

Skiers split up, one lost

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By Glenn Henderson

At 8:30 Sunday night I received an emergency phone call from Kevin. A skier was reported overdue and lost by her husband. They had been skiing to Jean Peak and were part way up the mountain when she, Christhild Anderson, decided it was getting to icy and turned back to go to the tram. When her husband Robert Anderson returned to the tram, Christhild was not there. He waited until 4:00 p.m. and then asked the rangers to help in finding her. The rangers then started searching and finding no sign, called RMRU out.

We met at the lower tram station and started gathering gear and getting ready to go. A sense of urgency is always felt by me and probably by all members in this type of search as the subject may be injured, possibly seriously, especially considering the weather report from the top of the tram - 20 to 25 M.P.H. winds and temperatures in the low 20's.

The tram did their usual great job by staying open way past closing hours and ferrying members and gear up the steep mountain. We finally got everyone to the upper tram station at about 12:00 a.m. Jim Fairchild was operations leader and made up four different teams to go four different ways. Before sending us out he interviewed Robert to better understand where he last saw his wife. While this was going on we got word that ranger Rick Brown had lost a crampon while searching and had slid 300-400 feet down an icy slope. He was reported to have difficulty breathing and some pain in the chest area from hitting a tree. He was helped to the Round Valley ranger cabin by head ranger Manfred Knaak where he spent the night.

Jim then fired up the teams, sending Bernie McIlvoy, Cameron Robbins and Craig Britton to the Tamarack Bench. Rick Pohlers, Mark Hebert and Mark Rhoads were sent to the Wellman Divide. Joe Erickson and Jim Anholm to the Sid Davis Drainage. And that left Bruce Gahagan, Kevin Walker and I to go to the east end of the Wellman Divide.

Joe's team and ours started out together to the Round Valley ranger cabin before splitting up so that Jim who is a M.D. could check Rick Browns condition. He did not seem to be in serious condition, but still had some chest pains. From there we split up, Joe and Jim down the Sid Davis drainage, and us up onto the divide. Joe was especially excited as he knew he would end up back at base camp before daylight and would then get a lot of flying time in the morning, as the green light was already given for the helicopter at first light.

We completed our assignment at about 5:00 a.m. and all teams bivouacked until 6:30. After 1½ hours of sleep, everyone was ready to continue the search. As Joe was waiting in Long Valley for Don Landells to pick him up he saw a lone female skier coming towards him. He gave a shout and yes it was a still lost Christhild Anderson. She was fine after digging out a small snow cave, sitting on her skies, covering her feet with her daypack and spending a cold night on the mountain (smart girl). Joe led her to the ranger station and a reunion with her husband.

After hearing the good news on the radio my team set a record for packing up and beat it to the Round Valley ranger cabin. From there, Don flew us to the Palm Springs Hospital with Rick Brown. Don then flew all other teams from the field to the lower tram (except Joe, he was already in base camp, and had to ride the tram down). Thus ended another successful RMRU mission with a smile on everyone's face.



BACK AT LONG VALLEY - RMRU member Joe Erickson helps Christhild Anderson out of her skis after she wandered into the Long Valley area after spending a cold night out on the mountain.

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.