



THE TRACKER

Monthly Newsletter of the Inland Empire Search and Rescue Council

November 2006

Volume 15 Number 6

Saying goodbye . . . and thanks

Michael Fisher, Adam Hartmann, Sharon McNary and John Asbury - The Press-Enterprise

Solitary alarm bells called the fallen crew of Engine 57 home one last time Sunday amid a sea of about 10,000 heartbroken relatives, friends and uniformed firefighters who gathered to honor the five men who died fighting the Esperanza Fire.

10,000 mourn as heroic men of Engine 57 killed in the Esperanza Fire are praised

Tears flowed freely at the memorial service at the Hyundai Pavilion, an

open-air amphitheater within sight of the San Bernardino National Forest. Song, ceremony and utter sadness marked the loss of the U.S. Forest Service firefighters in the arson-caused blaze that burned for five days and blackened 63 square miles.

Speakers praised the men and their families. The men's sacrifice, their heroism and the courage they demonstrated by putting themselves in harm's way to save the lives and property of others were cited.

Hung above the crowded stage was a banner emblazoned with the words, "Always Remember" and the names Capt. Mark Loutzenhiser, 43, of Idyllwild; Jess McLean, 27, of Beaumont; Jason McKay, 27, of Phelan; Daniel Hoover-Najera, 20, of San Jacinto; and Pablo Cerda, 23, of Fountain Valley.

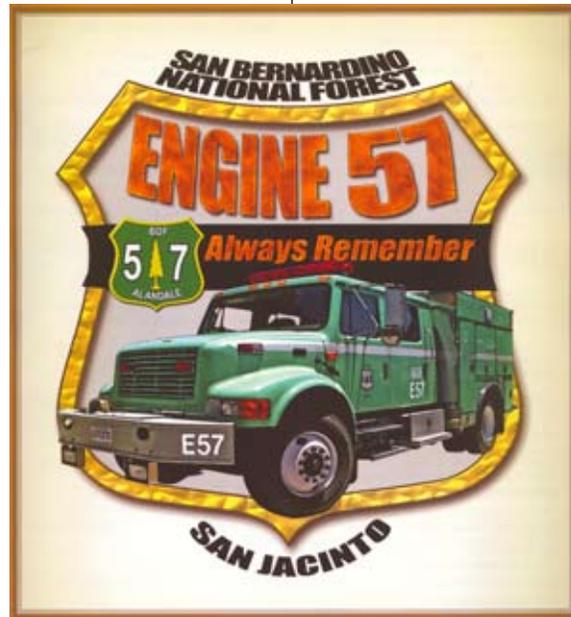
"The sense of loss we feel, that everyone feels, is profound, painful and it will remain with us. But I hope that the loss will be tempered by memories of who these men were," said Jeanne Wade-Evans, supervisor of the San Bernardino National Forest, where the men were assigned, adding, "This tragedy has the attention of the nation."

Evans read off the firefighters' names, her voice breaking on Loutzenhiser and especially Hoover-Najera, "the newest recruit."

"They loved doing their jobs but they also loved going home afterwards. This time,

they could not go home," said Evans, describing the five as "pillars of the community."

A memorial with photos of the five firefighters sat at the front of the stage. Next to each stood a small bronze statue of a fireman holding an ax and a fireman's helmet, one dedicated to each of the fallen firefighters.



Gov. Schwarzenegger said he was moved to see such a large crowd paying their respects during the two-hour tribute.

"I hope (the families) gain some comfort knowing how many people these men have helped, how many people they

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What's New in Volunteer Forces?

Lt. Glenn Grabiec, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

Greetings! I know it has been a while since I was able to write an article for the Tracker. To say we here in Volunteer Forces have been busy is an understatement!

Many of you may have heard about Golden Guardian. Well, yesterday the 10 months and 123 planning meetings to bring this together finally paid off. For those of you that aren't familiar, Golden Guardian was part of a statewide exercise under the Office of Homeland Security. It was a simulation of a concert with a terrorism incident involving explosives, suicide bombers, mass casualty incident and a bio-toxin. The planning for this included bringing together every police department, fire department, and emergency medical service in the county. Approximately 1200 people participated in

this exercise which by most accounts was very successful.

I have good news on the 155 repeaters that we have been hoping would finally be installed. One on Heaps Peak was repaired and the one on Onyx is being installed as we speak. This should improve our communications ability dramatically.

It is coming to that time of year when the installation dinners are starting. I look forward to seeing many of you at these functions. Until then, I hope you and your families have a great Thanksgiving!

Thank you for all you do!!

Glenn ☐

Public Relations Events

Colleen Alton, West Valley SAR

This is a story of a partnership between a SAR team and the community, not a rescue or a search, so if its not what you are looking for, its okay.

On Saturday, October 7, the West Valley Search and Rescue Team in partnership with the State Park Rangers in Chino Hills State Park, put on a map and compass/orienteering event for local boy scout troops and the Young Marines Organization.

The park itself is over 12,000 acres, situated where three counties come together; San Bernardino, Riverside and Orange. There were six courses developed ranging from 8 1/2 miles to 3 miles. Each course had its range of difficulty and length and was suited towards the age level and experience of the participants. The SATERN radio team was also a participant and put members on peaks and destinations points along the routes.

The Boy Scouts were able to earn their orienteering badges. The participants, no matter what age attended an initial orientation and welcome, where Ranger Dennis Stephens, State Park Ranger and

Colleen Alton, West Valley Search and Rescue, demonstrated went over the basics of map and compass, hiking safety and wilderness awareness in the parks new Amphitheater.

The Young Marines were a hearty group of young men ages 8 - 16 and learned how to orient their maps, take and plot bearings in the field, and measuring and plotting bearings on a topo map. They completed the entire 8 1/2 mile long course in 3 1/2 hours.

The Chino Hills Interpretive Society, the Weatherman, Hug-A -Tree and ARRL were also in attendance.

WVSAR has done a number of public relations events during the last several months in their ongoing efforts to maintain positive community relationships and interact with many different agencies within their city and county. ☐

Rockman...

John Hayes, Deputy, Wrightwood/Phelan SAR Coordinator

There are some given expectations when one goes into the field for a search; the cooperative want to be found and the non-cooperative do not want to be found. The Crescencio search kicked the non-cooperative category up a notch to an unpredictable and even dangerous level; but like most searches it all started with a phone call to the Sheriff.

On Tuesday July 18th, 2006 at 1756 hrs the California Highway Patrol transferred a cell phone call to the Sheriff reference a naked subject who was chasing juveniles and throwing rocks at anyone who followed him at the south end of Mountain Rd. in Pinon Hills. Deputies Juarez, Salyer, Winegar, and Borroughs responded to the scene and learned that the juveniles were the subject's children and the vehicle they had arrived in was burned. The children (ages 15, 10, and 8) were unharmed from the incident. The Deputies called in Sheriff's aviation to the scene but the subject could not be found from the air or the road.

Continued from page 5

Using this

exercises, I declared that we had gone 367 paces. I looked around and was surprised that I didn't see a golden ray of light piercing through the sky to shine on the marker. In fact, the marker was no where! I then reminded everyone that there was a slight margin for error. We spread out and kept in voice and eye contact. After about a half an hour, my father found a familiar red marker and there was much rejoicing. It was alas, not the corner post which we sought. We were as disappointed as Chicago Cubs fans. We consulted another map which had an approximate destination elevation, checked my pop-in-law's Garmin against previously GPS'd marker positions as references,



At 8:00 pm the Wrightwood Phelan Search and Rescue team was called. During briefing it was learned that Crescencio, a diagnosed scitsaphrinic who had not taken medication or slept in at least two days, was supposed to take his three kids to summer school in the Granada hills area. Crescencio instead drove out to Pinon Hills, an area he had never been to before, ordered the kids out of the car, set fire to the car, stripped all of his clothes off, and abandoned his children to run off into the field. Prior to this incident the most bizarre thing Crescencio had done was run across the US 101 freeway several years ago.

A resident of the area reported hearing screams near camp Jubilee. Sgt Jim Morgan sent three teams into the field for a hasty search. Frank Hester and myself went to where the scream had been reported to cut for sign. This assignment proved difficult because the area was rocky with 8-10 foot vegetation and we had

See "Rockman" on page 5

and determined that we had migrated a bit high and to the west. We corrected ourselves and started again. Another maker was found. And another. We were hot on the trail now. Like hounds sniffing for sweaty socks, there was no stopping us. The branches lashed our faces and yet we continued. Up ahead I saw a flash of red. We got closer and closer. We closed the distance and held our collective breath as we looked at the base of the red marker. There, nestled in the pine needles and oak leaves, was the object of our desire, a metal marking-post with my father's lot number on it. We laughed, we cried, we took a picture.

Imparted knowledge from the BSAR

See "Using this" on page 8

Always Remember

renovations when it reopened. Jess McLean laid the tile “and he was a perfectionist.”

The firefighters worked tirelessly to make improvements above and beyond what was required -- and sometimes without Walker’s approval.

Walker said Loutzenhiser, a carpenter, had become expert at calling him and “partially explaining what he had in mind.” When Walker said he didn’t agree with him, the response was, “Chief, you want your car washed?” Walker said, recalling how he often left the station losing the argument but with a clean vehicle.

Audience members laughed for the first time during the service.

Engine 57 a Trusted Crew

New York City Deputy Fire Chief Jim Manahan said he traveled to the memorial as his department’s way of returning the outpouring of support after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

“Where I come from we’ve suffered our own losses,” Manahan said. “No matter what happens and where, we all feel it. We know what the families and this organization is going through.”

During the service, Tom Harbour, director of fire and aviation management for the U.S. Forest Service, described the trust among firefighters, and how Engine 57’s crew could be trusted.

He used a phrase that fire crews use -- bump up -- meaning that they had completed the job they were assigned to do and were ready to move on to the next.

“Can we go forward? Engine 57, can we

bump up? The answer from Mark, Jess, Jason, Pablo and Daniel is yes,” Harbour said. “They can be trusted.”

Those who knew and loved the crew wish that they could still be here, he said.

“But they’ve anchored their line. They have our backs. We can trust them,” Harbour said. “As tough as it is, we will lift our faces. We will look to the ridge.

“Just as we they did their duty, so will we do ours. Bump up, move forward, move ahead. God bless us all,” he said.

The Final Alarm

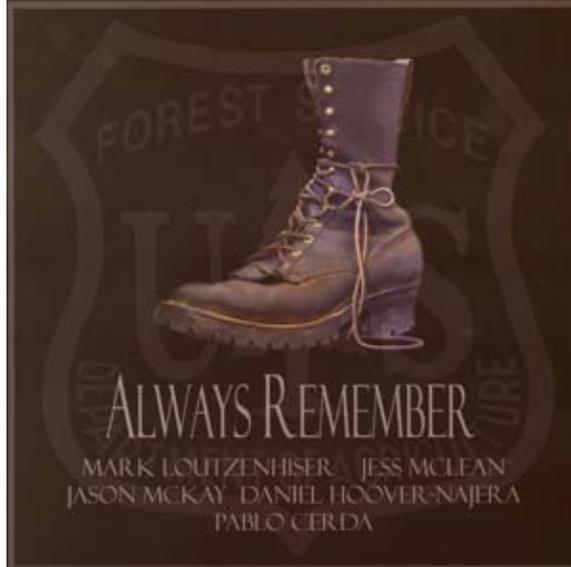
By tradition, firefighters presented the families of the fallen with a fire helmet and a small statue before a final five alarm bells were tapped out for each of the men.

Firefighters rose in unison after the final alarm bell honoring Engine 57’s men, as the honor guard marched back down the runways on either side of the bowl.

The hum of bagpipes filled the pavilion, evoking emotions.

Planes, then helicopters soared overhead at the conclusion of the memorial service. One helicopter banked skyward in a missing-man formation, symbolizing how the forest service will continue on without its five colleagues.

A rousing rendition, with a full-throated choir, of “Do Not Be Afraid” serenaded the mourning families, and then firefighters as they filed out of the pavilion. Audience members craned their necks for a better look, as the music crashed, rose and carried everyone out into the parking lot. 



Rockman

already lost our sunlight. During the search I heard two sounds that resembled fire works being launched from the ground. I thought the sounds to be our subject throwing rocks at us and mentioned it to Frank. Frank and I heard a third similar sound but figured it had to be something else and moved on.

At about 0100 hrs Jeremy Thomas and Brett Murphy entered into the same area where Frank and I had just been when they received a call from the command post that the search was to be suspended for the night and to return to the CP. While returning to their vehicle they found a bare foot print and reported that to the CP. While tracking the prints, the subject began throwing large rocks at them. Frank and I returned to the area and I used a hand held thermal imaging device to scan the area for the source of the thrown rocks. A few hundred feet to the southwest I spotted the heat silhouette of a human. I focused the device onto the silhouette and was able to make out muscle tone, which suggested that the source of the silhouette was a human devoid of clothing. I called out that I may have the subject in sight but due to the lack of moon light and heavy vegetation Thomas, Murphy, and Hester could not see

the subject even with the multi cell mag-lights they had. I watched as the subject picked up a rock and called out a warning. The rock landed within feet of me and was followed by several other rocks that were aimed at Thomas, Murphy, and Hester. As I continued to call out the subject's position Thomas, Murphy, and Hester continued to close in on the subject until they were able to light him up with their flashlights. The subject was indeed devoid of clothing and continued to throw rocks. I drew my firearm and the subject ran off to the east at a high speed over sharp rocks with no footwear and no light. At one point the subject stopped running, looked about him, and then ran off again like a spooked animal. We continued to pursue the subject until he stopped a second time. I placed the subject into a Lateral Vascular Neck Restraint and held on until the subject dropped to the ground. Murphy and Thomas placed the subject in handcuffs as the subject growled at us.

The subject was eventually secured in a litter with webbing and transported in the back of the team's Dodge 4x4 to an awaiting ambulance for evaluation. After evaluation Deputy Salinas transported the Subject to the hospital for a 72 hour committal. 

Chance to using this?

Thad Riley, Deputy, Emergency Operations/Volunteer Forces

As I stomped through the chaparral with my compass and list of headings, I thought, "When will I ever get a chance to use this?" The Land Navigation course at BSAR seemed about as remote a need for a corporal at Volunteer Forces

as a paperback dictionary is for an IT guy. Last month, on a trip to my folks' ranch in Colorado, I found myself trudging once again through the brush with a compass in hand. This time I was with my dad, my wife, my son and my father-in-law, retired Deputy Chief and former Volunteer Forces Captain, Ron Perret. Our mission: To find the only unfound marking-post at one corner of the property. According to the realtor's map, the post was bordering national forest, emphasis on forest. Should I refuse to accept this mission, my self-image in front of my family would self-destruct in 5 seconds.

Converting the map with surveyor's degrees to degrees of bearing and the distance in feet to paces, I set off with the kinfolk in toe, uphill. After a couple stops, a few rest breaks and some deep breathing



Always Remember

have inspired, not only in their jobs but in their lives because they were outstanding people,” Schwarzenegger said.

Just six hours before McKay died, he called his girlfriend — the woman he intended to propose to at Christmas, Schwarzenegger said.

“He said ‘Sweetie, this one looks bad. I love you.’ And then he went off to do his job because that’s what firefighters do,” the governor said.

Support Acknowledged

The five men from Engine 57, based near Idyllwild, were overrun by flames Oct. 26 as they tried to protect an unoccupied home near Twin Pines from a wind-stoked inferno spreading across the San Jacinto Mountains, about 20 miles west of Palm Springs. Hoover-Najera, McKay and McLean died at the scene. Loutzenhiser died en route to a hospital. Cerda suffered burns over more than 90 percent of his body. He died Tuesday at a Colton hospital.

“The scourge of arson is nothing less than domestic terrorism,” Mike Dietrich, fire chief of the San Bernardino National Forest, said at the ceremony. Had the blaze been set a few hours earlier or had the wind blown any harder, many residents might not have been able to evacuate, Dietrich said.

He urged firefighters and their families to look around at the sea of love and support assembled at the pavilion.

“Take a minute. It’s amazing,” Dietrich said.

By tradition, he said, when the next emergency call comes into Station 57, the captain will respond, “In memory of...” listing each firefighter’s name and position, closing with, “Engine 57 responding.”

Soft applause followed.

Colorful, Solemn Tribute

On stage, each firefighter’s picture was surrounded by colorful wreaths, such as a red-and-white California Department of Forestry wreath, and a helmet adorned with “E57.” The crowd stood, mostly motionless.

Salutes summoned the color guard, with snapping drum rolls and 30 bagpipe players. They shuffled down from either side of the silent, standing crowd, cameras clicking madly.

Then, they marched in place. The flags flapped wildly as gusty winds buffeted the sun-kissed bowl before clouds rolled in.

“Each of these remarkable men shared a passion for their profession,” said Rep. Mary Bono, R-Palm Springs. “I salute these noble and courageous men.”

She spoke of a spiritual connection to the forest the men died trying to protect and said the firefighters’ friends and families would never again walk those lands without being reminded of their loss.

U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., spoke from the podium directly to the mourning families, lamenting Hoover-Najera’s loss at such a young age and the terrible burns Cerda suffered. She described how McLean was a devoted son to his mother and McKay’s dedication to the fire service.

To Loutzenhiser’s widow, she said: “To Maria, little can be said that mutes the grief with one exception, your five beautiful children, yours and Mark’s endearing legacy.”

Mark Rey, undersecretary for natural resources and environment with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees the U.S. Forest Service, tried to comfort Loutzenhiser’s children.

“Don’t regret anything you forgot to tell your father about how you felt about him. He knew, and he knows it today,” Rey said.

Memories of the Five

Norm Walker, division chief of the San Jacinto Ranger District, noted that Engine 57 was a seven-person team, two of whom were at the service.

“The other five are here in spirit,” Walker said. Then he swung into a more personal account, saying that everyone before him had been so serious.

Walker recalled that after the Alandale station had been closed for a couple of years, the crew had to undertake

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.

*Course / Provider	Contact Name	Phone	email/URL
BSAR / Vol Forces	Dave Pichotta	(909) 387-0678	dpichotta@sbcasd.org
CMC Rescue School	John McKently	(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.ropesthatrescue.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	rgattas@earthlink.net

Using this

instructors along with ancient and modern technology saw us to the end of our rainbow. I felt like we were as cool as Indiana Jones. My thanks to Wes, Bill, Mom and the rest of the crew.

P.S. The location of the post ended up being about 150' east and 50' north of where I had initially stopped. It was well concealed in a clump of brush and trees. ☺

Rescue Net

If you are a HAM radio operator, IESARC has started a Rescue Net on Keller Peak every Tuesday at 2000 hrs. The frequency is 146.985 with standard offset and the PL Tone is 146.2. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Ward at:

rockywinds@aol.com

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") \$15 and **Lapel Pin/Tie Tacks (5/8")** \$10. Fund-raiser for Morongo Mounted SAR Team. For ordering info contact Kim Miller at kim.m.miller@usmc.mil or call Kim at (760) 367-1148.

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

SBSD 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/helicopter2 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:

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

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