



Hiker fell 50 feet

January 16, 1980
Mt. San Jacinto
1980-002

By Walt Walker

It was early evening when RMRU received a call from the Banning office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that there was an injured young man on the North Face.

Team members responded to the Banning station and were advised that a member of a three man climbing party was being brought down from Idyllwild, via patrol car, by a deputy sheriff.

Upon questioning the informant we learned that the day prior, one of the three Climbers, while ascending some rock on the North Face, had fallen about 50 feet and complained of chest injuries and pain when breathing. The informant continued upward (which was a mistake) going over the Fuller Ridge (slept out over night), descended down into Pinewood, walked out the Black Mountain road and finally hitchhiked into Idyllwild.

We were just about ready to start towards the Snow Creek roadhead when we were advised that Capt. Canova and Sgt. Weakly, enroute from Palm Desert to Banning, had spotted an orange glow part way up the North Face. Everyone drove out to the Snow Creek turnoff. We used binoculars to determine that the campfire was at about the 6500 - 7000 foot level.

Veteran members discussed options available and it was decided that since daybreak would occur before a ground team could hike up, we would wait for first light and use a helicopter. Don Landells was contacted and he agreed to be at the Snow Creek helispot at 0600.

At 0530 team members got up and quickly readied themselves for the mission. It was decided that Bernie McIlvoy and Walt Walker would go with Don Landells as aerial searchers. (They were also veteran members with experience as climbers and first aiders.) Don arrived promptly and the trio were on their way up the mountain.

Upon reaching the 6000 foot level, a contour search was started and continued up to the summit with negative results. The pattern was reversed back down the

mountain with the same results. It was decided to put the informant aboard the chopper and have him direct the flight the same route up as the climbers had gone. Just a few minutes into the second trip, two hikers were spotted descending a ridge at about the 3000 foot level.

Don flew over to them and found a spot where Bernie and Walt could jump as he hovered. They jumped and went over to the pair who indeed were the subjects of the search. The two young climbers were guided to the helispot and Don returned and hovered his jet Ranger while Bernie and Walt helped the pair aboard for the flight back to base.

Don returned and picked up Bernie and Walt and they all returned to base. After talking to the two climbers, it was learned that after resting overnight the injured young man had felt better and the pair had decided to start hiking down.

The team gear and radios were stored back into the big orange van and a hungry but happy group of RMRU members headed for a breakfast they had missed earlier that morning.

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.