

Volume XIV, Issue 2, February 1978 — John Dew, Editor — Walt Walker, Publisher — Dona Towell, Artist

RMRU heads into storm!



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

Three feet of fresh snow, darkness, and a continuing storm did not deter RMRU from starting on a mission to aid an injured skier in the backcountry of the San Jacinto Mountains. This photograph was shot in Long Valley, near the upper station of the Palm Springs

Aerial Tramway, as unit members prepared to start snowshoeing towards Round Valley. (L to R) John Muratet, Jim Garvey, Bernie McIlvoy, Carl Miller and Ken Dahlke. (Story starts on page 2, see Mission No. 7804M by Ed Hill, also more photographs.)

Search and Rescue

RESCUE

Mission No. 7804M

**12 & 13 Feb., Sun. & Mon.
Round Valley
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Ed Hill

After a day of cross-country skiing in a storm there is nothing like a "call-out" back into the same storm. My

call captain told me that a skier had broken his ankle in Round Valley and we were meeting at the Palm Springs Tramway. I sorted through my gear and took the driest and left in a rain storm.

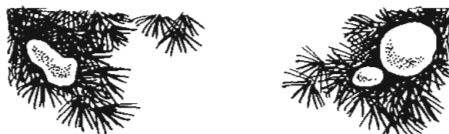
Three feet of fresh power snow met us at the mountain station. We snowshoed over to the Long Valley Ranger Station where we were told that the Round Valley ranger was bivouacking with the injured man. The fresh snow made our progress very slow, and it was daylight before we reached Round Valley. We called the ranger and asked him where he was. (Radios are great help in times like these.) He replied to the effect that he really wasn't sure and was in a gully so he couldn't pick out any landmarks.

We left the rescue toboggan in the middle of the meadow and started searching and shouting. One of the teams near the upper end of the val-

ley heard them and we quickly snowshoed up the proper gully. The two skiers and the ranger had spent a cold night.

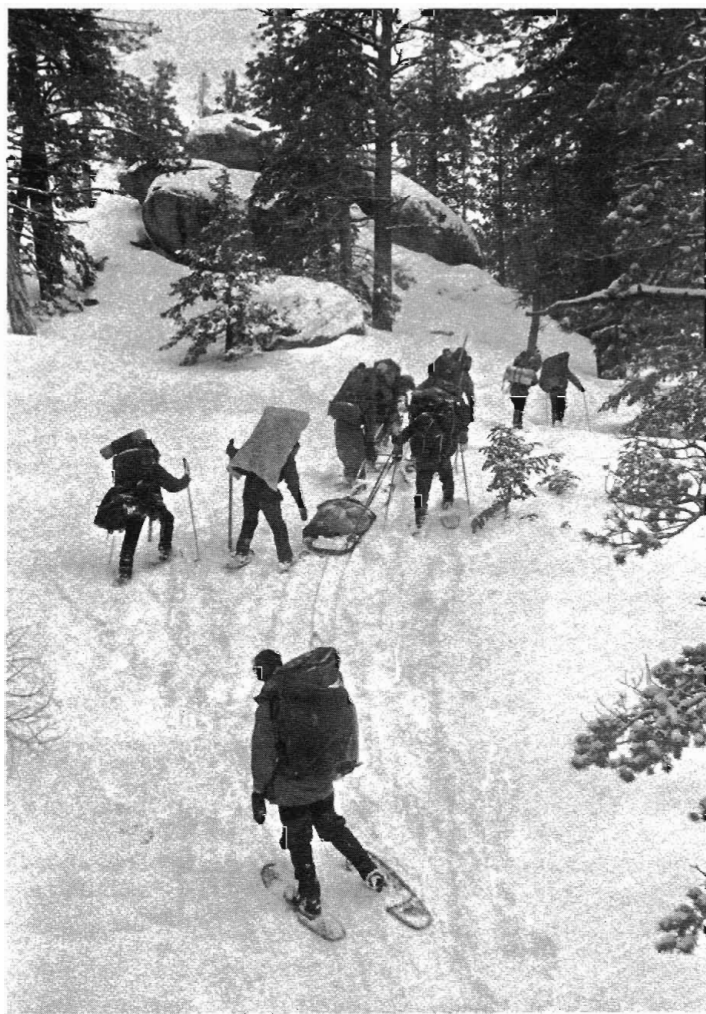
We fired up our stoves and served hot food to all. The weather cleared a bit and we asked for a helicopter for evacuation. While waiting the storm closed in again so we loaded the injured man into the rescue toboggan and pulled him back to the mountain station. This is a trip of over two miles and we had been up all night. (Hard work.)

A report that two brothers were overdue climbing one of the desert ridges reached us as we were finishing this task and the team deployed on the next mission. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

The injured young man was photographed as he was helped into a sleeping bag (and was then secured into the rescue toboggan) in the upper part of Round Valley.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

Although it is generally downhill from Round Valley to Long Valley, there are short areas that are uphill. This photo was shot as unit members struggled uphill.

The following mission had two, very different segments, so it was decided to have one write-up for each.

SEARCH

Mission No. 7805M

**13 & 14 Feb., Mon. & Tue.
So. Ridge Chino Canyon
San Jacinto Mountains**

By John Dew

It was about noon on Monday. The whole team was tired, having been up all night bringing a man with a broken ankle out of Round Valley, on a rescue toboggan, which is nothing but pure hard work. We were looking forward to a good lunch and then home to bed for some much needed rest. We were just ready to board the tram for the trip down when we were informed by the Sheriff's Department that two men were reported missing in the hills just at the **bottom** of the lower station.

Our first question was, "How can anyone get lost in the low hills at the **bottom** of the tram?" Their car was parked on one of the lower parking lots, tracks were leading to the nearby ridges and the Palm Springs Mounted Police had already been called to search the area around the car, as this was still in the Palm Springs city limits. (We were called when it proved to be up the canyon beyond their jurisdiction.)

The Mounties had secured a "bird" and had flown the ridge and nearby territory. They reported that they had seen tracks at about the 6000' elevation and they seemed to be going both up and down.

The RMRU team went to lunch as they had not eaten since the night before, then returned to take up the search. The Mounties had ceased searching and left the area sometime earlier than our return and we made team assignments as soon as possible. The day was nearing a close and we needed as much time as possible to use the helicopter during daylight to place men on the ridge near the 6000' level to evaluate the reported tracks.

The afternoon had been very stormy and the clouds were at just the 6000' level making the landing of men there very difficult.

Immediately tracks were found which looked as though at least two people had been walking each direction. RMRU really questioned if this could be the two young men we were looking for, as their car was down at the 2000' level and these tracks were at 6500' and the men were reported as being in canvas shoes. In addition to this, the snow from this storm had piled to about three feet and they were wearing nothing more than light summer clothes.

After searching for about an hour or an hour and a half darkness was coming and the cloud cover lowered and the decision was made to lift the teams off the ridge. Darkness and the deteriorating weather are both detriments when using aircraft. In addition it didn't seem logical that the missing persons would be that high. All teams were lifted off except one consisting of Bernie McIlvoy and John Muratet who had started searching up the ridge, following these tracks, and found themselves in the clouds, too high to get back to the helispot before dark. They were informed by Base Camp that they would have to remain on the ridge all night.

Just as this bit of cheerful news was radioed to them, they sent word back that they had voice contact with someone. "It sounds like it is about a thousand feet above us," they said. So instead of making camp and trying to get some rest and sleep these two continued to press upward, calling, waiting for a response to their shouts, and pressing on again. This was extremely difficult as they had been up all night before and were nearly exhausted.

At about 2200 hrs. (10:00 p.m.) and at the point of complete exhaustion these men radioed Base Camp that they had found **one** subject. This was good news to RMRU. We were very concerned, however, when we learned that he was one of two brothers for whom we were searching and he did not know the whereabouts of the other. The other one he told us later had fallen near the spot where the helicopter had been landing men on the ridge, where the tracks had first been seen. (The finding of the brother is in another place in this issue.)

This young man was alive. For this we were thankful. He had suffered much from the cold. His clothes were literally frozen to him. His feet were near freezing and showed evidence of much frost bite, he had severe snow blindness and he was very hungry. He confided in the team members who were up there with him that he had actually given up and did not think he was going to make it.

Bernie and John got some warm food into him, found a nearby rock formation which gave them some shelter from part of the wind and cold and snow and with the skimpy amount of clothing the team members had with them, put some dry clothing on the subject. They put him in one sleeping bag and by using every available thing left, kept themselves from freezing during the night.

When morning finally dominated over that long cold night for them, they fed the injured man some more warm food while we in Base Camp were making arrangements with the helicopter to lift them off that mountain.

We were glad the ordeal was over and we at last could return to our homes. We were happy that we were able to save one life, yet saddened that the brother had not been so fortunate. • RMRU

The following write-up is the second part of Mission No. 7805M.

By Ed Hill

A swiftly moving storm on February 12th and 13th kept RMRU busy. A cross country skier sprained his ankle above Round Valley and had to be evacuated by toboggan. At the same time, two brothers, Ray and Joe Soucie were attempting to climb the ridge east of Chino Canyon to the mountain station of the Palm Springs Tramway. After evacuating the skier, we started searching the ridge. We soon had tracks at the 6000 foot level going up the mountain. After some hard travelling two of our men reached Joe Soucie who reported that his brother had fallen over a lip at the 6000 foot level. He had heard a scream and then nothing. He had



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

While airborne in the helicopter, Jim shot this photograph which shows the upper part of the steep cliff that Ray Soucie went down, as he fell to his death.

continued up to get help for his brother. At the 6000 foot level the mountain station looks close, but in actuality, it is hours away.

Tuesday was clear and we were able to search by helicopter. The bird soon spotted a body in the snow at the base of a 200 foot wall. Tom Aldrich, Don Chambers, Steve Zappe, Steve Jensen, Darrel Hand and I were flown into the heli-spot at 6000 feet to recover the body. We were able to crash through the brush to an outcrop at the edge of the lip above the wall. Here we could put in anchors. We decided to send two men down a rope to the base of the cliff to look the situation over. They would tell us if more men were needed below. Don was lowered over the side, and Tom rappelled as soon as Don was off the rope. They reported that they were at the body and no more men would be needed below.

They loaded the body into a body bag and dragged it to a point where the helicopter could hover above them. A cargo net on a long line was dropped to them. The body bag was loaded into the cargo net, and the bird flew back to base.

While Tom and Don were jumaring back up the rope, a Marine helicopter

started flying lazy circles around us burning off fuel. When everyone was back on the outcrop, we packed up and went back to the ridge top heli-spot. A number of plans were considered and rejected. Finally we were told to load our packs in the cargo net. They would be hauled aboard, and we would be winched through the "hell-hole" into the bird. The helicopter hovered above the heli-spot and dropped the cargo net. We loaded all of our gear into it and, it was winched up. The problems began when the helicopter crewmen could not wrestle the gear into the cabin. Finally, the cargo net was lowered back down into the brush, and we took off half of the gear. This time the crew could get the gear into the cabin. Back came the cargo net for a third time, and the rest of the gear made it to the cabin. The bird flew off, but we soon realized that the pilot was going to put the rear end of the helicopter into the brush and lower the ramp. Once done, we scrambled up the ramp, and were flown back to base.

Our thanks go to the Marines who flew us out of an awkward spot on the ridge. I personally was saddened by the fact that another person paid with his life for being unprepared in the mountains. •RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7806A

**13 Feb., Mon.
Mountains South of
the City of Corona**

By Walt Walker

While most RMRU members were participating in the previous mission, I received a call from one of our coordinators Jerry Muratet, that a plane was missing and was thought to be down near Corona. There had been a short break in the weather and a military search helicopter had sighted what was thought to be the wreckage.

After another round of pager and telephone calls, by and through the sheriff's department, it was decided that Hal Fulkman and I would meet a Marine helicopter at the Hemet Airport. We both drove home and picked up our gear. Within about 20 minutes we were waiting at the airport with the rain coming down so hard, ducks could swim in it. After about 30 minutes the pagers went off again. I called Riverside and the dispatcher asked us to drive to the Corona airport.

Into my car, went us and our gear, and we were off towards Corona. Just as we neared March Air Force Base, you guessed it, the pagers once again. I pulled off the highway and phoned Riverside again. Cancel was the word, they said that the military was going to assist the sheriff's department in the morning. We later learned that the wreckage sighted was a very old one and not the missing plane. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7807A

**18 Feb., Sat.
Idyllwild area
San Jacinto Mountains**

At about 9 p.m. on Saturday night the pagers were activated informing the unit of an 11 year old girl who had been reported missing near Idyllwild.

As we started rolling in that direction the pagers again were activated informing us that the girl had been found. • RMRU

Coming Events-

MAY

10 — Regular Meeting

12-14 — Training

24 — Board Meeting

TRAINING



11 Feb., Sat. San Jacinto Foothills

By Kevin Walker

Have you ever had a weekend when you just couldn't figure out what to do? Well that's what happened to RMRU. The regularly scheduled winter trip to the little draw in the San Gorgonio Mountains had to be cancelled because of the unusually large amounts of powder snow our mountains have been receiving. It was decided that we would have training in the San Jacinto Mountains to gain some familiarization in our own area. The plan was for everyone to meet in Idyllwild Friday evening, and then hike to Tahquitz Valley and camp. But as luck would have it, another storm rolled in Friday. The reports said that there would be snow falling as low as the 4000 foot level. So . . . it would be best to hold training in the San Jacinto foothills, so that if there was a rescue the team would not have to take **hours** to get out of the heavy snow falling in the mountains.

My dad asked if I could get a friend who would be willing to be a victim for a mock mission. The new plan would go into effect Saturday morning with the team members being activated at 07:00 hours.

Saturday rolled around, and with the victim neatly stashed somewhere up in the hills, the scene was set.

First to arrive at the roadhead in Lamb Canyon (highway 79) was Ed

Hill, but rule number one states that all veteran members are to be treated as probationary members, and cannot make any command decisions. Of the first to take charge was Jim Garvey. Jim was handed a sheet, stating what had happened to the missing young man. After looking it over, Jim informed us that, Friday evening there had been a car accident involving 3 youths. Two were taken to the hospital, but unknown to authorities (until later) there was a third person involved. It was our job to find the young man. The rescue van had not arrived yet, so Jim elected to send three bash teams into the field to try and cut tracks. After leaving the highway, first to find tracks was Ken Dalke. We preceded up a small canyon. The tracks seemed to wander about aimlessly, climbing up the sides only to go back to the canyon floor. After about 45 minutes of searching, fellow team member Carl Miller gave a shout that he could see the victim laying beside a small boulder in the canyon floor.

Rule number two in a mock mission states that no veteran member can take charge as head first aider. Since I was taking a EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) course, I took charge. After doing the primary and secondard surveys, I found that Brian (victim's name) was in shock, and had possible skull and neck injuries. Completing the survey I found that he had a possible fracture of the tibia. The word was sent out that we would need the following equipment: Unit rescue sleeping bag, stokes litter with the wheel, full length back board with cervical collar and full leg air splint.

Once the needed equipment arrived, we immediately placed Brian in the rescue bag, and on the back board. After all the necessary tasks were completed we began the job of wheeling him out in the litter.

On the way out, we were informed that fellow team member Hal Fulkman had fallen and injured himself while searching for Brian. This of course was just another mock mission, but was to be treated as the real thing. A bash team was assigned to go up the extremely steep ridge and find what the extent of Hal's injuries were.

After getting Brian back to base, we helped him get out of all the rescue attire we had placed on him. On

Behalf of RMRU I would like to say thank you to Brian Hixson of San Jacinto for doing an excellent job as a mock victim.

The word came over the radio that Hal had a possible fractured leg and was in deep shock. To get Hal down from the ridge would need the rescue bag, litter with the wheel, assorted ropes and technical gear, snow pickets for anchors, and the hare traction splint, and plenty of men to help lower him down the ridge. Once we got all the equipment up the ridge, the different tasks were assigned by operations leader Jim Garvey. Once completed, with Hal splinted and in the litter, we began the task of lowering down the rain soaked ridge. It was slow going, but comfortable for Hal. After getting down the steep part of the ridge, we decided (with rain still falling occasionally) to let Hal walk the final 250 yards back to base.

All in all it was a good training with some of us new members (and old ones) getting a lot of beneficial experience from it. Maybe next month the snow will be good for the winter trip.

• RMRU



\$USTAINING MEMBERS—

BY MIKE DAUGHERTY

This month our thanks go to the following new and renewing members.

New—

Gary and Patricia Platner

Renewing—

M/M H. E. Carlson

M/M Jack Mihaylo

David Randell

M/M Albin Merzals

Fred Camphausen

*Kennel Club of Riverside

*Century Club, Donation of \$100 or more.

from

Old'en Days

by Walt Walker

FEBRUARY

Ten years ago—

The one page newsletter told about meetings and trainings, past, present and future. It also noted that the new slide program had been given three times and had met with very good response each time. "RESCUE ACTIVITY: January was a 'dry' month. But one of these days"

Five years ago—

After 'Coming Events' was the 'The Past President's Box' penned by me. The first paragraph commented on tardy newsletters, (hasn't changed much in five years). The next one told about the new pagers and how well they were working: "Recently, mine came on while I was driving through the small community of Sage 15 miles south of Hemet and Art Bridge's beeper activated while he was in Pasadena! Looks to me like they are going to be the best thing, or worst, depending on who is listening, RMRU members or their wives." The last paragraph noted that in the early years of RMRU there were about 20 searches for very rescue call, but in '72 there were 1½ rescues for each search.

In the 'Sustaining Members' column by Al Andrews, he told of four pagers in operation and three more on order. He welcomed Craven, Dargan & Co. as new members and thanked the following for renewing their memberships: Mrs. M. A. Johnston, Miss Patricia Higgins, Mr. David Harrah, Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth N. Andrews, Mr. & Mrs. Alfred King, *Mr. & Mrs. Carl Tennant, *Mr. & Mrs. Jack Bamberger, *Kennel Club of Riverside, *Dr. & Mrs. Norman Mellor and *Mrs. Theodore Young. *Century Club Members - Donation of \$100 or more.

'The Road Runner sez-' by Jim Fairchild told of how the new pagers were put to good use as they went off while a group of six members were practicing a technical evacuation on Mt. Rubidoux. He also thanked the San Diego and Sierra Madre teams for assisting us on recent missions.

The first mission under 'Search and Rescue' was the mission that Jim spoke of above. Hank Schmel wrote up the mission and he told of an all night search near Indio for a 3½ year old boy that ended happily the next day just at noon. The following were thanked for their efforts and cooperation: California Highway Patrol, Art Trask, Bill Carbaugh and Helicopter; U. S. Border Patrol, Cajon and Indio units under the direction of Ab Taylor; Riverside Police Department, Lee Owens, John Olsen and Helicopter; Don Landells and Helicopter; Sierra Madre Search & Rescue Team; San Diego Mountain Rescue Team; Riverside County Sheriff's Department, Capt. Del Fountain and crew from the Indio Station.

The next write-up was mine and I described the search for a 76 year old woman that was missing from the Red Mountain area south of Hemet. We searched most of the day and were assisted by Lee Owens, who flew the Riverside Police Department helicopter. The sheriff's department fixed wing aircraft was also used and late that afternoon we learned that the woman had been admitted to the mental health unit at the hospital.

The nod went to me again for the next mission as I had been the first RMRU member to the victim. A young man had fallen in the Soboba Hills north of San Jacinto. When I arrived at the victim, after hiking up a steep hillside, I found Gary Fritzinger and other members of the Hemet Valley Search & Rescue Team ably giving CPR and artificial respiration to the injured young man. When the Riverside Police Department helicopter arrived, it transported a litter and the RMRU oxygen system up to us. We put the young man in the litter and he was airlifted down to the road where he was going to be transferred to a waiting ambulance. When it would not start, RMRU member Jack Schnurr climbed in the bird and attended the victim on the way to the Hemet Hospital. The mission ended sadly when the young man was pronounced dead on arrival by waiting doctor.

The last mission was written up by Pete Carlson and he told of how he had been driving home from training when he saw the rescue van heading east on the highway. He was almost home, so he continued on, called Al Andrews and found out there were two men stranded in Tahquitz Canyon. He loaded up some technical gear and headed for Palm Springs. At 1700 hrs. ten RMRU members started up the canyon. Just above the first falls they made voice contact with the stranded men. An anchor was set up and Jack Schnurr rappelled down. As it was not so steep the pair were able to climb up, one at a time, as they were belayed from above. Everyone was back to the van by 2100 hrs. • RMRU