

RMRU NEWSLETTER

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A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT CORPORATION
MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

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Jim Fairchild, Editor

23 July	Regular Meeting
26 July	Training, Tahquitz Rock
6 August	Board Meeting

COMING EVENTS ---

23 July - Regular Meeting, 1930 Highland Outfitters. We'll try to have Dr. Norman Mellor again to train us further in shock and high altitude pulmonary edema. Another feature will be instruction on use of the Stokes litter with helicopter.

26 July - Technical training on Tahquitz Rock, 0800 at Lunch Rock. Morning -- a climb in the class 5 range; afternoon -- rescue practice high on the rock.

6 August - Board Meeting. Time and place to be announced, if, that is, a quorum is in town.

11 September. First Aid Class, 1900-2200, Red Cross Chapter House, Riverside. Again, here we go again, Standard, Advanced, and Instructor courses especially for rescue people, outdoorsmen of all types, and youth group leaders. This will take fourteen Thursdays if you go through all courses. Tell your friends and acquaintances, seems like people too often learn of the course when it's half finished.



If you have been a reader of the 'RMRU NEWSLETTER' for any time at all you probably thought upon picking this issue up, it's thicker and heavier than those before. Yes, it is, but for good reason. Since the last newsletter RMRU has participated in 11 missions. Without a doubt this sets or breaks some kind of record for us, but we have not had time out to look it up. (Last year till 30 June we had had 7 missions. This year 30 June arrived and we had had 19 missions.) In the following pages you will read of missions where lives were saved and rescues performed. Many of these were done when muscles ached and the mind said sleep. Some were harrowing, either by the technical nature or by the demand on the body that could only take it because of excellent physical conditioning. Others required highly

skilled first aiders who knew how to do the right thing when it was needed. If you have any doubts I invite you to read on..... Pres. Walt

30 May - SEARCH - Dark Canyon, San Jacinto Mountains

Several RMRU members with their wives were enjoying the holiday with an excellent steak dinner at a local restaurant when we were informed by the waitress that we were "wanted by the Sheriff". Upon arriving at the Dark Canyon Campground near Idyllwild, we were informed that Michael Murphy, age 18, had been missing for 8 hours. With no scent article available, Sugar (tracking Bloodhound) could not be used; therefore, a ground search was started. After searching all night, it was decided to return to the place where Mike was last seen. A re-search of the area had just begun when Michael came walking "out of nowhere." -- Al

1 June - RESCUE - Mt. Whitney area, High Sierra

Early on the morning of Sunday the first of June, as unit members were trying to catch up on their sleep after having been out on a search all night Friday (see above), RMRU received a call from the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group. A young climber had come down from the environs of Mt. Whitney to get help for his climbing partner who was camped near East Face Lake (about 12,000') and had all of the symptoms of pulmonary edema.

By 5:30am Briggs, Fairchild and Daugherty were rolling towards Lone Pine. When they arrived, they learned that an unsuccessful attempt had been made to use an Air Force rescue helicopter from Edwards Air Force Base. The helicopter had sustained some tail rotor damage when caught in a downdraft while attempting to land near the victim. For obvious reasons, the pilot felt that further attempts to evacuate the victim by helicopter were unjustified.

we had a seriously ill victim whose condition we were forced to assume to be very grave and who would have to be evacuated by litter from an altitude of 12,000'. Since this contingency had been anticipated, other teams of the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association had also been called for assistance. Accordingly, 3 members of RMRU and 2 members of the China Lake group left the portal with the aim of reaching the victim as soon as possible in order to render

first aid and prepare the victim for evacuation. Traveling at top speed, we reached the victim in less than 3½ hours. His condition was indeed quite serious. His pulse was over 170, he had a fever and was having considerable difficulty breathing owing to fluid in his lungs. His companions reported that his condition had been worsening steadily since Friday evening and that he had been coughing up orange sputum. Anyone familiar with the difficulties of evacuating a person a long distance over rough terrain will understand our great reluctance to evacuate so seriously ill a victim in this manner. Our only hope was to await the Oxygen being brought in by members of the Sierra Madre team in the hope that this might make the difference.

Just as the full gravity of the situation was becoming clear, our ears detected the always welcome chop-chop-chop of an approaching helicopter. Members of the China Lake team in base camp had managed to obtain the use of a Hiller helicopter used by the University of California to supply its White Mountain station. Soon the mountainside was awash in the thick orange smoke of our flares and in several minutes the victim whose condition was by now worsening very rapidly, was aboard the bird and on his way towards recovery in the Lone Pine hospital. As we stood there in somewhat stunned disbelief watching that beautiful machine recede toward the valley, we knew that we had just barely made it. Had we not been in good enough shape to move fast or had those in base camp been any less persistent in obtaining the helicopter, the outcome would almost certainly have been much different. Training, teamwork and conditioning made that difference. -- Mike

2 June - TECHNICAL EVACUATION - Soboba Hills



After a Sunday sand dune racing event in the San Jacinto river bottom, five young people went for a drive in their dune buggy up a fire control road along the crest of the Soboba Hills, hoping to reach the big "S" that is scratched on the highest peak. Their vehicle became stuck and they headed down a ridge, barefooted. On the way down one of the men diverged down a nearly vertical gully and was stranded, almost at the point where earlier in the year a boy had fallen and fractured his pelvis. The other four hobbled in to the San Jacinto Police Department to report the problem. RMRU was called and rolled to the mouth of what we now could call "Picket Canyon." Anchor points for rappels and riggings must be set up by three or four in-line pickets (aluminum 4' long stakes) pounded three feet into the dirt matrix that supports the millions of rocks that constitute these hills. About a half-mile up the canyon we scrambled up the left side to a point above but considerably to one side of the victim, set up the anchor, and "lucky" Mike went down. He tied the man in, then tied himself in to the rope a few feet higher, and we hoisted. As is usually the case, the now safe subject was happy to be belayed down the messy hillside to the safe walking of the canyon floor. Technical rescues on the usually firm cliffs of Tahquitz Rock or the High Sierra are simple and safe compared to the treacherous footing of this area and the Mecca Mud Hills. -- Jim



(left) Mike Daugherty assists victim up steep slope. (center) Mike and victim safe at the top.
(right) Jim Fairchild tapes shoe on before descent.



The injured young man is carried and hoisted up to the helispot. l to r - Fred Camphausen, Bob MacPherson, giving hauling commands, Jim Fairchild, looking down, and Ron Harris.



The injured young man.

To the casual hiker the series of cascades and falls above and below the higher falls called the "Second Falls of Tahquitz Canyon" can be a nearly impassable obstacle; to the mountaineer ascending or descending the canyon they are a good reason for detour; to the rock climber they are fun to rappel down and into the pools below; to the weekend habituee who goes there for reasons not printable in the Newsletter, this area is a haven. But a treacherous one. On the Thursday afternoon in question we received a call, "A girl has fallen to her death over the Second Falls in Tahquitz Canyon, and another is hanging on by her fingers". Needless, to say, we made good time driving down there an hiking up the canyon. Warm too, over 100 deg. F. up the steep climb. Part way up we encountered a boy who said a 20 year old boy had fallen and was injured badly. We sure hoped a helicopter was on the way. Mike and I, picking our way up the cliffs above the trail and crossing the excessively swollen stream, finally reached the victim. He was in about as tough a spot as one could imagine. He had a compound fracture of the left hip, the forehead, and, we saw in the X-rays later, compression fractures of the first and second lumbar vertebra. As we cleaned and dressed the wounds, we learned how he "accrued" them. He had slipped off a huge boulder near the stream and fallen thirty feet onto a slanted ramp-like rock washed by the stream, landed in the pool below, washed over an even higher vertical falls into its pool, then staggered ashore, bleeding considerably. Didn't even go into shock. (Upon landing in a seated posture at the bottom of the falls, his back bent drastically forward and slightly left, his forehead striking the left ilium, this caused the compound fractures, the curious feature is that a good-sized sliver of bone split off the ilium and imbedded itself, arrow-like, in the forehead sinuses, just stopping short of the brain sac.) Later arrivals from RMRU brought the collapsible litter, sleeping bag, ropes, etc. The helicopter ferried in more men and equipment. We used a 150' rope to hoist the boy to a real "hairy" helispot where Darrel Ellenburg endured a hectic tie-in of the litter, then zippered him off to the hospital. Oh yes, about the girl hanging on by her fingers, she sort of was "psyched-out" where her girl friend terminated and just needed assistance across the creek to be picked up by helicopter. Walt, on belay, swam and was banged around in the stream and pools in a fruitless search for the body. Almost a month has passed and she has not been sighted. In this mission we used all the major points of preparedness to be mentioned in "The Roadrunner Sez." -- Jim



This sequence of photographs shows the supercharged Bell from Western Helicopters, Inc. piloted by Darrel Ellenburg coming into the helispot. In the first photo the bird is still about three feet off the ground. The second photo shows the bird just about to touch one runner down and the litter can just be seen. The man in the center of the photo has his hand on the foot end of it. In the last photo pilot Ellenburg holds the bird in a tight spot while the litter with the victim is secured for the flight to the hospital.

9 June - SEARCH - Tahquitz Canyon

Two sixteen year old Fullerton boys attempted a descent of the canyon on Sunday. A third boy had started but changed his mind and returned to Humber Park, and advised the parents to make their pick-up at Palm Springs Sunday afternoon. With no arrival Sunday evening the parents notified the Palm Springs Police Department and in turn the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. Walt got the call at 0600 Monday and seven team members responded, including four "veterans" of the prior days Sierra Club recreational hike from Humber Park to Palm Springs via the ridge.

Pat Patterson of Western Helicopters, Inc. and Jim Fairchild made a recon flight; then decided to drop parties off at the top and at several places in the upper canyon. After putting off the first two near Caramba, Pat searched the canyon on his way down and spotted the boys standing at our 'Grapevine' helispot and brought them on out. They had started to climb up out of the canyon and were about half way up the ridge when they spotted the helicopter working. They hurried back down and were waving their shirts from the most prominent point they could quickly locate. Thanks to the Riverside County Sheriff's Department prompt calling of the helicopter, to our operation leaders knowledge and to Western's pilots keen observation, a quick rescue was made and considerable suffering avoided. Good work Lt. Brown, Pat Patterson and Jim. -- Art

17 June - SEARCH - Barton Flats area, San Bernardino Mountains

Early Tuesday morning Jim Fairchild phoned me and asked if I had read the morning paper. There was an article concerning the disappearance of Matthew Zimmerman, age 6. The newspaper article stated that he had become lost about noon on Saturday 14 June. It went on to state that Bloodhounds, helicopters, horsemen, San Bernardino County Sheriff Search and Rescue Teams and large numbers of volunteers were looking for the boy. Jim suggested that he drive up to the base camp and volunteer RMRU's services. In the afternoon Jim called me and said that our services would be appreciated and those of any other MRA teams. I then asked my wife, Sondra, to start calling the RMRU members and I started calling the California Region teams.

RMRU members began arriving at basecamp at 1830 and by dark we sent two teams out into the field. After searching half the night the teams returned to basecamp for a couple hours rest. By morning members from the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group and the San Diego Mountain Rescue team had arrived. After a short briefing China Lake, San Diego, RMRU and San Bernardino team members went into the field. I remained at basecamp as Operations Leader and was assisted by Lois McCoy of San Diego. With our new special antenna and FM radios we had a tremendous communications system and remained in contact at all times.

At 0630 word rang through basecamp that 'Matty' had been found by a pair of 18 year old boys who had volunteered to help and were searching on their own. They had found the boy laying face down on top of a six inch deep patch of snow. Although he had visible life signs he was definitely in very poor condition. One of the boys ran for help while the other remained with the victim. A sheriff's team led by Deputy Sgt. Ollie Gray reached him rapidly and removed his wet clothes and wrapped him in jackets and proceeded down with him in a make shift litter. They were met by another team bringing in a Stokes litter. He was transferred into the Stokes and the journey out to road continued. While this was taking place I advised the MRA teams by radio to return to base and drove to where the boy was to be brought out too. When the litter arrived at the road I entered the vehicle with the boy. His skin was icy cold and I could not hear a audible heart beat with a stethoscope, but I could feel respirations with my hand. Occasionally he would make faint moaning sounds and I could also hear expelled air as I placed my ear to his mouth. After a short trip we arrived at a heliport where a Marine helicopter was waiting, with engine running, from the El Toro Marine Base.

We quickly loaded the litter into the waiting bird. Deputy Gray, the boy's father and I boarded for the flight to Norton Air Force Base. As we took off I yelled to the crewman to ask the pilot to radio ahead and make sure a doctor would be waiting. Deputy Gray and I unbuttoned our shirts as we were going to place the boy between us for warmth. As I lifted the boy he went limp and I noted his pupils were dilated. I immediately tried to open his mouth with no success. Feverishly I removed dried mucous and dirt from the boys nostrils and tried mouth to nose respiration. After three quick breaths I could see there was no response as the pupils remained dilated. Then training, that the team had received the month before from team member Dr. Norman Mellor, in closed chest heart compression, flashed to my mind. Again, I yelled over the roar of the helicopter, for Ollie to take over the respiration while I started the heart massage. The small lifeless form before me had died, in my mind I knew it, and that there was nothing more I could do. However, we had been instructed to continue until a doctor says stop. It seemed like hours were passing and muscle spasms racked my forearm. (The helicopter pilot later told me it had taken only nine minutes for the flight.) As the huge machine shuddered to a stop at Norton I heard a sound and my eyes flashed to the small blue eyes before me. I detected a very slight contraction of the pupils. I couldn't believe my eyes and I found it hard to breathe. The door slowly opened and shortly an air force doctor and medic entered. The doctor listened for a heartbeat and heard none. He then took over the heart massage and the medic tried a manual resuscitator. A tight seal was difficult to maintain on the small face and I could see

that the boy was not receiving air. I thought, my God, don't let him slip away again and asked for something to pry his mouth open. As if from nowhere a tongue depressor appeared. I worked 't between his teeth and pried his mouth open. With an open airway the small form began to breathe again. He was then quickly loaded into the waiting ambulance and was on his way to the hospital. Although breathing, he was still in serious condition. Doctors told us that he would probably remain in a coma for 24 to 48 hours and quite likely have some brain damage. That night he opened his eyes and spoke to his parents and when I was phoned the news I couldn't hold back the moisture that collected in my eyes. Just seven days after RMRU started in the search, 'Matty' was wheeled from the hospital by his father with a big smile on his face and a teddy bear on his lap. -- Walt



'Matty' with tongue depressor still wedged between his teeth, is loaded into the waiting ambulance at Norton Air Force Base.

(Photos by Bob Ringquist, Riverside Press-Enterprise)



Harried but happy, Walt Walker and Deputy Sgt. Ollie Gray are interviewed just after saving the young lad's life.

21 June - RESCUE - Tahquitz Canyon AGAIN

A peaceful Saturday afternoon, hal At 1300 we received the call that a girl was hurt in the canyon, both legs broken it was reported. Another speed run to the cul-de-sac off Ramon Road in Palm Springs. Western Helicopters was on hand again, the supercharged Bell piloted by Tom Mason. He took Walt and me in to a spot above the victim. (The girl fell about a hundred feet lower down the canyon from where the boy fell who sustained the serious fractures.) She was a mighty lucky 16 year old. She fell while crossing the stream and jammed a leg under a rock that prevented her from being swept down a cascade and falls to probable death. When we arrived at her location we started examining her and found a serious laceration on the top of the tibia, with considerable damage to the underlying tissue. We dressed the wound and put an air splint on the leg, suspecting a fracture. The temperature was in the 90's and although the young lady had lain not more than five feet from rushing water her companions had not given her any water (her lips were dry and looked like they were about to crack). She said yes, but had better not because of nature's call. At previous sessions with team doctor, Norm Mellor, we had been warned about the seriousness of a distended bladder and the consequences if it burst. While I went back up to direct the helicopter back in, Walt in a very professional manner explained the problem to the young lady and assisted her to take care of the problem with help from two of her girlfriends. We tied her into the litter and four RMRU members carried her across the stream to a 40 foot cliff. Previously, other team members had set up a mechanical advantage and other technical riggings. We hoisted her and Mike on up the cliff to top, thence to the hover spot. Instructions were radioed out for the bird to come in for the pick-up. Once again, Tom did his usual tremendous job of flying, as he held the bird on one runner as we loaded the victim into the ship for a quick trip to the hospital. He returned four more times to haul us and our gear back to base. -- Jim



(left) Walt Walker explains to the young lady how she will be transported across the stream, up the cliff and out to the hospital by helicopter. (center) Looking down the cliff which the litter with the victim and Mike Daugherty were hoisted up. (right) Jim Fairchild, in lower left corner, gives Helitac signals to pilot Tom Mason as he holds a one runner touch down and Walt Walker loads equipment to be transported out to basecamp.

23 June - EVACUATION - Hidden Lake drop-off, San Jacinto Mountains

About 1430 we received the call that a boy had fallen and was seriously injured. Everyone actively connected with SAR operations will understand our terribly negative feelings when we finally were convinced that this boy, 17 year old Chris Upgood, was beyond earthly help. We had made another fast trip to the tram Monday afternoon. At the upper station we were told he was "probably" dead. Once down in Long Valley, Rangers who were on the scene verified this. It's tough to accept when every mental and physical facet of our personalities yearns to reach the victim, give first aid, evacuate from dangerous terrain, anything necessary to bring him out in condition to survive. Sure, we went in to recover the body. He had tumbled 300' down the 65-70 degree cliffs just southeast of Hidden Lake. Death had been instantaneous, but you know how reports are -- we had hoped for another chance to save a life. -- Jim

24 June - SEARCH - Strawberry Creek, San Jacinto Mountains

Late in the afternoon RMRU was notified by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a 12 year old boy was missing. As I arrived at the Idyllwild sub-station I was informed that a man was missing in the Santa Rosa Mountains. After a discussion with Capt. Crowell we decided to call the San Diego Mountain Rescue Team to assist in that search. Jim Fairchild was assigned to be the Operations Leader and leave as soon as more RMRU members arrived. We drove to where the boy was staying with his mother and were told that he left for the Idyllwild Arts Campus just before 0800 that morning. We drove to there and discussed this with a man and 'fired' Sugar. (Sugar is one of the teams tracking Bloodhounds and we had obtained a pajama top from the victim's mother to use as a scent article for the dog.) Sugar bounded down towards Strawberry Creek, crossed to the north bank and started downstream. Ron Harris was right behind all the time carrying one of the team's new radios. Shortly we crossed again back to the south side and continued high up on the side of the canyon. Following along and calling all the time were RMRU members Bill Speck, Fred Camphausen and Ed Hill. We began to drift downward as the dog tracked and we occasionally found footprints. Ron and I came to a drop off and I climbed down through Poison Oak to check the area. Shortly we heard calls, the three men behind us had heard the boy answer their calls. A 150 foot long rope was quickly uncoiled and Bill descended down the 45 degree angle slope of decomposed granite. Right at the end of the rope Bill found the boy hanging onto a small bush. Somehow as the young lad fell and slid down the slope he managed to grab the bush and stop his descent. If he had not been able to stop he would surely have landed on the rocks below and tumbled into the swollen waters of Strawberry Creek to his death. Ed also descended to the boy and he and Bill assisted the boy up the slope with Fred managing the rope from above. Just as the boy was found other RMRU members were about to start up the canyon from the highway below. Due to the excellent communications we were able to call them off and they went over to the Santa Rosa search. The five of us then started back up the canyon and took the boy to his anxiously waiting parents. Once again a life was saved because RMRU was ready with all of its skills and equipment. -- Walt