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Rob Gardner, Editor — Kevin Walker, Publisher — Barbara Darling, Typesetter

Search and Rescue

SEARCH

Mission No. 8711M

17 April, Fri.
Vicinity of Angel's Glide Trail
San Jacinto Mountains

By Jim Fairchild



A red-checked shirt and some hair, at the bottom of a one-hundred foot high cliff, just south of the junction to Strawberry Cienega Trail and Angel's Glide Trail, with tracks in the snow leading to the very edge

of the cliff, was the description that was the start to this mission. A hiker that had camped near the junction on April 15 reported that he had seen the tracks at about dusk. He and a friend hiked back to the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway on the 16th, and then reported their observations to the Sheriff's Office. Kevin Walker of RMRU was contacted and he conducted a thorough interrogation with the informant.

That evening a pager call went out for RMRU to meet at Humber Park above Idyllwild at 7:00 a.m. Shortly after that hour we (Henry Negrete, Ronnie Pierson, Eric Townsend, Brian Silison, Jay Pion, Kevin Walker, Larry Carter, Bernie McIlvoy, and the writer) trudged up the 2600' elevation gain to the search area, while others worked at base camp. We encountered snow cover of varying depths and varying hardness. Information came to us over the radio that the State Park Ranger reported that an unusual fellow in a red-checked shirt got a permit earlier, and the Sheriff said the man's car was still

at Humber Park. Aha! No problem, we'd find him and lug him out, early this afternoon.

Upon reaching the trail junction and ridgeline we spread out and checked very carefully all high boulders, bluffs, and cliffs. No luck. A radio message then came to say the red-checked shirt owner came out and drove away. Well, we had a nice hike, explored a nice area, and finished with a nice Mexican food dinner in Idyllwild. • RMRU



CALL

Mission No. 8711C

18 April, Sat.
San Jacinto Mountains

We received a call from the Hemet Station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department at 1800 hours that a father and his son were overdue in returning from a day hike that started at the Riverside County Visitors Center in Idyllwild, and ended via a loop hike at Humber Park. As the callout procedure was being initiated the pair walked out safely. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

NICE DAY FOR A HIKE — That is about all that could be said for the search for a possible body in the vicinity of the Strawberry Cienega. Here members take a break at the top of the Angles Glide, close to the search area.

RESCUE

Mission No. 8712M

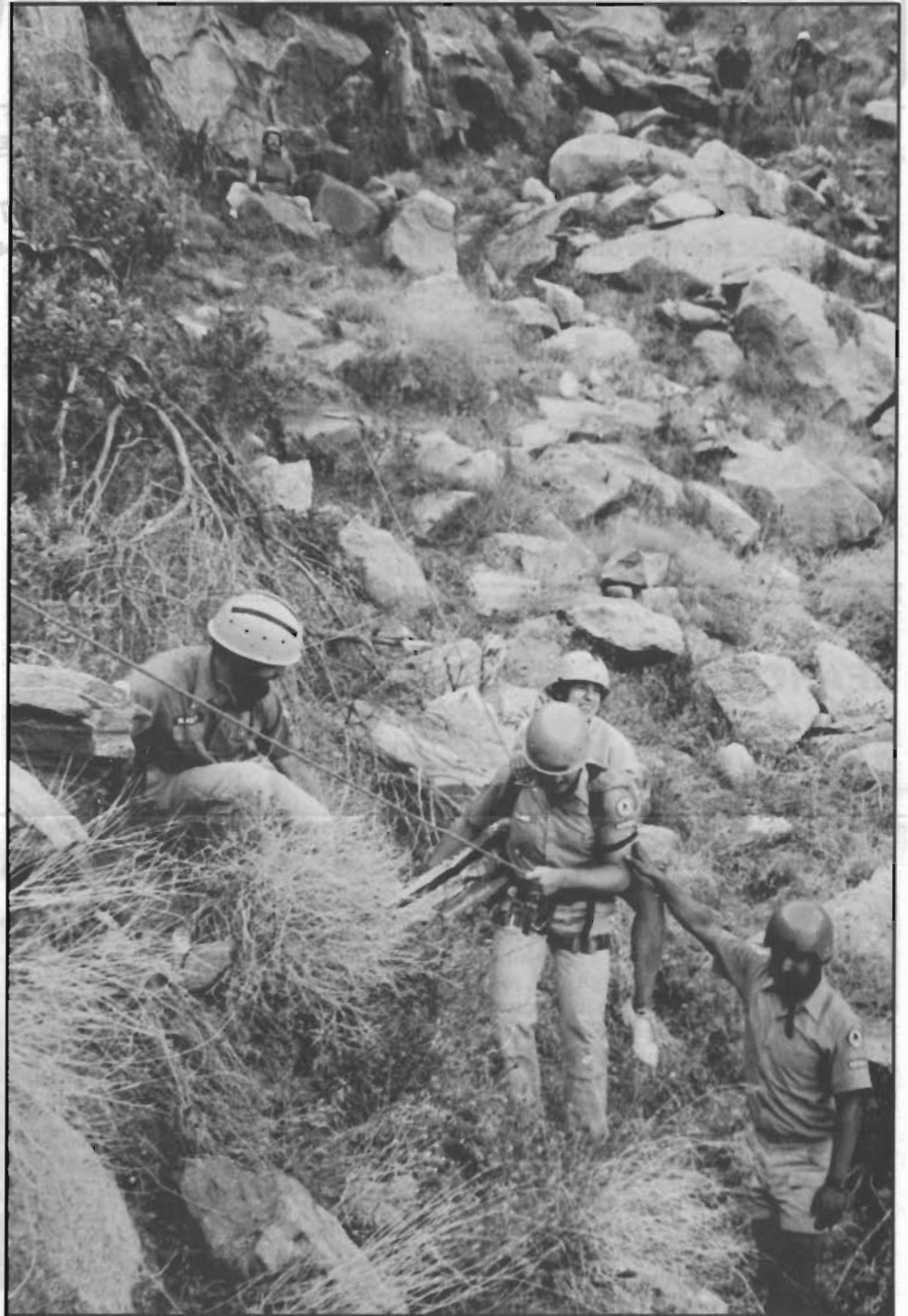
23 April, Thurs.
North Chino Canyon,
San Jacinto Mountains

By Kevin Walker



At a little after 1:00 pm the phone rang at work with the news of a rescue down in Palm Springs, destination the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. I was the first to arrive closely followed by Rob Gardner. At the lower station Rob and I interviewed James Newby, the informant. James told us that he, Steven Rule, Tina Kuo and Jill Woelfle, all from Pasadena, were down to Palm Springs for spring break. Their fellow classmates were planning to ride the tram up in the late afternoon and have dinner at the mountain station. But this group of four had a more challenging way of reaching the top. They started out from parking lot H at the lower station early in the morning. The group was well equipped for a day hike, each having plenty of water, extra clothing, food and other items necessary for the trip from the palms to the pines. The only error made was they picked a route to the north of Chino Canyon instead of going up the Skyline ridge to the south. By mid morning they could see that their route was taking them away from where they wanted to go, and that they had quite a bit more altitude to gain to get to the top, so the decision was made to descend back to the valley station. The group went via the direct route, taking a very steep chute towards North Chino Canyon. About halfway down, Jill Woelfle dislodged a rock weighing in the neighborhood of 600 pounds which rolled over and pinned her right foot. Her companions quickly tipped the boulder back enough for Jill to pull her foot out. They could not tell for sure whether or not her foot or ankle was broken. There was no doubt though that she would not be able to get out on her own.

Sgt. Dave Norstrom from the Banning station arrived, and after discussing with James her approximate location and possible injuries the decision was made to contact Landells Aviation. As more members arrived, Rob and I readied our packs and waited only a short time for the arrival of mountain pilot Steve DeJesus in helicopter 16 Uniform. We loaded our packs, strapped ourselves in and lifted off for North Chino. As we gained altitude, I described to Steve where we thought the remaining three were. After making sweeps across the slopes of the north side and



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

TROGSITZ EVAC — This photo shows RMRU's Trogsitz which was used to carry injured subject Jill Woelfle on the back of RMRU member Kevin Walker, as fellow members Bill Blaschko and Henry Negrete help for balance. In the background RMRU member Glenn Henderson can be seen as he belays Kevin and Jill down the steep slope.

reaching the top of the ridge with no results, we then started a slow descent back. Everyone on the team will have hot spells for finding people, a lot of which is being in the right place at the right time. Well this was to be the beginning of a hot run for me. About a thousand feet below the helicopter in the shadow of the ridge was something moving! I called out for Steve to roll to the left. As we came about

sure enough we had located them. Steve spiralled down, and ended up level with the group several hundred horizontal feet away. The chute was a large one with a very confined bottom, so we would have to be careful not to roll rocks down on the trio if we were to get out above. Steve did find a spot where we could get out off to one side slightly. Steve put the tip of one skid onto a small boulder in the mountain-



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

READY FOR PICK-UP — As RMRU members Henry Negrete, Rob Gardner, Glenn Henderson, Kevin Walker, Walt Walker, and Bill Blaschko cling to the small helispot holding Jill Woelfle, pilot Steve DeJesus maneuvers the helicopter into position for the pick-up.

side and Rob and I climbed out. Steve pulled away and returned to base to wait for further instructions for loads and equipment.

Upon our arrival, we found Jill resting comfortably on a large flat boulder with two other companions close by. It was Tina's red sweatshirt being waved that I had spotted, something to remember when out in the wild. Back to Jill though, there was some swelling at the ankle with moderate point tenderness, enough to warrant fracture precautions. This information was relayed to base along with other items that would be needed for the rescue operation. Second load in consisted of Jim Fairchild and Walt Walker with brush cutting tools. The brush hooks were handed out to Rob who made some minor improvements to the site, enough for Steve to let Walt and Jim out. With all three working, the helispot was quickly ready for the balance of members and equipment. Next was Bill Blaschko and Henry Negrete, followed by Glenn Hen-

derson and Joe Erickson. Back at base was base camp operator Bob Sairs and fellow members Jay Pion and Ray Hussey who arrived late.

Steve returned to base and shut the machine down and waited there as we went about the business of getting Jill ready to go. Dr. Bill examined Jill and then he and I placed an air splint on the injured foot while the rest of the guys set up anchors for rope belays, cleared a small path to walk to the helispot, and also cleared a little more room at the helispot itself. Instead of using a stokes litter to move Jill in, we used the teams Trogsitz. It is a means of carrying someone on the back of another person piggy-back style. With anchors and belay stations ready, Jill was strapped into the Trogsitz, I got into the pack strap portion of it, clipped in and then with the help of Bill and Henry as outriggers for me to balance with, we started out. First we traversed over about twenty feet and then down about thirty belayed by Glenn. Then we transferred again to another belay by Joe, and soon

were at the spot. As gear was being gathered I asked to radio down and have Steve start up the helicopter, but Walt said to wait so that we could make sure all was ready. As Jill was still strapped to my back I was getting a little anxious to get the show on the road, (sorry Jill). I must say that Jill was one of the lighter subjects we have helped, so the wait was not all that bad. As the photos accompanying this article show best, once Steve arrived, using almost all present, Jill was removed from my back and transferred into the helicopter, and then flown back to base.

Steven and Tina were flown out next followed by loads of RMRU members and gear until all that remained was Rob and myself. Steve returned, and what would become known as the THREE AMIGO's returned to base. For Jill, X-rays showed no fracture, which was good to hear. Some college students may have had some excitement down in the springs. This foursome had excitement of a different sort up in the mountains known as the San Jacintos. • RMRU

TRAINING



Technical

3-4-5 April, Fri.-Sat.-Sun.
Joshua Tree National Monument

By Larry Carter



This weekend proved to be both informative and fun. The fun began with a humorously written challenge to RMRU from the Joshua Tree Search and Rescue Team (JOSAR) to compete in the first annual "Lost Horse Prusik Race".

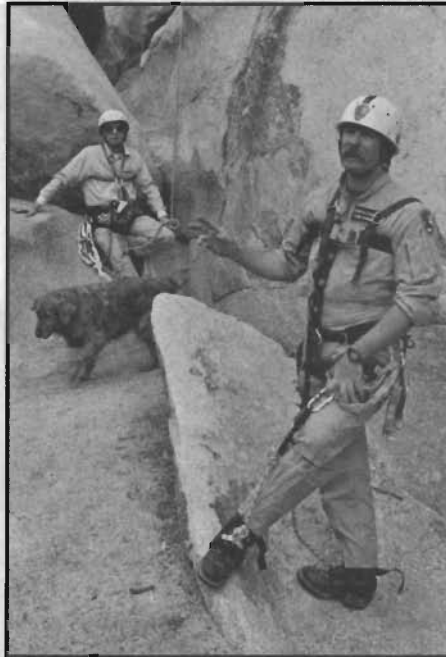
We arrived Friday night, with our families, at the Lost Horse Campground. We were informed by the rangers that the race may be delayed due to the finding of two backpacks full of gear in the Wonderland of Rocks, and no account for the backpack owners.

Saturday morning, after a leisurely breakfast, the team members broke into three training groups and rotated between stations. At station one Walt Walker went over the basics of litter rigging using the pre-tied systems. How to protect the subject in the litter and the litter attendant from falling rock and ice were also discussed, along with various tradeoffs.

Kevin Walker discussed mechanical advantage (MA) systems that are used to reduce the effort in hauling a litter up a steep slope or rock face. Team members then set up a MA system. Glenn Henderson covered the correct placement of anchor devices and demonstrated their use in cracks found in the rocks. Each team member practiced placing anchors.

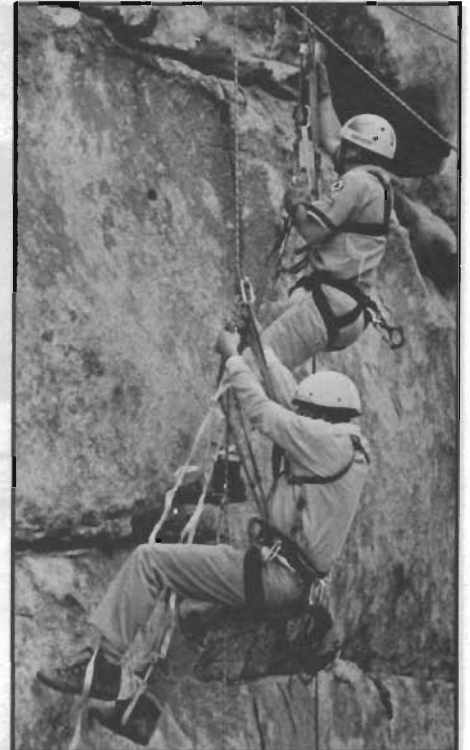
These sessions provide training for the new members and senior members alike. They also provide a forum for introducing new techniques and devices developed by our team members as well as other search and rescue teams.

This being a family weekend, RMRU team members brought wives and children. Between meals the children could be seen from time to time poking their heads from the top of any number of rock formations around the campground. Their constant scurrying around the rocks reminded me of ants on an ant hill — in constant motion.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

DANGER RANGER - As RMRU member Bud White and his dog Buddy listen on, local SAR CZAR in training, Rescue Ranger, and all around nice guy Tom Patterson describes the rules for the 1st annual Lost Horse Prusik Race between RMRU and the members of the JOSAR team.



RMRU PHOTO BY JIM FAIRCHILD

HUFFIN-N-PUFFIN - RMRU members Bud White and Rob Gardner work their way up the rope during the Prusik Race.

While we were training, the children were being taught the "hug a tree lesson" by some of the mothers. Also, a foil print was made of each child's foot print.

As we were eating our lunches, the members of JOSAR arrived at our campground. The equipment found in the Wonderland of Rocks was shown to RMRU team members and it was generally agreed that the equipment had been exposed to the elements for some time. The discussion changed to the rules of the upcoming Lost Horse Prusik Race.

The race was to begin twenty feet from the ropes to be ascended. The participants would run to the rope and attach their ascending systems to the rope and ascend 130 feet of rope. At the top, the participant would switch over to a rappelling system, descend the rope, and return to the starting line. A safety officer was assigned to insure that during the heat of battle no one violated the rules of safety.

The competition was between types of ascending systems as well as skill and endurance. The JOSAR team used an ascending system developed by cavers, called the Mitchell ascending system. RMRU used various systems based upon the Jumar ascending device. The battle was close with RMRU pulling out a narrow victory. The best times were recorded by Ron Pierson of RMRU and Tom Patterson of JOSAR.

After the competition some members proceeded onto some friendly bouldering challenges such as "Can you climb that boulder with one hand?" As we competed, some of the wives decided that the Jumar-ing did not look difficult and donned harnesses and proceeded up the ropes. Meanwhile, the children scurried over the rocks.

Sunday began with setting up a mechanical advantage hauling system like the one discussed the previous day. We practiced raising and lowering the litter. After lunch we departed for home. • RMRU

RMRU People

Bruce Damon, owner of Nomad Ventures, donated \$200 worth of equipment to RMRU in April. Bruce saw that RMRU was conducting a search in the high country at the time (see Mission No. 8710M) and approached base camp personnel with the donation. On hand to receive the equipment was Ops Leader Walt Walker and Asst. Ops Rob Gardner. This is the third straight year that Nomad Ventures has helped RMRU, thanks again Bruce.