

RMRU NEWSLETTER

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Search and Rescue

RESCUE

Mission No. 7642M

17 & 18 Oct., Sun. & Mon.
Tahquitz Canyon

By Charles Bujan

The coals had just reached the right temperature and I was ready to start cooking dinner when the pager went off. After a few phone calls, I found out that we had a rescue in Tahquitz Canyon. As I was getting ready to roll, Larry Brown called to tell me to come over to his house so that we, along with Rich Quackenbush, could go to the trail head together.

The three of us arrived at the trail head at 2000 hours. We immediately went to the information board in the RMRU van to find out the details of the rescue. The board informed us that the first team of Fairchild, Dew, Fulkman, Aldrich and Zappe had just started to hike to the base of the second water falls in Tahquitz Canyon where the victim, Mike Everley (a man suffering from a bleeding ulcer) was last seen. As we finished reading the board Larry Roland, temporary operations leader, came to tell us that he had just finished questioning Mike's hiking buddy who had pointed out the sick man's problem, location and other pertinent and necessary information. From the conversation with the informant, Larry had found out that Mike was probably suffering from a bleeding ulcer. Our orders were to wait for Captain Canova to return

with Maalox and cream, the temporary remedy for the illness.

While we were waiting, John Muratet arrived, whereupon Rich Quackenbush took over as Ops Leader because he had more experience than the rest of us, enabling L. Brown, J. Muratet, and I, to form a second team. It was 2033 when Captain Canova arrived with the Maalox and cream. We stashed it in our packs and started out immediately.

It was a beautiful night for a hike. The sky was clear, the air was fresh and it was warm. Actually, I should say hot, moving along as we were, by the time we were half way up to the second falls everyone was ringing wet with sweat. (By this time we were also taking bets as to whether the cream would turn to butter by the time we reached the subject!) At 2115 team one radioed to inform us that they had left a rope in place to help us get past a rock, known as the Belly Roll, which went straight up on one side and straight down on the other. By 2130 we reached the Belly Roll and the rope. As we were undoing the rope to take along with us after crossing the rock, another call came over the radio. It was to tell us and base camp that team one had arrived on the scene.

When the first group made personal contact with Mike, they found he was alone near the stream in the canyon. Until about an hour earlier he had had the company of Spirit, a permanent resident of the canyon and known to all the team by just this name. Spirit had left Mike and hiked down the canyon and met team one hiking up canyon and had turned and hiked back in with them.

Part of the first group of Fairchild, Dew, Fulkman, Aldrich, Zappe immediately went into action. They began checking pulse, blood pressure, and other vital signs, while the others set up a radio-phone patch to Dr. Norm Mellor at his home in Corona with the help of the Riverside Amateur Radio Association who did

an excellent job of making it sound as though Norm was there with the team. After a few minutes of conversation and exchange of facts, Norm agreed that the young man was suffering from an ulcer. An order of 2 oz. Maalox on the hour and 2 oz. cream on the half hour was given as anticipated. This was to continue through the night until the subject could be brought out.

At this moment we (the second team) arrived with the Maalox and cream. Despite its trip, the cream was still nice and cool, to Mike's enjoyment. Between servings, the plastic bottle of cream was kept submerged in the creek, almost to the neck, which kept it fresh.

At this point we decided who was going to take what shift during the night to make sure Mike got his Maalox and cream, as well as having someone making sure that he was okay.

While some of us were sleeping, others were being entertained with Spirit's story telling. Still others back at base were making arrangements for Don Landells to fly us out in his big bird. Quackenbush, with the help of Captain Canova, was able to guarantee us that Don would fly in at 0630 the next day.

On Monday, we awoke at 0530 to start getting ready for the arrival of Don. Our first priority was to find a landing spot for the bird. This was easier than we had expected, because right above the area we had been occupying was a giant rock big enough for the bird to land on. The next problem was to get Mike up on the rock. This proved to be easy too with a little team work and muscle. To make our whole morning complete, Mike was feeling well enough to get into the helicopter himself instead of having to be flown out tied in a litter.

Don was operating his bird in top form; within 30 minutes he had the sick man with Fairchild and Dew attending at the hospital and Muratet,

Aldrich, Fulkman, Zappe, Brown and myself back our cars, hungry for breakfast. ■ RMRU

EVACUATION

Mission No. 7643M

**29 Oct., Fri.
Round Valley
San Jacinto Mountains**

By John Dew

On October 29 at 10:45 a.m. the pager activated and the call said, "RMRU member, John Dew, call Banning ASAP!"

A frown crossed my brow and a dread filled me as I made my way to the nearest phone. The reason for the concern was the team had just been talked to by Walt Walker on a Monday night training and by Jim Fairchild the following Wednesday

night in regular training about individuals being paged on our pager system. My first thoughts were - who could be calling me? My wife never uses this method of contact. My second thoughts were - what must the rest of the team think after what we had just been told two nights ago.

Upon contact with the sheriff, I learned that Captain Canova had put out the call because a man in Round Valley up on the top of the mountain had suffered what was thought to be a heart attack during the previous night. He had already contacted Western Helicopter and a bird was in the air at the time, but the pilot didn't know where Round Valley was.

Captain Canova called me because I work here in Banning and the bird could just set down at Banning Airport, pick me up and be gone immediately. He wanted to know if I could be ready to fly in twenty minutes. I assured him I could and asked him to call a couple other team mem-

bers to let them know what was going on.

Immediately, I changed clothes, put on my boots, grabbed all the gear I thought I could possibly need (even though a mission sounds simple, you never know what complications you may run into) and was waiting at Banning Airport when my ride got there.

We lifted off, flew to Round Valley where Jerry Henderson, Park Ranger, was holding a piece of orange material to show us wind direction and velocity. We set down quickly, picked up the subject, George Wehbi, a 46 yr. old man from Culver City, Ca., and flew him out **lying down inside the helicopter** (a new arrangement in the Western Helicopter capabilities). We delivered him to Desert Hospital in Palm Springs and then I was brought back to Banning.

The whole operation took just 1 hour and 45 minutes and yet we were able to be of service to still another person in need. ■ RMRU

TRAINING



Technical

**30 & 31 Oct., Sat. & Sun.
Joshua Tree
National Monument**

By Hal Fulkman

Turning off the highway into the monument John Dew and I were rapidly approaching Sheep Pass Campground, to meet with the rest of the team. The monument was especially spectacular at this time in the morning with each rock having it's own color and hue, and changing as rapidly as the sun rose.

Arriving at the **exact** location at the **precise** time, John and I were appalled to find the entire group, which



came in the night before, still in their sleeping bags. John, taking matters into his own hands, snapped them out of their unconsciousness with 3 long blasts from his horn. The effect was devastating! A movement here, a groan there, an expletive everywhere.

Fifteen feet directly ahead of our vehicle lay a mass of nylon, goose down, and human flesh. This culmination of unlikely materials turned out to be none other than our own Ed Hill. To watch Ed emerge from his sleeping bag was an experience worth the journey. The entire process bore a close resemblance to that of childbirth. First came the top of his head, then an eye - then another. Now his entire head is visible. His shoulders are out now and the worst is over. With a groan and a final push, Ed is standing erect in front of us ready to face whatever challenge Jim Fairchild has in store.

After everyone had arrived, Jim called us together around the van. The plan was to have three exercises that day. Technical raise, tracking, and multipitch lower. The first two were timed, start to finish, and were executed quite well. The technical raise consisted of lifting a victim, by

litter, from a suspended ledge to the top of a rock face. One of the members wives, Nanci Carlson, courageously volunteered to be the victim in the litter. After raising the fair damsel safely to the top of the rock face we all proceeded back to the van.

Upon arriving we were greeted by another disaster. Three hikers, team members girlfriends, had been caught in a freak October blizzard. Although a blizzard condition was a little hard to simulate, with a little imagination the mission got under way. The tracking segment went well and in a short time we found the victims on the very brink of oblivion. After treating their simulated hypothermia, we evacuated them by litter back to the van.

The third exercise was the most difficult, multipitch lower. Multipitch lowering is a method used when in the course of lowering a litter it becomes necessary to set up additional anchoring points down beneath the original ones. This is employed when the lowering distance is greater than the length of our rope or obstacles make it impossible to continue lowering.

Sunday was devoted to practicing rock climbing techniques. With Bernie McIlvoy as head of the class, we were all given some very good instructions, as well as given a dazzling exhibition of rock climbing skill.

■ RMRU



The Road Runner Sez-

By Jim Fairchild.

As my belayer lowered me farther down the waterfall I began to regret my decision to "give it a try". A "wall-to-wall" pool of deep, brown water awaited below, with no visible escape from a swim to reach the far side twenty feet away. It was like descending into a large, rocky cylinder - sheer on three sides, the fourth side featuring a ledge above another vertical waterfall with another deep, brown pool at its bottom. Well, it's only water, and I don't want to look like a chicken. Calling for a steady rate of lowering, I soon was at the water's edge. On tension it was a rough scramble, scrape, grab, lunge to force my body left onto a ledge, thus missing all but one shoe full of water. A handy staff four feet long helped, and when shoved down into the pool went several feet and bobbed up not having touched bottom.

Over to the ledge at the edge of the next pool. My flashlight's beam revealed a similar pool with no ledges at all, but I knew there were no more waterfalls requiring rope-downs. Upon arrival at the water I was disgusted to find no alternative but to swim. I kept shining the light into the water for some indication of a weakness. There it was - a sunken sandbar ten feet right! Swinging over I cautiously put a foot into the murk and stepped out. Eighteen feet of wading and only knee-depth. My companions atop the upper waterfall had been guffawing and enjoying my predicaments. I yelled up, "Who's next?" Absolute silence. Then, Hal Fulkman answered, "I'll try it." Of course, he arrived at the bottom much sooner having the benefit of my experience. Larry Roland, Randy Morrow, and Randy Miller quickly removed the anchors and rigging, coiled the ropes, and made their way out of the canyon via the high trail.

So, what was all this about? Our frequent, informal Monday evening training. We were in Massacre Canyon, a steep, deep cleft in the west-

ern part of the Soboba Hills, a couple of miles northwest of the city of San Jacinto. We chose to get some familiarity and practice in these hills the last two Monday trainings because they are the most dangerous hills we have ever entered for missions. Their southern scarp is deceptively steep and the earth is a matrix of soft loose dirt with rocks and boulders therein ready to roll or slough off with little excuse. We've evacuated a number of stranded, injured, or deceased victims of the Sobobas. During warm weather numerous rattlesnakes are encountered, having given us anxious moments in the past.

Back at the van where John Dew had waited we had a short de-briefing. As was the case two weeks ago in another canyon, the comments emphasized how easily one can underestimate the problems encountered there. Randy Morrow commented on the narrow trail with frequent rock outcroppings at the sides that force one onto the edge a bit, and one had better take all the equipment that could be logically required for a technical evacuation on Tahquitz Rock, plus long pickets for anchoring in the sand and dirt. I had to confess that the reason I did not come back up the rope upon determining the depth and extent of the pools of water was because I forgot to put my second technical bag into my pack - the one containing my Jumar Ascenders (clamps that attach to the rope and permit one to "walk up" it).

Occasionally our training sessions provide us with "mini-adventures." Through the year we try to manage our training so that it is at least as difficult as any actual search or rescue would be. Hence, when the real thing gets our attention, the main difference is that the subjects we assist differ from our "pretend" victims only in that they surprise us as to when and where they need that assistance. ■ RMRU

**THE OCTOBER
'OLDEN DAYS'
WILL BE
IN THE
NOVEMBER ISSUE**