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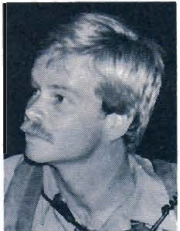
Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8410M

3 June, Sun.
Willow Creek Drainage,
San Jacinto Mountains

By Joe Erickson



We received a phone call from the Sheriff's Dept. concerning a skull that was found in the Willow Creek drainage area. The skull cap was found by a hiker going cross country in the eastern slopes of the San Jacinto Mountains. He placed this skull on a rock where he could find it again and informed the Sheriff's Dept. upon his return to civilization.

We were asked to search for this and we agreed to do this search after we finished with our responsibilities at the Mountain Rescue Association seminar at Idyllwild, on the same weekend.

I had to work that weekend but because this was an official mission, and because I am an active member, I drove up to assist the members already present.

Don Landells flew the informant, RMRU members Mel Krug, Kevin Walker, and the Sheriff's detective into the area, where they immediately located the spot. The rest of the team was brought in to find any more evidence. None was found and the theory is that this was from a persons camp we found years ago when looking for a Mr. Self. Mr. Self has not been taken off our books as a completed search because the evidence is not conclusive as to the identity of the bone fragments found

years ago. Coyotes have most likely eaten and or moved anything they could from Mr. Self's camp or body.

The report from the Sheriff's Dept. is (as we suspected) that there was again not enough to identify this skull. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

SKULL DRUDGERY — RMRU members Joe Erickson and Dave Ezell look at the skull cap found by a cross country hiker. Nothing else was found even though members dug around like gophers.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

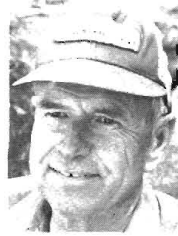
OUT OF PLACE — Helicopter 816 looks out of place in front of the 100 plus foot pine trees as it flies over the Wellman Cabin preparing to take members out after looking for evidence of a body.

SEARCH

Mission No. 8411M

**6 June, Wed.
Badlands,
Highway 60**

By John Dew



It was right at noon on Wednesday when the pagers were activated. Having been laid up for SEVEN MONTHS recuperating from shoulder surgery without even being able to go to Base,

and having been just released from the doctor "to go to Base camp ONLY," (NO pack, NO use of the arm, NO anything) I was ready for any kind of mission. I just wanted to get back to doing something. I was willing to go to Base and run the radios. (This is a job most try to get out of. We all want to get on into the field.) Anyway, I grabbed the phone even before the pager stopped to see what exciting adventure lay ahead.

The information was that a man 62 years old with the mental capability of approximately a 6 year old was lost in the "Badlands" area just off highway 60. Our instructions were to start driving highway 60 about eight miles east of Beaumont until we saw the Sheriff's car. This would be the meeting place.

Upon arrival we were told that this man was being taken to a "home" and he didn't want to go there. He had thrown something in the way of clothing out the window. When the driver stopped to pick it up he jumped out, ran up one drainage, over a ridge and had disappeared. Knowing this man was unable to care for himself and afraid he might get lost in those hills and be there into the night, the Sheriff was called. The Sheriff, sensing the need this person had to be found quickly, called RMRU and then called Don Landells and his helicopter.

RMRU arrived shortly after the pager call and within minutes Don called down to ask where we wanted him to land.

Jim Fairchild and I were chosen to fly search. (Surely that couldn't hurt my shoulder.) We were less than two minutes in the air when Don asked me, "Was the guy you want wearing a red shirt?" He was and he was found just that quickly.

We might have called this, "The Two Minute Mission." It took less time to complete than it has taken me to write this article, but it is good it went so smoothly and the fellow was safe. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8412M

**10-14 June. Sun.-Thurs.
Joshua Tree National Monument**

By Rob Gardner



On Sunday afternoon, RMRU was summoned by the National Park Service and Riverside County Sheriff's Office to Joshua Tree National Monument (JTNM) to search for a lost hiker, John Romo. A lengthy and intensive search followed which failed to produce any signs of Mr. Romo.

Mr. Romo reportedly had entered the Wonderland of Rocks area of JTNM about twenty-four hours prior to the call-out. He was on a day hike. He was about eighteen hours over-due for his return. The search efforts were initiated and coordinated by National Park Service Tom Patterson of the Lost Horse Ranger Station in cooperation with the MRA teams. Lost Horse Station was established as the base camp for search operations.

When RMRU arrived at Lost Horse, team members were quickly deployed to initiate a search of the most probable areas that Mr. Romo may have entered or crossed, based on the available information. Mr. Romo reportedly had three quarts of water with him. The temperatures were high, particularly around the

rocks and boulders which reflect the sun's heat. SAR radio communication was hampered by the large ridges of boulders that form the Wonderland of Rocks vicinity in a maze-like fashion.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's office helicopter had been deployed for air search of the area. It was later joined by a Landell's Aviation Jet Ranger helicopter piloted by Mike Donovan and a military SAR Huey helicopter from El Toro Marine Corps Base. The helicopters continued to air search, transport SAR personnel to strategic spots, and to keep radio communication open throughout the first four days of the search. Don Landells flew one of his Jet Ranger helicopters in the dark of the night for several hours in an effort to see any signs of Mr. Romo, such as a camp fire, signal fire, or flashlight signal.

The reporting party, John Brongo, was Romo's hiking partner. The two men, both twenty-nine years of age and from Pasadena, reportedly rode to JTNM together in Romo's vehicle. They reportedly had planned to enter the Wonderland of Rocks, an area of very rugged terrain, at its South end, each from a separate point, and to proceed with map and compass, across this region, exiting via Rattlesnake Canyon at the North end. The Wonderland of Rocks area covers approximately twenty square miles. Mr. Brongo advised that he entered at the Southeast corner of the described area and that Mr. Romo was then to drive the vehicle back to their Hidden Valley campsite and walk to his



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

PLACE LAST SEEN — It was very near this location that John Romo was last seen. By the terrain in the background and high temperatures it is easy to see what MRA and Park searchers were up against



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

SEARCH COORDINATOR — Even though his back is to the camera as he approaches Don Landells helicopter, we wish to commend Ranger Tom Patterson of Joshua Tree National Monument for doing an excellent job of working with the MRA in directing the search in Joshua Tree.

point of entry at the Southwest corner of Wonderland of Rocks. Mr. Brongo stated he hiked to the agreed upon destination at the North end in about six hours, then hitched a ride with a park ranger back to the vehicle. He left a message for Mr. Romo at the North end in an agreed upon fashion. Mr. Brongo said he never saw Mr. Romo again after being dropped off to

begin the day hike on that Saturday afternoon.

The search was quickly intensified. Sierra Madre SAR personnel arrived Sunday night and two SAR dog handlers entered the area of Monday with Blood Hounds. A scent article had been obtained from Mr. Romo's vehicle. The San Diego SAR team then arrived and joined the search. Radio relay stations were established to overcome the radio transmission difficulties caused by the numerous high ridges of boulders. The Blood Hounds were then brought out of the field and replaced by three German Shepards in addition to Jim Fairchild's Newfoundland, Kody. These dogs are trained to lead their handler to any human being they sense. The RSO transported volunteers of the Coachella Valley Underwater SAR team from Indio to JTNM. The SCUBA divers did an underwater search in the murky twenty foot deep Barker Dam reservoir, to no avail.

The search reached a point of one-hundred and four SAR personnel in the field on Tuesday and Wednesday, including forty persons from the Yucca Search Team that combed the Northwestern area adjacent to the Wonderland of Rocks. San Bernardino and Riverside County Deputy Sheriffs and National Park Service personnel provided supportive services at Base Camp, including transportation, food provisions, and other logistics. After the fourth day of searching MRA personnel began to be released. A military reconnaissance plane was brought in at dawn on day five and flew over the Wonderland of Rocks area with highly sophisticated heat sensing devices, to no avail. The search was continued thereafter by Coun-

ty Sheriffs and National Park Service Rangers, with particular attention to areas surrounding the Wonderland of Rocks. The search continues without discovery of any signs at all of Mr. Romo. • RMRU

SEARCH

Mission No. 8413M

**23 June, Sat.
Mallard Canyon
San Geronio Mountains**

By Kevin Walker



Happy Birthday to ME... Oh well, nothing better to do on ones 25th. For the second time in a month we were going out looking for a skull found by a hiker. This time we were hiking up the trail from Mallard Canyon to the Kitching Saddle. This article is already running too long, so I will hit the main points only. Our informant led us in to where he thought he left the trail. Then we went down a little creek bed to where he thought the skull cap was, but to no avail. We looked for several hours finding nothing but fresh coyote and bear droppings. We gave the area a good look and headed for home. The day was not a total loss as I hiked with friends, and went home to a very nice dinner planned by my wife Patrice. • RMRU

Mountain Rescue Association Seminar

**1-3 June, Fri.-Sun.
Buckhorn Camp,
San Jacinto Mountains**

The 1984 California Region Mountain Rescue Association Seminar was held at Buckhorn Camp in Idyllwild. The three day seminar had much to offer mountain rescue personnel. Sessions such as equipment testing, cave rescue, computers in SAR, hypothermia, safety in rescue, and emergency mountain medicine were held, all with fine instructors and discussion leaders. RMRU's role in the seminar was two fold. Saturday, under the direction of RMRU member Bernie McIlvoy we held a session of technical skills in the grotto area of Strawberry Creek below Isomata. Using a mechanical advantage and a tyrolian traverse in one, we demonstrated

how a patient could be picked up in the bottom of the creek, then using the M.A. raise the entire tyrolian assembly up and then move the patient to safety. A more common use of this system would be lowering an injured subject down and away from the face of climbing rock or canyon wall. By using this system the danger of injury by rock fall is greatly reduced.

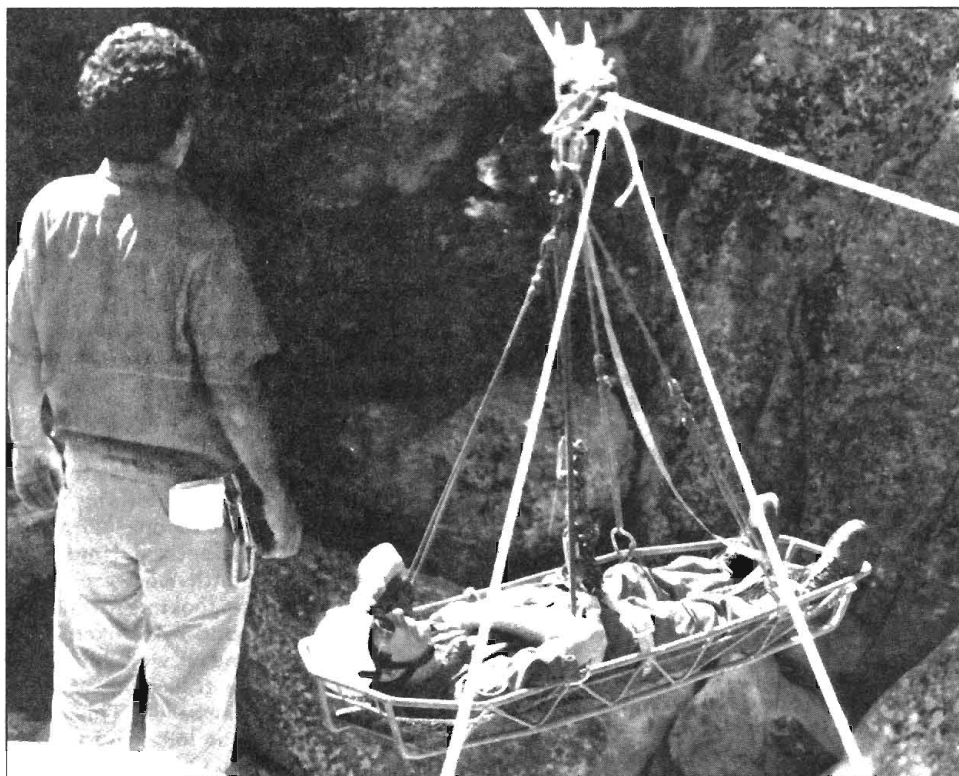
Saturday evening all present enjoyed an excellent program by Dr. James Morrissey from the American Everest Expedition, accompanied by a fine movie and slide presentation.

It is probably because we held it, but we feel a major highlight of the weekend was the Sunday demonstration by RMRU. Taking time out from a very busy schedule, pilot Don Landells gave his time and the use of one of his Bell Jet Rangers to show seminar participants how we perform technical helicopter rescues. After talking

to participants about the situations that RMRU and Don face regularly, the bird (as we call it) or helo (to others) was fired up. We showed different types of one runner pick-ups, full hover pick-ups and exits. Loading the litter complete with live patient (supplied by our friends at Buckhorn Camp), and also picking up a sling load or litter under the helicopter in a confined area. After the demonstration was over, very favorable comments were heard by members present.

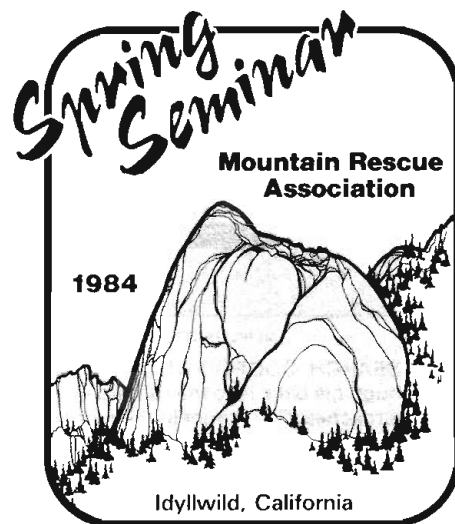
In closing we would like to say thank you to all the fine people who put on a very successful seminar, and to Don Landells for giving his valuable time and expertise.

• RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

DEMONSTRATION — An identified MRA member starts out across Strawberry Grotto as RMRU member Rob Gardner looks on. This particular set up was an adjustable tyrolian traverse using a mechanical advantage to raise and lower the entire system



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

RECESS — After finishing a demonstration session, RMRU member Mel Krug takes off across Strawberry Creek for a bit of tyrolian fun.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

GRAND FINALE — To cap off an excellent seminar, Sunday morning RMRU members along with mountain pilot Don Landells gave a helicopter demonstration. Here RMRU members Dave Ezell and Cameron Robbins steady the runner as Glenn Henderson and Bruce Gahagan boost Mel Krug into the bird as Kevin Walker gives the hand signals to Don. This demonstration showed how members could get on board in a tight helispot.