

# RMRU NEWSLETTER

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A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT CORPORATION  
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MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

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Walt Walker, Editor

## Search and Rescue



ALL 15 MINUTES OF IT!

1 JAN., TUE. — SEARCH — No. 7401M

San Jacinto Mountains

By Hank Schmel

1974 had a sad beginning for Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Lonberger. For it was their son George who was overdue from a day hike up to San Jacinto Peak. The New Year was only 15 minutes old when the Riverside County Sheriff's Department called for RMRU's assistance and ended the welcoming that RMRU members were giving the New Year. The team was able to muster 11 members by 3 a.m. To add to our problem we already faced, we received another call that two young boys were missing on the Palm Springs side of the mountain. This mission was handled by the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team, who we had called for back-up.

The weather was really getting bad. The wind was gusting to 25 mph, it was snowing and the temperature was 20 degrees. By 6 we had four teams on the trails. Jim had met a hiker who had seen Lonberger on San Jac peak at about noon Monday. It was now 10 a.m. and we had about 35 MRA members in the field. The San Diego Mountain Rescue Team arrived at 11 a.m. and it was at this time when George Lonberger came into base camp. After talking with him it was found that he became disoriented after leaving the peak and headed down towards Deer Springs. He expressed astonishment when he spoke of the quickness with which the storm came in. He said he dug a hole in the pine needles and went to sleep. He also said he was very cold and hungry. Considering the weather conditions I would say that

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George is a very lucky young man, besides restoring happiness into the saddened hearts of his parents.

How It Was Up On The Mountain . . . .

By Jim Fairchild

Pete Carlson, Bernie McIlvoy, and I had the fine assignment of hiking to San Jacinto Peak to determine whether George was there or somewhere along the trail. Reaching Saddle Junction (8100') was no problem, but it seemed extra cool up there. The intensity of the storm increased as we gained elevation. From the saddle northward up Angel's Glide to Wellman's Cienega we encountered bothersome drifts, gusts of wind up to about 50 mph, swirling snow that obscured vision. I took off my poncho which frequently blew up into my face. The exertion of hiking with heavy packs kept up our bodies' temperatures. Footing is always "squirrely" if not treacherous in varying conditions of soft and crusted snow, you just can't get good traction.

We were in a fascinating wonderland of snow-encrusted trees and shrubs. All leaves were enlarged many times with pure-white ice. Occasional radio contacts with other parties helped keep in touch with reality.

At Wellman's Divide (9600') we stopped for pack adjustment and suddenly were aware of much reduced temperatures, increased wind velocity — much increased concern for George should he be high on the mountain — no way he could survive for over an hour without the kind of clothing and equipment that made the hike almost fun for us. A mile farther on, across the eastern slopes to where the Tamarack Valley Trail comes in, I had a problem getting a broken zipper on my pack back in position. Bernie helped fix it, but not before the ends of both my thumbs froze white and hard, "click, click" they said as I tapped them together. Back inside my bulky gloves they quickly re-warmed with no further problem. As we strode up the big switchback that leads past Frank Miller Peak (10,500') just east of the main peak, and having devoured numerous candy bars to maintain blood sugar, we overheard a broken radio transmission with Dan MacIntosh's voice saying, ". . . the subject has been found . . ." We radioed down to Miner Harkness of the Sierra Madre team at the tramway and asked for confirmation. Soon we zoomed cross-country down and toward the tram. I'm sure the temperature was at least down to zero Fahrenheit because at the Long Valley Ranger Station our friend Jerry Henderson startled us by saying it was 18 deg. F. after we commented on how balmy it was down there — shedding clothes.

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Had we found George alive at the higher elevations in the conditions of cold, wind, swirling snow coming off deep, soft drifts, the three of us would have had quite a time caring for him, even with the adequate equipment we carried. We are quite thankful he got out in good condition.



With snow still coming down, George Lonberger was welcomed back by the family dog, from his long cold night spent out on the mountain.

1 JAN., TUE. — SEARCH — No. 7402C  
Beaumont Area  
By Walt Walker

When the call came for the mission above at 20 minutes into the new year I had to say no because of a lingering bronchial condition. When Al Andrews called again at 2:30 a.m. and said two boys were missing, I once again had to say no.

Al called the Sierra Madre Search & Rescue Team for assistance as all responding RMRU members were already hiking in the San Jacinto mountains.

Just as the Sierra Madre members were about to start the search, the boys were located, cold and wet but not injured.

13 JAN., SUN. — RESCUE — No. 7403A  
Ortega Highway, above Elsinore  
By Walt Walker

It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon and the dull

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Super Bowl game was just over when Al Andrews' conference call came. A 20 year old girl had fallen and was injured.

Myself, like all other RMRU members, hurry a little more than usual when we have a reported injury situation. Heading up the Ortega Highway I caught up with Bernie McIlvoy as he was slowed by Sunday drivers. When we arrived at the scene, the girl was in the ambulance, having been transported down slippery moss covered boulders by a group of volunteer firemen from San Juan Capistrano.

27 JAN., SUN. — SEARCH — No. 7404M  
Santa Rosa Mountains  
By Rich Morris

Did I ever tell you the one about the time when Alan Nichols was left sitting alone on a rock by his fellow Sierra Club members and told they'd be right back and he thought that they didn't or wouldn't and they finally had to call the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and three Search and Rescue teams?

Well anyway, on Sunday morning Al Andrews called to ask me if I would drive the 'Pumpkin' up the mountain since everybody else was supposed to be on the training mission (including myself). So, I dashed off to the fire house, loaded my gear up, and headed for Martinez Peak in the Santa Rosa Mountains above Palm Springs.

As I headed out Interstate 10 I continually broadcast into the blind hoping to mobilize our team. Near Banning lo and behold: a response from Dan MacIntosh. He said they would start right down. I also learned that our friends from the San Diego Rescue Team were training in Tahquitz Canyon and that they were evacuating to help the search. I had the Sheriff call Al to advise him of the manpower situation.

With the forces mobilized and ready to go, all that was left was to get a base camp organized and start hiking . . . but what's this? The truck has just stopped dead above the 3000 foot mark on Highway 74 and **it won't move!** Quick, roll it off the road as rapidly as possible and set road flares; very dangerous, narrow curve, and lots of tourists. Call Sheriff, direct traffic, wait for help.

At last help arrives: Deputy Sheriffs Butlow and Nehen arrive, roll up sleeves, and jury-rig truck with passing motorist's tools. It worked well enough to get up the hill.

Finally I arrived at the base. Jack Schnurr and Art Bridge had set up operations using San Diego's base. Gary Gillespie, Sonny Lawrence, and Pete Frickland had arrived. I asked San Diego to move their truck up from Palm Springs as soon as I broke down so we could use their base radio. Shortly after, the rest of the San Diego and Sierra Madre teams showed up as well as our members from the training mission.

So much for how we got it all together; now for what we did with it. It seems that several members of the Angeles Chapter of the Sierra Club took an informal hike

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the day before up Martinez Peak and Sheep Mountain. One member of their party, Alan Nichols, was relatively unknown to the others and very quiet. He became fatigued as the day went on and wanted to rest. At this point the Sierra Club leader instructed Mr. Nichols to wait for them at a particular location for "20-30" minutes. When they returned he was not there. They assumed that Nichols had become impatient and started back to the car. This assumption further worsened a potentially catastrophic leadership decision of leaving one member of the party alone. When the Club members returned to the vehicles Mr. Nichols was not present. In retrospect, Nichols claimed to have been abandoned since the rest of the party did not return at the appointed time. In a situation like this only one person can be blamed, and this is the person who was leader.

Upon realizing that Nichols was lost the Sierra Club members initiated their own search which ultimately proved to be unsuccessful. At this point (Saturday night) they contacted the Sheriff's office and the Sierra Madre Rescue Team.

Art and Jack set up operations which Jim Fairchild took over when he got off the mountain. We sent Gary with the Sierra Club members; Dan, Sonny, Dave Nehen, and I took Deep Canyon; and Rick Pohlers, Larry Brown, and Pete Frickland took a probable canyon. Dave Nehen, a former team member, is now a deputy sheriff in Indio. He was on his day off and so donated his hard earned free time to us. It's always a pleasure to hike with Dave.

We were perhaps an hour into the search when the word got around that the victim was found alive and well by Rick Pohlers and Company. By this time we were deep in Deep Canyon. Fortunately, Roy Cox had just arrived from Western Helicopters with a Huges's 500. What a sight for sore eyes. A quick ride out, a long critique, followed by a good meal, and a long ride home finished up the day.

contributions nor assign an order of importance. We'll ask various members of the unit to write about particular donors. This will be done as a "series" because there are too many for one issue.

## Sustaining Members

by Mike Daugherty

We are fortunate to kick off 1974 with an unusually large number of sustaining members. Among those joining us for the **first time** are:

- Barbara Meyers
- Watters Mountaineering School
- Erby Davidson
- \*George and Stanley Lonberger
- \*Dr. Donald Browning
- Mr. and Mrs. William Grounds
- Bruce Dodd

**Renewing members** are:

- Mrs. M. A. Johnston
- John Chappell
- Mr. and Mrs. Jim Fairchild
- Herbert Wilson
- Theodore Morgan
- Wayne Ford

*\*Century Club Member, donation of \$100 or more.*



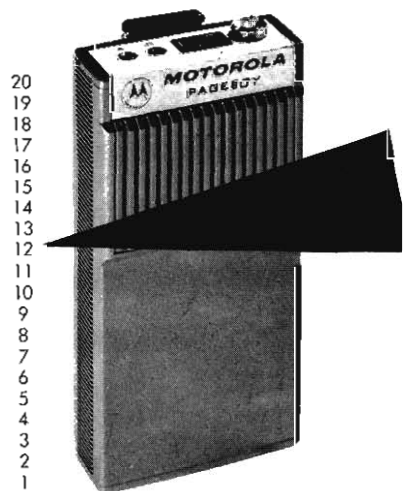
### The Road Runner

sez- by Pres. Jim Fairchild

For some years now we've been recognizing donors of money to RMRU by listing their names in the appropriate column. Some of these donors have been providing the unit with labor and materials that amount to a tremendous cash value. It is about time that we elaborated a bit on this wonderful group of donors, who, as Mike Daugherty stated last month, contribute because they feel they "ought to." Probably this obligatory aspect can be defined as our combined desires to help people who have a problem in the back-country - really a team effort - some of us giving cash only, some labor and materials, some rolling to and performing the missions. We'll make no attempt to compare individual

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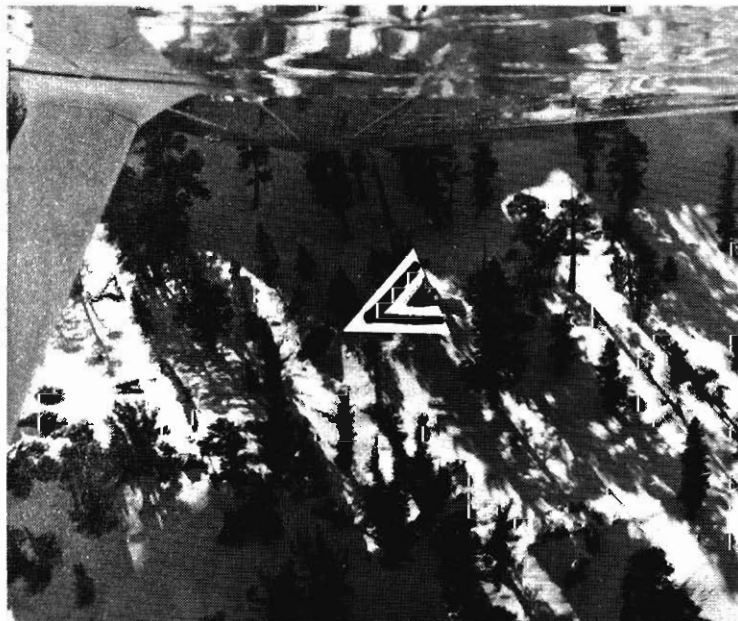
## Pager Fund





25-27 JAN., FRI. - SUN. - SNOW  
 San Jacinto Mountains  
 By Dan MacIntosh

January is traditionally winter shakedown and I have to smile when I think of how we wondered if we would have any snow this winter. We assembled at the tram Friday evening and spent the night in the woods near Round Valley. Saturday began clear and beautiful. Hiking up Frank Miller Peak we noticed clouds and wind coming our way. By night we had high winds and light snow along with our steaks. Sunday dawned bright and clear, a testimony to the drastic weather changes in the mountains. Hank Schmel and Steve Stephens overflew us in a plane paid for by Steve. Shortly afterwards our radio notified us of a lost hiker in the Santa Rosa Mountains. So we threw everything in our packs and raced down to the tram. Some times I think that if it weren't for all the rescues, we could have a lot more fun.



While pilot and RMRU member Steve Stephens circled over Frank Miller Peak, photographer and RMRU member Hank Schmel recorded the team's four man mountain tent pitched on the deep snow.



With the Sunday morning sun already high in the sky, RMRU member Dan MacIntosh photographed the unceremonious coming down of the four man tent.

## Coming Events - - -

- March 14, Board Meeting at Carlsons.
- March 27, Regular Meeting.
- March 29-30, Training, N. Face Mt. San Jacinto.
- April 11, Board Meeting.
- April 24, Regular Meeting.
- April 26-28, Training, High Sierra, perhaps a four-day period.

## from Old'en Days

5 YEARS AGO IN THE "RMRU NEWSLETTER" -  
 February 1969

### IN MEMORIAM

We noted with sorrow the deaths of fellow mountain rescue personnel; Don Buck and Dennis Huestis, of the Los Padres Search and Rescue Team, and Charles Raye, of the Montrose Search and Rescue Team, who all gave their lives while trying to help others during the floods.

### SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. Roland Wilhelmy gave RMRU a 1963 Jeep pick-up and of course were welcomed as new sustaining members. Also the Mineral Wool Insulations Corporation became new sustaining members. The following people renewed their sustaining memberships: Mr. & Mrs. David Harrah, Mr. & Mrs. Albin Merzals, and Norman H. Mellor, M.D.