

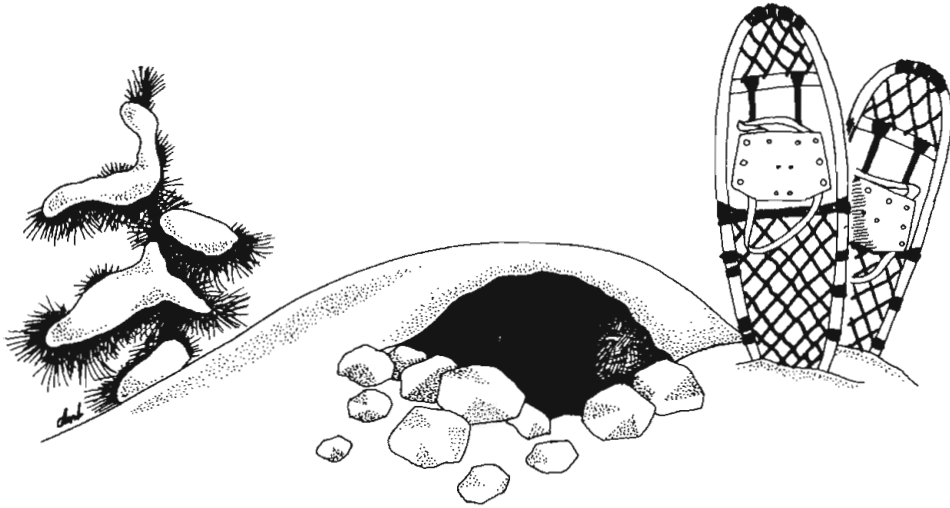
RMRU

RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

NEWSLETTER

12 ISSUES PER YEAR DISTRIBUTED BY THE RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT, INC. — POST OFFICE BOX 5444, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92517
A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT TAX DEDUCTIBLE CORPORATION — MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

Volume XIV, Issue 3, March 1978 — John Dew, Editor — Walt Walker, Publisher — Dona Towell, Artist



After breakfast clean-up, we donned wet-weather gear and snowshoes. First we hiked out into the broad white expanse of Tahquitz Meadow, then continued for a tour of Willow Creek, Laws Camp, Reeds Meadow, and back to camp by mid-afternoon. All day it had snowed on and off, and we were all fairly cold and wet. Jim Hanson and Don Chambers were planning to hike out before dark, so Rick moved into one of the tent vacancies. That still left Bernie and I with no shelter for Saturday night, and the weather was gradually getting worse. The two of us had little enthusiasm when you're cold, wet, and no tent.

Bernie attempted to dig out a snow cave, but he hit slush a couple of feet down, so he gave up. The two of us contemplated hiking out that evening, but Larry Roland suggested another crack at digging a snow cave. We chose another site, and this time the snow was not slushy, but compact. Two people worked on the cave at a time, being continuously relieved by other team members. In two hours, we had carved ourselves out a 7 ft. x 7 ft. chamber, tall enough to kneel in.

As daylight subsided, with the storm continuing into darkness, we cooked dinner in our Ice Palace, and hit the sack early. The floor of the cave was rather rough, but at least we were warm and out of the weather. Outside, the snow continued to drift down on a sub-freezing wind.

Sunday morning was a great improvement over Saturday. The snow had stopped, and brilliant patches of blue were breaking up the gray sky, letting the sun cast out warm rays to the snow-laden world below. After a hearty breakfast we broke camp, and Larry gave us the day's program. We would hike to Little Tahquitz Meadow, drop our heavy packs, and scramble up to Red Tahquitz Peak. The weather stayed warm and partly

TRAINING



**10-12 Mar., Fri.-Sun.
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Ron Berry

Our March training was to be held in the snow-laden back country above Idyllwild. Bernie McIlvoy and I pulled into Idyllwild at around 6:00 Friday evening, and allowed ourselves one last luxury before our weekend excursion; dinner at the Charthouse. At dinner, we were joined by Ed Hill and Carl Miller.

It was over this fine meal that we learned that seven of us had planned to use the same four-man tent. Well, Bernie offered to sleep outside after

some panicky conversation. Since I had missed Doctor George that evening, I had no idea what kind of weather was expected over the weekend, so I also offered to be "put out" for the night.

By 7:30 we were at Humber Park changing into our hiking paraphernalia, as the rest of the team began to arrive. In thirty minutes, the eleven of us were carefully making our way up the muddy, icy trail towards Saddle Junction.

We reached the Saddle in a couple of hours, and the cloud cover parted open to expose crystal stars. From here, we felt our way through the blackness of the forest to Tahquitz Meadow where we set up camp. Ed Hill, Carl Miller, Randy Beaty, Larry Roland, Steve Jensen, Jim Garvey, Don Chambers and Jim Hanson set up their two tents, while Bernie, Rick Pohlers and myself prayed the weather would stay clean all night, since we had no shelter. Luckily, the night was cold, and clear but by breakfast the skies were steel gray. Small flurries of snow laced through the trees as we ate our mushroom omelets.

sunny all the way to Little Tahquitz Meadow, but then the weather began to build up again. The side trip to Red Tahquitz was abandoned, so we traversed over to the ridge that runs to Saddle Junction. From here, it was an easy jaunt down Devil's Slide to Humber Park. • RMRU

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 7808A

**5 Mar., Sun.
Tahquitz Canyon
San Jacinto Mountains**

The unit was called at 8 p.m. to search for and rescue a person who had supposedly fallen while hiking in Tahquitz Canyon. Before we were ten miles from home the mission was aborted via the pagers. • RMRU



SEARCH

Mission No. 7809C

**17 Mar., Fri.
San Gabriel Mountains**

The unit was requested to be on stand-by by the Sierra Madre Search & Rescue Team for possible assistance in searching for a missing skier should their mission continue until the weekend. We were not called upon to respond. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 7810M

**22-23 Mar., Wed.-Thur.
Box Springs Mountain
Riverside Area**

By Steve Zappe

I was talking long distance to a friend Wednesday night at 11:00 and she casually asked me how the SAR business had been lately. I had no sooner said that things were pretty slow when the operator cut in and said I had an emergency call from RMRU, call coordinator Jerry Muratet. The business was about to pick up . . . literally.

I had been reflecting during the week on the fact that my celebration of Holy Week and Easter for the last two years had been marred by tragedies. Two years ago we recovered the charred remains of six people from a charter plane wreck on Good Friday, and my meditation that evening on Christ's death was intensified by my exposure to the harsh realities of death earlier in the day. Last year

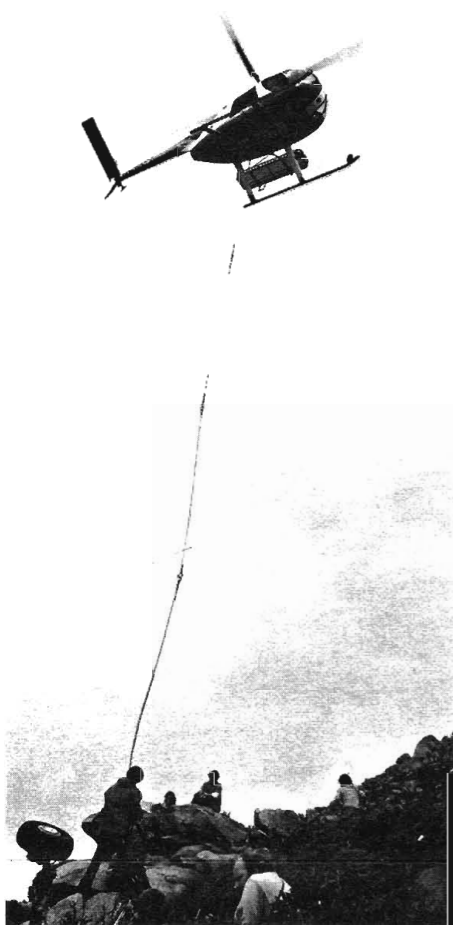
the body of a young man was pulled from the icy waters of Tahquitz Creek on Easter Sunday morning, and I experienced little of the joy which should be felt on this festival of life when the father found out that his son was dead . . . Yes, I had been reflecting, and I had wondered if life would return to normal this year and I could celebrate a joyous Easter. The answer appeared to be "no" after Jerry told me we had a plane crash on Box Springs Mountain, located in Riverside between the UCR campus and the International Raceway.

Several families and their friends had flown in two planes from Lake Havasu to Orange County to spend the day at Disneyland, but on the return trip that evening one of the planes landed in Riverside rather than take the risk of flying through the fog and low cloud cover beyond the city. The other pilot took the risk and ended up not only taking his life but the lives of his five passengers - a total of one man, two women, a teenage boy and two young children. The impact was at full speed, folding the wings back, dragging the engine under the fuselage and ripping open the



PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

The deputy coroner and RMRU members work at the grim task of removing the bodies from the wreckage.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

While Western Helicopter pilot Pete Gillies held the Hughes 500C in a hover, RMRU members attached the sling to the cargo net that contained bodies.

cockpit. It didn't burn, but then it really didn't matter - the six people were killed instantaneously.

The first RMRU members on the scene were Jim Fairchild and Rick Pohlers, and their hopes were temporarily raised when they heard voices on the mountain frantically yell "Hurry, we need help!" The voices were actually coming from two teenagers who had hiked up the mountain without flashlights and panicked when they stumbled upon the eerie scene of wreckage and victims partly obscured by the fog. The next several hours were spent waiting for the coroner, hiking him up to the crash site, and deciding to delay the body recovery until morning. I opted to drive the five miles home and sleep in my bed rather than hang around.

We rendezvoused at 7 a.m. back at the base of the mountain and due to mixups had to wait until nearly 9:30

before our chopper pilots, Pete and Jim from Western Helicopters in Rialto, arrived in their Hughes 500's - one was for us and the other was for the television reporters. We were then shuttled up the hill to the crash site where we proceeded to place the remains into body bags and fly them out slung under the bird in a cargo net.

And that was it . . . no happy endings, no unexpected turn of good luck, no reuniting of loved ones. It was the type of mission where we sometimes find ourselves asking, "Is this why I'm a member of RMRU?" And the answer is usually hard to rationalize if you're a mountaineer and prefer to search for lost hikers or rescue stranded climbers, but the answer must be positive. It obviously isn't the main reason for anyone I know on the team, but the work has to be done. Maybe next year my Easter will be better. • RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 7811M

25 Mar., Sat. Near Tahquitz Peak San Jacinto Mountains

By Kevin Walker

It seems that sometimes old mother luck just is not in your favor. My dad and I had just finished painting the front door to our house, and were preparing to have a late lunch (2:30), when the pager went off. We hastily rehung the door, grabbed some snack food, and went out the door.

Leaving behind a disaster of uncleaned paint brushes and cans for my mother and sister to clean, we headed for the Idyllwild fire station where the team was to meet. Enroute we had a wonderful view of the San Jacinto Mountains, looking up to the mountain we could easily see why there would be people using the backcountry. There wasn't a cloud in the sky, and the temperature was in the upper 70's. What better conditions could one have, except for one little item, deep snow still carpeted the ground, and in the shade, ice was also a problem. For this reason RMRU was called. We were informed that a young man hiking on the Devil's Slide

trail had slipped and fallen some distance. It looked as if it would be a long afternoon and evening before we completed our task.

Upon reaching Idyllwild we were told by the informant that the young man in question had indeed fallen and injured himself, but the location of injury was not where we had been told. He had slipped off the snow and ice covered ridge just below Tahquitz Peak. According to the informant he had fallen approximately 600 feet down an ice chute, severely burning himself on the ice, and possibly fracturing his right ankle. Walt immediately requested from Capt. Ray Canova of the Banning sheriff's office that Don Landells be contacted and asked to fly to the Camp Maranatha ball park. We then headed over to Camp Maranatha where base would be set up. Shortly after arriving at the camp we were joined by fellow team member John Dew. As we were preparing our packs for the task at hand, Capt. Canova arrived followed by Jim Fairchild in Riverside 2, the newest of the two vans that RMRU has. The plan was as follows, Walt would go in with Don to find out what the situation was, and find out what kind of equipment would be needed for the operation. If he needed assistance, he would be followed in by Jim and myself.

Not long after we had finished packing we heard the familiar sound of the chop-chop and high pitched whine of Don Landells Jet Ranger. Upon his arrival at the camp he told Walt that he had seen a young man on a large rock about 650 feet below the summit. With the gear in the bird, Don and Walt departed for the steep icy chutes of the mountain. After what seemed like years (actually only 10 minutes), Don radioed that he was returning to base to pick up Jim and I, and that we would need a full leg air splint. We quickly pulled a splint out of the first aid drawer and made ready for the flight in. We were also told that we would not need our packs, so with Don just arriving, we buckled in, and in what would take several hours on foot, we did in less than five minutes. We were fortunate enough to land in a one runner mode on the same rock that the young man had crawled to after he finally came to rest. With Don hovering out about 1,000 feet away from us, Jim Fairchild



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

This aerial view of the Tahquitz ridge shows where the fall started (•) and where it ended (X). The arrow points (T) at the Tahquitz Peak Lookout

with camera in hand, I lifting the young mans pant leg, and my dad placing the air splint on the swollen ankle, only one task remained, blowing the air splint up. Guess who had to do it, the newest support member, ME . . .

With all being ready, we called Don. Don came back and pushed one runner in to the snow bank and held power to the other, Jim and Walt lifted him in on one side while I reached through on the other side and helped pull him across. Jim joined the hiker in the back seat, and with the old thumbs up from my dad Don pulled up on the collective (rotor blade pitch) and lifted up for the flight back to base. After a short wait, which was not long considering just how great the view was, Don returned. We climbed into the bird and headed up to Tahquitz Peak where we had been asked to pick up the informants pack. With that task completed, RMRU's work was finished.

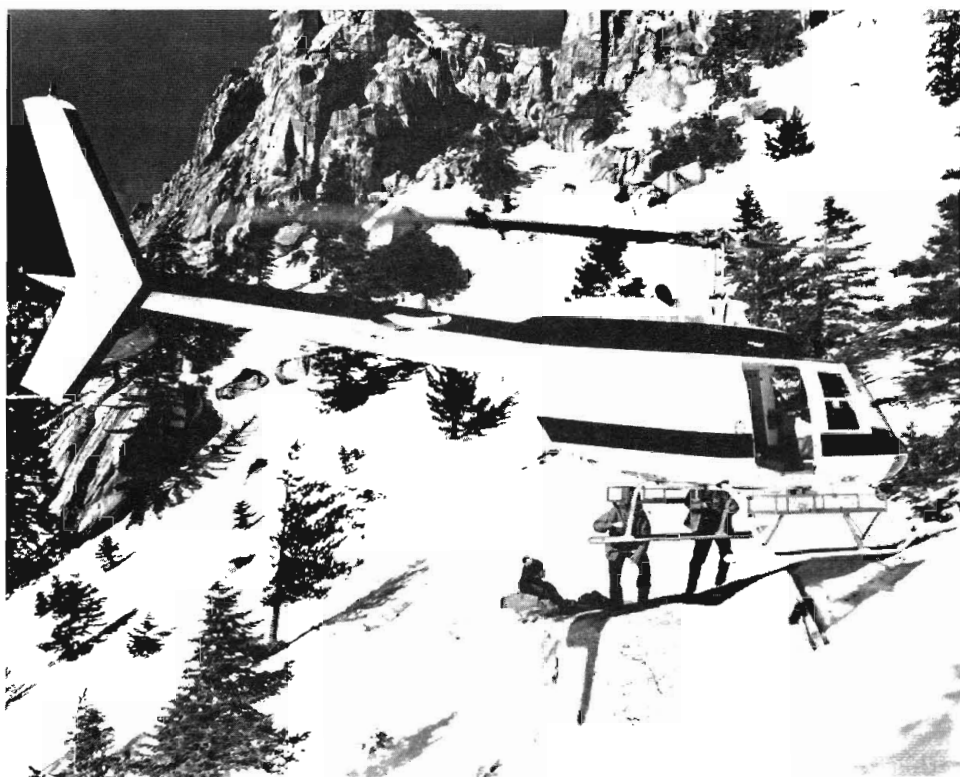
After the usual hand shake and compliments to Don for his SUPER flying, which makes our job a whole lot faster, we said good-bye to a really super person.

After all the gear was placed back in the van, the question arose, where are we going for dinner? Jokingly John Dew said why not the Chart House . . . and the Capt. said fine, so off we went for a really fine steak dinner. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

Kevin Walker and the injured young man appear to have been amused by the story told by Walt Walker as they waited for the helicopter to bring the air splint.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

Veteran mountain pilot Don Landells maneuvered his Bell Jet Ranger to a soft touch down of the runners with the aid from hand signals given by RMRU member Kevin Walker.

RESCUE

Mission No. 7812M

**26 Mar., Sun.
Near Tahquitz Valley,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Walt Walker

With a paintbrush in one hand and a bucket of paint in the other, I just stood there and listened as the pager went off. For the second time in as many days it announced there was a rescue. However, **today**, we had the front door back on its hinges when the call came.

Leaving the paintbrushes for my wife, Sondra, and daughter Lisa to clean (waterbase paint), my son Kevin and I began to load gear into the Wagoneer. We changed into our orange shirts and green pants and headed for the Banning airport.

Capt. Ray Canova, of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, had called Don Landells and he was on the way with his Bell Jet Ranger helicopter. As Kevin and I pulled off the freeway we could see the bird descending towards the airport. We drove into the parking area as Capt. Canova walked out to the bird.

During a discussion with Capt. Canova, we found out that two young men had hiked out of the backcountry to report that a friend of theirs had slipped, while descending an icy slope, below Tahquitz Valley. The accident had occurred on Saturday morning but the young man did not think he had broken his leg. He thought if he rested until Sunday he would be able to hike out. When Sunday morning arrived he was still too sore to hike.

Kevin and I loaded our packs with normal gear that might be needed for a winter mission. We also put in a large first aid belt, full leg airsplint and a RMRU handitalkie. After putting on our hiking boots, we grabbed our packs, and headed for the bird. We climbed in, buckled up, Don applied the power and we lifted off.

As we neared the Black Mountain Lookout Tower, the RMRU radio came to life, Riverside 2 (the new van) with Jim Fairchild at the wheel, reported being only 10 minutes from the airport. We advised Jim of our

plan and that possibly we would be able to handle the situation.

In a short time we were over Tahquitz Valley, but there was only one tent, and it was not the color of either of the tents we had been told would be there. Don circled wider and we checked Little Tahquitz Valley, no tents. We then headed over to Skunk Cabbage Meadow, same thing, no tents.

Talking it over, we decided to return to Tahquitz Valley, land and talk to the people we had seen there. The tent was near the edge of the trees and Don landed about 100 feet away. Kevin climbed out and headed over towards a young man walking in the direction of the bird. After a quick discussion, Kevin returned and told us that the young man that needed help was below Tahquitz Valley. We took off again and headed down the Tahquitz drainage. After a brief search we located the two tents on a small ridge about a quarter of a mile above Reeds Meadow. Another discussion, this time we decided that Don would land at the low end of Tahquitz Valley, Kevin and I would

hike down towards the tents, give first aid and Don would return to Banning for two more RMRU members and the rescue toboggan.

This time the plan worked as planned. Don let us out, he started back as we hiked downhill towards the tents. In less than ten minutes we located the tents. We talked with the injured young man about how the injury occurred. After an examination we decided that a full leg airsplint was needed. We put on the airsplint, slid the young man out of the tent with the help of nearby campers, and helped him into his sleeping bag. While we were awaiting the return of the helicopter we took the tent down and gathered the young man's equipment together.

Hearing the helicopter approaching, Kevin took off towards Tahquitz Valley. He met the bird and guided Jim Fairchild and Darrel Hand, along with the toboggan, back to my location. Once again, with help we placed the young man into the toboggan and secured him with the straps. With the help of one of the campers, Darrel, Kevin and I pulled the loaded to-



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

The rescue toboggan was put to use again, as (L to R) Kevin Walker, Walt Walker, Darrel Hand (behind), unidentified camper pulled uphill to Tahquitz Valley.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

Don Landells and Walt Walker looked on as Darrel Hand unbuckled the straps of the rescue toboggan. Kevin Walker can be seen through left rear door of the helicopter and the woman hiker who helped by carrying an RMRU pack back to the bird was not identified.

boggan uphill to Tahquitz Valley. (Jim was shooting the pictures.)

We checked the airsplint, Darrel put some more lung power into it, and we loaded the injured young man into the backseat of the bird. We tied the toboggan to the cargo basket and Don and I climbed in the front. Don fired up the turbine and we were shortly in the air headed for the San Geronio Pass Hospital.

Downhill is always fast, even in helicopters. As Don circled the hospital we both looked for the emergency room entrance. I spotted a waiting gurney and Don landed in the parking lot right beside the emergency room entrance. ER personnel came out and wheeled the gurney over to the bird. We unloaded the young man onto the gurney and they wheeled him towards the hospital. Don lifted up and we headed back to the airport. Upon arrival at the airport I climbed out and Don took off to pick up Jim, Darrel and Kevin. While waiting for the return of the bird I discussed the mission with other RMRU members

who had arrived while the mission was in progress.

After we had all eaten dinner Kevin and I drove over to the hospital to pick up the unit airsplint. When we got into the ER the nurse showed us the injured man's X-ray. It showed a clean transverse fracture of the right tibia (shin bone). • RMRU

\$USTAINING MEMBERS—

BY MIKE DAUGHERTY

I'm sure that you are all aware that the RMRU Newsletter is required reading for all Sustaining Members enrolled in RMRU 101. So it is that I am confident that you have secured the pages of the Dec., Jan. and Feb. newsletters. That being the case, you must have been struck by two things:

(1) The superb quality of Jim Fairchild's candid photographs of RMRU in action — yes, the snowflakes at night really are 8" in diameter and the winter snows on San Jacinto this year are 417' 4 9/16" in depth and you should see the snow snakes!

(2) RMRU has been **very** busy.

Given all of this you might be forgiven for thinking that there hasn't been time for much else. Wrong! Minus five points. Believe it or not, in their spare time RMRU members have been converting the old rescue van to a mobile operations center. If just reading about all of this activity makes you tired, you may take a five minute break and resume reading at this point.

Now that you've had a chance to catch your breath, you're ready for the point of this column. (All S/M columns have a point, however they are sometimes so very cleverly hidden that the little devils elude even their author.) At any rate, here is the point of this column. In the course of refitting the old van, the team has run low on a critical resource. Now logic would seem to dictate that the missing element must be time, ambition or energy. Remarkably, these are all reported to be in good supply. Instead, the effort is in danger of being grounded on the treacherous shoals of temporary insolvency and that, friends, is our department.

Fortunately I've hit upon a clever scheme which will combine the solution of this problem with an exercise aimed at stemming the well publicized decline in literacy among today's students. Everyone enrolled in RMRU 101 is assigned a two-line essay to be completed in a "green" book. Since your writing skills may be a bit rusty, I'm going to get you

Coming Events-

MAY

- 10 — Regular Meeting
- 12-14 — Training
- 24 — Board Meeting

JUNE

- 7 — Regular Meeting
- 9-11 — Training
- 21 — Board Meeting

started by providing the first line, it goes:

"Pay to the order of the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit."

You are to complete and sign the essay. I'll post your grades in a forthcoming newsletter.

During the past month we have received passing grades from the following new and renewing students (RMRU 101 is the only course in which a passing grade entitles you to repeat the course).

New—

Mardon Jewelers
Norbert Larkey
M/M William Bush, Sr.

Renewing—

Hundred Peaks Section —
Sierra Club
Dr. Paul H. Trotta
Kathleen D. Murphy

from Old'en Days

by Walt Walker

MARCH

Ten years ago—

The issue covered one whole page and the following is a brief rundown of what was there: New meeting schedule; Wednesdays on the rocks; Board meeting; Regular meeting; Winter training; Sustaining membership; Financial; February training; Physical fitness; Group picture; Rescue activity (there had been none for two months); Slide show; Stolen from the "Rucksack". The newsletter in early years was mainly used to communicate information to the regular members.

Five years ago—

The seven page issue started out with **Search and Rescue**. The first mission, written up by Art Bridge, was about a search for an eight year old Cub Scout missing from the Crestline area of the San Bernardino Mountains. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's

Search and Rescue teams had been searching most of the day and when evening came they called on the California Region MRA teams: Altadena, China Lake, Montrose, San Diego, Sierra Madre, Sylmar and RMRU. We were the first team to arrive, being the nearest. Our assignment started at the Lake Gregory Dam and went down the canyon. We searched all night, were picked up by four wheel drive vehicles and returned to base, ate breakfast, then went out again on another assignment. While working on this we were notified that the young lad had been located and was in good condition. Art ended his write-up by commenting on the cooperation of everyone that had participated.

It was a Saturday afternoon when RMRU received a call that a 22 year old man was missing in the Willow Creek area. Hank Schmel was the first member to arrive at the Palm Springs Aerial Tram, having driven out in the rescue van. He was quickly followed by Bob Claybrook, Jack Schnurr, Dave Nehen and Rich Morris. It was decided that Bob and Rich would snowshoe over to Willow Creek and Dave would serve as a relay from the upper station. They snowshoed towards Hidden Lake and ran into extremely bad weather, strong gusty winds and alternating freezing rain and drizzle. They found the missing man's shoes with barefoot prints leading away. Shortly before this they had been advised there was another mission in the Idyllwild area. Due to the unusual situation, Chief John McCoy and Sgt. Bill Herring (of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department) and our team leaders, it was decided to terminate the search. Bob and Rich continued on, planning to hike out to Humber Park. At Willow Creek crossing they found the subject's pack. They finally arrived at Humber Park at 2230, wet and tired.

The rest of our team members who had met at the tram for the search from the previous mission drove to Idyllwild and started searching for a boy missing from Buckhorn Camp. Dan MacIntosh and Rich Quackenbush were searching a ridge. When they came to a road they were instructed to follow the road and shout the boy's name. About a half mile down the road they got a response to their calling. Shortly they were with the boy and he was in good condition, just cold.

The next mission written up by Bud White actually got started while we were searching for the boy from the previous mission. We had been advised that two young men had planned a hike up the South Ridge Trail to Tahquitz Peak, then to Saddle Junction and down the Devil's Slide Trail. Art Bridge, Don Ricker, Bill Hunt and Bud were assigned to snowshoe to the Saddle. Because of working on the previous mission and learning of this one it had been decided to ask the Sierra Madre Search

and Rescue Team for assistance. When they arrived they were given two assignments: one group was to go up the South Ridge Trail and the second group was to head for Tahquitz Peak via the Saddle. Bud got the job of being relay at the Saddle while Art, Don and Bill went down to Skunk Cabbage Meadow. They ran into a number of persons and they advised them to start hiking out as there had been eight inches of new snow in a little more than an hour and a half, the wind was gusting to 50 mph and the temperature was 23°. They contacted 29 people and actually led eight people out who did not know the way. During all this the original missing two ran into Bud at the Saddle. Bud had nothing but compliments for the two Sierra Madre groups that had been hiking during the storm.

Jack Schnurr got the nod for the next write-up and with his usual flair he described how we journeyed up a fire road, that was almost washed out in many places, in four wheel drive vehicles almost to the top of Santiago Peak. A Blazer had gone off the road and three of the occupants had hiked out for help. When we arrived at the scene it had been 11 hours since the accident and it had been raining part of the time. There was an injured man about 100 feet down from the road. Art Bridge, Jack and I worked our way down through the dense brush to the injured man. We got him out of his wet clothes, applied an airsplint to his injured leg and placed him in our rescue sleeping bag. He was then secured into a litter and while we had been working, Jim Fairchild and Bernie McIlvoy had set up a lifting system. We moved him up to the road, loaded the litter into the back of my Jeep Wagoneer and headed for the Elsinore hospital.

In the **Road Runner** sez column Jim Fairchild mentioned that twice that year we had had three missions during a weekend. He also asked other MRA units that come to assist us, to be prepared for any kind of terrain and any kind of weather.

The **Training** column was penned by Jim Fairchild and he related that he and Bill Hunt had carried "character building" packs into the San Jacinto Wilderness area during the snow training that had taken place of the originally planned snow and ice training at San "G."

The "Pager Fund" chart in the **Sustaining Members** column, by Al Andrews, was up to seven. He mentioned that the pagers were working at ranges longer than we had anticipated. He welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Spencer as new members and thanked Mr. and Mrs. Alen Merzals for renewing their memberships. • RMRU