



## Missing hiker went down Tahquitz Canyon

**May 11, 1987**  
**Tahquitz Canyon**  
**1987-014**

By George Crampon

It was a warm clear morning. The Riverside Sheriff's Office called RMRU out to search for a missing adult male hiker, Raymond (Ray) Ramero had become separated from his three companions the previous day. When Ray did not return to the campsite, near Laws Camp, by morning, the companions summoned help.

A base camp for the RMRU operations was set-up at Camp Maranatha in Idyllwild. Landells Aviation provided helicopter service. Kevin Walker, Rob Garner, and pilot Steve DeJesus Departed for an aerial assessment and the PLS (point last seen) and vicinity, it was decided to fly down Tahquitz Canyon a short distance. In the past, lost people in the vicinity inadvertently hiked down difficult Tahquitz Canyon. Tahquitz Canyon is generally overgrown, without trails, and has many waterfalls.

As Steve was in a left turn to head back to base camp to pick-up and disperse ground teams, Kevin spotted a man at the canyon bottom, sitting on a large boulder. The man was not moving. His clothing matched the description of our subject, Ray Ramero. The canyon had been closed off to the public for over a decade and nobody else had been seen in the canyon this day. Therefore it appeared to be a good chance that this was the man RMRU was searching for.

Steve circled and let him know that he had been seen, and then look for a helispot. No helispot was to be found and eventually Steve touched six inches of the right helicopter runner on a pyramid shaped boulder. Rob exited the ship to learn that there was not any place to stand and proceeded in an immediate down climb of about ten feet, finally getting his feet onto loose rock of the steep, north side of the canyon. The helicopter had already left and Steve flew down the canyon to our old helispot where Kevin could get out of the front seat and move to the right rear seat. The helicopter then returned to the pyramid like boulder and the exit process was repeated by Kevin.

From this point Rob and Kevin hiked for fifteen minutes before they could see Ray. However, from that point they needed to get to the bottom of a sixty foot waterfall and then fifty feet down canyon to reach Ray. They called to him but ray continued to sit on a large boulder, facing down canyon. Ray did not move or try to turn around. He called-out but could not be understood as he faced away from Rob and Kevin. With continued calling and shouting it could finally be discerned that Ray was saying, "Are

you coming down? Hurry!"

It took another ten minutes to prepare to climb down. There was not any easy routes on the slick waterfall wall, but at least the water was at a slow flow. Rob pulled-out a call-out rope and put on his sit-harness. Kevin looked for a safe anchor, without success. Finally, it was decided Rob would climb down with Kevin belaying, as he set in a depression of the rock and used his body for an anchor.

Keeping the rope taut Rob climbed down about fifteen feet above the pool of water and then begin to traverse. He unroped for the last two moves and once again his feet were on Grade 3 terrain. He hiked over to Ray who first said, "I'm sure glad to see you guys!"

It became apparent that Ray was too stiff and sore to move and that therefore had been unable to wave to the helicopter or turn around earlier to call up canyon to Rob and Kevin. Ray was alert, but he had lumps all over his head, abrasions on his back and shoulders, and generally ached. Rob measured Ray's vital signs and did a head to toe assessment reporting findings by radio.



UP AND OVER - RMRU members Ray Hussey, Rob Gardner, Walt Walker and Cameron Robbins bring injured Ray Romero up and over the edge of the 80 foot cliff in Tahquitz Canyon.

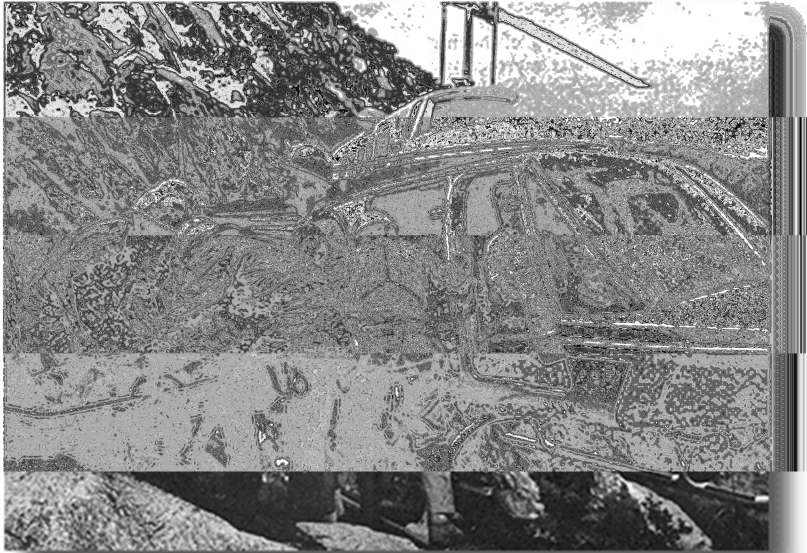
Ray Ramero reported that when he was climbing down the waterfall wall he slipped and fell, tumbling head over heels several times. He said he hit his head on the rock as he tumbled. He landed in the pool of water at the bottom. He then swam to the side and crawled a few feet to the boulder he was sitting on. He was unable to start a fire to keep warm, he did not have any gear, and was too stiff and sore to reach the water that ran past him a few feet away.

Kevin radioed-out for the rest of the team to prepare to fly to the rescue site with ropes, hardware, etc. if necessary for a technical rescue using a mechanical advantage (M.A.) system. They also were to bring in a stokes litter an immobilization apparatus for neck/back injury. Kevin had already found a site he could make into a helispot and was working hard to clear enough area for the small Jet Ranger helicopter to touch two skids down.

The helispot ready, RMRU men and gear were flown to the site. Dr. Ray Hussey was

on the first load, and as soon as anchors were set, he rappelled down to Rob and Ray Ramero. Dr. Hussey did another medical evaluation, started to hydrate Ray and called for the Oregon spine splint (which had been recently been donated to RMRU by doctors Mellor, Hussey, and Blaschko).

While Rob and Dr. Hussey packaged Ray, into the stoke litter, and set the litter rigging, the other team members were flown to the site and set-up the M.A. system in preparation for the raise. The raise was to be about seventy feet, to the new helispot. Ray would be flown out of the canyon and then transported to the hospital.



Walt Walker

**CLASSIC TAHQUITZ CANYON - RMRU members Cameron Robbins, Eric Townsend, Joe Erickson, Rob Gardner, Ron Pierson, Henry Negrete, and Kevin Walker pass the litter containing injured hiker Ray Ramero into the back of the helicopter 40MC. Mountain Pilot Steve DeJesus of Landells Aviation held the chopper in a one runner position while the transfer was made. With RMRU member Ray Hussey in the back, Steve flew them down Tahquitz Canyon to the base of the canyon where members of the Palm Springs Mounties were standing by.**

There was so little space where Dr. Hussey and Rob worked that no others could come down to help, in fact, the foot of the stokes litter had to hang over the waterfall below them.

The raise was done with some difficulty, but as soon as Ray was at the top of the raise the helicopter was called back by radio and made perfect timing to Fly Ray out of the canyon. A few hours had gone by from mission start to getting Ray out of the mountain. In this instance, use of the helicopter mad a great savings of time. Without the helicopter Ray would not have been off the mountain for at least twenty-four hours.

RMRU cleaned up the gear and was flown back to base camp, where they had dinner together and then rode off in different directions each RMRU member returning to his family.

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.