

# RMRU NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT, INC.  
A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT CORPORATION  
P. O. BOX 5444, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92507  
MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

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Walt Walker, Editor

## Coming Events - - -

- 9 October, Board Meeting
- 23 October, Regular Meeting
- 26 October, CR-MRA Meeting, Sylmar
- 26-27 October, Training
- 13 November, Board Meeting
- 20 November, Regular Meeting
- 23-24 November, MRA Meeting, Sacramento
- 23-24 November, Training
- 27 November, Board Meeting (Dec.)
- 4 December, Regular Meeting
- 7 December, Training

## Search and Rescue

### 4 AUG., SUN. — SEARCH — No. 7437C Baja California Mexico

RMRU received a call from the De Anza Search and Rescue Team requesting assistance for a missing young man. We had to decline because no team leaders were available to roll, even though some regular members were ready to go.

### 6 AUG., TUE. — SEARCH - No. 7438M San Jacinto Mountains, High Country by Pete Carlson

Barbara and Mike McCluskey, ages 16 and 15, were left off Sunday afternoon at Humber Park by their mother, to hike over to the tramway and come down Monday afternoon. Tuesday at 1600 we received the call to go look for them.

By 1845 a team of five RMRU men started for the saddle where they would split up to check out possible search areas. Around 1950 two more men arrived and were about to start up. Just then we received word that the two had walked into Palm Springs.

### 8-9 AUG., THUR.—FRI. — SEARCH — No. 7439M Lake Fulmore, San Jacinto Mountains by Pete Carlson

A group of people were camping at Boulder Basin Camp Ground and six of them, Jim (20), Kim (18), Marian (18), Linda (12), Robert (11), and Steve (9) decided to hike down to Lake Fulmore. They were to be picked up by two friends. When they failed to arrive the friends called the sheriff. He went up a road from the bottom and gave a yell. He got a response that sounded way off and called RMRU at 2230.

Arriving at 2405 in the rescue van I began to pack, adding 2 wool sweaters, a down parka, and a wind parka. The six, it seems, were going to go swimming and had on only swim suits or shorts and tennis shoes. Bernie, Steve Stephens, and I started up from the bottom at 2415. Other teams started to drive the 10 miles to Boulder Basin to come down from the top. After 10 minutes we had voice contact and advised the other groups to come back and follow us up.

It took us 45 minutes hiking up and across many drainages and continually yelling to reach the six people. They were sitting around a small fire but still a little cold and quite thirsty. My 2 wool sweaters and down parka, along with Bernie's and Steve's parkas were quickly accepted. Then as we brought out 3 quarts of drinks they had no problem in drinking them all. The six people were in good shape and in great spirits but admitted they were happy to see us. At this point we all settled back to rest while more people with flashlights came up so we could start the hike out.

After some trouble with directions Ed Hill took a compass bearing on our lights and in no time at all the other teams reached us. At 0300 with 10 RMRU men and the six hikers we started out and by 0345 we reached base at Lake Fulmore. We sorted gear as the friends and parents greeted the hikers. They headed back to camp and RMRU went to a 0500 breakfast and finally bed at 0630.

### 15 AUG., THUR. — SEARCH — No. 7440M Ortega Mountains, above Elsinore by Rich Morris

I was just getting ready to eat dinner when, for the second Thursday evening in a row, I was summoned to go on a search. This time the mission involved looking for a man lost from a resort in the mountains above Elsinore (elevation 2450). I drove up to the El Cariso Fire Station on the Ortega Highway where I met up with team members Jim Fairchild, Pete Carlson, Hank Schmel, Rick Pohlars, and Bernie McIlvoy.

After a brief wait we found out that the search was being coordinated by the Orange County Sheriff's Office. We received directions for finding the search area over a public telephone and convoyed to the scene, a secluded resort straddling the Riverside-Orange County border. We were met by Orange County Sheriff's Deputies Russ Elsner and Jerry Rottkamp who explained that Bernie Thomkins, a 70 year old guest at the resort, had wandered off at around 9 a.m. that morning. A search of the area by the owners had turned up nothing except a few sneaker prints, so they called the authorities for help. Mr. Thomkins was described to us as being afflicted with Parkinson's disease, a progressive degeneration of the central nervous system. As a result of this he was feeble and could not walk great distances.

A Marine helicopter had also been called and was circling the area, but the fading light made it difficult to see the ground. Bernie and I started hiking

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right away in order to use what little light we had left. We started up a firebreak that divided a hill above the resort. We had decided to look very carefully in the brush near our base because of the victim's physical condition. Bernie headed off into a gully and I started checking the pockets that went into the dense brush. On the second pocket I found Mr. Thomkins who was, unfortunately, deceased. At this point we were only a few hundred feet from the truck and were in an area that could be driven into. The Sheriff's deputies notified the Orange County Coroner who gave us permission to move the body so that the remains could be taken care of properly. Hank took some pictures for the Coroner and then we performed the sad task of carrying the body to base.

Although we were lucky to have located our subject immediately we were somewhat subdued. The men of RMRU prefer to find their victims alive.

### 17 AUG., SAT. — RESCUE — No. 7441M Tahquitz Canyon, near Palm Springs by Sonny Lawrence

Tahquitz Canyon is famous for its "dirty hippies" who inhabit it. However, there appears to be a new breed of hippie nowadays. Today a young fellow, Greg, took a chance on being arrested for living in Tahquitz in order to assist a hiker, Jerry Runyan, who fell 50 feet there.

Sometime about noon the call out came for the rescue. I was the first to arrive at Ann Dolley's in Palm Springs, where the Deputy Sheriff was waiting. Of course Ann Dolley had the refrigerator stocked with ice cold soda pop! But things happened too fast for me to grab a can.

Greg said that Jerry had fallen down a cliff. Greg had escorted him down to the stream, then came quite a ways down to Palm Springs for help. He reported that Jerry had multiple head wounds with much bleeding.

Well, it was a toss-up between waiting for the bird (45 minutes) or hiking up (45 minutes). The Deputy in charge (sorry, I forgot the name) had a handie-talkie radio. That decided it; with a radio, I might as well take a walk — the helicopter could be late. Greg led me up the canyon.

By this time Gary Gillespie had arrived and stayed to act as base operator until more RMRU people showed up. Soon Hank Schmel, Rich Morris, Rich Quackenbush, Larry Brown, Bob Claybrook, Doug Brewer, and John Dew came roaring in. Morris took over as base operator, Schmel as Ops leader.

For some reason, the bird flew faster than I walked! Thus Hank beat me to the second falls and the victim. He found a very bloody but smiling Jerry sitting next to the stream in a shady spot. Hank decided that Greg, Doug (who had stayed with Jerry), himself and I could handle the situation and asked that the other team members stand by at Ann Dolley's. After a few bandages, water, and food; we hiked up to the helispot. Thus Jerry got a quick trip to the hospital via helicopter.



RMRU Ops. Leader, Hank Schmel cleans the wounds of injured hiker Jerry Runyan. After this was completed, a dressing was applied.

The rescue ran well overall. We had minor problems with communications (typical in this canyon). There were some highlights though. We established a plan with Greg and Doug, residents of Tahquitz, who will assist in future missions in the canyon. And to top off the day, Larry Paul, a businessman in Palm Springs, donated a large amount of gasoline to RMRU members!

### 19 AUG., MON. — RESCUE — No. 7442C South America by Pete Carlson

Through Sierra Madre the Air Force was requesting help in getting to a plane that crashed around 20,000 feet near La Paza, Bolivia. They wanted only people who had been to high altitudes before, so only five team members were contacted, all agreed to help. Finally some Bolivian climbers decided to try, so we were put on standby. After two days we heard the bad news, the plane was found and all 9 crewmen were dead.

### 29 AUG., THUR. — SEARCH — No. 7443M East of the City of San Jacinto by Ed Hill

At quarter to twelve on Wednesday, August 28th, Al called to tell me that Tracy Lee Salsberry had run away again. Tracy is three and a half years old, and this was his third time that he had run away from his home in a trailer park on the outskirts of San Jacinto. We had searched for him on the two previous times he had run off.

When I arrived at one thirty in the morning I found some of our men in the field along with the Mounted Posse and the Hemet Search and Rescue Team. Jim Fairchild, the operations leader, told me that Tracy had wandered off that afternoon; the trailer park residents had searched that afternoon, and the other teams had been called in early in the evening.

We deployed all around the trailer park looking for tracks. We found several of the kid's forts, but no sign that Tracy had been there. We asked the sheriff if the trailers had been searched, and he replied that the owners themselves had looked. Just before dawn we returned for a few short hours of badly needed sleep. While we were sleeping a group of scuba divers walked a small pond looking for Tracy in or near the water.

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While the Western Helicopters pilot held the bird in a tight spot, Hank Schmel assisted the injured man aboard.

Dawn found us in the San Jacinto riverbed looking for tracks. The riverbed is mostly sand, so tracking was easy. We found lots of horse, dog and rabbit tracks, but no tracks belonging to a small boy. When we turned up nothing in the riverbed, we started to sweep the fields around the trailer park. We found nothing in the fields. Mid-morning we received a report that he had been seen at the nearby Junior College, so we concentrated on that area. The sighting turned out to be false. We returned to base to review our progress and come up with a new search plan. We decided to call Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team and try using their bloodhounds. It was a long shot since it was quite hot and horses had been in the area. Heat and horses would destroy the faint scent left by Tracy. The sheriff told us that 150 men from March Air Force Base were coming to really search the trailer park.

That afternoon we continued searching in the nearby fields, and in a small dump near the trailer park. We surprised four ground squirrels, one rattlesnake, and one lizard, but no boy. While we were searching the dump Sierra Madre arrived with two bloodhounds. We gave them a scent article and tried to fire one dog at Tracy's mother's trailer. The first dog ran in circles. The other dog was tried with the same results.

The Air Force searched the trailer park and found nothing. The sheriff decided to use all the Air Force personnel on massive line searches around the trailer park. John Dew, Jim Garvey and I, and three Sierra Madre men were to direct the line. We formed a search line three-quarters of a mile long and started going through the fields again. At the end of the first sweep it was almost dark so we went back to base to eat and pick up flashlights. Then it was back out again.

The second sweep was done after dark. The sweep ended up in the riverbed about a mile and a half from the trailer park. Some of the searchers on the right end of the line reported that they may have found some tracks in the sand. The Air Force tried to use their guard dogs. These German Shepards are trained to follow any human scent. The dogs wandered aimlessly. John Dew and several of the Sierra Madre men tried to follow the tracks, but soon found a good track which told them that they belonged to someone else.

Late that evening the sheriff dismissed the Air Force and the MRA teams saying that the San Jacinto Police Department would search the western side of their town. We left with the sobering realization that our best efforts had not turned up little Tracy.

A week later I read in the paper that Tracy had suffocated in a tiny ice chest in a shed one hundred yards from his home.



## 24 AUG., SAT. — STRAWBERRY VALLEY by Jim Fairchild

All Search and Rescue operations are dependent upon individual skills. We succeed as a unit, team, party, whatever, according to the sum of the individuals' knowledge, physical and mental abilities, made effective relative to the group's experience and judgement. Now, the best training is "on-the-job (on the rescue) experience." To supplement we conduct monthly training sessions aimed at developing individual and group skills and, especially, to become familiar with one another's strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the latter reason is the most important of all because when we work together smoothly, it's because we know what we ourselves must do and what can be assigned to another.

On the Saturday of our training we just walked down Strawberry Creek two hundred yards from Mellors' Sky Yacht to a huge boulder. There we worked on anchors, rigging for lifting a litter, how to tie victims in the litter, how to rappel and tie-off on the cliffside. We demonstrated natural anchors with trees, artificial anchors with chocks (metal forms fitted with slings, coming in wedge, cylinder, hexagonal, square shapes). Bud White's daughter,

Becky, was our victim for a real litter raising exercise up an overhang and over a long rounded rock "lip" that taxed both brain and muscle.

Later in the afternoon we adjourned to the van for a fine discussion on how to get an operation started, both from the Operation Leader's standpoint and the individuals' to be assigned. We ended with a display and discussion of individual equipment as usually carried in our call-out packs.

## THANKS by Rich Quackenbush

In August the Idyllwild Izzac Walton League once again held their annual breakfast for the benefit of RMRU.

As usual members of the league organized and ran the whole thing while a goodly number of RMRU members and their wives and girlfriends helped with the cooking and serving. We also took advantage of the opportunity to display our van and equipment, which previous breakfasts have helped to provide.

Many, many THANKS to this great group of people who make this breakfast an annual occasion that never fails to bring in revenue and to introduce us to new friends.

Again I thank you and the members of the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit thanks you.



Caught in the act of cooking and serving (from the inside looking out) were RMRU members Rich Morris, Hank Schmel and Dave Hadley.



The photographer then went outside, and captured Bob Claybrook, Dave Hadley, Hank Schmel and Dr. Norm Mellor hard at work.