

Search for lost hunter

October 15, 1983
Toro Peak, Santa Rosa Mtns
1983-032

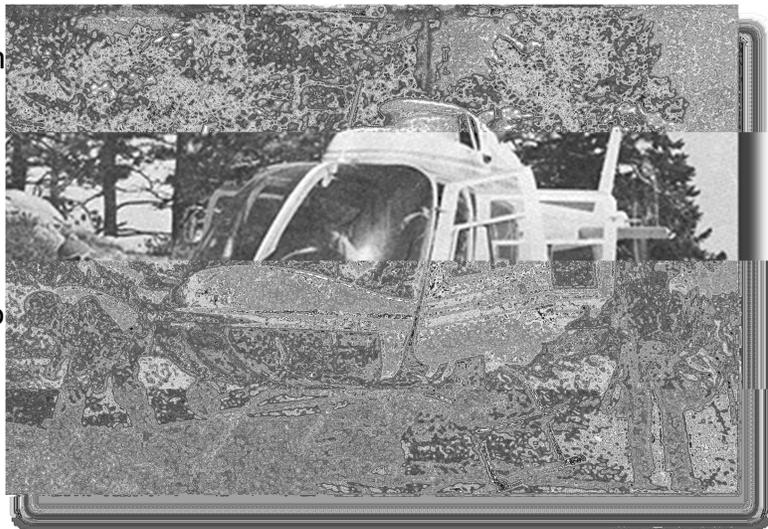
By Bruce Gahagan

Something told me early in the evening that the stroke of good luck I had just received would end up being a mere hallucination. The luck I am talking about was seats to the Rams game; third row seats on the forty-five yard line. Then as luck usually has it the phone rang and my greatest fears were vocalized by Kevin Walker informing me we had a call out for a lost hunter.

All members responded to the Piñon Flats Fire Station and were told that the search would be for a deer hunter that had become separated from his friends during the days hunt in the Toro Peak area. Members waited at the fire station while one of the hunters' partners returned to show RMRU members the exact area of their last known contact. When the primary facts were obtained, members loaded up in four-wheel drive vehicles to get to the search area. Upon arriving at the scene teams were sent out in coordinated directions to find any signs.

The field teams consisted of Joe Erickson, Cameron Robbins, Bruce Gahagan, Glenn Henderson, Jim Fairchild ... ? and John Dew acting as radio relay. Since dawn was growing near and the only sign found was possible tracks heading down a canyon by Joe and Cam, all teams bedded down for a brief rest before dawn.

At the hint of first light members were up and searching. About an hour into the search Bruce and Glenn heard a sound after another team yelled trying to obtain voice contact with the subject. After climbing to a high point on a ridge, Bruce and Glenn spotted the subject at the base of the



Jim Fairchild

SAFELY RETURNED - RMRU member John Dew (left) guides Thomas Garcia away from the helicopter after he had been located and then flown back to his companions near Toro Peak.

canyon against some rocks. We reported the position and started down. The subject was at the base of the canyon which Joe and Cam were tracking down. Both teams heading down the canyons ran into the same problems bushwhacking through heavy manzanita. First to the subject was Cam; who yelled across to us that the subject was exhausted, but all right. This was radioed to the base and the field teams converged with Cam and the subject.

It was determined that because of the subjects condition and the difficulty of the bushwhack back up the mountain that a helicopter be requested. Due to the diplomacy of Walt Walker and the base team and the sheriffs department understanding of the subjects status and field condition, a helicopter was authorized from Landells Aviation and all were flown out safely.

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.