

## Rock climber fell 30 feet

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**Tahquitz Rock**  
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By Bill Blaschko

The tips of the helicopter rotor blades were slicing through the night air, missing Tahquitz Rock by a mere five feet, as Brian McGoldrick was drawn into the Huey helicopter by a slim metal cable. Looking below me, I could see the rock massif tapering down to the scree slope three hundred feet below. Brian's head was covered with blood. We pulled him from the cable into the helicopter, but he was alert enough to help work himself into the waiting litter. As I began administering first aid, the U.S. Marine Corps helicopter winch was used for two more quick raises to bring Brian's climbing partner, Kevin Brennan, and U.S. Navy Corpsman Mike Anjola up to the helicopter. Just as the helicopter run to Loma Linda University Medical Center was completed, the low fuel light began to flash.

The incident had begun about four hours earlier when a rock that Brian had a grip on gave way, resulting in a thirty foot fall. Mr. McGoldrick struck his head, loosing about half a pint of blood as well as fracturing his spine, wrist and suffering internal injuries. Kevin, who caught Brian's fall with the climbing rope, did not suffer any significant injuries. The pair yelled for help and their distress message had been relayed to Mt. San Jacinto State Park Ranger Mike Whitehead and ultimately to RMRU.

After being contacted by fellow RMRU member Kevin Walker and being assessed of the situation, Bud White, Henry Negrete and I hiked to the base of Tahquitz Rock on the North Side, and with the help of some local climbers, voice contact was established with the party in question. Seeing that they were about 400 feet down from the top of the rock and with the light of day quickly fading we quickly hiked back to Humber Park and drove back to Camp Maranatha where base camp was now set up and the members present were waiting for the Marine Helicopter from El Toro to arrive. Upon their arrival, Operations Leader Walt Walker and Kevin Walker climbed aboard and flew up with the crew to the now dark massif of Tahquitz Rock to help the marines locate the injured party. Winds aloft made flying tricky, but after a period of time Walt and Kevin were able to talk the crew into the right area and Brian and Kevin were located. Corpsman Mike Anjola rappelled down to the subjects from the helicopter. While Mike gave aid to the pair the helicopter returned to base with Walt and Kevin, and then I was flown back to be ready to give medical assistance when the climbers were winched back into the helicopter. The helicopter crew from El Toro did some very skillful flying and rapidly evacuated the climbers from the climbing face.

Also involved in the mission were fellow members Jim Fairchild, Joe Erickson, Ray Hussey, Mary Bownman, Jay Pion and Steve Bryant. One additional note, Brian McGoldrick was released from Loma Linda University Medical Center after about 24 hours of hospitalization in good condition.

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.