

Climber fell and fractured ankle

April 11, 1979
Base of Tahquitz Rock
1979-010

By Kevin Walker

Wouldn't you know it, every time you get a vacation, and during that vacation you are trying to paint your house there is a rescue call. Well, I suppose that it does not happen every time, but that it just feels that way at the moment. It was a little after 11:00 a.m. when the call came with news of an injured climber at the base of Tahquitz Rock. While my dad was making calls to his people on the call list, I went ahead and loaded the gear and the teams rescue toboggan into the back of my truck. With that done, we made one more stop and picked up fellow team member Brian Hixson, and left the valley for Idyllwild.

Upon reaching Humber Park, we were met by the informant, and a Deputy from the Sheriff's Department. We were told by the informant that he and his climbing partner were almost to the base of the rock when the accident occurred. He also told us that his partner thought he had broken his ankle and was in pain and had started to become shocky when he left him for help.

Sol with first aid gear, stove, and packages of soup and all the other miscellaneous equipment, we headed for the rock. Since the snow was hard, we made very good time in reaching the injured man. As we neared the man, he made the comment, "Well guys, I guess Ill never be accepted at this rate." just then it hit me, Chris?? Sure enough it was Chris Noon, a RMRU applicants Do surprises never cease to end.

While I made an examination of Chris' injuries, Brian started on a platform to place the toboggan on, and Walt started the stove to cook some hot soup to help warm up Chris. After getting Chris covered up and warm, we placed a full leg air splint on his right leg, because after examining him everything pointed to a fracture of the right ankle. As Chris finished his third cup of soup, he told us that he and his partner were approaching the base of the rock, and were preparing to do an ice climb up the Larks (a climbing route) when Chris punched through the snow and lost his balance. And in doing so lost grip of his ice axe; needless to say with the hard snow, he took off like a bullet. Even though it may not seem that lucky, he was fortunate to have hit the pine tree that he did, because if he would not have struck it he would have went another 200 feet and into some very large rocks at the bottom. Off hand I'd say the tree was the best bet.

Just as Chris was finishing his soup, the rest of the team arrived with technical gear and the toboggan to make the multiple lowers down the snow covered slope. After placing Chris in the toboggan it was just a matter of making the lowers back to Humber Park.



Jim Fairchild

TOBOGGAN RIDE - The sun was shining, it was early afternoon, the injured man Chris Noon was in good spirits, the belaying progressed smoothly and the teamwork was the order of the day.

Even though everything went well in bringing Chris down, and then transporting him to the Hemet Hospital, the X-ray report wasn't so neat. His ankle was indeed fractured, so severely that he had to be admitted and be scheduled for surgery to have two pins put in his ankle. Hey, Chris, get well soon so we can have you join the gang in orange shirts.

A message from the rescuee...

It started out as a routine climb on Tahquitz. Two climbers made their way to the rock along the North face, and upon approaching the Larks, traversed to the left. The intent was upon a sloping dihedral. We never made it that far; on the traverse there was an accident.

It's not important to know who, what happened, or why, but rather a mountaineer of good physical condition, and understanding of the area was injured.

The climbers had brought light provision. Nothing needed for that particular incident. No bag, or parka, nor a stove for warming soup.

The injured climber with only a light wool coat, a rope, four carabiners, and a stocking hat waited for three hours, knowing that help would come.

However, what happens to the person who doesn't know help is on the way? I'm sure that the injured person will deteriorate quickly if all hope is lost. I must now question the duration of time before this happens. Experienced, weather and severity of injury all have an important influence on the individual.

Those readers who are not members must be asking the point of this article. In short it was an evaluation of RMRU's response and procedure from an experienced observer, who was injured.

I, Chris Noon, was that climber. I experienced the ordeal first hand, and objectively viewed RMRU with a critical eye of both a prospective RMRU member and an injured person.

I'd like to say that I found no fault what so ever on the behalf of RMRU. The lapse time between notification and arrival at the accident scene was, in fact surprisingly quick. Examination and evaluation of injury was complete, and correct. Handling and rigging was smooth and professional.

Now I would like not only to thank those who brought me down from the rock, but also request that this article be placed in the RMRU Newsletter. Again, thank YOU.

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.