

RMRU NEWSLETTER

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

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Editor, Walt Walker

Thank you!



TRAINING

9 DEC., SAT. - HELITAC
Western Helicopters, Rialto (Miro Field)

Once again Alec Ferguson, owner of Western Helicopters, provided RMRU with the opportunity to practice with his birds. We of RMRU and the victims in years to come will be grateful for this fine service.

It was extremely cold as Alec showed us his two latest machines, turbine powered Hughes 500's, and the big old Sirkosky that Western maintains and flies for Loma Linda hospital.

Kevin Walker, son of veteran member Walt Walker, who is only two years older than RMRU was on hand to do two things he greatly enjoys. The first, being around helicopters, which he has loved since only about a year old. The second, photography, by borrowing his dad's Nikon F with telephoto lens and using a small rangefinder camera he shot all the photographs on this page and the first page. A big thanks to him for his interest in RMRU and some fine photography.



The camera catches Ed Hill looking on while Walt Walker demonstrates the correct way to enter the helicopter. It seems like a trivial thing, but it could mean disaster if done incorrectly while a bird was hovering in a tight canyon.



With the box as a simulated boulder, Bernie McIlvoy jumps, while the pilot holds the bird with a one runner touchdown. The arrow points to the skid suspended in the air.



Pete Carlson appears to be good naturedly waiting his turn to be secured on the outside of the bird and experience what an injured person is subjected to.



The last safety strap is secured over Pete as the pilot holds the bird on a one runner touchdown. We have had to load victims this way in the past and practice helps to stay sharp.



The Road Runner

sez— by Pres. Jim Fairchild

If there were a chance to record some impressions from Search and Rescue operations during 1972, they'd go like this: a rash of aborted missions that tried the dedication of the Sheriff's Office and RMRU; first evacuations with our new wheel for the litter — fabulous improvement; Hank's demonstration on mashing a finger with a flashlight; lasagna and pineapple cheesecake by Rich and Dave; the thrill of working with skilled and dedicated fellow members to save lives or at least help others with a problem in the wilderness; the glorious mountain and desert scenes of God's Creation we are a part of when training and rescuing; the safe helicopter operations in risky situations made possible by adroit pilots; a small boy about to dehydrate and die in the chaparral — found in time; Dan's "shoulda-been-fatal" fall during training in Tahquitz Canyon and his speedy recovery; and maybe our first failure — the Mark Seils search — he's not yet been found. An impression that again this year loomed strong is that of our faithful Sustaining Members who continue to provide funds for maintaining and increasing our material needs. So — what about 1973? God only knows, and we're about to find out — new challenges, new opportunities to serve.

Coming Events ---

- 24 January, Regular Meeting, County Hall
of Records
- 27-28 January, Winter "Shakedown" Training
on Mt. San Jacinto
- 14 February, Board Meeting
- 21 February, Regular Meeting
- 23-25 February, Full Winter Training on
Mt. San Geronio

Search and Rescue

21 DEC., THUR. — RESCUE — No. 7256M
Tahquitz Canyon (Palm Springs)
by Pete Carlson

On Thursday morning we received a call from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a girl

in Tahquitz Canyon had broken her leg. By 1130 we had assembled at the roadhead and got the story. Nilene Kumona, 16, of Palm Springs had fallen the night before at 2200 and received an over riding fracture of the right femur. One of the people in the canyon had put tension on the leg and had straightened it out, but she was still in pain.

We had called for a helicopter earlier and the bird would arrive at 1200 so we readied gear as we waited. At 1210 in came Jerry Leeper of Western Helicopters. Walt Walker flew in first to evaluate the situation. He radioed back that the helispot was a runner touch down and the girl was about 80 feet below that point. As Walt set up the repell, in came Dr. Joe Bell, Jim Fairchild, Bernie McIlvoy, and myself. Walt, Joe, and Jim went down to Nilene first and Joe examined her and then gave her an injection to reduce the pain. Next, I repelled down with the rescue sleeping bag and litter rigging equipment. Then Walt and Joe applied our new Hare Traction Splint. This is the best possible splint for a fractured femur and was the first time we have used ours. It worked great. Once on, Nilene never complained of pain again as we moved her around.



RMRU members Joe Bell, M.D. and Walt Walker apply the newly acquired Hare Traction splint to the injured girl. The pool of water where she landed, after her fifty foot fall, is in the background.

Up above Bernie was setting up for the raise with the help of Steve Bryant, Dennis Simpson, Bob Claybrook, Rick Polhers, Dave Nehen, Dan MacIntosh, and Ray Castilonia M.D. (Our newest member and second hiking Doctor).

Next we put the bottom half of our sleeping bag in the litter and with the help of people in the canyon lifted Nilene up while the litter was slid under her. Gently we placed her in the litter, putting the top

half of the sleeping bag on and zipping it up. Then Nilene was tied in with webbing and the litter was rigged for the raise. When all was ready I tied into the litter for the free ride up with Nilene and the litter. Walt hooked on to a free line, using ascenders, at the end of the litter to help watch the broken leg and keep it from getting bumped. The lift was without problems and we were on top in about ten minutes. Once up, all loose gear was put away and we called for Jerry and the helicopter. Jerry did some great flying as he held the bird still with one runner on the rocks and the other in mid air. Ray climbed into the bird and we loaded Nilene on the outside for the trip to the hospital.

We then cleaned up all our rigging and coiled the ropes as we waited for Jerry to come back for us. Half an hour later back came the bird and we were all out by 1600. Then to a big meal thanks to the Sheriff's Department as we had all missed lunch once again.

(Editor's Note: The following write-up was done by Bernie McIlvoy who was in charge of the technical rigging. We thought it would be interesting to hear from members who were at the bottom of the canyon and those who worked the top.)

by Bernie McIlvoy

The call came on a lazy Thursday morning in the office. It was Al Andrews saying that a young girl was injured in a fall in Tahquitz Canyon.

"Can you go?" "Sure!"

After a frantic rush home to get my call-out pack and technical gear, I kissed my wife good-by.

As I'm driving to the freeway it seemed that every signalized intersection turned red as I approached. Has to be a coincidence, I told myself.

When I finally got on the freeway headed toward Palm Springs, I put the car on automatic and let my mind wonder. It seemed I was home getting my gear for an extraordinary length of time. But my watch disagreed and I could not believe how slow I was going. But a glance at the speedometer told me I'm anything, but slow. The speedometer game was repeated many times before I arrived at the end of Ramon Road in Palm Springs. Seeing the super pumpkin parked at Mr. Dolley's house, which is near the mouth of the canyon, convinced me that I hadn't got burned.*

Pete Carlson was the B.C.O. (Base Camp Operator). He said the bird (Helicopter) will be here in a few minutes and these are the tentative plans. Walt Walker, because of his extensive experience in similar situations will fly in first to evaluate the situation. If

there is an injury, then Joe Bell, one of the three medical Doctors on the team, will go in second. Jim Fairchild will fly in third to assist Walt and Joe. If the evacuation is technical, (meaning ropes, pitons, and that sort of stuff will be used), I'll fly in fourth, then Pete Carlson fifth. Steve Bryant sixth, and so on until we have enough personnel to handle the technical evacuation.

We heard the bird before we could see it, as usual. It was being flown by Jerry Leeper, a pilot from Western Helicopters.

Walt flew in to locate the injured subject and to select a helispot. The helispot selected was particularly interesting. It was a one runner touch down on the edge of an 80 foot overhanging cliff. But probably the most fascinating aspect of this helispot was the fact that at times the main rotor was within twelve inches of a boulder on the uphill side. As bad as this helispot was, it was the best one around.

From the top of this cliff Walt rappelled down to the subject at the base of the cliff. After quickly examining the subject, (whose name was Nilene) he radioed out that Nilene had a suspected fractured femur, and that the evacuation would be technical. The pilot then proceeded to fly in twelve of our members. One and sometimes two at a time.

While Joe and Walt were giving first aid to Nilene, Jim and Pete also rappelled down the cliff. They were to start rigging the stokes litter for the evacuation up the cliff to the helispot.

In the mean time Steve and I, along with Dennis Simpson, Bob Claybrook, Rick Polhers, Ray Castilonia, Dave Nehen, and Dan MacIntosh, were



Pete Carlson, attached to the litter with the injured girl, guides the litter as it ascends and Walt Walker readies himself to help the litter past a difficult area.

* Burned — That's when a member takes time off from work and drives sixty miles to participate in a rescue only to find it's been aborted.

given the job of rigging a M.A. (Mechanical Advantage). A M.A. is a group of pulleys used in such a way that the effort needed to lift say 500 lbs. would only be about 100 lbs. This M.A. was to be used to lift the subject, lying in the litter, and one attendant (pete) to guide the litter up the overhanging cliff. Walt would also ascend a fixed rope beside the litter and was prepared to assist Pete if complications developed on the lift.

We also rigged a separate, independent rope system to the litter as a safety in the event the other system was to in some way fail. Although this has never happened in the history of the team, this is still considered essential. At this point, with all the rigging completed we were ready to start the lift. This information was radioed down to Walt and his crew at the base of the cliff. He informed us, they were ready to commence the lift.

The lift took about five minutes to complete. It was one of the smoothest and most efficient lifts I have seen with the team.

Once we had the subject secured on top of the cliff, we radioed the bird to fly in to pick up a litter and one member.

It took six members standing near the edge of the cliff to load the litter on the bird. Ray Castilonia, another one of our M.D.'s, was selected to fly with Nilene to the hospital in Palm Springs.

With the subject on the way to the hospital and the main effort completed there was nothing left to do except coil the ropes and collect the gear that was used. After this was completed we were flown to base camp and before the long drive back home we had a fabulous supper courtesy of the Sheriff's Office.

30 DEC., SAT. — RESCUE — No. 7257M
Devils Slide Trail, San Jacinto Mtns.

Just after dinner time RMRU received a call from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a sixty year old man, Saul Levy, was stranded somewhere near the Devils Slide Trail.

Deputy Grutzmacher was waiting, with Saul's son, when Walt Walker arrived at the Idyllwild Fire Station. He was quickly filled in on the details of what had happened. Mr. Levy and his son had taken a day hike into the back country. They had gotten a late start on the way out, and lost the trail somewhere below Saddle Junction (8050'). This area is fairly steep and Mr. Levy had slipped with his smooth soled boots. Luckily he had not traveled far when he was stopped by a large rock and was not injured. His son was wearing crampons (metal spikes attached to the boot with straps) and also had a ice axe. They decided that he would wait there, while his son went for help.

Walt then drove on up to Dr. Mellor's cabin and discussed the situation with Norm and his wife, Maggie. Shortly, Bernie McIlvoy, Jim Fairchild, Dennis Simpson and Bob Claybrook arrived and were filled in on the details. It was decided that Bernie would remain at base, as he was feeling under the weather, and the rest would take full winter gear, minus snowshoes.

Hiking up the trail, the group began calling for the stranded man. It was not until they were almost up to him that he responded. At the same time they could smell smoke from a wood fire. Upon arrival, the group found Saul sitting in front of a fire along with three young men. They had been hiking up the trail when Saul called to them. They had used a climbing rope, to descend from the trail and bring Saul back up. They were the real heroes and had done a great job.

All we had to do, was put crampons on Saul, tie a rope around his waist (which was also tied to Walt and Bob), hand him a ice axe and start hiking out. While we were hiking down Jim slipped on the frozen snow and fell with his hand upon the ice axe he was carrying. He cut his hand open and began to bleed profusely. He was quickly bandaged by Walt and we all headed down again.

When we got back to Norm's cabin, Norm took one look at the injury and told Maggie to sterilize some instruments. Shortly Jim was being sutured by Norm. Maggie then had not chocolate ready for all of us. We discussed the mission and headed down to Banning for a three a.m. breakfast before the drive home.

31 DEC., SUN. — RESCUE — No. 7258M
Little Tahquitz Valley (S. J. Mtns.)
by Walt Walker

When I arrived home Sunday morning at five a.m. from the all night mission on the Devils Slide trail I quickly hit the sack. Shortly after noon I awoke and lay in bed thinking about the rest of the day, having promised my son that we would fly his model airplane. However, that was quickly shattered when the phone rang.

RMRU was being requested by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department to evacuate a young man, who had injured his leg the evening before, while on a camping trip with his fellow Explorer Scouts.

Upon arriving at Idyllwild I discussed the situation with Deputy Don Reener and the informants. After hiking the Devils Slide the night before and having to use crampons, I knew it would be way after midnight before we would be able to get the young man back to Humber Park. So I called Lt. Ray Campbell of the sheriff's department and asked if we

could have a helicopter for the evacuation. He said he would get one for us.

About 50 minutes later, the team having assembled at the Camp Maranatha ballpark, we heard the familiar chop of a supercharged Bell helicopter. We watched as pilot, Jerry Leeper of Western Helicopters fought his way down in the gusting wind.

With first aid belt, air splint and radio I quickly boarded and Jerry lifted off. We were bounced around by the wind as we headed for the Saddle. With an unexpected lift we soared up and over the Saddle (elevation 8050') and descended into Little Tahquitz Valley. Jerry asked if I thought the snow was hard or soft. With the experience from the night before and seeing no footprints I answered that it was probably hard. He set the bird down slowly in the middle of the valley. The snow being so hard that the runners did not sink at all.

Jumping out the door I was greeted both by the Scouts and the very cold wind. The Explorer Advisor explained the situation, I examined Philip Hill and decided the air splint was not needed. With the help of the Scouts we loaded Philip into the bird. I climbed in and Jerry lifted the powerful machine up, swung it around, and we were off and flying. All the while Jerry talking to the bird as we skimmed over tall Pine trees.

When we got to the west side of the Saddle we literally dropped, in a huge downdraft, towards Idyllwild. Landing back at the ballpark, we unloaded the injured young man and helped him into his friends' station wagon and they left for the hospital. The sun had already set where we were at and it did not take us long to put gear away and head for dinner.

31 DEC., SUN. — SEARCH — No. 7259M
Deep Canyon (West of Palm Desert)
by Jack Schnurr

Relaxing quite comfortably in the Pine Cove Lodge, we watched as Hank Schmel polished off the last of his lobster plate. It had been an easy mission: watching Walt fly in and out of Little Tahquitz Valley with the injured boy. Sometimes you wonder the validity of eating a full dinner on such easy missions. There's always the full tank of gas exhausted to get to the rescue roadhead and the four hours of "homework" time lost that has to be considered. Still, we really didn't have to sweat, strain or worry about finding or evacuating a victim (except for Walt flying in the wind). Still, the dinner had to happen: it was expected.

The waitress approached and tapped Dave Nehan on the shoulder, "Jim Fairchild? You have a phone call." Walt who had gone home for dinner, was calling to advise us to stand by for another mission. Hank continued telling his story.

About 6:30 thoughts drifted from the empty table toward the long drive home. The approaching waitress tapped Dan MacIntosh, "Jim Fairchild? You have a phone call." Walt had called again to say we were needed.

We sipped our coffee mentally negating New Year's Eve's plans as Jim explained our next call. Two hikers were 12 hours overdue from attempting to hike from Sugarloaf to Palm Desert via Deep Canyon. Age unknown, experience level unknown, little, if any, equipment carried. Expected temperature for the night was 17 degrees with winds reaching 20 to 25 knots.

As we descended the steep canyon wall on very loose gravel and rock, we exchanged opinions on the various Cholla and Yucca plants found along the way; such circumstances actively stimulate tactile awareness. Thirty minutes from "The Pumpkin" we found tracks that were eventually to lead us to our quest. We continued.

Bob Claybrook wished us a Happy New Year as he entered "en rappel" over our first obstacle. Jim had mentioned "one or two interesting waterfalls along the way" as we peered over our next challenge: a 150' waterfall ending in a huge pool of cool, clear mountain water. "... Well Base, it's like this ..."

Dawn broke free of wind in the canyon as we rustled from our bivouac sacks. The rocks burned bright orange from the rising sun and the cold began to melt away as Rick Polhers heated the soup for our gang. It hadn't been reluctance to rappel the falls in the dark that had stopped our team but a real diversification of possible routes around the falls that our missing persons might have taken: their tracks led everywhere always ending in trackless rocks. The eagerness among our young crew had to wait till morning to fully evaluate this delicate tracking situation.

Seven a.m. found our group past the large waterfall and looking down a mere 80' dry fall. Base camp reported that the search helicopter was due to arrive at 8 a.m.

A ground searcher really doesn't resent the helicopter, in fact the 'chopper' literally saves the day covering huge amounts of terrain with a fair amount of efficiency. Conversely, the ground searcher who has covered alot of tough ground, rappelled falls, carried the always heavy rescue pack, bivouaced the always cold sleepless night, feels that in romantic justice, he should be the one to make the big find. It can't help but be a disappointment to be actively searching in your second day and hear the radio announce that the helicopter picked the victims up a half mile down canyon of your location. Besides the relief of the ended mission, the only thing left is the long hike out. Our group pressed on; we still had fresh tracks!!

At 8:00 Base announced the arrival of the search bird. This news harmonized magnificently with the

shouted response of our two victims who answered our yells. They stood high on the northerly canyon wall on our left. Attacking the loose rock once again we arrived at their location in about 30 minutes of climbing.

The dangerously building winds did little to affect the excellent flying skill of Roy Cox from Western Helicopters: soon we were all standing at Basecamp with the rescued hikers. It seems that Charles Forteza, 34, and Tom Leahy, 25, had started on their trip at 7 a.m. two days previous expecting to exit at 7 p.m. the same day. After eight hours of hiking they found an impassable waterfall and were forced to spend the night out. The major portion of the second day was spent trying to circumvent the falls and after the second night out they decided to try and hike back out. When we found them they were headed into worse terrain from which they had come.

It was 12:30 a.m. on New Year's day and we again sat comfortably, contemplating the empty table and the long drive home. The feeling of fellowship permeated the dining room of the restaurant; suddenly you were overwhelmed with the strength of the dedication and good-will that cemented the unit together. The after mission meal was the timely circumstance: the stimulating association with positive action and commitment towards fellowman. As I finished my coffee the meeting was adjourned for a brief pause.

rescue equipment made possible by our sustaining members.

During the year we welcomed 99 new members to our sustaining membership and saw 65 percent of last years members renew their memberships. It is very gratifying to know that so many people believe in RMRU and are able to financially support us.

This month we want to welcome Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Mossman and Mr. & Mrs. Dale D. Rosenkrans to the sustaining membership. We also want to thank each of the following for renewing their memberships:

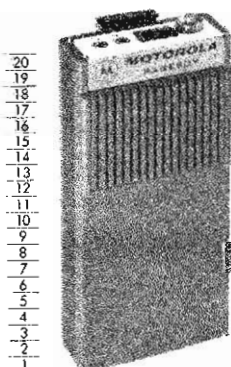
Mr. & Mrs. David L. Morris
Mr. & Mrs. Fred H. Camphausen
Mr. Theodore L. Young
Mr. W. Paul Matthews
Mr. & Mrs. Wynlow L. Swick
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald E. Harris
Mr. & Mrs. Earl N. Cannon
Mr. Howard M. Loy
Mr. G. W. Gardner

Ding Bat
of the month
by HANK SCHMEL

Sustaining Members

by Al Andrews

Pager Fund



Another busy and successful search and rescue year for RMRU has passed. Our success this year has to be attributed in a large part to the top quality

