

Volume XVII, Issue VI, June 1981 — Kevin Walker, Editor — Walt Walker, Publisher — Lisa Walker, Artist



Familiarization

**6-8 June, Fri.-Sun.
Tahquitz Canyon,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Kevin Walker

Once upon a time there were "five little piggies." The first little piggy went to Caramba Camp. The second little piggy went down Tahquitz Canyon. The third little piggy almost stepped on a sleeping rattlesnake. But the fourth little piggy stubbed his little toe. And because of that, the fifth little piggy had to be flown out.

I know you are wondering what the above paragraph is all about. In a nut shell, that is what happened on our annual decent of Tahquitz Canyon. Friday evening, the team hiked in from Humber Park to Caramba Camp.

Saturday morning after breakfast, we split into two groups. The main group consisting of Joe Erickson, Hal Fulkman, Walt Walker, Craig Beasley, Randy Iwasuik, Bernie McIlvoy and son Eugene, Ron Barry, Bob Attride, Jerry Niswonger and myself started down through the narrows below Caramba, which is the beginning of the canyon. Group number two was led by Jim Fairchild, recovering from an injury to his hand. In his group was daughter Carol Cook, Mary Bowman, Karen Rutledge and newest member, Mark Rhoads. This group would walk the high country for familiarization.

As we descended the canyon the temperature became steadily hotter, and because of that we frequently stopped for water breaks, and to wet our shirts and hats. At noon we arrived and had lunch at the pool where former member Dan MacIntosh fell in June of 1972. Before, during and after lunch, members enjoyed the cool pool. After lunch, we

continued on down. A major part of the descent is getting to know the various landmarks and helispots in the canyon. Points along the way included Mac's helispot (made when Dan fell), Rockpile, the major confluence of the Hidden/Long Valley drainage, and Tower helispot. Just before we were to climb out of the canyon to get around one of the canyon's major waterfalls, about half of the group walked past a rattlesnake (remember piggy no. 3) that was sleeping in the shade.

After making the climb out of the canyon, we traversed several hundred feet, and then descended back to the floor, and our favorite campsite at the 3,000 foot level. Members quickly got their packs and boots off. Next item of business was to get everyone's favorite beverages into the stream to cool. And with that done, it was but a short walk up stream to a pool about half the size of an olympic pool, but still plenty deep (10 feet). Normally the water is crystal clear, but because of the fire that went through the area in August 1980 the water was slightly clouded, but still quite cool and refreshing. Everyone went in except for Jerry and Joe. Ron Barry walked back to find out the reason for their absence. Ron came back and said that Joe had dislocated his little toe on his left foot. As we walked back to camp we all had a good chuckle. Someone made the comment about five little piggies that went down Tahquitz Canyon. With that I couldn't help but volunteer to do the write-up. Back at camp we found Joe in a fair amount of pain. Dr. Jerry had already given Joe a pain killer, and had put his foot in the water to slow the swelling.

All joking aside, we definitely had a problem in that Joe would not be able to walk out on his own. With that we got a radio out. It was thought that a couple members would have to climb up to the ridge to radio out to Don Landells heliport (Don has a radio on our frequency in his hanger). But when we were about to start up we heard Don talking to Jim Fairchild's group. We were even more surprised when Don was able to hear us. Walt told Don of Joe's problem. Don said that two of his birds were down for repairs and that his other pilot Mike Donovan would not be back until Sunday at 4:00 pm. with the third Jet Ranger.

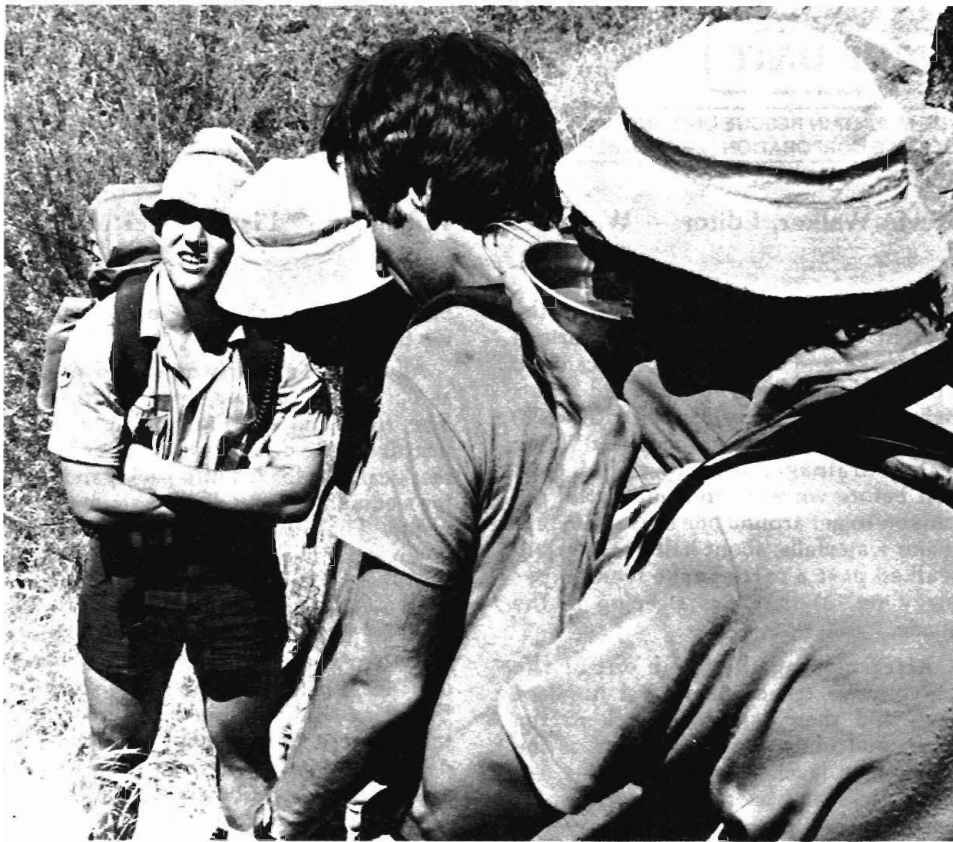
Since that was the best offer around, we took it.

All enjoyed a hearty meal, and as soon as darkness came we were off to sleep. The following morning brought more heat from the desert below. After breakfast gear was loaded into packs, and then Joe's equipment was divided amongst the group. The plan was to help Joe hobble down canyon approximately a half of a mile to the Grapevine Helispot. It took awhile, but Joe made it (on one leg most of the time). After taking a short rest there, we left Walt (we always stay in at least pairs) and Joe in the shade of the trees, and continued on down. The temperature quickly shot past the 100 degree mark. We stopped often to rest and cool off. At 11:00 am we climbed out of the canyon once more to go around the granddaddy waterfall of the canyon (300 feet). It was a hot walk, but the reward of lunch and a long swim back in the canyon was worth the wait.

As we were enjoying the water, the sound of an old friend could be heard. It was a Bell 47G (old vintage helicopter) working its way up canyon. Two things were strange about it though. One, it was a helicopter we did not recognize, and second it was about four hours early. Soon enough though it descended back over us. About five minutes later it flew back up. And on its return trip it circled overhead and sure enough it was Don with Walt in the passenger seat (Joe went out on the first trip). Don hovered close enough to us that we could see a big grin on his face. He motioned for us to come on out, laughed and departed. We finished lunch and continued on out to Ann Dolleys.

For the second month in a row we were assisted by Don. Come to find out Don's neighbor Chuck Kellog who owns the old Bell (in mint condition) donated the use of his machine, and Don donated the gas. To Chuck Kellog and Don Landells, Joe thanks you, and all the rest of us troopies thank you. • RMRU





RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

COOL WATER — RMRU members were met at the mouth of Tahquitz Canyon by Walt Walker (already flown out) and Jim Garvey. Walt and Jim had carried a five gallon container of ice water up to the thirsty troops.

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8118M

**8 June, Mon.
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Craig Beasley

It was just minutes before 2:00 when the pager went off. The voice emitting from the little gray box told of a search in Idyllwild, and that all RMRU members were to call Kevin Walker for information. Upon calling Kevin I was told that two brothers were missing somewhere in the San Jacinto Mountains.

As I arrived at Humber Park, I was quickly turned around as base camp was being moved down to Camp Maranatha,

I did not need to be told why, as that means a helicopter had been asked for and okayed. Once at Maranatha, we (the members) were told that James DeWitt (age 29) and his brother Michael (14) had come up to the Idyllwild area on the previous Thursday. They had told their family that they were going to stay in one of the public campgrounds and would return on Sunday. When they did not return home on Sunday the family notified the Sheriff's Department. Our only clue was the pair's car which was now parked up at Humber Park. They had not brought any backpacking gear with them, so we could only guess that they had went on day hike. How long they had been up on the mountain, we did not know.

Rick Pohlers and Kevin Walker would be on the first flight to Caramba to try and cut tracks. The two Jims, Fairchild and Garvey would be on the second load. Their assignment was to search the upper Tahquitz drainage. I was waiting for Bernie McIlvoy to arrive. We would also search the drainage. John Dew and son Roy were hiking up the Devil's Slide trail in the chance that the two brothers might have found their way back to the saddle.

The chopper, piloted by Mike Donovan

(of Landells Aviation) was about 10 minutes out when we were notified that the pair had wandered into the tramway, and had rode it down to Palm Springs. Both were okay, and with that, the mission was cancelled. Information was passed back that James and Michael had went day hiking on Sunday and became lost. They were forced to spend the night on the mountain. Monday, they wandered onto a trail that led them to the tram. With that, we headed home.

• RMRU

SEARCH

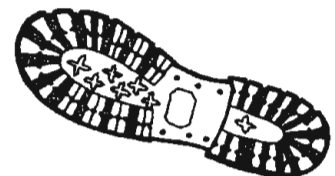
Mission No. 8119M

**9 June, Tues.
San Jacinto Mountains**

At a little before 4:00 pm RMRU member Walt Walker received a call from Capt. Ray Canova of the Sheriff's Department. Capt. Canova informed Walt that a group of horseback riders was overdue in completing the Mt. San Jacinto segment of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). After discussing the situation it was decided to make an initial search of the mountain by air using the Sheriff's Cessna Birdog. Since Walt was the closest member to the Banning airport, he would fly as an observer.

Walt met the plane at the Banning airport. From there the craft flew up and around the mountain to the Anza area where the PCT heads up into the San Jacinto high country. They searched from the Desert divide up and through the Tahquitz Valley area. From there they worked their way around the Western slope and out the Fuller Ridge with no results. Searching from a fixed wing aircraft is quite difficult in a mountainous terrain. It was decided that they would search back over their route once more before stopping the air search. If this did not turn up anything the rest of the team would be called out to start a ground search from various locations on the mountain.

Just as they started to work back, Walt spotted the group on horseback trying to make their way down to the Twin Pines Boys Ranch. After giving the group a few directions from the loud speaker, the group got themselves onto the correct trail to get down to a road head. With that, the pilot flew Walt back to Banning. • RMRU



ASSIST

Mission No. 8120M

**21 June, Sun.
Gavilan Hills,
South of Riverside**

By Jim Fairchild

Late Sunday afternoon a call came with meager details. It was reported that a child had fallen off an 80 foot waterfall in the Gavilan Hills, sustaining possible spinal and leg injuries.

Before long daughter Carol and I were driving the No. 1 van out Victoria Ave. toward the hills in question... east of Lake Mathews, about eight miles south-east of Riverside.

Following considerable radio conversation to determine where to meet the Sheriff's Deputy, we found him, received directions, turned off onto an extremely dusty dirt road, and proceeded deep into the hills along a canyon to the scene.

The "scene" consisted of the recently landed Riverside Police Department helicopter, numerous California Division of Forestry vehicles and personnel, the Sheriff's Deputy, and distraught friends of the fallen and injured "climber." I tried to determine if anyone was in charge and had any information—no success. Then I asked a CDF man if he knew where the fall occurred, he pointed over to the canyon edge, and, upon looking down, I saw four men struggling and slipping with the litter, and adult aboard. I quickly stepped down thirty feet to take the uphill hand of the lead litter carrier. Soon we were up to the helicopter. After some rather "strong encouragement" from the writer, they turned the litter around so it would fit into the litter already lashed to the helo. I tried to ask the very serious woman with a clip-board nearby (the first aider?) about the victim's condition and was sternly told, "We got all that." So, Carol and I returned to the van and watched as the helo began its trip to the hospital. We later learned the man in the litter had sustained permanent spinal column damage at and below shoulder level. • RMRU

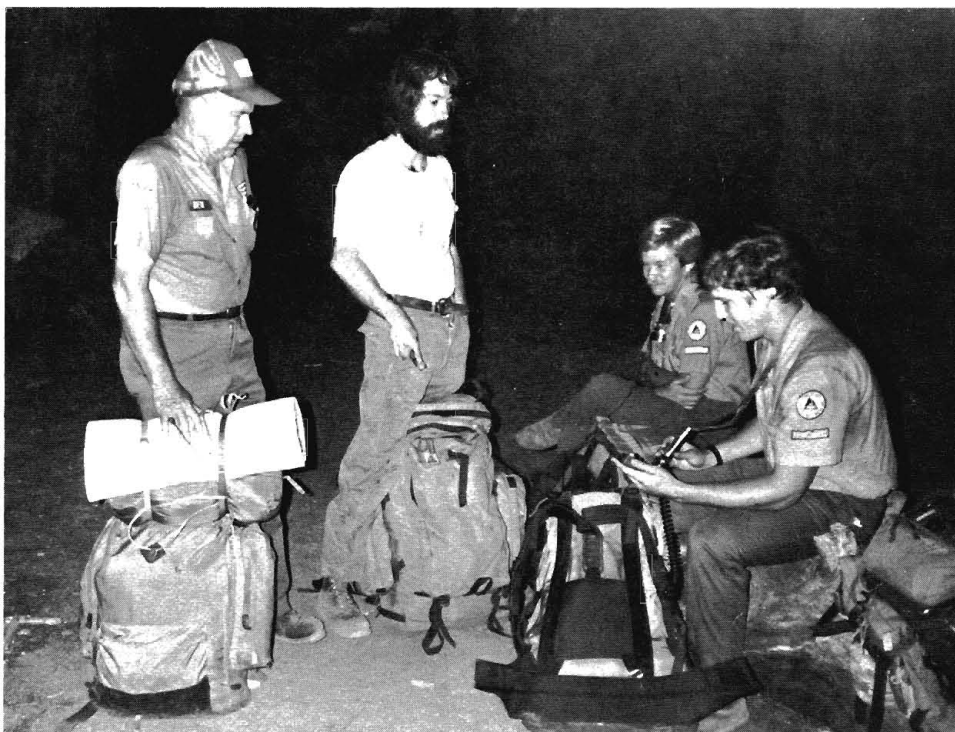
SEARCH

Mission No. 8121M

**30-1 June-July, Tues.-Wed.
Willow Creek Area,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Jim Fairchild

Ngori Malmquist of Anaheim, and Jay Byrum of Escondido, both age ten, were following a compass bearing of 220 degrees, magnetic or true, I don't know. They proceeded far beyond their



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

POW-WOW — RMRU members John Dew, Craig Brittain, Joe Erickson and Kevin Walker discuss their assignments at Saddle Junction before continuing on

intended destination, a flag, and on up into the timber, rocks and brush to a point near the trail that goes to San Jacinto Peak from Humber Park (6400' el.) and Saddle Junction (8100' el.). Dusk stopped them finally, and they put up their tube tent on a rocky ridge formation and waited, occasionally calling out and looking around.

Meanwhile, back at their camp at about 8000' el., 400' above Willow Creek Crossing, they were missed earlier in the afternoon. A search by leaders was undertaken, unsuccessfully, and an informant hiked out to alert the Banning Sheriff's Office a bit after 8:00 pm. RMRU was called at about 9:00 pm and we headed for Idyllwild to start the search.

The group from which the boys disappeared were from Pine Springs Ranch, a youth camp in the Apple Canyon area north of Herkey Creek. Two groups had undertaken a three day hike from Humber Park to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, with practice in orienteering and wilderness living. Obviously, the two missing boys were in the former group.

By 11:30 pm we were hiking, having had some delays in waiting for information. We knew the boys were clothed, had a pack with water, lunch, whistles, and compass, but no word on footgear/footprint — the most crucial piece of knowledge we could obtain. Kevin Walker and Joe Erickson started up the trail first, John Dew (to function as relay from a point above Saddle Junction), Craig Britton and the writer, then Pete

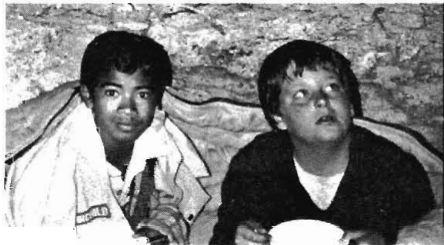
Carlson and Mark Rhoads. Walt Walker was at base as Operations Leader, with Mary Bowman as Base Camp Operator. Rick Pohlers arrived later, but had no partner to hike in with.

Following a brisk hike to Saddle Junction, we re-grouped for our assignments. Kevin and Joe to get more information from leaders at the camp; Pete and Mark to search the nearby meadows and camps, then head for Law's Camp (2 miles distant), and even Caramba (4 miles distant); John to his relay position; Craig and the writer up the northward trail toward Wellman's Cienega (9000' el.).

Pete had just returned from a rather fast ascent of Mt. Williamson (14,284' el.) in the High Sierra, the writer from a rather warm ascent of Mt. Whitney (14,496' el.). Joe's easily dislocated little toe was still quite loose, but he promised to keep his boots on. But, like Walter Mitty's imaginary heroes, we managed to hobble along quickly, into the cooling breezes.

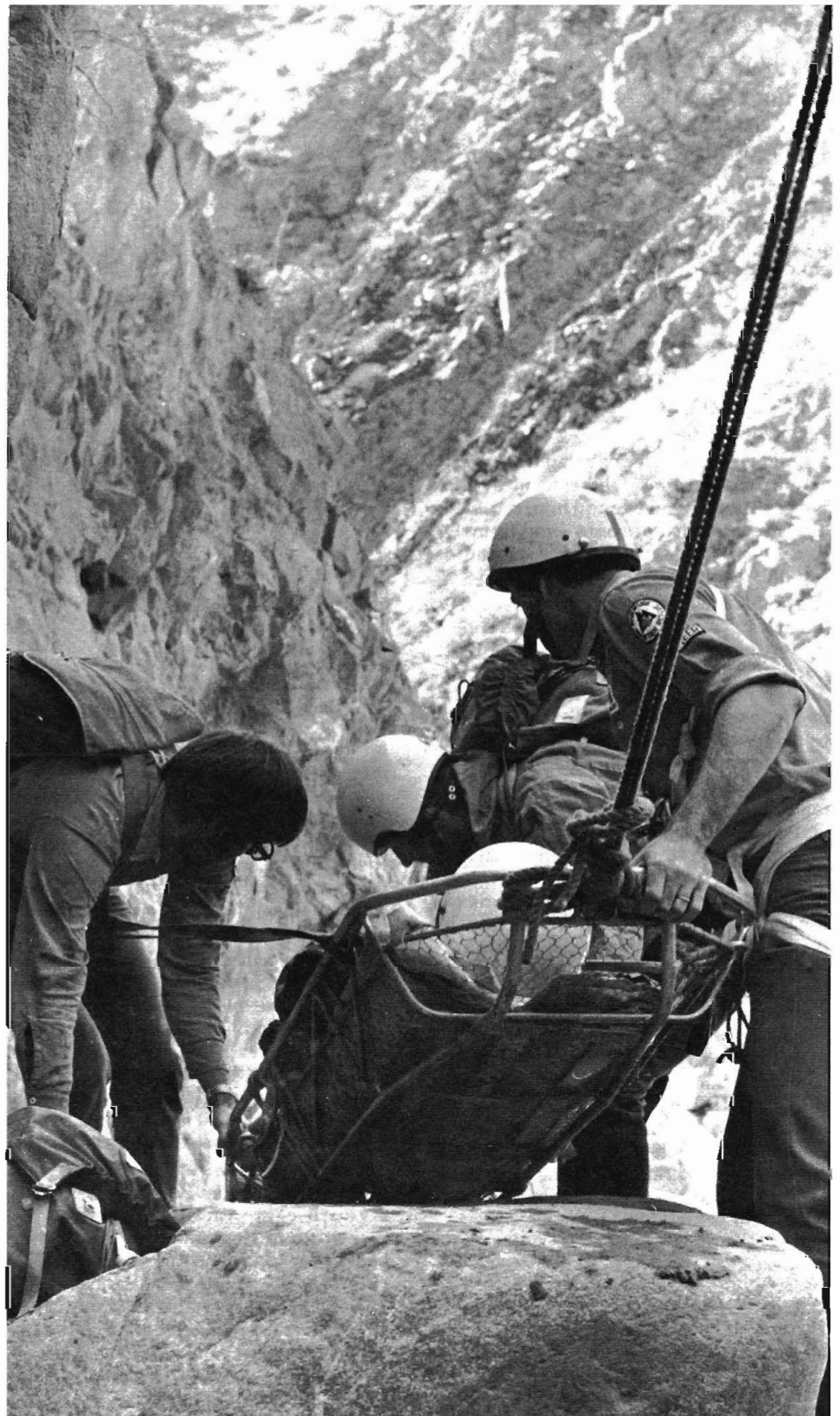
Craig and I immediately found numerous footprints, going both up and down the trail, and about the size a ten year old should wear. We yelled, the other teams yelled, and we all asked, by radio, if the other had yelled. Well, our ears were working. We then agreed to radio to the other teams when we planned to yell. We yelled again, and Craig thought he heard a faint reply. So, we tried again at the next switchback, with no response. A few more switchbacks and two hundred feet elevation above the saddle,

about two thirds of a mile along, we yelled again, loudly. Two young voices answered and we elatedly radioed all units the good news. Craig took off up through the shoulder-high thorny deer-brush, and I followed, clad in shorts. After 150 yards of this we saw the boys on a rocky place. Soon we had them warming in garments, ensolite, and bivvy cover. Craig fired up his stove, and



after M & M's and dried fruit, they ate Top Ramen soup. Along with eating they explained their activities that led to their getting lost. Seems they had a compass and no map. I asked them to point where they "knew" camp should be, and the pointed exactly 180 degrees from the proper direction. Hmm, it never fails. Anyway, they were just cold and anxious, certain they could find their way back after sunup.

After warming and eating, Craig and I got them started down the trail (it was found a hundred yards away, reached by a brushless approach — the boys had no idea they were near a trail), and we whizzed down to the saddle. There, Craig sped off to Humber Park and his mornings work, Pete and John waited, and Mark and I hustled Nigori and Jay back to their camp. Once there I had "forceful" words for the leader about sending youngsters off into the forest alone, tempered by saying the boys performed well once they discovered their plight. We then, with Kevin and Joe, got a couple hours sleep, then hiked out in the coolness of morning, commenting that the mountains are still beautiful. One of the boys, Jay, said, "I think that next year I'll sign up for 'Wilderness Living' instead of orienteering." • RMRU



**Don't forget the
20th Anniversary
on October 3, 1981**