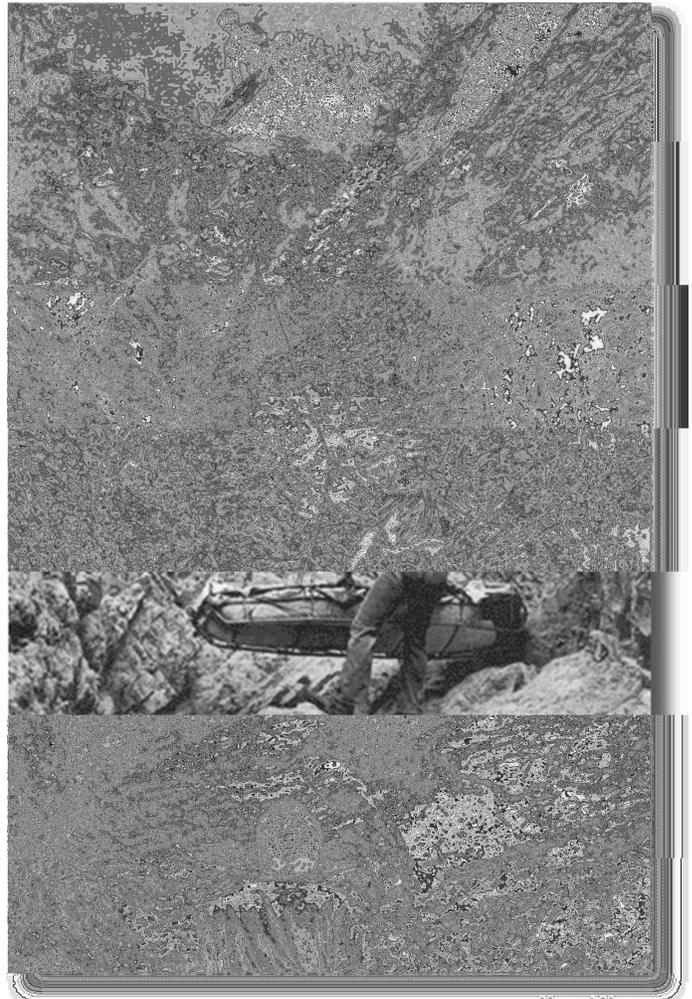


## Man with hypothermia

**October 15, 1980**  
**Foothills, North of San Jacinto**  
**1980-046**

By Kevin Walker

It was a cold and somewhat cloudy day when Walt Walker received a call from the Hemet Sheriff's office. Walt was told that a nature photographer had been reported overdue, and that the vehicle had been located on Soboba Road, north of the City of San Jacinto. A deputy rolled out to where the vehicle was found and followed a set of foot prints up a small canyon. The deputy located Norman Berman at the top of a 50 foot dry waterfall about a half mile up the Canyon. Norm had spent two nights with no warm clothing at that location. Needless to say he was in hypothermia. The deputy radioed back out and asked for rescue personnel. At that point the Hemet team was notified and then Walt was called. Walt went home for his gear, while I grabbed mine and then picked up the No. 1 van. Within twenty minutes we were at the base camp below North Mountain. There we met Capt. Bill Park and several deputies from the Hemet S.O. and Gary Fritzingler from the Hemet team, who was handling radio communications from the rescue operation. Gary told us that a paramedic and two of his team members had already hiked in to start giving aid to Norm. While we were deciding what gear to carry in, the paramedic radioed out that it would have to be a litter evacuation, and that a technical lower would have to be made over the waterfall. With that I radioed Riverside and had Al Andrews notified to activate RMRU.



Hemet News

**TECHNICAL LOWER** - RMRU member Kevin Walker guides the litter containing hypothermia patient Norman Berman down the narrow 50 foot dry water fall, to Rick Pohlers at the base. At the top, Jim Garvey handles the lower line, while Walt Walker relays commands.

With that I radioed Riverside and had Al Andrews notified to activate RMRU.

Shortly thereafter Walt and I and Dave Fisk from the Hemet team were on our way in. It was a quick walk up the gentle canyon to the base of the water fall. But gentle was not the word for the 50 foot, near-vertical waterfall equipped with loose rock. After assessing the fall itself, we left the sandy creek bed and started up the steep side of the canyon. After making our way up the side, we traversed over and back down to where the other rescuers were. Norm was looking a lot better now. An I.V. had been started, warm clothing had been put on him, and he was finishing his second cup of hot soup. With the paramedic seeing after Norm, we started setting up for a lower over the waterfall. As we were finishing setting up the lower line and the belay line, RMRU members could be seen approaching from down canyon. I volunteered to be the litter attendant, Walt would be the safety officer. Jim Garvey and Pete Carlson were sent up to handle the lower and belay. Once Norm was secured into the Stokes litter, we carried him over to the edge, and then slowly worked our way over the side to where I could lean out and pull the litter away from the wall. The tough part was getting started; once we were out on the waterfall itself, the lower went extremely smoothly. Once we had Norm down fellow RMRU members Chris Smith and Rick Pohlers lent a hand in carrying Norm away from the base of the falls.

While we secured the "wheel" to the litter, the rest of the troopies brought down the technical gear. After that it was a smooth wheel out to the road, and the waiting ambulance.

Later that evening, Walt and I visited Norm in the Hospital. He was resting comfortably, and was going to be released with doctor's instructions to get a warm meal, a hot bath, and a good nights rest.

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.