

RMRU NEWSLETTER

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P. O. BOX 5444, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92507
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John Dew, Editor
Walt Walker, Publisher
Dona Towell, Artist

TRAINING



Familiarization

26 - 27 June, Fri. - Sun.

By Steve Zappe

Friday afternoon at 1700 I picked up Pete Carlson and the two of us whizzed up the hill to rendezvous with Rich Quackenbush and Jim Garvey. The four of us made up team #1, and our assignment for that evening was to drive up the Black Mountain Lookout road to the Fuller Ridge trailhead and hike approximately 3 miles up the trail to Spike Camp (elev. 8400'), an abandoned Forest Service trail construction camp. We hit the trail at 1845, hiking in shorts all the way and just thankful that Larry Roland hadn't scheduled a desert training during this weekend of record temperatures in Southern California. We rollercoasted along the ridge trail until we rolled into a breezy camp at 2015.

Morning found us frantically looking for the bug dope and wondering where all the gnats and mosquitoes came from - there wasn't any water within a mile from camp. We proceeded at 0715 up the junction of the Deer Springs trail, and then on towards Little Round Valley. We arrived at Bed Springs at 0915, which was rather embarrassing when you consider that it was our campsite for Saturday night. It was decided by our team that we would unload most of the heavier items out of our packs and hike up to San Jacinto Peak for lunch. Being the sucker in the group

I also got stuck with the radio, since we figured we could find out what the second assault team was doing with its time.

During lunch we managed to raise Jim Fairchild and discovered that his group had been doing a lot of hiking and familiarization that morning. Jim, Larry, John Muratet, Ron Barry, Hal Fulkman, and former member Steve Bryant had enjoyed a delicious dinner at Idyllwild's Chart House the preceding evening, had then hiked from Humber Park to the South Ridge trail below Tahquitz via the Scenic Trail to a bivouac site. That morning they went over Tahquitz and looked at many of the most important landmarks and meadows in the upper Tahquitz drainage. They were currently coming up Willow Creek and didn't expect to get into camp until late in the afternoon.

We wrapped up lunch by comparing the surrounding topography with our map, trying to become a little more aware of the lesser known drainages on the west side of San Jacinto, and then scrambled south to Jean Peak to sign the register before we rolled back into camp at 1400. We were surprised to hear a voice calling out around 1600, and who should it be but Bud White. He had arranged to meet Jim's group at Skunk Cabbage Meadow that morning at 1000, but apparently they had been so wrapped up in familiarization to notice the time, so Bud took off in search for our camp after they didn't show up. Hunger caught up with us as we listened, so we decided to eat dinner before team 2 arrived in hopes of helping them consume their dinner too.

It ended up that they didn't need any help - 2 pounds of hamburger in several dozen tacos doesn't go too far with six hungry men, and there was little remaining besides the grease in the frying pan. After din-

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Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 7628M

1 June, Tues.
San Jacinto Mountains

By John Muratet

The search started at 2245 hours (10:45 p.m.) at Mrs. Morgans on Camino Rojos in Palm Springs. She'd seen a flare with a red arching trajectory behind the ridge, just below the tram light and above the "First Hump" of the mountain. Jerome, her son saw it also. He said, "It appeared north of the line from the house to the tram light."

There was also another sighting that was reported by Mr. Doty on Chino St. He said he had seen a similar flare on the mountain, with a possibility of it being on the ridge northwest of Chino Canyon.

At 2345 (11:45 p.m.) Ed Hill and Jim Garvey went up the road to the lower tram station. Their plan was to yell and shine their lights up side canyons, and to check for tracks.

Just about midnight the tram operators appeared and the teams drove up to take the tram to the top. One team was dispatched to go down the skyline trail; Bernie McIlvoy, Larry Brown, Hall and Ron Barry. A radio with John Dew operating it, was on the top level of the tram station, acting as a relay. The tram started up at 0055 (12:55 a.m.) and stopped at numerous places along the way. Those aboard gave many shouts and

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Shouts

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waited hoping for a response. The only sound to be heard was that of a small breeze.

At 0112 (1:12 a.m.) everyone at base camp was discussing what was to be done in the morning when Sergeant Conroy saw a flash in the area where the other sightings had been.

Meanwhile Bernie's team had gotten on the trail and found a Yashica camera case and some tracks going uphill. About five minutes later they found the tracks going downhill and also picked up some tennis shoes.

At a little after 0200 (2:00 a.m.), John Dew found the victims name in the Long Valley ranger station sign-in book. Apparently the victim had signed in on May 29. The plans were set for the next day.

At 0530 (5:30 a.m.) Jim Fairchild was at Morgan's trying to determine the exact location of the flare. It was determined that the flare had appeared most likely on the ridge separating the Chino and Snowcreek drainages, possibly on the ridge running north of the tram, with a telephone line running down it.

Meanwhile Bernie's team was on their way back up to the tram to meet a new team in the field.

At 0730 (7:30 a.m.) Captain Canova made the decision to call in a helicopter. He called Western and arranged to have the bird land at base camp at 0800 (8:00 a.m.)

At base camp Bob Claybrook was getting ready to go up in the bird. First they would go up to Long Valley then starting at 7000 feet make sweeps across the eastern side of the mountain, dropping 200 feet each sweep.

At 1010 (10:10 a.m.) base asked for the field teams location. One was south of Desert View, and southeast of Hidden Lake and returning to Willow Creek. Another was on Sunday School peak. Still another was in the bird on their way back to Long Valley.

About 30 minutes later while the team with Radio 64 was at the intersection of ridges just above Fall Creek, taking a break scouting the ridge which they were going to go down to the desert, it came over the

radio that the victim was located at school, thankfully safe and sound. Apparently, he had come off the mountain and spent the night at a friends and had not notified his parents.

So another search ended, everyone returned back to base, glad that everything turned out all right.

■ RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7629

3 - 6 June, Thurs. - Sun. San Jacinto Mountains

By Rich Quackenbush

On the afternoon of Thursday, June 3, RMRU was activated at the request of Capt. Ray Canova, commander of the Riverside County Sheriff's Substation at Banning.

On May 28, 23 year old Raymond Blahausz had been left at Humber Park in Idyllwild by his sister and boy friend. On the morning of June 3, Blahausz' family contacted the Palm Springs Police Department and advised them that their son had been due out of the wilderness Monday, May 31, and had not been seen nor heard from since he left Humber Park. At that time Blahausz advised his sister that he planned to hike up the Devil's Slide trail and go to Tahquitz Peak. From there he planned to hike down one of the Indian Canyons to Palm Springs and home.

By late afternoon RMRU had dispatched four teams up the Devil's Slide trail from Humber Park. The assignments were to check the peak register and to look for tracks in the vicinity of the canyons. Results were negative and the teams spent the night in the field.

Because of the cold trail and the size of the area involved it was decided that much more manpower would be needed. The China Lake, San Diego, Sierra Madre, Saddleback, Montrose and March AFB Para-Rescue teams and the Palm Springs Mounted Posse were called.

Base was moved from Humber Park to the entrances of Murray and Andreas canyons just off Palm Canyon Drive in the city of Palm Springs.

The next morning forty additional men were available. Don Landells and his helicopter had been hired by the PSMP and a UH-1 Huey from George AFB arrived. The helicopters were used to carry teams up to the high country and to search for the missing man. Teams were sent down Andreas, Murray, Tahquitz and Palm canyons along the Desert Divide and many other side canyons and ridges. Not a clue or a sign was found.

On the next day, June 5, the search continued with similar results. This time we were aided by a Marine Huey from El Toro.

The search continued through Sunday, June 6, with another Huey, this time from Edwards AFB. Again not a clue to Raymond Blahausz' whereabouts was found

I think we were all impressed again by the immensity of this wilderness area. Although it can be crossed in a helicopter in five minutes, the search area embraces an expanse of over one hundred square miles. The

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Dinner

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ner some of us explored the terrain around the camp before the sun set.

Next morning everyone decided to hike up to the top of Marion Mountain, where we were given an outstanding view of the surrounding country. Jim took us on a 360° tour, pointing out peaks, meadows, valleys, and other landmarks visible from the top and also relating some of them to previous missions. It was next to impossible to absorb everything, but I had been making notes on my map the entire weekend, especially noting cross country routes and unnamed peaks which team members shared with each other. As a matter of fact, Bud led team 1 down the south slope of Marion to Humber Park on a route that was 95% cross country, leading to Strawberry Cienega and down the drainage north of Suicide rock. We picked up the other group's cars and drove back to the Black Mountain road to get our own vehicles. Jim took team 2 over to San Jacinto Peak and through Little Round Valley on their way back down the Fuller Ridge Trail to meet us at the cars. ■ RMRU

terrain ranges from forrested mountain side at ten thousand feet through brushy canyons down to arid desert at five hundred feet. None of it is flat and some of it is vertical.

The canyons Raymond planned to descend are not often visited in the higher elevations. If he had entered either Murray or Andreas by any normal route his tracks would surely have been found. We can only speculate as to what happened to him. ■ RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7630M

**10 June, Thurs.
Boulder Basin**

By Hal Fulkman

On June 10, 1976, RMRU responded to a request by the Banning Sheriff's Office to aid them in a rather bizzare search. Upon arriving on the scene I was met by Captain Canova who gave me all the available information on the mission.

Forty year old college professor, Kurt Auth, and his twenty-one year old student girl friend Susan Woelfl, both of Orange County, were missing and presumed to be in the Boulder Basin campground area.

The original missing persons was filed by the girl's mother. According to the mother the girl had gone to Auth's apartment to break off their relationship. The Orange County Sheriff's Department found Miss Woelfl's car as well as her purse and wallet at Auth's apartment. Auth's car was not at the apartment. A small caliber hand gun was also missing.

A friend of Auth's told the Sheriff's Office that Auth liked to hike in the Black Mountain area and from this information his car was located at the campground.

Everything about the mission seemed ominous and not the least was the weather. Previously it had been typical mild June weather. But the day of the mission a freak storm blew in dropping snow, ice, and a very cold rain.

Four team members had arrived before me and were already in the field. Their assignment was to search the perimeter of the park for it was doubtful the couple had traveled any great distance.

I relieved Captain Canova at the radio while I was waiting for another member to show up to form a two man team. A short time later the first two teams returned to the van to mark the area covered and to decide their next assignment. Because darkness was approaching the search was suspended for the night.

Because of the accessibility of the terrain, Captain Canova decided he would have his own men search the park the next day and if they could not turn up anything RMRU would once again be called to search the drainages and higher elevations surrounding the park. RMRU was not recalled.

At 1500 the next day, on a rocky ledge, three-quarters of a mile from the car, the two victims were found. Both were dead, an apparent murder-suicide. Both were killed by a small caliber hand gun that was found next to Auth's body. ■ RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7631M

**19 June, Sat.
Stony Creek Campground,
Sequoia National Forest**

By Ed Hill

On Saturday, June 19, 1976, the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association was asked to help search for an 83 year old lady lost since Thursday, June 17th. She had wandered away from a family picnic.

Teams from China Lake, Sierra Madre, Bay Area, San Diego, Montrose and Riverside responded. RMRU's contribution was Jim Garvey, Larry Roland and myself. We joined the Tulare County Search and Rescue Team and the U. S. Forest Service.

At six thirty, a team from China Lake were shown her last known tracks, and they started tracking.

Groups from the other units were assigned areas to cover. By nine thirty, the team from China Lake had tracked her down. She had been wandering up and down a ridge about two miles away from the campground. The team reported that she was in fair shape but would need to be carried out.

The Forest Service volunteered a helicopter, and the rest of us would drive as close as we could and hike in with a litter and more first aid gear. She was about twenty minutes walk down the ridge from a logging road. We placed her in a litter and carried her up to where the helicopter had set down. The plan was to fly her out in the passengers seat in the bird. However, when we sat her up, she complained of back pains. So we decided to leave her lying down, carry her up the hill and take her out in a Volkswagon bus. By noon, the operation was secured, and the teams had started on the long drive back.

The mission really convinced me on the value of really being able to track. The China Lake people had sorted out her tracks even though other searchers had partially covered them. ■ RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 7632M

**20 & 21 June, Sun. & Mon.
Cabazon**

By Bob Claybrook

As usual I was just going to bed when the phone rang. It was Al Andrews informing me we had a 63 year old nurse overdue out of Black Mountain walking to Cabazon. I loaded my gear and proceeded to the Banning sub station where I met Bernie McIlvoy, Ron Barry, Ed Hill, Rich Quackenbush and Jim Fairchild.

We were informed by the Sheriff's Dept. that we were looking for Mrs. Ruth Boyle of La Mesa. She is trying to do the Pacific Crest Trail in sections. She is also a strong hiker.

We decided to send two teams down from Black Mountain - Bernie, Ron, Barry, Rich Quackenbush and

Ed Hill. I would go check the YMCA camp at Black Mountain. The teams started down at 3 A.M. I went to the camp and found nothing. I also checked the Black Mountain campground where I met Mrs. Boyle's son, Mike. He gave me further information on his mother - she carries a walking stick at all times. Checking the road, I found footprints of hers and followed them to the trailhead. At this time we moved to Banning so we could work from the bottom up. We put out a call for more man power. This included the Palm Springs Mounted Police, Sierra Madre Mountain Rescue, and Para-Rescue from March Air Force Base.

By this time it was after 6 A.M. and the Para-Rescue arrived. We were informed by the Sheriff's Office that Landell's helicopter would arrive and that due to other commitments, Don could only give us one hour of flight time.

At this time it was quite warm in Cabazon and the winds were very strong in the pass when the helicopter arrived. I loaded my pack and my little fat self into the helicopter. Don proceeded to take off and because of the hot air was having trouble climbing the hill. After several minutes he got the altitude he needed. We flew up the mountain and found the two teams working down. Don decided the best bet was to go high on Black Mountain and work our way back and forth between there and Snow Creek so that everything would be checked. We did this and after 40 minutes of flight time I spotted a single set of tracks on a ridge with a small indentation next

to them. Don and I argued whether or not they could be Mrs. Boyle's. After the debate, he decided to land to take a look. Once we landed we could tell they were definitely her tracks because of the shoe size and the walking stick mark.

We notified base we had a definite set of prints down canyon and at the same time Bernie found prints up above. Don flew down the canyon and at the edge of a large cliff we found Mrs. Boyle waving a white flag at us. We notified base and landed, finding Mrs. Boyle in very good condition and very glad to see us.

Total time for the helicopter was only 45 minutes, which we were very happy about. Other members participating were Jim Garvey, John Gabbert and Larry Roland. ■ RMRU

This hike (an elevation gain of 8000 ft.) can be difficult even in cool weather, but in our minds, was more difficult in midsummer by a 71 year-old with just one quart of water and six small cans of grapefruit juice.

We were told this man had been hiking for 50 years and had done this trail five times previously and yet his quantity of carried fluids seemed very small to us, and this caused our concern. He was scheduled to ride the Tram down on Monday evening and at 2300 hours when he had not returned, his wife had alerted the authorities (the Palm Springs Mounted Police). They secured a helicopter to fly the trail for 1½ hours with high-intensity lights from 0100 until 0230 at which time they, having found nothing, alerted the Sheriff's Department, who alerted us.

A team of the Mounted Police started hiking in from the bottom of the trail at 0500 on Tuesday. Our RMRU was to take the tram car to the mountain station at 0700 (the only car going up on Tuesday) and we would start hiking down from the top.

With our packs readied, we had started walking towards the tram at 0655 from the parking lot below when, by police radio, we were informed that the subject had called from the Long Valley Ranger Station on top to his home informing his wife of his location.

After talking with the tram people and being assured that he would be brought down, we returned home relieved that another had been found in good condition. ■ RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No 7633M

29 June, Tues.
Skyline Trail
San Jacinto Mountains

By John Dew

At 0310, we were awakened by Al Andrews, the team co-ordinator, and advised of a 71 year-old man who had taken the Skyline Trail from Palm Springs with a destination of the mountain station of the Tram, at 0400 the day before.

**DUE TO A
 LACK OF SPACE,
 THE JUNE
 'OLDEN DAYS'
 WILL BE IN
 THE JULY ISSUE.**

