



RMRU

RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

1970's RMRU Flashback!

Rescuer Profile

2013-14 Mission Reviews

“A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.”

~Mahatma Gandhi



RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT

Rescue Committee Letter

This past year has been an eventful one for RMRU. In addition to completing a host of rescues, the team has entered a recruitment drive to help expand our membership base with experienced hikers, climbers and mountaineers. Even as old members retire, new rescuers join the team, contributing their dedication and expertise in our continuing effort to keep the Wilderness safe. Already, new members recruited this year have proved a supremely valuable asset on missions, have breathed new life into trainings, and brought useful new ideas to the table.

As we look to our future, we also take the time to remember and honor the past. The truly great mountaineers who grew the team from its infancy. Giant names like

Jim Fairchild and Walt Walker- the heroes whose exploits inspire the rescuers of today.

On this note, this issue will be dedicated to introducing you to our future – in the form of a new member profile & current missions, and to remembering our past with vintage newsletter artwork, mission reviews and photos. We hope you enjoy this “flash from the past”!

We would like to thank our team members for their unfaltering dedication in showing up over and over to the “call in the middle of the night”. As RMRU team members always say in parting: “See you tonight!”

RMRU RESCUE COMMITTEE CHAIR,

Helene Lehr

IN THIS ISSUE



MEMBER PROFILE: ERIC HOLDEN

New RMRU rescuer Eric Holden discusses his time on the team and commitment to Search and Rescue.

Pages 3-4



2012-2013 MISSION REVIEWS

It's been a busy season for RMRU. We've included some of the most exciting highlights.

Pages 5-27



70's RMRU PHOTO ALBUM

Enjoy a few pics of some of our most iconic rescuers.



Page 28

1970'S VINTAGE MISSION REVIEW

We seen it in the stores, and splashed all over TV: the 70's are back baby!

Pages 29-30

RMRU-toons

by RICK POHLERS

70's CLASSIC RMRU DOODLES

Enjoy a groovy cartoon collage with some classic characters from RMRU's past.

Page 31

Member Profile: Eric Holden

by Eric Holden, edited by Helene Lohr



One of RMRU's newer members, Eric brings a solid base of canyoneering, orienteering and backpacking experience to the table. In his first year he has shown himself to be a highly reliable and dedicated member that any Rescuer would be comfortable and confident going in the field with.

On Joining RMRU

I have always loved hiking, climbing and anything outdoors related. I found out about RMRU through the San Jacinto Mountain Forums and decided to join RMRU after reading all 600+ mission write ups located online. At that time I was tipping the scales at 300lbs and decided if I am going try and be a member of this team, I need to get back into shape. I started hiking and climbing more and eating less. While waiting for my application to be processed and going through the Sheriff's background check I lost 70lbs and was in the best shape of my life. The prospect of being on the team helped me change my life so I can help save lives.

First Mission

Technically, my first mission involved driving to the Palm Springs Tram and watching Les Walker get out of the Helicopter with the two subject he just airlifted out. My first "real" mission was large OES (Office of Emergency Services) mission in San Bernardino. When a mission goes to OES all of the search teams in the area are summoned out -as the subject could not be found with local teams.

I carpooled with two of the veterans, Glenn and Lou, on the team and when we got to the

command post we had close to 100 rescue personal gearing up for a day of searching. As this was my first mission I was a little nervous, but knowing I would be teamed up with two long time RMRU vets helped my confidence...until they called out the teams. Turns out I would not be with RMRU but with two members of Desert Search and Rescue and another member of RMRU I didn't know very well, Helene. That nervousness came back, but as we hiked into the field I felt in my element and had a great day with my team. That search would continue for 3 more days and unfortunately no sign of the subject was ever found. I still search this area now and then as this was my first real mission and is special for me.

Most Memorable Mission

My most memorable mission was a search down Skyline Trail with Les Walker. Skyline, or "Cactus to Clouds", is rated one of the hardest hikes in the nation. With 8,000ft of elevation gain in 10 miles on an unmaintained trail. Multiple people get lost and a few lose their lives on this trail every year.

I met with Les at the Tram station and he said it would be just him and I. Les is a great guy to team up with and I was grateful it would be him leading us down. We started hiking while calling the subjects' names and eventually made voice contact. We got to the three young men huddled up together



under a sleeping bag, cold with cramping legs they were ecstatic to see us. This was my first "find", were I was part of the team that found the subjects and not just on the same mission. We hiked them out and spent the night on the tram. Couldn't ask for a better mission.

Experience and Teamwork

I started the team having lots of hiking experience and an intermediate level of climbing knowledge. Many of my hikes were completed solo, this was the biggest thing for me to learn while on the team, and that is being on a team. I was not used to working with others while out in the field and normally if I was with friend, I would be the one leading. Now I am one cog in the great RMRU machine.

On Canyoneering

I bring the team my knowledge of rappelling and canyoneering. Started hiking, then climbing, and this eventually brought me to my love of canyoneering. This is becoming and increasingly popular adventure "sport" that involves the decent of canyons through hiking and multiple rappels, typically through waterfalls. Canyoneering is very unique as once you pull your rope, you can't go back, you are in till the end. With multiple canyons in Riverside and recently released Beta, it will be soon that RMRU will be called out to these areas.



Team Guide and Mentor

With out a double, Les Walker is the man. He was there on my very first mission coming out of a helicopter like it was an everyday thing, and for Les it is. Les and I have been on multiple missions and trainings together. His prodigious knowledge of climbing and the San Jacinto wilderness is something I tap into every time we are out together.

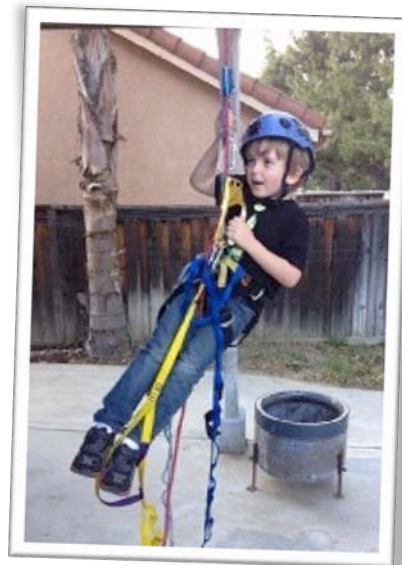
Value of Team Training

I have been on the team now for almost 1 year and I have attended every monthly training and recently organized a training of the Skyline area in Corona. Every month I count down the days till the next one. From area familiarization to technical rock rescues, to being hoisted up in a helicopter. The skills I get to learn are beyond words. Getting to use these skills while on a rescue is great, but there is nothing like the low stress environment that comes from

training with all of the other great people on RMRU.

On Balancing Team and Life

Most of my outdoor life now revolves around the team. I set my schedules around the training and meetings. I have been married for 9 years, have one six year old son, finding the balance between my family and my extracurricular activities is of extreme importance. My son loves to come with me camping and I have a wonderful wife who lets me participate on the team and supports me in every aspect



of it. I know it can't be easy on her as I am frequently called out right at dinnertime, or worse at midnight. When I wake up for a mission, she wakes up, when I am gone all day on a mission, she has to run the house... who am I kidding she runs the house even when I am home. As she is the most understanding wife out there she always has the big red button. She can at any time say she needs me home and I will cancel all other plans.

~ERIC HOLDEN

2013-14 Mission Reviews

The following pages contain a selection of first hand accounts of RMRU missions written by the team members involved.

RMRU members are on call 24/7, to search for and rescue hikers, skiers, rock climbers and outdoorsmen whenever and wherever tragedy strikes.



PCT Hiker Missing

May 8, 2013

Idyllwild, CA

Written by Les Walker

Around 7:00 pm on a May 8th, I received a call from Call Captain Gwenda Yates. She had received information that a PCT hiker could possibly be missing as he had not checked in with his Mother from the trail since Monday "two days ago". Gwenda was able to give me his full description and most importantly his trail name.

Why is the trail name important?

All the PCT hikers use a simple name so when they meet other hikers it is easier to remember than "John Doe". This missing hiker's trail name was Baby Face. With information in hand, and my knowledge of where the PCT hikers like to migrate to in Idyllwild, I began my search.

First stop the San Jacinto State park and all the way in the back to the "hiker's area." There were

many tents set up but not many people about, I did find one sleepy hiker and asked if he knew Baby Face, "Nope". No luck here, so where next?

"I made up a note that said **"Baby Face Call Home"** and I attached it to the climber's box on the deck of the motel."

RMRU RESCUER LES WALKER

PCT hikers have one goal in mind when they hit town: Food and Beer, so off to Idyllwild Pizza. There I found about 5 hikers and talked to them about Baby Face, No luck again, no one had heard of him. I decided to canvas the local motels where they like to stay and see if anyone has heard of him. I stopped in at the Idyllwild Inn and talked to the clerk. Yes she had heard of Baby Face as his Mother had called there looking for him. However he had not stayed there. I made

up a note that said "Baby Face Call Home" and I attached it to the climber's box on the deck of the motel.

So, where to next? How about the coffee shop next door? No luck there either as they were closing up. That's when I spotted two hikers crossing the street and I stopped them and I asked about Baby Face, YES, they knew of him! They directed me to the motel they knew he had been staying at.

I made my way over to the Knotty Pines Cabins and talked to the owner/clerk and she went through the registry with me. FOUND HIM! Baby Face stayed there Monday and Tuesday night and just checked out this morning around 9 am with two other hikers and was now on the trail.

So great news he was *not* lost, he had just decided not to check in with his Mother every day I guess. He was now probably up near the summit of San Jacinto with his hiking partners and will be back

out and down to make the crossing at the Banning Pass some time on Thursday the 9th.

I hope he calls home!

RMRU team members present:
Les Walker.

Injured Woman Hiker

July 1, 2013
San Jacinto Mountains –
Tramway

Written by Helene Lohr

At first I can't figure out why I'm awake. Out of reflex I reach over to the bed stand and grab my phone to check the time. Staring through heavy eyes at the glowing face, I realize its ringing. It's my partner, Lee; "They need a team for a rescue hoist. Can you jump in with me as backup?" I flick up on the light switch, blink to adjust my eyes, and stride towards the gear closet. I drag out my Osprey pack and pull open the top to review the contents: Helmet, Harness, extra clothes, food and water for the subject, overnight supplies for me. Check! Even though the hoist will probably go quickly, you never know... as a general rule we "pack for 2 hours or 2 days".

Inside of 15 minutes I'm jumping into the cavernous cab of Lee's Dodge Ram. We bomb our way halfway down the mountain to the Keenwild Helipad. Lee parks, I swing my hefty pack out of the truck bed after him, than we make our way onto the pitch

black landing pad. A coyote howls, than fades into silence. Far out in the distance I can see Star-9's lights approaching, intermittently piercing the dark night sky. We crouch down to the side of the Landing Zone and watch the skids cruise above our heads. Even on the smooth pavement the rotor wash from the landing pelts me with enough debris to make me glad I am wearing my safety goggles.

With a quick wave, the Technical Flight Officer (TFO) motions to us to approach the helicopter. We duck down at the waist, carrying our packs down low in our hands, and move forward. Up close I smile to see the familiar faces of pilot Mike Calhoun and TFO Eric Hannum. After a quick but warm exchange of handshakes and nods, we climb up into our seats and buckle up. In what seems like only a few seconds, the ground sways away beneath us, and we are cruising towards the High country. I pull on my headset and swing down the mouthpiece. We cross check communications, "good to go".

The dark desert floor wraps out below us to the north east, cities an oasis of bright lights twinkling in the black of night. We see bright flashes of lightning threatening far out over the Mojave. "There's something brewing out there" says Eric, "Let's hope it doesn't come our way ". I cast a glance in the same direction and silently echo the same sentiment in my head. I realize I have been gripping my pack since we took off and let it go, settling back into my seat. It's

an unexpectedly warm night. I'm usually colder in the cockpit but tonight I have to peel my jacket off within minutes of getting in.

"What have we got?" asks Lee. Eric turns toward us, "Injured hiker, she missed the tram down. The reporting party is her boyfriend, says she hurt her ankle on the way back down to the tram. We have a general idea of her location, but we'll need to pinpoint it first before we can decide how to insert you."

" We see bright flashes of lightning threatening far out over the Mojave. "There's something brewing out there" says Eric, "Let's hope it doesn't come our way ".

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

Mike circles the helicopter around the high mountain valleys, while we search the slopes for any sign of light, any sign of our subject. The noise of the rotors echoes across the valleys, breaking into the silence of the night and probably waking up a few annoyed backpackers along the way. After about 15 minutes we see it, a faint light shining up from far below. "We see a light ahead at 9 o'clock." From the color and strength it looks like it may be the face of a cell phone. Most people don't know that we can see cell phone light at night from miles away given the right conditions. Lee pulls out a local topographical map and I trace my

finger over the area, starting to plan our hiking approach.

Mike and Eric are doing the same for the helicopter. "We can put it down nearby in Long Valley meadow," says Mike. "Sounds good to us" I chime in and Lee gives a quick nod and a thumbs up. It's not too far from the subject. We can hike in quickly as the hasty team to assess her condition. Our air crew can insert further rescuers and equipment as needed afterwards. I lean forward and hook my fingers through the top handle of my pack in anticipation. Now that we have visual, I'm eager to get out on the trail hiking. "Hold up there. We can't land yet." Pilot Mike says.

Despite dramatically staged movie portrayals, a straight up-and-down take off is very difficult, potentially dangerous, and consumes huge amounts of power".

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

When dealing with helicopters, there are a lot of factors to consider. The warmth of the night has altered the air density, making it unexpectedly thin for our purposes. Wisely preparing for a potentially longer aerial search, the crew filled the fuel tank. On a colder night this weight would not be a problem, but tonight, adding in the weight of a subject and multiple rescuers if we land, we might not have

enough power to take off in the short clearance offered by the mountain meadow.

" We see bright flashes of lightning threatening far out over the Mojave. "There's something brewing out there" says Eric, "Let's hope it doesn't come our way ".

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

Despite dramatically staged movie portrayals, a straight up-and-down take off is very difficult, potentially dangerous, and consumes *huge* amounts of power. "We need to fly around and burn more fuel to get the weight down", says Mike. We circle the rim of the mountain valley several more times. It's absolutely stunning and for a moment I gaze down and let myself relax into the view. Off to the North I can still see flashes of lightning illuminating the desert floor. I feel my brow furrow. The storm seems a lot closer. I'm starting to get a little nervous that it might show up before we can finish.

Another 25 minutes and things are looking good. We've burned enough fuel and it's time to land. As we come into the meadow, tall grasses lie down flat in wide waves in front of us. The helicopter draws a circle of light out directly below us fading into the jagged black silhouettes of pine trees. Eric, our TFO, cracks open the door and leans out for a

better view. It's his job to make sure that the helicopter is safe, that we have enough clearance around us and that no major debris are poised to be sucked up into our rotor. Mountain landings are risky business. Within moments we are down. Time to move out, Eric opens the door all the way and motions for us. I unclip my seat belt; I grab my pack and step out into the dark.

After a quick radio check with Eric to make sure we can keep up communications with our air crew, we head out onto the trail. Within minutes, Lee spots the reporting party wandering along the trail. We gather information from him about our subject's whereabouts and condition. He's well off and in decent shape and we request that he return to the relative shelter of the tram station to remain safe until contacted. Lee heads off first down the trail, long strides carrying him along quickly. I crank my own short legs into gear and manage to haul him back in.

As we reach the base of the switchbacks I interject between strides; "Hold up, time for a call out!" We pause and I turn my shoulders to face upslope. "One...two...three..." I sucked in a deep breath, spreading my ribs wide, and we bellow out "Hello!" in unison. My ears are met with silence for a few seconds, and then a faint cry echoes in from far upslope.

Great! I let my breath out, only then realizing that I was holding it. Lee radios in "Star 9, we have



voice contact, proceeding to the subject". A few minutes of intense hiking later, I see a faint light ahead and my heart lifts further.

"Hello, Search and Rescue, we're here to help". Our subject, Teresa, is happy to see us. She is sitting in the middle of a switchback on the trail, obviously exhausted, but smiling back at us. Despite her smile, it's obvious she has *not* had a fun night.

After a quick scene safety assessment, I settle down by her on the dusty trail. "Are you hurt? What happened?" Careful questioning gives us a good outline of her backstory and method of injury. After a long and exhausting hike attempting to keep up with her friend, (probably excessive for her level of conditioning) she reports having slipped, twisting her ankle and bumping her hip, luckily with no head, neck or back involvement. After her friend left to get help, she did her best to try and self-evacuate, sliding and dragging herself downhill until her strength gave out. She finally found a relatively soft spot on the trail to hunker down and await rescue. She has been sitting alone in the middle of the dark trail for hours.

She's a friendly, tough lady, a nurse, and makes no complaint as we examine her. We gather necessary information. A thorough head to toe reveals some scrapes and bruises, in addition to a painfully sprained, potentially broken ankle. LOC, SAMPLE and quick set of vitals shows her to be in generally good

condition, although we will keep track to make sure she maintains a positive trend. As soon as we examine her foot, it's quickly obvious that our subject will not be walking anywhere tonight. Lee keys the radio: "Star-9, we will need a litter, a wheel and additional rescuers to help with transport."

" Team One, we can't pull you out! Are you and the subject prepared to overnight?"

PILOT MIKE CALHOUN

I pull out my first aid kit. It's time to get our brave lady ready for transport. One SAM splint, an ace bandage, and with some TLC we have a stable injury. I make sure to leave access so that we can continue to check her distal pulse and make sure she is getting circulation. Hopefully we will have her out of here in just a few minutes, after the rest of the team arrives with the litter, but it's always better to prepare for the long term if possible.

Now that we've dealt with the most pressing safety issues, it's time to further address patient comfort. Teresa has been sitting still for a long time on the cold ground. Lee pads her sitting area and wraps her up our spare sleeping bags and down jackets. I make sure she has enough to eat and drink. Getting her insulated, rehydrated and fed will fuel her body and help keep her warm.

"Are we good to go?" Lee asks. "Good to go". I reply, giving our

subject an encouraging smile. Lee walks off to the side and calls in: "Star-9, Team One. We're ready for transport. Where are we with the litter and additional rescuers?" The radio crackles; "Team One, this is Star-9, bad news. We have the litter, and rescuers are standing by, but the storm is almost here."

Oh heck. I almost forgot about the storm. Star-9 isn't exaggerating-the storm has moved in unbelievably quickly. Seconds later, the first burst of lightning streaks across the sky and thunder booms close behind. The sky opens up in a pelting rain.

The first raindrops splash cold onto my scalp. "Team One, we can't pull you out! Are you and subject prepared to overnight?" Lee glances at me and I nod. "Star-9, we are good, we repeat, good to overnight, request additional rescuers and resources when available."

With our last radio contact I put in a request that the Sheriff's Department let my school know that I won't be in to teach class in the morning. At least I have a unique excuse they probably haven't heard before!

The helicopter peels off. We are alone on the mountaintop. Without the helicopter we have no outside radio contact. We'll just have to wait until the storm breaks or the tram opens up in the morning to allow new resources. We ramp down from our evacuation efforts, and start to prep for a long, wet, and cold night. Lee pulls out a tarp and I

wedge several logs up against a deadfall tree to form a lean-to shelter in place above Teresa. Luckily, within a few minutes the torrential downpour has passed. Unfortunately, the cloud cover is still far too thick for a helicopter to penetrate.

We make sure Teresa is warm and as comfortable as possible in the circumstances; check her distal pulse and vitals again, then bed down nearby for an uneasy rest. I set my alarm to repeat every hour, so we can check in regularly on our subject. High winds moan through the trees as we settle down for an uncomfortable night.

I meet first light with the reassuring weight of my rescue pack on my back. Lee and I have decided that I will head out to the tram to re-establish contact with the Sheriff's Department and try to wrangle up reinforcements. I leave my first aid supplies, spare sleeping bag and clothing behind to help take care of our subject.

On the way back I swing by the Ranger Station. Although it is *officially* closed and unmanned, I notice that there is a CCC crew camped just outside. Perfect! With some aggressive pounding and loud voice I quickly manage to wake them up. A quick explanation of the situation gets them in motion. In a few minutes they have pulled a litter and wheel from the station (which they conveniently have the keys to) and we now have several strong young guys to help us transport our subject. That's what I call using the resources at hand!

I radio Lee with the good news: "I've got a gift for you on the way up, a wheeled litter and four eager young guys". Lee is more than happy hear this: "Copy that!" I send the guys back up the trail to Lee and Teresa and continue on my way to the tram.

"I've got a gift for you on the way up, a wheeled litter and four eager young guys!"

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

The tram employees have just arrived on the first car. Once informed of the situation, they are eager to help. Plus 2 more RMRU members and 2 DSAR members also came up on the first car. Together RMRU and DSAR escort the subject back down to the tram and to safety.

Our brave subject has kept a good attitude through her entire ordeal and soon will be heading home after a quick check out at the hospital! As an extra surprise, the Riverside Sheriff Department has not only informed my school that I would be late, they also provided an officer to drive me back to my side of the mountain. I arrive in class only 5 minutes late, and with a great story to share with my kids.

RMRU team members present:
Lee Arnson, Paul Caraher, Pete Carlson, and Helene Lohr.

DSAR team members present:
Sharon Ollenburger & Mike Calhoun.

Missing Autistic Youth

November 6, 2013

Wildomar, CA

2013-034

Written by Paul Caraher

On Wednesday November 6th, RMRU was called to help with an urban search for a missing 18-year-old male with autism. Our assignment for the first night was to search the surrounding foothills of Wildomar. We were able to send out four two man teams to start probing the hillsides looking for tracks. After a few hours of searching with Star 9 overhead, we were called back to be reassigned during the coming days.

On Friday, the 8th, RMRU was assigned to Riverside Sheriff's SWAT Team to continue searching the foothills. During this time, a citizen came forward and stated that she had seen a male who fits the description crossing into a field at Grand Ave. and Ontario Way in Lakeland Village.

Detectives and patrol arrived on scene and secured footprints leading into the hills. Soon afterward Riverside County Search Dog teams arrived and alerted to a scent going towards the foothills. Right behind them, RMRU and SWAT arrive to assist with the search.

About two and a half miles up a ravine and off trail, the dog team found David alive and responsive.



(L-R) Search Dog, Searchers, and (SWAT member, Subject, and RMRU Paul)
Photo courtesy of Riverside County Sheriff's Office

Minutes later SWAT and RMRU arrived to facilitate the carry out.

Red Cross and especially the Riverside County Search Dogs.



RMRU members: Paul Caraher, Pete Carlson, Joe Erickson, Eric Holden, Mark Houston, Rob May, Roger May, Frank Snider, and Les Walker.

Special thank you to everyone involved: Star 9, Riverside County SWAT, The Citizen Emergency Response Teams, Desert Sheriff's Search and Rescue, Sheriff's Mounted Poses, Riverside County Office of Emergency Services, American

Helicopter Hoist Corona

November 7, 2013
Corona Area

Written by Helene Lohr

The call comes in at 3:30 AM. It's my partner Lee. "They need a helicopter hoist team for a lost hiker on Skyline". My bed is warm and my fuzzy flannel sheets are so comfy... But this is more important than a few hours' sleep! "Count me in", I slur with sleep still in my voice. Shaking my head to clear it, I throw the warm covers back, roll out of bed and head straight for my gear closet. Perfect! My Go-Pack is still full from the last mission. I dig around inside - ticking off my mental checklist. Good, everything is accounted for in my pack. I refill my Nalgene water bottles, pull on my pants, and shrug into my fluorescent orange uniform shirt.

Within 15 minutes I'm already on the way to pick up Lee. Another speedy half an hour drive down the mountain puts us in the parking lot at Riverside Sheriff's Office Aviation Unit. One more check of gear and we head straight into the hanger. Pilot Chad Marlett and Technical Flight Officer (TFO) Manny Romero are on tonight. The Aviation crew are exceptional at what they do - we really enjoy working with them and readily trust them with our lives.

Following protocol we do a brief review of the Screamer suit and rescue gear, then load our packs and ourselves into the helicopter. I clip the seat belt together, strap



Star-9 prepares to take off. Photo Helene Lohr

on a headset and snug it down over my ears, bending the microphone down directly in front of my mouth. "Good to go?" Lee and I give Manny a thumbs up and a verbal confirmation of "oh yeah"! Manny confirms we are securely strapped in, then cranes his neck around out the door, scanning one last safety check of the environment as Chad preps for takeoff.

One minute we're on the ground feeling the increasing thup...thup...thup...thup...thup of the accelerating rotor, the next the ground swings eerily away beneath us, disappearing into the black. We discuss the mission on our headsets as we watch the twinkling city lights cruise by beneath us. "Want to hear the transcript?" Manny briefly reviews the mission notes and original call text with us.

Our subject called 911 for help with a weak cell signal. He had been hiking all night and was now trapped off trail in the thick brush of the coastal mountain range, unable to hike any further. He was scratched up, dehydrated, exhausted, and utterly disoriented by his efforts. He described seeing red blinking lights on a nearby hill. The 911 operator told him to stay put and await further contact, but RSO has not been able to raise him again. He has likely run out of battery. As is often the case in emergencies, people don't think to conserve their batteries until it is nearly too late.

The only "red blinking lights" in the area are a set of radio towers. A ping of the subject's cell phone put his location at 2 miles Southeast of the towers, but it's best not to put complete trust in these coordinates. Over the years we've learned that since they



View through the night vision goggles. Photo Helene Lohr

tend to ping to the nearest cell tower, they can sometimes be miles off.

Chad suggests we start in the vicinity of the towers. In the subject's description he said he could see the flashing lights on a NEARBY hill. I agree. "That ping is too far south for him to see the lights clearly." It's generally best to trust a subject's physical description over a set of cell coordinates. Hopefully our subject has followed instructions and hasn't moved. We reach the edge of the city lights and venture out and above the inky black mountain slopes. Manny hands back a pair of night vision goggles. As I raise them to my eyes the world below lights up with an eerie green brightness. Ridges and valleys jump out in a rough grainy contrast. I pass them over to Lee for a quick acclimatization.

We start our search near the radio towers, cruising slowly in the air, up and down each ridge and Canyon, eyes intently searching for something, anything that will signal us that our subject is here. In addition to a spotlight, we also have a set of cameras that allow us to pick heat signatures and the night vision goggles which will starkly reveal anything more reflective/bright than the background of dense scrub brush.

Manny, Lee and I scan the landscape as Pilot Chad concentrates on the added difficulties of mountain flying. The steep ridges guide and magnify any wind into strong updrafts, and each time we cross a ridge he must slow down to compensate for the increased rpm of the blades. Even a slight breeze over this rugged terrain can increase the risk of our flight.

We know our subject is likely on top of a ridge, since he was able to see the radio towers. We fly for a while, scanning the ridgelines, seeing nothing but thick brush and short stumpy trees crammed in tightly along the hillside and steep slopes.

"Even a slight breeze over this rugged terrain can increase the risk of our flight."

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

The goggles make everything much clearer, but nothing is jumping out at us. We're starting to get discouraged. The Eastern sky is just starting to lighten, and now we're racing against time to try and find him at night. Most people don't realize that it's easier for us to see most signals

at night. Anything bright or reflective will instantly jump out at us. The contrast of even a small light or reflection stands out against the dull black of night far more than during the bright light of day. The pilots say that in the right conditions they can see the light from a cell phone 3 miles away.

Hunting as a child with my father, I learned to let my eyes go slightly unfocused to search the terrain for patterns and movement. When searching, focusing your eyes or your mind too hard on any one point can give you a myopic view and make you overlook what's right in front of you. The guys are scouring the ground with their night vision goggles, and I am left with my naked eye. After what seems like an eternity, but is probably just another half hour, something on a ridgeline snags the edge of my eye.

"Silhouetted in the circle of light is our subject- a tiny dot with a white shirt jumping up-and-down wildly"

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

"Wait. Go back to the North, I saw something." Chad swings the helicopter around. I verbally direct the beam of his spotlight to a spot on the ridgeline below us. There, silhouetted in the circle of light is our subject- a tiny dot with a white shirt jumping up-and-down wildly. It's nice to get

confirmation on our decision- the cell ping was definitely off! Alright, I can hear the grin in Chad and Manny's voices. We examine the ridge nearby. It's a jumble of high brush and short stunted trees, "there's no place to land" reports Chad and nowhere to easily hike in from. "We'll have to hoist him out".

We circle over him for a better position and Chad turns on the loudspeaker. "Wave your hands if you can understand us". A few enthusiastic hand waves from the subject later, the flight crew gets confirmation that he can indeed hear us and will stay put as we fly away to reconfigure the helicopter for a hoist. The subject hunkers down under the shelter of the tall brush to wait as we fly away. Chad beelines the helicopter to landing area at the base of the foothills, and the aircrew rapidly reconfigure the helicopter for the hoist. Still this takes time, by the time we are flying back through the canyons the first rays of the sun are hitting the mountain slopes. Since our subject looks like a heavy guy, it's decided that we will leave Lee on the hillside after we hoist the Subject and come back for him later. Chad sets the helicopter into a hover and Manny hoists Lee and then me down directly onto the hillside near our subject.

Lee pulls the bright Red screamer suit out of his pack. It looks like a combination between a jacket and a diaper, designed to be simple to put on in an emergency and very secure. We help the subject strap himself in "put your arms through the holes like a





Rescuer Lee Arnson moments before the hoist. Photo Helene Lohr

jacket" I cinch the inner waist belt tight as Lee brings the straps together from each shoulder and between the subjects legs. He secures the front rings together with a locking carabiner at chest level. After a quick but thorough briefing for the subject of what's going to happen next and helicopter safety, we signal the TFO that we're ready to hoist.

In a great show of piloting Chad manages to put the hoist directly into my hand on the first try. I clip in, wave my hand in our exaggerated "lift me up" signal and enjoy the ride. Before you know it I'm at the skids and walking my hands upward to the TFO's chest carabiner. Into the helicopter, clip into the seatbelt,

unclip the hoist and hand it to Manny. Soon thereafter the anxious face of the subject appears over the edge of the deck. He stares straight forward, clasping the cable tight, petrified by his first hoist and helicopter flight, but manages to follow all of our instructions perfectly.

Within minutes we are back at the landing zone. Everything goes smoothly in the subject handoff to the deputies on scene and we head back for Lee. In a great mood, we fly back to the hanger in Hemet and a much anticipated breakfast!

RMRU members: Lee Arnson and Helene Lohr.

RSO Aviation: Pilot Chad Marlett and TFO Manny Romero.

Missing 78 Yr Old Woman

November 29, 2013
Thousand Palms Preserve

Written by Matt Jordon

At about 2:30 pm on Friday, November 29 members of RMRU received a call out for a search in Thousand Palm Oasis for lady in her late 70's. The female subject had gone hiking and was two hours overdue when the report was made to form a search. Additionally, a CHP spotter plane was implemented and a local member of DSAR arrived shortly thereafter to assist.

Not long after I got to the Coachella Preserve, the subject's

car was cordoned off with a police line and I began to note tracks leading from the vehicle.

Members of the family also arrived and I interviewed them to gain more information on the possible whereabouts of our missing person. We were getting ready to go out in the field for the Search when at 3:40 the subject was spotted walking back on the same trail she had hiked out. The family staining next to me where extremely happy, calling out her

" The moral of the story is: Don't get separated, know your surroundings, and have a backup plan before setting out on any outdoor adventure."

RMRU RESCUER MATT JORDAN

name.

When I spoke to the little old lady, she was extremely aggravated that the spotter plane had not seen her. She told me that she wound up climbing a nearby hillside and removed her top -- then waved her blouse around on multiple occasions in hopes of gaining attention of the pilot. I mentioned that skin tones blend in well with the desert terrain, but she would have none of it.

My overall assessment of what happened was that she was an inexperienced hiker who became separated and disoriented from her group. Instead of sticking together and returning as one, she decided to continue on solo and lost her way somewhere.

Eventually she regained her bearings and (luckily) made her way back before dark. When I showed her a map and asked her to point out where she thought she had been, she couldn't orient herself and had a hard time trying to visualize where she may have come from or gone to.

The moral of the story is: Don't get separated, know your surroundings, and have a backup plan before setting out on any outdoor adventure. It would have been smart of her to have brought water and a map also.

RMRU team members present:

Pete Carlson, Glenn Henderson, Matt Jorden, Lew Kingman, Helene Lohr, Les Walker, and Gwenda Yates.

Missing 60 Year Old Man Tramway

**December 29, 2013
San Jacinto Tramway**

Written by Pete Carlson

At about 8:00 pm on Sunday night we got a call for a 60 Year Old Man who had not returned from a day hike to San Jacinto Peak from the Tramway. The Riverside County Sheriff's Helicopter flew the area and spotted two camp fires. At the first near Tamarack Valley the sole person by the fire ran away into the forest when the fire was spotted. At the second the person stood up and waved at the helicopter. So it was a good guess

that the second fire was our subject. It was too windy for the helicopter to land or to lower anyone down to the ground. But they got GPS co-ordinates for us to entry into our GPS units and do a go to function and find the fires.

By the time everyone got to the Tramway and ready to go it was 10:40pm. We would like to thank the Tramway Officials who had kept a few people around and they took us up to the top before closing for the night. We sent the State Park up the Sid Davis Trail to check on the Tamarack Fire and a team of two RMRU and two DSAR people up the Round Valley Trail towards the second fire. We could then slip the 4 member team into two teams if the need arose. The fire looked to be just off the trail to round valley and just short of round valley. We stayed on the trail which was half dirt and half covered in a thin layer of ice.

" We stayed on the trail which was half dirt and half covered in a thin layer of ice."

RMRU RESCUER PETE CARLSON

As we went up the trail we called out every 5 minutes just in case the subject had moved or that the fire was not that of the subject. After 50 minutes of hiking and almost to Round Valley we got an answer to our calling out. In 2 more minutes we were 400 feet off the main trail and at the fire with our subject. He was in great

shape and keeping warm, just got off the trail in the dark and did not have a light. He had just taken longer than he thought to reach the peak and by the time he was back at Round Valley it was almost completely dark. He tried to follow the trail but got lost. He then stopped, stayed put, and build a fire to stay warm. He did all the correct things to do if you get lost.

We put out the fire and gave him a head lamp and hiked back to the Tramway, arriving about 1:45am. He stayed with the State Park Rangers in their cabin and the rescue members all went back up to the Tramway and sleep on the floor in the back special events room. The Rangers brought him up to the Tramway at 6am and we waited for the 6:15am car to come up. The Tramway Officials again did another special run to take us back down at 6:30am.

RMRU team members present:

Pete Carlson, Glenn Henderson, Eric Holden, and Dana Potts.

DSAR team members present:

Donna Beane, Michael Calhoun, and Chris Miller.

Other Agency's Assisting: State Park Rangers and RSO Helicopter Crew.

"It's always a good idea to have a charged cellphone on when a rider is out and about because it doubles as a homing beacon."

RMRU RESCUER MATT JORDAN

Overdue Quad Rider

February 9, 2014
Palm to Pines Highway

Written by Matt Jordon

On Sunday evening February 9, a call-out was received for a missing quad rider just outside Garner Valley off Highway 74 and Palm Canyon Drive. Being a former off-road enthusiast, I started having flashbacks of all the times I've been hurt, out of gas, or just plain lost - so I grabbed my gear with extra vigor, said bye to my wife and her family that was visiting and headed east toward our meeting location. For team members on the desert side - there are few missions more fun to respond to than those up Highway 74. The drive is awesome.

Nevertheless, I was first from RMRU on scene and after checking in with the Sheriff on post and giving my warm regards to rescuers Eric and Mike who had just shown up, I began to pack my

sleeping bag for a possible overnigher when I heard and saw someone in the distance calling out from a nearby dirt road -- something to the effect of "I found him!" I quickly yelled back and hopped in my car to head that direction and soon after spotted two worn-out looking fellows hiking in t-shirts and blue jeans.

The first guy introduced himself as the brother of the missing subject and the second fellow was the missing subject. Apparently, that guy had been out riding in an unfamiliar area (he was from Desert Hot Springs); he said that his little quad was stalled and stuck and he got lost on the way back. His brother mentioned that he used to be a sniper and it was his duty to go find his brother. I commend him for doing so and if only there were more brothers of this caliber out there!

At this point the mission was over. I drove the two guys back to base and turned around with Eric to go get two Sheriffs that were out tracking with a bloodhound. This mission was certainly lining up to be a good tracking experience, but fortunately it ended very well with no injuries and basically just some worried girlfriends shivering in their cars. If things had gone a bit worse - if there was an injury or if the fellow was further out in the boondocks, this mission could have easily stretched several more hours or even days to finally find him in that terrain.

It's always a good idea to have a charged cellphone on when a rider is out and about because it doubles as a homing beacon. It's

also a good idea to have a helmet and proper riding gear (even for an overnigher).

This young fellow had none of those which made finding him more challenging and reduced his overall chances of survival if he were injured or seriously stranded. Additionally, he had no map, no flashlight, and no water. All of these lessons apply to

" Fortunately it ended very well with no injuries and basically just some worried girlfriends shivering in their cars."

RMRU RESCUER MATT JORDAN

hikers, campers, drivers, off-roaders and more.

Always be prepared!

RMRU Members Involved: Glenn Henderson, Mike Herman, Eric Holden, and Matt Jordon.

Lee's waiting truck. We're on our



Rescuer Lee Arnsen and TFO Eric Hannum scan the mountain. Photo Helene Lohr

Medical Problem Hoist

March 12, 2014
San Jacinto Mountains

Written by Helene Lohr

Surprisingly enough, it *isn't* a dark and stormy night. The sun shines warmly on my back, a light breeze whispers through the pines. Little chickadees sing of spring. All in all, it's a beautiful early spring afternoon.

In the middle of this Disney day, my phone vibrates against my leg. It's RMRU member, Lee Arnsen calling. "Want a helicopter ride?" is his greeting. "There's a hiker, possibly in full arrest, in the High Country. Star-9 needs a team ready to go immediately."

My prep has an extra edge to it. I pull on my uniform; quickly check my backpack for the essentials, head out the door, and jump into

way in a handful of minutes towards Keenwild helipad. On the way, we get the news that Donny and Les will be backing us up as the ground team hiking into the high country, with the rest of the team on standby to head in if we need assistance.

The A-Star helicopter touches down as we arrive. Technical Flight Officer Eric Hannum leans out and waves us in. He briefs us as Pilot Mike Calhoun speeds us towards the High Country. Our subject's name is Donna. She is a 70 year old woman, blond hair, blue eyes, white jacket, and black pants. She was hiking with her husband near Laws Junction when she experienced "heart attack symptoms." Her husband hiked several miles back to Notch 5 in the State Park before he could call for help.

Eric relates that the husband reported a "large opening" in the

trees nearby that he thinks should be perfect for a helicopter landing. Well, we will soon see if it really is a "big spot". Star-9 makes a series of wide circles above the trail near Laws for what seems like eternity, but is in reality only a few minutes. We peer down, trying to somehow pick up any slight movement, any change in color. Where is she? It doesn't help that our subject is wearing black and white against a background of patchy, half-melted snow, blackened remains of trees left over from the Mountain Fire, and dark mountain soil.

As the minutes tick by, I start to doubt the location information we've been given. The husband had to have hiked out along the Hidden Divide trail to get back to Notch 5 from Laws. And it could be that they never made it all the way down to the actual junction, especially if they had to go through the burn area to get there. I key my microphone: "Hey guys, why don't we locate the upper end of the Hidden Divide trail and backtrack?" Mike swings the helicopter to the North and we start to scour the steep slope for the remains of the trail.

Bingo! Within 2 minutes of changing our strategy, we've located the subject. Even better, she is obviously still responsive and no longer alone. Two other hikers have joined her to help in her time of need.

Unfortunately what seemed like a "large opening" in the tree cover to the husband is far too small and dangerous to land a



The subject being hoisted. Photo Helene Lohr



Lee and the TFO perched in the door. Photo Helene Lohr

helicopter. Pilot Mike thinks quickly and flies us back to the closest clearing large enough to land and insert us. Once on the ground, we grab a screamer suit to carry with us. We're pretty sure this will end up being a hoist situation, and we want to be prepared to get our subject safely in the air as soon as possible. The afternoon sun is fading into a warm alpenglow; the evening wind is starting to kick in and the already crisp temperature is starting to drop. We had best get moving before our window of opportunity closes. I don't know if our subject can survive a night out here, and we don't intend to find out.

The helicopter flies out to convert to their hoisting setup as we hike at double time down through the brisk mountain air towards our subject's location. Within minutes we see her ahead of us, sitting on a rock flanked by her caretakers. It's a relief to see her responsive and in far better condition than we had expected from the original call-out.

Lee and I quickly introduce ourselves to our subject and her helpers. Our subject, Donna, greets us with a shy sweet smile, bright blue eyes and a friendly, soft spoken voice. Instead of meeting her situation with panic, she is calm, although obviously worried. I begin my medical examination as Lee heads down the trail to search the nearby forest for a safe hoisting location.

I notice right away that Donna is trembling; I'm not sure yet if it is due to the cold or to something more serious. I ask her questions to get her talking and to help me assess her mental state. I check her pupillary response, then her vitals. Her pulse is rapid, but not strong. Breathing is somewhat labored and slightly fast. She has recently eaten and had water, already taken aspirin, and reports no history of cardio vascular disease or any other medical conditions or medications.

Even as I lead the conversation to what happened, I'm closely watching my subject. I am always

assessing her, watching for any clues to her condition, or information that will need to be passed on to the hospital. She is alert and aware of what has happened to her, has a good memory of the situation and can explain it well. She describes hiking down the trail to the clearing, then having lunch with her husband. She had a slight headache and took a nap. She woke to extreme shortness of breath and muscular weakness. She was unable to hike at all, and found it hard to even walk a few feet. They quickly decided that the husband would run for help.

One of the hikers has kindly shared her jacket with Donna. Despite this, she is still shivering. As soon as I've made sure there is no immediate threat to her life, I break open my pack, pulling out a down jacket, a thick wool beanie, and warm wool gloves. Once she is warmer, we will be better able to assess the source of her trembling.

Since we are out this far in the wilderness, our best bet is to get her out as quickly as possible. Unless an immediate emergency comes up, our priority is to prep her for transport, take care of her immediate physical needs, and get a pattern of vitals established so we have some trends to hand off to the hospital. Any information we can gather at this stage may play a key role in saving her life if her condition suddenly worsens.

Lee arrives back from his scouting trip. "There's a good hoist location just a two-minute walk to the west," he says, his arm pointing down the slightly inclined slope. It's a short and clear walk downhill. It should be manageable if we take it easy. Donna's heart and respiratory rates have slowed down a bit and her breathing seems much less labored.

I glance to the sky. The sun is hanging low. We need to get Donna out of here while we can still easily do so. I'd much rather hoist while we still have light to do so safely.

Donna is a real trooper and makes the trek with no complaint. Now time to get her ready for the hoist. Lee holds up the screamer suit for her to put her arms through as I strap her in and join the rings with a locking carabiner, securing her into her "cradle." Lee verbally walks her through the steps of the process. Lee keys his radio: "Star-9, we are ready for hoist."

"The helicopter approaches, the rapid beat of its rotor blades echoing up and through the wide ravine."

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

The helicopter approaches, the rapid beat of its rotor blades echoing up and through the wide ravine. The sudden gale throws up ash from the recent fire, pelting my face with bits of debris. I turn to shelter Donna from the onslaught as Lee reaches out for the rapidly descending hoist hook. The air crew manages to swing the hook right into Lee's hand! I clip Donna into the hook, double check that the system is securely closed, and wave my hand upward and out from my helmet to signal the TFO to lift.

The wind from the chopper is brutally cold, and my hands have become painfully stiff from just a couple minutes of exposure. I'm going to need all the dexterity I can manage to clip myself into the hoist, so this could be a problem. I jam my hands deep into my jacket pockets to warm them up. Another minute and I'm gazing up expectantly, positioning myself, reaching for the hoist, clipping in. Suddenly I'm flying straight up. As I reach the helicopter, I walk my hands on the struts to avoid bumping my head. The TFO gives me a nod and a smile and helps me into the seat next to Donna. Our unwieldy packs come up next, spinning in the wild wind currents. It takes far longer for Lee to come up and as the minutes tick by, I start to get worried. Is something wrong?

Finally I see Lee's head emerge over the edge of the deck. He looks sick. He has completed the most hoist rescues ever of anyone on the team, but I've never seen him like this. The TFO clears up the mystery: "He spun like a top on the way up—I've never seen anything like it!"

There's not enough room in the small cabin for all of us and for the enormous packs, so Lee and the TFO sit perched on the outside of the copter, safely clipped in, but exposed to the biting cold wind as we fly towards the desert.

As we beeline towards our destination, the scenery is majestic enough to take our breath away: craggy cliffs, the sharp relief of impenetrable ravines, and razor ridge lines flying by almost too quickly to absorb. Donna is fascinated; it's a real joy to see the worry leave her face, replaced by wonder... "What an adventure!" We arrive at the transfer point and pass our subject off to the waiting EMTs. I give them a briefing on her vitals and current condition. Then I shake the hand of her eagerly awaiting husband, give her a big hug, and wish her well.

RMRU Members Involved: Lee Arnson, Donny Goetz, Helene Lohr, and Les Walker.

RSO Aviation: Pilot Mike Calhoun and TFO Eric Hannum.



RMRU Rescuers with the safe and sound subjects.

Two Overdue Hikers

March 21, 2014
Tramway San Jacinto
Mountains

Written by Carlos Carter

At 9 pm I was relaxing on the couch watching TV when the call went out to rescue members for a search. Two hikers were missing at the Palm Springs tram and I was excited to go for many reasons. I did a quick check of the Palm Springs Tram Cam online and saw that there was no visible snow at the Ranger Station.

Within 15 minutes I was on my way, and my new storage system worked! Normally, we all have a pack ready to go, but since I'm always using my gear, I got tired of packing and unpacking. I recently decided to use storage containers and pack like items

together. I grabbed the containers, placed them in the back of my truck, and left.

Knowing that the search would most likely keep us out all night at 8-10,000 feet with clear weather and temps in the 30s, I knew what to pack once I arrived. My light gear would be the best choice so, for example, I grabbed a down sweater instead of down parka and a bivy instead of a tent. While I was packing up in the parking lot, Glenn arrived with our rescue truck. Two of our newest members, Kevin and Cameron, were on the way.

While in the Lower Tram building we gathered information: Two females planned to go on a hike and return by 4:00 PM, but did not show up to meet their husbands at the bottom of the Tramway. Ultimately, we were called out. The Sheriff's helicopter had spotted the light from their cell phone and

provided us with a GPS coordinate. Kevin had arrived by then, and he quickly input the coordinates into his GPS; we now knew the location we would be hiking. To be sure, we also did it the old way by pulling out our maps and verifying the coordinates and trail to take. Although we always carry extra batteries, we also carry maps and a compass. By then Cameron had arrived, so we all rode the Tramway to the upper building known as the Mountain Station, which is at 8,516 feet.

Our plan was to take the quickest route, up a steep drainage towards Tamarack Valley. By now we also were informed that State Park Ranger Todd was already on the main trail in route to find the subjects. Kevin, Cameron, and I headed out and up the mountain while Glenn worked at the base we had established at the top of the Tramway.

Once we arrived at the drainage, there was no well-marked trail, so we guided ourselves with the GPS. Neither new members Kevin nor Cameron had been up this way. Both did a great job of using their GPS and knowing where we were and where to go. We soon received the message from Glenn at base that Ranger Todd was with the subjects and was bringing them down the main trail. We decided to continue up and hopefully meet them to render any assistance needed. We looped over to the main hiking trail through Round Valley Campground and ended up chasing them back to the

Ranger's building near Mountain Station.

The main trail down still had some snow which had turned to ice and was very slippery. In total, we hiked 5 miles and by the time we were back at Mountain Station, it was 4:00 AM. Overall, the subjects' actions provide a good example of what should be done when hiking: The subjects had informed someone of where they were going and when they would be back. After realizing they were lost, they stayed in one location for rescue personnel to find them. This is crucial, because when there is partial snow on the ground, the trails are not always easily visible.

As for our new team members, Kevin and Cameron, they did a great job!!!

RMRU Members Involved: Carlos Carter, Cameron Dickinson, Glenn Henderson, and Kevin Kearn.

State Park Ranger: Todd.



RMRU Rescuers Eric Holden and Les Walker with the subjects.

Three Hikers Lost

April 12, 2014
Skyline Trail Top of the Tramway

Written by Eric Holden

I had just finished making a nice dinner of Cajun-Sausage Alfredo when I got the text that we had three hikers stranded on the Skyline Trail. Ah Skyline, greater than 8,000 feet of elevation gain in under 10 miles, one of the USA's hardest dayhikes. I quickly annihilated a bowl of food and headed out the door. On my way to the Tram, I got a call from Les Walker letting me know that it would be he and I on the mountain tonight. Excellent, I thought, the best piece of equipment to bring into the field is Les. As I arrived at the Tramway, I was met by Cameron Dickinson who mentioned that Les was in the station and that we needed to gear up with helmet and harness.

Once in the station I was greeted warmly by Les and spoke to the

Riverside County Sheriff's Deputy. The report was that three males in their early 20s had become lost on the upper part of the Skyline Trail and had hiked into a location where they could not move up or down.

"Excellent, I thought, the best piece of equipment to bring into the field is Les Walker."

RMRU RESCUER ERIC HOLDEN

Due to the steep terrain and darkness, the Sheriff's Aviation Unit was not able to lower us in. However, they had been able to drop a bag with warm weather gear, food, and water to the subjects. During our briefing, we got a call for another rescue on the other side of the mountain near Idyllwild. Cameron left for that mission as he had to be in Idyllwild early the next morning for a Wilderness First Responder class.

Les and I got the GPS coordinates of the subjects and headed up the tram. Once at the upper tram station, our GPS receivers said the subjects were 0.5 miles away (as the crow flies) but 1,200 feet below us, at approximately 7,200 feet in elevation. Les and I quickly began our hike towards Grubb's Notch at around 9:30pm. With

Les leading the way, we descended the Skyline trail and got to within 500ft of the coordinates provided to us. We went off trail and soon made voice contact with the subjects a little after 10pm, right where aviation said they would be.

The three subjects (Keith, Ali, and Matt), were cold and hungry but otherwise had good physical and mental faculties. We got them into warm clothing, provided some food and started packing up the gear that RSO had dropped to them. Once again, Les led the way, and we started the slow process of heading back up Skyline towards the tram station. Due to lack of fluids and food, two of the subjects were experiencing leg cramps. Slow and steady, plus the subjects'

resolve, got us up to the tram at about 11:45pm for some much needed rest.

We caught the first tram down at 7:30am and headed home. I made a stop at the Airport to return the bag of goodies that aviation dropped off the previous night.

"Due to lack of fluids and food, two of the subjects were experiencing leg cramps."

RMRU RESCUER ERIC HOLDEN

What they did right:

1. **Get Help!** After getting lost and realizing their situation they called for help.
2. **They stayed put.**
3. **They hunkered down** and prepared to spend the night.

What went wrong:

1. **The subjects did not have enough food** to replenish the calories/minerals burned on the strenuous climb. The lack of salt

and minerals that the body needs is what was causing the cramps

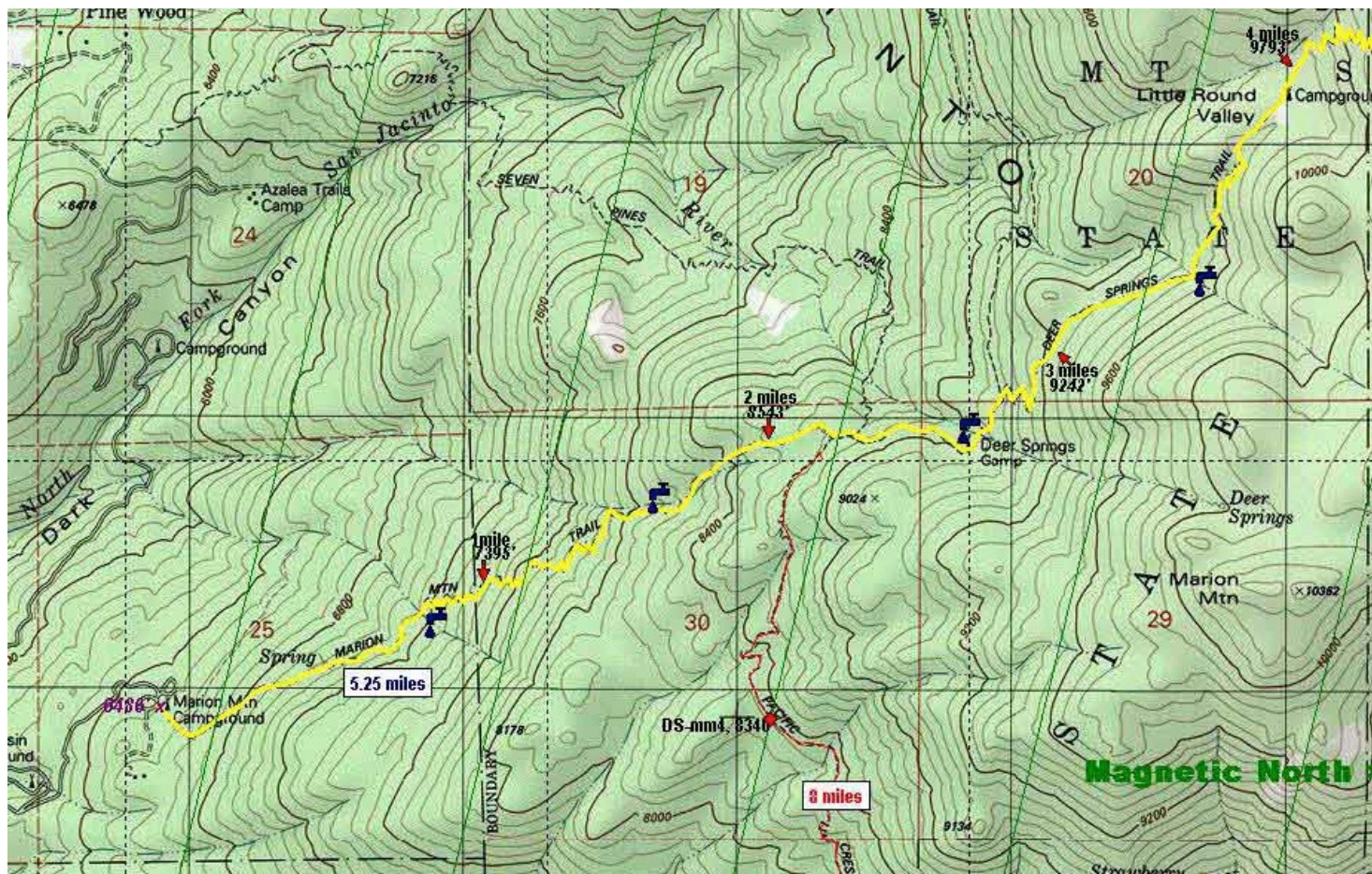
2. **They did not have extra clothing--**Hikers should always bring a warm jacket on any hike and be prepared for the unexpected, like spending the night. 10+1 essentials.

3. **After getting lost, they crossed the trail twice without noticing it.** Lack of nutrients can also impair a hiker's decision-making process.

Hikers who find themselves lost should stay calm, take the time to note their surroundings, and pay attention to landmarks. Lost hikers should also use the map/compass/GPS (part of their 10 essentials) and come up with a plan for what to do if you are lost.

Many thanks to the Riverside Sheriff's Aviation Unit for getting the subjects' location and for the drop bag of warm gear and food. and the Palm Springs Tramway for dropping us off after hours.

RMRU Members Involved:
Cameron Dickinson, Eric Holden, and Les Walker



Topographic Map of the Marion Mountain Trailhead showing the Dark Canyon area. Image: National Geographic

Missing Persons near Dark Canyon

April 12, 2014
Marion Mountain Trailhead

Written by Helene Lohr

After a long hard work week, it was finally time for a night out. Dinner down in the desert had been great. It was a long winding back up the mountain, but it was worth it. An hour later I could still taste the lingering flavor of Duck confit with chanterelles in my mouth as we pulled with a gravelly crunch into the driveway. Now, all I was looking forward to was a hot bath and warm bed. I had just unclipped my seatbelt when a new text chimed out. I

turn to Lee, eyes suddenly bright and wide: "We have a mission!"

Two lost hikers at Marion Mountain. Dang, this could be a big one! Marion Mountain is one of the steepest trails in the area. It is notorious for sending people down it's offshoots into deep, dark, dangerous canyons. Over the years we've rescued many people from its grasp, and it's usually been a doozy of a mission. We'd better prep for an overnigher for sure. Instead of jumping in the bath, I head directly for the rescue room. In a matter of minutes we pull on our uniforms, cross check our gear and backpacks, and are ready to head out. I grab an extra radio for the deputy and I'm out the door.

" Marion Mountain Trail:
notorious for sending people down it's offshoots into deep, dark, dangerous canyons. Over the years we've rescued many people from its grasp."

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

I toss my backpack in the bed of the truck and hop in. Lee speeds up the 243 towards the mission base location marked by a google pin drop. On the way we get the news that RMRU members Cameron and Kevin are on their way here. Turning off the main highway we wind our way along the pockmarked and potholed asphalt back towards the Marion Mountain trailhead.

As we approach we can see the Sheriff's lights ahead, red and blue flashes piercing the pitch black, illuminating the pines in an eerie dance of color. Dispatch is on the radio with the deputy. One of the subjects has managed to get weak cell-service and is on the phone describing their location. The deputy slowly repeats the conversation to us. "They're at a campground with water towers nearby". Lee's eyes light up immediately. "I know where they are!"

"Sound the siren!" Lee suggests to the deputy. A loud whoop comes from the car. A couple of seconds later, confirmation from dispatch: The subjects have heard the siren.

Perfect! Lee and I grin at each other. We won't even need our backpacks for this one. He turns to me: "They're at the old campground". That makes sense- it's still closed this early in the season. They could've gotten sidetracked on their way back down, found an old campsite and decided to stick it out somewhere that seems at least somewhat civilized. We ask the deputy to wait. "This won't take long". A quick eight minute march up a steep hillside covered in slippery pine duff, and we see the glow of a fire ahead illuminating up the trees in a warm circle of light. "Hello!" We yell out as a greeting. Excited yells greet us back.

As we approach I see two people huddled near the inviting blaze of a fire ring. Our subjects are ecstatic to see us. A quick set of introductions goes around before

we get to the meat of the interview.

"Our new friends readily confirm they will not be heading out without their full set of ten essentials again, especially not without headlamps and a good map!"

RMRU RESCUER HELENE LOHR

They made some of the classic mistakes that tend to get hikers in trouble. Neither one had counted on staying out so late. They had underestimated the length of the hike, had not brought extra provisions, not familiarized themselves with the trailhead, and they had no source of light between them.

In the fading light at the end of the hike they got off the trail, but managed to make it back down. Unfortunately the simple map they had showed only the trails without the topography. (This is good reason to have a topo map and know how to read it.) Once off trail, they had no way to find the location of their cars. The darkness made everything unfamiliar and they weren't even sure they were in the right area on the mountain. "I had figured our car was over that way", Ron said pointing North in the direction of Dark Canyon. "But she insisted we stay put".

"I'm glad you did." If they had headed off that way they would be lost in the middle of a tangle of deep dark ravines and thick brush

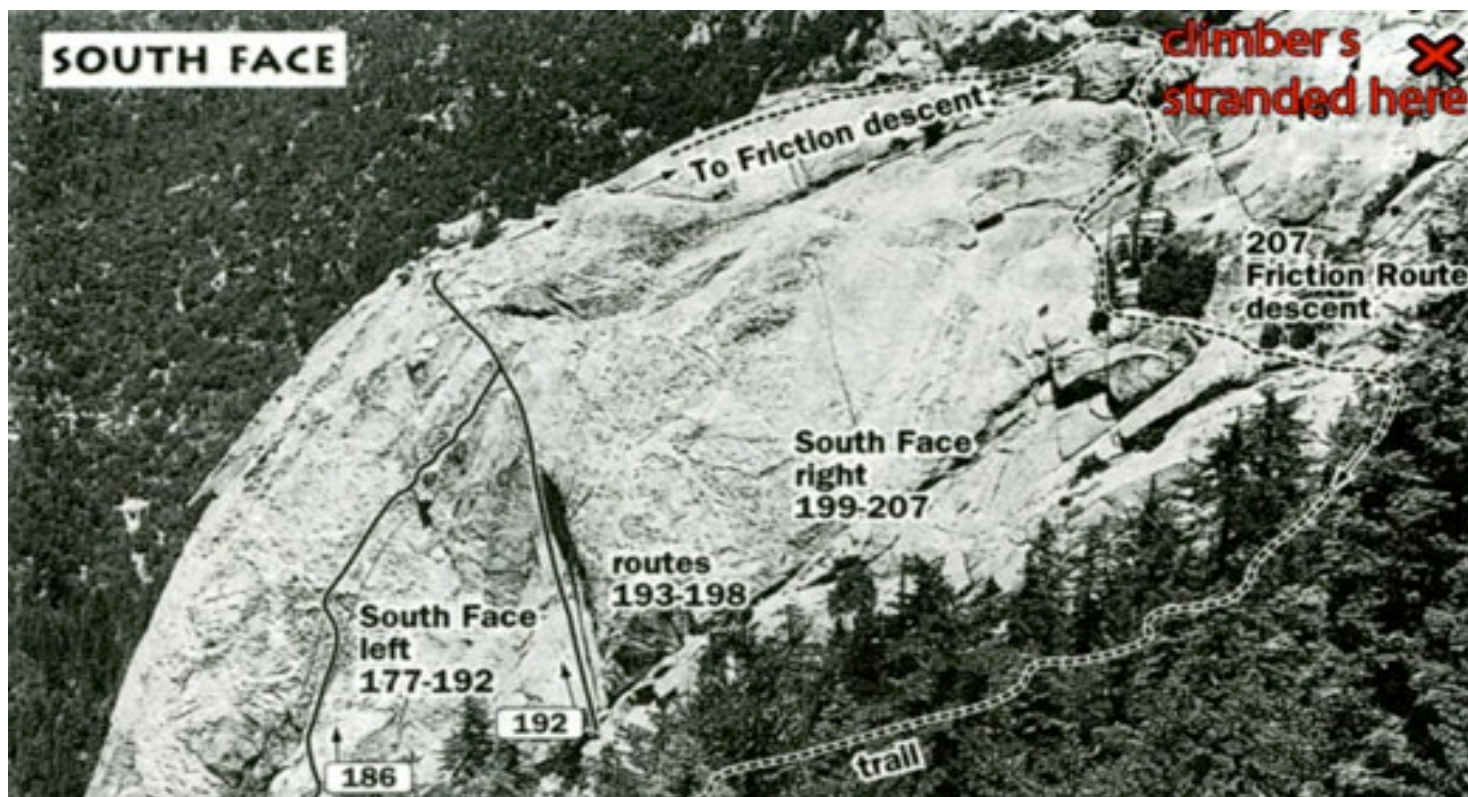
right now. No cell service there! Our job would've gotten a whole heck of a lot harder. An amazingly simple search of several minutes would have morphed into long hours or even days, with a large potential of our subjects becoming injured, hypothermic and/or severely dehydrated. Luckily for us all, they decided to hunker down instead. Diana had brought some matches for the fire and they both had jackets which helped keep them warm.

"Well, let's get you back". Lee puts out the fire. I stamp out the last embers with my heavy leather boots. We each hand out one of our many spare headlamps for the subjects to use. As we walk back, I review a few of the lessons of the night.

Our new friends readily confirm they will not be heading out without their full set of ten essentials again, especially not without headlamps and a good map! A short hike down the slope and we hit the pockmarked road leading to their cars. In a couple minutes, we see flashing lights illuminating the road ahead. We hand them off to the deputy.

They'll have an exciting story for friends and family. They were lucky- they had all the ingredients for things to go horribly wrong, but got a brief adventure and a good lesson instead.

RMRU Members Involved: Lee Arnson, Cameron Dickinson, Donny Goetz, Kevin Kearn, and Helene Lohr.



Stranded Climbers Tahquitz Rock

April 15, 2014
Tahquitz Rock Idyllwild

Written by Les Walker

The phone rang around 8:45 pm on April 15th. It was Glenn Henderson on the line asking me if I would go in and access the situation with two lost climbers/hikers. According to Glenn who had been in phone contact with them, they could not find the friction decent route down off of Tahquitz rock. Glenn and I felt that it would be an easy mission, "just go in and direct them out of the forest on the south side of Tahquitz." Glenn gave me the subject's cell number and I gave them a call.

I asked them where they thought they might be. There was a long

pause with no response. Are you in the forest I asked? "No". Are you on low angle rock? "No" was their answer again. Are you still on Tahquitz Rock? "Yes." Embarrassed about the situation they had not relayed this info to Glenn as to their location.

"OK", I said, "Stand by, we will get to you." At this point I gave our Call Captain a call asking her to put out a team standby till we could figure out where these two where. I then gave Eric Holden a call, asking him to back me up. Eric is a competent canyoneering guy - I knew he would be familiar with my gear if needed.

So with back up on the way and the team on stand-by if needed, I make my way to Humber Park and waited for the Sheriff Deputy to arrive. I arranged all my gear in the parking lot while I wait. I pack a small rope, a hand full of locking carbineers, some webbing,

runners, harness, helmet and headlamps. Just for good measure my trusty climbing shoes get added. Plus all the gear I normally carry on a mission, first-aid, water, food, some sort of shelter.

Just as I was loading all that in my bag the deputy shows up and I was able to let him know what was going on and to give him a team radio so I could stay in contact. I arranged all the gear I needed Eric to bring up when he arrived and advised the deputy to give it to him upon his arrival. Eric would have a huge load of an 80 meter climbing rope and a huge rack of cams, nuts, and ascending gear to bring me if this mission turned out to be a much bigger challenge than we thought.

I hit the trail and within 40 minutes I make my way around to the south face of Tahquitz rock and give a yell out to the subjects.



Les Walker and Eric Holden with the Subjects. Photo: Sheriff Deputy

They respond back that they can hear me but not see me yet.

So I make my way around and up the friction descent expecting to find them just above the tree line in on the rock. "It is easy to get lost there if you have not been shown the way." But I can't see them yet so I yell out again and they yell back, we can see your headlight! *Awesome, I am close!* Turn on a light or something I yell back, they turn on their headlight and yell back. **WE ARE UP HERE!**

I look around. Finally, way up toward the summit blocks I see their light. "I see you" I yell! And then yell, "How the heck did you get there?" *We rappelled here* they answered!

Dang, they look to be pretty high up on a small ledge. I make my way up the descent route and get myself where I can talk with them without yelling. From there I can see they are about one pitch above the top of the descent

route. I asked them if they felt confident in rappelling down. No, was the reply, they did not feel their rope was long enough!

"OK, stay there" I yell up. At that moment it was good to hear Eric on the radio telling me he is just around the corner from me and is on his way up. I let Eric know of the situation and tell him to check back with me when he gets to the "Open Book" area of the rock. I was very happy to know that Eric was just minutes away if I needed him!

Meanwhile I made my way along a ledge and up a trough so I can see the climbers a little better and decide that I can make it to them with a small scramble over a steep section and on to their ledge. I let Eric know what I am doing and that I feel confident I can reach them.

So with a little sure footedness and a bright headlamp I make my way up and over to them, as I

crested over the ledge I could see two huge smiles. They were as happy to see me as I was them!

From there I just organized a rappel and used their rope and anchor to rappel off and over to see if I could reach the bottom. If I was unable to, I had equipment with me to ascend the rope if needed. But I made it over and down with 3 foot of rope to spare. I then directed the two climbers to rappel to me as I did a fireman's belay on them for backup. Both got down to me and we pulled their rope. There where hugs all around. We then walked down to Eric and down the trail to the awaiting Deputy.

"With a little sure footedness and a bright headlamp I make my way up and over to them. As I crested over the ledge I could see two huge smiles."

RMRU RESCUER LES WALKER

What they did wrong: The climbers did not know the area or the way off the rock, they did the research on the climb up, but *not how to get off*. They were not equipped to spend the night on the rock. They did not have the right clothing or enough water.

What they did right: Stayed put, when they knew they were in over their heads and called for help.

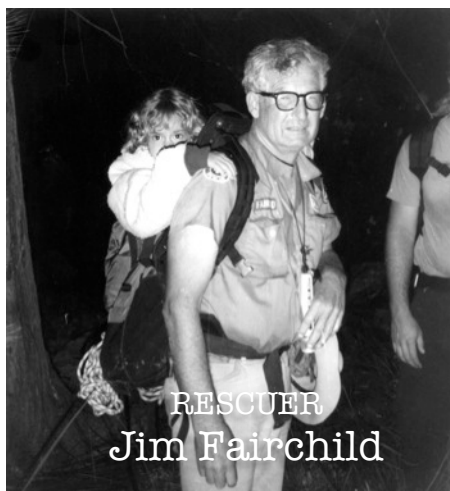
RMRU Members Involved: Eric Holden and Les Walker.

Classic

PHOTO ALBUM



Helicopter Evac!



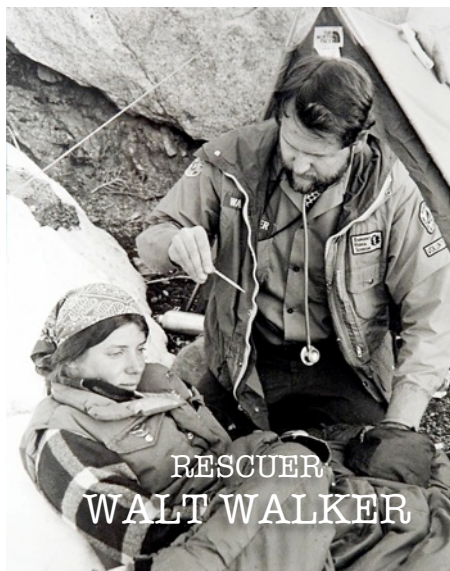
RESCUER
Jim Fairchild



Walt, Tom Dadson, Ron and Jim Fairchild make a final check as the bird comes in to land. RMRU's new oxygen system is pictured in the foreground.



Reunited family!



RESCUER
WALT WALKER



Kevin Walker, Dean Peterson and Glenn Henderson
Rob Gardner



Helitac Training



Winter Training



Ron Harris and Walt Walker examine Gary Wright, injured 4WD driver. Monitoring a victim's blood pressure in one of the ways you can keep an eye in traumatic shock.



EYES OF A CHILD - Sometimes an expression is worth a thousand words. This being the case with little Toni Mojeske just after being found by RMRU members Bill Blaschko (pictured) and Jim Fairchild.

Classic

MISSION REVIEW

RESCUE

Mission No. 7527M

28 & 29 Nov., Fri. & Sat.
Tahquitz Valley,
San Jacinto Mountains

November 1975...

They were all dead. They have to be. Nothing can survive in this weather. It is 28 degrees **inside** the tent. Outside it is worse- 0 to 5 degrees with the wind gusting 35- 40 miles per hour. With the wind-factor, the "real" temperature must be fifteen to twenty degrees below zero. Exposed flesh freezes in a matter of seconds at these temperatures.

The tent snaps and pops in the wind. We are searching for nine boys, ages 12-14, who have been reported trapped in Tahquitz Valley (elev. 7850) by the heavy snowfall brought on by the Thanksgiving Day storm. We have camped after searching late into the night. To continue searching in this weather would have meant death or serious injury for all of us.

The call had come at 1:30 Friday afternoon. I arrived at the Fire Station in Idyllwild at 3 o'clock after a drive filled with tension because of the bad weather and the numerous accidents



along Hwy 74. Walt and Kevin Walker and John Dew were already there. They gave me the details of the mission.

Nine boys, ages 12-14, had hiked into the San Jacinto Mountains on Wednesday planning to stay through the Thanksgiving weekend. The weather was bad Thanksgiving Day and had worsened during the night. The boys tents had either collapsed under the weight of the snow or had been destroyed by the wind.

Friday morning, the two older boys, Paul Porter and John Sandberg, were struggling through the snow, trying to get back down to Humber Park in Idyllwild, when they ran into the nine boys. The young boys were already in trouble. Some of them were suffering from frostbite and hypothermia. They were disorganized and apparently about to panic .

Paul and John left the boys their tent, sleeping bags and their packs. They told them to stay put and wait for help. Paul and John struggled through the snow into Idyllwild and contacted the Sheriff's Office. At 5 o'clock the first teams had assembled and we began

hiking up the Devil's Slide Trail to Saddle Junction. There were nine of us in the first group - Walt Walker, Jim Fairchild, Pete Carlson, Rich Morris, Larry Brown, Larry Roland, Jim Garvey, Bernie McIlvoy and myself. All of us were on snowshoes except Bernie. Bernie was our guinea pig. If Bernie had trouble hiking in the snow, no one else without snowshoes would be permitted to join the search. *And Bernie had trouble- a LOT of trouble!*

None of us could believe how much snow had fallen in this first storm of the season- and it was still coming down. By the time we reached Saddle Junction (elev. 8100') Bernie was up to his waist in snow and almost completely exhausted. At the Saddle, Bernie and Larry Brown set up a two man tent. They would be the radio relay passing messages to Base for us once we dropped down into the Tahquitz Creek drainage.

As I turn away from the cold and back to the warmth of the tent and the companionship of friends, I thought of what one of the existentialist philosophers had once said about hope: *"to say that there was no hope implied that hope did indeed exist."*

We were no longer alone on the mountain. Bud White, Ray Castilonia, Mike Daugherty, Rick Pohlers and Tom Aldrich had followed our tracks as far as Saddle Junction and the searched

the area to our east. They had found no trace of the boys. Also at the Saddle now with Bernie and Larry were five members of the San Diego team. The Sierra Madre Team was being held on standby in Los Angeles. Two huge twin rotor Marine Corps helicopters would be in Idyllwild at first light.

There was no hope, but we were still hoping.

Winter mountaineering mornings are brutal- a struggle of mind against body. The warmth and security of the sleeping bag and the tent against the cold bite of the wind. Another morning I would have hidden in my bag until 10. This morning I was up at 6. Jim Fairchild, Walt, Rich and I began a search of the area immediately surrounding our tents. *Nothing.* I headed for the Forest Service tent frames a hundred yards away. Their canvas roofs were gone now and they could provide no real shelter. If the boys were in the frames, they were dead. They weren't there.

The four of us continued up Tahquitz Valley searching the sheltered stands of pine and fir, which border the now frozen meadows. As my trail crossed Walt's he suggested that I climb a small rise and take a good look at the area. I looked in vain. There was nothing. *There was no hope.*

Head down, I snowshoed down the other side of the rise. I looked to my right at



possible shelter among a stand of small fir trees. Nothing.

There was no hope.

An anxious voice yelled "Hey! Over here!" and over there was the strangest pile of humanity I had ever seen. Nine boys in one big ball of arms, legs and heads sticking out every which way. I yelled for Walt and he and Jim and Rich materialized out of the thin mountain air.

The boys were found, but they were not yet saved. Some of them were badly frostbitten and suffering from hypothermia. I had never seen anyone shiver so violently in my life.

The other team members started triage- the treating of the most seriously injured first- while I headed back to camp for more food, warm clothing, stoves, more of

everything. When I returned half an hour later all of the teams were treating the injured and preparing them for transport. Some of the boys could walk, five others were taken by sled 100 yards away to a meadow where the giant Marine chopper picked them all up and took them to the Hemet Hospital in one trip.

In Search and Rescue, seldom is one individual singled out for recognition, for it is the effort of the entire team- in this case several teams- that makes success possible. But I believe that without the help of Paul and John, some, if not all, of these young boys would have died.

Thank you Paul and John for your help. *And thank you readers, for your continued support.*

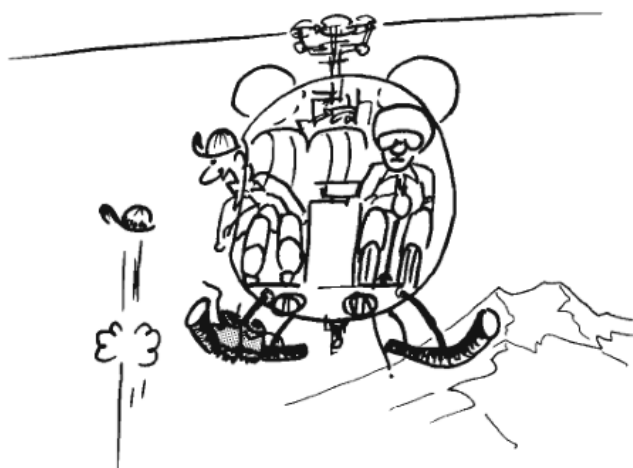
Classic

RMRU DOODLES



RMRU-toons

by RICK POHLERS



"HEY WALT! YOU FORGOT YOUR BOOTIES AGAIN."



"If Walker sends me to Caramba, one more time, I'll..."



Walt "Kamikaze" Walker practiced air dropping needed supplies to fellow RMRU members in the backcountry during a recent training weekend. Walt decided animal crackers were the most needed and dropped a whole box full of them.



In the 1970's Rick Pohlers managed to capture the typical life and times of the team—especially in the form of poking fun at iconic rescuer and friend, Walt Walker.



How YOU can help: become a Sustaining Member

Even if you can't join us in the field, your contribution can help make a vital difference to our mission to save lives.

RMRU is a completely volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with search and rescue efforts in other counties and states. Each member purchases their own equipment and takes time off work, without compensation, to participate in search and rescue missions.

Team equipment is purchased from contributions from the community. We are a non-profit organization and are funded by donations from people like you. Your donations allow us to keep our training and team gear updated and help us to save lives.

Your generous donations last year helped RMRU buy thousands of dollars worth of critical team rescue gear.

DONATIONS

To make a donation via
PAYPAL send contribution to:

info@rmru

OR

Mail check to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue
Unit

43950 Acacia Avenue

Hemet, CA 92544

Thank You!

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Your Donation is deductible from *both* your state and Federal taxes

RMRU tax ID number for Not-for-Profit status 95-2497048

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Membership Types:

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- ☐ Summit Club \$500
- ☐ Patron Club \$200
- ☐ Century Club \$100
- ☐ Supporting Club \$25

Please send your donation to:

Riverside Mountain Rescue Unit
43950 Acacia Street
Hemet, California 92544

or at: www.rmru.org

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Thanks You