



# THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

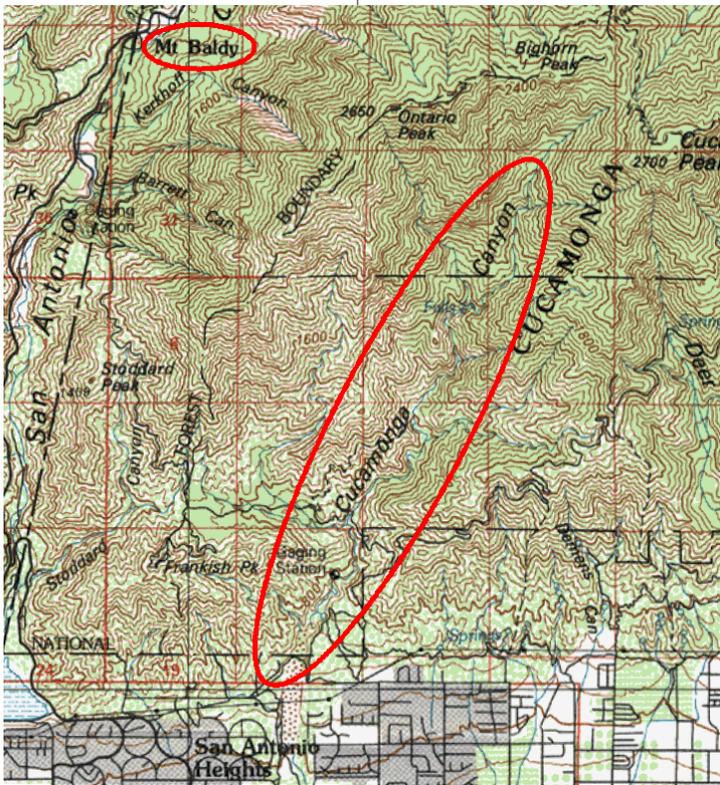
May 2005

Volume 14 Number 5

## Canyon Rescue

Eric Spaeth, West Valley SAR

West Valley SAR got the call at 2000hrs to assist Rancho Cucamonga Fire Dept (RCFD)



with an injured hiker in Cucamonga canyon. The initial page indicated the injured hiker was in San Antonio Canyon (SAC), luckily we heard the original fire dispatch for RCFD an hour earlier for Cucamonga canyon, otherwise

drainage to stabilize him. His injuries included a broken ankle, wrist and nose. In this maneuvering thru the canyon and in the dark the actual location of the victim and the medics became unclear, this is where our new searchlight saved the day.

Around the first of the year we decided to look into a new hand held light offered by Polaron Portable Search Light (it uses the same technology as the spot light on the 40 king patrol helicopters). The moment we turned the switch on, the whole canyon before us was lit up almost like daytime, we could see all the details of the canyon instantly and knew we were headed in the right direction. The medics could see the glow and confirmed the direction. This was the second time this light helped us locate people on the mountain. In January in Mt. Baldy, from Mt. Baldy road we pointed it towards Mt. San Antonio in the direction of a couple of hikers who were lost. While we spoke to them by cell phone, they told us when the light was brightest; we took a bearing, and eventually located the couple. This hand held lantern is incredible!

the team would have been going for a nice hike somewhere up SAC!

Upon arriving at the usual Sapphire and Almond staging location we waited for enough personnel to fill our ancient (1985) equipment truck 5110 to the gills and our 2 suburbans with 11 members and started our 3-mile off road drive in to the canyon.

Arriving at the drainage that we felt was the best way to get the hiker out; the paramedics apparently followed the injured hikers friends down another

Mean while back in Cucamonga Canyon, RCFD's rescue group and WVSAR maneuvered down the drainage placing rope systems at 2 locations, the first was low angle at about 200' long, but passed through very difficult terrain due to a cut caused by the water flow. On this system we were aided by a healthy branch that just happened to be right at the beginning of the cut and extended across, about 15' above. One of our brave members shim-

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# What's New in Volunteer Forces?

Lt. Glenn Grabiec, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

Some of you may know that FEMA has been in the process of finalizing their National Incident Management System (NIMS). In October of last year, FEMA released the National Mutual Aid Glossary of Terms and Definitions and the Resource Typing Definitions for 120 different kinds of resources. Upon review of these definitions, many States and Counties have determined that the guidelines are not necessarily reflective of the guidelines needed at the local level.

So what does all of this mean to us? Please let me try to summarize. I attended the recent SAR Coordinators Meeting hosted by California Office of Emergency Services. During this meeting, there was much discussion about this topic. Basically, FEMA is telling the States and Counties that they may not be reimbursed when their teams are requested through mutual aid on a FEMA incident unless we conform to their guidelines. Sounds like no big deal right? Well, one of the examples given in the meeting I attended was related to a Type I Wilderness SAR Team. The FEMA guidelines state that the *minimum* number of personnel needed

for a response is 6 team members and at least 48 other team members to support 6 operational units. At least 1 member of each team must be a medical specialist. Though this would be what we would want in an ideal world, many counties do not have this many SAR personnel all together! This is one small example, but you can see we have issues. Keep in mind also, I gave an example of a Wilderness Team, but FEMA has guidelines for *all* SAR Team disciplines!

The good news is, the team here at Volunteer Forces is going to be actively involved with the other California counties and OES to complete a set of team typing guidelines that are more reflective of what most of our capabilities are. It is my understanding that once this process is complete and everyone is in agreement, OES will be meeting with the FEMA folks to try to come to some understanding. We all know that California has been at the forefront of progressive thinking when it comes to these things. I will try to keep you updated on this issue. D

## Hug-A-Tree

NASAR has taken over the Hug-A-Tree program, and they are in the process of updating the program. They are interested in contacting any past presenters. If you are a past presenter, or are interested in becoming a presenter please contact NASAR at :

[hugatree@nasar.org](mailto:hugatree@nasar.org)

# Patrick "PACKY" Wassell

Shannon Kovich, San Gorgonio SAR & Valley of the Falls SAR

Harry Millner wrote, "There are many paths to the top of the mountain, but only one view."

One thing I can say about Packy is, he has seen all of the views that this mountain has to offer. He has decided to move on, after 41 years of dedicated service to the



San Gorgonio Search and Rescue Team. I would like to first tell you a little about my teammate.

Packy, as we call him, started "officially" with the San G Team around April

1964. This was before most of you had been born. He stayed on the team working his way through the many positions each team has to offer, like President, Vice-President, Training Officer and finally Equipment Officer. When Packy started



with the team, he was a District Fire Management Officer with the United States Forest Service. In 1980 Packy retired from the USFS with 32 years of Honorable Service.

Well, now that you know the general overview of our friend, let me tell you about the other parts. Packy is one of those teammates who just love what he does, for

all of those years, which seem like a lifetime to many of us, he has given to his community and to his county. You would always see him out in the field with the team, and in the later years, he would man the team's mobile command post. Some think this was the easy part of the job, but it was just the opposite. Our friend spent his time in the mountains, and on the ropes. He now leaves this "fun" stuff to the youngsters on the team. Support is what he did the best, no matter what the mission, a lost child in the forest or an overdue well-prepared hiker, Packy was always there to support his teammates. We often forget the work, which takes place in the command post, other than just drinking coffee. Hypothetical situations, brainstorming, and mathematical computations, are just a few things we all worked on.

I can talk all day about all of the time I have spent with Packy, the many hours of missions, and the many hours of personal time. We will miss him and will always remember what he has given to our family and our team.

We all rely on each other when we work on missions, it may just be a simple hiking partner, or a complicated rope system. All our teammates could rely on Packy to be there for them, and for the team. We all wish him and his beautiful wife Celeste a wonderful life with their children in Arizona. We can never repay him and his wife for what they have given to our agency.

# Plummers Meadow Search

Shannon Kovich, San Gorgonio SAR & Valley of the Falls SAR

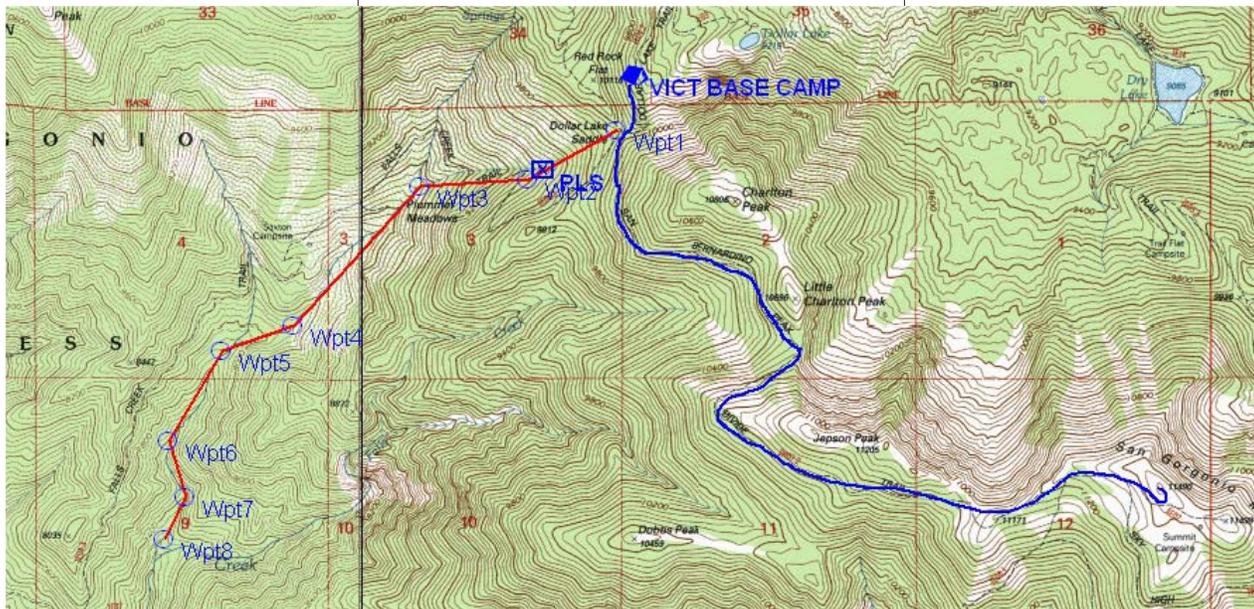
It never fails, the whole ideal of setting up a base camp and hiking from base camp to the summit with minimum gear, with the plan that we will be right back, has failed once more. Sok Yong Chang, a 54-year-old resident of Los

below the pairs tracks. When Chang dropped down in elevation, he worked his way into the Plummers Meadow area, and then did not have the strength to work out of the canyon area.

The two friends followed their tracks

back to the point where their friends tracks turned down canyon, they then returned to base camp, packed up and hiked out of the area to get help.

After Valley of the Falls personnel searched



Angeles County was hiking with several of his friends on Sun 041005 in the Dollar Lake area of the San Gorgonio Wilderness. They had set up a base camp on the trail between Dollar Lake and Dollar Lake Saddle. The initial plan was for the three to stay the night at base camp and head for the summit early Sunday morning.

The group packed their winter packs with minimum gear to make it to the summit; they even had their family radios to talk to each other. The several hour trip to the summit went without flaw, until they were almost back to their base camp. This is when the two-team members noticed they were one person short. They tried him on the radio, and had limited contact with Chang. Chang had told the pair that he had lost their tracks in the snow. The two friends told Chang to drop down in elevation until he was able to cross the pairs tracks in the snow. Little did the pair know, that Chang was actually already

through the night, Sheriff's aviation spotted the missing hiker in a steep canyon above Dobbs Cabin. Chang was not prepared for the cold of the night, no map or compass and no cell phone. He was not familiar with the area, but once in the Falls Creek Canyon, he spotted the lights of Forest Falls and kept hiking.

Sheriff's Aviation hoisted out the hiker and flew him to the Big Falls Parking lot where medical aid, and family waited. Just a little cold and hungry, Chang survived a night of bone chilling cold and rough terrain, and all they had to do to prevent this was to stay together on their hike to the summit.

We are all glad that Sok Yong Chang is all right, and hopes he visits our beautiful National Forest again in the future. 

# Take Your Alpine Gear to the Desert

Jeff Lehman, Cave Rescue Team

Last summer I got a call from a local reporter that wanted to do a story about the team; she was especially



interested in going into a cave. Since there was a cave on the training schedule soon after our conversation, we agreed to be observed, and to have her and a photographer tag along. As you know, in SAR things don't always go as planned and there are always last-minute changes. The training weekend arrived, and lo and behold we were scheduled for a search on Baldy (Big surprise! That's been a busy place.), so we had to postpone the meeting. We had an upcoming Moun-

tain Rescue Association Technical Rock recertification, so we were going to spend the remaining training weekends focusing on preparation for the exercise. We didn't have another cave scheduled for a few months, so we put the whole idea on hold.

In April we were scheduled to complete our annual helitac training at aviation. Since this is typically a half-day exercise, we figured that we could do a short scenario in a local bolder talus cave east of Temecula called Cahuilla Creek Cave. The team thought this would be a good cave to invite the reporter to tag along, so we made arrangements to meet at aviation then caravan to the cave. This is where the fun began.

15 minutes into the presentation at aviation, we got a call to help West Valley SAR with an evacuation near the Baldy Ski Hut (Hey, its Baldy again!). A West Valley team member was out hiking and hap-

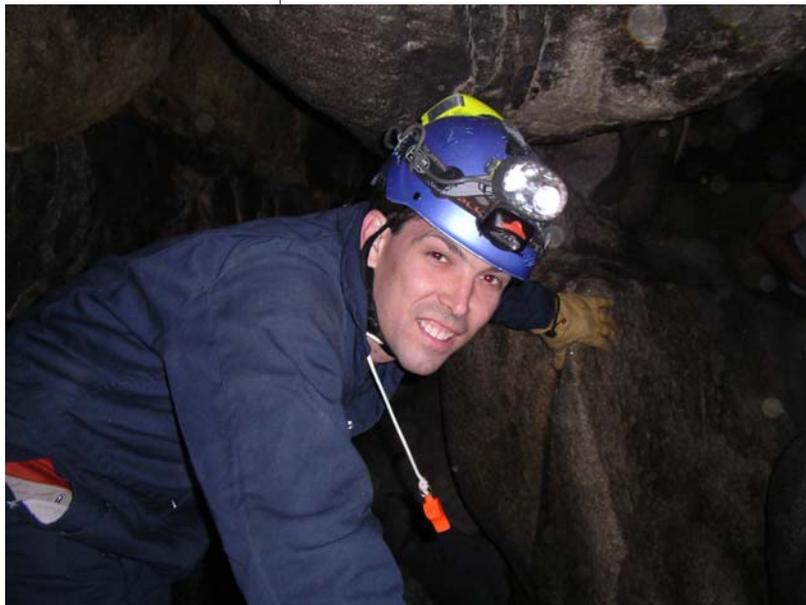
See "Busy" on p.6



## Busy

Continued from p. 5

pened upon an injured hiker, and initiated the call. Aviation was called, but the winds were too strong, so the patient was not able to be hoisted. We were needed to help carry the injured man off the slope and



down the trail. We gathered our alpine gear and made our way to the hut trailhead to meet the West Valley folks. While sorting gear and preparing for our hike in and out, word came that L.A. County's big rescue helicopter was able to hover and hoist the patient out. Upon finding out that the patient weighed more than 200 lbs, we were relieved; it would have been a sporting evacuation. So, with the reporter still in tow, we decided to continue with the day's plans.

The folks at Sheriff's Aviation were just getting ready to start some meetings, so we weren't able to continue with the helitac exercise. We

decided to continue to the cave and finish the day there. We spent a few hours making our way through the cave and answering questions about SAR and what we do. Upon exiting the cave that Saturday night, we got a page to assist with a mutual aid search for a missing woman near Indio the following day. So, we made plans for the 0445 hrs meeting the following morning, grabbed a late dinner, and parted ways for a few hours.

Sunday morning we arrived at the Riverside County Incident Command Post near Lake Cahuilla. We were given our search assignment and we began our effort. Half-way through our area we got a call on the radio asking us to return to the command post. Upon our arrival we were informed that there were some missing Boy Scouts on Mt. San Jacinto, we were asked to respond to the Palm Springs Tramway for a ride to the top to assist the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit's search effort. Again, we loaded up our alpine gear and headed out. Just as we were leaving we got word that the boys had been spotted from the air, and that we weren't needed. Hearing this we returned to our search area and completed our assignment.

It was a very busy weekend. Who would have thought that we would be in a cave, the snow, and the desert in a single weekend.



# Calendar

For information or to submit an event, contact the editor at [editor@thetracker.info](mailto: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

### April

#### Apr 16—Personal Vertical Skills Check-off

Hosted by West Valley SAR. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for information.

#### Apr 30—West Valley SAR 9th Annual Run for Rescue & Safety Fair

Visit [www.thetracker.info/calendar/FlyerRun&Fair05.pdf](http://www.thetracker.info/calendar/FlyerRun&Fair05.pdf) for more information.

### May

#### May 14-15—West Valley SAR Training

Rope Training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto: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](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

### July

#### Jul 16—West Valley SAR Training

Rope rescue training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

#### Jul 16-17 & 23-24—Technical Rescue Basics Course

Contact Mike Schlax at VFU ([msclax@sbscd.org](mailto: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 20—West Valley SAR Training

Rope rescue training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

### September

#### Sep 17—West Valley SAR Training

Search exercise. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

#### Sep 21—IESARC Meeting

19:00 in the main conference room at SBSB HQ.

### October

#### Oct 14-16—West Valley SAR Training

Map & Compass training. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto: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](mailto:mkinsey@caverescue.net)) for more information.

### November

#### Nov 19—West Valley SAR Training

Night scenario. Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

### December

#### \*Course / Provider

BSAR / Vol Forces  
CMC Rescue School  
On Rope1  
Rigging For Rescue  
Ropes That Rescue  
TRBC, PVSC, NCRC / Vol Forces  
Mountaineering / Vol Forces  
West Valley SAR Training

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[www.riggingforrescue.com](http://www.riggingforrescue.com)  
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## Cucamonga

mied out onto the branch and rigged a pulley to create a Natural Hi Directional (NHD). The next station 200' down stream was a 30' vertical waterfall. We set a rappel line and sent 8 personnel over to help carry the litter back to this location and again the searchlight helped immensely to light the path of the litter team as they climbed over very rough terrain and crossed the main flow of water in Cucamonga canyon.

The waterfall presented a challenge, due to the water and the edge trauma raising the litter. We decided to use a large tree "face right" above the falls and up the side about 75' this would help create another NHD but this was going to cause the rope to "drag" thru a very un-stable rock area, possibly injuring our rescuer and victim in the litter. We then realized that our first system could act as a directional on the second system and keep the litter more controlled during the raise. We had to use a little "pro" to secure the directional pulley from moving up as we raised with the internal 3:1 MA; but it worked great! Once the litter was up to the top of the falls, we used the same system to raise the rest of the RCFD personnel up while to save time the WVSAR personnel used rope ascending techniques they learned at PVS to ascend the rappel line.

Now we faced the cut. As we struggled to maneuver up the drainage, the closer we came to the NHD the easier (relatively speaking) it became to get the litter through. By the time we got to the NHD it was almost easy to clear the cut. It's amazing how some basic rope techniques learned at the Ropes That Rescue class can be so useful in these situations.

Now that we had cleared the 2 sections that required rope work it was basically a litter carryout over rough terrain filled with ankle twisting rocks and debris left from the recent storms. Finally we climbed up to the waiting suburban 4X4 where the victim was transported slowly from the canyon to the waiting AMR ambulance crew and then off to the hospital.

This rescue was possible because of the great working relationship between the Rancho Cucamonga Fire Department and the San Bernardino Sheriffs West Valley Search and Rescue team.

## Classifieds

Contact the Editor to place or remove any item.



**SBSD 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.



**SBSD 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.

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

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

**Custom SAR/Expedition Topo maps.** \$14.95. See the web site for full details!

**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](http://www.nasar.org), and shop the store at [www.nasar.org/garmin/default.php](http://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 Helen at Aviation (909-356-3800). Go to [www.cafepress.com/helicopter2classifieds](http://www.cafepress.com/helicopter2classifieds) to purchase these items.

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