



# RMRU

*Fresh Tracks*



A publication of the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit for September 2006

## Highlights

- Nine people rescued from snow—see Mission #8
- Missing hiker's life saved after 5 days—see Mission #10
- Two stranded teens rescued—see Mission #11
- Two lost hikers lives saved—see Mission #12
- John Donovan's body recovered after one year—see Mission #14
- Injured climber rescued from Tahquitz Rock—see Mission #15
- Backpacker rescued from Skyline Trail—see Mission #17



Jim Manues Climbs at Joshua Tree



Members Drive Vehicles and Carry Joe Bakos in Our Wheeled Litter in the Idyllwild July 4th Parade

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By: Patrick McCurdy

While RMRU continues to occasionally work with private aviation firms, the bulk of our aviation training and missions are with the Riverside Sheriff's Aviation Unit. A review of this year's missions to date shows that a large percentage of our missions involve work with the aviation unit, and this kind of cooperative relationship requires regular training. Our latest "helitac" training was Saturday, September 2nd.

We next moved on to training with rigging a litter for a "short-haul" hoist operation, working with some new tag line techniques developed by the flights crews.

After a very short break for lunch, we practiced loading a litter into a helicopter maintaining a "one-skid" landing followed by entry into and exit from a hovering helicopter. The flight crews kept these drills going at a brisk pace - rest assured that you were barely in the door of the hovering bird before it was moving!

The last skill of the day was hoisting operations used to insert us or retrieve us from remote areas. This is always the most exciting skill and, for both the old-timers and our four newest team members for whom this was their first helitac training, this drill always ends with an ear-to-ear grin.

This was, by far, the best helitac training in my time with the RMRU. It is only through this type of training that our two groups can build the kind of trust to work efficiently and safely together in demanding field situations. We sincerely appreciate the time and effort put in by the aviation unit to train with us.



### Jacoba gets the ride of her life



Steve & Nick get their ground training with the team



Liz on the sharp end of the winch



## **A Letter From the President**

By: Gwenda Yates

Greetings!

Welcome to another edition of RMRU Fresh Tracks. The team has seen a few changes in the past few months.

Starting with its first female president. I am honored to hold that position and hope I can do the team justice.

We have had several notable mission this year starting with Hans from Denmark and Gina and Brandon from Texas. But the one that hits home the most is the recovery of John Donovan's remains.

I want to thank all team members who worked so hard on these missions starting with the first one. RMRU put many man-hours and trainings into searching for John.

Sending him home to his friends is bitter sweet. I would also like to thank his friends in VA for their kind words.

-Gwenda Yates,  
President, RMRU

### **Mission 7 & 8:**

## **Thomas Mountain Rescue & Control Road Rescue**

By: Patrick McCurdy

Through a series of intense storms, Southern California doubled its winter snow pack in the first three weeks of March. One such storm resulted in RMRU being activated at 6 p.m. on Sunday, March 19th, for a man stranded on Thomas Mountain near Lake Hemet. Getting up the mountain on Highway 74 was a bit dodgy as heavy snow fell and we found a mess at Mountain Center, just short of the summit. Pressed into service by the CHP to un-stick stuck vehicles blocking the highway, we were just ready to proceed to Thomas Mountain when we heard from our advanced team that the stranded man had been found.

Thoughts of home, a late dinner, and a warm bed dissolved as a sheriff's deputy informed us at about 8 p.m. that we had another search.

A party of nine in two vehicles was stranded in the snow on a dirt road somewhere below Idyllwild. Most serious, however, a small child and an infant were among the stranded party. The party had made cell phone contact with sheriff's dispatchers, but were unable to say exactly where they were.

Two team vehicles headed down the mountain to establish a command post while six of us, in three personal 4WD trucks, started driving snow-covered dirt roads in what was often rather treacherous conditions. Myself, with David Webb, and Jim Manues, with Ray Hussey, drove the two trucks of Team One down the

Control Road while Kirk Cloyd, with Brad Scott, drove his truck (Team Two) up Bee Canyon Road from Highway 74.

After clearing the Control Road, Team One drove to Pine Cove and headed down Bee Canyon Road from the top. While the Control Road had been challenging, Bee Canyon Road was downright unpleasant. Snow up to one foot deep made driving a challenge, forcing us at one point to dig my stuck truck out with snow-shoes. Eventually we met up with Team Two and regrouped. We then all drove up East Indian Truck Trail and eventually climbed back through the snow onto Highway 243. At no point was there any sign of the missing party. A San Diego County Sheriff's helicopter joined in the search about 4 a.m., but did not have enough fuel to stay overhead very long.

As we continued to scour the fire roads looking for the missing family, Gwenda Yates and Grace Manues at base were finally able to make cell phone contact with one of the subjects and get a better idea of where they were - though we still did not know their exact location.

With the search area narrowed, however, we were able to focus our resources in a smaller area. David and I checked a side road off of the Control Road. About a mile up this road, in deep snow, I was becoming doubtful that we would find the subjects on this road when we suddenly saw footprints in the fresh snow. About a hundred yards further on, my headlights shown on smiling faces. I could hear concerned family members cheering over the radio after I called in "subjects found."

Within ten minutes the other two vehicles arrived and we quickly had the nine subjects loaded in our trucks. We started rolling just as the first light of dawn began to illuminate a beautiful snowy landscape. Forty-five minutes later we had all the subjects back at base camp in Hemet.

As a side note, I would like to compliment the mother of the two children. Even when pressured by others to attempt to hike out, she insisted on staying with the vehicles. They had a little food and water, stayed bundled in warm clothes, and ran their vehicles from time to time in order to stay warm. Leaving their vehicles and hiking cross-country through the snow could have proven disastrous. She did exactly the right thing to stay put and stay warm. Kudos to mom for keeping a cool head in a bad situation.



The Rescued Families



#### Mission 9:

### Bautista Canyon Recovery

By: Jim Bakos

The page came in at 6:30 am that the Sheriffs Department needed our assistance in recovering a body in the southern Bautista Canyon area of Riverside County.

By 9:30 am our members were on-scene and ready to extricate the victim. After a brief wait while the Sheriff helicopter photographed the scene from the air, Ray and Jim Manus commenced with clearing brush down to the victim's location.



The team preps at Base during the Bautista Canyon Recovery.

Ray, Patrick, Liz and Jim Manus were the crew over the side to package the victim and attend the litter. Deano, Grace and myself manned the haul system while Gwenda ran operations.

We finished our task and were back at the station by noon. Even though the reason we were out there was a sad one, the fact that the weather was clear and sunny helped make the situation bearable.

The Riverside Sheriffs Office greatly appreciated our assistance in this somewhat gruesome matter, and complemented us on our professionalism. Since we're unpaid volunteers, a "pat on the back" is a wonderful reward.



#### Mission 10:

### Missing Danish Hiker Rescued After 5 Days

By: Kevin Walker

Easter Sunday. A day that Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ, a day of children hunting for brightly colored eggs, a day of family. That is what was scheduled for my family.

RMRU was activated by RSO to respond to the Tram to search for a missing hiker from Denmark. Members arrived prepared for winter conditions a late winter storm had deposited fresh snow at the upper elevations of Mt. San Jacinto on Thursday. On this operation I took Ops Leader and Gwenda Yates assisted me with Base Ops. At the mountain station. Hans Ebbenscaard vacationing in the United States had taken out a day hiking permit on Wednesday to hike to Mt San Jacinto and return to the tram by nightfall. With his car still in the parking lot at the lower station on Saturday evening, we were activated. This was all of the information we had to start. **Nothing else.**

First out were Pete and Jim headed to the summit in high gear. Team 2, Patrick, Grace and Bill, headed to Round Valley and then on towards and over the Wellman Divide to search the Willow Creek drainage. Because Hans had been missing since Wednesday and weather had been a factor, we asked and received a California OES operations number quickly allowing us to ask for and receive help from other agencies.

As more RMRU members and other teams arrived we assigned the personnel to the prime search area and then to the more outlying areas. Glenn and Elizabeth headed from Hidden Lake to Caramba Camp in hopes of finding prints at the narrows of Caramba. Historically this has been the trap of the San Jacinto's. Lost hikers are easily drawn downhill to it, and then can see the Palm Springs below, and then enter the steep and extremely dangerous canyon. As members worked the search areas, our RSO helicopter (Star 9) and CHP H60 searched from the air. L.A. County with their mighty Air 5 moved additional teams into the field.



Looking southwest from Wellman's Divide during the search



In base we were swamped with chores. With Sierra Madre veteran Dick Sale helping me with plans, we continued to assess assignments and make new ones, while Gwenda headed up the detective end of things with the sheriff and the tram. As the day progressed more completed information was gathered on Hans such as getting his identification, photos from his laptop computer (at his hotel in the desert) and better description of clothing



Grace Manues searching for Hanz.

Unfortunately as the day wore into the late afternoon bad reports started coming in from field teams. Pete and Jim found no prints at all on the summit as the storm two days earlier had deposited more than a foot of fresh powder, covering any sign if Hans had been there. At the lower elevations basically the same thing, in Glenn and Elizabeth's case rain had completely washed the ground clean at Caramba. So Hans could have walked through and we would not know. Patrick's team occasionally saw very weak sign in the snow. Keeping that in our minds we pressed on. Teams searched until after dark. Air5 brought in the teams from the high country and Glenn and Liz from Caramba.

I missed the evening planning session as my daughter Shelby had injured her ankle and I spent my night in the Loma Linda ER. Glenn and Gwenda from RMRU and Dick Sale and Arnold Gaffrey from Sierra Madre worked into the night preparing for Monday.

Monday brought clear skies to the mountain, but high winds in the desert. RSO was unable to get Star9 out of the Hemet area, but L.A. Counties Air8 (a patrol helo) was able to sneak through the Banning pass and arrived at 0800 to continue the air search. With no sign of Hans in the central search area it had been decided to expand the search area, re-search in close and have the helicopter search the North Face of Mt San Jacinto. Caramba was bothering me. Too many times people had gone through and into Tahquitz Canyon. We had Air8 move over to Tahquitz. I also wanted to get two teams into the canyon to cut for sign. One at Tower Helispot (3500') and one team at the Grapevine Helispot (2500'). The Sheriff gave us the ok (thank you Gwenda) to request Landells Aviation. With the ok given, Elaine Landells was contacted. Steve deJesus was about to leave on a Dept of Fish and Game project but could hold it scene as Steve flew over from Desert Hot Springs. Jim Manues and Dave Webb flew in with Steve. Once the subject was located, Steve put the toe of the skid down on a small ledge. Jim and Dave stepped out, Steve then backed

away. The confirmation came back, it was Hans. He was dehydrated and weak but uninjured. Steve came back in, put the skid down and with Hans and RMRU on board returned to the lower tram.

It was decided to have Hans transported to Desert Hospital for medical assessment. I went with Hans to the hospital in the back of the Landells ship. From the roof heliport Hans was taken to the ER.

He was given IV therapy for dehydration and a well deserved meal after his check up. Indeed Hans was in very decent shape. He later told us that he had hiked to the Mt. San Jacinto saddle on Wednesday and decided not to finish the last push to the top. He wanted to come back a different way and took the trail to the west towards Little Round Valley (mistake #1). Shortly after starting down that trail he decided to go cross country to the south and then turn east again and come over the top of the mountain and then return to the tram (mistake #2). Hans instead moved in a southerly direction until he reached the southern end of the 10,000 massif. He could hear water below (Willow Creek), and headed towards it. Hans ended up in the Willow Creek drainage (he was now in the trap of the San Jacinto's). By Wednesday night Hans was in the in Tahquitz Canyon, and actually going into the canyon saved his life. When the storm arrived he was weak but able to seek shelter in a cave/outcropping below snow level. Over the four day period he had descended to the 300 foot level just above the largest of Tahquitz Canyon's waterfalls. There he was physically and emotionally spent. There he waited. Either to be found, or to die.

This is a classic Mt San Jacinto search operation – Good weather, lost hiker, winter snow, Palm Springs Aerial Tram Tahquitz Canyon, OES, multiple helicopters, multiple MRA and county teams....and another life saved!



RMRU Members with Hanz at the hospital.



RMRU Members involved with the search: Pete Carlson, Bill Delo, Michael George, Glenn Henderson, Travis Henderson, Grace Manues, Jim Manues, Patrick McCurdy, Jeri Sanchez, Elizabeth Sanz, Brad Scott, Kevin Walker, Dave Webb, Gwenda Yates.

Additional Riverside County: Desert Search and Rescue

Mountain Rescue Association Teams: China Lake Mountain Rescue Group, San Diego Mountain Rescue, Sierra Madre Mountain Rescue, West Valley Search and Rescue.

Additional San Bernardino County: Rim of the World Search and Rescue, San Bernardino Cave Rescue Team.

Helicopters: California Highway Patrol H60, Landells Aviation, Los Angeles County Air 5 and Air 8, Riverside County Star 9.

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway and its entire staff and facilities.

***In excess of 75 persons***

#### Mission 11:

### **Two Teens Stranded on Cabazon Peak**

By Will Carlson

Another long day of work and class was finally done. It was midnight when I closed my eyes looking forward to some rest. Beep Beep... Beep Beep...

With five minutes of rest I was headed to Cabazon Peak to rescue two hikers stranded on a cliff. After receiving a call from Gwenda informing me that I was the only person responding I picked up my best friend and long time climbing partner, Scott. If we had a technical rescue on our hands there would be no way for me to perform it myself.

The two of us met Gwenda in Cabazon. The Sheriff Officer gave us a quick run down of the situation and pointed out where the two kids light was coming from. Taking a look at a map Scott and I soon realized that there was no trail. We picked what looked like a good route following a ridge toward the summit. "Base - Team 1... radio check." "Loud and Clear." We were off!

Almost instantly our route headed up. In fact that's all we could do to get to the hikers. We made quick progress and were reassured knowing that team members Ray Hussey and Mike George were heading up behind us. Scott and I reached the two young hikers in a little under an hour. They were quite cold but in good condition. After warming the hikers and giving them some water we headed back. We ended up climbing approximately 100 feet up in order to get out of the boulder field they were in. From there it was just a matter of avoiding the 15 foot high bushes. We followed the same ridge we came up on and soon met Mike and Ray. After a quick break for some water we continued down. Another great mission!

Authors note: Missions like this one are some of my favorite. Even though we weren't in the high country, we didn't use any technical skills, and the rescue didn't involve lots of hiking... We made a difference in someone's life. That is why RMRU exists.

#### Mission 12:

### **Two Missing Hikers from the PST- Brandon & Gina**

By Pete Carlson

Monday May 8 and Tuesday May 9, 2006

We received a call around 6pm Monday night saying that 2 people were missing from the Tramway. Two people from a large tour group had ridden up the Tramway on the afternoon of Sat May 6. Brandon Day and Gina Allen had gone down to play in the snow and walk around Long Valley below the Upper Tramway Station. Most of the people headed back, but they stayed and went a little further. They found a stream and followed it down. That was the last anyone had seen of them. They had missed their flight home to Texas and all their belongings were still in their hotel room in Palm Springs on Monday afternoon.

By 9:30pm, Gwenda, who was running Base and OPS had teams in the field. Each of the teams stop every 5 minutes to YELL and LISTEN along their assigned route. Additionally, while we are hiking, we are to look for any fresh tracks on the ground or anything out of the ordinary.

Team 1, Lee Arnson, was hiking in from Idyllwild going to Saddle Junction and down to Laws Camp. Then he continued up the Willow Creek drainage to Willow Creek Crossing and looped back to Saddle Junction, covering about 11 miles. Lee finished in about 5 hours.

Team 2, Patrick McCurdy and John Dempsey, headed down the Sky Line Trail from Long Valley to Palm Springs as a number of people lost in Long Valley have found that trail and gone down it.

Team 3, Erica Zastrow and Jeff Sutch, headed up from Long Valley to Round Valley, over to Tamarack Valley, and back down the Sid Davis drainage in case the couple changed directions and went towards San Jacinto Peak.

Team 5, Grace Manues and Jeri Sanchez, went down to the Desert View Trail and started looking over the steep sides that look down on Palm Springs hiking up towards Hidden Lake.



Will and Scott with the subjects in front of the Rescue Van after the mission.



Team 6, Will Carlson, came in late at night after his evening college classes and came up the Deer Springs Trail, across the Strawberry Cienega trail to the Angels Glide Trail, and up to Wellman's Divide. After 3 hours sleep he was up and searching down the ridge from Wellman's Divide to Hidden Lake Divide.

Team 4, Jim Manues and myself (Pete Carlson), went from Long Valley up to Hidden Lake and then down to Willow Creek Crossing. From there we covered the same trail that Lee had done down to Laws Camp. We then continued down to Caramba Camp. We covered about 8 miles and stopped for a few hours sleep about 2am. We were up at first light at 5:30am, had a short breakfast and then started searching again at 6am. We went down into Tahquitz Canyon about a ½ mile looking for any signs that someone had started down the canyon. We found none, so we came back up to a ridge that went back towards the Tramway. As we went around the ridge we took other ridges down into the canyons to YELL and then came back up and went back up the main ridge.

We got to a point where we could look down into the Hidden Lake and Long Valley Creeks. We found a ridge that went down 600-800 feet into the canyons and took it. As we came around a large boulder field we saw smoke coming from the Canyon bottom. It had not been there 5 minutes before. We called base to get a Helicopter over here and call the Forest Service that we had a fire. We were at least 2000 feet above the canyon bottom and it would take us a least 1 hour to get down the steep canyon walls. We continued on anyway in case the helicopter could not get to them. About 15 minutes later the Riverside County Sheriffs Helicopter flew in and confirmed it was the 2 missing hikers, Brandon Day and Gina Allen. They had to fly back to base and off load some equipment and then they returned and picked up the 2 hikers. There were in good condition for having spent 3 cold nights out with no food. We found a good location to be picked up and the Sheriffs Helicopter came back to pick us up. The Riverside Sheriffs Helicopter did a great job in getting us out and saved us a 4 hour hike back to the Tramway.

This was a classic mission and was truly a team effort. Without everyone there to cover all the areas we would not have had the success we had. Over the years we have had people going down the canyons, or up to San Jacinto Peak, or down the Skyline Trail. You never know for sure what direction the lost people will go.

Back at base we learned that the couple had found a camp site and a backpack that belonged to the missing hiker, John Donovan, who disappeared on the Pacific Crest Trail 1 year ago. He was last seen around Little Tahquitz Valley by other hikers during a storm. They were all going down to Idyllwild, but Donovan said he was going to continue on. No one heard from him for another 2 weeks, until he was reported missing when he did not pick up next food supply. We had spent many hours searching for him and never found any sign of him last year.



#### Mission 13

### **Sick Hiker on PCT above Mission Creek**

By Ray Hussey

Call out occurred at 0820 hrs for a hiker experiencing chest pains on the Mission Creek trail. The reporting parties were not consistent as to the subject's location-one hiker referred to section 5 but no map quadrangle was given. Since the location was not specific and the area vast, we asked for helicopter support. The RSO helicopter was grounded because of the marine layer but a San Bernardino SO helicopter responded, and at first we were confused because we never saw the helicopter. RMRU was waiting at a very nice place called stone house-built by the Wilderness Conservancy, located just south of the PCT junction with the Mission Creek trail, and were on medical standby with gear appropriate for the subject.

Very shortly the RSO got word the subject was found by the SBSO helicopter apparently much further north than reported near the junction of the north and south branches of the Mission Creek called Mission Creek Campground-an area much closer to Hwy 38 than Hwy 62. The mission was then 90-ed.

RMRU Members Present: (10)-Jim Manues, Grace Manues, Pete & Will Carlson, Jim Bakos, Patrick McCurdy, Michael George, Ray Hussey, Gwenda Yates, & Deano Esades.

#### Mission 14:

### **Search and Body Recovery in Long Valley Canyon**

By: Glenn Henderson

We were able to finally begin the search, and we hoped recovery, of John Donovan on Sunday, June 5. John's pack had been recovered during a search of a missing couple from Texas (see Mission 12). It was truly amazing how far John had gotten off the trail. He was not anywhere near the search area from the previous year. We met with Sheriff's deputy Kim Judge, Detective Kevin Duffy, and helicopter Star 9's pilot Steve Smith with observer Kevin Boss at 07:00 at the lower Palm Springs aerial tram parking lot.

First in were Jim Manues and myself. We flew to the site but had trouble finding the burn area. We were looking for a forest fire area that was started by the Texas couple. We finally found it, estimated at ½ an acre, but a VERY hot fire. Due to the heat, (mid to high 90's), and high altitude, (4300 feet), we had an extremely hard time finding a place to put us out. We searched for over an hour and then had to fly to the Palm Springs airport for more fuel. While waiting to fuel up we decided to take Jim back to base and try to do one rescuer at a time. This we were able to do but were about ½ mile away from the burn area. The distance was not the problem, the terrain was. It was extremely steep and covered with thick brush.



Glenn, Patrick and Jim at base.





Jim was flown in next followed by Steve Sanford of the Riverside County Search Dogs and his German Shepard. Patrick McCurdy and Will Carlson were the next two members flown in. We worked our way down to the Long Valley drainage that would lead us to the burn area and John's campsite. We had two machetes and used them extensively. We finally jumped on top of the brush and kind of rode, rolled, and clambered over it to get into the creek bed. Once we were in the creek bed we had to do some 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class climbing around waterfalls to get down to John's camp.

Once there we found that there had been an extremely hot fire that somehow did not burn John's gear. While we had been getting to John's camp Star 9 had been doing an aerial search and found a stick with something tied to it. Will went up the canyon to check it out while Jim, Patrick and I searched around the campsite.

We stood on top on a 25' waterfall and saw what looked like something green in the water below. We knew John had a green tarp and assumed that it was John's. While Patrick and I searched around Jim went around the waterfall and found John. He was completely intact, something no one expected. We think he may have slipped from the top of the waterfall and died in the fall. He was caught in a tree in the middle of the stream. We called Will back from his climb and radioed base with the information.

We waited for instructions from base that finally radioed to get John out and ready to fly back to base. This we did along with his gear. Star 9 dropped a long line which we hooked to the cargo net and John was flown back to base camp. The four of us remaining hiked back to the LZ (landing zone) and were flown out one at a time.

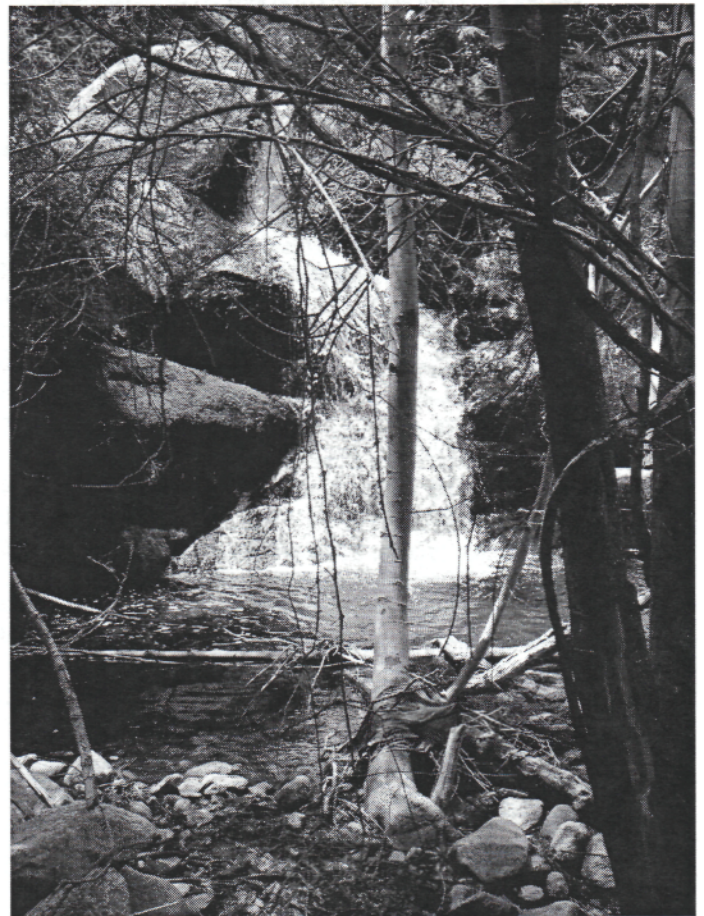


Fighting brush to find John.

It took many personnel to accomplish this mission. There was base camp personnel, a relay team that relayed information from the field team to base as the canyon was so steep that we did not have direct communication with base. We also had personnel at the lower tram parking lot directing and assisting the helicopter landing and takeoffs.

It also took great skill by our helicopter crew, Steve and Kevin. It was really delicate flying to get us all in and out safely. Our deepest gratitude to them.

This was a bittersweet mission for all of us as well as for other Mountain Rescue Association teams that spent many hours and days searching for John. Many of our personal trips to the mountain were always taken with an eye watching out as to where he might be. It was an extremely beautiful area that John finally ended up. We were glad that we could finally help to send him home.



The pool where John was found.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: John Donovan clearly touched the lives of many people, ourselves included. RMRU is very grateful for the generous donations by John's friends in Virginia. RMRU simply could not function without the generosity of our donors and John's friends have been particularly generous to us. Though they lost a close friend, their donations are helping to save the lives of others.



#### Mission 15:

### **Injured Climber on Tahquitz Rock**

By: Pete Carlson

We had just arrived at the Hemet Sheriff's station for our monthly meeting at 7 p.m. when a deputy came in and said, a climber has fallen on Tahquitz rock and may need help getting out. We waited thirty minutes until it was confirmed that we were needed and then ended the meeting. Some members went home to get gear while others took the Rescue Vans and headed up to Idyllwild.

By 8:30 p.m. we were sorting gear and getting ready to start hiking. We took 2 two hundred foot ropes and lots of sling for putting around trees that would be our anchors. One person took the rescue wheel and carried it in their arms, while several of us took turns carrying the litter. We had to turn on headlamps as it got dark. We reached the subject, Kenneth Schneider, around 9:30 p.m. The Idyllwild Fire paramedics had already splinted Ken's leg. All we had left to do was to tie him into the litter, with the wheel on, and we were ready to go.

We tied one rope onto the litter and belayed from the first big tree near us. With six people on the litter they slowly rolled it down the slope over boulders, tree roots, and whatever else was in the way. The slope is between 20 and 35 degrees so this is no easy task. When the 200 foot rope ran out, we put more slings around the next big tree and repeated the process with the other rope. After over a dozen of these lowers we finally reached the trail. From there it was an easy 1/3 of a mile walk back to the road. We finally arrived about 11:30 p.m. The Sheriff had gone into town and purchased several large pizzas for everyone to enjoy before heading home.

We would like to thank Idyllwild Fire and the other climbers who helped us with the carryout. Also two former RMRU members, Mike Daugherty and Jim Dodson, who loaned us some extra packs and headlamps for those of us at the meeting who did not go home to get gear.

RMRU members present: Pete Carlson, Kevin Walker, Lee Arnson, Travis Henderson, Henry Negrete, Jim and Grace Manues, Jacoba Leeuwen, Jim Bakos, Steve Bryant, Gwenda Yates, Brad Scott, John Dempsey, Michael George and Glenn Henderson.

Here is an email from the injured climber:

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of RMRU:

While there is no way I can ever repay you, I wish to express my extreme gratitude for the great efforts you all put forth to bring me down the mountain last Wed. night. My heart skipped a little each time one of you lost your ever sure footing in your selfless effort to bring me to safety.

You left the comforts of your homes to respond to the need of a fallen stranger, and I cringed to think that my climbing mistakes could have lead to an injury to one of you as you strained to lift the liter over rock after loose rock on the dark, steep slope. Your professionalism and steadfastness could be the example for a benchmark to any organization anywhere.

I can never thank you enough. Except for three fractures to my left tibia plateau and a few scrapes an bruises I came out of my fall in good shape. As for scrapes and bruises, I am sure many of you also brought many of them home with you that night and many sore muscles. I also wish to thank the fire fighters my climbing partner and the other climbing team that stuck with me from high on the mountain to the door of my jeep you are all incredible people.

Thank You

Kenneth Schneider

#### Mission 16:

### **Missing Hiker Near Whitewater**

By: Jim Bakos

The page came in at 9:00 p.m. on a Friday evening. There was a lost female hiker along the creek in Whitewater canyon. By 10:15 p.m. RMRU was on scene, and ready to search for the missing subject.

This mission seemed a little odd right from the beginning:

The first indication of weirdness came during our briefing with the Sheriff Deputy in charge, and the landowner of the property where the female hiker had gone missing. The Deputy gave us the standard details: Last seen at 2:00 p.m.; Female; 5'-4" in height; 115 pounds; Brown hair; Brown eyes, etc... Then the landowner chimes in with some rather disturbing information: "You folks might want to watch out for the crazy guy that lives down the street, he's a (illegal) drug manufacturer and wanders up and down this creek with a machete."

Our second point of concern was the rather large wildfire burning just north of our location, the winds were blowing toward the fire, but that can easily change in sunny southern California. We formulated an escape plan in case the fire started down towards us.

We started off our search from the subject's creek-side campsite. There we identified a shoe-print that would fit someone of that gender, height and weight. We tracked both upstream and downstream, on both sides, and found nothing that would indicate the subject moved from her initial campsite. There was significant deadfall across the creek every 50' - 100', so we could easily rule out her falling in and being washed downstream.



We then returned to base camp, and tried to ascertain the point at which the subject departed from the vehicle that dropped her off (to be certain we had identified the correct shoe print). The vehicle was there at base camp, along with the person that dropped her off and reported her missing. This made our job much easier, because we were able to readily identify the tire prints of the drop-off vehicle, along with her shoe print.

Tracking the subject back toward her campsite, we came upon her tracks exiting the creek side area. By 0300 Saturday morning the RMRU tracking team had tracked the subject back out to the road, and were absolutely certain the subject had departed the area.

The Sheriff's Office asked us to stay until daylight to search one more time. So we grabbed less than an hour's sleep and made another sweep of the area. Our conclusion was the same as before.

The area we were searching in was starting to get quite smoky, because the winds had changed and were blowing the fire toward us. We departed for the road-head to confer with the Deputy on the scene. We were told we could leave after we led a few more Sheriff's officers to the scene and explained our findings. After doing this, our trusty old command post vehicle wouldn't start. But with an hour of tinkering and some rather violent physical persuasion, it did finally start - *Certain team members believe that simply having this author on the search was enough reason to cause the vehicle malfunction...*

Now with most team members present going on 28 hours, with only a brief nap in between, we were ready to leave for home. It was then we were informed that a fire fighter working the up-canyon wildfire had seen a woman of her description walking out the afternoon before.

#### Lessons for the Public:

The print left from a shoe can be a very valuable asset when tracking someone who is either lost, or believed to be lost. Leave an impression of your shoe print at home if your going hiking; Remember what kind of shoes or boots your companions are wearing; Draw a picture of the type of impression they leave in the dirt or sand. Should the need arise, anything you can do to gather information ahead of time will be of value to a rescuer.

#### Mission 17:

#### Missing Hiker on Skyline Trail

By: Patrick McCurdy

On Saturday, July 29th, Justin Ross and three friends set out on the Skyline Trail, a uniquely long and steep trail that leads 8,000' over about ten miles from Palm Springs into the gorgeous high country of the San Jacinto Mountains. While the top portion passes through the beautiful conifers of the San Jacinto State Park, the lower portions are extremely dry desert foothills and canyons. It is not a trail to be undertaken lightly. There is no water available anywhere on this trail this time of year.

Justin and his friends intended to spend one night out, continuing up the trail Sunday and taking the Palm Springs Tram back down to the desert that evening. At some point on Sunday Justin's friends ran low on water and turned back. Justin decided to continue on alone. By the time it turned dark he was out of food, drinking the last of his water, utterly exhausted, and not yet at the top. This section of trail is very steep and the trail is often hard to see even in the daytime. As he had cell phone coverage, he called his family and told them about his situation, then hunkered down in his sleeping bag for the night.

His mother called 911 and described her son's situation. The Riverside County Sheriff dispatched a helicopter to the area and it was able to visually locate Justin with a search light. As he was not injured and in no danger, the decision was made to call out RMRU first thing in the morning.

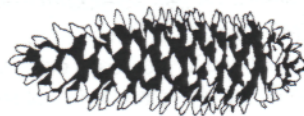
At about 0030 Monday morning we got the page: Lost backpacker near the tram, on a sixty degree slope, uninjured, but unable to move. Report to the tram at 0600.

At 0600 I met with some of the usual faces (Jim and Grace Manues, Gwenda Yates) at the tram, as well as an old hand I hadn't seen in a while (Rick Maschek), and two of our newest team members, Jacoba Leeuwen and Steve Gonzales. As we were expecting a technical rescue, we hauled our full compliment of ropes and technical rigging gear up the tram, Gwenda set up and ran the command post, while the rest of us headed out for the GPS coordinate thoughtfully provided by the Sheriff's helicopter. With the rest of the team on our heels, Jim Manues and I were first out of the chute at about 0645 and my GPS said .49 miles to Justin's location.

We headed for an area we call the "Launching Pad," but which is actually the upper terminus of the Skyline Trail (aka Cactus to Clouds Trail), where my GPS said .33 miles to Justin. We all headed over the edge, down the quite steep slope of the upper portion of the trail and followed my GPS, which essentially told us to follow the trail.

Whenever searching for a missing person, search teams stop frequently to call the person's name. We did so on this search, but got no response. As we continued on, and my GPS told me we were within .15 miles (about 800') of Justin's location, Jim and I became increasingly worried that we were getting no response when we called Justin's name. We worried that he might have fallen and that we would have to first search for him, then rescue a severely injured person. A radio call to base prompted Gwenda to call Justin on his cell phone. When asked if he heard us he said yes. When asked if he was responding he said no. Gwenda was finally able to convince him to respond and we heard him a short distance away and almost immediately spotted him sitting on the trail. He wasn't on a 60 degree slope, was ambulatory, and was in no danger.

Jim and I spent about 20 minutes with Justin, giving him food and water, as well as making sure he was uninjured and in good health. His only complaint was of very sore legs and that he was exhausted. Shortly thereafter, all of us started hiking back up the trail where we quickly ran into Rick, the rest of the team (who were very close behind us) having headed back to base when they heard





they would not be needed. We were less than 1/2 mile from the tram, but the trail is quite steep at that point and Justin was moving slowly. After a short time Jim Manues took his pack for him, but that didn't seem to help much. It was a very slow hike back.

We got back to the upper tram station by about 0900 and it was a relief to dump the hundreds of feet of rope and pounds of technical rescue gear that had not been needed on this search and to get Justin back to safety.

At one point Jim Manues mentioned to Justin that we had been afraid he would start moving at first light and that we would have a hard time locating him. "No way," replied Justin. "Then you wouldn't know where I was. If I move, you have to go searching for me." Ah, music to our ears. We couldn't have scripted those lines better ourselves. The very first rule when you become lost in the wilderness is "Stay put." Justin clearly understood this.

The helicopter crew who spotted him the previous night gave us his GPS coordinates and finding him was a simple matter of entering those coordinates in a GPS and following the arrow on the unit as we watched the distance to target decrease. He may have misjudged the intensity of the Skyline Trail and the amount of water he would need, but he kept a cool head and did the right thing when he got into trouble. Justin's good sense was the main reason this mission was complete in a little over two hours.



Rick Maschek with Juston Ross after the rescue.

## Mountain Rescue Association 2006 Spring Conference. The Headlands Institute, Marin California. June 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>

By Jim Bakos

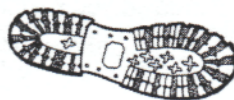
RMRU fielded 10 team members for this year's conference, all looking dapper, as usual, in our official team Hawaiian shirts at the banquet. But aside from the fun of going to banquets and such, the spring conference provided a wonderful learning environment.

Many hands-on workshops and classroom courses were offered in a wide range of Search and Rescue topics. Our RMRU team members probably came close to covering virtually every topic offered. Then, after-hours, we'd sit by the warm bonfire, with a cold beverage, and share the information learned that day – just another example of 'good ole' RMRU teamwork. Search and Rescue, and more importantly Mountain Rescue, can be a very stressful and dangerous occupation. Therefore we have a tendency, as a team, to form a close bond. To become more like a family, than simply a group of professionals working together.

This was no more evident than in the way we handled the lodging and bathroom facilities: The Headlands Institute was once a Nike missile site; therefore the housing is vintage WWII bunkhouses. I thought I had a good plan for showering; I would rise at 0530 every morning, and shower without company. But like any good plan, others embraced it. On the third day, while taking my early morning shower, our team president shouted from the next stall: "Morning Jim!" Oh well... We are family. The sleeping arrangements were alcoves full of twin-size bunk beds. It's obvious that more than a few team members snore, as it didn't take long for the group to fragment and spread out to avoid the bone rattling noise. Certain MRA members could use a lesson in getting dressed inside a shower stall, but for modesty's sake, I won't go in to detail.

We only had one mishap: The curse of Jim struck yet another Sheriff's vehicle, and we shredded a rear tire on our borrowed Ford SUV. We all enjoyed a wonderful three hours in Santa Nella, while the slowest tire-guy in the world changed the flat. We laughed and joked as usual. Some getting it more than others -- poor Rob!

All in all, everyone had a wonderful time. We bring back information on different rescue systems and techniques, along with data from the scientific testing done on anchor systems by the MRA, and even more information on the new Federal standards for SAR that will soon be implemented. We would like to thank Marin for their hospitality, and hosting such a fantastic conference. Thanks to all our brothers and sisters in Mountain Rescue for the camaraderie, education, and flawless teamwork in the rescue scenarios. Lastly: Thanks to my fellow teammates. Without you, Mountain Rescue wouldn't mean near as much.

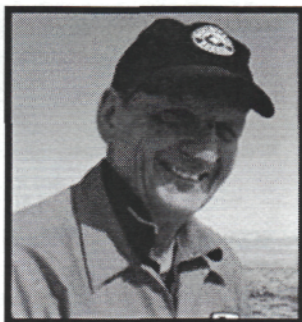




## Meet The Team!

This Issue: Ray Hussey

Starting with this issue, we are going to be highlighting a different team member with each issue! Like an RMRU version of "getting to know you," we'll start the sentence, and



the team member we are highlighting completes the sentence. This issue, we started off with one of our longtime veterans; the good Dr. Ray Hussey. Always ready with a smile, a joke, a snippet of song, or some common sense advice about SAR techniques and mountaineering skills. So here's to you Dr. Ray!

### Meet Ray Hussey

**Name:** Ray Hussey

**Age:** 72

**Job:** Invasive Radiologist & Radiotherapist

**I grew up...** in Newport, R.I.

**I live in...** Riverside, California.

**When I was a kid...** I enjoyed body surfing, boating & commercial fishing with my uncle.

**My family is...** located in Middletown, RI; Mt Pleasant, SC & Riverside, California.

**If I could have any job, I would...** do the same thing all over again.

**My hobbies are...** woodworking, playing handball, the tenor banjo & the ukulele.

**You can strive to...** and accomplish anything you want to, with the proper motivation.

**My favorite type of music is...** classical... especially Mozart & Dixieland Jazz.

**I never saw...** combat but was with the USAF in SAC for 8 1/2 yrs.

**I have been on RMRU for...** 20+ yrs.

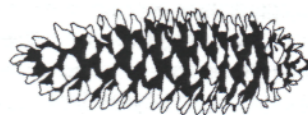
**What I've learned...** mostly has been technical rescue.

**RMRU motivates me because...** I like helping people, mountaineering & the great outdoors.

**People wonder...** why I do what I do, I always say because I like to.

**My most memorable moment with the team is...** the fall Kevin Walker & I took at the old Riverside quarry.

**I offer this advice to wilderness travelers...** always carry the ten essentials and read and understand the best book- **MOUNTAINEERING-The Freedom of the Hills**.



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Well, the truth is we don't have an editor right now. Our intrepid editor for the last year or so, Erica Zastrow, recently decided that the mountains near Mammoth were more desirable than Riverside and is pursuing her fortunes there. We are very thankful for her tireless work on Fresh Tracks and wish her the very best in her endeavors.

Please forgive the somewhat rough nature of this edition of Fresh Tracks. Several of us worked together on this and mostly just ended up scratching our heads and saying "how the heck did she do that?" It all seems so easy when you're reading a newsletter, but putting one together is another thing entirely.

We'll get this figured out by the next edition if it kills us—which at this point seems entirely possible.

One other thing to note is that we have resurrected from old newsletters some of the wonderful artwork Dona Towell used to contribute. We hope to use more as the team archivist scans more of the old newsletters.





## Found in the Great Outdoors

By Jim Fairchild

*Beginning with this issue, our old friend Jim Fairchild has agreed to write a regular column for Fresh Tracks, focusing on plants, animals, and ethnobotany of our local mountains. Anyone who has ever hiked with Jim knows that he is a fountain of knowledge on these subjects (and others) and this column will be a welcome addition to our humble newsletter.*

### Found In the Great Outdoors

When RMRU personnel head into the wilderness for a search or rescue, they penetrate a part of our planet's natural realm. Different areas feature a diverse variety of flora, fauna, and terrain. Our mountains and deserts present elevations from sea level to over ten-thousand feet; pleasant valleys and meadows, tortuous ridges and canyons; and high cliffs.

Searchers may not be identifying the plants and animals encountered, but they'll be dodging cacti and other thorny shrubs, walking around tree trunks, thrashing through thick chaparral, evading ants, hornets, and mosquitoes. Plants may hide lost persons who are under leafed-out cottonwoods in canyon bottoms, behind oak trees on the hillsides, and also under or behind pines and firs, especially when being looked for by helicopter. Children have been located under almost impenetrable chaparral. Thick conifer forests can block radio transmissions and satellite signals for GPS instruments. Because I've been asked to focus on the ethnobotany (people/plants), future articles will be devoted to plant uses for food, medicine, tools, and shelter along with their appearance, location, and seasonality.

Remember: no plants would mean no oxygen, no food -- a cessation of life on our Planet Earth.

-- Jim Fairchild

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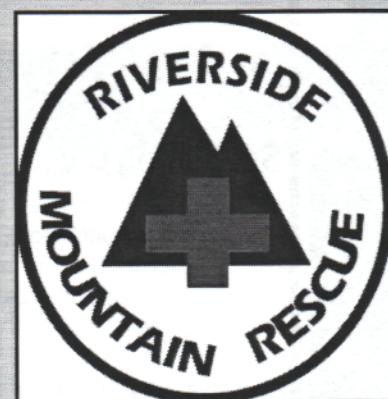
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#### Memberships

Benefactor club	\$1,000
Summit Club	\$ 500
Patron Club	\$ 200
Century Club	\$ 100
Supporting Club	\$ 25

An envelope is enclosed for your convenience.  
Please send your donation with application to:

Attn: RMRU Box  
C/O Riverside Sheriffs Office  
43950 Acacia Street  
Hemet, California 92544



We Appreciate Your Support!



<b>Benefactor Club</b>	<b>\$1,000 +</b>	Elaine Landells Palm Springs Aviation, Inc. San Jacinto Valley Veterinarians	Betsy Mellor [Memory: Don Landells] Scott Brothers Dairy Farms
<b>Summit Club</b>	<b>\$ 500 +</b>	Mike & Kay Daugherty Dr. & Mrs. Ray George Daren Koontz	[Memory of Norm Mellor] Steve & Rosemarie Johnson Marvin Matsumoto
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The team in Marin with the Golden Gate bridge in the background



Commander Henderson



Pilot & TFO Kevin Boss



Veteran Rescuers Walt Walker & Pete Gillies at the Pancake breakfast



The gear pictured to the left is due to the hard work of Gwenda Yates and Grace Manues. They secured a grant for RMRU to help purchase new technical gear for our high-angle rescue operations.

Since we're an all volunteer rescue team, we rely on donations and grants like this to help us to purchase new and safer equipment.



# The Last Page



Jeri Sanchez Prepares to Ascend A Cliff Face at Joshua Tree National Park



Dave, Patrick, and Jim M. Seek The Shade of Jim's Camper Shell During A Break in Rope Rescue Training at Joshua Tree National Park



Glenn Henderson Gives An Orientation To New Team Members



Jim Manues and Ray Hussey Rappel Over The Edge To Recover A Body in Bautista Canyon