



# THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

January/February 2006

Volume 15 Number 1

## SAR Assistant Director Dies at Scene of Plane Crash.

Deputy Serg Palanov, Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office PIO

**O**n December 23, 2005, Santa Clara County Sheriff's Search and Rescue (SCCSSAR)



8 Nov. 1947 - 23 Dec 2005

Assistant Director Doug Mincey collapsed and passed away while attempting to take pictures of a small plane crash site. The Santa Clara County Sheriff's Search and Rescue team had spent the two previous days searching for and recovering the bodies of four people killed in a small plane crash in the Coyote Reservoir Park in

Gilroy, California.

Doug and the team Director had hiked out to the site of the downed plane in hopes of collecting pictures and information for training and debriefing purposes. At the site Doug became faint and lost consciousness. California Department of Forestry, Gilroy Fire and Sheriff's Deputies responded to an emergency call for help from SCCSSAR's Director. Upon their arrival, CDF personnel were unable to revive Doug.

Doug was born on November 8, 1947. He worked as a Director of Sales Support for Altera. Doug joined the

Santa Clara County Sheriff's Search and Rescue team in October of 1993. During the past 12 years Doug had dedicated thousands of volunteer hours to training, organizing and conducting SCCSSAR events. In addition to the vast amount of time that he devoted, Doug personally outfitted his own four-wheel drive vehicle as a fully operational command center.

During his long tenure with SCCSSAR, Doug assisted on the high profile cases of Polly Klaus and Xiana Fairchild. He was always one of the first on scene, and one of the last to leave.

Doug was a beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend. He fostered many friendships both with his teammates and those that came in contact with him. He was always eager to show, to anyone who was interested, the tactics, equipment and philosophy that the SCCSSAR team possessed. Doug will be sorely missed by us all.

Santa Clara County Sheriff's Search and Rescue was formed in 1989 to assist city, county, state and federal agencies in times of emergency. The Team is part of the Special Operations Division of the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Department. The members are all dedicated volunteers, who are highly trained to effect successful SAR operations.

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**OFFICERS**

- Council Director ..... Mike Ward  
rockywinds@aol.com
- Assistant Director ..... Shirley Keebaugh  
skeebaugh@aol.com
- Treasurer ..... Dave Northrop
- Secretary ..... Tom Schneider  
tom\_kasey@eee.org
- Member At Large ..... Don Welch  
ww26sar5@aol.com
- Standing Committees & Projects**
- Communications ..... Wes Podboy &  
Bill Maclay
- Newsletter Editor ..... Jeremy Thomas  
editor@thetracker.info
- Volunteer Forces ..... Lt. Glenn Grabiec

[www.thetracker.info](http://www.thetracker.info)

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San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department  
655 E. Third Street/Volunteer Forces Unit.  
San Bernardino, CA 92415-0061  
Attn: The Tracker

(909) 387-0686 / (909) 387-0667 FAX  
editor@thetracker.info



# What's New in Volunteer Forces?

Lt. Glenn Grabiec, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

**G**reetings All! I hope the holidays were good to you and your families!

The team here at Volunteer Forces is looking forward to a progressive and productive new year. We plan to continue moving forward on several fronts, including making quality training more available on a regular basis, seeking funding opportunities for new equipment, and continuing with a recruitment effort started late last year. One issue that we are working on a believe will see to fruition soon is the installation of the 155 repeaters that were purchased many moons ago. It is basically a funding issue that I believe I have solved. Will let you know.

I will be continuing to attend the regular SAR Coordinators meetings in Sacramento. These meetings include all counties in the state and provide us an opportunity

to discuss issues affecting county SAR teams. As your representative, I am able to pass on your concerns to the group and get some feedback. If you have concerns about issues that affect us or other counties, please shoot me an email directly or through Deputy Dave Pichotta.

Through January and February, we will be attending as many unit installation dinners as we can. We look forward to seeing many of you as your new officers are sworn in and you embark on a new year. Lastly, we are working diligently on the Commanders and Coordinators meeting and will notify you of the date and location as soon as we get it. Again, if there are any issues you would like us to address at this meeting, please let Dave or I know as soon as is feasible.

Thank you for all you do!

*Glenn* ☐

## New Tracker Editor

**H**ello All! As was announced at the last IESARC meeting, Jeff has stepped down as editor of *The Tracker*, while he and his family move to South America for a few months.

A few months ago I was sucked into, I mean I volunteered to take over the editor duties of *The Tracker*. I thought that I would take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Jeremy Thomas and I am from the Wrightwood team. I am a Technical Writer by trade, I write installation instructions and use & care manuals, you know the stuff

nobody reads. I have been married to my wife Cherie for 10 years and we have three children; Hayley (9), Andrew (6) and Ayden (3).

Remember, *The Tracker* is only as good as you make it. There are several stories out there still waiting to be told, and hundreds of people that would like to read them. Thank you to those who continue to write regular articles.

I can be reached at, editor@thetracker.info. Thank you in advance for all of your support.

*Jeremy* ☐

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# My Pack Got Heavy!

William (Sonny) Lawrence, Cave Rescue Team

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A hundred years ago Einstein had a disagreement with Newton. We ended up with a different understanding of gravity. However on



Earth it is constant enough. It sure causes things to be weighty, especially those we place in our packs and hump up the mountain.

I had the pleasure of spending the night in Icehouse Canyon with David Laver and Don Welch from the Wrighwood team. We were trying to locate three fellows who dabbled in ice climbing around Cucamonga Peak. We witnessed the sun rise. All went well despite difficult hard pack and icy conditions. Our search effort was rewarded with a hoist up and into Air 5. As David was off loading his pack from the helicopter, he exclaimed “my pack got heavy!” Now I appreciate packs get heavy from too many items stashed in them or from everything being soaked in a down pour or from a few choice rocks sneaked in when the owner is not looking. But none of these had occurred. David’s pack got heavier from a night without sleep. Lack of snooze hit him all of a sudden, like a ton of bricks.

The average healthy adult falls asleep in 10-15 minutes. While waiting for Air 5, I witnessed David start to snore about 2 minutes into sitting quietly. He was okay while moving. Sitting got him. Sleep caught up. This represents an important concept for all of those who participate in SAR. We may feel like we can safely drive home at the end of a mission. But the sleep deprived brain wants to retire in a moment’s notice. Not only do the packs get heavy, so do the eyelids. D

# Personal Vertical Skills Requirements Have Changed.



Rope Rescue Oversight Committee (RROC)

If you haven't had to update your Personal Vertical Skills (PVS) Certification in the last year, you may not be aware that the PVS requirements were updated by RROC in November 2004.

There is now only a single 2-year PVS certification instead of the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced certifications of the past.

If you need to update your PVS certification, watch for PVS re-certification dates in the Tracker or call Volunteer Forces for the next available dates.

If you have questions about the updated PVS requirements, please contact a member of the RROC committee, through Dave Pichotta at Volunteer Forces.

## *Personal Vertical Skills Certification Requirements (2-year certification)*

1. Demonstrate mastery of basic rescue knots including: Figure-8 on a Bight, Figure-8 Follow-through, Figure-8 Bend, Water Knot, Seat Harness in Webbing, Double Overhand Bend, Prusik Hitch, Bowline, Bowline on a Bight (2-loop), Butterfly, Clove Hitch, and Munter Hitch.
2. Discuss safety near an Edge.
3. Discuss safety in a Fall Zone.
4. Demonstrate proper use of a Travel Restrict and Edge Kit (AZTEK or similar system).
5. Demonstrate ability to safely use a traverse line on an exposed slope.
6. Demonstrate ability to do a proper belay of a rappeller:
  - a Do a conditional belay, i.e., a "bottom belay".
  - b Do a top belay with a separate, non-tensioned rope.
7. Demonstrate ability to properly don personal equipment (helmet, harness, ascending, descending equipment).
8. Starting at the bottom of a 75' drop:

Note: If the student would like a belay line on them, PLEASE advise the evaluators.

  - Attach your ascending system.
  - Ascend 75' .
  - Pass a knot while ascending
  - Change over to rappel while on rope.
  - Pass a knot while rappelling
  - Resume and complete your rappel.
  - There will be a time limit of 30 minutes to complete this course with mechanical ascenders.
  - There will be a time limit of 60 minutes to complete this course with Prusiks.
9. At a point off the ground (non-timed event)
  - Tie off your descent device (soft tie) and clear a simulated jam.
  - Demonstrate the ability to invert while on rope and have both hands free.
10. Do a two-rope pickoff of a conscious, cooperative patient in less than 5 minutes (time starts when student is 5 feet above victim).
11. Demonstrate rigging a pull down rappel.

# 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 command post.

See "Black Ice" on p. 8

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# Volunteer of the Year, Tom Schneider

Sergeant Todd Paterson, Volunteer Forces

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It was a tremendous conclusion to the SAR Council meeting on Wednesday, January 18, 2006. Tom Schneider was awarded the Volunteer Forces Unit "Volunteer of the Year" Award. The list of nominations was very distinguished and all very deserving of the award. However, Tom's dedicated service, commitment and accomplishments left him as the clear choice to be the recipient of the annual award.

In addition to holding the position of SAR Council Secretary, Tom is also a Level I Reserve with the Phelan Station, member of Wrightwood SAR, BSAR Instructor, 1st aid CPR Instructor, member of the Sheriff's Rodeo Committee, Parade Detail, Hug-a-Tree Instructor and the West Valley Posse. Tom was also recently instrumental in the development and teaching of the first Victor Valley COP Academy. As if this were not enough to keep Tom's time occupied, he also volunteers to teach GPS classes to any team or volunteer member

who needs or wants it. Tom's dedicated and outstanding services culminated in 3,300 hours of service to the department and the citizens of the county of San Bernardino during 2005. To put this into perspective, the average deputy or 40 hour a week employee will work approximately 2,080 hours during a year not withstanding overtime. The average deputy will also take an annual four to five week vacation totaling 160 to 200 hours. This brings the time spent at work down to 1880 to 1920 hours. Now, weather you subscribe to "New Math" theories or old it is easy to see that Tom stands in a class by himself.

Tom's tireless sacrifice and dedication to duty should serve as an example for all to follow. To quote Coach Lou Holtz, "Do right. Do your best. Treat others as you want to be treated". Tom exemplifies this philosophy in every walk of life. Congratulations Tom it is well deserved. 

# 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.

## 2006

### January

### February

15-16 — **Sgt. Heller's Tracking**  
Call 909-473-2695 for more information.

26 — **Personal Vertical Skills Check-off**  
Call Volunteer Forces for more information.

26 — **HAM Radio Class**  
Call Bob Hall 760-245-0123 for more information.

### March

6-10 — **Direction and Control of the Search Function**  
Call Volunteer Forces for more information.

13 — **Searching for Victims of Predator Abductions**  
Call Volunteer Forces for more information.

14 — **Searching for Victims of Predator Abductions**  
Call Volunteer Forces for more information.

### April

13 — **10th Annual Run for Rescue & Safety Fair**  
Contact Bob Gattas ([rgattas@earthlink.net](mailto:rgattas@earthlink.net)) for more information.

### May

17-18 — **Sgt. Heller's Tracking**  
Call 909-473-2695 for more information.

### June

4-5 — **Sgt. Heller's Tracking**  
Call 909-473-2695 for more information.

#### \*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

#### Contact Name

Dave Pichotta  
John McKently  
Bruce Smith  
Mike & Joanie Gibbs  
Reed & Jayne Thorne  
Don Welch  
Frank Hester  
Bob Gattas

#### Phone

(909) 387-0678  
(800) 235-5741  
(423) 344-4716  
(970) 325-4474  
(520) 282-7299  
(760) 244-7340  
(760) 242-0855  
(909) 980-8820

#### email/URL

[dpichotta@sbcscd.org](mailto:dpichotta@sbcscd.org)  
[www.cmcrecue.com](http://www.cmcrecue.com)  
[www.onrope1.com](http://www.onrope1.com)  
[www.riggingforrescue.com](http://www.riggingforrescue.com)  
[www.ropesthatrescue.com](http://www.ropesthatrescue.com)  
[ww26sar5@aol.com](mailto:ww26sar5@aol.com)  
[flhester@aol.com](mailto:flhester@aol.com)  
[boobali@gte.net](mailto:boobali@gte.net)

## Black Ice

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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### 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**

### Articles Wanted!

The Tracker needs you! Please send articles to share with your colleagues. Send in a mission report or a trip report. Write an article about a team training. The Tracker has a wide national audience. Anything related to search and rescue is worthy of publication. Please send submissions to:

**editor@thetracker.info**

## 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.

**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 Kathy at Aviation (909-356-3800). Go to [www.cafepress.com/helicopter2classifieds](http://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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