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Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8552M

8 Dec., Sun.
Lake Elsinore

By Joe Erickson



I have been dreading this phone call for a couple of years now, and sure enough I got it.

Sunday morning at 6:00 a.m. Kevin Walker called me with a mission, informing me that I would have to perform the duty of Operations Leader. Yuk. The mission would be out in the Elsinore area near the upper San Juan campground. Double yuk. Most missions in the Elsinore area have a strange twist, and this one was no exception.

When Kevin told me a hiker was missing from near the upper San Juan campground and that we were to meet at the Sheriff's sub-station in Lake Elsinore I must have still been groggy because I went straight up to the campground. Also, I had called Ray Hussey and told him we were meeting at the campground.

When I got there and no one was around I got a bit apprehensive and drove up to the cafe across from the San Juan loop trail and telephoned to base. I was told of my mistake and that when all members were assembled at the designated site (Sheriff's Office) they would join me at the campground.

I hung up the telephone and saw Ray drive by. I figured he would come back up the road for the same reason I did, so I walked across the road to look at the trail while I waited. Just then I saw a fellow walking up the road. The man had wet feet and looked like he had spent the night

outdoors. I called to him. He confirmed that he was our subject and so I telephoned the Sheriff's Office and told them the mission was secure. Ray Hussey came back and we drove down the hill to the awaiting Sheriff's Deputy and the faithful RMRU troops. Those present were: Bruce Gahagan (Operations Leader), Mary Bowman, Rob Gardner, Ray Hussey, Henry Negrete, Gil Carr and myself. • RMRU



SEARCH

Mission No. 8553M

8 Dec., Sun.
Tahquitz Rock
San Jacinto Mountains

By Rob Gardner



A small group of RMRU team members had just completed an Elsinore search when the Riverside County Sheriff's Office (RSO) called the team for a search at Tahquitz Rock, near Idyllwild, California.

Upon arrival at Humber Park (below Tahquitz Rock) the RSO Deputies from the Idyllwild sub-station advised that a man had reported to the Idyllwild Fire Station that he heard somebody on Tahquitz Rock shouting "help."

Idyllwild Fire Station personnel had completed a preliminary investigation before RMRU was contacted. The situation was unclear and information was very limited. The man reporting the information had vanished and no further information was available.

Several groups were deployed to different parts of the rock. There was a lot of ice on the North side at the base of the Diorite Mass. Two rock climbing parties were located at different points. Nobody was found to be in trouble and the climbers located did not have knowledge of anybody in trouble. There was a good turn-out of RMRU men . . . but, apparently, the call was a false alarm. • RMRU

CALL

Mission No. 8554C

8 Dec., Sun.
Idyllwild,
San Jacinto Mountains

As we were finishing refueling vehicles in Idyllwild after completing Mission No. 8553M, we were contacted by radio on the Sheriff's frequency that a 16 year old mentally retarded male had wandered away from one of the inns near the center of the village. A deputy was enroute from Hemet. As members were preparing to drive to the P.L.S. (place last seen), we were notified that the teenager had returned. Members then returned home.

• RMRU

EVACUATION

Mission No. 8555M

10 Dec., Tues.
Laws Camp
San Jacinto Mountains

By Bill Blaschko, M.D.



Sometimes in life you don't feel happy when you find what you have been looking for. I felt a strange mixture of awe, fear and satisfaction when I set eyes on the body of John Kivlen curled up in a hollowed out tree just off the trail between Laws Camp and Caramba. Mr. Kivlen had last been

seen a month before when he set out on a day hike from the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. He was lightly dressed and had obtained a permit to go to Wellman's Divide on Sunday, Nov. 10. That night a surprise snowstorm dropped three to five feet of snow on the area.

When Mr. Kivlen's failure to return was reported, RMRU was already in the process of searching for five other hikers caught in the same storm. We were being assisted by several Mountain Rescue Association teams as well as two US Marine Corps helicopters and Landells Aviation. During this period of time temperatures dipped to five degrees fahrenheit and the snow level was down to 3000 feet. Mr. Kivlen was reported to be wearing only tennis shoes and a light jacket and he had no overnight sleeping gear. With the combination of adverse weather conditions and lack of equipment it seemed very unlikely that Mr. Kivlen could have survived more than 24 hours. The initial search for Mr. Kivlen stretched over four days including both air and ground searching. At the end of this time the hard decision was made to discontinue searching until some further information was available.

On Monday, December 9 I set out on a day hike to Caramba with a close friend, Bruce Morlan. Bruce had never been to Caramba and I was hoping to find some nice ice formations at the falls. We were both aware that John Kivlen had not been found and we agreed that we would keep our eyes open for any clues. Two cloudbursts had dropped a lot of rain on the high country and washed away much of

the snow from the surprise storm of the month before. The few inches of snow left was quite icy and Bruce and I had to use crampons to keep our footing. I happened to be in the lead just after we crossed a creek east of Laws Camp when I noticed a red paperback book barely visible through the snow and ice. With a little effort I was able to pry it loose. The pages were frozen together, making it impossible to check inside for a name. We then searched the general area for anything else that looked unusual. Bruce noted some branches stacked against a tree about twenty yards off.

When we went over to investigate we found John Kivlen's body resting inside of a hollowed tree. The body was in the sitting position, with the head slumped forward. His back was resting against the inside of a three by four foot space inside the tree. The skin had a brownish black discoloration but otherwise he was well preserved. The branches that had initially attracted Bruce's attention apparently had been placed to cover the opening in the tree and provide more shelter. Bruce and I hiked out to Idyllwild to report our find to the Sheriff.

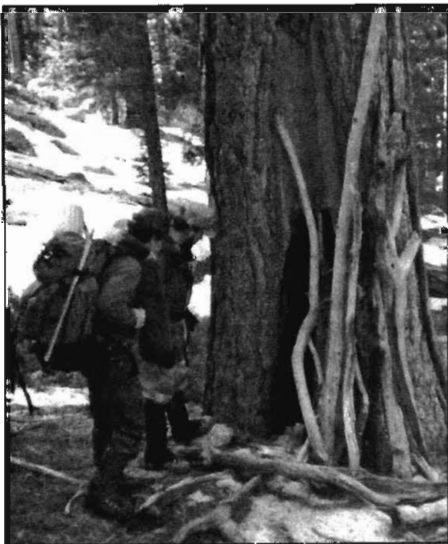
The following morning Kevin Walker, Mel Krug, Rob Gardner, Gil Carr and I were flown into Caramba to retrieve the body. After hiking to the scene we loaded the body into a body bag and cargo net. Don Landells flew over and lowered a line from his helicopter which was attached to



RMRU PHOTO BY MEL KRUG

A SOMBER MOMENT — RMRU members carry the body of John Kivlen to a small clearing where Don Landells would be able to get low enough with the helicopter to finish the evacuation.

the cargo net. Don flew the body to the waiting coroner. We team members were flown out just as a new snow storm began to dump another foot of snow on the high country. This mission was concluded. It was a sad ending, but not so sad as no ending at all. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

A FINAL CAMPSITE — RMRU members Rob Gardner and Mel Krug look over the partially burned out pine tree that lost hiker John Kivlen fashioned a makeshift shelter in and then perished during the major storm from the month before.



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

CARAMBA NORTH — RMRU members arrive at the Caramba North helispot in helicopter 16U piloted by Don Landells. Team members then hiked to Laws Camp to effect the evacuation of John Kivlen.

SEARCH

Mission No. 8556M

11-12 Dec., Wed.-Thurs.

Pleasant Valley

Joshua Tree National Monument

By Steve Bryant



An early evening call out sent **RMRU** on its way to Joshua Tree National Monument for a search. Upon arriving and signing in, we were briefed that a group of five teenage girls from the CEDA School in Run-

ning Springs was missing. Although the girls were well equipped, snow was falling and it was thought best to bring the girls back to Headquarters. At about 11:00 pm we went into the field, with Mary Bowman taking one **RMRU** van to serve as radio relay to Headquarters. The rest of us went to the girls' destination, near Fried Liver Wash, and hiked around for about two hours looking for tracks — no luck. We did have a nice hike in the desert, with a couple inches of fresh snow and a reasonably warm night.

We later went back to Headquarters, and got about an hour's sleep, before going to a local restaurant for breakfast, courtesy of the National Park Service (thanks!) Most **RMRU** members had to report to work, this being Monday, but Ray Hussey and Steve Bryant were sent out again down a wash to search for tracks. Again, no luck, but while we were enjoying the beautiful clear cold sunny weather, we heard a lot of helicopter activity, and soon heard over the radio that the girls had been found. Ray and Steve were soon picked up and returned to HQ. The girls had been found, safe and sound, so we returned home a lot happier than on the Laura Bradbury mission.

• RMRU

end the search and rescue year without having to go out under those circumstances. Fifty-seven calls, a busy year for **RMRU**.

• RMRU

\$USTAINING MEMBERS

BY KEVIN WALKER

57 mission numbers. In my opinion, and I think you will agree, there is still a need for the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit.

Searches	23
Rescues	8
Assists	1
Evacuations	1
Aborts	7
Calls	17
Total	57

The members of **RMRU** gave 9,638 volunteer man hours to search and rescue during the past year. Like years past the challenges have increased but so has our knowledge. Close calls, yes. Joyful endings, yes. And yes, some sad ones. Also another financial dry spell was encountered.

Hopefully through our members' articles, both serious and humorous, we have brought you close to the dangers of the North Face, and even the craziness of a winter training with yours truly face down in the snow. No long pitches this time, just thanks for sticking with us and a wish for your continued support. And look out world, here comes 1986, the 25th anniversary of the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit.

JULY —

- *M/M Ernest Johnson
- *M/M Kenneth Andrews
- David Westheimer
- Maryoris Powers
- *Circle City Auxiliary
- *United Way Contributions
- *Circle City Hospital
- *Bill Stewart

AUGUST —

- M/M Oliver Blaschko
- M/M C. A. Beasley
- Larry & Nancy Carter
- *Banning Womans Club
- United Way Contributions
- Circle City Hospital
- Sylvia Broadbent
- Roy Haglund
- Steve & Mary Lee Bryant
- Izaak Walton League
- Jack & Grace Mihaylo

SEPTEMBER —

- Circle City Hospital
- *Bud & Mildred Nelson
- W. Wallace Wilhite
- *Robert E. Clark

- G. T. & Rhonda Anderson
- *United Way Contributions
- Ruth & Chandler McMillan
- Norman R. Bumenthal
- Kenneth & Wilma Chapman
- Bernadine C. Pohlers
- Frank Olson
- Barbara Jean Montroy
- Canyon View Pools
- Rob Gardner

OCTOBER —

- *Maris Valkass
- *Sorooptimist of Idyllwild
- James & Cathy Machir
- Circle City Hospital
- John & Katherine Gabbert
- John Kolenich
- *John B. Morgan
- Philip & Josephine Modica
- David & Patricia Randel
- Virginia L. King
- *Frances L. Gray
- M/M Robert L. Everett
- *Charles Duke
- Genie C Bryant
- *Sorooptimist of Banning
- Richard W. Elliott

NOVEMBER —

- Paul M. Luse
- *Circle City Hospital
- Jerry & Cynthia Whitt
- Trudeau Enterprises
- *Milton M. Levy
- *J. F. Gilbert
- *Leon & Shirley Barris
- *Methodist Mens Club of San Jacinto
- Daniel & Leonor Frey
- Ashley & Bruce Carlson
- *Avis M. Anderson
- *San Jacinto Host Lions Club
- *United Way Contributions

DECEMBER —

- Robert & Edna Kowell
- Beverly & Jorg Angehrn
- *A. P. & Virginia Crist
- Rodney & Beatrice Anderson
- *Theodore Luther Young
- Philip C. Moedt
- *David & Rita Harrah
- Corinne & Bret Haering
- *Kathleen K. Fredrick
- *Norm & Maggie Mellor
- *Marion & James Collins
- Muzquiz Dental Studio
- *Thomas & Maureen Gillen
- *Circle City Auxiliary
- Paul & Elizabeth Thurston

*Century Club, donation of \$100 or more

CALL

Mission No. 8557C

15 Dec., Sun.

Lake Fulmor,

San Jacinto Mountains

We received a call from the Banning station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department of a report of a possible drowning at Lake Fulmor in the San Jacinto Mountains. We were put on stand-by in case a search was initiated. We would work the surrounding area on foot in the event the person did not actually go into the water. Fortunately the ice was not broken. Apparently a false report had been turned in. It was good to be able to

TRAINING

Helitac & Team Gear Check-up

7 Dec., Sat.
Landells Aviation
Desert Hot Springs

By Steve Bryant



Helitac. Once again, thanks to the generosity of Landells Aviation of Desert Hot Springs, we were able to refresh our skills in working with helicopters. As in all aviation courses, we first had ground school conducted by Walt Walker of RMRU and helicopter pilot Brian Novak, of Landells Aviation. We were reminded of how the helicopters operate, what kinds of density altitude ceilings they had, how shifting centers of gravity can affect the pilot's control, and the various safety precautions necessary to keep bodies intact: always approach from the front so that the pilot can see you, have no loose items in the vicinity which might fly up and foul the rotor blades, etc.

Then we practiced getting in and out of a helicopter on the ground — watching the pilot while making very smooth movements into the bird, sliding across to the far seat, buckling and unbuckling the seat belts, and getting out again. After everyone had practiced on the parked bird, Brian Novak started up 40 Mike Charlie,



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

INSTRUCTION — RMRU members Walt Walker and Randy Iwasiuk listen as pilot Brian Novak of Landells Aviation discusses some of the technical facts about the helicopter.

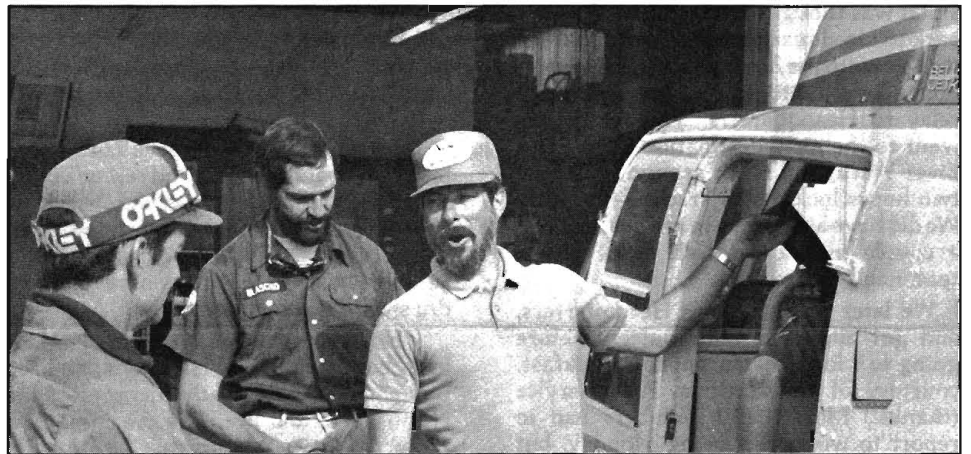
one of the Bell Jet Ranger helicopters, and carried the "RMRU Rock" over to the practice field. The "rock" is a wooden structure designed to simulate a rock, and enable us to practice one-runner and hover pickups on the flat desert.

Every RMRUer got to give hand signals to guide the helicopter into a one-runner touchdown on the "rock," hold the runner onto the rock for stability, climb into the bird on a one-runner, climb into the bird while hovering, and jump out of the helicopter while it hovered a few feet above the ground. Our thanks to Brian for flying around and around a tight circle giving us this practice.

After the helicopter practice, we took all the equipment out of both RMRU

"pumpkins" (the vans), cleaned the vans inside and out, checked radio batteries, and put everything back into its place. We then adjourned to the nearby house of Don and Elaine Landells for a barbecue with the Landells, pilots, and other guests. As usual, the barbecue was a tremendous success, both in terms of amount consumed and friendships strengthened.

We thank Don and Elaine Landells, Brian Novak, and Steve DeJesus for their unstinting hospitality and helpfulness in giving us this necessary training, and for their continuing fantastic flying in the tightest rescue situations. The helicopters are responsible for saving many lives by getting us to victims quicker and with more equipment, and for making our job much easier and safer. THANKS!! • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY WALT WALKER

DON'T TOUCH — Pilot Brian Novak tells RMRU members Ray Hussey and Bill Blaschko not to pull on the pilots shoulder harness when getting in and out of the machine as it would greatly disturb the pilot.



RMRU PHOTO BY WALT WALKER

A FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING — New member Henry Negrete enters the helicopter on a one runner pick up for the first time as Kathy Davis gives hand signals to Brian Novak at the controls.