

Volume XVII, Issue II, February 1981 — Kevin Walker, Editor — Walt Walker, Publisher

Critically Injured Lad **Rescued!**



TENSE MOMENT — As the main rotor blade wash, from the hovering helicopter, was blowing downward, RMRU member Jim Fairchild photographed the drama from the helicopter piloted by Don Landells. The picture does not accurately show the steep ice slope where this mission occurred (below the Tahquitz Notches). (L to R)

RMRU member Bernie McIlvoy grabs his ice axe for balance, while injured hiker Eric Nelson shields his face and RMRU member Walt Walker struggles to secure the litter after it was delivered by the helicopter. See Mission No. 8108M for the story of this dramatic rescue and a *first* in the annals of RMRU's 19½ year history.

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8105C

**8 Feb., Sun.
Palomar State Park,
San Diego County**

Early Sunday evening we received a call from the San Diego Mountain Rescue Team with news of a search for 10 year old boy in Palomar State Park. The San Diego County Sheriff was coordinating the search and did not require any out of county assistance at that time, was requesting that we go into a stand-by mode. Monday morning we received another call stating that our services would not be needed. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8106M

**10-11 Feb., Tues.-Wed.
Palomar State Park,
San Diego County**

By Randy Iwasuik

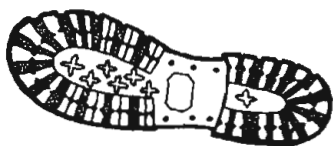
My gear was still scattered about the house drying after our training weekend on 'San Jacinto' when Larry Roland called Monday evening February 9th. He informed me that RMRU had been placed on standby to assist in the search of a missing boy in the Mt. Palomar area of San Diego County.

The next morning nine year old Jimmy Beveridge still had not been found and RMRU was activated to assist in the search. When Larry and I arrived at the search coordination center at 1000 we found that the search had ballooned into a major project with SAR teams from San Diego, Sierra Madre, Saddleback and Riverside. We checked in with Mary Bowman at the RMRU vans and proceeded to adhere strictly to that timeless axiom of large organized efforts—hurry up and wait. After briefly examining what was thought to be a footprint of the boy and learning that the boy's uncle, who set off in search of him, was also missing, we returned to base to await a new assignment.

By that afternoon we learned that the missing boy's jacket had been found on a

steep slope less than a mile and a half from where he was last seen. Larry and I were teamed up with six members of Sierra Madre and dispatched by jeep to the rugged area west of the campground where Jimmy's family was staying. Pauma Creek ran through a rugged canyon choked with brush and moss covered rocks made slick by the recent rain storms and swirling mists that obscured the clattering helicopters overhead. With less than an hour of light left we arrived at the jacket site. We split up into groups of two and continued searching several small drainages uphill with the intention of bivouacking at the top of the ridge. Larry and I moved slowly through the tangled brush and dense fog reaching the top of the ridge just as the sun set into a sea of fog. A pale sliver of moon added little illumination to the ghostly woods and the lingering mist as they receded into the hollows and valleys below us. It got cold fast with a damp chill that struck to the core. We regrouped with six of our Sierra Madre friends and after considerable effort had a fire going to warm those who did not have sleeping bags.

The next morning was bright and clear as we split up and continued searching the brushy gullies upstream and down hill to the small creek below the jacket site. Staying in voice contact we formed a line from the creekbed to just below the ridge and began sweeping south towards Pauma Creek. I was at the top of the line nearest the ridge with Larry about 40 yards below me. As we swept around the end of the ridge I heard a voice call out for help. I scrambled up and saw a figure sitting on a rock on the ridge. Thinking I had found the boy's uncle I yelled to Larry and ran over to investigate. The man, Bill Thompson told me he had found a body to the north. Larry and I accompanied him to the site which was about 45 minutes from where we met him. Jimmy's body was on a steep rocky slope in a dry gully obscured from the air by dense tree cover. A litter was dropped and a landing site secured. The litter was evacuated along with ourselves one by one back to base. Back in camp we were amazed to find 150 Marines and a crack Navy survival team had joined the search along with several helicopters including two from San Diego TV stations. After a debriefing and an informal interview with the media Larry and I headed home while the search continued for the boy's missing uncle. He was found that Friday after five nights in the open, in fair condition. By this time I had come down with an impressive case of Poison Oak. • RMRU



SEARCH

Mission No. 8107C

**12 Feb., Thurs.
Palomar State Park,
San Diego County**

Thursday morning we received a call from the San Diego Mountain Rescue Team. We were told that CR-MRA search was being organized for Saturday morning, to try and locate Eric Enell missing since February 7th. As on the previous mission, we would rendezvous at Doane Lake Campground, in the Palomar State Park.

Friday afternoon, while on another mission (No. 8108M) we heard over the radio that Eric was found alive in Pauma Creek by Navel personnel. • RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 8108M

**13 Feb., Fri.
Tahquitz Peak area,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Walt Walker

It was a beautiful day for a hike in the mountains and two young men took advantage of the weather for a day hike to Tahquitz Peak. Eric Nelson and Ricky Park had hiked up the South Ridge trail to the peak where they ate lunch. They then started out the ridge towards Saddle Junction. While they were traversing a snow slope Eric slipped and began a sliding, tumbling, rolling fall that almost ended in tragedy better than 1,000 feet below. Eric's painful trip was stopped by a four inch diameter Pine tree.

Ricky called out to his friend and was joyful to hear Eric answer back. Eric related that he was injured and needed help. Ricky yelled down that he would go for help. Ricky made a speedy descent back down to Idyllwild. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department was advised of the situation and they called RMRU. Discussing the incident with the SO it was decided to have Don Landells fly directly to Idyllwild. It was a known injury situation on difficult terrain and it would be mid-afternoon by the time we made our way to the injured lad.

Kevin Walker and I arrived in Idyllwild at 1405 hrs. with the No. 1 van. Jack Bowman pulled in right behind us at Camp Maranatha. He was followed by Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Nelson (Eric's parents), and his friend Ricky. I asked Jack to run base while Kevin and I packed our gear and interviewed Ricky. From his description it sounded like Eric had fallen of the backside (south-eastern) side of the Tahquitz ridge.

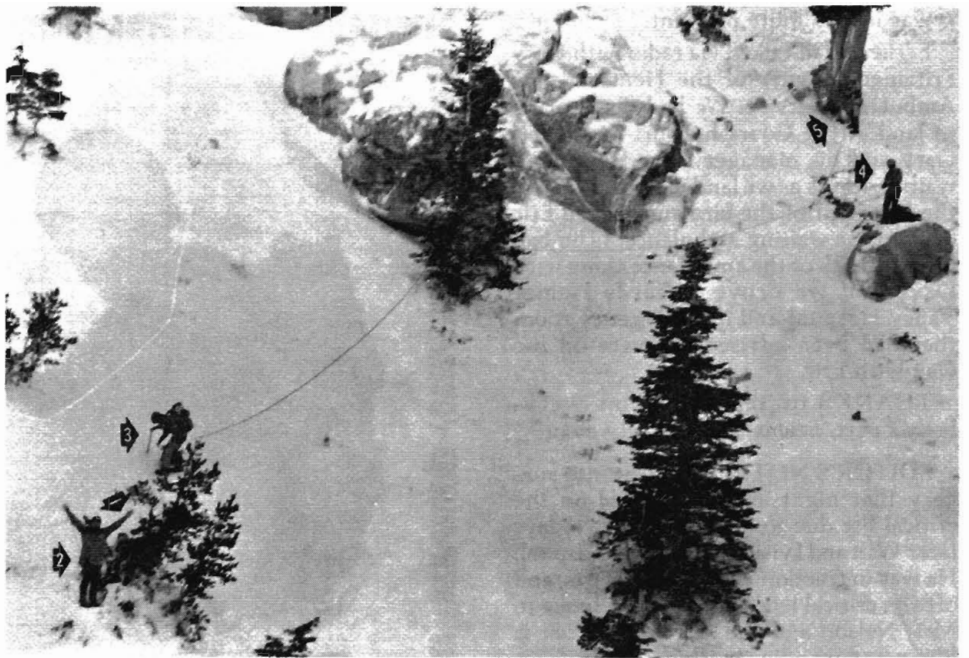
It was 1417 hrs. when Don arrived in one of his Bell Jet Ranger helicopters. I briefed Don on the situation while Kevin loaded our packs. Don applied the power and we were off and on our way towards the peak. We searched back and forth along the backside with negative results. We flew over to the other side and started searching below the notches with the same results. At 1432 hrs. I radioed to base to have the informant ready as we wanted to put him in the front seat of the bird.

We picked up Ricky and headed towards the peak. Flying along the backside again we quickly learned what I had suspected. Eric was on the other side! Again we flew over to the area below the notches and at 1449 hrs. Kevin spotted Eric weakly waving. Don and I briefly discussed the situation and it was decided to drop Kevin and Ricky off on the ridge and then return to look for a helispot. They were dropped off and Don flew back and began looking for something to put a runner down on. The major problem was the lack of main rotor blade clearance due to the steepness of snow covered slope.

At 1453 hrs. Don put a runner down on an ice covered boulder and I slowly slid out of the bird and onto the rock. Don pulled away and headed up to pick up Kevin and Ricky. Only four minutes later Don was back and Kevin climbed out onto the same boulder. While Don returned to base, Kevin climbed up to a large tree to set up a belay anchor, while I put on my crampons. It was now 1517 hrs. as Kevin belayed me the 175 feet over to Eric.

All the time (six minutes) as I was climbing over, Eric complained of being cold and that his back hurt him. I thought to myself, "it's good that he is still feeling and talking." Arriving at Eric I could see that his lower right leg had both bones fractured, it was obvious due to the deformity. I immediately secured Eric to the Pine tree with a nylon sling. As I began my examination at 1525 hrs., Don lifted off from base with Bernie McIlvoy and Pete Carlson aboard along with the rescue sleeping bag and a Hare traction splint that I had requested.

Continuing the examination I was concerned of possible head injuries because Eric did not respond well to my questions. As soon as I finished with the examination of the head and torso I put my fiberpile jacket on Eric. Due to the precarious position that Eric was in, I could not take his wet clothing off. Upon finishing the examination, I had found: possible wrist fracture, possible hip and/or upper leg fracture, extreme tenderness of the abdominal area (probable internal bleeding), definite fracture of both right lower leg bones, severe shock and advancing hypothermia.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

ACCIDENT SCENE — This was the scene of near tragedy for Eric Nelson (1) resting against a small Pine tree that stopped his 1,000 foot sliding-tumbling fall. Walt Walker (2) guides the helicopter, piloted by Don Landells, in to let off a RMRU Stokes litter, while Bernie McIlvoy (3) makes his way over and down to Eric and Walt. At the other end of the belay rope, was Kevin Walker (4), above Kevin making adjustments to the ropes was Pete Carlson (5).

Bernie and Pete arrived as I finished the examination. They quickly climbed over to Eric and I. As we discussed my plan, Don was in the air again, this time with Jim Fairchild aboard along with one of our Stokes litters. Arriving at our area, Don hovered the bird while Jim lowered the litter to me. With the litter secured, Bernie, Pete and I put the Hare traction splint on Eric's severely injured right leg. While Bernie and I lifted, Pete slid the litter under Eric and we zipped the rescue sleeping bag closed. At 1536 hrs. we completed tying him into the litter. Checking Eric again I found the shock had increased and that the hypothermia was into the second stage as Eric was now not making sense when he spoke.

Bernie, Pete and I discussed our options which were basically two. Fly more members and equipment in (besides Jim, Rick Pohlers, Joe Erickson and Mary Bowman were also at base) and set up a hauling system to move Eric the 1,000 plus feet up to the top of the ridge. This was a slow and somewhat dangerous plan, due to the falling ice blocks. It also meant that we would finish the lift well after dark and quite possible not be able to fly Eric out in the dark. With Eric's deteriorating physical condition, this did not appear to be a very good option.

The other option was to ask Don to do something that he and RMRU had never done. Pick up the litter as a sling load underneath the bird and fly Eric to the top

of the ridge. This also was not without danger. We had slung out numerous loads of gear and equipment with Don and he had flown better than 300 Tule Elk as sling loads with never a mishap. So we radioed out and told Don of Eric's serious condition and requested that he sling Eric up to the ridge. Don radioed back that if we thought it was that serious, he would do it.

The three of us rigged the litter for a horizontal pick-up and were ready when Don arrived at 1628 hrs. Don picked up Kevin and I and flew us up to Chincapin Flat on the Tahquitz Ridge. We climbed out and secured a sling rope to the helicopter's bomb hook. Don lifted off and descended. He hovered over the litter as Bernie and Pete secured the litter to the sling rope. They signaled and Don picked up the loaded litter. All this time Kevin and I had been watching from above. In what seemed like an eternity, but was only 90 seconds, Don slowly flew up toward us with the litter slowly spinning at the end of the sling rope. Don gently sat the litter down on the snow at Chincapin and moved forward and released the bomb hook. He landed the bird next to us and we loaded the litter into the back of the bird. I climbed in the back with Eric and Kevin got in the front and we lifted off at 1642 hrs. At first it was cold as the air rushed by the openings left by the removal of the rear doors. Then, as we descended the air became warmer until

it was indeed quite pleasant.

Earlier I had talked via radio with Gary Fritzinger, owner of the Hemet Valley Ambulance Service. We had made plans to land at the Coors heliport in Hemet. Gary and his manager Dave King were waiting for us as we landed. We off loaded the litter out of the bird and carried Eric over to the waiting ambulance. I climbed into the back of the ambulance along with Dave and we drove towards Hemet Valley Hospital and its emergency room that had been advised we were on the way with Eric.

THANKS to 'teamwork' on everybody's part, Eric is alive today! • RMRU

EDITOR'S NOTE: Eric went into surgery that night and was placed on the critical list due to his injuries. Two days later Walt and I visited him in the hospital. He was in traction, but in good spirits, and off the critical list. Walt recently spoke to Mrs. Nelson and she related that Eric is home and mending well.

\$USTAINING MEMBERS

BY KEVIN WALKER

Not too much to say this month, except to welcome all the new people to RMRU's Sustaining Membership. You are the ones that help RMRU grow. And to the renewing group, welcome back! Our latest Sustaining Member report shows that we have a better than 90% renewal rate. That is a pretty impressive figure, it is one to truly be proud of, thanks to you the renewing people. With that kind of support we are able to continue to replace and improve on old equipment, and to purchase new equipment. This makes our job safer and expedites our primary mission, helping the ones in need.

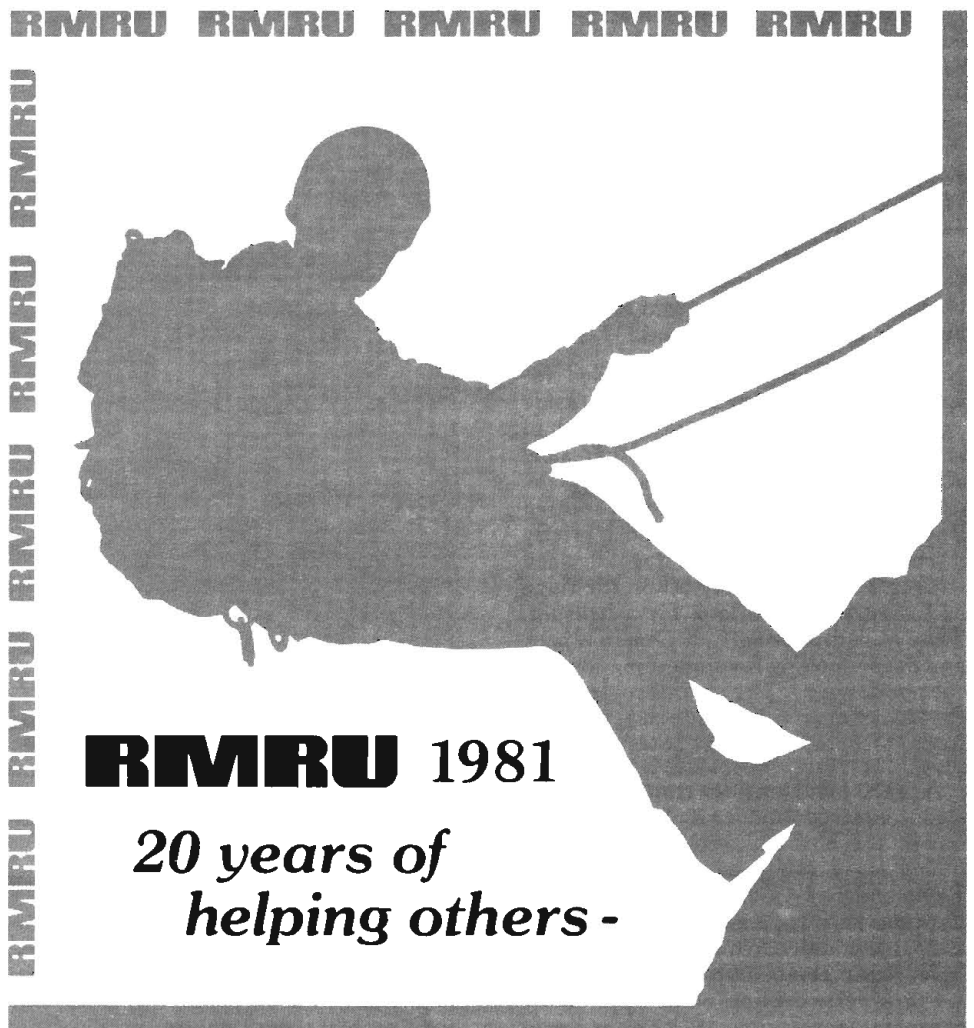
New—

Mrs. Lucile Brown
Martha P. Stuckey
Fred E. Viele
*Bud Nelson
Ann Ahern
O. M. Doud
Sue M. McKinney

Renewing—

Karin Allen
*Francis L. Gray
Dianne Corte
C. O. Barker, Jr.
Albin Merzals
Palm Canyon Trading Post
*Rubidoux Grange #611
Weston Robinson
Kathleen Kiliadko

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



Have you set aside the evening of October 3rd?

If you have not, then please mark your calendar right now! We are planning a **special** celebration of RMRU's 20th Anniversary. The main theme of the evening will be:

'20 years of helping others'

The plans are well underway for a very special evening. We have reserved a large room at Raincross Square in Riverside. Both of RMRU's vans will be on display along with the equipment that is housed in each one. There

will also be a display of old RMRU photographs, uniforms, helmets, packs, etc.

Before a buffet dinner you will be able to talk with the members, who will be in their uniforms. Right after dinner we will have a short program of slides and movies, a brief ceremony honoring the veterans, and the balance of the evening will be for you to again talk with RMRU's members. In the near future we will have more details including the cost of the dinner.



Training

Winter Shakedown

**7-8 Feb., Sat.-Sun.
Mt. San Jacinto,
San Jacinto Mountains**

With snow conditions being poor, our traditional January Winter Shakedown trip, was postponed for that month. This year's snowpack was considerably less than the 1980 deluge.

The team met at the lower station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway at 0630 Saturday. Shakedown is a time for testing new equipment and also to check out all the old stuff. Among the new equipment this year was two small plastic sleds, to be pulled in by the tent group of Rick Pohlers, Walt and Kevin Walker. The idea of this was to allow a group to pull in extra equipment that might have been left

behind due to lack of space in packs. For new RMRU members Bob Attride and Craig Britton, this would be their first shakedown trip with the unit

Once at the upper station, packs were put on and the sleds were prepared. After a quick stop at the Long Valley Ranger Station to leave a RMRU radio in the event of a rescue, the group was on their way. Some found enjoyment up at the front of the group just taking in the morning beauty, while others in the back got a good laugh at the sled 'dogs' trying to keep their sleds on the trail and not slipping over the edge. Everyone stopped at Round Valley to put snowshoes on. From there the team headed over to Tamarak Valley for lunch. It was an unusually warm day, in fact members were wishing they had short pants to change into.

After a very leisurely lunch the troops hiked on up the ridge to a good camping area. Once everyone had tents and such set up, training chairman Hal Fulkman divided the unit members into three groups. One group had a search problem, another had to perform first aid to an injured hiker (Hal), while the third group had a technical evacuation. The purpose of this exercise was to see how well members could do these operations with the

gear they had with them. All in all the exercises were successful. Next came a highlight of the trip. Dinner! Nothing more need be said on that subject

Sunday morning members were awoke by falling snow (sounds a lot like January), and strong gusty wind. After breakfast, a hearty group gathered for quick snowshoe trip up to the summit. Within an hour and a half the group reached the summit. No one stayed long though. The extremely strong wind accompanied by snow made it a very inhospitable place.

Once back at camp, some members climbed back into the tent for one last cup of something hot to drink, while others prepared to break camp. When all were ready, the team headed cross-country for Round Valley. It was an enjoyable snowshoe trip through the trees, with the snow gently falling. From Round Valley it was a quick walk down the compacted trail to Long Valley and the tram.

Even though there was only three feet of snow on the ground, members were able to test equipment and themselves, in temperatures ranging from 70° weather to below zero conditions. And for the sleds, they indeed work, but some modifications will have to be made before the next 'Winter Shakedown'. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

THE SUMMIT — RMRU members (L to R) Kevin Walker, Don Chambers, Tom Aldrich, Larry Roland, Hal Fulkman, Randy Iwasuik and Jim

Garvey show their enthusiasm upon reaching the summit of Mt. San Jacinto, in the middle of a heavy, wind laced, snow storm