

Missing balloonist

April 27, 1980
Chino foothills, west of Prado Dam
1980-020

By Kevin Walker

Certain rescue missions just don't seem to fall together properly; this would be one of those missions. My phone rang at 8:30 A.M. daylight savings time. On the other end was my dad, Walt Walker with news of a search operation in the hills west of the Prado Dam for a balloonist. "A what?" I said. Sure enough, there was a balloon race going on Saturday, and due to deteriorating light and weather conditions, a helium filled balloon containing two balloonists, had to make a forced landing in the foothills. Well, the pilot was picked up that evening, but for some reason the co-pilot wasn't. That's where we came in, we thought.

The team met in Corona, from there we caravanned back into the hills on an access road for an oil company. After driving for about a half hour we reached our destination. On a small hilltop we found a large group of balloon people and R.A.C.E.S., a radio group from the Orange County area acting as rescuers. We offered to help, but the group didn't seem to want any extra help. So all we could really do was stand back and watch. Apparently we had ended up crossing into Orange County, because a helicopter from the Anaheim Police Department was flying search in the area the balloon went down.

After another hour went by Walt questioned the balloon pilot who had made it out safely. The pilot remembered his route quite well, but could not make things out good from the ground. Well, to make this a short story, Walt convinced the other searchers to allow the balloon pilot to go up in the chopper and retrace his course. Sure enough, they were not up more than five minutes when the chopper reported that they had spotted the missing man next to the now rolled up balloon. After he was flown out and the rescuers were patting each others' backs, the rest of us troopies from RMRU headed for home.

search and rescue efforts in other counties. 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.