

A publication of Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit - Fall 2006

RMRU

Fresh Tracks

In memory of Walt Walker
1936 - 2006

Wesley Search 3
Missing Hunter 5
Tribute to Walt 7

www.rmru.org



LA County Air 5 landing at the Wesley search



Riverside Sheriff's "Star 92" flying out on a search



An Air National Guard Blackhawk searches for Wesley

Rescued Mountain Biker Pechanga Foothills – Temecula Mission 18

By: Kevin Walker

As the team completed an operation in Idyllwild, Riverside Sheriff's Office (RSO) contacted the team and asked for assistance in rescuing a stranded mountain bike rider in the foothills to the south of the Pechanga Casino. RMRU members Ray Hussey and I responded to RSO Aviation headquarters at Hemet Ryan Airport while the balance of the team started towards Temecula.

With Ray and I on board, the helicopter flew to a landing zone at the base of the densely brush covered slopes south of Temecula near the I-15. The subject had become stranded at the end of a game trail he was riding, and using a cell phone call 911 asking for rescue. He also said he was badly dehydrated and unable to retrace his path back up the steep hillside. The subject in his late 20's – early 30's was quickly located approximately 1000 feet up from the valley floor. I was lowered to the subject by the rescue hoist on Star 9. The rescue harness was placed on the subject and he was raised up to the rescue helicopter followed by his mountain bike. The subject was flown back to base; I was then extracted and in turn flown back out.

To our dismay, the subject was checked by paramedics, refused treatment, and then rode home on his bike. It is our opinion that this was not a life saved, but someone in need (of sorts) and helped nonetheless. ■



Kevin exits "Star 92" carefully
protecting his pancreas

Presidents Letter

By: Gwenda Yates.

While we have not had many searches or rescues the past two months it doesn't mean we are not busy. Besides doing our usual fundraising and training, we have been putting together our 45th anniversary / Founders Dinner.

I'm very sad to announce that all six of the team's original founders are not still with us. Just this fall we lost one of our founders, Walt Walker — see page 7 for a tribute to Walt.

The team has also been working hard on the education part of what we do under the guidance of Brenda DeLuna. Look for more on this in up-coming issues of *Fresh Tracks*. ■

Search & Rescue San Jacinto Peak Mission 21

By: Gwenda Yates

It's Monday night after a three-day weekend. My phone rings and I answer it, I don't even know who's calling and I say: "No I don't want to do a search tonight!" The reply is: "Too bad, you're going anyway." We'd had a report of a missing hiker from the Palm Springs Tram, who'd gone on a day hike to San Jacinto Peak and had not returned. The park rangers searched for about three hours before calling out RMRU.

As I was driving to the scene I was thinking "oh great," someone gets to hike to one of the most remote places on our mountain tonight, Caramba. Most people who get lost coming down from the peak see the lights of Palm Springs and think they can just hike down to them, unfortunately the mountain drops off sharply with huge cliffs and waterfalls blocking their way.

I arrived at the upper tram station and the situation had changed -- going from bad to the absolute worst. After interviewing our reporting party, Keith, it was learned that our subject, Wesley, was not missing on the trail down from the peak, but at the peak itself. This opened up our search area to the whole mountain. I just hope I was able to hide my near panic from Keith.

Searchers were deployed into the field as they arrived. Steve (with a bruised ankle) and Nick were first, then Liz and John. Their first assignments were to check the trails. By morning we had more field teams as Jim M. and Jim B. were on the 6 a.m. tramcar and then headed for the Willow Creek drainage. Kevin and Patrick caught a helicopter at the lower tram and were flown into Tahquitz Canyon. By noon we enlisted the help of Desert SAR, then we got the approval from the Office of Emergency Services to call in all Southern California Type 1 (technical rock) rescue teams.

I knew at that point it was going to get big. It is a big mountain and we were tasked with finding just one person. And to make our task even harder, we learned our subject wore hearing aids and was basically unable to hear us.

As evening fell and teams returned to base to debrief, we realized we had nothing. We knew he wasn't on a trail, because none of the field teams found any sign of him there.

Wednesday I arrived on scene at 5 a.m. and checked in with the team that had spent the night at the tram. There was still no news, so we set up base at the lower tram parking lot.

I had Kevin working with me at base, because he has the years of experience at operations. With the help of Deano, we were able to set-up a very organized base camp. We had teams Coming from Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties, as well as LA's Air 5 Rescue Helicopter, a U.S. National Guard Black Hawk, and our own Riverside County Aviation.

We concentrated our efforts on areas where others have been found in the past. Knowing we had the whole mountain to check, it seemed an impossible task, but, with strong air support, we were able to insert teams on to the peak as well as into the lower drainages. We even attempted to put a dog and handler, Kobby, on the peak, but failed.

Rainstorms hindered the search in the afternoon, but everyone pushed on. It had been 2.5 days and we still had no sign of Wesley. As I drove home at 8 p.m., I looked at the mountain and asked: "Wesley, please send us a sign letting us know where you are."

Thursday it was Deano and myself at base and we had our field team assignments ready. As teams reported in we informed them that the assignments are short so be thorough: we go off trail today, assuming Wesley must be hurt. We have checked every trail, even the old ones most don't know about. We used the Black Hawk to scour the North Face. We sent Sierra Madre SAR into Tahquitz Canyon and Montrose SAR into Long Valley Canyon, because these are both areas where hikers have gone missing in the past, trying to get to the lights of Palm Springs. Both teams came up with nothing, not even a single footprint.

Other teams (Palm Springs and San Geronio) were flown to the peak to again check the boulders in that area. Yet other teams hiked all the way to Idyllwild. As I drove home that night at 8 p.m., I look up at the mountain and plead: "please send us a sign."

Later that night, Glenn, Kevin, and myself drew up the next day's plans at Kevin's print shop. Then, at 11 pm, I finally fell asleep.

Friday: We're going into our fourth day; the attitude at base camp was a little more subdued. Though no one said it aloud, we all asked ourselves: "Are we looking for a body now?" We had found nothing, not a trace of Wesley.

Our efforts Friday were targeted again on the peak. Getting a scent dog and as many searchers as possible to the top was the priority. We had lost the help of LA's Air 5 due to fires in their county, but we still had the Black Hawk and the Riverside helicopters.

The dog and handler were able to hike to the peak after being flown into Round Valley. With the help of Riverside Sheriff's aviation, the game plan was to have one helicopter fly teams to Round Valley and the other take them to the peak, one at a time. At around noon we received word that Team 3 had spotted something blue (Wesley had been wearing a blue shirt and jeans), but were unable to get to it. So we sent a helicopter to check it out.

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When we began to hear reports of smells coming from the area of Team 3, everyone at base feared the worst. Wesley's uncle went to get ice, to keep the drinks at base camp cold, and we all tried to keep the news we were hearing from showing on our faces.

In the next few minutes we heard reports that Wesley had been found, not only alive, but he was on the helicopter with Tony and Kevin, and they were bringing him back to base. I ran to find Wesley's hiking partner Keith to tell him the great news, but as soon as I saw him the tears started. I yelled: "No, its good news! They have him, and he's alive and well!"

Wesley was flown back to base camp and was checked out by our team nurse, Jeri, who pronounced him in good condition - but he still got a ride to the hospital, just to be sure. At that point all I could think was: "This is why we do this!"

For all the missed nights of sleep and days spent hiking till our legs feel like they'll not take us another step -- So that people like Wesley will live to see another sunrise.

I would like to take a monument to thank everyone involved in this search. Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Desert SAR, Montrose SAR Sierra Madre SAR, Riverside County Search Dogs, San Bernardino Cave Team, West Valley SAR, San Geronio SAR, Mountain SAR and Rim of the World SAR.

To the people from Walgreen's: Thank you so much. You spoiled us by cooking us dinner every night and meeting the basic needs like water, sunscreen, power bars, etc. We would like to extend you an invitation to our next search... ■



Cave Rescue searches for Wesley

In an age of impersonal corporations, union battles and downsizing, it's nice to see that there are still companies that actually care about the welfare of their employees. I'm speaking, of course, about Walgreen's and the tremendous effort they put in to aiding the rescue effort for their employee Wesley Heilhecker.

Not only did Walgreen's donate items that the searchers could use in the field like: lip balm; Power Bars; Gatorade; water; beef jerky and other essentials. They also brought out two large barbecues and cooked hamburgers and hotdogs for the hungry and tired rescuers as they returned from the field.

Jim Manues and myself ran into a trio of Wesley's coworkers on the trail to Wellman's Divide on Thursday the 7th. One had just finished the graveyard shift, and the others were playing hooky to search for their friend and fellow Walgreen's employee - all selflessly helping in the effort.

All the search and rescue members on this mission were unpaid volunteers. We normally have to pay for our own Power Bars and lip balm - not to mention meals and other expenses. It was a wonderful treat to have someone care so much, and aid us in this endeavor.

In closing I'd like to offer a big kudos to Walgreen's! And, to parrot the phrase of our President, Gwenda Yates: "Walgreen's is welcome to attend any search and rescue we have." - Ed.

Walgreen's helps RMRU

By: Patrick McCurdy

On Monday November 6th, three RMRU Board members were on hand at the Sheriff's Office in downtown Riverside to receive a check for \$1,000 from Walgreen's drug-store.

The mission to find Wesley Heilhecker (written up elsewhere in this edition of *Fresh Tracks*) was made that much easier by the logistical assistance of his employer, Walgreen's.

In addition to the numerous supplies they provided to SAR volunteers during the search, they graciously donated \$1,000 to RMRU to assist in saving lives in the future.

We are very grateful for their generosity. ■

Body Recovery Kitching Peak - Morongo Mission 22

By: Kevin Walker

RMRU member Gwenda Yates received a call from Riverside Sheriff's Office (RSO) mid Saturday morning asking for a RMRU member to fly with RSO Star 9 to assist CDF to evacuate a male adult who had perished from a heart attack while deer hunting on the slopes of Kitching Peak, almost directly north of the Morongo Casino in the Banning Pass.

The bulk of RMRU was training on Tahquitz Rock in Idyllwild. I was working Saturday at the family printing business and was available.

I responded to Hemet Ryan Airport, and flew with TFO Kevin Boss and Pilot Eric to the western slopes of Kitching Peak. The subject was approximately 500 feet down from a large flat area along one of the many fire and truck trails that crisscross the slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains.

The subject along with friends and family had been hunting. While tracking a deer down a very steep path, the gentleman succumbed to a heart attack. Because of the steep and dangerous terrain it was decided by CDF personnel that it would be safer to long-line the subject out rather than attempt a risky carry out back to the vehicle above.

Star 9 landed and I along with CDF personnel descended to the subject's location.

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The gentleman was placed in the stokes litter, secured, and with the long-line in place pilot Eric positioned the Sheriff's helicopter above the rescue personnel. The horizontal spider rigging was attached to the end of the long-line and the subject was flown back to the landing zone.

As the rescue personnel hiked back up, family and friends who had arrived at the accident site gathered to mourn and be with one another. The equipment was placed back in the helicopter, then the RSO personnel and I departed.

RMRU sends our regrets and sympathy to the family of the departed. ■

Out of County Search Angeles National Forrest Mission 23

By: Glenn Henderson

We were called out for a mutual aid by Sierra Madre Mountain Rescue Team to help search for a missing hunter in the Angeles National Forest. On November 15th RMRU sent Jim and Grace Manues, John Dempsey, and Will Carlson. They arrived at basecamp and were assigned to search an area near Lupine Camp where the hunters group was staying. Many teams as well as ours were searching but nothing was found.

On Saturday, Jim and Grace Manues, Patrick McCurdy, Rick Maschek, and myself reported to base camp at 6 A.M. The hunter had been missing for seven days now and so far nothing substantial had been found. Our assignment was to be flown in via a Black Hawk helicopter to the summit of Dawson peak at 9,500 feet.

Once there we split up into two teams with Jim and Grace going east along the "Backbone" while Rick, Patrick and I swept along the area from the peak down to a saddle between Dawson and then up to San Antonio (Mt. Baldy) peak at 10,640 feet.

Rick found a Swiss Army knife off trail, and I found a footprint along a deer trail but nothing else. Jim and Grace found a single set of tracks but nothing else. We all got back to Dawson peak around 3 P.M. and called base for a pickup.

While we were waiting we saw a forest fire start up in the west and it looked like it could grow to a substantial fire very quickly. I found out later it was about 70 acres.

At about 4 P.M. we heard the call for all teams to hold their positions. As we feared, the hunter had been found by one of Sierra Madre's teams. It sounded like he had fallen down an extremely vertical band of rock and had been killed on impact. Fifteen minutes later the Black Hawk flew us back to base camp where we signed out and headed home.

Since it was only 30 minutes to darkness, the Sierra Madre team that found the hunter had to stay the night until the next day so an investigation could be completed and the hunter airlifted out. ■



Grace, Jim and Glenn at the Dawson peak LZ



The View From Caramba.

This publication, *Fresh Tracks*, is going through some changes. We're trying to give it a more professional look and feel. Why, you might ask? Well, because even though RMRU is an all-volunteer, unpaid Mountain Rescue Team, we're still a strong band of professionals. The team deserves not only to be proud of their accomplishments, but also their newsletter.

Though I've been given the title of Editor, I cannot take credit for the content or texture of this publication. RMRU has such a diverse population, with so much talent. This, in itself, makes my job pretty easy. We're a family, friends and coworkers, all wrapped up into a band of mavericks that respond 24/7 to a lost or injured individual in our local wilderness. RMRU saves lives. It's that simple. I want the mission reports and feature articles in this newsletter to reflect the professionalism I see every time RMRU responds to a search or rescue.

This year has been a busy one for RMRU. We started the year with the sad task of recovering the body of young man who'd fallen on Tahquitz Rock, then a wild goose chase a few days later out of Long Valley. February brought one recovery, a successful rescue and another search. March had us using our personal four-wheel-drive vehicles rescuing families trapped in the snow on the southwestern slopes of Idyllwild, and another search and a recovery. April thru June we had five missions: The successful rescue of Hans Ebbenscaard, two teens rescued from Cabazon peak, one aborted medical call, Gina and Brandon rescued from the far reaches of Long Valley Canyon and that rescue led us to the recovery – after more than a year – of John Donovan's remains. July was the busiest month for RMRU, with five Searches and/or Rescues: Two climbers, on different days, rescued from the base of Tahquitz, a wild goose chase in Whitewater and a lazy Mountain Biker in Pechanga and a tired solo hiker on the Skyline trail. September and October had us with another climber down on Tahquitz, our very

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successful search and rescue of Wesley off the north face of Mt. San Jacinto and another sad body recovery north of Morongo. Thank you to all who make this necessary work possible.

That aside, we're also not against a good dose of levity. That's where the title of this column comes from. Your Editor was told not to call a certain senior team member by a specific title. I was threatened with a permanent search assignment in Caramba – Caramba is one of the most remote locations you can reach by trail in our mountains, losing 2000' in elevation on your way down. Well, in grand RMRU tradition, I couldn't resist doing what I was told not to do. Now I have to pay the piper. However, Caramba is quite lovely this time of year, so if anyone cares to join me, just head east from Saddle Junction until you run out of trail (I'm at the third waterfall down on the left)...

A few folks need to be thanked for their contribution to this issue: First off is Magdy Farag at Gray Bar Printing, his attention to detail and dedication is what makes the printing of this newsletter look so good. Also, The Riverside County Sheriff's Office, without their support our task would be much more difficult. Next: My fellow team members who provided mission write-ups and articles for this edition, without them there wouldn't be any content. Lastly: The other members of the newsletter staff, Patrick and Kevin, for their tireless work in getting this to press. ■

Meet The Team.

Fall 2006 – Glenn Henderson

Fresh Tracks has, in the past, run this feature. Our pervious editor resurrected Meet The Team, and I think we'll stick with it. It gives our new team members, and our Sustaining Members, a bit more insight into the rich tapestry that is RMRU.

This month we feature veteran Mountain Rescuer, Glenn Henderson. From fieldwork to operations; from training to reverie; Glenn is the best. To describe Glenn as an asset to the team would be an understatement.

I'll write a dozen questions, and we'll get Glenn to answer them – Ed.

How old are you Glenn? 57.

How long have you been with RMRU? 25 years and 3 years with Hemet Search and Rescue before that.

What's your most memorable search or rescue? When I was first on the team we got a call at 10 P.M. for a missing 5-year-old boy in Black Canyon Campground near Idyllwild. When I got there I was teamed up with my best friend, Kevin Walker. Kevin's Dad, Walt, was operations leader. Our assignment was to go to the PLS (place last seen) and search from there. Well the PLS was near a pool from a stream running through the campground. We didn't

really want this assignment because we knew our real assignment was to follow the stream and probe all the pools for a small body, as many of the pools were easily deep enough to drown in. We began working our way downstream probing and calling his name out as we went along. At 3 A.M. we shouted out his name and we both thought we heard a reply. We called again and sure enough we got another answer! We took off running through the brush and boulders and found him sitting on top of a boulder, cold, thirsty, and hungry, but otherwise in good shape. We got some food and water in him, bundled him up and started taking turns carrying him back to base. We turned him over to his father at the campground amid many tears of joy and happiness. What a great night it turned out to be! I finally got home around 5 A.M. and looked in on my 8 and 5-year-old sons and thought of another father's anguish and joy. I felt truly blessed.

Since we're not paid by RMRU, what do you do for a living? I teach 7th and 8th grade Algebra at Santa Fe Middle School in Hemet.

Where do you live? In Hemet, for the past 30 years.

Tell us a bit about your family? Robin, my wife of 32 years has been a Laboratory Technician at Hemet Valley Medical center for over 30 years now. My son Travis, 28, is a teacher at Hemet High School. Son Jeremy is a firefighter/engineer – Paramedic for California Department of Forestry. Travis is also an 8 year RMRU veteran.

Aside from rescue work, what hobbies do you have? Surfing, kayaking, rock climbing, and backpacking.

What's your favorite music? Rock & Roll, Reggae.

What's your favorite food? Mexican.

What's your favorite book? Westerns and anything by Tom Clancy.

How has being a member of RMRU changed your life? It has made me aware of how fast lives can change. I have witnessed many wonderful moments and many tragic moments. Many of these could not have been done differently. They were not the mistake of anyone and could not have been avoided, it just happened.

What advice would you offer folks that venture into our wilderness? The Boy Scout Motto: Be Prepared! When you go into the wilderness even on the most benign of hikes, accidents and mistakes can happen that can be life changing. I always remember what Dick Sale of Sierra Madre Mountain Rescue says, "The Mountains don't care so you take care." ■

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A Tribute to Walt Walker

By: Mike Daugherty

When I joined RMRU, forty years ago this past spring, I was one of a small number of younger guys who had recently joined the team. We were interested primarily in mountaineering and rock climbing and had what we thought of as a lot of mountaineering experience, but we were all excited at the prospect of using our skills to participate in mountain rescue.

At that time, the team was built around a core of "old timers," many of whom had been founding members and who were experienced in mountain rescue. Many of these folks are still involved, though not active members of the team (Jim Fairchild, Don Ricker, Al Andrews, Bud White, etc.). They were anywhere from five to fifteen years older than we were, which made them somewhere between 30 and 40 and thus pretty old, at least from the perspective of a bunch of 25-year-old kids. They also had a "lot" of mountain rescue experience, in some cases as much as five years on RMRU (Imagine!). However, most of them had limited experience in technical climbing, so we thought that we brought something new and useful to the team. We soon discovered, however, that these guys had a lot of other skills, were pretty strong hikers and that mountain rescue didn't involve leading very much 5.8 rock. (There were a few exceptions to this rule, but that's a story for a different time).

While I learned a lot from these guys (several of them are still good friends), I remember being most impressed by Walt Walker. There were several reasons for this. Walt was absolutely committed to the team; it was a central part of his life. His business and physical location allowed him to be there for most of our operations anywhere in the county at any time of the day or night. He had strong organizational and leadership skills and kept the team running as an organization. During those years we advanced from having a donated Helms Bakery truck and CB radios to having a new Ford "Supervan" and real VHF radios. He ran a printing business, an asset of inestimable value to the fund-raising of a volunteer organization in the era before computers and the Internet. But most of all, Walt supplied essential leadership to our operations in the field. He had, it seemed to me, an unusual ability when under pressure to calmly assess the situation and make a reasonable, prudent decision about how to proceed. This is not as easy as it may sound and in Walt's case it amounted almost to a sort of personal charisma.

As I gained experience on the team, I occasionally found myself first on the scene or otherwise thrust into the role of Ops Leader and I can still remember the sense of relief I felt when Walt showed up at the road head. Simply put, I trusted his judgment. This was not always an unmixed blessing. I remember a body recovery of a young man who had fallen off the overlook point behind Hidden Lake on San Jacinto. Walt and I were setting up rigging to raise the litter from a high point above the scene when Walt noticed a loose rock likely to be dislodged by the motion of the rope and said to me, "Mike, kick that rock off." As usual, I complied automatically and the rock

bounded down the face, cleanly shearing one of our nylon ropes in two. We had more than one laugh at my expense about that episode.

Walt was a dominant force on RMRU. He had the closest working relationship of anyone on the team with the Riverside County deputy sheriffs and, most importantly, with Don Landells. Don was the owner of Landells Aviation in Palm Springs and had been the lead helicopter pilot for the construction of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway in the early sixties. He knew "our" mountain intimately and he trusted Walt. The two of them formed a very close working relationship, which was the key to success on many missions. Most old members of the team can remember more than one time when Walt swooped down in "the bird" and snatched up the victim for a triumphant return to base camp, just minutes before they reached the scene at the end of a seven mile forced march. I can remember spending all night rappelling down icy chutes in Chino Canyon tracking a lost hiker only to arrive at his location at dawn, five minutes after Walt had picked him off in the helicopter. Of course, there was the time that his love of helicopters got him in trouble. The team got a report of an injured scout in Little Round Valley on the west side of San Jacinto. A helicopter was available (not Landells, this time) and Walt saw an opportunity to get to the scout before dark. So, while most of the team was still en route, Walt took off in the bird. They set the aircraft down in Little Round and, somehow, one of the scout's plastic rain ponchos got sucked into the tail rotor drive shaft and kinked the shaft. Unaware of the problem, the pilot took off, but the tail rotor shaft bearings seized, robbing the aircraft of power and they failed to make it out of the meadow, crashing into the pine trees at the bottom end and ending-up upside down in a tree. Walt recovered quickly, set up some rigging and lowered the pilot to the ground before rappelling out on his own. Nonetheless, he injured a shoulder in the process and got a lot of flak from the rest of us for "going it alone." Walt was sensitive to the fact that he got more than his share of time in the bird and I think he tried to share it around. I know that I always felt blessed when Walt would suggest that I accompany Don Landells on a search or fly out with the victim to the hospital. In spite of that, you could always count on Walt being at the scene of the action at the climax. Part of this was because he had an unerring instinct about how it would turn out, and part of it was because he had an overpowering will to make the difference between success and failure in a search or rescue operation.

Eventually, I left graduate school at UCR and had to make my way in what is laughingly referred to as "the real world." That made regular participation in RMRU problematic and I slowly drifted away from the team and from Walt. I know that he subsequently became a major player in mountain rescue on the national and international scenes, but that comes as no surprise, given the strength of his leadership skills and his commitment to the cause of mountain rescue.

Many, many people have played critical roles in the history of RMRU and it is certainly unfair to give all, or even most, of the credit to one person. Nonetheless, it seems likely to me that Walt's contribution is the single biggest reason that we still have an RMRU today, 45 years after its founding in 1961. ■

Five Teens Missing from Car Wreck Tenaja Road area, Cleveland National Forest Mission 24

By: Patrick McCurdy

On the evening of Wednesday, December 6th, four boys, aged 18 to 19, and a 15-year-old girl decided to mix alcohol, a pick-up truck, and a dirt road at night. Bad combination. RMRU was alerted at 7 A.M. and responded to the Riverside Sheriff's Office (RSO) substation in Lake Elsinore to search for a wrecked vehicle somewhere in the Tenaja Falls area of the Cleveland National Forest. Some of the kids had stayed with the vehicle, but at least two had hiked to get cell phone coverage to call for help and had subsequently become lost. All of this had been relayed to RSO through a friend who had spoken to the missing kids before getting cut off when their cell phone died at 3 A.M.

By 8:30 we had Jim and Grace Manues, John Dempsey, Liz Sanz, Jim Bakos, Ray Hussey, Dana Potts, and myself prepared to go into the field. We were faced with finding two different parties of lost kids who could be anywhere within a huge search area. After being briefed by Detective Sergeant Evan Petersen, we used John Dempsey's knowledge of the area to plan search assignments for the team, all of which would initially be searching roads with personal four-wheel-drive vehicles.

As John came up with search assignments, I listed our resources and divided the group into four teams, and Grace continued to gather information from the detectives working the case. As Jim Bakos was still en route with the team vehicle, we sent him straight to a field location on Tenaja Road where he could set up a field operations command post. With John's search assignments, I assigned three field teams which were deployed to their search areas. My plan was to stay at the sheriff's station until Jim Bakos got the field command post set up, then go into the field myself.

RSO meanwhile was pulling out all the stops. A team of deputies was making phone calls to family and friends to try to get more information about where the kids might be. Detective Petersen was coordinating with both Orange and San Diego Counties (the search was in an area near where those two counties abut Riverside County), U.S. Forest Service, California Department of Forestry, and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). CHP was going to provide one helicopter and one fixed-wing aircraft, while RSO was going to bring two of their own helicopters in on the search (both a CHP helicopter and an RSO helicopter had made preliminary searches before daylight without results).

Just as our teams were getting to their assigned search areas, a U.S. Forest Service crew found all the kids near their vehicle at 9:45. Their vehicle had become stuck on Margarita Truck Trail near Sky Ranch, just inside San Diego County.

None of the kids were injured. They were transported to waiting Sheriff's vehicles and brought back to the Lake Elsinore station for a dreaded meeting with parents and sheriff's detectives.

Kirk Cloyd will be missed

By: The *Fresh Tracks* Staff

This Fall RMRU received the news that a long-time member and past president, Kirk Cloyd, has taken a job in Northern California and, by the time this edition of *Fresh Tracks* goes to press, will have moved his family to the area around Tracy, CA.

Kirk has been with the team for over ten years, serving for a number of years in various positions on the Board of Directors, and for two as the President of RMRU. Additionally, Kirk is one of two members of RMRU (including Dana Potts) who have served for years on the Honor Guard for the national Mountain Rescue Association. Honor Guard members serve a ceremonial role in funeral services for search and rescue members, paying for their travel and uniform at personal expense. Kirk has clearly dedicated a large part of his life to search and rescue for the last ten years.

A strong bond is built among search and rescue volunteers and nowhere is that more true than in Mountain Rescue. Through repeated exposure to risk and hardship on long mountain search and rescue missions, friendships are formed that cannot easily be described to those who don't take part in these activities. That makes it particularly hard to say goodbye to people like Kirk, with whom many of us have spent so many years on the team.

Kirk is not someone with whom you have to worry about what he really means when he says something to you. Whether it is constructive criticism about a rescue technique on which you need to improve or a joyous bear hug at the end of a mission where lives were saved, Kirk is as straight forward a person as you will find.

While Kirk is a capable leader, manager, and volunteer, it would be wrong to portray him as being too serious. Whether placing a medical exam glove over his head and blowing it up with his nose to form a rooster's comb on his head, or playing practical jokes on other team members, nobody would characterize Kirk as lacking a sense of humor! His ready laugh and smile will be missed as much as his presence on Rescue Missions.

Kirk will stay affiliated with RMRU as a support member and will continue to be active with the MRA Honor Guard. While we will miss him not being around as much, he still has ties to this area and we expect to see him at team functions from time to time — In all honesty, we hope he comes back to live here again before too long. ■



RMRU fundraising.

By: Patrick McCurdy, MBA

Without the generosity of our regular donors, RMRU could not possibly continue to serve our community. It is through the donations, large and small, of our many supporters that we are able to raise funds for our annual operational budget of \$5000-6000.

This amount, however, doesn't begin to address the large capital expenditures that arise every few years. Vehicles need to be replaced, facilities need to be enhanced, and our substantial investment in technical rescue gear needs to be kept up to date.

This year, through the efforts of President Gwenda Yates and Team Member Grace Manues, we were fortunate to be chosen as the recipient of a grant from the Riverside Community Foundation. That enabled us to purchase new technical rescue hardware for two of our three vehicles. This was a major accomplishment and significantly

Other options for donating to a charity.

For those thinking about maybe doing a bit more than a small donation, legislation was passed this year allowing those 70 and 1/2 years and older to donate up to \$100,000 out of a standard or Roth IRA to a qualified charity. (This might be an opportune moment to mention that RMRU is just such a qualified charity!) These donations are pre-tax, so there are no tax consequences to the donor or the charity. This provision in the tax code only exists through 2007. One can however, make a \$100,000 donation in each of the 2006 and 2007 tax years.

For people looking to leave a lasting charitable legacy after they are gone, there exist a number of options in addition to immediate cash donations. Charitable Remainder Trusts (CRTs) entail putting a set amount of your estate into a trust, with the income from that trust paid to you for your lifetime. The balance of the trust then becomes available to the charity when you are gone.

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enhanced our technical rescue capabilities.

Currently, however, RMRU has two large capital investment projects for which we desperately need to raise money.

The first is a ropes training tower that will sit aside our team garage and will tremendously enhance our ability to train members in rope rescue safety, try out new rescue techniques in a controlled environment, and keep our rope rescue skills current. With the help of a certified ropes tower contractor, we have designed a tower that will ideally suit our needs and received a bid for its construction. The only thing that now stands between the tower construction and us is to raise \$12,000. We are actively pursuing grants for this purpose, but most grant-making agencies want to see the recipient put some of their own money into the project. This is where you can help.

The second major capital investment RMRU is working on is a

(Continued on page 10)

Sustaining Membership Application

Your donation is deductible from both your state and federal taxes
RMRU tax ID number for Not-For-Profit status — 95-2497048

Name _____ Amount _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership Types:

Benefactor Club	\$1000.00
Summit Club	\$500.00
Patron Club	\$200.00
Century Club	\$100.00
Supporting Club	\$25.00



Please send your donation to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit
C/O Riverside Sheriff's Office
43950 Acacia Street
Hemet, California 92544

Or at: www.rmru.org

We Appreciate Your Support!

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plan to replace our aging mobile command post. This vehicle provides a base from which plans and operations can be run for every mission we have. We are currently working with several vendors to design a command post vehicle that will serve our needs for the next 10-15 years. We don't yet have an exact price tag for this project, but it is likely it will run in excess of \$130,000. Again, we are actively pursuing grants toward this end, but we need to raise a substantial part of the cost on our own.

You can help. It feels embarrassing to ask for more from those who have been so generous in the past, but that is the only way we can raise the amount of money we currently need. Never before has RMRU undertaken such a large fundraising drive. Your tax-deductible donation to the team can help us achieve these two projects, the tower and the new command post, in the next twelve months. It is an aggressive goal and we cannot achieve it without your support.

From everyone on the team, we deeply appreciate your past, current, and future support. ■

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This is a very common and proven technique for maximizing the public service impact of your estate while legally avoiding taxes.

A Charitable Lead Trust (CLT) works in a similar way, only in reverse. You set up a trust just as with the CRT, but income from the trust accrues to the charity and your heirs inherit the balance of the trust when you are gone.

Estate planning is an important and often-ignored part of our lives. Each family's situation is unique and professional advice from an accountant, financial planner, or attorney can be invaluable. If you would like to explore how your estate plan can create a lasting legacy that will help RMRU to continue our mission for decades to come, contact us to discuss how we can assist you. ■

For more information visit: www.rmru.org
To contact us email: info@rmru.org



Our Sustaining Members

Benefactor Club \$1,000 +

Elaine Landells • Betsy Mellor • Palm Springs Aviation, Inc. • San Jacinto Valley Veterinarians • Scott Brothers Dairy Farms
Wallgreen's • Katherine Nixon

Summit Club \$500 +

Mike & Kay Daugherty • Dr. & Mrs. Ray George • Steve & Rosemarie Johnson • Daren Koontz • Marvin Matsumoto
James and Roberta Skidmore • Mr and Mrs Michael Mack

Patron Club \$200 +

Gordon Austerman • Darrell & Donna Bell • Michael R. Chester • Danielle Hamlin • Hemet Ramona Valley Lions Club
Bob & Susan Krieger • Marvin M. Oliver, Esq. • Theodore Young • Old Dominion Appalachian Trail Club

Century Club \$100 +

Al & Natalie Andrews • Jennifer Anthony • Max Brummett • Nancy Carter • James M. Collins • Thomas Daniel
John & Janie Dew • Brett Faron • David & R Harrah • Terry and Sue Henderson • Patricia Honosky • Rosemary Kraft
Cathy Lennox • Carol J. Lovatt • Kathy Machir • Betty C. Moore • John & Sandy Murdock • Mrs. Taweesuk Sepdham
Lynn Sherrard • Andrew Yeckel • T & D Young • Rotary Anns • Fern Valley Water District • Idyllwild Water District
Lake Hemet Municipal Water District • Pine Cove Water District • Dorthy Worthington • Roy Cheatwood

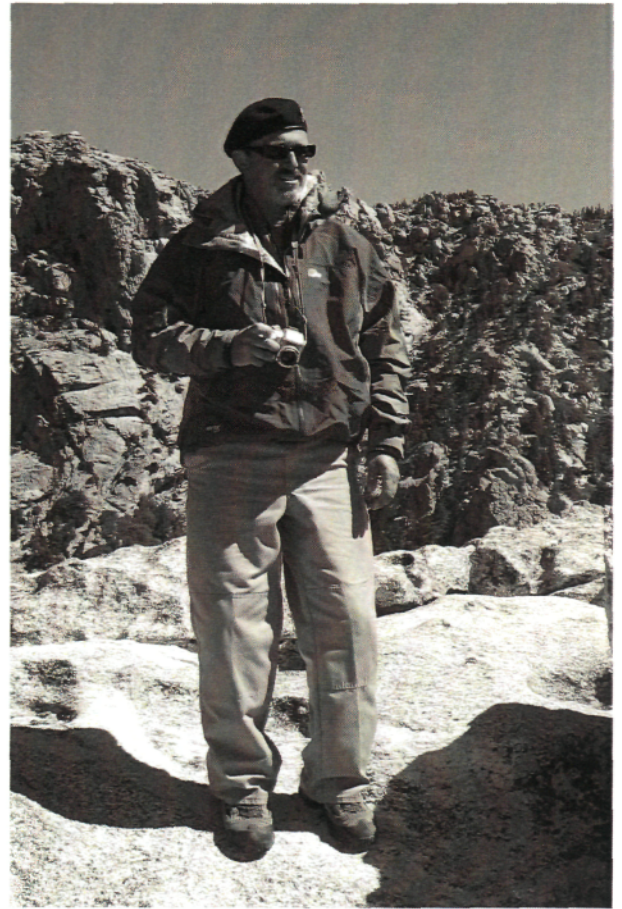
Supporting Club \$25 +

Bill & Melody Blaschko • Sylvia Broadbent • Wanda Carman • Beverly Combs • Elve B. Cook • Jeanne Rodriguez Deitleff
Mark Fleming • Rob & Carmen Gardner • Heidi Henderson & Chris Hook • Peggy Kite • Frances W. Leckie • Michael Martin
Thomas & Karen Miceli • Loraine Nagy • Andrew Ramstetter • Bill & Juanita Starmer • Mark & Sonya Vallejo • John Williams
Judith Gustafson • Wesley Heilhecker

Thank you all for your continued support!



Lew exits "Star 92" on San Jacinto peak to search for Wesley
Some folks fly at 10,834 feet. We land!



Kirk on top of Tahquitz Rock. His first team event was there, and so was his last...



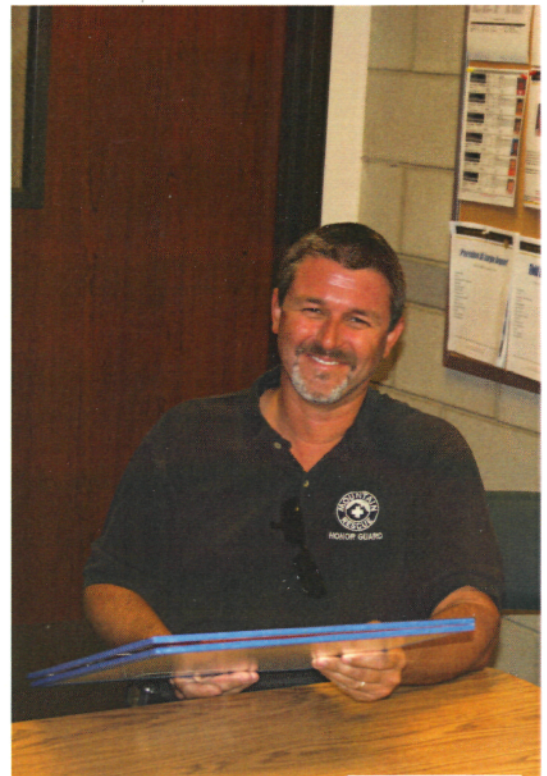
The ANG Blackhawk searches the north face.
Look at the steep terrain Wesley was lost in!



Glenn tests our new rigging.
Notice the expression of confidence!



Brad, Patrick, Gwenda, Assistant Sheriff Mike Andrews, Walgreen's Manager Rick de Leon.



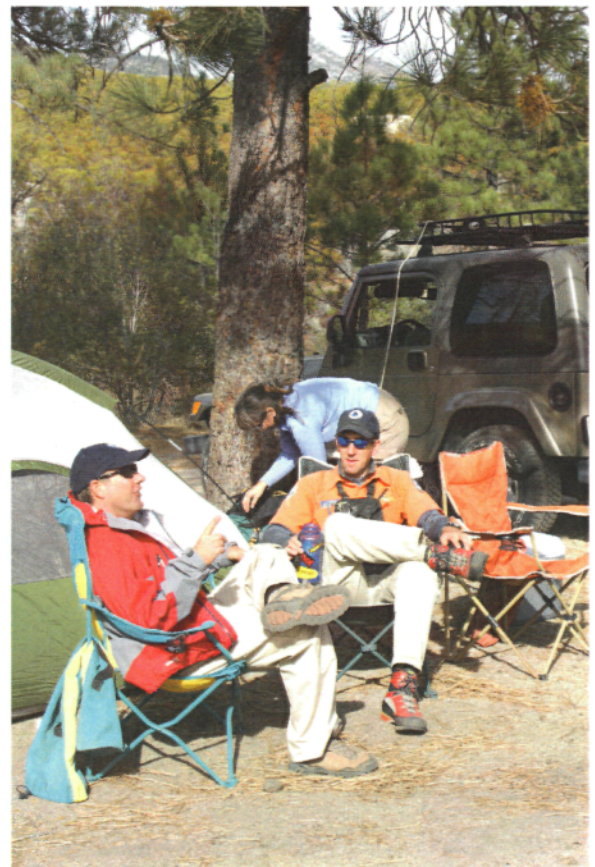
Kirk at his going away party.



Cinematographer & Director plan a scene for the RMRU safety video: Power of Survival.



Rick exits the Blackhawk on Dawson peak.



Actors Brad & Lee lounge on the movie set, while the Director works.