

Volume XXI, Issue VIII, August 1985

Rob Gardner, Editor — Kevin Walker, Publisher — Dona Halcrow, Artist

## Search and Rescue

### CALL

**Mission No. 8534C**

**8 Aug., Thurs.  
Yosemite National Park**

We received a call from the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association asking for manpower to assist rangers with a search in Yosemite National Park. No members were sent because of logistical problems with travel. • RMRU

### SEARCH

**Mission No. 8535M**

**19 Aug., Mon.  
Strawberry Creek  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By Kevin Walker*



Around 4:00 pm we received a call from the Hemet station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that an Idyllwild youth had been missing since an early morning bike ride with his parents. In the mid afternoon the bike was located near the outdoor theatre at the campus at ISOMATA. Because of the close proximity to the treacherous grotto area of Strawberry Creek, RMRU was called out.

I quickly finished my calls, changed, loaded the rescue van and headed for Highway 74 which winds its way up the mountain. Traffic was light as I drove the mountain road, and I was plotting in my head what would be the best plan of attack when I reached Idyllwild. But as I rounded the curve just below where Strawberry

Creek passes below the highway after falling several thousand feet down from Idyllwild, I saw a young boy walking down the side of the road by himself. Quickly I pulled off in a turnout and ran back down the road. I called to the boy and he stopped. Asking him where he came from, he responded from Idyllwild, and that he had been lost all day. As fellow member Rick Pohlers would say, "Bingo, bingo, bingo." We walked back to the van, and I radioed to Deputy Dennis Fogel that I had located the missing youth and that we were enroute to his location in Idyllwild.

As we drove up the mountain, the 11 year old who was covered with minor cuts and abrasions, and was scratching what would definitely turn out to be a poison oak reaction, told me that he had ridden out ahead of his parents and become lost on the small mountain streets. He said that he decided to hide his bike and try and find his way home on foot. Problem was, by his description, he ended up in Strawberry Creek. He said he had slipped many times on the slick rocks in the bottom of the creek bed, one time banging his knee quite hard. Soon we reached ISOMATA where the deputy and his parents were waiting, after a reunion with tears of joy from his mother and a stern but relieved look from his father the family of three headed home as did I, and the rest of the team that had now been turned around.

• RMRU



### SEARCH

**Mission No. 8536M**

**24-25 Aug., Sat.-Sun.  
Thomas Mountain  
Santa Rosa Mtn. Range**

*By Joe Erickson*



Riverside County has a wide variety of terrain that a search and rescue team needs to be familiar with and able to operate in. From below sea level in the lower desert to the top of Mt. San Jacinto (10,805 ft.) Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit (RMRU) will respond to a call for help. We perform rescues for people known to be hurt or stranded, and searches for those who are lost, regardless of the terrain or time of day. Most often the call for help is received at night, usually when the readers of this Newsletter are snuggled in their warm blankets.

This mission started out as a lost female in the San Jacinto Mountains. While enroute the pagers relayed the message of a change in the operation. The RMRU volunteers were advised to proceed on to Thomas Mountain road, off Highway 74, in Garner Valley. A search was being initiated for a lost six year old boy.

Several months ago the RMRU solicited several thousand dollars from donors and service clubs. The goal was seven thousand dollars for a new pager system to replace our old "unreliables." Thank goodness for the new system. This system enabled the RMRU to respond to the Garner Valley search much more expeditiously. We arrived just before dark.

In the eight years I've been with the RMRU I have heard comments regarding how long our response time is and how long the operations are in length. Riverside County is huge. It takes me an hour and thirty minutes from the call-out time to my arrival time in the Idyllwild area, and I keep my gear packed and in my car for almost instant response.

A search involves many methods and each situation may utilize many or all the methods that we know. Basically, we determine the general area and the closest

road or trailhead. We interview those involved in an effort to get a good description of the person, their clothes, and footgear. It helps to know if the lost person has been in the area before, if they were prepared for the terrain and weather. We go to the Point Last Seen (PLS) and search for tracks to determine a direction of travel.

A group of eleven children had gone camping with some adults at one of the remote campsites on Thomas Mountain. They chose a site near the summit where the fire look-out tower used to be. The children explored and hiked and had fun all day. In the afternoon, about 3:00 pm, a group of the children spotted a deer and charged off to find it. One of the boys, Gregory, six years of age, had decided to return to camp and was last seen going in that direction. (Two mistakes here: 1) Children should be supervised at all times in the mountains, 2) never let someone travel alone in the mountains.) Gregory never made it back to camp.

RMRU volunteers were paired off for search area assignments. They carried gear for an all night search. Extra flashlights are standard equipment in our packs, as are extra bulbs and batteries. When tracking at night one flashlight that is dimmer works well because it has less tendency to wash out shadows.

We arrived at the campsite before we needed flashlights and had two areas of immediate concern. A visor was found above a campsite opposite from the PLS. The other spot to start from is the PLS (more on that later). The visor was on the side of a dirt road leading up to the summit. There were many children's footprints around that area. I went back to the group's camp and asked for all the shoes in camp so we could use the process of elimination to determine Gregory's shoeprint. We were told that the other children in camp had spent some time searching, resulting in many footprints up this road and down from camp, past the PLS, on another dirt road.

Darkness quickly overcame us and we concentrated our efforts on these dirt roads, working the prints. One team on the left berm, one in the middle, and one on the right berm. Many vehicles had, and were, driving up these roads, obliterating most everything, making our work go very slowly.

To Gregory's favor the weather was in the seventies. After many hours of fruitless searching, we decided that if he was on the mountain he was probably sleeping comfortably. At almost 4:00 am we opted to get some sleep for a fresh start at about 6:00 am.

Gregory's mother had come up to the camp. She did some calling around and I

assume someone told her the search had been on for about twelve hours. She told us her son had been educated about strangers and she felt he may not respond to searcher's calls. I had explained earlier to the adults in camp that Gregory probably would be up and moving in the early dawn when it was the coldest, and first daylight appeared. I also explained that we would most likely see him by air from the helicopter within the first two hours of flight.

Six a.m. came soon enough for me as I did not sleep well. I'm sure the other RMRU team members on this call, Rick Pohlrs, Kevin Walker, Steve Bryant, Glenn Henderson, Rob Gardner, Walt Walker, and John Dew, slept fitfully also. We resumed the search, concentrating on the PLS and all the terrain downhill from there. We all had ideas as to where to search. Probability said Gregory had not made it up to the dirt road or he would have seen camp, and most likely arrived there. Further, there was no significant evidence to support that he was on either dirt road.

We had Rob Gardner and John Dew go down to the highway to meet the helicopter at base. They were flying when the foot search restarted. (Hurry up and find this little boy before the chopper does, you guys!).

Glenn Henderson and I started down a



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

**PRIDE IN WHAT WE DO** — A very proud RMRU member by the name of Joe Erickson prods young Gregory into smiling just before the helicopter lifted off to fly Greg back to base camp and his waiting mother. Seated on either side of Gregory are John Dew and Rob Gardner, who were flying as observers when Joe located the missing boy in dense brush below Thomas Mountain.

minor drainage looking and calling. Moments later I yelled over to Glenn that I heard a faint voice in the distance, downhill and a little to the north. I heard the voice again and reported into the radio somewhat excitedly that I had voice contact. The response was delayed, but the expected "where" came back. I really didn't know exactly where I was, so I said "downhill from the PLS." This didn't help much as this is big country, with several drainages leading away from the PLS. Walt came back on the radio and said guide the helicopter in. I couldn't because I was under trees and brush, running full steam in the direction of the voice. The helicopter was out of my sight. The voice

was more distinct now and I could yell to Gregory telling him to stay where he was.

Gregory had found some large rocks for shelter. I was about twenty yards away now, separated from the little lad by some dense brush. The chopper had made it's way over and with the help of the men in the helicopter I found my way around the brush. When I reached Gregory and began to talk with him, I said his mother was looking for him, and he began questioning me. "What's her name," he said. "I don't know" was my response. He said, "What does she look like?" So I described her and he came right along. We crawled under some bushes to where the chopper had set down in a small clearing. Just then Glenn

and Kevin popped out of the surrounding brush, evidently led by the sounds of the chopper.

We flew Gregory down to base and waited for his mother to arrive. Gregory was refueled with many cups of hot chocolate and warmed up. I had gotten a ride to retrieve my car and missed the happy reunion. However, when I showed up at the Garner Valley fire station where everyone was gathering, Gregory stood up and announced to his mother, "that's the man who saved me," as he walked over to me. And, that six year old boy shook my hand and said, "thank you." • RMRU



## Van Clean-up & Technical

10-11 Aug., Sat.-Sun.  
Rick Pohler's Home  
& Tahquitz Rock  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Kevin Walker



Sometimes when you are given an article it is not the most exciting event in the world, but never the less it is needed. Saturday morning we met at Rick Pohler's home in Bloomington for a van clean-up. With both vehicles present and a good amount of members, we proceeded to unload all the equipment from the vans and then split into two groups. One servicing, vacuuming, washing and polishing the vans, and the other slowly going through gear, checking for any damage that may have occurred on a mission and just straightening up in general. Everyone moved right along, and by mid afternoon we were relaxing in Bob's pool next door to Rick's.

Sunday, for a few who wanted to, we met in Idyllwild for breakfast, and then adjourned to Humber Park, where gear was divided up. Our destination, Tahquitz Rock, and in particular the White Maiden Route. Under the climbing leadership of Bernie McIlvoy and Cameron Robbins, followed by myself, Kathy Davis, Bill Blaschko, Mark Rhoads and Mel Krug on

sweep, we ascended the long climb up the rock, and a little after noon made the summit. It was a good experience as it not only gave some of us a little more climbing practice, it also was good familiarization of the surrounding routes on the rock. After a long break up in the clean mountain sunshine, we headed down and then home.

• RMRU

## Notice!

The **RMRU Newsletter** is published 12 times per year by the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc. It is intended primarily to inform the Regular and Sustaining Members.

If you would like to receive the newsletter on a regular basis, and at the same time become a Sustaining member, send your tax deductible donation of \$25 or more to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit  
Post Office Box 5444  
Riverside, California 92517

## PANCAKES

Izaak Walton League  
Breakfast for RMRU

18 Aug., Sun.  
Idyllwild

By Mary Bowman



August 18, 1985 was the date of the annual Izaak Walton League Breakfast for RMRU at Idyllwild Town Hall. More than five hundred people enjoyed fellowship and an excellent pancake breakfast.

Everyone had an opportunity to visit with the RMRU team members and to examine the search and rescue vans and equipment on display.

Ernie Maxwell did his usual superb job of organizing the breakfast, with help from many members of the Izaak Walton League and the RMRU.



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

CHEAP LABOR — We can only guess. RMRU members Mel Krug and Rob Gardner seem to be trying to design a new type of head light that mounts to your waist, as professor Steve Bryant practices his hand writing with the grease pencils. And finally Bill Blaschko who we know could reach the center of the van roof, lazily gives Kathy Davis van waxing instructions.