

RMRU

RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

NEWSLETTER

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Training

Technical & Family Campout

16-18 April, Fri.-Sun.
Joshua Tree
National Monument

By Glenn Henderson

Technical training at Joshua Tree was held on April 16-17-18 which was one week late to avoid having training on Easter weekend. Most people arrived Friday evening and night with many bringing their wives, kids or girlfriends.

Saturday morning everyone was up early to greet a beautiful day in the desert sun. The weather all weekend was near perfect with warm sunny days and cool nights. We started the morning off with Jim Fairchild giving a short talk on tying subjects into a Stokes litter and rigging the litter up for raises and lowers. Bernie McIlvoy then took over and explained about the different kinds of anchors available and how to use them. Especially interesting was the use of our little "friends."

After a short break for lunch we all walked to a huge rock formation just south of camp where we all practiced

rappelling and ascending the short face there. We also practiced raising and lowering the litter under Bernie's supervision.

At about 4:30 we wrapped up all the equipment and returned to camp for much food, drink and war stories around the campfire. This of course led to Craig challenging Bud to climb a small boulder near the campfire. Bud and Craig climbed this small obstacle easily whereupon

a line quickly formed to also try and answer the challenge. Oh well, maybe with a little practice I'll get it next year.

The next morning we went to Hidden Valley where Bernie told me we would be doing lowers of the litter and rappelling off of a really big face. I didn't realize then that he meant BIG. Two hundred and fifty feet is definitely a big drop. We set up the anchors and took turns lowering the litter as everyone tried to get in a turn at rappelling. The rappel was quite a rush especially as you walked down the face and dropped off the roof and dangled in mid air for 60 to 70 feet before you could touch the face again. All in all it was really a lot of fun unless your name is Mark or Mark. In one case it would cost a new glove and in the other new skin across the back.

We finally gathered up the equipment a little after noon and headed back to the van. From there most people headed home with a few staying to do some sport climbing. So ended a very learning as well as fun training at Joshua Tree.

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RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

STARTING DOWN - With RMRU member Mark Rhoads' sister Charlene in the litter, members Bob Attride, attendant Randy Iwasiuk, Jim Anholm and Bernie McIlvoy help get the litter started and over the edge onto the face 50 feet off the ground.

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8210M

**5 April, Mon.
San Jacinto Mountains**

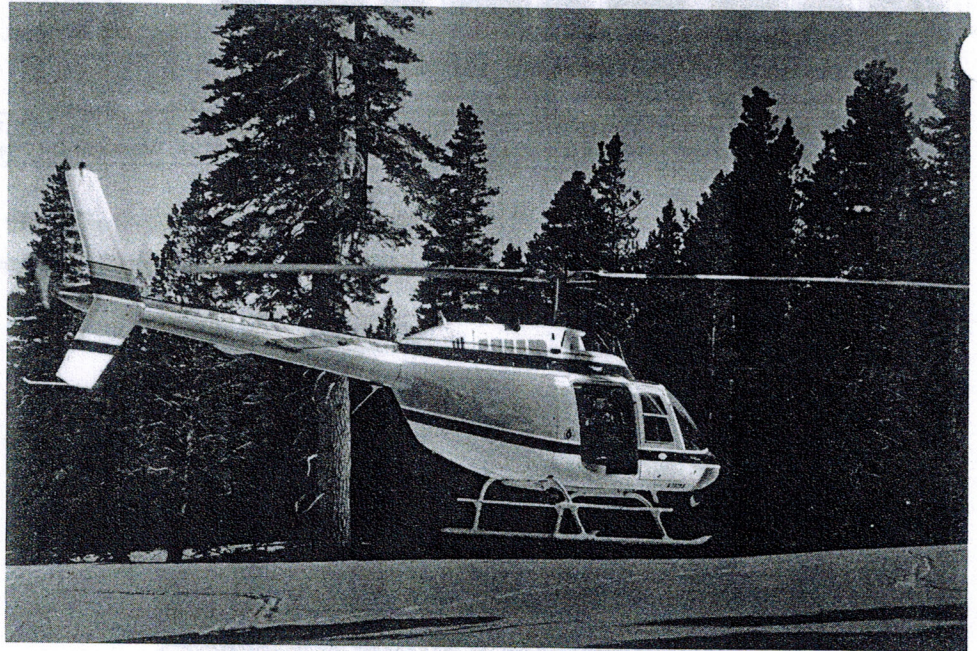
By Walt Walker

As with most businesses, mine being no exception, Mondays are always busy. When I received the call from the Banning station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that RMRU's services were needed I was less than enthusiastic. The call came just before lunch and I called Riverside for a RMRU pager call to notify the members.

In just 15 minutes Kevin Walker and I were on our way, towards Palm Springs, in the No. 1 van. On the way Kevin and I discussed the situation: 22 year old Scott Lesovsky had become separated from hiking companions around 4 p.m. Sunday afternoon in the vicinity of Tamarack Valley. The group he was in had rode up the Palm Springs Aerial Tram on Saturday and snowshoed into the wilderness. They had camped out Saturday evening and climbed Mt. San Jacinto Sunday. On the way back towards the tram is when the group became separated.

As we rounded Windy Corners, north of Palm Springs, we talked to Don Landells who was on his way to the tram in one of his Bell Jet Ranger helicopters. He arrived at our usual heliport (a lower tram parking lot) just before we arrived. Capt. Ray Canova and Sgt. Dave Weakly were already there. They quickly filled us in on the details as we loaded our packs. Fellow RMRU member Glenn Henderson was also there when we arrived. We decided that Glenn, Kevin and I would be the first load up in the bird.

The three of us loaded our gear and Don took off and headed for the top of the mountain. Our very fine winter had deposited a lot of snow and the high country was still deeply covered by the heavy blanket of white. Quite frequently we can track lost people from the air, especially when they are using showshoes. But it wasn't going to be that easy this time. There were literally dozens of different tracks, of



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

LEAVING FOR ANOTHER LOAD - After bringing a load of RMRU members, complete with packs and snowshoes into Round Valley, mountain pilot Don Landells prepares to pull out of the small snow covered meadow and head back to base for another load. Because of bad wind conditions Don had to take great care in moving members into the wilderness.

snowshoers and skiers, that crisscrossed the entire area between the upper tram and the peak.

To further complicate the task at hand there were strong erratic winds that buffeted the helicopter constantly. This made it difficult to try and follow the tracks from the area where Scott had last been seen. Don landed at Round Valley and Glenn and I got out to check the person standing in front of the ranger cabin. Don took off and flew over to Tamarack Valley to put Kevin out to talk to two people snowshoeing. None of the people we spoke with were our missing man.

Don flew Kevin back to base and then he transported Jim Fairchild, Craig Beasley, Mark Rhoads, Joe Erickson and Rick Pöhlers to the high country. They were joined by Glenn Henderson to form three two man search teams. It was hoped that they could sort out the criss-crossing tracks and obtain a direction of travel. While they were working on the tracking problem. Don and I flew a perimeter search consisting of: the Wellman divide on the south, the Marion Mountain, Jean Peak ridge on the west, the Mt. San Jacinto, Cornell Peak scarp on the north and from north of the upper tram terminal to Hidden Lake on the east. We did not see any tracks leaving the area. It was now a good possibility that the missing man was injured and down in the above cordoned off area.

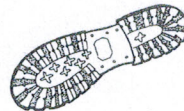
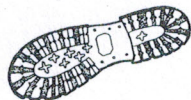
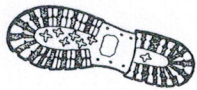
It was now late afternoon and the

eastern side of the mountain was entirely in the shade as Don and I took off from base after refueling the helicopter. Don was working his way back and forth across the face looking for updrafts to speed our trip back to the search area. As we passed over where the Long Valley drainage drops off we spotted some snowshoe tracks descending that had been missed before. Don quickly descended the canyon following the tracks which shortly turned into man tracks punched into the snow. We reached the snowline and the tracking became much more difficult. Don began circling each area where sand had built up and sometimes revealed a bootprint.

When we arrived at the big waterfall at the lower end of the Long Valley and Hidden Lake drainage, which cannot be down climbed, we started looking for tracks around this major obstacle. Don spotted tracks on the northeastern side of the steep canyon wall. They were climbing up towards the ridge. We lost them and circled back into the canyon and started back up again. As we neared the ridge a second time we spotted Scott waving a jacket at us. Don swung the bird around and put one runner down on a boulder and I motioned to Scott to climb in. When he was aboard and had his seat belt fastened I told Don to lift off. As we pulled away Scott shouted to me that his pack and sleeping bag were near where we had picked him up. Don and

I discussed the situation over the intercom headsets and decided that I would jump (Helitac) out near the pack. Don hovered the bird over a large rock and I stepped off. Grabbing the pack I scrambled back up the rock and Don returned to pick me up. Scott was sitting in the back seat right behind Don and he leaned over towards me (thinking I'm sure to try and help me with the pack) just as I stepped on the runner of the hovering helicopter. With the wind coming from Don's side of the bird and too much weight on the opposite side, Don was running out of cyclic to pull away from the canyon wall. I quickly swung inward and pushed Scott back and Don was able to slowly pull away. There was a whole lot of nothing between me and the ground when I opened the front door of the bird and slid inside off the step above the runner. As we descended in the growing darkness my heart rate slowed down to a more normal beat. At 5:45 p.m. we landed in the lower tram parking lot. Another successful mission was about to be history.

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CALL

Mission No. 8212C

**24 April, Sat.
North Face,
Mt. San Jacinto**

At 2100 hours Saturday, we received a call from the Banning office of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a 67 year old climber had been left behind on the North Face of Mt. San Jacinto earlier in the day by his climbing party. As the callout was being started we were notified that the man had made it out on his own, and was in good condition. • RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 8211M

**11 April, Sun.
Joshua Tree National Monument**

By Mary Bowman

We were through with April's training at Joshua Tree National Monument and we were putting our gear away while we ate lunch. A man came running up to us out of Hidden Valley and said, "There is a lady up there who fell and broke her ankle, would you help her?" Dave Ezell, Mark Rhoads, Sue Bowman, Roy Dew, and Jim Fairchild took a litter and some first aid equipment and went to check it out. Bernie McIlvoy and I stayed at the van. I called the Park Rangers on my Ham Radio thru the telephone patch on the Joshua Tree Repeater and advised them of the problem. When the team got to her they found Sumner Ravitzh, 56, from Palm Springs. While she was walking on the self guiding Nature Trail she had slipped on some gravel and hurt her ankle. The team members examined her, splinted her ankle, put her in the wheeled litter, and hiked back out to the van. She and her husband decided to transport her to Eisenhower Hospital in their car. • RMRU

from

Old'en Days

by Walt Walker



Early in the morning, one to be exact, on November 7, 1970 RMRU members began arriving at our usual roadhead for Tahquitz Canyon, Ann Dolley's house. A young man had fallen and was reported to have fractured many bones in his legs. He was seriously injured and needed help in a hurry. A group of eager young RMRU members sped up the canyon by way of the high trail. They found and splinted the injured man and made him as comfortable as possible. It was only a short time before first light when they requested a helicopter for the evacuation.

The photograph at the right was taken as Don Landells was lifting off, with his supercharged Bell helicopter, shortly after first light. Don flew the young man to Desert Hospital in Palm Springs.

