



Two men overdue on North Face

May 13, 1984

North Face, Mt. San Jacinto

1984-007

By Walt Walker

It was Sunday at one in the afternoon when RMRU received a call from the Banning station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that two young men, ages 23 and 25, were overdue from a planned one day climb of the North Face. So much for a planned family event.

Members began arriving at our usual helispot near the Snow Creek community at the base of Mt. San Jacinto. We quickly made assignments, packed gear and were ready when Don Landells arrived at 2:30 p.m. in one of his Bell Jet Ranger helicopters. In only about 30 minutes we had three field teams airlifted onto the North Face.

The missing pair had planned on a one day ascent of the face. It has been done by groups that knew the route and traveled light. This group was traveling light but did not know the route. We were fairly sure that they were either off route, stranded or injured. Considering the vastness of the North Face the problem facing us was immense.

One of the field teams found tracks in the Falls Creek drainage and this drainage is some distance from the route that was described to us by friends of the missing men. Shortly after 5:00 p.m. we received word from the State Park Rangers at Long Valley that one of the missing men had walked out. He said that he had left his partner on a ridge and that he was exhausted and dehydrated. From the description that was relayed to us we searched the area from Cornell Peak to the Palm Springs Tram by air with no success.

It was then decided that we fly to Long Valley and pick up the hiker who had walked out. The Rangers had the man waiting for us when we landed. We quickly put him into the front seat of the bird and took off for the North Face. He had a considerable amount of trouble figuring out the route that the two had gone up. (This is normal and we expect it.)

Finally we spotted a man waving from the ridge top. There was no spot near the man where the bird could set down. About 200 feet above the man, Don located a series of boulders and hovered over them while a RMRU member helitacked out.

We descended to the man and led him up to the boulders and signaled the bird to return. Once again the bird came into the tight spot and picked up the missing man and the RMRU member. They were flown to base. The helicopter picked up the field teams in repeated trips and at 6:30 p.m. the mission was completed.

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.