

SIERRA MADRE SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM

"Anywhere in the wilderness that someone needs help..."



CELEBRATING

70

YEARS OF SAVING LIVES

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



It is my distinct honor and privilege to welcome you to the celebration of another milestone in the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team's history. It is wonderful to have the opportunity to be in the company of so many Teammates, families and friends of the Team.

"Anywhere in the wilderness that someone needs help..." serves as the motto of a unique organization of individuals who, starting in 1951, have embodied community spirit, dedication and a commitment to excellence in its highest form. Through the 70 years since the Team's founding, you have supported and sustained a unique organization that is truly greater than the sum of its parts. It is not just what we do, but more importantly how we do it.

As current and former Team members, your contributions have positively impacted the lives of not only those for whom we assist in the mountains, but of the lives of their families and friends. Over the years, the support of the community and our partner agencies has been essential. Perhaps most importantly, our spouses, significant others, and families deserve special recognition and thanks since they play a key role in supporting the Team.

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as the President of the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team as we celebrate the Team's 70th anniversary. Let's have a wonderful celebration!!!

Robert W. Klusman

President

Sierra Madre Search & Rescue

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Vice President

Art Fortini

Treasurer

Alan Leung

Secretary

Carolyn Grumm

Member at Large

Greg Kinne

Member at Large

Jeffery Moore

Congratulations & Thank You **Sierra Madre Search & Rescue Team!**

Your selfless service, bravery, and commitment have saved lives and inspired communities for **70** years.



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THE SIERRA MADRE SEARCH & RESCUE TEAM PHILOSOPHY



The Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team is a volunteer organization existing to help people who may be lost or injured or otherwise in trouble in the wilderness areas.

We, the Team members, believe that we can do this work as it should be done, and meet this responsibility as it should be met,

only if:

- We bring to every search and rescue mission the highest level of mountaineering and rescue skill that training and self-discipline can produce;
- We go on every search and rescue mission with a positive attitude, committed to the belief that the person who needs our help is alive and can be found;
- We go on every search and rescue mission not to pass judgement, but because someone is in pain or trouble or needs help;
- We go on every search and rescue mission not because we are told to, but because we want to;
- We feel a genuine respect for the wilderness environment and share that feeling with others;

and,

- We maintain our autonomy and tradition.



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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SIERRA MADRE SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM



The team, known in its early years as the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Crew, was founded in August, 1951, by Sierra Madre residents Larry Shepherd and Fred LaLone, along with Earl LaLone, Robert LaLone, Don Jackson, Bill Wark, John Grippi, Boyd Keith, Charles Kassler, Jim Heasley, Vint Hoegge, George Black, Howard Miller, Bill Evans, Roland Guthertz, Bill Wolfson, Bill Adams, Ralph Shangraw, Henry Nuetzel, Al Wingate, Hubert Herrick, and Ed Wodrich.

The LaLones had already been called on to lead a number of searches and rescues in the mountains above Sierra Madre because of their extensive knowledge of the backcountry area. But a search for a missing boy in August, 1951, convinced the local men that better organization was needed.

On an August Sunday afternoon, Walter Weirich, a young teenager from Altadena, disappeared while hiking in Bailey Canyon. The next morning, a search was started by his parents, relatives and friends from Altadena, deputies from the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, and the Sheriff's Mounted Posse.

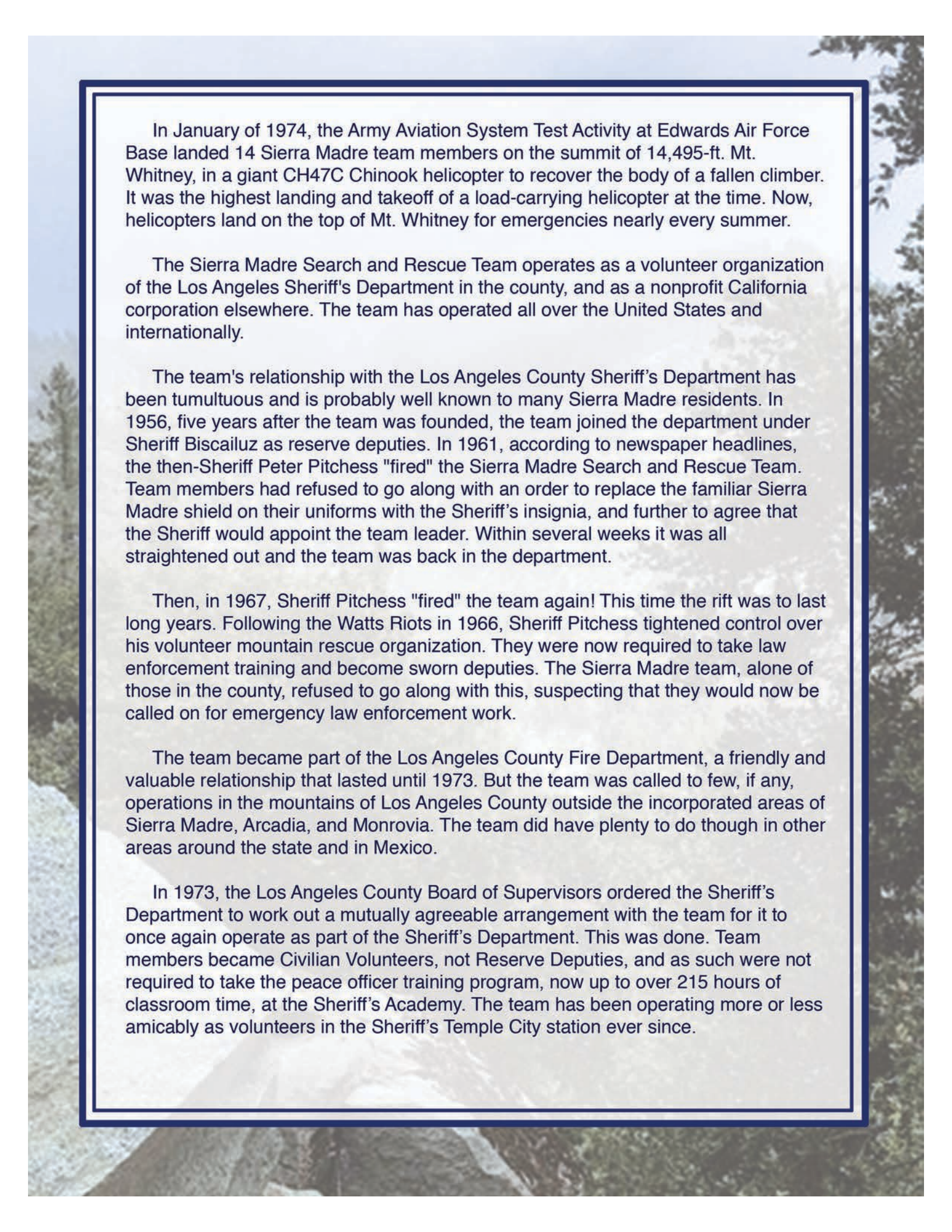
By Tuesday afternoon, Walter had still not been found. Larry Shepherd and Fred LaLone then went to help. They had to argue with Sheriff's deputies to get into the canyon. Searching in areas previous searches had missed, they found the boy's tracks near the Old Indian Trail as darkness fell. They marked the location and reported it to the command post so that deputies could pick up the search Wednesday morning.

Partly disregarding the Sierra Madre men's instructions, deputies nevertheless did manage to find Walter on Wednesday, 50 feet from the Indian Trail. He was severely dehydrated and near death. It was apparent to Shepherd and LaLone that experienced and properly equipped personnel, familiar with the local area could have found the boy as much as two days sooner.

Within days, the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Crew was born, the first mountain rescue team in California.

In 1956, they became the first trained "helitac" team, able to use helicopters for transport and insertion of rescue personnel into rugged mountain areas. Helitac operations in the mountains are now routine.

In 1957, the team began the training of bloodhounds for mountain searching, the first time these amazing dogs had been used in technical terrain. There are now several large teams of tracking dogs in California.



In January of 1974, the Army Aviation System Test Activity at Edwards Air Force Base landed 14 Sierra Madre team members on the summit of 14,495-ft. Mt. Whitney, in a giant CH47C Chinook helicopter to recover the body of a fallen climber. It was the highest landing and takeoff of a load-carrying helicopter at the time. Now, helicopters land on the top of Mt. Whitney for emergencies nearly every summer.

The Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team operates as a volunteer organization of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in the county, and as a nonprofit California corporation elsewhere. The team has operated all over the United States and internationally.

The team's relationship with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has been tumultuous and is probably well known to many Sierra Madre residents. In 1956, five years after the team was founded, the team joined the department under Sheriff Biscailuz as reserve deputies. In 1961, according to newspaper headlines, the then-Sheriff Peter Pitchess "fired" the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team. Team members had refused to go along with an order to replace the familiar Sierra Madre shield on their uniforms with the Sheriff's insignia, and further to agree that the Sheriff would appoint the team leader. Within several weeks it was all straightened out and the team was back in the department.

Then, in 1967, Sheriff Pitchess "fired" the team again! This time the rift was to last long years. Following the Watts Riots in 1966, Sheriff Pitchess tightened control over his volunteer mountain rescue organization. They were now required to take law enforcement training and become sworn deputies. The Sierra Madre team, alone of those in the county, refused to go along with this, suspecting that they would now be called on for emergency law enforcement work.

The team became part of the Los Angeles County Fire Department, a friendly and valuable relationship that lasted until 1973. But the team was called to few, if any, operations in the mountains of Los Angeles County outside the incorporated areas of Sierra Madre, Arcadia, and Monrovia. The team did have plenty to do though in other areas around the state and in Mexico.

In 1973, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors ordered the Sheriff's Department to work out a mutually agreeable arrangement with the team for it to once again operate as part of the Sheriff's Department. This was done. Team members became Civilian Volunteers, not Reserve Deputies, and as such were not required to take the peace officer training program, now up to over 215 hours of classroom time, at the Sheriff's Academy. The team has been operating more or less amicably as volunteers in the Sheriff's Temple City station ever since.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

1951 -The team is formed by Larry Shepherd and Fred LaLone as the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Crew (August). Four months later (December), the Altadena Mountain Rescue Team is formed.

1956 -The Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Crew becomes part of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department under Sheriff Biscailuz.

1956 -The nation's first Helitac squad is formed from members of the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team: Fred and Earl LaLone, Red Shangraw, Jon Mathews, Bill Wark, and Miner Harkness.

1957 -First training of bloodhounds for mountain search begun by Diane and Miner Harkness.

1958 -After failure by several "crack mountaineering teams," Sierra Madre team members reach and recover the body of a young boy on a ledge next to the 700-foot Big Falls on San Geronio Mountain. Widespread press coverage brings national recognition to the team.

1959 -Fred LaLone appears on national TV, CBS's "To Tell the Truth." Panelists Don Ameche, Tom Poston, and Polly Bergen guess who the real Fred LaLone is, right away.

1961 -The team is "fired" by Sheriff Pitchess for the first time, rejoins the department several weeks later.

1963 -After serving in the post for 12 years, founding president Fred LaLone moves to Yosemite National Park. Miner Harkness begins a long term as president.

1965 -The team becomes motorized as Honda donates trail bikes for each member of the team for a large-scale search in Baja.

1966 -Los Angeles County Sheriff begins to train regular deputies for mountain search and rescue. First field exercises appear to be secret.

1967 -The team is again "fired" by Sheriff Pitchess and soon joins the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The Team is featured in an episode of *Emergency!*

1967 - The team is instrumental in the rescue of two young people (Ogden Kellogg and Eleanor Dart) from near the summit of the highest peak in Baja, El Picacho Del Diablo, 10,126 feet. Following this successful operation, philanthropist William Kellogg funds the establishment of the international rescue organization, Search and Rescue of the Californias (SAROC) with Sierra Madre as a founding member.

- Founding team member Billy Wark receives the first Sierra Madre "The Citizen of Year Award," primarily for his work on the Sierra Madre Wilderness Project.

1968 - SM-2, a 1-ton Dodge four-wheel drive crew-cab truck, is purchased jointly by the City of Sierra Madre and the team after a lengthy fund-raising drive. The truck was still in use by the team, 23 years later.

1973 - SMSR rejoins the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department as "Civilian Volunteers," the only one of eight Los Angeles County teams whose members are not Reserve Deputies.

- Founding team member, Earl LaLone is named Sierra Madre Citizen of the Year.

1974 - The U.S. Army lands 14 team members on summit of Mt. Whitney in winter to recover the body of a fallen climber—a first for this altitude.

1975 - The Los Angeles County Fire Department moves out of Station 108 at the corner of Stonehouse and Grandview in Sierra Madre and turns it over to the Rescue Team on a yearly lease.

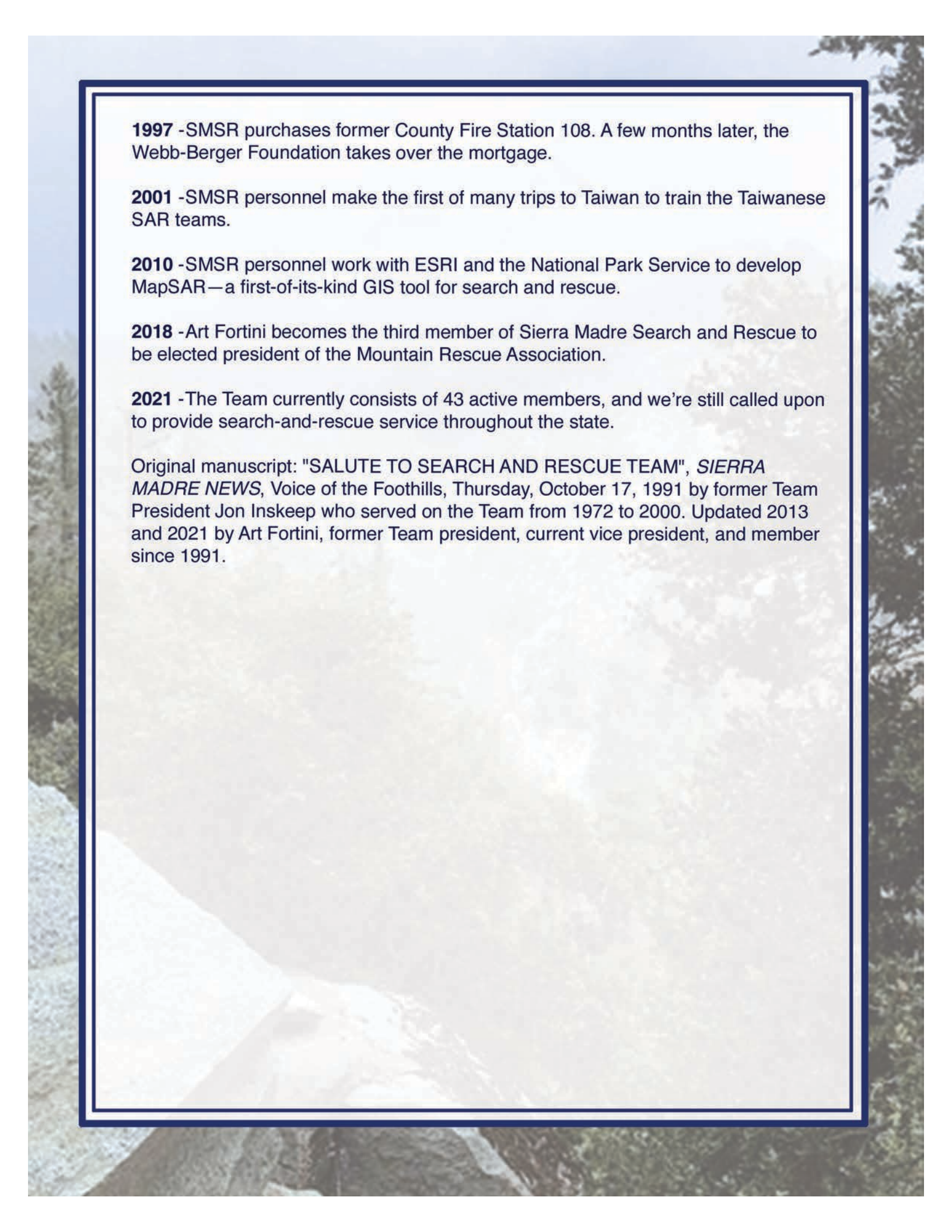
- Linda Stoner becomes the first female to join the team as a full member and is one of the first female SAR team members in the state.

1981 - The team is the last to move out of the old Sierra Madre City Hall, taking over the basement of the new City Hall building.

1982 - Arnold Gaffrey becomes the first member of Sierra Madre Search and Rescue to be elected president of the Mountain Rescue Association.

1983 - SM-1, a Ford van, is purchased with a large grant from the Pasadena Foundation. The value of the team-installed radio equipment is almost equal to the cost of the van itself. The old 1972 Ford van is retired.

1984 - Abbie Keith becomes the second member of Sierra Madre Search and Rescue to be elected president of the Mountain Rescue Association.



1997 -SMSR purchases former County Fire Station 108. A few months later, the Webb-Berger Foundation takes over the mortgage.

2001 -SMSR personnel make the first of many trips to Taiwan to train the Taiwanese SAR teams.

2010 -SMSR personnel work with ESRI and the National Park Service to develop MapSAR—a first-of-its-kind GIS tool for search and rescue.

2018 -Art Fortini becomes the third member of Sierra Madre Search and Rescue to be elected president of the Mountain Rescue Association.

2021 -The Team currently consists of 43 active members, and we're still called upon to provide search-and-rescue service throughout the state.

Original manuscript: "SALUTE TO SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM", *SIERRA MADRE NEWS*, Voice of the Foothills, Thursday, October 17, 1991 by former Team President Jon Inskeep who served on the Team from 1972 to 2000. Updated 2013 and 2021 by Art Fortini, former Team president, current vice president, and member since 1991.

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Dick Alley
Ladd Anderson
Rae Anderson
Dick Anderson
Ray Antaya
Steve Anthony
Lester Anthony
George Black
Jay Brands
Sharon Briel
Norm Brooks
Jerry Brown
Tom Burhenn
Brian Burke
John Clarke
Jim Cole
Don Colbert
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Ed Coulter
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John Dailey
Richard Deets
Jock DeSwart
Bob Dickens
Jonas Dickson
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Karl Domangue

Dave Douglas
George Duffy
Alex Dundas
Matthew Dunn
Bill Evans
Gary Ewald
Tom Faraguna
Dennis Farber
Kurt Ferber
Chuck Fields
John Fill
Bud Frazee
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Arnold Gaffrey
Alex Gagnon
Lyndell Griggers
John Grippi
Bill Guardia
Roland Gutherz
Ron Hanson
Rick Harkness
Miner Harkness
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Jim Heasley
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Bob Howery
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Jim Jeffrey
Robert Jenkins
Randy Jennings
Edward Kang
Charles Kassler
Randy Katai
Richard Katz
Clint Kearns
Abbe Keith
Boyd Keith
Jim Keith
Linley Kroll
Janice Lake
Earl LaLone
Ed LaLone
Fred LaLone
Robert LaLone
Claude Lane
Phil Lester
George Lindegren
Chris Lofthouse
Larry Lomax

HONOR ROLL



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Doug Loukota
Peter Lyman
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Tim McGruder
Jerry Meier
Steve Millenbach
Howard Millenbach
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Nick Razum
John Reinhart
Rick Resh
Al Rhein
Tom Ross
Dick Sale
Jay Salter
Larry Samuels
Paul Sanders
Pete Sciacca
Ken Scott
Ralph Scribner
Dennis Seeley
Red Shangraw
Rob Sheedy
Larry Shepherd
Jeremy Smith
Larry Smith
Ray Smith
Bill Snow
Jeremy Synder

Bill Stephans
Linda Stoner
Mike Sullivan
Doug Templin
Dan Thacker
Gene Thom
Suzette Torres
Dale Trapp
Larry Twedell
Bill Udell
Frank Van Wickle
Pete Vierheilig
Mike Waite
Jim Ware
Billy Wark
Rich Watchler
Bob Watkins
Dave Watts
Randall West
Dennis Whalen
Bill White*
Steve Williams
Don Wilson
Al Wingate
Ed Wodrich
Bill Wolfson
John Woodburn
Rolin Woodworth
Vance Yost

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Lorin Bice
Tim Cadogan
Lauren Capoccia
Philip Chyan
Shane Clark
Keith Coffman
Roberto Crespo
Collin Davis
Katherine Deck
Marisal Dobbins
Liza Epps
Eric Ferguson
Art Fortini

Barbara Fortini
Rodger Gray
Carolyn Grumm
Tommy Ingulfsen
David Johnson
David Kessler
Greg Kinne
Rob Klusman
Bruce Lamarche
Danny Le
Alan Leung
Donovan Leung
Eddie Martinez
Susan McCreary
Roberto Crespo

Jeffery Moore
Michael Owens
Matthew Palma
Jon Pedder
Joey Raum
Eric Scheidemantle
Chuck Stoughton
Gary Sarley-Weng
Cheryl Smith
Kellie Torio
Taison Tran
Eric Triplett
Kyle Umland

PAST PRESIDENTS OF SIERRA MADRE SEARCH & RESCUE



Fred LaLone

Earl LaLone

Miner Harkness

Ray Lorenzini

Rae Anderson

Jim Maclay

Arnold Gaffrey

Jon Inskeep

Steve Millenbach

Tom Burhenn

Art Fortini

Larry S. Smith

Eric Triplett

Barbara Fortini



The '40s '50s & '60s



1940's

There were no organized search and rescue teams in California. Although the sheriff's department had responsibility for dealing with incidents in the unincorporated areas of the county, the deputies responding to these incidents had no formal training in search tactics, search management, or wilderness rescue, and spontaneous volunteers were frequently used on searches. In the mountains above Sierra Madre, the LaLone brothers were frequently called upon to look for overdue hikers. They were extremely familiar with the local mountains, and they were the community's go-to resource if someone was reported lost or injured in the mountains.

1950's

In 1951, in the aftermath of a poorly run search by the sheriff's department, Fred LaLone and Larry Shepherd founded the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Crew—the first search and rescue team in California. Soon thereafter, Sheriff Biscailuz recognized the value of the Team and agreed to provide insurance to the Team. Sierra Madre became the first team trained in helitac and the use of helicopters to insert crews into rugged mountainous terrain. Sierra Madre also pioneered the use of bloodhounds in mountainous terrain. Later in the 1950s we moved into the basement of City Hall where monthly meetings and trainings were held. In addition to the ultimately successful search that galvanized the community into forming the Team, another notable operation was the winter recovery of a fallen hiker near the 700-foot Big Falls in the Forrest Falls area of San Bernardino. The recovery brought much attention to the Team and resulted in the formation of San Gorgonio SAR. Another notable rescue involved a car over the side of the Angeles Crest Highway in 1953. The sole survivor of the incident is still very grateful and sent the Team a thank-you note earlier this year (April 2021)! In an interesting bit of serendipity, a week later we received another thank-you note—this one from the daughter of a woman that the Team rescued from a 1957 car-over-the-side incident along the Crest.

1960's

Being one of the few search and rescue teams in California, the Team was quite busy both in and outside of LA County. It was also in the 1960s that friction developed between Sheriff Patches and the Team, which came to a head in 1967 when he fired the Team. At that point the Team began a 6-year stint working under the auspices of the LA County Fire Department. Perhaps the most notable mission during this decade was the search for Eleanor Dart and Ogden Kellog in the area of El Picacho Del Diablo, the highest peak in Baja, Mexico. After three weeks of searching, Eleanor was found alive with Ogden being found alive the following day. Both were reunited with their loved ones, and their story is captured in *Coming Home from Devil Mountain* by Eleanor Dart O'Bryon. Sierra Madre becomes a founding member of Search and Rescue of the Californias.

THANK YOU LETTERS FROM 1950'S RESCUES

Hello,

Just wanted to let you know I survived the crazy ride down the mountain on May 30th, 1953. Many of you here today weren't there, yet many of you are still saving others. Thank you! Everyone was so caring and helpful. I always remember each one in my prayers and thank you for choosing to help others.

I thought you might enjoy seeing a couple of the pictures from that day. Now I am 85 (wow) and don't bounce so well. Thank you again. God Bless you all.

Ellen Bass Larsen

Dear Bob Alvord,

"A true hero"

Words cannot express how very much my family appreciates your courage, dedication, compassion, and assistance to our mother Gladys Campbell on Aug 5, 1957. You truly saved her life!

God Bless You Always,
Ann Mills and Family

May 7, 2021

Way back in 1957 or thereabouts, I assisted at a rescue off the Angeles Crest Highway, of a woman whose car had gone to the bottom of the canyon. I was a unit ranger for the Forest Service. The woman's daughter looked me up recently and sent a very gracious thank you note. I would like to pass on both to the volunteers of the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue. I was one of many who responded. Please accept her thanks and mine for carrying on the work you do.

Sincerely,
Bob Alvord



The '70s & '80s



1970's

Still working under the LA County Fire Department, the Team is featured in an episode of the very popular TV show *Emergency!* Team members participate in searches not just throughout California and in Mexico, but also in states as far away as Iowa and New York. In 1973 the Team rejoins the sheriff's department as civilian volunteers and is the only team not comprised of reserve deputies. On Christmas Eve of that year, the Team assisted in an attempted recovery on the east face of Mt. Whitney a few hundred feet below the summit. Initial recovery attempts were aborted when altitude sickness became an issue, but a month later SMSR member Jon Inskeep worked with several others who used their connections at Edwards Air Force Base to get a specially equipped CH-47 to land 14 members on the summit—the first ever helicopter insertion at that altitude in the US—to complete the recovery.



1980's

Arnold Gaffrey became the first Team member to be elected president of the Mountain Rescue Association (MRA), and after a term in office, team member Abbe Keith was elected president of the MRA—the first (so far, only) time a team has had two members serve successive terms as president of the MRA. The Team also replaced the old SM-1 with a new Ford van thanks to a generous grant from the Pasadena Foundation. The van is outfitted with a state-of-the-art radio system that enables the Team to talk to virtually anyone.





The '90s & '00s



1990's

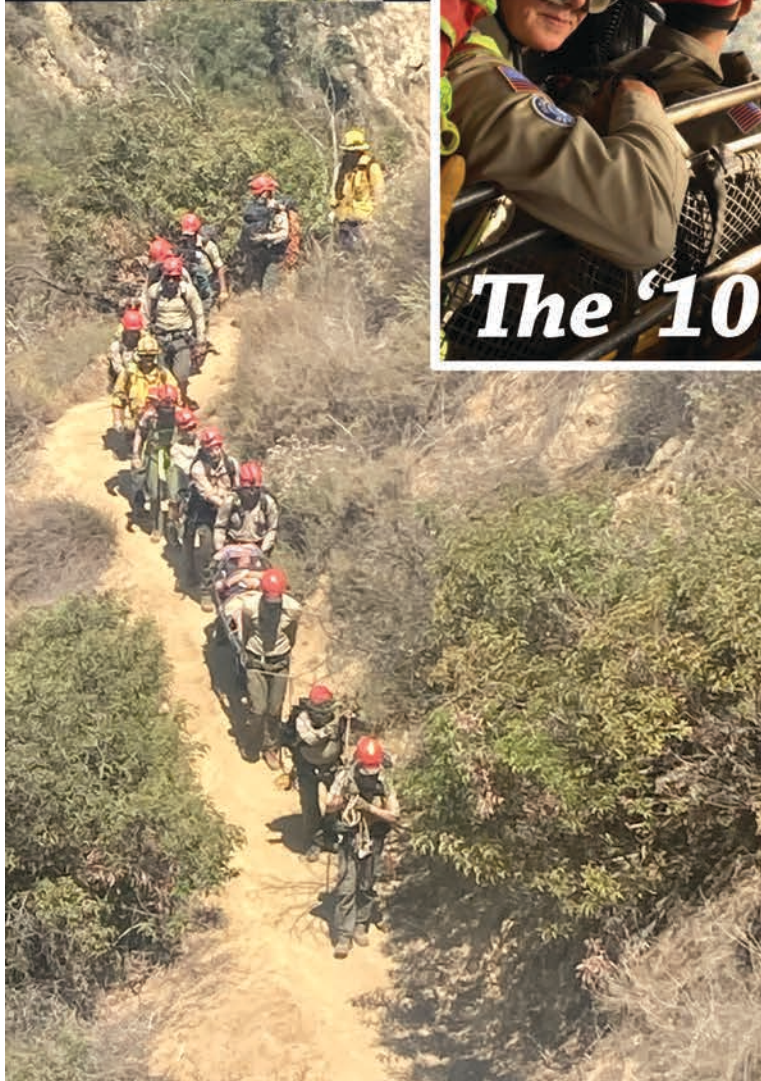
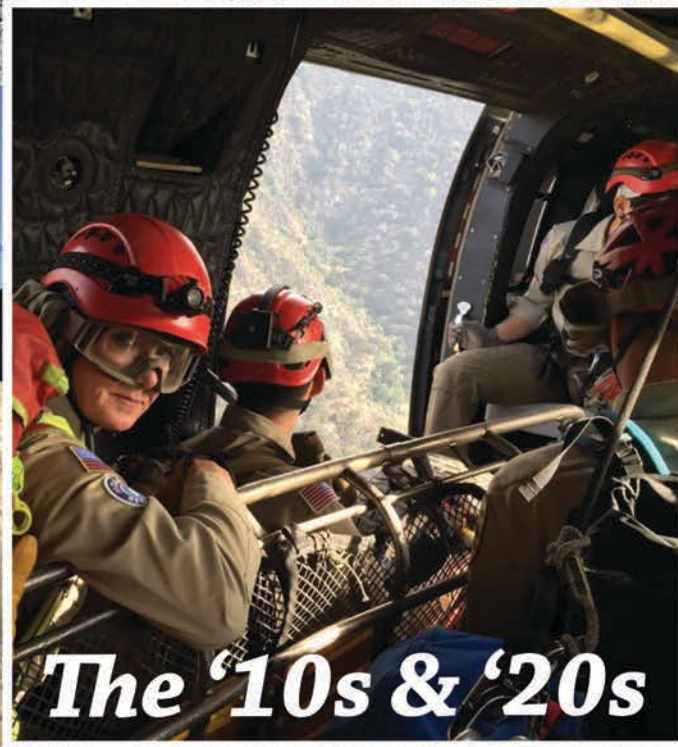
By 1990 the Team was no longer being called for operations in Baja, as Mexican teams had flourished and taken over that responsibility. Their resources were bolstered with SMSR's donation of the first SM-2, a 1963 Dodge Power Wagon. The Team participated in several well-publicized searches including the successful search for Cindy Moyneur and Ryan MacIntosh on Mt. Baldy in 1991, and a bitter-sweet find of a lost snowboarder missing for six days off the backside of Mountain High ski resort in 1998. In 1997, after a long effort and with the generous support of the community and the Webb-Berger Foundation, the Team acquired the Rescue Station after the LA County Fire Department declared it surplus.



2000's

The team added the American flag to the right shoulder of the uniform after the events of September 11, 2001. Also in 2001, Dick Sale and other Team members make the first of many trips to Taiwan to train Taiwanese rescuers in search and rescue techniques. The Team was called on to support multiple mutual-aid requests for stranded climbers on El Capitan in Yosemite, a swiftwater search near LA County's Wildlife Waystation, and a missing party in the Sierra. Other notable missions include a car over on the Chantry Road where SMSR worked with Fire to rescue a critically injured driver. Despite severe injuries, he made a full recovery. Later that year, the Team responded to a pack train that had fallen over the side. The Team chopped a trail into the hillside during the overnight rescue to bring most of the animals up, and the lead horse was evacuated via helicopter in the morning.





2010's

Working with personnel from the National Park Service and ESRI, Team members develop MapSAR—a geographic information system specifically designed to meet the needs of the SAR community. Notable operations during this decade include leading the recovery of a mostly-buried subject from a cave in the Anzo Borrego area of San Diego County, finding the remains of a Sierra hiker who had originally gone missing the year before, and playing key roles in an overnight double-rescue during an ice storm on Mt. Baldy in 2012. In 2014 the Team performed an overnight technical rescue of three subjects for Riverside Mountain Rescue (who were busy with two simultaneous searches) in a burn area with no natural anchors. In 2018 yet another member of SMSR, Art Fortini, is elected president of the MRA. In 2019 Team members provided continuous overhead support and field crews to a neighboring team in an extensive search that ultimately leads to the live find of a subject who had been lost for seven days in the Angeles National Forest, near Mt. Waterman. Later that year, SMSR members find two subjects who had been lost in Cucamonga Canyon for four days in winter conditions. In addition to these more unusual operations, the team is now responding to between 100-110 calls for help each year, as well as continuing to pursue our mandate to educate the community on outdoor safety and preventative search and rescue.



2020's

This decade started off with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Bobcat Fire, which burned a large portion of the Team's territory and resulted in the closure of large portions of the Angeles National Forest. This resulted in fewer callouts in our local area, but calls into Little Santa Anita Canyon and Bailey Canyon, along with mutual aid requests from our neighboring teams are keeping the Team busy. The Team is currently 43 members strong and remains extremely proud of what we do. The dedication and service of past Team members have led us to where we are today.





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outdoor community.*

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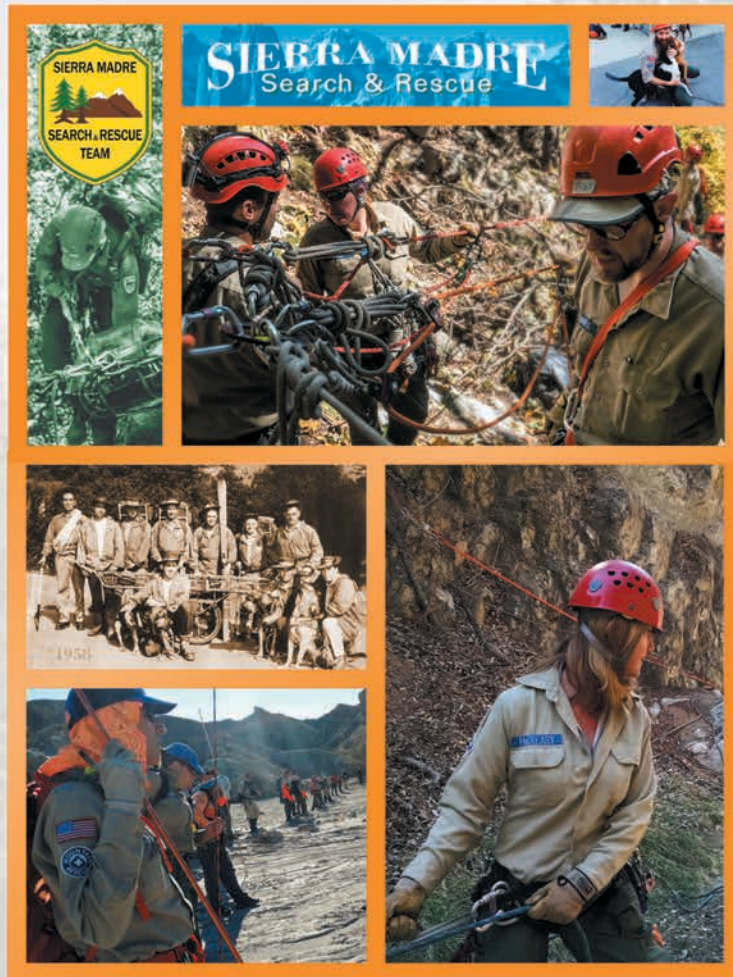
Every year, Sierra Madre Search and Rescue members wake up in the middle of the night, call out of work, or miss a weekend one hundred times, on average, to help someone in the wilderness. Most of the time, the reward is a long hike back out from an assignment. Sound like fun? Search and rescue might be for you. Sierra Madre Search and Rescue was founded in 1951 to provide help anywhere in the wilderness. While we are an all-volunteer group, the training process is rigorous and requires a significant time and money investment.

Joining a search and rescue team is a serious commitment. Our training process takes anywhere from 16-18 months and the material covered is wide and deep.

During this time, you will be expected to pass an annual fitness test, pass a variety of skills tests, and attend 90% of weekly probationary member trainings, respond to 75% of all operations once cleared for field ops, and participate in several multi-day backpacking trips.

This does not include team meetings, which happen 3 times a month. Expect to spend hundreds of hours training during your probationary period.

But working in SAR isn't all sweat, blood, and tears. You'll make lifelong friendships with a diverse group of people with the same crazy interests. You'll explore the nooks and crannies in the San Gabriel mountains and beyond. And every once in a while, you'll change someone's life.



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**Congratulations to the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team
on your 70th anniversary.**



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Megan Hanley, R.N.



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SIERRA MADRE SEARCH & RESCUE WANTS YOU TO: *HUG-A-TREE*

As well as responding to calls for searches and rescues in the mountains, Sierra Madre Search and Rescue (SMSR) is also dedicated to PSAR. PSAR is Preventative Search and Rescue. We hope that by educating hikers and outdoor enthusiasts we can prevent a rescue from ever happening. At the core of the Team's PSAR efforts is the *Hug-A-Tree* program designed for kids.

Over the years, thousands of children have attended *Hug-A-Tree* presentations with SMSR. There have been presentations at our rescue stations, in classrooms, at parks and even at a drive through event during the pandemic.



The *Hug-A-Tree* program is designed for children between the ages of 5 and 12. These 30-60 minute presentations teach children what to do if they get lost in the wilderness. The *Hug-A-Tree* program was created after a 9 year old boy in San Diego died of hypothermia after getting lost in the wilderness during a family camping trip. He was found just a couple of miles away from his campsite after a massive 4 day search. Many people were impacted by this tragedy and wanted to make sure it never happened again.

Now children can watch a short video and hear from team members about what to do to keep from getting lost, how to stay comfortable if they are lost, and how they can help get themselves found. The key is to hug a tree! By staying still children (and adults) can increase their odds of being found quickly.

Kids also walk away from their *Hug-A-Tree* lesson with a whistle kit. The kit includes a card reminding them of everything that they learned, a large trash bag (that can be used to stay warm, dry, or shaded in an emergency) and a whistle to carry with them on all of their hikes.

The key lessons that kids learn with *Hug-A-Tree* are:

When you're hiking:

- Tell an adult where you are going
- Notice landmarks around you as you hike

If you get lost:

- Don't panic, and don't run
- Hug a tree and stay put so that you can be found
- Searchers will come looking for you and yell your name, but they're not mad.
- A search dog may help too, so don't be scared if you hear barking
- Yell back or blow your whistle 3 times if you hear searchers
- Use a trash bag, or emergency shelter to keep warm and dry
- If you get scared by noises at night, blow your whistle

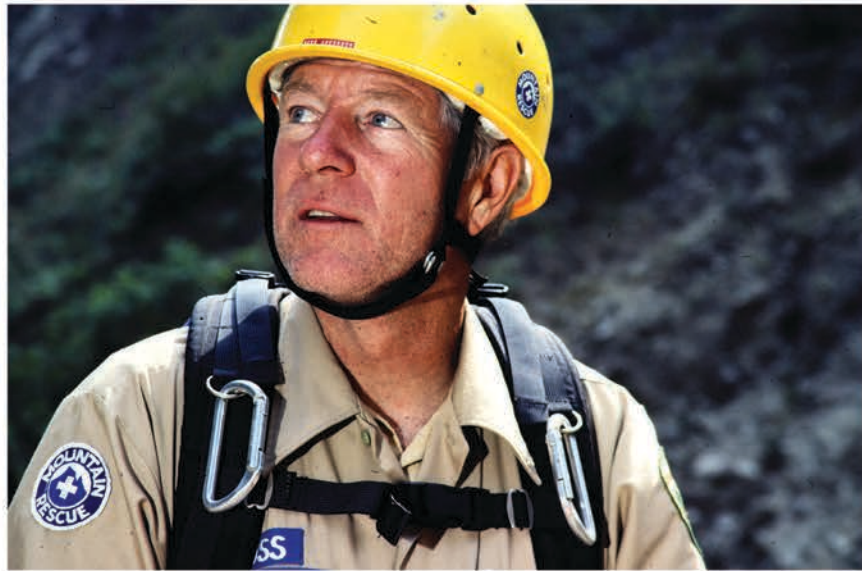
To help the helicopter find you:

- Make an "X" or "SOS" out of sticks or rocks in an open area
- Lay down in an open area and move like a snow angel
- Wear bright clothes
- Wave a bright jacket at the helicopter

If you would like to schedule a Hug-A-Tree presentation, or learn more about the Team, visit www.smsr.org.

RUSS ANDERSON

By Roberto Crespo



Take a look in the equipment room, back of a team truck, or call-out pack of most any SAR team in the United States and you're likely to find one name over and over - Russ Anderson. Since 1975 Russ has married passion for the outdoors, technical expertise, and belief in volunteerism to produce gear that is used by SAR professionals around the world.



Born in 1932 in Pasadena and raised in the San Gabriel Valley, Russ' calling to be in the wilderness started in Orange County, where at 12 years old, he remembers hiking from his parents' beach house down to Crystal Cove and into the Irvine Ranch, his .22 rifle slung over his shoulder, to go hunting rabbits. In 1949 at the age of 17 Russ set out on the John Muir Trail with Bob Leslie, a friend from South Pasadena. Russ and Bob covered the 211 miles of the JMT in 24 days, carrying all their gear in custom made packs that tipped the scales at ~60 pounds. Russ was hooked and hiked part of the JMT again in 1951, and yet again in 1960 when he and a coworker did it in 12 days, averaging around 18 miles per day.

Russ' passion for the outdoors has taken him to many places, including the two highest peaks in Mexico; Pico de Orizaba (18,701') and Popocatepetl (17,802'). True to form, while on Orizaba with an SMSR teammate, they witnessed a group of four climbers from Arizona take a fall at around 16,000'. They helped with the rescue and brought 3 of the 4 climbers out safely. Russ' favorite destination over the years has become the eastern Sierra Nevada, and he has made notable climbs including technical ascents of Mt. Whitney as well as Mt. Russell, which he climbed with the first female member of SMSR, Linda Stoner in 1986. Eight years later he climbed Mt. Russell again, this time with his grandsons Hunter (15) and Carson (12).

Russ was able to embark on these adventures because of one crucial decision he made while working at Aerojet in Azusa. Confined to a building, unable to see the open skies and San Gabriel mountains a few miles away, Russ decided to quit, despite the objections of many, including his wife Madeline who said "Russell, you've gotta get a job!". So he started a tree trimming business in Sierra Madre.



Around the same time, Russ embarked on yet another journey: taking his passion for the outdoors and helping others, he joined the Altadena Mountain Rescue Team. He later joined the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team in 1975 and at the same time started the Russ Anderson Company, which produced some of the aforementioned gear such as the RA Rescue 8, the RA Pulley, and the RA Litter Wheel, which are used literally around the world in the SAR community.

It's not often you get to work with a man whose name is ubiquitous with the gear he innovated, but that has been the case with SMSR for many years. All those qualities that make Russ who he is have permeated the Team over the years and continue to this day. One only needs to sit with Russ and talk SAR to understand how deeply he cares and how much it has shaped who he is today.

Mention the name Paul Snow, and he will tell you, with emotion in his voice, about this search from 50 years ago, and he will recount it like it was yesterday. How the search lasted a week. How LASD wanted to give up. How he and his teammates found Mr. Snow, a week later, in a narrow canyon directly below the CP. How he found a t-shirt that still smelled of deodorant. How he spotted a guy in the canyon that looked 'like a darn hippie' only to realize it was in fact Mr. Snow, and telling him "...are we glad to see you."

Mention the El Cariso Hotshots and the Loop Fire, and he will tell, again with emotion in his voice, about the difficult body recoveries of the 10 members of the crew that perished above Sylmar back in 1966. What it was like to discover one of the victims lying on the ground, clothes burned off, boots still on, looking like he was just sleeping. How the team went down to a Shakey's Pizza Parlor after the operation for pizza and beer to reflect on the events of the day and share their experiences as a catharsis.



Russ has been a member of SMSR for the past 46 years; over half his life has been spent in the service of his community. And those of us who have followed in his footsteps these past 46 years would like to recognize Russ for his contributions to the team and to the SAR community at large. Thank you and Siempre Duro!

MINER HARKNESS

By Arnold Gaffrey

"Hi Fred, this is Miner. Sorry for calling so late, but I need your help. My son and his friend, Ben, went up the trail today to find the snow. They should have been out by now. No, they don't have jackets or flashlights. Miner is 13 and I think Ben is about the same. You will? Thank you. I'll meet you at the trailhead."

Fred located the boys, gave them jackets and flashlights and hurried them down the trail. That telephone conversation in 1942, between Miner's dad and Fred Lalone was the beginning of Miner's involvement with the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team.

After coming home from service in Korea, Miner joined the team in 1953. The team was still somewhat disorganized and ill-equipped with no technical rescue standards or procedures. In Korea, Miner had learned about organizing people under adverse conditions and he brought that experience to the team. He also saw helicopters at work and realized how helpful they could be for search and rescue.



He contacted Sewell Griggers, the head of the Sheriff's Aero Bureau, who agreed to help but was limited to using fixed wing aircraft, which proved to be very difficult and risky. Since the team didn't have radios the aircraft would drop messages and supplies to the ground crews. These challenges led to the eventual use of helicopters and the idea of Helitac.

After several challenging searches, Miner conceived of the idea of using bloodhounds on the team. The idea was not received enthusiastically, but Miner was convinced that bloodhounds would be a tremendous help and he moved forward on his own. At one point he was using four dogs and the expense became unsustainable. He contacted the owner of Sturdy Dog Food Company, Craig Sanford, hoping he would allow Miner to purchase dog food at cost. Craig was so impressed with the program that he offered free food along with a new truck to transport the dogs! Soon the team was getting calls from other counties for the "Sturdy Dog Food tracking bloodhounds" and Miner pushed the Sheriff to call in SMSR as well.

As the team started getting calls for assistance from further away, getting to the SAR basecamp became more difficult. Miner and Bob Watkins worked their magic with the Air Force, and after legislation allowing the military to fly civilian SAR teams was signed by President Eisenhower, they agreed to fly SMSR on some operations.

On top of everything else Miner knew how to find lost people. He would look at a map of the search area and say, "We need to look here." Hundreds of people owe their lives to Miner's planning, organization and instinct.

Miner has been an inspiration and driving force behind much of what SMSR is today. He says the most important thing he helped with was Team Philosophy. "Every member should be required to memorize it. This is the code we live by." It is as true today as it was when it was written. Miner and Sarah Harkness now reside in Ketchum, Idaho.



ARNOLD GAFFREY

By Tom Burhenn

Arnold Gaffrey joined the Sierra Madre Search & Rescue Team in 1973. He was the youngest member ever at just 22. He remained on the team for another 45 years until 2018.



Arnold participated in literally thousands of SAR operations over 45 years. Level-headed and cool as a cucumber in difficult situations his teammates nicknamed him "Spock". Arnold exhibited excellent technical skills whether it was searching in white-out conditions or guiding a stranded hiker down a moss-slick gully near Sturtevant falls. He also has a strong humanitarian side: comforting a worried parent or handing a rescued shivering 5-year-old a cup of hot cocoa.

Arnold served as SMSR Team President, Vice President, and on the Board of Directors for many years. He was active with the California Mountain Rescue Association and the national MRA, serving as President of the California Region and also President of the national MRA. Simply put, if you were active in Mountain Rescue in the United States, you knew Arnold and he knew you.

He has received numerous awards for his years of volunteer work. Additionally, Arnold has been teaching the course, *Managing the Search Function*, since the early 1980's for the State of California, Office of Emergency Services, a role in which he continues.

In addition to his many significant contributions as a crew member, crew chief, or Operations Leader during operations, and in Mountain Rescue leadership, Arnold played a key role behind the scenes. Whether it was soothing the ego of a rural county sheriff who worried needlessly that Sierra Madre would elbow his guys out of the way (we never did that); or tiptoeing through the politics of various agencies to ensure that SMSR got the call, Arnold was a master. Employing the skills of a diplomat with the quiet authority of a man with thousands of SAR operations under his belt, Arnold was an unstoppable force. Despite all these seemingly super-human abilities Arnold is modest and generously shares accolades with others.



By day, mild-mannered Arnold worked in the insurance industry as a Chief Information Officer. He retired three years ago. Arnold and his wife Gail have been happily married for 46 years. Arnold is the father of three adult children (Adam is 42, Michelle is 37 and John is 29) and grandfather of five, so far. That does not tell the whole story at all, as Arnold has lovingly cared for their oldest child, Adam, who is severely disabled with cerebral palsy.

If all this weren't enough, Arnold is active in his church, and currently volunteers his time as head of Technical Ministries, which is nearly a full-time commitment. In retirement, he has enjoyed more time for vegetable gardening, woodworking and cooking--just a few of his passions. He and Gail and son Adam are enjoying adventures all over the beautiful state of Oregon, and road trips to Kansas City to visit daughter Michelle and her four children. As befitting a person who has a lifelong love of the mountains, Arnold and his family live not far from beautiful Mount Hood.

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View of Mt. Baldy from Telegraph Peak Photo: C. Scurlock



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***“Congratulations to the Team on
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***Bob Spears and the All-Volunteer
Mt. Wilson and Bailey Canyon Trail
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LOST & FOUND

Personal Stories from the Survivors



EMIKO AND BRITNEY SEARCH

JULY 17TH 2021

"I know everyone wants to know what happened. Truthfully, it was a small mistake that altered the course of events for the 26 hours we were in Angeles National Forest. Britney and I planned to hike the Burkhart Trail to Cooper Canyon Falls because we wanted to hang by a waterfall. AllTrails marked this hike as moderate and I've hiked Switzer and Sturtevant and thought ok this will be easy. I saw Andrea for about 2 minutes on my way out to the car and told her very briefly where I was going, mentioned checking out a waterfall, but didn't give much thought to tell anyone else.

We parked in the Buckhorn lot and started off around 10:30am on the Burkhart trail. Some of the AllTrails reviews mentioned that there would be a rope tied to a tree that would get us down to the waterfall which we passed probably by 3-4 miles. This wasn't really an issue, we just decided to stop where we were to have lunch and then head back. This is where things went wrong—we took a wrong turn, missed the trail, and continued along the river hoping to find another trail instead of turning around. Dumb. We know.

We were crossing the river from bank to bank, walking through brush and ash from the Bobcat fire, everything in my body told me this was wrong. Lesson #1. Instincts. We've maybe hiked 10-12 miles at this point. I break my water bottle and the dogs were exhausted. We're going to have to ration Britney's water from here on out. We were losing daylight and real panic is starting to set in. Are we going to die like this? I could not believe this was happening. We stopped and we prayed and pep talked ourselves to keep going. I sent an SOS from my phone with no idea if it went through because nothing happened on my phone. If you've been up the crest you know there is absolutely no reception.

At around 6pm we realized we passed a little cave that the dogs were trying to take shelter in and a man-made fire pit and decided that we had to turn around to make it to either of them before dark. We didn't mark it. We landed on a semi enclosed space by a rock with trees on either side so we were protected as we rested with a towel to share as a blanket. In our wet shoes and socks we were SO lucky it was in the 60's at night. I worried more if bears or any other animals would smell the food in our backpacks, if I should put it by the river, but then we'd risk having no food for us or the dogs in the morning.

We prayed again that our families would realize that we weren't back and went over the possible scenarios of how they would find us. Julia (Britney's mom) would call Aiko because Britney and Scout (the Nakamoto's dog) were gone, Aiko would call Molly, Molly would call Andrea and Andrea knows the general direction we were in.

In the darkness of the WILDERNESS I saw bioluminescence or hallucinated fairies. Delirious with fear for our lives, I think I was looking for any sort of comfort outside of myself and I definitely wasn't going to sleep. Mochi stayed up all night protecting us. THE BEST BOY.

Around 2am we heard faint helicopters to our left of where we were. They are so far from us. Were they even for us? Please god or whatever is out there. PLEASE be for us.

5:30am another helicopter to our left, still very far away, but more hope it's for us. It's still too dark to start the hike so we stay put until it's light enough to move. Mochi finally feels like he can sleep since we were up and we give him some time to rest. We start back around 6:30am, not as frantic as we were since we had more daylight to work with. 7:30am another helicopter is still too far left to see us, then no more helicopters from there on out. At this point, we were convinced they weren't looking for us and we'd just have to find the trail if it took all day or die trying. Phones are also dead.

We're so depleted, bodies sore, out of clean drinking water, dogs so tired and everything is burnt and looks the same. Did we pass this tree? Did we walk through the river here or through the brush? Total confusion and more panic that we aren't going to make it. Mochi is so tired from being the best boy, he can't walk anymore. I walk with him in the backpack for maybe 2 hours but my back is giving out. It's going to be easier to just pick him up and walk him through the river since he physically can't or will not touch water anymore. The possibility of staying another night out here is becoming an intrusive thought but I silently pray.

We keep going. Every now and then I'm screaming "hello, is anyone out there?" like I'm in the Titanic, so desperate. Then I hear a woman's voice respond. OMG, is this real? I turn around and look at Britney and I ask if she heard it too. We keep screaming, we hear screaming back as we make our way towards each other. Four people come scrambling down the mountain asking if we were Britney and Emiko.





They were Sierra Madre Search and Rescue, immediately we break down with relief while they're asking if we're hurt, giving us food and water. I ask what time it is -- 11:30am. They looked at my shoes and told us they had tracking us from my shoe prints by my car and there were 2 helicopters and 2 search teams looking for us. They told us that Britney's mom called, someone's brother is waiting at our car in the parking lot (my brother Shawn), and some girl in a black Tesla (Molly) has been looking for us. We hike back up the trail with the rescue team.

It happened exactly as we prayed: Julia called Aiko, Aiko called Molly, Molly called Andrea and Andrea knew the general direction we were in. The problem was no one knew exactly what area we were in, just that we're up the crest somewhere near a waterfall.

The next part I've gathered from conversations post rescue:

- Julia called Aiko around 10:00pm worried that we're not back, she files us as missing persons
- My family starts to drive to LA from Vegas
- Molly, Nick, Rachid, and my brother in law Shawn start driving to different waterfalls looking for my car up the crest
- Molly started her own search team
- Dom called the Altadena Sheriffs, Sierra Madre, and Montrose rescue teams
- At 2am, everyone was notified that they found us, but it was 2 other hikers that were severely injured
- Altadena Mountain Rescue team asked Sierra Madre Search and Rescue to assist who ultimately found us by my shoe print
- The helicopters were for us. The one we heard at 2am was a thermal detector. The other ones we heard had to refuel and planned to search again from 9:30am-3:00pm.
- The SOS from my phone pinged a tower in Palmdale because we were that far out."

EMIKO

DESPLINTER SEARCH

APRIL 11TH 2019

"In April of 2019 I set out on a planned day hike from Icehouse Canyon Trailhead to Cucamonga Peak. At higher elevations the trail was covered in snow. The snow turned into very hard ice at Cucamonga Saddle where my partner's crampon didn't bite resulting in a 300' slide. After the accident we attempted to descend Cucamonga Canyon to get to safety. We thought it was an open valley we could simply walk down, but didn't realize it was actually a technical canyon requiring rope (we had none) to safely rappel down several waterfalls. After we descended the canyon for five days, we had passed the first two major waterfalls by tying our jackets together for a handline to go down one waterfall and exposed climbs to get around another. We didn't know at the time but there were multiple more waterfalls ahead of us. We were in serious trouble with no way to ascend back up the canyon and no rope to safely descend.

Search and Rescue crews were searching the entire five days we were missing, but high winds prevented them from inserting ground teams near the area we were last seen. This meant searchers had to hike long distances just to get to the primary search area which limited their time to search before they had to return to the command post. On the fifth day the weather was still not cooperating. It was decided that a ground team would start at Icehouse Canyon Trailhead and descend Cucamonga Canyon. The team needed mountaineering, canyoneering, and rope rescue skills for the planned overnight trip. They also needed the strength and endurance to carry heavy packs filled with alpine gear to safely traverse the snow and ice, wetsuits to protect from the frigid mountain water flowing in the canyon, a lot of rope to descend a rarely traveled canyon with unknown rappel lengths, extra clothing to get through the cold night, and extra gear to help us out of the canyon once they reached us.

The Sierra Madre SAR team possessed the unique skillset required to carry out this arduous rescue and were given the assignment. When they reached the canyon late in the day, they found our footprints in the canyon. They knew they were on the right track. That evening we were hoisted out of the canyon via helicopter and reunited with our families. I am grateful for the Sierra Madre team's willingness and capability to access such a remote canyon and track us down."

ERIC DESPLINTER

"In April 2019 my son, Eric DeSplinter, and his friend Gabrielle Wallace didn't return from a hike to Cucamonga Peak. For the next five days, the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue team contributed to the search efforts. I watched every day as the crew strapped on their gear to head out into the mountains, and their presence alone gave my family much needed hope. Because of their persistence, they were able to find footprints late one night that would lead them to Eric and Gabrielle. This crew never gave up.

My sincere thanks to everyone that participated in searching throughout those five days. Your commitment is the reason our story ended well. Over the past couple years I've learned more about the sacrifices you make as volunteers. The training is intense, the calls are frequent, and each one of those means you are away from your families. Thank you for being selfless with your time when heading out for every mission. My thanks also to your families for sharing their loved ones with those that have benefitted from your skills and knowledge. It's because of all of you that my family stays complete.

Happy 70th Anniversary, Sierra Madre S&R!"

KAREN ZIEBARTH (Eric DeSplinter's mother)





Sierra Madre Search & Rescue and Socorro Alpino Guatemalteco



The story of Socorro Alpino Guatemalteco is not unlike the story of many search and rescue teams around the world, including SMSR. Local hikers, mountaineers, climbers and the like are known in the community as “who to call” when someone goes missing or gets injured in the mountains. Over time they realize that every time one of these events occurs, the same people show up, so why not form a team?

On July 10, 2016, 40 year old Ariel Rodriguez went missing on Volcan Tajumulco, which at 13,789 feet is the tallest volcano in Central America. Volcan Tajumulco is 170 miles from Guatemala City, the capital of Guatemala. Ariel was hiking the volcano solo, fell along the way, was injured, and rendered non-ambulatory. A call went out for help, and a loosely formed group called Paramedicos de Montaña (PdM) mobilized and headed out to San Marcos department to help. PdM consisted of mountaineers, hikers, and climbers from Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango. Two days later the members of PdM found Ariel, treated him for his injuries, and brought him down off the mountain.



Following the search for Ariel, a Guatemala City based Emergency Services provider, SOS Servicios Medicos, provided Wilderness First Responder training in an effort to baseline a standard of care for PdM.

On November 2, 2016 PdM formally changed its name to Socorro Alpino Guatemalteco (SAG), based on and with support of Brigada de Rescate Socorro Alpino Mexico (Founded in December 1946) and with the goal of creating the first professional, all-volunteer mountain search and rescue team in Guatemala.

SAG was called to service soon after when on Jan 9, 2017 an unexpected cold front on Volcan Acatenango (13,045') resulted in the death of six hikers due to hypothermia (3), head injuries (2), and pulmonary edema (1). SAG assisted the local fire department in the search and recovery of the bodies.

This event motivated SAG to start a program of PSAR (Preventative SAR) for local hikers. In addition SAG initiated trainings with local agencies in Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango in how to deal with incidents on the area's many volcanoes.

2017 was a landmark year as SAG in conjunction with the Guatemalan Institute for Tourism (INGUAT) organized a week long training put on by the Association of Mountain Guides of Peru (AGMP), a highly respected group of professional mountaineers. The training included members of various fire departments, CONRED (Nat'l Coordination for Disaster Reduction), ASONBOMD (Nat'l Association of Firefighters), the Guatemalan Army, and the National Police. This training led to greater communication between SAG and the many agencies of first responders in Guatemala.

In June of 2018, while participating in the search for Luis Moncada, 29, on Volcan Acatenango, the adjacent Volcan de Fuego (12,346') erupted violently. SAG assisted in the evacuation of hikers on Acatenango, which was impacted by the eruption and subsequent pyroclastic flow, and which ultimately led to the destruction of several towns and the deaths of hundreds of people.



In October 2020 SAG was involved in another multiagency rescue at Corazon de Agua (7903'), a popular local hiking area in between Guatemala City and Antigua. Pablo Esquit, 22, fell down one of the ravines off the south side of the mountain and had to be rescued. The first agency on scene was the local fire department, but due to various factors they were unable to effect a rescue and in fact two fire fighters became subjects of the rescue as well.

Members of SAG responded later in the day and were able to effect the rescue of both Pablo as well as the fire fighters.



This is where the story of SAG and SMSR cross paths for the first time. SMSR member Roberto Crespo, who had recently moved with his family to Antigua, Guatemala, was hiking with a local group that morning on Corazon de Agua. Upon reaching the top he saw several members of the local fire department working with some ropes and looking over the side of the mountain. Roberto approached the group to find out what was happening and offered his assistance to them, which they declined. Once at home Roberto started looking for information about the incident by contacting friends in the area and eventually found out about SAG.



Over time and through various contacts he eventually got in touch with one of the founding members of SAG and became very interested in finding ways to support their efforts. He participated in several online meetings and trainings to gain an understanding of the group and their mission, and quickly saw many parallels between the core values of SAG and SMSR.

May 1, 2021 was Roberto's first in person meeting with the members of SAG, during their overnight training on Corazon de Agua. There he got detailed information about the rescue of Pablo, the terrain on which the rescue was performed and the techniques and gear used in the rescue. The group sat in a circle over lunch and went around and told their brief stories of why they joined SAG or were interested in joining SAG. Roberto was struck once again by how similar the group was in so many ways to SMSR. The overarching theme was, "I just want to be able to help those in need of help..."

Back in Sierra Madre, the members of SMSR had donated and collected roughly 200 pounds of used rescue gear including litters, backboards, helmets, ropes, carabiners, pulleys, ascenders, webbing, backpacks and harnesses. Roberto flew up in mid-May to gather all this gear, load it up in his 2006 Toyota Tacoma and drive it down to Guatemala with the intent of training and equipping SAG.



Roberto participated in trainings in late May and June and was able to put the equipment to use very quickly in these trainings. He also met with the leaders of SAG to answer any and all questions about SMSR, the history, the structure of the team, training principles, etc.

SAG quickly adopted many of the core operating principles used by SMSR regarding attendance of trainings to teach and maintain skills as well as the participation in PSAR events to further educate the local hiking community and responding agencies. They also finalized the formation of SAG as a Non-Profit Organization.

Due to COVID restrictions in-person trainings are suspended indefinitely, but Roberto has already planned several trainings in rope system techniques, litter management, and search management.

Roberto hopes to bring members of SMSR down to Guatemala to meet and work with SAG in the future and ultimately test this team to the standards of the MRA.





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SHOWPRO 

THE BOBCAT FIRE OF 2020

On September 6, 2020 a fire started near the Cogswell Dam in Bobcat Canyon. This would become the Bobcat fire, one of the biggest wildfires in Los Angeles' history. Before it was fully contained, in December, the Bobcat Fire burned over 116,000 acres of land.

The drama of the fire progressed over weeks as flames moved south and west towards our foothill communities. Evacuation orders and warnings affected Duarte, Bradbury, Monrovia, Arcadia, Sierra Madre, Altadena and Pasadena. Firefighters did a tremendous job of protecting all of the homes in these communities. The area was covered in smoke and team members watched as the mountains we love burned.

The fire came dramatically close to homes in Monrovia and the facilities in Monrovia Canyon Park, including Camp Trask, but through incredible efforts firefighters were able to defend all of the buildings.

As the fire moved west across the range, SMSR prepared to do a sweep of all of the cabins in Big Santa Anita Canyon to ensure that cabin owners and hikers had cleared the area. The assignment was called off as the fire progressed too quickly for it to be completed safely.

The Pack Station at Chantry Flats, and all of the animals were evacuated. Team members watched news footage and the cameras off of Mt Wilson as the fire crawled through Chantry Flats. Seventeen of the 81 cabins in the canyon were destroyed as well as many outbuildings and most of the call boxes. One of the small cabins at Sturtevant Camp was lost, but thanks to amazing work by firefighters, all of the pack station buildings were spared.

When residents in "the canyon" of Sierra Madre came under voluntary evacuation orders, SMSR with the help from some of our neighboring teams, manned barricades in the community to keep the area secure and free from looky-loos. While at these posts team members spoke with worried residents as they passed by under the roar of the water dropping helicopters filling up at the settling basins. We saw the sleep deprived faces of our local firefighters and trucks from around the state as they drove by. Residents brought sodas, coffee, fresh baked banana bread and ice cream to the team members manning the barricades. It was a powerful demonstration of the strong sense of community in Sierra Madre.

On September 15th the fire came within 500 feet of the Mt Wilson observatory as firefighters successfully defended the facilities. But as the fire moved towards the Antelope Valley structures were lost, including the Devil's Punchbowl Nature Center.

In the aftermath of the Bobcat Fire Monrovia Canyon Park and the entire Chantry Flats area remain closed to the public until spring of 2022. The mountains are being given a chance to recover. Trails will need to be repaired, and major road work will have to be completed on the road to Chantry before it can open to the public again. In the meantime, SMSR has seen a dramatic drop in call volume. With a large portion of our area closed to the public as a result of the fire we have seen about a 50% decrease in operations.

We watched helplessly as our mountains were seemingly destroyed, but already they are starting to rebound. Disaster species of flowers that haven't been seen in the canyon for years sprouted this spring. Cabin owners are starting to repair the trails and the pack station is again making deliveries in the canyon. In time this season will pass and we look forward to the next challenges and adventures these mountains have in store for us.



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**SIERRA MADRE SEARCH AND
RESCUE**

Anywhere in the wilderness that someone needs help...

1951 - 2021

THE DOG STORIES OF SIERRA MADRE SEARCH & RESCUE



Sierra Madre Search and Rescue's (SMSR) motto is "anywhere in the wilderness that someone needs help." And by anyone we mean human, dog, donkey, mule, horse or bear. Yes, we've rescued them all, but the dogs we have rescued have a special place in our hearts.

Since the Team started keeping more detailed records in 2003, there have been 41 dog rescues. The Team has helped dogs that have been out with their lost owners, stranded in steep terrain, dangerously overheated, or simply exhausted.



Overheated Dogs

In the last couple of years SMSR has seen multiple overheated dogs on the Mount Wilson Trail. This trail has very little access to water or shade and is a dangerous place for a dog on a warm day. In these cases, rescuers responded with extra water, frozen water bottles and ice packs to begin cooling the dogs immediately and then transported the dogs off the mountain.

When considering taking your dog for a hike, remember that short snout breeds like pugs and Boston terriers are not great hikers. They are especially prone to exhaustion and overheating. If temperatures will be reaching 75°F carefully consider how dark your dog's coat is and how much shade is on the trail. If temperatures will reach 80°F it is best for your dog to stay home. When your dog does join you for a hike be sure you carry plenty of water for both of you.

Lost Dogs

Two dogs SMSR helped this summer spent an unexpected night out with their owner and a friend when the group got lost on a hike to Cooper Canyon Falls. A SMSR team was thrilled to find the group alive and well the next day, and hiked the women back to the trailhead giving the exhausted pups a ride for most of the hike out.

In 2019 one dog helped lead rescuers to their missing owner. On July 12 a 60 year camper and her dog went missing from the Grandview Campground near the Bristlecone Pine Forest. Teams from across California joined in the search and on day 4 of the search the dog was found, alive and well. This find caused search assignments to be shifted to the area, and later in the day the missing camper was located alive and well by a SMSR crew.

Stranded Dogs

Another dog helped lead SMSR to a new team member. In 2014 Bandit was out hiking with his owner, Michael Owens, when Bandit got stranded on a narrow ledge off trail. Our friends with the Montrose Search and Rescue Team, sent rescuers down on ropes to retrieve Bandit and hoist him back up to the trail. This was Owens' introduction to what mountain rescuers do, and shortly after Owens joined SMSR.

Behind every search, and each rescue that SMSR responds to there is a story to be told. But the ones that involve dogs are especially memorable to our teammates. Although we are always ready to help any dog that needs it, we'd rather you be prepared when you are hiking with your dog so that we don't have to.

Know that dogs build physical fitness just like you. If your dog only takes walks around the block, they're not ready for a 14 mile trip to Mt. Wilson. Be cautious about putting them in a situation where they will overheat. Know that your dog will be safest on a leash.

Since 1951, the all-volunteer Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team has responded to calls for help in the local mountains and beyond. SMSR also provides a range of wilderness safety programs. The Team never charges for any of these services, and is funded entirely by charitable donations.



Searching With Social Media



In the 70 years since the founding of Sierra Madre Search and Rescue (SMSR) many new technologies have been developed and incorporated by the team. Today's team members carry light weight aluminum alloy carabiners, GPS units, and GORE-TEX jackets that didn't exist in 1951. One of the newer tools that the Team uses is social media.



16,298
People Reached

1,595
Engagements

Boost With Credit

SMSR has active accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. As these tools first became available they obviously helped the Team stay in touch with the community that we serve, share safety tips, advertise team events, and post recruiting information. As SMSR has continued to hone the power of social media, we have found it can also be a powerful tool during a search.

The summer of 2021 the team had two searches where social media played an important role in the operations.

In February SMSR partnered with San Dimas Mountain Rescue in their search for a missing hiker that was last seen hiking alone just below the summit of Iron Mountain but never made it home.

As ground teams hit the trails to search for her, back in town other team members hit social media. A post was made asking for information from anyone who had been on the mountain that same day. After being shared out 334 times and reaching 105,751 people on Facebook alone, the Team was able to identify and contact members of all but 1 of the hiking groups believed to be on the mountain the same day as the missing hiker.

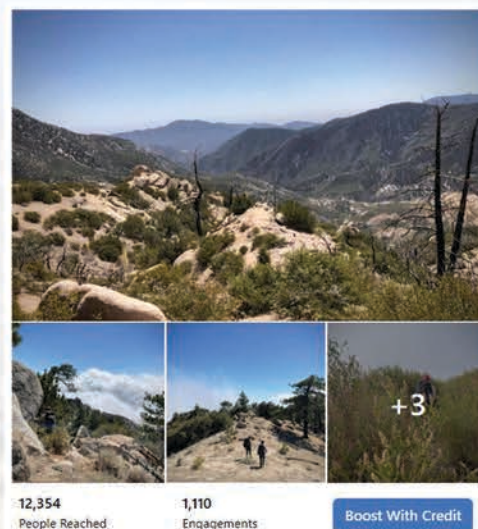
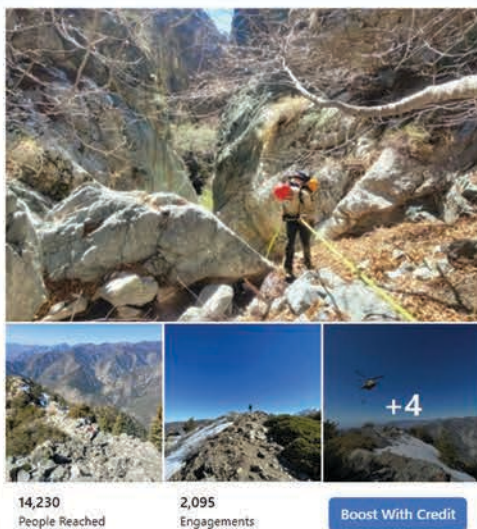
These hikers shared valuable information about their interactions with the missing. They reported when and where they saw her, how she appeared to be doing and even pictures of the weather and terrain on the day she went missing. All of this information helped searchers focus their search area and attempt to predict the missing's behavior.

Sadly this hiker has still not been located. SMSR is dedicated to learning from every operation we deploy on, even those without happy endings. Great things were learned about the power of social media on this search.

A couple of months later, SMSR assisted Montrose Search and Rescue Team in their search for a lost hiker who texted a message out to friends letting them know that he was lost. He also sent a picture of his legs sitting above a canyon. This and the fact that the missing's car was found at the Buckhorn Campground/Trailhead was all of the information searchers had to work from as they began to search.

Once again as team members searched the mountain, others searched for help on social media. The picture the hiker took was shared on social media asking if anyone could identify his location, and @ai6yrham answered on Twitter. The location Benjamin Kuo (aka @ai6yrham) shared was searched by Air Rescue 5 and the hiker was located alive and well after an unexpected night out in rugged and remote off trail terrain.

SMSR is constantly working to hone their skills as searchers. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to see what we are up to.



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Top Safety Tips for Visiting the Angeles National Forest

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

Call your local Forest Service office to find out what fire use restrictions are in place, weather conditions, if you'll need a day pass, or if your location is open.

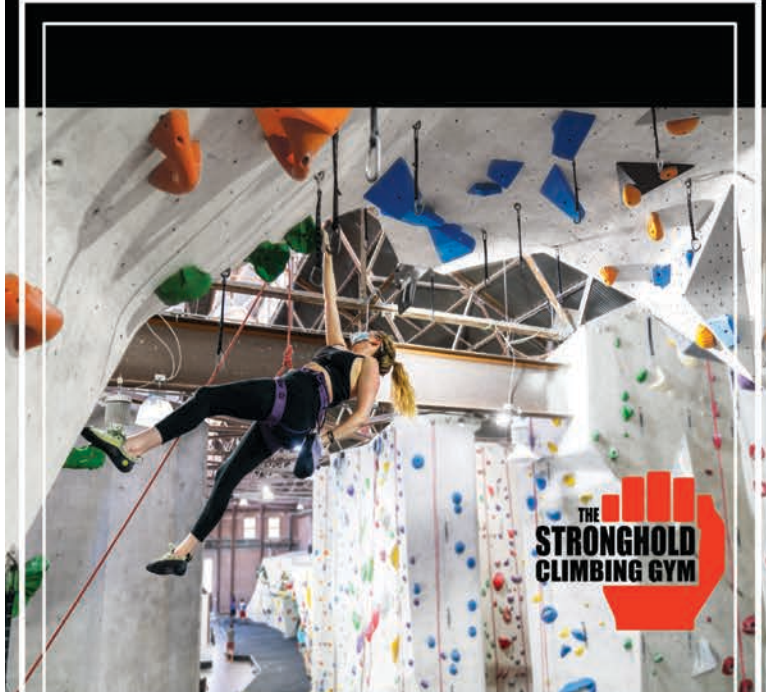
TELL SOMEONE YOUR PLANS!

Should you get lost in the forest, this provides critical information on where and when to start searching for you.

HAVE THE RIGHT GEAR!

Having the right boots can be a game-changer! Also, if you're planning to hike or camp deep in the forest, having a proper and well-adjusted pack is a good idea. It's also not a bad idea to pack some extra clothes, plenty of water, and sunscreen.

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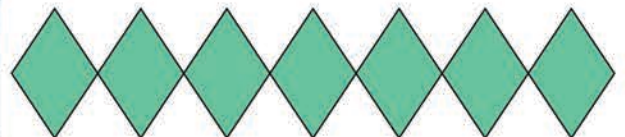


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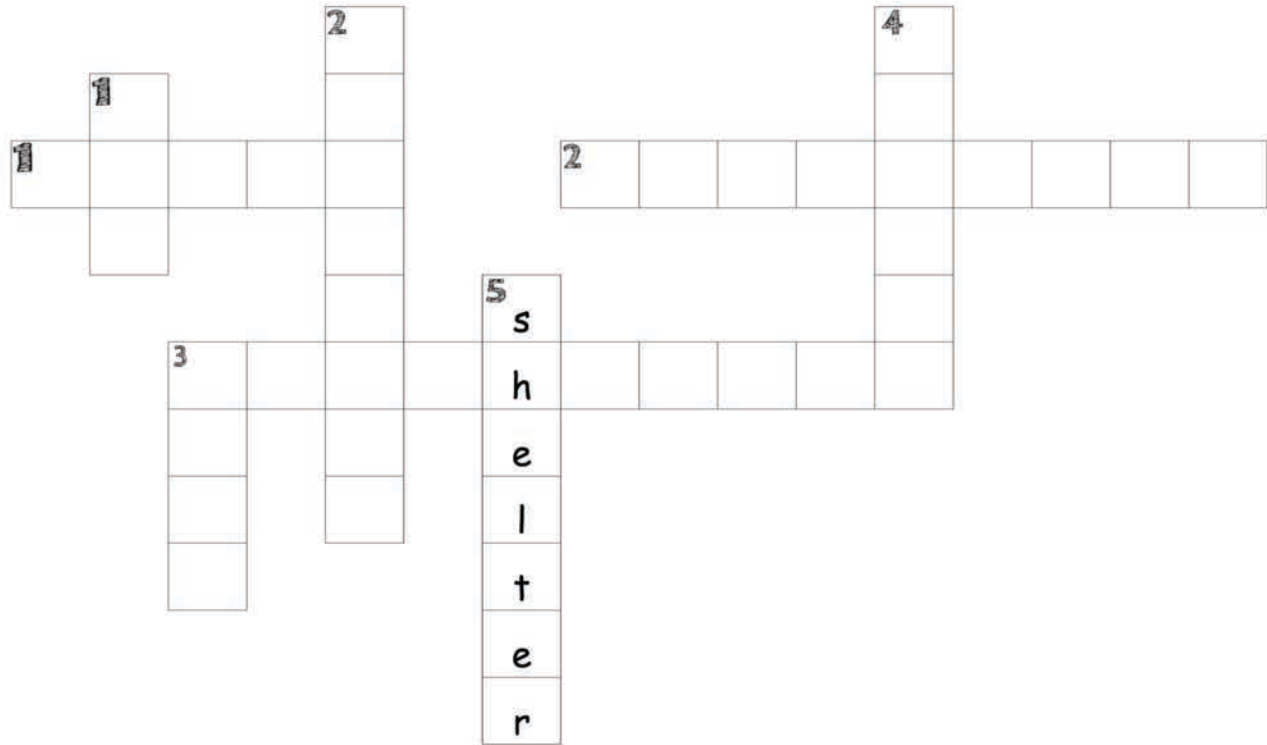
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Crossword Puzzle



Use the picture clues to name the things you should take with you when you go hiking to keep you safe.



Down

1 So that you don't get lost



2 In case you get hurt



3 In case you get hungry



4 So that you don't get cold or wet



5 In case you need a safe place



Across

1 In case you get thirsty



2 So that you don't get sunburned

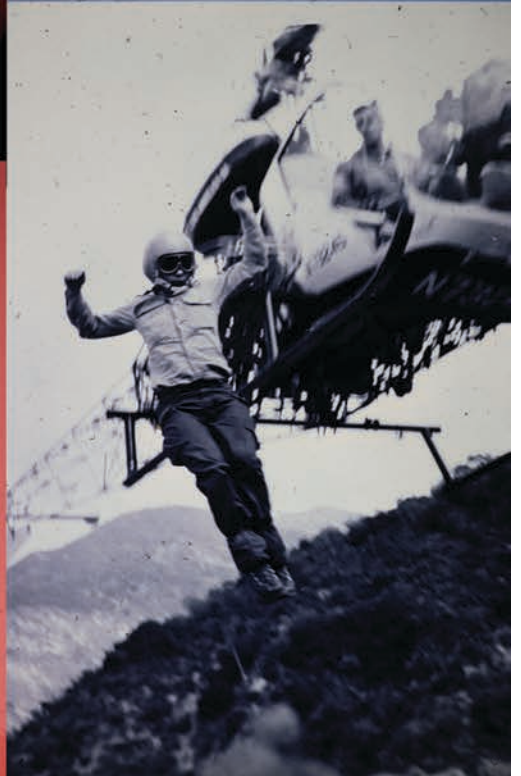


3 In case it gets dark



A grown up with you should also carry a knife and a fire starting kit.

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