

Climber fell, injured foot

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Tahquitz Rock
1984-022

By Glenn Henderson

Vacation - what a lovely word. But after two weeks of being away from home with my family plus my sister and her family, we were ready to go home. Since we were in Montana we decided to leave a day early so as to have an extra day to rest up from the long drive and to separate all our camping gear. We drove down to Cedar City, Utah, spent the night and left at 9:00 AM Friday morning. We finally got home at 6:00 PM Friday evening. Ah home sweet home. What a grand sight after all day on the road with four adults plus four kids stuffed in the back of my sister's suburban truck.



EDGE MAN - RMRU member Rob Gardner makes sure that the ropes stay in the edge rollers as the hauling crews raise the litter.

It's 7:30 now, we are all beginning to unwind and in the middle of a taco dinner when the phone rang. You guessed it; John Dew calling with a mission on Tahquitz Rock - a climber had fallen and had a broken foot - could I go?? My first reaction was no, I'm just too beat, but instead I said yes, I'll be on the road in 10 minutes. I asked my brother-in-law if he wanted to go along and watch? Larry realizing his escape from two women and four very busy kids, said "sure." (Big mistake, Larry.)

We got to the trail head at Humber Park and met up with John Dew, who ran base camp, Joe Erickson, Dave Ezell, Rob Gardner, Bud White and Mel Krug. You must be kidding? Is this all? Yup, John answered. Everyone else was on "vacation" or out of town. Well then let's get to it.

Our information was that they were about 100 feet from the top and that they were climbing on one of the Lark routes. We could hear them yelling for help once in a while which added a sense of urgency to the mission. Since they were only a 100 feet from the top we decided to take plenty of rope anyway "just in case." We took four 300'

PMI's, plus two 165 footers, breakdown litter, litter rigging, free runners, extra carabiners, large first aid kit, plus our own personal gear - extra clothes, etc. We needed more sherpas so Larry was asked to go along plus two climbers who happened to be at Humber Park and volunteered their services.

We finally got going and hiked around the south side of the rock and up to the top arriving at about midnight. Anchors were quickly set up and I was lowered over the side on a 300' PMI. We had some trouble locating them as their shouts to us seemed to come back from every direction, so we took a guess and aimed at one point. We planned on pulling me back up once I got on the face and pinpointed their location, but as luck would have it I dropped almost in their laps. The only



Larry Carter

HAULING TEAM - Along with the help of three kiyitwild residents, RMRU member Mel Krug (farthest back) raises the litter and its attendant up the face of Tahquitz Rock.

problem was I was down 295 feet on a 300 foot rope and I still had over 100 feet to go. I was left hanging for hours (?); well it seemed like a long time while more rope was added. I was finally lowered down to Steve Cauley and Brian Stipak. It was now about 2:30 AM and they were quite happy to see someone to help them. Steve was the injured one and upon examination of his foot it did seem very broken as his entire foot and part of his ankle was swollen to twice normal size. He was following a traverse behind Brian who had led the pitch. Steve popped out of the traverse and went into a pendulum situation. He immediately picked up speed and was heading for a big wall so to slow down he kicked a small ledge. Even with the broken foot result he probably made the right decisions as the other option was a body crash at full speed. Anyway after checking him over for any other injuries, I gave them water and extra clothing, put an air splint on his foot and we all began the long wait for daybreak. They were sitting on about a 15 inch down-sloping ledge that had a pine tree growing out of it so we all tied into the tree for safety. It was a long wait.

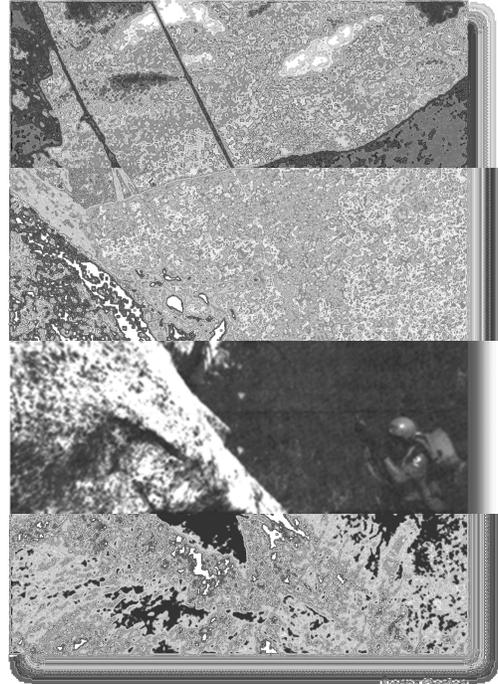
Since we were down 400 feet plus from the top and up 450 to 500 feet from the bottom the crew on top realized that more rope would be needed. To send someone down for more rope, edge rollers, etc. needed to do a raise for the litter would have taken too long plus whoever went would have been totally spent and they needed everyone alert and able to work.

Dave Ezell radioed out to John to call two good friends of his that knew the area. Maybe they could hike in to help plus bring in the extra gear? They both got middle of the night phone calls and upon hearing that Dave needed help were at base camp within minutes as they both live in Idyllwild. Those guys really saved the day.

Dawn finally arrived and with the rising sun our spirits rose with it as the nights cold chill was quickly dispelled. The topside crew had been at work before daybreak and soon had the litter ready to go over the side. Dave Ezell was to be the litter attendant. An extra rope was sent down with Dave for Brian and myself to Jumar up, so I sent Brian up right away to help topside. Dave and I then got Steve into the litter and the raise began. It was slow hard work as we had to go over about six large overhangs and through two bushes growing out of the rocks. Steve was quite a guy as he never complained once when the litter would catch on an overhang or in the bushes and pop free jarring his foot, but you could see the sweat break out on his face.

All in all the raise went quite smoothly, even having to pass knots in the system. Bud, Mel, Joe, Rob and Larry did a great job setting the system up. We finally got over the top, the helicopter was there waiting so into the bird, down to Idyllwild to a waiting ambulance and off to the hospital went Steve.

To land on top of Tahquitz rock takes a special kind of pilot and our pilot today was Steve De Jesus of Landells helicopter service. Steve had never landed on Tahquitz before but he made it look like ho-hum - no big deal, guys. It took seven trips to fly everyone plus the gear out. During the third trip a thunderstorm moved in, it started raining and hailing on us with very gusty wind conditions. Steve still wouldn't quit, picked up the third load, landed in Idyllwild, waited about 15 minutes until the storm blew over and then flew the rest of us out. All our hats are tipped to you, Steve, for a great job.



Larry Carter

OUT ON THE FACE - RMRU litter attendant Dave Ezell holds the litter containing injured climber Steve Cauley as they are raised up the steep face of Tahquitz Rock. Jumarung along-side the litter is RMRU member Glenn Henderson to help get the litter around any obstacles they might come across.



Larry Carter

AFTER A LONG NIGHT - RMRU member Glenn Henderson finishes a very long Jumar ascent after spending the night down on the rock face with the stranded climbers.

Well after a long, cold, sleepless night we ate lunch at the Alpine Pantry, sorted gear between the two rescue vans and put to rest another successful RMRU mission.

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.