



THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

November/December 2005

Volume 14 Number 11

Snow Pics on San B Peak

Shannon Kovich, Deputy San G/Valley of the Falls SAR SarTech II

On 110805 at 2300 Hrs, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office received a call for assistance from two hikers who had become lost on their way to the area of San Bernardino

them, the two hikers decided to start down a dry creek bed, which they believed, would get them to the highway. The two hikers said they could see some traffic from where they were on the mountain, and thought that they could get to the highway and work their way to the vehicle.

Members of the San Gorgonio Search and Rescue Team responded to the location and searched through the night looking for the two hikers. Sheriff's Aviation and the San Bernardino Mountain Search and Rescue Team responded the next morning to the location to assist with the lost hikers. Aviation located the missing hikers in a steep dry creek bed. The helicopter crew directed the San Bernardino Team into the location, and they walked the two hikers to safety.

The two hikers stated that they just wanted to get some pictures of the snow for their school projects. A simple picture-taking trip, turned out to be a 10-hour hike for many volunteers who went to their regular jobs the next morning, after hiking all night. The public sometimes forgets the people behind the scenes. When I interviewed these two hikers, they had no ideal of the way search and rescue works. I had to explain the fact that all of those people who hiked all night in the cold and rain had done so with no payment, and no glory. They just wanted to help someone in need. Things that we do on a regular basis. That is the way it is, we do the things we do for ourselves, and because we enjoy it.

Just remember that we all need to be safe out there, we can't help them if we get hurt while we do it.



Peak in the San Gorgonio Wilderness. The lost hikers stated that they had started on a trail near Jenks Lake, and hiked until 4pm in the afternoon before they decided to turn back for the vehicle.

The two hikers are students from the Otis School of Design in the City of Los Angeles. They wanted to get some pictures of the snow, and decided to go for a day hike, but got started in the late afternoon on the trail. When the hikers turned around to start back towards their vehicle, they soon lost the trail. The hikers searched for the trail for many hours, even back tracking. Once darkness moved upon

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What's New in Volunteer Forces?

Lt. Glenn Grabiec, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

Normally, I use this opportunity to give you the latest Volunteer Forces news. This month though, I would like instead to take a moment to thank all of you for the job that you do.

As many of you know, I have been in this assignment since March. It has been a year, (almost), of learning that has given me a deep appreciation for the dedication and professionalism of all of our SAR members. I feel truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to meet and work with many of you and am proud to be your representative at the Department, County, and State level. Thank you!

I would like to give a special thanks to those team members that have taken a leadership role within our

SAR family. I have attended the SAR Council and the Rope Rescue Oversight Committee meetings and know how hard you folks work to keep everyone safe and keep our department on the cutting edge. Thank you for all of the extra things that you do!

Lastly, on behalf of the Volunteer Forces Unit team members, we hope the holidays are filled with happiness for you and your families! We are looking forward to another great year working to support the good work that you do!

Happy Holidays!

Glenn ☐

Tracker Editor Heads South

Hello All! As was announced at the last IESARC meeting, I will be stepping down as editor of *The Tracker*. I am packing up the family and moving to South America for a few months. We are planning on returning in June.

Jeremy Thomas from the Wrightwood team will be taking over editor duties with the January issue.

Please treat him with the kindness you have shown me, and **MAKE SURE YOU SEND HIM ARTICLES!** Remember, *The Tracker* is only as good as you make it. There are several stories out there still waiting to be told (Donna Newlin!), and hundreds of people that would like to read them. Thank you to those who continue to write

regular articles.

Jeremy can be reached at, editor@thetracker.info. I'll still be reading email and keeping in touch. If you are interested in our travels you can visit lehmanfamily.org to see our blog. Take care, and I will see you again in June.



Two Thumbs Up for EVOC 4x4 Class

John Hayes, San Bernardino Mountain SAR

My Dad was a big time 4x4 guy when he was my age and he used to tell me, "Son, you can always judge how much fun you had on a 4x4 trip by what you broke. Pop a bead on a



tire . . . Ho hum. Break an axle . . . good to go. Twist the frame . . . now your cooking with gas!" You know, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. During my first training with Mountain SAR I put the fan through the radiator of my classic 1977 bronco

and had to be towed home. But you got to give me credit . . . when there is an opportunity for me to increase my skill I take it. The Emergency Vehicle

Operators Course (EVOC) 4x4 was such



an opportunity and I want to recognize team member Rick Nelson for introducing me and many others to it. Thanks Rick.

The 4x4 course has been around since the mid 1980's. The original course included sand from the Cajon creek and limited rugged terrain from the Cleghorn area. The course has changed over the years to include a broader eight hour curriculum and rugged terrain of sand, rock, mud, obstacles, uneven surface ascent/descent, steep grade ascent/descent/traverse, rut straddling, and stuck vehicle extraction. Three full time instructors and twenty part time instructors staff the EVOC 4x4 course. Full time instructors Joel Crawford, Joe Hernandez, and Randy Keller are all retired from Law Enforcement and have completed over eighty hours of driving instruction in the areas of driver awareness, driver training, and 4x4. Instructor Joel Crawford has seen the course change during his career with EVOC and cites the most recent change as the construction of obstacles.

At one time a local Hummer dealer used to include this EVOC 4x4 course with every new Hummer. Now a days the EVOC 4x4 course is only offered to Law Enforcement, Fire, and Rescue at the cost of \$295.00 per seat. While the price seems a bit steep, one must understand that the Sheriff provides no funding to EVOC so all classes must pay for themselves. The good news is that EVOC has donated all 4x4 course seats taken by SAR members who use their team vehicle. The bad news is that these free seats are only offered to SAR members between paying courses. Think of it as black out dates for your season pass to Disneyland. According to Crawford, SAR members occupied most of the seats for the 15-20 EVOC 4x4 courses offered so far this year

I found this course more challeng-

See "4x4" on p. 8

Fresh Out of BSAR & Ready To Save The Day

Tree Franklyn, Bear Valley SAR

Having just graduated from BSAR merely 3 weeks prior, I was raring to go when the pager went off that fated evening. The call was for 0600 the next morning, which gave me time to prepare and “eat a good, hearty meal” the night before, as I learned in the academy.

Being vegetarian, “good and hearty” meant pasta with lots of soy “meatballs.” For breakfast, I sacrificed my usual bowl of Cheerios and went with something a little more filling, like oatmeal and peanut butter & jelly toast.

Belly full and gear packed, I felt smugly proud as I put on my oh-so-flattering glaze orange shirt and camo pants and headed out the door.

The drive to the Sheriff’s Office felt exhilarating. I must admit, under any other circumstance, driving to the S.O. at 0430 in the morning would not be my ideal way to start the day.

But this particular morning, I was on my way to my first search! After over a year (14 months, 2 weeks and 4 days, to be exact, but who’s counting?) of “preplanning,” from the day I went to my very first meeting as a new prospect to the day I received my first callout as an official SAR Tech II member, I couldn’t wait to get out there and put to use all the training, planning and skills I had learned over the course of the past year.

I was ready! I was more than ready, I was overdue! I was going to go out there and find that missing “WFA” hiker within the hour! Yes, that’s right, the newcomer would save the day! Call it beginner’s luck, good training, fresh perspective, whatever, it didn’t matter. I was on a mission to be a hero and nothing would stop me! I was ready with a capital R!

I was so ready, in fact, that I didn’t even see her when passing within a few feet

from her.

Five hours, two sore feet and one aching back later, I remembered page 13 of the BSAR manual: “Words to delete from your vocabulary: I, Me, My.”

It’s funny the things that pop into our heads when we’re out there, hiking through brush, trudging up hills, scampering down ravines and boulder hopping.

I heard voices (no, not those kind of voices!) from the instructors at BSAR. From Wes to Chuck to Dave, they all spoke to me, urging me on with gentle reminders, molding, sculpting and shaping me into a valuable SAR Team Member.

When I scanned the terrain for a person, I heard, “Search for clues, not just subjects. There are more clues than subjects. Clues lead us to the subject.”

When my ego got the best of me, I heard, “There is no I in Team.”

When I became thirsty, I heard, “Drink water before you’re thirsty. Thirst means you’re dehydrated.”

When I almost lost my footing from being overzealous, I heard, “Your safety first.”

When my glare locked in front of me, I heard, “Look ahead, behind, up, down, left, right, and all around you.”

During our grid search in the morning, I had lost sight of my team leader due to the rugged terrain. He was combing the area down in a large ravine and I had managed to find myself somewhere in the pit of another ravine. We always maintained radio contact so I was not worried, (though if I am to be completely honest, I must admit there was a part of me that wondered if I’d ever hear the end of my team members’ playful jabs if I got lost on my first search), however, it gave me a chance to practice

See “First Call” on p. 6

Black Ice Leads to San G Tumble

Shannon Kovich, Deputy San G/Valley of the Falls SAR SarTech II

Good advice is always certain to be ignored, but that's no reason not to give it
Agatha Christie

We always recommend to hikers that they not go into the wilderness by themselves. At one point or another, we all need the assistance of another, someone to come to our rescue. The buddy system is a guideline we do not break in the SAR community. The main reason is because if you take a fall or incur another injury while in the middle of nowhere, you have someone to help, someone to go for help if needed.



John Bleeker, an off duty CHP Officer, was hiking down from the summit of San G on the Sky High Trail, when he walked over a spot of black ice and fell. Bleeker fell head over heel down the side of the mountain for about 250 feet. He became separated from his pack and received major injuries to his ankle and shoulder. Though injured, he was able to use a small leatherman tool to dig small footsteps in the solid frozen surface. He used these steps to slowly move his way up the steep slope. Once he was about 100 feet below the trail, he was able to get a reception on

his cell phone to call for assistance. Bleeker gave the dispatcher his exact location with a Lat/Long from his gps. He said that he thought he had a dislocated shoulder and a possible broken ankle, along with other cuts and scraps.

The Command Post was established at the Heartbar Probation Camp off of State Hwy 38 in Barton Flats. Sheriff's aviation responded with their rescue ship to search for the subject. Initially, aviation was not able to see the subject; due to the clothing the subject was wearing blending into his surroundings. Com Center, who was on the phone with the subject, directed Air Rescue 7 into his location.

Members of the San Gorgonio and Valley of the Falls SAR Teams responded to the command post for deployment. The Bear Valley and San Bernardino SAR Teams were placed on stand-by as plan B, just in case we had to carry the subject out without the assistance of aviation.

When the two members of the San G SAR Team were deployed into the area, they also found that the solo hiker had a dog companion with him. This posed another problem for searchers. The team helped the subject up to the trail, and then they all worked their way to the LZ, with dog by their side. The dog was muzzled and his head was covered with a bag to limit his exposure to the helicopter. The helicopter was not able to land, due to the limited space, so they hovered near a point in the trail to do a one-skid landing. The dog posed a large problem, the team had to lift this fairly large animal into a helicopter, which he did not want to go into. Everything worked out, all SAR personnel; the victim and his dog were all flown to the


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Black Ice

command post.

Once at the command post, the victim was treated for his injuries, which end up being a dislocated right shoulder and a broken left ankle. This went very smoothly, on the other hand, the dog had become so frightened during flight, that he had worked himself under the seats in the rear of the ship. Once on the ground, the crew chief had to disassemble the seat to get the animal out. Once out of the ship, "Gunner" was as happy as can be.

We look back at this incident, and think, "what if". What if Bleeker could not have used his cell phone, or what if he would have been hurt worst than he was during the fall. We always recommend hiking with a partner. Things like this happen all the time, and its better to be safe than sorry. 

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First Call

my new orienteering skills with my handy dandy compass that I had used to pass the "map & compass" field test just weeks ago (and had shamefully not touched since).

My instructions were to travel due North and meet up again on the road. Wes' voice had already reminded me how to set the azimuth (thanks, Wes!) and just for kicks, I had set a back azimuth at the start (though that was soon out of sight). I checked my direction periodically to ensure I maintained my heading, after all, as the instructors' voices reminded me, "a few degrees off, over a long distance and you'll find yourself in Death Valley." Half an hour later, I emerged up over the ravine, out from the thick brush and saw my team leader waiting for me (and the rest of the team) on the road. It worked!

We regrouped at ICP and refueled our bodies with pepperoni pizza (am I the only vegetarian in SAR?). During lunch, we were told that the "missing hiker" was most likely a victim of suicide and our search changed from a search to a possible recovery.

By this time, my ego had been set back in its place. I was no longer "the new-comer who will save the day," I was simply another team member performing her duty. Valuable? Absolutely, like all the other team members out there that day. But the hero? Absolutely not, even if I had found her during that first hour.

After recovering the body and having a few days to reflect on the experience, I have come to the conclusion that the real heroes are the family members who now have to pick up the fragmented pieces. It is the 13 year old daughter who has to live, every day from now on, with the last memory of her and her mother being one of anger, turmoil and fighting. It is the 9 year old autistic son who has to not only struggle within himself to comprehend his mother's final desperate act, but also struggle every day to live in a world which is not his own without the steady, warm shoulder of a mother to cry on. It is the ex-husband who undoubtedly must battle his own guilt and blame while now raising two grieving, confused and broken children, alone.

To me, these are the real heroes, the survivors.

One final voice popped into my head a few days later: "...these things we do, so that others may live."

While our subject did not live, I learned a valuable lesson, one that is impossible to learn in a classroom, in a meeting or from a book, but can only be absorbed and understood internally and personally by actual experience in the field.

I learned the true meaning of our motto. It deserves far deeper thought than I originally gave it upon reading it in the book and hearing it from others. No, our motto is multi-layered and speaks on many different levels.

"...these things we do, so that others may live" not only means we sacrifice our time and energy for others, it also means we sacrifice our ego. There is no room for a lone hero in the field. There is no room because if your ego is in your way, how could you possibly see the subject you are looking for?

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Calendar

For information or to submit an event, contact the editor at editor@thetracker.info. Appearance of items in this section does not necessarily imply endorsement by the SAR Council or the County of San Bernardino. Call if you have any questions about a particular listing. To save space, persons to contact and numbers for multiple listings of *Department-approved training providers* are consolidated in one place at the bottom of this page.

2005

May

May 14-15—West Valley SAR Training
Rope Training. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for information.

May 18—IESARC Meeting
19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

June

Jun 4—West Valley SAR Training
Night ELT exercise. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

July

Jul 2—Valley of the Falls SAR Pancake Breakfast and Raffle
Visit thetracker.info for more information.

Jul 16—West Valley SAR Training
Rope rescue training. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Jul 16-17 & 23-24—Technical Rescue Basics Course
Contact Mike Schlaw at VFU (msclax@sbscd.org) to sign up. A \$50 deposit is required.

Jul 20—IESARC Meeting
19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

August

Aug 12 & 13—Air Rescue Team Fundraiser
“Hollywood Bowl Style” concert in La Verne. Tickets are \$55.00, which includes food. Contact stephen.miller39@verizon.net for more information.

Aug 20—West Valley SAR Training
Rope rescue training. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Aug 24—Central Mountain Rescue Annual Fundraiser, “An Evening at the Improv”.
Visit thetracker.info for more information.

September

Sep 17—West Valley SAR Training
Search exercise. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Sep 21—IESARC Meeting
19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

October

Oct 1-2—Morongo Basin SAR 26th Annual Desert Run Fundraiser.
This exciting event is held on Soggy Dry Lake in the Johnson Valley OHV. This is a fun family event, not a race. There will be food, music and prizes. So bring your motorcycle, quad, buggy or 4x4 and have enjoyable weekend. For more information call (760) 369-9999.

Oct 3—San Geronio Search and Rescue Team Calvert & Johnston Memorial Golf Tournament
Golf Tournament and fundraiser 12:00pm-7:00pm Shandin Hills Golf Club. See registration flier and sponsor information at www.thetracker.info.

Oct 7-9—SAR City
Hosted by Barstow Desert Rescue Squad. Visit www.sarcity.org for more information.

Oct 14-16—West Valley SAR Training
Map & Compass training. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Oct 15—Personal Vertical Skills Check-off
Hosted by the Cave Rescue Team. Sheriff's Aviation in Rialto. Contact Mark Kinsey (mkinsey@caverescue.net) for more information.

Oct 22—West Valley Softball Tournament
At The Epicenter in Rancho Cucamonga. For information call 909-207-2444 or 909-605-1341. Download the flyer at www.thetracker.info

November

Nov 19—West Valley SAR Training
Night scenario. Contact Bob Gattas (rgattas@earthlink.net) for more information.

Nov 19 & 20—Winter Alpine Basic Mountaineering Course
Sign up with Dave Pichotta in VFU (dpichotta@sbscd.org)

December

*Course / Provider	Contact Name	Phone	email/URL
BSAR / Vol Forces	Dave Pichotta	(909) 387-0678	dpichotta@sbscd.org
CMC Rescue School	John McKentley	(800) 235-5741	www.cmcrescue.com
On Rope1	Bruce Smith	(423) 344-4716	www.onrope1.com
Rigging For Rescue	Mike & Joanie Gibbs	(970) 325-4474	www.riggingforrescue.com
Ropes That Rescue	Reed & Jayne Thorne	(520) 282-7299	www.ropes-that-rescue.com/
TRBC, PVSC, NCRC / Vol Forces	Don Welch	(760)244-7340	ww26sar5@aol.com
Mountaineering / Vol Forces	Frank Hester	(760) 242-0855	flhester@aol.com
West Valley SAR Training	Bob Gattas	(909) 980-8820	boobali@gte.net

Continued from p. 6 "First Call"

"...these things we do, so that others may live" not only means we give up our evening in the comfort of our own homes to go out in the field when we get a callout, it also means we unceasingly study, train, grow and learn when we're not on a call, so that we may better do these things, so that others may live.

"...these things we do, so that others may live" not only means we do all this so that the subject lives, it also means we do all this so that the subject's loved ones may continue with their lives, whether that means providing closure by recovering a body or finding the missing loved one alive.

"...these things we do, so that others may live" not only means the selfless dedication of each individual for the sake of others, it also means the selfless dedication of the entire team as a whole. It means pulling our strengths and resources together, putting aside our individual differences, to better serve our purpose, so that others may live.

"...these things we do, so that others may live" not only means we do all this so that others may live, it also means we do all this so that we may live. We ARE part of the "others" and each search we go out on gives us the opportunity to learn and grow. It gives us the opportunity to see ourselves, to see others and to see life in a new perspective and become better, more knowledgeable, compassionate and humble human beings. It teaches us to live and live fully. For those of us who have been out in the field, whether it's our first time or our 100th time, we know all too well how fragile and fleeting life really is.

Fresh out of BSAR and ready to save the day, I instead learned the true meaning of honor in our motto, "...these things we do, so that others may live."

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4x4

ing than a similar course I took in the Marine Corps. The obstacle I found particularly challenging was a railroad tie I had to negotiate up hill in the sand while making a sharp left turn. The obstacle I found most intimidating was a steep decline, which could not be seen as I started over the edge because the hood was in the way. The only way to safely negotiate the steep decline is to trust the spotter, a co-student, who gives directions. Choose your partner carefully . . . scary scary.

If you have not taken the EVOC 4x4 course yet, you gotta try it. Two thumbs way up! Of course, pay attention to your instructor lest you have so much fun you cause the same damage that occurred to one of our vehicles . . . no it was not me this time. This course runs from Spring to fall. Contact Sheriff's EVOC for more information at (909) 473-3888.

Classifieds

Contact the Editor to place or remove any item.



SBSB Commuter cups with star and motto. \$16. Features generous 16 oz. capacity, stainless steel construction, double-walled insulation and fits virtually all auto cup or mug holders.



SBSB Search and Rescue decals. \$5. The decals are 3.5" X 3.5" and can be stuck on the outside of just about anything or on the inside of a window. The price is \$5.00 each and can be purchased by contacting SarDesertRun@aol.com or calling 760-369-9999.



Earrings (1/2") \$10 and **Lapel Pin/Tie Tacks (5/8")** \$8. Fund-raiser for Morongo Mounted SAR Team. For ordering info contact Kim Miller at millerkm@29palms.usmc.mil or call Kim at (760) 367-1148 or (760) 367-1148 evenings.

SBSB Coffee cups \$5. High-gloss ivory coffee cups with gold-colored SBSB star on the side is microwavable. Available at Volunteer Forces.

SBSB SAR Pens \$10. High-quality, refillable ink pens with SBSB star and "Search & Rescue" on side. Great gift idea! Available at Volunteer Forces.

Garmin Offers NASAR Members Discounts. NASAR has an agreement with Garmin to distribute its entire line of consumer GPS products and a handful of its aviation products to the SAR community. Join NASAR at www.nasar.org, and shop the store at www.nasar.org/garmin/default.php.

Air Rescue Team. The Air Rescue Team is selling T-shirts and baseball caps. To purchase them contact Diana at VFU (909-387-0641) or Kathy at Aviation (909-356-3800). Go to www.cafepress.com/helicopter2classifieds to purchase these items.

Join the SAR Email List

To improve communication in the county, there is a new email list called SARInfo. This email list will facilitate county-wide discussions for those who subscribe. To subscribe, send an email to:

SARInfo-subscribe@sbsar.org

When you are ready to post to the list send email to SARInfo@sbsar.org.

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