

RMRU

RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

Summer 2011

CELEBRATING
50
Years of
SERVICE

Letter From The President
Anniversary Celebration
Member Profile
2010-2011 Mission Reviews
Radio Fundraiser
Pancake Breakfast



WOW!!! RMRU will be starting its 50th year in September, 2011. Many team members have come and gone in that time. It's a lot different than when I started 30 years ago and that was different from the beginning 50 years ago according to Steve Bryant and Pete Carlson. We started with a donated bakery truck and now have three vehicles, all housed in our own garage at the Hemet Sheriff's substation. Goldline rope was the rope of choice back in the day but now there is a huge choice of synthetic ropes that are ten times stronger. The first aid and rescue equipment have all gotten lighter and more reliable than in the past. Radios have now become all important again. We used to have big box radios that required 12 D batteries to run. If you weren't first on scene you got to carry one of them for your team. They have passed on and we have newer lighter radios but they are slowly fading out too. The ones we have are seconds but have been very reliable for the past 25 years. Unfortunately many are no longer working and we now have a push to raise money to buy new radios that will hopefully last another 25+ years.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, our sustaining members, that has enabled RMRU to save over 500 lives in the past 50 years through countless searches and rescues in Riverside county, California and even outside California. Without your support, the support of the Riverside Sheriff's department, our family and friends, we could not continue to provide the services we do.



**Thank You
Glenn Henderson "President"**

2011 Current Board Members

Glen Henderson "President"

Rob May 1st "Vice President" - Dave Webb "2nd Vice President"

Gwenda Yates "Secretary" - Nick Nixon "Treasurer"



RMRU has been using the same radios for over 15 years, and they were purchased or donated used when we got them. While these have been great radios, they are beginning to fail at an alarming rate and will, in any case, be obsolete in a little over a year due to changes in FCC regulations.

After a two year study period, we have selected replacement radios that will be legal and will also allow us to interoperate with the new Riverside Sheriff's Office digital radio system now being deployed. The price of these replacement radios gave us a case of sticker shock: \$80,000.

Two generous donations, one from Skechers Shoes and one from Stater Brothers, have given us a good start in our fundraising and we now have \$10,000 in our radio fund, but that still leaves is needing to raise \$70,000. We have came up with the concept that you can donate and have a radio named after you. We will use your name to identify the radio and the team it is with.

Radios are not a luxury for us. Each team member carries a radio into the field not only to alert the command post when we locate lost or injured persons, but also for the personal safety of the team member. We also need communication from field teams to the sheriff's helicopter to coordinate hoist operations. Radios are used by every field team member on every search. To be quite honest, RMRU team members frequently go into somewhat dangerous areas and would certainly not do so without radio contact with the command post.

With \$70,000 still to raise, we have a long ways to go. This is more money than we've ever attempted to raise. You can help us with a tax-deductible donation - no amount is too small. You can donate via the Internet at www.rmru.org or you can send us a check at the address in the back of this newsletter.

Patrick McCurdy : Director of Communications



JOIN US

AUGUST 21st 2011

RMRU's Pancake Breakfast

in the pines

8 am Idyllwild Town Hall

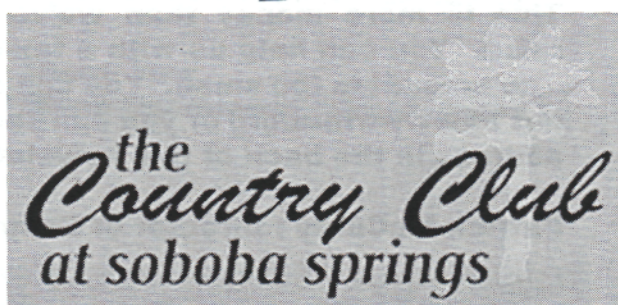


Join us for RMRU's 50th Anniversary

Soboba Country Club on September 10, 2011

Starting at 6PM. Cost is \$25 per person.

***No host bar 6 to 7, dinner 7 to 8, program 8 to 9,
Contact info@RMRU.org for more info or questions.***



***PLUS: We are looking for addresses of ANY former members or anyone associated with the team in the past or present. Rescued persons too.
info@rmru.org***



Member Profile

Pete Carlson

41 Years on the Team



Q and A of 41 years of service

Pete on the summit of Mnt Rainier

How long have you been on the team and when did you join? 41 years having joined the team in May 1970 at age 21, guess that makes me 62 now.

What was your first mission? Sat morning June 27, 1970 at 7:30am we got a call to rescue two young men struck in Chino Canyon between towers 2 and 3 of the Tramway. I had never ridden the Tramway and my first ride only went up to tower 2. By climbing down tower 2 and traversing from its base along the east wall of the canyon we reached the subjects about 1000 yards up canyon. As a trainee as was teamed up with a veteran member and we were assigned to fix ropes on a traverse. So out came the pitons and gold line rope that we used back in the day. I put in my first piton that day and started a learning period that is still going on today. You can never know it all. We climbed back up the tower and belayed the subjects up the tower where we waited for the next down car to pick us up.

What has been your most memorable mission? Where to start? First out-of-county search Aug 1971 for a 14 year old boy, I was on the team that found him after 4 days. May 1973 finding a 3 year old lost over night for almost 18 hour; again I was on the team that found him. Nov 1975 9 boys lost in a blizzard in Tahquitz Valley over night as 3 feet of snow fell that night. We found them all alive in the morning very cold and some with frostbite.

On we go through the late 1970's with lots of missions in Tahquitz Canyon, Tahquitz Rock, and all over the San Jacinto Mts. As we went into the 80's and 90's we saw the use of Helicopters and new technology's to help with search and rescue.

In the last ten years I have had many memorable missions with my son William who started helping out on missions in 2000 as a 15 year old and joined the team in 2003 as a full MRA member right from the start. May 2006 search for the couple from Texas, lost 5 days in the San Jacinto Mountains and I was again on the team that found them alive. Sept 2006 another hiker missing found after 5 days alive.

Feb 2009 a hiker on the Skyline Trail in the ice chutes below the Tramway. This was an epic mission and RMRU would win the Rescue of the year award from the National MRA for this mission. After all these years I do not think I can pick one mission, just too many great missions with great team mates. It is always a team effort and no mission is a success without all the team members working hard.

What was your hardest rescue, most intense, physically or mentally? Was it the first time we had 3 missions in a row from Sunday noon till Tuesday 2am, 38 hours straight with no sleep? Or was it hiking up from Humber Park with 3 feet of fresh powder snow at the bottom taking 4 hours on snow shoes with full winter packs in a blizzard? Or hiking down Tahquitz Canyon in 100+ degree heat for 12 hours straight on a search?

Again after 41 years memory fails and over beers at night missions become more epic each time the story is told, but that is the way it should be. If we really remember how bad things were at the time we would not want to go back. Time heals our memory and we just keep coming back for more. Most missions are not that hard to someone who is in shape and hikes and climbs all the time. The key, keep feeling young no matter how old you are in years and keep active.



Pete on a search:
1972 Skunk Cabbage Meadow

What has being an RMRU member meant to you?

Family: I have become close friends with so many people over the years and they would do anything to help a fellow team member.

Adventure: I have been to so many out of the way places in weather and at times of day/night that no one would want to be out in. But the beauty of these places is stunning and worth the effort to get there.

Accomplishment: I have been able to help people in need, actually save lives, and make a difference in people's lives. I hope that they remember what someone did for them asking nothing in return and that someday they will do the same for someone else.

Fun: I have had so many great times, with so many great people, in so many great places, and we share so many great memories together.

What advice would you give someone wanting to get involved with RMRU? You must really enjoy being out-of-doors and hiking and camping. If you commit to RMRU the rewards are many, you get out of it what you put in. It can take many hours of your time and it takes time away from your family, but if it makes you happy, your family will benefit from your happiness.

Here are my favorites out door quotes from others:

- 1) How can I be lost if I don't care where I am?
- 2) Adventure is not in the guidebook and beauty is not on the map; Seek and you shall find!
- 3) You can't stay on the summit forever. You have to come down again. So why bother in the first place? Just this: What is above knows what is below, but what is below does not know what is above. One climbs, one sees, one descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions, by the memory of what one saw higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know.

Pete Carlson



Missions 2011/2010

The following pages contain the stories written by team members of their first hand accounts of missions RMRU was involved in. These do not include the hundreds of mission that we respond to, just a select few to show you RMRU's dedication to the community

Become a Sustaining Member

It is necessary to rely on contributions from friends - just like you - to provide lifesaving equipment. Funds donated are spent so that our expanding Unit can be equipped to master insurmountable odds on a life or death mission. If you will be so thoughtful as to send a contribution today, you can help Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit maintain it's rescue and safety training efforts.

To acknowledge your donation we will send you the RMRU newsletter for a year. This small but interesting newsletter will keep you up-to-date on what is happening in search and rescue, training, public education and how your contributions are being used by the Unit.

The Unit believes that two things can provide the income needed to keep search and rescue operations on an ongoing basis. First, to interest more people in becoming Sustaining Members, and second, to ask the present Sustaining Members to increase the amount of their donations.

If you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list and be credited in the newsletter for your generous donation, please also send a quick note with your name and address to info@rmru.org.

To make a donation via PAYPAL use, [info@rmru](mailto:info@rmru.org) to make your donation. Alternately, you can mail a check to: Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, 43950 Acacia Avenue, Hemet, CA 92544.

Missing San Jacinto Peak Day Hikers

May 22, 2011

**Palm Springs Aerial Tramway
2011-012**

Written by Glenn Henderson

It started out as a report of two overdue hikers at 10 p.m. Saturday night. By 2:30 a.m. Sunday morning one call had become two as we had received another report of two more overdue hikers. Gwenda Yates phoned me and we agreed that she would get the first call started and I would get the second one going. The first mission (Mission 2011-011) was on the Deer Springs Trail near Idyllwild; I went to the Palm Springs Tram for the second search. Our search was for a 56 year old male, Michael Cao and his wife, Yi Mei, 55. They had pulled a permit to go to the summit on Saturday and to return the same day. When they did not return home to Carson City, their niece called 911 and we were called out. We met the first tram car up at 6 a.m. Deputy Granito was our Sheriff's liaison for the mission. I sent our first team of Pete Carlson and Carlos Carter out to cover the Long Valley Drainage, Hidden Lake, Hidden Lake Divide and then down to Willow Creek Crossing and on to Laws Camp. If they found no sign they were to go on down to Caramba (Caramba is where you send people you don't like!). Well, I like Pete and Carlos but I sent them anyway. The area is notorious for capturing lost hikers that get on the wrong side of Wellman's divide. At the same time I sent our second team of Nick Nixon and Mt. San Jacinto Park Supervisor Sue Neary out to Round Valley. Sue reported that about 100 Boy Scouts were camped in the area. We hoped they had seen our subjects. About 8 a.m. Dana Potts was our third team out with Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR) members, Sharon Ollenburger, and Joe McEuen. Their assignment was to go up the Sid Davis Drainage and then on to the Tamarack Benches. Also by this time Gwenda Yates had arrived to help with planning after turning the first mission over to Les Walker at the Deer Springs Trailhead. Chris Miller and Chris Stevens from DSAR arrived and became Team 4. I gave them the daunting task of going to the summit of San Jacinto as fast as possible, checking out the stone hut on top and then going down to Little Round Valley Campground. We now had a report of our subjects going to the summit at 2:30 p.m. and another report of them on the summit but going off on the wrong side, west instead of east. About 10:30 a.m. Team 3 reported they had made voice contact. YESSSSSSSSSSSS!!!! Then, NNNNOOOOO!!! The wrong Michael was answering their calls. All teams resumed their assignments. DSAR members Donna Deane, Dave Gomez, Craig Patton and Rich Dolezm arrived. I kept Rich back with Gwenda to possibly be a radio relay and sent the others as Team 5 to take the trail toward Hidden Divide and then cut across to Round Valley Campground. Lew Kingman and Jeri Sanchez from RMRU were sent out as Team 6 to cover the Cornell and Yale Peak areas east of Mt. San Jacinto. Pete and Carlos made it to Laws Camp and did not find any sign but did stop three hikers that were coming up from Caramba. The three had not seen anyone so I turned Pete and Carlos around and sent them up Willow Creek toward Wellman's Divide. About 12:30 p.m. Team 4, Chris and Chris, reported that they thought they could see our subjects coming down from the summit with two other people. These turned out to be our subjects being helped by two day hikers whom they had asked for help. Our subjects had spent a very cold night on the wrong side of Mt San Jacinto. They did get down to Little Round Valley where some Boy Scouts gave them food and water and put them on the right trail. Chris and Chris caught up with them and took over escorting them to Wellman's Divide, where they met up with Teams 1, 2, and 3.



**Michael Cao, Yi Mei, and rescuers
Photo: Jeri Sanchez**

All teams were out of the field and the mission concluded at 3:30 p.m.

Special thanks go to the Mt. San Jacinto Park Service for their invaluable help - Supervisor Sue Neary and Shawn McIntyre, Brian Everest and Rick Hanson all did a great job covering a lot of area during the search; to Desert Search and Rescue members for their expert assistance and for finding the subjects(!); to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway for transporting team members up and down numerous times - we could not have completed this mission so successfully without your support; to Riverside Sheriff's Helicopter Star 9 that searched until called away on a possible sniper call; and to Deputy Granito, whose constant support made our job so much less stressful.

Three Missing Deer Springs Trail Hikers

**May 21, 2011
Deer Springs Trail
2011-011**

Written by Ralph Hoetger

On Saturday night a heads-up went out via text to members of RMRU. There were three lost hikers in the high country. The hikers' original plan was to hike up Marion Mountain Trail, bag San Jacinto Peak, and hike back down Deer Springs Trail all on Saturday. Originally four hikers had started out. One of the hikers was faster, left the group, summited, and started back down the mountain. He crossed the others' paths on the way down from the summit. They said they were fine, just hiking slowly. He continued down the mountain on the Deer Springs Trail and exited the forest.

Eventually the faster hiker became concerned for his friends because they did not make it out of the forest by late afternoon. He thought they may have become lost. The faster hiker became the reporting party.

The call went out to RMRU at about 9 p.m. It was a mild evening and there were no reported injuries so the decision was made to start the search on Sunday morning, May 22, at 6 a.m.

By morning another mission and callout had also been issued for the Tramway side of the mountain for two lost hikers (Mission 2011-012). The decision was made for Doug Kelbert and myself (Ralph Hoetger) to hike up the Deer Springs Trail and see if we could find the three subjects. Gwenda Yates dropped off radios, then headed for the Tramway mission while Les Walker ran base.

We had been given GPS coordinates that were sent to us from the subjects via text. The coordinates indicated that our subjects were at Strawberry Junction. Based on this information, Doug and I thought the search would be quickly over. We expected to run into the subjects between Strawberry Junction and the Suicide Rock Junction.

Doug and I hiked the 4.1 miles to Strawberry Junction but did not make contact with the subjects. While we were taking a short break two hikers came down the trail. We asked the hikers if they had seen three East Indian men. Their response was affirmative - the men were hiking down the trail about 45 minutes to an hour back.

Doug and I conferred with Les Walker at base and made the decision to hold at Strawberry Junction for about a half-hour and then start hiking further up Deer Springs to meet them and then bring them back down. We did not want to use our legs up in case we had to go assist the search on the Tramway side of the mountain.

We made contact with the subjects at about 9:30 a.m. We hiked down the mountain with them and got out at the Deer Springs trailhead at about 11:45 a.m. At that point we sent out a 90 (everyone was out and safe).

RMRU team members present: Ralph Hoetger, Doug Kelbert, and Les Walker, and Gwenda Yates.



PCT Hiker Needs Medical Aid

May 11, 2011

**Pacific Crest Trail at Snow Creek
2011-010**

Written by Patrick McCurdy

At 2 p.m. the page went out for RMRU to respond to the Snow Creek trail head for a Pacific Crest Trail through-hiker who had been vomiting non-stop and was severely rehydrated. All my gear was in the garage drying off from Sunday night's mission, but it was quickly in my truck and I was headed out to Snow Creek, where the PCT comes down out of the San Jacinto Mountains before heading up into the San Bernardino Mountains.

On the drive out I was considering our options. If we could get our subject stabilized and hydrated we might be able to walk her out, but we would simultaneously probably bring up a litter team with the Stokes litter and rescue wheel, as we were initially told we had no helicopter support. Given the time of day, if we had to carry her out, we would have to hurry to have any chance of getting this done before dark.

While Matt Jordan had already been hiking in the area and had gone in on foot, I was the first to arrive by vehicle and was surprised to see Star 9 (the RSO helicopter) flying up the drainage. As I spoke to the deputy on scene I heard Star 9 on his radio say they would need someone from RMRU on board. Tough luck, eh? The air crew wants one of us on board and I'm the only one present!

They landed at the water pumping station and it took me less than five minutes to gear up. I thought we would likely do a hoist with the "screamer suit," but TFO Eric Hannum said there was a nice rock right where the subject was on the trail and it was perfect for a hover step pick-off. Eric and I discussed various contingency plans and pilot Andy Rasmussen quickly had the bird powered up and we were off.

The wind was blowing hard and the ride was quite bouncy, but Andy did a good job of putting us in a hover above the rock right next to our backpackers. When Eric signaled me to go we were about 6-8 feet up, but just before I jumped Andy brought the bird in close so it was only a 2-3 foot fall.

There were about six backpackers in total and one of them appeared to have medical training as she gave me a concise report of the medical condition of our subject, Sarah, which had been improving. Sarah was alert, ambulatory, and in good spirits. Most important for a hover pick-off, she was calm. We quickly went over exactly what she needed to do and were back on the rock, so I radioed Star 9 we were ready.

Due to the wind I was sure Andy would allow Eric to get only Sarah in the bird before backing off and then come back again for me, but Andy did a superb job of bringing the bird in for a very steady hover and Eric was able to reach out and pulled us both into the bird one at a time. Twenty-three minutes from takeoff and we were landing at the Command Post with Sarah. Glenn Henderson came out to greet us and together we walked Sarah over to waiting CalFire and AMR medics would attended to her medical needs.



**Patrick and Sarah arrive at the Command Post
Photo by Pete Carlson**

Matt Jordan made it by foot up to the trail where the backpackers were just about the time we were ready to do the hover pick-off, but the helicopter could not pick up three of us and they got another call shortly after we landed, so Matt had to hike back out. He got the short end of the stick on this mission. The other responding RMRU members had remained at the Command Post in case the helicopter rescue was not successful.

RMRU Team members present: Lee Arnson, Paul Caraher, Pete Carlson, Glenn Henderson, Matt Jordan, Patrick McCurdy, Gwenda Yates.

Two Lost Hikers Black Mt. Trail

May 8-9, 2011

Black Mt. Trail Head, San Jacinto Mountains

2011-009

Sunday Night, May 8 - written by Patrick McCurdy:

RMRU members are always trying to figure out some way to predict when missions will happen. Bad weather and inconvenience are strong predictors. Mother's Day at dinnertime with a wet storm headed in makes a mission a near certainty. The call came at 6 p.m., two hikers lost off of Black Mountain Trail.

I got there first just after dark in a light rain, followed quickly by Frank, Gwenda, Glenn, Mike, and Nick showing up shortly thereafter. The last cell phone contact with the subjects was about 7 p.m. They said they had a fire going but their phone battery was low and must have died after that call as we never heard from them again. Since we had gotten GPS coordinates from their cell phone before the battery died, Nick, Mike, and I headed out as Team 1 about 8 p.m.

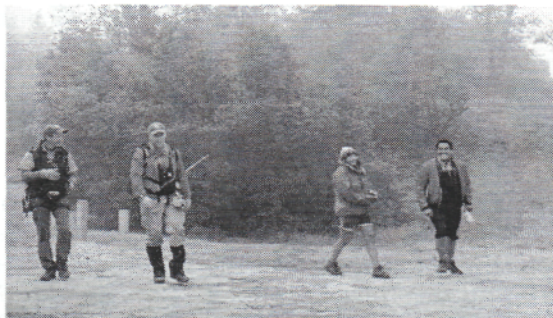
We hiked about two miles up the trail, than started bushwhacking through incredibly dense manzanita and chinquapin bushes trying to get the last half mile to the subjects' GPS coordinates. The growth was so dense that moving through it was nearly impossible. We kept calling out for the subjects, but the wind and fog made any voice contact over 1/10 of a mile impossible.

We got to the GPS coordinates, but there was no sign anyone had been there. We made our way to an area of trail that looked like someone had been earlier, but we still unable to locate our subjects. Finally around midnight, soaking wet, and with the knowledge that our subjects had a fire, the search was suspended until 6 a.m. the following morning.

Monday Morning, May 9 - written by Dana Potts:

On Monday morning I responded to the Black Mountain trail head at 6 a.m. and met up with team members Lee Arnsen and Gwenda Yates. After a brief discussion about what had been done the night before, Lee and I headed to the last known GPS coordinates from our subject's cellular phone. Upon reaching the area, Lee and I found no sign of the two and headed back to the trail to look for any sign of tracks leaving the main trail. As we approached the trail, Lee gave out a shout for the two missing hikers and we listened. Just then the wind stopped and I heard a faint voice. Lee yelled out again and the second time we could clearly hear, "we're over here."

Within 5 minutes we were with the two missing hikers. They were in good spirits for having spent a damp and cold night out. We fed them and gave them extra warm jackets to put on before walking them down the trail to the road head. The two later told us that they were able to start a survival fire for warmth but had run out of water.



**Lee, Dana, and subjects arrive at base
Photo by Patrick McCurdy**

Note: Always pack a couple extra snacks, just in case. Trail mix is an easy one, plus it has protein and carbohydrates. Put it in a plastic bag, it will pack away easy. A light weight survival blanket, bivy sack, or plastic trash bag will help keep you warm and dry all night.

RMRU Team members present Sunday night: Glenn Henderson, Mike Herman, Patrick McCurdy, Nick Nixon, Frank Snider, and Gwenda Yates.

RMRU Team members present Monday morning: Lee Arson, Dana Potts, and Gwenda Yates.

PCT Hikers Lost Off-Trail

**April 27, 2011
Pacific Crest Trail at Snow Creek
2011-008**

Written by Pete Carlson

The call on Tuesday night stated that two Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) hikers had lost the trail between Black Mountain and the desert floor at Snow Creek. In the dark the hikers had come upon a cliff that had water below it. Since they were out of water they dropped a pack down the cliff, intending to lighten their loads for down climbing to the water source. They soon realized that they could not reach the water or the pack. They called for help on a cell phone, indicating that they were OK and could spend the night out safely, but would need help the next morning.

Five RMRU team members met at Snow creek near the PCT junction at 8 a.m. Wednesday and made plans as we waited for the RSO helicopter to show up at 9 a.m. During that time we communicated by cell phone with the two lost hikers and learned that by daylight they had found a way to get to their pack and the water. They were now hiking through brush up to a ridge top where they hoped to determine their actual location. Upon reaching the ridge top our subjects reported they could see the trail again, so they continued cross-country through the brush until they reached the PCT. Just at that time the RSO helicopter arrived and began searching for our subjects. The helicopter crew soon spotted the lost hikers and reported that they were about 45 minutes away from the road. We contacted the subjects again via cell phone and they told us that they were fine to hike out on their own. The helicopter left and we just waited at the trail head for our subjects.

The hikers were fine and said they were going to continue on their hike to Canada. We wished them well and the mission concluded by noon.

Editor's note: If this mission had occurred 10-15 years ago, the hikers would probably not have carried a cell phone, and RMRU would not have heard about their predicament. They would simply have waited overnight and found their ways out the next morning, just as they did in this instance. Sometimes if weather conditions are favorable and no one is in danger it is better to wait for daylight and problem-solve accordingly. But once a call for help comes, RMRU must respond and be ready to help if needed. Cell phones can help save lives, but the convenience of cellular communication can lead to a false sense of security and/or premature calls for assistance.

RMRU Team members present: Pete Carlson, Glenn Henderson, Matt Jordon, Les Walker, and Gwenda Yates.

Urban Search Oceanside

**April 26, 2011
Oceanside, CA
2011-007**

Written by Paul Caraher

The call out alert came Monday night the 25th at approximately 2100 hours. We were to report in the morning for an "Urban Search" in Oceanside, California. From time to time RMRU will assist other counties when asked and are happy to help. Jerri Sanchez and I reported to the Oceanside Police Department at 0900 hours on the 26th and reported to the briefing. Our missing subject was an elderly gentleman in his late 70's who suffers from dementia and Alzheimer's disease. At approximately 1830 hours on Saturday the 23rd the subject wandered from his home, without telling his family members. From the time he went missing to when we were called out, San Diego SAR teams were scouring the area. At 0930 assignments were issued and members of DSAR, a San Diego Dog Team and Oceanside detectives joined RMRU and conducted two line searches in the neighboring canyons with zero success. Upon completion of our assignment we reported to the command center where we were thanked and released. Later that evening all SAR teams were called off with the Oceanside Police Department continuing the search. On Thursday morning, April 28th, our subject was found deceased in a field near his home. RMRU extends sincere condolences to the family and friends of the decedent.

RMRU Team members present: Paul Caraher and Jeri Sanchez.

Ill Hiker on PCT

**March 15, 2011
Garner Valley, Highway 74
2011-006**

Written by Nick Nixon

A callout message was sent at 12:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 15, 2011. A female high school-age subject was on a group outing on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) north of Highway 74 when she became ill and was unable to hike. Cal-Fire had first responded at 9:00 p.m. the previous evening. However, Cal-Fire was concerned that they might need assistance from a mountain-trained rescue team in evacuating the young woman. I responded with an RMRU team vehicle and joined three members of DSAR (Riverside County Sheriff's Desert Search and Rescue). This joint team was staged to support Cal-Fire as the subject was located and evacuated about 5:00 a.m.

RMRU Team members present: Nick Nixon.

Assisting team: Riverside County Sheriff's Desert Search and Rescue.

Missing Hiker Near Hemet

**March 1-2, 2011
Ramona Bowl
2011-005**

Written by Editor

At about 8 p.m. on Tuesday, March 1st, RMRU was called out to the foothills above the Ramona Bowl in Hemet. An adult male had not returned from hiking with his dog earlier that day. His car was located near a local park. A Sheriff's scent dog and helicopter Star-9 assisted RMRU members in a hasty search of the area. Sadly, the search was suspended when the subject was found deceased.

RMRU extends sincere condolences to the family and friends of the deceased.

RMRU Team members present: Michael George, Glenn Hendersen, Tom Meyers, Nick Nixon, Ty Whittersheim, and Gwenda Yates.



Missing Skier San Jacinto Peak

**February 19-21, 2011
San Jacinto Peak
2011-004**

Saturday night, February 19 - written by Editor with input from members:

We received a call at 8:30 p.m. that earlier a skier had gone to San Jacinto Peak via the Palm Springs Tramway and that he had not returned. It was snowing, the wind was blowing, and visibility was not very good. By 11:00 p.m. four RMRU members were at the Upper Tramway Station and setting up. Bob Bakos was going to remain at the station and run base, while Lee, Paul, and Donny would head up to the peak. Heading up the Sid Davis Trail was slow going in the snow storm and even wearing snow shoes the members were sinking up to their knees in the deep snow. Around 3:30 a.m. the three decided to bivvy above Tamarack Valley until morning.

At 6:30 a.m. after only three hours of rest Lee and Paul again headed towards San Jacinto Peak and Donny, who had a bad cough, went back down to base. Even on snow shoes Lee and Paul were having a really difficult time - as the slope got steeper they sank up to their thighs into the fresh, soft snow. Progress was a snail's pace and by noon they were still 200 feet below the Miller Saddle. At this point they were so tired they knew if they continued to the summit they would have to spend another night out and both had commitments on Monday. They turned back and returned to base.

Note: Donny was one of the first members to report to the Tramway and in spite of his cough he stayed until the end of the mission on Monday, helping out at base camp.

Sunday, February 20 - written by Patrick McCurdy

The search continued Sunday morning. Riverside Sheriff's Office set up its mobile command post and moved planning and operations from our usual room at the top of the Palm Springs Tramway. Team 1 was still in the field from the previous night and we sent teams to check Wellman Divide and Hidden Divide, but conditions made for slow progress. Realizing that a skier could potentially cover a huge distance, and that we had no solid clue where he was, the request was made for assistance from out-of-county teams. We asked for "Type 1" (winter alpine certified) personnel only, equipped for severe winter conditions. Our teams from the field were reporting ferocious winds and they were post-holing even while wearing snowshoes in 2-3 feet of fresh powder.

**RMRU member Rob May breaks trail
Photo by Dana Potts (RMRU)**



We were unable to deploy teams into the field via helicopter due to the extreme winds on the mountain. Los Angeles County's Air Rescue 5 was asked to assist with the search and was able to "clear" the hut near San Jacinto Peak as well as do some visual searching from the air. As the day wore on with no sign of our subject, Brian Carrico, we began drawing up plans for team assignments for Sunday night and Monday morning. Within a few hours we had about 15 assignment packets ready for field teams.

By mid-afternoon the first mutual aid team, Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team, arrived with three vehicles and nine members. As they arrived within about two hours of the call, I teased SMSRT's Art Fortini by asking him if their team sat around all the time in their vehicles all geared up and waiting for a mission. He immediately said "Sure. Don't you?" Sierra Madre's team took an assignment and headed out at dusk, knowing they would be spending the night in the field. Within an hour or two more teams started arriving and we began to deploy them to the top of the tram for an early start the next morning. Yet more mutual aid teams were due in at 6 a.m. Monday morning, and we had plenty of field assignments for them.

Missing Skier Contuned:

It should be noted that the fresh snow made this an extremely busy day for the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway and that they bent over backwards to accommodate mountain rescue teams, laden with bulky gear, riding the tram and bumping paying customers. We always get tremendous cooperation from the tram and very much appreciate their help on rescue missions. As a round the clock operation, Gwenda Yates, Donny Goetz, several sheriff deputies, and Art Fortini stayed at the command post all night, while another Sierra Madre member manned the radio at the top of the tram to maintain radio contact with the teams that spent the night in the field, continuing to search all night long. Monday, February 21 - written by Pete Carlson

At 5:30 a.m. teams were signing in at base camp at the lower Tramway and getting ready to ride the 6 a.m. tram car to the upper station to begin searching. About 15 SAR members rode to the Upper Station and there met up with another 10 SAR members who had spent the night in the Upper Station. By 7 a.m. all teams were in the field starting their assignments. More SAR teams arrived at base and by 9 a.m. 12 different SAR teams with over 40 members were in the field searching for our subject, Brian Carrico. The assignments all required breaking trail in the new snow and we were sinking in up to 2 feet eve with snow shoes on. Going up hill was not an easy task for anyone.

As the day went on several times we thought we had tracks, but they turned out to be animal tracks. Then around 11:30 a.m. the call came over the radio from Team 14 (China Lake) that they had found a snow cave and SOS marked out on the ground next to it. They had a set of tracks and started following them uphill towards Wellman Divide.



China Lake members ascend to subject
Photo courtesy of Bob Huey (China Lake)

Helicopter STAR-9 flew over, saw the tracks, and then saw a man waving from a small clearing. Team 16 (Malibu) was positioned above our subject at Wellman Divide and started down toward him. STAR-9 circled over the subject while the two ground teams closed in on him. Malibu reached the subject first and confirmed it was Brian, the missing skier. Shortly afterward the China Lake team reached the subject from below and the two teams worked together to care for the subject while STAR-9 went for fuel.

The subject was then hoisted out of the clearing into STAR-9 and flown to base, where he was put into an ambulance and taken to the hospital to be evaluated. Also, helicopter AIR-5 from Los Angeles County had just arrived at base. AIR-5 then took off and helped pick up SAR members from all over the mountain and fly them back to base. STAR-9 also picked up SAR members and brought them back. This saved searchers hours of hiking, although any teams who were within 1 hour or so of the Upper Tramway hiked back on foot and then rode the tram car down to base camp.

Subject Brian Carrico and Donny Goetz
(RMRU) at Base
photo by Matt Jordan (RMRU)



This was a major search and the Riverside Sheriff's Office personnel did a great job of helping us manage the search. It is a big job keeping track of 40 members in the field and making sure we know where everyone is and that each team is safe. A big thanks from RMRU to all SAR teams who sent members to help on this search; we could not have done it without you.

Overdue Hiker San Jacinto Peak

**January 2-3, 2011
San Jacinto Peak
2011- 003**

Written by Matt Jordon

Late Sunday evening RMRU members were notified of a third mission of the evening, the second in the San Jacinto high country. Initially reported as a missing 80 year-old in winter storm conditions, the mission understandably alarmed team members who were already deployed to rescue three lost hikers on the Upper Skyline Trail.

Immediately following the successful rescue of the hikers on the Upper Skyline, Team members Carlos, Matt, and Bill set off to conquer the Sid Davis drainage and head toward Tamarack Valley. At 9,000 feet midnight temperatures had dropped below 12 degrees and although wind gusts were a reasonable 25 mph, visibility was extremely limited at times. Furthermore, as rescuers trudged by snowshoe into Lower Tamarack Valley, an unforeseen field radio malfunction resulted in frustrating one-way communication from the Tram relay. Motivation to find the lost hiker in life-threatening conditions kept the team going strong until about 5 a.m. Physically exhausted, they bivouacked until about 7:30 a.m. The first Tram car at 6:30 a.m. brought two fresh searchers (Lee and Donny), who went right out the door and headed for San Jacinto Peak via the Round Valley Trail. After a shaky night in the snow, overnight rescuers continued toward Round Valley where they rendezvoused with the fresh team and regained radio communication. The overnight team continued on to Upper Tamarack Valley while the fresh team headed toward the peak. Additionally, other SAR teams from out-of-county were alerted to this mission, in case we did not find the missing hiker soon.



Lee Arnson in Round Valley

Around 10 a.m. the crew of the Riverside Sheriff's Star 9 helicopter offered critical assistance by determining the exact location of our subject (near the base of Cornell Peak). Rescuers all headed in that direction and soon met up with the hiker. They escorted the fit 65 year-old hiker back to Mountain Station (aka Upper Tramway Station) via the Sid Davis drainage, reaching their destination around noon. It turned out that the subject had survived the night by staying in the emergency shelter near San Jacinto Peak from about 5 p.m. Sunday until first light on Monday morning when the storm was over.

Subject Stan with RMRU rescuer Bill

Thank you to all rescuers, Tramway staff, and Riverside Sheriff's Department.

Team members present: Lee Arnson, Paul Caraher, Carlos Carter, Bill Delo, Donny Goetz. Matt Jordon, Dana Potts, Gwenda Yates.



Three Lost Hikers 7000' Skyline Trail

**January 2, 2011
Upper Skyline Trail
2011-002**

At 6 p.m. we headed to the Lake Elsinore Area of the Ortega Mountains to search for two missing hikers in the rain. Then at 7 p.m. we were turned around and told to head to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway for a Skyline Trail mission in blizzard conditions. Three hikers (father, son, and the father's girlfriend) had left Palm Springs at 10 a.m. Sunday morning to hike the 10 miles and 8000 vertical feet to the Upper Tramway Station. The son had done this several times in the past so the hikers thought that they would be OK. But in the winter the upper part of the Skyline Trail is buried in snow and ice and is very hard to find if you do not really know the way. The subjects had called for help by cell phone, saying that they had lost the trail around the 7,000 foot level and were getting very cold. While en route to the Tramway we got another call saying that an 80-year-old man had not returned from a day hike to the summit of Mt. San Jacinto. It was decided to first get the Skyline hikers out and then start searching towards the Peak. It was 10 p.m. by the time everyone arrived at the Tramway, packed up, and rode the tram car to the Upper Station. Quickly Carlos, Paul, Matt, Dana, and Bill headed out into the night with temperatures nearing 20 degrees, winds gusting to 30 mph, and visibility often extremely limited. Meanwhile, Gwenda drove the rescue vehicle further into the desert so that she could run base and have direct line of site with the Skyline Trail. The rescuers hiked from the tram station across to Grubb's Notch and gave a yell. They thought that they heard a response and immediately started down the Skyline Trail, leaving Dana on top to ensure radio communication with base. As it turned out, the three hikers had kept moving very slowly up the gully and the rescuers found them after descending only 500 feet in elevation. The female hiker was very cold and almost hypothermic because she was only wearing thin cotton pants and a light jacket. The other two hikers were cold but OK. Team members quickly got more clothing onto the woman and then started hiking everyone up the last 500 feet to the top. At times team members almost had to carry the woman to keep her moving. By 11:30 p.m. everyone was inside the Upper Tramway Station.

The female hiker was put into a warm sleeping bag and given lots of hot liquids to warm her up. Once that was done Dana and Paul stayed at the Upper Tramway Station to run base for the San Jacinto search. Carlos, Matt, and Bill went back out into the cold to start up the Sid Davis Trail to the Peak, looking for the overdue 80-year-old hiker.

Team members present: Paul Caraher, Carlos Carter, Bill Delo, Matt Jordon, Dana Potts, Gwenda Yates

Ortega Search

**January 2-3, 2011
Ortega Hwy (SR 74)
2011-001
Written by Roger May**

Just sat down to dinner at 5:30 p.m. when the "heads up search" text came in for the Ortega Highway area. This is in my area so I was going to respond if it became a mission. So when the next text came at 6 p.m. to call the rescue line, I called and the recorded message still had old mission information. I called Gwenda (callout captain) and was told to respond to the Ortega Country Cottage Candy Store on Highway 74 for a search for two missing hikers. Almost to the road head I received a text to respond to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway for a rescue. Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR) was going to do the Ortega mission while RMRU did the (concurrent) Tramway mission. Since I was almost at the road head I continued to the Ortega base and met with the Sheriff's deputy on scene. At 6:30 p.m. I called Gwenda, who asked me to stay and assist DSAR. Around 9:30 p.m. DSAR arrived with four team members, of whom Kevin was the Operations Leader. Kevin decided to send all four DSAR members and me to search and left a radio with the deputy. One problem was that we were without a map so we copied the trail head map that was on a sign post to use as our map. Another problem was the small amount of information we had on the subjects. We all had GPS devices and decided to split into two teams and meet at a trail called Four Corners. We thought that we were in the right area and were hopeful. As we continued our cold, rain-soaked search we realized that covering the area was going to be a much bigger effort than we had originally anticipated. Actually our plan to meet up never came to be (map malfunction). We made radio contact with each other and headed back to the trailhead. Radio reception was very poor and many times nonexistent. By 3 a.m. we met back at the trailhead map to discuss the area that we had covered and what was left to search. We decided to wait until morning for more search

Ortega Search continued

teams to come in and help with the search.

The morning of course was still raining and cold. At 8:30 a.m. D. Douglas with the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT) arrived and we realized we were going to need a dry command post. He commandeered a small club house next to the candy store and we started to put in place a plan of deployments. We now had another SAR team (Sierra Madre Search and Rescue) with us to help and San Diego Search and Rescue was on the way. At this time other searches were going on and ours was a lower priority so D. Douglas was asked to divert San Diego to the Palm Springs Tramway. That left us with five people to search a rapidly widening area. We decided to send out two teams of two and I would stay at base to work the radio and be Operations Leader. After new teams arrived later we could expand the search area. Teams 1 and 2 started off on the trail that we had searched last night, intending to continue on to other trails not yet searched. One mile from the trailhead and before the teams split up they made voice contact with the subjects, Heather and Devon, both 28 years old. The two subjects were in good condition after having spent the night out in the cold and rain.

RMRU members present: Roger May

Assisting teams: Desert Search and Rescue (DSAR), Sierra Madre Search and Rescue, and Riverside Sheriff's Emergency Response Team (SERT)



JOIN US

AUGUST 21st 2011

RMRU's Pancake Breakfast

in the pines

8 am Idyllwild Town Hall



Missing Hikers Marion Mountain Trail

**Dec 11, 2010
San Jacinto Mountains
2010-039**

The annual RMRU Christmas Party was just beginning around 6 p.m. at member Rob May's home when a text message announced a heads up for a search. At that time the Sheriff's deputy was still gathering information and trying to talk to the subjects by cell phone. It took about 90 minutes before we actually got called out. Two hikers had gotten a late start hiking the Marion Mountain Trail towards San Jacinto Peak. Since it is very steep they had reached the Deer Springs Trail junction at dusk and then turned around. They lost the trail while descending. Member Lee Arnson had been in the desert that day and was not attending the party. He had just arrived home in Idyllwild when the call went out. Lee lives about a 15 minute drive from the trailhead, so he headed out to meet with the deputy to try to get additional information. Three other RMRU members who were already attending the party - Chad, Matt, and Nick - agreed to join Lee and help with the search. RMRU member William Carlson, who was also not attending the party, started over to the trailhead to help out. Meanwhile, the deputy turned on his flashing red lights as he drove up the road to the trailhead, talking to the subjects on the cell phone the entire time. Eventually the subjects could see the deputy's head lights and started hiking, soon finding the trail again. By the time Lee, William, Chad, Matt, and Nick reached the trailhead, the subjects had made it back to their car. Mission completed with no RMRU members actually hiking into the field and the annual party went on as planned with everyone having a great time.

RMRU members present: Lee Arnson, William Carlson, Chard Marler, Matt Jordon, and Nick Nixon.

**Missing Hiker on Mt. Baldy
December 7, 2010
Mt. Baldy
Written by Carlos Carter**

How strange, my phone is sounding the RMRU alarm mid morning on a Monday. Even though we are on call 24/7, most of our callouts seem to happen on weekends. The message was, "Standby for a search for a missing hiker on Mt. Baldy". Sure enough, we were told to report at the command post at 0600 Tuesday morning. The missing hiker, 49 year old Michelle Yu of Venice, had gone on a day hike on Saturday, December 4, and had not returned. The local search team had been searching all day Sunday and even into Sunday night. On Monday they brought in several more teams to help. Today was day three of the search with even more teams being brought in to help search. It was an early Tuesday morning for Paul, Donny, and me as we met our RSO Liaison Deputy Zek Escobedo. We met in Upland at 5:30 am to car pool up to the Mt. Baldy Fire Station. The three of us each piled a couple bags full of winter climbing gear into the back of the Sheriff's SUV and we were at the command post by 6 am. We checked in with West Valley SAR and were told to standby for an assignment. We were to join fourteen other SAR teams to search for a hiker missing since Saturday. Since our team is "mountain certified", we were given the task of searching the summit and part of Devil's Backbone before heading down the steep south facing bowl. It was to be a clear day, but knowing we would be above 10,000 feet, we dressed for the cold on top. We received our mission - insertion by helicopter - to the summit. Within minutes we were whisked away and transported to the pickup area. As we exited the vehicle we could hear and see the helicopter making its approach to land. The safety officer barked out the commands as we rushed to waiting area. We barely had enough time to prepare ourselves as we frantically searched our packs for eye protection and helmets since we knew the dirt landing area would kick up dust and debris. We were now in a helicopter for the second day out of the past four. The past Saturday we had just had our yearly Helitac training with the Riverside Sheriff's helicopters (the best part was being hoisted up and down via cable). On this mission we landed on the summit and just stepped out. Paul, our team leader for the day, lives at sea level and we just got dropped off at 10,000 feet on ice covered rock and scree. Our hearts were pounding while we strapped on our crampons and gripped our ice axes. Although the three of us were relatively new to RMRU we had enough experience and training for this alpine mission. The mission was to head east on the Devil's Backbone trail then, at a specific GPS coordinate, head south down the bowl towards the Sierra Club Ski Hut on the Baldy Bowl trail. We were to check the drainages, ditches and any place a person could be. By the time we reached the coordinates it was sunny and getting warm so we removed our outer layers and since there was no snow or ice in the area we were to down-climb. We also removed our crampons and put the ice axes away.

Missing Hiker on Mt. Baldy continued:

Other nearby SAR teams were doing the same thing and every few minutes we could hear someone calling out the subject's name and echoing back. Our search area was steep, rugged and full of scree. There were many times when a simple push of the toes pointing downhill would start a two-foot slide down the hill. We spread out and did a zigzag pattern downwards. We eventually cleared our area and were at the Ski Hut, as were other SAR teams. Paul was in communication with the command post providing coordinates and status on the way down. We were asked to take lunch and wait for the next assignment.

As the different teams arrived and broke for lunch it turned out that we were all the same, volunteers eager to help a people in need. It lifted everyone's spirits to spend a few minutes together discussing SAR topics and of course checking out each other's gear as all of us had come up empty handed for signs or clues about our missing hiker. After lunch we had another assignment to continue looking as we descended the Baldy Bowl trail. Although we went off trail many times to look at possible fall areas we again came up empty handed and eventually made it off the trail and onto the dirt road. We were then transported back to the command post at approximately 1630 hours. RMRU was one of fourteen teams searching that day and no one found any sign of the subject.

Late the next day our subject was found deceased in an ice chute on the north side of Mt. Baldy 2100 feet below the summit. Our condolences go out to the family and friends of the subject.

RMRU members present: Paul Caraher, Carlos Carter, Donny Goetz.



Body Search Whitewater Canyon

Dec 05, 2010

**Whitewater Canyon, Interstate 10
2010-037**

Written by Editor

RMRU was to meet at the trailhead in Whitewater Canyon at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday morning to help the Sheriff search for a body. Members arrived and were getting their assignments when the Sheriff's canine team, which had started searching earlier that day, found the body. The Sheriff thanked us for showing up and supporting them even though we were not needed this time around.

RMRU Member Injured on Tahquitz Rock

November 27, 2010

Tahquitz Rock

2010-036

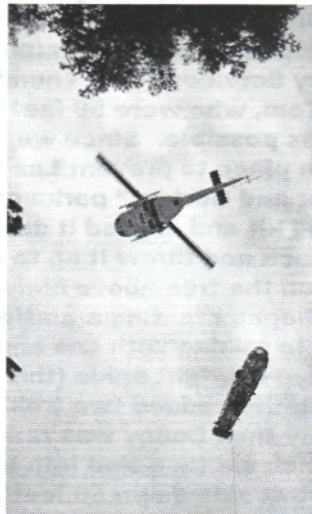
Written by Pete Carlson

Seven RMRU team members met at Humber Park at 9 a.m. Saturday for an unofficial training to hike around Tahquitz Rock, learn the starting points of some of the main routes, and determine the best approaches to them. We started up the North Gully in beautiful sunny weather, enjoying the hike and talking as we ascended. By 10 a.m. we were near the base of the Rock, pointing out routes and telling stories about past missions. The ground was covered in fresh snow on top of a layer of hard packed snow and ice. We were nearing the top of the North Gully where it tops out at the notch and opens to the south side when we got to the first problem of the day. Just below the notch there is a short section of third class scrambling that was covered with patches of snow and ice. Lee took off his pack and climbed up 10 feet to assess our approach. He reported that we could tie a rope to a tree above, and then everyone could attach an ascender to the rope and climb up safely, carrying his pack. Les stated that he had a rope in his pack and started to climb, his pack on his back, to give the rope to Lee. Les was eight feet up when he reached with his left hand to grab a hold that turned out to be covered with ice. He immediately came off and landed perfectly on his feet, facing the 35 degree slope that we were on. Unfortunately Les' right leg punched through the snow and sank another two feet and we heard a snap. The rest of us thought that he had landed on a bush beneath the snow, but that was not the case. The first thing Les said was, "I broke my leg; help me." It was 11 a.m. and two of us started making cell phone calls at once. Lee called Gwenda, our RMRU call-out captain, and Donny called 911. Within 60 seconds of the fall Gwenda was calling out the Team and Donny had notified the Riverside Sheriff (standard procedure is to contact the Sheriff who then gets an official Office of Emergency Services - OES - number and then we can get help from other agencies, if needed). Paul, Nick, and Tom, who were 50 feet below us, climbed up to Les to start first aid and to help get him as comfortable as possible. Since we were all on a 35 degree slope we had to move carefully and quickly get some ropes in place to prevent Les from sliding further down the slope. I climbed down to Les and put a down sweater and Gortex™ parka on him to keep him warm. Then I got a SAM Splint and Ace bandage from my first aid kit and carried it down to the three first aiders. I then climbed back up and got a rope from Lee's pack and threw it up to him, following with a sling and some technical gear. Lee planned to set up rope on the tree above him and rappel back down to us rather than down climb to where Les had fallen. Donny began creating a platform in the snow 50 feet below Les so we would have a level place to care for him. In talking with Les and upon examination, Paul determined that Les had a compound tib-fib fracture above his right ankle (this was later confirmed by hospital personnel). Paul and Nick put on the SAM Splint, then added two trekking poles wrapped with an Ace bandage to further stabilize the broken bones. By then Donny was ready below. Meanwhile, I set up an anchor 20 feet above using another rope, which we then tied into Les' climbing harness. While I belayed, the three first aiders helped Les slide on his left side down 50 feet to the platform that Donny had made. Lee rappelled down a rope that was doubled around a tree so that once he was safely down he could pull the rope back out. Now came the waiting game. All of the involved coordinating agencies were doing their parts. The Riverside Sheriff and Idyllwild Fire tried to procure a helicopter for the evacuation. The Riverside Sheriff's helicopter was not flying on this particular day, but the RSO made attempts to call in a pilot on his or her day off. The Idyllwild Fire Department always sends an ambulance comes to Humber Park whenever there is an injury on Tahquitz Rock and they did so on this day as well. Idyllwild Fire also worked with CAL FIRE to try to get a helicopter for us. In the mean time we began planning a route down the North Gully in case we had to carry Les out. By then other team members were arriving at Humber Park and Team 1, Chad and Will, started up with two 200 foot ropes. Team 2, comprised of Glenn, Rob, Roger, Mike, and Matt, would carry in a litter if needed. It was now 12 o'clock noon and we got word that CAL FIRE 901 would be in the air in 10 minutes with two medics and a litter. The plan was for the helicopter to fly Les to a big field at Astro Camp in Idyllwild. This is the closest area in which CAL FIRE can land. An ambulance would then take him to Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs for medical evaluation and treatment. CAL FIRE 901 flew over and checked out the area first, then started to lower one of the medics down on the hoist cable. Once on the ground, the medic sent the cable back up and the litter came down next. With the litter on the ground the cable was on its way back up when wind knocked it into the rocks. This meant that the helicopter had to return to Astro Camp to check out the cable for safety. This is standard practice with helicopters; whenever anything unusual happens they always land and re-inspect equipment.



Les ready to go!

We got Les into the litter, securing him for the hoist out, just as the helicopter returned. Les went up first, followed by the medic, and the helicopter flew off. Then all was quiet. It was now 1:15 p.m., 2 hours and 15 minutes from fall to evacuation. We took a break to eat and drink, then packed up ropes and gear for the hike out. As we started down the North Gully we met Chad and Will only 400 feet below us. They took Les' equipment from us to lighten our loads and Chad had cold pizza and Gator Aid as a treat for us. As we continued down we met up with members of Team 2 who had also come up about ½ mile to meet us. At 2:45 p.m. we reached Humber Park where Gwenda was running base camp.



Half way up

Les was to have surgery the next day (Sunday) and as I write this post I have not heard how it went or what the long term outcome will be. We all wish Les a speedy recovery and hope to see him back in action with the Team soon. We will post an update on Les' status to this web site in the future. As the appointed Team Leader for the rescue, I am proud of every member of our Team. When the fall happened everyone just did what needed to be done as quickly as possible in a safe and effective manner.

RMRU would like to thank the pilot and crew of CAL FIRE 901. They did an excellent job of evacuating Les from the mountain and it was a pleasure to work with such competent, professional people.

RMRU members present (training): Lee Arnson, Paul Caraher, Pete Carlson, Donny Goetz, Tom Myers, Nick Nixon, and Les Walker.

RMRU members present (mission): Will Carlson, Glenn Henderson, Mike Herman, Matt Jordon, Chad Marler, Rob May, Roger May, and Gwenda Yates.

Nov 22, 2010
Palm Springs Aerial Tramway
2010-035

Written by Editor

We received a call at 2:30 p.m. that two hikers could not find the trail back from San Jacinto Peak. While RMRU members prepared to respond, State Park rangers made contact by mobile phone and gave them directions to the trail. The subjects were subsequently able to find the trail and hiked to the Upper Tramway station. RMRU was called off at 3 p.m.

Missing Hiker Marion Mountain Trail

November 13-14, 2010
San Jacinto Mountains
2010-034

Written by Kevin Varner

The text message stated that there was a mission for a lost hiker in the Idyllwild area, and the team was short on members. A number of team members were on a camping trip in Death Valley and unavailable for the mission. I called the rescue line and stated that I was available for the search, but it would take a while since I was visiting family in the Los Angeles area. Gwenda Yates told me that any help would be appreciated. I grabbed all the gear I had available and started out on a three hour drive to Idyllwild.

I received a text message shortly before 9:30 p.m. that base ops was being moved to the Deer Springs trailhead. Minutes later I received a call from Les Walker in which he said, "Pack for an all-nighter, we've got a lot of ground to cover." We had been informed that the subject was an experienced hiker who had had survival training, was in good physical condition, but was equipped only with a jacket.

I reached the base at Deer Springs Trailhead at midnight and found two sheriff deputies, Les Walker, and Carlos Carter waiting for me. Les was running base and informed me that the 28 year old hiker had become separated from his group (six in total) while descending from San Jacinto peak. The group had originally departed from the Marion Mountain trailhead and had returned to the same location. Another team, Lee Arnson and Bob Bakos, were currently clearing the Seven Pines trail. Carlos and I were instructed to clear the Deer Springs Trail to the Marion Mountain Junction. Both search teams would then descend down the Marion Mountain Trail from the point where all three trails converge.

I packed whatever food and cold weather gear I had available (which wasn't much) and started out with Carlos on the Deer Springs trail at roughly 12:30 a.m. It was very dark and the wind was howling, which decreased any chance of finding the subject if he was off trail. We gave yells every few minutes in hopes of hearing a response, but the wind made it very difficult. We checked for tracks at many points, but found no tracks that pointed downhill (the only possible route the subject would have taken).

Roughly a half hour after beginning our search the radios lost contact with base. Carlos and I could receive transmissions from Les at base; however, we could not transmit ourselves. This would later prove problematic for the other team members. I was very impressed by Carlos' tenacity and endurance. During our hike, Carlos informed me that he had spent the entire day hiking and reached San Jacinto Peak earlier that afternoon. I don't know how many miles Carlos put in over that 48 hour period, but he was trooper all the way through.

After searching for three hours to no avail, we reached the Strawberry Springs Junction. It was incredibly cold and windy, and we both agreed that a couple hours sleep was the best course of action. We figured it would be best to sleep next to the trail junction in case the subject may pass by during the night. We braved through the cold and managed to catch a couple hours of sleep. We woke early the next morning around 6:15 a.m. and ate a quick breakfast of Kits-Kats and Slim Jims. We struck out on the trail again around 6:30 a.m.

Our radios were still down and we were unable to communicate with base. At this point, we could neither send nor receive transmissions. We stuck to our original mission plan to reach the Marion Mountain

Missing Hiker Marion Mountain Trail Continued:

Junction and then return to base via the Marion Mountain Trail. Upon reaching the Marion Mountain Junction we encountered a lone hiker on his way to the Mt. San Jacinto Peak. He said he was not our missing subject but would keep his eyes open for him. We descended down the Marion Mountain Trail and soon spotted a Sheriff's helicopter circling nearby overhead. Carlos and I thought that they might have found the subject and were commencing with a rescue. We would later find out that in fact they were looking for us.

Carlos and I continued down the Marion Mountain Trail as planned in the hopes that the subject had been found and rescued. We were relieved to see a person in a familiar orange shirt walking up the trail. It was fellow team member Chad Marler. He informed us that the subject had bedded down the night before, not far from our location, but could not hear our yells. The subject was only equipped with a jacket to stay warm and used the pine needles and leaves on the forest floor to make a blanket to stay warm. He awoke at first light and managed to hike down the Marion Mountain Trail just a few hours ahead of us.

Chad gave us a lift back to base where we were greeted by fellow team members Les Walker, Lee Arnson, Bob Bakos, Gwenda Yates and Sheriff's Deputy Cadenhead. As we reviewed the mission, our team members gave us a breakfast of hot coffee and warm Mountain Muffins. The mission was an overall success because the subject survived the ordeal without any injury and all the team members did a terrific job. Les Walker did a terrific job running base, planning a thorough search, and coping with the faulty communications equipment. Lee Arnson and Bob Bakos did a terrific job clearing their trail and sticking to the mission plan. Carlos Carter deserves particular recognition for his tenacity and determination. He had climbed San Jacinto Peak the day before and then stuck out the entire mission without any complaints.

RMRU members present: Lee Arnson, Bob Bakos, Carlos Carter, Chad Marler, Kevin Varner, Les Walker, and Gwenda Yates.

Stranded Climbers On Tahquitz Rock

November 7-8, 2010
Tahquitz Rock
2010-033

Written by Donny Goetz

After having spent the weekend in Idyllwild for our monthly team training, a 13+ mile hike from Humber Park out to the Desert Divide, Les Walker and I had finally decided that by 8 p.m. on Sunday it was safe to say that we "probably wouldn't be called out for a mission". I hopped in my truck and began the two hour drive back home to Orange County.

I had just passed Mountain Center when the first text came out; "Heads up, we have stuck climbers on Tahquitz rock, one pitch from the top. Not called out yet but get ready."

I was still sore and tired from the hike the day before but I knew that this wasn't the time to wimp out! Only part-way down the mountain, the forecasted storm was just rolling in. I knew our window of opportunity was narrow. I had just turned around when Les called me to make sure I was on my way back. We decided to meet back at his house and rally from there. I met up with Les, and we drove back down toward the Village Market where Sheriff's Deputy Garvin was parked. We spoke with Deputy Garvin and informed him of the incoming weather. At this point, we were still not officially called out. Les and I made it known that the weather was going to escalate the situation and that we needed to get the green light ASAP. Deputy Garvin radioed our concerns back to dispatch; we waited.

At 8:39 p.m. the second text came over: "We are called out, respond to Humber park. Call the rescue line."

Les, Deputy Garvin, and I headed up to Humber Park. RMRU team member Lee Arnson was also en route from his home and arrived at Humber Park within one minute of our arrival. We immediately began sorting out the technical gear that we felt we would need for the mission.

Stranded Climbers On Tahquitz Rock Continued:

Deputy Garvin filled us in with all the info he had about the stranded climbers. Having spoken with them via cell phone, Deputy Garvin knew that the two 23-year-old Santa Cruz climbers were on the White Maiden's Walkway approximately one pitch (rope length) from the top of the rock, that they weren't injured, and that they did have insulated jackets. We packed an assortment of cams, hexes, webbing, and ropes. Lee packed more than his share of the gear!

The hasty team of Les Walker, Lee Arnson, and myself (Team 1) began to hike shortly after 9 p.m. We made good time up the trail, taking approximately 40 minutes to reach Lunch Rock (the base of the cliff). We continued up the south side of the cliff towards the Friction descent route. Route finding was difficult with the absence of moonlight but we eventually found our way to the base of the rock. At this point, I would estimate our hiking time at 1 hour 20 minutes. We were pushing hard knowing that the storm was on its way.

It took us roughly 25 minutes to ascend the Friction route. The climbing is not strenuous here under normal circumstances but the weight of our packs and the darkness slowed progress somewhat. We arrived on top of Tahquitz Rock at approximately 11:10 p.m. We carefully navigated higher up the rock toward the top of the White Maiden's Walkway route. Les and I had both climbed the route several times and were familiar with the rock at the top. We were still unsure of exactly where the climbers were and were attempting to make voice contact. The wind made this particularly difficult.

Meanwhile, RMRU team members Paul Caraher and Carlos Carter had arrived at Humber Park and had established base communications with our team. Paul and Carlos helped to guide us into position by sighting the position of our headlamps relative to those of the stranded climbers. This sped things up and in a matter of minutes, Les had positioned himself directly above the climbers and established verbal with them. Lee and I shuttled the gear up to the new staging point and I set about building anchors for our ropes. Again, being familiar with this particular route proved invaluable as we knew that we would need to set ropes in two different locations due to the traversing nature of the end of the route. Les clipped his rope to the first anchor, had me double check his set-up, and proceeded over the edge into the darkness toward our subjects. I finished building the anchor for the second rope.

Les reached the subjects and radioed their status. They were cold but in good enough shape to climb if we could get them on ropes. I followed over the side down to a higher ledge. The plan was to have the subjects climb under their own power from their current location to the higher ledge where I was established. Les ascended his rope to my position, trailing the subjects' rope for use as a belay line. The subjects' rope was quite tangled and it took Les several minutes to sort out. Meanwhile, I cleaned up the anchor at the upper ledge. After "flaking out" the subject's rope, Les rappelled back to the subjects' position some 50 feet below mine and got them tied in. As soon as I called out "belay on", Hannah was on her way up to me, assisted by Les. She reached me, very cold, wet, and ready to be off the rock! Les returned to Steven, got him tied to the line, and sent him up to me. Les cleaned the subjects' anchor and climbed up to join us on the higher ledge. He continued up to the top while I remained with the subjects. We were very exposed to the wind and rain but were only 50 vertical feet from the top so we knew the final push should go quickly. Again, Hannah went up first, belayed this time by Les. She made short work of the climb and soon it was Steven's turn. The weather was building and at this point visibility was about 25 feet. Steven also made short work of the climb and I was then free to make my way back to the top. I cleaned the gear from the anchor and ascended the fixed line to the summit, stopping briefly to deal with a rope that, thanks to the wind, was tangled in a tree.

Lee had been helping to keep everything organized on the summit and had also brewed up some delicious hot cocoa. The subjects had their fill and Les and I finished the rest. It was a great morale boost! We radioed back to base that the subjects and Team 1 were all safely on top of the formation and that we would soon begin our descent. We packed up the gear and headed out. The Friction route we had come up was now too wet to safely descend without rigging ropes for rappel. We deemed this less desirable in the sake of time and instead headed up towards the summit of the rock where we could drop over the side into the north gully. We also felt that this exposure would be more sheltered from the elements. We carefully picked our ways up the rock and were soon in the gully. At this point, the rain had turned to intermittent snow flurries. But we were moving steadily and the subjects were in good spirits.

We plodded down the gully, led by Lee. Les and I were really feeling the toll of the weekend at this point and were opting for a slightly slower pace. We made our ways steadily down the gully into the talus and eventually to the faint climber's trail that parallels Strawberry Creek. We had maintained

Stranded Climbers On Tahquitz Rock Continued:

radio contact with base throughout the night and, being very close, Paul and Carlos offered to come up from the parking lot to meet us and assist however they could. They met us at the creek crossing and offered to take gear off of anyone. The subjects didn't have much on them so attention turned toward the team. Somehow Lee still seemed to be feeling like a champ and declined their offer, instead offering assistance to Les and me. We gladly accepted and were back on our way to the parking lot.

It was just approaching the 3 a.m. mark, putting the total mission time at roughly six hours. Everyone was back safely! We gave a brief report to the deputy on scene and were soon shaking hands and on our way home. Les ended the mission with the "mission is a 90, all out safe" text. Another successful, and my first, mission for RMRU!

L to R: Donny, subjects Steven and Hannah, Lee, and Les

photo by Carlos Carter



RMRU members present: Lee Arnson, Paul Caraher, Carlos Carter, Donny Goetz, and Les Walker.



Rescue point on the White Maiden Route



Message from Editor:

I have only been on the team a short 3 years, but during this time I have experienced some incredible adventures with some incredible people. I have seen my team save lives, train countless hours to be prepared for the time that, when called, they are ready, all the while taking away time from their families and careers. It takes a special person to be a volunteer, let alone a Search and Rescue volunteer. Maybe you know someone like this? If so, send them our way, we are always looking for new members.

Please contact info@rmru.org



Team Members

Lee Arnsom, Bob Bakos, Jim Bakos, Steve Bryant, Paul Caraher, Pete Carlson, William Carlson, Carlos Carter, Kirk Cloyd, Bill Delo, Joe Erickson, Deano Esades, Mike George, Donny Goetz, Glenn Henderson, Mike Herman, Ralph Hoetger, Kim Jordon, Matt Jordon, Doug Kelbert, Lew Kingman, Grace Manues, Jim Manues, Chad Marler, Robert May, Roger May, Patrick McCurdy, Kelly McDole, Tom Myers, Floyd Nixon, Dana Potts, Aaron Reyes, Jeri Sanchez, Brad Scott, Frank Snider, Jeffrey Toscas, Kevin Varner, Kevin Walker, Les Walker, Dave Webb, Ty Whittersheim, Brian Wood, Gwenda Yates, Randy Yates,



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