



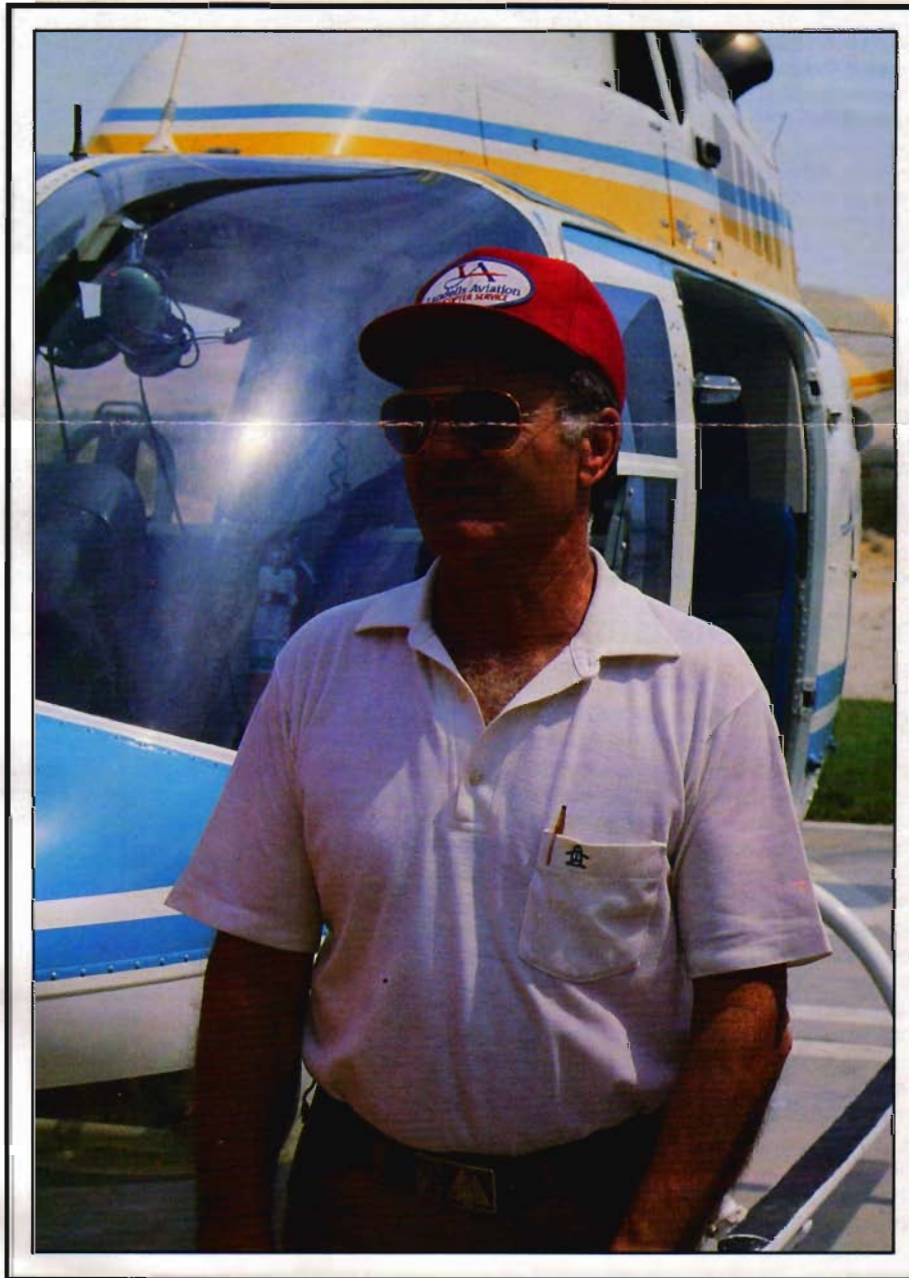
NEWSLETTER

12 ISSUES PER YEAR DISTRIBUTED BY THE RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT, INC. — POST OFFICE BOX 5444, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92517
A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT TAX DEDUCTIBLE CORPORATION — MEMBER OF THE MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION

Volume XXII, Issue X, October 1986

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In Memorium



Don Landells

Don Landells

Don Landells, 59, was killed while piloting a Bell Jet Ranger helicopter on Monday, October 6, 1986. The crash occurred on the slopes of Clark Mountain, about 5 miles north of Interstate 15 and 15 miles from the California-Nevada border. He is survived by his wife, Elaine, and two sons, Jim and Kelly, and a brother, Bill. Memorial services were held on Saturday, October 11 in Palm Springs.

The accident happened during an early morning flight on the first day of a bighorn sheep project in the Mojave Desert. Also killed in the crash was Jim Bicket, a biologist for the BLM. Surviving the incident were Dick Weaver, a DFG biologist, and Gerald Wagner, a volunteer worker.

Everyone who had ever flown with Don was shocked as word spread of the accident. Some RMRU members gathered on Tuesday and quietly tried to console each other. Veteran members of the unit had flown with Don for more than 24 years.

Don was born in Mountain Peak, Alberta, Canada and became involved with aviation when he was 16 years old. He earned his wings in an Aeronca Champ in November of 1947. In a very short time he was flying a DC-3 hauling mining supplies and equipment. He formed a flying service with a partner and flew a small Luscombe on skis and floats delivering supplies to remote territories in Northern Alberta. He then trained with Associated Helicopters of Canada and became their second licensed pilot in only 13 hours.

After three years he moved on to the Canadian Seaboard Company. He was hired as the chief pilot and while there met his wife Elaine.



Don was then hired by United Helicopters, based in California, to fly a ship down from Canada. In the summer of 1961 United moved Don to Palm Springs as the chief pilot on the construction of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. With the completion of the tram in 1964 Don and Elaine founded Palm Springs Aviation.

In the 24 plus years that RMRU flew with Don a friendship and trust was formed. During that period of time at least 50 to 75 lives were

saved by Don and RMRU working together. It would take hundreds of pages to recall the rescues that Don and RMRU participated in together and hopefully some day that will be done.

Elaine Landells has asked that memorial contributions be sent to the Palm Springs Mounted Police Search and Rescue, P. O. Box 226, Palm Springs, CA 92263 and the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, P. O. Box 5444, Riverside, CA 92517.

“Doing What You Do Best”

By Kevin Walker

In the fall of 1965 a young rescue team already known by its fellow organizations as RMRU was participating in an airshow at Flabob Airport near the city of Riverside. What was a mountain rescue team doing at an airport you might ask. For one thing to be able to assist in any accidents that might occur, but also the young struggling team was working very hard at getting its name out in front of the public. This particular day became a very important part of my life. My dad, Walt brought me along with him, as I really enjoyed watching airplanes, besides even the added fun of playing in the rescue truck, or “donut wagon” as the members called it. Remember, six year olds, or at least this particular one liked doing these sort of things. At any rate the day went fine and as things wound down my dad brought me over to a funny looking contraption called a helicopter. It was really exciting to be up next to one until my dad asked, “You want to go for a ride?” Well that was a whole different story. “No, No, No” . . . was about how it went as I recall. But finally my dad and Don Ricker convinced me to climb into the center of the Bell 47 next to the pilot, and then Don Ricker in the right seat with his daughter Suzy in his lap. The pilot, Tom Mason, with a small helicopter company called Western Helicopters started the supercharged reciprocating engine and powered up for take off. All I can remember of that moment was being more scared than I had ever been, UNTIL we lifted off. The rest shall we say is history, as a very deep love developed for helicopters. The ride only lasted 15 minutes, but it was wonderful, exciting, beautiful, and well, feelings that can’t be described. From that moment on any time I could beg, borrow or steal a ride in a helicopter I would do it. From year to year I would look forward for December to come around, not because of

Christmas so much as “HELITAC.” I would be allowed to go along to Western and watch, take photographs with my dad’s Nikon camera, and oh yes, try and get a ride. It was such fun to go along and be near the helicopter, but I did not yet understand the real importance of training around helicopters. That would come later for me.

On June 25, 1970 my dad was involved in a helicopter crash in Little Round Valley. Both the helicopter pilot Reed Jarrow, from Western, and my dad survived the incident, though my dad suffered a laceration and a shoulder separation. The accident did not stop my dad, because he was back flying three weeks later on a mission with the same pilot. It also didn’t set my dad’s feelings back one bit, so it was the same with me.

During the summer of 1971 RMRU was involved in a search for a young man that did not want to be found. For the members who were on the team at that time the name of Mark Siels will not soon be forgotten. This mission ran for six days with no major clues, and fellow MRA teams also participated in the six day epic. Back in those days RMRU did not have a regular base camp operator, so since it was summer vacation for me, RMRU had a 12 year old sitting behind the radio. What this all leads into, is that during the week long mission, search and rescue teams used a variety of helicopters. Western flew, as did a California Highway Patrol bird and one other. A pilot arrived one morning in a Bell 47 with the registration number of 84G (eighty-four-gulf). This was the helicopter belonging to James Donald Landells, or Don as everyone called him. This was my first meeting in person with the already famous pilot. I knew this from the stories told by my dad

Reprinted from the RMRU
25th Anniversary Booklet
dedicated to Don Landells

and others on the team of tough missions on the mountain and in Tahquitz Canyon. Don was back at Camp Maranatha with several other team members for lunch that day, so while they sat under the pine trees and ate their meal I walked out to the helicopter just to stare, and that was when I was first spoken to by the man. And to the best of my memory it went something like this, "Hey Kid! Get your face off the plexiglass!" Oh well, it was a start.

March, 1973 the infamous Colgetty search. On the last day of the search I was allowed to go up into Jensen Canyon on foot with the rest of the team. By mid morning a bittersweet ending of the mission came about with the locating of the body of the missing 11 year old. Landells Aviation was contacted, and Don arrived with 84G to fly all personnel and equipment out. At the age of 14 I climbed into a helicopter on a one-runner helispot. As I slowly moved to the center and then my dad behind me, the pilot said "Nice entrance, young man." Well, that really made my day.

December 1978, one month after becoming RMRU's youngest member, my first helitac as an actual member. For me it was my first time to work with a Bell Jet Ranger. What a powerful and graceful ship 40MC (four-zero-mike-charlie) was, especially with Don at the controls. And why the need for helitac training? Several weeks later it became quite clear. While working in the rain on a plane crash near Desert Hot Springs, I was assigned to guide Don in to the helispot between the rain squalls and cloud white outs, and it was then that a bond between Don and I started to form. A trust, a caring for one another, a love for what we did. Over the past eight years I have had the extreme pleasure of flying with Don on missions, now too many to mention all of them. We have flown search over Mt. San Jacinto during snow storms trying to find lost teenagers with little equipment. He has picked me up in Tahquitz Canyon by putting the skid of 40MC on a larger limb of an oak

tree so that we could be flown out before bad weather came in. We have used helispots with rock walls just mere feet from the main rotor or tail. Over the years he has conservatively saved 50 to 75 lives. These are just some of my personal memories. Don's great flying has been shared with so many others, especially with my dad Walt. Their closeness could always be felt by those around them. Theirs was truly a unique bond.

During these years of flying with Don, we have watched Don go from one Bell 47 to six Bell Jet Rangers. Don and his wife Elaine could be termed as workaholics building their business up to what it is today. Also helping to make Landells Aviation what it is today has been Don's son Jim, his brother Bill, and of course the other pilots, Mike Donovan, Brian Novak and Steve DeJesus, who definately can be called mountain pilots also. I can safely say this only because I have been in spots with these pilots that have left no margin for error. No doubt about it, the Landells have good taste in the pilots they have hired.

On October 5, 1986 while doing another thing that was very important to Don, working with the Department of Fish and Game on a Bighorn sheep count, Don was involved in a helicopter crash that took his life and another mans also. Of the two real life heros in my life, one of whom is my dad, I lost the other that day. Everyone on the team trains at everything we do in search and rescue, but yet we all have our areas of expertise. I happen to pride myself in my ability to work around the helicopter and with the pilots sitting at the controls. Not only because of my ability to do what I do best, but because he was like a second father to me, the hurt will not soon go away, knowing I will no longer be able to work with a real hero.

To end on a positive note, one I know for a fact that the smiling Canadian would want. We will go on, we will save more lives, we will fly again. And I promise Don, I will continue to do what I do best.

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8640M

**3 Oct., Fri.
Tahquitz Rock,
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Kevin Walker



As members were gathering at Humber Park on Friday evening for training in the high country, the Idyllwild deputy made contact with our members at Humber in regards to a couple that were overdue in returning to the roadhead from a climb on Tahquitz Rock. Steve Bryant gathered information and had the Sheriff contact me at Arrow Printing as my dad and I

were finishing a job that had to be ready for the following day. Also helping us were Glenn Henderson and Mel Krug so that I would be able to go on training the following morning. As I started the call out procedure for more members, Steve assigned Henry Negrete and Ray Hussey to hike up to the base of the rock and try and make voice contact with the overdue couple. With radio 66 in Henry's pack, they ascended the steep climber's path to lunch rock. From there they started calling out "hello" as they moved around towards the northern side of the rock. With no response they started back towards lunch rock and were going to go around to the south side and continue calling. But apparently the couple got back to lunch rock before Henry and Ray did, as the group in base could hear them coming down the trail to Humber. Ray and Henry were recalled to base and once back training plans could be reinstated. • RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 26

ABORT

Mission No. 8641A

**5 Oct., Sun.
Palm Canyon
Santa Rosa Mountains**

The RMRU was returning from Marion Flats, completing a two day hike across

upper Mt. San Jacinto, when a call was received over the radio. The Indio office of the Riverside Sheriff's Department called the RMRU to begin a search for an overdue male hiker. The solo hiker reportedly was hiking from Santa Rosa Springs (near Santa Rosa Peak) to Hermit Bench at the mouth of Palm Canyon. As the RMRU hiked down the trails of Mt. San Jacinto, the in-town team member, Walt Walker, made arrangements regarding aerial search and transportation technicalities. Walt also had the Palm Springs Mounted Police called out to search at the lower part of Palm Canyon and cover the mouth of the canyon. As both search and rescue teams proceeded towards Palm Canyon, the overdue hiker walked out, uninjured.

• RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 26

ABORT

Mission No. 8642A

**5 Oct., Sun.
Pacific Crest Trail,
Whitewater**

We received a call from the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that a man was reported to have had a heart attack somewhere up the Pacific Crest Trail in the Whitewater. We had just got home

from training and quickly reloaded the gear and drove to the Whitewater. Upon arrival we learned that a San Bernardino Sheriff's helicopter had been called and already had picked up the patient and was enroute to the desert hospital. • RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 20

ABORT

Mission No. 8643A

**5 Oct., Sun.
Pacific Crest Trail,
Whitewater**

While responding to Mission No. 8642A our assistance was also requested by the wife of one of three hunters who were overdue in returning from a trip up the Whitewater. After arriving and learning about the other Abort we started gathering info on the hunters. Soon after, though, they hiked out and all were in good condition. • RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 20

CALL

Mission No. 8644C

Yosemite National Park

We were contacted through the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association to assist in a search in the Toulouame Meadows area of Yosemite National Park. No members were available to respond.

• RMRU



Familiarization

**3-4 Oct., Fri.-Sun.
High Country
San Jacinto Mountains**

By Jim Fairchild



Dinner at the Chart House in Idyllwild prior to training is a tradition whenever possible. This time was great for a few of us. Then we headed for Humber Park and the roadhead, well, three of us did, Bill Blaschko, Joe Erickson, and the writer. At Humber

we were soon joined by a Deputy Sheriff who said someone had reported a call for help from Tahquitz Rock which looms above us southward. We had heard nothing, and a bit after eight o'clock, which was the appointed hour for the whole team to start up the trail, we started hiking, believing our teammates would catch us as we strolled along.

Little did we know that a search was in progress just a few minutes after we commenced the upward climb. The deputy thought we had headed for Tahquitz Rock, so did the rest of the team, arriving with thoughts of a full-scale rescue on the rock. (See that write-up).

The three of us wondered why no one caught up with us, and soon we were at a fine bivouac site near the palisades south of Saddle Junction. Bill and Joe were soon ensconced in sleeping bags, the writer was soon following his guilty conscience back to Humber Park to discover a note on his windshield telling of the quick search, and that the group was staying at Henry Negrete's place and would be up in the morning. I went over to Henry's to let them know we were OK, ensconced near the palisades. The hike back to camp further strengthened my determination never to head up the trail without all my teammates and a radio, on trainings, that is.

Late in the morning we were properly reunited and ready to hike into the wonderland that is the San Jacinto Mountain High Country. As our route took us up to the ridge between the Tahquitz Meadow areas and Willow Creek, we stopped a few times to point out landmarks and to determine compass directions. Then the writer was asked to find a way around the worst brushy patches, not easy because the chinquapin and especially the thorny deerbrush had grown during the past three or four years to block previous paths. Nevertheless, we made it to Willow Creek and began the several hundreds of feet ascent to Wellman's Cabin, an idyllic site. There is a big meadow, dense ferns, huge Jeffrey pines and white firs, a nice stream, and the broken-down log "cabin." Several of us went down to the old storage shelter complete with decades-old utensils and other gear. A detailed inspection of every members' equipment revealed that we were ready for nearly any kind of emergency, and enlightened a few as to certain items that really ought to be carried.

The steak dinners (also traditional) were soon cooked and eaten. We had reminisced somewhat about the times Don Landells had flown us in and out of the meadow here, totally confident that the imminent horrible tragedy of Don's crash could never happen.

We slept to the gentle sound of the wind in the needles, on a surface of duff that softened the earth. "We" were: Bill, Joe,

Glenn Henderson, Henry Negrete, Steve Bryant, Kevin Walker, Mel Krug, Cam Robbins, Ray Hussey, Pete Carlson, Ed Hill, Rob Gardner.

Morning arrived cool and welcome after a full night's rest. Various gourmet breakfasts were cooked. We finally began the hike to our first objective, Wellman Cienega, a marvelous small stream that drains an extensive hillside meadow on the trail to San Jacinto Peak, at about 9,000 feet elevation. Along the way this old training chairman of past years was thrilled to see the interest shown in eating chinquapin nuts. They are numerous this year, protected by a thorny, several compartmented pod. Just above the cienega the thrill returned, as we ate plump, tasty gooseberries. Then the cross-country climb continued to a flat pass between Jean and Marion Peaks. A week or so before, Bill Blaschko and Bud White had set up an eight-legged compass course. We paired off, broke out the compasses and followed the directions on the sheets provided. Another thrill! Everyone accepted the challenge and carefully followed where their compasses pointed, and believed them. They also carefully paced off the distances, which were considerable. At the end of the seventh leg, a pass southeast of Marion Peak, every pair had wondered why they came out fifty feet east of the cairn on a huge boulder formation that was the landmark. Bill said they were "right on," it was just handier to put the cairn where it was. The final three-hundred paces led downhill to another tall boulder. Where could the "treasure" be? Eager searchers circled the boulder, wondering where to dig. An inspired participant, determining where Bud would hide something, climbed the boulder, and there it was! We quenched our thirsts with "Mountain Dew," and admired the view.

We then thought of descending the southeast ridge of Marion Peak, but declined when it appeared quite brushy. A contour west and down a slope brought us to a fine previous campsite. We then dropped down to the Deer Springs Trail and headed out. This is an enchanting area of huge trees and huge, round boulders.

Near where we had found and rescued three small children about four years ago our radios heard from Walt. He was telling us of a search that was starting over in Palm Canyon. Thus began a hot-footed (fast) finish of the miles left before the roadhead at the Riverside County Park Visitors' Center. Meanwhile, of course, the lost subject had been located. So, we went over to the Blaschkos' place for debriefing and refreshments. • RMRU