



Man with cast re-injured leg

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Mt. San Jacinto
1979-012

By Walt Walker

Mid-morning, while at work, I received a telephone call from Capt. Ray Canova from the Banning office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. He told me that he had received a report that a young man, with his leg in a cast, had re-injured the leg. He was reported to be in the hut near the top of 10,831 foot Mt. San Jacinto.

We discussed a plan of action and Ray suggested that Don Landells pick up my son Kevin and I at the Hemet Airport, then fly to the summit and pick up the subject and fly him back to Hemet. It sounded like a good plan, so we started the wheels turning.

First, I telephoned our coordinator Jerry Muratet, and asked him to put the rest of the team on standby. Then RMRU members, who live in the Hemet - San Jacinto Valley, John Dew and Brian Hixson were called and asked to meet at the airport.

Just as Kevin and I arrived at the airport, so did Don Landells (in his Jet Ranger helicopter), followed by John and Brian. Some quick instructions were given to John and Brian, Kevin and I climbed into the bird and we started for the mountain. The Hemet Search and Rescue Team was contacted and asked to be on standby and also to send a couple of members to be at the hospital to assist when the bird returned.

It was a beautiful clear, almost windless day, and it seemed to me that I would be back to work very quickly. However, it did not work out quite that fast.

The tremendous winter snow pack was very much still in evidence. As we flew over the summit hut, only the chimney and the west end of the roof were visible. With all the deep snow, about 10 feet, most of the boulders and small trees were covered and Don was able to land about fifty feet from the hut.

Kevin and I climbed out and hurried over to the hut. Standing in front of the door I yelled down into the partially opened door. There was no answer, so I slid down the snow and stepped into the hut. No one was inside and I quickly scanned the register. No mention of the party we were looking for. So Kevin and I returned to the bird.

We lifted off and started searching from the air. There were numerous sets of tracks leading towards Round Valley. We spotted two hikers ascending the slope and they

pointed downhill. Continuing down, we quickly spotted two men pulling a third down the slope. Don circled around looking for a place to land. There was nowhere to land on the slope and Don found an opening about 300 feet from the bottom of the slope. He put the bird down and Kevin and I hiked towards the slope.

We met the trio just as they reached the level area and helped them pull the injured man over to the waiting helicopter. (They had made a sled out of a poncho and a pair of snow shoes. Pulling it down the steep slope had been easy, but it had become increasingly tougher as the terrain leveled out.)

We loaded the injured man into the bird, climbed in ourselves, and Don applied the power to the bird and we lifted off. It was a quick flight back to Hemet and we landed in the street near the hospital. We were met by John and Brian of our team, Bob Elliot and Steve Vaughn of the Hemet team and a deputy from the Hemet station. We helped the subject into the patrol car, briefly discussed the mission and headed back to work.

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.