

## Three Hikers Lose Trail – Spend Cold Night Out

**November 24, 2000**  
**High Country, San Jacinto Mtns**  
**2000-027**

By Gene Baune

Family members reported John O'Connor, 54, of Los Osos, Michael Poehlman, 46, of Vista, and John Kuezwara, 54, of San Diego missing while hiking the Marion Mountain Trail when they failed to return as planned at 3 pm. At approximately 8:30 on 24 November, the Sheriff's Department requested assistance with the search and by 10:45 the first team of three members had started up the Marion Mountain Trail, with full winter rescue loads, towards San Jacinto Peak to retrace the hiker's planned route.



After a long night of hiking and battling the steep, icy terrain Team One bivouacked at Little Round Valley at 4 am. By 6 am Team One began the final 1.5 miles to the peak to check the hikers hut. Three additional teams had also been put in the field to begin checking side trails and alternate routes.

At 7 am the three men walked out and reported that they had lost the trail in the darkness. The men had spent the night huddled around a campfire in mid 20 degree temperatures dressed in tee shirts and shorts. They had bivouacked for from the trail so they did not hear the calls as searchers passed through the area.

Members responding: Bruce Sanny, Steve Bryant (Operations Leader), Larry Ross, Darrell Bell, Terry Greenstein, Jim Fairchild, and Gene Baune

Teams from Sierra Madre, San Bernardino County and Hemet Search and Rescue also responded.

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.