

## Young climbers stranded on rock

**November 11, 1977**  
**Tahquitz Rock**  
**1977-031**

By Ed Hill

Friday, November 11th, was Veteran's Day and a holiday for many high schools. Two parties of kids decided to attempt the White Maiden's Walkaway, an easy climb on the North side of Tahquitz Rock behind Idyllwild. Both parties started in the morning. At dusk, one party had made it to the ledge at the start of the last pitch: the other party was strung out in the gully leading up to the ledge where the first group was.

When darkness fell, it became cold; both parties yelled for help. Their cries were reported to the sheriff, and RMRU was called.

When I arrived at Humber Park, I found one group had already started up toward Lunch Rock to locate the climbers. Several other climbers had volunteered to carry some of our equipment. Rick Pohlers, two volunteers, and I were to carry some of the technical equipment while Pete Carlson, John Muratet and two other volunteers would carry the litter and the rest of the gear.

As we climbed up to Lunch Rock, we could hear one of the climbers yelling. We heard Walt Walker yell up to him to be quiet and that we were coming. The next thing that we heard was a radio message to sneak by the climbers on our way to the top of the rock to keep him from yelling again.

We slipped around to the top of the White Maiden and set up our anchors in the usual spots. Jim Fairchild, John Muratet and Steve Zappe decided that Bernie McIlvoy would be lowered on one rope to the lower party, while I would be lowered on another rope to the upper party. We would carry down jackets, food and water along with our climbing gear.

Bernie was lowered down the gully and found a fourteen and a fifteen year old standing on small ledges a rope length apart. He tied the lowest man into his rope, and asked the men on top to keep the rope taut while they climbed up to the ledge where the other three were.

Meanwhile I was lowered down to the upper three climbers. I found three seventeen year old kids shivering on the ledge. They were wearing light

windbreakers. I got them into warm jackets and started to feed them. They were really hungry, and my dates and candy bars disappeared quickly. We rearranged ourselves on the ledge to leave room for the other party. Bernie left the man that he had brought up on the ledge and went back for the other man. Once he had reached our ledge, we started hauling them to the top of the rock. Each climber climbed as much as he could to make it easier for the men hauling on top. We set up a production line making each climber trail his climbing rope behind him to raise the next man on. In the end Bernie and I jumared up the ropes that we had been lowered on.

It was near dawn when we all got back to our van. While we were putting our gear back, our subjects quickly said 'Thank you' and disappeared before we or the sheriff could get their names and addresses. Five climbers in two parties were the most that we have had to rescue in one mission on the rock.

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.