

## Entire Boy Scout troop hypothermic

**November 12, 1978**  
**Dark Canyon area**  
**1978-047**

By Ed Hill

At 2 a.m., the phone rang. The team was asked to search for a Boy Scout troop, lost in the Dark Canyon area. We were to meet at the Idyllwild Sheriff's Substation at 5:30 a.m. I called my people and went back to bed for an hour.

Arriving in Idyllwild, we were sent to the Pine Cove Fire Station to look after the boys who had been evacuated via a snow cat. We started cooking cans of soup and cocoa and carefully wrapped up bunches of boys in blankets. While we were doing this, we were told that T. J. Smith, the deputy left at the scene, had found another boy, deceased, wrapped up in one of the collapsed tents. Jim Fairchild and I volunteered to go with Captain Ray Canova to evacuate the body.

We rode in on the snow cat, relieved the deputy, took the pictures that the coroner requires, wrapped the body in one of the sleeping bags and sent it out on the snow cat.

Both Jim and I were numb from what we had just seen. A whole group of scouts and their leaders had succumbed to hypothermia. There had been no one in good enough condition to take the necessary steps to keep the whole



Jim Fairchild

**SAD TASK, HALF COMPLETED. Two unidentified men, Ed Hill (looking at camera) and Jim Fairchild (taking photo) had just loaded, the body of the deceased Boy Scout, along with some camping equipment. The other half of the equipment, pictured at right, was removed by a second trip up the snow covered Dark Canyon road.**

group alive. We found sleeping bags which could have helped keep the group warm still on pack-frames and found food which should have been eaten still in bags. The group's clothing was totally inadequate for the mountains at this time of year. We found soaked Levis and tennis shoes.

Our mountains which are so hospitable for three seasons of the year can be arctic in the winter. As long as people go into them unprepared for these conditions, lives will be lost.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.