

Training

Helitac

12 Dec., Sat.
Landells Heliport,
Desert Hot Springs

By Kevin Walker

For many years now RMRU members have been training at something very important. It may not be as physically demanding as a winter trip to the Little Draw, but ask former member Dan MacIntosh if the December training skills were needed then. It also may not be as tough as our annual descent of Tahquitz Canyon, but ask Joe Erickson if these skills were not good to know. As you probably already are aware, I am referring to the helicopter. In both the above cases these members had to be flown out with injuries that prevented them from completing their respective trips.

For the past five years now, Don Landells has given his time and use of his Bell

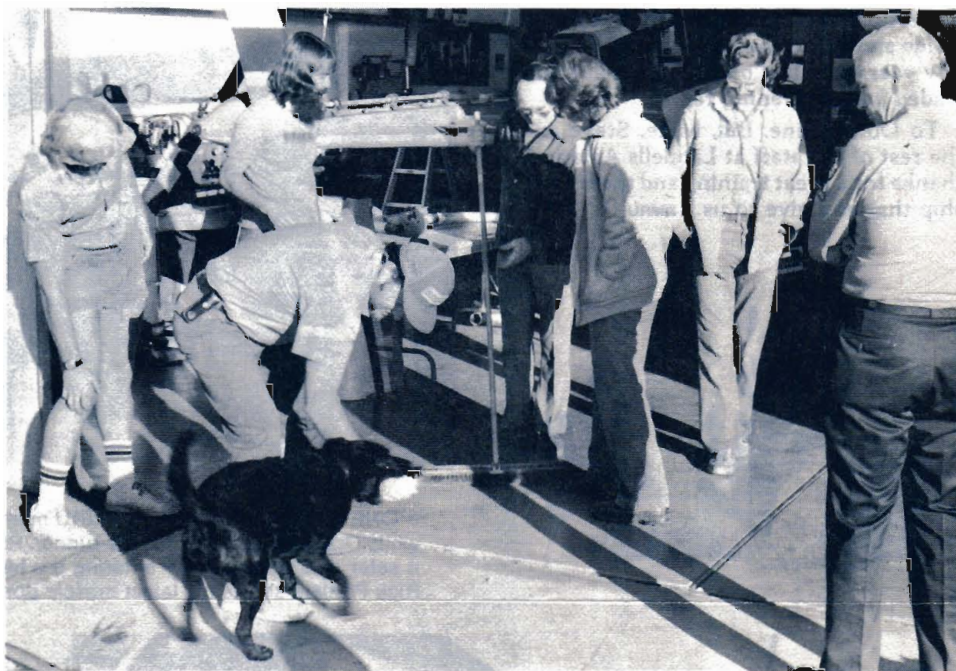
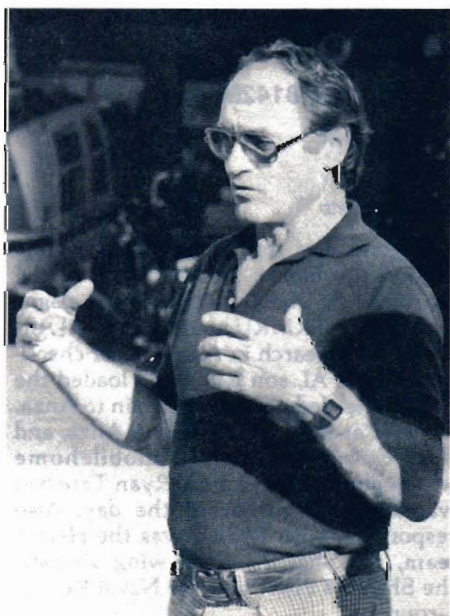


PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

HELIPORT DOG — RMRU member Walt Walker wrestles with 'Cinder' as John Dew (right foreground) looks on. Don Landells and Mary Bowman seem to have struck up an interesting conversation about Don's broom. Others looking on are Craig Beasley (with the knobby knees) Criag Britton and Jim Anholm.

Jet Rangers for us to train new members, and for the rest of the team to practice their skills. I have been attending helitacs for better than ten years now (five of which I was starry eyed observer). In December of 1977 I made my first training jump. It is quite a kick to step out of a hovering helicopter, but when you step out onto the runner and get the nod to jump, and then slowly step off into six feet of air, then land on a steep brush covered slope with a blanket of snow to boot, it is a very serious task. Then there is the practice of giving hand signals to the pilot, and maneuvering the bird onto a one runner practice rock in the open field next to Don's hanger. Again this is fun seeing who does the best. Then ask Walt about the time he gave signals to Don and positioned his skid onto the top of a small oak tree, so that we could climb up the trunk of the tree, take hold of the runner climb into the bird (this was done because the slope was too steep for Don to get the chopper close to the ground).

RMRU met at Don's front gate at 8:00 am and waited for 'Cinder', (Don's heliport dog) to greet us on the other side of

the gate, followed by Don. 8:15, coffee, donuts and war stories from the past. After rolling 40MC out of the hanger, Don went over the do's and don'ts around helicopters. Walt followed with instruction on getting in and out of the helicopter, hand signals and general safety information. Members then practiced climbing in and out while the machine sat idle. With static practice complete, we moved to the nearby field and waited while the machine was warmed up. Joining us this year from Don's staff were pilots Mike Donovan, who we have flown with several times now on actual missions and pilot Steve deJesus who was new to flying with RMRU. Mike started things off with one runner pick ups on RMRU's wood rock, and then a quick spin around to the other end of the field for jumps (it is not a jump but actually just stepping off). After everyone took several turns at it, Steve gave it a try for the first time with RMRU. Again we went through all the steps. To finish off things Don climbed in to the cockpit, and along with RMRU members, did a one runner litter pick up with Randy Iwasiuk's wife Bobbi

in the litter. With Helitac officially through, three members strapped themselves into the back and then Don gave us a high performance demonstration of just what a *Bell Jet Ranger III* could do.

With the bird put back in the hanger, we adjourned to lunch. After lunch, local tough guy, Rick Pohlers took control and made assignments for van clean-up. So, it was out with the gear for inventory and inspection, washed and polished both the inside and out of the vans. As per the past few years, the last bit of equipment was loaded just as evening fell.

To Don, Elaine, Bill, Mike, Steve and the rest of the staff at Landells Aviation, thanks for a great training and the friendship that you give to us. • RMRU



PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

ONE RUNNER PICK-UP — RMRU member Mark Rhoads steps into the cabin of 40MC, while Craig Britton steadies the runner. RMRU has found that steadying the runner makes it safer and smoother for entering the helicopter. On a funny note, 'Charles Atlas', alias Rick Pohlers shows his latest muscle pose while Pres. Walt Walker looks on in disbelief.



PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

HIGHER WALT! — Pilot Mike Donovan lets RMRU member Walt Walker off with an easy jump of about three feet. Got to take care of the veterans.



Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8142M

**5 Dec., Sat.
Anza**

By John Dew

A good day for getting things done around the house. At least I did in the morning. At about 1:00 p.m. the pager went off. 'All RMRU members call Al Andrews for a search in Anza.' After checking in with Al, son Roy and I loaded the car and headed up the mountain to Anza. We met at the CDF station in Anza, and then caravanned out to a mobilehome where young two year old Ryan Tate had wandered off earlier in the day. Also responding with RMRU was the Hemet team, the Sheriff's fixed wing aircraft, the Sheriff's Posse and the Naval Rescue Group.

First thing operations leader Walt Walker did was to have Kevin Walker and I start looking for tracks heading away from the home. We loaded up light packs and headed out. As more members arrived, Walt assigned them to try and cut a perimeter for tracks on the other side of the mobilehome. Kevin and I swept around and found nothing but foot prints from what was no doubt concerned friends and relatives. Just as we reached the road that we had driven in on, Bernie McIlvoy reported finding tracks fitting the description about one mile from the mobilehome. Walt drove over to Bernie's location and agreed that these were probably the right ones. Walt came back and moved Kevin and I over to Bernie's location. We had enough members there for three teams, so Kevin and I started down a sandy wash, Bernie and his brother Dave continued over to another wash. Bernie and Dave went down the wash, and the third team of Joe Erickson and Hemet member Greg Lewis went up the wash. The reason for splitting up was because the prints that Bernie had found, went up onto a humped ridge where the ground was so hard that we were leaving little if any signs ourselves.

As Kevin and I continued down, we could hear coyotes in the distance, and another fear for the child was the fact that the light of day was fading fast and it would soon be getting very cold. Just as the sun was dipping behind the mountains, Bernie came on the radio, 'Base, we have found Ryan. He is in good shape'. We gave a shout to Bernie, and by his reply we were close, so Kevin and I climbed out of the small wash and headed towards the voices. Upon reaching them we found young Ryan hanging on to Dave for dear life. After getting a jacket around Ryan, we headed back the mile and a half to the dirt road, and then a quick ride back to his waiting parents. Because of Bernie and Dave's sharp ears, they were able to here Ryan weeping in the brush above them. Just goes to show what a little positive crying can do. • RMRU

Ranger. Just as members were arriving at the road head the sheriff notified us that the group had just walked out, and were in good shape. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8144M

**23-24 Dec., Wed.-Thurs.
Anza**

By Brian Hixson

At about 8:30 pm I was pulled away from the TV by a call from Walt Walker, stating that a young child was missing in the Anza area. Walt picked me up shortly after. We left Hemet and rolled through Sage and then up to Anza, followed by John Dew and Kevin Walker. Base camp was set up only a mile from where we had searched for a two yr. old earlier in the month. The Hemet team had been called earlier but did not have any luck. We were shown the child's footprints near the mobilehome where he was last seen with his dog in the afternoon. A Hemet search team reported that they felt they had found tracks. Walt assigned John and I to go along with Kevin in his jeep, and follow the deputy around to where the search team was. Upon arriving at the

groups location we did some looking, and confirmed that this was the correct print. The Hemet group continued on and we moved around again and further North. Our plan was to try and leap frog search to try and cut off the child, who had already gone several miles in a short amount of time. As was the problem earlier in the month, temperatures were dipping into the 30's and the coyotes could be heard howling in the distance.

After moving around, we started searching our way up another dirt road that would hopefully cut the young child off. We had been searching for some time when over the scanner we heard the sheriff's dispatcher tell the deputy to roll to an Anza address, that a young boy and his dog had been found sleeping on a doorstep, by the residents. We jumped back into the jeep and followed the deputy to the house in question, and upon going inside we found that our three and a half year old friend was still abit cold but other than that was O.K. Kevin checked him out, and after seeing that he was in good shape, the deputy took him back to base and his waiting parents. Once back in his mothers arms it was apparent that this young one would have a very Merry Christmas • RMRU

ABORT

Mission No. 8143A

**22 Dec., Tues.
Martinez area,
Santa Rosa Mountains**

At 1030 hrs. we recived a call from the Indio office of the Riverside County Sheriffs' Department that three men were overdue in hiking out from the Sugar Loaf Cafe to La Quinta on the desert floor. The trio started on Sunday and were to be out by Monday evening. RMRU was activated and was to meet at the Sugar Loaf Cafe where we would be joined by Don Landells and his Jet



PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

HAPPY REUNION — A very happy, safe young boy, motions as his mother looks on knowing that this will indeed be a joyous holiday after all!

RESCUE

Mission No. 8145M

**29-30 Dec., Tues.-Wed.
Upper Skyline Trail,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Jim Garvey

Ironically, the pager call for this mission came while a lady friend, Terri McCawley and I were driving from the show to a restaurant for conversation and coffee. I had just finished joking with her that a team member could activate his pager to terminate a date that was not working out; when, much to my chagrin, the crazy thing went off!

After taking my friend home and providing heartfelt assurances that the pager call was indeed authentic, Larry Roland and I sped off into the night towards the Palm Springs Tram.

Two young men had attempted to hike up Tahquitz Canyon to the upper tram station. Due to last years fire and flooding much of the canyon was filled with material eroded from the canyon walls, making the canyon easier to negotiate. However, they ran into a large waterfall that forced them to climb out of the canyon and continue the ascent up the ridge to the East of Tahquitz Canyon. Late in the afternoon, Anson Brooks left Robert Tyler at about the 6,000 foot level and continued on towards the upper tram station. Anson arrived after dark and told the Rangers at the Long Valley station about his abandoned companion. After searching the upper end of the Skyline Ridge, the rangers called RMRU.

It was an exciting night to be out hiking. The wind had blown out two windows in one of the tram cars, and one at the ranger station. Limbs and entire trees littered the ground. Joe Erickson, Bernie McIlvoy, Mark Rhoads and I started down the Skyline trail. Larry Roland, Rick Pohlers, Mary Bowman and John Dew stayed at the upper Tram station as back-up support.

After descending for about 45 minutes we saw a flickering campfire to the East on a ridge across a one-half mile expanse of foreboding darkness. Crossing that black expanse proved to be a very difficult and unpleasant undertaking. The area was burned over, leaving sharp stumps that resembled punji sticks. The steep slope was very loose and broken with rock fall a constant hazard. Many small drainages crisscrossed the area interspersed with dropoffs that blocked our route.

I had the distinction of taking the most interesting fall of the evening, landing up side down wedged between some very hard rocks. After several hours of picking our way through this mess, we approach-

ed our subject, who was sitting beside a dying fire trying to keep warm. By contrast, everyone in our search party had been cut, scraped or bruised by the time we reached Robert. An outside observer would have had difficulty distinguishing the rescuers from the rescuee.

Robert was in good condition, but cold. As we prepared to bivouac for the rest of the night, the gentle mist that had been falling developed into intermittent snow and rain. If we had not arrived the rain would have greatly increased Roberts chances of succumbing to hypothermia.

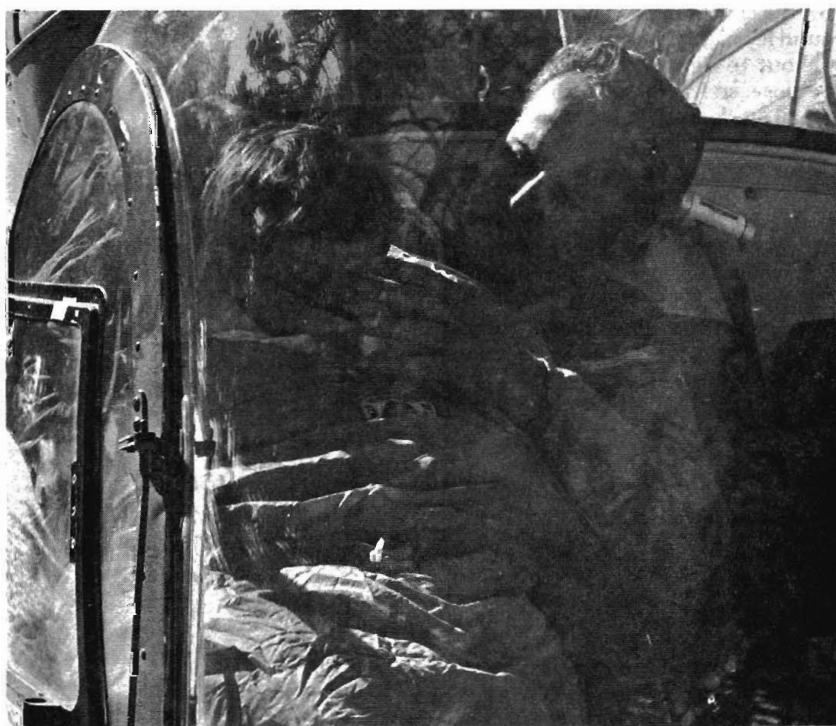
Waking up with a small river flowing through my bivy bag and into my boots is not how I usually like to start the day. My comrades, having spent an equally exciting night, ate a breakfast of jelly beans and cashew nuts.

It was still raining off and on making a helicopter evacuation impossible. As our subject appeared to be in good condition we started to hike up the ridge. After three hours of strenuous up hill hiking and third class bouldering, we reached the upper Tram station. From there it was down to Bobs Big Boy in Palm Springs for a very large breakfast. • RMRU



PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

MODESTY — One of RMRU's more modest members, Joe "Cool" Erickson, attempts to dodge the photographer, as he and the rescued subject, Robert Tyler, walk the concrete trail up to the tram station.



Our hearts are filled with joy,
because we are able to help others!
RMRU's 20th Holiday Season