

Injured Hiker

September 19, 1977
Upper Tahquitz Canyon
1977-025

by John Doe

Just at 5 o'clock, the phone rang and the message from Hal Fulkman was, "John, we've got a rescue at Caramba and Walt will pick us up at your house very shortly. When Walt arrived, complete with the new van Riverside Two, to pick up Hal and me, we learned that our total knowledge was: there's a man, 29 years old, with a broken leg at Caramba Camp.

Upon arriving in Idyllwild and contacting the sheriff, we were informed the injured subject, Darrell Diesel, was not at Caramba which is approximately eight miles from Idyllwild, but rather down into the upper parts of Tahquitz Canyon.

Walt informed us a helicopter had been called and would be in Idyllwild as quickly as possible. The three of us arrived at Marantha (a camp area in Idyllwild large enough for a helicopter to land) and within a minute or a minute and a half, the helicopter was heard in the distance. The chopper landed, we discussed the situation with pilot Don Landells, boarded immediately with our packs and were off toward Caramba.

Our search of the canyon was quickly rewarded as we saw a man waving a blanket to attract our attention about a quarter mile down this rugged canyon from Caramba Camp. We then started looking for a spot level enough and clear enough in this heavily wooded area where we could get out of the helicopter as close to the injured subject as possible. Once again Don found a new helispot and we climbed out.

We quickly hiked down to him and discovered that he had a compound fracture of the left tibia. The man who had been waving the blanket to attract our attention and his girlfriend had remained with Darrell while another girl who was in the party had gone for help. The leg had been injured at approximately noon, but by the time the person going for help had climbed up out of the canyon, hiked approximately four miles across the top of the mountain and was starting down the trail towards Idyllwild when she met a forest ranger, approximately four and a half hours had passed. The forest ranger had a radio and upon learning of the situation, radioed out for help and our team was activated immediately.

The three team members who flew in first performed first aid on the subject, prepared some warm liquids for the injured person in order to warm him up as his

long, unattended injury had put him in some degree of shock. Other team members were beginning to arrive and were flown in with the extra gear that would be needed for evacuating this man. They hiked with the necessary equipment down canyon to be of any assistance they could. The injured person was loaded into the litter and the long, hard, tedious task of hand carrying the litter up the creek, over the boulders, through the brush was begun. After about a quarter mile of this, the litter arrived at the spot where the large wheel which is often used, could be attached. With a rope and pulley system attached to the front and men pulling on it, three team members on each side of the litter pulling on it and two men out in front in the darkness scouting the best route the next half mile of steep terrain was covered and we had arrived at the largest fairly level clearing in the area. The plan was to call the helicopter back in that night, evacuate the injured subject and then lift the team members off the mountain as they all had to go to work the next day.

The time was 2330 (11:30 p.m.) when the helicopter cautiously lowered into the clearing with just feet to spare on each side of the rotor blades between the 150 foot trees in the area. The night was total blackness. The helicopter had his light and the team members formed a circle with their flashlights indicating the outer part of safety for the pilot. Yet, as he has done so many times, our pilot, Don Landells, made a remarkably accurate approach. The injured subject was loaded on the outside runners, tucked snugly into the sleeping bags to keep him from the extreme cold of flight conditions. Walt Walker and John Dew were the attendants going out with the subject to the hospital.

The other team members were to be picked up after this initial flight and because of this plan had been told to come light, which means no sleeping bags which are extra weight. The strange twist in this rescue came soon after the helicopter lifted off with the injured subject and the two team members aboard when the pilot said, "Hey, guys, with no moon and total darkness, it's too risky to go back in there tonight. We have gotten the emergency over - do you think we could lift the other fellows out in the morning?" Realizing the seriousness of the situation and trusting Don Landells' judgement implicitly, we had no choice but to agree with him.

We learned the next day that four of the team members, Hal Fulkman, Bernie McIlvoy, Ed Hill and John Muratet hiked out because of the necessity to go to work the next day. The others, Jim Fairchild, Steve Jensen, Larry Roland and his brother, David, chose to remain with the injured man's gear and were flown out the next morning.

Thus ended another successful evacuation of an injured person and RMRU again had the opportunity of demonstrating the professionalism and ability to be of service to those in need in the back country!

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.