

14-year-old boy stranded

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Foothills above Whitewater Canyon
1981-002

By Walt Walker

It was early Saturday evening when we received word that a 14 year old boy was stranded in the foothills west of Whitewater Canyon. When we arrived at the roadhead we learned that Brian Reinert and a friend were hiking downhill when Brian slipped and fell. He was not injured, but he was stranded in a very dangerous spot.

We drove up a dirt road for about four miles, where we were met by the informant David Wilshire. Having had experience in this area in the past, we knew there would be no natural anchors (large rocks or trees). So out came the snow pickets along with our normal pile of rope and hardware.

It was only a five minute hike downhill to where we could look down on Brian, who was astride a narrow dirt ridge, with long drops off on both sides. While team members began working at the task of trying to set up anchors in the rock ground, Bernie McIlvoy got the nod to descend to the stranded boy. Bernie tied into one rope and snapped a second rope onto his harness for Brian.



CRUCIAL S.E.A. - RMRU member Randy Iwasluk makes a final check on a crucial Self Equalizing Anchor. Because there were no trees or rocks stable enough to make anchors, snow pickets had to be driven into the ground. A team member was assigned to each picket to watch for unusual pull or strain.

There were hundreds of rocks sticking out of the 70-80° slope. The potential danger, due to rock falls was extreme. Bernie started his rappel and slowly tested some of the

large rocks. When Bernie had descended the 50 feet to Brian, he quickly secured the rope around him.

Other team members had set up a hauling system while Bernie had descended. They were now ready to haul Brian up while Bernie would Jumar up his rope. Brian was about 10 feet up from his perch when a rock broke loose and landed right in front of Bernie. The rock was about the size of a basketball. Had it struck Bernie? I don't even like to think of the possibilities. The hauling continued and Brian was shortly at the top.

The pickets that we had been watching so closely, proved to be very secure. We could not get them out. This was one time when we were not saddened to leave some equipment behind. It was worth it, another life had been saved!

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.