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John Dew, Editor — Kevin Walker, Publisher — Dona Halcrow, Artist

Search and Rescue

RE-SEARCH

Mission No. 8419M

4 Aug., Sat.
Deep Canyon,
Santa Rose Mountains

By Kevin Walker



At the request of the Indio station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, RMRU responded back to the Pinyon Fire Station. The plan was to carefully re-search the area we had

looked in one week previously for a woman that was swept away by flash flood waters on July 27 (see July issue - Mission No. 8418M).

Members met at 6:00 a.m., and being that we were going out on what would normally be a training weekend, we had a great turnout with the following members present. Walt Walker, John Dew, Bernie McIlvoy, and his brother Dave, Rick Pohlers, Rob Gardner, Mel Krug, Ray Hussey, Jim Fairchild, Bill Blaschko, Bud White, Randy Iwasiuk, Don Ricker, Larry Roland, Jim Garvey and myself. Upon Don Landells arrival, we were flown in groups of four with our packs to a ridge near where the woman was last seen. Once all members were in, we set out in two groups, one lead by Rick Pohlers, and a smaller group with me to do a sweep behind the first group. As we started down, Walt and Don flew in containers of water to various locations in the tributary and in Deep Canyon. Even though water was running, it was still murky from the previous weeks' rains. Both groups moved along slowly, poking and digging anywhere a body might lodge. Progress was slow as



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

WATER BREAK — RMRU members Jim Garvey, Don Ricker, Rob Gardner, Bill Blaschko, Larry Roland, and Kevin Walker stop for a water break in the tributary above Deep Canyon. Water containers such as this one were put out at different locations in the canyon as temperatures soared into the 100's.

we planned to spend the entire weekend searching.

Much farther down Deep Canyon, Bernie and his brother had been set out to search the narrow part of Deep Canyon where the largest pools were to be found.

At 11:15 Rick came on the air and notified base that his group had located the body, and that the Coroner should be called. Our group was about a quarter mile behind Rick's, so it did not take long to make it past the few small to medium cascade type waterfalls and walk on down to where the first group waited. As Rob and I rounded a bend in the little canyon just ahead of the rest of our group, we saw the entire first group about 75 feet above the canyon floor. We wondered why they would want to be out in the hot sun instead of down in the shade. We found out as we approached the site. Because of a most unpleasant odor, we quickly joined them.

As we waited, Don Landells was re-contacted and flew back to Pinyon. It was about a two hour wait as the coroner was responding from somewhere in the desert area. Once he did arrive, he, Walt and a Pinyon fireman were flown in with extrication equipment. To be brief, it was a very distasteful job removing the body out from under several large boulders in the center of the canyon floor. The body would have not been found in the first place if it were not for the odor. Thanks to the expertise of the firefighter and the stamina of several RMRU members, the body was extricated and bagged, then flown out in the cargo net. At 3:00 the last group was flown out. No major casualties were reported other than every member present had literally been eaten alive by some type of insect in the area, some worse than others. With the mission complete, we went down to the desert, had lunch, and then went over to a team member's girl friend's house for a most enjoyable cool swim. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

LAST LOAD OF GEAR — RMRU members Kevin Walker and Rob Gardner attach the sling to the cargo net as pilot Don Landells holds the helicopter in a hover, before flying the last load of equipment out of the canyon. The located body was flown out in the same manner.

SEARCH

Mission No. 8420M

**11 Aug., Sat.
Camp Lawler,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By John Dew



Dinner was over and we were just settling down for an evening with the family when again the pager made its presence known by its familiar whistle.

We were informed that a girl from Camp Lawler had become lost. We were told that although she was about 30 years old she could only function as about 8 years. Realizing this problem, the night being cool, and her lack of warm clothing caused us to rush even more.

Jim Fairchild brought the rescue van from Riverside while I got the one kept in Hemet Valley and we met at Camp Lawler which is about half way between Banning and Idyllwild. When we arrived we were met by Bud White, Don Ricker and Bill Blaschko who were in Idyllwild when the

call went out. Soon we were joined by Mark Hebert, Cameron Robbins and Joe Erickson.

Teams were sent into the field to search down canyon. One team led by Mark Hebert went UP canyon — just in case. The teams had been out only 10 or 15 minutes when Mark called in and said he had voice contact. He found the subject within minutes, discovered she had fallen onto and then slid down a dirt embankment just above the creek. He did a quick initial survey and determined she was not hurt badly, although she had taken a bump on the head.

Soon all team members in the field had assembled with the subject, placed her in the wheeled litter and wheeled her the short distance back to Camp Lawler. She was then sent to Banning to be checked more thoroughly than can be done in the field.

RMRU went home happy that this young lady had not been lost for long and had not been seriously injured. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

BACK AT BASE — RMRU members Bud White, Bill Blaschko, and Cameron Robbins watch over the slightly injured subject before she was taken to the Pass Hospital.

CALL

Mission No. 8421C

**20 Aug., Mon.
Bautista Canyon,
near Thomas Mountain**

We received a call direct from the wife of a man who was reported a day late in returning home on a motorcycle from somewhere in the Bautista Canyon area. RMRU member Kevin Walker contacted the Hemet station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and notified the Watch Commander. As the sheriff was

gathering more information, the man in question returned home. • RMRU

RESCUE

Mission No. 8422M

**24-25 Aug., Fri.-Sat.
Tahquitz Rock,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Glenn Henderson



Vacation — what a lovely word. But after two weeks of being away from home with my family plus my sister and her family, we were ready to go home. Since we were in Montana we decided to leave a day early

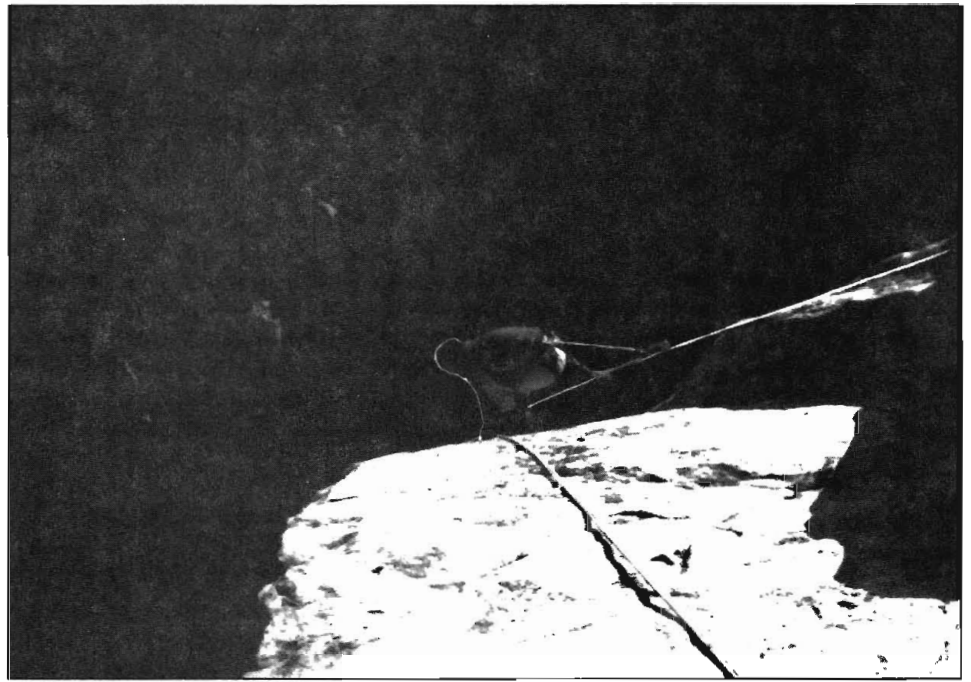
so as to have an extra day to rest up from the long drive and to separate all our camping gear. We drove down to Cedar City, Utah, spent the night and left at 9:00 AM Friday morning. We finally got home at 6:00 PM Friday evening. Ah home — sweet — home. What a grand sight after all day on the road with four adults plus four kids stuffed in the back of my sister's suburban truck.

It's 7:30 now, we are all beginning to unwind and in the middle of a taco dinner when the phone rang. You guessed it; John Dew calling with a mission on Tahquitz Rock — a climber had fallen and had a broken foot — could I go?? My first reaction was no, I'm just too beat, but instead I said yes, I'll be on the road in 10 minutes. I asked my brother-in-law if he wanted to go along and watch? Larry realizing his escape from two women and four very busy kids, said "sure." (Big mistake, Larry.)

We got to the trail head at Humber Park and met up with John Dew, who ran base camp, Joe Erickson, Dave Ezell, Rob Gardner, Bud White and Mel Krug. You must be kidding? Is this all? Yup, John answered. Everyone else was on "vacation" or out of town. Well then lets get to it.

Our information was that they were about 100 feet from the top and that they were climbing on one of the Lark routes. We could hear them yelling for help once in a while which added a sense of urgency to the mission. Since they were only a 100 feet from the top we decided to take plenty of rope anyway "just in case." We took four 300' PMI's, plus two 165 footers, breakdown litter, litter rigging, free runners, extra carabiners, large first aid kit, plus our own personal gear — extra clothes, etc. We needed more sherpas so Larry was asked to go along plus two climbers who happened to be at Humber Park and volunteered their services.

We finally got going and hiked around the south side of the rock and up to the top arriving at about midnight. Anchors were quickly set up and I was lowered over the side on a 300' PMI. We had some trouble locating them as their shouts to us seemed to come back from every direction, so we took a guess and aimed at one point. We planned on pulling me back up once I got on the face and pinpointed their location, but as luck would have it I dropped almost in their laps. The only problem was I was down 295 feet on a 300 foot rope and I still had over 100 feet to go. I was left hanging for hours (?); well it seemed like a long time while more rope was added. I was finally lowered down to Steve Cauley and Brian Stipak. It was now about 2:30 AM and they were quite happy to see someone to help them. Steve was the injured one and upon examination of his foot it did seem very broken as his entire foot and part of his ankle was swollen to twice normal size. He was following a traverse behind Brian who had led the pitch. Steve popped out of the traverse and went into a pendulum situation. He immediately picked up speed and was heading for a big wall so to slow down he kicked a small ledge. Even with the broken foot result he probably made the right decisions as the other option was a body crash at full speed. Anyway after checking him over for any other injuries, I gave them water and extra clothing, put an air splint on his foot and we all began the long wait for daybreak. They were sitting on about a 15 inch downsloping ledge that had a pine tree growing out of it so we all tied into the tree for safety. It was a long wait.



RMRU PHOTO BY LARRY CARTER

EDGE MAN — RMRU member Rob Gardner makes sure that the ropes stay in the edge rollers as the hauling crews raise the litter.

Since we were down 400 feet plus from the top and up 450 to 500 feet from the bottom the crew on top realized that more rope would be needed. To send someone down for more rope, edge rollers, etc. needed to do a raise for the litter would have taken too long plus whoever went would have been totally spent and they needed everyone alert and able to work.

Dave Ezell radioed out to John to call two good friends of his that knew the area. Maybe they could hike in to help plus bring in the extra gear? They both got middle of the night phone calls and upon hearing that Dave needed help were at base camp within minutes as they both live in Idyllwild. Those guys really saved the day.

Dawn finally arrived and with the rising sun our spirits rose with it as the nights cold chill was quickly dispelled. The topside crew had been at work before daybreak and soon had the litter ready to go over the side. Dave Ezell was to be the litter attendant. An extra rope was sent down with Dave for Brian and myself to jumar up, so I sent Brian up right away to help topside. Dave and I then got Steve into the litter and the raise began. It was slow hard work as we had to go over about six large overhangs and through two bushes growing out of the rocks. Steve was quite a guy as he never complained once when the litter would catch on an overhang or in the bushes and pop free jarring his foot, but you could see the sweat break out on his face.

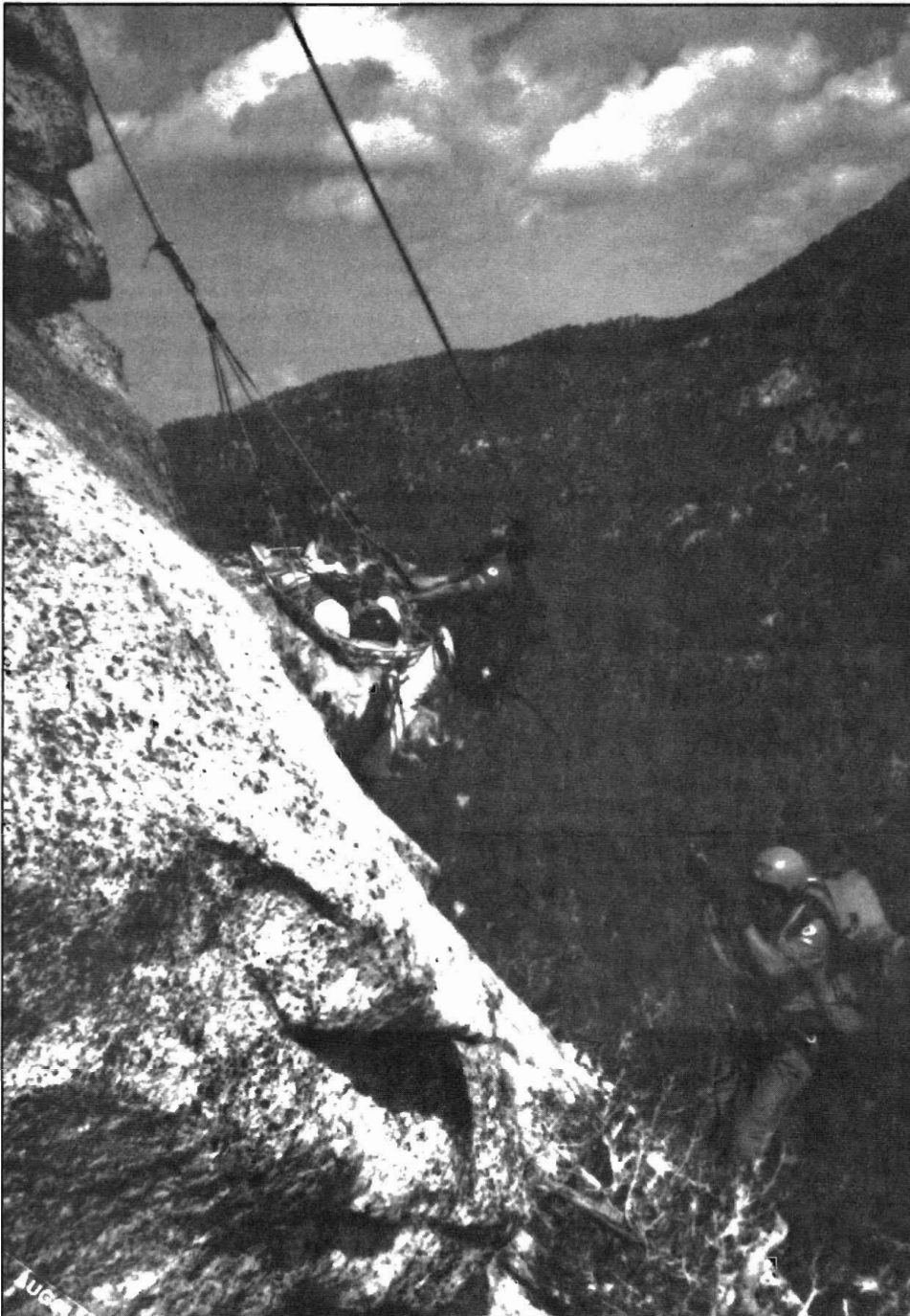
All in all the raise went quite smoothly, even having to pass knots in the system. Bud, Mel, Joe, Rob and Larry did a great job setting the system up. We finally got over the top, the helicopter was there waiting so into the bird, down to Idyllwild to a waiting ambulance and off to the hospital went Steve.

To land on top of Tahquitz rock takes a special kind of pilot and our pilot today



RMRU PHOTO BY LARRY CARTER

HAULING TEAM — Along with the help of three Idyllwild residents, RMRU member Mel Krug (farthest back) raises the litter and its attendant up the face of Tahquitz Rock.



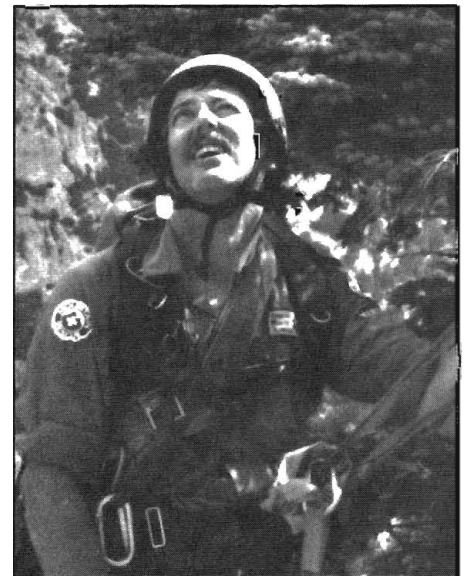
RMRU PHOTO BY LARRY CARTER

OUT ON THE FACE — RMRU litter attendant Dave Ezell holds the litter containing injured climber Steve Cauley as they are raised up the steep face of Tahquitz Rock. Jumaring along-side the litter is RMRU member Glenn Henderson to help get the litter around any obstacles they might come across.

was Steve De Jesus of Landells helicopter service. Steve had never landed on Tahquitz before but he made it look like ho-hum — no big deal, guys. It took seven trips to fly everyone plus the gear out. During the third trip a thunderstorm moved in, it started raining and hailing on us with very gusty wind conditions. Steve still wouldn't quit, picked up the third load, landed in Idyllwild, waited about 15 minutes until the storm blew over and then flew the rest of us out. All our hats are tipped to you, Steve, for a great job.

Well after a long, cold, sleepless night we ate lunch at the Alpine Pantry, sorted gear between the two rescue vans and put to rest another successful **RMRU** mission.

o RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY LARRY CARTER

AFTER A LONG NIGHT — RMRU member Glenn Henderson finishes a very long jumaring ascent after spending the night down on the rock face with the stranded climbers.