

Our Good Intentions, Went down the drain!

If you are a regular reader of the RMRU Newsletter, you might remember, that we wrote in the May issue that we planned to catch up on our being behind in publishing. The plan was, to mail the August, September and October issues, together in November. Then, the November and December issues sometime in January. It will be February when you receive the July, August, September, October, November and December issues. The January 1979 issue of the RMRU Newsletter will have a number of changes. Some of them, will be to reduce the cost of the newsletter, and others, will be new ideas from a new editor. - Walt Walker, Publisher

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 7837M

**12-13 Aug. - Sat.-Sun.
San Jacinto Mountains**

By John Dew

This August Saturday had been a hot, long, happy one. The RMRU

team had been on training, and it had been a time of fun.

This training had been to carry fifty pounds from Humber Park to Tahquitz Peak and back to set a time on about how long it should take. Much good natured horsing around had taken place and we had had fun, BUT still we were glad it was over. We were looking forward to getting some rest before the next morning when we would be involved in helping with the pancake breakfast the Isaac Walton League of Idyllwild puts on to benefit RMRU.

With this special day coming we wanted to be at our best, BUT that wasn't to be.

On Saturday evening some of the team had gone home to be with their families. Some of them had stayed to camp in one of the local parks, and some of them had taken advantage of Norm and Maggie Mellor's hospitality at the Sky Yacht. No matter where the team members were our trusty pagers were alert and about eight o'clock that night they started screaming at us that there was a mission that must be handled immediately.

A 15 year old boy was camping near Willow Creek Crossing with some others in a group when he decided to take a short walk. When he decided to return a short time later he was so disoriented he could not find his way back to the group. He had wandered off mid-afternoon and the group had searched for him until dusk before calling for help, thus the late call to RMRU.

Several team members were dispatched to the area where he was last seen. They started searching from there while two other members were placed at Saddle Junction to serve as relay back to Base, while a couple of members were left at Base Camp to do the work which needed to be done there.

As was suspected by the searchers, and as had happened so often before,

the lost boy had gotten into the Willow Creek drainage and started toward the infamous hazard to inexperienced hikers, Tahquitz Canyon, which catches so many lost persons. Fortunately for him, at Laws Camp, some other people were camped. As they were talking to him they discovered he was lost. They did about the best thing they could do. They knew someone would be looking for him and they persuaded him to stay there with them until morning.

About 2:00 a.m. our team members searching the area and calling, calling, into the night, had waked the people in the tent. After information was exchanged it was learned the young man RMRU was looking for was in the tent.

After camping there until morning RMRU thanked the folks who had been so much help and took the lost boy back to his group.

They arrived back in Idyllwild in time for part of the Pancake Breakfast, and members of the Isaac Walton League of Idyllwild had opportunity to see first hand what a tremendous part they play in assisting those in need in the wilderness. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7838M

**19-20 Aug., Sat. & Sun.
Whitewater Drainage
San Bernardino Mountains**

By Jim Fairchild

The Whitewater Drainage originates from the very top of Mt. San Gorgonio, 11,501' el., Southern California's highest mountain. Four major forks descend easterly and southeasterly, joining to make one broad wash at about 4500' el. The Pacific Crest Trail, the 2600 mile route from Mexico to Canada, enters Whitewater Canyon where Interstate 10

crosses. The trail proceeds northward past the Whitewater Fish Hatchery and two miles farther north into a side canyon and over ridges into the Mission Creek Drainage.

Kent and Richard missed the PCT where it leaves Whitewater Drainage. They split up to try and find it. They stayed split. Richard realized the problem as he hiked up the wash. He spent a day and a half crossing and searching the area many times. Then he hiked out and finally alerted the Sheriff at the Banning Station.

RMRU arrived at the hatchery and set up base. Sgt. Weakley procured the San Bernardino Sheriff's Hughes 500C helicopter just after the initial party of Dew and Chambers left the hatchery to cover the first part of the canyon. Kevin Walker and I were dispatched into the field along with Richard, the informant, to check the area of "splitting" and try to establish a direction for the lost Kent. Jim Garvey went with three men in a 4WD machine from Hemet to check the road that penetrates Whitewater from Mission Creek, ending at Wathier Landing at about 4000' el.

Kevin and I searched the area, finding where Richard had built a signal fire the first night they split. Dew and Chambers joined us. Garvey reported the subject's tracks in the wash near Wathier Landing. We asked that Dew and Chambers be lifted up there - they were. Kevin and I awaited our turn; we wanted to check the Middle Fork to see if Kent could have in some miraculous way managed to get into the North Fork, or go over the headwall of the Middle Fork. Both routes were tricky, the headwall quite treacherous. We finally, through Roland, the Operations Leader, got a hold of the helicopter, but when it flew over we heard the dismaying command, "Continue hiking up the canyon." We asked to be lifted into the Middle Fork two more times, but got the same command each time. Suffice it to say, we were miffed. Radio silence prevailed until about 5 pm, when the machine arrived and we were told the Sgt. had found tracks up the Middle Fork. Dew, Chambers, Walker and myself were soon up there following tracks up the ever steepening canyon. The walls closed in, enormous jumbles of boulders and recently fractured bluffs rose close by. As the angle increased,

we encountered Class 4 scrambling up active waterfalls. Dew stayed behind as relay. We still had Kent's tracks, but lost them about 400' below the top of the headwall. Long, steep, constantly moving slides of sand and gravel made it impossible to tell whether Kent took a side shute to escape the direct route. We were now on the tracks of a small black bear and a deer. Kevin was above us, almost to the top, 8000', Don Landells arrived in his powerful bird and plucked us off that loose mess - just stuck one skid into the matrix and held the machine as we clambered aboard. Flying out we searched the Middle Fork's upper reaches and were even further impressed by its ruggedness.

Back at Base we heard that a party from the 303rd ParaRescue unit had found a single track west of the headwall. Our hunch was right on.

The next morning, due to a mix-up, we got airborne at 0900, instead of 0630. We flew close search up the South Fork, then into the East Fork. Kent later said we flew over him. His clothes matched the canyon walls perfectly, and we were going higher and faster at that point. Kevin and I got out on a small peak south of the Middle Fork headwall. We had just arrived where the single track was

marked when word came of Kent's being spotted from Landell's bird. We hustled toward the area - about a half mile north of where the East and South Forks join. A 303rd party was hiking downstream on Kent's tracks and was ten minutes away when he was spotted. The difficult terrain caused quite a long delay in getting him out.

Later, Hal Fulkman and I were flown in by Don to retrieve Kent's pack - he had tied it to a small tree thirty feet below the headwall about three hundred feet up from the pass itself. Of course, he had absolutely nothing with him his last night and day in the wilderness. But, being along water, he survived.

The above is a short summary of the story. I could write a book on the mission to make it complete. But that's as usual. Maybe someday we'll do just that on a particularly long and difficult operation. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7839M

29 Aug., Tue.

San Jacinto Mountains

By Hal Fulkman

A call came in to Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit from the Riverside County Sheriff's Banning Office requesting RMRU to assist the United States Forest Service and the Pine Cove Volunteer fire department in searching for a woman who had disappeared from Camp Lawler near the Allendale Ranger Station. The woman was believed lost in the Dark Canyon area and was unfamiliar with the surroundings.

The woman had last been seen shortly before sundown near the kitchen facility area where she was employed as a helper. After interrogating some of the woman's friends, we discovered that the woman liked to take short strolls on the many nature paths that surrounded the camp; particularly those trails that led down to the stream. With this information we focused the search in the immediate area around the stream. The paths were heavily traveled and it was difficult trying to single out the particular footprint we were looking for.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

RMRU MEMBER Kevin Walker leads, the just located, lost hiker Kent away from the rescue helicopter.

Finally, we discovered a few partial prints that looked promising and, after some careful tracking and a little guesswork, we discovered several good clear prints in a sandbar near the stream that we were able to determine as being hers.

Continuing to follow the tracks, we discovered that the prints followed the stream for a short distance and then turned back toward the direction of the camp. After considering the direction the prints were going, the girl had either walked back to camp and was somewhere in camp without anyone's knowledge or she had, somehow, walked past the camp and was further to the west of where we were searching.

Because the direction was paralleling the highway, some of the Pine Cove firemen were sent in vehicles down the highway; periodically stopping their vehicles and calling the woman's name. After approximately ½ mile distance, the firemen got a distant reply to their shouting. All RMRU personnel were sent to the location of the firemen and dispersed down the heavily brushed slope toward the direction of the woman's cries for help.

The progress was slow and arduous through the immense wall of thick brush. The continual searching



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

RMRU MEMBER Darryl Hand, flashlight in one hand, and the missing woman's hand in the other, leads her through the dense brush

for a passable route became more and more difficult and finally came to the point of having to crawl under the brush instead of trying to penetrate through it. The feeling of claustrophobia and the thought of coming face to face with one of the "buzz-tails" that frequent this area made it difficult to concentrate on zeroing in on the sound of the voice. Finally, the brush opened to the point that we could once again move forward in an upright position. Moving steadily forward, we covered the last 50 to 75 yards in about 25 minutes.

Reaching the girl who by this time was wondering if we were going to find her at all, and after some minor first aid, some nourishment, and about 2 quarts of water, the woman was able to travel. Joining up with another team consisting of USFS personnel and a counselor from the camp, we began the long, slow trip back to the highway. • RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 7840M

30 Aug., Wed. Deer Springs San Jacinto Mountains

By Kevin Walker

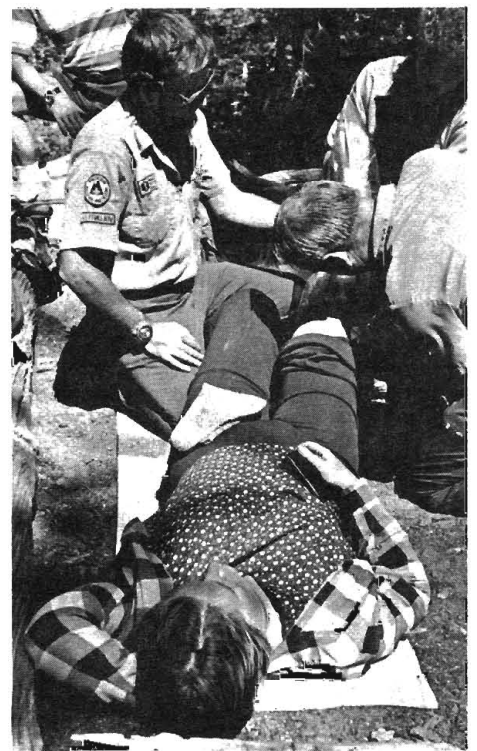
"Only 20 more minutes till lunch!" That was my exact thought when the telephone rang at work with word of a rescue mission in the San Jacinto Mountains. I was informed by RMRU day coordinator Jerry Muratet that a 50 year old woman had slipped while hiking in the Deer Springs area, and possibly fractured her leg. Jerry also told me that a helicopter had been ordered, and the rendezvous point would be the Banning Municipal Airport.

John Dew, my dad and I rode to Banning. Shortly after that Jim Fairchild arrived. We were met there by Capt. Ray Canova and Sgt. Weakly of the Banning S.O. The Capt. told us that Don Landells was on his way with his Bell Jet Ranger, and that the Rescue Van was about 30 minutes out. Don arrived before the van did, so we decided to go in with first aid gear and a full leg air splint. John, Walt and I climbed in the bird, and Jim would wait at base for the van. Even though it was a warm day it did not

take the powerful turbine powered helicopter long at all to reach the 8,000 ft. level and soon after that, we were circling Deer Springs. After making a few passes at the upper end of the camp, Don moved to the lower end of Deer Springs. It was soon after that Don spotted the camp out of the right side of the chopper. About a quarter of a mile below that was a fairly good sized meadow to land in. With the three of us let off, Don started back for Banning.

It took about ten minutes to reach the parties camp. Upon arriving, we were indeed confronted by a possibly fractured ankle. The subjects name was Shirley Albertson. She, her husband, her daughter and daughter's boyfriend had hiked over from the tram on Tuesday. Approximately half a mile out of camp, Mrs. Albertson slipped on a wet log. At the time she could still walk (with help) but soon after making camp her ankle swelled up, and became quite painful. Wednesday morning her husband started down for Idyllwild, and that is when RMRU came into the scene.

I was assigned to be first aider, so upon examining her, I found there to



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

INJURED WOMAN Shirley Albertson looks on, while RMRU members, Walt Walker, John Dew (with back to camera) and Kevin Walker inflate air splint that had been put on her ankle

be nothing wrong with her other than the ankle injury. While I was doing the exam, Walt radioed back to base, and asked for the wheeled litter. It was the type of day that you could have just sat out in the warm sun and enjoyed the view for hours. Our quiet break did not last long, for soon after that we could hear the familiar sound of the turbine.

With Don waiting in the meadow, Jim and Darryl Hand brought the wheeled litter to our location. It then did not take long to wheel Shirley down to the waiting helicopter. After loading Shirley into the back, I climbed in to help steady her foot. With Walt and Don (the Lone Ranger and

Tonto), in the front, it was a hearty hi-yo chopper, and away.

After being thanked many times while going into the Pass Hospital, we left Shirley in care of the doctors, and returned to the airport. Don then returned to the mountain to get John, Jim and Darryl. Once that was complete, it was thanks again to Don for his usual great flying, and see you next time. After finishing an early dinner, we stopped at the hospital to get the air splint and check on Shirley. Luckily it was only a badly sprained ankle, but the proper precautions had been taken on our part, by treating it as if it was a fracture. A happy ending for all concerned. • RMRU

TRAINING

12 Aug., Sat. Tahquitz Peak, San Jacinto Mountains

By John Dew

For most on the team, training is training. "Tell me what to do and I'll do it." "It'll be fun doing it with the other guys." August training was to be no different in that respect. The team would train. They would do what had been planned for them to do. It would be fun because they would be with the other members of the team. These things were standard, but August was to be *different!*

For years there had been a requirement for membership, that to prove ones physical fitness to be a member, probationary members were to do either Rabbit Peak, or from Humber Park, do Mt. San Jacinto. These feats were to be done carrying a given amount of weight and of course in a given amount of time. The problem with this requirement was that for many years it had not been strictly enforced. In fact, many of the more recent members didn't even know that such a requirement existed.

Something had to be done to correct such a gross oversight, or lack of discipline, or whatever it was which



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

WHEELED LITTER AND TURBINE HELICOPTER — RMRU's very own wheeled litter and Don Landell's Jet Ranger Helicopter came together in a meadow below Deer Springs. The 'wheel' and the 'chopper' were the means of transportation used to get Shirley Albertson to the San Geronio Pass Hospital.

Izaak Walton Pancake Breakfast

13 August, Sunday

By J. R. Muratet

Sunday, August 13 was a beautiful morning for the annual Issac Walton League Breakfast put on to raise some money for RMRU.

Issac Walton, a historical person, was concerned about the preserva-

tion of the outdoors. To continue his work the League was formed.

Idyllwild's Issac Walton League chapter is the second largest in California; with such an excellent board of directors made up of people like Ernie Maxwell it is easy to see why. Ernie, a longtime Idyllwild resident, has been the League president for 30 years. Every year it's Ernie and the other active League members who make the breakfast a reality.

As you know, RMRU is a non-profit organization supported complete-

ly through donations. The annual breakfast is an important source of income for the team. Over \$600.00 was realized from this years breakfast. At a time when the team is growing and our operating expenses are increasing the income from the pancake breakfast was greatly welcomed and needed! Let me extend from RMRU our thanks to the Isaac Walton League for a job well done.

Thank You!

caused us to fall into such a state of lethargy... *BUT WHAT????*

To have probationary members do one of these things would truly prove their endurance capability, but, it was felt, their physical fitness and also their ability to help the team could be determined much easier than that.

It was necessary to find out to some degree the fitness level and endurance of a person before loading them the way we load ourselves and say to them, "O.K., do this.". In the past several had applied who no doubt would have been part of the problem rather than part of the solution had they been accepted. The team tries hard to keep such a situation from arising.

At last the idea came to someone!!! "Let's have probationary members put 50 pounds in their packs, go from Humber Park to Saddle Junction, then to the lookout tower on Tahquitz Peak and back. We can time them on the round trip." Not too hard! Not an endurance contest! Just a good hike! *BUT* in what length of time?? No one knew for sure what to expect an unproven person to do that hike in, in terms of time. *THEN* the real BRAINSTORM!!!! Let's have the whole team do it. It would be good training. It would be fun. *AND* it would establish a time frame.

Deliberating over this idea it was decided it wouldn't be a race. It wouldn't even be competitive. (Oh, no?) It would just be a leisurely stroll of approximately eight miles with 50 pounds on your back.

The day for training came. We met at Humber Park, weighed our packs to remove all guess work, (and possibility of going to *LIGHT*), and we started on the trail. Soon the team was scattered along the trail as some members hiked faster than others.

It didn't take long for the competition to develop and some were just sprinting up the hill. It was fun, but it removed the validity of setting an expectancy time for new members, as an average time for this particular hike was nullified.

The team was to take the regular trail up and back, but some of those in the "race" were seen shortcutting by taking a section of the *OLD* trail (much shorter) on the return half of the round trip. (There I go talking out of turn again).

All in all it was a good day. Everyone had fun. The enjoyment of being together is to us an important portion of any training. We returned to our homes, planning to be back in Idyllwild the next morning for the Pancake Breakfast which is put on for RMRU by the Izaak Walton League, but were awakened sooner by a phone call the night before. The call was to go back up the hill for a second time that day. This time it was to look for a lost hiker. • RMRU

from Old'en Days

by Walt Walker

AUGUST

Ten years ago—

On the 4th of July the team was called at 6:15 p.m. to search for a fisherman, who was missing in the Strawberry Creek area. Paul Baker was found about ½ mile below the USC Arts Foundation. He had slipped, injured his shoulder, and was unable to climb out. We assisted him from his location and he then walked out under his own power.

The next mission was wrote up with the following title: "Here's Why We Belong to RMRU". A 10 year old boy, Bobby Sitz, had become separated from his hiking group about 10:30 Thursday morning. The unit was notified in the afternoon and we began what was to become a five day mission. We tracked and searched most of Thursday night. When, by noon on Friday, we had not found him, we called for help from the California Region. Saturday morning we had 40 more searchers, from the region teams. We searched all day Saturday with negative results. Sunday, we expanded our search area. We also had one Bell helicopter from Western Helicopters and another Bell from the L. A. Co. Sheriff. There was also two large Navy helicopters. At times the Camp Maranatha ballpark looked like an airport. Late Sunday afternoon tracks were found in the upper end of Tahquitz Canyon. On Monday the entire operation was moved to the east side of the mountain. We had the helicopters again and concentrated in the canyon and on its adjoining ridges. Around two a team in the lower end of the canyon found a

set of small tracks. RMRU member Al Andrews took off in the Western bird and spotted a pair of tennis shoes in a large pool of water. When the bird turned back for another look the missing boy was spotted under a large tree. Al was put out on a one-runner helispot and he used his call-out rope to go down to the boy. Dr. Dick Alley and Walt Walker were next flown in and they went down to the boy. The boy was examined and it was determined that he was not injured, but he was very weak and dehydrated. More MRA team members helped to move Bobby up the canyon wall, where he was picked up by the Western bird and flown out to the Palm Springs Airport. The first RMRU 'epic' mission had ended with a very positive result.

A week later we started a search for two brothers, aged 15 and 2½ years, who were missing from the Marion Mountain Campground. We searched most of the night and our tracking Bloodhound was hot on their trail. The pair walked out onto the road and were returned to camp by a passing car.

The rest of the newsletter was devoted to a number of short articles on things that RMRU was involved in. The **President's Box** by Walt Walker had some interesting statistics. In the period, June 23-30, RMRU had put in 702 manhours in SAR missions. The Tahquitz Canyon 'epic' saw RMRU members put in another 864 manhours.

Five years ago—

The first item under **Search and Rescue** was a write-up about RMRU members who manned a first aid station that was set up at Camp Lackey. A massive fire was burning its way up the North Face. Besides being the fire camp first aiders, they were also ready to rescue any firefighters who might be injured on technical terrain. The next mission was a search for two men overdue from a climb of the North Face. The helicopter was used to put search teams out at different areas. Pete Carlson was flying with Don Landells when Pete spotted the pair. Don sat the bird down for a one-runner and Pete climbed out. He helped the pair climb in and they were flown to base.

The **Training** article told about a great session on Suicide Rock and the annual wives and girlfriends appreciation dinner at the Sky Yacht. The **Sustaining Members** column by Mike Daugherty had bad news, no donations for the month. • RMRU

