

RMRU *Fresh Tracks*

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit

The Official Newsletter of the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc.

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 1

SPRING 1999

The Envenomation or Snakebite

By Jim Fairchild, A Founding Member of RMRU

It is my privilege and joy to teach outdoor skills Ethnobotany, Survival, and Living-With-The-Earth, at Pathfinder Ranch Outdoor Education School in Garner Valley, San Jacinto Mountains. During my twelve years there about forty-thousand youngsters have come through. Also during that time I've picked up and shown the fangs and venom of at least sixty rattlesnakes.

At about three-forty, the afternoon of May 24th (exactly a month prior to this writing we were about a hundred yards up my Ethnobotany Trail above the ranch where I was describing the uses of streamside willows. One of my fifteen students saw a beautiful, three-foot-long specimen of the Western Diamondback Rattle snake, Southern Pacific variety, under an oak Tree, close to the trail. I took off my pack, instructing a boy to take out my forked snake stick while I held the snake with my walking stick. I pinned the neck and picked up the rattler, held his head between my right thumb and index finger, with the rest of his body snug between right arm and chest. Using a small twig, I pried his fangs out to show them the fangs and the venom. Turns out this specimen has somewhat longer fangs than I have ever seen, even in much larger rattlers. He presented them straight out, his right fang quickly entering my left index finger at the edge of the nail. Instant burning sensation! I asked the boy to give me the radio and extractor kit from the pack and it was done instantly. I called Maggie, our school's registered nurse, informing her I'd been envenomed. She said, "Jim, don't kid me that way!" We got that straightened out. I could not use the extractor because of the proximity to the nail. I had to let that beautiful rattler go and he's still up there doing rodent control. The children (6th Graders) were totally calm and awaited the Outdoor Director to arrive and continue the class as I

walked back to the apartment, 300 yards away. I met Maggi,, who had called my wife. She called Dr. Bill Blaschko at his home in Idyllwild and he drove down to the Hemet Medical Center Emergency Room. Shortly after, I arrived in Station 53's ambulance.

No anxiety, no real pain, the swelling only reached my elbow as the fine nurse Christy and Dr. Blaschko injected twenty vials of horse serum into the truly painful intra-venous needle site. It was really an attention-getter with nurses, paramedics, doctors warming vials between their hands, people looking concerned and me just enjoying the whole scene.

Then it was off to the I.C.U. where more wonderful care ensured-hooked up to cardiac and respiratory monitors, plus automatic blood pressure cuff-that hurt. Then x-rays, then blood tests. I pleaded to get out of there that night, but Bill said no. I even had to stay Tuesday night. Further x-rays and blood tests Wednesday morning revealed all was well. They removed the I.V. so I did not have to continue walking around the halls pushing the I.V. stand and feeling ridiculous. My wife JoAnne retrieved my anxious body after lunch (the food had been very good) and we drove back to the school where I resumed teaching the next day.

I was (am) very blessed that none of the expected (predicted) after-effects occurred; a hives like rash; pooling of venom and anti-venom here and there with pain; and painful or swollen joints. Now, four weeks later, there's only a slight tingling when touched a couple of millimeters at the fang entry site.

It must be emphasized that my care was excellent beginning with the paramedic in the ambulance, the Emergency Room folks, the nurses in I.C.U. and importantly, everyone's Prayers. **Thank You!!!**



January Training

Winter Shakedown by Glenn Henderson



One of the tents at camp in Shangri-La.

Winter Shakedown was a normal **Winter Shakedown**, i.e.: Little or no snow again !!!!! We hiked into Shangri-La and set up camp for the night. During the day we did some familiarization around the North Face escarpment and hiked back to camp. Chris Babcock and Lee Arnson hiked to the Summit of San Jacinto and over to Wellman's Divide before returning to camp. Due to the lack of snow, Lee, Chris, and Ralph Hoetger, got up at the (*unjustifiable without a reason*) hour of 5:00 a.m. to catch the first tram car down. That left just Jim Fairchild and I to get up a more sane hour, cook a leisurely breakfast and then have a very enjoyable stroll back to the tram. (Editor's Note: The last few years have seen a very poor snow cover in the high country. We have had years when the snow depth was from four to six feet at Round Valley above the tram.)

February Training

By Michael George

'Twas the night before our February expedition and the majority of our team was feverishly re-packing, trying to decide what was best to take and what we could leave at home. Ultimately we were trying to reduce the weights of our packs and after a couple of hours we finally closed our packs, jubilant. We managed to shave significant weight from each of our packs. A pair of socks here, a 4th flashlight there. It is the same before every trip. We always stay up late trying to make our packs lighter only to find that, yes, everything was needed. Oh, well.

The next morning was beautiful and bright at the base of the Palm Springs Tram and the cable car ride to the top provided us with unparalleled views of Palm Springs behind us and the spectacular San Jacintos in front of us. Fifteen minutes later we passed





through three climate zones to reach our destination, snow, 8500 feet above the valley floor. Our mission was to explore the snow chutes on the North face of the mountain range. We were to determine suitable evaluation sites for our upcoming re-accreditation in Snow and Ice rescue techniques in accordance with practices established by the Mountain Rescue Association. It was our team's turn to host the California region's Search and Rescue teams.

At the top of the tram my team, consisting of Glenn Henderson, team leader and current President, Janet Hillard, Penelope May, Chris Babcock, myself, and Jim Fairchild, an original founding member of the team 38 years ago, and the one person who doesn't need to repack needlessly. We threw on our 45-lb. packs and snow gear and headed west, skirting Long Valley. Shortly thereafter we realized that the snow report was vastly overestimated observing a lightly packed base of about 12 - 16 inches. Upon reaching the ridge we realized that indeed the snow level was too low for our purposes. The snow chutes were splattered with exposed rocks and cracks, a perfect site for a standard technical rock rescue. However our evaluation would require the use of snow anchors necessitating more solid snow. Well, our mission came to a screeching halt. We had been looking forward to hosting this conference, but now it looked like it would have to be moved to another location, in the end, the Sierras. We decided to follow plan B and continue our 2 day trip, familiarizing ourselves with different North Face features such as avalanche chutes, winter-time helicopter landing zones, and

popular areas for hikers and skiers to get into trouble.

Along the way we practiced winter navigation using maps, compasses, and prominent landmarks. As night approached, the cold temperatures reminded us how quickly the human body will lose heat as the sun goes down and how many of our subjects had been ill-prepared. It pays to throw in that third sweater and cap for the unfortunate enthusiasts.

The second day found us finishing up our familiarization and enjoying a pleasant trek back to the tram, with hot roast beef sandwiches waiting. Mission Accomplished.

March Training

By Kevin Walker

MRA Winter Re-accreditation

On Friday March 5th twelve members from RMRU made the trek north on U.S Highway 395 to Big Pine, California on the eastern slope of the High Sierra. Not only was this a training exercise, but it also was the official Winter Re-accreditation test for membership in the Mountain Rescue Association.

Saturday morning the teams of the California Region of MRA gathered at the site of the old Gla-

cier Lodge, destroyed by fire several years ago. With each team supplying at least one tester, the groups were given their various rescue assignments and locations on the scantily snow clad slopes above. RMRU member Janet Hillard volunteered to serve as our patient suffering from a fall with leg injuries and the early signs of hypothermia. Kevin Walker took the point as Operations Leader, Henry Negrete led the technical team, and EMT's Glenn Henderson and Kirk Cloyd served as medical and patient attendants on the litter.

Snow anchors were set up and Glenn and Kirk were lowered down the moderate slope to Janet. As they attended to her injuries and prepared her for transport, Henry directed the rest of the team as a raising system was set up to raise the patient. When all was ready and our system had been inspected by the tester assigned to us from the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team, the litter and two attendants was raised up the snow field. Along the way we were instructed to change over to a lowering system and then change back to a raise. Also demonstrated was our anchor systems ability to handle the stresses of an anchor failure. And near the end of our test we showed an ability to improvise and move the patient in an extremely fast manner simulating a deterioration in patient health due to possible internal injuries and change in weather conditions.

Even though we were a small group on site, RMRU members worked in a safe and time efficient manner. At our critique session we received a passing authorization from our tester, and received a high



compliment for our ability to work together smoothly and efficiently and still show that we are a close knit group of friends.

Lastly, four of us from the team participated in the avalanche portion of the test. Using the teams new avalanche beacons, we fanned out across the test slope and started a grid search for a simulated buried person in the snow. With our new locators we quickly picked up the signal, and within three minutes had located the buried transmitter. Again a passing grade.

Members present: Janet Hillard, Steve Bryant, Jim Fairchild, Michael George, Henry Negrete, Kirk Cloyd, Joe Erickson, Glenn Henderson, Kevin Walker, Kurt Sullivan, Bob Sairs and Walt Walker.

Author's note: *Saturday evening we gathered at our car and trailer camp in Big Pine for dinner and fellowship. That evening Bob Sairs, a respected and close friend, commented to Kirk Cloyd over a glass of scotch that this trip to the Sierra would probably be his last one with all of us. Unfortunately it would be, as we lost Bob in October.*



April Training

By Walt Walker

Team Technical Joshua Tree NP



Litter attendant Michael George makes adjustments to the litter rigging before starting a raise.

It was 37 years ago that a three year old boy was present when the team held the first family technical weekend at 'JT'. That boy is now a senior member of the team, Kevin Walker. His first daughter, Bridgett, was only two years old when she attended her first family technical weekend. That was the year the team set up the 300' plus foot zip line.

We were blessed with good April weather. It wasn't too hot and not too cold, it was just right unless you were in the shade.

The members reviewed personal technical skills, knots,

placement of 'pro' (stoppers, nuts, hexs' and Friends), setting up raising and lowering systems, litter rigging, Jumaring and rappelling.

The order of the day was to put all this to use by having someone be the injured person in the litter and then doing raises and lowers with numerous members at the many different manned positions in a system.

The member's children enjoy scrambling on the rocks and in 37 years we have not had to rescue one of the children. However, we have helped them up and down the boulders a number of times.

The traditional campfire Saturday night was enjoyed by all, young and old. Sunday morning saw us do more of the same. A number of members demonstrated the ability to descend and ascend a long rope so they could qualify for the May training in the cave.

May Training

By Kirk Cloyd

I joined the team shortly after a training trip to the Cave of the Winding Stairs. I had heard the horror stories and saw the "Dead Phil" photos and it just excited me more. For the last two and a half years I have been looking forward to the next training in the cave. In '98 I had my hopes dashed when the plans for this training fell through. Now it was May of '99 and everything had come together for this long anticipated adventure.



I had agreed to meet up with fellow team member Michael George in Palm Springs after work Friday night at about 5:30 as he had a doctors appointment in that area and he had already arranged to leave his vehicle at the home of Chris Kramer. I arrived in the Palm Springs area at 5:30 p.m. just as we had planned. Michael asked me where I was so, after I told him he asked me to pull over telling me that he would get back with me. My patience was wearing thin at this point! I remembered that Michael was to leave his car at Chris Kramer's so, never having been to Chris' house I purchased a local map at the gas station and found that his house was two blocks from me. GiGi paged Michael and when he called told him that if he wasn't at the Kramer's desert home in 15 minutes I was going to leave without him. I got the message to meet him at CoCo's and within ten minutes I had arrived at CoCo's and searched the dining hall and parking lot to no avail. After some additional phone calls I learned he was at the Denny's Restaurant on the 10 Hwy and Ramon Rd. We met and started out trip to the site.

We drove for three hours and arriving at the campsites at 12:30 a.m. to find a howling cold wind. I was out within seconds only to be awakened thirty minutes later (1:30 a.m.) by the wind lifting my tent and feet off the ground six to twelve inches and then slamming them onto the asphalt parking lot. I threw my gear and tent in the back of my Blazer and settled into the drivers seat for a couple of hours sleep. By 3:00 a.m. I was awakened by what sounds like thousands of rocks hitting the side of my vehicle and realized that the wind had

picked up Michael and his tent sliding them about six feet across the asphalt and into my Blazer. Hmmmm, Do I start up the Blazer, put it in reverse and see where the wind takes him! NO.... I rolled down the window and invited him in out of the cold. Mistake! I told him to just put his stuff in the back seat as the back window might not roll up once down as cold as it is. Yep you guessed it, down went the window and yes it was cold enough that it would not go up. I started the Blazer and turned the nose into the wind to reduce the amount of sand entering and sand blasting my nose! 4:00 a.m. woke us both with 60 plus wind gusts and by 6:30 a.m. I was up for the day.

We got a late start toward the cave (8:30 a.m.) yet made the cave entrance by 10:45 a.m. At this point my whole outlook changed. I had been looking and training for this for many months. It was more than I expected. Debbi Riegle even arrived in style as Landells flew her in from an early morning photo shoot to raise money for the team. Now that we were all here the fun could begin!

We entered the small doorway and made are way through what appeared to be a hallway. As we stepped over small fishers in the floor I heard Janet Hillard yell back to me that a bag of runners had fallen down the larger of the fishers. When I got up to that point I could see them approx. 20 feet down. We continued onward and came to the top of the first rappel. The first of the team had tied a rope to this petrified piece of 4x4 wood that straddled this large crack. I said a little prayer,

put my pack on daisy chair below me and clipped on. As I made my way down the fissures, I realized how much fun I was having! Soon the walls disappeared and I was hanging free at the top of a large room. I continued my rappel to the first ledge. Glenn Henderson, the team president and training leader, asked me to remain at this point and assist all that needed help in getting to the next level. As I brought up the rear I continued down from the large ledge it was on to complete the first rappel. From here I crawled through a small hole called "the rat hole" and proceeded into the "Great Hall". There I found the group taking a well-deserved break and playing with the night vision video camera that had been brought by Debbi Riegle. Debbi, we want to see the video! From here, Glenn roped up again and rappelled down to a ledge with another large crack in it. I followed shortly behind. Glenn told me to lead the last rappel to the cave floor. As I clipped onto the last rope and unhooked from the other one, Janet Hillard arrived at our level. While changing where some of the gear on her harness was she dropped her small Petzle chest harness ascender down into the depths of the black abyss. As I forged on I was a little apprehensive but once on the rope excitement took over. As I rappelled down the rope it slowly turned 360 degrees. The beauty was ah inspiring! As I landed on the cave floor I noticed that I was actually about three feet above the ground on a portion that protruded upward. Once I got my bearings and got down to the real floor I took this opportunity to explore while waiting for the rest of the team. I found



Janet's Petzle. When the others had arrived I crawled into the final room. I understand that this is the favorite room of Debbiy and GiGi as it holds some of the most beautiful formations of the trip. From here it was a slimy crawl to the "Registrar Room" to sign in showing that we had truly made it.

Now the real work was about to start. As the last person rappelled down, Michael George, Glenn said that we should start back out. Being the first down and spending quite a bit of time in this hole I volunteered to head up. I was also anxious to employ the ascending system that I had been working with for the last few months. I went up with little effort and felt good when I made my way through the first crawl space and switched over to the next rope. Before I began the second ascent I called down to the next ascender, Janet, and she started up. The ropes that Janet and I were on were anchored close together as there was no other way. When I got within ten feet of the anchor points I noticed that the two ropes were rapped around one another roughly two times. With my weight on one rope and Janet's weight on the other I was at a point that I could no longer climb with the ease I had seen before. I was fortunate that I had an extra ascender and was able to drag my self up over the tangle and clip the third ascender in. At this time I released the original top ascender and moved it to a point above the tangled ropes as well. I then unclipped my chest harness and pulled myself up onto the second ledge. By this time Janet had made her way to the first ledge and so had the tangles. She was unable to free herself to the point of switch-

ing over to the other rope. This meant that as she continued on the first rope, everyone else had to wait until she was on the second ledge with me before proceeding up the first rope. We soon learned that the last person down had decided to do a little exploring and used the second ascending rope as a safety line. This is not a problem if you remember not to walk around the other rope as it will cause the ropes to tangle. While getting Janet up and over the lip of the second ascent, an anxious climber put their weight on the rope preparing to climb. I could tell by the panicked look in Janet's eyes and the explicatives hurled down to the depths below that this not only pulled her backwards toward the dark chasm below but it hurt too. I realized that the person on the other end did not do this intentional and after some yelling got the individual off of the line. With Janet up, I proceeded to the "Great Hall" where I took a 30-min. nap before others arrived. Kurt Sullivan (Sully), who had informed the team that he was mildly claustrophobic *at the bottom of the cave*, arrived at the "Great Hall" and informed me that he needed to remove himself from the cave ASAP. So, across the hall and through the "Rat Hole" we went. I went up the rope to the ledge with Mike Curtis close on my heels. When Mike arrived on the ledge I had him head on up to the top so I could work with Sully as he came up the rope. When Sully arrived at the ledge I sent him on up where Curtis was waiting for him. Once Sully was out and Janet was on the ledge I headed up the last ascent while

Janet rested. As my head breached the surface of the crack, I realized how tired I was and how slippery the rock was. After a lot of praying and a little rest I was able to pull myself out with the encouragement of Mike Curtis. Janet came out in the same fashion as I did, tired and ready for fresh air. It was believed that the other five team members were on the final ledge when they had me haul the first pack out. Come to find out, they were at the bottom of the first rappel so, when we sent the rope back down to them to get the next load they could not see the rope. Mike Curtis to the rescue! Mike rapped back down and got the rope over to the remaining team members before ascending back out. Once the remaining team members reached the ledge I had regained my composure and proceeded to pull their packs and the gear up one at a time. After some time and effort, all eight team members made it out in one piece. At about 8:30 p.m. we arrived back at the vehicles for a group picture and the drive back to camp. Some went home that night or early the next morning (4:00 a.m.) but those of us that stayed hiked to the near by springs after breakfast and went on the park tour of the main cave before heading home at noon. Needless to say, the trip home was much better than the trip there, but I will have to admit it, I would do it all over again just to see the cave and build on the friendships that I have formed with *all* of the team members. This training taught me more than the caving skills I so enjoy. It taught me to be patient, perseverer, and most of all how to bury my feelings of aggression when needed! We all have off days, hope there are not many more!!!



June Training

By Jim Fairchild

On a beautiful, clear day, in Garner Valley, fifteen of us gathered for a morning of intense training in the basics of tracking, our "bread-and-butter" skill in search for lost people.

Prefaced by many tales of previous successful searches, we raked out a large tracking pit where partners could see what kind of disturbances various gaits and movements appeared on the texture of soil. By "reading" and interpreting what we saw, conclusions could be made as to the condition and actions of those who had passed through the pit. During the hours as the sun rose higher we could tell age of the disturbances, and work with the angle of the sun as to how best to find and follow footprints.

Branching out from the pit area, partners watched each other's evidence making as they walked through the forest on different surfaces. This process is most instructive not only in the gathering of evidence, but interpreting the subject of our search as to condition and even intentions.

By noon brain-strain had set in, and we determined that everyone was either well reviewed or newly well instructed, so we headed elsewhere to have lunch and achieve a profitable afternoon.



Setting the Record Straight

Not only to share some memories with you about a person who has had a major impact on my life, I also wish to correct an error from the last issue of *Fresh Tracks*. In the Winter 1999 issue on page 10 there was a wonderfully written article by Tim Westcott telling of how Walt and Kevin Walker had written and published an excellent booklet titled "*HeliTactics*". It sung all the praises of how Walt and Kevin had taken all their years of experience and put it into this booklet. Because there was no credit given to anyone, only Kevin's name on the back for ordering, and a copyright bearing the name of Arrow Printing, Tim Westcott had no way of knowing that Walt and I were only participants in its evolution and production.

What follows is a closer account of those who deserve the credit, and one in particular. If only one person could be responsible and receive credit in the booklet "*HeliTactics*", that person should be Steve deJesus. Steve's list of accomplishments would only partially read as follows: Veteran Mountain Pilot, Chief Pilot of Landells Aviation, past member of Palm Springs Mounted Police Search and Rescue, volunteer with the Bighorn Sheep Society and as a pilot responsible for assisting in the saving of many lives through his skill as a pilot, including the life of a close friend and RMRU member Ray Hussey. *Not bad for only a partial list of accomplishments.*

It was Steve's goal to complete something another man had always planned to do. That would be James Donald Landells - or "Don" as everyone knew him. We lost Don far too early. On October 6, 1986 Don and another man Jim Bickett lost their lives while flying on a Bighorn Sheep project on Clark Mountain. Some other time I would like to share some memories of the man who was a living hero and like a second dad to me. For now let me share the final paragraph from the dedication page in "*HeliTactics*" - "*During his many years as a pilot, he (Don) gave generously of his time, knowledge and expertise to train SAR (search and rescue) personnel, to streamline SAR efforts, and to make SAR missions safer. Don's teachings were from memory. He always wanted to write a small book to*



help standardize and simplify training. Although it didn't get done before he died, some of the hundreds of SAR personnel he trained, his fellow pilots and friends wanted to share his teachings and preserve his legacy of service. This is a token of our respect and love for Don Landells."

At the request (more like demand) of Steve deJesus the only mention of credit in "*HeliTactics*" was in that last paragraph - obviously no names mentioned. "Sorry Steve I need to set this straight." The list would indeed go on forever regarding those who gave their valuable input towards the writing of "*HeliTactics*", however there was a core group led by Steve. Rob Gardner, Elaine Landells, Jim Landells and Larry Paul and myself gave their time and financial support to actually complete the project. A special recognition needs to go to Kenny Paul who produced all of the original art for "*HeliTactics*". And thanks to Walt Walker owner of Arrow Printing who indeed bared the majority of the financial burden of the "*HeliTactics*" project.

"*HeliTactics*" belongs to all who knew Don Landells, but it was Steve's stubbornness and desire that led to its completion. Thank you Steve for pushing all of us so that Don's dream could become a reality!

On a personal note. . .

. . .to Elaine, Jim, Kenny, Larry, Rob - and most of all to Steve. I am so sorry for the mix up with our booklet. All of you deserve so much credit for the completion of "*HeliTactics*."

And please remember that all of you are so important to me, and that even in my absence, "the hanger" is still my second home!

SAR

Search and Rescue

9901M — Search
North Face Mt. San Jacinto
By Ray Hussey

Call received early Monday morning January 11th, 1999 re: San Clemente couple Thomas & Kristen Kidwell overdue from a climb of the North face of San Jacinto. First report was that the subjects had started the climb on Friday, this eventually was found to be incorrect. They actually stated the climb at noon Saturday 1-10-99. Thomas & Kristen were both experienced hikers and climbers but since Thomas was overdue at work on Monday the search was started. Initially teams were deployed to search the de-

sert floor for the subjects vehicle, and a hasty team was sent to search for tracks and cut for sign along the plateau to approximately 3,500 feet where the East Fork of snow creek presents a natural barrier. The State Park was notified and asked to check the summit register and Interview all hikers coming from the peak. Riverside Sheriffs Office helicopter Star-80 was requested and on deployment spotted a vehicle 3 mi. east of snow creek road.

Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR) responded and radioed back the license plate. This confirmed that the vehicle spotted was in fact the subjects' vehicle. A RMRU team was sent up to the tram to walk the North Face ridge-line checking for any movement and/or distress signals. The RMRU hasty team reported no recent disturbance or tracks at the 3,500 ft. level, which was very surprising since this is the usual route of ascent. The search was temporally suspended, at nightfall because of the technical degree of difficulty with darkness and danger to the searchers.

The Office of Emergency Services (OES) was contacted and additional helicopter support from San Bernardino County arrived early the next day (Tuesday) along with Mountaineer trained personnel from Sierra Madre SAR [Search and Rescue] teams. DSAR tracked from the vehicle along the east ridge. Sierra Madre, China Lake and RMRU teams were airlifted to strategic locations on the North Face. Mid-afternoon a flashing reflection/light was seen by spotters at the 9000 ft level. Star-80 was dispatched with an RMRU technical-medic but the flashing turned



out to be the sun shining intermittently on a sheet of ice. Shortly thereafter the DSAR team found the two subjects and hiking down the east ridge at the 4,000 ft level. The subjects were airlifted to base by Star-80 and rehydrated. When interviewed it was determined that the subjects had avoided the usual ascent route since they hadn't obtained the proper permits. Their clothing was dark and they didn't attempt to signal the sheriff's helicopters. Their climb was terminated due to time constraints and the degree of difficulty. A very happy and relieved family warmly embraced them at base camp.

9902M — Search **Near Cranston Ranger Station** **Little Girl Mission** **By Glenn Henderson**

We received a call from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a five year old girl had wandered away from a friends house during the night. The trailhead was at Cranston Ranger Station in Valle Vista, east of Hemet. The house she was visiting was next door to the ranger station and it was believed that she had gotten lost in the citrus groves in the hills behind the ranger station and the house. She was reported to be in the company of two large dogs. Since I live only five minutes away I was the first on the scene. Hemet Search and Rescue and the Desert Search and Rescue Team from Palm Desert had been on scene all night and had found a good set of prints. With this information I began sending out teams out. We were in the field for about 20 minutes when we got the call to hold

our positions. A Sheriff's deputy saw something out of the ordinary as he was driving back to base camp through the citrus groves. Sure enough it was our subject. She was a little cold but was otherwise in great shape. She had spent the night curled up with the two dogs. She was returned to base camp and checked out by American Medical Response Paramedics. She was then turned over to a very relieved family. All teams met at Hamby's Cafe for breakfast and then off to work.

9903M — Search **Valle Vista, East of Hemet** **Alzheimer woman lost** **By Glenn Henderson**

We received an early morning call to help search for an Alzheimer woman that had been missing all night. We met at the CDF substation in Valle Vista to start our search. I deployed a team to search the river bottom to cut for tracks and another team to search a large field of weeds in case she had fallen down. While the two teams were starting their assignments a deputy noticed and an empty house had a broken window. Upon investigation he discovered the subject asleep inside. She was a little hypothermic but otherwise ok. Another breakfast at Hamby's and off to work we went.

9904M — Rescue (03/19/99) **Tahquitz Rock, near Idyllwild** **Injured climber carried out** **No article filed by press time.**

9905M — Search (03/22/99) **Tahquitz Rock, near Idyllwild** **Missing couple** **By Tim Westcott**

Search and Rescue is Like a Box of Chocolates...

Forest Gump sat on a bus stop bench pondering his "momma's" home-spun philosophies. "Life is like a box of chocolates," he said, "you never know what you're gonna get." Instantly, everyone had the perfect word picture to convey the fact that life is full of uncertainties. Jump in and see what you get!

Since then, this famous "Gumpism" has been applied to every conceivable context or situation where uncertainty prevails and question marks abound. That being the case, one could easily argue that mountain search and rescue was tailor-made for Gump's immortal words. There are few environments where questions are consistently the rule, and certainty is the rare exception.

Why is it that one is never more tired, and one's bed never feels quite so good, as it does when the rescue pager goes off late at night? Such was the case about 11:30 p.m. on Monday evening, March 22, 1999. Initial report: Climbers possibly in trouble on Tahquitz Rock, one of Southern California's more sought after climbing venues. Two graduate school students, one male and one female were long overdue. They had begun an ascent of Angel's Fright, a moderate route on the southwest face of the rock. Fellow members of their party were working other routes at the same time, and neither visual or verbal contact with the pair was maintained during the climbing. As



darkness fell and all other members of the group were safely off the rock, the two were unaccounted for.

RMRU was called out, and base was set up at Humber Park. Immediately two teams were dispatched; one to run out a well traveled trail in the event the subjects had made a wrong turn on their descent, and the other to recon the base of the rock, eventually attaining the summit of the rock by a non-technical route.

Team One, assigned to Tahquitz Rock, scrambled up the scree slope by headlamp, eventually arriving at the base of the suspected climb about 1:00 a.m. Yelling out the climbers names every couple of minutes produced no results as Team One began to work its way around the base of the south face. As the elevation increased, so did the wind. It seemed to swallow the team's yells as it blew constantly, with gusts to 40 mph.

Headlamps performed only meager assistance in throwing light on the rising granite face. However, as Team One neared the summit of the rock, and looked back across the black expanse of the rock face, a headlamp suddenly appeared. It was 3:00 a.m. Team One maneuvered into a position that eventually enabled some verbal communication, but the distance and the high winds resulted in mostly half-sentences and orphaned words. Even so, it didn't take long to determine that this was the missing pair of climbers.

Both were very cold, but otherwise unhurt. They had managed to get off route, which resulted in much wasted time. When darkness eventually overtook them, they de-

cided it would be better to endure a night of 34 degree cold, rather than risk more climbing. They found a large crack that got them out of the wind and there the two shivered together until hearing Team One's calls. Following communication with base, and more frustrated yells back and forth with the climbers, it was determined that so long as they were not in immediate danger, it would be safest for everyone to wait until first light which was now only about 2 1/2 hours away. The pair's condition at that time, and their actual position on the rock would determine the best course of action. Team Two returned to base to begin preparing for possible support, and Team One hunkered down and began to appreciate what the climbers themselves were experiencing. It WAS cold!

As the sun put an early morning crown on the summit of Tahquitz Rock, Team One made its way to the summit. It was 5:45 a.m. Once on top, the climbers were easily visible about 150 feet below, with mostly non-technical terrain between themselves and the summit. The climbing pair waited until the warmth of the sun had worked its magic, and then under their own power, covered the final distance to the summit where they joined the waiting Team One. It was 7:00 am.

With the climbers warming by the minute, it wasn't long before everyone was retracing Team One's steps back to base. About mid-way down, support teams met up with the foursome, packing hot coffee and encouragement. No worse for wear, and with a greater appreciation for

how long a night can be, these rock climbers will enjoy their sport another day...hopefully just a bit wiser and better prepared the next time.

9906M — Rescue (04/07/99)
Palm Springs Aerial Tramway
Mt. San Jacinto Wilderness
Two women need help
By Pete Carlson & Lee Arnson

Lee called me at 8:15 p.m. to say that there were two women at Wellmans Divide in shorts and T-shirts calling on their cell-phone to say that they needed help. They had been on a day hike and got caught by darkness and deep snow as the trail they were on had ended. He wanted me to be with him as the first team because he wanted another strong fast hiker and everyone he had called in Idyllwild was not home. I quickly got my gear together, which was all over the place from a snow camp the weekend before and, with the help of my son William, in 20 minutes we had everything in the car and were off to the Tramway.

When I got there I found Lee, Ray, Phil, Jim Fairchild, and Darrell Bell. I took everything into the tram car and we started up at 10:00 p.m. As we rode up I packed my pack with extra jackets and pants for the subjects. Jim had a cold and Ray could not go in the field this night. So my son William, who has been training with the team for 2 years now, got his pack ready to help carry extra gear in to the subjects. We started hiking at 10:30 p.m. up the trail to Round Valley and on to Wellmans Divide. It is a 3-1/2 mile hike up about 2,000 feet in



elevation. We completed it in 1-½ hours arriving at the subjects at midnight.

They were sitting against a tree with a torn space blanket over them and shivering quite badly. Lee went directly to them and started an assessment. We had been hiking in long underwear with shorts over them and long sleeve tops because we were hiking hard and did not want to overheat. I quickly put on my pile jacket and Gore-Tex jacket over that. Then William and I started pulling out extra pile jackets and pants which Lee and I put on the subjects. Next we pulled out sleeping bags and put the women in them. Lastly we put out pads under the sleeping bags and threw a tarp over the two subjects. Lee started his stove while William and I collected firewood and started a fire.

They had been doing a loop trail, but because of the deep snow, no one had completed the whole loop. When they got to where the loop ended it was getting dark and they did not have time to retrace their path back. It had been a warm day when they started from the Tramway, but by nighttime it was below freezing. Their boots and socks were wet so they took them off to warm their feet. But in only minutes their boots and socks froze solid. With the fire going we were able to dry out their socks and boots completely in about 90 minutes. We gave them each 4 hot drinks and lots of food to munch on. By 2:00 a.m. they were feeling ready to go. We gave them our ski poles for balance and started the hike out.

The section of trail from Round Valley down to the Tramway stream crossing was icy on the way

up, so a team of Mike Wimbrow and Rick Rhay came up to meet us with in-step crampons for the women to wear on the ice. We met them at lower Round Valley. After putting the crampons on them we proceeded on the Tramway. Back at the Tram we gathered up extra gear and all the base camp equipment and rode back down to our cars. We started home about 4:30 a.m. I pulled in my driveway at 6:00 a.m., 10 hours after I had left, and went straight to bed.

9907A — Search (05/15/99)
Missing person found while
Van was preparing to leave.

9908M — Search (05/15/99)
Pacific Crest Trail
Overdue, missing woman
By Kirk Cloyd

It was a normal Thursday night at our house with me trying to get our three year old to bed. It's not normal for us to get a Mountain Rescue page out this late in the week so when the pager went off at 9:30 p.m. I expected it to be a family member or friend. I was surprised to see the rescue number on the display. The message reported that there was an experienced female hiker missing on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). Scarlet was a hiking instructor for Pathfinders Camp. With family commitments, I was unable to respond immediately and noted on the answering machine that I would come out later that night.

At 10:30 p.m. the "74" (need

additional help) went out. I called in noting that I was rolling and of course my three year old had still not fallen asleep! He asked, "Daddy, are you going to mountain rescue?" When I responded yes he told me to be careful, find the missing lady, and that he loved me. With these thoughts playing over and over in my mind I headed up the mountain. When I got to Garner Valley fire station the decision to move Ops. up toward the trail head was made. The assignments were handed out shortly after arrival with Team 1 (Debbie Riegle, Lee Arnson & Chris Babcock) hiking up to PCT from the Morris Ranch Rd. trailhead. Team 2 (Rick Floquet and myself) followed the Sheriff Deputy and camp personnel that knew the fire roads to an area of the PCT that we were able to drive to. When we arrived at the intersection we looked both down the fire road heading to Oak Canyon and up the PCT for tracks. The Sheriff Deputy and camp personnel returned to base while Team 2 proceeded down the PCT towards Oak Springs. We traveled approx. 1.5 miles when I turned to Rick and stated that we will probably turn one of the next three or four corners and she will be snug in her sleeping bag. I then told him that the hard part would be waking her.

We turned the next corner and there she was snug in her bag. After waking her & identifying ourselves, we asked her if she would like to accompany us back to base. We told her that we could walk approx. 4 miles down to the road or 1.5 miles up to a vehicle and then drive out. She opted to hike up to the truck and we drove back to base. Other than being tired and a little sore she was in fine health.



9909M — Rescue (06/03/99)
South Fork, San Jacinto River
Injured young man
By Debbiy Riegle

On June 3rd, 1999, RMRU was called out on a rescue of an injured hiker. Chris, a 22 year-old was hiking with a couple of his friends up the North Fork of the San Jacinto River. The area they were illegally trespassing into what is considered very technical and dangerous terrain. They had spent the day climbing alongside some waterfalls. They ended up at a swimming hole where they proceeded to swim and indulge in alcohol. Chris attempted to climb from the swimming hole up some very loose scree. Loosing his footing he fell breaking his arm and injuring his knee.

When we arrived on scene, CDF Firefighters and Hemet Ambulance personnel were already administering first-aid. While being briefed on Chris's condition, by the waterfall, we realized that chances for an easy and safe evacuation looked pretty grim. Scanning the area we discover that the terrain was very unstable for a safe litter evacuation. We couldn't find anything secure enough to use as anchor points for lowering the litter. We thought that maybe we could possibly raise our subject out of the canyon to higher ground where we could have the helicopter pick him up at first light. (There wasn't anyway that we could use the helicopter at our present location, because of the narrow deep canyon we were in.) The CDF personnel (except one) and the Hemet Ambulance people left after giving Chris his third and final dose of morphine. At this point, we

narrowed our evacuation choices down to one. We decide that the only way to get our subject down was to carry the litter in chest deep, near freezing water and to lower the litter very close to the waterfalls. Our time was getting short since it started to rain and we were in a flash flood zone. We loaded our subject into the litter and briefed him on what we needed to do. After deciding the safest route and setting up our ropes we were ready to go. We radioed based and told them of the dangers RMRU members will be undertaking and how our major concern was the possibility of several members becoming Hypothermic after being in the near freezing waters. Our subject was becoming more concerned with the situation as the last dose of morphine was wearing off. He kept asking us questions about the water and the loose rock. We told him this was going to be very dangerous and we would prefer to have him walk out with assistance. Since this was the first time we were able to communicate with him, we were now able to ask him more questions concerning his injuries. After a round of conversation, he asked if he could try walking. We got him up and he started walking. This completely changed everything. We now slipped a climbing harness on him and both belayed and assisted him back to base. We reached base at about 5:00 am, and loaded Chris into the ambulance. Chris was very lucky his injuries weren't life-threatening. From the information by the Riverside County Sheriff, Chris was intoxicated and suffered a broken arm and bruised knee.

9910M — Search (06/21/99)
Tenaja Trail, Santa Ana Mtns.
Scout overdue
By Jim Fairchild

Astute Boy Scout leaders, planning to conduct treks in California's High Sierra, take their Scouts on a number of conditioning and training backpack outings during the months prior. This is the case with a Troop from Orange County. Two groups, starting at opposite sides of the area between Fisherman's Camp and Ortega Highway in the Santa Ana Mountains planned to hike to the other's roadhead, crossing somewhere along the way, but using trails mostly separated by a small distance. They met Saturday night, then split. The Group heading west along the Tenaja Trail were greatly delayed, having problems finding the path, being forced to camp well short of the highway.

They were reported to the Sheriff's Office in the early hours of today, Monday. RMRU was called. We arrived at a General Store down the far side of the mountain at 0600. We being Darrell Bell, Base Camp Operator, Dr. Ray Hussey, Operations Leader, Phil Thompson, who became the relay, and 'ol Jim. After a period of organization, the writer, along with two of the boy's parents Debby and Ron and a nurse who was a friend, Jean, hiked along the Tenaja Trail in hopes of either finding tracks or intercepting the group. Normally, we don't take relatives or friends of the subjects into the field, but these folks were good hikers.

The rather nice hiking was punctuated by dodging poison oak, listening to bird calls, describing plant uses, and encountering trail signs



uses, and encountering trail signs that were sometimes different from trail names on the topographic quadrangle. No problem, we stayed on the most traveled path, calling loudly at times.

Finally, a bit over two miles, we came to a sign where the trail branched a bit left from an abandoned truck trail (dirt road). We guzzled some water and then I gave a call up the road, no answer, down the road, got an answer. While I radioed Base with the good news, the others walked down for hugs and questions. We had them take off packs, become re-hydrated, eat food, and fix blisters. They were all O.K., described their frustration in trying to find the trail, finding that a spring where they hoped to fill canteens was covered and locked.

Part way back to Base we met Rick Rhay and Michael George who had come in to offer any needed assistance. They, the overdue group, did everything right, sticking with trying to locate their trail and staying together. Had they been truly lost deeper into the wilderness, and out of water, today's heat could have rendered a different outcome.

9910A — Search (06/28/99) Ortega Highway

The van was almost to Hemet when the pager code "90" (abort go home) was sent out to all members. The two missing women had been located.



Presidents Perspective from the Peak



Remember when the newsletter was a monthly issue??? Then it tapered off to a bi-monthly newsletter . . . Then twice a year (maybe) and now, who knows? Well with old the millennium going out soon and a new one coming in, we want to put the newsletter out in a timely way to keep you, our *Sustaining Membership*, informed of what's happening with the team, it's members, training and most importantly, missions.

Many of you continue to give us your support, even when you don't hear from us. I cannot tell you how much that means to us. We appreciate everything you do to help improve the team, our equipment and most of all, to help us save lives in the wilderness.

We thank you!!!

Glenn Henderson

A Note from the Assistant to the Editor

The new Editor, Darrell Bell, did one heck of job obtaining the information and materials for this issue of the RMRU newsletter 'Fresh Tracks'. The bulk of what was needed to produce the newsletter was in my hands by the end of July. Through some uncertainty of how we were going to put it together, a very busy commercial printing business and just putting it off until tomorrow, we're late!

It is my fault and no body else's that this was not produced, printed and mailed several months ago. I sincerely believe the production part of the newsletter has been solved because of some new equipment. There is also more

equipment on the way that will even make the job easier and also improve the newsletter another step up. We are looking forward to bigger and better things for the next millennium.

Team President Glenn Henderson, who was president a number of years ago and is giving it a second go, has started a new career in teaching and is working very hard to improve the team with lots of new things to come.

This next item is another subject, but have you seen the RMRU web site. Team member John Willis has created a very professional site with many terrific pages. If you have not been to the web site, stop, do not pass go, and type in — www.rmru.org Try it, I know you will enjoy it.

Walt Walker



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Even though this is the Spring Newsletter (January - June) we wanted to acknowledge the donations that were received up through the end of October.

There are names on this list that have donated for over thirty years. Also, there are names of former team members and their wives.

You are the people that make RMRU possible. Yes, we the regular members go out into the field and perform the searches and rescues, but it would be next to impossible to do it without specialized equipment.

A number of years ago, while preparing a new brochure, we were reviewing our records to find out how lives that RMRU had saved. How many?

Over 500



RMRU is a non-profit, tax deductible, all volunteer organization which has been in existence for more than 38 years and is a member of the international Mountain Rescue Association. RMRU works in conjunction with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and other emergency relief organizations. RMRU's primary purpose is to provide competent, swift, and effective wilderness search and rescue services. If you would like additional information about RMRU, please contact:

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