

## Flood watch

**March 05, 1980**  
**Lake Hemet**  
**1980-010**

By Brian Hixson

At approximately 12:30 Wednesday afternoon I received a call from veteran team member Walt Walker, asking if I could help in watching the Lake Hemet Spillway. Saying yes, I started getting my gear together. I could not help but wonder why we were needed to help watch the dam when all the newspapers had said that all was stable at the dam. Nevertheless I drove to Walt Walker's house and transferred gear into the teams rescue van, which was being kept in the San Jacinto area. After meeting Hal Fulkman to pick up a special light that he had put together so that the spillway could be watched at night, Walt, Kevin and I headed for Lake Hemet. Once there we were briefed on the situation. The Lake Hemet Municipal Water District provided us with a motor boat so that we could transfer all the gear and ourselves to the other end of the lake. It was an eerie sound that we heard as we approached the lower end of the lake. It was the sound of rushing water flowing over the main dam. Even though the rains had slackened off, there was still a good eighteen inches of water going over the dam. We finally reached our destination, the spillway. The three of us then carried the equipment up onto a little knoll that looked down to the spillway. After the team's Bishop tent was set up and the newly acquired compact generator (actually meant for base camp operations) and the light was put in position, we went down to the base of the spillway. At first all seemed to be in order, but as we reached the base, we found a chunk of bedrock the size of two greyhound busses missing. Now I realized why the concern. With a storm expected to be in that evening, I could see why we were asked to watch the spillway, the reason being, if the water level were to rise again, and water were to start flowing over the top of the spillway, erosion of the spillway would occur.

To make the story short, Walt, Kevin and I monitored the spillway until eight in the evening. At that time fellow team members Bernie McIlvoy and John Muratet relieved us and they then kept an eye on the spillway during the night.

Footnote: Thursday morning the water district personnel took over the watch at 6:00 A. M. Luckily there was no heavy rain during the night and the water level did not rise to be a critical factor.

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.