



Search-Rescue 80 Year Old Fallen

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Ortega Highway Candy Store
2013-010

Written by - Mark Houston

Wednesday night we were called out for a lost hiker off the Ortega highway. As it turns out, a group of friends went on a hike together. The youngest of the group was 74 and the oldest was in his 80s. They planned a hike to the Simmons Summit. The last half mile to the summit can be very steep and the group had thinned out with one of the friends making it to the summit before the rest. After waiting some time for the rest of the group to summit, he decided to head back. On his way back he took the wrong path, which led to him getting engulfed in Manzanita trees and completely losing his way. The rest of the group made it to the top and began to call out. Locating the missing man by voice, they realized no one from their group had the ability to descend to help him and the lost man was too exhausted to make his way back up. They all agreed the best course of action was to have the lost man stay where he was and to get help. They left a metal pole they found pointing in the direction of their friend's voice and returned.

When we meet them at the candy shop, they were very helpful, giving us exact location of where he had left the trail, what he had with him and offered whatever other help they could provide. Paul and I started our hike at 10 P.M. The weather threatened rain but it did not come, which was a mixed blessing--this meant the subject would not be stuck out in the rain but on the other hand, the overcast conditions made it impossible for the helicopter to pull him out. When we reached the summit, we found the pole and began calling out his name in the direction it pointed. To our surprise, that is exactly where he was. He had stayed where they had left him. We still had a tough route ahead of us, but at least we knew where he was.

For the next hour we swam our way through Manzanita trees periodically calling out to the subject and asking him to shine the light from his walky-talky to help us stay on track. We reached him and found him more beaten up than we had expected, yet in good spirits. He had fallen at some point and chipped a tooth and, either from the fall or just the climb through the trees, cut his hands up and torn his pants. I dressed his hands as best we could and Paul lent him some gloves. We used a pair of personal rain pants to keep him warm. He had plenty of water with him so we warmed up some cocoa and

food. He was too exhausted to move so we made camp.



**Subject in warming bag and Mark
Photo by Paul Caraher**

The next morning was still overcast, so with no guarantee of a helicopter, we began our long trip back. By a stroke of luck, we were convinced to bring a machete before leaving base. This made a huge difference. Paul spent the whole time chopping a path through the trees while I dug makeshift steps in the loose ground and then every 15 feet or so, we would stop and push/pull the subject to another resting spot. Finally the weather broke, and we got word that the helicopter was on their way. We kept climbing until we reached a good spot for the helicopter to pick us up.

The helicopter lowered the screamer suit and we had the subject out within minutes. A few more minutes, and they were back to pick us up. AMR checked the subject out and decided to bring him to the hospital to make sure he was okay. The last update we

received was from his son, saying his dad was back to his old self and hiking again--this time, however, he plans to stay on the trail.

RMRU team members present: Paul Caraher, Glenn Henderson, Mark Houston, Roger May, and Gwenda Yates.

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.