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## Search and Rescue

### RESCUE

Mission No. 8706M

1 Feb. Sun.  
Tahquitz Rock,  
San Jacinto Mountains

By Walt Walker



It was late in the afternoon when I was contacted by the Hemet station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department that they had received a report of an individual calling for help from somewhere up on Tah-

quitz Rock. Since there was the possibility of an injury and there was not going to be too much more daylight, I requested the use of a helicopter. The call-out procedure was put in motion and I quickly drove home, changed into my uniform, loaded my gear and drove over and picked up the unit's No. 2 van.

As I arrived at the Camp Maranatha ballfield (used as a heliport) I was met by fellow RMRU member Ron Pierson. We discussed the situation and started pulling gear out of the van. Deputy Reed advised us that Western Helicopters of Rialto had dispatched pilot Dorcey Wingo in a Bell 206. Since Ron was a climber and knew the rock well, I decided that he and I would go on the first flight. We were packed and ready when the bird arrived.

Ron and I quickly walked over to the Jet Ranger and I explained the details of the mission to Dorcey. With the daylight failing fast we took off immediately and headed up towards Tahquitz Rock. We spotted the solo climber on the first pitch of the Trough. Since Dorcey was new to the area I asked him to circle back towards Lunch Rock, a 60 foot tall boulder at the

base of the rock, to see if he thought we could use it as a helispot. (Helispot — usually a boulder large enough to put one skid down and sometimes both skids, but power must be continuously held as you cannot actually land.) After one pass Dorcey headed into the rock, placed both skids on the rock, and he gave the nod for Ron and I to climb out. I slid out and Ron started passing packs and gear to me. Ron slid out and we both crouched down and I gave the thumbs up signal to Dorcey. Ron and I climbed down off the rock and started over towards the Trough as Dorcey returned to Camp Maranatha to pick up RMRU members Jim Fairchild and Bud White.

Since there was a fair amount of snow in the shady areas Ron and I had to carefully traverse ledges that had patches of snow and ice on them. We worked our way to within about 100 feet of the Trough route. We made voice contact and found out that the climber was not injured, just stranded. About 60 feet of a 50 degree slope of hard crusted snow was the next problem. I set up a belay and Ron carefully led off across the steep slope. Getting across the slope he climbed upward until he found a spot that he could place some chocks and set up a belay for me. Ron belayed me over to him and I clipped in to the anchors. Jim and Bud were dropped off at Lunch Rock and while Dorcey headed back, Ron and I discussed the situation and he said that he could rock climb the route with no major problems. I decided that since it was almost dark and the climber was not injured we would not have any more members flown in.

Ron started climbing the route with his boot soles wet and having to contend with some ice on the rock and in the cracks. He placed a few chocks for protection as he led up to the ledge where 30 year old Michael DePatie was waiting. (Ron made the somewhat dangerous climb look easy but it was only because of his skill as a mountaineer.) When Ron got to Michael he found a somewhat embarrassed and cold subject who had climbed up the Trough route without a rope and had become stranded by ice on the ledges.

The next problem was setting up some anchors to use so that Michael and Ron could rappell down. Ron solved that problem and assisted Michael in getting ready to descend. Michael rappelled down to me

and I clipped him into the anchor and Ron then rappelled down. Ron had set up a double rope for the rappell and we had a couple of anxious moments as we started to pull the rope down and it felt like it had become stuck. With another hard pull the rope came loose and slid down to us.

Ron then led back across the steep slope to the first belay spot and we both belayed Michael across. Ron then belayed me back across. I then belayed first Ron and then Michael across a ledge and down a small chimney crack. One more set of belays across some more ledges found us off the snow and we were met by Jim and Bud. We then carefully hiked down to Lunch Rock and radioed base that we were ready to be picked up.

It was now dark and there was about a 3 to 5 mph wind blowing across the face of the rock. We had preplanned with Dorcey that we would use flashlight wands to help in guiding him to the helispot. We also used Jim's new bright Tekna light to illuminate a large pine tree that was fairly close to the rock. As Dorcey flew towards us I advised him of the wind and our plan for loading the bird. Bud and Michael would be flown out first, then Jim with all the extra gear and finally Ron and I.

When Dorcey was about 500 feet out I turned on the light wands and held them horizontally in my outstretched arms. Dorcey turned on his land light and I began motioning to him with the wands. The powerful bird softly touched down and I signaled for Dorcey to hold and placed one foot on the skid to assist in keeping the bird there. Bud and Michael climbed aboard and I signaled for Dorcey to lift off. We repeated this process two more times and we were all back to Camp Maranatha by 10 p.m. I personally would like to thank Dorcey Wingo for some very fine flying under difficult conditions.

Volunteer Man Hours — 113 • RMRU

### CALL

Mission No. 8707C

18 Feb., Wed.  
Sequoia National Park

We received a call through the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association that there was a missing solo cross country skier. The request was for ex-

perienced ski mountaineers. We did not have anyone available. The search for the missing man went on for many days with negative results. It was thought that he was probably buried in an avalanche. •RMRU



## Snow & Ice Skills

6-8 Feb., Fri.-Sat.  
Mt. San Geronio,  
San Bernardino Mountains

By Jim Fairchild



Several years have gone by since we trained on the North slope of San Geronio Mountain, to be more specific, Jepson Peak (11,269' el., a mile west of San Geronio Peak). We had been advised by J.R. Muratet

and Bernie McIlvoy, who had skied part-way into the area the previous Sunday, that conditions were good for winter technical training and practice.

At about 9:00 a.m. Friday, Steve Bryant, Pete Carlson, Larry Roland, Bud White, Ron Pierson, Henry Negrete, Eric Townsend and the writer gathered at the Jenks Lake turn-off to Poopout Hill for a drive to the roadhead. Following the inescapable axiom that "If you want it, you carry it," we shouldered heavy burdens and proceeded toward South Fork Meadow, in the vernacular, "Slushy Meadow." Intermittent snow and ice graced the trail until just below the meadow where continuous cover became deeper and deeper. Through the meadow we "postholed" through the crust, finally stopping under a Lodgepole Pine where a bare grassy area provided a dry place to put on snowshoes. Another three-hundred yards of soft snow travel brought us to the start of Christmas Tree Hill, a well-known skiing slope. Our snowshoes, amazingly, quickly found very hard, "boiler-plate" ice. Some of us have spikes on the bottom of our snowshoe bindings and were able to surmount the hill almost to the top without changing to crampons. Others wore crampons. Once at the hill's eminence, we changed back to snowshoes. Our route up another thousand feet of elevation took us past spectacular views of icy slopes and rock crags, with clouds moving eastward and the wind blowing

westward, raising an ominous plume, just like in the "big" mountains of the world. Our camp was at 10,000' el., immediately below steep couloirs (gullies) swooping off the summit of Mt. Jepson.

Ah! Supper! Encouraged in my four-person tent, three of us, Henry, Steve, and the writer, enjoyed steaks, tossed salad with Italian dressing, English muffins, and other delectable accessories to the meal. All the while a loud-roaring wind was speeding westward over the peaks. Occasional bursts hammered the side of the tent, but our stoves continued to melt snow for beverage water as we refilled canteens and prepared for a long night's sleep.

We reluctantly accepted the dawn many hours later. Our plan was to practice ice-ax arrests (methods for stopping one's self from unexpected slides down steep slopes of hard snow). While the snow's surface was a bit soft, we slid well and soon regained proficiency in the four modes or "postures" and with both right and left-handed sides. All of us there that morning had used these skills many times before. Some fun and quick-reflex-time came when we slid downward head-first on our backs without the ice ax, then were handed this indispensable tool as we gained speed, and were supposed to orient the ax and arrest the slide.

About lunch time more intrepid members arrived: Glenn Henderson, Larry Carter, Kevin Walker, Rob Gardner, and

J.R. Muratet. The afternoon saw the last mentioned men practicing what we had done in the morning, and then an ascent of one of the couloirs to the top of Jepson Peak, truly an invigorating and demanding enterprise. All day we had wondered whether the cloud-cover would begin to precipitate, but no, Dr. George was right — it would just be cloudy.

Supper again! More gourmet edibles and drinkables, followed by and interspersed by friendly between-the-tents conviviality. The wind blew in circular swirls, lifting powder snow and pushing it more uphill than down. As it did the night before, the moon lighted the landscape and even the interior of our tents.

Conversation died out shortly after 8:00 p.m. and deep slumber came peacefully, totally devoid of the stresses and pressures of "civilization," only a few miles and hours below our exclusive campsite.

The daylight of Sunday arrived, continuing the wonderfully beautiful sights of the slopes and crags. Our morning training included team arrests and roped travel. These demand careful procedures in climbing and traversing slopes so as to be prepared for surprises, that is, sudden falls by one or more of the rope-mates. We also practiced setting snow anchors and belays. The training ended with practice at snow-cave digging. The latter skill has saved many lives.

We ate lunch back at the tents, then



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

**SOCIAL HOUR** — Or hours — as there is not much to do after the sun goes down, team members must find something to help pass the time. Here RMRU members Rob Gardner, Glenn Henderson and Larry Carter are seen playing Uno. Notice how no one looks at the other person's cards.

packed up. The hike down on showshoes went quickly until the top of Christmas Tree Hill. Here a lot of fun began. A few of us marched down forthright on crampons or snowshoes with spikes, but most descended slowly with some breath-taking slides (the slip and fall routine) that were arrested using ice axes and recently gained or reviewed skills. An hour or so later we were at the vehicles and driving to a fine Mexican food supper in Mentone — a fitting re-entry to civilization. • RMRU

Volunteer Man Hours — 843

## \$USTAINING MEMBERS

BY PETE CARLSON

In February we paid our California vehicle registration for the No. 1 van, bought two chest harnesses for our small radios, and purchased four antennas and ten batteries for our radios. These expenses are typical of those that are incurred each month in order to operate efficiently. The new chest harnesses for the small radios will allow team members, while situated on steep rocks, to use the radios and still have their hands free. Each radio uses about three batteries per year with normal use, and we have five small radios. We occasionally break antennas going through rough terrain, so each field team carries an extra antenna. We thank our new and continuing sustaining members for their contributions to RMRU.

### FEBRUARY

#### New —

Freeman Bovard  
Brett & Rose Romer  
•Michael L. DePatie

#### Renewing —

M/M H.E. "Jeff" Divine  
M/M Bert Leithold

•Patron, donation of \$250 or more

### Notice!

The **RMRU Newsletter** is published 12 times per year by the Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit, Inc. It is intended primarily to inform the Regular and Sustaining Members.

If you would like to receive the newsletter on a regular basis, and at the same time become a Sustaining member, send your tax deductible donation of \$25 or more to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit  
Post Office Box 5444  
Riverside, California 92517



RMRU PHOTO BY GLENN HENDERSON

THE LITTLE DRAW AT DAWN — To take advantage of hard snow conditions RMRU members got up early and hiked a short distance from camp up into the Little Draw to practice snow and ice skills.



RMRU PHOTO BY KEVIN WALKER

TEAM ROPE PRACTICE — RMRU members Bud White, Eric Townsend and Glenn Henderson with one rope attached to each other, practice making bollards (anchors) in the snow field. If one person were to fall, the other two would then attempt to stop the falling companion by going into what is called the arrest position.