resolved itself quickly and Kevin and Bruce arrived with the No. 1 and No. 2 vans shortly after.

Kevin accepted the job of operations leader and began gathering information from the informants present, while we prepared our packs for an overnight search. It seemed like forever for our briefing and assignments to be given, but the wait was necessary since we were limited in manpower, and if Kevin were to give a hasty assignment we might not even find a clue. We gathered around the van and learned that we would be going out for five teenagers: four girls and one boy, ages 15-16, last seen below the camp at 1:30 in the afternoon leaving to go downstream on a short hike. They were dressed lightly and did not have any food or water with them. With Kevin left at base with the

dubious job of running the show, Bruce Gahagan, Joe Erickson, Mark Rhoads, Rick Pohlers, Henry Negrete and myself started down slowly from the camp. Not just slow because of trying to follow prints, but also because brush and large boulders made traveling extremely slow. As we searched, Kevin activated the Hemet Search and Rescue team and they responded with five members in two vehicles. Their task would be to drive down the San Jacinto truck trail, a dirt road for fire access that crosses the North Fork below where we were searching.

To make a long night and story short, we worked through the night following prints intermittently, and eventually ran into two people from the Hemet team coming upstream. So, somewhere the kids climbed out of the bottom and we missed where they did that. Just as the sun was nearing the almost 11,000 foot summit of Mt. San Jacinto far above us, the Hemet members brought us back to base for some breakfast and new assignments. Just then the Sheriff's dispatcher came on the radio and informed base that the kids had made it back up to highway 243, north of our location. We then were able to relax as we waited for the deputy to bring the group back to our location. Once back the cold and scratched up group of five told us what we thought had happened. They went down stream for quite awhile and then decided to climb out to the ridge. But in doing so, they went into extremely thick brush. They kept going until after dark, and then spent the night huddled together on a large boulder. When there was enough light in the morning, they pushed on, and made it to a fire break on the ridge top, and then went on to the highway. At any rate, the only thing that appeared to be injured was both their and our respective prides. With that we drove to Idyllwild for breakfast and then home for some badly needed sleep.

• RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 180

ABORT

Mission No. 8633A

**16 Aug., Sat.
Tahquitz Rock,
San Jacinto Mountains**

While responding to Mission No. 8632M RMRU was also contacted by the Idyllwild deputy that a couple was overdue in coming back from Tahquitz Rock. RMRU members Kevin Walker and Bruce Gahagan responded to Humber Park to get more information. Upon their arrival the couple returned to Humber, both OK. • RMRU

CALL

Mission No. 8634A

**21 Aug., Thurs.
Pacific Crest Trail,
San Jacinto Mountains**

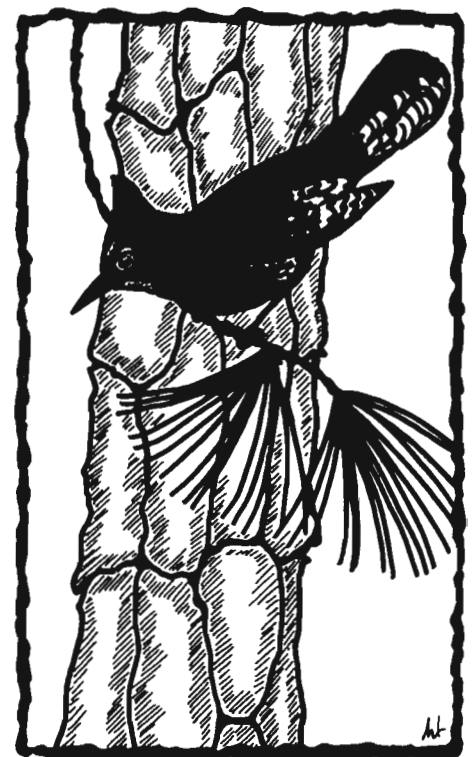
We received a call from the Hemet Station of the Riverside County Sheriff's department that a 22 year old man was overdue on the Pacific Crest Trail somewhere between Saddle Junction and Highway 74 near Anza. As the call out procedure was being initiated, the man walked out to Garner Valley via Apple Canyon. The mission was then cancelled. • RMRU

CALL

Mission No. 8635C

**24 Aug., Sun.
Yosemite National Park**

We received a call through the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association to assist in a search for a missing 11 year old in Yosemite National Park. While manpower reports were being gathered the girl was located and all teams were notified. • RMRU



TRAINING

Tracking

9 Aug., Sat.
Tahquitz Valley
San Jacinto Mountains

By Rob Gardner



August training was a mock mission with emphasis on tracking. Senior team member and number one RMRU tracker, Jim Fairchild, had hiked into the wilderness the previous night and camped out,

prepared to act as our lost subject. Jim kept a completed incident form on his car windshield, his car being parked at Humber Park, near Idyllwild. Training Chairman Steve Bryant was to retrieve this form as he led the training exercise, but had been taken ill.

Steve's absence was resolved, as Henry Negrete was appointed Operations Leader and the envelope which contained the incident sheet was handed to him. Henry's first problem was a small turn-out of team members. (Other members were hiking in the Sierra's, some were ill, and some just were not present).

Henry's second problem was a delay resultant from Mel Krug's car blowing the radiator plug just as he arrived at Idyllwild.

Eventually, all participants were on the mountain and up Devil's Slide Trail to Saddle Junction. The incident report physically described our subject and noted that he was an expert hiker, in good condition, with adequate gear. It also noted that the subject had a large dog with him. He was overdue for return from a hike on which he planned to hike to Tahquitz Valley and then proceed eastward. We attempted to find large dog tracks and size 12 Nike Approach footprints as we hiked on from Saddle Junction to Tahquitz Valley. We were more successful at finding dog tracks than Jim's tracks, amidst the zillions of footprints and the few horse tracks that now covered the trail, on a beautiful day that brought hikers and backpackers of all sizes and shapes to the mountain.

As we approached Tahquitz Valley we lost signs (tracks) of our lost subject and his large dog. Henry split the men up into teams of two and we prepared to proceed

to three different assignments. The east-bound team quickly found tracks of a large dog near tracks matching the description of Jim's Nike shoes near a water hole. They found three footprints and again lost signs. Everybody came to the site of those prints to get a good look and then proceeded on their assignments. The tracks being quickly lost, the mock mission began to resemble a search exercise more than a tracking exercise. The search area near the lost tracks enlarged and the limited amount of people were used as effectively as possible, in a hasty search.

From the information and signs available we deduced the hot area to be near the Pacific Crest Trail at the base of Red Tahquitz. Indeed, this was the vicinity Jim had hiked over to, with his pooch, Primo.

The mock mission training exercise took all day and included a good long hike. The people on the exercise learned a little more about tracking and searching, while also gaining a little more familiarity with an active area of the San Jacinto Mountains. • RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 91

Fun... Fellowship... Service... Thanks to the Izaak Walton League

There was a good turn-out of good folks for the Woodsmen's Breakfast on Sunday, August 24, 1986. The Woodsmen's Breakfast is held annually at the Town Hall in Idyllwild. This is a benefit for the RMRU that is sponsored by the Idyllwild Chapter of the Izaak Walton League.

The weather was terrific and the pancake, sausage, and eggs breakfast had that special touch of being prepared by the men of the RMRU.

Proceeds from the breakfast go to the RMRU for purchase and maintenance of

team equipment which is needed in addition to the \$2,000 worth of individual SAR equipment which each individual team member purchases on his own.

It is with the help of folks like those who donated for the breakfast, those with the Izaak Walton League, and the RMRU Sustaining Membership that the RMRU has been able to carry out its mountain search and rescue missions and will be able to continue, after "25 years of caring for others." With continued support the RMRU surely will be around for a second 25 year span of caring for others. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

GOOD FOOD SERVED BY THE PROFESSIONALS — Here we see top cooks Mel "the Spatch" Krug, Kevin "Jemima" Walker, and Joe "the Sausage King" Erickson conferring over the RMRU super secret pancake recipe used at the annual pancake breakfast served in Idyllwild.