

Volume XIX, Issue III, March 1983

Kevin Walker, Editor — Walt Walker, Publisher — Carolyn Parsons, Artist

Search and Rescue

RESCUE

Mission No. 8308M

4 Mar., Fri.
San Jacinto River,
Railroad Canyon

By Mel Krug



After finishing dinner and sitting down to spend a quiet evening home with the family for a change, wouldn't you know it, the pager went off. Call Al, learn of a stranded canoeist in the

San Jacinto River, grab the gear and roll.

When I arrived **RMRU** members Walt and Kevin Walker were already there, along with numerous CDF and ambulance personnel. Earlier in the evening the CDF had tried to wade out to the stranded person but turned back due to the strong current from recent rain storms. Apparently after **RMRU** was activated it had been decided to call for an El Toro Marine helicopter, at that point as more **RMRU** members arrived we just stood by.

After waiting nearly a hour with no arrival of a helicopter, and the fact that the subject was not talking as much as earlier, we decided to do something because of the fear that hypothermia would become a factor. A person was needed to wade out with a rope belay from up stream and one from the side. Being a whitewater rafter I guess I fit the bill.

With the ropes secured, I started out. The first two-thirds was no problem as the cold and muddy water was only waist deep, and not moving swiftly. Upon reaching a large clump of reeds, I found the water on the other side to be much

deeper and quite swift. Making some what of a lunging motion, aided by the ropes I made it to the tree that the subject was hanging onto. After securing the subject into a sit harness and then hooking him up to me, I started to shout instructions across to the members on the bank, when just in time to make things difficult, the Marine helicopter arrived. For some reason they descended right over us making it impossible to communicate with the group. Everyone on the bank gave the wave off to the pilot, who finally saw them and complied. With the bird out of the way we started out. The fast current immediately pulled us down stream, but with the aid of the **RMRU** members on the bank, we were quickly pulled up to the shore.

And to make things short, the subject was transported to the local hospital to be checked out, I got into some dry clothes we were all commended for our quick and positive action (which was a nice thing to hear), and then headed home to get some sleep before training the following day.

• **RMRU**

SEARCH

Mission No. 8309M

9 March, Wed.
Palm Springs Tram,
San Jacinto Mountains

By Kevin Walker



After having just finished lunch with the Hemet Noontimers Lions Club, I was just starting to give the **RMRU** slide show to the large group of men that had turned out. I was explaining how, over the past few months we had been extremely busy with rescues out of the Palm Springs Tram, and how due to the heavy use of our radios two of the lithium powered ones had ran down. Just then the manager of the restaurant walked up and handed me a portable phone. At the other end was Walt Walker, with news of a possible person down an ice chute at the tram. After quickly explaining the situation to the Lions Club, I turned the program over to my grandfather, Roy Walker

and started to make my exit, when to my surprise the president of the club handed me a check for \$250 to purchase new batteries. A very big thank you and into the No. 1 van and off for P.S.

Once at the tram it was decided that a helicopter would be a great help in locating someone if they were indeed down the chute below the upper station. I say if because the only evidence was a set of snowshoe prints starting below the railing and then some slide marks for a short distance. Of course it would be better to be safe than sorry. While we waited for a bird, Walt had John Dew and Mark Hebert start up the tram to check the evidence for themselves. Shortly thereafter Brian Novak arrived in a Jet Ranger from Landells Aviation. Walt and Jim Fairchild loaded packs and then were off with Brian for the upper chutes.

It always seems an eternity to the troops in base, but was actually only 45 minutes, when the chopper returned. Air search revealed nothing. Brian was then released as he had another job to fly. Because nothing had been found, and Mark radioed down that there was indeed slide marks below the upper station, we decided to go up with technical gear and send a couple men down the chute to make sure that no one was there.

With 12 **RMRU** members on the upper viewing area, we each went about our various assignments preparing for a lower. At the end of **RMRU's** new PMI rescue rope was Bernie McIlvoy, and with everything checked out, we proceeded to lower Bernie down as an interested crowd of people watched from inside the warm station, eating their barbeque ribs. When the lowering was complete, Bernie had been lowered 1200 feet, which included a 70 foot overhanging face. Bernie then radioed up that he had found nothing, but stated to be doubly sure, to send Cameron Robbins down. After getting into his harness, Cameron rappelled the 1200 feet down to Bernie. Again nothing. So with **RMRU** satified and the sheriff also, it was decided to wrap things up. One problem could use the entire viewing deck, our raise went quickly and smoothly. With work and changed the system over to a mechanical advantage. Because of our new edge rollers and the fact that we could use the entire viewing deck, our raise went quickly and smoothly. With

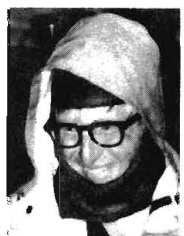
Bernie and Cameron back up we loaded gear and stuffed ropes for the return trip down the mountain. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8310M

**27-28 March, Sun.-Mon.
Devil's Slide Trail,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Jim Fairchild



Practicing climbing, rappelling, jumarring, and other cliffside skills on the high boulders of Mt. Rubidoux, with a friend and his teenage children, is a fine Sunday afternoon activity.

Then the pager activates. A frantic scramble ensues, with the result that the writer arrives home fifteen minutes later, our having disassembled riggings and anchors, coiled ropes, loped down the hill, only to get "busy" signals when attempting to call the stated number. Finally, I got Joe Erickson, and learned that a person was missing above Idyllwild. Enough information to drive to the fire station and transfer gear from pickup to the No. 2 van, drive to the Sheriff's office in Idyllwild.

Here was a scene of men readying for the hike into the heights deeply covered with snow, and the leaders planning the who, where, when, and how. I contributed a number of suggestions, then faced the packing process in a mound of scattered gear.

Earlier on Sunday four people ascended the trail from Humber Park, heading toward Skunk Cabbage Meadow (8000'el.) a short mile east of Saddle Junction (8100'el.) which is two-and-a-half miles hike up from Humber Park (6400'el.). They were, Greg Knickerbocker, 23, Chris Martin, 21, Kevin Knickerbocker, 13, Troy Wyatt, 14, all of Mission Viejo. About two-thirds of the way up to the saddle the stamped-down trail ended on a very steep, deeply drifted switchback below Powder Box Spring. Greg said he would continue, and climbed up and out of sight. When he did not return for some while, Chris told the boys to stay with their packs and his while he went in search for Greg. After waiting the hour, Chris asked them to, they descended to Humber, without packs, to report both men overdue. In due course, RMRU was called, its members notified by phone and pager, and we drove to Idyllwild.

The village center where the Sheriff's Office is has an elevation of exactly one mile, while Humber Park, our roadhead is 6400'el., as noted above. The village was mostly free of snow, while the park had depths up to a foot.

Back at base Kevin Walker and John Dew tussled with such considerations as gathering further information, trying to reach and call out more RMRU people, and checking with the boys to see if they could remember anything more. Mary Bowman worked the radio and log. Theirs was the hard part of the operation, we on the trail would have to carry heavy packs up a steep, snow/ice covered mountain, but that's fun, sort of, ever so much better than a sedentary or confining task. Then, there are the tremendous benefits of mountain rescue: moon-lit scenery of reflected light on glistening snow with conifers giving mute silhouettes, mighty Tahquitz Rock and the spires above showing alpine crag character. We are fortunate to be in mountain rescue, because it takes us to places during times we would not otherwise frequent. Anyway we did not see anyone else taking a midnight hike up there.

Mel Krug and the writer were a team, followed by Glenn Henderson, Bruce Gahagan, Mark Hebert and Joe Erickson, then the Hemet team of Pete Boss, Steve Vaughn, and Mike Kincaid. Later, Ed Hill would arrive and join us. We toddled along ever upwards, soon reaching Jolley Springs then Middle Springs (halfway to Saddle Junction), generally enjoying the slip slide, crunch-plunge sequence of hiking. This last, crunch-plunge, is when we took a step from a hard, slippery portion on the trail to one where half our weight broke through the crust and we "post-holed" from ankle deep to knee deep. Rather disconcerting to me, the heaviest (200 lbs. of unrefined chicken gristle, with

60 lbs. of gear thought to be needed).

Nearing the area the boys had described as where they left their packs, we gave another yell and were quickly answered by Chris who was bivouacked at the packs between two large boulder formations. He soon became a buddy by sharing his Snickers bar and cereal bars, and importantly, telling us of his attempt to find Greg. Seems he followed tracks up the trail a ways, then, when the trail ended, straight up the steep, icy slope. In the vicinity of Saddle Junction and south of it, he lost the tracks, but saw a woman who was cross-country skiing. She said she had seen Greg nicely camped 'in back of Tahquitz Peak' (8826'el.). That struck us as rather farfetched, because of the distance and difficulty with terrain, not to mention the timing, for she had seen him camped shortly after 2 p.m.

We left Chris at his bivouac and proceeded the ever deepening trail of snow and ice. At the switchback below Powder Box Springs, where snow often drifts upwards of twenty feet deep due to some peculiarity of wind currents, the trail ended, and the footprints went straight up.

By now the seachers behind us who had not returned to base for reasons of helping injured searchers or demands of employment, were Ed Hill, Pete Boss, Mark Hebert, and Glenn Henderson. They caught up to us and gave added strength and support.

Leading off up the alternately hard and soft steep snow was tiring, and we began to switch leads. Mel soon found a nice icy face of 45 degrees, and packed steps up it.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

DOWN THE DEVIL SLIDE — Subject Greg Knickerbocker is guided down the Devil Slide trail by RMRU members Mark Hebert, Mel Krug and Ed Hill after having been located a short distance out from the Saddle the night before.

The configuration of the rock ridges indicate we were just south of the switchbacks that lead up the old trail to the junction. Before long, after more steep pitches, the angle decreased and we encountered a single set of ski tracks. Another hundred yards and we really thought that Greg's camp could be not too far south of us. We gave a group yell, and there was Greg, about 200 yards away. He was ensconced in his tent on an open flat area between huge pines and firs that were loaded with tons of ice. Radio messages to base were gladly received as far as our finding Greg was concerned, but the request for helicopter flights to get us out of the backcountry proved futile (we knew that) and we prepared to stay the balance of the night. High-technology packs disgorged high-tech pads and sleeping bags, high-tech bivvy covers and high-tech stoves. Surrounded by warmth and comfort, we relaxed and had a hot supper. The gusty wind bombarded us with small chunks of ice from nearby trees, and at times tried to get under the shelters and roll us over, but we slept anyway.

The first hints of dawn were lost on us, but by about sun-up we stirred. A hot drink, some packing, and we hiked. The return to Humber Park might have been anticlimatic had not the scenery been superbly resplendent on the sun light with some small clouds scudding over. We belayed Greg down the icy slopes, then marched along the trail to the cars. The mission had been 'no big deal,' but certainly could have been. • RMRU

\$USTAINING MEMBERS

BY KEVIN WALKER

As you have probably read by now, RMRU has indeed had a busy winter. Along with it has come some new problems, requiring new equipment to overcome them. On some of the missions, descents of over 1500 feet were the norm. Luckily we were able were able to meet the distances with ropes purchased over the past few months. When one is over 1000 feet down an ice chute, it is very reassuring to know that the rope you are hanging from is new and in good condition. Ropes, because of their obvious uses, are retired more often than any other piece of equipment we own. As it is said, quite often, *if it were not for you—*

November

New—

- *William & Barbara Marsden Jr.
Dr. & Mrs. Richard Rose
Hemacinto Mobile Park

Friends of the San Jacinto Library

Renewing—

- *Circle City Hospital
Mr. & Mrs. C. B. McMillan
Cliff Lindquist
*Milton M. Levy

December

New—

- Mr. George E. Johnson
Mr. & Mrs. John Nix

Renewing—

- *Norm & Maggie Mellor
David & Rita Harrah
*Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Gillen
*Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Andrews
*Mrs. Frances L. Gray
Mr. & Mrs. Robinson
*Circle City Hospital
Robert & Edna Kowell
Hazel Berglund
*American Association of Retired
Persons - Chapter 237
*Circle City Auxiliary
*Dr. & Mrs. Zweig
*Bud Nelson
*David E. Crimi
*Theodore Young
*Avis M. Anderson
*George & Norma Ruptier
*Jane & John Wiefels

January

New—

- †Mr. & Mrs. Anson Brooks
*Smith, Barney, Harris, Upham & Co.
Foundation for the California State
College at San Bernardino
*Riverside Airport Boosters Club

Renewing—

- Jane & John Wiefels
Richard & Karin Greenwood
John & Betty Moore
*Circle City Hospital

February

New—

- *Charles & Ann Van Atta
Breakfast Exchange Club
of Hemet/San Jacinto

Renewing—

- *Idyllwild Property Owners Assoc.
Jane & John Wiefels
Herwil & Genie Bryant
Lloyd & Ann Allen
*Circle City Hospital
William Stewart

March

New—

- Town & Desert Apartments
*Mr. & Mrs. Robert Andersen

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Gebbia

Renewing—

- Dianne Coate
Mr. & Mrs. Francis Johnston
Fred C. James
*Circle City Hospital
*Mr. & Mrs. John Pohlers
David Westheimer
Helen F. Werner
Mr. & Mrs. Dooly
Jane & John Wiefels

*Century Club, donation of \$100 or more
†Summit Club, donation of \$500 or more

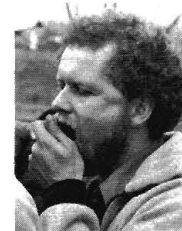


Technical Skills

5 Mar., Sat.

San Jacinto River,
San Jacinto Mountains

By Les Patt



To bad we could not have had training before the mission we had the night before on the lower San Jacinto River. But never the less we got through it. RMRU members met just a little south of the North

Fork bridge. First order of business was a mock accident involving one person over the side from the highway. Glenn Henderson was assigned to be Ops leader, and got things underway. As Mel Krug and Mark Hebert took charge of the technical rigging, Hal Fulkman then went down the 200 foot dirt slope to take care of first aid. Our patient, Susan Bowman had possible back injuries, and several fractures. To complicate things, we were told that heavy rain fall had occurred up stream and that the water level in the river would be rising shortly. As quickly as possible first aid was given, Susan was placed in the litter, and then raised up the slope. After critiquing the operation, we moved on.

This time Mark Hebert was put in charge. And to change the situation, the subject was above a dirt road about 100 feet with only minor injuries, but had to be helped out of her problem. Again, Susan filled the shoes of a person in need. Anchors were placed, and using the teams

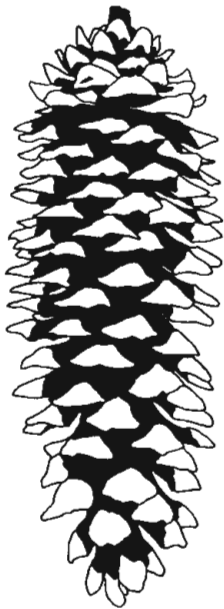
Trog-sitz harness Susan was carried down on Kevin Walkers back while on belay. The next important thing to do was to break for lunch.

We moved down the highway to the old San Jacinto River bridge and ate lunch in the warm sunshine. After a good siesta, we went to the final problem, river tyrolian crossings. With Ed Hill and Hal Fulkman on the other side, various members tried their hand at throwing a rope across the river. After several misses the rope reached Ed. After Hal secured it high in a large tree, and we set up an adjustable end on our side, members took turns getting hauled across, and then back. One problem though, after the training aspects had been covered, Rick 'Major Disaster' Pohlers started, (let's say) accidentally lowering people in to a state of wetness, needless to say yours truly got a sample of the cold water.

Even though it was only a one day training, a lot of very good practice and knowledge was gained. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTOS BY JIM FAIRCHILD



Notice!

The **RMRU Newsletter** is published 12 times per year by the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc. It is intended primarily to inform the Regular and Sustaining Members.

If you would like to receive the newsletter on a regular basis, and at the same time become a Sustaining member, send your tax deductible donation of \$25 or more to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit
Post Office Box 5444
Riverside, California 92517

MODES OF TRANSPORT — In both of the above photos, RMRU members are seen trying both litter transport and the use of the Trog-Sitz harness, in hilly brush covered terrain.