

Injured Man

August 22-23, 1976

Willow Creek Crossing, San Jacinto Mts

1976-039

Jim Fairchild

The sunset colors on Mt. San Jacinto's west side are often exquisite hues of yellow, amber, bronze, even purple. They soon deepen then fade to grays. Such was the scene as I drove the van to Humber Park (6300 feet el.) above Idyllwild. We had been called to evacuate a young man with a "rupture", suffering through the wait at Willow Creek Crossing (E1. 7600', about an airline mile northeast of Skunk Cabbage Meadow). The call had come at 1800 and Walt and Kevin Walker, Bernie McIlvoy, Ron Barry, John Muratet and I were hiking up the trail with the wheeled litter by 2000. The Sheriff Deputy had asked how long we would take to arrive at the victim (name unknown then), I estimated 105 minutes -- we were there in 103 minutes (must have had a tailwind). On the way we heard by radio that Steve Zappe, Larry Brown, and Tom Aldrich were steaming along behind us. At Saddle Junction (8100' el.) we assigned Steve and Larry to be radio relay. Later Rich Quackenbush and Larry Roland arrived at base and manned the radios at the van.

Barney Zimmerman, age 18, was, as mentioned before. suffering. He had a real hurt internally that went from lower right quadrant of abdomen up through his "innards" to center of the chest. Palpation elicited quick responses. He vomited a couple of times. Pulse was variable. These and other signs and symptoms indicated possible hernia, appendicitis, or kidney stone. Our super communication assisters, the ham radio group from Riverside, were put to work setting up a radio-telephone patch to Dr. Norman Mellor in Corona. With Norm on the phone we relayed signs and symptoms and possible diagnoses. Here's how it went: we radioed relay; relay called base; base talked to ham operator who called another ham in Riverside; this last ham talked to the doctor. Then Norm started the process in reverse. It all went quite well, every word correct. Jim Varner and Bob Arndt were the ham operators.

Aside from his hurt, Barney was active and alert, so we loaded him onto our marvelous litter with the big wheel and marched out with him. Well, it wasn't really that easy. Barney writhed a lot and changed the center of gravity and balance with drastic changes in loading with drastic consequences to varying members of the litter-hauling crew. By the time we reached Saddle Junction my recently sprained back was screaming, so I became the belayer for the trip down-trail to Humber Park. Earlier, Bernie had put his own callout pack into Barney's big Kelty BBS pack and carried them back to Humber. Barney had just started a fourday jaunt into the high country,

his pain began at 1000 that morning. He yelled and used his whistle until passers-by came along. I understood the Sheriff Office was notified by State Park Rangers.

Down at Humber the Idyllwild Fire Department ambulance drove up one minute after we arrived, and Barney was soon on his way to Hemet Hospital.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions. Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by [donations](#) from people like you.