

A publication of Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit - Winter 2007

RMRU

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Presidents Letter

By: Gwenda Yates

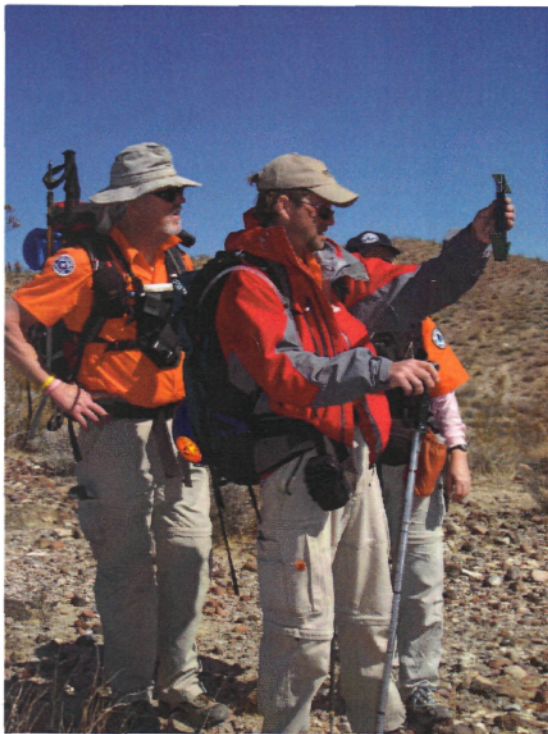
Well here we go. Off to another year as RMRU president. Let me take a minute to introduce you to the new Board of Directors V.P. Rob May, Sec. Glenn Henderson, and Members at large. Jim Manues and Jeri Sanchez.

One of the goals of the new Board of Directors is to raise the funds for a new vehicle. Our current Communication Vehicle is a 96 Ford Van. We are looking into a Ford F450 Truck with a box. The funds for this will come from donations from this newsletter as well as other fundraising events held throughout the year.

So look for our up coming events and keep up the donations. We will update you thru this newsletter and let you know our progress. Anyone wishing to make a substantial donation can contact me at info@rmru.org . ■



Our new tower under construction



Glenn, Dave & Jacoba at the Spring recert



Lee Locates Lost Leg!

Mission 25 (2006)

Lost female hiker

South Ridge Trail, Idyllwild

By: Will Carlson

Laughter and joy filled the room as many team members enjoyed our annual Christmas party. Once again team member Rob May offered the use of his home. The last few months were filled with excitement as we planned this get-together and prepared for the first presentation of the Founders Award. The party was in full swing and the presentation of the award was to follow. It was nine o'clock when the fun came to an abrupt halt. Kevin announced we had a mission. This was not what we wanted to hear, knowing that the first major winter storm was moving in over the mountains.

Realizing we couldn't leave without completing the presentation of the Founders Award we quickly gathered in the living room. It was a great moment for the team to recognize the people who created RMRU in 1961. This was also an emotional moment with the recent loss of founding team member Walt Walker. The award recognized the sacrifices team members made to help others in need. At this moment it was only fitting that we were to head out on that same mission, to save a life.

Lee Arnson and I arrived at the trailhead first. A brief chat with a deputy provided us with the basic information we needed to begin the search. A woman set out around 1200pm heading to Tahquitz Peak by way of the South Ridge Trail. She called a friend around 1500pm from the summit. The next phone call to her friend was around 1700pm stating that she and her dog were lost; no one heard from her since. About this time other team members began to arrive.

Lee and I headed out as team 1. Team 2 consisted of Jim Manues, John Dempsey, Brad Scott, and Travis Henderson. Pete Carlson and Mike George comprised team 3. The last team formed up for the night was Kevin Walker and Jeff Toscas; team 4. At base, Grace Manues, Steve Bryant, Glenn Henderson, Patrick McCurdy, Lew Kingman, and Gwenda Yates performed operations, communications, and set in motion the mutual aid callout.

Lee and I initially headed down the lower South Ridge Trail to a point where we could give a yell covering most of the main drainage coming off of Tahquitz Peak. No luck! Next we headed up the South Ridge Trail. Our assignment was a hasty search of the South Ridge Trail to the summit, and possibly from the summit to Chinquapin Flats. Teams 2 and 3 followed the same route performing a more thorough search. Team 4 set out along the Ernie Maxwell trail which was a probable area for the subject to hike out.

As the teams entered into the field we all felt confident that we would find the subject quickly. By 0130 Lee and I neared the summit in 4 to 6 inches of fresh snow. We continued to yell for the subject; there was no response. The wind made it extremely difficult for our voices to travel far at all. Between a strong gust of wind I asked Lee, "Did you hear that?" I had heard a dog bark. We hiked up the last switchback and onto the deck of the lookout tower. Lee said he saw fresh

dog prints in the snow. A moment later the dog found me. We were getting very excited. We figured the dog would remain close to its owner.

We yelled and yelled and yelled, moving to all sides of the summit. No response. We were frustrated, tired, and cold. A quick call to the FICC (forest service dispatch) provided us with the combination to the lookout tower. We let the dog inside to escape the wind and continued down to Chinquapin Flats. The hike across the bowl hammered us with some of the worst conditions either of us had been in. We returned to the shelter of the lookout tower to warm up and wait for John, Travis, Brad, Jim, Pete, and Mike. We were able to get the wood burning stove going to provide some heat. Around 0230am the other two teams arrived. We were all very worried about the condition of the subject. After a quick discussion we decided it would be best to bed down for the night and head out at first light.

0600am brought a sliver of light, along with poor visibility and strong winds. Many out of county teams began arriving as well. We reorganized our teams and set out again. Our hopes remained high for finding the subject near the summit due to the fact that her dog was at the lookout tower. Teams searched every aspect of the summit as well as spent time searching across the bowl to Chinquapin Flats again. We checked off of every switchback of the trail as well. No one wanted to say it, but we thought the subject could be down and unresponsive.

Afternoon quickly came about. Fresh teams entered the field as the teams that were out all night began to make their way out. Around 1400pm the radio crackled. "All teams, this is base. Stand by at your current location." This was the first positive news we had. The next thing we heard was the teams from Saddle Junction and Tahquitz Valley being pulled out. Our level of excitement rose as we realized we were in a good area. Next our team was called and base said, "Team 1, your hunch last night may have been right." Lee and I began running down the trail having an excellent idea where the subject might be. We joined team 15, or rather, they joined us. We ran a good 3 miles to a point located part way down the lower South Ridge Trail. Finally we found what we were hoping for. "Base, team 1. We have voice contact."

It was a great relief to hear her voice. However, it was a long ways off through a sea of bushes. After what seemed like an eternity (it was later determined to be under 8 minutes) we reached the subject. She was cold, but overall in good condition. Some hot drinks and warm clothes made conditions more bearable for the subject. Two out of county teams, including Rob May and Jeri Sanchez of RMRU, arrived to assist with the hike out. A couple of hours later we were all back at base, thinking back to when this mission began in 1961. This one is for you Walt! Thanks for watching over us! ■

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www.rmru.org

Mission 1 Lost hiker Laws Camp, San Jacinto N.F.

By: Lee Arnson

I'm just settling in with my family to have dinner when Glenn Henderson calls to tell me we have a mission in the high country.

A 40-year-old man has called 911 with his cell phone stating he was lost in the woods. He set out on a day hike from the Palm Springs tram earlier in the day, it was now getting dark and the tram was nowhere in sight. A sheriff's helicopter spotted the subject earlier but because of impending darkness was unable to land. They were however able to give us latitude and longitude which helped us considerably to locate our subject area.

Because I live closest to the trailhead (Humber Park) and have a good feel for the high country, I was given the green light to go out by myself while the rest of the team caught up. The extremely cold temperatures and strong winds we've been experiencing in Idyllwild were a big part of this decision. We felt time was definitely of the essence.

As I was hiking up to Saddle junction, Gwenda Yates called me on my radio to inform me base was set up and other team members were on their way.

I eventually got into the area that matched the coordinates given to us by the sheriff's aviation unit. I yelled out, but got no response. I yelled out again and this time got a faint response. The subject was approximately 300 yards north of Laws camp. He had built a fire and had stacked enough wood to get him through the night. He also made a bed on top of the snow with pine boughs and he seemed in good shape with no injuries. This was one of the few people who did exactly what they are supposed to do when they get lost, STAY PUT.

I offered to make him some coffee and something to eat, but to my surprise he just wanted to get moving. He felt his wife was very worried and he just wanted to get out of the woods.

We made sure the fire was out and then made our way up to Saddle junction where team members Jim Manues and Patrick McCurdy met us. We eventually made our way down to Humber Park around midnight where Grace Manues and Gwenda had a hot pot of coffee waiting for us.

It turned out that our subject was visiting from Florida and was staying at a hotel in Palm Desert. A Cabazon deputy gave him a ride to his hotel and we went our separate ways home. ■



Mission 2 Man over a cliff Hwy 74 east of Pinion Pines

By: Jim Bakos

RMRU was called out to rescue a man who had fallen down a cliff off Hwy 74. Kevin Walker was first on-scene with our communications van, only to witness the CHP helicopter winching the man to safety.

The rest of the team was notified and we all turned around and headed back for our homes and families. The Hemet station of the Riverside Sheriff's Office has recently taken over the patrolling of the Sugar Loaf/Santa Rosa area, so look for more RMRU rescues in those mountain areas. ■

Mission 3 Missing female Gavlin Hills

By: Jim Bakos

RMRU was paged out to search for a missing female in Gavlin Hills (Lake Mathews area). She'd had a fight with a friend of hers and ran off, saying she was going to take a full bottle of prescription painkillers.

I arrived on-scene and got a briefing from the Sheriff's Deputies handling the case. One deputy had seen the subject near a rocky out-cropping on his way to the home she'd run away from.

Just minutes behind me were John Dempsy and Jim and Grace Manues. Knowing that Gwenda Yates and Kevin Walker were on their way in with both rescue vehicles, we split into teams of two and hit the trail. Soon we were joined by the Sheriff's helicopter, Star 92, and we started covering as much area as quickly as possible – if she had in fact ingested those painkillers, she didn't have much time!

After an hour or so we were called back to base to get a second briefing from the Sheriff's Office. We learned that she had allegedly called her friend, and said she had gotten a ride to Riverside and that she was Okay. We'd been tracking and cutting for sign the whole time out, and really didn't find anything conclusive. So with this information the Sheriff's Office called off the search and we all went home. ■



Mission 4

Search for a missing female hiker Deer Springs Trail, San Jacinto S.P.

By: Glenn Henderson

Around 10 PM, Sunday Night, Deputy Gery Barba , our liaison with the Sheriff's department called me with a "heads up" that we were going to get a call from dispatch for a missing hiker on the Deer Springs Trail. Dispatch called right away and said the missing hiker had been spotted by Star 90, (the Sheriff's helicopter unit). They also gave us the LAT / Long and she had been told via loudspeaker to stay put.

I thought "Great, a quick in and out. Get her and still get home for a little sleep." It didn't work as I hoped.

I paged the team out and called Idyllwild team member Lee Arson, to get to the trailhead, meet up with the deputy on scene and take off to get her. Lee called me and relayed that the husband had notified authorities his wife, Karen Keller, was overdue from a hike to Suicide Rock via the Deer Springs Trail. Lee headed up the trail followed by Henry Negrete and then myself. Gwenda Yates was running base and sent more teams up the Marin Mountain drainage where we should be able to get her between the two sets of teams.

It was a nice cool evening with little wind, a great night to be hiking. We got to the area she was supposed to be in around 12:30 AM doing lots of calling out but no answer. We search for another hour but still no answer. We finally called Star 90 to fly up and shine their light on her but they could not lift off due to a cloud cover that had Hemet Valley socked in. We searched until 4:30 and then worked our way back to base camp. As teams grabbed a couple of hours sleep more team members arrived for the morning assignments.

We were up and moving about 6:30 and started sending teams in on different assignments, some re doing what had been done the night before. We were becoming concerned that she may have fallen during the night in the Marion Mountain drainage as there was a lot of water running and it has some steep, slippery waterfalls.

Star 90 was finally able to lift off about 9 AM and went back to the place last seen but could not locate her. They started a search pattern as we on the ground continued our own assignments. About 10:30 Star 90 radioed that they spotted our missing hiker heading out on the Deer Springs Trail at a very fast pace. They used the loudspeaker asking her to stop or acknowledge them but she would not stop. Fortunately team member Deano Esades was on board having hitched a ride up with Star 90 from Hemet.

Star 90 flew ahead of our subject and Deano was let out to intercept her. When he did he radioed that it was our overdue hiker and that she was in good shape and wanted to hike out. Deano said ok and hiked out with her. All field teams were then called back to base.

Team members involved in the search were: Jim Manues, Grace Manues, Dave Webb, Jacoba Vanleeuwen, John Dempsey, Dana Potts, Patrick McCurdy, Lew Kingman, Jim Bakos, and Jeff Toscas. Sheriff's Department personnel in addition to Gery, were Brian Whitaker and Andy Ybarra. ■

Mission 5

Search for Human Remains Hwy 74, near the South Fork Trailhead

By: Grace Manues

Following an accident, in which a car went over the side on Highway 74 near the Mixing Station, deputies discovered partial human remains including a skull and jawbone.

The Coroner's office was able to use dental records to confirm the remains belonged to a man whose car was found near that area in July 2004. (RMRU participated in the original search for the man's body in August 2004.)

On April 7, 2007, RMRU joined forensic pathologist, Corporal Debbie Gray of the Coroner's Office, to search for additional remains. This task was made more difficult because brush-clearing crews had recently graded the search area. While we didn't have to fight our way through overgrown vegetation, the top foot of soil had been overturned, potentially burying any remaining bones.

Undaunted, a dozen RMRU team members fanned out across the search area determined to find what we could to assist the Sheriff's Department and to provide whatever closure we could for the family.

Over the course of three hours, we scoured an area about the size of a football field looking for any bones, large or small. After a few false alarms involving animal bones, Lee Arson found a critical piece, the femur, and quite a distance away, Bruce Sanny located the clavicle.

While no one will ever know the "why," at least the family knows the "where" of their long-missing relative. ■

Mission 6

Overdue PCT hiker Snow Creek, off Hwy 111

By: Gwenda Yates

Its 10 pm Saturday, April 21. My phone rings. It's a Sergeant from Cabazon and he needs the team to respond to Snow Creek for an over due PCT hiker.

Upon arriving on scene it was determined the reporting party was mistaken. Our subject was not due out till Sunday.

I paged the rest of the gallant team members that were en route and told them to turn around and go home, this was just a case of bad scheduling – I only hope they made it back home in time to enjoy a cold beverage! ■

Breakfast in the Forest

**Support us at our annual Pancake
Breakfast at Idyllwild Town Hall.**

Sunday, August 19, 2007

Mission 7

Stranded Hiker

San Jacinto Peak, San Jacinto S.P.

By: Pete Carlson

At 8pm we got a call from the Sheriff that a 51 year old man had called them on his cell phone and was on San Jacinto Peak in the dark. He could not find the trail back down to the Tramway. They told him to get in the Summit Hut and stay there until RMRU got to him. 6 RMRU members made it to the Tramway to catch the last car up around 10pm.. Kevin Walker and Grace Manus were going to run base while Jim Manus, Rob May, Jeff Toscas and myself started the hike to the peak.

We left the upper station at 10:10pm in mild temperatures and a light wind. By the time we got to the creek crossing about ½ mile up the trail we split up into 2 teams with Jim and I going ahead as the fast bash team and Jeff and Rob following in case the subject, Chase, was not in the hut and we had to search for him. By the time Jim and I reached Wellman's Divide Junction it was below freezing and the wind had picked up. There were some icy patches on the trail and we had to watch our footing. We put on more jackets and continued on reaching the Summit Hut in 2 hours 18 minutes to find Chase inside. He was cold and thirsty, but otherwise OK. After some food and water we gave him a headlamp and some trekking poles and started down about 1am, now Wednesday morning.

About 2:40am we reached Round Valley and met up with Rob and Jeff who had waited there once they heard we had found the subject. We took on more food and water and then on down to the Tramway. We got back at 4am to the upper station and took a 1 hour nap until the 5am tramcar came to take us back down. We went to breakfast and then left for the drive home arriving around 8am, exactly 12 hours after we had left home.

Our thanks to the Tramway Staff for staying late to let us ride up after normal hours and to the Riverside County Sheriffs who got us breakfast after a long night without much rest. ■

Arizona Search for Jaquelin Hartman

By: Dave Webb

This is a story of heartache and tragedy, loyalty, dedication, family, friends, and Justice.

It started with a phone call from my wife's cousin Susan. Her husband's niece who was a 19yr. old nursing student in Gilbert, AZ. has been missing for a week. The last time she was seen was with a 25yr. old ex con., (7 years in, 5 months out). She had no idea what kind of guy he was. Some how he convinced her to go out on a date with him. When she didn't show back up afterward her parents contacted the Police. The next morning they went to his apartment to find him asleep, stating that they had been intimate the night before but he had dropped her off at her parents. Evidence showed to

the contrary, law enforcement found her ripped up under garments in a dumpster nearby. Along with her blood soaked top with what appeared to be bullet holes in it. Needles to say they placed him under arrest for sexual assault.

Susan knowing my involvement with search and rescue asked for my help. Of course I immediately booked a flight out for the next weekend, luckily we had an RMRU monthly meeting the next day. In the meeting I pleaded my case for help. I knew that on my own I would be little help to the search. But if I could get a couple two or three people to go with me, we could actually be of some real help. Little did I know of the family I have with RMRU. For you have to understand in RMRU there are times when we laugh together, we cry together, and there are times that we risk our lives together. But this was different, this wasn't an out of county search, this wasn't even in our own state. We were on our own!

I am humbled to what happened next. Fifteen people raised their hand in support. So many people that our planned training that weekend for our up coming MRA tracking recert had to be rescheduled, too many of our key people wanted to go over and help. At first I thought that some of our expenses would be covered. But the day before we were to leave I found out that the family had decided to put the money in to the reward for information. Totally understanding with Mr., Hartman, I started making the calls to shut everyone down. To my amazement no one wanted to turn back. Even if it was at their own risk.

My mission now did an about face. In less than 24 hours I've got to figure out who's driving, who's riding with who, how am I going to help pay for the gas? Oh' and where am I going to find a place for fourteen people to sleep for two nights? I was stressing! Then our President Gwenda Yates called me to let me know that there had been an emergency board meeting and that RMRU was going to pick up the tab on everyone's gas. Waa Hoo! Now about the lodging. She went on to explain that she and Glenn Henderson have a mutual friend that now lives out side of Phoenix. She had been in contact with them and they were willing to let a bunch of dirty rescuers into their brand new home to clean up, eat, and sleep.

A special thanks go out to Gary and Joice Joy of Surprise, AZ. without your support our efforts to help look for Jackie would have been greatly diminished. Thank you!

On Feb. 9th to the 11th RMRU went to Arizona to aid in the Hartman's search for their daughter. We were to meet up at 0730hrs., some where along HWY 87 north east of Phoenix. The Hartman family had suspicions to search in the Four Peaks Wilderness area. So that's where we would start. When everyone arrived we started to get our game plan down, in checking out the maps I think it became apparent very quickly that we were talking about a vast search area. But our assignment was to drive 10 to 15 miles in on a dirt road and start searching, so we did. With a number of vehicles and people in each one we drove to our search zone. From there we started to leap frog one vehicle to the next, taking time for all on board to search the area up and down. At the end of the day all we found out of the ordinary was a piece of an old Indian pottery jar. I guess that goes to show how closely we were looking for anything out of place. One thing I do know is that RMRU lived up

to their reputation and that is, an area hasn't been searched unless RMRU has searched it. And we knew at the end of the day she wasn't in our search area.

I went into this wanting to help, and with all we did I know that many people in our unit felt that our time there was too short. I personally hoped that we would find her and bring her home. I just didn't want to be the one to find her, if you know what I mean. Over the years in mountain rescue I've had a chance to see it all, the good and the bad, but this was personal. Jaquin may have been a distant relative, but she's still family and families takes care of each other, like RMRU. So we went to do what we could, if we only had more time.

Good news! During the weekend that we went over to help the local DA felt that they had enough evidence against this guy to indite him for murder one, kidnapping, and weapons violations. He wasn't going anywhere soon and he still wasn't talking. But now faced with the possibility of death or life with out parole we hoped that he would try to save his own skin and talk. With such a vast search area we knew that one, he could talk. Two, she could be found by off road enthusiast. Or three, that she would never be found.

One week later, three weeks to the day that she went missing, Jaquin was found. It was by some ATV riders miles into the Arizona desert, about 5 miles down the highway from where we had been searching. Our worst fears were confirmed. But at least now Jaquin was coming home. And for this guy, he'll never walk the streets again. Rightfully so!

In closing I would like to express my deepest condolences to the Hartman family from the family at RMRU. If it was my child that was missing I would like to think that there are people out there who are willing to step up and help. I am proud to be one that can say I know a lot of people like that. A special thanks to all our drivers, Jim and Grace Manues, Kevin Walker, Lew Kingman, Bruce Sanny, and Jacoba Van Leeuwen. And to all who put their lives on hold for a few days to go and help, Glenn Henderson, Gewnda Yates, Michael George, Lee Arnson, John Dempsey, Jeff Toscas, newcomer Matt McConnell, and retired RMRU founder Jim Fairchild. Thank you all. ■



The View From Carumba

Things have been pretty quiet for RMRU lately. We ended 2006 with our first ever Founders Award dinner, which was interrupted by a rescue call – See Mission 25 elsewhere in this issue of *Fresh Tracks*. Then followed a call to aid a fellow team member in the search for a missing relative out of state. Although the task of searching for Jaquin was a sad one, the team managed to find a little levity on the return trip – I'm told it brought tears to the eyes of some members because the full moon was so bright....

Mission number one for 2007 was Lee's very successful rescue of a San Diego man from the high country area

around Laws Camp. Now that Will Carlson is attending college in Colorado, we don't have anyone quick enough to catch Lee Arnson on the trail. So we just send Lee out and hope he doesn't exceed the speed-of-light so we can maintain radio contact.

Mission two was wrapped-up by the CHP helicopter by the time we got on-scene, and mission three appeared to be another wild goose chase, and was called off after several hours of searching.

Mission four found us rescuing a lost female hiker on the Deer Springs trail. Well, I should say "semi-lost" hiker. When we found her, she'd gotten back on the trail, but since there were so many of us there, we forced her into letting us rescue her.

In between all this RMRU successfully passed it's re-certification in search and tracking. Every year we re-certify in one of three different elements: Search and tracking, technical rock and snow and ice. These re-certifications are done through the California region of the Mountain Rescue Association, and guarantee our skills are at their best.

This spring many of our members will be traveling to Weber, Utah, to attend the Mountain Rescue Association's Spring Conference. Where, as in years past, we'll bring back information on the newest gear and techniques in mountain rescue. Also, by the time this issue of *Fresh Tracks* goes to press, we should have our new training tower installed at the Sheriff's station next to our garage. This will improve our training in technical rope skills immensely, by allowing us more frequent and local training exercises.

That's about all I can think of for this issue. So I'll leave you to continue reading this newsletter, and I'll get back to my permanent search assignment here in Carumba. Thanks again to Magdy at Gray Bar, RSO and my fellow team members for bringing this issue together! -- Ed ■

RMRU Climbs Mt. Kilimanjaro Tanzania, Africa

Editors note: Although RMRU is dedicated to saving lives 24/7/365, we still manage to squeeze in some fun as well. We trust each other with our lives when we go out on a mission. We are a family — just as close as any family would be. So it's not uncommon for us to vacation together (sometimes in exotic places). Look for more of these features in future issues of Fresh Tracks -- Ed

By: Steve Bryant

19,340 FEET UP IN THE AIR – that's how high Mt. Kilimanjaro is, and it was conquered last fall by a few RMRUers. Now, that sounds like quite an effort, but in fact, except for the elevation, hiking up Kili is really a stroll in the park (really – because it is inside Mt. Kilimanjaro National Park in Tanzania).

Now back to the beginning: Bill Delo from RMRU, JR Muratet, a long-time former member of RMRU and myself also with RMRU, and a friend of mine from work, Jon Baskin, and Jon's brother Marc Baskin, got together at the end of last summer to go up Kilimanjaro.

Myself, Jon and Marc met at Amsterdam Airport on 31

August 2006 for the KLM airlines flight to Kilimanjaro International Airport. We had nice views of the Alps, the various blues of the Mediterranean, a wonderful view of the city of Venice, Italy, and views of the Sahara Desert before landing at night at the Kili airport. We were met by representatives of our tour company, Zara Travel, and taken in a minibus to our hotel outside Moshi, Tanzania. There we met JR, who had flown to Africa earlier to view some sights and go diving in the waters of Zanzibar (the fabled spice island off the coast and part of the nation of Tanzania). We settled into our room. The next morning, we took off for a safari to various local national parks – we went to Lake Manyara NP, where we saw baboons, blue monkeys, termite mounds, huge flocks of pelicans, buffalo, zebra, our first Baobab trees, and a lot of elephants – in fact, as we tried to leave the park, one group of 3 small male elephants had a different idea, and blocked the road. The male elephants were in “musth”, a sexually active condition that makes them irritable. Our guides finally lined up 3 vehicles abreast and slowly drove down the dirt road, using both shoulders, and finally the elephants gave way, but not before one turned around, flared his ears, raised his trunk, and tried to bully us into turning around. We then drove through a Maasai (sometimes spelled “Masai”) village to E-Unoto Resort, a deluxe resort with separate “cottages” modeled after the Maasai huts, but with deluxe Western amenities. This resort was at the bottom of the Great Rift Valley, with one of the Rift Valley cliffs right outside, framing our view of a small lake and banana trees as we sat out the porch of our “hut”.

The next day, we went to Ngorongoro National Park, which is an old caldera, about 15 miles across. I, myself, had wanted to see Ngorongoro since I read a book about hunting in Africa when I was 7 years old. Ngorongoro was a fantastic place, full of wildebeest, lions, a hippo pool full of hippos flipping their short tails to get water on their backs, various antelope, tree-size euphorbia plants – and, a special treat, we saw a group of black rhinos in the far distance. Black rhinos are almost extinct due to poaching, and Ngorongoro is one of the few places they can sometimes be seen in the wild. We again spend the night at the E-Unoto Resort, where Bill met us after a hectic trip through Ngorongoro, since he flew in a day later than the rest of us. Unfortunately, after watching the show the Maasai dancers put on, Bill tripped and dislocated a finger – fortunately, Marc Baskin is an ER physician, and after while was able to relocate the finger.

The third day, Marc and Bill went to a hospital to get X-rays of Bill’s finger, while JR, Jon and Myself went to Tarangiere National Park to see more wildlife. There were especially fine Baobab (pronounced “bao-bao”) trees here.

We also saw giraffes, elephants, various apes, various antelope and Tse-Tse flies. Upon entering the park, we had to stop while our vehicle was sprayed on the outside with something to discourage the Tse-tse flies. Even so, some flies came into our vehicle, so we swatted them. At least in this part of Africa, the “Tse-tse” is pronounced “che-che”. We had lunch on a bluff overlooking a river, and could see elephants, antelope, and other wildlife below. Superb starlings and Buffalo weaverbirds were at our lunch tables waiting for dropped crumbs. A highlight for myself at Tarangiere was getting a close picture of a Saddle-billed Stork. Fortunately, Bill’s finger was some better

at the end of this day, and was taped to his other fingers for a splint, allowing him to continue up the mountain.

On the fourth day, we got our gear together, piled into a minibus, and drove around to the other side of Kilimanjaro, since we were going to use the Rongai route, one of the longer (for better acclimation to the altitude.) and less-traveled routes up the mountain. After checking in at the park gate, we shouldered out packs, and set out on a dirt road which shortly became a very-well-maintained trail. At this point, I need to describe how one hikes in Kili National Park. One has to hire guides and porters, so this is really a deluxe trip. Instead of the usual 70-or so pound pack an RMRUer would carry for a 7-day trip to the mountains, our group of 5 Americans had 13 support personnel – a guide, two assistant guides, and 11 porters. The porters would hike ahead of us, while we hiked with the guides, and the porters had camp set up, with hot wash water and hot soup waiting for us when we arrived. All we Americans carried were a few essentials, such as water, snacks, sunscreen, extra jacket, and cameras – altogether less than 20 pounds, and some of us carried only about 7 pounds. The guides were always telling us to hike more slowly – “Pole, Pole”, pronounced “pole-y, pole-y” which means “slowly, slowly”. This was sometimes difficult for us RMRU types, as we normally hike a pretty fast pace, especially with almost no weight on our backs. Each morning, we were awoken about 6:30AM with hot coffee or tea in bed (in our sleeping bags in our tents, that is) by our guides and porters. After washing with the hot water provided, we ate our breakfast in our mess tent – food, drink, etc. all provided – this is NOT the usual RMRU style of backpacking, but it also was NOT hard to get used to. Our first camp was in what we would call chaparral, though the area was wetter than our California chaparral. This camp was called “Simba Camp”, but we were assured that we would not be bothered by Simbas (lions).

Our second day of hiking brought us to “First Cave”, which was a small lava tube. During this day, we got out of the lush vegetation and into scrub vegetation, with few tall plants. This western side of the mountain is fairly dry compared to the other side, because the mountain itself blocks a lot of the moisture coming off the Indian Ocean. This day we had nice views of our mountain’s two peaks – Mawenzi, a rugged technical rock climb, which is shorter than the main peak called Kibo. The indigenous peoples of this area don’t have a combination name for the three volcanos making up the Kilimanjaro massif, but refer to Mawenzi, Kibo, and the shorter Shira separately.

The next day, 06 September, we walked up to 3rd cave, another collapsed lava tube at about 12,500 feet, and in very sparse vegetation. We stayed here two nights, with an acclimation hike on the 7th September to an old Outward Bound hut “School Hut” at a little over 15,000’. This was a wonderful camp, with great views of Mawenzi and Kibo – but not too much in the way of views of the surrounding plains of Africa, since there is a more-or-less constant cloud cover at maybe 7000’. We did get the occasional view of the plains when the clouds broke briefly, but the air was moist and hazy, so even these views weren’t great.

On the 8th of September, we left 3rd cave to hike

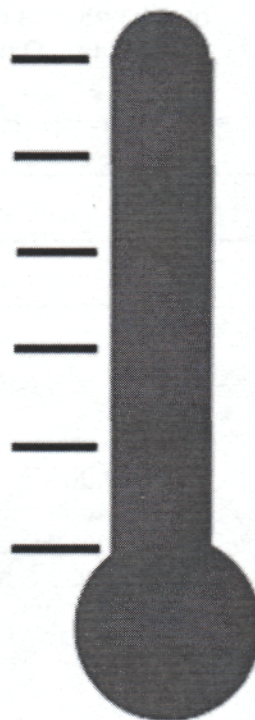
Kibo Hut at 15,500'. Here we joined the other trails leading up the mountain. We camped in our tents, but many of the perhaps 200 people here at Kibo Hut spent the night in one of the huts, which come complete with beds and dining rooms. The huts are run by people from the National Park Service, and are quite nice, but somewhat noisy, since they are dormitory-style, and there are always those who would prefer to talk than sleep. So our tents were a good solution for us. It was quite windy when we arrived at Kibo, and eating dinner in our mess tent was exciting. At midnight, our guides woke us up to climb the rest of the mountain. JR and Bill went all the way up – starting at midnight in bitter cold (but fortunately the wind had died down), and reaching the crater rim at about daybreak – but then having to walk another couple miles – and this at 19,000' – to get to Uhuru Peak, the summit of Africa. Bill and JR carried the RMRU banner to Uhuru Peak, the first of the "Seven Summits" (highest peaks on each continent) to see the RMRU banner.

Bill and JR returned about 9AM to Kibo Hut, and went to sleep (sort of) for a couple hours. Then we packed up, and headed down the east side of the mountain, following the main route (the "Coca-Cola" route) along a VERY well-worn path (some 25,000 people try Kili each year, and most do the "Coca-Cola" route). We strolled at first through lifeless volcanic rock, but further down – at around 12,000' – came upon the famous Giant Senecio plants. These plants are closely related to the common garden senecio plant, but these Kilimanjaro plants grow into trees with old leaves insulating the trunk from the extreme temperatures (day temperatures can be very hot with large amounts of UV radiation at this altitude, while nights almost always drop below freezing). Seeing these plants was the highlight of the whole trip for myself, I'm a biologist, and wanted to see these plants to compare them with unrelated plants of similar shape he had seen before in the Venezuelan Andes.

Although we were supposed to stay in our tents this night of the 9th September, when we arrived at the camping place, we found our tents set up near a group of huts, called Horombo Camp. The Park Service person-in-charge asked us whether we might prefer sleeping in a hut, so we looked at a hut and were instantly convinced it was worth the \$10 each to sleep in a real bed (you bet we wimped out!). We had dinner in one of the other huts, served as usual by our porters.

We woke up on the 10th September, had breakfast – our last served meal on the mountain, packed up and started hiking out. We descended through cloud forest (a constantly wet type of vegetation with trees covered in grotesque lichens) with giant lobelias (related to the common garden lobelia, but with a 3-4' tall bloom stalk) and finally through tropical rain forest – huge trees covered with African Violet relatives growing on their branches, vining begonias growing up the trees, and a whole host of other houseplants growing on the ground. It reminded one of being in a houseplant store. After a few hours, we made it to the park gate, where we celebrated, and then took a waiting minibus back to our hotel in Moshi. ■

Our New Command Post Vehicle



RMRU Fundraising The New Command Post

We're bringing back an old *Fresh Tracks* favorite with this issue.

The fundraising Thermometer!

RMRU desperately needs a new command post, and as soon as we have a total cost for the vehicle and the radios we'll fill in the blanks on the thermometer.

Our old command post is getting somewhat unreliable, we really need to work toward replacing our aging vehicle, so that we can continue to give outstanding service to the citizens and visitors of Riverside county.

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Our command post is the heart and soul of our operation. It not only provides a service to those we rescue, but it also keeps us, the rescuers, safe and in contact with civilization when we're in the wilderness.

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Thank you all for your continued support!



The parks in Africa sport somewhat larger animals than our parks here in the U.S.

Simba camp, sans the “simbas”.

We’re VERY glad that Steve and Bill didn’t get eaten by lions!



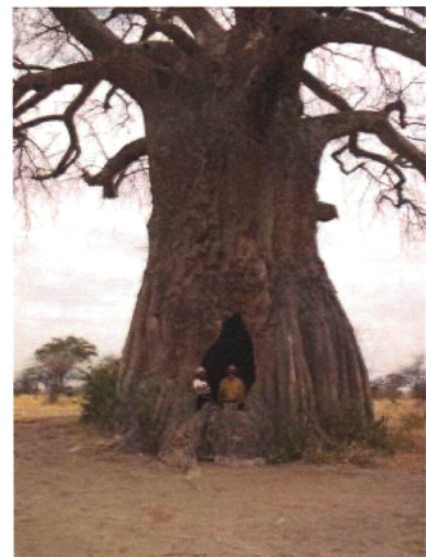
The last leg of the journey up Kilimanjaro — Whew!



RMRU on top of Mt. Kilimanjaro.
We're putting the "mountain" back in mountain rescue!



Kibo Hut on "kili". 15,500 feet!



Big Baobab trees in Africa!