

Dog stranded by exhaustion

April 10, 1978
North Mountain
1978-016

By Kevin Walker

Monday April 10th, started off like any other Monday, HECTIC... but little did I know it would be a day to long to remember.

At noon while eating lunch at home, fellow former Explorer (from Scouting), Greg Bronson stopped by and had a concerned look on his face. He told me that his dog "Frank" was all tuckered out from hiking in the foothills Northeast of San Jacinto, and couldn't even move a paw. Greg asked if he could borrow a rope of ours to aid in getting Frank out of the spot he was in. Being a dog lover myself I said yes. I inquired if Greg would be needing any help. He said no, and that he could probably get some friends together. I wished him well, and went on about my daily routine. At about 1500 hours Greg called back saying that he couldn't get any help other than his girlfriend and one other friend. My dad (Walt - former Explorer Post leader) and I decided that we would break away from work and help Greg out. I managed to get another former Explorer, Brian Hixson to lend a hand too.

We all met at the Gilman Bridge at 1600 hours. Enroute up the extremely steep hillside, Greg told us the long story of how Frank got stuck. To make the long story short, Greg and his brother were hiking with Frank on Sunday. On their way out in the late afternoon, Frank became extremely tired and just stopped in his tracks. Greg, doing the smart thing for his brother and himself, left Frank and got off the mountain before total darkness could overtake them. Returning the next morning (Monday) they found Frank had descended down into the canyon and was stuck above a 50' water fall. Well, Frank being the smart dog that he is, knew better than to go back up hill... so there he was, and there to stay. Upon reaching the point where we would have to haul Frank up to, we set up an anchor and I preceded on down the steep and loose hillside to the canyon floor where Frank lay. I was greeted by Greg's brother who had stayed with Frank all day long. What a sight, Frank wouldn't even move his head to see who I was. Evening was coming rather quickly, so I placed a harness we had from tracking days on Frank, and then the rope. With Greg now in the bottom and all secure, we yelled back up the 300 feet of rope that was stretched down to us that we were ready. Well, after about two pulls on the rope from above, Frank just went limp, and literally slipped out of the dog harness. It was now time to call the professionals... for the second time in the teams history, RMRU would be asked to

help a WOOFER.

Being prepared for just such an emergency, Walt had brought in his two watt RMRU radio. With my mother monitoring the teams five watt at home, Walt radioed down asking her to activate RMRU. Since this was not a true emergency, the pagers were not activated, and members were only asked to help if they were not doing anything else important. Our biggest concern was to get the wheeled litter and technical gear in to make the operation as easy as possible.

As darkness began to set in, my dad hiked back down to the road and then drove to a telephone. He called Gary Fritzinger, of the Hemet Valley Search and Rescue Team, and requested additional manpower from them. Arriving from RMRU was Jim Fairchild with the rescue van, John Dew and son Richard, Hal Fulkman, Bernie McIlvoy with son Eugene, and Walt and I included. Those able to come from Hemet were Mike Kincaid, Mike Giovani, Bob Elliot, Bill Woodie, John Foster and Steve Vaughn.

It was well after dark when the teams reached us on the ridge. Once there, all work was completed in an orderly fashion, with anchors being placed as if we had an injured hiker, instead of a dog. After all was in readiness, final checks were made and working assignments were given. Those going over the side would be Greg to make sure that Frank would be as comfortable as possible, Bill Woodie, Jim, Bernie and myself.

With the go ahead from Ops. Leader Walt, we began the slow descent to the canyon floor. Since there was a light cloud cover and no moon, it was safer to be lowered down hanging on to the wheeled litter. Upon reaching the bottom Greg gave good 'ol Frank' a pep talk, and told him that he was in good hands. Frank's only reply was a large "sigh." Frank was very cooperative while we loaded him into the litter. After Bernie completed tying Frank in, we radioed back up that we were ready for the trip up.

We decided that it would be best for only two people to go back up with the litter. Everyone but Bernie and I went back up a hand line that was secured earlier. The trip up went quite smoothly, and Frank seemed to actually enjoy his free ride.

Once at the top, gear was placed back into the packs and all ropes were coiled and thrown over shoulders. After a final check for gear and people, we made our way back down the steep hillside. Once back at base, Greg promised that he would only take Frank on walks in the river bed from now on.

Even though it may seem a little odd to you that RMRU would go out into the hills for a dog, it did two things. We helped a friend in need, and this mission served as a great training session for the two teams. Thanks Frank, for a most unusual evening.

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.