

BRMRG Dispatch

From the Chair
by Lauren Schiff

Welcome back to the second issue of BRMRG Dispatch. We're still tromping through swamps, sweeping the Virginia wilderness, and teaching semitech on O-Hill. I'm Lauren Schiff, BRMRG chair for 1997/98 and I'd like to welcome you to round two of BRMRG updates. This is my fourth year in the group and soon I, too, will likely be joining the ranks of alums. It is difficult to imagine leaving the calls in the middle of the night, cramming the locker into one car, the boots I forgot to waterproof, the task terrain that was not on the map, the fingers stained with markers, the excitement of a find, the frustration of a suspension, the caravan home, and the pizza at Anna's. BRMRG is as active as ever, running the largest searches in the state with the ASRC, yet the personalities of its members and quirks of the locker seem to remain constant. You will continue to receive this newsletter for several years after leaving the group—and forever if we keep hearing back from you in some way (whether it be a donation, post card, or e-mail!)

On the whole, searches this year have been very positive—quick and live finds seem to be the trend. There have also been several significant changes in BRMRG. To hit the highlights, the Newcomb Hall renovations are complete, and we have moved back into the basement of Peabody Hall – in to a room four times the size of our old locker! Allison Mabe and James Vann have founded BRMRG Dogs, a component of BRMRG that trains handlers



though our FTM and FTL courses and work towards qualification as a state canine resource. The new BRMRG training class is holding steady with a new mentoring program kicking in and we have begun a program with the Virginia Military Institute that allows up to 10 cadets per class to join BRMRG and respond to missions. The Lisa Hannon Fund and the Marc Zolides Fund have distributed its first awards. Brian Ulmer, Alex Hartman, and Jason Powell are taking leadership April 1st, and look forward to another successful year with dedicated new officers and a strong membership.

Now that you have heard from us, we would like to hear back from you. BRMRG Alumni have several mediums for reverting back to those crazy search days. Look on the webpage (<http://brmrg.med.virginia.edu>)

Training Class of '98
by Jason Powell

This year's training class started off great when we filled the Physics Auditorium during our open house; here we told prospective members all about our group. The next week, over 50 people came to the CQ workshop, where they learned the basics of search and rescue and to be able to come to searches as a basic resource. Training has since continued twice a week (Wednesday nights, and a full day in the weekend). We've tried to expand our horizons by visiting a variety of places for our training, from O-Hill to Sugar Hollow, the SNP, Hardware River,

IN THIS ISSUE

Page Two
Page Three
Page Four

BRMRG Dogs
Alumni News
Liaa Hannon Fund

Lake Anna, and Raven's Roost, and having a variety of instructors, which the older members have graciously helped out with. Beth and Kevin Coyne conducted a full simulation out at Lake Anna State Park, and members of other groups attended it, making for a very realistic environment. Last fall's training has promoted 16 members to FTM, and they are all now participating in the spring training toward FTL. Very recently, Greg Fuller, a certified tracker, came to C-ville to teach his FTS (Field Team Signcutter) class to five BRMRGers, who all passed the course. All of these brand new FTS were able to try out their skills on an actual search that we were called out to the day after they received their certification. As part of our FTL training, we are having most of our new FTMs take the MSO (Managing Search Operations) course, which will teach them the aspects of SAR back in base so that they may be better FTLs and eventually become Staff. Soon, this year will come to a close, and we will have a fresh new supply of FTLs. Next year, Justin Reich will take over as the new Training Officer, and start a new batch of CQs out on the task of learning SAR.

tions will be another direction that FTLs can go when they have search experience and are interested in dog handling. In order to be certified a dog handler must be an ASRC FTL. The dog team consists of the dog and handler who must pass a battery of tests to judge the dog's performance and experience as well as the handler's ability to read their dog and perform consistently good searches of a given area. The major tests that the team must pass are a 40-acre night search problem, a 160-acre problem with multiple victims, and

well. For this reason, Blue Ridge has an open training policy and anyone with or without dogs can attend. We have many working members and a few very dedicated members who don't have dogs themselves, but attend training and help out as walkers and subjects. These members will now be better trained to assist dog handlers at searches and will be more knowledgeable all around. At this writing, Blue Ridge Dogs has eight members from across the state. Three of the handler members are state certified from other groups.



Chirs Wilson (l) and George Usitalo (r) get frisky on O-Hill with new four legged recruits.

Blue Ridge Dogs

by Jason Dalton

This name is brand new to many that will be reading this. It's the name of the air scent search dog group that has risen out of the work of a few BRMRG members who were interested in training dogs for SAR. It has been a rocky start. Some political challenges almost threatened to stop the formation of the group, but the new handlers are still training twice a week and are making great progress. The membership of the dog group must also be active members of BRMRG. The dog certifica-

obedience. Technically any breed could be used for SAR, but practically it must be a medium to large dog with the endurance to perform long tasks, and the agility to maneuver obstacles safely. There are also some dogs who are not interested in SAR for some reason or another. Blue Ridge Dogs has also embarked on a small educational mission. Many people in Search and Rescue have no idea how dog teams work, what kind of support they can give or would need. This problem filters over into Incident staff eventually as

Our training officer is state certified in live find and advanced cadaver search. We are taking new members always and always train all levels at every training. Wish us luck in forming this new SAR resource!

BRMRG Experience

by James Freas

During the course of the first few trainings the same question was asked of me over and over again by

the old members, "So, why did you join BRMRG?" After a long and exciting semester I have been promoted to FTM and I have found myself asking a different version of the same question. Why have I stayed in BRMRG?

My answer to the original question were all relatively similar. After puzzling out that "BRMRG" is the sound produced when one runs the letters b, r, m, r, g together, I would describe my love of the outdoors and a desire to help people. Now, having survived 9 AM weekend trainings, calls in the middle of the night, and a one day-long bastard search, I am asking myself why have I stuck with it. While my original answers for joining remain true, it is the new friends and general camaraderie of the group that have kept me involved.

From day one of joining a person is accepted into the activities of the group. He or she is automatically invited to after training meals at Anna's pizza or to see "Friends" and "ER" over at the Fontaine house. If you need a ride just send a message to the e-mail server and you are almost assured a response. In no other organization at this university have I seen or felt such a quick bonding to new members. The result of that ability to absorb new members into the social aspect of the group is a strong, close-knit team. The future of the Blue Ridge Mountain Rescue Group relies on the camaraderie and interdependence of the members that I saw when I first joined and that has kept me in the group through all my experiences.

Info from BRMRG Alums

Jean (Milam) (NURS 88) and Brian Wheeler (CLAS 90) are still in Charlottesville. Last Fall we moved

Search Log

Sept 21, 1997	8 yo male	Spotsylvania Co.	Status 1
Sept 22, 1997	5 children, 2 adults	Great Dismal Swamp	Status 1 X 7
Sept 22, 1997	73 yo male	White Hall	Status 1
Oct 4, 1997	72 yo male	Albemarle Co.	Status 1
Oct 24, 1997	83 yo female	Greene Co.	Status 1
Jan 13, 1998	73 yo male	King and Queen Co.	Status 1
March 7, 1998	91 yo male	Newport News	Status 3
March 13, 1998	19 yo female	Martinsville	Status 1
March 21, 1998	84 yo female	Mecklenberg Co.	Status 3

to a new house near Ivy where we feel like we are in the country, yet still close to town. Jean works and plays at home with BRMRG babies Abby (6) and Sam (2). Brian has great plans to get Abby on the rocks this summer. Would be amazing just to get Brian back on the rocks at this point! Brian is Chief Information Officer of SNL Securities, a financial information company in Charlottesville. He is hoping William Dixon is really at Microsoft learning everything so he can call him for help!

—Brian Wheeler
89 Langford Place
Charlottesville, VA 22903
984-2233
BWheeler@SNLnet.com

Thanks for keeping the Dispatch coming! As you know, there is usually SOME truth to most rumors. I'm now enjoying the good life in coastal Rhode Island (the Ocean State). The "State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation" (its official name) has adopted the 1988 official SAR motto of Maryland, "There are no lost people in RI." What's a SAR guy to do? However, I met a rescue dog lady at a pet show last weekend, who informed me that Steve McConaughy had moved up to Massachusetts and

was the president of their air scent dog team! We exchanged numbers, and I hope that Steve will call soon.

Living here is kinda like living in Mayberry RFD, except everyone up here has a funny accent and lives on a boat. Of course, they probably think I sound like Gomer Pyle. But it's really pretty, and the coastal effect keeps temperatures within 10 degrees of Virginia, so it's not like living in New England at all. In fact, the folks I've met from the mid-Atlantic or South tell me that this is the ONLY area up here that they would even consider living in. But I do miss the Blue Ridge mountains and especially C-ville. And I miss you guys a lot. That's about it for me. Please let me know when the Awards Ceremony is!
—Greg Shea

Greg – BRMRG Awards Ceremony is April 25th!!!

Tis bit on me are about the same....been working at Gannett Fleming as a Project Engineer since July 95 (almost 3 years ugh!). Currently Steve and I are living in Williamsburg and have 2 great dogs... Emma and Maggie. Steve is in grad school at William & Mary for

a Master's in Education. I have been taking classes to finish up my premed requirements with the hopes of applying in June of 1999 for the class of 2000. Sounds kind of weird. I will be sitting for my PE (Professional Engineer) License next April and then I'll be fully licensed and ready to go nuts!!! Steve and I have taken up kayaking, and I continue off and on to volunteer at the Local ER. The big plan is for both Steve and I to get into UVA for my MD and his Ph.D., so that we can study and be poor at the same time. That's about it from the 'Burg.

—Jenn Avery Whitaker

How's BRMRG? I miss the gang and the late nights. Anyway, I am up to no good. The company I am working for moved me from Boston to San Francisco in December and I have spent several months now enjoying the monsoons. I am working as a Senior Account Executive for a software and research company. I have been doing a fair amount of climbing and mountain biking, but haven't been involved in SAR at all. Otherwise, nothing too notable. Anyone who's looking for me can reach me @ 415-931-6578 or write to me at 1572 Grove Street, San Francisco, CA 94117

— Seth Markowitz

Ted Dettmar is working for the U.S. Antarctic Program as a Field Safety Instructor (mountain guide, cold weather instructor!) and he is also deputy leader of the Joint Antarctic SAR Team.

Kevin and Beth Coyne are moving to Atlanta this fall — and expecting a second BRMRGer!

Lisa Hannon Fund

The Lisa Hannon Fund has distributed its first award! Many of you will remember Lisa as an Incident Commander in BRMRG. After her

death in May of 1994 returning from a search, a fund was established in her name to support search and rescue activities.



An implementation plan for the fund was passed by the BRMRG membership in July of 1997. In September of each year, the amount available for award will be announced by the Board of Directors. This amount is to be half of the interest earned during the past year so that the fund can continue to grow. Proposals for the fund will be due at the October business meeting and the membership will vote on these proposals each November. This process was designed so that current BRMRGers, involved alumni, and other people in the search and rescue community can start new ideas and projects in Lisa's memory. For example, it could be used to begin a Hug-A-Tree program in a portion of the state not covered. This year, Bruce Hemmer and Jenny Burmester were able to attend the business meeting and contribute to a new scrapbook for Lisa. We will continue to ask for your proposals through the brmrg-alum mailing list. Currently, the fund has \$5,208 and is being invested through the University of Virginia Alumni Association.

On October 1, 1997 two proposals

were passed by the BRMRG membership: 1) \$20 to the VA SAR Council for a plaque for the Lisa Hannon award, and 2) Funding of postage for Bob Koester's fatigue study. The primary objective of Koester's Study is to determine which factors best serve as predictors of sleepiness and driving mishaps in searchers when returning from SAR incidents. Secondly, the study aims to determine if searchers adequately assess the risk of driving in their current state, which techniques are currently used to reduce sleepiness while driving, the effectiveness of current sleepiness prevention programs, and to identify factors that may help develop future programs and policies. The award from Hannon's fund will fund the mailing of survey questionnaires that searchers will complete and mail upon arriving home or the following day.

Info on BRMRG Alumni Fund

To make a contribution—send check to:
UVA Alumni Association
PO Box 3446
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Make checks to : UVA Fund
Designate your check to contribute to
BRMRG

These gifts are tax deductible, and you will automatically receive a receipt. Many corporations will match gifts to non-profit organizations! To get more information, call Bonnie Ford at 804-984-9227.

The BRMRG alumni fund is used for summer and other operational needs. We must rely completely on self-funding for the months of May, June, July, and August. Today, the average search costs hundreds to thousands of dollars! We constantly need assistance for summer gas money, ops supplies, and equipment repairs. After the summer, we are able to use the fund for large equipment purchases. Last year, we were able to purchase a new Stokes. We are currently looking to improve technology in base and the field with new handheld radios (with assistance of a RSAF grant) and GPS units.