



Injured climber

June 22, 1980
Tahquitz Rock
1980-031

By Walt Walker

It was early in the afternoon when RMRU received a telephone call from the Hemet Station of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, that there was an injured climber on Tahquitz Rock. The information relayed to us sounded rather serious, a climber had fallen and was reported to have broken both legs and received severe head injuries. With that information we requested that a helicopter be called for.

The call out process was put into motion and Brian Hixson, Kevin Walker and I were quickly on our way to Idyllwild in the No. 1 Van. We were met at Camp Maranatha by Mary Bowman. Mary started up the operations center in the No. 1 Van while we started selecting equipment to be used.

The Idyllwild Fire Department volunteered the services of one of their engines to wet down the field where the helicopter would land. This does a couple of very important things - visibility is improved by the lack of dust, which is a safety factor - and it greatly lessens the amount of dust that is sucked into the air intake of the helicopter and this is another safety factor.

While the above was being accomplished, Pete Carlson, Jim Fairchild, Hal Fulkman, Jim Garvey and Mike Daugherty arrived at base. They were followed by Jack Schnurr and Tom Aldrich. We had called the Hemet Search and Rescue Team for additional help. They responded with Greg Wright, Jim Snodgrass, Steve Vaughn and Mike Kincaid.

We were forming up the helicopter loads when Don Landells arrived in one of his Bell jet Ranger helicopters. Kevin and I climbed in, along with our packs, and we were on our way towards the rock. As we gained elevation I filled Don in on the information we had. We flew around to the south side of the rock and quickly spotted a group of people gathered on one of the routes used frequently as a way to descend after finishing a climb.



HORIZONTAL RAISE - RMRU member Mike Daugherty makes an adjustment in the litter system that moved injured climber Ron Bottorff up to the ledge that was used as the helispot.

As we circled for another look we spotted Bernie McIlvoy and Ron Barry near the summit. They had just finished an afternoon of sport climbing. Don located a good ledge for a one runner landing and Kevin and I climbed out. Don circled back around and picked up Bernie and Ron and let them off on the ledge. Many more loads of members and equipment followed.

As the above was being done I climbed down to Ron Bottorff, who had fallen while free climbing down the descent route. He had slipped and fallen about 30 to 40 feet. Upon examination I found a laceration on the forehead and another completely through the lip. He also had numerous abrasions and it appeared that he might have fractured his left femur.

While the members above set up a mechanical advantage to lift the injured climber, I put additional dressings and bandages on Ron. The Stokes litter, Mike, Jack and Hal came down to the ledge where Ron and I were. With the usual problems of no space to work, we began the task of getting Ron into the litter and secured. With that completed we connected the hauling and belay ropes to the litter. Mike got the nod to go with the litter. He tied into the system and the lifting process was started.



Jim Fairchild

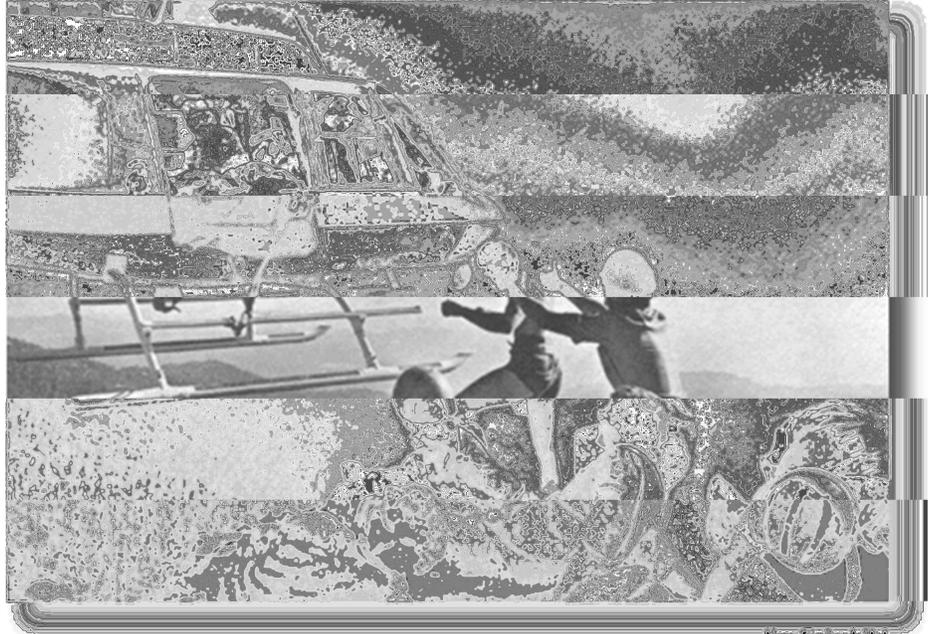
RESTING - The camera captured injured Ron Bottorff in a quiet moment while waiting for the helicopter pick-up on Tahquitz Rock.

In a very short time we had the litter up to the ledge where Don had let us out. We discussed loading plans and then radioed Mary at base to have Don fly up to the rock.

When Don arrived Kevin was in position to give Helitac hand signals. With one runner down on the rock, Don gave the nod and I climbed into the back seat area. The litter was passed into the bird and I secured the head end of the litter while the foot end was being secured. Kevin signaled that the litter was secured and Don lifted off and we headed for the Hemet Hospital. The members collected up all the equipment and then hiked out to Humber Park.

Don then landed in the hospital parking lot and we took Ron into the emergency room. Having worked in the E.R., and there were numerous patients, I washed up and assisted with Ron's care. He was X-rayed and found to have a fractured femur that required surgery. He also had to have numerous sutures on his forehead and lip. As the suturing was being completed Brian and Kevin showed up at the E.R.

I wished Ron the best luck, he thanked us for all our efforts, and we headed home shortly before midnight.



Jim Fairchild

DELICATE PICK-UP - RMRU member Kevin Walker gives Don Landells the thumbs up okay to pull away, as Bernie Mollvoy (center) steps back after making sure that the right skid does not get stuck in a crack while the one runner pick-up is made. Walt Walker rides in the back as the attendant, while the RMRU members in the foreground cling to the small rock ledges.

RMRU is a volunteer search and rescue team that covers Riverside County and assists other teams with 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.