

# 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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## TRAINING



### Tracking

**28 & 29 Aug., Sat. & Sun.  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By Bud White*

A full weekend of tracking training sounded like hot hard work but our new training chairman, Larry Roland had found a way to make it interesting. The California State Park Wilderness Foreman, Jerry Henderson, and his able assistants, Bob and Rudy, had invited RMRU to dinner at LITTLE ROUND VALLEY Campground Saturday night.

Ed Hill and I were the rabbits so we started up the Marion Mountain Trail about 30 minutes ahead of the trackers. Ed went low under Deer Springs and then up the drainage to Little Round Valley and I went high up under Marion Mountain and over the saddles east of peaks 10,160 South and North, past Bed Springs Camp and down into Little Round Valley.

It was really an interesting day as we communicated by radio identifying the clues and evidence Ed and I had left behind. The "low" team was lead by Tom Aldrich with Larry Brown, John Muratet, Charles Bujan (new trainee) and Larry Roland. They did a fine job and tracked Ed right into Little Round Valley. I led the "high" team on a more circuitous route but they unerringly and erringly tracked me to my last hideout.

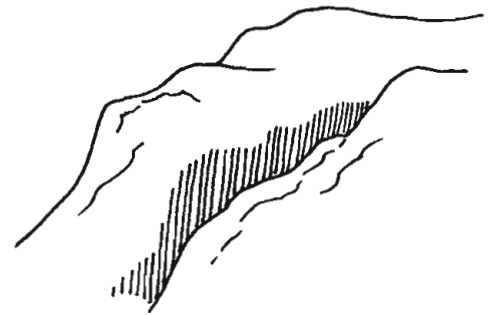
Pete Carlson led the "high" team with Jim Fairchild, John Dew, Steve Zappe, and Ron Barry. The "high" teams tracking was interrupted by being directed by radio to a spring that I had stumbled into that was completely new to all of us. When you consider the number of times we have traversed the high country you'll understand the name we gave it "Hidden Springs". We also found and named a new saddle "Guess What? Saddle". Ask Pete how it got its name. Jim and John gave us an anxious moment when they were late for dinner but they deserve a pat on the back for continuing to track me up a very steep and deviously laid trail. Art Bridge and his son Dick (a Senior at Pomona College) joined us for dinner and made the hike into Little Round look like a stroll in the park by doing it in 2 hours and 15 minutes. Sunday was spent climbing the nearby peaks and taking another look at "Hidden Springs" to set the location in our minds.

Many, many thanks again to Jerry Henderson and crew for the great dinner. We all need to meet under relaxed circumstances and rap about our differences, if any, and to discuss mutual problems regarding Search and Rescue. Also highlighting our evening was the presence of the San Jacinto Wilderness (U. S. Forest Service) Patrol Foreman Warren and his assistant Juliet. They capped the evening off by extending an invitation to RMRU to be their guests at Tahquitz Valley for dinner next August and making this an annual affair. Needless to say we accepted. Just to keep the record straight we all helped with the finances for food and beverage.

Larry Roland did an excellent job in planning and executing the training. We are looking forward to other training he plans particularly if we don't have to cook or carry dinner.

■ RMRU

## Search and Rescue



### SEARCH

**Mission No. 7636C**

**12 August, Thurs.  
Lower Twin Lake,  
High Sierra**

*By Jim Fairchild*

While Larry Brown, Pete Carlson, and Jim Fairchild were over in Sierra Madre's rescue room for a California Region/Mountain Rescue Association meeting on new team testing and qualification, a call came from Bridgeport for assistance in a search for a 6½ yr. old girl missing between her cabin and the lake. We had to decline the call because at least half our unit's men were away on vacation, and good manpower was available from other units.

Just talked to Miner Harkness of Sierra Madre who said his team drove half way to Bridgeport when the report came that the girl was found in the lake, drowned. We can recall only one search over the years when a child was not found drowned in a nearby body of water when such was involved, that was about seven years ago at Upper Twin Lake, the five-year-old boy was found dead a mile up canyon. ■ RMRU

## SEARCH

Mission No. 7637M

15 Aug., Sun.  
Toolbox Springs  
Thomas Mountain area

By Larry Brown

Sunday, August 15th started out as a Benefit Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the Isaac Walton League in Idyllwild. Just as we got things cleaned up and gear stowed back in the van, we were put on standby for a possible search in Garner Valley. The team was taking the Bi-Centennial tour of Mike Daugherty's new cabin when the call came to search for a 22 year old schizophrenic man who walked away from Toolbox Springs above the Thomas Mountain community.

Maggie Mellor instantly ran across the road to the Sky Yacht and whipped up a "quick" lunch of cheese, meat, bread, fruits and drinks (milk), which was gone in seconds, and we were off to Garner Valley. (After a few minutes finding the road head up 6 miles of dirt roads,) and a couple more to wait for the dust to clear enough to see. RMRU had probably the fastest call out all year!

We then talked to the informant about the missing man, James. The informant, (James psychologist, John) said they were on an outing when his patient had walked away from the camp the night before. He had on light clothing and size 10 "Earthshoes" and was believed to hide from Authoritive types (and us in our nice Orange Uniforms)! We all did a perimeter search of the area to find his tracks and found plenty . . . going everywhere. So we expanded our perimeter (being on top of the ridge he could go downhill 359 degrees). John Dew went up the ridge, Walt and Kevin Walker and John (informant) went over to Toolbox Springs. Art Bridge, Mike Daugherty and myself went down the drainage from Toolbox, staying off the trail. This practice preserves the **disturbances** we were following. (Not actual footprints). This off trail walking has it's pitfalls or should it be pit vipers! Mike and I woke up a 12 ft. x 8" diameter Pacifica, sub-

species Thomas Big-Fang! Walt, and Kevin heard it buzzing 50 yds. away. 10 minutes later Walt had found positive prints going down the trail towards Lucky Deer Mine, not very lucky as a Mine but we did see Deer, and Highway 74. We followed them farther down noticing two sets of Vibram Lug sole prints **over** the earthshoes!

Mike got to a look-out rock and spotted two people down the ridge that looked like hunters with guns. So Art and I ran cross-country over rocks, burnt brush and stick-ya bushes all the time hoping we wouldn't surprise two "Poachers" and get ourselves shot. We called down to ask them if they had tracks in front of them. They replied "No", we asked them to wait, and ran down to them. The two "Poachers" turned out to be trail crew members with shovels, brush hooks and wearing the two sets of Vibram sole boots. Most important, right in front of them were the subjects fresh, solo footprints we were looking for. Good class, 1 & 2 tracking on a trail! Beautiful, until he came to a wide spot in the narrow trail, in the dark, the night before, became disoriented and went down a side canyon towards the car lights of Highway 74. As Art ran and talked our location on the Radio to Jim & Hank at Base, I ran the class 1 tracking (sand, good prints) and crawled the class 4 & 5 tracks. (Overturned rocks, broken twigs and such). I was able to follow his tracks  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile down to where Walt and Crew had leap frogged ahead. We then followed them another 800 yds. down a road to a cabin where John Muratet, Don Ricker and Hal Fulkman had back-tracked from the bottom. Meanwhile . . . Norm Mellor had driven the streets of Thomas Mt. Community asking people if they had seen our man. A local resident had seen him at about 9:30 a.m. that Sunday morning at the intersection of Barbara Lee and Courtesy. After a short discussion with Base and the Sheriff we terminated the mission as a "missing person" safely out of "our backyard". Art, Walt & Crew then fixed Norm's El Camino that bent a flywheel cover shield coming down the Corduroy road. We then went for dinner at the "Dew Drop Inn".

■ RMRU



## SEARCH

Mission No. 7638M

16 Aug., Mon.  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Larry Brown

Monday night August 16th was to be our third Monday night of training on Tracking, it seemed only natural to have a mission on Tracking instead.

That afternoon we were called to search for Mike Blotter, 1 day overdue up the Skyline Trail from Palm Springs to the Upper Tram. He had two army canteens, (in that heat about three hours worth) plus food and gear for an overnight stay. As RMRU team members assembled at the lower Tram station we assigned into teams with radios and search areas. Jim Fairchild, Rich Quackenbush and myself were to go up the Tram then down the Skyline Trail looking for tracks. John Dew was to be Radio Relay at the top. With other members in Long Valley, Hidden Lake and Desert View. We met the Palm Springs Mounted Police at the lower station on their way down. They told us that they had gotten the subjects footprints at his car and then were flown to the 5,000' level of the Trail and then disbursed one team down and one team up, after seeing the same tracks. The "Up" team followed tracks up and into Long Valley only to lose them in the weekend crowds from the Tram. They did circle 3 of the tracks for RMRU to see and go from there.

New Strategy . . . Rich, Jim and I would go to the top of the Skyline and draw out the footprints, carefully measuring the length, width, sole pattern and stride between steps for future reference. (Animals, wind and Bigfoot can destroy tracks overnight).

We walked on the **side** of the trail up to where the first track was marked. I got my pencil, paper and tape measure to draw it, when Jim yelled up that he had the second. A good size **10**, with lateral ridges about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart and staggered . . . wait . . . I was drawing a size **8** with lateral ridges  $\frac{1}{4}$ " apart with  $\frac{1}{2}$ " circles in the instep area! All three of us went

down to the third circled print to find a size 11½ with ridges ½" apart but **no staggering** and **no circles** in the instep. We now had three different tracks to follow! So on down the trail we went until #3 was solo and we agreed that this was the one that best describes his hiking boot. (His wife described it as a size 11 work boot).

I drew it while Rich and Jim tracked it back up to the top. The three of us then went track-to-track back towards Long Valley when John relayed over Radio that the subject had just walked out the bottom of Tahquitz Canyon . . . What?!! . . . How can he do that?!! We have his tracks up here! Palm Springs-to-the-Tram and back down Tahquitz Canyon in only 3 days! Superman! Sign him up with RMRU! Well it turned out otherwise. The subject got up to about the 3,800 ft. level of the trail, ran out of water, and headed down a side canyon leading to Tahquitz and water. He saw none of the Canyon residents and spent the next 2½ days route finding his way out to Palm Springs. He was alright and drove home.

We made two big mistakes; we did not inspect **first hand** the footprints by the car and after finding 3 different "tracks" circled, one team should have continued on down the Skyline Trail, and another team should have started **at the subjects** car coming up the trail. This was a very good learning experience for all of us.

We can be grateful, however that Mike was able to get out before any serious complications occurred and another mission was successfully completed. ■ RMRU

## RESCUE

### Mission No. 7639M

**22 & 23 Aug., Sun. & Mon.  
Willow Creek Crossing  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By Jim Fairchild*

The sunset colors on Mt. San Jacinto's west side are often exquisite hues of yellow, amber, bronze, even

purple. They soon deepen then fade to grays. Such was the scene as I drove the van to Humber Park (6300 feet el.) above Idyllwild. We had been called to evacuate a young man with a "rupture", suffering through the wait at Willow Creek Crossing (El. 7600', about an airline mile northeast of Skunk Cabbage Meadow). The call had come at 1800 and Walt and Kevin Walker, Bernie McIlvoy, Ron Barry, John Muratet and I were hiking up the trail with the wheeled litter by 2000. The Sheriff Deputy had asked how long we would take to arrive at the victim (name unknown then), I estimated 105 minutes -- we were there in 103 minutes (must have had a tailwind). On the way we heard by radio that Steve Zappe, Larry Brown, and Tom Aldrich were steaming along behind us. At Saddle Junction (8100' el.) we assigned Steve and Larry to be radio relay. Later Rich Quackenbush and Larry Roland arrived at base and manned the radios at the van.

Barney Zimmerman, age 18, was, as mentioned before, suffering. He had a real hurt internally that went from lower right quadrant of abdomen up through his "innerds" to center of the chest. Palpation elicited quick responses. He vomited a couple of times. Pulse was variable. These and other signs and symptoms indicated possible hernia, appendicitis, or kidney stone. Our super communication assistants, the ham radio group from Riverside, were put to work setting up a radio-telephone patch to Dr. Norman Mellor in Corona. With Norm on the phone we relayed signs and symptoms and possible diagnoses. Here's how it went: we radioed relay; relay called base; base talked to ham operator who called another ham in Riverside; this last ham talked to the doctor. Then Norm started the process in reverse. It all went quite well, every word correct. Jim Varner and Bob Arndt were the ham operators.

Aside from his hurt, Barney was active and alert, so we loaded him onto our marvelous litter with the big wheel and marched out with him. Well, it wasn't really that easy. Barney writhed a lot and changed the center of gravity and balance with drastic changes in loading with drastic consequences to varying members of the litter-hauling crew. By the

time we reached Saddle Junction my recently sprained back was screaming, so I became the belayer for the trip down-trail to Humber Park. Earlier, Bernie had put his own call-out pack into Barney's big Kelty BB5 pack and carried them back to Humber. Barney had just started a four-day jaunt into the high country, his pain began at 1000 that morning. He yelled and used his whistle until passers-by came along. I understood the Sheriff Office was notified by State Park Rangers.

Down at Humber the Idyllwild Fire Department ambulance drove up one minute after we arrived, and Barney was soon on his way to Hemet Hospital. ■ RMRU

## SEARCH

### Mission No. 7640M

**28 Aug., Sat.  
Little Round Valley,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By Bud White*

John Dew and Jim Fairchild were last hikers into camp after the tracking training, due to a long-standing disagreement some food in John's digestive tract had with a now pale, wide-eyed John.

We found our gang enjoying post-prandium refreshments and conversation. Some of the younger bachelors were talking to three young ladies who had ridden in on horses from Wilderness Pines. They were quite late and decided to spend the night before heading for San Jacinto Peak and Humber Park. Jerry Henderson, State Park Ranger, had radioed a much-relayed message to that effect, hopefully to allay worried parents.

Upon arrival home after training Sunday, my wife told quite a story of how a call came late Saturday night from the Sheriff indicating there were three missing girls riding horses. Bernie McIlvoy went up to a vantage point with the van and tried to call us by radio. Then he asked Sierra Madre to try to contact us because they have a powerful transmitter atop Mt. Wilson. No contact.

Reason, Jim forgot to tie the radio up high in a tree.

A couple of hours later word came that the girls were safe (?) with us at the valley. A pair of USFS employees had been there during supertime and rode their horses back and reported what really happened.

Rather a delightful evening for the above-mentioned young people - several of them hiked to San Jacinto's peak.

Oh, about the relayed radio message. It seems to have reached its destination with word that one of the girls was hurt, one of the horses was lame, and I guess a few embellishments to boot. ■ RMRU



## The Road Runner Sez-

By Jim Fairchild

An event today brought great joy to this writer - RMRU's Newsletter arrived via mail! Now our readers know we're still alive and performing search and rescue when called, that their hard-earned dollars so generously given are part of the overall effort. Do you know that most of us on the unit are also Sustaining Members? Some are Century Club members unacknowledged because of split contributions. One way to look at it is we contribute our "cigarette" money, because we don't smoke.

Back to the Newsletter. As I read through it the excitement level rose abruptly in re-living some of the missions - I had almost forgotten many details. It never ceases to be a thrill when we're able to use skills developed through sport mountaineering and specialized training to save lives. The responsibility factor looms big at times - it's our responsibility to find, care for, and return to safety those whom we've been asked to help. Usually this occurs and everything is smiles and satisfac-

tion. But then there are the failures. We could not find the subject of our search. On the Mike Self search we later found out why - he was covered with at least three feet of snow by the time we were called in to search. With Mark Seils and Ken Blahausz we really don't know. Perhaps Mark went off on the desert side of Mt. San Jacinto from his camp and perished from dehydration in a secluded location. Perhaps Ken did the same. It's easy to think they got off the mountain and . . . ? Well, maybe, but we in RMRU think they are still there even though it constitutes a failure on our part. Having been on both operations and having done a huge amount of soul-searching about our execution of the operation, I believe we did the best we could with what resources we had.

This brings up a subject or question that every operations leader along with the governmental agencies responsible for the search must face. How long do we persist with the search? Answer: as long as there is reasonable hope of finding the subject alive. If we've ever terminated a search prematurely, it is an emotional judgement, not a practical one. Through experience we can tell (usually it's a gut feeling) when the limit of endurance must surely have been passed by the lost subject. Many environmental and physical factors are considered: weather, terrain, time lost, age, experience, physical condition, and so forth. Extending the search time to satisfy emotions is costly in terms of money and time and jeopardy. Extending it to comply with the possibility of the subject's survival is no problem.

You may be thinking, "Why don't people use good sense and not get lost or hurt?" Fair question, but have you ever had a problem in civilization that required assistance from others? What's so different about the wilderness problem? I can mention a few prosaic but effective preventive measures: plan the trip thoughtfully, thoroughly, and well in advance; travel with compatible companions only; be sure everyone wears or carries a bright-colored garment, mirror, whistle; be sure everyone is well fed, watered, and rested; do not permit children to get out of sight (we've searched for children that got out of sight for less than one

minute!) Mark your route and itinerary on a map and leave it with a responsible person with instructions on when and who to call for help. I'll bet you're waiting for me to condemn solo hikes and climbs. No way! It would be hypocritical because I've climbed some easier routes on Tahquitz Rock and moderate routes on peaks in the High Sierra alone, not to mention regular backpacks. Yeah, I know what a few of you are thinking, "Someday, that nut will get it." But going solo sharpens up your awareness and safety level, it does not dull them. Going it alone does have the disadvantage of no one to report your problem and location. Last winter we rescued quite a number of people in groups. Any rebuttal?

Since April 24 we have been diligently striving to train newer men in the basics of tracking, and to further increase our own abilities in this totally unlimited skill. We see rapid comprehension and a most satisfying progress in ability. Since RMRU began we've called tracking our "bread and butter" skill. I can think of many people who are alive because we "headed them off at the pass" by following their footprints or evidence they made. Many of our regular Monday evening training sessions have been devoted to tracking. We even make mock missions complete with real "victims" (my wife, Godchildren, and friends). As if this were not enough, we've also practiced technical evacuation about half the Mondays culminating for the time being with our formal practice on Suicide Rock (see that write-up). Following a bit of vacation during September, we'll get back to the weekly sessions with intensive practice in victim care on the cliff and tracking over hard terrain, featuring such unlikely locations as the Bernasconi and Soboba Hills. This will lead up to our annual training weekend in Joshua National Monument where a particularly demanding training will occur. What has made me really happy these past months is the participation and enthusiasm shown by fellow team members. After the promised training events of October, we'll have more surprises in November, getting ready for the anticipated demanding missions during the winter.

Is it enough to train monthly and

weekly in the outdoors? No! Each month we ask either Norman Mellor or Ray Castilonia, our unit physicians, to give a topic pertinent to wilderness first aid at our regular meeting. For years now Norm has been keeping us far ahead regarding knowledge and techniques for victim care. He instructed us on the cold water treatment for thermal burns years before it was accepted by the American Red Cross, and has kept us informed about developments in high altitude illness long before the material is printed or disseminated. E.g., we could tell the difference between acute high altitude edema and pneumonia perhaps six years ago. Ray gives us topical lectures on subjects not usually covered in any first aid course. Frequently Norm or Ray instruct us on a problem and we meet it soon in a victim in the wilderness. Both men have a truly outstanding ability to condense material and instruct us so that we can use it.

Is this enough training? No! Nearly weekly different members get together for recreational climbs and backpacks locally, in the High Sierra, other ranges in the United States, and about yearly overseas. The opportunities are unlimited.

We must overlook the superb opportunity for training on actual missions. That's where we get more training and use what we already have. Is that enough, with all we've mentioned heretofore? No! Why? Because . . .

"The more we learn, the more we realize there is to learn." ■ RMRU

from  
**Old'en Days**

by Walt Walker

**Ten Years Ago -**

The newsletter was rather terse, only 10 lines. The reason being that there had been five missions in three weeks.

**Five Years Ago -**

On the front page there was a notice of RMRU's coming Tenth Anniversary Dinner to be held October 23, 1971. Tom Dadson and Hank Schmel, dinner co-chairmen, put out a call for old photos and nostalgic items.

The Sustaining Membership chairman, Al Andrews, noted that the drive to raise money for a second handitalkie was doing well. The following were thanked for their support: Mr. & Mrs. Richard Card, Mr. Bob Schlamal, Mr. & Mrs. Bob MacPherson, Mr. & Mrs. Carl F. Tennant, The Hemet Jeep Club, Mrs. M. A. Johnston and Mr. John Lase.

The first write-up under Search and Rescue was about RMRU's nighttime search for a plane believed down in San Timoteo Canyon. It was complicated by fog and drizzle. Mike Daughterty and I remember it well

as we were climbing an extremely steep dirt face, that was very slippery, when the radio requested all searchers to return to base. After regrouping we started searching in a different area. About 3 a.m. Bernie McIlvoy spotted something white directly across the canyon from the ridge he was searching on. It indeed was the wreckage of the missing plane. Two people were killed in the crash.

The next write-up, by Steve Bryant, was about a search above Palm Springs. An S.O.S. was being flashed down from a hillside above the city. We spent the night searching, tracking and sweating in the summer heat. The tracks led out to the road. We never found out if someone was pulling a prank or thought they were in trouble and hiked out ahead of us as the sun came up.

A rescue, almost solo, was reported on by John Murdock. He was a member of a group who were planning to climb Mt. Shasta. They had hiked to Helen Lake and camped. At the lake they met a young hiker who was in trouble. He had tried to climb the peak, but was turned back when an attack of gout began to give him problems. John identified himself as a member of RMRU and offered to help the suffering man down off the mountain. At first, they glissaded down a snow field roped together. As the angle decreased, John pulled the man along. A passing hiker was hailed and requested to go for more help. The caretaker of the Sierra Club hut arrived with help and a litter. The ailing hiker was loaded into the litter and carried out to the roadhead.

The "Road Runner Sez" column by Jim Fairchild noted with sadness the resignation of charter member Don Ricker. Jim also noted a rather unusual summer regarding SAR activity. No missions since July 4th.

The training write-up described the annual technical training held on Suicide Rock and the dinner at Norm and Maggie Mellor's Sky Yacht that evening after training. There were photographs of the training session.

The benefit breakfast, sponsored by the Idyllwild Izacc Walton League, was reported on as a success again for the fourth year. Photos pictured the pancakes cooking and RMRU displaying equipment. ■ RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY LEE MICKELSON

NO, it is not a wilderness emergency (complete with cast). The above photograph was taken a number of years ago during a technical training at Mt. Rubidoux. Since RMRU member Bud White was 'recovering' from an operation on his heel, he was nominated to be rescued.

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