



## Snowstorm surprised hikers

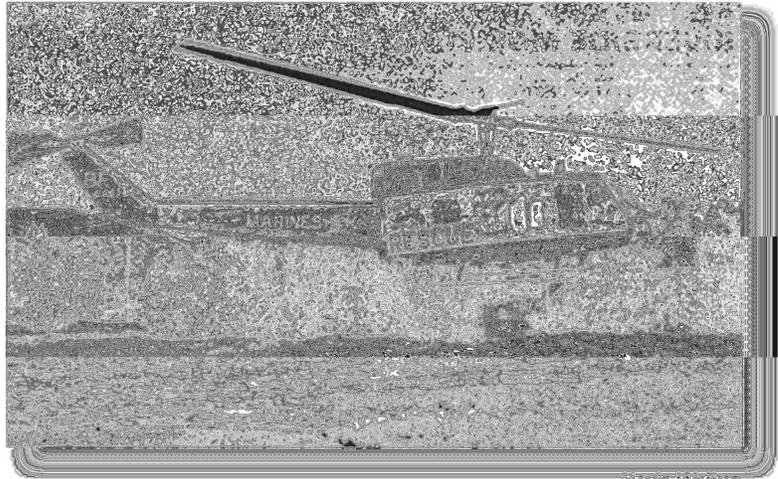
**November 13, 1985**  
**San Jacinto Mtns**  
**1985-049 & 1985-050**

By Kevin Walker

Every so often a volunteer is tested, yes tested, to see just how much people are willing to give. Not just it's members, but also family members, and yes employers. This week would do just that. Mission No. 1985-049 and 1985-050 evolved as Mission No. [1985-048](#) drew to a close.

Fellow member and close friend Glenn Henderson and I had to get back to work after being out all night looking for the group from San Diego. But even though that mission had been resolved two new and even larger ones were starting. As we impatiently waited at Skunk Cabbage Meadow for a helicopter flight back to the tram we did not fully understand what was happening elsewhere on the mountain. Once back at base at the upper tram I quickly understood the situation. A full region (California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association) was now in progress for Rudy Brown (1985-049) a former State Park Aide, from Los Angeles and for John Kivlen (1985-050), from Playa Del Rey, a day hiker in the State Park. Glenn and I were soon flown off the mountain and returned home to our respective jobs. That evening when my dad Walt Walker (Operations Leader) returned home he called me and asked me to come to his house. He told me of how searchers from Sierra Madre, China Lake, Los Padres, San Dimas and San Diego had scoured from Mt. San Jacinto across Jean Peak, Round Valley and Tamarack Valley, the Wellman Divide to Hidden Lake, and also back to Long Valley. Also used throughout the day was a Landells Aviation Bell Jet Ranger, piloted by Steve DeJesus, and Angel 8, a Marine 212 Helicopter and it's crew. But no clues, nothing. Not knowing all about the two subjects I asked Walt to fill me in on what had led to the call out for the two separate people.

The first of the two missing subjects, was Rudy Brown, age 30, an ex seasonal Park Ranger from the San Jacinto State Park. Rudy was considered to be a competent backpacker, and had good equipment when he took out his permit on Saturday, the last day he was seen. His itinerary called for his return to the tram on Monday evening. The second subject was John Kivlen, age 55. Mr. Kivlen took out a day hiking permit on Sunday, and had planned to hike to the Wellman Divide and return to the tram later that day. He was dressed only in light clothing and was not prepared to stay out overnight let alone through a major winter storm. Rudy was



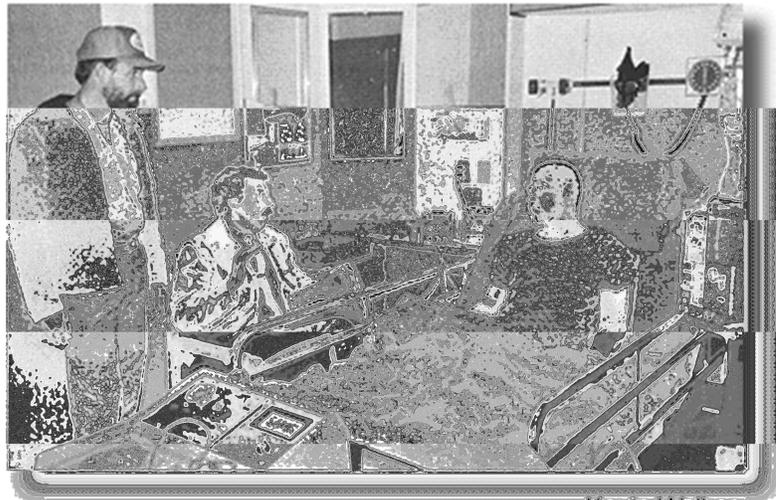
Kevin Walker

**AIR SUPPORT** - During the searches for the two couples from San Diego, and for Rudy Brown and John Kivlen, RMRU utilized one Bell 206 from Landells Aviation, and two Bell 212's from the Marine Air Station at El Toro. All of the helicopters were put to good use. The group from San Diego was located from the air with the Landells machine, and one of the Marine choppers transported injured hiker, Rudy Brown to Desert Hospital in Palm Springs. Special thanks go out to the pilots and crew for jobs well done.

reported missing Tuesday as Mission No. 8548M was under way, and Mr. Kivlen was reported overdue Wednesday as 1985-048 wound down and 1985-049 was under way. My dad and I have our own business which can be advantageous, and sometimes quite difficult. Walt had commitments for Thursday, so even though some of my work was not complete I traded and took over as ops leader for Thursday. Base camp was moved over to the western side of the mountain at the Vista Grande Forest Service Station on highway 243 between Banning and Idyllwild. RMRU members and region teams met at the base camp at 6:30 am. Shortly after Steve from Landells Aviation arrived with helicopter 31LA. First off Steve flew in and brought out a team of San Diego people who had been relay the day before on Jean Peak and were left overnight because of strong winds. As Steve was out doing that task, Angel 7 and Angel 8 (Marine choppers from El Toro Marine Base) arrived. After a short briefing, one helicopter started air search as the other and Steven flew teams into the field. Bud White and Ron Pierson (RMRU), were flown into Marion Flats. Sierra Madre members were flown into a helispot near a peak called 10,160 north, and onto the Fuller Ridge at the base of Folley Peak (Linda Stoner Helispot). China Lake was flown over into the Willow Creek Drainage near the old Wellman cabin, and also to Little Round Valley. San Diego Personnel were let off again at Jean Peak and at Mt. San Jacinto. The ground personnel worked on into the afternoon scouring the snow covered mountain looking for anything that might help in locating the two missing hikers. And at the same time, the three helicopters searched the mountain by air.

As the day progressed, base camp looked more and more like a movie set with news crews, and their helicopters coming in to gather stories for the evening news. At around 2:00 pm word was passed to us that Rudy Brown had wandered into the Long Valley Ranger Station with moderate frostbite. We immediately sent Dr. Bill Blaschko over to Long Valley in Angel 8. Bill examined Rudy and then the Marine chopper transported Rudy to the Palm Springs Hospital. Information coming back in was sketchy, except that we were told Rudy was stable.

The search for Mr. Kivlen went on into the late afternoon, with no clues being found. As darkness approached, the three choppers retrieved the field teams from the mountain, and with the last bit of light Mel Krug and Cameron Robbins went up with Steve for one last try for the day. Over dinner that night we discussed what had been done over the three days of intense searching. Given the fact that Mr. Kivlen had no gear to be out in a winter storm, there was five to six feet of new snow on the ground and the fact that volunteer hours had run their toll on searchers, I decided to recommend to the Sheriff that the mission be shut down until some type of information might indicate re-opening the operation. With that all teams were released, and began their journeys home.



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**THE STORY RETOLD - RMRU Asst. Ops. Leader Mel Krug and Sgt. Doug Bordon of the Sheriff's Department interview hiker Rudy Brown. Both hands and both feet were being treated for frostbite.**

Later that night, Mel and I accompanied Sgt. Doug Bordon to the hospital, and listened to Rudy's story. In summary: Saturday, hiked to Mt. San Jacinto, spent the night. Sunday, hiked down the western slope to Deer Springs, then returned to Mt. San Jacinto and spent the night. Monday, with heavy snow made it down to Round Valley. Attempted to contact the Long Valley Ranger Station on the emergency CB radio outside of the cabin. Not making contact with anyone, attempted to find his way back to Long Valley. Not finding it, camped again. By his description we felt he was in the Shangri La area or near the base of Harvard Peak (approximately 112 mile from the Long Valley Ranger station). Tuesday, moved around the Shangri La area, but was unable to navigate because of snow still falling.

the afternoon found shelter in a natural snow cave formed by large boulders. Wednesday, stayed in the cave. He heard and saw the Bell Jet Ranger, but apparently was slightly hypothermic, as he did not come out and did not accurately describe the

helicopter. Thursday, came out of cave and went for broke, leaving the gear behind and wandering down slope until coming upon tracks made by searchers, and then made his way back to the ranger station.

Quite an ordeal, but he made it through luckily, and doctors felt he would not lose fingers or toes to the frostbite. Out of three missions running at the same time, two were resolved with happy endings. Unfortunately not true in the case of Mr. Kivlen. As of this writing, later in the month of November, nothing has been resolved. To family members of Mr. Kivlen, we of the Mountain Rescue Association teams involved send our deepest sympathies.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the searches. I felt everyone conducted themselves in a professional manner and are to be commended. To the following I say thanks: China Lake, Los Padres, Sierra Madre, San Dimas, San Diego, and RMRU Mountain Rescue Teams. As ops leader special thanks go to Sgt. Dave Duncan, Sgt. Doug Bordon and Sgt. Dave Nordstrom of the Sheriff's Department for overwhelming support. Mary Bowman gets 3 gold stars for her great work as base camp operator. And most of all to Mel Krug as assistant operations leader. Mel worked his backside off taking care of gathering info from the teams as they came and went, and also monitored and kept the helicopters coming and going at base smoothly and safely. To everyone again, thanks for the A-1 effort given in trying to help others.

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.