

This is what it's all about...



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

Judith Ann, lost for over 30 hours with no food or water, was reunited with her joyful parents!

From the Editor's desk—

In this month's issue I would like you to pay particular attention to Ed Hill's write-up of Mission No. 7905M. In that write-up you will find out just what RMRU is all about, "a volunteer organization dedicated to saving lives." Those of you who are employers of team members should be congratulated on helping in this mission, and all others for that matter. Because if you did not allow team members to participate, little Judith Ann might not have been found. This may sound somewhat cornballish, but it is a fact. Without your co-operation we could not do our job, **save lives!**

RMRU members; take note of the statement at the end of Ed's article, it says something about a common cause. This mission proves that there is a closeness in this unit, and it looks like it is here to stay. Let's keep it up and, "bring em back alive."

• RMRU

Coming Events—

APRIL

- 4 — Regular Meeting
- 6-8 — Training
- 18 — Board Meeting

MAY

- 2 — Regular Meeting
- 4-6 — Training
- 23 — Board Meeting

JUNE

- 6 — Regular Meeting
- 8-10 — Training
- 27 — Board Meeting



Man Tracking

9 & 10 March, Fri.-Sun.
Cactus Springs area,
Santa Rosa Mountains

By Bob Savage

The trail to Horsethief Creek in the Santa Rosa range was unusually busy this particular Friday evening. That's because RMRU members were on their March training which was to be a tracking practice in the Cactus Springs area of Pinyon Flats.

After arriving at the creek crossing, the remainder of the evening was spent around a warm crackling fire. In the morning after a hearty breakfast, we all started up the creek, hopping from bank to bank and from boulder to boulder. We found what appeared to be the drainage from Cactus Springs several hours later. The spring was found and camp was made nearby.

After a leisurely lunch, and a short siesta, we had a short discussion on tracking methods, and personal experiences by some of the veteran members. Just as we were about to break up into small groups for tracking practice, we heard a call on the radio, "RMRU ground units." "This is air one." Lo and behold, it was Walt and John in a Cessna 182. Some of the newer team members did not quite know what was going on, but the older ones sure did. Walt was preparing to make a drop. But what was in it? Well, we soon found out. After the small brown bag settled to earth, we found a note attached to it. The note read, "Some goodies for the men, and a special box for Rick Pohlers." The goodies were colored marshmallows, and the box for Rick was animal crackers. It seems Rick likes animal crackers. Oh well, back to training.

Once in small groups, some very good pointers were learned in the next few hours, following tracks through the chaparral.



Ah! But it wasn't over yet. Larry Roland, our training chairman, had other ideas. Since most tracking takes place in the night, he said that it would be good to practice it then also. So after dinner, the team was divided into two groups, to track two "rabbits" (Ed Hill and Bernie McIlvoy). After many false starts, one group found the tracks that led to the top of a knoll some distance from camp. After taking a short rest enjoying the moonlit scenery, we started back to camp and our sleeping bags.

But just after 12 midnight the radio crackled an announcement of a lost girl in Joshua Tree National Monument and so our training came to an abrupt end as we packed to respond to the call. • RMRU

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 7905M

10-11 Mar., Sat.-Sun.
Cottonwood Springs,
Joshua Tree National Monument

By Ed Hill

After failing to contact either of the team coordinators, the Indio Station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, contacted John Dew with news of a search for a ten year old girl missing since 9:00 A.M. from the Cottonwood Springs Campground in Joshua Tree National Monument.

The team was on training at Cactus Springs in the Pinyon Flats area of the Santa Rosa Mountains. Being that this month's training was tracking, we had just finished the night (Saturday) tracking exercise at about midnight and were turning in for the night when John's voice was heard over the radio with news of a search in Joshua Tree. It took some effort from yours truly to get everyone up and going, but we finally got packed up, and started the six mile hike back to the roadhead. While we were hiking out, Walt Walker and John went on ahead and drove the van to Cactus Springs Campground. Once there, they met with the grandparents, and then with the parents gathering information on Judith Ann Trimm, the ten year old girl, who we were to search for. After doing that Walt and John then met with the Park Ranger to formulate a search plan. It was not long after that when the rest of us showed up to catch at least a couple of hours of sleep. While we were still trying to catch a little sleep, Walt was in the ranger station going over the final plans with the head ranger, and John was preparing radios needed for the coming morning's search.

At about 6:00 A.M. we were awakened by the high pitched whine of Don Landells Jet Ranger. Well, some of us anyway. Once up, everyone gathered around the office for a briefing. Walt then told us of the events that led up to Judith Ann's disappearance. On Saturday morning Judith Ann, and her parents drove from the campground to Cottonwood Springs where the road ends. The family was going to take a short hike up the canyon and enjoy the beauty of the desert morning.

Judith Ann, complaining of a sore ankle, asked if she could stay at the car and wait for her family's return. Upon her family's return, at 9:00 A.M., they found that Judith Ann was not in the car, and that all the doors had been locked. After searching the immediate area for some time, her parents notified the park officials. After conducting a small search of their own with no results, the park rangers called in their own SAR team. At the end of Saturday, still with no results, the park officials called the Indio Sheriff's office and asked for the services of the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit. Walt then explained that the park rangers had searched the immediate area around the campground and two small canyons that end up on the road leading into the campground.

It was decided to keep the same search teams that we had used on training. Don then informed us that he would only be able to stay and search from the air until 10:00. He would then have to leave and fly equipment for CBS. Walt assigned Pete Carlson's team to fly with Don and make a quick check of the area. While they were flying, the rest of us prepared our gear for desert searching. After Pete's team was let off to establish a northern perimeter, my team consisting of Brian Hixson and Bob Savage, who by the way is an employee of Judith Ann's father, drew one of the canyons that ran south towards the highway.

In the canyon we soon found that our biggest problem was catclaw. This is a scraggly bush with sharp thorns. We descended the entire canyon since there were many places where Judith could have dropped into it. All we saw were the tracks of a coyote who descended that night. At the canyon's mouth we hiked westward to the paved road leading up to the ranger station establishing that Judith had not travelled that far south. We were slowly establishing a perimeter around the Campground that we could be reasonably sure that was still inside.

Once on the road, a Park Ranger drove us back to the station. Once back at the station we found a CBS film truck on the scene filming some of the goings on. The film crew had been working with Don and were on their way back when they spotted the rescue van and stopped to investigate. Well anyway, back to the rescue, and not being hams. While new assignments were being made, we had a skimpy lunch. While we were searching in the morning arrangements had been made for a Marine 212 Helicopter from El Toro Marine Base to work with us in the afternoon. Upon its arrival my team was assigned to search Lost Palm Canyon. After over flying the area we were dropped off at the head of the canyon. Along with searching the main canyon, we were to pay close attention to the chutes and gul-

lies at the upper part of the canyon. While we were still in the air I spotted a circle and an arrow in a sandy spot in one of the side canyons. We started down the main canyon and searched the side canyons by sending one man up each. We found a large arrow in the sand but were not able to find the arrow and the circle. We requested that the helicopter come back and search for it but they had no luck either. Finally we decided to continue down canyon continuing to check out the side canyons.

While we continued on down the canyon, the rest of the team concentrated on the immediate area around Cottonwood Springs. The Marine chopper had to land at 29 Palms Marine Base because it was due for a 50 hour check. We now had to search for the rest of the day totally on foot. As we dropped further down canyon we slowly went out of radio contact.

It was now after 4:00 and no tracks or even a trace of the arrow in the sand. We were nearing the bottom of the canyon, and had checked all of the side canyons but ONE. Brian was sent up that canyon to check for any signs of Judith. He went part way up it and yelled. Bob and I thought that he had found something and went up the canyon after him. We found him, and he told us that he had been yelling. Then we heard something but were not sure what we had heard. We yelled again and got another answer. Finally Brian spotted a small figure on the very rim of the canyon. We yelled for her to stay put, and that we would climb up. She was standing on a large boulder on the north rim of the canyon. Brian reached her first and started giving her small sips of water. We learned that she had gone looking for her parents, had taken the wrong trail and had lost the trail at the

top of the canyon. She had hiked east and north looking for the campground but couldn't find it. The canyon was seven miles west of where we had found her. We asked her if she had seen the helicopters. She said that she had but they had not seen her. After further questions, we were told by Judith that she had indeed seen the chopper, but was sitting under a boulder. Other than a very sore ankle and being very scared, she was in good shape considering that she had spent two days without food or water.

Our next problem was to let base know that she had been found. We had been out of radio communication since early afternoon. We tried calling any RMRU unit but had no luck. We then called for anybody who was listening, and a lady with the De Anza Search and Rescue Unit in El Centro responded. Through her we sent a message to Cottonwood Ranger Station saying that we had found Judith and were requesting a helicopter evacuation.

It took some work, but the General at 29 Palms Marine Base got an OK to release the chopper from its 50 hour check and return to Joshua Tree. The Marine bird arrived just before dark and picked up Judith from a small helispot on the ridge. With Judith on her way out, our task was complete. We then hiked down the canyon to the roadhead where we were met by two park rangers and a ride back to the ranger station. We had a large and excellent dinner in Indio courtesy of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department before starting the long drive home. I would like to thank the De Anza Search and Rescue Team for their excellent relay work and our members for working so hard for a common cause, the safe return of 10 year old Judith Ann. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY LARRY ROLAND

RESCUED GIRL — After having been found by a RMRU tracking team, flown to the base of operations by a Marine helicopter, Judith Ann was assisted by a Marine crewman and RMRU member Kevin Walker.

RESCUE

Mission No. 7906M

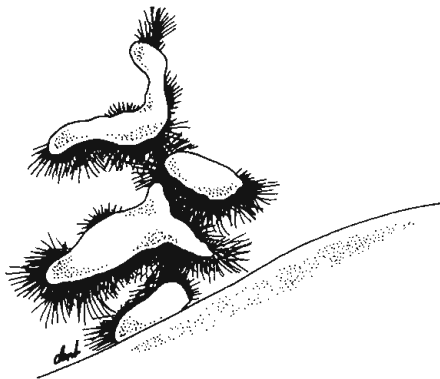
21 March, Wed.
Toro Peak,
Santa Rosa Mountains

By Kevin Walker

At approximately 2:30 a.m. (who's precise at that time of the morning) Wednesday I was awakened with news of a rescue in the Santa Rosa Mountains. It seemed that three men who were employed by a company in Texas, became stranded when their snow-cat got stuck in the deep snow below Toro Peak. The three men were enroute to service a micro-wave unit on the peak when the accident occurred. A base unit had been in radio contact with the men until shortly after they became stuck. So, because of the scattered snow flurries and strong wind, RMRU was activated.

Since I had been doing some clean-up work on the rescue van the previous day, and it hadn't been returned yet, I went ahead and started for the Sugar Loaf Cafe where base camp was to be set up. Due to extremely thick fog, it was a very slow trip up the mountain. I made a quick stop at Mountain Center to pick up fellow team member Dave Ezell, and then continued on to the cafe. Shortly after arriving we were met by Sgt. Weakly from the Banning Office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. He informed us that Don Landells was enroute. There were a few holes in the clouds, but not many for night flying. Nevertheless, Don did arrive. Shortly after his arrival, radio contact was regained with the three men.

After talking with them, it was decided our services would not be needed after all, since they had a large fire going and had plenty of warm clothing. When there was enough light in the morning, another snow-cat would be sent in to get them unstuck. So, with that news the rest of us troopies headed for home. • RMRU



from Old'en Days

by Walt Walker

MARCH

Ten years ago—

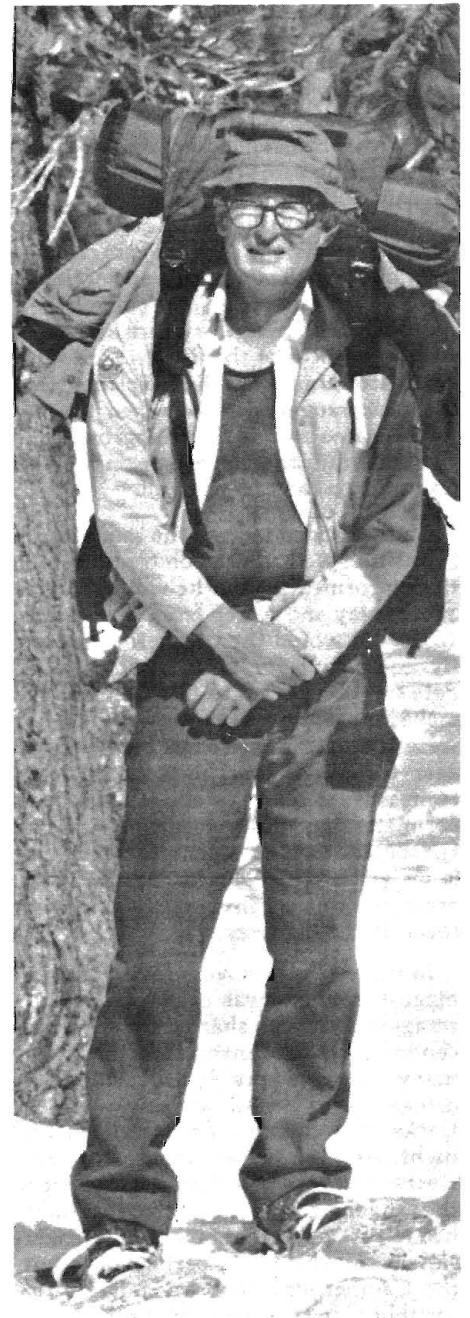
After the usual notices on the front page, began the **Search and Rescue** column. The article began by telling that 14 members of the unit were on a team training in the San Geronio area. That left seven men to respond to a search for a three year old girl in Joshua Tree National Monument. This small group of men responded to assist other searchers. They searched most of the night only to hear over the radio that the child had been found dead.

The following is reprinted from **The Road Runner sez** by Jim Fairchild. "Just a rhetorical question. When we are called for a search, what will it take to stop us? Will we give up when the snow gets deep, when the rain soaks us, when we become fatigued, when other obstacles seem to stymie our efforts? Just how tenacious and determined is RMRU corporately and individually? When lives are in danger will we sacrifice time, comfort, convenience, and safety to give of ourselves to help? A mission may pass the reasonable point of continuance, but we must stay with it until that point is passed. This all goes back to our "rhetorical" motto: "Are you as prepared for SAR as you would want your rescuers to be?"

Five years ago—

After the **Coming Events** came **The Road Runner sez** column and one of the things noted was the energy crisis. It appears that history is repeating itself, again!

The **Search and Rescue** column only had one mission for the month. Two 17 year old girls had gone for a day hike into the Strawberry Creek area below ISOMATA. It was late on a Monday night when we were alerted. Team members searched most of the night, bivouaced for about an hour, and started searching again. Pete Frickland and Bernie McIlvoy found fresh tracks going downstream. They hurried downstream and Bernie found the girls. They were all right, just hungry and cold. A little while later they were airlifted out of the canyon by Don Landells in his super-charged Bell helicopter. • RMRU



Editor's Note

If you look under the the lower right hand corner of the majority of the photographs in the RMRU newsletter, you will notice the words, "RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD". It has been through Jim's continuing efforts, in photography, that has allowed the newsletter to more graphically illustrate our search and rescue missions for you.

For your special efforts Jim, we, your fellow RMRU team members wish to say, **thank you!** • RMRU